

NEW ZEALANDERS'  
EXPERIENCE  
RESEARCH PROGRAMME



# Understanding the Drivers: Summary Report

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# Introduction

In 2007 the State Services Commission (SSC) began a programme of research to find out more about New Zealanders' experience of public services<sup>1</sup>. This included the Drivers Survey<sup>2</sup> which successfully identified the key factors (or drivers) that have the greatest influence on New Zealanders' satisfaction with, and trust in, public services<sup>3</sup>. The most effective way to improve satisfaction with public services is for agencies to focus on these key drivers.

To measure how well public services are performing in relation to the drivers a biennial all-of-government national survey called Kiwis Count<sup>4</sup> was launched in 2007. In addition, the Common Measurements Tool is available to agencies to measure satisfaction with their own services. Together, the Kiwis Count survey and the Common Measurements Tool let agencies know how they are doing in improving the areas that really matter to New Zealanders, and where to focus resources so they have the greatest impact. However, improving New Zealanders' experience of public services is not only about knowing where to improve, but understanding how to improve.

Understanding the Drivers is a qualitative research project that expands our knowledge and helps us to understand what the drivers mean to New Zealanders. Their views have provided us with a wealth of information to assist public service agencies to become more user-focused and accessible, and to improve the service experience of New Zealanders.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the New Zealanders' Experience research programme visit [www.ssc.govt.nz/nz-ers-experience](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/nz-ers-experience)

<sup>2</sup> For full report see [www.ssc.govt.nz/drivers-report](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/drivers-report)

<sup>3</sup> 'Public services' is used throughout this summary report and is the term most widely understood by New Zealanders. The term means all services provided by the government. Public services therefore relates to central and local government, tertiary institutions, schools and hospitals.

<sup>4</sup> For full report see [www.ssc.govt.nz/kiwis-count-research-survey](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/kiwis-count-research-survey)

This summary highlights some of the main results and explains what they mean for public services. The full research report is available on the SSC website at [www.ssc.govt.nz/understanding-drivers-report](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/understanding-drivers-report).

Understanding the Drivers was carried out for the SSC in 2008 by UMR Research. Forty focus groups were held across the country with the following groups: general public, Māori, Asian, Pacific, young people (aged 15-30 years) and participants that live in rural provincial areas.

This summary provides some highlights of the research findings. It then presents an overview of the drivers of satisfaction, including some generic service improvements. This is followed by a look at what each of the specific drivers mean and what can be done to improve satisfaction for that driver. The suggested improvements have come from the research participants. The summary also includes the key themes arising from the discussions around the drivers of trust.

Finally, the summary identifies other approaches for acting on the results and where else to go for more information.

## Research highlights

- **The drivers are very closely linked.** Meeting the expectations of New Zealanders is the most effective way of improving satisfaction overall. However, this research shows that meeting expectations involves the other drivers. As such, many of the suggested improvements apply to several drivers.
- **The service experience is more important than outcome.** Participants who got what they wanted, but didn't like the actual service they received, were not satisfied.
- **Staff need to be customer focused.** It is vital that agencies have the right people, and that staff are well trained and are knowledgeable about the services their agency provides. Ensuring staff are customer focused – that is, they listen, make the effort to understand and empathise with their customers, are respectful and treat people fairly – will go a long way towards improving New Zealanders experience with public services.
- **It is important to admit and fix mistakes.** Participants accepted that mistakes do happen. However, when one occurs agencies needed to take responsibility by apologising, explaining what has happened and fixing the mistake.
- **Participants had strong views as to what constitutes good value for tax dollars spent.** Most were able to list a clear set of services that were 'good value'. These tended to be core services (such as: health, education and emergency services) or where participants had received a high quality service.

- Set and monitor service standards so that staff know what is expected of them and the public are aware of the standards they can expect to receive.
- Raise public awareness of the State Service's Standards of Integrity and Conduct<sup>5</sup>. Although these standards are used for internal purposes, there was strong support for them to be made more visible so that the public are aware of the standards they can expect to receive.
- Telephone was one of the most common ways participants used to contact public services. However, telephone also had the lowest satisfaction levels. These findings are consistent with the Kiwis Count 2007 survey results.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.ssc.govt.nz/code](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/code)

# Findings

## Drivers of satisfaction

The Drivers Survey, published in July 2007, identified the main factors (or ‘drivers’) that have the greatest influence on New Zealanders’ satisfaction with, and trust in, public services.

