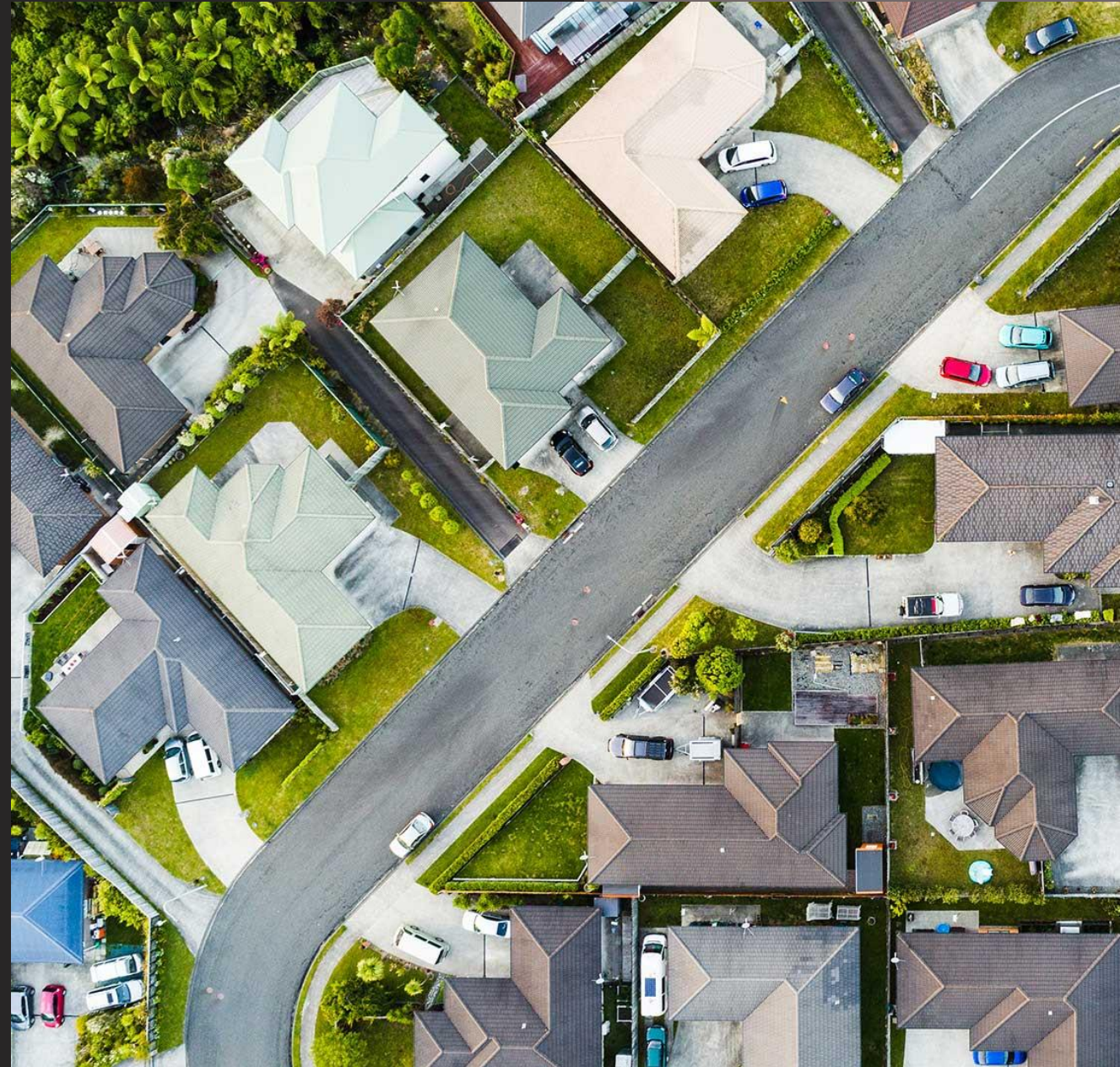




# **2025** Public Sector Reputation Index

5 June 2025





01

# Why reputation matters

# Reputation

The overall impression people have of an agency, based on what they **think, feel** and **believe**.

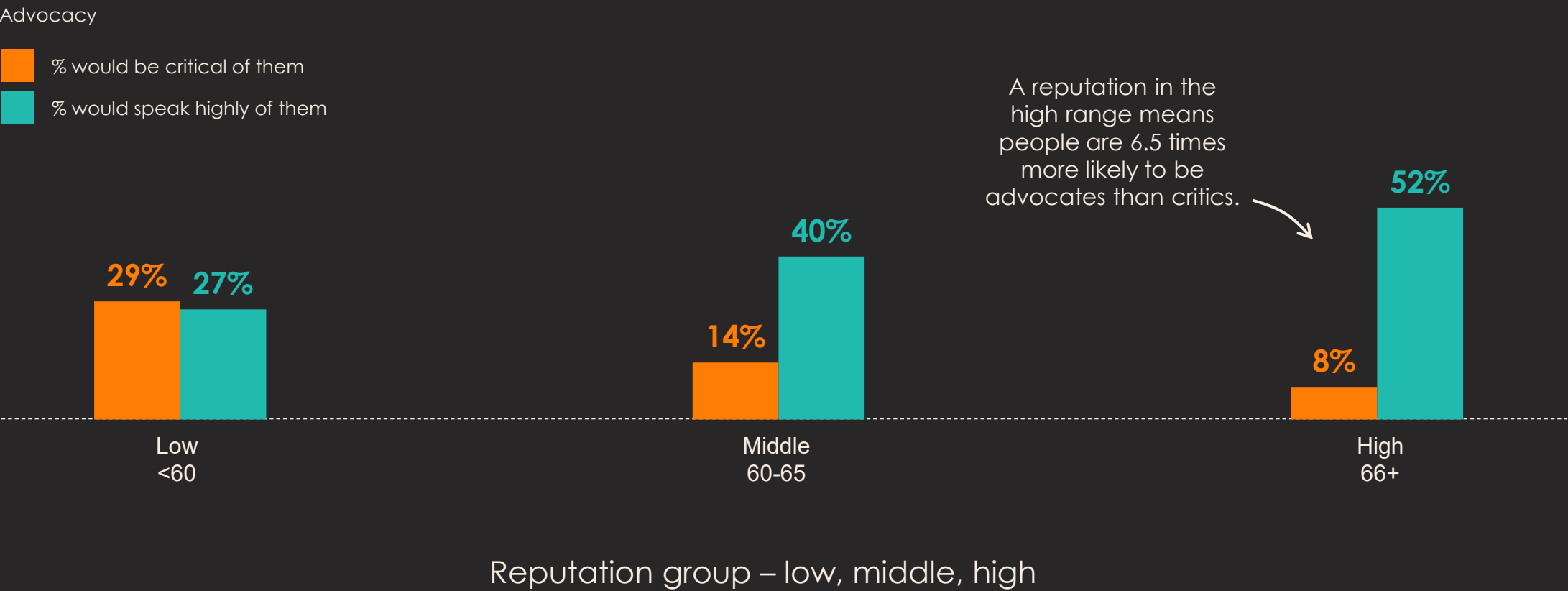
It's a foundation for trust.

It matters because  
trusted agencies can  
operate more effectively  
and efficiently.

When people trust an agency, they're more likely to follow its advice, use its services, and meet their obligations.

This reduces compliance costs to government, as well as to New Zealand people and businesses.

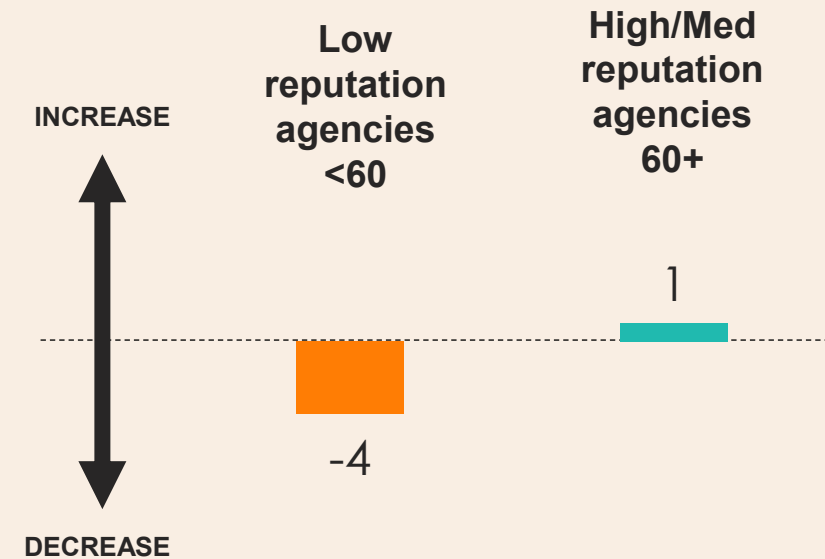
A respected agency is spoken highly of, which contributes to a wider sense that government is competent, fair, and working in the public interest.



A good reputation also earns you the benefit of the doubt.

Agencies with stronger reputations are more resilient. They're able to maintain support and credibility when addressing issues.

Average change in reputation score for agencies that saw a nett percentage point increase of 5+ in negative media/comms during 2025





02

# How we measure reputation

# Public Sector Reputation Index

9 years

Benchmarked in 2016

57

Public sector  
organisations

3,500

New Zealanders

The 2025 survey was  
carried out from  
2 to 27 April.

In total, 3,504 online  
interviews undertaken  
to reflect the views of  
New Zealanders

Sampled and weighted  
to be nationally  
representative by age,  
gender, region,  
ethnicity and income  
by household size.





