

## 4. Role, workload, and school relationships

The principals were asked many questions about their work: about the school (size, decile, type, location, any roll changes, ERO reviews), about how they find aspects of the work (job satisfaction, what they find most stressful, how many hours they work, their workload, the balance between leadership and management in their job), interpersonal relationships (with the Board of Trustees, students with behaviour problems, staff), their level of attendance at conferences or meetings (NZPF, Regional Principals' Association, local Principals' Association meetings, informal discussions with other principals), and the level of support they receive (from NZPF, NZEI, NZST, the Ministry of Education, the Advisory Service).

In this section, we look now at the associations between these work-related responses and personal and school characteristics, and key measures of mental and physical health.<sup>1</sup> We also look at the response to the question about how often in the previous week the principals had quality socializing time with other people in a non-work-related situation. The response to this question can be taken as a very crude measure of the extent to which the respondents are gregarious, outgoing, and enjoy the company of other people. This variable does show associations with questions about aspects of the principals' jobs where good interpersonal relationships are a key component, which supports this interpretation.

### **Workload, role, and rewards**

Here we look at the number of hours worked, balance between leadership and management, perceptions of the workload, stress caused by the multitasking nature of the job and lack of time to focus on teaching and learning, and job satisfaction and whether others value the work that the principal does.

#### **Workload**

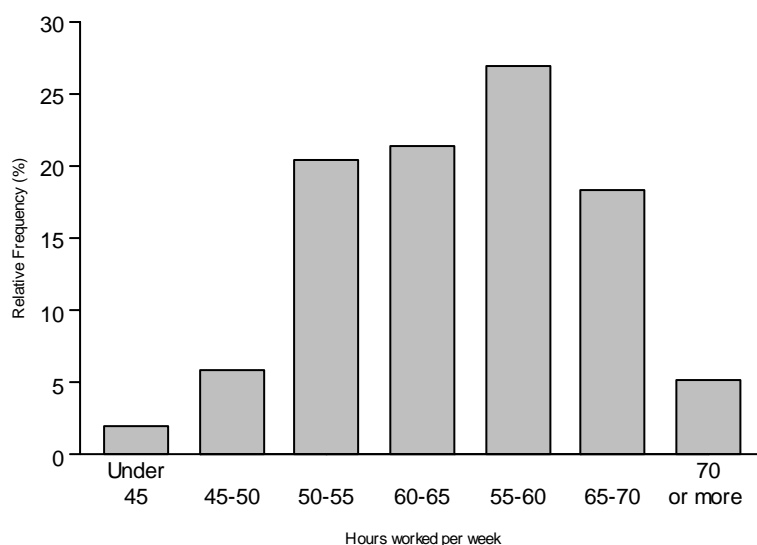
##### *Hours worked*

Few principals worked less than 45 hours a week on average (2 percent).

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<sup>1</sup> We looked at perceptions of stress, general happiness, fitness and health levels, tiredness, socializing time, and the number of domestic/support activities.

Figure 1 **Hours worked per week by principals**



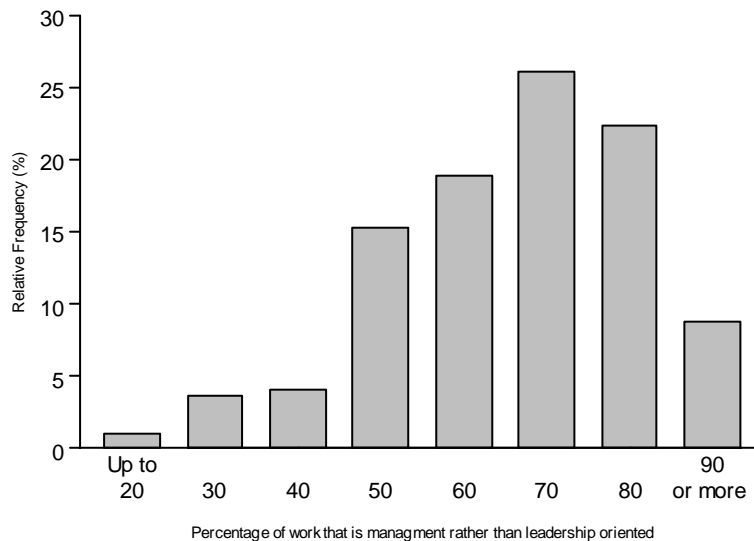
In the description that follows, we take 60 hours a week as a cut-off to measure whether principals were working excessive hours, as according to this measure, 42 percent of the principals were. The average number of hours worked per week was associated with:

- type of school (40 percent of primary principals worked at least 60 hours, 53 of those from kura, 67 percent of those from area schools, and 70 percent of secondary school principals);
- decile (38 percent of decile 1–2 principals, rising to 45 percent of decile 9–10 principals);
- gender (38 percent of males, compared with 49 percent of females);
- experience (50 percent of principals with 2–5 years’ experience, 43 percent of those with less experience or 5–20 years’ experience, and 32 percent of those with over 20 years’ experience);
- qualifications (38 percent of those with teaching certificates, 43 percent of principals with bachelor degrees, and 51 percent of those with post-graduate degrees);
- stress (53 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 36 percent of those who reported low or extremely low levels of stress);
- health (52 percent of those who rated their health as really not good, compared with 38 percent of those who said they were very or exceptionally healthy);
- tiredness (53 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 38 percent of those who had no problems);
- happiness (51 percent of those who rated themselves as unhappy, compared with 37 percent of those who were happy);
- fitness (54 percent of the least fit, compared with 39 percent of the fittest);
- quality socializing on non-work activity (49 percent of those who did not socialize at all, compared with 32 percent of those who socialized a lot).

### *Management or leadership?*

The principals were asked to indicate the proportion of their work that was management rather than leadership oriented. Only 24 percent indicated that there was at least an even balance, with 50 percent or less of their work oriented to management.

