

eeo trust

recruiting talent

a research
report

Ko te Kimi Tāngata
Pūkenga: He Pūrongo
Rangahau



T R U S T

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES TRUST
success through diversity
Ahakoā whakaaro kē, ka puta a ihu

Research conducted by Janice Burns
November 2000

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Executive summary

'Take the lid off this issue – it is holding us back.' Recruitment consultant

This publication reports on the findings of a survey of human resource practitioners and recruitment consultants carried out for the EEO Trust by independent researcher Janice Burns of Top Drawer Consultants in partnership with the Human Resources Institute of New Zealand (HRINZ) and the Recruitment & Consulting Services Association (RCSA).

Forty per cent of the 243 respondents to the survey had more than 10 years' experience in the industry, and two-thirds of them had more than five years' experience. This represents a wealth of expertise in the field of finding people jobs, and their views and experiences tell a disturbing story.

Key results were that:

- more than 95 per cent of respondents considered that some groups of people face unfair barriers to obtaining employment
- those considered most likely to face such barriers were older people, those with a non-New Zealand accent, those with a disability and people from a different culture
- more than 80 per cent of the human resource professionals and recruitment consultants had first-hand experience of talented and appropriately qualified people being discriminated against in the job market
- those the respondents had most often witnessed experiencing unfair discrimination were older people, followed by people with a non-New Zealand accent, and then people from a different culture
- the most common forms of discrimination reported were clients thinking the applicant wouldn't 'fit in', stereotyped views, clients wanting a younger employee and clients formally or informally specifying the kind of person they wanted rather than relying on evidence of relevant merit including skills, qualifications and experience
- those by far the most likely to discriminate were the managers or clients the human resource professionals and recruitment consultants were working for
- almost two-thirds of respondents had felt personally compromised or embarrassed by an applicant's experience in trying to get a job
- the top three strategies for attracting diversity in applicants identified by respondents were making sure people got a chance to show their talent, alerting clients to potential breaches of the Human Rights Act, and becoming personally more familiar with the issues.
- more than half the respondents (58 per cent) had undertaken some training in EEO/diversity. The two groups of professionals were almost equally likely to have undertaken training. The most useful training was that which had a practical focus.
- Of the 45 people who said they would like to undertake training, the majority wanted training in cross-cultural communication and in techniques to attract diverse talent.

These findings confirm the experiences of Sri Lankan migrants reported in Employment Experiences of Sri Lankan migrants in New Zealand published last year by the EEO Trust. They also point to an urgent need for all those involved in employing staff to look closely at their practices to see if they are missing out on the potential New Zealand's labour pool offers.

The responsibility lies with both the client and the recruitment agency to ensure the good practices suggested by the professionals in this report are carried out in all cases. Otherwise, the risk is not just in failing to employ the best person for the job, but also of breaching the Human Rights Act and facing legal action for doing so.

The benefits however of ensuring non-discriminatory hiring practices are enormous. Diversity brings opportunities for expanding markets, increased customer satisfaction, higher productivity and reduced staff turnover, as well as the satisfaction of being sure that your business has the optimum staff for its needs, rather than those people being employed by the competition. Ensuring your employment practices guarantee a diverse workforce is also just a step in facing the reality of the changing demographics in the 21st century: our population is aging and becoming more culturally diverse. New Zealand's leading businesses in the future will be those that have recognised this trend and taken measures to ensure they stay one step ahead of their competitors.

The EEO Trust has many useful resources for those wishing to ensure they are maximising their recruitment opportunities. Check out our website www.eeotrust.org.nz for further information.

Background

'I would say that 75 per cent of the clients we deal with discriminate when they describe what they want in an employee.'

As part of its annual EEO Trust *Diversity Index* project, the EEO Trust conducted a survey of Sri Lankan migrants in 1999. Sri Lankans are the ethnic group with the highest level of tertiary qualifications in the country, yet 47 per cent of the survey respondents considered they had faced discrimination in finding employment. They found that employers preferred 'kiwis' even when the immigrant applicant was better qualified. Fifty-six per cent of those reporting discrimination experienced it from recruitment consultants and 65.5 per cent from employers.