# We assess reputation across 16 attributes, under four pillars

## Trust



- Listens to the public's point of view
- Uses taxpayer money responsibly
- Is trustworthy
- Can be relied upon to protect individuals' personal information
- Has the best of intentions

## Leadership



- Is a forward-looking organisation
- Contributes to economic growth
- Is easy to deal with in a digital environment
- Is a successful and well-run organisation

We determine the importance of each pillar and use this to calculate each agency's reputation score

## Social responsibility



- Behaves in a responsible way towards the environment
- Is a positive influence on society
- Has a positive impact on people's mental and physical wellbeing

## Fairness



- Treats their employees well
- Deals fairly with people regardless of their background or role
- Works positively with Māori
- Works positively with Pacific peoples

03

# The 2024-25 public sector landscape

A year of disruption, debate and division

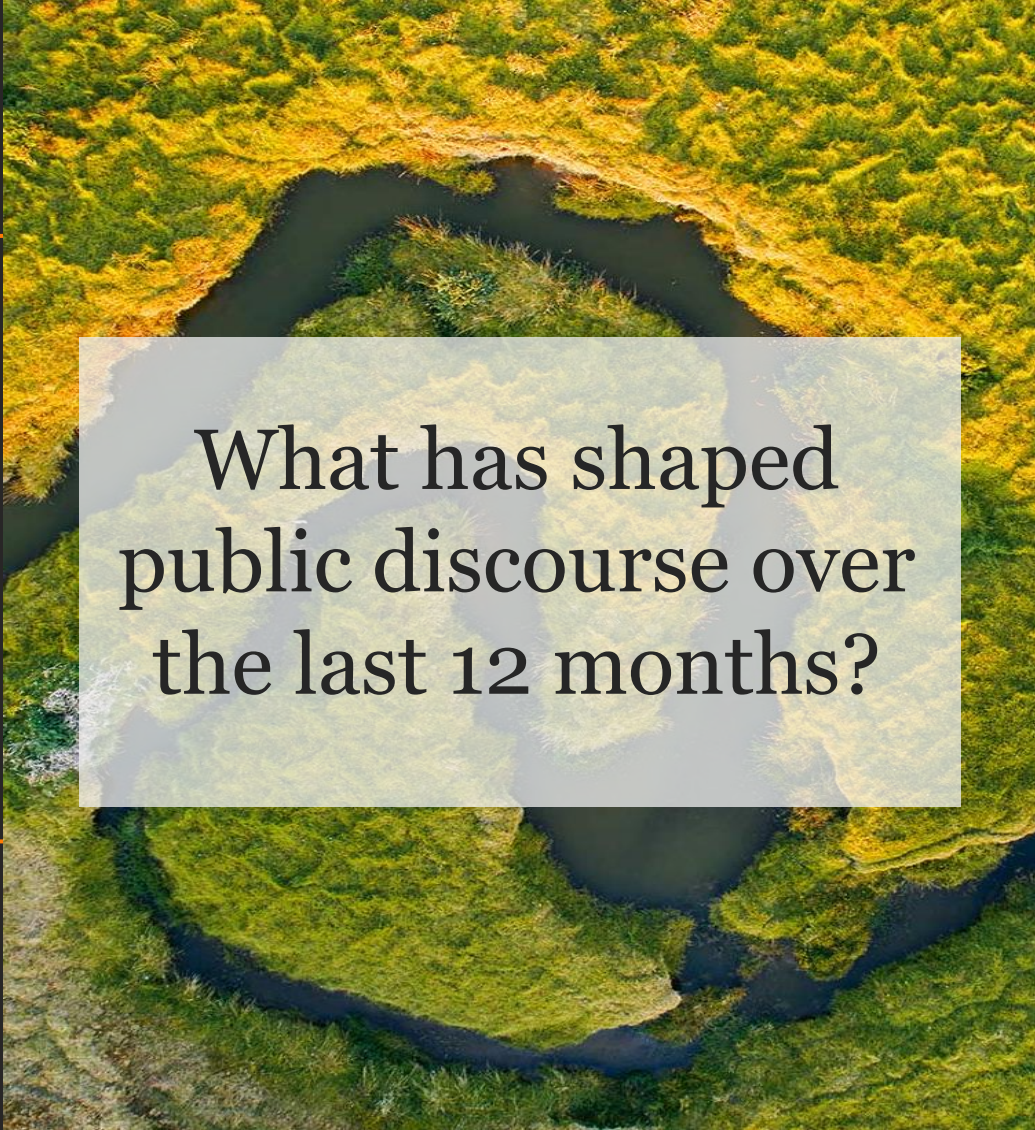


### Political and policy issues

- Public sector job cuts, budget reductions, spending constraint, restructuring, and 'back to office' policies
- Return of "three strikes"
- Fast-track approvals, transport and safety reforms
- Instances of public servants framed as 'woke' or overly aligned with progressive values, not politically neutral

### Social and cultural issues

- Treaty Principles Bill
- Removal of co-governance provisions from water and environmental reforms
- Proposed curriculum changes de-emphasizing NZ history and te ao Māori values
- Debate over 'one people' vs biculturalism
- Media sector job cuts, including closure of Māori and Pacific news programming



## What has shaped public discourse over the last 12 months?

### Economic issues

- Rising cost of living, despite inflation easing
- Media stories about struggling families
- Debates about income tax reductions vs public service funding trade-offs
- Pay equity disputes

### Environment & resilience issues

- Cyclone Gabrielle recovery still ongoing in Hawke's Bay and Tairāwhiti
- Rollback of resource management act reforms
- Possibility of opening conversation land to mining
- Withdrawal from emission reduction commitments