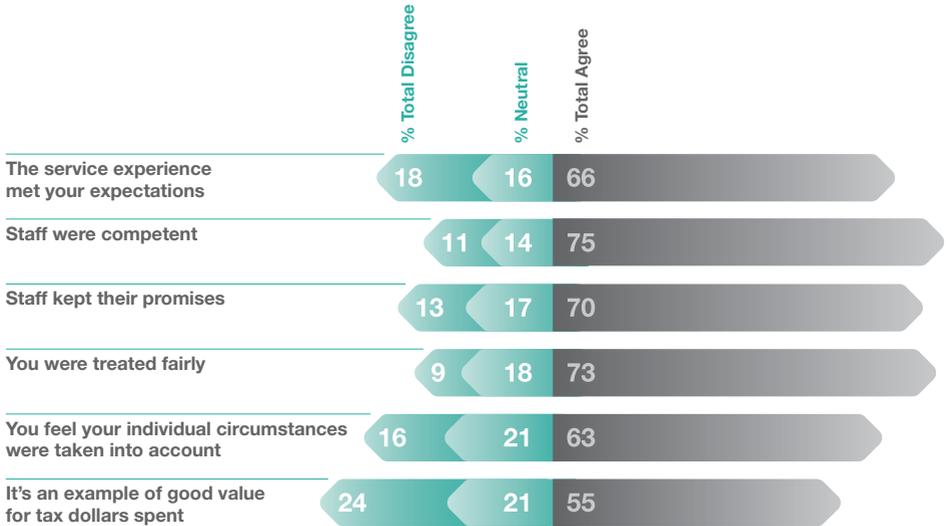
Drivers of satisfaction with service quality:

- The service experience met your expectations
- Staff were competent
- Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do
- You were treated fairly
- You feel your individual circumstances were taken into account
- It’s an example of good value for tax dollars spent.

Not all drivers are equal: ‘the service experience met your expectations’ is the most important driver and accounts for nearly one third of satisfaction with public services. The driver ‘staff were competent’ is marginally more important than others, accounting for one fifth of satisfaction, and the remaining four drivers are of equal importance.

Kiwis Count 2007 measured satisfaction with public services against these six main satisfaction drivers. Results are illustrated in the graph on the following page.

## PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC SERVICES ON DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION WITH SERVICE QUALITY



Source: Kiwis Count 2007

## Improving frontline service delivery for New Zealanders

Through Kiwis Count we know what New Zealanders want at the frontline. They want their expectations met, they want the staff they deal with to be competent and to keep their promises, they want to be treated fairly and their individual circumstances taken into account. And they want the service to be an example of good value for tax dollars spent.

Focus group participants were asked what they understood each of these meant and what the public service could do to improve satisfaction with public services. The most important driver of service satisfaction

was whether or not the service met their expectations. However, this research shows that the drivers are very closely linked and that meeting expectations involves the other drivers. As such, many of the suggested improvements by participants listed below apply to two or more drivers.

### **Generic service improvements**

Participants made the following suggestions to improve service delivery.

#### **Recruitment**

- Select the right people for the job, that is, front line staff who want to help, have good people skills and are solutions focused. (Applies to all satisfaction drivers)

#### **Training**

- Ensure staff are adequately trained in how to deal with customers. This would cover how to greet customers, politeness and respect. It would also include training on how to find out what people's needs are, how to deal with difficult customers and how to treat each customer as new irrespective of how demanding the previous one has been. Showing empathy and demonstrating a willingness to help should assist staff to gain the trust of their customers. (Met expectations, Competent staff, Treated fairly, Individual circumstances)
- Ensure staff have the knowledge and experience to meet customer needs. This would require that staff are well trained across the range of enquiries they are likely to receive and that adequate support systems (such as access to a knowledge base or to more experienced staff) are in place to cover other contingencies that may arise. (Met expectations and Competent staff)

- In complex situations where customers are dealing with several agencies, ensure staff are trained to handle basic enquiries about other government agencies their customers will most likely need to interact with (for example social welfare and housing services). (Met expectations and Competent staff)

### **Communications**

- Improve access to services through ensuring all communications (written or otherwise) are clear and easy to understand. (Applies to all satisfaction drivers)

### **Putting it right**

- Where a promise has been broken or a mistake has been made, it should be standard procedure for an apology to be given together with an explanation of what happened and, where possible, outline the steps that have been taken to ensure there is no recurrence. (Met expectations and Kept promises)

### ***Specific service improvements***

The following sections look at the findings for each driver focusing on:

- what the driver means
- unique interpretations from different population groups
- how managers can improve satisfaction for that particular driver.