These findings prompted the EEO Trust to seek more information about the positive strategies used to overcome the barriers some groups of people face when trying to obtain employment. A survey form was sent to members of HRINZ and RCSA to seek their professional opinions and experiences of the barriers faced by some groups in gaining employment, and their ideas and strategies for reducing such discrimination. This paper presents the results of that survey.

The population

Survey forms were sent by email to recruitment consultancies and the recipient was encouraged to distribute them widely. Human resources (HR) professionals received their form as an insert in the HRINZ newsletter. Both audiences were given advance notice of the survey.

The number of survey forms returned and the thoughtful comments provided was pleasing. No claim is made that this sample is representative. We are aware that people with a 'story' to tell are more likely to take the time to respond. However, the survey has provided a wealth of information about who is affected by discriminatory practices and the nature and source of that discrimination. There is also a high degree of unanimity in the respondents' views and experiences.

The survey questionnaire is available from the EEO Trust.

Who responded?

Two hundred and forty-three recruitment professionals (HR practitioners and recruitment consultants) took the opportunity to share their opinions, experiences and ideas on the recruitment of diverse talent into New Zealand workplaces. Their demographic information shows that they are likely to have a wealth of experience from which to base their contribution to this survey.

Table 1: Gender and professional grouping of respondents

	Male	Female	Non-response	Total
HR professionals	54 (34%)	100 (63%)	4 (2.5%)	158 (100%)
Recruitment consultants	18 (21%)	66 (78%)	1 (1%)	85 (100%)
Total	72	166	5	243

Ethnicity

The majority of respondents were Pakeha. Five identified as Māori, one as a Pacific Island person and one as Asian. Nine people identified with another ethnic group such as Indian, Canadian, British, Scottish or Australian. Ten people wanted to be called European, seven preferred New Zealander and four took exception to the term Pakeha. Two people believed that the ethnicity question was offensive and unnecessary.

Age

Fifty percent of the respondents were over 40. The recruitment consultants were younger than the HR professionals. A quarter of the recruitment consultants were under 30, compared with just less than 15 per cent of the HR professionals. Fifty-nine per cent of HR professionals were over 40 compared to 34 per cent of the recruitment consultants.

Industry experience

The respondents were experienced in their fields. Almost 40 per cent of them had more than 10 years' experience and two-thirds had more than five years' experience.

Over a fifth (22 per cent) of the recruitment consultants had less than two years' experience in their industry compared with less than 10 per cent of the HR professionals. Almost half the HR respondents had more than 10 years' experience compared with almost a quarter of the recruitment consultants.

Barriers to employment

'Discrimination against older people seeking employment will be a major issue which needs to be addressed.'

Opinions on barriers to employment

Respondents were asked their opinion on whether some groups of people face unfair barriers to obtaining employment, and which groups of people have this experience. An overwhelming majority of these professionals (95.5 per cent) said that in their opinion some people do face such barriers. Only three per cent said 'no', and one per cent did not respond. There was little difference between the two professional groups.

Table 2: Do some people face unfair barriers to employment?

	Yes	No	No response
HR professionals	150 (95%)	6 (4%)	2 (1%)
Recruitment consultants	82 (96.5%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)
Total	232 (95.5%)	8 (3%)	3 (1%)

Six men and one woman thought there were no such barriers (one person did not identify their gender). These respondents identified as Pakeha, British or Australian.

Who faces the barriers?

Table 3 sets out how respondents ranked the groups facing discrimination.

Table 3: Groups likely to experience discrimination

	Total	HR professionals	Recruitment consultants
Older people	78%	79%	74%
Non-New Zealand accent	70%	67%	74%
Disability	62%	70%	49%
Different culture	57%	59%	54%
Asian	50%	45%	58.5%
Pacific people	37%	43%	27%
Māori	32%	39%	210%
Women	32%	39%	21%
Family responsibility	30%	31%	27%
Gay men	27%	28%	24%
Lesbians	21%	23%	16%
Other*	13%	15%	11%
Men	12%	13%	10%

Note: Respondents could tick more than one group so percentages do not total 100.

* Other included people with no New Zealand work experience (6), English as a second language (3), older men (3), people deemed overweight (3), long term unemployed (2), Indians (2), people with tattoos or body piercing (2), transsexuals (2), women with family responsibilities (2), people with gaps in their employment history (1), self-employed people re-entering company employment (1), union members (1), those not from the right school (1), Christians who have taken time out for study (1), public servants moving to the private sector (1), sexual orientation (1), those with a mental illness (1), younger people (1), smokers (1) and unattractive people (1).

