

## STUNTPERSON

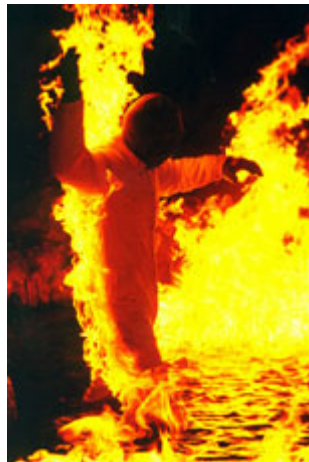
### Tangata Whakatara

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### *Print Page*

### *Description*

Stuntpeople use special stunt equipment to perform dangerous activities for film and television productions. They may double for other actors.



A stuntperson in a protective suit is set on fire

### *He Whakamarama*



Whakamahi ai i nga utauta whakahirahira ki te whakahaere ngangahau morearea i runga amohanga pikitia. Tera ka noho kairiwhi mo etahi atu kaiwhakaatu.

### *Alternative Titles*

- Stunt Co-ordinator
- Stunt Performer
- Stunt Double
- Stunt Player
- Action Actor

### *Tasks and Duties*

Stuntpeople:

- study the sequence of stunt actions, especially if they are working with a team of stuntpeople
- do warm up stretches and exercises before doing stunts
- practise different stunts
- wear as much safety padding and equipment to prevent injury as the costume allows
- perform stunts specific to their skills and background; for example, drivers take part in car crashes and chases, and those with a stage combat and/or martial arts background perform fight scenes
- take the place of actors in scenes that are considered dangerous or require special skills
- perform in front of a camera and/or an audience
- use special stunt equipment to perform stunts
- may perform fire stunts or high fall stunts.

A stuntperson may become a stunt co-ordinator after years of experience. Stunt co-ordinators:

- study the script
- design the stunt sequences so that they are safe and visually effective
- may train other stunt performers or actors to perform stunts
- examine and advise on the safety aspects of stunts and stunt equipment
- work closely with actors and arrange action sequences that reflect their screen character
- meet with directors, producers, and other film crew members to discuss how stunt sequences will be choreographed, and make appropriate adjustments to stunt sequences.

***"Probably 80% of the stunts we do here are fight scenes, so you're more of a 'fall guy' - you could take a hit and go into a back flip or do a fall from a hit. The rest of the time we're doing other stunts, like high falls and things like that."***

**Allan Poppleton, Stuntperson**

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## Personal Requirements

### Skills

Stuntpeople need to have good communication and people skills. They also need to have skills particular to the type of stunts they are performing, such as martial arts, gymnastics or driving.



Stuntperson Thomas Kiwi practising a stunt

### Knowledge

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Stuntpeople need to know about different stunts, and which ones to perform in certain situations and the best ways of performing them. They should also have a knowledge of first aid, safety equipment, and specialist stunt equipment such as flying harnesses and airbags.

## ***Personal Qualities***

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Stuntpeople need to be creative, sensible and confident. They need to have discipline to maintain their personal fitness levels and they should be safety-conscious and work well in a team.

## ***Physical Requirements***

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Stuntpeople need to be fit and healthy, with a flexible body and good co-ordination.

***"You have to be conditioned and fit. That's why I think coming from a martial arts background helps. For instance, your body is more conditioned to falling on the ground and that sort of thing."***

**Allan Poppleton, Stuntperson**

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## ***How to Enter the Job***

### ***Education***

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There are no specific educational requirements to be a stuntperson; however, qualifications in drama, physical education and first aid can be useful.

#### ***Related courses:***



[Acting, Drama and Theatre](#)  
[Circus and Street Performance](#)

#### ***Take off to tertiary!***

[Take off to tertiary!](#) - information and advice to help with study or training decision -making.

#### ***New Zealand Qualifications Authority:***



[Dance](#)  
[Drama](#)  
[Maori Performing Arts](#)  
[Music](#)  
[Performing Arts General](#)  
[Professional Acting](#)

## ***Entry Requirements***

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There are no specific entry requirements to be a stuntperson. However, depending on the type of stunts required, stuntpeople need certain skills and experience in areas such as gymnastics, martial arts and driving. Stunt and/or acting agencies usually select stuntpeople from an audition.

