



Who do we
trust
in New Zealand?
2016 to 2019

Simon Chapple & Kate Prickett

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Institute for Governance
and Policy Studies

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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased from 10.5 million to 12.5 million, and the number of people in the public sector who are employed in health care has increased from 2.5 million to 3.5 million (Department of Health 2000).

There are a number of reasons for this increase in the number of people employed in the public sector. One reason is that the public sector has become a more important part of the economy. Another reason is that the public sector has become a more attractive place to work. A third reason is that the public sector has become a more important part of society.

The public sector has become a more important part of the economy because it provides a number of essential services. These services include health care, education, and social care. The public sector has become a more attractive place to work because it offers a number of benefits, including a secure job, a good pension, and a good work-life balance.

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FOREWORD

In 2016, 2018 and 2019, in association with Colmar Brunton, the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies (IGPS) surveyed 1000 New Zealanders to obtain information on their interpersonal and institutional trust.

When the then IGPS Director Michael Macaulay made the decision to first collect the survey in 2016, he envisaged regular data collection every two years. When the survey was run again in 2018, we found unanticipated rises in trust in various dimensions of government. As Director, these changes led me to decide to run the survey at higher frequency, in part to be able to say more about the drivers of trust changes.

Our 2019 survey was conducted between 25 February and 10 March. On 15 March the mosque shootings in Christchurch occurred. Because of the shootings, the IGPS made the decision to commission an immediate follow-up survey. The

main aim was to answer the question of whether the event had changed trust. In this second 2019 survey we added further questions on trust in ethnic and religious groups, and questions on gun ownership and trust related to guns, since very little information was available on these dimensions in New Zealand and they are pertinent in the aftermath of the shootings.

This report takes an overview of all four of our surveys so far – 2016, 2018 and the two 2019 surveys.

We are very grateful for the work that Colmar Brunton has done. I also wish to acknowledge Michael Macaulay for initiating this survey. I am deeply grateful to my colleague Conal Smith and my co-author Kate Prickett for their ongoing and extensive help with this publication. Finally, our thanks go to all of those who participated in our surveys.

Dr Simon Chapple

Director, Institute for Governance and Policy Studies

METHODOLOGY

The surveys are intended to provide a representative picture of the New Zealand population. The questions for the survey were designed by the IGPS and were adapted from trust surveys run in various countries overseas.

Data was collected by Colmar Brunton. A total of 1000 New Zealanders aged 18 years or over were interviewed online, randomly selected from Colmar Brunton's online panel.

In terms of the panel, Colmar Brunton has an agreement with the Fly Buys Loyalty programme to recruit their members. Fly Buys is one of the biggest loyalty programmes in New Zealand with around 2.5 million members, about two thirds of the New Zealand population over age 18. When Colmar Brunton started their panel in 2006-07, they went to programme members with an offer to join. From there on every year Colmar Brunton run a recruitment campaign approaching random selection of members who are not on it to join the panel. The number of people approached depends on how many are needed in each of the age/gender/ethnicity or other demographic segments. In addition, every new member joining the programme gets a welcome email which also has a link to join the Colmar Brunton Panel. Further, any person can join the panel through Colmar Brunton's website. Once they show an interest, Colmar Brunton ask them to register with the programme and return with a membership number to enter the panel.

Quotas were applied at the sampling and selection stage for this survey. Results were also weighted to be representative of New Zealand by age, gender, ethnicity and region.

Not all New Zealand households have internet access. 77 percent of households had internet access in the most recent 2013 Census, meaning the survey cannot be said to be truly representative of all groups. Having said this, we believe that the results provide a reasonably good picture of the population and will allow us to identify trends and changes over time.

When comparing trust data, following standard practice we convert ordinal data (e.g. first, second, etc) into cardinal data (one, two, etc) by assuming equal intervals between ordinal response categories.

Additionally, we use several measures to assess importance of differences in time and between groups. The first and most important is a standardised effect size - the difference between two mean cardinal trust values divided by the relevant standard deviation, the latter a measure of spread in trust outcomes. We illustrate the scale of differences we find in our data through the qualitative terminology of very small (0.01), small (0.20), medium (0.50) and large (0.80) effect sizes.¹ The second is statistical significance, which measures whether the observed difference is probably systematic, or whether it is simply statistical noise. We use five percent as our cut-off level of significance. If we were to redraw our sample, at least 95 times out of 100 we would find a substantively similar finding.

The size of impacts on trust: Terminology used

Qualitative term:	“Very small”	“Small”	“Medium”	“Large”
Quantitative definition	0.01 of a trust standard deviation	0.20 of a trust standard deviation	0.50 of a trust standard deviation	0.80 of a trust standard deviation

¹ The qualitative lexicon also includes very large – 1.2 and huge – 2.0, but we do not find any such effects in our data. See Shlomo Sawilowsky. 2009. New effect size rules of thumb. *Journal of Modern Applied Statistical Methods*, 8(2), 597-599.

SUMMARY

Interpersonal trust in New Zealand is modestly on the rise

Between 2018 and 2019 the trust that New Zealanders express in others rose by a very small to small amount. Compared to other countries, New Zealand's interpersonal trust is at the higher end of the OECD.

Which institutions are most trusted?

In 2019 New Zealanders trust their neighbours most, equal with their trust in government to do right for New Zealand. Trust in government-related institutions has risen between 2016 and 2019. New Zealanders are least trusting of the way political parties are funded.

Which groups are most trusted?

New Zealanders trust Police and Medical practitioners the most, and Bloggers the least. There has been a rise in trust in Government ministers and Members of Parliament between 2016 and 2018. High trust groups are gaining in trust. The picture is more mixed for low trust groups.

Did the Christchurch shootings influence trust?

There is no evidence of any systematic influence of the Christchurch shootings on trust. If the goal of the shootings was to lower trust in New Zealand, it has failed.

Does trust in ethnic groups differ?

Out-group trust for all ethnic groups is the same. However, New Zealand Europeans and Māori have higher in-group trust.

Does trust in religious groups differ?

The most trusted religious group in New Zealand is Buddhists. The least trusted is Evangelical Christians. In the middle, trust in Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Protestants and Catholics is very similar.

Trust and guns

Between one in six and one in seven households have a gun. Gun owners are only moderately different in their sociodemographic profile from other New Zealanders – more likely to be New Zealand European and have lower levels of education – but trust government less.

How big are differences between sociodemographic groups?

In most cases, sociodemographic differences in trust are small or non-existent. Together, they only explain a modest amount of variation in trust. There is no male trust advantage. Age seems to matter more. The ethnic picture is mixed and shows no systematic picture of advantage for the majority group over minorities. Income, region, and education play a small to medium sized role.

