



Ministry of Finance and Economic Management

Tō'ou reo, kia 'akarongo' ia, ei puapinga nō'ou

Your Voice Should be Heard, Your Voice is Important

Health & Wellbeing Survey of the Public Sector

2022

The *Tō'ou reo, kia 'akarongo' ia, ei puapinga nō'ou, Your Voice Should be Heard, Your Voice is important* survey is the 2022 Cook Islands Public Sector's employee engagement survey focusing on the Health & Wellbeing of Public Sector employees and was launched on Tuesday 7th June. The survey was open to all employees from 28 Public Sector Agencies for two weeks, closing at 12am on Monday 20th June. The survey was conducted through Survey Monkey and was made available to all Public Sector employees through an email link.

It is envisioned that the individual Agency results and information provided from this survey can be used to drive policy change, make improvements to workplace culture and give Public Sector leaders a better understanding of the health & wellbeing of their employees. The survey results provide agencies with a snapshot of how employees see their workplaces, including views on: Employee engagement and job satisfaction, Public Sector ethics and culture, Communication, Inclusion, Workload and Motivation, Fairness and respect and Job demands, Resources and support.

This is a 'new look' survey and was redeveloped to be more user friendly, more focused, shorter and to encourage participation across the sector. Participation rates in previous years in the Employee Engagement Survey have been consistently low compared to the number of employees. After some research, and in consultation with a statistician it was determined that there were a number of changes that could be made to help increase participation numbers and provide the sector with a more concentrated set of data and reporting mechanism. The first change was eliminating a large number of questions required to be answered and focus on one area, and for this survey "Health & Wellbeing" was selected, unlike the previous survey that had a number of areas that it covered. This shortened the survey significantly and in turn the time it took to complete. Another change was to improve the level of confidentiality in the survey, so many of the 'identifier' questions were removed, leaving only the Agency an employee worked for, which improved the level of privacy and confidentiality significantly. Finally, another consideration was the reporting of the data collected. With the previous surveys, reports were downloaded straight from the survey platform website, Survey Monkey, and were very large and not very user friendly due to the amount of questions and the limited formatting options available. It was very time consuming to provide any kind of analytical report but with a more focused approach it allows for a report to be produced that is more succinct and should assist management to easily identify issues.

The lack of 'identifiers' means that demographic information is not able to be produced for this report. It is recognised that it is important for agencies to understand the demographics of their employees and this information will be available in the individual agency survey reports and under development is a sector wide demographic dashboard that will be launched on the OPSC website in August and updated at regular intervals.

A total of 412 employees participated in the survey. Of those who participated, 41 did not select which Agency they were employed with. The 412 respondents number does not include the 59 employees from the Pa Enea who participated in a shorter, mobile friendly version of the survey in an effort to make the survey more accessible. A separate report will be produced for the Pa Enea results. Work is underway at OPSC to develop a second survey which will seek feedback from employees on the management and leadership of the Public Sector. This is due to be launched in October 2022 and will contribute towards the Mid Year Review process for the 14 Government Ministry's. The response rates were too low overall to infer the result to the entire Public Sector population and is a snapshot of the opinions of the 412 that responded. In order to get a more accurate picture of the realities of working in the Public Sector and be able to track trends over time a higher participation rate is needed for future surveys.

In our endeavours to be more transparent for the purposes of improving performance, accountability and the service delivery to the public this report will be made available to all Public Sector employees .

About the Report

The *Tō'ou reo, kia 'akarongo' ia, ei puapinga nō'ou, Your Voice Should be Heard, Your Voice is important* survey has been designed to support Public Sector agencies to build positive workplace cultures with integrity and that reflect the Public Sector values of Honesty, Impartiality, Service, Transparency, Accountability, Respect, Effectiveness and Efficiency.

