

HOW IMPORTANT IS CULTURE?

NEW ZEALANDERS' VIEWS IN 2008 — AN OVERVIEW

MINISTER'S FOREWORD

In my travels around New Zealand in the past two years, I have witnessed the commitment of New Zealanders to arts, culture and heritage activities. I am pleased to see my impressions confirmed by the findings in this updated survey report.

Rt Hon Douglas Graham initiated the first of these surveys in 1994 to obtain data about New Zealanders' perceptions about their culture. It was followed by a second survey in 1997. The 2008 update includes new questions on attitudes towards the role of cultural activities in the community and on the importance of culture in perceptions of New Zealand's identity.

The surveys have picked up some notable shifts and developing trends over time: for example, more New Zealanders now consider Māori culture and activities to be an important part of New Zealand's identity; and more believe cultural activities enable people to express themselves and be creative.

The findings in this survey will help us ensure funding for arts, culture and heritage is used in ways that best meet New Zealanders' expectations. I am sure the findings will also be of interest to the arts and heritage sectors and I hope the media will particularly note the perennial wish that cultural activities receive greater coverage than at present.

I am very much encouraged by this evidence of New Zealanders' enthusiasm for culture and cultural activities. I trust you will find the results of this survey as interesting as I have.



Hon Chris Finlayson
Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage
February 2009

INTRODUCTION

In 1994 and 1997, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs commissioned research into the attitudes of New Zealanders to gain an understanding of the relevance of culture and cultural activities.

In 2008 the Ministry for Culture and Heritage commissioned Synovate Ltd to undertake further research to establish how attitudes may have shifted in the intervening period.

The key objective of this research is to provide up-to-date information on the New Zealand public's perceptions of the importance of culture and cultural activities.

With this objective in mind, key measures from the two previous surveys conducted in 1994 and 1997 have been repeated in this survey. The methodology, sample sizes and sample structure have been retained to allow for direct comparability with previous surveys where possible.

In 2008 new questions were added relating to the perceived importance of the role of culture and cultural activities as factors in national identity. Additional questions about attitudes to culture and cultural activities in local communities were also included. Some of the graphs which follow simply present information from the new questions for 2008, while others, where possible, also show data from the 1994 and 1997 surveys.

METHODOLOGY

Telephone interviews were conducted with 1,000 New Zealand residents aged 18 and over. These were conducted in 2008.

Quota management of the sample was undertaken to ensure the survey sample was representative of New Zealand residents. Gender, age, geographic and Māori ethnic quotas have been applied.

The survey was conducted as a stand-alone questionnaire with interviewers probing the open-ended questions to obtain quality detailed responses. The average interview duration was 18 minutes.

The margin of error for this sample size is +/-3.1% at a 95% confidence interval assuming a score of 50% on any one attribute. This means that there can be 95% confidence that the survey measure is within 3.1% of the measure that would have been gained had the entire population of New Zealand residents over 18 years of age been surveyed.

To allow respondents to respond to a clearly defined issue, a definition of culture and cultural activities was provided at the beginning of the questionnaire:

One way of thinking about it is that culture and cultural activities are about our way of life and are a combination of;

- Our past and present languages, traditions and beliefs, as reflected in museums, historic places and libraries, on marae, television, radio, the internet, and in films.
- Activities such as dance, classical and modern music, the visual arts, theatre, reading books and magazines, and other forms of crafts and hobbies.
- And finally when we talk about national identity we are referring to who we are as a country.

OVERVIEW

Culture and cultural activities are an important and valued part of life.

New Zealanders are proud of their culture and want to share the best of it with the rest of the world. They generally accept that culture delivers real benefits, brings communities closer together and improves quality of life.

- Most New Zealanders have a strong sense of national identity with culture, landscape and diversity defining New Zealand for the majority, with sport also making a recognized contribution.
- New Zealanders have a stronger sense of who they are as a nation, than as local communities.
- New Zealanders appreciate the contributions of Māori culture to national identity and also the contributions of other cultures.
- New Zealanders also see plenty of opportunities to access culture and cultural activities.
- Youth are less interested in culture generally.
- New Zealanders see government and local councils as key supporters of culture in New Zealand for funding and support.
- There is more coverage of culture in the media than before but New Zealanders would prefer even more.

