

PERCEPTIONS OF ASIA

New Zealanders'
Perceptions of Asia
and Asian Peoples
June 2026

 Asia New Zealand
Foundation
Te Whītau Tūhono

KIA ORA WELCOME
YOUKOSO EOSEO OSEYO
SELAMAT DATANG XIN CHÀO
MALIGAYANG PAGDATING
SWAGAT HUĀNYÍNG



INTRODUCTION	Comment from the Chief Executive	3
	Executive summary	4
	Our approach	6

PART 1: SETTING THE SCENE	Importance of Asia to New Zealand's future	11
	What do New Zealanders know about Asia?	23
	Connections to Asia	31
	Spotlight: Sports in Asia	36

PART 2: CURRENT TRENDS	New Zealand's relationships in Asia	43
	Spotlight: Travel to Asia	54
	Defence and security in the region	61

PART 3: LOOKING FORWARD	How is Asia expected to impact New Zealand in the decades ahead?	71
	How does media and entertainment consumption influence perceptions of Asia?	79
	Spotlight: Entertainment from Asia	84

APPENDICES	Background, methodology and sample profiles	92
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Comment from the Chief Executive

The 29th *New Zealanders' Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples* report is published in a world where instability is no longer a moment in time, but the new normal.

Conflict, geopolitical competition and uncertainty have reshaped international relations, increasing the pressures on smaller and middle-sized powers. At the same time, New Zealand is becoming more diverse, more internationally connected, and more engaged with Asia in everyday life. Against this backdrop, New Zealanders' views of Asia are becoming both more considered and more consequential.

When we started surveying in the 1990s, Asia was often perceived as distant and, at times, uncertain. In 2026, 81 percent of New Zealanders say it is important for New Zealand to develop social, political and economic ties with the countries and peoples of Asia. Asia is now understood as central to New Zealand's place in the world. At the same time, this growing recognition is accompanied by a more cautious assessment of the major powers shaping the region.

While the United States and China remain critical actors, neither commands strong confidence as a stabilising force. Instead, New Zealanders are placing greater weight on the role of regional middle powers. Japan's rise to become New Zealand's most trusted partner after Australia, overtaking the United Kingdom for the first time, is a notable signal of this recalibration. So too is the growing appreciation of countries such as Singapore, which is seen as closely aligned with New Zealand in its international outlook and engagement.

Travel, cultural exchange, sports, and the global reach of Asia-related media, entertainment and popular culture have deepened and enriched our people-to-people relations. Once seen through the lens of business or diplomacy, Asia is now an increasingly embedded part of New Zealand's social fabric. At the same time, New Zealand is increasingly seen by others in Asia as an integral part of the region.



This report reveals that public attitudes are aligning more closely with the realities of New Zealand's economic exposure, demographic change and strategic environment. There is a growing recognition that prosperity, resilience and security will depend on the depth and quality of our relationships across Asia – not only with major powers, but across a diverse and dynamic region.

Taken together, our 2026 results reflect a maturing public understanding of New Zealand's place in the world. There is clear recognition that Asia is central to our future, and that engaging effectively in a more contested and unpredictable region will require a higher level of capability and coordination with trusted partners in Asia. Success will depend on being informed, adaptable and strategically agile. Encouragingly, New Zealand's diversity and international connections position us well to meet this challenge.

Suzannah Jessep

Chief Executive

Asia New Zealand Foundation Te Whītau Tūhono

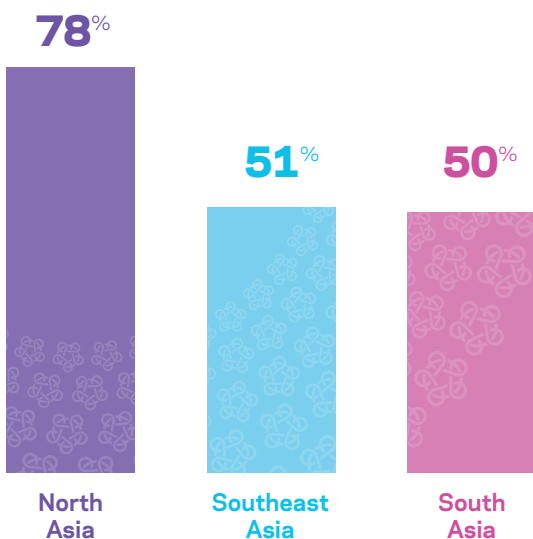
Executive summary

New Zealanders' relationships in Asia are deepening and evolving, reflecting shifts in global dynamics and changing domestic attitudes.

This year's findings show that Asia's importance to New Zealand's future continues to grow across political, economic, social and cultural dimensions. A vast majority of New Zealanders see developing ties with Asia as important, and two thirds believe that New Zealand should continue to invest energy and resources into these partnerships. Asia continues to stand firmly as the second most important world region to New Zealand - still behind Australia, but increasingly central to how New Zealanders see their country's future.

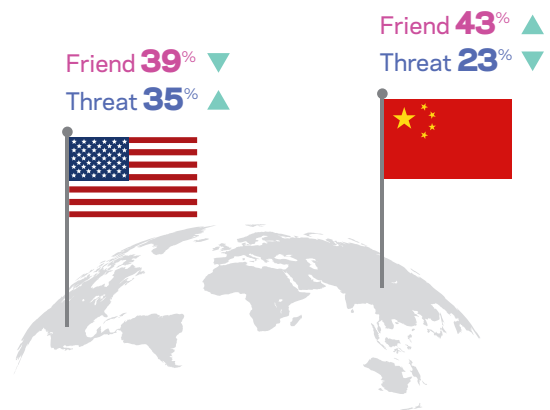
While North Asia remains the region viewed as most critical, South Asia has risen in perceived importance, now equal to Southeast Asia. Trade and economic factors remain the leading reasons New Zealanders view Asian countries as significant, but there is also a growing sense that Asia's influence reaches well beyond economics, shaping technological, cultural and security interests.

Perceived importance of Asia regions



Japan continues to hold a special place in New Zealanders' minds - considered both New Zealand's best friend in Asia and its most important security partner. Singapore follows as the second closest friend in Asia, and New Zealand's most likeminded counterpart in the region. Notably, attitudes toward China have warmed: for the first time in a decade New Zealanders are more likely to see China as a friend than the United States. This comes as threat perceptions of the United States increase to overtake those of China and Pakistan.

Friend and threat perceptions of the United States and China



Trust in the United States to act responsibly in the world has also fallen sharply, leading many New Zealanders to place greater confidence in Asian powers. This year, Japan has overtaken the United Kingdom as the most trusted global partner after Australia.

In defence and security, concerns about misinformation and fake news persist as the top perceived threats to New Zealand's vital interests, followed by climate change and rising authoritarianism around the world. Japan is seen as New Zealand's most important defence and security partner in Asia to address these issues, followed by Singapore, South Korea, and China. New Zealanders view conflict prevention and peacekeeping as the most valuable areas for cooperation with partners in Asia.

When it comes to Asia’s broader impact on New Zealand, optimism is high. Many expect tourism from Asia, the region’s economic growth, inbound investment flows, and technology and innovation to positively benefit New Zealand. Investment in science and technology research, biotechnology, infrastructure and transport are seen as the most promising areas for collaboration. Over half remain positive about immigration from Asia, though that optimism has dipped slightly from the previous survey. By contrast, there is growing uncertainty about Asia’s political and security trajectory and its implications for New Zealand, and New Zealanders are least optimistic about Asia’s impact on environmental issues.

Culturally, New Zealanders are feeling more connected to Asia than ever. Sixty percent say they feel connected to Asian cultures as part of their daily lives, up from 56 percent previously. Food, travel and tourism remain the leading avenues of engagement.

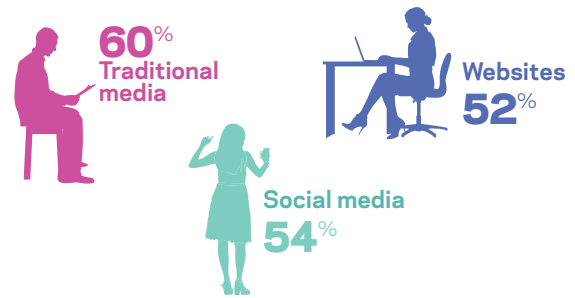
New Zealanders feel increasingly connected to Asia



Given these interests and geographic proximity, it makes sense that Asia is New Zealanders’ most-visited world region outside Australia and the South Pacific. More than 771,000 return trips were made in the year to January 2026 - a 14 percent increase over the year prior. Travel to mainland China surged nearly 20 percent in the year to January 2026, helped by the introduction of visa-free travel for New Zealanders in mid-2024. Visits to Viet Nam, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Japan also increased by more than 20 percent each, while travel to the United States dropped by nine percent over the same period.

New Zealanders’ engagement with Asia-related media content continues to evolve. The recall rate of Asia-related news has reached a new low this year, with just over one third of New Zealanders (35 percent) able to recall reading or seeing news stories in the past three months. While mainstream outlets remain the main source of news about Asia, reliance on social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Instagram continues to grow, likely contributing to both lower recall and heightened worries about misinformation. Almost half of New Zealanders now think Asia receives sufficient media coverage, but over a third still feel there could be more. New Zealanders see domestic coverage of Asia as reasonably balanced, however.

Reliance on social media platforms as a news source continues to grow



Meanwhile, Asia’s cultural influence in New Zealand society continues to expand. About a third of New Zealanders consume Asia-related entertainment at least once a month, with Japanese and Korean entertainment leading the way. Enthusiasm for Asian film and TV is strong across genres, underscoring how Asian pop culture has entered the mainstream of New Zealand life.

Taken together, this year’s findings reveal a country that sees Asia not only as a dynamic economic partner, but as an integral part of its cultural identity, security and future prosperity.

Our approach

The *New Zealanders' Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples* survey is an important annual reference point on New Zealand's engagement with Asia.

Now in its 29th year, the survey provides New Zealand's research and international affairs community, media, government officials and the public with insights into New Zealanders' connections to and perceptions of Asia. The survey informs New Zealand public discourse on Asia and the Foundation's work to equip New Zealanders to excel in Asia.

While maintaining the longitudinal nature of the survey, the questionnaire has evolved to gain insights into key relationships with Asian countries and other topical issues. The findings from these newer questions are relevant for a range of sectors in New Zealand and for New Zealand decision makers who are shaping the future of New Zealand-Asia relations.

This report presents the results from a survey of 2,300 New Zealanders aged 15 years and over, conducted between 21 January and 18 February 2026. Survey results have been weighted using 2023 Census data so that they are representative of New Zealanders by age, gender, ethnicity and geography.

A slight change in the timing of fieldwork from November/December to January/February means there is no annual survey data for the 2025 year. The 2025 report used survey data collected in November and December 2024 and a supplementary mini-poll conducted in March 2025.

Questionnaire additions in 2026

This year's questionnaire contained some new questions to offer insight into perceptions of the following:

- Why countries are seen as important to New Zealand's future
- Which country in Asia is seen as the most likeminded to New Zealand
- The most important defence and security issues for New Zealand and countries in Asia to cooperate on
- The countries seen as having the most political influence among Pacific countries
- The countries seen as the most important development partners for Pacific countries
- The regions and places younger New Zealanders are most interested in going to on an OE
- The areas and industries in which New Zealanders most want to see increased investment from Asia
- The social media platforms New Zealanders use to get their Asia-related news
- Which places in Asia New Zealanders consume the most entertainment from, and New Zealanders' favourite films and TV series.

There were minor changes to survey questions and response options, and removal of some questions to make way for the new.



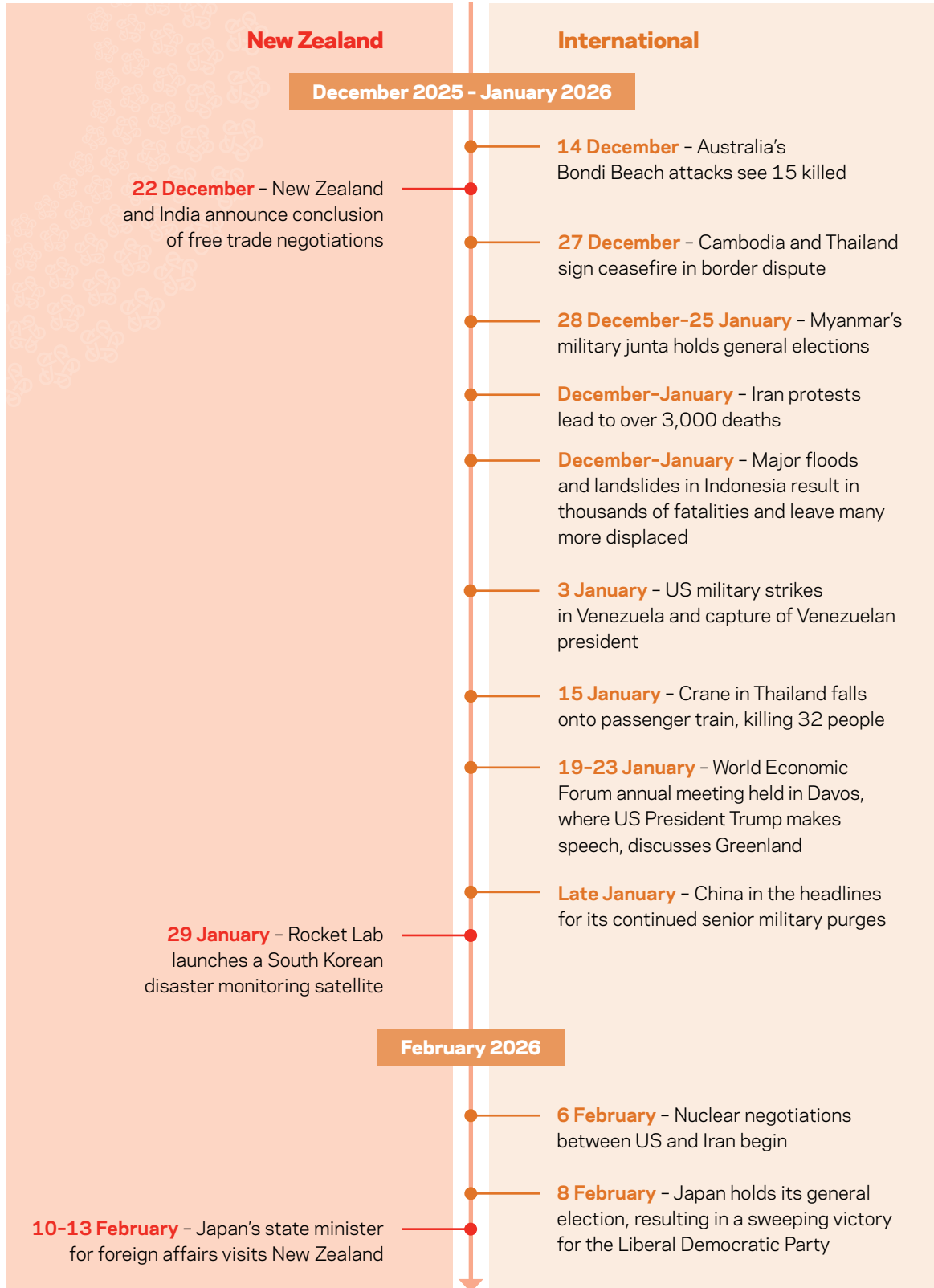
Look out for this marker to see new questions added in this survey.

Context for the survey

Fieldwork was carried out between 21 January and 18 February 2026.

Events happening in the lead up to and during fieldwork inevitably influence survey responses. The following events, issues and media reports occurred around the time of survey fieldwork and may have impacted New Zealanders' perceptions and responses.

FIG. 1: EVENTS AROUND THE WORLD IN LATE 2025 AND EARLY 2026





PART 1: SETTING THE SCENE

This section looks at New Zealanders' perceptions of Asia's importance, knowledge of Asia, and connections with the region. It also includes a spotlight on the role of sports in New Zealand's Asia relationships.





Importance of Asia to New Zealand's future

“We have many immigrants from the Philippines in our healthcare and infrastructure sectors, so I see them as very important to us.”

Female, 40-49 years, New Zealand European, Canterbury

Key findings

A vast majority of New Zealanders see **developing political, economic and social ties with Asia as important**, and two thirds think that New Zealand should be actively investing energy and resources into building these partnerships.

Asia continues to be seen as the **second most important world region** to New Zealand's future.

North Asia is seen as key to New Zealand's future, reflecting the importance New Zealanders place on China and Japan.

New Zealanders are also seeing **South Asia** as an **increasingly important** sub-region, now on par with Southeast Asia.



New Zealanders see building ties with Asia as very important

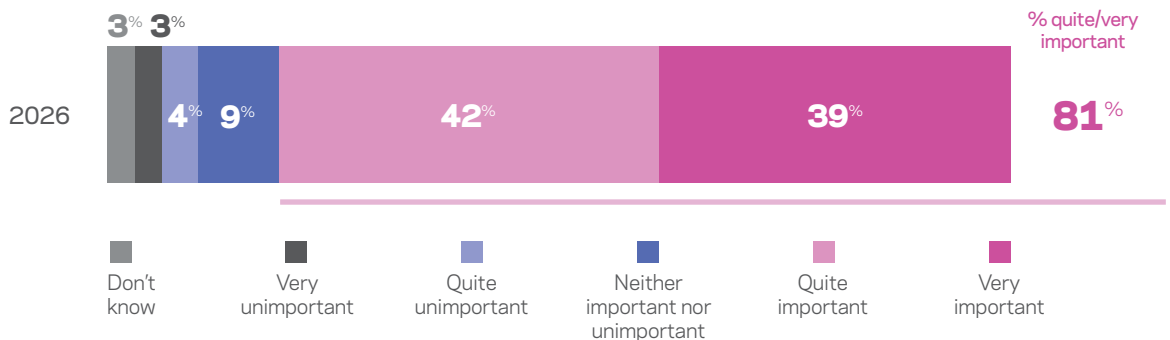
Eighty-one percent of New Zealanders see developing political, economic and social ties with the peoples and countries of Asia as important, with 39 percent seeing it as very important.

The percentage of New Zealanders of Asian heritage who see building ties as important is even higher, at 89 percent.

While the results are unchanged from the previous survey, they are a significant increase from when the question was first asked in 2019. At that time only 67 percent of New Zealanders said building ties was important.

FIG. 2: IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TIES WITH ASIA

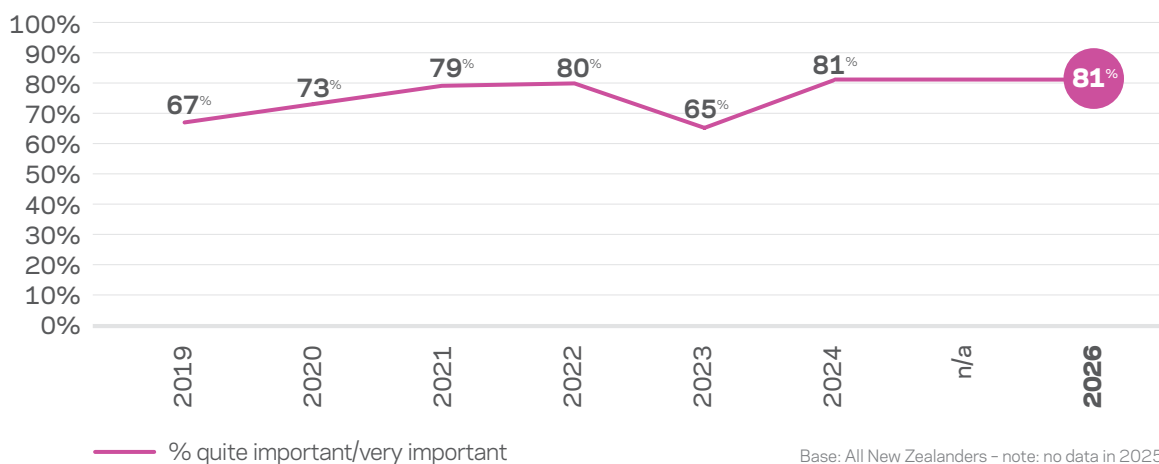
Overall how important do you think it is for New Zealand to develop political, economic and social ties with the peoples and countries of Asia?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300

FIG. 3: IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TIES OVER TIME

Overall how important do you think it is for New Zealand to develop political, economic and social ties with the peoples and countries of Asia?



Base: All New Zealanders - note: no data in 2025

Two thirds of New Zealanders think actively investing in partnerships with Asian countries is important

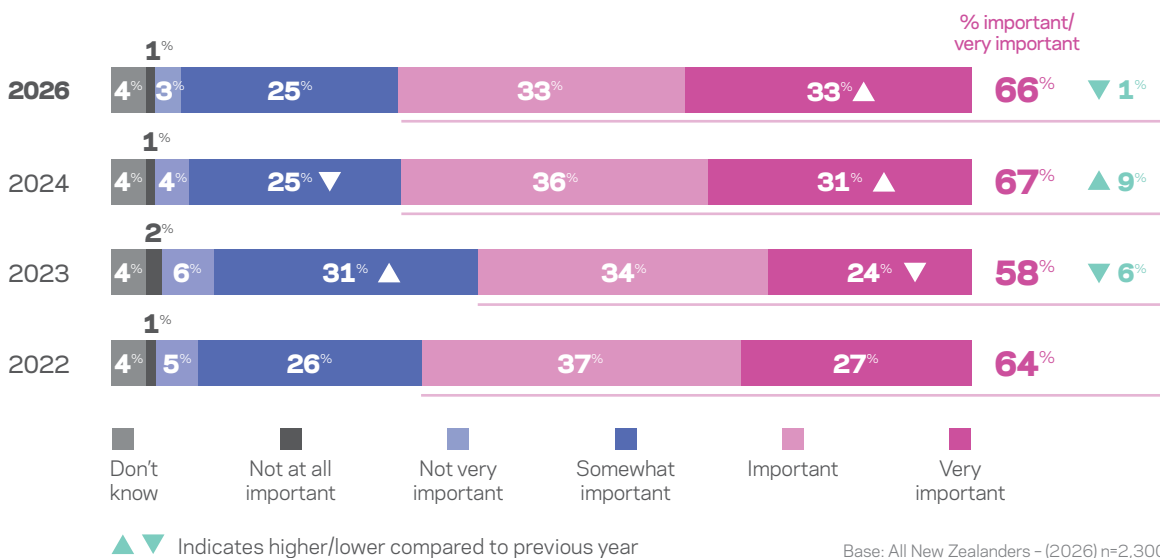
Sixty-six percent of New Zealanders see investing energy and resources into building partnerships with Asian countries as important, with 33 percent saying it is very important. This is similar to the last survey. Only four percent say investing in partnerships is not important.

