Measuring the perceptions of Predator Free 2050 since 2022 benchmark study

FINAL DEBRIEF JUNE 2024







#### **This document**

- **1.** Background and context
- 2. Brand 'health check'
- 3. Behaviours that support Predator Free by 2050
- 4. Attitudes towards cat control
- **5.** Conservation in context: an update
- 7. Bringing it all together



## Background and context



#### Context

Predator Free New Zealand is charged with connecting and energising all New Zealanders towards a predator free Aotearoa New Zealand to enable our native species to thrive

The vision guiding Predator Free NZ is to make Aotearoa Predator Free by 2050. This entails the complete removal of damaging predators who have an impact on New Zealand's native flora and fauna.

- > Predator Free NZ cannot achieve this vision on their own; in addition to collaborating with organisations and community groups they require engagement and commitment from ALL New Zealanders
- The emergence of other social issues ranging from financial pressure on day to day living to climate change, have dominated the hearts and minds of kiwis; potentially leaving less bandwidth to engage with Predator Free NZ

In 2022 a benchmark survey was run across a nationally representative sample of the New Zealand population to understand the current 'health' of the predator free movement and gauge the level of engagement in conservation activity.

The latest survey is a repeat of the 2022 benchmark survey (with a few changes to some sections) and aims to ascertain where things may have changed over the last two years.



#### **Our objectives**

The overall objective of this work is to measure progress since the 2022 benchmark study for the 'health' of the Predator Free New Zealand movement amongst the general NZ population.

More specifically this includes gauging whether there has been a change in the following:

- > Awareness and engagement of New Zealanders with the target of Predator Free by 2050
- > Incidence of participation (and willingness) to participate in Predator Free by 2050
- > Relative importance of Predator Free by 2050 against competing societal issues/concerns
- > Expectations kiwis have about the support required to achieve Predator Free by 2050
- > Sentiment towards current topical issues e.g. domestic cat control



#### **Our approach**

- A 10-minute online survey New Zealanders aged 18 years and over
  - > 1259 total responses received (1,016 + regional booster of 243)
  - Representative of the national population based on age, gender and region
  - > NZ Māori representation in line with population incidence
  - Respondents sourced via the Dynata consumer research panel - the world's largest first-party data platform

- Extra responses were collected outside of the main cities to gain sufficient sample for the regions and enable deeper insight
- This survey wave we created new regional clusters in addition to the major cities of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. The aim was to achieve a minimum of n=100 per cluster

Regional cluster	2024 Boosted sample
Northland (north of Auckland)	n=105
Waikato/Bay of Plenty	n=158
East Coast North Island	n=102
West Coast North Island	n=102
Upper South Island	n=105
Lower South Island	n=103

All total 2024 data points in this report incorporate the extra responses collected in the regional clusters. Their contribution to the overall results has been down weighted to ensure the impact of responses from each region is matched to the 2022 sample.

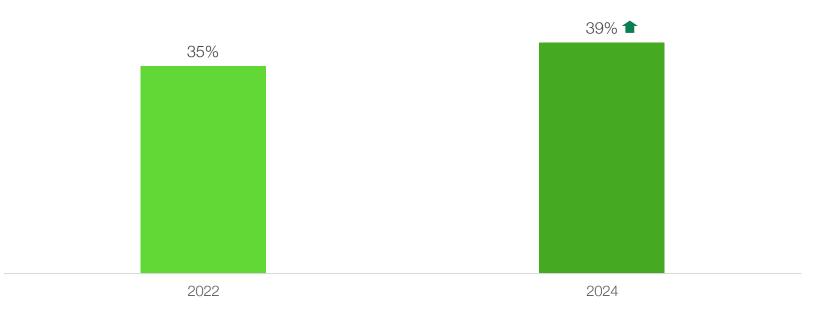


## Brand 'health check'

#### **Awareness of the Predator Free 2050 movement**

Overall awareness has increased four percentage points since 2022 – an increase that is statistically significant.

**Prompted awareness of Predator Free 2050** 



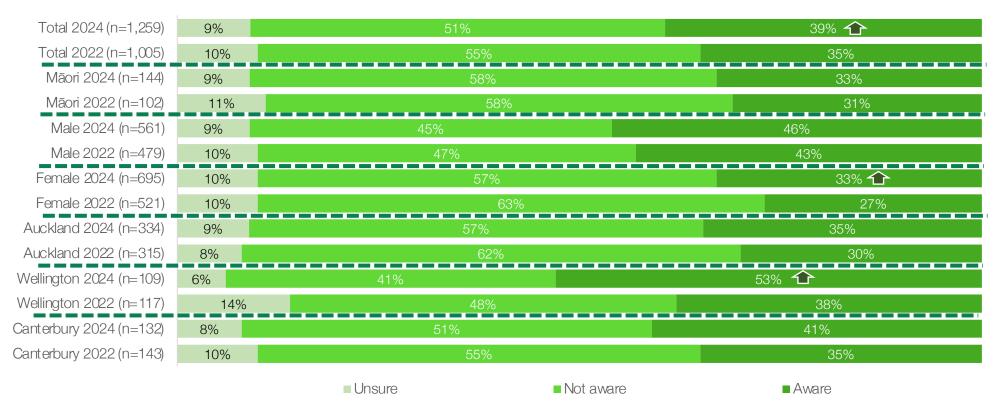
Base: 2024 = 1,259, 2022 = 1,005



### Awareness of the Predator Free 2050 movement

This increase in prompted awareness of the Predator Free 2050 mission has been most notable in the Wellington region.

