

Summary of findings from Kiwis Count Pilot May 2023

Technical Report

Strategic Information Team

Te Kawa Mataaho

September 2023

Catalyst for changes

Te Kawa Mataaho | Public Service Commission has run the Kiwis Count survey since 2007. Over time, the substance of the survey has changed with modules being swapped in and out as trust and satisfaction data on different aspects of services provision has been required. The focus of the survey has also moved away from primarily service quality and customer satisfaction to trust and confidence in the Public Service. The core trust questions have remained the same since 2012, although the frequency of publication of results has changed over time.

In early 2023, the OECD country study [Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions in New Zealand](#) was published. The OECD made recommendations on how Te Kawa Mataaho should measure trust, including measurement of the drivers of trust and increasing the sample size of the survey. We took the opportunity to make other improvements to the survey at the same time.

To explore how we could improve Kiwis Count, we internally assessed the user experience of the current version of the survey and considered what we had learned from qualitative comments over the two years that that version had been running. We also examined the rate that different services covered by the survey had been used, for the potential to remove seldom used services.

Because Kiwis Count is a long running survey, we wanted to assess any potential changes in the questionnaire design to ensure that the continuity of the headline measures, particularly trust based on personal experience, was maintained. Kiwis Count has been changed multiple times and trust based on personal experience has maintained a tight range around 80%.

Kiwis Count 2023 pilot survey - trial of changes

Methods

We conducted the pilot through our research provider Gravitas, using the Dynata panel. This is the same method that has been used in our quarterly Kiwis Count surveys since 2020, when the survey switched from electoral roll to online panel methods.

The total number of participants in the pilot was 3,006.

Questionnaire versions

We made two pilot questionnaires (Version 1 and 2), with the only difference being in the order of the questions. In one questionnaire the drivers questions came just before trust in the Public Service overall. This might “prime” participants to consider the Public Service more broadly. Each pilot questionnaire was tested with a sample of approximately 1000 participants, and a further 1000 participants responded to the previous version (Version 3) of the questionnaire as a control.

Pilot survey questions are shown in Appendix 1.

Defining the Public Service

The pilot survey included a clearer definition of the Public Service, to reduce confusion that had been noted in comments of the survey in previous quarters. The definition used was:

*The public service is the central government agencies and the people who work in them. It covers any public services provided by **central government**, such as health, education, transport, and social assistance. It does not include elected officials (politicians), local government (councils), and judges.*

Updated service list

The previous version of the Kiwis Count survey listed 35 services that participants may have used. The survey showed the list in the same order for all participants.

Exploration of the user experience identified that the list was long and required users to answer yes or no for each item in the list, leading to relatively high frustration.

There was also significant cross over in service types between items (e.g. *Received outpatient services from a public hospital (includes Accident and Emergency) and stayed in a public hospital*). One item was unnecessarily intrusive (*Received help for mental health or substance abuse problems from a doctor or nurse at your local medical centre*). Analysis on frequency of service use identified several low usage services (e.g. *Used ERO (Education Review Office) school or early childhood reports for a child in your care*). Where the low usage service was likely to be accessed by participants who were facing higher levels of deprivation, the service was retained despite low usage.

The pilot survey contained a shortened list of services (22) and randomised the order in which they were presented. Participants ticked any services they had used in the past 12 months and left any unused services blank.

New question on reason for trust

The pilot survey replaced an open-ended question on reason for trust based on experience with another question asking whether any recent event had changed their level of trust in the public service overall.

MELAA separate to Other ethnicity

Ministry for Ethnic Communities requested that Te Kawa Mataaho capture information on trust for Middle Eastern, Latin American, African communities (MELAA), as a group that is separate from the Other ethnicity category that they were included in in the previous survey. We included that change in the pilot, including MELAA in our sample frame as a separate ethnic grouping.

