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# WAKA KOTAHI STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

JULY 2021

*Executive Summary Version*



Waka Kotahi commissioned Kantar Public (formerly Colmar Brunton)<sup>1</sup> to undertake a third stakeholder survey to understand how it is perceived by current stakeholders across a number of areas, and if there has been any changes since the survey in 2020.

The success of most businesses is built on strong relationships that take time to develop, and are based on trust and respect. Waka Kotahi is no exception.

Waka Kotahi has an ongoing need to measure and track its performance on key stakeholder engagement measures.

Specific objectives of this research are:

- To understand how stakeholders perceive current engagement with Waka Kotahi.
- To identify potential improvements from a stakeholder perspective.
- To provide updated measures and change to the baselines found in 2019 to assess shifts in how Waka Kotahi is perceived by stakeholders on a number of metrics included in the agency's 2020/21 Position Statement.



<sup>1</sup> | The joint social research teams across Colmar Brunton and Kantar New Zealand transitioned into Kantar Public (our joint parent company) on 1 July 2021. This means we have a single research team of around 20 skilled and talented social researchers in Aotearoa, who in turn are supported by the global Kantar Public network.



**309\*** online interviews

*In order to have a more robust base size for performance measures, partial completes (those who made it to Section F of the survey) were also included in the analysis.*



**15** minute online survey



## SAMPLE SOURCE

Respondents were sourced from a list of stakeholders provided by Waka Kotahi. Nicole Rosie, CE sent a prenotification email in advance of the survey invite.

## FIELDWORK

31 May to 25 June 2021



An initial invite was sent on 31 May, with reminder emails sent on 8, 14, and 24 June.

*Note: Council stakeholders received their initial invite on 8 June, as 31 May coincided with the announcement of indicative Council NLTP funding.*



## ACCURACY

Findings based on the full sample have a margin of error of +/-4.8% (at the 95% confidence level).

## RESPONSE RATE

**28%**  
(adjusted)

This response rate is broadly in line with Colmar Brunton's expectations based on similar studies, and is in line with 2020 (28%).

### The response rate was calculated using the following information.

- Colmar Brunton sent out a total of 1,133 survey invites via email.
- 10 'bouncebacks' (i.e. invalid email addresses) were received from the initial Waka Kotahi CE invite.
- Six percent of those surveyed had not interacted within the last 12 months (used to adjust the response rate).

## NOTES TO READER

Differences are reported both at a total level (between 2020 and 2021) and at a sub-group level. Any differences reported in this research are significant at the 95% confidence level. Before the third reminder we cut four banks of questions from the survey in order to reduce the interview length and maximise the response rate. This cut the survey down to 12 minutes in the last week of fieldwork.

Individual percentages do not always sum to the 'nett percentages'. This is due to rounding. Nett figures are reported on the full base, however when the 'don't know' responses make up a significant proportion of answers, a nett figure excluding don't know is also included.

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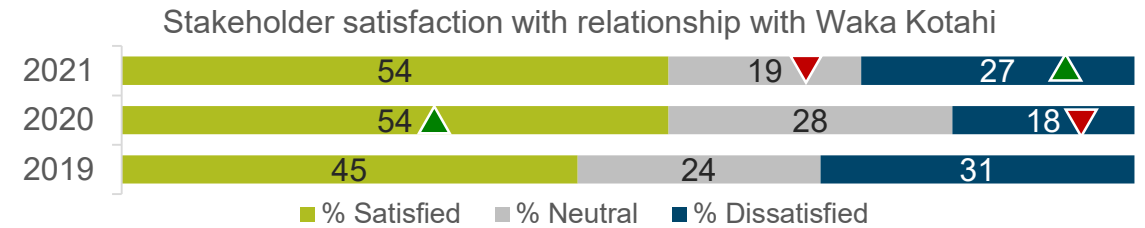
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: REBUILDING REPUTATION OF WAKA KOTAHI

## Stakeholder<sup>1</sup> satisfaction in consistent with 2020.

Stakeholders' satisfaction with their relationship with Waka Kotahi has held steady at 54%. However, dissatisfaction has increased to 27%, compared to 2020. This is a general pattern throughout the research, and indicates increasing polarisation in stakeholders' views and experiences of Waka Kotahi. Our analysis indicates that this polarisation is not a result of the timing of the survey coinciding with the most recent round of funding decisions.



## Despite a lack of growth in satisfaction, there have been some areas of success for Waka Kotahi in 2021.



Stakeholders with a Māori affiliation have higher than average satisfaction (62%). They also rate Waka Kotahi more positively than average across a number of measures.



Stakeholders are increasingly mentioning strong or improving working relationships with Waka Kotahi. They are also more likely to feel that they have access to staff than they did in 2020. This, combined with fewer stakeholders saying that they have no point of contact at Waka Kotahi, indicates the good work that the agency is doing in engaging with their stakeholders.

## However, there is work to be done in order to standardise the experience that stakeholders are having, and curb the polarisation of their views.

Increasing negative ratings on almost all measures, yet consistent positive ratings, indicate a disparity in the engagement that stakeholders are receiving from Waka Kotahi.

It is possible that this baseline of negative sentiment is creeping up due to teething issues with the recent introduction of the regional model at the operational level. A number of stakeholders spontaneously mention issues with the reorganisation (such as losing their contacts within Waka Kotahi) as detrimentally impacting their relationship with the agency. Additionally, a greater proportion of stakeholders reference communication issues as a negative aspect of their relationship than in 2020.

Waka Kotahi needs to work to ensure that stakeholders have a clear understanding of who they can engage within their region as a result of the reorganisation. While there are some improving relationships, ensuring that new points of contact and structures are communicated is paramount. This should help to bring negative sentiment back down.

Additionally, those interacting with Waka Kotahi for planning / funding tend to rate the agency less positively than average. Business case submitters are also generally rating the business case process less positively than they did in 2020. Roughly one-third of stakeholders fall under each of these groups, making lessening negative ratings in these areas an important area to work on moving forwards.

<sup>1</sup> Normally Waka Kotahi prefer to describe participants as 'co-funders' or 'partners', but for ease-of-reference, we use the word 'stakeholder' to describe the broad group of respondents who participated in this research. 297 stakeholders took part in the survey during the month of June – the bulk of whom are senior decision-makers who interact with Waka Kotahi on a frequent basis. Respondents come from a range of organisations including local government, infrastructure businesses, representative organisations, emergency services, central government, and others (e.g. regulatory organisations, Iwi, and research bodies).

<sup>2</sup> | Māori affiliation includes stakeholders who: work for a Māori business / a business with strong Māori ownership / values, identify as Māori, or work on Māori projects

The key pain points for stakeholders remain the same as in 2020. This indicates scope for continued improvement in those priority areas, highlighted below:

### Primary area to focus on and invest

Statistical analysis shows the key opportunity to improve stakeholder satisfaction is around being:



### Agile and Responsive

1. Improving Waka Kotahi process to be **efficient and effective**
2. Solving problems and issues **when they arise**
3. **Learning** from experiences

### Secondary area to focus on and invest

The analysis also shows that there is an opportunity to better:



### Partner

1. Take the time to **understand stakeholder organisation's needs**
2. Prioritise those needs **appropriately**
3. Take stakeholder **expertise into account**

### Audiences to pay particular attention to:

Throughout the research, some stakeholder groups consistently rate Waka Kotahi lower than average. Waka Kotahi needs to pay particular attention to how it can better support these audiences and build more positive relationships. The audiences include:



Stakeholders with no point of contact<sup>1</sup>



Stakeholders from Industry / Representative organisations



Stakeholders involved in regional transport planning and funding/investment decisions<sup>2</sup>



Stakeholders from District / City Authorities

<sup>1</sup> | However, this is a shrinking group of stakeholders

<sup>2</sup> | Throughout the report, this is referred to as 'interacting in the Planning & Funding space'