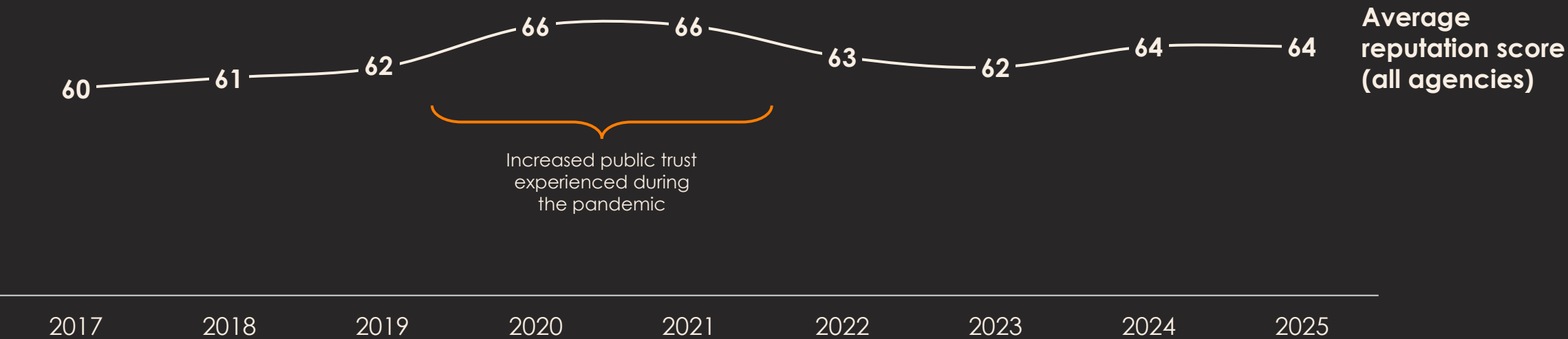


04

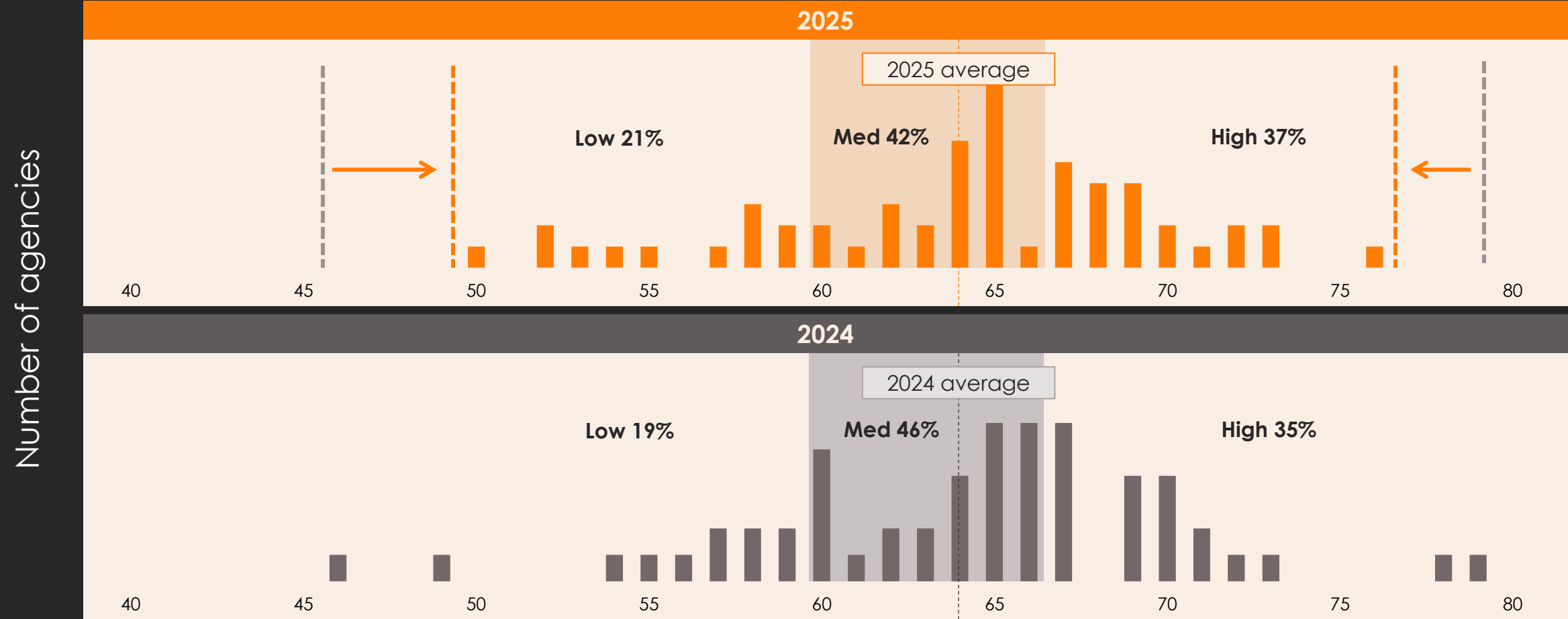
# Public sector reputation 2024-25

Sector wide reputation findings

# The public sector has maintained the rebound in trust it experienced in 2024.

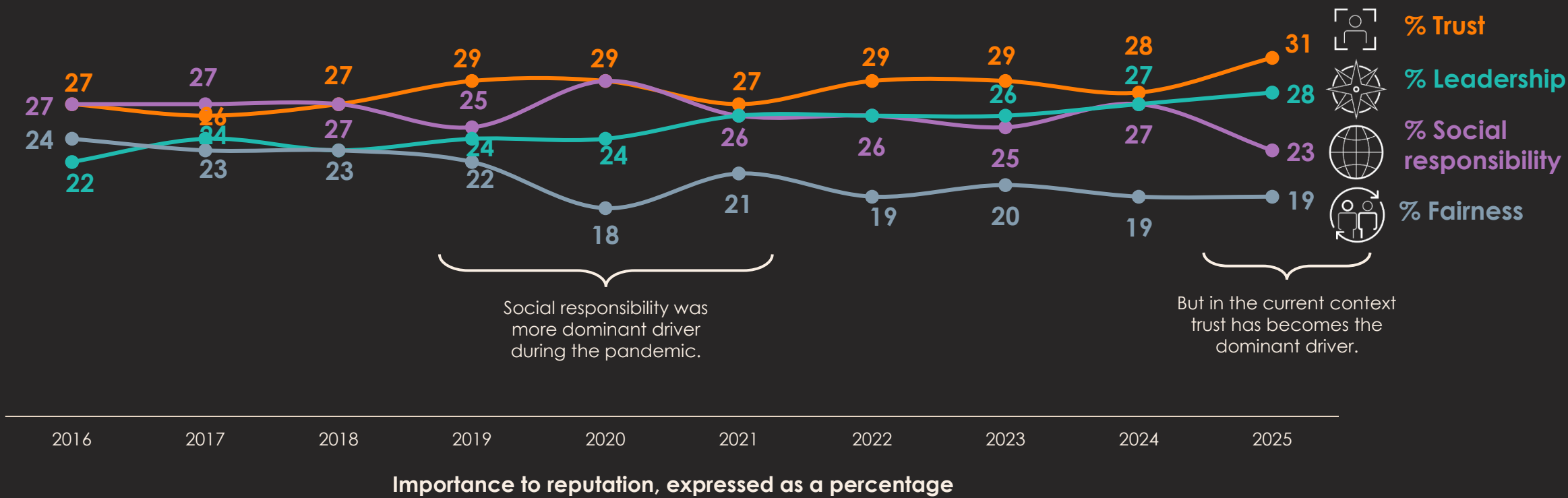


But reputation appears more fragile. There has been a lot of movement among agencies, with scores now more tightly clustered.

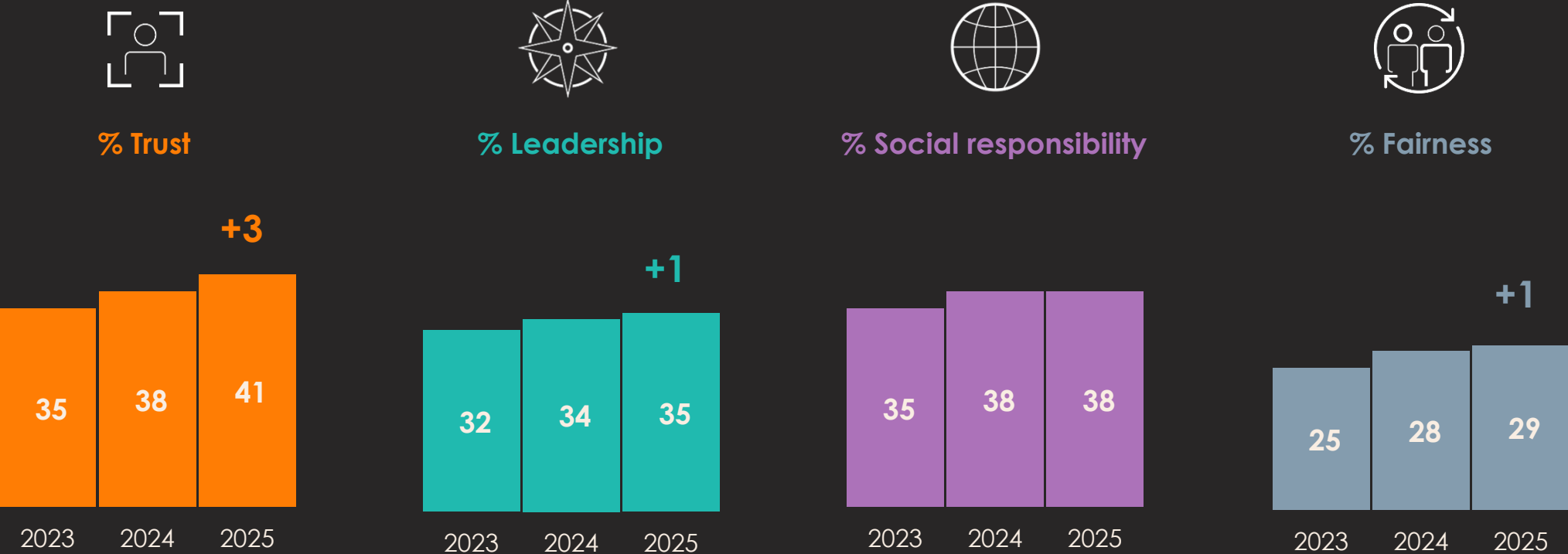




And this year **trust** has become the most dominant driver of reputation, perhaps driven by the growing emphasis on fiscal responsibility and competent service delivery.

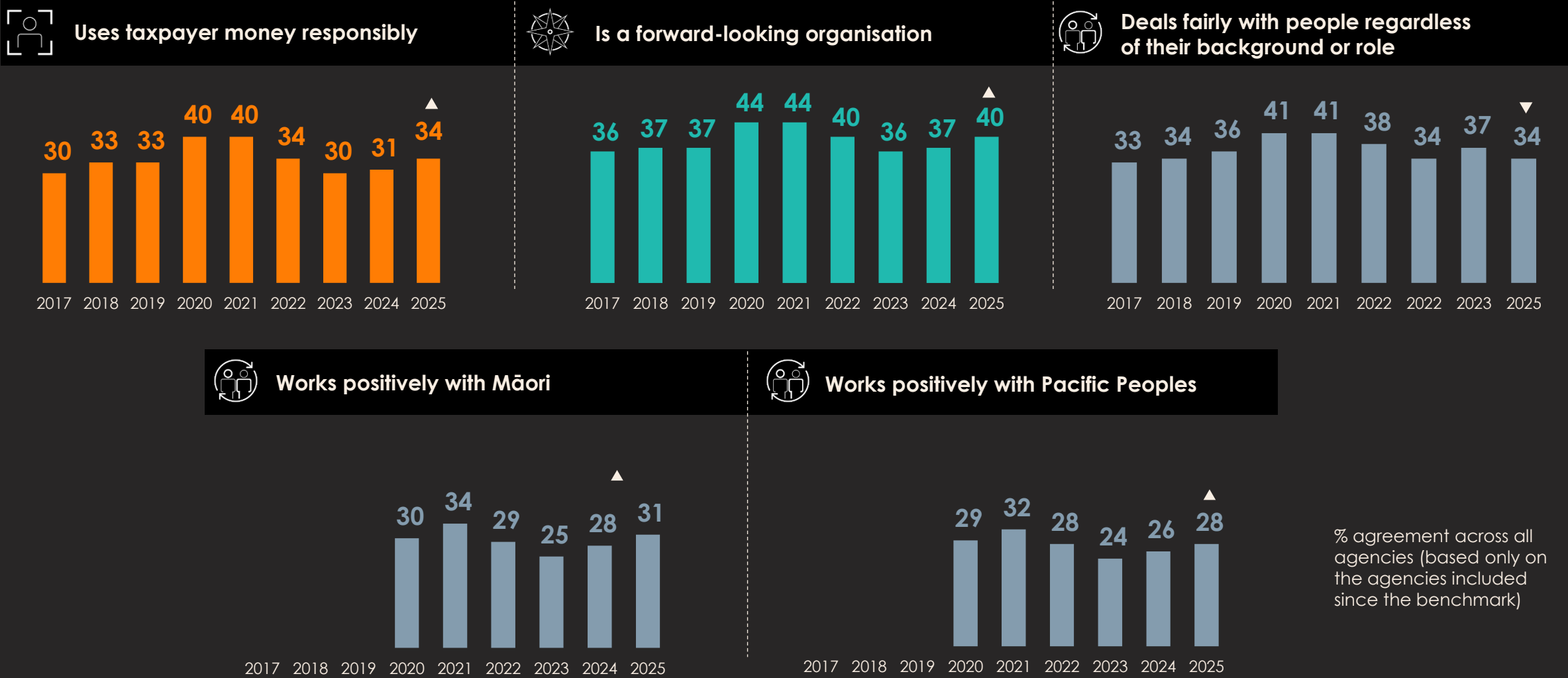


Now the most dominant driver, the trust pillar has seen improvement sector-wide.



