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FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
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MFAT Partner & Stakeholder Research 2022

Research report

July 2022

KANTAR PUBLIC

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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What is the health of the partner & stakeholder relationships? (1 of 2)

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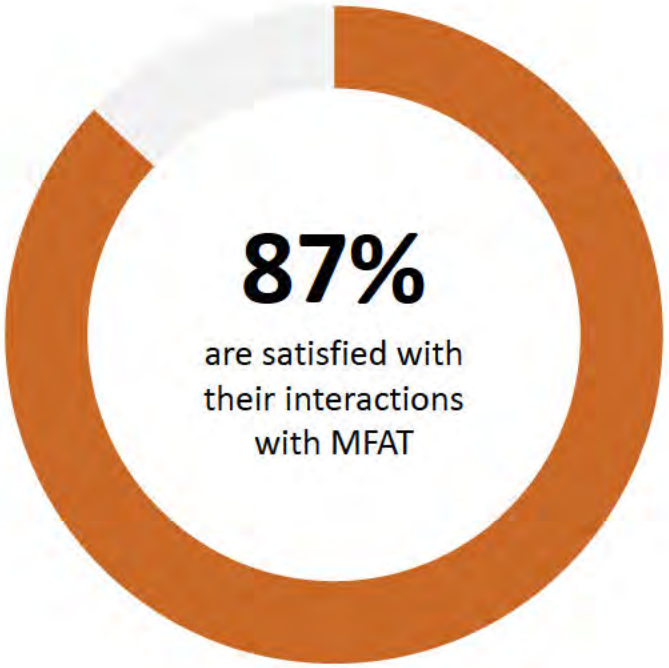
Partners & stakeholders remain very positive about their interactions with MFAT, as well as MFAT's role in advocating for New Zealand's interests on the world stage. The health of the relationship is very robust when compared to other similar stakeholder research conducted by Kantar Public.

Overall, stakeholder perceptions are largely consistent with the 2019 research, both positive perceptions, as well as some persistent pain points. These key perceptions are summarised below:

- Staff continue to be seen as a key asset; they are perceived as highly professional, and competent.
- Stakeholders remain convinced MFAT is effective at advocating for NZ's interests, understanding the international landscape and what matters to New Zealand internationally.
- Perceptions of the quality of the services offered by MFAT to different groups of stakeholders continue to be broadly positive.
- At the same time, stakeholders repeat their calls for improvements in navigating MFAT's organisation and processes. Less than half believe that MFAT is good at delivering efficient or easy to understand processes, or coordinating things internally.
- There also remains questions about how agile MFAT is. There is evidence that stakeholders perceive the organisation to be too risk averse, which inhibits the ability to develop fresh solutions.
- The organisation continues to be criticised by stakeholders for allowing a culture of superiority, the flip side of its professionalism.
- Frustration remains at the way in which MFAT handles the rotation of staff. A lack of effective handovers can result in a loss of institutional knowledge, while stakeholders have to rebuild relationships on a relatively regular basis.



What is the health of stakeholder relationships? (2 of 2)

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While many partner & stakeholder perceptions hold true with the 2019 research, there are also shifts in perceptions, as well as fresh insights. These are summarised below:

- The 2022 research has revealed a lack of familiarity with MFAT's strategy across many different stakeholders.
- Stakeholders note there is greater demographic diversity at MFAT (with more women in senior positions), but that MFAT staff lack diversity of thought. They believe this could act as a barrier to understanding stakeholder perspectives and needs, as well as bringing forward fresh ideas in response to those needs.
- In some areas we see greater agility. Specifically, the NGO partnership funding model is seen to be a more agile model which delivers better outcomes. Beyond this, there is evidence that MFAT's pandemic response has demonstrated its ability to pivot as required.
- Stakeholders also feel there has been improvement in how MFAT can support exporters beyond FTA negotiations.

The Māori partner perspective

- The research shows Māori hold broadly positive perceptions in terms of their interactions with MFAT and its effectiveness in advocating for Aotearoa.
- Māori recognise the positive work that the Māori Policy Unit, Dep Sec and Māori partners are engaged with. However, they also feel there is more to do in strengthening MFAT's roles and responsibilities as a Treaty Partner.

What should MFAT focus on to improve the health of partner & stakeholder relationships?

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Partners & stakeholders explicitly call upon MFAT to do the following to add value to the work stakeholders are doing:

- Work toward true partnerships with stakeholders.
- Engage with Māori partners to ensure the current advisory structures are being optimally utilised.
- Provider greater transparency and better sharing of information.
- Continue in-country support to develop strong international relationships.
- Refocus efforts around thinking strategically (coming out of the detail),
- Raise MFAT's profile of its international aid work.

Our analysis also identifies other ways in which the relationship might be improved:

- Better management of staff rotation, and retention of institutional knowledge.
- Being more humble to ensure the organisation feels more relatable.
- Being less risk averse in decision making, which will support MFAT in finding relevant solutions in a timely manner.
- Bringing in greater diversity of thought alongside demographic diversity.
- Stronger cultural competence and capability from a Māori and Pasifika perspective.
- Stronger co-ordination between MFAT and NZ Inc, as well as All of Government.
- Better support for NZ Inc's future footprint investment and planning.
- Continuing to strengthen the quality of the market intelligence provided to NZ businesses.

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THE NEED FOR RESEARCH

Background

Kantar Public formerly Colmar Brunton) first delivered research to better understand MFAT stakeholder relationships in 2017, and again in 2019.

This research has been repeated in 2019 and 2022 to measure performance against the key metrics identified in 2017.

The research needs to understand partner & stakeholders' expectations and experiences when engaging with MFAT to enable MFAT to continue to grow your engagement framework.

Key research objectives:

- Measure performance against existing performance measures
- Understand partner & stakeholders expectations and experiences, and explore opportunities for improved engagement.

As with 2017 and 2019, the research approach incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Quantitative methodology

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Audience

MFAT provided contact details for 1,343 stakeholders to Kantar Public for the purpose of this research. The survey lists included a broad range of MFAT stakeholders.

Research specific to Māori was incorporated to understand those who identify as Māori, work for a Māori business or organisation, or work for a business or organisation with strong Māori ownership or values base.

Methodology

The survey was carried out online.

The questionnaire was 12 minutes long and focused on the relationship between stakeholders and MFAT.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted from 27th April – 12th May 2022.

Mid-way through fieldwork a reminder email was sent to people who had not completed or partially completed the survey.

Response

We received 268 responses from MFAT stakeholders, a completion rate of 20% (compared to 26% in 2019). The decline in the response rate is in line with other stakeholder surveys in 2022, and could potentially reflect challenges linked to COVID.

55 stakeholders identified as Māori, work for a Māori organisation, or an organisation with strong Māori ownership or values base. This is the highest number surveyed to date.

Significance

The maximum margin of error on the total sample of 268 respondents is ±5.36%.

Statistically significant changes year-on-year have been denoted on the charts by triangles.

Significance has been calculated at the 90% confidence level due to smaller sample sizes among some groups.

Qualitative Methodology

We completed 40 interviews with senior partners & stakeholders of MFAT. Individual interviews were conducted online or over the phone, and each lasted 45 to 60 minutes.

Interviews

Stakeholder & Partner type

10	NZ BUSINESSES / EXPORTERS
6	NON GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS
4	ACADEMICS
9	NZ INC. AGENCIES
7	MĀORI PARTNERS
4	PASIFIKA
40	TOTAL

NOTE:

- The partners & stakeholders who took part in the qualitative research hold senior positions within their organisations and tend to interact with MFAT primarily on strategic matters. Hence the term 'stakeholder' in the context of the qualitative findings refers to senior stakeholders. This is similar to the qualitative research conducted in previous years.
- In the quantitative research, stakeholders who took part came from all levels of their organisation ranging from junior to more senior roles.

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MAIN FINDINGS

OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF MFAT

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Overall perceptions of the relationship with MFAT remain consistently high. 87% are satisfied with their recent interactions with MFAT, and 85% feel MFAT is effective at representing and advocating for New Zealand's interests internationally. The marginal declines since 2019 are not significant. The satisfaction score also compares very favourably to the Kantar Public benchmark for other similar stakeholder surveys and means MFAT is one of the highest rated public sector agencies.

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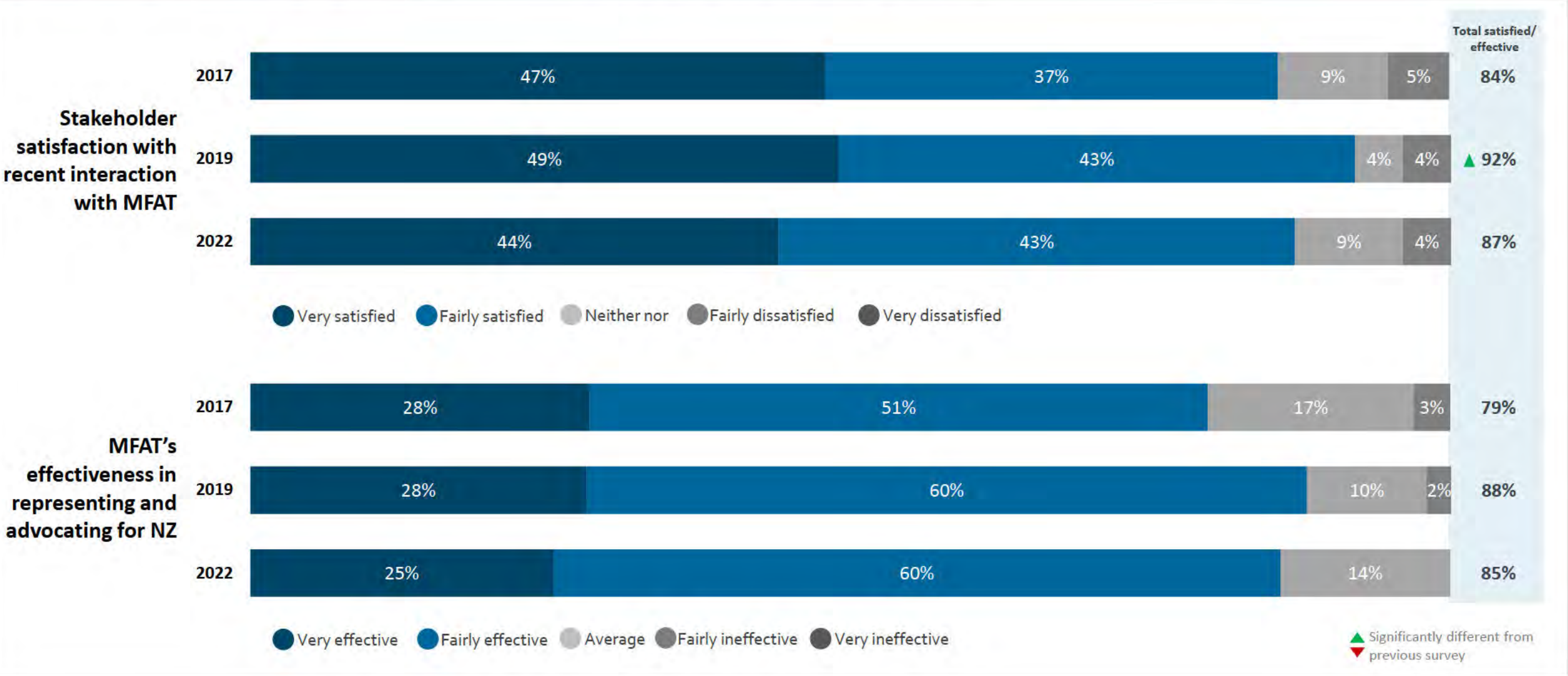

Source: Satisfaction: M4B. Now please think about interactions you have had with MFAT staff recently. Although your views on staff are likely to vary depending on the staff members, the context, and the particular interactions...overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the interactions you have had with MFAT staff recently? **Effectiveness:** M10. Overall, how effective do you think MFAT is at representing and advocating for New Zealand's interests internationally? **Base: M4b** 2017 (184); 2019 (300); 2022 (255). **M10** 2017 (188); 2019 (292); 2022 (234). Excludes 'don't know' responses

Stakeholder satisfaction with their recent interactions with MFAT is relatively high across the board. That said, Trade / industry organisations express the highest levels of satisfaction, while academic partners express relatively lower levels (albeit the differences are not significant against the average). Those who deal with MFAT domestically have significantly higher satisfaction than in 2017.

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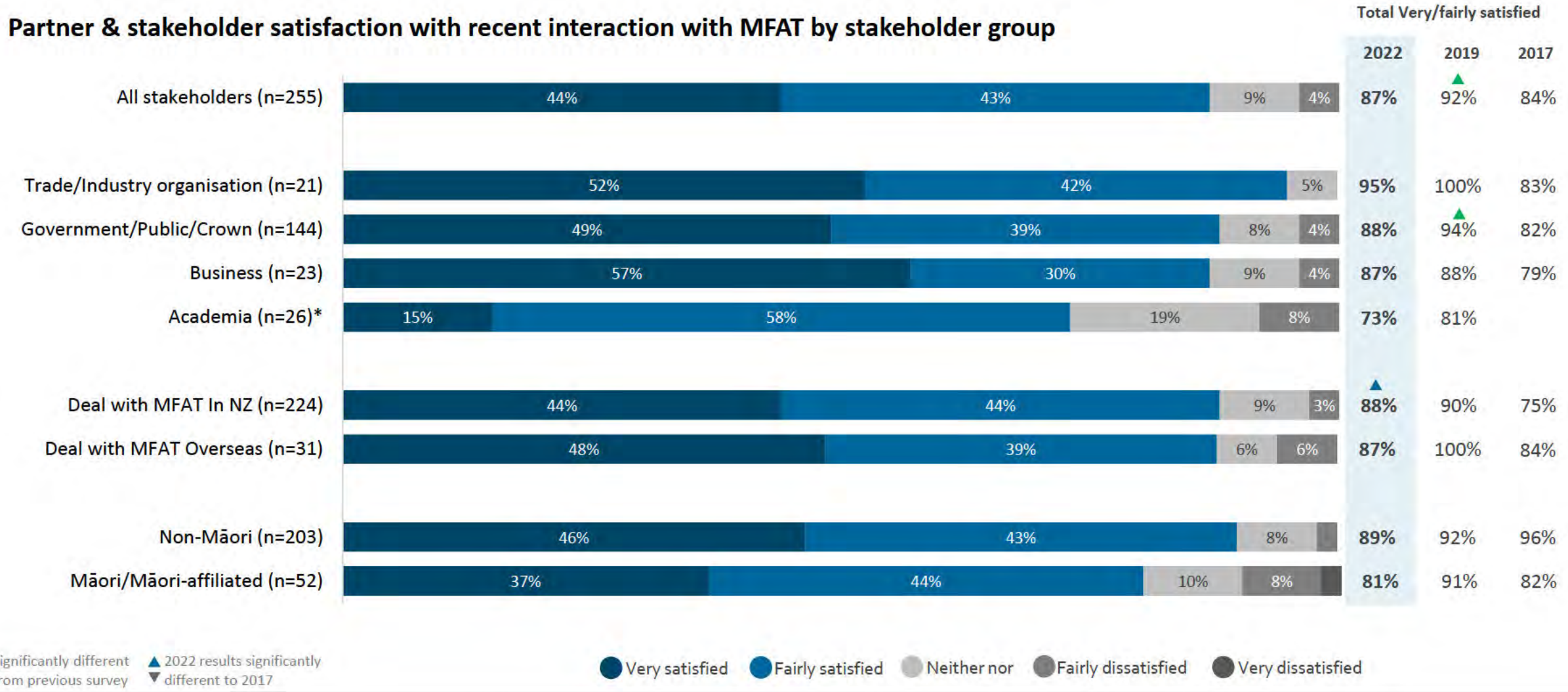
Partner & stakeholder satisfaction with recent interaction with MFAT by stakeholder group



Source: M4B. Now please think about interactions you have had with MFAT staff recently. Although your views on staff are likely to vary depending on the staff members, the context, and the particular interactions...overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the interactions you have had with MFAT staff recently? *Previous years not available due to small sample size
Base: Stakeholders who have had an interaction with MFAT in the past year. Results shown for groups with more than 20 people . Excludes 'don't know' responses

Senior stakeholders are broadly positive, and it is important to remember this when considering the wider feedback they provide on improving the relationship.

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Business/exporter and **Academia** stakeholders tend to hold positive perceptions overall.

NZ Inc. stakeholders with a more operational focussed tend to be less positive than NZ Inc. stakeholders with a strategic focus.

NZ Inc. and **business/exporter** stakeholders commonly make a point of saying their comments may come across as quite negative, but it's not as bad as it appears as they simply want to offer constructive feedback.

> *So everything I've given you, I've given you in the vein that will get them from a 90% score to a 95%, in that they need a few home truths.*
> **NZ Inc.**
>
> *I really am nit picking.*
> **Business/Exporter**

Some **business/exporters** views are through a lens of receiving funding from MFAT, while other business/exporters don't receive MFAT funding[1].

Several **NZ Inc.** and some **business/exporter** stakeholders have worked at MFAT previously in their careers.

Note: [1] This slide and this comment relates to the qualitative sample. In the survey respondents were asked if they had applied or received funds from the International Development Cooperation programme. Overall 20% of stakeholders said they had done so, while 14% of exporters had done so, and 11% of those under NZ inc. The categories most likely to have done so are NGOs (76%) and Community (60%).

