



Finish Water Waste

A report into
New Zealand's
water habits

2024



Let's help protect what we love.

We need to practise smart water habits now so we can help make a difference to climate change for our future generations, environment and ecosystems.

As the planet continues to experience global warming, the effects of climate change are becoming increasingly apparent. Scientists predict that this will manifest itself in the form of more frequent and intense periods of drought and flooding, the melting of glaciers, and changes in the patterns of rain and snowfall.

Globally, a third of the world's urban population is already facing water shortages, and this proportion will rise to almost half by 2050. In the next three decades, the need for water will increase from 50 to 80% and that supply may become limited.

Here in Aotearoa, we're surrounded by water. It's part of what makes our country so unique; it supports our agricultural industries and provides us with the lifestyles we cherish. However, while New Zealand is considered water-rich by global standards, this abundance of water can vary significantly from month-to-month and year-to-year.

In 2023, parts of our country experienced some of the most significant weather events in history, including floods, cyclones and droughts, with disastrous effects that impacted the lives of many.

Thinking about how we can conserve and protect our water sources may help to protect our infrastructure, our health, and the health of the ecosystems around us. It also encourages us to form better habits which, in the long run, may help us become more resilient to climate change in the future.

An important part of creating behavioural change is changing perceptions and attitudes, and this change stems from better education and understanding. In this case, from New Zealanders having good levels of water literacy (education).

Understanding our water use and where water comes from is the first step in the journey towards valuing water and using it wisely. This research is fascinating as it reflects what we've found across the Tasman in Australia. Everyone can play their part in conserving water by being more aware of their water use and making small easy changes to their behaviour

CHRIS PHILPOT, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, THE WATER CONSERVANCY.



Finish, both locally and globally, is committed to educating people on ways to help save water, by inspiring smarter water use.

1. Sector State of Play: WaterWaters Reform in New Zealand.
2. Future global urban water scarcity and potential solutions, 3 August 2021
3. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/climate-change>
4. [https://niwa.co.nz/freshwater/freshwater-update/freshwater-update-70-august-2016/the-water-accounts-of-new-zealand#:~:text=Compared%20with%20many%20other%20countries,or%20too%20little%20\(drought\).](https://niwa.co.nz/freshwater/freshwater-update/freshwater-update-70-august-2016/the-water-accounts-of-new-zealand#:~:text=Compared%20with%20many%20other%20countries,or%20too%20little%20(drought).)

About the Research

Methodology

Finish has commissioned two pieces of research, both conducted by market research company, YouGov. The first study was conducted online from 29 November – 6 December 2022 and the second a year later from 21 December 2023 - 11 January 2024, also online. A nationally representative sample of 1,000+ New Zealand adults aged 18 years and older was surveyed for both studies and the second piece of research also included an additional sample of 168 Kiwi youth aged 8-17 years of age. The data has been weighted by age, gender and region to reflect the latest Stats NZ population estimates.

Who was surveyed:

2022 (NZ adults aged 18+, weighted)

Gender



Age



Region



2022 (NZ adults aged 18+, weighted)

Rural/Metro



80%

City and surrounding suburbs



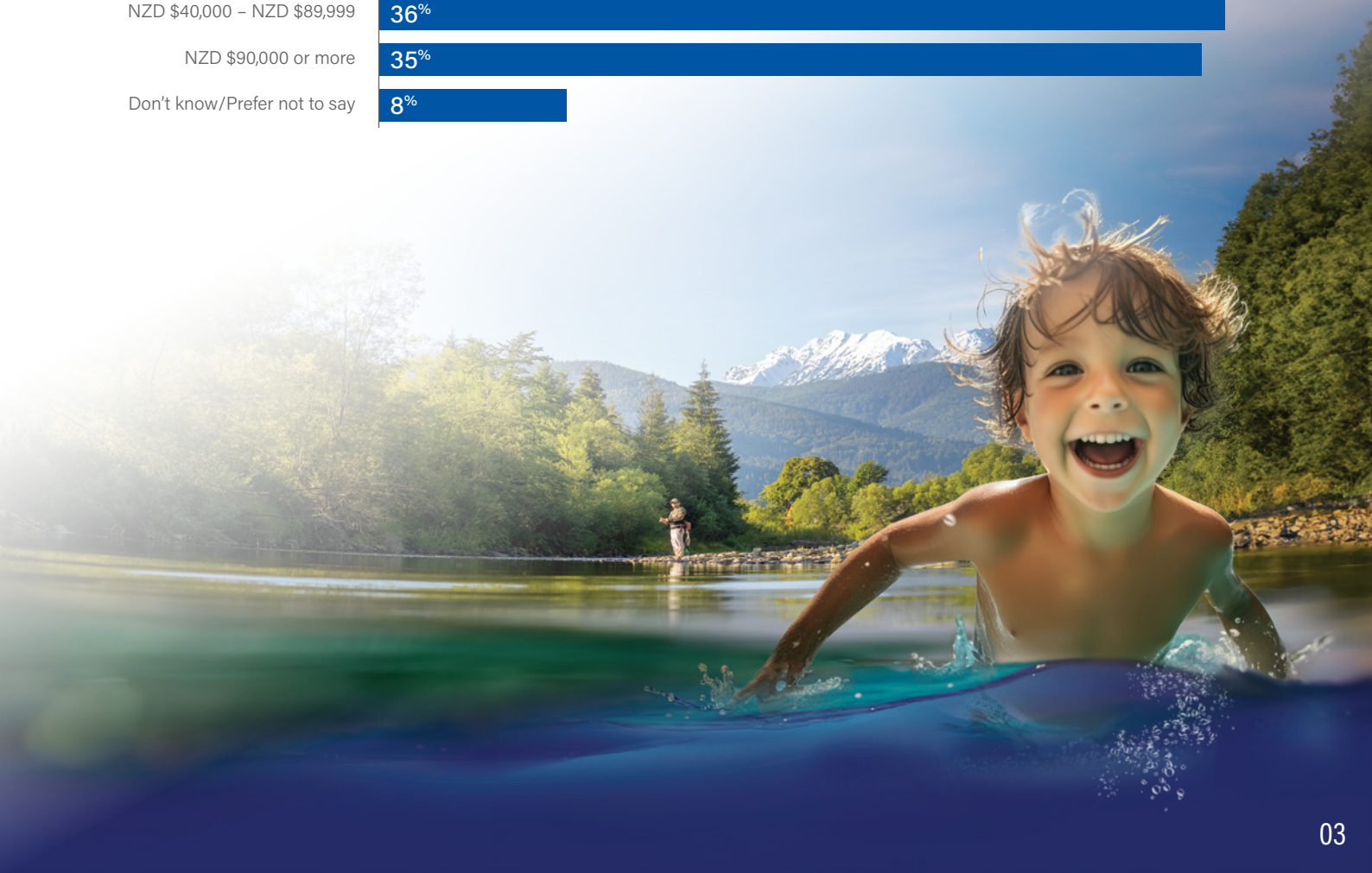
20%

Country town or rural areas

Working Status



Household Income



2023 (NZ adults aged 18+, weighted)