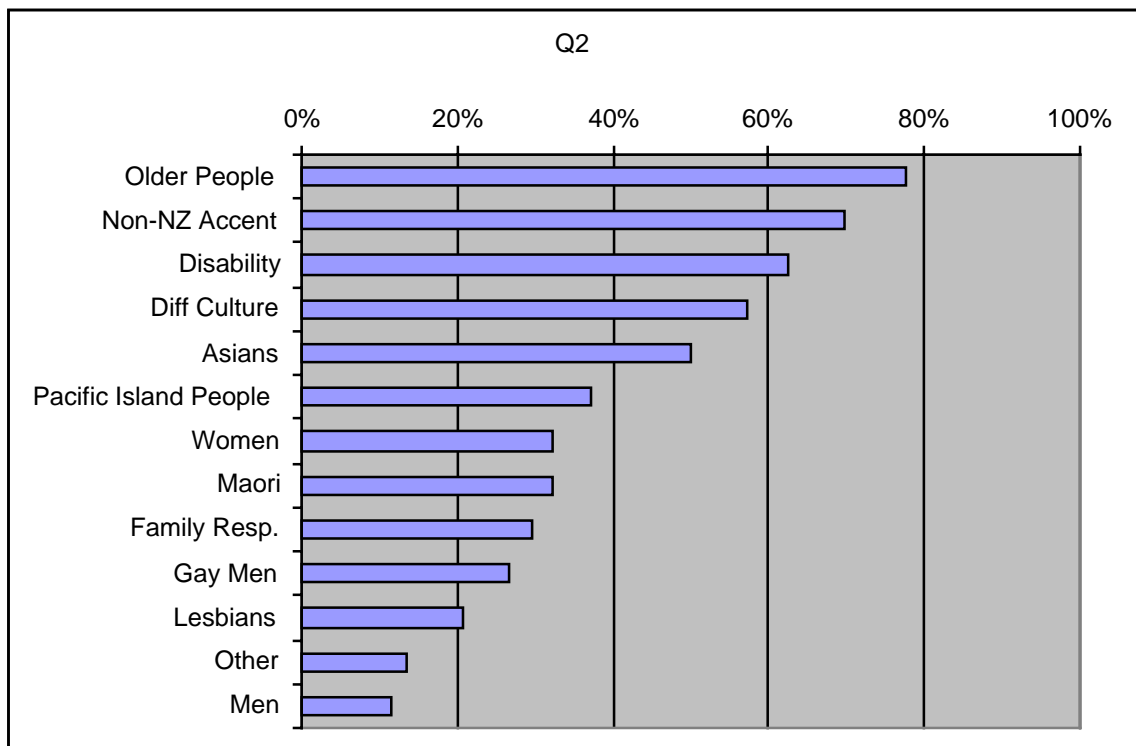


Diagram 1: Groups likely to experience discrimination

Both groups of professionals considered that older people are the most likely to face discrimination.

‘As the workforce ages I feel discrimination against older people seeking employment will be a major issue which needs to be addressed, eg some employers feel that if they employ an older person they risk them never leaving.’ (*HR professional with more than 10 years’ experience*)

Both groups also strongly considered that people with a non-New Zealand accent face barriers.

‘It is not hard to conclude that many employers, or their HR/recruitment staff, will consider applicants with a foreign accent or a foreign name only as a last resort, regardless of their qualifications, experiences and references.’ (*Recruitment consultant with more than 10 years’ experience*)

Differences in opinions

There were some interesting differences in views between the two groups. Over two-thirds of the HR professionals compared with less than half the recruitment consultants considered that people with a disability face barriers to employment. However, recruitment consultants are much more likely (58.5 per cent) than HR professionals (45 per cent) to believe that Asian people face barriers. A higher proportion of HR professionals than recruitment consultants believe Pacific peoples, Māori and women also face barriers in seeking work.

In general, women were more likely than their male colleagues to think that women faced discrimination. Women recruitment consultants were much more likely than men to think that people with family responsibilities, people with disabilities and gay men faced discrimination.

