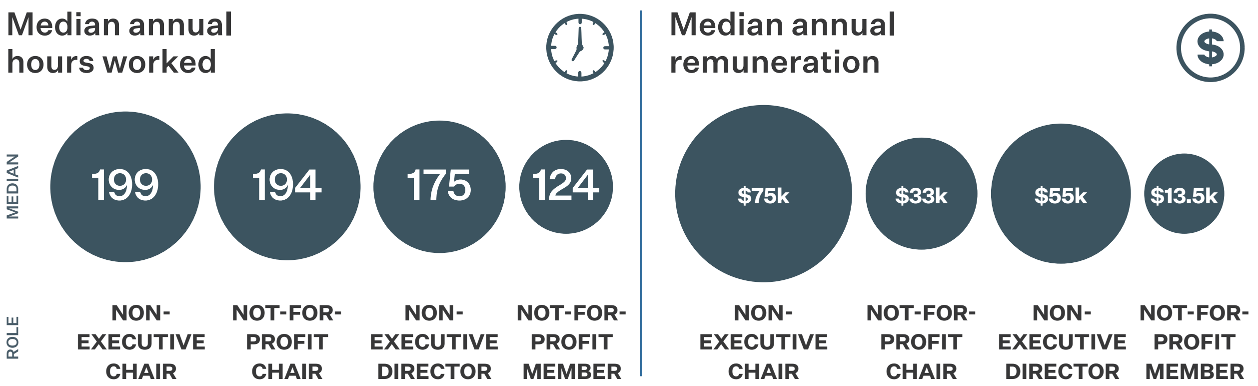
2026 Directors' Fees Survey: Not-for-profit Insights

The *2026/27 Directors' Fees Report*, produced by the Institute of Directors (IoD) and EY, provides a detailed picture of director remuneration and board practices across New Zealand. This year's survey draws on 4,174 directorships across 1,677 organisations.

People serving in not-for-profit (NFP) governance roles[1] continue to make a significant contribution to organisations and communities across New Zealand. The 2026 data provides insights into the different demands placed on NFP chairs and governing body members, and how those roles compare with non-executive governance roles more broadly.



The NFP chair results stand out in terms of both time and remuneration. NFP chairs report almost the same median annual time commitment as non-executive chairs overall – 194 hours compared with 199 – but their median annual remuneration of $33,000 is less than half the overall chair median of $75,000.

The picture is different at governing body member level. NFP members report a lower median annual commitment than non-executive directors overall – 124 hours compared with 175 – alongside a substantially lower median remuneration of $13,500 compared with $55,000.

There is also a substantial difference within NFP boards themselves. The median annual time commitment for an NFP chair is 56.5% higher than a governing body member, while the median annual remuneration is 144.4% higher. The data reinforces how substantial the NFP chair role can be, both in time commitment and leadership responsibility.

1 For 2026, trust and incorporated society roles have been brought together into consolidated NFP chair and NFP governing body member categories. This provides a more comprehensive picture of NFP governance but means the new role medians are not directly comparable with the separate trustee and trust chair categories used in previous years.

Institute of DIRECTORS NEW ZEALAND

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Not-for-profit Chair

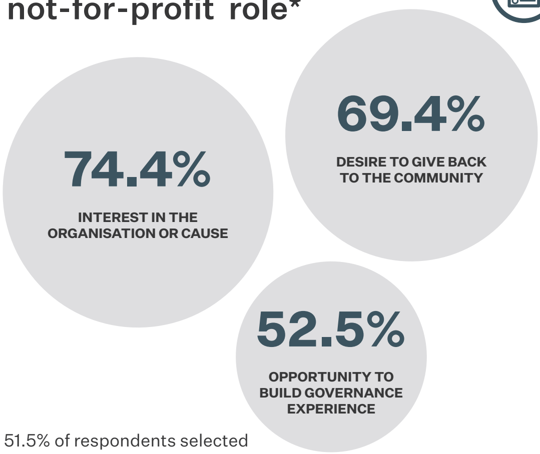
194	**36**	**10**	**2.4**
MEDIAN ANNUAL HOURS	MEDIAN HOURS IN MEETINGS	MEDIAN NO. OF MEETINGS	MEDIAN PREPARATION HOURS PER MEETING

