

5. Participation and support

The principals were asked about their participation in the First Time Principals' Programme, their region, sectional or interest conference, the NZPF National Conference, their Regional Principals' Association Conference, and meetings of their local Principals' Association. They were asked how often they had contact with fellow principals, and about the level of support they felt they received from the NZPF, NZEI, NZ School Trustees, Ministry of Education, and Advisory Service.

Participation

First Time Principals' Programme

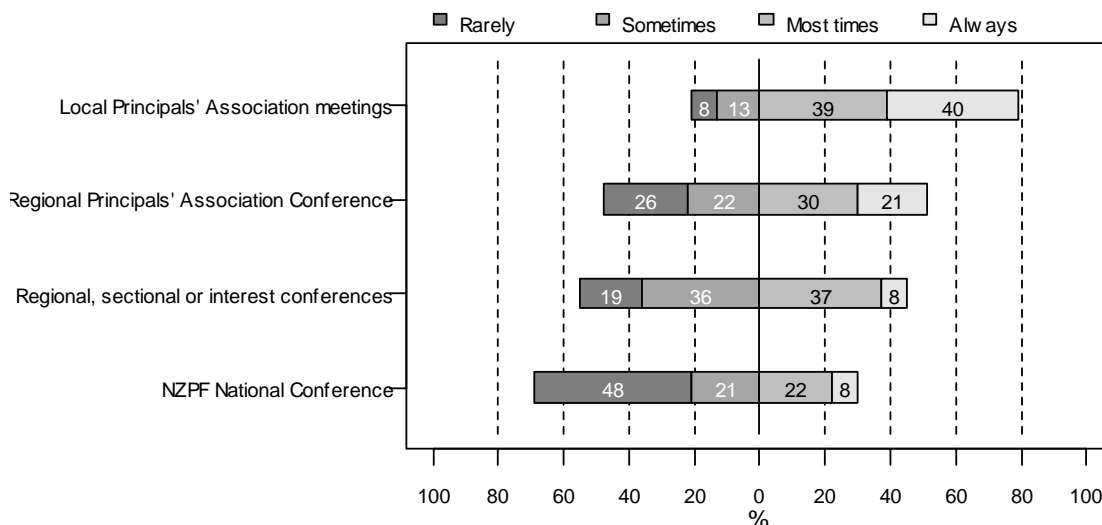
Twenty-eight percent of the respondents were or had been involved in the First Time Principals' Programme. Participation in this programme was associated with:

- size of schools (47 percent of U1 or U2 principals – who are more likely to be first-time principals - had participated, compared with 13 percent of U7 and above principals);
- type, where participation rates were higher among area (30 percent), kura (47 percent) and secondary principals (42 percent);
- location (18 percent of town principals, 20 percent of city principals, and 44 percent of rural principals), again probably reflecting the length of experience of principals in the different locations;
- gender (35 percent of females compared with 21 percent of males), this is probably linked to the with school size, type and location;
- ethnicity, (42 percent of Māori, 49 percent of other, and 25 percent of NZ European);
- age (more of the under-45 principals, 51 percent, than over-45s, 21 percent);
- experience (81 percent of those with under two years' experience, 70 percent of those with two to five years' experience, and five percent of those with over five years' experience had participated).
- There was some indication of an association between participation and stress, with 43 percent of the participants reporting high or breaking-point levels of stress, compared with 38 percent of the other respondents, but there were no statistically significant associations with the other health variables.

Principals' meetings

Overall rates of attendance at the possible conferences or meetings are shown in Figure AA. The national and regional conferences have lower attendance rates than the local meetings. Seventy-nine percent of the principals attended their local principals' association meetings always or most times.

