

Faith and Belief

Te Patapātai Whakapono

Exploring the spiritual landscape in
Aotearoa New Zealand

Wilberforce Foundation

November 2023

Rārangi upoko

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Wāhinga kōrero

Foreword

Tēnā koutou katoa, ngā mihi nui kia a tātou.

Our society is not as disinterested in faith and spirituality as we might think. This is one of the key findings from the 2023 Faith and Belief Study. The decline in formal religious affiliation continues, but we are also seeing a rise in the breadth of spiritual practices and an increasing appetite, especially among younger people living in Aotearoa New Zealand, to explore issues of spirituality.

The 2023 Faith and Belief Study, commissioned by the Wilberforce Foundation and undertaken by McCrindle (an independent social research organisation), explores attitudes towards spirituality and religious faith in Aotearoa New Zealand. It examines our hopes, fears, and longings, the factors that draw us toward and away from faith, and our society's perceptions of Christianity, Jesus, and the church.

This study is undertaken at five-year intervals, coinciding with the nationwide Census, and uses quantitative and qualitative measures to ascertain the views of a representative group of people living in Aotearoa New Zealand towards faith and belief. The 2023 study incorporates many elements of the inaugural 2018 study, but it has been strengthened to ensure better demographic representation, deeper engagement of the Aotearoa New Zealand research community in the survey design, and greater use of open-ended and qualitative questions. The 2023 report also includes responses to the study's findings from church, academic, and social sector leaders.

This study does not offer solutions. Rather, we hope it will spark reflection and conversation among faith leaders, commentators, adherents, and academics, about the changing 'shape' of faith in Aotearoa New Zealand and what this might mean for our society – for local communities, families, and individuals.

Our thanks to the many contributors who helped to develop the study and especially to the 1009 people who responded to the survey.

Ngā mihi nui,

Chris Clarke

Chief Executive Wilberforce Foundation

Acknowledgements

This project benefited from the support, expertise, and guidance of a range of contributors. Wilberforce Foundation is grateful to each of these. In particular, we would like to thank Bradford Haami, Allen Hou, Peter Lineham, Lui Ponifasio, Lynne Taylor, Luke Fenwick, Karen Kemp, and Andrew Shepherd for their significant roles advising on this research. We are deeply grateful to the McCrindle team for their efforts designing and executing the project.

Te Mana o Te Reo Rangatira

Wilberforce Foundation would especially like to acknowledge the work of Junior Tana (Ngā Puhī) in translating the Faith and Belief Study into Te Reo Māori. The organisation wanted to make this option available to enable te iwi Māori to participate fully in this process and to honour the indigenous language of this land. We also would like to thank Emerson Rikiriki (Raukawa ki te Kaokaoroa o Pātetere) for his cultural guidance and support.

Hoaketanga

In December 2022, Wilberforce Foundation commissioned McCrindle to explore faith and spirituality in Aotearoa New Zealand. This study builds on the [research](#) conducted by McCrindle in partnership with Wilberforce in 2018.

Objectives

The key objectives of this research were to:

- Explore the social landscape on matters of spiritual beliefs, attitudes, and practices
- Understand better the impact of spirituality, faith, and faith-based communities in Aotearoa New Zealand
- Spark national conversations around faith and spirituality
- Support faith-based communities as they seek to engage their society.

Hakunetanga

The *Faith and Belief* report is the collation of quantitative and qualitative data gained through an online survey of 1,009 people aged 18-77 who live in Aotearoa New Zealand, representative by age, gender, and location, with a representative sample of those from a Māori and Pasifika background. The survey was in field from 19 May – 2 June 2023. At a sample size of 1,009, with the current population at 5,223,100, this study has a 3.08% margin of error at a 95% confidence level.

In addition to the survey, four focus groups were conducted with people from across Aotearoa New Zealand, similarly representing an array of cultural and religious backgrounds. Each group had between nine and ten participants. The groups each represented one

Method

generational cohort, namely Gen Z (aged 18-28), Gen Y (aged 29-43), Gen X (aged 44-58), and Baby Boomers (aged 59-77). These focus groups were conducted on 5 and 6 July 2023.

Graphs and rounding

Data labels on the graphs in this report have been rounded for simplicity. Some graphs may, therefore, sum to 99% or 101%. Any calculations where two data points have been added are based on raw data (not the rounded data labels on the graph), which have been rounded once combined.

Terminology and segmentation

Throughout the report, the total sample of respondents is referred to as 'people who live in Aotearoa New Zealand', or more simply as 'participants' or 'respondents'. In addition to this, several segmentation filters are applied to understand the results. The tables below display the number of respondents in each segmentation filter.

The following icons feature alongside quotes in the report to distinguish the generation with which they are associated.



Gen Z (aged 18-28)



Gen Y (aged 29-43)



Gen X (aged 44-58)



Baby Boomer (aged 59-77)

Which of the following ethnicities do you identify with? (multiple options can be selected)*

Option	%	# of respondents
New Zealand European/Pākehā	62%	626
Māori	18%	179
Asian (incl. Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Other Asian)	12%	123
Pacific Peoples	9%	88
Other European (not reported on due to small sample size)	6%	62
Other ethnicity (not reported on due to small sample size)	3%	31

* Use caution when interpreting these results due to small sample sizes for the various ethnic groups

Which of the following best describes the religion you currently practice or identify with?

Option	%	# of respondents
Religious (incl. Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Māori spirituality, beliefs, and philosophies, Sikhism)	49%	492
Spiritual but not religious (I have spiritual beliefs but I don't identify with any religion)	19%	189
Non-religious (None - I do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief)	30%	301

Tuhinga whakarāpopoto

Executive summary

Participants feel satisfied and hopeful about their relationships and close community

Aotearoa New Zealand society is one that prioritises family and community connection. More than half of respondents are extremely or very satisfied with their family and social wellbeing (53%) and their personal relationships (53%). Other areas in which participants report a relatively high level of satisfaction in life include their spiritual wellbeing (48%), sense of purpose (46%), and mental wellbeing (43%).

The areas of life in which participants are less satisfied include their physical wellbeing (29%), work and career (38%), and sense of financial security (21%).

When thinking about the next three years, participants feel most hopeful in areas that align with where they feel most satisfied, particularly their family and social wellbeing (92%) and personal relationships (90%). This contrasts with areas in which respondents are feeling most hopeless: the state of the planet (37%), Aotearoa New Zealand society (32%), and their own financial security (20%).

When asked about what they long for in life, almost three in five participants (58%) long for a hope for the future. This is followed by a desire to increase their wealth and prosperity (52%) and for a sense of security in an uncertain world (47%).

The most common fear identified in this study is the fear of losing a loved one (62%), further highlighting the value people who live in Aotearoa New Zealand put on close relationships. This is followed by a fear of not having enough money to live (53%), illness (47%), and crime (41%).

There is openness to spirituality

People who live in Aotearoa New Zealand show an openness to spirituality. Spiritual beliefs are not just held by those who identify with a religious faith. They are held broadly across society, with 81% agreeing with at least one statement that indicates a form of spiritual belief. When participants are asked which statement most resonates with their spiritual beliefs, the most commonly shared statements include a belief that there is an ultimate purpose and meaning in life (37%), a belief that there is one god (35%), and a belief in a spiritual realm (27%). Almost one in five (19%) say they don't hold any form of spiritual belief.

When asked about their agreement with other sets of statements, participants are most likely to strongly or somewhat agree that they believe in a higher being or God (45%), that they believe in life after death (44%), or that they have witnessed situations that have led them to believe there is something beyond the material world (43%).

Personal challenges spur people to explore faith and spirituality

Three in four participants (75%) say they would be attracted to investigate faith or spirituality further if they experienced a personal trauma or significant life change. In fact, for many who have been prompted to think about faith or spiritual matters, a death in the family (35%) or a life crisis (31%) has been the catalyst.

Community is central in supporting faith and spirituality

Many participants say they would consider investigating faith or spirituality because of people in their lives. Two-thirds of respondents (66%) would be attracted to think further about these aspects of life if they were to see people who live out a genuine faith or spirituality first-hand. In fact, 33% have been prompted to think about faith because of

conversations with people such as their friends, neighbours, or colleagues.

The value of relationships in supporting faith and spirituality is further demonstrated by the two in five respondents (39%) who turn to family at least weekly for help in this area of life, followed closely by 34% who turn to friends.

Friends and family are seen to have a positive influence on spiritual development for many in Aotearoa New Zealand. 60% of respondents say their parents have positively impacted this aspect of their life. Friends (59%) and other family members (57%) are also perceived to play a positive role in individuals' spiritual development.

Almost half identify with a religion

Almost half of participants (49%) practice or identify with a religion, with Christianity being the most common religious identity across the generations (39% Gen Z, 31% Gen Y, 34% Gen X, 50% Baby Boomers). Of those who identify with a religious faith, 46% are extremely or often engaged in the practice of their religion. Gen Z are the least likely generation to identify with no religion or spirituality (25% cf. 31% Gen Y, 34% Gen X, 27% Baby Boomers).

While Baby Boomers are the most likely to identify as religious (58% cf. 40% Gen X, 46% Gen Y, 52% Gen Z), they are also the least likely to be extremely or often engaged in the practice of their religion (38% cf. 46% Gen X, 53% Gen Y, 48% Gen Z). The younger years are formative for developing religious and spiritual identity, with three in five (60%) continuing in some way to follow the religious beliefs with which they grew up.

There is warmth towards Christianity, Jesus, and the church, but there is room to improve

Attitudes towards Christianity have remained consistent over the past five years. When asked about their attitudes towards Christianity, 31% of respondents identify as Christian, and 26% feel warm towards Christianity (cf. 31% and 26% respectively in

2018). Similar comparisons to 2018 are found in those who are neutral towards Christianity (13% cf. 12% 2018) and those who feel cool towards Christianity (30% cf. 31% 2018).

Two-thirds of participants (67%) have heard of Jesus and know either a significant or moderate amount about his life. For those who are familiar with Jesus, sentiments towards him are positive, with more than half of participants describing Jesus as loving (57%), caring (54%), and kind (51%).

Christians are similarly viewed in a positive light. Nine in ten respondents (91%) know at least one Christian, and their most common descriptors for Christians are positive: caring (58%), kind (55%), and faithful (53%). Still, Christians are more likely to have negative descriptors associated with them than Jesus is. More than one in five participants perceive the Christians they know as opinionated (21%) and judgemental (21%).

The impact of local churches is more likely to be described as positive (38%) than negative (6%). However, more than one in four (26%) respondents don't know the churches near them well enough to answer. Churches and Christian organisations are most valued in society for offering financial assistance or food relief programs (72% highly/somewhat valued), looking after people who are homeless (72%), providing disaster relief assistance (72%), and providing a place for community (71%).

While respondents acknowledge many positive impacts of the church in Aotearoa New Zealand and churches in their local communities, there are areas for improvement. Participants believe the church can continue to grow in transparency and in working to attract a new generation of believers. When respondents were asked what aspects of Christianity they find problematic or challenging, 57% reported an issue they find to be a barrier to engagement with Christianity or Christians. For some participants, Christian beliefs and values simply do not align with their own. Many, however, point to a significant mismatch between Christian beliefs and values and how they see Christians living these out in the world.

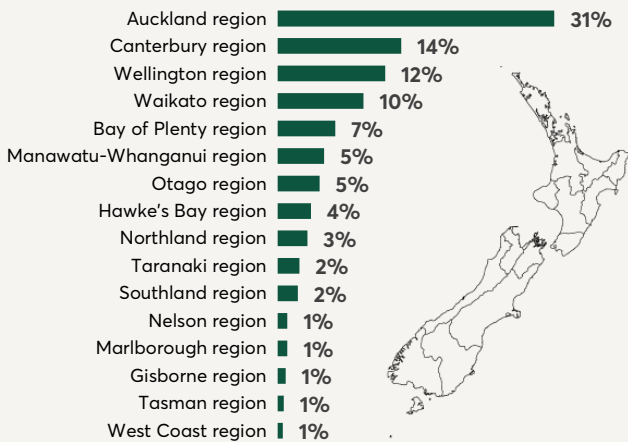
Raraunga whakarōpū

Demographic summary

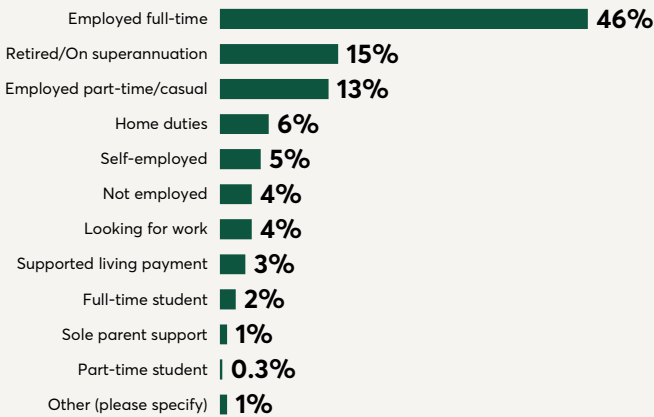
Are you male or female?



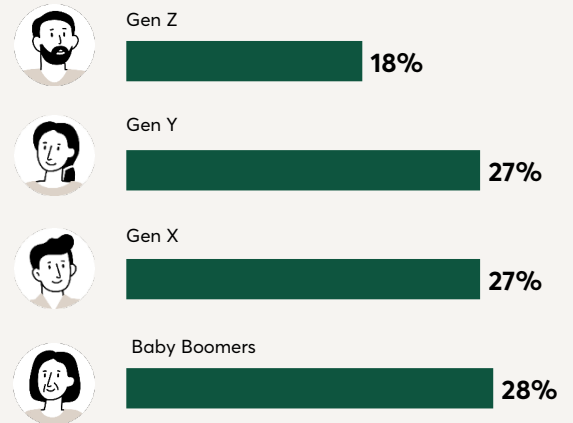
Where do you usually live?



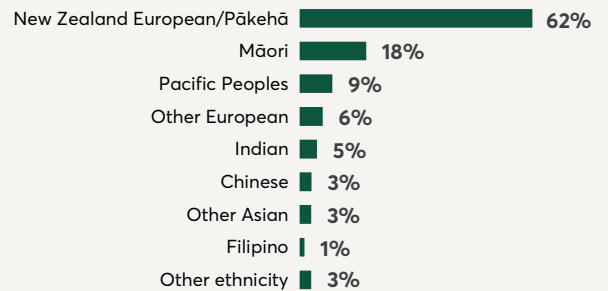
Which of the following best describes your employment status?



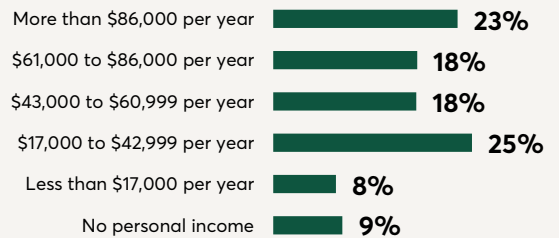
What age will you be in 2023?



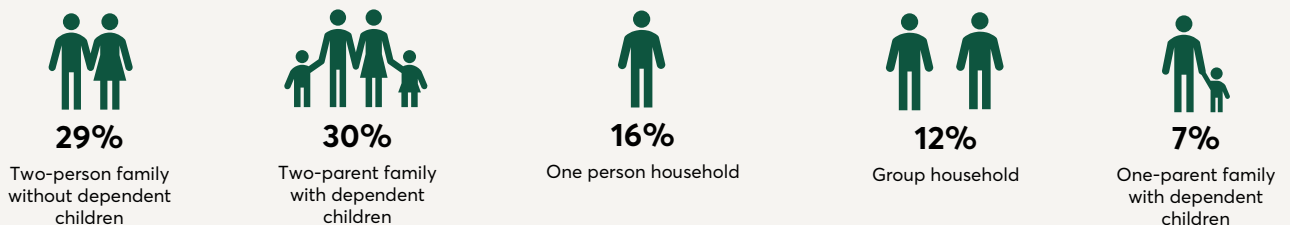
Which of the following ethnicities do you identify with?



Which of the following best represents your total personal annual income? (i.e., before taxes)



What type of household do you currently live in?



Ngā wawata, ngā wehi me ngā ingoingo

Hopes, fears, and longings

Social relationships are key for people living in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Building strong, close relationships is a priority for people living in Aotearoa New Zealand. The top areas of life satisfaction are family and social wellbeing (53%) and personal relationships (53%). Building connections beyond these close relationships is more challenging, however, with having a sense of community being the third lowest area of life satisfaction (35%).

Those who are religious are more likely to be extremely or very satisfied with their sense of community than those who are not (43% cf. 28% spiritual but not religious, 29% non-religious).



"Happiness comes from building a strong community around me, my friends and family, just having someone to lean on and having people, because I'm a very sociable person, so I just like having people around all the time. I get really bored alone." Gen Z

Participants are also reasonably satisfied with their sense of meaning and wellbeing. More than two in five respondents are extremely or very satisfied with their spiritual (48%) and mental wellbeing (43%), and 46% are satisfied with their sense of purpose in life – however their purpose might be defined, and however difficult it might be to discover.



"I think everybody's life probably should have purpose, but I don't know that everybody has found their purpose." Gen X



"The purpose in life for me is to do God's will." Baby Boomer

Baby Boomers are more likely to be satisfied with their spiritual wellbeing than their younger counterparts (61% extremely/very satisfied cf. 43% Gen X, 46% Gen Y, 38% Gen Z).

In fact, the younger generations are the least likely to be extremely or very satisfied across many of the areas tested. This gap is most evident in satisfaction with mental wellbeing, where just 30% of Gen Z are extremely or very satisfied (cf. 39% Gen Y, 37% Gen X, 62% Baby Boomers).

Māori (38%), Pacific Peoples (39%), and Pākehā (41%) are less satisfied with their mental wellbeing, compared to people of Asian ethnicity (54%). This response for mental wellbeing represents the greatest satisfaction gap between ethnicities.

The areas of life in which participants are least likely to be extremely or very satisfied include physical wellbeing (29%) and other aspects of life over which respondents have less agency, like financial security (21%) and employment (38%).



"I would say we're socially doing better, like we're much more accepting of fringe groups, and that sort of stuff, but economically, the cost of living is pretty wild." Gen Y

Participants are most hopeful about family and personal relationships

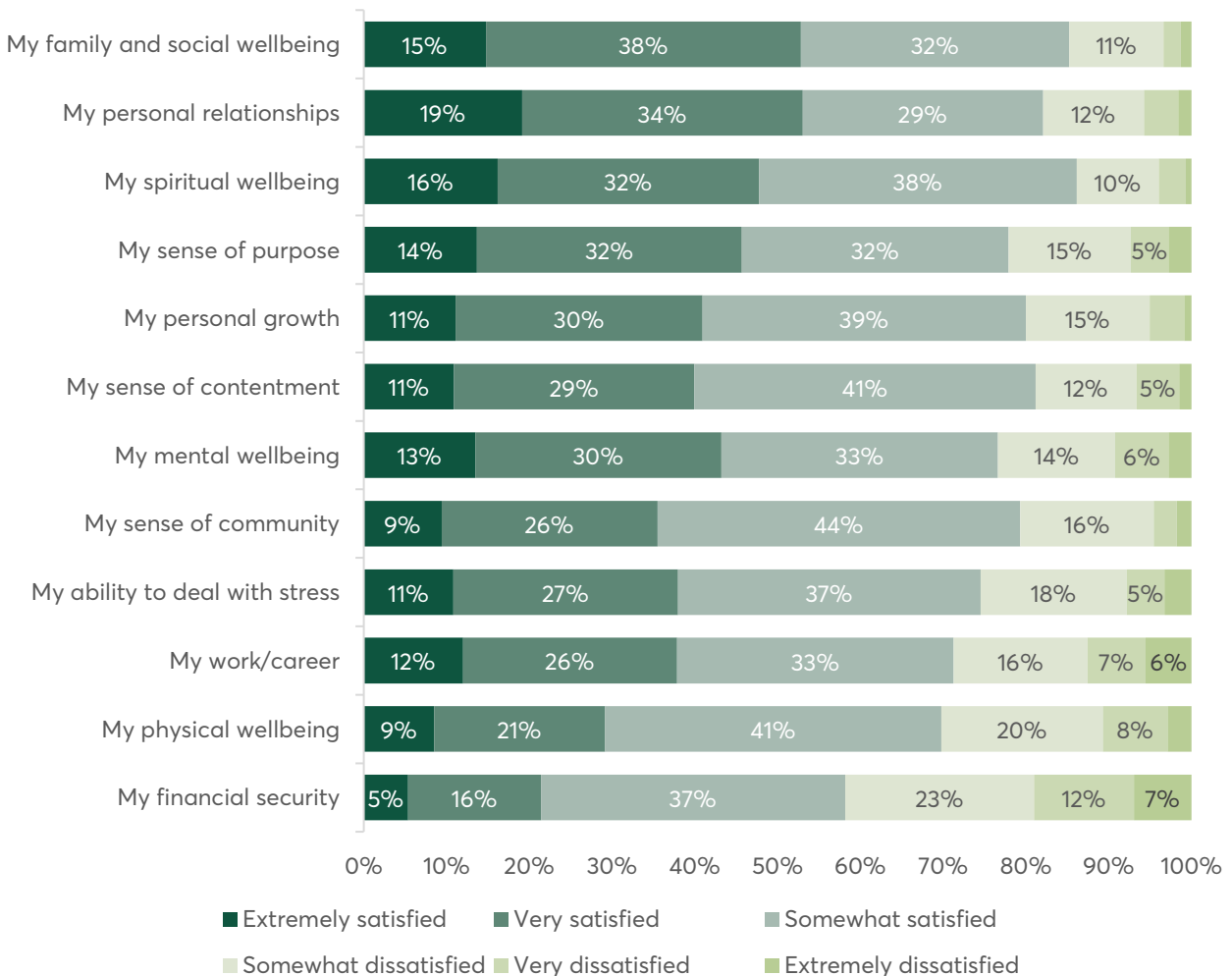
When considering the next three years, nine in ten people living in Aotearoa New Zealand feel hopeful about their family and social wellbeing (92%) and their personal relationships (90%), further highlighting the importance of community and connection in this society. Personal growth is another area in which participants feel hopeful for the near future (91%).

