

Kea New Zealand

Understanding the skills of offshore Kiwi in technology industries

Digital Technology Industry Transformation Plan - Skills Workstream

April 2022

“Returning and offshore Kiwi possess distinctive skills, knowledge, experience, and connections. We need to be proactive to ensure these traits are used to lift innovation, productivity, and wellbeing of all in Aotearoa.”

Ganesh Nana

Chair of the New Zealand Productivity Commission Te Kōmihana Whai Hua o Aotearoa

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Acknowledgements

The global Kea community

We would like to first and foremost acknowledge our global Kea community. This community spans 185 countries and consists of individuals who willingly offer up their time, advice, experience, and support to help grow and inspire Kiwi export businesses and entrepreneurs.

Our government partners

We gratefully acknowledge the support for Kea from our **government partners**: Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment [MBIE], New Zealand Trade & Enterprise [NZTE] and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade [MFAT].



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI



About Kea

Kea was founded in 2001 at a time when many of our best and brightest Kiwi minds were heading overseas. Sir Stephen Tindall and Professor David Teece recognised that for a nation as small and geographically remote as Aotearoa, offshore Kiwi are crucial to our ongoing global connectedness. 20 years after its inception, Kea continues to focus on keeping our extraordinary offshore Kiwi part of Aotearoa.

Each month Kea supports 30+ Kiwi businesses to compete on the world stage by extending the helping hand of our offshore community via our Kea Connect service. We highlight inspiring Kiwi doing world changing mahi offshore, we profile the successes of Kiwi export businesses to educate future entrepreneurs and we showcase to broader New Zealand the significant opportunities in connecting with both offshore and returning Kiwi.

Within our Kea community we have our select group of World Class New Zealanders, these are Kiwi across a variety of locations and sectors who are changing and shaping industries and cultures and want to leverage their skills and experience for the good of New Zealand, they are also passionate about giving back to the communities where they live and work. They are strong advocates for both Kea and New Zealand.

Kea has a community of almost half a million Kiwi, across 185 countries. We are funded by government agencies including NZTE, MBIE, MFAT and selected corporate partners.

Overview

Image source: Unsplash

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kea

OVERVIEW

The skills and expertise of offshore Kiwi have never been more important

Understanding the skills of offshore Kiwi in technology industries was commissioned by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment [MBIE] as part of the Skills Workstream of the Digital Technologies ITP.

The findings from this report will support existing plans to address skills pipeline constraints in the sector such as skilled migrant pathways, development of the existing tech workforce, transfer of skills and tertiary education pathways. With 16% of Kea's community active in the tech sector, this report highlights how the skills of offshore Kiwi contribute to addressing New Zealand's largest area of tech skills shortage - senior specialists with more complex skills. In addition, it highlights an opportunity for offshore Kiwi to fill gaps in senior leadership and board roles.

The Draft Digital Technology Industry Transformation Plan [Digital ITP] was released in January 2022 against a domestic and global backdrop significantly different from when it was conceptualised in 2019. The tech sector is now one of New Zealand's top 3 exporters, and employment in the sector has been growing at almost twice the rate of the general economy over recent years.

When New Zealand's compulsory managed isolation requirement came into force on April 10th 2020, the inward migration flow that had previously both supported the tech sector's growth and augmented the pipeline of new tech talent entering the domestic workforce, dried up virtually overnight. At the same time, the homeward migration of hundreds of thousands of our Kiwi expats was impacted.

Reconnecting with the world

As New Zealand now looks to reconnect with the world, we are hearing some hesitancy from our Kea offshore community to return home, with this sentiment stronger from those in the tech sector. Recent Kea data shows that border-related obstacles are a key factor, but also that there is growing nervousness from our offshore Kiwi around New Zealand not being seen as a progressive environment to grow career and business. Those who are returning are comparing their recruitment and employment experience to that of larger markets, with Kiwi employers appearing to remain focused on location based working as opposed to embracing remote options, meaning significantly less employee flexibility. Returners are finding it tough to position their experience for the employment market. Our community tells us many employers are preferring New Zealand-based experience.

OVERVIEW

The opportunity is now for offshore and returning Kiwi to positively contribute to the Digital ITP

Despite these challenges, it's encouraging to see that New Zealand's tech sector has continued its exceptional growth. Our top 200 tech businesses have experienced an 11.5% uplift in revenue over the last 12 months and securing the right talent is a major contributing factor to ensuring this growth is sustained.

We see a strong opportunity for returning Kiwi to support New Zealand's tech talent pipeline, particularly to fill leadership gaps, board positions and senior specialist roles. Recent data shows that the right career opportunity would be the primary trigger for a return from almost one third of Kiwi offshore, with almost 18% of Kea's globally experienced community willing to consider board roles.

The recent launch of New Zealand's Technology Story and other country brand initiatives and campaigns in place do help alleviate concerns about returning home. We see a major opportunity to showcase career opportunities and share homecoming experiences directly with our offshore Kiwi, and Kea are well positioned to support here.

The steps we're taking now

In March Kea launched a new jobs platform which offers businesses the opportunity to directly target offshore and returning Kiwi for international and local roles. Businesses can also utilise Kea's 1:1 Shoulder Tap offering for confidential, C-suite and Board roles.

Kea acknowledges that the insights and real time information on our returning Kiwi are valuable and we will continue to survey and provide this insight to help with New Zealand's recovery and reconnection. Our next survey will be in-market in April.

We look forward to the opportunity to contribute to the continued growth of New Zealand's exciting and innovative technology sector.

Sincere thanks for your ongoing support,

Toni Truslove, CEO Kea New Zealand

OVERVIEW

Approach - about the surveys

As the pandemic continued to evolve, understanding the sentiment and needs of our offshore and returning kiwi became crucial to many aspects of New Zealand's planning, therefore Kea conducted community surveys every 6-8 months. The following surveys form the basis for the analysis conducted for this report:

1. Welcome Home [WH]

In market: 5 - 31 August 2020, launch Sunday 8th November 2020

Number of respondents: 14,944

Developed in partnership with: [IRA](#) who conducted the original analysis of the data for all respondents.

In recognition of the significant numbers of Kiwi returning to New Zealand during the initial stages of the pandemic, Kea sought to understand more detail about who was planning to return, why, their timeframe, as well as their commercial background and experience.

The Welcome Home survey was open to any participant.

3. Employer Survey [ES]

In market: April 20 - May 28 2021

Number of respondents: 28

Designed to complement the Future Aspirations survey, Employer Survey captured the perspective of New Zealand employers on international talent, forward pipeline of open roles and the flexibility of those roles. The Employer Survey was promoted to EMA members.

2. Future Aspirations [FA]

In market: April 20 - June 7 2021

Number of respondents: 3,790

Developed in partnership with: [IRA](#) who conducted the original analysis of the data for all respondents.

Further into the pandemic, Kea sought to understand whether plans had changed for Kiwi planning to return, and also for offshore kiwi understanding their appetite to engage with New Zealand from afar.

The Future Aspirations survey was only open to Kea members.

4. Border Reopening [BR]

In market: December 8 2021 - January 10 2022

Number of respondents: 2,123

The survey was developed to support this report, with the goal of learning more about the specific roles and functions of respondents, as well as the most up to date information on intent to return to New Zealand.

The Border Reopening survey was only open to Kea members.

Surveys analysis

1.0 About Kea's tech sector respondents



Image source: Unsplash

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SURVEYS ANALYSIS - ABOUT TECH RESPONDENTS

1.1 Estimated 16% offshore Kiwi in tech sector

The proportion of respondents from the tech sector was consistent across all three surveys, with a tight range of 15.80% - 16.53%. This indicates that with respect to sectors, Kea’s community is broadly representative of the population of offshore Kiwi, as Welcome Home survey responses were not restricted to Kea members, but open to any offshore Kiwi.

As expected, the Software & Platforms subsector dominates, with emerging fields such as Artificial Intelligence and AR/VR correspondingly low. A surprise was the relatively high proportion of respondents in the Research field, ranging from 6.1% - 11.3% across the surveys.