KEY FINDINGS

ATTITUDES TOWARDS CULTURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

While most measures being tracked have remained steady, in 2008 there are now more people who strongly agree that:

Māori culture and activities are an important part of NZ's national identity (up from 45% in 1997 to 62% in 2008);

Cultural activities enable people to express themselves and be creative (up from 53% to 68%);

Culture and cultural activities have a high profile in NZ (up from 23% to 38%);

Cultural activities should receive some funding from Government (up from 37% to 49%);

Information about culture and cultural activities is readily available (up from 23% to 33%).

KEY FINDINGS

ATTITUDES TOWARDS CULTURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

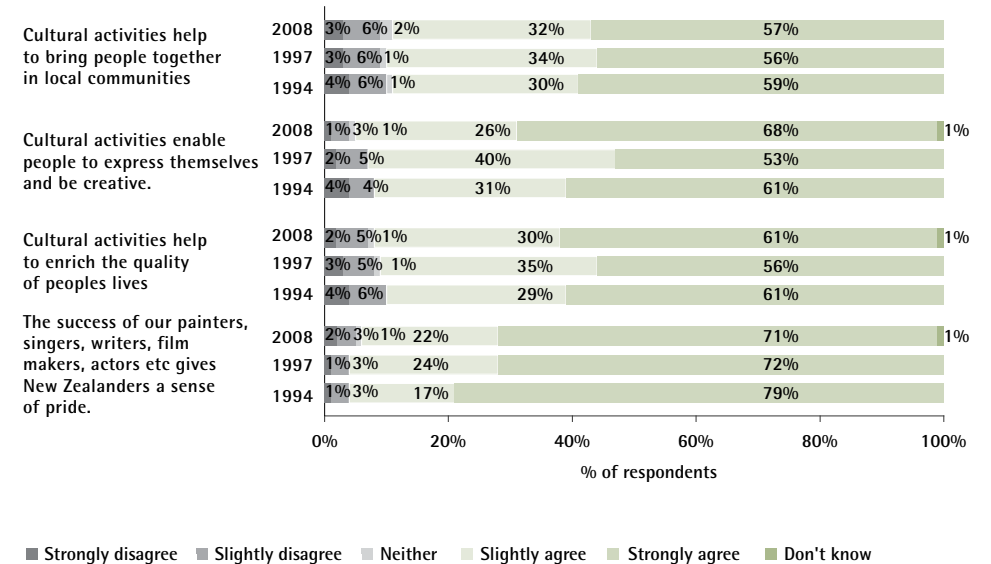
New questions added in the 2008 survey indicate that overall there is more agreement that culture plays an important role at a national level, than at a local community level. Most notably:

- The protection of New Zealand's historic buildings and places, is seen as more important at a national level with 82% strongly agreeing and 48% strongly agreeing at a community level;
- Māori culture and activities are regarded as more important to NZ's national identity, with 62% strongly agreeing, than to community identity, with 27% strongly agreeing;
- Culture is seen to give people a stronger sense of national identity (53% strongly agreeing) than community identity (46% strongly agreeing);
- And overall, New Zealand is seen to have a stronger sense of national identity (52% strongly agreeing) than community identity (35% strongly agreeing).

BENEFITS OF CULTURE

Most scores are similar to those recorded in 1997; one exception being that in 2008 there is more agreement that culture enables people to express themselves and be creative.

Q: Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.



