



**Te Kaunihera  
Rata o  
Aotearoa**

Medical  
Council of  
New Zealand

# Good Medical Practice Patient survey

September 2025

Prepared by

**PERCEPTIVE**



# Contents



- About the Survey
- What Makes ‘Good Medical Practice’
- Dignity and Respect
- Cultural Safety and Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- Healthcare Experience
- Demographics

01

# About the Survey

# Introduction



- Te Kaunihera Rata o Aotearoa | The Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ) is reviewing and updating its current Good Medical Practice statement, which sets out the standards and principles that guide how doctors should practise medicine in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- This research seeks to understand from the public and doctors what ‘good medical practice’ means to them in the context of the doctor-patient relationship, ensuring that the updated statement reflects contemporary expectations and needs.
- **The Patient Survey** aims to understand what patients think makes a ‘good doctor’ and what they expect from their relationship with a doctor. The focus is on individual doctor-patient relationships rather than with hospitals, healthcare systems, or other health professionals.

# Methodology (I)

- An online survey of n=1,155 New Zealand residents aged 18 years or older.
- The survey was conducted from 29<sup>th</sup> July to 15<sup>th</sup> August 2025.
- The survey was distributed via research panel with an average completion time of 7 minutes.
- All responses are confidential and anonymous in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020.
- The survey acknowledged that some participants may have concerns, questions, or problems about a health or disability service that they or someone else received, and provided appropriate support information.
- The survey data is weighted by age, gender, and region to account for sample variances and ensure results are representative of the New Zealand population according to the NZ Census 2023.

## Methodology (II)

- The survey questionnaire was designed in partnership with research agency, Perceptive. It included 12 questions, with a mix of closed response questions and open-ended questions. The questions covered the following topics:
  - Healthcare experiences
  - What makes 'good medical practice' when receiving care from a doctor
  - What it means to be treated with dignity and respect from a doctor
  - Respecting cultural background and beliefs in the doctor-patient relationship
  - Respecting Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the doctor-patient relationship
  - Demographics
- *Quantitative Analysis:* Eight closed response questions were compulsory to ensure complete datasets, with 'don't know' or 'prefer not to say' options provided. Statistical analysis was conducted to calculate frequencies and percentages for each question. Statistical testing was performed to identify and comment on statistically significant findings at the 95% confidence level.
- *Qualitative Analysis:* Four open-ended questions allowed patients to describe their thoughts on 'good medical practice', including expectations when receiving care from a doctor, advice to doctors on respecting their cultural background or beliefs and Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles, and reasons for avoiding doctors when needing medical care (if applicable). A 'prefer not to comment' option was provided.
- Verbatim comments were systematically coded or categorised into recurring themes. The analysis focused on identifying the most frequently mentioned themes with frequency counts used to prioritise reporting. Representative quotes were selected to illustrate each theme and provide contextual meaning.

# Executive Summary

- New Zealand patients' expectations of doctors are generally well addressed in the current Good Medical Practice (GMP). When describing 'good medical practice', patients often emphasise the importance of doctors who listen carefully to their concerns and take them seriously, and expect doctors be knowledgeable, competent, and professional in their conduct. The current GMP provides a solid foundation for these expectations.
- Expectations of doctors encompass several other inter-related themes of showing empathy, care and kindness; having effective communication practices; demonstrating respect and honesty; and being thorough in the assessment of patients. These are all broadly covered in the current GMP.
- These key 'top-of-mind' expectations are reflected in importance ratings, that is, most important to patients are a doctor who is honest and trustworthy, listens carefully to them, has up-to-date medical knowledge and skills, explains things in a way they understand, treats them with respect and dignity, respects their privacy, and responds to their concerns.
- A lack of trust in doctors is a contributor to those who avoid visiting doctors when they need medical care. This lack of trust is manifest by past experiences of a small minority of the population feeling unheard, rushed, ignored, judged or dismissed, not taken seriously or not treated with respect or care by doctors.
- Broadly speaking, the key to treating patients with respect and dignity are that doctors demonstrate compassionate care, and clear and mindful communication. More specifically, taking their concerns seriously, explaining things clearly and ensuring understanding are core to showing respect and dignity to patients.
- New Zealand's diverse cultural communities contribute valuable insight to respectable medical practice, asking for consent before physical examinations being a particularly important sign of respect in Pasifika communities. The revised GMP would benefit from explicit guidance drawing on this understanding to improve outcomes for all.
- New Zealanders generally feel that it is important doctors respect cultural backgrounds and beliefs. While the current GMP strongly establishes the importance of cultural sensitivity, it would benefit from explicit guidance on how this can be achieved, for example, asking questions about patients' cultural backgrounds and beliefs is highlighted as a key step to providing culturally sensitive care.
- Recognising that respect for Te Tiriti o Waitangi is valued by many New Zealanders in their healthcare relationships, with this being particularly important to Māori and Pasifika communities, GMP could include practical guidance to expand upon acknowledgement of the principles of partnership, participation and protection in the delivery of medical care by doctors.