Awareness remains higher amongst males, however females have become more aware since 2022

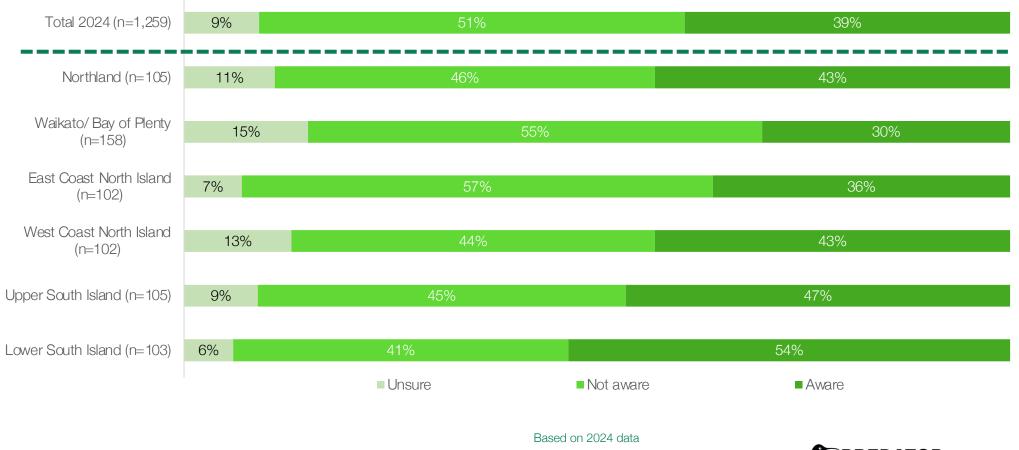


#### Prompted awareness of Predator Free 2050



## Awareness of the Predator Free 2050 movement (regional clusters)

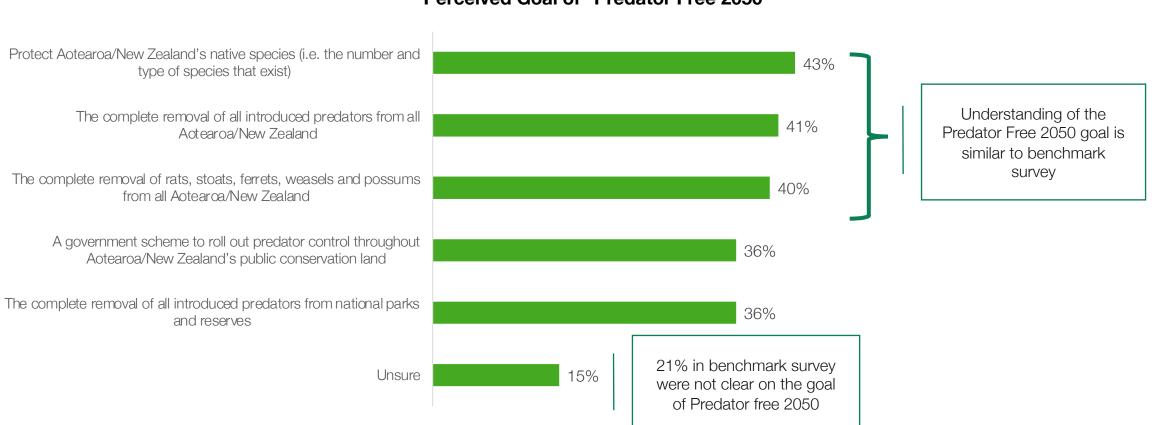
When looking at regional clusters, awareness is highest in the South Island, particularly south of Canterbury.



Prompted awareness of Predator Free 2050 by regional 'clusters'

## What is the goal of PF2050?

On the whole, Nzers have a similar understanding of the 'Predator Free by 2050' mission to 2022



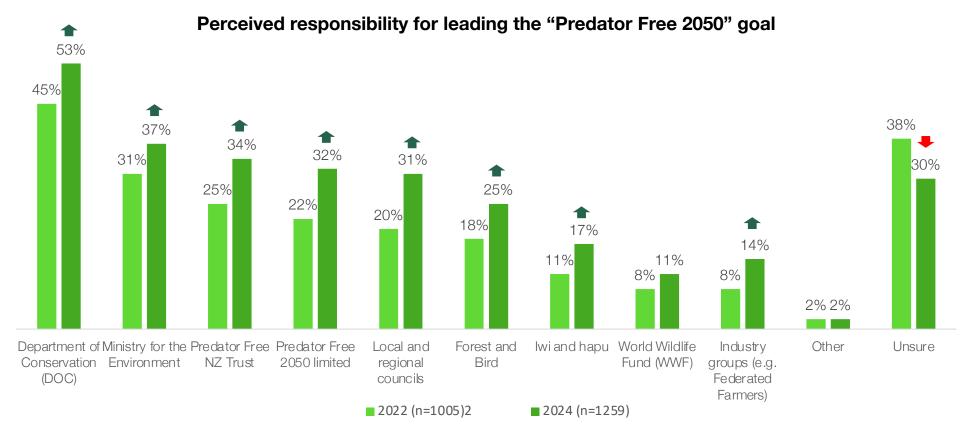
#### Perceived Goal of "Predator Free 2050"

What do you believe the "Predator Free 2050" goal is set up to achieve?



## **Responsibility for the goal**

Who leads the movement is less clear, and DOC remains the most commonly selected candidate.

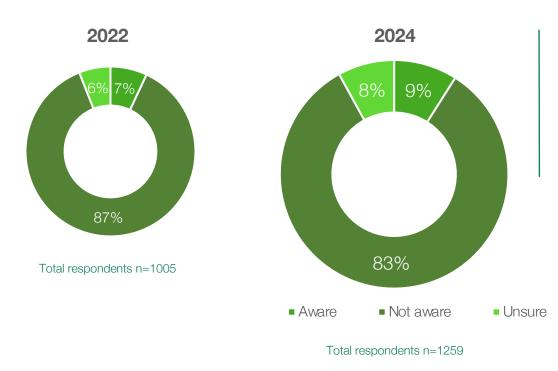


Who is responsible for the "Predator Free 2050" goal?



