

In whom do we trust?

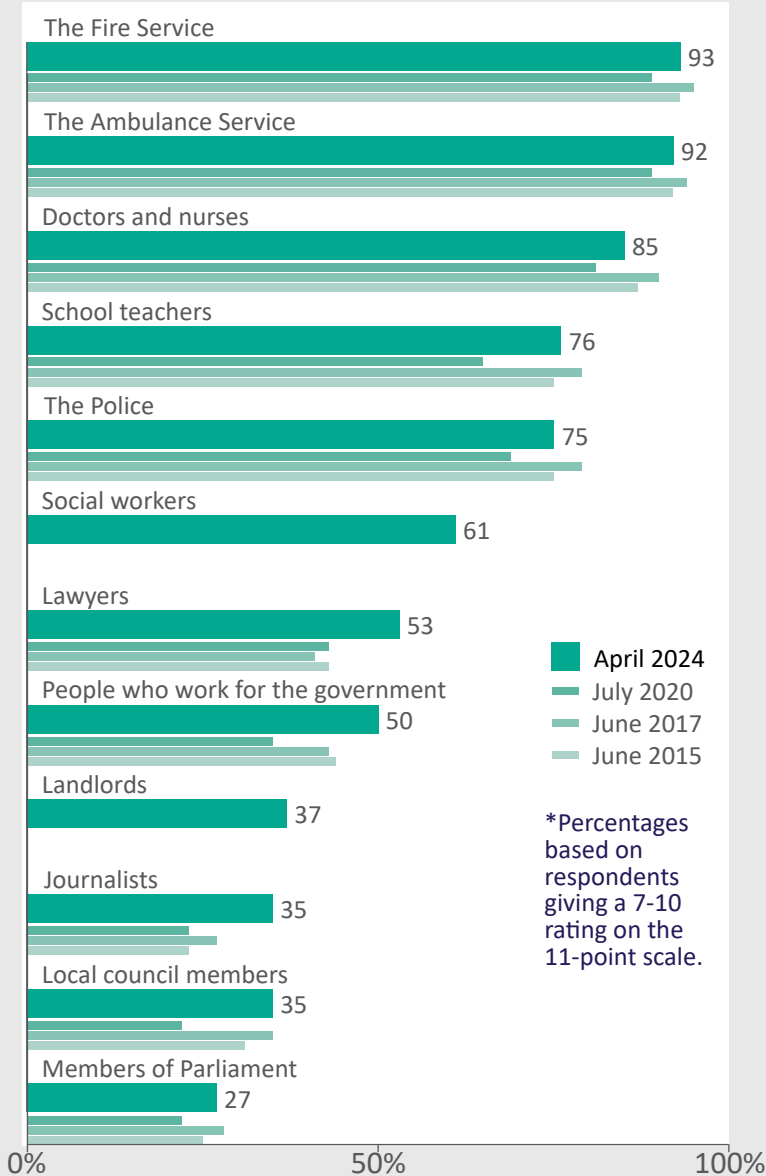
Which occupations do we have trust and confidence in, and which ones do we not?



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The Police Association recently rejected a government pay offer, and drew comparisons with firefighters', nurses' and teachers' salary increases. To contribute to the discussion, we asked the general public to rate their level of trust and confidence in the Police and other key occupations - a repeat of our regular *Trust and Confidence in Professions* poll.

Occupational trust & confidence – Time series*



KEY FINDINGS

- 1 Trust and confidence in most occupations appears to have **rebounded**, when compared with the poll that was taken in 2020, 3-4 months into the COVID-19 lockdowns.
- 2 The relative positions between the top five occupations are mostly **unchanged** in terms of trust and confidence, and continue to be the **Fire Service, the Ambulance Service, doctors and nurses, school teachers and the Police**, rating between 93% and 75%.
- 3 The least trusted continue to be **Members of Parliament, local council members, journalists and people who work for the government**, with **landlords** now in the survey at 37% (and 4th from the bottom.)
- 4 The results differ by **age and gender**, but less by region. Older respondents (i.e., 55+) and females were generally more sceptical, rating their trust and confidence lower in most occupations. For example, 22% of older respondents trusted members of Parliament compared with 34% for those respondents aged 18-34.

"We are pleased to see trust and confidence in most occupations surveyed rebounding, and the 'caring' occupations continuing to top the list. However, the occupations scoring low levels of trust and confidence – both relatively and in an absolute sense – need to carefully consider the results."