Figure 1 Rates of attendance at conferences or meetings



Meetings of the local Principals' Association

Attendance at meetings of the local Principals' Association was most common, with eight percent attending rarely (used for comparisons), and 40 percent attending always. There were associations with:

- school size (16 percent of U1 or U2 school principals attended rarely, compared with five percent of U5 and above school principals);
- type (60 percent of kura principals, compared with seven to eight percent of all other principals; primary principals were most likely to always attend, 41 percent, compared with about a quarter of secondary or area school principals, and no kura principals);
- roll change (six percent of principals from a school where the roll has risen, compared with 10 percent of those where it had fluctuated; the corresponding proportions of those who always attended were 42 and 28 percent, respectively);
- location (seven percent of those from city schools, compared with 14 percent of those from rural schools);
- ethnicity (seven percent of NZ Europeans, compared with 15 percent of Māori);
- quality non-work-related socializing (36 percent of those who had none, compared with 18 percent of those who had a lot);
- experience (13 percent of those with under two years' experience, compared with seven percent of those with over 5–20 years' experience; proportions always attending increased

from 32 percent of those with under 2 years' experience to 44 percent of those with over 20 years' experience).

Regional Principals' Association Conferences

Attendance at the Regional Principals' Association Conferences was next most common, with 26 percent attending rarely (used for comparisons), 22 percent attending sometimes, 30 percent attending most times, and 21 percent attending always. There were associations with:

- school size (40 percent of U1 or U2 school principals, compared with 19 percent of U5 and above school principals);
- type (17 percent of secondary principals, 25 percent of primary principals, 33 percent of area school principals, and 73 percent of those from kura);
- decile (33 percent of decile 1–2 school principals, decreasing to 20 percent of decile 9–10 school principals);
- roll change (22 percent of principals from a school where the roll has risen, compared with 31 percent of those where it had fluctuated; the corresponding proportions of those who always attended were 24 and 14 percent, respectively);
- location (19 percent of those from city schools, compared with 37 percent of those from rural schools);
- gender (23 percent of males, compared with 29 percent of females);
- ethnicity (24 percent of NZ Europeans, compared with 38 percent of Māori);
- stress (27 percent of those with high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 22 percent of those with low or extremely low levels; the corresponding rates always attending were 20 and 26 percent, respectively);
- quality non-work-related socializing (56 percent of those who had none, compared with 45 percent of those who had a lot);
- age (33 percent of those aged under 45 years, compared with 24 percent of those over 45);
- experience (41 percent of those with under two years' experience, decreasing to 21 percent of those with over 20 years' experience).

Regional/sectional or interest conferences

Forty-five percent of the principals attended regional/sectional or interest conferences; 19 percent rarely attended (this is the percentage used for comparisons). Rare attendance was associated with:

- school size (26 percent of U1 or U2 school principals rarely attended, compared with 13 percent of U7 and above principals);
- type (19 percent of primary principals, 17 percent of area school principals, five percent of secondary principals, and forty percent of those from kura);

- decile (26 percent of decile 1–2 school principals, compared with about 14 percent of principals from decile 5, 6, 9 or 10 schools — there was not an even increase in participation across decile groups);
- roll change (13 percent of principals from schools where the roll had risen, compared with 25 percent of those from schools where the roll fluctuated);
- quality non-work-related socializing (24 percent of those who had none, compared with 11 percent of those who had lots);
- age (25 percent of those aged under 45, compared with 17 percent of those over 45 years);
- experience (25 percent of those with under two years' experience, compared with compared with 18 percent of those with more experience);
- qualifications (21 percent of those with teaching certificates or diplomas, 19 percent of those with bachelor degrees, and 12 percent of those with post-graduate degrees).
- There were no statistically significant associations with any of the health variables.

