

KANTAR

BETTER
FUTURES
2026

Sustainable
Business Council 

 WBC
Global
Network

1.

Where are
New Zealanders
in 2026?



3.

How does
sustainability vary across
generations?



2.

How are
New Zealand
businesses turning up?



Methodology Details

MAIN SAMPLE

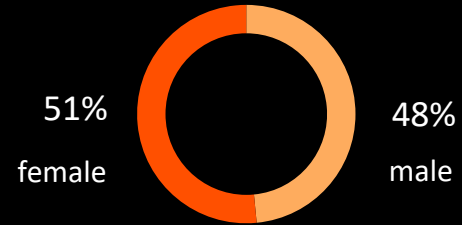
Fieldwork dates:
12th – 23rd January 2026

Sample Size:

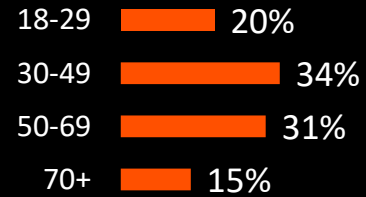
1001

Nationally representative

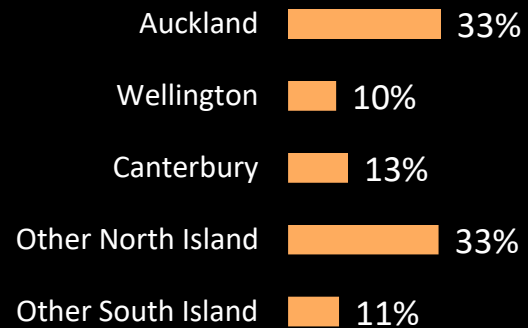
Gender



Age



Region



1.

Where are
New Zealanders
in 2026?

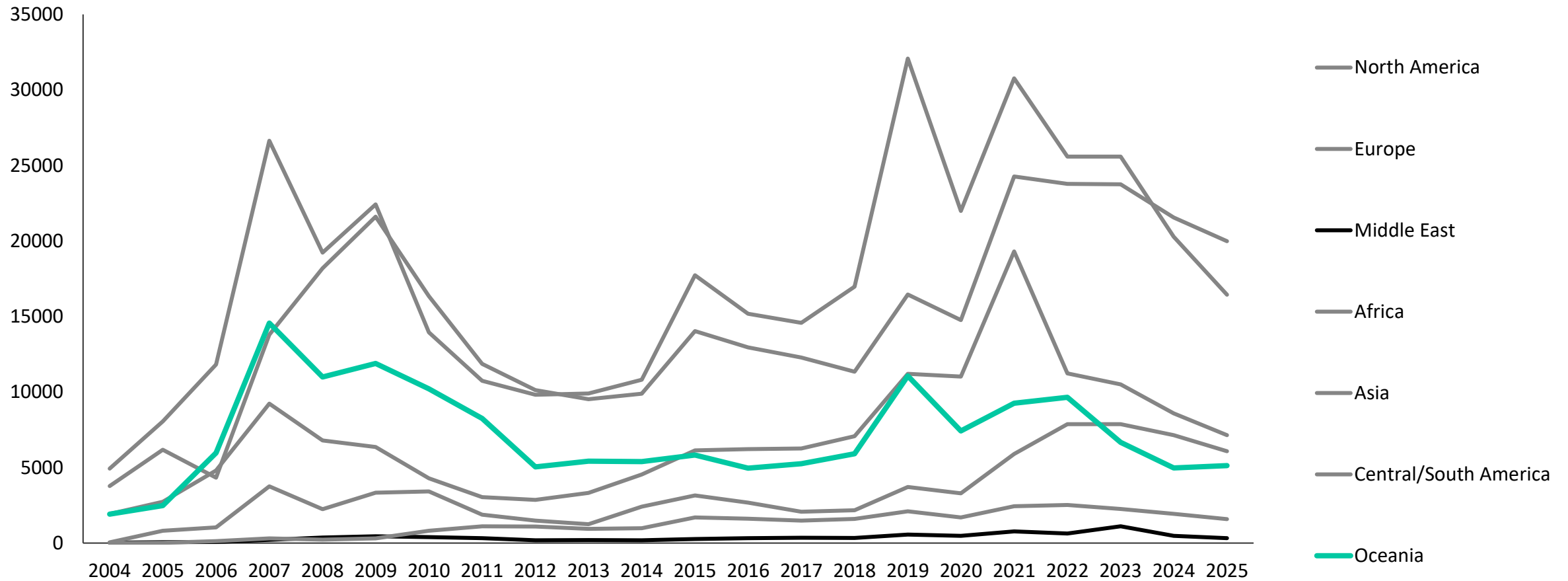


Globally, sustainability is competing for attention amid multiple crises



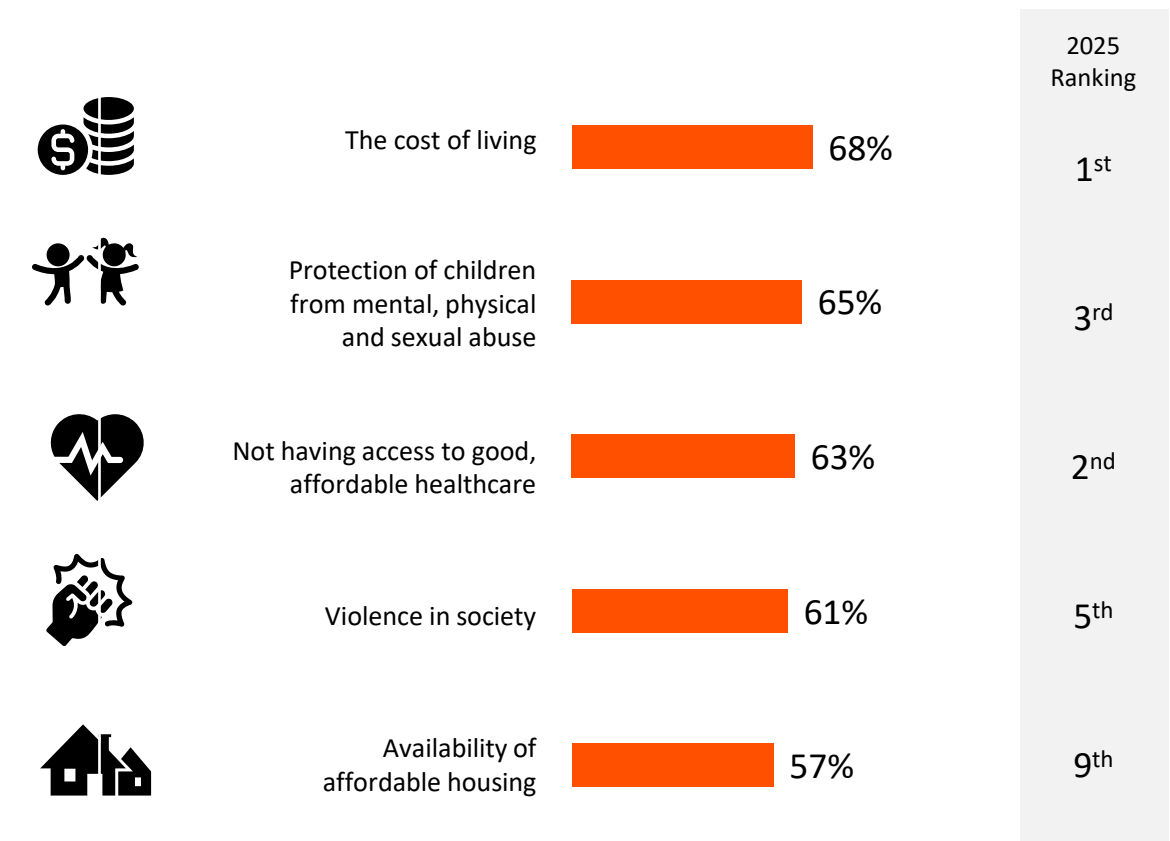
These immediate crises have crowded out climate and environment in the media

GLOBAL NEWSPAPER COVERAGE MENTIONING CLIMATE CHANGE

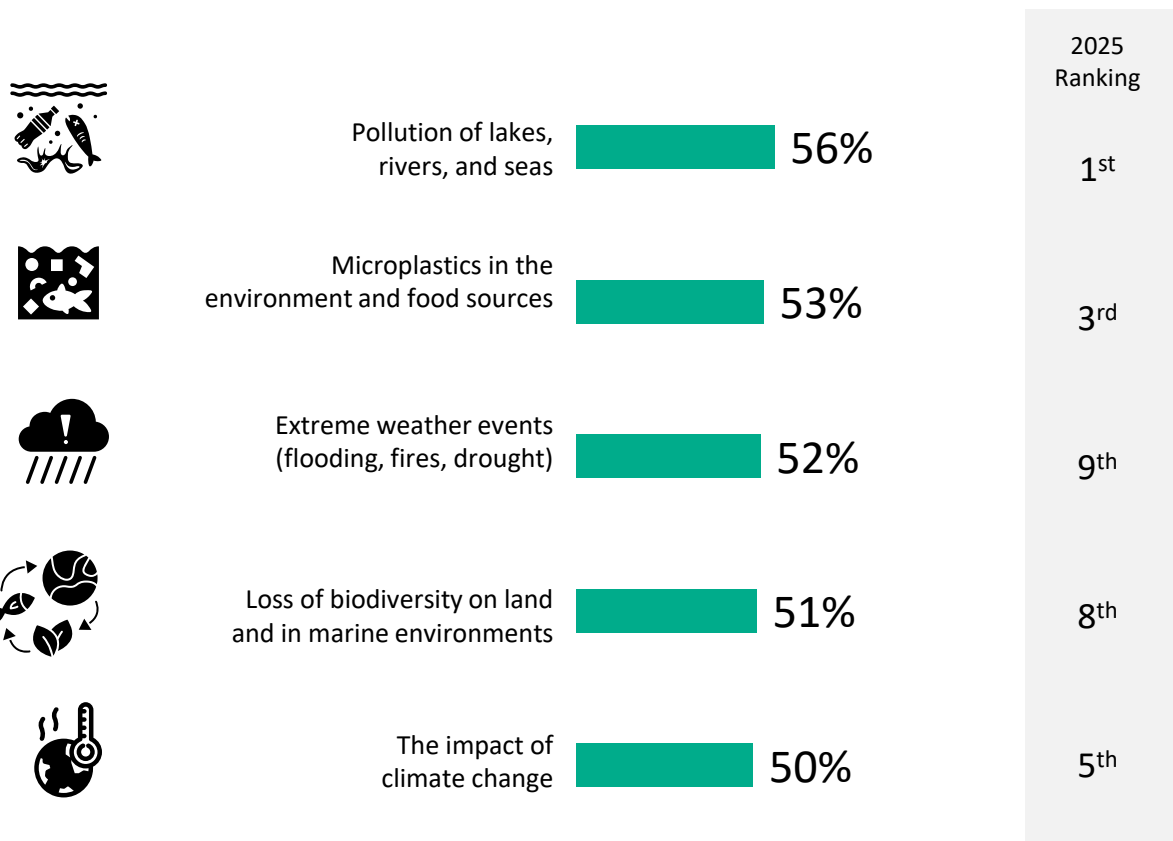


The key issues of concern to New Zealanders remain primarily related to community resilience, while extreme weather events have leapt back into public awareness

