Ministry of Education

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 Enua 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 Enua 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 is 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
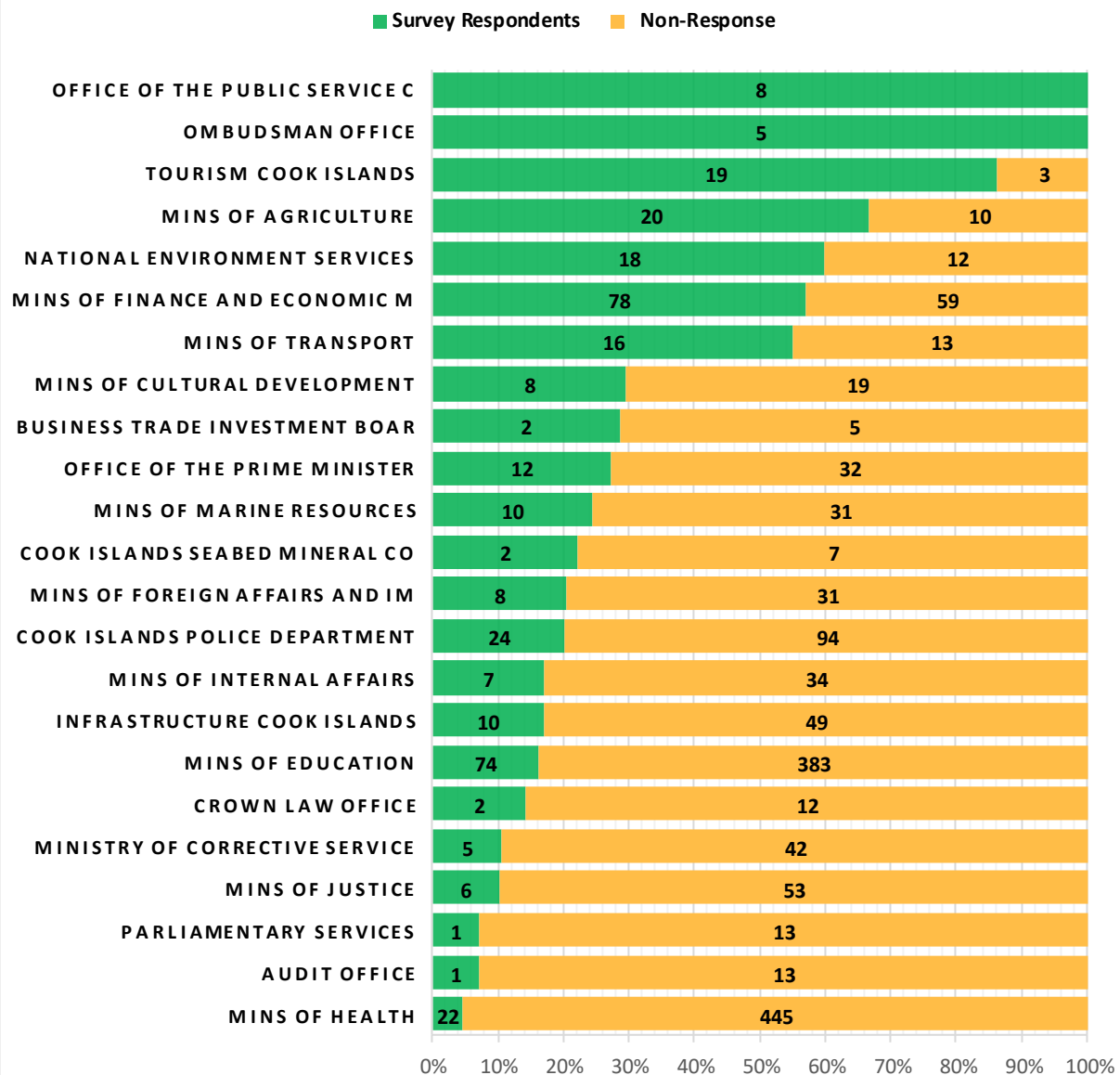- Job demands, resources and support

