

TE MANA WHAKAATU

**Classification
Office**

Watch carefully.
Think critically.

THE EDGE OF THE INFODEMIC

**Challenging Misinformation in Aotearoa:
Additional statistics and information**

The Edge of the Infodemic: Challenging Misinformation in Aotearoa: Additional statistics and information

The research *The Edge of the Infodemic: Challenging Misinformation in Aotearoa* was published by the Classification Office on 30 June, 2021. This document provides additional information for people who are interested in further details about the research.

Percentage figures for 'prefer not to say' options that are 1% or under are not presented in the charts.

The full report can be downloaded on our website: www.classificationoffice.govt.nz

Contact us for further information: info@classificationoffice.govt.nz.

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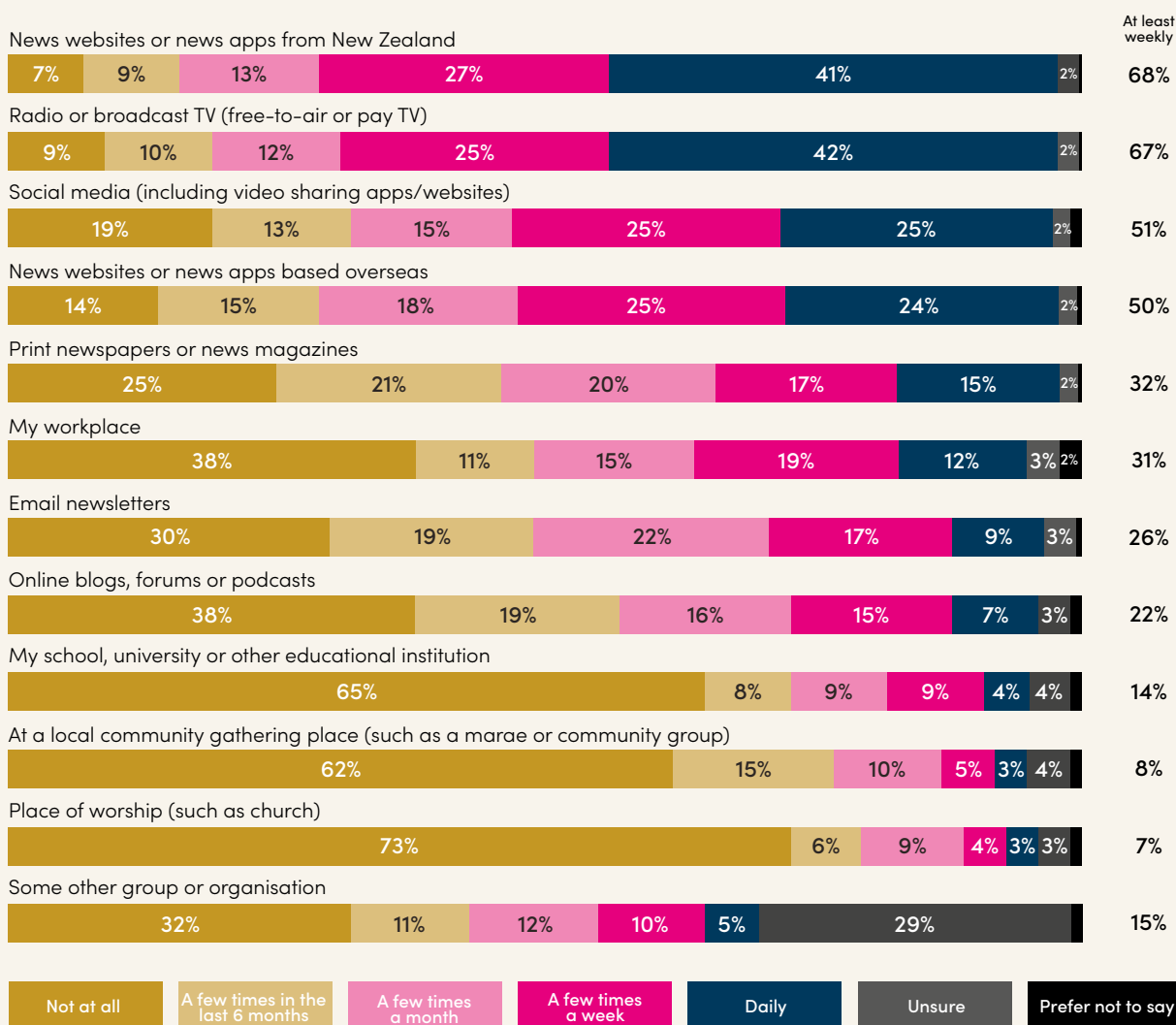
Additional charts

The following charts provide additional information that was not included in the research report.