02

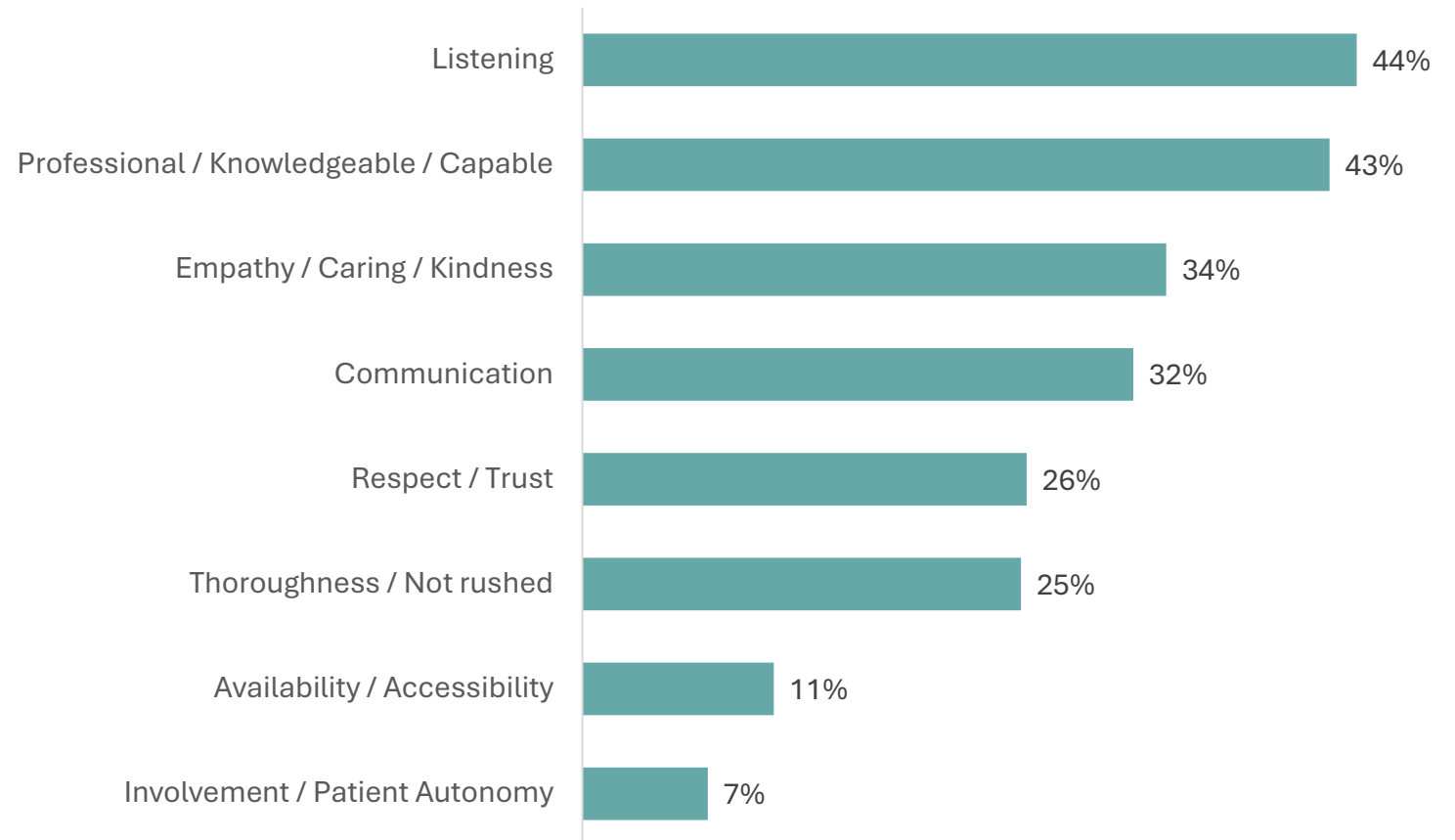
## **What Makes ‘Good Medical Practice’**



# Good Medical Practice

- Responses encompass a range of overlapping themes. Patients often emphasise the importance of doctors who **listen carefully to their concerns** and take them seriously, and expect doctors to be **knowledgeable, competent, and professional** in their conduct.
- Patients who avoid visits to doctors (11% of the population) are more likely to raise availability as an expectation of their doctor (22% compared to 11% overall). Many have had trouble accessing care when they needed it, making availability a priority.

+ Thinking about the conduct of doctors (not clinics, hospitals or healthcare systems), in your own words, how would you describe 'good medical practice' and your expectations when you receive care from a doctor?