If we look closer we can also see potential for partner & stakeholder relationships to be undermined, as they are based on individuals, not the organisation.

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Senior stakeholders feel they have relationships with MFAT staff, rather than with the organisation itself. There is a sense this isn't ideal, particularly given MFAT's internal rotation policy.

There appears to be variability in how the relationship is perceived depending on which part of MFAT senior stakeholders are engaging with.

[The relationship is] definitely strategic now, and far more of a relationship based. It's still very much at an individual level. I think that's what worries me, is it's still hinging on that trust in relationship with individuals. It has to be more at an organisational level.
NGO

I don't really feel I've got a relationship with the Ministry as a whole. I think it's more that I interact with people there.
Academia

[The relationship is] positive, optimistic, multifaceted and sometimes confusing. I've always found, particularly in the [scholarships unit/alumni team within MFAT], MFAT to be very open to deal with, very honest and transparent, and they're all always welcome qualities. You genuinely know where you're standing. We find when you're dealing with country desks or sector desks, the diplomatic speak is less committal, and less transparent.
Academia

Different groups of partners & stakeholders continue to believe MFAT is effective at representing and advocating for New Zealand internationally. This belief is particularly strong for the private sector, but again relatively weaker for Academia.

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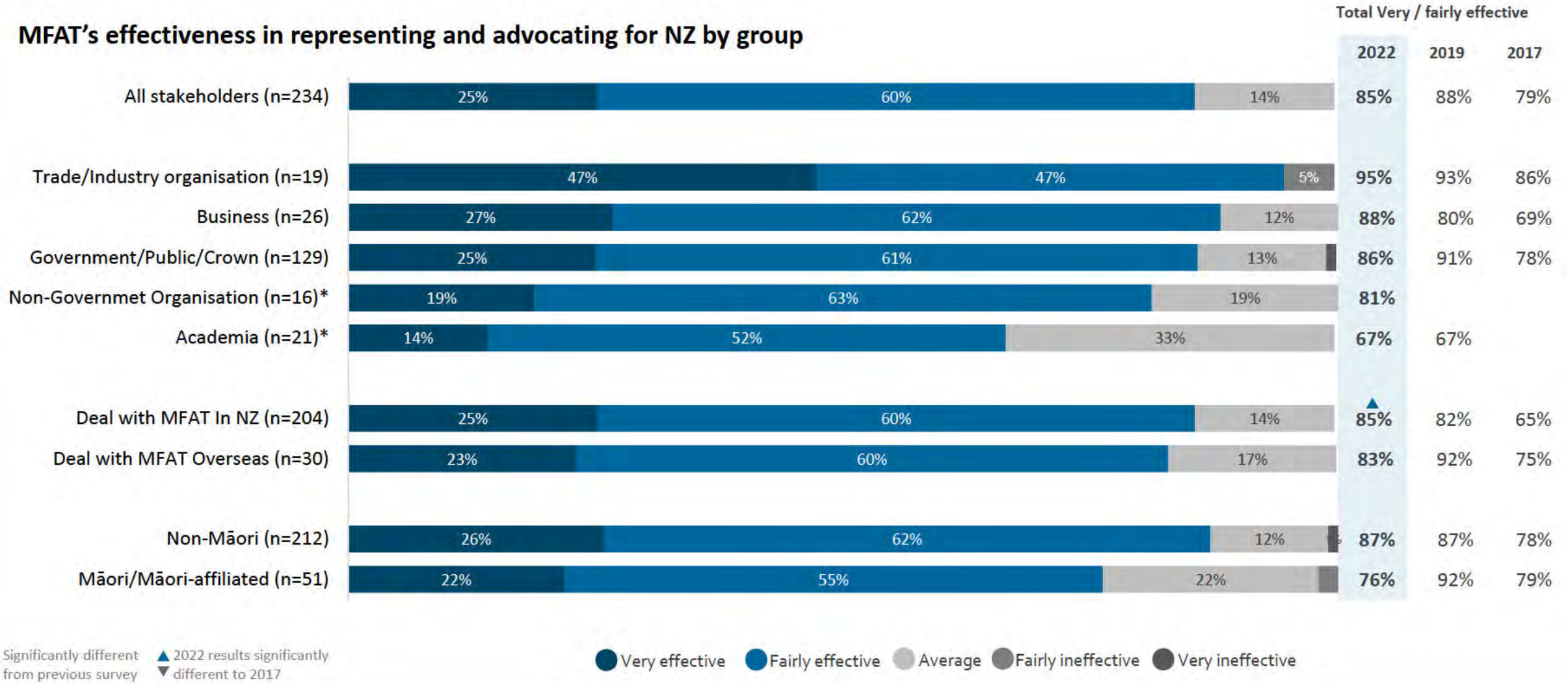
MFAT's effectiveness in representing and advocating for NZ by group



Source: M10. Overall, how effective do you think MFAT is at representing and advocating for New Zealand's interests internationally?
Base: All stakeholders Excludes 'don't know' responses. **Note:** Results shown for groups with 15 or more people. Due to the smaller base sizes of some groups,, some differences that appear larger are not statistically significant. *Data not shown for all years due to small sample size. Excludes 'don't know' responses

PERCEPTIONS OF MFAT AS A TREATY PARTNER

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Māori partners are generally satisfied with their interactions with MFAT staff and continue to believe MFAT is effective at representing and advocating for New Zealand internationally. Whilst satisfaction and effectiveness scores are lower versus previous years, these differences are not significant. Further, the qualitative interviews do not indicate a worsening situation, and the next slide shows survey evidence that things have in fact stayed the same or improved over recent years.

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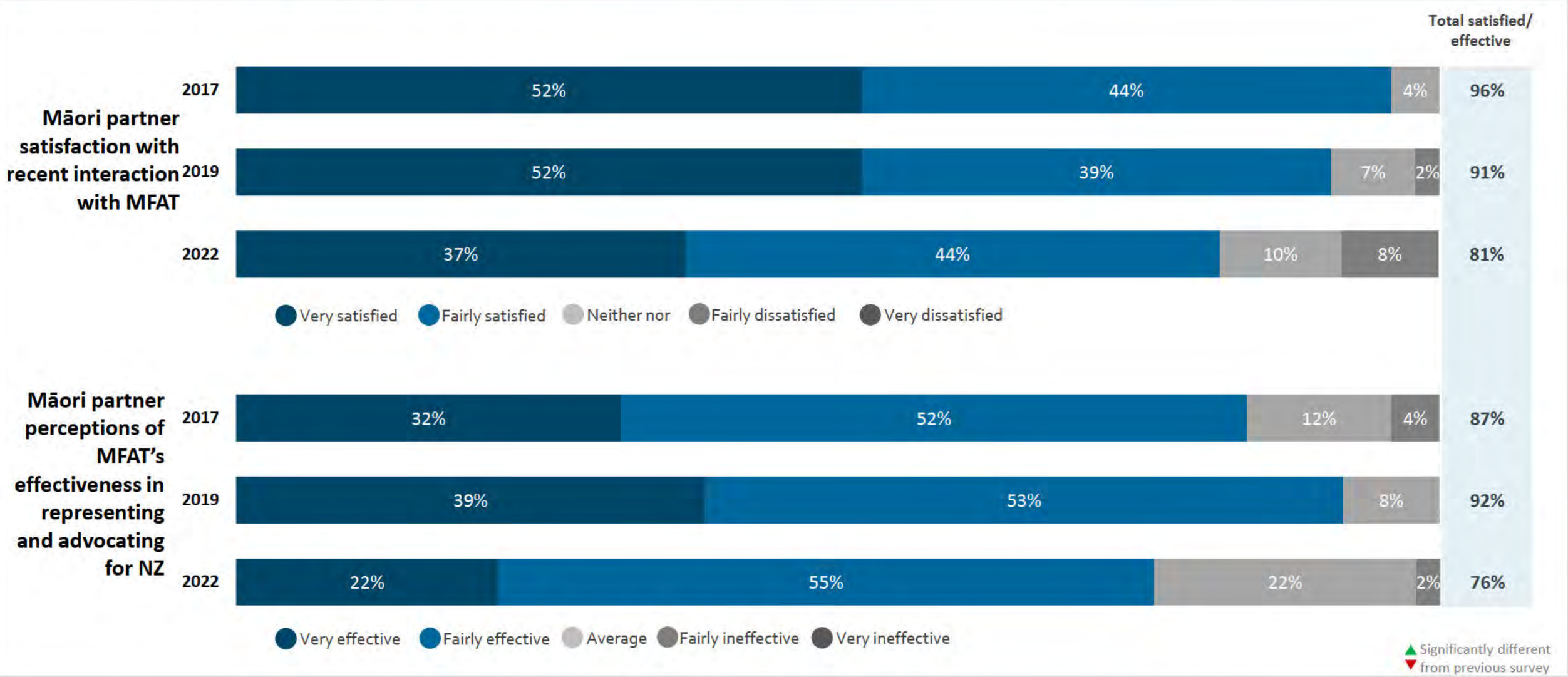

Source: Satisfaction: M4B. Now please think about interactions you have had with MFAT staff recently. Although your views on staff are likely to vary depending on the staff members, the context, and the particular interactions...overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the interactions you have had with MFAT staff recently? **Effectiveness:** M10. Overall, how effective do you think MFAT is at representing and advocating for New Zealand's interests internationally? **Base:** Māori stakeholders only. **M4b** 2017 (25); 2019 (44); 2022 (52). **M10** 2017 (25); 2019 (38); 2022 (51). Excludes 'don't know' responses

MFAT's engagement has stayed the same or improved over the past two years for most Māori partners, deteriorating for a minority. Several factors have contributed to improved engagement including responsiveness, collaboration, communication, and frequency of contact.

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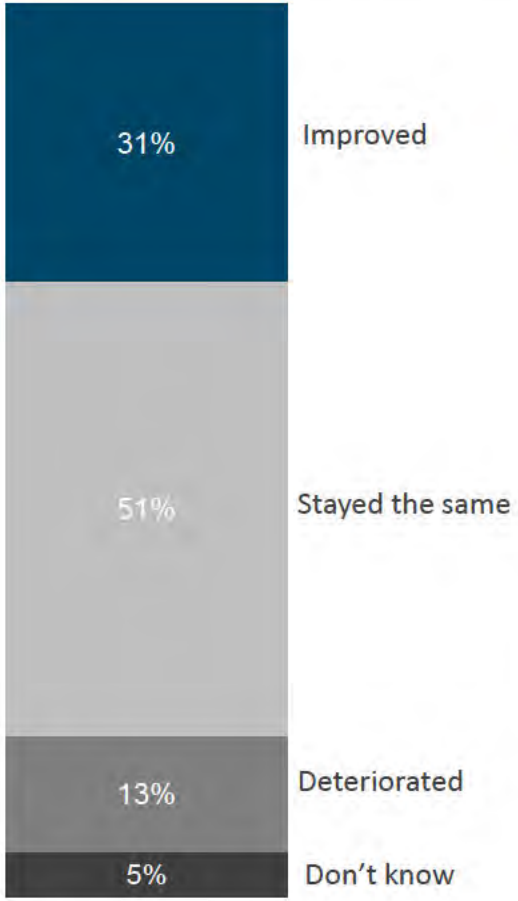
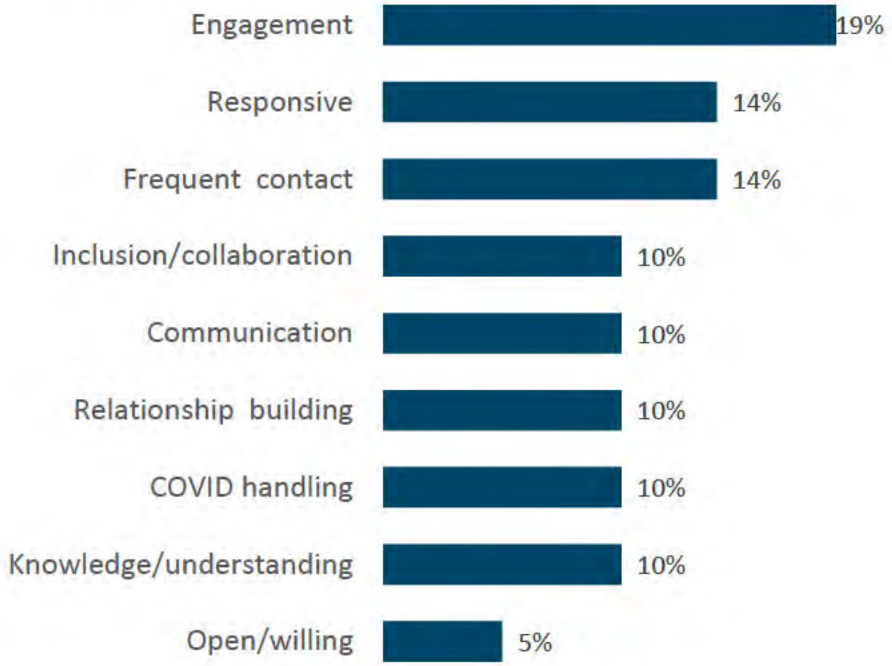
How MFAT's engagement has changed



Reasons why engagement has improved



"Effort made to go out to Māori and build relationships rather than transact. Effort made to demystify MFAT and its processes."

"Our dialogue and interaction has felt sincere"

"Better recognition of the importance of collective and effective representation of NZ's interests."

"More engaging and showing a bit more professional respect. Previously there was an element of some MFAT [staff] presenting themselves as aloof and above other NZ agencies, but I'm not really noticing that anymore."

"Relationships take time to build, and the staff I've worked with have consistently engaged and become more responsive as the relationship strengthens."

Reasons why engagement has deteriorated

"Less opportunities for engagement - organisation seems more inward looking"

"Appears to be less and less communication coming from MFAT. Constant staff changes don't help."

Source: J4 Would you say that the way MFAT engages with your entity/organisation has improved, deteriorated or stayed the same over the past two years? J5 Why did you say that the way MFAT engages with your entity/organisation has improved/deteriorated? **Note:** These questions are new to 2022, so no time-series data is available
Base: Stakeholders who personally identify as Māori, work for a Māori business or organisation, or for a business or organisation with strong Māori ownership or values base (J4 n=55, J5 n=21)

Overall however, MFAT still has some way to go to strengthen its roles and responsibilities as a Treaty partner to Māori. Particularly in terms of improving staff capability in mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori, enabling genuine Treaty partnerships, understanding Māori needs and priorities, and improving the engagement processes.

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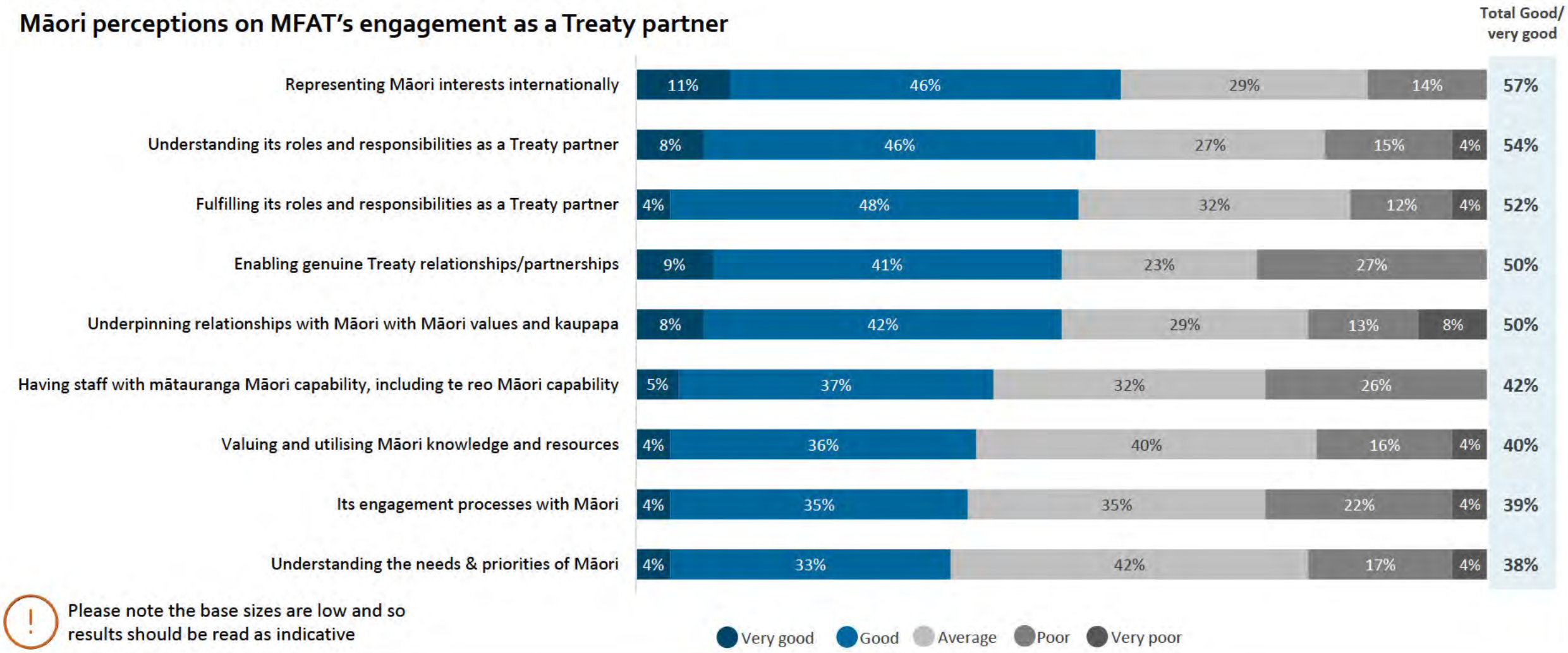
Māori perceptions on MFAT's engagement as a Treaty partner



Please note the base sizes are low and so results should be read as indicative

Source: J3 Thinking about MFAT and its roles and responsibilities to Māori and as a Treaty Partner, how would you rate each of the following?
Base: Stakeholders who personally identify as Māori, work for a Māori business or organisation, or for a business or organisation with strong Māori ownership or values base. Don't know responses are excluded so base varies between **n=19 and n=28**. Note: this question is new in 2022, so no timeseries data is available. Excludes 'don't know' responses

Senior Māori partners highlight that as an organisation, MFAT is seen to be receptive and open to strengthening relationships and partnerships with Māori.