Sources of news and information

Respondents were asked how often they got news or information from a range of sources in the last six months. These findings are discussed on page 22 of the research report.

Sources of news and information in the last six months



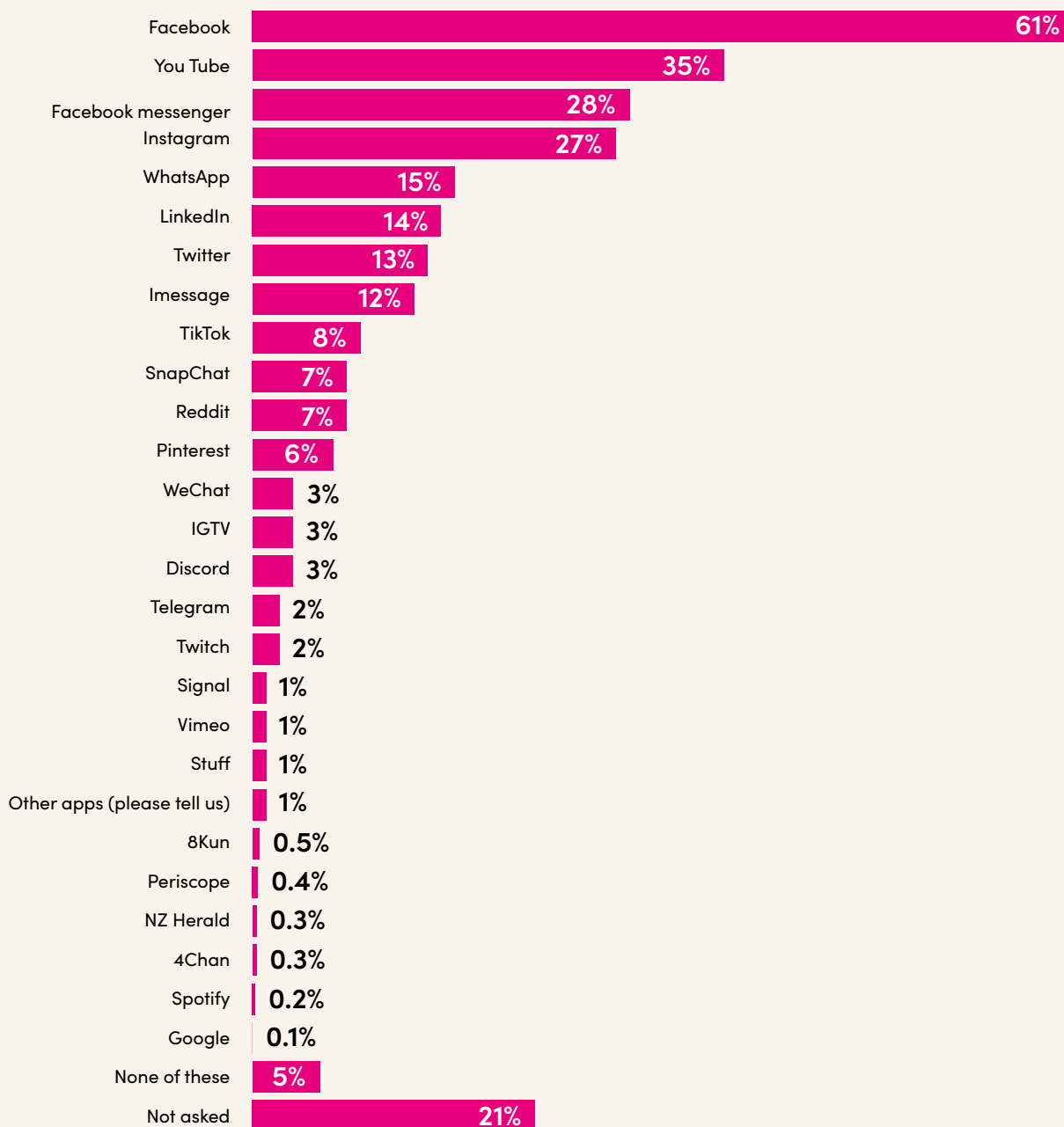
SURVEY QUESTION:

“In the last 6 months, how often did you get news or information from...?”
% of all respondents

Social media use

Respondents who indicated they used social media apps or websites to get news or information at least a few times in the last six months were asked to identify which specific apps or websites they used in the last month. This group made up 79% of the full sample. These findings are discussed on page 22 of the research report.

Social media use in the last month



SURVEY QUESTION:
 "In the last month, which of these did you get news or information from?"
 % of all respondents

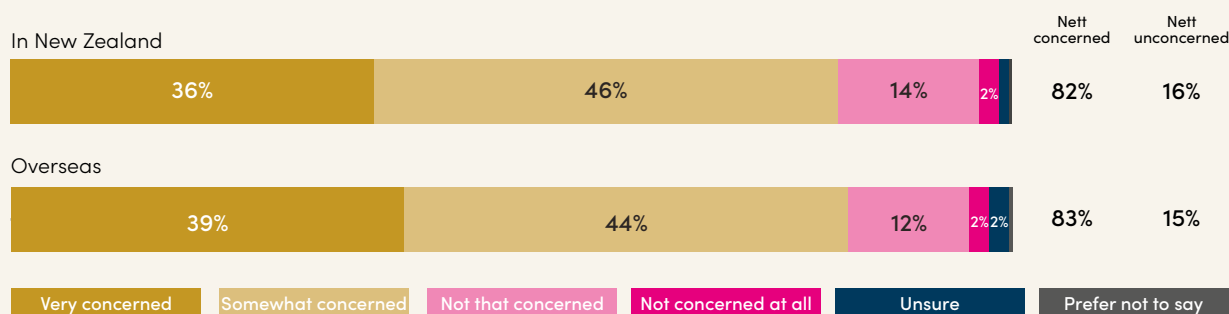
Concern about the spread of misinformation

Respondents were asked how concerned they are about the spread of what they perceive to be false or misleading information in New Zealand as well as overseas. The scale used was 'very concerned', 'somewhat concerned', 'not that concerned', 'not concerned at all', 'unsure' and 'prefer not to say'.

The 'Nett concerned' score refers to the proportion of respondents who said either 'somewhat concerned' or 'very concerned'. The 'Nett unconcerned' score refers to the proportion of respondents who said either 'not that concerned' or 'not concerned at all'.

The findings relating to concern about misinformation in New Zealand are presented on page 17 of the report. The chart below includes findings relating to concern about misinformation overseas.

Concern about the spread of misinformation in New Zealand and overseas



SURVEY QUESTION:

“Overall, how concerned (if at all) are you about the spread of false or misleading news and information in New Zealand?”