TOP 5 OVERALL CONCERNS

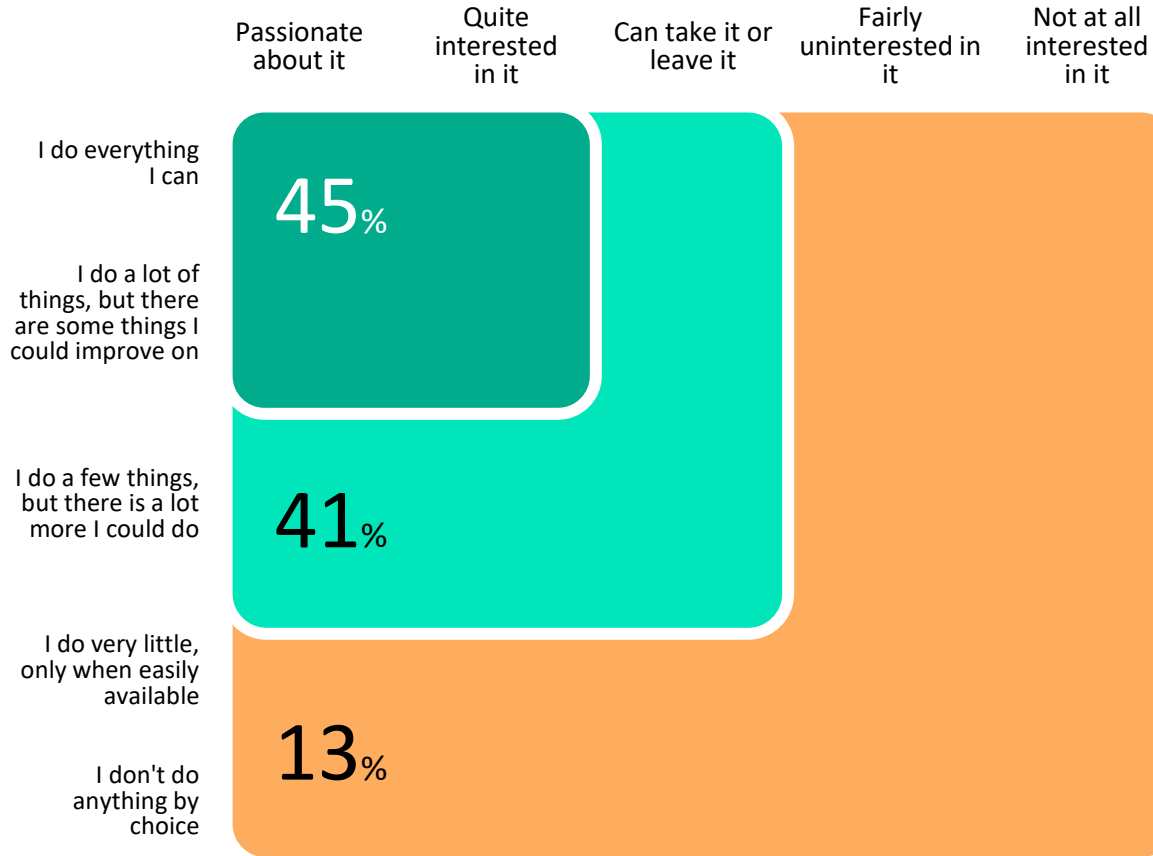


TOP 5 ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

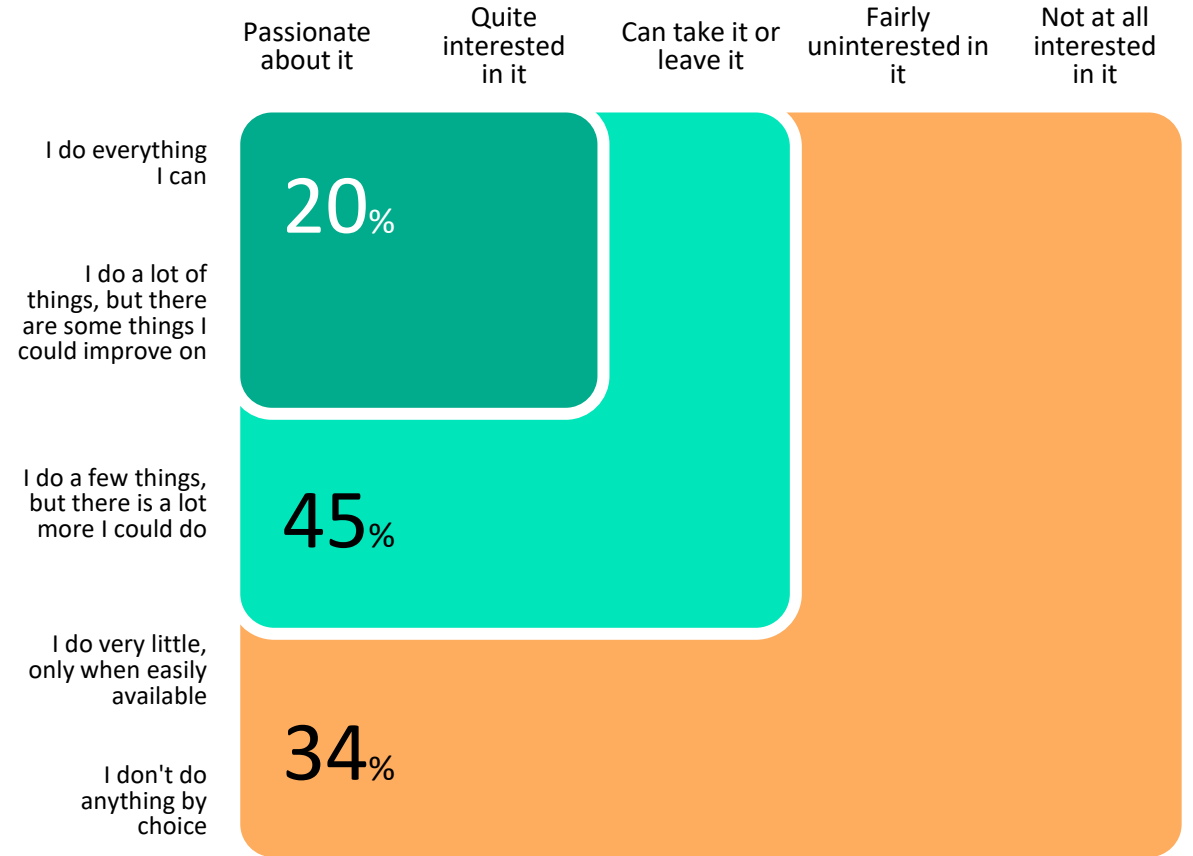


Despite this social emphasis, we again see that the level of environmental commitment is notably stronger

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT

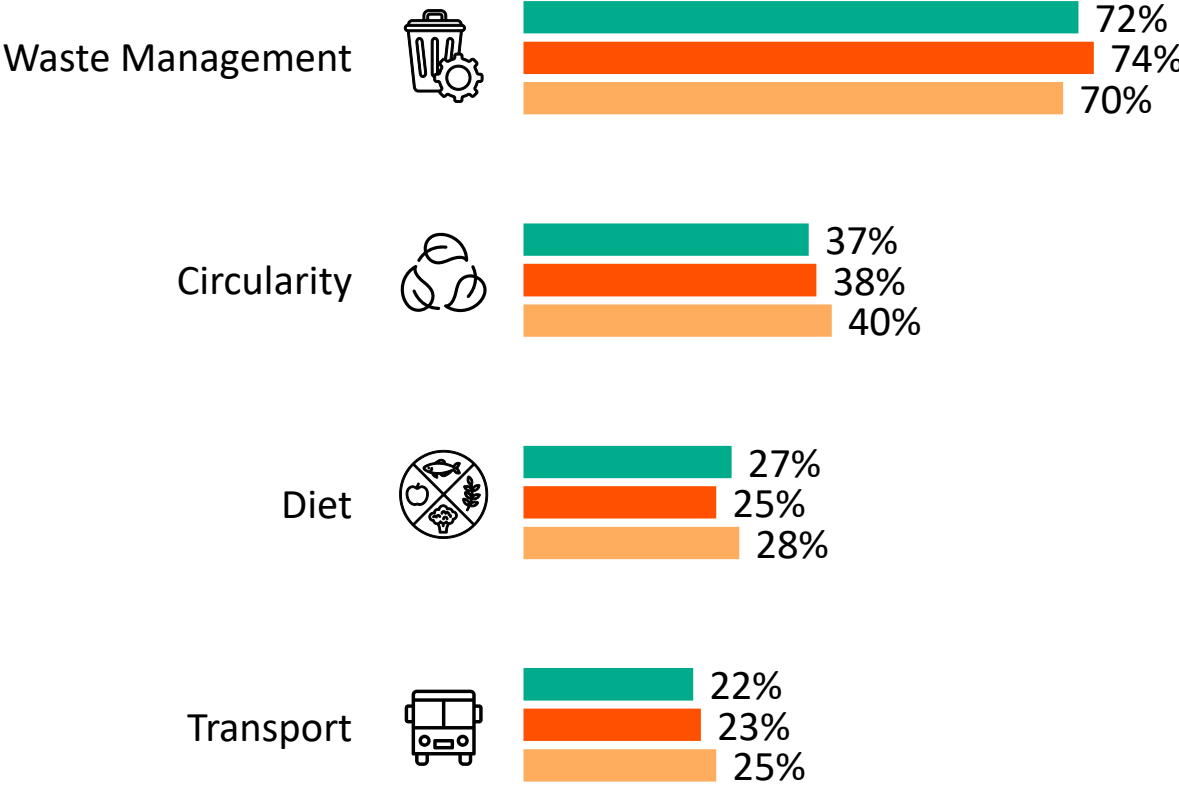


SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT





And those environmental behaviours are proving to be very steady...



2024 2025 2026

Most importantly, despite the decreasing share of media, sustainability is still commercially relevant – as it still drives both adoption and rejection



REJECTION

53%



Versus 52% last year

ADOPTION

74%



Versus 72% last year

2.