Those who rate their knowledge of Asia more highly are more likely to see investing in partnerships with Asian countries as important, with 76 percent saying it is important compared to 53 percent of those who feel they know 'less than a fair amount' about Asia.

New Zealanders of Asian heritage were also more likely to see investing in partnerships as important (76 percent) compared to non-Asian New Zealanders (64 percent). Those aged 60 years and over are more likely than other age groups to see investing in partnerships as important (75 percent compared to 63 percent).

“Historically we have had valuable trading and cultural links with Japan, and it would be good for both nations to build on those past relationships.”
 Male, 70+ years, New Zealand European, Bay of Plenty

FIG. 4: IMPORTANCE OF INVESTING IN PARTNERSHIPS WITH ASIAN COUNTRIES
 Overall, how important is it for New Zealand to invest energy and resources into building partnerships with Asian countries?



Asia seen as the second most important world region to New Zealand's future

Asia continues to be seen as second only to Australia in terms of its perceived importance to New Zealand's future, with 77 percent of New Zealanders seeing it as important or very important.

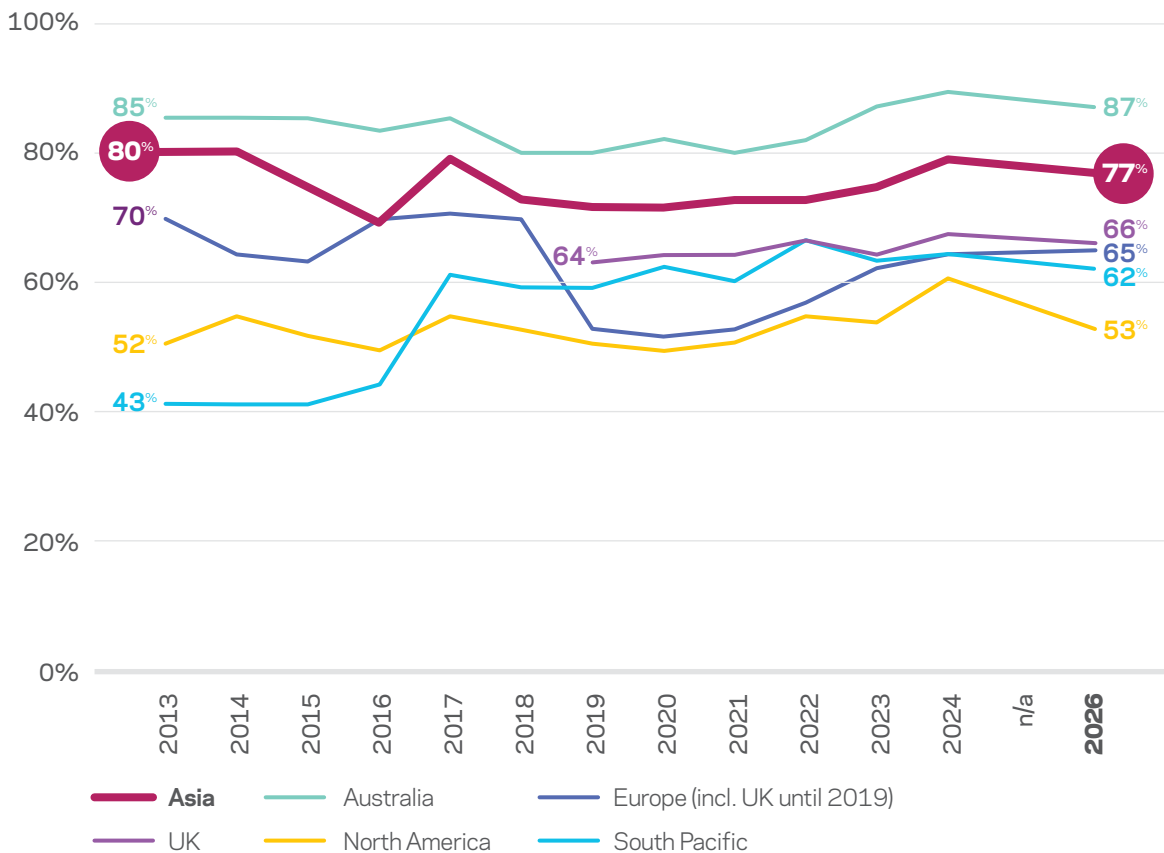
As with previous surveys, Asia's perceived importance was higher among New Zealanders of Asian heritage, with 85 percent seeing it as important compared to 76 percent of those of

non-Asian heritage. Those who rated their knowledge of Asia more highly are also more likely to view Asia as important (86 percent) compared to those who rated their knowledge lower (66 percent).

While many world regions, including Asia, saw slight drops in perceived importance from the last survey, North America and the Middle East saw more notable decreases (down nine and five percentage points respectively).

FIG. 5: IMPORTANCE OF WORLD REGIONS OVER TIME

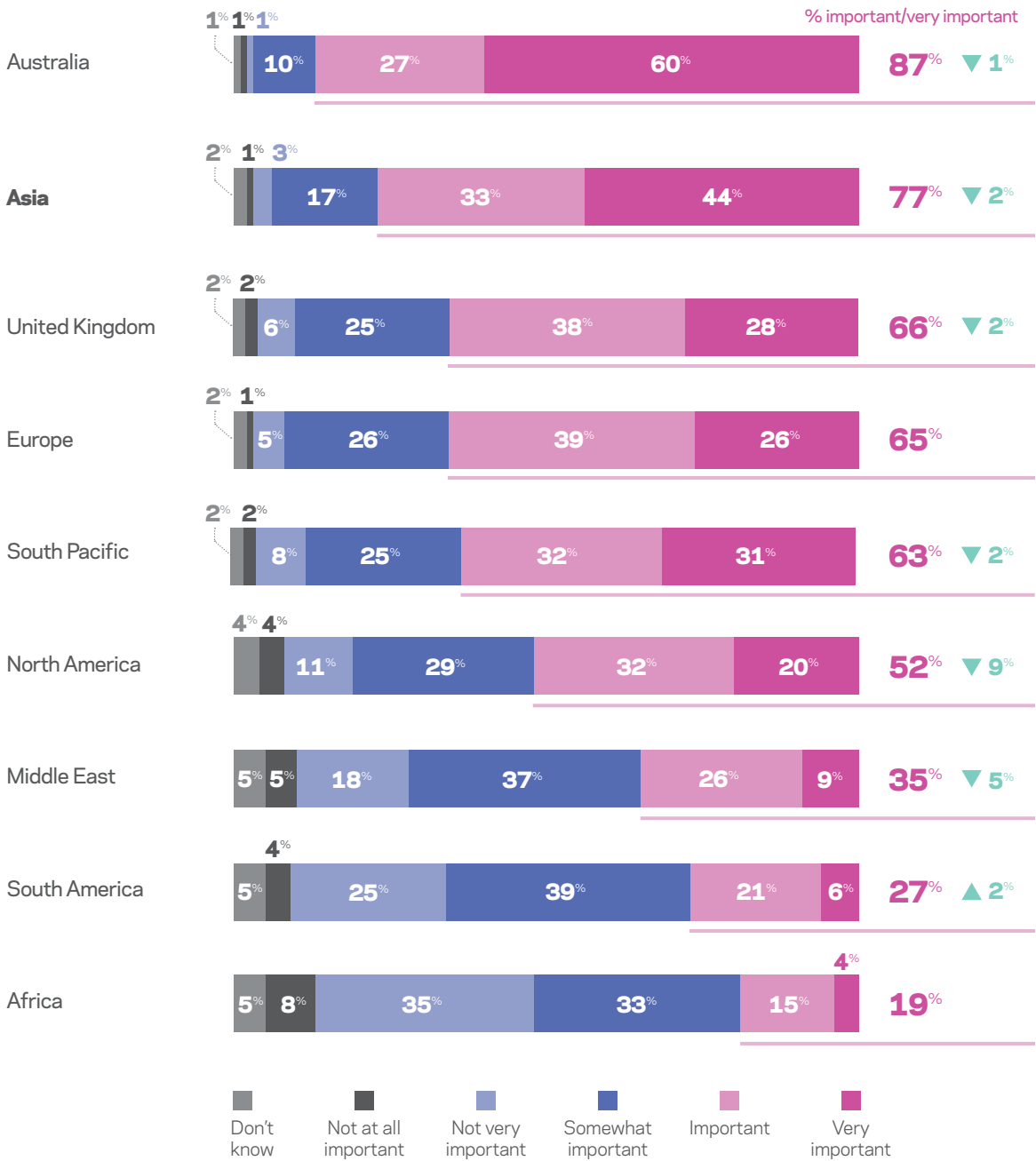
How important do you think each of the following regions are to New Zealand's future?



Base: All New Zealanders - note: no data in 2025

FIG. 6: IMPORTANCE OF WORLD REGIONS TO NEW ZEALAND'S FUTURE

How important do you think each of the following regions are to New Zealand's future?



▲ ▼ Indicates higher/lower compared to previous year Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300

South Asia seen as increasingly important

Half of New Zealanders now see South Asia as important to New Zealand’s future, an increase from 46 percent in the previous survey. This increase puts it almost equal with perceptions of Southeast Asia’s importance at 51 percent.

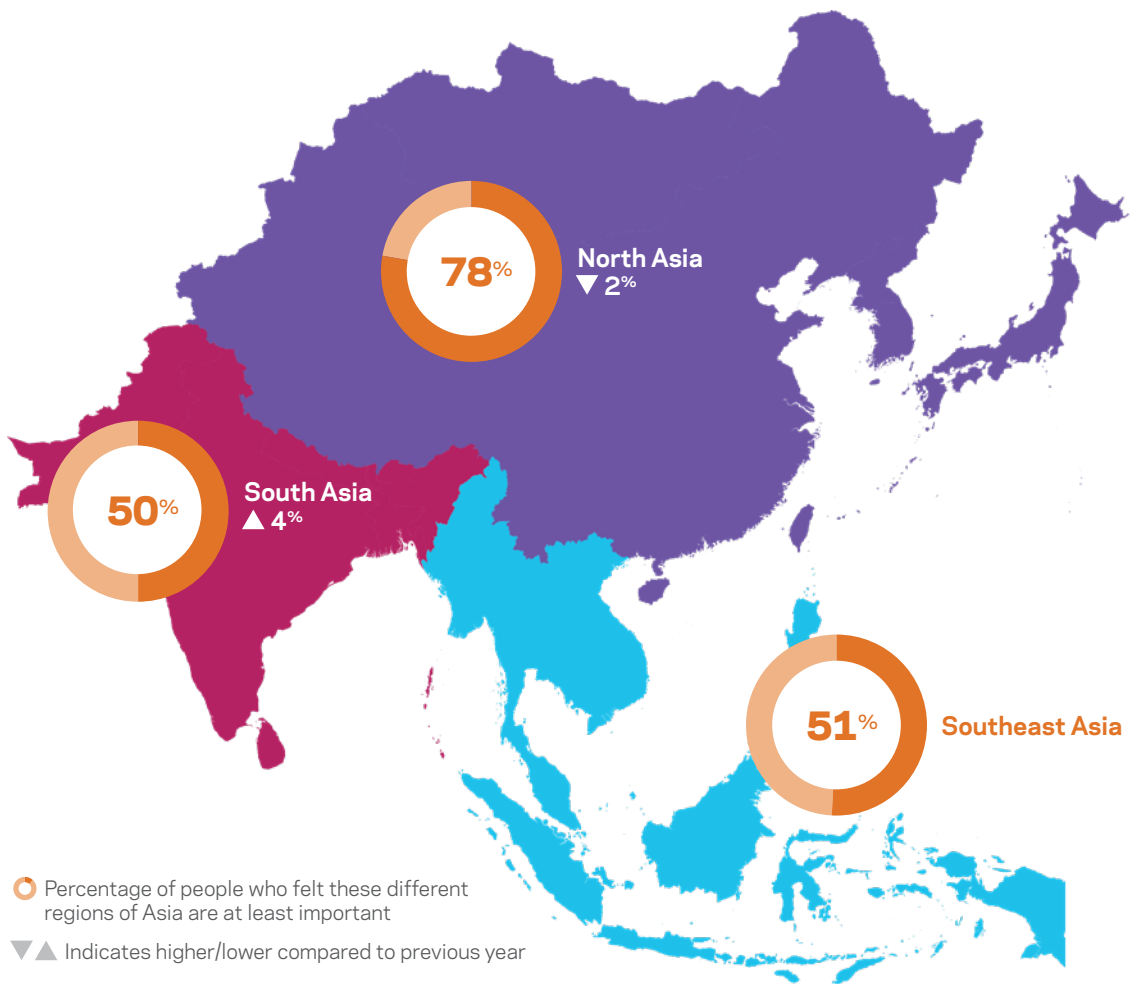
North Asia continues to be seen as the most important sub-region in Asia, with 78 percent rating it as at least important and 45 percent as very important.

Sub-regions were defined as follows:

- **North Asia** (including countries such as China, Japan and South Korea)
- **Southeast Asia** (including countries such as Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia)
- **South Asia** (including countries such as India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh).

FIG. 7: IMPORTANCE OF ASIA'S SUB-REGIONS TO NEW ZEALAND'S FUTURE

How important do you think each of the following Asian regions are to New Zealand's future?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300

China and Japan are considered the most important countries in Asia

New Zealanders continue to see China and Japan as the most important countries in Asia to New Zealand's future, followed by India, Singapore and South Korea. These results are consistent with the previous survey.

China leads perceptions of importance by a considerable margin, with 81 percent seeing it as at least important and 51 percent as very important. Seventy-one percent of New Zealanders say Japan is at least important, with 31 percent saying it is very important.

India continues to be a clear third, with 61 percent saying it is at least important to New Zealand's future and 27 percent saying it is very important.

At least half of New Zealanders see Singapore (57 percent) and South Korea (50 percent) as important.

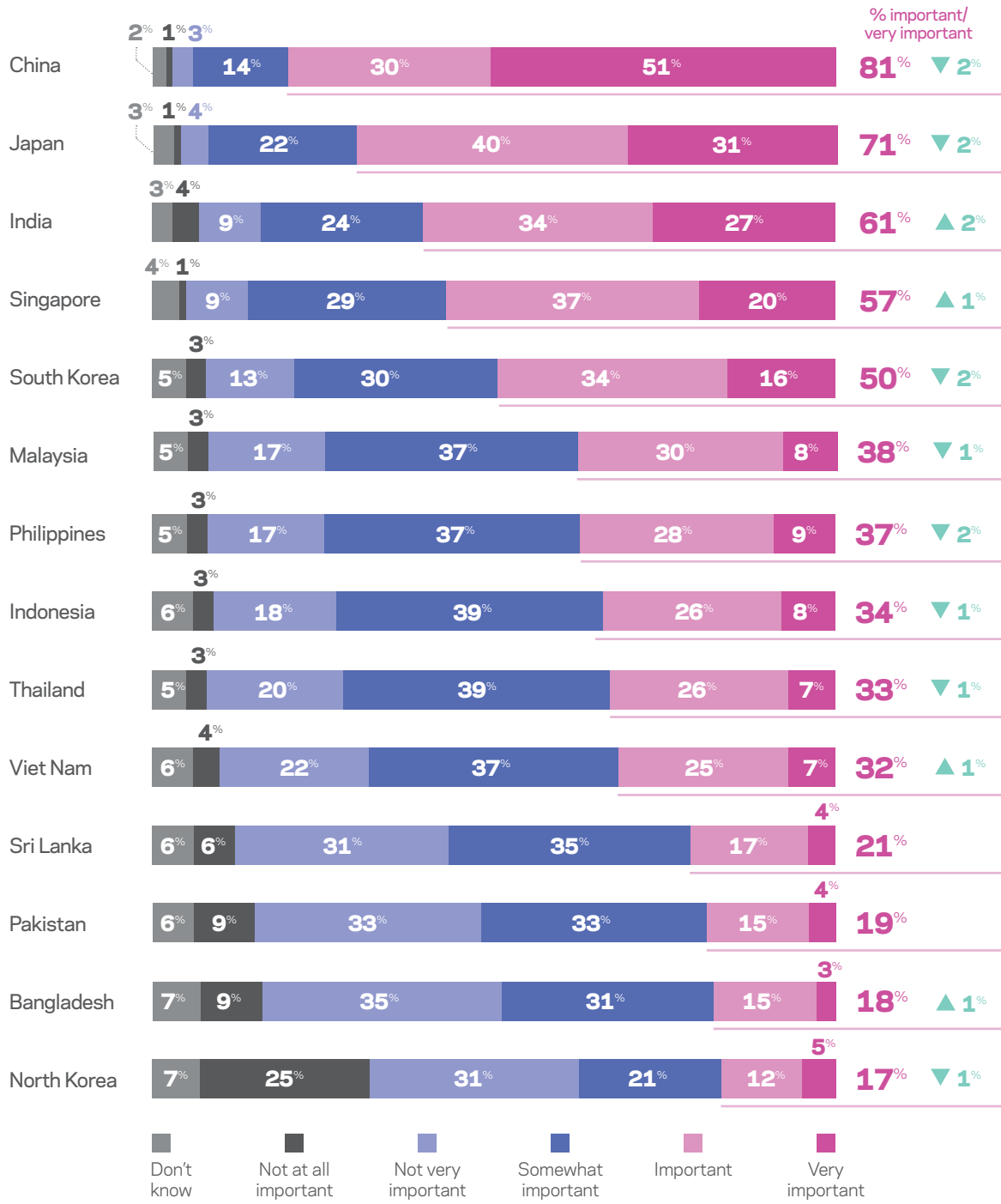
There has been little change in the perceived importance of the remaining nine countries.

“[Pakistan is important] because of its strategic location, economic potential, shared security interests, people-to-people ties, and common membership in global forums - all of which create mutually beneficial cooperation paths for trade, climate action, and regional stability.”

Female, 25-29 years, New Zealand European and Māori, Auckland

FIG. 8: IMPORTANCE OF COUNTRIES IN ASIA TO NEW ZEALAND'S FUTURE

How important do you think each of the following Asian countries are to New Zealand's future?



▲ ▼ Indicates higher/lower compared to previous year

Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300



Why are countries seen as important to New Zealand's future?

In a new question this year, New Zealanders were asked why particular countries are important to New Zealand's future.

Trade and trade partnerships, having strong economies, being a producer of advanced technology and AI, as well as manufacturing hubs are among the leading reasons New Zealanders see countries in Asia – and particularly China and Japan – as important.

Being a source and destination of tourism and migration is a key reason New Zealanders see India and the Philippines as important. Many noted the large populations of these countries and the contributions of migrants to New Zealand's workforce.

Those 60 years and older are more likely than New Zealanders under 30 to view trade as a key driver of importance (22 percent compared to 16 percent of under 30s). Those under 30 are more likely to see countries as important due to migration and people movements (13 percent compared to just five percent of those 60 and over).

“[China is important because of its] massive population, [being the] world's largest producer of cheap consumer goods, [and its] political power and influence around the globe.”

Female, 50–59 years, New Zealand European and Māori, Auckland

“Indonesia has the fourth largest population in the world. There is the potential for them to be a significant export market for New Zealand.”

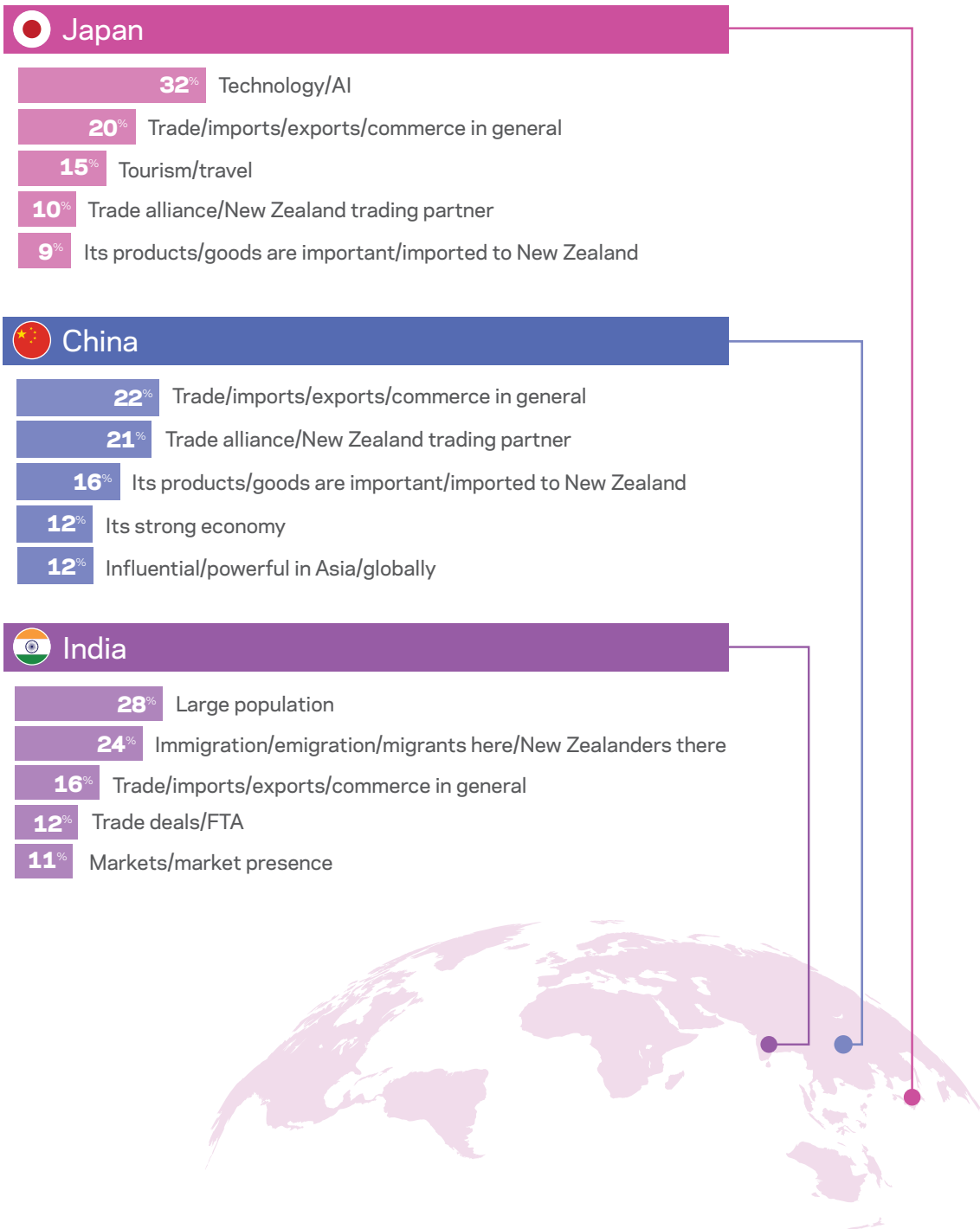
Male, 60–69 years, New Zealand European, Auckland

“[Malaysia is important] for trade when traditional markets (USA, UK, Europe) become harder to enter [and is a] place where international students may come from.”