Rangahau Aotearoa | Research New Zealand Managing Partner, Emanuel Kalafatelis.

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The topic

Last month, the Police Association rejected the government's pay offer, describing it as "a kick in the guts", "insulting", "demoralising", "farcical", "disrespectful", "an absolute joke", and much more. The Association reported that "many have also revealed the extreme financial pressures they are currently facing, difficulty and inability, to pay rent and mortgages and the lure of Australia".

The Association drew comparisons with firefighters', nurses' and teachers' salary increases, with the proposed increase to Police officers' salaries failing on all counts.

In response, a revised offer was presented to the Police Association who said they would "aim to present the fully detailed offer to members for voting in the second week of April. That notice will include a pay calculator so members can assess how the offer affects them individually, a terms of settlement, and a draft Collective Employment Agreement ... We do not believe there is any possibility of negotiating for further enhancements. If members reject the offer, we will go to final offer arbitration".

The poll

In times like these, we feel it is important to stop and take stock of the trust and confidence that ordinary New Zealanders have of the Police and other key occupations. Therefore, early this month (4-8 April 2024) we repeated our regular **Trust and Confidence in Professions** poll.

In addition to Police, the nationally representative sample of a little over 1,000 New Zealanders, 18+ was asked to rate their trust and confidence in 11 other professions, including the media, public servants and Ministers of Parliament.

Headline findings

1. Overall, trust and confidence in most occupations appears to have **rebounded**, when compared with the poll that was taken 3-4 months into the COVID-19 lockdowns.
2. This aside, the relative positions between the occupations are **unchanged**; the 'Top Five' occupations in terms of trust and confidence continue to be (in order): the Fire Service, the Ambulance Service, doctors and nurses, school teachers and the Police – with trust and confidence ratings of between 93% and 75%.
3. In comparison, the 'Bottom Five' continue to be (in order): members of Parliament, local council members, journalists, landlords and people who work for the government.

4. The results differ by **age and gender** , but less by region. Older respondents (i.e., 55+) and females were generally more sceptical, rating their trust and confidence lower in most occupations.

Comment

“We are pleased to see trust and confidence in most occupations surveyed rebounding, and the ‘caring’ occupations continuing to top the list. However, the occupations scoring low levels of trust and confidence – both relatively and in an absolute sense – need to carefully consider the results.”

Rangahau Aotearoa | Research New Zealand Managing Partner, Emanuel Kalafatelis.

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Key findings – Trust and confidence in the Police and other occupations

New Zealanders' trust and confidence in the Police and eleven other occupations was asked in this poll. On a rotating basis, respondents were asked to rate their trust and confidence in these occupations using a 11-point scale, running from 0='no trust and confidence at all' to 10='full trust and confidence'.

This scale was chosen because this is typically how trust and confidence is measured in a commercial setting.

Table 1 overleaf presents the results for the current poll in comparison to the same poll in June 2025, June 2017 and July 2020. Note that the 2020 was 3-4 months into the COVID-19 lockdowns.

The key findings are as follows:

- As a general observation, trust and confidence ratings for most occupations fell in the July 2020 poll when compared with the previous polls in 2015 and 2017.
- The current poll shows trust and confidence ratings **rebounding** for most occupations. The asterisked occupations indicate statistically significant improvements (e.g., 76% trust and confidence in school teachers compared with 65% in July 2020).
- This aside, the relative positions between the occupations are **unchanged**; the 'top rating' occupations in terms of trust and confidence continue to be: the Fire Service, the Ambulance Service, doctors and nurses, school teachers and the Police.
- Notably, we are also seeing a significant improvement in trust and confidence for lawyers, people who work for the government, journalists, local council members and members of Parliament – albeit around 50% or less.

Table 1: Occupational trust & confidence – Time series (this table shows the percentage who rated each occupation between 7 and 10 inclusive)

Q. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means ‘no trust and confidence’ and 10 means ‘full trust and confidence,’ how would you rate your trust and confidence in each of the following?

Trust & confidence in ...	Unweighted base =	April	July	June	June
		2024	2020	2017	2015
		1,009	1,010	500	500
	%	%	%	%	%
The Fire Service	93	89	95	93	
The Ambulance Service	92	89	94	92	
Doctors and nurses	85	81	90	87	
School teachers	76*	65	79	75	
The Police	75*	69	79	75	
Social workers	61	NM	NM	NM	
Lawyers	53*	43	41	43	
People who work for the government	50*	35	43	44	
Landlords	37	NM	NM	NM	
Journalists	35*	23	27	23	
Local council members	35*	22	35	31	
Members of Parliament	27*	22	28	25	

Percentages based on respondents giving a 7-10 rating on the 11-point scale.

