

Report on 'Women in Lifesaving' Survey

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Introduction	2
Some Core Findings	2
Sample Size	3
Demographics	3
Age Group	3
Regional Location	3
Ethnicity	4
Qualifications of Respondents	4
Results	5
Current Participation in Lifesaving	5
Past Participation in Lifesaving	9
Experiences of Lifesaving	10
Gaps and improvements sought by Women	11
Māori Involvement in Lifesaving	12
Limitations of the report	13
Further Analysis	13

Introduction

This report is prepared for the Surf Life Saving New Zealand (SLSNZ) Women in Life Saving (WILS) Project to explore the experiences of women in lifesaving, as provided through the 'Women in Life Saving' survey. The Project Group has been working together to understand the various roles that women have within the organisation at all levels from participation, volunteerism and paid employment. SLSNZ is interested in understanding the role of women in life saving and where there are possible gender and diversity gaps, understanding why the gaps exist, and working toward recommendations on how to bring equality and equity for all women who are involved with lifesaving in New Zealand. It is our belief that inclusion of women at all levels in SLSNZ is a step toward representation of the membership and the guiding principle of inclusiveness.

The purpose of the survey is to understand current gaps that have been identified from data that has been collected across all areas in SLSNZ.

All members over the age of 14 identifying as women in SLSNZ were invited to complete this survey. The survey was undertaken online using SurveyMonkey, with respondents being primarily contacted through social media. The survey was in operation between 20th April 2020 and 18th May 2020.

This report provides the initial high-level findings from the survey. As needed, further analysis can be generated to provide a more detailed report from the survey, including layering across demographics.

Some Core Findings

The principle finding from the survey, with respect to female participation, is there remains a high level of participation and enjoyment in the sport. This can be observed in that 95% of the respondents stated they plan to continue with the sport. This result is so dominant that it should contextualise all other results from the survey.

In terms of challenges experienced by women in lifesaving, there was a consistent theme of women being overlooked in terms of men. This finding can be identified in several ways from the survey. Most notably the preferred treatment given to men was the highest rating experience felt by respondents. Furthermore, this was backed up with examples and reflections from respondents. While there are some examples provided of overt sexism, the overall impression is that the preferred treatment of men can be best described as subtle or passive. For example, when comparing the responses to different experiences, the results show a low relationship between experience of sexual harassment and the preferred treatment of men. Similar low relationships were observed with other forms of social exclusion such as homophobia and racism. However, in contrast, there was a higher relationship with more general experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and not feeling heard. These observations support there is a more passive expression by men to limit the roles of women within lifesaving, yet these are still influential on women's experiences.

The third observation is the high experience of a 'lack of confidence in self'. One deep analysis indicates the 'lack of confidence in self' has a low relationship with other experiences with respect to lifesaving. This suggests that the experience of 'lack of confidence in self' may be less dependent on internal factors within lifesaving. One possible reason for this could be an age factor, given a high proportion of the respondents were under 25, who are still trying to find their feet in lifesaving. This may suggest options for lifesaving to promote greater confidence in self, especially younger participants. The further layering the experiences by age can be explored in more detailed analysis.

The higher proportion of younger respondents is likely to be a reason for the difference between the roles of current and former female lifesavers. The younger respondents are generally involved in two roles – lifesaving and sports participation – whereas older women are more involved in other roles, such as administration. As most of the former female lifesavers are older, they leave a gap in such roles. Whether these gaps are taken up by younger women is a question that requires further investigation.

Sample Size

The most recent data shows current female membership of lifesaving being 4,664. A total of 1,188 respondents accessed the survey,¹ which includes current and former members. 892 respondents were current members, giving an approximate response rate of 19% (892/4664). This is considered a high response rate, providing a robust insight into female lifesavers. However, it is important to note that not all respondents answered all questions, hence the response rate will vary per question.² Except where indicated, the results in this report include both current and former members.

Demographics

Age Group

41% of the respondents were between 14-19, with 16% being 20-24. Consequently, over half the respondents were aged under 25 of total responses [n = 1,156].

Table 1: Distribution of age of survey respondents

Age	14-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-45	45-49	50-54	55-59	60+	Total
Survey	477	190	110	42	48	50	104	60	48	27	1,156
Members	1,675	439	193	266	347	520	515	317	148	244	4,664

The sample size for the age groups 14-19 and 20-24 overrepresents the members from the same age range. In turn, the age of 40-44 was underrepresented in the survey. However, in a pragmatic assessment of proportions, the age range is considered appropriate, especially given the overall size of the survey.