The areas in which participants are more likely to feel hopeless are, again, those over which they have less agency. These include the state of the planet (37% feel

hopeless), Aotearoa New Zealand society (32%), and financial security (20%). These results reveal a significant concern for people, the planet, and adequate resources. While respondents are more likely to feel hopeful than hopeless in all areas tested, a large proportion are only somewhat hopeful about the future.

Pākehā respondents have the greatest sense of hopelessness about Aotearoa New Zealand society, compared to those of other ethnicities (37% cf. 28% Māori, 23% Asian, 15% Pacific Peoples).

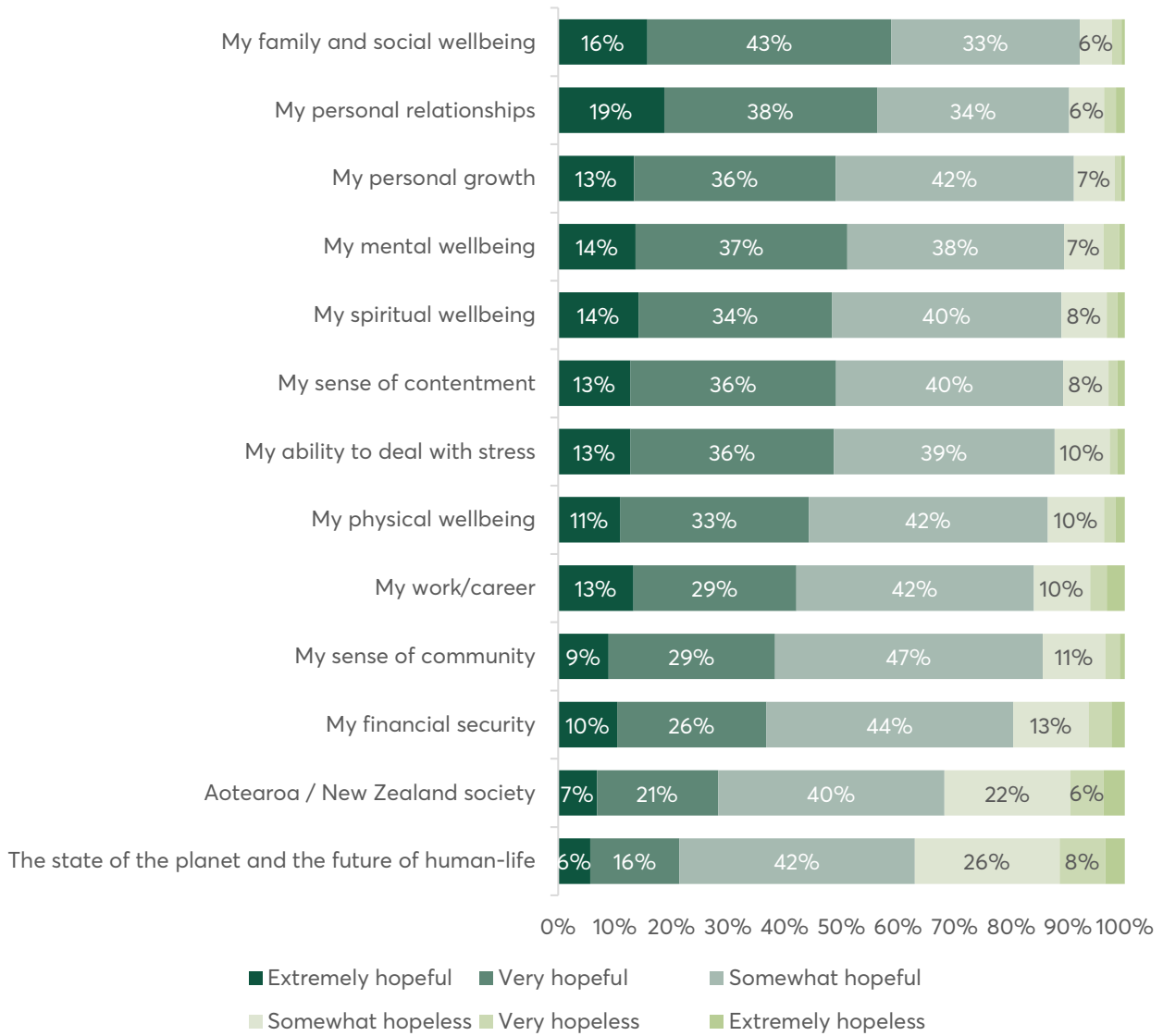
How satisfied are you with the following areas of your life?



Top areas of satisfaction by generation (extremely/very satisfied)			
Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
My personal relationships (54%)	My family and social wellbeing (50%)	My family and social wellbeing (48%)	My personal relationships (64%)
My family and social wellbeing (49%)	My personal relationships (49%)	My personal relationships (46%)	My family and social wellbeing (62%)
My personal growth (45%)	My spiritual wellbeing (46%)	My spiritual wellbeing (43%)	My mental wellbeing (62%)

Bottom areas of satisfaction by generation (extremely/very satisfied)			
Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
My financial security (21%)	My financial security (15%)	My financial security (16%)	My financial security (33%)
My physical wellbeing (28%)	My physical wellbeing (29%)	My physical wellbeing (25%)	My physical wellbeing (34%)
My ability to deal with stress (29%)	My sense of community (29%)	MY sense of community (29%)	My sense of community (48%)

Thinking about the next three years of your life, to what extent do you feel hopeful or hopeless about the following?



Areas most hopeful towards by generation			
Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
My personal growth (93%)	My personal growth (89%)	My family and social wellbeing (94%)	My family and social wellbeing (94%)
My family and social wellbeing (92%)	My family and social wellbeing (88%)	My personal growth (91%)	My mental wellbeing (91%)
My personal relationships (92%)	My personal relationships (87%)	My mental wellbeing (91%)	My sense of contentment (92%)

Areas most hopeless towards by generation			
Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
The state of the planet and the future of human-life (34%)	The state of the planet and the future of human-life (41%)	The state of the planet and the future of human-life (40%)	Aotearoa/New Zealand society (38%)
Aotearoa/New Zealand society (25%)	Aotearoa/New Zealand society (30%)	Aotearoa/New Zealand society (32%)	The state of the planet and the future of human-life (33%)
My financial security (19%)	My financial security (18%)	My financial security (22%)	My work/career (20%)

People in Aotearoa New Zealand long for hope.

Almost three in five participants (58%) long for a hope for the future, resonating with the uncertainty many feel about the current environment. This is followed by a desire to increase wealth and prosperity (52%) and for a sense of security in an uncertain world (47%).

People living in Aotearoa New Zealand also long for genuine relationships where they feel known (45%) and for a strong sense of personal identity (34%).

The top longings are shared across the generations but are reflected in a different order. Gen Z and Gen Y are the most likely to long for an increase in wealth and prosperity (61% Gen Z, 60% Gen Y). Gen X and Baby Boomers most long for a hope for the future (58% Gen X, 56% Baby Boomers).

Participants who identify as Māori (19%) or Pākehā (18%) are less likely than those with Asian ethnicity (41%) or Pacific Peoples (48%) to say they long for a stronger personal faith.

When respondents from different generations were asked what they hope for in life, Gen Z found it harder to identify something specific, opting for more general topics. Gen Z's struggle to articulate their aspirations is reflected in one participant's belief that having a purpose in life is something people develop over time. Younger generations also noted that they are growing up in a different environment than their older counterparts, which impacts their hopes and longings.



"We don't have a purpose when we first kind of start out, but unintentionally, I feel like we all end up having a purpose in life."

Gen Z



"I'm not sure what I hope for; I guess success in a career and to be happy in general."

Gen Z



"Personally, what I want to achieve in life is having peace within myself, but I think for my generation it's almost a bit of a disillusionment from generations before us who are very much work hard and you'll get ahead in life, whereas, we work hard, but prices have gone up."

Gen Y

Baby Boomers, with their rich tapestry of life experiences, found it easier to articulate their hopes, which were often for tangible things like good health or their families' wellbeing.



"[I hope for] good health. I recently had three big surgeries. I'm a few years away from my retirement, but without health, it really impacts you in every area of your life."

Baby Boomer

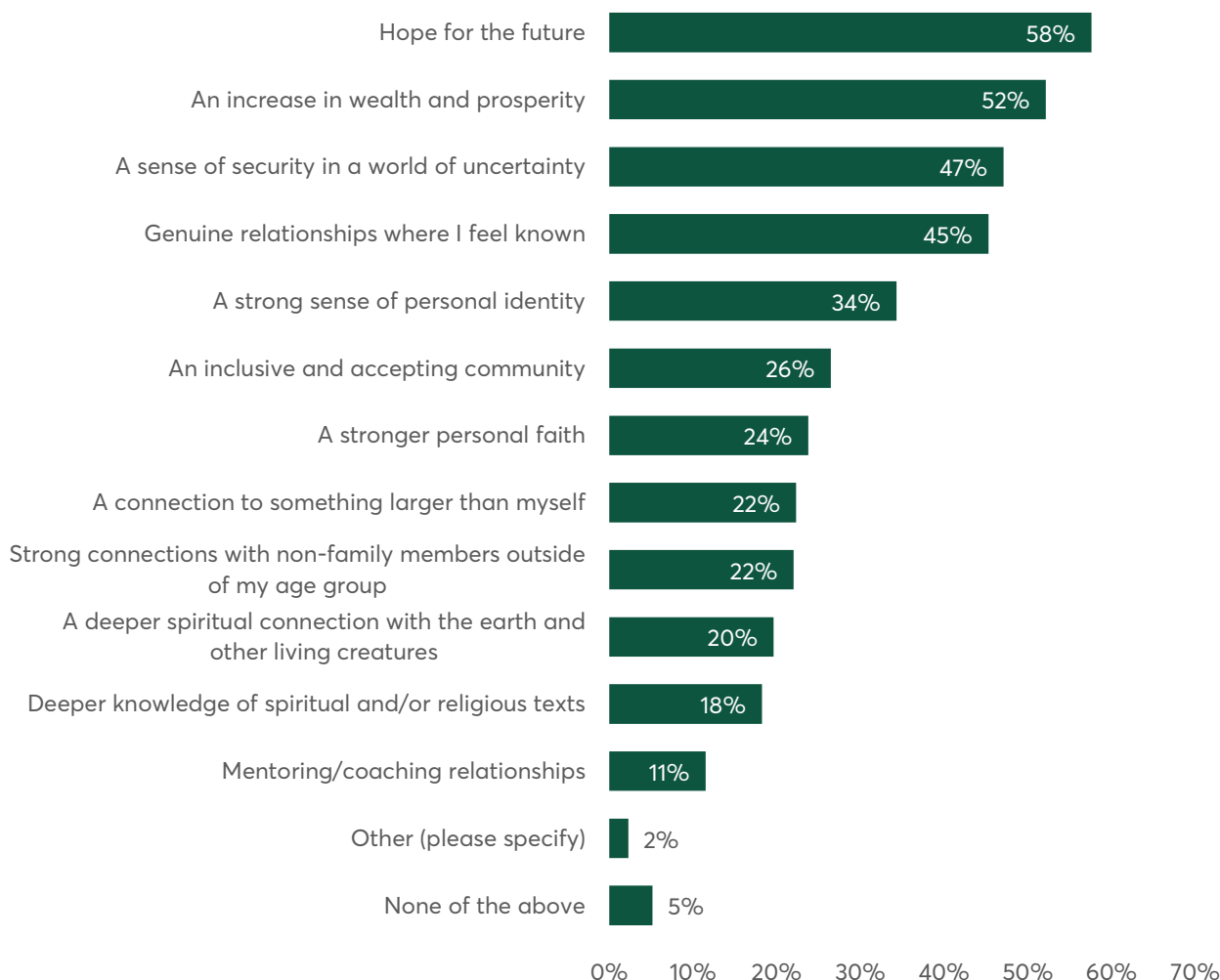


"Well, I'm in my mid-seventies and we have a comfortable home; we have seen our children through many difficulties; they've strived, they've come through, they live good lives. I've seen my grandchildren, albeit we lost one, that was tough. But... life generally is pretty good. I just hope it continues like this for the future, and I can't see any reason why it won't."

Baby Boomer

What do you long for, in your life?

Please select all that apply.



Top longings by generation			
Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
An increase in wealth and prosperity (61%)	An increase in wealth and prosperity (60%)	Hope for the future (58%)	Hope for the future (56%)
Hope for the future (59%)	Hope for the future (57%)	An increase in wealth and prosperity (55%)	A sense of security in a world of uncertainty (52%)
Genuine relationships where I feel known (53%)	Genuine relationships where I feel known (49%)	A sense of security in a world of uncertainty (51%)	Genuine relationships where I feel known (39%)

Losing a loved one is the greatest fear.

Losing a loved one is the top fear for people living in Aotearoa New Zealand (62%), speaking directly to the importance of community and close relationships. Loneliness is also among the top fears for participants (37%), further highlighting the value placed on togetherness. Other fears include not having enough money to live (53%), illness (47%), and crime (41%).

Gen Z are the only generation to name a fear of loneliness among their top three fears in life (44% cf. 38% Gen Y, 36% Gen X, 32% Baby Boomers).

Being mistreated is another fear that is most evident in the younger generations and particularly in Gen Z (39% cf. 29% Gen Y, 27% Gen X, 17% Baby Boomers).

When it comes to fears, the greatest difference between ethnicities appears in relation to crime. Those of Asian ethnicity are more likely than others to say they fear crime (53% cf. 42% Pākehā, 35% Māori, 33% Pacific Peoples).

Those who report being extremely or very dissatisfied with their mental wellbeing are twice as likely to fear loneliness as those who are extremely or very satisfied with their mental wellbeing (52% cf. 25%).



"[I fear] not being able to do as much as I want to and not doing everything that I want to do in life. Like travelling, having a good career and family and all that." Gen Z



"I think in terms of generations, my parents, for example, we have conversations about this all the time and their fears when they were 18, 19, 20 were different to what I fear. It may be because I'm more financially secure in terms of I depend on them a little bit and I can choose to work for money if I want to right now while I'm at uni. I'm not completely financially independent yet. So I feel like for me, I want to do all of these things before I go into the workforce and have to actually work for money and have to make my own money, but for them it was more that they needed to work, they needed to make money, because they're going to have kids in two years. So it was different for them. Whereas for me, it's different because I'm a lot more secure in that sense. But, I think also because of inflation and social movements, there's a lot of other things that we're going through that they didn't." Gen Z



"The fears are all about what is happening in the world." Gen X



"I fear dying too early and not leaving my family with support." Baby Boomer

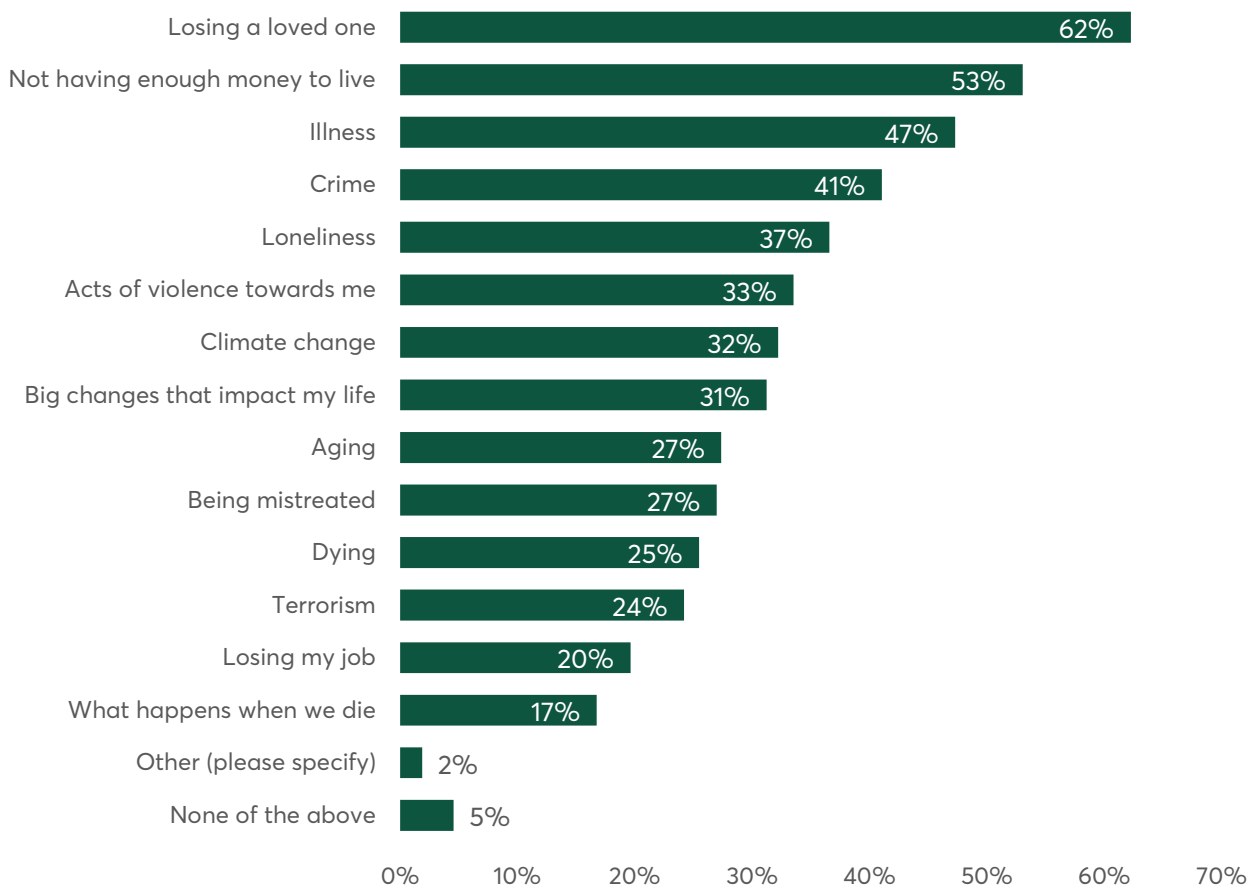
Climate change is a significant fear for one in three participants (32%). Qualitative statements from younger participants highlight a concern for the world that future generations will inherit.



"I think a fear of mine is the climate we live in, the economic climate and environmental, and what's the world we leave them (future generations) going to look like?" Gen Y

Which of the following are things you fear in life?

Please select all that apply.



Top fears by generation

Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Losing a loved one (68%)	Losing a loved one (66%)	Losing a loved one (62%)	Losing a loved one (55%)
Not having enough money to live (56%)	Not having enough money to live (60%)	Not having enough money to live (59%)	Illness (51%)
Loneliness (44%)	Illness (52%)	Crime (47%)	Crime (47%)
Being mistreated (39%)	Loneliness (38%)	Illness (46%)	Not having enough money to live (40%)
Big changes that impact my life (38%)	Crime (37%)	Loneliness (36%)	Acts of violence towards me (34%)

Nurturing wellbeing is important to participants.

Family and social wellbeing is the greatest area of life satisfaction for people living in Aotearoa New Zealand. Participants nurture this aspect of their wellbeing most by spending time with family and friends (74%), getting out in nature (31%), and listening to music (22%).

Gen Z are less likely than others to nurture their family and social wellbeing by spending time with family and friends (66% cf. 73% Gen Y, 75% Gen X, 78% Baby Boomers).

Participants also report a high level of satisfaction with their spiritual wellbeing. The main ways they invest in this area include spending time in nature (39%), praying (36%), or listening to music (34%). However, spiritual wellbeing isn't an area all consider in their lives.



"Spiritual wellbeing isn't necessarily a concept I actually think about personally."
Gen Z

Unsurprisingly, respondents who are religious are more likely to nurture their spiritual wellbeing through prayer (61% cf. 21% spiritual but not religious, 4% non-religious). Those who are spiritual but not religious are most likely to support their spiritual wellbeing through spending time in nature (49% cf. 42% religious, 28% non-religious).