Average % agreement across attributes within each pillar

# Attribute changes since 2024





05

# Public sector reputation 2024-25

Top 10 agencies

# Overall reputation top 10 for 2025

Fire and Emergency New Zealand retains its position as the agency with the highest reputation score, but we have a lot of movement within the top 10 in 2025.

76



2024 RANK

1

73



Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

6

73



**GNS**  
SCIENCE  
TE PŪ AO

7

72



NEW ZEALAND  
**CUSTOMS SERVICE**  
TE MANA ARAI O AOTEAROA

4

72



**MetService**  
TE RATONGA TIORANGI

10

71



**National Emergency  
Management Agency**  
Te Rākau Whakamarumaru

5

70



TE OPE KĀTUA O AOTEAROA  
**DEFENCE FORCE**

Outside  
top 10

70



Aviation Security Service  
*Kaiwhakamaru Rererangi*

Outside  
top 10

69



CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY  
OF NEW ZEALAND  
*Te Mana Rererangi Tāmatanui o Aotearoa*

Outside  
top 10

69



**NIWA**  
Taihoro Nukurangi

Outside  
top 10





























# Top 5 by pillar

Fire and Emergency NZ sits in top position across all pillars.

The top five overall appear in the top five across at least three of the four pillars.

[Please make a mental note of this, as I'll come back to it shortly.]

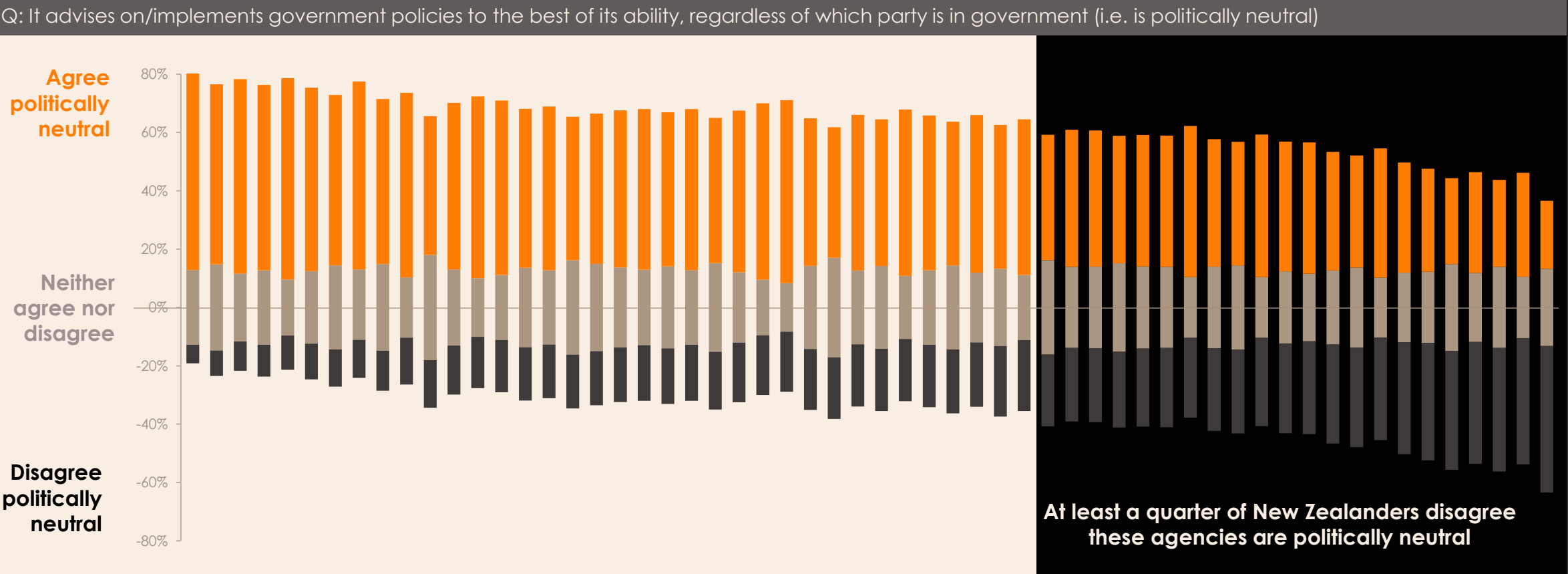
	 Trust	 Social responsibility	 Leadership	 Fairness
1				
2				
3	 NEW ZEALAND CUSTOMS SERVICE TE MANA ĀRAI O AOTEAROA		 NEW ZEALAND CUSTOMS SERVICE TE MANA ĀRAI O AOTEAROA	 NEW ZEALAND CUSTOMS SERVICE TE MANA ĀRAI O AOTEAROA
4	 National Emergency Management Agency Te Rākau Whakamarumaru	 National Emergency Management Agency Te Rākau Whakamarumaru		
5	 Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai			