Male, 50–59 years, New Zealand European, Manawatū-Whanganui

FIG. 9: WHY COUNTRIES ARE SEEN AS IMPORTANT TO NEW ZEALAND'S FUTURE

Why do you view [insert country] as important to New Zealand's future?



Base: China n=458, Japan n=325, India n=244



What do New Zealanders know **about Asia?**

“I think of Asian cuisine and Southeast Asia. I think of Japan and Korea and the entertainment.”

Male, 25-29 years, New Zealand European and Latin American, Auckland



Key findings

'**China**' and '**food**' continue to be the first words New Zealanders associate with Asia.

Almost **60 percent** of New Zealanders feel they **know at least a fair amount** about Asia, a result consistent with the past two surveys.

Aucklanders rate their Asia knowledge the highest, followed by those in Otago and Wellington.

North Asia continues to be the Asian sub-region New Zealanders **feel most familiar with**, particularly among under 30s.

While half of New Zealanders see **South Asia** as important to New Zealand's future, **only 29 percent** report having at least a **fair amount of knowledge** about the region.



Most New Zealanders are confident in their knowledge of Asia

Self-reported knowledge of Asia holds steady, with 58 percent of New Zealanders saying they know at least a fair amount about Asia, and 16 percent saying they know a lot. This is now on par with New Zealanders' knowledge of the South Pacific.

However, Australia (88 percent), the United Kingdom (74 percent), Europe (68 percent) and North America (60 percent) continue to be the regions New Zealanders feel they know the most about.

New Zealanders' knowledge of Asia varies considerably by where they live in the country,

likely reflecting New Zealand's demographic makeup as well as the opportunities that come with a larger, more diverse urban population.

Aucklanders are the most confident in their Asia knowledge, with 65 percent saying they know at least a fair amount about the region and 22 percent saying they know a lot.

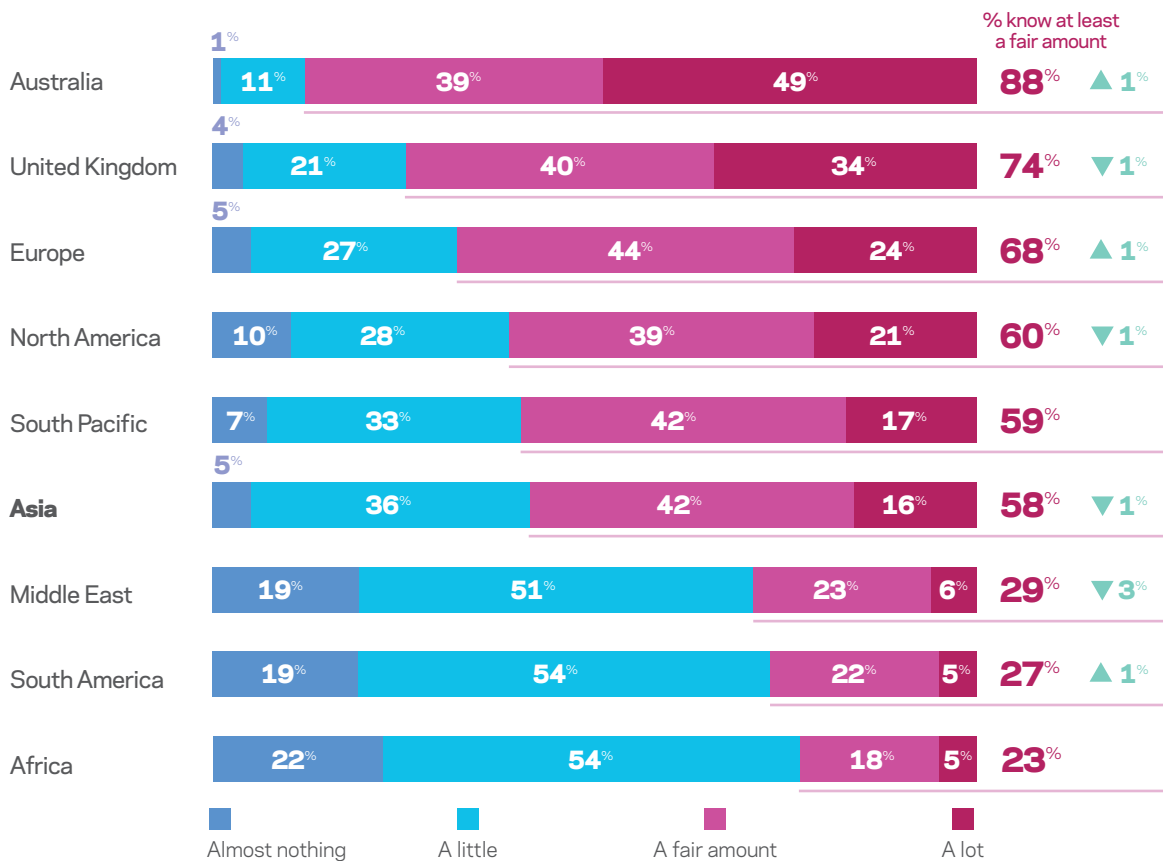
Otago, Wellington and the Tasman region had the next highest levels of self-assessed Asia knowledge.

"My mum used to teach over there [in Cambodia] and I know a lot about the culture."

Female, 18-19 years, New Zealand European and other ethnicity, Northland

FIG. 11: NEW ZEALANDERS' KNOWLEDGE OF WORLD REGIONS

How much do you feel you know about the following regions?

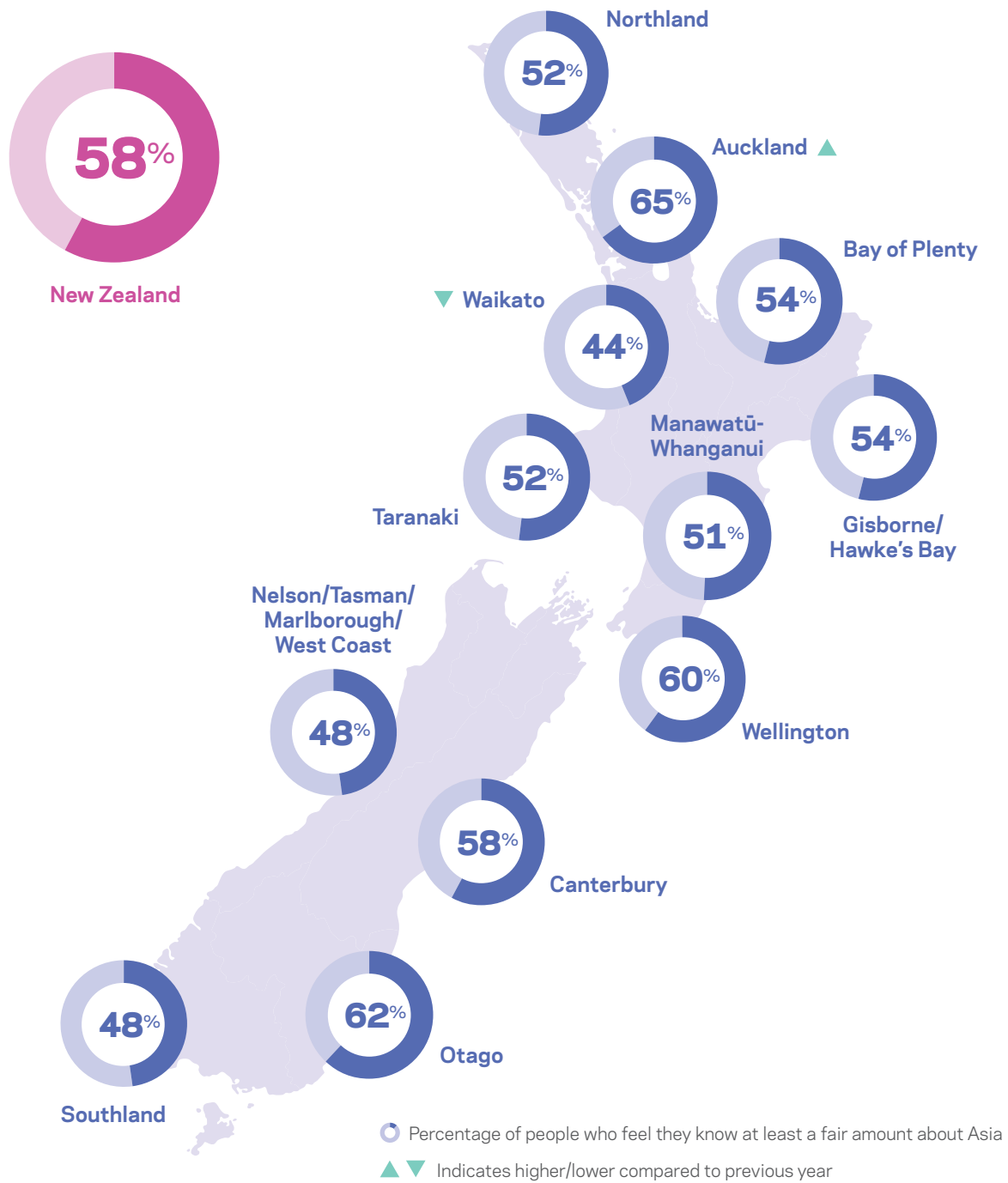


▲ ▼ Indicates higher/lower compared to previous year

Base: All New Zealanders excluding 'unsure' - (2026), Australia n=2,281; United Kingdom n=2,277; Europe n=2,276; North America n=2,264; South Pacific n=2,277; Asia n=2,278; Middle East n=2,271; South America n=2,272, Africa n=2,272

FIG. 12: NEW ZEALANDERS' KNOWLEDGE OF ASIA BY REGION

How much do you feel you know about Asia?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300

How much do New Zealanders know about Asia's sub-regions?

North Asia remains the Asian sub-region New Zealanders feel they know best, with 54 percent saying they know at least a fair amount about it. Southeast Asia is the next most familiar, with 40 percent of New Zealanders saying they know at least a fair amount.

Consistent with the previous survey, South Asia remains the sub-region New Zealanders feel they know the least, with just 29 percent saying they have at least a fair amount of knowledge.

There is a clear correlation between New Zealanders' travel patterns and perceived knowledge levels of the sub-regions, with North Asia being the most visited region in 2025, followed by Southeast Asia. By contrast, New Zealanders made significantly fewer visits to South Asia in the same period.

When it comes to demographics, New Zealanders aged between 18 and 24 years old are more likely than other age groups to say they know at least a fair amount about each of the three sub-regions.



What Asian capital cities can New Zealanders identify?

New Zealanders were asked to identify which countries the following capital cities belong to:

- Pyongyang
- Bangkok
- Kathmandu
- Kuala Lumpur

New Zealanders are most familiar with Bangkok, with 89 percent correctly identifying it as the capital of Thailand.

Kathmandu comes in second, with 83 percent of New Zealanders able to identify it as the capital of Nepal, followed closely by correct identification of Kuala Lumpur as the capital of Malaysia (80 percent).

New Zealanders are least familiar with Pyongyang, with just two thirds able to correctly name it as the capital city of North Korea.



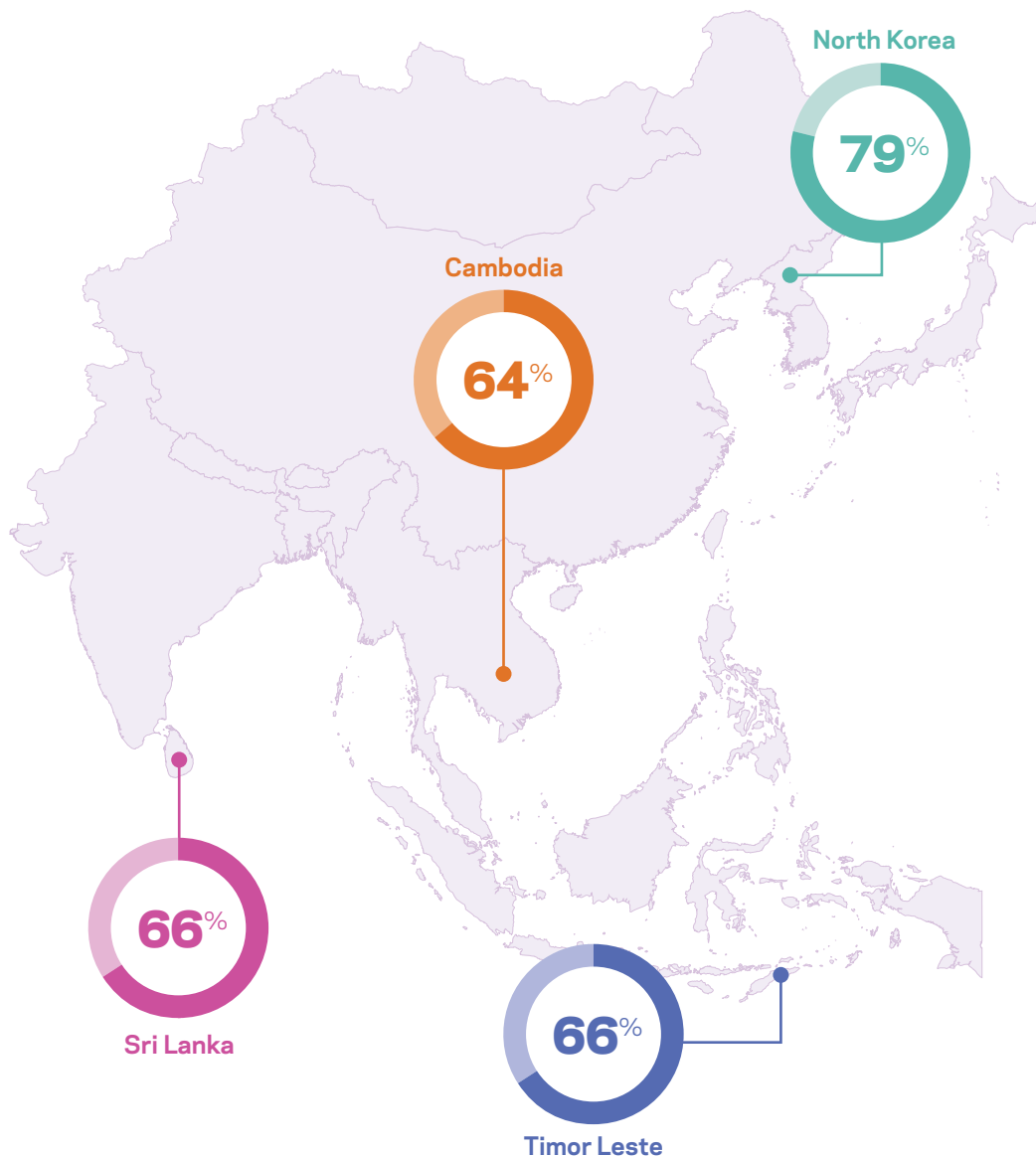
Which locations can New Zealanders correctly identify on a map?

New Zealanders were shown four arrows on a map and asked which they thought pointed to North Korea, Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Timor Leste.

Seventy-nine percent were able to correctly identify North Korea. Two thirds (66 percent) correctly identified Sri Lanka and Timor Leste, while 64 percent correctly located Cambodia.

FIG. 13: THE PERCENTAGE OF NEW ZEALANDERS WHO CAN CORRECTLY IDENTIFY THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS

Can you find these locations on the map?





Connections to Asia

“I feel we have a growing and present population of Malaysian immigrants in my area, and they contribute to our community. It is also a place Kiwis travel to often and feel welcome [and can] connect with people.”

Female, 25-29 years, New Zealand European and Māori, Manawatū-Whanganui

Key findings

New Zealanders are feeling **increasingly connected** to Asia in their daily lives.

Food continues to be New Zealanders' top Asia-related interest, followed by **tourism**.

A majority of New Zealanders think having **Asia-related skills is important for New Zealand's future workforce**, with confidence in dealing with people of Asian cultures seen as the most important.

While only a small percentage of New Zealanders currently follow sports in Asia, a majority of those who do see **sports as a way to learn more about those countries and cultures**.



New Zealanders are feeling increasingly connected to Asian cultures

Sixty percent of New Zealanders say they feel connected to Asian cultures in their daily lives, up four percentage points from the previous survey.

Of these, 43 percent say they feel a reasonable connection to Asia day-to-day, while 17 percent feel highly connected. Just 36 percent of New Zealanders report feeling a low connection to Asian cultures.

Those living in New Zealand’s biggest and most diverse city feel the strongest connection to Asia, with 24 percent of Aucklanders saying they feel highly connected, followed by those based in Otago (20 percent) and Wellington (16 percent).

Unsurprisingly, New Zealanders of Asian heritage are more likely to feel highly connected, with almost half (49 percent) reporting a strong connection. Within this group, those of Southeast Asian heritage are most likely to feel a strong connection (68 percent) while New Zealanders of Indian heritage are least likely (44 percent).

Those able to recall seeing or hearing recent Asia-related news are also more likely to feel connected to Asia, with 73 percent saying they feel at least a reasonable connection compared to 51 percent of those unable to recall recent news stories.

FIG. 14: NEW ZEALANDERS’ SENSE OF CONNECTION WITH ASIAN CULTURES IN DAILY LIFE

Looking back over the past five years, how connected have you felt, in your daily life, with Asian cultures?



▲ ▼ Indicates higher/lower compared to previous year

Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300

What are New Zealanders' top Asia-related interests?

Asian food continues to top the list of New Zealanders' Asia interests, with 59 percent mentioning it.

New Zealanders living in big cities were more likely to report being interested or very interested in Asian food (65 percent) compared to those who live rurally (49 percent), likely reflecting the culinary diversity available in larger centres.

Tourism and travel are a clear second at 47 percent, with New Zealanders under 30 more likely to express interest (52 percent) and New Zealanders over 60 least likely (39 percent).

Interest in business and trade fell four percentage points from the last survey, and interest in sports fell three points, with 12 percent saying they are interested or very interested.

While those interested in Asian politics, history and current affairs, as well as Asian languages have been declining in recent years, these are holding steady in 2026.

Given feelings of connectedness, it is unsurprising that New Zealanders of Asian heritage are more likely than the general population to have Asia-related interests in their daily lives. Interestingly, those of Pacific descent are also more likely to be interested in Asian languages (68 percent of Pacific New Zealanders are at least somewhat interested compared to 51 percent of non-Pacific New Zealanders), social media (54 percent compared to 37 percent), and art, music and literature (65 percent compared to 56 percent).

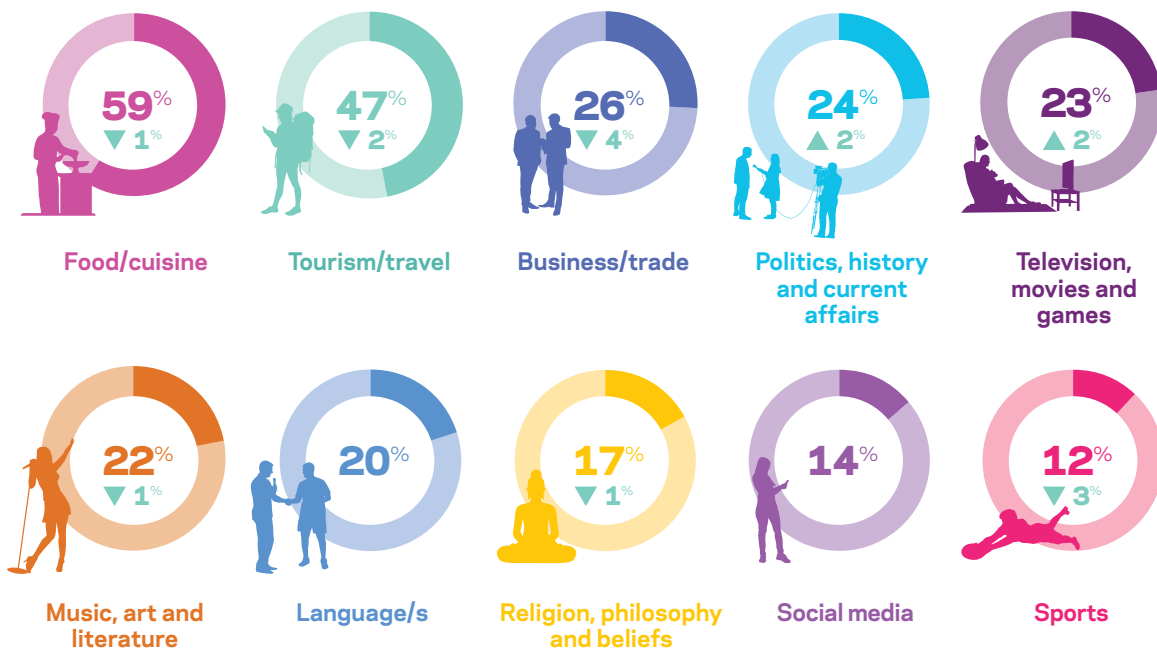
"[When I hear 'Asia' I think of] diverse cultures, traditions and delicious food."

Female, 35-39 years, Indian, Canterbury

FIG. 15: NEW ZEALANDERS' ASIA-RELATED INTERESTS

How interested, or not, are you in the following Asia-related areas, in your day-to-day life?

% interested/very interested



▲ ▼ Indicates higher/lower compared to previous year

Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300

New Zealanders recognise the importance of Asia-related skills for the country’s future workforce

Confidence in dealing with people of Asian cultures continues to be seen as the most important skill for New Zealand’s future workforce (92 percent), consistent with the last survey.

