

Redundancy with dignity – Give it to me straight

WAYNE MACPHERSON* and DOUG ASHWELL**

Abstract

In times of crisis, organisations implement cost-cutting measures, including retrenchment. Research on employee redundancy often focuses on the processes performed by organisations. This paper, however, reports on the expectations of New Zealand and Australian employees (n=613) during the later stages of the pandemic-lockdown environment, circa late 2021, regarding their organisation's messaging of imminent redundancy. Employees in both countries indicated that they seek dignity and directness, and to be told face-to-face by their immediate line manager, senior line manager, or CEO that they are being "made redundant". Interestingly, being told by Human Resources personnel was a least favoured option. This research informs organisations of their organisational justice and corporate social responsibilities in times of retrenchment.

Keywords: Covid-19, Redundancy, Termination, Workplace dignity, Employee dignity, Organisational justice, Corporate Social Responsibility, Human Resource Management

Introduction

In times of crisis, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, organisations often implement cost-cutting measures in attempts to deal with the impact of reduced revenues (Teece, 2014). Labour costs are one of the largest expenses for any organisation, often accounting for a significant portion of total business costs. Reducing labour costs is one strategy firms can implement as they grapple with the impact of economic crisis or set themselves up for long-term success. This has certainly been the case during the pandemic with large numbers of employees being made redundant or furloughed as a result of the severe economic downturn faced by many companies (World Economic Forum, 2021). Redundancy (or retrenchment) can be defined as "the involuntary termination of employment, occupation, or job by the employer through no fault of the employee" (Nyaberi & Kiriago, 2013, p. 17). While employees are protected by employment law and are usually provided with financial and emotional support from their employer, employee dignity is something the organisation needs to consider when enacting redundancy. Doing so may reduce intra-organisational conflict and external reputational damage, even to the point of positive outcomes.

Treating employees with dignity should be part of an organisation's adherence to the concepts and principles of organisational justice and corporate social responsibility (CSR). The organisational justice concepts of interpersonal and informational justice can guide an organisation's messaging to both employees being *exited* and those remaining with the organisation (Greenberg, 1987). While the definition of CSR has been debated, Dahlsrud (2008) suggests that it has five dimensions: environmental, social, economic, stakeholder, and voluntariness. Treating employees with dignity at the organisational and individual levels may be considered within the stakeholder dimension. Wan-Jan

* Corresponding author: W.Macpherson@massey.ac.nz. Senior lecturer, School of Management, Massey Business School, Massey University.

** Senior lecturer, School of Communication, Journalism and Marketing, Massey Business School, Massey University.

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(2006) argues that the stakeholder dimension of CSR refers to the ethical interaction of the organisation with its stakeholders, including employees. Treating employees ethically means that they will be treated with dignity by upholding an employee's perceptions of self-worth and what it means to be treated with fairness, trust, and respect (Lucas, 2015).

Previous research on redundancy has mainly examined the experience of those made redundant or those who were not made redundant when a round of redundancy occurred in an organisation. However, it appears there is little research that asks employees how they would like the process to proceed and the message to be conveyed to maintain their dignity and to feel they are receiving the social support they require at a time that, for many, will be stressful. Therefore, by way of survey methodology (Groves et al., 2011), this study seeks to fill this gap in the literature by asking workers how they would prefer to be told about being made redundant.

The process of making employees redundant exists within a dyadic relationship involving two distinct parties – the employer and their employee. Extant literature predominantly covers the perspective of the employer and all but ignores the perspective of the employee. In the face of increased redundancies due to global crises and cyclical economic downturn events (Davis et al., 2006), this research explores the processes by which employees are messaged and treated in the redundancy process. Further, it considers how the employing organisation can preserve the outgoing employee's dignity as they re-enter the job market. Subsequently, the research questions of this study are:

RQ1: How do employees wish to be informed of impending redundancy?

RQ1-1: By what means do employees wish to be told?

RQ1-2: By whom do employees wish to be told?

RQ1-3: What terms do employees wish to be used when told? (e.g. redundant, laid-off)

RQ1-4: In what manner would employees wish to be told?

RQ1-5: Over what timeframe would employees wish to exit?

To answer these questions, an online survey was used to collect data from employees in New Zealand and Australian organisations to investigate their messaging preferences should they be made redundant. Collecting data from each country provides an opportunity to collect a larger sample size, make cross-country and cultural comparisons, report to policymakers in each country, and provide greater relevance to the analysis output reported here. There are also very strong links between New Zealand and Australian businesses and many citizens of both countries work in the country of the other.

While employees may be privy to pre-messaging signals from their workplace and beyond, the event of receiving news of impending redundancy can be devastating for the employee as they may lose face and confidence; and their wellbeing, both physically and psychologically, may be threatened. Therefore, this research focuses on the signalling and messaging processes of redundancy, the relationship between the employee(s) and employer needs to be considered. The act of making staff redundant impacts employee attitude and behaviour and can signal the state of leadership within an organisation. This, in turn, may have positive or negative consequences on an organisation's reputation in the marketplace and CSR outcomes.

This study reports on messaging preferences through the lens of the employee who works in the organisation. The primary intention is to preserve the dignity of the outgoing employee. By preserving this dignity, the employee is better prepared to face the job market, and the organisation has an opportunity to manage the impact on its public reputation by being seen as a caring organisation (Abimbola & Vallaster, 2007; Wood & Karau, 2009). Employees facing the prospect of being made redundant indicated that they would prefer to be told face-to-face when receiving news of redundancy by their immediate supervisor or CEO or senior line manager. Interestingly, being told by Human

Resources staff was one of the least favoured options. Employees preferred being ‘made redundant’ as referring to terminology with the process being direct and to the point. The results indicated an even split between employees leaving immediately and working out their contractual notice.

This paper is organised as follows: extant literature on the redundancy process is presented with the research gap identified; the research methodology and findings from the empirical evidence are then presented and linked back to the underpinning theoretical framework. Conclusions, practical implications, and limitations of the research are finally presented.

Literature Review

The Covid-19 pandemic has had devastating consequences globally, both in terms of lives lost and economically. At the time of writing, the pandemic has resulted in the deaths of over 6.88 million people (John Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, 2021, updated daily), and economically it is estimated that \$10 trillion of GDP has been lost globally (The Economist, 2021). This economic downturn has also resulted in the loss of an estimated 114 million jobs worldwide in 2020 (World Economic Forum, 2021).