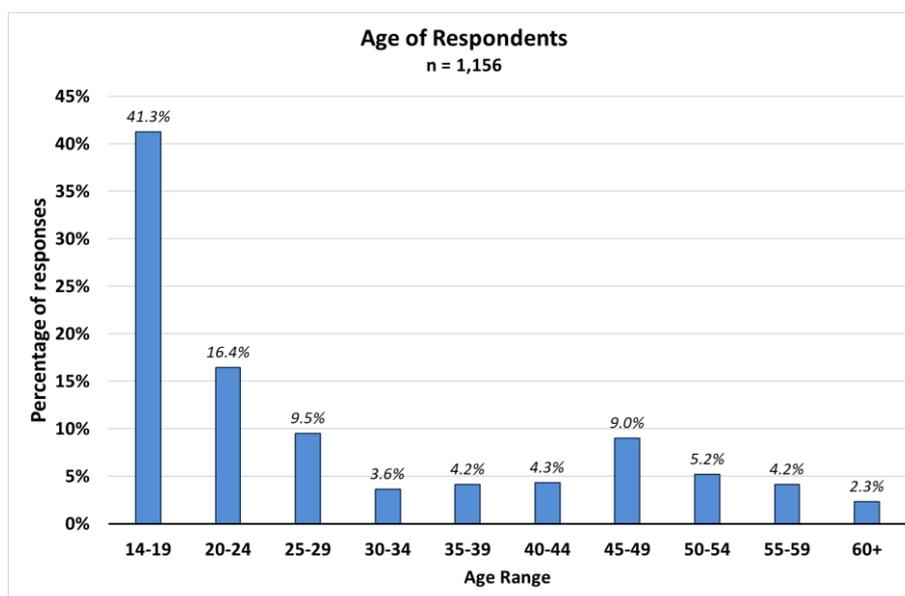


Figure 1: Age range of Respondents

Regional Location

The regional split was relatively even between the four regions, with the Northern region providing the greatest number of responses at 31%. The other regions fell between 21-24% [n = 1,156].

¹ This excludes nine responses who did not identify as a woman.

² Due to this, the sample sizes related to each question are provided in square brackets. Due to missing responses the individual question sample size may not total the overall response to the survey.

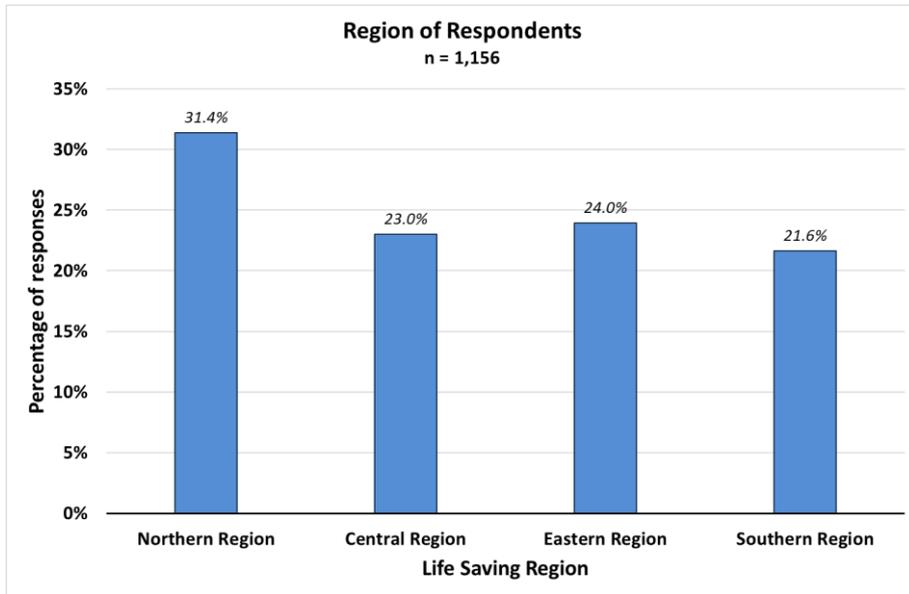


Figure 2: Region of Respondents

Ethnicity

92% of respondents identified as being New Zealand European with 14% identifying as Māori.^{3,4} All other ethnicities were under 2%. Nearly 10% listed other, most of which fall into the broad category of other European [n = 1,149].

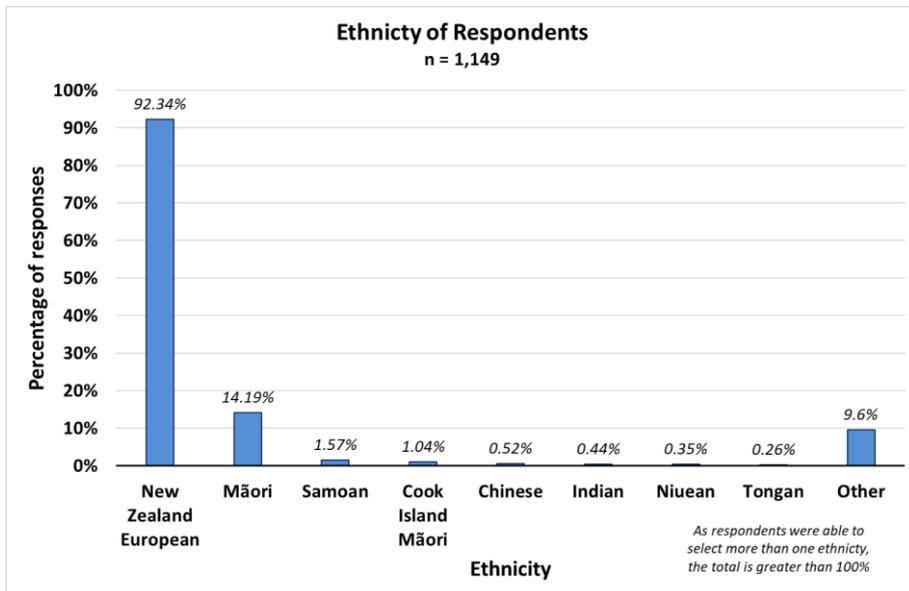


Figure 3: Ethnicity, by identification, of Respondents

Qualifications of Respondents

The most common SLSNZ qualifications are Surf Lifeguard Award (92.4%) and First Aid (81.3%) (Table 1). The responses relate to those how are currently active in lifesaving.