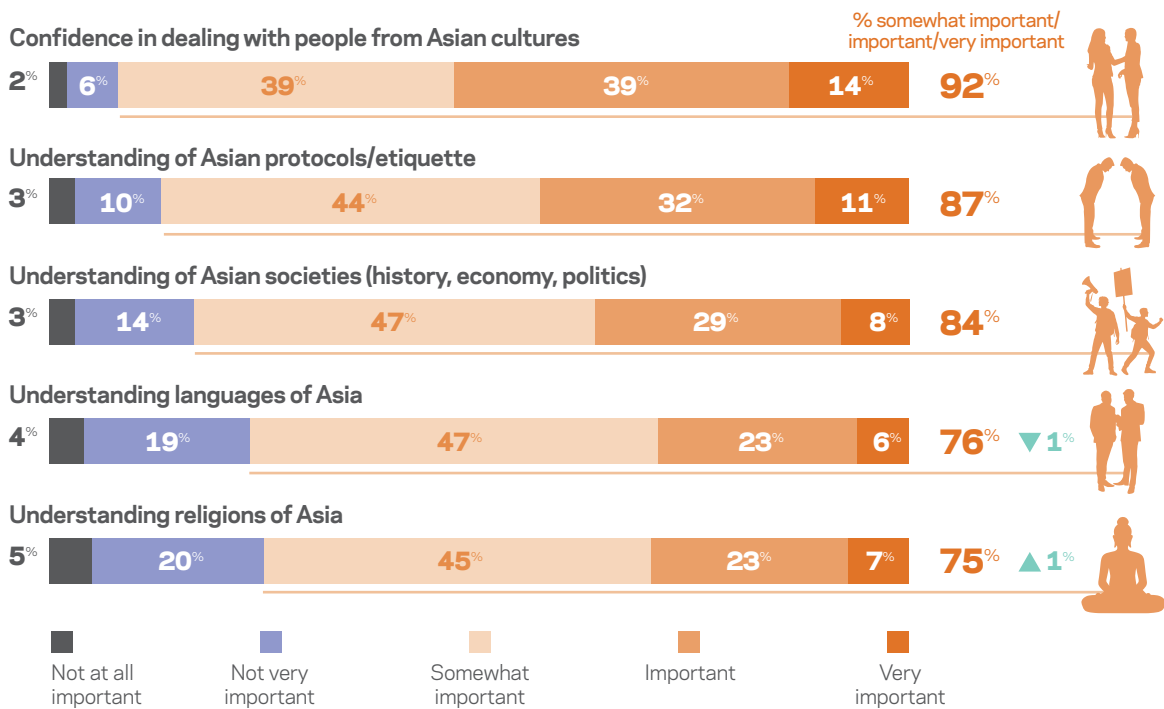
“Filipino people are culturally similar to New Zealanders, especially to Māori and Pasifika communities.”

Female, 30–34 years, New Zealand European, Wellington

New Zealanders’ perceptions of the importance of understanding Asian languages and religions are holding steady at 76 percent and 75 percent respectively, after dropping three and four percentage points each in the last survey.

FIG. 16: IMPORTANCE OF ASIA-RELATED SKILLS FOR NEW ZEALAND’S FUTURE WORKFORCE

How important are the following Asia-related skills for our future workforce and the career path of New Zealanders?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300



Spotlight: Sports in Asia

A closer look at how New Zealanders are engaging with Asian sports teams and competitions.

Asian sports teams and competitions

Fourteen percent of New Zealanders currently follow Asian sports competitions or teams.

Men are more likely to follow sports in Asia than women (18 percent compared to nine percent), as are New Zealanders of Asian heritage (36 percent compared to nine percent of New Zealanders of other backgrounds). Those of Indian descent are most likely to follow Asia-based sports competitions or teams (44 percent), reflecting the shared popularity of cricket in both New Zealand and India.

14%

of New Zealanders currently follow Asian sports competitions or teams.

“Matches held in different venues allow a little glimpse of the culture of that part of the world.”

Female, 50–59 years, Southeast Asian and other Asian, Southland

“We are fans of the cricket players and curious about their lives and where they live and the cultural practices of their country. I am Indian South African and my ancestors were from India, so our cultures are similar.”

Female, 50–59 years, Indian, Auckland

What Asian sports teams or competitions do New Zealanders follow?

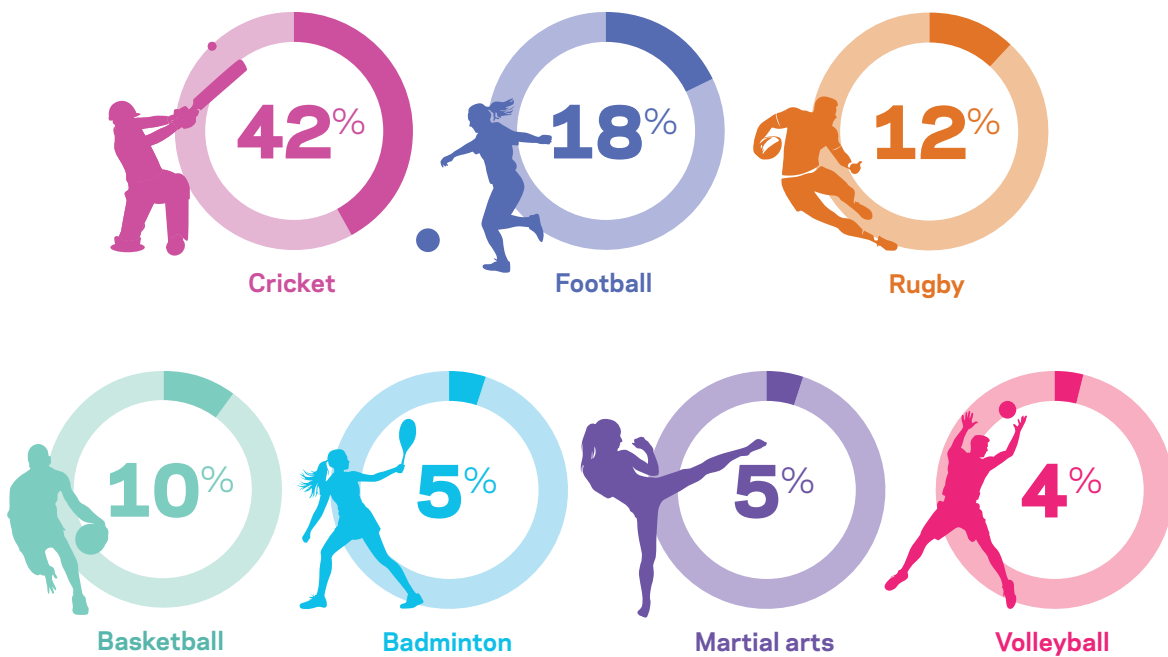
Cricket is the clear favourite, with 42 percent following cricket in some form, including the Indian Premier League (IPL) or the Twenty20 World Cup (T20).

Football/soccer is the next most popular, with 18 percent reporting they follow the sport. Chinese, Japanese and Korean football teams received particular mention, alongside the Asian Football Confederation.

Rugby is a clear third at 12 percent, with mentions of Japanese rugby and the Rugby Sevens.

FIG. 17: ASIAN SPORTS TEAMS AND COMPETITIONS FOLLOWED BY NEW ZEALANDERS

What Asian sports teams or competitions do you follow?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=305

Does following sports in Asia increase knowledge of the region?

While just 14 percent of New Zealanders currently follow Asian sports teams or competitions, a majority of those who do (61 percent) say that it has helped them learn more about Asian countries and cultures.

A quarter of those (25 percent) said sports have helped them better understand Asian customs, traditions and religions, while 11 percent said that sports have taught them about etiquette, protocols and values in Asia.

A further 11 percent said that following Asian sports teams or competitions had helped them learn more about the importance or history of particular sports and seven percent said they had learnt more about a particular country, region or geography.

“Where to start? For example, Sumo forces an outsider to learn about the sport and the culture surrounding the sport. The Japanese culture surrounding the rugby league is astounding.”

Male, 70+ years, New Zealand European, Bay of Plenty

“[Sports helped me learn about Asia by] hearing the language, seeing behaviour patterns, learning some of their values and traditions through things said in interviews.”

Gender not disclosed, 50-59 years, New Zealand European and Māori, Wellington

“An example [of what I learnt] was when Indian team members had restricted eating due to Ramadan during a tour.”

Male, 50-59 years, New Zealand European, Manawatū-Whanganui

FIG. 18: HOW FOLLOWING SPORTS IN ASIA HAS HELPED NEW ZEALANDERS TO LEARN ABOUT THE REGION

How has following sport in Asia helped you to learn more about Asian countries and/or cultures?







PART 2: CURRENT TRENDS

This section looks at perceptions of New Zealand's closest friends and biggest threats in the region, which powers New Zealanders view as likeminded, and which countries they trust the most to act responsibly on the world stage. It discusses who New Zealanders see as the most important defence and security partners, and which powers New Zealanders think are wielding influence in the Pacific. It also includes a spotlight on travel.





New Zealand's relationships in Asia

“[Viet Nam is a friend to New Zealand] because it’s accessible. People from New Zealand go there and people from Viet Nam migrate to New Zealand.”

Male, 30-34 years, Samoan and Tongan, Auckland



Key findings

Japan continues to be seen as New Zealand's **best friend in Asia**. **Singapore** follows in second and is also seen as New Zealand's **most likeminded** Asian counterpart.

Sentiment towards **China** has warmed considerably, while attitudes towards the **United States** have taken a significant dive. New Zealanders are now **more likely to view China as a friend than the United States**.

Perceptions of certain countries tend to **differ along the political spectrum**. New Zealanders are most polarised, however, when it comes to the United States.

As trust in the United States to act responsibly in the world falls, New Zealanders are **placing greater trust in countries in Asia**, with Japan surpassing the United Kingdom to become New Zealand's most trusted power after Australia.



Perceptions of China warm as those of the United States cool

New Zealanders were asked which of the following 22 countries they regard as friendly (a country viewed to be safe and trustworthy) or a threat (one viewed with caution or suspicion).

New Zealanders' perceptions of most countries are broadly unchanged from the previous survey, with a few notable exceptions.

Australia continues to rank as New Zealand's closest friend, with 93 percent of New Zealanders viewing it as such, followed by two other Commonwealth countries – the United Kingdom (86 percent) and Canada (84 percent).

New Zealanders also continue to see Japan as New Zealand's closest friend in Asia (81 percent), a ranking Japan has consistently held since the question was first asked in 2017. Singapore is New Zealand's second-closest friend in the region, followed by the Philippines and South Korea in shared third place, also in keeping with previous surveys.

New Zealanders' sentiment towards China has warmed significantly since the last survey, with friend perceptions increasing from 38 percent to 43 percent (and up significantly from the Asia New Zealand Foundation's March 2025 mini-poll where only 21 percent of New Zealanders saw China as a friend). At the same time, the percentage of New Zealanders who view China as a threat has fallen from 28 percent to 23 percent, now broadly on par with the percentage of New Zealanders who see Pakistan as a threat (24 percent, up from 20 percent). The rise in friend perception follows increased travel to China, which grew by almost 20 percent in the year to January 2026 (see Spotlight: Travel to Asia).

Meanwhile, sentiment towards the United States has cooled considerably. Friend perceptions have fallen from 61 percent to 39 percent (a 22 percentage point change), while threat perceptions have increased from 17 percent in the last survey to 35 percent. These results are more consistent with the Foundation's March 2025 mini-poll where 32 percent of New Zealanders saw the United States as a friend, and 32 percent saw it as a threat.

North Korea has seen a notable decrease in threat perceptions, falling from 73 percent in the last survey to 69 percent this year. Threat perceptions of Russia have also fallen slightly from the last survey, from 68 to 66 percent.

“We have close ties with [China], in business, economics, and there are so many Chinese nationals living in New Zealand that work and contribute to our society.”

Female, 40–49 years, other European, Auckland

“[Sri Lanka is a friend because of] cultural connections with the Sri Lankan diaspora in New Zealand, trade and tourism.”

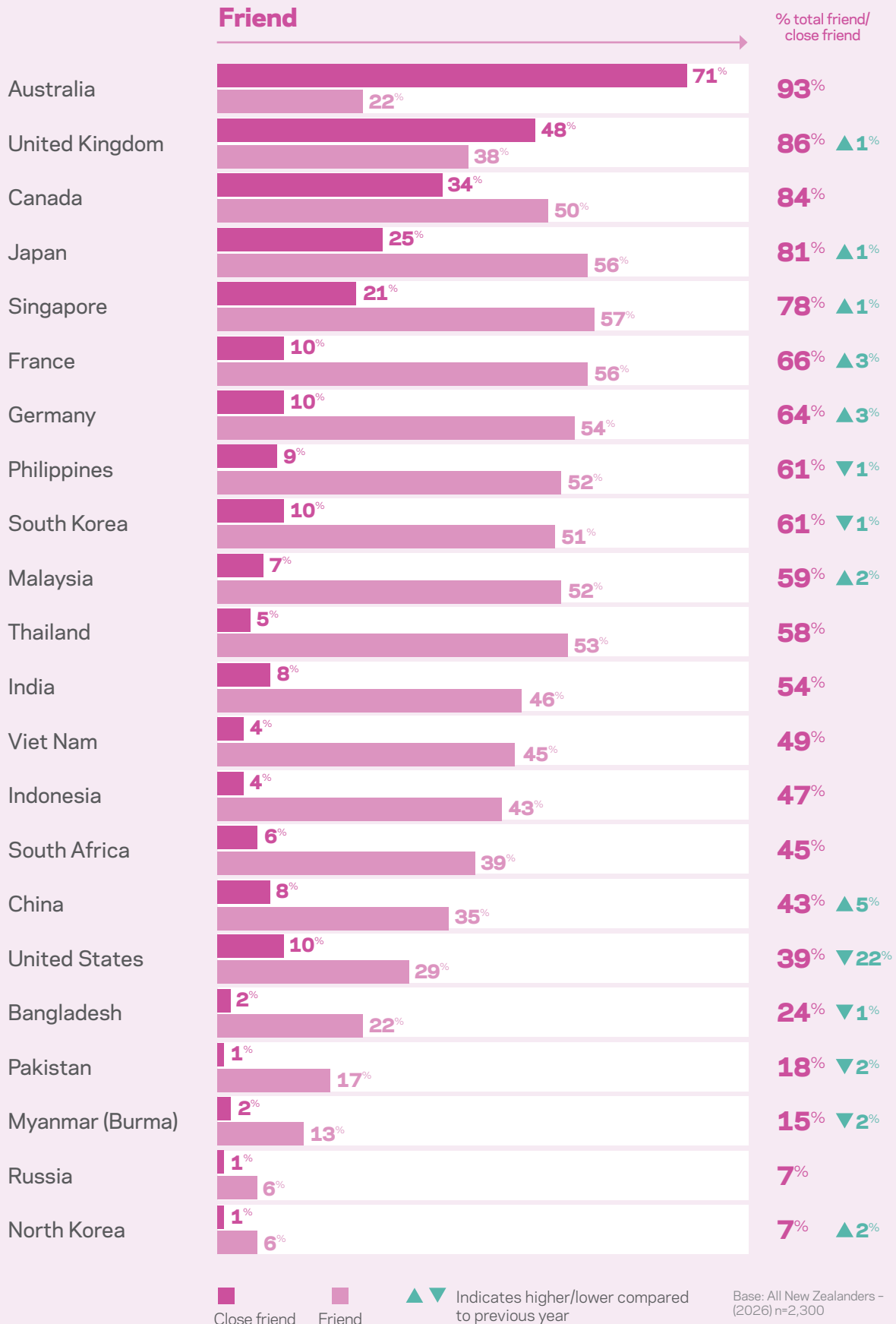
Male, 60–69 years, New Zealand European, Canterbury

“There was a recent trade agreement between India and New Zealand that will be helpful for both countries and other sectors involving both.”

Female, 25–29 years, other Asian, Auckland

FIG. 19: NEW ZEALANDERS' FRIEND AND THREAT PERCEPTIONS

A friendly country is one you view as safe and trustworthy. A threatening country is one you view with caution or suspicion. For each country below, do you view them as a friend or a threat to New Zealand?



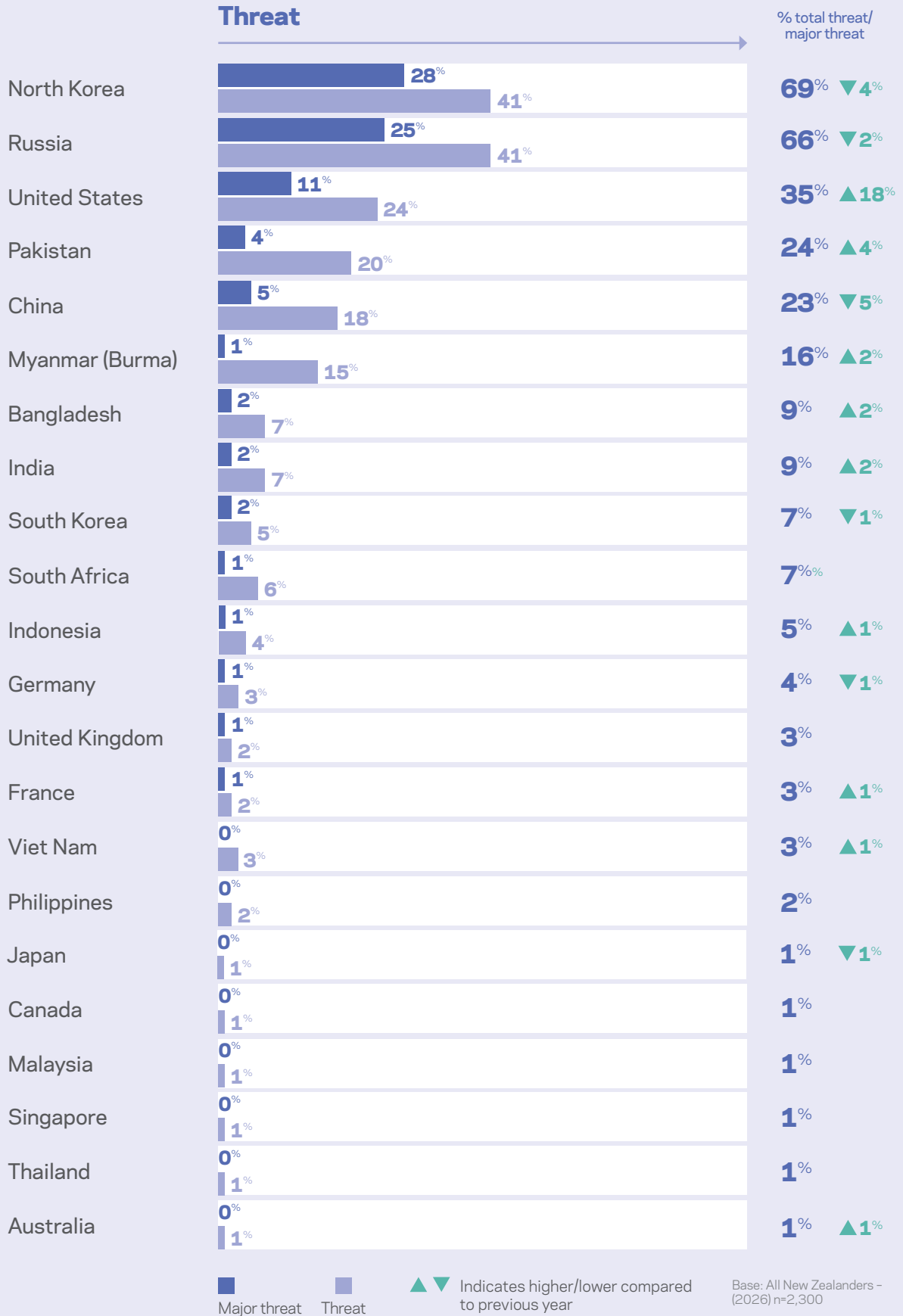
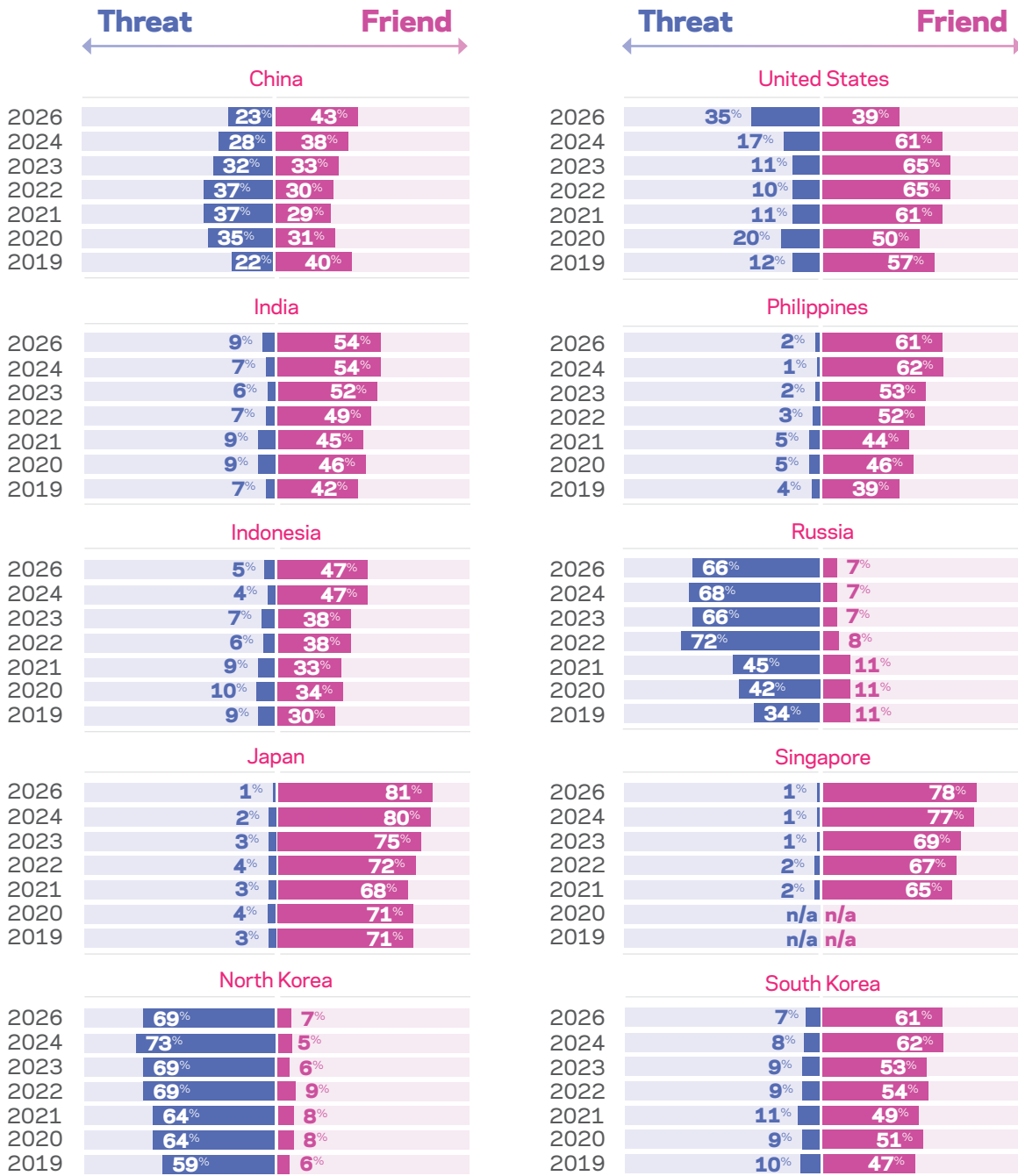


FIG. 20: FRIEND AND THREAT PERCEPTIONS OVER TIME

A friendly country is one you view as safe and trustworthy. A threatening country is one you view with caution or suspicion. For each country below, do you view them as a friend or a threat to New Zealand?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300

How do views of countries vary along the political spectrum?