Interpersonal trust: We asked about overall trust in people

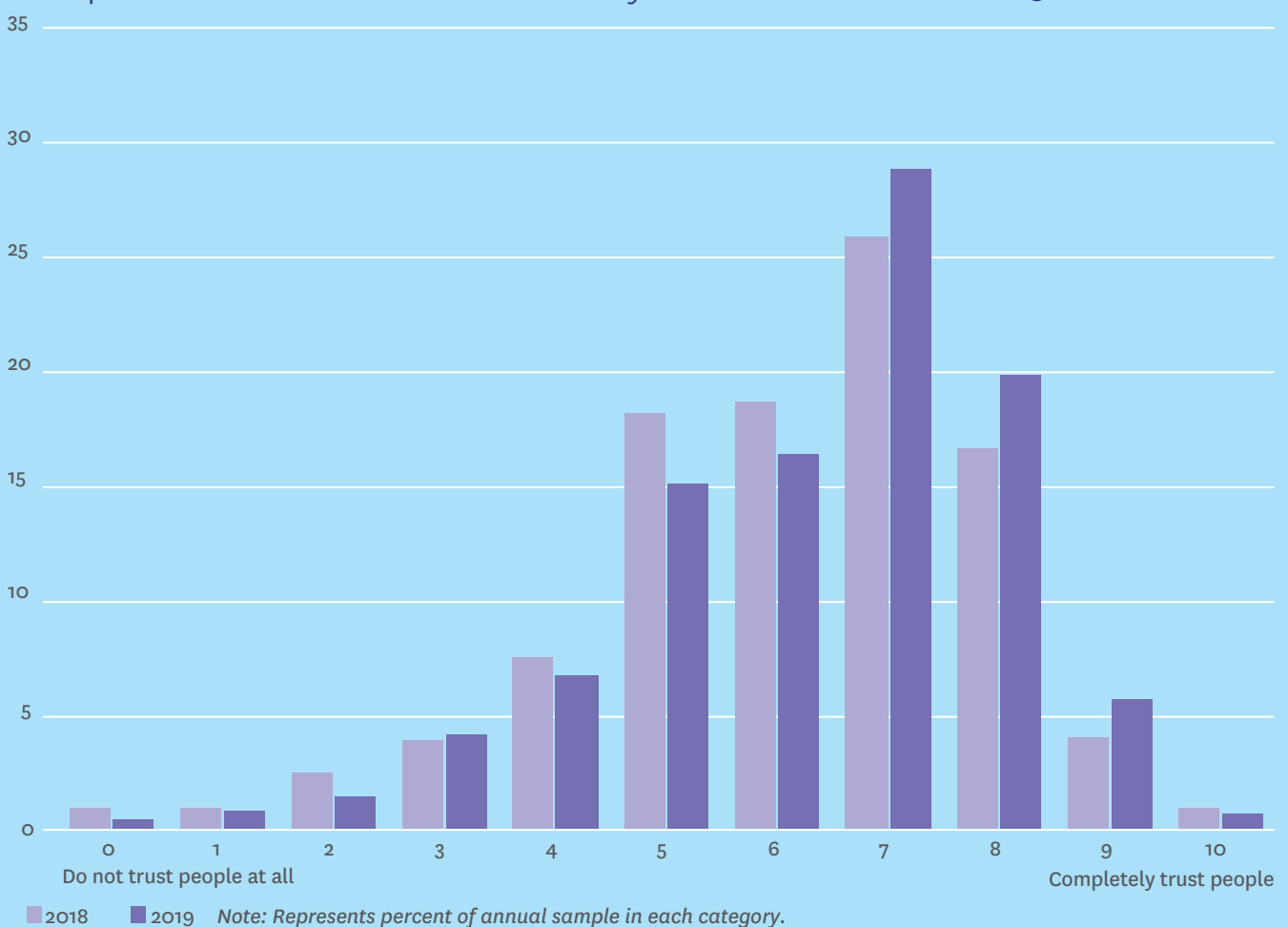
WE asked: *On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, in general how much do you trust most people?*

The average value on the 11-point scale was 6.1 in 2018, when this data was first collected, and is 6.3 in 2019. The 0.2-point trust rise between 2018 and 2019 is statistically significant. However, the effect size is between very small and small.

For 2019, our measure gave a somewhat lower level of interpersonal trust than Statistics New Zealand's *General Social Survey (GSS)* value of 6.8 for 2018/9. More work is intended on why

these two numbers differ. In both cases however, interpersonal trust is considerably higher than the OECD-wide population-weighted average of 5.7, published in their 2017 *How's Life?* publication.² The GSS measure ranked New Zealand 7th and the IGPS measure 12th out of the 27 OECD countries where data is available. Internationally, our interpersonal trust levels are on the higher side, but also at some distance from the highest in the OECD.

Interpersonal trust has risen modestly between 2018 and 2019



² See OECD. 2017. *How's Life? 2017*, OECD, Paris.

Group trust: We asked about trust in groups

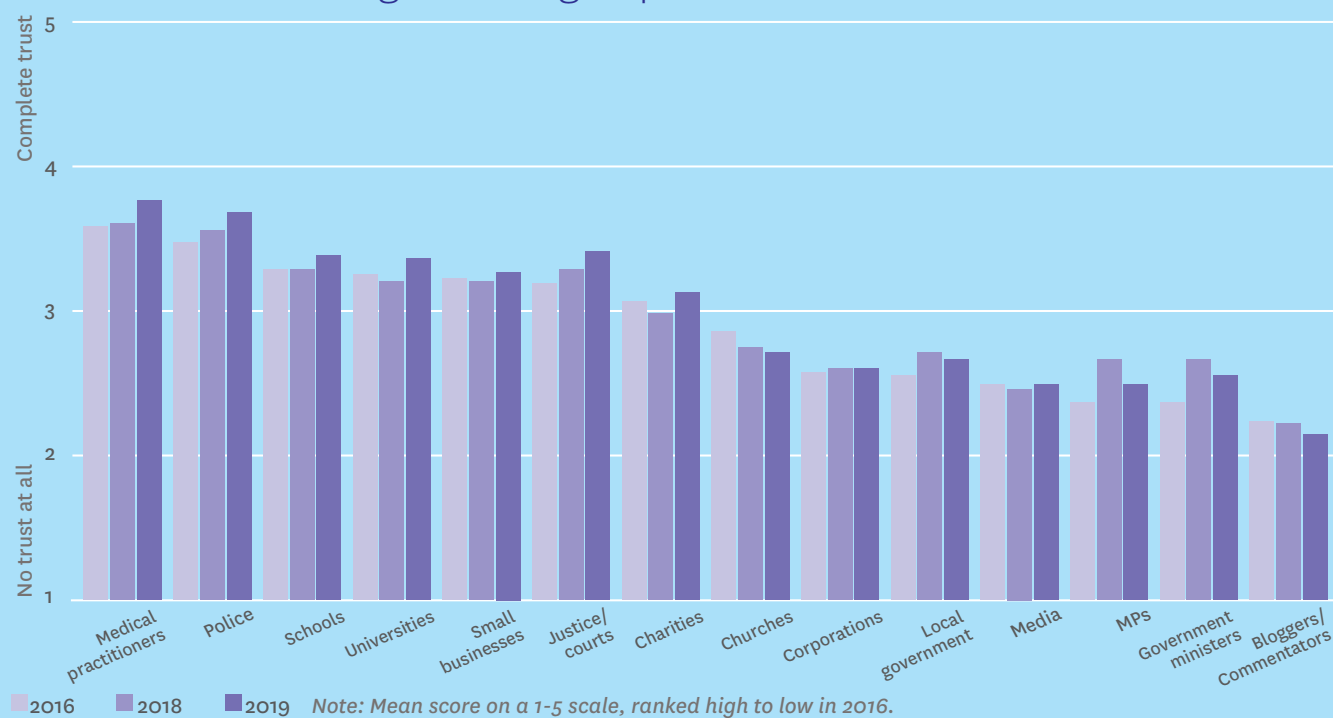
WE asked: *How much trust do you have in the following groups to do the right thing?*