NZPF Conference

Overall, 48 percent of respondents attended the national NZPF conference rarely (used for comparisons), 21 percent attended sometimes, 21 percent attended most times, and eight percent attended always. There were associations between rare attendance and:

- school size (74 percent of U1 or U2 school principals, compared with 33 percent of U5 or U6 school principals);
- type (45 percent of primary principals, compared with 80 percent of principals from other types of school);
- decile (51 percent of decile 1–8 school principals, compared with 36 percent of decile 9–10 school principals);
- roll change (41 percent of those from schools where the roll had risen, compared with 55 percent of those from schools where it fluctuated);
- location (36 percent from city schools, 48 percent from town schools, and 71 percent from rural schools); gender (43 percent of males and 55 percent of females);
- ethnicity (46 percent of NZ European principals, 67 percent of Māori, and 59 percent of other principals);
- quality socializing (56 percent of principals who had none, compared with 45 percent of those who had a lot);
- age (57 percent of those under 45 years, compared with 46 percent of those over 45 years);
- experience (72 percent of those with under two years' experience, decreasing to 34 percent of those with over 20 years' experience).
- There was no association with any of the health variables, nor with qualifications.

Support

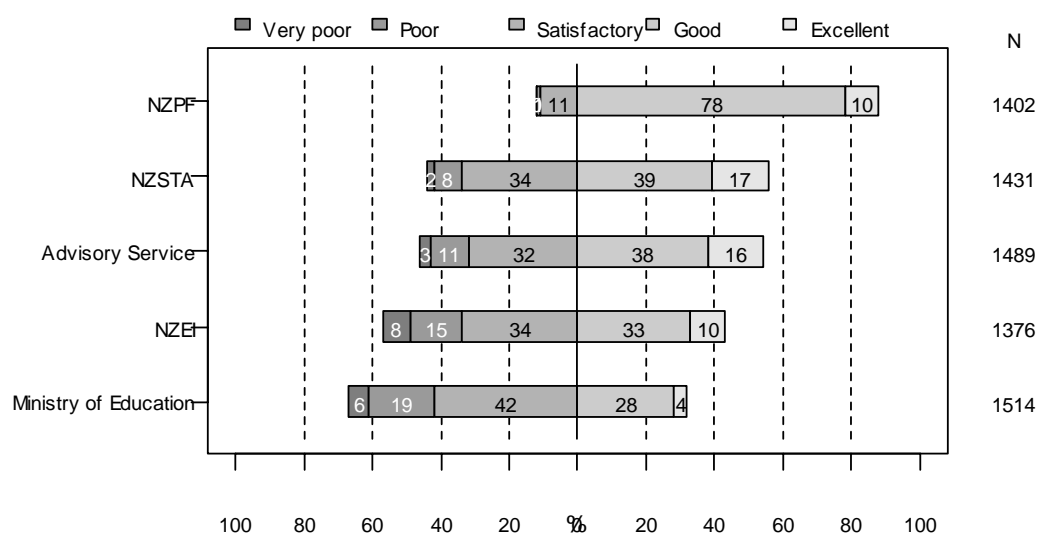
Contact with other principals

The principals were asked how often they contacted other principals for work-related issues including support, or socialized with other principals. Overall, 19 percent of the respondents rarely had contact with other principals, 27 percent did so monthly, 25 percent fortnightly, and 29 percent had weekly contact (used for comparisons). There were associations with:

- school roll (23 percent of U1 or U2 principals, rising to 35 percent of U5 and above principals);
- type (30 percent of primary principals, 15 percent of area school principals, 25 percent of secondary principals, and 20 percent of those from kura);
- roll change (32 percent of those from school where the roll had risen, compared with 22 percent where it had fluctuated);
- ethnicity (31 percent of NZ European principals, 19 percent of Māori principals, and 20 percent of other principals);
- health (19 percent of those who reported their health to be really not good, compared with 35 percent of those who reported they were very or exceptionally healthy);
- tiredness (22 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 34 percent of those who had no problems);
- happiness (22 percent of those who were not happy, compared with 33 percent of those who were happy);
- stress (24 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 38 percent of those reporting low or extremely low levels);
- fitness (25 percent of those who were least fit, compared with 30 percent of those who were most fit);
- quality non-work-related socializing (22 percent of those who had none, compared with fifty percent of those who had a lot);
- how many things they did around the house (18 percent of those who did between one and five things, compared with 39 percent of those who did more than 10).

