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# Faith and Belief in New Zealand

MAY 2018





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# Research objectives

The 2018 *Faith and Belief in New Zealand* report, commissioned by Wilberforce Foundation, explores attitudes towards religion, spirituality and Christianity in New Zealand. The purpose of this research is to investigate faith and belief blockers among Kiwis and to understand perceptions, opinions and attitudes towards Jesus, the Church and Christianity.

# Research methodology

This research employed qualitative and quantitative methods to explore Kiwi perceptions and attitudes towards Christianity, the Church and Jesus. These methods included a nationally representative survey of Kiwis, a series of focus groups with non-Christians and analysis of Census data from Statistics New Zealand.

## National survey of 1,007 Kiwis

This survey was developed in accordance with the existing Faith and Belief survey (deployed nationally in Australia in 2011 and 2017). A number of new questions were also added to capture data for the New Zealand context. The nationally representative survey was deployed to an online panel. The survey was completed by 1,007 Kiwis, who are representative of the population by gender, age and region. To survey New Zealand’s population (approx. 4,700,000 Kiwis), with a confidence level of 95%, the minimum sample size required is 385. For robust public datasets we utilise a sample of 1,000.

The survey was in field from the 6<sup>th</sup> of March until the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

## Focus groups with 26 non-Christians

Three focus groups were conducted to explore the attitudes of Kiwis across three different generations who do not identify as Christians. The purpose of the groups was to understand their perspectives, experiences and attitudes towards religion and spirituality.

The groups were held in Auckland on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2018. The 26 participants were segmented by age, with one group conducted for each of the following generations:

	Female participants	Male participants	Total participants
Generation Y (aged 24-38)	4	4	8
Generation X (aged 39-53)	5	4	9
Baby Boomers (aged 54-72)	4	5	9

## Throughout this report

Reference to the generations throughout this report refer to the following age categories:

- Generation Z: 18-23 year olds (those born from 1995 to 2009)
- Generation Y: 24-38 year olds (those born from 1980-1994)
- Generation X: 39-53 year olds (those born from 1965-1979)
- Baby Boomers: 54-72 year olds (those born from 1946-1964)
- Builders: 73+ year olds (those born from 1925- 1945)

Focus group participants are referred to as 'non-Christian participants' throughout this report.

### Terminology and segmentation

Segmentation is used throughout this report to differentiate survey respondents based on their religious affiliation and involvement.

Q. What religion do you currently practice or identify with?		
Segment name	Option/s chosen	% of New Zealand population
<b>Kiwis who identify with Christianity</b>	Christianity (Catholic/Orthodox), Christianity (Protestant/Evangelical/Pentecostal)	33%
<b>Non-religious</b>	None – I do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief	35%
<b>Spiritual but not religious</b>	I have spiritual beliefs but I don't identify with any main religion	20%
<b>Non-Christians</b>	Non-religious, Spiritual but not religious, 'other', Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism	67%

Q. Which of the following best describes your current attitudes towards Christianity?		
Segment name	Option/s chosen	% of New Zealand population
<b>Non-Christians warm to Christianity</b>	'I believe in Christianity, but don't consider myself a Christian', 'I believe in much of Christianity, but still have some significant doubts' and 'I believe in the ethics and values of Christianity but I don't practice Christianity in any way'	20%
<b>Non-Christians cold to Christianity</b>	'I am passionately opposed to Christianity', 'I've got strong reservations about Christianity and I have no interest in it' and 'I have some issues with Christianity and it isn't for me'	30%

**Q. Given the right circumstance and evidence, how open would you be to changing your current religious view?**

Segment name	Option/s chosen	% of New Zealand population
<b>Non-Christians open to change</b>	'Extremely open', 'Significantly open', 'Somewhat open' and 'Slightly open'	35%

**Q. How frequently do you attend church?**

Segment name	Option/s chosen	% of New Zealand population
<b>Kiwis who identify with Christianity who regularly attend church</b>	'Weekly', 'Fortnightly' and 'Monthly'	17%
<b>Kiwis who identify with Christianity who never attend church</b>	'Less than annually' and 'I do not attend a church'	13%



# Executive summary

## **New Zealand is becoming an increasingly secular nation.**

More than half of Kiwis (55%) do not identify with any main religion. One in five have spiritual beliefs (20%) whilst more than one in three (35%) do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief. A third of Kiwis (33%) identify with Christianity (either Protestant or Catholic), whilst another 6% identify with other major religions. These results show that New Zealand is a largely secular nation.

This secularisation has been steadily increasing over the last decade or so. In the 2006 Census, half of New Zealand's population (49%) identified as Christian, and three in ten (31%) identified as non-religious. Seven years later, in the 2013 Census, the proportion of Christians had dropped to 43% whilst those identifying as non-religious had increased to almost two in five (38%).

Further research is needed, however it is possible New Zealand's youth as a nation and resulting lack of a religious tradition is one influencing factor in this move away from religion. Perhaps the increasing busyness of modern day life, or the emphasis on individualism and self-created identity have also had an impact.

## **Despite increasing secularisation, Kiwis remain open to exploring religion and spirituality.**

Given the right circumstances and evidence, just over one in ten Kiwis (12%) would be very open (significantly/extremely) to changing their religious views. A further two in five (42%) suggest they are somewhat or slightly open to exploring other religious views.

Kiwis are most likely to be attracted to exploring religion and spirituality further by seeing first hand people who live out a genuine faith. Three in five (59%) suggest this would either somewhat or strongly attract them to investigating religion and spirituality further. For many Kiwis, conversations with people (27%) have been the main catalyst for thinking about spiritual, religious or metaphysical things.

## **Kiwis believe spirituality is important for individual wellbeing, but also suggest it has played a part in shaping national values.**

Almost half of Kiwis feel that spirituality is extremely or very important for their overall wellbeing (46%) and mental health (47%). The younger generations particularly recognise the importance of spirituality in their lives, with half of those in Generations Y and Z believing spirituality is extremely or very important for their overall wellbeing (50% Gen Y, 51% Gen Z) and mental health (52% Gen Y, 52% Gen Z).

Kiwis also feel that spirituality, specifically Māori understanding of spirituality, has contributed to the values commonly held in New Zealand today. Three in five Kiwis (61%) believe (yes, definitely/somewhat) that Māori culture and understanding of spirituality has influenced values and beliefs in New Zealand's society. This influence is seen to be most apparent in the acknowledgment of sacred places (73%), the importance of extended family (69%) and respect for elders (68%).

## **Kiwis are open to discussing spirituality and religion, as long as all parties involved are treated with respect.**

More than half of Kiwis (59%, often/occasionally) talk about spirituality or

religion when they gather with friends. One in ten (11%) do this often, whilst 48% talk about spirituality or religion occasionally. Although different spaces in society are deemed to be either appropriate (e.g. churches) or inappropriate (e.g. shopping centres), Kiwis generally feel that the relational context determines the appropriateness of discussion about spirituality and religion.

This perspective applies to the discussion of spirituality and religion in state schools. More than half of Kiwis are open (very/somewhat) to the discussion of spirituality and religion in this context (55%) but would prefer sessions that teach children about many different religions. The main benefit of religious instruction in state schools, according to Kiwis, is the ability for children to explore the concept of religion (45%). The main challenge is that it currently only explores Christianity and not other religions (48%).

**Whilst Kiwis recognise some of the positive influences of Christianity in New Zealand, there are significant blockers which negatively influence common perceptions.**

One in four Kiwis (26%) are warm towards Christianity, indicating they believe much of the religion but still struggle with doubts or concerns. Three in ten (31%), however, are cold towards Christianity suggesting they have significant issues and do not believe in it. An individual's attitude towards Christianity is most likely to be shaped by their parents and family (57%).

Kiwis recognise some of the positive influences of Christianity in New Zealand's history, including helping those in need and establishing community initiatives to better society. There are, however, significant belief blockers which repel Kiwis from investigating Christianity further. The main blocker (completely/significantly block) to Kiwis

engaging with Christianity is the Church's stance and teaching on homosexuality (47%). Almost as many are influenced by the idea that a loving God would allow people to go to hell (45%).

When it comes to people's perceptions of Christians and Christianity, Church abuse has the greatest negative influence (76% massive/significant negative influence). Christians not practicing what they preach is second to church abuse, with almost seven in ten Kiwis (69%) indicating this has a massive or significant negative influence on their opinion.

**Kiwis have little knowledge of the Church in New Zealand and one in ten don't know any Christians.**

Many Kiwis have little to no engagement with Christians or the Church in New Zealand. One in four (25%) know less than two Christians, and some of these don't know any Christians at all (9% of all Kiwis). More than one in five Kiwis (22%) know nothing at all about the Church in New Zealand, whilst three in five (60%), know a little or a moderate amount.

Kiwis know even less when it comes to their local church, with more than one in two (56%) suggesting they don't know their local church well at all. Therefore unsurprisingly, many Kiwis (51%) take a neutral stance regarding the impact of the church in their local area, suggesting it has neither a positive or negative influence in their community.

**Positive impacts of the Church are recognised in New Zealand.**

Despite low levels of engagement and knowledge about the Church in New Zealand, Kiwis do appreciate the work the Church does in helping those in need. Kiwis most value the work of the Church and Christian organisations in providing disaster relief assistance, with almost seven in ten (68%) indicating they



extremely or somewhat value the work in this area. Following this, two thirds of Kiwis value the Church and Christian organisations' work in looking after people that are homeless (66%), offering financial assistance/food relief programs (66%) and providing aged care facilities (66%).

**Jesus is thought to be relatable and approachable.**

More than nine in ten Kiwis (92%) know at least a few things about the life of Jesus. Whilst half of Kiwis (52%) believe Jesus' life was extremely or very important to the history and culture of the world, they are less likely to suggest he is important to them personally (30%).

Jesus is seen to be relatable and approachable. More than half of Kiwis (53%) positively connect Jesus with the attribute of love. Perceptions towards Jesus are often quite positive, with non-Christian focus group participants suggesting he is relatable, approachable and gracious. Whilst some indicated that Christians made them feel they had to be perfect to come to church, they did not associate the same message with Jesus. Non-Christians feel that Christians could better represent Jesus by letting their actions speak louder than their words, and by living out the values that Jesus represents.

# Religion in New Zealand

## Insights from the Census data

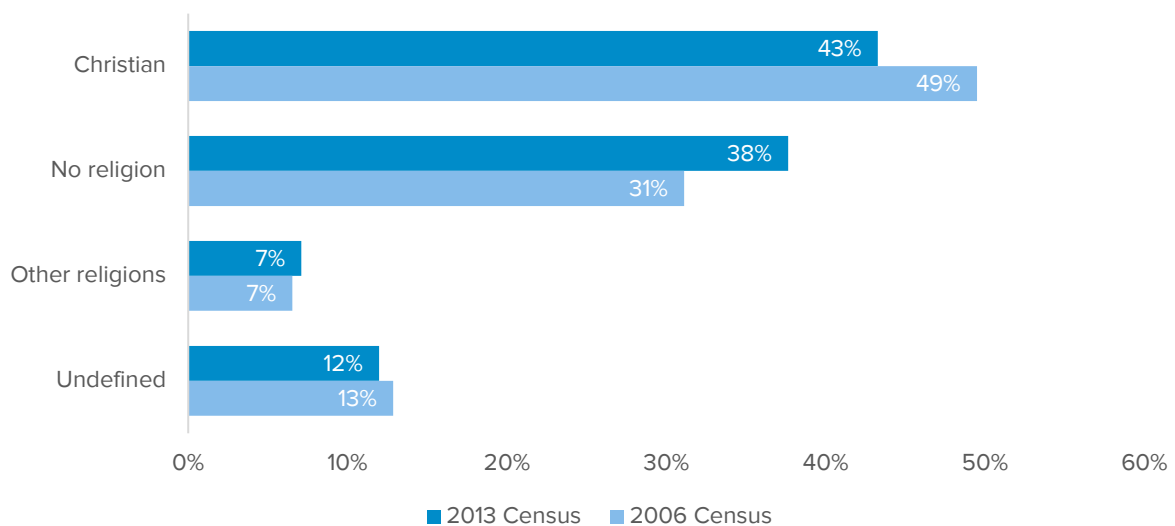
In the Census, Statistics New Zealand asks Kiwis to identify their religion through the question, ‘What is your religion?’ The 2013 Census revealed that two in five (43%) identify as Christian, whilst almost as many identify as ‘non-religious’ (38%). A further 7% adhered to other religions, including Māori Christian, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism and Spiritualism, whilst 12% remained undefined (i.e. ‘not stated’, ‘object to answering’, ‘don’t know’ etc.).

Between 2006 and 2013 the proportion of New Zealand’s population identifying as Christian

dropped by six percentage points from 49% to 43%. The proportion identifying as non-religious increased from 31% to 38% in the same period. The results from the 2006 and 2013 Censuses present a picture of change, with New Zealand becoming an increasingly secular nation.

The *Faith and Belief in New Zealand* study conducted in 2018 provides a snapshot of Kiwi attitudes towards religion and spirituality, further illustrating how religious affiliation has changed over the last decade.

Religious affiliation in New Zealand  
Census data



## New Zealand is an increasingly secular nation.

New Zealand is a largely secular country. More than one in three Kiwis (35%) do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief, while another one in five (20%) have spiritual beliefs but do not identify with any main religion. There is a sense that the number of individuals identifying with major religions is declining amongst the country's population. This may be influenced by New Zealand's identity as a young country without an entrenched religious tradition. Instead, Kiwis are accepting of diversity in beliefs and are open to discussing and exploring different worldviews.

*"We don't have one overall entrenched tradition. We're open-minded and intelligent as a country, which leads to looking at different types of spirituality rather than structured religions." (non-Christian Gen Y)*

Religions and spiritual beliefs are generally seen as sets of values or ideas which can be drawn from to enhance one's life. Individuals feel they have freedom to explore different ideas and align themselves with beliefs that resonate most strongly with their own identity.

*"I like [the idea of] figuring it out for yourself and finding your own beliefs through a mixture of different inputs you have...people can look for what resonates most strongly with them, rather than potentially having something forced on them which doesn't fit." (non-Christian Gen X)*

Another reason that many Kiwis do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief is that the

required time and commitment is seen to be difficult to fit in with a busy lifestyle.

*"In the last 20 years, in Auckland, we're just busier. We do a lot more things as young people...we want instant gratification. Religion doesn't necessarily fit into our social construct. Crazy but that's the way we're moving" (non-Christian Gen Y)*

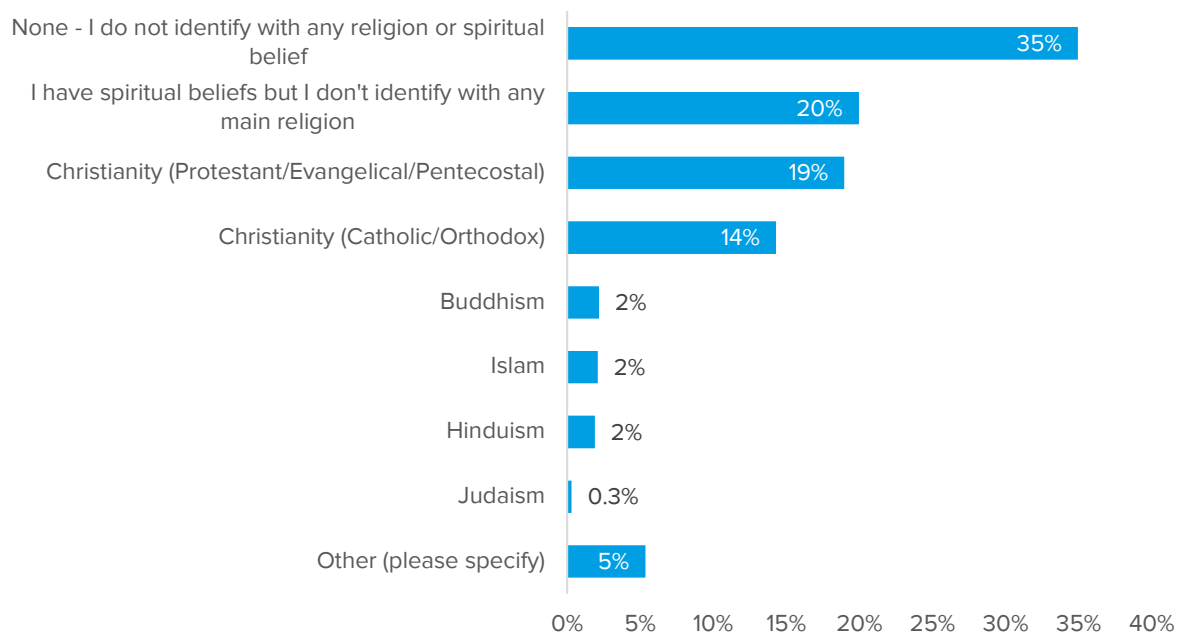
### Two in five identify with a religion

Two in five Kiwis (40%) identify with a major religion. A third of Kiwis (33%) identify with Christianity (either Protestant or Catholic) and a further 6% with other major religions including Buddhism (2%), Islam (2%), Hinduism (2%) and Judaism (0.3%). Of the 5% who indicated 'other', the most common responses were specific Christian denominations (e.g. Presbyterian or Anglican) as well as Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventist and Mormonism.

Older Kiwis are more likely to identify with Christianity, whereas younger generations are more likely to not identify with any religion or spiritual belief. Three in five Builders (59%) and almost two in five Baby Boomers (37%) identify with Christianity, compared to 27% of Generation Y and 22% of Generation Z.

Of New Zealand's three most populous regions (Wellington, Canterbury and Auckland), Auckland has lower proportions of residents identifying with Christianity (31% Auckland compared to 42% Wellington and 42% Canterbury).

### What religion do you currently practice or identify with?



Religious identification	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Builders
Christianity (Protestant/Catholic)	22%	27%	30%	37%	59%
I have spiritual beliefs but I don't identify with any main religion	20%	19%	21%	24%	11%
None - I do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief	43%	39%	39%	29%	26%

Religious identification	Auckland	Wellington	Canterbury
Christianity (Protestant/Catholic)	31%	42%	42%
I have spiritual beliefs but I don't identify with any main religion	16%	18%	20%
None - I do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief	36%	27%	29%

## Non-religious Kiwis prefer a scientific and rational approach to life.

*Insights into Kiwis who do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief n=352.*

Kiwis who do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief are likely to prefer a scientific, rational and 'evidence-based' approach to life (43%). A smaller proportion think that religions and spirituality are outdated and traditional approaches to life (17%), whilst another one in seven (14%) believe religion is a crutch for the weak to lean on.

Those that selected 'other' (15%) most commonly indicated they were simply not interested in religion. Many respondents also suggested that people are free to believe what they want, taking an 'each to their own' approach. Other common responses included 'I

don't believe in religion' and 'I have no opinion.'

Some non-religious Kiwis are unsure of what they believe, but do not feel that they fit into any main religion. While some suggest they are on a journey of discovery, others have not given religion much thought.

*"I was brought up as a Catholic, but I realised the hypocrisy of it with the science teachers teaching you to question it all. I thought 'this is all wrong'... I came to the conclusion that I don't know where the universe has come from... but when you die, you die." (non-Christian Baby Boomer)*

### Which of the following statements best describes your position and thoughts about religions?

*Non-religious only, n=352*





# Household upbringing has influenced New Zealand’s religious identity.

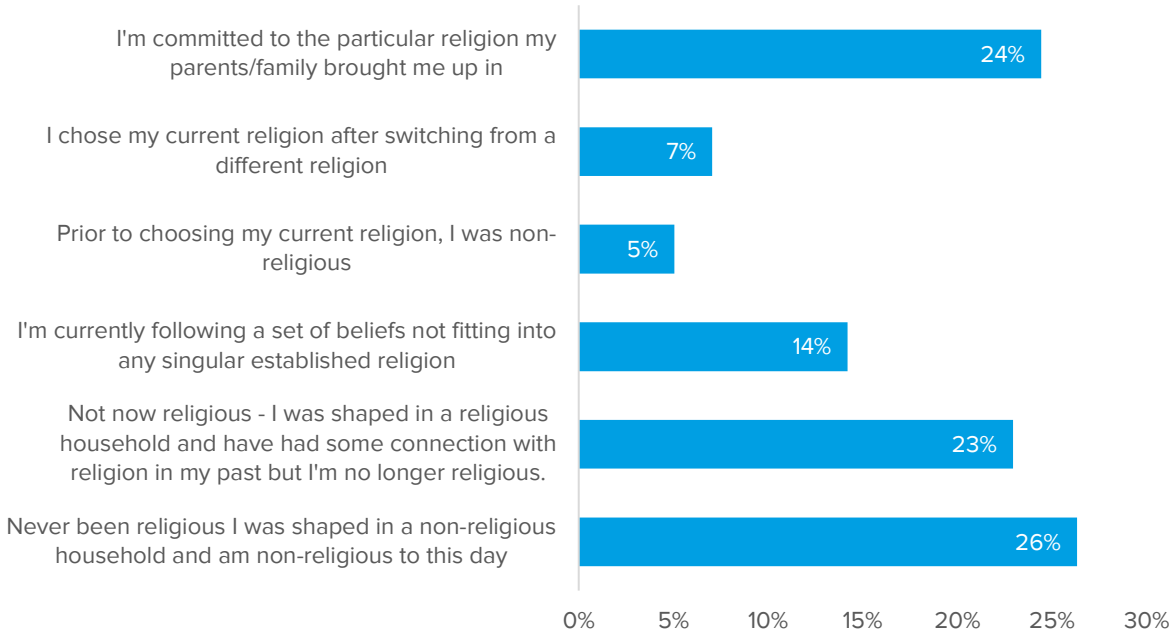
For more than half of Kiwis (51%), their current religious status is a strong reflection of what they were brought up to believe. Just over a quarter (26%) were shaped in a non-religious household and continue to be non-religious, while another one in four (24%) are committed to the religion they were brought up in.