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- Most senior Māori partners feel the relationship with MFAT is marked by **good intentions** and a **genuine ambition** to improve engagement, relationships and partnerships with Māori.
- Positive engagement and relationships are seen to be synonymous with the work and efforts of the **Māori Policy Unit (MPU)**, the **Dep Sec**, and the **Māori partners**.

There is a genuineness by MFAT to want to do the right thing by Māori as informed by Te Tiriti within the international trade environment.
Māori partner

Overall, MFAT engagement with Māori is developing. They are at the start of an organisation-wide journey, having achieved some success through the Māori Policy Team and Trade Policy, Engagement and Implementation team (TPEI) to date.
Māori partner

There is a high level of trust developed over time with the Māori Policy Unit and Vangelis (Dep Sec). It is a comfortable and warm relationship despite some micromanaging evident throughout the relationship.
Māori partner

The positive relationship with MFAT is also about the consistent efforts by Māori partners to engage with MFAT in genuine partnership terms for Māori.
Māori partner

Māori partners are still working hard to have Māori principles and processes valued, respected, and consistently applied.
Māori partner

Source: Qualitative insights

But overall, MFAT still has some way to go to strengthen internal cultural competence and capabilities.

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Most Māori partners note that currently MFAT has 'pockets' of cultural competence and capabilities within the organisation.

There is a strong perceived need for MFAT to increase Māori staff numbers, and to have Māori in strategic roles and positions, for example:

- Increase the number of Māori fulfilling ambassador roles.
- Train more Māori negotiators to sit (and operate) alongside the Dep Sec.
- Increase Māori involvement in working with indigenous peoples globally.
- Build the MPU capacity and capability.

Most would like to see MFAT be more intentional about promoting and socialising career opportunities for Māori / rangatahi to work at MFAT.

Need to have a Te Tiriti/Māori perspective across the whole MFAT organisation, not just held or driven by the Māori Policy Unit – the only way to improve.
Māori partner

MFAT needs more Māori staff who will bring a cultural understanding of te ao Māori to the work of MFAT within its organisation and within an international trade environment.
Māori partner

Put in place a succession plan to ensure that another champion can replace the Dep Sec should he move from his current role and function.
Māori partner

There are 50 [MFAT] offices around the world and very few are occupied by Māori.
Māori partner

Develop a formulated career pathway to MFAT for Māori.
Māori partner

How do we work together to expose our rangatahi to national and international trade?
Māori partner

Source: Qualitative insights

Greater clarity and specificity around the partner roles is needed.

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Some senior Māori partners have noted there can be a lack of transparency from MFAT about which Māori partners they are engaging.

This lack of transparency can lead to potential duplication of mahi, the risk of partners feeling they are being played off against another, and/or the perception that MFAT is 'cherry-picking' advice.

MFAT needs to engage with its Māori partners to ensure the current advisory structures are being optimally utilised.

MFAT needs to clearly articulate the outcomes and expectations they have for each of the Māori groups with whom they engage. This is about ensuring that each group has clear parameters in which to operate.
Māori partner

MFAT does well by engaging multiple Māori groups, this is good but it needs to be more cohesive.
Māori partner

Continue to develop a partnership approach with Māori and all that this entails.

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Moving from an advisory relationship to a genuine partnership means working alongside Māori partners across **all the stages** of trade development.

MFAT's intent for partnership is perceived as genuine, but MFAT needs to be **willing to listen** and consider what Māori are saying.

Māori partners want MFAT to utilise all processes for engagement and consultation, including face-to-face meetings, and ensure key decision-makers (not delegated officials) are at the table.

At the moment, it's not really a partnership, more of an advisary type of relationship that MFAT taps into.
Māori partner

Working with and alongside Māori to build the partnership and to provide input into trade matters at all stages of development – not just to review trade agreements at the end.
Māori partner

Take the time to understand Māori trade kaupapa, and be responsive to it.

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Acknowledge and be willing to consider a holistic Māori perspective of trade in an environmental, social, wellbeing, economic, and cultural context.

Many partners also mention the need for MFAT to understand the implications of a growing Māori economy and what this means for trade.

It is a work in progress incorporating a Māori perspective/Te Tiriti perspective into all aspects of trade and indigenous rights matters.
Māori partner

MFAT need to increase the value of culture within trade - it's not just about the economy, independent of people and culture.
Māori partner

Normalising a wellbeing approach and value of culture within trade will be positive economic growth for everyone.
Māori partner

Continue to develop their [MFAT] understanding of a Māori world view, which is becoming even more important as key figures in international trade have become aware of the value and leverage of the growing Māori economy.
Māori partner

FAMILIARITY WITH MFAT AND ITS STRATEGY

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Familiarity with what MFAT offer remains consistently high. In contrast, there is an opportunity to improve familiarity with MFAT's direction / strategy.

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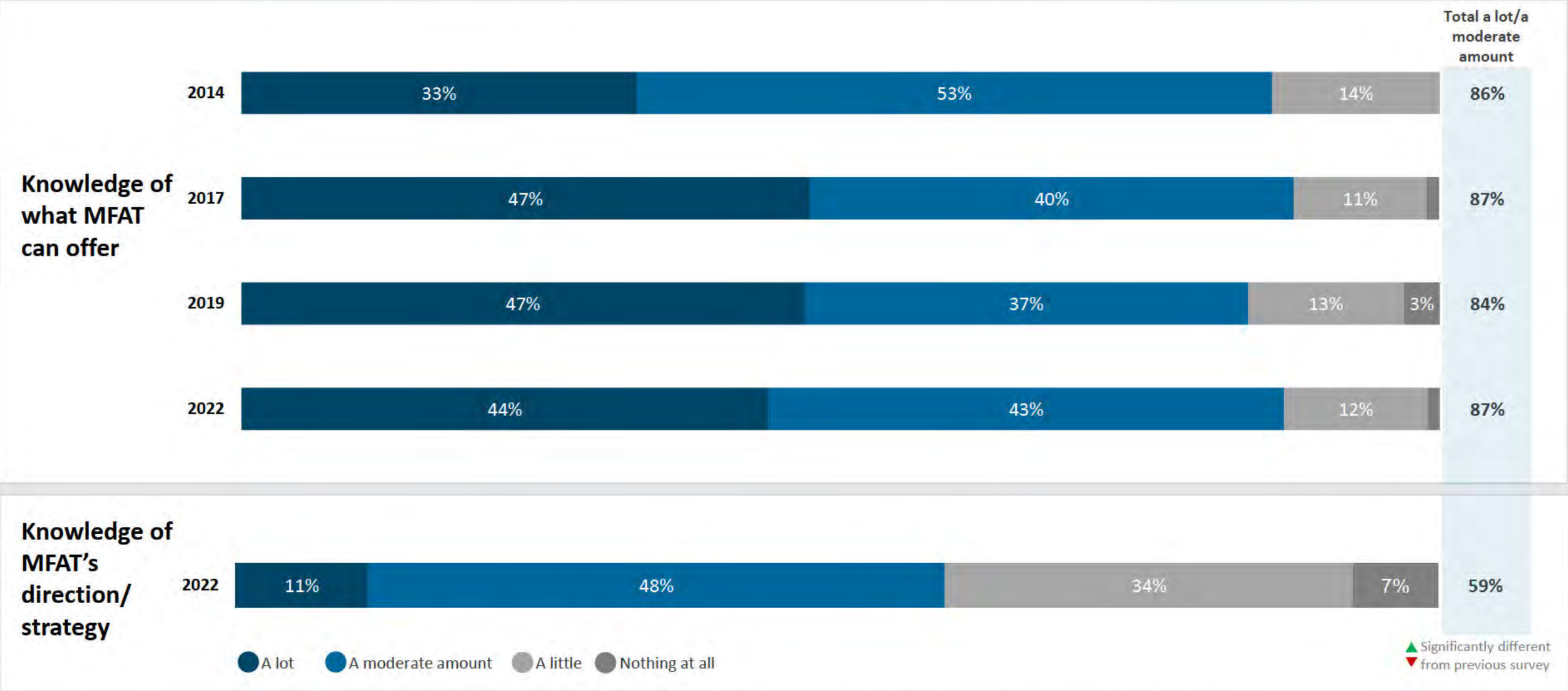

Source: I2. How much do you feel you know about what MFAT can offer your organisation? **J1** How would you describe your awareness and understanding of MFAT's strategy and future direction?
Base: I2 All stakeholders 2014 (n=36); 2017 (n=205); 2019 (n=325); 2022 (n=267). **J1** 2022 n=263. Excludes 'don't know' responses from J1
Note: J1 was asked for the first time in 2022, so no timeseries data is available.

The stakeholders surveyed deal with MFAT relatively frequently, with almost half interacting at least once a week. Their interactions are most likely to be at community meetings, hui, seminars and speeches.

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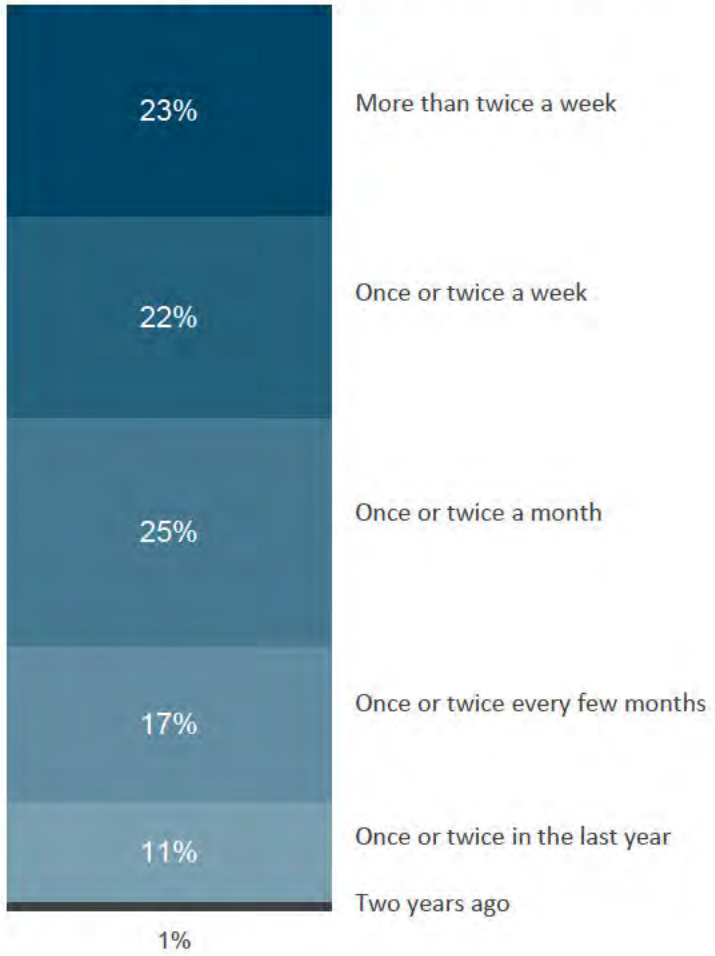
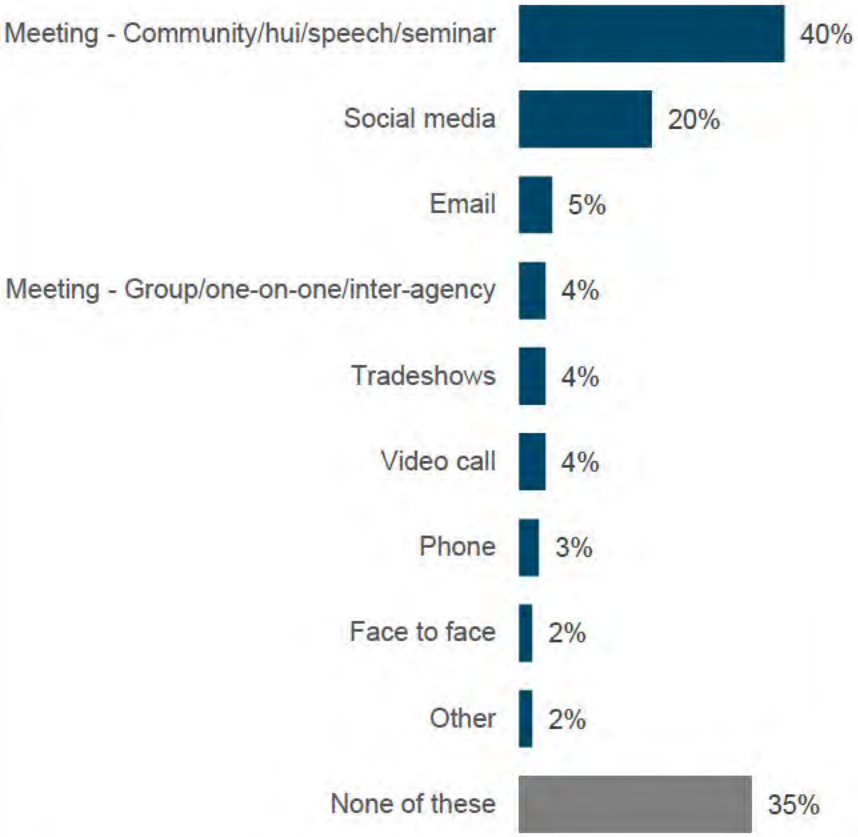
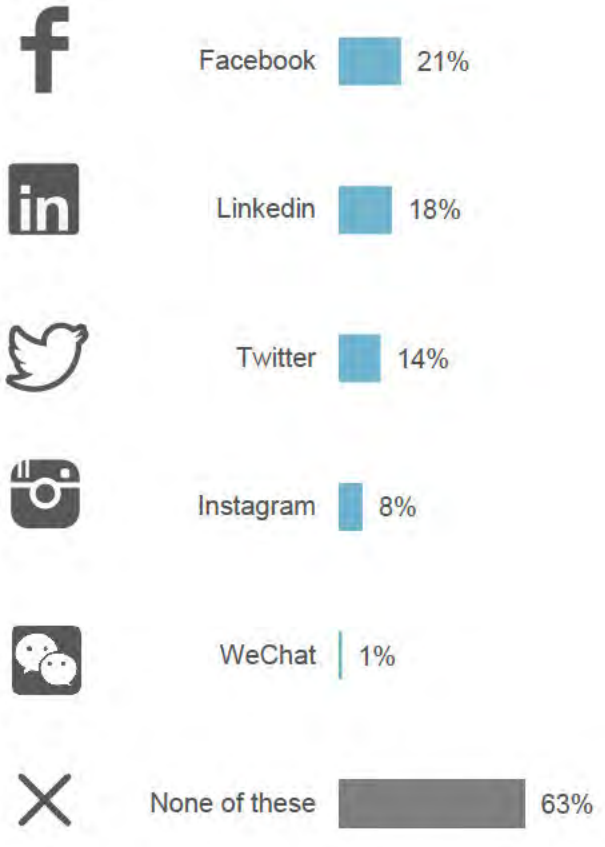
Frequency of interaction with MFAT



How stakeholders interact with MFAT



How stakeholders follow MFAT on social media



Source: Quantitative insights

Source: Q50. When was your most recent interactions with a person at MFAT? By this we mean an interaction where you received a personalised response via any channel – email, the website, phone or in person. Q52. And have you interacted with MFAT using any of the following channels in the past year? *(note, only showing responses with >2%)* Q53. Do you follow MFAT on any social media channels?
Base: All stakeholders (n=325). **Note:** Starting in 2022, those who have had contact with MFAT more than 2 years ago are excluded and more detail on recency of contact in the last year is collected

SATISFACTION WITH SERVICES

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Stakeholders continue to express relatively high levels of satisfaction with the services that they receive from MFAT. Satisfaction is strongest with MFAT's ability to make introductions, provide venues and deliver geo-political advice. Satisfaction with participation in overseas trade missions/delegations has decreased from 2019 (albeit not significantly), presumably as a result of COVID restrictions.

