



## OECD Country Study: Drivers of trust in public institutions in New Zealand

**Date:** 31 January 2022

**Security Level:** UNCLASSIFIED

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	<b>Actions Sought</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
<b>Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for the Public Service</b>	<b>Note/Agree</b>	<b>18 February 2022</b>

**Enclosure:** Yes - Appendix one

### Minister's Office Comments

<b>Comments:</b>	
<b>Date returned to Te Kawa Mataaho:</b>	

## Executive Summary

1. The Public Service Commission is progressing the country study by the OECD to explore 'Drivers of trust in public institutions in New Zealand'. The first step is a household survey. We have been working with the OECD to ensure the survey provides international comparability, but also is appropriate to the New Zealand context. This has included ensuring that questions are in line with the recommendations of John Ombler's 2019 report on political neutrality.

## Recommended Action

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We recommend that you:

- a **note** the OECD trust in government survey scheduled to run in early February.  
*noted*
- b **agree** that Te Kawa Mataaho release this briefing in full once it has been considered by you.  
 Agree/ Disagree.



Hon Chris Hipkins  
**Minister for the Public Service**

## **Te Kawa Mataaho Report: OECD Country Study: Drivers of trust in public institutions in New Zealand**

### **Purpose of Report**

2. This paper provides an overview of the upcoming household survey, part of the OECD country study 'Drivers of trust in public institutions in New Zealand' that will include a sample of 2000 New Zealanders and the risks related to the survey questions.

### **Background**

3. In June 2021 the Commission, on behalf of the New Zealand Public Service, agreed to take part in and organise funding for an OECD country study 'Drivers of trust in public institutions in New Zealand'. This is part of a larger programme of work by the OECD that will measure public trust across multiple countries.
4. For the New Zealand study, there are three main stages:

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  - Stakeholder interviews and desktop research
  - Household survey to investigate current state
  - Workshops to test and refine analysis and findings

### **Risks**

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5. The OECD standardised survey will ask New Zealanders about their perceptions of various government institutions, including the public service but also the courts, Parliament, and elected public officials in general. The questions were developed by the OECD based on their trust framework and are currently being used across 20 countries. The survey OECD intends to use in New Zealand will be asking the same questions that are asked in all other countries so responses can be compared.
6. Some of the questions in the survey pose a risk of creating a perception that they are politically motivated. We have removed the questions that were the most likely to create this perception, using the rationale that John Omblor reported in 2019. Questions on whether the participant was leaning toward the left or right political scale, and whether they had voted for the government of the day have been removed from the survey.
7. We have ensured that the introduction to the survey makes clear that it was developed by the OECD and is being used across numerous countries as part of an international project that the OECD is conducting on trust in government.
8. To reduce the risk that questions are perceived to relate to the government of the day, notes have been added to let participants know "All references to institutions in this survey mean the institutions over time, for example for government it is any government over time regardless of which political parties are in power". These notes introduce the survey and individual questions that may have ambiguity in their interpretation. The full survey is attached in the appendix.
9. The OECD requirements for the study were that they would own, analyse, and report on the data, and the Commission has contracted and funded a New Zealand research provider to deliver it. To meet the principles of Māori data sovereignty, we are planning to hold a copy of the data to ensure researchers have access to it, particularly iwi and Māori.
10. We have conducted a robust process to ensure that the risks of the survey are mitigated to the extent practically possible, while maintaining the ability of the OECD to use the data.
11. The draft survey questions have been reviewed by our Trust in Government Steering Group, with membership from Stats NZ, Ministry of Justice, Department of Internal Affairs, Te Arawhiti, MFAT, and

Treasury. Within Te Kawa Mataaho, the survey questions were reviewed and approved by the Public Service Commissioner.

12. Our public webpage on trust and confidence has been updated with information about this project.

### **Next Steps**

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13. We have contracted a research supplier and are scheduled to commence the survey in early February, using an online panel of 2000 New Zealanders.
14. Findings from the survey, along with those of the other stages of the project, are expected to be reported by the OECD at the end of 2022.

## Who do you trust?

You are invited to be part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study about trust in government. The OECD is doing a case study about New Zealand, as part of a multi-country programme looking at trust across the world. The Public Service Commission, on behalf of the Public Service, has funded the New Zealand portion of this study.

