The Public Sector Reputation Index began in 2016 in response to demand from our public sector clients for rigorous, independent benchmarks of their reputation.

We took our globally validated reputation measurement framework, RepZ, and customised it to the needs of the New Zealand public sector.

In 2020, we have:

- Surveyed 2,750 New Zealanders
- Included four new agencies
- Added four new reputational attributes
- Examined New Zealanders’ perceptions of the legitimacy of each agency’s purpose
New Zealand public sector agencies

New agencies in 2020 are GNS Science, Immigration New Zealand, the Commerce Commission and the Productivity Commission.
Online surveys conducted from 10 to 25 March*

Interviews conducted to reflect the views of all New Zealanders

Nationally representative sample by age, gender, region, ethnicity and income

*The last three days of interviews occurred during COVID-19 Alert Level 3 which was announced on 23 March, 2020. Alert Level 4 commenced post interviewing at 11:59pm on 25 March, 2020.
Uses our globally validated RepZ framework, customised to the New Zealand public sector, with reputation measured across four pillars.

**TRUST**
- Listens to the public’s point of view
- Uses taxpayer money responsibly
- Is trustworthy
- Can be relied upon to protect individuals’ personal information

**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**
- Behaves in a responsible way towards the environment
- Is a positive influence on society
- Has a positive impact on people’s mental and physical wellbeing

**LEADERSHIP**
- Is a forward looking organisation
- Contributes to economic growth
- Is easy to deal with in a digital environment
- Is a successful and well-run organisation*
- Prepares New Zealanders for the future challenges that we face as a nation*

**FAIRNESS**
- Treats their employees well
- Deals fairly with people regardless of their background or role
- Works positively with Māori to improve Māori wellbeing*
- Works positively with Pacific peoples to improve Pacific wellbeing*

* New reputation statements in 2020
What performance levels are New Zealand’s public sector agencies achieving this year?
New Zealand public sector agencies continue to have a healthy reputation with most RepZ scores in the mid to high range.
High performing agencies are rated eight times more positively than negatively across the reputational attributes. Low performing agencies are more polarising.

Each agency is rated across 16 reputation attributes using a seven point agree/disagree scale. The percentages in the charts above represent the average agree/disagree across the 54 agencies on the 16 attributes in each of the RepZ ranges.
Who are the top performing public sector agencies in 2020?
Fire and Emergency remains the benchmark agency when it comes to reputation.

The Defence Force jumps from 10th to 2nd position.

The Customs Service also moves up from 9th to 3rd.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>TRUST</th>
<th>SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>LEADERSHIP</th>
<th>FAIRNESS</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>FIRE</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>DEFENCE FORCE</td>
<td>Callaghan Innovation</td>
<td>DEFENCE FORCE</td>
<td>DEFENCE FORCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>DEFENCE FORCE</td>
<td>Department of Conservation</td>
<td>New Zealand's Innovation Agency</td>
<td>Ministry of Civil Defence &amp; Emergency Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>DEFENCE FORCE</td>
<td>DEFENCE FORCE</td>
<td>DEFENCE FORCE</td>
<td>DEFENCE FORCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Callaghan Innovation</td>
<td>CUSTOMS SERVICE</td>
<td>HEALTH PROMOTION</td>
<td>CUSTOMS SERVICE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Highest scoring agencies on each of the four pillars.
Who’s improved their RepZ score by five or more points since 2019?
Kāinga Ora has been the most improved agency for two years running. We spoke to their Chief Executive, Andrew McKenzie, to find out what’s behind this success.

McKenzie says that as an organisation, Kāinga Ora have tried to be very thoughtful and deliberate about everything they do. This thoughtfulness is what enables staff members to make high quality decisions, which advances their overall strategic direction.

Two years ago they took the time to sit down with customers to find out what they need, and (perhaps more importantly) how they want to feel when interacting with Kāinga Ora. These discussions highlighted that Kāinga Ora needed to go beyond providing warm, safe, quality housing to building better relationships with their customers based on mutual respect and trust. This emphasis is translating into stronger experience scores for the organisation.

The importance of relationships is also evidenced with media relations, through striving to create a respective and responsive media discourse rather than ‘reaching for the megaphones’. Kāinga Ora works hard to counter media bias against its tenants through putting a human face to its customers and helping them to tell their success stories. McKenzie feels that also telling positive stories through owned channels is important.

