

NZ Search and Rescue

Awareness and expectations survey

2024



Introducing Verian

Verian is the new name for Kantar Public (formerly Colmar Brunton).

Following our divestment from our former parent company, we are now an independent research and evaluation agency, providing evidence and advisory services to government and the public realm, across Aotearoa New Zealand and around the world.

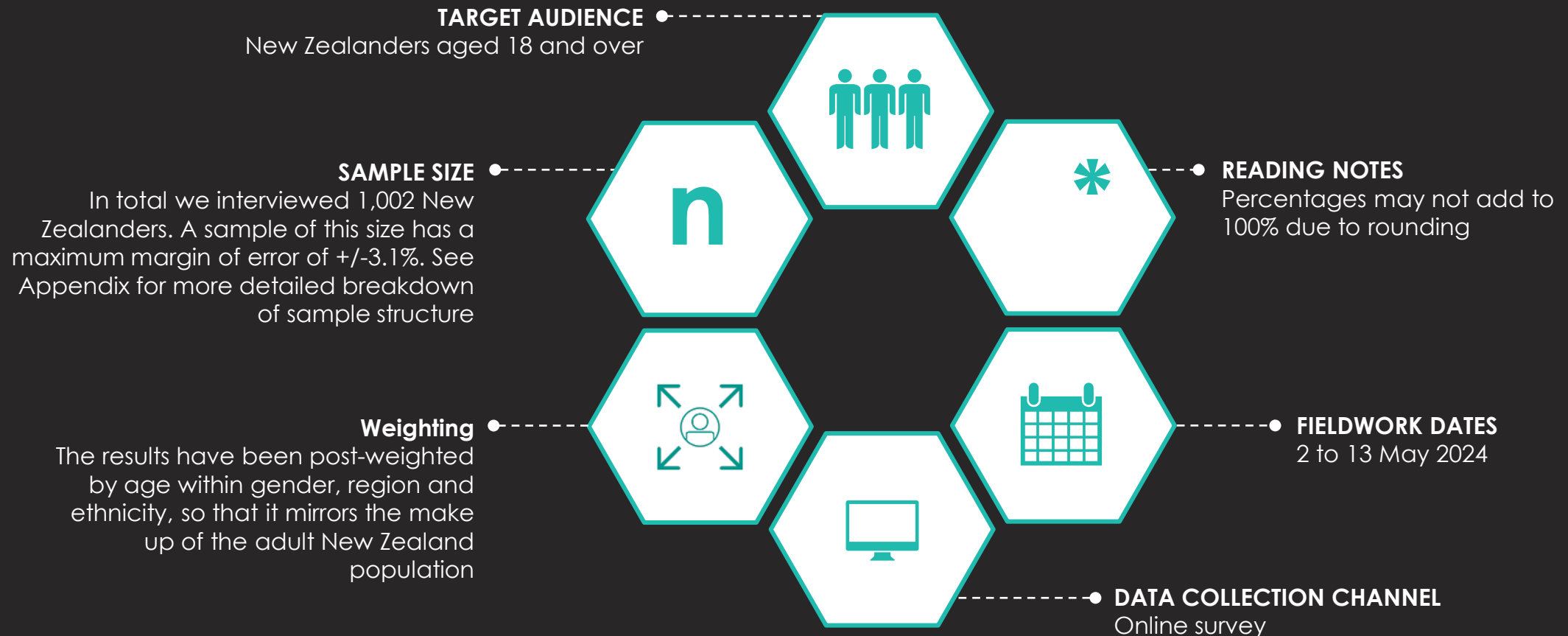
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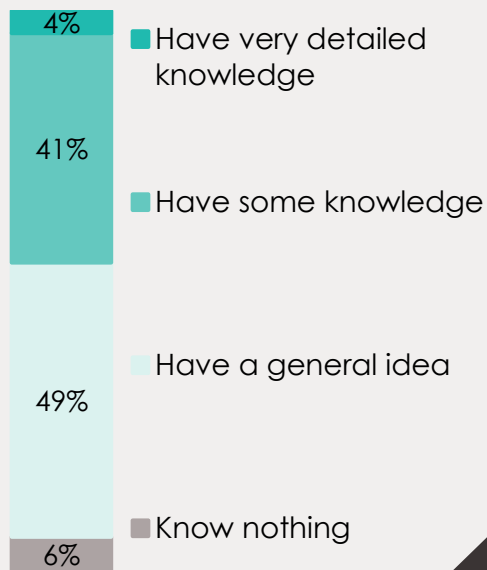
Survey methodology



Summary of findings

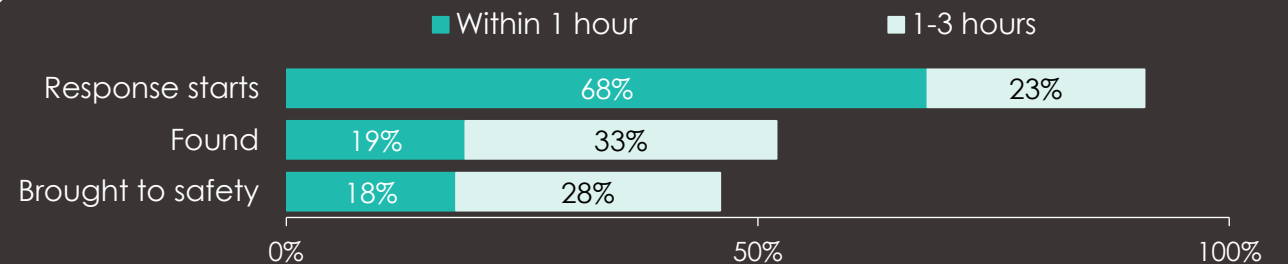
AWARENESS

Most New Zealanders have at least a general idea about search and rescue services



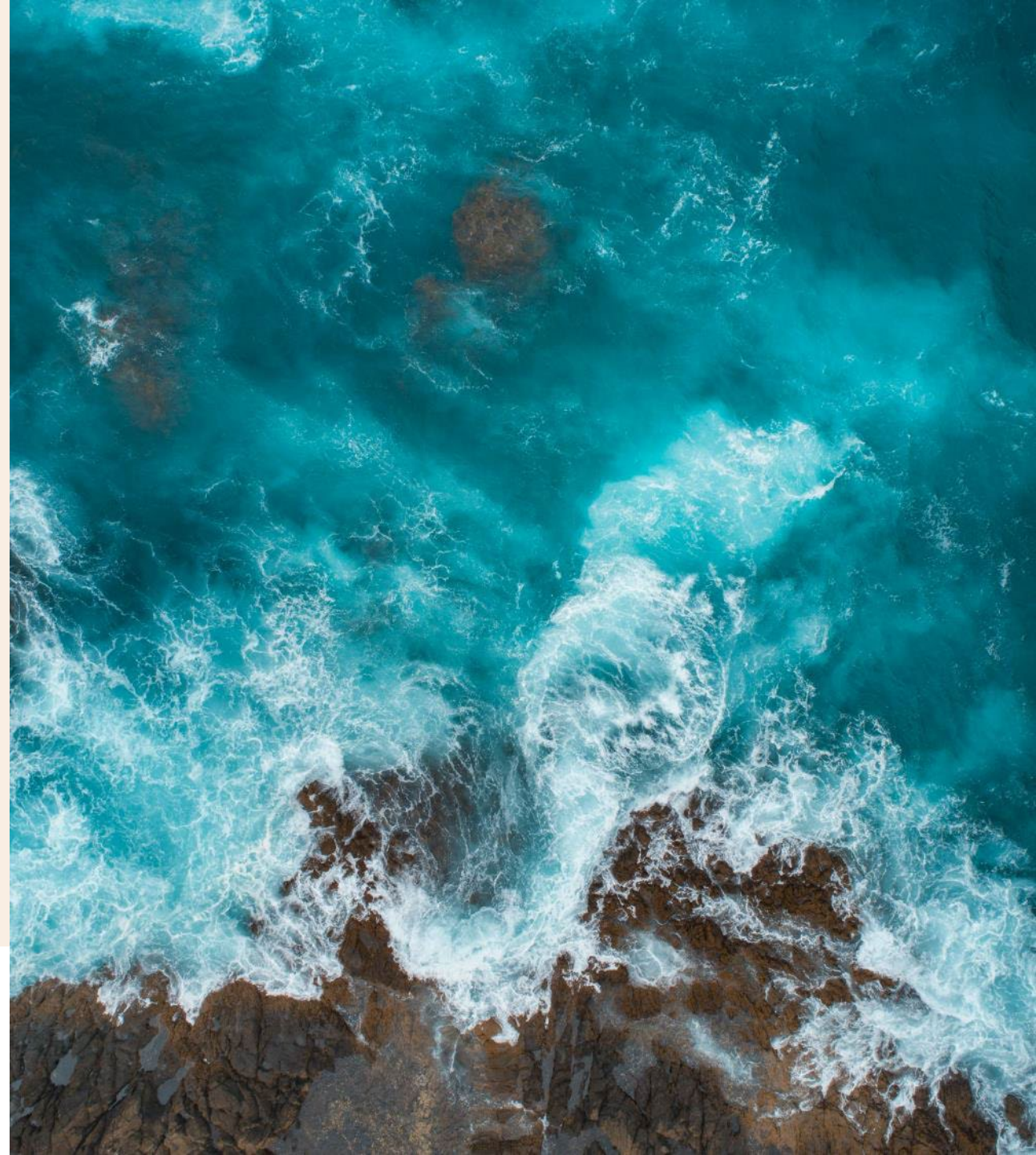
EXPECTATIONS

Two in three New Zealanders believe that, in a remote setting once the alarm's raised, a response will start within an hour. Around half believe they would be found and rescued within three hours