New question drivers of trust in the Public Service

The [OECD country study](#) made a recommendation that Te Kawa Mataaho regularly collect answers to questions on the drivers of trust in addition to the headline measures of trust levels. To address

this recommendation, we pilot tested a series of questions that captured drivers of trust in the [OECD framework](#), as well as covering the values set in the [Public Service Act 2020](#). Overlap between the framework and Public Service Act are shown below.

| OECD TRUST FRAMEWORK | Pilot survey drivers question | Pilot survey drivers question | PUBLIC SERVICE ACT VALUES |
|----------------------|---|---|---------------------------|
| RESPONSIVENESS | treat people with respect change services in response to feedback from the public | treat people with respect understand my needs | RESPONSIVE |
| | | admit responsibility when they make mistakes | ACCOUNTABLE |
| RELIABILITY | are there when I need them | are there when I need them | RELIABLE |
| OPENNESS | are open and transparent with information | | |
| INTEGRITY | are generally honest | are generally honest | TRUSTWORTHY |
| FAIRNESS | treat people fairly | treat people fairly | IMPARTIAL |
| | | do their best to help New Zealanders | SPIRIT OF SERVICE |
| | | work together with other government organisations to meet my needs | UNITED PUBLIC SERVICE |

Results

Survey usability

The respondents for all three versions of the questionnaire that were piloted were asked how easy they found it to complete the survey they were assigned and if the questions made sense. Version 2 of the survey had the highest proportion of people (92%) saying they found it easy to complete (combined very easy and easy), compared to 90% and 85% for versions 1 and 3 respectively. Only very small proportions of people found the surveys not easy to complete (combined not so easy and not at all easy), regardless of version. Version 2 was also the version for which the highest proportion of people said it all made sense to them (80%), although this was similar to the proportions for the other two versions (78% each).

Versions 1 and 2 of the survey were faster to complete, with median times taken to complete of 5 minutes 2 seconds and 5 minutes 1 second respectively. Version 3 (previous questionnaire) was longer at 6 minutes 11 seconds.

Taken together, this is evidence that the new versions of the survey used in the pilot were easier to understand and had a lower cognitive load on respondents.

How easy did you find it to complete this survey?

| | V1 | | V2 | | V3 (previous questionnaire) | |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Very easy | 525 | 52.3% | 582 | 57.9% | 497 | 49.7% |
| Easy | 380 | 37.9% | 340 | 33.9% | 354 | 35.4% |
| Neither easy nor not easy | 76 | 7.5% | 66 | 6.6% | 135 | 13.5% |
| Not so easy | 19 | 1.9% | 15 | 1.5% | 13 | 1.3% |
| Not easy at all | 3 | 0.3% | 2 | 0.2% | 1 | 0.1% |

Did the questions...

| | V1 | | V2 | | V3 (previous questionnaire) | |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| All make sense to you | 785 | 78.4% | 805 | 80.1% | 780 | 78.0% |
| Mostly make sense to you | 211 | 21.0% | 195 | 19.5% | 202 | 20.2% |
| Often didn't make sense | 6 | 0.6% | 4 | 0.4% | 17 | 1.7% |

Updated service list

The new survey versions used in the pilot reduced respondent burden by shortening the list of services (22 in the pilot compared to 35 previously), removing services with low usage rates and combining services where possible. This did not meaningfully change the trust based on experience scores (81.7% and 81.8% in the new survey versions vs 80.1% in the previous version).

The three services with the highest usage in the past 12 months in the new survey versions (combined results) were *Licensed/got a rego for vehicle* (65%), *went to a public hospital for treatment (includes Accident and Emergency or outpatient services)* (35%), and *filed a tax return or requested information about taxes* (32%). This is a similar pattern to what has been seen in the data in previous quarters, although the public hospital option is combination of several service options in the previous survey.

The three recently used services (from the updated service list) with the highest levels of trust based on experience were *applied for or renewed an NZ passport* (91% trust), *called an 0800 number for health information e.g. Healthline, Quitline, Poisons Centre and the Immunisation Advice line* (88%) and *applied for or received New Zealand Superannuation or used a SuperGold Card* (88%).