### **Awareness of local groups**

Awareness remains low for the existence of a local predator free group.



Awareness of local predator free group in their region

Are you aware of a Predator Free group in your region?



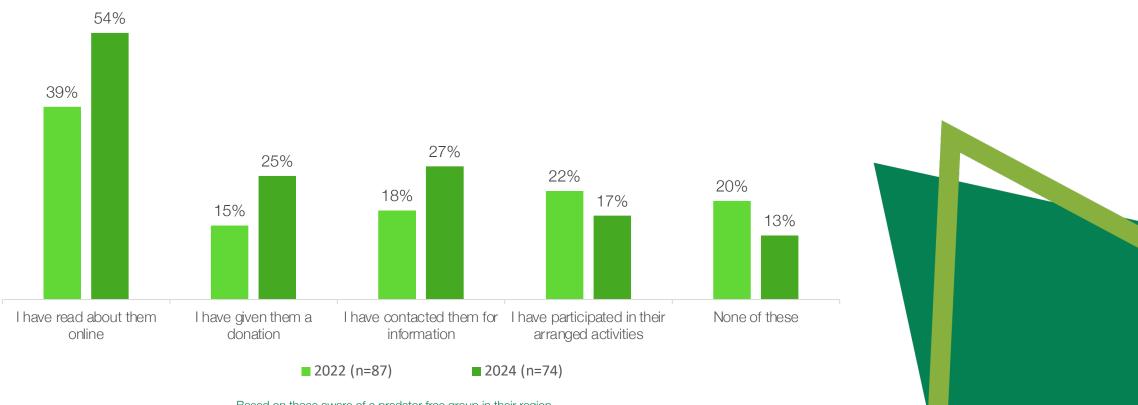


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## **Awareness of local groups**

Half of those aware of a local predator free presence in their region have read about them online.

Encouragingly, the proportion of those who are aware that have donated has increased in recent times.



#### Level of involvement with local predator free group

Based on those aware of a predator free group in their region

 14
 Final debrief | June 2024

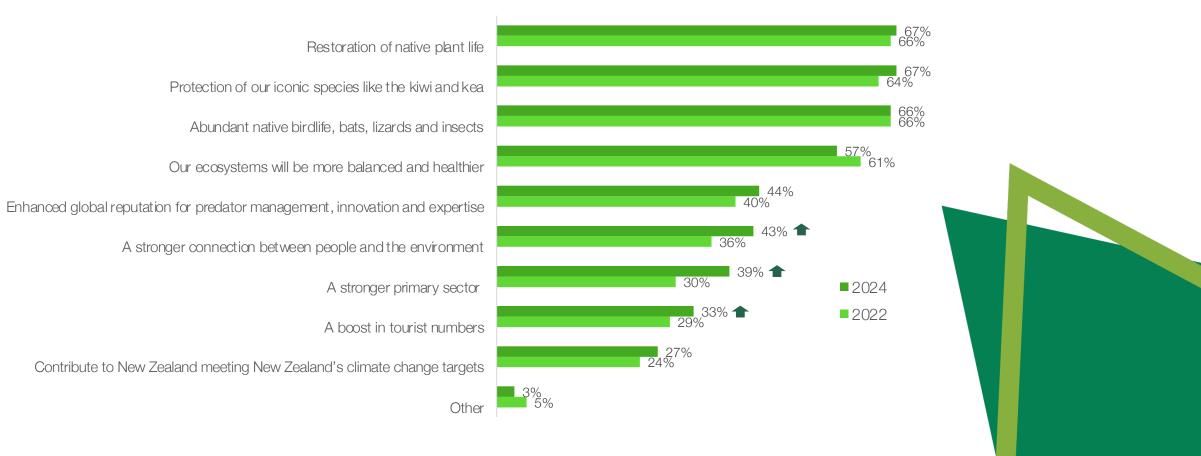
Which of the following best describes your involvement with this local group?



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### The benefits of predator free

The main benefit of becoming Predator Free is to preserve a bird and plant life and now we see the value it brings to our economy.



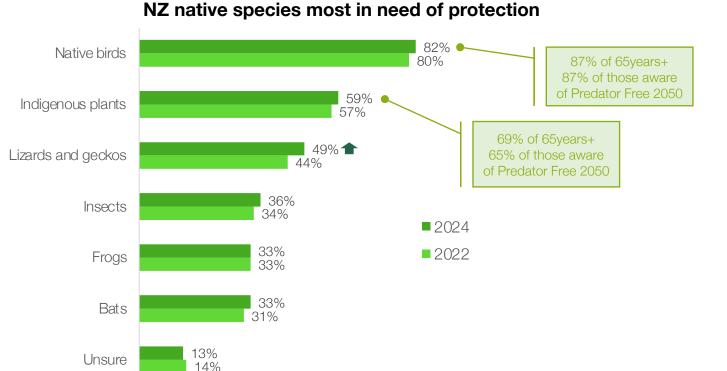
#### Benefits if we meet our Predator Free 2050 goal

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Total respondents 2024 n=1259, 2022 n=1005

## Linking species with predator free

Native birds are viewed as being the worthiest of protection, and possums, mustelids and rats are considered the most harmful predators.



## Most damaging introduced predators for NZ native species are the same as in 2022

- 1. Possums (67% vs 64% in 2022)
- 2. Mustelids (66% vs 60% in 2022)
- 3. Rats (61% vs 58% in 2022)
- 4. Cats (34% vs 32% in 2022)
- 5. Hedgehogs (17% vs 12% in 2022)



## **Confidence in the goal**

When compared to 2022 the general public are no more or less confident that NZ can be predator free by 2050 (20%).

