

Predator Free NZ: Tracking awareness and perceptions of Predator Free 2050

Insight Report

June 2026

This Document will cover

1. Background and approach
2. Brand health check
3. Predator Free Participation
4. Cat control
5. Bringing this all together

#1: Background and Approach

A 10-minute survey of 1,231 New Zealanders

Representative nationally – with regional boosters to allow extra analysis

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 – this was then repeated in 2024.

The latest survey is a third wave (with a few changes to some sections) and aims to ascertain the current position and where things have changed over time.

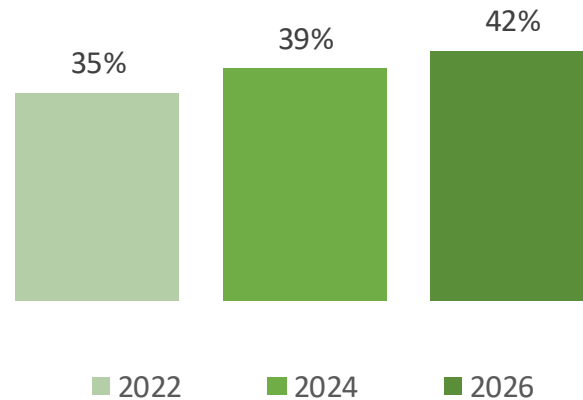
Overall, we sought to measure and track:

- 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 and feral cat control

And in summary, we have seen positive progress in relation to awareness, engagement and sentiment



Overall awareness of Predator Free 2050 has increased slightly to 42%, and this is a statistically significant increase since our baseline in 2022



Future intent to participate in conservation activities has indicatively increased – especially in Wellington



There has also been an increase in the proportion of the population who are confident that NZ will be Predator Free by 2050 – especially in Wellington

For the first time, we asked if New Zealanders supported Predator Free 2050 and found that 79% supported or strongly supported the goal

79%



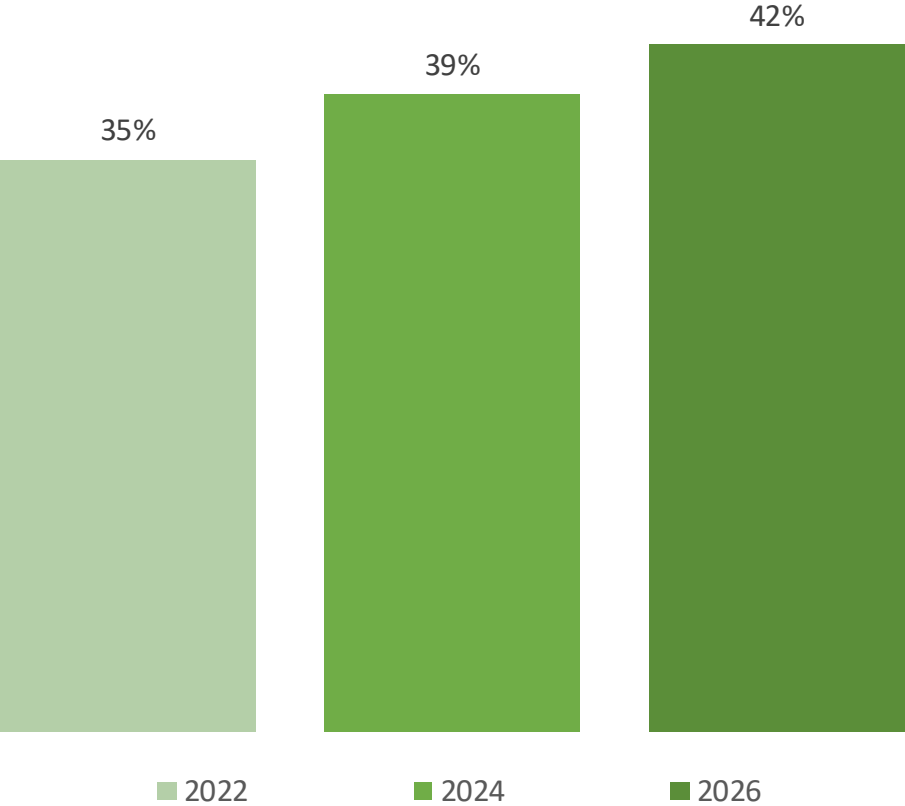
Overall, we have seen a slight uplift in support for initiatives and legislation that look to control cats and cat owners, with feral cats still seen as the main issue

#2: Brand Health Check

Overall awareness of Predator Free 2050 has increased slightly to 42%, and this is a statistically significant increase since our baseline in 2022



Prompted awareness of Predator Free 2050



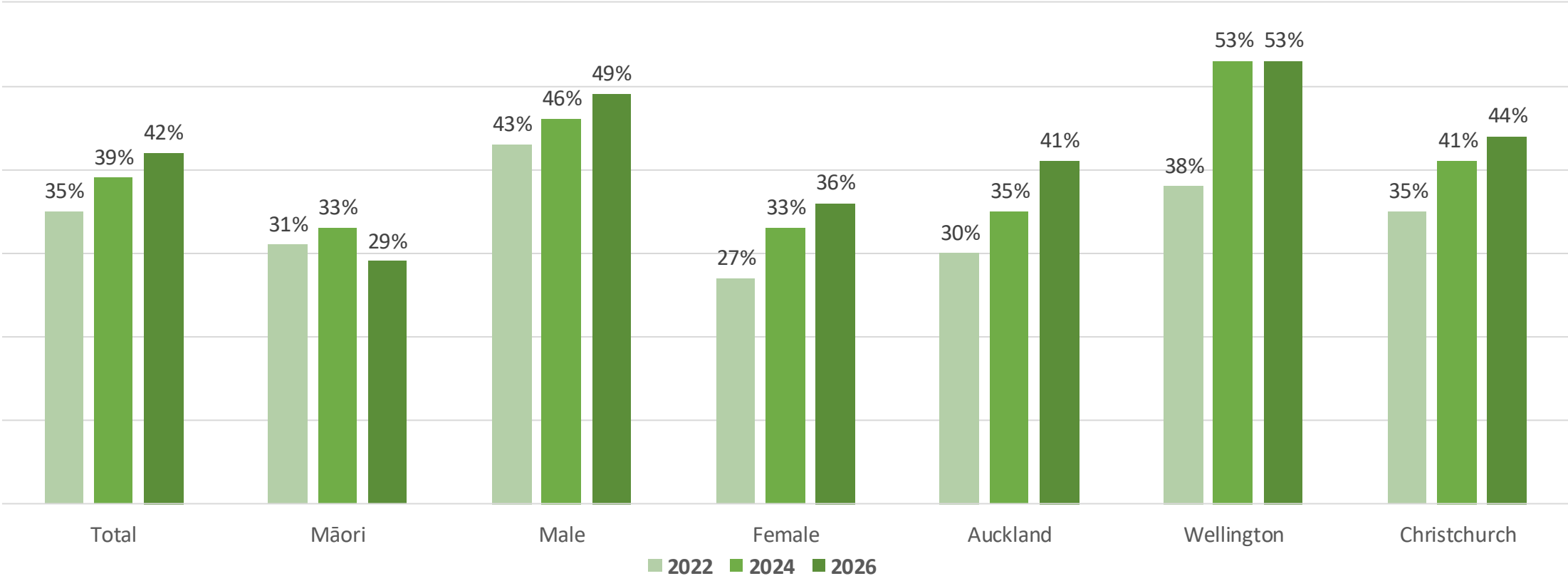
NOTE: The result for the alternative wording "Have you heard of NZs goal to be Predator Free by 2050" resulted in 43% awareness.

Base: 2026 =1,231, 2024 = 1,259, 2022 = 1,005

And this increase in prompted awareness has increased across many audiences – with a particular increase in Auckland