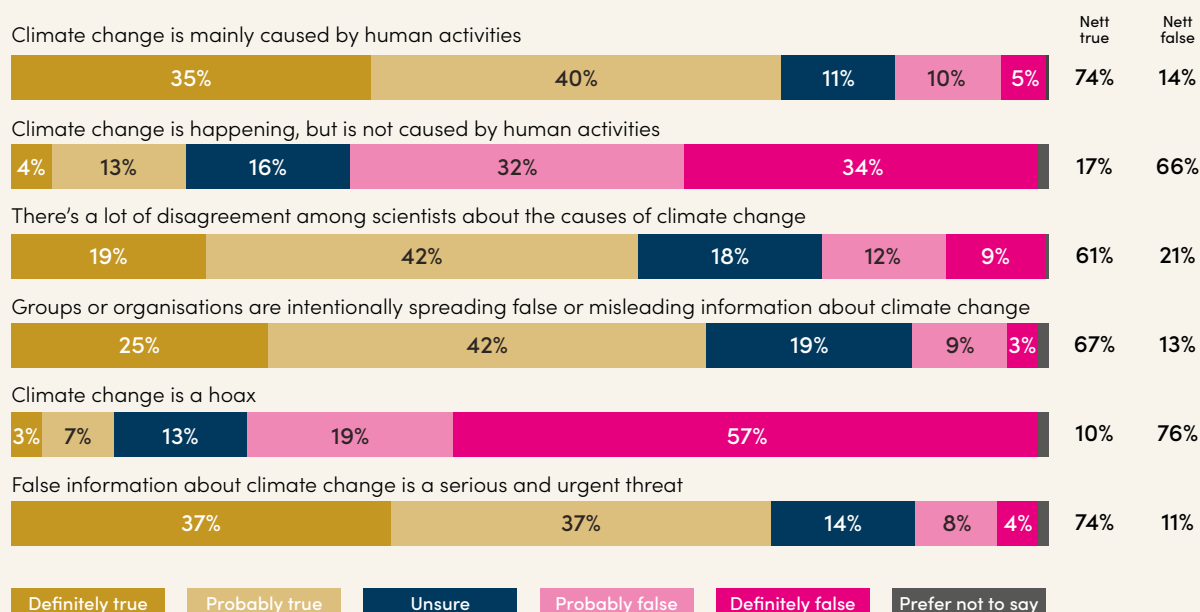
“Overall, how concerned (if at all) are you about the spread of false or misleading news and information overseas/internationally?”

% of all respondents

Beliefs about climate change

Beliefs about climate change are discussed on page 33 of the research report. Below is a full chart of findings about this topic.

Specific beliefs – climate change



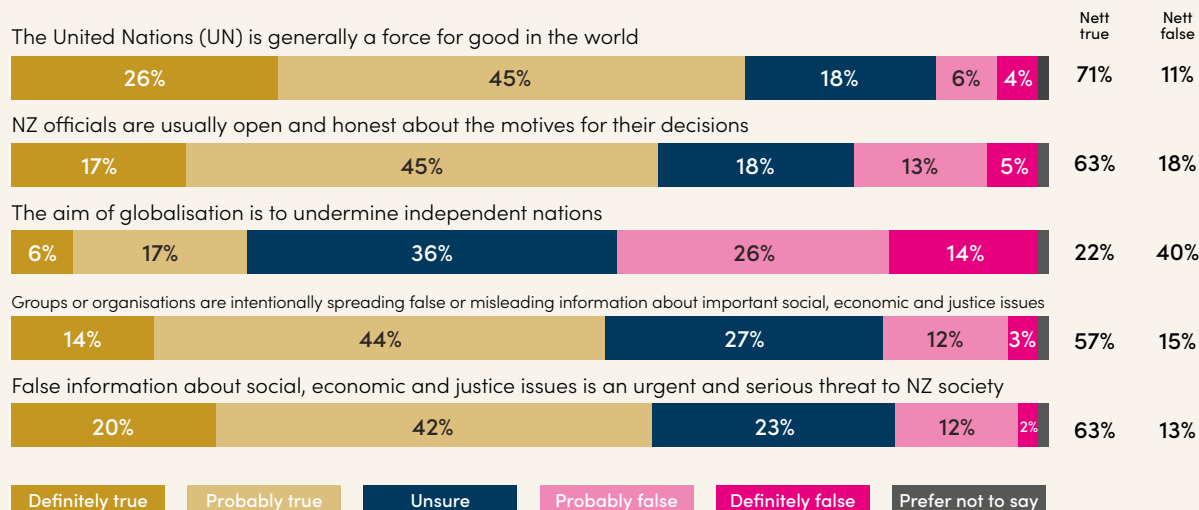
SURVEY QUESTION:

"Next we have some statements about climate change. Do you think this statement is true or false?
We're just interested in what you personally think."
% of all respondents

Beliefs about officials, international organisations, globalisation, and social, economic and justice issues

We asked participants about a number of statements relating to international organisations, globalisation and trust in officials. We also included statements about misinformation relating to social, economic and justice issues. Some of these findings are referenced separately in the research report on pages 19 and 24.