If you decide to participate, you'll be asked about your views on institutions such as government departments and local councils. Because this is an international study, any information you provide will be grouped with all other responses from New Zealand and the data given to the OECD for analysis and reporting. The final report will be available on the OECD's website here <[Trust in Government - OECD](#)>. The Public Service Commission will keep a copy of the data in New Zealand, and researchers and iwi can use the anonymised data. Individuals will not be identifiable in any of the data or reporting from this project.

If you have any questions about the study, write to [info@publicservice.govt.nz](mailto:info@publicservice.govt.nz).

### **Q1. On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, in general how much do you trust most people?**

[Not at all – Completely – Don't know]

[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

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*The next question asks you about trust in various institutions in New Zealand. Even if you have had very little or no contact with these institutions, please base your answer on your general impression. We are interested in your general impression over time rather than the people who are currently in these positions.*

### **Q2. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust each of the following institutions?**

- Local government councillors
- Parliament
- Police
- Public service (non-elected employees in central government)
- Local authority/council employees
- Media
- Courts and legal system
- International organisations (United Nations, OECD, World Bank, etc)

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*The following questions describe situations that could happen in any country and ask how unlikely or likely you think it is that they could happen in New Zealand.*

### **Q3. If a court is about to make a decision that could negatively impact the government's image, how unlikely or likely do you think it is that the court would make the decision free from political influence?**

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[Very unlikely – Very likely – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

*Note: All references to government in this survey mean any government over time regardless of which political parties are in power.*

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**Q4. If a government employee was offered money by a citizen or a firm for speeding up access to a public service, how unlikely or likely do you think it is that they would refuse it?**

[Very unlikely – Very likely – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

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**Q5. If many people complained about a government service that is working badly, how unlikely or likely do you think it is that it would be improved?**

[Very unlikely – Very likely – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

*Note: Government service refers to a service that is provided by the public sector for people to use, e.g. education, health facilities, public transport, street cleaning.*

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**Q6. If there is an innovative idea that could improve a public service, how unlikely or likely do you think it is that it would be adopted?**

[Very unlikely – Very likely – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

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**Q7. If a new serious contagious disease spreads, how unlikely or likely do you think it is that government institutions will be ready to act to protect people's lives?**

[Very unlikely – Very likely – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

*Note: All references to government in this survey mean any government over time regardless of which political parties are in power.*

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**Q8. How unlikely or likely do you think it is that the business conditions the government can influence (e.g. laws and regulations businesses need to comply with) will be stable and predictable?**

[Very unlikely – Very likely – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

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*Note: All references to government in this survey mean any government over time regardless of which political parties are in power.*

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**Q9. If a decision affecting your community is to be made by the local government, how unlikely or likely do you think it is that you would have an opportunity to voice your views?**

[Very unlikely – Very likely – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

*Note: All references to government in this survey mean any government over time regardless of which political parties are in power. Local government includes both elected councillors and the local government employees who carry out the policies for the council of the day.*

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**Q10. If you need information about an administrative procedure (for example obtaining a passport, applying for a benefit, etc.), how unlikely or likely do you think it is that the information would be easily available?**

[Very unlikely – Very likely – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

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**Q11. If you participate in a public consultation on reforming a major policy area (e.g. taxation, healthcare, environmental protection), how unlikely or likely do you think it is that the government would adopt the opinions expressed in the public consultation?**

[Very unlikely – Very likely – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

*Note: All references to institutions in this survey mean the institutions over time, for example for government it is any government over time regardless of which political parties are in power.*

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**Q12. If a government employee has contact with the public in the area where you live, how unlikely or likely is it that they would treat both rich and poor people equally?**

[Very unlikely – Very likely – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

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**Q13. If a government employee interacts with the public in your area, how unlikely or likely do you think it is that they would treat all people equally regardless of their gender, sexual identity, ethnicity or country of origin?**

[Very unlikely – Very likely – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

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**Q14. If you or a member of your family apply for a government benefit or service (e.g. unemployment benefits or other forms of income support), how unlikely or likely do you think it is that your application would be treated fairly?**

[Very unlikely – Very likely – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

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**Q15. How much do each of the following influence your trust in the institutions of government?**

[Not at all – Completely – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]  
[rotate order]

- How the government has treated people in my community
- Experiences I've had with government agencies
- Experiences my family and/or friends had with government agencies
- Things I've seen in the media
- The motivations of the people working in government
- The integrity of the people working in government (e.g. political neutrality, corruption)
- Not having enough information about what government institutions are doing to be able to trust them

*Note: All references to institutions in this survey mean the institutions over time, for example for government it is any government over time regardless of which political parties are in power.*

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**Q16. Do you agree with the following statements about government institutions in New Zealand?**

- Government institutions are competent to do their job.

