



## Kiwis Count Trust and Confidence in Government and Public Services

**Date:** 31 August 2021 **Security Level:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Minister:** Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for the Public Service  
**Report No:** 2021-0242

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**Purpose** To inform you of the latest Kiwis Count trust and confidence results.

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**Proposal** Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission runs a quarterly survey (Kiwis Count) to measure trust and confidence of New Zealanders in the public service. The results show a trend of improving trust in the public service.

These results are corroborated across a range of international indexes, where New Zealand ranks as a world-leader in trust and confidence in government, and Covid response. You may wish to consider sharing these results with your colleagues.

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- Key Results**
- Trust in the public service brand (i.e. people's perceptions of the public service) is measured by asking respondents: "Thinking about your overall impressions and from what you know or have heard from family, friends or the media, to what extent do you trust the public service?"
  - Trust in the public service brand sits at **63%** - the same as last quarter and whilst down from 69% last year represents a strong result in comparison to the 51% pre Covid-19.
  - **81%** of New Zealanders trust public services based on their own experiences. This result is in line with previous years' findings and is 2 percent up from the last quarter.
  - Please refer to the graph attached to this aide memoire for the trends in these indicators.
  - There are differences in the trust and confidence in public services held by different ethnic groups, with Māori and Pacific respondents identifying a lower level of trust and confidence. Research shows that a number of factors contribute to this lower level of trust, which includes the 'mix' of services used. Please refer to the attached A3 for details of the trust and confidence score by ethnicity.
  - To support the production of these metrics we are also now collecting data on why people have a high or low trust in the public service and if low, what we may be able to do to increase that trust.
  - This quarter we are also releasing some information on why people have a high level of trust in the public sector and services. These reasons often focus on interactions with helpful, friendly and professional staff who 'make the effort' and are competent. This combines with high quality services that are open and transparent and a high trust in government held by informants. This high trust is supported by continuing positive experiences and high expectations of the public service.
  - Globally, trust in government was declining in many countries even before the pandemic and only 45% of OECD citizens trusted their national government in 2019. NZ had observed a long term gradual upward trend in public trust since 2007 and the survey gives the government insight into New Zealand's views, trust and confidence in government and its role in society.

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**Our advice** We will work with your office if you require further information on Kiwis Count.

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We have included an A3 giving an overview of the trust and confidence results that you may wish to share with your colleagues. We intend to release the Kiwis Count quarterly results in the week commencing 30<sup>th</sup> August 2021, with supporting commentary on trust and confidence. As part of the broader trust and confidence programme we also publish links to international indexes that have recognised New Zealand's high trust and confidence, as well as our Covid response.