## The service experience met your expectations

### *What does the driver ‘service experience met your expectations’ mean?*

This was the most important driver for the general public, Asian and young people groups. The ‘service experience’ included a wide range of interactions such as: requesting information about tax matters, renewing a passport, applying for a student loan, getting treatment at a hospital, calling the police for help and unblocking a roadside drain.

Participants’ statements of what ‘meeting their expectations’ would look like often mentioned (unprompted) other satisfaction drivers such as: being treated fairly, staff keeping their promises and providing services that are value for money. Much of the discussion focused on staff attitude and behaviour, demonstrating the strong link between meeting expectations and having well trained, competent staff.

While customers wanted to achieve an outcome, what was more important was the actual process and how the customer had been treated during the course of the service experience.

*“Having your best interests at heart. They actually really do care about what your problem is... treated as a human being and not a client or a number.”*

Participants reported that a service had met their expectations when staff:

- listened to and understood their circumstances and treated them like an individual
- knew about the services their organisation offered and could help
- communicated in a manner that was clear and simple
- treated them with respect
- were customer focused, that is, were friendly, polite and approachable
- followed through or did what they said they would do.

Participants were forgiving of public servants and accepted that sometimes mistakes do happen. The key to maintaining satisfaction in these circumstances was for staff to take ownership of the mistake by admitting one had occurred and apologising for it, explaining what had happened and fixing it, all while ensuring minimal impact on the customer.

Providing a consistent service also helped, that is, the advice is the same no matter who you approach. The ideal scenario for many participants was to be able to have a single point of contact to avoid re-explaining their situation.

*“My son had an accident and had to have an operation ... they gave me a name of a person I needed to ring and each time I rung I spoke to him and he couldn't have done more for us, he was brilliant. That is what made the difference, you knew who you were going to talk to and you didn't have to go back through the whole bloody thing.”*

## Expectations of public services versus private

*“If you don’t like what you are getting you would go somewhere else, public services you don’t necessarily have that choice.”*

*“They don’t have to fight for survival like most other companies do.”*

*“The private sector always go back and examine themselves whether they’re efficient or not because they have to be ahead of their competition...”*

Across all groups service expectations were generally lower for public services than for the private sector. Participants felt that one of the main reasons for this was that public services lack competitive pressures to do better. There was also a higher level of expectation for services that were paid for directly (for example a passport) than for those paid for from general taxation. However, participants felt the private sector did not necessarily provide a higher quality of service. This was particularly so with the health sector where the most public-private comparisons were made. Participants did not think that their medical treatment would be better in private care, instead they placed a very high value on avoiding waiting lists.

### ***Unique interpretations from different population groups***

In addition to the factors that have already been discussed, Asian and young people placed a higher level of expectation on the speed and efficiency of services. Both groups were sensitive to discrimination and expected staff to treat them with respect and act in a non judgemental manner. Asian participants for whom English was a second language expected staff to help them understand things.

#### ***How can managers improve satisfaction for this driver?***

- Set and monitor service standards so that staff know what is expected of them and the public are aware of the standards they can expect to receive.

## **Staff were competent**

### ***What does the driver 'staff were competent' mean?***

Participants felt that to be competent in one's job meant being capable of doing the job required. Participants were not expecting an outstanding service, rather there was a focus on just getting the basics right. There was considerable overlap between meeting customer expectations and what it meant to be a competent staff member.

Participants said the most important factor that competent staff should have was knowledge. They expected staff to know about the services their organisation offered and could help the customer. If they could not help then staff needed to be honest and upfront about it. In these circumstances staff were expected to know who could help and take responsibility to ensure a successful referral was made.

*“It’s knowledge. They know what they’re talking about. If you’ve got anything that you want to query they’ve got the answers for you.”*

Another important aspect of competence was staff being able to listen and understand the customer’s circumstances and to treat them like an individual. For participants, being customer focused, while not as important as being knowledgeable or understanding, was nevertheless a desirable characteristic for staff to have. Being friendly and polite would enable better understanding for staff, as participants said they were more likely to open up or relax with someone who was approachable.