Fig. 1.1a Tech as proportion of total respondents

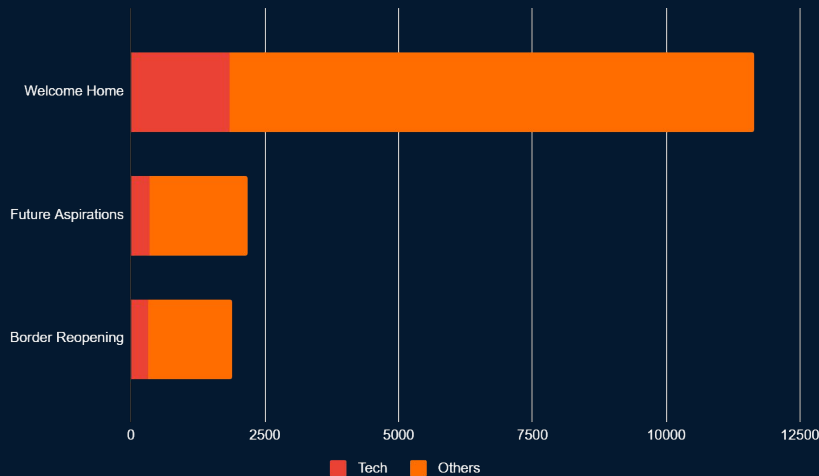
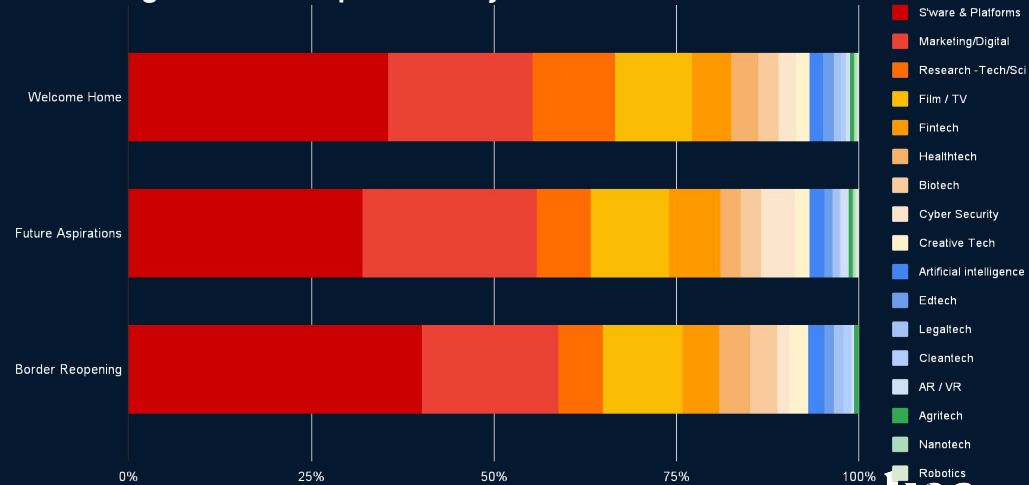


Fig. 1.1b Tech respondents by subsector



SURVEYS ANALYSIS - ABOUT TECH RESPONDENTS

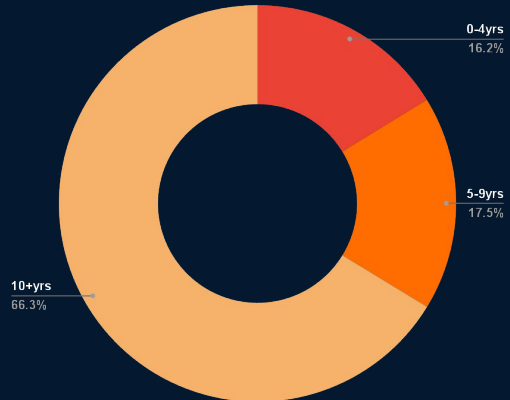
1.2 Extensive offshore experience in Kea's community

A high percentage of survey respondents in both Welcome Home and Future Aspirations surveys indicated that they had lived offshore for 10+ years. As Future Aspirations was limited to Kea member respondents only, and almost 80% of respondents to this question indicated 10+ years offshore, the criteria was expanded in Border Reopening to better understand the depth of experience and skills within our community.

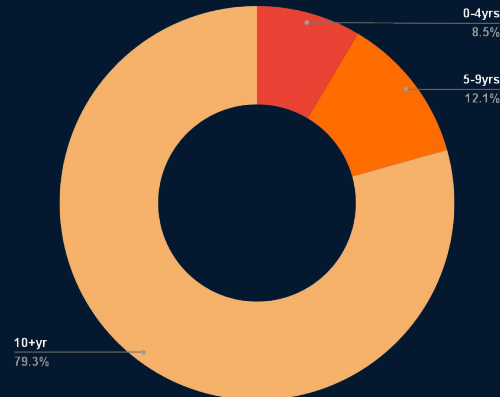
The expanded criteria highlighted that over 45% of Kea's community have lived overseas for 21+ years. The next set of charts compares the proportion of tech sector respondents to non-tech by years living offshore.

Fig. 1.2a Welcome Home

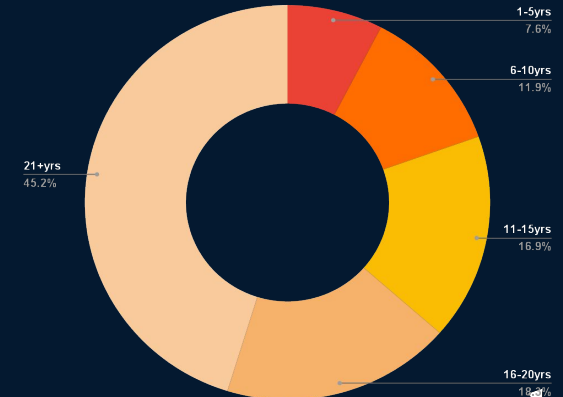
n=11,653

**Fig. 1.2b Future Aspirations**

n=2,750

**Fig. 1.2c Border Reopening**

n=1,900



SURVEYS ANALYSIS - ABOUT TECH RESPONDENTS

1.3 Tech sector overseas tenure is shorter

Tech sector respondents have been living offshore for a shorter period on average than non-tech respondents.

This trend becomes more clear in Border Reopening data, where the 10+ year criteria was expanded to include 11-15 years, 16-20 years and 21+ years living offshore. The proportion of tech respondents in the 1-5 year [22.8%] and 6-10 year [25.1%] categories is notably higher than the average tech respondents to the survey [16.5%].

Fig. 1.3a Welcome Home

n=11,653

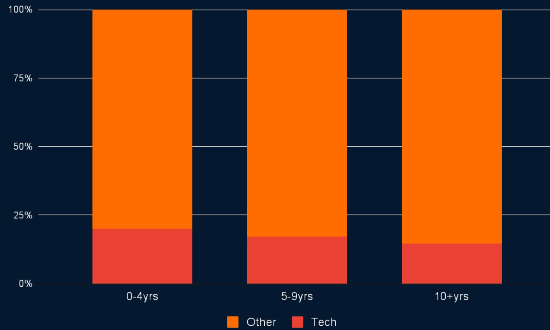


Fig. 1.3b Future Aspirations

n=2,750

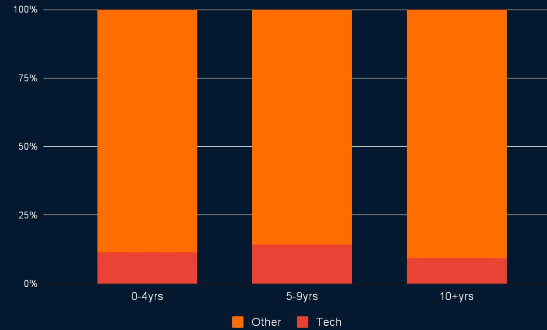
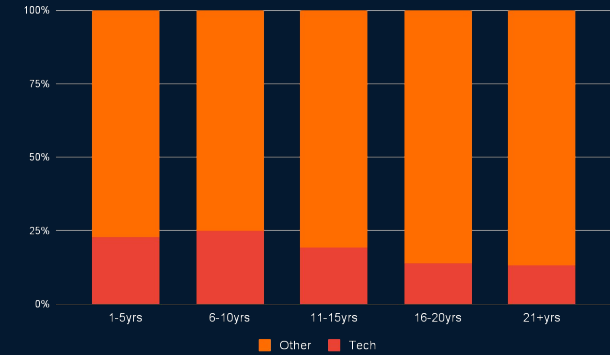


Fig. 1.3c Border Reopening

n=1,900



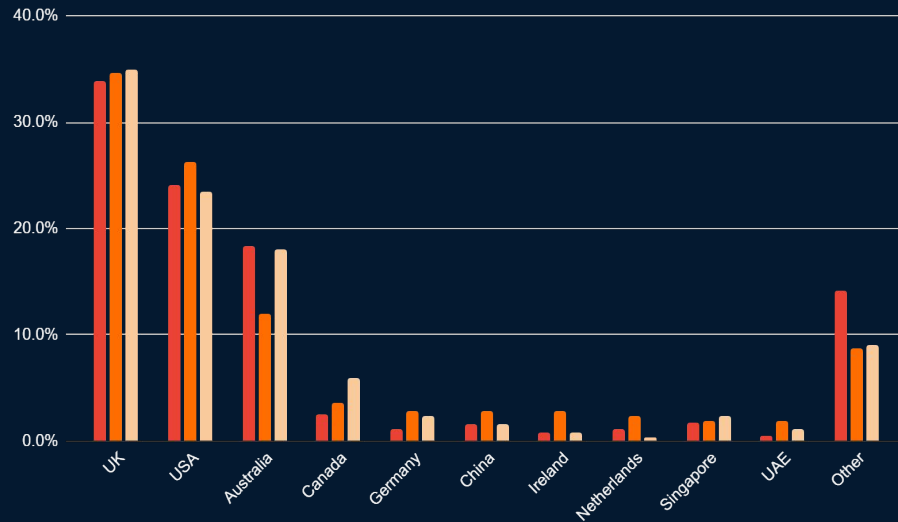
SURVEYS ANALYSIS - ABOUT TECH RESPONDENTS

1.4 Kiwi well represented in top trading partners

The top 10 countries for tech sector respondents are consistent across all surveys, with a narrow range of 73% - 76.4% of respondents from the top three countries of UK, USA and Australia.

The top 10 countries where tech respondents reside and work include five of New Zealand's top 10 trading partners.