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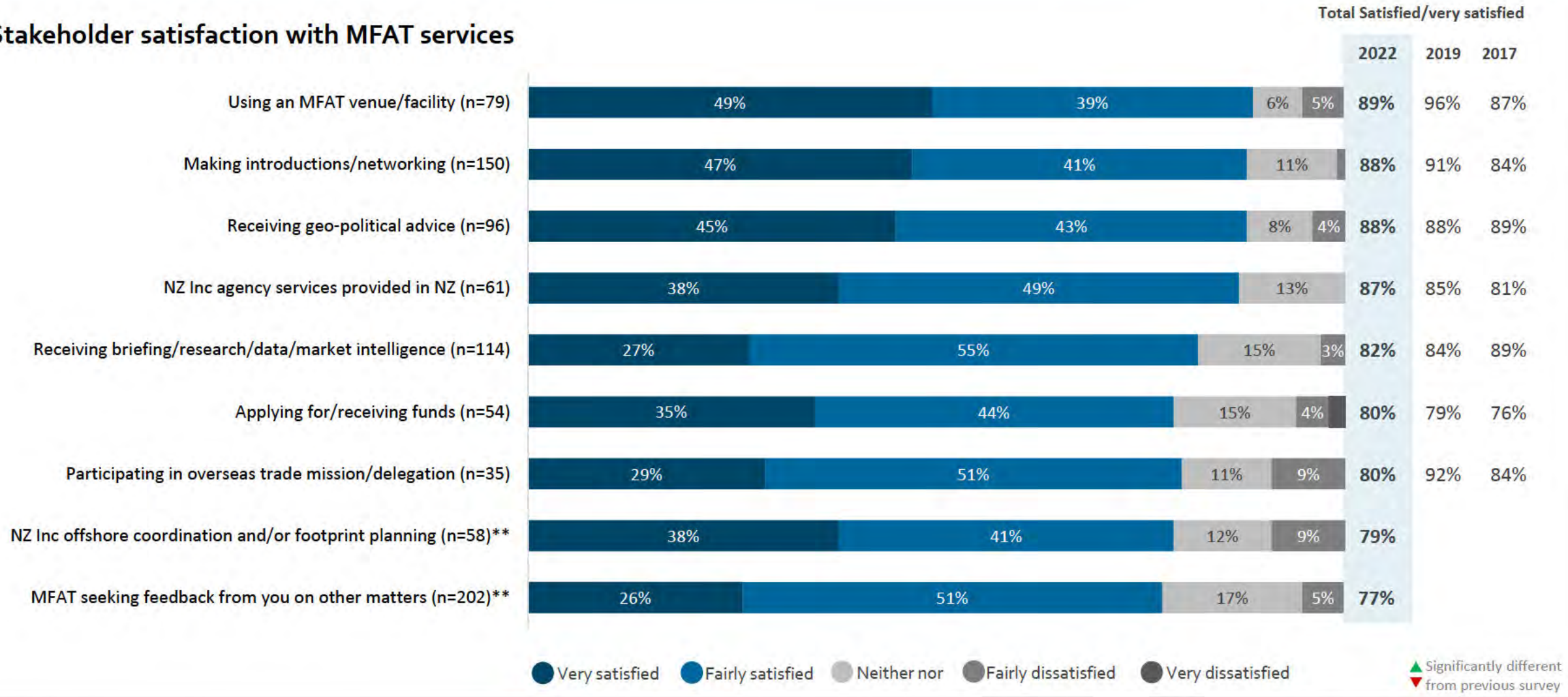
Stakeholder satisfaction with MFAT services



Source: M1G: You mentioned that you have received a service or services from MFAT in the past year. Overall how satisfied, or dissatisfied are you with the overall quality of service delivery for each of the services you've received? **Base:** Stakeholders with experience with each service. Excludes 'don't know' responses. Excludes Tariff finder online, Assistance or advice with exporting, Receiving support to overcome a particular trade barrier or issue, Receiving support in key meeting, Identifying new international business opportunities. **New to 2022, so no time-series data is available.

NGOs and business/exporter senior stakeholders value MFAT's ability to help them make the right connections in-country.

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- Mostly, MFAT is seen to help stakeholders connect with a range of valuable in-country connections.
- MFAT's assistance in making these connections supports stakeholders to carry out their business and enables successful outcomes.

> *They can be fantastic for networking and putting you in touch with the right people, because they're there on the ground. They know who's doing what. Advice and support in that space has been incredibly valuable for us. And that's over a wide range of countries, everything from the Middle East to across Asia, across the Pacific.*
> **Business / Exporter**
>
> *We have also used them to get [international] Government connections as well. They've been very willing to do introductions for us. There's a lot of parts of the world where if you're going to do business with Government, you actually need to be introduced at a very senior level to start with, and MFAT have been willing to write those letters on our behalf.*
> **Business / Exporter**
>
> *Playing the role very well as far as opening doors if we ask, and actually being proactive on that.*
> **Business / Exporter**

- However, there is comment that senior stakeholders would like to see more consistent assistance in making the right connections.

> *Having the High Commission and post is important. They do add value at times, because they can assist us with local relationships and help us. But, as I pointed out before, they weren't particularly willing to do that in [name of country].*
> **NGO**

MFAT also supports stakeholders in-country through…

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Senior stakeholders, particularly NGOs and business/exporters, value other aspects of MFAT's in-county support, including:

- Its in-country knowledge and ability to accomplish tasks.
- Removing or minimisation in-country bureaucracy to enable stakeholders to more easily conduct their business.
- Having an in-country presence so the New Zealand Government is represented and visible.

They're in country. They know the market. They know how to get things done. They're used to solving problems.
Business / Exporter

For New Zealand companies setting up entities in other countries, keeping those requirements simple. Allowing our personnel to fly in for work for three or four weeks, and then come home without any hiccups. There are still countries that require visas and licences just to do a week's work. Removing all of that red tape is where MFAT is playing a great role for us.
Business / Exporter

It's helpful for our in-country partner to see MFAT. I think it does add value to say actually it's not [name of NGO], but ultimately it's the New Zealand government that we're accountable to.
NGO

While well understood, the funding process for some can feel convoluted and lack collaboration. Smaller NGOs continue to feel the funding model puts them at a distinct disadvantage due to their limited fundraising abilities.

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- Some senior stakeholders describe their experience of the funding process as 'smooth'. They understand the reporting requirements.
- Despite understanding the reporting requirements, other senior stakeholders can find the level of detail needed can make the negotiation process convoluted.
- Some smaller NGOs continue to feel the funding model places them at a disadvantage because MFAT funding is predicated on how much the NGO can raise from the New Zealand public. They also feel it can mean significant amounts of funding can go to an NGO who may not be best placed to deliver.
- There is sense that there would be more value if the process was less competitive, and those bidding for funding were more able to collaborate.

The funding process is in general very smooth. We do understand the reporting that we're doing at the moment. We understand the timelines and the expectations.
NGO

At the moment we've got a well understood funding mechanism and it works well.
NGO

The level of detail that's now being required has increased quite a lot. I can understand the need for that, but at the same time, it does make the negotiation process quite convoluted.
Business / Exporter

s9(2)(b)(ii)

Rather than a heavily contestable bidding process that pits us all against each other, and it may not actually get the best project outcome, or the project team. A collaborative approach would be really beneficial and we would be really supportive of that. We'd rather work together with others to give them the best outcome.
Business / Exporter

Despite contractual payment agreements seeming to work well, others experience some tensions.

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There are instances where business/export senior stakeholders feel the payment contract arrangements lack equitability:

- MFAT won't pay more than the agreed contractual amount, but also won't pay the maximum agreed fee if work required is less than anticipated.
- Business/exporters having to pay costs upfront, before receiving payment from MFAT.

Yet, other business/exporter senior stakeholders have a different experience where MFAT payments enable sufficient working capital.

One senior stakeholder comments on how MFAT can expect business/exporters to begin work before the contract is signed and payment has been agreed.

The funding arrangement has a thing in there that says we'll fund up to up to the funding amount. It's not quite like a quote, because if we don't use all of the time we don't get to charge the full amount. We lose both sides in terms of you can't charge more than that 'up to amount', the maximum amount. But if you do less work, you can't have the difference. So that provides some challenges in-house.
Business / Exporter

In the past we've had payments on signing and international funding agencies do have payments on signing, but MFAT don't seem to be wanting to do that anymore. Which, when you've got international travel involved in a project, and your first payment is six months into a contract, that's quite significant.
Business / Exporter

Once the arrangement is made, the money flows. It is really quick. There's no real cash flow problem. And I must say that's commendable, because sometimes being paid by Public Sector can be quite an interesting challenge depending on the organisation.
Business / Exporter

Money will flow every five or six months. And so large amounts are transferred at intervals, but it gives enough working capital to deliver the project. So from the point of view of what's working well, it's that mechanism that works very well, and it doesn't have a large administrative overhead.
Business / Exporter

Sometimes MFAT ask us to do things that might actually be part of what you plan to do as part of the contract. And they're asking you to do stuff that they have not agreed to pay you for yet. So that can cause a little bit tension.
Business / Exporter

NGOs who are part of the Negotiated Partnership funding model are positive about this approach and believe it is the right way forward.

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NGOs consider Negotiated Partnerships to be beneficial to all involved, and will ultimately lead to better outcomes.

In particular, NGOs believe the more agile approach of Negotiated Partnerships is its key strength. It means NGOs:

- Can better plan for the longer term.
- Have greater continuity and sustainability.
- Are able to deliver better outcomes.

Ten INGOs have been accredited under Negotiated Partnerships, and it's a new way of working. Rather than being in a competitive basis, it's a strategic partnership. So they reset, and this was fabulous. They reset with a thing called Negotiated Partnerships, and they tried to emphasise the word partnership.
NGO

I think the most important thing was that we did reset to an overall agile strategy, so that we weren't fixed to a specific programme of work for five years. If we get to the end of year one and the programme wasn't really working, we could then go back to MFAT and go 'actually, this isn't really working'. We've still got a pool of $x million over five years, and we'd say 'we suggest a routing of that to a different part of the project or part of the project that was working'. **NGO**

It's kudos to MFAT because they've at least called a Negotiated Partnership over five years. They've given us some guaranteed funding for a period of time, and they've also indicated that they want us to be agile.
NGO

That's far superior than the previous way of working. It gives us continuity. It gives our partners and our countries continuity. And it theoretically should mean that we can deliver better results. That's been a massive change.
NGO

For having long term outcomes, it certainly is the way to go. It's exciting to really be thinking in that longer term, because our most successful projects are projects that have had reiterations of them. They've started as one thing, they've been developed and had another phase. Those are the projects where we see most success. So, there's a good pattern there of knowing that there's good, sustainable, long term, significant impact as a result of long term funding engagement.
NGO

What we believe is amazing about this is the fact that it is a long term view towards humanitarian development. It just allows for so much more planning.
NGO

Transitioning to the Negotiated Partnership process was challenging for some NGOs, and there is some doubt about it being a true partnership

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Some NGO senior stakeholders found the due diligence process to transition to a Negotiated Partnership was stressful. There is a sentiment that MFAT lacked trust in their stakeholders.

However, other NGOs understood the need for due diligence (even though they understand it created pressure on the sector).

Finally, while called a partnership, NGOs don't tend to feel it is a true partnership.

We've made the transition [to Negotiated Partnerships], which was a very, very heavy and lengthy process. I know it nearly broke the sector. To learn that most international teams within the sector were also losing people because of the pressure it was putting on, that was not great. The level of scrutiny, and at times what felt like lack of trust, that was just interesting.
NGO

In order to move into that Negotiated Partnerships place, every NGO had to go through a due diligence process. Lots of the staff got frustrated. From my point of view, that due process is entirely necessary. If you haven't got the governance in place, if you haven't got the policies in place, then why on earth should the government partner with you? I think MFAT, if it's received a bit of negative feedback about the fact that Negotiated Partnership process was too rigorous, I put my hand up amongst the group and say 'actually, it needs to be rigorous'. Let's not have this ideological handout culture. We actually do need to be accountable and to deliver.
NGO

Even though they call it Negotiated Partnerships, power and balance is way in favour of MFAT. And so, is it truly partnership when the power imbalance is sitting at their end? Some of the contractual pieces have been dictated by MFAT. That's probably just the nature of a funder versus an implementer.
NGO

I know I speak on behalf of the sector, it didn't feel like a partnership. They were calling it a partnership, but very much they were holding the strings.
NGO

BUILDING STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

KANTAR PUBLIC

Stakeholders typically view MFAT staff as an asset to the Ministry, but they also identify areas for improvement. While most stakeholders perceive staff as professional and competent, they are less positive about MFAT's diversity of thought or openness to perspectives or ideas. Many of these themes are picked up in the subsequent slides on senior stakeholder views.

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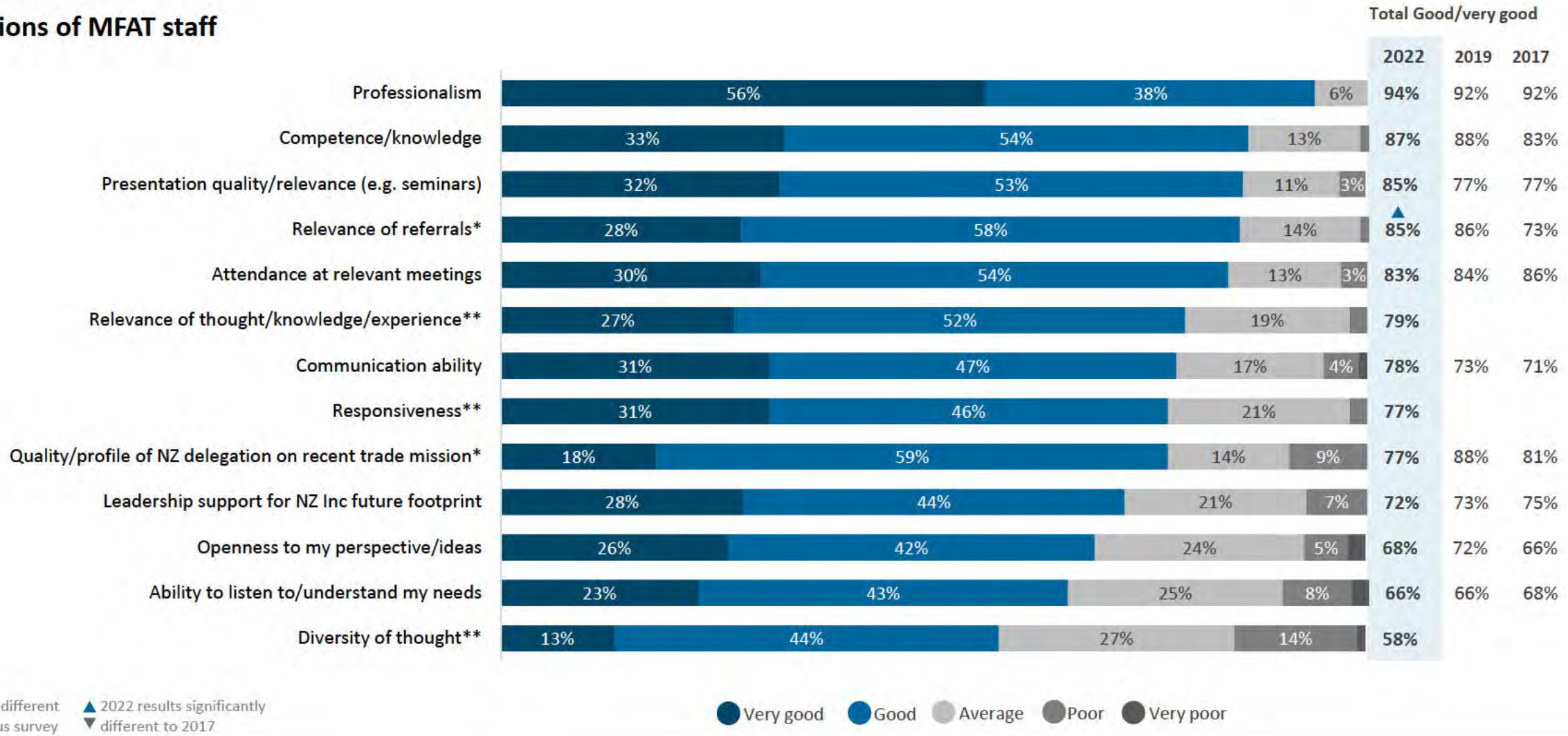
Perceptions of MFAT staff



Source: M1: Thinking about recent interactions you have had with MFAT, how do you rate each of the following?
Base: Stakeholders who have had any interaction with MFAT in the past year (excl. not relevant) (n≈259). Excludes 'don't know' responses
* Only asked of stakeholders who had a relevant interaction **Asked for the first time in 2022, so no time-series data is available

As in previous years, senior stakeholders consistently speak highly of MFAT staff.

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Despite staff being exceptionally busy and under pressure, senior stakeholders attribute MFAT staff with several positive characteristics:

- Intelligent, talented, and competent
- Credible and professional
- Knowledgeable and well-educated
- Dedicated and hard working
- Accessible, approachable, and accommodating
- Trustworthy and respected.

Perceptions of staff can be in stark contrast to perceptions of the organisation.

The people we're dealing with are amazing. I can't say enough about them. We've really enjoyed building a relationship with them. But you just feel that honestly it's just clear that they're under pressure, and that they're trying to do more than one role many times.
NGO

I have a lot of respect for the people who work there. They're diligent, hard working, and committed to advance New Zealand's interests.
Academia

I've found the activity managers pleasant to deal with, and accommodating and able to approach them easily. There's no issues there.
Business / Exporter

They're diplomats. They are very trustworthy. It is possible to share with confidence, confidential information with them, because you know that that's a safe place to put it.
Business / Exporter

I have a great deal of respect for [my peers]. I appreciate their wisdom and their counsel and the way they view the world. And, I think what we generally do together is for the betterment of New Zealand.
NZ Inc.