Planned redundancies are part of organisational change and much of the research in this area has been based on the work of Kurt Lewin (1947a, 1947b, 1947c) and his three-step process of change. While Lewin’s research is dated, Burnes and Bargal (2017) argue that Lewin’s model is still strongly relevant today. Lewin’s (refer 1947a, 1947b, 1947c) psychological Field Theory examined how individuals interact with their environment and finds that their behaviour is contextual; and is underpinned by the five principles - the psychological approach, emphasis on the total situation, the classificatory versus the constructive approach, present time versus historical causation, and the dynamic approach (Burnes & Bargal, 2017).

Field theory becomes action by way of a three-step process of ‘unfreezing’, ‘change’, and ‘freezing’ (or refreezing) of habitual activities (Lewin 1947b, 1947c.). Based on these theoretical roots, more recent research on redundancy has examined the phenomena from several perspectives, including the best ways to conduct the process (See Cameron et al., 1991; Kinnie et al. 1997; Kleiman & Denton, 2000); the reactions of those made redundant (see Berchick et al., 2012; Kanfer et al., 2001; Leana & Feldman, 1998; Macky, 2004; Zikic & Klehe, 2006); the reactions of those who survive redundancy (see Brandes et al, 2008; Brockner et al., 1989; Macky, 2004) and the perceptions and experiences of those who implement the redundancy plans (see Gandolfi, 2009; Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011). Extant research on employee perspectives and redundancy has focused on employee experiences post-redundancy, with little research on the perspectives of employees on how they would wish to be told this news in-redundancy. Given the current global economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, people being made redundant is becoming common. Anecdotal stories suggest employees have been made redundant by phone call, Zoom™ call, or by text, with little or no support given after the news is delivered (Shah, 2020; Kelly, 2020). This suggests the dignity of these employees may not have been properly considered by their employers (Wood & Karau, 2009).

Treating staff with dignity and respect creates strong organisations (Lucas et al., 2017). Lucas (2015) argues “Workplace dignity is important to workers, as they possess a strong desire to derive a sense of self-worth from their work and to be treated respectfully” (p. 644). However, Lucas notes that workplaces can both increase workers’ sense of self-worth and dignity or can be a place “where dignity can be destroyed by disrespect, dehumanization, or disposability” (2015, p.644). Involuntary job loss through redundancy not only has serious economic impacts on employees but can also negatively affect their health and wellbeing (Berchick et al., 2012; Olesen et al., 2013). We argue that, to truly maintain

good faith in reference to the New Zealand Employment Relations Act 2000 (ERA) and the Australian Fair Work Act 2009 (FWA), employers should always treat employees with dignity, even when the employment relationship comes to an end. Therefore, the proposed research examines the perspectives of employees on how they would wish to be told they were going to be made redundant (Parker & Axtell, 2001).

Recently there has been a growth in research into the concept of Workplace Dignity (WPD) (Bal, 2017). This is defined as an “individual’s perception about respect and trust, equal treatment, valuation of one’s worth, fair-treatment, autonomy and freedom of expression, and decision making enjoyed by an employee at the workplace” (Tiwari & Sharma, 2019, p. 8). As Tiwari and Sharma (2019) note, the workplace plays a large role in a person’s life because they spend so much of their time there and jobs give people the opportunity to enrich their potential. Therefore, how employees are treated in the workplace will have a strong effect on their sense of self-worth and dignity. Being made redundant, for many employees, will be a stressful event that will threaten both their physical and mental wellbeing and so the process needs to be supportive to limit the impact on their wellbeing in order to maintain their sense of self-worth and dignity.

The loss of a job will see the conclusion of the relationship between an employee, their workplace, and their employer. Nevertheless, if this process is handled badly, it could negatively affect any remaining sense of workplace dignity an employee may have, leading them to have a completely negative image of their association with the organisation (Macky, 2004), which they may share with others resulting in damage to the organisation’s overall reputation. Should this process be handled in an informed and professional manner, the employee may be able to depart their workplace with dignity and confidence as they go to market for their next job. This would also allow an organisation to ‘keep face’ in a time of potential negative media exposure (Abimbola & Vallaster, 2007).

The organisational justice concepts of interpersonal and informational justice can provide an organisation with a roadmap for which to deliver the messaging of impending redundancy which may be perceived as fair and equitable by employees. Colquitt et al. (2001) note that the individual employee’s perception of fairness of the decision being made will affect their future behaviour where interpersonal justice “reflects the degree people are treated with politeness, dignity, and respect by authorities” (p. 427) and informational justice ensures “explanations that convey information about why procedures were used in a certain way or why outcomes were distributed in a certain fashion” (p. 427). Bies and Moag (1986) note that interpersonal justice perceptions can drive employees’ reactions to senior individuals, and informational justice perceptions can drive reactions to the organisation. In a similar vein, Colquitt et al., (2001) explain that “interpersonal justice acts primarily to alter reactions to decision outcomes” and “Informational justice acts primarily to alter reactions to procedures” (p. 427)

In terms of interpersonal behaviour, research has found that face-to-face communication, with its accompanying non-verbal immediacy behaviours of eye contact, and nodding is linked to job satisfaction, employee motivation, and supervisor credibility (Hinkle, 2001). Non-verbal immediacy behaviours are linked to social support which is an important element in helping people cope with stressful situations, such as imminent redundancy (Bodie et al., 2014; Turner, 1981). It was found that when these behaviours are expressed by an employee’s immediate supervisor, employees felt they had been treated with respect (Hinkle, 2001). Therefore, it is expected that respondents will prefer the message of redundancy to be delivered by a person they trust - their immediate supervisor/manager - in face-to-face communication. Most significantly, the research notes that an organisation’s HR department is not the preferred source of information for any messages about redundancy. HR’s role is seen to provide support as required.

Research has illustrated how redundancy messages can influence employees' judgements of fairness and feelings of negativity towards a former employer (Richter et al., 2018). Richter et al. (2018) found that employees who felt they had been treated well by their employers at the time of being made redundant experienced:

- Respectful treatment shown through the interpersonal behaviour displayed by the message giver, e.g. immediacy behaviours
- Were supplied with an adequate explanation
- Were given the message by an authority figure they respected

In contrast, employees felt less respected and reported increased feelings of anger towards the organisation if they were given an inadequate explanation and the message was delivered by an external agent (Richter et al., 2018). In these situations, employees felt the psychological contract between the organisation and themselves had been broken (Richter et al., 2018). These aspects of employee judgements correspond directly with those of interpersonal organisational justice. Bies and Moag (1986) suggest that employee perceptions of fairness are impacted by their interpersonal and informational justice perceptions created by the manner and tone in which signals are given by the bearer of news.