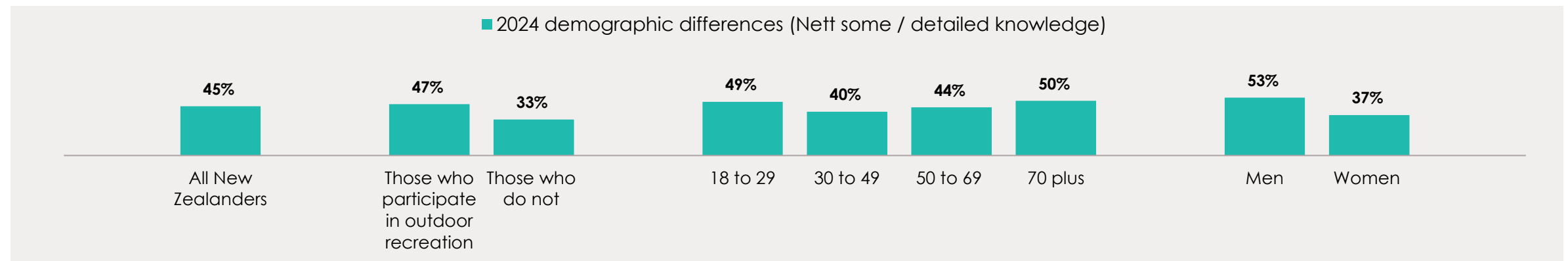
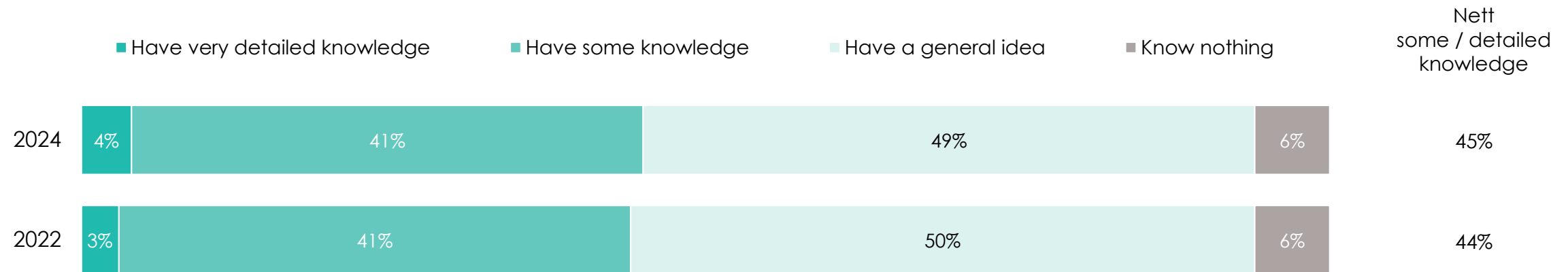
41% of recreators say they would do less outdoor recreation if search and rescue services were not able to respond within 24 hours

Awareness



Most New Zealanders have at least some knowledge of search and rescue services. Knowledge remains very consistent with 2022 findings and is relatively consistent across demographic groups (in 2024), however, those who do not participate in outdoor recreation and women do tend to have lower than average knowledge.

Knowledge of search and rescue services



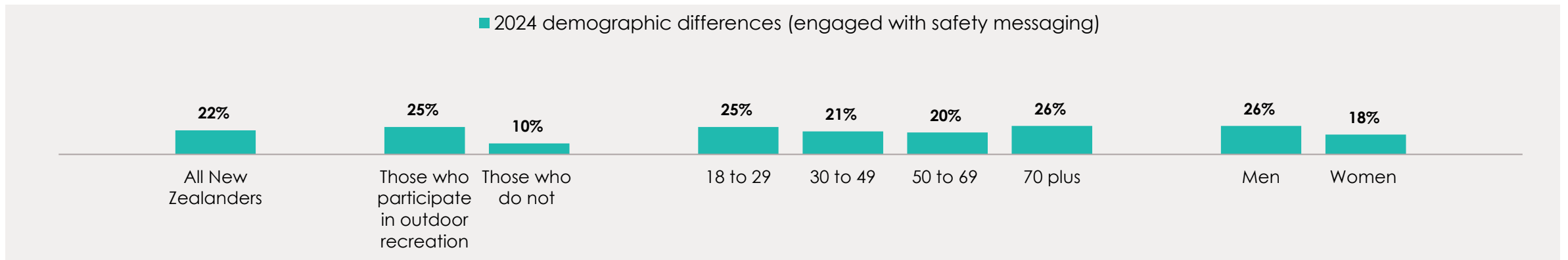
Source: KP1 – How much do you know about search and rescue services in New Zealand?

Base: All New Zealanders (2022 n=878, 2024 n=1,002), those who participate in outdoor recreation (n=810), those who do not (n=192), 18 to 29 (n=221), 30 to 49 (n=341), 50 to 69 (n=304), 70 plus (n=136), Men (n=490), Women (n=510).

Nearly a quarter of New Zealanders (22%) have seen, or searched for, safety information in relation to outdoor activities. This is a decline from the 29% seen in 2022.

Engagement with communications or information

22%
of New Zealanders have seen, or searched for,
safety information in relation to outdoor activities.
Down from 29% in 2022.

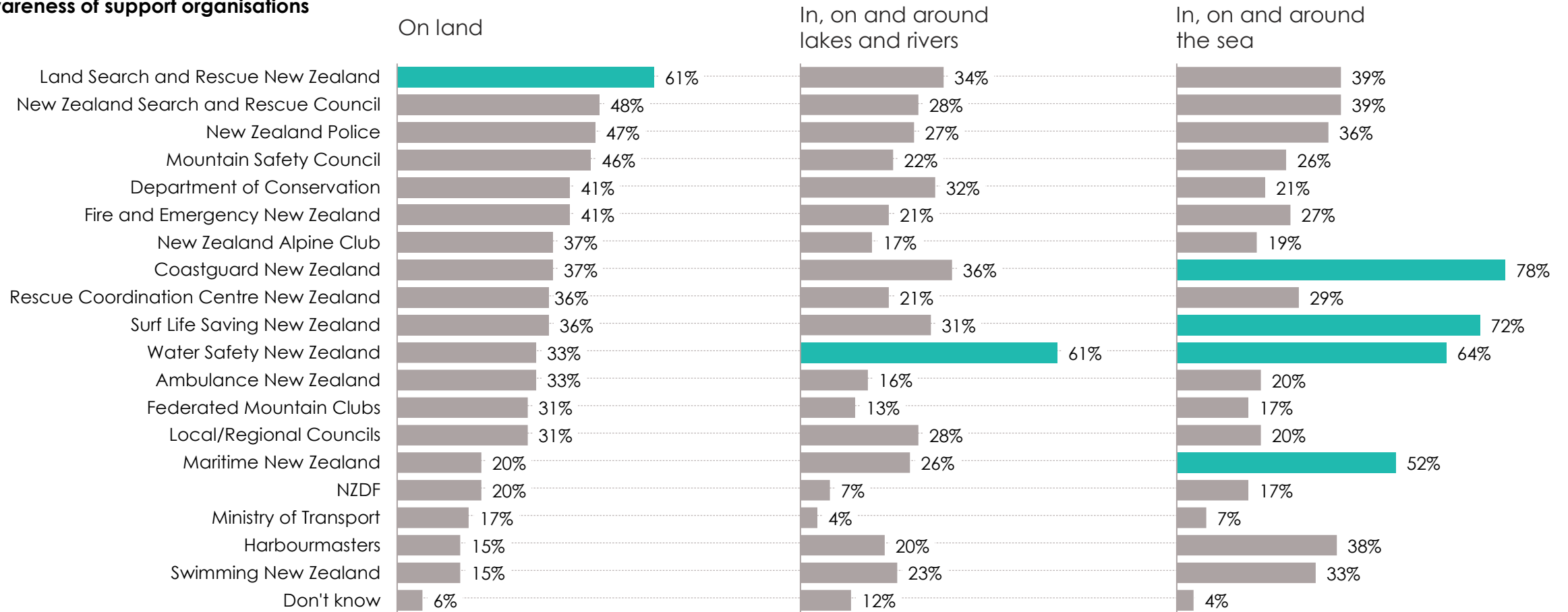


Source: P2 – In the last 12 months, have you seen any safety messaging, or tried to find safety information in relation to outdoor activities?