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

Legend: ■ Survey Respondents ■ Non-Response

Agency	Survey Respondents	Non-Response
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE C	8	
OMBUDSMAN OFFICE	5	
TOURISM COOK ISLANDS	19	3
MINS OF AGRICULTURE	20	10
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT SERVICES	18	12
MINS OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC M	78	59
MINS OF TRANSPORT	16	13
MINS OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	8	19
BUSINESS TRADE INVESTMENT BOAR	2	5
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER	12	32
MINS OF MARINE RESOURCES	10	31
COOK ISLANDS SEABED MINERAL CO	2	7
MINS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND IM	8	31
COOK ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT	24	94
MINS OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS	7	34
INFRASTRUCTURE COOK ISLANDS	10	49
MINS OF EDUCATION	74	383
CROWN LAW OFFICE	2	12
MINISTRY OF CORRECTIVE SERVICE	5	42
MINS OF JUSTICE	6	53
PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES	1	13
AUDIT OFFICE	1	13
MINS OF HEALTH	22	445

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

Summary of Results and Recommendations

Just less than half of participants, 46%, selected Always or Frequently to this statement. The remaining 54% selected Occasionally, Rarely or Never. Whether an employee will give recommendations to friends and family to apply for a role in an organisation is a good gauge of organisational, team, and work engagement levels. MOE Management would be recommended to look at the other indicators from this survey for where improvements could be made to increase the number of respondents selecting a more positive rating.

Summary of Comments

- Respondents noted that they would recommend family or friends if they had a passion for the role. The family friendly working environment was also commented on as well as the rewards of a teaching role as reasons to recommend.
- Other respondents would recommend not because of the working environment but for the students. Some felt that the passion for teaching was not as evident at the senior management level.
- The most critical comments mentioned the lack of leadership, the negativity of staff and low morale were reasons why they would not recommend.
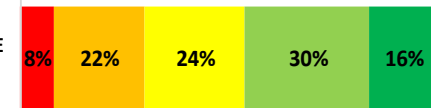
ETHICS AND CULTURE

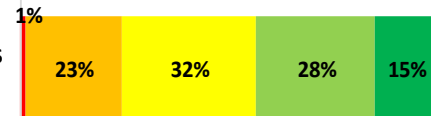■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Occasionally ■ Frequently ■ Always

AS A PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT I WOULD RECOMMEND MY WORKPLACE TO CLOSE FRIENDS OR FAMILY.
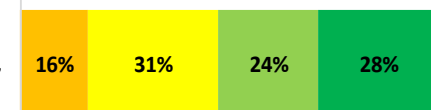14% | 18% | 23% | 27% | 19%
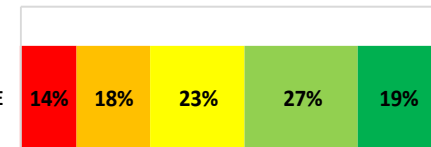
IN MY WORKPLACE ALL PEOPLE ARE TREATED FAIRLY.
8% | 22% | 24% | 30% | 16%

THE CULTURE OF MY WORKPLACE IS POSITIVE AND MOTIVATING.
1% | 23% | 32% | 28% | 15%

MY AGENCY'S ACTIONS ALIGN WITH THE PUBLIC SECTOR VALUES OF HONESTY, ACCOUNTABILITY, IMPARTIALITY, RESPECT, SERVICE, TRANSPARENCY, EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY.
16% | 31% | 24% | 28%

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

An improvement in the ratings for this statement in that 52% selected Always or Frequently and the remaining respondents opting for Occasionally or Rarely. While this is a higher result than the other results in this section, there is room for improvement. If employees are feeling they are not always treated fairly or working in a positive and motivated environment they are much less likely to recommend their workplace as a place of employment or feel that their employer or Agency reflects the values that it promotes. Again like other recommendations, management staff could consider ways to mitigate these results and work as a team to implement initiatives to further engage their staff.

Summary of Comments

Comments for this statement were very similar to those already made ranging from feeling respected and working in an Agency that reflects the sectors values to working in an unhealthy work culture with a lack of impartiality, accountability, respect and where improvements need to be made for the wellbeing of the staff and the sector.

In my workplace all people are treated fairly

Summary of Results and Recommendations

Like the statement asking whether participants would recommend their workplace to friends or family, 46% of respondents selected Always and Frequently and the same choosing Occasionally or Rarely. 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 workload, 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.

Summary of Comments

- A few comments suggested that they felt that everyone was treated fairly, regardless of gender, race etc.
- Others felt that most of the time employees were treated fairly but not always and it sometimes depending on who you were.
- Many more felt that there was a definite difference between how 'expat' workers were treated, which was seen as more favourably, than local employees or the difference between Rarotonga and the Pa Enua. There were several   comments on the lack of tools and resources available to competently carry out their roles and lack of leadership in some areas.