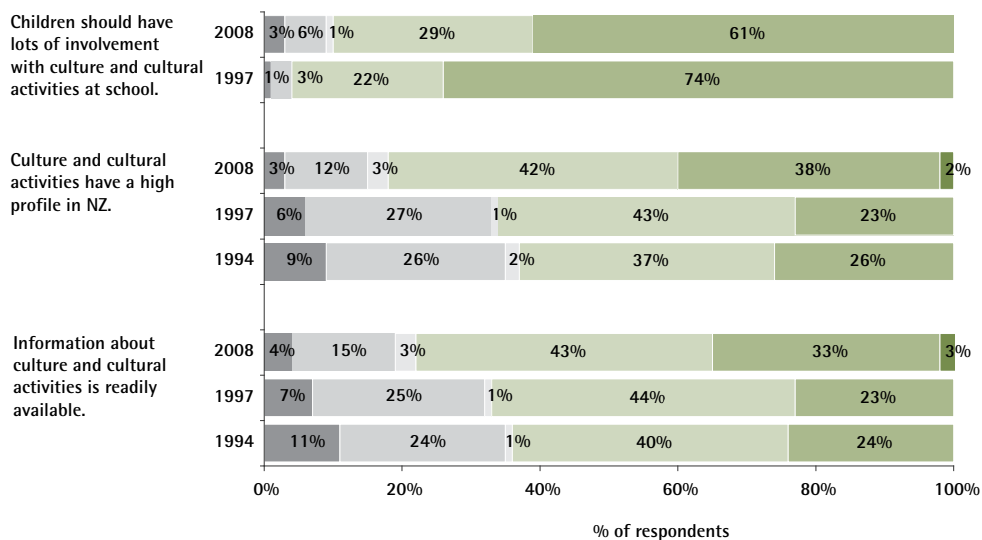
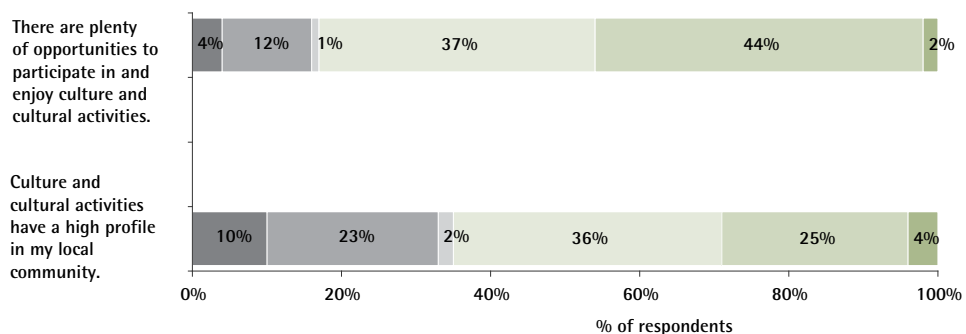
PROFILE AND ACCESS

Some 44% strongly agree that there is plenty of opportunity to participate in and enjoy culture, with a quarter strongly agreeing that culture and cultural activities have a high profile in their local communities.

In 2008, there is less strong agreement that children should have lots of involvement with culture at school although overall agreement remains high.

There is stronger agreement in 2008 that culture has a high profile in New Zealand and that information about culture and cultural activities is readily available.

Q: Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.



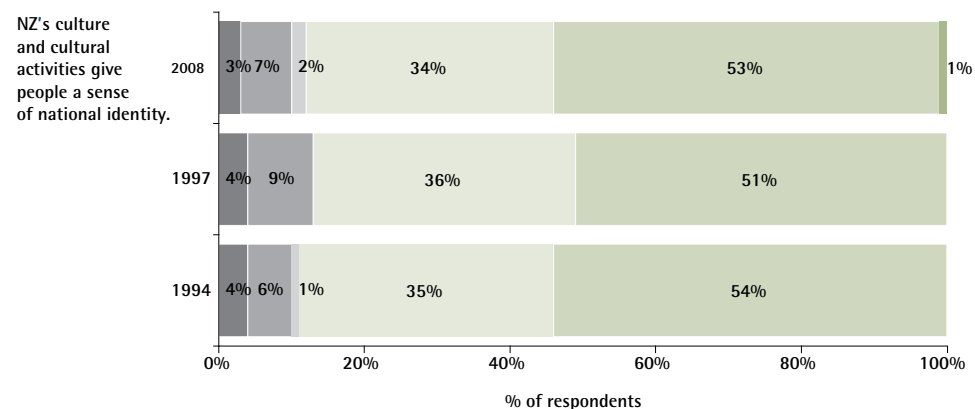
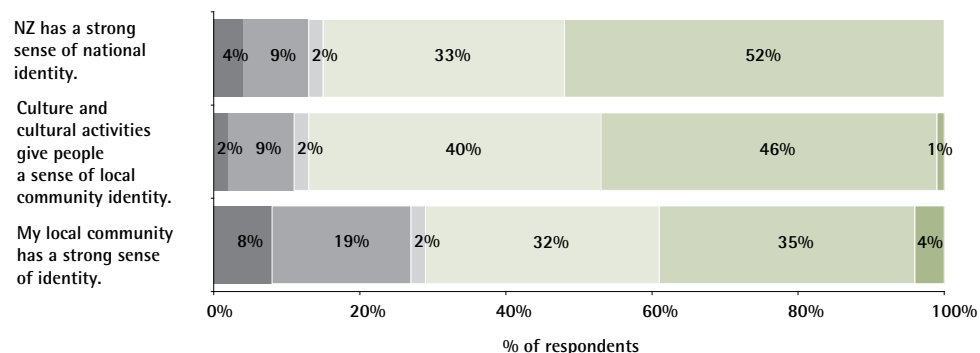
Strongly disagree Slightly disagree Neither Slightly agree Strongly agree Don't know

NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Around half of all respondents strongly agree that culture gives people a sense of national identity. Some 52% strongly agree that NZ has a strong sense of national identity, but only 35% strongly agree that their local community has a strong sense of identity.

While slightly more people strongly agree that culture and cultural activities contribute to a sense of national identity (53%) than community identity (46%), overall agreement that culture contributes to national and community identity is almost the same.

Q: Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.



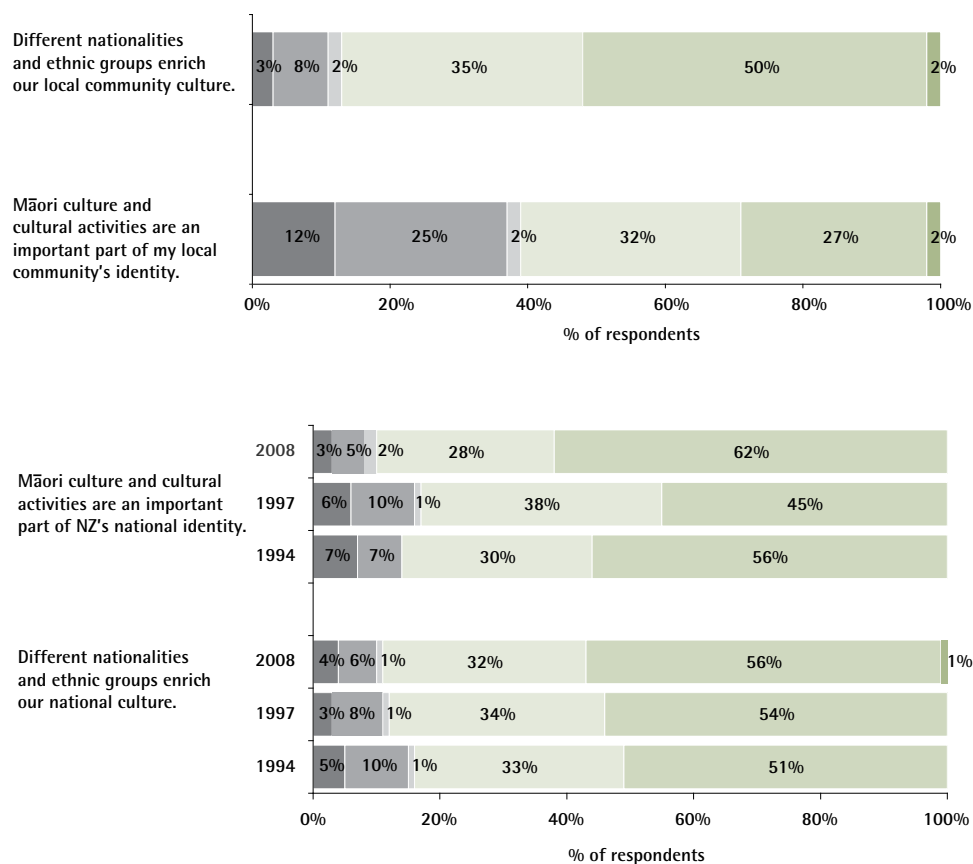
Strongly disagree Slightly disagree Neither Slightly agree Strongly agree Don't know

IDENTITY: MĀORI AND OTHER CULTURES

In 2008, 62% strongly agree that Māori culture and activities are an important part of New Zealand's identity. This is an increase of 17% from the 45% who strongly agreed in 1997. However only 27% strongly agree that Māori culture and activities are an important part of their local community's identity.

56% strongly agree that different nationalities and ethnic groups enrich national culture, and 50% strongly agree that different nationalities and ethnic groups enrich their local community culture.

Q: Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.