Fig. 1.4 Tech respondents by country, %



	Export partner rank*	Export value*
United Kingdom	6	\$986.29M
United States	3	\$4.30B
Australia	2	\$5.29B
Canada	16	\$515.30M
Germany	12	\$608.40M
China	1	\$10.79B
Ireland	47	\$56.72M
Netherlands	18	\$450.21M
Singapore	8	\$708.72M
UAE	14	\$530.96M

*<https://tradingeconomics.com/new-zealand/exports-by-country> 2020 data, New Zealand exports, USD

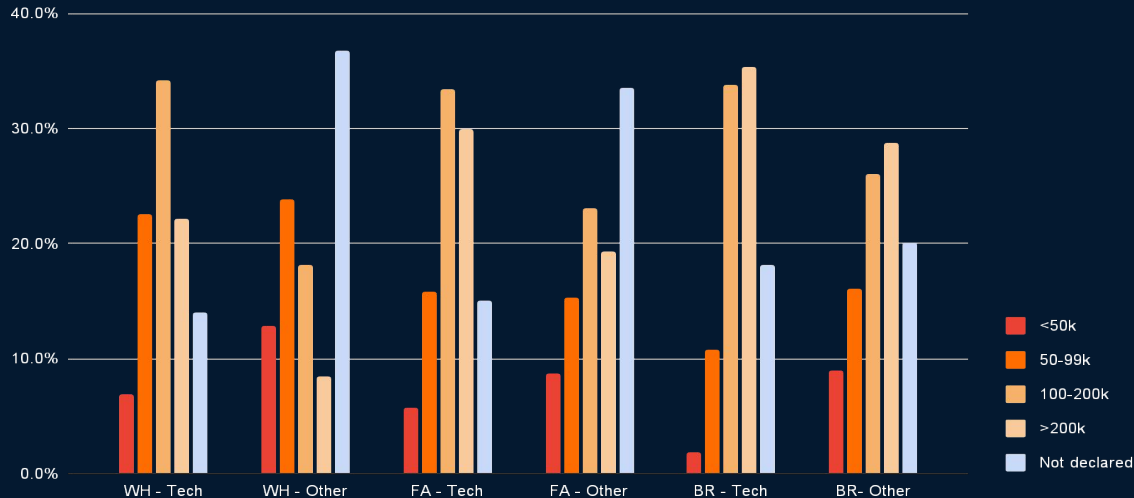
SURVEYS ANALYSIS - ABOUT TECH RESPONDENTS

1.5 Tech sector commands higher salaries

Tech sector respondents showed consistently higher average salaries than non-tech respondents, with 65.7% - 84.4% of tech respondents noting their salary as over \$100k.

There is a distinct difference in the willingness to share salary information between the groups, with only 14.1% - 18.2% of tech respondents choosing not to disclose salary, compared to 20.1% - 36.7% non-tech respondents.

Fig. 1.5 % Respondents by salary band, tech vs all other sectors



	% >\$100k Excludes not declared
WH - Tech	65.7%
WH - Other	42.0%
FA - Tech	74.5%
FA - Other	63.9%
BR - Tech	84.4%
BR - Other	68.6%

SURVEYS ANALYSIS - ABOUT TECH RESPONDENTS

1.6 Gender in tech more balanced offshore

The Draft Digital ITP* notes that specifically for the IT workforce, only 27% are female. [TechWomen](#) similarly notes that women are underrepresented in broader STEM careers in New Zealand. The proportion of experienced women respondents to Welcome Home and Future Aspirations surveys [Section 1.7] has positive implications for not only the opportunity to welcome more women into NZ's tech sector, but also for the pool of mentors and coaches to young women entering the tech sector.

As was found with Section 1.5 salary comparison, tech sector respondents were much more likely to share information than respondents from other sectors, ensuring the data presented is representative of Kea's community.

Fig. 1.6 Tech sector vs all other respondents - gender

	WH - Tech	WH - Other	FA - Tech	FA - Other
Female	47.6%	47.2%	37.5%	39.1%
Male	51.3%	26.9%	61.1%	40.4%
Gender diverse	0.4%	0.2%	0.8%	0.2%
Not declared	0.6%	25.7%	0.5%	20.3%

SURVEYS ANALYSIS - ABOUT TECH RESPONDENTS

1.7 Clear gender + age band variance in tech

A noticeable difference exists in the salary ranges for male and female tech respondents to the Welcome Home survey. Only 13.8% of female respondents earned salaries over \$200k, compared to 30.3% of males.

Significant differences are also clear in the age profile of male and female tech respondents, with 62% of female respondents aged 44 or under compared to 45% of males. Note, insufficient data exists to provide analysis of gender diverse respondents [0.44% of respondents].

Fig. 1.7a Welcome Home Tech [female] : salary by age band

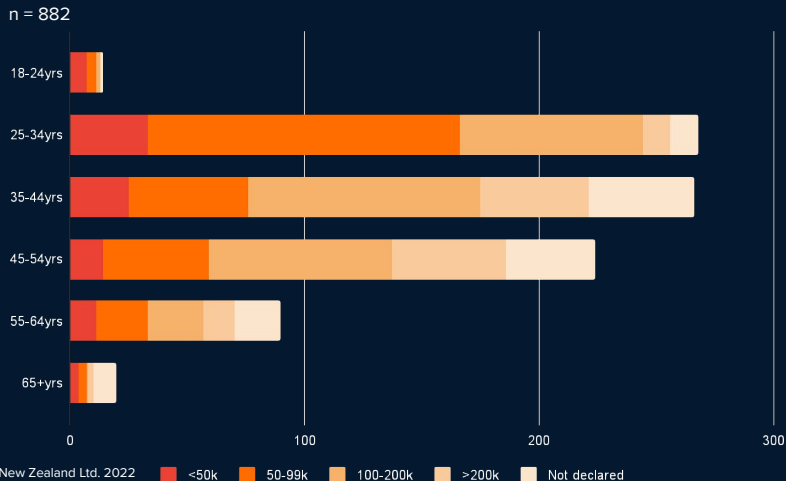
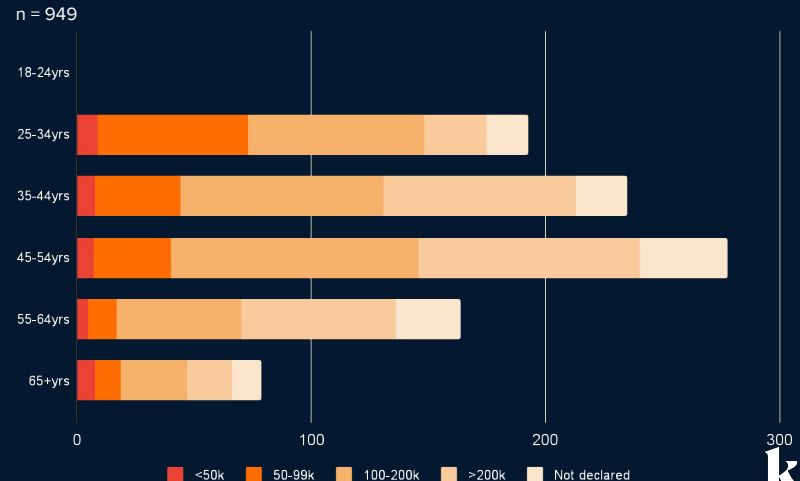


Fig. 1.7b Welcome Home Tech [male]: salary by age band



SURVEYS ANALYSIS - ABOUT TECH RESPONDENTS

1.7 Clear gender + salary band variance in tech

The difference in age profile and salary bands observed in the Welcome Home survey open to any offshore Kiwi was also observed in the Future Aspirations survey results from within Kea’s community.

Female respondents were on average younger than male, with 55% female respondents aged 44 or under compared with only 30% male. With respect to salary 35.8% males and only 21.9% females were in the highest \$200k+ band. Note, insufficient data exists to provide analysis of gender diverse respondents [0.83% of respondents].

Fig. 1.7c Future Aspirations Tech [female]: salary by age band

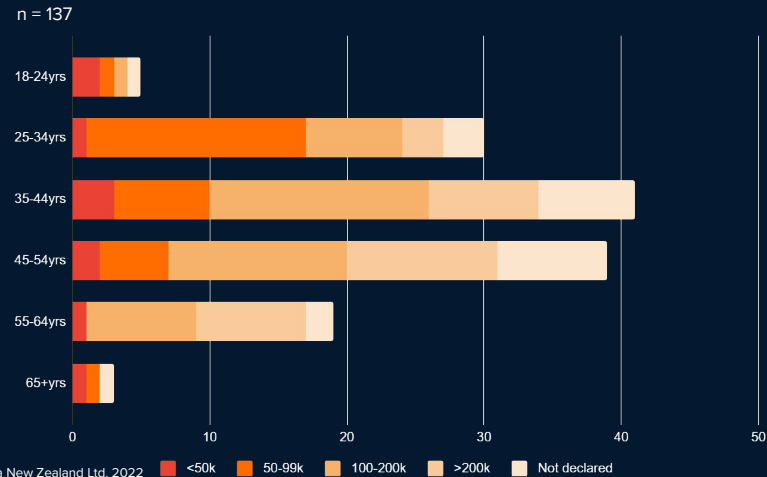
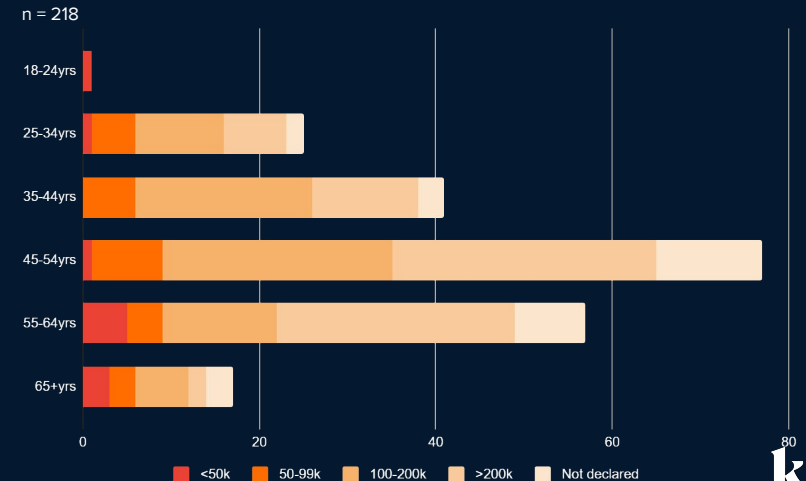