More than one in five (23%), however, have moved away from the religion they were brought up in, and now identify as non-religious. Only a small proportion (12%) have

chosen their current religion after switching from another faith (7%) or being non-religious previously (5%).

*“I identify as a Buddhist. I was brought up Christian... even as a teenager I went to one of those evangelical churches and saw it for what it was, hypocrisy, and I left. I have identified as [a Buddhist] for the last twenty years but at the beginning I found it very uncomfortable to identify with a religion again.” (non-Christian Gen X)*

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



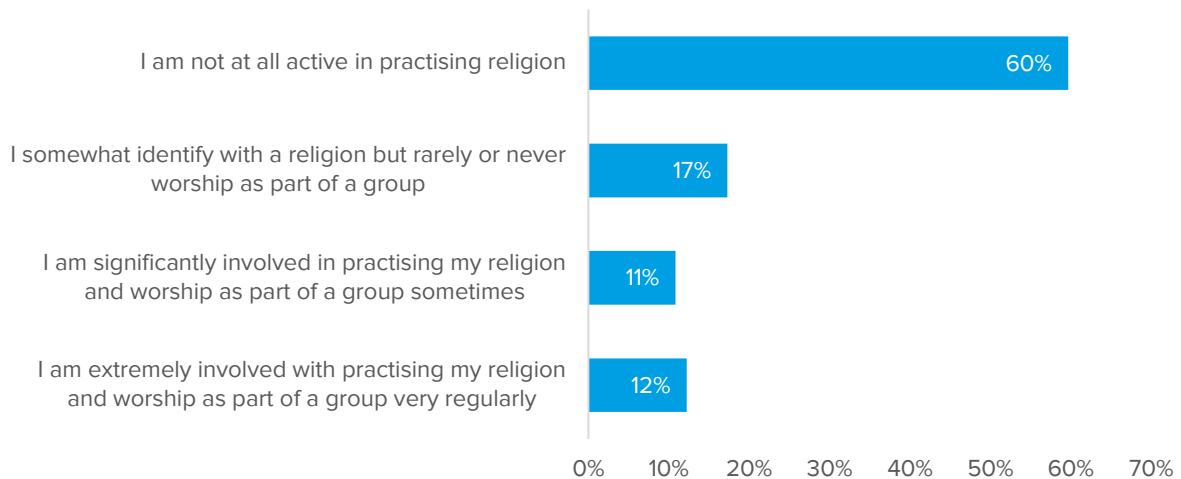
## One in five Kiwis are active in the practice of religion.

Just over one in five Kiwis (23%) are active in practising religion, indicating they are extremely or significantly involved in their religion and worship as part of a group (regularly/sometimes). Three in five (60%) however, are not at all active in practising religion. The remaining 17% somewhat identify with a religion but rarely or never worship as part of a group.

When it comes to the three most populated regions in New Zealand, Auckland has the highest proportion of residents actively involved in practicing religion (27% cf. 21% in Wellington and 26% in Canterbury), despite having a lower proportion of Christians. This is likely due to a higher participation in religious activities in other religions such as Buddhism or Islam in Auckland.

*“Within my group of about 40 friends I can count on one hand the amount that go to church and temple.” (non-Christian Gen Y)*

### How active are you in your religion?



Activeness in practising religion	Auckland	Wellington	Canterbury
Extremely/significantly involved	27%	21%	26%

Activeness in practising religion	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Builders
Extremely/significantly involved	18%	28%	22%	21%	25%

## One in eight Kiwis are very open to changing their religious views given the right circumstances.

Given the right circumstances and evidence, one in eight Kiwis (12%) would be very open (extremely/significantly) to changing their religious views, indicating their interest in exploring different religious views and practices. A further two in five (42%) suggest they are somewhat or slightly open to exploring other religious views although they are not actively exploring other religions.

Just under half (46%) are not open at all to considering other religions and are strongly committed to their current religious view. Those that do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief are most likely to take this viewpoint, with 61% indicating they are not open at all to changing their current view. Those that are spiritual but not religious, however, are more open to exploring different viewpoints, with only 29% indicating they are not open at all.

### Given the right circumstances and evidence, how open would you be to changing your current religious view?



Openness to changing religious views	Identify with Christianity	Spiritual but not religious	Non-religious
Not open at all	41%	29%	61%

Openness to changing religious views	Identify with Christianity	Non-Christians warm to Christianity	Non-Christians cold to Christianity
Not open at all	41%	32%	60%

## Seeing people live out a genuine faith is most likely to attract Kiwis to investigate religion and spirituality.

Kiwis are most likely to be attracted to exploring religion and spirituality further by seeing first hand people who live out a genuine faith. Three in five (59%) suggest this would either somewhat or strongly attract them to investigating religion and spirituality further. Experiencing a personal trauma or significant life change is also a key attractor (59% strongly/somewhat attract).

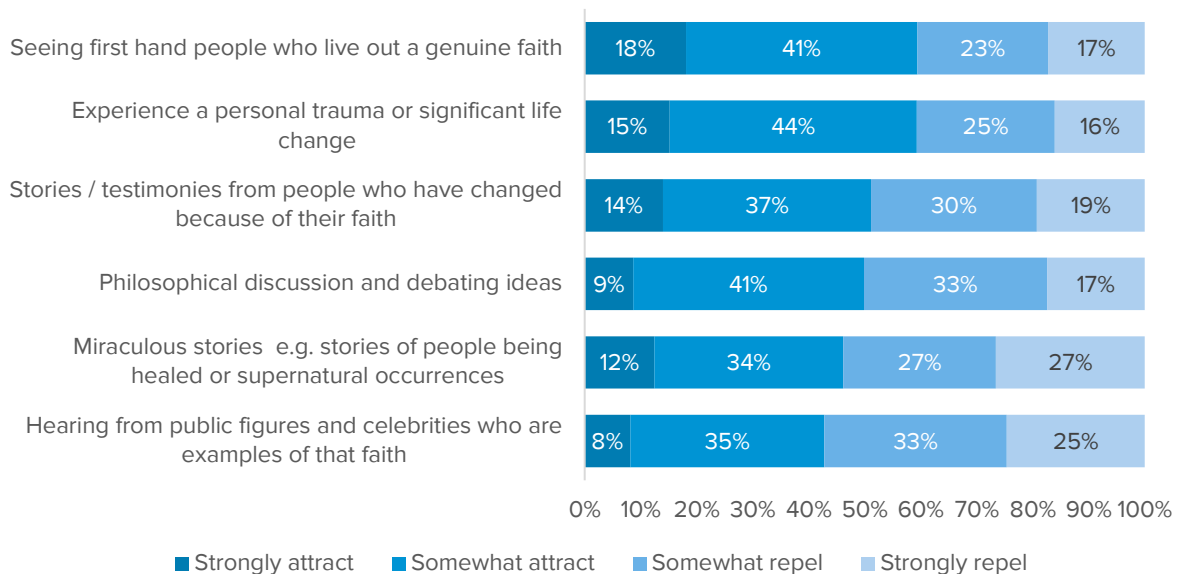
*“Be a good role model so that many people believe what he (Jesus) believes rather than what the Church tries to get you to believe.”*  
(non-Christian Baby Boomer)

The areas that are most likely to repel Kiwis from exploring religion and spirituality further

include hearing from public figures and celebrities who are examples of that faith (57% strongly/somewhat repel) and miraculous stories (54% strongly/somewhat repel).

For each aspect, non-Christians warm to Christianity are much more likely to be attracted (strongly/somewhat) to investigate religion and spirituality further than non-Christians cold to Christianity. For non-Christians warm to Christianity, a personal trauma or significantly life change is most likely to be an attractor (68% strongly/somewhat attract). Non-Christians cold to Christianity, however, are more likely to be attracted by philosophical discussion and debate (29%) and seeing people live out a genuine faith (29%).

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



*Extent to which each factor would attract (% strongly/somewhat) Non-Christians to investigating religion and spirituality further.*

	Non-Christians warm to Christianity	Non-Christians cold to Christianity
Seeing people live out a genuine faith	66%	29%
A personal trauma or life change	68%	28%
Stories/testimonies from people who have changed	62%	20%
Philosophical discussion and debate	56%	29%
Miraculous stories	52%	23%
Hearing from public figures who are examples of the faith	40%	16%

## Conversations with people often prompt Kiwis to think about spiritual, religious or metaphysical things.

Several aspects can prompt thought about spiritual, religious or metaphysical things. For Kiwis, the most common influences are conversations with people (27%), a death in the family (27%) or personal unhappiness (26%). Conversations throughout an individual’s life, particularly with trusted friends or family members, can significantly influence their thoughts and perceptions regarding different beliefs and religions.

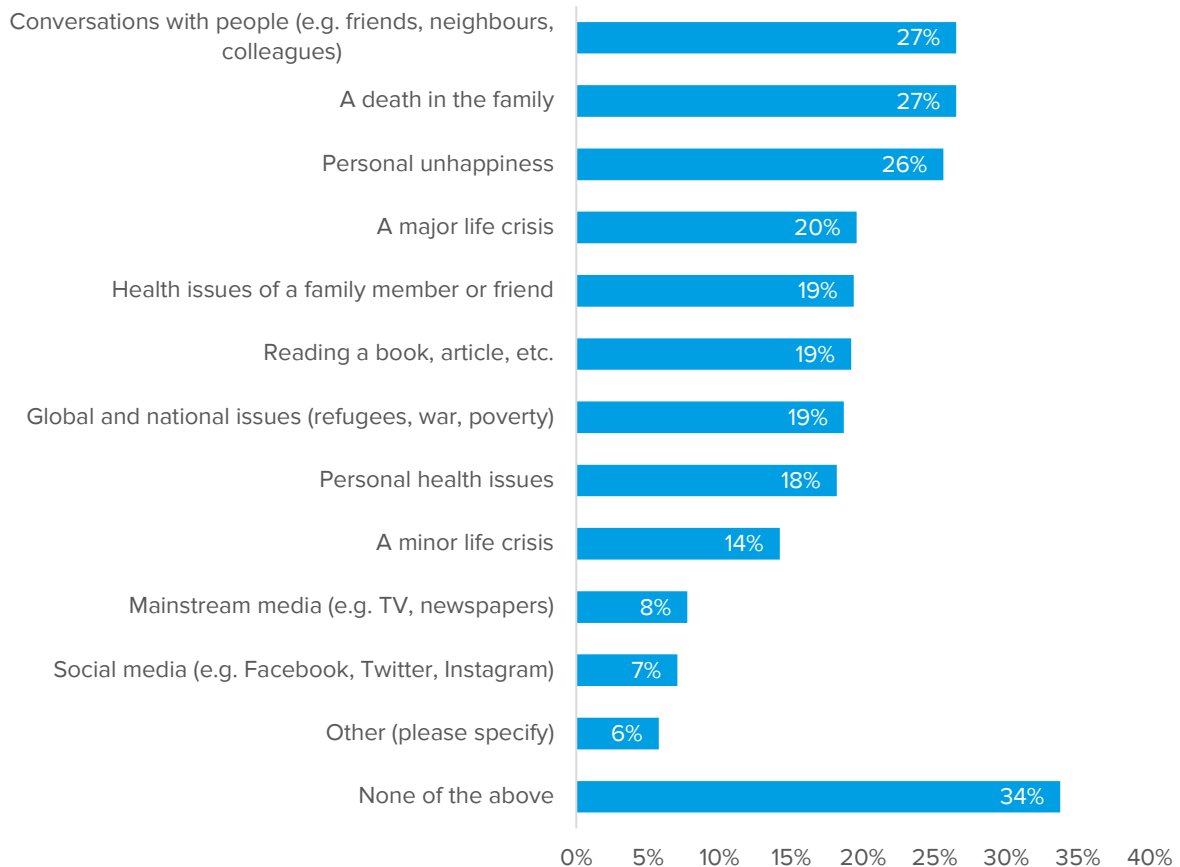
*“In college I had a very religious Christian colleague... so we got into trying to*

*[understand] each other’s religion... that experience was really the one that got me focused on the values of my religion rather than just practising it.” (non-Christian Gen X)*

Conversations with people, as well as personal unhappiness, tend to be the main catalysts for younger generations to think about spiritual, religious or metaphysical things. Older generations, however, may be more influenced by a death in the family or health issues.

### Which of the following influences have prompted you to think about spiritual, religious or metaphysical things?

*Please select all that apply.*





Influences for each generation to think about spiritual, religious or metaphysical things (top 3).

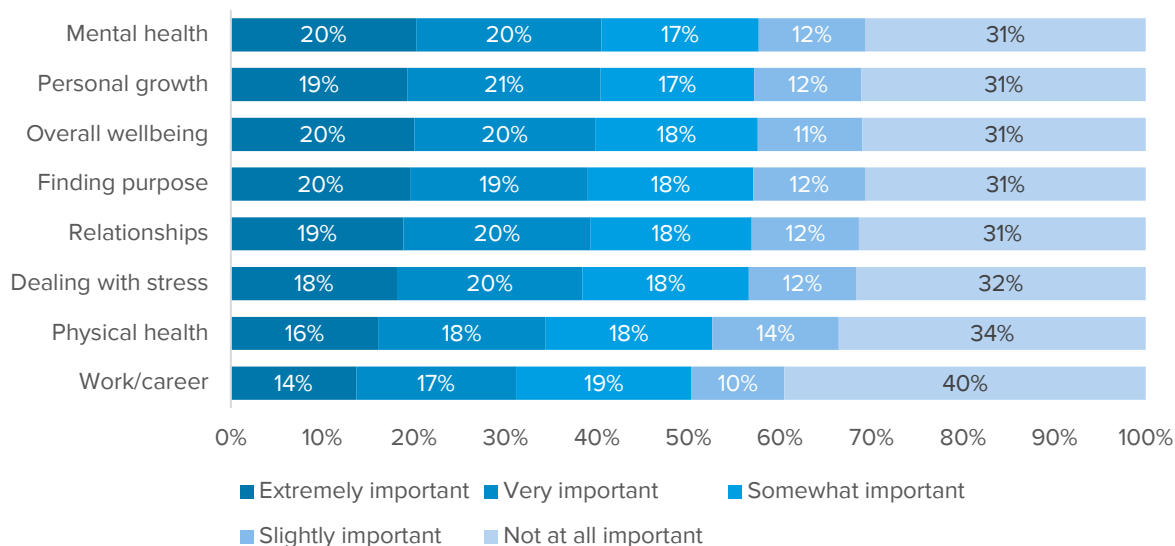
Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Builders
Personal unhappiness (37%)	Conversations with people (33%)	Personal unhappiness (27%)	A death in the family (29%)	A death in the family (25%)
Conversations with people (29%)	Personal unhappiness (30%)	A death in the family (26%)	Conversations with people (24%)	Global and national issues (24%)
A death in the family (24%)	A death in the family (26%)	Conversations with people (25%)	Personal unhappiness (21%), personal health issues (21%)	Health issues of a family member or friend (23%)

## Two in five Kiwis believe faith is very important for mental health, personal growth and overall wellbeing.

In New Zealand, faith is generally considered to be important to many areas of life. Two in five Kiwis indicate faith is extremely or very important to their mental health (41%), personal growth (40%) and overall wellbeing (40%). Kiwis are, however, less likely to believe faith is important for their physical health (34% not at all important) and their work or career (40% not at all important).

Kiwis identifying with Christianity are much more likely to believe faith is important to mental health, personal growth and overall wellbeing than Kiwis who are non-religious or have spiritual beliefs but don't identify with any main religion.

How important is faith to each of the following areas of your life?



Proportion of each group who believe faith is extremely/very important to top three areas of life.

	Identify with Christianity	Spiritual beliefs but do not identify with any main religion	Non-religious
<b>Mental health</b>	60%	39%	15%
<b>Personal growth</b>	61%	39%	14%
<b>Overall wellbeing</b>	60%	38%	14%

# Kiwis look up to public figures that are respectful of others and honest.

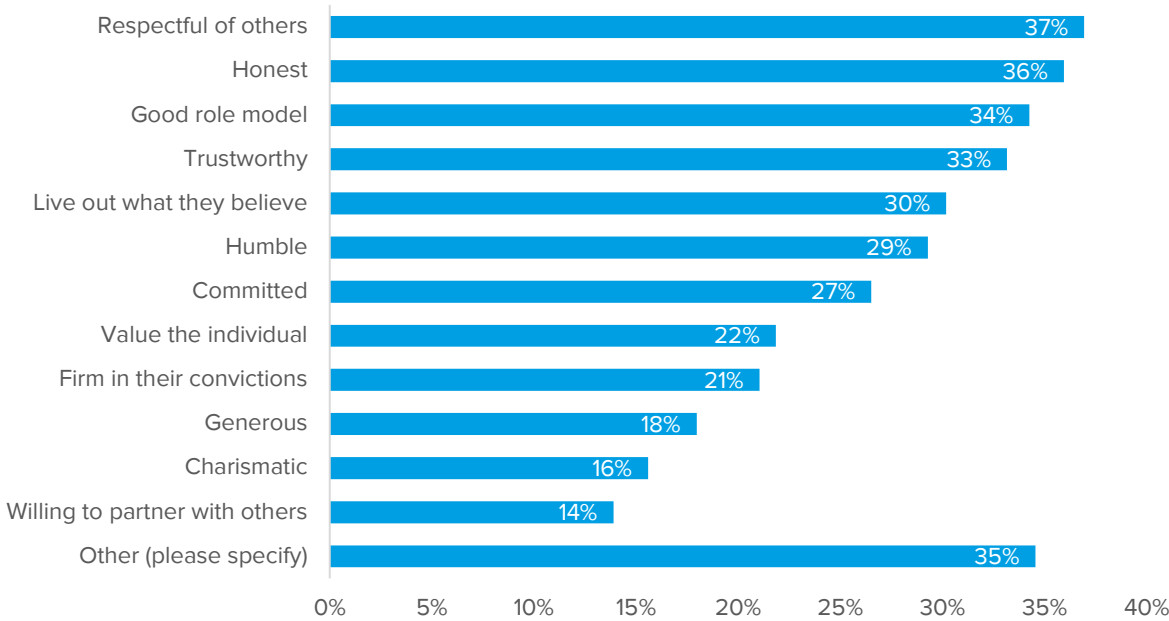
Survey respondents were asked to list public figures they respected or admired, who identify with any faith, religion or belief. Following this question, they were asked to select the qualities they admired in the public figures they identified.

The qualities that are most admired in public figures of various faiths and religions include respectfulness (37%) and honesty (36%). About a third of respondents also value public figures

who are good role models (34%) and are trustworthy (33%). Kiwis are less likely to admire public figures for their generosity (18%), charisma (16%) and willingness to partner with others (14%).

Those that selected 'other' predominantly indicated 'nothing' or 'not applicable' as they hadn't been able to think of any public figures that identified with a faith or religion.

What are the qualities that you respect in the public figure/s you identified?  
Please select all that apply.



# Spirituality in New Zealand

*Insights into Kiwis who are spiritual but not religious n=201.*

Many Kiwis who are spiritual but not religious believe there is an ultimate meaning and purpose in life.

More than two in five Kiwis who are spiritual but not religious (41%) believe there is an ultimate meaning and purpose in life. This statement may resonate more than others because it is not strongly connected with a particular religion or set of beliefs.