The culture of my workplace is positive and motivating

Summary of Results and Recommendations

Less respondents, 43%, chose Always or Frequently for this statement and the remaining 57% selecting Occasionally or Rarely. Positivity and motivation are key indictors of employee engagement. Engagement is a sense of purpose, belonging, and commitment to an organisation, whereas **motivation is the willpower and drive to act on those feelings**.   Employee engagement serves as a foundation for your employees to do their best work, while motivation is the fuel or energy required to actually do it. Looking further into why some employees are feeling the culture of MOE is not always positive or motivating would be recommended. Management plays a big part in the culture of a work environment so discussing this with the management team and how improvements could be made would be a positive start.

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

- There was several comments regarding positivity and motivation being present, and part of the work culture, but only in the individual division, not in the Ministry as a whole
- Successes were not celebrated enough and disagreements were solved promptly.
- A lack of leadership or management and what seemed to be an element of disengagement and lack of positive interaction from the senior management teams and their staff.

In my workplace my ideas are listened to

Summary of Results and Recommendations

A larger proportion of respondents chose either Occasionally, Rarely or Never, totaling 53% so management need to consider the results so far and how they can improve. 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 respondents felt listened to and that their ideas were valued and respected. Management was available and always willing to listen was another theme that came through in some of the comments.
- Some felt that while they were heard it took time to have ideas actioned, if at all, and that more formal forums should be made available to share ideas openly and respectfully.
- Others felt that it was a waste of time as nobody was listening. Poor leadership, micromanagement and a disregard for institutional knowledge, with a focus on 'western methods and culture' rather than Cook Islands.
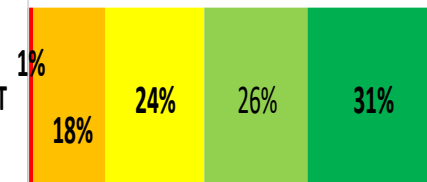
COMMUNICATIONS

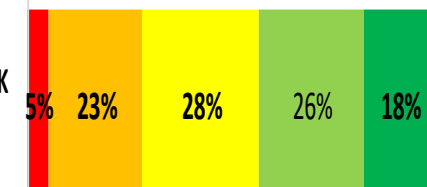■ Never　■ Rarely　■ Occasionally　■ Frequently　■ Always

IN MY WORKPLACE MY IDEAS ARE LISTENED TO.
3% | 15% | 35% | 30% | 18%
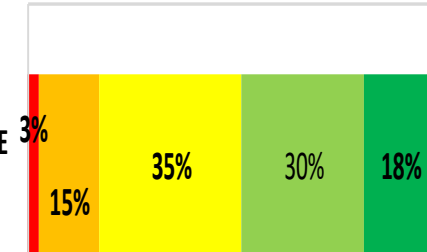
IN MY WORKPLACE, I CAN VOICE MY OPINION EVEN IF MY IDEAS ARE DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS.
1% | 18% | 24% | 26% | 31%

I FEEL THAT MY ACHIEVEMENTS AT WORK ARE ACKNOWLEDGED.
5% | 23% | 28% | 26% | 18%

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

Summary of Results and Recommendations

This result is more positive, though there is still 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 management could consider communication training for the management team to help improve 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
- Some respondents felt happy and confident to voice their opinion and their management team valued and appreciated their ideas and opinions. Weekly meetings were mentioned as good place to share opinions and ideas.
- Others felt it was not so much that you could not voice your opinion, more that it was ignored or made no difference.
- Fear of retribution or viewed as a troublemaker were some reasons given for not speaking up.

I feel that my achievements at work are acknowledged

Summary of Results and Recommendations

This result is not surprising given the ratings and feedback provided so far in the Communications section and as preciously mentioned communication training for the management teams should be considered.

Feeling valued at work increases more than just an employee's job satisfaction. The influence of recognition and appreciation has a profound impact on the entire organisation.
Appreciation in the workplace:
- Improves employee engagement. When leaders fail to recognize and appreciate their people, employees are 42% less likely to be engaged.
- Boosts productivity. There is an 18x increase in the probability of great work when employees are recognized at work.
- Strengthens company culture. Employee recognition has a tremendous impact on the six essential elements of a thriving organizational culture
- Helps to retain employees. Consistent appreciation and recognition can add 3.5 years to an employee's tenure.
- Impacts bottom line results. Organisations that practice recognition effectively are 12x more likely to have strong business results like increases in shareholder return. (extract from www.octanner.com/insights/articles)

Summary of Comments
- Some respondents indicated that they were acknowledged by their manager and being acknowledged encouraged employees to work hard and fostered commitment. Some felt that the achievements of their students was reward enough.
- Some felt there was more need for management to acknowledge the work staff did and more often, not just during the annual performance reviews
- Others expressed they never receive any acknowledgment and if they did receive feedback it was often focusing on errors that are not necessarily caused by them, leading to stress and extra work to correct.