Experience of talented job-seekers facing discrimination

‘Clients reinforce discrimination over time and they condition consultants not to push for diversity.’

Just over four-fifths of the respondents have first-hand experience of talented people facing discrimination in employment. A slightly higher proportion of recruitment consultants than HR professionals was in this position.

Table 4: Experience of job-seekers facing discrimination

	Yes	No
HR professionals	127 (80%)	31 (20%)
Recruitment consultants	72 (85%)	23 (15%)
Total	199 (82%)	44 (18%)

‘In my experience discrimination is often unintentional. It comes from a lack of cultural awareness/experiences or not thinking about the value of difference/diversity. There is a preference for the known/familiar/comfortable.’ (Experienced HR professional.)

Who experienced discrimination?

Respondents identified which groups of people had experienced discrimination. Over two-thirds of them reported first-hand experience of discrimination against older people and people with a non-New Zealand accent, and over half experienced discrimination against people from a different culture.

There was considerable agreement between the two groups of respondents on who experiences discrimination. Recruitment consultants reported more first hand experience of discrimination against Asian people, while HR professionals had more experience of discrimination against people with a disability.

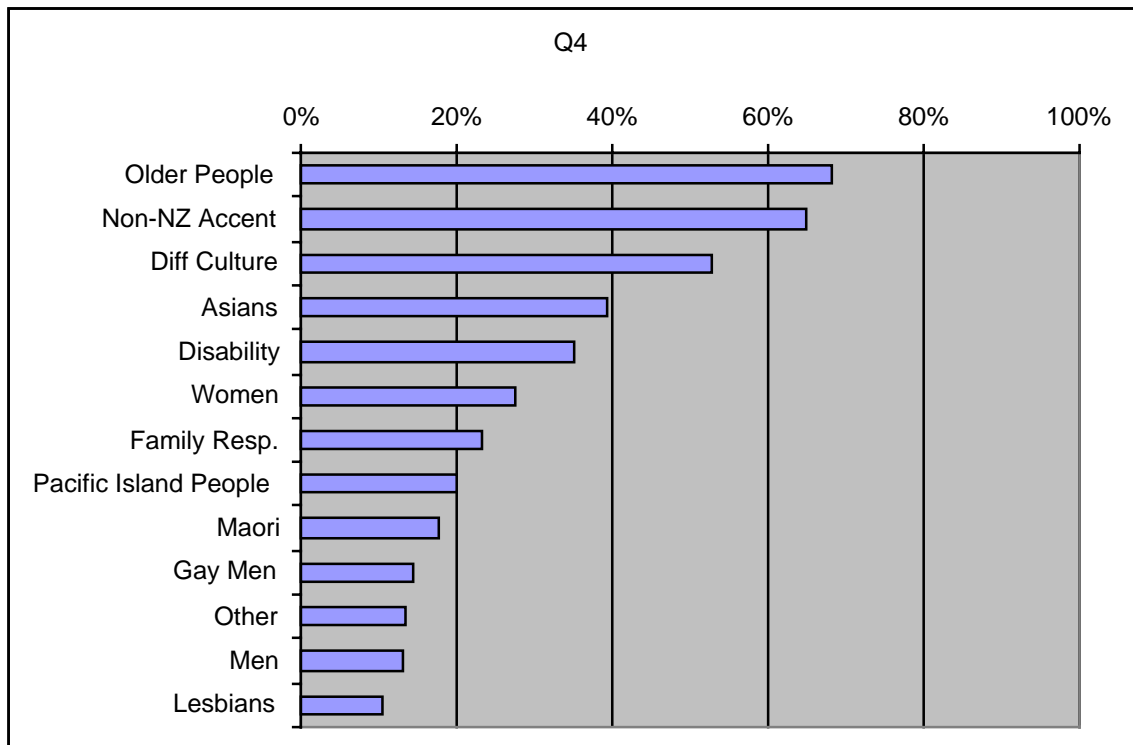
Men were twice as likely to have experienced discrimination against men, and women four times as likely to have experienced discrimination against people with family responsibilities.

Table 5: Who was discriminated against?