*“If they were friendly you would relax with them and tell them a lot more and they might pick up on a lot more things you should or shouldn’t be doing. Rather than everyone be guarded.”*

Staff who communicated in a clear and simple manner and were confident also inspired confidence that they knew what they were talking about. Being able to help required that staff were skilled at explaining processes and informing people of their entitlements.

In summary, participants reported that competent staff were:

- knowledgeable about the services their organisation offered and could help the customer, or knew who could help
- able to listen and understood their customer’s circumstances
- customer focused, that is, were friendly, polite and approachable
- able to communicate in a clear and simple manner.

### **Unique interpretations from different population groups**

Asian participants interpreted competency as providing an outstanding service as opposed to other groups that said competency was about just getting the basics right. They also stressed speed and efficiency as more significant attributes of competence.

Pacific people were the only ones to raise the need for cultural understanding as a mark of competence.

#### **How can managers improve satisfaction for this driver?**

- Ensure staff are skilled in explaining processes and informing people of their entitlements. Consider a more tailored approach for client groups that have difficulty understanding English.

## **Staff kept their promises – that is, they did what they said they would do**

### **What does the driver ‘staff kept their promises’ mean?**

Participants described a ‘promise’ as an undertaking or when staff ‘do what they say they’re going to do’. Most of the examples participants provided involved promises to deliver a service by a particular time or an undertaking to get back in contact with the customer.

*[What is a promise?] “A commitment. Got to be done. Follow through. Giving an assurance that it will be done. You trust that it will happen. You rely on them. There’s an expectation.”*

The need for follow through was vital for this driver. Participants reported it was far better to under promise and over deliver than to come in short. In general they felt promises should not be made unless they could be met. Not fulfilling promises could easily damage or even destroy trust.

When a promise is broken, it should be accompanied by an apology, an explanation as to why it occurred and what will be done in the future to prevent a recurrence. Some participants felt that it may be appropriate to provide compensation in circumstances where the customer had suffered a loss as a result of a broken promise. Participants said any action to put a mistake right should be done promptly and with minimal impact on the customer.

*“They expect you to go through paper work and fill out a whole pile of forms for a dog I never knew existed. I expect them to take it off our records ... if we move suddenly we have another pile of paperwork to take our imaginary dog with us to our new home. It is a silly mistake, but it wasn't ours.”*

When staff kept their promises it reflected well on the public service as a whole. However participants acknowledged that staff may try their best to keep a promise, but be let down by systems and processes within the organisation.

### ***How can managers improve satisfaction for this driver?***

- Ensure staff do what they say they will do.
- Set and monitor service standards (particularly for response times) so that staff know what is expected of them and the public are aware of the standards they can expect to receive. These standards should be capable of being met all the time under normal circumstances.
- Have a transparent and open complaints process and ensure customers know about it. Ensure complaints are investigated promptly and customers are kept fully informed of the process and when they can expect a response.

## **You were treated fairly**

### ***What does the driver 'you were treated fairly' mean?***

Participants generally assumed that public servants are fair and that they treat people fairly. What mattered most was the actual service experience rather than the outcome. Most participants interpreted being treated fairly as everyone being treated the same in the same circumstances. A way in which this could be achieved was through providing a quality service where people's expectations were met. What was particularly important was to be listened to and not treated like a number.

Participants tended to be forgiving of staff that had tried their best but were let down by the system through, for example, lack of resources. In these circumstances participants still thought they had been treated fairly.

### **Unique interpretations from different population groups**

Māori, Asian and younger people stressed the importance of staff being non judgemental and treating people with respect as key elements of fair treatment.

*“Sometimes when you have face-to-face contact, you see a change in attitude. Or over the phone, when you say your last name which is an Asian name.”*

*“People who can’t speak good English, they’re very impatient with them and they get real frustrated, but if you’re going to have customers like that obviously you have to understand. I sometimes have to go with my parents and I always have to help them. I think it’s quite rude when they’re real impatient.”*

Being treated fairly was the most important driver for Māori. When asked why this might be the case Māori participants raised issues relating to honouring the Treaty of Waitangi.

### **How can managers improve satisfaction for this driver?**

- Explaining the rationale for decisions in a reasonable manner is an important aspect of demonstrating fairness. If it is not possible to meet a customer’s expectations, then care is required to explain why this cannot be done.
- Ensure staff treat all customers with respect, are non judgemental and have a reasonable degree of flexibility, that is, treat people the same in the same circumstances.