The New Zealand ERA 2000 mandates "Parties to employment relationships must deal with each other in good faith" (ERA, 2000, section 4(1)(a)), noting that good faith applies to "consultation... between an employer and its employees... about the employees' collective employment interests, including the effect on employees of changes to the employer's business" (ERA, 2000, section 4(4)(c)) effectively "making employees redundant" (ERA, 2000, section 1(4)(e)). The ERA states numerous penalties that may be applied for certain breaches of duty of good faith by the employer.

Sections 1(1-4) require employers to follow fair and reasonable procedures before and during the redundancy process. The initial stage of the process begins with the employer notifying staff of its proposal for change and thereby signalling any proposal to disestablish employee positions through organisational restructuring. The parties then enter a consultation phase followed by the employer's final decision which is notified to staff. If the final decision includes the disestablishment of employee positions, the ERA (Refer to section 69G (1)) requires employers to advise employees of impending redundancy "as soon as practicable, but no later than 20 working days before the date on which a restructuring takes effect" (ERA, 2000). However, the ERA does not provide specific timeframes for this process or the final decisions. The timeframe utilised by the employing organisation can be determined by the organisation but is not subject to the objective of the restructure, affected-employee tenure, employee contract, organisational and industry practice, and compensation value (Employment New Zealand, 2020).

The Australian FWA2009, on the other hand, is more explicit than the New Zealand ERA about employers consulting with employees on redundancy. Australian employers are obligated to consult only if employees are "in a modern award or enterprise agreement" that stipulates that consultation is to take place, which is most often the case (FWA, 2009, section 389(1)(b)). The FWA seeks to ensure any employee redundancy is genuine as opposed to being perfunctory. If no modern award or enterprise agreement exists, then employers are not obligated to consult on matters of redundancy.

In contrast to the New Zealand ERA, the Australian FWA specifies minimum notice periods depending on the affected employee's period of continuous service. For example, one-week notice for one year or less service, two weeks for one year to three years of service, three weeks for three years to five years of service, and four weeks for more than five years of continuous service (FWA, 2009, section 117(3)(a)). This applies less to casual, contract, and seasonal staff. The FWA may, at times, be supplemented by Australian Federal, State, and Territorial laws, and may or may not cover specific

occupations (e.g. police officers in Victoria or Northern Territory) and sectors (e.g. the public sector in Western Australia or New South Wales).

Methodology

This research sought the perspectives of employees in stable employment environments in New Zealand and Australian private and public enterprises. A customised online survey was developed and disseminated to employees by way of the Qualtrics survey platform in December 2021. Given the impact redundancy can have on individuals, the research methodology employed two eligibility screening questions to ensure the survey excluded respondents who had either been made redundant in the 12 months before undertaking the survey or those who felt that they were under imminent threat of redundancy at the time of the survey. The survey tool questions were generated in response to the primary research question: *How do employees wish to be told about losing their jobs?* and collected a total of n=613 responses, made up of n=310 from New Zealand and n=303 from Australia. The combined sample populations of New Zealand and Australia were analysed as they were found to proportionally mirror each other, as noted in the Demographics section below.

Measures

The survey tool comprised 15 questions designed to comply with ethical research requirements and collect data for analysis to satisfy the research questions. Question 1 sought respondent permission to survey to comply with ethical requirements and standard survey protocol. Questions 2 and 3 filtered out ineligible respondents which were defined as individuals not currently employed or currently under threat of redundancy. Questions 4 to 8 enquired of respondents' preferences for imminent-redundancy messaging, including: how they would like to be told, e.g. face-to-face, letter etc; who they would like to be told by, e.g. CEO, direct supervisor etc; preferred terminology when told, e.g. made redundant, furloughed etc; the manner of being told, e.g. direct to the point, good news first etc.; and, if they were made redundant, their preferred time frame of departure, e.g. leave immediately or work out their notice. Question 9 asked respondents to describe their *ideal layoff*, should such exist. This question was analysed using thematic coding methodology. Six demographic questions, numbered 10 to 15, asked respondents' age, gender, ethnicity, job role, employment contract type, and industry. These were used to analyse if there were any significant differences in the way certain groups responded. The quantitative results were analysed using IBM's SPSS 27. The survey concluded with an opportunity for respondents to provide any final comments. The estimated survey completion time of 10 minutes was based on pilot testing conducted by the researchers.

Statistical Significance

In addition to conducting quantitative analysis, statistical analysis was conducted to assess whether the observed relationships or differences between variables were unlikely to have occurred by chance alone. Hypothesis testing involved formulating a null hypothesis (H_0), that there is no relationship or difference between the variables, and an alternative hypothesis (H_1), which suggests the presence of a relationship or difference. Pearson's chi-squared test was run across the demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, employment contract type, industry, and respondents' length of employment in respondents' current organisations and industries against all response variables. To determine statistical significance, a predetermined significance level of alpha value or $p < 0.05$, or a five per cent chance of obtaining the observed results purely due to random variation, was set. Results for tests are discussed in the Analysis and Findings section following. As shown in Appendix A, the demographic differences between New Zealand and Australia are minimal and, therefore, a statistical comparison between the two countries was not conducted.

Analysis and Findings

Survey questions were generated in response to the primary research question: *How do employees wish to be informed of impending redundancy?* Mixed methods analysis (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007) was used to identify employees' perspectives about how they would like to be told; who they would like to be told by; preferred terminology when told; the manner of being told; and if they would prefer to leave immediately or work out their notice.

Analysis of the data for New Zealand and Australia identified the results to be nearly identical as the two countries are very similar across the social and economic spectrums. Therefore, we can report the total figures in our findings, with highlights of differences that may provide an opportunity for future research.