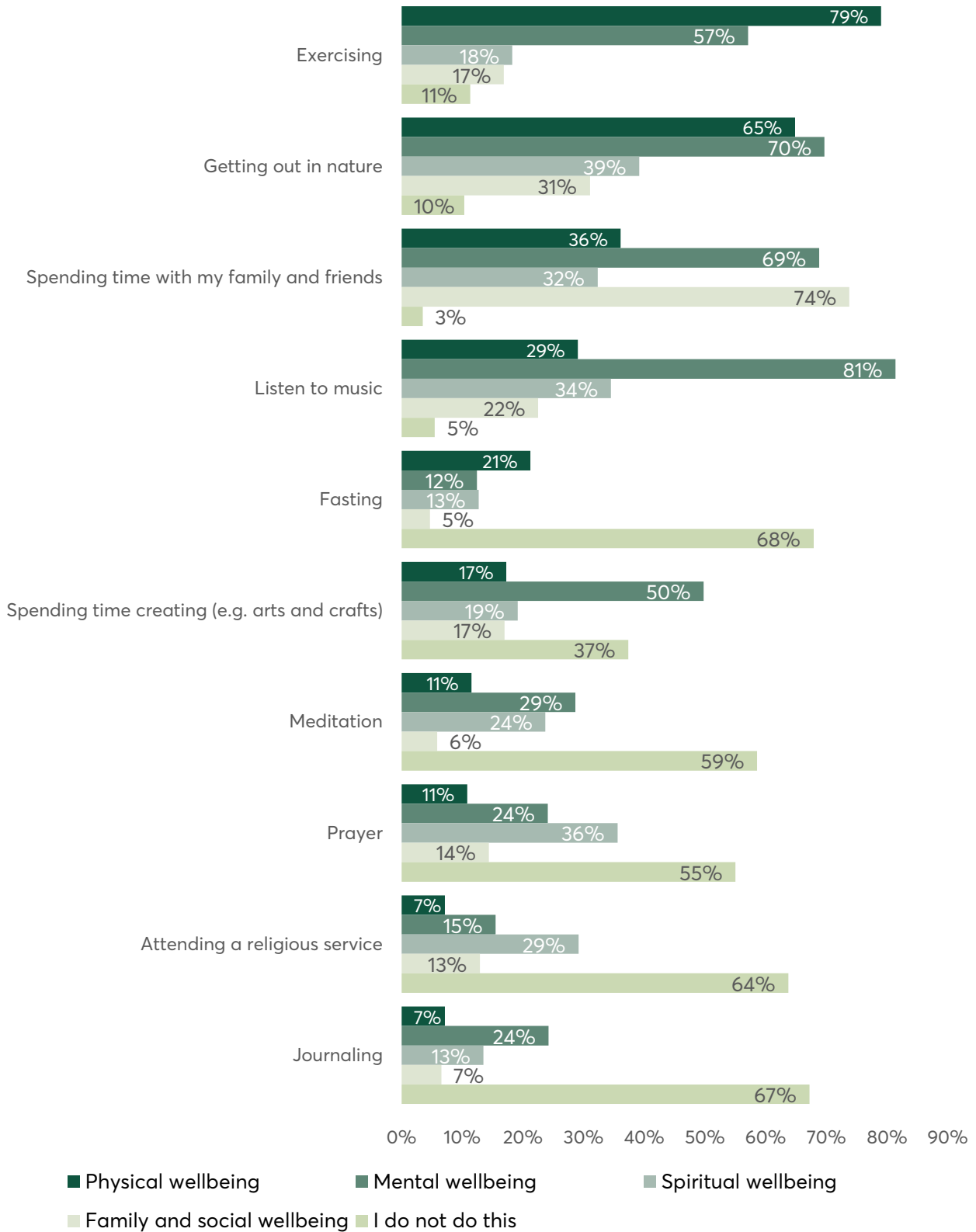
Pākehā participants are least likely to use meditation for their wellbeing, compared to those of other ethnicities (34% cf. 49% Māori, 63% Asian, 64% Pacific Peoples).

Among the different generations, Baby Boomers are the least likely to use meditation (29% cf. 40% Gen X, 51% Gen Y, 50% Gen Z).

People in Aotearoa New Zealand foster their mental wellbeing primarily by listening to music (81%), being in nature (70%), and spending time with family and friends (69%). Similarly, physical wellbeing is nurtured through exercise (79%), getting out in nature (65%), and time with family and friends (36%).

Gen Z are the most likely generation to support their mental wellbeing through journalling (41% cf. 30% Gen Y, 17% Gen X, 14% Baby Boomers).

Which of the following do you do to take care of the different areas of your wellbeing?



Tūānuku wairuatanga

The spiritual landscape

Many in Aotearoa New Zealand engage with spirituality.

There is a diverse collection of beliefs about spirituality held across Aotearoa New Zealand. Some participants don't relate to spiritual concepts at all, while others relate to images or concepts associated with spirituality without describing themselves as spiritual. For others, however, spirituality is an integral part of their identity.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the rate of those who report no religion in the Census is growing (48% 2018 cf. 42% 2013, 35% 2006, 30% 2001).¹ Many, however, still identify with beliefs associated with spirituality. Four in five participants (81%) identify with at least one statement about spiritual beliefs. The statement that resonates most is a belief that there is an ultimate purpose and meaning in life (37%), followed closely by a belief that there is one god (35%). More than a quarter of respondents (27%) believe there is a spiritual realm. Almost one in five (19%) don't indicate any form of spiritual belief.

Baby Boomers are the most likely generation to believe there is an ultimate purpose in life (45% cf. 34% Gen X, 36% Gen Y, 30% Gen Z).

Gen Y are the most likely to believe in the inward journey of discovering the inner person (26% cf. 19% Gen Z, 22% Gen X, 15% Baby Boomers) and to hold their own self-developed beliefs (27% cf. 18% Gen Z, 22% Gen X, 22% Baby Boomers).

Interestingly, female respondents are more likely than males to believe there is purpose and meaning in life (40% cf. 33%).

Further, participants who identify with a Pacific Peoples (53%) or Asian ethnicity (46%) are much more likely to believe there is one god than those who are Pākehā (31%) or Māori (27%).

Some of the less common spiritual beliefs people hold include believing in a mixture of spiritual beliefs from major religions (13%), believing in astrology (13%), believing in multiple gods (8%), or believing in new age/eastern spirituality (6%).

Participants describe their own faith or spirituality in varied ways. Many in older generations identify as quite spiritual, while others, particularly in the younger generations, are less interested but still respectful of differing views.



"Spirituality is a core part of me. I think about spirituality quite a lot." Baby Boomer



"I don't always think 'oh, this is spirituality, or, this is my religion' every day. But it's always in the background and it's something you don't always think about." Baby Boomer



"I grew up in a family where religion wasn't really spoken about at all. I'm probably more of a spiritual person and slightly"

¹ Stats NZ, 2019, Losing our religion, <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/losing-our-religion>

believe that there is a bigger or higher self. So what you put out into the universe is what you get back. But in terms of religion, I've never been to church or anything. I have nothing against it, but that just wasn't how I grew up at all." Gen Z



"It's really nice to see that we can all have different religions and different beliefs and we can still coexist and still respect each other so I think it's good to have conversations but it's not the easiest thing to bring up." Gen Z

Almost half believe in a higher being or God

Participants were asked about additional sets of statements, designed to further explore nuances in their spiritual beliefs. Here, the beliefs they agreed with most strongly include a belief in a higher being or God (45% strongly/somewhat agree) and a belief in life after death (44%). Two in five (43%) say they have witnessed situations that have led them to believe there is something beyond the material world. More than one in three (37%) feel that their faith helps them to have a better relationship with others.

While just 35% of people living in Aotearoa New Zealand strongly or somewhat agree prayer changes things, Pacific Peoples are more likely than those of other ethnicities to hold this belief (66% cf. 50% Asian, 39% Māori, 26% Pākehā).

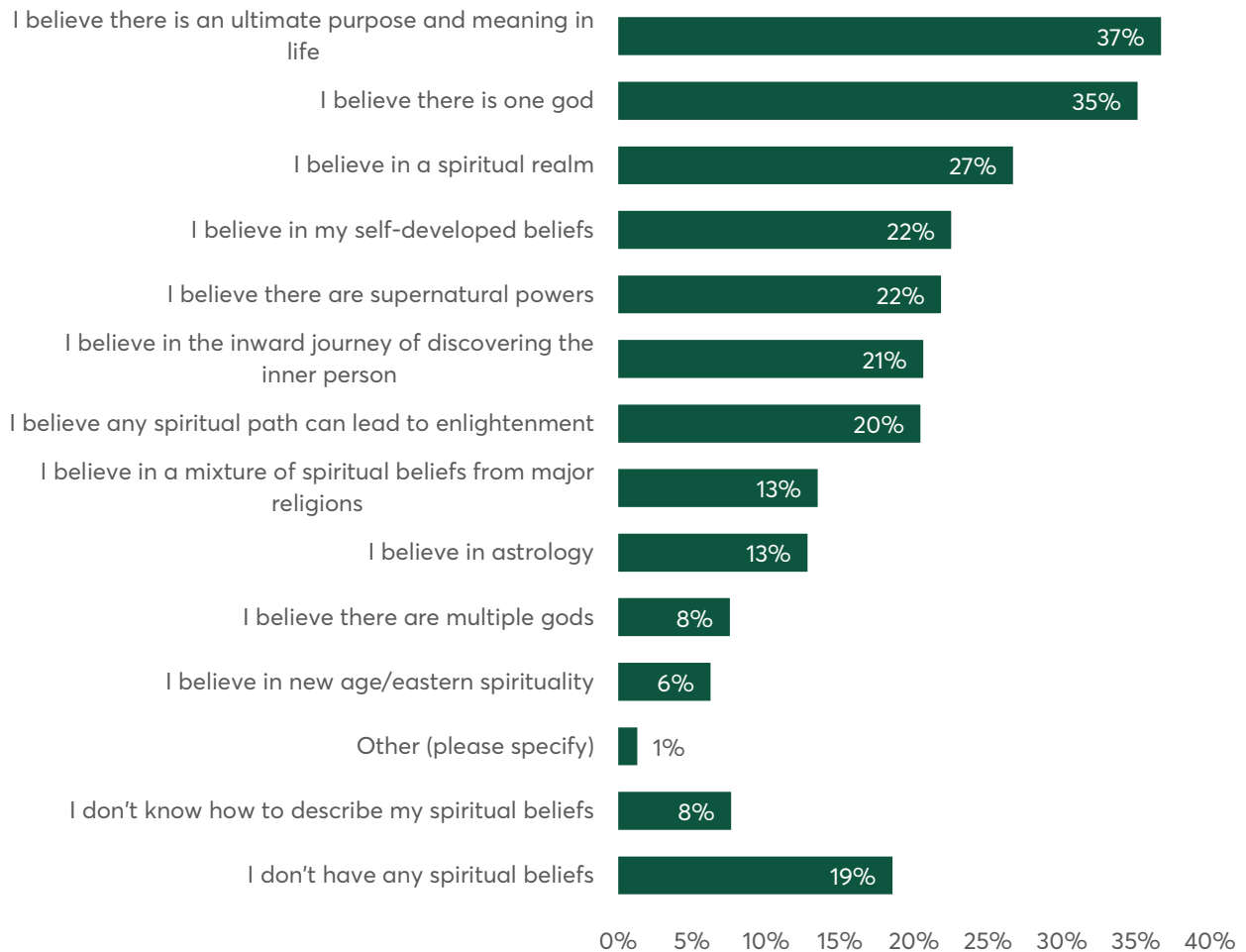
Three in ten (29%) strongly or somewhat agree that they use practices such as meditation, prayer, or reading spiritual texts to connect with a spiritual force. A greater proportion (38%) say they do not engage with these practices.

The strongest areas of disagreement relating to statements about faith and spirituality are the belief that astrology helps people make better decisions (51% strongly/somewhat disagree) and that crystals have healing properties (41%).

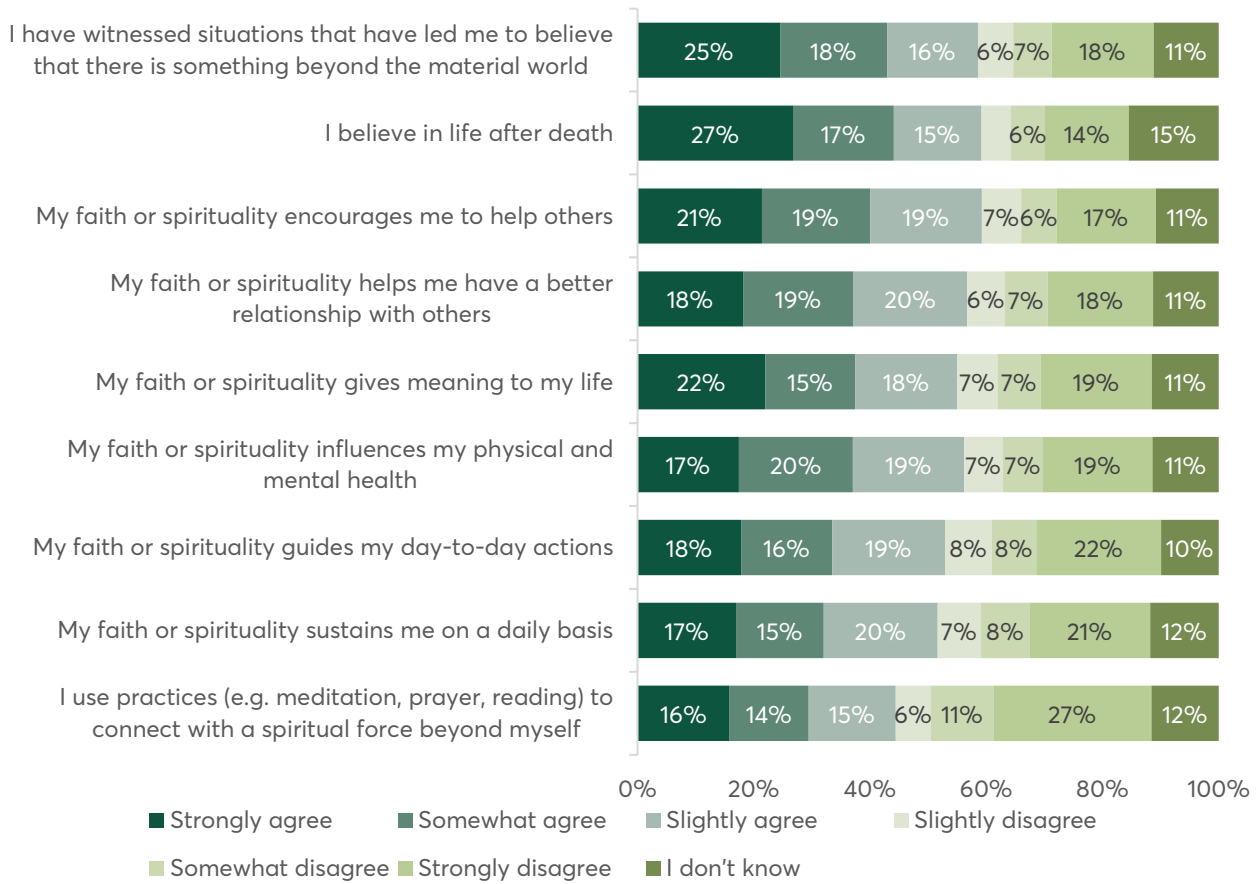
Younger generations, however, are more likely than their older counterparts to believe that astrology helps them to make better decisions (20% Gen Z, 16% Gen Y cf. 11% Gen X, 8% Baby Boomers) and that crystals have healing properties (29% Gen Z, 26% Gen Y cf. 19% Gen X, 9% Baby Boomers).

Which of the following statements best describe your spiritual beliefs?

Please select all that apply.

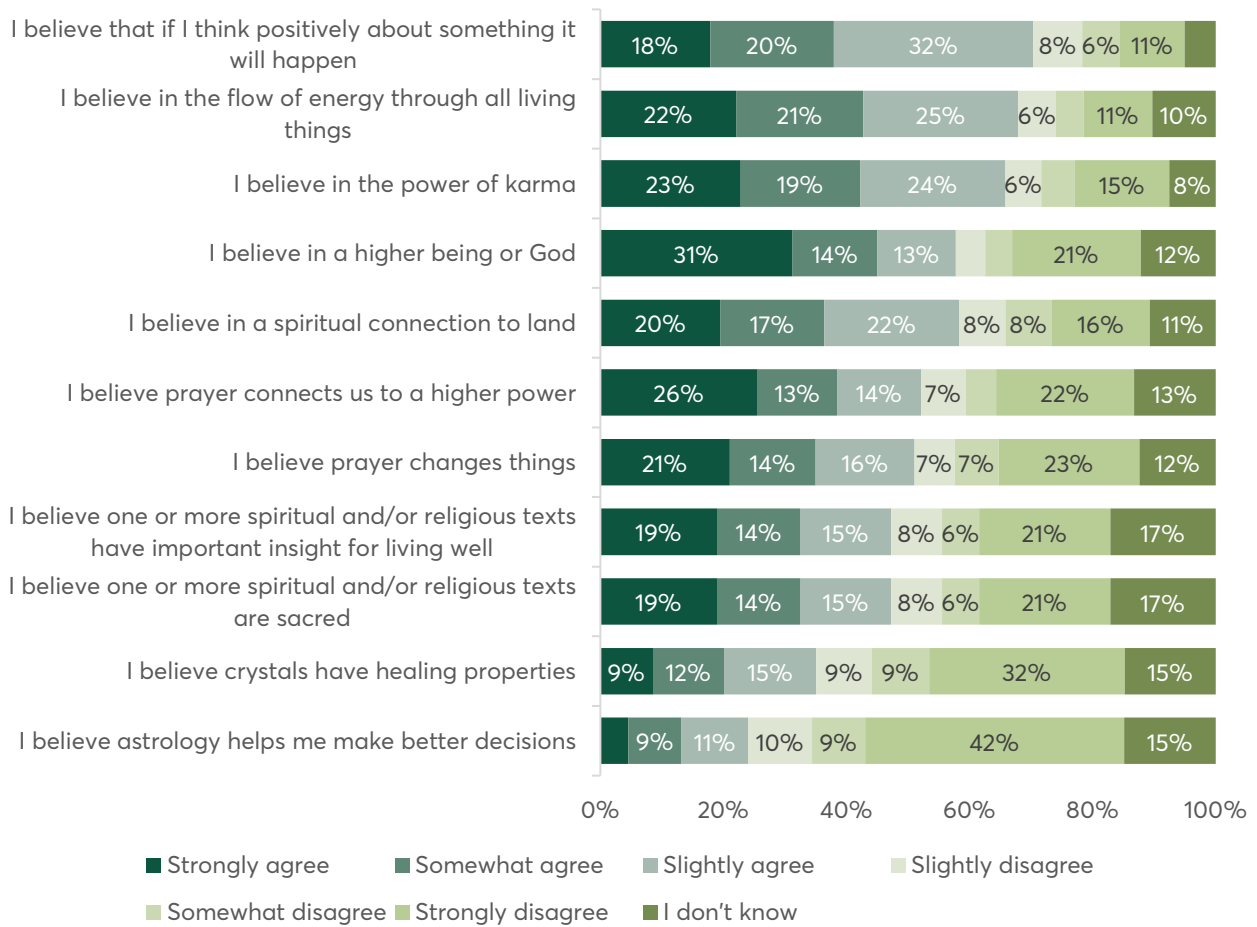


To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



Top agreement areas by generation (Strongly/somewhat agree)			
Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
	I have witnessed situations that have led me to believe that there is something beyond the material world (46%)		
I believe in life after death (52%)		I believe in life after death (39%)	I believe in life after death (43%)
I have witnessed situations that have led me to believe that there is something beyond the material world (47%)	I believe in life after death (44%)	I have witnessed situations that have led me to believe that there is something beyond the material world (38%)	My faith or spirituality encourages me to help others (42%)
My faith or spirituality influences my physical and mental health (47%)	My faith or spirituality encourages me to help others (40%)	My faith or spirituality encourages me to help others (36%)	I have witnessed situations that have led me to believe that there is something beyond the material world (42%)

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?*



*Question developed and adapted from Braghetta CC, Gorenstein C, Wang YP, Martins CB, Leão FC, Peres MFP, Lucchetti G and Vallada H (2021) Development of an Instrument to Assess Spirituality: Reliability and Validation of the Attitudes Related to Spirituality Scale (ARES). Front. Psychol. 12:764132. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.764132

Top agreement areas by generation (Strongly/somewhat agree)			
Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
I believe in the power of karma (55%)	I believe in the flow of energy through all living things (49%)	I believe in the power of karma (42%)	I believe in a higher being or God (49%)
I believe in a higher being or God (50%)	I believe in the power of karma (46%)	I believe in a higher being or God (41%)	I believe prayer connects us to a higher power (39%)
I believe in the flow of energy through all living things (47%)	I believe that if I think positively about something it will happen (44%)	I believe in the flow of energy through all living things (42%)	I believe in the flow of energy through all living things (36%)

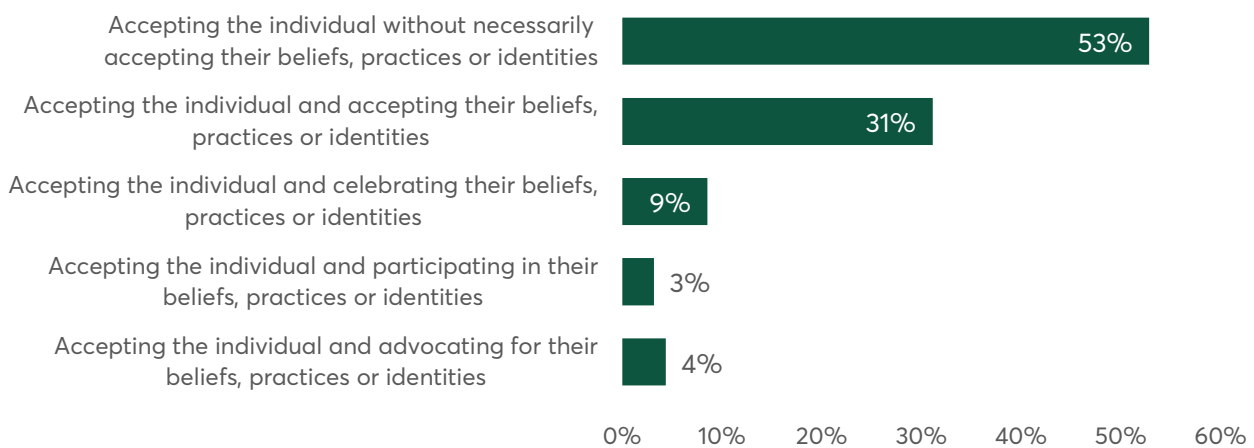
Acceptance is about accepting people, without necessarily accepting their beliefs, practices, or identities.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the most common view of acceptance is that it means accepting an individual, without necessarily accepting their beliefs, practices, or identities (53%). Some believe that acceptance should extend to accepting (31%), celebrating (9%), participating in (3%), or advocating for (4%) the beliefs of an individual as well.