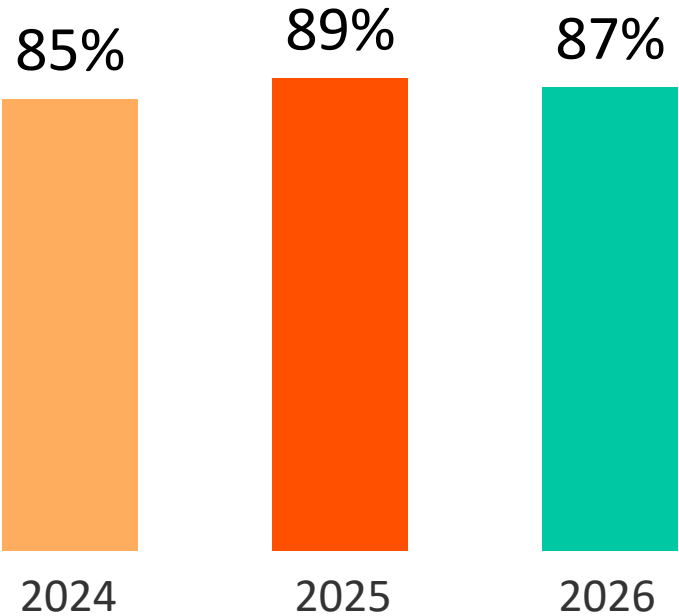
How are New Zealand businesses turning up?





It's clear that New Zealanders expectations of business actions remain as clear as always

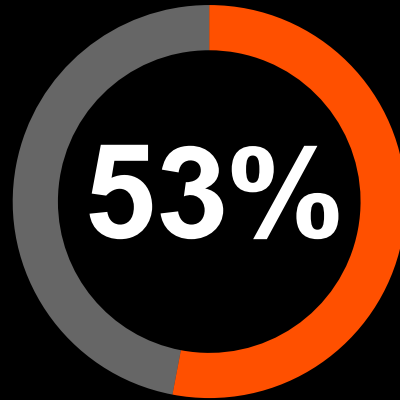
Businesses should take responsibility for their environmental / social impact



**Taking visible
consumer action is
imperative**

**Because silence isn't
neutral - it's
interpreted...
as you're doing
nothing or hiding**

**If a brand does not mention
what it is doing to address
societal issues;**



**I will assume the brand
is doing nothing, or
hiding something**

Source: 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer Special
Report: Brand Trust, From We to Me.



In New Zealand, when businesses speak up, it's not trusted or understood which means that they are not seen as doing enough



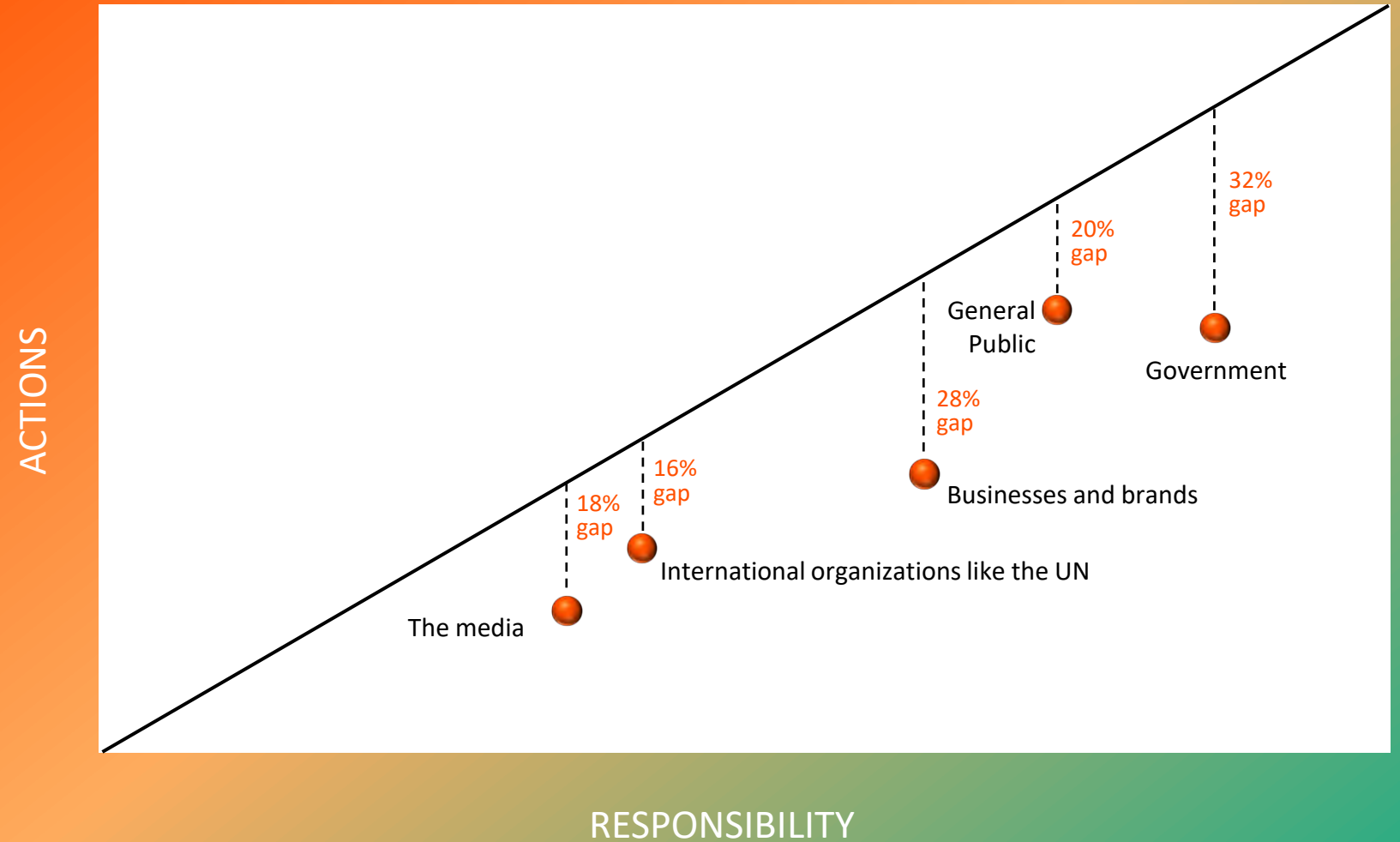
■ 2026 ■ 2025



Alongside government, businesses and brands are the biggest underperformers against expectations.

And crucially, this has not shifted since 2024

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN NEW ZEALAND



And businesses lack of delivery on social challenges is equally telling – and is again showing no change

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES INCLUDING INEQUALITY, DISCRIMINATION AND RESILIENCE IN NEW ZEALAND



We measured indepth the perceptions of a range of major New Zealand businesses and brands

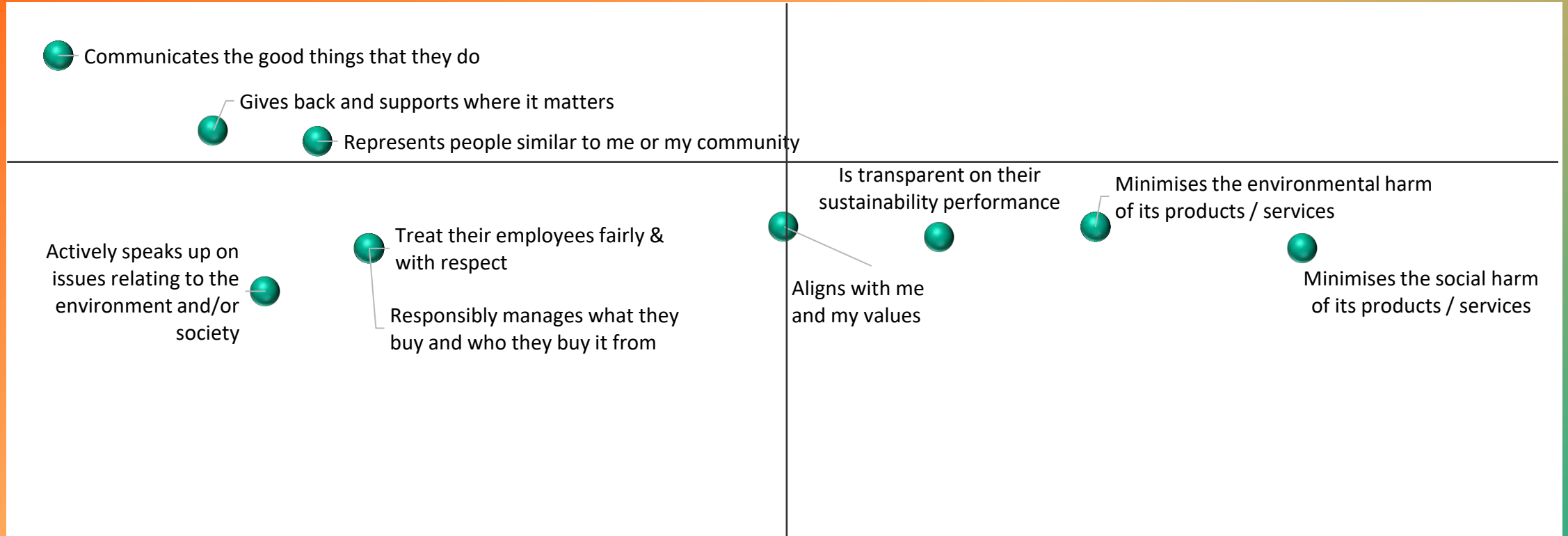
				
				
				
				

As in 2025, actions are more impactful than talk, particularly harm minimisation



Direct and transparent action represents the key opportunities to improve perceptions of major brands in New Zealand