■ Strongly disagree ■ Slightly disagree ■ Neither ■ Slightly agree ■ Strongly agree ■ Don't know

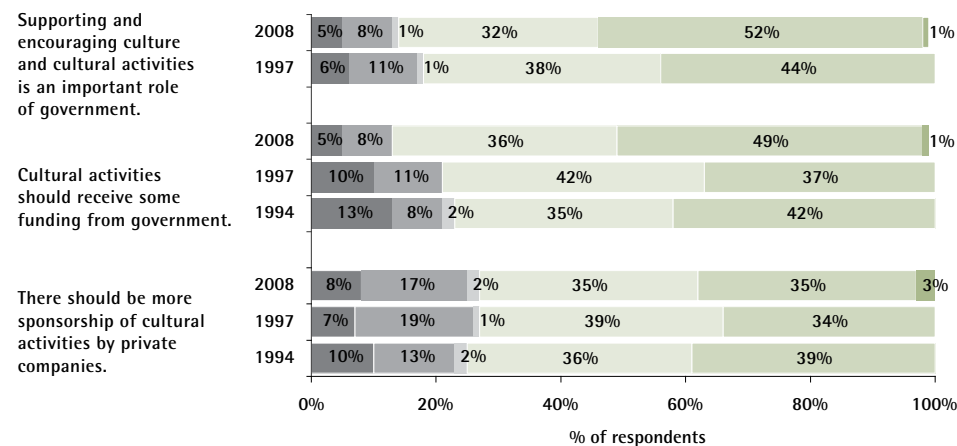
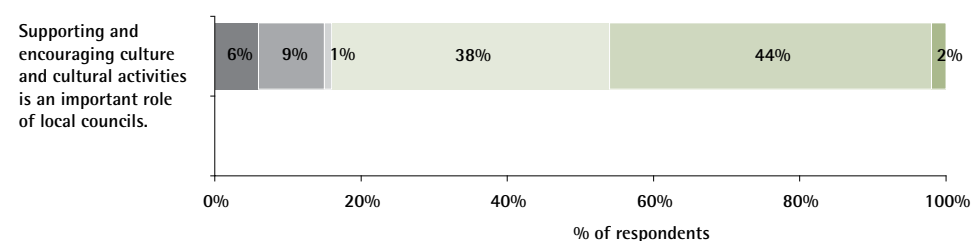
FUNDING AND SUPPORT

44% strongly agree that supporting and encouraging culture is an important role of local councils. Slightly more than half (52%) strongly agree that supporting and encouraging culture is an important role of government.

Almost half (49%) strongly agree that cultural activities should receive some funding from government, with 85% agreeing to some degree that such activities should be supported by government.

Only 35% strongly agree that there should be more sponsorship of culture and cultural activities by private companies, with 70% agreeing to some degree.

Q: Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

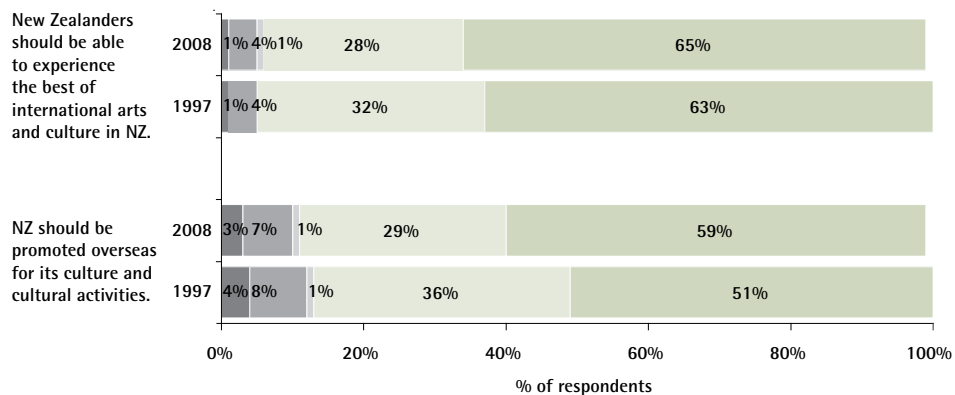


■ Strongly disagree ■ Slightly disagree ■ Neither ■ Slightly agree ■ Strongly agree ■ Don't know

INTERNATIONAL ACCESS AND PROMOTION

Close to two-thirds of all respondents strongly agree that New Zealanders should experience the best of international arts and culture. 59% of all respondents strongly agree that New Zealand should be promoted overseas for its culture.