Base: Total n=1,155

# Patients often emphasise the importance of doctors who listen carefully to their concerns and take them seriously

🗨️ *A good listener, empathetic and able to communicate clearly and check for understanding if they use complex terms or medical language.*

*Feel listened to. Have adequate time in appointments to express concerns. Friendly caring demeanour. A doctor that follows up and is engaged with concerns and referrals.*

*Listening to your patients. Not brushing aside questions or concerns they may have.*

*They listen to what you have to say. And take your thoughts on board and not judgemental.*

*Listening to the patient without making assumptions, communicating clearly their diagnosis and what to do.*

*Someone who is willing to listen to me about what is going on and someone who is concerned about investigating what is going on.*

*An aura of compassion and caring. Listens well, hearing exactly what you tell them, but also having the ability to ask if you have any other symptoms that might go along with what you have described.*

*Listening to you and giving you the advice you need and for the reason you went in there for. Helping you out and letting you email if you have concerns or questions after you leave.*

*Good listening to your problems you have. And offering great advice for daily life hacks.*

*Someone who listens, communicates well and respectfully (doesn't treat you like an idiot). Caring, empathetic and professional.*

# Patients expect doctors to be knowledgeable, competent, and professional in their conduct

🗨️ *Be compassionate, caring of their patients, provide constructive advice and be professional and clam.*

*Effective communication and listening. Clinical competence and professionalism.*

*Good follow up and discussion of tests; knowledge of medications and options; nice professional attitude.*

*Being able to listen and then make sound judgement on the diagnosis.*

*Use latest science. Take time for a proper diagnosis.*

*I want a doctor that listens to me, who doesn't assume that what he or she thinks about me and how I should be treated is actually how I am. A knowledgeable person who tells me what's going on and who doesn't assume that he or she is the only person who knows everything and thinks I'm ignorant.*

*Informed care – ensuring professionalism in undertaking historical or current available records, patient narrative listened to and therefore able to discuss and decide collectively what steps or options to pursue.*

*Empathy and understanding the implications of the medicine they give you i.e., effects of cumulative drugs and how they may respond to one another.*

*I expect the doctor to be knowledgeable about the problem I am there for and to be able to prescribe the appropriate medication to help.*

*Doctors should be skilled, make careful decisions based on evidence, and act in the patient's best interest. I expect doctors to see me as a whole person, not just a set of symptoms, and to involve me in decisions about my health.*

# Patients want to feel comfortable and at ease and for doctors to show empathy, genuine care and kindness

🗨️ *Good medical practice is when a doctor has excellent communication skills with their clients, very polite and with empathy. Not only that but a good medical practice is when a doctor has a strong basis in medicine and the ability to use it in a variety of contexts.*

*Doctors who believe you and don't judge. Doctors who actually investigate issues, even if blood tests don't show anything. I want to be treated like a human, with empathy, and not just told to lose weight or that its anxiety because I am a woman.*

*One with whom I have established a good relationship, is caring, takes time to talk and discuss, who listens, who acknowledges that I know my body best.*

*When they are kind, caring, show compassion for the issue you are experiencing. But are also able to communicate what they think should be the next steps, including if there should be none.*

*They are approachable and allow time to talk and investigate with care and kindness.*

*Engaged with your patients – actively listening to problems before approaching diagnosis. Genuine care – making patients feel welcome and appreciated.*

*Take a genuine interest in my health concerns. Clearly explain what they think is the problem and give explanation of treatment suggested. Have a friendly disposition.*

*I'd expect good medical practice to include the doctor really listening to the patient and empathising with their problems and not rushing the appointment.*

# Clear and effective communication is highly valued, explaining diagnoses and treatment options in understandable terms

🗨️ *Good friendly communication, in understandable terms. Displays an interest in you as a person.*

*Being able to ask questions and having effective answers, quick service, not waiting for long periods of time, being friendly and accepting.*

*Clear everyday communication is always appreciated too, not just using big medical jargon but everyday terms spoken in a respectful, humble and friendly manner.*

*Listen carefully and take my concerns seriously, not just rush through the appointment. I want to feel heard. Explain things clearly – whether it's a diagnosis, test result, or treatment option. They should use plain language, not medical jargon.*

*How they communicate to you as a patient, like talking through results...explain things clearly and stop relying on using big medical words that most people would not understand. When talking through conditions...explain what the condition is, how to treat it, steps moving forward...*

*A good medical doctor should acknowledge me when I come into their room. They should listen to me and check that they understand what I am telling them about my condition. If they have a referral, they should let me know they read it and let me know that they understand what's in the referral and how it relates to what I am telling them. They should explain their findings and what they suggest should happen from here. Then discuss the possibilities with me and together we should agree on what will be happening from here...They should also allow and acknowledge a support person to accompany me.*