Base: All New Zealanders (2022 n=878, 2024 n=1,002), those who participate in outdoor recreation (n=810), those who do not (n=192), 18 to 29 (n=221), 30 to 49 (n=341), 50 to 69 (n=304), 70 plus (n=136), Men (n=490), Women (n=510).

We asked New Zealanders which organisations were responsible, across three different settings, for supporting people to stay safe when doing outdoor activities. When it comes to land-based activities, New Zealanders feel responsibility falls across many organisations with the primary one being Land Search and Rescue. In, on, or around lakes and rivers, New Zealanders generally feel it is Water Safety New Zealand's responsibility. In, on, or around the sea, New Zealanders feel the responsibility falls across Coastguard, Surf Life Saving, Water Safety, and Maritime New Zealand.

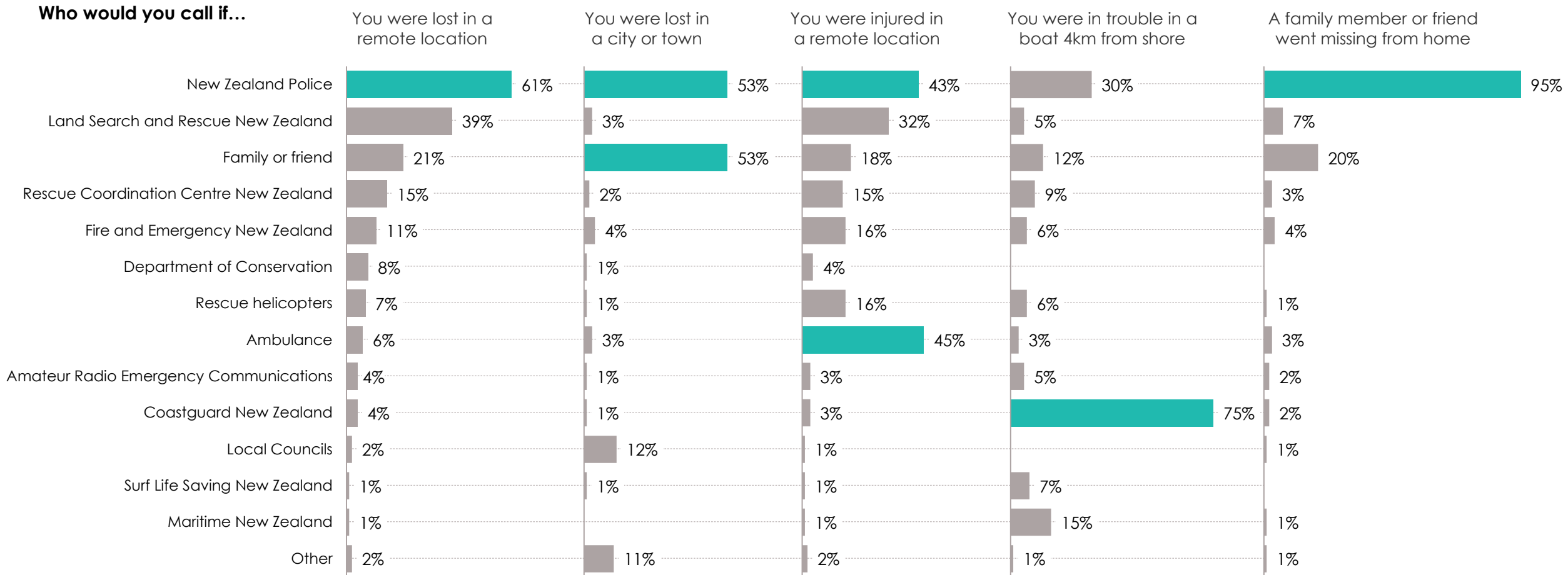
Awareness of support organisations



Source: P3 – Which of the following organisations support people to stay safe when they're doing outdoor activities...

Base: All New Zealanders (each respondent was asked one of the three questions n≈333).

In terms of who New Zealanders would call if they (or others) were lost or injured, Police tend to be top of mind across most settings. The exception being boating, in this instance most New Zealanders say they call the Coastguard.



Source: E3 – Assuming you had a phone and coverage, who would you call if...

Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,002).

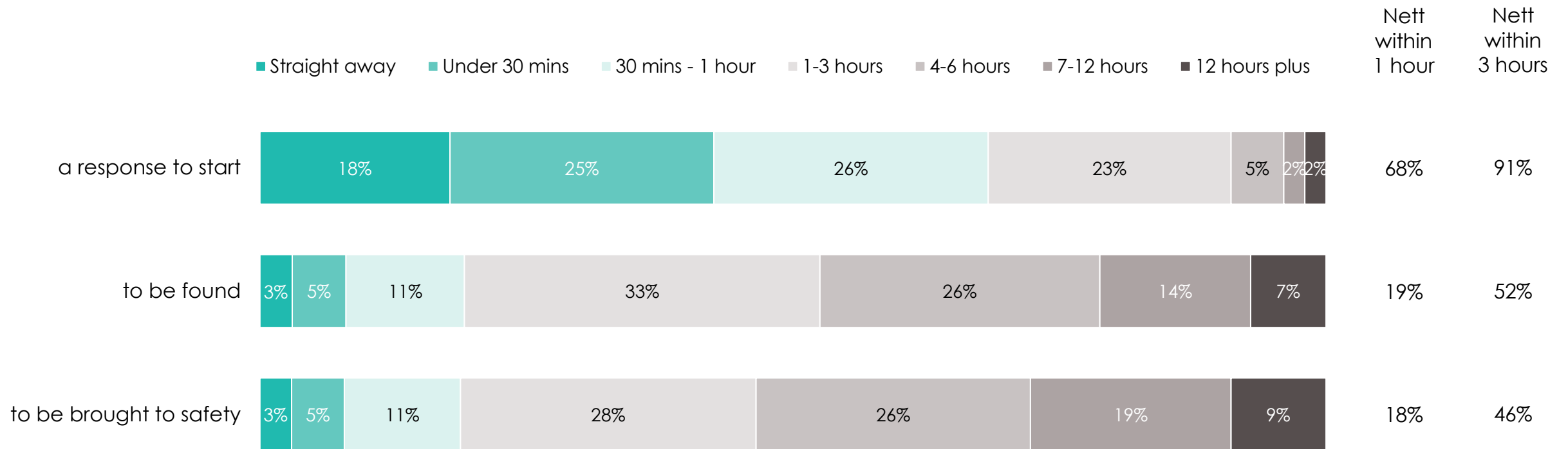
Note: NZDF, Civil Defence, and Don't know are not shown due to low findings (0% to 3% across all categories).

Expectations



Two thirds of New Zealanders expect that, in a remote setting once the alarm had been raised, a response would start within an hour. Around half expect that they would be found and rescued within three hours.

If you were in a remote location, how long after the alarm was raised would you expect...