Figure 2 **Perceptions of principals of balance between management and leadership in their work**



We have taken 70 percent as the cut-off to indicate that a large proportion of the principals' work was management not leadership oriented, and overall 57 percent of principals reported a percentage of 70 percent or more. The school and personal differences here are smaller than they were for hours worked. Variables showing some differences were:

- size of school, although the differences were moderate (56 percent of U1 or U2 school principals, 59 percent of U3 or U4 principals, 57 percent of U5 or U6 principals and 51 percent of U7 and above principals)
- location (59 percent of city principals, 55 percent of town principals, and 57 percent of rural).
- male principals were more likely than females to say that more than 70 percent of their work was management oriented (33 percent and 29 percent, respectively);
- qualifications (principals with bachelor degrees (61 percent), compared with those with teaching diplomas or certificates (53 percent) and those with post-graduate degrees (also 53 percent);
- stress (67 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress compared with 37 percent of those who reported low or extremely low levels of stress);
- fitness (60 percent of those who were less fit compared to 56 percent of those who were more fit, although the association was less strong than with the other variables);
- health (75 percent of those rated their health as really not good) compared with 51 percent of principals who rated themselves as very or exceptionally healthy;

- tiredness (74 percent whose performance was affected by tiredness compared with 51 percent of those for whom it was no problem);
- happiness (76 percent of principals who were unhappy compared with 50 percent of those who were happy); and
- quality of non-work-related socializing (64 percent of those who had none compared with 47 percent of those who had a lot).

### *Workload*

The principals' perceptions of their workload can be gleaned from the extent of their agreement with the statement that *There is so much work to do, I never seem to get on top of it*. Eighty percent of respondents agreed with the statement, so any differences are measured in the differences in the proportion strongly agreeing (39 percent overall). There were associations with:

- school size (49 percent of U1 or U2 principals, 40 percent of U3 or U4 principals, and 32 percent of U5 and above principals), which is not surprising as the U1, U2 and some U3 principals are teaching principals;
- type (40 percent of primary principals, 38 percent of secondary principals, 35 percent of area school principals, and a third of those from kura).
- More females (43 percent) than males (37 percent) strongly agreed;
- those who rated their health as really not good (58 percent) compared with those who stated they were very or extremely healthy (32 percent);
- who reported high or extremely high levels of stress (58 percent) compared with low or extremely low levels (16 percent);
- whose performance was affected by tiredness (67 percent) compared with those with no problems (28 percent);
- were unhappy (69 percent) compared with those who were happy (30 percent);
- those who were least fit (51 percent) compared with those who were most fit (35 percent); and
- those who did not have any quality socializing (47 percent) compared with those who had a lot (24 percent).

### *Ability to focus on teaching and learning*

Fifty-nine percent of the principals described the impact on them of the lack of time to focus on teaching and learning (Figure 1), as high or breaking point. This cause of stress was associated with:

- school size (66 percent of U1 or U2 school principals — the teaching principals — compared with 47 percent of U7 and above principals);
- location (56 of city principals, 73 percent of town principals, and 66 percent of rural principals);
- gender (56 percent of males, compared with 63 percent of females);
- health (75 percent of those who rated their health as really not good, compared with 52 percent rated very or exceptionally healthy);

- stress (74 percent of those with high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 36 percent of those with low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (80 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 51 percent of those who had no problems);
- happiness (81 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 49 percent of those who were happy);
- fitness (68 percent of the least fit, compared with 58 percent of the most fit);
- quality non-work-related socializing (67 percent of those who had none, compared with 42 percent of those who had a lot); and
- the number of things the individual did around the home (64 percent of those who did between one and five, compared with 55 percent of those who did 11 or more).

### *Multitasking*

A third of the principals reported high or breaking point levels of stress about the multitasking nature of their job (Figure 1). Again, there were associations with:

- school size (41 percent of U1 or U2 principals — the teaching principals — compared with 19 percent of U7 and above principals);
- location (29 percent of city principals, 31 percent of town principals, and 41 percent of rural principals);
- qualifications (35 percent of those with teaching certificates of diplomas, 32 percent of those with bachelors degrees, and 30 percent of those with post-graduate qualifications).
- health (58 percent of those who reported their health was really not good, compared with 24 percent of those who were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (47 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 9 percent of those with low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (55 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 23 percent of those who reported no problems);
- happiness (58 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 24 percent of those who were happy);
- fitness (41 percent of those least fit, compared with 31 percent of the most fit);
- quality socializing (38 percent of those who had none, compared with 21 percent of those who had a lot).

We have seen that the principals are largely working excessive hours, the majority see that a major part of their work is management, only a fifth see a chance to get on top of their work, a majority experience high stress levels from their inability to focus on teaching and learning, and a third because of the multi-tasking nature of the job. The school characteristics associated with the number of hours worked are somewhat different from those associated with the role itself. Area and secondary principals were more likely to work excessive hours; those in small or rural schools more likely to feel they cannot get on top of their work, and to see it as having too many different demands. Women were more likely to be working longer, feel they could not get on top of their

work, or get the balance right in terms of focusing on teaching and learning. This may be related to there being higher proportions of women in small or rural schools.

Associations between their responses to these questions and others, such as principals' overall stress levels, mental and physical health, including fitness, and the number of tasks they carry out in and around the house indicate that they might not have a good work-life balance. Do they, nonetheless, perceive that there are rewards in their job?

## Rewards

### *Job satisfaction*

Notwithstanding long hours and stress from their role, the majority of principals do get great satisfaction from their work. Thirty-six percent strongly agreed with the statement *Your job gives you great satisfaction*, and 49 percent agreed with it. Ten percent felt neutral about this statement, and only 4 percent disagreed with it.

Looking at differences in the proportions strongly agreeing that their job gives them great satisfaction, we find associations with:

- school size (27 percent of U1 or U2 principals, 37 percent of U3 or U4 principals, 41 percent of U5 or U6 principals, and 55 percent of U7 and above principals);
- location (41 percent of city principals, 34 percent of town principals, and 30 percent of rural principals);
- roll change (41 percent of those whose roll was stable, 39 percent of those whose roll has risen, and about 30 percent of those whose roll has declined or fluctuated);
- qualifications (34 percent of those with teaching certificates or diplomas, 36 percent of those with bachelor degrees, and 43 percent of those with post-graduate degrees);
- health (16 percent of those who reported their health was really not good strongly agreed, compared with 45 percent of those who said they were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (25 percent of those with high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 68 percent of those with low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (20 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 43 percent of those who had no problems);
- happiness (11 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 44 percent of those who were happy and 90 percent of those who were very happy — or 48 percent overall of those reporting either level of happiness);
- fitness (28 percent of the least fit, compared with 41 percent of the most fit); and
- quality non-work-related socializing (32 percent of those who had none, compared with 61 percent of those with a lot).

