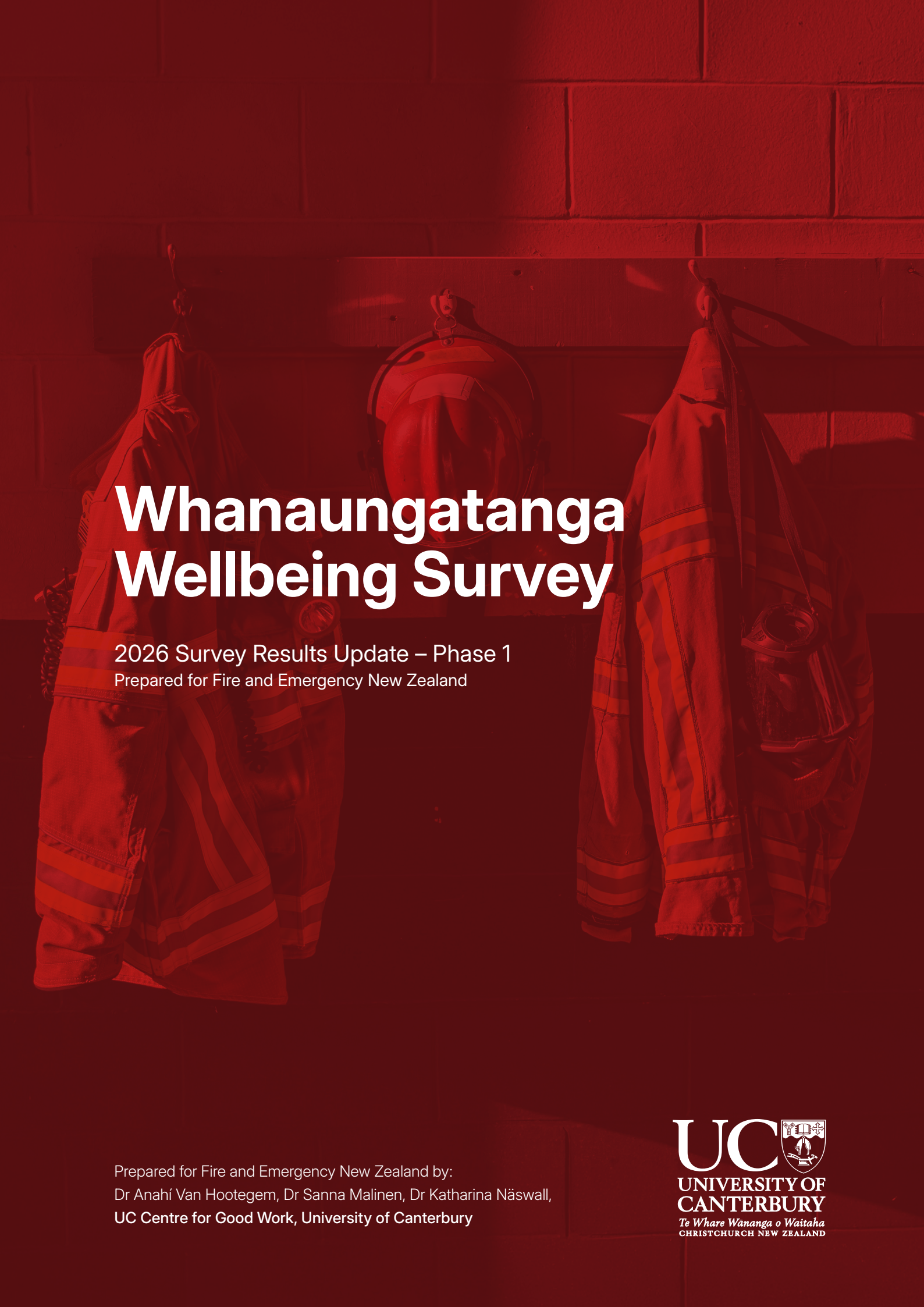




Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey

2026 Survey Results Update – Phase 1
Prepared for Fire and Emergency New Zealand

Prepared for Fire and Emergency New Zealand by:
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Executive Summary

Purpose and interpretation

The 2026 Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey provides a national update on employee mental health and wellbeing, working conditions, and organisational experiences across Fire and Emergency New Zealand (Fire and Emergency). The survey also contributes to the evaluation of the Whanaungatanga Programme in Te Hiku and the Communication Centres (Northern, Central, Southern; ComCen hereafter). This is the third round of evaluation of the Programme, with earlier surveys conducted in 2023 and 2024 (the 2024 survey only capturing those who participated in 2023).

A total of 1,811 employees participated in the 2026 survey, representing approximately 59% of eligible personnel. Participants included 77% of uniformed personnel and 82% of ComCen employees. The response rate among non-uniformed employees was approximately 24%. Findings for non-uniformed staff should be interpreted cautiously, as the results for this staff group may not be representative.

It is noteworthy that the survey was conducted during significant organisational disruption, including proposed restructuring, collective bargaining and industrial action, alongside significant staffing, workload and infrastructure pressures. As these factors were present during data collection, the survey results regarding the Whanaungatanga programme may be difficult to separate from results related to the overall organisational context. Changes in the pilot group since earlier surveys therefore cannot exclusively be attributed to the intervention programme. The groups of employees who participated in the survey were also not identical at each survey time, and programme implementation varied between settings and initiatives. The findings show what employees reported, how different factors were related, and whether results were consistent with the programme's aims. However, due to the overall context, it is difficult to establish with certainty which changes are attributable to the Whanaungatanga programme and which to wider organisational factors.

This executive summary presents the main findings from the analysis completed to date. More detailed longitudinal and qualitative analysis will follow, including further examination of changes over time and the implementation and outcomes of the programme.

What is the overall picture?

The survey identified significant organisation-wide concerns alongside encouraging local and programme-related findings. Mental-health symptoms remained elevated but stable, while indicators of organisational trust, confidence, and intentions to remain with Fire and Emergency deteriorated more markedly. Experiences also differed meaningfully between employee groups.

Within this wider picture, the first pilot region Te Hiku compared favourably with other regions on several outcomes, while ComCen's first phase of implementation showed improvements in manager support, co-worker support, and some mental-health indicators. In survey comments, participants strongly endorsed the Whanaungatanga Programme and valued its emphasis on employee voice, relevance for their context, and creating connections between staff.

The findings support continued efforts to improve organisational systems and leadership practices, alongside continued development of the Whanaungatanga Programme.

What do the results of the overall organisation look like?

What are the organisation-wide findings?

It is important to note that the survey captures more than the Whanaungatanga Programme itself: it is also a broader check on organisational wellbeing, and 2026 findings point to a marked deterioration across the organisation as a whole. Across nearly every measure of organisational functioning, 2026 reversed some of the gains made between 2023 and 2024, noting that the 2024 survey was limited to participants who completed the 2023 baseline and consented to follow-up, whereas both 2023 and 2026 were open to the whole organisation. Rates of high perceived organisational support

fell sharply (managers: 39% in 2023 to 22% in 2026; staff: 15% in 2024 to 4% in 2026), alongside declines in perceptions of organisational competence (26% in 2024 to 10% in 2026), accountability (10% in 2024 to 3% in 2026), and psychological safety (29% in 2023, rising to 37% in 2024, before falling to 14% in 2026). Pride in membership rose from 71% in 2023 to 77% in 2024 before falling to 53% in 2026, and gratitude towards the organisation similarly rose from 21% to 28% before falling to 19%. A newly added measure, psychological contract violation — capturing the sense that the organisation

has broken its obligations to staff — was high for 74% of employees. Seventy per cent reported high cynicism towards the organisation, and 49% reported high intentions to leave. Against this backdrop, one positive finding stood out: perceived co-worker support remained strong and largely unaffected (86%), suggesting that the declines in other variables reflect how employees view the organisation, rather than a breakdown in relationships between colleagues.

Open-text comments provide further insight into these organisation-wide patterns. Across nearly 1,450 responses to open-ended survey questions, the most frequently raised concerns were staffing shortages and workload pressures, distrust in senior leadership, and dissatisfaction with pay and recognition. It is worth noting that career firefighters, as the largest respondent group, contributed the majority of these comments (around

70%); a fuller breakdown of open-text themes by employee group will be provided in the phase 2 detailed report. Many participants felt that wellbeing initiatives alone would be insufficient without accompanying structural change to staffing, communication, and leadership practices. Consistent with the quantitative findings, one theme stood out as a counterpoint: supportive colleagues and local managers were repeatedly

described as a protective buffer, helping employees cope despite frustration with the wider organisation. A further recurring theme was scepticism about whether the feedback provided through the survey would lead to visible action. Taken together, these findings suggest the 2026 decline is largely a story about the wider organisation, and that continued staff engagement may depend on visible follow-through on this feedback.

How do experiences differ across employee groups?

Throughout this section, employees are compared across six broad role groups, based on their uniformed/non-uniformed status and specific role at Fire and Emergency (see Table 1 for a full breakdown of who is included in each group).

ComCen employees experienced markedly poorer mental health when compared to other roles in the organisation. ComCen staff reported the highest rates of PTSD symptoms, depression, and anxiety, alongside the greatest exposure to potentially traumatic events (PTEs) over the past 12 months, when compared to other roles. This pattern was consistent across every mental health measure in the survey and represents the clearest and most substantial difference observed between role groups, reinforcing the case for continuation of the Whanaungatanga programme within ComCen. ComCen employees were also the most dissatisfied with their physical work environment, significantly more so than every other role group, consistent with qualitative feedback describing ComCen facilities as not fit for purpose, including concerns about co-location arrangements, environmental conditions, and lack of control over the physical workspace. Work-family conflict was also highest among ComCen employees of any role group, adding a further dimension to this pattern of elevated strain across multiple wellbeing measures. ComCen staff also reported the highest rate of burnout risk of any role group, with 82% scoring above the burnout risk threshold.

Career firefighters reported the lowest awareness of Fire and Emergency's long-term plans and direction, alongside the lowest sense of organisational accountability. They also reported the lowest levels of gratitude toward the organisation, and the lowest perceived support from both their managers and the organisation more broadly, of any group surveyed. Alongside this pattern of low organisational trust and connection, career firefighters also reported the second-highest rate of PTSD symptoms of all role groups, behind only ComCen employees. Career firefighters also reported the highest potentially hazardous alcohol use of any role group.

Uniformed Managers and Commanders stood out for reporting a distinct workload and time-pressure problem not shared by any other role: they were significantly less likely than all other groups to feel they had enough time to complete their work. Uniformed managers and commanders also reported struggling the most of any group to psychologically switch off from work once home, and reported high levels of emotional job demands, work-family conflict, and being troubled from having witnessed others engage in unethical acts, a level which was matched only by non-uniformed managers. This group also reported the second-highest rate of burnout risk of any role group (81%).

Uniformed staff in other roles reported low perceived preparedness to serve their community, psychological safety, and organisational competence, placing them, alongside career firefighters, among the two lowest-scoring uniformed groups on these core measures of organisational support.

Non-uniformed Managers reported job security as their single largest concern of any measure in the survey: their scores were tied-lowest of all role groups (alongside other non-uniformed staff). This pattern should be interpreted alongside the proposed organisational restructuring, which disproportionately affected non-uniformed roles. Non-uniformed managers also reported feeling the least supported by uniformed colleagues of any role group, alongside elevated levels of moral injury from witnessing unethical acts and higher turnover intentions, both comparable to levels reported by Uniformed Managers/Commanders and non-uniformed Other staff. Non-uniformed managers reported a comparably high rate of burnout risk (81%), on par with ComCen and Uniformed Other staff.

Non-uniformed staff in non-managerial roles also reported job security as a leading concern, with scores tied-lowest of all role groups alongside non-uniformed managers, which is consistent with the impact of the proposed restructuring during the survey period.

What work-related factors are linked with wellbeing and organisational attitudes?

Among career firefighters, support from managers* was the workplace factor most consistently linked with better mental health and life satisfaction, even when employees' exposure to PTEs was taken into account. The physical work environment, workload, emotional demands, competing role demands, lack of involvement, and feeling that the organisation had not met important commitments were also linked with multiple wellbeing outcomes.

A similar pattern emerged for how employees felt about the organisation

itself. Stronger feelings that the organisation had broken its obligations to staff were most closely linked to low organisational support, low psychological safety, a sense that the organisation doesn't take accountability, and feeling excluded from decisions. Distrust towards leadership was most closely tied to a lack of useful feedback on performance, a poor physical work environment, low psychological safety, and a sense that promotions were not handled fairly. By contrast, employees felt more emotionally connected and committed to the organisation when they experienced

strong support, felt safe to voice concerns, and received fair and regular feedback.

These findings support addressing harmful working conditions and strengthening leadership and management practices first and providing individual mental-health support as a complement to these measures. Individual support remains important, particularly for employees experiencing distress, but should not replace addressing harmful working conditions.

Whanaungatanga programme evaluation

Programme implementation varied across settings and initiatives. In Te Hiku, participants reported reduced momentum, inconsistent follow-through and concerns that some initiatives might not be sustained – echoing the sustainability and "tick box" concerns raised in both Te Hiku and ComCen qualitative feedback more broadly. Programme activity in ComCen began later, in 2025, and interventions remain at different stages of implementation. Employees had not all experienced the same interventions, and some initiatives may not have been in place long enough for their effects to be visible in this survey.

Despite these constraints, participants generally supported the programme's aims and perceived value. Eighty-six per cent of Te Hiku respondents and 87% of ComCen respondents said they would recommend the interventions for broader organisational use – with ComCen expressing stronger endorsement despite reporting substantially poorer wellbeing overall. Participants described the programme as credible and authentic, and as one of the few mechanisms through which they felt heard and able to influence decisions. Open-text comments from ComCen employees suggest this is partly because the programme bypasses layers of organisational hierarchy and involves

people with direct decision-making authority, allowing concerns to be acted on more quickly than through standard channels. Participants particularly valued having a genuine voice, locally relevant interventions, improved connection between managers and staff, and the programme's ability to progress issues across conventional organisational hierarchies. However, they also expressed uncertainty about whether the interventions and organisational support for the programme would be sustained.

What are the programme-related findings?

Te Hiku employees reported significantly higher co-worker support (92% vs. 87%), job satisfaction (50% vs. 41%), and post-traumatic growth (33% vs. 24%) than employees in comparison regions, alongside lower organisational cynicism (69% vs. 76%) and lower turnover intentions (40% vs. 48%). Concerns remained about employee involvement, communication and wider organisational conditions, and participants consistently

distinguished their positive view of the programme from these broader concerns.

In ComCen, perceived manager support increased from around 45% in 2023 to 63% in 2026, and co-worker support increased from 78% to 84%. Anxiety, probable PTSD, hazardous alcohol use, and work-to-family conflict also improved over this period. At the same time, organisational cynicism, intentions to leave, and presenteeism worsened,

fewer people felt safe to speak up, and depression symptoms remained very high throughout. This pattern suggests that local relationships and some wellbeing outcomes can improve even while wider organisational conditions remain difficult. However, because programme activity in ComCen only began in 2025, the 2023–2026 change cannot yet be confidently attributed to the programme.

*For career firefighters, "manager" referred specifically to their Group Manager or District Manager (now Assistant District Commander and District Commander, following the post-survey title changes). This analysis does not distinguish between different types of manager as the source of that support; respondents answered with whichever manager applied to them in mind.

What are the overall conclusions about the programme?

Taken together, the findings provide encouraging support for the Whanaungatanga Programme's relevance, value to participants and continued development, even if some of the quantitative measures do not yet clearly show the desired change in Te Hiku and ComCen. Participants generally endorsed the programme and valued its emphasis on employee voice, local relationships, manager engagement and developing solutions with employees. Qualitative feedback described the programme as credible and authentic, with some participants identifying it as one of the few mechanisms through which they felt heard and able to influence decisions. These perceptions are supported by favourable

findings in Te Hiku and by improvements in manager support, co-worker support, and some wellbeing indicators in ComCen.

The available evidence is consistent with the programme making a positive contribution to local conditions, although the survey and comparison data cannot attribute these outcomes to the programme with certainty. Equally, the deterioration in wider organisational indicators should not be interpreted as evidence of programme failure. Participants frequently distinguished their positive views of the programme from concerns about staffing, remuneration, employment relations, proposed restructuring and infrastructure, which sit outside the programme's authority.

The programme is well positioned to strengthen employee voice, local relationships, manager visibility and the development of locally relevant solutions. The programme can also identify and raise wider organisational risks; responsibility for resolving those risks must sit with leaders who have the appropriate authority and resources. Continued evaluation should examine whether interventions were delivered consistently, whether they achieved their intended results, and whether favourable changes were sustained over time.

What does this mean for the programme going forward?

ComCen represents the clearest priority area for continued and expanded programme investment. ComCen employees reported the poorest outcomes of any role group across nearly every mental health and wellbeing measure examined in this survey, the greatest exposure to PTEs, and the highest dissatisfaction with their physical work environment. To place these findings in context, ComCen's 2026 rates of probable PTSD (27%), depression (54%), and anxiety (39%) remain substantially higher than those reported in comparable research: a large Canadian study using the same screening measures among emergency call-takers and dispatchers found rates of 18.3%, 33.2%, and 18.0% respectively¹, and a more recent international systematic review and meta-analysis of call-handlers and dispatchers reported rates of 17.8%, 28.2%, and 17.2%²; in both cases well below what ComCen employees report here. This is in line with ComCen's 2023 rates, since published in the peer-reviewed literature³. Overall, these findings suggest ComCen's mental health outcomes remain elevated relative to international findings. This need is echoed in ComCen's own qualitative feedback, which described a

long-standing sense of being overlooked and under-resourced relative to other parts of the organisation. It is also worth noting that ComCen outcomes changed little between 2023 and 2024, a period before ComCen had been included in any Whanaungatanga intervention; some positive changes have since emerged in 2026, following ComCen's inclusion in the programme from 2025 onward. Taken together, the scale of need in ComCen relative to these benchmarks, combined with participants' own strong endorsement of the programme there and some of the positive changes observed, suggests this is the area where continued investment is most likely to have a meaningful impact.

Career firefighters reported the lowest levels of overall organisational trust indicators and connection of any role group, alongside the second-highest rate of PTSD symptoms; uniformed managers and commanders reported a distinct workload and time-pressure problem, alongside the greatest difficulty of any group in psychologically switching off from work.

Sustainability and momentum emerged as significant themes in both Te Hiku and ComCen qualitative feedback and

represent a key consideration for the programme's future. Participants in both groups expressed concern that interventions could lose momentum over time, become reduced to symbolic or "tick box" exercises, or create a dependency on the programme itself rather than fostering lasting cultural change embedded within the organisation more broadly. This is most pronounced in Te Hiku, where evaluation ratings have declined since 2024, which is why the recommendations below distinguishes between restoring momentum in Te Hiku and continuing to deepen the more recently established ComCen work. This suggests that securing visible, sustained organisational commitment to the programme, and communicating that commitment clearly to staff, may be as important to its ongoing success as the design of the interventions themselves.

Another, distinct pain point concerns non-uniformed staff, who reported substantially lower perceptions of job security than every uniformed group.

Priority areas for Fire and Emergency

Beyond the programme itself, staff feedback points to five priority areas for wider organisational attention:

- Resourcing (staffing, workload, equipment, and fleet),
- The employment environment (recognition and remuneration, bargaining, and job security),
- The leadership environment (trust, psychological safety, accountability, and communication),
- The relational environment (respect, recognition, and being heard),
- The physical work environment.

These areas fall largely outside Whanaungatanga's direct influence but addressing them – particularly through greater transparency in communication, consistent leadership support and training, and stronger performance feedback – is likely to be an important complement to the programme's continued work.

To make this actionable, Fire and Emergency is advised to focus on:

Organisational systems

- Identify and address workplace risks relating to staffing, workload, infrastructure, employee involvement, competing role expectations and organisational change.
- Assign clear responsibility for risks that the Whanaungatanga Programme does not have the authority or resources to resolve.
- Strengthen consultation and communication during change and ensure employee concerns reach decision-makers with the authority and resources to address them.
- Regularly monitor organisational trust, employees' confidence in speaking up, accountability and intentions to leave, and treat these as significant organisational risks.

Leadership and management

- Invest in leadership capability development and support, with clear accountabilities and development pathway.
- Strengthen manager visibility, relationship-based leadership and the quality of feedback provided to employees.
- Give managers sufficient time and clear responsibility for engaging with their people.
- Address workload and competing role expectations, particularly among uniformed managers and commanders.
- Monitor the consistency of leadership practices and require transparent communication and visible follow-through.

Individual support

Maintain accessible clinical, peer and individual wellbeing support tailored to the needs of different employee groups. Individual support should complement, rather than replace, action on harmful working conditions and leadership practices.

The Whanaungatanga Programme

- Continue and deepen the ComCen work, given the scale of need identified and the positive impact already emerging there.
- Keep monitoring implementation in Te Hiku, to help sustain early gains and support the potential for these interventions to benefit not just Te Hiku, but other regions and leadership more widely.
- Consolidate and embed current interventions.
- Continue developing interventions with the employees who will be affected by them, while strengthening ownership, monitoring and accountability for follow-through.
- Communicate clearly with participants about the programme's continuity, in response to qualitative feedback indicating uncertainty about whether the programme would be sustained over time.
- Clarify for participants what the programme can directly influence, what it can identify and raise, and what requires action elsewhere in the organisation.
- Use survey findings to guide interventions for different employee groups and identify approaches that may be suitable for adaptation or wider use.
- Where the programme expands, locally-tailored workshops are recommended as a starting point, both to tailor interventions to local needs and to build staff involvement in decision-making – which this survey found to be consistently low.

To date, this involvement gap has not shifted substantially, and part of the reason may be that Whanaungatanga continues to be perceived by many staff as an initiative separate from Fire and Emergency's own senior leadership, rather than something the organisation itself owns and drives. For the programme to close this gap, authentic and visible ownership from the Senior Leadership Team may be a precondition for restoring trust and relationships at the organisational level, alongside continued, adequately resourced support for existing intervention groups and ongoing organisation-wide monitoring and evaluation.

Conclusion

The survey identifies significant workplace and retention risks that cannot be addressed by the Whanaungatanga Programme alone. It also shows encouraging local changes and strong participant support for the programme. Fire and Emergency should continue strengthening the programme while taking wider organisational action on workload, staffing, infrastructure, employee involvement, communication and leadership. Individual mental-health services remain important but should support rather than replace action on the conditions affecting people at work.

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Background

The Whanaungatanga Programme is a Fire and Emergency initiative aimed at improving the psychological wellbeing of career firefighters, operational commanders, and communications centre employees. The programme seeks to strengthen connection, trust, and a shared sense of belonging across the organisation. The programme was initially funded through Movember, the Distinguished Gentleman's Ride Veterans, and the First Responders Mental Health Grant Program and is now additionally supported by Fire and Emergency.

The initial phase of the programme focused on career firefighters and operational commanders in the Te Hiku region (Auckland and Whangārei), where pilot organisational interventions were implemented (see Table 9). In response to findings from earlier time points showing relatively high levels of psychological distress among ComCen employees – including elevated depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, and probable PTSD – programme activities and evaluation efforts were extended to ComCen as part of the programme in 2025 (see Table 10). Please see Whanaungatanga Programme Evaluation section for more specific information on the intervention programme and participant experiences.

The Time Point 1 (T1) survey, conducted in March 2023, served as a baseline assessment prior to intervention implementation. The Time Point 2 (T2) survey, conducted in March 2024, was limited to participants who had completed the baseline survey and consented to follow-up contact, and evaluated early changes following intervention implementation in Te Hiku. The Time Point 3 (T3) survey, conducted between 30 March and 8 May 2026, was reopened to all currently employed Fire and Emergency New Zealand (Fire and Emergency) personnel, including both operational and non-operational staff, allowing for broader organisational comparisons across occupational groups and regions. Auckland University of Technology (AUT) led the survey evaluations at T1 and T2, including quantitative surveys and qualitative evaluation activities. The University of Canberra, appointed by Movember as the external evaluator, additionally conducted broader evaluation activities across the international

Movember-funded programme portfolio. The University of Canterbury (UC) was subcontracted to undertake the T3 survey evaluation in 2026, including the collection and analysis of quantitative survey data.