For those looking to improve their own reputation, McKenzie has two pieces of advice:

1. Be clear about what success is for your agency (and make sure this matches what success looks like for your customers)
2. Be clear on how staff should think about and interact with clients and customers
What general reputation trends are we seeing?
In 2020, social responsibility had joined trust as a key driver of agency reputation, reflecting public focus on the environment and wellbeing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRUST</th>
<th>SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</th>
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<tr>
<td>o Listens to the public’s point of view</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Uses taxpayer money responsibly</td>
<td>o Is a positive influence on society</td>
<td>o Contributes to economic growth</td>
<td>o Deals fairly with people regardless of their background or role</td>
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<td>o Is trustworthy</td>
<td>o Has a positive impact on people’s mental and physical wellbeing</td>
<td>o Is easy to deal with in a digital environment</td>
<td>o Works positively with Māori to improve Māori wellbeing*</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Can be relied upon to protect individuals’ personal information</td>
<td></td>
<td>o Is a successful and well-run organisation*</td>
<td>o Works positively with Pacific peoples to improve Pacific wellbeing*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Footnote: percentages show the extent to which each pillar influences reputation.

* New reputation statements in 2020
However, in a COVID-19 environment trust becomes even more important.

Footnote: percentages show the extent to which each pillar influences reputation.
BASE: Pre-COVID-19 Alert Level 3 (n=2250) and Post-COVID-19 Alert Level 3 (n=520)
In the lead in to COVID-19 Alert Level 4, New Zealand’s public sector agencies were favourably positioned with unprecedented levels of trust.

Footnote: average trust attribute scores for the 35 agencies who have been measured since 2017
New Zealanders’ perceptions of the public sector have notably improved across the other pillars. COVID-19 has accelerated what was a more gradual trend in recent years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is a positive influence on society</th>
<th>Contributes to economic growth</th>
<th>Deals fairly with people regardless of background or role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% agree</td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>2018</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
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<th>Behaves in a responsible way towards the environment</th>
<th>Is a forward looking organisation</th>
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<tr>
<td>% agree</td>
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</tr>
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<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Footnote: average attribute scores for the 35 agencies who have been measured since 2017
Does public support for an agency’s purpose impact their reputation level?
Most agencies have majority support for their purpose, with ten agencies having support of at least 75% of adult New Zealanders.

New question in 2020:
How much do you agree or disagree that what the agency does is important for New Zealand?

Legitimacy of purpose

The proportion of people who agree that the agency’s work is important for New Zealand
Agencies which have clearly established their purpose in the eyes of the public are at an advantage. However, it is still possible for agencies with moderate legitimacy of purpose to deliver a strong reputation performance, if they deliver on the four pillars.

Legitimacy of purpose
The proportion of people who agree that the agency’s work is important for New Zealand
The public’s impression of the importance of an agency’s work is more important than the extent of their knowledge of what the agency does.

**New question in 2020:**

Which of the following best describes what you know about each of the organisations below in terms of who they are and what they do?

- I’ve got a good understanding of what they do
- I’ve got a basic idea of what they do
- I have just seen or heard the name before

**Diagram:**

- A very weak relationship between knowledge of work and RepZ score

**Text:**

The proportion of people who have a “good understanding” of what the agency does
Which agencies are delivering outstanding experiences?
In 2019, we showed that the experience delivered by an agency to the public can have a significant impact on the proportion of advocates and critics.

Good experiences stick in people's memories and bad experiences are particularly damaging initially but linger for up to ten years.
Yet many agencies are still giving a poor impression with the public.

Experience Score

What proportion of agencies are delivering positive experiences.

Footnote: New question in 2019
Top five agencies delivering superior experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% positive experience dealing with agency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commission for Financial Capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW ZEALAND CUSTOMS SERVICE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARITIME NEW ZEALAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRE EMERGENCY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which agencies are working positively with Māori and Pacific peoples?
Most New Zealanders feel unable to comment on the way in which public agencies work with Māori and Pacific peoples. But those who do, generally believe they work positively.