	Total	HR professionals	Recruitment consultants
Older people	136 (68%)	82 (65%)	54 (75%)
Non-New Zealand accent	129 (65%)	80 (63%)	49 (68%)
Different culture	105 (53%)	66 (52%)	39 (54%)
Asian	78 (39%)	39 (31%)	39 (54%)
Disability	70 (35%)	52 (41%)	18 (25%)
Women	55 (28%)	36 (28%)	19 (26%)
Family responsibility	46 (23%)	26 (20.5%)	20 (28%)
Pacific people	40 (20%)	26 (20.5%)	14 (19%)
Māori	35 (18%)	23 (18%)	12 (17%)
Gay men	29 (15%)	20 (16%)	9 (12.5%)
Other*	27 (14%)	19 (14%)	9 (12.5%)
Men	26 (13%)	15 (12%)	11 (15%)
Lesbians	21 (11%)	15 (12%)	6 (8%)

* The 'other' category is similar to the list provided by respondents giving their opinion on who faces barriers. The only differences are the inclusion of people who are over-qualified for the job they apply for (3) and East Europeans (1).

Diagram 2: Experience of groups discriminated against



One female HR professional commented on the difficulty for the practitioner of dealing with such discrimination. *'We have to explain to the candidates why they have not been successful and yet still protect the client.'*

Type of discrimination

Respondents who had first-hand experience of discrimination against some groups of people obtaining employment were asked how the discrimination occurred. The most comment type of discrimination was from clients thinking the applicant would not fit in, followed by stereotyped views and clients wanting a younger employee.

Table 6: Nature of the discrimination

	Total	HR professionals	Recruitment consultants
Clients don't think the applicant will 'fit in'	122 (61%)	72 (57%)	50 (69%)
Stereotyped views	115 (58%)	81 (64%)	34 (47%)
Clients want a younger employee	101 (51%)	57 (45%)	44 (61%)
Clients (formally or informally) specify the kind of person they want	99 (50%)	50 (39%)	49 (68%)
Applicants don't get a chance to be interviewed	94 (47%)	60 (47%)	34 (47%)
Overseas qualifications not recognised	86 (43%)	55 (43%)	31 (43%)
'Foreign' names not recognised	81 (41%)	50 (39%)	31 (43%)
Applicants don't get short-listed	77 (39%)	52 (41%)	25 (35%)
Other*	26 (12%)	18 (14%)	6 (8%)

* Many comments in the other category related to those already on the list supplied. Other key comments included too old to train, told informally who the client wants, person was different and did not fit their team concept, assumed Asians would struggle with English.

One notable comment was that the outcome was, '*...not just due to discriminatory type behaviour, but also due to general 'sloppy' practice or failure to structure sensible/intelligent questions.*'

Who discriminated?

Respondents who had first-hand experience of discrimination described who had perpetrated the discrimination. Overwhelmingly their experience was that the managers or clients they were working for or with had been the source of the discrimination.

Table 7: Sources of discrimination

	Total	HR professionals	Recruitment consultants
Managers/clients	176 (88%)	109 (86%)	67 (93%)
Recruitment consultants*	50 (25%)	35 (28%)	15 (21%)
HR/Recruitment consultant colleagues	19 (9.5%)	13 (10%)	6 (8%)
Other**	28 (14%)	21 (16.5%)	7 (10%)

* For HR professionals, this refers to recruitment consultants who have been involved in the process. For recruitment consultants, it refers to other recruitment consultants.

** The other category included supervisors, others on the interview panel, co-workers, team, registration board criteria and myself.

'I would say that 75 per cent of the clients we deal with discriminate when they describe what they want in an employee. Because the client pays us to find that employee, we in turn have to discriminate every day. It is morally and ethically against our views but the bottom line is the company's needs.' (Recruitment consultant)

'The main form of discrimination comes from clients. Even with the best intentions and the best strategies, the consultant cannot force the client to see the people they want to screen out. Clients reinforce discrimination over time and they condition consultants not to push for diversity. It falls into the "too hard" basket over time and allows for passive discrimination which the consultant does not agree with but can't/won't fight any more as it is a losing battle.' (Recruitment consultant with 10 years' experience)

A quarter of those who had first-hand experience of discriminatory behaviour saw it from recruitment consultants. While not the main source of the discrimination, this is still of concern. Female recruitment consultants were more likely than their male colleagues to have experienced applicants being disadvantaged by other recruitment consultants. One person commented that problems occur through, *'...recruitment consultants not looking laterally enough at a person who isn't white, middle-class etc. Many tend to be driven through their commission structures to focus on the "easy to place" candidates.'*

Personal embarrassment or being compromised

Almost two-thirds of respondents had personally felt compromised or embarrassed by an applicant's experience in trying to get a job. The proportions of recruitment consultants and HR professionals who said answered this question in the affirmative was roughly similar, as was the proportion of male and female respondents.