I look forward to coming into work each day

Summary of Results and Recommendations

A much more encouraging result for this statement with 63% 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.
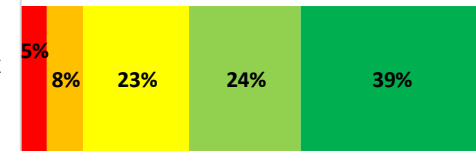
Summary of Comments

- Respondents indicated strongly that the love of the job and working in the education sector as the main driving factor for looking forward to work each day.
- Others felt that it was more mixed, with good days and bad or what there workload and the type of work to be done that day
- A few mentioned that the negative work culture and lack of good leadership often did not make them feel like going to work.
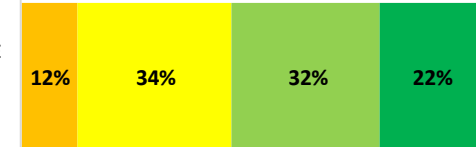
WORKLOAD AND MOTIVATION

■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Occasionally ■ Frequently ■ Always

I LOOK FORWARD TO COMING INTO WORK EACH DAY.
5% | 8% | 23% | 24% | 39%

I AM ABLE TO CARRY OUT MY ROLE WHILE MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WORK/LIFE BALANCE.
12% | 34% | 32% | 22%

I am able to carry out my role while maintaining a healthy work/life balance
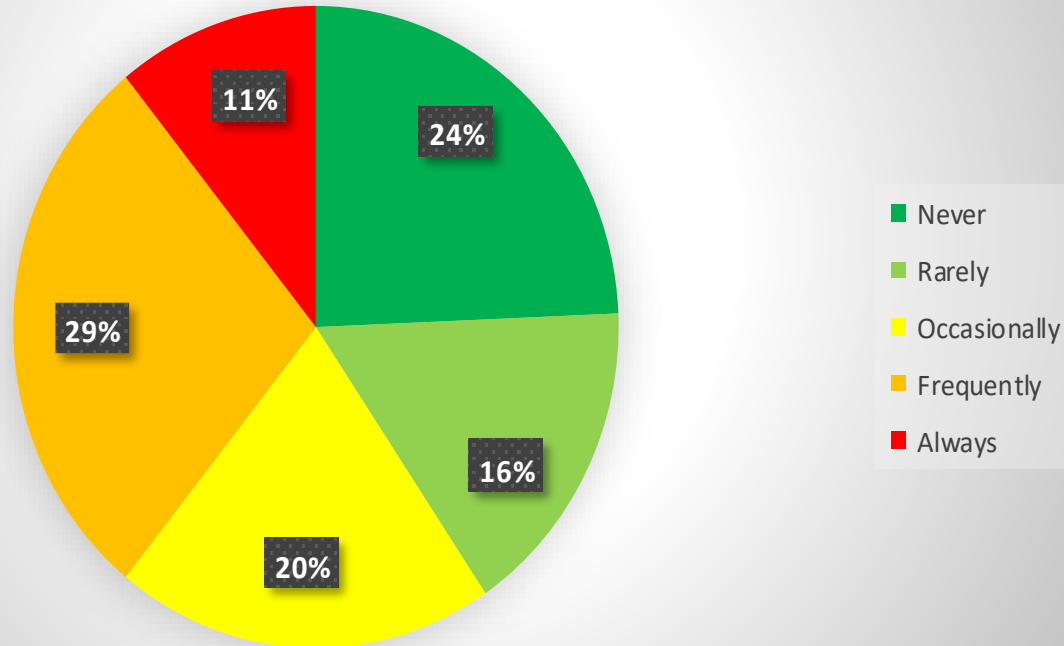
Summary of Results and Recommendations

Again another result that has a higher number of respondents choosing Always or Frequently tipping over 50% at 54%. 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

- Several respondents comments referred to the fact that working extra hours and not having a good work/life balance was because of their own level of commitment to the role and wanting to provide a high quality service to their students, school and community. Others commented on their other commitments outside of work that meant that they were often stretched and finding it difficult to maintain a healthy balance.
- Lack of resources and staff also factored in participants comments and led to an imbalance due to higher workloads.