Demographics

The survey collected demographic data from respondents across age, gender, ethnicity, level of the organisations respondents work at, employment contract type, and the industry they are employed in, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic descriptives of participants by country

Demographics			
Category	New Zealand (NZ) n=310	Australia (AU) n=303	Total (TT) n=613
Age			
Under 30 years old	14.8%	16.2%	15.5%
30-39 years old	24.8%	29.7%	27.2%
40-49 years old	21.6%	18.8%	20.2%
50-59 years old	21.6%	16.8%	19.3%
60-69 years old	11.3%	12.6%	11.9%
70> years old	5.8%	5.9%	5.9%
Gender¹			
Female	61.6%	60.1%	60.9%
Male	38.4%	39.9%	39.2%
Ethnicity			
Asian	19.0%	14.2%	16.6%
European	69.4%	48.2%	58.9%
Indigenous Australian/ Torres Strait Islander	0.0%	8.3%	4.1%
Māori	5.2%	0.3%	2.8%
Pasifika	1.6%	3.0%	2.3%
Others including Middle Eastern/Latin American/African	4.8%	26.1%	15.3%

¹ A skewed gender distribution was noted for each country: New Zealand 61.6 per cent, Australia 60.1 per cent of respondents were female.

Age

The age range of respondents (See Table B1, Appendix B) was evenly distributed across all ranges, with the sample of respondents forming a standard bell-shaped distribution with similar proportions from each country. This distribution aligns with the populations of New Zealand and Australia as per government statistics (Statistics NZ, 2021; Statista, 2021).

Ethnicity

A vast majority of respondents were of European descent with the next largest group being people of Asian descent (See Table B2, Appendix B). These groups were proportionally represented in the population of New Zealand (Statistics NZ, 2021) but lower in Australia due to the higher number of other ethnicities' respondent count (Statista, 2021). The proportion of respondents identifying as Indigenous Australians is slightly higher than the overall Australian indigenous population by about one per cent. Māori and Pacific peoples were under-represented per population in each country.

Organisational levels

The survey sample of respondents was split into two distinct occupational categories – management and non-management. Approximately one-quarter to one-third (NZ 23.8 per cent, AU 31.5 per cent, TT 27.6 per cent) were executive, senior, or middle management employees. The remainder were team members.

Employment contract²

A vast majority of respondents were in full-time permanent employment while a lower number worked on fixed-term contracts, either full or part-time, with the remainder being casual employees (see Table B3, Appendix B). Given the study question was hypothetical, i.e. how would employees like to be informed if they were to be made redundant, the study also included responses from those on fixed-term or casual contracts with the understanding that they cannot be made redundant per se.

Primary, secondary, and tertiary industries

The data displayed a slight underrepresentation of secondary industry workers and an overrepresentation of tertiary industry workers for each country (See Table B4, Appendix B).

How people want to be told

Question 4 of the survey asked respondents, “If you were to lose your job how would you like to be told? Please select up to three choices” As Table B5 (Appendix B) illustrates, a large majority of the respondents report they would prefer to be told face-to-face. Face-to-face communication by the organisation can ensure employees' needs for interpersonal and informational justice are satisfied. Approximately one-quarter of respondents indicated that they would prefer a written letter, and a slightly lower proportion said they preferred email. While there has been media coverage of employees being made redundant by way of online platforms, few respondents were open to being notified by way of Zoom™ or video messaging. Between countries, New Zealand and Australia, respondents reported similar preferences.

² The researchers note that casual and fixed-term contract employees are not ‘made redundant’ as their contracts are not permanent. They have been included in this research as their perspective is seen as contributing to the labour market as they may have their contracts cut short. They contributed 20.2 per cent of total responses.

These findings were also indicative across gender and each of the age groups, however, as a respondent's age increased so did their desire to be told face-to-face. In terms of ethnic groupings, all respondents significantly preferred to be told face-to-face. Regardless of organisational positions, contract type or industry, the most preferred method of being told of redundancy was face-to-face. It is also noted that a third of casual workers would be happy to receive news of redundancy by phone (See Table B6, Appendix B).

Of interest was that Asians also indicated written letters and email as the preferred channels to be notified of redundancy (See Table B7, Appendix B). Email was also indicated as a preferred method by 44 per cent of Indigenous Australian/Torres Strait Islanders. These results are discussed below.

Told by whom?

Question 5 of the survey asked respondents, "Who would you like to tell you? Please select up to three options". As Table B8 (Appendix B) illustrates, there was no dominant preference indicated other than to be informed by senior members of the organisation. When considering the level in the organisation where a recipient of redundancy news works, a person's senior manager was their preferred source of being told of redundancy. However, it was clear that respondents did not want to be informed by the HR department as a less-than-significant 18.3 per cent of respondents sought this preference. This result is addressed in the Discussion section below. By adhering to the preferences of employees for their immediate or senior manager, an organisation will be able to ensure employees' expectations of interpersonal and informational justice are upheld. Analysis across gender, age, and ethnicity discovered similar preferences to those indicated in Table B8 (Appendix B). Across permanent, fixed-term and casual workers, respondents had an even distribution for being told by their head of the organisation, senior line manager, or immediate line manager or supervisor (approximately one-third each).

What terminology?

Question 6 of the survey asked respondents, "Which terminology would you prefer, "I am sorry, but you are being..."? Please select up to three." As Table B9 (Appendix B) illustrates, the most dominant term preferred was that employees were being made redundant, followed by laid off, and let go. Other lesser terms included dismissed, released, and terminated. The term furloughed, which became quite the buzzword at the beginning of the redundancy period resulting from the Covid-19 lockdown of early 2020, was indicated by very few respondents. The use of correct terminology when messaging redundancy can ensure that employees feel interpersonal justice has been enacted.

"Made redundant" was also the preferred term across all age groups with an increased preference for 49-50 and 70 years and over groups. Employees in the under 30 years old range were also open to the terms laid off and let go. There was a slight difference between female and male respondents with females finding the term made redundant more favourable. Across the ethnic groups, made redundant was the most preferred term. However, Asians also indicated a tendency to accept the terms laid off and let go. Most Pacific peoples and Indigenous Australians/Torres Strait Islanders indicated made redundant as their preferred term. Although about one-third of these groups also gave other terms equal weight. The term made redundant was also the preferred term across all employee contract types (See Table B10, Appendix B).

What manner?

Question 7 of the survey asked respondents, "What manner would you prefer to be told? Please select up to three options". A significant majority of respondents indicated they would prefer the messaging

to be direct and to the point, with a lower number seeking an apology or facts first. There was a statistically significant indication that the messaging be more direct and to the point as employee age increased indicating employees sought informational justice in redundancy messaging. Further analysis found that males indicated slightly more tendency to be told direct and to the point compared to females (See Table B11, Appendix B).

Work or leave?