### *Being valued*

The principals were asked two questions about whether the work they did was valued: by staff, and by the Board and community. The responses to these questions showed no statistically significant associations with roll size, decile, type, or location, nor with the principals' age, ethnicity, qualifications, or length of experience. They did show associations with roll change, and some of the health measures.

Three quarters of the respondents thought that their work was valued by the staff most of the time or always, and the comparisons are made with this percentage. There were associations with:

- roll change (79 percent of those from schools where the roll was stable, compared with 69 percent from those where it had declined);
- health (58 percent of those who rated their health as really not good, compared with 81 percent of those who said they were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (67 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 86 percent of those who reported low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (65 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 80 percent of those who reported no problems);
- happiness (58 percent of those who reported they were unhappy, compared with 81 percent of those who reported they were happy); and
- quality non-work-related socializing (71 percent of those who had none, compared with 85 percent of those who had a lot).

Seventy percent of the respondents thought that their work was valued by the Board and community most of the time or always, and the comparisons are made with this percentage. There were associations with

- roll change (74 percent of those from schools where the roll was stable, compared with 63 percent from those where it had declined);
- health (50 percent of those who rated their health as really not good, compared with 78 percent of those who said they were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (60 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 82 percent of those who reported low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (59 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 77 percent of those who reported no problems);
- happiness (53 percent of those who reported they were unhappy, compared with 78 percent of those who reported they were happy); and
- quality non-work-related socializing (64 percent of those who had none, compared with 74 percent of those who had a lot).

Overall job satisfaction was related to school size and location – as were views on workload and its composition. However, it was not related to individual characteristics. Other than roll change, school or individual characteristics were not related to principals' sense of being valued.

## Resources

### Resourcing needs

Forty-two percent of principals reported high or breaking point levels of stress about resourcing needs and 15 percent reported low or no stress levels. Reporting high levels of stress about resourcing was associated with:

- school size (highest stress from U5–U6 principals, 52 percent; lowest from U1–U2 principals, 35 percent);
- type of school (lowest stress from principals of area schools, 30 percent; highest stress from secondary school principals, 58 percent);
- location (46 percent of city principals, compared with 35 percent of rural principals);
- general health (49 percent of those who reported they were really not healthy, compared with 36 percent of the very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (48 percent of the principals who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 23 percent of those who reported low or extremely low levels); and
- tiredness (50 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 36 percent of those who reported no problems with tiredness);
- happiness showed a less marked association (44 of the unhappy principals, compared with 39 percent of the happy principals).

### Lack of ICT support

Nearly a quarter of principals reported high or breaking point levels of stress about lack of ICT support, and a third reported no or low stress. This source of stress was associated with:

- school size (27 percent of U1 or U2 school principals, compared with 11 percent of U7 or above principals);
- location (20 percent of city principals, 25 percent of town principals and 29 percent of rural principals). These associations may partly explain why stress about having no ICT support was also associated with:
- gender (a relatively weak association, but 22 percent of males, compared with 26 percent of females); and
- ethnicity (32 percent of Māori principals, compared with 23 percent of NZ European). There were also associations with



- experience as a principal (27 percent of those with under two years' experience reported low or no levels of stress, compared with 34 percent of those with 20 or more years' experience).
- general health (29 percent of principals reporting their health was really not good, compared with 19 percent of those reporting they were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (30 percent of principals with high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 13 percent of those with low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (33 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 20 percent of those reporting no problems);
- happiness (33 percent of the unhappy principals, compared with 19 percent of the happy ones);
- fitness (29 percent of the least fit principals reported low or no levels of stress in relation to ICT support, compared with 40 percent of the most fit principals); and
- quality socializing, non-work-related (29 percent of principals who did not socialize reported low or no levels of stress in relation to ICT support, compared with 47 percent of those who socialized a lot).

Unlike workload, school resourcing as a whole was most keenly felt as a source of stress by secondary principals, in larger schools in urban areas. This is consistent with the tensions expressed by secondary principals in NZCER's recent report from its school funding study (Wylie & King 2005).

## **Systemic administration, compliance, and accountability**

### **Ministry initiatives, paperwork and other system demands**

Stress levels around Ministry initiatives, paperwork and other system demands were high, second-highest overall, with half of the principals reporting high or "breaking point" levels of stress, and only seven percent reporting low or no levels of stress. There were no associations with decile, location, gender, ethnicity, age, experience, or qualifications. There were associations with

- size of school (57 of U1 or U2 principals, compared with about 48 percent of all other principals),
- type (38 percent of secondary school principals, 73 percent of those from kura, and just of half of primary and area school principals);
- roll change (45 percent of principals from schools with a roll that declined, about half from those with a stable or rising roll, and 57 percent of those with a fluctuating roll);
- general health (62 percent of those whose general health was really not good, compared with 44 percent of those who were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (61 percent of those with high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 33 percent of those with low or extremely low levels of stress);
- tiredness (67 percent of those whose tiredness affected their performance, compared with 43 percent of those who had no problems with tiredness);

- happiness (63 percent of unhappy individuals, compared with 43 percent of happy individuals);
- fitness (60 percent of those who were unfit, compared with 48 percent of those who were relatively fit);
- spending quality time socializing (57 percent of those who did not socialize at all, compared with 47 percent of those who socialized a lot).