The survey results provide agencies with a snap-shot of how employees see their workplaces, including views on:

- Employee engagement and job satisfaction
- Employee wellbeing
- Public Sector ethics and culture
- Communication
- Diversity and inclusion
- Workload and Motivation
- Fairness and respect

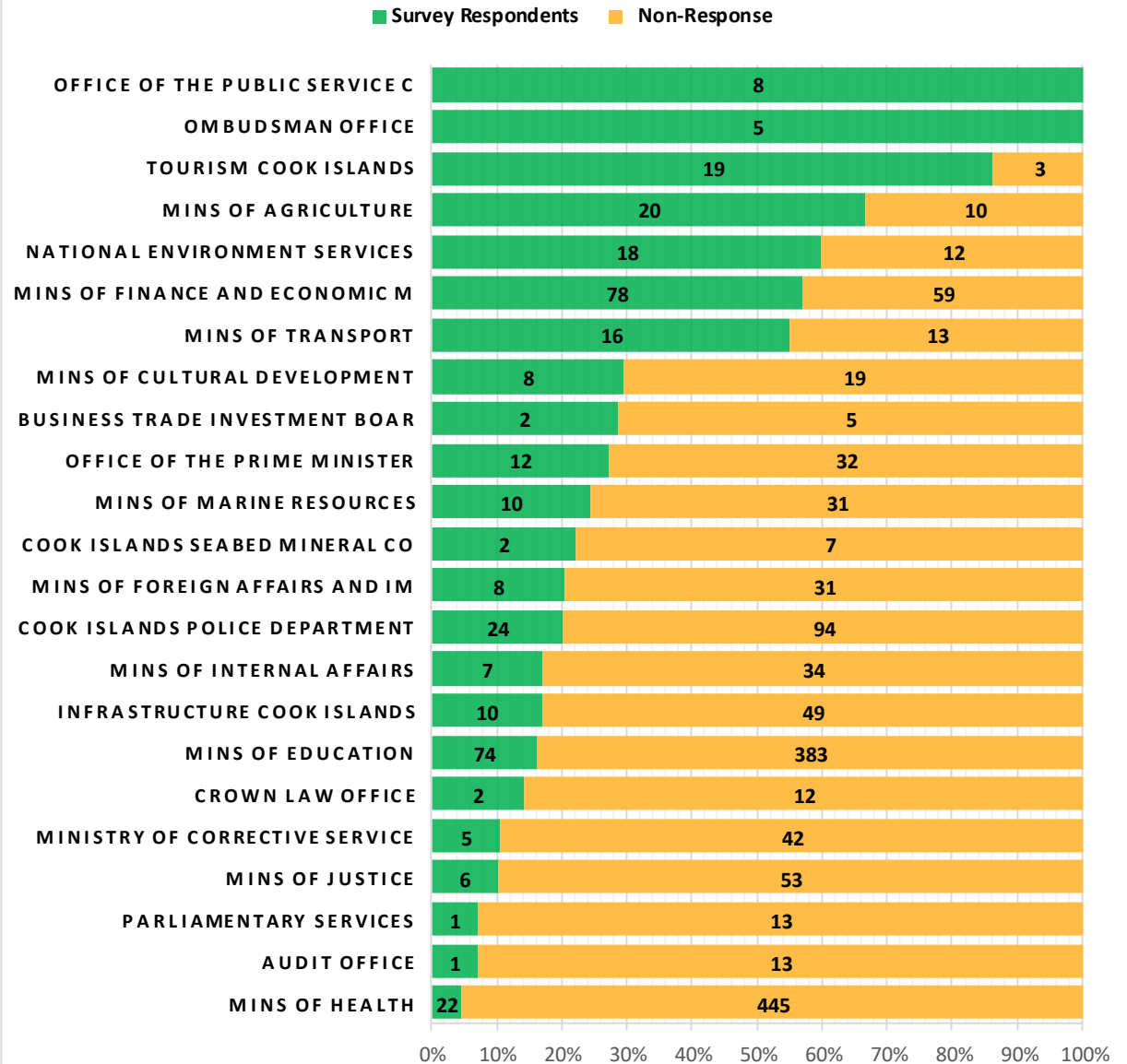
Agencies can use the results to determine how to improve the workplace for their employees.

