

# New Zealand Government Procurement Business Survey 2023



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,  
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**  
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

**Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government



## **Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) Hīkina Whakatutuki – Lifting to make successful**

MBIE develops and delivers policy, services, advice and regulation to support economic growth and the prosperity and wellbeing of New Zealanders.

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# Introduction

## New Zealand Government Procurement

New Zealand Government Procurement (NZGP), a branch within the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), runs an annual business survey to understand businesses' experiences of government procurement. The survey identifies businesses' perceptions of the quality of government procurement and their experiences when doing business with government. These results (along with other data) help us to track the impacts of government's efforts to improve procurement practice.

## The research

We sent an invitation to participate in the survey to everyone who has subscribed to a tender on the Government Electronic Tenders Service (GETS). We included a link to the survey on GETS, the NZGP website and newsletters, and MBIE's social media pages. We also emailed an invitation to participate to businesses that work with government through our external survey provider Premium Research.

The survey took place over three weeks in September 2023. We received 755 responses. This compares to 1,717 responses in 2021 and 2,095 responses in 2019.

## Structure of the report

This report is structured around six key areas: business profile, initial engagement, tender activity, contract management, supplier relationships and the complaints process. Each section summarises how businesses reported their experiences in these areas.

## Limitations

**Sample size:** The survey response rate was lower than in previous years.

**Sample profile:** It is important to note that the sample profile for the 2023 survey is significantly different to the previous years in many ways. There are some proportional changes in the sample profile, but the impact of these on the survey results is not known. Any changes in the survey results from previous years may be a result of the change in the sample profile.

The key changes in the sample profile were a proportional increase in Wellington businesses and those offering services throughout New Zealand, small businesses, 'companies' and 'consultancies'.

**Note:** The changes in the sample profile are proportional and the comparatively small sample size may undermine the representation of the sample for the whole population of businesses engaging with government and the validity of the findings.

**Unspecified or blank responses:** In order to accurately compare the results between years, we have removed 'not applicable' responses from the report since this option was not used in previous surveys.

# Survey findings

## Key findings

Overall, the 2023 survey results are similar to the 2021 results, though they tend to fall short of some aspects. There have been some downward trends since 2019 and this is something that will be monitored going forward.

- 26% of respondents rated the *quality of government procurement* highly. This is a small decrease from 2021 and continues a downward trend from 2019.
- Positive perceptions of the quality of government *tender activity* have had a proportional drop between 2021 and 2023.
  - 52% of respondents said *tender documents* provided by government agencies include all the information that the business needs to make a bid to supply products and/or services.
  - 47% said the information provided by government agencies in these *tender documents* is easy to understand.
- Positive perceptions of the quality of the *initial engagement* with government and *contract management* have remained stable between 2021 and 2023. However, there is a continued downward trend in ratings for *contract manager performance* and there is also a drop for professionalism/knowledge, clear communication and the timing of transactions.
- On the other hand, there have been some increases in positive perceptions of the quality of *supplier relationships* (with government) and the ability of business to *effectively bid* for government contracts.
- Nearly all respondents would at least sometimes *recommend government as a customer* to other businesses (86%). This is consistent with the 2021 result.
- Low awareness of complaints processes continued in 2023.

## Additional findings

- Government receives the highest rating for *supplier relationships* (45% total good), closely followed by *initial engagement* (43%) and *contract management* (40%), while *tender activity* is identified as the weakest, with 32% rating this as good and 29% poor.
- 44% of respondents said the opportunity to respond to tenders in an alternative way often or always makes the procurement process easier for businesses.

## Areas for improvement

Respondents gave rich and detailed feedback via the open-ended questions. One of those is asking about areas which would make government a more attractive client. The report summarizes with themes which focus on:

- Building genuine and sustainable relationships, which allows interaction to clarify needs. Respondents expect commitments and consistent practices from their government partners.

- Suggestions on the tender activities to improve the efficiency includes improving the quality and standardised requirements of RFQs, allowing flexibility in responses and refreshing panels and panel information.
- Considering broader outcomes and prioritising small, local and diverse businesses.

# Sample profile

## Business base

### IN WHICH REGION IS YOUR MAIN OFFICE IN NEW ZEALAND BASED?

Two thirds (69%) of the businesses that responded to the survey were based in either Auckland or Wellington. There was a proportional increase in businesses based in Wellington and decrease in those based in Waikato between the 2021 and 2023 surveys.

Region	2019	2021	2023	Region	2019	2021	2023
Auckland	35%	36%	35%	Hawke's Bay	3%	2%	2%
Wellington	22%	19%	34%	Taranaki	2%	2%	1%
Canterbury	12%	10%	9%	Nelson	1%	1%	1%
Waikato	7%	7%	3%	Gisborne	0%	1%	1%
Bay of Plenty	4%	4%	3%	Southland	1%	1%	<1%
Manawatu-Whanganui	4%	3%	2%	Tasman	1%	1%	<1%
Northland	4%	3%	2%	Marlborough	1%	1%	<1%
Otago	3%	2%	2%	West Coast	0%	1%	0%
Not based in New Zealand	-	6%	4%				

Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2019 – 1,740, 2021 – 1,703, 2023 - 755



## Business supply regions

### IN WHICH NEW ZEALAND REGION(S) DOES THE BUSINESS SUPPLY PRODUCTS AND/OR SERVICES TO GOVERNMENT?

At least half of the businesses supply products and services to government in the Wellington, Auckland and Canterbury regions. There was a proportional increase in businesses supplying to government in every region except the West Coast (where there was a proportional decrease) between 2021 and 2023.

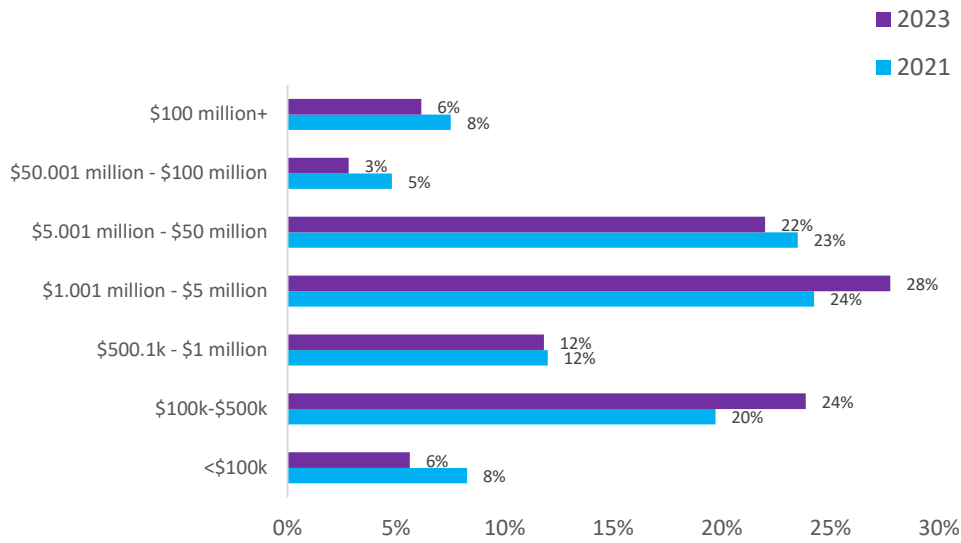
Region	2019	2021	2023	Region	2019	2021	2023
Wellington	39%	35%	79%	Hawke's Bay	31%	27%	42%
Auckland	59%	54%	71%	Nelson	0%	7%	41%
Canterbury	27%	24%	53%	Taranaki	34%	29%	38%
Waikato	47%	40%	49%	Southland	35%	32%	38%
Bay of Plenty	44%	40%	46%	Gisborne	31%	28%	37%
Otago	28%	25%	44%	Marlborough	36%	31%	37%
Manawatu-Whanganui	36%	31%	43%	West Coast	62%	58%	36%
Northland	31%	26%	43%	Tasman	29%	25%	36%

Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2019 – 1,871, 2021 – 1,703, 2023 - 735

## Scale of business

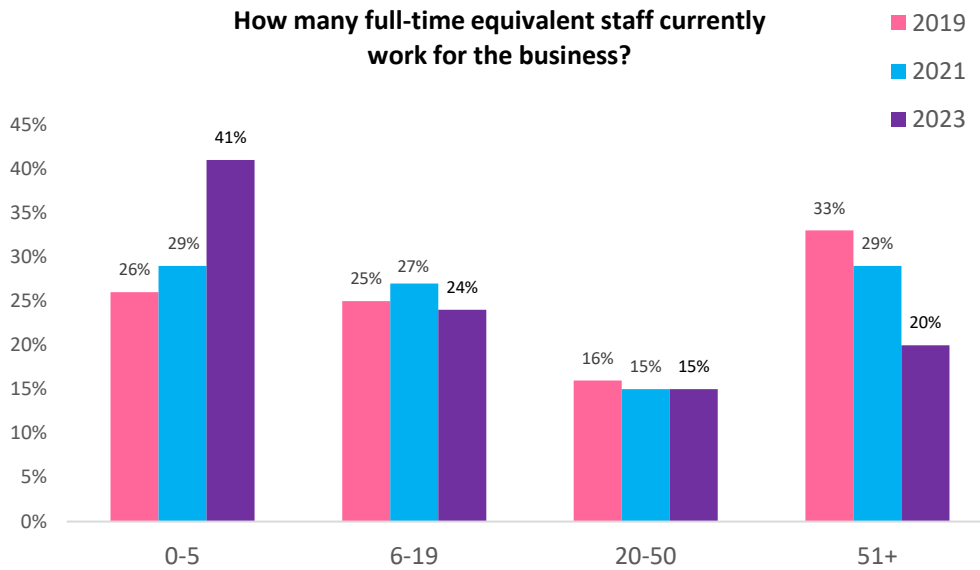
A diverse range of businesses completed the survey. 42% of businesses had an annual turnover of one million or less. Most of the businesses that responded to the survey in 2023 had 19 or less employees. There was a corresponding increase between 2021 and 2023 of businesses with 0-5 employees.

**What was the approximate turnover of the business in New Zealand dollars in the most recent financial year?**



Base size, respondents who answered this question:  
2019- 1,824, 2021 – 1,499, 2023 - 747

**How many full-time equivalent staff currently work for the business?**



Base size, respondents who answered this question:  
2019- 1,824, 2021 – 1,499, 2023 - 747

## Industry

### WHAT MAIN INDUSTRY/FIELD DOES THE BUSINESS OPERATE IN?

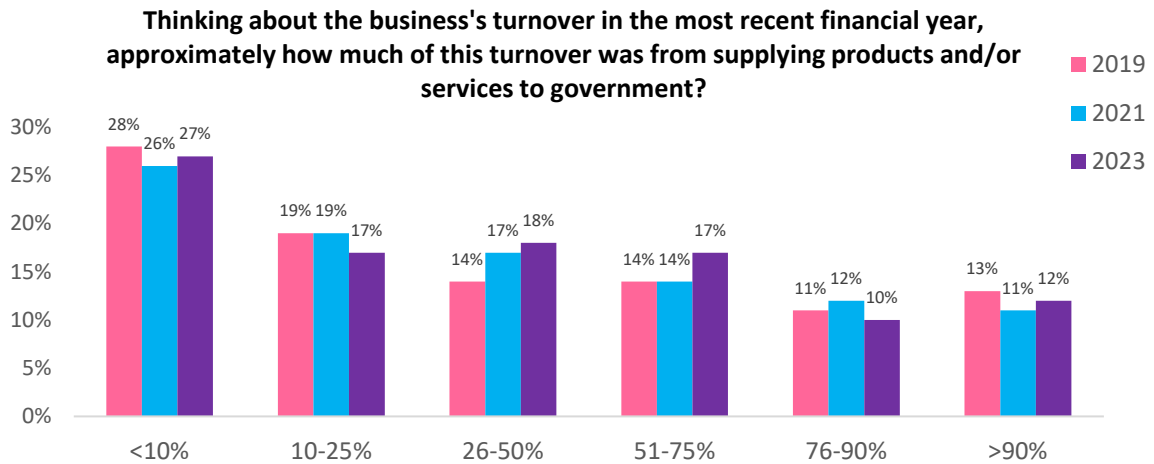
Businesses from a diverse range of industries completed the survey. The most common industries were consultancy, ICT and construction. Although there was a proportional increase in the participating businesses in consultancy between 2021 and 2023, the actual number is roughly the same. There was a proportional decrease in construction, community and clinical businesses.

Industry	2021	2023	Industry	2021	2023
Consultancy	14%	29%	Vehicles	0%	1%
Information and communication technology (ICT)	11%	9%	Energy and utilities	2%	1%
Construction, infrastructure and manufacturing	16%	9%	Facilities	2%	1%
Marketing and media	3%	7%	Financial and banking services	1%	1%
Engineering solutions (including architecture)	3%	6%	Logistics	0%	1%
Services (other, this includes research services)	4%	6%	Operational goods and services	2%	1%
Community and social services (Health, justice, education and welfare)	18%	5%	Travel, events and accommodation (including catering)	1%	1%
Personnel related (including training and professional development)	2%	5%	Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries	1%	1%
Professional services temporary staff	1%	2%	Waste management	0%	<1%
Clinical, medical and laboratory	4%	1%	Other	12%	10%
Office solutions	1%	1%			

Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2021 – 1,493, 2023 - 746

## Government turnover

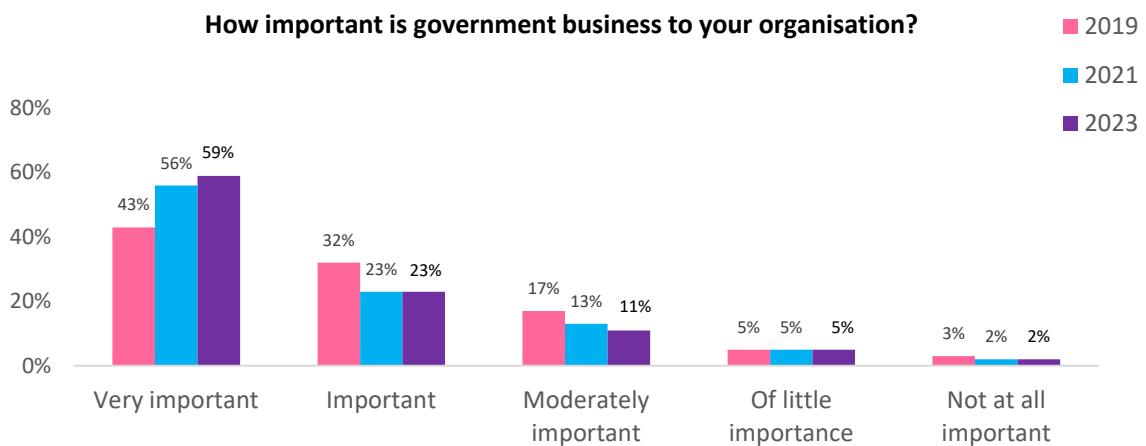
As in 2021, 62% of the businesses that responded to the survey sourced 50% or less of their turnover from government. The remaining 38% sourced 50% or more of their revenue from government.



Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2019 – 1,761, 2021 – 1,474, 2023 - 748

## Importance of government business

Government business is important to most of the businesses that completed the survey (*very important* or *important* = 82%). There was no proportional change between 2021 and 2023.



Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2019 – 1,812, 2021 – 1,487, 2023 - 750

## Importance of government business by key groups

### HOW IMPORTANT IS GOVERNMENT BUSINESS TO YOUR ORGANISATION?

Government business was rated as important across all key groups of interest. Total importance for Wellington businesses was higher than the *overall* total.

Importance of government business to your organisation	Total important
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82%</b>
<b>Business base</b>	
Auckland	80%
Wellington	86%
Canterbury	76%
Rest of North Island	81%
Rest of South Island	53%
<b>Business type</b>	
50%+ owned by New Zealanders	80%
Defined/identified as a Māori business	82%
Described/identified as a Pasifika business	75%
<b>Industry</b>	
Community and social services	93%
Construction, infrastructure and manufacturing	76%
Consultancy	82%
Others	81%
<b>NZ annual turnover</b>	
Less than \$500K	75%
\$501K - \$1 million	80%
\$1.001 million - \$5 million	84%
\$5.001 million - \$50 million	84%
\$50.001 million +	93%

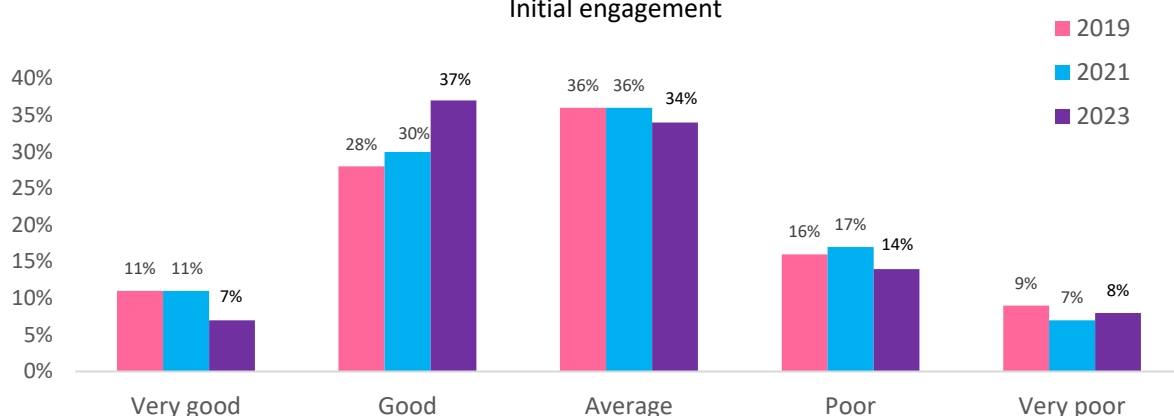
Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2023 - 750

# Initial engagement with government

## Initial engagement

Overall, perceptions of the quality of the initial engagement with government have remained consistent over time. 44% of respondents rate the engagement positively (*very good* or *good*) and 22% negatively (*very poor* or *poor*). There has been a small decrease, since 2021, in the highest level of rating (*very good*) and corresponding increase in the other positive category (*good*).

**Thinking about the last 12 months, how would you rate the quality of the following government procurement activities?**  
Initial engagement

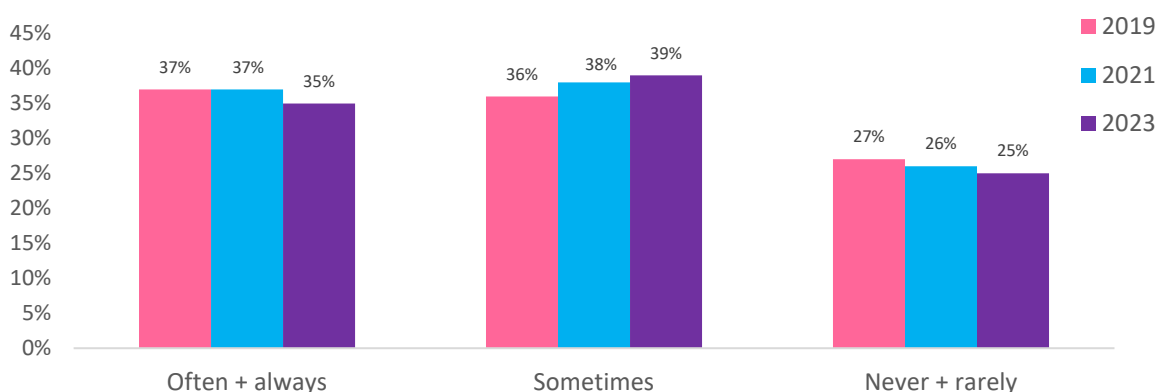


Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2019 – 1,427, 2021 – 1,287, 2023 - 730

## Openness of officials

Perceptions of the openness of government officials, when asked for more information about a contract opportunity, have remained consistent over time. 35% reported that officials are *often* or *always* open, 39% said officials were *sometimes* open and 25% said *never* or *rarely*.

**Do government officials discuss their requirements openly when asked for more information about a contract opportunity?**



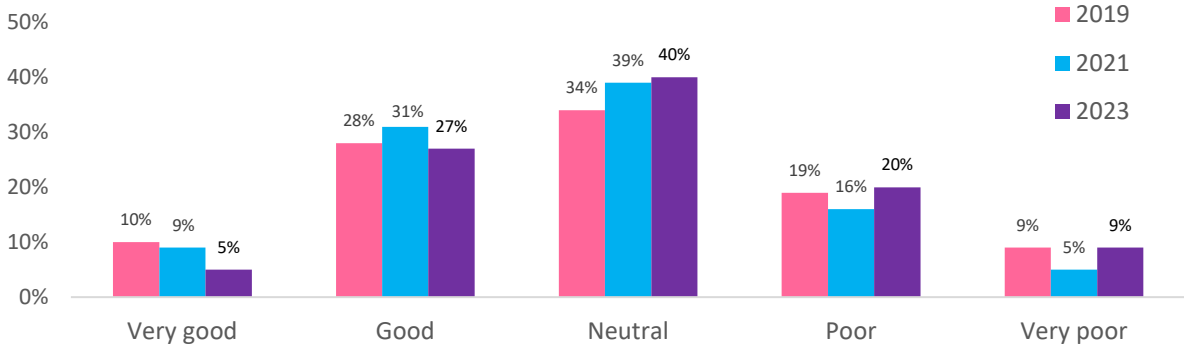
Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2019 – 1,610, 2021 – 1,253, 2023 - 702

# Tender activity

## Quality of tender activity

Perceptions of the quality of government tender activity have had a proportional drop between 2021 and 2023. Total good (*very good* or *good*) has dropped from 40% to 32%. Total poor (*very poor* or *poor*) has increased from 21% to 29%.