Some of the talented staff they have are just outstanding.
NZ Inc.

It's a slightly unexplainable paradox of just really liking and respecting the individuals, but at the same time, really not liking the behaviour of the Ministry.
NZ Inc.

MFAT is beginning to establish greater demographic diversity amongst its staff, but there is still too much uniformity of thought.

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- Some senior stakeholders acknowledge MFAT has made an effort towards greater diversity, most noticeably by placing more females in senior positions. They feel this focus needs to continue, as establishing diversity takes time.
- Yet, while senior stakeholders are starting to see greater demographic diversity across MFAT staff, a lack of diversity of thought exists.

I think that there's a recognition that the Ministry needs to become a bit more diverse in terms of its hiring policies. I'm sure there are probably be some people who will be critical about the lack of progress on that. But to me, as an outsider, that's something that's become much more visible as a priority in the last two or three years. I'm not suggesting they've solved all their challenges. But it seems to me something that has been moving along.
Academia

It doesn't seem like it's a box of assorted chocolates.
NZ Inc.

You can see them starting to value different people, they're now getting more demographically diverse… but they're still all the same, all the same A-type personality, all middle class, all think the same.
NZ Inc.

Senior stakeholders believe strong relationships with MFAT are characterised by…

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- Proactivity
- Accessibility
- Responsiveness
- Mutual respect
- Trust
- Adaptability
- Willingness to listen
- Transparency
- Regularity
- Easy to work with

We have a mutual respect. I always find they conduct themselves in a really professional way. You can have a good laugh about things. But when I ask for advice, I'm always confident in the advice I'm being given.
NZ Inc.

Certainly positive. I'd call it high trust, and in both directions. I think there's a good degree of credibility in all the people that I deal with.
Business / Exporter

I think they're very accessible in the main. Certainly with the staff that we deal on a very frequent basis, they are able to build up a good relationship. And that means that they can have good, solid discussions. It's good to know that you can pick up the phone and sense check something, talk an issue through. When there is an opportunity to build a relationship that really works.
NGO

MFAT post staff who see the work on the ground, they understand it, they know our teams on the ground, they know us, they know the work, they get us. They have a high degree of trust in what we do.
NGO

I should point out we just don't work for MFAT, we work with numerous donors around the world. And I should say upfront that MFAT are one of the better and easier aid agencies in the world to work with. No question about that. They're smaller, they're more focussed.
Business / Exporter

There's an element of trust. So I think that I can have frank conversations with people.
Academia

Mixed views exist about how well MFAT understands its stakeholders.

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There is a stronger sense amongst senior stakeholders that MFAT lacks a comprehensive understanding of stakeholders' sectors, organisations and/or ways of working. This is demonstrated by:

- A naivety about the complexity of some stakeholder organisations
- Disingenuous consultation
- A lack of understanding about other organisations' purpose and resourcing limitations

However, a few believe MFAT demonstrate an understanding of their sectors/businesses. Business/exporters in particular feel MFAT understand their commercial realities, and make the effort to learn about their sector.

They think [geopolitical subject] is all we do, there's not quite a full appreciation.
Academia

I don't think they understand we're passionate about what we do, passionate about the outcomes we deliver. We're passionate about making the world a better place. So we're not doing business at any cost. Yes, we want to make some money. We have to return to our stakeholders. But we actually do a lot of good as well with what we do.
Business / Exporter

If they could actually understand the issues that each organisation is facing, because when you talk to exporters, there's a wide range of exporters.
Business / Exporter

Really short turnaround expectations. MFAT just comes to you and they say 'close of play tomorrow, we need you to consult on this very complex document'. I think that they don't really take on board the comment, it's kind of more just going through the motions as consulting.
NZ Inc.

MFAT understand business, even though they're a Government agency. They understand things from commercial stakeholder point of view. So, whilst they are sitting in Government, they understand the impacts of what it would mean for commercial players.
Business / Exporter

It always feels like they're listening, and showing an understanding of the problem, whether they can help or not. I think that's all you can ask for from them. They show a willingness to learn and understand our business and sector that we're in, which is good.
Business / Exporter

Perceptions of MFAT's culture remain unchanged to previous years: Professional and trusted, but with an unwarranted air of superiority.

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MFAT continues to hold a reputation for being highly professional.

Business senior stakeholders consider MFAT as a trusted arm of Government. These stakeholders also value the proactive way in which MFAT reaches out to them.

However, the flip side of professionalism is that sometimes MFAT can be seen as elitist, and some senior stakeholders continue to feel the Ministry believes it is superior to others. This sentiment is strongest amongst NZ Inc. and a few NGO stakeholders.

I think they are an intelligent, professional arm of Government that is trusted, and that we have confidence in. And that they are fulfilling their role well.
Business / Exporter

MFAT is one of the few that actually proactively reach out into the business community. It's clearly something that they do as part of the way that they work. Part of the reason why I'm being so positive is because they are proactive in their outreach and stakeholder management.
Business / Exporter

I suppose a nice way to put it is professional. On the other hand, they have a reputation for being a rather elitist organisation. And they think they have the brightest and best. I'm not saying that they're stupid or anything, but that there are people outside MFAT who have good minds as well. And I think there's more to high grades at university to being an effective representative of New Zealand and doing their roles.
NGO

They think they're in control and other agencies are subservient to them.
NZ Inc.

There's something about how MFAT operates as a system, really just throws its weight around, gets involved in the business of other agencies.
NZ Inc.

A Minister described them [MFAT] as being like a castle surrounded by a moat, they lower the drawbridge only when they want something.
Business / Exporter

MFAT still seen as cautious, overly so at times

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As in previous years, MFAT is seen to be risk averse and conservative.

This is demonstrated by:

- The language MFAT uses
- Its preference to left things unsaid
- Its unwillingness to stand against poor behaviour by other countries.

These senior stakeholders believe MFAT's cautiousness is driven by a fear of negatively impacting trade and concerns of a potential fall out with other countries.

There is a desire for MFAT to be bolder – both in its point of view and decision making.

There is a bit of a risk averse tradition in MFAT at times. There are some officials who are trying to push the boundaries on that a bit. There have been signs of that happening a bit more, but it's not always the case.
Academia

There is a tendency sometimes for MFAT officials to be very conservative, which is understandable. Trying to get them to take bold positions can be a difficult, but sometimes a bold decision needs to be made.
NGO

s6(a)

NAVIGATING THE MINISTRY AND ITS PROCESSES

KANTAR PUBLIC

Stakeholders are broadly satisfied with the support services provided by MFAT, which enables stakeholders to perform their role. Indeed, satisfaction has intensified over time with more stakeholders selecting the top end of the scale (27% in 2022 vs. 8% in 2017).

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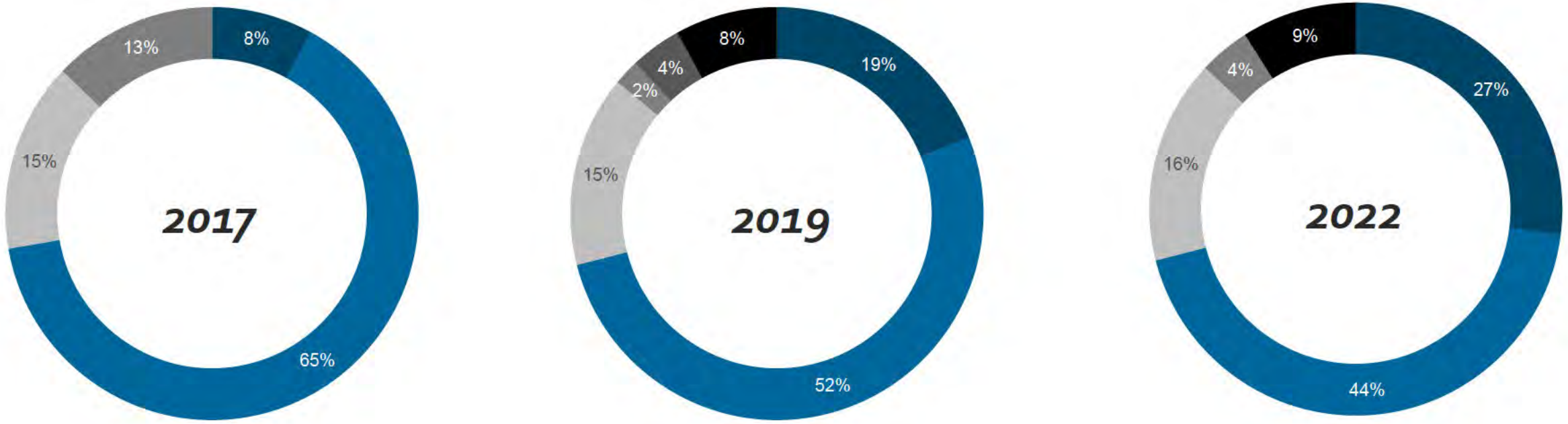
Satisfaction with MFAT's support services



Don't know | Very dissatisfied | Fairly dissatisfied | Neutral | Fairly satisfied | Very satisfied

Source: M1E. How would you rate support services provided by MFAT (including, property, IT) which enable you to perform your role?
Base: Government stakeholders who have experienced NZ Inc.agency services provided at an overseas post (excl. not relevant) (n=45). Excludes Not relevant responses
Note: In 2022 the scale was changed from Very poor/poor/neither/good/very good, to a satisfaction scale.

Stakeholders feel there is room for improvement when navigating MFAT's organisation and processes. Less than half believe MFAT's is good at delivering efficient or easy to understand processes, or coordinating things internally.

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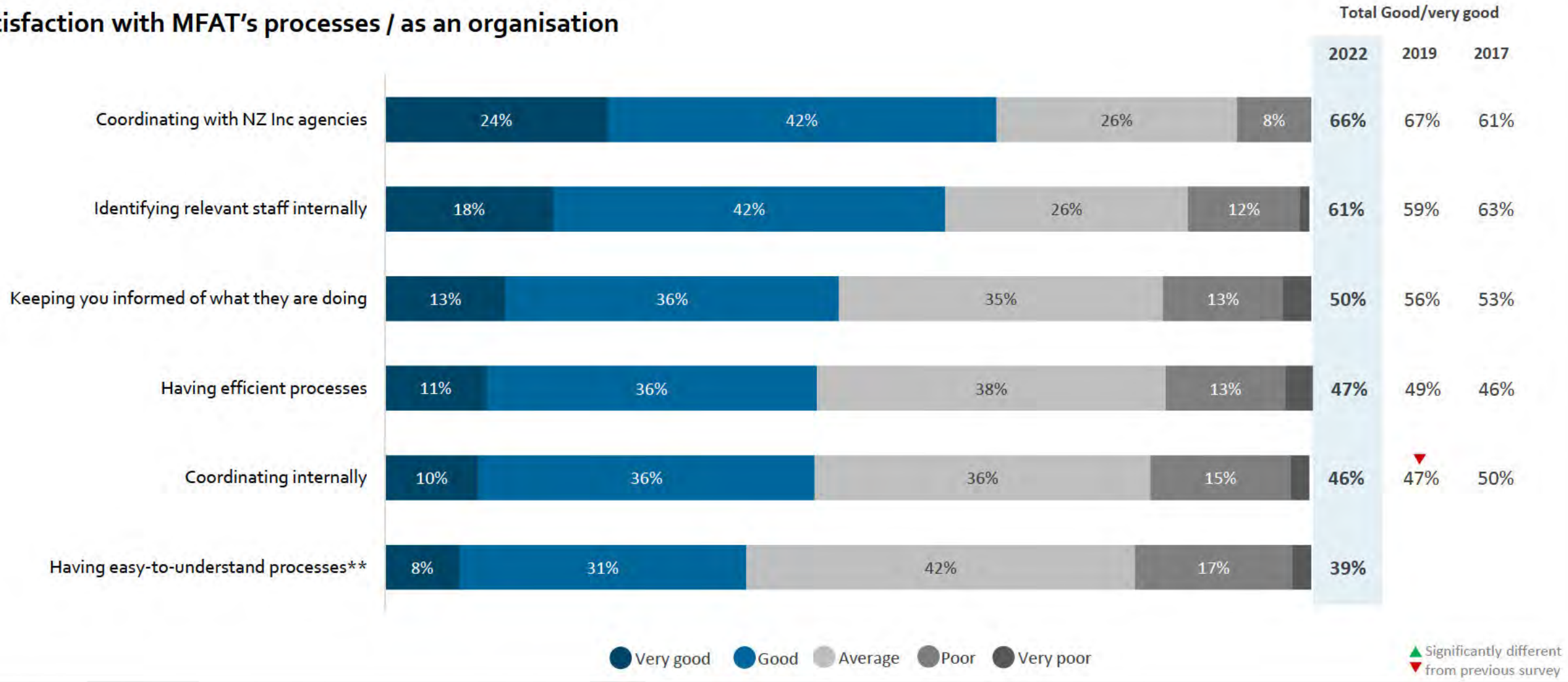
Satisfaction with MFAT's processes / as an organisation



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Base: Stakeholders who have had any interaction with MFAT in the past year (excl. not relevant) (n≈259). Statements only asked of stakeholders who have had a relevant interaction. Excludes 'don't know' responses (Don't know ranges from 2-17%, with the highest levels of uncertainty around coordination internally) **Asked for the first time in 2022, so no time-series data is available

Senior stakeholders can find it challenging to understand MFAT's structure.

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Some senior stakeholders find MFAT's organisational structure confusing.

They feel this confusion arises from:

- Acronyms used for the different departments.
- Working out which MFAT staff work where (and therefore who they should contact about what).
- Relatively regular changes to the structure and personnel.

It takes a while to get our heads around. They change the names of the groups, what are the acronyms today?
Business / Exporter

I think from an outsider's perspective, and someone who hasn't worked within Government, let alone within MFAT, MFAT is very difficult to understand. I think people struggle to keep up with who's working where, and what the structure within the organisation looks like. That's nothing new.
Business / Exporter

Maybe a little more effort done on making that structure clearer about who's dealing with what matters. They do have quite a fluid use of their resource base, their human resource base, we're never exactly sure who's going to be leading on a particular issue.
NZ Inc.

Perceptions of MFAT's processes and systems being slow and bureaucratic remain unchanged.

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- Internal processes are thought to slow down MFAT's response time and decision making.

- This slowness is exacerbated by:
  - Time zone differences, and waiting for MFAT in Wellington to respond
  - MFAT 's hierarchal and formal way of working
  - MFAT staff only being available Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.

There can be quite a considerable delay in the communications between us and them. I guess that's just simply a reflection of the size of the animal we're working with here, and that there's a bit of a chain of command for a suitable response to come back. So quite often there can be a bit of a delay between them coming back to you with a response to whatever it was that you were asking or questioning or seeking advice on.
Business / Exporter

We communicate to the desk officer, the aid manager in [country], they then have to go back to Wellington. Wellington takes longer than most people would like. But, I can't stress enough that they're quicker than any other donor. Then, that has to come back to [country]. Then all that, and with the time zone differences, that just makes from asking something and getting a response back takes longer than is ideal. The time zone thing is a frustration which no one can fix. And MFAT's time to turn around the response, that is a second frustration.
Business / Exporter

I think they are at top of their game. No matter how many people they have working for them. And that's a little tongue in cheek, because they do travel as a pack. When you come to a meeting, you might be in a group. [This means] I'm like 'do I need a lawyer?'. I know that the world they operate in, they need to be business like, they need to be really formal. I think that sometimes the formality gets in the way of quick decisions, quick turnarounds, and speedy operational solutions.
NZ Inc.

While recognised as how MFAT operates, its staff rotation policy remains a point of frustration.

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- MFAT's staff rotation policy continues to draw significant comment from across a range of senior stakeholder types.
- As in previous years, senior stakeholders feel a sense of frustration with having to regularly build new relationships with MFAT staff as a result of the rotational policy.
- This frustration is aggravated by the lack of effective handovers within MFAT. Stakeholders are often left to bring the new staff member up to speed.
- The impact on stakeholders of staff rotating and poor handover processes is that MFAT:
  - Lose institutional knowledge.
  - Lose an understanding of the stakeholder's business.
  - Has inconsistent expectations and ways of working.

Rotation, obviously if you've developed relationships with officials over a period of years and they've gained expertise, they've gained contacts and experience, it can be frustrating to find that to move on to a slightly unrelated area and they're dealing with a new official and bringing them up to speed.
NGO

A weakness, even a frustration is that MFAT tends to change their desk officers on a regular basis. So you just develop a professional relationship with an individual, and then they get moved onto another desk. The issues from that is that the incoming person doesn't understand, doesn't have the context. But most frustratingly, more often than not they haven't been briefed internally. So, they have no idea about what the programme is about. To be honest with you, more often than not they don't even know how to find the files. I could share emails with you where an incoming desk officer has come to us saying 'could you please send us such and such document?', which is something that was generated by MFAT, sent to us, that they can't find a copy of. Happens on a regular basis.
Business / Exporter

It's always a challenge of MFAT that team members move around a lot. There's this classic rotation with MFAT... Every time someone new comes on board, so whether that's two months, or two or three years afterwards, there's that body of knowledge that they have to pick up. And so they have to spend a certain amount of time relearning... and when you've had to do that two or three times, it can be a little bit frustrating.
Academia

When you talk about MFAT, it's not an entity. It's people within it. So, they do not talk with one voice. You work with someone and they want to see certain things or they want the work that you're doing told in a certain way or described in a certain way. And then, another person comes in and they have a different emphasis - more of this, less of that. We're not dealing with a person, we're dealing with different people that bring different things and different expectations and ways of working.
NGO

NGO's believe changes are being made to MFAT's staff rotation policy. They are optimistic about this perceived change.