24% of those aware of PFNZ 20% Total 2024 (n=1,259) by 2050 are confident we can achieve this (vs 27% in 2022) Total 2022 (n=1,005) 20% Auckland 2024 (n=334) 24% Auckland 2022 (n=315) 24% Wellington 2024 (n=109) 17% Wellington 2022 (n=117) 18% Canterbury 2024 (n=132) 20% Canterbury 2022 (n=143) 20% Confident (8-10)

% that are confident New Zealand will be Predator Free by 2050 by main centres



## **Confidence in the goal**

Reasons behind low confidence in being predator free by 2050 are underpinned by sense of being overwhelmed and scale.

Predator populations have grown so large it feels overwhelming

"There are millions of pests in NZ. I think it will be very difficult to be able to irradicate them all."

"They just keep on breeding and growing no matter what you do, they'll be some who will survive and breed."

"There must be millions of these predators and they'll be hiding in dense outdoor areas that will often be difficult to access" Not enough people supporting and driving the cause

"There are so many of these predators that it's a massive task and would involve thousands of people"

"Seems unlikely without a more concentrated community effort"

"I don't think that enough people are on board yet. Most of the work is being done in national parks, not in urban or residential areas where rats in particular thrive." Lack of money and resources

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"It's a massive task and we just don't have the funds"

"It will take a lot of planning and effort from lots of people to make it happen"

"The government is cutting funding and not enough people care."

*"It would require a big financial investment that we probably can't afford"* 

It is too difficult to find and eradicate predators given NZ's size and many remote areas

"I think our bushland is vast and we can't access all parts of the country."

"That's a big job and there are a lot of remote areas in NZ for them to hide"

"There are large areas of inaccessible forest that can only be treated by aerial drops of poison" Feral cats aren't being given enough focus

"They need to concentrate more on feral cats. give traps for free, because my domesticated cat has never caught a kiwi, but feral cats do"

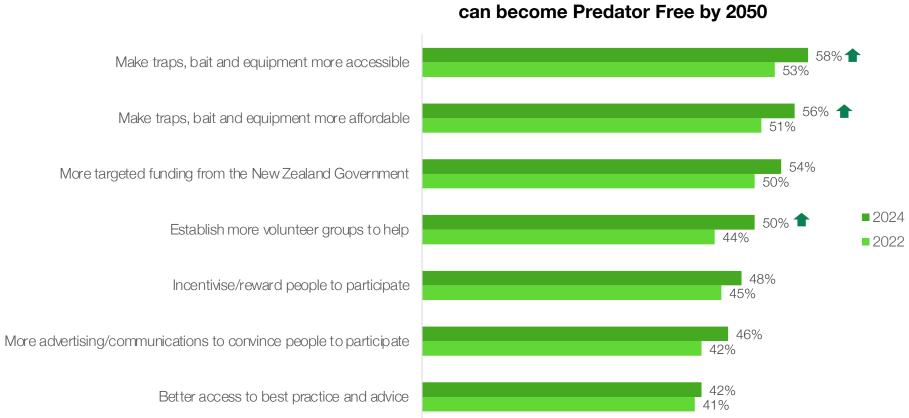
"The problem has been allowed to get too big and the amount of Feral cats is huge, there should be more control on cat ownership and not being allowed to roam and breed at the rate that is happening."



Based on those who rated their confidence as 1-5 in relation to NZ being Predator Free by 2050

## Steps needed to reach the goal

Kiwis feel more strongly that more investment and access to resources are needed, as well as more volunteer 'boots on the ground'.



#### Perceived actions required to ensure NZ can become Predator Free by 2050

Total respondents 2024 n=1259, 2022 n=1005



#### What this means:

- > Awareness of Predator Free 2050 has increased; particularly in the Wellington region
- > While there continues to be a good understanding of the Predator Free goal, kiwis are less clear on who is responsible for leading the movement, with many perceiving it to be a collaborative initiative
- > As in 2022, the majority of the general public are not aware of a local predator free group in their region; and although the level of active participation is low there is a growing level of engagement online
- Recognition of a local predator free presence differs by region, giving us an opportunity to learn from those that are achieving better cut through eg communities North of Auckland
- Confidence remains low that NZ can be predator free by 2050, and this does not change when drilling down into the regions. Low confidence continues to be fuelled by a sense of overwhelm and lack of resource.
- So as a consequence, Kiwis feel more strongly about the need to direct more investment into predator free efforts and encourage more volunteer 'boots on the ground'

#### IMPLICATION:

Whilst pleasing progress has been made in terms of overall awareness of the Predator Free 2050 movement, it remains important to work on ways to translate this awareness into engagement and activity.

This includes areas like awareness and means to engage at a local level and continued messaging around the purpose and importance of this work (and the roles individuals can play).





## Behaviours that support predator free

#### **Conservation behaviours**

The most common conservation behaviours are planting natives and visiting eco sanctuaries, with predator control and making donations more prevalent than in 2022.

	2022		2024		
	Done	Done (Total*)	Done within la 2 years	ist	Done 2+ years ago
Plant native plants for birds etc to live in	39%	41%	22%	33%	19%
Visit and support eco sanctuaries	36%	37%	20%	28%	16%
Lay bait for introduced predators such as rats, possums etc	27%	33% 👚	22%	29%	11%
Place a native bird feeder in my backyard	29%	33%	21%	26%	12%
Trap introduced predators such as rats, stoats etc	24%	29% 🕇	16%	21%	13%
Donate to help a specific species eg kokako project	17%	21% 🛧	10%	16%	11%
Donate to local predator free groups	11%	16% 🛧	8%	13%	8%
Create a lizard garden (create a space place to avoid predation)	8%	11%	5%	7%	7%
Put out wētā hotels (shelters to avoid predation)	6%	10%	4%	6%	6%