Treating patients with respect, being honest and building trust, with patients wanting to feel valued, heard and confident in their doctors

Patients value doctors who are thorough in their examinations and take the time to understand them and their medical history

🗨️ *When a doctor is open and transparent with their patients. I like when my doctor is able to give me the advice I need to ensure I get better soon. I like open and honesty.*

*Respect for the patient. This means respecting their autonomy in decision-making, honouring their values and preferences, and ensuring that their dignity is upheld throughout the care process.*

*Honest and trustworthy, ethical and caring, listens to your specific needs.*

*Confidentiality. Can be trusted to give you the best diagnosis.*

*I value doctors who treat me as a whole person, not just a case or condition. That means showing kindness, respecting my background and values, and making me feel safe and understood during vulnerable moments.*

*Good medical practice to me entails a thorough examination of the issue at hand, as well as asking the patient what they think would best suit them.*

*That they take time and care when they see you. That they refer you on to other specialists as and when required.*

*Listen to properly understand your issue, continue working on the issue until resolved, prescribe effective medicine.*

*To take time and actually get to the root of the problem not just worry about symptoms. Make me feel like human and not just another number. I hate that rushed feeling like they are just hurrying you out...*

*I'd like them to explain everything in terms I can understand, I'd like them to be patient and listen to what I'm saying, not make assumptions without having the full story, and to be kind.*



Accessibility and timely appointments are important to patients, who appreciate doctors being available when needed

🗨️ *Having access to my own doctor in a timely manner.*

*Seeing GP in timely manner; having time to explain my concerns; knowing that GP will make referral to appropriate agency; and that I will get appointment for appropriate care again in a timely manner.*

*Taking the time to explain or research problems. Being available for follow up.*

*Speaks clearly and plainly to us, treats us well, caring but being thorough, and is nearly always available if really needed.*

*Expect doctors to keep to appointment times, know your patient history and actively care about current health and long-term health, including preventive measures.*

*It's important that my doctor takes time to listen to my concerns... follows up after a consultation.*

Patients appreciate some autonomy in their care, where doctors consider their overall wellbeing and involve them in decision-making

*Holistic approach, discusses options and pros and cons of each, for shared decisions.*

*By keeping you fully informed, helping you to understand your options if there has been a particular diagnosis, to be interested in me as a WHOLE person, which includes physical and mental wellbeing.*

*Involves the patient in decision-making and ensures understanding.*

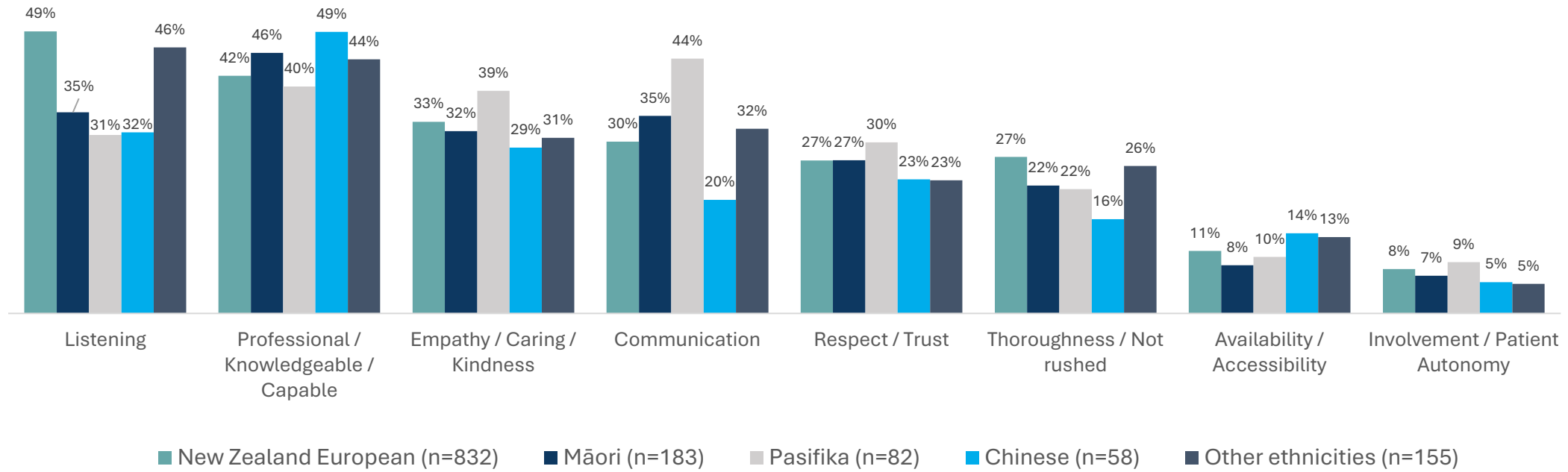
*Ultimately, my expectation is to be treated with respect and empathy, feeling confident that my wellbeing is their top priority and that our relationship is a partnership built on trust and shared understanding.*

*A good doctor listens attentively, explains things in plain language, and makes sure I feel informed and involved in decisions about my care.*

# Good Practice by Ethnicity

- Overall, New Zealanders of varying ethnic backgrounds share similar expectations in the care they receive from doctors. Māori often mention the importance of professionalism and capability of their doctors, while generally sharing similar expectations as the wider New Zealand population.

