What is the engagement index?

Index scores are useful to summarise results across a group of similar questions.

There is no universally agreed set of questions to measure employee engagement, but the OECD asked New Zealand to report against a set of 10 questions on employee engagement for our public servants to be used along with other countries responses in their Government at a Glance publication. Their question set includes one question on public service motivation (contributing to the common good). Because space in the survey is limited, we've selected four of the OECD questions, and retained our own equivalent question on job satisfaction (asked in our 2021 Public Service Census) rather than replacing it with their question.

For the Public Service Census engagement index we use each individual's score for the questions on enthusiasm about their job, recommending their organisation, work giving a sense of accomplishment, work contributing to the common good, and job satisfaction.

Because we are using a set of questions that are different from other surveys, we do not recommend comparing engagement index scores with other measures (e.g. Gallup).

The Public Service overall has a .77 enagement score in 2025.

How is the score created?

Response options are numerically coded (with a 1 for strongly disagree/very dissatisfied through to 5 for strongly agree/very satisfied), any don't know/prefer not to answer responses are excluded from the calculations.

For each person, they are given a score as the fraction of the maximum score they could give across the five questions (25). For example, someone who answered all five questions with a strongly agree/very satisfied would have a numerator of 25 and denominator of 25, so a score of one. Someone who answered all five questions with an agree/satisfied would have a numerator of 20 and denominator of 25, or a score of 0.8.

These scores are then averaged across the group (in an agency report, this is across the entire agency). A perfect engagement score for a group would be one, meaning all staff rated all questions in this set as strongly agree/very satisfied, and the worst possible score would be 0.2, meaning every staff member said they strongly disagreed/were very dissatisfied with all questions in the index.

What is it useful for?

The index is helpful to compare performance of different groups or the same group over time (e.g. we plan to include this group of questions in future surveys so we can track changes).