Pākehā participants are more likely than those of other ethnicities to view acceptance as accepting an individual but not necessarily the individual's beliefs, practices, or identities (57% cf. 46% Asian, 44% Pacific Peoples, 37% Māori).

Younger generations are more likely to describe acceptance as accepting the individual as well as their beliefs, practices, or identities (43% Gen Z cf. 33% Gen Y, 30% Gen X, 23% Baby Boomers).

We live in an increasingly diverse society of different beliefs, practices and identities. Which of the following best describes your view of acceptance?



A journey to faith and spirituality is deeply personal.

Significant life experiences influence people's engagement with spiritual concepts and practices. Participants are most likely to be attracted to exploring faith and spirituality as a result of a personal trauma or significant life change (75%), indicating a shift from 2018, when this was an attractor for 59% of participants. The option of being slightly attracted or repelled was added for respondents in 2023 to give more nuance to this data. While this may have an influence on the apparent change in sentiment, it is important to appreciate the altered landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand since 2018. Many have gone through significant life changes in a world impacted by COVID-19. For a large number who have been prompted to think about faith or spiritual matters, a death in the family (35%) or a life crisis (31%) has been the catalyst.

It's not just significant life experiences that attract individuals to investigate spirituality further, but also the opportunity to explore different spiritual practices, such as meditation, prayer, or mindfulness (68%).

Authentic conversations play an integral role in the exploration of spirituality

People living in Aotearoa New Zealand value authenticity, with 66% of respondents being attracted to explore spirituality if they see people living out a genuine faith or spirituality first-hand. Authenticity around faith and spirituality in conversations is particularly important, as having conversations with people (33%) is a key factor in leading individuals to consider faith or spiritual matters. Still, it's important

these conversations are done well, as one of the top repellents to exploring faith and spirituality is engaging in philosophical discussions and debating ideas (38%).



"I am open to everybody coming across my front door because I want to know about different people and I want to understand and I want to embrace them." Baby Boomer

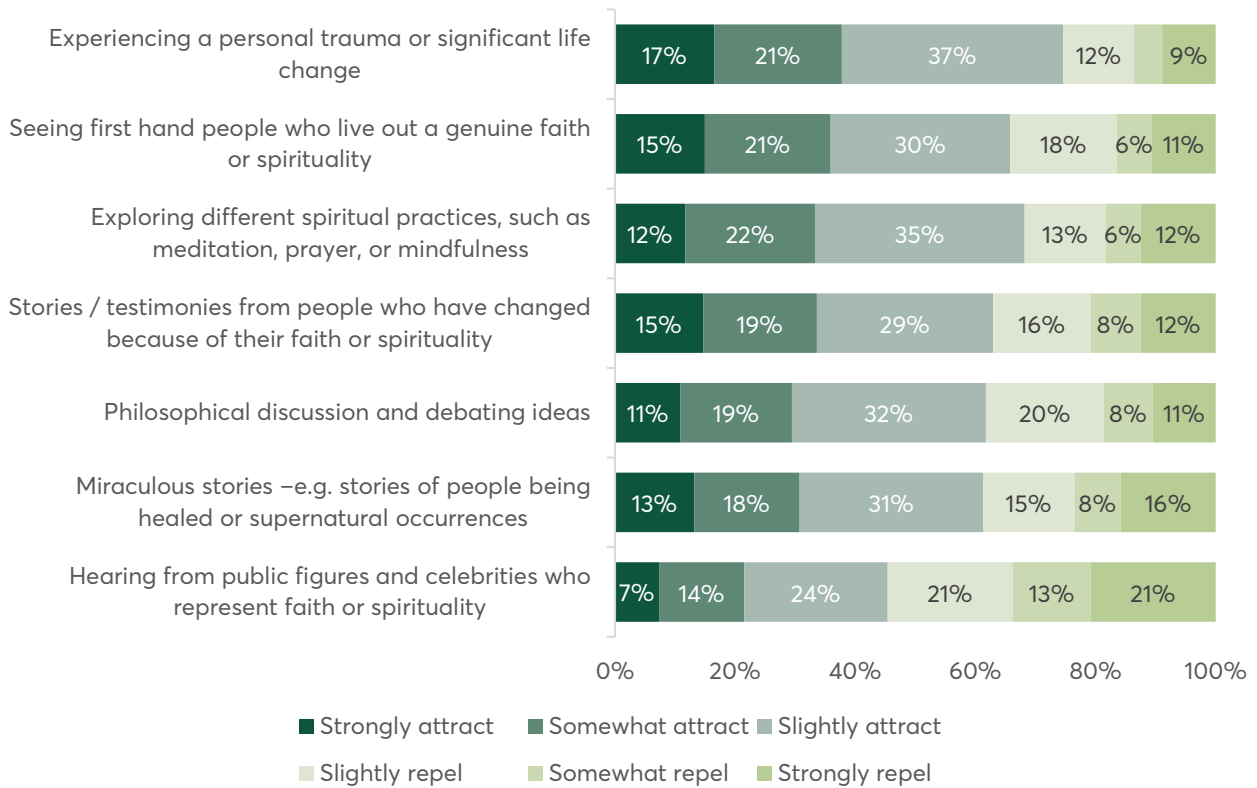
The number one repellent to exploring faith and spirituality is hearing from public figures and celebrities who represent faith or spirituality (55%), highlighting the value of personal connection as the foundation for conversations about this significant aspect of life.

Interestingly, the above finding does not hold for the younger generation, who are more open to influencers. Gen Z are the most likely generation to investigate faith or spirituality if they hear from a representative public figure (62% cf. 44% Gen Y, 42% Gen X, 39% Baby Boomers).

Gen Z are also the most likely to be attracted to exploring spirituality further because of stories or testimonies from people who have changed because of their faith or spirituality (75% cf. 66% Gen Y, 61% Gen X, 54% Baby Boomers).

Pacific Peoples (84%) and those of Asian ethnicity (82%) are more likely to be attracted to investigating faith and spirituality further as a result of exploring different spiritual practices (cf. 75% Māori, 63% Pākehā).

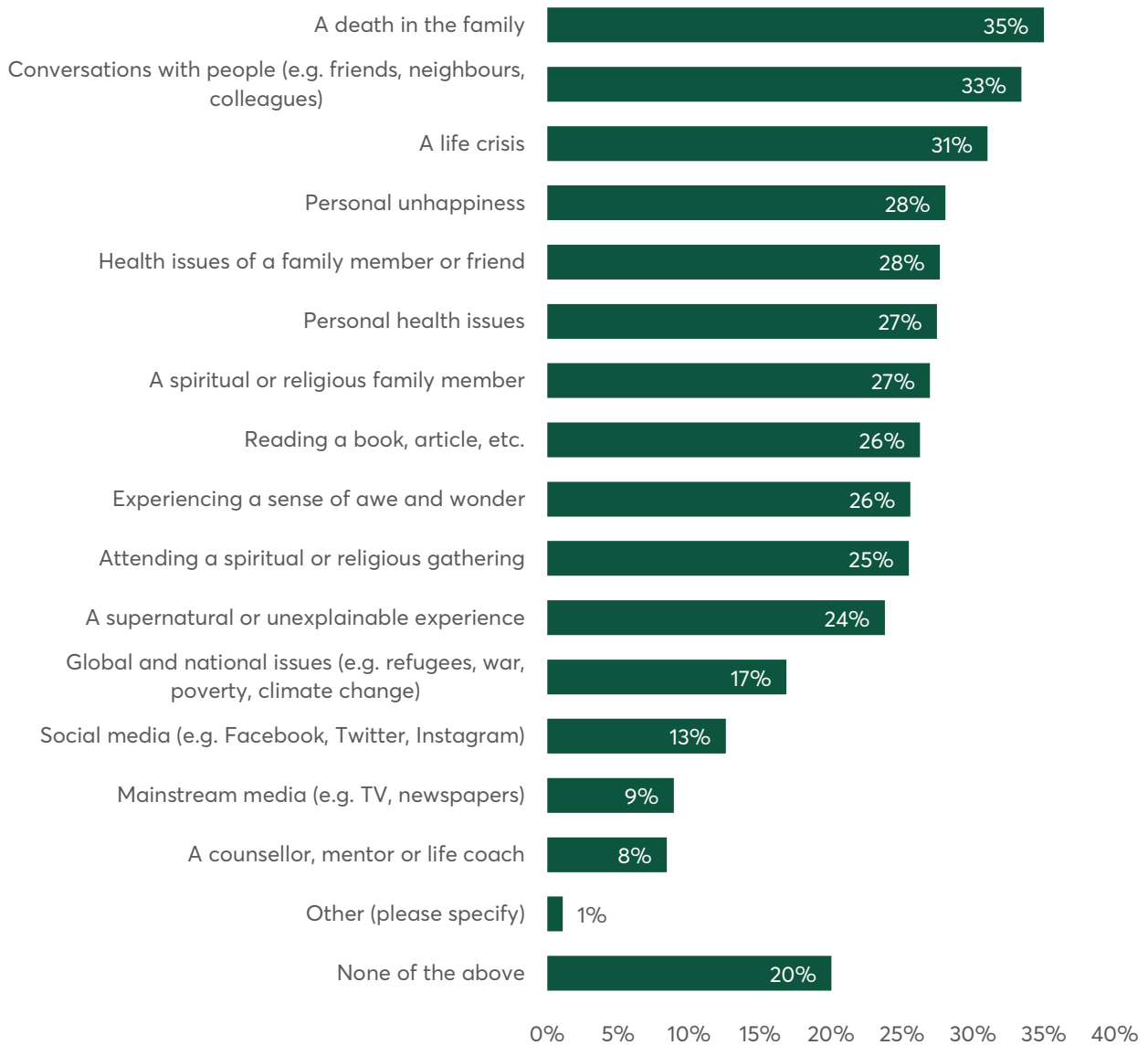
To what extent would the following attract or repel you from investigating faith and/or spirituality further?



Top attractors by generation (Strongly/somewhat/slightly attract)			
Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Experiencing a personal trauma or significant life change (79%)	Experiencing a personal trauma or significant life change (77%)	Experiencing a personal trauma or significant life change (75%)	Experiencing a personal trauma or significant life change (69%)
Exploring different spiritual practices, such as meditation, prayer, or mindfulness (76%)	Exploring different spiritual practices, such as meditation, prayer, or mindfulness (73%)	Exploring different spiritual practices, such as meditation, prayer, or mindfulness (69%)	Seeing first hand people who live out a genuine faith or spirituality (62%)
Stories / testimonies from people who have changed because of their faith or spirituality (75%)	Philosophical discussion and debating ideas (70%)	Seeing first hand people who live out a genuine faith or spirituality (66%)	Exploring different spiritual practices, such as meditation, prayer, or mindfulness (58%)

Which of the following have ever prompted you to think about faith or spiritual matters?

Please select all that apply.



Top prompts by generation			
Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Conversations with people (39%)	Conversations with people (36%)	A death in the family (34%)	A death in the family (38%)
A death in the family (35%)	A death in the family (33%)	A life crisis (32%)	Conversations with people (30%) / A life crisis (30%)
Personal unhappiness (34%) / A spiritual or religious family member (34%)	A life crisis (31%)	Conversations with people (31%)	Personal health issues (29%)

Community plays a crucial role in supporting spirituality.

Close relationships are not only important in forming ideas around spirituality, but they also help to support and nurture spiritual wellbeing. Two in five participants (39%) turn to their family at least weekly for help with their faith or spirituality, while 34% turn to friends.

Some participants turn to spiritual practices like prayer (35%) or engaging with spiritual or religious texts (25%) at least weekly for spiritual support.

Social media also has a significant role, with Facebook (24%) and YouTube (23%) being the most common platforms for people to look for help with their faith or spirituality. Twitter (10%) and TikTok (15%) are less likely to be used in this way.

Unsurprisingly, young people are driving the trend towards social media for spiritual support. Gen Z are 20x more likely than Baby Boomers (40% cf. 2%) to turn to TikTok at least weekly for help in this area (21% Gen Y, 7% Gen X), 8x more likely to turn to Instagram (40% cf. 24% Gen Y, 10% Gen X, 5% Baby Boomers), 3.8x more likely to turn to Facebook (42% cf. 32% Gen Y, 16% Gen X, 11% Baby Boomers), and 3.5x more likely to turn to YouTube (35% cf. 34% Gen Y, 19% Gen X, 10% Baby Boomers).

Parents and family are important in nurturing spiritual wellbeing

Participants' spiritual development is more likely to have been positively than negatively impacted by

most of the influences tested. Those who have been impacted by their parents in this area of life are more likely to describe their parents as having a positive (60%), rather than negative (15%), influence on the development of their spiritual or religious practices. Friends (59%) and other family members (57%) are likely to have had a positive influence on spiritual development. Respondents also name books and articles as a key positive resource (59%).

The areas that are most likely to impact an individual's spiritual development negatively are religious instruction or education in schools (23%), faith or religious communities (18%), and spiritual teachings and gatherings in their youth (17%). Whilst people are more likely to have had positive experiences in these areas, it is critical to understand where negative experiences are most likely to emerge.

Some participants reflect on their negative experiences around religion and spirituality:

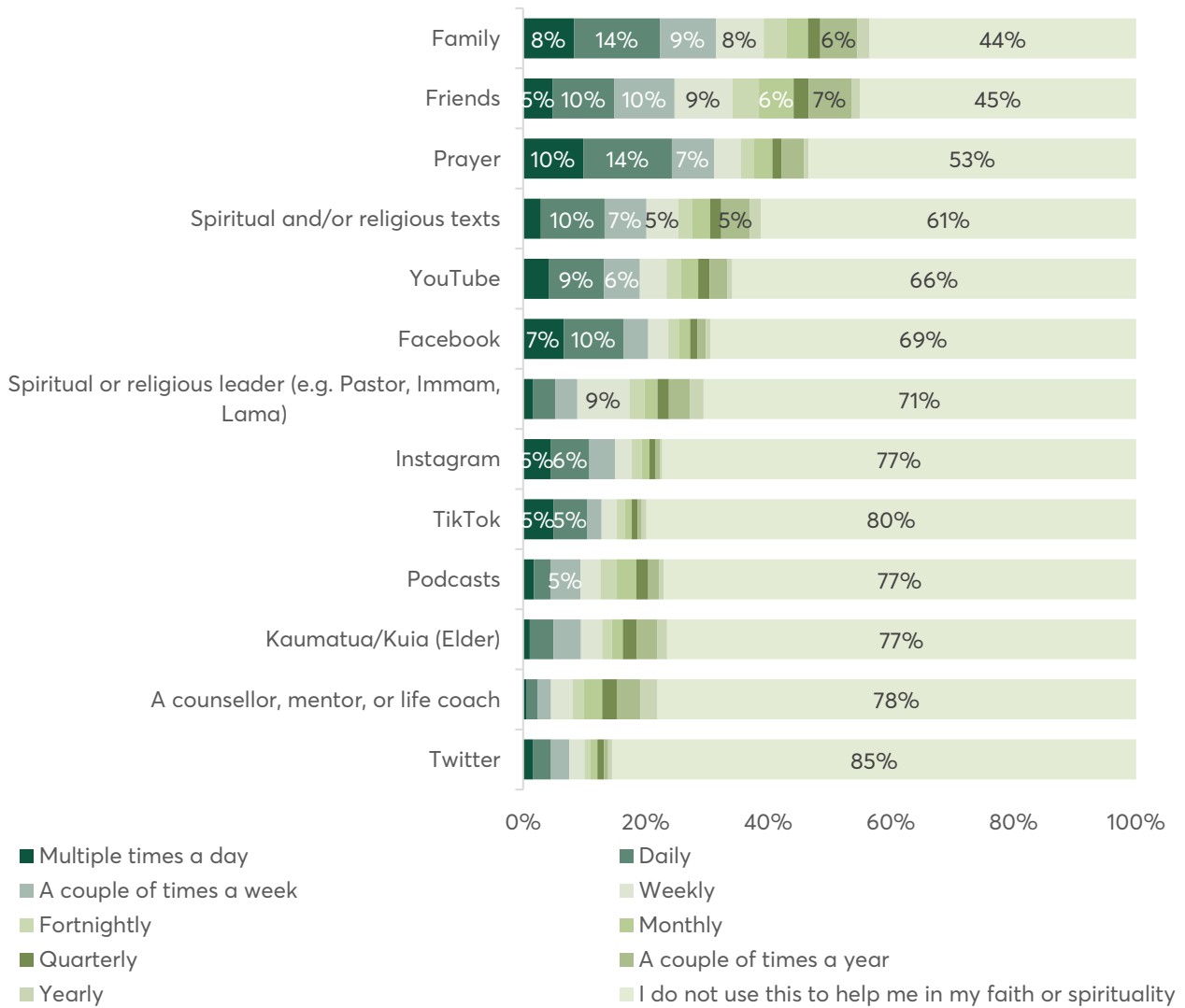


"If I try to explain things to priests, for example, I've been to confessions where I feel very judged for not respecting my parents or something, and they were like, do some Hail Marys, do some Our Fathers, and go apologise to your parents, and that hasn't been the nicest experience for nine year old me."
Gen Z



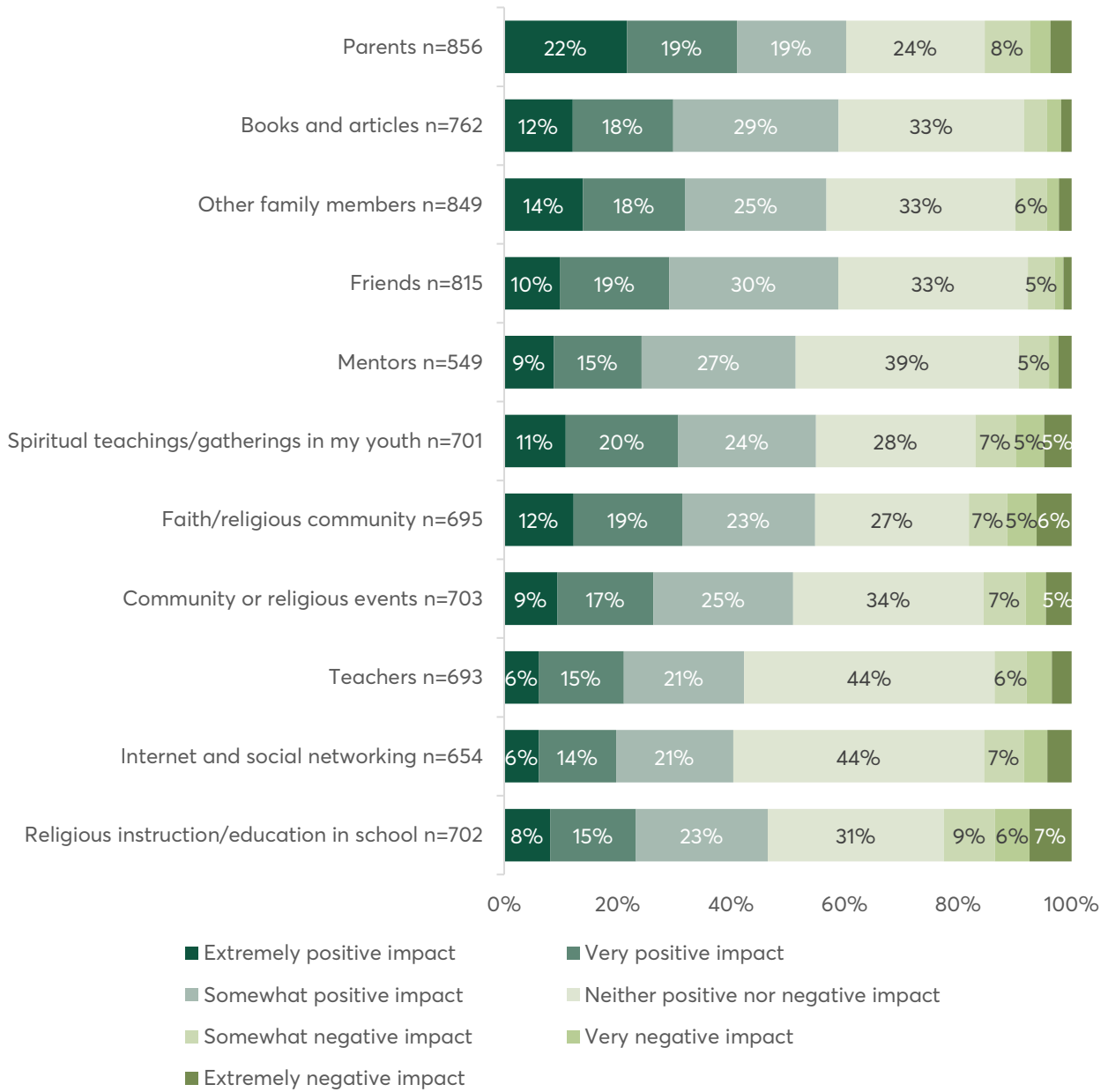
"People who were different to what the church taught have negative experiences because anybody outside of the 'norm' were not allowed, they were outcasts." Gen X

How frequently do you access/utilise the following to help you in your faith or spirituality?



Areas with the greatest difference between the generations (accessed at least weekly)				
	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
TikTok	40%	21%	7%	2%
Instagram	40%	24%	20%	5%
Facebook	42%	32%	16%	11%
Family	60%	45%	30%	29%
YouTube	35%	34%	19%	10%
Friends	50%	37%	29%	26%
Kaumatua/Kuia (Elder)	28%	17%	7%	5%

To what extent have the following positively or negatively impacted the development of your spiritual and/or religious practices overall?*



*Those who responded N/A have been removed for analysis.