## You feel your individual circumstances were taken into account

### *What does the driver 'you feel your individual circumstances were taken into account' mean?*

In general, participants felt that staff should be able to exercise some discretion when dealing with customers. For them, this driver was about making some kind of exception to the norm due to relevant circumstances. Participants felt greater priority should be placed on taking into account the circumstances of those with disabilities or significant household pressures. Other important factors to take 'into account' included a person's age, their income and mental state.

*"You are considered as an individual rather than a case number because everybody's circumstances are different although we are all part of the same things. It is that you are a human being and you have circumstances that are different."*

As with other drivers it was important that staff take the time to listen and ask questions in order to fully understand what an individual's needs are as well as their context. Staff should have sufficient knowledge and experience to assess whether those needs can be met. Where the individual's circumstances cannot be taken into account, staff should provide a full and clear explanation.

*“If you don’t know what to ask for, if you don’t know what you need, you don’t ask the right questions. The other person who knows what they have to offer needs to ask enough questions of you. That means getting to know you, asking the questions so they know what the fit is.”*

This driver was not about providing a different outcome depending on one’s circumstances. Rather it was about exercising flexibility around the actual process. For instance, it may be a lot more difficult for an elderly person to travel to an appointment or someone looking after children might only be able to meet at limited times during the day. Being flexible in these circumstances put a human face on public services and left a strong positive impression.

### **Unique interpretations from different population groups**

Cultural sensitivity was an important factor for Māori and Asian participants. Examples provided by Māori included commencing and ending significant Māori hui with appropriate karakia and an awareness that some Māori who need help, and are entitled to receive a service, may be too whakama (ashamed) to ask for that help.

The amount of time and effort required to access public services in rural areas were important factors for rural-provincial participants. Making and keeping appointments was even more important for these participants.

*“Sometimes you have only got a limited amount of time to do something, so you get an appointment... you turn up on time, 10 minutes early and then sit there and you wait and wait and wait. And then half an hour has gone past your appointment time... by that time you have got another appointment.”*

### **How can managers improve satisfaction for this driver?**

- Ensure staff are able to exercise some flexibility when dealing with customers, particularly in relation to scheduling appointments. Participants expect agencies will be more sensitive to certain circumstances, such as whether an individual has disabilities relevant to their needs or has household circumstances that require special attention.
- As individual circumstances are broad in their range, senior and more experienced staff with the authority to authorise discretion should be available to provide support for front line staff.
- Ensure staff are professional at all times – show their customers that they are important by being on time and keeping appointments.

## It's an example of good value for tax dollars spent

### *What does the driver 'it's an example of good value for tax dollars spent' mean?*

Participants interpreted this driver in two ways – 'good value' services were either essential 'core' services or where a person had received a high quality service.

#### **Core services**

Most of the examples that were considered good value for tax dollars spent related to health, education, police, emergency services and, to a lesser extent, were infrastructural and environmental. These core services were value for money because participants felt they were:

- considered free – or paid for through taxes or rates
- necessary and available to everyone
- generally excellent based on personal experience
- performed well despite being under-resourced
- a demanding job for those on the front-line.

#### **High quality service**

Another way participants interpreted 'good value' was when they had received a high quality, comprehensive service, that is, the experience had exceeded their expectations.

*“They offer a prompt and efficient service. They put a name to a person, you get a case manager, they have good systems, they have good phone systems and you can contact the person, that is your only contact.”*

*“When I do need to avail myself of the services of some government department, then I expect them to be run well, that the people there know what they’re doing and that they treat you right. I expect a good service for all those taxes I pay. Good value for money.”*

### **Increasing awareness and value**

Participants placed higher value on services that they knew about, that is, the service was tangible or visible. As such, front-line staff were valued more by participants than advisory or administrative staff. Television programmes, for example about the Police, Customs and Fisheries, had helped participants understand the value those organisations provided.

*“It’s money well spent with Customs. Because they provide a really good service. I didn’t realise actually what they did until you see the programmes on TV and stuff and they control all the mail that comes through ... I didn’t really think that anyone looked at stuff like that. So I just think that that’s really good service.”*

There was strong support for value for tax dollars spent to be shown. Suggestions were made that information on how tax dollars are spent should be available on a special website, in libraries and local newspapers. Participants also felt this information should be presented in a way that is easy to understand. Other participants expressed some scepticism over whether people would actually read such information.