## ***Useful Experience***

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Useful experience for stuntpeople includes:

- gymnastics, tumbling and trampolining
- martial arts
- advanced specialised driving of motorbikes and/or cars
- theatre and film work
- dancing and drama
- stage combat
- mountain climbing
- horse riding and vaulting.

Any of a variety of sports, including water skiing, scuba diving, high diving, hang gliding, parachuting and boxing, are also useful. Stuntpeople are advised to specialise in one or several types of sporting or physical activities, but to also have some experience in a range of others.

## ***Training on the Job***

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Stuntpeople train on the job during training weekends and rehearsals, which are completed before shooting on a film set.

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## ***Working Conditions***

### ***Work Places and Travel***

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Stuntpeople work in film and television studios, and in theatres. They may work outdoors on location, and travel throughout the country and overseas.



***"We work at studios and outdoor sets all over the place: at beaches, in the bush - it just depends on the location of the set and what is being shot."***

**Thomas Kiwi, Ngai Te Rangi/Nga Puhi, Stuntperson**

## ***Equipment***

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Equipment stuntpeople may use includes:

- body armour and safety equipment
- stunt equipment such as mini-tramps, flying harnesses, air-rams and airbags
- stage props and weapons

- costumes and body padding
- make-up
- cars and other vehicles.

## Workplace Conditions

Work conditions may be noisy and dangerous, depending on the location of the sets and the stunts required. However, a safety team is always present on a film set when stunts are being performed.

## Employment Conditions

### Hours

Stuntpeople often work on short-term contracts of about three to nine months, and work can be irregular, depending on demand in the film industry. They may also work long hours and weekends.

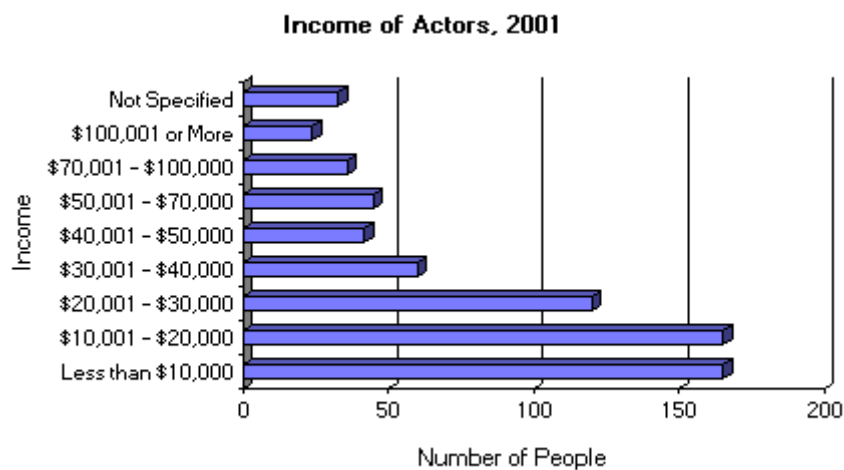


***"Sometimes we will turn up on the set early in the morning, and we won't be used until the end of the day. You can spend a lot of time waiting."***

Thomas Kiwi, Ngai Te Rangi/Nga Puhī, Stuntperson

### Salary

Salaries vary greatly and depend on the amount and type of work the stuntperson does. Some stuntpeople may earn between \$300 and \$600 per day.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

[Interpreting Charts](#)

## Contact with People

Stuntpeople work in teams under the supervision of a director and/or stunt co-ordinator. They interact with other stuntpeople, safety personnel, actors, wardrobe people and film crews.

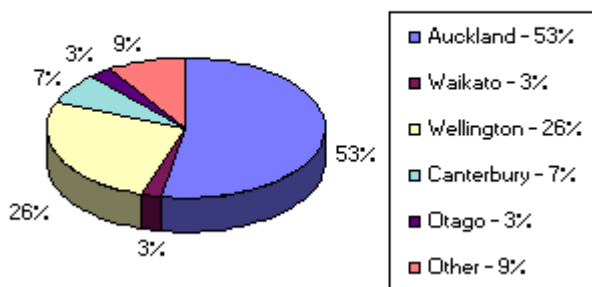
## Job Market

### Market Details

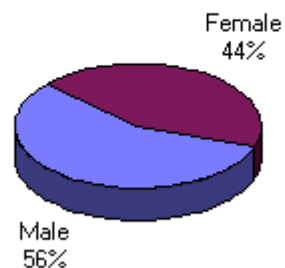
These statements and statistics are based on information available from Statistics New Zealand about acting occupations. Charts and statistics on actors include data on stuntpeople.