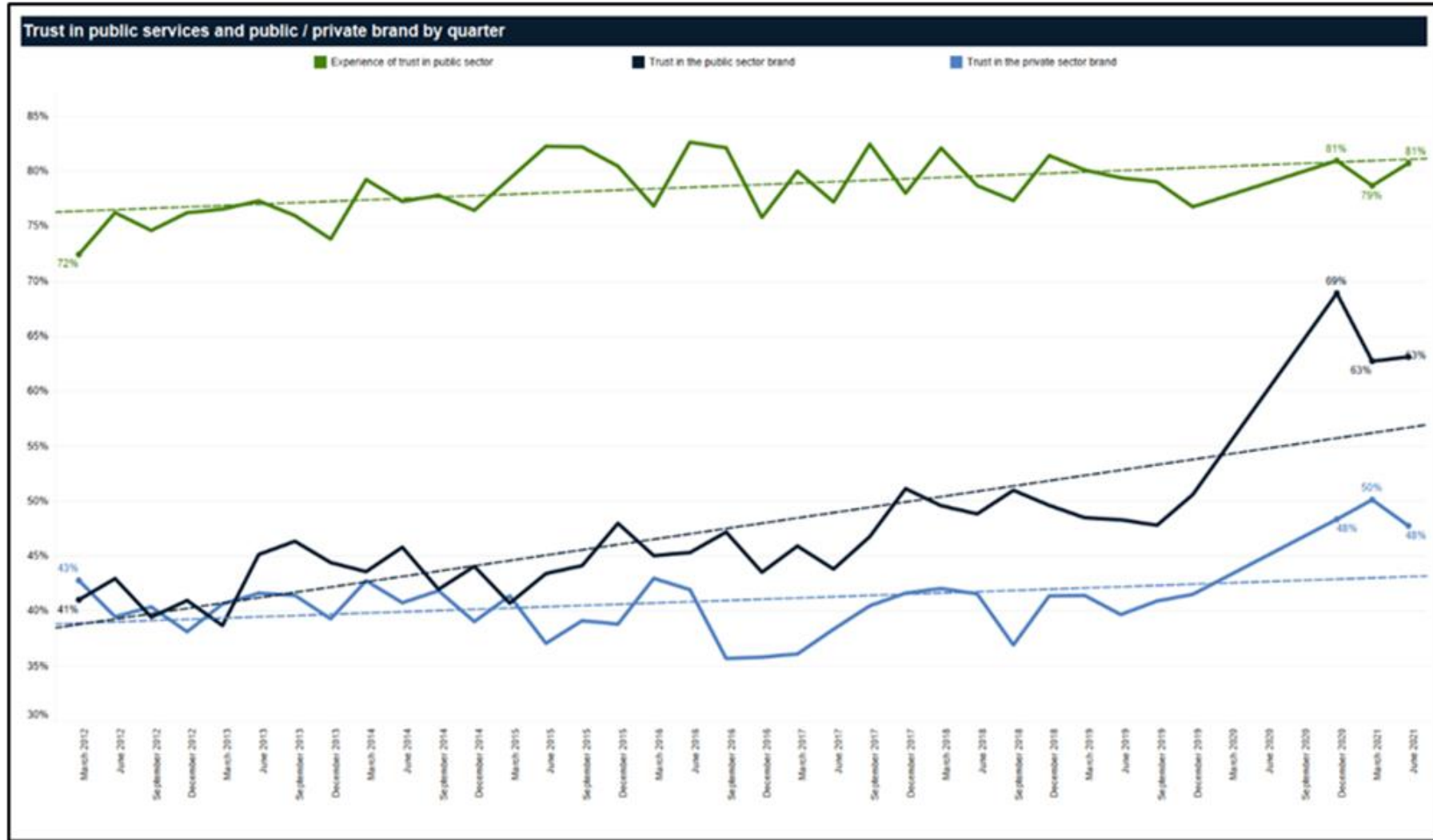
Maintaining the trust and confidence of New Zealanders is our ongoing job, and these results are encouraging and something to celebrate.

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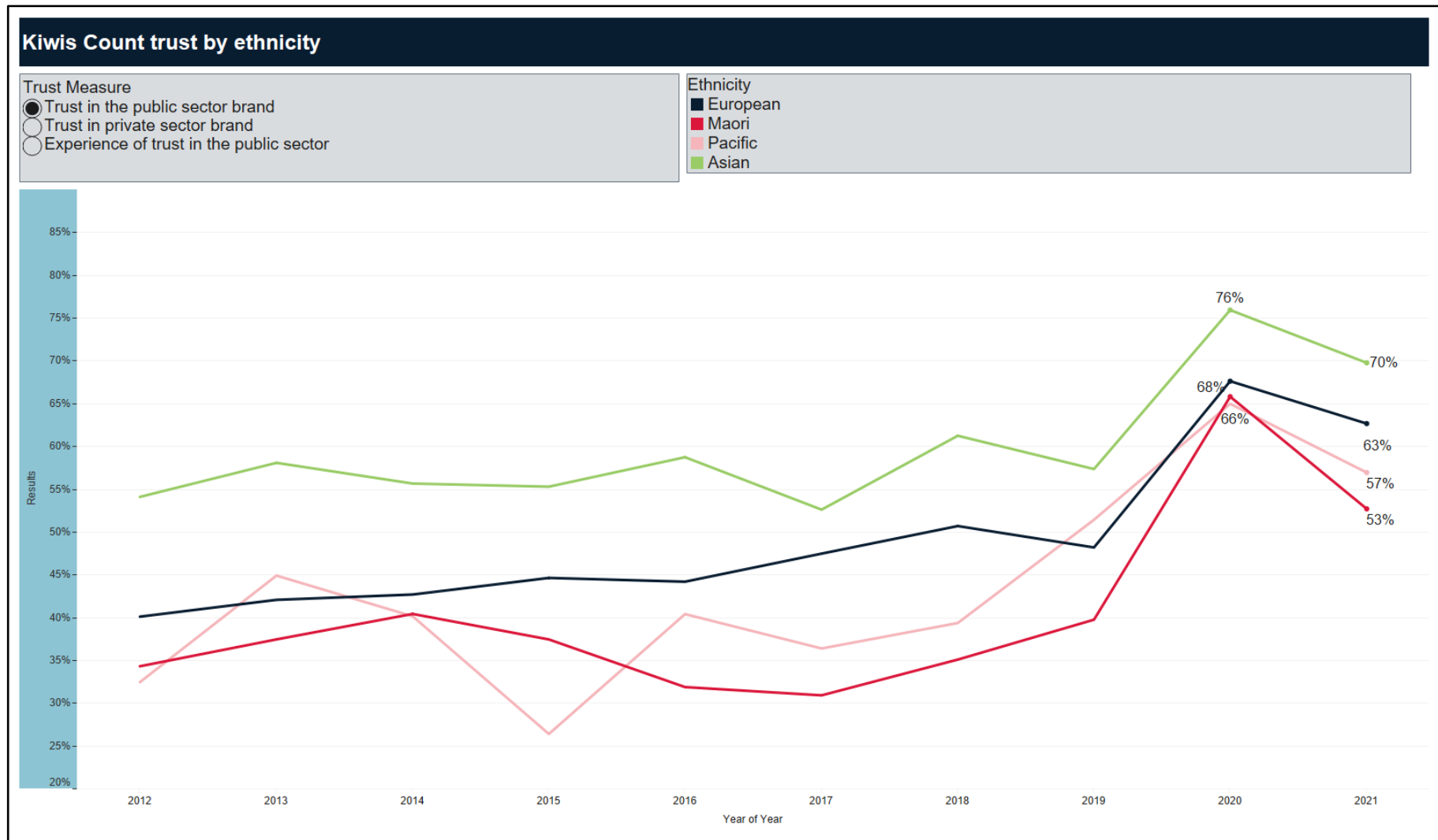
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Supplement: trust and confidence in public services chart and trendline.