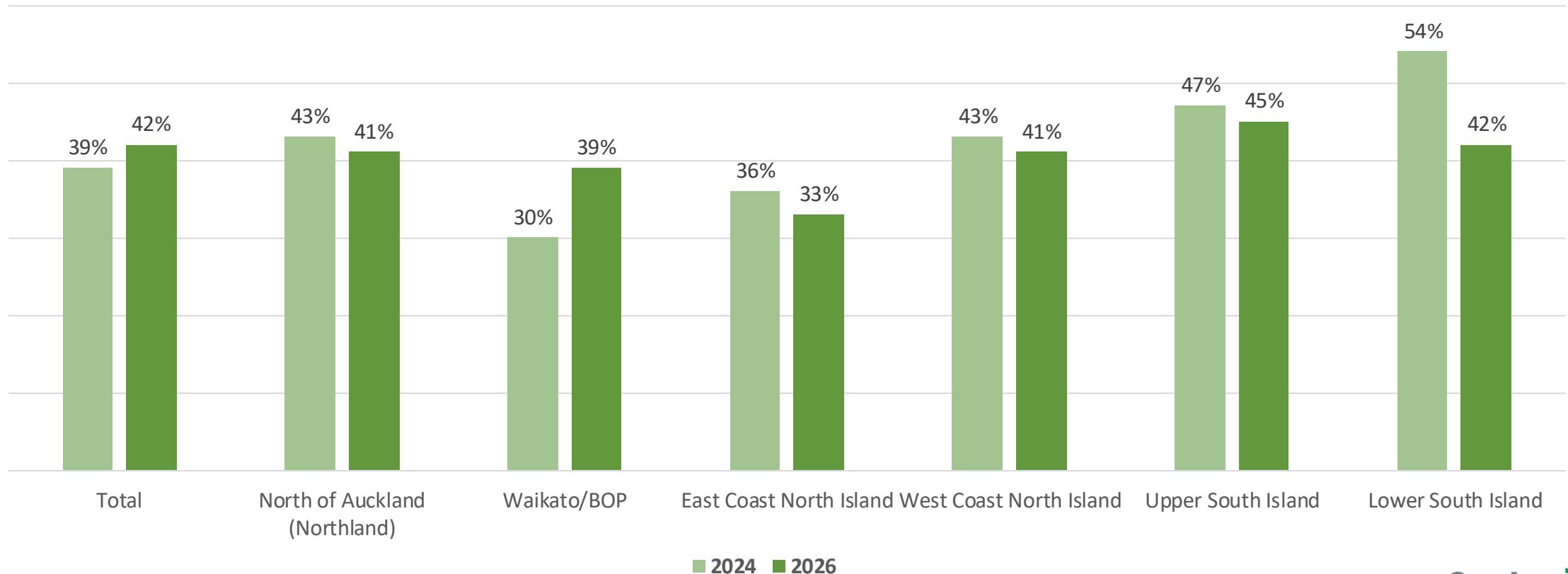
Prompted awareness of Predator Free 2050 by Audience Type



At a regional level, awareness of Predator Free 2050 has increased in Waikato / BOP, but decreased slightly in other regions (especially Lower South Island).



Prompted awareness of Predator Free 2050 by Regional Clusters

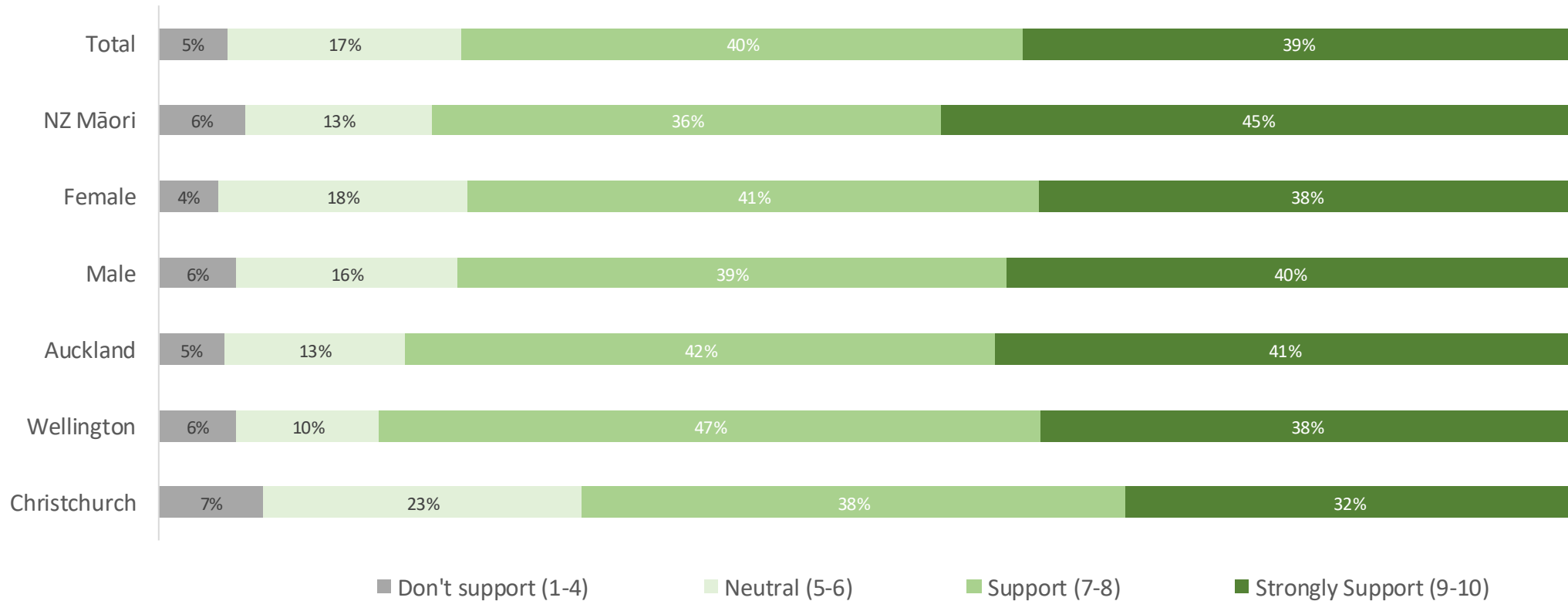


There is very little opposition to the Predator Free goal, with 79% supporting or strongly supporting the goal.



New question

Level of Support for "Predator Free 2050" Goal

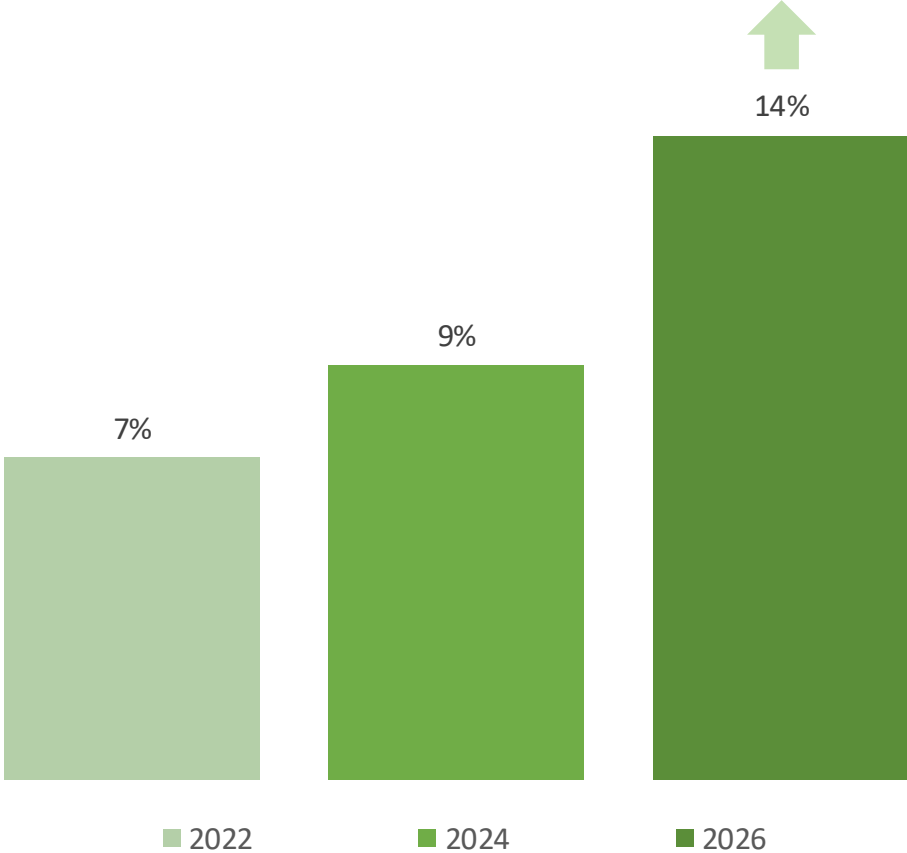


How much do you support New Zealand's goal to be predator free by 2050?

Alongside an increase in overall brand awareness, awareness of predator free activity taking place locally has also increased significantly since 2024 to 14%



Awareness of Local Predator Free Group or Project



Base: 2026 = 1,231, 2024 = 1,259, 2022 = 1,005

And this increased awareness is evident across most audience types – especially amongst Males and Wellington residents