Hāhi ki Aotearoa

Religion in Aotearoa New Zealand

Almost half of those living in Aotearoa New Zealand identify with a religion.

Almost half of participants (49%) practice or identify with a religion. This includes Christianity (39%), Hinduism (3%), Māori spirituality, beliefs, and philosophies (2%), Buddhism (2%), Islam (2%), Sikhism (1%), and Judaism (0.2%). A further 19% have spiritual beliefs but don't identify with any religion. Three in ten (30%) don't identify with any religion or spiritual belief at all.

Christianity is the most common religious identity for all generations; however, this is most evident for Baby Boomers (50%). While Gen X (34%) and Gen Y (31%) are less likely to identify with Christianity, Gen Z pick the trend back up (39%).

Gen Z are the least likely generation to identify with no religion or spirituality, followed closely by Baby Boomers (25% cf. 31% Gen Y, 34% Gen X, 27% Baby Boomers).

Those of Asian ethnicity (74%) and Pacific Peoples (70%) are more likely than Māori (46%) or Pākehā (39%) to identify as religious.

Participation in religious practice

Of those who identify with or practice a religion, just under half (46%) are extremely or often engaged in the

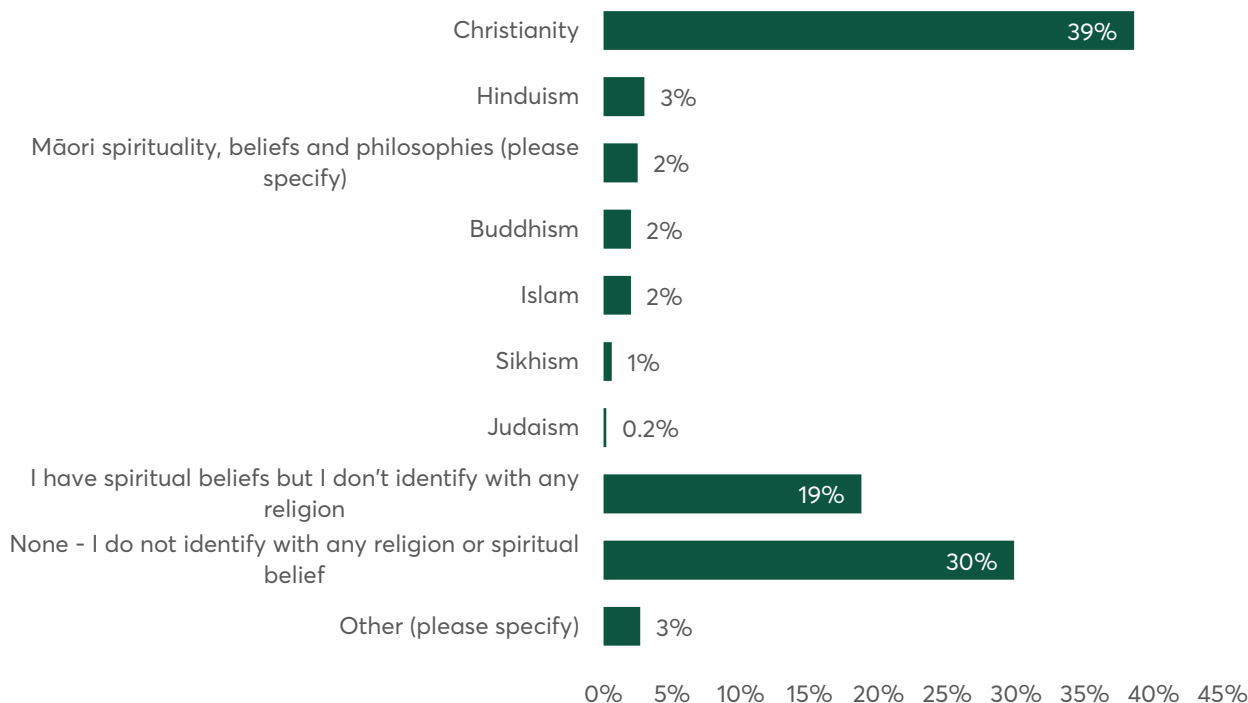
practice of their religion. A further 40% sometimes or rarely engage in the practice of their religion, while 15% describe themselves as not at all engaged in practising their religion.

While Baby Boomers are the most likely to identify as religious (58% cf. 40% Gen X, 46% Gen Y, 52% Gen Z), they are also the least likely to be extremely or often engaged in the practice of their religion (38% cf. 46% Gen X, 53% Gen Y, 48% Gen Z). Religious Gen Ys, by contrast, are the most engaged (53% Gen Y cf. 48% Gen Z, 46% Gen X, 38% Baby Boomers).

One in four respondents (23%) attend a service at a place of worship in person at least monthly, while 14% attend at least monthly online. Almost half of those who are religious (45%) attend a place of worship in person at least once a month.

Pākehā (15%) and Māori participants (23%) are the least likely to attend a place of worship in person at least once a month (cf. 41% Pacific Peoples, 55% Asian).

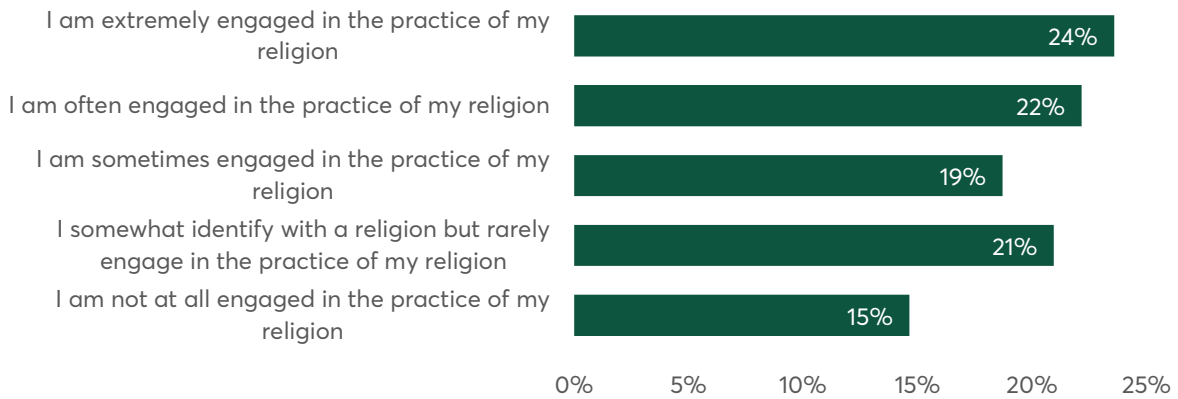
Which of the following best describes the religion you currently practice or identify with?



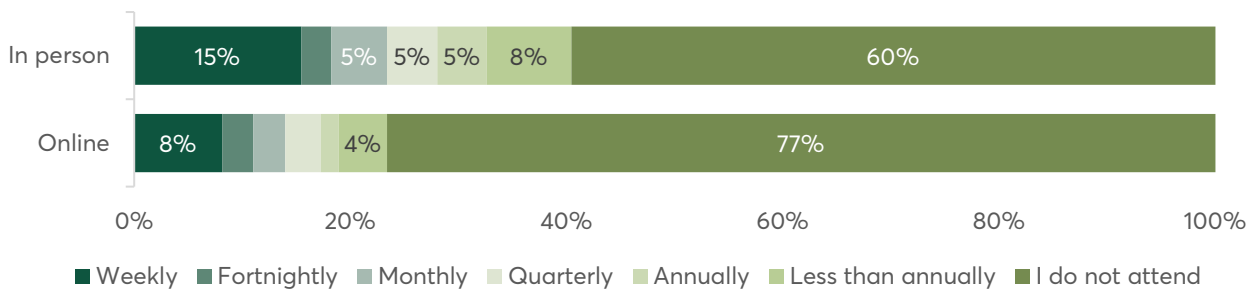
Areas with the greatest difference between the generations				
	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Religious	52%	46%	40%	58%
I have spiritual beliefs but I don't identify with any religion	20%	20%	22%	13%
None – I do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief	25%	31%	34%	27%

How engaged are you in the practice of your religion?

Those who identify with or practice a religion n=492



How frequently do you attend a service at a place of worship (except for weddings, baptisms and funerals) in the following ways?



There is continuity in religious identity.

The younger years are formative for developing religious and spiritual identity. This is seen through the three in five participants (60%) who have kept the religious status with which they grew up. One in four (27%), however, have changed their religious status, including those who were shaped in a religious household but are no longer religious (20%), those who were previously non-religious but now identify with a religion (4%), and those who left one religion to join a different one (3%). Just 14% follow a set of beliefs that do not fit into any one existing religion.



"I was raised Christian and when I turned 18 I moved out of home. I'm 25 now and it's a weird thing because I had this huge fight with [my faith] when I was in uni and I am very confused about it now." Gen Z

Participants of Asian ethnicity are the most likely to remain committed to the religion in which they were brought up (49% cf. 41% Pacific Peoples, 20% Māori, 15% Pākehā).

The greatest proportion of participants have maintained their existing religious status to some extent. Just 13% describe themselves as extremely or significantly open to changing their current spiritual/religious beliefs or practices if given the right

circumstances and evidence. This is consistent with the proportion of those who were open to changing their beliefs in 2018 (12%). Half (49%), however, are not at all open to changing their beliefs, rising slightly from 2018 (46%).

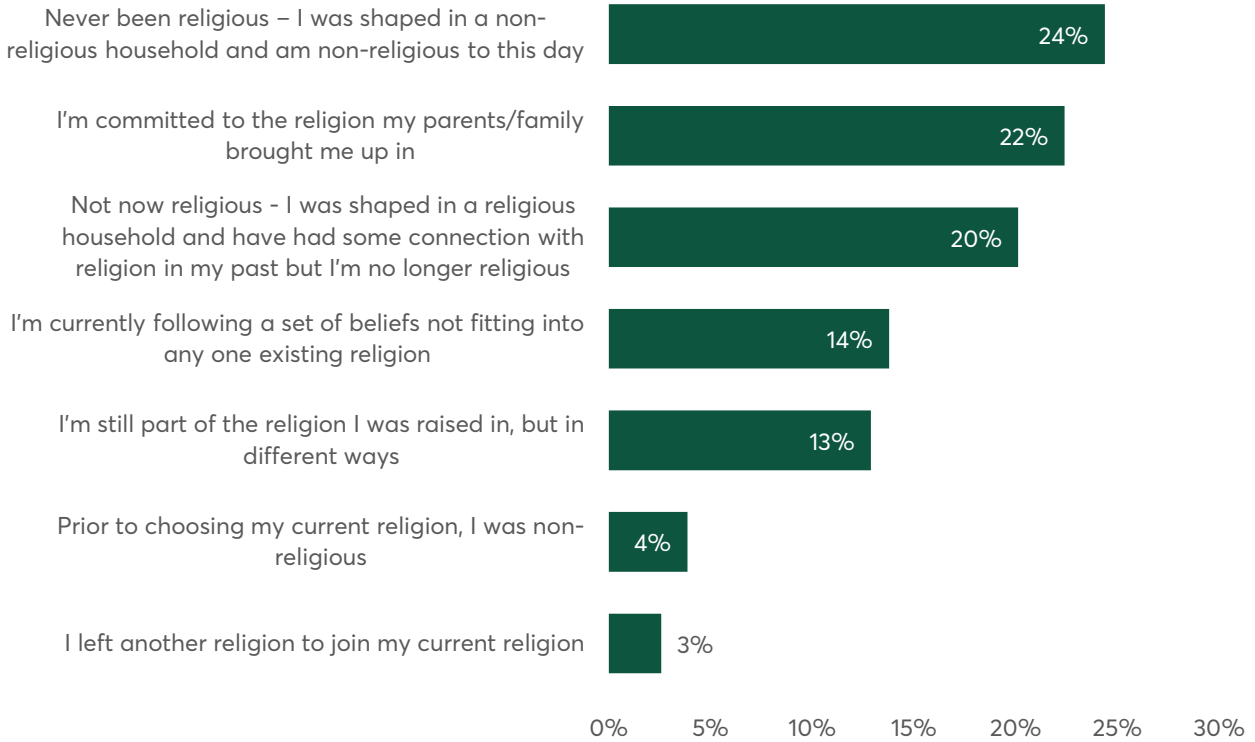
Interestingly, the proportion of those who are extremely or significantly open to changing their beliefs is similar to that in Australia (16% Australians cf. 13%), while a slightly lower proportion in Australia are not at all open (42% cf. 49%).²

Younger generations have a reputation for being more flexible and open to new ideas, and this is true for Gen Z, who are the most likely to be extremely or significantly open to changing their current spiritual or religious beliefs (22% Gen Z cf. 17% Gen Y, 11% Gen X, 6% Baby Boomers). Conversely, Baby Boomers are the most likely generation to be not at all open to change (62% cf. 49% Gen X, 42% Gen Y, 40% Gen Z).

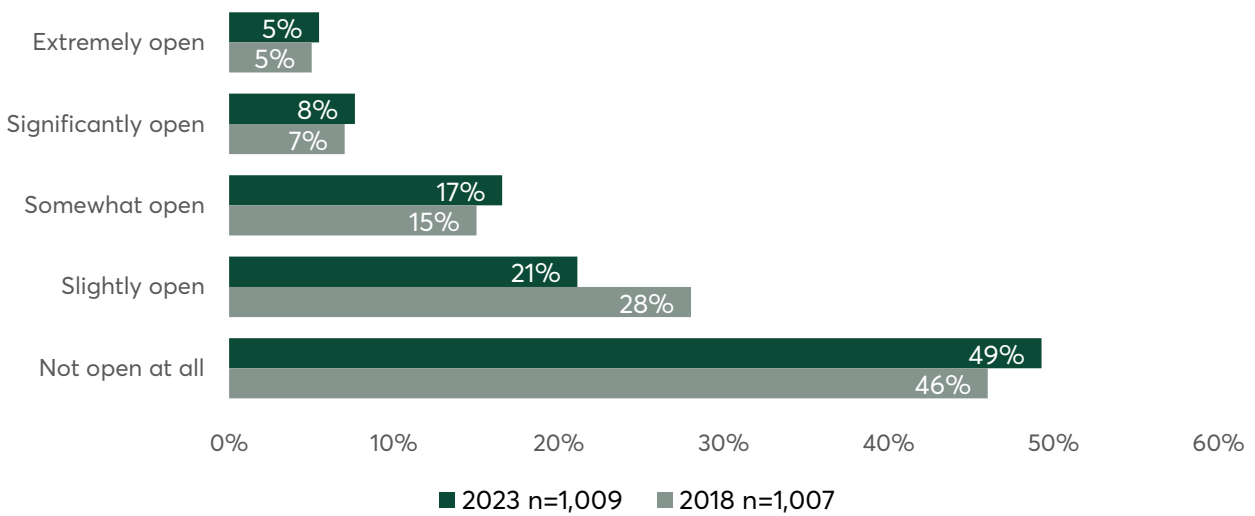
It is people who identify with a religion who are the most likely to be open to changing their current beliefs or practices (19% cf. 13% spiritual but not religious, 5% non-religious).

² McCrindle, 2022, The changing faith landscape of Australia

Please indicate which of the following BEST describes your CURRENT religious status.



Given the right circumstances and evidence, how open would you be to changing your current spiritual/religious beliefs or practices?



People living in Aotearoa New Zealand have a positive outlook on religion.

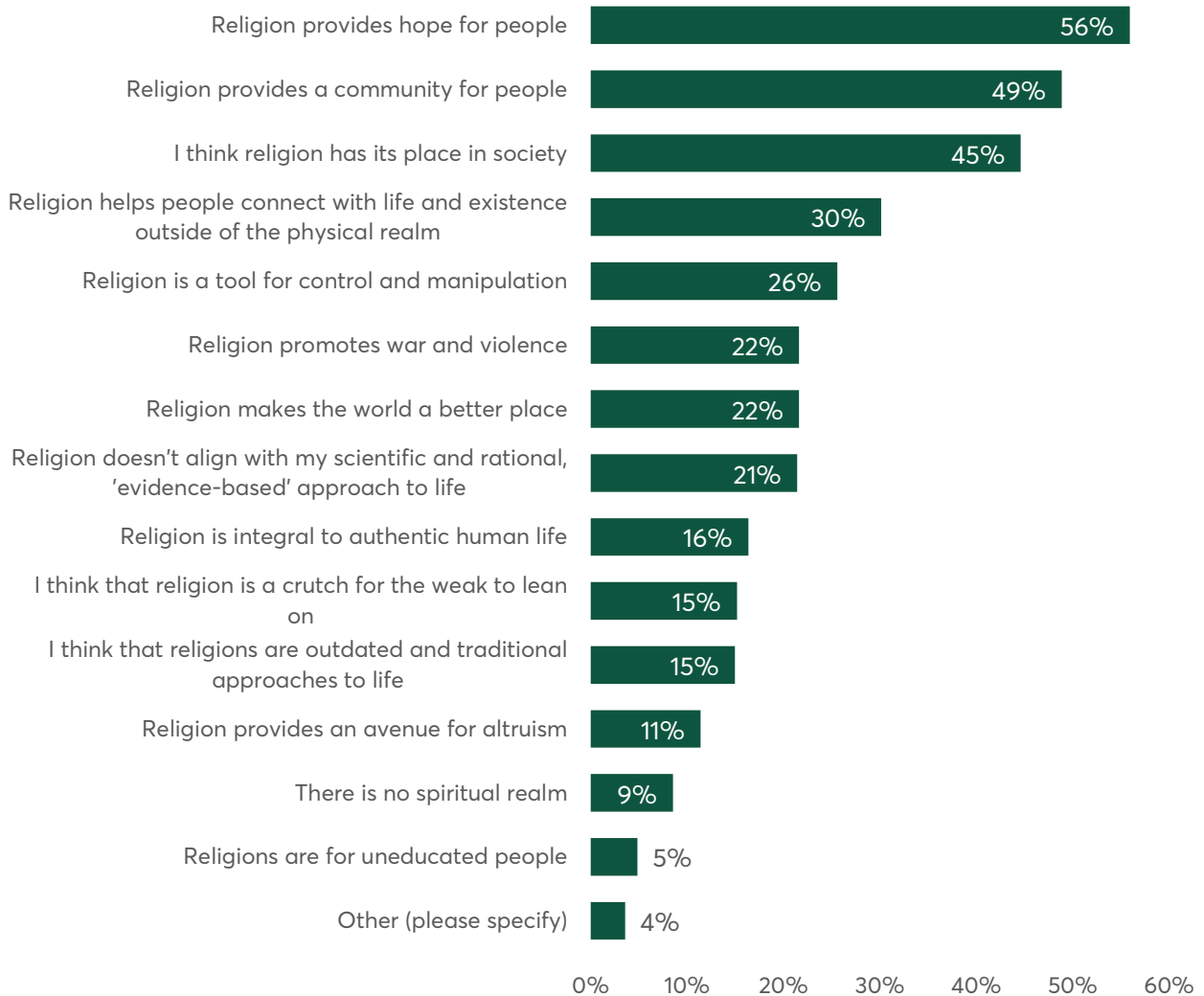
Religion is much more likely to have positive than negative sentiment attached to it in Aotearoa New Zealand. Many believe that religion provides hope for people (56%), that it provides community (49%), and that it has its place in society (45%). Still, some participants believe that religion is a tool for control and manipulation (26%), promotes war and violence (22%), or is a crutch for the weak to lean on (15%). A smaller proportion (5%) think religions are for uneducated people.

Each of the generations shares the same top three thoughts about religion. Baby Boomers, however, are the most likely to believe that religion has its place in society (57% cf. 43% Gen X, 32% Gen Y, 45% Gen Z).

Gen Z are the most likely to believe that religion helps people connect with life and existence outside of the physical realm (37% cf. 27% Gen Y, 25% Gen X, 34% Baby Boomers).

Which of the following statements describes your thoughts about religion?

Please select all that apply.



Karaitiana, Ihu me te hāhi

Christianity, Jesus, and the church

There is warmth towards Christianity.

Of the 39% of participants who identify with or practice Christianity, the most common church denominations are Catholic (23%), Anglican (16%), Presbyterian and Reformed (10%), and Baptist (9%).

Attitudes towards Christianity were tested using a question based on a modified Engel Scale. The first option captures whether the respondent identifies as a Christian. The remaining seven options can be categorised as warm, neutral, or cool towards Christianity, as shown in the graph below (p. 43).

There is consistency in attitudes toward Christianity between this and the 2018 study. The proportion who consider themselves Christian has remained unchanged (31% 2023 cf. 31% 2018). **Note:** This group of participants is lower than the proportion who identify with Christianity when asked about their religious beliefs. In other words, while some are willing to identify with Christianity in general, their responses are more complex when asked specifically about their attitudes towards Christianity. Some, for example, connect with certain beliefs or values of Christianity but retain significant doubts.

Of those who identify as Christian when asked about religion, 74% say they consider themselves a Christian when they are asked to reflect further on their attitudes towards Christianity. A further 21% of this group are warm towards Christianity, while just 2% are cool, despite identifying with the religion.

The overall proportion who are warm towards Christianity, represented by the orange in the graph (p. 43), has remained unchanged since 2018 (26% cf. 26% 2018). This category includes those who believe the central claims of Christianity but don't consider themselves Christian (5%), those who believe many of the claims of Christianity but have some doubts (7%), and those who believe in the ethics and values of Christianity, without practising the faith (14%).

The proportion of who feel neutral towards Christianity, believing that churches and Christianity should have religious freedoms but not wanting to be involved, has also remained consistent since 2018 (13% 2023 cf. 12% 2018).