Gender



Age



Region

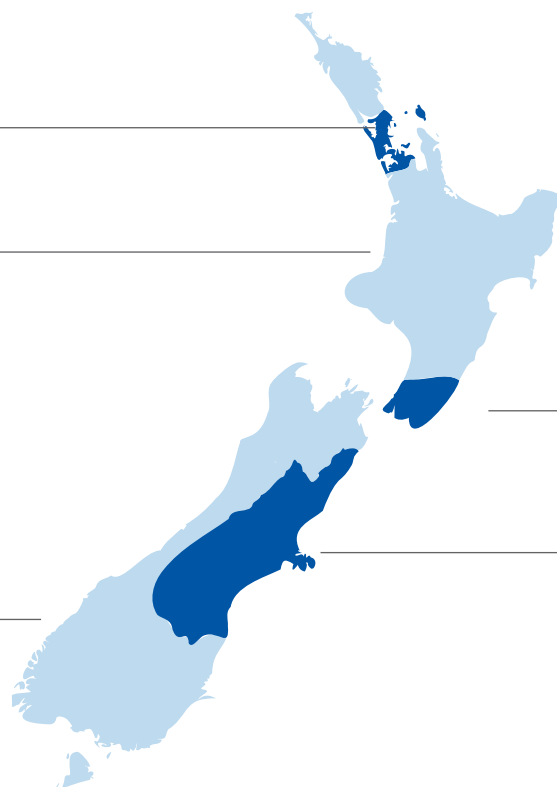
33% Auckland

32% Other North Island

Wellington **11%**

Christchurch **13%**

11% Other South Island



Rural/Metro



City and surrounding suburbs



Country town or rural areas

2023 (NZ adults aged 18+, weighted)

Working Status



Household Income



Glossary of Statistical Terms

NC	No Change
NZ	New Zealand
NZD	New Zealand Dollar
Full time	For statistical purposes, Statistics New Zealand defines full-time as working 30 hours or more per week
Part time	Generally someone who works less than 30 hours per week
Rural	Areas of New Zealand that are not urban
Urban	Cities, towns and other conurbations (an aggregation of urban settlements) of a thousand people or more



2023 (NZ children aged 8-17, weighted)

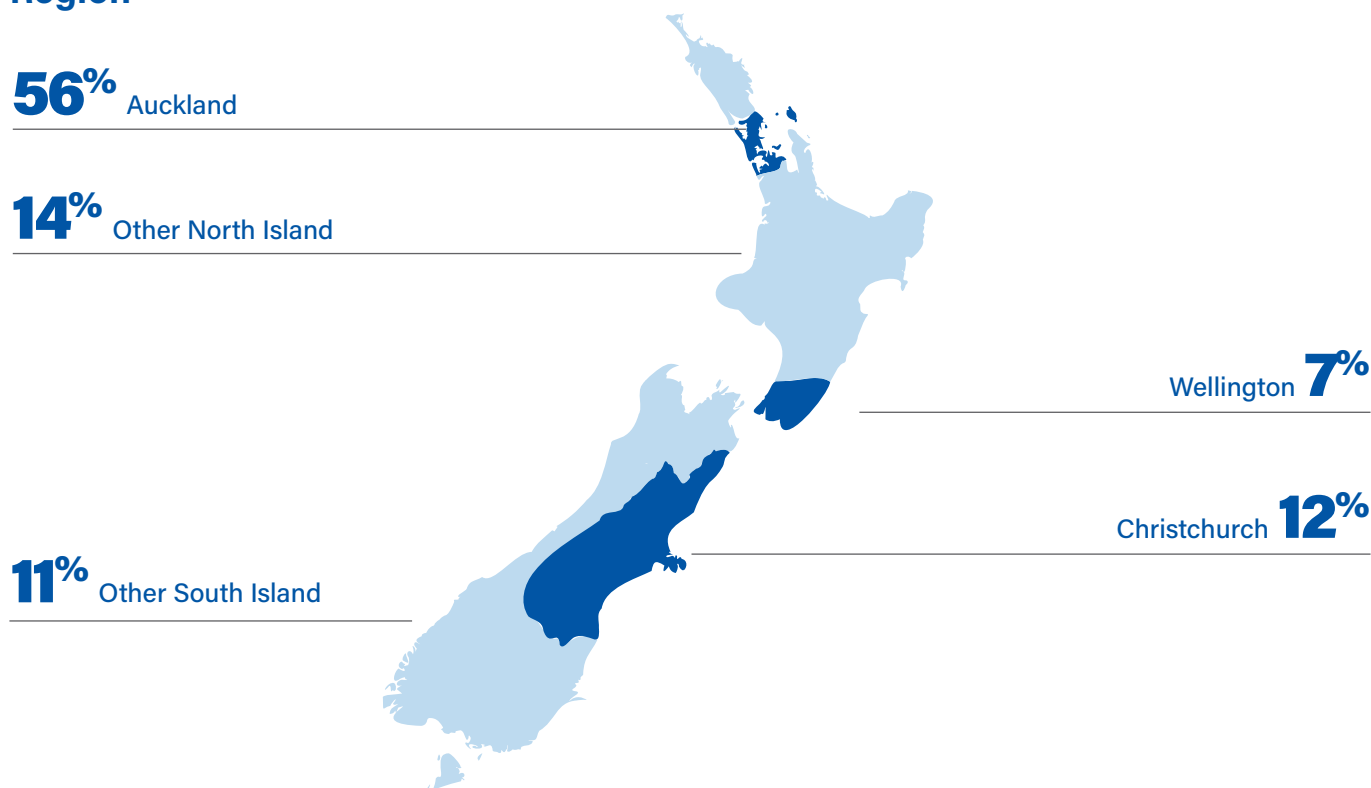
Gender



Age



Region



Rural/Metro



91%

City and surrounding suburbs



9%

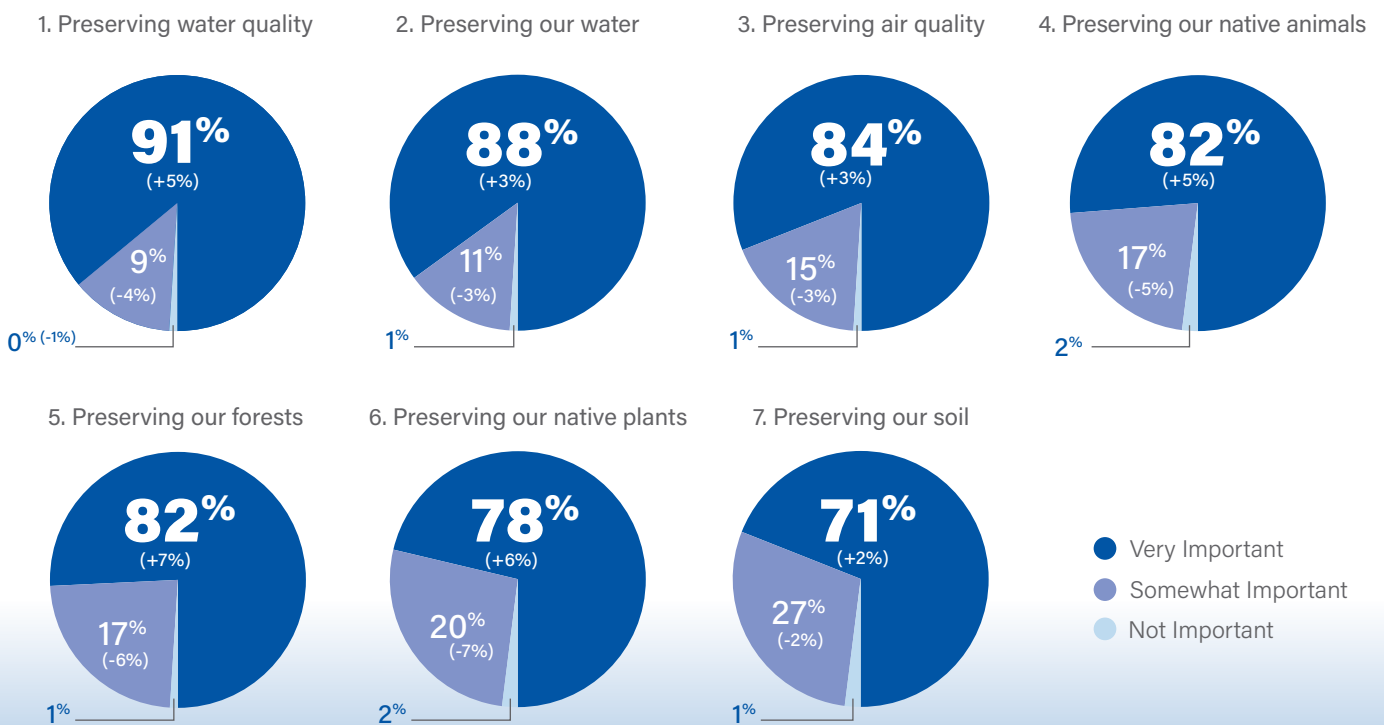
Country town or rural areas

Research Findings

Environmental causes most important to New Zealanders

Across both studies, preserving the nation's 'water quality' and 'water' were listed as very important environmental causes to New Zealanders, outbidding air quality, forests, soil, native plants and native animals.