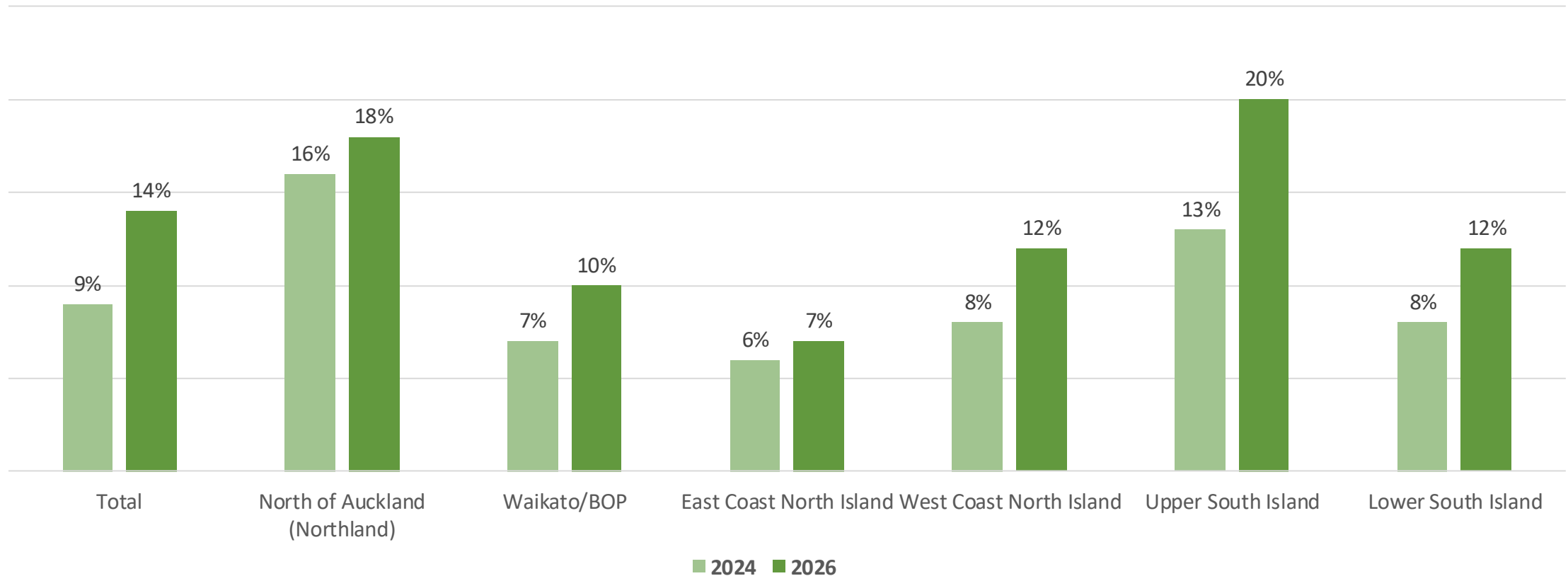
Awareness of Local Predator Free Group or Project by Audience Type



While at a regional level, we see increases in awareness across the board, with Northland and the upper South Island being the 'hot spots' with highest awareness of local groups or projects



Awareness of Local Predator Free Group or Project by Regional Clusters



When prompted - half of all New Zealanders are aware of *some form* of predator control activity happening locally. This shows that known activity isn't always attributed to the Predator Free 2050 "brand"



New question

<i>Prompted Awareness of Predator Control Activity in Region</i>	2026
Regional and local council predator control	33%
Community groups undertaking predator control on public land	20%
Communities undertaking backyard predator control	18%
Predator control on farms	18%
Something else	1%
Not aware of any predator control activity in my region	51%

Overall, 49% of respondents were aware of some form of local predator control activity

More specifically, which, if any, of the following predator control activities are happening in your region?

There has also been an increase in the proportion of the population who are confident that NZ will be Predator Free by 2050 – especially in Wellington



% That are confident New Zealand will be Predator Free by 2050

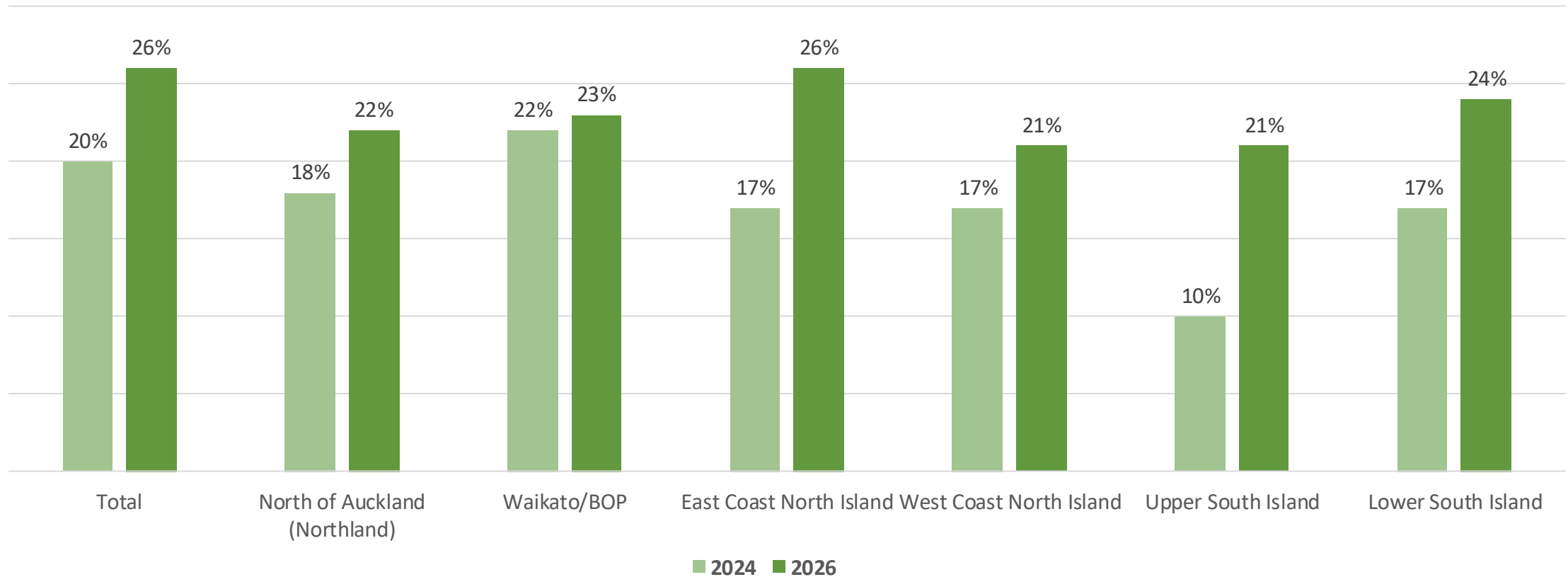


Base: 2026 = 1,231, 2024 = 1,259, 2022 = 1,005

Confidence is also up across our regional centres; particularly in East Coast North Island and upper South Island



% That are confident New Zealand will be Predator Free by 2050 by Regional Clusters



Key challenges such as geography and resources are still seen as major impediments to complete eradication



1. Perceived impossibility of total eradication

"A target of 100% is invariably difficult to achieve."

"It's an impossible task."

2. Predator biology: breeding, adaptability and elusiveness

"They breed faster than they can be eliminated."

"They will adapt and survive."

3. Scale and geography make it too difficult

"There are parts of the country where nobody goes."

"Too much land too few resources."

4. Insufficient resources, funding and government commitment

"It all depends on momentum and the consistency of government policy."

"Not enough money is being spent to fulfil this project."

#3: Predator Free Participation

We have seen incidence of conservation activity more generally increase slightly in some areas, and the majority of this activity is done on one's own property

These increases are driven by a general lifting of incidence across the board rather than being linked to particular locations or segments of the population

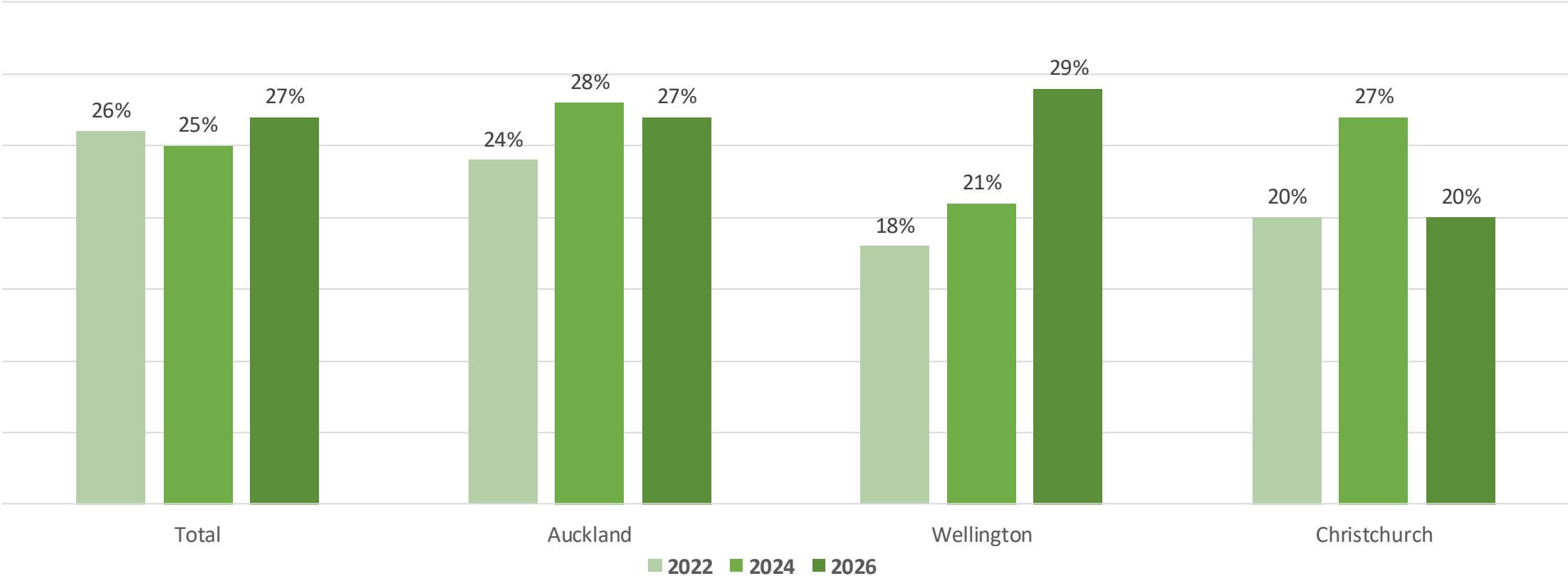
Incidence of Conservation Activities

	Done (Total)		Done in last 2 years	Done on own home/ property
	2024	2026	2026	
Plant native plants for birds to live in	42%	↑ 47%	24%	→ 78%
Visit and support eco sanctuaries	37%	↑ 43%	20%	→ 80%
Lay bait for introduced predators such as rats, possums etc	33%	37%	20%	→ 80%
Place a native bird feeder in my backyard	33%	↑ 38%	19%	
Trap introduced predators such as rats, stoats etc	29%	33%	18%	
Donate to help a specific species eg kokako project	21%	25%	11%	
Donate to local predator free groups	16%	↑ 21%	9%	
Create a lizard garden (create a space place to avoid predation)	11%	14%	6%	
Put out Weta hotels (shelters to avoid predation)	10%	14%	6%	

