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Research
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Technical Report

Te Tauanaki Public Service Census 2025

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Technical Report

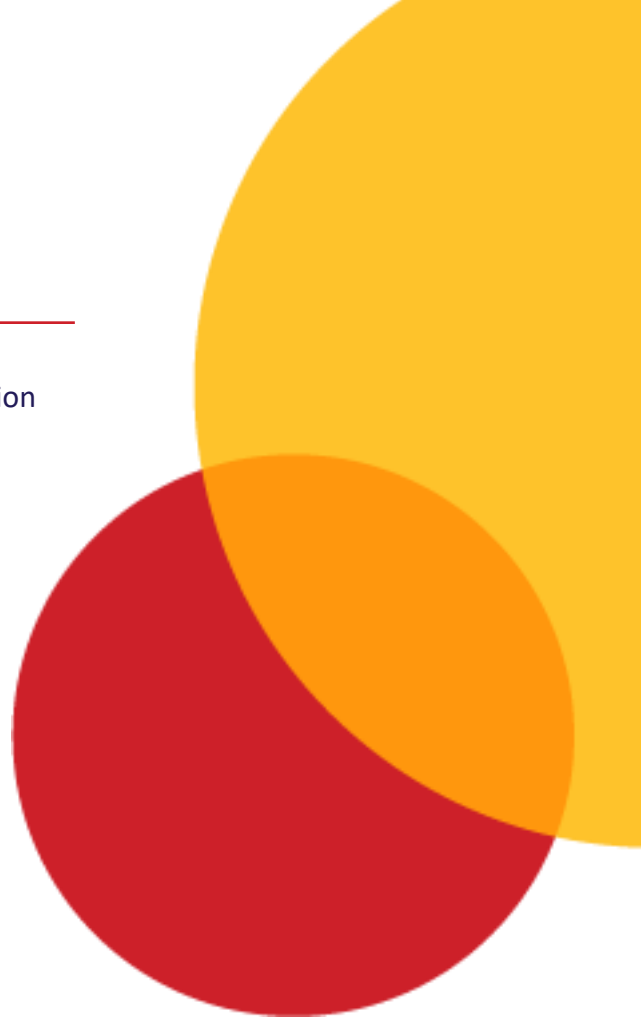
Te Tauanaki Public Service Census 2025.

Prepared for Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission

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1.0 Background

This report contains the technical and methodological details for the second Public Service Census (a.k.a. *Te Taunaki*), which was conducted in 2025 by Rangahau Aotearoa (Research New Zealand) on behalf of Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission. As with the first Public Service Census completed in 2021, the purpose of the 2025 Public Service Census was to gather information directly from public servants about their experiences of working in a public sector organisation.

Research New Zealand's specific responsibilities were to:

1. Undertake the delivery and management of the survey.
2. Capture and process the survey data and assist Te Kawa Mataaho's reporting of the results by providing the following deliverables:
 - A clean, depersonalised dataset,
 - A secure e-reporting tool/online portal, which has two 'views'; one for Te Kawa Mataaho and the other for each participating agency.

This report provides:

- A record of the survey implementation approach.
- Information relating to the survey design, privacy and security related activities.
- Sampling information.
- Response rates and margins of error.
- A link to the final questionnaire and a copy of the informed consent document.

2.0 Methodological overview

A brief overview of the methodological features are as follows.

Development of the Census questionnaire was conducted by Te Kawa Mataaho, in consultation with key stakeholders.

The final questionnaire comprised 10 parts:

- Part A: About your role | Ō mahi
- Part B: Supporting productivity | Te hāpai whakaputaranga
- Part C: Public Service principles | Ngā mātāpono ratonga tūmatanui
- Part D: Integrity and conduct | Te pono me te mahi tika
- Part E: Health, safety, and wellbeing | Te hauora, te haumarutanga, me te toiora
- Part F: Skills and development | Te whakapiki pūkenga
- Part G: Māori Crown capability | Ngā āheinga o ngāi Māori me te Karauna
- Part H: Job satisfaction and future plans | Te āhuareka o te mahi me ngā mahere mō anamata
- Part I: About you | Mōu ake
- Part J: Your comments | Ō tākupu

Concurrent with the questionnaire design phase, an extensive round of discussions and data security checks were carried out to ensure data at all key stages of the project (sampling, data collection and reporting) would remain private and secure.

