



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

A collage of three images: a glacier lake with icebergs, two children by a lake, and a hand holding a coffee cup.

ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES BASELINE



COLMAR BRUNTON

A Kantar Millward Brown Company

The Ministry for the Environment is moving towards a different way of engaging with New Zealanders regarding the environment. To do so, they require a better understanding of the drivers of current attitudes, as well as a baseline to measure progress against in the future.

This report presents findings to provide a baseline for New Zealanders' attitudes toward the environment, namely with the intent to glean insight on where to focus to create a significant shift in perceptions and attitudes.

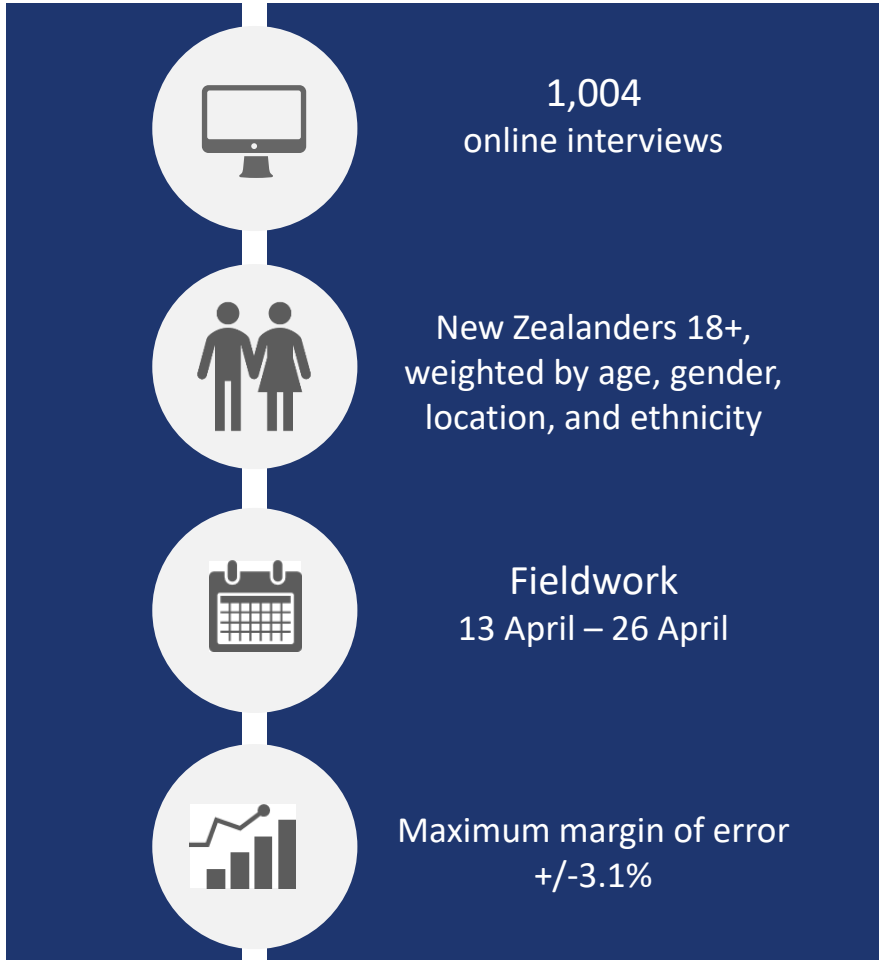
The research provides an understanding of the following:

Climate change

- The level of concern that New Zealanders have toward climate change
- Current beliefs and perceptions surrounding climate change and responsibilities moving forward.

Water Quality & Waste Reduction

- Current perceptions on both the quality of New Zealand's lakes and rivers, and concern about the impacts of waste
- Current actions taken, and barriers to further action.
- Where New Zealanders feel that responsibility lies.



Sample source

Respondents were sourced from Colmar Brunton’s online panel.

Audience and weighting

New Zealanders aged 18 and over. Data has been post weighted by age, gender, location, and ethnicity to align it with Stats NZ population counts from the 2013 census.

Fieldwork

Interviewing was carried out from the 13th April to 26th April 2018.

Accuracy

At a total sample level the results have a maximum margin of error (at the 95% confidence interval) of +/-3.1%.

Summary



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32% of New Zealanders are very or extremely worried about Climate Change



33% are highly committed to combatting Climate Change



- Around one in three New Zealanders are fired up on climate change. Most others see it as an issue but not one which motivates them.
- This reflects a reluctance to fully embrace the science. Only 39% believe climate change is caused entirely or mainly by human activity, whereas 42% say it is more balanced between nature and human activity.
- While the majority of New Zealanders (57%) think we are heading in the right direction on tackling climate change, there is a call for more decisive action - only 18% feel that the Government is doing enough. In addition, there is support (62%) for a more ambitious emissions target.
- New Zealanders are optimistic individuals can make a difference (62%) and have a responsibility for doing so (75%). However many show a reluctance to 'walk the walk' by changing their behaviours.



- New Zealanders are divided as to the quality of our waterways, with 36% feeling it is good, 38% poor and 22% okay (5% don't know).
- New Zealanders feel improving water quality is the responsibility of government, businesses and farmers, but do not feel any of these players are doing enough.
- New Zealanders have a lower sense of personal responsibility for water quality, and there is generally low awareness of household behaviours that can impact water quality.
- Most (83%) accept that polluters should pay to improve water quality, but only 40% think this should include rate payers. This reflects a lower sense of culpability in terms of water quality.

82% of New Zealanders feel that it is very or extremely important to improve the quality of our water



38% are highly committed to improving it.



50% of New Zealanders are very or extremely worried about the impacts of waste



62% highly committed to recycling



55% highly committed to reducing the amount of waste they generate.



- New Zealanders feel that the responsibility for waste reduction falls on everyone, but that the Government is not currently doing enough.
- There is a high level of personal responsibility, combined with less preparedness to pay more in rates and taxes, suggesting a preference for changes in individual behaviour, over taxpayer-funded initiatives. This could be symptomatic of a lack of understanding of the infrastructure required to transition to a circular economy.
- There is an opportunity to raise awareness of recycling behaviours outside of the home, as well as many waste reduction behaviours.
- The main barriers to reducing plastic waste are a lack of alternatives, the cost of reusable items and forgetting to carry reusable items.

Key events leading up to the research

23rd February 2017

National Government announces a target of 90% of New Zealand's lakes and rivers meeting swimmable water quality standards by 2040

4th /10th October 2017

Countdown & New World announce plans to phase out single-use plastic bags by end of 2018

20th August 2017

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern calls climate change "[her] generation's 'nuclear-free' moment" in campaign launch speech

12th November 2017

Documentary Blue Planet II airs on TVNZ 1

2nd February 2018

Ex-tropical cyclone Fehi strikes

12th March 2018

Ex-tropical cyclone Hola strikes

12th April 2018

Minister for Climate Change, James Shaw, announces that 'urgent action' needed after emissions rose 20%

20th February 2018

Ex-tropical cyclone Gita strikes

12th April 2018

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announces an end to offshore oil exploration permits

13th April 2018
Survey launched

18th December 2017

Minister for Climate Change, James Shaw, announces plans for Zero Carbon Act

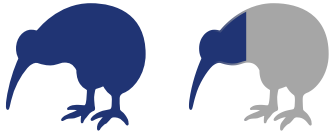
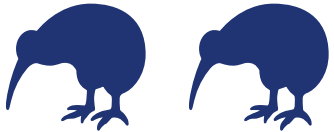


Climate Change
BELIEFS & CONCERNS

“[Climate change] is my generation’s nuclear-free moment, and I am determined that we will tackle it head on.”

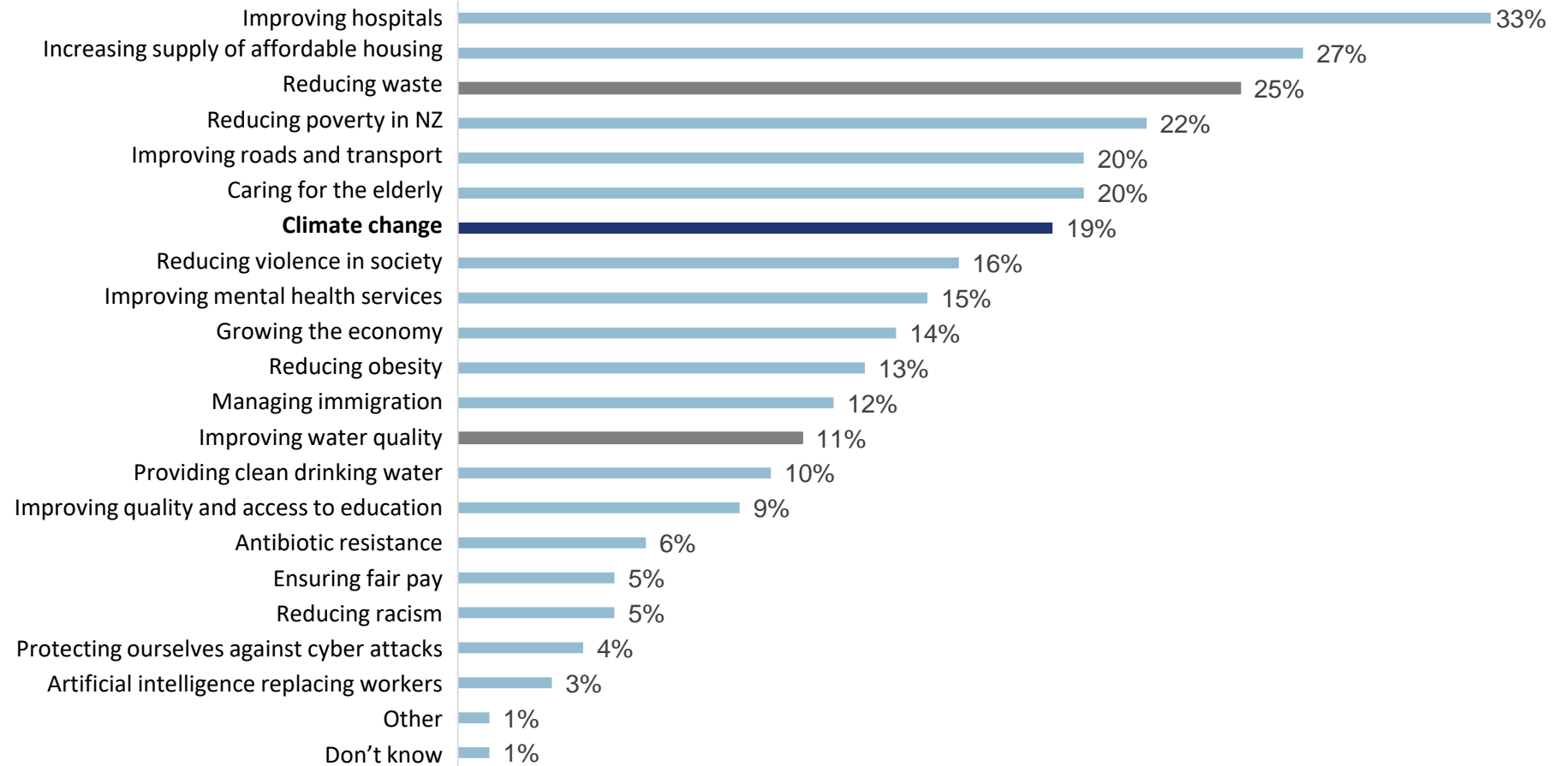
RT. HON. JACINDA ARDERN, PRIME MINISTER

Only one-third of New Zealanders are highly worried about climate change.
Looking forward, many say other issues are more important.



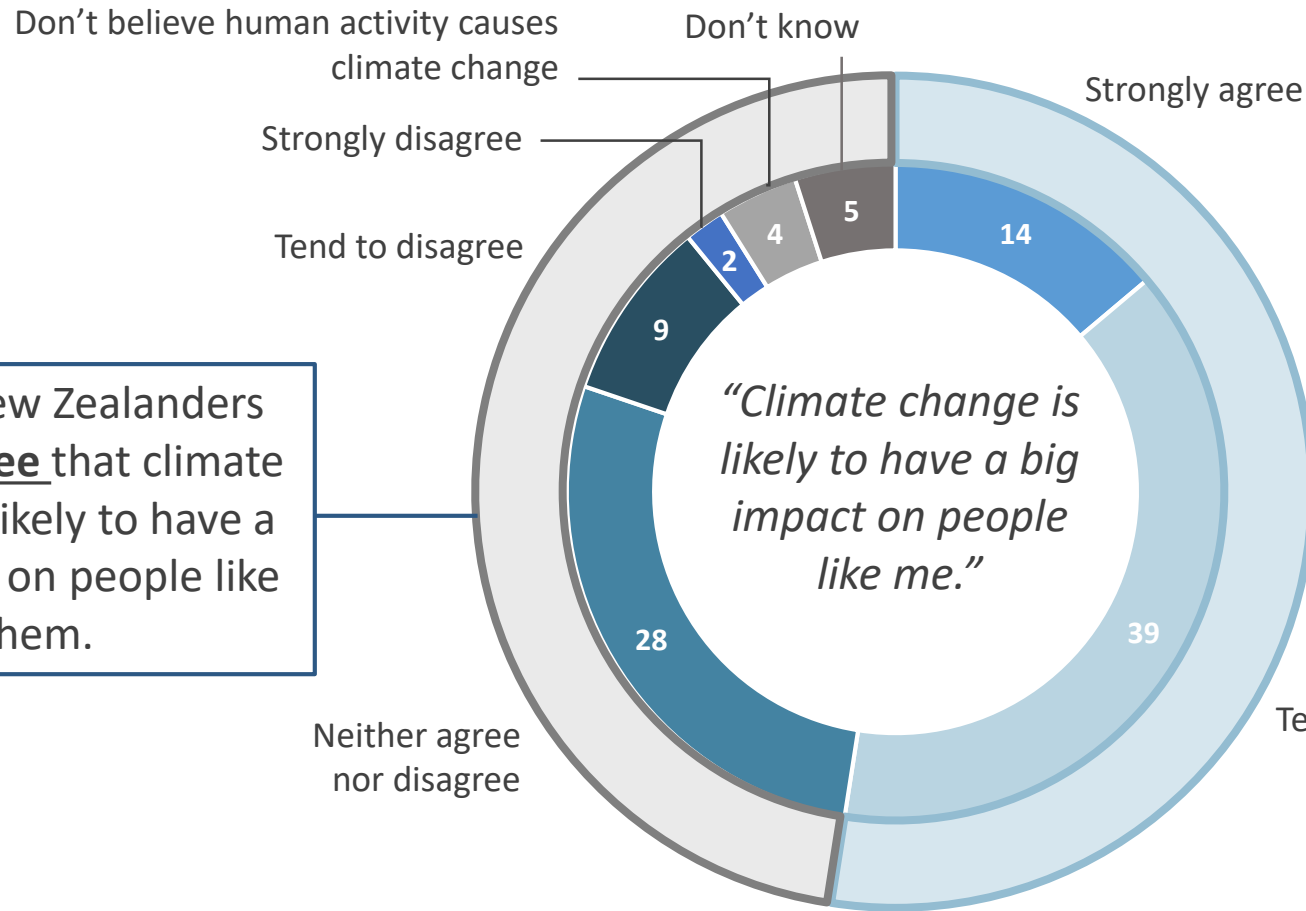
32% of New Zealanders are very or extremely worried about climate change.