Question 8 of the survey asked respondents, “If you were in this position, would you wish to...?”. Respondents reported no significant preference between working out the required notice or leaving immediately. Across all age categories, respondent preferences were similar to those illustrated in Table B12 (Appendix B). However, females showed a stronger preference to leave immediately in comparison to males. In terms of ethnicity, there were some differences with Europeans, Māori, and Middle Eastern/Latin American/Africans suggesting they would leave immediately. In contrast, Asians, Indigenous Australian/Torres Strait Islanders and Pacific Peoples across both countries indicated they would work out their notice. Of interest is that all executive management sought to leave immediately while other management levels across countries provided no clear tendency (See Table B13, Appendix B).

Of statistical significance

The following reports on the statistical significance of findings as identified by running Pearson’s Chi-square test for independence to the data where the resultant alpha or significance level is set at $p < 0.05$. This gives validity to the results posted as significant relationships are identified and known not to be random occurrences.

Upon running tests against dependent variables (Questions 4 to 8) and demographic variables, the only demographic variables across which statistical significance is reported are age, ethnicity and gender (See Table B14, Appendix B). For questions 4 to 7, respondents were asked to indicate their top three preferences while question 8 only required one choice. All other demographic variables showed no statistical significance, therefore the null hypothesis was accepted (the alternative hypothesis was rejected) reporting that no independence was identified.

Analysis of the age category found several preferences that show statistically significant associations. Face-to-face and email (Q4) were statistically significant as the terms made redundant and fired (Q6) have very low p-values (less than 0.001), suggesting strong relationships with age. This indicates that different age groups may have distinct preferences for these actions: as age increased, respondents preferred face-to-face communication and being made redundant as the preferred term to be used. Also of statistical significance, email was preferred by people under 49 years of age; and the term fired was preferred by people under 39 years of age.

Statistical analysis across ethnicity found that face-to-face was preferred by all groups except Indigenous Australian/Torres Strait Islanders. Also significant were Asians’, Pacific peoples and Indigenous Australian/Torres Strait Islanders’ preferences for text; and Asians’ and Indigenous Australian/Torres Strait Islanders’ preferences for email.

Regarding gender, several statistically significant associations confirmed that males preferred the term fired (Q6), females preferred gratitude first (Q7); males preferred to be told by their senior line manager (Q5), and males preferred to work out their notice (Q8). These associations suggest that gender may influence an individual’s preference for these actions.

From Quantitative to Qualitative

A final open-ended question asked respondents to describe their ideal redundancy process, should such exist, to enrich the quantitative data acquired from the survey. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of these responses was undertaken to discover emergent themes. These thematic findings are supported by data collected in the survey. Overall, five themes were identified across the New Zealand and Australian sample populations. The most dominant theme regarding respondents' ideal redundancy centred around transparency, clarity, and directness of the message delivery (38 per cent). Following this, respondents sought compensation and redress to provide them with security and the financial means to seek future employment (27.4 per cent). Respondents also indicated that they wished to be provided both psychological and job-seeking skill support (17.8 per cent), treated with respect or in an amicable manner (12.7 per cent), and told swiftly (12.3 per cent). Less significantly, respondents indicated that employees required sufficient lead time (6.2 per cent), and preferred to be told in private (2.4 per cent) or by the head of the organisation (1.7 per cent). Several employees indicated they would wish to be able to negotiate redundancy terms (1.7 per cent). A marginal number of respondents indicated that they were unsure of their ideal redundancy (7.5 per cent) or that none existed (8.2 per cent).

While survey respondents provided a total of n=613 comment responses, there was one comment that exemplified the qualitative comments received in the data collection process, being:

Called to the office and told the reason why my position is no longer available then given the news of any payouts or the provision of suitable references either written or verbal and if a transition company will be assisting me with the application process for a new position elsewhere. I pack up my belongings and leave the company as quickly as possible after the exit interview where I could make any statements to HR without fear of retaliation.

The qualitative responses indicated participants wanted early notification of pending redundancy (NZ 24.8 per cent, AU 14.4 per cent, TT 19.6 per cent). This call indicates employees would like a warning of possible changes to their job status to plan for the future. The provisions of the NZ ERA (2000) and the FWA (2009) for consultation may go some way to meet this need. The call for early notification by respondents answering this open-ended question may indicate the importance employees place on being alerted about such possibilities. Early notification, rather than just receiving a unilateral decision from management allows employees and management to discuss options which might avoid job losses, or give employees more time to consider their options. Finally, the word 'early' is open to interpretation and further research is required to understand what is meant by early notification. Such research might also investigate whether the other possible reasons suggested are the reason for such calls.

Discussion

As Table 1A (Appendix A) illustrates, the most preferred method of being told of an impending redundancy was face-to-face and this was the case for both men and women, and across all age groups and ethnicities. Face-to-face communication is preferred by many employees because of its perceived richness, with body language and tone of voice conveying much of the message. It is also an immediate channel where questions can be asked and answered synchronously and in terms of being made redundant this ability may be very important (Kupritz & Cowell, 2011). It is through this communication medium that interpersonal and informational justice may be achieved to ensure that fair and equitable redundancy processes are followed, and outcomes achieved. More important for this research is the perception amongst employees of face-to-face communication being seen as a very personal medium that provides feelings of immediacy and one giving employees the belief that

management respects them and is interested in them as individuals (Braun et al., 2015; Hinkle, 2001; Kupritz & Cowell, 2011). Face-to-face communication is the most likely to maintain the dignity of employees, illustrating the principles of interpersonal and informational justice have been followed and also giving employees the social support they need to deal with this stressful situation.

While this may indeed be the preferred method for employees, the Covid-19 pandemic made this extremely difficult because of nationwide lockdowns, mask-wearing and social distancing requirements. In these circumstances, face-to-face meetings may not have been possible and alternatives needed to be found. It is suggested that, in these circumstances, video calls may have offered the next best level of immediacy and respect needed to illustrate to employees that management is interested in them as individuals. However, this could also add a layer of additional stress to employees working remotely who may wonder if the next video call they enter with their manager might be their last with the organisation. To alleviate some of this stress of redundancy, pre-messaging through an alternative channel might be useful. Pre-messaging, as shown in the findings, was preferred by several respondents, and would be an area for future research.

