

# — Exercise

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The professional exercise workforce is the beating heart of New Zealand's fitness industry. It's made up of those people who teach, lead and guide participants as they take part in a range of fitness activities.

This group spans everyone from yoga teachers, community fitness leaders in parks and church halls, and functional trainers in small urban gyms, through to personal trainers working cooperatively with allied health professionals, and gym floor instructors in large fitness chains.

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## Industry structure



### LOCAL AUTHORITIES (COUNCILS)

Typically, council leisure centres provide a range of services including a gym and exercise classes. These may be run by commercial contractors or non-profit organisations, such as YMCA.



### COMMERCIAL ORGANISATIONS

Gym chains, which have multiple branches, such as Les Mills, Jetts, City Fitness and Snap Fitness. Regional and local gyms, individual personal training services, yoga studios, etc.



### COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Community exercise providers including churches, marae, community groups, walking groups, weight loss organisations, etc.

## Workforce profile

There were 6,590 people working in the exercise industry in 2018, or 0.26% of the total workforce.

Nearly two of every three exercise professionals were women, or 61%.

The size of the exercise workforce was down 1.5% compared to a year earlier, while the total workforce increased 3% over the same period.

Despite the slight fall in 2018, total exercise industry employment is up 19.4% over the past 10 years. And it is forecast to keep growing by 10% over the next five years, with an average of 114 new job openings each year between now and 2023.