Thinking about the last 12 months, how would you rate the quality of the following government procurement activities?  
Tender activity

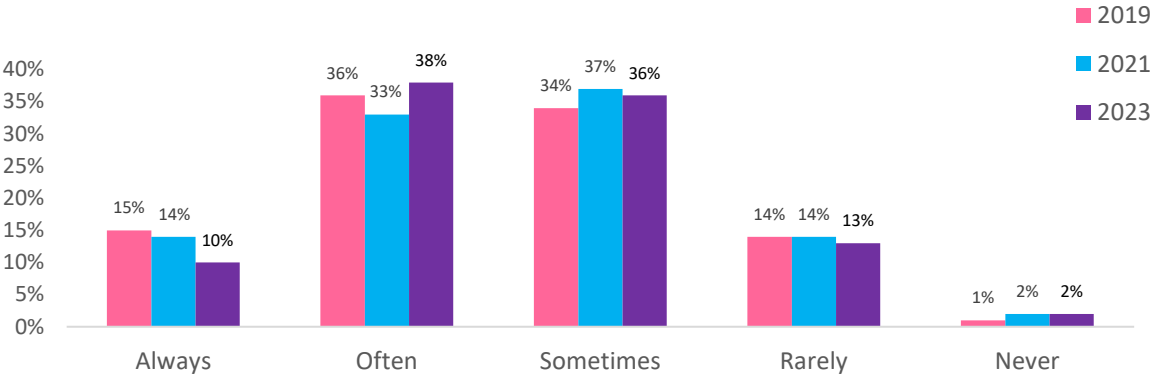


Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2019 – 1,405, 2021 – 1,201, 2023 - 713

## Time to respond to a tender

Perceptions of the time given to respond to a procurement activity have remained consistent over time. 48% reported that they *often* or *always* have sufficient time, 36% said *sometimes* and 15% said *rarely* or *never*. There has been a small decrease, since 2021, in the highest level of rating (*always*) and corresponding increase in the other positive category (*often*).

Do you have sufficient time to respond to a procurement opportunity?



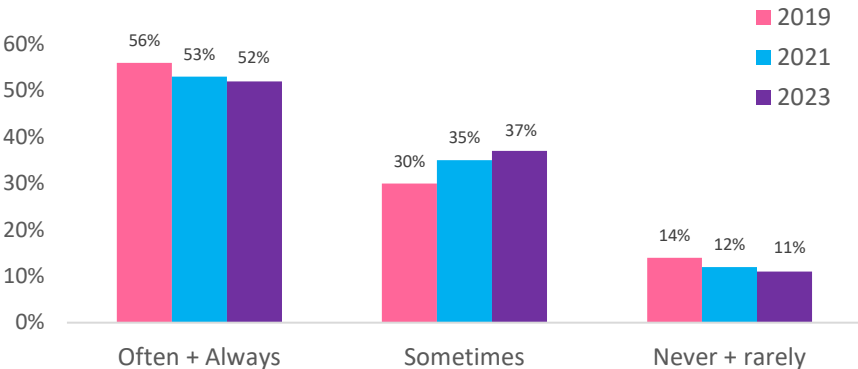
Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2019 – 1,605, 2021 – 1,291, 2023 - 713

## Tender documentation

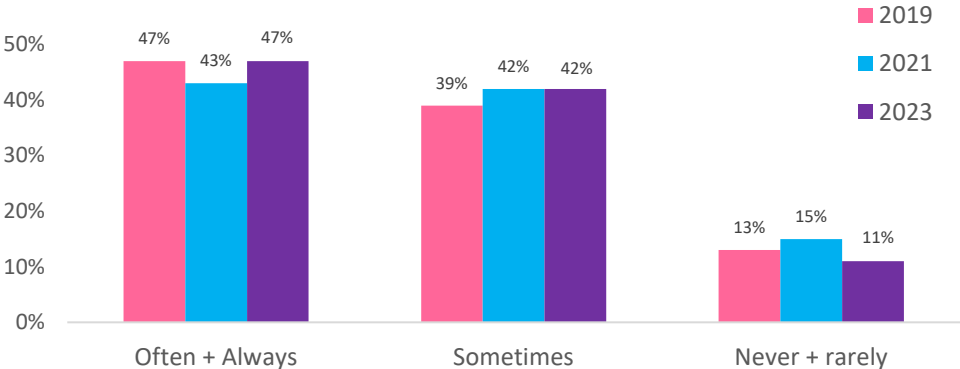
Perceptions of the information in government tender documents has slightly trended downward since 2019. Just over half of the respondents said they *often* or *always* receive sufficient information, while 37% said *sometimes* and 11% *never* or *rarely* the tender documents provide all needed information for bidding.

On the other hand, perceptions of the clarity of government tender documents has slightly increased in 2023, returning the 2019 level of 47% saying *often* or *always*. 42% said *sometimes* and 11% *never* or *rarely*.

**Do the tender documents provided by government agencies provide all the information that the business needs to make a bid to supply products and/or services?**



**Is the information provided by government agencies in these tender documents easy to understand?**

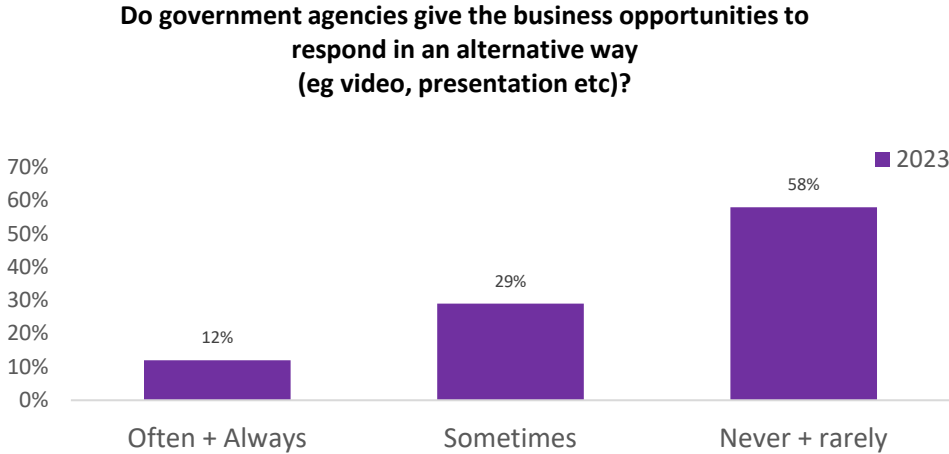


Base size, respondents who answered these questions:  
 2019 – 1,591 , 2021 – 1,287, 2023 – 720

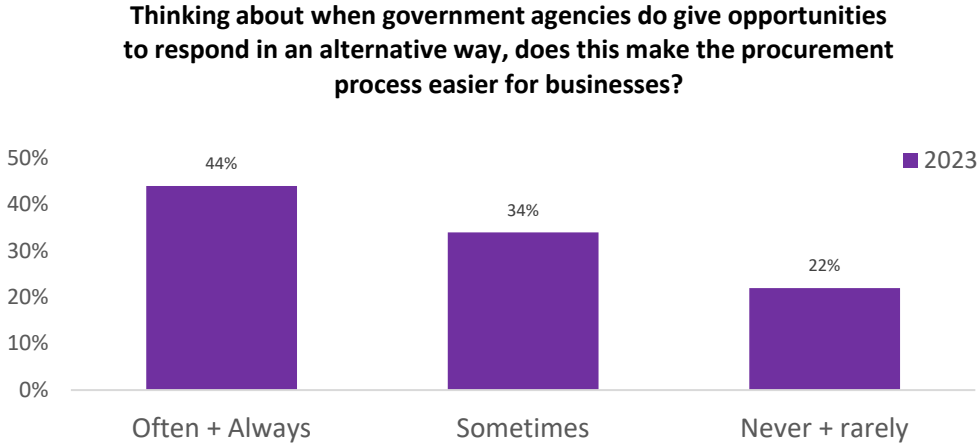


## Alternative ways of responding to a tender

Just 12% of respondents said they are *often* or *always* given the option to use alternative ways to respond to tenders. 44% of respondents said being given the option to use alternative ways to respond to tenders is *always* or *often* easier for businesses.



Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2023 - 616

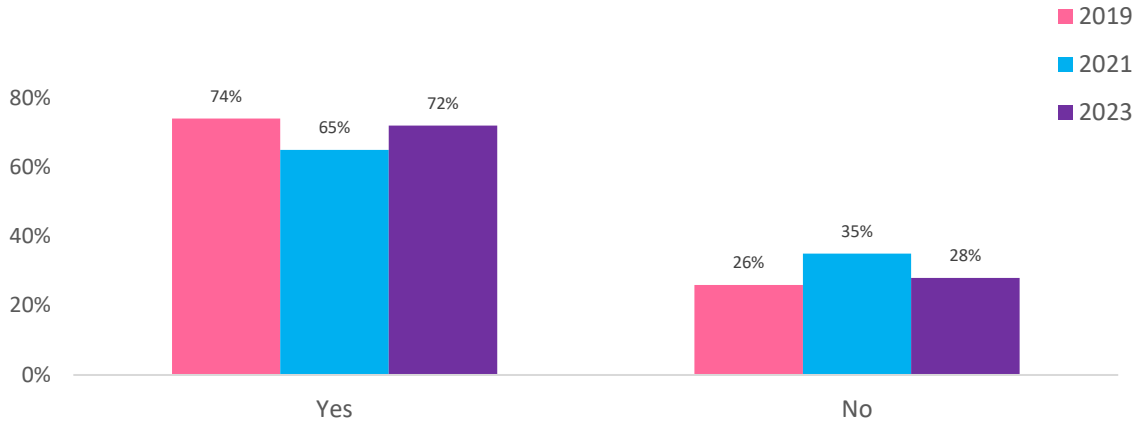


Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2023 – 483

## Effective bidding

Perceptions of businesses’ ability to effectively bid for government contracts have improved between 2021 and 2023, returning to similar levels as in the 2019 survey. In 2023, 72% agreed that businesses can effectively bid for government contracts and 28% disagreed.

**Do you think that the business can effectively bid for government contracts?**



Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2019 – 1,631, 2021 – 1,384, 2023 - 733

**Ability to bid effectively by key groups**

**DO YOU THINK THAT THE BUSINESS CAN EFFECTIVELY BID FOR GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS?**

Auckland based businesses and those with annual turnover of \$5 million, were more likely (than the total) to agree that businesses can effectively bid for government contracts. Those less likely to agree were businesses based in Wellington and those with an annual turnover of less than \$500K.

Ability to effectively bid for government contracts	Yes
<b>TOTAL</b>	72%
<b>Business base</b>	
Auckland	82%
Wellington	62%
Canterbury	61%
Rest of North Island	74%
Rest of South Island	79%
<b>Business type</b>	
50% + owned by New Zealanders	70%
Defined/identified as a Māori business	81%
Described/identified as a Pasifika business	77%
<b>Industry</b>	
Community and social services	75%
Construction, infrastructure and manufacturing	77%
Consultancy	70%
Others	72%

Ability to effectively bid for government contracts	Yes
<b>NZ annual turnover</b>	
Less than \$500K	59%
\$501K - \$1 million	64%
\$1.001 million - \$5 million	74%
\$5.001 million - \$50 million	82%
\$50.001 million +	94%

Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2023 - 750

## Factors that help effective bidding

### WHAT ARE THE MAIN FACTORS THAT HELP YOU TO EFFECTIVELY BID FOR GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS? (RESPONDENTS CHOSE FROM A LIST)

The factors that most help respondents to effectively bid for government contracts are relevant experience (84%), engagement and dialogue with government agencies (47%) and an easy-to-follow procurement process (40%). Responses were largely consistent between 2021 and 2023. There were small increases for engagement with agencies, the ease of the procurement process and supplier engagement programmes from government agencies.

Factors that help effective bidding	2021	2023
Experience in this marketplace/service area	86%	84%
Engagement and dialogue with government agencies	40%	47%
Easy to follow procurement processes	31%	40%
Clear information	34%	35%
The size of the business	35%	32%
The transparency of new government tendering opportunities	NA	31%
Supplier engagement programmes from government agencies	18%	21%
Investment in this marketplace/ service area	20%	20%
Being situated in an urban centre	15%	17%
Support from industry bodies	16%	15%
Other	13%	12%

Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2021 – 1,321, 2023 - 733

## Factors that make it difficult to bid

### WHAT ARE THE MAIN FACTORS THAT MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE BUSINESS TO EFFECTIVELY BID FOR GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS? (RESPONDENTS CHOSE FROM A LIST)

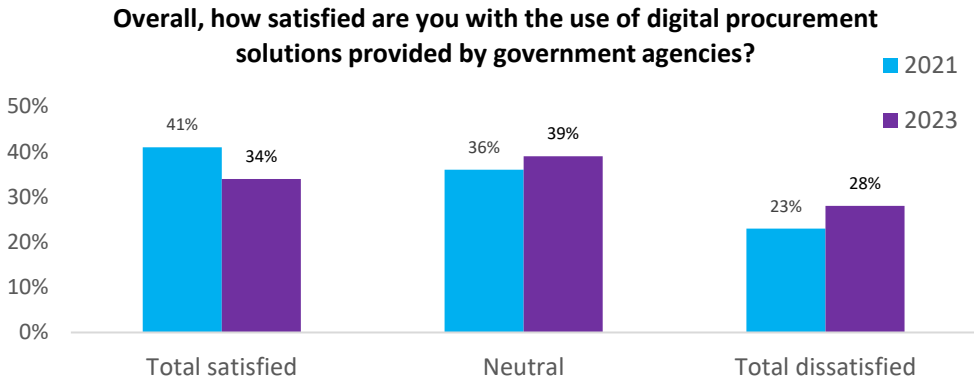
The factors that most negatively impact on respondents' ability to effectively bid for government contracts are complicated procurement process (64%), lack of engagement and dialogue with government agencies (54%) and complex information (38%). The results did not present significant differences between 2021 and 2023.

Factors that make it difficult to bid	2021	2023
Complicated procurement processes	62%	64%
Lack of engagement and dialogue with government agencies	50%	54%
Complex information	37%	38%
Lack of information on new government tendering opportunities	NA	36%
Lack of support from government agencies	35%	35%
The size of the business	33%	34%
Lack of experience in this marketplace	8%	13%
Being situated in the regions, away from the urban centres	8%	8%
Lack of support from industry bodies	10%	8%
Lack of investment in this marketplace	9%	7%
Other	27%	27%

Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2021 – 1,300, 2023 - 730

### Digital procurement

Overall, 34% rated government's use of digital procurement services highly. This is a decrease from the 2021 result. There was a corresponding increase in dissatisfaction between 2021 and 2023.