*"[Believing in an ultimate purpose and meaning in life] doesn't necessarily mean anything religious or spiritual. Most of us want purpose and some meaning to our lives but not necessarily religious... that's probably why it got the highest result." (non-Christian Baby Boomer).*

One third of Kiwis who are spiritual but not religious (34%) believe in a spiritual realm, whilst three in ten (30%) believe any spiritual path can lead to enlightenment.

## Gender differences

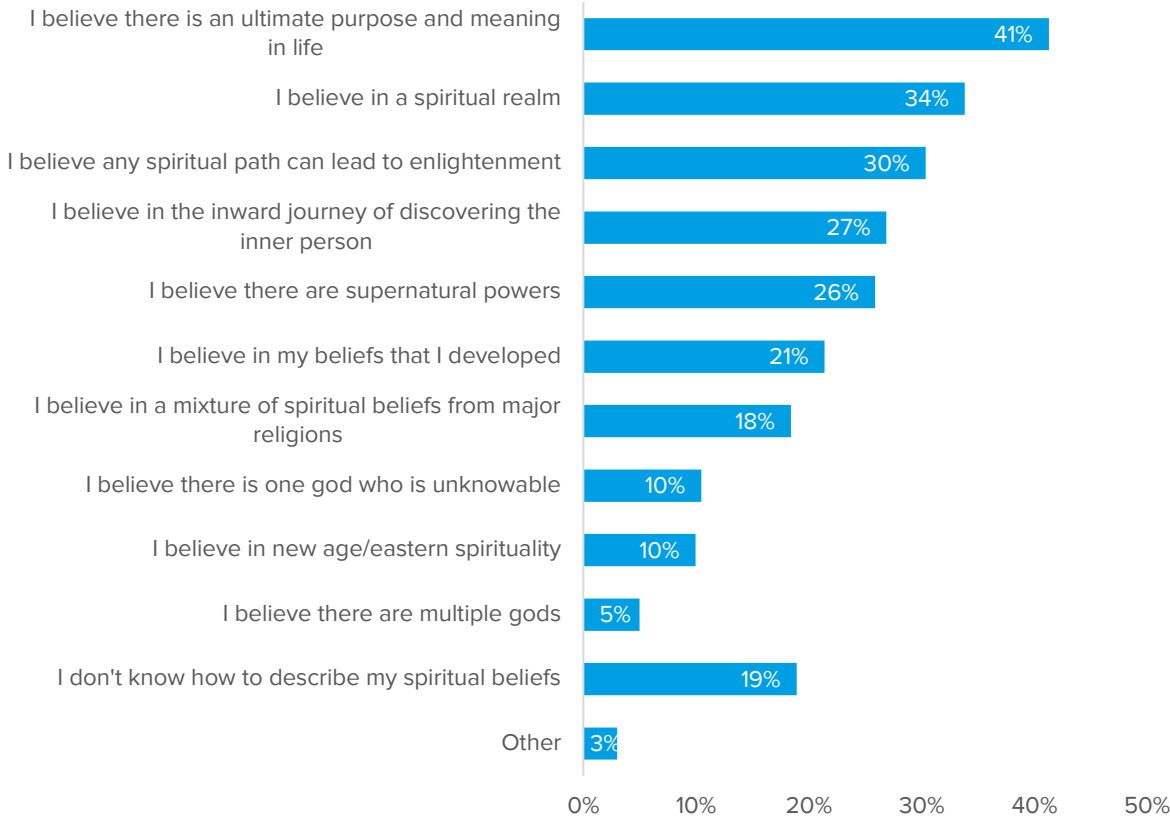
Females who are spiritual but not religious are more likely than males to believe that any spiritual path can lead to enlightenment (38% cf. 17%). Similarly, females are more likely to believe in the inward journey of discovering the inner person (35% cf. 13%). Males, however, are more likely than females to suggest they don't know how to describe their spiritual beliefs (30% cf. 12%).

## The spiritual journey

Almost half of Kiwis who are spiritual but not religious (47%) don't consider themselves to be on a spiritual journey. Three in ten (31%) consider themselves to be growing in their spiritual journey and a further one in ten (11%) feel they are at the beginning of their spiritual journey.

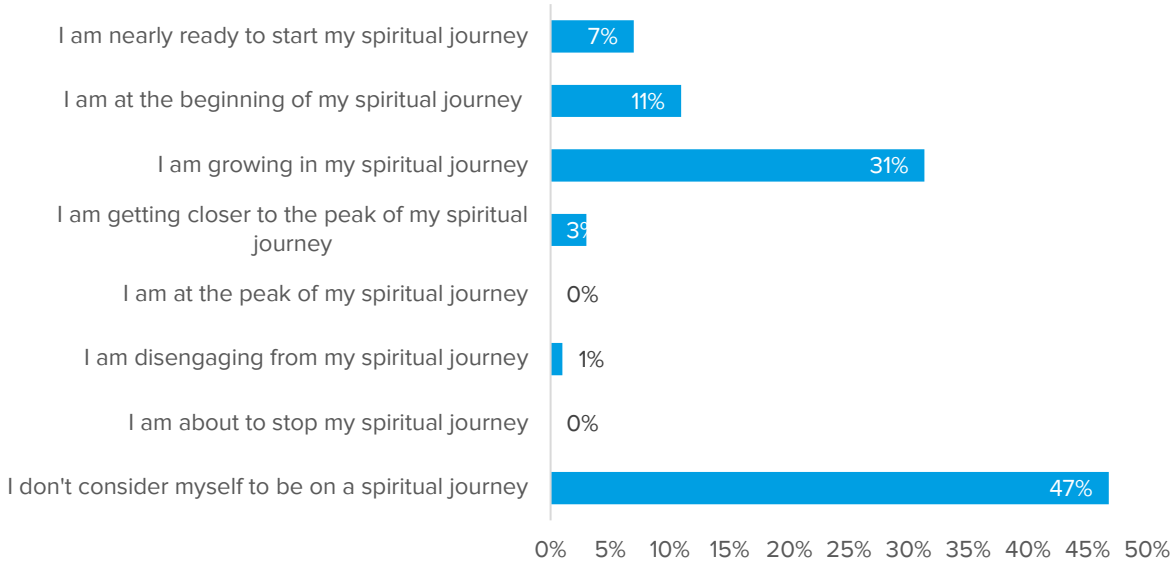
### Which of the following statements describe your spiritual beliefs?

Please select all that apply to you.  
Spiritual but not religious only, n=201



### How would you describe your spiritual journey at the moment?

Spiritual but not religious only, n=201



## Almost half of Kiwis believe spirituality is very important for their overall wellbeing and mental health.

Many Kiwis feel that spirituality is important in various areas of their lives. Almost half (46%) indicate spirituality is very or extremely important for their overall wellbeing and this proportion is slightly higher for mental health (47%). Kiwis are least likely to see spirituality as important in their work or career, with two in five (40%) suggesting spirituality is not at all important in this area of their life.

### Generational differences

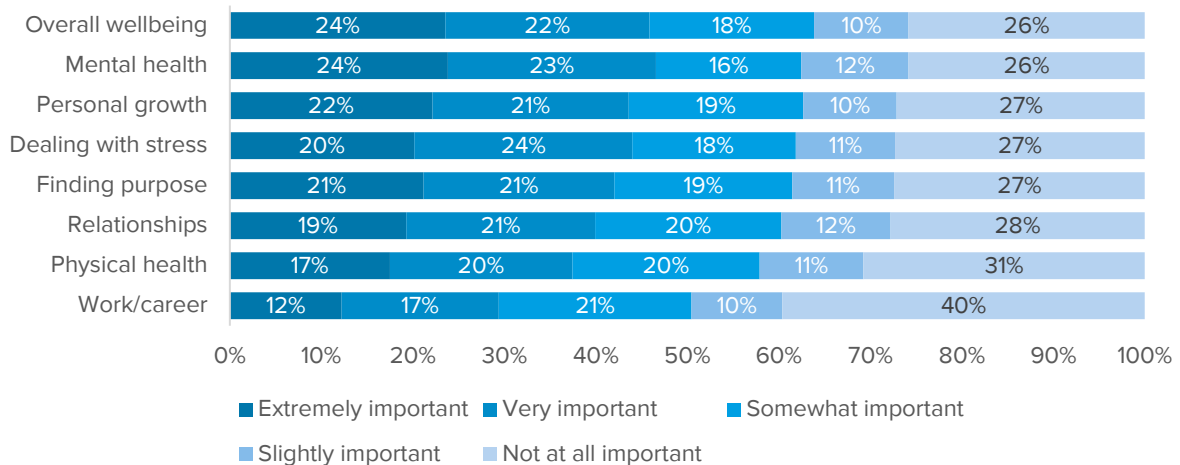
Younger generations are more likely to believe spirituality is important for their overall wellbeing and mental health. More than half of Generation Z (52%) and Generation Y (52%) believe spirituality is extremely or very important for mental health, whilst only two in five Builders (41%) and Baby Boomers (42%) feel similarly. Differences in generational

attitudes towards spirituality are similar for overall wellbeing, as can be seen in the table below.

### Comparing faith & spirituality

Respondents were asked the same question in relation to faith (results included on pg. 22). In almost all the areas tested, spirituality is more likely than faith to be considered extremely or very important. For example, 46% of Kiwis feel that spirituality is important (extremely/very) for mental health, whilst 41% believe faith is important in this area of their life. The only aspect where faith is more likely to be considered important is in an individual's work or career (31% believe faith is extremely/very important, whereas 29% believe spirituality is extremely/very important).

### How important is spirituality to each of the following areas of your life?



Proportion of each generation who believe spirituality is extremely/very important to mental health and overall wellbeing.

	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Builders
<b>Mental health</b>	52%	52%	46%	42%	41%
<b>Overall wellbeing</b>	51%	50%	47%	42%	38%



## Younger Kiwis are more likely to believe that Māori culture has influenced New Zealand's values and beliefs.

Three in five Kiwis (61%) believe (yes, definitely/somewhat) that Māori culture and understanding of spirituality has influenced values and beliefs in New Zealand's society.

Those who believe Māori culture has influenced New Zealand's society suggest Kiwi values have been shaped in the following ways:

- Acknowledgment of sacred places (73%)
- The importance of extended family (69%)
- Respect for elders (68%)

### Generational differences

The younger generations are more inclined to believe that Māori culture has influenced New Zealand's values and beliefs (73% Gen Z, 63% Gen Y, 65% Gen X) than their older counterparts (53% Baby Boomers, 55% Builders).

*"Speaking as someone who wasn't born here... growing up and going to school I have an understanding of the Māori culture, but my parents have no idea." (non-Christian Gen Y)*

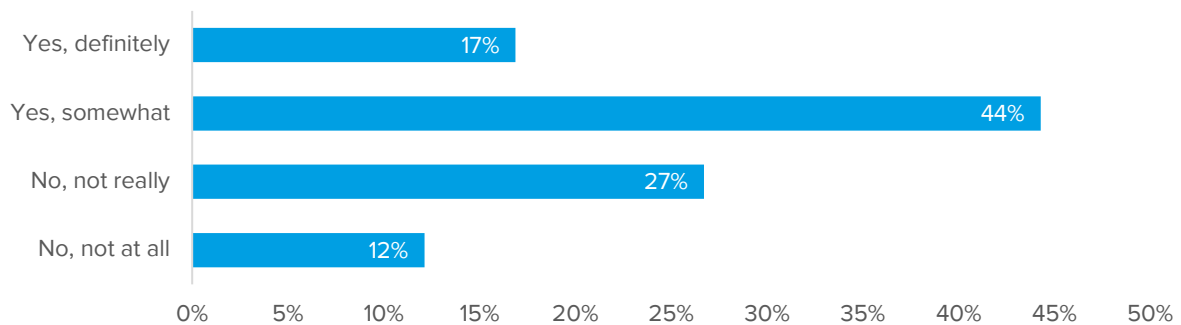
Younger Kiwis suggest the Māori understanding of spirituality has helped provide a better understanding of the New Zealand story (67% Gen Z, 55% Gen Y, 63% Gen X cf. 39% Baby Boomers, 44% Builders). Older generations, however, highlight the Māori contribution to the importance of extended family in New Zealand (75% Builders, 76% Baby Boomers cf. 71% Gen X, 58% Gen Y, 64% Gen Z).

Across all generations, there is a sense that the Māori culture has contributed to the strong sense of family in New Zealand and has embedded a deep respect for elders in the community.

*"I have observed more of a sense of family here than I was used to back in the UK. You go into houses and everyone is called aunty, uncle but are they actual uncles or not? It's just a big family, [there is] a strong sense that everyone's in it together." (non-Christian Generation X)*

*"Looking after their elders, Europeans just wack us into old folk's homes. As far as I'm aware, Māori don't do that. They take them into their home." (non-Christian Baby Boomer)*

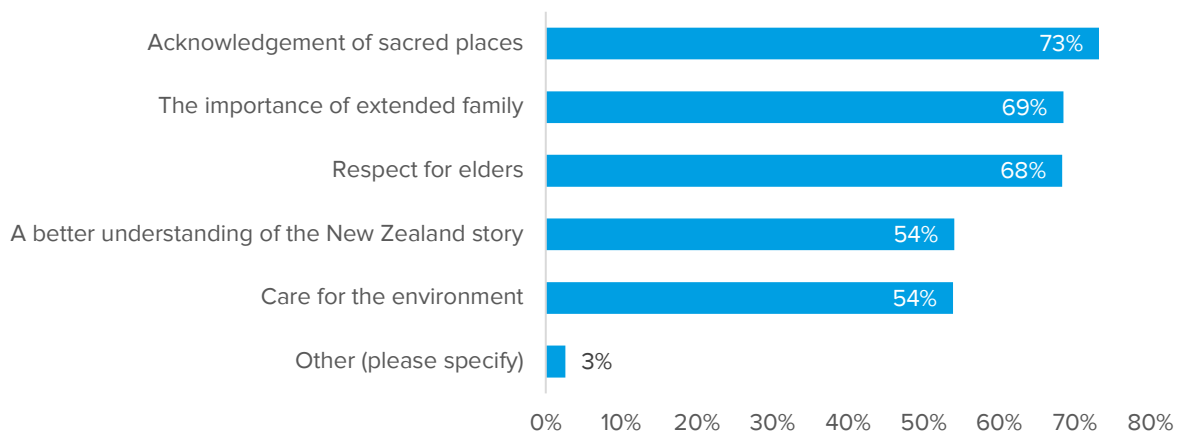
Do you believe Māori culture and the Māori understanding of spirituality has influenced values and beliefs in New Zealand's society?



Which of the following values do you believe Māori understandings of spirituality have contributed to New Zealand society?

*Please select all that apply.*

*Māori culture has impacted society, n=616*





*“[Believing in an ultimate purpose and meaning in life] doesn’t necessarily mean anything religious or spiritual. Most of us want purpose and some meaning to our lives but not necessarily religious.”*

*- Non-Christian Baby Boomer*

# Discussing spirituality and religion

Kiwis are comfortable talking about spirituality and religion when they gather with friends.

Almost three in five Kiwis (59%, often/occasionally) talk about spirituality or religion when they gather with friends. One in ten (11%) do this often, whilst 48% talk about spirituality or religion occasionally. Two in five (41%) never talk about spirituality or religion with friends.

There is a sense that religion is talked about most freely by those who have a religion or spiritual belief.

*“Those who identify with a religion or spiritual belief are more likely to talk about religion more often.” (non-Christian Baby Boomer)*

Kiwis tend to feel that religion and spirituality is a sensitive topic. For some it is not talked about until asked. Others would say they talk about spirituality and religion from the perspective of values more than the religion itself.

*“I don’t push what I believe on anyone unless someone asks me. It’s my beliefs and my journey.” (non-Christian Baby Boomer)*

*“I feel like it’s reflected in the values we try and teach our son: kindness and caring, caring for the planet... it’s not so much religion and spirituality, but more values.” (non-Christian Gen X)*

## Generational differences

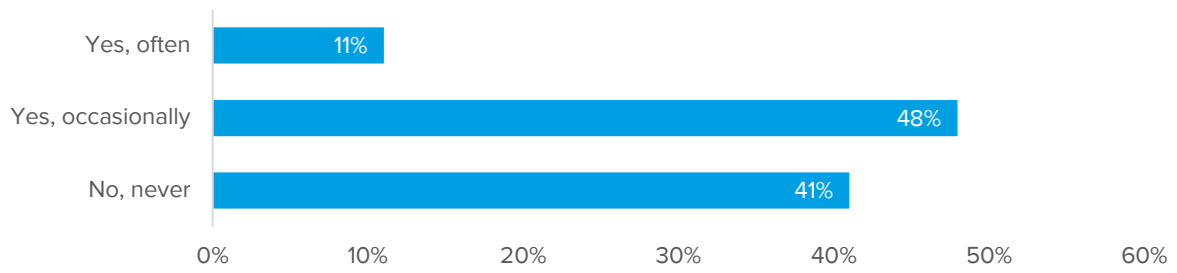
Younger generations are more likely to talk about spirituality and religion, with seven in ten Generation Y (69%) often or occasionally discussing spirituality and religion with friends. Half of Builders (50%), however, never talk about spirituality or religion with friends.

## Topics of conversation

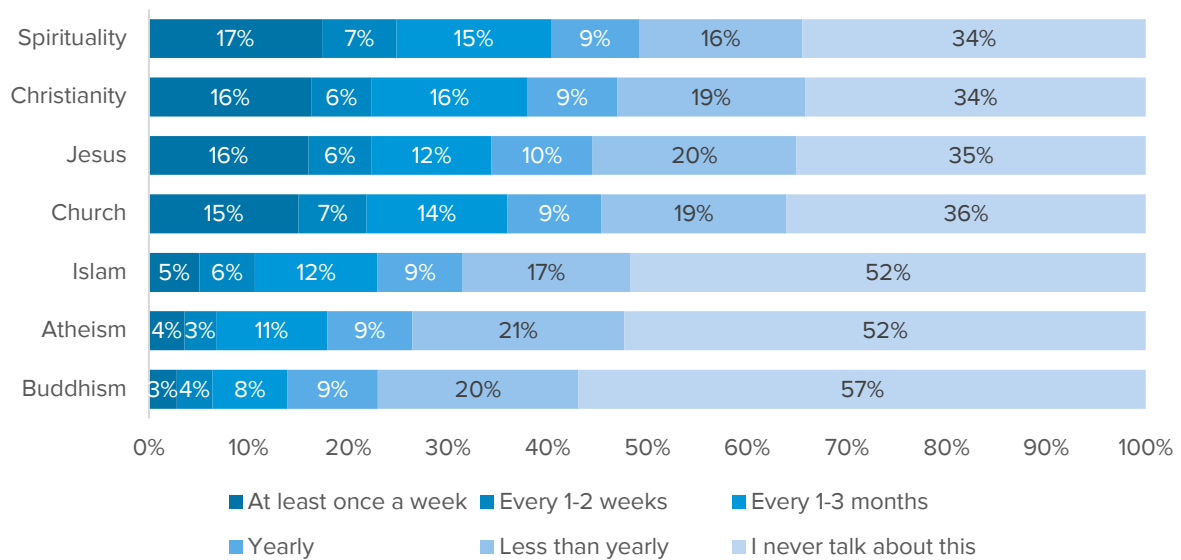
One in four Kiwis (25%) discuss spirituality at least every two weeks, making this the most frequently discussed topic when it comes to faith and belief. Spirituality is, however, closely followed by Christianity (22%), Jesus (22%) and the Church (22%), with more than one in five Kiwis discussing these topics at least every two weeks. The least likely topics to be discussed, with more than half of Kiwis never talking about them, are Islam (52%), Atheism (52%) and Buddhism (57%).

The main topics of conversation (at least every two weeks) for non-Christians cold to Christianity are spirituality (12%), Islam (9%) and Atheism (8%). Non-Christians warm to Christianity differ slightly, being more inclined to talk about spirituality (25%), Islam (13%) and Christianity (13%) at least every two weeks.

### Do you ever talk about spirituality or religion when you gather with friends?



### How often do you talk about each of the following with your family, friends, colleagues etc.?



Proportion of each generation that discuss spirituality and religion either often, occasionally or never.

	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Builders
<b>Often</b>	13%	16%	11%	7%	9%
<b>Occasionally</b>	45%	53%	46%	49%	42%
<b>Never</b>	42%	31%	43%	44%	50%

## The relational context determines the appropriateness of discussion about spirituality and religion.

In society, some places are deemed more appropriate than others to talk about spirituality and religion. Kiwis see churches (83%) and Christian schools (79%) as the most appropriate (very/somewhat/slightly) spaces for these conversations. Universities (48%) and community events/groups (48%) are also deemed appropriate spaces to discuss spirituality and religion.