Fig. 1.7d Future Aspirations Tech [male] salary by age band



Surveys analysis

2.0 Returning to New Zealand

Image source: Unsplash

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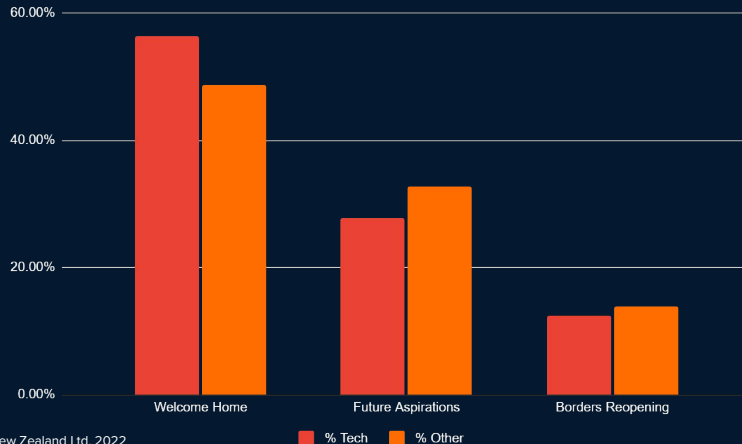
SURVEYS ANALYSIS - RETURNING TO NEW ZEALAND

2.1 Tech shows rapid decline in intent to return

Recent headwinds such as uncertainty related to vaccine certificate recognition process, visas for non-NZ partners of citizens, differences between countries' approaches to vaccine mandates and MIQ availability all contributed to a decline in intent to return over the period August/September 2020 [Welcome Home] to December 2021/January 2022 [Border Reopening]. Tech respondents' intent to return permanently shows a steeper decline than non-tech respondents.

This trend is concerning, and adds an additional constraint to the flow of skills and expertise much needed to support the continued growth of New Zealand's tech sector. However, we believe there are ways to alleviate these new headwinds, which are explored in upcoming sections and in the findings.

Fig. 2.1 Intent to return over time, tech vs non-tech



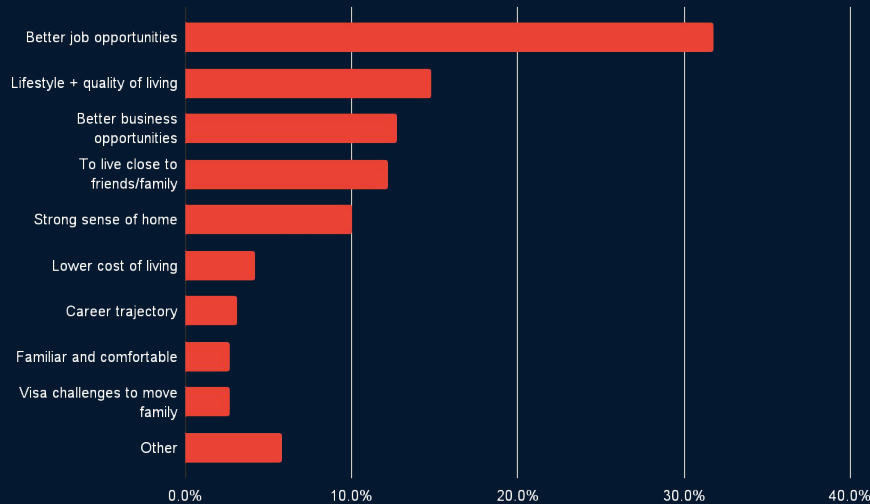
SURVEYS ANALYSIS - RETURNING TO NEW ZEALAND

2.2 Job opportunities primary reason for remaining

In the Future Aspirations survey a series of questions was asked covering why respondents were choosing to remain overseas, and for those planning to return, what was pulling them home.

Not surprisingly, **almost one third indicated their main reason for remaining overseas was related to the job opportunities** open to them outside New Zealand. Better business opportunities also featured strongly for this group.

Fig. 2.2 Reasons for remaining overseas



“Biggest challenge is finding what you’ve loved in London in a global market & being able to find something like that in NZ - the level of role and opportunity will be vastly different.”

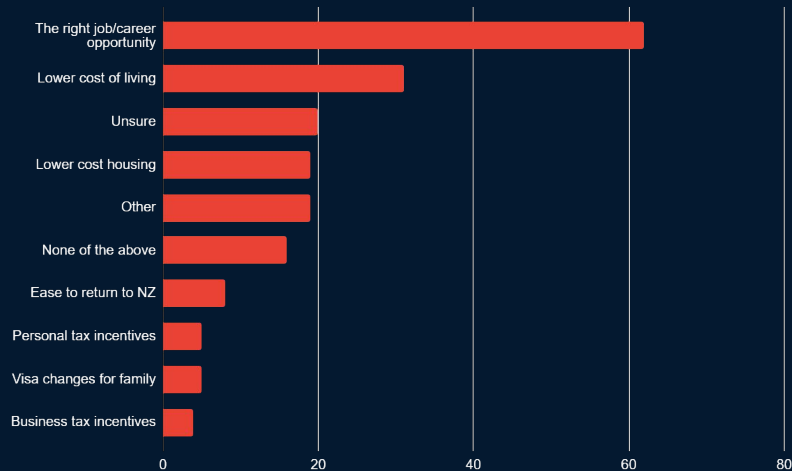
Respondent to Kea audience research

SURVEYS ANALYSIS - RETURNING TO NEW ZEALAND

2.3 Job opportunities would incent a return home

On the flip side to the question in 2.2, Future Aspirations survey respondents were also asked what would incent them to return to New Zealand. Almost **one third of respondents [32.8%]** indicated that **the right job or career opportunity would be the primary lever to trigger a return to New Zealand**. Kea sees this as a major opportunity, because unlike issues such as cost of living, housing costs and tax changes, surfacing career opportunities to offshore Kiwi and choosing to implement more flexible approaches to hiring is within our control. Industry can collaborate right now on solutions.

Fig. 2.3 What would encourage a return to New Zealand



N = 189, blanks excluded

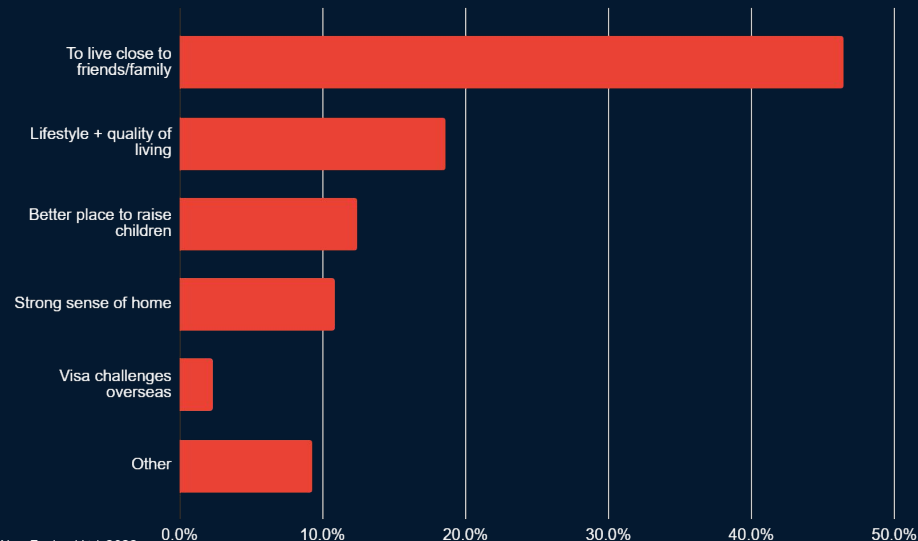
SURVEYS ANALYSIS - RETURNING TO NEW ZEALAND

2.4 Lifestyle and family are the main pull home

Unsurprisingly it is not career progression triggering a return to New Zealand, but rather being closer to family and friends, and an improved lifestyle. With many Kea community members having been overseas for 16+ years, schooling for children and the desire to spend time with parents and family members as they enter a different stage of their lives becomes more important.