“What would you say are the most important challenges facing New Zealand in the next 20 years?”



New Zealanders are split on the extent to which climate change will impact them personally.

%



48% of New Zealanders **do not agree** that climate change is likely to have a big impact on people like them.

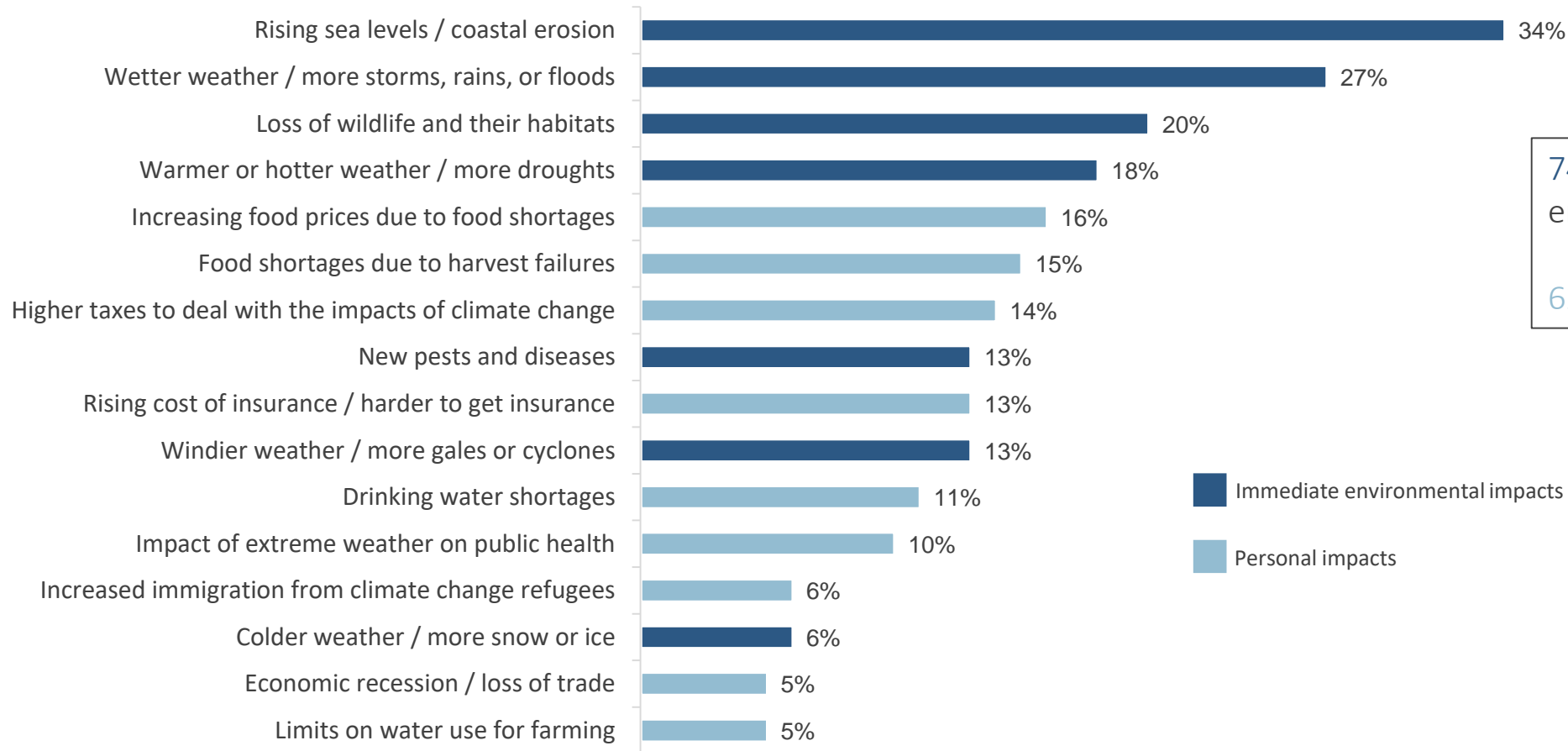
52% of New Zealanders **agree** that climate change is likely to have a big impact on people like them.

"Climate change is likely to have a big impact on people like me."

The immediate environmental impacts of climate change loom largest in the minds of New Zealanders. They are less likely to acknowledge personal impacts.



“What do you think will be the most noticeable negative effects of climate change on New Zealand?”

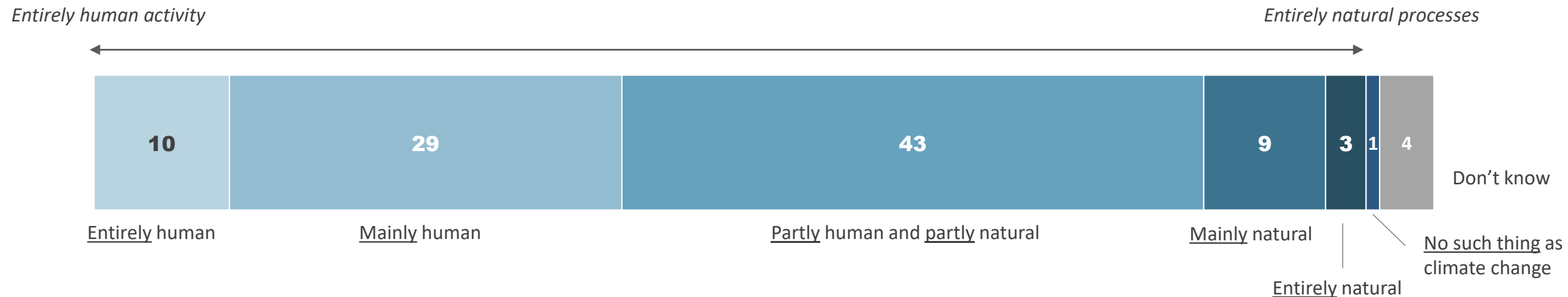


74% recognise immediate environmental impacts
62% recognise personal impacts

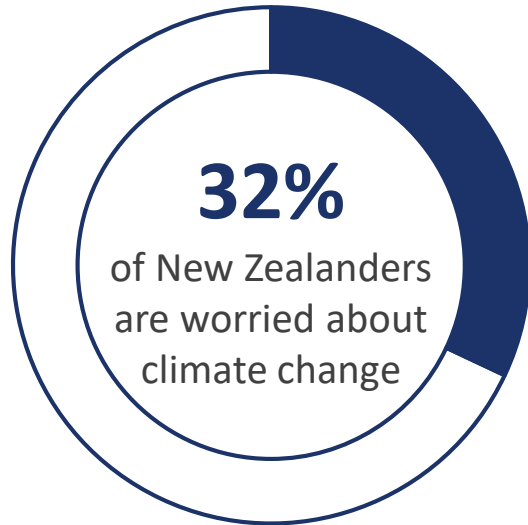
The public don't fully accept that climate change is due to human activity. A high proportion remain on the fence.

%

“Which of the following best describes your views on climate change?”



Climate change has less salience for some groups of New Zealanders than others.



Less likely to be worried about climate change...



Men
(26%)



Have no qualification /
secondary school
qualification only
(24%)



Low connectedness
with the environment
(17%)

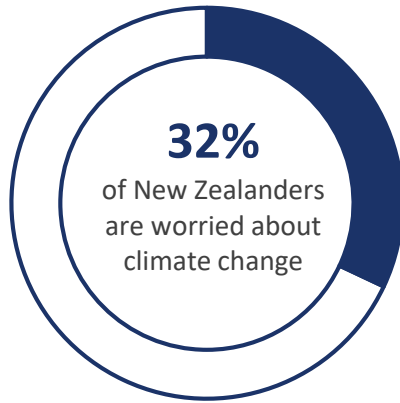


Have seen little about
climate change in the
media
(20%)

These groups are also less likely than others to believe climate change is mainly due to human activity.



Less likely to be worried about climate change...



Men
(26%)



Have no qualification /
secondary school
qualification only
(24%)



Low connectedness with
the environment
(17%)



Have seen little about
climate change in the
media
(20%)

Less likely to believe human activity causes climate change...



Men
(35%)



Aged 65+
(29%)



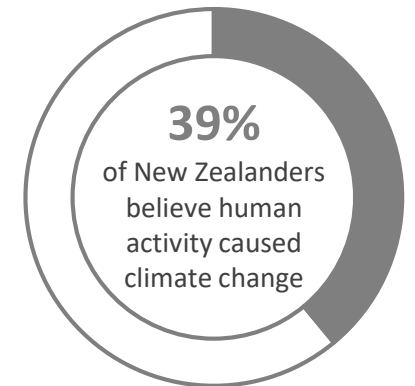
Live rurally
(34%)



Low connectedness
with the environment
(27%)



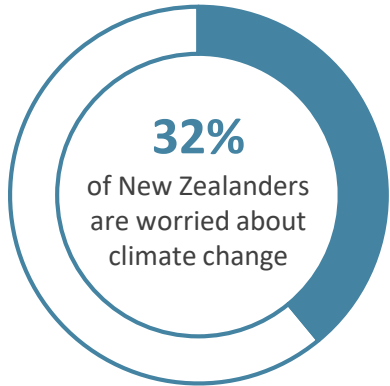
Have seen little
about climate
change in the media
(31%)



Conversely groups who are concerned about climate change are more likely to be convinced it is due to human activity.



More likely to be worried about climate change...



Women
(37%)



Aged 25-34
(40%)



NZ Māori
(42%)



Asian New
Zealanders
(42%)



Have a Bachelors
degree or higher
(39%)

More likely to believe in man-made climate change...



Women
(43%)



Aged 18-24
(52%)



Aged 25-34
(47%)



Live in a city
(45%)



NZ Māori
(49%)



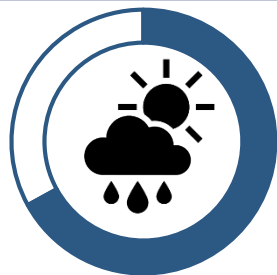
Have a Bachelors
degree or higher
(46%)



We trust what we can see. Extreme weather events increase the salience of climate change for New Zealanders. This is in line with overseas research¹.



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67% agree that recent weather has been unusual.

More likely to be....



Worried
36%

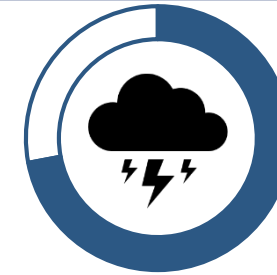
c.f. 32% on average

More likely to think the cause is....



Human Activity
45%

c.f. 39% on average



72% agree that extreme weather events now happen more often.

More likely to be....



Worried
39%

c.f. 32% on average

More likely to think the cause is....



Human Activity
49%

c.f. 39% on average



Climate Change

THE PATH TO COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE



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A Kantar Millward Brown Company



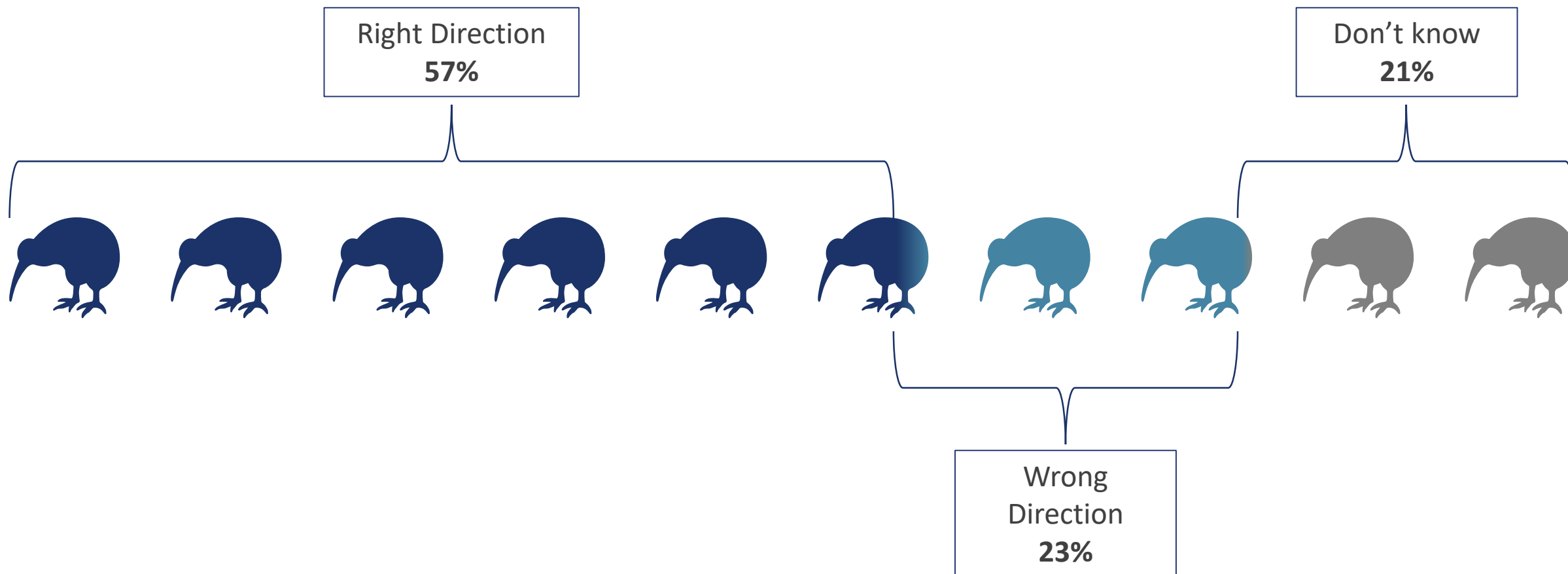
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Around six in ten New Zealanders think the nation is heading in the right direction on climate change, but some are not yet convinced.