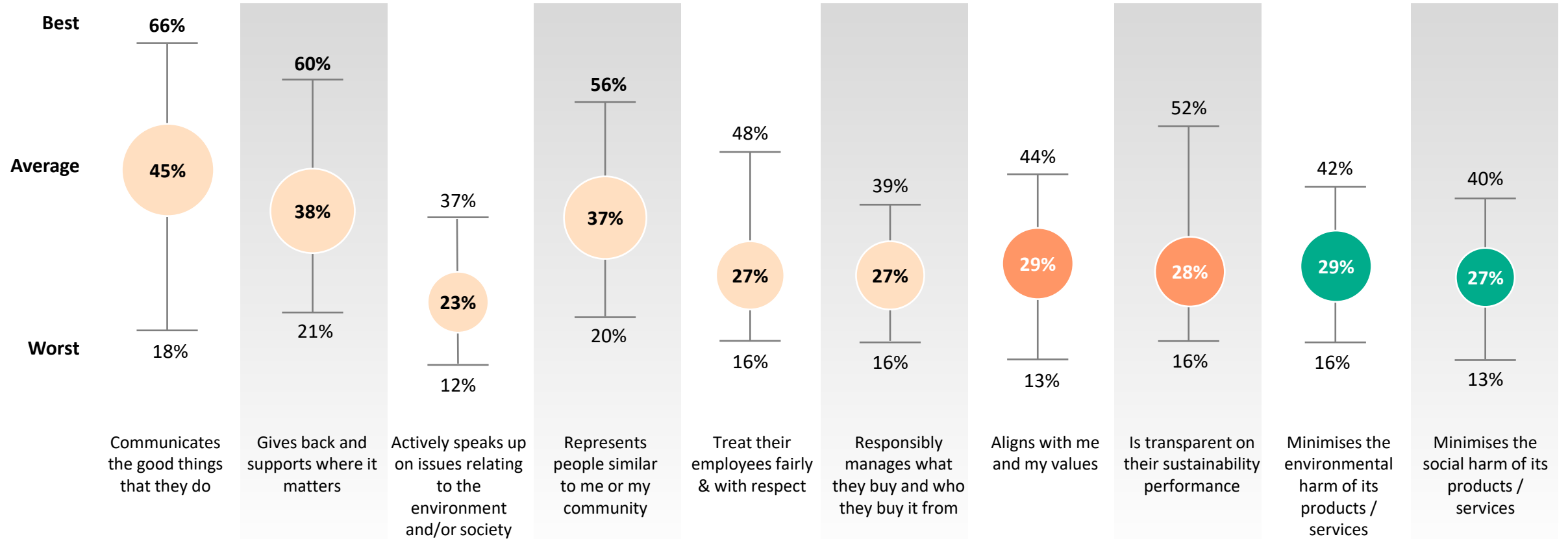
PERFORMANCE AMONG NZ BUSINESSES



IMPACT UPON THE HEALTH OF PEOPLE AND PLANET

Many of New Zealand's largest businesses are struggling, with even the strongest performers recognised as such by only 60% of New Zealanders

% AGREE THAT BUSINESSES ARE PERFORMING



3.

How does sustainability vary across generations?



We will be looking through the lens of five generations



Gen Z

18-29 years old



Millennials

30-45 years old



Gen X

46-61 years old



Boomers

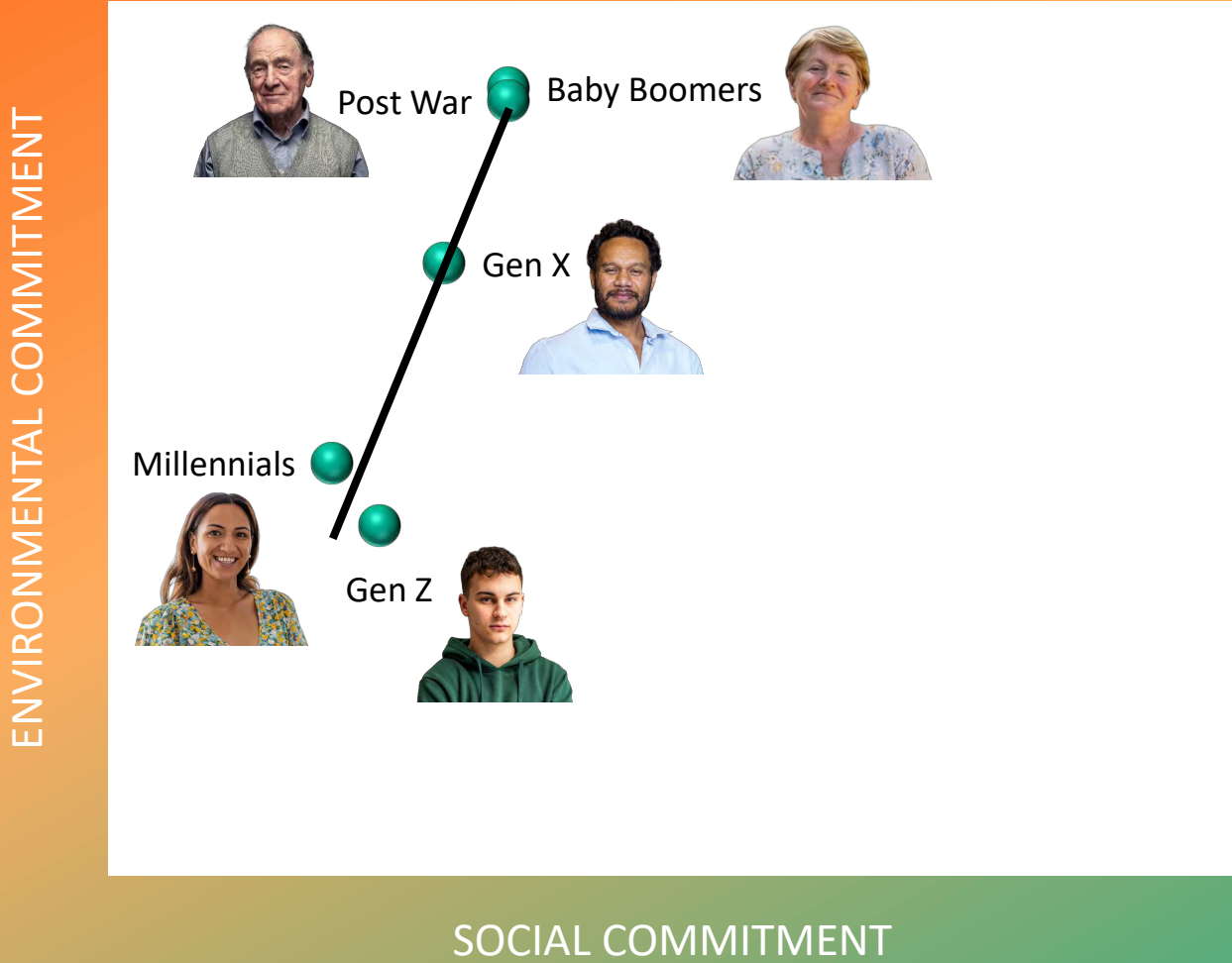
62-80 years old

































Post war

81-98 years old



























There is a clear relationship between generation and level of environmental and social commitment



There are some notable patterns by generation regarding **social issues**

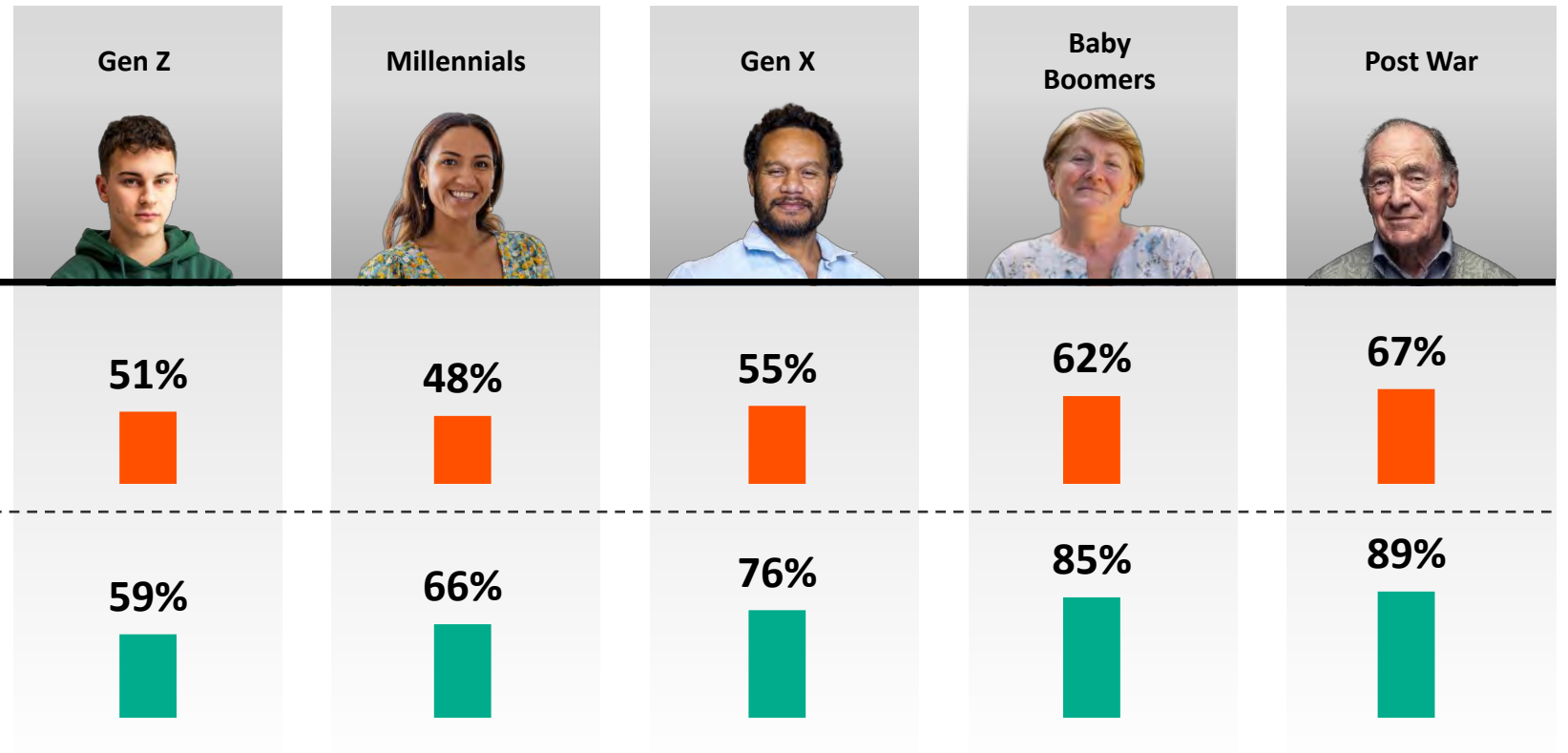
Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Post War
				
 Lack of jobs with a sufficient living wage 66%	 The cost of living 72%	 The cost of living 76%	 Protection of children from mental, physical and sexual abuse 74%	 Drugs / alcohol addiction in society 81%
 Drugs / alcohol addiction in society 60%	 Protection of children from mental, physical and sexual abuse 62%	 Protection of children from mental, physical and sexual abuse 65%	 The impact of Social Media 71%	 Not having access to good, affordable healthcare 78%
 Availability of affordable housing 60%	 Not having access to good, affordable healthcare 60%	 Violence in society 64%	 Not having access to good, affordable healthcare 71%	 Protection of children from mental, physical and sexual abuse 77%
 The cost of living 59%	 Violence in society 57%	 Not having access to good, affordable healthcare 64%	 Caring for the ageing population 68%	 Political extremism 76%
 The state of the economy 57%	 The state of the economy 57%	 Caring for the ageing population 62%	 Violence in society 66%	 Violence in society 76%

Meanwhile there is far more consistency across generations regarding **environmental concerns**

Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Post War
 <p>51% The impact of climate change</p>	 <p>53% Extreme weather events (flooding, fires, drought)</p>	 <p>58% Microplastics in the environment and food sources</p>	 <p>63% Pollution of lakes, rivers, and seas</p>	 <p>80% Pollution of lakes, rivers, and seas</p>
 <p>51% Microplastics in the environment and food sources</p>	 <p>52% Pollution of lakes, rivers, and seas</p>	 <p>57% Pollution of lakes, rivers, and seas</p>	 <p>61% Managing our waste including recycling</p>	 <p>77% Microplastics in the environment and food sources</p>
 <p>50% Loss of biodiversity on land and in marine environments</p>	 <p>48% Loss of biodiversity on land and in marine environments</p>	 <p>54% Extreme weather events (flooding, fires, drought)</p>	 <p>61% Microplastics in the environment and food sources</p>	 <p>66% Extreme weather events (flooding, fires, drought)</p>
 <p>48% Extreme weather events (flooding, fires, drought)</p>	 <p>47% The impact of climate change</p>	 <p>52% Loss of biodiversity on land and in marine environments</p>	 <p>58% Protection and management of conservation land and water ways</p>	 <p>66% Protection of native animals and plants</p>
 <p>44% Protection and management of conservation land and water ways</p>	 <p>42% Overconsumption (e.g. food, clothes, etc.)</p>	 <p>49% Protection and management of conservation land and water ways</p>	 <p>54% The level of renewable energy production</p>	 <p>59% The impact of climate change</p>
 <p>44% Overconsumption (e.g. food, clothes, etc.)</p>				

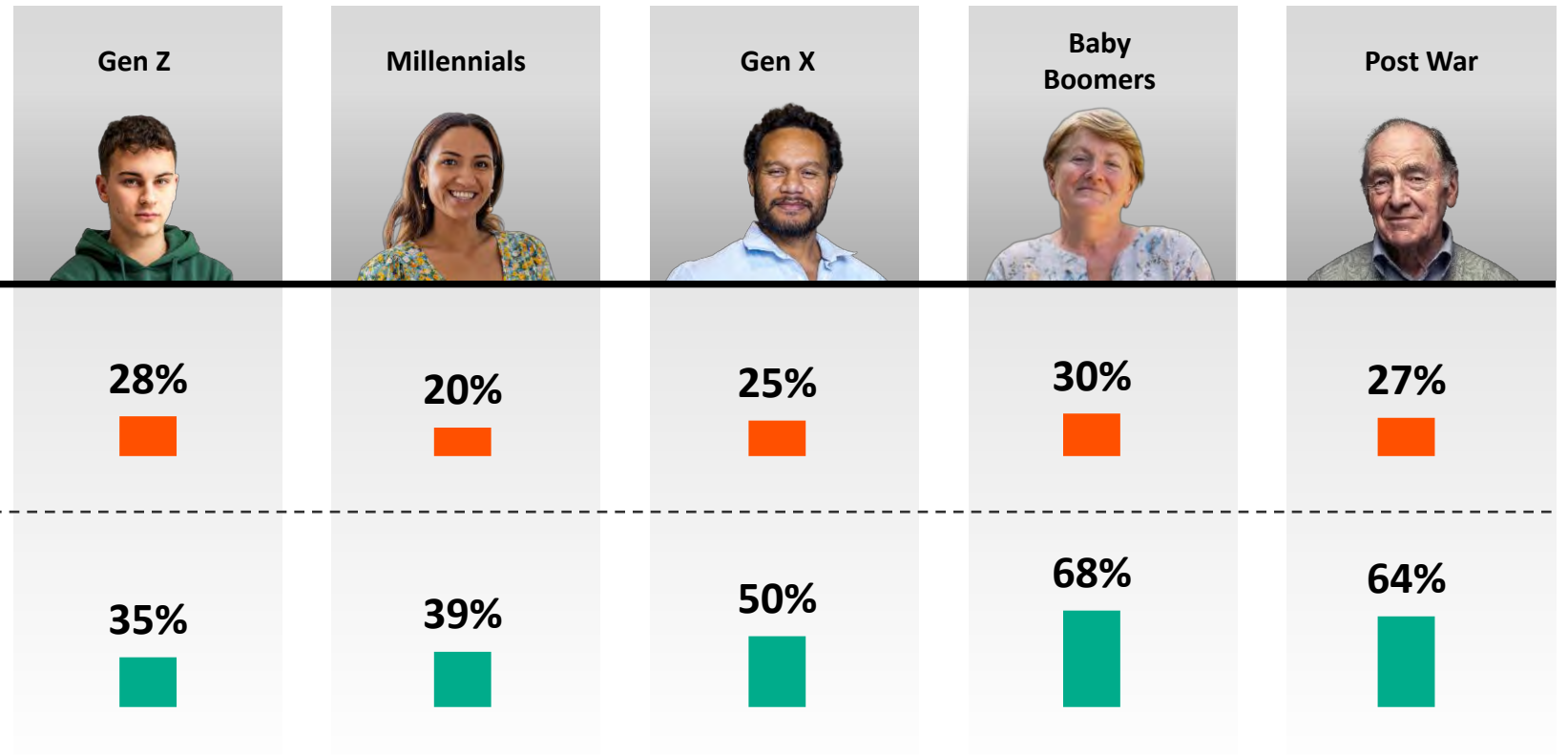
Our emotional commitment to all types of sustainability increases as New Zealanders age

% OF NEW ZEALANDERS PASSIONATE / INTERESTED



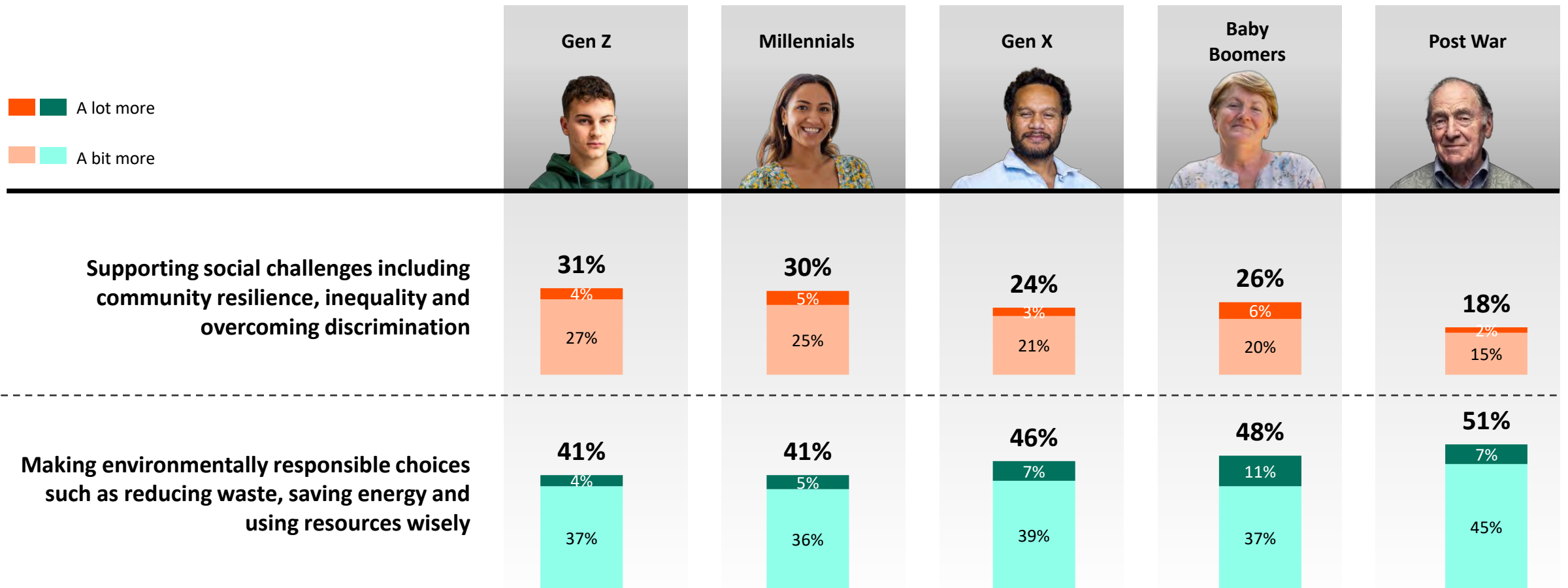
While social action is more consistent across generations, taking environmental action does increase with age