New scale on drivers of trust in the Public Service

Responses to the new 'drivers of trust' questions indicated that people believe the Public Service is doing their best to help New Zealanders, and that they do so with respect and integrity. Levels of agreement with the top three 'drivers of trust' were consistently high, with people agreeing that they think the Public Service:

- do their best to help New Zealanders (69% strongly agree/agree)
- treat people with respect (69%), and
- are generally honest (68%)

The lowest levels of agreement were for:

- admit responsibility when they make mistakes (40% strongly agree/agree) and
- change services in response to feedback from the public (41% strongly agree/agree).

However, these two lower scoring questions also had relatively high levels of people who said they don't know in response to the questions (8% and 10% of people overall – note that 'don't knows' are excluded from the above analysis as per standard practice). Respondents indicated in comments that they had limited visibility of these aspects.

The other drivers of trust all received similar levels of agreement, between 54% and 62%. It's worth noting that in nearly all cases, the number of people who disagreed that the Public Service exhibited these characteristics was considerably smaller, with a large number of participants (about a quarter) giving the neutral (neither agree nor disagree) response.

We explored if these questions together can predict trust levels, considering them as a potential scale. We found that even when controlling for demographic characteristics known to influence trust (education, income, age, ethnicity, disability), the drivers questions as a group are predictive of trust in the Public Service.

New open-ended question on recent events that impact trust

Participants were asked whether anything had happened recently that impacted their trust in the Public Service and 23% (454 out of 2005) identified a specific event or issue. Service-related reasons were the most common (70% of the comments), with media stories (6%), Covid (5%), and cost of living pressures (2%) also being raised.

Health experiences were by far the most frequently mentioned by those who gave a service-related reason, with 49% of the events. Health comments included mental health and ACC, as well as hospital, GP, and emergency medical services. Others were social services (16%), justice sector (12%), and transport (9%) events/issues.

The written responses related to service experiences tended to be more specific than the responses given to why people trust in general (question in the previous survey). This additional question helps us to narrow down what service experiences are impacting trust, and the extent to which current events impact trust.

Impact on headline measures

As discussed above there were only minor changes in the measure of trust based on experience and these were within the margin of error.

The pilot versions did have higher levels of trust in the Public Service overall (64.8% and 62.8% in versions 1 and 2 respectively) when compared to the previous survey questions (59.3%) that were run concurrently. This may be due to the addition of a clearer definition of the Public Service in that question, as the only other changes in the surveys prior to that question was the shortening of the list of services and randomisation of the order of the service list, which seem unlikely to have positively impacted overall trust.

We consider this refined definition a minor improvement that increases the accuracy of the survey, while allowing the continued long-term time series.

Next steps

Following this analysis, a decision was made to use Version 2 from our next data collection, because this survey version had the best usability.

The new version of the Kiwis Count survey is being implemented from September 2023. The sample size has also been increased from 1000 participants per quarter to 2000 participants per quarter.

Public reporting is available on our webpage: [Kiwis Count - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#).

Appendix 1

Kiwis Count Trust & Confidence Survey – September 2023

Introduction screen

This is a survey to understand how much you trust the **public service** in New Zealand, based on your experiences and perceptions.

The public service is the central government agencies and the people who work in them. It covers any public services provided by central government, such as health, education, transport, and social assistance. It does not include elected officials (politicians), local government (councils), and judges.

The survey will take around 5 minutes.

Your answers are confidential and you will not be identified in the results.

This survey is for the Te Kawa Mataaho Public Services Commission and is being conducted by Gravitas, an independent research company.

Demographics & Quotas (Quotas attached to QA/B/C/D)

To ensure that the results from this survey represent the views of all New Zealanders, we have a few questions about you. The information will not be used to identify you in any way in the reporting.

QA. Are you

Please select one only

| Male | Female | Another Gender |
|------|--------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |

QB. In which of the following age groups do you belong?