Three in ten participants (30%) are cool towards Christianity – from feeling like Christianity is not for them (12%) to being passionately opposed (6%).

The younger generations are slightly more likely than their older counterparts to be warm towards Christianity (30% Gen Z, 28% Gen Y cf. 24% Gen X, 25% Baby Boomers). This trend is also reflected in sentiments expressed in focus groups with younger generations, who seem to have a wider appreciation for different faiths and spiritualities.

Māori (37%) and Pākehā (34%) participants are more than 2x as likely as those of Asian ethnicity (15%) or Pacific Peoples (13%) to feel cool towards Christianity.



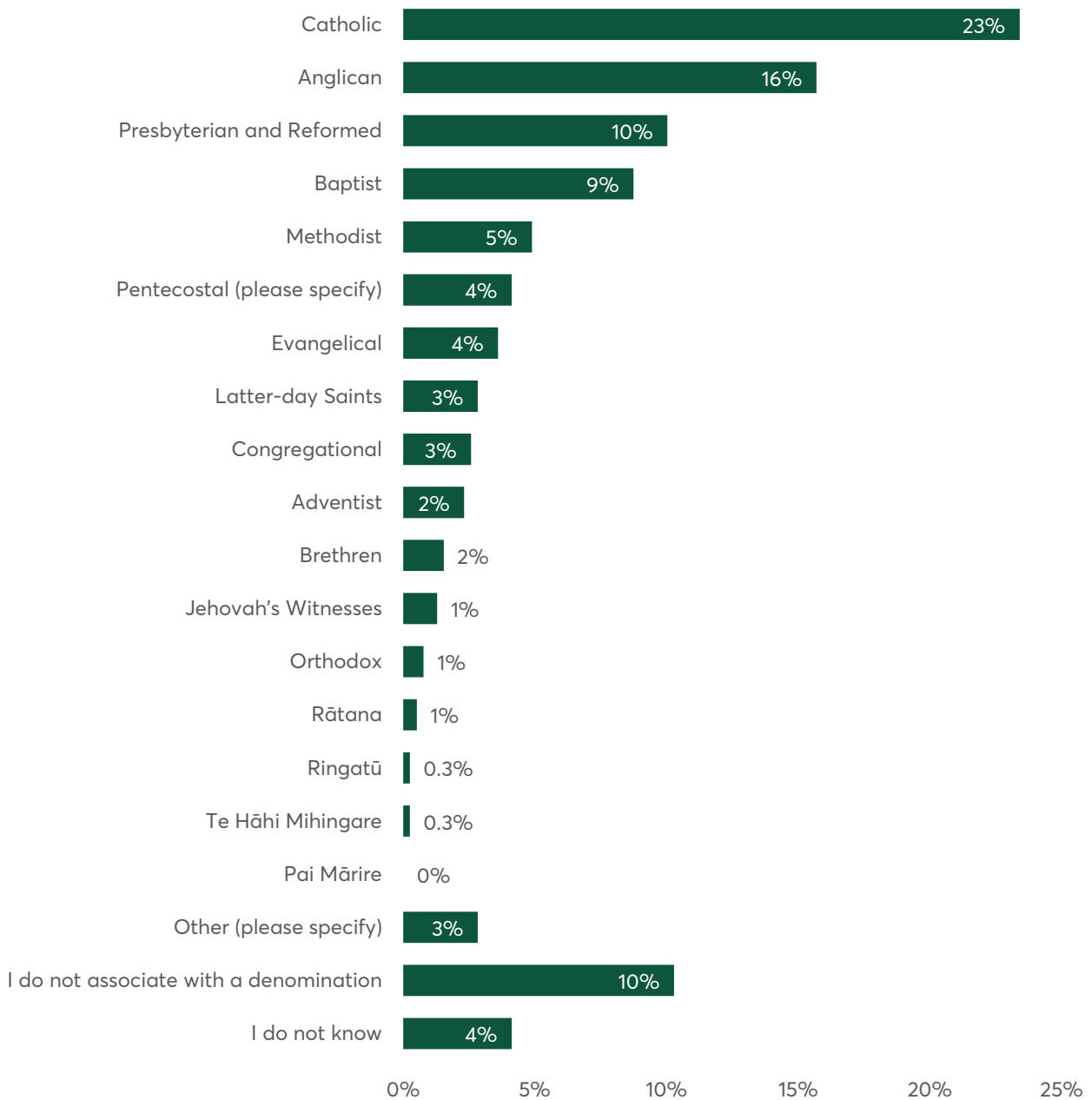
"When I look at Christianity, I really like the idea of it. I think that the core values are really good. Treat others how you want to be treated and be nice to your neighbour."
Gen Z



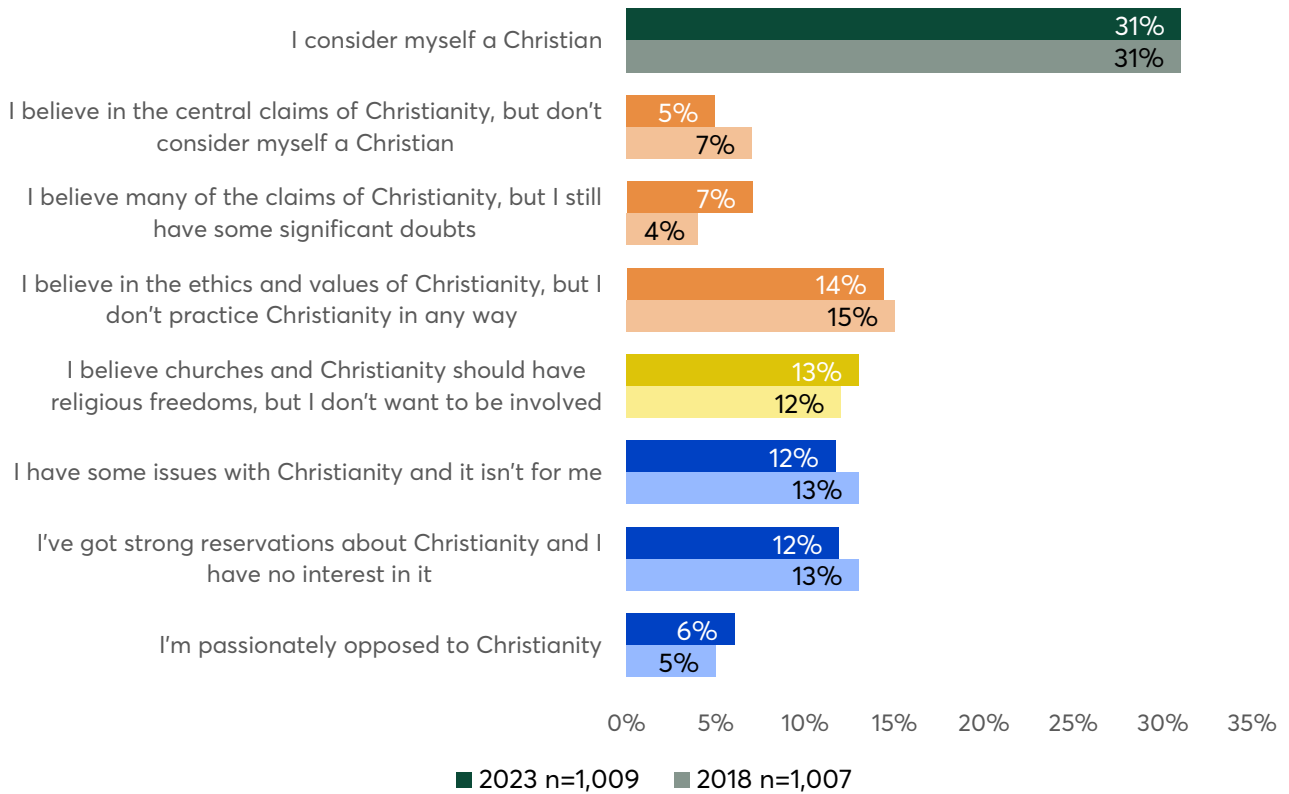
"The core aspects I think are really good, but then the specifics are not so great...people do a lot of good with it and then some people do terrible things with it." Gen Y

Which of the following best describes your church denomination?

Those who identify or practice Christianity n=389



Which of the following BEST describes your CURRENT attitudes towards Christianity?*



*Note: The option 'I believe in the central claims of Christianity, but don't consider myself a Christian' was 'I believe in Christianity, but don't consider myself a Christian' in 2018. 'I believe many of the claims of Christianity, but I still have some significant doubts' was asked as 'I believe much of Christianity, but still have some significant doubts' in 2018.

Some find Christianity or Christians challenging or problematic.

Almost three in five participants (57%) reported finding an aspect of Christianity or Christians challenging or problematic. When participants were asked to specify what it is that they find problematic or challenging, various themes emerged. These barriers highlight areas for the church to be attentive to in its engagement with Aotearoa New Zealand society.

The most regularly cited difficulty people have in this area is that Christian beliefs do not align with their own. This is seen, for example, in participants questioning of the legitimacy of particular miraculous claims or the claim of Christians that their God is the only God. Many participants point, further, to a significant mismatch between Christian beliefs and values and how they see Christians living these out in the world. Participants name intolerance, judgmentalism, the real behaviour and morals of Christians, and hypocrisy among their key barriers to engaging with Christianity. One interesting finding in this study is participants' strong reaction to evangelism when it comes across as pushy or overbearing.



"I don't know if I believe in miracles / non-scientific elements. I disagree with conservative social views e.g. condemnation of sex before marriage / divorce/ homosexuality." Gen Z



"Historically Christianity has been used to justify persecution and war against others. Some still use it for this now." Gen X



"[The elements of Christianity/Christians I find problematic/challenging are] the birth of Jesus, Jesus' miracles, Jesus rising from the dead, the resurrection and many other "events" described in the bible. Christians believe in a God who advocates "an eye for an eye" and Jesus who advocates for peace and love. Christians took part in the Crusades to try to force their views on members of another religion." Baby Boomer



"[The elements of Christianity/Christians I find problematic/challenging are] that they believe their God is the only God." Gen Y



"When Christians are narrow-minded and misinterpret the teachings of Christ." Gen X



"Too many are intolerant to people of other religious beliefs." Baby Boomer



"Some people think because they are a person of god they can think of themselves as better than others." Gen Y



"Some people say they are Christians but they don't have values of a Christian." Gen Z



"There are lovely people who are Christians. Unfortunately, I have met a few who are hypocritical and try to shove religion down your throat. I prefer humans who have great morals are kind, caring and just believe in Karma and good vibes. They are my people." Gen X

Are there any aspects of Christianity and/or Christians that you find problematic or challenging?*		
Theme	Responses	%
No	432	42%
Christian beliefs	81	8%
Intolerance	72	7%
Judgementalism	60	6%
Behaviour & morals	62	6%
Hypocrisy	48	5%
Unwelcome evangelism	48	5%
Conflict & wars	33	3%
Lack of Inclusivity	32	3%
Abuse within churches	26	3%
The church's stance and teaching on LGBTQIA+	23	2%
Finances	17	2%
Church disputes	16	2%
Science & evolution	11	1%
The role of women	11	1%
Belief in the supernatural	9	1%
Pain & suffering	4	0.4%
Other	45	4%

*The data presented in this section was derived from responses to the open-ended question: "Are there any aspects of Christianity and/or Christians that you find problematic or challenging?" To facilitate a comprehensive analysis, the responses were categorised into distinct themes, as depicted above. Notably, some responses encompassed multiple themes. In such instances, the response has been duly recorded under each applicable category.

Jesus is perceived positively in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Participants' familiarity with Jesus has remained relatively consistent since 2018. Many people living in Aotearoa New Zealand know about Jesus, can describe who they think he is, and think highly of him. More than nine in ten participants (96%) have some degree of familiarity with his life, including 41% who know a significant amount about it (cf. 39% 2018) and 27% who know a moderate amount (cf. 28% 2018). Just 4% of participants in 2023 have never heard of Jesus (cf. 3% 2018).

Those who have heard of Jesus are most likely to describe him as the Son of God (56%), followed by a source of inspiration and guidance for many people around the world (38%), or a wise teacher and prophet (33%).

Baby Boomers have the highest awareness of Jesus, with more than three in four (77%) knowing either a significant or moderate amount about his life (cf. 66% Gen X, 60% Gen Y, 65% Gen Z). Baby Boomers are also the most likely generation to think of Jesus as a wise teacher and prophet (41% cf. 29% Gen X, 30% Gen Y, 33% Gen Z).

Pacific Peoples living in Aotearoa New Zealand are most likely to know a significant or moderate amount about Jesus and his life (77%), while those who are Māori are the least familiar (63% cf. 70% Asian, 66% Pākehā).

Pacific Peoples are also the most likely to believe that Jesus is the Son of God (70% cf. 58% Asian, 56% Māori, 54% Pākehā).

Those familiar with Jesus tend to describe him in a positive light, using words such as loving (57%), caring (54%), kind (51%), and faithful (50%). The top half of the list of responses to this question is markedly positive. The first more 'negative' sentiment towards Jesus is held by 7% of participants, who describe him

as old-fashioned (7%). Some also think of Jesus as divisive (7%), opinionated (6%), or judgemental (6%).

Pacific Peoples familiar with Jesus are the most likely to think highly of him. Interestingly, they are much more likely than those of other ethnicities to think of Jesus as honest (79% cf. 52% Māori, 51% Asian, 47% Pākehā).

The 'good news' of Christianity is perceived to be about salvation

Participants were asked through a qualitative question what they understand 'good news' means to Christians, in light of Christian faith being grounded in the belief that Jesus is 'good news' for the world. The greatest proportion of respondents indicate they are unsure what 'good news' means to Christians. For those who do have an idea, the most common response is that the good news is about salvation. Many also believe it is a message of life after death, followed by those who believe it's about having hope.



"He saves people from their sins if they surrender to him." Baby Boomer



"Jesus died for us to save us from sin." Gen Y



"That he saved humanity and he is the reason we are still alive, hence why they should devote their lives to him." Gen Z



"A hope for an enjoyable afterlife." Gen X



"They will live forever on the other side." Baby Boomer



"[The good news] means he brings hope to them." Gen Y

When asked what would be 'good news' for them, the greatest proportion of participants are unsure. For many, 'good news' would be some sense of salvation – whether that means to be saved from their current circumstances in life or saved in some way after they

have died. Some participants express that the existence of a saviour would be good news.



"I do not have an answer." Gen X



"Maybe the saving of people." Gen Z



"Freedom from desire and liberation from the cycle of birth and death." Baby Boomer



"There is a Saviour." Baby Boomer

When Christians describe what 'good news' means to them, they are most likely to suggest that it is about being saved now and for the future. For some, it is also about being able to pass on the 'good news' to others.



"A hope for a good afterlife." Gen X



"A purpose in this life and hope for the future." Baby Boomer

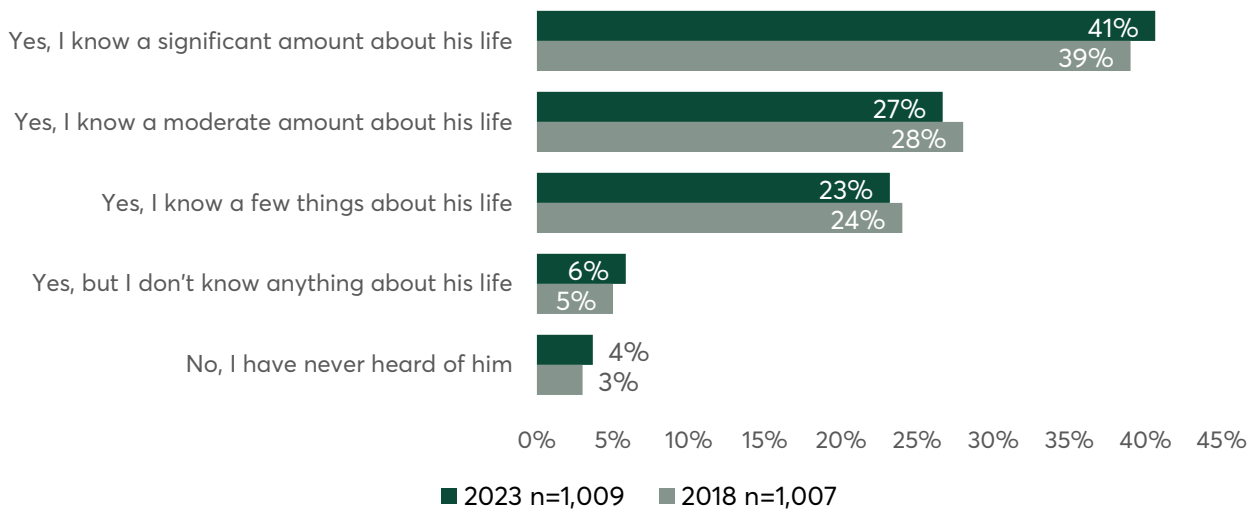


"The gospel of salvation." Gen Z



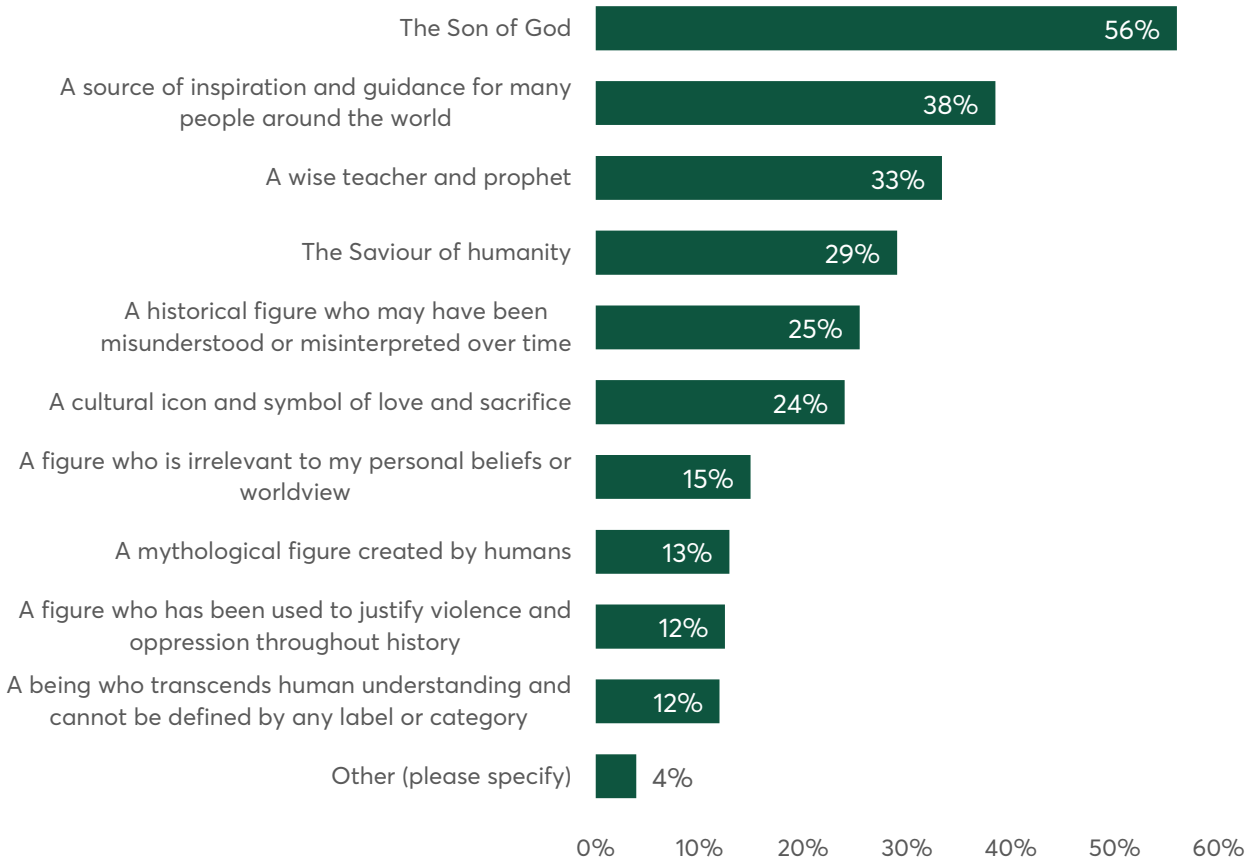
"Sharing the good the news to those that want to be saved." Gen Y

Have you heard of Jesus, the central figure in Christianity?



Who do you think Jesus is?

