

Policy Brief

Satisfaction with the condition of local waterways in Aotearoa New Zealand

Freshwater bodies are closely tied to the wellbeing of New Zealanders. But the quality of freshwater is one of the most serious environmental issues the country faces and has been consistently rated as bad/poor in the last decades [see 1-3].

In 2018, the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Survey (NZAVS) asked 47,948 adult New Zealanders to rate their level of satisfaction with the quality and health of waterways in their region.

Participants' average level of satisfaction was 4.8 out of 10. This indicates that most New Zealanders are, on average, dissatisfied with the quality and health of local waterways.

But participants' answers were spread across the response options, as shown in Figure 1.

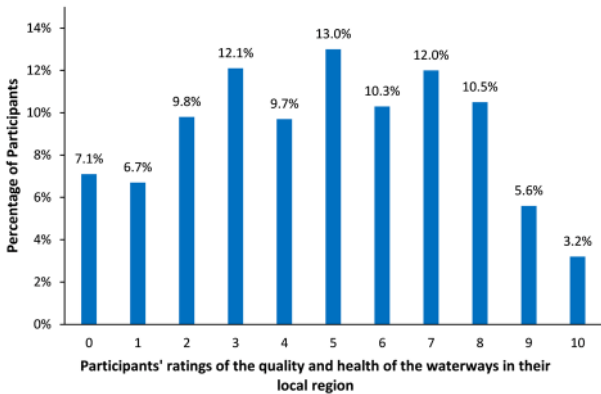


Figure 1. New Zealanders' level of satisfaction with local waterways for each response option.

Are New Zealanders satisfied with the quality and health of waterways?

The NZAVS asked people about their level of satisfaction using the question:

Please rate your level of satisfaction with the quality and health of the waterways in your local region.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Completely Dissatisfied			Somewhat Dissatisfied				Completely Satisfied			

We grouped participants who responded 0 to 3 as "Dissatisfied", those who responded 4 to 6 as "Neutral", and those who responded 7 to 10 as "Satisfied". Figure 2 shows that New Zealanders were spread across these three groupings in each region.

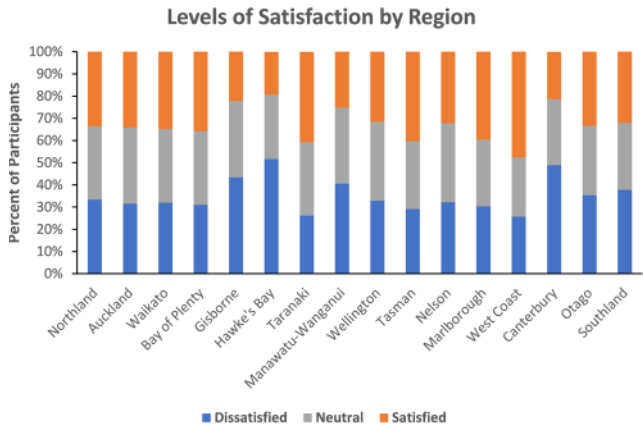


Figure 2. Grouping New Zealanders based on their level of satisfaction with the quality and health of local waterways across regions of Aotearoa New Zealand.

“Overall levels indicate New Zealanders are, on average, dissatisfied with the quality and health of local waterways.”

In fact, there were marked variations in satisfaction with the quality and health of waterways across New Zealand regions. As shown in Figure 3, satisfaction levels varied from the *highest dissatisfaction* in Hawkes Bay to the *highest satisfaction* in the West Coast.

How does level of satisfaction differ by demographic and psychological factors?

There was a very small difference between urban and rural populations in level of satisfaction, with participants from urban areas being more dissatisfied with the quality and health of waterways (M = 4.72, SD = 2.71) than those from rural areas (M = 5.05, SD = 2.84).

We also document variability in levels of satisfaction across other socio-demographic and psychological factors.

When considering all variables together, the strongest predictors of level of satisfaction were age, ethnicity, conservative political orientation and social dominance orientation (i.e., individuals' support for social hierarchy).

Younger participants and those self-identified as Māori expressed a higher level of *dissatisfaction* with the quality and health of waterways in their local region, while participants with greater levels of political conservatism and social dominance expressed a higher level of *satisfaction*.

Summary

- In 2018, adult New Zealanders rated their level of satisfaction with the quality and health of waterways in their local region
- The average satisfaction level (4.8 out of 10) indicates New Zealanders are overall dissatisfied with the quality and health of local waterways
- Satisfaction levels varied across regions, being lowest in Hawkes Bay and highest in the West Coast
- Urban New Zealanders are slightly less satisfied with the quality and health of local waterways than rural New Zealanders
- Younger and Māori participants are less satisfied while participants upholding conservative and social dominance orientations are more satisfied with the quality and health of local waterways

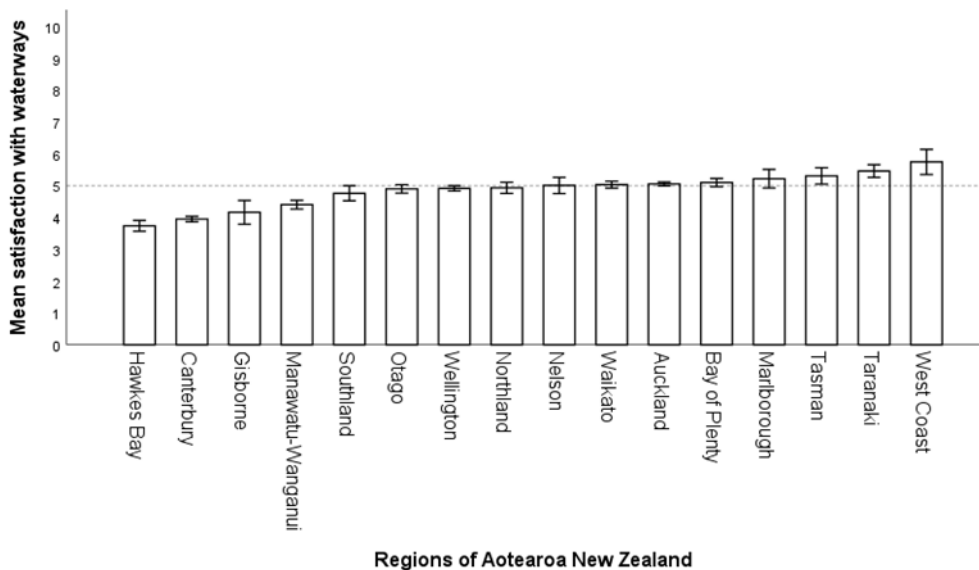


Figure 3. Mean satisfaction with the quality and health of local waterways by region. Note. Line represents midpoint of satisfaction scale. Error bars represent 99% confidence interval.

References

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3. Colmar Brunton. (2018). Environmental Attitudes Baseline. Retrieved from <https://environment.govt.nz/facts-and-science/science-and-data/understanding-new-zealanders-attitudes-to-the-environment/>

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