Please select one only

| Under 16 years | 16-24 years | 25-34 years | 35-44 years | 45-54 years | 55-64 years | 65-74 years | 75+ years |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| <i>Screen out</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

QC. Which ethnic group(s) do you belong to?

Please select as many as apply

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1 | New Zealand European |
| 2 | English |

| | |
|----|--|
| 3 | <i>Australian</i> |
| 4 | <i>Dutch</i> |
| 5 | <i>Other European</i> |
| 7 | <i>Māori</i> |
| 8 | <i>Samoaan</i> |
| 9 | <i>Cook Islands Māori</i> |
| 10 | <i>Tongan</i> |
| 11 | <i>Niuean</i> |
| 12 | <i>Tokelauan</i> |
| 13 | <i>Fijian</i> |
| 14 | <i>Other Pacific Peoples</i> |
| 15 | <i>Filipino</i> |
| 16 | <i>Chinese</i> |
| 17 | <i>Indian</i> |
| 18 | <i>Japanese</i> |
| 19 | <i>Korean</i> |
| 20 | <i>Cambodian</i> |
| 21 | <i>Other Asian</i> |
| 22 | <i>Middle Eastern</i> |
| 23 | <i>Latin American</i> |
| 24 | <i>African</i> |
| 25 | Prefer not to answer - <i>screen out</i> |

QD. Which regional council area do you live in?

| | | | |
|----|--|----|--------------------|
| 1 | Northland Region | 9 | Wellington Region |
| 2 | Auckland Region | 10 | West Coast Region |
| 3 | Waikato Region | 11 | Canterbury Region |
| 4 | Bay of Plenty Region | 12 | Otago Region |
| 5 | Gisborne Region | 13 | Southland Region |
| 6 | Hawkes Bay Region | 14 | Tasman Region |
| 7 | Taranaki Region | 15 | Nelson Region |
| 8 | Manawatu - Wanganui Region | 16 | Marlborough Region |
| 17 | Unsure (<i>please type in your closest city or town</i>) | | |

QE. Which best describes your **household's** total annual income from all sources before tax or anything else is taken out?

Please select one only

| | | | |
|---|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
| 1 | \$0/none | 7 | \$50,001 - \$70,000 |
| 2 | \$1 - \$10,000 | 8 | \$70,001 - \$100,000 |
| 3 | \$10,001 - \$20,000 | 9 | \$100,001 - \$150,000 |
| 4 | \$20,001 - \$30,000 | 10 | \$150,001 - \$200,000 |
| 5 | \$30,001 - \$40,000 | 11 | More than \$200,000 |
| 6 | \$40,001 - \$50,000 | 12 | Don't know |

QF. Do you have a long-term disability (lasting 6 months or more) that stops you from doing everyday things other people can do?

Please select one only

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
| 1 | 2 |

QG. What is your highest completed educational qualification?

Please select one only

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | No qualification |
| 2 | School level qualification (e.g. NCEA levels 1-3, school certificate, bursary) |
| 3 | A post-school certificate or diploma that does not require a degree, including trade qualifications |
| 4 | A degree or postgraduate qualification |
| 5 | Other (<i>please type in</i>): |

Public services provided by central government

Please think about government services you have used in the last 12 months, including facilities or places you have visited or people you have had contact with (in person, online, over the phone, by letter, or by email). This includes services provided or funded by **central government**.