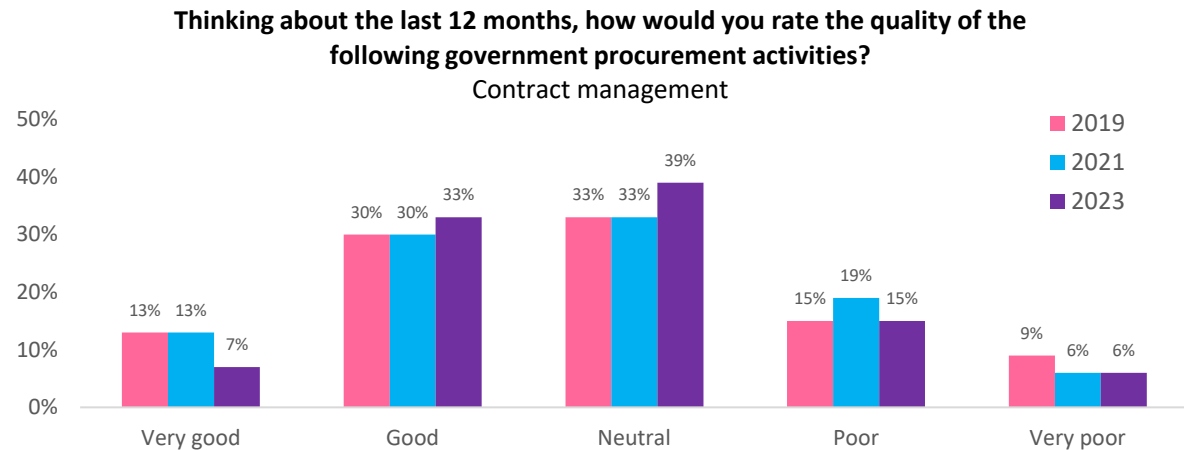


Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2021 – 1,202, 2023 - 724

# Contract management

## Quality of contract management

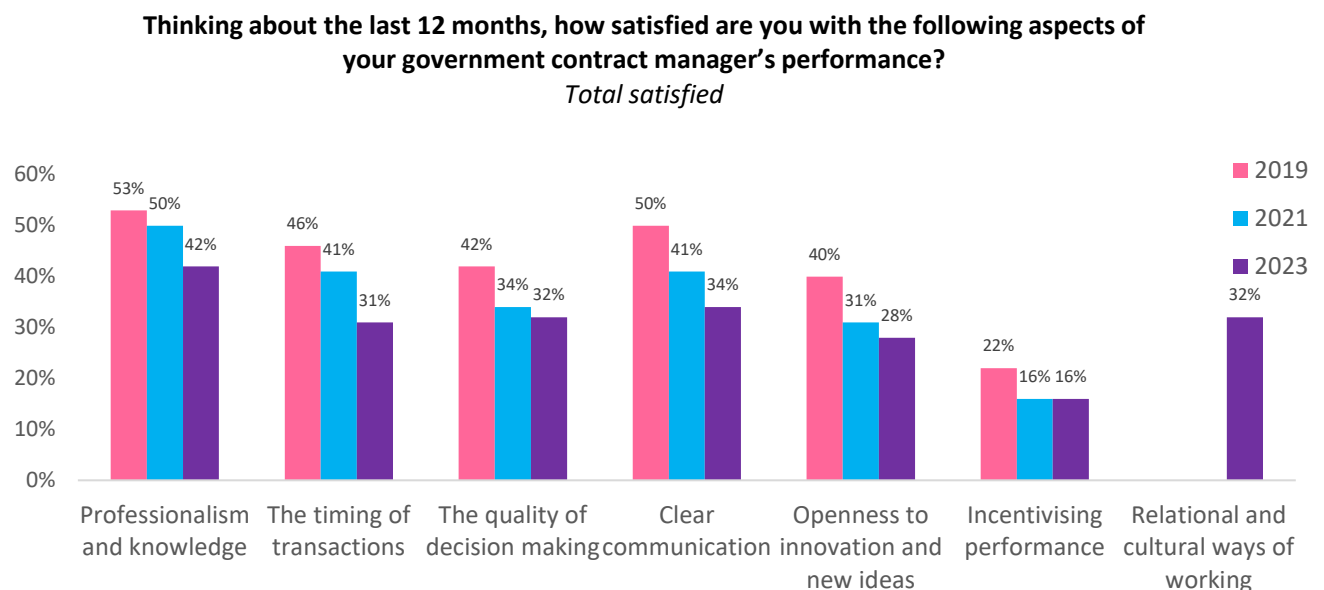
Positive perceptions of the quality of government contract management have remained stable between 2021 and 2023. Total good (*very good* or *good*) was 43% in 2021 and 40% in 2023. *Neutral* has increased from 33% to 39%, while *very good* has decreased from 13% to 7% and *poor* has decreased from 19% to 15%. There was also a small decrease in total poor (*very poor* or *poor*) down from 25% in 2021 to 21% in 2023.



Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2019 – 1,353, 2021 – 1,166, 2023 - 718

## Competencies of contract managers

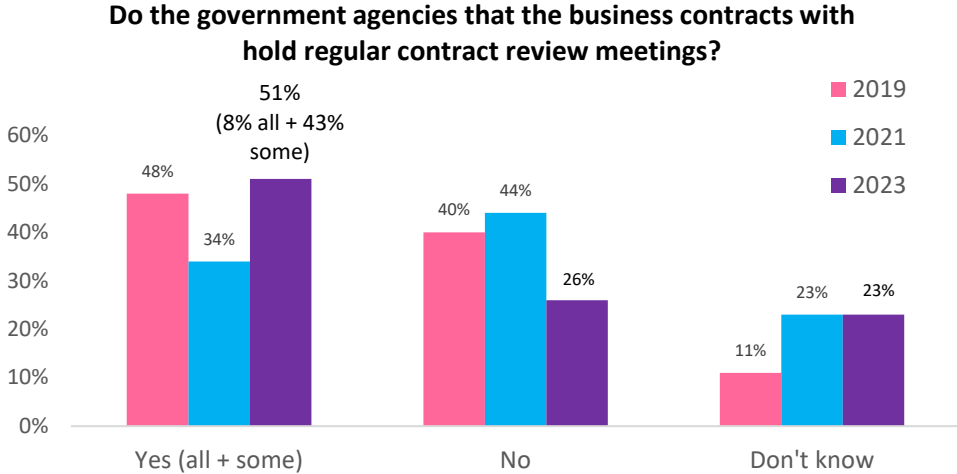
Businesses rate government contract managers most highly for professionalism and knowledge (42%) and clear communication (34%). Levels of total satisfaction have decreased between 2021 and 2023 for professionalism and knowledge, clear communication and the timing of transactions.



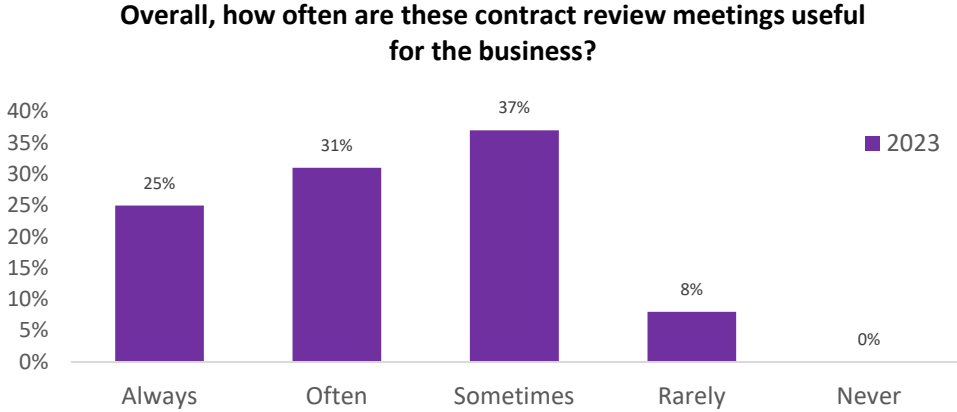
Base size, respondents who answered this question: multiple bases for different competency aspects

### Contract review meetings

In 2023, half of the business said at least *some* government agencies hold regular contract review meetings (8% *all* and 43% *some* = 51%). There has been an increase in those who say they do have meetings between 2021 and 2023. Of the businesses that sometimes have contract reviews nearly all respondents said the meetings were at least *sometimes* useful (92%).