Q: Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

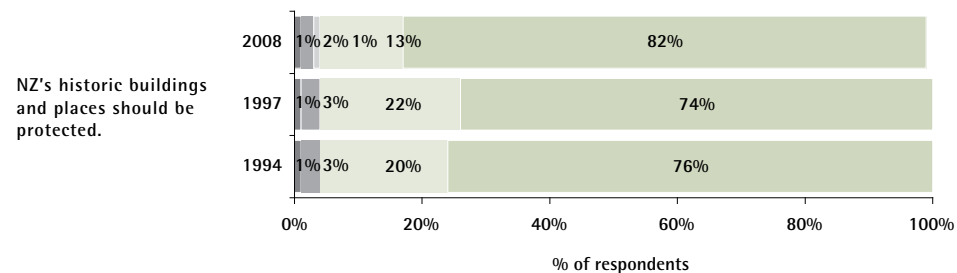


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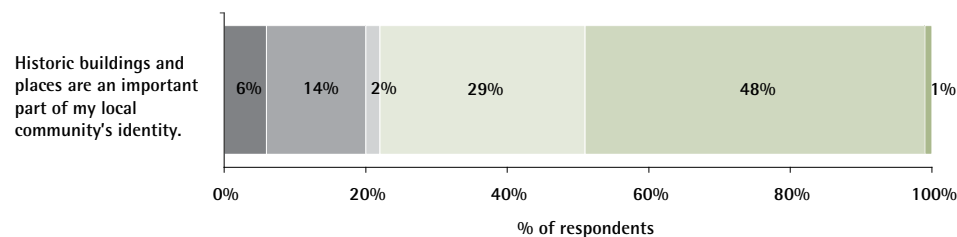
HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND PLACES

82% of people strongly agree, and another 13% slightly agree, that New Zealand's historic buildings and places should be protected, an overall result that is the same as in 1997. There has been a slight increase in those who strongly agree with protection of these places in 2008. At the local community level, 48% strongly agree that New Zealand's historic buildings and places make an important contribution to their local community's identity.

Q: Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.



■ Strongly disagree ■ Slightly disagree ■ Neither ■ Slightly agree ■ Strongly agree



■ Strongly disagree ■ Slightly disagree ■ Neither ■ Slightly agree ■ Strongly agree ■ Don't know

NEW ZEALAND'S SENSE OF IDENTITY

Respondents were also asked how important a specific set of themes were to creating New Zealand's sense of national identity.

When respondents were asked to say which contributors are the most important to New Zealand's sense of national identity:

Landscape and the environment is still regarded the most important. Those in Canterbury were most likely to nominate this factor.

Culture and cultural activities moved into equal second rating with race relations and diversity.

Wellingtonians were most likely to nominate culture and cultural activities as the most important contributor, while Māori and those living in the Bay of Plenty were most likely to say that race relations and diversity is the the most important factor.

Sport, in fourth place, was nominated by 13% as the most important factor, with those in Auckland and those aged 18-24 more likely to nominate sport as most important.

Respondents were then asked specifically about the importance of the seven areas in contributing to New Zealand's sense of national identity:

Landscape and the environment is regarded as the most important contributor to New Zealand's sense of identity, with 80% who say this is at least 'very important', including around 20% who say it is extremely, or critically important.

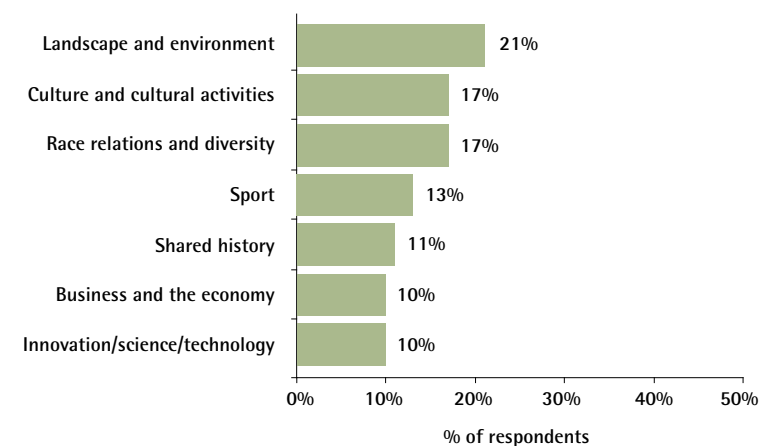
Innovation, science and technology followed with 75% who say this is at least 'very important' (19% for extremely and 13% for critically).