Respondents were given a five-point scale – No trust, Little trust, Some trust, Lots of trust, Complete trust – and asked about trust in 14 institutions: Medical practitioners, Police, Members of Parliament (MPs), Judges/courts, Corporations/large businesses, TV/Print media, Schools and colleges, Government ministers, Universities, Charities, Local government, Bloggers/online commentators, Churches, and Small businesses. The ordinal scale is converted to a cardinal measure, with a maximum value of five.

Medical practitioners and the Police are consistently the most trusted groups in our society. On the other hand, our consistently least trusted group is Bloggers. Trust has typically increased for those groups which had the highest initial levels of

trust in our first 2016 survey, including for Medical practitioners, Police and Schools. The changes have, however, been modest, with small effect sizes. Patterns of changes through time are more mixed for those institutions with lower than average trust. There are downwards trust trends observed – more modest however even than the small upwards trends for high trust institutions – for Churches and Bloggers. Other lower trust institutions have stable trust – like Corporations and the Media. The government-associated institutions – Government ministers and MPs – show something of a saw tooth, with small to medium effect sizes for trust rises between 2016 and 2018 following the election in 2017, and a modest dropping off in 2019.

Trust increased for higher trust groups



Institutional trust: We asked about levels of trust in various formal and informal institutions

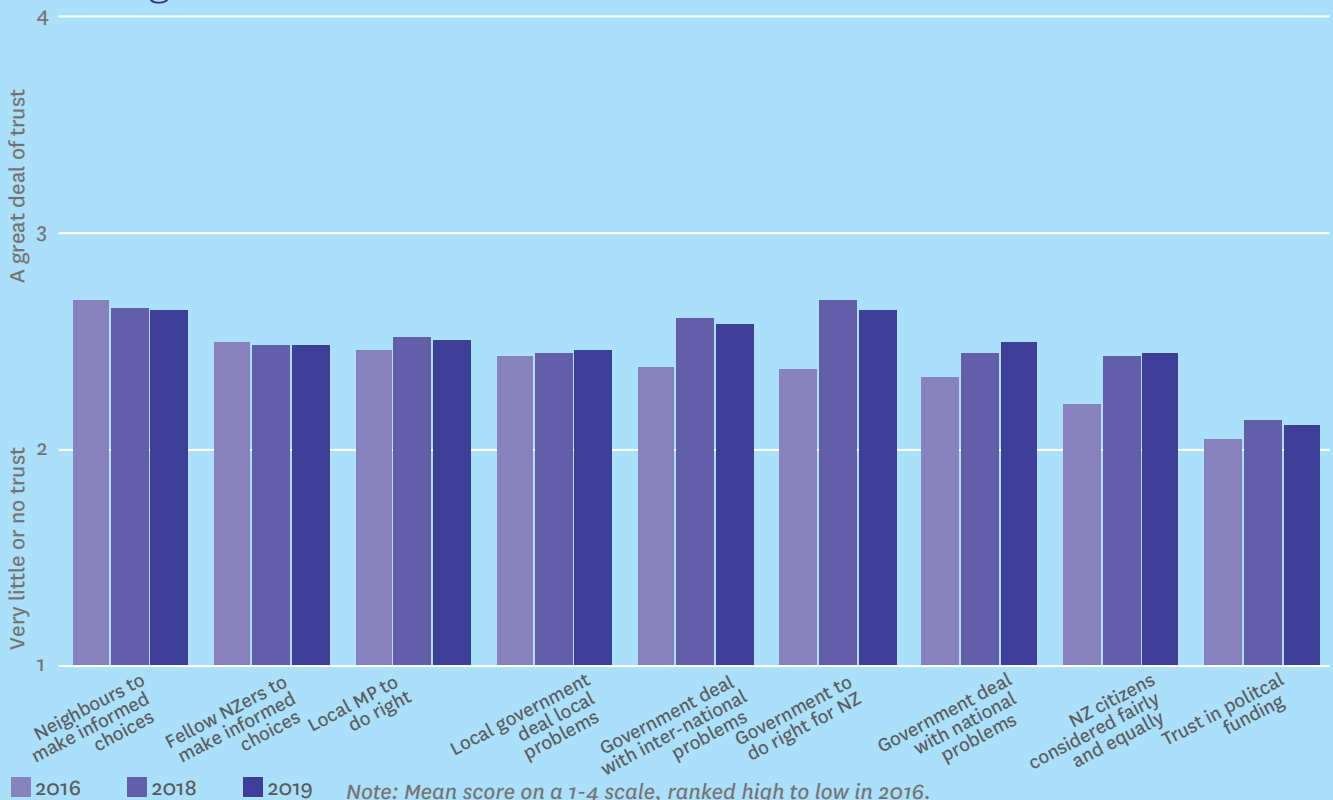
WE asked nine questions, on a four-point scale (Very little/none, Not much, A reasonable amount, A great deal) on trust in various formal and informal institutions.