06

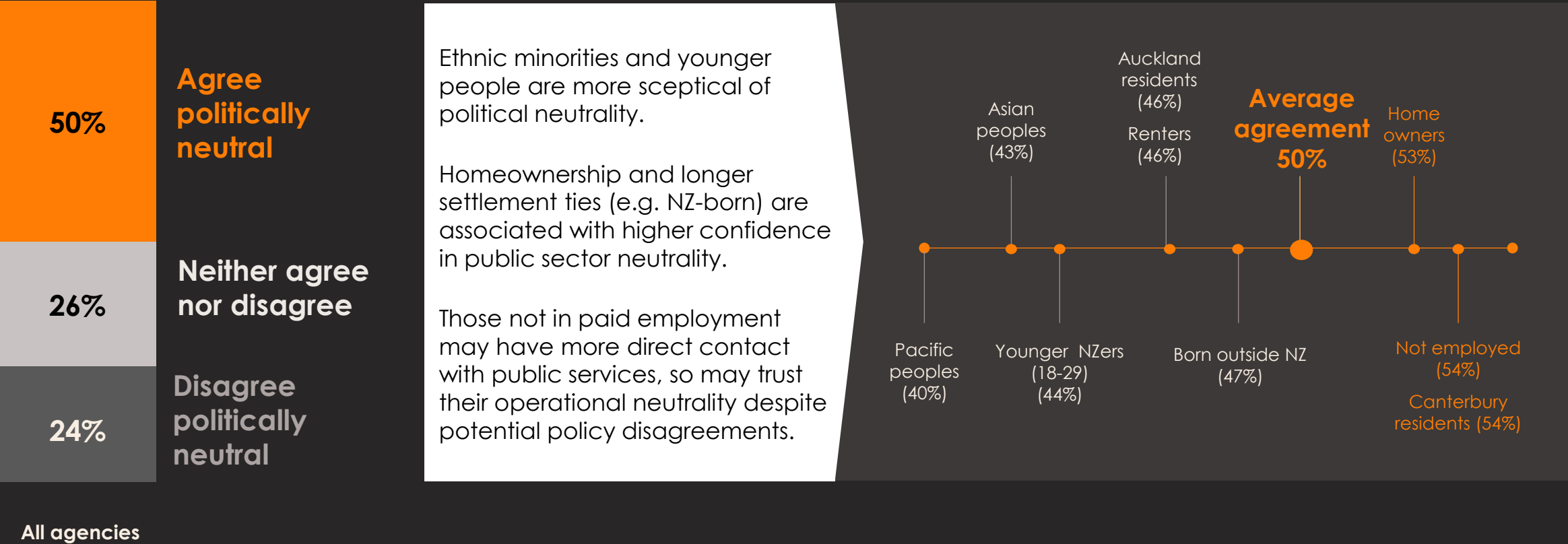
# Political neutrality matters

# The survey points to a need for some agencies to build confidence in their impartiality.



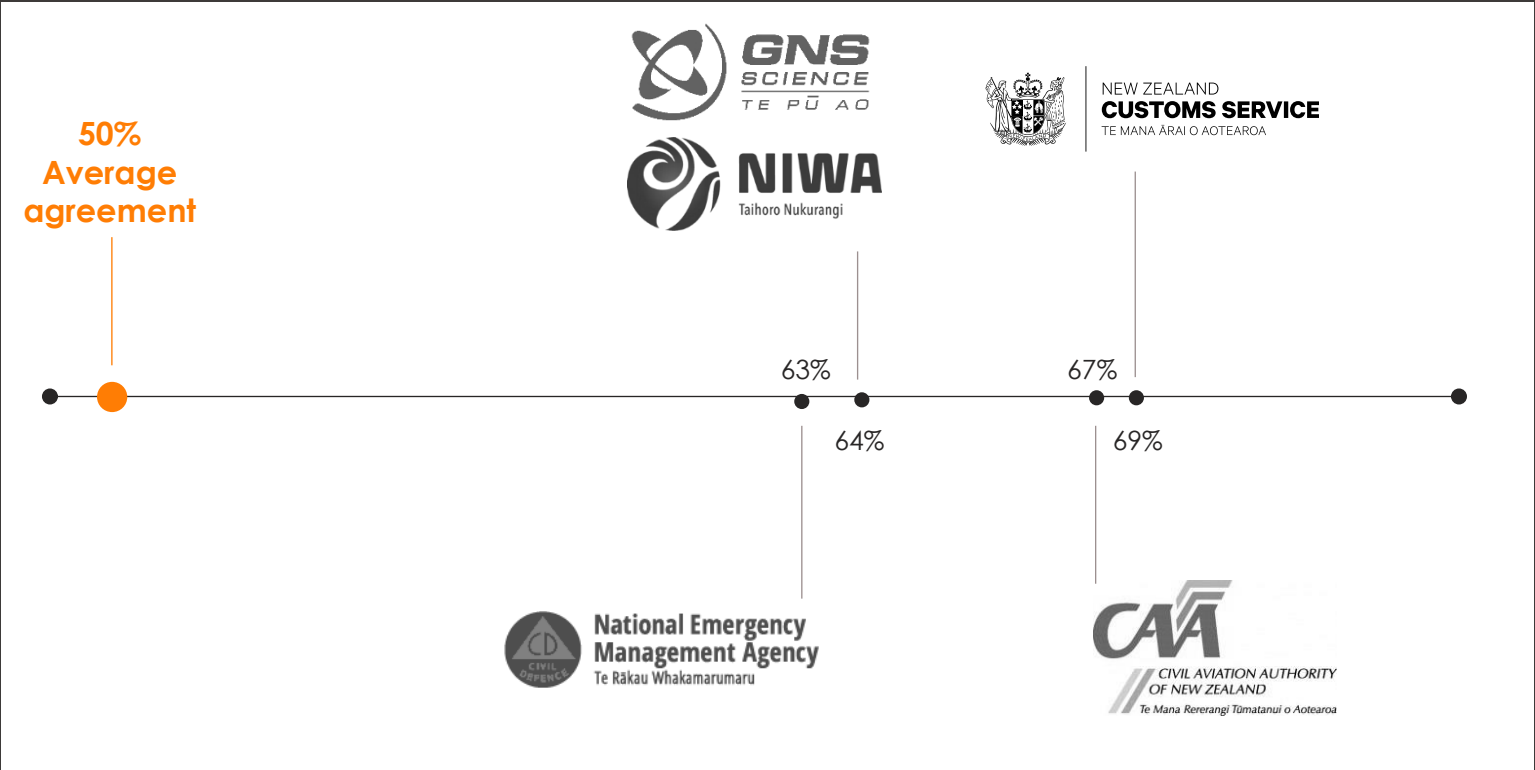
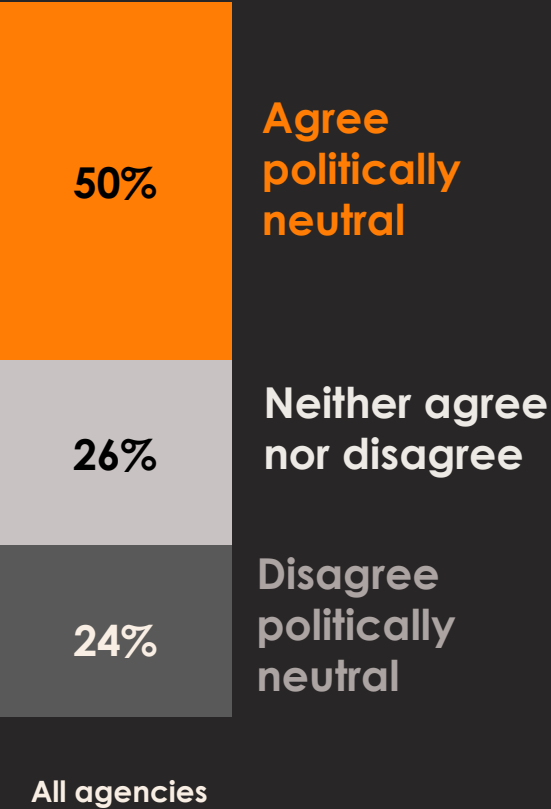
This is particularly the case among groups who may feel less heard, less represented, or less well-served.

**Political neutrality** [The agency] advises on/implements government policies to the best of its ability, regardless of which party is in government (i.e. is politically neutral)



# Perceptions of neutrality are highest for agencies seen as independent, expert-led, and free from political noise.

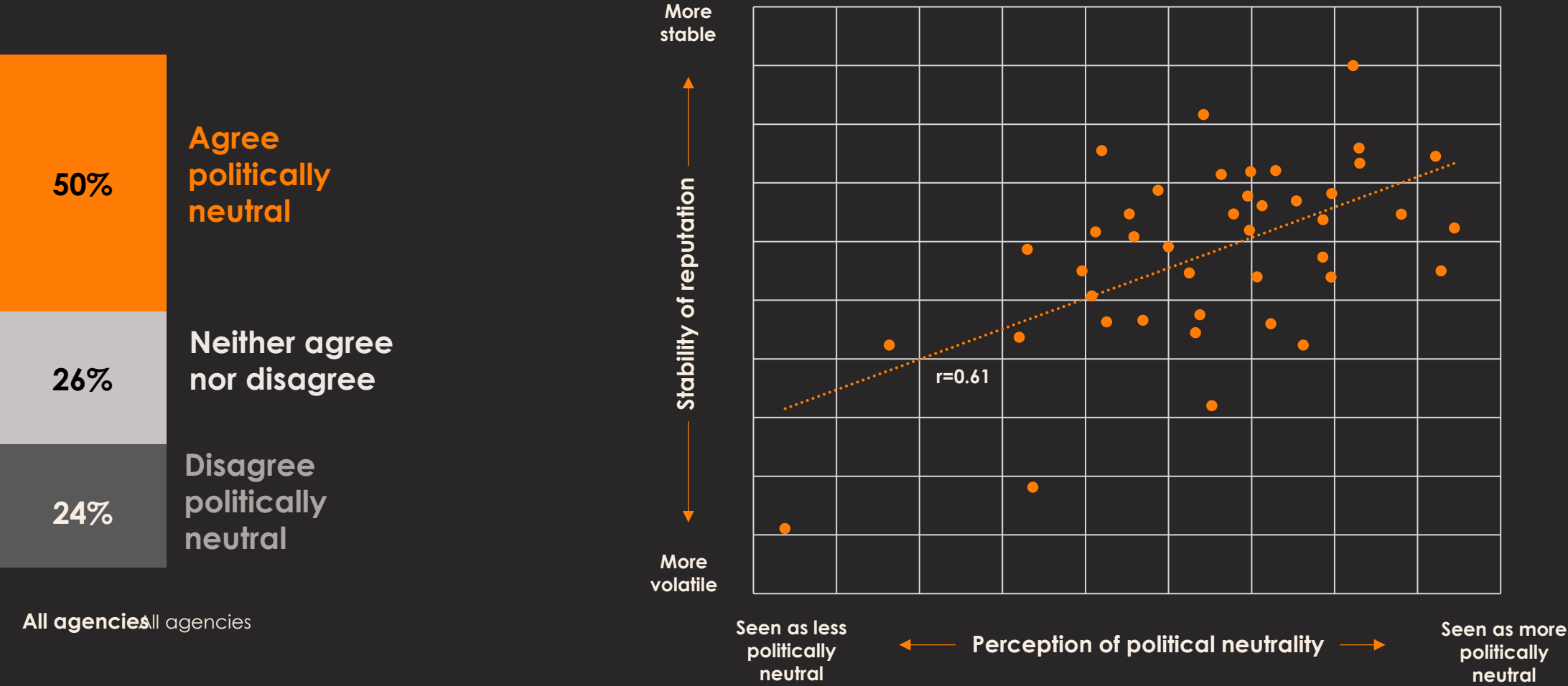
**Political neutrality** [The agency] advises on/implements government policies to the best of its ability, regardless of which party is in government (i.e. is politically neutral)





# Agencies seen as independent, expert-led and apolitical enjoy stronger and more stable reputations.

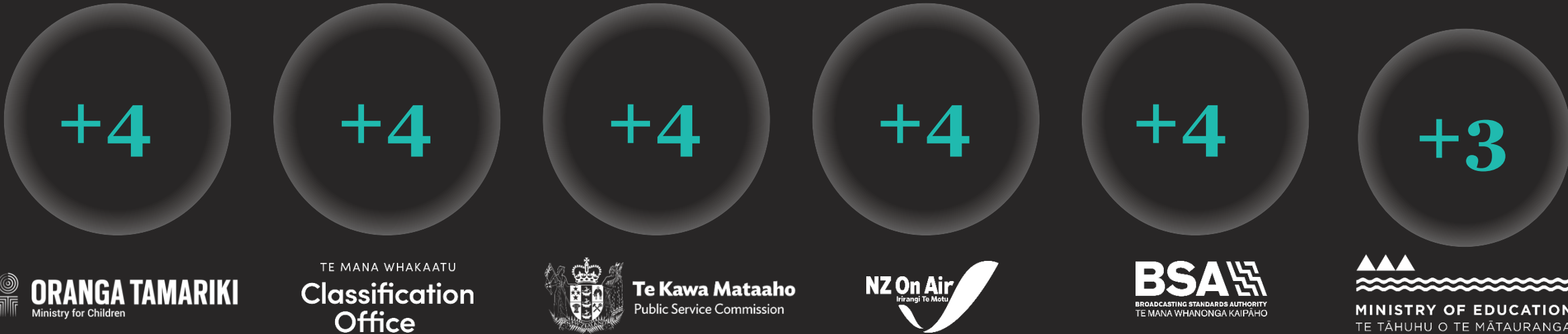
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07