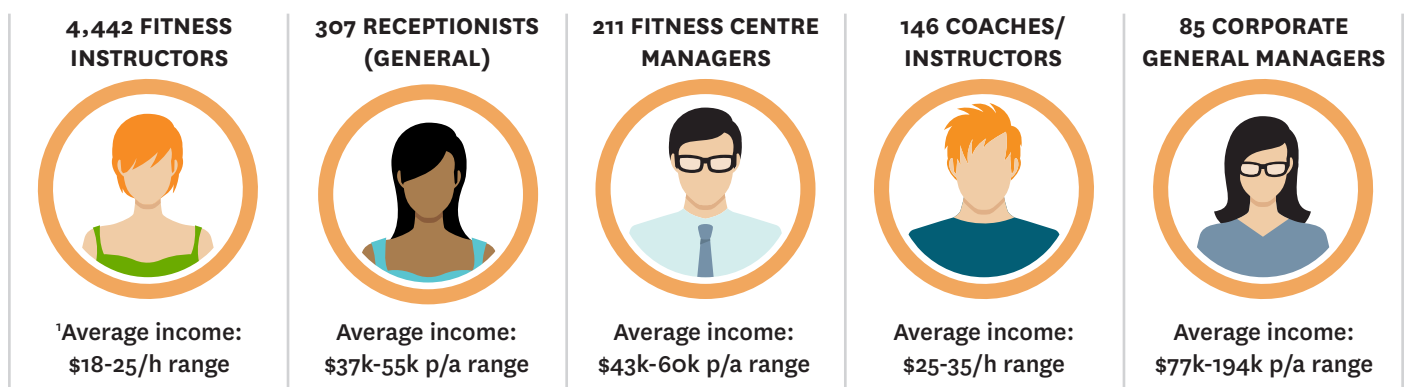
MALE  
**39%**



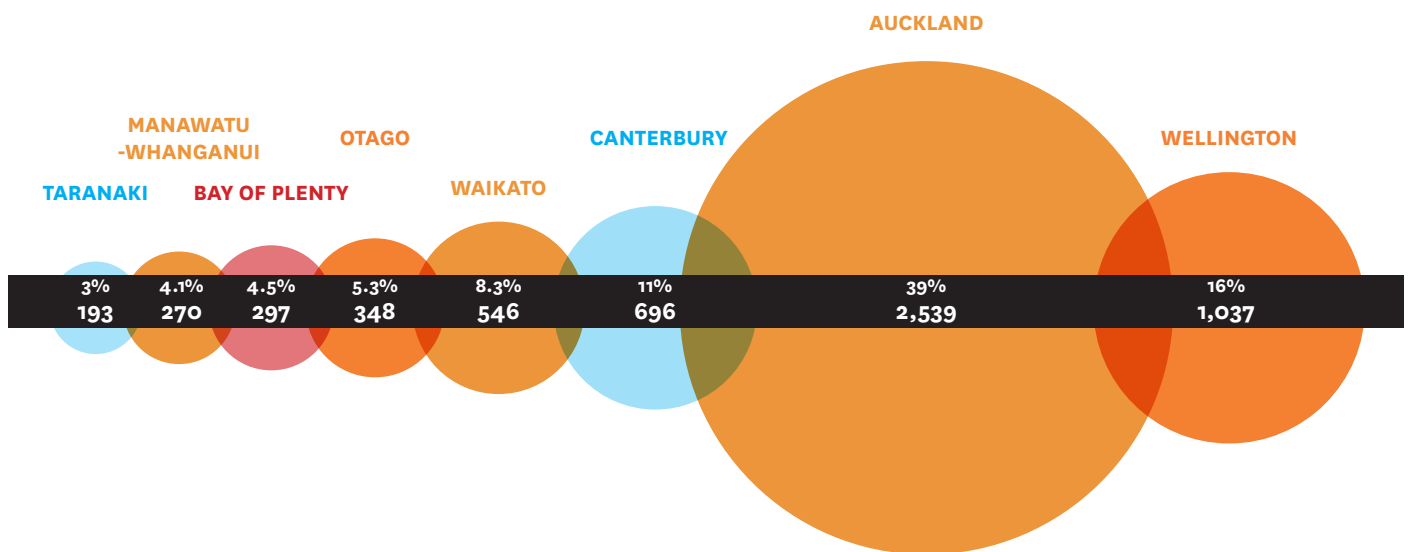
FEMALE  
**61%**

# Data

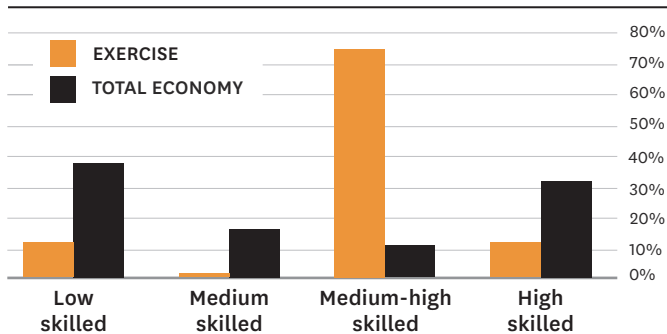
## TOP FIVE JOBS BY VOLUME IN 2018



## REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT (JOBS) IN 2018



## SKILL LEVEL



## AVERAGE EARNINGS

In 2017, the average annual income in exercise was \$33,700 compared to \$58,900 for the total economy. It is worth noting that exercise has a high proportion of people working part-time, compared to the total economy.