Specific beliefs – officials, international organisations, globalisation, and social, economic and justice issues



SURVEY QUESTION:

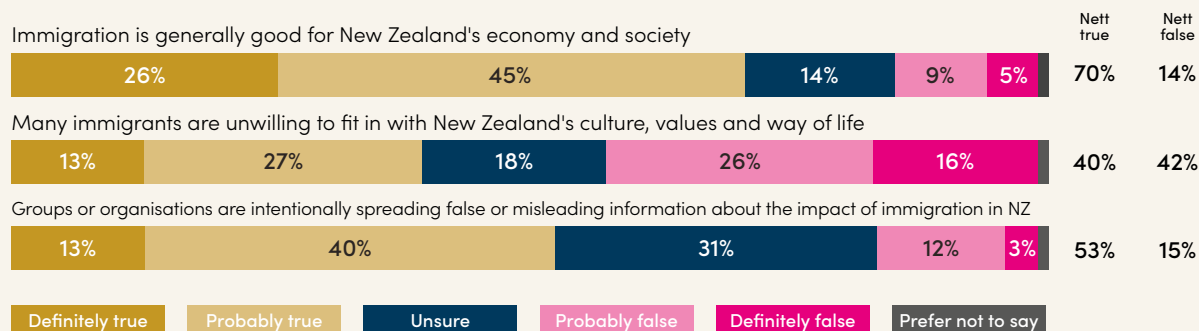
“Next we have some statements about governments and international organisations. Do you think this statement is true or false? We’re just interested in what you personally think.”
 % of all respondents

Beliefs about immigration

The ideological justification for the March 15 terrorist attacks is based in part on misinformation about immigration and immigrants, and so we covered this topic separately in the survey.

In addition to the statements below, we asked a smaller group of respondents about the statement “immigration is an urgent and serious threat to NZ society”. We found that 7% believe this is ‘definitely’ true, and 12% believe this is ‘probably’ true.

Specific beliefs – immigration



SURVEY QUESTION:

“Next we have some statements about immigration. Do you think this statement is true or false? We’re just interested in what you personally think.”
 % of all respondents

New Zealanders' attitudes and beliefs: additional information about our methodology

We address New Zealanders' beliefs on different topics from page 28 of the research report. Some of these statements can be characterised as reflecting misinformation, based on the available evidence and general scientific consensus. Others are more opinion-based, or ask about beliefs in a topic in a broad way. The latter were included to minimise the risk that participants thought they were being tested, and also to provide context of the wider attitudes held by New Zealanders.

For each topic, the scale used was 'definitely true', 'probably true', 'unsure', 'probably false', 'definitely false' and 'prefer not to say'. The 'Nett true' score refers to the proportion of respondents who said either 'probably true' or 'definitely true'. The 'Nett false' score refers to the proportion of respondents who said either 'probably false' or 'definitely false'. In general, responses to most statements indicated a level of uncertainty, and sit on a spectrum from 'probably true', to 'unsure', to 'probably false'. This might reflect participants feeling they lack firm knowledge about a subject, or that they are still forming a view – it might also reflect uncertainty about specific elements of the statement and how it is worded.

All percentages in the report are based on the full sample of respondents.

The order of the statements in each chart reflects the order in which respondents were asked about the statements. However, topic areas were rotated. The exceptions were statements about the Christchurch attacks, due to their sensitivity, and statements about 1080 (as a significant proportion of respondents were unlikely to have previous knowledge about the subject).

WHY WERE SOME OF THESE STATEMENTS SHOWN TO A SMALLER GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS?

Some statements describing beliefs with a clear link to known misinformation were only asked if a respondent had indicated a reasonable likelihood to believe such statements based on their previous responses. The rationale being that if they don't

believe the initial statement they are highly unlikely to believe the more specific statement relating to the same topic.

As an example, people who indicated that vaccines are safe are unlikely to believe vaccines cause autism. The purpose of this statement is to dig deeper and find out who believes vaccines cause autism, not to find out who disbelieves this or are unsure. Results for those who answered 'true' to the autism statement provide us with meaningful data in terms of the total population, as respondents who believe vaccines cause autism are highly likely to have been shown the statement and given an opportunity to express their belief.