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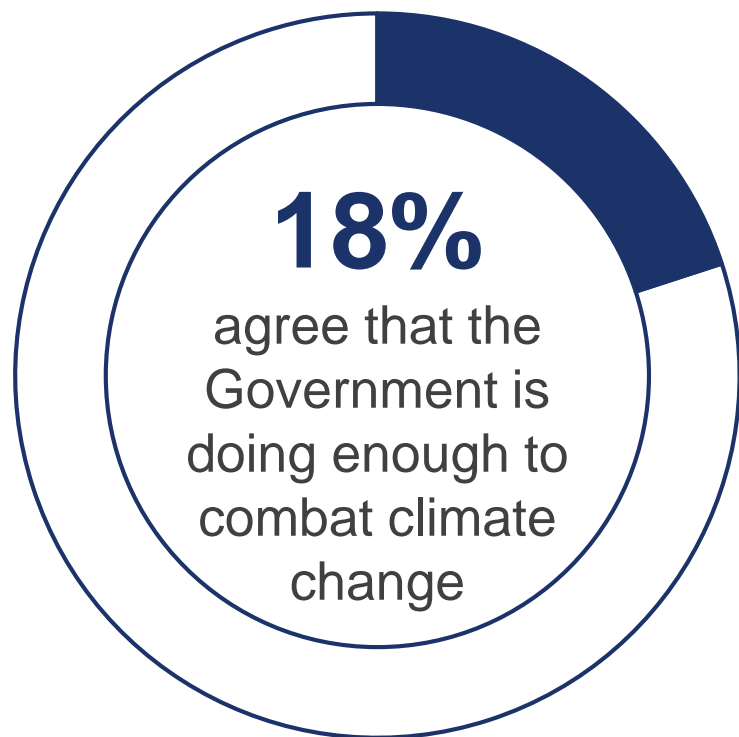
“Is New Zealand heading in the right or wrong direction in how it approaches climate change?”



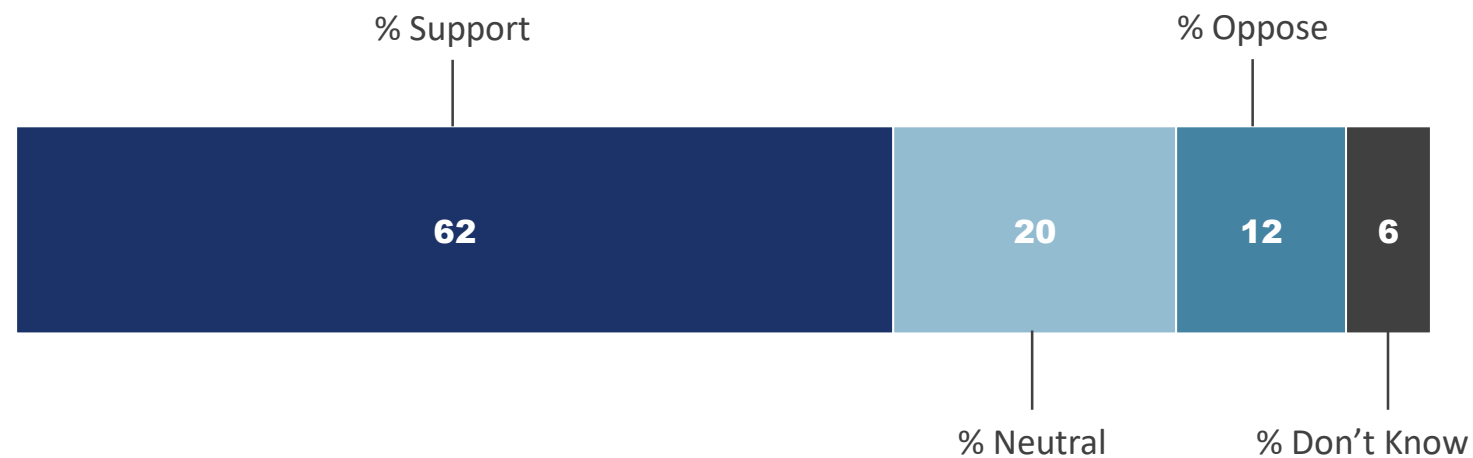
Many New Zealanders don't think the Government is currently doing enough to combat climate change. Three in five support more ambitious goals.



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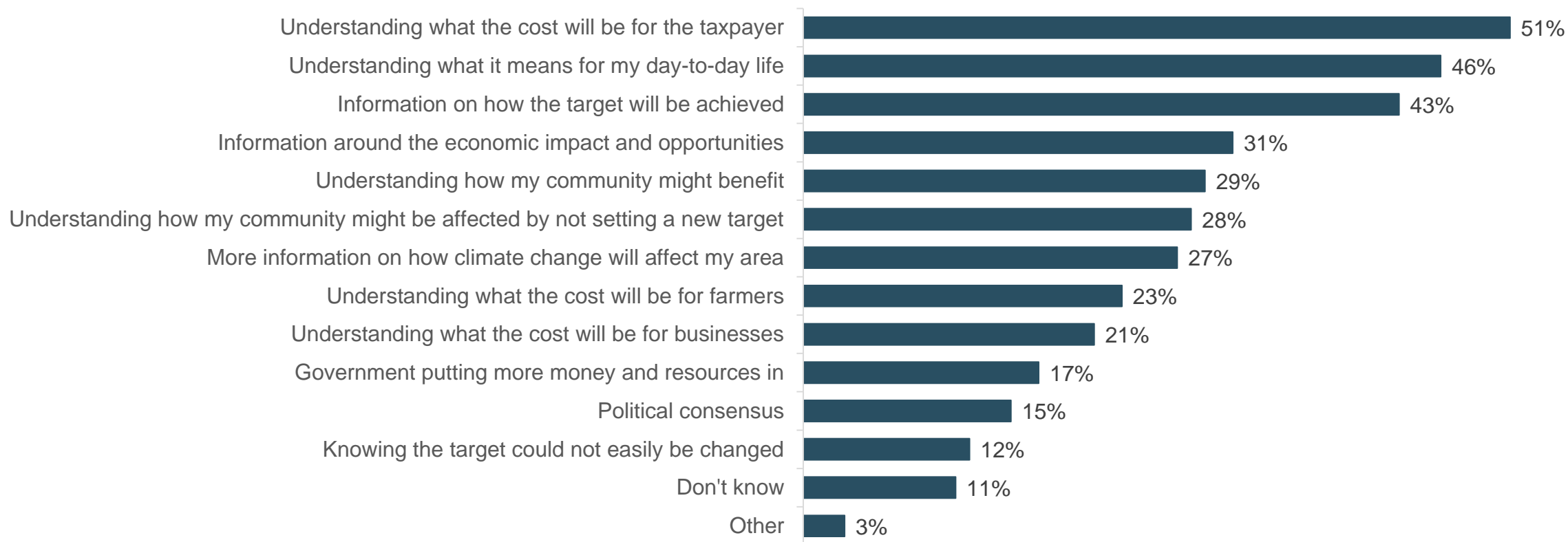
Support for a more ambitious emissions target



The primary barriers to supporting more ambitious emissions targets are doubts about the cost and the effects on people's daily lives.



What, if anything, would make a difference to how much you would support or oppose a more ambitious target?



Climate Change

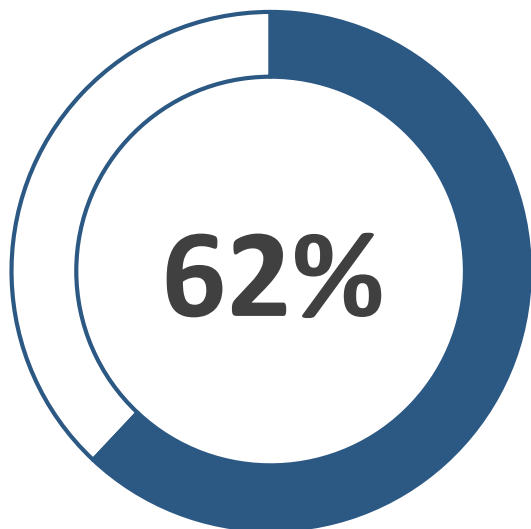
WILLINGNESS & COMMITMENT TO ACTION



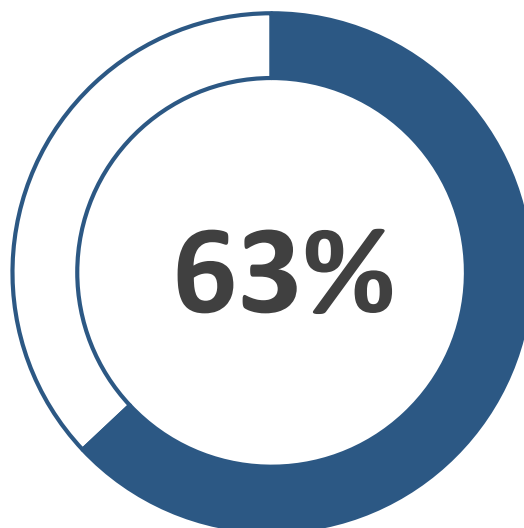
New Zealanders are optimistic we can make a difference, and we have a responsibility to do so.



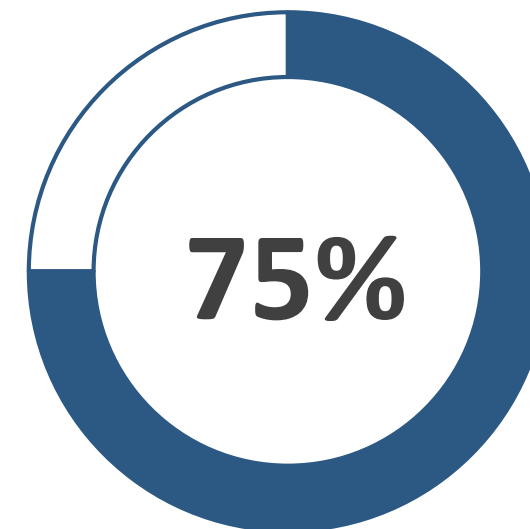
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are confident that together, New Zealanders can make a difference when it comes to climate change.



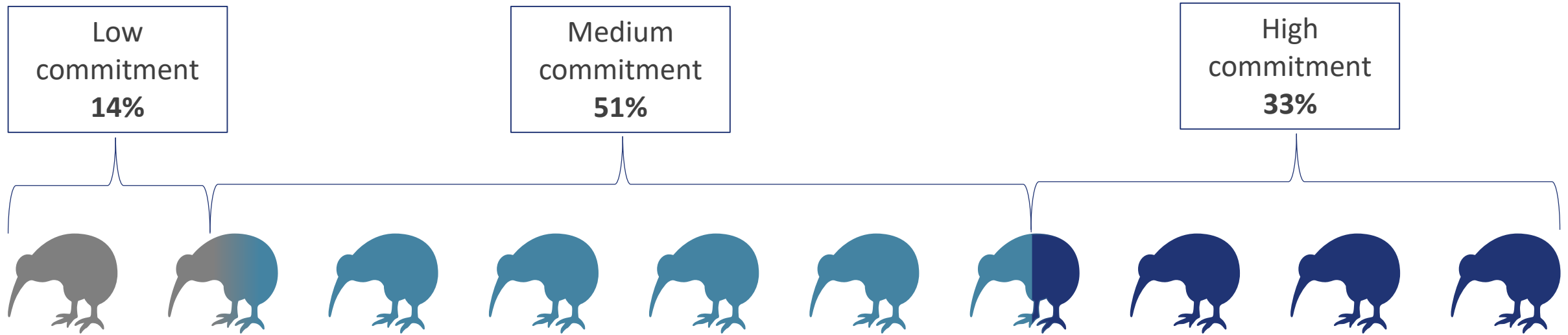
think that New Zealand is **NOT** too small a country to be able to do anything.



think that combatting climate change is the responsibility of all New Zealanders.

While we acknowledge there is a responsibility to act, only one in three New Zealanders are highly committed to doing so.

