

# 2019 IPANZ Survey Report

A report offered pro bono for Government Women's Network,  
focused on women's work experiences

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# THE 2019 IPANZ SURVEY

This short summary report highlights key findings, in particular gender differences, found in the 2019 IPANZ survey. It draws out selected findings from the wider survey that are applicable to GWN. This brief report is offered to GWN pro-bono. It is not funded.

The IPANZ survey was conducted between March and April 2019, and was operated by Esme Franken and Dr Geoff Plimmer.

We surveyed 893 public servants about their experiences working in the public sector. 65.4% percent were women. Just over half of respondents were over the age of 45. 74% identified as NZ European, with Māori being the next largest ethnic group (albeit at 6.2%). The majority of respondents had no managerial responsibility in their work and 87.7% were permanent employees. See the following page for a more detailed breakdown of respondent characteristics.

# WHO WE ASKED

		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	256	33.7%
	Female	497	65.4%
	Gender diverse	7	.9%
<b>Age</b>	18-24	29	4.5%
	25-34	133	20.8%
	35-44	138	21.6%
	45-54	162	25.4%
	55-64	144	22.6%
	65 or older	32	5.0%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	NZ European	582	74.0%
	Māori	49	6.2%
	Samoan	8	1.0%
	Cook Islands Māori	5	.6%
	Tongan	3	.3%
	Niuean	1	.12%
	Chinese	15	1.9%
	Indian	14	1.8%
Other	109	22.5%	
<b>Managerial responsibility</b>	No managerial responsibility	553	65.6%
	Team leader or middle manager	165	19.6%
	Senior-level manager	125	14.8%
<b>Occupational category</b>	Clerical or Administrative Worker	33	3.9%
	Policy advisor	207	24.4%
	Inspection or Regulation Worker	133	15.7%
	Professional (e.g. legal professional, HR professional)	172	20.3%
	Scientist	284	33.5%

# WHAT WE FOUND

## What demands do public servants face?

- Over half of respondents often need to work to very tight and short deadlines and solve unforeseen problems on their own.
- Despite most people finding their work challenging, more than half of all surveyed felt they were good at their jobs.
- The significant gender differences we found were
  - a) men rated themselves as more competent than women did, and
  - b), as women advanced, their job experiences improved across resilience, job satisfaction, role clarity, and job demands. For men, only role clarity improved with advancement.

## What kind of management do they experience?

Respondents reported that in general, they felt well supported by their managers. For example, we measured leader member exchange (quality of manager-employee relationship) and found that most respondents agree that exchanges with their manager are fair and positive. We also tested a new scale, of how managers develop their staff so that they can become more resilient. Overall, managers were rated highly in encouraging team work, building trust, and supporting staff growth and development.

However, we found that, while most public servants experience reasonable management, around 1 in 5 experience low or mediocre management support. This finding is supported by an additional qualitative study on mediocre leadership amongst New Zealand public sector managers. It identified that the following were common but harmful amongst poor managers: micromanagement, poor social and career support, and reactivity rather the proactivity. (Franken & Plimmer, 2019). In the IPANZ survey, many respondents had been with their managers a long time. This suggests some managers can stay in their jobs despite being poor at managing people, or that poor manager-employee relationships can persist for a long time.

## How 'resilient' are public servants?

Respondents reported average to high levels of resilience overall. This means they rated themselves positively on behaviours related to network-leveraging, learning and adaptability, which have been found to help people deal with challenges and crises (Näswall, Malinen, Kuntz, & Hodliffe, 2019). This is good news, as resilience is an important capability of public sector workforces, which need to be smart, responsive, and adaptive to changes and uncertainties.

Our studies also identify what leaders and managers can do to help their staff become more resilient. A unique combination of leadership behaviours that foster growth, trust, and collaboration in employees seems to help employee resilience. Example leader behaviours are: *showing a general openness towards learning, acting calm when mistakes are made, and encouraging employees to seek out opportunities for development*. Managing the tensions and paradoxes that are common in government jobs also helps. For instance, managers that balance autonomy with adequate control have more resilient staff (Franken, Plimmer & Malinen, 2019).