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MANATŪ AORERE

Some NGO senior stakeholders comment on changes MFAT is making to its staff rotation policy. These stakeholders are positive about this change, and feel optimistic it will reduce previous frustrations they've experienced.

It was only last week that we heard, which is a very positive thing, about change in the Partnerships Fund. There's 12 staff in the Partnerships Fund. Previously, those staff used to rotate every two years - interning and moving up through the ranks, getting their teeth into something, and that was incredibly frustrating. MFAT has actually realised that, which is great. They've changed it so that only two of their staff will be rotating staff, and the others are going to be ten permanent staff. So that's a really significant positive change, because it's all about relationship and building up an understanding of the NGO here in New Zealand, but then also understanding at post our partners and having some understanding of that.
NGO

I know it's something that they are already addressing because the turnover of staff has been a major challenge. Moving forward with MFAT, they have talked about how that rotational base is going to change. And that is really, really good news. A high percentage of staff were going to be in more permanent roles there, rather than I think it's a two year rotation. However, we've had staff rotate in and out shorter times than that at all levels, and that's what makes it difficult.
NGO

When we have that rotation of staff, despite having the longevity of our relationship with MFAT and that funding, we are continually having to remarket who we are to the team. So having a more permanent team, we see it as incredibly beneficial.
NGO

There is a sense MFAT is increasingly (but appropriately) transparent, particularly among NGOs and business/exporters.

NEW ZEALAND FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
MANATŪ AORERE

Generally, senior stakeholders understand MFAT staff are privy to confidential information that they are unable to share. However, there is a sense that some staff members are open and frank.

The level of transparency and willingness to share information appears to be dependent on the MFAT individual. Some individuals are more willing to provide information, and/or are better able to navigate these situations.

Sometimes it can be difficult for senior stakeholders to know if they have all the information, or if parts have been left out.

We've had the privilege of working with people who are good communicators and are engaging. They're reasonably honest and open. They are surprisingly frank. They won't go and give you a whole lot of bureaucratic mumbo jumbo. Pretty direct.
Business / Exporter

I've spoken to some officials who are more forthcoming than others. That could be that some officials are still working in the old way of working, that you tell outside parties as little as possible. While others have got more into the spirit of it, they're willing to share and listen.
NGO

It's different between different people that you work with. But certainly there's an openness to the communication. I don't think anybody's trying to hide anything.
Business / Exporter

At times, diplomatic speak means they can't really say too much, but we understood that. I think they navigate giving as much information as they could through to us as an interested sector. At times you would have appreciated a little bit more plain speaking from them. I just think they were wedged into a tight corner, and some were better at navigating that than others. Some would confide a little bit more to you, but within context.
Business / Exporter

If I could put it delicately, they're diplomats and polished at saying things that are appropriate to the circumstances. That may or may not be the full story. You're really never 100% sure that we are hearing the whole story.
NGO

NGOs that have transitioned to a Negotiated Partnership funding model believe their relationship with MFAT is more transparent and open.

NEW ZEALAND FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
MANATŪ AORERE

NGOs feel the Negotiated Partnerships has led to a more transparent relationship, where there is a sense they can openly discuss with MFAT problems they are experiencing with in-country partners.

> *We've had a more transparent relationship. In the past, where your in-country partners weren't performing as they should, you would probably try and conceal that, or try and brush it over, or try and massage it. But, with the partnerships approach, there's been more of an open door to say 'we're actually having a problem here and let's work together to try and fix this'. From MFAT's perspective, they said 'you guys are the model INGO because that's what we want everyone to do, because in the end there's no point in concealing problems'. If we get them out in the open and work together in a partnership approach to actually fix them, I think that's very mature and very positive.*
> **NGO**

However, others express a lack of transparency.

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MANATŪ AORERE

- NZ Inc. senior stakeholders can feel MFAT withholds information from them, leaving some agencies to find out about foreign affairs matters via the media.
- Some NGO senior stakeholders comment about the trade negotiation process being shrouded in secrecy.
- The language used can create a sense of a lack of transparency, e.g. when MFAT use 'Government speak' when engaging with the business sector.
- There is some sense that it can be difficult to find or access information from MFAT.
  - Stakeholders have to go looking for information, rather than MFAT proactively sharing it with interested parties.
  - A few NZ Inc. senior stakeholders wonder if the difficultly in accessing information is a deliberate strategy. Given knowledge is power, they question if MFAT purposely makes information inaccessible to increase its superiority.

You can't even pretend they're transparent… the New Zealand media hear more about foreign affairs than agencies of the New Zealand government.
Business / Exporter

Throughout the process, there's this issue of secrecy about the negotiating text and these agreements are increasingly important. In the legislative area, the public consultation process has progressively become more and more broad and allowing public input in in a variety of ways. Yet, in these international agreements, it's still buried under secrecy.
NGO

What would really help the relationship is for them to connect in the language that we speak, not the language of Government. It's my responsibility to translate what they say to me into terms that are relevant to me. It's got easier as time has gone on. But, there's a lot of language and terminology there that just isn't used in the business world. And trying to dissect that and actually understand what that means for business can be quite challenging at times. It's really when they use policy speak.
Business / Exporter

Things get released, then you have to go and find, where to find them.
Academia

As in 2019, NGO senior stakeholders feel there is an opportunity for MFAT to take a leadership role in supporting collaboration between NGOs.

NEW ZEALAND FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
MANATŪ AORERE

Similar to 2019, NGOs believe there is an opportunity for the sector to work more strategically and collaboratively to deliver greater impact. They consider the longer term nature of Negotiated Partnerships lends itself to this opportunity, and would be greatly assisted with leadership from MFAT.

> *One of the things I talk about is something that I hope to be able to be part of, is organising ourselves as a sector much more strategically. I think we could as a sector get rid of our egos and actually come together in a much more collaborative manner. I just hope that through all of the effort we've gone through to get to this much more longer term view of the world, that actually we can organise ourselves, including with our Ministry, to be much more strategic as a group of entities for better impact.*
> **NGO**

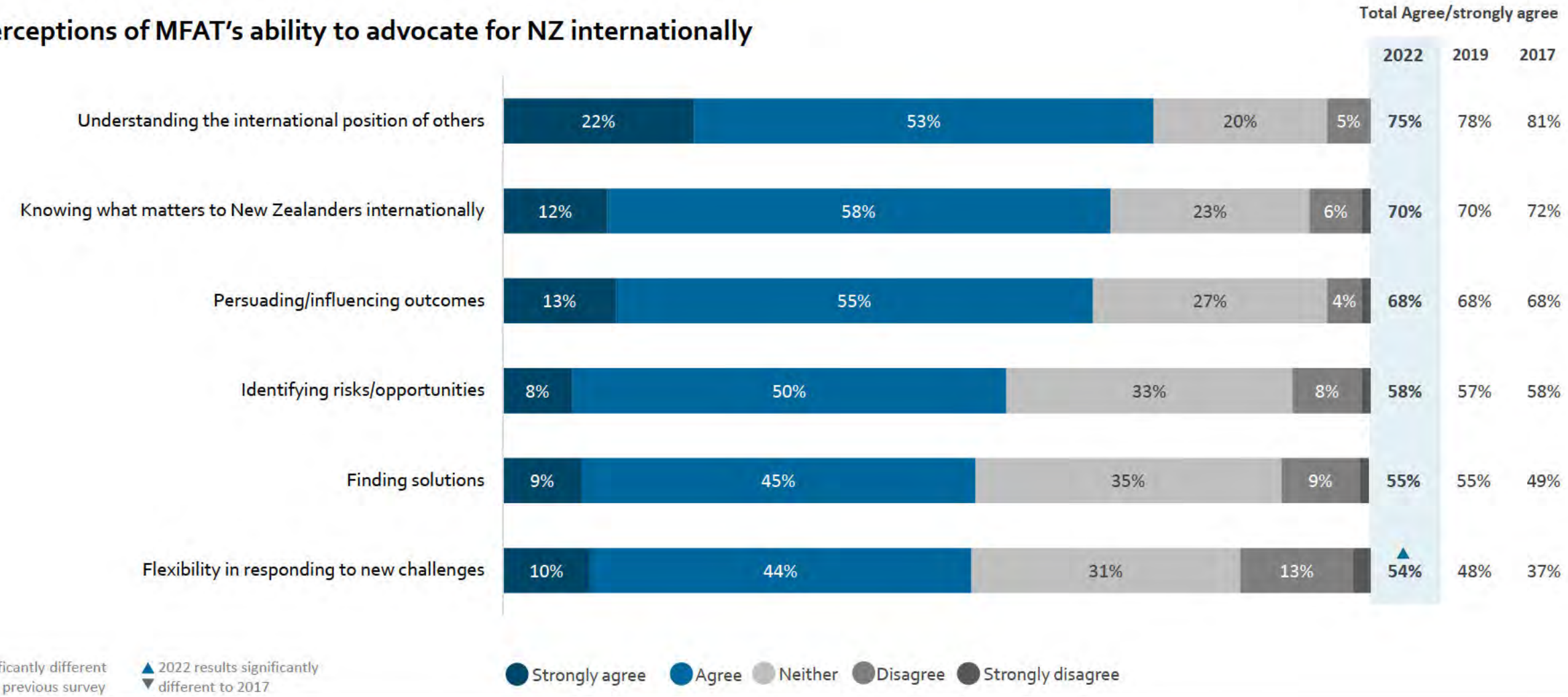
ADVOCATING FOR AOTEAROA

KANTAR PUBLIC

Most stakeholders feel MFAT continues to be good at understanding the position of other international players and what matters to New Zealanders internationally. In contrast, perceptions about MFAT's ability to flex to new challenges is trending upwards from 2017.

NEW ZEALAND FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
MANATŪ AORERE

Perceptions of MFAT's ability to advocate for NZ internationally



Source: M9: Thinking about MFAT's role in the area of representing and advocating for New Zealand's interests internationally, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base: All stakeholders (n=267). Excludes 'don't know' responses (note, don't know responses range from 12-14% for each statement)

MFAT is seen to play a strong role in advocating for Aotearoa.

NEW ZEALAND FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
MANATŪ AORERE

- Senior stakeholders comment on MFAT's strength in championing Aotearoa and its work and businesses overseas.
- There is a sense that stakeholders can overlook how much MFAT does overseas to assist them.

> *They're a very complex organisation. But, when you actually take a step back and look at what they do, they do a great job for New Zealand, and particularly the people offshore. I think we don't appreciate the effort that they put in.*
> **Business / Exporter**

> *Certainly championing New Zealand's exporters is a key part of what MFAT does. And obviously maintaining strong foreign relations with New Zealand stakeholder countries. From what I could see from the individuals we deal with, if they bring that level of competency and broad context and understanding, I could see that they do that well. I think there is definitely within them a strong desire to support New Zealand's export sector.*
> **Business / Exporter**

Stakeholders appreciate the agility and learning MFAT has demonstrated as a result of the pandemic.

NEW ZEALAND FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
MANATŪ AORERE

- Given the difficulties of working globally during the pandemic, NGO and business/exporter senior stakeholders appreciate the way in which MFAT was accommodating and flexible in its approach.
- Some observe MFAT gained a new appreciation for staff wellbeing as a result of the pandemic. While this is good for their staff, it is also helps MFAT have a better understanding about its partners.

We work in communities with a lot of community volunteers. And so being able to adapt what we were doing in a COVID environment, and working with MFAT around what those changes looked like, that that was good. That was really helpful.
NGO

It seems as though MFAT have been very accommodating in terms of understanding that some of the work has been impacted by COVID. Actually, one of my first roles has been to finalise the renegotiations of things that have changed because of COVID. I've done variations on contracts and moving things online.
Business / Exporter

I think internally for them there was a lot of learnings around staff wellbeing. And especially those that were overseas or those that were not able to get back or those that were having to support work from New Zealand, but with a different time zone. And so I think there was a lot that there seemed to be a lot of internal learning and an appreciation of those well-being factors for their team. And, you know, that can only be good because then that can be extended to good understanding around partners as well.
NGO

SUPPORTING TRADE

Businesses and trade organisations broadly hold positive perceptions of how MFAT can support them in trading overseas. Several perceptions have improved over time, including adding value to strategies for lifting exports, providing valuable market intelligence and providing broader help to exporters (beyond FTA negotiations).

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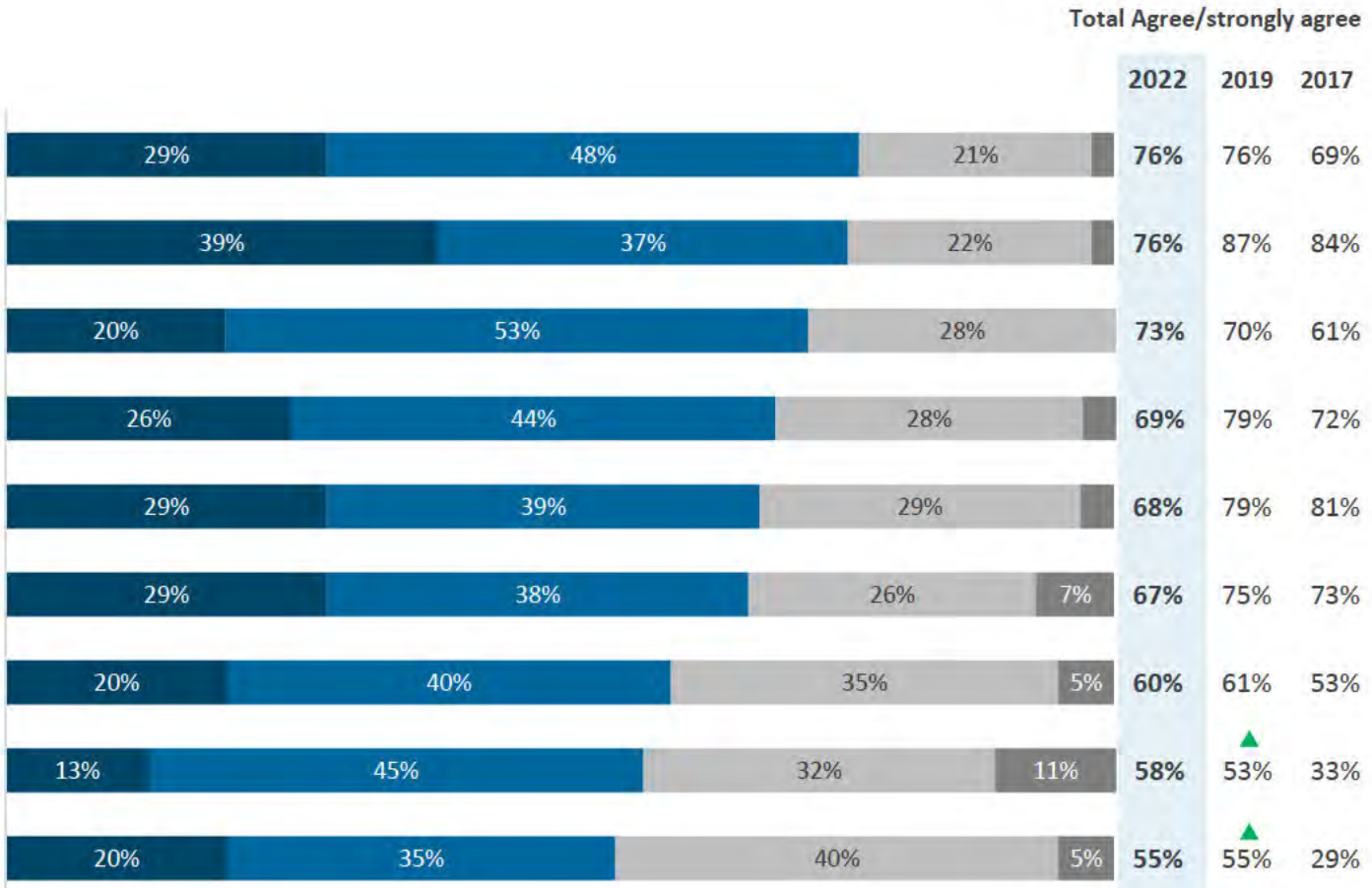
Perceptions of MFAT' support to NZ businesses



▲ Significantly different
▼ from previous survey

Source: M6: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about MFAT's role in supporting New Zealand businesses....? **Base:** Stakeholders who are businesses or trade organisations (n≈40). Excludes 'don't know' responses (note, don't know responses range from 8-17%, with higher uncertainty around whether MFAT defends NZ interests when trade restrictions violate WTO rules or whether MFAT's role in helping exporters beyond FTA negotiations is clear) *Posts include Embassies, High Commissions or Consulates). **Note:** The 2017 questionnaire contained a 'Not relevant' code which was removed in 2019.

Government stakeholder perceptions of NZ Inc. are broadly positive, and consistent over time. More could be done to support stakeholders in their understanding of NZ Inc. agencies' aims, enabling agencies to function as one team, and promoting an open NZ Inc. culture.