Shared history, race relations and diversity, culture and cultural activities and business follow with around 70% who say these are at least 'very important'.

Sport is regarded as the least important, though still important with 64% who feel it is at least 'very important' (14% of those rating it extremely important and 8% critically).

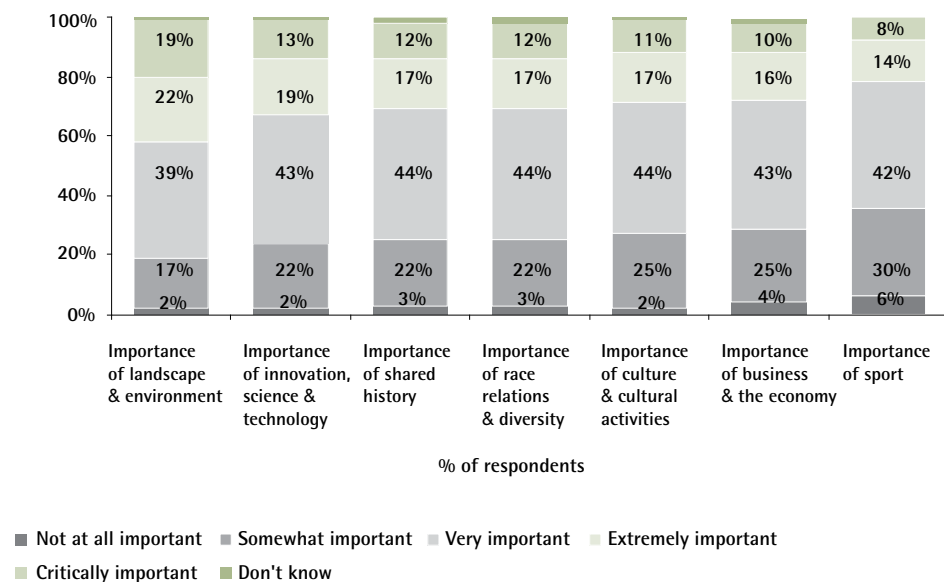
WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO NZ'S SENSE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY?

Q: What is most important in creating a sense of NZ's national identity?



WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO NZ'S SENSE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY?

Q: How important are the following things to NZ's sense of national identity?



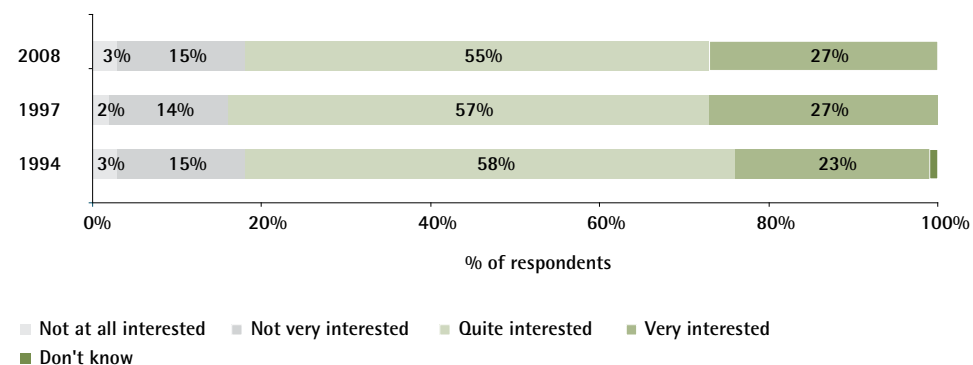
LEVELS OF INTEREST

A total of 82% of all respondents say they are at least quite interested in culture and cultural activities, including 27% who say they are very interested.

The level of interest in culture and cultural activities has remained largely unchanged since 1997, with more than 4 in 5 who are at least quite interested.

INTEREST IN CULTURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Q: How interested are you in culture and cultural activities?



Māori (47%) and Pacific Islanders (64%) are more likely to say they are very interested in culture and cultural activities.

Wellington has the highest interest in culture and cultural activities.