Those who have heard of Jesus n=972

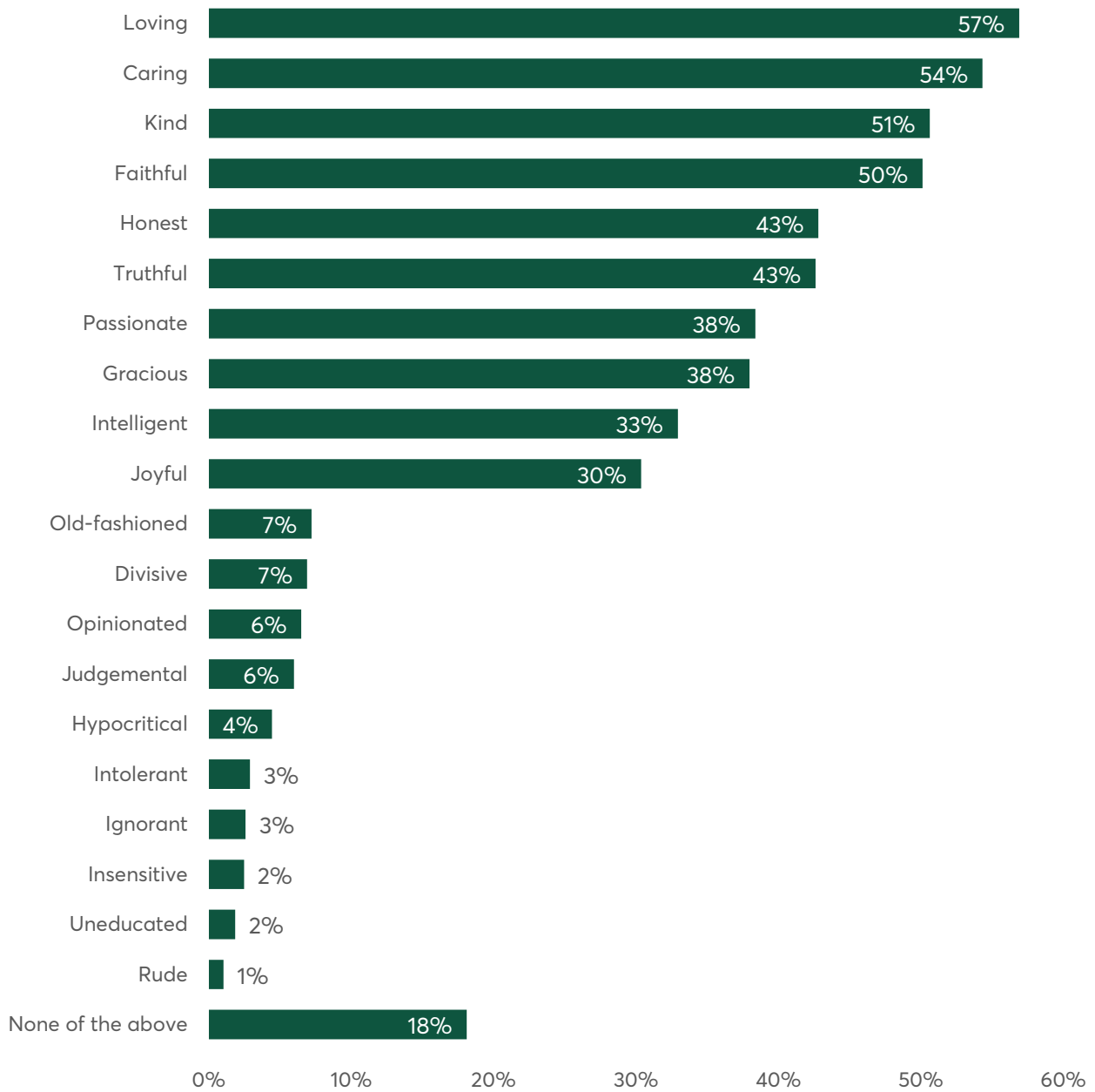


Top perceptions of Jesus by generation

Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
The Son of God (60%)	The Son of God (50%)	The Son of God (58%)	The Son of God (57%)
A source of inspiration and guidance for many people around the world (37%)	A source of inspiration and guidance for many people around the world (34%)	A source of inspiration and guidance for many people around the world (37%)	A source of inspiration and guidance for many people around the world (45%)
The Saviour of humanity (35%)	The Saviour of humanity (30%)	A wise teacher and prophet (29%)	A wise teacher and prophet (42%)

How would you describe Jesus, the central figure in Christianity?

Those who have heard of Jesus n=972



Nine in ten know a Christian.

Nine in ten respondents (91%) know at least one person who is a Christian, which has remained consistent since 2018 (91%). The proportion who know more than ten Christians, however, has grown (50% cf. 42% 2018). The most likely way people have encountered Christians is through a friend or family member who is Christian (63%), at a church or religious gathering (43%), or at a community event or social group (29%). People are less likely to engage with Christians through volunteer work/community service (18%) or online communities or social media (12%).

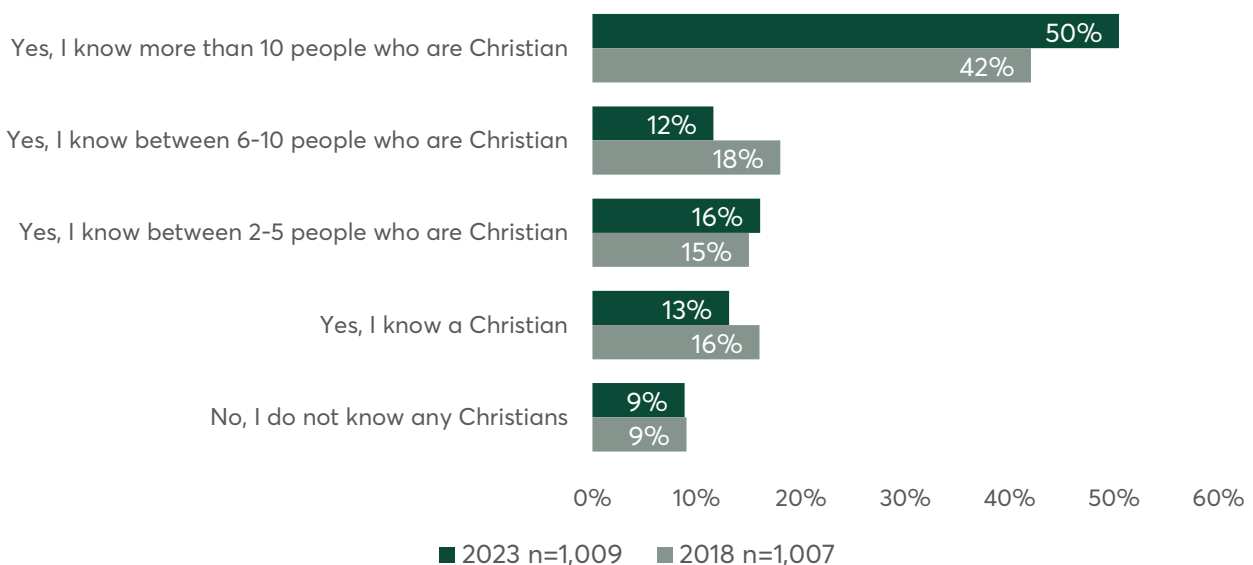
Those who know a Christian are likely to describe them as caring (58%), kind (55%), faithful (53%), and loving (49%), while some associate more negative perceptions with the Christians they know (21% opinionated, 21% judgemental, 17% old-fashioned, 17% hypocritical). A greater proportion of people use negative descriptors for Christians than for Jesus.

Gen Y are more likely than other generations to associate Christians they know with negative sentiments. They are the most likely to describe Christians as judgemental, while their younger counterparts in Gen Z are least likely to describe Christians in this way (14% Gen Z cf. 27% Gen Y, 23% Gen X, 20% Baby Boomers). This is consistent with a swing, among Gen Z respondents, towards openness and positivity when it comes to faith and spirituality.



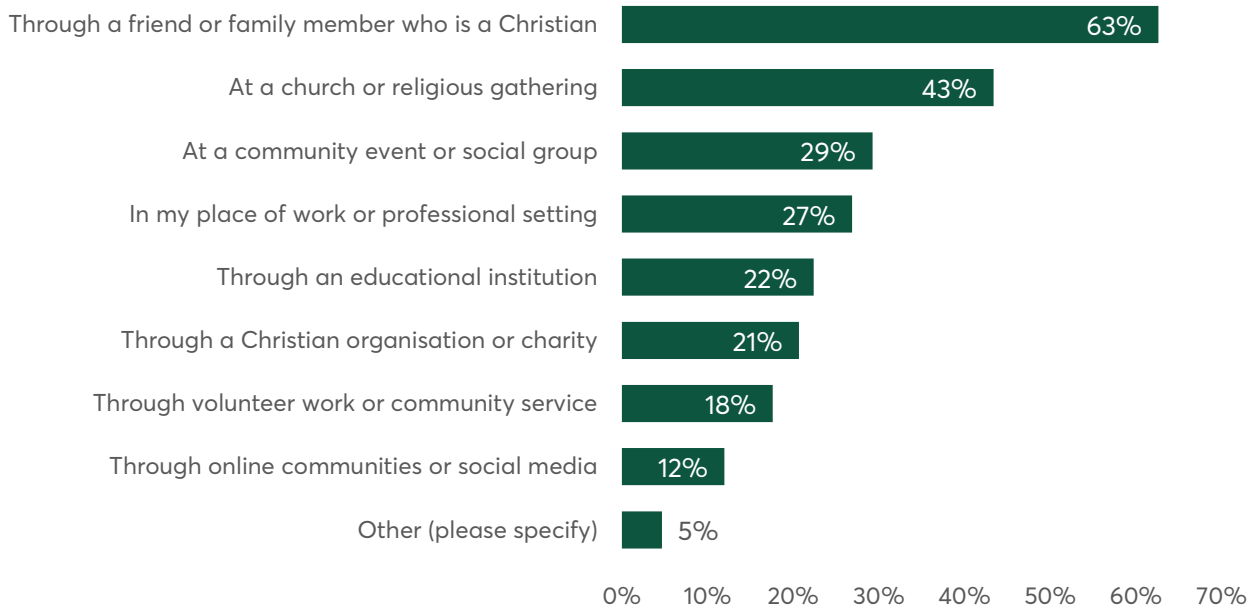
"I've met so many Christians throughout my life from all kinds of Christian backgrounds, and that's the thing with Christianity as well; there's so many iterations and so many different groups that it's really hard to understand. But obviously this is an assumption, but I think they all believe that their religion that they subscribe to is the correct one and the true one. And that can kind of colour their interaction with people when, in my experience, some of them can be not very open to other people's disagreeing beliefs to them." Gen Y

Do you know someone who is a Christian?



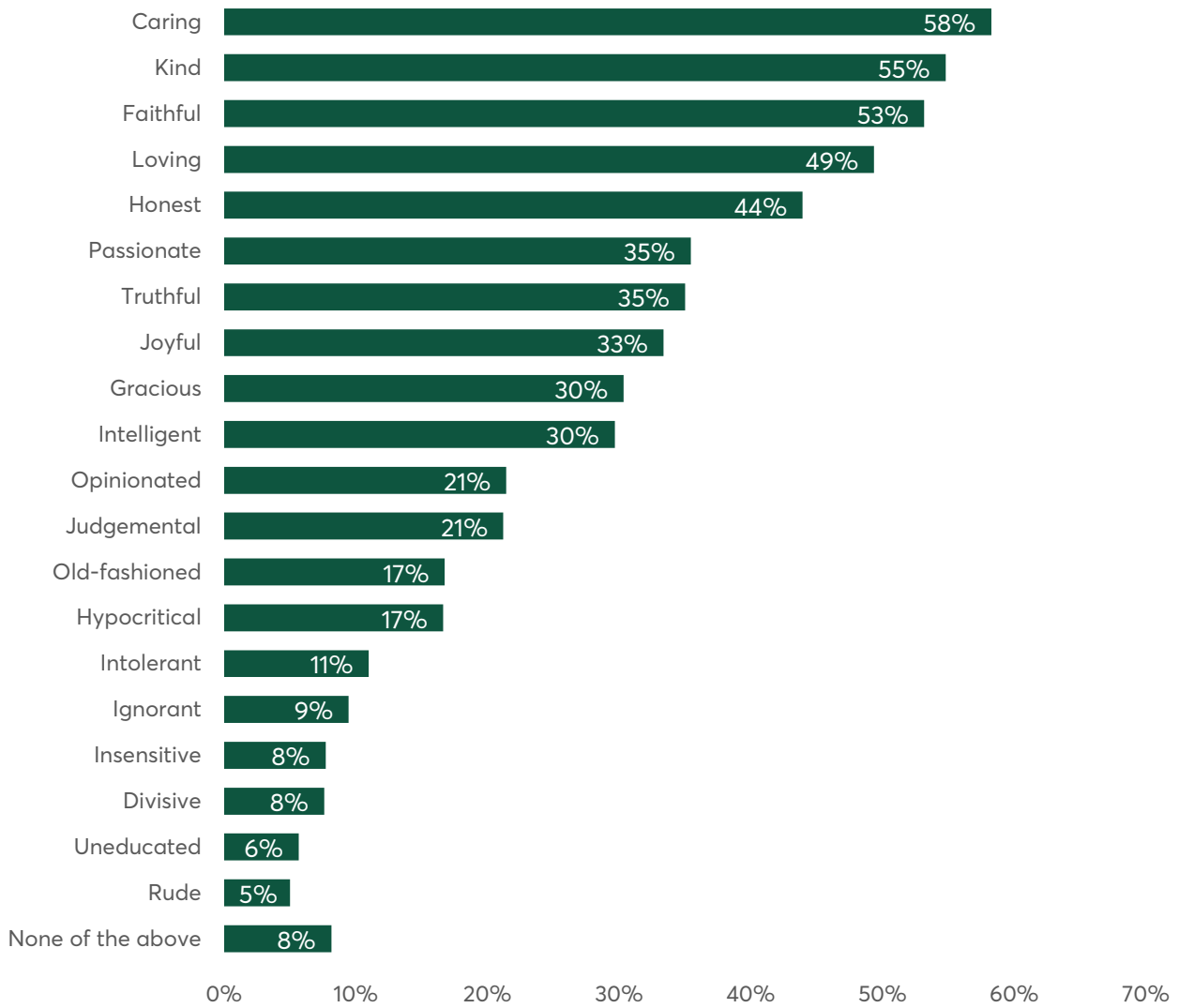
Where or how have you encountered or engaged with Christians in your life?

Those who know a Christian n=920



Overall, how would you describe the Christians you know?

Those who know a Christian n=920



Areas with the greatest different between the generations

	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Judgemental	14%	27%	23%	20%
Caring	55%	54%	55%	67%
Honest	43%	39%	40%	52%

Churches are perceived as having a positive impact on society – but there is room to improve.

Churches are valued for supporting local communities

One in three living in Aotearoa New Zealand (37%) are extremely or very aware of the churches near them. They are more likely to describe the impact of the churches near them as positive (38%) rather than negative (6%). Three in ten (30%), however, believe the impact of local churches is neither positive nor negative, and 26% don't know enough to answer.

Gen Z have the greatest awareness of the churches near them (47% extremely/very aware cf. 35% Gen Y, 29% Gen X, 41% Baby Boomers). Reflective of their more open attitude toward faith and spirituality, half of Gen Z (50%) believe the churches near them have had a positive impact (cf. 34% Gen Y, 35% Gen X, 38% Baby Boomers).

Pacific Peoples are more likely than those of other ethnicities to believe the impact of the churches near them has been positive (58% cf. 50% Asian, 41% Māori, 32% Pākehā).

Some who have observed a negative impact from local churches feel that churches promote harmful perspectives.



"They are all in little groups and if you are not part of that group then they want nothing to do with you." Baby Boomer



"Preaching intolerance of others." Baby Boomer



"They push their beliefs and agenda onto the community." Gen Z

The work of churches is noticed and valued across Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly in key community service areas. Respondents highly or somewhat value the work of the church in offering financial assistance or food relief programs (72%), caring for people who are homeless (72%), providing disaster relief assistance (72%), and providing a place for the community (71%). The areas in which the work of churches is least valued in society are their response to climate change (31%) and their teaching on faith and spirituality (24%).



"I'd say the most impact a religion can have is just on a local community level, because it tends to bring communities together, like, local areas, and it creates a sense of belonging on a large scale." Gen Z



"[Churches in my area] are friendly and are helpful whenever I and my family have needed help from them, and I have never had any issues with them and neither have my neighbours." Gen X

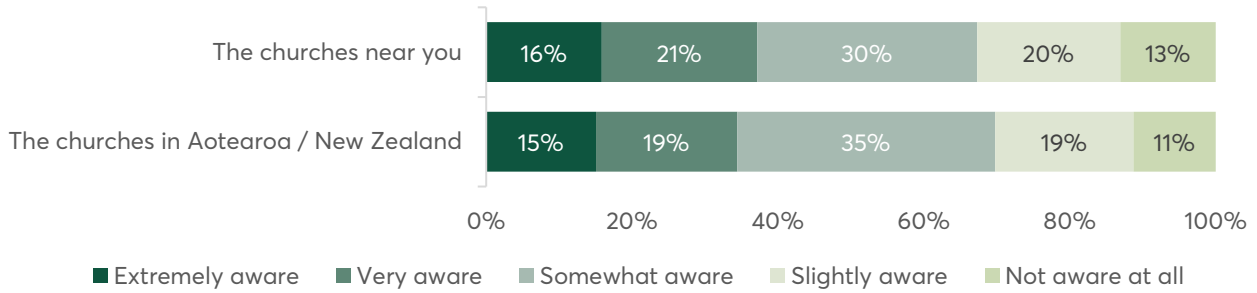


"[Churches in my area are] taking care of some social issues, and providing a place for folk to gather together." Baby Boomer

Interestingly, Gen Z are more likely than other generations to highly or somewhat value the work of churches and Christian organisations in responding to climate change (58% cf. 43% Gen Y, 43% Gen X, 39% Baby Boomers).

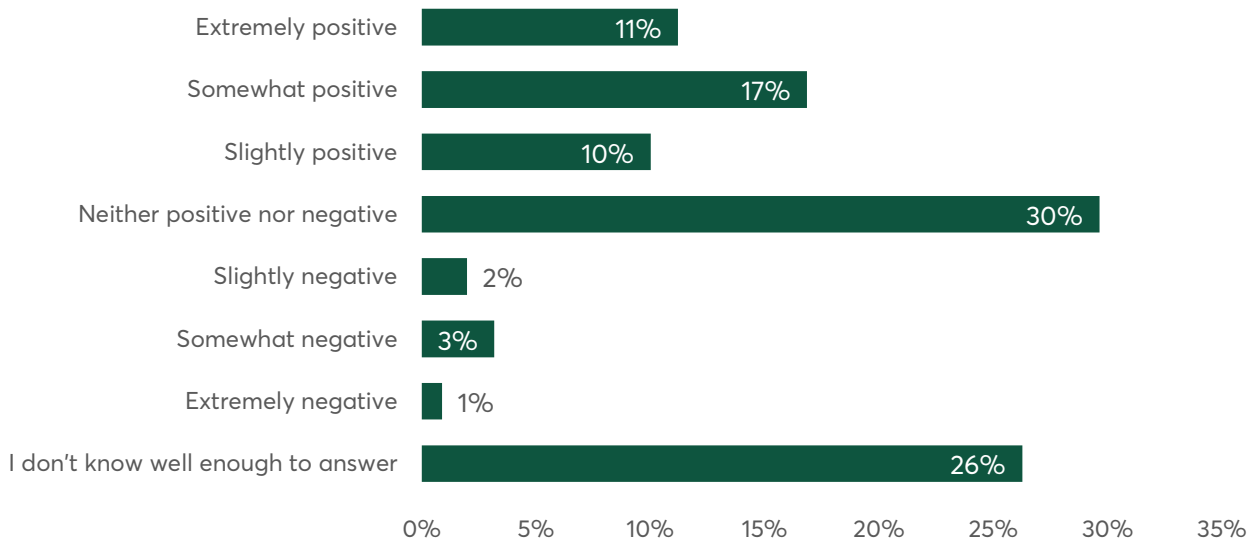
In addition, Pacific Peoples (64%), those of Asian ethnicity (60%), and Māori (50%) are more likely than Pākehā (37%) to value the work of the church in responding to climate change.

How aware are you of the following?

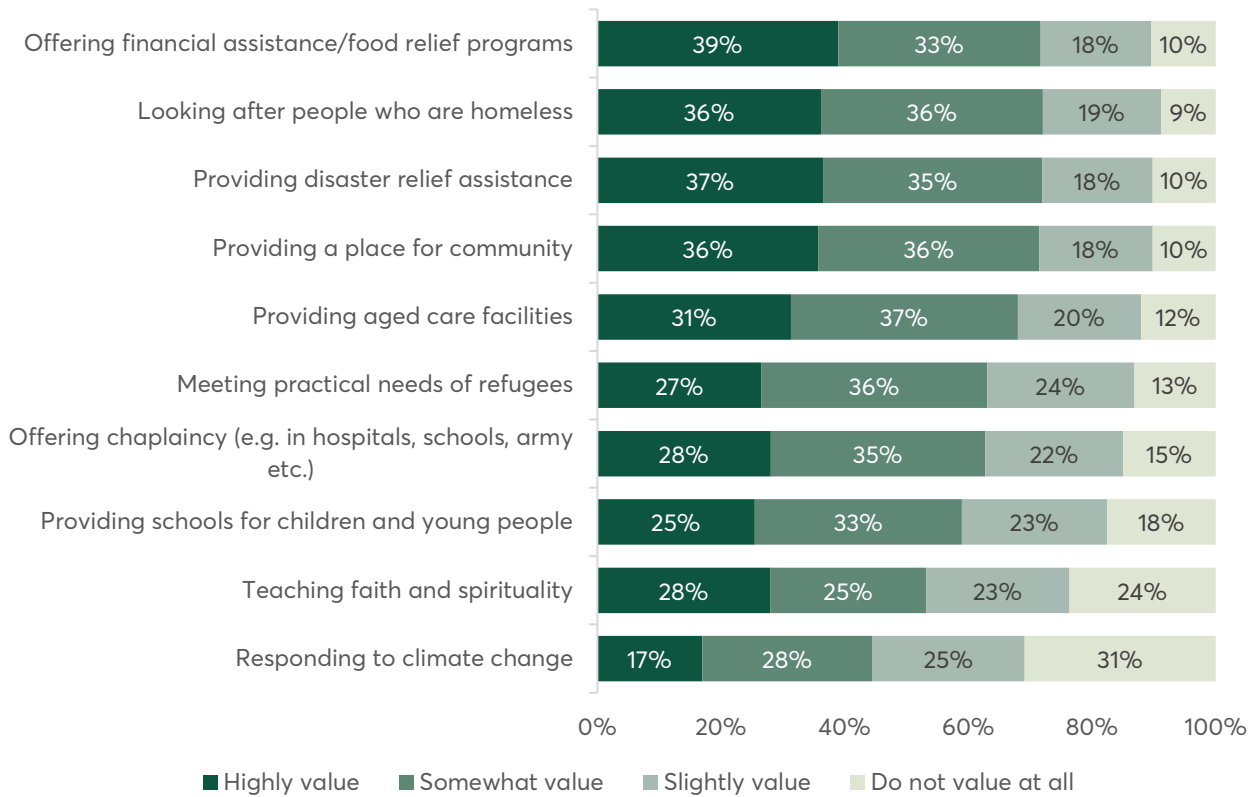


How aware are you of the following?				
<i>Extremely/very aware</i>	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
The churches near you	47%	35%	29%	41%
The churches in Aotearoa New Zealand	43%	34%	27%	36%

How would you describe the impact of the churches near you?