³ As respondents were able to identify with more than one ethnicity, the total will exceed 100% of respondents.

⁴ Iwi affiliation was also asked in the survey. This will be reported on in the detail report.

Table 2: Types of SLSNZ Qualifications [n = 737]

Award	%	Award	%
Surf Lifeguard Award	92.4%	Examiners Award – Surf Lifeguard	5.8%
First Aid	81.3%	Advanced Lifeguard Award (<i>National Lifeguard School</i>)	4.7%
IRB Crewpersons Module	56.9%	Surf Official Level 2	3.5%
Marine VHF Radio Operators Certificate	46.3%	Instructors Award – IRB	2.8%
Board Rescue Module	24.6%	Competitive Surf Coach	2.2%
Senior Lifeguard Award (<i>Patrol Captain</i>)	23.3%	Instructors Award (<i>Rock Training & Rescue</i>)	1.6%
Senior Lifeguard Award – IRB Driver	23.1%	Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	1.4%
Instructors Award – Surf Lifeguards	20.1%	Rescue Water Craft Operators Award	0.8%
Rock Training & Rescue Module	19.7%	Examiners Award - IRB	0.5%
Intermediate Lifeguard School	19.0%	Performance Surf Coach	0.5%
Developing Surf Coach	14.4%	Surf Official Level 3	0.3%
Surf Official Level 1	13.8%	Instructors Award (<i>Rescue Water raft</i>)	0.0%
		Other	4.2%

Results

Current Participation in Lifesaving

80% of respondents [n = 892] indicated they are currently involved in lifesaving with the remaining 20% [n = 225] being inactive. Of those currently active in lifesaving [n = 771]⁵, the primary roles were lifesaving (83%) and sports participant (44%).

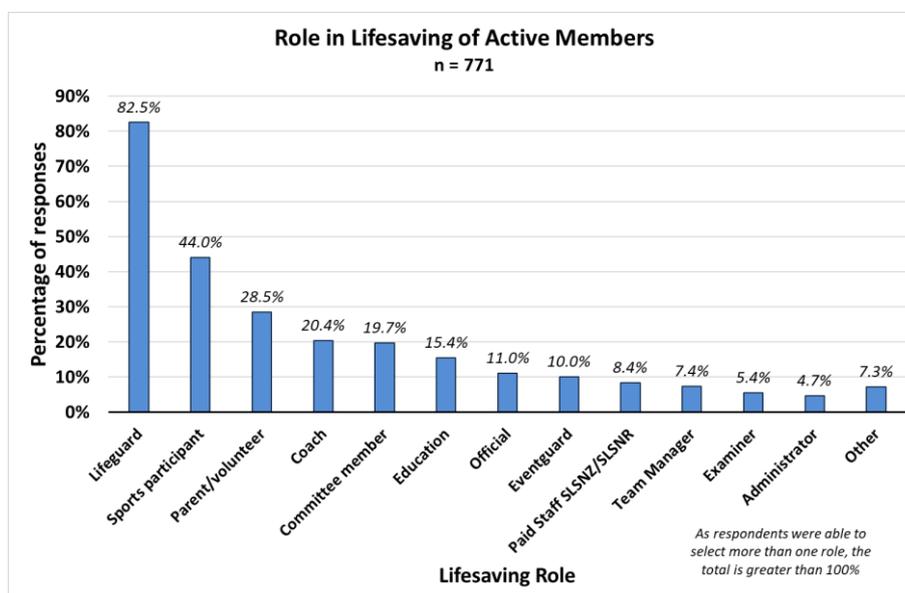


Figure 4: Role of current members in lifesaving

Most respondents volunteer 2-5 hours per week (45%) with 25% giving 6-10 hours of their time [n = 764].

⁵ Not all respondents who identified as being currently active provided details of their current roles.