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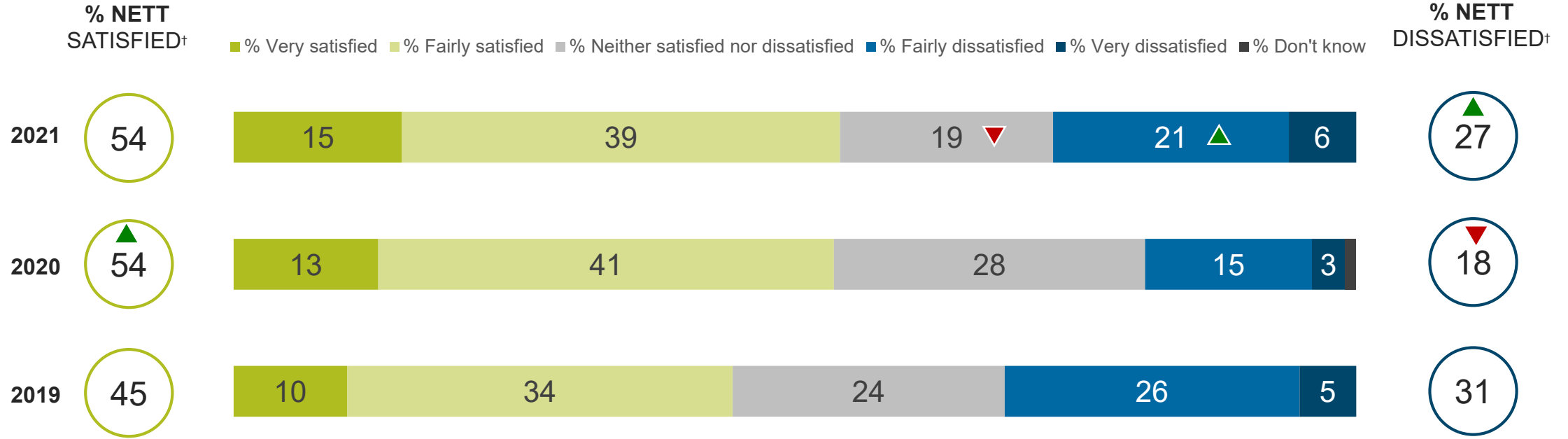
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# OVERALL SATISFACTION AND PERCEPTIONS OF WAKA KOTAHI



# OVERALL SATISFACTION

Stakeholders' satisfaction with their relationship with Waka Kotahi has remained stable following the significant improvement seen in 2020. Overall satisfaction is consistent with 2020, sitting at 54%. However, there is greater polarisation in 2021, with the proportion dissatisfied with their relationship having increased from 18% in 2020 to 27% in 2021. As in previous years, satisfaction with Waka Kotahi is lower than the average for other similar public sector stakeholder studies.

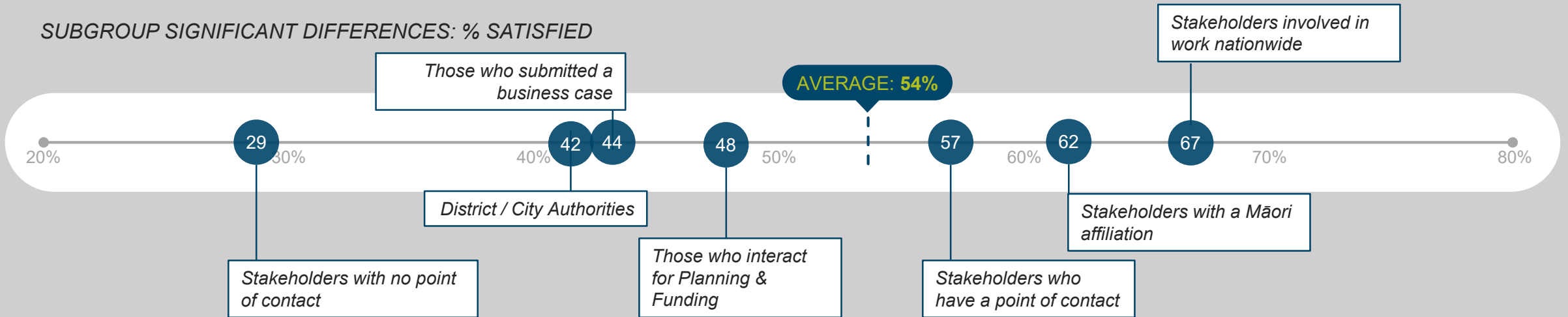


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# OVERALL SATISFACTION: SUBGROUP CHANGES AND DIFFERENCES

Stakeholders involved in work nationwide, those with a Māori affiliation, and those with a point of contact at Waka Kotahi are more likely than average to be satisfied. Stakeholders with no point of contact, District / City authorities, those who submitted a business case, and those interacting in the Planning & Funding space are less likely than average to be satisfied.



Indicative organisational subgroup satisfaction scores (*caution very small sample) <sup>1</sup>	Emergency services (n=18*)	94%
	Central government agency (n=19)*	79%
	Iwi (n=11)*	8 of 11
	Suppliers (n=47)	66%
	Business (n=33)	48%
	Local Government <sup>2</sup> (n=131)	44%
	• District / City Authorities (n=110)	42%
	• Regional / Transit Authorities (n=21)*	52%
	Industry/representative organisation (n=48)	42%

Source: QF1: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the current relationship your organisation has with Waka Kotahi? | Base: All stakeholders (n=309)

1 | Satisfaction for Health Agencies or Research Agencies have not been included in this report as the sample size is only 2.

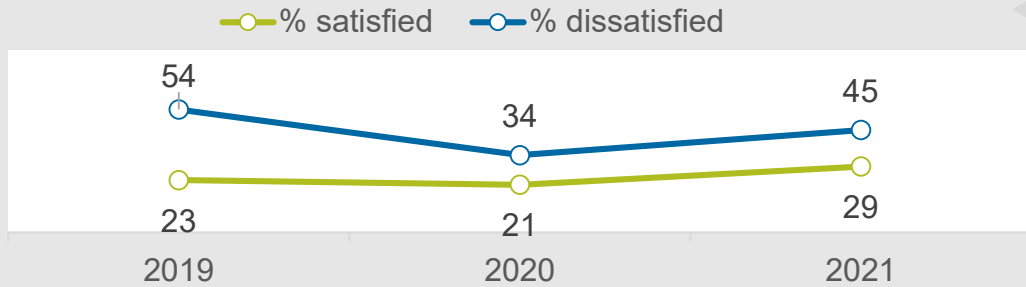
2 | Local Government is the combined grouping of District / City Authorities, and Regional / Transit Authorities

# PRIORITY GROUP: THOSE WITH NO CONTACT POINT REMAIN THE LEAST SATISFIED

Stakeholders without a point of contact continue to be the least satisfied with Waka Kotahi, indicating the need for easy access to staff. Positively, this group has been growing smaller year-on-year, although they remain a priority area for 2021.



Stakeholders who **do not have a point of contact** at Waka Kotahi are the least satisfied with their relationship:

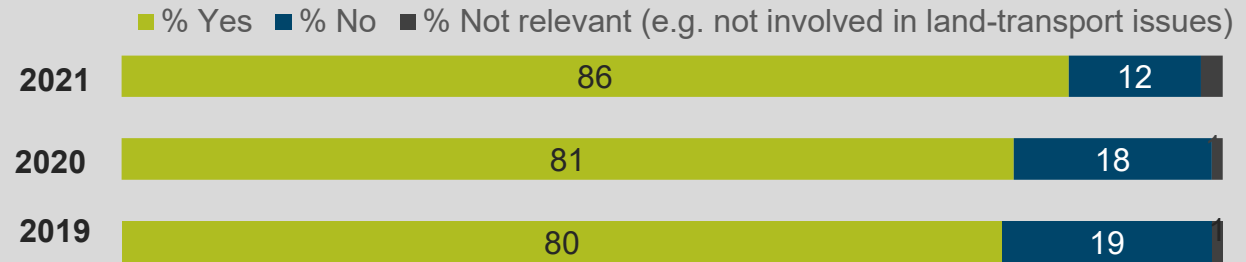


“Another restructure recently makes it difficult to know who’s doing what again.”

“Project delivery and reporting can be confusing - needs clearer responsibility lines externally which will reduce escalations to senior executives.”

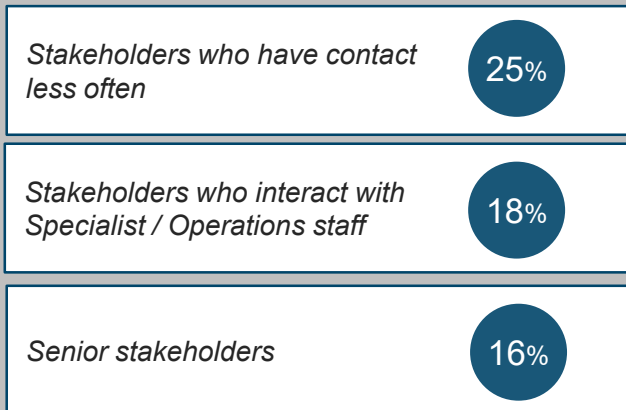
“It is hard to find the actual decision makers within the organisation.”

Currently, do you know who to contact at Waka Kotahi to discuss matters, escalate issues, or raise queries?