Future intent to participate in conservation activities has indicatively increased – especially in Wellington



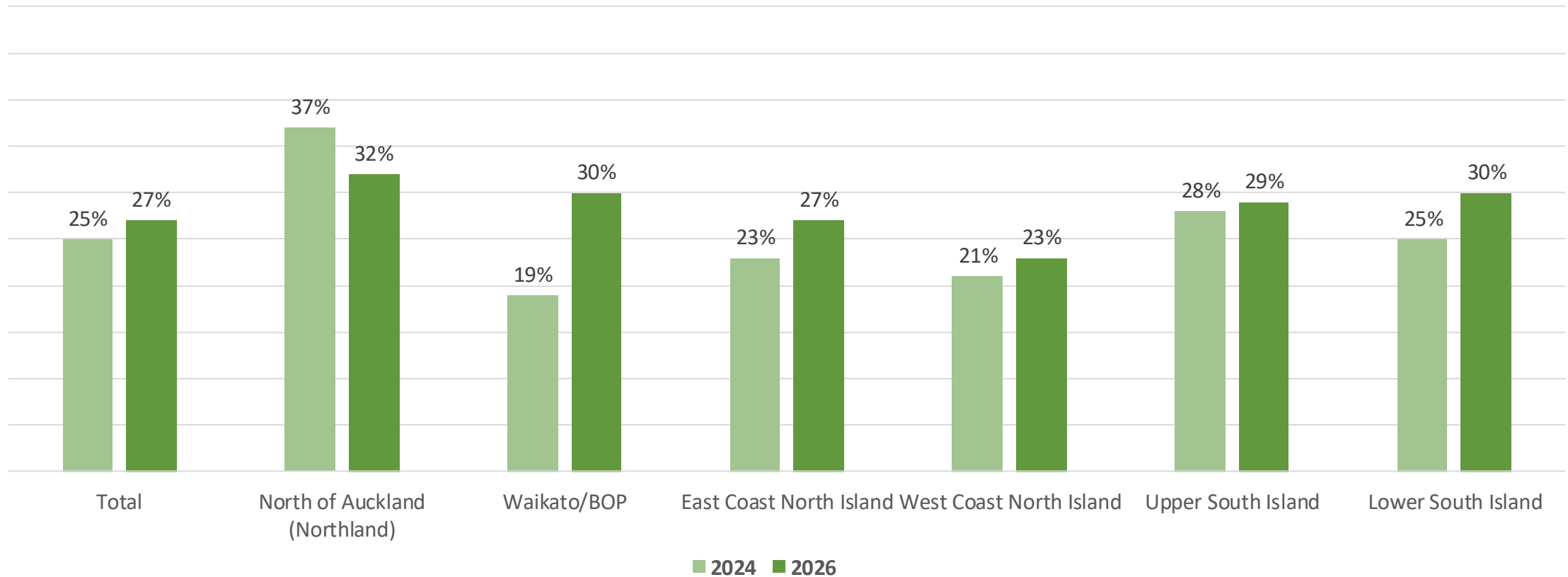
Future Intent to Participate in Conservation Activities (% likely to participate)



In the regions there is higher intent to participate in the future amongst those living in Waikato/ Bay of Plenty



Future Intent to Participate in Conservation Activities (% likely to participate)
by Regional Clusters

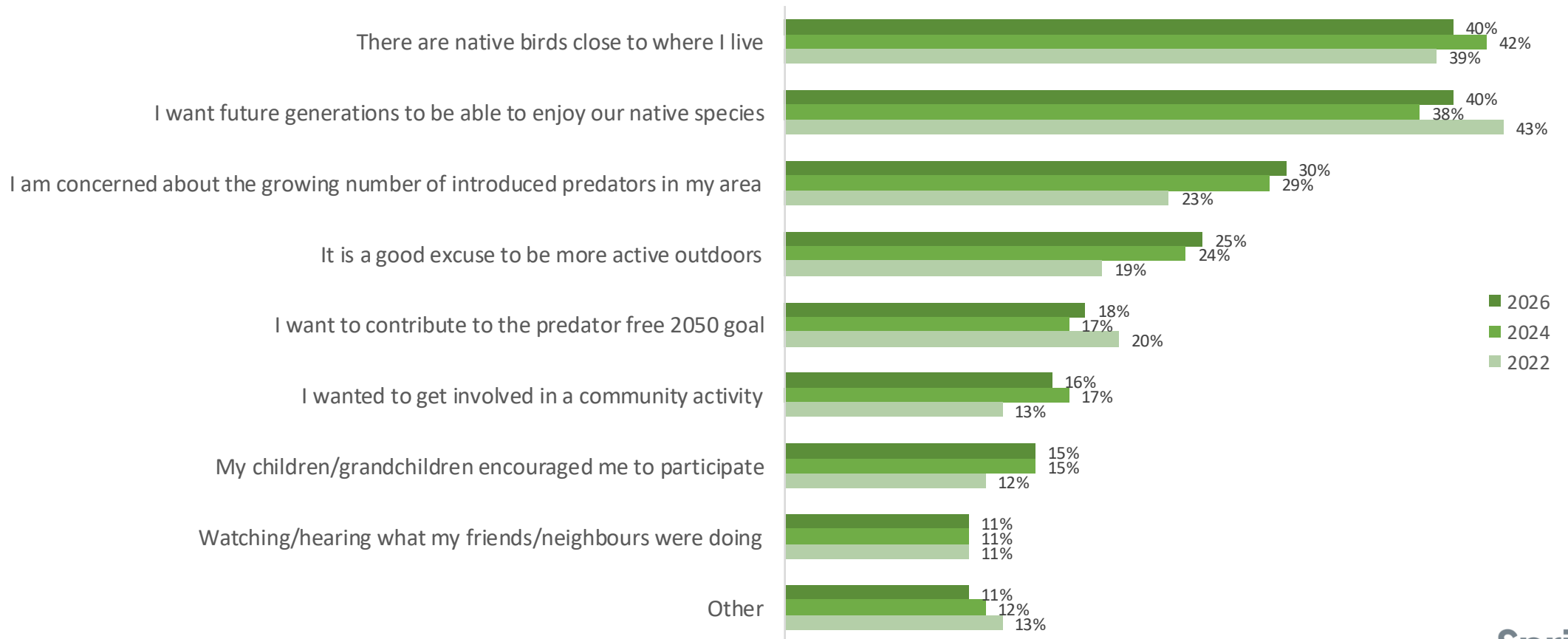


Base: 2026 =1,231, 2024 = 1,259

The main drivers for participation remain the same – a connection to native birds in their area and wanting to protect for future generations



Drivers for Participating in Conservation Activities



And the barriers to participation / getting involved in conservation activities in the future remain consistent with previous waves.

1. Time constraints and competing priorities

"I don't have the time to get involved."

"Too busy with work and family commitments."

2. Lack of awareness, information and knowledge

"I have not much information about the programme."

"I wouldn't know where to start."

3. Low perceived relevance or impact

"The garden I have does not attract the predators."