It is interesting to note that all ethnic groups suggested face-to-face as their most preferred communication channel, with Asian respondents also indicating a preference for email and text. This result may indicate that an indirect approach be preferred for the recipient to save face (Li & Su, 2007). Torres Strait Islanders and/or Indigenous Australians had the lowest preference for face-to-face (28.6 per cent). Whilst a small group (n=25), they were nonetheless the group most likely to select email or text as their next most preferred methods of communication. This group has often faced workplace discrimination (Cameron et al., 2017) and thus may prefer to avoid a face-to-face meeting to receive such news. Alternatively, strong kinship ties among Australian Aboriginals oblige them to give money earned from jobs to their families (Maru & Davies, 2011), therefore, receiving news of redundancy in written form may not only help them to avoid a face-to-face meeting but may also provide them with something to share with their families to whom they have kinship obligations.

In general, respondents wished to be told by their immediate superior, for example, those in executive management preferred to be told by the CEO; middle managers told by senior line managers and so forth. However, those in junior positions were open to being told by CEOs, senior or immediate line manager/supervisors of pending redundancy (See Table 2A, Appendix A).

The preference for being told by immediate superiors resonates with previous research suggesting “employees’ preferred source of information, regardless of the issue, is their supervisor” (Therkelsen & Fiebich, 2003, p. 126). Therkelsen and Fiebich (2003) also suggest direct, face-to-face communication between employees and their immediate supervisors can increase an employee’s trust, loyalty, and satisfaction with their organisation. Furthermore, employees who are told face-to-face by a respected authority about a redundancy report, feel they have been treated with high levels of respect, again maintaining their dignity and sense of self-worth. Those who are told by an outside agent reported higher levels of anger and more intention to complain (Richter et al., 2018) as they may believe the principle of interpersonal justice has been compromised.

The survey did not ask about the structure of HR in the organisations in which respondents worked. While the results indicated that being told the news of impending redundancy by HR was one of the least preferred options (NZ 16.1 per cent, AU 20.5 per cent, TT 18.3 per cent), the results could be interpreted in one of two ways. First, in organisations with highly centralised HR departments with whom employees have little day-to-day contact, HR people may be perceived as outside agents by employees. As Richter et al. (2018) found, employees felt they had been treated with low respect if the message of job loss was delivered by someone they perceived as an outside agent. Alternatively, in organisations with decentralised HR functions, employees may have closer relationships with HR

people and the result may reflect a negative relationship they have with their immediate supervisor. This is an area for future research.

When it came to the terminology, as Table A3 (Appendix A) illustrates, respondents preferred the term made redundant (61.5 per cent). The next most preferred terms were laid off (27.9 per cent) and let go (25.8 per cent). Made redundant may be preferred as it appears to blame the organisation and the difficulties it faces rather than it being the fault of the employee. Interestingly, furloughed, a term used commonly across the western world to describe people losing jobs due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Newman & Freilekman, 2020) was one of the least preferred terms (3.1 per cent). This is despite the term in law meaning that the employee is still employed by the organisation and can return to work once the period of the furlough has finished (Crawford, 2020).

Table A4 (Appendix A) illustrates most respondents wanted the news of redundancy delivered directly and to the point. However, as Lipinski et al (2020) suggest that doing so in an overly blunt manner could be considered aggressive and unfair by the recipient. Many of those who answered the open-ended question agreed with this by describing their ideal process as being told directly and to the point respectfully, compassionately, and empathetically. If this is done in a face-to-face conversation with their immediate supervisor, then employees are likely to feel their dignity and sense of self-worth have been maintained. Furthermore, the immediacy present in a face-to-face conversation will also give employees the social support they need to deal with the situation in a manner that as much as possible preserves their psychological wellbeing.

Two other important themes emerged from the open-ended question about employees' ideal process. The first was that many employees wanted an early warning of impending redundancies so they could start looking for other jobs and plan for life after the redundancy. This is supported by Macky (2004) who found employees wanted "adequate warning that they would lose their jobs" (p. 75). The other major theme was employees wanted an indication of their compensation or payout following their redundancy which, again, allows employees to plan for the future. The amount of compensation may help determine whether employees would work out their notice or leave immediately.

These results suggest guidance for best practices to ensure the dignity of employees when making them redundant:

- Impending redundancies should be signalled early to employees so they may plan for the eventuality.
- Employees should be told face-to-face by their immediate superior/supervisor.
- The word redundancy should be the preferred term used.
- The message should be direct and to the point and delivered with respect, compassion, and empathy.
- Employees should have the option to leave immediately or work out their notice.

While the above guidelines would appear to meet the needs of most people in the survey, the data illustrates some gender and ethnic differences in how they were told, so different approaches may have to be considered in some cases to ensure that employees are treated with dignity and justice.

Limitations

While data samples obtained from organisations by way of Qualtrics panels are comparable to other populations in published research, it is convenience sampling (Croucher et al., 2021), thus, the findings need to be interpreted with this knowledge. Furthermore, the questionnaire did not include a question about support services or information people may require after being told of their impending

redundancy. The open-ended part of the survey did bring these points to light; however, future research in this area should include a specific question regarding this aspect of the redundancy process. The sample size (n=613) has provided rich insight into employee perspectives; however, comparable to a much larger sample, it is less representative of the greater population. As discussed, this research focuses on the processes of redundancy, yet the relationship between the employee(s) and the employer is paramount. Future research on employee-employer relationships may provide insight into the means of signalling and messaging with favourable outcomes for each.

Conclusion

While much research has been conducted on redundancy in the past, there has been little research examining how workers who may one day face being made redundant wish to be informed. This research found workers are quite clear in how they wished to be told and by whom. Interestingly, HR personnel are *not* a preferred source of such news. Therefore, it is argued the role of HR should be to ensure due process is followed and to provide the required information concerning compensation to the immediate superiors/supervisors who deliver the message. It will also be important to give adequate training and support to those who deliver the message so that employees feel they have been treated with the respect and dignity and justice they deserve at such a difficult time. Finally, during times of crisis, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, employees' preference for face-to-face meetings may be unable to be accommodated and further research is needed to find the best suitable alternative that still illustrates that management respects and cares about employees on an individual level.

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Appendix A

Table A1

Q5 - If you were to lose your job, how would you like to be told?

Q4 - If you were to lose your job, how would you like to be told?			
	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Answer			
Face-to-face	90.6%	82.2%	86.5%
Written letter	30.7%	21.5%	26.1%
Email	14.8%	23.4%	19.1%
Telephone call	11.3%	18.5%	14.9%
Text	1.0%	5.6%	3.3%
Zoom, Skype or other video call	4.2%	6.9%	5.6%

Table A2

Q5 - Who would you like me to tell you?