Thinking about the conduct of doctors (not clinics, hospitals or healthcare systems), in your own words, how would you describe 'good medical practice' and your expectations when you receive care from a doctor?

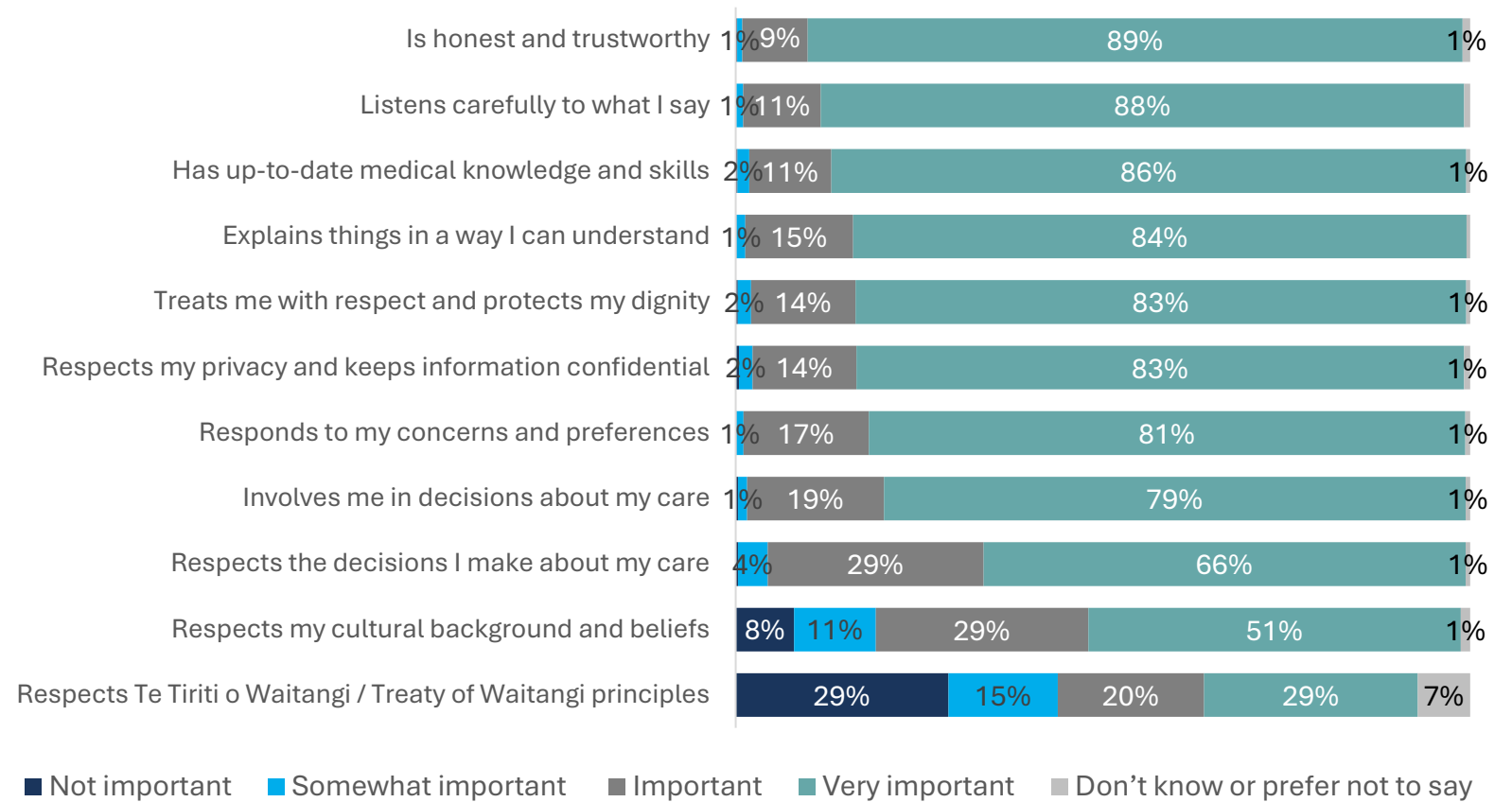




# What is important to patients

- New Zealanders consider a doctor who is **honest and trustworthy**, **listens carefully to them**, and **has up-to-date medical knowledge and skills** to be most important in their relationship.
- Also, very important to most New Zealanders (about 80%+) is that their doctor explains things in a way they understand, treats them with respect and dignity, respects their privacy, responds to their concerns, and involves them in decisions.