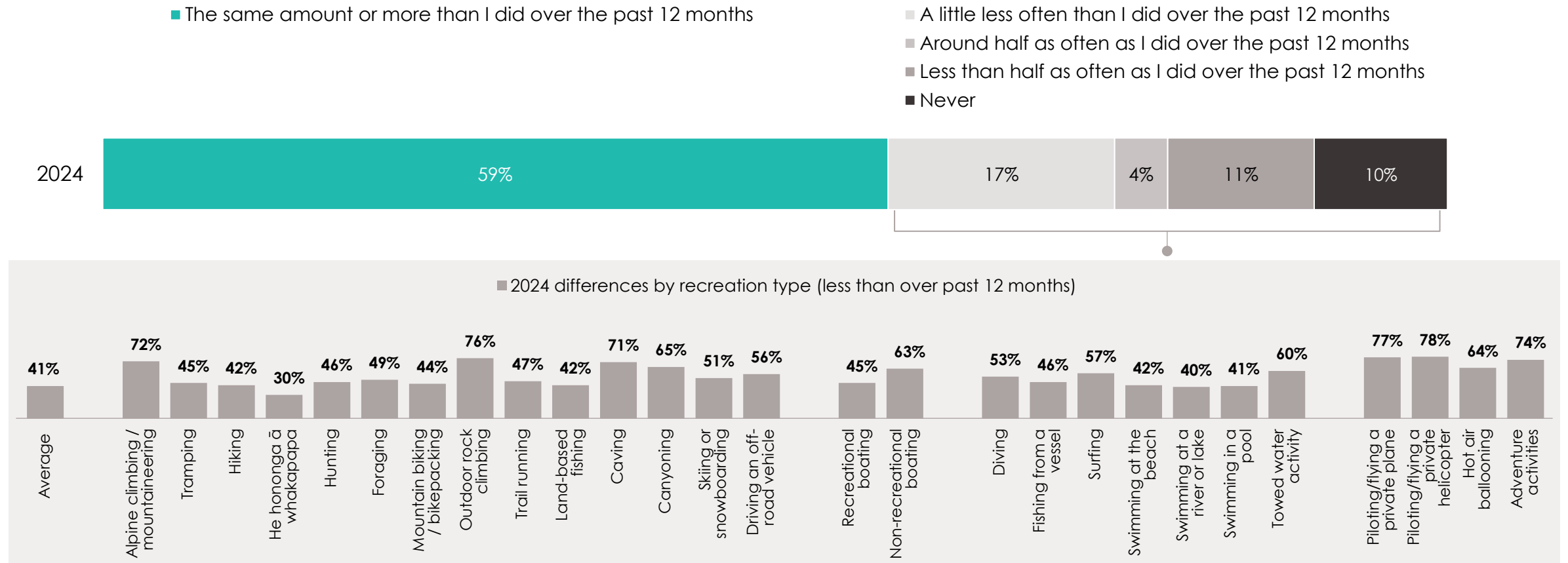


Source: E2 – If you were in a remote location, how long after the alarm was raised would you expect...

Base: All New Zealanders (2024 n=1,002).

Forty one percent of recreators say they would do less outdoor recreation if search and rescue services were not able to respond within 24 hours. This differs based on activity type, those who engage in activities with a higher perceived risk tend to be more likely than average to say they would reduce the amount of outdoor recreation they would do.

Estimated change in activity participation with reduced search and rescue services

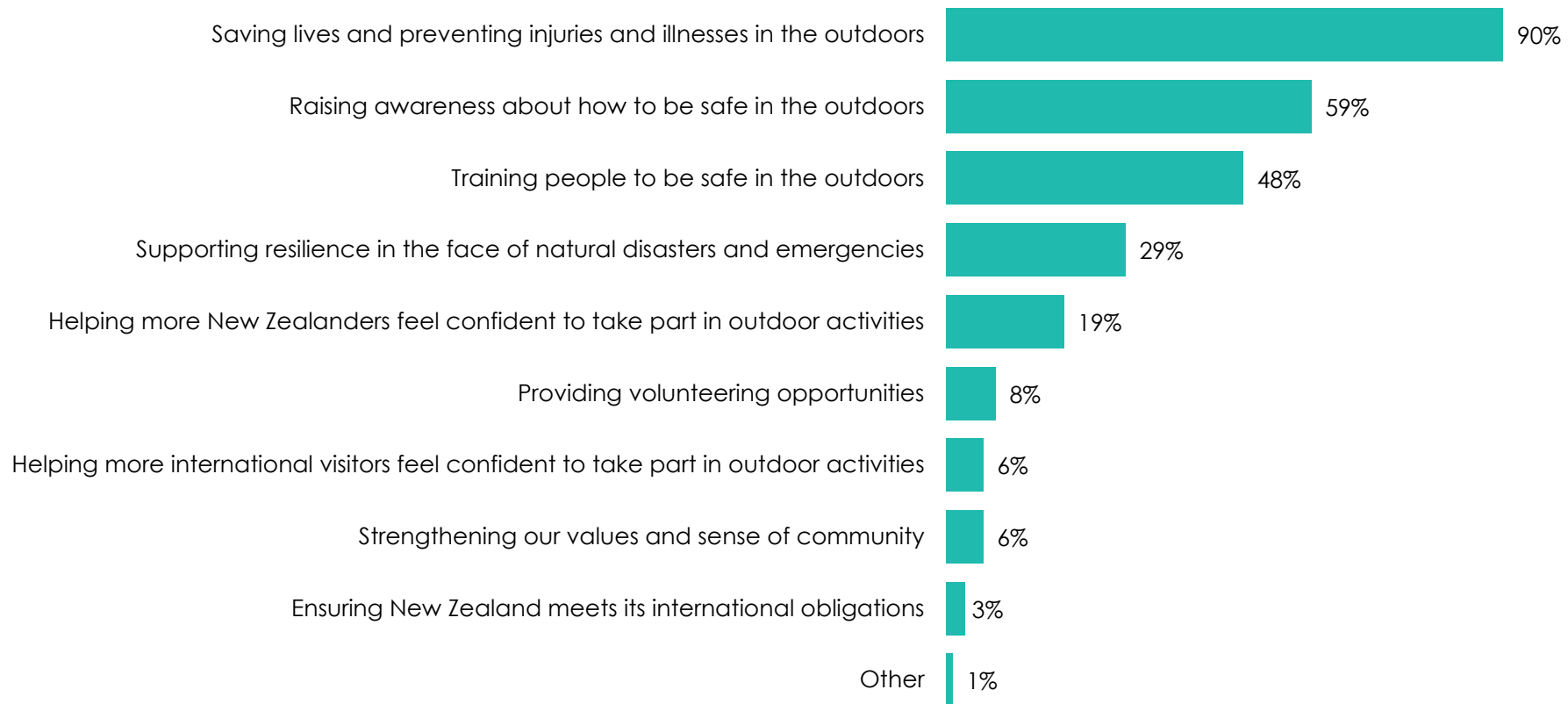


Source: E8 – Imagine if search and rescues services were not able to respond within 24 hours, how often would you do [ACTIVITY]?

Base: All New Zealanders who engage in outdoor recreational activities (2024 n=810), individual activities (n=25 to 581).

When asked about the perceived benefits of search and rescue services, New Zealanders primary focused on their role in saving lives and preventing injuries and illnesses is the outdoors. Around half of New Zealanders also feel search and rescue services have an important place in raising awareness of safe practices, as well as training people to be safe, in the outdoors.

Benefits of search and rescue services

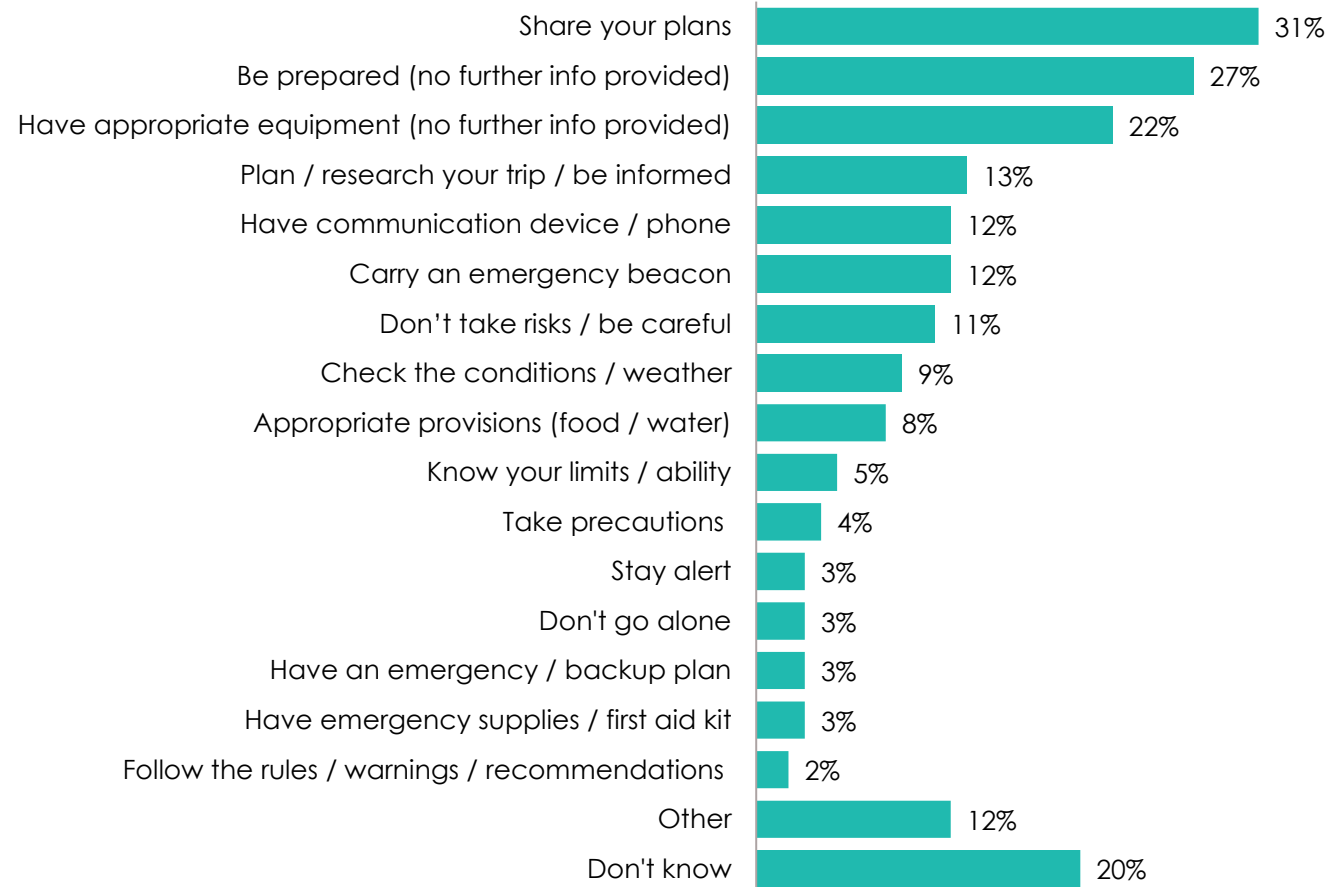


Outdoor safety code



When it comes to personal responsibility, New Zealanders are most aware that they should share their plans with others, be prepared, and have appropriate equipment. One in five said they didn't know what their personal responsibilities were.