In 2016, New Zealanders placed the greatest trust in their neighbours to make informed choices about their local area. This trust has fallen by a statistically significant amount, although the effect size is between small and very small. Trust in the government to do what is right for New Zealand has risen between 2016 and 2018 and 2019 to a level equal to trust in neighbours. The effect is medium sized and is statistically significant. Trust in the government to deal with national problems has significantly risen too. Here, however, the effect size is small. Trust in government to consider New Zealand citizens' interest fairly and equally, as well

as to successfully deal with international problems, have both also risen significantly with the effect size for both lying between small and medium. Increases in trust for government-like institutions to a large extent mirror rises in trust over the same period for MPs and Government Ministers and are presumably the consequence of the election and change in government in late 2017.

Compared to other institutions, trust is lowest in the way political parties are funded, by an effect size between medium to large. Trust in funding of political parties has significantly risen over the period, but the effect size is very small to small.

Trust in government rose



Did the Christchurch shootings influence trust?

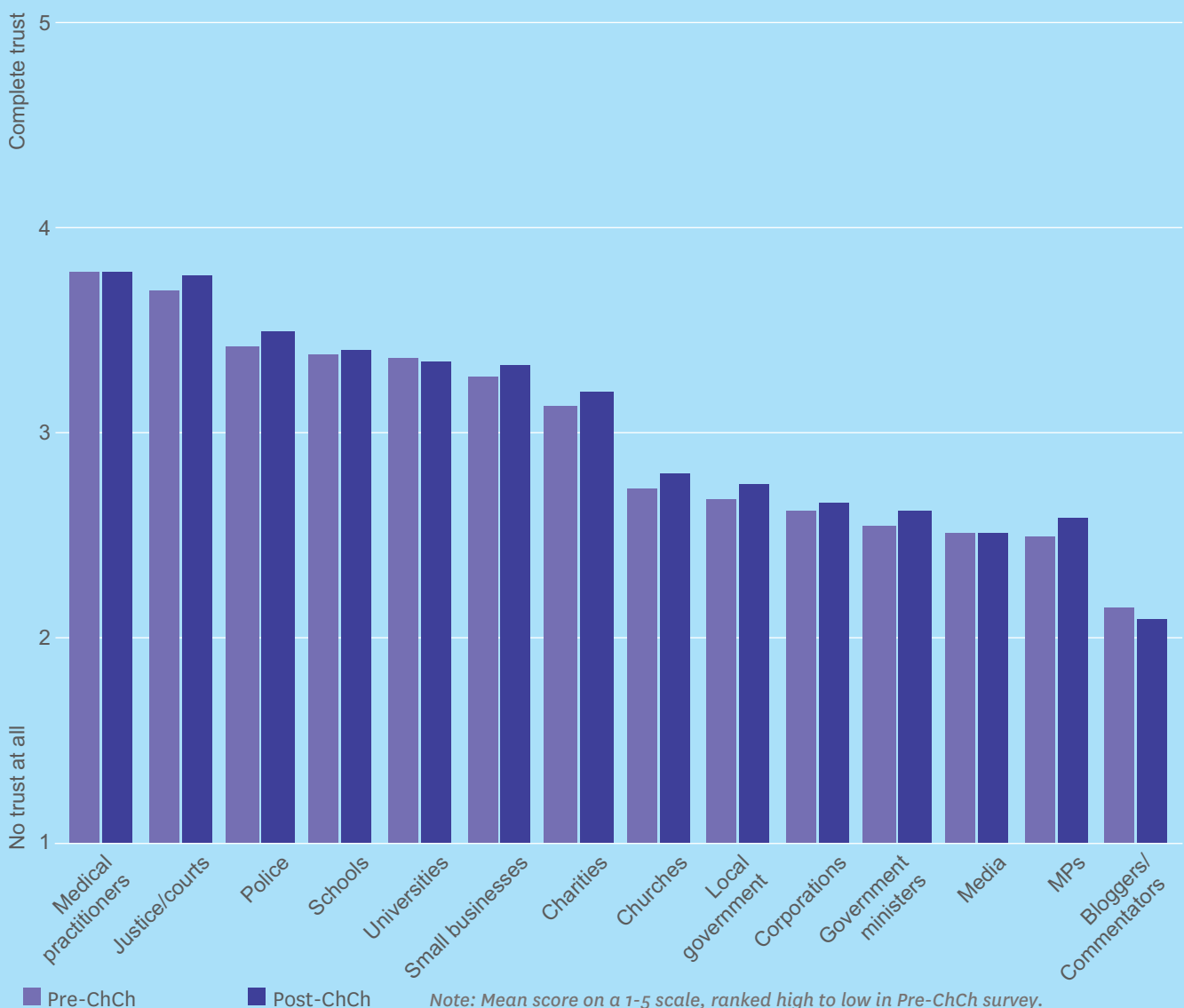
OUR first 2019 survey was collected between 25 February to 10 March. The Christchurch shootings occurred on 15 March. We decided to run the survey again to ascertain any changes in trust. It was run between 12 and 18 April, approximately one month following the shootings.

The data show no change in interpersonal trust following the shootings, in terms of either size or significance. Interpersonal trust was 6.3 before and after the shootings. Effect sizes for change in group trust measures are all below small, and only two are

statistically significant, one positive shift (for MPs) and the other a negative shift (for Bloggers).

Despite the scale and shock of the event, the clear conclusion is that trust was rock-like in response to the shootings. If the goal of the shootings was to lower trust and sow suspicion in New Zealand, there is no evidence that it has succeeded. Conversely, in the sense of greater trust following the shootings, the data provide no evidence for any national “coming together” either.