Conversely, 'false' responses are likely to be highly under-represented – as most respondents who were not shown the autism question are highly unlikely to think it was 'true'. In other words, the finding that 4% of the full sample believe vaccines cause autism is likely to be a fair indication of belief in this statement, while the figure for those who do not believe vaccines cause autism should not be considered representative. For this reason, only the 'true' responses for these statements were presented in the research report.

This method was aimed at:

- Reducing the number of statements asked to avoid respondent fatigue – the full list included 50 statements in total.
- Mitigating the impression that respondents were being 'tested' on a list of topics which may be considered 'extreme' or controversial – including the full list of statements may have led to respondents being less willing to admit beliefs due to negative connotations about other beliefs listed.
- Ensuring robust data by including statements to those respondents who may be reasonably likely to believe them. To people who had not come across these beliefs before, some of these statements may seem novel, extreme or humorous, and this could have potentially had an impact on their responses.

Belief and misinformation: additional information about our methodology

On page 37 of the research report we look at how common it is for New Zealanders to believe statements that are associated with misinformation.

A core premise of the research is that some information can be objectively characterised as likely to be false or misleading based on the available evidence and general expert or scientific consensus. The scientific method is about determining facts based on the available evidence, but it is important to acknowledge that a determination of whether a statement is 'true' or 'false' is not absolute, and may be subject to change based on new evidence that is assessed in a rigorous and objective way. Therefore, findings in this report are not based on the assumption that certain statements or beliefs are inherently 'true' or 'false', or that the researchers are 'arbiters of truth' in the topics covered. Rather, the salient factor is whether information or beliefs can fairly be characterised as being associated with belief in misinformation based on the available evidence.

Misinformation occupies a wide continuum, and the statements represent a spectrum of beliefs that are not equally likely to be true or false. For example, the belief that 5G networks are harmful to people's health is associated with misinformation, and is not backed by evidence. Nonetheless, it is conceivable that new evidence could emerge to back this theory in some form. On the other hand, the probability that 5G networks are directly responsible for the Covid-19 virus is essentially zero.

COUNT OF BELIEF IN STATEMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH MISINFORMATION

For each respondent, a count was made of the number of responses indicating belief in statements associated with misinformation. Depending on the wording of the statement, this was either true (definitely or probably) or false (definitely or probably) responses. The table below includes the full list of 19 statements that were used for this analysis.

List of statements associated with misinformation

Statement	Response
Climate change is a hoax.	True
When used correctly, 1080 is a safe and effective way of controlling invasive predator animals like possums, stoat and rats.	False
1080 is part of a global agenda to control the human population.	True
1080 is an urgent and serious threat to NZ society.	True
The official story of the March 15 Christchurch mosque attacks is accurate.	False
The official story of who is responsible for the March 15 Christchurch mosque attacks is false - other people or organisations carried out the attacks.	True
The March 15 Christchurch mosque attacks never happened. It was a hoax intended to trigger political or social change.	True
The COVID-19 virus is real and it is a serious threat to public health worldwide.	False
Social distancing and regular hand washing reduces the likelihood of spreading the virus from person to person.	False
The COVID-19 virus does not really exist, it is a myth created by individuals or organisations with a hidden agenda.	True
The UN's 'Agenda 21/30' plan for sustainable development is intended to deprive nations of their sovereignty.	True
Vaccines are an effective way to fight disease and are generally safe.	False
Officials and scientists are intentionally misleading the NZ public about the safety of vaccines.	True
Vaccines cause autism.	True
The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic is being used as an excuse to force people to get vaccinations.	True
5G wireless communications are harmful to people's health.	True
COVID-19 is caused by 5G wireless communications networks.	True
The United States government or government officials allowed the September 11, 2001 attacks to take place.	True
The United States government planned or sponsored the September 11, 2001 attacks.	True

Demographic sample

As people may identify with more than one ethnicity, respondents are weighted according to whether or not they identify with a particular ethnic group. For this research, results have been weighted to ensure they represent Māori and Pacific populations. This means each respondent has two weights for ethnic identity (for Māori identity either yes or no, and for Pacific identity either yes or no). This approach allows for an individual person to identify as both Māori and Pacific, neither Māori nor Pacific, or only one of these ethnic groups but not the other.