+ How important are the following in your relationship with your doctor(s)?

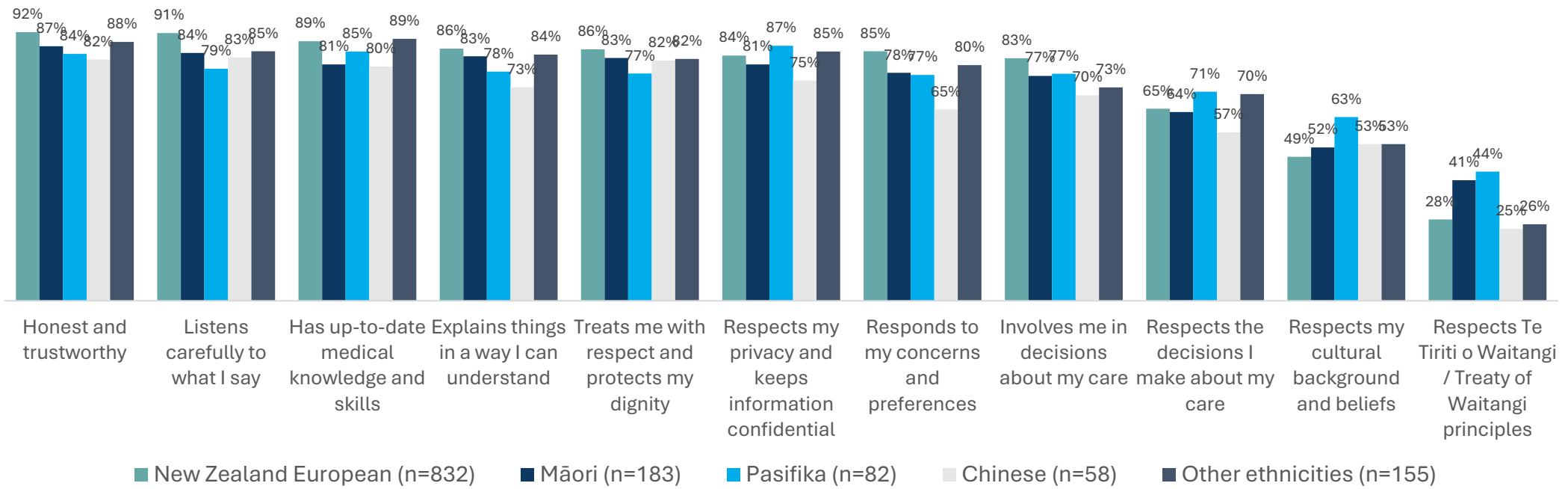


Base: Total n=1,155

# Importance by Ethnicity

- Overall, New Zealanders of varying ethnic backgrounds share similar expectations in their relationships with doctors.
- Māori and Pasifika communities demonstrate strong cultural values in healthcare expectations, with Māori particularly emphasising the importance of Te Tiriti principles (very important to 41% versus 29% overall), while Pasifika communities highlight both cultural respect (63%) and Te Tiriti principles (44%) as being very important to quality doctor-patient relationships.

How important are the following in your relationship with your doctor(s)? % *very important*