## ERO Reviews

Forty-two percent said their last ERO review was generally good, and 49 percent that theirs was excellent. Eight percent of respondents reported that their school's last ERO review identified serious concerns, or some real problems. The outcome of the ERO review was associated with:

- size of school (14 percent of U1 or U2 schools had a review indicating serious concerns or some real problems, compared with four percent of U7 and above schools);
- decile (10 percent of decile 1–4 schools had reviews indicating serious concerns or some real problems, compared with five percent of decile 7–10 schools — the outcomes for deciles 1–2 and 3–4 were both 10 percent, and for deciles 7–8 and 9–10 were both five percent);
- roll change (47 percent of schools with rolls that had risen or were stable had excellent reviews, as did 46 percent of schools with rolls that declined and 42 percent of those with rolls that fluctuated).
- There were indications of association with gender and ethnicity, that may be mainly explained by the characteristics of the schools receiving poorer reviews than much else;
- stress (43 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress received an excellent review, compared with 60 percent of those who reported low or extremely low levels of stress).
- tiredness (40 percent of those who reported that their performance was affected by tiredness received an excellent review, compared with 52 percent of those who reported no problems with tiredness); and
- happiness (35 percent of those who reported being unhappy received an excellent review, compared with 53 percent of those who reported being happy).

Thirty-eight percent of principals reported high or breaking point levels of stress associated with ERO reviews, and 16 percent reported low or no stress. The amount of stress was related to:

- school size (40 percent of U1–U2 school principals, compared with 36 percent of U7 and above principals);
- school type (30 percent of area school principals, a third of those from kura, and 38 and 39 percent of secondary and primary principals, respectively);
- decile (46 percent of decile 1–2 school principals, compared with 34 percent decile 9–10 principals);

- the result of the last ERO review (62 percent of those whose school's last ERO review identified concerns, compared with 44 percent of those whose last review was generally good, and 30 percent of those whose last review was excellent);
- age (about 30 percent of principals under 44 and also those 65 or older, compared with 40 percent of those aged 45–64 years);
- qualifications (43 percent of principals with TTCs or teaching diplomas, compared with 35 percent of those with bachelors degrees and 34 percent of those with post-graduate degrees).
- general health (50 percent of those whose health was rated really not good, compared with 32 percent of those who were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (49 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 21 percent of those reporting low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (46 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 34 percent of those who reported no problems with tiredness);
- happiness (50 percent of those who reported they were unhappy, compared with 33 percent of those who said they were happy).

## Network reviews

The aim of Network Reviews is to determine what changes need to be made to the delivery of education in an area, usually in terms of the number of schools in the area. The outcomes of such a review will mean that there may be fewer schools in the area in the future, through closures or mergers, or more schools in areas of anticipated population growth, or different types of schools (Ministry of Education, 2004).

Ten percent of schools ( $n = 159$ ) had been involved in a Network Review in the last two years. Given the purpose of the review, there is the expected association between having been reviewed and:

- school size (13 percent of U1–U4 principals, compared with six percent of U5 and above principals);
- roll change (14 percent of those who described their roll as having risen, seven percent who described their roll as stable, 12 percent who said their roll had declined, and seven percent who said their roll fluctuated);
- location (only two percent of principals from large cities; around 14 percent of those in provincial cities or town, and 19 percent of those from isolated rural areas).
- Gender and age showed an association with school size and location, and therefore being involved in a review was slightly more likely for female principals, or younger principals.
- There were no other associations.

Concern about being involved in a Network Review was not that great: 11 percent of respondents were very concerned, and 59 percent were not concerned. A fifth of those who had been in a network review in the last two years were very concerned about the possibility that their school

would be involved in another one, compared with a tenth of those who had not been involved in such a review.

Lack of concern depended on

- school roll (35 percent of U1 or U2 principals, 56 percent of U3 or U4 principals, and 81 percent of U5 and above principals);
- location (71 percent of those from city schools, 56 percent of those from town schools and 43 percent of those from rural schools);
- roll change (72 percent of those from schools with rolls that had risen, 62 percent of those from schools with stable rolls, 50 percent of those from schools with fluctuating rolls, and 42 percent of those whose rolls had declined). There were also associations with
- gender (63 percent of male principals, compared with 56 percent of females);
- age (53 percent of principals aged under 45 years, compared with 61 percent of those aged over 45 years);
- experience (the percentage increased with increasing experience from 48 percent of those with under two years' experience to 69 percent of those with over 20 years' experience);
- qualifications (56 percent of those with teaching certificates or diplomas, compared with 69 percent of those with post-graduate degrees).
- general health (56 percent of those whose health is really not good, compared with 63 percent of those who reported they were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (43 of those who reported having extremely high or high levels of stress, compared with 60 percent of those who reported low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (52 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 62 percent of those who reported no problems with tiredness); and
- happiness (43 of those who reported being unhappy, compared with 61 percent of those who were happy).

Fourteen percent of the principals reported high or breaking point levels of stress about network reviews, and 57 percent reported low or no stress about it. Differences in stress levels can be seen more easily by looking at the proportion with low stress (a high percentage is "good"). There were associations with

- school size (43 percent of U1 or U2 principals, compared with 71 percent of U5 and above principals);
- decile (decile 3–4 school principals were most concerned, 50 percent; those from decile 9–10 schools were least concerned, 69 percent);
- location (65 percent of city school principals, 53 percent of town principals, and 48 percent of rural principals);
- roll change (63 percent of those from schools where the roll has risen, 60 percent where the roll is stable, and 49 percent from those where the roll has declined or fluctuated);
- involvement in network reviews over last 2 years (53 percent of those who had been, compared with 9 percent of those who had not);

- high level of concern that school would be involved in a network review (49 percent compared with 14 percent of those who were somewhat concerned, and 6 percent of those who had no concern);
- experience (48 percent of those with under 2 years' experience, compared with 61 percent of those with over 20 years' experience);
- qualifications (52 percent of those with teaching certificates or diplomas, 58 percent of those with bachelor degrees, and 65 percent of those with post-graduate degrees).
- general health (58 percent of those who reported their health as really not good, compared with 62 percent of those who reported they were very or extremely healthy);
- stress (52 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 66 percent of those who reported low or extremely low levels); and
- tiredness (53 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 60 percent of those who reported no problems).