Table 8: Being personally compromised or embarrassed

	Yes	No
HR professionals	98 (62%)	60 (38%)
Recruitment consultants	55 (65%)	30 (35.3)
Total	153 (63%)	90 (37%)

Cause of embarrassment or compromise

Respondents were asked what had made them feel compromised

Table 9: Source of embarrassment

	Behaviour of corporate client/ manager	Behaviour of own consultancy/HR colleagues	Other*
HR professionals	81 (83%)	22 (22%)	23 (23%)
Recruitment consultants	48 (87%)	5 (9%)	8 (14.5%)
Total	129 (84%)	27 (18%)	31 (20%)

* Other included attitude of managers, general organisational culture, qualifications authority, supervisors' prejudice, CEO, partners and business owners, the team the person would work with and clients themselves.

One male HR professional commented that one person had been disadvantaged by '*...the applicant's own behaviour – different cultural background – arrogant.*'

The majority of HR professionals who experienced embarrassment did so because of the behaviour of a manager, while for recruitment consultants it was mostly due to the behaviour of their corporate client.

One person commented that their embarrassment was because of, *'the behaviour of clients putting pressure on the consultants to find certain sorts of people.'*

'It is an (unfortunate) fact of life that in today's business environment, employers are under more pressure than ever to appoint a person with the right "fit". Managers are under enormous amount of time and financial pressure to deliver the result and so feel they have to minimise risk by the elimination of the perceived "marginal" options.' (HR consultant with 3-5 years' experience)

A higher proportion of HR practitioners than recruitment consultants had been embarrassed by their colleagues' behaviour.

Strategies for attracting diverse talent

'We are missing out on talent where training in some "culturally appropriate" skills for the candidate could make a difference.'

Ideas for attracting diversity in applicants

Respondents were asked for their ideas on what assists in attracting and appointing a diverse range of people. They were offered a list of strategies considered useful in attracting diversity, and could tick more than one strategy.

Table 10: Strategies for attracting diversity

	Total	HR professionals	Recruitment consultants
Make sure people get a chance to show their talent	146 (60%)	95 (60%)	51 (60%)
Alert clients to potential breaches of Human Rights Act	123 (51%)	82 (52%)	41 (48%)
Become more personally familiar with the issues	108 (44%)	76 (48%)	32 (38%)
Include messages in advertisements to encourage application	85 (35%)	54 (34%)	31 (36.5%)
Use community based media or advertising sources	82 (34%)	57 (36%)	25 (29%)
Recommend a diverse interview panel	76 (31%)	62 (39%)	14 (16.5%)
Use contacts within different communities	69 (28%)	69 (31%)	20 (23.5%)

Use EEO Employers Group logo in ads	36 (15%)	23 (15%)	13 (15%)
Translating all or some of advertisements	30 (12%)	23 (15%)	7 (8%)
Other	23 (9.5%)	17 (11%)	6 (7%)

Strategies named in the other category fell into three kinds of approaches.

- Requirements of HR/recruitment consultants, such as:

'Employing HR/recruitment consultants with sufficient knowledge of the labour market, nationally and internationally, to see the benefits an ESOL job applicant (for example) with contacts in his/her country of origin, might bring to the employer's business.'

'Endeavouring to ensure our company is a 'microcosm' of society – our customers are.'

'Practice what you preach.'

- Changing some practices, such as:

'Redeveloping selection procedures other than formal interviews.'

'Using community based groups e.g. refugee groups or language schools.'

'Transparent competency based recruitment and selection processes (non-discriminatory ones). This is structural only – diversity of thinking and decision making is the behaviour most wanted and needed.'

'Using overseas referees from reputable international companies.'

'Development of a critical factor analysis for shortlisting and interviews.'