Q5 - Who would you like to tell you?			
	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Head of organisation	47.1%	41.3%	44.2%
Senior line manager	42.9%	40.9%	41.9%
Immediate line manager/supervisor	47.1%	44.6%	45.8%
Human Resource (HR) person	16.1%	20.5%	18.3%
Co-worker	2.3%	3.6%	2.9%

Table A3*Q6 - Which terminology would you prefer, "I am sorry but you are being"?*

Q6 - Which terminology would you prefer, "I am sorry but you are being"?			
	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Axed	0.0%	3.3%	1.6%
Canned	0.3%	1.0%	0.7%
Discharged	2.9%	8.3%	5.6%
Dismissed	10.3%	19.8%	15.0%
Fired	2.9%	5.6%	4.2%
Furloughed	1.9%	4.3%	3.1%
Laid off	30.3%	25.4%	27.9%
Let go	24.2%	27.4%	25.8%
Made redundant	72.9%	49.8%	61.5%
Released	11.0%	15.8%	13.4%
Retired	5.5%	6.6%	6.0%
Sacked	0.3%	2.6%	1.5%
Terminated	6.1%	13.2%	9.6%

Table A4*Q7 - In what manner would you prefer to be told?*

Q7 - In what manner would you prefer to be told?			
	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Direct, to the point	73.9%	69.6%	71.8%
Apology first	28.1%	28.7%	28.4%
Facts first	33.2%	22.8%	28.1%
Gratitude first	20.7%	21.5%	21.0%
Compliment first	7.1%	10.2%	8.7%
Good news first	3.9%	7.6%	5.7%
Casual conversation first	2.3%	5.3%	3.8%

Table A5*Q8 - If you were in this position would you wish to...?*

Q8 - If you were in this position would you wish to...?			
	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Work out the required notice	51.3%	45.9%	48.6%
Leave immediately	43.6%	51.8%	47.6%

Table A6*Q10 - Age by country*

Q10 - How old are you?			
	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Under 30	14.8%	16.2%	15.6%
30-39 years old	24.8%	29.7%	27.2%
40-49 years old	21.6%	18.8%	20.2%
50-59 years old	21.6%	16.8%	19.3%
60-69 years old	11.3%	12.5%	11.9%
70 years or older	5.8%	5.9%	5.9%

Table A7*Q11 - Gender by country*

Q11 - What is your gender?			
	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Female	61.6%	60.1%	60.9%
Male	38.4%	39.9%	39.2%

Table A8*Q 12 - Ethnicity by country*

Q12 - What is your ethnicity?			
	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Asian	19.0%	14.2%	16.6%
European	69.4%	48.2%	58.9%
Indigenous Australian/Torres Strait Islander	0.0%	8.3%	4.1%
Māori	5.2%	0.3%	2.8%
Pacific Peoples	1.6%	3.0%	2.3%
Others including Middle Eastern/Latin American/African	4.8%	2.0%	1.6%

Table A9*Q 13 - Level in the organisation by country*

Q13 - What level of your organisation do you work in?			
	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Executive Management, e.g., CEO, CFO	7.1%	11.9%	9.5%
Senior Management, e.g., portfolio manager	3.9%	5.0%	4.4%
Middle Management, e.g., department head	12.3%	13.9%	13.1%
Senior Team Member	33.9%	30.0%	32.0%
Junior Team Member	21.3%	11.9%	16.6%

Table A10*Q14 – Employment type by country*

Q14 - What is your employment type?			
	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Permanent (full or part-time)	82.6%	72.3%	77.5%
Fixed-term (full or part-time)	9.4%	15.2%	12.2%
Casual	4.8%	11.2%	8.0%
Seasonal	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Table A11*Q 15 – Industry by country*

Q15 - What industry are you employed in?			
	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Primary	3.6%	2.3%	2.9%
Secondary	12.6%	8.3%	10.4%
Tertiary	83.2%	86.8%	85.0%

Table A12*Q 16 – Years in current organisation by country*

Q16 - How long have you worked in your current organisation?			
	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Less than 1 year	10.3%	7.6%	9.0%
1 to 4 years	40.7%	30.0%	35.4%
5 to 9 years	21.3%	25.4%	23.3%
10 years or more	26.8%	36.6%	31.7%

Table A13*Q 17 – Years worked in current industry*

Q17 - How long have you worked in your current industry?			
	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Less than 1 year	5.5%	6.3%	5.9%
1 to 4 years	28.1%	16.8%	22.5%
5 to 9 years	20.7%	24.8%	22.7%
10 years or more	44.5%	51.8%	48.1%

Appendix B

Table B1

Age ranges of respondents by country

	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Age			
Under 30 years old	14.8%	16.2%	15.5%
30-39 years old	24.9%	29.7%	27.2%
40-49 years old	21.6%	18.8%	20.2%
50-59 years old	21.6%	16.8%	19.3%
60-69 years old	11.3%	12.6%	11.9%
>70 years old	5.8%	5.9%	5.9%

Table B2

Respondents' ethnic groups

	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Ethnicity			
European	69.4%	48.2%	58.9%
Māori	5.2%	0.3%	2.8%
Pasifika	1.6%	3.0%	2.3%
Asian	19.0%	14.2%	16.6%
Indigenous Australian/ Torres Strait Islander	0.0%	8.3%	4.1%
Others including Middle Eastern/Latin American/African	4.8%	26.1%	15.3%

Table B3*Respondents' employment contracts*

	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Full-time employees	83.1%	72.8%	78.0%
Fixed-term employees	4.9%	11.3%	8.0%

Table B4*Respondent's industries*

	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Industry			
Primary	3.6%	2.4%	3.0%
Secondary	12.7%	8.5%	10.6%
Tertiary	83.8%	89.2%	86.4%

Table B5*Question 4: "If you were to lose your job, how would you like to be told?"*

	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Answer			
Face-to-face	90.6%	82.2%	86.5%
Written letter	30.7%	21.5%	26.1%
Email	14.8%	23.4%	19.1%
Telephone call	11.3%	18.5%	14.9%
Text	1.0%	5.6%	3.3%
Zoom, Skype or another video call	4.2%	6.9%	5.6%

Table B6*Respondents' preferences for Face-to-face across categories*

	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Face-to-face			
Under 30 years old	13.5%	15.7%	14.6%