Encouragingly the 2023 results showed an upward trend across all causes in how important people thought preservation was.

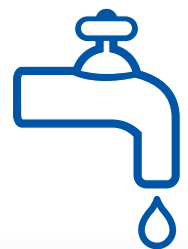
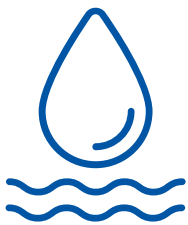
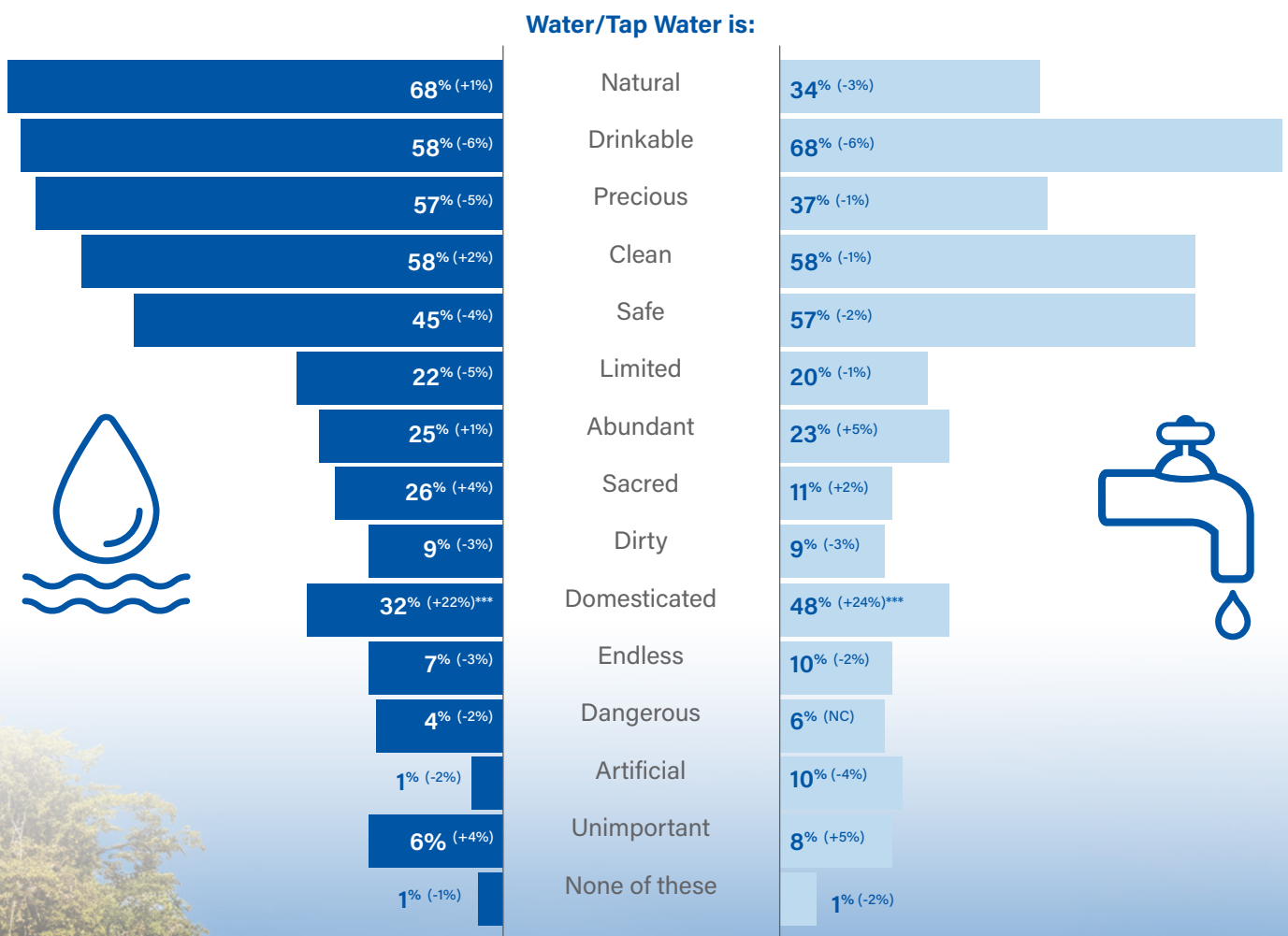


Research Findings

Associations with water and tap water

While 68% of New Zealanders associate water as 'natural' and more than half view it as 'drinkable' there is a general downward trend year-on-year in the percentage who believe it to be 'safe' and 'endless.'

There is an increase in the view that tap water is 'abundant' however less people in 2023 are associating it with the term 'drinkable', as compared with a year ago. At odds with this is the significant increase since 2022 of those believing both tap water (+24%) and water (+22%) to be domesticated (suitable for humans to drink).



Interestingly, 8-17 year olds were the least likely of the age groups to associate water with terms such as 'limited', 'drinkable', 'natural' and 'domesticated'. They were however also least likely to deem it as 'dirty' - only 3% - and the most likely to deem it 'endless' and 'unimportant'. These attitudes are also reflected in regards to tap water.

Water is



	8-17 years	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-49 years	50-64 years	60+ years
Natural	50%	70%	73%	59%	75%	69%
Clean	61%	64%	64%	60%	52%	54%
Drinkable	45%	65%	53%	48%	62%	67%
Precious	46%	28%	50%	54%	68%	70%
Safe	50%	58%	50%	47%	37%	38%
Domesticated (suitable for humans to drink)	19%	26%	23%	25%	35%	48%
Abundant (available everywhere)	22%	26%	21%	27%	24%	28%
Sacred (historic/ valuable)	17%	21%	33%	31%	24%	17%
Limited	13%	17%	15%	22%	27%	24%
Dirty	3%	9%	9%	6%	13%	11%
Unimportant	18%	5%	16%	10%	1%	0%
Endless	14%	12%	5%	5%	6%	8%
Dangerous	2%	5%	4%	3%	4%	6%
Artificial (man made/ does not occur naturally)	3%	3%	1%	4%	0%	0%
None of these	0%	3%	1%	1%	1%	0%