A number of countries are perceived differently by New Zealanders across the political spectrum, from left to right.¹

New Zealanders on the right are more likely to view China, North Korea, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar and Indonesia as threats than those on the left, while those on the left are more likely to view these countries as friends or as being 'neutral'.

New Zealanders on the left are also more likely to view Thailand and the Philippines positively, while those on the right are more likely to feel warmly towards five Commonwealth countries: Singapore, Malaysia, Australia and the United Kingdom, as well as Germany.

New Zealanders are most divided when it comes to the United States. While over half of New Zealanders on the right (57 percent) view the United States as a friend, just 29 percent of those on the left feel the same. By contrast, 45 percent of

those on the left view the United States as a threat, compared to just one in five (20 percent) of those on the right.

Political leanings have no impact on how the remaining quarter of the countries listed are perceived. This includes South Korea, Japan, Viet Nam, Russia, South Africa and Canada.

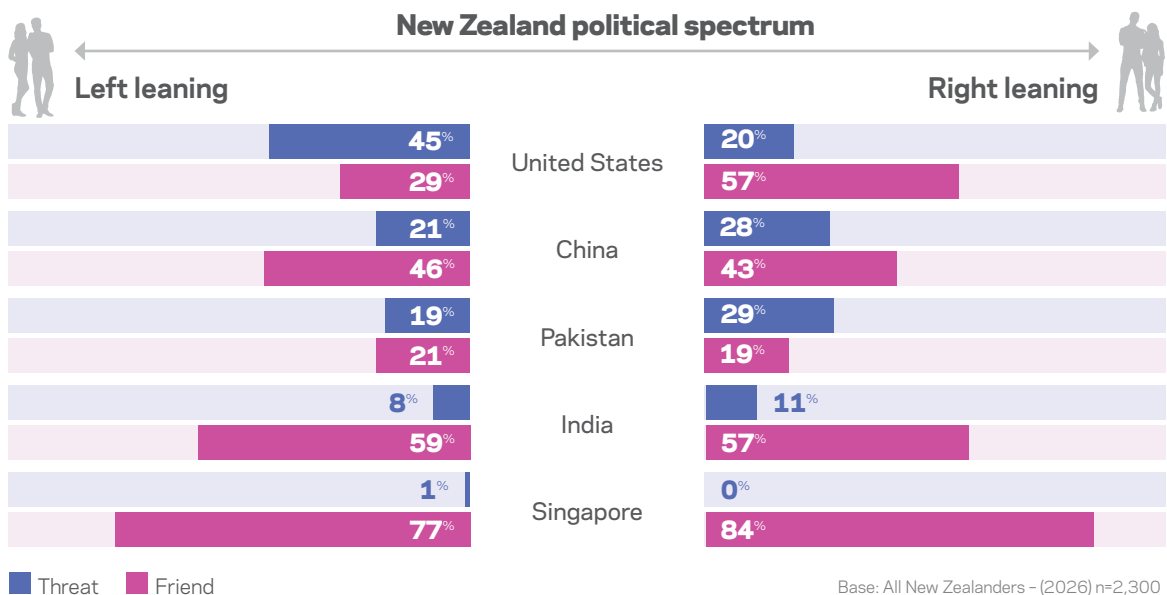
How were political leanings defined?

New Zealanders surveyed were asked who they intend to vote for in the next election.

For the purposes of this survey, those who selected National, New Zealand First or ACT have been categorised as 'right-leaning' while those who selected Labour, the Green Party or Te Pāti Māori have been categorised as 'left-leaning'.

FIG. 21: HOW DO FRIEND AND THREAT PERCEPTIONS VARY ALONG THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM?

A friendly country is one you view as safe and trustworthy. A threatening country is one you view with caution or suspicion. For each country below, do you view them as a friend or a threat to New Zealand?



1 At a general level, the left end of the spectrum tends to be more progressive and the right more conservative.



Singapore seen as most likeminded to New Zealand

While Japan may be New Zealand’s best friend in the region, Singapore is seen as the most likeminded and as having a similar approach of engaging with people and the world.

One in four New Zealanders said that Singapore is most likeminded to New Zealand, while one in five (20 percent) said Japan. The Philippines is a distant third at just six percent, followed by South Korea, China and India at just four percent each.

Almost a third of New Zealanders said they were unsure about which country was most likeminded.

“[Singapore] is progressive and has similar values to New Zealand.”

Female, 70+ years, New Zealand European and Fijian, Auckland

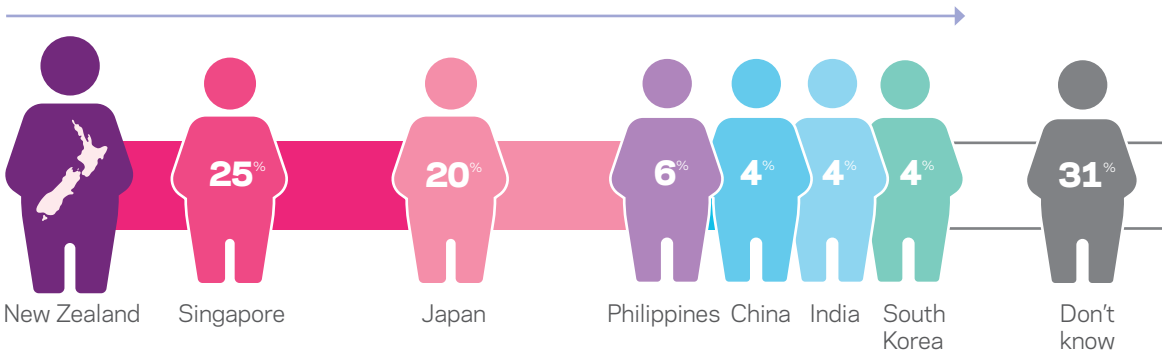
“[Singapore is] very similar in size and [New Zealand] can learn a lot from their infrastructure and good fiscal environment.”

Male, 50–59 years, New Zealand European, Wellington

FIG. 22: PERCEPTIONS OF LIKEMINDEDNESS WITH NEW ZEALAND

What country in Asia do you think is most likeminded with New Zealand - meaning we have a similar approach of engaging with people and the world?

Most likeminded



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300



“My perception is [that Singapore has] similar ethics and values based on my own visit and people I know from there. Technologically advanced and I think a country [like] New Zealand would do well to be friendly with.”

Female, 25-29 years, other European, Wellington

New Zealanders' trust in Asian powers increases as trust in the United States falls

New Zealanders are feeling increasingly trusting of major and middle powers to act responsibly in the world, with a couple of notable exceptions.

Every country included in this question saw an increase in the percentage of New Zealanders placing trust in its willingness to act responsibly in the world. The exceptions were the United States and Russia, as well as Singapore which was included in the poll for the first time.

New Zealanders continue to place the most trust in New Zealand (82 percent high trust, up seven percentage points), followed closely by Australia (81 percent, up nine percentage points).

Japan continues to be New Zealand's most trusted power in Asia (70 percent high trust) and has increased eight percentage points to surpass trust in the United Kingdom for the first time.

Singapore is the next most trusted power in Asia at 65 percent.

Trust in China has increased to 19 percent (from 14 percent), while trust in Indonesia has increased six percentage points to 21 percent.

New Zealanders are increasingly distrustful of the United States, with just 20 percent expressing high trust compared to 33 percent in the last survey. This is again similar to the Foundation's March 2025 mini-poll which had trust in the United States at 21 percent. Over half of New Zealanders now say they have low trust in the United States (54 percent).

New Zealanders' trust in India is becoming more polarised, with 23 percent saying they have high trust (up from 20 percent), while 26 percent have low trust (up from 22 percent). Less than half of New Zealanders now express neutral trust in India (46 percent) compared to 52 percent in the last survey.

“Because of the administration, civil instability, and the US has volatile relationships with other countries.”

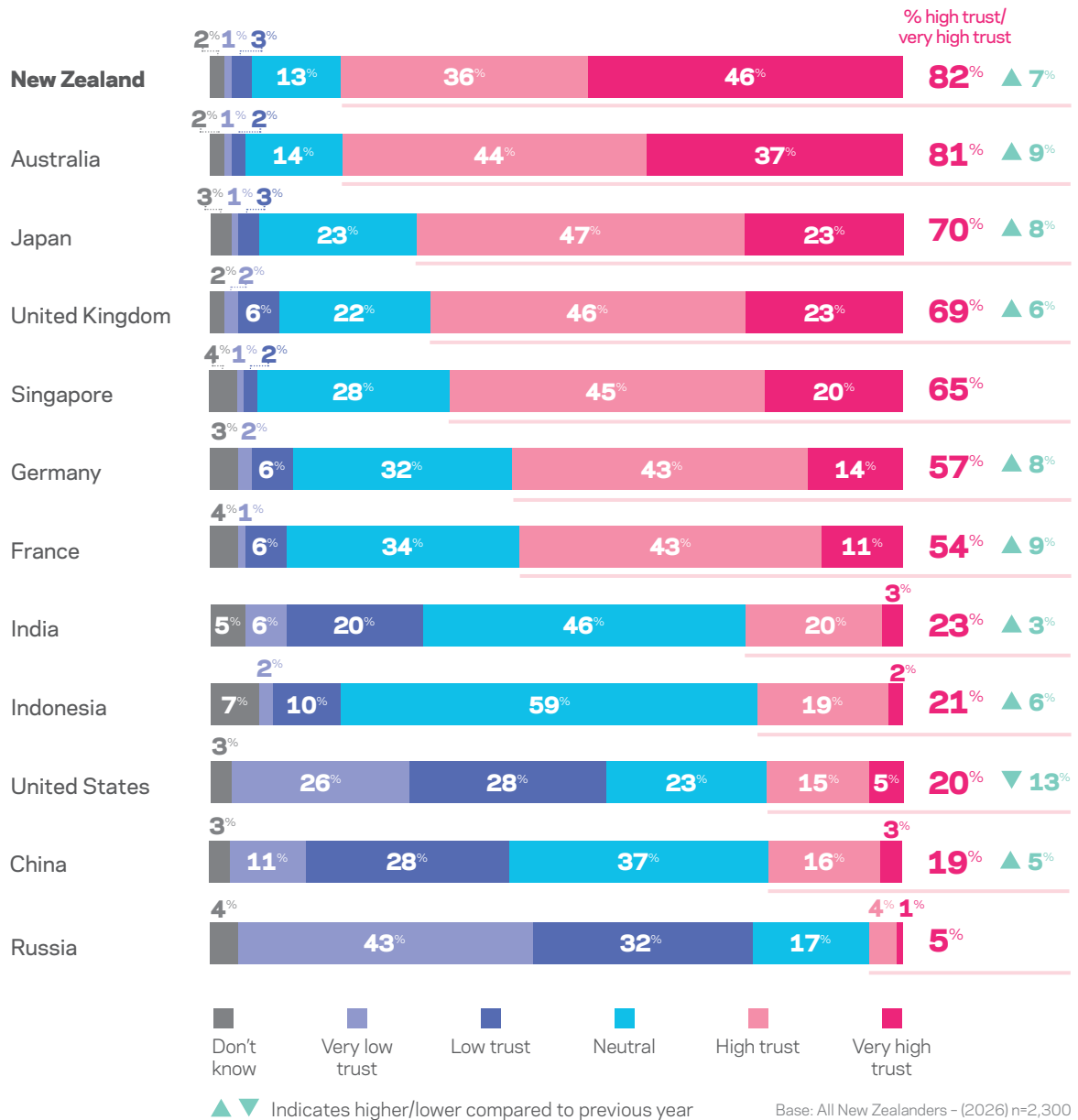
Female, 25–29 years, New Zealand European and other European, Wellington

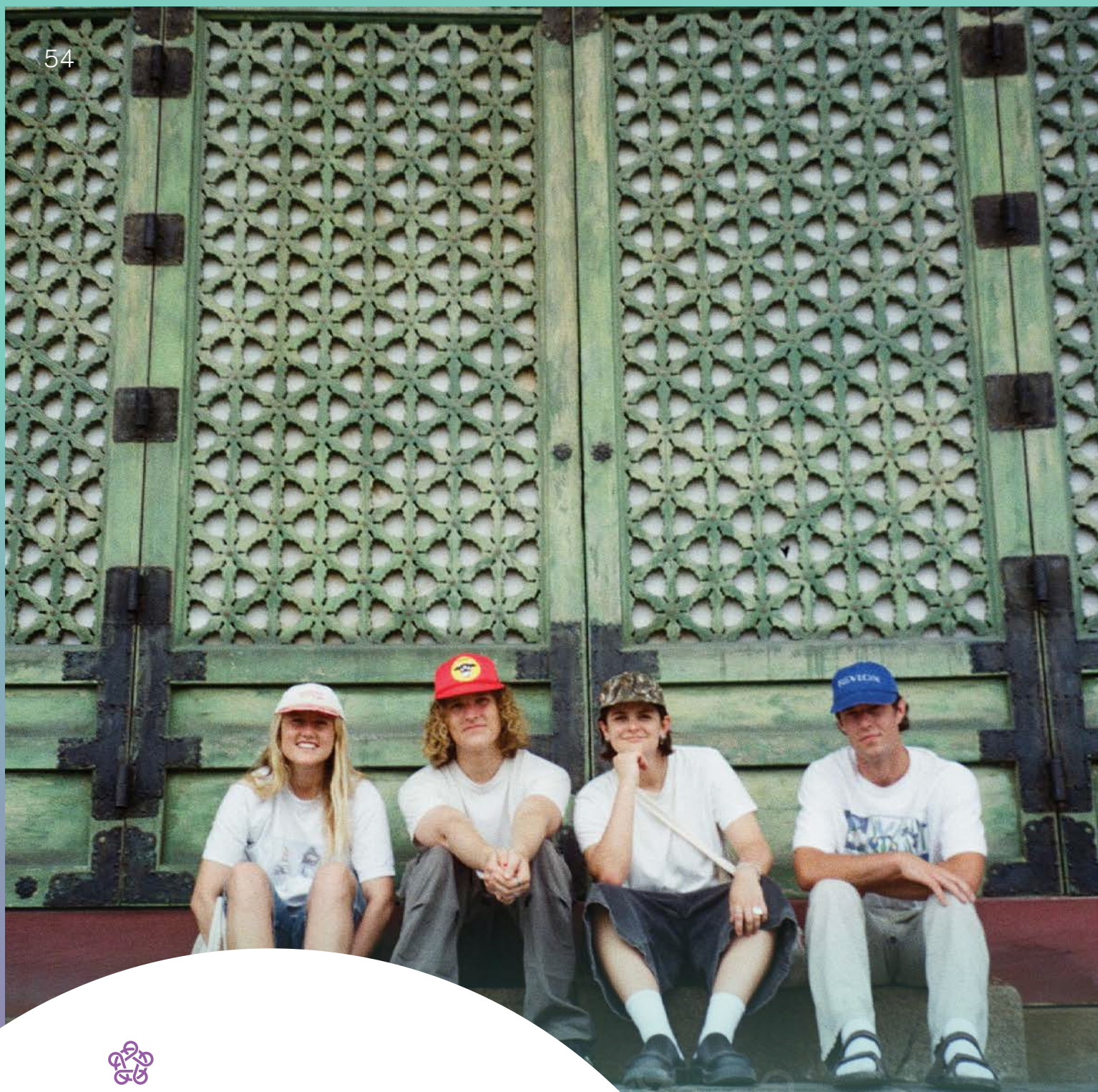
“New Zealand has a good trading partnership with Japan. Many of our values align and we share common interests.”

Male, 35–39 years, New Zealand European and Japanese, Gisborne

FIG 23: NEW ZEALANDERS' TRUST IN MAJOR AND MIDDLE POWERS

How much trust do you have in the following major powers to act responsibly in the world?





Spotlight: Travel to Asia

Where are New Zealanders travelling to and where do young New Zealanders most want to go on their OEs?



Where are New Zealanders travelling to?

Outside of Australia and the South Pacific, Asia is New Zealanders' most visited region.

New Zealanders made a total of 771,196 return trips to Asia in the year to January 2026, an increase of over 14 percent from the year before.²

Mainland China was the top destination, followed by India, Indonesia and Japan.

New Zealanders' travel to China increased almost 20 percent in the year to January 2026, likely facilitated by China's visa-free policy for New Zealand passport holders in place from July 2024 through to December 31, 2026.

Viet Nam, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Japan also saw increased travel in the order of 20 percent.

In the same period, New Zealanders made nine percent fewer trips to the United States.³

"I think of Japan and China and visiting these beautiful countries. I love how these places are safe to visit."

Female, 60–69 years, New Zealand European, Auckland

Where do New Zealanders most want to go on their OEs?

New Zealanders under 35 were asked where they would most want to go for an OE (overseas experience).

Asia was second only to Europe, with one in five under 35s selecting it as their preferred destination.

"I've seen lots of [South Korean] entertainment content which made me curious and interested."

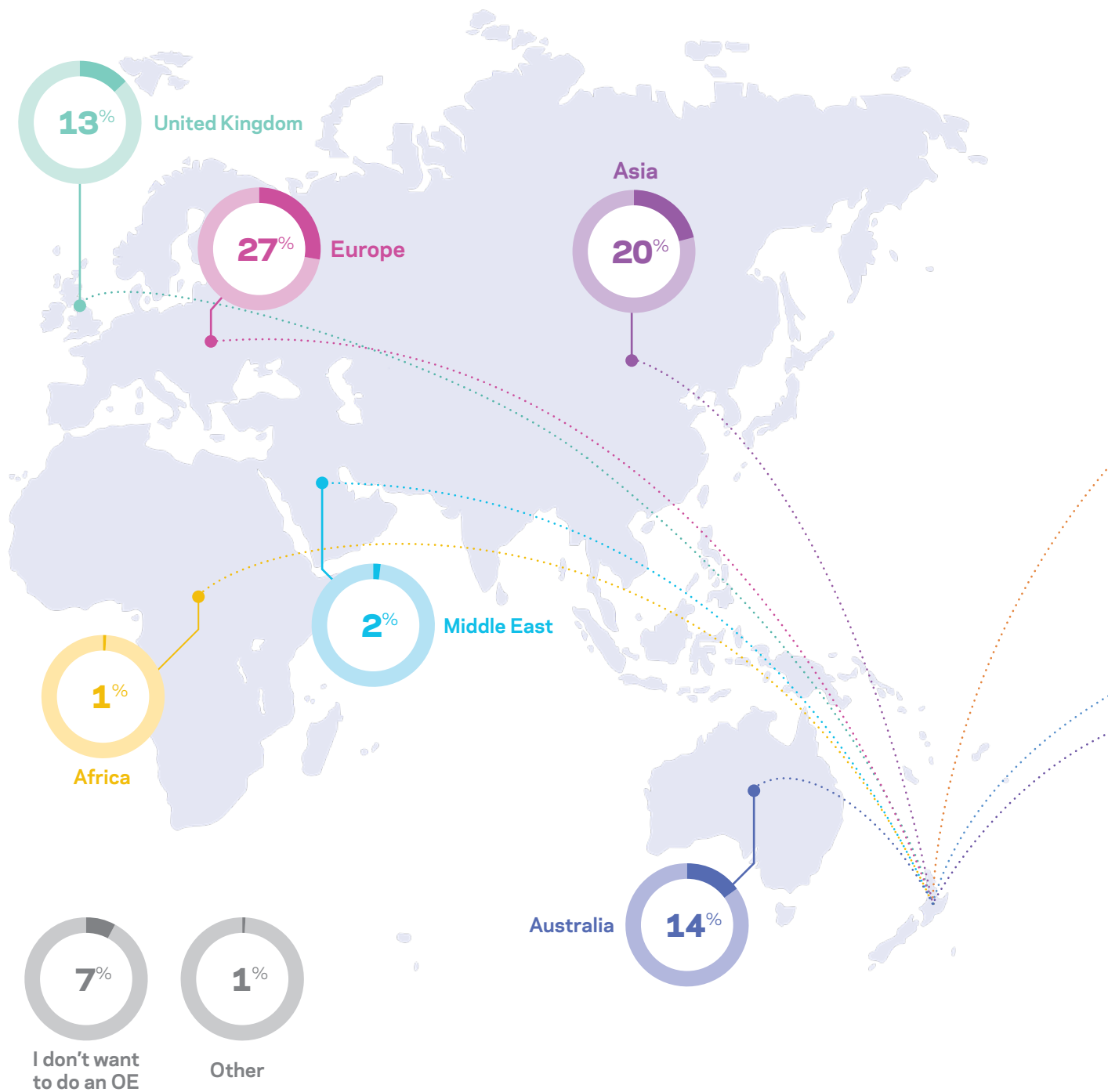
Female, 25–29 years, Southeast Asian, Auckland

² Includes travel for the purposes of holiday/vacation, visiting friends/relatives, business, education, conference/convention, as well as 'other' and 'not stated'.