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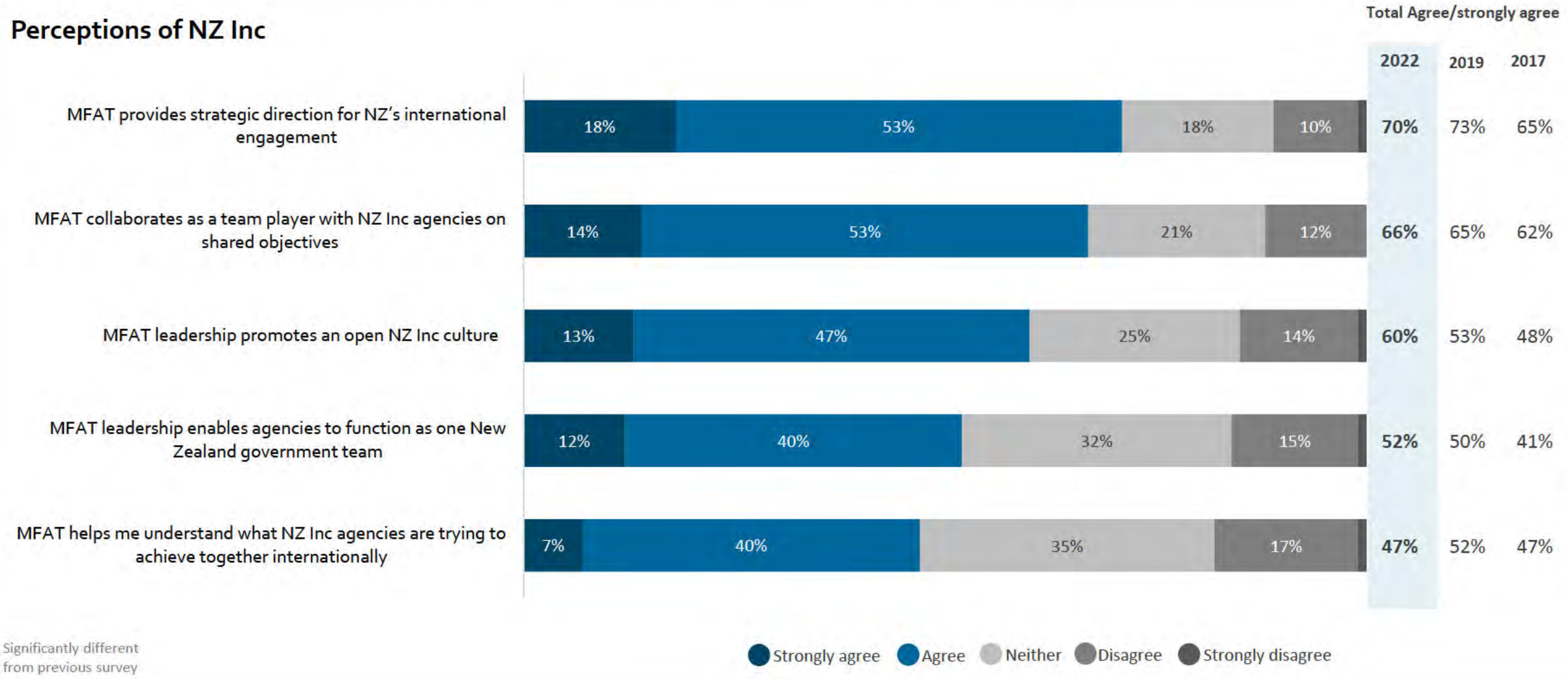
Perceptions of NZ Inc



Source: M8. Where the New Zealand Government's objectives have international engagement dimensions, MFAT collaborates with partner NZ Inc.agencies to deliver them. MFAT is expected to provide strategic leadership, lead integrated NZ Inc. international efforts and contribute to collaboration across the public sector. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about NZ Inc?
Base: Government stakeholders (n=145). Excludes 'don't know' responses (note, don't know responses range from 6-13%, with most uncertainty around whether MFAT leadership promotes an open NZ Inc.culture)

Satisfaction is high with MFAT's role in its work with NZ Inc. especially with cross-agency engagement and facilitating posting NZ Inc.staff overseas

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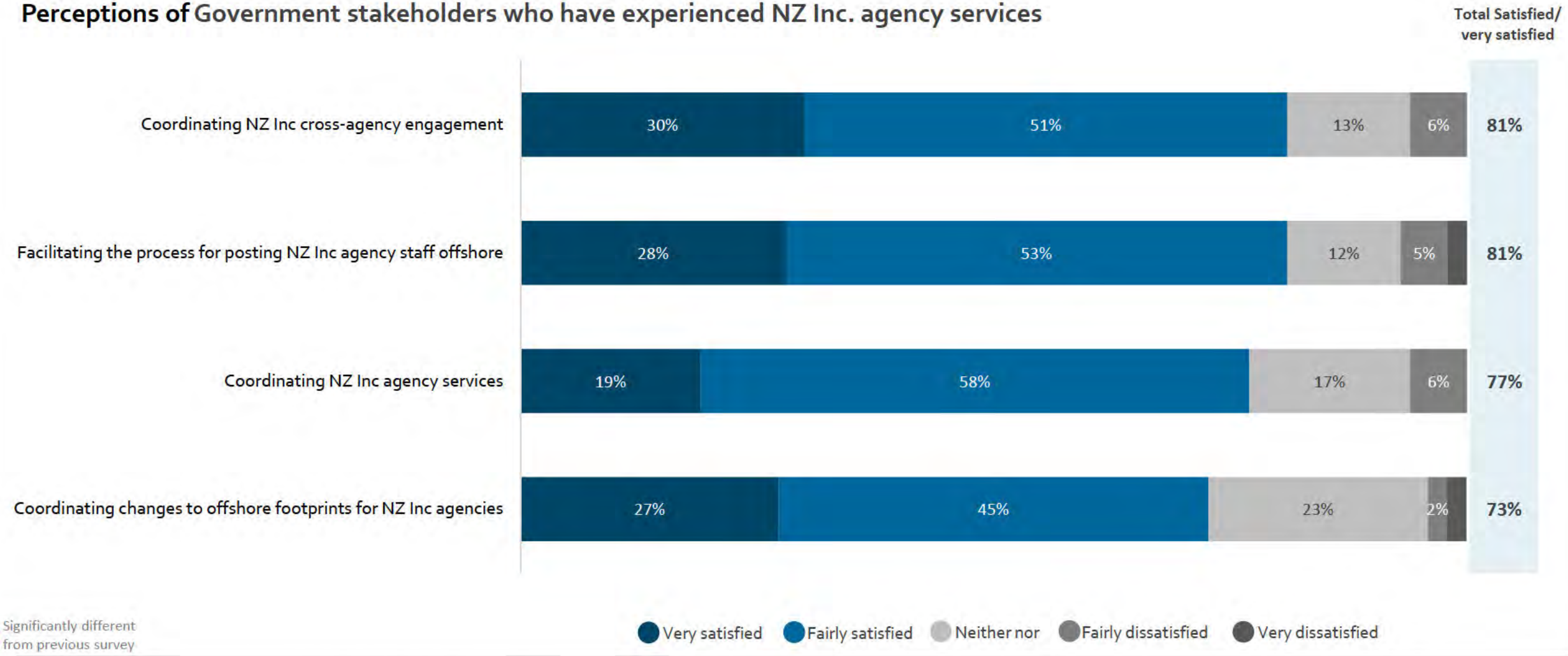
Perceptions of Government stakeholders who have experienced NZ Inc. agency services



▲ Significantly different
▼ from previous survey

Source: M1B. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall quality of service delivery regarding the following?
Base: Government stakeholders who have experienced NZ Inc.agency services provided at an overseas post n=48. Excludes 'don't know' responses
Note: These statements are new to 2022, so no time-series data is available.

Stakeholders are broadly of the view that there is at least some operational planning in the NZ Inc. team. Indeed, the proportion who feel there is a lot of joint operational planning has trended upwards over time (albeit the increase from 2017 to 2021 is not significant).

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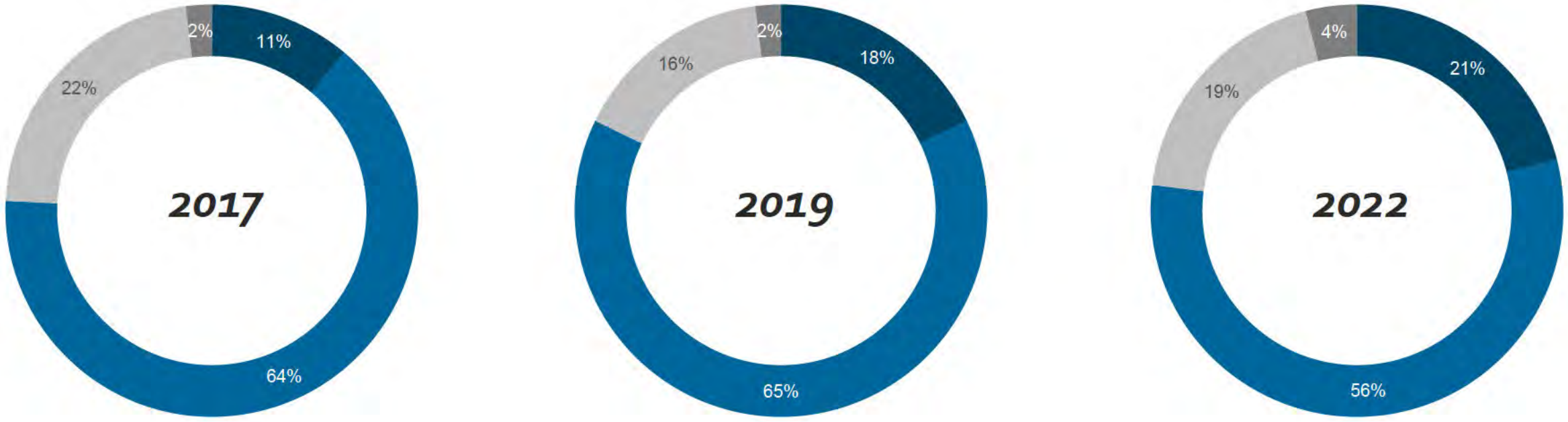
Extent to which there is joint operational planning in NZ Inc. team



None | Only a little | Some | A lot

Source: M1F. To what extent do you feel there is joint operational planning in the NZ Inc. team?
Base: Government stakeholders who have experienced NZ Inc. agency services provided at an overseas post (excl not applicable) (n=52). Excludes 'don't know' responses

PACIFIC PERCEPTIONS

KANTAR PUBLIC

MFAT is perceived to have a strong and positive impact on trade in the Pacific, but still has some way to go in terms of collaborative engagement.

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Senior Pacific stakeholders perceive MFAT to be very effective in:

- Advocating for New Zealand in the Pacific.
- Promoting bilateral trade between New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.
- Helping make connections with international organisations.
- Providing geopolitical advice and intel.

The Talanoa is seen to be an important platform to discuss improvements and opportunities for collaboration. The desire is to keep up with regular Talanoa – not just when either party has something urgent to cascade.

Pacific stakeholders note that for MFAT to participate in collaborative engagement, it must take the time to listen, hear, and be responsive to the views, priorities, and voices of the Pacific.

This will help to ensure respectful engagement, and it will help mitigate MFAT being seen to be 'pushing' New Zealand views into the Pacific.

MFAT does well in providing geopolitical advice, in-country support, and connection with international organisations.
Pacific stakeholder

Keep the Talanoa going.
Pacific stakeholder

Nurture relationships and don't have a short quick fix approach.
Pacific stakeholder

The foreign policy role must be a partnership, not a one-way track - a long way to go still.
Pacific stakeholder

Source: Qualitative insights

There is a need for greater cultural competency within MFAT.

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The senior Pacific stakeholders who took part in the research know and deal regularly with the Pacific Development Group / Pacific Connect Team within MFAT. This group is perceived positively by stakeholders, but the impression is that they are understaffed, and this can impact response times.

There is a desire for improved cultural competency within MFAT in terms of the Pacific ways, protocols, and spiritual connection. This is particularly important for those representing MFAT in the Pacific, and for those writing any policy regarding the Pacific.

We liaise primarily with the Pacific Connect Team or the Pacific Development Group within MFAT. We know who to contact in the team.
Pacific stakeholder

Better resourcing is needed to respond and support to our needs / to be more available to assist.
Pacific stakeholder

There's been a lack of timely response to queries which creates a delay in our response and support to members.
Pacific stakeholder

It's important for MFAT to train all its staff, from those that write policies about the Pacific or work in the Pacific space to have cultural competency training. We see a lot of young graduates that have little to no understanding of the Pacific and its way of doing things, so cultural competency will go a long way.
Pacific stakeholder

For most, MFAT communicates well.

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The senior Pacific stakeholders generally feel that MFAT communication is transparent and regular.

Some mentioned that the number of communications can be overwhelming at times. This can give the impression of comms being transactional rather than value-based and meaningful.

There is an opportunity to build awareness of the IDC programme - most did not know about the IDC programme but knew about NZ Aid.

Others noted that changing personnel within MFAT can disrupt communication.

And for some, communication between departments was seen to be lacking.

The more funding, the more communication. In some instances, it is more quantity than anything, which potentially leads to missed opportunities.
Pacific stakeholder

When did NZ AID change its name to IDCP? Is that a new funding organisation?
Pacific stakeholder

A change in personnel within MFAT always creates delays in communication, it's difficult to secure a meeting with high level officials with MFAT.
Pacific stakeholder

I get the impression that the departments within it do not communicate or know what the other is doing.
Pacific stakeholder

Short-term funding can be restrictive.

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The provision of long-term funding is seen to work well, allowing organisations to plan, pivot quickly, and scale their business.

In comparison, short-term annual funding is seen to be more restrictive, particularly if organisations want to plan beyond the next 12 months.

> *Funding is important for us, especially long-term funding. Having yearly funding prohibits our ability to project ahead and be strategic in how we better support and promote New Zealand's values in the Pacific.*
> **Pacific stakeholder**

Some would like to see a stronger New Zealand presence in the Pacific.

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Some Pacific stakeholders hold the view that New Zealand / MFAT's voice and presence in the Pacific are too passive.

They would like to see New Zealand being more active in the region – particularly as China's interest increases.

> *MFAT is very narrow-minded in its approach in the Pacific, the encroachment of China into the Pacific is evidence of this failure.*
> **Pacific stakeholder**

> *Businesses are made to make international connections with China when it is MFAT that should be doing this.*
> **Pacific stakeholder**

PRIORITIES MOVING FORWARD

KANTAR PUBLIC

Statistical analysis demonstrates that MFAT staff are most important in shaping overall satisfaction, rather than organisation-level attributes. MFAT performs well on may critical staff attributes, but less so on the organisational ones. Priority areas for improvement include better leadership support for NZ Inc's future footprint, better coordination between MFAT and NZ Inc, diversity of thought and ability to find solutions at an organisational level

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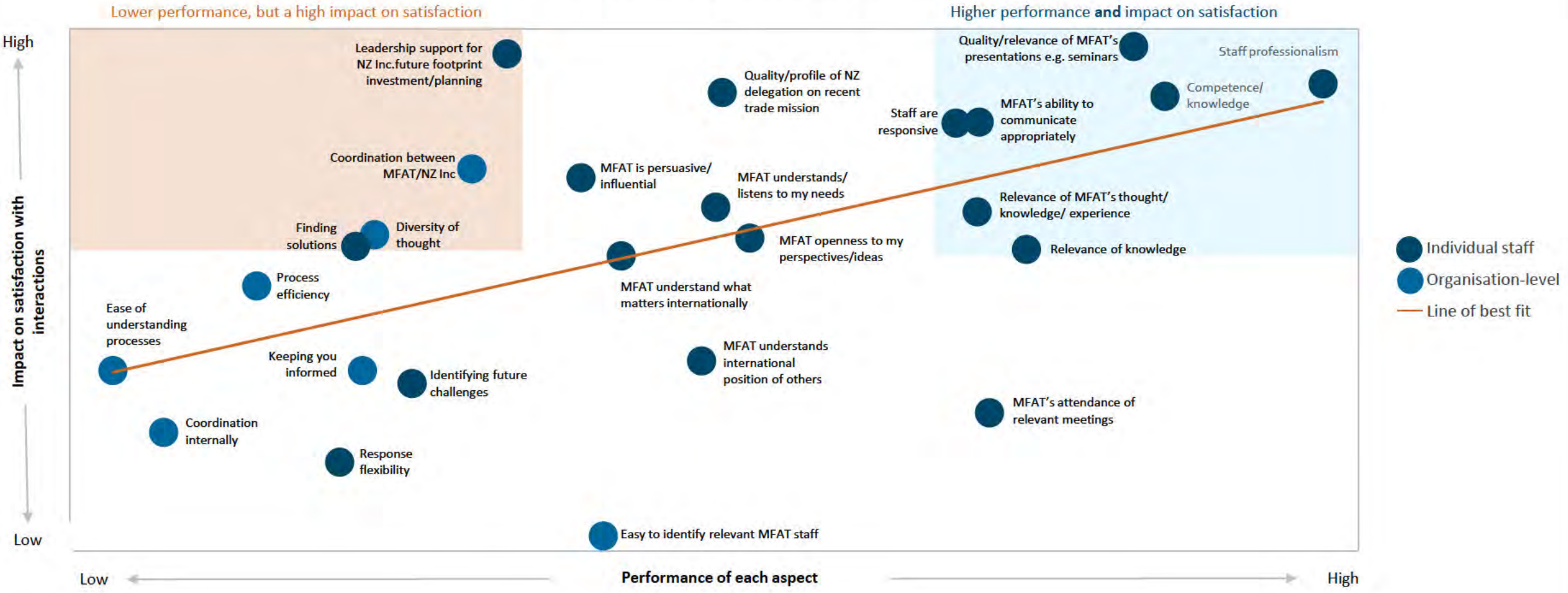
Mapping priorities for improvement in delivering stakeholder satisfaction with MFAT interactions



Source: Quantitative insights
Base: Stakeholders who have had an interaction with MFAT in the past year

Statistical analysis reveals the extent to which different attitudes shape stakeholder perceptions on MFAT's efficacy in representing and advocating for New Zealand. The area where there is greatest room for improvement is in finding solutions, and this should be a priority moving forward.