Tap Water is



	8-17 years	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-49 years	50-64 years	60+ years
Natural	30%	43%	37%	34%	30%	33%
Clean	59%	53%	54%	56%	55%	69%
Drinkable	48%	62%	58%	59%	79%	81%
Precious	36%	22%	32%	35%	41%	46%
Safe	53%	57%	56%	53%	55%	61%
Domesticated (suitable for humans to drink)	27%	39%	36%	41%	59%	61%
Abundant (available everywhere)	23%	28%	22%	23%	21%	25%
Sacred (historic/ valuable)	16%	7%	18%	13%	9%	8%
Limited	18%	16%	12%	21%	27%	20%
Dirty	8%	18%	10%	10%	8%	4%
Unimportant	20%	13%	17%	9%	1%	0%
Endless	18%	23%	13%	7%	8%	5%
Dangerous	3%	8%	6%	5%	6%	4%
Artificial (man made/ does not occur naturally)	5%	16%	11%	13%	8%	6%
None of these	0%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%



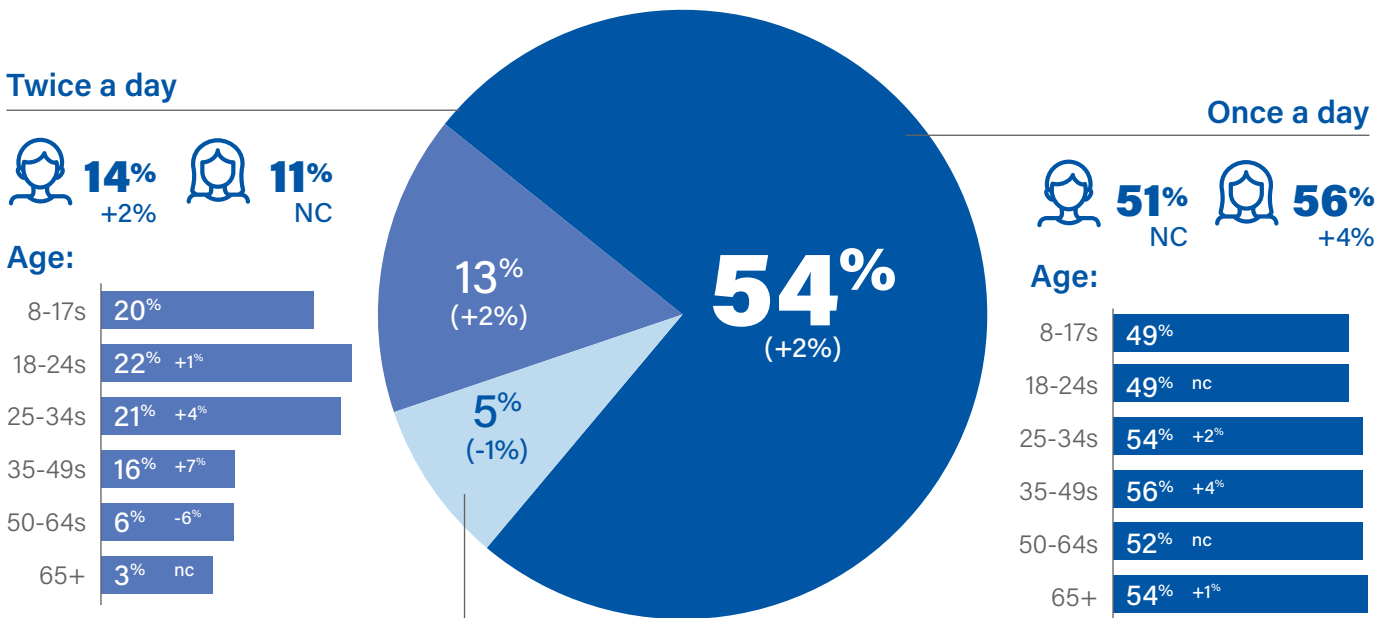
New Zealanders' personal water usage at home



54%

While roughly half the population (54%) shower once a day, 22% of 18-24 year-olds are showering twice a day, and 10% claim to have three or more showers per day. Over the last year the number of 35-49 year olds showering twice a day has increased by 7%, countered by a reduction of 6% in the 50-64 year old bracket.

How often do you shower?



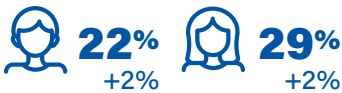


25%

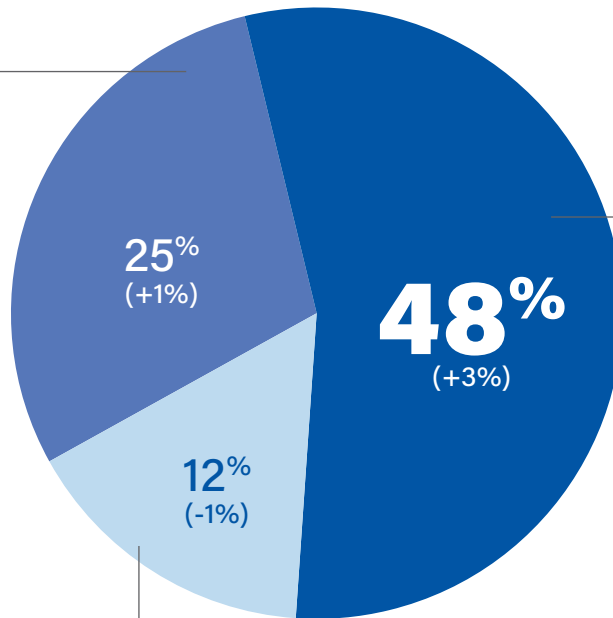
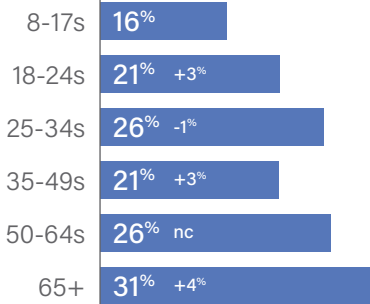
One in four (25%) New Zealanders are flushing the toilet between 6-9 times a day while 12% are flushing 10 or more times a day. Meanwhile, 8-17 year-olds, on average, are flushing the toilet the least number of times a day in comparison to all other age groups.

How often do you flush the toilet?

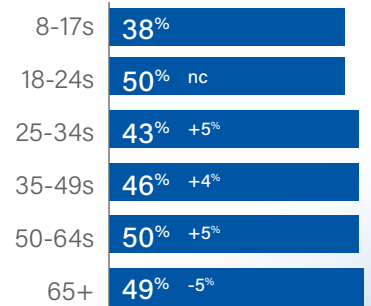
6-9 times a day



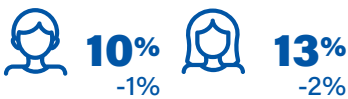
Age:



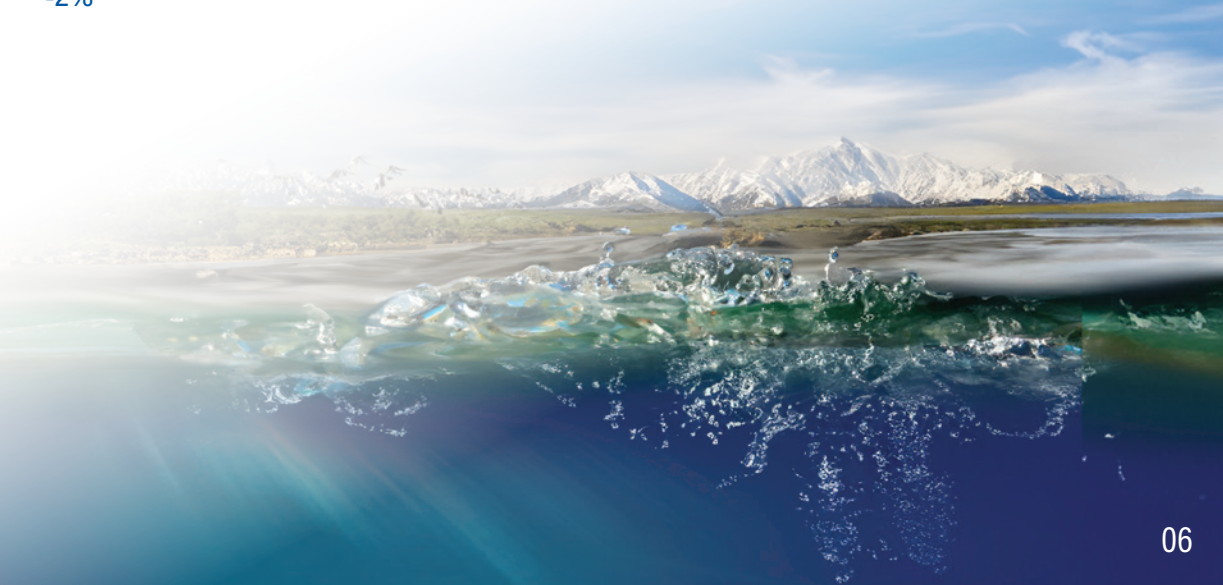
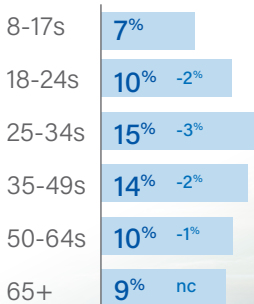
3-5 times a day



10+ times a day



Age:



26%

Around one in four (26%) New Zealand adults use the tap 10 or more times a day to carry out tasks such as filling a glass of water, rinsing dishes and brushing teeth. Since 2022, the number of 18-24s using the tap at this frequency has increased by a huge 15%. A high percentage of New Zealanders (61%) are also failing to perform simple water saving techniques such as turning taps off while brushing teeth.

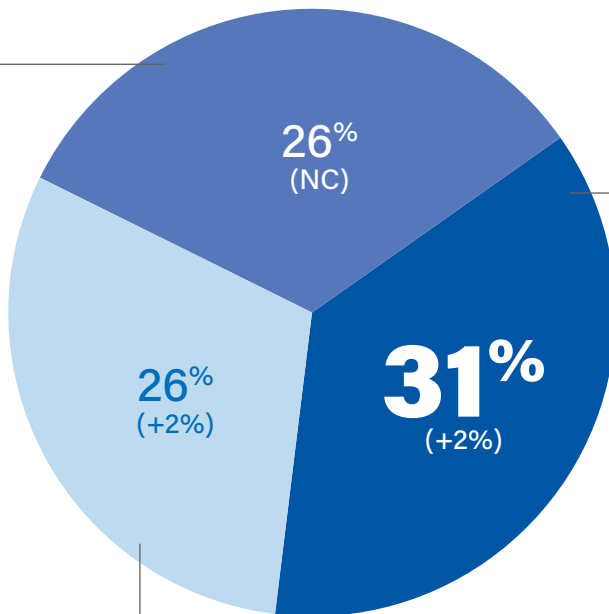
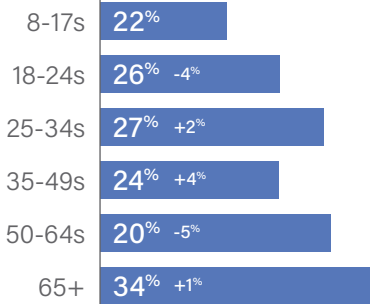
How often do you use the tap?

(e.g. to fill a glass of water, rinse dishes, brush your teeth, etc)

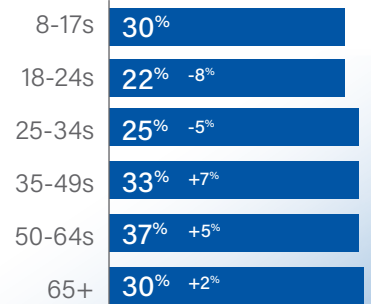
6-9 times a day



Age:



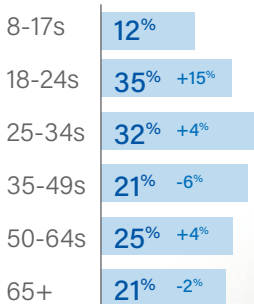
3-5 times a day



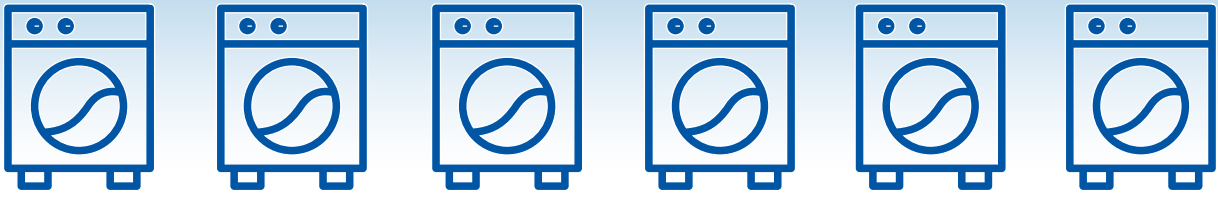
10+ times a day



Age:



Household water usage

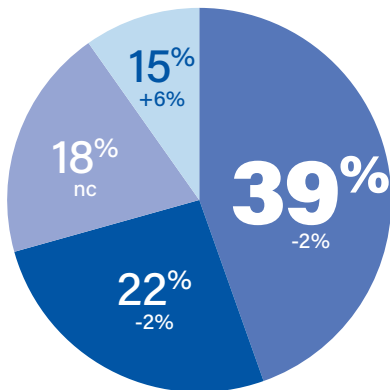


33%

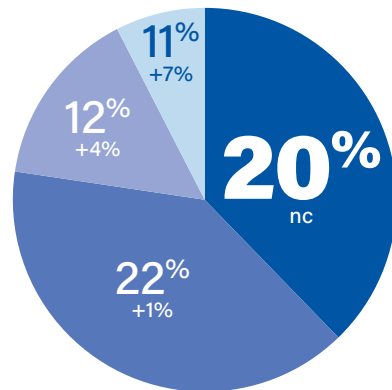
One third (33%) of New Zealand adults use the dishwasher at least four times a week, while the same figure (33%) claim to do a load of washing at least four times a week.

How often do you or your household...*

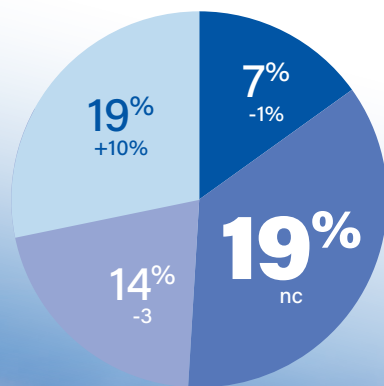
1. Do a load of washing/laundry?



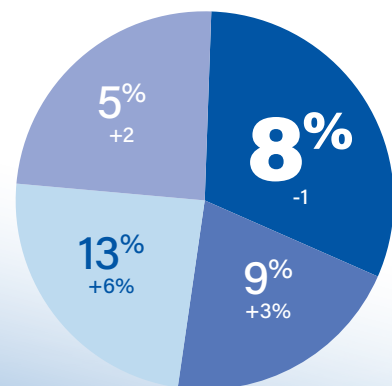
2. Use outdoor tap/hose or sprinkler?