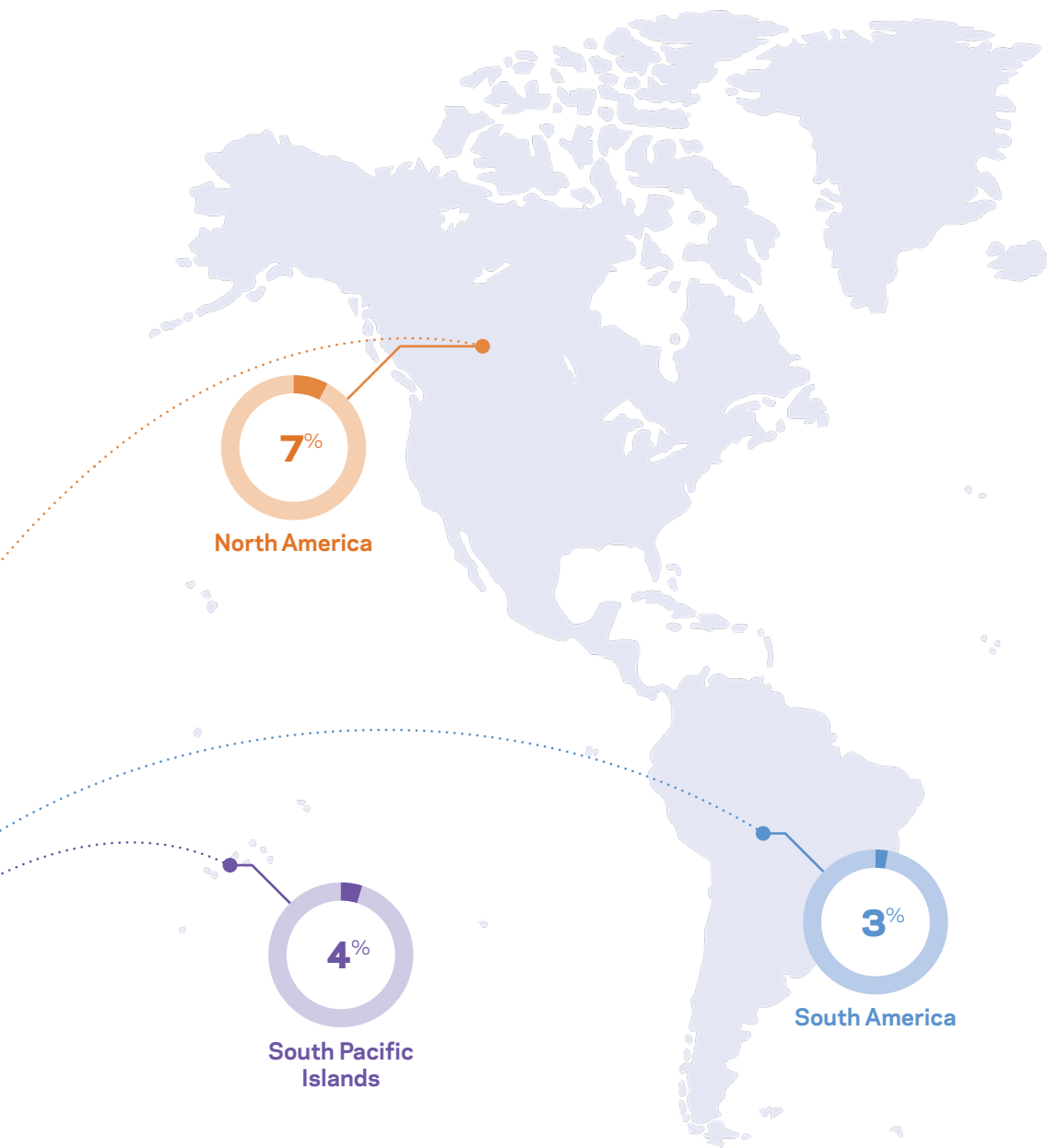
³ Stats NZ, 'International travel: January 2026'; 13 March 2026, <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/international-travel-january-2026/>.

FIG. 24: WHERE DO NEW ZEALANDERS MOST WANT TO GO FOR THEIR OE?

If you could, where would you most want to do an overseas experience (living and working overseas for a period of time)?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=704



Where in Asia do New Zealanders want to go?

Those who selected Asia were asked where in the region they would most like to go for their OE.

Japan is the clear top choice, with almost half (47 percent) naming it as their preferred OE destination. New Zealanders pointed to Japan's appealing culture and its reputation as a safe and respectful society. People also highlighted Japan's food culture and its beautiful natural environment.

South Korea and mainland China are a distant joint second (each selected by eight percent), followed closely by India (seven percent).

New Zealanders who are interested in doing an OE in South Korea said that curiosity in Korean culture, language, entertainment and food had helped spark interest in going there.

Those who selected China pointed to its rich and ancient cultural history as well as its advanced technology and infrastructure.

New Zealanders interested in India for an OE also mentioned its rich cultural landscape and the positive reputation of its people. Others pointed to its growing economy and having family links.

"It's always been a place on my bucket list as I love Japanese food but getting to work with Japanese people on a daily basis has made me more interested in working in Japan."

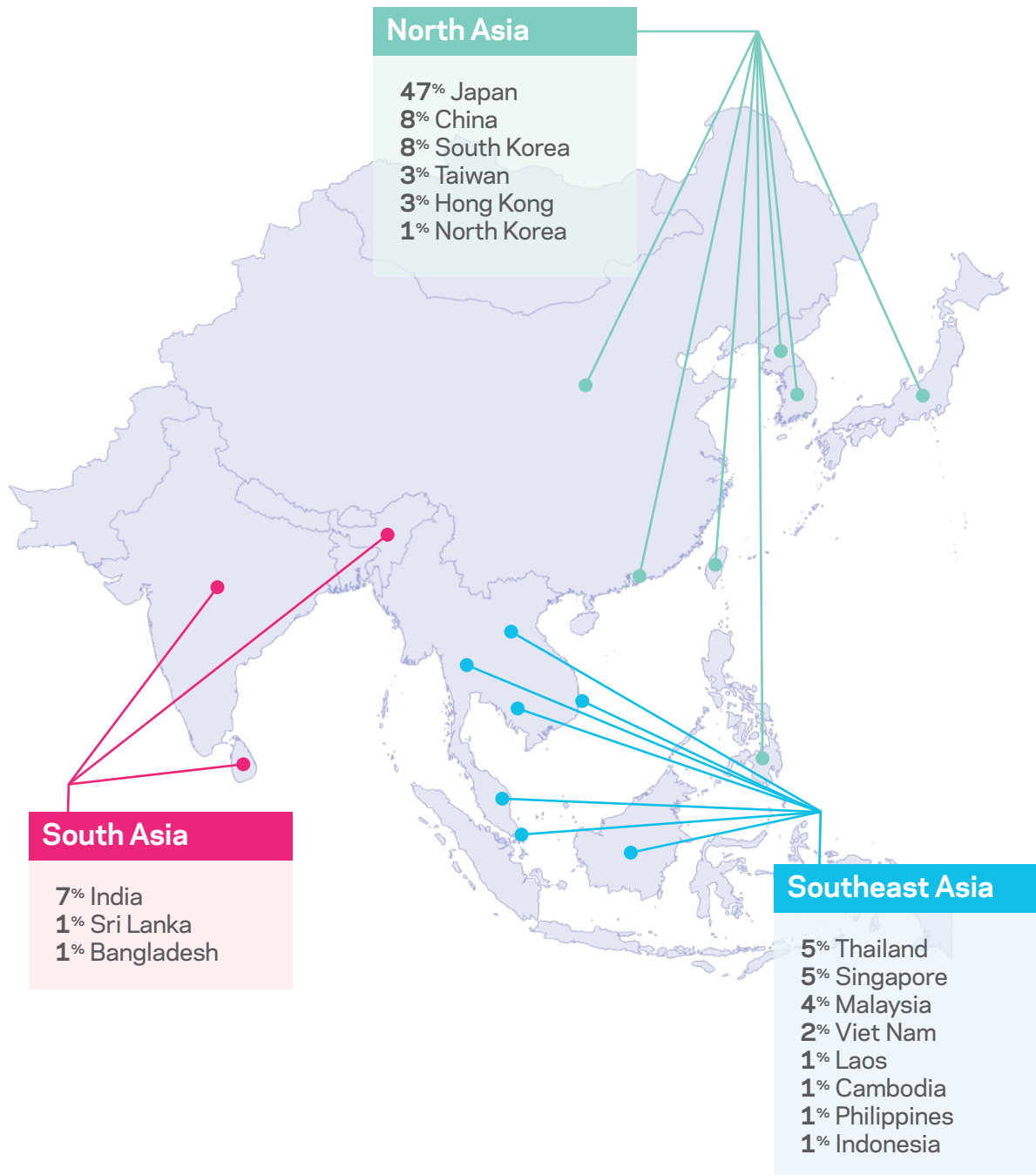
Female, 30-34 years, New Zealand European, Auckland

"I'm most drawn to China for an overseas living and working experience for its unmatched blend of rich ancient culture and cutting-edge modern development."

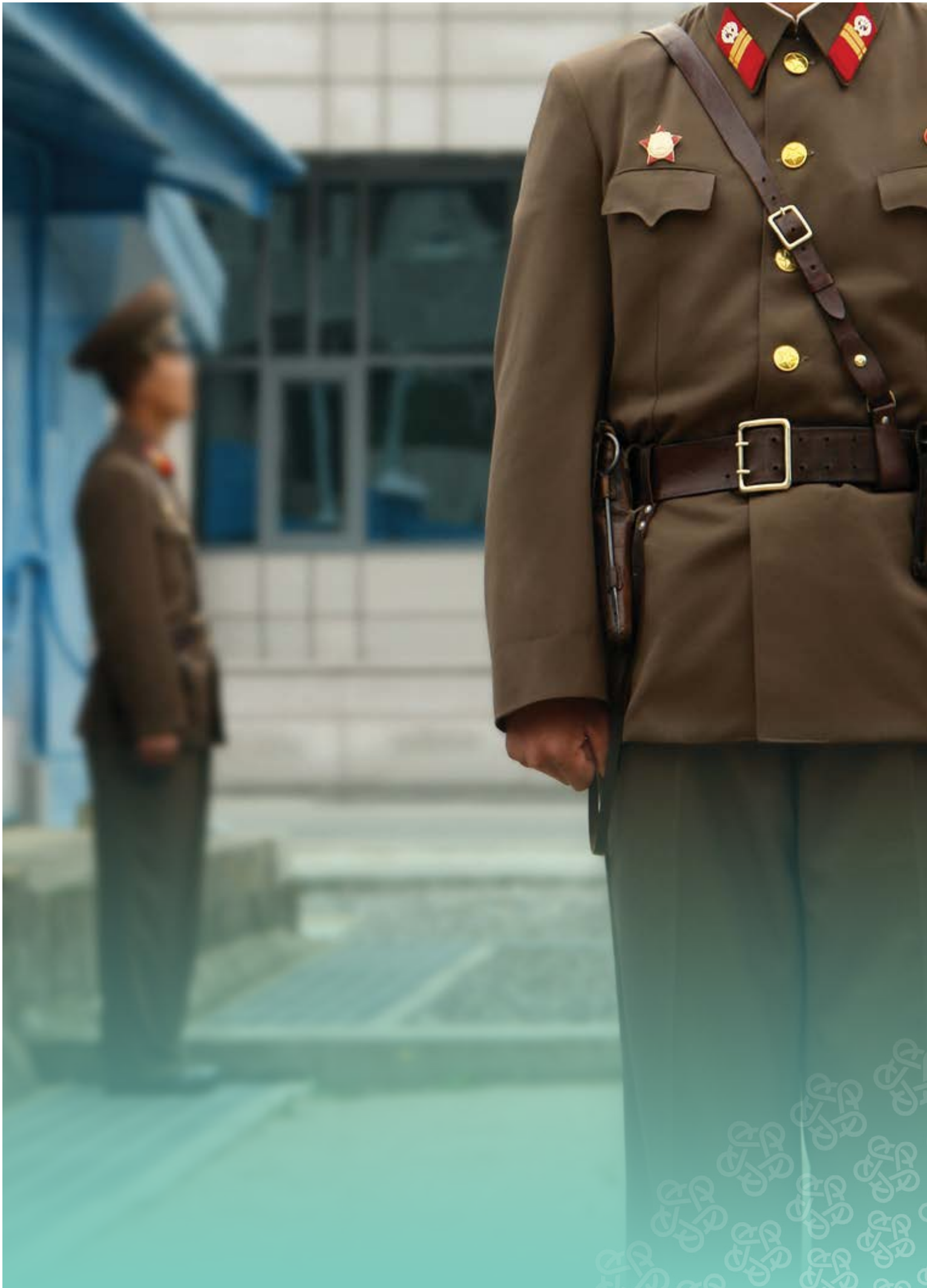
Female, 25-29 years, New Zealand European and Māori, Auckland

FIG. 25: WHERE IN ASIA ARE NEW ZEALANDERS INTERESTED IN DOING AN OE?

Where in Asia would you be most interested in doing an overseas experience (living and working overseas for a period of time)?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=141



Defence and security in the region

“Thailand is one of the key partners for New Zealand. Thailand is very important for trade and investment, and defence and security. There is a good market for New Zealand products, education and tourism.”

Male, 60-69 years, Southeast Asian, Auckland

Key findings

Fake news and misinformation continues to be seen as the **biggest threat** to New Zealand's vital interests, followed by climate change and the rise of authoritarian systems of government.

New Zealanders consider **Japan** New Zealand's most important **defence and security partner** in Asia, followed by Singapore.

Conflict prevention and peacekeeping are seen as the most important defence and security issues for New Zealand and countries in Asia to cooperate on.

New Zealanders see **China** and **New Zealand** as having the most **political influence in the South Pacific**, while New Zealand and Australia are seen as Pacific countries' most important development partners.



Misinformation continues to be seen as the biggest threat to New Zealand’s vital interests over the next ten years

For the second year in a row, fake news and misinformation is the only issue to be seen as a major concern by at least half of New Zealanders (51 percent).

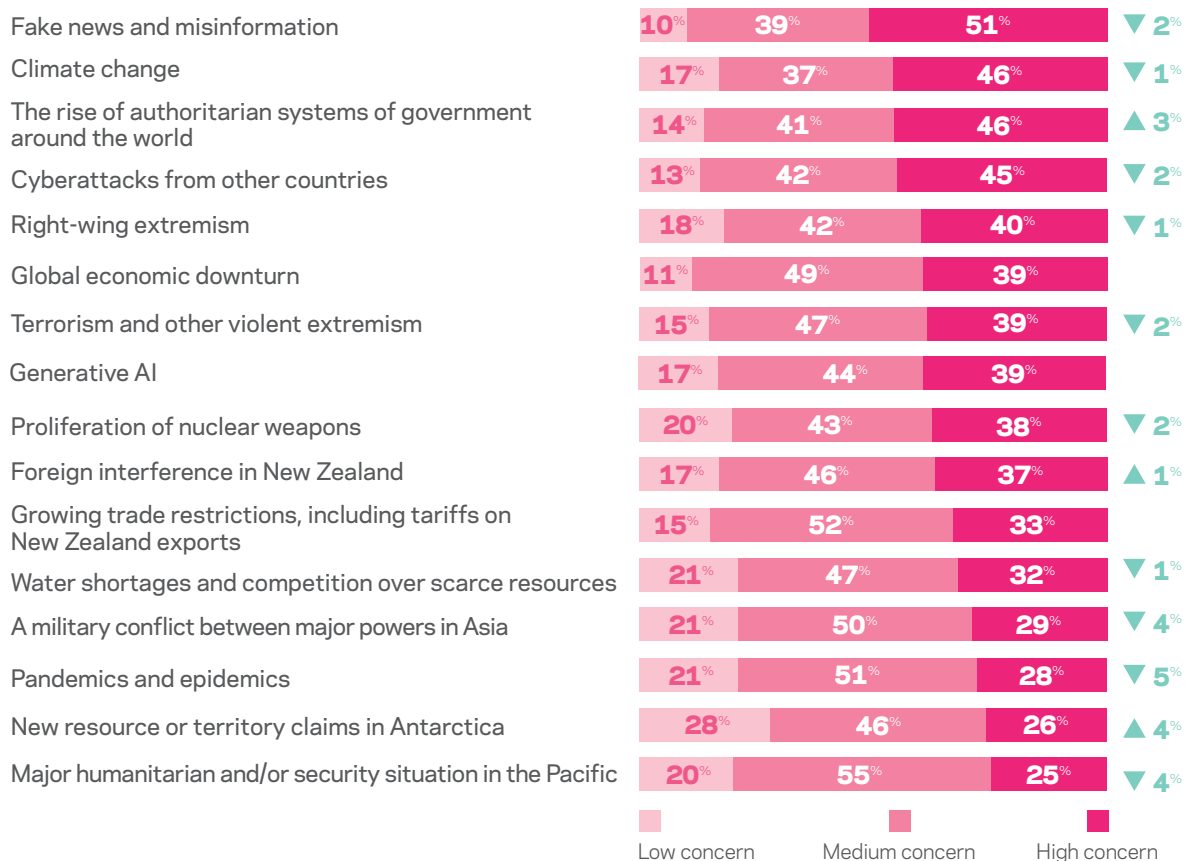
Concern about the rise of authoritarian systems of government is up three points from last year, ranking joint second with climate change (46 percent) and followed closely by cyberattacks (45 percent). Those with a university degree were more likely to be worried about climate change: 51 percent of university degree holders say they are highly concerned compared to 39 percent of the rest of the population.

Concern about generative AI comes in eighth place at 39 percent after being included in the survey for the first time. Growing trade restrictions, also included for the first time, are considered a major concern by a third of New Zealanders.

New Zealanders are feeling less worried about the possibility of a major military conflict in Asia, pandemics and epidemics, as well as a major humanitarian or security situation in the Pacific compared to the last survey. There is increased concern, however, about new resource claims in Antarctica (up four percentage points).

FIG. 26: WHAT ARE NEW ZEALANDERS MOST WORRIED ABOUT?

How concerned, or not, are you with the following possible threats to New Zealand’s vital interests over the next ten years?



▲ ▼ Indicates higher/lower compared to previous year

Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300, (2023) n=2,300

Japan continues to be New Zealand’s most important defence and security partner

Over half of New Zealanders (55 percent) say Japan is the most important defence and security partner for New Zealand to work with in Asia.

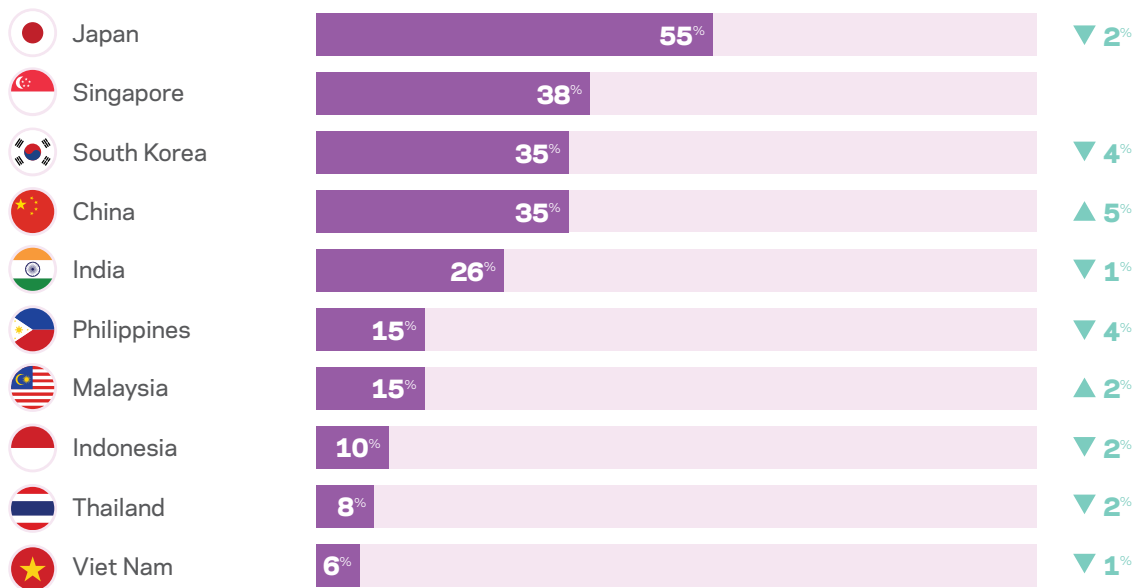
Japan is the only country to have been consistently selected by at least half of New Zealanders since 2021, when the question was first asked.

Singapore has overtaken South Korea to be seen as the second most important defence and security partner at 38 percent

China’s perceived importance has risen to 35 percent from 30 percent and now ties with South Korea at third equal. India holds steady as the fifth most important defence and security partner in the region.

FIG. 27: MOST IMPORTANT DEFENCE AND SECURITY PARTNERS

In terms of New Zealand’s defence and security, which Asian countries are New Zealand’s most important partners to work with?



▲ ▼ Indicates higher/lower compared to previous year

Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300



When it comes to defence and security, what issues should New Zealand and partners in Asia be addressing?

Conflict prevention and peacekeeping is seen as the most important area for New Zealand and countries in Asia to cooperate on when it comes to defence and security issues.

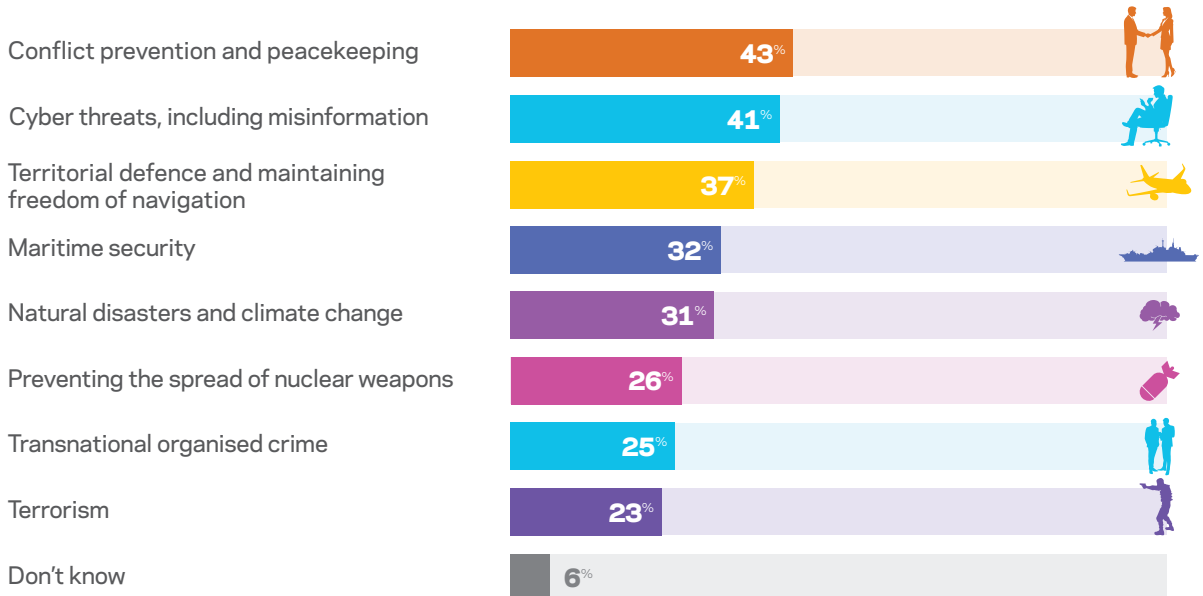
This was followed closely by cyber threats and misinformation, both of which rank among the issues New Zealanders see as the biggest threats to New Zealand's vital interests.

Territorial defence and maintaining freedom of navigation is in third place.

Responses differed along gender lines, with men more likely to emphasise the importance of cooperating to address cyber threats, territorial defence and maritime security. Women were more likely to place importance on preventing the spread of nuclear weapons as well as conflict prevention and peacekeeping efforts.

FIG. 28: MOST IMPORTANT DEFENCE AND SECURITY AREAS TO COOPERATE ON WITH ASIA

When it comes to defence and security, what are the top three most important issues for [insert country] and New Zealand to cooperate on addressing?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n= 1,712



China and New Zealand are seen as having the most political influence among Pacific countries

New Zealanders see China and New Zealand as having the most political influence among Pacific Island countries, equal at 26 percent.

Australia is seen as the next most politically influential, selected by 20 percent.