How much do you value the work of churches and Christian organisations in each of the following areas?



What the different generations are most likely to highly/somewhat value			
Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Looking after people who are homeless (72%)	Providing a place for community (71%)	Offering financial assistance/food relief programs (73%)	Looking after people who are homeless (75%)
Providing aged care facilities (70%)	Providing disaster relief assistance (71%)	Looking after people who are homeless (72%)	Providing disaster relief assistance (75%)
Providing a place for community (70%)	Offering financial assistance/food relief programs (71%)	Providing disaster relief assistance (71%)	Providing a place for community (74%)

Invitations are important for people to consider attending church.

The top reason for someone to attend a Christian church service or event is if they were invited to a special event like a wedding, funeral, or christening (48%). Others would be motivated to attend for special occasions such as Christmas or Easter (28%). The power of an invitation is evident, with one in four respondents (25%) considering attending if a family member or friend invited them to an event, or for the opportunity to help in the community (24%).

For those who don't identify with Christianity, the top three motivators to attend a church service or event are special events (45%), an opportunity to help in the community (19%), and an invitation from a Christian friend or family member (17%).

Baby Boomers are much more likely than other generations to be motivated to attend a Christian church service for special events such as weddings, funerals, or christenings (61% cf. 47% Gen X, 45% Gen Y, 31% Gen Z).

Gen Z are more likely than others to be open to attending if they were invited to a weekend service by a family member or friend (27% cf. 22% Gen Y, 15% Gen X, 16% Baby Boomers).

Across ethnicities, special events are among the top motivators to attend a Christian church service or event. Pacific Peoples are the most open to attend a church to engage in a worship experience (44% cf. 25% Asian, 19% Pākehā, 9% Māori).

How churches relate to society can improve

While the church is broadly seen as having a positive impact in Aotearoa New Zealand, people are looking to Christians to work on some critical areas. Some would like to see the church improve in its

transparency and be more upfront and clear about its work, mission, and finances.



"I'd like some transparency from the churches. If they are the upstanding members of society, and the community as they claim to be, why aren't they contributing to the community?" Gen Z



"[The impacts of the church are] very missed. There is the positive impacts, where these organisations are offering their services to our communities. It also does provide the impact of a social, community feel. I find that that does bring in collectives of people. The downfall of that is I wonder about the vulnerability of the followers, as well as the other things behind the scenes, and the way that they use their power to manipulate either, their followers, or our children. And the money side of things, there is the negatives there too." Gen Y



"I think many organisations, but probably more religious organisations tend to have a reputation for being really inward-looking, and closed off. When something goes wrong, you kind of double down and don't admit your mistakes. So I think being able to be more transparent and genuine and role-modelling (positive) behaviours... it's a way to continue inspiring the trust that people could have in you." Gen Y



"I think it comes down to good governance as well. Having leaders that actually are accountable to the community... It's having people that truly represent the church and the church communities, and the way that we connect to the communities, and making sure that they're accountable to the people within the church and also those who are outside of the church." Gen Z

Others would like to see the church find a helpful balance between being authentic to its values and traditions and considering how to relate to contemporary society.



"I think often any interaction I've had with the church, it's been when they try and relate to the whole youthful church, with the church concerts and stuff. I get it, but it's forced, I think, so they should stop it." Gen Z



"One of the reasons I left the church was because there were so many questions I had that leaders couldn't answer for me. And it was all about having faith and believing but I never got answers to the questions I was asking. Also, from my experience working in the social sector, I would bring Christianity into the modern world, hold on to those values and beliefs, but increase your tolerance and understanding of some of the other social issues that are going on, because conversely, I see the good that Christianity is doing in the community as well." Baby Boomer

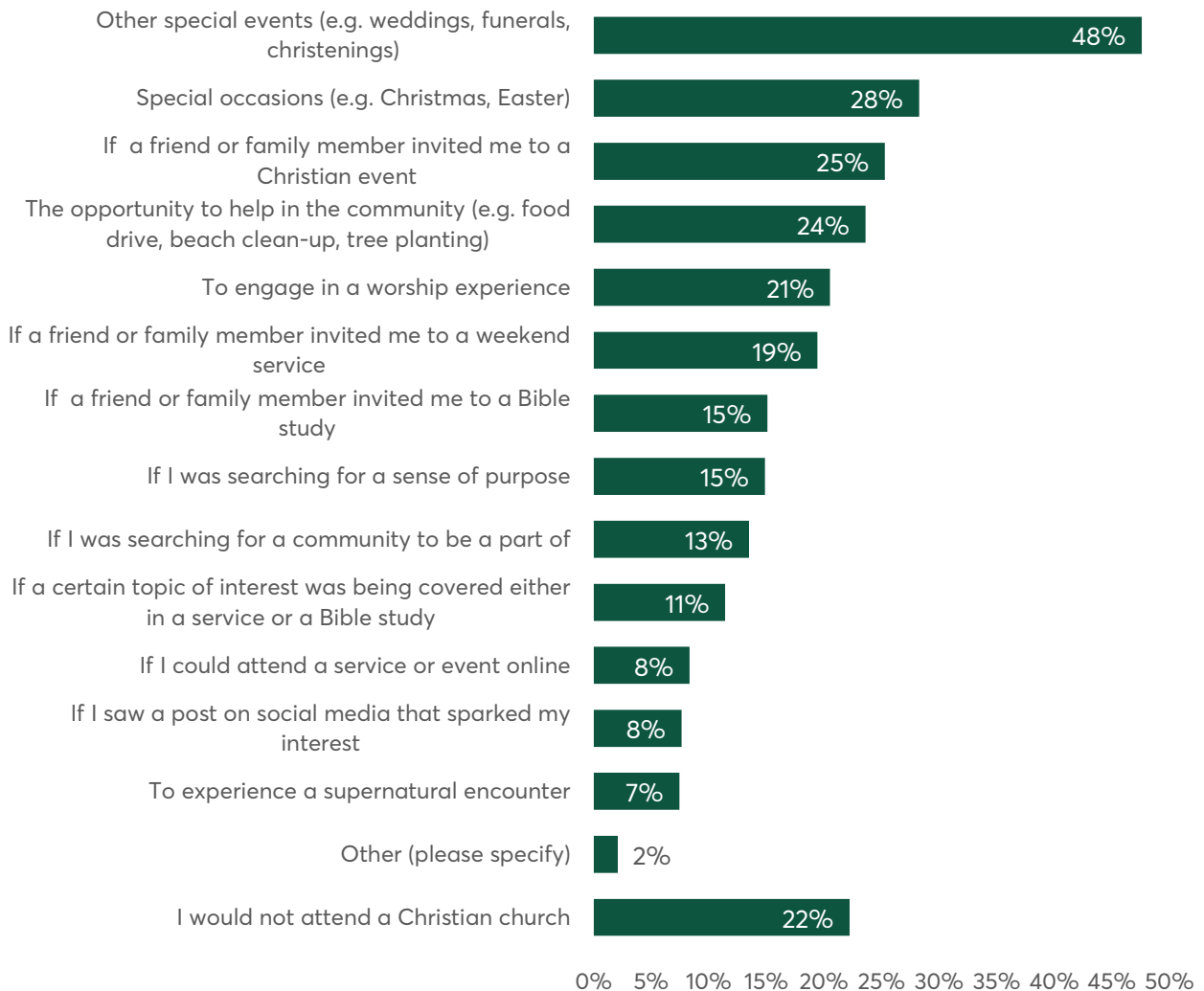


I meet people who say they are Christians and they are truly wonderful and I meet people who say they are Christians and I look at them and I think you're not thinking of those poor people without food, those poor people without money, you're not thinking of your neighbour who's really struggling and I think of myself and think, well, I'm looking after a 90 year old neighbour who has no relatives whatsoever. I've taken him on. He's a lovely man. I really enjoy doing it. I don't have to be a Christian to do that, but I do. Baby Boomer

For those who desire to be a help to others in the area of faith and spirituality, it is important to continue to listen to these voices – both to the real challenges that are impacting on this aspect of life today and to the profound place that it still holds for the people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Which of the following are reasons you would attend a Christian church service or event?

Please select all that apply



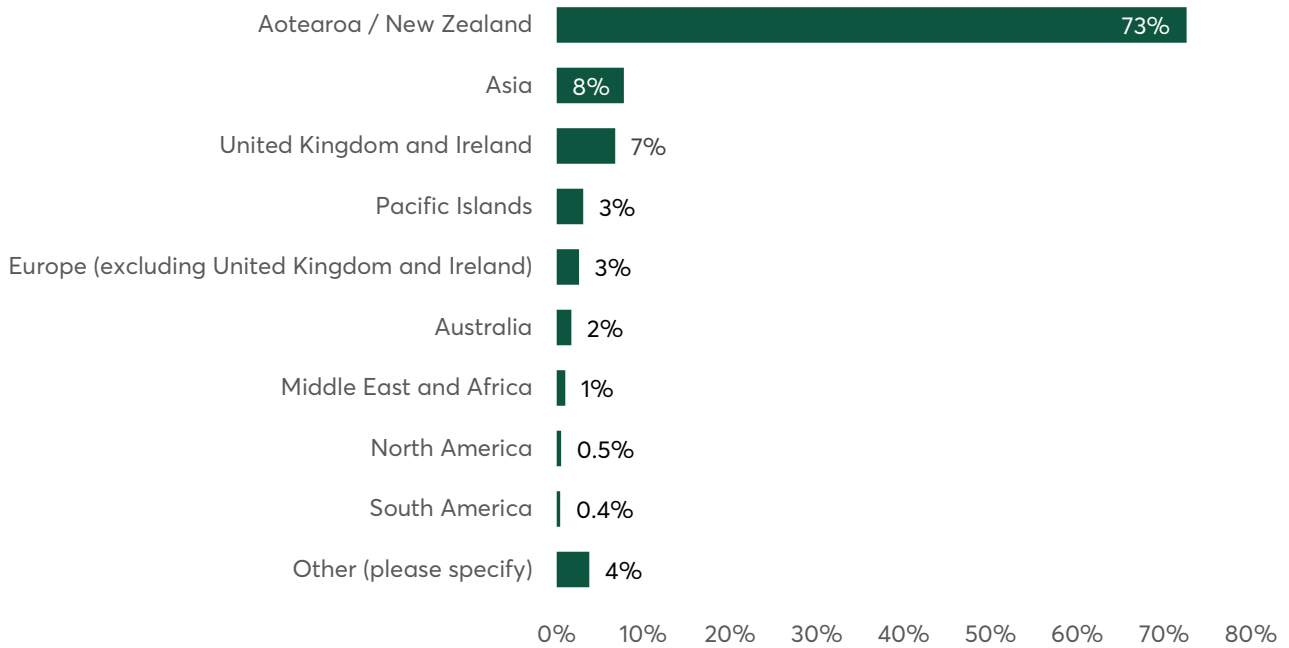
Motivations to attend a Christian church service/event by ethnicity			
Māori	Pākehā	Pacific Peoples	Asian
Other special events (45%)	Other special events (49%)	Other special events (56%)	Special occasions (32%)
The opportunity to help in the community (25%)	Special occasions (27%)	If a friend or family member invited me to a Christian event (52%)	Other special events (31%)
Special occasions (24%)	The opportunity to help in the community (24%)	To engage in a worship experience (44%)	To engage in a worship experience (25%)

Motivations to attend a Christian church service/event by generation			
Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Other special events (31%)	Other special events (45%)	Other special events (47%)	Other special events (61%)
If a friend or family member invited me to a Christian event (30%)	Special occasions (29%)	Special occasions (25%)	Special occasions (35%)
If a friend or family member invited me to a weekend service (27%)	If a friend or family member invited me to a Christian event (29%)	The opportunity to help in the community (23%)	The opportunity to help in the community (24%)

Whakaaro tāpiripiri

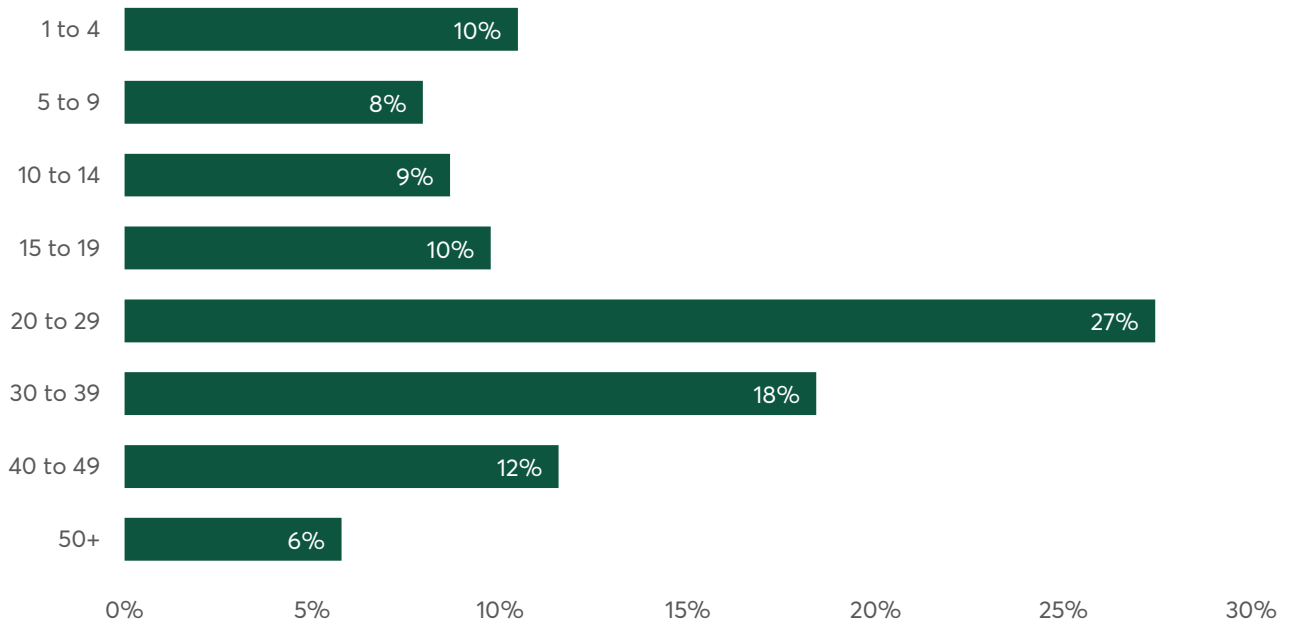
Additional demographics

Which country/region were you born in?



How old were you when you first moved to Aotearoa / New Zealand?

Those born outside of Aotearoa New Zealand n=277



Were either of your parents born overseas?

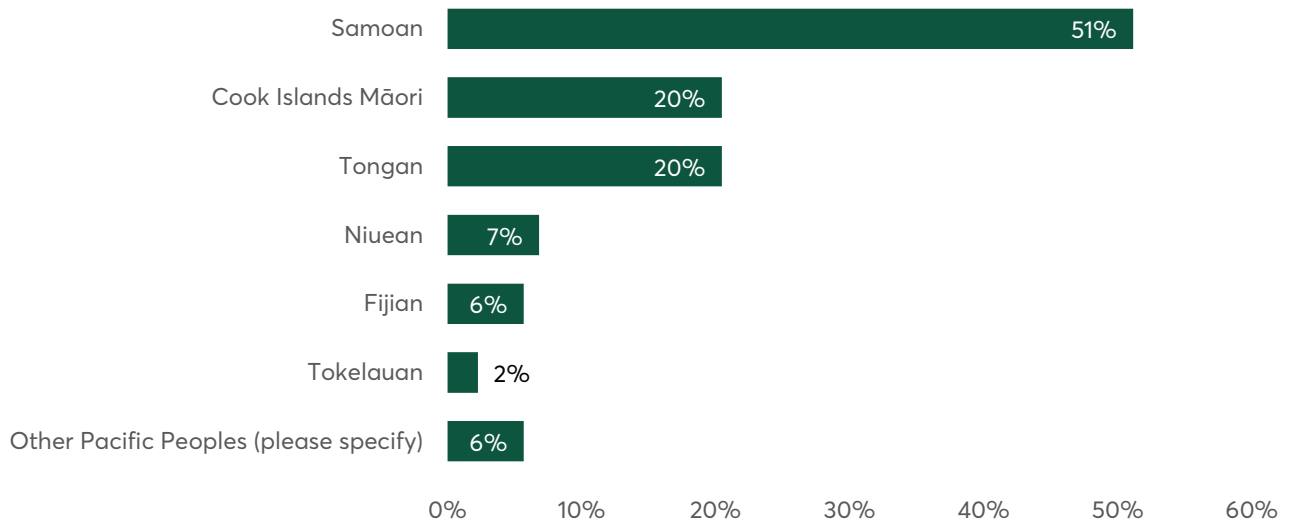


- Yes, one of my parents was born overseas
- Yes, both of my parents were born overseas
- No, my parents were born in Aotearoa / New Zealand

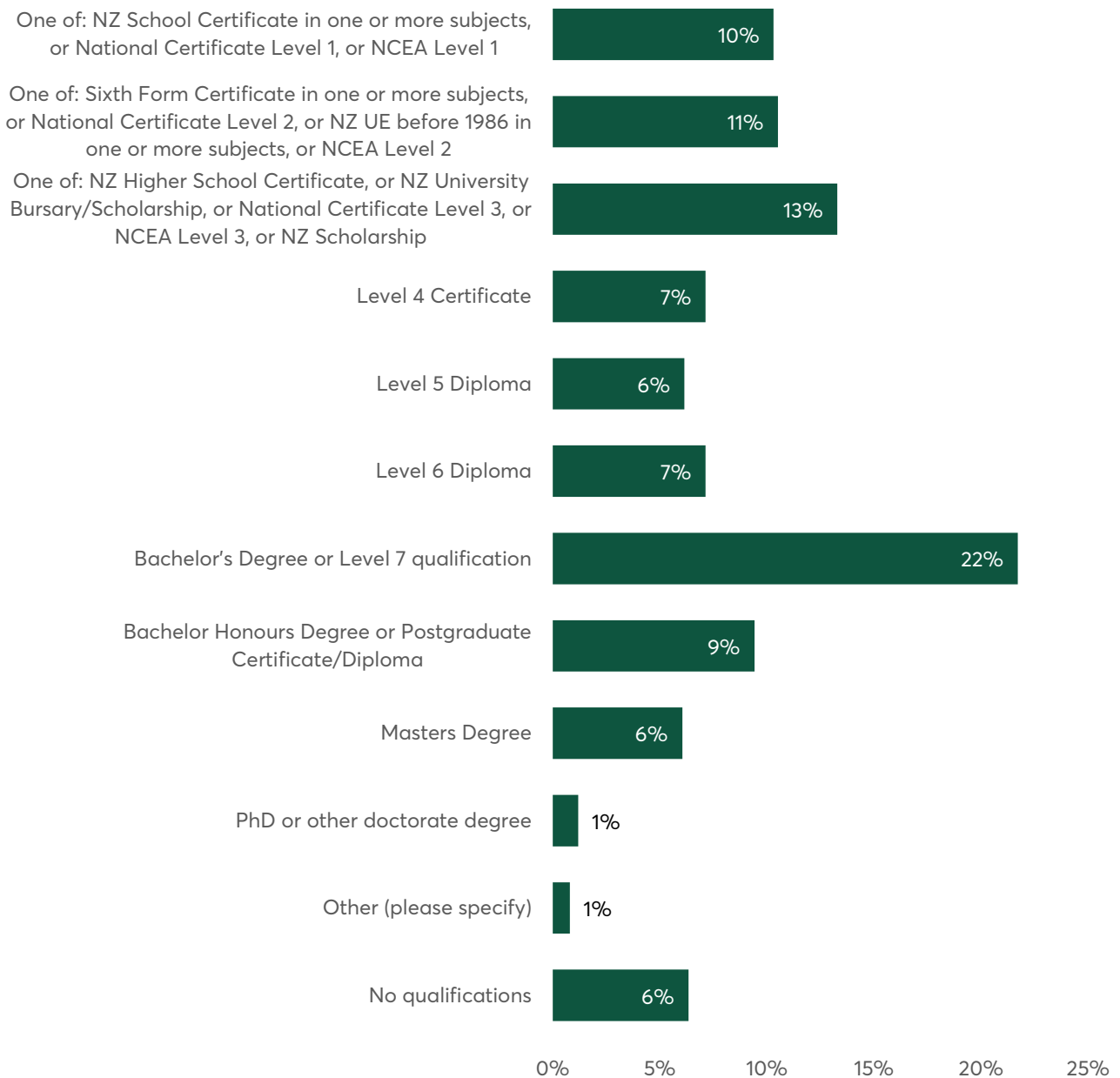
Which Pacific Peoples group do you most identify with?

Please select all that apply.

Pacific Peoples n=88



What is your highest level of completed education?





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