3. Use the dishwasher?



4. Take a bath?



- Once a week
- 2-4 times a week
- 4-6 times a week
- Once a day or more often

New Zealanders' water habits at home



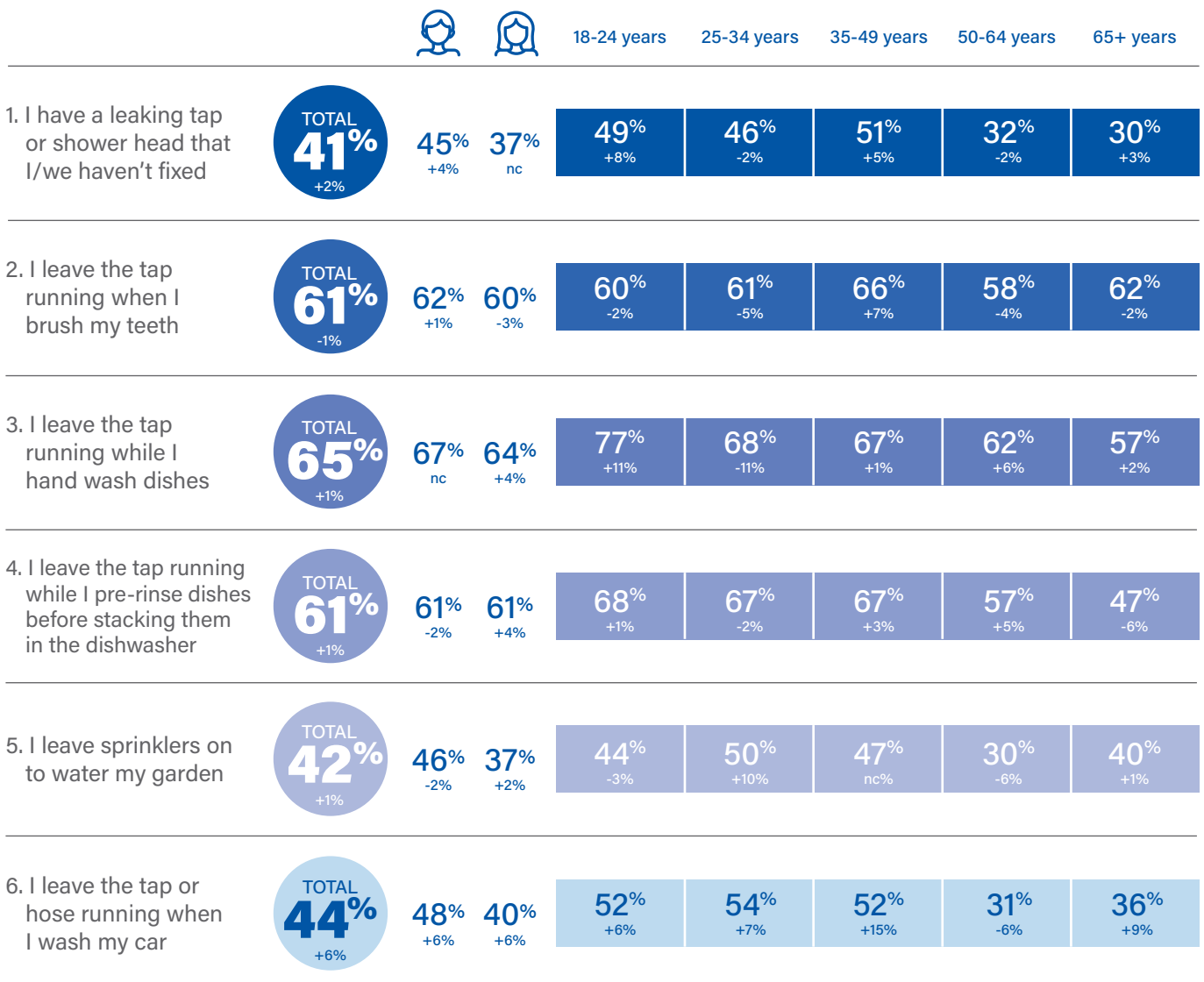
61%



15%

Three in five (61%) New Zealanders leave the tap running while they pre-rinse dishes before stacking them in the dishwasher, and an even higher percentage (65%) leave the tap running while they hand wash dishes.

There is a general year-on-year increase in New Zealanders' water usage, with 10% more 25-34 year olds leaving sprinklers running and a huge 15% more 35-49 year olds leaving the hose running when washing their cars. This could be a reflection of increased cost of living with more people installing home vegetable gardens.



New Zealanders' attitudes towards water and water use

28% 

Though there is generally more concern and understanding about water use than a year ago, more than one in four (28%) Kiwi still claim they have 'no idea' how much water they use. There also seems to be a lack of knowledge for many Kiwi about our water - where it comes from, where it goes, and how it can be used. Despite this, more people are reporting using rainwater and grey water for their plants.



Interestingly 32% of New Zealanders think they are better at saving and using less water than their neighbours, with 10% more men believing this to be true than a year ago.

Those aged 18-24 seem to be less water conscious than other age groups, with 35% not knowing how much water they use and 23% not concerned about it. Additionally, 38% of 18-24s like to enjoy long showers when they get home from work, with more than half (54%) showering for 10 mins or more.

Concerningly, nearly one in five (17%) 18-24s believe we should be enjoying our lives now and not worrying about New Zealand's water supply in the future.



New Zealanders' attitudes towards water and water use

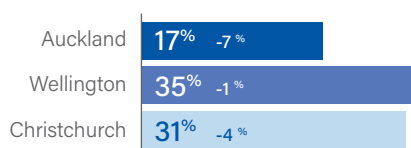
				8-17 y	18-24 y	25-34 y	35-49 y	50-64 y	65+ y
1. I have no idea how much water I use	TOTAL 28% -2%	26% -6%	29% nc	37%	35% -9%	32% -5%	27% nc	27% -1%	21% -3%
2. I don't think about the water I use	TOTAL 15% -2%	15% -2%	14% -3%	15%	21% -9%	14% -6%	13% +1%	14% -2%	13% -3%
3. I'm not concerned about the amount of water I use	TOTAL 13% -2%	16% -1%	10% -3%	13%	23% +3%	11% -5%	11% nc	12% -2%	13% -3%
4. I don't know where our tap water comes from	TOTAL 13% +1%	10% nc	16% +2%	23%	30% +3%	21% +1%	10% nc	9% +2%	6% +2%
5. I don't know what greywater is	TOTAL 18% +1%	15% nc	22% +2%	23%	29% +1%	20% -4%	18% nc	20% +4%	8% +1%
6. I don't know what happens to water when it goes down the drain	TOTAL 17% +1%	13% +1%	21% +2%	23%	22% -2%	29% +6%	16% nc	13% +2%	10% nc
7. Any water that goes down the drain is wasted water	TOTAL 30% +2%	29% +2%	30% +2%	24%	19% -4%	19% +2%	25% +1%	38% +6%	43% +2%
8. I like to have long showers at the end of the day to relax	TOTAL 14% -1%	14% +1%	14% -2%	24%	38% +5%	19% -4%	13% nc	7% -1%	5% +1%
9. I am better at saving / use less water than my neighbours	TOTAL 32% +4%	37% +10%	28% -1%	na	31% +10%	37% +9%	34% +1%	32% +3%	28% +1%
10. I collect rainwater (e.g. to water plants/garden)	TOTAL 28% +5%	28% +7%	28% +2%	na	17% +4%	18% -7%	29% -8%	36% +11%	32% +4%
11. I re-use greywater (e.g. to water plants/garden)	TOTAL 18% +5%	18% +6%	18% +5%	na	12% +3%	18% +10%	18% +5%	17% +1%	23% +9%
12. We should enjoy the life we have now, and not worry about what might happen to New Zealand's water supply in the future	TOTAL 8% +2%	9% +1%	7% +2%	13%	17% +9%	12% +2%	7% -1%	5% +2%	3% nc

Attitudes towards water and water use by region

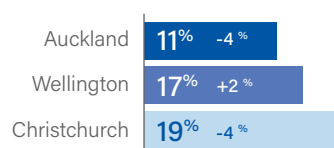
Those from Auckland are more likely than other regions to be aware of their water usage, with only 17% saying they have no idea how much water they use.