Youth (those aged 18-24 years) are somewhat more likely than other age groups to say they are not interested in culture or cultural activities, with 25% not very interested in 2008 (compared to 16% of 25-39 year olds, and 12% of those over 40). 73% of those 18-24 year olds are quite or very interested in culture, though this was a fall from 85% in 1997.

MEDIA PERCEPTIONS AND PREFERENCES

Respondents were asked about their perceptions of the level of coverage of culture and cultural activities, and how much coverage they would like to see of these activities.

The results were largely unchanged from 1997, with around half believing there is some coverage of cultural activities, and about a third saying there is very little coverage of culture. A smaller proportion (16%) felt there was a lot of cultural coverage, which was up from 9% who perceived this in 1997.

Similarly, when it came to preferences in relation to cultural coverage, the numbers were broadly comparable to previous years.

The number wanting more coverage has somewhat shrunk since 1994, and is matched with a small rise, (as noted above) in those who perceive there to be some, or a lot more coverage of cultural activities.

Nonetheless, still well over half of respondents believe there should be more coverage of culture in the media. Clearly, there is still an ongoing preference for more coverage of cultural activity by the media.

OTHER TOPICS IN THE MEDIA

Respondents were also asked their perceptions of coverage of other types of topics in the media.

When compared to responses in 1997, 2008 shows more than double the percentage of respondents who feel that gardening and life-style topics (such as home improvement, travel and cooking) get a lot of media coverage (49% vs 23%).

More than half (56%) of all respondents are happy for this level of media coverage of lifestyle topics to continue, and a further one quarter would like there to be more coverage of lifestyle topics.

When it comes to sport in the media, there is little change from 1997 with the vast majority (85%) feeling that there is 'a lot' of media coverage of sport. Half are happy for this to remain the same, and one third would like less coverage of sport.

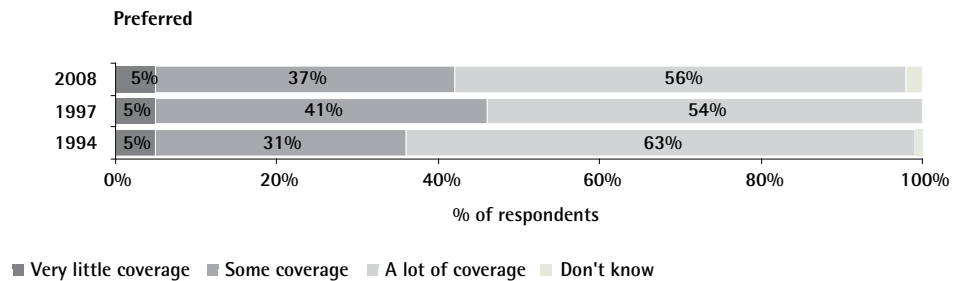
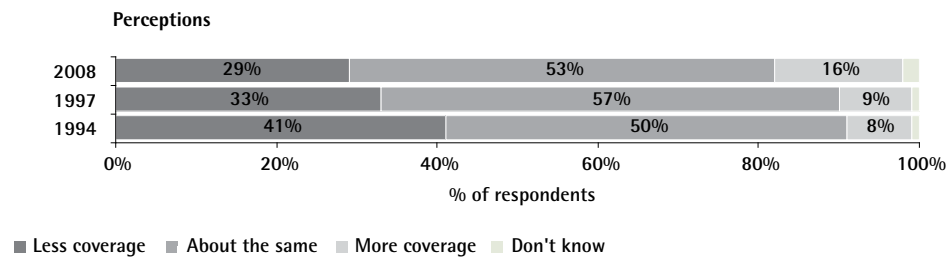
In relation to business coverage, 40% of people feel there is some media coverage of business (unchanged from 1997), with one-third who feel there is a lot and nearly one fifth who think there is very little (similar to 1997). Slightly more than half (55%) would like this to remain the same, with one-quarter who would like more and nearly one-fifth who would like less (unchanged on 1997).

MEDIA COVERAGE: CULTURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

More than half of all respondents feel there is 'some' coverage of culture and cultural activities, with one third who feel there is very little coverage.

More than half would like more media coverage of culture and cultural activities (similar to 1997).

Q: How much media coverage (television, newspapers, magazines, internet, radio) do you think there is of culture and cultural activities?



THE FULL REPORT IS AVAILABLE ON LINE
AT WWW.MCH.GOV.T.NZ

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New Zealand Government