Personal responsibilities

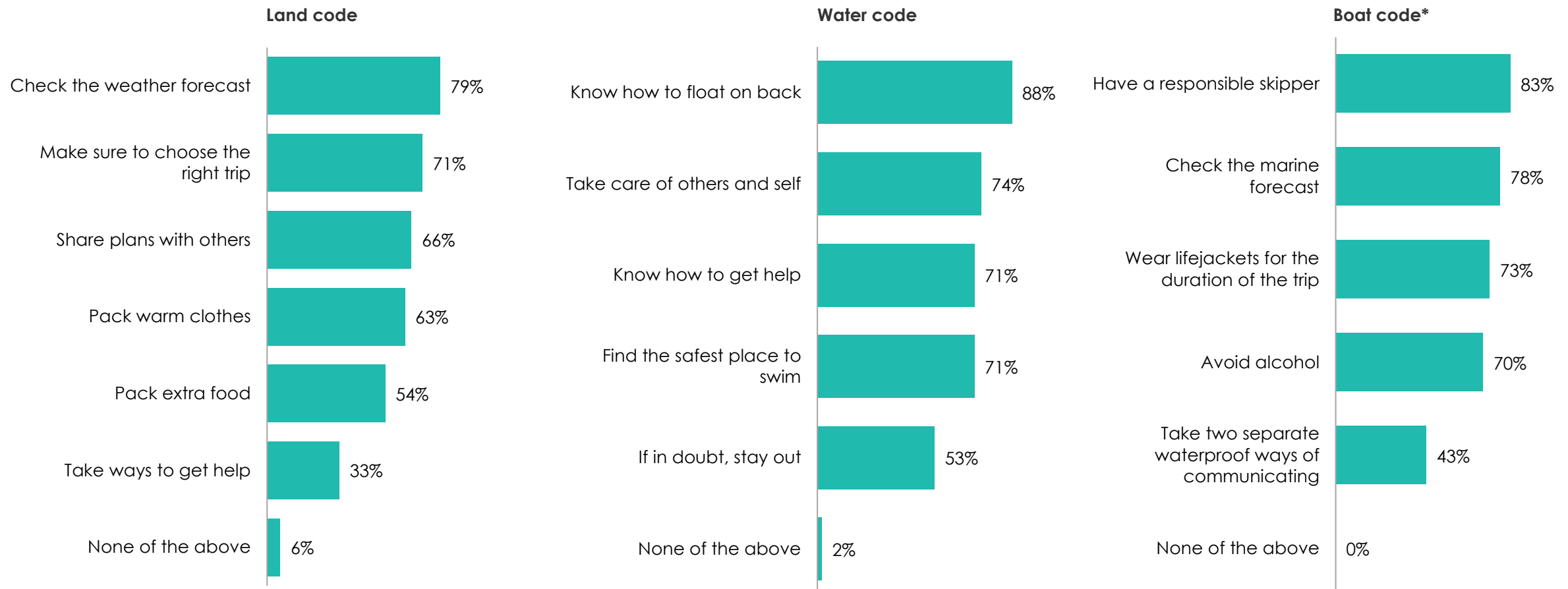


Source: P1 - What are your responsibilities to prevent/minimise you requiring search and rescue services?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,002).

However, when prompted with the applicable outdoor safety code for their most recent activity, most recreators say they were adhering to most aspects of their respective codes.

Code adherence



Source: CODE1, 2, 3 – The last time you went [ACTIVITY] did you...

Base: All New Zealanders who have participated within each category in the last year (Land n=365, Water n=411, Boat n=23*).

Note: * Caution small base size, results are indicative only.

A third of recreators say they have received practical lessons or advice to help them stay safe while recreating. Swimming lessons were by far the most frequently mentioned.

36%

of outdoor recreators have received practical lessons or advice. These include...



Source: TRAIN - Of the activities you have indicated, have you received any practical lessons or advice to help you stay safe during the activity – for example: swimming lessons, diving training, skipper training, flight training, river crossing course, navigation course?

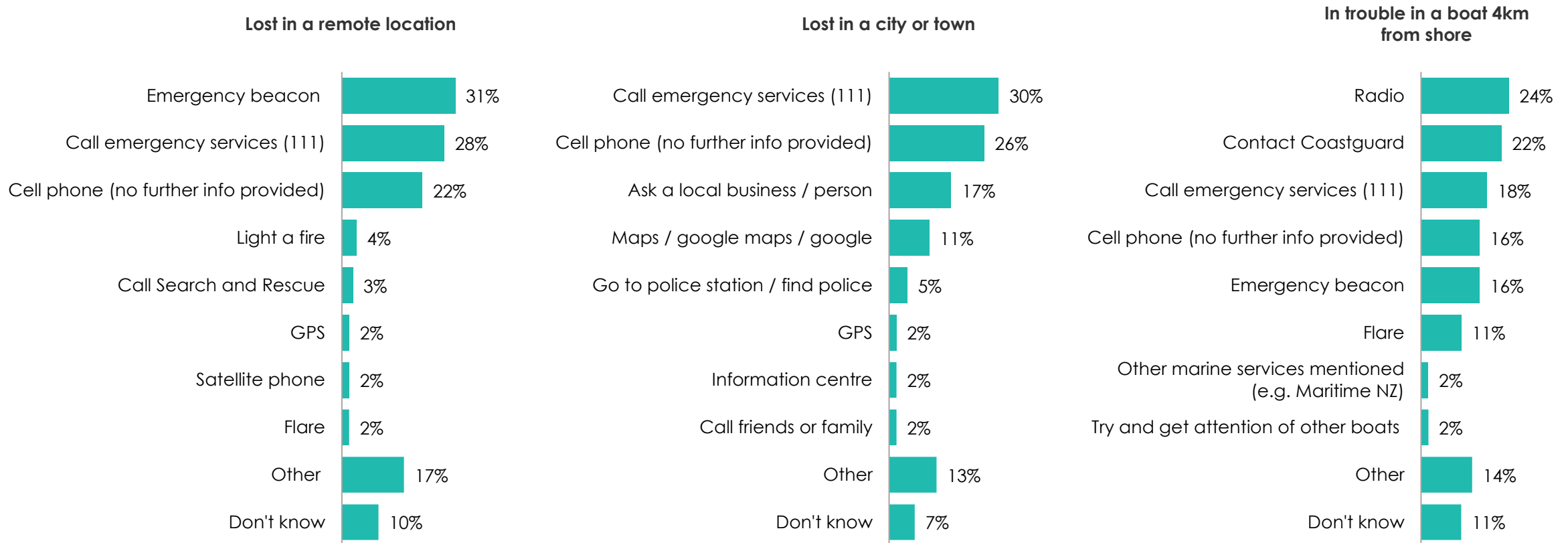
Base: All New Zealanders who engage in outdoor recreational activities (2024 n=810).

Distress beacons



We asked New Zealanders how they would seek help from search and rescue services in differing locations. When in a remote location a third of New Zealanders say they would use a beacon and a quarter say they would call emergency services. When in a city or town a third of New Zealanders say they would call emergency services and a quarter say they would rely on their cell phone. When in trouble in a boat 4km from shore, a quarter of New Zealanders say they would use a radio and a similar proportions say they would call the coastguard.

How would you seek help from search and rescue services if you were...