Over the past year, 10% more Wellingtonians are reporting that they don't know what grey water is (22%) and significant numbers of Kiwi across the main centres believe all water that goes down the drain is wasted. Despite this, there is a reported uplift in the use of grey water for watering plants and gardens etc.

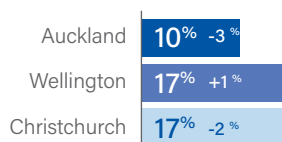
1. I have no idea how much water I use



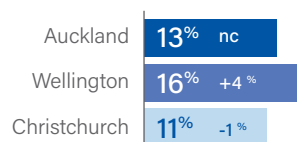
2. I don't think about the water I use



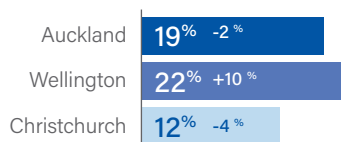
3. I'm not concerned about the amount of water I use



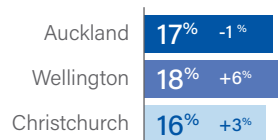
4. I don't know where our tap water comes from



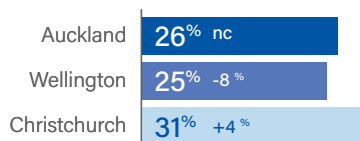
5. I don't know what greywater is



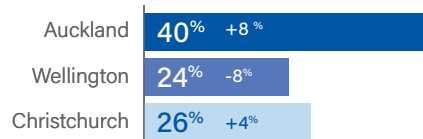
6. I don't know what happens to water when it goes down the drain



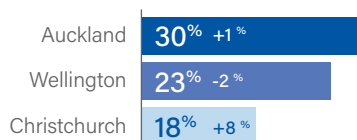
7. Any water that goes down the drain is wasted water



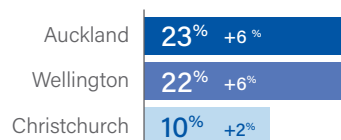
8. I am better at saving/use less water than my neighbours



9. I collect rainwater (e.g. to water plants/garden)



10. I re-use greywater (e.g. to water plants/garden)



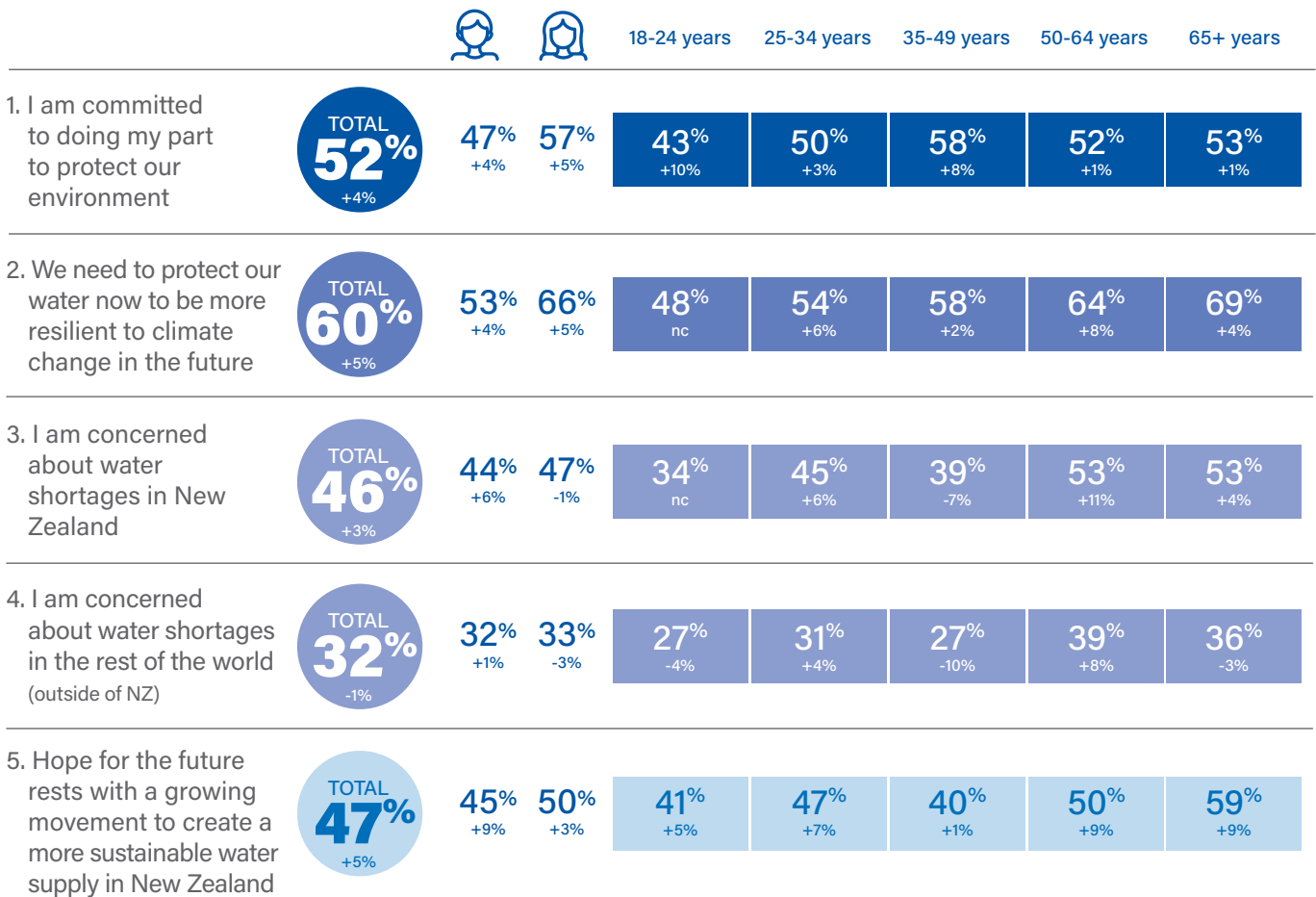
Attitudes towards water scarcity in New Zealand and globally

60%



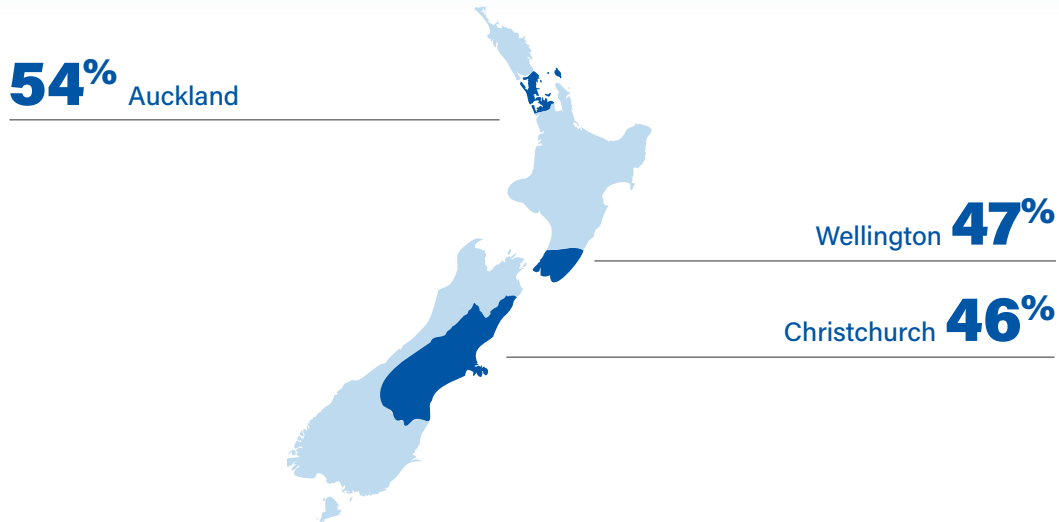
The majority (60%) of the population agree we need to protect our water now to be more resilient to climate change in the future.