The Whanaungatanga Programme has been endorsed by Fire and Emergency's Executive Leadership Team (ELT), as well as the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union (NZPFU), the Auckland and Whangārei Local Union Committees (ALC, WLC), and the Fire and Emergency Commanders Association (FECA).

It is important to interpret the findings of the 2026 survey within the broader organisational context in which the data were collected. During the survey period, Fire and Emergency was proposing significant organisational restructuring and was engaged in ongoing collective bargaining negotiations with the NZPFU, accompanied by industrial action and substantial organisational discussion about future structures and employment conditions. The 2026 survey is the first to be undertaken during a period of

restructuring and industrial action. Such events have the potential to influence employees' perceptions of leadership, organisational support, trust, job security, and broader workplace experiences. As a result, changes observed between the 2023, 2024, and 2026 time points should be interpreted within the context of these broader organisational developments, alongside the ongoing implementation of the Whanaungatanga Programme.

The purpose of this report is to document the methodology, survey content, data processing procedures, and findings associated with the T3 survey, while also providing continuity with the earlier T1 and T2 evaluations. In addition, this report provides initial recommendations to Fire and Emergency.

The Whanaungatanga programme uses a positive participatory approach that draws on insights from Fire and Emergency personnel gathered through organisational change workshops and co-design activities.

Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey

The purpose of the Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey is to gain insight into employees' psychological wellbeing, workplace experiences, and perceptions of organisational support, and if, and to what degree, a relationship exists between these factors. An additional purpose is to evaluate how these outcomes may change across time alongside the implementation of organisational wellbeing initiatives.

The baseline survey in 2023:

- Assessed baseline levels of perceived organisational support among uniformed and non-uniformed personnel and managers. Overall, support from co-workers was generally perceived as relatively high, while support from managers and particularly from the organisation itself was more variable and often lower.
- Assessed baseline levels of psychological wellbeing and mental ill health indicators, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, resilience, post-traumatic growth, and work-related wellbeing outcomes. Rates of psychological distress were higher than those typically observed in the general population, with ComCen employees appearing particularly affected across several wellbeing indicators.
- Examined the relationships between organisational factors and a range of wellbeing, behavioural, and organisational outcomes, including presenteeism, extra-role performance, organisational commitment, cynicism, and turnover intention, while accounting for demographic, occupational, and potentially traumatic event (PTE) exposure variables. Findings indicated strong associations between organisational experiences and employee wellbeing outcomes.

The follow-up survey conducted in 2024 aimed to:

- Examine changes in perceived organisational support, wellbeing, mental ill health indicators, behavioural outcomes, and organisational attitudes between the baseline and follow-up survey wave.
- Evaluate early changes associated with the implementation of the pilot Whanaungatanga Programme interventions within the Te Hiku region.

The T3 survey conducted in 2026 aimed to:

- Continue monitoring organisational experiences, wellbeing, and psychological health outcomes across Fire and Emergency employees following the ongoing evaluation and expansion of the Whanaungatanga Programme.
- Extend the evaluation to ComCen following the expansion of programme activities into these settings.
- Examine organisational and wellbeing outcomes within the broader organisational context present during the 2026 survey period, including proposed organisational restructuring and collective bargaining processes.

Survey development

The Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey was originally developed by the AUT research team in collaboration with a technical advisory group from Fire and Emergency, the late Professor Robert Eisenberger, and Dr Zihan Liu from the University of Houston. The survey was designed to assess organisational experiences, psychosocial work factors, behavioural outcomes, and psychological wellbeing among Fire and Emergency personnel, with particular consideration of the unique demands associated with first responder work and exposure to PTEs.

Survey testing

For T3, UC retained the core structure and many of the measures used in the earlier T1 and T2 surveys to support longitudinal comparability across time points. At the same time, some survey sections were shortened to reduce survey length and participant burden and to create space for additional measures relevant to the evolving priorities of the evaluation.

Decisions about which scales could be shortened were informed by findings from the earlier time points, including which constructs appeared most important in explaining key organisational and wellbeing outcomes, as well as whether longer scales could be reduced without

losing important aspects of the construct being measured.

Shortening some scales allowed the inclusion of additional measures that were considered important for understanding workplace experiences and wellbeing within the current organisational context. In addition, earlier survey findings showed that organisational experiences such as organisational support, accountability, and cynicism were strongly related to employee wellbeing outcomes. Building on this, the T3 survey aimed to further examine the antecedents which may shape these organisational perceptions and experiences. These included constructs related to one's job content, such as workload, autonomy, emotional job demands, and performance feedback, as well as constructs considered particularly relevant in the current climate, including job security, psychological contract violation, and moral injury.

The survey and related processes underwent ongoing testing and refinement throughout survey development. For T3, decisions regarding the topics included in the survey, as well as adjustments to survey wording, structure, and administration procedures, were made in close consultation with the Whanaungatanga Programme team and

Lisa Mackay, who coordinated the earlier T1 and T2 surveys at AUT.

Approvals

Ethical approval for the original Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey was granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 17 January 2023 (AUTEC reference number 22/320). An amendment extending the survey to all Fire and Emergency employees was approved by AUTEC on 2 February 2023. A subsequent amendment for additional T2 evaluation questions was approved on 16 January 2024.

For T3, ethical approval for the 2026 Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey was granted by the University of Canterbury Human Research Ethics Committee (UC HREC) on 2 March 2026 (HREC reference number: HREC 2026/03). An amendment relating to revisions of survey items and clarification of survey distribution procedures was approved by UC HREC on 20 March 2026. In addition, the project underwent Māori ethics consultation and received approval through the Ngāi Tahu Consultation and Engagement Group (NTCEG).

Survey implementation

2023 and 2024

The Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey is a longitudinal project consisting of three time points. T1 (2023) surveyed Fire and Emergency employees across operational and non-operational roles, with a particular focus on career firefighters and commanders in the Te Hiku pilot region. T2 (2024) followed up participants from T1 who had consented to be recontacted. Detailed information regarding the implementation and procedures for T1 and T2 is available in previous technical reports.

2026

For T3 (2026), the target population included all Fire and Emergency employees across operational and non-operational roles. Participation was not conditional on having participated in previous time points. Invitations to participate in the survey were distributed by the Fire and Emergency communications team and included a Participant Information Sheet and a link to an electronic consent survey.

Following completion of the consent survey, participants received a personalised survey link. This process enabled consent information and survey responses to be stored separately, supporting participant confidentiality while allowing survey responses to be linked across datasets where consent had been provided. Participation was voluntary throughout.

The survey was tested and refined throughout March 2026. The full invitation to participate was sent on 30 March 2026 to all eligible personnel (N = 3,049). The survey was originally scheduled to close on 27 April 2026 but was extended until 8 May 2026 to accommodate employees in the North Island who were responding to Cyclone Vaianu during the intended response period.

Two staggered reminders were sent by the UC research team to participants who had completed the consent survey but had not yet completed the main survey. In addition, the Whanaungatanga project team distributed targeted reminders to regions and occupational groups where response rates were lagging.

Structure of the report

This report provides an overview of key findings from the 2026 T3 Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey. Unlike the earlier reports, which focused primarily on baseline prevalence estimates and early follow-up comparisons, the current report places greater emphasis on understanding patterns across the three time points and examining organisational, psychosocial, and wellbeing factors within the broader organisational context in which the 2026 survey was conducted.

In addition, the report provides initial recommendations to Fire and Emergency based on the findings.

The report begins by presenting findings related to psychological wellbeing and mental health outcomes, followed by organisational experiences, workplace factors, and organisational attitudes. Where relevant, comparisons with findings from the 2023 and 2024 time points are included to provide context for interpreting changes across time. The report also includes an update on findings from the Te Hiku pilot region, alongside findings related

to ComCen following the expansion of Whanaungatanga Programme activities into these settings.

In addition, the report presents findings from programme evaluation questions and open-text survey responses to provide further insight into employees' experiences and perceptions of organisational changes and wellbeing initiatives. The report concludes with recommendations on next steps to prioritise.

For further details on individual survey indicators and measures, please refer to the Glossary of Survey Indicators.

Interpretation of the survey findings

The figures presented in this report are based on aggregated data available from the 2023, 2024, and 2026 time points. As only aggregated data from the earlier time points were available at the time of writing this report, comparisons across time points reflect overall average levels and prevalence estimates within each survey wave rather than changes within the exact same group of participants. As a result, differences observed across time points should be interpreted with the understanding that the composition of participants may have varied between the three survey periods.

Prevalence and means

Prevalence refers to the percentage of employees reporting a particular outcome or experience. For many indicators in the earlier AUT reports, responses were grouped into "low" and "high" categories using predefined cut-off scores. Reported prevalence estimates reflect the percentage of employees whose scores fell within the "high" category for a given outcome or experience. For comparability with the earlier time points and reports, this approach was retained for many of the key indicators included in the current report. However, for several of the newer workplace and organisational measures introduced at T3, results are also presented using averages (means) and standard deviations. These measures provide additional information about the overall level and spread of responses across employees and can help identify more subtle differences and patterns that may not be fully captured when responses are grouped only into "high" and "low" categories.

Table 1. Overview of Role Groups

Role group	Who is included
Uniformed Manager / Commander	Operational Managers, Region Managers, and other uniformed Managers, including GM, DM, CRM*
Uniformed Firefighter	Firefighters, including Station Officers and Senior Station Officers
Uniformed ComCen	Staff working in ComCen, any rank
Uniformed Other	Volunteer Support Officers, Community Risk Management staff, Engineers, Trainers, and other uniformed roles
Non-Uniformed Tier 1-4 Manager	Managers with direct reports (Tier 1-3 or Tier 4)
Non-Uniformed Other	Non-uniformed staff without direct reports (team members or Tier 1-4 individual contributors)

**Since the survey, the Group Manager (GM) role has been renamed Assistant District Commander (ADC), and the District Manager (DM) role has been renamed District Commander (DC).*

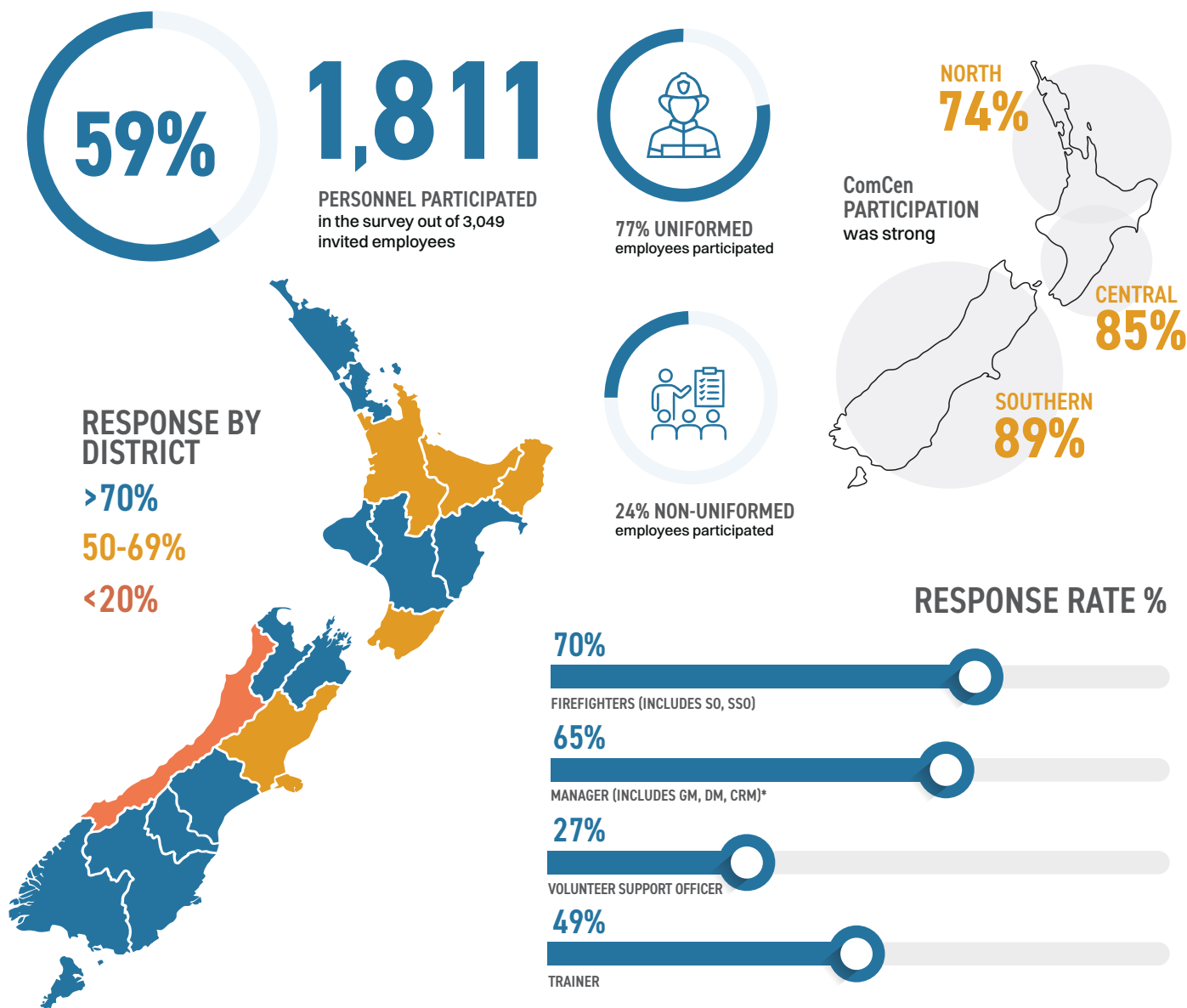
Changes between 2023 and 2024, and 2026

Because only aggregated data from the 2023 and 2024 time points were available at the time of writing this report, statistical testing of differences between the earlier time points and the 2026 survey wave was not possible. Comparisons across time points should therefore be interpreted with caution. Statistical testing was conducted for comparisons between groups within the 2026 survey wave, and differences are only highlighted in the report where these were statistically significant (i.e., where the results suggest the observed difference is likely to reflect a real difference between groups). Where relevant, results in this report are also broken down by role, to explore whether experiences and outcomes differ across different parts of the organisation.

Respondents were first asked whether they were currently in a uniformed or non-uniformed role at Fire and Emergency New Zealand. Depending on their answer, they were then asked a follow-up question about their specific uniformed role or their specific non-uniformed role. These two questions were combined to group respondents into six broad role categories, summarised in Table 1.

This report focuses primarily on role differences for the newly included constructs introduced at T3. For constructs that were included in previous survey waves, readers are referred to the Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey: 2023 Detailed Report and 2024 Survey Results Update⁴, where detailed breakdowns by role of the key differences highlighted in those years can be found in the appendix tables.

Participant Distribution



Overall, 1,811 personnel participated in the survey out of 3,049 invited employees, resulting in an overall response rate of approximately 59%. Response rates varied across organisational groups and regions but were generally moderate to high, indicating good engagement with the survey.

The response rates among uniformed staff reached 77%, while non-uniformed staff were less represented with 24% participating in the survey. The different regions have similar response rates, with higher-than-average participation in Te Kei and lower rates

in Te Ihu. Participation was particularly strong within the ComCen, with response rates of 74% in the North ComCen, 85% in the Central ComCen, and 89% in the South ComCen.

The strong response among uniformed and ComCen employees indicates high engagement with the survey and provides a sound basis for understanding the experiences of these groups. Confidence in the findings is greatest for groups with higher participation, namely uniformed personnel and ComCen staff, given the larger proportion of these groups who completed the survey. Findings relating to non-uniformed personnel, by contrast, should be interpreted with greater caution, as a smaller proportion of this workforce participated.

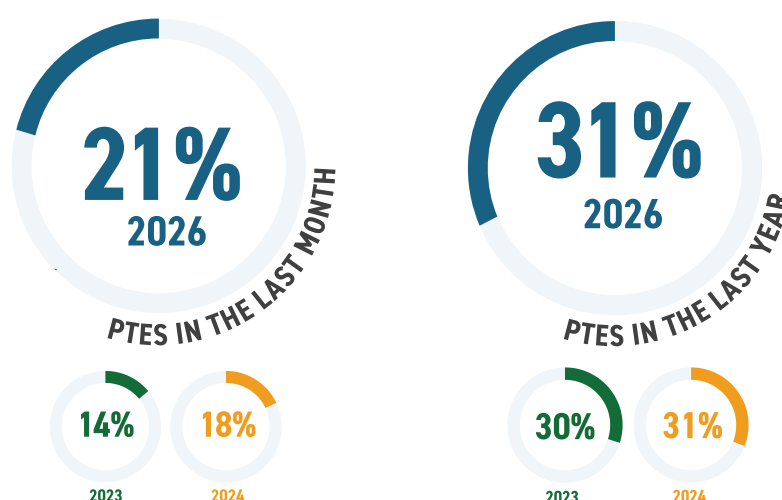
*Since the survey the group manager (GM) naming has changed to assistant district commander (ADC) and District Manager (DM) has changed to District Commander (DC).

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health is an important component of overall wellbeing and exists on a continuum ranging from positive wellbeing to severe psychological distress. There is substantial evidence showing that first responders are at increased risk of mental ill health compared to the general population, partly due to repeated exposure to PTEs. Findings from the 2023 baseline survey aligned with this wider research, with Fire and Emergency personnel reporting elevated rates of several mental health concerns.

At the same time, research suggests that organisational experiences and workplace conditions may help shape how employees cope with these demands. In this section, we provide an update on indicators related to psychological wellbeing and mental health, including depression, anxiety, PTSD, alcohol use, emotional numbing, life satisfaction, job satisfaction, resilience, and post-traumatic growth. Results are presented for the overall survey sample unless otherwise stated. For more detailed background information on mental health outcomes within Fire and Emergency and comparisons with broader first responder research, readers are referred to the 2023 and 2024 Whanaungatanga survey reports.

Figure 1. Prevalence of High Self-Reported Potentially Traumatic Event Exposure, 2023-2024-2026



2023 and 2024 summary

The 2023 baseline survey identified elevated rates of several mental ill health indicators among Fire and Emergency personnel compared to the general population, including symptoms of depression, anxiety, and probable PTSD. Findings were broadly consistent with international first responder research and highlighted particularly elevated levels of psychological distress among ComCen employees.

Overall, mental health and wellbeing indicators remained relatively stable between 2023 and 2024, although some modest improvements were observed in probable PTSD, potentially hazardous alcohol use, and work-to-family conflict.

Despite these improvements, rates of mental ill health remained elevated compared to the general population. They were, however, consistent with international rates of mental ill health among first responders.

A detailed account of these baseline results, along with associations with PTEs and organisational factors, are presented in the Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey 2023 Detailed Report and the Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey 2024 Results Update.

2026 update

Differences between the **pilot region (Te Hiku)** and **comparison regions** were also examined. Career firefighters and commanders in the Te Hiku region reported significantly higher rates of high monthly PTE exposure compared to career firefighters and commanders in comparison regions, similar to the findings observed in 2024. After an initial decrease in yearly PTE exposure from 2023 to 2024, rates remained relatively stable in 2026, with Te Hiku personnel continuing to report higher levels of yearly PTE exposure than the comparison regions. However, this difference did not meet conventional criteria for statistical significance in 2026.

ComCen employees also continued to report substantially greater exposure to PTEs than the rest of the survey participants, with 72% reporting high monthly exposure and 81% reporting high yearly exposure in 2026. This was similar to the results observed in 2023, when 75% reported high monthly exposure and 82% reported high yearly exposure.

Table 2. Prevalence of High Self-Reported Potentially Traumatic Event Exposure, Te Hiku vs Comparison Group, 2023-2024-2026 (% Scoring High)

Yearly PTE	2023	2024	2026
Te Hiku	38	35	36
Comparison Group	42	28	31

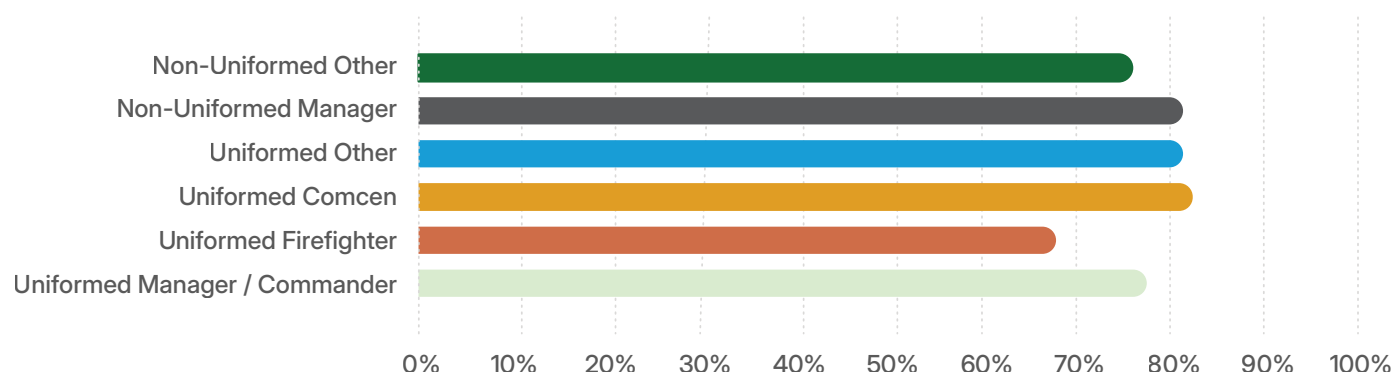
Mental ill health

Overall, rates of mental health indicators in 2026 remained relatively comparable to those observed in previous time points, although some indicators showed small increases compared to 2024 (Figure 3). In several cases, rates in 2026 were more closely aligned with the initial 2023 baseline findings than with the modest improvements observed in 2024. Some indicators, such as depressive symptoms, showed slightly higher rates than those observed at baseline in 2023 or 2024.

- Rates of moderate-to-severe **depressive symptoms** increased from 24% in 2024 to **29% in 2026**, compared to 26% at baseline in 2023.
- Rates of moderate-to-severe anxiety symptoms increased from 15% in 2023 and 14% in 2024 to **18% in 2026**.
- Rates of **probable PTSD** were **14% in 2026**, representing a slight increase compared to 11% in 2024, but remaining similar to the 2023 baseline rate of 15%.

- Rates of high **work-to-family conflict** were **23% in 2026**, compared to 20% in 2024 and 28% in 2023. Although rates remained lower than those observed at baseline in 2023, findings suggest a small increase compared to 2024.
- Among **career firefighters and commanders**, rates of depressive symptoms were comparable to the general sample, and were broadly similar between the **Te Hiku pilot region** (31%) and **comparison regions** (27%), with no statistically significant difference observed between groups. Rates of high anxiety and high probable PTSD among career firefighters and commanders were broadly comparable between the Te Hiku pilot region and comparison regions, and reflected patterns observed in the overall sample. Rates of high work-to-family conflict among career firefighters and commanders were somewhat higher than in the overall sample (23%), at 27% in the Te Hiku pilot region and 26% in all other regions.
- **ComCen** employees continued to report substantially poorer mental health outcomes than the wider survey sample across all three time points. Rates of depressive symptoms remained consistently high over time, while anxiety symptoms and probable PTSD showed some modest improvements compared to earlier time points. Nevertheless, rates in 2026 remained high, with more than half of ComCen employees reporting moderate-to-severe depressive symptoms, approximately four in ten reporting moderate-to-severe anxiety symptoms, and more than one quarter meeting the threshold for probable PTSD. Rates of emotional numbing also increased in contrast with the baseline levels.