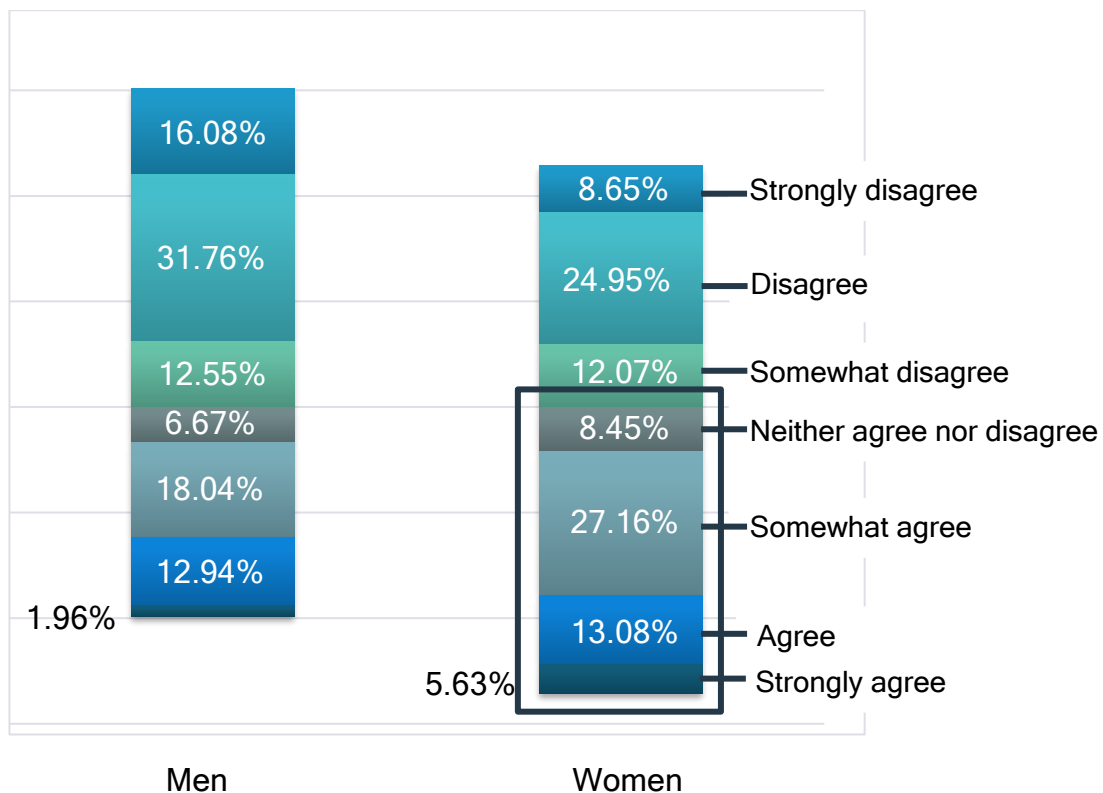
For more information on our resilience-enabling leadership research (including information on workshop and presentations), please contact [Esme.Franken@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Esme.Franken@vuw.ac.nz).

# GENDER DIFFERENCES

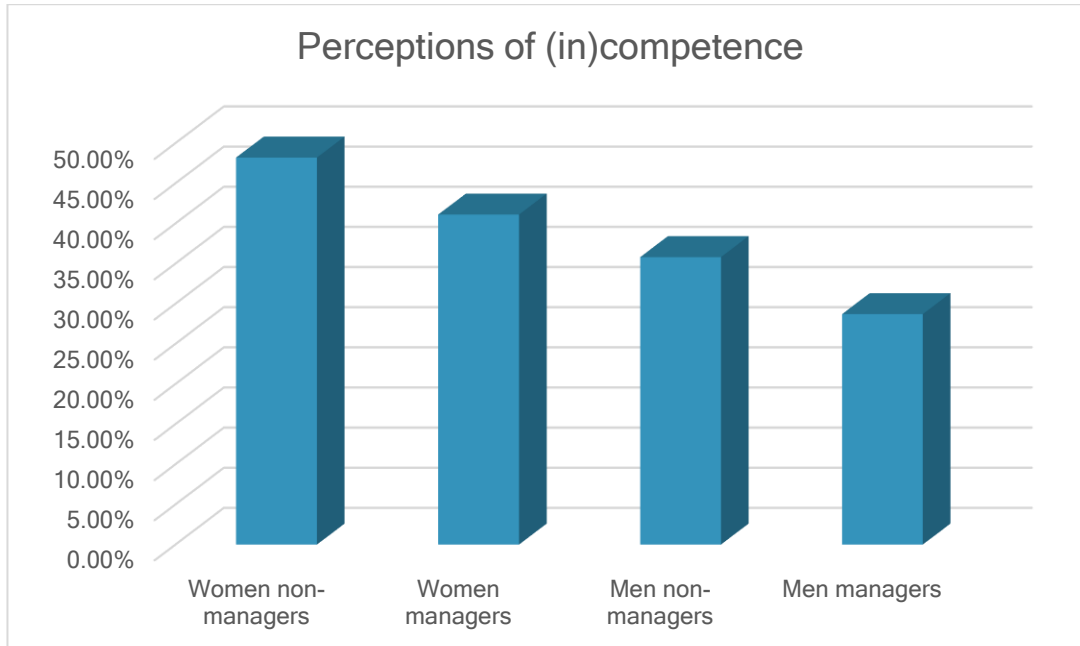
The only significant group differences we found were a) men rated themselves as more competent than women did, and b), as women advanced, their job experiences improved across resilience, job satisfaction, role clarity, and job demands. For men, only role clarity improved with advancement.