**In the last 12 months I have thought about leaving**

Summary of Results and Recommendations
A good result with 60% selecting Never, Rarely or Occasionally. Like the previous statements the comments reflected the love of the job as the main reason employees stay and not necessarily the working environment or culture.
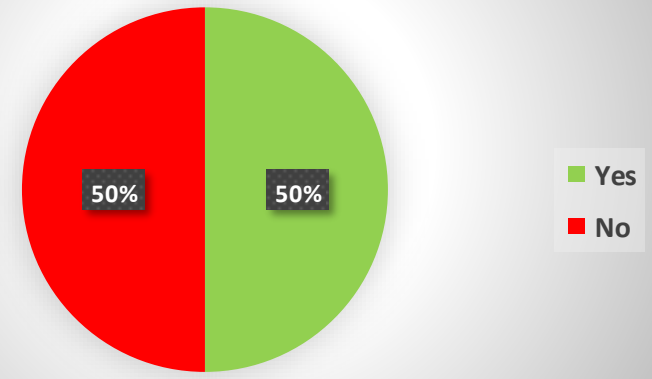
Summary of Comments
- Comments included that employees loved their job and they are their for the students. Others thought about leaving for other opportunities, training or retirement.
- Others commented that the lack of leadership, resources, staff, acknowledgement, disparity in how employees are treated and other points already mentioned in previous sections as to why they think about leaving.
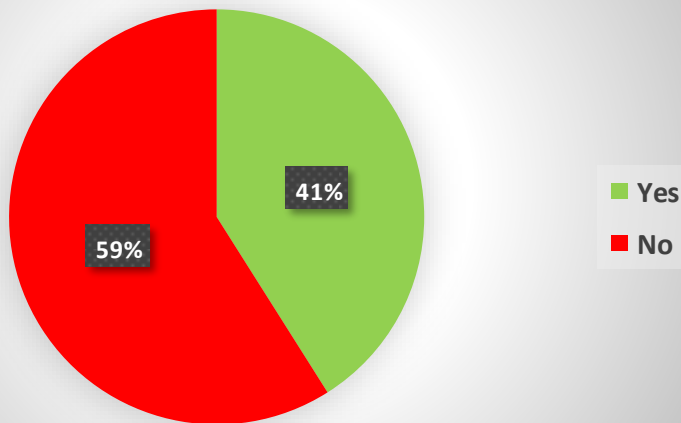
In the last 12 months have you experienced a dispute or conflict in your workplace?

49% 51%

Yes
No
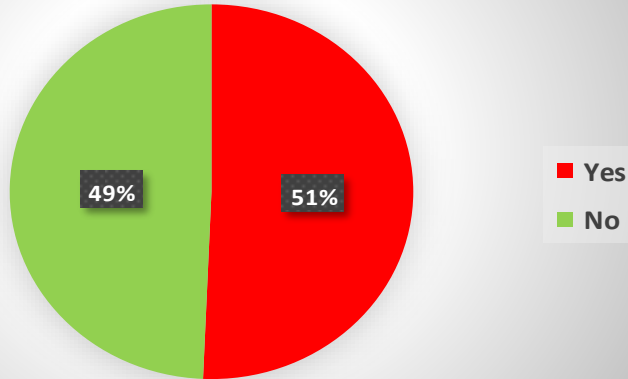
Was your dispute or conflict resolved within one month?

50% 50%

Yes
No

Was the dispute or conflict resolved fairly?

41%
59%

Yes
No

Summary of Results and Recommendations

51% of respondents have experienced a dispute or conflict in the last 12 months and from that 51% the average number of conflicts experienced was 3.5.

Disputes and Conflicts in the work environment are difficult to eliminate completely and the results show that 50% felt the dispute or conflict was resolved within a month, and a slightly lesser amount at 41% that it was resolved fairly would indicate that some management staff do have skills in conflict resolution. There is still a gap though and management might benefit from refresher training. 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 ranged from disputes or conflicts being resolved fairly and in a timely manner with management following the process and reaching a fair decision with all parties feeling heard. Other comments though eluded to poor management skills, ignoring the situation, not following processes and bullying tactics being used.

Conclusion

A report that shows that there is a need for improvement in many areas and while employees are largely committed to their roles the level of employee engagement could be greatly increased with some work and commitment from management to drive change.

The number of employees that participated was 74, which equates to 16% of the workforce. This response rate means that this report is providing a smaller snapshot of employees levels of engagement and their health & wellbeing than is ideal. However the results that were collected showed a level of commitment to the sector and students. Statements ranked between 43% and 63% of employees selecting Always or Frequently.

The 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/