The Christchurch shootings did not affect group trust



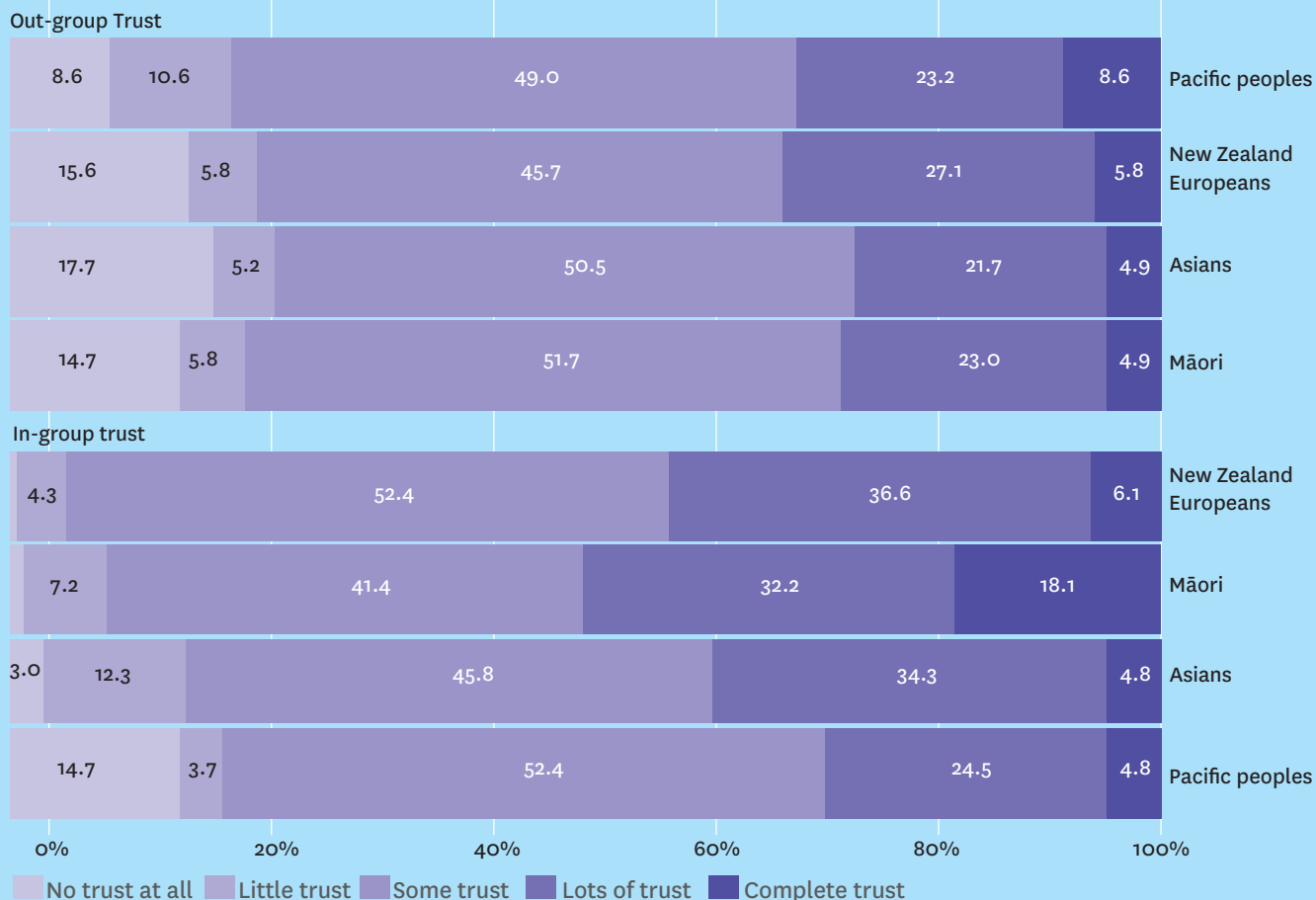
We asked about trust between ethnic groups

IN the post-Christchurch shootings survey, we asked: *How much trust do you have in the following people, or groups of people living in New Zealand?* The question was asked, on the same five-point scale used for institutional trust, with reference to four groups: New Zealand Europeans, Māori, Asians and Pacific peoples. Because we could allocate respondents into these categories, we could distinguish between in- and out-group trust. Out-group trust is defined as trust by non-New Zealand Europeans in New Zealand Europeans, non-Māori in Māori and so on. In-group trust is defined as trust by New Zealand Europeans in New Zealand Europeans, Māori in Māori and so on.

considered. No ethnic group experiences a different degree of out-group trust or distrust from any other. There is evidence of higher in- than out-group trust for both New Zealand Europeans and Māori. They trusted themselves significantly more than others trusted them. In size, the in-group advantage is small to medium for New Zealand Europeans, and medium to large for Māori. That there is no in-group advantage in trust for either Pacific people or Asians may reflect ethnic heterogeneity within the category. For example, for Pacific peoples the actual reference in-group may be Samoans, Tongans or Cook Islanders, not Pacific peoples, and for the Asian group, it may be Koreans, Filipinos or Chinese.

The most striking result is that out-group trust is very similar across all four ethnic groups

Out-group ethnic trust no different across ethnic groups



We asked about trust in different religious groups

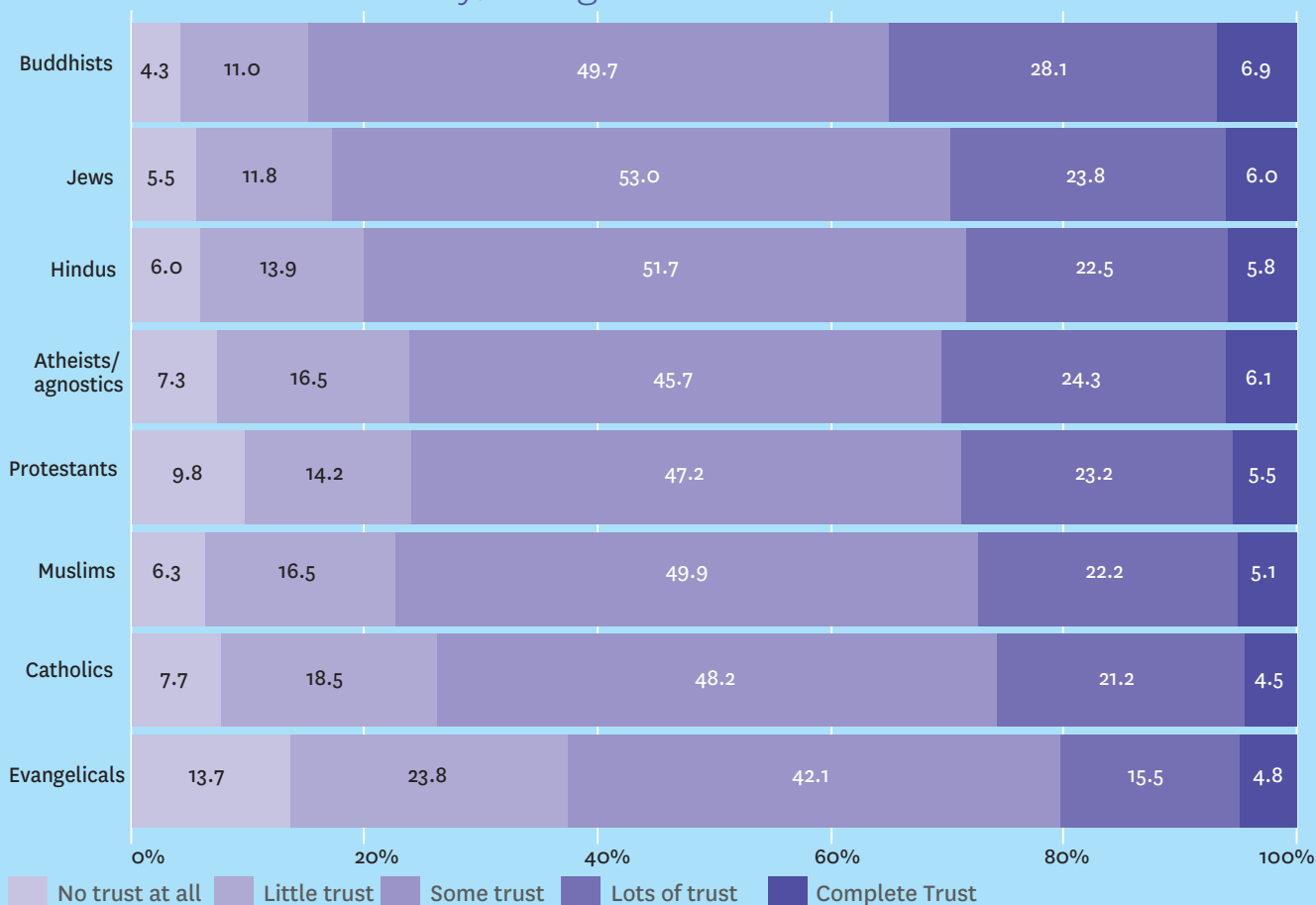
IN the post-Christchurch shootings survey, for the first time we asked: *How much trust do you have in the following people, or groups of people living in New Zealand?* The question was asked with reference to Catholics, Protestants, Evangelical Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Atheists or agnostics, and Jews and using the five-point scale.