30-39 years old	24.2%	25.3%	24.7%
40-49 years old	22.1%	18.9%	20.6%
50-59 years old	23.1%	18.5%	20.9%
60-69 years old	12.5%	14.9%	13.6%
70 years and older	4.6%	6.8%	5.7%
European	92.1%	88.4%	90.6%
Indigenous Australian/ Torres Strait Islanders	0.0%	100.0%	50.6%
Māori	87.5%	0.0%	82.4%
Asian	88.1%	74.4%	82.4%
Middle Eastern/Latin American/African	100.0%	66.7%	80.0%
Pacific Peoples	80.0%	88.9%	85.7%
Executive management	81.8%	75.0%	77.6%
Senior management	100.0%	80.0%	88.9%
Middle management	92.1%	86.7%	88.8%
Senior team members	99.0%	83.5%	91.8%
Junior team members	82.4%	83.3%	80.6%
Permanent employees	91.8%	85.4%	88.8%
Fixed-term employees	89.7%	78.3%	82.7%
Casual workers	80.0%	70.6%	73.5%
Primary industry	72.7%	71.4%	72.2%
Secondary industry	94.9%	76.0%	87.5%
Tertiary industry	90.7%	83.3%	86.9%

Table B7*Respondents of Asian ethnicity preference for means of messaging*

	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Asian			
Written letter	45.8%	32.6%	40.2%
Email	30.5%	41.9%	35.3%

Table B8*Question 5: "Who would you like to tell you?"*

	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Terminology			
Immediate line manager/supervisor	47.1%	44.6%	45.8%
Head of organisation	47.1%	41.3%	44.2%
Senior line manager	42.9%	40.9%	41.9%
Human Resource (HR) person	16.1%	20.5%	18.3%
Co-worker	2.3%	3.6%	2.9%

Table B9*Question 6: "Which terminology would you prefer?"*

	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Terminology			
Made redundant	72.9%	49.8%	61.5%
Laid off	30.3%	25.4%	27.9%
Let go	24.2%	27.4%	25.8%
Dismissed	10.3%	19.8%	15.0%
Released	11.0%	15.8%	13.4%
Terminated	6.1%	31.2%	9.6%
Retired	5.5%	6.6%	6.0%
Discharged	2.9%	8.3%	5.6%

Fired	2.9%	5.6%	4.2%
Furloughed	1.9%	4.3%	3.1%
Axed	0.0%	3.3%	1.6%
Sacked	0.3%	2.6%	1.5%
Canned	0.3%	1.0%	0.7%

Table B10

Preferences for being Made redundant across Gender, Ethnicity and Contract types

	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Made redundant			
Under 30 years old	9.3%	10.6%	9.8%
30-39 years old	23.9%	23.8%	23.9%
40-49 years old	23.5%	24.5%	23.9%
50-59 years old	23.9%	21.2%	22.8%
60-69 years old	13.3%	13.3%	13.3%
70 years or older	6.2%	6.6%	6.4%
Female	75.9%	86.6%	66.0%
Male	68.1%	58.7%	54.6%
European	78.6%	58.9%	70.6%
Māori	50.0%	0%	52.9%
Asian	50.0%	0%	52.9%
Pacific peoples	60.0	44.4	50.0
Permanent employees	73.8%	52.5%	64.0%
Fixed-term employees	75.9%	56.5%	56.0%
Casual employees	46.7%	41.2%	42.9%

Table B11*Question 7: "What manner would you prefer to be told?"*

	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Manner			
Direct, to the point	73.9%	69.6%	71.8%
Apology first	28.1%	28.7%	28.4%
Facts first	33.2%	22.8%	28.1%
Gratitude first	20.7%	21.5%	21.0%
Compliment first	7.1%	10.2%	8.7%
Good news first	3.9%	7.6%	5.7%
Casual conversation first	2.3%	5.3%	3.8%
Direct and to the point			
Female	71.7%	67.0%	69.4%
Male	77.3%	73.6%	75.4%

Table B12*Question 8: "If you were in this position, would you wish to...?"*

	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Notice			
Work out the required notice	51.3%	45.9%	48.6%
Leave immediately	43.6%	51.8%	47.6%

Table B13*Preferences for Working out notice or leave immediately across categories*

	New Zealand	Australia	Total
Work out the required notice			
Females	48.2%	41.2%	44.8%
Males	56.3%	52.9%	54.6%
Asian	83.1%	55.8%	71.6
European	43.3%	39.0%	41.6
Indigenous Australian/ Torres Strait Islander	0.0%	72.0%	72.0
Māori	37.5%	0.0%	35.3
Pacific Peoples	40.0%	66.7%	57.1
Others including Middle Eastern/Latin American/African	60.0%	43.0	45.7%
Senior managers	58.3%	46.7%	51.9%
Middle managers	47.4%	35.7%	41.3%
Senior team members	52.4%	45.1%	49.0%
Junior team members	56.1%	47.2%	52.9%
Leave immediately			
Females	45.6%	55.5%	50.4%
Males	40.3%	46.3%	43.3%
Asian	17.0%	44.2%	28.4%
European	49.8%	58.9%	53.5%
Indigenous Australian/ Torres Strait Islander	0.0%	28.0%	28.0%

Māori	56.3	100.0%	58.8%
Pacific Peoples	60.0%	33.3%	42.9%
Others including Middle Eastern/Latin American/African	40.0%	51.9%	50.0%
Executive management	50.0%	58.3%	55.2%
Middle managers	47.4%	61.9%	55.0%
Senior managers	41.7%	53.3%	48.2%
Senior team members	43.8%	53.9%	48.5%

Table B14*Confirmed statistically significant associations*

Demographic	Variable	Action	P=
Age	How told	Email	< 0.00001
		Face-to-face	0.0000538
		Written letter	0.0255
	What terminology	Dismissed	0.00566
		Fired	0.000594
		Let go	0.00572
		Made redundant	< 0.00001
	What manner	Apology first	0.0275
		Direct, to the point	0.00857
Facts first		0.00893	
Ethnicity	How told	Face-to-face	0.0000511
		Text	< 0.00001
		Written letter	0.00169
	By whom	Immediate line manager	0.00854
	What terminology	Discharged	< 0.00001
		Made redundant	< 0.00001
		Retired	< 0.00001
		Terminated	0.000421
Work or leave	Leave	0.000136	
	Work out	< 0.00001	
Gender	How told	Text	0.00853
	By whom	Immediate line manager	0.0469
		Senior line manager	0.0292

	What terminology	Fired	0.0228
		Made redundant	0.00508
	What manner	Gratitude first	0.0335
	Work or leave	Work out	0.0204