Figure 2. Burnout (% Scoring High) by Group, 2026



- **Burnout symptoms** were assessed for the first time in the 2026 survey using the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT)⁵. Burnout refers to a work-related state of exhaustion characterised by extreme tiredness, reduced ability to regulate cognitive and emotional processes, and mental distancing from one's work. These core dimensions can also be accompanied by broader psychological and psychosomatic distress symptoms and are thought to arise when high job demands persist

alongside insufficient resources⁶. Overall, employees reported an average burnout score of 2.80 out of 5 (SD = 0.69). While this average score may appear moderate on a five-point response scale, it falls within the range classified as "high" burnout symptoms in the BAT manual (2.41–3.29) and approaches the threshold for "very high" burnout symptoms (> 3.30). Burnout risk varied across employee groups. The proportion above the burnout risk threshold was highest

among Uniformed ComCen staff (82%), followed by Uniformed Other (81%) and Non-uniformed Managers (81%). Career firefighters had the lowest relative rate of burnout risk.

- Looking at the differences between Te Hiku and other career firefighters and commanders, 66% of employees in Te Hiku compared to 70% of employees in the comparison regions reported elevated burnout complaints. This difference was not significant.

Maladaptive coping mechanisms

Findings suggest a continued, though modest, improvement in potentially hazardous alcohol drinking patterns over time, while rates of high emotional numbing behaviours increased in 2026 following relative stability between 2023 and 2024 (Figure 3).

- Across the organisation, rates of **potentially hazardous drinking** remained high, although they continued to decrease across the three time points, reaching 56% in 2026.
- Rates of high **emotional numbing behaviours** in the overall sample remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (29% in both years) but increased to **34% in 2026**.



REPORTED POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS DRINKING



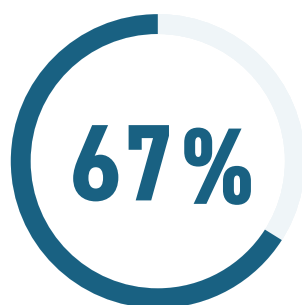
REPORTED EMOTIONAL NUMBING BEHAVIOURS

- Similar rates of potentially hazardous drinking were observed among **career firefighters and commanders** in both the Te Hiku pilot and comparison regions (59%), with rates slightly higher than those observed in the overall sample. Emotional numbing behaviours were also somewhat higher than in the wider sample, with 40% of employees in the Te Hiku pilot region and 37% in the comparison regions reporting high emotional numbing in 2026.
- **ComCen employees** also continued to report elevated levels of emotional numbing and potentially hazardous drinking. Rates of potentially hazardous drinking among ComCen employees decreased from 51% in 2023 to 46% in 2026. In contrast, rates of high emotional numbing increased, with 41% of ComCen employees reporting high emotional numbing in 2026 compared to 31% in 2023.

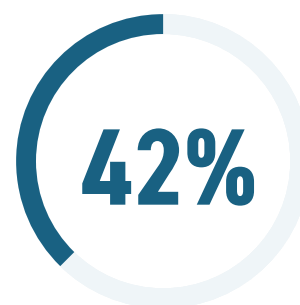
Positive wellbeing

Findings suggest that positive wellbeing indicators remained relatively stable overall between 2023, 2024, and 2026 (Figure 3).

- Rates of high **life satisfaction** increased substantially in **2026, with 67%** of employees reporting high life satisfaction compared to 33% in 2023 and 34% in 2024. In 2026, life satisfaction was measured with one item instead of three, which could explain the difference between the percentages. When looking at the means of the question "I am satisfied with my life", the averages appear to be similar (5.13, 2023; 5.19, 2024; and 5.56, 2026, which falls roughly between "slightly agree" and "agree" on a seven-point Likert scale).
- Rates of high **job satisfaction** stayed relatively stable with **42% in 2026** (as opposed to 42% in 2023 and 44% in 2024).
- Rates of high **resilience** remained stable overall, with **33%** of employees reporting high resilience in 2023, 2024, and 2026.
- Rates of high **post-traumatic growth** also stayed similar: from 30% in 2023 and 2024 to **29% in 2026**.
- Similar rates of high life satisfaction were observed among **career firefighters and commanders** in the Te Hiku pilot region (69%) and comparison regions (66%). Among career firefighters and commanders, more employees in the Te Hiku pilot region reported high rates of high job satisfaction compared to those in the comparison regions (50% vs. 41%). This gap was already present at baseline in 2023 (53% vs. 40%), indicating it might reflect a pre-existing regional difference. Rates of high resilience were somewhat higher in the Te Hiku pilot region (38%) compared to the comparison regions (34%), although this difference was not statistically significant. Employees in the Te Hiku pilot region were also significantly more likely to report high post-traumatic growth than those in the comparison regions (33% vs. 24%).



EMPLOYEES REPORTING HIGH LIFE SATISFACTION in 2026



EMPLOYEES REPORTING HIGH JOB SATISFACTION in 2026

- Positive wellbeing indicators among **ComCen employees** generally remained lower than those observed in the wider sample across time points. Nevertheless, some modest improvements were observed between 2023 and 2026. Rates of high life satisfaction increased from 19% in 2023 to **43% in 2026**. In contrast, rates of high job satisfaction remained relatively stable over time, with 40% of ComCen employees reporting high job satisfaction in 2023 and **39% in 2026**. Rates of high resilience stayed relatively similar from 26% in 2023 to **24% in 2026**. Similarly, rates of high post-traumatic growth remained relatively unchanged over time, increasing only slightly from 22% in 2023 to **23% in 2026**, compared to 29% in the overall sample in 2026.
- **Psychological detachment from work** was also assessed for the first time in the 2026 survey. Psychological detachment refers to the ability to mentally switch off from work during non-work time and is considered an important recovery process that helps employees restore depleted psychological and emotional resources⁷. Overall, employees reported relatively low levels of psychological detachment, with an average score of 3.07 out of 7 (SD = 1.86) on the item "During time after work, I don't think about work at all." This suggests that many employees continued to think about work during their time away from work. Consistent with this, **only 26% of employees reported high levels of psychological detachment**, indicating that the majority of employees may experience difficulties fully switching off and recovering psychologically from work demands during non-work time.

Figure 3. Percentage Scoring High on Mental Health Indicators, 2023-2024-2026

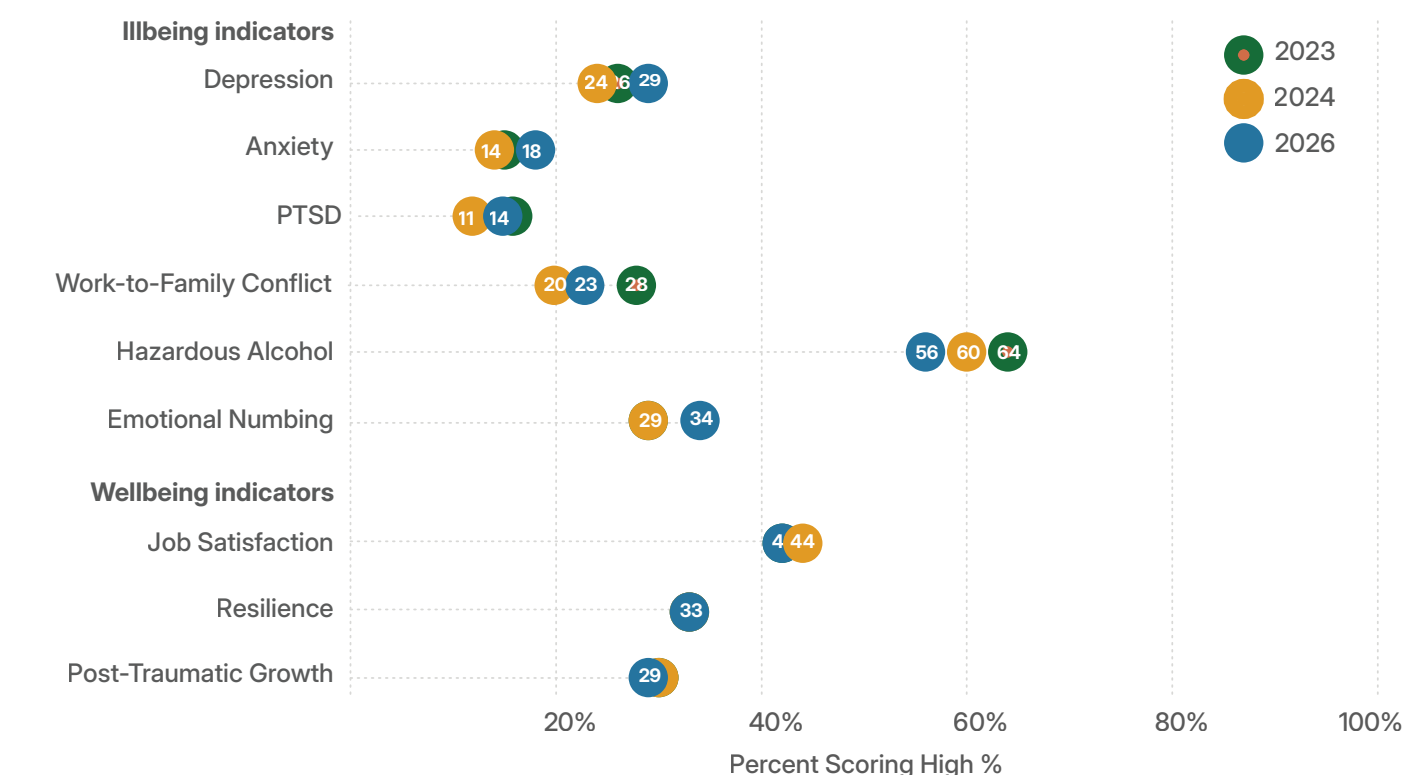


Table 3. Prevalence of Mental Health Indicators within ComCen, 2023-2024-2026 (% Scoring High)

ComCen	2023	2024	2026
Depression	53	54	54
Anxiety	43	42	39
PTSD	31	30	27
Work-Family Conflict	35	27	27
Hazardous Alcohol	51	53	46
Emotional Numbing	31	37	41
Job Satisfaction	40	*	39
Resilience	26	*	24
Post-Traumatic Growth	22	*	23

* No ComCen-specific data were available for job satisfaction, resilience, or post-traumatic growth for 2024 at the time of writing this report.

Organisational Experiences

In this section, we provide an update on employees' perceptions of organisational and workplace factors in 2026. In addition to previously assessed organisational support and organisational attitude indicators, the 2026 survey also included a broader range of workplace factors included to give a better understanding some of the upstream drivers that shape employees' organisational experiences and wellbeing, and that are modifiable by the organisation or managers. These new factors related to communication and involvement, workload, autonomy, role clarity, physical work environment, psychological safety, and performance feedback. Results are presented for the overall survey sample unless otherwise stated. For more detailed information on the baseline findings and associations with mental health outcomes, readers are referred to the 2023 Detailed Report and 2024 Results Update.

2023 and 2024 summary

Employee perceptions of organisational performance refer to the views, attitudes, and opinions employees hold about how effectively the organisation functions and supports its personnel. Findings from the 2023 survey suggested generally low perceptions of organisational support and organisational functioning, although support from co-workers was consistently rated more positively. The 2024 survey findings indicated some early positive changes, including improvements in perceptions of organisational and manager support, organisational competence, accountability, psychological safety, and

preparedness to serve, although many of these indicators still remained relatively low overall.

Findings from the earlier time points also suggested that employees maintained a strong emotional connection to their work and colleagues despite more mixed perceptions of broader organisational functioning. Between 2023 and 2024, gratitude towards the organisation increased, particularly within the Te Hiku pilot region, while organisational commitment increased modestly and intentions to leave the organisation decreased. Perceptions of managers also became somewhat more positive during this time, although more negative

organisational attitudes, including organisational cynicism, remained relatively common.

Behavioural outcomes related to workplace functioning showed a mixed but generally stable pattern across the earlier time points. Rates of presenteeism decreased between 2023 and 2024, suggesting fewer employees attended work while unwell, while rates of extra-role performance remained consistently high. Detailed findings from the earlier time points, including associations with mental health outcomes and potentially traumatic event exposure, are presented in the Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey 2023 Detailed Report and 2024 Results Update.

2026 update

Organisational performance

Employee perceptions of organisational performance refer to the views, attitudes, and opinions that employees have about their organisation's ability to achieve its objectives. In contrast to the generally positive trends observed between 2023 and 2024, findings from 2026 suggest declines across several indicators of perceived organisational support, preparedness, organisational competence, and organisational commitment (Figure 5 and 6). However, perceptions of co-worker support and extra-role performance remained relatively positive overall.

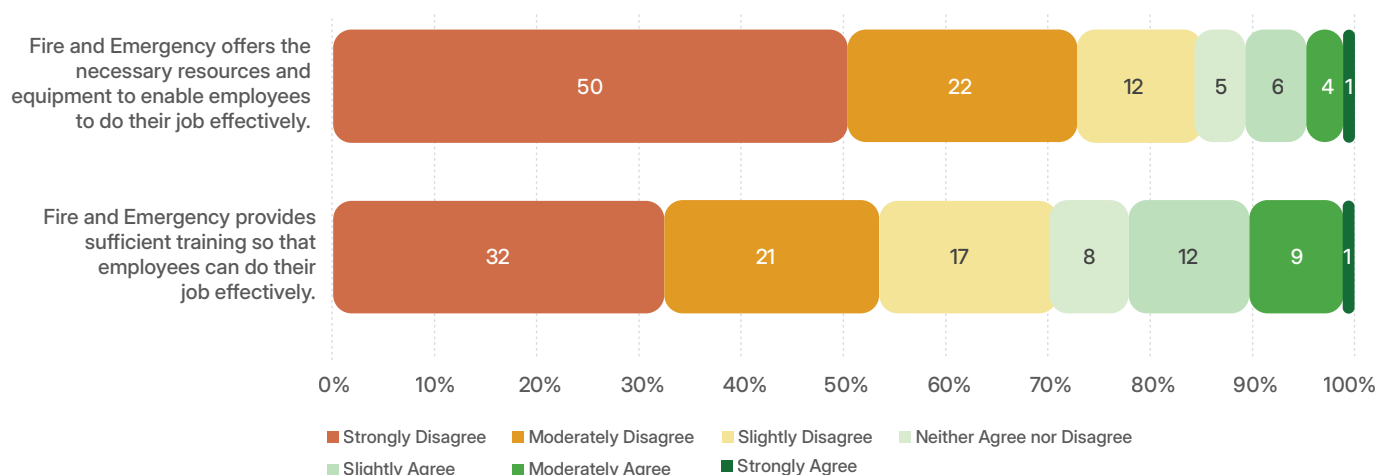
- Rates of high **perceived organisational support** declined substantially in 2026. Among staff, rates decreased from 15% in 2024 to 4% in 2026. Similarly, among managers, rates of high perceived organisational support declined from 39% in 2023 to 22% in 2026. These findings suggest a marked deterioration in employees' perceptions of organisational support across time points.
- Rates of high **perceived manager support** also declined, decreasing from 45% in 2024 to **37% in 2026**. In contrast, rates of high **perceived co-worker support** among **team members** remained relatively high

overall, with **86%** of employees reporting high co-worker support in **2026**. **Managers** also reported relatively high levels of perceived personnel support overall (**65%**).

- Rates of high **perceived preparedness to serve** decreased substantially from 26% in 2024 to 9% in 2026, suggesting reduced confidence in organisational preparedness and capability to effectively serve the community. This workplace variable consisted of two questions, for which a more detailed overview of responses is given in Figure 4.

*Rates of high **psychological safety** improved between 2023 and 2024, increasing from 29% to 37%. Findings from **2026** suggest a substantial decline, with only **14% of employees** reporting high psychological safety in 2026.*

Figure 4. Levels of Agreement with Perceived Preparedness to Serve the Community Statements, 2026



- **Perceptions of support between uniformed and non-uniformed employees** remained relatively low across all three time points. Specifically, the proportion of uniformed employees reporting high perceptions of support from their non-uniformed counterparts increased slightly over time, from 9% in 2023 and 11% in 2024 to 14% in 2026. Similarly, the proportion of non-uniformed employees reporting high perceptions of support from uniformed employees remained relatively low, increasing slightly from 13% in 2023 and 14% in 2024 to 12% in 2026.
- Rates of high **organisational competence and organisational accountability** declined substantially in 2026. Rates of high organisational competence decreased from 26% in 2024 to **10% in 2026**, while rates of high **organisational accountability** decreased from 10% to **3%**.
- Rates of high **psychological safety** improved between 2023 and 2024, increasing from 29% to 37%. However, findings from **2026** suggest a substantial decline, with only **14% of employees** reporting high psychological safety in 2026.
- No significant differences were observed between career firefighters

and commanders in the **Te Hiku pilot region** and comparison regions in terms of perceived organisational support or in terms of perceived manager support. Employees in the Te Hiku pilot region continued to report significantly higher rates of perceived co-worker support than those in comparison regions (92% vs. 87% in 2026, compared with 88% vs. 83% in 2024 and 89% vs. 81% in 2023). While co-worker support has increased over time in both groups, the gap between Te Hiku and comparison regions narrowed slightly after 2023 but has persisted since.

- Employees in the **Te Hiku pilot region** reported similar preparedness to serve the community scores as employees in comparison regions (5% vs 6%). No significant differences were observed between the Te Hiku pilot region and comparison regions regarding organisational competence (both 6%). Similarly, rates of high psychological safety were broadly comparable between the Te Hiku pilot region and comparison regions (10% vs 12%).
- **ComCen employees** showed a mixed pattern of organisational perceptions across time points. Perceived co-worker support and manager support

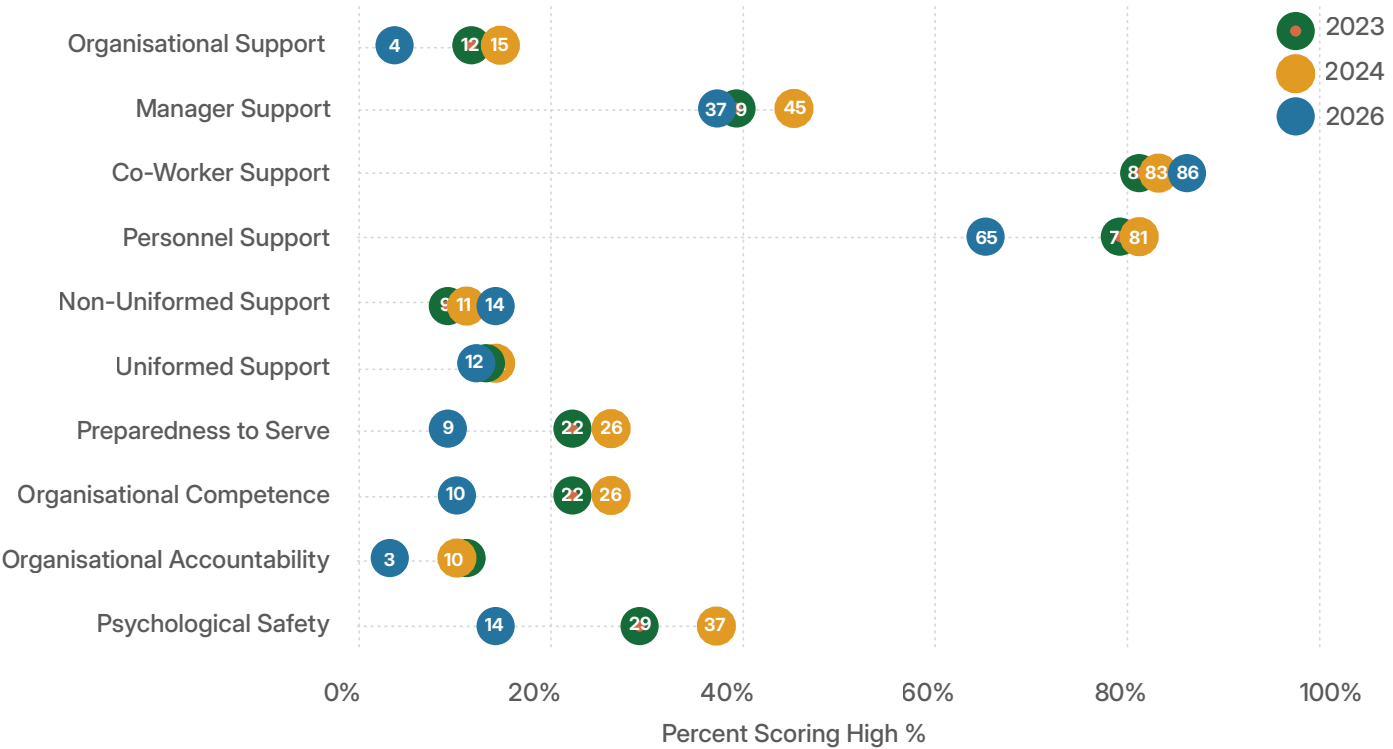
improved between 2023 and 2026, increasing from 78% to 84% and from 45% to 63%, respectively. In contrast, several broader organisational indicators showed deterioration over time. Rates of high perceived organisational support decreased from 7% in 2023 to 3% in 2026, while preparedness to serve the community decreased from 22% to 12%. When separated out into its two questions, 26% of ComCen employees agreed that Fire and Emergency provides sufficient training to do their job effectively, and 14% agreed that Fire and Emergency offers the necessary resources and equipment to do so.

Similarly, perceptions of organisational competence declined from 24% in 2023 to 20% in 2026, and perceptions of organisational accountability remained consistently low, decreasing from 7% to 4%. Perceived support between uniformed and non-uniformed employees also remained low overall, declining from 12% in 2023 to 7% in 2026. Overall, these findings suggest that while interpersonal support within ComCen appeared relatively strong and improved over time, broader perceptions of organisational functioning and support remained comparatively poor.