Each report contains a summary of the data results and a summary of the participants comments. If the report contains no summary of comments it is because no comments were given.

This year you will also see:

- Public release of the 'Survey Snapshot Report', which provides data results from all of the agency employees who participated.
- Demographic and survey information made available on the OPSC website, and
- A second employment engagement survey launched in October focusing on leadership and management.

PROPORTION OF AGENCY RESPONDENTS



The culture of my workplace is positive and motivating

Summary of Results and Recommendations

This statement collected a mixed bag of responses with 51% selecting Always or Frequently and the remaining 49% choosing from the other three options, the highest being 29% opting for Occasionally. Management should be concerned with the large amount of employees who chose at this end of the rating scale and look to ways to promote a more positive and motivating environment. The first step to improving positivity in the workplace is to identify any glaring negatives such as employees feeling undervalued, unacknowledged, or a lack of connectivity and being part of a team. Using the results of this survey to help identify negatives and then developing and implementing strategies to reduce those negatives will help with staff motivation and engagement in their work.

Some tips for motivating staff are:

- Say "Thank You"
- Communicate the big picture
- Show trust in your staff
- Give staff a voice
- Upskill
- Offer a clear progression path
- Create a welcoming work environment
- Be aware of your management style
- Refresh your performance reviews
- Ask employees for feedback

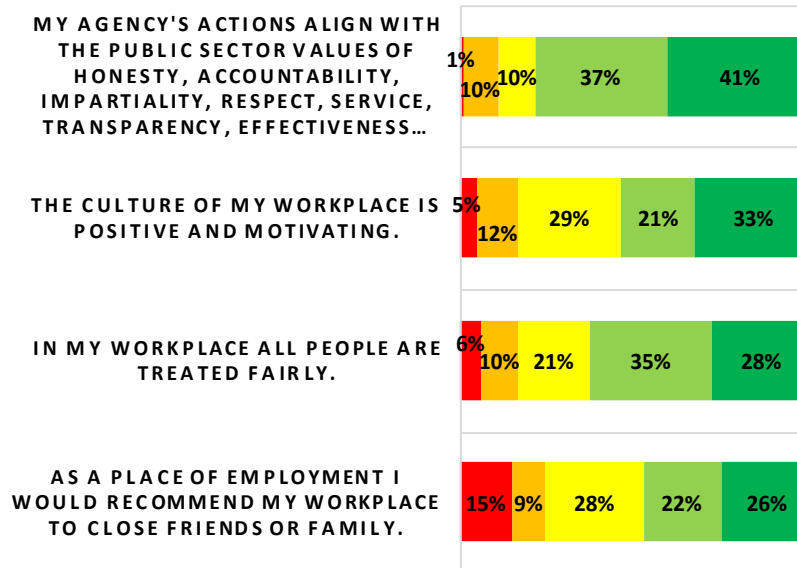
For further information go to <https://www.hays.net.nz/employer-insights/management-issues/how-to-motivate-employees>

Summary of Comments

Some comments for this statement related to the division that an employee is working in, while others reflected on the whole Ministry. Unfortunately there were a lot more critical comments than positive ones. Positive comments included employees working in a positive, motivating environment with others noting that they were encouraged and work with a loyal and honest team. Less encouraging were comments relating to the lack of leadership, incentives, encouragement or acknowledgment creating an environment of negativity and low morale.

ETHICS AND CULTURE

■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Occasionally ■ Frequently ■ Always



My Agency's actions align with the Public Sector values of honesty, accountability, impartiality, respect, service, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency

Summary of Results and Recommendations

Combined, 78% agreed with this statement either Always or Frequently, with 21% feeling that the Agency's actions align with the public sector values only Occasionally or less.

This is a good result but does require further work from management if they want to reduce the 21%.

Summary of Comments

Comments included that MFEM upholds high values, and employees are acknowledged and appreciated. More critical comments included that MFEM lacks resources and staff, management skills and equipment to function efficiently and effectively.