% OF NEW ZEALANDERS TAKING ACTION



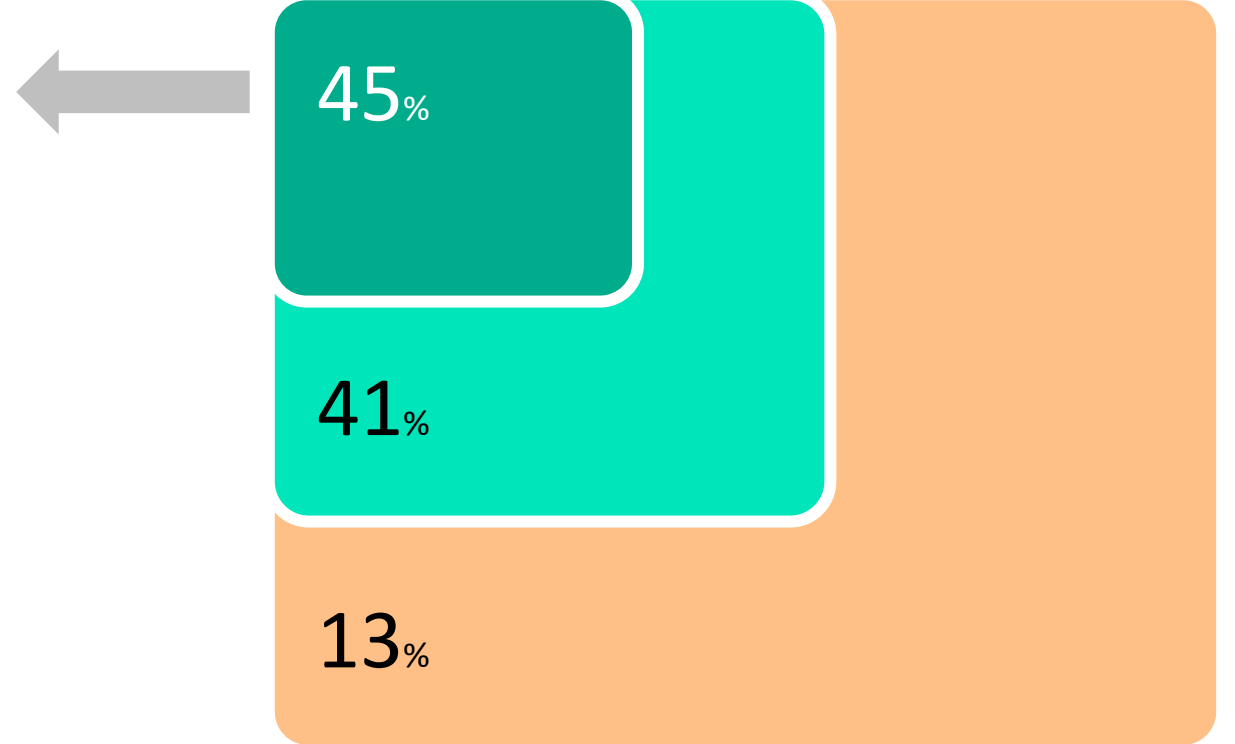
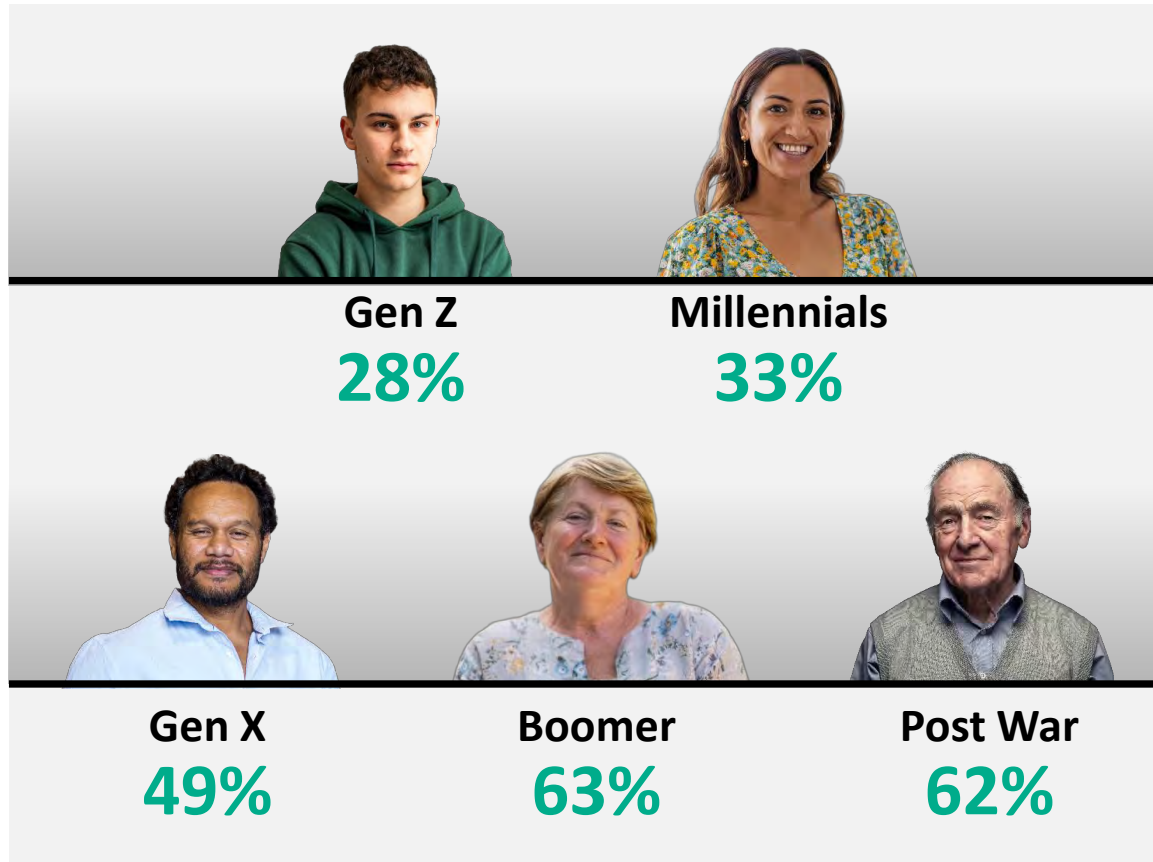
However, younger generations are the most likely to increase their actions on social issues, while this is less the case regarding environmental issues

% OF NEW ZEALANDERS EXPECTING TO DO MORE IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS



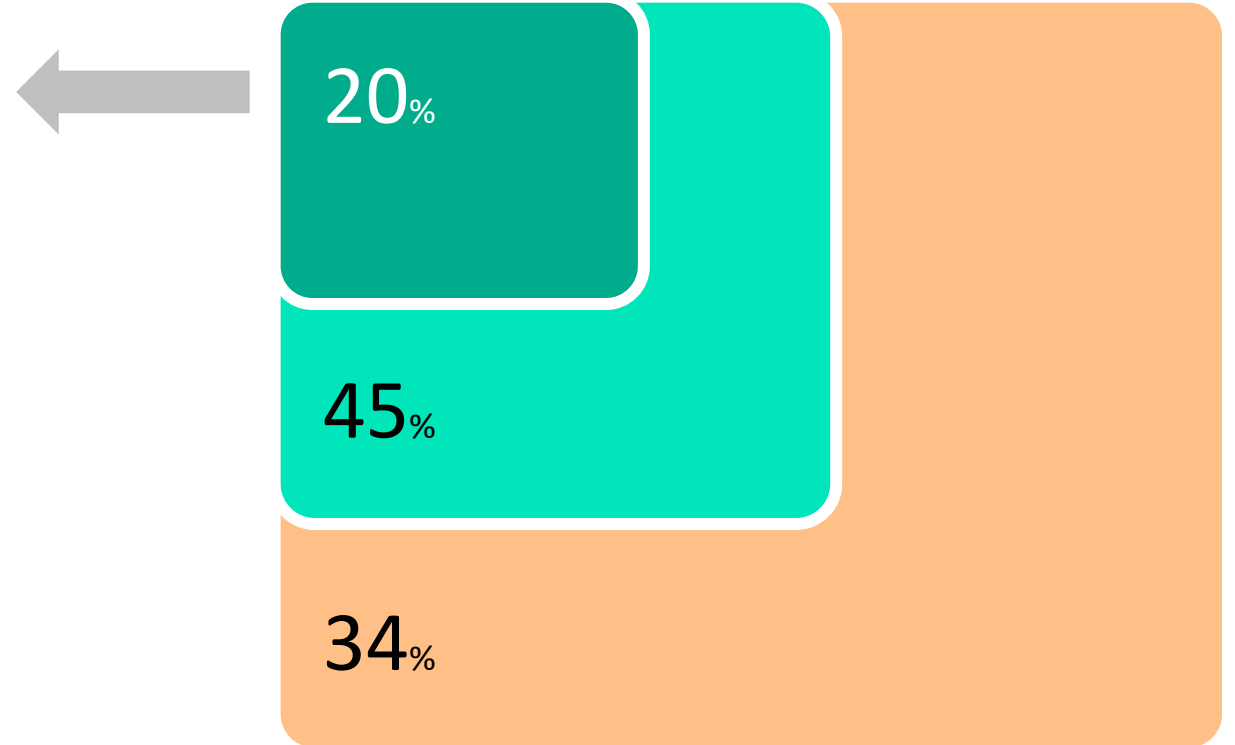
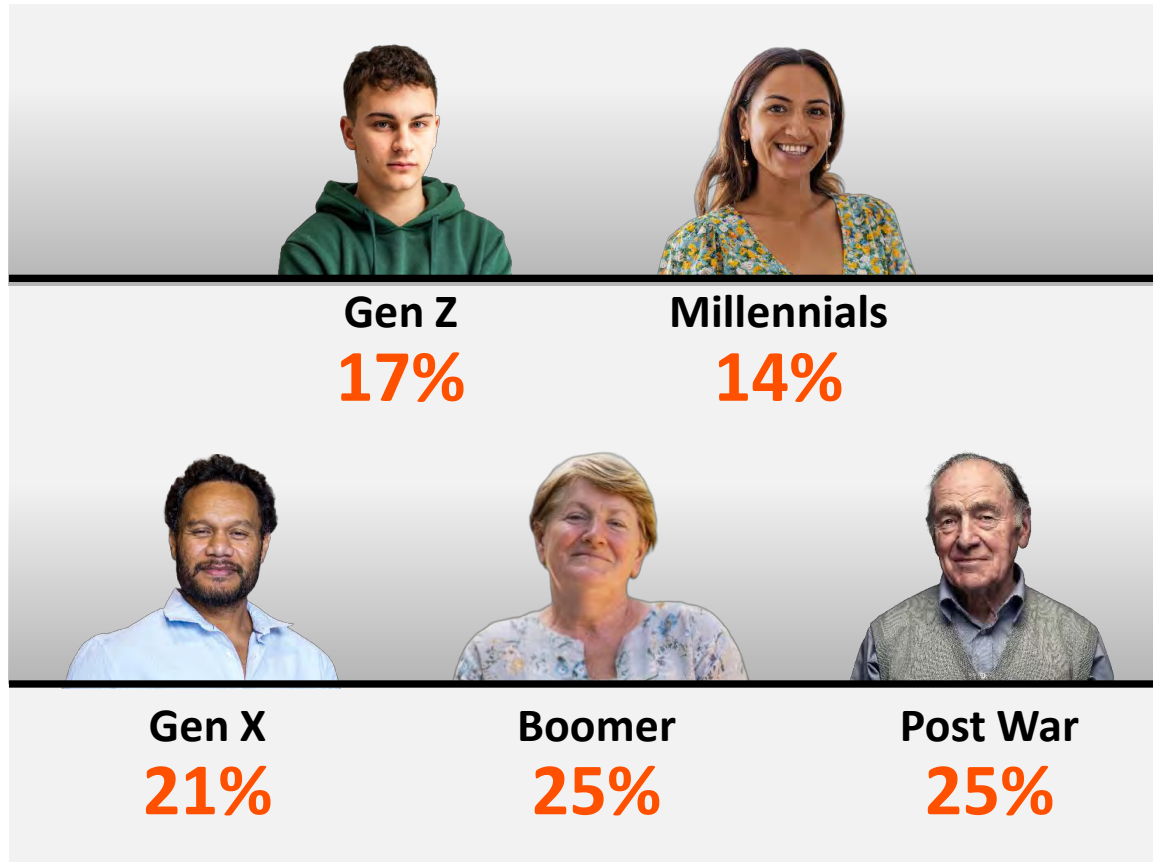
By combining our feelings and our behaviours, younger generations are notably LESS committed to environmental sustainability