Kiwis view shopping centres as the most inappropriate place to discuss religion and spirituality, with almost half (48%) deeming shopping centres very or somewhat inappropriate. Public schools are also considered inappropriate (very/somewhat) by more than one in three (36%).

Kiwis are neutral about the discussion of religion and spirituality on mainstream and social media platforms. Around one in three suggest these conversations are neither appropriate or inappropriate in these contexts (34% main stream media, 32% social media).

### Discussing religion and spirituality on social media

YouTube is considered the most appropriate social media platform for the discussion of religion and spirituality (42% - very/somewhat/slightly appropriate). Around two in five see Facebook (40%) and Twitter (37%) as appropriate. The most inappropriate

platform for the discussion of religion and spirituality is LinkedIn (38% - very/somewhat/slightly inappropriate).

### Relational context

Although there are some spaces in society which may be considered more suitable than others, Kiwis suggest the appropriateness of the conversation depends more on the relational context and the mutual respect of the parties involved.

*“I feel free. I don’t feel any constraint [on my ability to discuss religion and spirituality in certain places]. Its more the person who I am talking to that impacts the appropriateness.” (non-Christian Baby Boomer)*

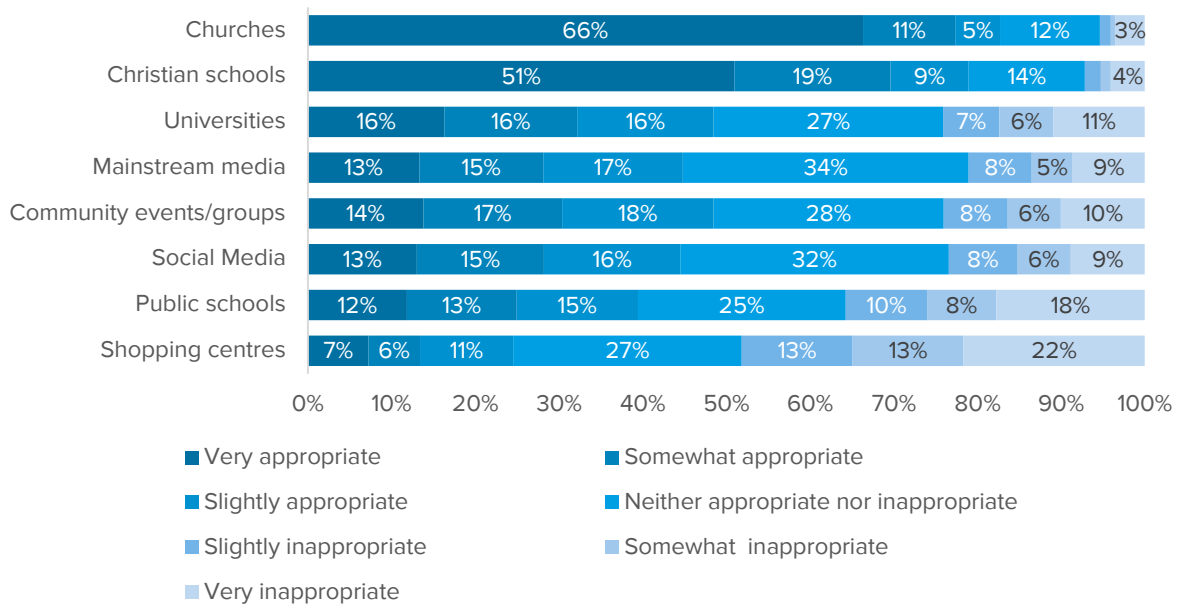
*“The discussion of religion is appropriate anywhere, as long as its respectful”. (non-Christian Gen X)*

Younger generations are also open to discussion and are accepting of other’s religious beliefs. Generation Y believe it is appropriate for individuals to share about their religion but not to push their religion on others or claim their religion is better than others.

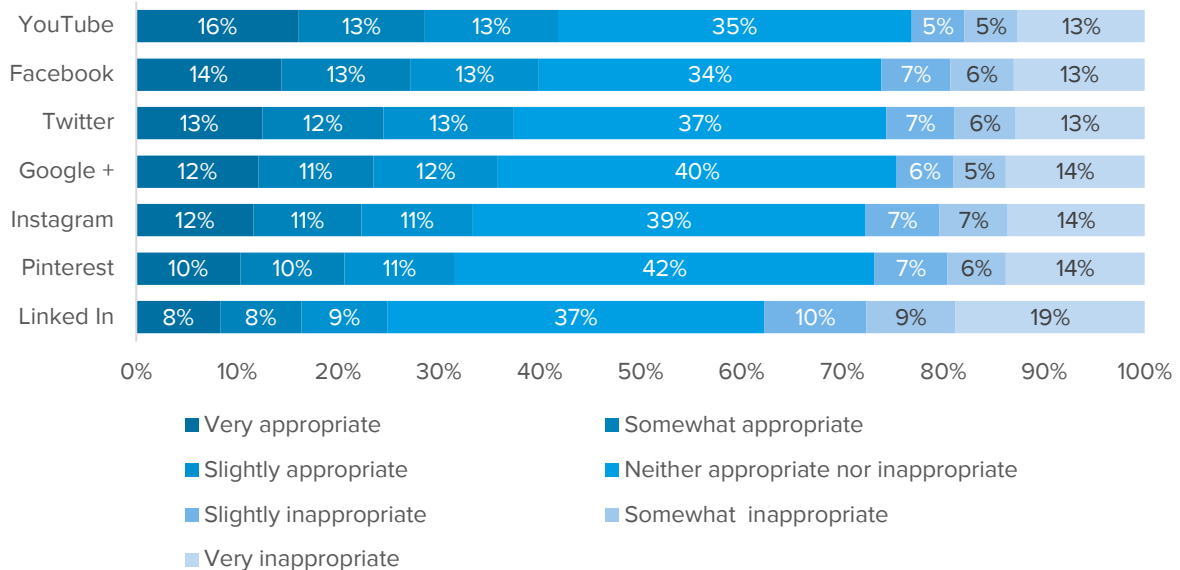
*“Depends on the context. If a church wants to put up a photo that’s fine, but not a big spiel about why their religion is better.” (non-Christian Gen Y)*



### Do you agree that the following spaces are appropriate for people to talk about spirituality and religion?



### Which social media platforms are appropriate for people today to talk about spirituality and religions?



Top 3 most inappropriate (% very, somewhat, slightly) spaces to talk about spirituality and religion.

Identify with Christianity	Non-Christian	Non-Christians open to change
Shopping centres (32%)	Shopping centres (56%)	Shopping centres (52%)
Social media (17%)	Public schools (45%)	Public schools (37%)
Public schools (16%)	Universities (31%)	Community events/groups (24%)

# Spirituality and religion in state schools

Kiwis are open to the discussion of spirituality and religion in state schools.

More than half of Kiwis are open to the discussion of spirituality and religion in state schools (55%). The extent to which Kiwis are open, however, varies according to their religious beliefs. Those that identify with Christianity (81%) are significantly more likely to be open (very/somewhat) to the discussion in state schools when compared to non-Christians (42%). Notably, non-Christians open to change are slightly warmer to the discussion of religion and spirituality in state schools (52%).

## Non-compulsory religious instruction

Despite this openness, Kiwis are slightly less likely to consider non-compulsory religious instruction in state schools to be appropriate. Less than one in two (47%) feel that religious instruction is appropriate (very/somewhat/slightly), whilst three in ten (30%) see it as inappropriate (very/somewhat/slightly). Around one in four (23%) see non-compulsory religious instruction as neither appropriate nor inappropriate.

Older generations are slightly more likely to see non-compulsory religious instruction in state schools as appropriate. More than half of Builders deem it appropriate, whilst only two in five Generation Z see it as appropriate (52% Builders, 51% Baby Boomers, 44% Gen X, 44% Gen Y, 43% Gen Z).

The appropriateness of non-compulsory religious instruction in state schools differs by geographic location. Aucklanders (42%) are less likely to see it as appropriate compared to

residents of Canterbury (50%) and Wellington (54% - very/somewhat/slightly appropriate).

Once again, religious identification influences perspectives. Kiwis identifying with Christianity are twice as likely to see non-compulsory religious instruction in state schools as appropriate (70%) compared to non-Christians (35%). Non-Christians open to change (41%) deem it slightly more appropriate than non-Christians.

## Kiwis are open to religious education that covers all religions

The discussion of religion and spirituality in state schools is seen to be appropriate only if it provides a broad perspective, rather than teaching only one religion. Non-Christian Kiwis feel that children should be taught about different religions to provide greater understanding and encourage acceptance of diversity in New Zealand.

*"I don't think there should be any one particular religion in school... I don't think you can dismiss it, there is no point ignoring faith and religions, it's part of the world, it's part of history, it's part of current affairs." (non-Christian Gen X)*

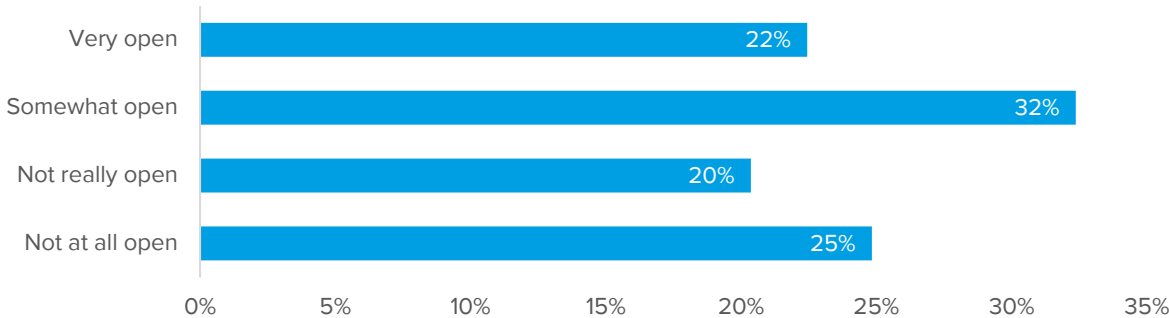
*"I'm open to it, as long as it's not only one religion. Religions of the world would be quite good to educate people with, especially around some of the misunderstood religions like Islam." (non-Christian Gen Y)*

**Age can influence appropriateness**

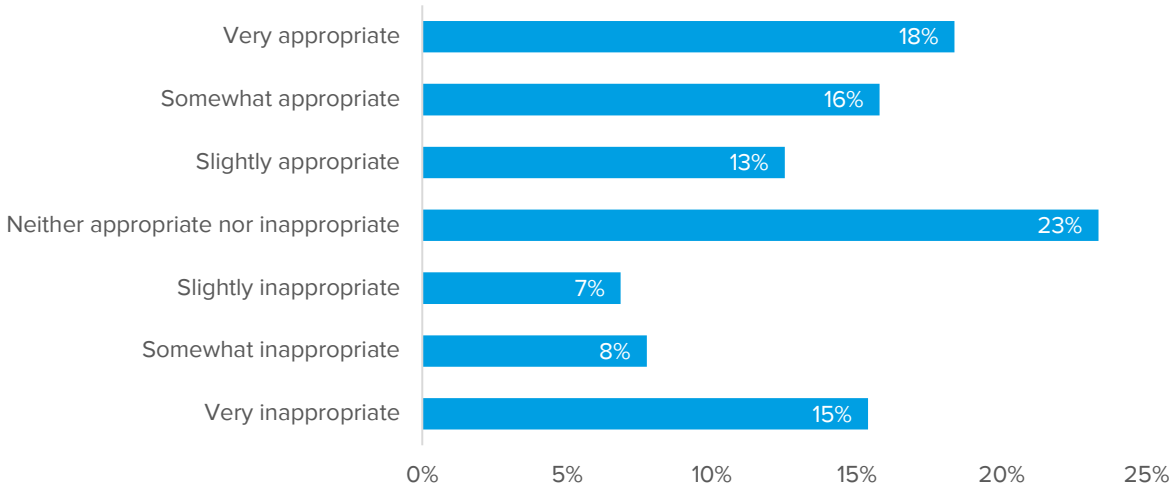
Non-Christian Baby Boomers suggest that the age at which religious instruction occurs is important.

*“I think the age is a really important factor. If the kid is 12, I would like them to be exposed to other religions, at a lower age they are softer.”  
(non-Christian Baby Boomer)*

**How open are you to the discussion of spirituality and religion in state schools?**



**In your opinion, how appropriate is non-compulsory religious instruction within the context of state schools in New Zealand?**



## Allowing children to explore the concept of religion is a key benefit of religious instruction.

### Benefits of religious instruction

Kiwis see the main benefits of religious instruction in state schools as allowing children to explore the concept of religion (45%), broadening children’s perspectives (39%) and providing opportunities for discussion (39%).

Kiwis identifying with Christianity are most likely to suggest that teaching children Christian values is a benefit (67%), whilst non-Christians cold to Christianity are most likely to suggest that none of the statements available were benefits (54%).

The key benefit that Kiwis of various religious affiliations agree on is that religious instruction allows children to explore the concept of religion (64% identifying with Christianity, 44% non-Christians warm to Christianity, 27% non-Christians cold to Christianity).

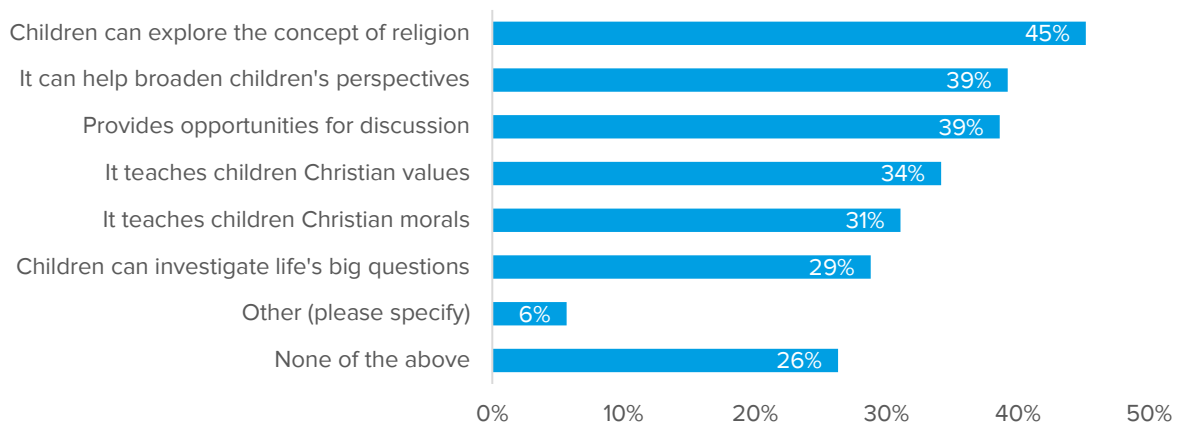
### Challenges of religious instruction

For Kiwis, the main challenge of religious instruction is that it only explores Christianity and not other religions (48%). Other concerns include the possible discrimination of children who opt out (45%) and that children might be taught different beliefs than those taught at home (43%).

The greatest challenge for both non-Christians warm to Christianity and non-Christians cold to Christianity is that it only explores Christianity, not other religions (both 53% cf. 41% of those identifying with Christianity). All three groups express concern that children who opt out might experience discrimination (47% identifying with Christianity, 46% non-Christians warm to Christianity, 42% non-Christians cold to Christianity). Non-Christians who are cold to Christianity are the most likely to hold the belief that religious instruction is inappropriate within a secular education system (45%).

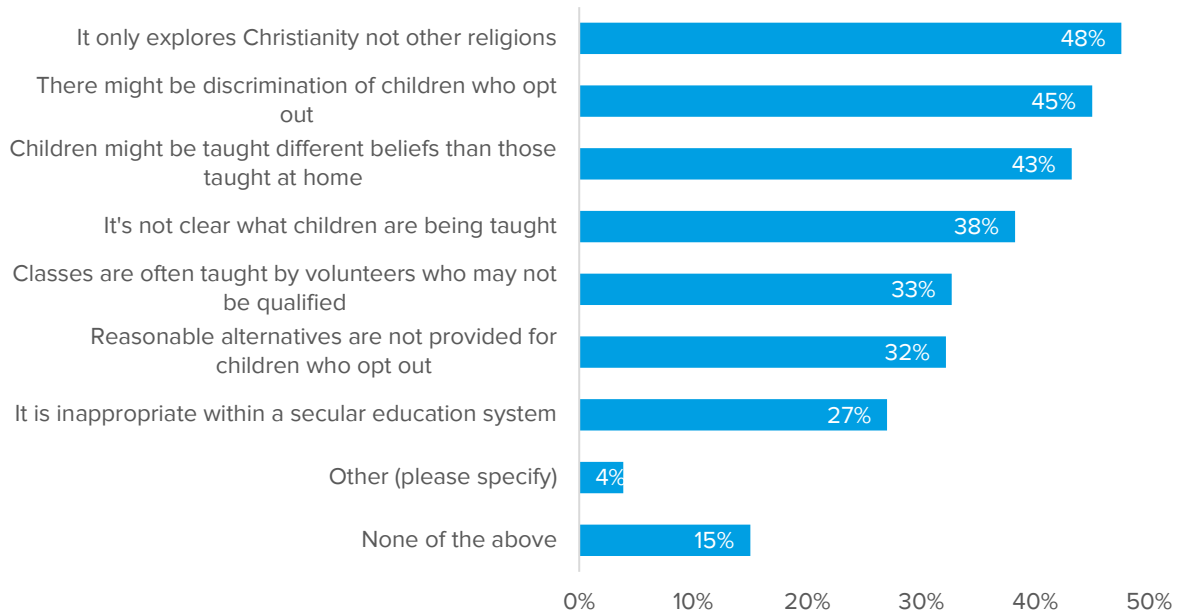
### What do you believe are the benefits of religious instruction in state schools?

*Please select all that apply.*



## What do you believe are the challenges of religious instruction in state schools?

Please select all that apply.



### Top three benefits of religious instruction in state schools.

Identify with Christianity	Non-Christians warm to Christianity	Non-Christians cold to Christianity
It teaches children Christian values (67%)	Children can explore the concept of religion (44%)	None of the above (54%)
Children can explore the concept of religion (64%)	It can help broaden children's perspectives (39%)	Children can explore the concept of religion (27%)
It can help broaden children's perspectives (61%)	Provides opportunities for discussion (34%)	Provides opportunities for discussion (20%)

### Top three challenges of religious instruction in state schools.

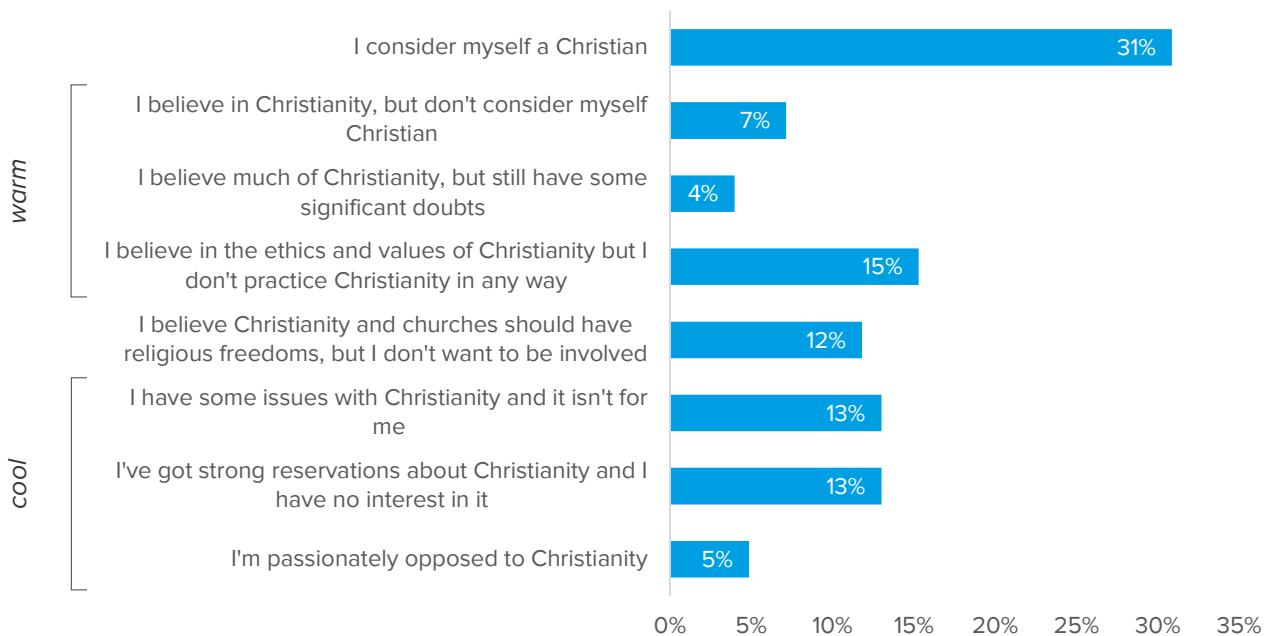
Identify with Christianity	Non-Christians warm to Christianity	Non-Christians cold to Christianity
There might be discrimination of children who opt out (47%)	It only explores Christianity not other religions (53%)	It only explores Christianity not other religions (53%)
Children might be taught different beliefs than those taught at home (44%)	There might be discrimination of children who opt out (46%)	It is inappropriate within a secular education system (45%)
It only explores Christianity not other religions (41%)	Children might be taught different beliefs than those taught at home (45%)	There might be discrimination of children who opt out (42%)

# Christianity

Parents and family members have the greatest influence on an individual’s attitude towards Christianity.