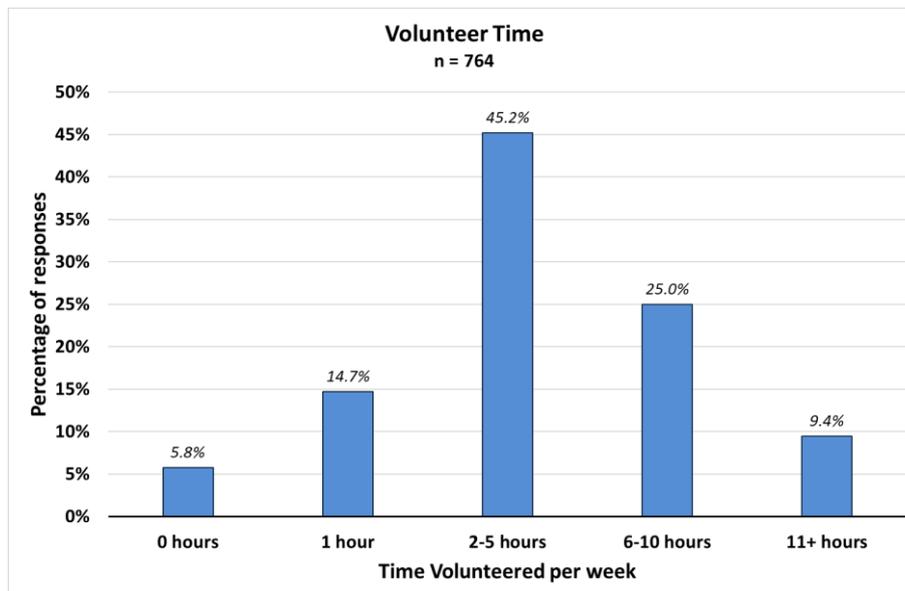


Figure 5: Time invested in lifesaving by active members

758 respondents answered the question as to why they got involved in lifesaving. Key themes include:

- Through family or friends
 - *“Runs in the family.”*
 - *“A friend got me into it.”*
 - *“Family, we have always been a part of our club.”*
- To become a lifeguard and participate in sport
 - *“I needed a summer sport and becoming a lifeguard made me feel like I had some purpose.”*
 - *“To become a lifeguard and participate in surf sport.”*
 - *“For the sport, and to learn water safety skills as are local to the beach.”*
 - *“To become a lifeguard and learn better water skills and sports.”*
 - *“Sport first then lifeguarding.”*
- To make friends and be part of a community
 - *“To be a part of the community. Love the family I have made with surf club.”*
 - *“To be involved in a sport and a close-knit community.”*
 - *“I thought it would be a great way to make friends and get involved in the community.”*
- To volunteer and give back to the community
 - *“To volunteer for my community, I love lifeguarding in both a volunteer capacity and paid capacity; the opportunities I have been given and what I've been able to give back to the community.”*
 - *“Really enjoy the people I do it with and giving back to the community.”*
- From a love for the ocean and living near the beach
 - *“I became a lifeguard because we live beside the beach and wanted to be involved in the surf club community.”*
 - *“When I was 7, our school went to Mairangi Bay for beach education and loved it so much I asked my parents if I could join.”*
 - *“Started when I was 14 as we had a bach at Piha.”*
 - *“I loved to surf and wanted to learn about how the ocean moved and worked (eg rips, waves). So I joined rookies and did that for three years. Ended up loving the lifesaving community and became a lifeguard.”*
- To learn new skills
 - *“For the chance to learn and gain new skills...”*
 - *“To learn surf skills from a young age.”*
 - *“To build important life skills.”*
 - *“To learn first aid and spend more time at the beach helping people.”*

754 participants responded to the question, what do you like about lifesaving? Key themes included:

- The social side, making friends and being around like-minded people
 - *"I like the family / community aspect and sense of belonging."*
 - *"The club is like my other family; I love the involvement and relationships you build within the sport."*
 - *"Being surrounded but great likeminded people all in it for the good of others."*
 - *"I like the feeling of being a part of a huge nationwide family. I like having friends who are interested in the same thing as me and we are all having fun by doing good things for our community beaches."*
 - *"I like the social aspect of lifesaving. It is a great way to meet other people who share a common goal and it is something that families can be involved in."*
- Helping others and giving back to the community
 - *"Helping people enjoy the beach safely."*
 - *"Making a difference in the community."*
 - *"It's fun to be on the beach and to help the public."*
- Being outdoors and connection with the water
 - *"The ocean and outdoor component, keeping fit, real life skills."*
 - *"The beach is part of our culture - we love being there."*
 - *"I love the beach so lifesaving is just a good all rounded sport."*
 - *"Connection with the water - outdoors challenge."*
- The competition, sport and keeping fit
 - *"The balance between providing a volunteer essential service and the competitive sport."*
 - *"Everything, the sport side is why I'm so involved but being a lifeguard is so much fun and so rewarding."*
 - *"Super fun and a great way to gain fitness."*
 - *"I was firstly involved in the competitive sport which I loved, this then combined with the social aspect as I made many friends through this."*

603 respondents answered what they do not like about lifesaving. Key themes include:

- Club politics, male dominated, sexist behaviour or lack of diversity
 - *"Many of the national committees are very male dominated and there is often an "old boys network" culture in decision making with a tendency [of] bullying to ram decisions through without consultation and consideration of the wider needs of members and the organisation."*
 - *"The sexism and bias I experience in being a female head coach. Often made to feel like a mum helping out rather than the experienced professional I am."*
 - *"There is a distinct lack of racial diversity in the movement. It was very sobering to have a young Maori man come up and thank me for pronouncing his name correctly- he said in 6 years of being involved in surf it was the first time it had happened."*
 - *"It is definitely an old boys club which is very frustrating when trying to progress or innovate. There are very often sexist remarks or comments regarding the 'young' age of people (people in their 20s) that implies we don't know anything therefore our views aren't valid or important even though the majority of our membership is under 30, decisions are being made on our behalf by primarily older Pakeha men that are out of touch."*
 - *"Club politics (committee) has definitely had a negative impact on my surf experience, especially over the last few seasons...Club politics has forced me out of my original club and whilst I don't like the way they treated me; it sucks to see the club struggling as a result of their seniors leaving."*
 - *"The competition is male focused, and there's not a lot of encouragement for young women. Oceans proved this with the commentary only on men's sports 85% of the time, most certainly when all males were in finals. You never saw commentary when females were in finals."*