#### Incidence of participation (past or present) in conservation activities

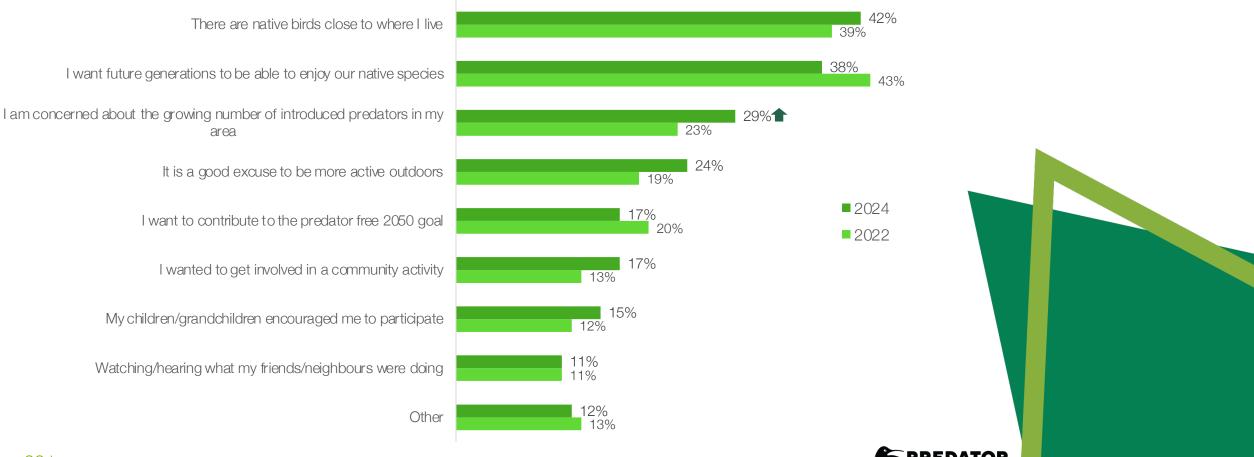
\* Rounded to 1dp

Below are some activities that New Zealanders can undertake to help improve the survival of Aotearoa/New Zealand's native species. For each activity below please select the ONE option that applies to you.

## Key drivers to participation

#### Protecting native birds is a key driver for participation in conservation activities.

Concerns about the growing number of predators is now a more powerful catalyst for action.



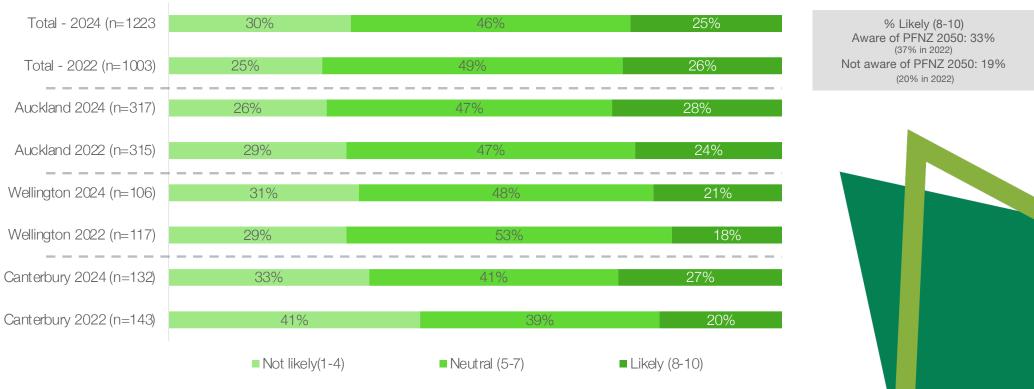
#### Drivers for participating in conservation activities

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## Intention to participate

#### One in four express an intention to undertake conservation activity in future.

There is a higher propensity to get involved if living in Canterbury when compared with two years ago.



Future intent to participate in conservation activities by main centres

In future how likely are you to participate in activities to improve the survival of Aotearoa/New Zealand's native species such as trapping/baiting, creating habitats or donating to groups?

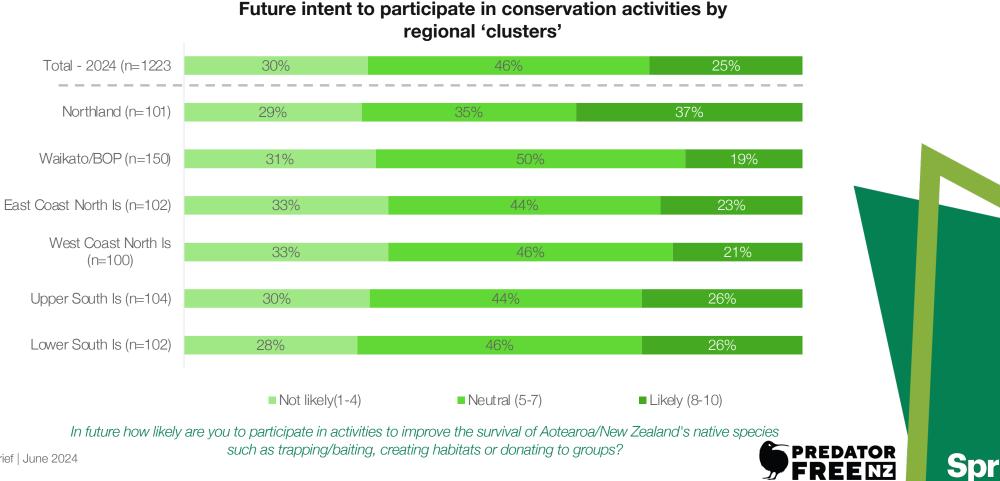


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## Intention to participate (regional cluster)

#### Northlanders are the most likely to express a desire to participate in conservation activities.

There is a large degree of 'fence sitting' across the regions, which is easier to shift to a positive direction than moving those who aren't likely to get involved.