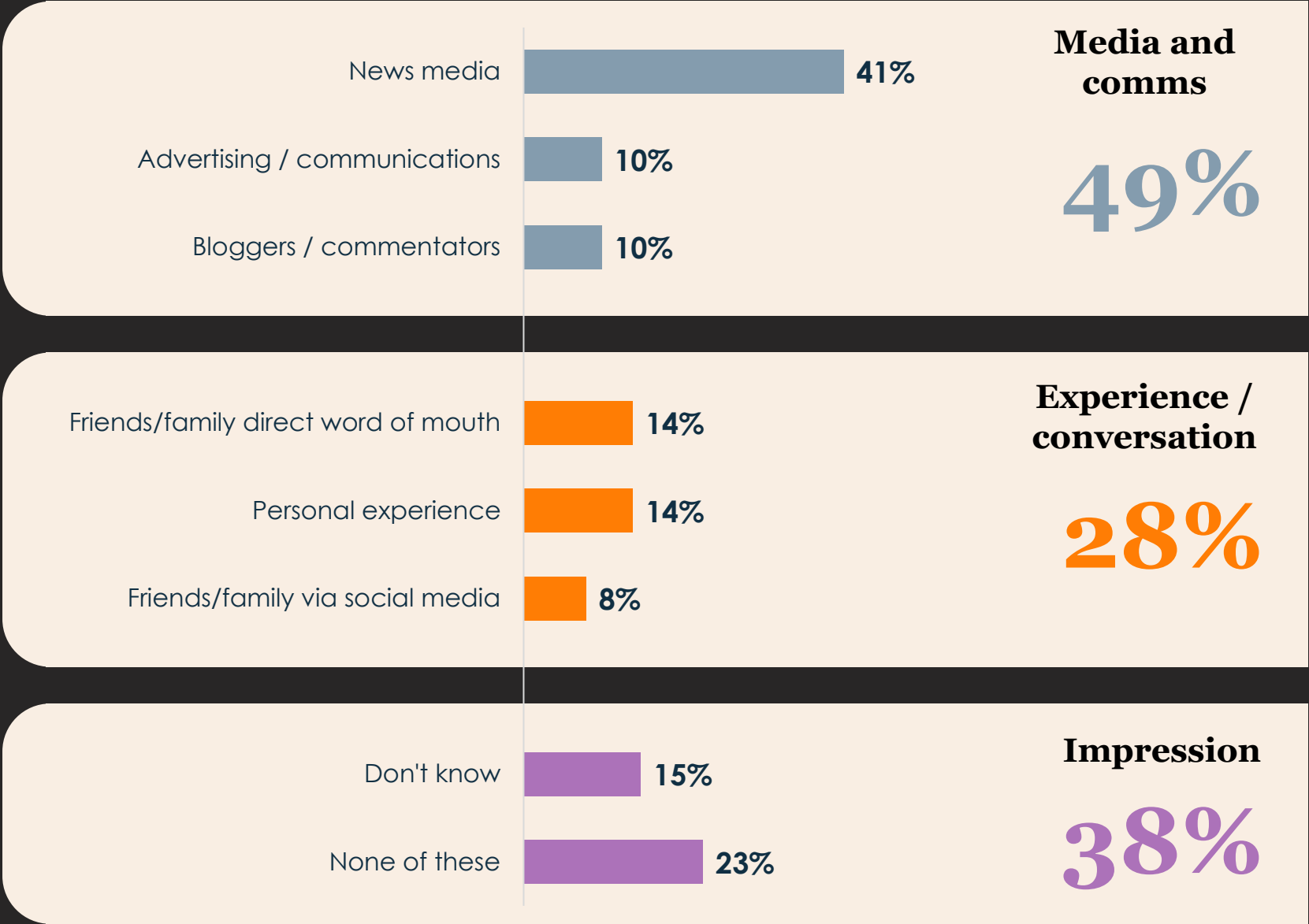
# Reputation improvements since 2024

# Six agencies show strong reputation improvements since 2024.



On the surface, media and comms *appear* to have the most influence on reputation, especially the news media.

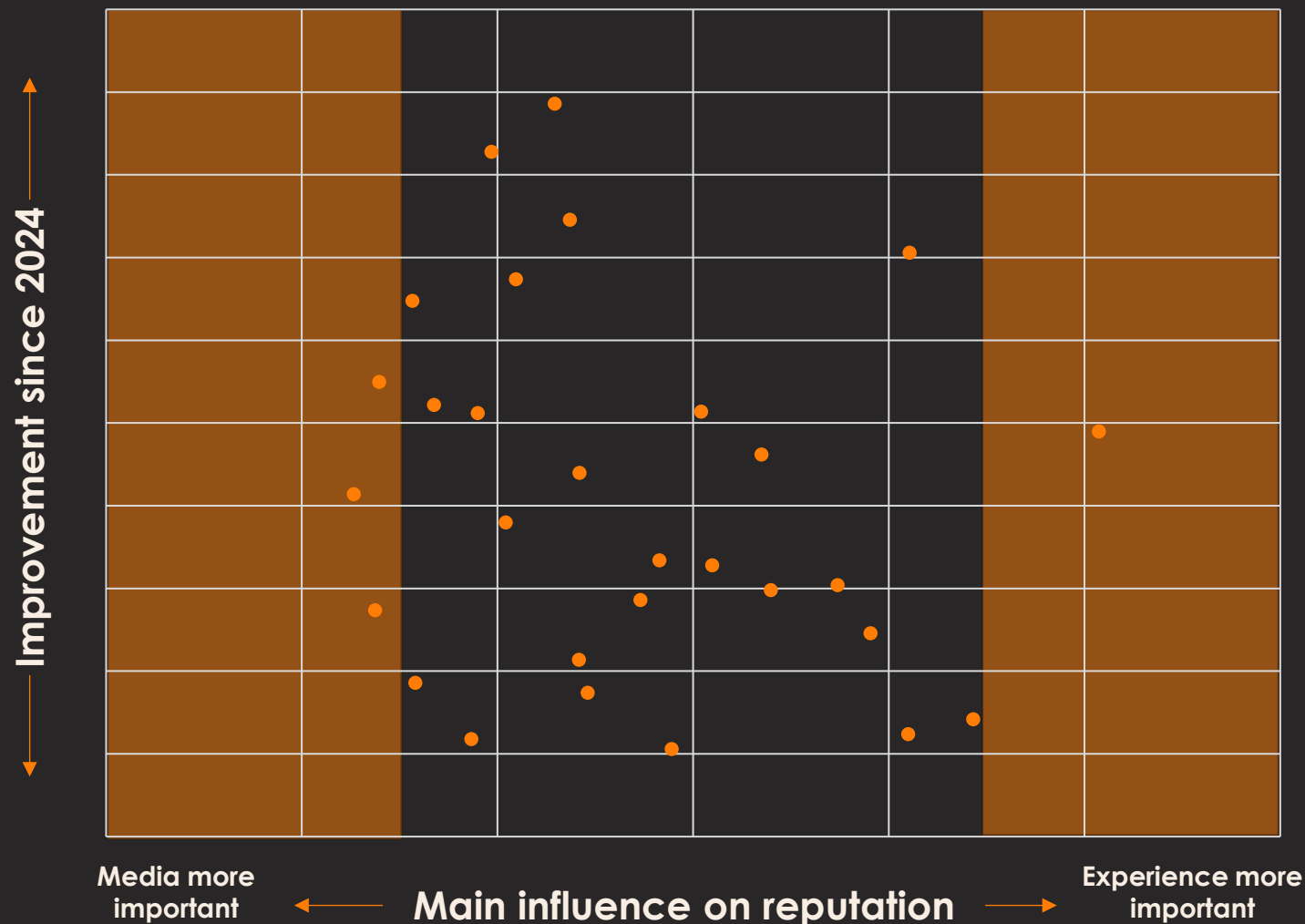
Which, if any, of the following has impacted your views of [insert agency]?





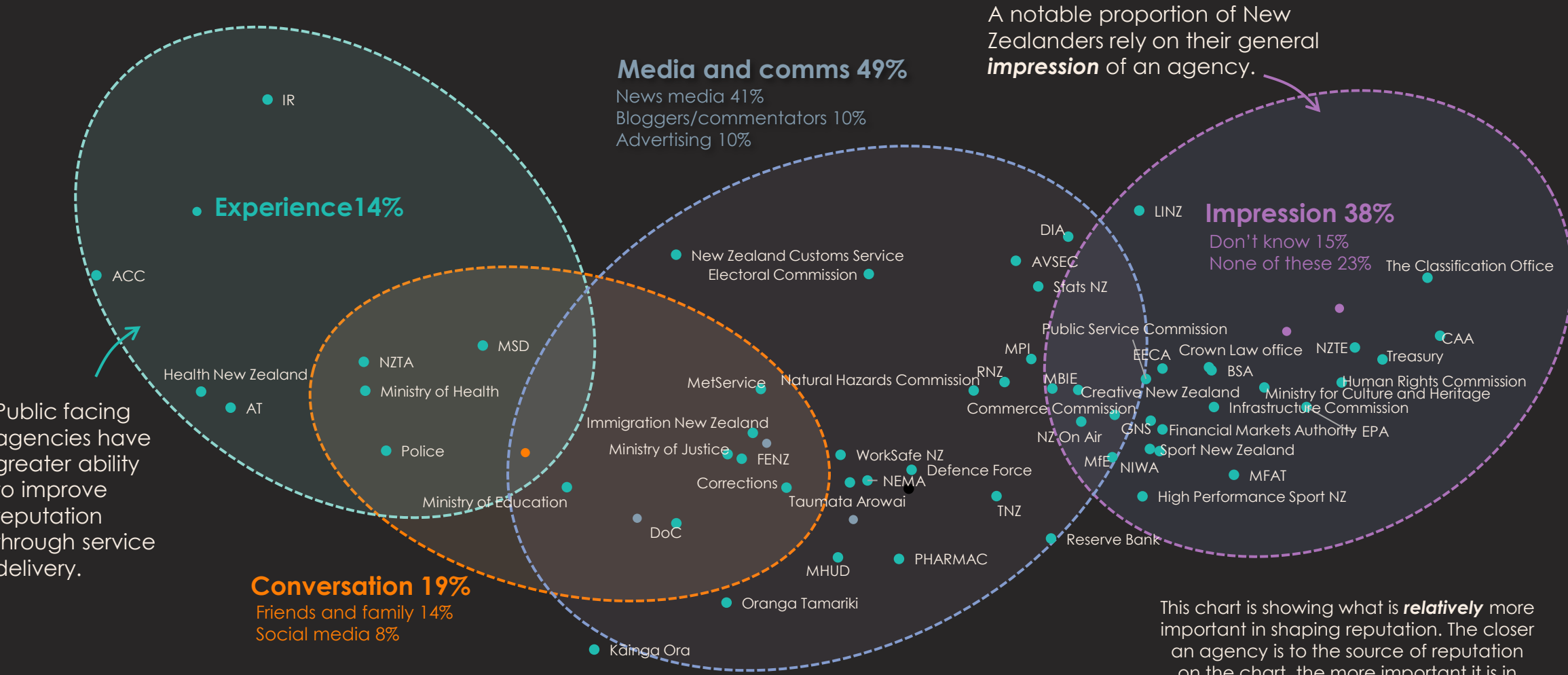
But most agencies that *improved* their reputation have relied on combination of visibility and service delivery.