*Kiwi attitudes towards Christianity were tested using a question based on a modified Engel Scale. The first option captures whether the respondents consider themselves a Christian whilst the remaining seven options can be categorised as either warm, neutral or cool towards Christianity as in the diagram below.*

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



### Attitudes towards Christianity

When asked about their current attitude towards Christianity, just over three in ten Kiwis (31%) consider themselves a Christian (compared to 33% who identify with Christianity as a religion). One in four (26%) are warm towards Christianity, with 11% believing in all or much of Christianity but not considering themselves to be a Christian. One in seven (15%) believe in the ethics and values of

Christianity but don’t practice Christianity in any way.

Three in ten Kiwis are cool towards Christianity (31%). One in eight (13%) have some issues with Christianity and believe it isn’t for them, whilst another one in eight (13%) have strong reservations about Christianity and have no interest in it. Just one in twenty (5%) are passionately opposed to Christianity.

**Generational differences**

Older Kiwis are more likely to consider themselves a Christian (46% Builders, 37% Baby Boomers, 27% Gen X, 27% Gen Y, 19% Gen Z). Younger generations, however, are more likely to indicate they believe Christianity and churches should have religious freedoms, but they don't want to be involved (18% Gen Z, 14% Gen Y, 12% Gen X, 8% Baby Boomers, 9% Builders).

**Influences on perceptions and opinions of Christians and Christianity**

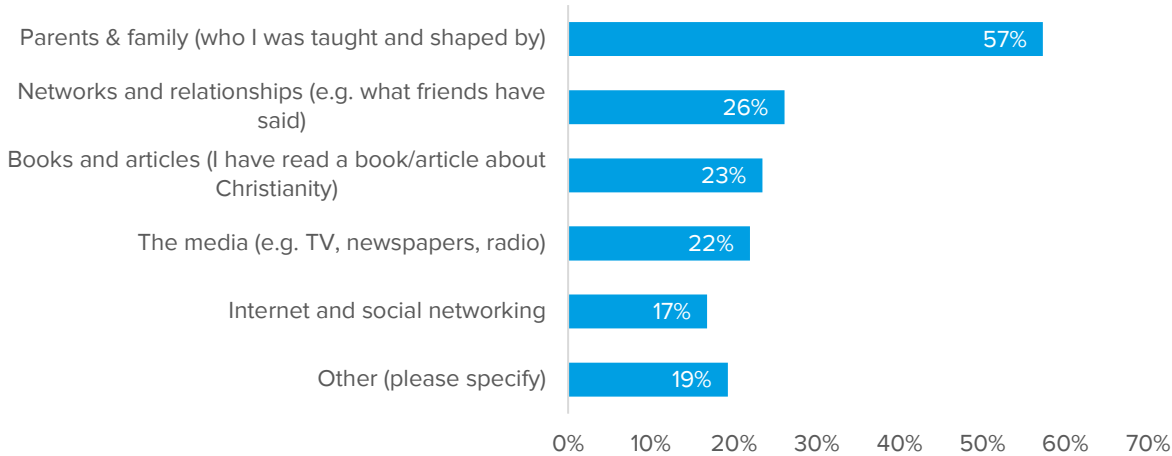
Parents and family are the greatest influencers on Kiwis opinions of Christians and Christianity.

More than half of Kiwis (57%) suggest parents and family have most influenced their opinion. One in four (26%) suggest networks and relationships, including friends have been highly influential. To a lesser degree, books and articles (23%) and the media (22%) influence Kiwis' perspectives on Christians and Christianity.

Almost one in five (19%) selected 'other'. The key themes represented in these responses were, 'none', their own personal questioning, reflection, observation and study, experience with Christians, life experience and experience of church.

**Who or what has most influenced your perceptions and opinions of Christians and Christianity?**

*Please select all that apply.*



## Positive and negative impacts of Christianity in New Zealand

*Non-Christian focus group participants were asked what they felt the positive and negative impacts of Christianity had been in New Zealand up until the current day.*

### **Positive impacts**

For both Generation X and Baby Boomers, the most positive impact of Christianity in New Zealand's society has been the social justice work of Christians in the community helping those in need. In setting up charities, encouraging volunteering and caring for their neighbours, Christians are seen to be living out their values.

Whilst Generation Y also appreciate the community work that Christians have done and still do, they see the most positive aspect of Christianity as the sense of community and belonging experienced by Christians and those who are part of a church. A church community is seen to provide support to its members, create friendships and bring like-minded people together. Other positive impacts of Christianity in New Zealand include the teaching of good principles such as love, respect and the ten commandments, as well as Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter.

### **Negative impacts**

Some Kiwis, within all three generations, feel that Christianity has negatively influenced New Zealand's society because it communicates a message of exclusivity and judgement. Some examples provided by non-Christian participants include the Church's teaching on homosexuality (classifying this as homophobia), attitude towards women's rights and perceived judgement of women who have children outside of marriage. Many also feel that Christians often have a 'sanctimonious attitude', and act as though they are superior to others around them.

Non-Christians also suggest Christians can be overbearing in the way they try to convert other people to believe what they believe. This approach is seen to be quite extreme and closed-minded, with a perceived non-acceptance of other people's beliefs and religions. Some suggest Christians talk too much about sin and find the idea that everyone is a sinner to be confronting.

Other negatives include the influence of Christianity on the beliefs of the Māori people, abuse in the church, corruption around money, and confusion around the different denominations within Christianity.



## The church's teaching on homosexuality is the biggest blocker to Kiwis engaging with Christianity.

The main blockers (completely/significantly) to Kiwis engaging with Christianity are the church's stance and teaching on homosexuality (47%), the idea that a loving God would allow people to go to hell (45%) and would allow so much evil and pain (39%).

### Generational differences

Younger generations are more likely to see the church's stance and teaching on homosexuality as a blocker to engaging with Christianity. The church's stance and teaching on homosexuality is the top belief blocker for Generation Z (43%), Generation Y (49%) and Generation X (50%). Similarly, the younger generations are more likely to think there are issues of gender inequality in Christianity (43% Gen Z, 42% Gen Y, 39% Gen X, 35% Baby Boomers, 27% Builders).

How a loving God could allow people to go to hell is the biggest belief blocker for Builders (53%) and Baby Boomers (49%). It is also an important issue for more than two in five (45%) from Generation X.

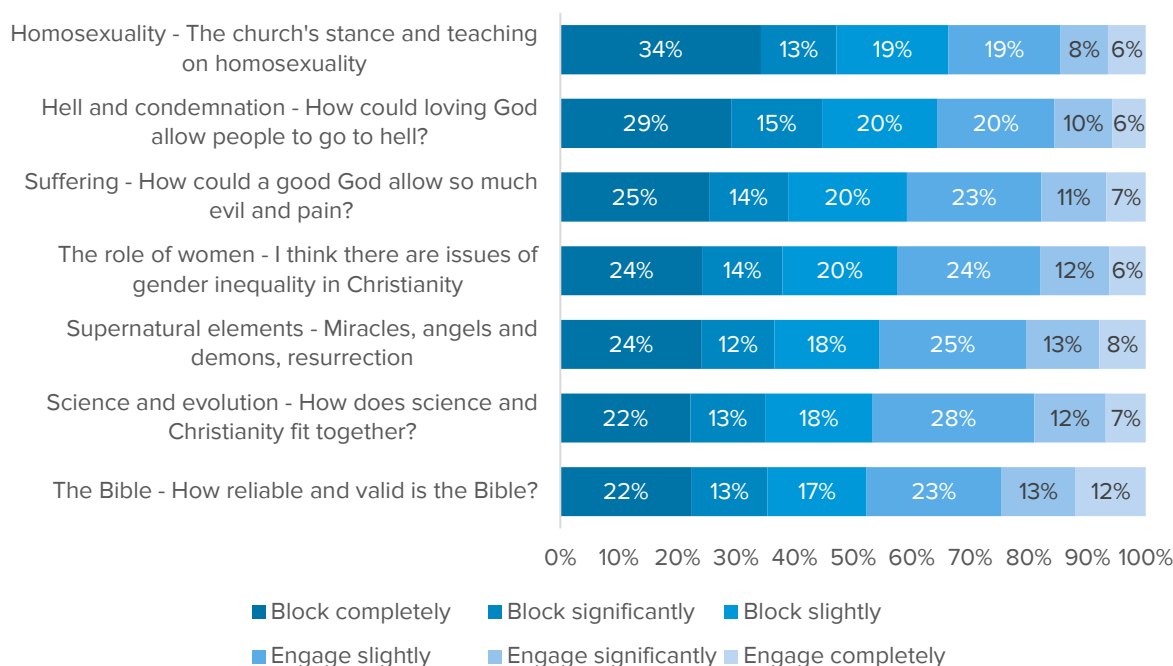
### Non-Christians

The church's stance on homosexuality is the biggest belief blocker (completely/significantly) for both non-Christians warm to Christianity (42%) and non-Christians cold to Christianity (71%). Following this is the question of how a loving God could allow people to go to hell (37% non-Christians warm, 70% non-Christians cold to Christianity). The third belief blocker differs slightly with non-Christians warm to Christianity highlighting the issue of gender equality (34%) and non-Christians cold to Christianity questioning the validity and reliability of the Bible (69%).

### Christians

The biggest belief blocker for Kiwis identifying with Christianity who regularly go to church is the church's stance on homosexuality (21% - block completely/significantly). For Kiwis identifying with Christianity who never attend church the greatest belief blocker is how a loving God could allow people to go to hell (33%).

### To what extent do each of the following issues and Christianity's stance on them block or engage with your interest in Christianity?



Top three belief blockers for each generation (% block completely/significantly).

Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Builders
The church's stance and teaching on homosexuality (43%)	The church's stance and teaching on homosexuality (49%)	The church's stance and teaching on homosexuality (50%)	How could a loving God allow people to go to hell (49%)	How could a loving God allow people to go to hell (53%)
I think there are issues of gender inequality in Christianity (43%)	How could a good God allow so much evil and pain (42%)	How could a loving God allow people to go to hell (45%)	The church's stance and teaching on homosexuality (47%)	Miracles, angels and demons, resurrection (44%)
How reliable and valid is the Bible (35%)	I think there are issues of gender inequality in Christianity (42%)	I think there are issues of gender inequality in Christianity (39%)	Miracles, angels and demons, resurrection (42%)	How could a good God allow so much evil and pain (40%)

## Church abuse has the greatest negative influence on Kiwis' perceptions of Christians and Christianity.

Perceptions of Christians and Christianity are not formed in isolation. Numerous events, situations and historical events play a part in informing perceptions of Christians and Christianity. From priests abusing children, to church leaders involved in scandals, church abuse has the greatest negative influence on Kiwis' perceptions of Christians and Christianity in New Zealand (76% massive/significant negative influence).

Christians not practicing what they preach is second to church abuse, with almost seven in ten Kiwis (69%) indicating this has a massive or significant negative influence on their perceptions. For two in three Kiwis (67%) religious wars negatively influence their perceptions of Christians and Christianity.

### Non-Christians

The greatest negative influences for non-Christians warm to Christianity are Church abuse (80%), hypocrisy (74%) and religious wars (74%).

The greatest negative influencers for non-Christians cold to Christianity are Church abuse (84%), religious wars (81%) and judging others (80%).

### Transparency and trust in the Church

When it comes to Church abuse, there is sense among non-Christian Kiwis that the church needs to acknowledge its history and rebuild trust. Some non-Christians link Church abuse, and the inaction of the Church in acknowledging its history, to the decline of religion in New Zealand. There is a desire for greater transparency from the Church in order to rebuild trust.

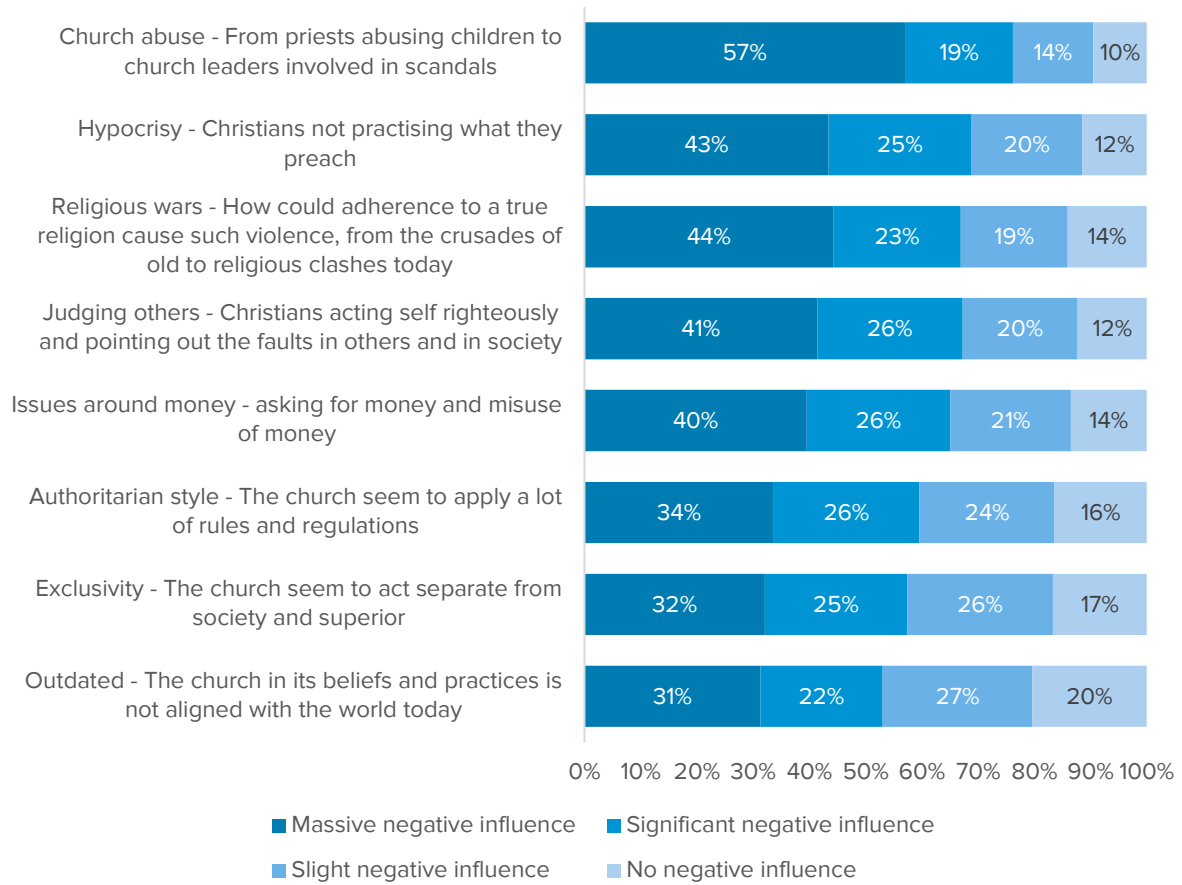
*"The Church never seems to take it on the chin. There never seems to be any consequences for any of their actions. The Church never seems to go into further investigations... they never just own up to it." (non-Christian Gen Y)*

*"I think it does correlate with the downward spiral of religion. We're hearing more, and we are not given any answers so we're not wanting to go there." (non-Christian Gen Y)*

*"[I think it's impacted the level of trust in the church] horribly. How could you have faith in that?" (non-Christian Baby Boomer)*

*"[The Church] needs to be more transparent and open. I'm quite surprised, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, that church leadership hasn't been more open and acknowledged the dark history. It really just needs some light shone on it." (non-Christian Gen X)*

### When you think about Christians and Christianity, to what extent do the following negatively influence your perceptions?



# Christians

Kiwis describe Christians as caring, faithful and kind.

Three in four Kiwis (75%) know two or more Christians. A further 16% of Kiwis only know one Christian. Almost one in ten (9%), however, do not know any Christians – which is equal to approximately 347,000 Kiwis.

Out of all the generations, those in Generation X are most likely not to know any Christians (12% cf. 9% Gen Z, 7% Gen Y, 8% Baby Boomers, 6% Builders).

### Perception of Christians

Kiwis who know at least one Christian are most likely to describe Christians as caring (43%), faithful (38%), kind (37%), loving (36%) and honest (33%).

Builders are more likely than other generations to describe Christians they know as honest (48% cf. 36% Baby Boomers, 25% Gen X, 26% Gen Y, 26% Gen Z). Generation X, however, is more likely to describe Christians as

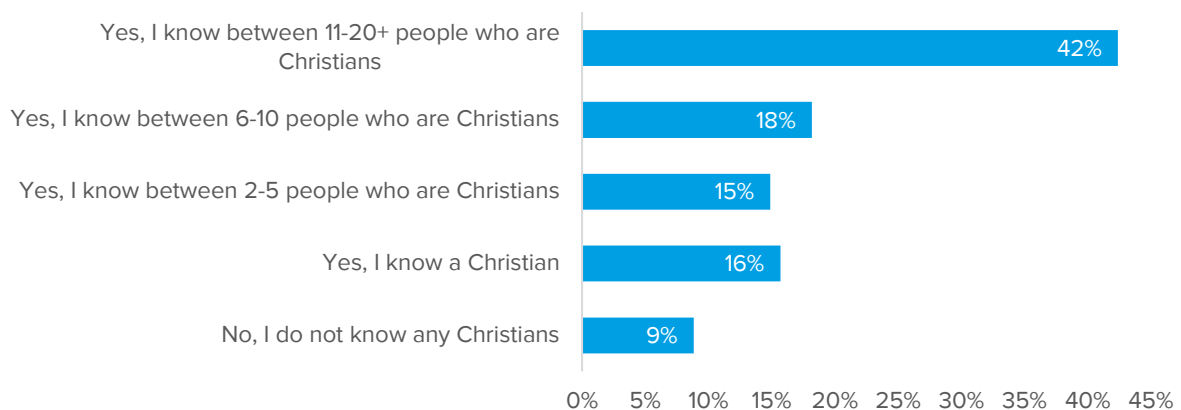
judgemental compared to other generations (27% cf. 18% Gen Z, 22% Gen Y, 19% Gen X, 14% Builders). Generation Z is twice as likely as Builders to describe Christians as joyful (26% cf. 12% Builders, 13% Baby Boomers, 15% Gen X, 17% Gen Y).

### Non-Christians' perceptions

Non-Christians are most likely to describe Christians they know as caring (36%) and kind (33%). Judgemental (27%) and hypocritical (24%), however are also in their top five words.

Non-Christians who are warm to Christianity are most likely to use the words caring (48%), kind (42%), loving (35%), faithful and honest (32%) to describe Christians they know. Non-Christians cold to Christianity, however, are most likely to use the words hypocritical (36%), judgemental (35%), opinionated (30%), old fashioned (29%) and caring (26%) to describe the Christians they know.