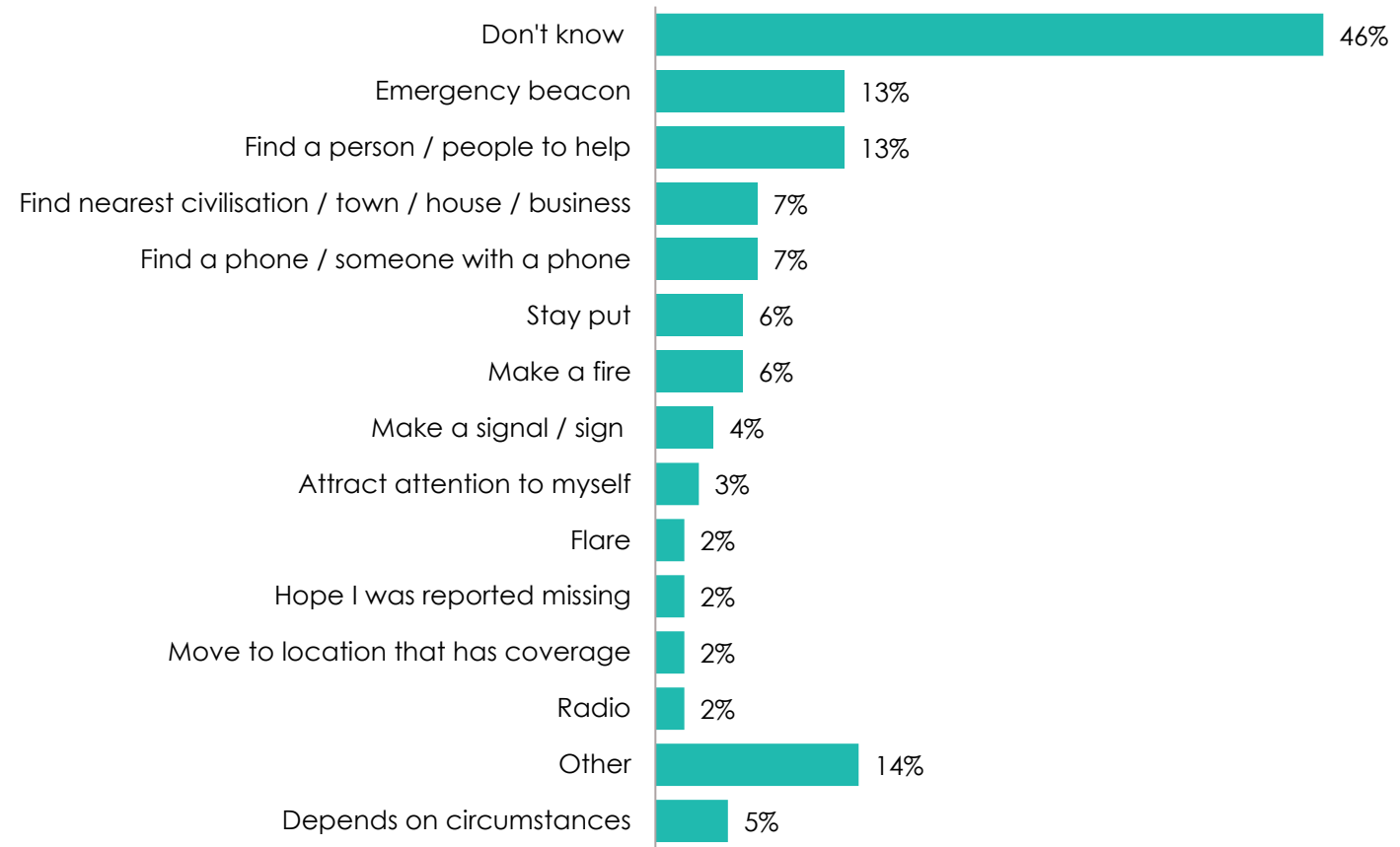


Source: E1 - How would you seek help from search and rescue services if...

Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,002).

Respondents were then asked what they would do if they needed to get help from emergency services but were unable to use their cell phone. In this instance nearly half of New Zealanders said they wouldn't know what to do. Thirteen percent said they would use an emergency beacon and a further thirteen percent said they would attempt to seek help from other people.

What would you do if you needed to get help from emergency services and you didn't have a cell phone or your cell phone was out of coverage/cell reception or battery?



Source: E6 - What would you do if you needed to get help from emergency services and you didn't have a cell phone or your cell phone was out of coverage/cell reception or battery?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,002).

Most New Zealanders say they know what a distress beacon is. Here are a few examples of descriptions respondents provided...

75%
of New Zealanders feel they know what a distress beacon is

“

“EPRB - only for use if you get in trouble.”

“It's a device you have with you and if you are lost or injured you activate the alarm so emergency services can find you.”

“Can provide accurate location for emergency services to pinpoint your location.”

“A device that emits a distress signal with coordinates once activated to local authorities.”

“A device that will put out a signal when someone activates it when in trouble, presumably GPS capable.”

“small unit that can be carried on your person and can be activated when required.”

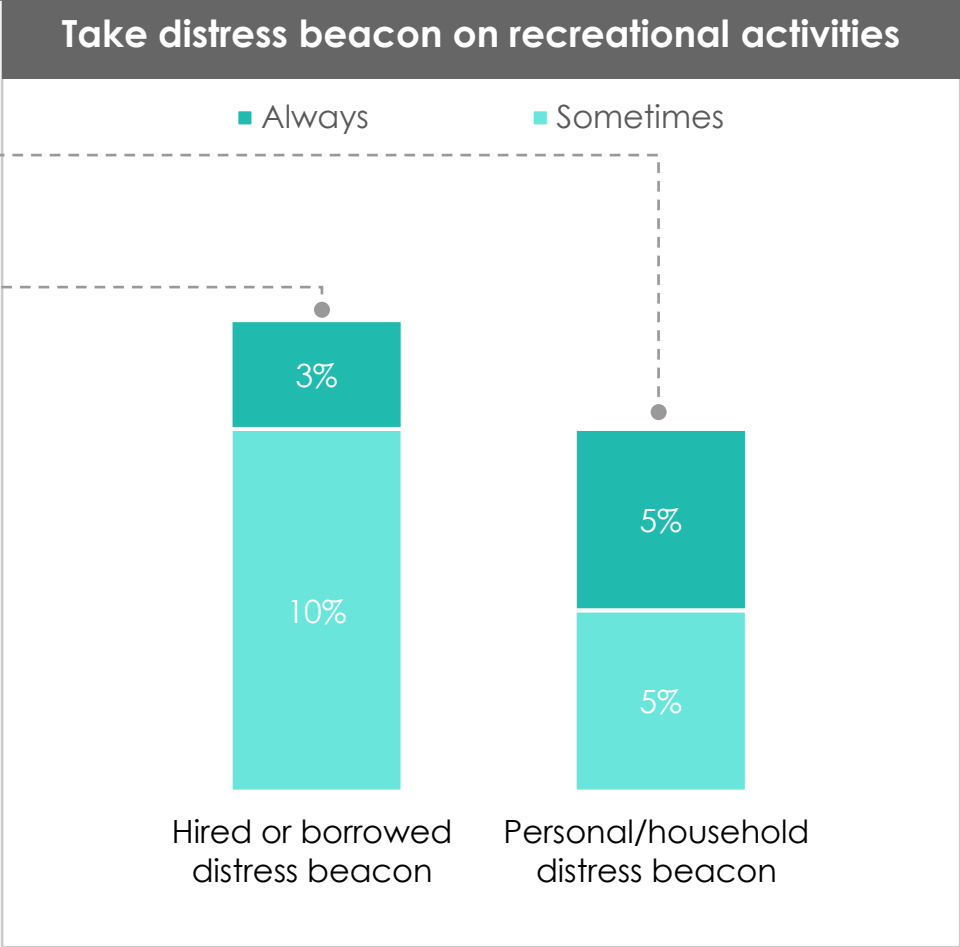
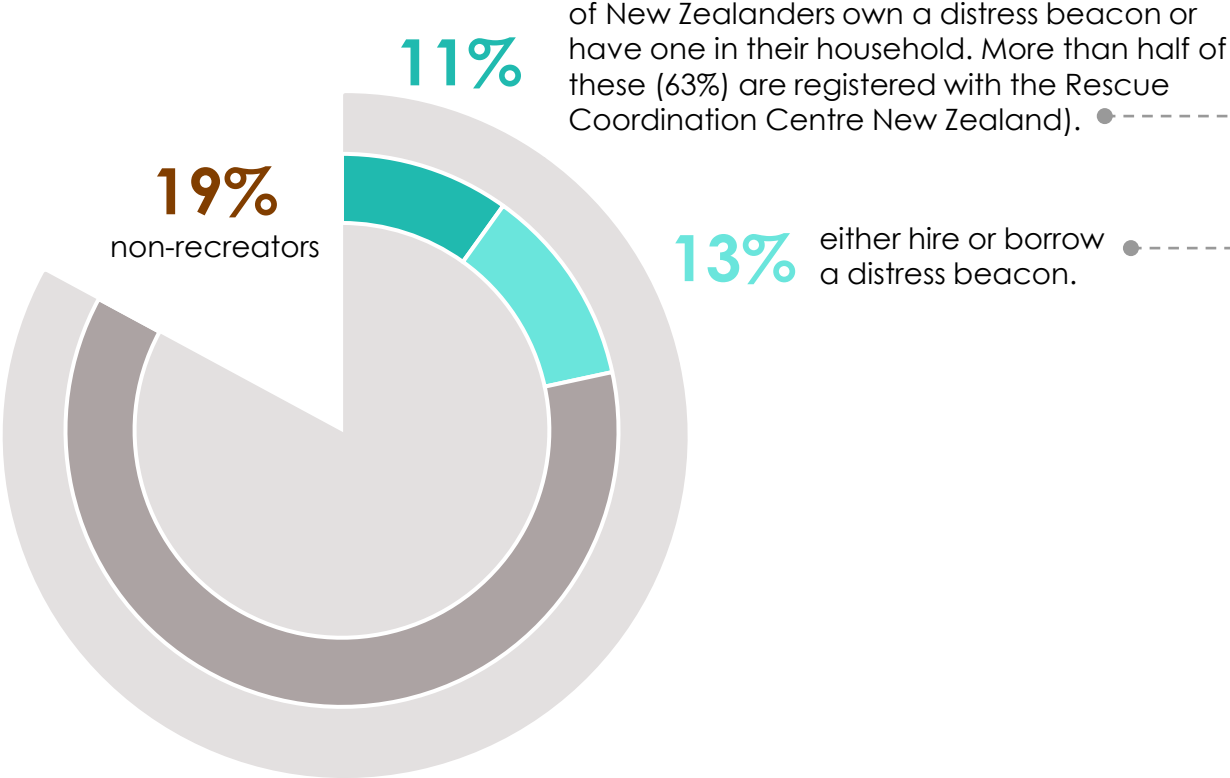
“Something you can deploy to inform rescue services you need assistance. The beacon should relay GPS data about where you are.”