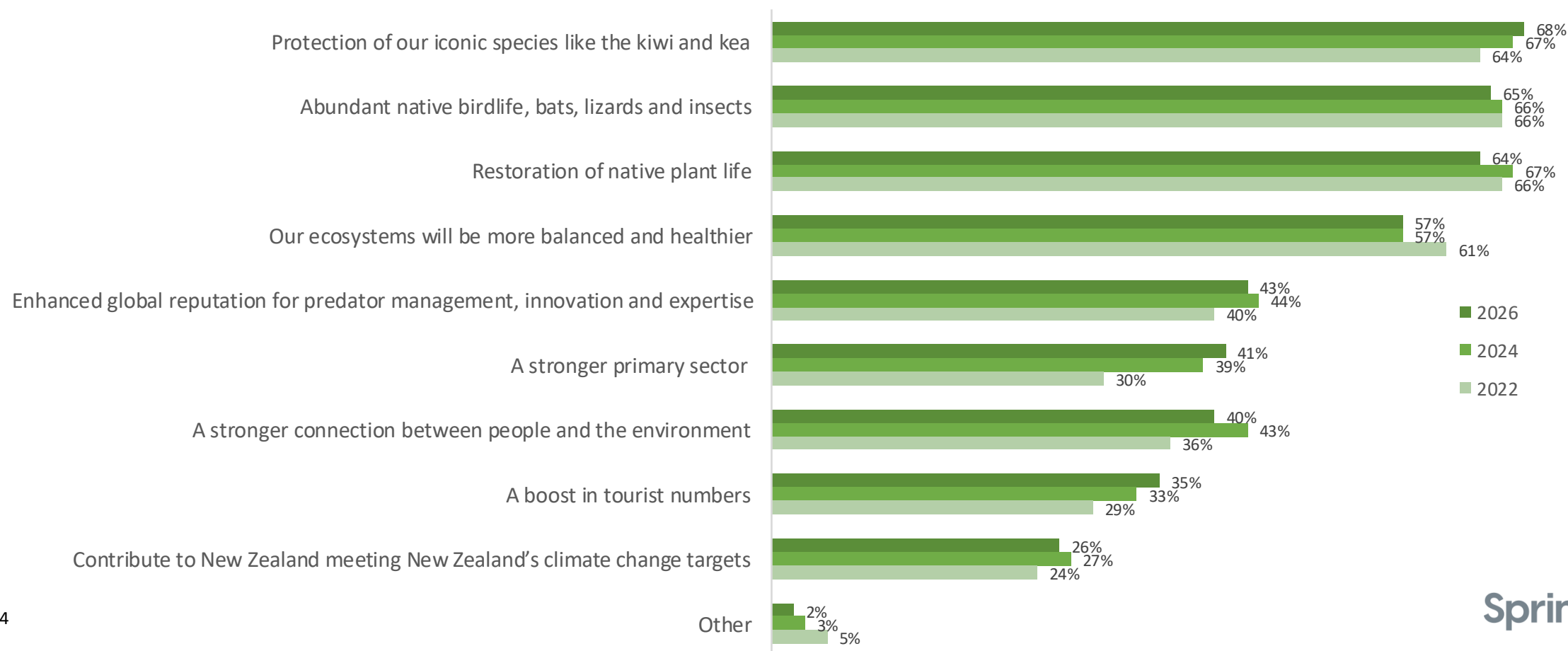
"Not really an issue where I live."

4. Physical limitations, age and health

"I'm not physically able to do that sort of work."

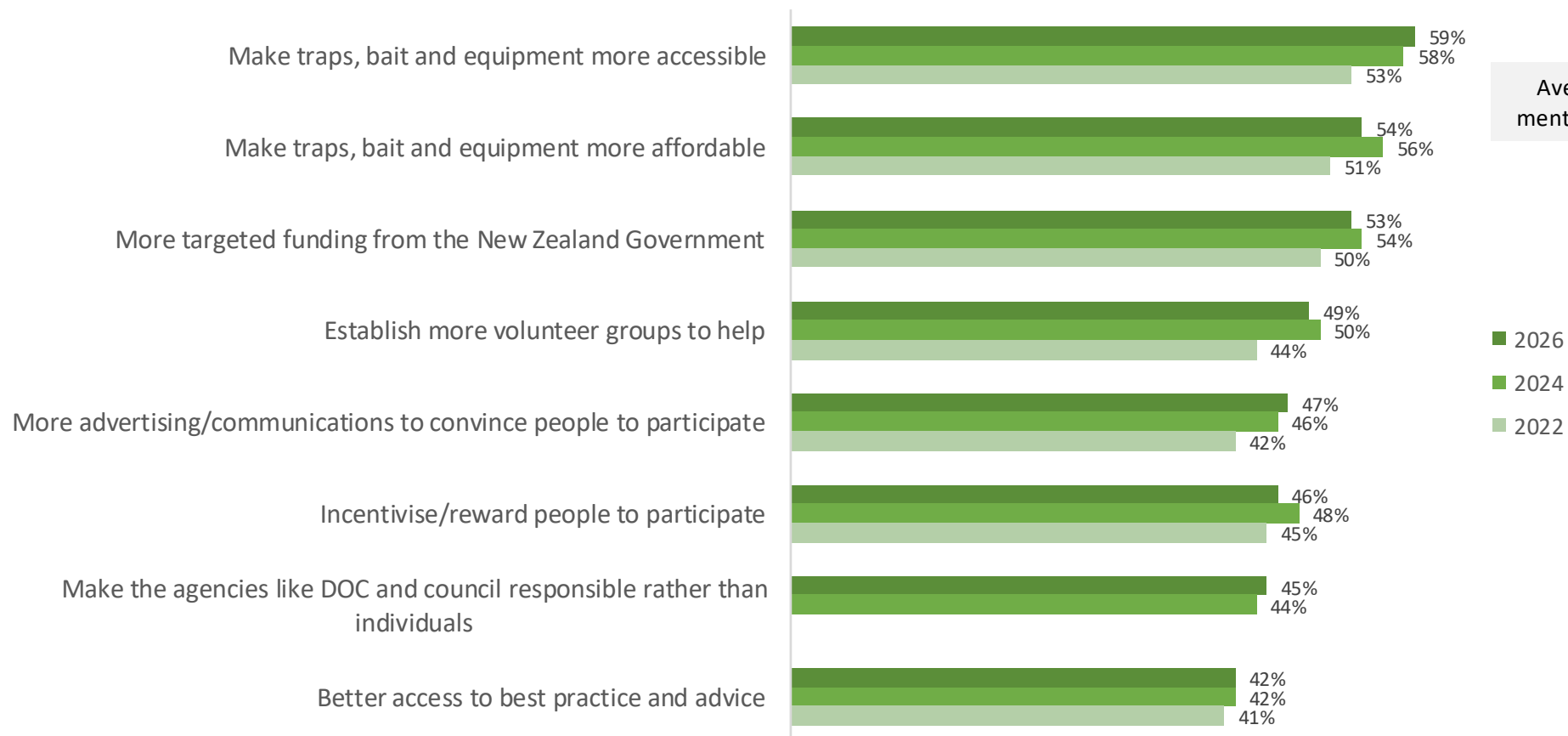
The key benefits we can expect from becoming predator free are seen to be an abundance of our native species; both flora and fauna

How NZ would be if we meet our Predator Free 2050 goal



But there are a range of required actions that are seen to be needed; with respondents choosing an average of four different actions

Perceived Actions Required to ensure NZ can become Predator Free by 2050



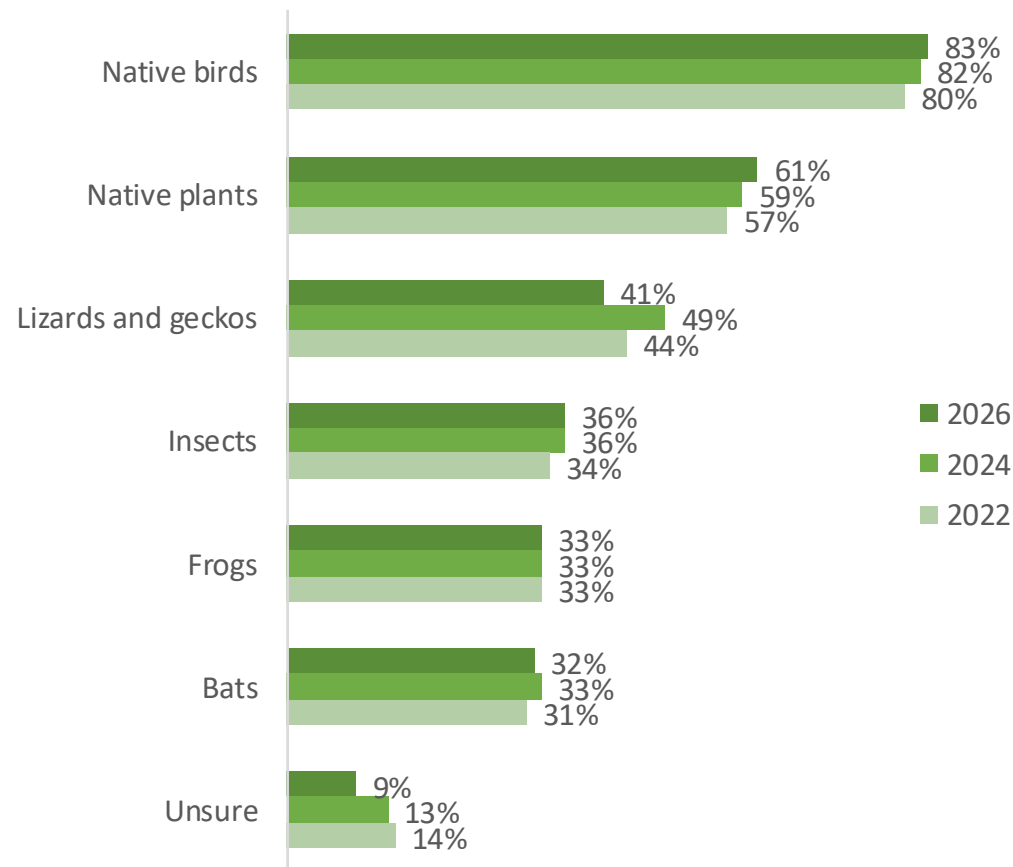
Average number of mentions (2026) = 3.99