- 693 people were employed as actors in 2001
- 61% were employed full-time
- 44% were female
- The highest proportion of people were employed in the Auckland (53%), Wellington (26%) and Canterbury (7%) regions.

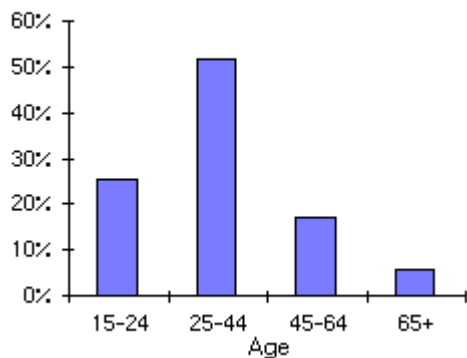
**Regional Location of Actors, 2001**



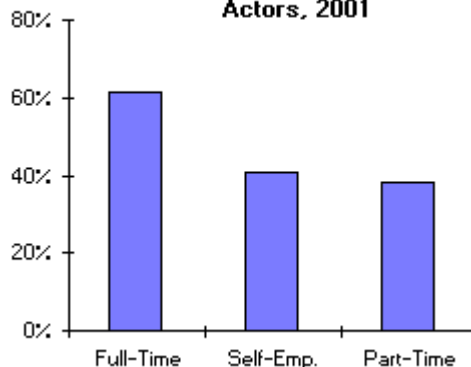
**Gender of Actors, 2001**



**Age of Actors, 2001**



**Type of Employment of Actors, 2001**



Source: Statistics New Zealand

[Interpreting Charts](#)

## ***Job Outlook***

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The outlook for stuntpeople is average and the number of people employed in this occupation is expected to remain stable over the next two to three years. However, competition for employment will remain extremely high, increasing the need for stuntpeople to be skilled and trained not only for stunt work but also for running and marketing themselves as a small business.

A large increase in government funding for the arts is expected to increase employment opportunities and job security in the performing arts industry. Twenty two million dollars has been put into establishing a Film Production Fund and an extra seven million dollars has been injected into NZ on Air, with the aim of increasing New Zealand made productions and creating more opportunities for employment.

The increase in the number of overseas production companies filming in New Zealand is another significant employment booster. The filming of the Lord of the Rings trilogy in New Zealand provided a multitude of jobs for New Zealand stuntpeople, while also exposing New Zealand's capabilities as a filming destination to an international market. Similarly, television action shows filmed here provide opportunities for New Zealand stuntpeople to get work experience and exposure in international television shows.

There are also opportunities for New Zealand stuntpeople to work overseas, especially in Australia and the Pacific Islands. Many stuntpeople work on a part-time basis and may have other jobs to supplement their income. This is likely to continue to be necessary for people entering the performing arts industry.

(Written 26/04/2001 - Updated 05/01/2004)

## ***Regional Market Details***

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Northland / Auckland / Waikato / Bay of Plenty / Gisborne / Hawke's Bay / Taranaki / Manawatu-Wanganui / [Wellington](#) / Tasman / Nelson / Marlborough / West Coast / [Canterbury](#) / [Otago](#) / Southland

### ***Wellington:***

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The number of actors employed in the Wellington region is expected to grow moderately over the next three to five years. There is a growing appreciation of the theatre as a form of entertainment and the Wellington City Council has made the city a user-friendly destination for film makers. There has been an increase in job opportunities due to the number of television productions that have been based in Wellington in the last year and an increase in funding from Creative New Zealand. New Zealand film and television production has increased and production resources for film are being purchased, creating optimism in the Wellington region about the future of film production and job opportunities for actors.

Most actors in the Wellington region work on a freelance basis and are usually employed part-time. When working on large productions for stage or television, actors may work full-time.

### ***Canterbury:***

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The number of actors employed in the Canterbury region is expected to remain stable or grow moderately over the next three to five years. Major influences on employment opportunities include increased funding and community support for the arts, a greater number of festivals and touring circuits, and the prospect of film or television work.

Turnover among actors in this region is high and this trend looks likely to continue for the next three to five years. There is only one professional theatre in Christchurch, limiting paid employment opportunities and

factors such as age or gender can also limit the roles an actor can audition for. Many actors find it difficult to retain full-time employment and as a result seek job opportunities outside of acting.