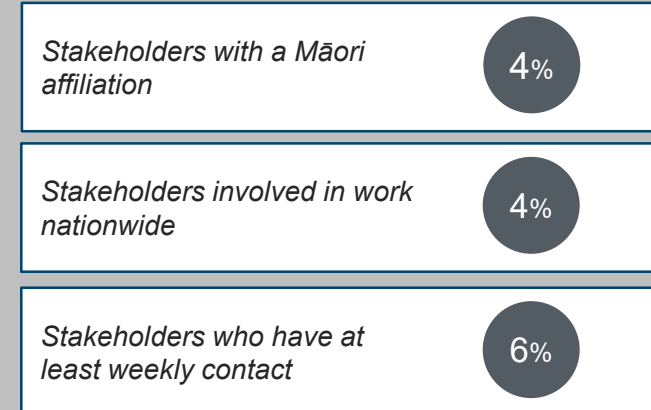


## SUBGROUP SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES: NO POINT OF CONTACT

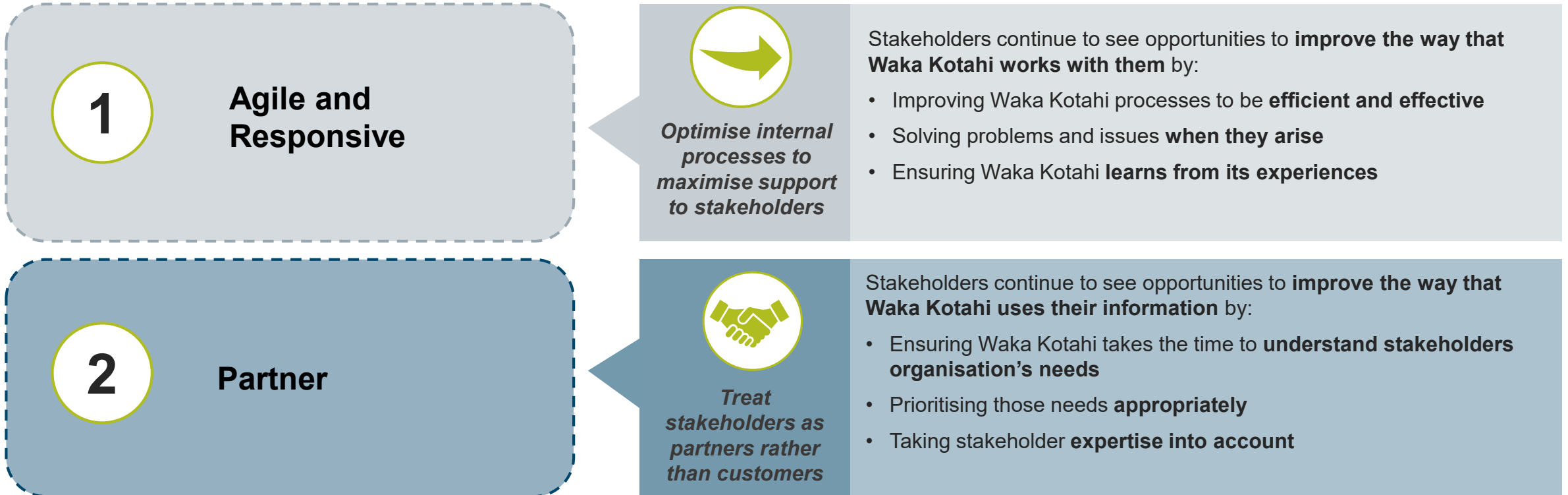
**More likely to not have a point of contact than average (12%):**



**Less likely to not have a point of contact than average (12%):**



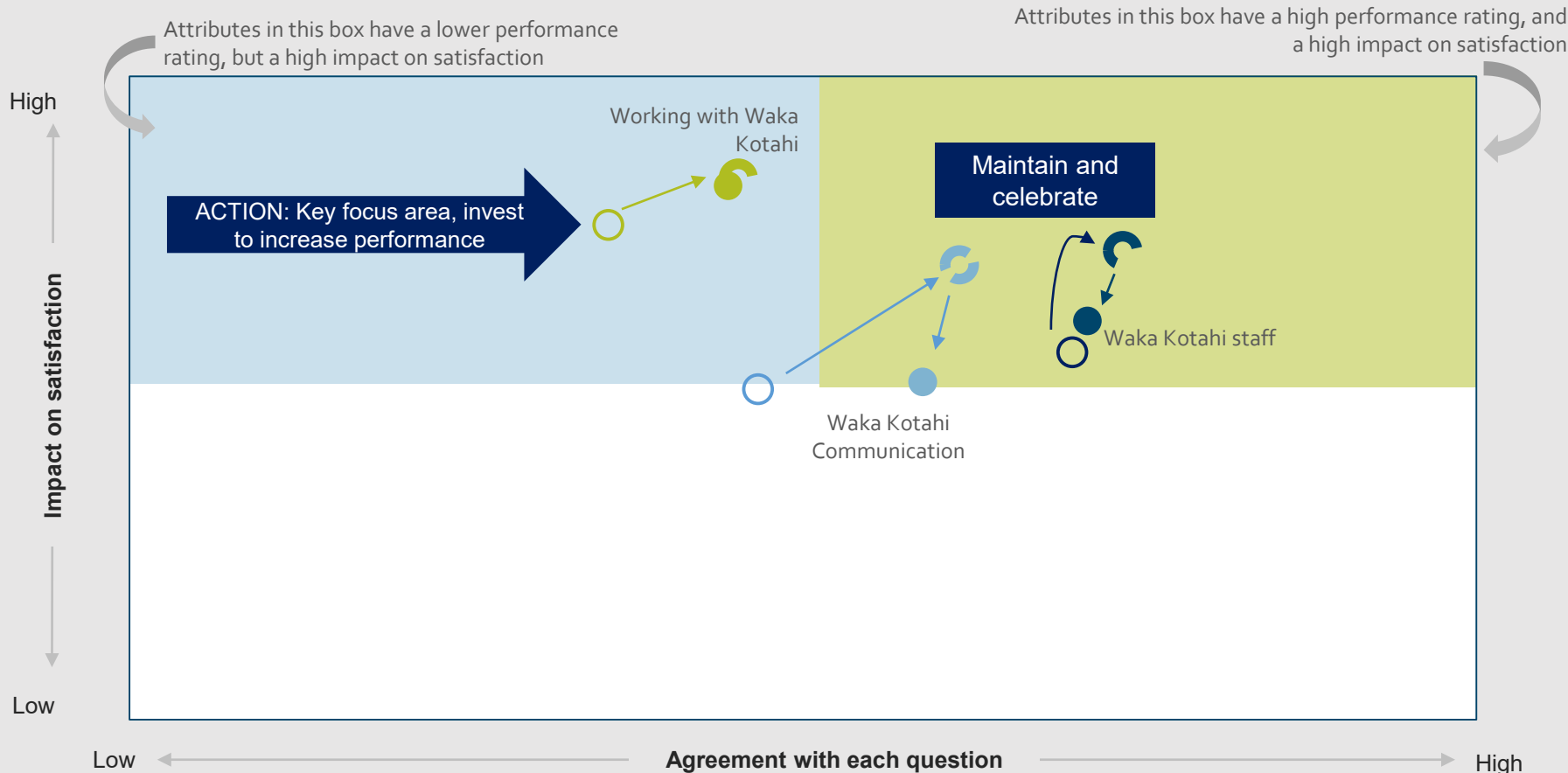
This slide summarises the two key areas to focus on to improve overall satisfaction. The next few slides describe how we identified these satisfaction drivers. The key areas of focus are in line with 2020.



Stakeholders continue to want Waka Kotahi to see them as valued partners, and to enjoy a two-way relationship. Waka Kotahi needs to ensure that stakeholder needs are met by demonstrating their value, whilst also showing the importance of stakeholder knowledge and expertise in the work that Waka Kotahi does. For some, this relationship is currently more transactional than mutually beneficial.

We have undertaken statistical analysis to determine how important different survey items are in determining overall satisfaction. We then mapped their relative importance against performance to help determine priority actions. The way in which Waka Kotahi works with stakeholders remains a primary area for action and investment. While staff and communication are areas of strength for Waka Kotahi, they have slightly less of an impact on satisfaction than in 2020.

## DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION – KEY THEMES



### EXPLANATION OF DRIVER ANALYSIS

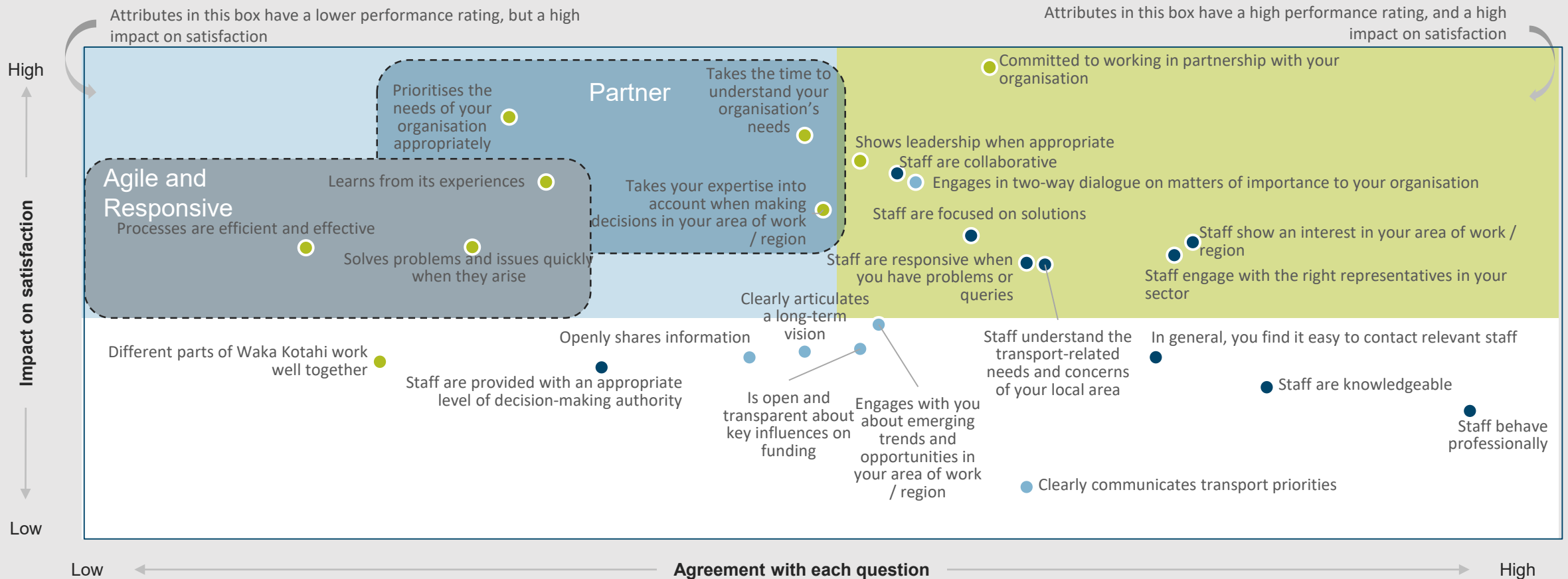


The drivers of satisfaction have been determined through a correlation analysis. We do this by measuring the association between two continuous variables (in this case the question / measure, e.g. Waka Kotahi staff, and overall satisfaction). The magnitude of the correlation coefficient indicates the strength of the association. A standardized beta coefficient compares the strength of the effect of each individual independent variable on satisfaction. The higher the absolute value of the beta coefficient (indicated on the Y-axis), the stronger the effect.

# DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION: BUILDING RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS

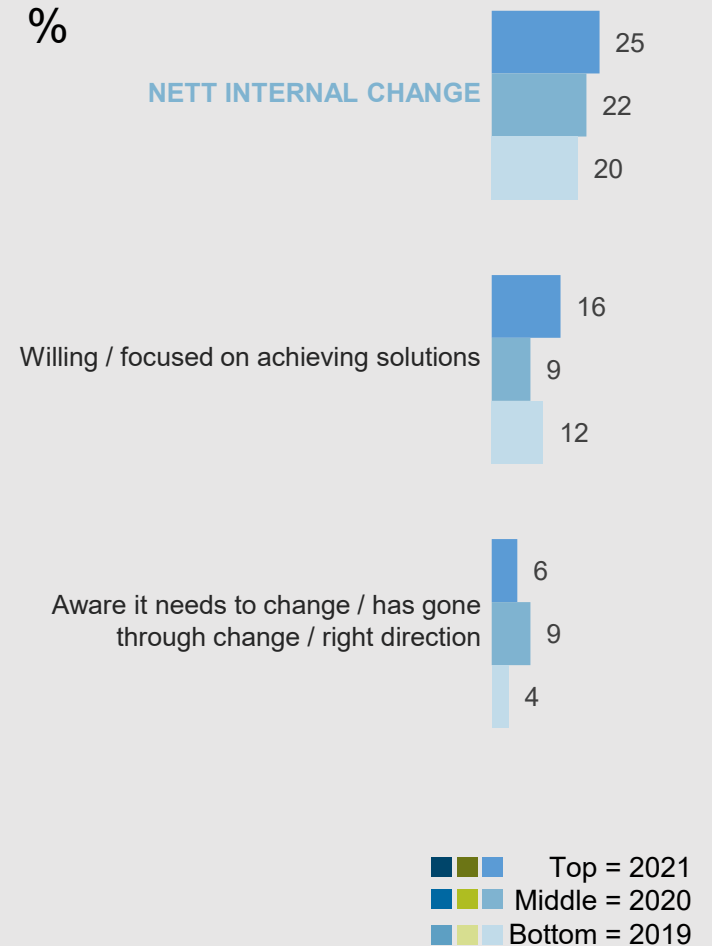
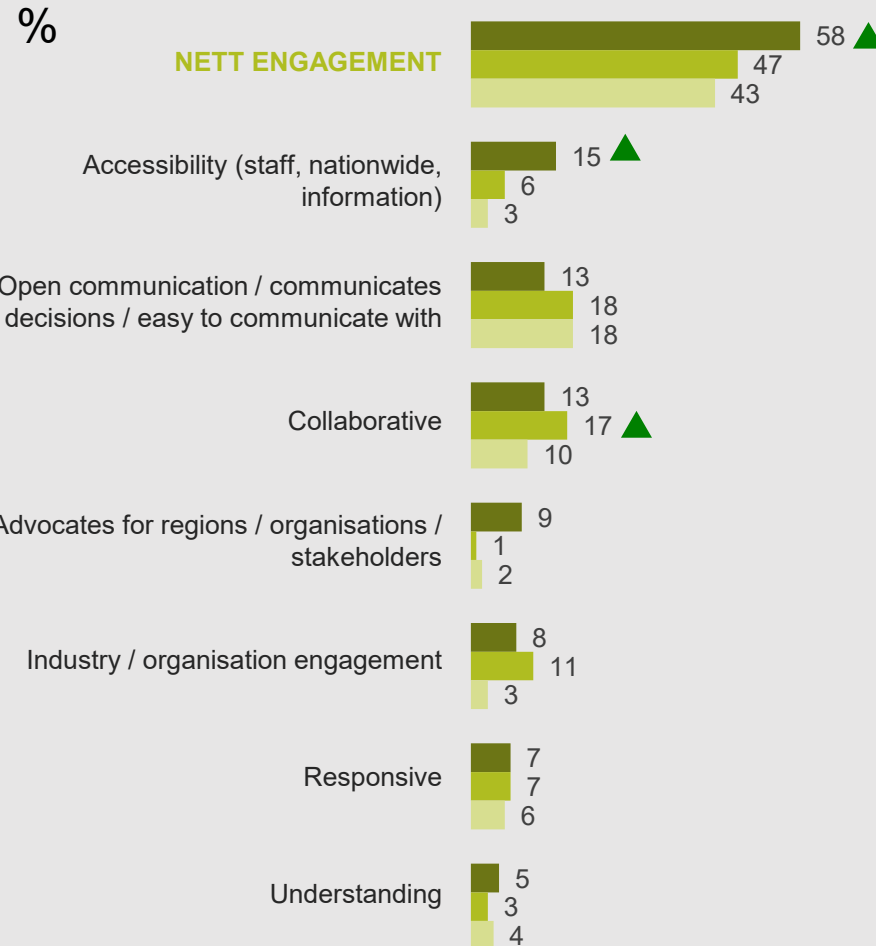
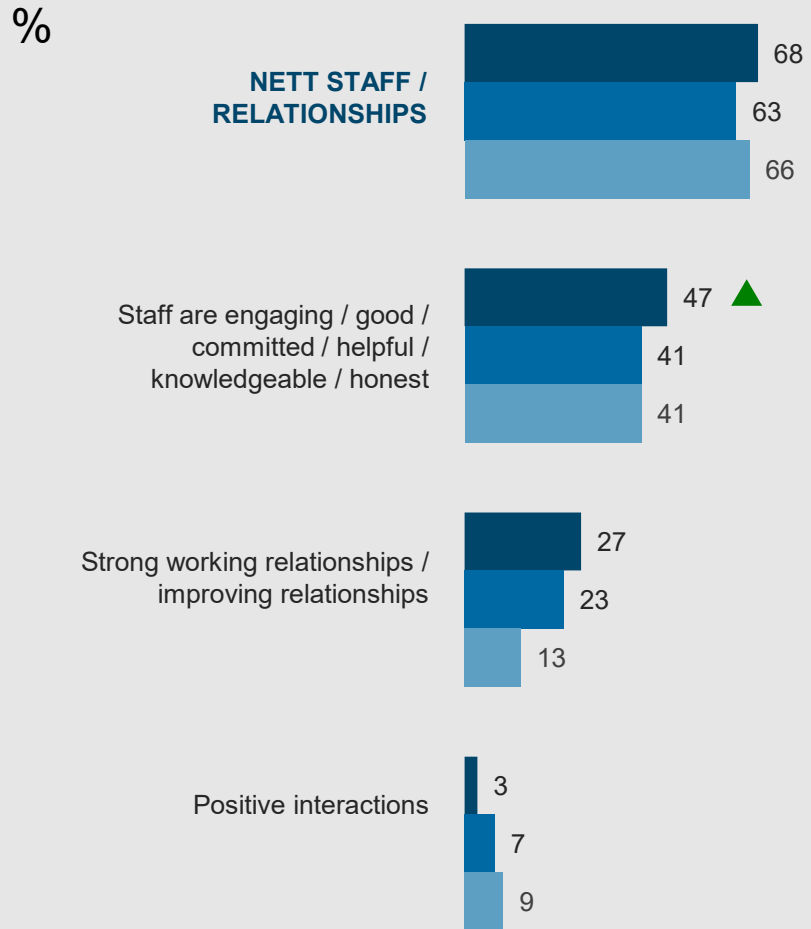
In line with both 2020 and 2019, having efficient and effective processes, solving problems quickly, and learning from experience all have a high impact on overall satisfaction, but low performance. Therefore, investing in these areas continues to be a priority in order to increase stakeholder satisfaction. Improving how Waka Kotahi partners with stakeholders – by prioritising their needs, taking the time to understand their needs, and taking their expertise into account, remains a second priority investment area.

## DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION



# POSITIVE ASPECTS OF RELATIONSHIP

Fifty-eight percent of stakeholders are able to spontaneously name a positive aspect of their relationship with Waka Kotahi. Of these stakeholders, 68% mention Waka Kotahi staff, once again referencing the strong staff performance ratings. More stakeholders mention positive engagement than in previous years, with references to accessibility and Waka Kotahi advocating on stakeholders' behalf having increased since 2020.

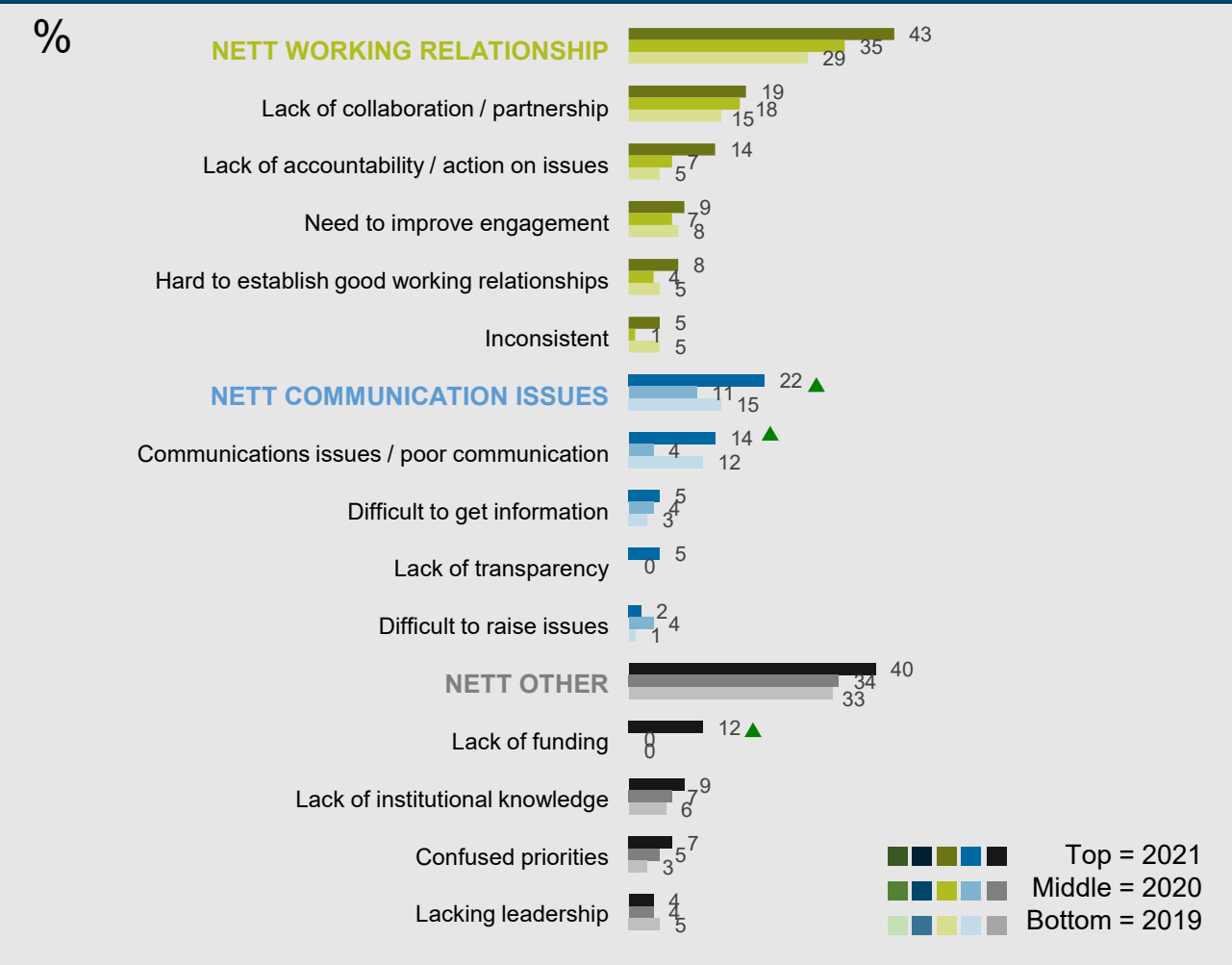
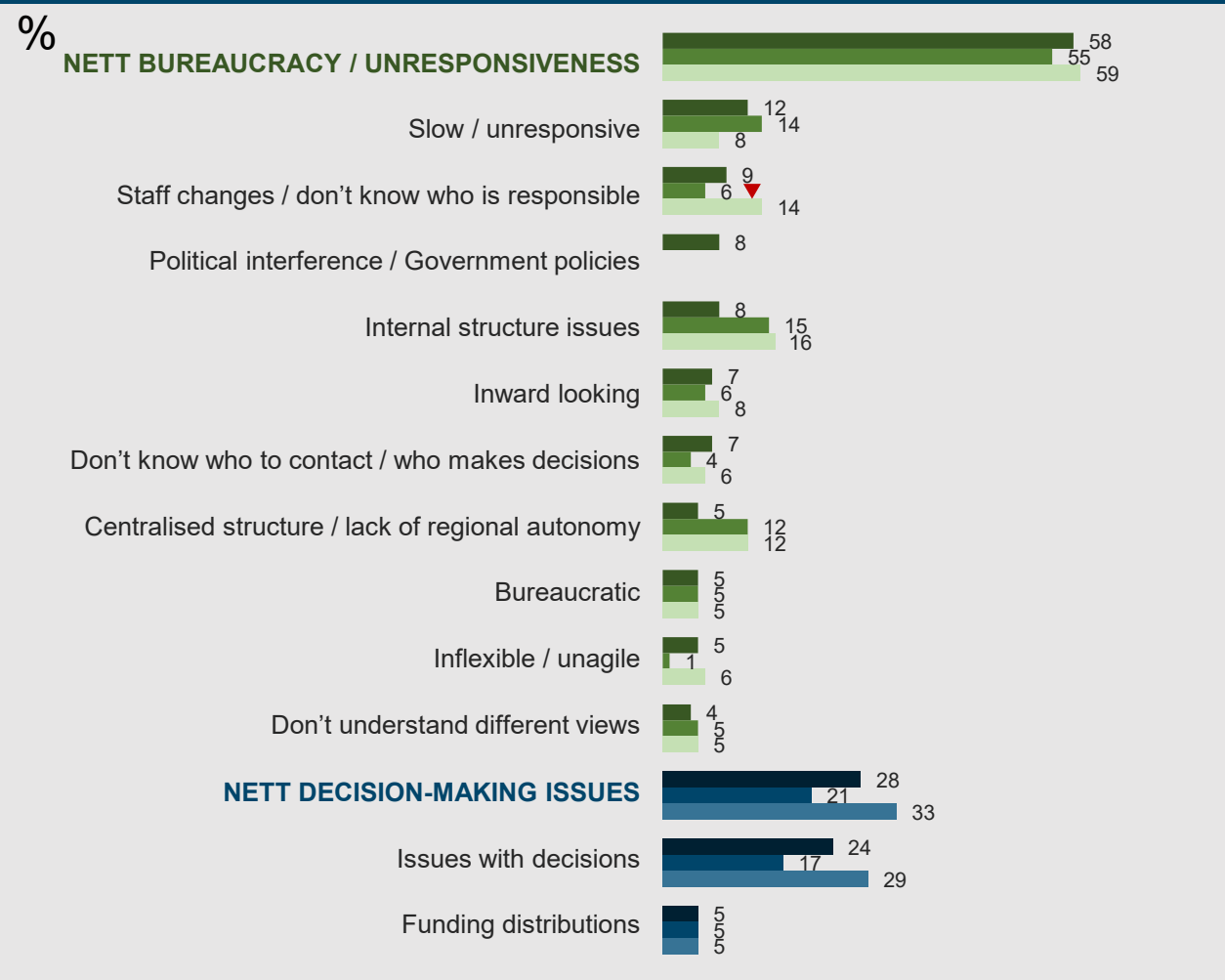


Top = 2021  
Middle = 2020  
Bottom = 2019

Source: F3: What, if anything, do you consider to be positive or good about your relationship with Waka Kotahi?  
Base: All stakeholders who provided a positive response (excl. don't know or nothing positive) (2021 n=179, 2020 n=180; 2019 n=180)  
Note: responses less than 5% are not charted

# NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF RELATIONSHIP

Fifty-three percent of stakeholders are able to spontaneously name a negative aspect of their relationship with Waka Kotahi. This is higher than in 2020 (47%), reinforcing the higher levels of dissatisfaction. Of these 53%, 58% mention something related to bureaucracy or a lack of responsiveness (reflecting the need to invest in responsive systems). Positively, fewer stakeholders mention internal structure issues than in 2020. However, more stakeholders reference communications issues (22% compared to 11% in 2020).