## Compliances

Overall, 23 percent of respondents rated stress about compliances as high or breaking-point, and 20 percent rated their stress as low or not at all. There was no statistically significant association with school characteristics (decile, etc), fitness, age, ethnicity, or qualifications. Stress levels around compliances were associated with:

- gender (27 percent of males, compared with 19 percent of women);
- length of experience as a principal (15 percent of those with under 2 years' experience, compared with 32 percent of principals with 20 or more years' experience);
- general health, where healthier individuals tended to report lower stress levels related to compliance (16 percent of those whose health was really, compared with 25 percent of those who were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (32 percent of those with high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 10 percent of those with low or extremely low levels of stress);
- tiredness (33 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 19 percent of those who reported no problems with tiredness);
- happiness (28 percent of unhappy individuals, compared with 20 percent of happy individuals).

## OSH regulations

OSH regulations caused high or breaking-point levels of stress for seven percent of the respondents, and above average levels for 27 percent, but low or no stress for 35 percent of the respondents. This cause of stress was associated with

- size of school (37 percent of U1 or U2 school principals reported low or no stress, compared with 31 percent of U7 and above principals; there was a corresponding increase in high stress from 8 to 17 percent, respectively);

- location (31 percent of city principals, 35 percent of town principals, and 38 percent of rural principals reported low or no levels of stress about OSH regulations);
- experience (42 percent of principals with over 20 years' experience find OSH regulations above averagely stressful, and 30 percent of principals with under 5 years' experience found it so);
- general health, with the healthy individuals tending to be less stressed than others (33 percent of those very or exceptionally healthy had low or no stress, compared with 28 percent of those whose health was really not good);
- stress levels, with most stressed individuals finding this aspect of their work stressful (40 percent of those with high or extremely high stress levels found it more than averagely stressful, compared with 23 percent of those with low or extremely low stress levels);
- tiredness, with tired individuals finding this a more stressful aspect of their job (44 percent of those absolutely worn out or whose performance was affected by tiredness found these regulations more than averagely stressful, compared with 34 percent of those who had no problems with tiredness); and
- fitness, with the more fit individuals tending to find it less stressful (37 percent of the fit principals found it of low or no stress, compared with 30 percent of the unfit principals).

## **Interpersonal relationships**

Many of the questions asked were about the principals' relationships with others; the Board of Trustees, students, parents, staff, and the consequences of the actions of people. Some of the questions are about the extent of stress caused by the interaction described, (Figure 1), and some are about the nature of the relationship or the frequency of an interaction. We look now for associations between responses to these questions, and the characteristics of the principals.

### **Students**

#### *Behavioural problems*

The principals were asked to indicate how often they had to deal with children with severe behavioural problems. Overall, 17 percent of the principals said that they did this at least once a day, 27 percent said at least once a week, 11 percent at least once a fortnight, 17 percent at least once a month, and 28 percent said it was something they rarely did. The response to this question was associated with:

- school size (14 percent of U1 or U2 school principals dealt with these once a day, compared with 21 percent of U7 and above schools);
- type (24 percent of area school principals, no principals from kura: 42 percent of secondary school principals have weekly issues, compared with 27 percent overall);
- decile (28 percent of principals from decile 1–2 schools dealt with children with severe behavioural problems at least once a day, compared with 5 percent from decile 9–10 schools);

the drop in frequency across decile groups was not even: 28 percent, 25 percent, 16 percent, 10 percent, and 5 percent);

- location (20 percent of city school principals, 17 percent of those from town schools, and 12 percent of those from country schools);
- health (23 percent of the principals who said their health was really not good did this daily, compared with 14 percent of those said they were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (21 percent of those with high or extremely high stress, compared with 11 percent of those with low or extremely low stress), and
- happiness (28 percent of those who were not happy did this daily, compared with 15 percent of those who were happy);

Stress about violent pupils or those with behaviour problems was moderate: overall just over a quarter reported high or breaking point levels of stress (a slightly higher proportion than were dealing with the issues daily), and almost the same proportion reported low or no stress. We measure the effect of the association by comparing proportions reporting low or no levels of stress (a high percentage is “good”). Low or no levels of stress about dealing with violent students or those with behaviour problems were associated with:

- school size (38 percent of U1 or U2 school principals, compared with 25 percent of both U3 or U4 school principals, and U7 and above);
- decile (16 percent of decile 1–2 school principals, 18 percent of decile 3–5 school principals, compared with 44 percent of decile 9–10 school principals);
- location (about 27 percent of city or town principals, compared with 37 percent of rural principals);
- gender (28 percent of males and 32 percent of females);
- experience (38 percent of those with under two years’ experience, compared with 27 percent of those with over five years’ experience);
- health (28 percent of those whose health was really not good, compared with 34 percent of those who were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (24 percent of those with high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 44 percent of those with low or extremely low levels); and
- tiredness (26 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 33 percent of those who had no problems).

Stress about violent pupils or those with behaviour problems was strongly associated with how often the principal had to deal with such problems. Two-thirds of those who dealt with students with behavioural problems reported high or breaking-point levels of stress, and three percent reported low or no stress. Of those who rarely dealt with such students, three percent reported high or breaking-point levels of stress, and 73 percent reported low or no stress. The Kendall’s tau-B measure of association between the variables was 0.57.

### *Child protection issues*

Overall, 47 percent of respondents reported low or no levels of stress about child protection issues, and 12 percent reported high or breaking-point levels of stress. The comparisons are made using the low stress levels. These issues were associated with

- school size (62 percent of U1 or U2 school principals, compared with 42 percent of U3–U6 school principals, and 40 percent of U7 and above school principals);
- type (47 and 48 percent of primary and secondary school principals, respectively, compared with 53 and 59 percent of kura and area school principals, respectively);
- decile (30 percent of decile 1–2 school principals, compared with 68 percent of decile 9–10 school principals);
- location (about 41 percent of city and town principals, compared with 63 percent of rural school principals);
- gender (44 percent of males and 51 percent of women);
- age (59 percent of younger principals, those under 45 years, compared with 46 percent of those 45 years or older);
- experience (57 percent of those with under 2 years' experience, compared with 41 percent of those with 20 years or more).
- health (40 percent of those who reported their health was really not good, compared with 56 percent of those who were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (40 percent of those who had high or very high stress levels, compared with 61 percent of those whose levels were low or very low); and
- tiredness (38 percent of those whose performance was affected, compared with 51 percent of those with no problems).