Base size, respondents who answered this question:  
2019 – 1,003, 2021 – 1,248, 2023 - 735

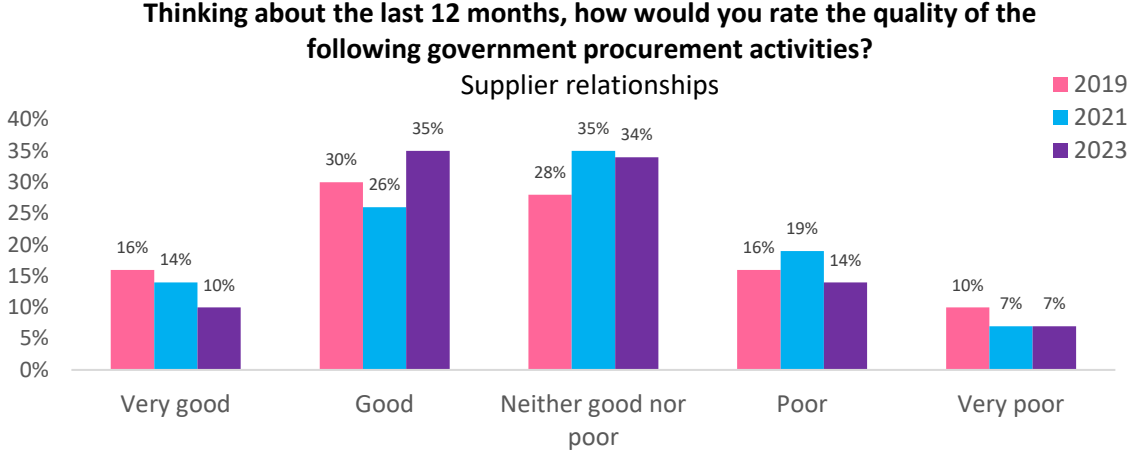


Base size, respondents who said they do have contract review meetings: 2023 - 375

# Supplier relationships

## Quality of supplier relationships

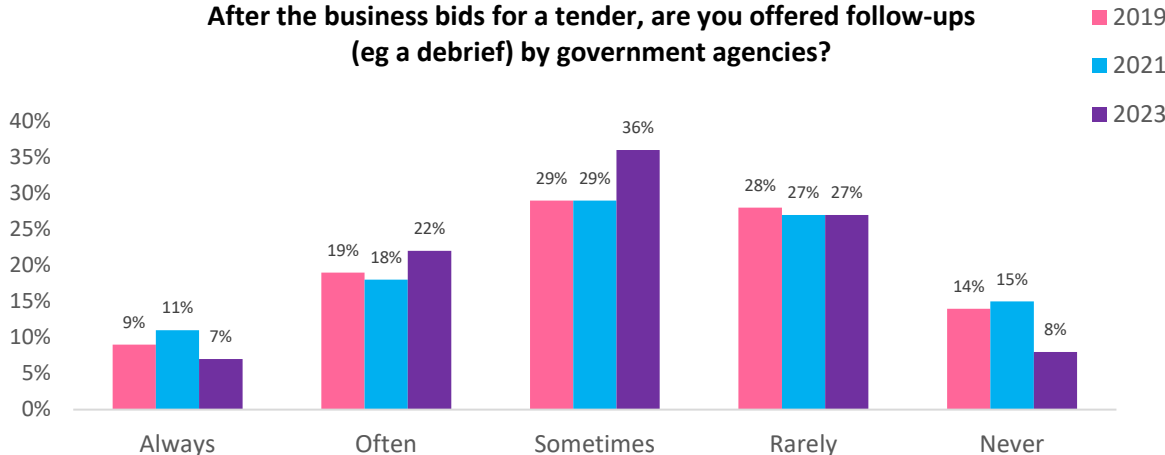
A total of 45% rated the quality of their supplier relationships with government as good (*very good* 10% or *good* 35%). This is an increase on the 2021 result of 40%.



Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2019 – 1,355 , 2021 – 1,156, 2023 - 720

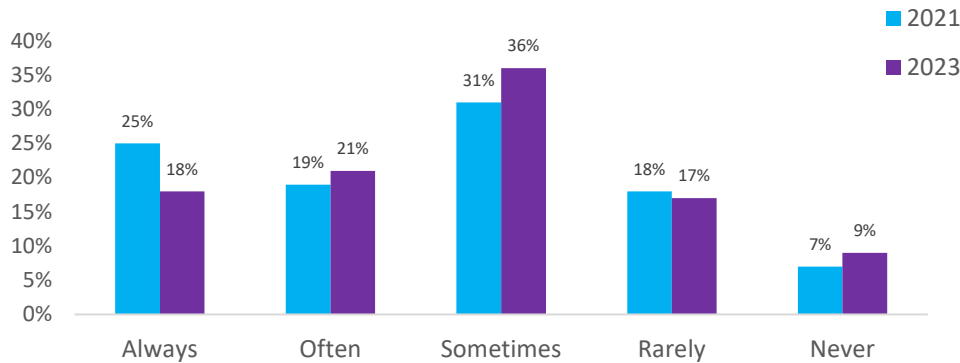
## Debriefing suppliers

29% of businesses said they are *always* or *often* offered opportunities for a debriefing after a bid, 36% *sometimes* and 35% *rarely* or *never*. A combined total of 39% *always/often* find the debriefs useful. There has been a proportional decrease between 2021 and 2023 in those who *always* find debriefs from government agencies helpful and an increase in those who said *sometimes*.



Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2019 – 1,603, 2021 – 1,223, 2023 - 678

**When the business has had debriefs/feedback from a government agency (agencies), have these been helpful?**

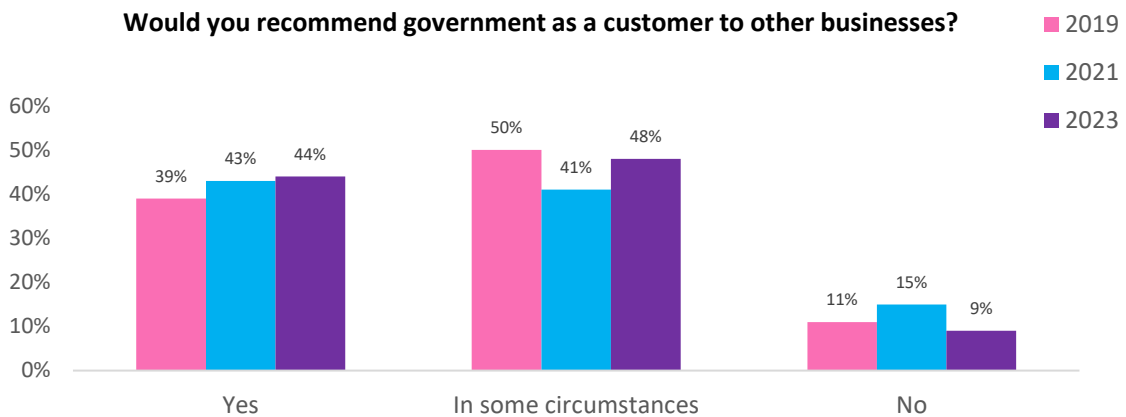


Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2021 – 1,072, 2023 - 599

**Recommending government as a client**

Nearly all respondents would at least *sometimes* recommend government as a customer to other businesses (92%). This is consistent with the 2021 result. There was a proportional decrease in those who said they would not recommend government as a customer to other businesses (down from 15% in 2021 to 9% in 2023).