- The culture can feel cliquy and unwelcoming
 - *“Very high school, lots of cliques and drama and can be quite mean.”*
 - *“Our club has a huge divide between lifeguards and sport. I've experienced bullying from members of our club who are stuck in their ways. Our rookies have experienced intimidation and hazing in their training.”*
 - *“Very cliquy, I've noticed the boys get first dibs on opportunity's, the club can be judgey and make you feel insecure.”*
- Volunteers not receiving recognition
 - *“The divide between athlete's and lifeguards.”*
 - *“Often times, volunteering is a thankless job, as not everyone realizes how much work is involved in running and planning programs.”*
 - *“Intensity within club culture of people thinking we are a business and forgetting we are volunteers doing the best we can.”*
 - *“Even though we spend hours volunteering, we have to PAY for uniforms and get penalized for incorrect gear.”*
- The competitiveness making it not fun
 - *“Sometimes at competitions it is very elitist and competitive which deters people from competing.”*
 - *“The competitive side has never really been large in my club and I think it can cause some tension between clubs/guards.”*
 - *“The sport was too competitive for me. If you weren't good enough you'd sort of be outcasted.”*
- Lack of funding
 - *“Having to fight for all the funding & recognition, when we provide such an essential service.”*
 - *“Funding is an issue. The success of a club is often measured financially, and it should be measured in participation and laughter.”*
 - *“It should be Government-funded. Finding funding is increasingly hard.”*

Over 95% of the respondents indicated that they would keep lifesaving. The 5% of respondents stating they did not intend to continue stay involved in lifesaving were asked why, 31 participants provided an answer. Key themes include:

- Not enjoyable anymore
 - *“As a senior guard in my club I feel as though we are over worked, and it is losing its fun and social component for volunteer patrol.”*
 - *“Too competitive an environment and no longer feels welcome unless you are a top athlete.”*
 - *“It doesn't interest me anymore and I don't enjoy it as much as I used to.”*
- Not being appreciated or listened to
 - *“I am not an athlete. I no longer have the energy for the negative attitudes and poor communication of our club. Once our kids have finished, I will volunteer elsewhere.”*
 - *“I feel like I have been banging my head against a brick wall to be heard and taken seriously within my club. It is as though my 17 years of involvement in the movement is worth nothing in my club space.”*
- Sexism
 - *“Unfair hierarchy within club. I don't feel welcome or appreciated, I feel like I'm wasting my time. Not respected, and this has a LOT to do with being female. I've heard mothers refer to club as a 'boys club'.”*
 - *“I have lost a lot of love and passion for it since I have developed myself into leadership roles, the sexism needs to change.”*
- The people
 - *“Have become sick of ongoing issues.”*
 - *“It is time consuming and gets political at times. Trying to help can feel like wasted time.”*
 - *“Done my time and can't really be bothered to put up with management and select crew members anymore.”*

Past Participation in Lifesaving

The role of former members [n = 211] shows that, on the surface, there are similarities with current members (see Figure 4). To this extent, the most common roles of former members was also lifesaving (83%) and being a sports participant (57%). However, a comparison of other roles shows some changes. Six roles⁶ showed a significant difference between the former and current roles, where current roles are less than those held by former members. Many of these roles, broadly, involved the administration aspects of the club. To account for this difference – assuming no overall reduction in roles – it is likely the gap in administrative roles have been taken up by men.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the number of roles between the former and current groups is different. The mean number of roles for a current member is 2.6 compared to 3.2 roles for a former member. This is potentially due to younger respondents having fewer responsibilities, focusing on roles in lifesaving and sport rather than being involved in administration. Although, it is also possible that women are becoming more selective in how they are engaging with their lifesaving club given the preference given to men.