Not-for-profit governing body member

124	**33**	**10**	**2.5**
MEDIAN ANNUAL HOURS	MEDIAN HOURS IN MEETINGS	MEDIAN NO. OF MEETINGS	MEDIAN PREPARATION HOURS PER MEETING

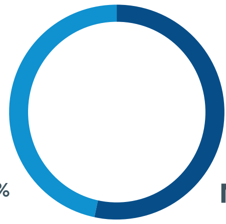
NFP chairs and governing body members report similar formal meeting commitments, but chairs report a substantially higher total annual workload. This suggests much of the additional chair workload occurs outside scheduled board meetings. This reinforces why remuneration decisions should reflect the actual demands of the role, rather than meeting frequency alone.

Reasons for taking on a not-for-profit role*



* 51.5% of respondents selected both of the top two choices

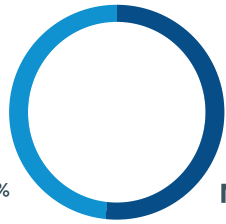
Not-for-profit Chair



Female 46.5%

Male 53.5%

Not-for-profit governing body member



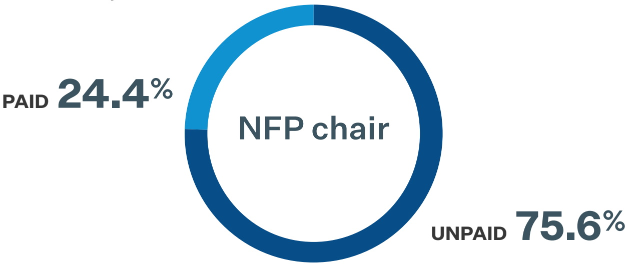
Female 48.2%

Male 51.8%

Purpose remains a strong motivation for taking on an NFP governance role. Interest in the organisation or cause has increased from 69.2% in 2025 to 74.4%, while the desire to give back remains broadly stable at around seven in 10 respondents. The largest movement is in those citing the opportunity to build governance experience, which has increased from 44.5% in 2025 to 52.5%.

Gender representation in NFP governance remains relatively balanced. Women account for 46.5% of NFP chair roles and 48.2% of governing body member roles. While the changed role categories mean direct year-on-year comparison is limited, NFP chairs remain considerably closer to gender parity than non-executive chair roles overall, where women account for 26.4% of positions.

Organisations with annual revenue below $10m



Setting remuneration

Unpaid governance is the norm among smaller NFPs. In organisations with annual revenue below $10 million, 75.6% of NFP chair roles and 83.6% of governing body member roles are unpaid. Even at this smaller scale, chairs are somewhat more likely than governing body members to be remunerated. Paid governance is more common among larger NFPs. However, smaller does not necessarily mean simpler. Some NFPs carry substantial responsibilities with limited management or administrative support, regardless of whether they can afford to remunerate their governing body.

That does not mean unpaid governance is necessarily inappropriate. Among unpaid NFP chairs, 61% considered it appropriate for the role to remain unpaid, while 39% believed it should be paid. The view was stronger among unpaid governing body members, with 80% considering the unpaid arrangement appropriate and 20% believing the role should be remunerated. The more useful question for a board is whether its current approach remains appropriate as the organisation and the demands of governance change, and whether voluntary governance is a deliberate choice or simply the default.

There is no single right approach to NFP governance remuneration. The starting point should not be "Should we pay?", but "What are we trying to achieve?" Benchmarking can inform the decision, but it should not determine it; organisations of similar size can still place very different demands on their governing bodies.

Reasons for considering remuneration may include attracting or retaining particular skills and lived experience, widening the pool of people able to serve, or responding to increased time and workload. Remuneration may not always be the best response. Options may include fees, reimbursement of expenses, or other forms of support or recognition.

1. Be intentional
Is voluntary governance a deliberate choice or simply the default? What are you trying to achieve, and what governance issue are you trying to address?

2. Test the case
Would remuneration help, and is it affordable and sustainable? What other options could help?

3. Set the approach
Decide what remuneration should recognise or enable, and how it will work. Consider governance documents and requirements, conflicts, stakeholder views, benchmarking and communication.

4. Review it
Agree how and when the approach will be reviewed as the organisation and the demands of governance change.

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