In my workplace all people are treated fairly

Summary of Results and Recommendations

63% selected either Always or Frequently, however it still leaves 37% of respondents selecting amongst the last three options. Like the previous sections results, if employees feel they are being treated fairly then they will be more engaged in their work and have a more positive outlook. Transparency and following clear procedures and guidelines is one of the key ways to combat unfairness in the workplace. Managers need to be mindful that every action they take is being scrutinized by their staff, so following correct procedure every single time is vital to ensure that employees are all being treated fairly and equally and that this is seen by employees.

Research conducted by UNC/Kenan Flagler Business School 2019 showed that a lack of fairness in the workplace created implications far beyond the emotional well-being of employees. Studies showed that when employees feel unfairly treated, they are less productive, more likely to engage in deceptive behavior and less likely to stay with the organisation long term.

In the workplace, “justice behaviour” relates to managers’ specific actions or behaviors such as:

- Making decision-making transparent
- Providing employees with opportunities to provide input/feedback
- Acknowledging employees contributions
- Making time for employees to provide input on decisions when possible
- Treating employees with respect and dignity

When managers engage in such “justice behaviors,” employees are more likely to evaluate them as fair. While it is acknowledged that these tasks take significant time and resources to accomplish – time and resources that are often in short supply for managers with heavy workloads, companies like Google, are recognising that by prioritising “justice behaviors” they can decrease turnover, increase productivity, and reap an array of other benefits. Management may want to look at the “justice behaviours” outlined above and assess if they highlight any areas that could be improved on within the Ministry.

In addition, observing workplace dynamics can provide valuable insights in to the different employee interactions and how people are being treated. One-to-one meetings with employees where they can express or communicate any concerns or issues they may be experiencing, can also help management identify issues and how to resolve them.

As a place of employment I would recommend my workplace to close friends or family

Summary of Results and Recommendations

Compared to the other ratings in this section, only 48% of participants indicated that they would Always or Frequently recommend MFEM as a place to work. Whether an employee will give a recommendation to friends and family to apply for a role in an organisation is a good gauge of organisational, team, and work engagement levels. Management would be recommended to look at the other indicators from this survey for where improvements could be made, to increase a more positive response for this statement.

Summary of Comments

Participants commented on that MFEM or their division was a great place to work. Others felt that they would only recommend to those they knew had the relevant skills and could handle the challenges of the role and the workload. Some commented on the unhealthy work environment and the high stress levels as reasons not to recommend.

In my workplace my ideas are listened to

Summary of Results and Recommendations

It is obvious with these results that a good proportion of employees, 66%, feel listened to the majority of the time, which is a good result, but like the previous section there is still a section of employees who do not agree with that view.

As management, you would be considering what is lacking in the work culture and management team to elicit these responses and how to increase the number of employees who feel listened to. Staff meetings are always a good forum for sharing ideas, as well as one-to-one meetings with employees and their manager. Not all ideas are able to be implemented and management should be open to the sharing of ideas but also to explaining and providing feedback to an employee/s as to why the idea has not been adopted.

Some ideas on how to show your employees you are listening:

- Let employees speak
- Make listening a priority
- Prepare for the good and the bad ideas
- Make engagement part of the process
- Take action
- Follow-up is vital

For further information go to <https://www.achievers.com/blog/how-to-show-your-workforce-that-youre-really-listening/>

Summary of Comments

Several comments were very positive and indicated that employees were listened to, that management had implemented open lines of communication, including weekly meetings. Participants also commented that this type of work environment led to greater collaboration and team work.

A greater amount of the commentary showed that while ideas were often listened to, none or very little action was taken by management to implement ideas or provide feedback on why they could not be other than budget restraints.

COMMUNICATIONS

■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Occasionally ■ Frequently ■ Always



I feel that my achievements at work are acknowledged

Summary of Results and Recommendations

Another good result with 65% selecting Always or Frequently and like the last section some work could be done to improve the results at the lower end of the ratings.

