



# Sustainable Leadership - What you told us

**BRIAN O'DOHERTY** IPPN DEPUTY CEO

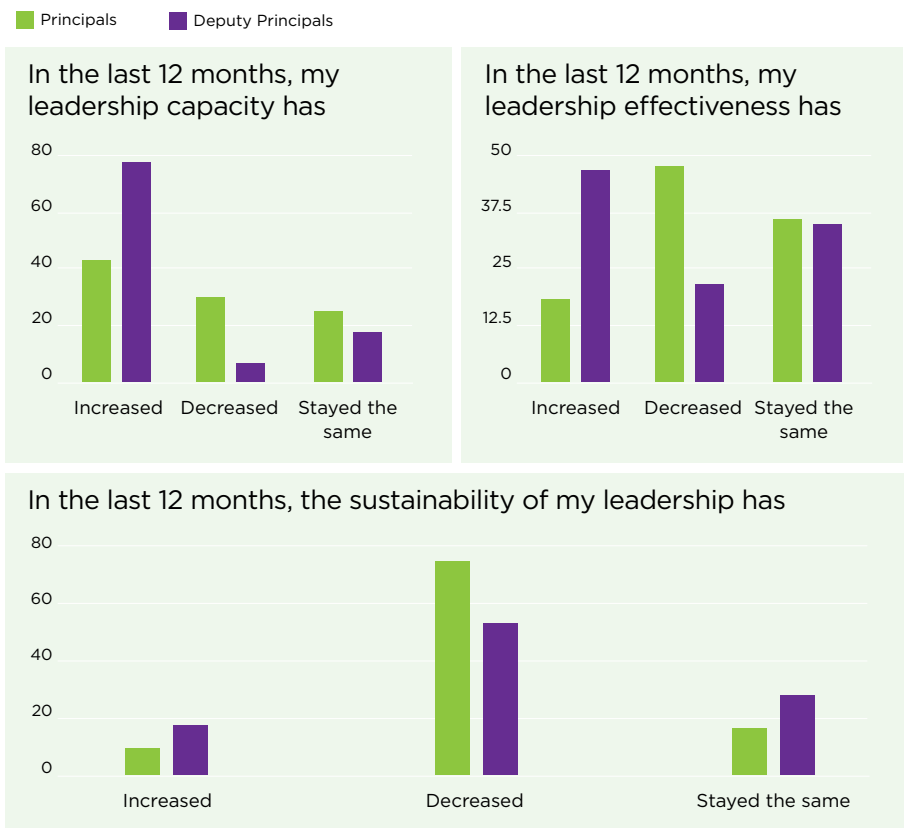
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The primary objective of our Sustainable Leadership project, and the focus of our advocacy work, is the enhancement of leadership capacity, effectiveness and sustainability. This is central to the mission of IPPN. A key element of the project, which underpins the associated advocacy work, has been the rich data you provided through your engagement with our member surveys and your participation in the Health & Wellbeing research. This has allowed us to analyse the current reality of both the practice and experience of primary school leadership.

Last November, we published a progress report on the Sustainable Leadership project, which detailed the engagement we have had and mapped the progress that has been made in relation to the recommendations in the original report. In preparation for the publication of the progress report, we issued separate member surveys to principals and to deputy principals to ensure that we had an up-to-date evidence base to strengthen the case for progressing the recommendations.

More than 1,500 school leaders responded to those surveys, which was a phenomenal level of engagement, and while some of the data gleaned from your responses was included in Section 3 of the progress report, we thought there would be a value in sharing with you a more comprehensive look at the data you shared with us.

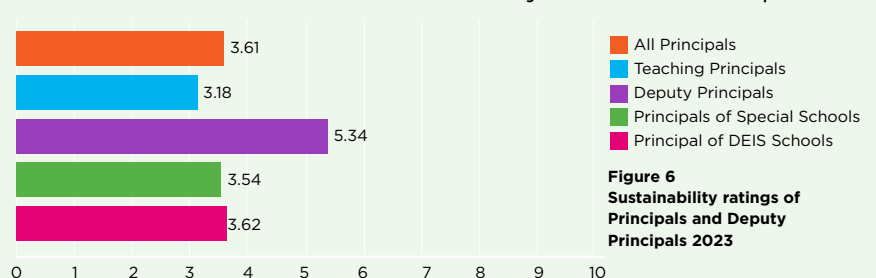
## Perspectives on leadership capacity, effectiveness & sustainability



We asked school leaders to indicate whether their leadership capacity effectiveness and sustainability had increased, decreased or stayed the same over the last 12 months. 75% of deputy principals reported an increase in their leadership capacity and 46% reported an increase in their effectiveness as leaders. 43%

of principals reported an increase in their leadership capacity but only 18% reported an increase in their effectiveness as leaders, with 47% reporting a decrease in their effectiveness. Significant numbers of principals (74%) and deputy principals (53%) reported a decrease in the sustainability of their leadership roles.