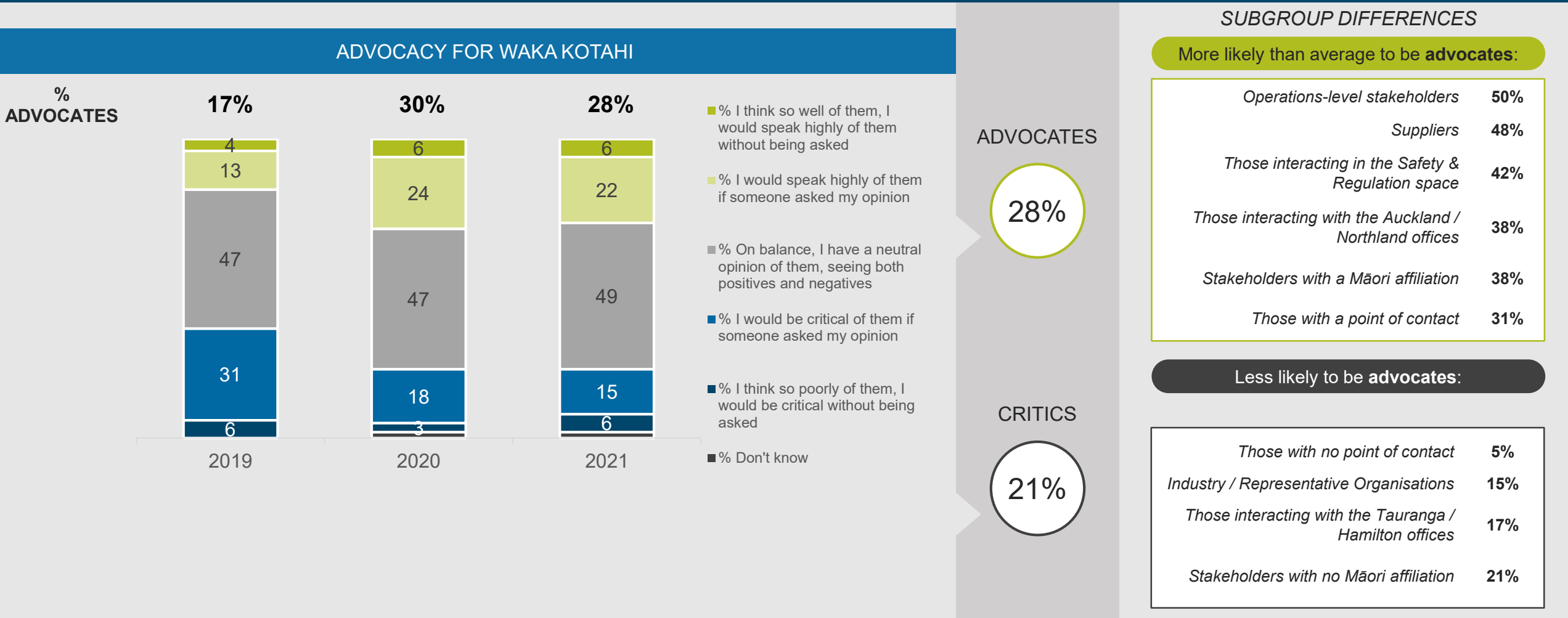


■ Top = 2021  
■ Middle = 2020  
■ Bottom = 2019

Source: F3: What, if anything, do you consider to be negative or bad about your relationship with Waka Kotahi?  
 Base: All stakeholders who provided a response (excl. don't know or nothing negative) (2021 n=165, 2020 n=137; 2019 n=154)

▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than previous year

Just over one quarter (28%) of stakeholders are willing to advocate for Waka Kotahi – in line with 2020. The proportion of critics remains the same as in 2020 (21%). Advocacy levels also remain notably lower than for similar public sector stakeholder studies. A number of groups are more likely than average to advocate for Waka Kotahi, including: Operations-level stakeholders, suppliers, those interacting in the Safety & Regulation space, those interacting with the Auckland / Northland offices, those with a Māori affiliation, and with a point of contact.



Source: J2: Thinking about everything you know about Waka Kotahi, please click on the statement that best reflects your opinion and perceptions.  
 Base: All stakeholders (n=307) ▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than previous year



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# WORKING WITH WAKA KOTAHI

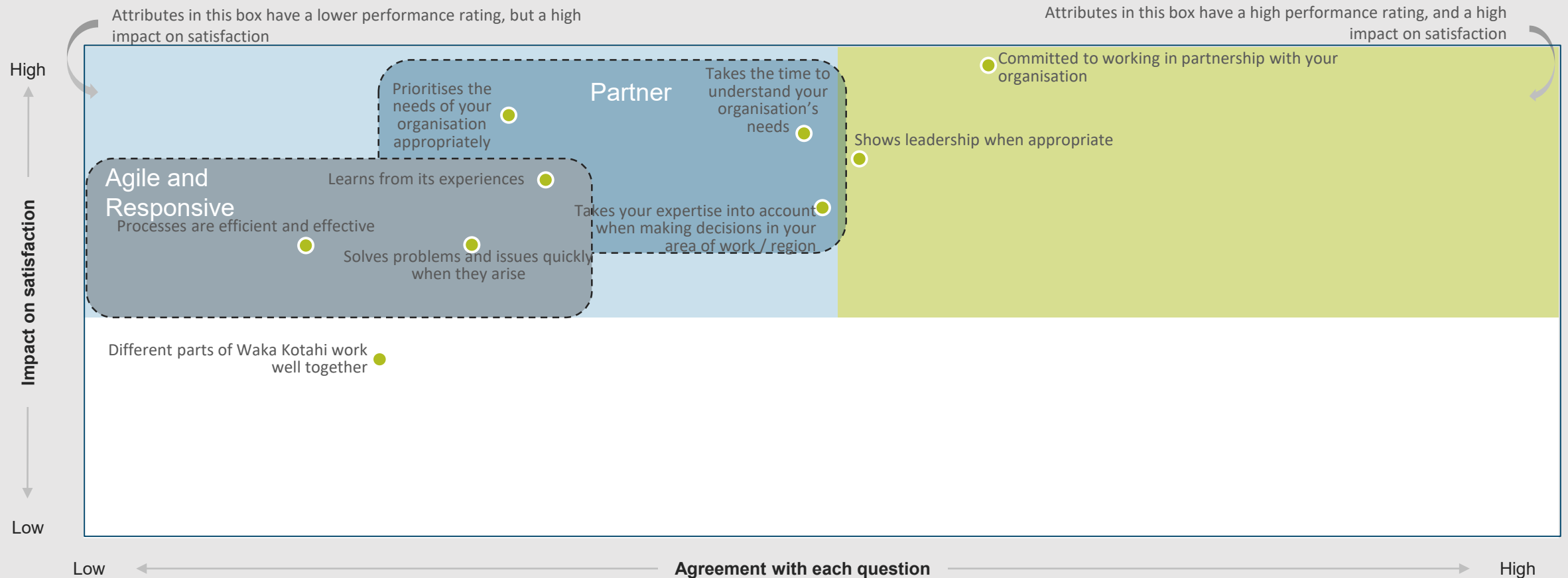
THE KEY FOCUS AREA FOR  
IMPROVEMENT



# WORKING RELATIONSHIP DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION

As shown on the earlier drivers analysis slide, learning from experiences, solving problems quickly, and ensuring processes are efficient and effective are the primary areas of focus. Building partnership relationships will also help increase stakeholder satisfaction.

## DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION - INDIVIDUAL MEASURES WORKING WITH WAKA KOTAHI

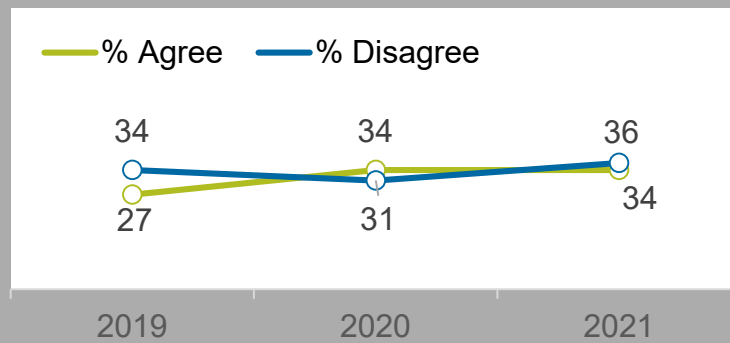


# WORKING WITH WAKA KOTAHI: THE KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

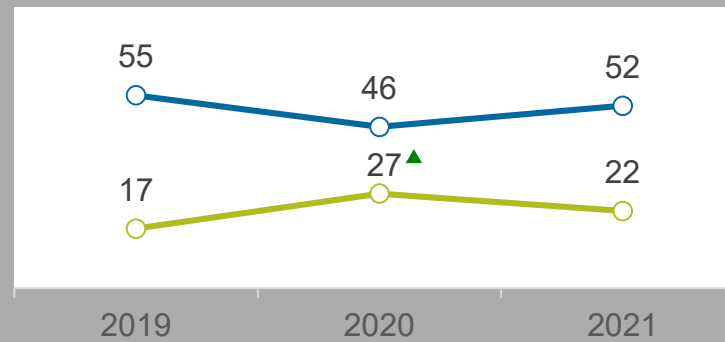
The way in which Waka Kotahi works remains a pain point for stakeholders. As seen for overall satisfaction, performance on the key drivers of satisfaction has also plateaued in 2021. There has been a significant increase in dissatisfaction with ‘prioritising the needs of your organisation’, which has returned to 2019 levels of disagreement. It is important to be aware that there is a worrying drift upwards in disagreement on many of the drivers, and four of the six are now have higher disagreement than agreement levels.

## PRIMARY FOCUS: AGILE AND RESPONSIVE

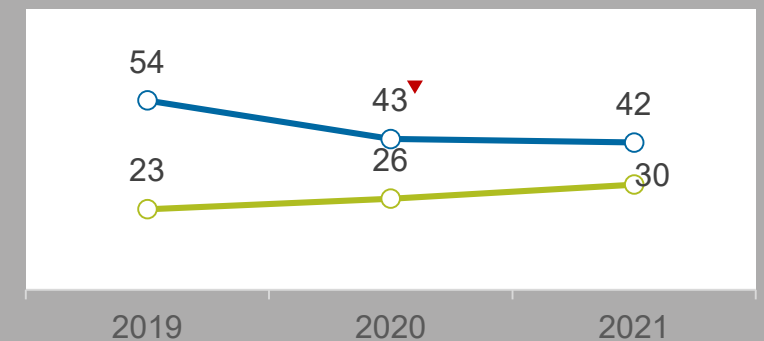
*Learns from its experiences*



*Processes are efficient and effective*

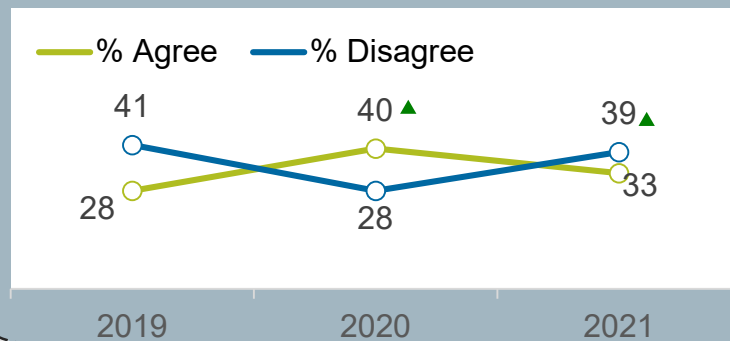


*Solves problems and issues quickly when they arise*

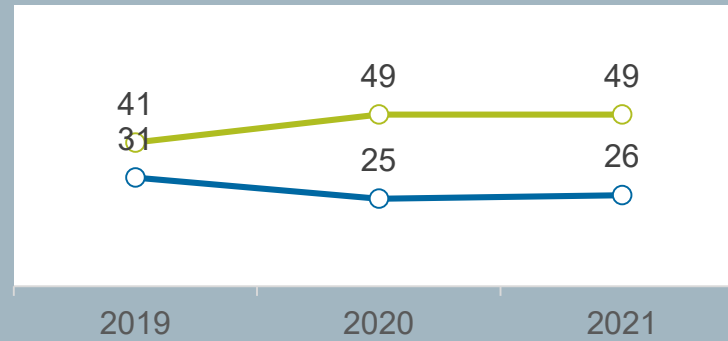


## SECONDARY FOCUS: PARTNER

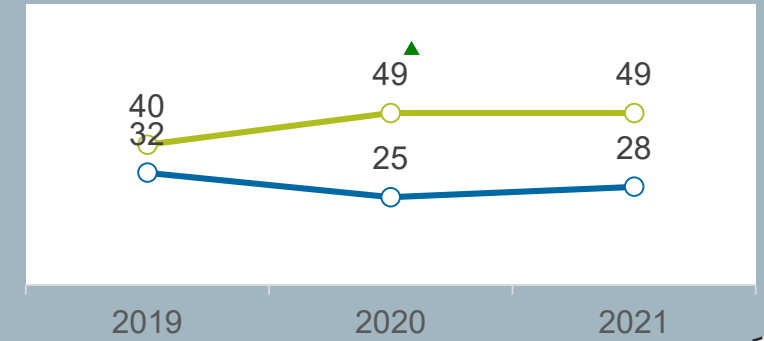
*Prioritises the needs of your organisation appropriately*



*Takes the time to understand your organisations needs*

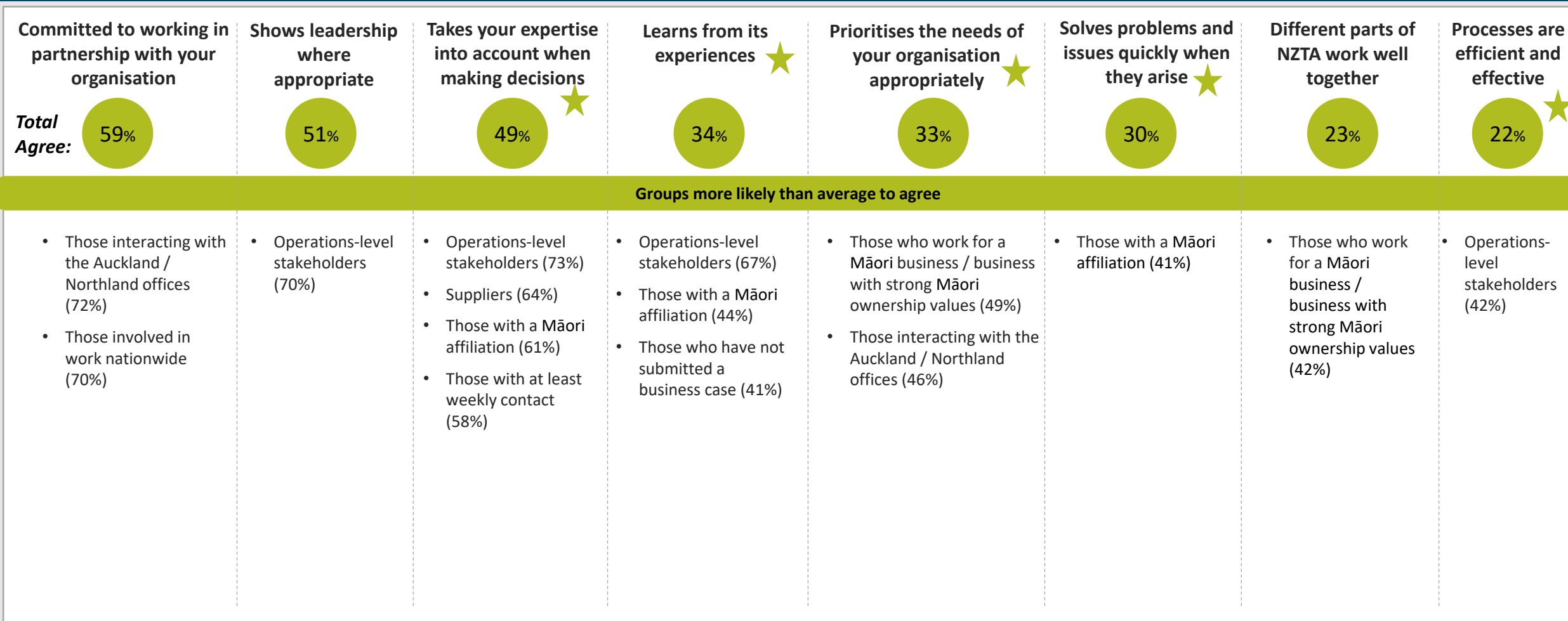


*Takes your expertise into account when making decisions in your area of work/region*



# WORKING WITH WAKA KOTAHI: POSITIVE SUB-GROUP DIFFERENCES

Stakeholders interacting with the Auckland / Northland offices, those with a Māori affiliation, and those interacting with Waka Kotahi operations staff tend to rate working with Waka Kotahi more positively than average.