Summary of Comments

Comments reflected a work environment where staff were regularly acknowledged and creating a space that is encouraging and supportive. Others felt that taking on extra work is not always acknowledged and that more acknowledgment would make employees feel valued. Some respondents felt that senior management took the credit for work done while giving no acknowledgement of employees efforts or that the only feedback they received was more often negative.

In my workplace, I can voice my opinion even if my ideas are different from others

Summary of Results and Recommendations

A total of 66% of respondents selected Always or Frequently, which reflects the results recorded in this section. While a good result there is that representation of employees who do not agree with this statement, with most opting for Occasionally or Rarely. This result indicates there is scope for improvement and like other sections management need to be looking at ways of ensuring employees are able to voice their opinions, be heard and respected for their ideas. Perhaps considering refresher courses or training for improving communication skills for the management team for these vital skills and lift the level of engagement between staff and management. There is online training websites listed in the conclusion. Coursera for example offer free online courses covering Manager's Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Managing People at Work, Leading Diverse Teams & Organizations and Leadership in 21st Century Organizations

Summary of Comments

Again comments included that employees worked in an office that encouraged sharing of opinions and they feel listened to, but also that while opinions were able to be given there was little action or change as a result. Others felt that sharing opinions was not a good idea as it often reflected poorly in performance reviews or that the environment was not one where employees felt 'safe' to share.

I look forward to coming into work each day

Summary of Results and Recommendations

Another encouraging result for this statement with 64% selecting either Always or Frequently. With improvements, through training and staff engagement initiatives, the culture and communication between staff and management, the lower ratings would shift towards the positive end.

Summary of Comments

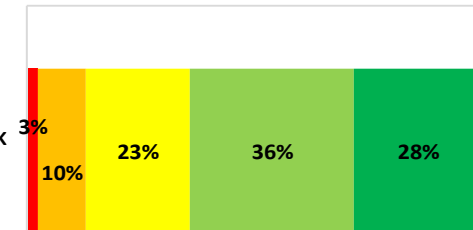
There was some very positive comments from respondents, again commenting on their work environment and the challenges of the role and helping the people of the Cook Islands as reasons that keep them motivated and look forward to coming to work.

Others were a bit more 50/50 with stress levels and workload contributing to lower motivation. There were several comments where participants did not look forward to coming to work each day because of an unhealthy and negative work environment.

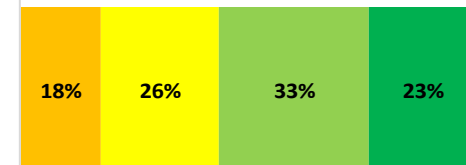
WORKLOAD AND MOTIVATION

■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Occasionally ■ Frequently ■ Always

I LOOK FORWARD TO COMING INTO WORK EACH DAY.



I AM ABLE TO CARRY OUT MY ROLE WHILE MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WORK/LIFE BALANCE.



I am able to carry out my role while maintaining a healthy work/life balance

Summary of Results and Recommendations

Again another result that has a higher number of respondents choosing Always or Frequently tipping over 66%. It would be great to see the number selecting Occasionally move up in ratings, though you will see from some of the comments that not all the reasons are because of the work load .

Summary of Comments

Most respondents felt that they more or less maintained a good work/life balance and that personal and family commitments were just as much a factor in this as work was. Others commented that staff shortages were contributing to high workloads and the need to work overtime.