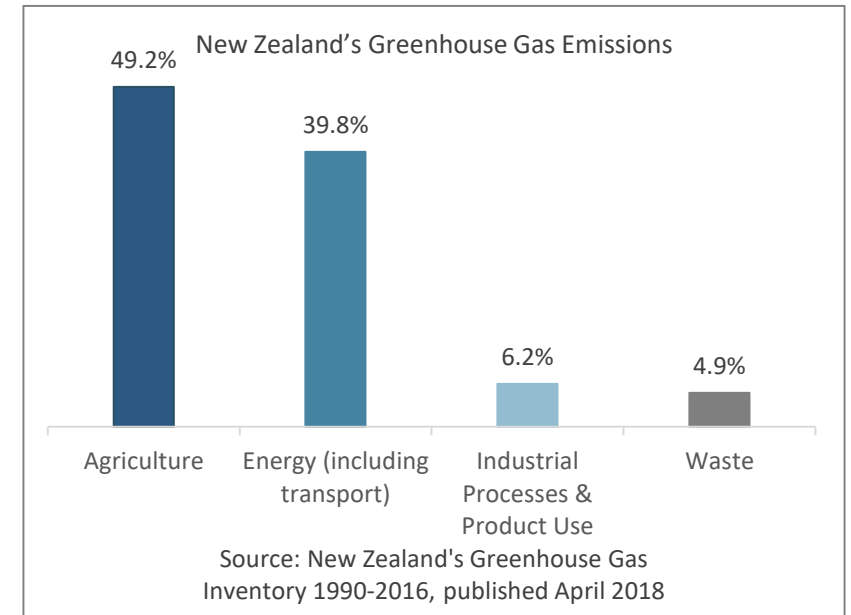
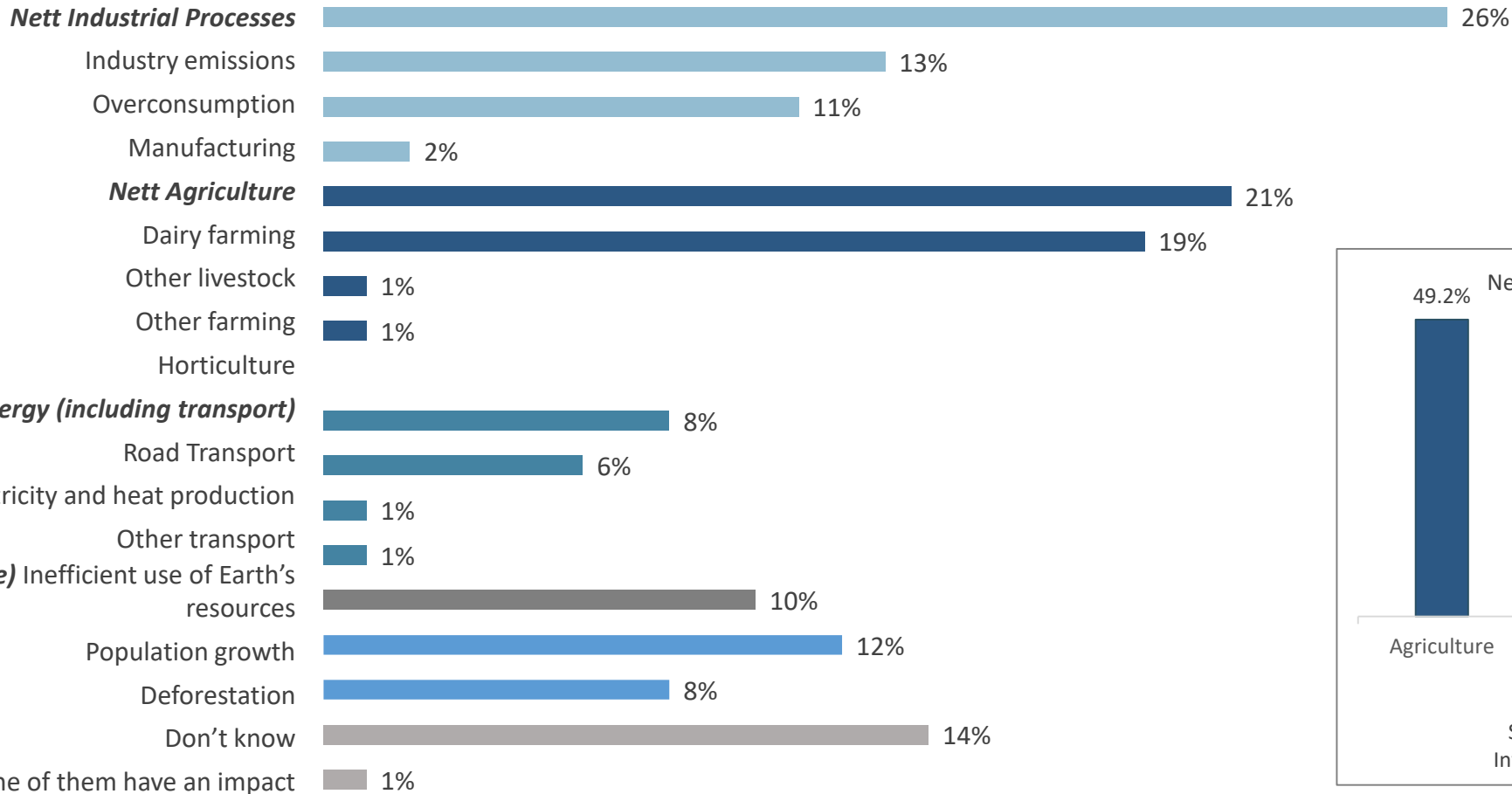
How would you rate your personal commitment to doing whatever you can to combat climate change?



One in five New Zealanders recognise that agriculture is the largest contributor to climate change in the country.



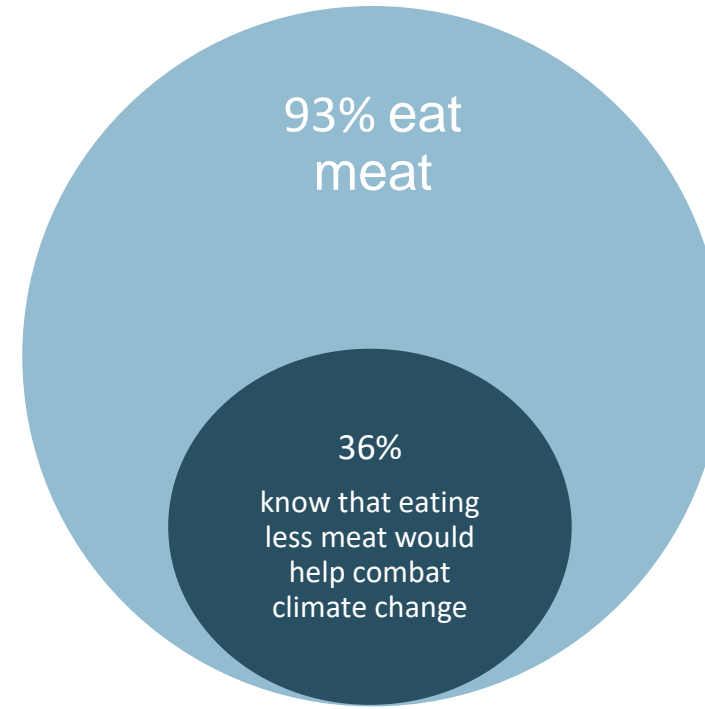
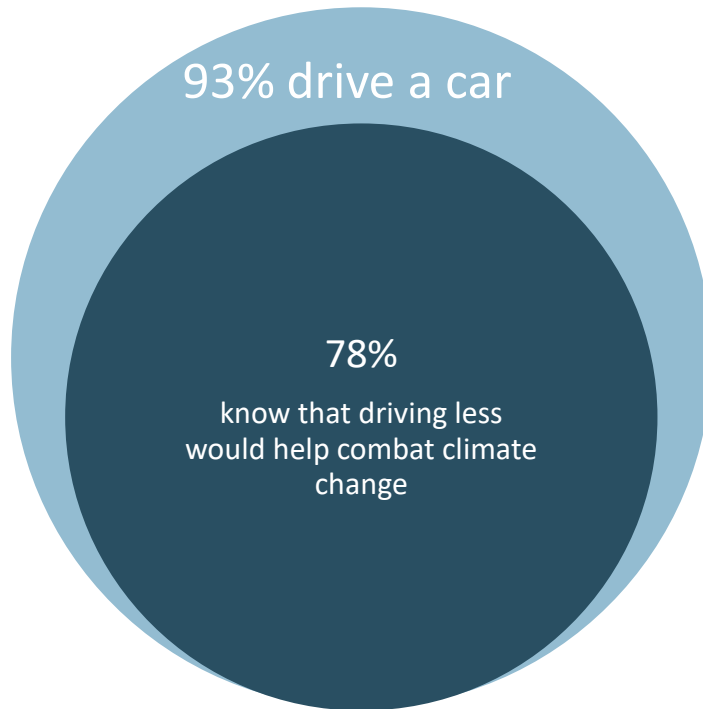
Which of the following has the most impact on New Zealand's impact to climate change?



Most New Zealanders know that driving less will reduce emissions, but only one third realise that eating less meat will help combat climate change.



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When it comes down to it, many are reluctant to change their behaviour to combat climate change.



26%
of drivers are
willing to drive
less



20%
of meat eaters
are willing to
eat less meat



7%
of rate payers
are willing to
pay more in
rates

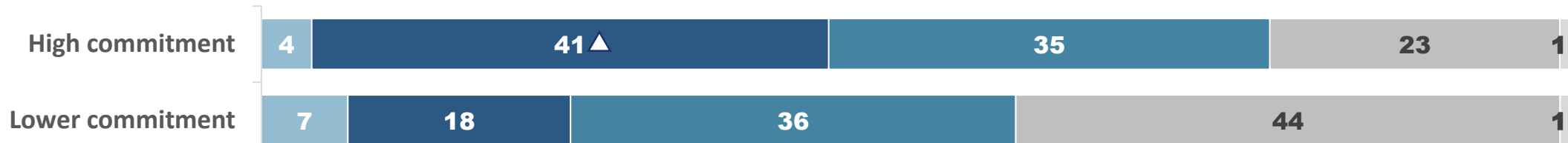


■ Extremely/very willing


■ Fairly willing

■ Not/not very willing

Those committed in principle are more willing to take action, but many highly committed people still need convincing.



▲ Significantly higher than Lower commitment ■ % doesn't eat meat/drive a car ■ % extremely/very willing ■ % fairly willing ■ % not/not very willing ■ % don't know



Water Quality

PERCEPTIONS & CONCERNS

Our waterways are where many of us play and relax. Three-quarters New Zealanders do so, with half enjoying swimming in our lakes and rivers.



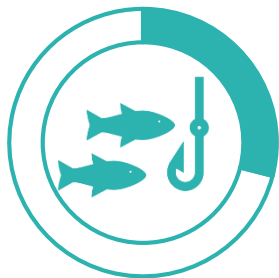
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“What activities do you do in, on, or around our lakes and rivers?”



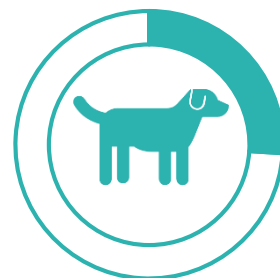
47%

Swim



29%

Fish / gather kaimoana



26%

Walk the dog



15%

Kayak



9%

Motorboat



7%

Walk/tramp/hike



5%

Water-skiing



1%

Picnicking



1%

**Sitting / relaxing / enjoying
scenery**



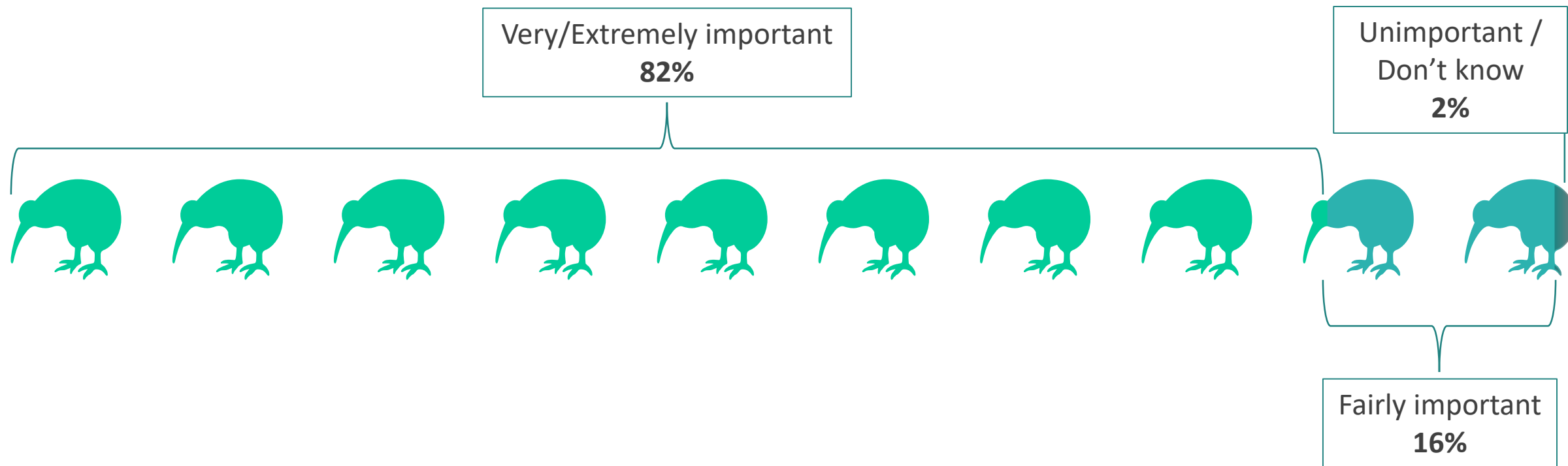
28%

Nothing / none of these

There is a recognition that our waterways are in need of attention. Eight in ten New Zealanders feel it is important to improve the quality of our water.



“How important or not is it to improve water quality in New Zealand’s lakes and rivers?”



Some groups are more likely to feel that it is important to improve water quality than others.



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Those more likely to feel improving water quality is important...



Lower income households (up to \$50k p.a.) (89%)



Women (86%)



NZ Māori (86%)



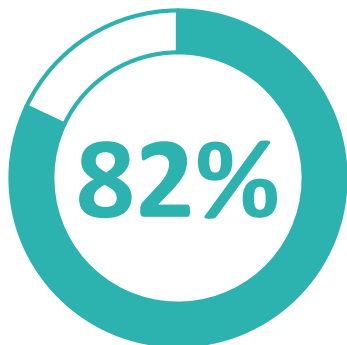
Aged 50+ (87%)



High connectedness with the environment (87%)



Have seen a lot about water quality in the media (87%)



82% of New Zealanders feel improving water quality is very/extremely important



Men (77%)



Asian New Zealanders (68%)



Aged 18-24 (71%)



Low connectedness with the environment (62%)



Have seen little about water quality in the media (72%)

Those less likely to feel improving water quality is important...

The public are divided on the quality of New Zealand's waterways. About a third think it is 'good', and a third think it is 'poor.'



"How would you describe the overall water quality in lakes and rivers in New Zealand?"

% Good Quality

% Poor Quality

36

22

38

5

Perceptions of water quality are consistent across New Zealanders who live in cities, towns, or rural areas.