The survey was conducted online with the 40 core public service agencies/departments. It was soft launched on the 24th of February 2025 and fully launched on the 3rd of March 2025. When the Census was closed off three weeks later, n=44,091 public servants had responded, answering at least the first question. This represents a response rate of 68.5%. 61.9% completed the survey in its entirety.

3.0 Privacy and security-related activities

Given the audience and the personal nature of some of the information being collected, data security surrounding the survey was paramount. In this regard, several activities were carried out before the survey was conducted, including:

- The completion of a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA).
- A Cloud Risk Assessment.
- Penetration testing.

Rangahau Aotearoa also liaised directly with a key IT contact at each of the public sector agencies to test that the survey invitation emails and the URL to the online survey would be accessible.

Following the completion of the survey, and in accordance with our Code of Practice, respondents' names and email addresses were removed from the survey dataset. Any other personal identifying information, including copies of the original contact lists, were deleted from our system at the conclusion of the project and the Commission advised of this fact.

Further privacy information, summarising the Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA), is published here:

[Privacy Summary Te Taunaki Public Service Census 2025 - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

4.0 Questionnaire design

Many of the questions included in the 2025 survey were based on those asked in 2021. Both surveys were developed by Te Kawa Mataaho following consultation with key stakeholder groups.

The final survey questionnaire, once programmed, was tested extensively by both Rangahau Aotearoa and Te Kawa Mataaho to ensure the wording, layout and routing instructions were correct.

The first Census in 2021 provided respondents the opportunity to complete the survey online, by telephone or on paper. However, uptake of the alternative options was extremely low, with only three of the n=39,977 respondents electing to complete the paper version of the questionnaire and none by telephone. As such, the decision was made to focus solely on the online version this year, as there is substantial cost in providing alternatives to the online version.

5.0 Accessibility

The survey was also reviewed against the New Zealand Government Web Accessibility and Usability Standard to ensure compliance with WCAG 2.2 AA. Changes made to improve accessibility included, for example, changes to fonts and colour contrasts. Changes were also made to the layout, lists and titles to improve accessibility and functionality for those using screen readers. A few additional minor issues identified through the testing were unable to be resolved due to limitations in the current version of our survey software programme. However, those recommendations have been raised with the software provider and are expected to be addressed in future updates.

The testing was completed by an independent third party, Intopia, which is licensed to complete such testing.

6.0 Sampling frame and sample size

The contact lists (samples) for *Te Taunaki 2025* were provided to Te Kawa Mataaho by each respective agency in February 2025. Rangahau Aotearoa was then provided access to these files via Te Kawa Mataaho's secure file transfer portal. As a census, all staff of the 40 core agencies were included in the sample, including full and part-time employees, casuals, graduates, fixed term and permanent employees.

To help keep the questionnaire length to a minimum, some demographic/workforce data was also provided by agencies for analysis purposes. This included information such as; tenure, region, salary, and management profile.

The only agencies that did not provide a contact list or workforce data for security reasons, were the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (NZSIS) and the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB). These agencies invited their own staff to take part in a version of the survey that they scripted and administered themselves. At the end of the survey period, an anonymised copy of their survey data was provided to Rangahau Aotearoa via Te Kawa Mataaho's secure file transfer portal and we merged that data into the main survey dataset.

In total, 66,196 public service employees were invited to participate in the Census (including NZSIS and GCSB employees). However, once bouncebacks were excluded, the final valid number of invitations sent was 65,356. Table 1 overleaf, shows the number of original and valid invitations broken down by agency.