### **Staff**

All the questions about relations with staff are about levels of stress. They are discussed from the most stressful to the least stressful. Levels of stress arising from relations with staff were generally low.

### *Employment issues*

Employment issues in relation to staff were a source of high or breaking point stress for 19 percent of the respondents. There were associations between this source of stress and

- decile (28 percent of decile 1–2 school principals, 17 or 18 percent of all others);
- roll change (16 percent of principals from schools with a stable roll, compared with 23 or 24 percent of those from schools where the roll fluctuated or declined, respectively);
- location (about 22 percent of city or town school principals, compared with 14 percent of rural principals);
- gender (17 percent of males and 22 percent of females);
- ethnicity (18 percent of NZ European principals, compared with 37 percent of Māori principals);



- age (24 percent of those under 45 years, compared with 18 percent of those over 45 years);
- qualifications (17 percent of those with teaching certificates or diplomas, 20 percent of those with bachelor degrees, and 22 percent of those with post-graduate degrees).
- health (29 percent of those whose health was really not good, compared with 16 percent of those who were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (30 percent of those with high or extremely high stress levels, compared with eight percent of those with low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (27 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 16 percent of those reporting no problems);
- happiness (38 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 15 percent of those who were happy); and
- fitness (25 percent of the least fit, compared with 18 percent of the most fit).

### *Staff competence*

Staff competence were also a source of high or breaking point stress for 19 percent of the respondents. There were associations between this source of stress and

- size (23 percent of U3 or U4 school principals reported high levels, compared with 13 percent of U7 and above principals);
- type (about 18 percent of primary and secondary principals, 30 percent of area school principals, and 40 percent of kura principals);
- decile (29 percent of decile 1–2 school principals, compared with 12 percent of decile 9–10 school principals);
- location (17 percent of city and rural schools, 27 percent of principals from town schools);
- roll change (17 percent of principals from schools with rising rolls, compared with 25 percent of principals from schools with falling rolls);
- gender (18 percent of males and 21 percent of females);
- ethnicity (17 percent of NZ European principals, compared with 34 percent of NZ Māori principals);
- age (27 percent of those under 45 years, compared with 17 percent of those over 45 years);
- experience (24 percent of those with under 2 years' experience, compared with 17 percent of those with over 20 years' experience).
- health (25 percent of those whose health was really not good, compared with 18 percent of those who were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (25 percent of those with high or extremely high stress levels, compared with nine percent of those with low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (22 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 18 percent of those reporting no problems); and
- happiness (31 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 16 percent of those who were happy).

### *Staff resistance to change*

Staff resistance to change was not a major source of stress, with 40 percent of the respondents reporting low or no stress (used for comparisons), and 15 percent reporting high or breaking-point stress. There were associations with

- size (53 percent of those in U1 or U2 schools, compared with 27 percent of those in U7 and above schools);
- type (about 40 percent of primary and kura principals, 35 percent of area school principals, and 18 percent of secondary school principals);
- roll change (36 percent of principals from schools where the roll has risen, compared with 46 percent of those from schools where it fluctuated);
- location (35 percent of city principals, 38 percent of town principals, and 50 percent of rural principals);
- gender (37 percent of males and 43 percent of females);
- qualifications (45 percent of those with teaching certificates or diplomas, 37 percent of those with bachelors degrees, and 34 percent of those with post-graduate degrees), consistent with the fact that this was nominated as the most important stressor by a larger proportion of principals with post-graduate degrees;
- health (28 percent of those whose health was reported as really not good, compared with 45 percent who were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (35 percent of those with high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 52 percent of those with low or extremely low levels of stress);
- tiredness (37 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 42 percent who reported no problems); and
- happiness (24 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 43 percent of those who were happy).

### *Interpersonal conflicts*

Interpersonal conflicts at school no doubt includes more than just those with or amongst the staff, but is probably mainly concerned with conflicts between staff members. This was not a major source of stress, with 49 percent of the respondents reporting low or not at all levels of stress (used for comparisons) and 14 percent reporting high or breaking-point levels. There were associations between low or no levels of stress from interpersonal conflicts for

- school size (60 percent of U1 or U2 school principals, compared with 45 percent of all others);
- type (59 percent of area school principals, 13 percent of those from kura, and 50 and 42 percent of those from primary and secondary schools, respectively);
- roll change (46 percent of those from schools where the roll declined, compared with 53 percent from those where it fluctuated);
- location (about 46 percent of city and town school principals, compared with 58 percent of rural school principals);
- age (39 percent of those under 45 years, compared with 52 percent of those over 45 years);

- health (34 percent of those who reported their health was really not good, compared with 57 percent of those who were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (43 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 70 percent of those reporting low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (39 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 53 percent of those reporting no problems); and
- happiness (41 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 54 percent of those who were happy).

### *Finding competent relievers*

Finding competent relievers caused high stress for 14 percent of the principals (used for comparisons), and low or no stress for 40 percent. This was associated with:

- School size (17 percent of principals in U1 or U2 schools had high or breaking point levels of stress about finding competent relievers, but none of those in U7 or above schools did);
- School type (13 percent of primary, 26 percent of area schools, 5 percent of secondary schools, and 60 percent of kura principals);
- Decile (26 percent of decile 1 or 2 principals, compared with four percent of decile 9 or 10 principals);
- Location (9 percent city principals, 16 percent town principals, 19 percent rural principals)
- Slightly more female principals (16 percent, compared with 12 percent of males), and for Māori (35 percent) than NZ European (12 percent) principals. These findings are probably more associated with the fact that female and Māori principals are over-represented among the principals of smaller, and rural schools, which would have more difficulty finding relievers.
- general health (18 percent of those whose health was really not good, compared with 11 percent of those who were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (18 percent of stressed principals, compared with 5 percent of unstressed principals);
- tiredness (22 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness reported high levels of stress, compared with 11 percent of those who had no problems with tiredness);
- happiness (20 percent of unhappy principals, compared with 11 percent of happy principals); and
- quality non-work-related socializing (18 percent of those who did not socialize reported high levels of stress, compared with 13 percent of those who socialized a lot).