■ 2026
■ 2024
■ 2022

Native birds are deemed the most in need of protection. And while cats are more widely recognised as a threat than previously, they still lag behind possums, mustelids and rats



NZ Native Species Most in Need of Protection



Most Damaging Introduced Predators for NZ Native Species

	2022	2024	2026
Possums	64%	67%	68%
Mustelids	60%	66%	68%
Rats	58%	61%	64%
Cats	32%	34%	40%
Deer	12%	18%	19%
Hedgehogs	12%	17%	17%
Goats	14%	17%	19%



#4: Cat Control

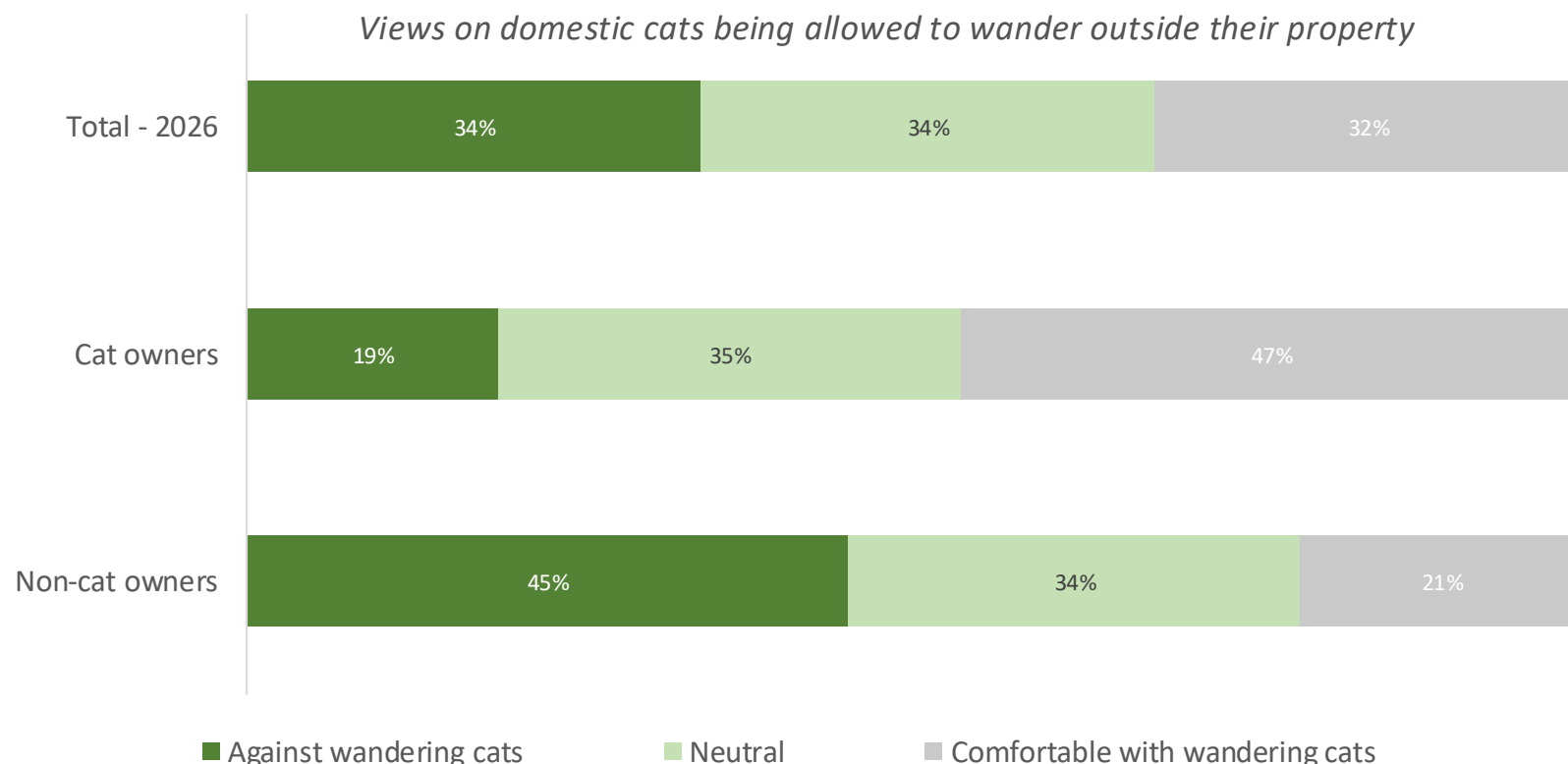
Overall, we have seen a slight uplift in support for initiatives and legislation that look to control cats and cat owners, with feral cats still seen as the main issue

	% Agree	Total '24	Total '26	Cat owners '26	Non-Cat owners '26
Feral cats are a significant problem for native species		57%	61%	54%	66%
Domestic cats are a significant problem for native species		28%	27%	15%	35%
Responsible cat owners should...					
Microchip all of their cats		66%	↑ 71%	70%	72%
De-sex all of their cats		75%	77%	77%	76%
Limit the number of cats they own (except for breeders)		61%	61%	55%	66%
Keep their cats indoors or on their own property		42%	43%	36%	48%
Keep their cats inside at night		55%	58%	51%	64%

There is more support for legislation to support cat control; particularly to reinforce some aspects of responsible cat ownership

% Agree	Total '24	Total '26	Cat owners '26	Non-Cat owners '26
We should actively reduce feral cat populations on public conservation land	64%	67%	61%	72%
There should be national legislation requiring microchipping of cats	56%	64%	61%	66%
There should be national legislation requiring de-sexing of cats	57%	62%	62%	62%
National legislation should require cat owners to keep their cats on their properties.	25%	35%	23%	44%

Views on cats being allowed to wander outside of their property is more divided overall, however cat owners are more likely to be comfortable with cats wandering



How strongly do you agree/disagree with domestic cats being able to wander outside their property?

Against wandering tend to be:

- Older – 55+ years
- Stronger supporters of 2050 goal (73%)
- Perceive native birds to be most in need of protection (90%) and lizards and geckos (47%)
- More convinced domestic cats pose a significant threat to native species
- More supportive of any legislative changes around cat ownership

#5: Bringing this all together

Overall, we have seen a slight increase in the ‘brand presence’ of Predator Free 2050 – with many brand metrics trending positively over time

We have seen a positive shift in terms of:

- increased awareness of Predator Free 2050
- increased awareness of local initiatives
- increased confidence in achieving the Predator Free 2050 goal.

This positive shift also appears to be flowing through into involvement in conservation activities and future intent to engage in conservation activities

New Zealanders have similar motivations to previous surveys for wanting to see us predator free by 2050, and the barriers to getting more involved personally remain unchanged.

Messaging about the specific threat of cats appears to be fostering more support for tighter cat control – with a slight uplift in support for initiatives and legislation that look to control cats and cat owners – with Feral cats still seen as the main issue

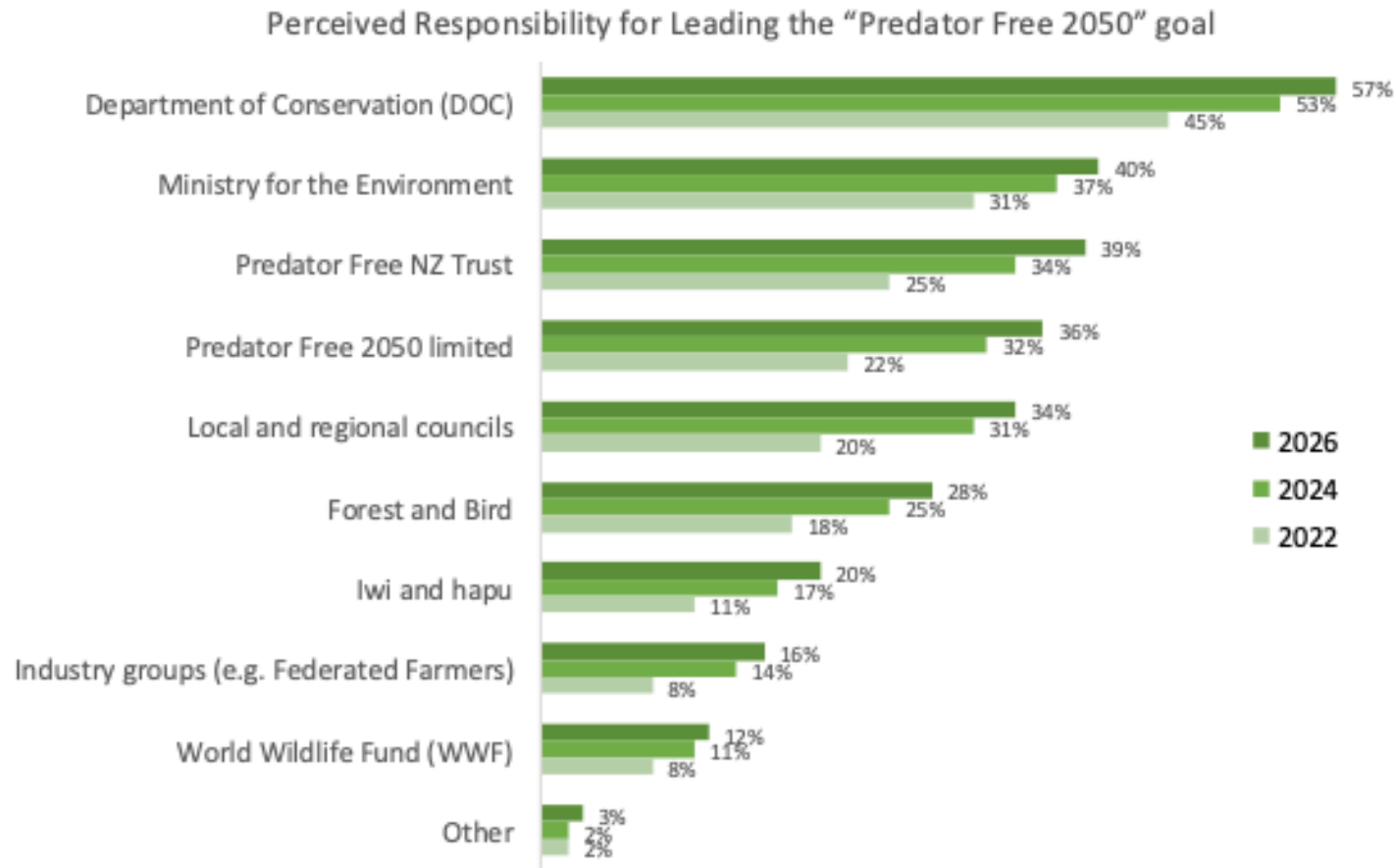
Predator Free NZ: Tracking Audience Perceptions