Table 1: Total number of invitations sent, by Agency

	Total number of invitations sent	No. of valid invitations sent (excludes bouncebacks)
Aroturuki Tamariki - Independent Children's Monitor	61	61
Charter School Agency	19	19
Crown Law Office	255	249
Department of Conservation	3,361	3290
Department of Corrections	11,324	11076
Department of Internal Affairs	2,751	2705
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	221	220
Education Review Office	242	240
Government Communications Security Bureau	614	614
Inland Revenue Department	4,744	4725
Land Information New Zealand	863	846
Ministry for Culture and Heritage	160	158
Ministry for Disabled People	74	74
Ministry for Ethnic Communities	77	61
Ministry for Pacific Peoples	97	92
Ministry for Primary Industries	3,717	3605
Ministry for Regulation	91	91
Ministry for the Environment	821	813
Ministry for Women	45	45
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment	6,024	5992
Ministry of Defence	191	191
Ministry of Education	4,258	4244
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	1,260	1233
Ministry of Health	783	761
Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	317	307
Ministry of Justice	4,923	4854
Ministry of Social Development	9,213	9189
Ministry of Transport	224	218
National Emergency Management Agency	163	163
New Zealand Customs Service	1,408	1403
New Zealand Security Intelligence Service	418	418
Oranga Tamariki, Ministry for Children	4,685	4630
Serious Fraud Office	75	74
Social Wellbeing Agency	55	54
Statistics New Zealand	1,233	1227
Te Aho o Te Kahu Cancer Control Agency	60	60
Te Arawhiti	133	129
Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission	214	211
Te Puni Kōkiri	425	421
The Treasury	603	599
Total	66,196	65,356

7.0 Fieldwork

Te Taunaki 2025 was soft launched on the 24th of February 2025, with Te Kawa Mataaho staff and the Chief Executives of each of the participating agencies.

The Chief Executives were included in the soft launch so they could experience the survey themselves and then comfortably promote and encourage participation amongst their staff; they are also employees of the Public Service Commission.

The Census was then fully launched on the 3rd of March 2025. Due to the size of the sample, invitation emails were sent progressively over two days. This staggered approach also helped to minimise the risk of network issues (due to overloading) within some of the larger agencies.

Up to three reminder emails were sent at approximately one-week intervals to encourage response. A final reminder was also sent a few days before the survey closed, to those who had started the Census, but had not completed it.

During the period in which the Census was live, some agencies provided updated sample lists identifying new staff who had not been included in the original samples and/or an indication of staff who had since left the agency so they could be removed from the reminder schedule. Other staff members contacted Te Kawa Mataaho or Rangahau New Zealand directly, requesting a survey link. This included new staff who had not been included in the original samples and some who had missed or accidentally deleted their initial Census invitation email.

Response to *Te Taunaki 2025* was monitored on a real-time basis using Research New Zealand's survey response tracker that Te Kawa Mataaho had remote access to. This tracked the response by agency and on an overall basis.

The Census was closed on 24 March 2025. By that date, n=44,737 public servants had responded; the majority (n=40,489) completing the survey in its entirety.

The average time to complete the survey, was 25 minutes. The average interview length excluding the time taken to complete the one final open-ended question in the Census survey was 23 minutes.

8.0 Response rates and margins of error

A total of 65,356 invitations to take part in *Te Taunaki* 2025 were successfully emailed to potential respondents; excluding the email invitations that bounced back. Of those invited, n=44,737 responded, n=40,489 of whom completed the Census in its entirety. The response rate based on those who completed the Census in its entirety is 61.9%. This is shown in Table 2 overleaf as 'Response rate A'.

Response rate B, of 68.5% is based on all n=44,737 returns (including those who only partially completed the survey by answering at least the first survey question).

The response rate per agency for *Te Taunaki* 2025 (including partial completes) ranged from 54.6%, through to 100%.

Table 3 presents the maximum margins of error associated with the total sample and each individual agency.

The maximum margin of error associated with the total sample of n=44,737 at the 95% confidence interval is $\pm 0.3\%$.