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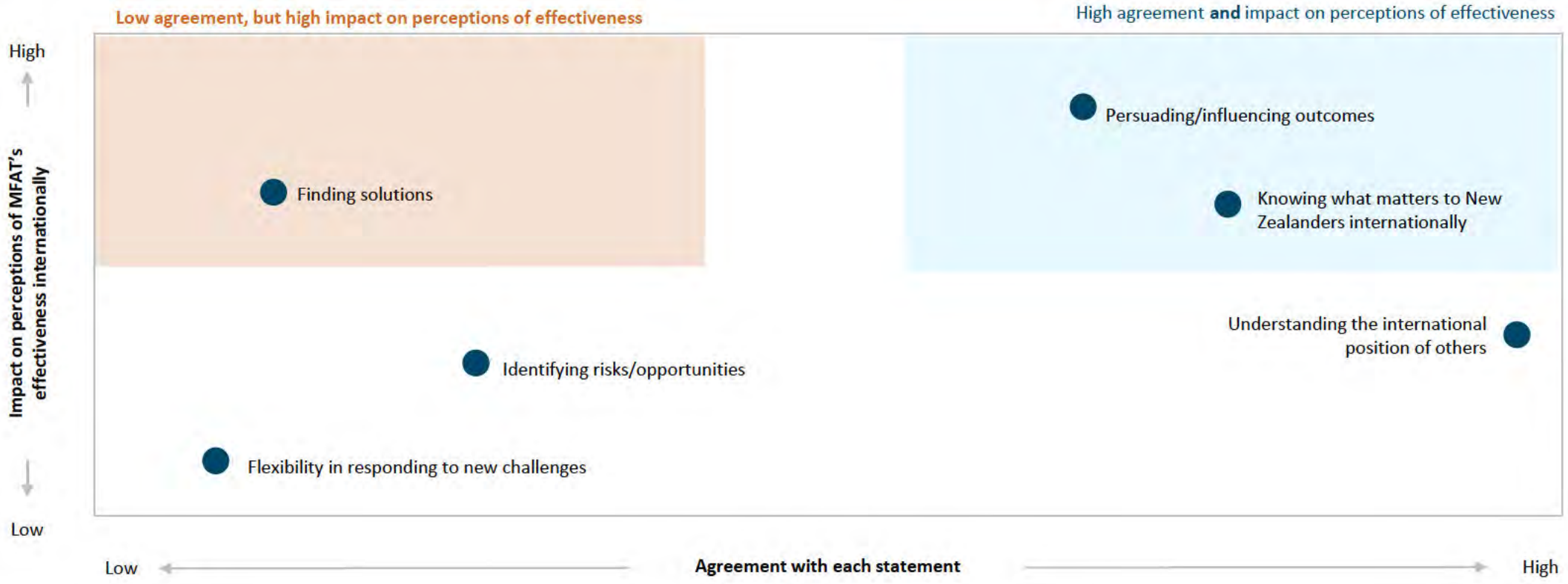
Mapping priorities for improvement in stakeholder perceptions of MFAT's effectiveness in representing and advocating for New Zealand



Source: Quantitative insights

Base: All stakeholders (n=268)

Senior stakeholders believe MFAT can add even further value by focussing on creating true partnerships, greater transparency, and continued in-country support.

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Working towards true partnerships with stakeholders

- More focus on understanding stakeholders and building relationships.
- More regular interactions and conversations at senior levels.
- Less superiority and a greater willingness to support rather than lead (where appropriate).

Knowing us, understanding us, really partnering with us, having confidence in us and listening.
NGO

Regular relationship building and contact. I think it's important. It just means that they're not just a funder. They are a partner.
NGO

There was a time where the CE or Deputy CE would come to Auckland to meet with different private sector CEs, and get a feeling of what was happening, in particular with internationally focused businesses, major exporting businesses.
Business / Exporter

Even greater transparency and sharing of information

- Better articulation of New Zealand's interests, and supporting conversations around this.
- Willingness to speak more frankly and share more information.
- Proactively sharing any potential issues that stakeholders might be interested in.

Often, it's quite hard to find out what's going on, even in things that are public statements. I think there's a desire to share information, but it's not always necessarily done very well.
Academia

If you're not actually consulting people, then you can't be very transparent and open with them.
NZ Inc

Continued in-country support to develop strong international relationships.

- Help stakeholders understand problems (in specific countries).
- Share New Zealand's in-country priorities.
- Identify key people stakeholders should connect with in-country.
- Identify in-country opportunities.
- Facilitate collaboration with other aid programmes (avoid duplication with other countries and/or organisations).

I think continuing on the path that they are already on, which is actually removing barriers to doing business in other countries, making that a lot simpler and easier for us.
Business / Exporter

Some senior stakeholders would like to see a greater focus on thinking strategically

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- NZ Inc. senior stakeholders in particular believe MFAT can be reactive and stuck in the detail. Similarly, business/exporter senior stakeholders feel MFAT is reactive because it is too busy fighting fires.
- They see a need for MFAT to be more proactive, and focus on the broader strategy.

We've worked quite a bit with them in terms of trying to reduce the amount of rewriting of other people's papers, but what we've found is they get very stuck on minor details, so they refuse to budge on what are quite minor things.
NZ Inc.

It's very reactive responses. There's always so much going on, so much to react to. And so there's not a lot of time spent, even where they want to, to actually stop and think about things strategically.
NZ Inc.

Responds, rather than proactively manages.
NZ Inc.

NGOs continue to believe more can be done to raise MFAT's public profile for its international aid work

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As in 2019, senior NGO stakeholders do not feel MFAT makes its international aid work visible to the public.

While they understand MFAT is working to improve this, they feel it is important to communicate as it helps its (and NGOs) social license to operate. These stakeholders feel support for the aid work that takes place would be further built if the public have an improved understanding of how the funds are spent and the impact these funds have.

> *Our supporters are very supportive of that relationship [with MFAT]. They really do acknowledge MFAT's funding for the work that we do. So there's a lot of good feeling. I know that MFAT are looking at how they better communicate that to the general public. I think that is a good path to follow, so that the general public are more aware of how the aid budget is not just expended, but the impact of it. I think if you asked the person in the street, they wouldn't be aware of the incredible work that is facilitated because of that funding and confidence in organisations to implement.*
> **NGO**

Several of the improvement themes expressed by senior stakeholders are echoed in the closing comments provided by stakeholders in the survey. Stakeholders also take the opportunity to reiterate a number of positive sentiments.

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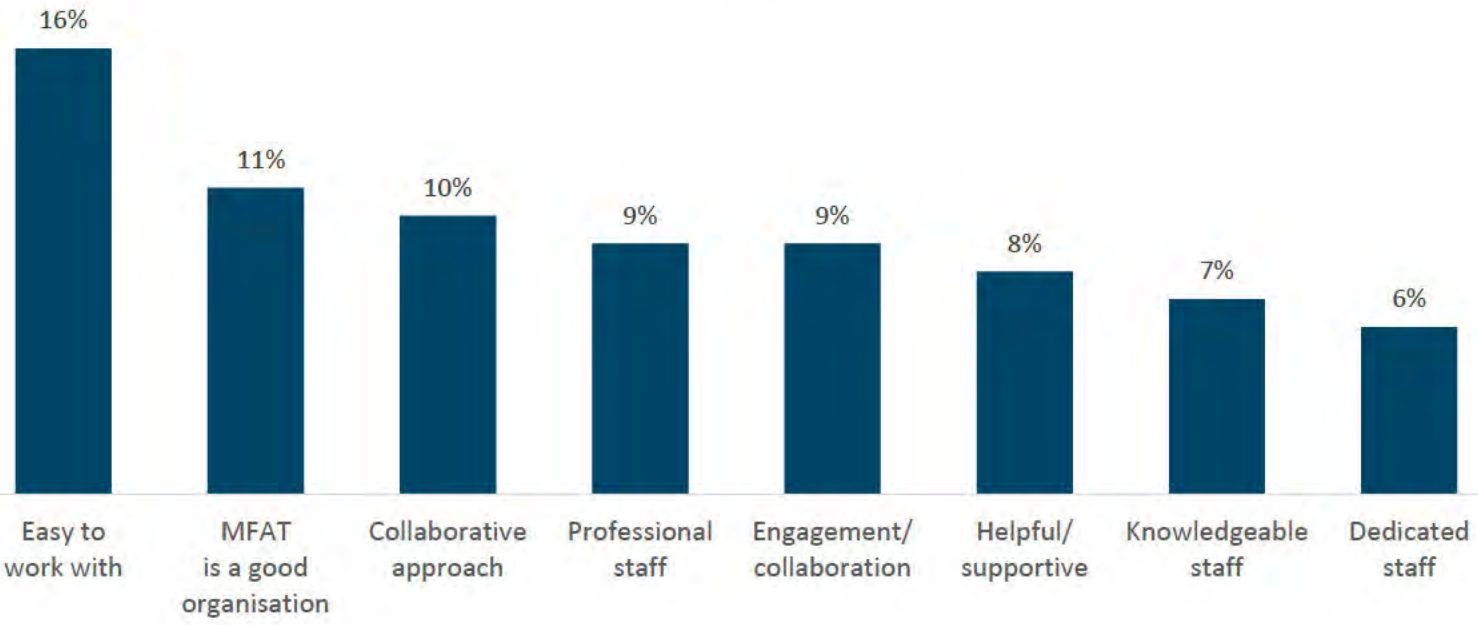
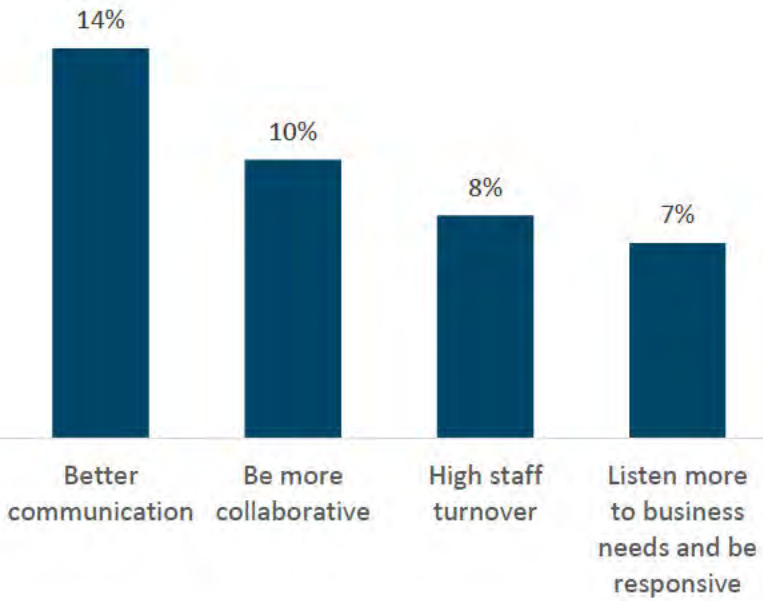
What stakeholders say they are happy with …



Where stakeholders say they want improvements …



Source: F1 is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience with, or your perceptions of, MFAT?
Base: 2022 n=105. Only showing responses with more than 5%. Showing as a percentage of those who provided a comment (i.e. excluding those who said they have no other comments)

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Appendix A

KPI scorecard

KANTAR PUBLIC

KPI scorecard

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INDICATOR	MEASUREMENT	2017 actual	2019 actual	2022 target	2022 actual
MFAT acts in the world to build a safer, more prosperous and more sustainable future for New Zealanders	Stakeholders are satisfied with MFAT's effectiveness at representing New Zealand's interests internationally (Covers whole ministry)	79%	88%	80%	85%
Management of New Zealand's International Development Cooperation.	**New Zealand domestic engagement** Domestic stakeholders who are satisfied with their engagement with MFAT. (International Development Cooperation)	75%	90%	90%	87%
Departmental output expenses – Analysis and advice to inform New Zealand's foreign policy	**New Zealand domestic engagement** Domestic stakeholders who are satisfied with their engagement with MFAT (Foreign policy and trade - i.e. excluding International Development Cooperation)	84%	92%	90%	86%
Delivery of services – Services for other New Zealand agencies overseas.	Satisfaction with service delivery – NZ Inc. Agency Services provided in NZ, and NZ Inc. Agency Services provided at an overseas post.	73%	71%	70%	71%

Source: Indicator 1: M10 - Overall, how effective do you think MFAT is at representing and advocating for New Zealand's interests internationally?
Indicator 2: M4b – Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the interactions you have had with MFAT staff recently? Non-International Development Cooperation stakeholders
Indicator 3: M4b – Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the interactions you have had with MFAT staff recently? International Development Cooperation stakeholders
Indicator 4: M1e – How would you rate support services provided by MFAT (including property, IT) which enable you to perform your role?

KPI scorecard (2)

NEW ZEALAND FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
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INDICATOR	MEASUREMENT	2019	2022
Ratings for leadership and collaboration from NZ Inc. Agencies	NZ Inc agencies agree that MFAT provides strategic direction for New Zealand's international engagement	69%	70%
	MFAT leadership enables agencies to function as one team	44%	52%
	NZ Inc. agencies agree that MFAT collaborates as a team player with NZ Inc. agencies on shared objectives	60%	66%
Confidence of Māori in their partnership with the Ministry	Māori partners are satisfied with their recent interaction with MFAT	*Not asked*	81%
Understanding of MFAT's role and what it delivers for New Zealanders	Stakeholders understand what MFAT offers	84%	87%
	Stakeholders understand MFAT's strategy and direction	*Not asked*	59%

Note: The target for these measures is to increase or maintain the trend based on previous survey results, rather than a specific target set for the year

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Appendix B

Familiarity with APEC
2021

KANTAR PUBLIC

More than four out of five stakeholders know at least a little about APEC 2021. Levels of knowledge are broadly consistent with 2019. The key things stakeholders are aware of are around how or where APEC was hosted.

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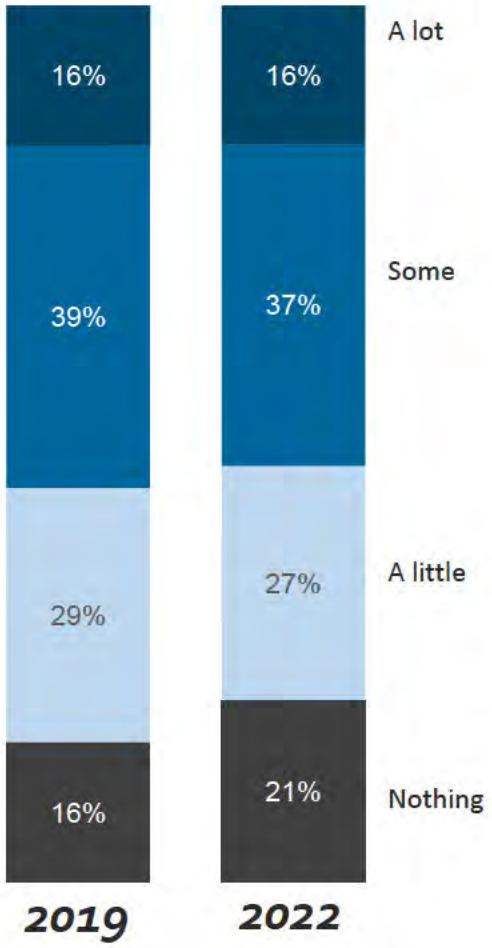
Familiarity with APEC 2021



What stakeholders say they know about APEC 2021

"Hosting series of multilateral engagements throughout the year at senior official, ministerial and prime ministerial level on trade and economic cooperation issues of join interest to member economies."

"21 economies working together to find practical solutions to managing the Asia-Pacific region's challenges due to Covid-19 and other megatrends like climate change - aligning on inclusive and sustainable recovery. It involved a HUGE amount of work to facilitate virtually."

"As all of APEC summits , it brings together leaders of countries and industry and a huge media contingent together in one place for a week to discuss/agree/plan on things strategic to APEC members. It also has a pre-post effect for about a 12 month window of focus to the hosting nation."

"...for me [APEC] was really all about increased indigenous and Māori presence both culturally given that we were hosts and ensuring our manuhiri were well looked after albeit virtually, in the substance and outcomes of the discussions across the wide range of meetings and specific workshops and seminars etc."

Source: Q54. How much do you know about New Zealand hosting APEC in 2021? Q55. Please tell us your understanding of what APEC 2021 involves?
Base: Q54 All stakeholders (n=267). Q55 Stakeholders who know at least a little about APEC 2021 (n=177). Only showing results with 5% or more