- Influencing clients, including:

'Running workshops on cultural diversity'

'Providing training to managers who interview on the value of cultural diversity.'

'Refusing to short list based on demographics.'

'Educating decision makers – i.e. discussing the issues and foundations for beliefs, challenging assumptions and linking it to skill and experience.'

'Ensuring the organisation is aware of the business reasons for having a diverse workforce.'

One person commented that clients can often be influenced by *'stereotyped ideas of what people are like or good at — this happens if a client has had several bad experiences with a particular nationality.'*

Key strategies

Most respondents suggested that if applicants were given a chance to show their talent they would have a better chance of being hired. One said, *'I feel we are missing out on talent where training in some "culturally appropriate" skills for the candidate could make a difference.'* Another commented, *'If at entry to our country, our government could assist in providing a grant to encourage immigrants to be 'kiwi'ised this may help them on the road to employment.'*

One HR professional gave a detailed account of two experiences where immigrant applicants had not been successful. He concluded, *'My question is – where can these people gain compassionate, skilled and experienced advice and support to get the feedback about what they need to do to succeed in our environment. Had someone worked on their [the applicants'] approach, CV and job search strategies I am sure they would have been far more successful.'*

The second most favoured strategy relied on reminding the client of the anti-discrimination legislation and consequences of breaching this.

The third relied on some form of increased familiarity with the issues, which implies some sort of training or reading.

Less favoured were the more interventionist or active strategies, such as using contact within different communities, recommending a diverse interview panel (although some recruitment consultants may see that as beyond their brief), using community media or advertising sources, or including positive messages in advertisements to encourage diverse applicants. The research was not able to identify whether the lower response to these approaches was due to unfamiliarity with the strategies or whether people had tried them and found them unsuccessful.

Professional training in EEO/diversity issues

‘Being involved with people from different communities has given me the most relevant education.’

More than half the respondents (58 per cent) had undertaken some training in EEO/diversity. The two groups of professionals were almost equally likely to have undertaken training.

Table 11: EEO/diversity training

	Yes	No	No response
HR professionals	94 (59.5)	62 (39%)	2 (1%)
Recruitment consultants	47 (55%)	34 (40%)	4 (5%)
Total	141 (58%)	96 (39.5%)	6 (2.5%)

Men and women were equally likely to have undertaken training, although women recruitment consultants were more likely to have done so (59 per cent) than their male colleagues (44 per cent).

Interest in training

Those people who had not undertaken EEO/diversity training were asked if they would like some.

Table 12: Those wanting EEO/diversity training

	Yes	No	No response
HR professionals	36 (58%)	22 (35.5%)	4 (6.5%)
Recruitment Consultants	9 (26.5%)	17 (50%)	8 (23.5%)
Total	45 (47%)	39 (41%)	12 (12.5%)

Of the 96 people who had not undertaken training, almost half (45) said they would like it while 39 said they would not. Recruitment consultants who had not already experienced training were much less likely to want it than their HR professional peers.

In response to an earlier question, 108 people (44 per cent of respondents) said they thought one strategy to attract diverse talent was to become personally more familiar with the issues (48 per cent of HR professionals and 38 per cent of recruitment consultants). Of these, 68 per cent had already undertaken training – presumably they had seen the value in such training.

Thirty-five people had not had training. Of these 35 people, 18 said they would like to have training and eleven did not want any (the proportion of recruitment consultants and HR professionals in this group was similar). This means that not everyone who valued becoming personally more familiar with EEO/diversity issues thought there would be value in training.

While the numbers are small, the recruitment consultants who were more likely to want training were those with less than one year's experience, younger people and women. There was a similar gender difference for HR professionals.

Type of training wanted

Those respondents who would like training were asked to indicate what kind of training they would find useful. They were able to tick more than one option. The 45 respondents (nine recruitment consultants and 36 HR professionals) gave 106 responses.

Table 13: What kinds of training would be useful?

	Total	HR professionals	Recruitment consultants
Interviewing people with a disability	16	13	3
Conducting whanau interviews	10	10	0
Understanding Māori culture	15	13	2
Gender issues in communication	11	9	2
Cross-cultural communication	26	21	5
Techniques to attract diverse talent	27	24	3
Other	1	1	0

These results form three clusters of responses:

- techniques to attract diverse talent and cross-cultural communication (26 and 27 ticks)
- interviewing people with a disability and understanding Māori culture (15 and 16 ticks)
- conducting whanau interviews and gender issues in communication (10 and 11 ticks).