Sample profile

Gender	Unweighted		Weighted	
	n=	%	n=	%
Male	1140	50	1121	49
Female	1155	50	1174	51
Another gender	6	*	6	*
Age by gender				
Male 16-17	168	7	38	2
Male 18-29	220	10	246	11
Male 30-39	164	7	185	8
Male 40-49	165	7	183	8
Male 50-59	166	7	184	8
Male 60-69	133	6	148	6
Male 70+	124	5	136	6
Female 16-17	131	6	37	2
Female 18-29	213	9	237	10
Female 30-39	174	8	193	8
Female 40-49	176	8	195	9
Female 50-59	174	8	194	8
Female 60-69	139	6	155	7
Female 70+	148	6	164	7
Another gender	6	*	6	*
Ethnicity				
NZ European	1642	71	1649	72
Māori	329	14	318	14
Pacific	117	5	152	7
Asian	331	14	312	14
Other	148	6	148	6
Unusable	4	*	4	*

Sample profile (continued)

Household income	Unweighted		Weighted	
	n=	%	n=	%
Under \$50,000	507	25	566	25
\$50,001 to \$100,000	728	36	811	36
\$100,001 to \$150,000	413	21	458	21
\$150,001 and over	352	18	389	18
Region				
Northland	81	4	85	4
Auckland	777	34	765	33
Waikato	219	10	221	10
Bay of Plenty	149	6	149	6
Gisborne	21	1	23	1
Hawke's Bay	85	4	80	3
Taranaki	56	2	57	2
Manawatu-Wanganui	117	5	117	5
Wellington	263	11	251	11
Tasman	22	1	25	1
Nelson	27	1	25	1
Marlborough	23	1	23	1
West Coast	14	1	16	1
Christchurch	205	9	207	9
Other Canterbury	88	4	91	4
Otago	108	5	115	5
Southland	46	2	48	2
Urban vs rural				
Large city	1175	51	1160	50
Small or medium sized town or city	855	37	864	38
Rural area	259	11	265	12
Unsure	12	1	12	1

Sample profile (continued)

Education	Unweighted		Weighted	
	n=	%	n=	%
No qualification	142	6	137	6
School Certificate or NCEA level 1	219	10	169	7
Sixth Form Certificate or NCEA Level 2	250	11	188	8
Bursary, Scholarship, University Entrance or NCEA level 3 or 4	213	9	209	9
A trade qualification	166	7	180	8
A certificate or diploma that does not require a degree	385	17	421	18
A polytech degree	79	3	87	4
A university degree	490	21	536	23
A postgraduate qualification (i.e. Honours, Masters, Fellowship, Postgraduate Diploma)	296	13	314	14
Doctorate/PhD	29	1	32	1
Other	9	*	7	*
Unsure	23	1	21	1
Religion				
No religion	1159	50	1145	50
Christian/Christianity (including Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, Rātana, or other denomination)	836	36	858	37
Buddhist/Buddhism	34	1	36	2
Hindu/Hinduism	79	3	78	3
Muslim/Islam	30	1	25	1
Jewish/Judaism	10	*	11	*
Sikh/Sikhism	25	1	24	1
Another religion	17	1	18	1
Prefer not to say	121	5	115	5

Sample profile (continued)

Religiosity	Unweighted		Weighted	
	n=	%	n=	%
1 – None at all	916	40	910	40
2	326	14	320	14
3	209	9	210	9
4	234	10	239	10
5	167	7	167	7
6	157	7	161	7
7 – A great deal	292	13	910	13
Employment status				
Working in full time paid employment (30 hours or more)	991	43	1071	47
Working in part-time paid employment (under 30 hours)	285	12	273	12
Self-employed	195	8	215	9
Studying (full time or part time)	286	12	152	7
Not employed but looking for paid work	90	4	82	4
Not employed and not looking for paid work	67	3	67	3
Stay at home parent	84	4	92	4
Retired	362	16	399	17
Volunteering	31	1	33	1
Unsure	22	1	17	1

*= % between 0.0% and 0.5%

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