Fig. 2.4 Reasons for returning to New Zealand

N = 129, blanks excluded



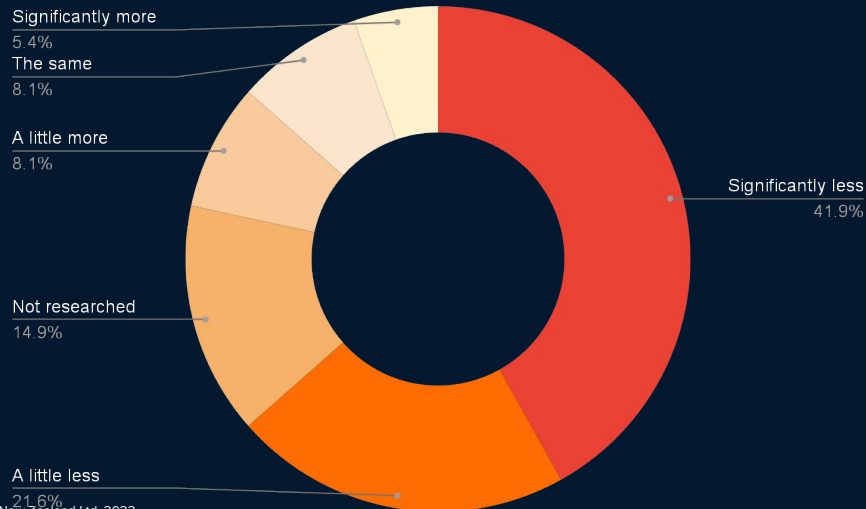
SURVEYS ANALYSIS - RETURNING TO NEW ZEALAND

2.5 Lower salaries expected on return

In the Future Aspirations survey the expectations around salary on return to New Zealand were explored. Of tech sector respondents, **63.5% expected to get significantly or a little less** than their current offshore salary. This expectation, plus the global trend to allowing fully remote working for knowledge workers means that returners could remain with their current employer, rather than bringing their skills to Kiwi employers.

Fig. 2.5 Tech sector respondents, salary expectations

N = 74, blanks excluded



SURVEYS ANALYSIS - RETURNING TO NEW ZEALAND

“I was too overqualified and considered lying on my CV to get a job [in New Zealand].”

Senior tech sector respondent to Kea audience research

SURVEYS ANALYSIS - RETURNING TO NEW ZEALAND

2.6 Concern experience will not be valued at home

A common theme running through open ended comments from respondents from all sectors in the Future Aspirations survey was anxiety about whether overseas experience would be genuinely understood and valued by New Zealand employers.

Only **one third of respondents were confident that New Zealand employers would understand and value their offshore experience**, whilst employers' concerns were around the challenges of finding the right person, their salary expectations, time to integrate and anxiety they would return overseas.

Fig. 2.6a Tech sector respondents, value perception

N = 68, blanks excluded

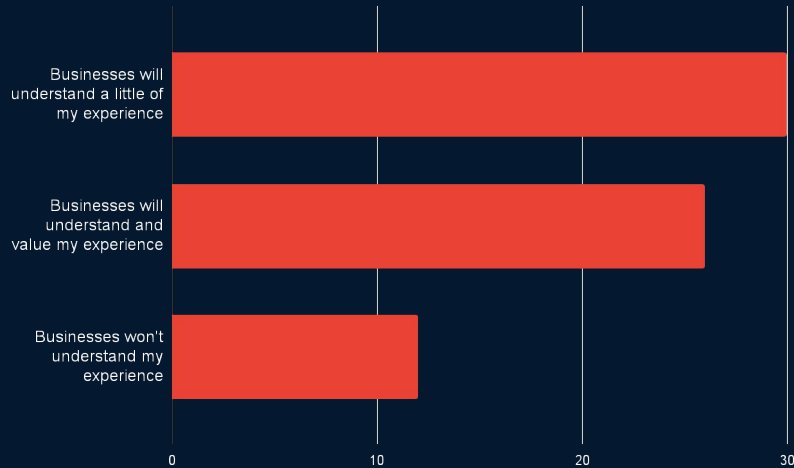
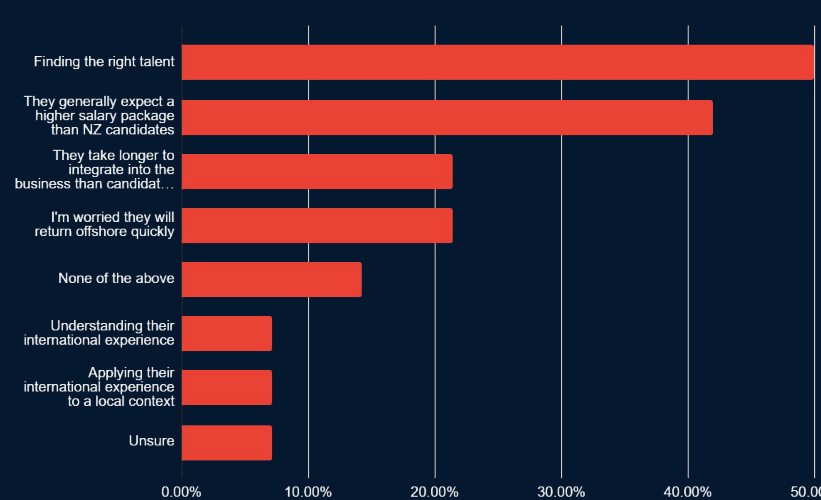


Fig. 2.6b Challenges to hiring offshore Kiwi, employer perspective

Multiple responses allowed, therefore responses >n



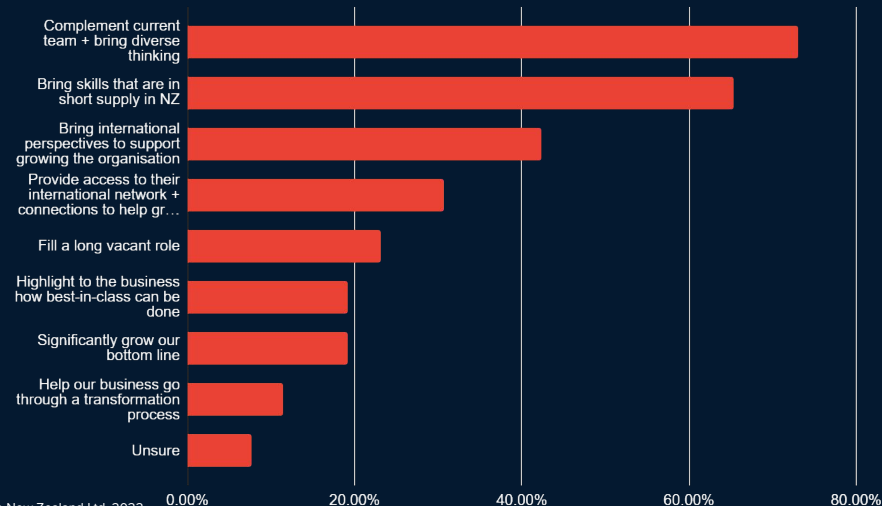
SURVEYS ANALYSIS - RETURNING TO NEW ZEALAND

2.7 Employers value skills + diverse perspectives

The [Employers' Survey](#) conducted at the same time as the Future Aspirations survey showed employers see clear benefits to bringing the skills and expertise of offshore Kiwi into their organisations. **Almost 75% valued international experience for the diversity of thought** that would be brought into local organisations.

Fig. 2.7 Benefits offshore Kiwi would bring

Multiple responses allowed, therefore responses >n



Surveys analysis

3.0 What skills gaps can offshore and returning Kiwi help address?

SURVEYS ANALYSIS - OFFSHORE KIWI SKILLS

“Start-up and scale-up are very different, and scale-up requires globally oriented expertise we are short in - we need to work with these returning Kiwis or risk being left behind.”