There were no associations with fitness, age, experience, or qualifications.

### *Poorly performing senior management*

Fifty-eight percent of respondents rating their stress levels low or not at all in relation to poorly performing senior management, and 12 percent reporting high or breaking-point levels of stress. Low or no stress levels were associated with

- school roll (73 percent of U1 or U2 principals who probably do not really have senior management, compared with 47 percent of U3 or U4 principals);
- location (53 percent of city or town school principals, compared with 72 percent of rural principals);
- health (48 percent of those who rated their health as really not good, compared with 62 percent of those who were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (52 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 74 percent of those who reported low or very low levels);
- happiness (55 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 60 percent of those who were happy); and
- fitness (53 percent of those who were least fit, compared with 61 percent of those who were most fit).

### *Low staff morale*

Low staff morale was a minor cause of stress — at least, 59 percent of the principals rated it as causing low or no stress (used for comparisons) and only five percent rated it as causing high or breaking-point levels. Low or no stress levels were associated with

- size (53 percent of U1 or U2 school principals, compared with 27 percent of U7 and above principals);
- location (about 56 percent of city or town school principals, 66 percent of rural school principals);
- health (39 percent of those who rated their health as really not good, compared with 68 percent who said they were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (48 percent of those with high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 76 percent of those with low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (46 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 64 percent of those who had no problems);
- happiness (28 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 65 percent of those who were happy);
- fitness (52 percent of the least fit, compared with 60 percent of the most fit); and
- quality non-work-related socializing (54 percent of those who had none, compared with 68 percent of those who had a lot).

### **Board of Trustees**

The principals were asked to describe their relationship with their Board of Trustees and to rate their stress in relation to three aspects of the Board: competence, employment issues, and involvement in management of the school (Figure 1). The board of trustees was not a major stressor for the principals.

### *Relationship with the Board*

The description of their relationship with their Board of Trustees was on a six-point scale from “A good professional relationship” to “It’s almost like a war zone”. Just over a third said it was a good professional relationship. Fifty-nine percent said it was ‘happy, relaxed, but I do most of the work’. Six percent indicated a negative relationship.

In terms of whether the relationship was described as good and professional, there were associations with

- school roll (26 percent of U1 or U2 schools, compared with 52 percent of U7 and above principals);
- type (13 percent of kura, 30 percent of area school, and 34 percent of primary, 40 percent of secondary principals);
- decile (20 percent of decile 1–2 school principals, compared with 45 percent of decile 9–10 school principals);
- roll change (39 percent of those from schools where the roll has risen, compared with 25 percent of those from schools where it fluctuated);
- experience (28 percent of those with 2–5 years’ experience, compared with 41 percent of those with over 20 years’ experience).
- health (31 percent of those who gave their health as being really not good, compared with 37 percent of those who said they were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (28 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 45 percent of those who reported low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (27 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 36 percent of those who reported no problems);
- happiness (25 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 38 percent of those who were happy);
- fitness (26 percent of the least fit, compared with 36 percent of the most fit); and
- quality non-work-related socializing (28 percent of those who had none, compared with 39 percent of those who had lots).

### *Competence of the Board*

Competence of the Board of Trustees was the source of high or breaking-point stress for 13 percent of principals, and 42 percent of the respondents reported no or low stress about it. There was some association between low or no stress and

- size (46 percent of U1 or U2 school principals, 54 percent of U3 or U4 school principals, and 65 percent of U5 or above school principals);
- decile (31 percent of decile 1–2 school principals, compared with 51 percent of decile 9–10 school principals);
- roll change (29 percent of principals from schools where the roll fluctuated, compared with 47 percent of those from schools where it had risen);
- gender (45 percent of males and 38 percent of females);

- ethnicity (43 percent of NZ Europeans, compared with 30 percent of Māori);
- experience, where the difference shows most clearly in terms of those who found it highly stressful — 18 percent of those with under 2 years' experience compared with 12 percent of those with more than 2 years' experience.
- health (27 percent of those who reported their health as really not good, compared with 51 percent of those who were very or exceptionally healthy);
- stress (32 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 64 percent of those who reported low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (24 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 49 percent of those who had no problems);
- happiness (27 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 48 percent of those who were happy); and
- fitness (30 percent of the least fit, compared with 46 percent of the most fit);

### *Board involvement in management of the school*

Eleven percent reported high/breaking point levels of stress related to board involvement in the management of the school, and 55 percent reported that it caused low or no stress. The latter was associated with

- school roll (46 percent of U1 or U2 school principals, compared with 65 percent of those from U5 or above);
- roll change (59 percent of principals from schools where the roll was stable or had risen, compared with 48 percent of those from a school where it had fluctuated);
- location (59 percent of city school principals, 56 percent of town school principals, and 48 percent of rural school principals);
- gender (58 percent of males, compared with 52 percent of females);
- ethnicity (57 percent of NZ European principals, compared with 41 percent of Māori principals);
- age (46 percent of those under 45 years, compared with 58 percent of those over 45 years);
- experience (47 percent of those with under 2 years' experience, compared with 59 percent of those with over 20 years' experience);
- health (54 percent of those whose health was really not good, compared with 63 percent of those who were very or extremely healthy);
- stress (48 percent of those who reported high or extremely high stress, compared with 76 percent of those who reported low or extremely low stress);
- tiredness (40 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 61 percent of those who reported no problems); and
- happiness (41 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 61 percent of those who were happy).