Table 4. Percentage Scoring High on Organisational Performance Indicators, ComCen, 2023-2026

ComCen	2023	2026
Organisational Support	7	3
Manager Support	45	63
Co-Worker Support	78	84
Non-Uniformed Support	12	7
Preparedness to Serve	22	12
Organisational Competence	24	20
Organisational Accountability	7	4
Psychological Safety	26	18

Figure 5. Percentage Scoring High on Organisational Performance Indicators, 2023-2024-2026

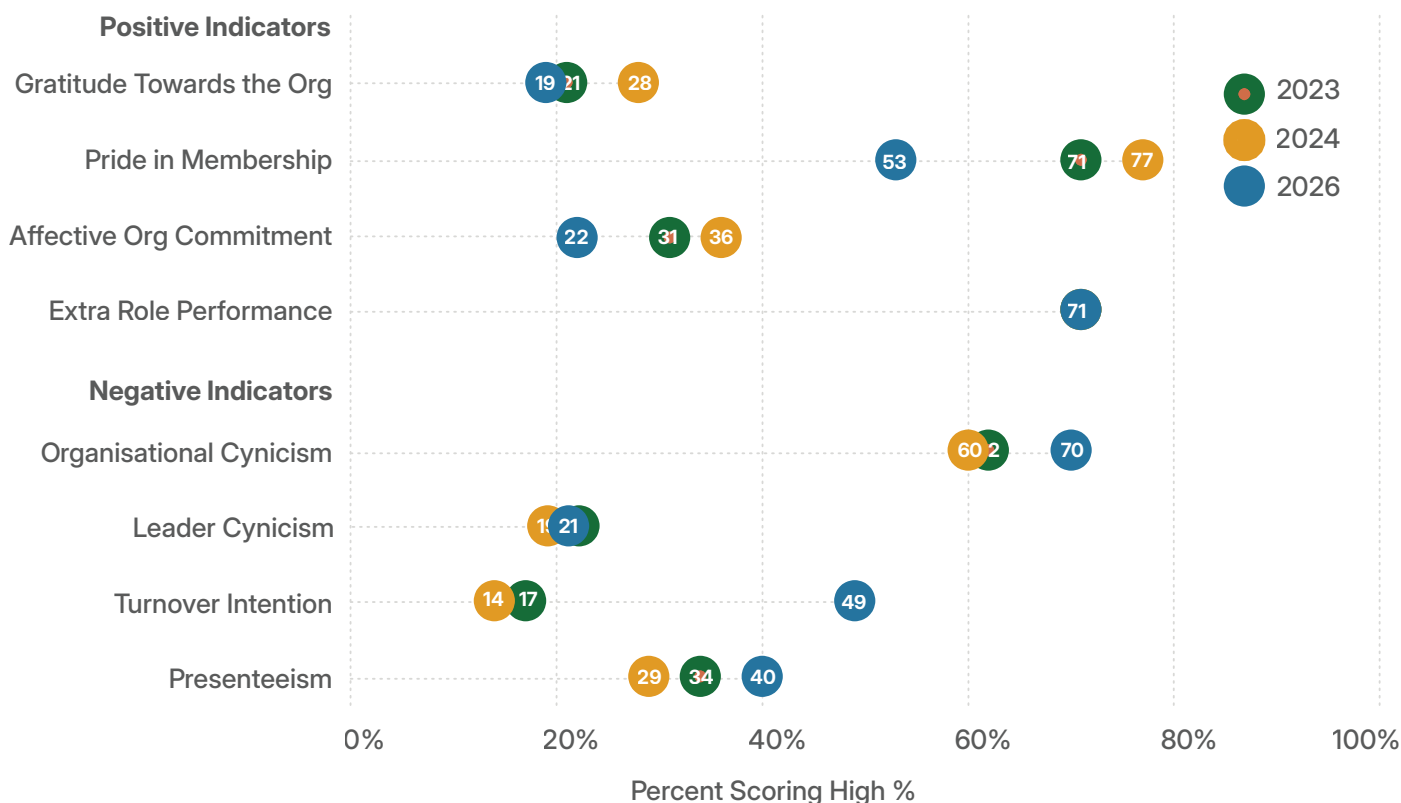


Emotional connection

Emotional connection with the organisation encompasses feelings of pride, gratitude, and commitment. In contrast to the improvements observed between 2023 and 2024, findings from 2026 suggest declines across several indicators of positive organisational attachment and substantially elevated levels of organisational cynicism (Figure 6).

- Rates of high **gratitude towards the organisation** declined in 2026, with 19% of employees reporting high gratitude towards the organisation compared to 28% in 2024 and 21% in 2023.
- Similarly, rates of high **pride in membership** declined substantially in 2026. Whereas rates increased from 71% in 2023 to 77% in 2024, only 53% of employees reported high pride in membership in 2026.
- Rates of **psychological contract violation** were also notably high in 2026, with 74% of employees reporting high perceptions of psychological contract violation. Psychological contract violation was added to the 2026 survey and refers to strong emotional reactions arising from the perception that the organisation has failed to fulfil its obligations or has treated employees unfairly, including feelings of anger, betrayal, and frustration towards the organisation.
- Among career firefighters and commanders, similarly high rates were observed across the **Te Hiku pilot and comparison regions** for the emotional connection variables, and no significant differences were found.
- Among **ComCen employees**, rates of gratitude towards the organisation decreased slightly between 2023 and 2026, from 19% to 16%. Similarly, rates of high pride in membership declined from 79% in 2023 to 74% in 2026. Despite this decrease, pride in membership among ComCen employees remained relatively high overall and higher than that observed in the wider survey sample.

Figure 6. Percentage Scoring High on Organisational Factors, 2023-2024-2026

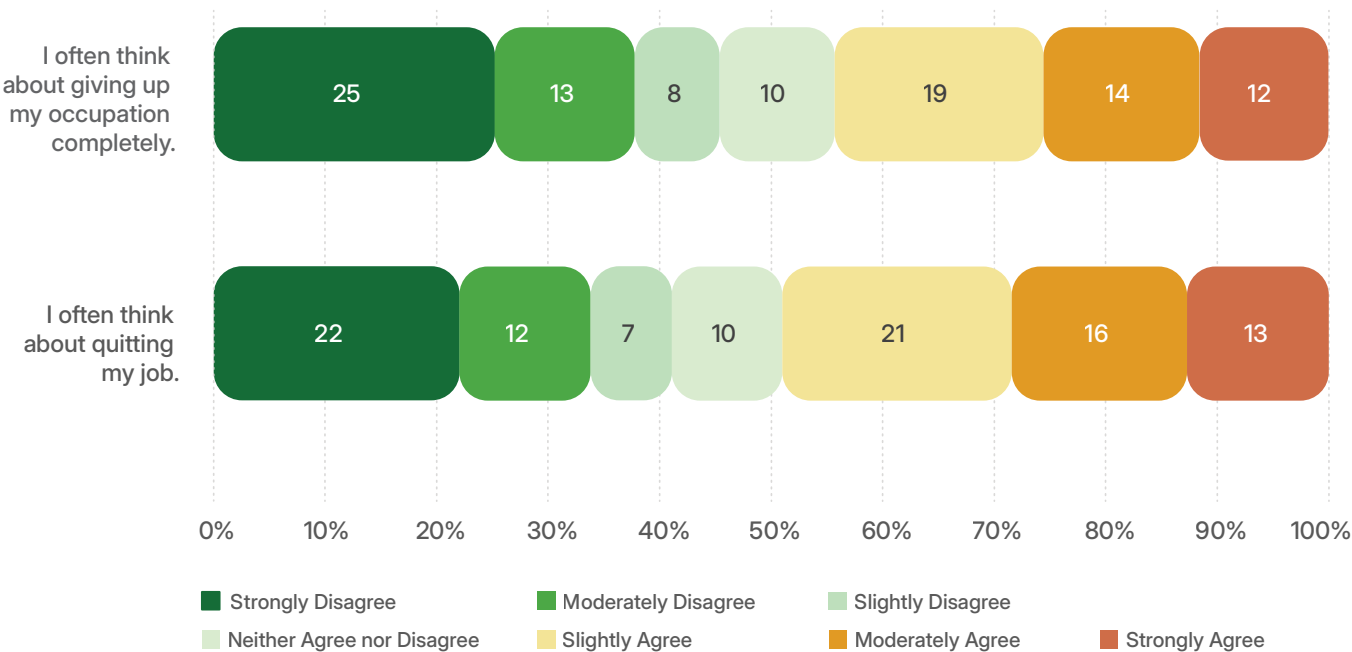


Organisational attitudes

Employee attitudes towards the organisation range from positive attitudes, such as commitment to the organisation, to more negative attitudes, such as cynicism and intentions to leave. In contrast to the generally positive improvements observed between 2023 and 2024, findings from 2026 suggest deterioration across several indicators of employee attitudes towards the organisation (Figure 6).

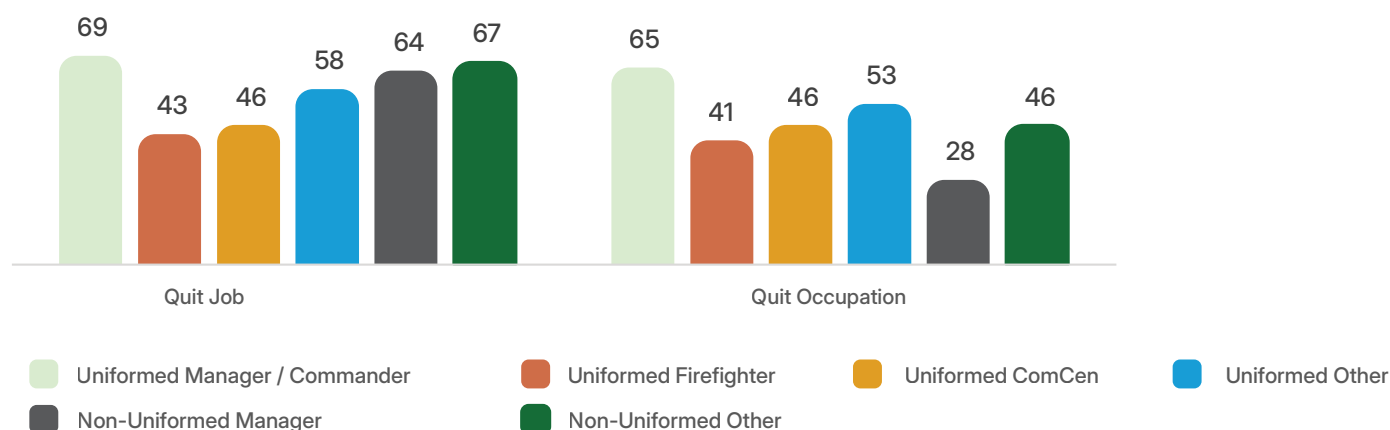
- Rates of high **commitment** towards the organisation declined substantially in **2026**, with **22%** of employees reporting high affective organisational commitment, compared to 36% in 2024 and 31% in 2023.
- **Organisational cynicism** appeared elevated in **2026**, with **70%** of employees reporting high organisational cynicism (compared to 60% in 2023 and in 2024). In contrast, cynicism specifically directed towards managers remained comparatively lower overall, with **21% of employees reporting high leader cynicism in 2026**. This is similar compared to 2023 and 2024, where 22% and 19%, respectively, of employees reported high cynicism towards managers.
- Rates of high **turnover intentions** also increased substantially in **2026**, with **50%** of employees reporting high intentions to leave the organisation, compared to 14% in 2024 and 17% in 2023. However, turnover intention to leave the organisation was only measured with one item instead of three in the 2026 survey, which can partly contribute to the different findings. When looking at the means of the question “I often think about quitting my job” (Figure 7), the averages are the following across the three years: 3.2 (2023), 3.0 (2024), and 3.9 (2026). These findings suggest a deterioration in employee intentions to stay relative to previous time points.
- Similarly, 45% of respondents agreed to some extent that they often think about **giving up their occupation completely**. These findings suggest that a substantial proportion of employees are contemplating either leaving their current role or leaving the occupation altogether (Figure 7). This question was a new addition in the 2026 survey.

Figure 7. Levels of Agreement with Turnover Intention Statements, 2026



Turnover intentions were highest among uniformed managers and commanders, who reported the greatest likelihood of both wanting to quit their job (69%) and wanting to leave the occupation altogether (65%) of any role group (Figure 8). Non-uniformed staff also reported comparatively high turnover intentions, particularly non-uniformed other staff (67% job, 46% occupation) and non-uniformed managers (64% job, though notably lower at 28% for occupation, likely reflecting that leaving the organisation does not necessarily mean leaving their profession). Uniformed firefighters and uniformed ComCen employees reported the lowest turnover intentions of any group on both measures, despite the elevated mental health and wellbeing concerns reported elsewhere in this report for ComCen specifically.

Figure 8. Turnover Intentions (% Scoring High) by Group, 2026



- Among **career firefighters and commanders**, rates of high affective organisational commitment were broadly comparable between the Te Hiku pilot region (21%) and comparison regions (20%). Employees in the Te Hiku pilot region reported lower rates of high organisational cynicism than employees in the comparison regions (69% vs. 76%), while rates of high leader cynicism were similar across regions (22% vs. 22%). Employees in the Te Hiku pilot region reported lower turnover intentions than employees in the comparison regions (40% vs. 48%).
- Among **ComCen employees**, rates of high commitment were 32% in 2026 (compared to 36% in 2023). While this marks a decrease in commitment, the level is still ten per cent higher than in the general sample. The rates of high organisational cynicism substantially increased from 53% in 2023 to 75% in 2026. Rates of high manager cynicism also increased from 21% in 2023 to 25% in 2026. Rates of high turnover intention doubled from 21% to 44% from 2023 to 2026 (see Table 5).

Table 5. Percentage Scoring High on Organisational Attitude Indicators, ComCen, 2023-2026

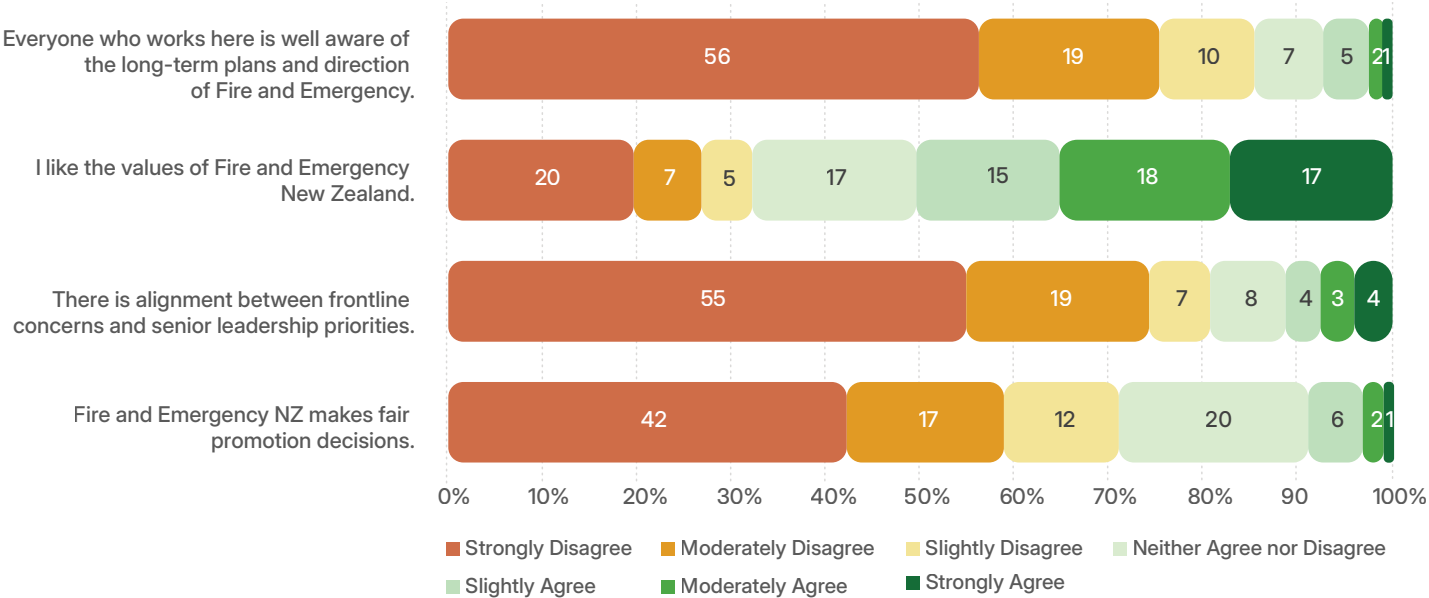
ComCen	2023	2026
Affective Organisational Commitment	36	32
Organisational Cynicism	53	75
Leader/Manager Cynicism	21	25
Turnover Intention	21	44
Presenteeism	47	59
Extra Role Performance	79	67
Gratitude Towards Organisation	19	16
Pride in Membership	79	74

Newly included organisational attitude variables

A number of new variables were included in the 2026 survey, described below and illustrated in Figure 9.

- Alignment between frontline and leadership priorities:** Perceptions of alignment between frontline concerns and senior leadership priorities were low, with only 11% of staff having a high score on perceived alignment (M = 2.12, SD = 1.68), indicating substantial perceived disconnect between operational staff experiences and organisational leadership priorities.
- Clarity of organisational goals:** The number of staff who indicated that they agreed that people are well aware of the long-term plans and direction of Fire and Emergency was 8%, indicating that the large majority of employees don't have clarity on organisational goals. This was reflected in the low mean score of 1.9 (SD = 1.3).
- Fair promotions:** Rates of perceived fair promotions were low, with only 9% of employees reporting agreement to the statement "Fire and Emergency NZ makes fair promotion decisions".
- Organisational values:** Just over half of employees (50%) reported liking the values of Fire and Emergency, with a mean score of 4.23 (SD = 2.11).

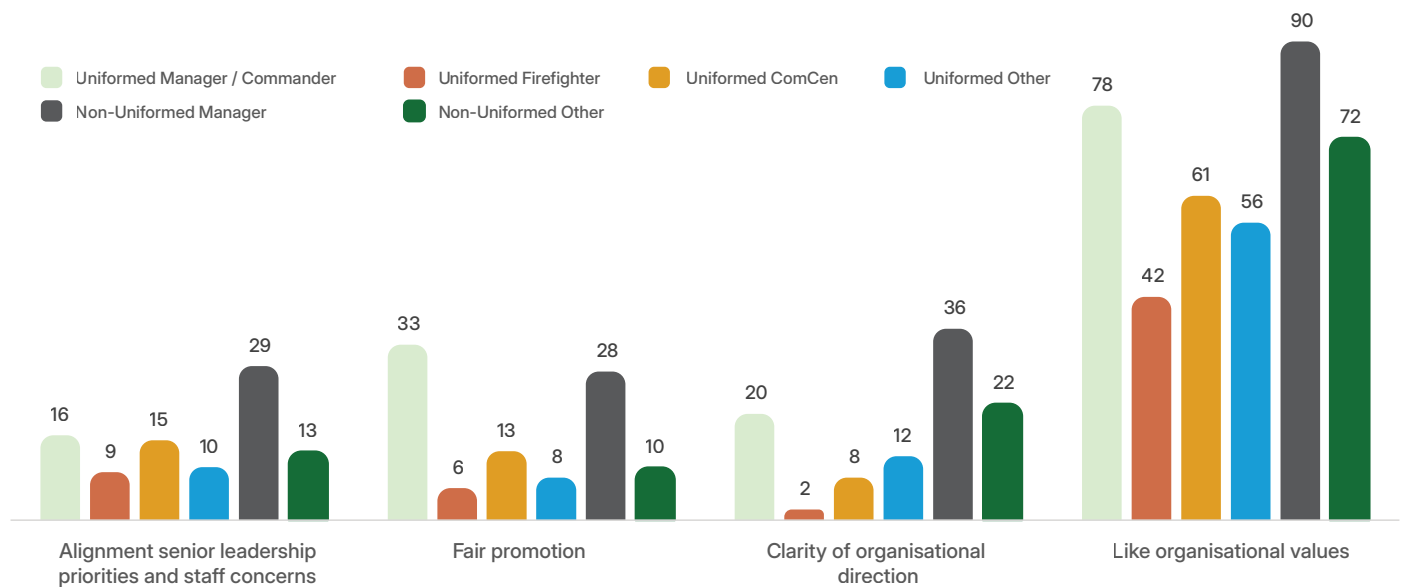
Figure 9. Levels of Agreement with Organisational Attitude Statements, 2026



Perceptions across all four measures were consistently more positive among non-uniformed staff and uniformed managers/commanders, and consistently lower among uniformed firefighters (Figure 10). Non-uniformed managers reported the highest scores on most items, including alignment between senior leadership priorities and staff concerns (29%), clarity of organisational direction (36%), and liking organisational values (90%). Uniformed firefighters reported the lowest scores across the board, including on

clarity of organisational direction (2%) and liking organisational values (42%), consistent with the earlier finding that career firefighters reported the lowest awareness of Fire and Emergency's long-term plans of any role group. Uniformed ComCen employees and uniformed other staff generally fell in between, though uniformed ComCen employees reported comparatively low agreement on alignment between leadership and frontline priorities (15%) and fair promotion (13%).

Figure 10. Strategy and Values (% Scoring High) by Group, 2026



Behavioural outcomes

Behavioural outcomes refer to the behaviours exhibited by employees in regard to their performance and presence at work. In contrast to the reductions in presenteeism observed between 2023 and 2024, findings from 2026 suggest that rates of presenteeism increased again, while rates of extra-role performance remained consistently high overall (Figure 6, page 23).

- Rates of **presenteeism** increased from 29% in 2024 to **40% in 2026**. This suggests that a substantial proportion of employees continued to attend work despite feeling physically or mentally unwell.
- Rates of **extra-role performance** remained relatively stable over time, with **71%** of employees reporting high extra-role performance **in 2026**, in line with 71% in both 2023 and 2024.
- Among **career firefighters and commanders**, employees in the Te Hiku pilot region reported somewhat lower rates of high presenteeism than employees in comparison regions (34% vs. 38%). Regarding extra-role performance, similarly high rates were observed across the Te Hiku pilot and comparison regions.
- Among **ComCen employees**, the rates of high presenteeism increased from 47% in 2023 to **59% in 2026**, which is substantially higher than the percentage found in the organisation overall. Extra-role performance decreased from 79% to 67%.

Job demands and resources

Job demands and resources refer to aspects of the work environment, job design, and organisational processes that may influence employees' psychological wellbeing, stress, motivation, and workplace experiences. **Job demands** refer to aspects of work that require sustained physical, emotional, or psychological effort and are therefore associated with physiological or psychological costs. In contrast, **job resources** refer to aspects of work that help employees achieve work goals, reduce job demands and their associated costs, or support learning, growth, and development. **In the current survey, job demands included factors such as emotional job demands, role conflict, lack of involvement in decision-making, and moral injury, while job resources**

included factors such as autonomy, role clarity, job security, and performance feedback. Research has consistently shown that both job demands and job resources play an important role in shaping employee mental health, burnout, organisational attitudes, and broader workplace functioning.

While earlier Whanaungatanga time points primarily focused on organisational support, organisational attitudes, behavioural outcomes, and mental health indicators, the 2026 survey expanded the evaluation to include a broader range of job demands, job resources, and workplace experiences. This was done to better understand some of the upstream organisational and work-related conditions that may contribute to employee wellbeing and organisational functioning

within Fire and Emergency, including factors associated with organisational commitment, organisational cynicism, job satisfaction, burnout, and intentions to leave the organisation. The inclusion of these measures allows for greater insight into which workplace factors may represent important targets for future organisational interventions and wellbeing initiatives.

In this section, we provide an overview of these newly added job demands and resources in 2026, as well as role-level differences for these constructs, which have not previously been examined. Role-level trends for the other constructs covered in this survey can be found in the appendix of the 2023 report. Results are presented for the overall survey sample unless otherwise stated.

Job demands

- **Limited involvement in communication and organisational decision-making:** Participants reported relatively limited involvement in organisational decision-making and communication processes, with all the average of all questions together was 5.70 out of 7 (SD = 1.21), where higher scores reflect lower perceived involvement and consultation. Consistent with this, around 81% of participants met the threshold indicating higher rates of limited involvement. Approximately 79% agreed that "changes are made without talking to the people involved in them," while a similar proportion agreed that "people don't have any say in decisions which affect their work." Together, these findings suggest many employees perceive organisational changes as occurring without meaningful consultation or staff input (Figure 11).
- Lack of involvement was reported by **85% of respondents in Te Hiku**, compared with 79% in the comparison regions, indicating significantly less favourable perceptions of involvement in the pilot region.
- **ComCen** employees reported somewhat better levels of involvement than employees in other parts of the organisation. Lack of involvement was reported by 74% of ComCen respondents, compared with 81% for non-ComCen respondents.

"Many employees perceive organisational changes as occurring without meaningful consultation or staff input."