# WORKING WITH WAKA KOTAHI: NEGATIVE SUB-GROUP DIFFERENCES

Stakeholders from industry / representative organisation, those interacting in the Planning & Funding space, and District / City Authorities tend to rate working with Waka Kotahi less positively than average.

Committed to working in partnership with your organisation	Shows leadership where appropriate	Takes your expertise into account when making decisions	Takes the time to understand your organisation's needs	Learns from its experiences	Prioritises the needs of your organisation appropriately	Different parts of NZTA work well together	Processes are efficient and effective
<p><b>Total Agree:</b> 59%</p>	51%	49% ★	49% ★	34% ★	33% ★	23%	22% ★
<b>Groups less likely than average to agree</b>							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industry / Representative organisation (44%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industry / Representative organisation (31%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Those interacting in the Planning &amp; Funding space (44%)</li> <li>Senior stakeholders (43%)</li> <li>District / City Authorities (35%)</li> <li>Those with less frequent contact (37%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Those who submitted a business case (40%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mid-level stakeholders (24%)</li> <li>Those who have submitted a business case (24%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District / City Authorities (18%)</li> <li>Those interacting in the Planning &amp; Funding space (28%)</li> <li>Those who submitted a business case (24%)</li> <li>Those interacting with the Tauranga / Hamilton offices (20%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industry / Rep organisation (10%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District / City Authorities (15%)</li> <li>Those interacting in the Planning &amp; Funding space (16%)</li> </ul>

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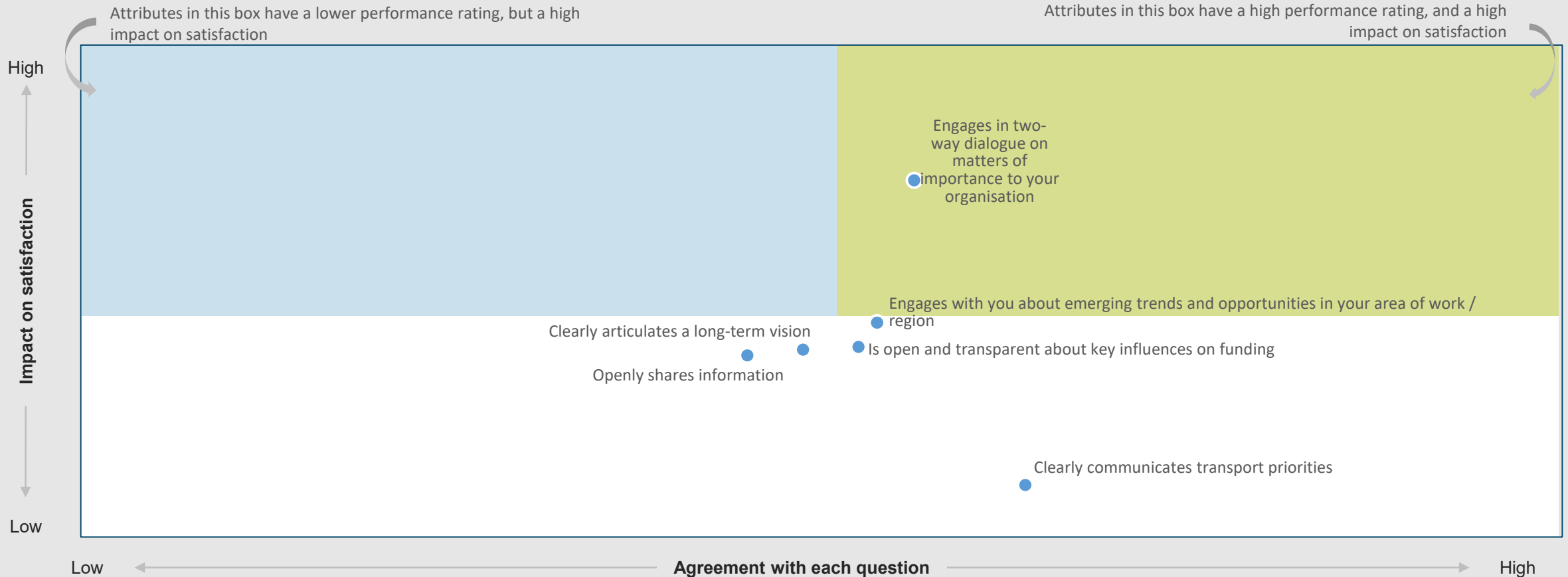
# HOW WAKA KOTAHI COMMUNICATES AND ENGAGES



# DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION: COMMUNICATION

As shown earlier, the communications attributes have become somewhat less important in driving satisfaction. At an individual level, there are no areas to invest in, however engaging in two-way dialogue remains an area of strength, to maintain and celebrate.

## DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION



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# PERCEPTIONS OF WAKA KOTAHI STAFF

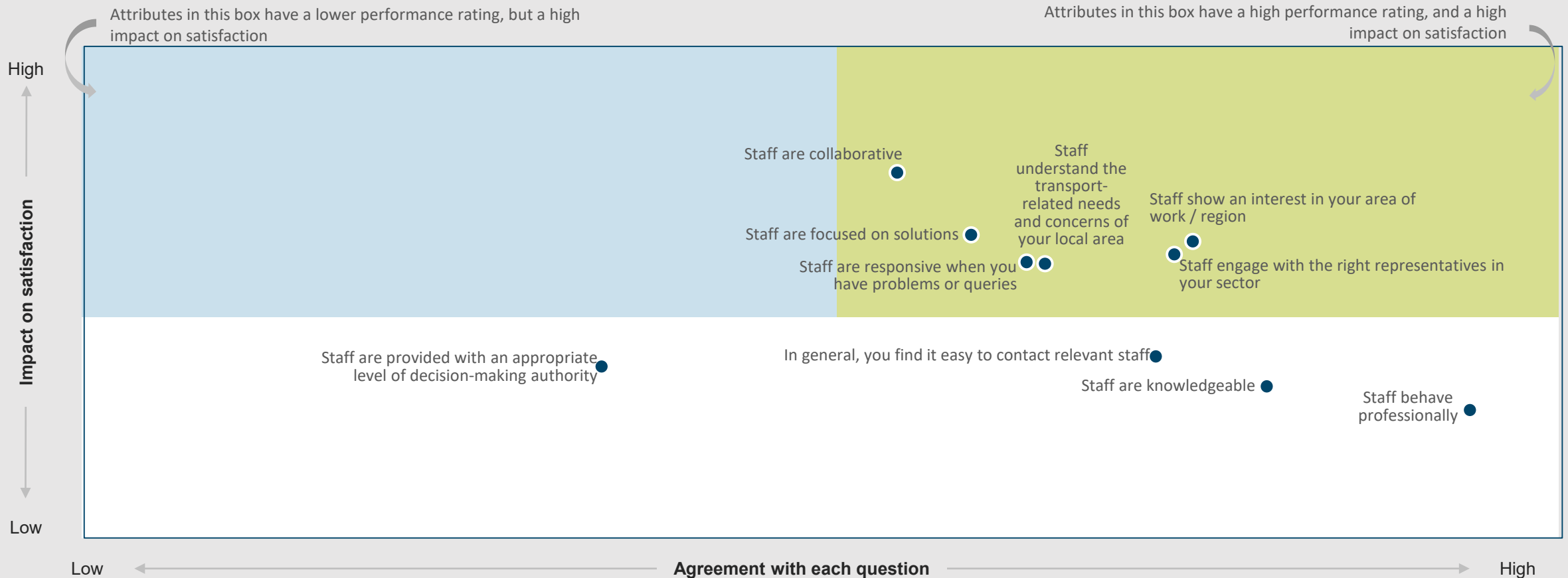
AN AREA TO MAINTAIN AND  
CELEBRATE





As with previous years, the key drivers analysis highlights staff performance as an area of strength. There are no key areas to invest in with staff satisfaction, but a number of areas to maintain and celebrate.

## DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION





FOR MORE INFORMATION  
PLEASE CONTACT:

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Phone (04) 913 3000

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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- c. They must not be disclosed by the Client to any third party, other than to a consultant working for a Client on that project. In particular, they must not be used by the Client to influence proposals or cost quotations from other researchers.

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- a. Refuse permission for their name to be quoted in connection with the published findings
- b. Publish the appropriate details of the project
- c. Correct any misleading aspects of the published presentation of the findings

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