[I fully disagree – I fully agree – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

- Government institutions act according to the best interest of society.

[I fully disagree – I fully agree – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

*Note: All references to institutions in this survey mean the institutions over time, for example for government it is any government over time regardless of which political parties are in power.*

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**Q17. How much confidence do you have in New Zealand's government institutions to:**

- Provide good public services
  - Consider the interests of the future generations
-

- 
- Protect citizens
  - Use power ethically
  - Use public resources ethically
  - Listen to citizens
  - Improve socio economic conditions for all

[No confidence at all – Full confidence – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

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*We will ask you a few questions about your use and satisfaction with specific public services.*

**Q18. How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the education system in New Zealand?**

[Not at all satisfied – Completely satisfied – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

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**Q19. How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the healthcare system in New Zealand as a whole?**

[Not at all satisfied – Completely satisfied – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

*Note: "Healthcare system" refers to services provided by health institutions – that is, basic health care services provided by a government/public health clinic or covered by a public health system. It can include health care services provided by private institutions, as long as such services are provided at reduced (or no) cost to beneficiaries, under a public health system.*

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**Q20. How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the quality of administrative services (e.g. applying for an ID or a certificate of birth, death, marriage or divorce)?**

[Not at all satisfied – Completely satisfied – Don't know]  
[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

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**Q21. In the last 2 years, have you or any children you have been enrolled in an educational institution in New Zealand?**

[ Yes - No - Don't know ]

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**Q22. In the last 12 months, have you had a direct experience with the healthcare system in New Zealand?**

[ Yes - No - Don't know ]

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politics

We will now ask you a few questions about your direct or indirect participation in .

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**Q23. How much would you say the political system in New Zealand allows people like you to have a say in what the government does?**

[Not at all – A great deal – Don't know]

[0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10]

*Note: Political system means the democratic processes of electing parliament, and opportunities for people to vote and communicate with elected officials.*

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**Q24. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Please select all that apply.**

- Voted in last local or municipal election
  - Contacted a politician, government or local government official
  - Taken part in a public demonstration
  - Signed a petition, including an e-mail or online petition
  - None of these
  - Prefer not to answer
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**Q25. Did you vote in the last general election in New Zealand?**

[Yes- No- Don't know – Prefer not to answer]

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*The following questions are about challenges faced by societies around the world, today and in the future. We are interested in your views on priorities in your country and New Zealand's cooperation with other countries.*

**Q26. How confident are you that New Zealand will succeed in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the next 10 years?**

[Not at all confident - A little confident - Somewhat confident - Completely confident - Don't know ]

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**Q27. Which of the following do you think are best addressed by working with other countries rather than by New Zealand alone? Please select your top three issues for global cooperation.**

- Tackling climate change
  - Taxing large multinational companies regardless of where they are headquartered
  - Protecting personal data and privacy online
  - Preparing for the next pandemic
  - Managing migration
  - Protecting refugees
  - Reducing inequality and discrimination
  - Tackling fake news and misinformation
  - Fighting international crime and terrorism
  - None of these
  - Don't know
- 

**Q28. Which of the following areas do you think the government in New Zealand should prioritise in order to better tackle global challenges (such as climate change, sharing of data, and migration, etc.)? Please select your top two priorities.**

- Engaging with multinational companies
- Joining forces with other governments internationally
- Strengthening New Zealand's role in international institutions
- Engaging with citizens on global issues
- Strengthening coordination across government offices
- Investing in the training and skills of government employees
- None of these
- Don't know

*Note: All references to institutions in this survey mean the institutions over time, for example for government it is any government over time regardless of which political parties are in power.*

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**Q29. How much do you disagree or agree that existing international agreements between countries (e.g. on migration, climate change, protection of personal data) are sufficient to solve long-term issues facing humanity?**