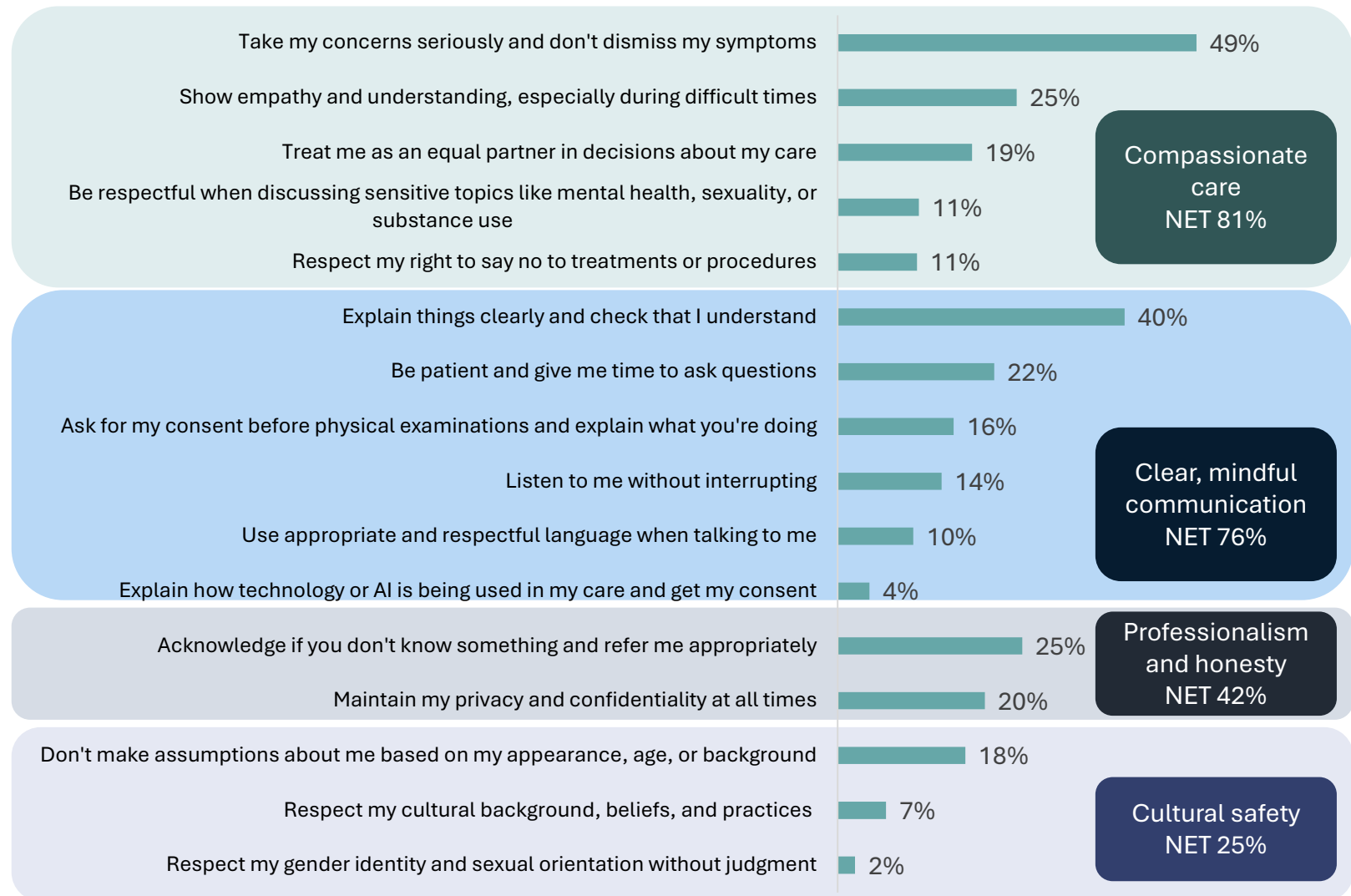
03

## **Dignity and Respect**

# Dignity and Respect

- Key advice to doctors in treating patients with respect and dignity are **taking their concerns seriously** and **explaining things clearly and ensure understanding**.
- More broadly, patients expect doctors to provide compassionate care, and clear and mindful communication.
- Young adults (18-24 years) contribute important perspectives on healthcare communication, with 26% emphasising respectful discussion of sensitive health topics compared with 11% overall.
- The importance of professionalism and honesty is shown in expectations that doctors acknowledge if they do not know something and refer when they need to and maintain patient privacy and confidentiality.

+ If you feel comfortable sharing, what 3 pieces of advice would you give doctors to ensure they treat you with dignity and respect?