Topline Numbers

June 2026

APPENDICES

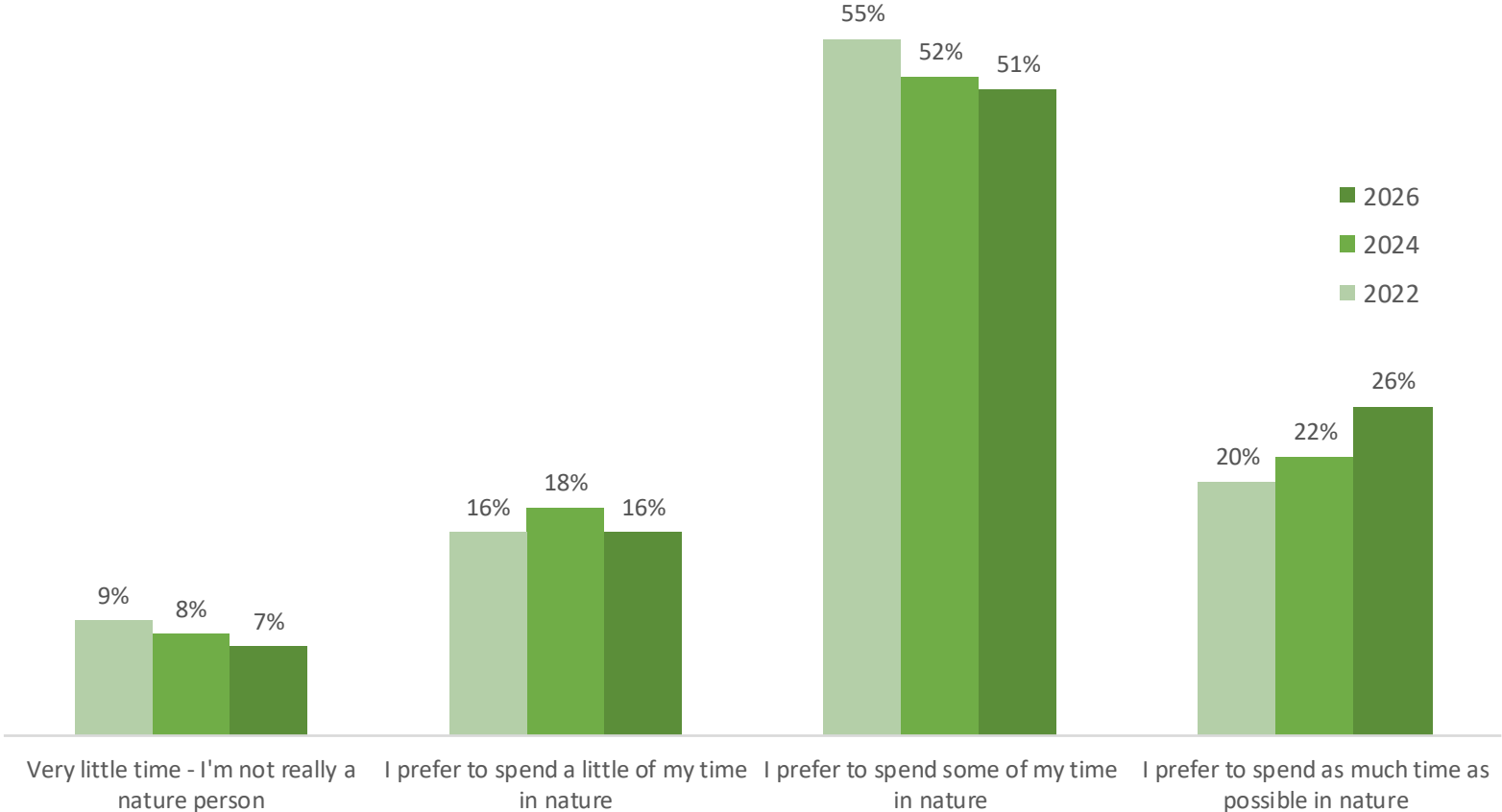
New Zealanders see the responsibility for leading the Predator Free 2050 goal to be assigned to many organisations, with DOC being associated the most strongly



For context, most New Zealanders continue to enjoy spending time in nature



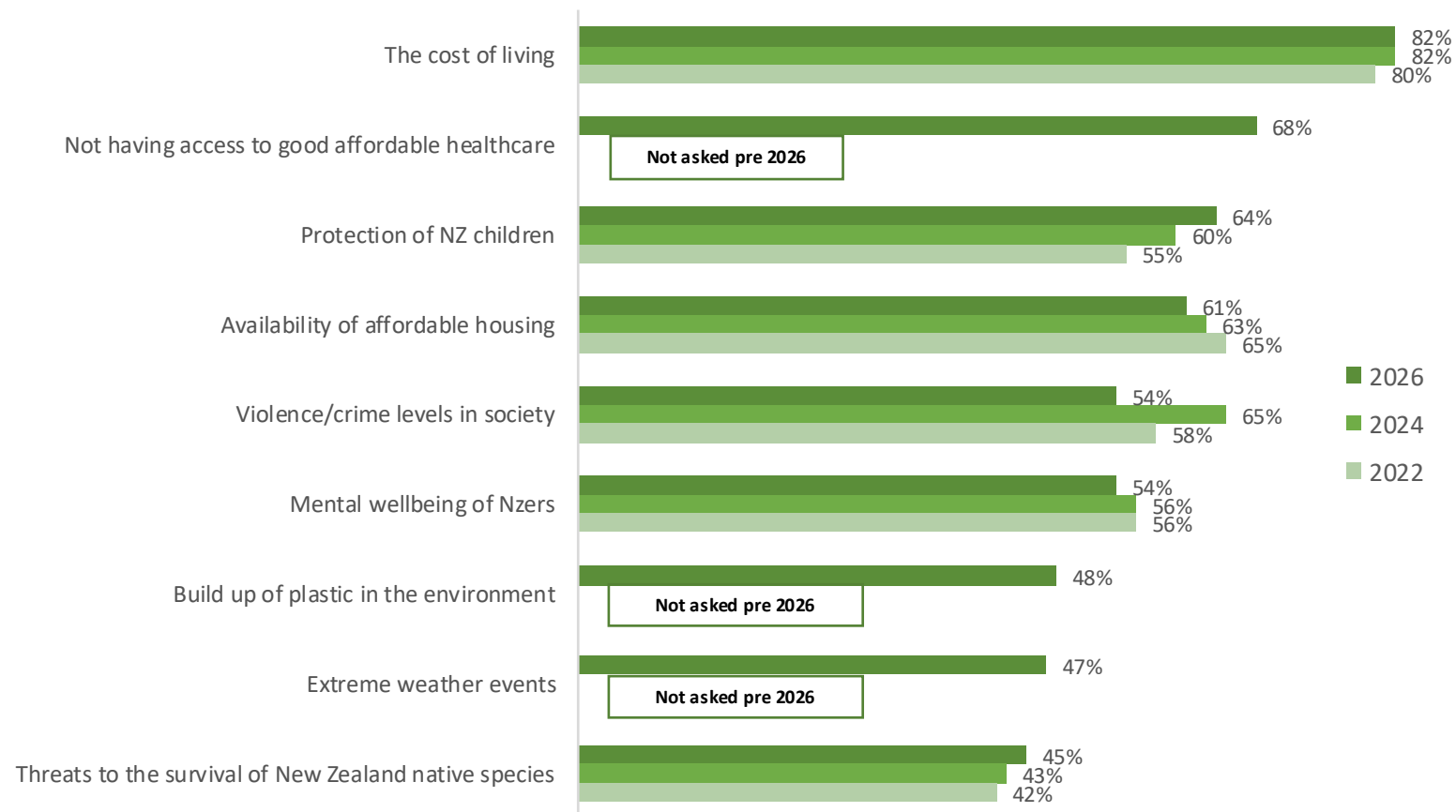
Connection with Nature



When comparing the survival of NZ native species to other societal issues, we see kiwis are much more concerned with issues such as the cost of living and affordable healthcare