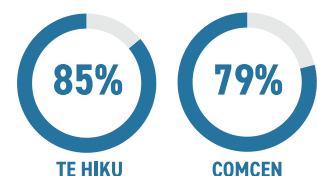
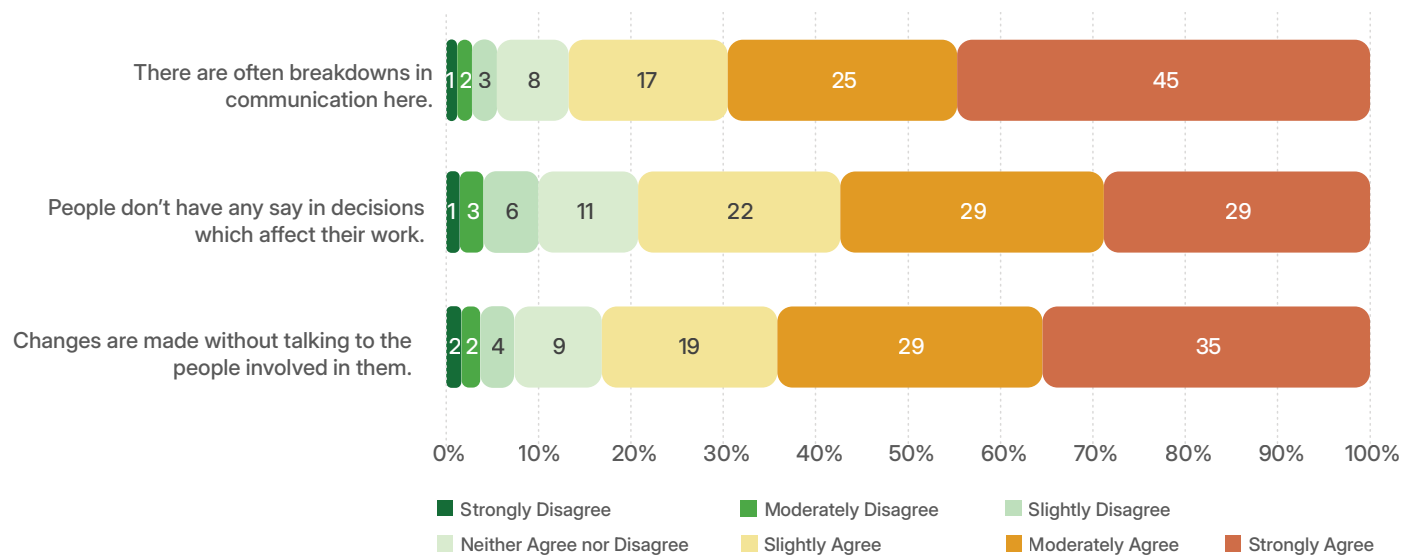


Figure 11. Levels of Agreement with Lack of Involvement Statements, 2026



Lack of involvement was reported at high rates across all role groups, though non-uniformed staff consistently reported the least favourable perceptions (Figure 12). Non-uniformed managers reported the highest rates on all three items, including agreement that changes are made without consultation (88%) and that there are often breakdowns in communication

(92%). Uniformed ComCen employees reported the most favourable perceptions of involvement of any role group, with comparatively lower agreement that changes happen without consultation (74%) and that people have no say in decisions affecting their work (72%), consistent with the earlier finding that ComCen employees reported somewhat

better involvement than the rest of the organisation. Uniformed managers and commanders and uniformed firefighters fell between these two patterns, though uniformed firefighters reported notably high levels of perceived communication breakdowns (87%).

Figure 12. Lack of Involvement (% Scoring High) by Group, 2026

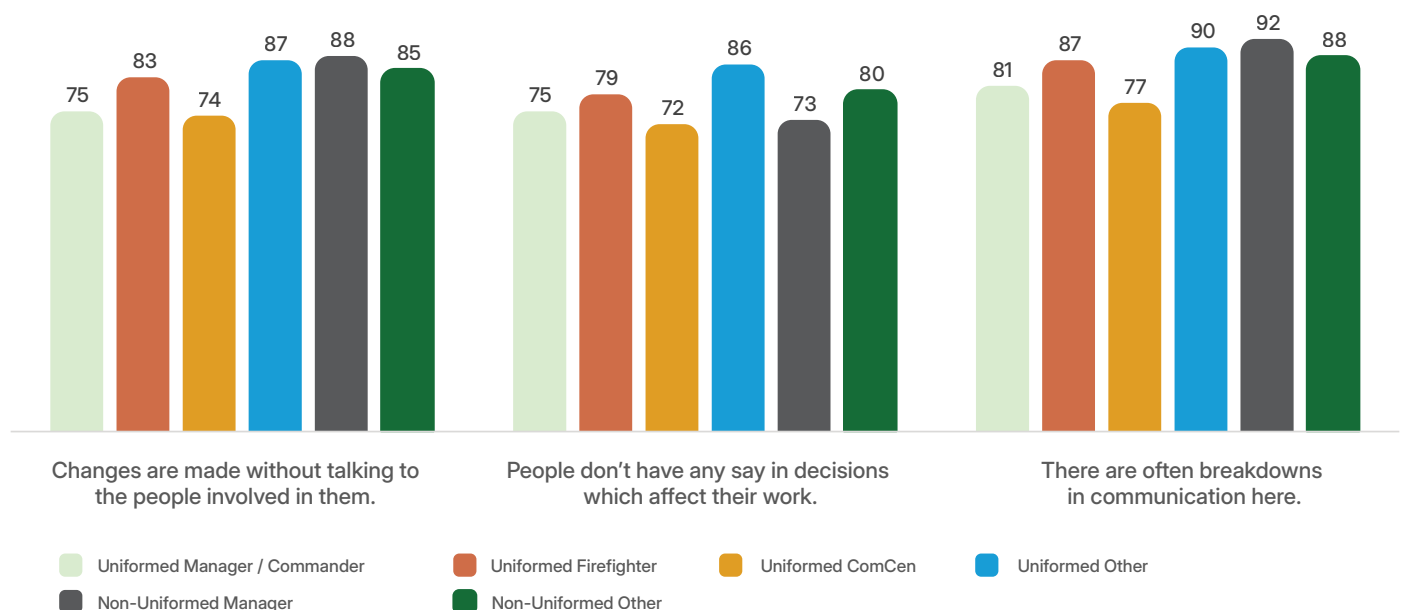
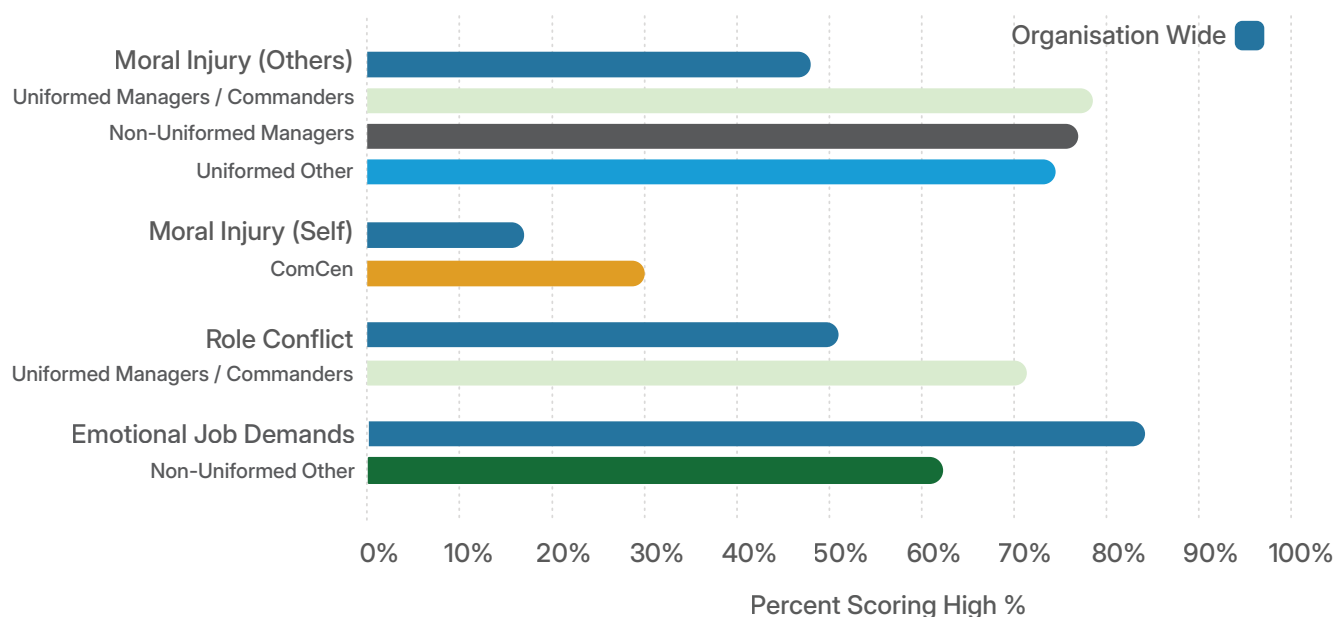


Figure 13 shows the job demands where there were significant group differences.

- **Emotional job demands:** Emotional demands were particularly prominent, with strong agreement to the statement “my work is emotionally demanding” averaging 5.77 out of 7 (SD = 1.38). In addition, approximately 84% of participants scored high on the emotional job demands scale, highlighting the emotionally intensive nature of the work. Emotional demands were felt somewhat less acutely by non-uniformed staff in other roles, who reported a notably lower rate (61%) than the overall sample.
- **Moral injury:** Participants reported moderate concern regarding exposure to unethical or morally troubling situations. Agreement with the statement “I am troubled by having witnessed others at work do things that I believed were wrong or unethical” averaged 4.22 out of 7 (SD = 1.98), with 48% of participants scoring high on the moral injury (others) item. In contrast, lower agreement was observed for having personally acted in ways that violated one’s own morals or professional standards (M = 2.67, SD = 1.78), with 17% of participants scoring high on the moral injury – self item.
- **Moral injury from witnessing others’ actions:** Moral injury from witnessing others’ actions was reported at much higher rates among uniformed managers and commanders (78%), non-uniformed managers (76%), and uniformed other staff (74%) than the overall sample. Moral injury relating to one’s own actions was comparatively low overall but notably higher among ComCen employees (29%).
- **Absenteeism:** Participants reported an average of 9.67 days absent in the previous six months due to illness or health-related reasons (SD = 21.0). The large standard deviation suggests considerable variability in absenteeism experiences across respondents.
- **Manageable workload:** Perceptions of workload were relatively positive overall, with agreement that participants were “given enough time to do what is expected” averaging 5.25 out of 7 (SD = 1.68). Approximately 75% of participants scored 5 or higher on this item, suggesting many employees generally felt they had sufficient time to complete their work expectations. Perceptions differed notably by role, with only 31% of uniformed managers and commanders scoring 5 or higher on this item, the lowest of any role group.
- **Role conflict:** Participants reported relatively high levels of contradictory demands at work (M = 4.64, SD = 1.56), suggesting many employees experience competing or conflicting expectations within their roles. Around half of participants (51%) agreed to some extent that they experience contradictory demands at work, while 30% neither agreed nor disagreed. In contrast, approximately 19% disagreed that they experience contradictory demands. These findings suggest role conflict is a relatively common experience for many employees, although experiences appear to vary across staff. Role conflict was reported at a substantially higher rate among uniformed managers and commanders (71%) than the overall sample.

Figure 13. Job Demands by Groups where there were Significant Group Differences, 2026



Job resources

- **Role clarity:** Participants generally reported high role clarity, with agreement to the statement "In my job, I know exactly what is expected of me" averaging 5.82 out of 7 (SD = 1.34). In addition, approximately 88% of participants scored 5 or higher on the role clarity item, suggesting most employees have a strong understanding of their responsibilities and work expectations. Perceptions differed notably by role, with both ComCen employees (90%) and firefighters (91%) reporting higher rates of role clarity than the overall sample.
- **Autonomy:** Despite concerns in other psychosocial areas, participants generally reported relatively positive levels of autonomy and control over their work. Agreement with the statement "I am given a lot of freedom to decide how to do my own work" averaged 5.20 out of 7 (SD = 1.58). Overall, approximately 74% of participants scored 5 or higher on the autonomy scale. Perceptions differed notably by role, with only 50% of ComCen employees scoring 5 or higher on this item, well below the overall rate.
- **Job security:** Perceptions of job security were mixed overall, with agreement to the statement "I feel my job is secure" averaging 4.30 out of 7 (SD = 2.02). The relatively large standard deviation suggests considerable variability in employees' perceptions of job security across the organisation. Overall, 54% of participants scored 5 or higher on the job security item. Perceptions differed notably by role, with only 19% of non-uniformed managers and 23% of non-uniformed other staff scoring 5 or higher on this item, both well below the overall rate of 54%.

Figure 14 shows the job resources where there were significant group differences.

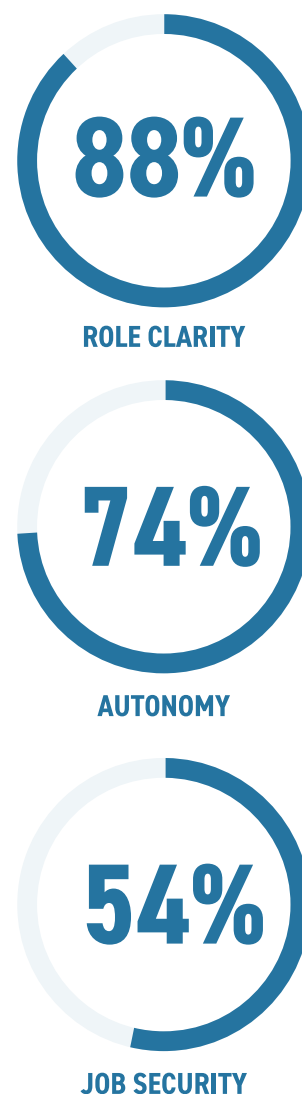
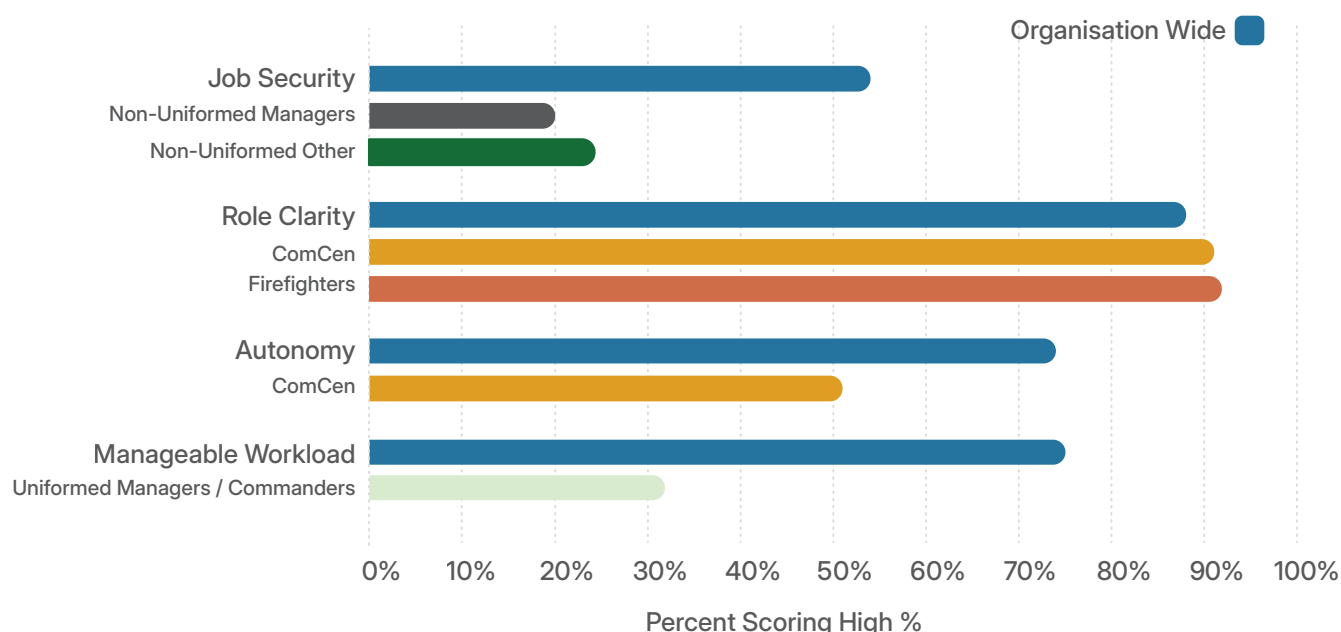


Figure 14. Job Resources by Groups where there were Significant Group Differences, 2026



- Performance feedback:** Perceptions of performance feedback were relatively low overall, with the performance feedback scale averaging 3.95 out of 7 (SD = 1.44). Consistent with this, only 27% of participants met the threshold for – on average – agreeing to the questions on performance

feedback. While a larger proportion of employees indicated that they received feedback on their work or had some sense of how well they were performing, considerably fewer reported that their performance was measured on a regular basis (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Levels of Agreement with Performance Feedback Statements, 2026

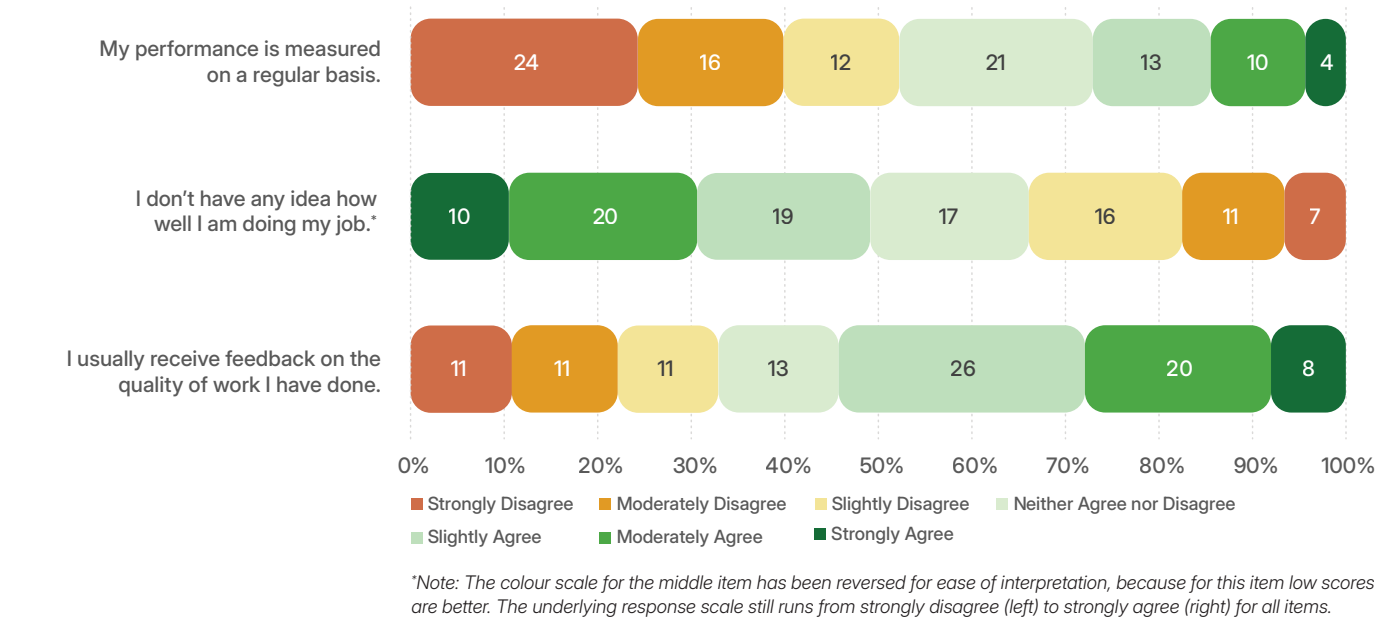
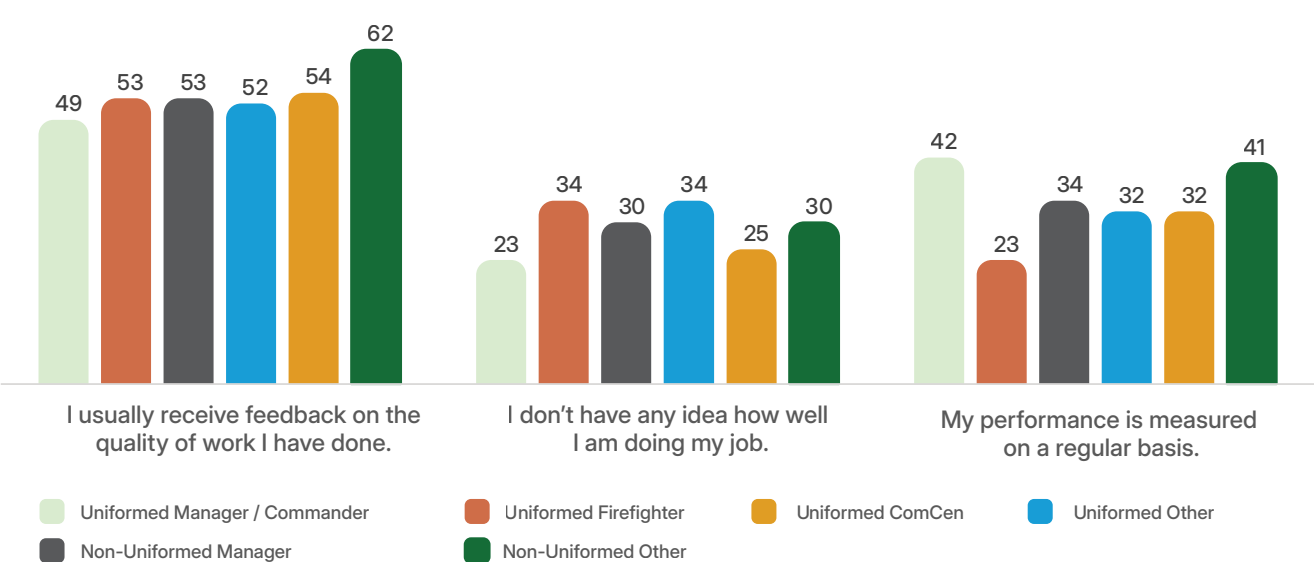


Figure 16. Performance Feedback Statements (% Scoring High) by Group, 2026



- Perceptions of performance feedback also varied by role (Figure 16). Uniformed managers and commanders were most likely to report that their performance was measured on a regular basis (42%) and least likely to report having no idea how well they were doing (23%), despite being somewhat less likely than other groups to say they usually receive feedback on their work (49%). Career firefighters showed close to the opposite pattern: although around half (53%) said they usually

receive feedback, they were among the most likely to report not knowing how well they were performing (34%) and the least likely to say their performance was measured regularly (23%). Non-uniformed staff in other roles reported the most positive perceptions across all three items, with the highest rate of receiving feedback (62%) and the highest rate of regular performance measurement (41%).

Physical Work Environment

Perceptions of the physical work environment were mixed overall, with satisfaction averaging 4.32 out of 7 (SD = 2.12), and 54% of participants reporting high rates of satisfaction with the work environment. While many participants reported relatively positive perceptions of their physical work environment, dissatisfaction was also common across several locations. Perceptions appeared to vary substantially by region and worksite. Participants in Te Ihu generally reported the most positive perceptions of their physical work environment, with a large proportion (83%) strongly agreeing that they were satisfied with aspects such as heating, lighting, ventilation, infrastructure, and work area layout. NHQ also reported more positive levels of satisfaction with the work environment, with 70% falling into the high category.

In contrast, more mixed or negative perceptions were evident in Te Hiku, Te Ūpoko, and the ComCens, where dissatisfaction with the physical work environment was more commonly reported. In the ComCen specifically, dissatisfaction with the physical work environment was particularly prominent, with approximately 12% of respondents in North ComCen, 10% in Central ComCen, and 13% in South ComCen reporting high rates of satisfaction with their physical work environment. These findings suggest considerable variability in how employees experience the quality and suitability of their physical working conditions across locations.

Comments on the physical work environment

In the survey, participants were invited to provide comments on their work environment. Overall, the feedback suggests that perceptions of the physical work environment varied considerably across locations. While some participants described newer or recently upgraded facilities positively, many comments reflected concerns regarding ageing infrastructure, maintenance delays, comfort within work environment, and station design. Comments frequently linked the physical environment to wellbeing, morale, operational effectiveness, and perceptions of organisational support.