* Statistically significant result.

Table 2 overleaf presents the results for the current poll by **age**. The key findings are as follows:

- With the exception of the Police, the results for the Top Five rating occupations in terms of trust and confidence do **not** differ by age (i.e., the Fire Service, the Ambulance Service, doctors and nurses, and school teachers).
- Aside from these four occupations, trust and confidence in nearly all other occupations differs by age. More specifically, aside from the Police, lawyers and people who work for the government, respondents in the 55+ age group were more sceptical, recording **lower** levels of trust and confidence compared with other age groups (e.g., 22% for members of Parliament compared with 34% for those respondents aged 18-34).

Table 2: Occupational trust & confidence – By age (this table shows the percentage who rated each occupation between 7 and 10 inclusive)

Q. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means ‘no trust and confidence’ and 10 means ‘full trust and confidence,’ how would you rate your trust and confidence in each of the following?

Trust & confidence in ...	Unweighted base = Total 1009 %	18-34 294 %	35-54 374 %	55+ 341 %
The Fire Service	93	93	91	96
The Ambulance Service	92	93	89	93
Doctors and nurses	85	84	82	90
School teachers	76	78	74	75
The Police	75	74	68*	81*
Social workers	61	67	61	57*
Lawyers	53	62*	46*	51
People who work for the government	50	48	50	50
Landlords	37	45*	34	32*
Journalists	35	39	36	29*
Local council members	35	44*	33	28*
Members of Parliament	27	34*	26	22*

Percentages based on respondents giving a 7-10 rating on the 11-point scale.

* Statistically significant result.

Table 3 overleaf presents the results for the current poll by **gender**. The key findings are as follows:

- With the exception of the Fire Service and the Ambulance Service, female respondents were more sceptical recording **lower** levels of trust and confidence compared with males respondents (e.g., 16% for members of Parliament compared with 40% for male respondents).

Table 3: Occupational trust & confidence – By gender (this table shows the percentage who rated each occupation between 7 and 10 inclusive)

Q. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means ‘no trust and confidence’ and 10 means ‘full trust and confidence,’ how would you rate your trust and confidence in each of the following?

Trust & confidence in ...	Unweighted base = Total 1,009 %	Male 480 %	Female 526 %
The Fire Service	93	94	92
The Ambulance Service	92	93	90
Doctors and nurses	85	89	82*
School teachers	76	79	72*
The Police	75	79	70*
Social workers	61	66	56*
Lawyers	53	57	48*
People who work for the government	50	55	44*
Landlords	37	46	27*
Journalists	35	44	26*
Local council members	35	44	26*
Members of Parliament	27	40	16*

Percentages based on respondents giving a 7-10 rating on the 11-point scale.

* Statistically significant result.

Table 4 overleaf presents the results for the current poll by **region**. The key findings are as follows:

- Compared with age and gender, there are relatively **few** statistically significant differences by region.

Table 4: Occupational trust & confidence – By region (this table shows the percentage who rated each occupation between 7 and 10 inclusive)

Q. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means ‘no trust and confidence’ and 10 means ‘full trust and confidence,’ how would you rate your trust and confidence in each of the following?

Trust & confidence in ...	Unweighted base = Total 1,009 %	North North Island 525 %	South North Island 241 %	South Island 243 %
The Fire Service	93	93	93	94
The Ambulance Service	92	90	93	94
Doctors and nurses	85	84	88	86
School teachers	76	75	74	78
The Police	75	74	77	73
Social workers	61	63	56*	61
Lawyers	53	55	50	51
People who work for the government	50	50	49	49
Landlords	37	41	33*	30*
Journalists	35	38	29*	31
Local council members	35	37	34	30
Members of Parliament	27	30	26	23*

Percentages based on respondents giving a 7-10 rating on the 11-point scale.

* Statistically significant result.

Method

This survey of 1,009 respondents aged 18 years and over was conducted online, between 04-08 April 2024. The maximum margin of error is +/- 3.4 percent (at the 95 percent confidence level).

The sample has been weighted by gender and age to ensure the results are representative of the population 18 years plus based on these demographic criteria. The survey was not undertaken on behalf of any organisation, but as part of Rangahau Aotearoa Research New Zealand's social poll of New Zealanders' opinions about topical issues.

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