Q1A Please select all services you have used in the last 12 months (tick all that apply)

Rotate order of services (except last write in response)

| | Service | Yes |
|---|---|-----|
| 1 | <i>Licensed/got a rego for a vehicle</i> | |
| 2 | <i>Went through-a New Zealand international airport (when arriving from outside NZ)</i> | |
| 3 | <i>Filed a tax return or requested information about taxes</i> | |
| 4 | <i>Visited a national park</i> | |

| | Service | Yes |
|----|--|-----|
| 5 | Went to a public hospital for treatment (includes Accident and Emergency or outpatient services) | |
| 6 | Taken a child in your care to see a doctor/GP | |
| 7 | Received Accident Compensation (ACC) for injuries | |
| 8 | Applied for or renewed a NZ passport | |
| 9 | Had contact with emergency services or the Police (including calling 111) | |
| 10 | Used or contacted a public school that a child in your care attends or may attend in the future | |
| 11 | Attended classes from a university, polytechnic or wānanga | |
| 12 | Made an application, payment or claim for child support, student loan repayments, KiwiSaver, or tax credits (e.g. Working for Families) | |
| 13 | Applied for or received New Zealand Superannuation or used a SuperGold Card | |
| 14 | Applied for or used a Community Services card | |
| 15 | Used the 20 hours free early childhood education, or other early learning service for your child or children. | |
| 16 | Applied for or received a student loan or allowance | |
| 17 | Called an 0800 number for health information (e.g. Healthline, Quitline, Poisons Centre and the Immunisation Advice line) | |
| 18 | Applied for or received a benefit (e.g. Jobseeker Support, Sole Parent Support or a Supported Living Payment, housing subsidy or accommodation supplement) | |
| 19 | Registered a birth, death, marriage or civil union | |
| 20 | Applied for a rental property bond lodgement, refund or transfer | |
| 21 | Applied for; or lived in a publicly subsidised house (e.g. a house owned by Housing NZ or a community housing provider) | |
| 22 | Received services through Whānau Ora | |
| 23 | Another service not listed here: [Please describe] | |

If only one service is selected at Q1A as “yes” skip Q1B and use this service at Q2B (excluding #15)

If no services are selected at Q1A as “yes” skip to Q3A (excluding #15)

Show all services marked as “Yes” at Q1A, including any listed at #37 and ask (excluding #15)

Q1B Which one of these services did you use or do **most recently**?

Single response

[show list of anything selected “yes” at Q1A, excluding #15]

Q2A. Thinking about when you [*insert most recent option from Q1A*].

Overall, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement about using this service.....**Overall, you can trust them to do what is right.**

This should be based on your experience only.

Please select one only

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | | | | Strongly agree | Not applicable |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |

Perception of trust in the public sector (public sector brand).

Q3A. Thinking about the public service overall, how much do you think they...

*The public service is the central government agencies and the people who work in them. It covers any public services provided by **central government**, such as health, education, transport, and social assistance. It does not include elected officials (politicians), local government (councils), and judges.*

Rotate order

- are open and transparent with information
- are generally honest
- treat people fairly
- treat people with respect
- understand my needs
- change services in response to feedback from the public
- are there when I need them
- admit responsibility when they make mistakes
- do their best to help New Zealanders
- work together with other government organisations to meet my needs

[scale from strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, don't know]

Q3B. **Overall**, to what extent do you trust the **public service**?

Please select one only

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|-----------------------|------------|
| Do not trust them at all | | | | Trust them completely | Don't know |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | DK |

Q3C. Please tell us why you gave the **public service** a trust score of [rating from Q3A] overall?

OPTIONAL Text box - Please type in

Q3D. Has anything happened recently to change your trust in the public service? What happened?

OPTIONAL Text box – Please type in

Private sector trust

We are also interested in your overall impression of non-government services. This includes companies and organisations that are not run by the government or councils, for example:

Rotate order of examples

- Banks or finance companies
- Insurance companies
- Internet and/or telephone service providers
- Credit card companies
- Electricity or gas companies

Q4. Overall, to what extent do you trust companies and organisations that offer non-government services?

This can be based on your experiences and what you know or what you have heard from family, friends or the media.

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|-----------------------|------------|
| Do not trust them at all | | | | Trust them completely | Don't know |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | DK |

Thank and close

Thank you for your help with this survey. Your views are important to us.

We report results of this survey each quarter on our website: [Kiwis Count - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

Please click on the button below to save and submit your survey.