- A dominant theme across comments was concern regarding **ageing and deteriorating infrastructure**. Participants repeatedly described feeling unsafe working in buildings perceived as structurally inadequate or hazardous. One respondent noted that “we are still operating in stations that are earthquake prone, leaking, asbestos riddled and no longer fit for purpose,” while another stated “I work in an asbestos filled, seismically underrated building long overdue for renovation and strengthening.” One participant described their station as “cold, damp and mouldy,” while another commented that “many stations are literally falling apart.”
- Concerns regarding **heating, ventilation, cooling, and general environmental comfort** were also common. Participants described working environments that were excessively hot, cold, noisy, or poorly ventilated. These concerns were often linked to fatigue, discomfort, and reduced wellbeing. Participants highlighted “constant roof leaks when it rains,” “drafty windows,” and “aircon always broken.”
- **Delays in maintenance and repairs** emerged as another strong theme. Participants frequently expressed frustration regarding the perceived slowness of organisational responses to infrastructure issues and the use of temporary fixes rather than long-term solutions. One participant stated that “things take years to get fixed,” while another commented that “we constantly patch things instead of replacing them properly.” Similar frustrations were reflected in comments such as “FENZ seems unable to find long-term solutions to property maintenance issues instead using short term fixes,” and “facility problems take an unreasonable amount of time to be resolved.”
- Several comments highlighted **dissatisfaction with the design and functionality of workspaces**. Participants described station layouts and office environments as impractical, overcrowded, or poorly suited to operational work. Lack of storage space, insufficient training areas, limited privacy, and open-plan office layouts were raised as concerns. One respondent noted that “the station was clearly not designed by people who actually work here,” while another commented that “buildings designed by bloody architects to look pretty rather than be functional.” Participants working in open-plan offices also described noise and lack of privacy as ongoing challenges.

- Participants also raised concerns regarding **unequal infrastructure quality across locations**. While some respondents described modern or upgraded facilities positively, others expressed frustration that investment appeared inconsistent across regions and stations. Comments from Christchurch-based staff were often more positive, with participants noting that “Christchurch has 7 near new stations” and describing rebuilt facilities as “fantastic” or “a major improvement on pre-earthquake stations.” At the same time, participants outside of Christchurch contrasted these experiences with stations they perceived as neglected or significantly outdated.
- Importantly, comments frequently linked the **quality of the physical work environment to broader perceptions of organisational care and support**. For some participants, deteriorating facilities symbolised a lack of investment in frontline staff wellbeing. As one respondent reflected, “it feels like we are expected to just put up with it,” while another commented that “you can only polish a turd so many times.”

"Staff described themselves as 'tenants' or 'guests' in shared spaces, with limited ability to influence decisions about layout, lighting, or maintenance."

Physical work environment ComCen

Across all three communications centres, participants described the physical work environment as not fit for purpose, with concerns spanning building quality, environmental conditions, and the suitability of the space for operational demands. While these concerns were broadly shared, their specific manifestations sometimes differed by centre.

- A consistent issue across all locations was **poor environmental conditions, particularly relating to temperature regulation and lighting**. Staff frequently reported malfunctioning or inconsistent air conditioning, resulting in environments that were either excessively hot or cold, as well as lighting that was overly bright and difficult to adjust. In addition, participants described inadequate facilities for shift work, including a lack of appropriate kitchen spaces, rest areas, and private spaces for decompression during or after demanding shifts.
- A second overarching concern was the **lack of control over the physical environment**, which participants strongly linked to **co-location with other emergency services**. Staff described themselves as “tenants” or “guests” in shared spaces, with limited ability to influence decisions about layout, lighting, or maintenance. This lack of autonomy was compounded by perceptions that concerns raised by staff were often dismissed or subject to bureaucratic constraints, leading to a sense that issues remained unresolved over time.
- **Co-location also created operational and psychological challenges, particularly in relation to noise and exposure to distressing content**. However, the nature of these challenges varied by centre. In the South ComCen, noise and poor acoustics emerged as the dominant concern, with staff reporting difficulty hearing callers and colleagues, as well as physical symptoms such as headaches and ringing in the ears. In contrast, staff in the Central ComCen emphasised safety concerns, including exposure to potentially threatening individuals around Police stations and feelings of vulnerability when entering or leaving the workplace. In the North ComCen, concerns centred more strongly on lack of control and organisational responsiveness, with staff highlighting barriers to having issues addressed and a perceived lack of influence over their working conditions.
- Across all centres, participants also described **the broader impact of the physical work environment on wellbeing and performance**. Staff reported fatigue, overstimulation, and emotional strain, particularly when exposed to potentially traumatic content from other agencies. These conditions were seen as directly affecting their ability to perform core tasks, such as effectively managing emergency calls, and contributed to a sense of being undervalued within the organisation.
- Taken together, the findings suggest that while co-location is a shared structural feature across centres, it gives rise to different localised challenges, including issues of control, safety, and acoustic design. Despite these differences, the overall environment was widely perceived as inadequately supporting both employee wellbeing and operational effectiveness.

Table 6. Explanations of Physical Work Environment Themes (ComCen)

Theme	Description	Example indicators
Not fit for purpose work environment	Physical space does not support the demands of communications work	Old, dark, dirty buildings; poor layout; not designed as a call centre
Environmental conditions	Inconsistent or uncomfortable temperature and lighting conditions	Broken air conditioning; too hot/cold; overly bright lighting; lack of fresh air
Noise and acoustics	High noise levels interfere with concentration and communication	Cannot hear callers; ringing ears; headaches; constant background noise
Lack of control over environment	Limited autonomy due to shared space and external decision-making	"Tenant" status; decisions controlled by others; issues not addressed
Co-location with other emergency services	Shared space creates exposure to noise and shouting during tense hours, distressing material, operational interference, and lack of privacy	Hearing traumatic calls; conflicting workflows; lack of separation
Safety concerns	Risks associated with building location and surrounding environment	Aggressive individuals; unsafe entry/exit; lack of parking; walking in dark
Inadequate facilities for shift work	Lack of appropriate spaces for rest, food, quick debrief from a shift manager, and decompression	No kitchen; no rest areas; no private space; reliance on takeaways, no parking – having to pay on top of minimum wage
Impact on wellbeing and performance	Physical environment affects health, stress, and job performance	Fatigue; overstimulation; difficulty concentrating; reduced ability to do the job, no performance management possible due to lack of private spaces
Perceived organisational neglect	Sense that ComCen is undervalued compared to other parts of organisation, not understood by Fire and Emergency or NZPFU	"Poor cousins"; "afterthought"; lack of investment

Differences Per Region

Additional analyses examined whether workplace experiences and factors linked to wellbeing differed across the five Fire and Emergency regions (Te Hiku, Ngā Tai ki te Puku, Te Ūpoko, Te Ihu, and Te Kei).

These analyses were based only on career firefighters, so the findings below should not be generalised to other roles across the organisation.

Wellbeing

Exposure to PTEs varied substantially by region: staff in Ngā Tai ki te Puku consistently reported the highest levels of exposure, while staff in Te Kei consistently reported the lowest.

Despite this regional difference, broader mental health indicators remained relatively comparable across regions.

Organisational and workplace factors

The clearest regional difference here was in how staff rated their physical work environment. Staff in Te Ihu consistently rated their physical work environment (e.g., heating, lighting, ventilation, infrastructure, work area layout) far more positively than staff in every other region, consistent with open-text comments earlier in this report describing near-new, post-earthquake-rebuilt stations in Christchurch, while staff in Ngā Tai ki te Puku and Te Ūpoko tended to rate it less favourably.

Staff in Te Kei reported significantly higher levels of support from their managers than staff in every other region and also tended to report greater involvement in workplace processes and decisions compared with several other regions (albeit still a low overall score). At the same time, staff in Te Kei reported significantly lower perceived preparedness to serve their community compared with several other regions.

For moral injury relating to witnessing others act unethically, staff in Ngā Tai ki te Puku and Te Ūpoko reported significantly higher levels than staff in the other regions. Te Kei reported the lowest scores.

Figure 17. Manager Support (% Scoring High) per Region, 2026

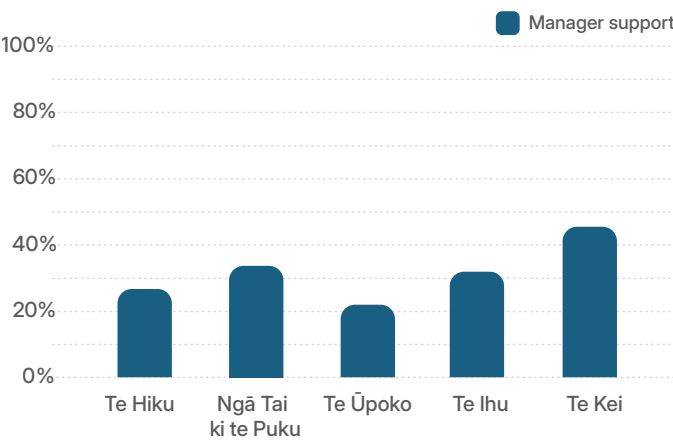
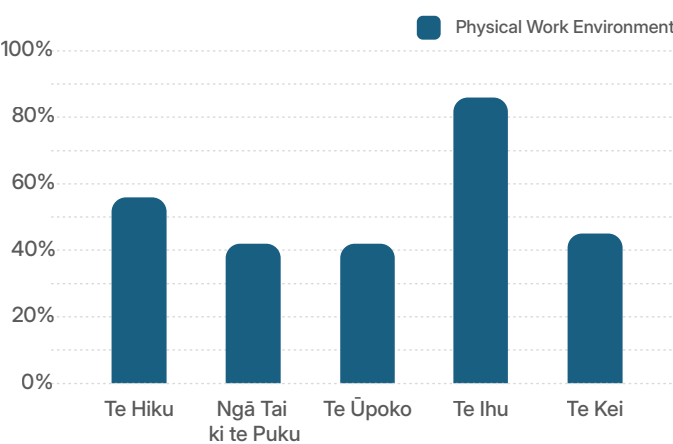


Figure 18. Satisfaction with Physical Work Environment (% Scoring High) per Region, 2026



Which Factors Shape Wellbeing and Organisational Attitudes?

Taken together, the national and cohort findings identify a range of workplace and organisational conditions that may be suitable for intervention. The following sections examine which factors were most closely linked with employee wellbeing and organisational attitudes, before considering how the Whanaungatanga Programme is addressing some of these conditions in Te Hiku and ComCen.

Wellbeing indicators

To better understand which workplace experiences matter most for employee wellbeing, this analysis looked at how a range of workplace factors were linked with outcomes such as anxiety, burnout, and life satisfaction among career firefighters. We first considered a broad range of workplace factors and then identified which ones had the strongest links with each wellbeing outcome. Importantly, the analysis considered these factors together, rather than looking at each one in isolation. This helps to separate the influence of closely related workplace experiences and provides a clearer picture of which factors have their own distinct relationship with employee wellbeing.

Support from managers stood out most clearly as an important modifiable factor for wellbeing outcomes.

Strength of association

The circles (see Table 7, on following page) show the direction and strength of the relationship between each workplace factor and wellbeing. Circle colour shows the direction of the relationship: green indicates that a workplace factor is associated with better wellbeing, while red indicates that it is associated with poorer wellbeing. Circle size and shade show the strength of that association, ranging from small (.05 to .09) through moderate (.10 to .14) and moderate strong (.15 to .19) to strong (.20 or above). Only associations that were statistically significant (i.e., whether the data provide sufficient evidence of an association) are shown. A blank cell means that workplace factor was not included in the final regression model for that wellbeing outcome.

The analysis identified several workplace experiences that were closely linked with career firefighters' wellbeing.

Support from managers stood out most clearly as an important modifiable factor for wellbeing outcomes. Firefighters who felt better supported by their managers tended to report less anxiety, burnout, PTSD and depression, and greater satisfaction with life. The strongest link was with PTSD. This suggests that improving manager support should be an important priority for Fire and Emergency.

Wellbeing was poorer when firefighters faced conflicting expectations at work or felt that the organisation had not met important commitments to them. High workload, emotionally demanding work and dissatisfaction with the physical work environment were also linked with poorer wellbeing.

Moral injury was especially relevant to PTSD, depression and life satisfaction. This refers to distress caused by actions or decisions, whether someone's own or those of others, that conflict with deeply held values. The findings highlight the importance of preventing these situations where possible and providing safe opportunities for reflection and support when they occur.

Exposure to PTEs remained closely linked with PTSD and lower life satisfaction. However, once workplace and organisational factors were considered, potentially traumatic event exposure did not explain additional differences in anxiety, burnout or depression. This does not mean traumatic events are unimportant. However, these findings suggest that employees' working conditions and organisational experiences play a major part in their wellbeing, above and beyond PTEs.

Overall, the findings point to several practical areas for action: strengthening manager support, reducing excessive or conflicting work demands, improving physical workplaces, rebuilding confidence that organisational commitments will be met, and providing appropriate support for trauma and moral injury. These findings show important relationships, but do not prove that one factor directly caused another.

Table 7. Strength of Association Between Workplace Factors and Wellbeing Outcomes Among Career Firefighters, 2026

Predictors for Career Firefighters	Anxiety	Burnout	PTSD	Depression	Life satisfaction
Team Member Perceived – Co-Worker Support					
Team Member Perceived – Manager Support					
Physical Work Environment					
Perceived Preparedness to Serve Community					
Manageable Workload					
Emotional Job Demands					
Role Conflict					
Lack of Involvement					
Psychological Contract Violation					
Moral Injury (Self)					
Moral Injury (Others)					
Clarity of Organisational Goals					
Autonomy					
Performance Feedback					
Exposure to Potentially Traumatic Events					
Tenure					
Gender (Coded As 1 = Female, 0 = Male)					

Note: Sizes of circles are based on standardised regression coefficients (β); circle colour indicates the direction of association (green = better wellbeing, red = poorer wellbeing), and circle size indicates the strength of association. A blank cell indicates the workplace factor was not included in the final regression model for that wellbeing outcome.



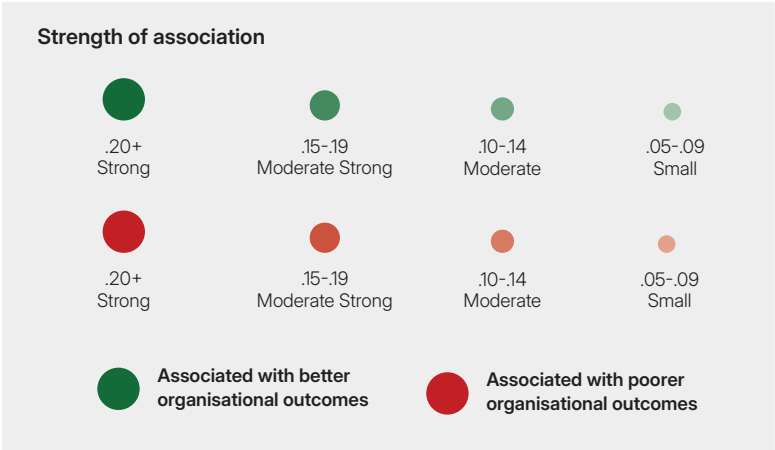
Organisational factors

A second analysis explored which workplace experiences were most closely linked with career firefighters’ attitudes towards Fire and Emergency and its leadership. It examined what factors were related to three areas: distrust or cynicism towards leaders, feeling that the organisation had not met important commitments or expectations, and employees’ sense of connection and commitment to the organisation.

Table 8. Strength of Association Between Workplace Factors and Organisational Outcomes Among Career Firefighters, 2026

Predictors for Career Firefighters	Leadership cynicism	Psychological contract violation	Affective organisational commitment
Psychological Safety			
Team Member Perceived – Co-Worker Support			
Team Member Perceived – Organisational Support			
Physical Work Environment			
Performance Feedback			
Fair Promotion			
Moral Injury (Others)			
Role Conflict			
Lack of Involvement			
Psychological Contract Violation			
Organisational Accountability			
Emotional Job Demands			
Perceived Preparedness to Serve Community			
Tenure			
Gender (Coded As 1 = Female, 0 = Male)			

Note: Sizes of circles are based on standardised regression coefficients (β); circle colour indicates the direction of association (green = better organisational outcomes, red = poorer organisational outcomes), and circle size indicates the strength of association. A blank cell indicates the workplace factor was not included in the final regression model for that organisational outcome.



For psychological contract violation, the findings suggest that stronger feelings of anger, betrayal, and frustration toward the organisation were particularly associated with lower organisational support, lower psychological safety, lower organisational accountability, greater emotional job demands, and greater lack of involvement. Lower perceived preparedness to serve the community was also associated with stronger feelings of organisational betrayal. This pattern suggests that employees are more likely to experience resentment or betrayal toward the organisation when they feel unsupported, excluded from decision-making or organisational processes, insufficiently equipped to do their work safely and effectively. The strong role of organisational support and accountability further suggests that perceptions of whether the organisation takes responsibility, communicates transparently, and meaningfully supports staff may be central to reducing feelings of organisational frustration and betrayal. Tenure was also positively related to perceived violation of the psychological contract, indicating that those who have

been working for Fire and Emergency longer, feel stronger feelings of betrayal.

Leadership cynicism appeared to reflect a somewhat different, although related, organisational process. Cynicism toward leadership was most strongly associated with poorer performance feedback, lower co-worker support, poorer physical work environment perceptions, lower psychological safety, perceptions of unfair promotion opportunities, greater role conflict, and experiencing moral injury from seeing others engage in perceived unethical behaviour. This suggests that leadership cynicism may emerge particularly in environments where employees experience inconsistent communication, contradictory role expectations, limited recognition and developmental feedback, or perceive leadership advancement processes as unfair. The stronger role of the physical work environment within the manager cynicism model may also suggest that visible organisational investment in everyday working conditions contributes to how credible and trustworthy managers are perceived to be. In addition, the

association with moral injury (others) indicates that situations where employees feel pressured to act against their own moral values or standards may contribute to distrust or cynicism toward their manager. Gender and tenure also appeared to be relevant for reported cynicism: men and employees with longer tenure experienced more cynicism.

In contrast, affective organisational commitment appeared to be fostered primarily through supportive organisational climates and positive relational experiences. Greater organisational support, co-worker support, psychological safety, performance feedback, and fair promotion opportunities were all associated with stronger emotional attachment to the organisation, while psychological contract violation was negatively associated with commitment.

Whanaungatanga Programme Evaluation

Te Hiku

Following the baseline survey findings in 2023, workshops were conducted with firefighters and managers in the Te Hiku region to identify key workplace challenges and collaboratively design interventions aimed at improving organisational support, leadership, communication, and wellbeing. These interventions were subsequently approved by Fire and Emergency together with the relevant Unions and Associations and were progressively implemented across the Te Hiku region.

The following interventions were developed, supported or evaluated through the Whanaungatanga Programme across Te Hiku from 2023, with support from the Auckland and Whangārei NZPFU local committees, regional and district management, and the local Intervention Development Team. Interventions remain at varying stages of implementation, as indicated by their status: completed, in progress or paused.

Table 9. Whanaungatanga Programme Pilot Interventions

Completed	In progress	Paused
Conducting workshops with firefighters and managers to identify priority concerns and inform the development of workplace interventions.	Identifying opportunities for managers to delegate appropriate responsibilities to officers and Business Service Coordinators (BSCs), increasing officer and BSC autonomy while reducing manager workload.	Improving transparency and connection between firefighters and organisational decision making relating to fleet, property and equipment.
Removal of the absence indicator across Fire and Emergency New Zealand.	Supporting training and facilitated mediation to strengthen relationships between the Auckland and Whangārei union locals and regional management.	
Supporting and shaping Meeting-Free Wednesdays to create meaningful opportunities for managers to visit stations and connect with crews. This included surveying managers and firefighters to inform improvements, developing and socialising guidance for both groups, and embedding the initiative within Assistant District Commander induction.	Strengthening connections between operational and non-operational personnel by developing ride-along guidance; encouraging station visits and ride-alongs for new and existing personnel; promoting informal opportunities for connection; and sharing programme findings to inform improvements to organisational induction.	
Supporting districts to strengthen reward and recognition by addressing medal backlogs, updating ceremonial guidelines and, in Auckland Central District, assisting with the establishment of an honours programme.		
Supporting leadership development for Te Hiku managers through Nonviolent Communication training, SpeakEasy workshops and a fast-tracked six-month leadership development programme.		

ComCen

The Whanaungatanga Programme was extended to ComCen during 2025 and 2026. The following interventions were developed and supported through the programme, with support from the ComCen Leadership Team, the Intervention Development Team and local union representatives. Interventions remain at varying stages of implementation, as indicated by their status: completed, in progress or paused.

Table 10. Whanaungatanga Programme ComCen Interventions

Completed	In progress
Conducting workshops with ComCen employees and leaders to identify priority concerns and collaboratively develop workplace interventions.	Strengthening ComCen involvement in After Action Reviews (AARs), including supporting training in new operational assurance systems, updating AAR templates and engaging with District Leadership Teams to promote consistent inclusion.
Supporting the review of ComCen rank insignia and alignment, including gathering employee input on naming conventions and progressing updated rank slides.	Supporting the development, delivery and embedding of training initiatives, including call-taker prompts and survival guidance, Psychological First Aid, refresher training, and training delivered with the Fire and Emergency legal team on coronial processes and survival guidance.
Informing consideration of ComCen staffing requirements through workshop and survey findings and supporting the development of a staffing paper for consideration by the staffing working group and bargaining representatives.	Strengthening leadership capability by supporting prioritised access to Fire and Emergency leadership development programmes, embedding Lead Self within recruit courses and supporting the delivery of a nine-month leadership development programme for the ComCen Leadership Team.
	Strengthening the inclusion, visibility and organisational recognition of ComCen employees, including recognition during International Control Room Week, greater inclusion in organisational communications and distribution lists, increased visibility at the National Training Centre, and opportunities to contribute to firefighter familiarisation and ride-alongs.
	Improving the work environment and equipment available to ComCen employees through ergonomic assessments, equipment provision and supporting organisational consideration of breakout spaces and broader workplace improvements.

Participant perceptions and experiences

In this section, we present findings from the intervention evaluation questions completed by participants involved in the Te Hiku and ComCen workplace intervention initiatives. These questions aimed to gather employees' views and feedback regarding the design, implementation, usefulness, and potential impact of the Whanaungatanga Programme interventions. In addition, we provide selected insights from the open-text comments shared by participants at the conclusion of the survey. The accompanying qualitative report provides a more detailed analysis of employees' experiences and perceptions of the workplace interventions and their implementation across both contexts.

Intervention design and aims

Overall, findings from both the Te Hiku and ComCen intervention evaluations indicated strong support for the design and aims of the Whanaungatanga Programme interventions. Participants across both contexts largely approved of the interventions and supported their broader implementation within Fire and Emergency.

Among Te Hiku participants, 92% agreed that they approved of the aims of the interventions, slightly higher than the 88.8% recorded in 2024. Similarly, 86% agreed that the aims of the interventions were applicable to Fire and Emergency, and 83% agreed that they would recommend the interventions for broader organisational use; in 2024, a single combined item on both applicability and recommendation was rated at 87.2%, suggesting these figures have remained broadly stable. ComCen participants reported even stronger endorsement overall, with 96% agreeing that they approved of the aims of the interventions, 84% agreeing that the interventions were applicable to Fire and Emergency, and 87% agreeing that they would recommend the interventions for broader organisational use.

Participants across both areas also viewed the interventions positively in terms of their perceived value and relevance compared to existing organisational approaches, although Te Hiku ratings on these items were somewhat lower than in 2024. In the Te Hiku group, 73% agreed that the interventions designed to support wellbeing were meaningful (down from 85.8% in 2024), 61% considered the interventions interesting (down from 81.1% in 2024), and 74% agreed they provided value compared to other approaches currently used within Fire and Emergency (down from 78.2% in 2024). Among ComCen respondents, endorsement was generally stronger than in Te Hiku, with 71% agreeing that the interventions were meaningful, 70% considering the interventions interesting, and 87% agreeing that they provided value compared to existing organisational approaches.

Perceptions regarding the overall user-friendliness of the intervention design and delivery process were somewhat more mixed compared to the broader endorsement of the intervention aims. In Te Hiku, 67% agreed that the overall approach to the design and delivery of the interventions was user friendly, a decline from 73% in 2024, compared to 77% among ComCen respondents.