## How school leaders rate the sustainability of their leadership role



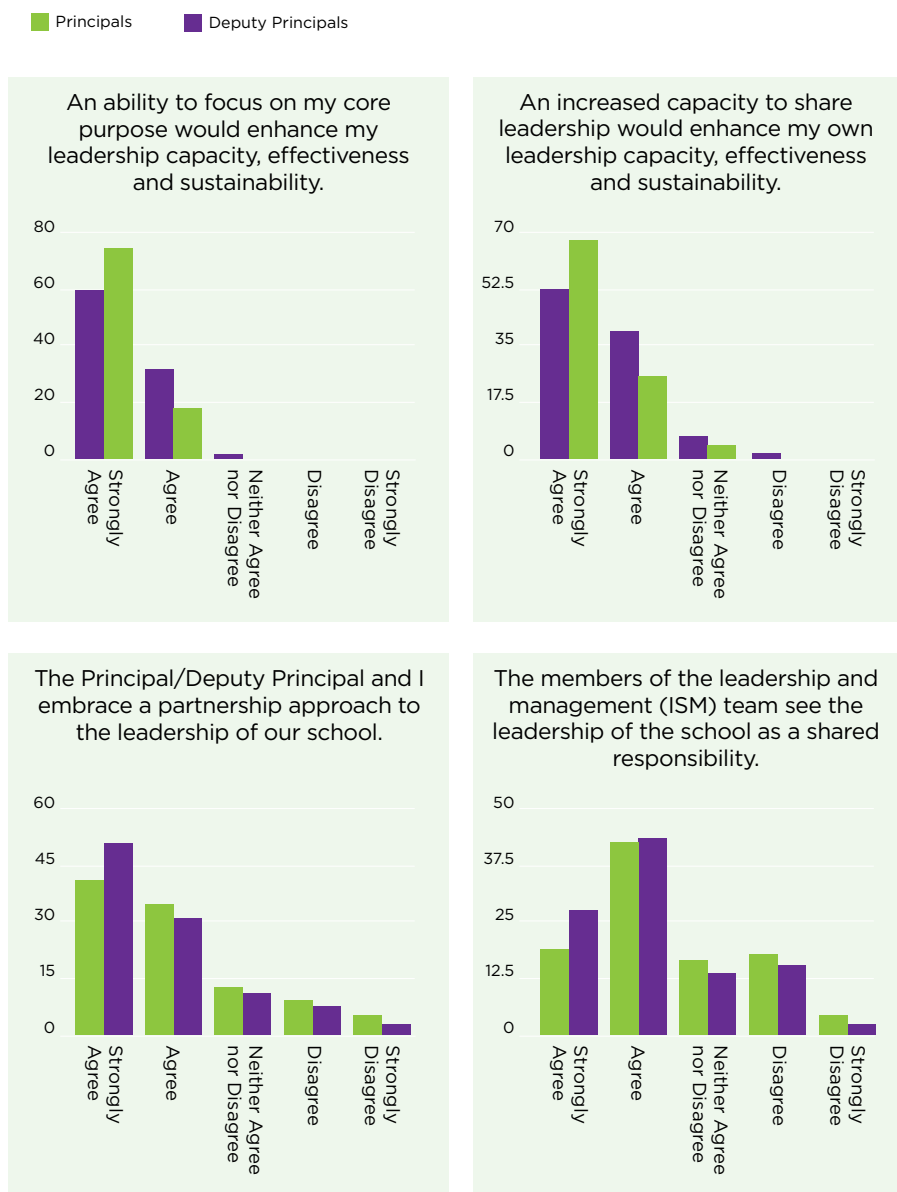
This is borne out in the responses to the question asking school leaders to rate (with a score out of 10) the sustainability of their leadership role. The leadership sustainability mean score for all principals dropped to 3.61 from 3.96 in 2022. Principals of Special Schools rated the sustainability of their roles at just 3.54 out of 10. Principals of DEIS Schools rated their sustainability at 3.62, down from 3.76 in 2022. Of particular concern is the mean score reported by teaching principals, which has dropped from 3.53 to 3.18 in the last 12 months. Deputy principals rated the sustainability of their roles at 5.34 out of 10. There is no comparable figure for 2022.