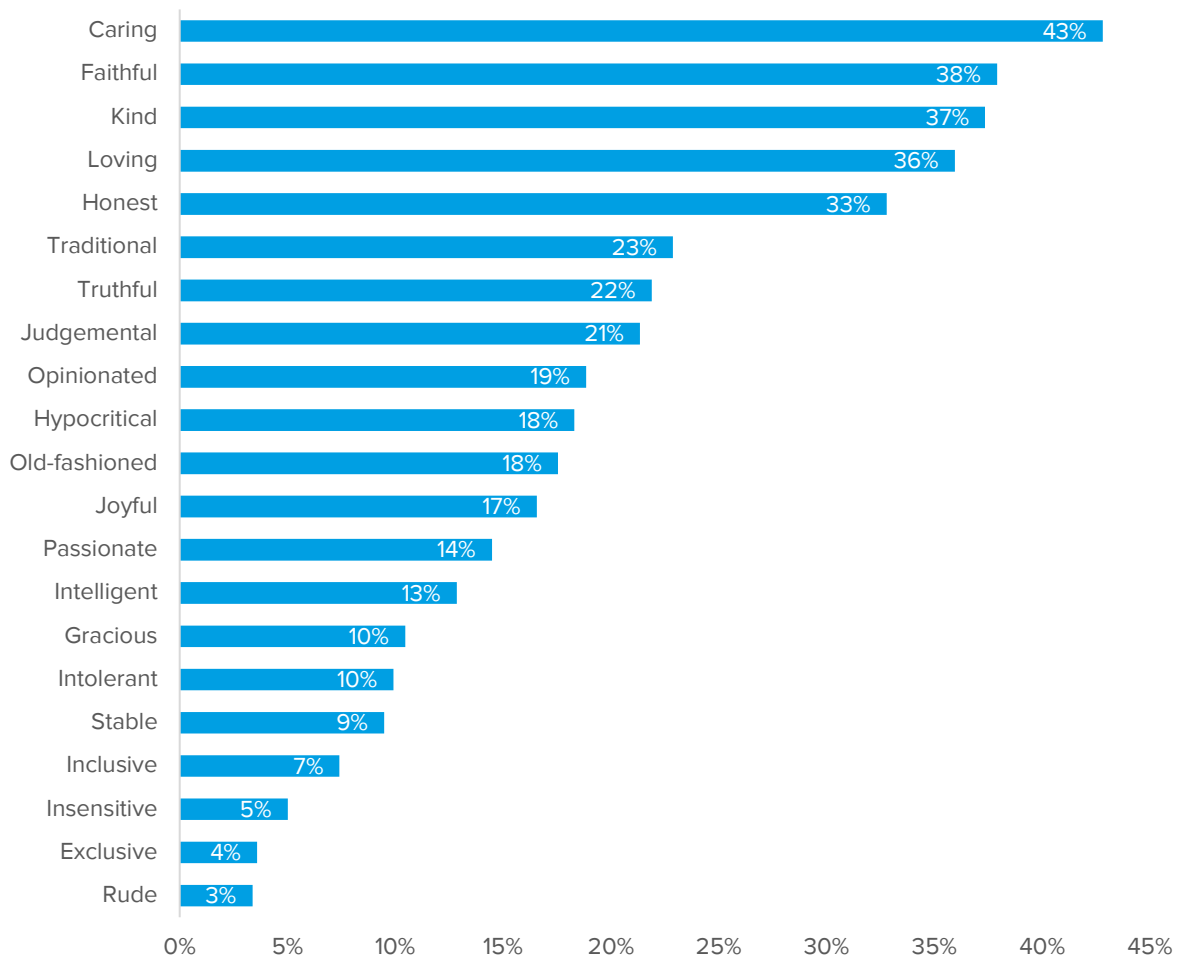
## Do you know someone who is a Christian?



### How would you describe the Christians you know?

Please select up to five words.

Those who know at least one Christian, n=918



#### Positive and negative experiences

Non-Christian Kiwis experience both positive and negative interactions with Christians. For some, the Christians they know are kind and caring.

*“They’re always very positive, very happy welcoming people.” (non-Christian Gen Y)*

For others, however, there is a sense that although a person may call themselves a Christian and, in some cases, appear to be very enthusiastic, they do not necessarily live out the values they preach.

*“I have dealt in business with people who openly tell me they are a Christian on the pretence of getting you to trust them and they turn out to be worse.” (non-Christian Baby Boomer)*

*“Most are really, really into it with a huge enthusiasm. They talk the talk but usually they don’t walk the walk. As a bystander, I don’t believe in it, I’m sitting in the middle, the pastor is saying one thing and doing another thing, it just feels so hypocritical, wrong in a way. I’ve shied away from it.” (non-Christian Gen Y)*

A negative experience non-Christians have repeatedly had with Christians is they feel religion is forced into the conversation even when it is not necessarily wanted. Similarly, some find Christians to be over the top in their beliefs, though they indicate that it is not all Christians.

*“One of the negatives I find, I do have a lot of Christian friends, when I go to them for support... they tell me to talk to God about it and pray about it. I’m like ‘can we talk about this situation? I don’t want to pray to God*

*about it, I want to fix it’. They always manage to wedge it into the conversation when something bad is happening in your life.” (non-Christian Gen Y)*

*“My husband’s family is religious. ‘God is the one truth, the only way’ and to me they are over the top... I don’t defend my view it’s just easier to say nothing. I know other Christians who are there for support, but they wouldn’t ever force it down your throat.” (non-Christian Gen X)*

# The Church

Younger Kiwis know the least about the Church in New Zealand.

## Knowledge of the Church

More than one in five Kiwis (22%) know nothing at all about the Church in New Zealand. Three in five (60%), know a little or a moderate amount. Less than one in five Kiwis (18%), however, know a lot or a great deal about the Church in New Zealand.

Younger generations know the least about the Church in New Zealand. One in three Generation Z (33%) and more than one in four Generation Y (26%) know nothing about the Church in New Zealand compared to 23% Generation X, 18% of Baby Boomers and 11% of Builders.

## Non-Christians perceptions of the Church

There is a range of perspectives from non-Christians on the Church in New Zealand. Whilst some see it as a place for belonging and community, others see it as a place of hypocrisy and scams, or as being old-fashioned.

*“[Church is] a place for everyone to gather together on a Sunday morning.” (non-Christian Gen X)*

*‘It’s a place of community and support when you are needing some help.’ (non-Christian Gen X)*

*“[[It’s a] scam – you see so many churches, they’re all very expensive, you hear stories of pastors who earn fortunes.” (non-Christian Gen Y)*

*“[The Church is] old fashioned and antiquated” (non-Christian Gen X)*

## The influence of media

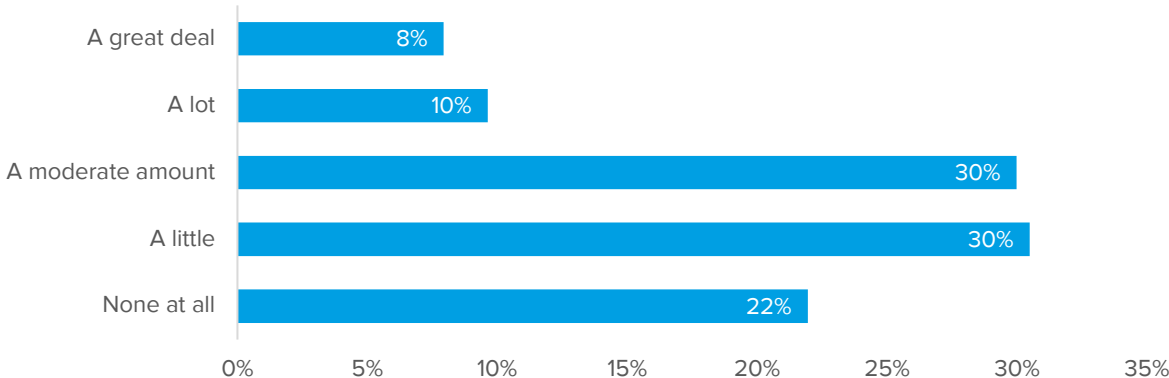
The media sources that have the largest influence on how Kiwis view the role of the Church and Christian organisations in society today are social media (34%), newspapers (29%) and commercial TV (27%).

Almost one in four Kiwis selected ‘other’ (24%). The most common response given was that media had not influenced their view of the role of the Church and Christian organisations in society.

Social media is the top influencer for the younger generations (52% Gen Z, 51% Gen Y, 31% Gen X) whereas the top influencer for the older generations is the newspaper (47% Builders, 33% Baby Boomers).

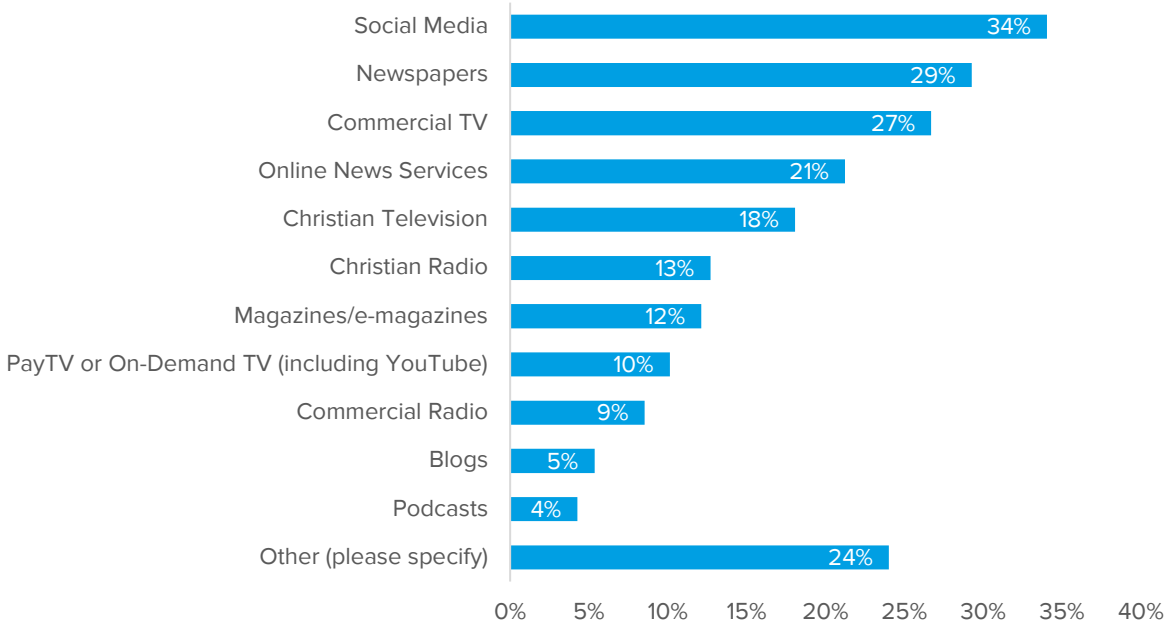


### How much do you know about the church in New Zealand?



### What are the top three media sources that have had the largest influence on how you view the role of the church and Christian organisations in society today?

*Please select up to three responses.*



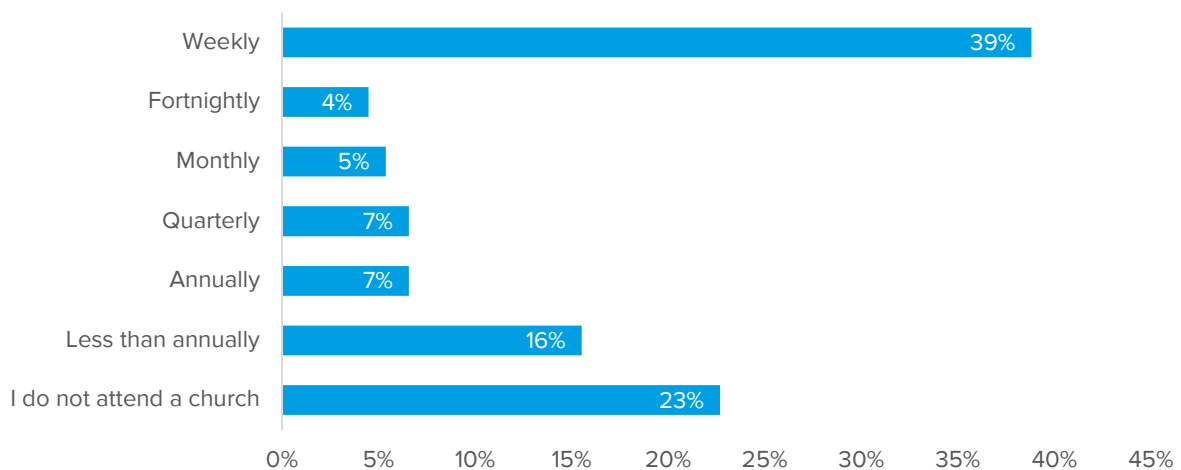
## Half of Kiwis identifying with Christianity attend church regularly.

Almost half of Kiwis identifying with Christianity (49%) are regular church attenders, attending at least once a month. One in eight (13%) attend every few months to once a year whilst almost two in five Kiwis identifying with Christianity (38%) attend church less than annually or never.

Kiwis who identify with Christianity but never go to church are most likely to be male (52%), Baby Boomers (38%) and be committed to the religion their parents/family brought them up in (38%) or have been religious and are now no longer religious (38%). Jesus' life is not at all or slightly important to them (45%) and they value the supportive community of the local church (55%).

### How frequently do you attend church?

Please select the response the most applies to you. Identifying with Christianity only, n=335



## The provision of disaster relief is what Kiwis primarily value about the Church and Christian organisations.

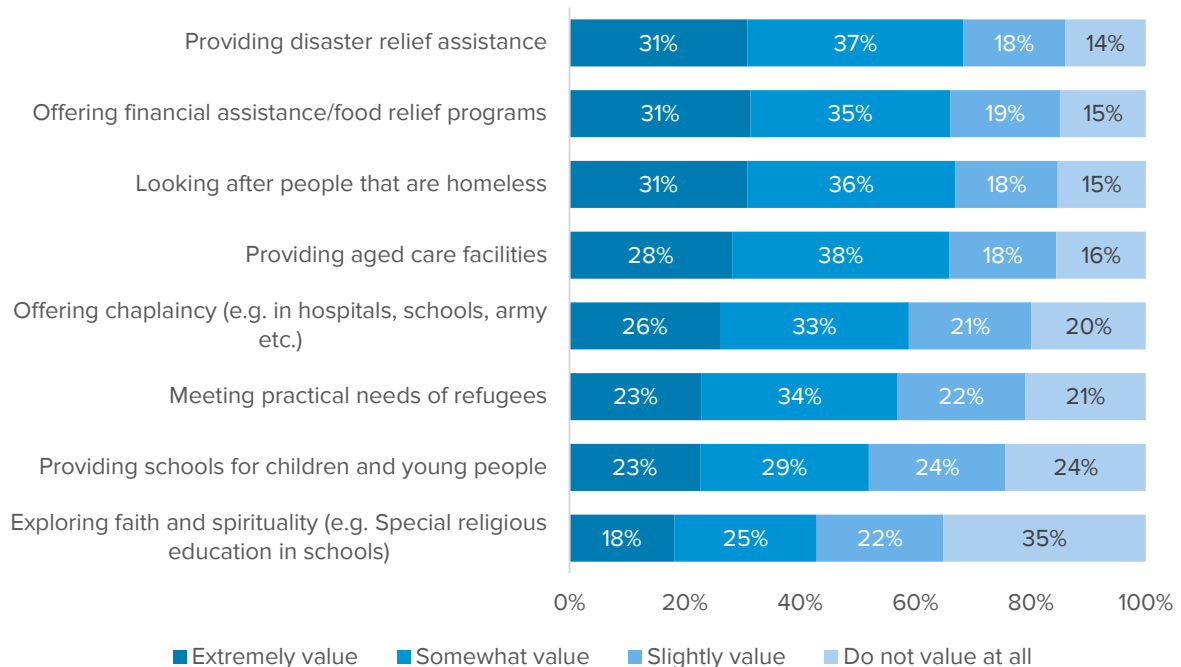
Kiwis most value the work of the Church and Christian organisations in providing disaster relief assistance, with almost seven in ten (68%) indicating they extremely or somewhat value the work in this area. Following this, two thirds of Kiwis value the Church and Christian organisations' work in looking after people that are homeless (66%), offering financial assistance/food relief programs (66%) and providing aged care facilities (66%).

More than half of Kiwis value the work of the Church and Christian organisations in the offering of chaplaincy (59%) and meeting the practical needs of refugees (57%).

### Differences between Christians and non-Christians

Regardless of religious identification, providing disaster relief assistance is in the top three most valued areas in which the Church and Christian organisations work. Kiwis identifying with Christianity, however, are much more inclined to value the Church's work in this area (82% cf. 79% non-Christians warm, 50% non-Christians cold to Christianity). Kiwis identifying with Christianity are also more likely to value the Church and Christian organisations for their provision of chaplaincy (83%).

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



Top three areas that each group values the work of the Church and Christian organisations (% extremely / somewhat value).

Identify with Christianity	Non-Christians warm to Christianity	Non-Christians cold to Christianity
Offering chaplaincy (83%)	Looking after people who are homeless (79%)	Providing disaster relief assistance (50%)
Providing aged care facilities (83%)	Providing disaster relief assistance (79%)	Offering financial assistance/food relief programs (47%)
Providing disaster relief assistance (82%)	Offering financial assistance/food relief programs (77%)	Looking after people who are homeless (47%)

# The local church

Kiwis value the supportive community of local churches.

Despite a third of Kiwis (33%) identifying with Christianity, just one in five (20%) say they know their local church very or extremely well. One in four (25%) know their local church slightly or moderately well. More than half of Kiwis (56%), however, suggest they don't know their local church well at all.

## Impact of the local church

More than two in five Kiwis (43%) suggest the churches in their area have a positive impact in the community (extremely/somewhat/slightly). Half (51%), however, take a neutral stance see their local church's impact as neither positive or negative. Just 6% of Kiwis see their local churches as having a negative impact in their area.

Almost half of Kiwis identifying with Christianity who do not go to church (49%) believe churches are having a positive impact in their local area. More than nine in ten regular church

attenders (92%), however, believe churches are having a positive impact in their local area.

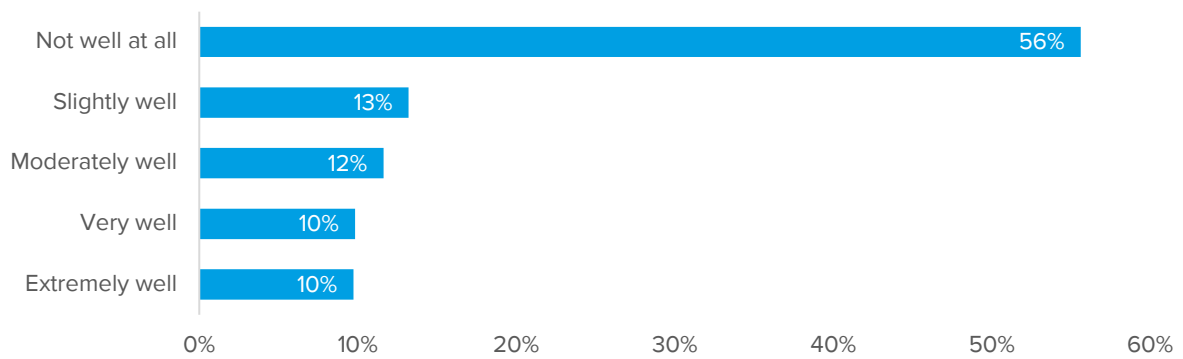
## Positives of the local church

Kiwis say the most valuable aspect of local churches is the supportive community it provides (44%). Secondary positive aspects include the social connections (26%) and the ability to worship together (23%). Two in five Kiwis (41%), however, do not value anything about local churches.

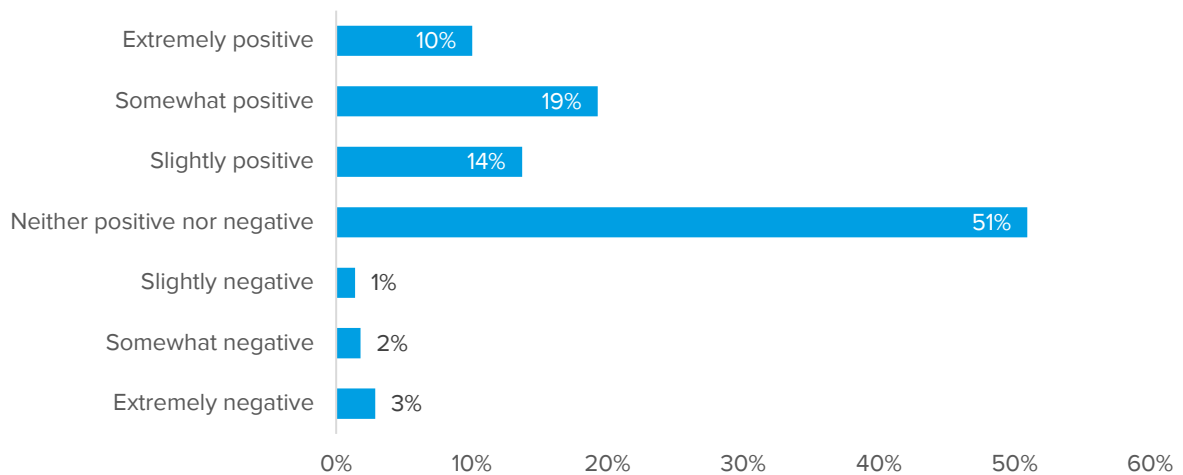
The value of local church decreases amongst non-Christian Kiwis, with almost three quarters of non-Christians cold to Christianity (74%) not valuing anything about local church. Non-Christians warm to Christianity, however, are slightly warmer towards local churches with just a third (32%) not valuing anything about local church. For both non-Christians warm and cold to Christianity, the aspect they do value about local church is the supportive community (49% and 19% respectively).