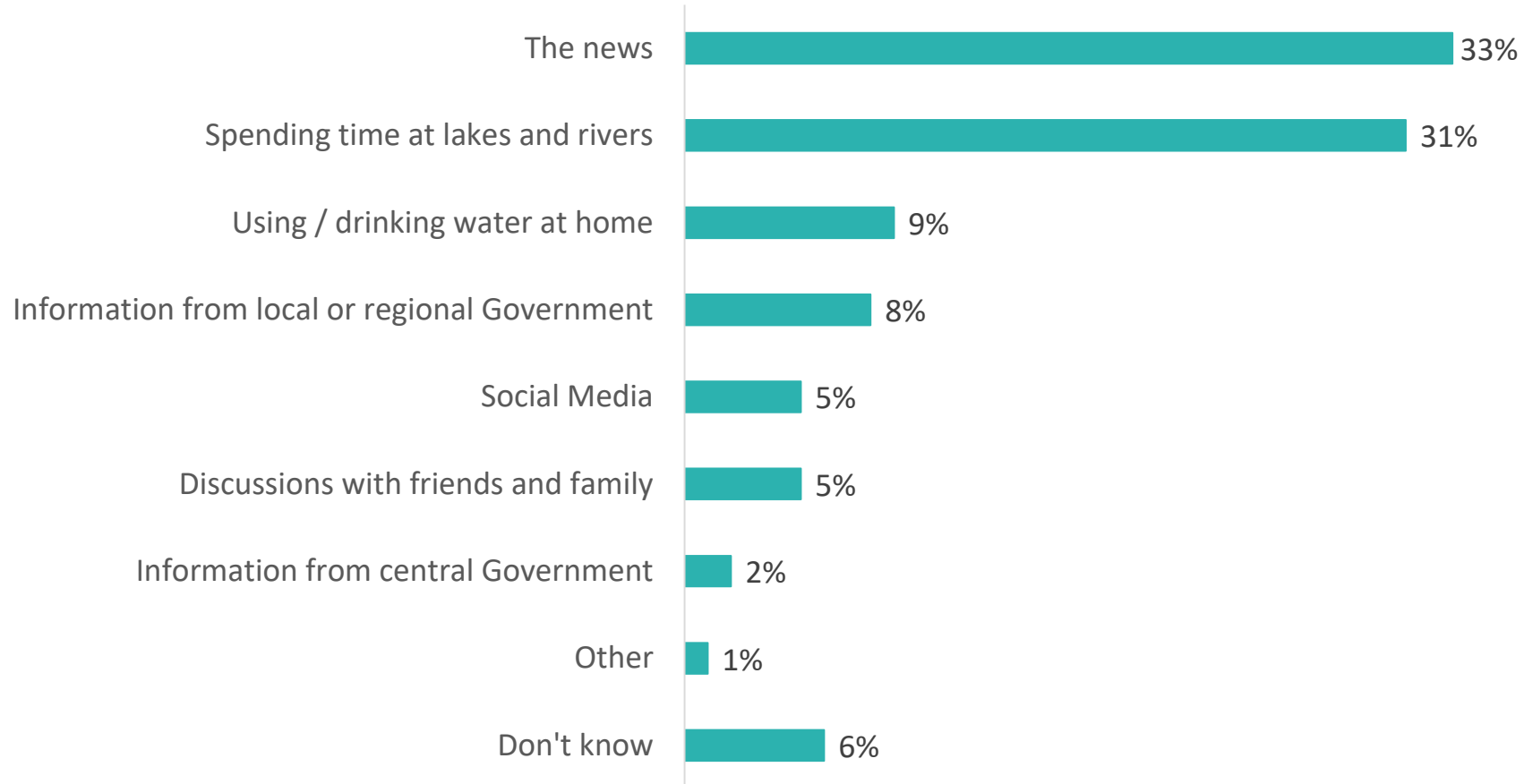
% Okay Quality

% Don't Know

The media, and spending time at lakes and rivers, are the biggest influencers of New Zealanders' opinions of water quality.



“Which of the following has been **most** helpful in forming this opinion?”



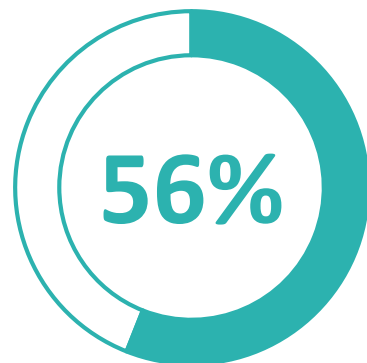
Those who judge water quality based on their own experience tend to be more positive, while those who rely on external sources tend to be more negative.



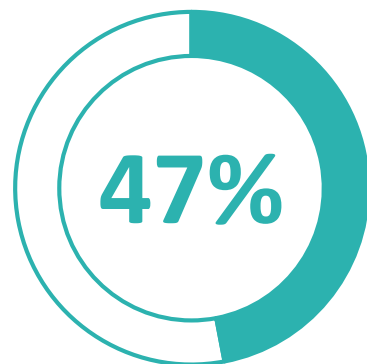
More likely than average (36%) to say water is of good quality...

More likely than average (38%) to say water is of poor quality...

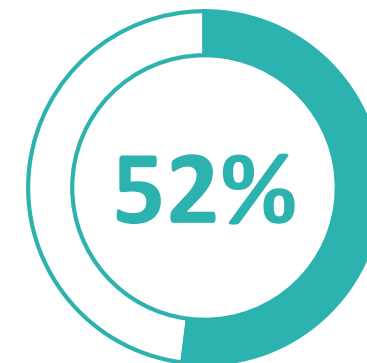
Those influenced by
*using / drinking water
at home*



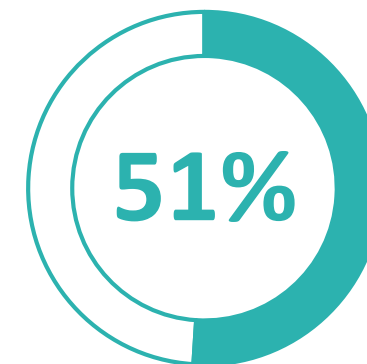
Those influenced by
*spending time at lakes
and rivers*



Those influenced by
*what they see or hear
in the news*



Those influenced by
*information from local
or regional government*



Water Quality

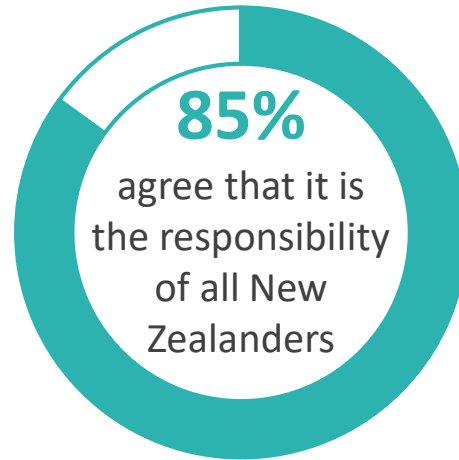
THE PATH TO IMPROVING WATER QUALITY



New Zealanders agree that improving water quality is everyone's responsibility. Moreover, they are optimistic we can make a difference and the nation is moving in the right direction.



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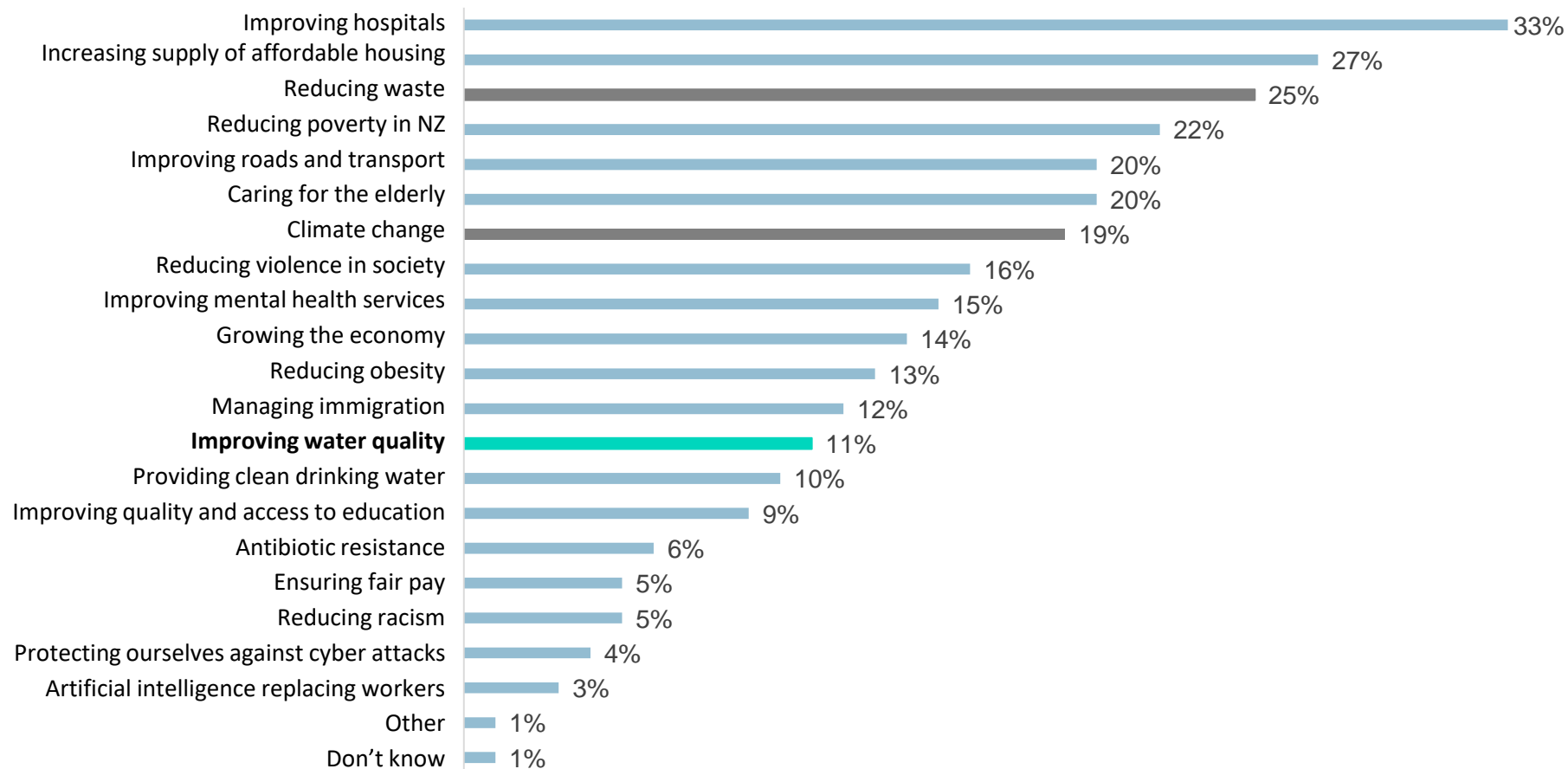
“Is New Zealand heading in the right or wrong direction in how it approaches improving water quality in New Zealand’s lakes and rivers?”



Improving water quality was not one of the top priorities when looking forward to the next 20 years, despite most New Zealanders saying it is important.

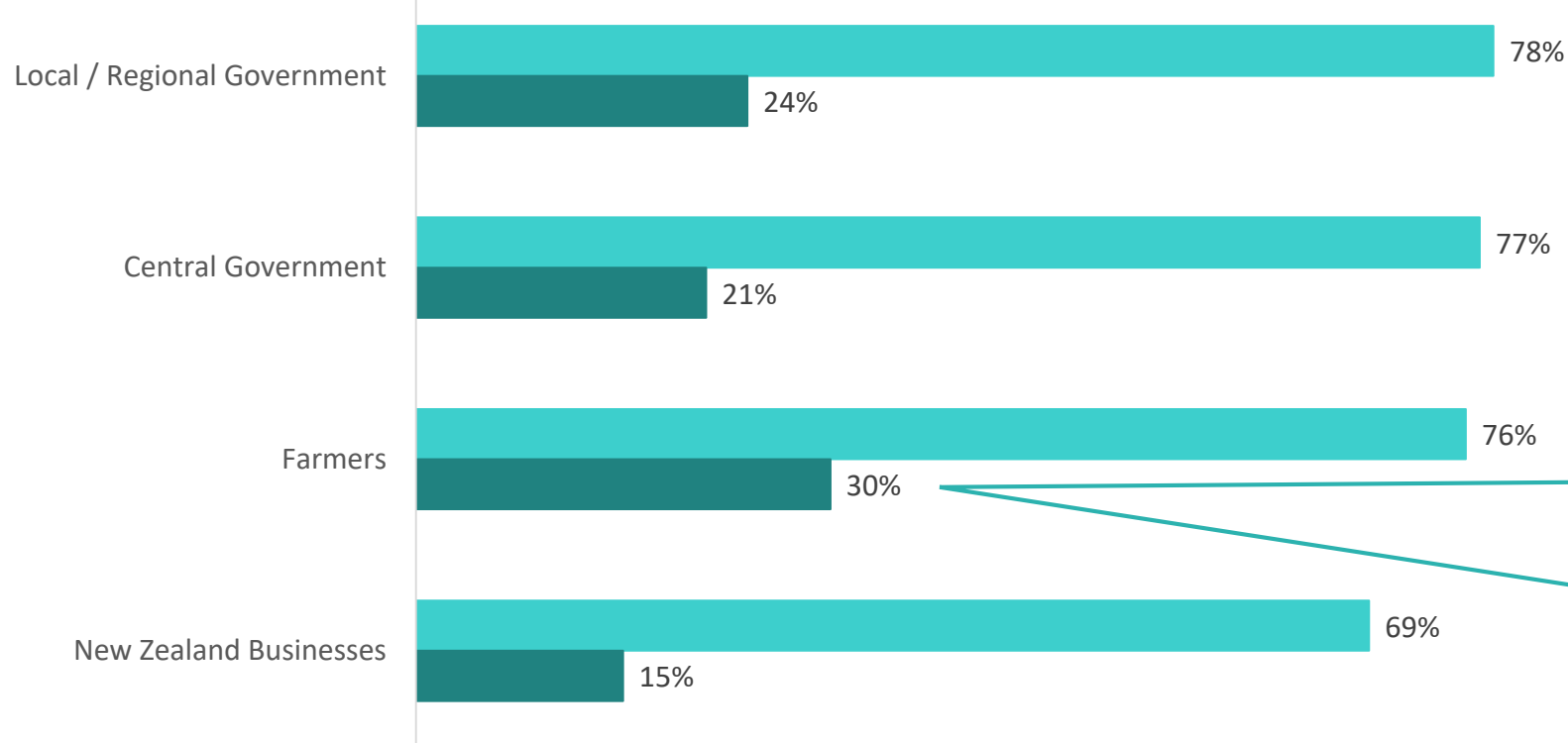


“What would you say are the most important challenges facing New Zealand in the next 20 years?”