The maximum margins of error differ by agency, depending on the number of responses received and the proportion of the population that number represents. These margins range from $\pm 5.1\%$ for the Serious Fraud Office which was one of the smaller agencies included in the Census (62 of their 74 staff completed the Census), through to 0% for the Charter School Agency, another small agency, but one in which all staff participated.

Table 2: Response rates, per agency

	No. of valid invitations sent	No. of completed surveys	Response rate A	No. of returns (incl. partials)	Response rate B
Aroturuki Tamariki - Independent Children's Monitor	61	47	77.0%	54	88.5%
Charter School Agency	19	19	100.0%	19	100.0%
Crown Law Office	249	193	77.5%	200	80.3%
Department of Conservation	3290	1633	49.6%	1827	55.5%
Department of Corrections	11076	4880	44.1%	6051	54.6%
Department of Internal Affairs	2705	1741	64.4%	1896	70.1%
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	220	182	82.7%	192	87.3%
Education Review Office	240	167	69.6%	183	76.3%
Government Communications Security Bureau	614	399	65.0%	399	65.0%
Inland Revenue Department	4725	3354	71.0%	3539	74.9%
Land Information New Zealand	846	692	81.8%	723	85.5%
Ministry for Culture and Heritage	158	138	87.3%	142	89.9%
Ministry for Disabled People	74	66	89.2%	68	91.9%
Ministry for Ethnic Communities	61	53	86.9%	54	88.5%
Ministry for Pacific Peoples	92	86	93.5%	87	94.6%
Ministry for Primary Industries	3605	2553	70.8%	2709	75.1%
Ministry for Regulation	91	88	96.7%	90	98.9%
Ministry for the Environment	813	551	67.8%	589	72.4%
Ministry for Women	45	38	84.4%	41	91.1%
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment	5992	3860	64.4%	4177	69.7%
Ministry of Defence	191	145	75.9%	150	78.5%
Ministry of Education	4244	2905	68.4%	3134	73.8%
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	1233	847	68.7%	898	72.8%
Ministry of Health	761	559	73.5%	603	79.2%
Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	307	226	73.6%	246	80.1%
Ministry of Justice	4854	2808	57.8%	3196	65.8%
Ministry of Social Development	9189	6422	69.9%	6988	76.0%
Ministry of Transport	218	175	80.3%	180	82.6%
National Emergency Management Agency	163	139	85.3%	146	89.6%
New Zealand Customs Service	1403	955	68.1%	1025	73.1%
New Zealand Security Intelligence Service	418	247	59.0%	247	59.0%
Oranga Tamariki, Ministry for Children	4630	2214	47.8%	2655	57.3%
Serious Fraud Office	74	61	82.4%	62	83.8%
Social Wellbeing Agency	54	50	92.6%	52	96.3%
Statistics New Zealand	1227	907	73.9%	965	78.6%
Te Aho o Te Kahu Cancer Control Agency	60	59	98.3%	59	98.3%
Te Arawhiti	129	95	73.6%	101	78.3%
Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission	211	192	91.0%	195	92.4%
Te Puni Kōkiri	421	315	74.8%	333	79.1%
The Treasury	599	428	71.5%	462	77.1%
Total	65356	40489	62.0	44737	68.5%