### How well do you know your local church?

*Think about the church closest to you, or a church you recently attended.*

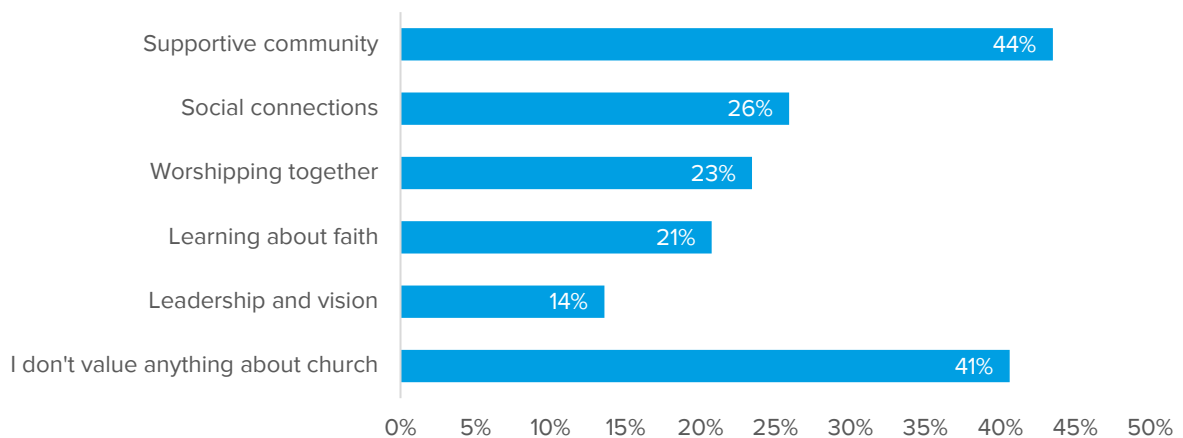


### What is the impact of the churches in your local area?



### What do you value about local church?

*Please select all that apply.*



# Regular church attending Kiwis are likely to recommend the churches in their local area.

## Net Promoter Score (NPS)

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) developed by Bain & Company is based on the fundamental perspective that every organisation’s clients can be divided into three categories: Promoters, Passives, and Detractors.

Supporters respond on a 0-to-10-point rating scale and are categorised as follows:

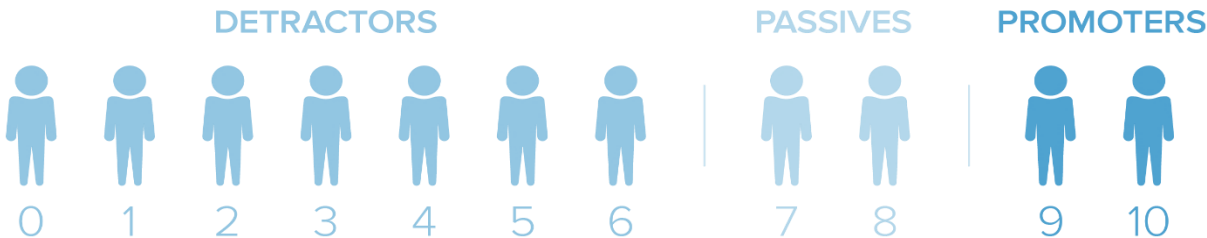
- Promoters (score 9-10) are loyal enthusiasts who will keep engaging and will refer others, fuelling growth.
- Passives (score 7-8) are satisfied but unenthusiastic stakeholders who are vulnerable to competitive offerings.
- Detractors (score 0-6) are unhappy stakeholders who can damage your brand and impede growth through negative word-of-mouth.

An organisation’s NPS score can range anywhere between -100 and 100. A score above 0 is considered a good score, with organisations often receiving a negative result.

## NPS for local churches in New Zealand

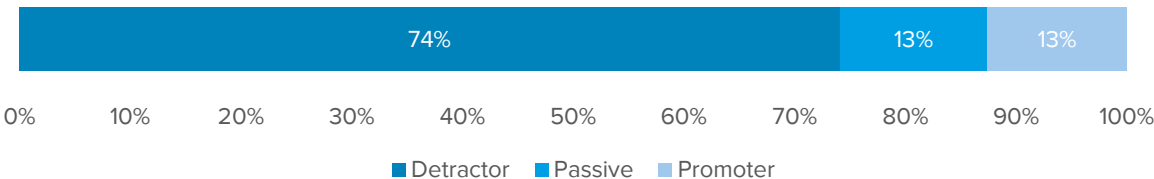
Kiwis are not likely to recommend the churches in their local area to a friend or colleague, providing an NPS of -61.

Kiwis identifying with Christianity are more likely to recommend the churches in their local area, however, still provide a negative score of -17. Regular church attenders, however, are very positive about the churches in their local area with an NPS of +35.



**NET PROMOTER SCORE** = **% PROMOTERS** - **% DETRACTORS**

On a scale from 0-10, how likely are you to recommend the churches in your local area to a friend or colleague?



# Jesus

Most Kiwis know at least a few things about the life of Jesus.

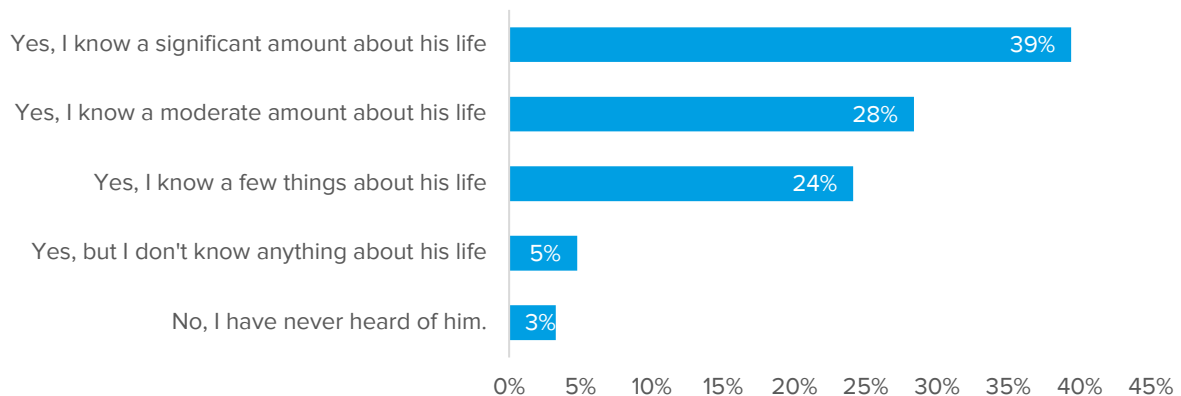
More than nine in ten Kiwis (92%) know at least a few things about the life of Jesus. Just 5% of Kiwis have heard of Jesus but don't know anything about his life and 3% of Kiwis have never heard of him at all.

Knowledge of Jesus is fairly consistent across the generations. The Builders, however, are

most likely to know at least a few things about the life of Jesus (95%), whilst Generation Z know the least about Jesus' life (87%).

Non-Christian Kiwis' knowledge of Jesus is fairly high with almost nine in ten (88%) knowing at least a few things about his life.

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





## For Kiwis, Jesus' life is important historically but not personally.

### Historical importance

More than half of Kiwis (52%) believe Jesus' life was extremely or very important to the history and culture of the world. One in three (33%) would say Jesus' life was somewhat or slightly important. Just 14% of Kiwis say Jesus' life was not at all important on the history and culture of the world.

Baby Boomers are more likely than other generations to suggest Jesus' life was important to the history and culture of the world (58%), whilst Generation Z are least likely (44%).

More than nine in ten regular church attenders (93%) believe Jesus' life was important to the history and culture of the world. Comparatively, three in five (62%) Kiwis who identify with Christianity but never go to church believe the same.

Non-Christians warm to Christianity are twice as likely as non-Christians cold to Christianity to consider Jesus' life important on the history and culture of the world (51% and 24% respectively).

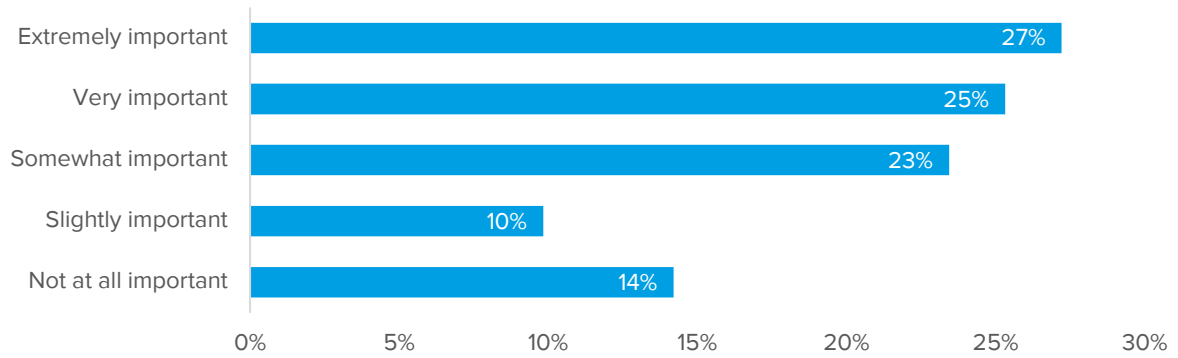
### Personal importance

Although half of Kiwis (52%) believe Jesus' life was important to the history and culture of the world, they are less likely to suggest he is important to them personally. Just 30% of Kiwis say that Jesus' life is extremely or very important to them personally. For more than two in five Kiwis (42%) Jesus' life is not at all important to them personally.

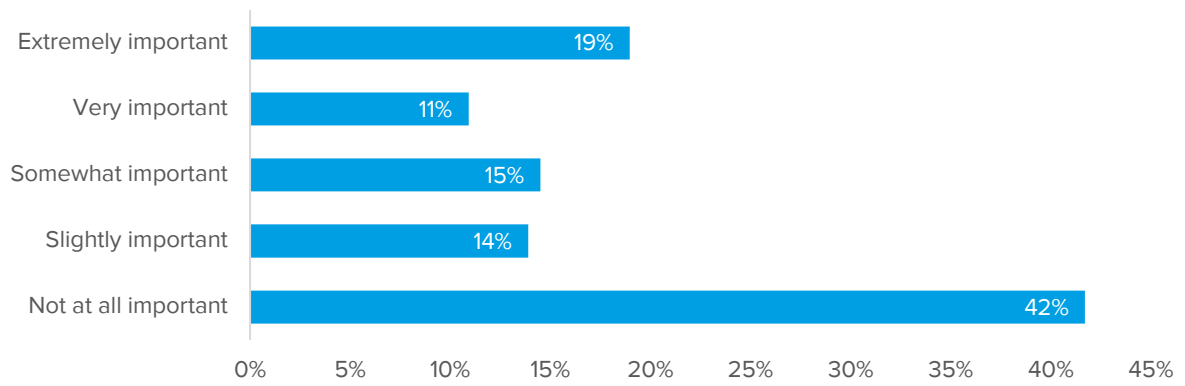
Kiwis identifying with Christianity who regularly attend church are twice as likely as Kiwis identifying with Christianity who never attend church to consider Jesus' life as important to them personally (88% and 35% respectively - extremely/very important).

Non-Christians warm to Christianity (18%) are more likely than those who are cold to Christianity (3%) to see Jesus' life as personally important to them. Non-Christians cold to Christianity, however, are significantly more likely to say Jesus' life is not at all important to them (80% compared to 33% non-Christians warm to Christianity).

### How important was Jesus' life on the history and culture of the world?



### How important is Jesus' life to you personally?



## Kiwis positively associate Jesus with ‘love’.

More than half of Kiwis (53%) positively connect Jesus with the attribute of love. This is consistent across:

- Regular church attenders (82%)
- Kiwis identifying with Christianity who do not go to church (68%)
- Non-Christians warm to Christianity (56%)
- Non-Christians cold to Christianity (25%)

Although the attribute of love is connected most with Jesus across different demographics, the extent to which each group associates Jesus with this attribute varies considerably.

Kiwis also positively connect with Jesus’ attributes of hope (45%), truth (41%) and care (38%).

### Generational differences

‘Love’ is the attribute connected with most across the different generations (53% Gen Z, 53% Gen Y, 50% Gen X, 54% Baby Boomers, 56% Builders). The exception to this is Builders, who connect most with ‘truth’ (58%).

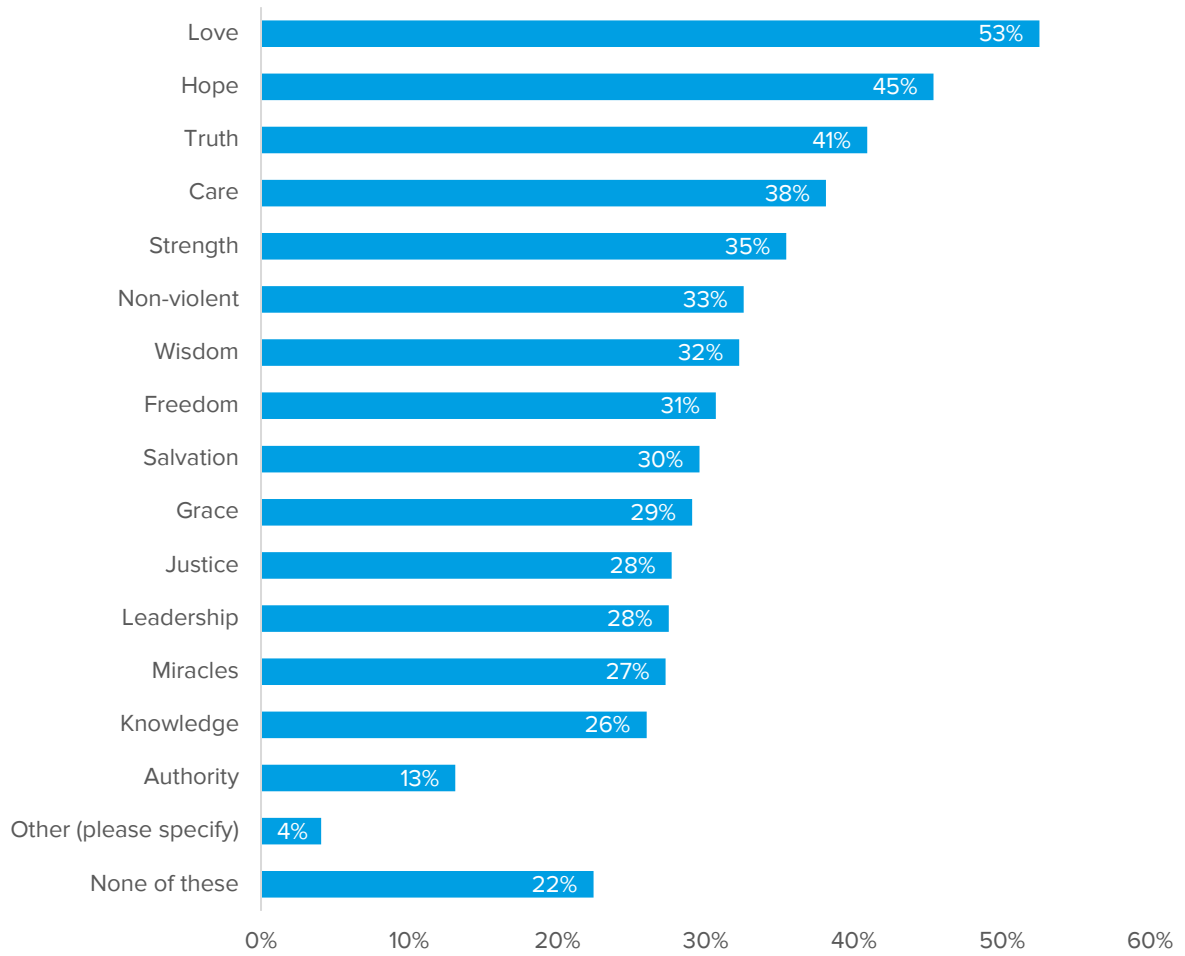
Jesus’ attributes of non-violence, justice and knowledge resonated differently across the different generations (as seen in the table below). Builders are the most likely to positively connect with the non-violent and justice attributes of Jesus. Generation Z are the most likely to connect with the attribute of knowledge.

*Proportion of each generation that connected with each attribute of Jesus’ life*

Attribute of Jesus’ life	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Builders
Non-violence	35%	26%	34%	32%	42%
Justice	23%	26%	24%	31%	37%
Knowledge	33%	26%	23%	29%	20%

### What aspects and attributes of Jesus' life do you most connect with in a positive way?

*Please select all that apply.*



## Jesus is seen as relatable and approachable by non-Christian Kiwis.

*Insights from focus groups with non-Christians.*

Perceptions towards Jesus are often quite positive with many non-Christians feeling that he is relatable, approachable and gracious. Whilst some indicated that Christians made them feel they had to be perfect to come to church, they did not associate the same message with Jesus.

*“I feel like he’s approachable. He just talked to anyone and didn’t give a s\*\*\* who you were. You were an equal to him.” (non-Christian Gen Y).*

*“He is the only figure in Christianity that said it’s ok not to be perfect, that message has been swept under the rug.” (non-Christian Gen Y).*

*“The Church should not be so exclusive. It should be a lot more welcoming. There are a lot of churches where you have to fit in to their checklist of oks to fit in, but what if everyone could come in?” (non-Christian Gen Y)*

*“I went to communion a few years ago and I didn’t know what was going on, I didn’t know the rules. I felt really nervous and*

*uncomfortable in church, and I would like to think if Jesus was around, he would be looking at that situation going ‘oh no, what are they doing making this guy feel uncomfortable?’ (non-Christian Gen X)*

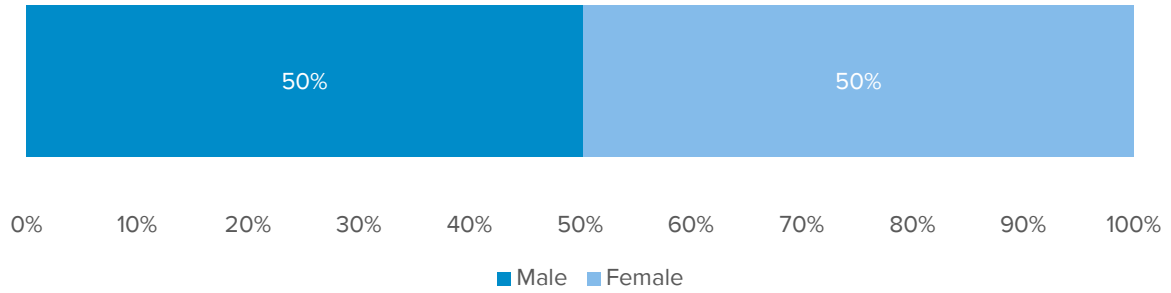
*“If you read what Jesus is supposed to have said in the Bible, it’s beautiful. But if you look at the Church you are like ‘how can someone like him turn a religion into something like that?’...It’s the institution that bothers me, but the man himself was good.” (non-Christian Gen Y)*

Non-Christians feel that Christians could better represent Jesus by letting their actions speak louder than words. Instead of Christians telling others how to live or what to believe, non-Christians would like to see Christians living out the values that Jesus proclaims in the Bible and continuing to do good work in the community.