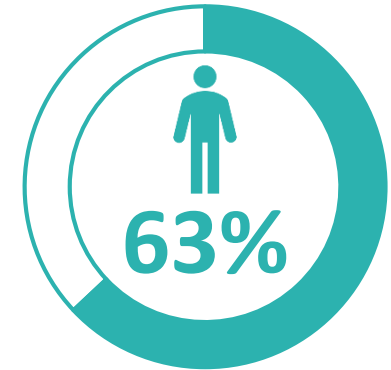
New Zealanders have high expectations of local and central government, businesses, and farmers for improving water quality, but few think that they are doing enough. They feel that, as individuals, they are less responsible.

% who feel each group has a high responsibility, and agreement on whether they are doing enough



■ % agree group has high responsibility ■ % agree group is doing enough

△ Significantly higher than New Zealand average

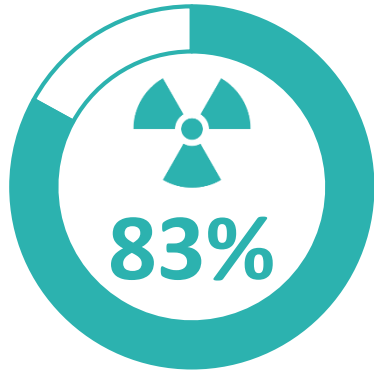


agree that individuals like them have a high responsibility



Those living in rural areas are more likely to say that **farmers** are doing enough

There is general consensus that polluters should pay. A majority also feel that the costs should be shared, but when it comes down to it, many ratepayers would be reluctant to contribute.



agree that polluters should pay for actions to improve water quality.



agree that everyone needs to share the cost of actions to improve water quality.



agree that ratepayers have a responsibility to pay for actions to improve water quality.

Water Quality

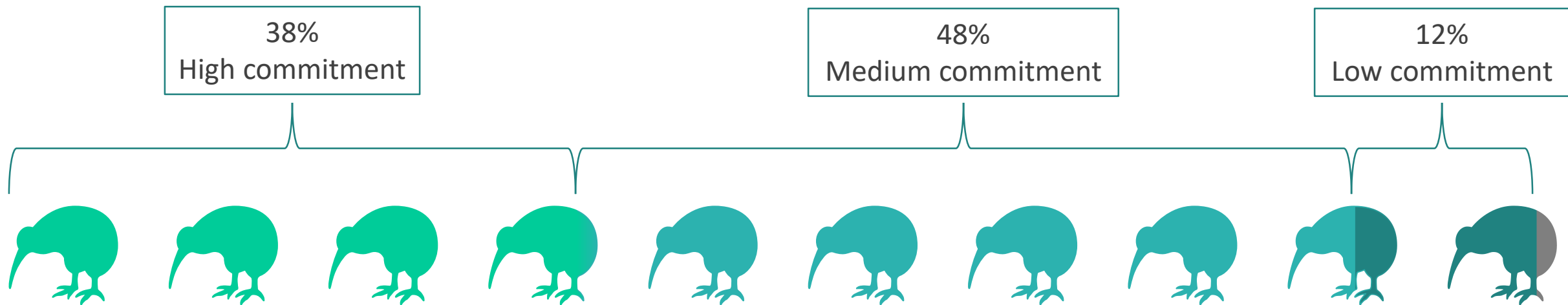
WILLINGNESS & COMMITMENT TO ACTION

Most New Zealanders are somewhat committed to improving water quality.
Just over a third are highly committed.



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“How would you rate your personal commitment to doing whatever you can to improving water quality in New Zealand’s lakes and rivers?”

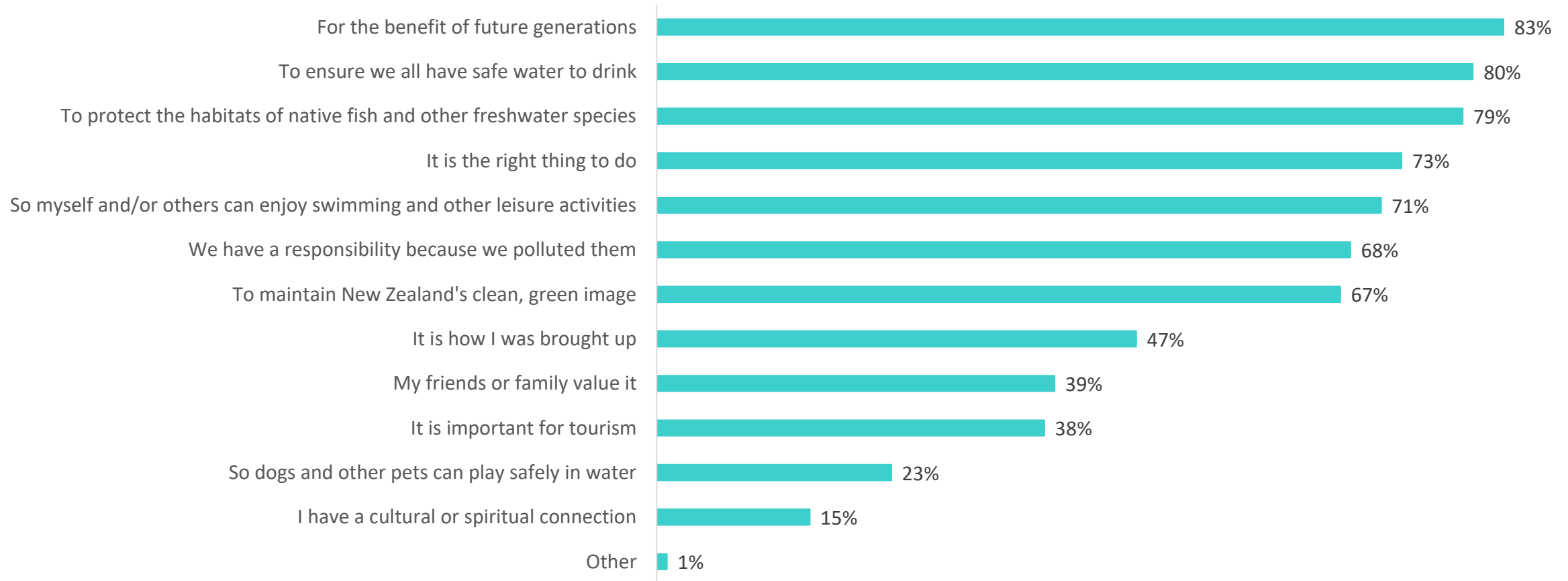


The main reasons New Zealanders are committed to improving water quality include benefits for future generations and freshwater habitat protection. Many also connect this with safe drinking water.



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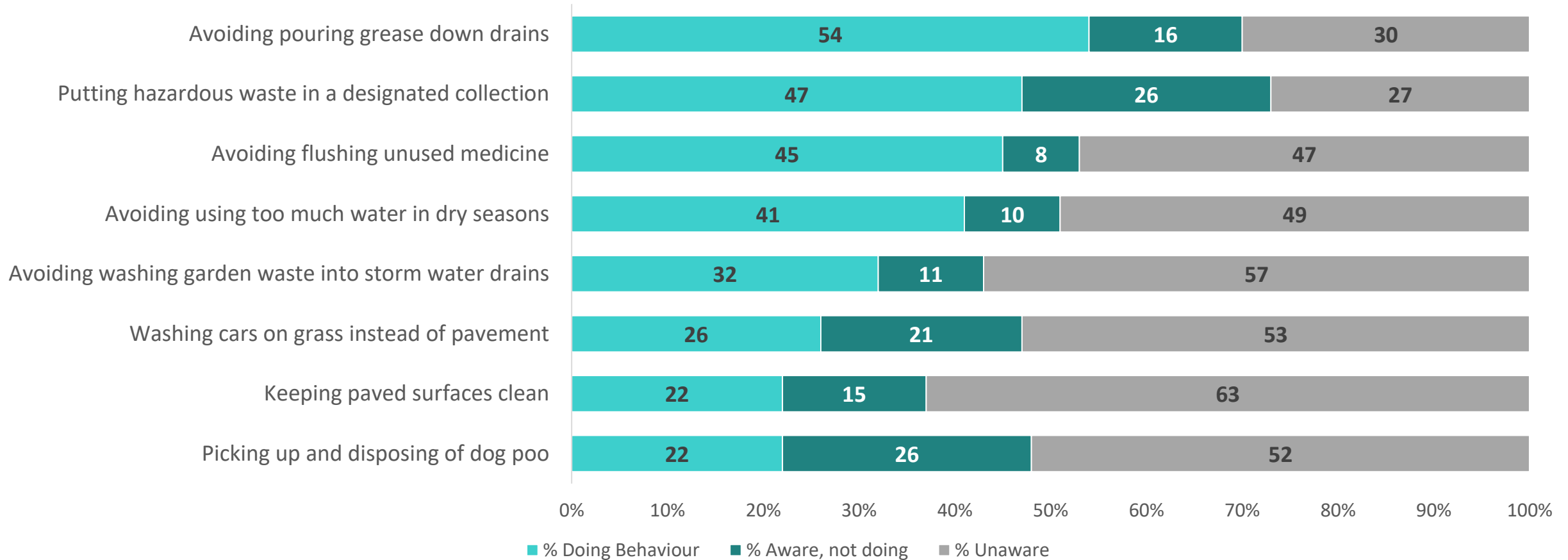
What are the main reasons you are committed to improving water quality in New Zealand's lakes and rivers?



Around half of New Zealanders are aware of, and actively perform, behaviours like avoiding pouring grease down drains, and putting hazardous waste in designated collections. Many New Zealanders fail to make the link between everyday behaviours and water quality (e.g. avoiding washing garden waste into drains).



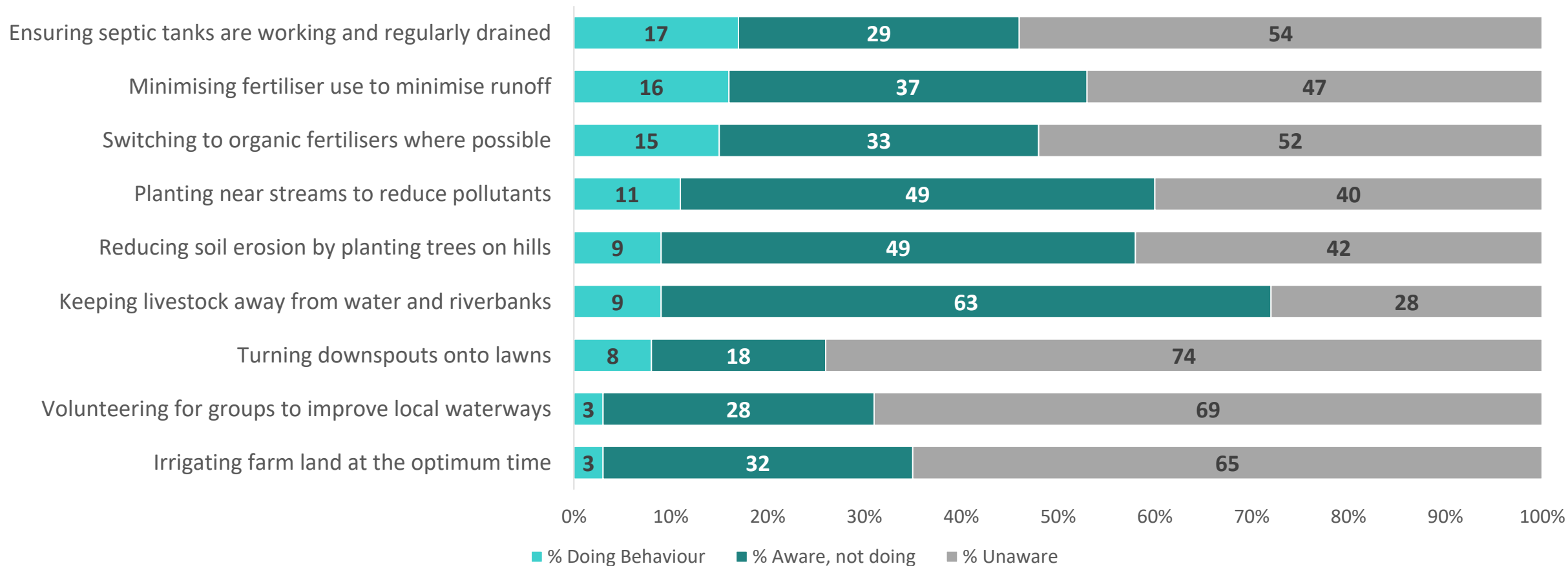
Awareness / Performance of behaviours to improve water quality



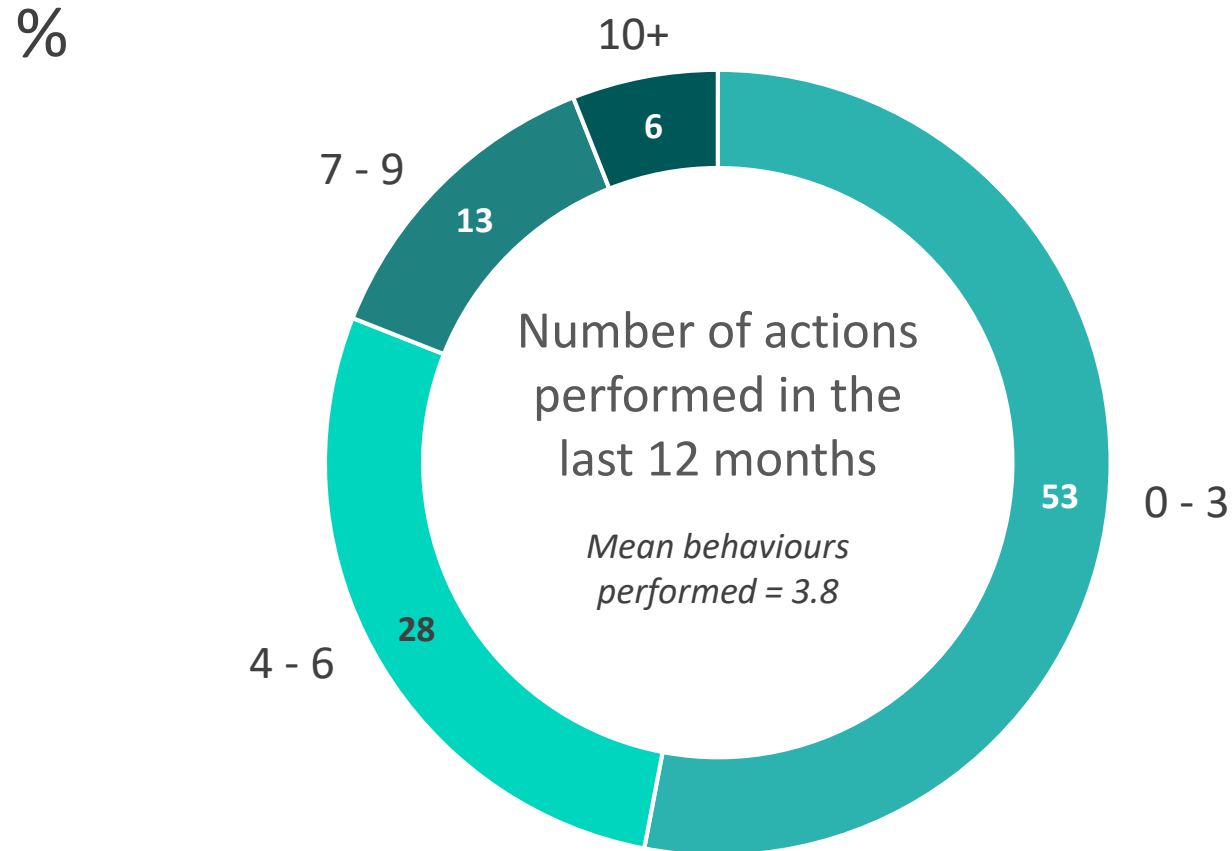
Many behaviours are performed by a small minority of New Zealanders. Some are due the agricultural nature of the task (such as keeping livestock away from waterways), but some are due to a general lack of awareness (such as turning downspouts onto lawns).