Perceived effectiveness and sustainability

Participants from both the Te Hiku and ComCen intervention groups generally expressed positive views regarding the potential effectiveness and impact of the interventions. Many respondents believed that the interventions were likely to contribute positively to trust, support, wellbeing, leadership, and organisational functioning within Fire and Emergency.

Among Te Hiku respondents, 59% agreed that the outcomes of the interventions had been significant, down from 80.5% in 2024. Further, 68% agreed that the interventions were likely to lead to better outcomes than other approaches to organisational change, down from 75% in 2024. Similarly, among ComCen respondents, 67% agreed that the outcomes of the interventions had been significant, and 84% agreed that the interventions were likely to lead to better outcomes than other approaches to organisational change. At the same time, responses suggested somewhat greater uncertainty regarding the long-term organisational implementation and sustainability of the interventions. In Te Hiku, 48% agreed that the Whanaungatanga Programme was likely to continue receiving support from Fire and Emergency, down from 56% in 2024 (noting the 2024 item asked about likelihood of implementation rather than ongoing support, so the wording shifted slightly across time points). ComCen respondents reported somewhat greater confidence, with 59% agreeing that the programme would continue to receive organisational support. This suggests that, despite strong endorsement of the interventions themselves, there is uncertainty among participants regarding the organisation's long-term commitment to sustaining the programme.

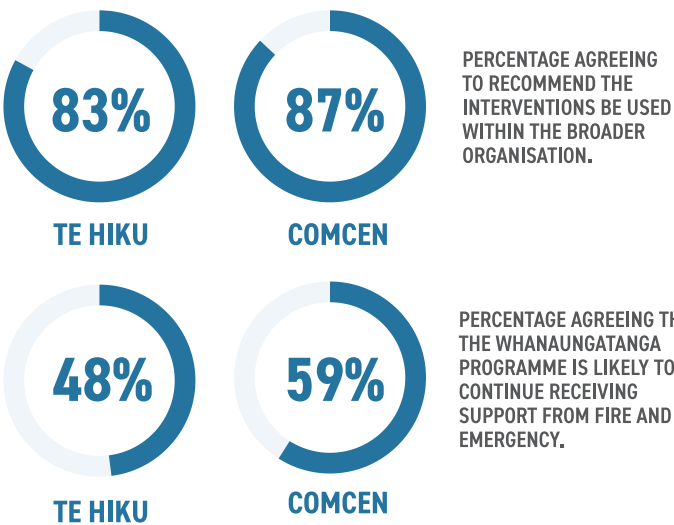
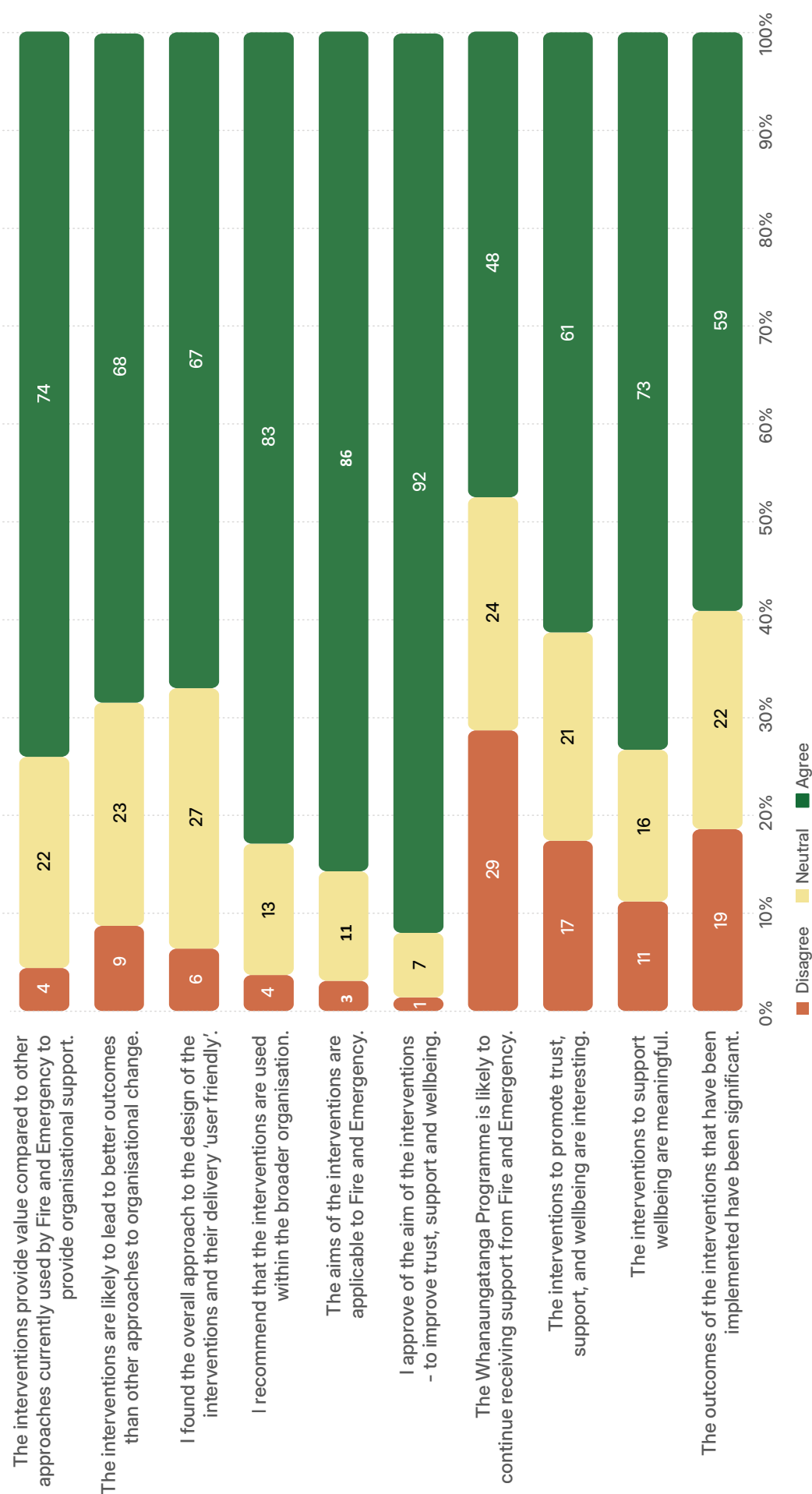
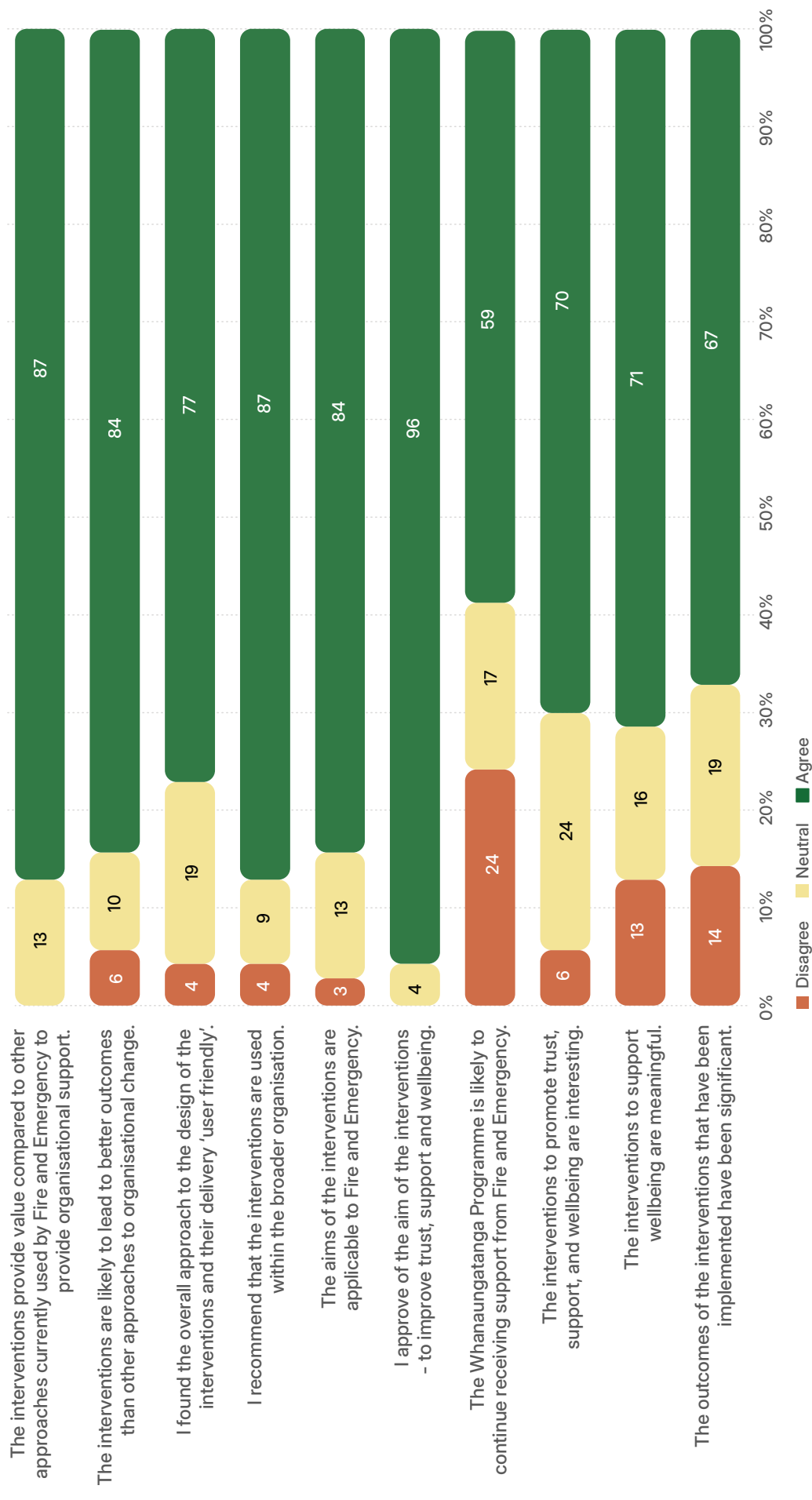


Figure 19. Levels of Agreement with Evaluation Questions, Te Hiku, 2026



Note. "Disagree" combines strongly disagree, disagree, and slightly disagree; "Agree" combines slightly agree, agree, and strongly agree; "Neutral" remained a single category.

Figure 20. Levels of Agreement with Evaluation Questions, ComCen, 2026



Note. "Disagree" combines strongly disagree, disagree, and slightly disagree; "Agree" combines slightly agree, agree, and strongly agree; "Neutral" remained a single category.

Participant reflections: Te Hiku

Participants in the Te Hiku pilot region were invited to provide additional qualitative feedback in response to the open-ended question: "Do you have any additional feedback about the Whanaungatanga Programme interventions, or would you like to elaborate on any of the scores you gave?" A total of 117 comments were received. While the question focused specifically on the programme interventions, many responses also reflected broader experiences within Fire and Emergency, particularly participants' perceptions of organisational leadership, workplace culture, and the current industrial relations climate. As such, the comments can be interpreted not only as feedback on the programme itself, but also as feedback regarding the wider organisational context within which the programme is being implemented.

Overall, feedback from Te Hiku firefighters reflects a complex mixture of appreciation for the Whanaungatanga Programme itself, alongside widespread frustration, distrust, and disappointment toward broader organisational leadership and culture. While many participants viewed the programme and several of its interventions positively, comments suggest that the wider organisational climate is currently undermining the programme's impact.

- A dominant theme across comments is a **widespread erosion of trust in senior leadership and the wider organisation**. Many participants described feeling unsupported, unheard, and disconnected from management, often contrasting the values promoted through the programme with their lived experience within Fire and Emergency. Comments frequently referred to leadership as "tone deaf," disconnected from frontline realities, or engaging in "lip service" rather than meaningful action. Or as one participant described: "What do we want from our direct Managers, honesty!"
- Despite this broader distrust, many firefighters still expressed **strong support for the Whanaungatanga Programme itself and for the people delivering it**. Several comments described the programme as one of the few initiatives that had generated meaningful progress or improved relationships between frontline staff and the organisation. Participants often differentiated between the programme team and broader organisational leadership. As one participant noted, "the team that deliver the program appear to be very genuine and up front," while another described the programme as "the best thing to ever happen to the fire service / FENZ."
- Closely related to this was the perception that **the programme provided one of the few genuine opportunities for frontline firefighters to express** their experiences and concerns honestly. Participants described the programme as creating visibility and voice for operational staff in ways they had not previously experienced. One respondent commented that "this is the only outlet that we can let FENZ know how we really feel," while another described it as "a great program to get an understanding of the FFs thoughts/ feeling on the organisation."
- A particularly strong theme concerned the perceived impact of the **current industrial relations climate and bargaining environment**. Many firefighters believed that progress made through the programme had been significantly undermined or reversed by broader tensions between Fire and Emergency management and operational staff. Respondents frequently linked declining morale, worsening relationships, and loss of trust to industrial action and organisational responses during bargaining. One participant commented that "all progress that had been made has been destroyed by their approach to bargaining," while another noted that "despite best intention all progress is being destroyed and is ultimately going backwards."
- Concerns regarding **inconsistent managerial engagement and implementation of interventions** also emerged frequently. Experiences appeared highly dependent on individual managers and local leadership practices. Some firefighters valued increased face-to-face engagement and informal interactions with managers, particularly through initiatives such as meeting-free Wednesdays. Others, however, described limited visibility from managers or perceived these interactions as insincere, inconsistent, or performative. One respondent noted that "some managers were better than others at implementing the Wednesday catch ups," while another stated that there was "virtually no manager engagement" occurring in their area.
- Several comments reflected concerns that **interventions had lost momentum over time** or were not being sustained. Participants commonly described interventions as starting positively before "dwindling away," "fading," or becoming "tick box exercises." Meeting-free Wednesdays and relational engagement initiatives were frequently mentioned in this context. Participants emphasised that sustained implementation and organisational commitment would be required to achieve meaningful cultural change.
- Feedback also highlighted the **importance of relational and face-to-face engagement**. Informal conversations, visible leadership presence, and opportunities for authentic dialogue were viewed positively and perceived as valuable for rebuilding relationships. One firefighter commented that "just having a person sit down with you to discuss anything versus an email or letter" was beneficial and contributed to a stronger sense of connection.

- The **removal of the absence indicator generated mixed views**. Some participants described the removal as a major relief that reduced pressure, fear, and presenteeism. Others believed the removal had contributed to reduced accountability and increased misuse of sick leave. Even among those who supported the removal, some participants expressed ongoing concerns that absence monitoring and judgement from management continued informally.
- A smaller but notable group of comments raised **concerns about Māori terminology, bicultural framing, and use of te reo Māori** within the programme and survey. Some participants expressed discomfort or exclusion related to not understanding Māori language content, while others questioned the relevance of bicultural approaches within the organisation. These perspectives were present but represented a minority of responses.
- While not directly related to the programme itself, concerns regarding **recognition and appreciation** also emerged repeatedly throughout the comments. Several firefighters described feeling undervalued and insufficiently recognised for their contribution and service. Participants highlighted a perceived lack of appreciation from the organisation, particularly for operational staff and long-serving firefighters. One respondent reflected that firefighters were retiring after “20+ years service and receiving little more than a handshake.”
- Similarly, although not explicitly focused on the programme, some comments highlighted a **perceived divide between operational firefighters and non-operational or corporate staff**. Participants described feelings of disconnect between frontline realities and organisational decision-making processes. In several responses, corporate or non-operational staff were perceived as detached from operational experiences and wellbeing concerns.
- Overall, the comments suggest that the **Whanaungatanga Programme** is perceived by many Te Hiku firefighters as a **credible and valuable initiative with significant potential**. However, its impact currently appears constrained by broader organisational tensions, inconsistent implementation, declining trust in leadership, and uncertainty regarding long-term organisational commitment.

Te Hiku – Comments about the evaluation

Table 11. Explanations of Themes Amongst Evaluation Comments, Te Hiku, 2026

Theme	Description	Illustrative quote
Erosion of trust in senior leadership	Distrust toward NHQ and senior leadership; belief leadership behaviour contradicts organisational values; lack of perceived accountability; scepticism towards acting on results survey	<i>“FENZ is paying lip service to the Programme. I do not trust them to do the right thing and look after us.”</i> <i>“What they say and what they do seem like too different things at the moment.”</i> <i>“This place is an absolute shambles, with the worse culture and not a single grain of trust in FENZ.”</i> <i>“The interventions are a step in the right direction ... However, the interventions that have been made are the “low hanging fruit” I don’t trust FENZ will implement any future or significant interventions.”</i>
Progress reversed due to current organisational climate	Industrial disputes and bargaining tensions were perceived as worsening morale and damaging trust	<i>“All progress that had been made has been destroyed by their approach to bargaining.”</i> <i>“Despite best intention all progress is being destroyed and is ultimately going backwards due to FENZ’s upper managements’ continued behaviour.”</i>

Table continued

Theme	Description	Illustrative quote
Inconsistent managerial engagement	Experiences depended heavily on individual managers and uneven implementation	<i>"Some managers were better than others at implementing the Wednesday catch ups."</i> <i>"As a Te Hiku firefighter, I have yet to see a manager come and talk to my crew since the program has started."</i>
Loss of momentum and sustainability concerns	Participants described interventions fading over time, not being maintained, or its impact reversed.	<i>"The interventions started well but have slowly dwindled away."</i> <i>"Meeting free Wednesdays dropped away fast"</i>
Value of relational and face-to-face engagement	Informal conversations and visible leadership presence were valued	<i>"Just having a person sit down with you to discuss anything versus an email or letter."</i>
Continued absenteeism pressure and surveillance concerns	Absence monitoring remained emotionally charged even after changes. Participants expressed opposing views about the absence indicator.	<i>"Although the absent indicator colour was removed, District and Group managers are now being held to numbers instead."</i> <i>"Removing the absenteeism indicator has been a great relief to me."</i> <i>"It's removal has directly contributed to widespread misuse of sick leave entitlements."</i>
Positive views towards the programme	Distinction between programme staff and broader organisation	<i>"The team that deliver the program appear to be very genuine and up front."</i> <i>"Best thing to ever happen to the fire service / FENZ"</i>
Uneven programme awareness and inclusion	Some staff felt excluded or unaware of the programme, fire risk management not included	<i>"Most FENZ employees & volunteers outside of Te Hiku & the 3 Comm Centers are not aware of the Whanaungatanga Programme."</i>
Need for broader trauma and wellbeing support	Desire for stronger psychological and trauma-informed support	<i>"This should include education about PTSD and its signs and symptoms."</i>
Concerns about Māori language and bicultural framing	Some participants expressed discomfort regarding Māori terminology and bicultural framing	<i>"I think the name of this program should be in English (I don't know what it means and the vast majority of people working for FENZ aren't Māori)."</i> <i>"as a person that cannot speak or read Māori, I feel disadvantaged that I cannot even understand the first word in this survey"</i>
Hope for meaningful change despite scepticism	Despite frustration, some participants still expressed hope for improvement	<i>"Hopefully the findings will push FENZ to make some positive changes for its people."</i>

Participants working within ComCen were invited to provide additional qualitative feedback in response to the open-ended question: "Do you have any additional feedback about the Whanaungatanga Programme interventions, or would you like to elaborate on any of the scores you gave?" A total of 29 comments were received. While the question focused specifically on the programme interventions, many responses also reflected broader organisational experiences, including perceptions of leadership, workload pressures, organisational change processes, and the visibility of ComCen staff within Fire and Emergency.

Overall, feedback reflects a cautiously positive perception of the Whanaungatanga Programme, alongside clear concerns about implementation, pace of change, and organisational follow-through.

- A prominent theme across responses is that the programme is viewed as **meaningful and long overdue**. Many participants expressed appreciation for the work undertaken and highlighted that, for the first time, they feel heard, seen, and taken seriously. As one respondent noted, "feels like we finally have a voice and are being heard and seen." The programme is frequently described as the only initiative that has led to tangible progress.
- However, this positive perception of the programme is contrasted by a broader **lack of trust in the organisation's ability to sustain and act on these efforts**. Several comments reflect scepticism about whether senior leadership will continue to support the programme or follow through on proposed changes.
- A dominant concern relates to the pace of implementation. While participants acknowledge the value of consultation and planning, many expressed frustration that change is perceived as too slow. This is captured strongly in comments such as "we are really running out of steam" and "we are exhausted." Others emphasised the gap between discussion and action, noting that "talking, planning, discussions so far is great... but more action needs to happen quicker." Delays were often described as unacceptable in the current context, with one respondent stating that "delays quickly turn from years to decades."
- **Communication and visibility of the programme** also emerged as key issues. Some participants reported limited awareness of specific interventions or how they are connected to the Whanaungatanga Programme. Others highlighted a lack of regular updates, leading to uncertainty about progress. This lack of visibility appears to reduce the perceived impact of the programme, even where changes may be occurring.
- In addition, several responses highlighted **challenges in the implementation of interventions**. While the overall direction is viewed positively, some interventions were described as inconsistently introduced or insufficiently supported. For instance, one respondent noted that they "had no idea [a change] was part of the Whanaungatanga Programme" and received limited guidance when trying to implement it.
- Participants also raised questions about the **long-term sustainability of the programme**. There is a perceived risk that improvements remain dependent on the programme itself, rather than being embedded into standard organisational practices. As one respondent reflected, there is a need to ensure changes are "embedded... so we no longer require ongoing support from the programme."
- Importantly, many of these perspectives are shaped by the broader organisational context. Comments frequently referenced **high workloads, staffing shortages, and ongoing uncertainty** related to organisational change. One participant described being "currently doing the job of 2 and very soon to be 3," while others linked delays in improvements to restructuring processes.
- Finally, there is a clear **desire for greater inclusion and recognition**. Participants expressed interest in broader staff involvement and highlighted the importance of acknowledging the contributions of specific roles, particularly within ComCen. As one respondent noted, "we are a small voice in a large organisation".
- In summary, the **Whanaungatanga Programme** is widely regarded as a **credible and valuable initiative** that has begun to generate meaningful change. Participants consistently recognised both its impact and the commitment of those involved, with one noting that "the team... are doing an amazing job, the approach has been welcoming, the support has been amazing." At the same time, its overall effectiveness is currently constrained by slow implementation, communication gaps, and a lack of trust in organisational follow-through.