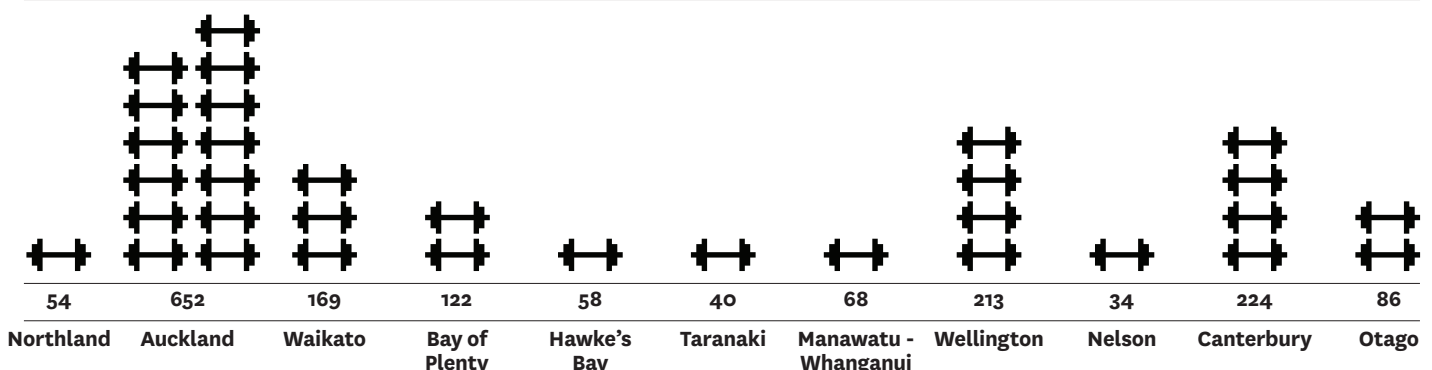
## EARNINGS GROWTH

Exercise earnings grew by an average of 2.8% per year between 2007 and 2017, compared to a figure of 3.2% per year for the total economy.

## SELF EMPLOYMENT

The self employment rate in 2018 was 23.3% or 1,533 people.

## REGIONAL BUSINESS UNITS





# Economic impact

The exercise industry added \$429 million to the New Zealand economy in 2018 - a contribution of 0.18% of total GDP.

Industry GDP was down 4.5% in 2018, compared to a positive growth rate of 3.2% for the whole economy. The GDP produced per full-time equivalent worker was \$82,142, also down 4.5%.

There were 1,787 exercise businesses operating in 2018, with an average of 3.7 employees per business unit. The total number of exercise businesses was up 3.7% year-on-year. Although this seems relatively high, it marks a

tapering off from the steep growth curve of the past five years, when average annual growth in business units was 7.3%.

By contrast, business units across the total economy grew 0.7% in 2018, and saw average growth of 2.1% over the past five years.

## ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

**\$429M**  
GDP

0.18% of New Zealand's GDP in 2018

# Workforce challenges

**A Skills Active survey of the exercise workforce found that industry employers cited personal trainers and fitness instructors as the hardest roles to recruit.**

About 60% of respondents said they faced barriers to recruiting staff; these included a lack of qualified and experienced applicants, unrealistic job expectations, and the inability to offer sufficient hours.

"It would be great to have clear consistent training pathways and progressions," one respondent said, "and an emphasis on what employment and self-employment pathways actually look like."

More than half those organisations surveyed did not have trouble retaining staff. Among those who did, not being able to offer enough hours, or career progression, were major drivers of staff turnover.

Asked about the skills gaps in the exercise workforce - areas where available candidates didn't meet employer needs - respondents cited communication skills and customer service as the most frequent gaps.

# Themes and trends

The last few years have seen an explosion in small, local gyms - fuelling a rise in demand for commercial spaces in suburbs and industrial areas.<sup>2</sup>

This growth in smaller gyms has seen increasing diversity in exercise offerings - from yoga and pilates through to functional fitness, circuit training, weightlifting and more.

Operators are tapping into new and non-traditional user markets, and therefore increasing overall exercise industry penetration, without crowding out the supply side.<sup>3</sup>

Some users are in fact paying for two or more memberships at once, to cover a range of exercise needs.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, some large national chains are continuing to use economies of scale to compete hard on price, and on the provision of extensive national networks. Others are differentiating themselves through expensive fit-outs and high-tech upgrades.<sup>5</sup>



Active Careers through  
On-Job Qualifications

<sup>2</sup>Fitness sector pushing into suburbs, April 2017, One Roof

<sup>3</sup>New gym for Roslyn as fitness boom continues, July 2019, Stuff

<sup>4</sup>Survival of the fittest: How Kiwis are opting for multiple gym memberships, June 2019, Stuff

<sup>5</sup>Les Mills aims to leave you breathless: inside NZ's biggest gym makeover, March 2019, NZ Herald