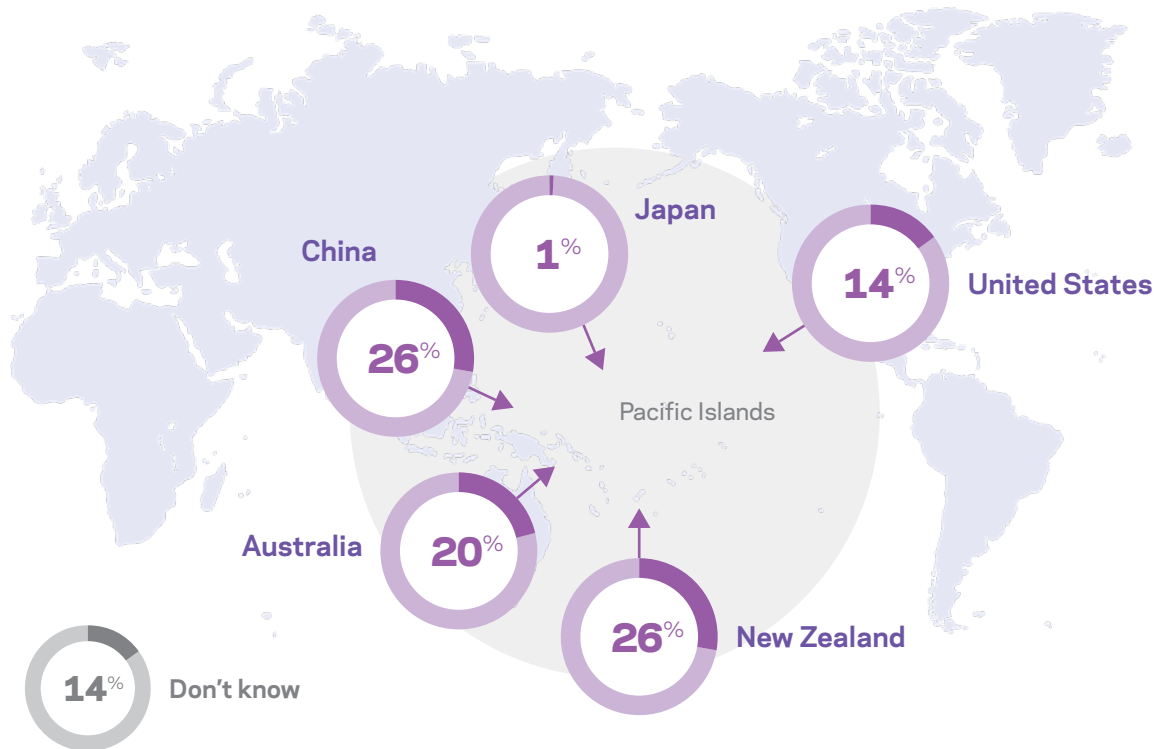
Just 14 percent see the United States as having the most political influence.

New Zealanders of Pacific descent are the most likely to see New Zealand as wielding the most influence in the Pacific, with 47 percent selecting it compared to 24 percent of non-Pacific New Zealanders.

Interestingly, and compared to other demographic groups, those with Asian heritage were more likely to see the United States as having the most political influence when compared to non-Asian New Zealanders (20 percent versus 13 percent). New Zealanders with whakapapa Māori are also more likely than non-Māori to see the United States as wielding the most political influence at 18 percent.

FIG. 29: PERCEPTIONS OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN THE PACIFIC

Which of the following do you think has the most political influence among Pacific Island countries?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300



New Zealand and Australia are seen as the most important development partners for Pacific countries

Almost a third of New Zealanders (32 percent) see New Zealand as the most important development partner for Pacific countries, followed closely by Australia at 28 percent.

Around one in five (19 percent) New Zealanders see China as the most important development partner, while just five percent name the United States.

Again, New Zealanders of Pacific heritage are most likely to select New Zealand as the most important development partner for Pacific countries (41 percent compared to 32 percent of the rest of the population).





A man with short dark hair, wearing a brown suit jacket over a white t-shirt and brown trousers, stands next to a patterned curtain. The curtain has a repeating circular motif in gold and brown. The background is a plain white wall.

PART 3: LOOKING FORWARD

This section looks at how Asia is expected to impact New Zealand in the coming decades, and at how New Zealand should strengthen and develop its relationships across Asia. It also examines how New Zealanders are consuming Asia-related news, and includes a spotlight on how New Zealanders are engaging with entertainment from Asia.

A decorative pattern of stylized, overlapping letters in a light red color, set against a darker red background, located in the bottom right corner of the page.



How is Asia **expected to impact New Zealand** in the decades ahead?

“I think everywhere is and could be important to Aotearoa’s future because we have to work together to overcome climate change.”

Female, 35-39 years, New Zealand European and other European, Wellington



Key findings

New Zealanders are generally **optimistic about Asia's impact on New Zealand's future**, particularly when it comes to technology, tourism, economic growth and investment.

New Zealanders are feeling more uncertain about how Asia's **political and security situation** will impact New Zealand and are least optimistic about the impact of **environmental issues**.

New Zealanders would most like to see **increased investment** from Asia in the areas of science and technology research and development, biotechnology, and infrastructure and transport.

New Zealanders see **doing business and trade together** as critical to building Asia relations.



New Zealanders are most optimistic about Asia's impact on technology, tourism and economic growth

Since 2019, New Zealanders have been asked how they think key developments in Asia will impact New Zealand in the coming decades.

At least four in five New Zealanders expect inbound tourism (84 percent) and technology and innovation in Asia (83 percent) to positively impact New Zealand over the next 10-to-20 years.

Around three quarters of New Zealanders also expect economic growth in Asia (75 percent) and investment from Asia in New Zealand (72 percent) to have a positive impact on New Zealand's future. These findings are broadly consistent with the last survey.

While over half of New Zealanders continue to feel optimistic about the impact of immigration from Asia to New Zealand (52 percent), this is down four percentage points from the previous survey.

New Zealanders are also feeling more uncertain about the impact of the political and security situation in Asia, with 36 percent expecting it to have a positive impact, down from 40 percent in the previous year.

New Zealanders are least optimistic about the impact of environmental issues, with just 29 percent expecting a positive impact, down two points from the last survey.

Those of Asian heritage are more likely than other New Zealanders to expect each of these areas to impact New Zealand's future positively, as are those who said they know at least a fair amount about Asia.

“South Korea is known for its innovative technology. Its geopolitical position [and situation] would have a knock-on effect in the Asia Pacific region.”

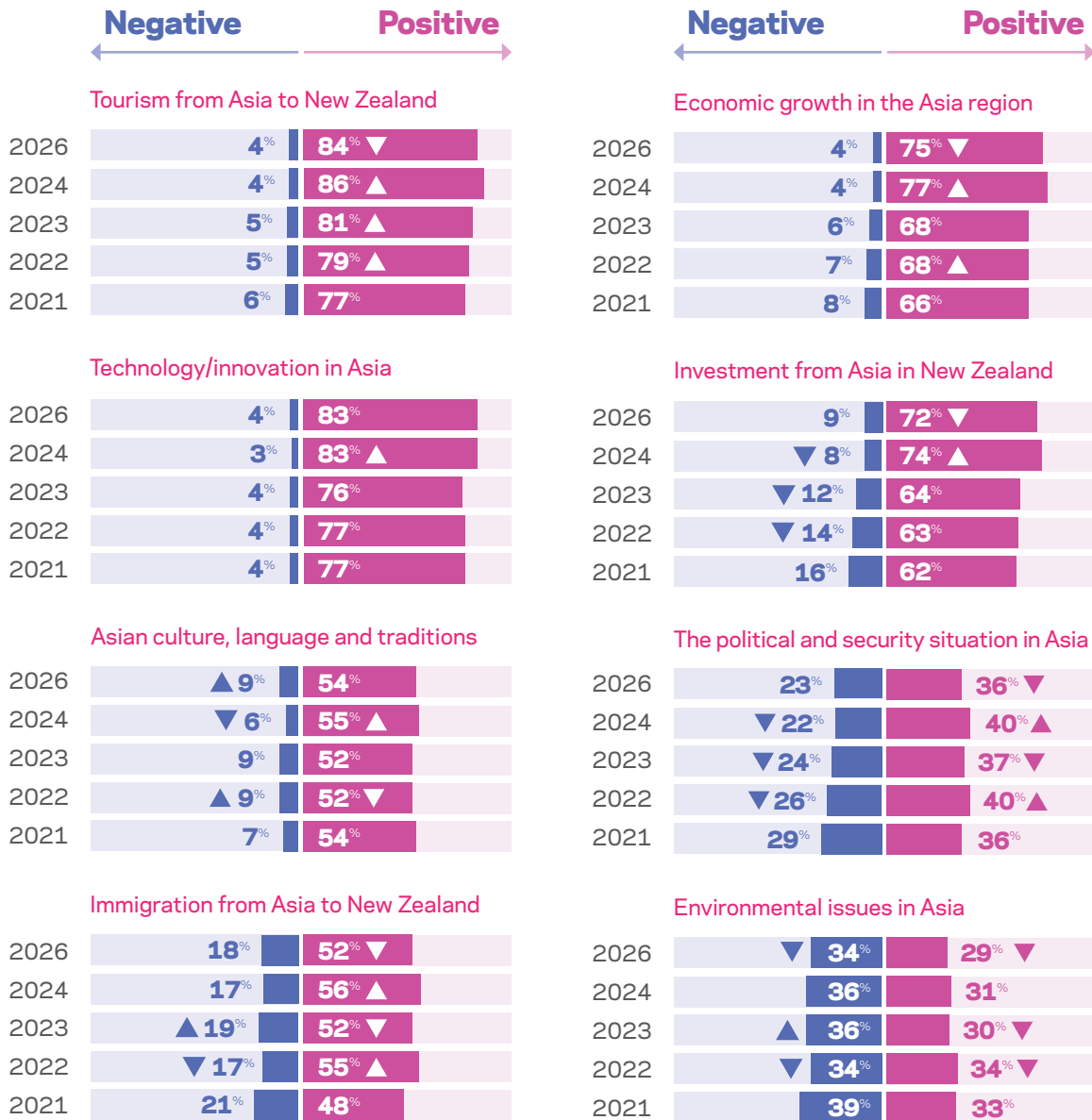
Female, 35-29 years, New Zealand European and Chinese, Auckland

“We would greatly benefit from a closer relationship with and more immigration from Singapore.”

Female, 40-49 years, New Zealand European, Canterbury

FIG. 30: HOW NEW ZEALANDERS THINK ASIA WILL IMPACT NEW ZEALAND'S FUTURE OVER TIME

What kind of impact do you think each of the following will have on New Zealand's future, in the next 10-20 years?



▲ ▼ Indicates higher/lower compared to previous year

Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300



In which areas do New Zealanders most want to see investment from Asia?

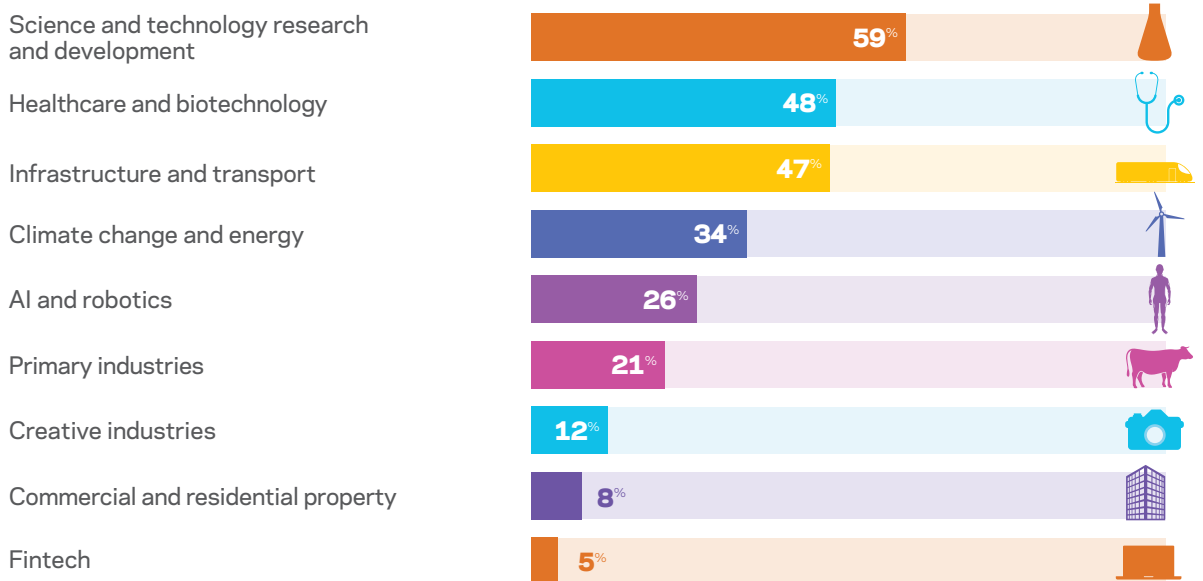
Those who said they expected investment from Asia to have a positive impact on New Zealand were asked in which areas they most wanted to see more investment.

Science and technology research and development tops the list, selected by 59 percent of those surveyed.

Healthcare and biotechnology came in second (48 percent), followed closely by infrastructure and transport (47 percent).

Over a third (34 percent) said they wanted to see more investment from Asian countries in climate change and energy.

FIG. 31: WHERE DO NEW ZEALANDERS WANT TO SEE MORE INVESTMENT FROM ASIA?
 In what areas would you most like to see more investment from Asia in New Zealand?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n = 1,672

How does New Zealand continue to build relationships with Asia?

New Zealanders were asked about the importance of the following 13 activities for growing New Zealand's relationships across Asia.

Doing business and trading together once again tops the list, with 72 percent of New Zealanders selecting it as most important for growing relationships.

Three other activities are considered important by at least half of New Zealanders: the New Zealand government having a long-term vision and plan for growing Asia relations (68 percent), having our governments speak to each other regularly (58 percent), and sending and receiving tourists (50 percent).

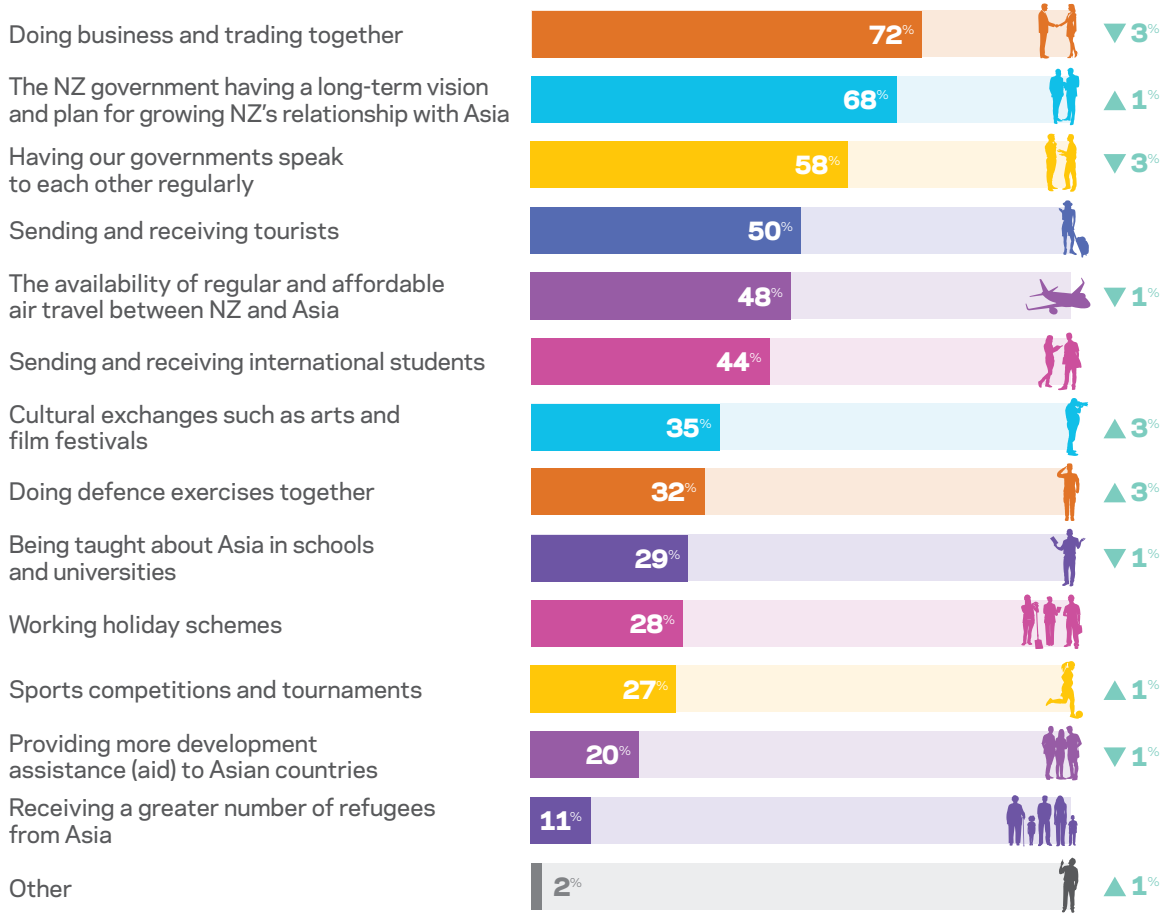
The perceived importance of activities varies by age. For instance, New Zealanders over 60 are more likely to place emphasis on the importance of doing business together than younger New Zealanders (85 percent of over 60s compared to 64 percent of under 60s).

“A lot of immigrants from the Philippines bring a lot of value into various job sectors especially in healthcare, so for that I view [the Philippines] as a friend.”

Female, 25-29 years, African, Waikato

FIG. 32: MOST IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES FOR GROWING NEW ZEALAND'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ASIA

Which of these activities do you think are important for helping to grow New Zealand's relationship with Asia?



▲ ▼ Indicates higher/lower compared to previous year

Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300



How does **media** **and entertainment** **consumption influence** **perceptions of Asia?**

"I love [South Korean] food and culture,
and I can read and write Hangul."

Female, 25-29 years, Māori and Indian, Auckland



Key findings

New Zealanders' **recall of Asia-related news** declines to a new low.

While traditional media continues to be the main source of Asia-related news, New Zealanders are increasingly reliant on **social media platforms** such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram.

Around half of New Zealanders think **Asia receives sufficient coverage in New Zealand media**, but 37 percent think there could be more.

Over half of New Zealanders think New Zealand **media coverage of Asia is reasonably balanced**, while one in five think it is too negative.

A third of New Zealanders consume entertainment from Asia at least monthly, with Japanese and Korean entertainment being most popular.



Recall of Asia-related news declines to a new low

New Zealanders' recall of seeing, hearing or reading Asia-related news in the past three months has continued to decline.

In 2026, just 35 percent of New Zealanders said they could recall Asia-related news or media from the three months prior to the survey, down from 37 percent in the previous poll. For the first time since the question was asked in 2010, the number of New Zealanders who say they cannot recall news about Asia is greater than those who can.

New Zealanders' ability to recall Asia-related news has been steadily declining since 2010, when 70 percent said they could recall seeing or hearing recent Asia news.

Does Asia receive the right amount of news coverage?

Around half of New Zealanders (47 percent) think that Asia receives about the right amount of news coverage in New Zealand media.

Thirty-seven percent, however, say that Asia receives too little coverage, down from 44 percent in the previous survey. Those who rate their knowledge of Asia highly are more likely to say that Asia receives too little coverage (40 percent compared to 27 percent of those who feel they know less than a fair amount about Asia).

New Zealand's Asia coverage seen as reasonably balanced

In terms of balance, over half (54 percent) of New Zealanders think that New Zealand media's portrayal of Asia is 'about right'.

Just under one in five (19 percent) think New Zealand media is too negative in its Asia coverage, while just six percent say that it is too positive, both broadly consistent with previous surveys.

New Zealanders of Asian heritage are more likely than other ethnic groups to say that coverage of Asia is too negative (29 percent compared to 17 percent of non-Asian New Zealanders).

Social media, podcasts key sources of Asia-related news

While traditional media remains New Zealanders' top source for Asia news (60 percent), holding steady from the year prior, social media is an increasingly close second (up three percentage points at 54 percent).

Websites, including online newspapers and magazines, rank third at 52 percent.

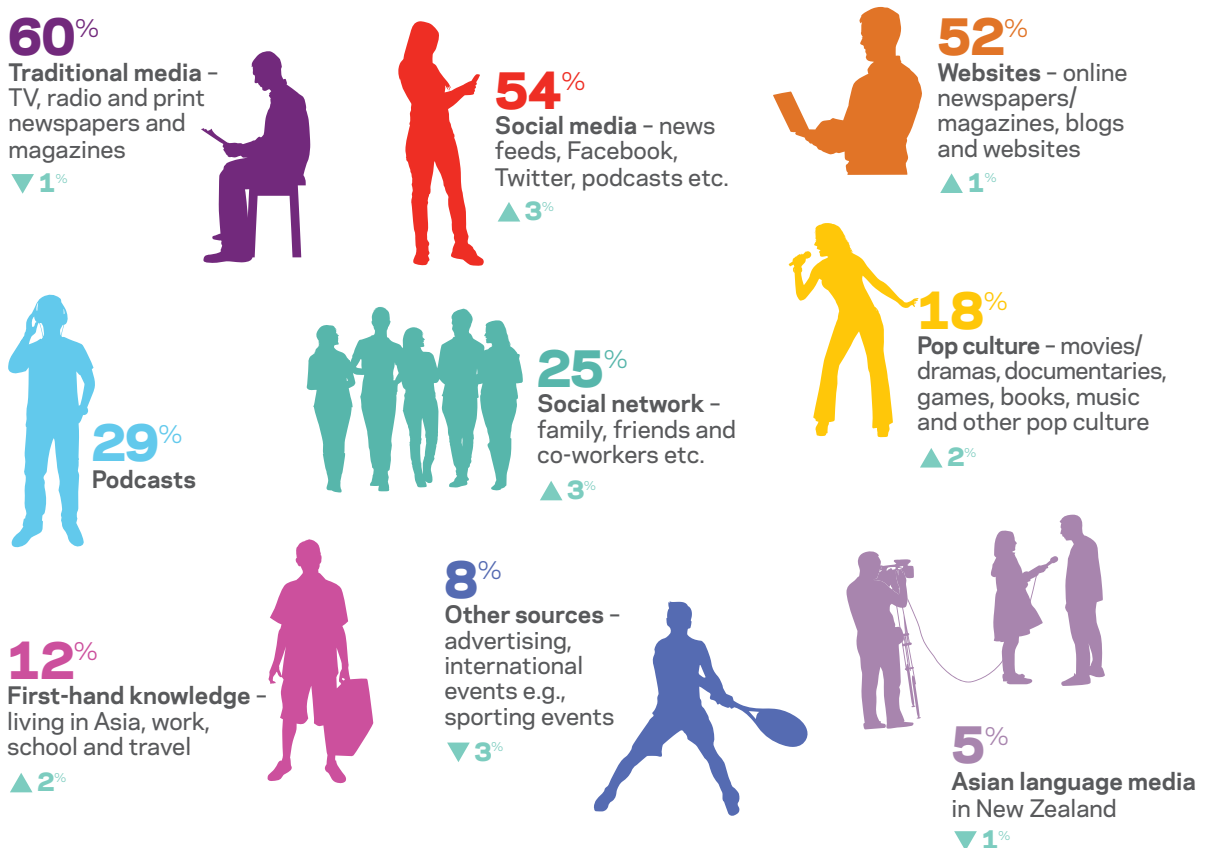
Podcasts, included as a separate option for the first time, are in fourth place.