### **Poor value versus good value**

Some participants found it easier to give examples of poor value for tax dollars spent. Typical examples included high profile reports in the media where there was perceived wastage of public resources.

*“They were recently in the paper for going off to some swanky hotel and I mean to be honest not the best look.”*

### **Unique interpretations from different population groups**

Some participants, notably Asian and Pacific people, made international comparisons with public services they had experienced elsewhere to gauge whether there was good value for tax dollars spent. Public services in New Zealand were generally held in high regard.

*“I was born here but I went back to Tonga and they don’t even have a public service ... also in the States if you don’t have medical insurance you’re not going to be treated. In Thailand people live on tourists giving them stuff.”*

An example of how the same service can be interpreted in different ways is getting a passport. Asian participants tended to place more value on the New Zealand passport than other participants. It was described as a high quality passport because of the visa-free access it provided to many countries. For other participants the significant increase in price, as well as halving the passport tenure, equated to poor value for money.

### ***How can managers improve satisfaction for this driver?***

- Improve service delivery through meeting expectations as discussed under the ‘service experience met your expectations’ driver.
- Inform customers about what fees cover and the benefits the service provides. For instance, some participants thought a passport was only used to track a person’s movements and provided no personal benefit. Informing customers of the benefits of a service should enable them to see the value they receive for what they pay.
- Look at ways to improve public awareness of the services an agency provides.
- Provide better information to the public concerning expenditure of public monies through, for example, local newspapers, agency websites or newsletters. This information should be easily accessible, that is, simple and easy to understand.

## Channels

Participants were asked about their service experience with different communication channels. Phone and face-to-face were the most preferred methods of contact. This was because customers could explain their circumstances and question staff to gain more information. Face-to-face was also the most trusted channel. Although a preferred contact method, participants were least satisfied with services accessed via the phone<sup>6</sup>.

*“When you are on the phone you expect to be on hold for the first 15 minutes before they talk. Then you are bounced from one person to another and each time you call it is a different person who has no idea what you are on about. On the phone you expect it to be a painful experience. You don’t want it to be.”*

The Internet and mail were valued as they provided a record of what had occurred. Being able to access information at a time and place that suited the customer were other benefits users of the Internet identified. While considered slow and inflexible, mail was suitable for those that were not computer literate. Written material was particularly important for those for whom English is a second language.

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<sup>6</sup> These results are consistent with findings from Kiwis Count 2007.

## Trust

The Drivers Survey also identified the key drivers that influence trust in public services:

- You have confidence that public servants do a good job
- The Public Service provides services that meet your needs
- Public servants treat people fairly
- The Public Service keeps its promises – that is, it does what it says it will do
- The Public Service admits responsibility when it makes mistakes.

Kiwis Count 2007 showed that public services performed less well on trust than satisfaction. As with the satisfaction drivers, focus group participants were asked what they understood the trust drivers to mean and what public services could do to improve trust. There were significant linkages across the trust drivers and overlap with what has already been discussed under each satisfaction driver. What follows are the key themes that were raised.

Note that participants do not distinguish between parts of government such as the Public Service and the State sector. (See footnote 3, page 1.)

### ***Largely perceptions based***

This research shows that a person's trust in the Public Service is largely based on perceptions<sup>7</sup>. Participants' views were strongly influenced by media reports and anecdotal accounts as well as stereotypes of the Public Service from, for example, television programmes like 'Gliding On' and 'Yes Minister'. Trust is therefore more difficult to earn. While levels of trust may improve over a longer period of time as satisfaction with personal experiences improve, other influences, such as media reports and stereotypes, mean that improving trust will remain a challenge.

### ***There is a perception that the Public Service does not tend to admit responsibility for its mistakes.***

There is a strong impression that the Public Service only begrudgingly admits responsibility when it makes mistakes and that often the admission occurs only as a result of media publicity. High profile mistakes could linger for years in people's minds. The 1970's Arthur Allan Thomas case where key evidence was planted to get a conviction, was referred to as one example of an injustice that had 'hung around' for a long time.