Supplement: trust and confidence in public services chart by ethnicity – annual results.



Please note that this is a static image of an interactive data visualisation of **annual** trust and confidence scores which allows the user to ‘drill down’ on a number of demographic variables.

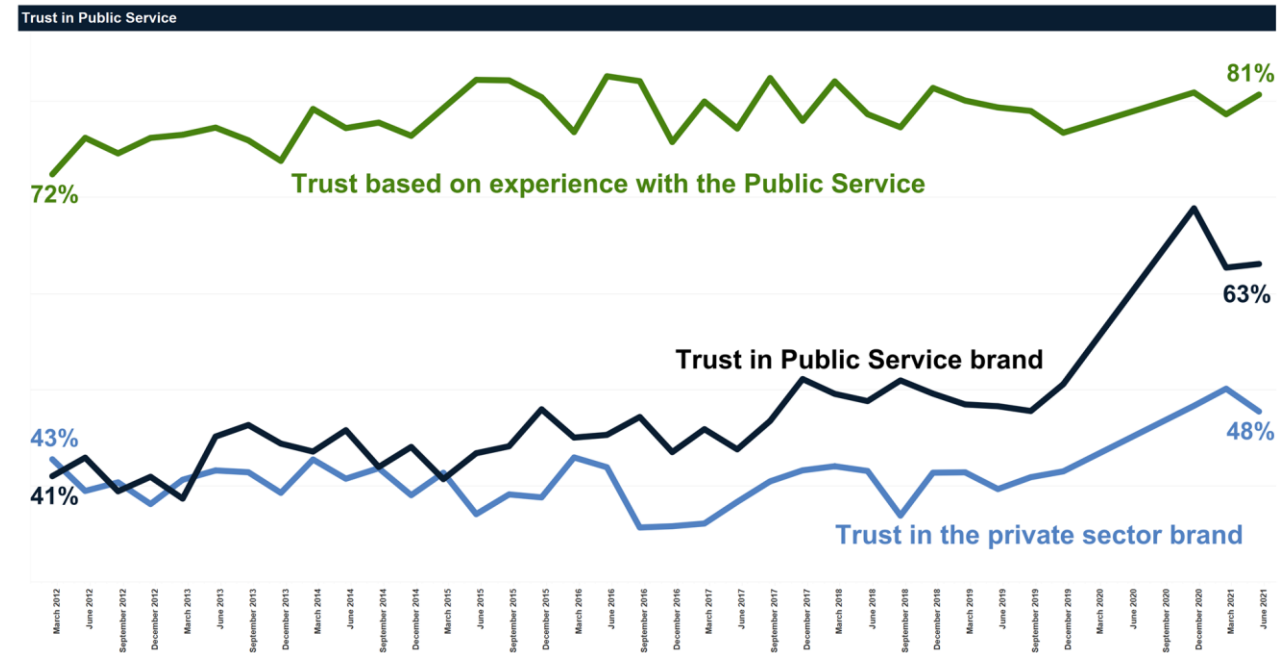
# Public trust in New Zealand government

Kiwis Count Quarterly update  
July 2021

New Zealand ranks highly in national and international indexes relating to trust in government....