Source: B1 - Do you know what a distress beacon is? B2 - Please describe in your own words what [you think] a distress beacon is [or might do].

Base: All New Zealanders (n=1,002).

Eleven percent of New Zealanders say they, or someone in their household, own a distress beacon. A further thirteen percent say they hire or borrow one when necessary.



We asked recreators their reasoning behind always / sometimes / never taking a distress beacon with them when undertaking outdoor activities. Here are a few examples of what they had to say....

Always take a distress beacon

"Because it's incredibly useful and save lives."

"In case my phone stops working or I'm in a dead zone and need urgent assistance."

"In case of emergency. Better to be prepared for anything."

"For peace of mind and use in the event of an emergency."

"It is an important part of personal responsibility. You can take lots of precautions, but sometimes stuff happens outside your control."

"I have it as part of my go to gear I take when I go out, for peace of mind for me and my family."

"It is being responsible, and a valuable tool should I need rescuing."

Sometimes take a distress beacon

"Some of my activities are low risk or near established populated areas."

"Having spent half my life in the NZ hills at the time we never really thought about it."

"most my outdoor activities are in places with good cell phone coverage and also well utilised area where you frequently encounter other groups."

"Take it when available to be borrowed or if we plan on doing something. If it's a spontaneous thing we don't have it on us."

"Battery is flat, expensive for new battery."

"It depends on where I am going, weather reports and what I am doing."

"Depends on locations I am going to and for how long and what existing phone coverage is at that location."

Never take a distress beacon

"I engage in outdoor activities but none where I would require one."

"Too expensive. Use proper planning and prep."

"Never even thought of it."

"I'm generally with others when walking and the group uses radios to communicate and ensure that everyone stays together."

"I am unsure what they are and where you would get one."

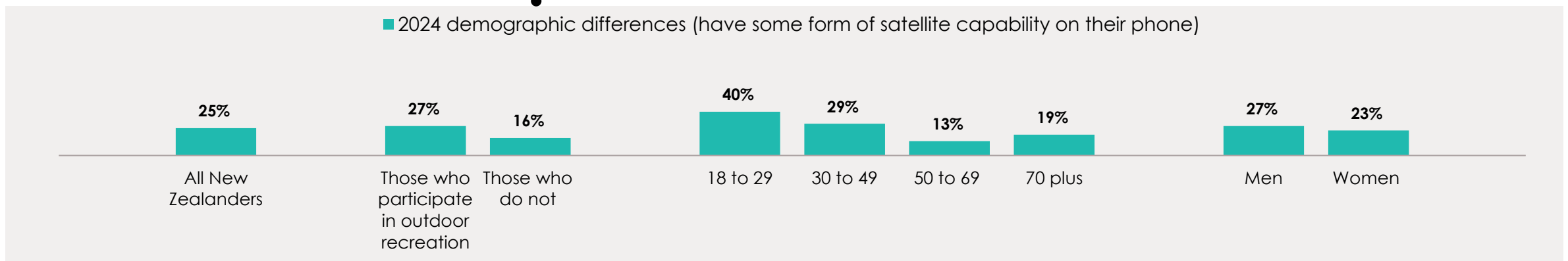
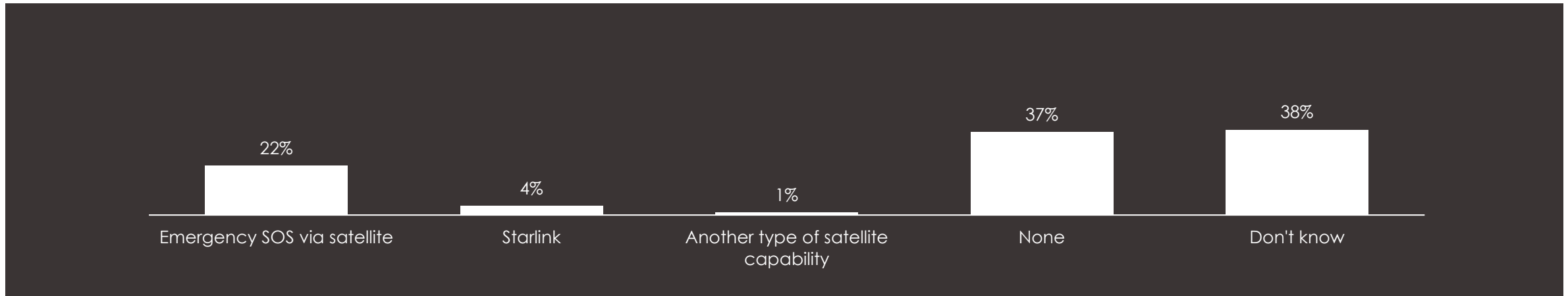
"Never really thought about it but should have one on the boat."

"Seldom go that far into the wilderness. I have maps and a good sense of direction."

"Have never thought of it to be honest. Not enough awareness around these things."

At this early stage of adoption, most New Zealanders are unclear whether they have satellite capability on their phone or not.

Prevalence of cellphone satellite capability



Source: E7 – Does your cell phone have any of the following...

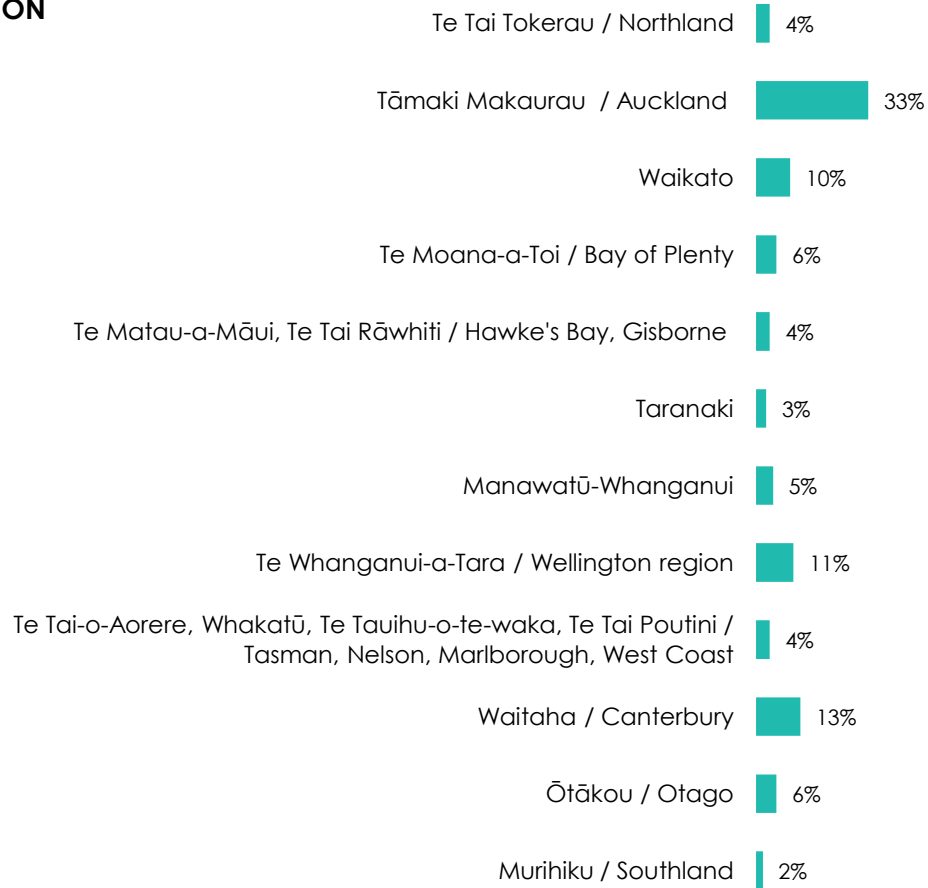
Base: All New Zealanders (2024 n=1,002).