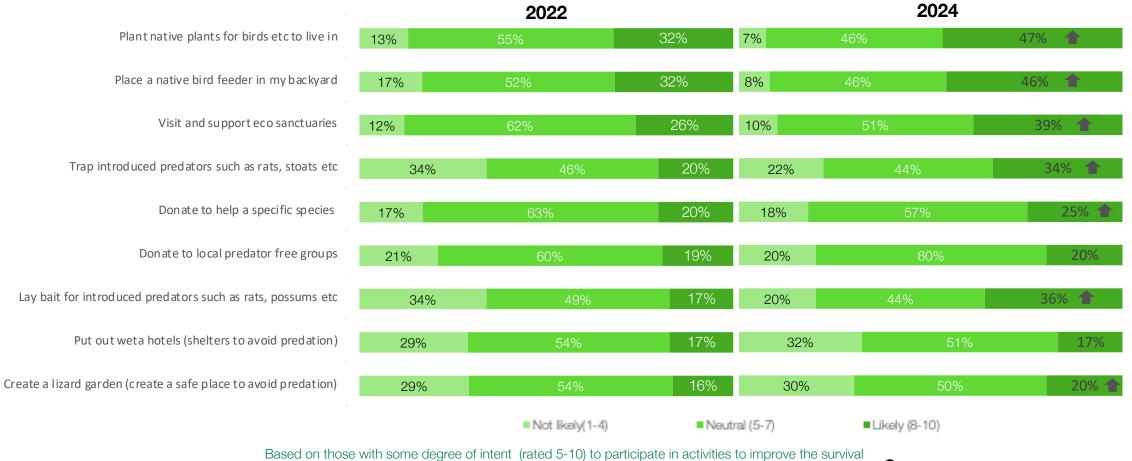


## Willingness to participate

There is now more willingness to participate in many of the predator control or conservation related activities.

#### Future intent to participate in specific conservation activities

(amongst those expressing an intent to participate in conservation activities generally)



Final debrief | June 2024 of native species. Excludes those who are already doing/have done this activity

26



#### **Barriers to participate**

The barriers to getting more involved in predator control are primarily driven by a range of personal circumstances or a lack of awareness about the problem/ how to act at a local level.

Lack of time/other priorities that precedence

"Lack of time with work and a young family "

"Too much else going on in life."

"It's just not a priority compared to everything else in life."

"More important use of my time and money"

"My finances do not allow me to purchase traps or donate." Lack of knowledge/ skills or not sure who to approach for help

"I don't know how to get involved"

"I didn't know there was a predator control group in my area"

"Seems to be no organised group to do this, apart from my own control methods at home"

"I don't really know the right channels to get involved with" Aversion to killing or handling trapped animals

"I personally hate killing

things, I would rather donate"

"I don't like the idea of harming innocent animals"

"I wouldn't be able to empty a trap with rats in"

"Happy for others to set traps/take care of deceased predators for me in my area, as I know it needs to be done, but have trouble doing it myself without feeling guilt." Can't see any evidence of a predator problem locally

"We really don't have much predators in my area and our neighborhood is pretty good at making sure we don't have any in our gardens."

"I don't believe predator control is needed"

"Don't live i an area where there is immediate need."

Constrained by health issues or age

"I am disabled so would be hard"

"I have difficulty tramping and walking any distances so can't do much to help outside of my own property"

"Age mostly - we're 73, and 79, plus we don't know much about it, and live in an apartment in the middle of Auckland"



#### What this means:

- > The most common conservation behaviours exhibited by NZers are planting natives and visiting eco sanctuaries.
- > More people are helping to control predator populations or donate than observed in 2022.
- Predator control and planting activities are predominantly done on one's own property, inspired by a desire to preserve our native species for future generations.
- > Kiwis are more likely to build sanctuaries for lizards and Weta across both private and public land, and a key motivation is to get outdoors or collaborate with children/grandchildren,.
- > Two years on from the benchmark study there is more willingness to participate in predator trapping, and baiting, as well as supporting native birds through tree planting and bird feeders
- The barriers to getting more involved in predator control are primarily driven by a range of personal circumstances or a lack of awareness about the problem/ how to act at a local level

#### **IMPLICATION:**

More Nzers are taking a hands-on approach to the Predator Free Movement than two years ago. Predator control (eg trapping) and planting is more often confined to one's own property, which could present an opportunity to transfer this 'will and skill' to more public spaces if guided and supported by their local predator free group.

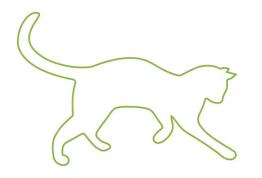


Attitudes towards cat control



#### **Attitudes towards cat control**

There is a similar level of support for actions to be taken by responsible cat owners, with de-sexing and microchipping.



#### 41% of New Zealanders own at least one cat

and they are more concerned (48%) about the survival of NZ native species vs non-cat owners (40%)

% that agree	Total sample 2022 (n=1,005)	Total sample 2024 (n=1259)	Own at least one cat 2022 (n=395)	Own at least one cat 2024 (n=531)	Don't own a cat 2022 (n=605)	Don't own a cat 2024 (n=728)
Responsible cat owners should						
Microchip all of their cats	66%	66%	66%	66%	66%	66%
De-sex all of their cats	75%	74%	82%	79%	71%	71%
Limit the number of cats they own (except for breeders)	61%	60%	59%	60%	63%	62%
Keep their cats indoors or on their own property	43%	43%	33%	38%	49%	45%



#### **Attitudes towards cat control (regional clusters)**

South Islanders, particularly those living North of and including Canterbury, are the most supportive of cat control measures.