Awareness / Performance of behaviours to improve water quality



The majority of New Zealanders performed between zero and three actions in the last 12 months. Due to the nature of some of the actions, those living in rural areas are more likely to perform a higher number of them.



11%

of those living in a **city** performed 7+ actions in the last 12 months



18%

of those living in a **town** performed 7+ actions in the last 12 months



34% 

of those living in a **rural area** performed 7+ actions in the last 12 months

 Significantly higher than New Zealand average

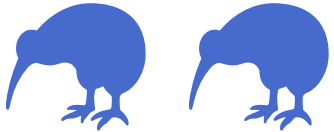
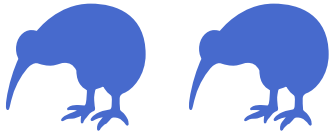
A large pile of waste, primarily plastic bags and debris, is the central focus. In the background, a yellow excavator is positioned on a dirt surface. The scene is set outdoors under a clear sky, with some industrial structures and cranes visible in the distance.

Waste
PERCEPTIONS & CONCERNS



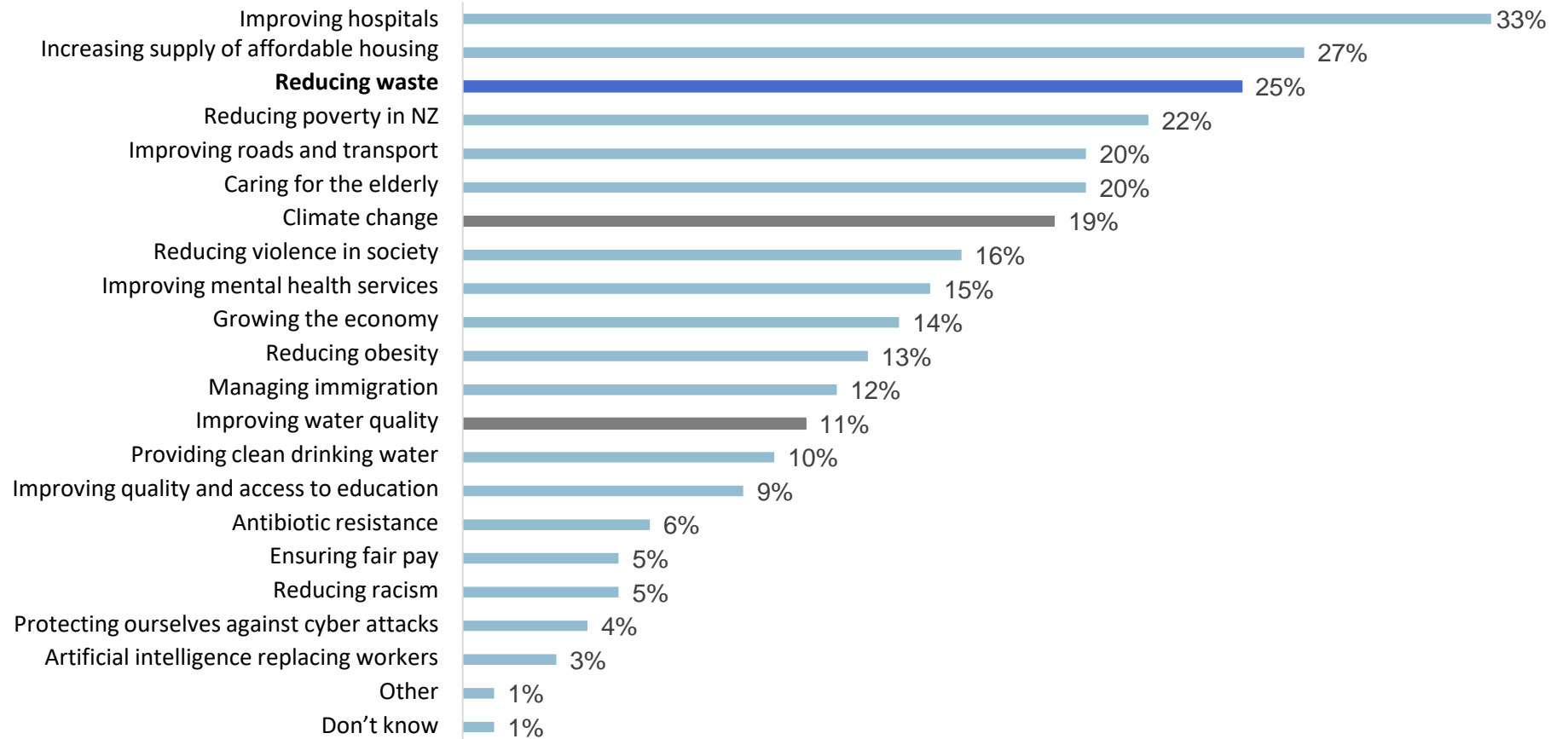
Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mo Te Taiao

Half of New Zealanders are highly worried about the impacts of waste on the environment. One quarter also rate it as an important issue heading into the future, placing it in the top three challenges.



50% of New Zealanders are very or extremely worried about the impacts of waste.

“What would you say are the most important challenges facing New Zealand in the next 20 years?”

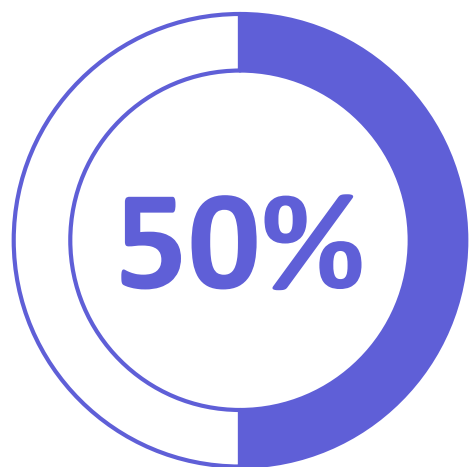


Some groups are more likely to be worried about the impacts of waste on the environment than others.



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

Those more likely than the average to be worried about the impacts of waste...



of New Zealanders are very/extremely worried about the impacts of waste



Women
(57%)



NZ Māori
(62%)



High connectedness with
the environment
(57%)



Have seen a lot about
waste in the media
(56%)

Those less likely than the average to be worried about the impacts of waste...



Men
(42%)



Asian
(38%)



Have no qualification /
secondary school only
(42%)



Low connectedness
with the environment
(23%)



Have seen little about
waste in the media
(38%)

Waste

THE PATH TO REDUCING WASTE



COLMAR BRUNTON

A Kantar Millward Brown Company



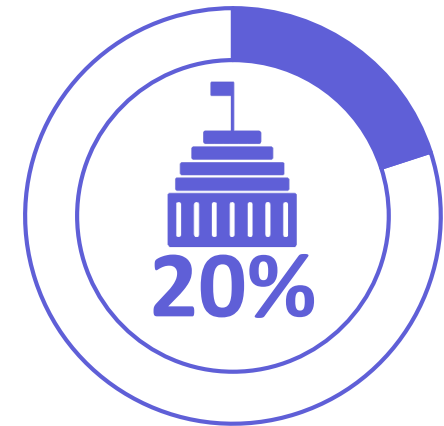
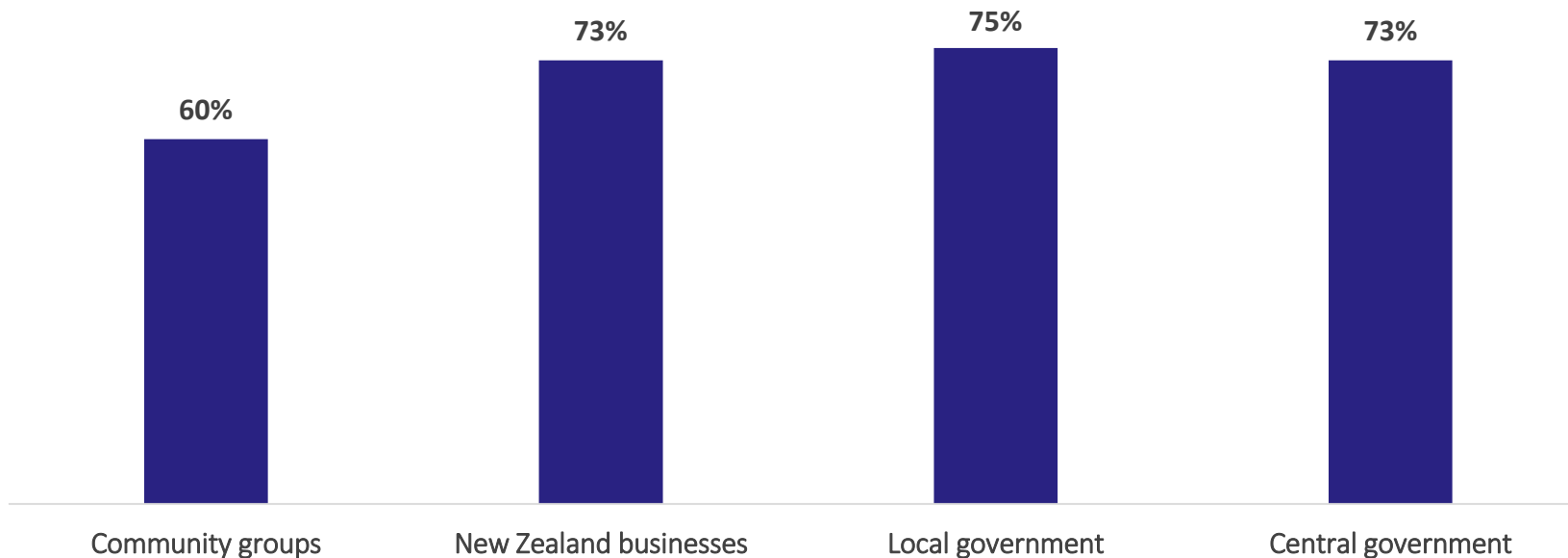
Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mo Te Taiao

Most New Zealanders feel that the country is moving in the right direction, and they have high expectations of the government. However, only a minority agree central government is doing enough.

“Is New Zealand heading in the right or wrong direction in how it approaches reducing the amount of waste we produce?”



Agreement that these groups have a high responsibility for reducing waste

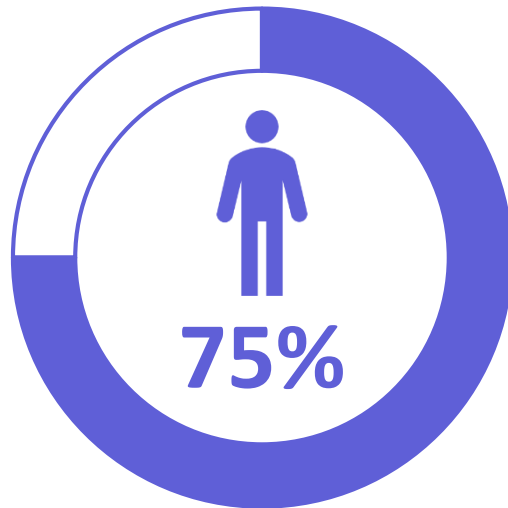


agree that Central Government and politicians are doing enough to reduce waste.

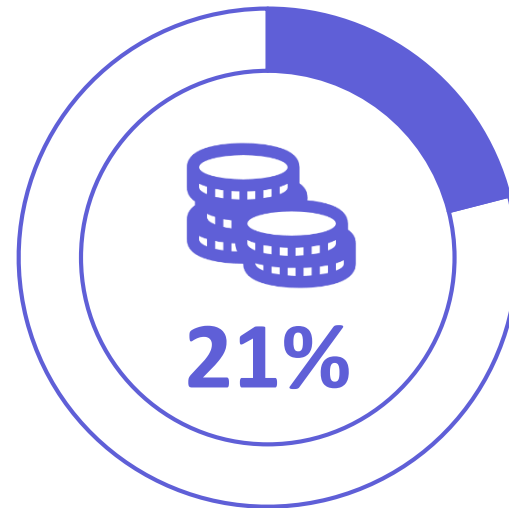
The majority of New Zealanders feel we all share a responsibility for reducing waste. However, only a minority agree that taxes will need to increase to tackle waste, and that they would be willing to pay that increase. This implies that New Zealanders think waste reduction can be achieved through behaviour change. They may not consider the wider infrastructure required for a circular economy.



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mo Te Taiao



Feel that individuals like them are highly responsible for reducing waste



agree that taxes will need to increase to significantly reduce waste.



agree that they are prepared to pay more in taxes to significantly reduce waste.