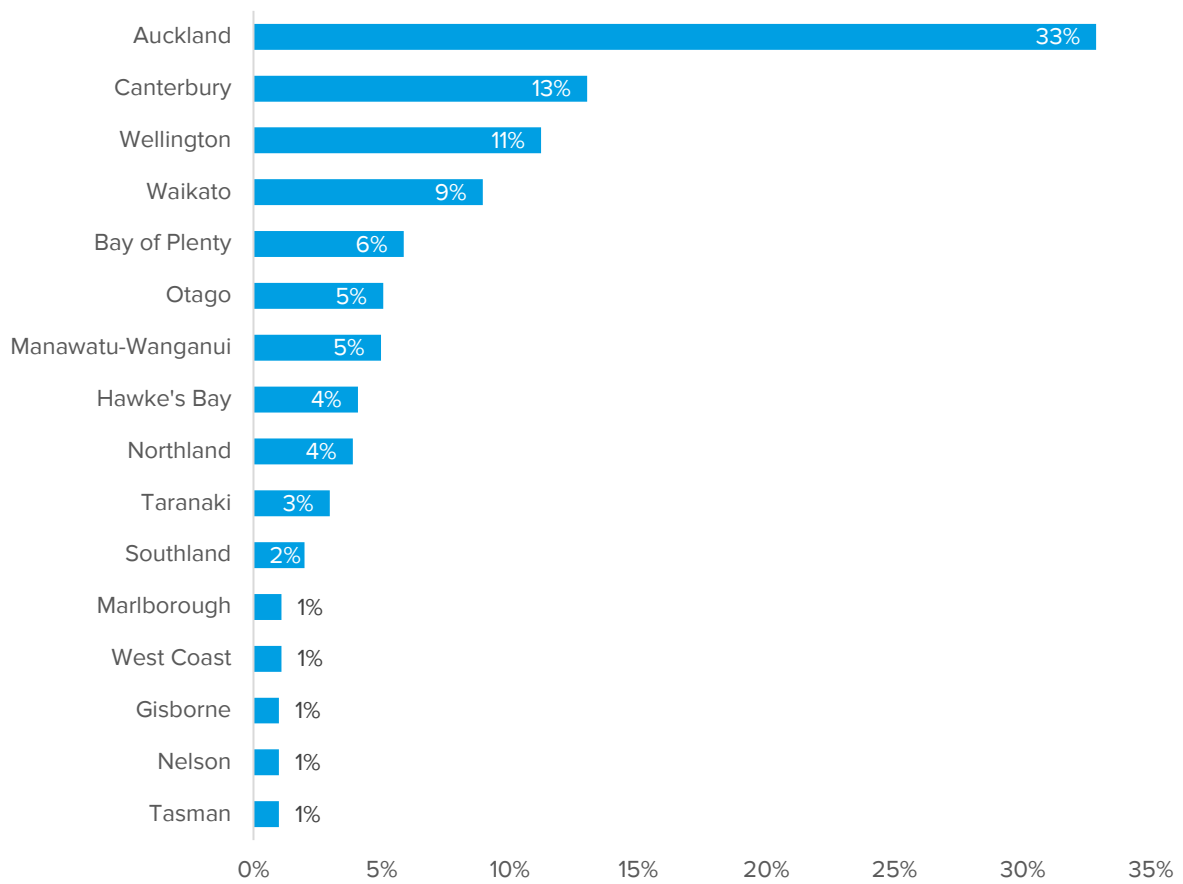
*“Practise don’t preach...do the good work, but don’t ram the religion.” (non-Christian Baby Boomer)*

# Demographics

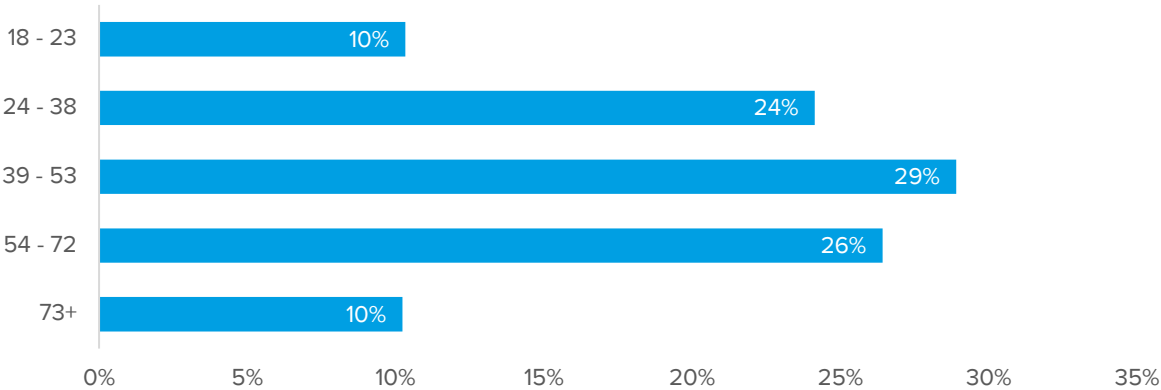
Are you male or female?



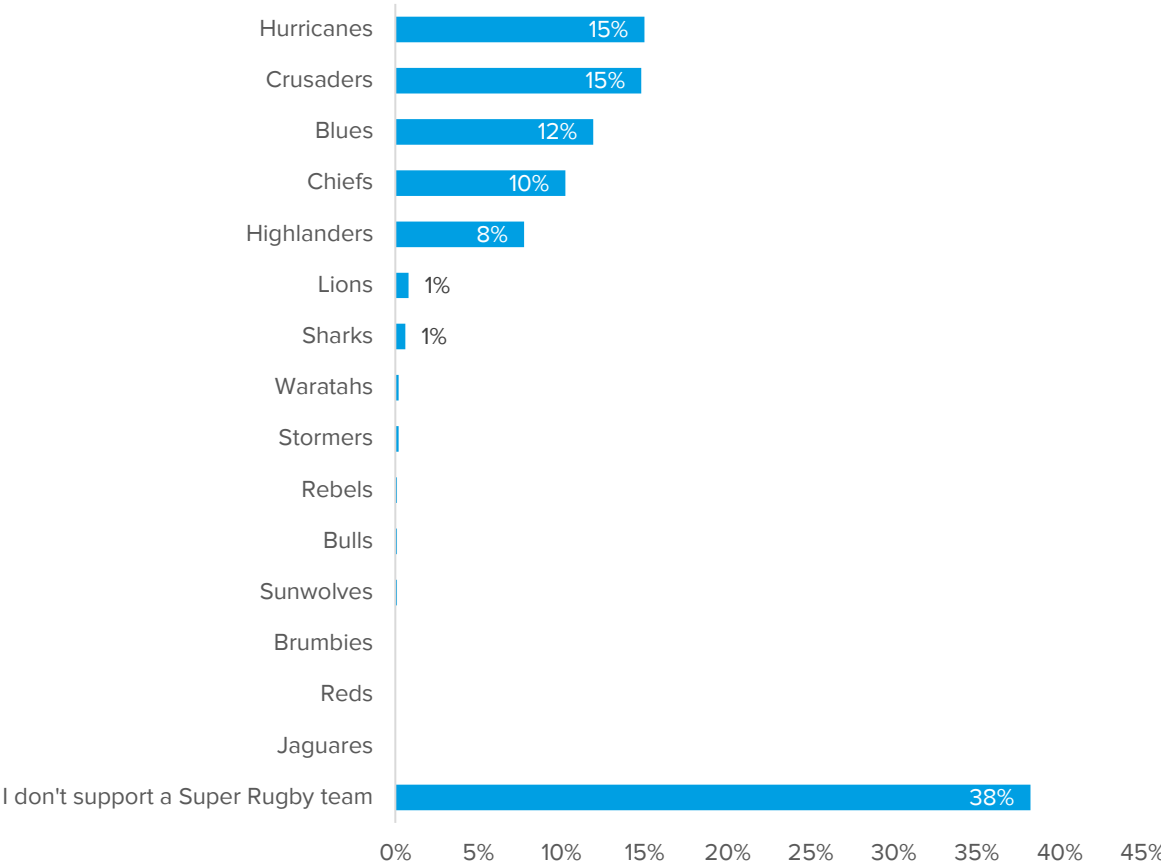
Where do you usually live?



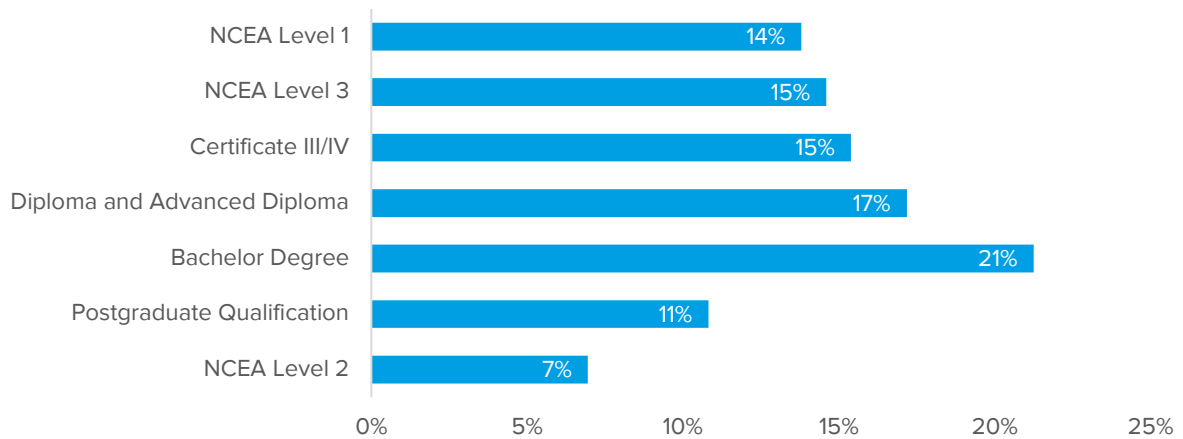
### What age will you be in 2018?



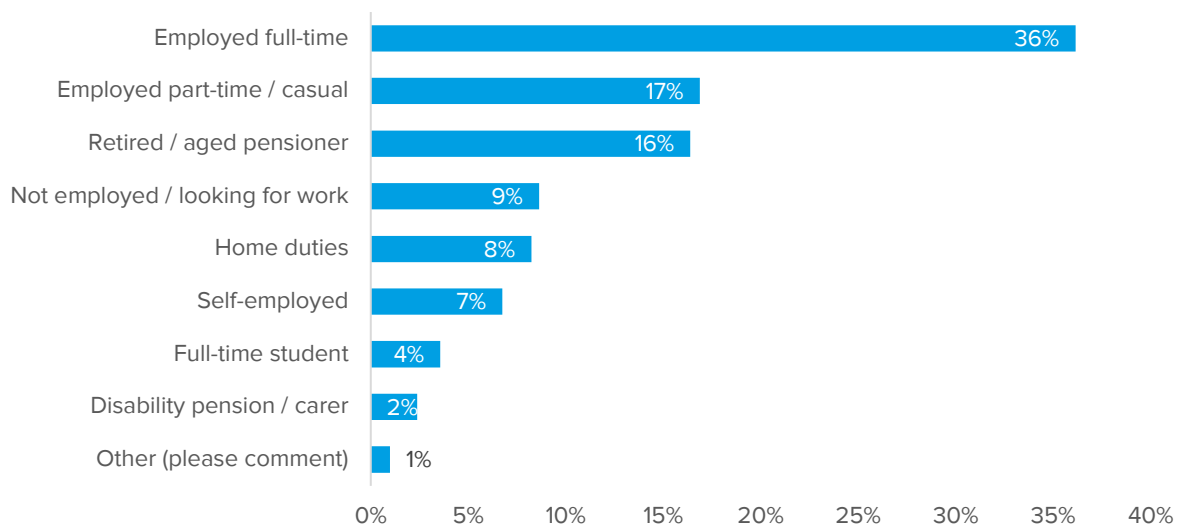
### Which Super Rugby team do you support?



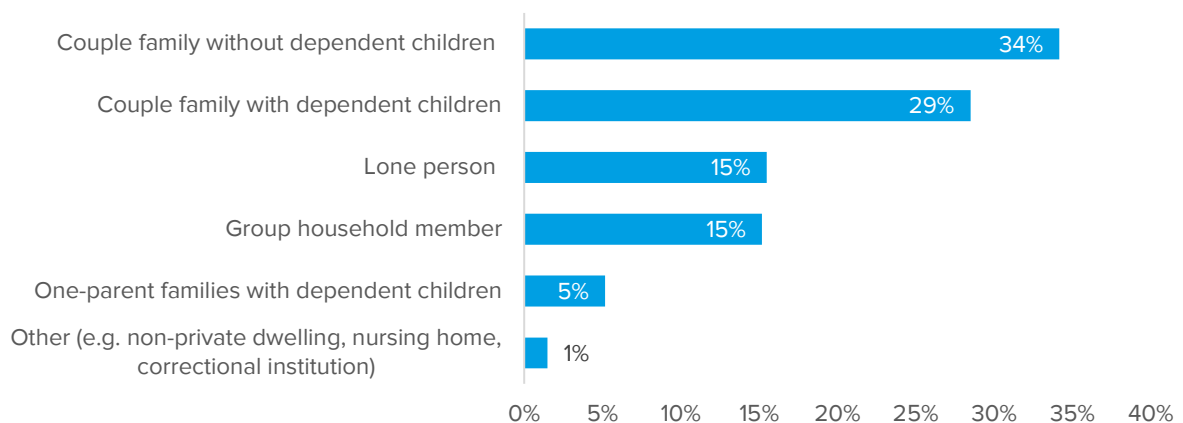
### What is your highest level of completed education?



### Which of the following best describes your employment status?



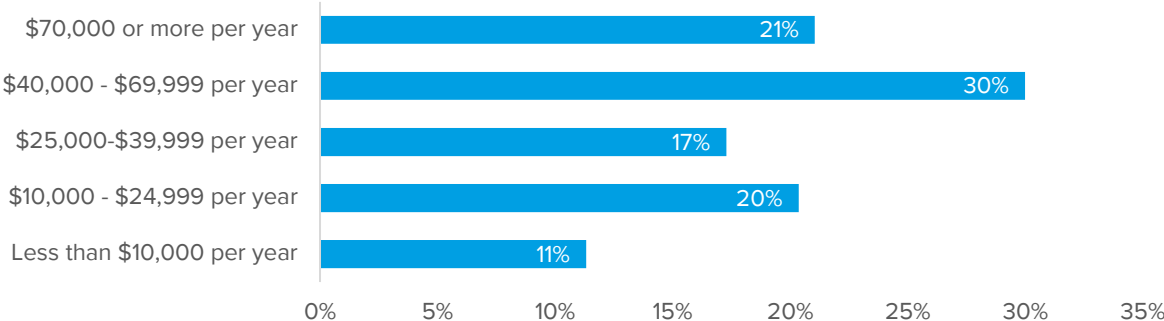
### What type of household do you currently live in?



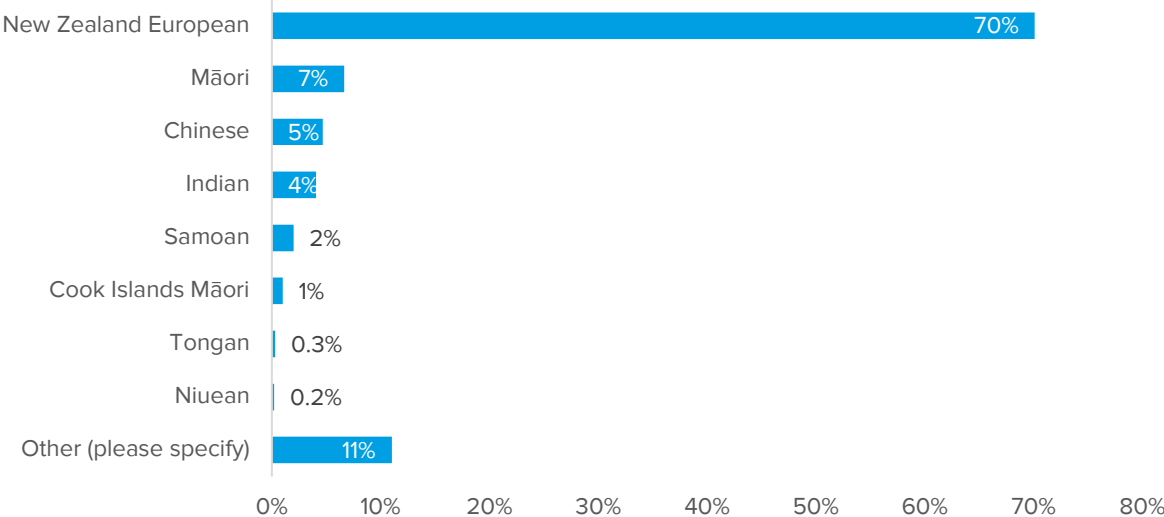


### Which of the following best represents your total personal annual income? (i.e. before taxes)

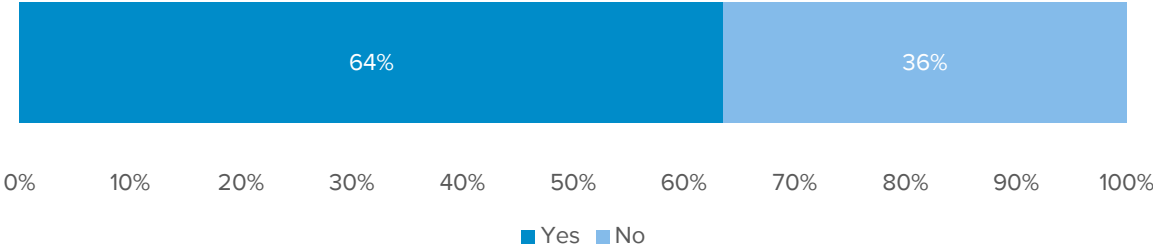
Note: - Includes pensions, allowances, overtime and investments like dividends or rent.



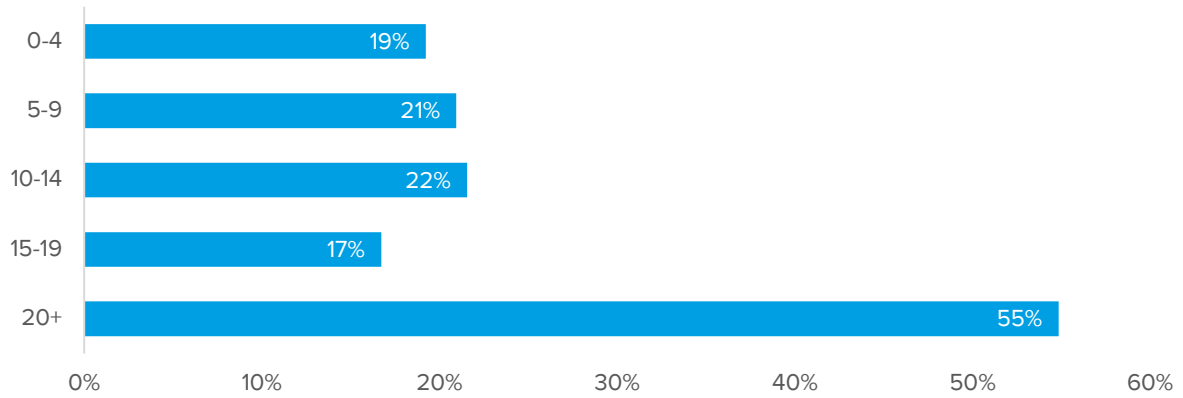
### Which ethnic group do you belong to?



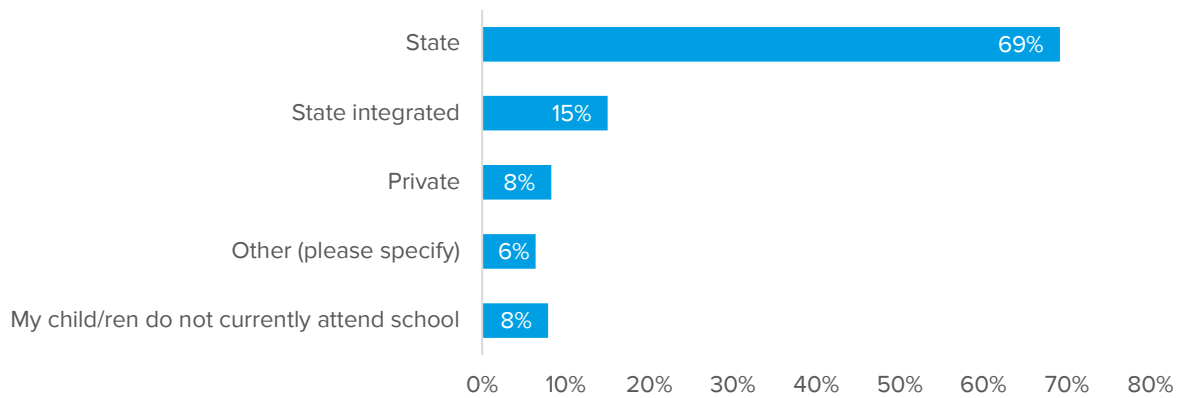
### Do you have any children?



### How old will your child/ren be in 2018? *Please select all that apply. Parents only, n=640*



### What type of school/s do your children attend? *Parents of school aged children only, n=266*



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## For further information

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