Appendix



Sample demographic information

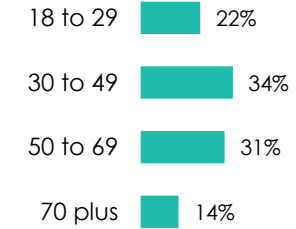
REGION



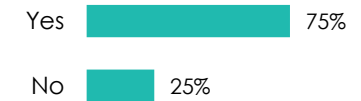
GENDER



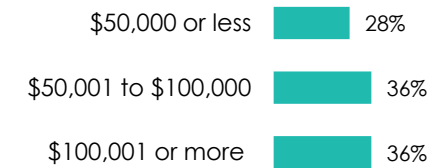
AGE



BORN IN NZ

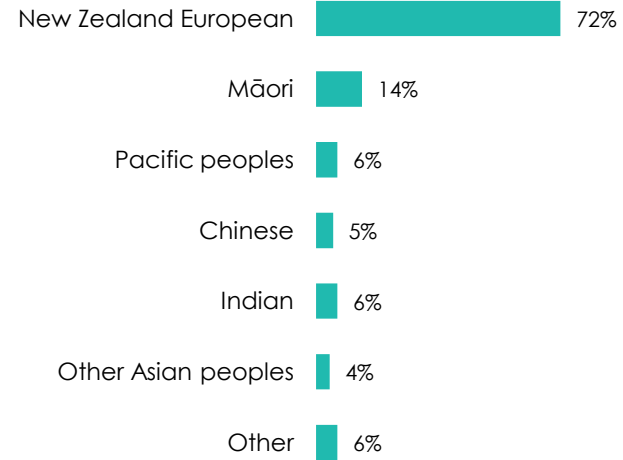


HOUSEHOLD INCOME

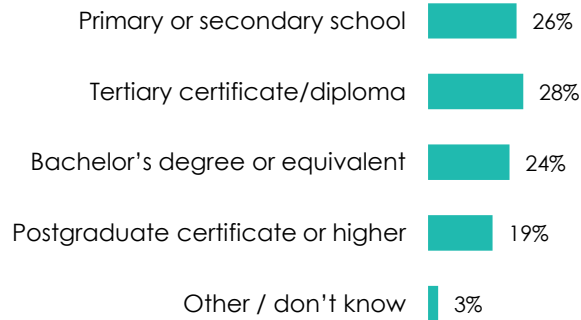


Sample demographic information

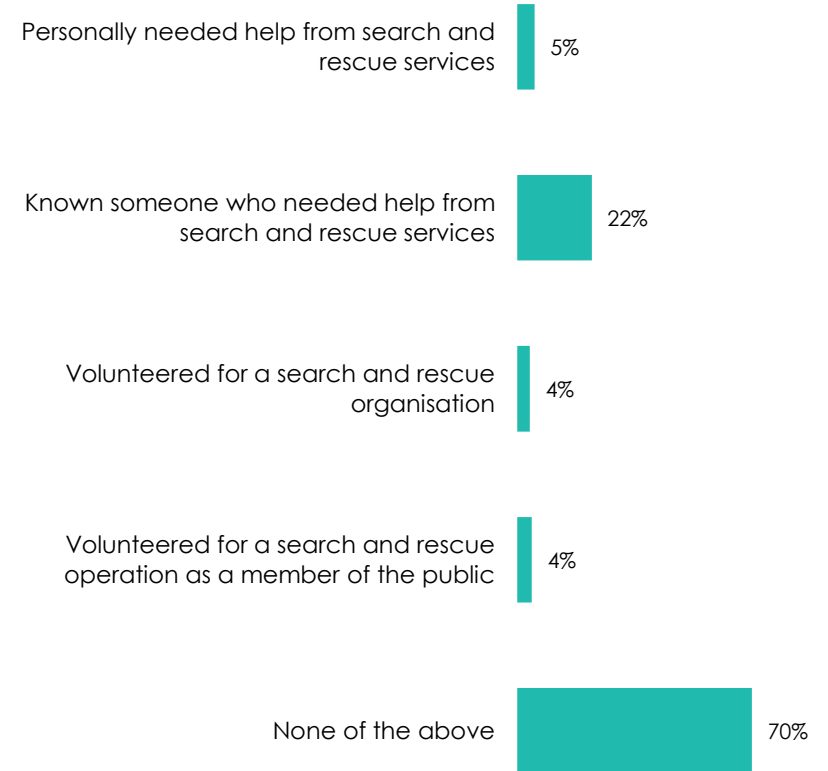
ETHNICITY



EDUCATION

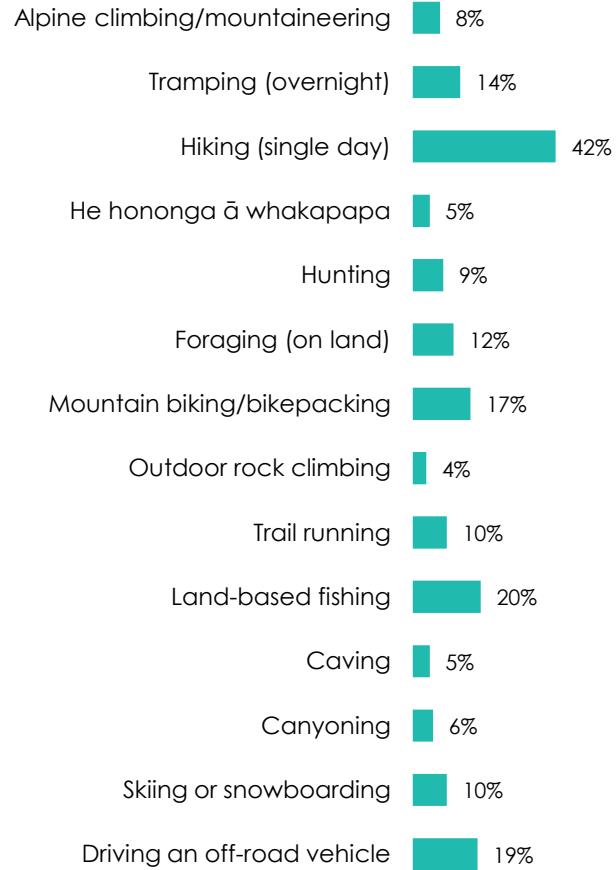


SAR INTERACTIONS

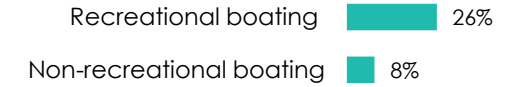


Sample recreational activity participation

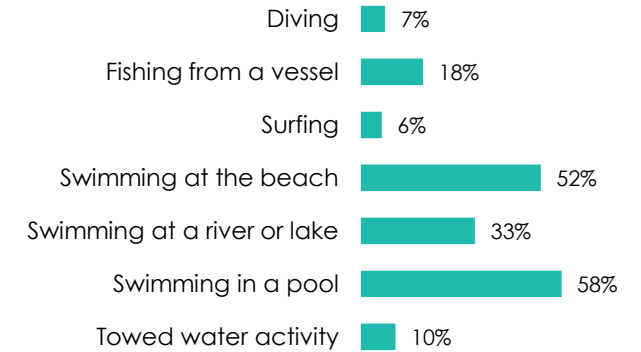
LAND



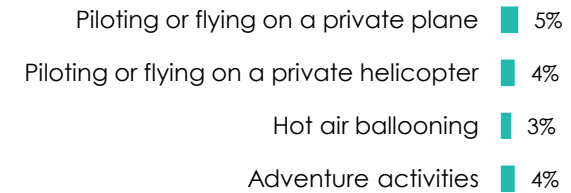
BOAT



WATER



AIR



NONE RECREATORS



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