# Agencies shouldn't just rely on visibility.



# Sources of influence vary among agencies

























Which, if any, of the following has impacted your views?



# Top 5 by pillar

Coming back to our top 5 agencies...

To what extent is reputation about the emotional connection New Zealanders have with public sector organisations?

	 Trust	 Social responsibility	 Leadership	 Fairness
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

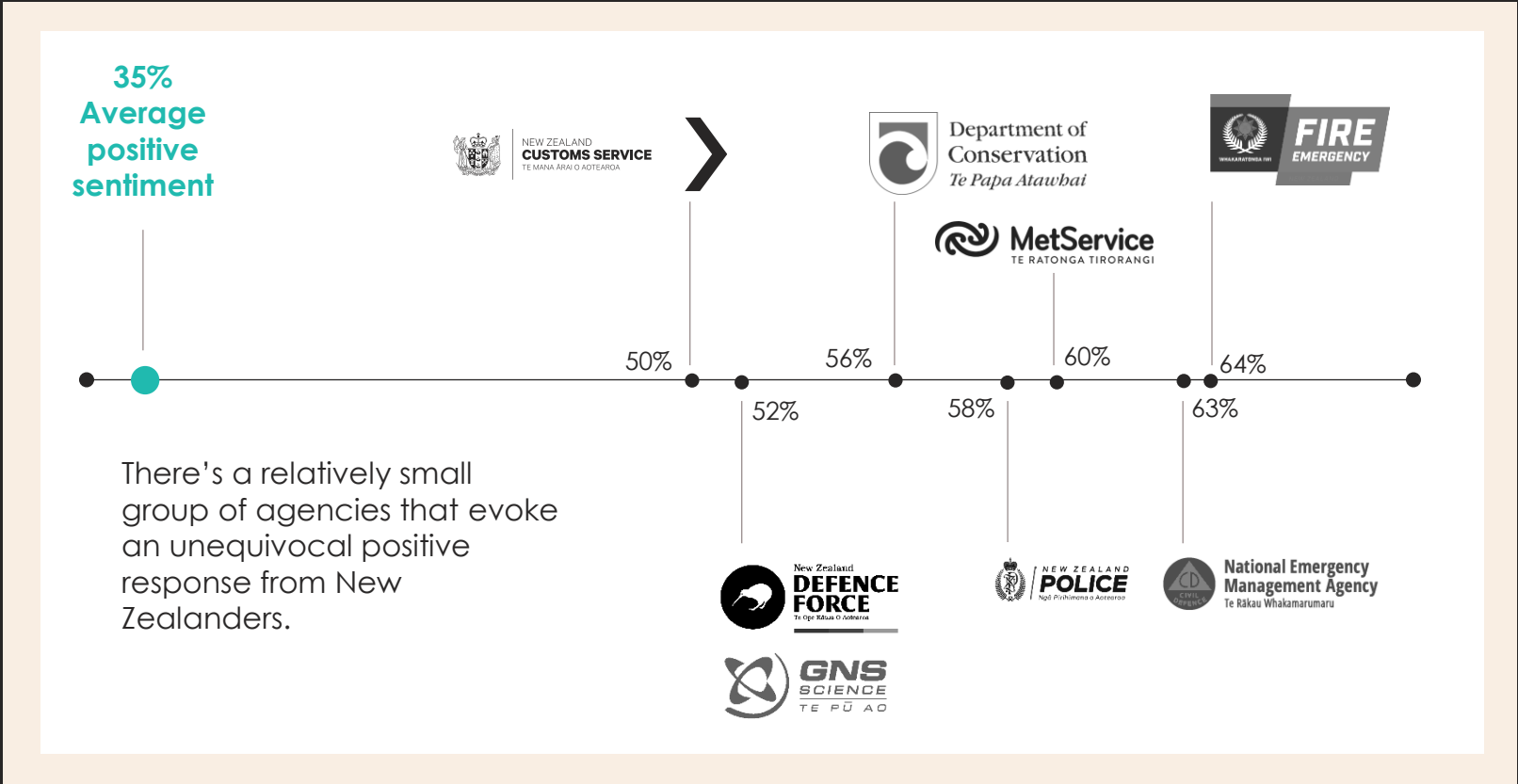
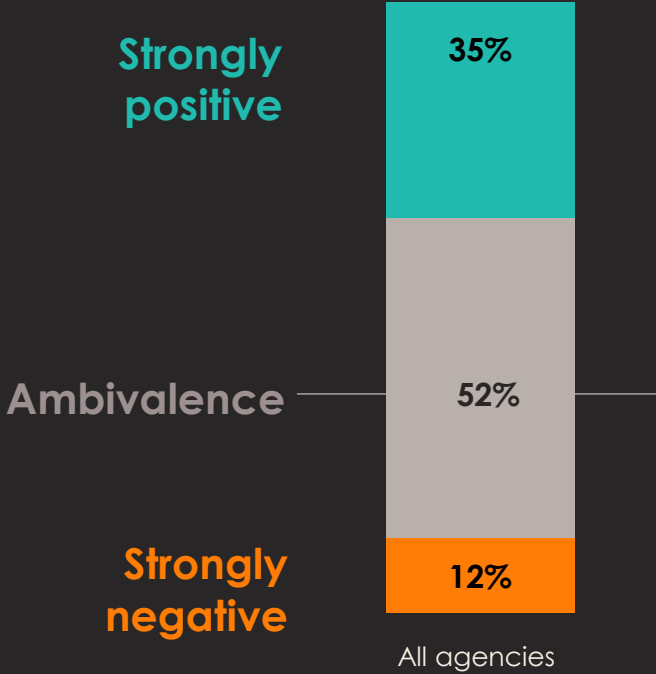


08

# The role of emotion in shaping reputation

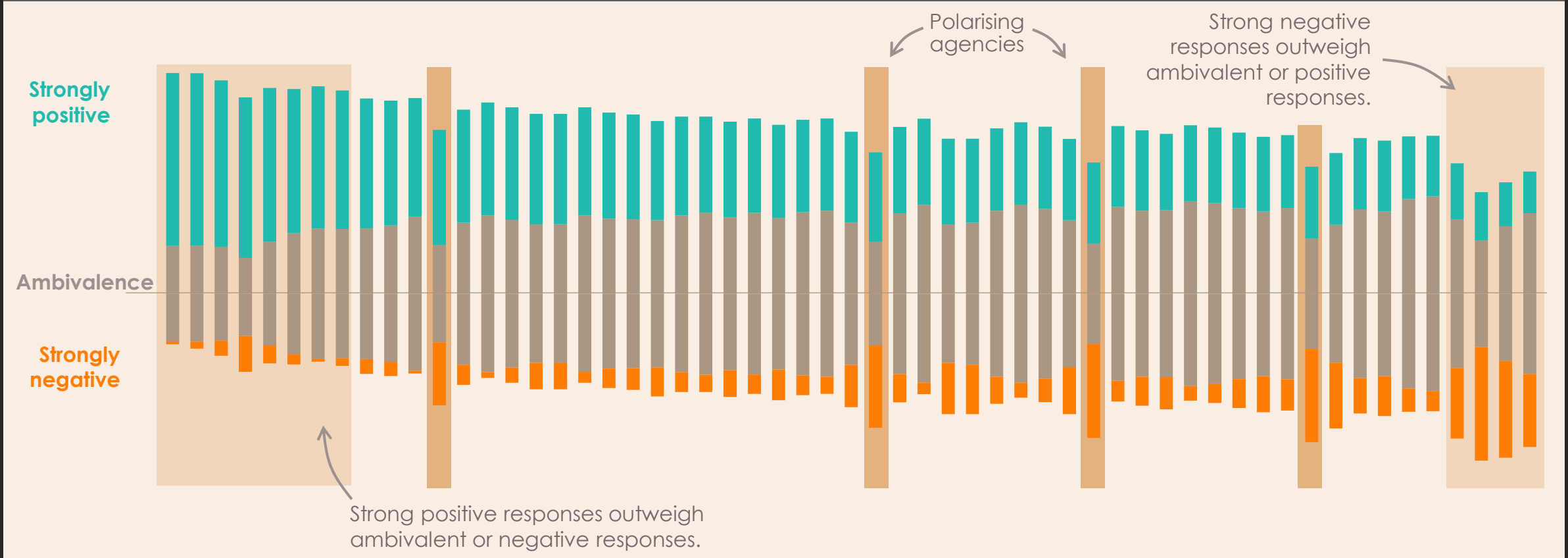
# On balance New Zealanders feel more positive than negative about public sector organisations, but most agencies are “pretty mid”.

Emotive response to public sector organisations



This ambivalence is perhaps an opportunity in disguise - agencies have an opportunity to strengthen the connection they have with New Zealanders.

Q: How do you feel about each organisation?