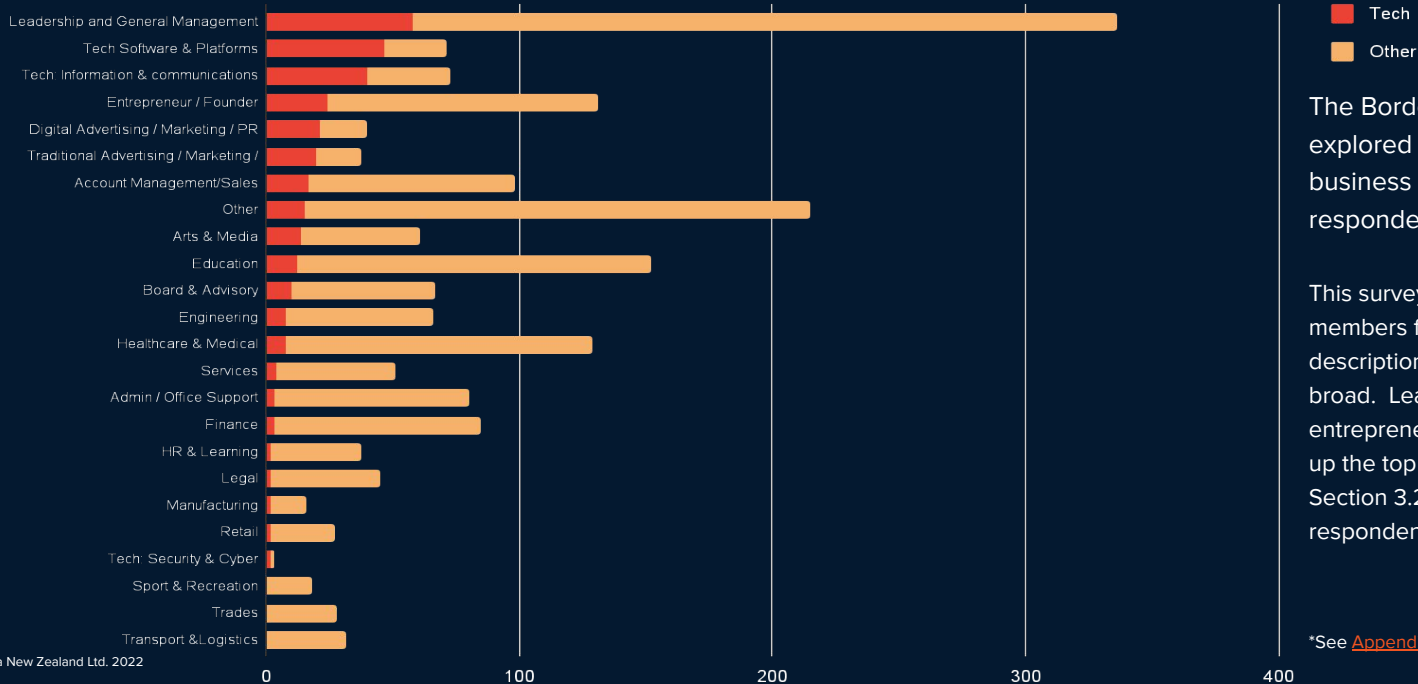
Sir Peter Gluckman - director of Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures and president-elect of the International Science Council

SURVEYS ANALYSIS - OFFSHORE KIWI SKILLS

3.1 Leadership, education, founders lead the way

Fig. 3.1 Tech sector as a proportion of all responses, Border Reopening survey

n = 1900



The Border Reopening survey explored more deeply the business functions or roles of respondents.

This survey was open to Kea members from any sector, and role descriptions* are correspondingly broad. Leadership, education and entrepreneur/founder roles make up the top three from all sectors. Section 3.2 focuses on tech sector respondents.

*See [Appendices](#)

SURVEYS ANALYSIS - OFFSHORE KIWI SKILLS

3.2 Extensive leadership experience in tech sector

Recognising the high proportion of tech sector respondents in leadership roles, the Border Reopening survey included a question to more deeply understand the type of leadership function.

Note for tech respondents the category of Entrepreneur/Founder was the fourth highest role category represented.

Fig. 3.2a Roles by tech sector - Border Reopening survey

n = 314

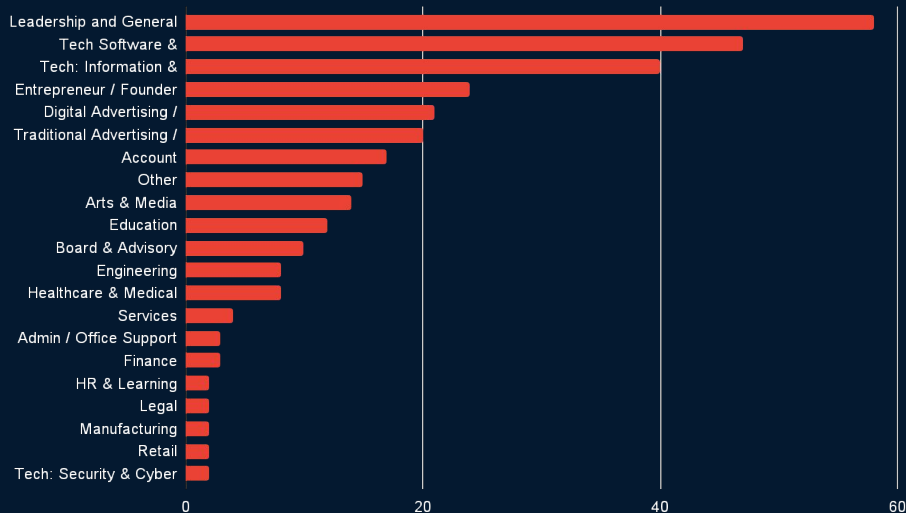
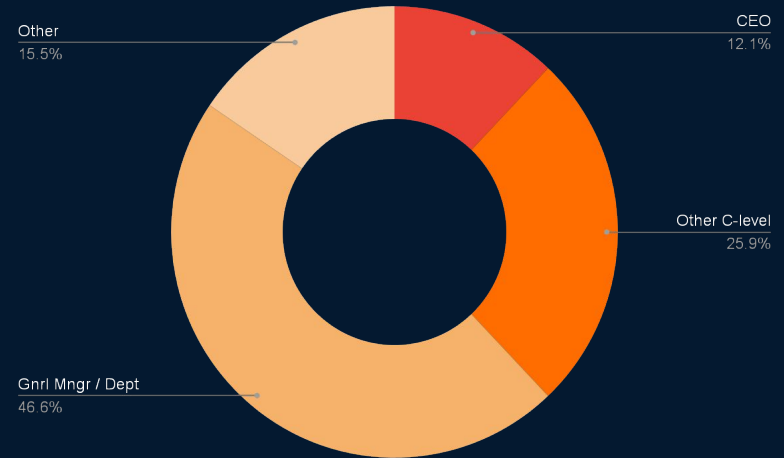


Fig. 3.2b Leadership & General Manager drill down

n = 58



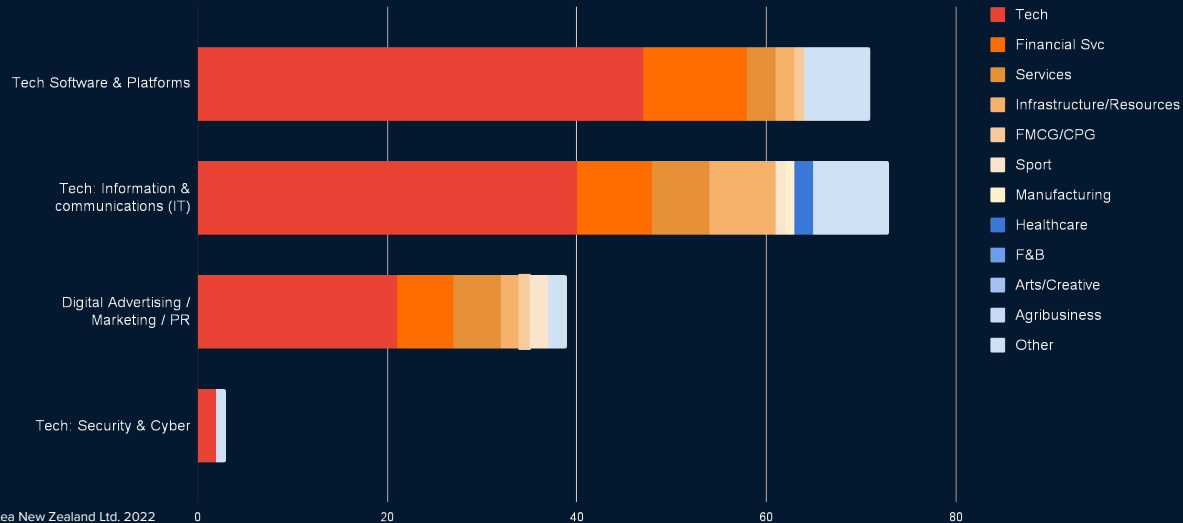
SURVEYS ANALYSIS - OFFSHORE KIWI SKILLS

3.3 IT + technology roles span multiple sectors

The Border Reopening survey explored more deeply the business functions or roles of respondents. With this survey open to Kea members from any sector, role descriptions were correspondingly broad.

Just under 10% of respondents from all sectors have roles which relate to software development and support, IT support, security and cyber and digital marketing.

Fig. 3.3 IT and tech-focused roles by sector



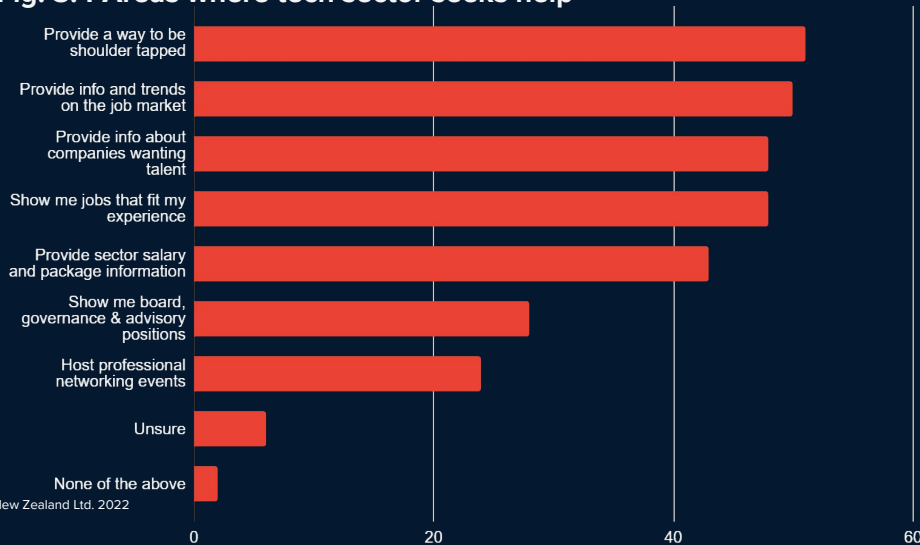
SURVEYS ANALYSIS - OFFSHORE KIWI SKILLS

3.4 Help needed to overcome time away from home

Recognising the implications of the high proportion of Kea community members who have spent 10+ years living overseas, the Future Aspirations survey included a question about the type of help returning Kiwi would find most useful when researching roles and the employment landscape in New Zealand.