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT

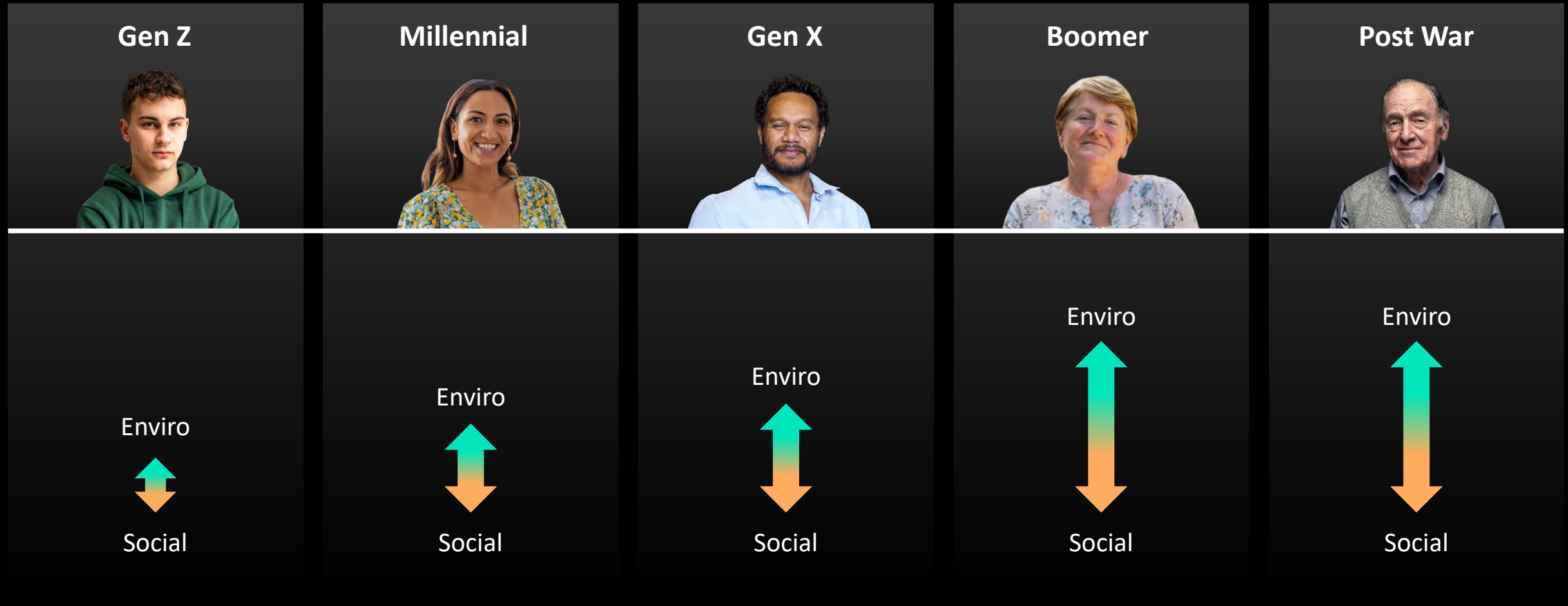


...and this is also true regarding commitment to **social issues** although the difference is far less

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT



Gen Z is the generation for whom environmental and social commitment levels are equivalent; elsewhere, social commitment is notably lower



A study analysing 495,000 online reviews also displayed a **lower commitment level**



Gen Z is less likely than older generations to mention environmental or social sustainability in hotel reviews.



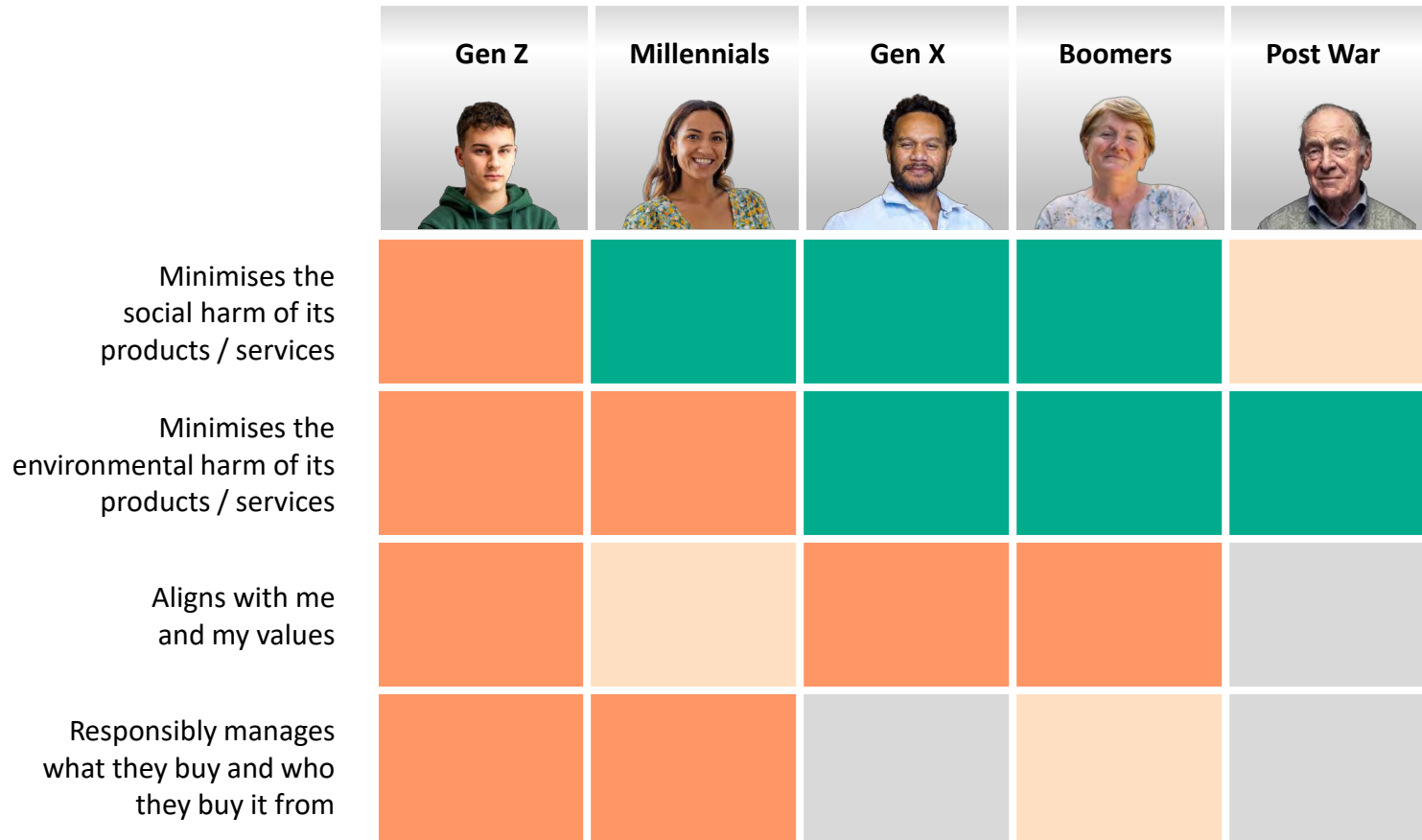
Environmental initiatives tend to generate more positive sentiment and higher ratings.



Whereas social and cultural sustainability issues elicit more critical responses.

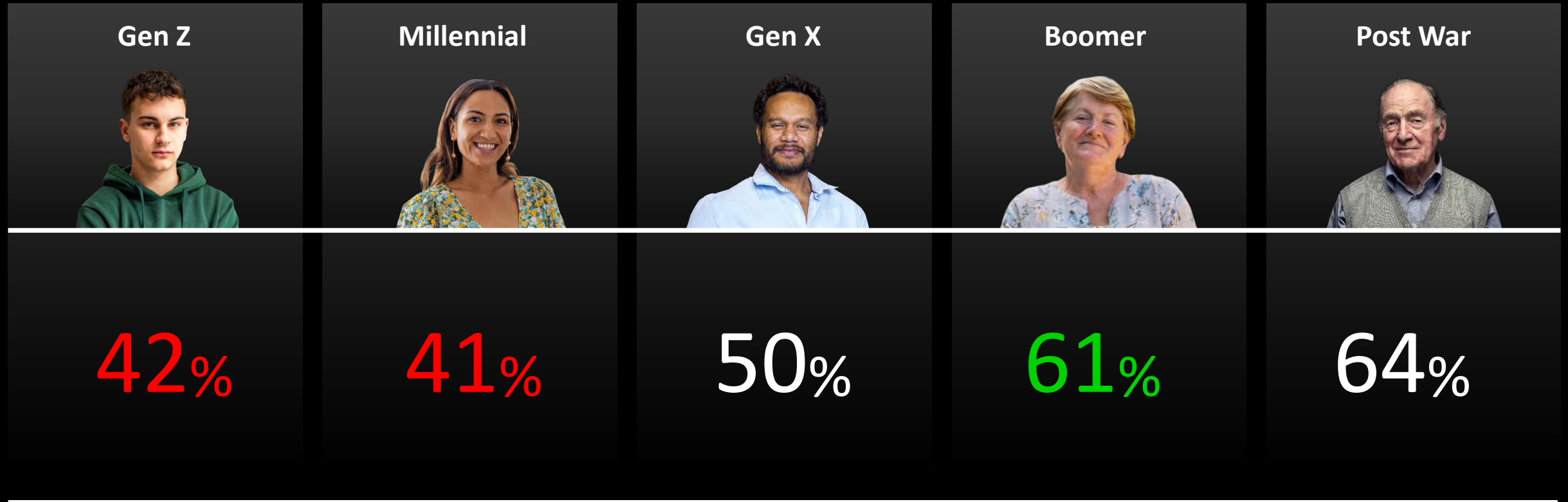


The singular focus on harm reduction is less a feature of what drives Gen Z's perception of New Zealand businesses