The opinions the principals expressed about the level of support they received from various agencies are shown in Figure 9. The valid number of responses to each question are shown on the right of the graph, as only members were supposed to respond to the questions about the NZPF, NZEI, and NZST. However, not all people who could respond did (nine gave no response to the question about the Ministry, and 34 did the same for the question about the Advisory Service). As we could not separate valid non-responses from others, all percentages shown in this graph are calculated from those answering the question.

Figure 2 Ratings of support received by principals



Support from the NZPF

Overall, 88 percent of NZPF members rated the support they received from the NZPF as good or excellent. Perceptions of excellent support were associated with:

- decile, with the highest rating (12 percent) coming from decile 1–2 school principals, 11 percent from decile 3–4 and 9–10 principals, and eight percent from decile 5–8 school principals;
- ethnicity (nine percent of NZ European principals, 14 percent of Māori principals, and eight percent of other principals);
- stress (nine percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 13 percent of those who reported low or extremely low levels);
- experience (6 percent of those who have under five years’ experience, rising to 15 percent of those who have over 20 years’ experience). There were no statistically significant associations with any other health variables.

Support from the NZ School Trustees’ Association

Overall, 56 percent of the principals said the support they got from NZSTA was good or excellent. Seventeen percent of NZSTA members gave a rating of excellent for the support they received (used for most comparisons), and 10 percent gave a rating of Poor or Very poor (used for comparisons where indicated). This rating was associated with:

- decile (22 percent of decile 1–2 school principals, dropping to 15 percent of those from decile 7–10 schools);
- gender (12 percent of males and 21 percent of females);
- health (17 percent of those who rated their health as really not good, compared with 21 percent of those who reported they were very or exceptionally healthy);

- happiness (23 percent of the unhappy respondents gave a rating of *poor or very poor*, compared with eight percent of the happy respondents);
- stress (16 percent of those reporting high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 20 percent of those reporting low or extremely low levels);
- experience (23 percent of those with under two years' experience, decreasing to 11 percent of those with over 20 years' experience).

Support from the Advisory Service

The Advisory Service was given a good or excellent rating by 54 percent of the principals. There was an association between an excellent rating and:

- school roll (23 percent of U1 or U2 school principals, decreasing to 4 percent of those from U7 and above schools);
- locality (13 percent of city school principals, 17 percent of town school principals, and 21 percent of rural school principals);
- gender (12 percent of males and 20 percent of females);
- happiness, where there was a tendency for the less happy people to give poorer ratings, and the more happy people to give better ratings;
- experience (24 percent of those with under two years' experience, decreasing to 11 percent of those with more than 20 years' experience).

Support from NZEI

Overall, 43 percent of NZEI members gave it a good or excellent rating. Twenty-three percent of the members gave the support they received from NZEI as poor or very poor rating, and the comparisons are made with this percentage. There was an association between a poor or very poor rating and:

- school roll (19 percent of U1 or U2 principals, rising to 26 percent of U7 and above principals);
- location (25 percent of those from city schools, compared with 17 percent of other principals; good or excellent ratings were given by 34 percent of city school principals, 38 percent of those from town schools, and 48 percent of those from rural schools);
- health (33 percent of those who rated their health as really not good, compared with 21 percent of those who said they were very or exceptionally healthy);
- happiness (35 percent of those who said they were unhappy, compared with 20 percent of those who were happy);
- qualifications (47 percent of those with teaching diplomas or certificates, 40 percent of those with bachelor degrees, and 39 percent of those with post-graduate degrees gave a rating of *good or excellent*).