News sources vary by age group. Eighty-one percent of those over 60 cite traditional media as a main source of Asia-related news, compared to 47 percent of those under 30 (up four points from the last report). By contrast, 69 percent of those under 30 say social media is a main source, compared to 50 percent of those 30 and above.

New Zealanders over 60 are also more likely to get their Asia news from podcasts (35 percent) than those under 30 (24 percent), while those under 30 are more likely to say pop culture is a key source (22 percent compared to seven percent of those over 60).

FIG. 33: WHERE DO NEW ZEALANDERS GET THEIR ASIA-RELATED NEWS FROM?

From what news or media sources have you received most of your information about Asia-related events, issues or people?



▲ ▼ Indicates higher/lower compared to previous year

Base: New Zealanders who have seen/heard Asia-related media in the last three months - (2026) n=812



Which social media platforms are most popular?

Those who said social media is a main source of Asia-related news were asked which platforms they rely on most.

Facebook is the top platform, named by 64 percent.

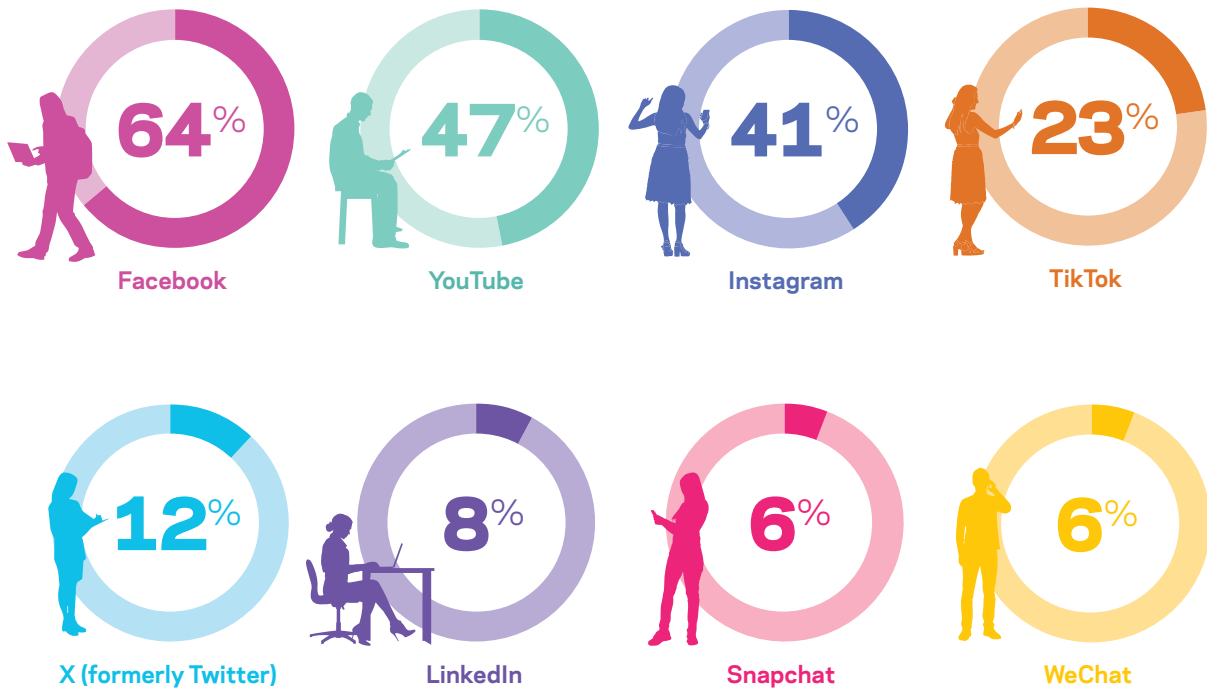
YouTube is a distant second with 47 percent mention, followed closely by Instagram at 41 percent. TikTok is in fourth place at 23 percent.

Social media use tends to differ between men and women. Men are more likely to frequent YouTube, while TikTok and Instagram are more popular among female users.

Unsurprisingly, Facebook is also more popular among those over 60 (75 percent compared to 49 percent of those under 30), while Instagram and TikTok are more popular among younger users. WeChat is significantly more popular among New Zealanders of Asian heritage than non-Asian New Zealanders.

FIG. 34: WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS DO NEW ZEALANDERS GET THEIR ASIA-RELATED NEWS FROM?

Through which social media platforms do you receive most of your information about Asia-related events, issues or people?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n= 430



Spotlight: Entertainment from Asia

A third of New Zealanders consume Asia-related entertainment every month or more, but what are they watching and listening to?

A third of New Zealanders consume Asia-related entertainment every month

A third of New Zealanders (34 percent) consume entertainment made in or relating to Asia at least monthly, with 17 percent doing so at least weekly.

Younger New Zealanders are more likely to be frequent consumers, with almost half (47 percent) saying they consume Asia-related entertainment at least monthly compared to 29 percent of those 30 and over.

New Zealanders of Asian heritage are also more likely to engage with Asian entertainment, with 70 percent consuming entertainment at least monthly compared to 26 percent of New Zealanders of other backgrounds.

New Zealanders of Pacific and Māori descent are also more likely to be regular consumers, with 45 percent of Pacific New Zealanders and 42 percent of Māori doing so at least monthly.

34%

of New Zealanders
consume Asia-related
entertainment at
least monthly

"I love [Japanese] culture as they're very polite and respectful. Also love gaming and manga."

Male, 15-17 years, New Zealand European and other European, Nelson

"I admire [Indian] culture and tikanga. I would love to immerse myself and learn hands-on the stories and experiences."

Female, 25-29 years, New Zealand European and Māori, Auckland

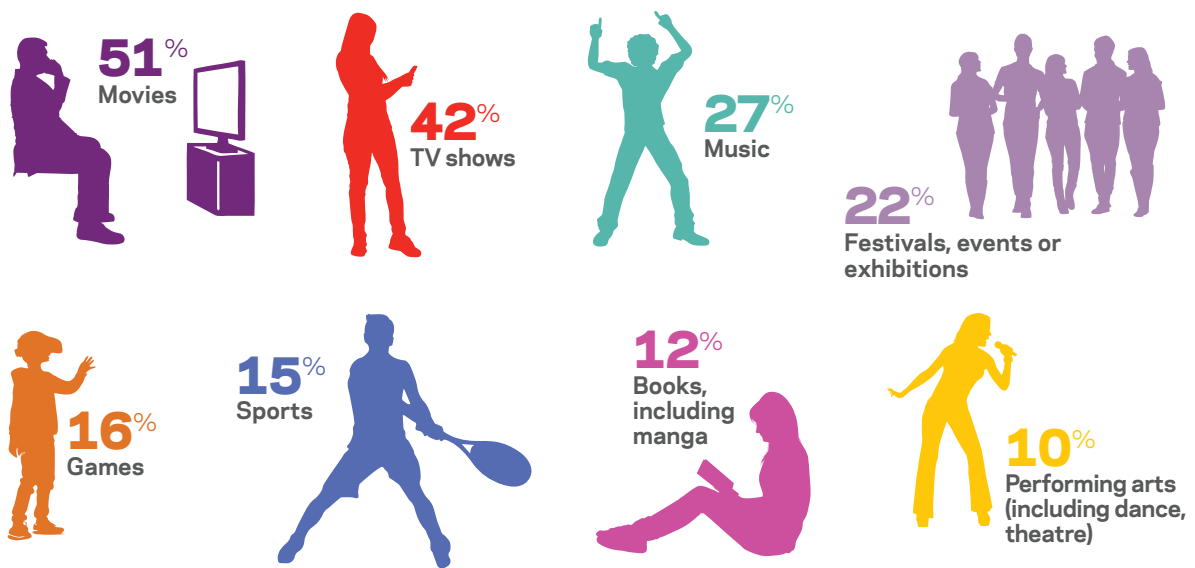
What types of Asia-related entertainment are New Zealanders enjoying?

Movies and TV shows are the most frequently enjoyed forms of Asia-related entertainment (51 percent and 42 percent respectively), followed

by music (27 percent) and attending festivals, events and exhibitions (22 percent).

FIG. 35: NEW ZEALANDERS' MOST FREQUENTLY CONSUMED TYPES OF ASIA-RELATED ENTERTAINMENT

What type of Asia-related entertainment do you enjoy most frequently?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n= 1,506

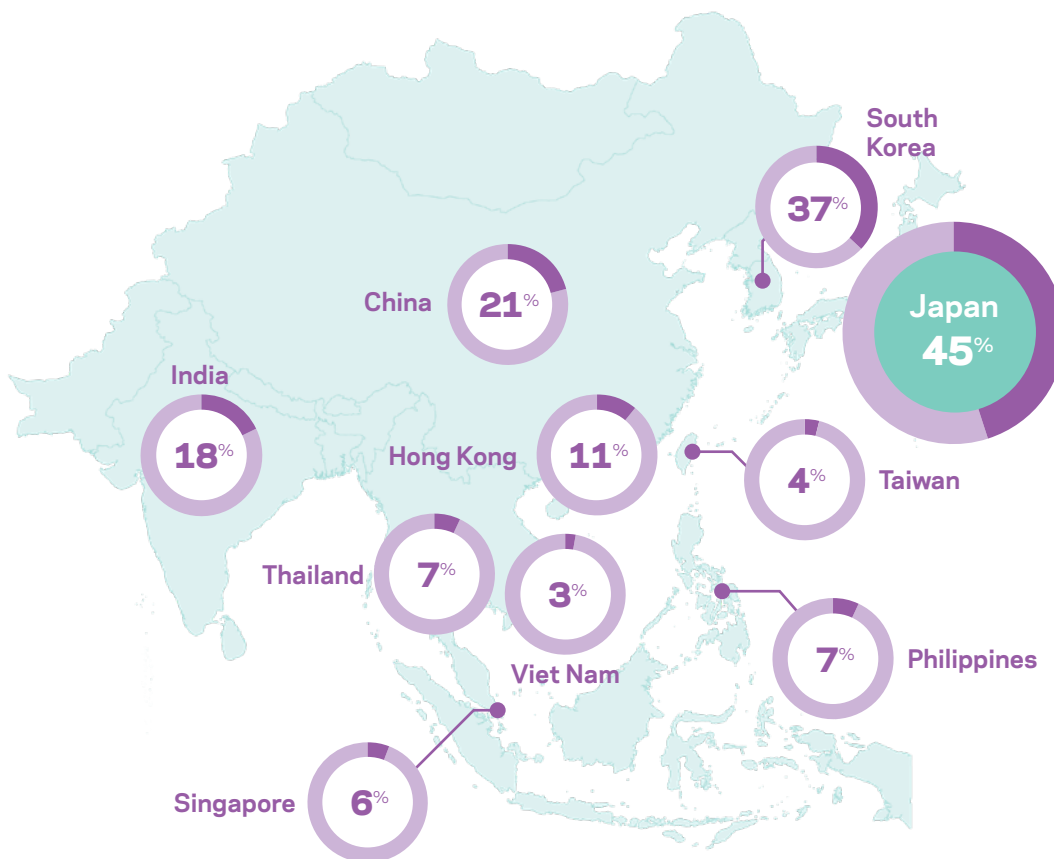
Which places are producing New Zealanders' favourite Asia-related entertainment?

Japan is the biggest source of Asian entertainment consumed among New Zealanders, followed by entertainment and content from South Korea.

New Zealanders are also frequent consumers of entertainment from mainland China, India and Hong Kong.

FIG. 36: WHICH PLACES PRODUCE NEW ZEALANDERS' FAVOURITE ENTERTAINMENT?

Which place in Asia produces the entertainment you enjoy the most?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300

***Squid Game* is New Zealanders' favourite Asian TV show, *Parasite* favourite film**

New Zealanders were asked to name their favourite Asian film or TV show.

Just over half of those asked gave an answer. Responses were many and diverse, reflecting the mainstreaming of Asian cinema and television. New Zealanders mentioned everything from arthouse films such as Hong Kong cult classic *In the Mood for Love* to Japanese reality dating show *Terrace House*.

South Korean films and TV shows, however, dominated responses. Netflix's dystopian series *Squid Game* tops the list, with over 170 mentions. The 2019 South Korean dark comedy *Parasite* is New Zealanders' favourite Asian film (mentioned over 70 times), while the United States-made, Singapore-set 2019 film *Crazy Rich Asians* comes in third, followed by the American-made but Korean-influenced 2025 film *KPop Demon Hunters*. The South Korean reality TV competition series *Physical: 100* and the zombie film series *Train to Busan* are also among the most mentioned. 'K-dramas' (Korean TV dramas) more generally were another popular response.

Two Japanese series, *One Piece* and *Alice in Borderland*, also garnered a significant number of mentions, as did the longstanding Japanese franchises, *Pokémon* and *Dragon Ball Z*. Many New Zealanders expressed a general love of anime and the Japanese animation studio, Studio Ghibli, with films such as *Spirited Away* and *Ponyo* getting particular mention.

Kung fu and martial arts as a subgenre were also frequently mentioned, with many singling out Hong Kong-American martial artist Bruce Lee and the Hong Kong film series *Ip Man*.

New Zealanders also expressed a general fondness for India's Hindi-language Bollywood film industry.

FIG. 37: NEW ZEALANDERS' FAVOURITE ASIA-RELATED TV SHOWS AND FILMS

What is your favourite Asian film or TV show?



Base: All New Zealanders - (2026) n=2,300



APPENDICES

This section provides the background context of the survey, the methodology used and detail on the sample profiles.



Background, methodology and sample profiles

ABOUT THE ANNUAL PERCEPTIONS OF ASIA AND ASIAN PEOPLES SURVEY

Since 1997, the Foundation has undertaken regular research to monitor New Zealanders' perceptions of Asia, focused on understanding their views of the barriers to and benefits of relationships across Asia.

The research helps inform the Foundation's policy direction, including identifying ways in which the Foundation might work to foster stronger relationships with Asia and how to better prepare New Zealanders to engage confidently in Asia.

Survey content

A core set of questions has been included over time to allow for comparisons between years to be made. Research content has evolved over time. It includes questions about:

- The perceived importance of Asia
- The perceived benefits to New Zealand of a relationship with Asia
- Perceptions of Asian peoples and cultures
- Perceived knowledge of Asia
- Involvement with Asian cultures
- Asia-related interests
- Media perceptions and consumption.

METHODOLOGY

Main survey

The quantitative survey was conducted via an online self-completion methodology (used since 2017).

Respondents were drawn from a mix of panels: 30% from Kantar's Consumer Link panel, 70% from Ipsos New Zealand's blended samples.

Note: prior to 2023, the research was conducted using Kantar New Zealand's online panels. Some minor changes are possible in metrics, given the change in panel.

A nationally representative sample of 2,300 respondents aged 15 years and over completed the survey. Fieldwork dates were between 21 January and 18 February 2026. In 2026, the total sample size was n=2,300 respondents.

A slight change in the timing of fieldwork from November/December to January/February means there is no annual survey data for the 2025 year. The 2025 report used survey data collected in November and December 2024 and a supplementary mini-poll conducted in March 2025.

New questions in 2026 cover the following topics:

- Why countries are seen as important to New Zealand's future
- Which country in Asia is seen as the most likeminded to New Zealand
- The most important defence and security issues for New Zealand and countries in Asia to cooperate on
- The countries seen as having the most political influence among Pacific countries
- The countries seen as the most important development partners for Pacific countries
- The regions and places younger New Zealanders are most interested in going for an OE
- The areas and industries in which New Zealanders most want to see increased investment from Asia
- The social media platforms New Zealanders use to get their Asia-related news
- Which places in Asia New Zealanders consume the most Asia-related entertainment from, and New Zealanders' favourite films and TV series.

Questions that were **not included in the 2026 survey** included:

- Military conflicts most likely to occur in Asia in the next ten years
- The impact of AUKUS on the Asia region
- The three Asian countries New Zealand could put extra effort into developing relationships with, and reasons for selecting these countries
- Whether New Zealand's economic interests or democratic values are more important at times of tension in relationships with Asia
- What New Zealand should give greatest priority to in its relationship with India
- Confidence in dealing with people from Asian cultures
- The Asian language respondents would most like to learn, and the most helpful way of learning and/or retaining that language
- Asia-related topics recalled in the media in recent months
- The most important regions for New Zealand media to have foreign correspondents.

Data analysis

Coding of open-ended data: Open-ended questions were post-coded into themes.

Post-coded questions included:

- Top of mind associations with Asia
- Reasons respondents view countries as important
- The sports teams and competitions followed and the ways they support learning about Asia.

Data weighting: The survey data was weighted for the population aged 18 years and over using 2023 Census data to ensure final results were representative of the New Zealand population by gender, age, region and ethnicity.

Details about the sample profile (unweighted and weighted) are included.

NOTES TO REPORT

Analysis

This report presents the results from a survey of n=2,300 New Zealanders aged 15 years and over, conducted online using a blend of online panels and non-panel sources between 21 January and 18 February 2026. The average survey length was 19 minutes.

Results from previous surveys are also presented in this report where questions are comparable with those asked in 2026.

Survey results have been weighted using 2023 Census data so that they are representative of the New Zealand population by age, gender, region, and ethnicity.

Significant differences are reported at 95% confidence. Where results do not sum to 100%, this may be due to rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of 'don't know' or 'prefer not to answer' responses.

The maximum margin of error, at the 95% confidence level, is ±2.0%.

SAMPLE PROFILE

The tables below show details of the sample achieved in 2026. The first column shows the proportion of respondents who responded to the survey (unweighted), while the second column shows the proportion of the total sample, for the weighted subgroups.

Sample profile tables

Gender	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Male	52%	51%
Female	47%	48%
Another gender	0%	0%

Age	Unweighted %	Weighted %
15-17 years	2%	3%
18-24 years	10%	13%
25-39 years	26%	26%
40-59 years	32%	31%
60 plus years	30%	28%

Region	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Northland	4%	4%
Auckland	36%	33%
Waikato	9%	10%
Bay of Plenty	6%	7%
Gisborne	0%	1%
Hawke's Bay	3%	4%
Taranaki	3%	2%
Manawatū/ Whanganui	5%	5%
Wellington	13%	11%
Nelson/ Marlborough/ Tasman	4%	4%
West Coast	1%	1%
Canterbury	13%	13%
Otago/ Southland	6%	7%

Urban status	Unweighted %	Weighted %
A major centre	54%	51%
A provincial city	26%	28%
A provincial centre	13%	13%
A rural area	7%	8%

Ethnicity-related aspects of the sample are as follows:

Ethnicity*	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Māori	14%	16%
Pākehā	74%	73%
Pacific Peoples	7%	8%
Asian	17%	17%
Other	3%	3%

Asian heritage	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Southeast Asian	22%	22%
Chinese	34%	33%
Indian	31%	30%
Korean	4%	4%
Japanese	3%	3%
Other Asian	12%	12%

Born in New Zealand	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Yes	68%	70%
No	31%	30%
Prefer not to say	0%	0%

Years living in New Zealand	Unweighted %	Weighted %
1–5 years	4%	4%
5–10 years	5%	5%
10–20 years	13%	15%
20 plus years	79%	77%

Education qualifications	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Primary/Intermediate school	1%	2%
Secondary school	22%	24%
Vocational or trade qualification	23%	23%
University degree	36%	35%
Postgraduate degree (Master's or PhD)	17%	16%

* Note: Ethnicity is a multi-response question, meaning that respondents were able to select more than one ethnicity category.

Fig. 1: Events around the world in late 2025 and early 2026	7	Fig. 21: How do friend and threat perceptions vary along the political spectrum?	49
Fig. 2: Importance of developing political, economic and social ties with Asia	13	Fig. 22: Perceptions of likemindedness with New Zealand	50
Fig. 3: Importance of developing political, economic and social ties over time	13	Fig. 23: New Zealanders' trust in major and middle powers	53
Fig. 4: Importance of investing in partnerships with Asian countries	14	Fig. 24: Where do New Zealanders most want to go for their OE?	56
Fig. 5: Importance of world regions over time	15	Fig. 25: Where in Asia are New Zealanders interested in doing an OE?	59
Fig. 6: Importance of world regions to New Zealand's future	16	Fig. 26: What are New Zealanders most worried about?	63
Fig. 7: Importance of Asia's sub-regions to New Zealand's future	17	Fig. 27: Most important defence and security partners	64
Fig. 8: Importance of countries in Asia to New Zealand's future	19	Fig. 28: Most important defence and security areas to cooperate on with Asia	65
Fig. 9: Why countries are seen as important to New Zealand's future	21	Fig. 29: Perceptions of political influence in the Pacific	66
Fig. 10: New Zealanders' first word associations with Asia	25	Fig. 30: How New Zealanders think Asia will impact New Zealand's future over time	74
Fig. 11: New Zealanders' knowledge of world regions	26	Fig. 31: Where do New Zealanders want to see more investment from Asia?	75
Fig. 12: New Zealanders' knowledge of Asia by region	27	Fig. 32: Most important activities for growing New Zealand's relationship with Asia	77
Fig. 13: The percentage of New Zealanders who can correctly identify the following locations	29	Fig. 33: Where do New Zealanders get their Asia-related news from?	82
Fig. 14: New Zealanders' sense of connection with Asian cultures in daily life	33	Fig. 34: Which social media platforms do New Zealanders get their Asia-related news from?	83
Fig. 15: New Zealanders' Asia-related interests	34	Fig. 35: New Zealanders' most frequently consumed types of Asia-related entertainment	86
Fig. 16: Importance of Asia-related skills for New Zealand's future workforce	35	Fig. 36: Which places produce New Zealanders' favourite entertainment?	87
Fig. 17: Asian sports teams and competitions followed by New Zealanders	38	Fig. 37: New Zealanders' favourite Asia-related TV shows and films	89
Fig. 18: How following sports in Asia has helped New Zealanders to learn about the region	39		
Fig. 19: New Zealanders' friend and threat perceptions	46		
Fig. 20: Friend and threat perceptions over time	48		

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