ComCen – Comments about the evaluation

Table 12. Explanations of Themes Amongst Evaluation Comments, ComCen, 2026

Theme	Description	Illustrative quote
Positive perceptions of the programme and intervention team	Participants frequently described the programme as meaningful and one of the few initiatives that had created visible progress or hope for change within ComCen. The programme team was often perceived as authentic, committed, and effective.	<i>"Whanaungatanga is the one programme that has actually delivered results."</i> <i>"Feels like we finally have a voice and are being heard and seen."</i> <i>"The team that have been working on this programme since day one are doing an amazing job."</i> <i>"It is the first time we have actually seen any positive change."</i>
Hope for organisational change alongside scepticism	Participants expressed cautious optimism that the programme could improve wellbeing and organisational culture, while simultaneously doubting whether Fire and Emergency leadership would sustain support or follow through with action.	<i>"It's hard to have hope/trust what we're asking for will be delivered, but this feels better than anything we've had so far."</i> <i>"I feel like I do not trust that FENZ will continue to progress through the processes."</i> <i>"Fingers crossed it gets the full support of the organisation."</i> <i>"I feel FENZ will tire of the Whanaungatanga model because it will highlight failings in the organisation."</i>
Frustration with slow implementation and organisational bureaucracy	Many comments reflected exhaustion with delays, slow decision-making, and difficulty translating plans into tangible improvements. Participants described interventions becoming stalled within organisational processes and restructuring.	<i>"We need action, not just lip service."</i> <i>"The project has stalled to 'wait and see what happens with restructure'."</i> <i>"Delays quickly turn from years to decades."</i> <i>"Talking, planning, discussions so far is great ... but we are really running out of steam."</i> <i>"More action needs to happen quicker."</i>
Lack of recognition of ComCen staff	Participants described feeling overlooked within the broader organisation and believed ComCen had historically struggled to gain recognition, support, and resourcing.	<i>"We are a small voice in a large organisation."</i> <i>"The organisation fails to remember what we do for them and they never acknowledge us."</i> <i>"We have tried to make improvements and been overlooked for years."</i>
Concerns about sustainability and programme dependency	Some participants worried that progress depended too heavily on the programme itself, rather than broader organisational culture change becoming embedded and self-sustaining.	<i>"I do have concerns about us creating too much dependency on the programme."</i> <i>"I would hope that they can achieve things eventually without this."</i>
Environmental and workspace concerns	Several comments focused on the physical ComCen environment, including unresolved issues related to noise, space, relocation, and infrastructure. Delays in environmental improvements were perceived as harmful for wellbeing and retention.	<i>"[location] want a relocation or at least a wall to reduce sound issues and space concerns."</i> <i>"I also see very little changes made to improve our space in [location]."</i>

Theme	Description	Illustrative quote
Uneven communication and programme visibility	Participants noted inconsistent communication about interventions and insufficient visibility regarding progress, updates, and implementation. Some staff also reported uncertainty about which initiatives were connected to the programme.	<i>"Sometimes we don't get regular updates on these interventions."</i> <i>"I had no idea that change was part of the Whanaungatanga Programme."</i> <i>"Some of the interventions were poorly introduced or not introduced at all."</i>
Emotional exhaustion and workload strain	Comments reflected broader organisational strain, including understaffing, restructures, uncertainty, and emotional exhaustion. These stressors shaped how interventions were experienced and interpreted.	<i>"We. Are. Exhausted."</i> <i>"I am currently doing the job of 2 and very soon to be 3."</i> <i>"It wears me down how long it takes to achieve anything in this organisation."</i>
Importance of structural access and high-level influence	Participants highlighted that the programme was effective partly because it bypassed some traditional organisational hierarchies and involved people with decision-making authority.	<i>"Whanaungatanga programme has been able to get more traction because it cuts out multiple layers of leadership."</i> <i>"The people sitting around the table have the ability to influence and make real change."</i>
Accessibility and inclusion barriers	Some participants experienced barriers to participation due to scheduling, caregiving responsibilities, or missing intervention sessions.	<i>"I wish all dates had the option to TEAMS in."</i> <i>"I can't do the catch up session as it's in the evening and I need to feed/put children to bed."</i>
Other contextual factors influencing responses	Some respondents noted that personal circumstances, health events, or limited exposure to the programme shaped their ability to comment.	<i>"I feel I am too new to elaborate on why the project is required."</i>

Conclusion

The 2026 Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey shows that Fire and Emergency continues to face significant employee mental-health and workplace risks. While poor mental-health outcomes remained elevated, the most noticeable deterioration was in employees' overall trust, confidence and relationship with the organisation. This indicates that the response needs to address not only exposure to PTEs, but also the organisational and working conditions in which those exposures occur and that impact employees' wellbeing.

The findings varied across employee groups, reinforcing that a single response will not be sufficient. ComCen employees, career firefighters, uniformed managers and commanders, other uniformed personnel and non-uniformed employees each reported different combinations of mental-health, workload, leadership, job security and organisational constraints. More detailed findings for these groups should inform the design and prioritisation of future initiatives.

The survey was conducted during a period of substantial organisational disruption. Change processes, collective bargaining, industrial action, staffing pressures, workload and infrastructure concerns all formed part of the context in which employees responded. The data cannot separate the contribution of these factors or attribute the results to a single cause. However, the findings clearly indicate that employees' experiences of organisational support, involvement, accountability, leadership and working conditions are closely connected with their wellbeing. Some of the concerns identified in 2026 were also evident in earlier surveys, and similar patterns of decline in organisational attitudes and evaluations of organisational support appeared across groups. They therefore warrant organisational attention regardless of the extent to which the current period of disruption contributed to their severity.

The programme-evaluation findings provide encouraging support for the relevance, value and continued development of the Whanaungatanga Programme and ongoing surveying of the organisation. Participants generally endorsed its aims and particularly valued having a genuine voice, locally relevant interventions, improved connection and access to people able to progress concerns through the organisation. Favourable findings in Te Hiku and improvements in several local and wellbeing indicators in ComCen are consistent with the areas the programme is designed to influence and suggest that positive local changes can occur even during difficult wider organisational conditions.

The evaluation cannot establish with certainty that the programme caused these outcomes. Programme implementation also varied, and some initiatives may not have been in place long enough for their effects to be fully visible. Equally, the deterioration in wider organisational indicators should not be treated as evidence that the programme has failed. Participants frequently distinguished their positive views of the programme from their concerns about the wider organisation. The programme can directly strengthen employee voice, local relationships, manager visibility and the development of locally relevant solutions. The programme

can also identify and raise wider risks relating to staffing, workload, infrastructure and policy. However, responsibility for resolving national staffing, remuneration, industrial relations, restructuring and major infrastructure matters should sit with the appropriate organisational leaders and decision-makers.

Taken together, the findings support continued and strengthened organisational and leadership-level intervention along with continued monitoring. This includes consolidating the programme, improving the consistency and sustainability of its implementation, and ensuring that wider risks are assigned to organisational leaders with the authority and resources to address them. Individual mental-health and peer support remain important, but should complement rather than replace action on the conditions affecting people at work.

The recommendations that follow set out the actions for consideration at organisational, leadership, individual-support and programme levels. More detailed technical and qualitative analysis later in the year will provide further insight into changes over time, qualitative findings, differences between employee groups and the implementation and outcomes of particular interventions.

Recommendations

The findings in this report point to a set of priorities for Fire and Emergency, spanning both the wider organisation and the Whanaungatanga Programme. This section draws on the detailed findings in the report to indicate which actions and areas would most benefit from being prioritised.

Beyond the programme itself, staff feedback from the wider organisation points to five priority areas for wider organisational attention: resourcing, including staffing, workload, equipment and fleet; the employment environment, including recognition and remuneration, bargaining and job security; the leadership environment, including trust, psychological safety, accountability and communication; the physical work environment; and the relational environment, including respect, recognition and being heard.

These areas fall largely outside Whanaungatanga's direct influence, but addressing them, particularly through greater transparency in communication, consistent leadership support and training, and stronger performance feedback, is likely to be an important complement to the programme's continued work.

Considerations for Fire and Emergency across the organisation

Fire and Emergency is encouraged to identify and actively address risks relating to staffing, workload, infrastructure, employee involvement, competing role expectations, and organisational change. Where a risk sits outside the Whanaungatanga Programme's authority or resources to resolve, we recommend responsibility for it be clearly assigned elsewhere, to help ensure it does not go unaddressed. Strengthening consultation and communication during periods of change is recommended, so that employee concerns are more likely to reach decision-makers with the authority and resources to act on them. Organisational trust, employees' confidence in speaking up, accountability, and intentions to leave remain significant organisational risks that warrant ongoing monitoring and mitigation. This recommendation reflects both the qualitative themes raised across nearly 1,450 open-text responses – mentioning staffing shortages and workload, distrust in senior leadership, and dissatisfaction with pay and recognition – and the strong 2026 decline in perceived organisational support, competence, accountability and psychological safety across nearly every measure of organisational functioning.

Considerations for leadership and management

Continued investment in leadership capability development and support is recommended, with clear accountabilities and developmental pathways to help guide this work. Manager visibility, relationship-based leadership, and the quality of performance feedback provided to employees would benefit from being strengthened where possible. Managers benefit from having sufficient time and clearly outlined responsibilities related to engaging with their people, and we recommend this be supported wherever practical. Workload and competing role expectations warrant attention, particularly among uniformed managers and commanders. We recommend the consistency of leadership practices continue to be monitored, with transparent communication and visible follow-through encouraged at every level.

This recommendation is based on the analyses of which workplace factors most strongly relate to each outcome: poor performance feedback, low psychological safety, low co-worker support, a poor physical work environment, and perceptions of unfair promotion had the strongest relationship with leadership cynicism and a sense of broken organisational obligations, while strong support, psychological safety and fair feedback were the strongest predictors of organisational commitment. This is reinforced by commanders' and uniformed managers' own experience of these same factors, who reported substantially higher role conflict and moral injury from witnessing others' unethical conduct than the wider sample, alongside the lowest rates of manageable workload of any role group.

Considerations for individual support

We recommend accessible clinical, peer, and individual wellbeing support to be maintained and tailored to the needs of different employee groups. This support is best positioned to complement, rather than replace, action on harmful working conditions and leadership practices. This recommendation follows the report's overall pattern of findings, which points to workplace conditions and leadership as the primary drivers of mental health and wellbeing outcomes, with individual support as a valuable complement rather than a substitute.

Considerations for the Whanaungatanga Programme

We recommend continued monitoring of implementation in Te Hiku, so that the early progress made there is not lost, while the work already underway in ComCen continues to build on what has been established so far. Before current interventions are expanded any further, it would be worth taking the time to consolidate and embed them properly, so that what is already in place has a chance to become secure. We recommend interventions continue to be developed together with the employees who will be affected by them, and as this work continues, we recommend ownership, monitoring and accountability for follow-through be strengthened along the way rather than left to develop on their own. This is grounded in two patterns in the findings: scores on nearly every Te Hiku intervention-evaluation question declined between 2024 and 2026, with qualitative feedback describing interventions "dwindling away" or becoming "tick box exercises" without sustained organisational commitment; and ComCen's persistently elevated rates of mental ill health relative to international benchmarks, its own qualitative feedback describing a long-standing sense of being overlooked and under-resourced, and the early positive shifts observed since its inclusion in the programme from 2025 onward.

It would also help to bring more clarity to what the programme can directly influence itself, what it can identify and raise on behalf of staff, and what instead requires action from other parts of the organisation. Survey findings can continue to guide how interventions are shaped for different employee groups and can help identify which approaches might be suitable for adaptation or wider use elsewhere. We recommend current interventions be consolidated and embedded before any widespread expansion. Where future expansion is approved, group-specific workshops are recommended as a starting point, both to help tailor interventions to the needs of different employee groups and to build staff involvement in decision-making, an area this survey found to be consistently low.

What further analysis will follow?

This report presents findings from the analysis completed to date. A further technical report will provide more detailed longitudinal analysis across the three survey waves, additional qualitative thematic analysis, and closer examination of the implementation and outcomes of individual Whanaungatanga interventions. Where sample sizes allow, it will also explore more detailed breakdowns beyond career firefighters and commanders, for example by employee group, region, or district, to better understand where experiences differ.

Glossary of Survey Indicators

Mental health indicators

Alcohol is one of the most widely consumed psychoactive drugs in the world. It is a common maladaptive coping mechanism during times of high stress or trauma. To assess alcohol consumption patterns, the survey employed the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test-Consumption (AUDIT-C), a 3-item scale. The scale's scores range from 0 to 12, and scores of 4 or higher for men and 3 or higher for women indicate potentially hazardous drinking patterns. The survey also reports rates of heavy episodic drinking (i.e., consuming six or more drinks on one occasion) on at least a monthly or weekly basis.

Anxiety is a mental ill health condition characterised by apprehension and somatic symptoms of tension in which an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune⁸. The survey employed the Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7), a 7-item scale, to measure the severity of anxiety symptoms. Scores on the scale range from 0-21, and scores of 10 or higher indicate moderate-to-severe symptoms of anxiety.

Burnout refers to mental exhaustion, reduced enthusiasm, concentration difficulties, and emotional strain experienced at work, often as a result of being overworked. The survey employed the 4-item ultra-short Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT4) to measure burnout, a brief screening version of the longer BAT designed for use in workplace settings. Scores on the scale range from 1 to 5, with scores above 2.38 indicating burnout risk. This threshold was established through validation research using a representative Swedish workforce sample alongside a group of people diagnosed with clinical exhaustion⁹, and was set to reliably detect people showing early or mild burnout symptoms. The BAT4 does not distinguish between mild and severe burnout risk; it is intended to flag people who may benefit from further support or follow-up, rather than to indicate the severity of their symptoms.

Emotional numbing is a coping mechanism in which people detach from their emotions, both positive and negative, to deal with distress and trauma. It can be helpful in the short term, but it can lead to problems in the long term, such as difficulty processing emotions, increased risk of mental health problems, and reduced quality of life. The survey employed 5 items from the general subscale of the Emotional Reactivity and Numbing Scale. Scores on the scale range from 0-7, and scores of 4.6 or higher indicate high levels of emotional numbing.

Depression is a mental ill health condition that affects a person's mood, thoughts, and behaviour¹⁰. It is characterised by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and loss of interest in activities that one typically enjoys. The survey employed the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), a 9-item scale, to assess the severity of depressive symptoms. The scores on this scale range from 0-27, with scores of 10 or higher indicating moderate-to-severe depressive symptoms.

Job satisfaction is the extent to which employees experience positive or negative emotions related to their work. The survey employed one question about job satisfaction. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, and scores of 6.0 or higher indicate high levels of job satisfaction.

Life satisfaction refers to the extent to which individuals positively evaluate their overall quality of life. The survey employed one question from the Satisfaction with Life Scale. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, and scores of 6.0 or higher indicate high levels of life satisfaction.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental ill health condition that can develop in individuals who have directly or indirectly experienced or witnessed traumatic events. PTSD symptoms may arise after a single event or from repeated exposure and can persist long after the original exposure has occurred, affecting an individual's quality of life and ability to function. The survey employed the Short Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Rating Interview (SPRINT), an 8-item scale, to assess the main symptoms of PTSD. Scores on the scale range from 0 to 32,

and scores of 17 or higher suggest probable PTSD.

Post-traumatic growth refers to the potential for positive change in individuals' lives following traumatic events or challenging life circumstances. The survey employed 5 items from the Post-traumatic Growth Inventory. Scores on the scale range from 0-7, and scores of 5.4 or higher indicate high levels of post-traumatic growth.

Psychological detachment refers to the ability to mentally switch off from work during non-work time. The survey employed one item to measure psychological detachment. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, and scores of 5 or higher indicate an ability to psychologically detach from work.

Resilience refers to the ability to recover from stress and approach the next stressor with optimism¹¹. The survey employed 3 items from the Brief Resilience Scale. Scores on the scale range from 0-7, and scores of 6 or higher indicate high levels of resilience.

Work-to-family conflict is a common inter-role conflict where the demands of work interfere with fulfilling family-related roles. The survey employed a 3-item subset of the work-family conflict scale. Scores on the scale range from 1 to 7, and scores of 6.3 or higher indicate high work-family conflict.

Organisational factors

Absenteeism was measured using a numerical free-text box in which employees were asked to report approximately how many days in the past 6 months they had been absent from work due to illness or health-related reasons (for themselves or a family member).

Accountability is the responsibility of an organisation to take ownership of its actions and willingness to address mistakes or wrongdoing. In this survey, accountability was measured on a 4-item scale. Scores on the scale range from 1 to 7, and scores of 5 or higher indicate that employees agree that Fire and Emergency exhibit accountability.

Affective exchange ideology refers to the belief held by employees that positive treatment from the organisation should be reciprocated with positive attitudes and behaviours, such as loyalty, pride, and respect, by the employee. In this survey, affective exchange ideology was measured with one item. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, with scores of 5 or higher indicating stronger affective exchange ideology.

Affective organisational commitment refers to the emotional attachment and loyalty that employees feel towards their organisation. It represents a deep sense of belonging and positive connection, leading to a willingness to invest in their work and support the organisation's goals. In this survey, affective organisational commitment was measured on a 6-item scale. Scores on the scale range from 1 to 7, and scores of 5 or higher indicate organisational commitment.

Autonomy refers to the level of freedom and discretion an employee has in deciding how to perform their work. In this survey, autonomy was measured with one item. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, with scores of 5 or higher indicating freedom within deciding how to complete work.

Clarity of organisational goals refers to the extent to which employees have a shared understanding of the organisation's long-term direction and future plans, and perceive these as clearly communicated across the organisation. In this survey, clarity of organisational goals was measured with one item. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, with scores of 5 or higher indicating an understanding of organisational goals.

Cynicism in the workplace refers to a negative attitude and scepticism that employees hold towards their organisation or manager. It involves a lack of trust and belief in the organisation's intentions, actions, and decisions, leading to a sense of disillusionment and detachment. In this survey, both organisational cynicism and cynicism towards managers were measured on 3-item scales. Scores on the scale range from 1 to 7, and scores of 5 or higher indicate that employees hold cynical attitudes towards the organisation or their manager.

Emotional job demands refers to the extent to which an employee's work is emotionally demanding. In this survey, emotional job demands was measured with one item. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, with scores of 5 or higher indicating that an employee's work is emotionally demanding.

Extra-role performance refers to voluntary actions by employees that go beyond their formal job requirements. This survey used a 3-item scale to assess extra-role performance. Participants were asked to rate their level of engagement in activities that go beyond their formal job requirements. Scores on the scale ranged from 1 to 7, with scores of 5 or greater indicating extra-role performance.

Fair promotion refers to whether employees perceive promotion decisions within Fire and Emergency as fair. In this survey, fair promotion was measured with one item. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, with scores of 5 or higher indicating a positive perception of fairness of promotion.

Gratitude towards the organisation refers to the level of appreciation and recognition employees have for their organisation. It encompasses their gratitude for the support, opportunities, and positive impact the organisation has on their professional growth and overall wellbeing. In this survey, gratitude towards the organisation was measured with a 3-item scale. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, with scores of 5 or higher indicating gratitude towards the organisation.

Involvement refers to the perception of having a voice in decision-making, and experiencing effective communication about changes. In this survey, job security was measured with a 3-item scale. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, with scores of 5 or higher indicating a perception of involvement in decisions.

Job security refers to the level of confidence employees have regarding the stability of their employment. In this survey, job security was measured with one item. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, with scores of 5 or higher indicating the employee feels their job is secure.

Moral injury refers to the distress experienced from witnessing other act in a way that violate one's moral or professional standards (others) or acting in ways that violate one's moral or professional standards (self). In this survey, moral injury was measured with a two-item scale. Scores on the scale range from 1 to 7, and scores of 5 or higher indicate moral injury.

Organisational competence refers to the employee's perception of an organisation's ability to carry out its role effectively. In this survey, organisational competence was measured on a 3-item scale. Scores on the scale range from 1 to 7, and scores of 5 or higher indicate that employees perceive Fire and Emergency as being competent and capable.

Organisational values refers to the extent to which employees resonate with the values of Fire and Emergency. In this survey, organisational values was measured with one item. Scores on the scale range from 1 to 7, with scores of 5 or higher indicating that employees like the values of Fire and Emergency.

Perceived support refers to how much an employee believes their organisation values their contributions and cares about their wellbeing¹². In this survey, perceived support was measured at each of the following levels:

- Support from the organisation as a whole
- Support from managers (for personnel)
- Support from personnel (for managers)
- Support from co-workers
- Support from non-uniformed employees (towards uniformed employees)
- Support from uniformed employees (towards non-uniformed employees).

The survey employed questions from the Perceived Organisational Support scale for each of these levels. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, and scores of 5.0 or higher indicate positive perceptions of support.

Perceived preparedness to serve the community refers to an employee's sense of being adequately supported by their organisation to fulfil their role and serve the community. It encompasses the provision of necessary resources, equipment, and training to effectively carry out their work. In this survey, preparedness to serve the community was measured with a 2-item scale. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, with scores of 5 or higher indicating agreement that employees are well-equipped and trained to carry out their roles effectively.

Performance feedback refers to whether people feel they are receiving regular, clear information about performance quality. In this survey, performance feedback was measured with a 3-item scale. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, with scores of 5 or higher indicating positive perceptions of performance feedback.

Physical workplace environment encompasses an employee's satisfaction with the physical environment in which they work. In this survey, performance feedback was measured with one item. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, with scores of 5 or higher indicating the employee is satisfied with their work environment.

Presenteeism is when employees continue to attend work even when they are unwell, rather than staying home to recover. In this survey, presenteeism was measured on a 3-item scale. Scores on the scale range from 1 to 7, and scores of 5 or higher indicate that employees turned up to work despite feeling physically or mentally unwell.

Pride in membership reflects the sense of honour, satisfaction, and loyalty that employees feel towards their organisation. In this survey, pride in membership was measured with one item. Scores on the scale range from 1 to 7, with scores of 5 or higher indicating pride in membership.

Pride in occupation was measured with one item, directly asking employees how much they agree or disagree that they are proud of their occupation. Scores on the scale range from 1 to 7, with scores of 5 or higher indicating pride in occupation.

Psychological contract violation refers to feelings of anger, betrayal, or frustration due to perceived broken organisational obligations. In this survey, psychological contract violation was measured with a

3-item scale. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, and scores of 5 or higher indicate a level of psychological contract violation.

Psychological safety refers to the feeling of safety to express ideas, take risks, and ask questions without fear of reprisal in the workplace¹³. In this survey, psychological safety was measured with one item, asking employees about the extent to which they felt they could bring up important issues without fear of reprisal. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, and scores of 5 or higher indicate positive perceptions of psychological safety.

Role clarity refers to knowing exactly what is expected in one's job at a given time. In this survey, role clarity was measured with one item, asking employees if they knew exactly what was expected of them. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, and scores of 5 or higher indicate positive perceptions of role clarity.

Role conflict refers to the extent to which employees experience contradictory expectations in their job role. In this survey, role conflict was measured with one item. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, and scores of 5 or higher indicating a perception of contradictory demands at work.

Strategic alignment refers to perceived alignment between frontline concerns and the priorities of senior leadership. In this survey, strategic alignment was measured with one item. Scores on the scale range from 1-7, and scores of 5 or higher indicate positive perceptions of alignment.

Turnover intention refers to an employee's inclination or desires to leave their current job/organisation, or to leave their occupation entirely. In this survey, organisational turnover intention was measured with two questions, one relating to the intention to leave the organisation and the other to leaving the occupation. For both organisational and occupational turnover intention, scores on the scales ranged from 1 to 7, and scores of 5 or higher indicate a level of intention to leave Fire and Emergency, or a level of intention to leave their occupation entirely, respectively.

Workload refers to the perception of having enough time to get one's work done. In this survey, workload was measured with one item, asking employees whether they have enough time to do what is expected of them.

Scores on the scale range from 1-7, and scores of 5 or higher indicate employees feel they have enough time to manage their workload.

Exposure to Potentially Traumatic Events

Potentially traumatic events (PTEs) refer to events that have the potential to result in trauma. An event that meets the diagnostic definition of a "trauma," is defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (5th Edition; DSM-5)¹⁴. This definition was used to develop three questions about exposure to PTEs (ever while working for Fire and Emergency, in the last month, and the last 12 months while working for Fire and Emergency). This definition is outline below:

PTEs are defined as events where there is actual or significant threat of:

- Death
- Life threatening or serious injury

This can occur in one or more of the following ways:

1. **Direct exposure:** You experienced a life threatening or serious injury at an incident, or there was a significant threat of you experiencing a serious injury or dying at an incident (e.g., you were seriously injured at a fire, you were involved in a near miss at an incident that could have killed or seriously injured you).
2. **Witnessing exposure:** You attended an incident where someone died/could have died, or was/could have been seriously injured (e.g., attendance at a purple call, a fire related rescue or fatality, a MVA involving serious injury/s or fatality/s).
3. **Indirect exposure:** In the course of your work you wrote, read, or heard about specific details of an event where someone died/could have died, or was/could have been seriously injured (e.g., dispatcher/shift manager hearing details of an infant cardiac arrest or entrapped person, fire investigator writing report related to a fatal fire, hearing about a close colleague who died/was seriously injured).

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