### *Employment issues*

Employment issues between the principal and Board were not considered a particularly stressful issue, with 60 percent of the respondents reporting low or no stress about it (used for comparisons), and seven percent reporting high or breaking-point levels of stress. There was some association with

- type (53 percent of kura principals, about 58 percent of primary and area school principals, and 73 percent of secondary principals);
- roll change (53 percent of principals from schools where the roll has been stable, compared with 48 percent of those from schools where the roll fluctuated);
- ethnicity (61 percent of NZ Europeans, compared with 47 percent of Māori);
- age (52 percent of those under 45 years, compared with 61 percent of those aged over 45 years);
- health (50 percent of those who reported their health to be really not good, compared with 66 percent of those who were very or extremely healthy);
- stress (53 percent of those who had high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with 79 percent of those who had low or extremely low levels);
- tiredness (49 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 63 percent who reported no problems); and
- happiness (44 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 64 percent of those who were happy).

### **Parents**

Two of the stressor questions related to parents: parental expectations and aggressive behaviour from parents (Figure 1).

### *Parental expectations*

Stress caused by parental expectations varied markedly between principals. Overall, 21 percent of principals reported high or breaking-point levels. This stress was associated with

- decile (5 percent of decile 1–2 school principals, rising to 43 percent of decile 9–10 parents; the proportions in the decile groups were 5, 13, 21, 26, 43);
- roll change (16 percent of principals from schools where the roll had declined, compared with about 23 percent of all others);
- location (18 percent of principals in town schools, 20 percent of those from city schools, and 28 percent of those from rural schools);
- age (27 percent of those under 44 years, 20 percent of those 45 years or older); experience (stressful for 25 percent of those with 5–20 years' experience, but for about 17 percent of other principals);
- qualifications (19 percent of principals with teaching certificates or diplomas, 23 percent of those with bachelor degrees and 25 percent of those with post-graduate degrees).

- health (30 percent of those who reported their health as really not good, compared with 17 percent of those who said they were very or extremely healthy);
- stress (28 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with seven percent of those who reported low or very low levels);
- tiredness (27 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 18 percent who reported no problems); and
- happiness (27 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 18 percent of those who were happy).

### *Aggressive behaviour from parents*

Overall, 17 percent of principals reported high or breaking-point levels of stress about aggressive behaviour from parents. This stress was associated with

- school size (16 percent of U3 or U4 school principals, compared with 21 percent of those from U7 and above schools);
- roll change (13 percent of principals from schools where the roll had risen, compared with 26 of principals from schools where it fluctuated);
- health (24 percent of those who reported their health as really not good, compared with 13 percent of those who said they were very or extremely healthy);
- stress (22 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with nine percent of those who reported low or very low levels).
- tiredness (24 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 14 percent who reported no problems); and
- happiness (26 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 14 percent of those who were happy).

## Complaints and critical incidents

### *Complaints management*

Associations with other variables and stress caused by complaints management sometimes shows more clearly amongst those reporting high levels of stress (14 percent overall), and sometimes amongst those reporting low or no stress (33 percent overall), and both are used in what follows.

This source of stress was associated with

- school roll (40 percent of U1 or U2 school principals reported *low* levels of stress, compared with 25 percent of U7 and above school principals);
- roll change (12 percent of principals from schools where the roll was stable reported *high* levels of stress, compared with 22 percent of principals from schools where the roll had fluctuated);
- location (12 percent of principals from rural schools, 14 percent of principals from city schools, and 16 percent of principals from town schools reported *high* levels of stress);



- experience (stressful for 17 percent of those with 5–20 years’ experience, but for 10–12 percent of other principals);
- health (24 percent of those who reported their health as really not good, compared with 10 percent of those who said they were very or extremely healthy);
- stress (20 percent of those who reported high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with four percent of those who reported low or very low levels);
- tiredness (20 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 10 percent who reported no problems); and
- happiness (27 percent of those who were unhappy, compared with 10 percent of those who were happy).

### *Critical incidents*

Overall 36 percent of respondents reported low or no stress about critical incidents, and 18 percent had high or breaking point levels of stress. The associations described are sometimes most clearly seen when comparing *low* levels of stress (the main comparison), and sometimes when comparing *high* levels (used less often, and only where indicated). This stress was associated with:

- school size (50 percent of U1 or U2 principals, compared with 28 percent of U7 and above);
- decile (23 percent of decile 1–2 school principals, compared with 43 percent of decile 7–10 school principals);
- location (31 percent of city or town school principals, compared with 48 percent of rural school principals);
- qualifications (40 percent with teaching diplomas or certificates, 34 percent with bachelors degrees, and 32 percent with post-graduate degrees).
- The association with experience was not particularly clear-cut as there was not a clear gradient across the amounts of experience. It seems that the principals who have under 2 years’ experience reported the lowest levels of stress (44 percent low or none), and those with five to twenty years’ experience reported the most (33 percent low or none);
- stress (23 percent of those with high or extremely high levels of stress, compared with nine percent of those with low or extremely low levels *had high or breaking point levels of stress*);
- health (30 percent of those whose health was really not good, compared with 41 percent of those who were very or exceptionally healthy *had low or no stress*); and
- tiredness (21 percent of those whose performance was affected by tiredness, compared with 17 percent of those who had no problems *had high or breaking point levels of stress*).

## Summary

On the whole, we see more consistent associations with particular sources of stress and overall indications of wellbeing, or lack of it, than with particular school characteristics, and even less so with particular individual characteristics. Most of the associations with individual characteristics such as gender are probably related to patterns of distribution, with more women heading small or rural schools.

However, there are trends indicating that principals of small schools, those in rural areas, and those whose school rolls are fluctuating or declining are more vulnerable to finding aspects of their work stressful and less satisfying than others. The aspects that are likely to be more stressful for them relate to the multidimensional nature of the job, particularly tensions around getting a balance between management and leadership, and feeling that they can make teaching and learning their main focus. Network reviews were more likely to be a source of stress for principals in these schools also.

Principals in larger, mainly urban schools have larger teams, and so these aspects of the job are relatively less stressful. However, they were more likely to have to deal with student behavioural problems, and to find these a source of stress. Resourcing needs were also more of a stressor for principals of city schools, and secondary schools.

Low decile school principals were more likely to identify issues with staff, or their Board of Trustees as a source of high stress. High decile school principals were more likely to identify parental expectations as a source of high stress.

We turn next to sources of support for principals in their work.