What makes EEO/diversity training work?

Of the 141 people who had undertaken EEO/diversity training, the majority (131 or 93 per cent) had found it useful. There was little difference between HR professionals and recruitment consultants, or men and women. Respondents were asked what had had made the training useful.

Table 14: Why training worked

	Total	HR professionals	Recruitment consultants
Practical focus	93 (71%)	69 (77.5%)	24 (57%)
Made me think about things differently	78 (59.5%)	58 (65%)	20 (48%)
Directly relevant to my industry	61 (47%)	37 (42%)	24 (57%)
Other*	10 (8%)	8 (9%)	2 (5%)

* This category included comments such as:

'We need a good tertiary level education which gives sufficient student knowledge of gender issues, psychology, economics, sociology and of the labour market and also a detailed study of communication.'

'Helped me provide up-to-date information and analysis to CEO and senior management and prove discrimination in the industry.'

'Diversity contact groups established to review current practice.'

'Whilst I have received training, being involved with people from different communities has given me the most relevant education.'

'Gave me tools to use.'

The main reason most respondents (both HR professionals and recruitment consultants) found EEO/diversity training useful was because it had a practical focus. They had also responded to the fact that the training had made them think about things differently. These findings would be useful for the design of any future training programmes.

Men (in both industries) were much more likely than women to have considered the training useful because it made them think about things differently. Male recruitment consultants had also appreciated the practical focus more than their female peers had.

Other issues

‘Once a person from a different culture is in an organisation it is important to help them understand both the country/corporate culture as well as for the organisation to gain an understanding of the culture they have come from.’

Respondents took the time to comment on other things that impact on the experience of job seekers – especially immigrants.

One person captured the thoughts of several respondents in saying, *‘One cannot let this question pass without reference to our appalling immigration policies, whereby we disappoint and compromise so many people. We bring in people on false promises that cannot possibly be made good in New Zealand...The result is the immigrant chooses to make the investment of immigrating to New Zealand based on false information and false promises. There are some tragic stories out there.’*

Some respondents were concerned about the person after they were employed. *‘Once a person from a different culture is in an organisation it is important to help them understand both the country/corporate culture as well as for the organisation to gain an understanding of the culture they have come from so that misunderstandings and miscommunications do not occur.’*

It was important for some respondents to make their own ethical position clear. Such comments included:

‘I have been in HR for more than 25 years. I hope that over that time I have treated the people that I have met with respect, regardless of ethnic background or disability. I take pride in maintaining standards and in treating all applicants for positions in the way I would like to be treated.’

‘I judge people for their abilities, not for their ethnicity and find affirmative action procedures offensive.’

‘I have had some very positive experiences employing people with disabilities.’

Conclusion

The findings of this survey confirm the experiences of Sri Lankan migrants reported in *Employment Experiences of Sri Lankan Migrants in New Zealand* published last year by the EEO Trust. The stories of both human resource professionals working within employing organisations and recruitment consultants working for those organisations tally across the board: unfair and wasteful discrimination is occurring in employment in New Zealand. This study particularly highlights the difficulties experienced by older job applicants.

The findings also point to an urgent need for all those involved in employing staff to look closely at their practices to see if they are missing out on the potential New Zealand's labour pool offers. The responsibility to ensure the good practices suggested by the professionals in this report are carried out in all cases lies with both the client and the recruitment agency. Otherwise, the risk is not just in failing to employ the best person for the job, but also of breaching the Human Rights Act and facing legal action for doing so.

The benefits however of ensuring non-discriminatory hiring practices are enormous. Diversity brings opportunities for expanding markets, increased customer satisfaction, higher productivity and reduced staff turnover, as well as the satisfaction of being sure that your business has the optimum staff for its needs, rather than those people being employed by the competition. Ensuring your employment practices encourage a diverse workforce is also just a step in facing the reality of the changing demographics in the 21st century: our population is aging and becoming more culturally diverse. New Zealand's leading businesses in the future will be those that have recognised this trend and taken measures to ensure they stay one step ahead of their competitors.