Waste

WILLINGNESS & COMMITMENT TO ACTION

A majority of New Zealanders rate themselves as being highly committed to both recycling and reducing the amount of waste they produce.

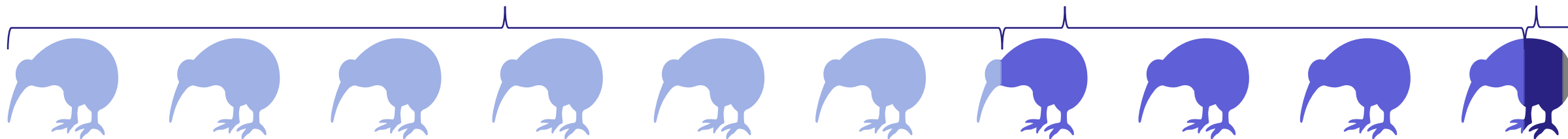


Commitment to recycling

High commitment
62%

Medium commitment
33%

Low commitment /
Don't know
5%

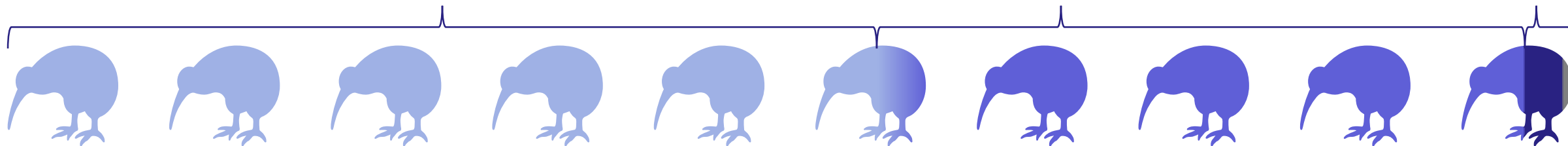


Commitment to reducing waste

High commitment
55%

Medium commitment
40%

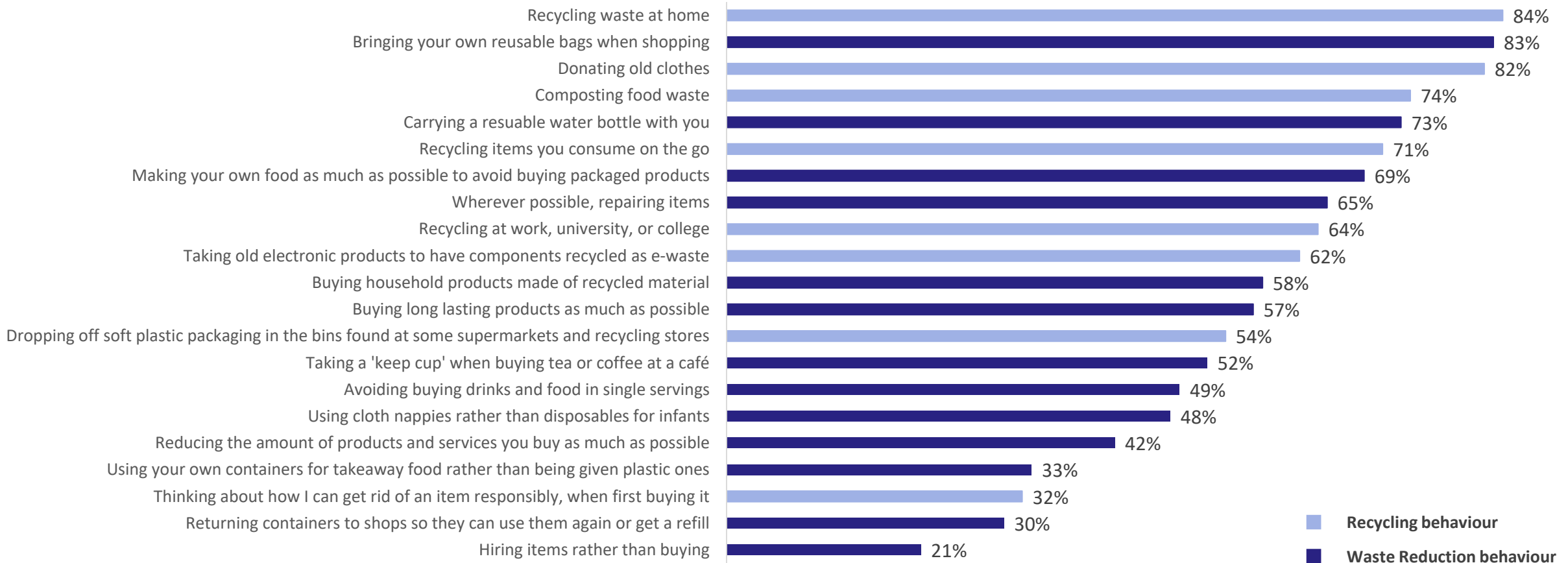
Low commitment /
Don't know
5%



Most New Zealanders are aware of behaviours such as recycling waste at home, or bringing their own reusable shopping bags. People are generally less likely to be aware of some of the ways they can reduce waste, than recycling.



“Which of the following did you realise was a way of reducing waste?”

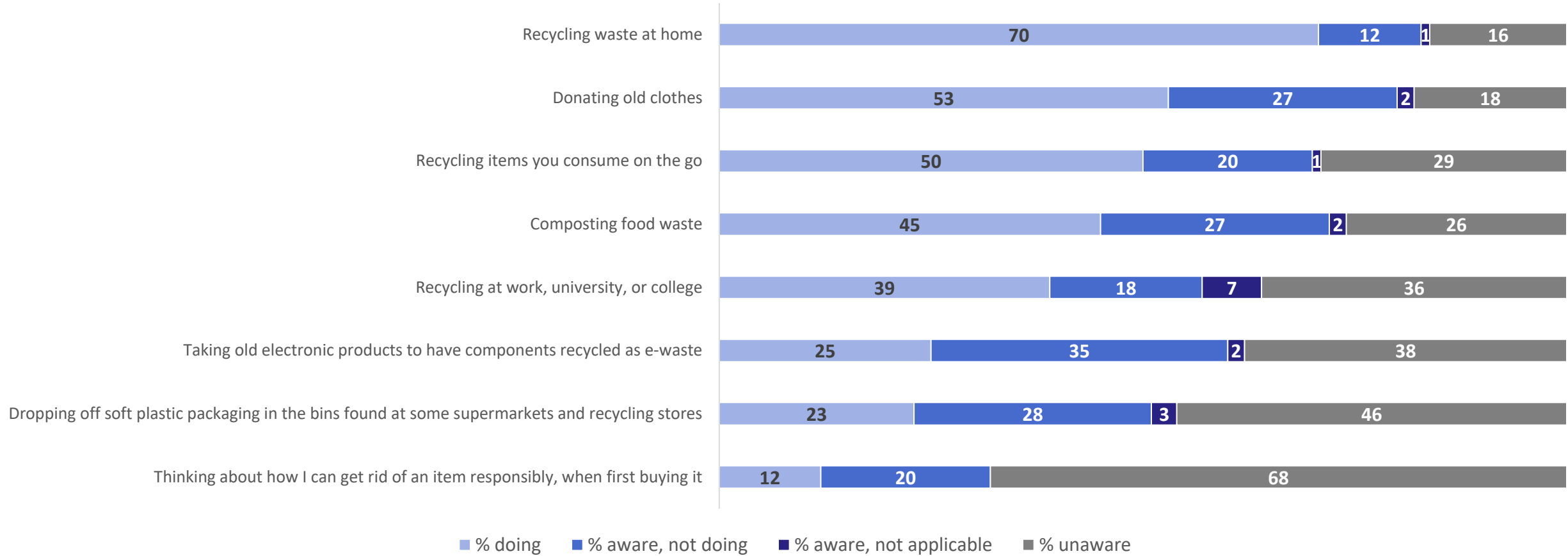


A majority of New Zealanders recycle at home, and over half donate old clothes. Few take products to e-waste facilities or think about how to recycle a product before purchasing it.



%

Performance of recycling behaviours

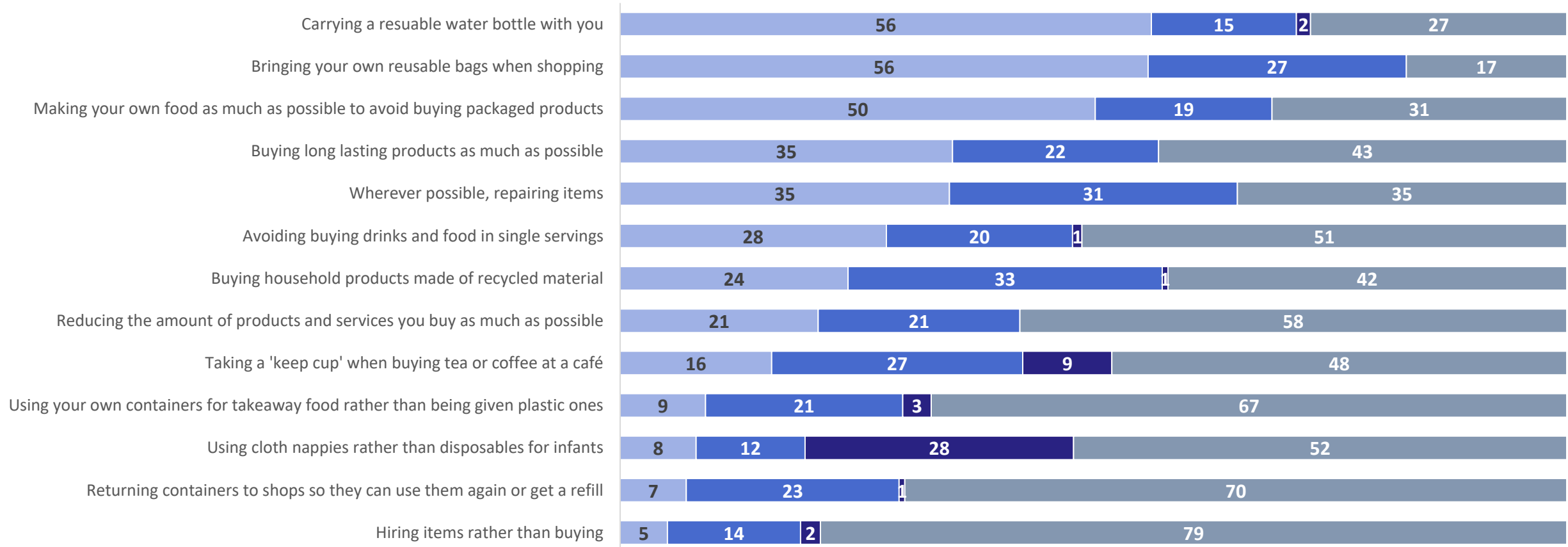


Over half of New Zealanders carry reusable water bottles and shopping bags with them. Few use cloth nappies (though for many this is not applicable), or opt to hire items over purchasing them.



%

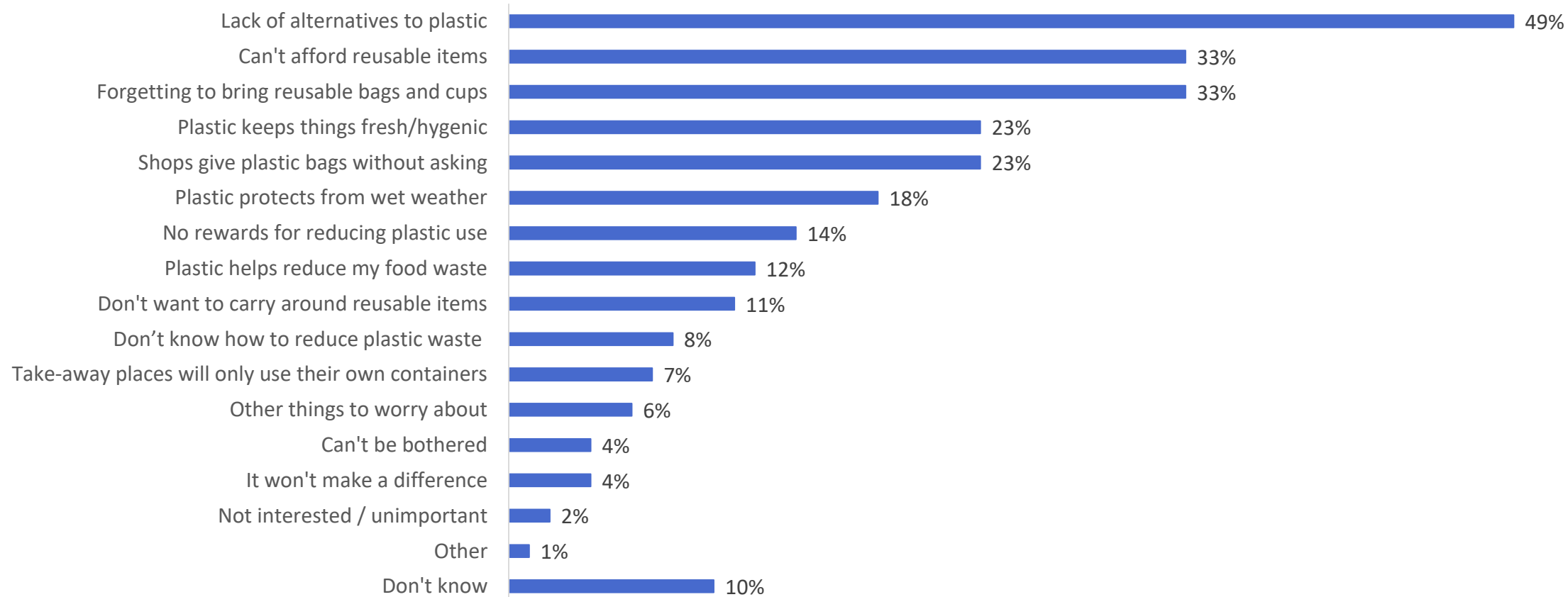
Performance of waste reduction behaviours



New Zealanders are most likely to attribute a lack of alternatives, the associated costs of reducing usage, and convenience to why they use plastic materials.



“What prevents you from reducing the amount of plastic waste you generate?”



“Be a global citizen. Act with passion and compassion. Help us make this world safer and more sustainable today and for the generations that will follow us. That is our moral responsibility.”

BAN KI-MOON, UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-
GENERAL 2007-2016



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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