... this is reflected in our latest quarterly results for Kiwis Count.

- 63%** OECD Trust in government (Gallup World poll)  
In 2020, **63% of people in New Zealand** reported confidence in government compared to an **OECD average of 50%**. In 2007 it was 59%.
- Tied 2<sup>nd</sup>** INCISE  
The International Civil Service Effectiveness (InCiSE) Index measured civil service effectiveness in 38 countries in 2019. New Zealand was ranked second highest after the United Kingdom.
- Tied 2<sup>nd</sup>** Strong Institutions in Chandler Good Government Index 2021  
ability of multiple government agencies to act coherently and collaboratively, as well as capability and performance of the public service
- 99/100** Freedom in the World 2021 Report  
including 40/40 for political rights and 59/60 for civil liberties
- 4<sup>th</sup>** The Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020  
A yearly Democracy Index. New Zealand retained our 4th position in the global ranking (out of 167 countries). The range of measures included functioning of government (8.93) Political participation (8.89)
- +0** Colmar Brunton Public Sector Reputation Index 2021  
had no change this year, with the same high level of reputation that was achieved during the initial Covid response last year being maintained.



*I have found through past experiences that very rarely am I treated as an individual. I feel unheard and unhelped.*

Click to add text

**We know trust in government is easily lost and hard to get back**

*In all my experience of public servants all the workers have been very honest and upfront with me.*

**Understanding how we protect, preserve, and nurture trust is important**

## Barriers and Enablers

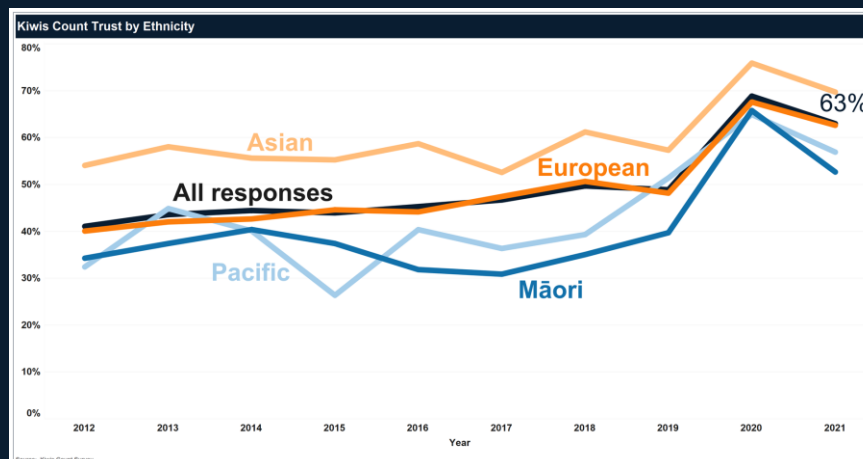
Kiwis Count and other research shows that **responsive and reliable services**, as well as **integrity** all are important enablers to trust.

Conversely, a lack of responsiveness, a lack of knowledge about public services and inconsistent services delivery are highlighted by respondents as barriers to high trust.

Interpersonal factors and perceptions from wider society can also influence general trust in government.

*They are easy to deal with and make sure you are getting a service you qualify for without too much effort.*

Levels of trust vary for different communities. Māori and Pacific respondents tend to have lower trust as measured in the Kiwis Count survey. A number of factors contribute to this lower level of trust, which include the 'mix' of services used being more oriented towards compliance and welfare.



## OECD Country Study

Te Kawa Mataaho has entered into an agreement with the OECD on behalf of the public service to undertake research into trust in government institutions in NZ.

The study will undertake a comprehensive analysis of the drivers of trust, and a set of practical recommendations designed to maintain and build levels of trust.

A report will be provided in late 2022.



**Te Kawa Mataaho**  
Public Service Commission