There is broad consensus among principals and deputy principals with regard to what would enhance their leadership capacity, effectiveness and sustainability, with 95% of principals and 94% of deputy principals agreeing that an ability to focus on their core purpose would have a positive impact. Similarly, 95% of principals and 93% of deputy principals agreed that an increased capacity to share leadership would enhance their own leadership capacity, effectiveness and sustainability.

**Shared leadership - the lived experience**

Broad consensus also exists with regard to the sharing of leadership in our schools. 74% of principals and 81% of deputy principals report the existence of a partnership or co-leadership approach between principal and deputy principal in their schools. Furthermore, 62% of principals and 70% of deputy principals believe that the members of their leadership and management teams see leadership as a shared responsibility, which is both encouraging and indicative of the proactive work happening in schools around the development of a culture of shared leadership.

However, 84% of deputy principals and 78% of principals cite lack of time as the greatest impediment to the development of a partnership approach, while 81% of deputy principals and 76% of principals identify the same lack of time, due to teaching commitments, as the greatest impediment to the leadership and management team seeing the leadership of the school as a shared responsibility.



**Preparation for Leadership**

The following table details some of the experience of school leaders prior to their appointment to their current roles.

	Deputy Principals	Principals
Before I decided to become a school leader, a senior school leader encouraged me to consider leadership	76%	56%
Prior to my appointment, I was afforded an opportunity to develop my leadership skills either as a member of the leadership and management (ISM) team or as curriculum/teacher leader in my school	67%	44%
Prior to my appointment, I had undertaken professional learning for leadership course	44%	52%*

\*Figure taken from Misneach data.

**Recruitment & Retention Trends**

The table opposite details how long the school leaders who responded to the surveys have been in their current roles.

