

The leadership support gap



With councils under increasing pressure to deliver services while managing funding constraints and rising public expectations, these findings raise serious questions about how well leadership is supporting employees at all levels.

The data, drawn from over 70,000 leaders, managers, and employees across New Zealand and Australia, presents a troubling picture. Stress levels remain high across job levels, but frontline leaders report experiencing the most stress with the least ability to manage it.

At the same time, senior executives and chief executives often feel unsupported despite their position of influence. Interestingly, while those in higher positions tend to feel more capable of managing stress, job satisfaction declines at lower levels of the organisation. If left unaddressed, this imbalance could have significant consequences for staff retention, performance, and overall workplace well-being.

These findings raise several critical questions for councils to consider. How can they prevent burnout among frontline leaders and staff? What steps should senior leaders take to strengthen the long-term resilience of their teams? And what practical strategies can be implemented to improve workplace satisfaction and leadership support in high-pressure environments?

One of the key areas councils need to focus on is managing workloads and setting realistic expectations. Many frontline leaders are stretched too thin, making it difficult for them to perform effectively or support their

New research from *The Nation's Wellbeing Report 2025* by Human Synergistics has highlighted a concerning gap in leadership support and workplace stress within our local government sector, writes **Carina Hull**, a Senior Consultant at Human Synergistics NZ.