Nearly half (47%) believe that hope for the future rests with a growing movement to create a more sustainable water supply in New Zealand. Concern for international water shortages has overall remained largely unchanged, however, with 10% fewer 35-49 year olds reporting concern than in 2022.

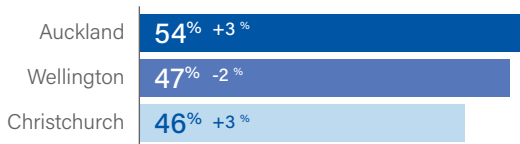


Attitudes towards water scarcity by region

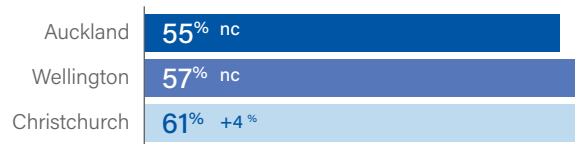
Aucklanders are most likely to say they're committed to doing their part to protect the environment, at 54%, followed by Wellington (47%) and Christchurch (46%). In the last year Wellingtonians report less concern for international water shortages with a drop of 8%, though still greater concern than Aucklanders at 30%.



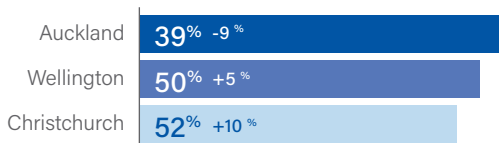
1. I am committed to doing my part to protect our environment



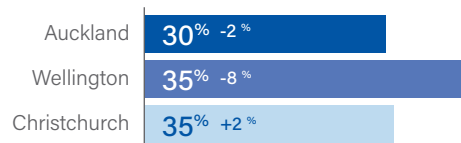
2. We need to protect our water now to be more resilient to climate change in the future



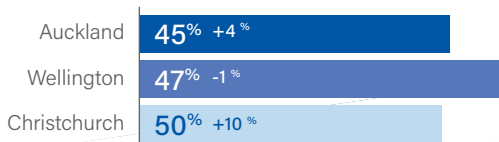
3. I am concerned about water shortages in New Zealand



4. I am concerned about water shortages in the rest of the world (outside of NZ)



5. Hope for the future rests with a growing movement to create a more sustainable water supply in New Zealand

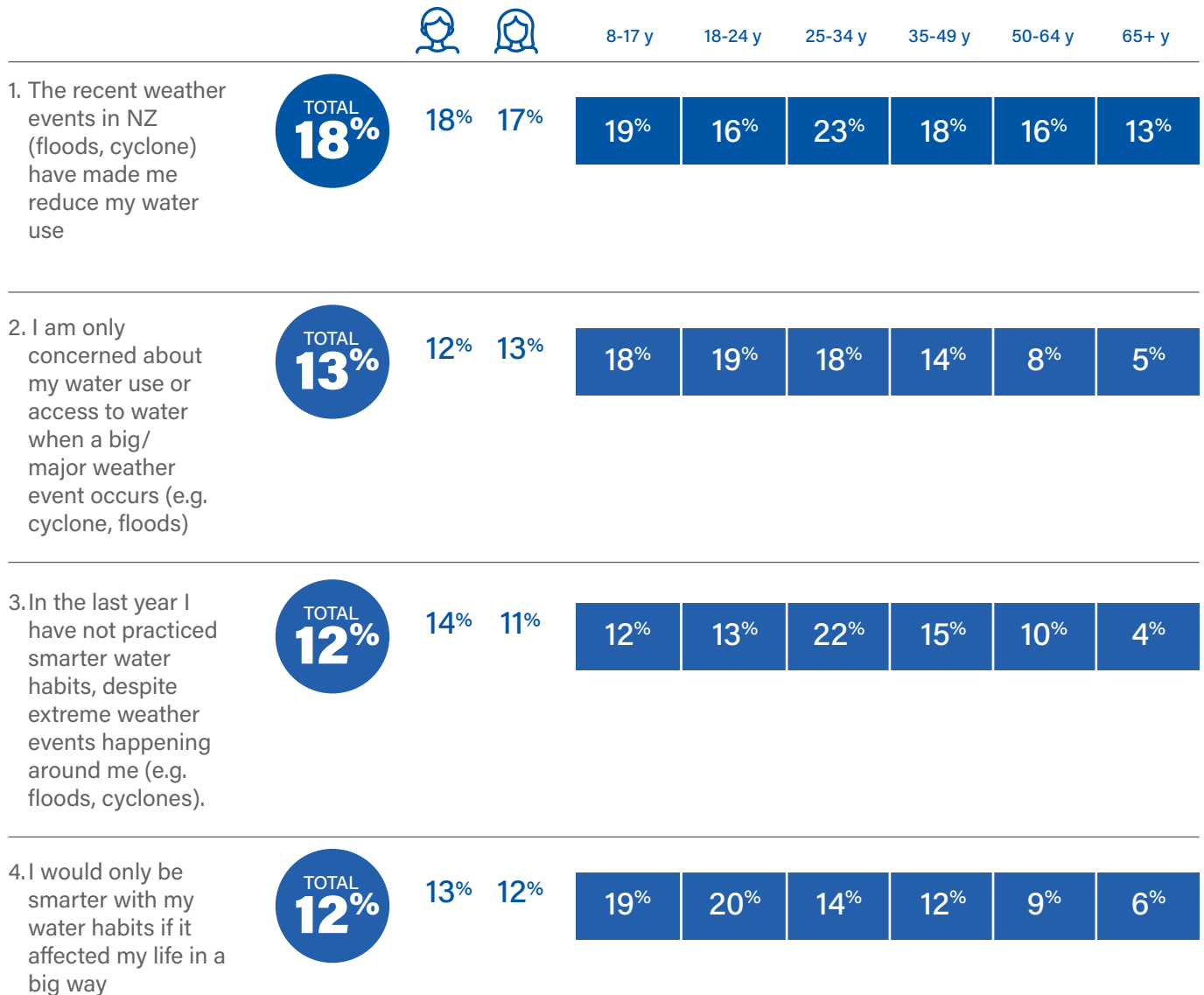


Attitudes towards recent weather events in 2023



According to the data, 18% of all New Zealanders said that the recent weather events had led them to reduce their water use. However, 12% said it was only of concern to them when a big event occurred like a flood or cyclone, and 12% have not practised smarter water habits at all as a result of the weather events.

Additionally, one in five (20%) 18-24s said they would only change their water habits if it 'affected their life in a big way'.





Overall the research shows that most New Zealanders agree that nature, the environment and our water needs to be protected and preserved. There is also evidence of increasing concern for these resources and their future.

However there appears to be a knowledge gap when it comes to water literacy - specifically, where our water comes from and how to use it more wisely. Concerningly there are also mixed results in terms of the behavioural changes being made in order to create change for the benefit of the environment. The research highlights the 18-24 year old age group (Gen Z) as having the biggest deficits in terms of attitude and use when compared to other age groups, a demographic that is generally considered to be eco-conscious and value sustainability.



Find out more at finishpledge.co.nz