	Northland	Auckland	Waikato/ BOP	East Coast North Is	West Coast North Is	Wellington	Upper South Is	Canterbury	Lower South Is
Microchip all of their cats	64%	63%	65%	66%	60%	69%	77%	73%	69%
De-sex all of their cats	83%	71%	70%	80%	80%	77%	84%	79%	77%
Limit the number of cats they own	68%	53%	60%	66%	67%	63%	70%	72%	63%
Keep their cat indoors or on their own property	41%	49%	35%	34%	35%	40%	38%	44%	43%

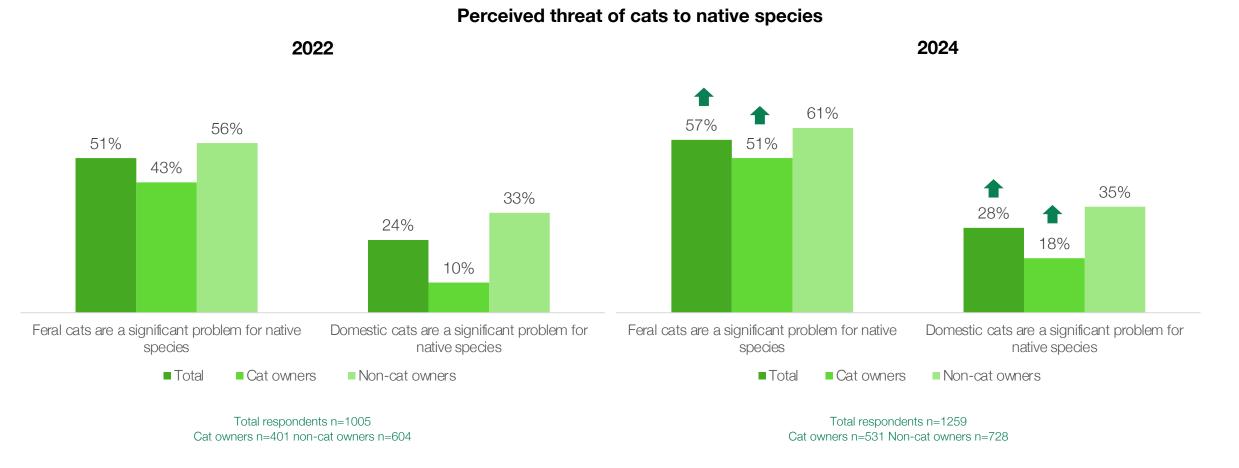
## Expectations of responsible cat owners (% that agree)

Which of the following behaviours would you expect to see from responsible cat owners? Based on 2024 data



#### **Threats of feral and domestic cats**

In two years the sentiment has strengthened about the threat posed by feral and domestic cats.





## **National legislation**

Kiwis are more in favour of national legislation initiatives to control the impact of cats; with feral cat control being the top priority.

There is greater support for de-sexing and keeping cats indoors, particularly amongst those who don't own a cat.

% Agree	Total sample 2022 (n=1005)	Total sample 2024 (n=1259)	Own at least one cat 2022 (n=395)	Own at least one cat 2024 (n=531)	Don't own a cat 2022 (n=605)	Don't own a cat 2024 (n=728)
We should actively reduce feral cat populations on public conservation land	60%	64%	52%	58%	66%	68%
There should be national legislation requiring microchipping of cats	52%	56%	46%	52%	56%	58%
There should be national legislation requiring de- sexing of cats	50%	57% 🛖	50%	56%	50%	57% 🛧
National legislation should require cat owners to keep their cats indoors.	21%	25% 👚	13%	17%	27%	32% 👚



#### What this means:

- After the last two years of conservation messaging, a greater proportion of the general public now acknowledge the threat posed by feral and domestic cats
- More than two thirds of all New Zealanders (and cat owners specifically) remain supportive of cat owners taking more responsibility for micro-chipping and de-sexing all of their cats
- > Opinions about responsible cat ownership differ across the country; with those North of Auckland and Canterbury north showing stronger support
- > Restricting cat movements by keeping them indoors was less favoured, particularly by those living within the lower half of the North Island, however this sentiment softened when limiting this restriction to the nighttime hours
- Across the country feral cats are consistently viewed as being a significant threat to native wildlife, whereas the threat posed by domestic cats generates more acknowledgement in Wellington and the upper South Island

#### **IMPLICATION:**

The destructive impact cats have on native bird life is more widely accepted than two years ago. Alongside this, the general public are also more supportive of mitigating this threat with proposed cat control measures.

Feral cats are still very much associated with the threat to native species and efforts should continue to point out the potential threat of domestic cats as well.