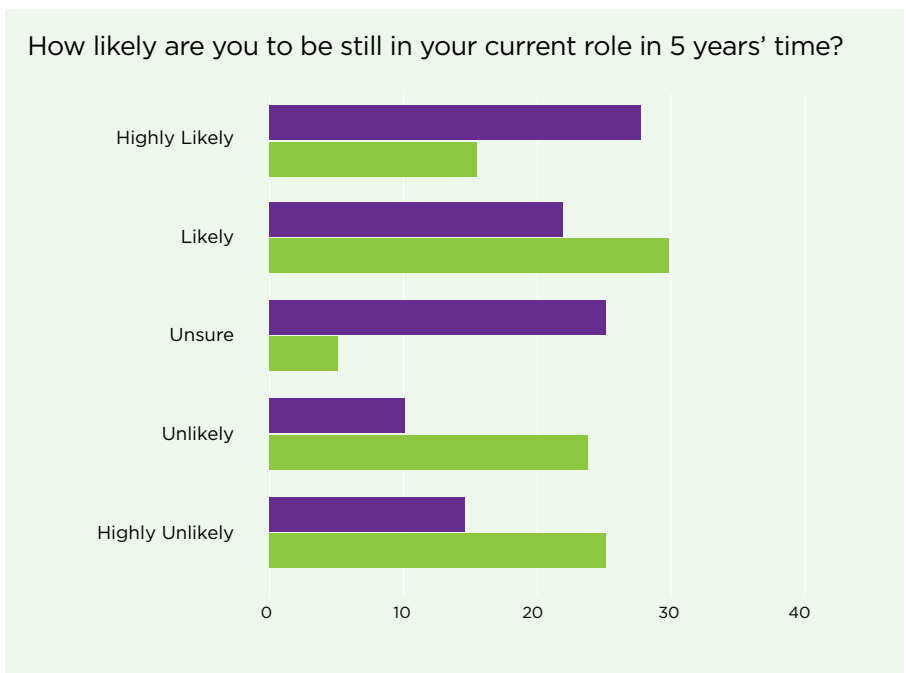
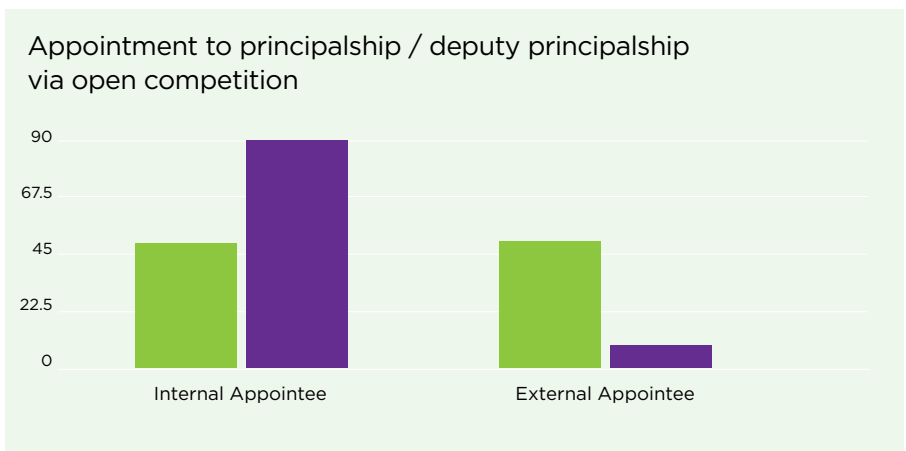
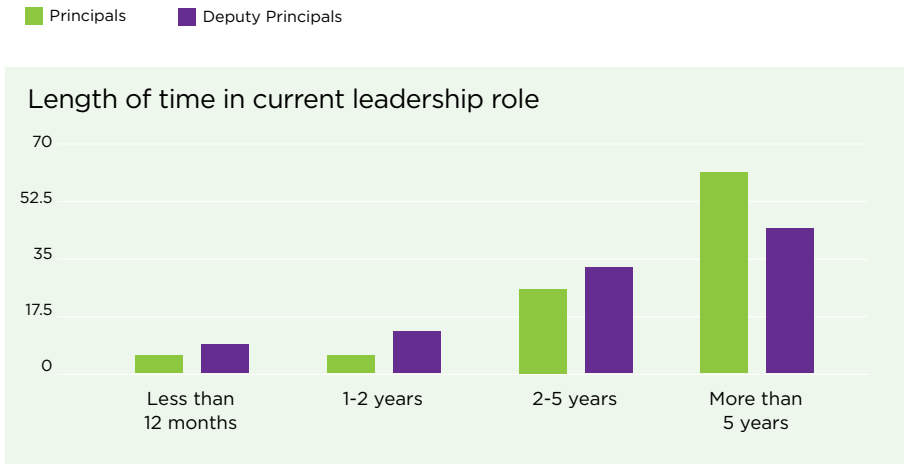
In processes to appoint a deputy principal via open competition, the successful applicant in 90% of cases was an internal candidate. There would appear to be greater balance between the number of internal (49%) v external (51%) appointees to principalship. However, these percentages should be considered against the backdrop of the average number of applicants for principal posts being 5.5 with the average number of internal applicants being just less than 1 (0.96). The average number of applicants for deputy principal posts was 3.1.

In terms of retention, there is greater certainty among principals about their current roles with 46% indicating that they would likely be in their current role in 5 years' time and 49% indicating that they would not. In the case of deputy principals, 50% indicate a likelihood that they will be in their current role in 5 years' time with 25% indicating that they would not and a further 25% reporting being unsure.

It would be erroneous to assume that the 50% of deputy principals who indicated that it was unlikely or who were unsure if they would be in their current role in 5 years' time, did so because they were considering a move into principalship. In response to a question seeking to ascertain whether they would apply for the role of principal in their school, if it became available, 81% of deputy principals indicated that they would not apply.

The top 5 reasons that deputy principals identified for not applying for the role of principal were as follows:

- 74% said that taking on the role of principal would likely have an adverse impact on their work/life balance
- 70% said that taking on the role of principal would likely have an adverse impact on their health and wellbeing.
- 59% said that they did not want the additional workload and responsibility
- 57% said that the increased allowance payable to principals is not sufficient compensation for the additional workload and responsibility
- 41% said that they did not wish to be a principal.



As 81% of deputy principals said they would not apply for the role of principal, but only 41% said they did not wish to be a principal, we can conclude that there is a cohort of deputy principals who would apply for the role of principal, but are deterred

by the manner in which primary school principalship is currently practised and experienced.

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