Table 3: Margins of error, per agency

	No. of returns (including partials)	Maximum margins of error
Aroturuki Tamariki - Independent Children's Monitor	54	4.6%
Charter School Agency	19	0.0%
Crown Law Office	200	3.1%
Department of Conservation	1827	1.5%
Department of Corrections	6051	0.8%
Department of Internal Affairs	1896	1.2%
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	192	2.5%
Education Review Office	183	3.5%
Government Communications Security Bureau	399	2.9%
Inland Revenue Department	3539	0.8%
Land Information New Zealand	723	1.4%
Ministry for Culture and Heritage	142	2.6%
Ministry for Disabled People	68	3.4%
Ministry for Ethnic Communities	54	4.6%
Ministry for Pacific Peoples	87	2.5%
Ministry for Primary Industries	2709	0.9%
Ministry for Regulation	90	1.1%
Ministry for the Environment	589	2.1%
Ministry for Women	41	4.6%
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment	4177	0.8%
Ministry of Defence	150	3.7%
Ministry of Education	3134	0.9%
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	898	1.7%
Ministry of Health	603	1.8%
Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	246	2.8%
Ministry of Justice	3196	1.0%
Ministry of Social Development	6988	0.6%
Ministry of Transport	180	3.1%
National Emergency Management Agency	146	2.6%
New Zealand Customs Service	1025	1.6%
New Zealand Security Intelligence Service	247	4.0%
Oranga Tamariki, Ministry for Children	2655	1.2%
Serious Fraud Office	62	5.1%
Social Wellbeing Agency	52	2.6%
Statistics New Zealand	965	1.5%
Te Aho o Te Kahu Cancer Control Agency	59	1.7%
Te Arawhiti	101	4.6%
Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission	195	1.9%
Te Puni Kōkiri	333	2.5%
The Treasury	462	2.2%
Total	44737	0.3%

Appendix A: Census Questionnaire

Available here: <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/assets/Public-Service-Census-2025-FINAL-for-web.pdf>

Appendix B: Te Taunaki Informed Consent

Participation is voluntary, but it's a great opportunity to speak up

We want to better understand our workforce and the experiences of public servants. Information from this survey is used to make improvements to how we work and our work environment within agencies and across the Public Service. Results from the first Public Service Census in 2021 were used by agencies, system leads, and the Public Service Commission.

The survey is an opportunity to communicate with senior leaders in your organisation and in the Public Service overall about what is important to you.

What is this survey about?

The survey asks questions about you, your experiences in your job, with your manager, team, agency, and career. It covers a range of topics including performance, integrity, capability, employment and demographic information.

As part of that, some of the demographic questions are quite personal (e.g. disability, religion). We need to ask these to understand how well the Public Service reflects the diversity of New Zealand and how groups' experiences are different (or the same). You can skip any question you would prefer not to answer.

There are also questions about bullying, harassment, and discrimination. If you have experienced these things, it can be upsetting to think about them again. Information on support options is presented in that section of the survey.

You can learn more about the topics in the survey and what the information is used for on our website: www.publicservice.govt.nz/census.

Your responses are confidential

To ensure confidentiality, your responses will be grouped with those of other respondents in your agency and across the Public Service. There is no information about organisational units smaller than 100 people, so there will be no reporting about teams from this survey. All reporting from the survey will be done in a way that individuals are not identified.

The survey will take around 20 minutes to complete

You can complete the survey on a computer or phone, including your personal phone if you forward this email to your personal account. You can also leave the survey and go back to finish later if needed. The survey will be open until midnight on 21 March.

Limited data matching is used to keep the survey as short as possible

To keep the survey as short as possible and to ensure what we have is accurate, some information has already been provided by your agency. We did this ahead of time to make sure that no one in your agency knows who participates and who does not. This information is limited to: occupational group (e.g. call centre workers, policy analysts), salary, tenure in agency, full/part time, region, organisational level (tier), and business unit (for units of 100 or more people). Your name and email address are only used for this survey invitation and are not included in the dataset. If you decide not to participate, all information supplied by your agency will be deleted.

Access to the complete dataset from this survey is limited to a small team of researchers within the Public Service Commission and the technical support team at Research New Zealand who host the survey and provide summary reporting to agencies. The Data Team at the Te Kawa Mataaho follow established protocols for reporting so that participants can't be identified. They also place strict limits on who can access the data set.

The Public Service Commission Chief Data Officer, [NAME], is leading the Census team. If you have any questions, please contact the team at census@publicservice.govt.nz.

By answering questions in the survey, you agree that you:

1. Read the information above and understand that participation is voluntary
2. Understand that all reporting from the survey will be done in a way that individuals cannot be identified
3. Know that you can skip any question, stop completing the survey, or withdraw your answers up to the day the survey closes (21 March)
4. Agree that your responses will be matched to a limited set of information provided by your agency for the purposes of this research only