**Would you recommend government as a customer to other businesses?**



Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2019 – 1,504, 2021 – 1,504, 2023 – 705  
*Don't know and prefer not to say removed from the 2023 finding for consistency.*

Respondents were asked to provide further feedback on why or why not to recommend government as client. The main themes from the feedback are summarised below.

**Consistency of work and stability:** Offer business stability and steady workflow, opportunities to build long-term relationships.

**Interesting and varied work:** Some good people to work with, opportunities to grow if you can get in, really good initiatives backed by solid people, easy to engage and rewarding work for everyone with positive outcomes.



**Meaningful and important work:** It feels good to be helping the New Zealand economy, opportunity to add value, projects with a social or national focus.

**Payment reliability:** Government as a customer gives security, prompt payment without hassle, interesting and varied work.

## Issues of working with government as a client

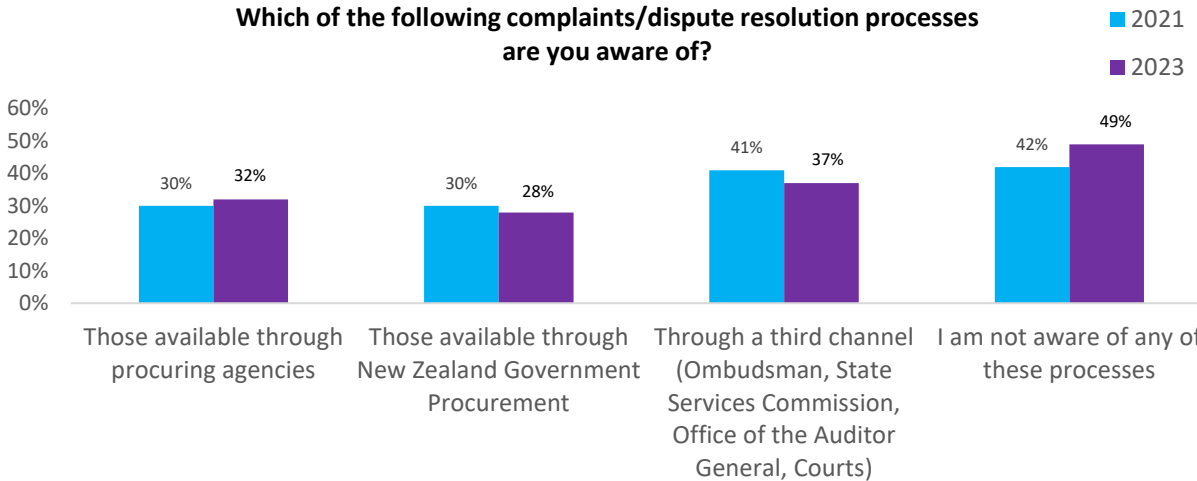
Respondents were asked to provide further feedback on issues when working with government as a client. The main themes from the feedback are summarised below.

- Resource required for tendering (especially when the tender is cancelled or unsuccessful).
- Complex processes or lack of clarity and transparency.
- Complicated project management and engagement.
- Timeliness of tendering timeframe.

# The complaints process

## Awareness of complaints processes

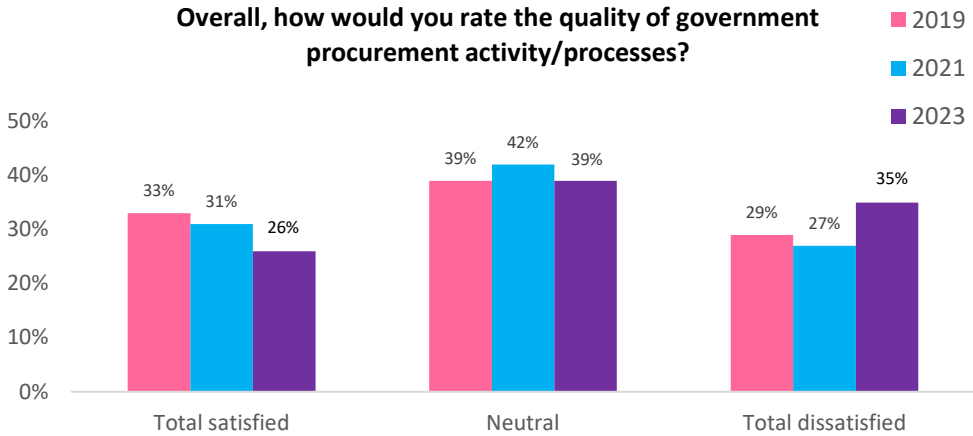
Awareness of the complaints processes has been consistent between 2021 and 2023. Around a third of respondents are aware of each process (via a procuring agency 32%, NZGP 28%, a third channel 37%). Since 2021, there is an increase in the proportion of respondents that are not aware of any of these processes (49%).



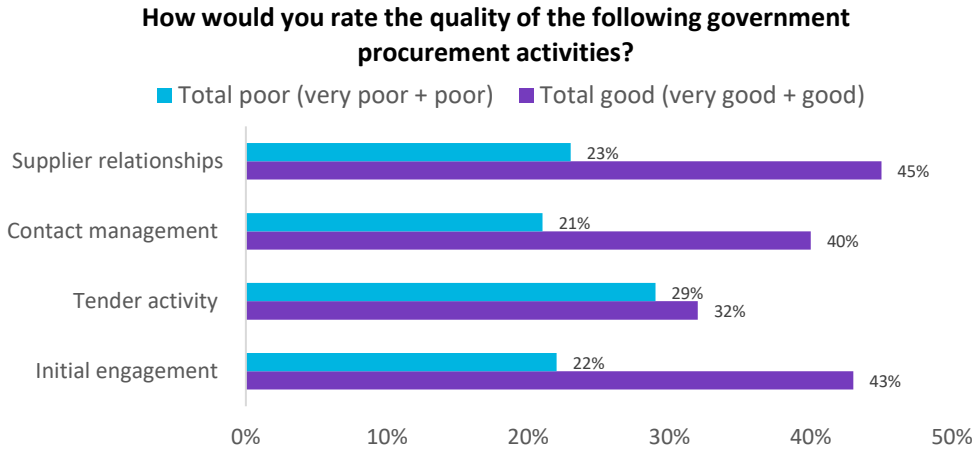
Base size, respondents who answered this question: 2021 – 1,195, 2023 - 742

# The overall quality of procurement

## Quality of government procurement



Base size, respondents who answered this question:  
2019 – 1,480, 2021 – 1,236, 2023 - 736



Base size, respondents who answered this question:  
2019 – 1,480, 2021 – 1,236, 2023 - 736

While more than one third of businesses give a positive rating for four aspects of government procurement, only 26% were generally satisfied with the overall quality of government procurement. 39% were neutral and 35% dissatisfied. There has been a small proportional decrease in those who are satisfied with government procurement activities between 2021 and 2023. This continues a downward trend from 2019.

Even though the results may not be statistically indicative of the total group, we appreciate the effort of those who responded. The survey findings and feedback will be shared and considered in targeted areas for improvement in government procurement practices.

NZGP is working on refreshing the government procurement system with multiple initiatives, with a vision to deliver a fair, transparent, inclusive and efficient procurement system. Though it might take longer to be visible to businesses, these changes are expected to have a positive impact on the system and in procurement activities.