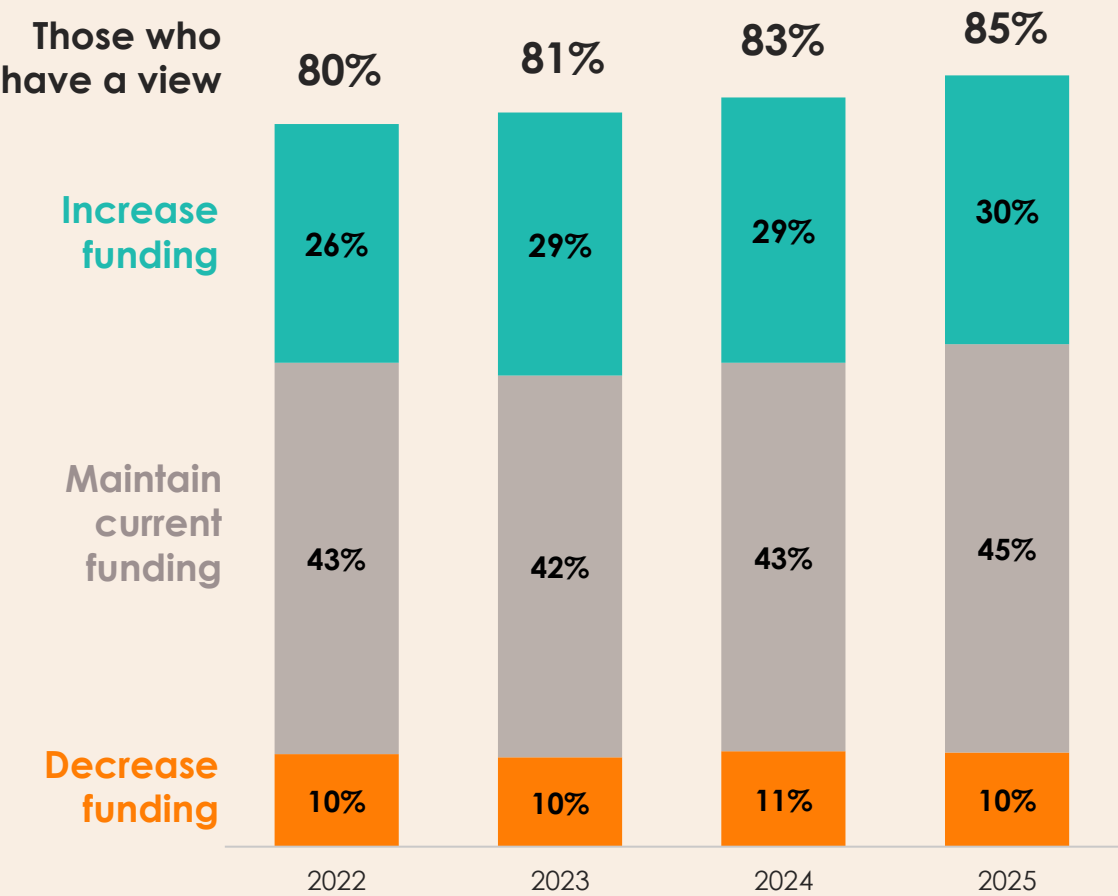


09

# Support for public funding

More New Zealanders hold an opinion about public sector funding. Most don't want to see it further reduced.

Do you think funding for each of the following organisations should be increased, decreased or stay the same?



## There are three main funding-reputation archetypes

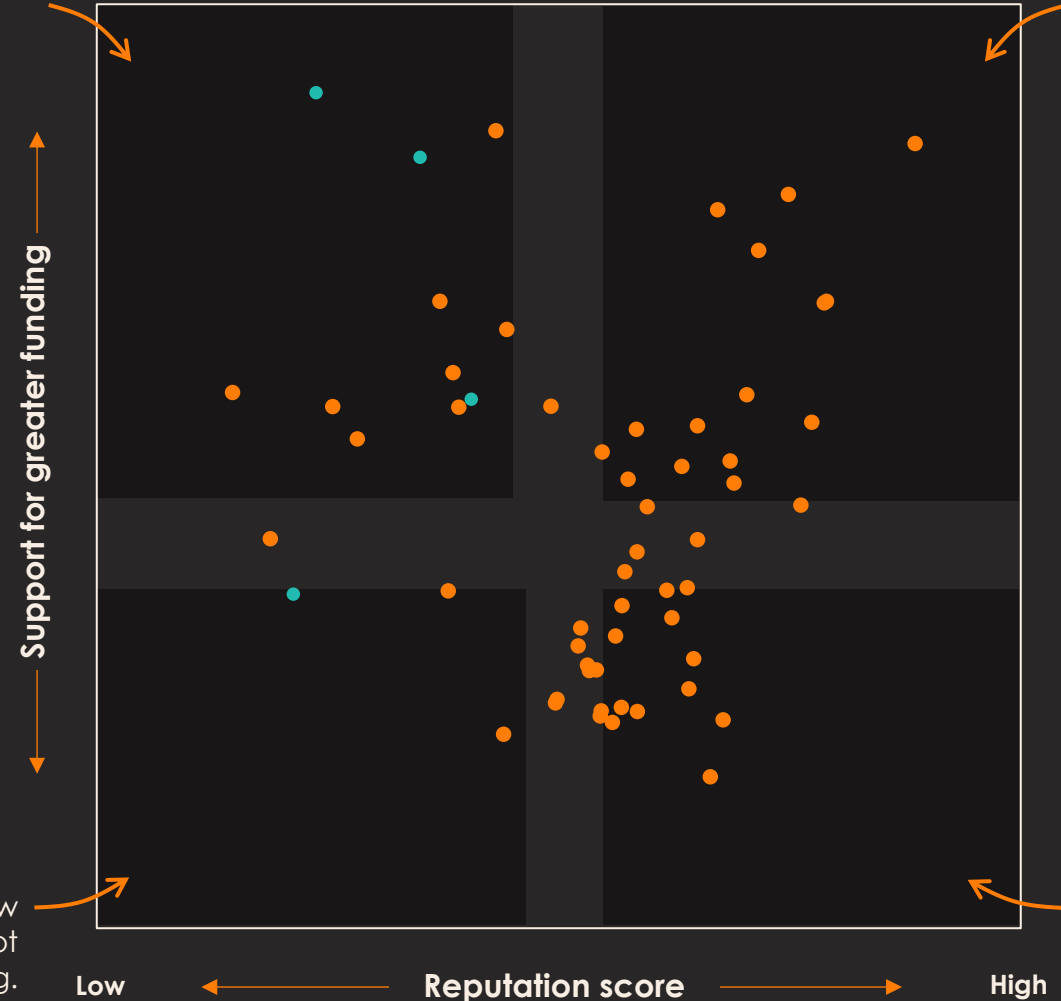
- Believed in and should be funded better
- Believed in, but current funding seems sufficient
- Underfunded and underperforming

Polarising agencies often fall into the third category.

- Agencies that evoke both strong positive and negative emotions

*"Underfunding means staff are stressed and time-poor, which impacts negatively on [function]."*

Viewed as low performing because they aren't properly funded.



Agencies the public believe in, and want greater funding so they can keep delivering

Viewed as low performing but not due to funding.

Agencies the public believe in, but believe current funding is enough



10

# Building organisational reputation

# 1. Focus on service delivery and demonstrating political neutrality

In a highly politicised environment, reputation is strong where politics appears absent..

1. Agencies perceived as independent and expert-led have higher reputation scores and are rated more politically neutral.
2. These agencies also show more stable reputation scores over time.
3. Where possible for your agency, make technical, operational or customer centric narratives more visible.

*"I feel they uphold [function] to a high standard and are politically neutral."*

*"I trust their service and neutrality."*

*"They should be impartial, but they are not. It's extremely important to be politically neutral. There have been many reports where they are clearly not."*

## 2. Build emotional connection by becoming more visible and human

We've seen that agencies that stir positive emotions are those that show up in people's lives in tangible, relatable ways.

1. Ambivalence is the dominant emotional response, but also an opportunity.
2. Visibility during crises and a sense of national or local identity build connection.
3. There may be opportunities for your agency to share stories of service, frontline impact, and human value.

*"They encourage fairness and support people who have been treated badly."*

*"The people that work there are awesome."*

*"I naturally feel compelled to be positive towards this type of organisation, because I believe their job is very important. I have never heard anything negative about the work they do."*

### 3. Strengthen reputation through action, not just impression

The agencies that improved their reputation did so through consistent delivery, not media alone.

1. Communication helps, but experience and frontline interaction can build understanding and trust.
2. Agencies seen as distant or vague rely more on gut feel, which can swing quickly in either direction.
3. So, where you can, invest in everyday, visible credibility.

*"They're consistently monitoring compliance."*

*"I have had first hand use of their services, cannot be faulted."*

*"All service I have gotten from them has been perfect."*



## 4. Understand your funding-support position and act accordingly

Public views on funding are influenced by reputation.

1. Agencies seen as deserving, underfunded, or strained receive sympathy and advocacy.
2. Know which quadrant you're in, and tailor messaging to reinforce trust or demonstrate value.
3. Making your resource needs visible, without sounding defensive, can enhance advocacy.

*"The work they do is incredible for the funding and support they get. Their job has increased and they go over and above. I feel they are not given the recognition they deserve."*

*"I have semi-regular contact with a variety of groups within the organisation and almost all of them are diligent, concerned, earnest, honest, and serious about their responsibilities and duties. Despite being purged by this government and having been consistently under-resourced for decades."*

# Ngā mihi



**Andrew Robertson**

+64 21 546 292

[andrew.robertson@veriangroup.com](mailto:andrew.robertson@veriangroup.com)



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Powering decisions  
that shape the world.