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[Disagree strongly - Disagree somewhat - Neither agree nor disagree - Agree somewhat - Agree completely - Don't know]

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**Q30. Please feel free to share any additional thoughts on what influences your trust in government and public institutions.**

[Free text box- long answer]

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*The next questions ask for some information about you. All the answers you give will be treated anonymously and confidentially.*

**B1. Are New Zealand citizen?**

[Yes - No Don't know Prefer not to say]

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**B2. Were you born in New Zealand?**

[Yes - No Don't know Prefer not to say]

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**B3. Have you spent time living outside of New Zealand as an adult?**

[Yes - No Don't know Prefer not to say]

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**B4. Thinking about the next year or two, how concerned are you about your household's finances and overall social and economic well-being?**

[Not at all concerned - Not so concerned - Somewhat concerned -Very concerned - Don't know - Prefer not to say]

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**B5. If you imagine status in society as a ladder, some groups could be described as being closer to the top and others closer to the bottom. Thinking about yourself, where would you place yourself in this scale?**

[1 (bottom) - 10 (top) - Don't know - Prefer not to say]

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**B6. From which of the following sources do you get information about politics and current affairs at least once per week:**

- TV
  - Radio
-

- Newspaper/magazines (including online)
- Online social media
- Other online sources
- Family/friends
- Place of work or study
- None of the above
- Prefer not to say

*Note: The OECD is interested in this information because it helps us understand how information sources influence trust.*

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**B7. Which region do you live in?**

[Drop down list as below]

Northland  
Auckland  
Waikato  
Bay of Plenty  
Gisborne  
Hawke's Bay  
Taranaki  
Manawatū-Whanganui  
Wellington  
Tasman  
Nelson  
Marlborough  
West Coast  
Canterbury  
Otago  
Southland  
Chatham Islands  
Other

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**B8. How would you describe yourself?**

[Male - Female - Another gender - Prefer not to say ]

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**B9. Which year were you born?**

[drop down list of years - Prefer not to say ]

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**B10. What is your highest level of education? Please select one.**

[Drop down list as below]

- No Qualification
  - Level 1 Certificate
-

- Level 2 Certificate
  - Level 3 Certificate
  - Level 4 Certificate
  - Level 5 Diploma
  - Level 6 Diploma
  - Bachelor Degree and Level 7 Qualification
  - Post-graduate and Honours Degrees
  - Masters Degree
  - Doctorate Degree
  - Overseas Secondary School Qualification
  - Not elsewhere included
- 

**B11. Please tell us the total gross annual income of your household in 2021.**

Note: By gross annual income, we mean before tax and deductions, but including benefits/allowances. By household, we mean all members of your household, regardless of whether or not they are a member of your family.

[choice of bands based on deciles of national income distribution, see list below- Prefer not to say]

*zero income*  
*\$1 - \$5,000*  
*\$5,001 - \$10,000*  
*\$10,001 - \$15,000*  
*\$15,001 - \$20,000*  
*\$20,001 - \$25,000*  
*\$25,001 - \$30,000*  
*\$30,001 - \$35,000*  
*\$35,001 - \$40,000*  
*\$40,001 - \$50,000*  
*\$50,001 - \$60,000*  
*\$60,001 - \$70,000*  
*\$70,001 - \$100,000*  
*\$100,001 - \$150,000*  
*\$150,001 or more*  
*don't know*

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**B12. Including yourself, how many people usually live in your household?**

[open numerical field]

- Prefer not to say
- 

**B13. Which ethnic group or groups do you belong to?**

Please select as many options as you need.

- LONG LIST FROM STATS NZ- SAME AS CENSUS

**B13a. Iwi affiliation- as in Census**

Please select as many options as you need.

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**B14. Have you ever worked in the public sector?**

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[Yes/no/don't know]

<BRANCHING with a Yes response only>

B14a. Have you ever worked in... (Select all that apply)

- A public service department or departmental agency
- Local government
- Other public sector organisation

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**B15. Do you have any family members or friends who work or have worked in the public sector?**

[Yes/no/don't know]

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**B16. How much do you know about how central government in New Zealand works?**

[0 = Nothing at all - 10 = A great deal]

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