Answers to this question guided the development of Kea's suite of talent offerings, which launched Q4 2021 with a pilot talent introduction service, Shoulder Tap. This question allowed multiple responses, hence the total is greater than the total number of respondents to this question.

Fig. 3.4 Areas where tech sector seeks help



“There isn't much of an industry for what I have specialised in, so I will need to find a way to reinvent myself. It's a little daunting.”

Tech sector respondent

Spotlight

Focus on governance and connecting to talent

Image source: Unsplash

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SPOTLIGHT: GOVERNANCE

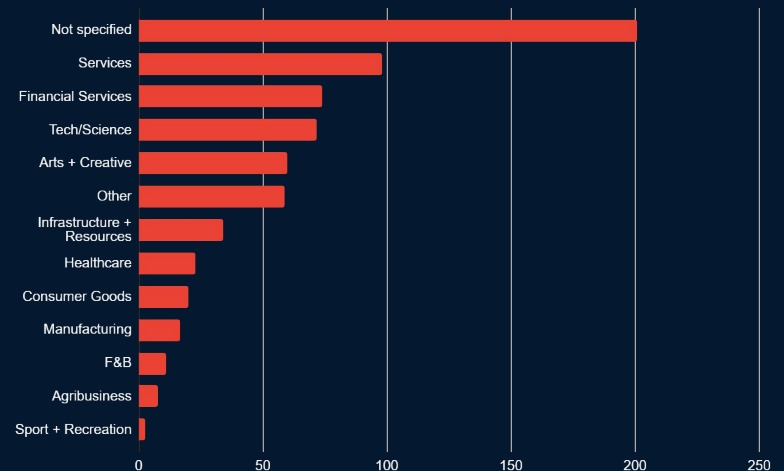
Kea's global community shows strong interest in contributing through board membership

The Productivity Commission report *New Zealand Boards and Frontier Firms** highlights the importance of international experience to New Zealand boards; bringing domain expertise, varied risk appetite, experience with businesses operating at scale and an understanding of failure. Additionally, the underrepresentation of technology skills on New Zealand boards is well documented.

With this in mind, Kea's 2021 Future Aspirations survey included a yes/no question, with options for those answering in the affirmative on ways by which respondents could chose to contribute to New Zealand businesses from afar.

680 respondents [17.9%] replied positively that they would leverage their expertise into New Zealand boards. This willingness to contribute can benefit not only technology businesses, through the appointment of board members with target market and domain expertise, but also non-tech New Zealand business seeking to bring digital technology skills, expertise and capability onto their boards.

Figure 4.0 Interested in board roles: sector experience



Source: Future Aspirations survey, responded Yes to Leveraging your experience into New Zealand Board and Advisory positions n=680

*[New Zealand Boards and Frontier Firms](#), Productivity Commission September 2020

SPOTLIGHT: GOVERNANCE

International experience is highly valued on boards

“We believe that having a diversity of thought and experience around board tables adds great value and richness to board discussions and decision-making. Overseas experience is one good way to introduce new ways of thinking, different experiences and knowledge of specific markets and countries. Technology is a sector that is fast-moving and often moves quickly into international markets and there are likely to be strong positive benefits for some board members having direct experience from overseas. The IoD has a number of members who reside overseas gaining experience in those markets, and ensuring they retain their knowledge of what is relevant for governance in New Zealand. And this combination offers great value to boards.”

Kirsten Patterson, CEO Institute of Directors New Zealand

Tradify - how an outside industry global perspective benefits a high growth tech business

Used by 25,000+ tradies & built in New Zealand, Tradify's all-in-one job management app saves hours of admin. The unique, end-to-end app is designed especially for trades businesses. It simplifies customer enquiry management, quote creation, job scheduling, job management, invoicing, and payments. The company's mission is to help tradespeople reduce their admin time and get their nights and weekends back.

With a solid base of New Zealand and Australian trades customers behind it, Tradify had expanded into the United Kingdom three years earlier, and was growing fast. The company secured \$10M Series-A investment early in 2021 and Tradify's CEO Michael Steckler contacted Kea seeking connections with specific expertise in trades in the UK, with a view to potentially bringing new members onto the Tradify board. As a tech executive with extensive experience in high growth companies in the US, UK and New Zealand, Michael was seeking someone with trades experience and deep knowledge of the UK market to help guide the approach to the UK expansion.

Kea introduced Michael to community member Anne Timpany, a Kiwi trades entrepreneur and recent returner to New Zealand who achieved global acclaim for her UK-based business.

During her 16 years in the UK Anne co-founded and built-up a large-scale trades business, receiving recognition including winning the prestigious National NatWest Everywoman Award in 2017, being named in the 2018 Great British Entrepreneur Awards and making F:Entrepreneur's list of top female entrepreneurs. She is also a Freeman of the City of London and was a Liveryman in the Worshipful Company of Plumbers, one of London's oldest liversies.

Michael says Anne's trades experience and market knowledge will help the company turn their philosophy of helping tradies make a life, not just a living, into reality for even more trades business owners.

"We had begun a search for a board member that had experience in the trades as well as the ability to hold an innate understanding of our customers and their challenges. Anne's understanding of how a trades business is run will really help to ensure we are building the best product for our customers' needs."

Learn more about [Tradify](#)

SPOTLIGHT: CONNECTING TO TALENT

Employer flexibility is valued

In response to the feedback from the Future Aspirations survey [3.4] on how Kea could best help the offshore community considering returning to New Zealand, a pilot talent introduction service was launched in November 2021. A jobs board and resource centre are due Q1 and Q2 2022 respectively. Shoulder Tap is Kea's talent introduction service, designed to connect Kiwi overseas with opportunities in New Zealand.

As part of the Shoulder Tap pilot, Kea worked with a leading New Zealand technology company searching for returning senior software engineers.

The company changed policy in 2022, allowing for remote work for some employees from anywhere in New Zealand, and for some new employees to commence working up to 12 months in advance of their return whilst still overseas. This change recognises the significant shift in expectations of overseas knowledge workers about what remote and flexible work really means, and was well received by Kea community members Shoulder Tapped for the role.

“As you're aware, I am looking to move back to New Zealand in the future, and opportunities such as this, which would presumably allow a transition, are very attractive.”

Feedback from a London-based Kea community member and Senior Software Engineer shoulder tapped for the role

SPOTLIGHT: CONNECTING TO TALENT

Thinking outside tech for talent

Skills gaps can be addressed not only by those from the sector, but those with business growth and scale expertise gained in different environments.

The 2021 Digital Skills and Tech Talent Plan noted that employers and recruiters often think in terms of roles rather than skills and capabilities, and that thinking more about the granular skills in specific roles would help resolve the difficulty in filling some roles.

Leadership, go-to-market and business scale skills are highly transferable, and **experienced Kiwi leaders from sectors outside tech could prove invaluable in filling mission-critical senior positions.**

“I’m at a stage in my career now where I have learnt so much about successfully operating a large manufacturing business as part of a global corporate. I know how to scale businesses. I’ve been a digital leader. My team numbers well over 400 and my revenue responsibility is \$250M USD. When I return to New Zealand I’m keen on pivoting and joining a startup in a C level role to apply this knowledge to a different type and scale of business, but I don’t believe I’ll be able to get a foot in the door.”

Feedback from a Europe-based General Manager & Executive Plant Lead of a Fortune 100 conglomerate during shoulder tap conversation with Kea

Image source: NZ Story

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SPOTLIGHT: CONNECTING TO TALENT

Thinking differently about a global workforce

The Covid-19 pandemic has driven a fundamental shift to remote working and distributed teams across the international tech and services sectors. We hear a lot about an onshore skills shortage in tech, but Aotearoa firms are competing in a global market for talent and need to adapt to this new reality. In my view, many NZ businesses still exhibit a chronic proximity bias when hiring. I think there is a transformational opportunity ahead for Aotearoa tech and services firms to shift their hiring approach to running distributed, remote-first teams all around the world and particularly in our timezone. Now Kiwi firms can hire the best person in the world for every role, not only someone who lives within a 20km radius of the office. And this shift will also mean more opportunities for offshore Kiwi to work with Aotearoa's tech firms while still remaining overseas. At last, the "tyranny of distance" has been removed, the tech sector can embrace these new opportunities.

From Ben Reid, Founder, Memia, former Executive Director of Artificial Intelligence Forum of New Zealand / Te Kāhui Atamai Iahiko o Aotearoa

Findings and recommendations

4.0 Five key findings arising from the research

Image source: Unsplash

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FINDINGS

4.1 Kea's community includes a strong pool of internationally experienced tech sector professionals both offshore and planning to return

The 2021 Digital Tech Skills and Talent Plan highlights that within the talent pipeline for the industry, it is senior specialist skills that are the biggest gap. Kea's community skews more senior and experienced, including a strong pool of leaders and those with valuable skills such as research and development, both of which are positive contributors to innovation and growth within the sector.