**Works positively with Māori to improve Māori wellbeing**

- All agency average:
  - % Agree: 29
  - % Neutral: 20
  - % Disagree: 9
  - % Don't know: 42

**Works positively with Pacific peoples to improve Pacific wellbeing**

- All agency average:
  - % Agree: 28
  - % Neutral: 20
  - % Disagree: 9
  - % Don't know: 43

Footnote: new questions in 2020
The picture is broadly the same when analysing by ethnicity. However, Māori and Pacific peoples are more critical than other ethnicities of the ways in which agencies work with their communities.

Works positively with Māori to improve Māori wellbeing

- Māori: 38% Agree, 15% Disagree, 19% Neutral, 27% Don't know
- Non-Māori: 43% Agree, 8% Disagree, 20% Neutral, 29% Don't know

Works positively with Pacific peoples to improve Pacific wellbeing

- Pacific peoples: 35% Agree, 14% Disagree, 21% Neutral, 30% Don't know
- Non-Pacific: 44% Agree, 8% Disagree, 20% Neutral, 27% Don't know

Footnote: new questions in 2020
Top five agencies working positively with Māori and Pacific peoples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>% agree each agency works positively with Māori</th>
<th>% agree each agency works positively with Pacific peoples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Promotion Agency</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Force</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland Transport Agency</td>
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</table>
Which communication channels build agency reputation?
The news media still has the biggest influence on perceptions of agencies, followed by experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Reputation</th>
<th>Impact on People’s Views of Public Sector Agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News media</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising / communications</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloggers / commentators</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2020 we’ve continued to look closely at “source of reputation”, breaking down media into granular detail.

**News media** remains the dominant influence on public sector reputation with 40% of people saying it is the main influence on their opinions of each agency (40% in 2019).

**Direct experience** is important as both positive and negative experiences can be spread through family & friends, and social media, and sometimes become elevated to the news.

**Conversation** plays a supporting role in telling each agency’s story, which in turn may be picked up and amplified by the news media or agency advocates.
**TV news remains the chief influence.**

Of those who said the news media has the largest impact on agency perceptions, half cited TV news stories. Newspapers and news websites are next most persuasive.

### What people have seen or heard from news organisations

- **TV news story**: 52%
- **Article on a news website**: 24%
- **News item in a newspaper**: 24%
- **TV news documentary or feature story**: 16%
- **Story on the radio news**: 13%
- **Radio news documentary or feature story**: 8%
- **Post on news social media channel**: 8%
- **Feature story in a newspaper**: 6%
- **News item in a magazine**: 3%
- **Other source**: 2%
In the days leading up to COVID-19 Alert Level 4 i.e. "lockdown", New Zealand citizens placed greater weight on attributes relating to trust when evaluating the reputation of the nation's public sector agencies. These include being trustworthy, listening to the public, protecting an individual's private information and using taxpayer money responsibly.

Over the past four years, we have seen ratings for these trust attributes gradually improve. This positive trend also extends to the other three reputation pillars. This meant New Zealand entered the COVID-19 response with agencies favourably positioned in the hearts and minds of the public.

This helped provide the Government with a solid platform to deliver clear and effective COVID-19 communications.
Building legitimacy of purpose is essential

This year we started to explore the issue of agency purpose. This new area of inquiry was in response to previous deep dive reports for various agencies where it appeared the level of support (particularly lack of support) for an agency’s purpose was placing a ceiling on the reputation heights it could achieve.

We examined purpose through two lenses. The first was the degree to which the public understands the role of the agency. This had a very weak, almost non-existent relationship with reputation. The second was through legitimacy of purpose, or more precisely the extent to which the public agreed that the agency’s work was important for New Zealand. This had a much stronger impact on reputation, emphasising the need for agencies to build support for their work in order to achieve higher reputation levels.
Delivering outstanding experiences will become even more critical in COVID-19 times

Last year, we clearly demonstrated the impact positive and negative experiences have on the level of advocacy and criticism an agency can expect to receive. We also showed these effects can last for up to a decade and sometimes longer.

Yet many agencies are continuing to provide less than ideal experiences which have undesirable impacts on their reputation. The COVID-19 response provides agencies with the opportunity to break the mould even though the circumstances will be challenging and potential demand for services at record levels.
For more information, please contact

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Katelynn.Fuller@colmarbrunton.co.nz