In the last 12 months I have thought about leaving

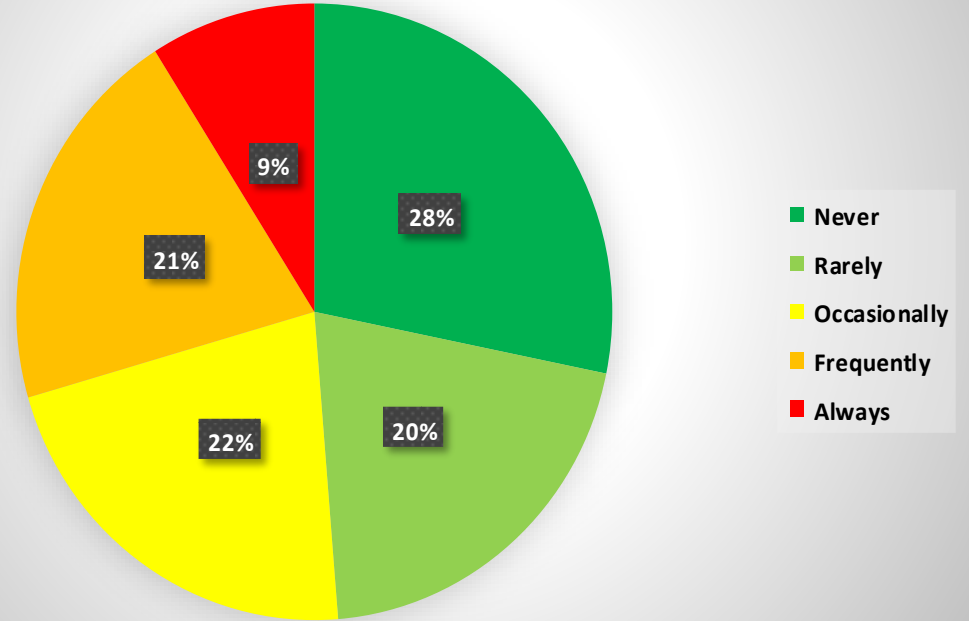
Summary of Results and Recommendations

A good result with 70% selecting Never, Rarely or Occasionally.

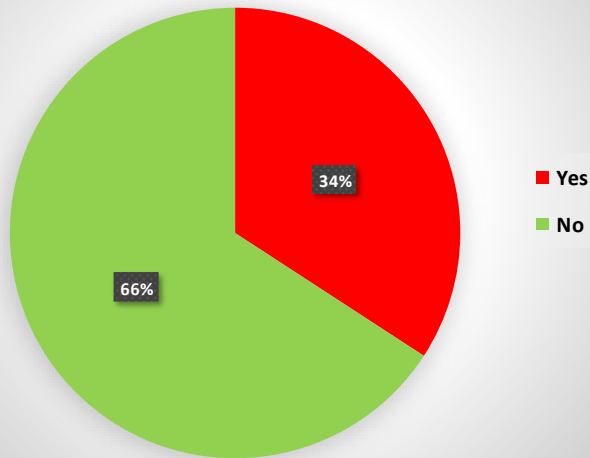
Summary of Comments

There was some very valid reasons given for why staff have thought about leaving and not all of them were negative. Some was for personal reasons, retirement or career opportunities. Several comments though focused on a 'toxic' and unhealthy work environment with a lack of strong leadership, communication recognition, respect and poor remuneration as reasons why they have considered leaving. Quite a concern for management given that 30% of respondents selected Frequently and Always.

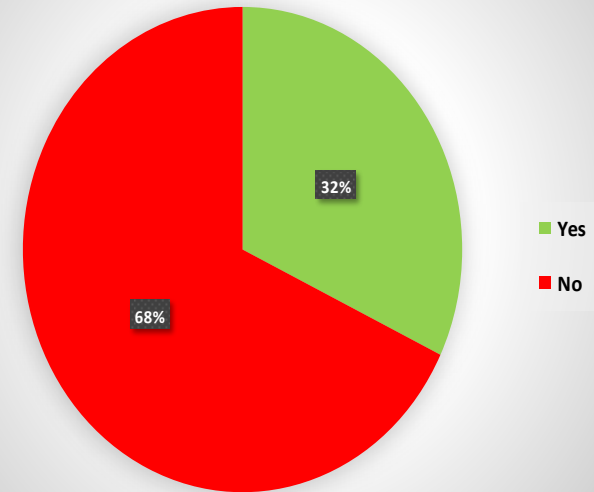
In the last 12 months I have thought about leaving my workplace