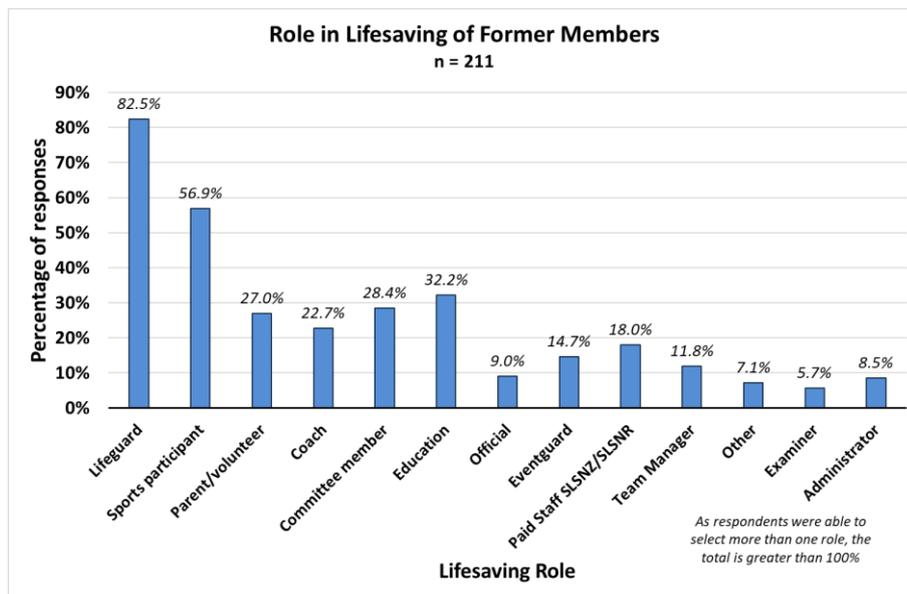


Figure 6: Role of former members in lifesaving

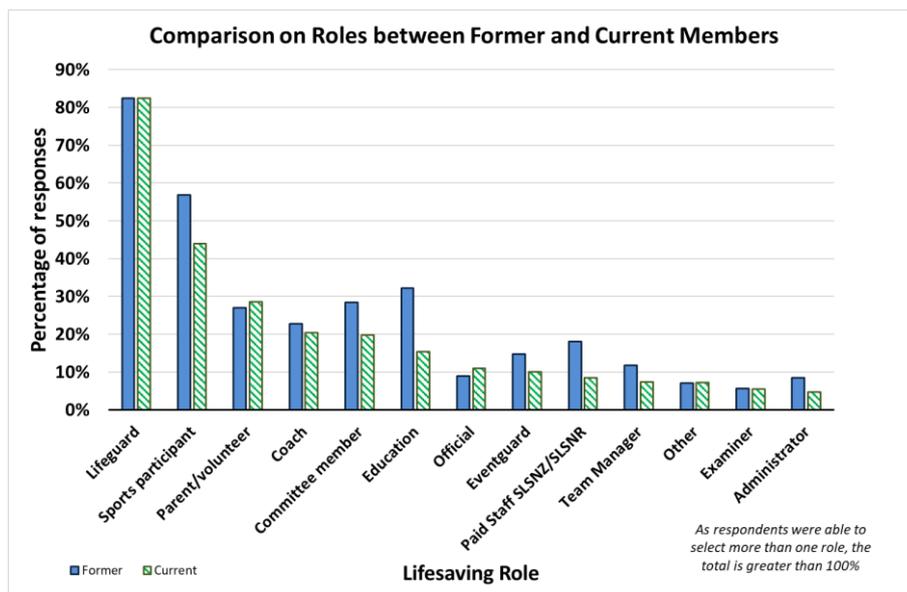


Figure 7: Comparison of roles between former and current members

⁶ These roles were: Sports participant, Committee member, Education, Paid Staff SLSNZ/SLSNR, Team Manager and Administrator

198 participants stated why they were no longer involved in lifesaving. Key themes as to why include:

- Moving away
 - *“Moving overseas and then coming home and living away from the club I qualified at and not yet joining with a new one.”*
 - *“Moved away. Still attend competitions as a supporter when I'm home.”*
 - *“My club was far away from me and I didn't feel comfortable joining another club plus I got busy with other things.”*
- Other commitments
 - *“Not enough spare time outside of employment.”*
 - *“Moved into a different phase of life and became too busy with work to commit to training/patrols.”*
 - *“I started working full time, I can't make the training and commit the way I'd prefer too.”*
 - *“The commitment of patrolling is not possible when you have children.”*
- Club politics and bullying
 - *“A group of us girls were bullied by our club president so we left.”*
 - *“Because of the total lack of respect that was shown towards me. Verbal abuse, bullying, underhanded behaviour and a total lack of professionalism. Physical assault on my partner who is a board member and harassment of my son who is a lifeguard.”*
 - *“Having participated at club, regional and national level for many years the politics, and discrimination finally got to me.”*
 - *“Politics in club and lack of roles for women.”*
- Grew out of it
 - *“My son was a nipper and lifeguard, once he no longer was involved, neither was I.”*
 - *“Grew out of it. Not as many opportunities when you are older.”*
 - *“Life moving on to different stages and this making it hard to get to the beach.”*
 - *“The club I was involved with was nipper orientated, and didn't support us as teenagers, there was a group of us aged 13-18 who were pushed out unfortunately.”*
 - *“The club I was involved with didn't have anyone my age anymore, so I chose to leave and didn't want to join the bigger clubs.”*
- The cost
 - *“Got too expensive paying for hotels, transport etc during the season. Also close colleagues left the movement.”*
 - *“I can't afford to anymore. Paying for carnivals (entry fee, petrol & accommodation), SLS gear and seasons fees are too much for someone flatting.”*

Experiences of Lifesaving

From a list of 13 different experiences (Figure 8), the leading felt experience by female lifesavers [n = 894] was the **preference towards men** in lifesaving (average of 3.12, range of 1 to 5). This was followed by **lack of confidence from self** (2.98/5) and **lack of confidence from others** (2.95/5).

The lowest felt experiences were **homophobia** (2.06/5) and **racism** (2.02/5). The average score, per respondent, was 2.58/5. Hence, given a neutral value of 3 (when 1 and 5, respectively, represent weakly and strongly felt experiences), this would suggest that, on average, there is a slightly more positive experience felt by members.