A secondary benefit of such a pool of internationally experienced and senior Kiwi is the impact they can have on the next generation of digital technology workers. They can be invaluable coaches and mentors to those entering from school or tertiary study, those new in their careers and those mid-career seeking their next step, further addressing the pipeline issue noted at mid-career of slow career progression.

To support New Zealand's trade-based recovery, connecting businesses with Kiwi professionals represented in our largest trading partners will provide significant benefit to exporters. Through ongoing surveys Kea will continue to provide the most up to date information around the pipeline of returning Kiwi to further support the objectives of the Digital ITP and will continue to share this valuable information to benefit New Zealand businesses.

FINDINGS

4.2 An untapped opportunity exists to bring global experience and diversity onto New Zealand boards

Alongside the direct benefit from hiring experienced tech sector professionals into a business, Kea sees an untapped opportunity to bring global experience onto tech sector board and advisory roles. Companies would not only benefit from their global perspective on risk, scale and go-to-market knowledge, but would gain access to the diverse global network of contacts these people bring with them. With a gratifying 17.9% of Future Aspiration survey respondents indicating an interest in board roles, this presents an immediate opportunity.

In delivering longer term benefits for the New Zealand economy, the Productivity Commission also highlights the relationship between international experience on boards and productivity improvements for New Zealand firms.

Creating a clear pathway to educate, inform and connect Kea community members into board roles will have a material impact on New Zealand businesses, their productivity and growth. To this end, Kea and the Institute of Directors have begun conversations on ways we can partner to achieve this.

FINDINGS

4.3 The headwinds to experienced talent returning have increased over the past 24 months

Talented and experienced offshore Kiwi are reconsidering returning to New Zealand, resulting in a striking decrease in percentage of people wanting to move home permanently. This trend is more pronounced in tech respondents. New headwinds such as uncertainty related to vaccine certificate recognition process, visas for non-NZ partners of citizens, differences between countries' approaches to vaccine mandates and MIQ availability all contribute to the overall consideration about returning home.

Those who are returning are experiencing differences of perception and are unsure of the welcome they will receive. In addition, New Zealand employers appear to continue to favour proximity, seem slower to adopt global trends of remote working, particularly for knowledge workers, and returners find it tough to position their international experience.

As borders reopen and MIQ is phased out, clear and frequent communication will be critical to overcome perception that these headwinds continue to exist. Better sharing of real time information and sentiment and supporting initiatives such as the Tech Story can help overcome headwinds. From a talent standpoint focusing on case studies from businesses that have brought in offshore talent which has delivered significant business upside will help shift perception.

FINDINGS

4.4 Returning Kiwi need support to successfully land back in New Zealand and fill much needed tech sector roles

The proportion of Kea's community that have lived overseas for >16 years has implications for the information they seek on return, the strength of their personal networks within New Zealand and where they start looking for jobs.

Think back to the New Zealand of 2006 - Xero and Rocket Lab had just been founded, there was no Vend, no Pushpay, no global financial crisis. The idea that tech hubs would spring up in the likes of Gisborne and Queenstown was far from anyone's mind.

The New Zealand of today has an explosion in tech companies, a strong flow of capital and investment and tech is now in the top 3 export sectors. The New Zealand business landscape has changed considerably since most tech sector respondents left NZ and returning Kiwi need help to make sense of the 'new New Zealand'. They also need the confidence that New Zealand employers will understand and value their offshore experience, a point which is the source of anxiety and some frustration.

"I came back for a trip to NZ, and was impressed with the quality of startups and tech ecosystem."

Tech sector respondent to Kea audience research

It is crucial to provide the right resources, knowledge and networks to Kiwi returning home. Kea is recognising this by building out a suite of talent products including resources to support the needs of Kea community members. Kea also hosts networking events, webinars and meetups around the world to connect returning Kiwi with each other, and with opportunities back home.

FINDINGS

4.5 Technology businesses are in a unique position to overcome the headwinds

The headwinds to returning we see in the most recent data are real, but will diminish over time as vaccine requirements become more clear and isolation is rapidly phased out. To help close the gap and to take advantage of the opportunity to connect now, technology businesses are in a unique and exciting position to make the jump and access a truly global workforce.

Kea's data shows just how valued flexibility from employers is, and how thinking outside the box for tech leadership roles can open up a whole new pool of experienced global leaders.

The global trend to remote working can offset the headwinds of today. It takes time to wrap up a decade or more overseas and work on your return to New Zealand. By providing the opportunity to transition into a role whilst still overseas, tech businesses can access and engage a new pool of skilled people.

FINDINGS

Summary

Kea's community of offshore and returning Kiwi can play an important role in contributing to and growing New Zealand's tech sector, whether they return to New Zealand, or choose to remain offshore.

It's crucial for tech and export businesses, industry and Kea to collaborate, share findings and highlight opportunities on how to engage and recruit highly skilled and experienced offshore and returning Kiwi.

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For the purposes of this report analysis was carried out on Kea’s community surveys conducted throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. These surveys were Welcome Home [August 2020], Future Aspirations [April-June 2021] and Border Reopening [December 2021-January 2022]. Respondents to each survey had the option to select a sector and subsector that best represents where they have the most work experience.

Right now there is no commonly agreed definition of the “tech sector”. MBIE and NZTech agreed to adopt the following definition of the Digital Technologies sector: **a digital technology business is a business whose primary purpose is to both create and sell digital technology products, services or solutions**. Whilst Kea’s sectors do not directly align with the statistical definition of the sector, they are consistent across all three reports and form the basis for the analysis.

Data relating to respondents from sectors categorised as tech is compared to data from all other respondents, to identify differences and similarities in the demographics; intent to return to New Zealand; sentiment, skills and needs of tech sector respondents. In all cases blanks were excluded from data.

APPENDICES

Definitions - sector and subsector

For the purpose of this report, subsectors coloured orange are included in the data for the broader technology sector and digital-related role definition including subsectors crossing into creative industries. The same sector and subsector questions were included in Welcome Home, Future Aspirations and Border Reopening surveys.

Agribusiness

Dairy
Farming/Agriculture
Fishing
Forestry
Horticulture
Mining
Viticulture

Arts & Creative

Architecture/Design
Art
Journalism
Marketing/Digital
Music
Radio
Television/Film

Consumer Goods & Retail

Consumer Electronics
Cosmetics & Health
E-Commerce
Fashion & Apparel
Food / FMCG
Furniture
Luxury Goods and Jewellery
Packaging and containers

Financial Services

Accounting
Banking
Capital and Investment
Insurance

Food & Beverage

Alcoholic Beverages
Alternative Foods (e.g. plants-based proteins)
Dairy Products
Health Foods & Dietary Supplements
Honey
Meat (Red meat and poultry)
Non-Alcoholic Beverages
Pet Food
Processed Foods
Produce
Seafood (incl. Aquaculture)

Healthcare

Dentistry
Dietitian
Health management or administration
Medical practice
Pharmaceuticals
Physiotherapy
Psychology
Residential /Aged Care services
Veterinarian

APPENDICES

Definitions - sector and subsector

Infrastructure & Resources

Building & Construction
Electricity/Energy
Oil & Gas
Renewable Energies
Telecommunications
Transportation & Logistics
Water & Wastewater
Systems

Manufacturing

Animal Care
Astrospace
Automotive
Aviation
Consumer Products
Hardware/Electronics
Industrial Equipment
Marine
Metal & Plastic Manufacturing
Packaging
Pest Management
Pharmaceutical
Manufacturing
Wood
Wool & Textiles

Services

Academia, Education & Training
Business Operations
Defence Forces
Emergency Services
Government, Trade & Relations
Health & Cosmetic Services
Hospitality
Legal
Not for Profit/Social
Enterprise
Real Estate
Recruitment /HR
Tourism

Sport & Recreation

Coach/Management
Fitness
Professional Sports

Technology/Science

Agritech
AR/VR
Artificial Intelligence
Biotech
Cleantech
Creative Tech
Cyber Security
Edtech
Fintech
Healthtech
Legaltech
Nanotech
Robotics
Software & Platforms
Technology/Science research

APPENDICES

Definitions - role classification

Kea's Border Reopening survey included the following question which drew from the role classifications listed:

- What role classification best applies to you?

Of those answering 'Other', the most common additional classification was 'retired'.

Account Management and Sales
Administration / Office Support
Traditional Advertising / Marketing / PR
Digital Advertising / Marketing / PR
Arts and Media
Board and Advisory
Education
Engineering
Entrepreneur / Founder
Finance
Healthcare and Medical
HR & Learning

Leadership and General Management
Legal
Manufacturing
Retail
Services
Sport and Recreation
Technology: Information and communications (IT)
Technology: Security and Cyber
Technology: Software and Platforms
Trades
Transport and Logistics
Other

The classification of **Leadership and General Management** was further broken down into:

CEO
Other C-level
General Manager/Department Head
Other

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Abbreviations: WH = Welcome Home survey; FA = Future Aspirations survey; ES = Employer survey; BR = Border Reopening survey

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To the global Kea community, thank you for sharing your insights, without which this report would not have been possible.

Have questions about Kea? Please contact us.
<https://keanewzealand.com/contact/>

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