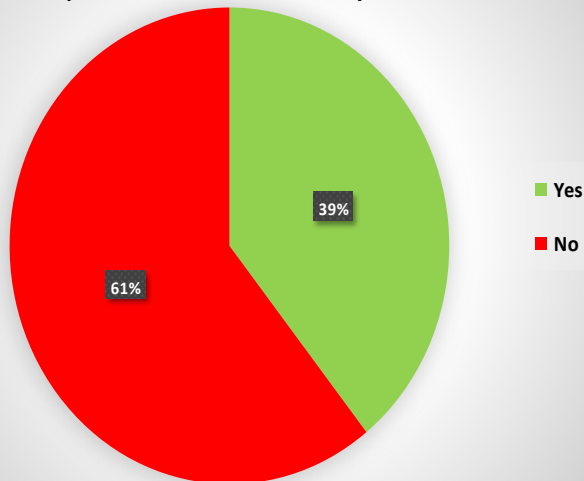
In the last 12 months have you experienced a dispute or conflict in your workplace?



Was your dispute or conflict resolved within one month?



Was your dispute or conflict resolved fairly?



Summary of Results and Recommendations

A good result with the first question, with 34% of respondents having experienced a dispute or conflict in the last 12 months. The more concerning results that showed 68% reported that their dispute or conflict was not resolved within one month and 61% that it was not resolved fairly. From that 34% that had experienced a dispute or conflict the average number experienced was 3.5. Disputes and Conflicts in the work environment are difficult to eliminate completely and the results show that some management staff do have skills in conflict resolution but the results would indicate a gap in skills and management might benefit from refresher training on policy procedures and for conflict resolution. There is a list of free online training websites which have a wide selection of courses provided, including conflict resolution and management in the conclusion section of this report.

Summary of Comments

Comments reflected a degree of dissatisfaction and frustration at unresolved or unfairly resolved disputes and conflicts, with management with management lacking in skills to facilitate and resolve the issues presented.

Conclusion

A very good report with results showing a high level of engagement from staff, with a total of 78 employees or 57% of the ministry's workforce. Participation rates were high with 78 employees participating in the survey. This is an excellent response rate and all the statements ranked between 48% and 78% of employees selecting Always or Frequently.

This is a report with definite successes and some high results, with most ratings achieving 60% or more. When asked about the culture of their workplace is would you recommend your workplace to close friends or family both ranked the lowest and are two areas where work from the management team could help to improve the overall level of employee engagement. These results already highlighted in the report should be considered as 'points of action' and where management work together to identify how and what can be done to increase the number of employees selecting Always or Frequently in the future.

Improving the wellbeing of employees leads to higher level of engagement and productivity, which again leads to better health, wellbeing and satisfaction with work.

Research suggests that employees who report high levels of wellbeing are more likely to:

- Be more creative
- Be more productive
- Provide better customer service
- Report more positive interactions with their managers
- Be more confident to speak up
- Be more satisfied with their job, career development and work-life balance
- Be more engaged.

Training Resources

Coursera is an online learning website that partners with more than 200 leading universities and companies to bring flexible, affordable, job-relevant online learning to individuals and organizations worldwide. They offer a range of learning opportunities—from hands-on projects and courses to job-ready certificates and degree programs. Coursera offers free online training courses as well as those with a fee. Coursera for Business provides courses for transformative skill development solutions for empowering teams with the high-impact skills that drive innovation, competitiveness, and growth. They also offer Coursera for Government which helps governments and organizations provide in-demand skills and learning paths to new jobs for the entire workforce, and implements national-scale learning programs. <https://www.coursera.org/>

edX Open Courses offers online learning from world-class academic institutions and corporate partners, self-paced individual courses or multi-course programs to earn a certificate and typically take 2 to 6 weeks to complete. They are low cost, so organisations can affordably provision learning for teams or the entire organisation. <https://www.edx.org/>

Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute offer two NZ Certificates in Business and Management. www.citti.edu.ck/courses/