Some deep dive analysis reveals interesting relationships, or the lack thereof. It was interesting to note that that the preferred treatment given to men did not show a strong relationship to overt experiences such as sexual harassment. Instead there was a stronger relationship with more general experiences of discrimination and exclusion. This suggests the preference towards men is more passive (subconscious) than active, yet this experience is nevertheless still influential on female participation.

Another observation is that while lack of confidence in self was ranked as the second leading experience, this had a very weak relationship to other experiences with lifesaving. This suggests that such experiences are

more likely to be due to external factors to lifesaving. One possible reason for this is the young age of respondents (over half were under 25), hence they are still trying to find their place in lifesaving.

Given the number of responses, there are many options to layer the experiences of respondents such as in terms of age, region or ethnicity. These options can be explored in a more detailed report on the survey.

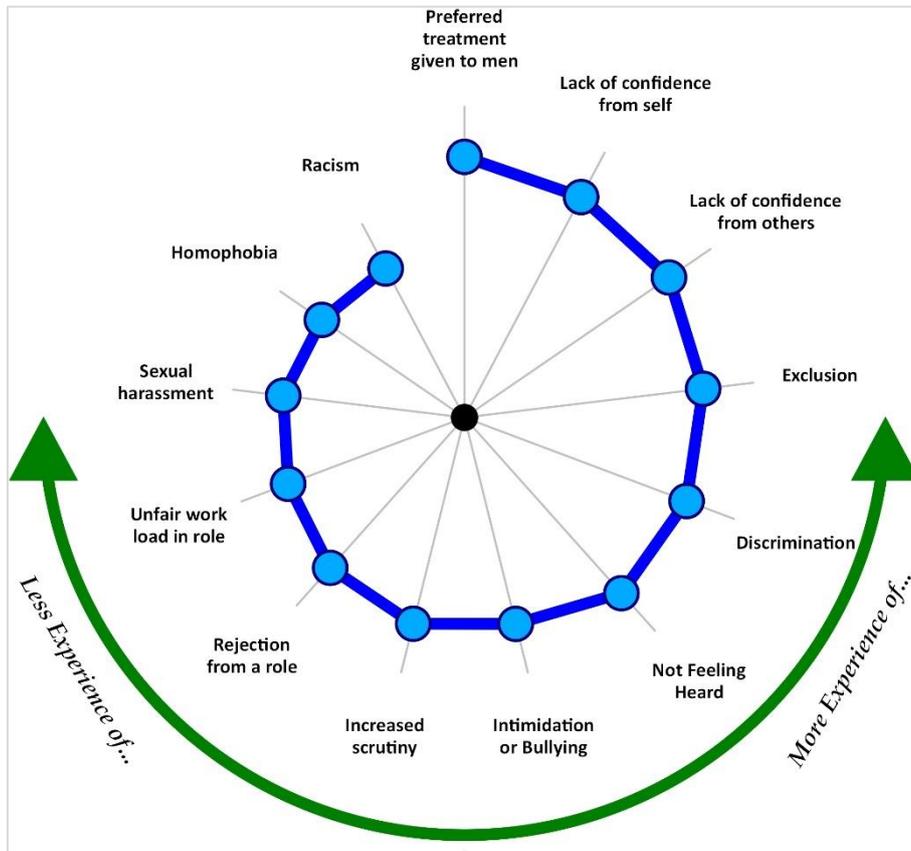


Figure 8: Felt experiences by women in lifesaving

Gaps and improvements sought by Women

From a list of five options, the most common roles that women seek can be grouped into two. The first group is one of personal support, either in terms of **role models** (48%) and **mentors** (37%). The next group is around learning, with **opportunities for development** (37%) and **suitable training** (29%).

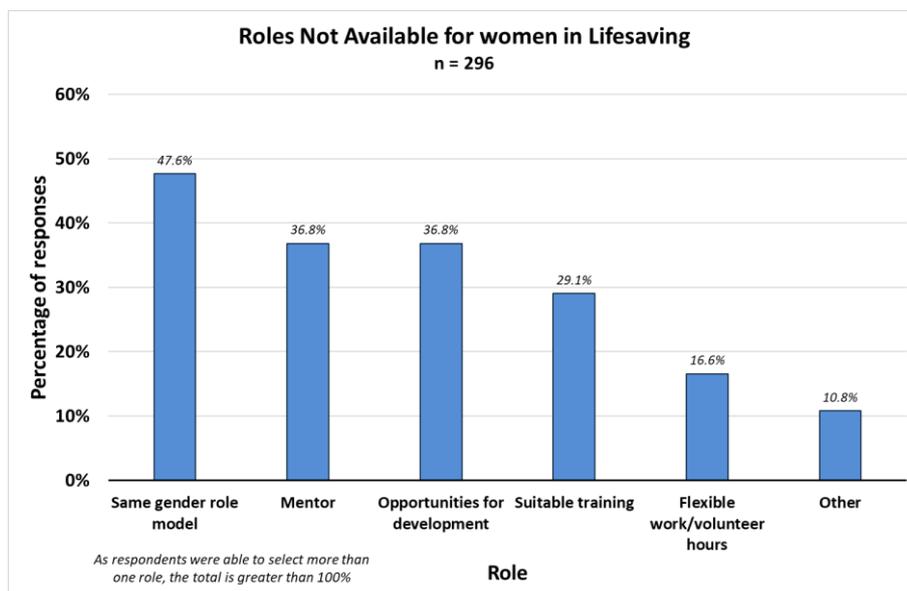


Figure 9: Roles missing for women in lifesaving

376 participants gave suggestions as to how SLSNZ could address barriers or issues identified. Key themes of suggested improvements include:

- More female presence
 - *"Promote club boards to have minimum 40/60 female/male gender mix on all committees."*
 - *"Creating more of a female culture and presence but to be fair you already are and it's great to see on social media."*
 - *"Have equal number of females as males on patrols."*
 - *"We need to encourage woman to join and continue. Lots of girls join at 14 but more often than not they do not continue on into their older teens and 20s like the men do. This means there's no female role models for younger female guards."*
 - *"Increase information to young females and parents about opportunities."*
- Female mentors
 - *"I think it could be valuable to have some kind of mentoring beyond completing your lifeguard award to ensure that people feel confident when using these skills in practice."*
 - *"My suggestion moving forward would be for SLSNZ to ensure a female mentor/role model could visit with small or new and growing clubs to talk about their own experiences within Surf, so those women could see where they could potentially head and how."*
 - *"Mentoring and education preparing women for roles in club committees and beyond would be fantastic."*
- Educate about sexism and discrimination
 - *"Education to everyone on the inequities for women in SLS, recognising more women successes in SLS within clubs, regions and nationally."*
 - *"Males with "power" either need to learn correct leadership with the appropriate courses or there need to be more females with rolls within the club."*
 - *"Sexual harassment training, that sounds intense but there has been a lot around when I was younger and even now. My sister and I have both be subjected to it. There was no discipline for those involved, and, the one instance that there was, it was a mild warning. This seems to be largely from males and they don't know where to draw the line."*
 - *"SLSNZ has always been an 'old boys' club and always will be until the cycle is broken. Members need to be educated on what is not appropriate behaviour. In my experience it is particularly older members that this applies to."*

Māori Involvement in Lifesaving

- 22% of the Māori respondents indicated they patrol beaches where they whakapapa to [n = 135]. Some 90% of Māori respondents considered that it was important for Māori to be involved in lifesaving. 87 participants explained why. Key themes include:
- It is an important part of Māori culture
 - *"It brings us closer to our ancestors."*
 - *"Because it helps you stay connected to the land, sea and others."*
 - *"Our whenua. We should always look after it and understand it and protect it."*
- It is important for Māori to be represented in lifesaving
 - *"So that members of the public who identify as Māori feel they are represented in Surf Life Saving."*
 - *"To be able to relate to the needs of Māori and help to lower the disproportionate rate of drowning for young Māori."*
- For Māori to learn skills to equip them for water safety
 - *"It's an opportunity for Māori to protect and look after our oceans and land, and giving back to our communities, whether you're patrolling from where you're from, or helping out in another area."*
 - *"It used to be quite common and still is for Māori tūpuna to head to the beach. There was and quite often still is the problem with those people and their safety. I think it is important*

to show the public and other Māori that being a beach user is cool and awesome but so is staying safe.”

- *“Helps to ensure that they are able to keep themselves and their whānau safe.”*
- All cultures should be included in lifesaving
 - *“Everyone in Aotearoa should participate, Korean through to European. We are all kiwis using beaches.”*
 - *“I think it is just as important as anyone else being involved.”*
 - *“It’s important for all New Zealanders to be involved in lifesaving. Everyone is safer if they are educated about the ocean.”*

63% of Māori respondents feel that lifesaving strengthens the relationship with whānau and whakapapa, comments included:

- *“Lifesaving engages my whole family - my children do nippers while my husband and I are lifeguards and it is a positive thing to do together. My extended whānau respect what we do and support us too.”*
- *“I have made so many new friendships through surf lifesaving at many different ages which I never would have experienced at such a young age.”*
- *“Our club is a whānau. I love the other teens like my own. I trust other adults with my only child. It’s grown her in ways I could never. I owe surf a lot.”*
- *“You can feel how powerful it is and it strengthens your respect for it.”*

Limitations of the report

Overall, given the number of respondents, the survey is a valuable source of information. However, in places, the structure of the survey limits the amount of insights that can be generated. For example, one question asked respondents if they planned to continue in lifesaving. A near universal response of 95% indicated they would continue. However, the survey only asked respondents for reasons if they were not planning to continue. Given only 31 respondents provided reasons, focusing on these is likely to distort the overwhelming consensus from this survey.

Some suggestions to improve any follow up surveys

1. Undertake a pilot survey. This would have picked up a couple of technical errors in the survey.
2. Have the survey reviewed by an expert surveyor. This will ensure the question order, logic and wording will maximise the quality of data.
3. One worthy question to include in future surveys is the length of time the respondents has been involved in lifesaving.

Further Analysis

Due to the size of the survey, there are further opportunities to explore the data and find inter-relationships between different factors. For further discussions, please contact Insights Manager at Aktive: becky.fry@aktive.org.nz

Further details on the work of Aktive can be found online at www.aktive.org.nz

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