Most actors are self-employed and work on part or full-time contracts. Some actors create their own shows and take them on tours.

### **Otago:**

The number of actors employed in the Otago region is expected to remain stable over the next three to five years despite a variety of new companies forming, local courses training talented actors, and strong support for theatre in Dunedin. This is due to limited funding for projects and a need for companies to keep cast numbers low in order to reduce production costs. Most of the region's actors are involved in amateur productions and many move to Auckland, Wellington or overseas to obtain paid work. However, some remain in Otago for lifestyle or family reasons and others return between jobs.

Most actors in the Otago region are self-employed and work on a contract basis for projects that run for a few months. As a result, they can be very busy acting for short periods between which they work in other roles. Even with more professional work available, few companies can afford to employ actors long-term.

Sixty percent of Otago's actors are male although the number of female actors is increasing as greater numbers of women are becoming involved in writing and producing theatre. Age is more of a barrier to working in this occupation than gender.

(Written 25/09/2001)

## **Current Vacancies**



[Writers, Artists, Entertainers, Sports & Religious Associated Professionals](#)



[KiwiCareers Job Vacancy Links](#)

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## **Personal Profile**

### **Allan Poppleton**

Allan Poppleton has been a stuntperson since 1993. He found out about this work through his martial arts club. "Back in 1993, the head of the stunt agency was looking for some people for an up-and-coming film, which happened to be the first pilot movie for Hercules. He came to our club and recruited a few of us."

Before then, Allan had never thought about becoming a stuntperson. "I never thought of anything like this happening - not in New Zealand - and when it did, I thought, 'I'll believe it when it I see it.'"

But it did happen, and Allan began training almost immediately. "We were taken through different stunts like using the air-ram (which propels a stuntperson through the air), doing high falls and body burns and learning about different camera angles, the speed of the shot and the size of the frame, in order to help us do the fight scenes with the actors."



Nowadays Allan is a full-time stuntperson, often working long hours on sets to get the job done. However, he doesn't consider his work to be a normal kind of job. "It's fun. A lot of the guys I work with are people I've been training with for the last ten years, because there are about six of us from the same martial arts club. And as we've gone on and got other people, the stunt agency has remained a quite close-knit group of people. We all get along, both inside and outside of work."

## ***Thomas Kiwi, Ngai Te Rangi/Nga Puhi***



Thomas Kiwi hails from Ngai Te Rangi. He is a self-confessed performer, a skill that he has used to his full potential from an early age. "I have always been in the performing arts scene. When I was at school I was always in productions, and I danced too." His love of performing led firstly to professional dance, and from there he went on to be stuntperson. "At the time I was a dance double in a New Zealand film and I asked the stunt people in it how they got into the work. They told me to just send my CV in to the stunt agency. I did, and a week later I got a call back telling me to come along to a stunts workshop. At the workshop we basically got told what is involved in doing stunts, like timing, safety, and appropriate distances to stand

away from people. Then we were shown different stunts and we basically had to copy. I was lucky because it was just like dance for me, where you copy moves. A week after the workshop I got a call saying I had some work." Three years later Thomas is still doing stunt work.

Practise, acting and co-ordination are all central to the stuntperson role, Thomas says. "Practise is what stops you from getting injured - you have to practise. Most of the time if you haven't done a stunt for a while you just lack the confidence to do it. Then you get hurt because you don't give it 100%, you hold back a bit. You have to be able to act because that ability sells the stunt. Before you come into a stunt you have to be in character, and after the stunt you have to really sell it, so it looks real. Then you need co-ordination so you can do all the different stunts."

During his time as a stuntperson, Thomas has done a number of different stunts, but says the scariest one was a car hit. "I had to walk out in front of a car and jump onto the bonnet, roll over the roof then onto the ground. He didn't hit me, but if I didn't jump in time he would have. There are a few things I have done that are quite hard, like jumping off scaffolding into a tree, and doing a storm sequence in a boat. It is all good experience and different. But you hardly ever get to do those sorts of things - it is usually just fighting scenes."

## ***Further Information***

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### ***Relevant Contacts***

- [NZ Stunt Agency](#)
- [The Stunt Guild of New Zealand](#)

### ***Related Jobs***

- [Actor](#)
- [Artistic Director](#)

- [Dance Teacher](#)
- [Director \(Film/Television/Video\)](#)

## Industry Overviews

- [Performing Arts](#)



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