Near identical in terms of trust are the two largest religious groupings in New Zealand – Protestants and Catholics. In a very similar space are Atheists and agnostics, Hindus, Jews and Muslims. Evangelical Christians are especially distrusted, and Buddhists particularly trusted. The trust difference between these top and bottom religious groups is of medium size. There

is no evidence of either local anti-Semitism or Islamophobia in the post-shootings’ responses, in the form of any unusual trust deficit displayed towards Jews or Muslims.

For the very small religious groups in New Zealand, like Jews and Muslims, our measure is a very good proxy for out-group trust, since there are so few in the minority group. For the larger groups, like Protestants and Catholics, our measure does not detect out-group trust well, as it is likely to contain a substantial number of in-group members. If there is an in-group religious bias in trust, out-group trust of Protestants and Catholics will be lower than that observed here and lowered relative to out-group trust of very small groups like Jews and Muslims.

Buddhists most trustworthy, Evangelicals least



Note: Percent in each trust scale category, ranked by high-low mean trust score.

We asked about trust and guns

IN the post-Christchurch shootings survey, we asked if people had a gun, either personally or in their household, and about trust in gun-owners and in the pro-gun lobby. We found that a not-insignificant minority of New Zealanders live in a home with a gun. Fifteen percent of respondents say they either own a gun (hereafter “gun owners”), evenly split between those who personally own a gun (7.7 percent) or live in a household with someone who owned a gun (7.5 percent). Gun owners report moderately lower levels of education (38 percent completed secondary school or less, versus 29 percent of non-gun owners), are somewhat more likely to own their home (79 percent versus 68 percent), are more likely to be New Zealand European (84 percent versus 74 percent) and are more likely to be New Zealand born (84 percent versus 75 percent). They are also less likely to live in Auckland (15 percent versus 34 percent) or Wellington (6 percent versus 12 percent), but more likely to live places outside those cities in the North Island (50 percent versus 29 percent).

Gun owners are less likely to identify as being at the Left of the political spectrum (8 percent versus 16 percent). They are more likely to consider themselves Centre right (32 percent versus 23

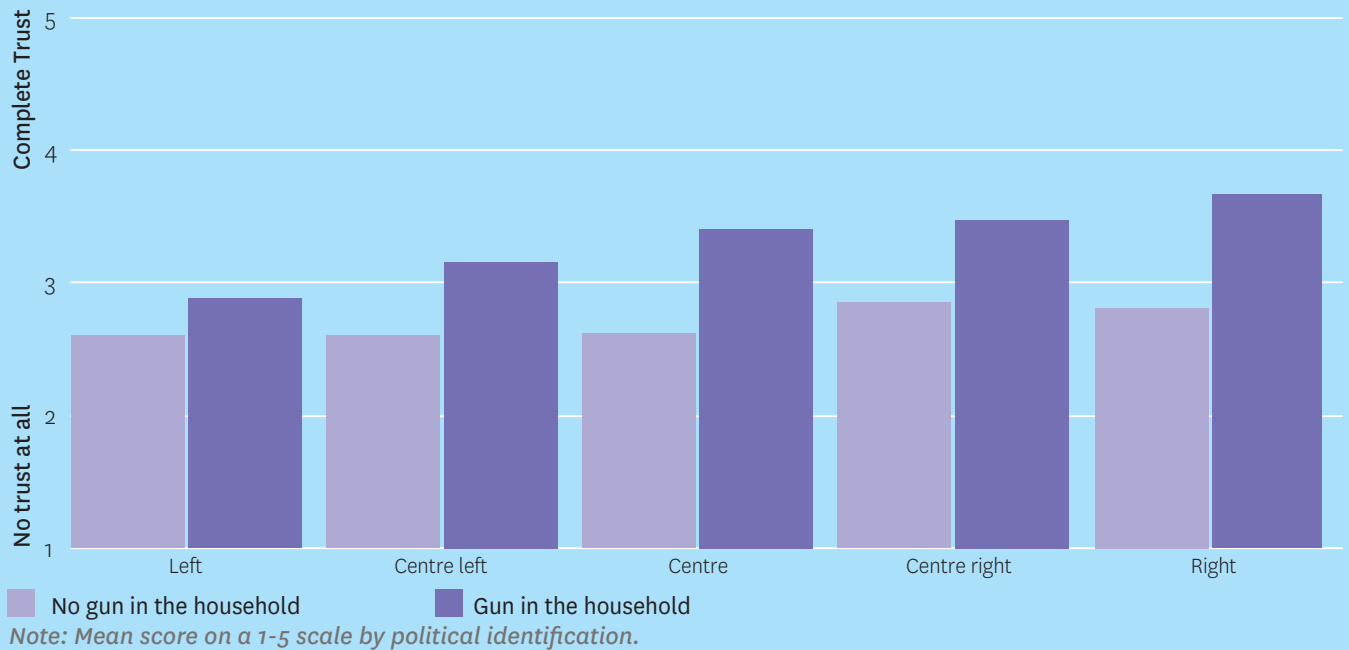
percent). There is no difference in the proportion in those who did and did not own guns who consider themselves Centre left, Centre, or Right.

There are no differences in interpersonal trust between gun owners and those who do not own guns. Gun owners, however, have lower levels of trust in the government to do the right thing. The effect is between small and medium in size.