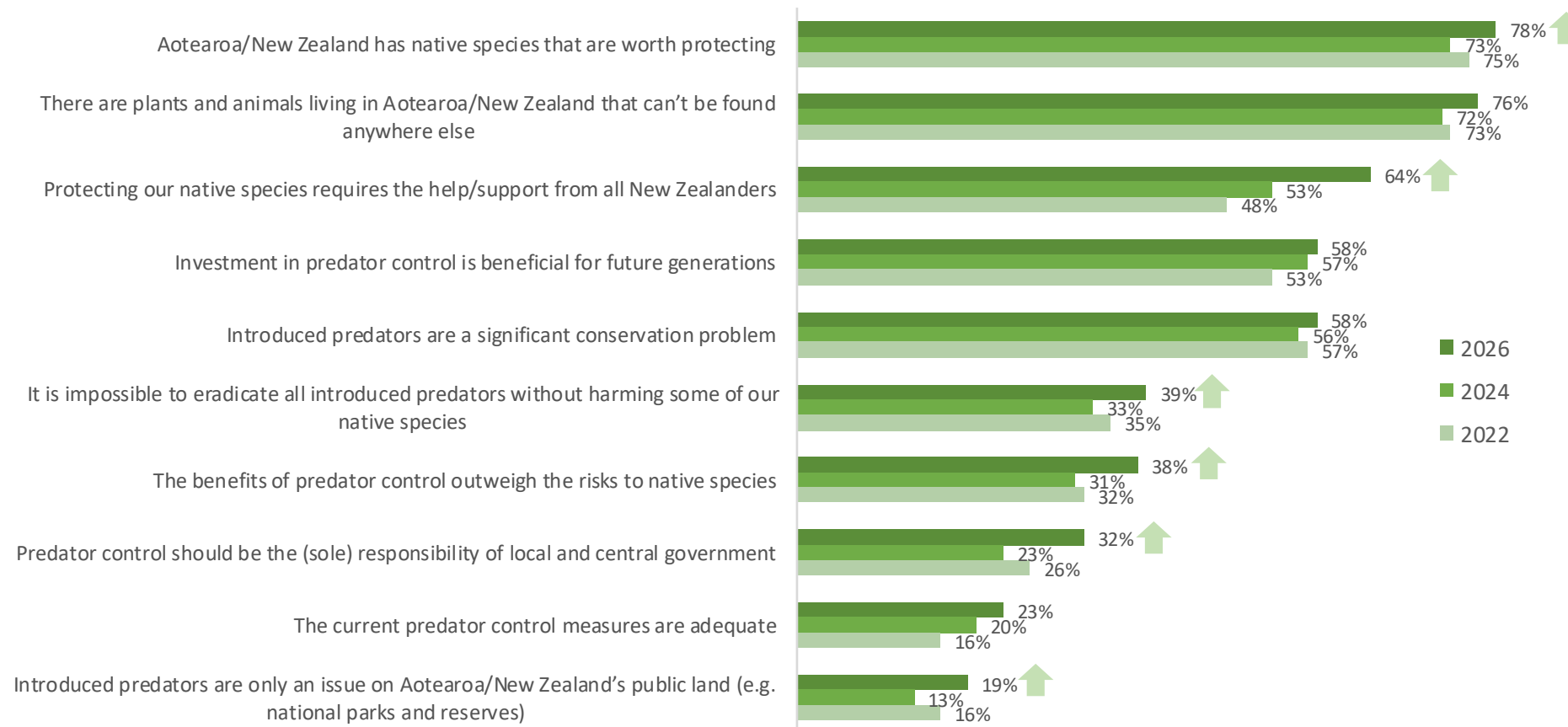
Concern About Societal Issues Relevant to Aotearoa/ New Zealand



But when we focus in specifically on conservation, we see more positive sentiment than two years ago, particularly the coordinated effort that's required to protect our unique native species

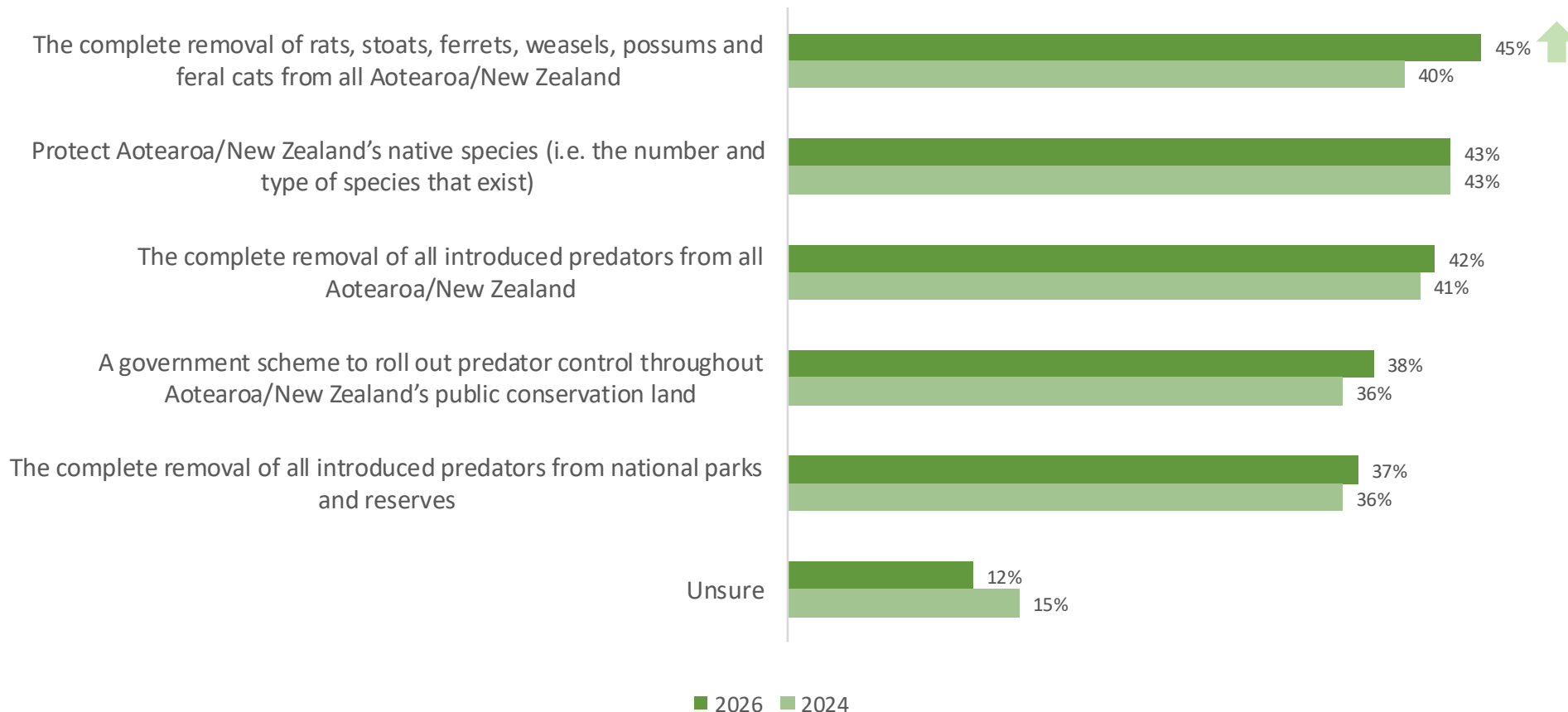


Sentiment Towards Aspects of Conservation in Aotearoa/ New Zealand (% Agree)



Understanding of the PFNZ 2050 goal is similar to two years ago, however we now see slightly stronger linkages to specific predators

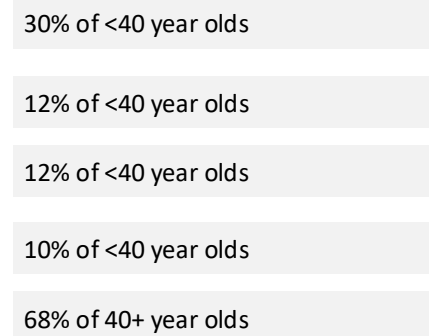
Perceived Goal of “Predator Free 2050”



More than a third of all New Zealanders are engaged in conservation activity to some degree, and those aware of PFNZ or under the age of 40 are more likely to be involved

Incidence of Participation in Conservation Activities

	Total - 2026	Aware PFNZ
I have read about them online	25%	38%
I have given them a donation	8%	14%
I have contacted them for information	7%	11%
I have participated in their arranged activities	8%	14%
None of these	62%	41%



*In 2026 there was a change to previous years in that all respondents were asked this question, unlike previous surveys where only those aware of a local predator free group were asked the question.

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