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<sup>7</sup> The Drivers Survey and Kiwis Count also found that trust is largely perceptions based

### **High profile breaches of ethics by senior public servants do not help**

There is also a perception that high profile breaches of ethics by senior public servants are indicative of further problems that have not seen the light of day. This was compounded if there was a long lapse between a serious mistake being made and the matter becoming public. Time lapses in ‘discovering’ and investigating breaches were interpreted as attempts to ‘hush up’ mistakes and led people to wonder what else had occurred during that time.

*“The problem is the time lag between when it is done and when it comes out ... if it’s two years how do you know that in that two year period the same thing hasn’t been done again and again and again? And that is the biggest problem with things not being made public sooner.”*

*“I think it’s the tip of the iceberg because it seems to take so long. It takes years before they uncover it.”*

On the positive side, there is no sense that there is a significant problem of corruption or endemic breaches of conduct across the Public Service. It is just that breaches by a few can have far reaching consequences. A number of participants compared the New Zealand Public Service favourably with their experiences in other countries.

### **Improving trust**

- Participants felt that trustworthy organisations were those that did a good job. They were also the ones that treated people fairly, did what they say they would do and admitted responsibility for and rectified mistakes.
- There was strong support for the State Service's Standards of Integrity and Conduct<sup>8</sup> to be well publicised. There was very limited public awareness of the standards and once aware of them, participants expressed concern that there was a gap between the words and what they had experienced at the frontline. Although these standards are used for internal purposes, there was support for them to be made more visible so that the public could hold staff accountable to them. Some participants had seen similar codes in hospitals advising of patients' rights and had found them reassuring. They also wanted to be able to complain if the standards were not upheld.
- Agencies should continue to improve satisfaction with service delivery through providing services that meet their customer's expectations.
- Finally, to improve levels of trust, it is important that *visible* action is taken swiftly to address breaches when they are discovered.

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<sup>8</sup> [www.ssc.govt.nz/code](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/code)

## What next?

To realise the potential of any research its findings need to be acted upon. Kiwis Count 2007 provided a detailed baseline for satisfaction and trust in public services in New Zealand. The survey showed public service agencies where they needed to improve. Understanding the Drivers has gone one step further and is intended to show managers how they can improve from their customer's point of view. SSC will repeat the Kiwis Count survey in September 2009.

### Common Measurements Tool

Agencies can build on the results of the Kiwis Count 2007 survey and develop a better understanding of satisfaction with their own services by using the Common Measurements Tool. This provides a set of common questions for agencies to use for their own satisfaction surveys, consistent with the approach used for Kiwis Count. By using common questions, agencies will be able to benchmark their results with the Kiwis Count 2007 survey results, with other agencies and also internationally. This will provide a basis for designing service improvements that lift satisfaction ratings over time.

SSC wants agencies to use the Common Measurements Tool.

For more information about the Common Measurements Tool visit:

[www.ssc.govt.nz/common-measurements-tool](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/common-measurements-tool) or email:

[commonmeasurementstool@ssc.govt.nz](mailto:commonmeasurementstool@ssc.govt.nz)

## Communities of Practice

Communities of Practice play a valuable role in bringing together State servants working in similar areas across different agencies to share expertise and practice and to work together on improving services.

SSC supports several service delivery Communities of Practice:

- For further information about the Contact Centre community of practice – aimed at Contact Centre managers and the managers they report to, email: [contactcentre@ssc.govt.nz](mailto:contactcentre@ssc.govt.nz)
- For further information about the Government Online Services forum – aimed at sharing best practice to improve online service delivery, email: [gosforum@ssc.govt.nz](mailto:gosforum@ssc.govt.nz)

## For more information

- To read the full Understanding the Drivers report, visit: [www.ssc.govt.nz/understanding-drivers-report](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/understanding-drivers-report)
- For more information about Understanding the Drivers email: [newzealanders.experience@ssc.govt.nz](mailto:newzealanders.experience@ssc.govt.nz)
- To read the Kiwis Count 2007 report visit: [www.ssc.govt.nz/kiwis-count-research-survey](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/kiwis-count-research-survey)
- To find out more about the New Zealanders' Experience research programme and read other research reports visit: [www.ssc.govt.nz/nzers-experience](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/nzers-experience)



STATE SERVICES COMMISSION  
Te Komihana O Ngā Tari Kāwanatanga



State Services Commission

PO Box 329

Wellington 6140

New Zealand

[www.ssc.govt.nz](http://www.ssc.govt.nz)

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