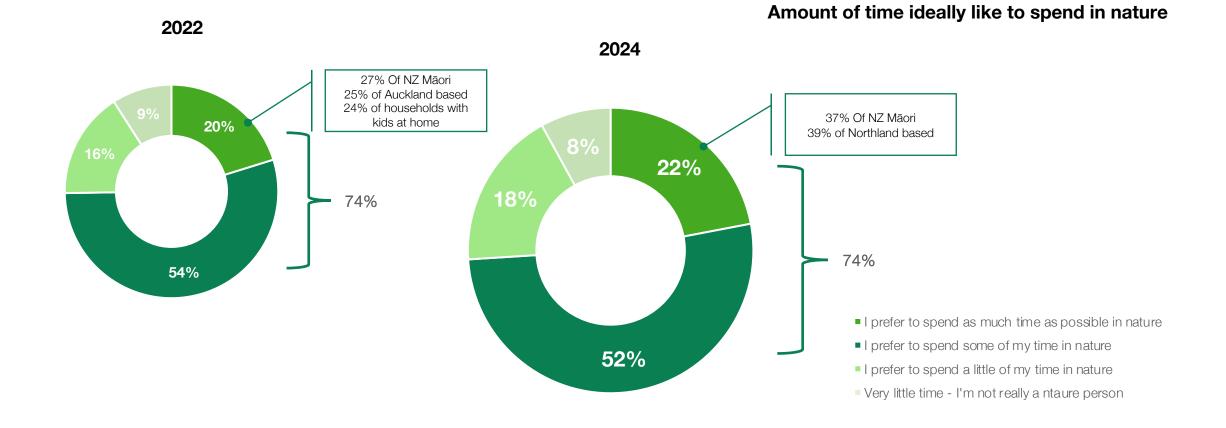
Conservation in context: an update



#### **Time in nature**

#### Three-quarters of all Kiwis want to spend some or as much time as possible in nature.

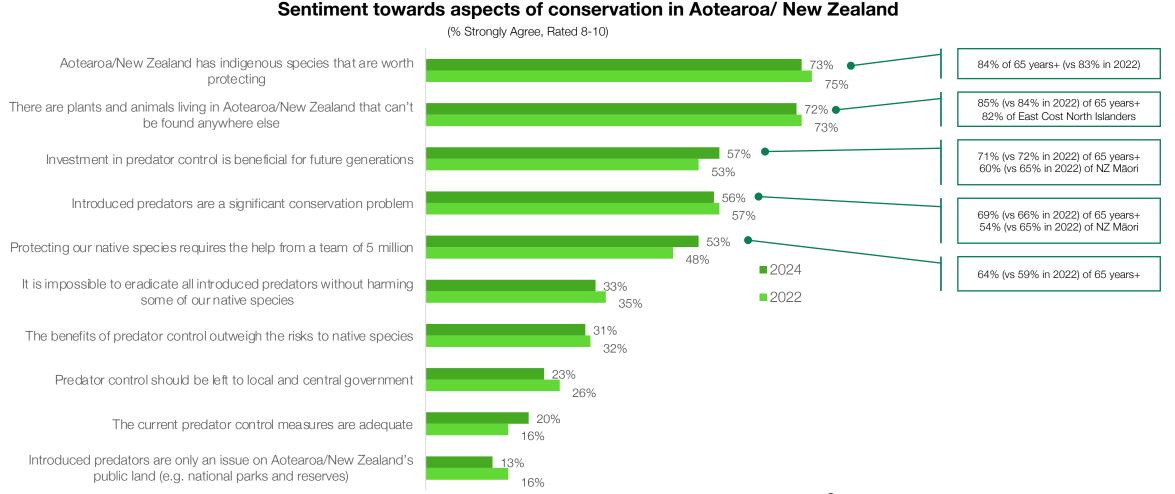
Māori and those based north of Auckland are inclined to enjoy time in nature.





#### **Protecting te taiao**

Three out of four New Zealanders appreciate the value and uniqueness of our native flora and fauna, this was especially resonant amongst Māori and older kiwis.

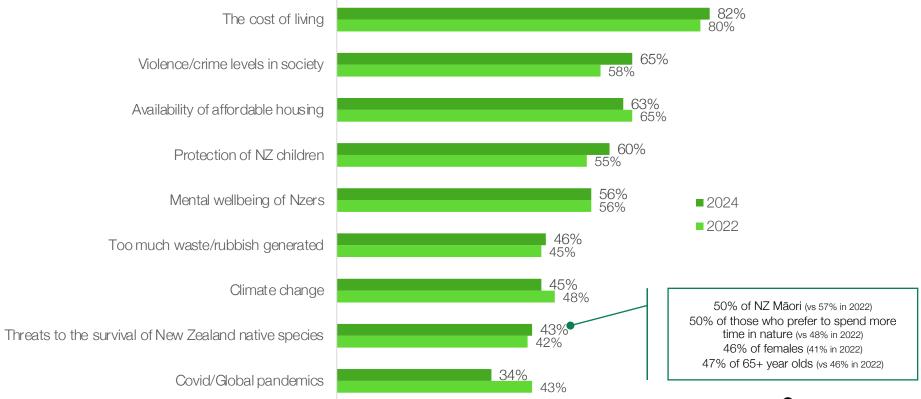




#### **Societal issues and concerns**

Other societal issues such as cost of living continue to trigger a greater degree of concern than threats to our native species.

There are pockets of the general population, such as Māori and those spending more time outdoors, who consider this to be a more concerning issue relative to other issues facing our country.



#### Concern about societal issues relevant to Aotearoa New Zealand

REENZ | Spring Primary Insights for Growthe

38 Final debrief | June 2024

#### What this means:

- > We see a very similar theme to two years ago in that three quarters of all Kiwis want to be in nature some or as much time as possible
- > The majority of New Zealanders continue to appreciate the value and uniqueness of our native flora and fauna
- > Preserving our native species for generations to come was especially resonant amongst Māori and those aged 65 years or older
- > There has been no real change in the level of concern for the survival of NZ native species relative to other societal issues impacting New Zealanders.

#### **IMPLICATION:**

Kiwis love and appreciate the many benefits of being in nature; however there is no greater feeling of unease about its future since the benchmark survey in 2022. There is still a sense that conservation of our native species, in relation to everything else, is something we can afford to worry less about.



# Bringing it all together

#### What we do from here

- > New Zealanders continue to appreciate and value the uniqueness of our native flora and fauna, and preserving this asset is important to many.
- > While intent, willingness and behaviour around Predator Free and conservation activities by New Zealanders is on the increase – there is an opportunity to better connect this intent and willingness to action and combined action.
- > Part of this relates to continuing to grow awareness and understanding of the high level 'Predator Free' goal which can help provide a sense of purpose and scale beyond people's own neighbourhoods.
- > But there is also an opportunity to drive greater visibility and ease of engagement with local level initiatives and reference the requirement for a range of changes (including Cat control) that can all contribute to the progress desired. At a 'local' level this may include greater visibility of groups or programmes, publicizing success or illustrating the potential to impact the things we know matter (e.g. protecting native birds, increasing native plant life.



## Thanks!