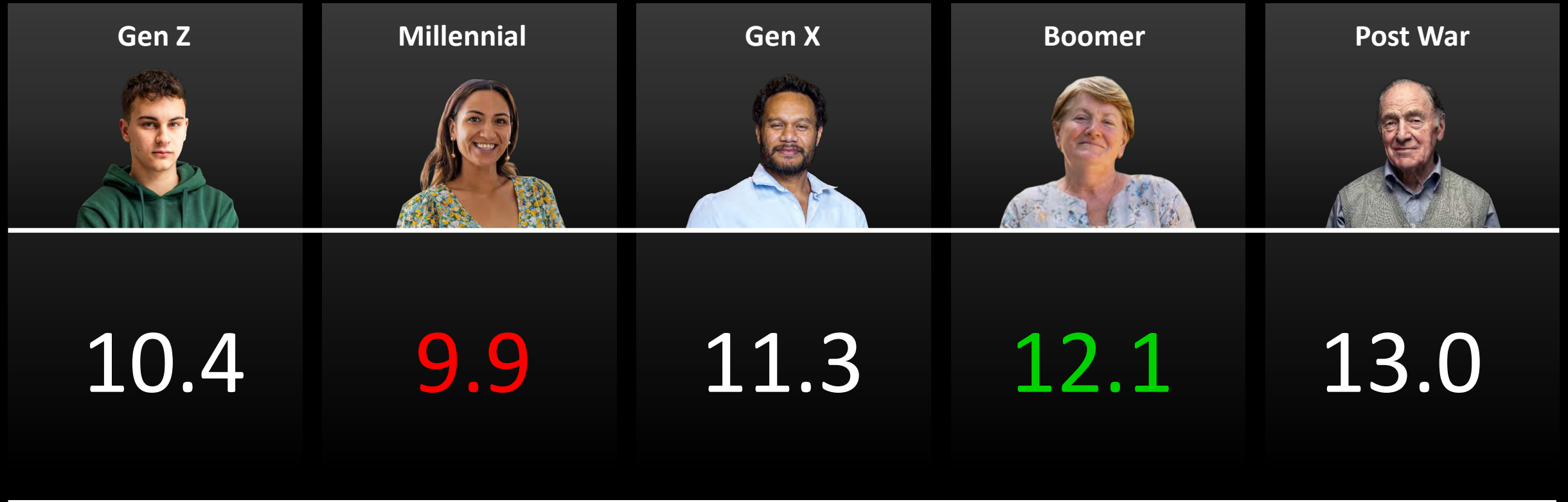
We see this same pattern repeated in the proportion of Conscious Consumers in each generation

PROPORTION OF CONSCIOUS CONSUMERS

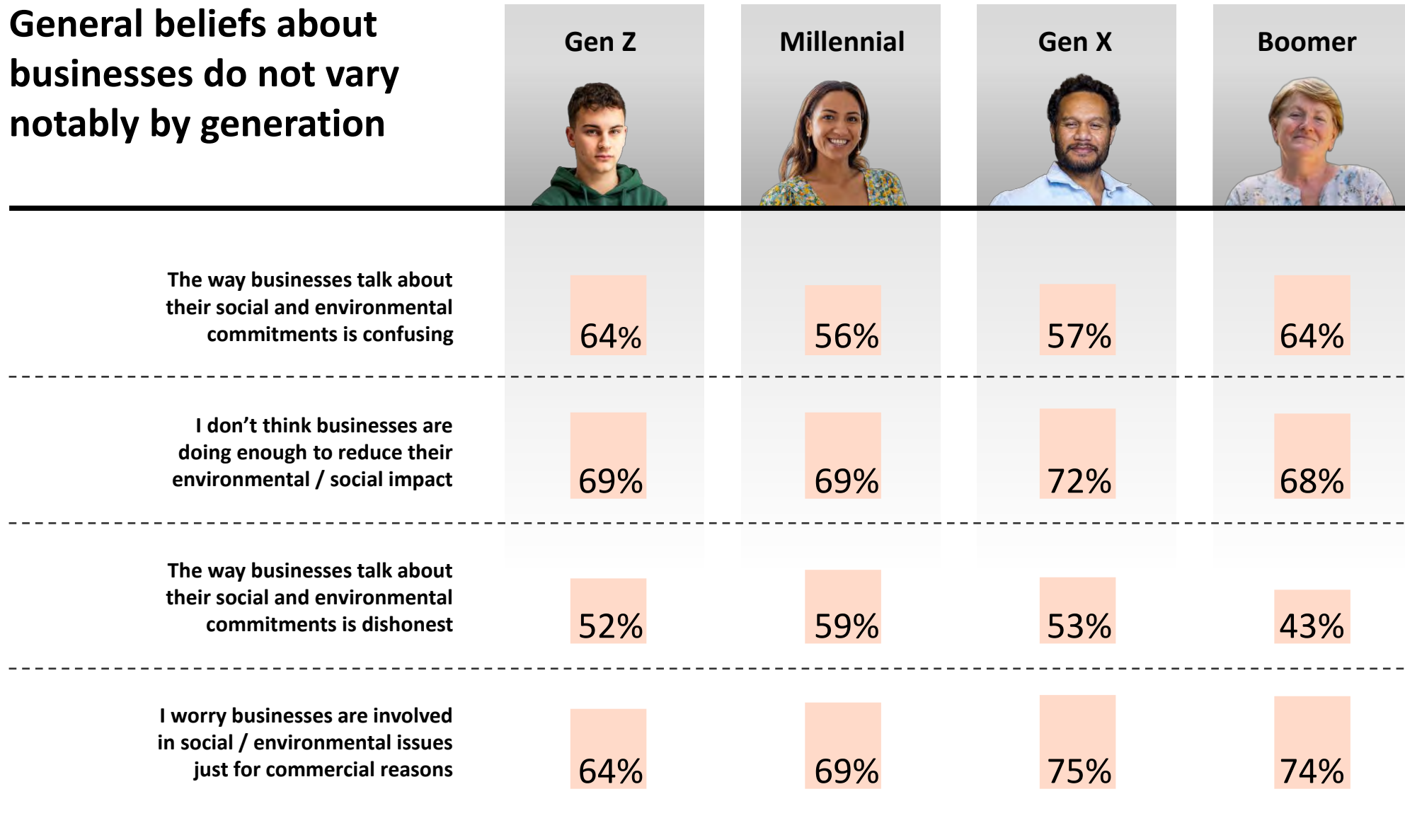


Furthermore, we see that younger generations place importance on fewer issues

AVERAGE NUMBER OF ISSUES OF CONCERN



General beliefs about businesses do not vary notably by generation



There are some defining and unique features of Gen Z



They are the only generation for whom **climate change** is the #1 environmental issue, and they share with Millennials a serious concern regarding **overconsumption**



Gen Z is the most likely to feel **personally impacted** by issues relating to diversity, equality and inclusion (55%)



Gen Z is the generation for whom **environmental and social commitment levels are equivalent** (elsewhere, social commitment is notably lower)



Gen Z's primary concerns are clear and largely distinct



Living wage jobs



Drugs / alcohol addiction in society
(also a concern for the Post War generation)



Housing affordability



The cost of living
(also a concern for Millennials and Gen X)



State of the Economy
(also a concern for Millennials)

It's less about harm reduction and more about **alignment** and **trust**



The singular focus on harm reduction is less a feature of what drives Gen Z's perception of New Zealand businesses

Instead, they look for **transparency** and **values alignment** before they look for harm minimisation



Many of the behaviours that define Gen Z may be a function of life stage rather than enduring values



Gen Z are more likely to...

Buy free range / organic / non-intensively farmed products

Use public transport, bike or walk rather than a car

Use reusable containers when eating out (e.g. bring a keep-cup, use own food containers for takeaways, etc.)

Car-pool for work or regular journeys

Participate in local environmental or social initiatives (e.g. community clean-ups, tree planting, or neighbourhood programs, etc.)

Is this generational or lifestage?

Lifestage – it drops significantly with declining disposable income

Lifestage - this drops among Millennials, especially households with kids

Lifestage & generational - this behaviour drops among all except financially comfortable

Lifestage – it halves among Millennials - driven largely by the presence of kids

Generational – this drops regardless of Income or the presence of kids

Overall, however, younger generations are notably **LESS committed** to environmental sustainability

...and this is also true regarding commitment to social issues



However, Gen Z and Millennials are the most likely to increase their actions on social issues



We see lower commitment to action within Gen Z



Gen Z's worldview is shaped by constant instability and overwhelming visibility



**Crises are constant
and visible**



**Media and technology expose Gen Z
to the world's extremes**



**The pathways that once promised
stability no longer hold**

**Together, these forces create intense pressure to succeed
and a pervasive sense of emotional overwhelm**

Gen Z do actually care about sustainability, but distrust in the system can leave them feeling like they have little impact




They care, but feel their individual impact is limited


They feel that the burden has been unfairly placed on individuals


Financial pressure makes sustainable choices harder


Low trust in corporations and other institutions shapes how they behave


Corporate sustainability claims rarely feel credible

To matter to Gen Z, corporates must offer real transparency and emotional relief, and that goes beyond sustainability messaging

Key issue:

Gen Z don't trust sustainability messaging. They're emotionally stretched and sceptical of corporate motives.



Solution:

At a minimum deliver informative transparency

Then build emotional assurance by proving their values through visible, meaningful behaviour.

Trust is rebuilt through what you **do**, not what you describe.





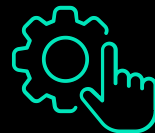
In summary...



Sustainability has retained its power to drive purchase behaviour, even as it becomes one of many competing conversations



It is however a more mature and complex arena – so choose wisely your areas of impact to own. These must make sense for your brand, your category, and your customers



And execute authentically as the level of disbelief that New Zealand businesses are doing enough to reduce environmental and social harm remains overwhelming



In summary...



Find the courage to display what you are doing



Actions are more impactful than talk, particularly harm minimisation



Understand your target market or audience's key generational issues, priorities and perception drivers



In summary...



Looking specifically at Gen Z, these represent both your current and future market and, executionally, your biggest challenge - so design for them appropriately



Some clear guidelines for authentically connecting with Gen Z

- Strive for honesty rather than perfection – Gen Z don't expect brands to be flawless
- Visible, meaningful actions – give something up or take a risk for the greater good
- Acknowledge systemic realities – not implying individuals / consumers alone can fix them
- Emotion-first communication – that delivers some form of emotional assurance
- Consistency across behaviour, and communications – proving sincerity over time
- Information transparency – explaining what you're doing, why, the trade-offs involved

KANTAR

BETTER
FUTURES
2026

Sustainable
Business Council 

 WBC Global
Network

© Kantar 2026 | 48

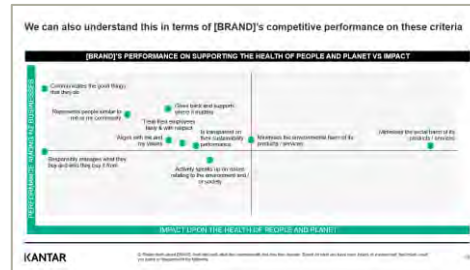
Better Futures Brand Reports

For any of the 20 businesses we investigated in Better Futures, individual deep-dive reports detailing your performance and providing recommendations to drive your business and brand's Environmental and Social sustainability can be prepared.

This report will include an understanding of your business' performance on the features that matter:

- The key issues driving perceptions of your sustainability credentials
- The key issues driving sustainability perceptions in your category (global)
- How New Zealand consumers perceive your business on those drivers
- Analysis by statement and consumer group

Your performance will be presented relative to the average of 20 New Zealand brands.



AA Insurance	MITRE 10
AIR NEW ZEALAND	NEW WORLD
bnz	noel leeming
Coca-Cola	SILVER FERN FARMS
Fonterra Dairy for life	Spark ^{nz}
genesis	Tegel
iag	the warehouse
LION	TOYOTA
McDonald's	Woolworths
Meridian.	ENERGY