Support from Ministry of Education

Thirty-two percent rated their support from the Ministry of Education as good or excellent. Twenty-three percent of the respondents also rated the support from the Ministry of Education as poor or very poor, and the comparisons are mainly made with this percentage, and the exceptions are shown clearly. Poor ratings were associated with:

- school roll (19 percent of U1 or U2 school principals, rising to 32 percent of U7 and above principals);
- location (29 percent of city school principals, 24 percent of those from town schools, and 19 percent of those from rural schools);
- gender (28 percent of males, and 22 percent of females);
- ethnicity (27 percent of NZ European principals, 15 percent of Māori, and 12 percent of other principals);
- health (34 percent of those who rated their health as really not good, compared with 22 percent of those who said they were very or exceptionally healthy);
- tiredness (31 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 22 percent of those who reported no problems);
- happiness (42 percent of those who reported they were unhappy, compared with 21 percent of those who said they were happy);
- stress (29 percent of those reporting high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 20 percent of those reporting low or extremely low levels);
- quality non-work-related socializing (30 percent of those who had none, compared with 26 percent of those who had a lot; more clearly seen as 28 percent of those who had none gave ratings of *good or excellent*, compared with 42 percent of those who had a lot); age (41 percent of those under 45 years gave a rating of *good or excellent*, compared with 30 percent of those over 45 years);
- experience (eight percent of those with under two years' experience — 56 percent of this group gave *good or excellent* ratings, 22 percent of those with two to five years' experience, 29 percent of those with five to 20 years' experience, and 32 percent of those with over 20 years' experience — 22 percent of this group gave *good or excellent* ratings).

Summary

We have seen that the principals' participation in formal networking with other principals depends mainly on the characteristics of their school, which probably determine how easy it is to get away to meetings or conferences, and to some extent on their gender, ethnicity, age, length of experience, and how readily they socialise. It was harder for principals of small schools, rural schools, and low decile schools to participate in networks.

Principals of these schools were more likely however to feel supported by outside agencies and organisations: rural and small schools by the advisory service and Ministry of Education; principals of low decile schools by NZPF and NZSTA. Newer principals tended to feel more supported than those with more experience, which may indicate that those who have been

principals for many years may have different expectations as well as needs than the more newly-appointed principals.

Are there associations also between principals' level of participation and perceptions of support?

Attendance at regional, sectional or interest conferences, NZPF National Conference, regional Principals' Association conferences, and local Principals' Association meetings were all associated with perceptions of levels of support from the NZPF. The strongest associations were with the NZPF National Conference, and the local Principals' Association meetings. The associations are not particularly strong, but an idea of their extent can be gained by looking at attendance at the NZPF National Conference: 16 percent of those who reported attending rarely gave a poor or satisfactory rating to the level of support given by NZPF (and 84 percent gave a good or excellent rating), compared with three percent of those who always attended (and 97 percent who gave a good or excellent rating).

Support from the NZEI was associated with levels of participation in regional, sectional, or interest conferences.

Being involved in the First Time Principals' Programme was associated with opinions about the level of support received from the NZST, Ministry of Education, and Advisory Service. In each case, those who were involved in the First Time Principals' Programme were likely to rate the support they received more highly than other respondents. It is, however, difficult to say whether this was because of their participation in the programme, or because of their length of experience as a principal, as on the whole older, and more particularly more experienced principals were likely to give lower support ratings.

Being in regular contact, formal or informal, with other principals, and possibly using that contact to talk through issues was associated with perceptions of levels of support from the NZPF (more frequent contact tended to be associated with higher ratings of support), and with attendance at the three types of conference, and the local Principals' Association meetings. The strength of these associations can be seen, for example, when looking at attendance of regional, sectional, or interest conference: of those who rarely have contact with other principals, 33 percent rarely attend the conferences, and 31 percent attend most times or always, compared with those who have weekly contact with other principals, of whom 13 percent rarely attend conferences, and 55 percent attend most times or always. There was also a weaker association between contact with other principals and perceptions of support from the Ministry of Education.

Different groups of principals can be discerned: those who are well-networked, both formally and informally, and those who appear to stand largely outside.