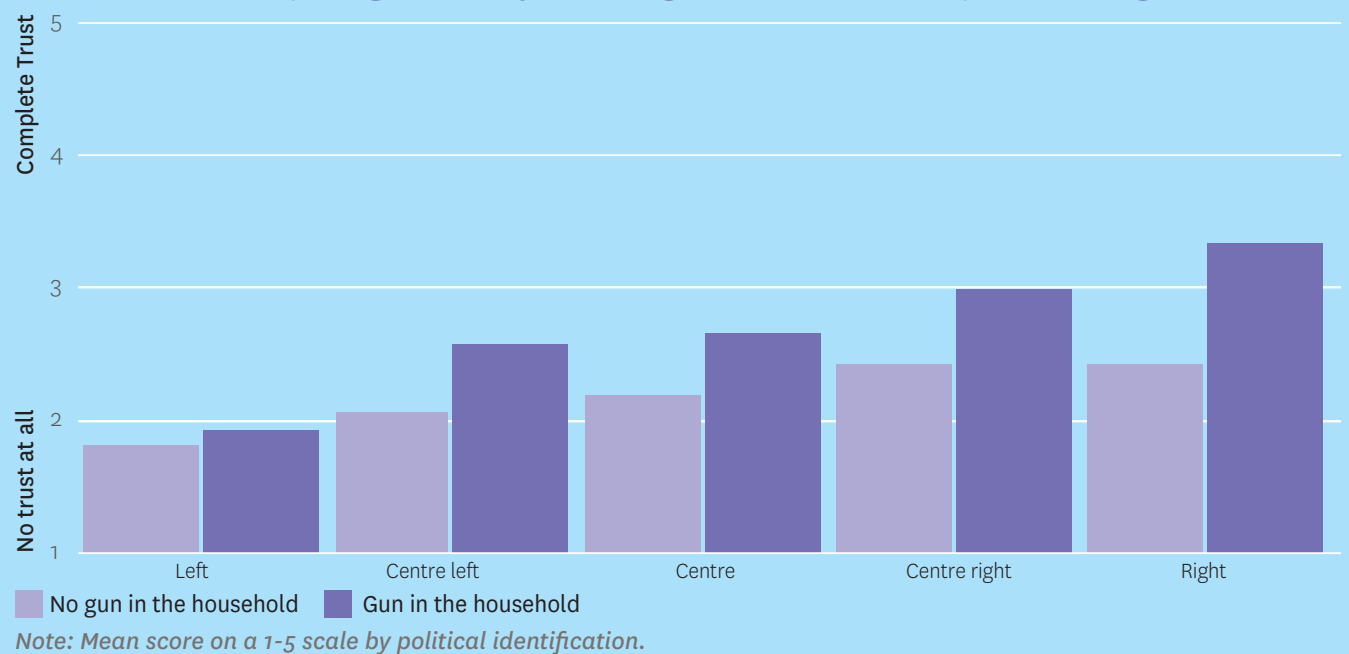
Speculatively, taken in their entirety, these results may indicate the greater rurality of gun ownership in New Zealand and the frequent rural use of guns as a farm tool or as a recreational hunting device.

We use a multivariate framework that adjusts for sociodemographic differences between gun owners and non-gun owners. The derived results, shown in the charts below, demonstrate that both gun owners and those identifying on the political right have generally higher levels of trust in both gun owners and in the pro-gun lobby. The positive trust gap of gun owners over non-gun owners in both gun-related trust measures grows markedly as we move from left to right across the political spectrum. People to the right who own guns are more divided on gun-trust from those who don't than are those to their left.

Gun owners to the political right more trusting of gun owners



Low trust in the pro-gun lobby, but higher trust on the political right



How big are interpersonal and government trust differences between sociodemographic groups?

POOLING the two 2019 data sets, we looked at the relationship of membership of various sociodemographic groups and two representative trust measures – interpersonal trust and trust in government to do what is right for New Zealand. Since the various sociodemographic dimensions can be related – for example, Māori are more likely to be young – we undertook this exercise in a multi-variate context. So, for example, a multi-variate approach means that we can examine the association between being (say) Māori and interpersonal trust after stripping out the independent impact of being younger. To visually illustrate some of the larger differences, predicted interpersonal trust for selected variables are shown in the chart. The main conclusions from considering the sociodemographics in terms of the two trust measures are as follows:

Gender: Men and women have very similar interpersonal trust. While men are significantly less trusting of government to do what is right than women, the difference is between very small and small.

Age: The relationship between age and interpersonal trust falls somewhat until people are in their early forties, and thereafter rises strongly in a “U” shape. In terms of size, some of these effects are large. A “U” shape in age is also found for government trust, but age differences are less pronounced in size.

Ethnicity: Those who identify only as Māori have lower interpersonal trust than New Zealand Europeans. The effect is of small to medium size. In contrast, those who identify

as both Māori and another ethnic group are statistically identical in trust to New Zealand Europeans. Other minority ethnic groups are also indistinguishable from the majority. Trust in government does not vary across most ethnic groups, with significantly higher trust found for the Indian and Other groups compared to New Zealand Europeans.

Education: Post-graduates have higher interpersonal trust levels than others, but the effect, while statistically significant, is between very small and small. There are no differences in government trust by educational level.

Income: People in higher income households have significantly higher interpersonal and government trust. The effect is small to medium, and lower for government trust than for interpersonal trust.

Political leaning: Compared to being on the Left, being on the Centre left, Centre, Centre right and Right end of the political spectrum has a small to medium sized positive impact on interpersonal trust. Patterns for trust in government are lower on the right than the left, and larger in size, suggesting these patterns may be sensitive to the ideology of the government in power.