## Perceptions of competence

*Sometimes I think I am not very competent at my job...*



Nearly half (48.2%) of women non-managers thought they were not very competent in their jobs. This is compared to 41.1% of women managers feeling this way, 35.8% of men non-managers, and only 28.7% of men managers.



## Management level

Management level and responsibility mattered more to people's (and especially women's) job experiences than gender alone. For men, management level was associated with greater role clarity, such that those with no management responsibility reported lower clarity regarding their job responsibilities.

For women, management level was related to resilience, job satisfaction, role clarity, and job demands. Our results suggest that job quality improves over time, or as women progress through their careers.

## Resilience

Resilience was highest for women middle managers, and lowest for non-managers. Senior managers had slightly lower reports of resilience than middle managers.



We also conducted a more fine-grained analysis of what particular resilient behaviours people engaged in. Women non-managers had consistently lower ratings of resilient behaviours than women managers:

- In the ability to handle high workloads for long periods of time (Mean for non-managers = 5.4; Mean for managers = 5.9)
- In resolving crises competently (5.5; 6.0)
- In responding to changing conditions (5.8; 6.1),
- In self-evaluation and performance (5.8; 6.0), and
- In using changes as opportunities for growth (5.7; 5.9)



## Job satisfaction and role clarity

In terms of job satisfaction, women managers were more satisfied in their work than women non-managers, and also experienced significantly higher levels of role clarity than their non-manager counterparts. Reasons for this could relate to the higher degrees of autonomy, control, and psychological ownership that managers tend to have over their work, compared to non-managers (Dobbin & Boychuk, 1999). The potentially longer time they've spent in their organisation, including the networks and relationships developed over this time, could be another explanation. There could be other explanations too.



## WHAT IT MEANS

Our research indicates that within-gender differences in managerial level are more significant than gender differences when it comes to work experiences. The differences between women of different managerial responsibility levels suggest that more attention needs to be given to the development of women non-managers. We further analysed the nature of this specific group and found the following:

- Many were relatively new to their organisation: 52.6% had been there less than five years. Over a third (36.2%) of these individuals were under 34, some likely to be young graduates.
- The majority were in science (41.1%) and policy (31.1%) related roles.
- 57.1% had been with their current manager for less than a year. Almost a third (32.8%) had only been with their manager less than six months.
- Over half (56.5%) experienced intense time demands in their work, and felt they “could never seem to catch up” at work.

Our findings have strong implications for understanding women’s work experiences in the public sector. The study sheds light on the importance of career progression and advancement opportunities, especially for younger, non-managers - women who may underestimate their competence.

# FUTURE RESEARCH – 2020?

We wish to conduct future research that builds on these results, and better shapes our understanding of the public sector workforce.

- We have identified a target group of women non-managers - lacking in perceived competence and satisfaction - who would benefit from more development in their jobs. Further research into this group would include emphasis on young graduates' work experiences.
- Secondly, we are very interested in studying the role that networks (professional/employee-led/informal etc.) play in the development of resilience capacity in employees and organisations. This would also involve developing an understanding of how networks influence perceptions of self, work, team, and organisation.

Please let us know if you are interested in being part of our research agenda for 2020, and share with us any ideas you would like us to explore with you.

# THANKS

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IPANZ (Institute of Public Administration New Zealand)

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