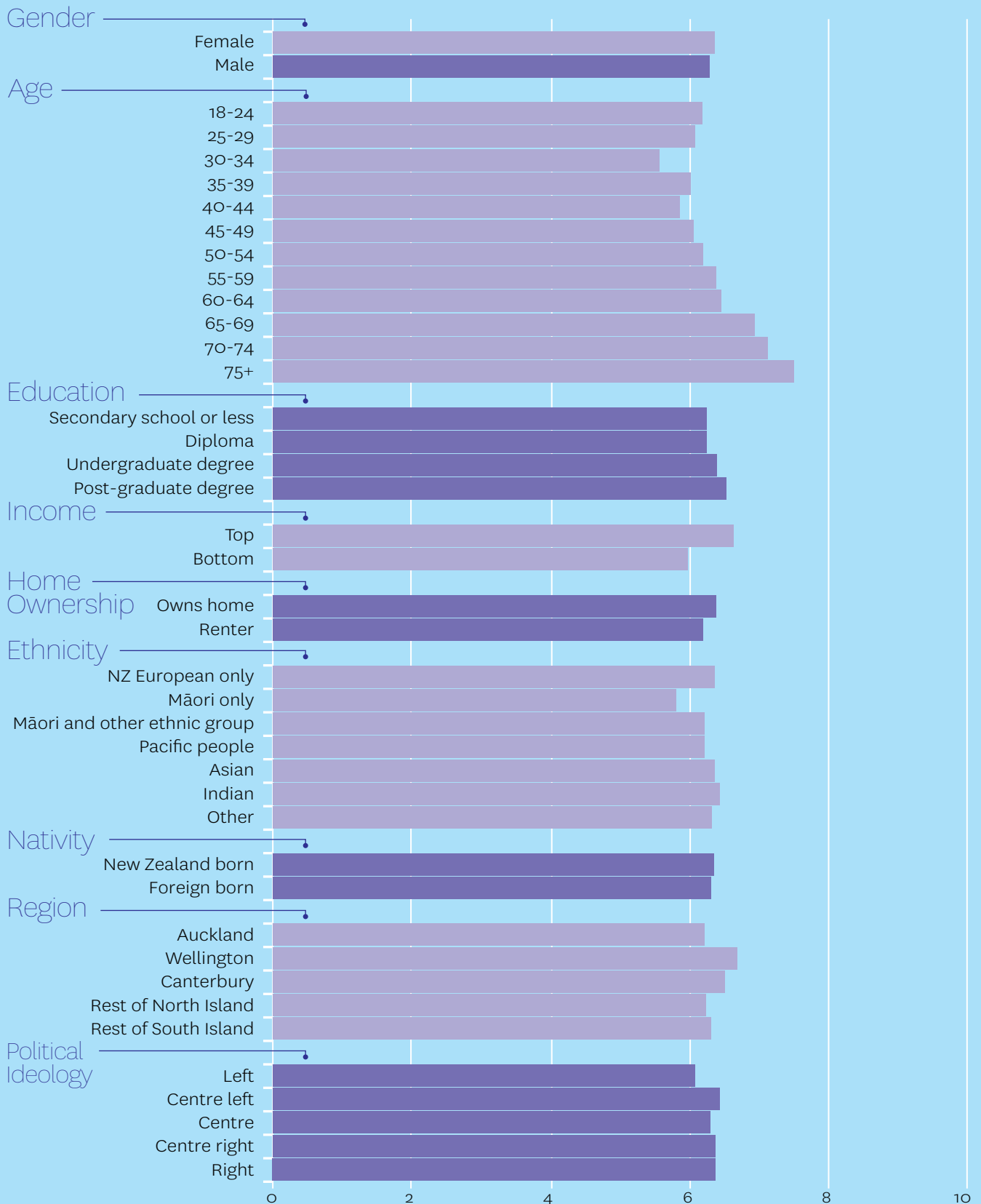
Region: Living in Wellington and Canterbury has a small positive effect on interpersonal trust compared to Auckland. Regional patterns are similar for government trust.

Birthplace: Those born in New Zealand and those born overseas have the same trust levels, for both measures.

Our multivariate modelling accounts for 11 percent of variation between people in interpersonal trust and 14 percent of variation in government trust. Hence, even using all our observed

sociodemographic measures, there is a much larger amount of social variation in trust for which we cannot account.

Socio-demographic differences in interpersonal trust



Note: Predicted trust score on 0-10 scale based on multivariate regression models.

What have we learned about Trust in New Zealand since 2016?

IN his report on the first 2016 survey, then director Michael Macaulay speculated that New Zealand is not a high trust country, at least in terms of political trust. He also suggested that New Zealand might be a country divided over public trust: “Relatively well-off white men are more trusting of government than those with lower incomes, the Māori and Pasifika communities, and also women”. The patterns in the data accumulated since then suggest a more complex and less deterministic picture than these first tentative suggestions.

The trust survey gives lower levels of overall interpersonal trust than the official Statistics New Zealand General Social Survey. The two surveys use different sampling frames and collection windows. Different forms of non-response bias may be a further factor in the lower level of measured interpersonal trust in our survey. Nevertheless, in both surveys, New Zealand interpersonal trust levels are above the 27 country OECD average. Our updated conclusion is that New Zealand is a higher-end trust country for interpersonal trust. However, we are not at the top of the OECD on this trust measure. We cannot directly compare our trust in

government question internationally because of the lack of readily comparable data.

There are no male advantages in interpersonal trust or government trust. Equally, there appears to be no shortfall in either interpersonal trust and government trust for most minority ethnic groups, except for interpersonal trust for those who ethnically identify only as Maori. The effect here is between small and medium in size. Equally, systematic trust differences across income groups, while they exist, are small to medium in size for both interpersonal and government trust. A further shift in our knowledge is that there appears to be a larger trust division in our society between young, middle-aged and old. But this conclusion needs further independent confirmation. We also now know that there are some significant interpersonal trust differences across some regions, but again, differences are small.

In addition to further informing our understanding of sociodemographic differences, our data suggests that who is in political power matters. A change in government in 2017 coincides with a small to medium-sized rise in trust in various dimensions of government between 2016 and 2019. There is an additional suggestion that this effect may wear off over the duration of a government, but this hypothesis, while tantalising, requires stronger evidence.

We also find that, following the Christchurch shootings, New Zealand is not a society where distrust in minority non-Christian groups is relatively high. Indeed, the least trusted religious group in

New Zealand is a Christian group – Evangelicals – and the most trusted group – Buddhists – is not Christian. There is little evidence in New Zealand society of either high anti-Semitism or Islamophobia in terms of any unusually low trust in Jewish or Muslim minority groups. Also, New Zealand does not appear to be a society where out-group trust varies systematically by ethnic group – all ethnic groupings trust each other equally, around the level of trust in Charities or Protestants.

Despite findings which indicate New Zealanders' trust in religious and ethnic groups do not appear particularly unusual or different, we should emphasise this finding does not show that hate based on religion and ethnicity does not exist. It clearly does. Additionally, it is possible those who report low trust in religious and ethnic minorities

harbour more extreme views towards these groups than those who report similarly low trust towards other groups. These more extreme views may, in turn, result in more instances of prejudiced or violent behaviours towards religious or ethnic minorities. It is also possible that, after the outpouring of support for the Muslim community and national discussion about the place of hate and racism in our society following the shootings, some respondents who might have harboured less trust for ethnic and religious minorities have either changed their views or become more reluctant to report those feelings.

Lastly, the large-scale event of the Christchurch shootings, aimed at reducing trust, polarising the community and creating religious division, has not succeeded in its intended goal.

A public trust survey
undertaken for the
Institute for Governance
and Policy Studies by
Colmar Brunton

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