Base: Total n=1,126

04

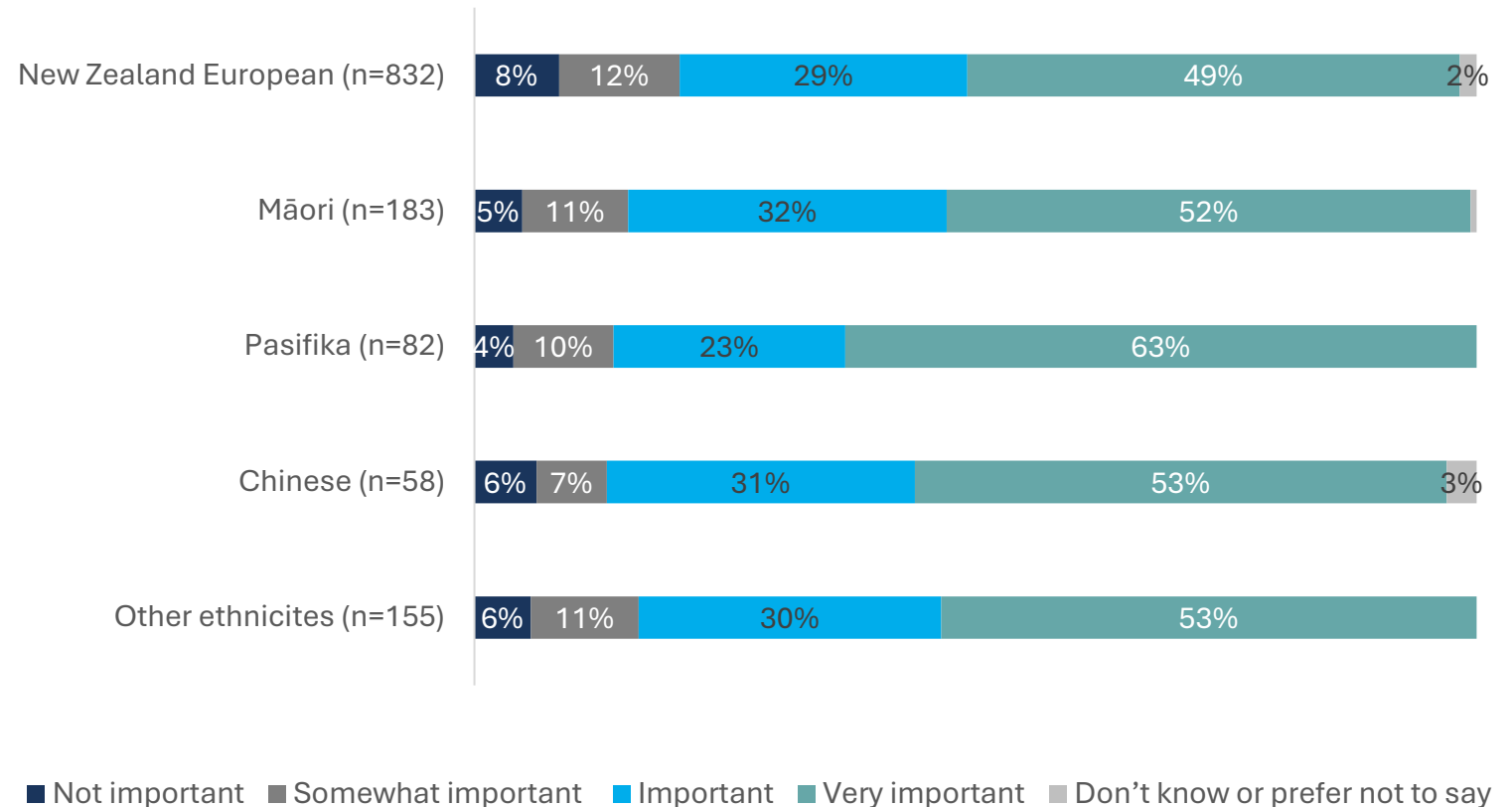
## **Cultural Safety and Te Tiriti o Waitangi**

# Cultural Background and Beliefs

- Overall, New Zealanders of varying ethnic backgrounds feel that it is important doctors respect their cultural background and beliefs.

## + How important are the following in your relationship with your doctor(s)?

Respects my cultural background and beliefs (which could include, Indigenous status, age or generation, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religious or spiritual belief, or disability)



Ethnic groups of greater than n=50 are reported. Respondents can identify as belonging to multiple ethnicities.

If you feel comfortable sharing, what advice would you give doctors about respecting your cultural background and beliefs?

New Zealanders of varying ethnic backgrounds shared advice to doctors on respecting cultural backgrounds and beliefs. The following are key themes from n=523 respondents.

**14% (n=167)** - Ask questions about patients' cultural backgrounds and beliefs to provide culturally sensitive care.

**6% (n=66)** - Acknowledge and understand different cultures and be open to learning about them.

**5% (n=57)** - Avoid making assumptions and judgements about patients' cultural practices and beliefs.

**4% (n=44)** - Clear and culturally sensitive communication to avoid misunderstandings.

**3% (n=37)** - Listening carefully to patients' responses about their cultural needs.

**3% (n=37)** - Being culturally sensitive in treatment plans, respecting dietary restrictions, touching of body parts, family member/whānau support, and traditional healing practices.

**3% (n=37)** - Value and respect patients' cultural and religious beliefs as relevant to their care.

**3% (n=29)** - Show empathy towards patients' cultural beliefs and practices.

“Doctors should ask respectful questions about my background and avoid assumptions. Listening without judgment, using my preferred name, and being open to flexible care options show cultural respect.”

“Try to understand different cultures and please don't make any judgement because of the culture.”

“I appreciate it when doctors ask about my cultural background and beliefs instead of making assumptions, listen with an open mind, and work with me to respect what's important to me while providing safe care.”

“Always ask first and don't rush things.”

“Be careful when and where they are touching me and ask permission to touch me first. Listen when I tell them things about me.”

“Should be asked if I want any family with me to include them in my health journey.”

“My faith is very important to me, so should I mention it, I don't want to be met with a dismissive attitude.”

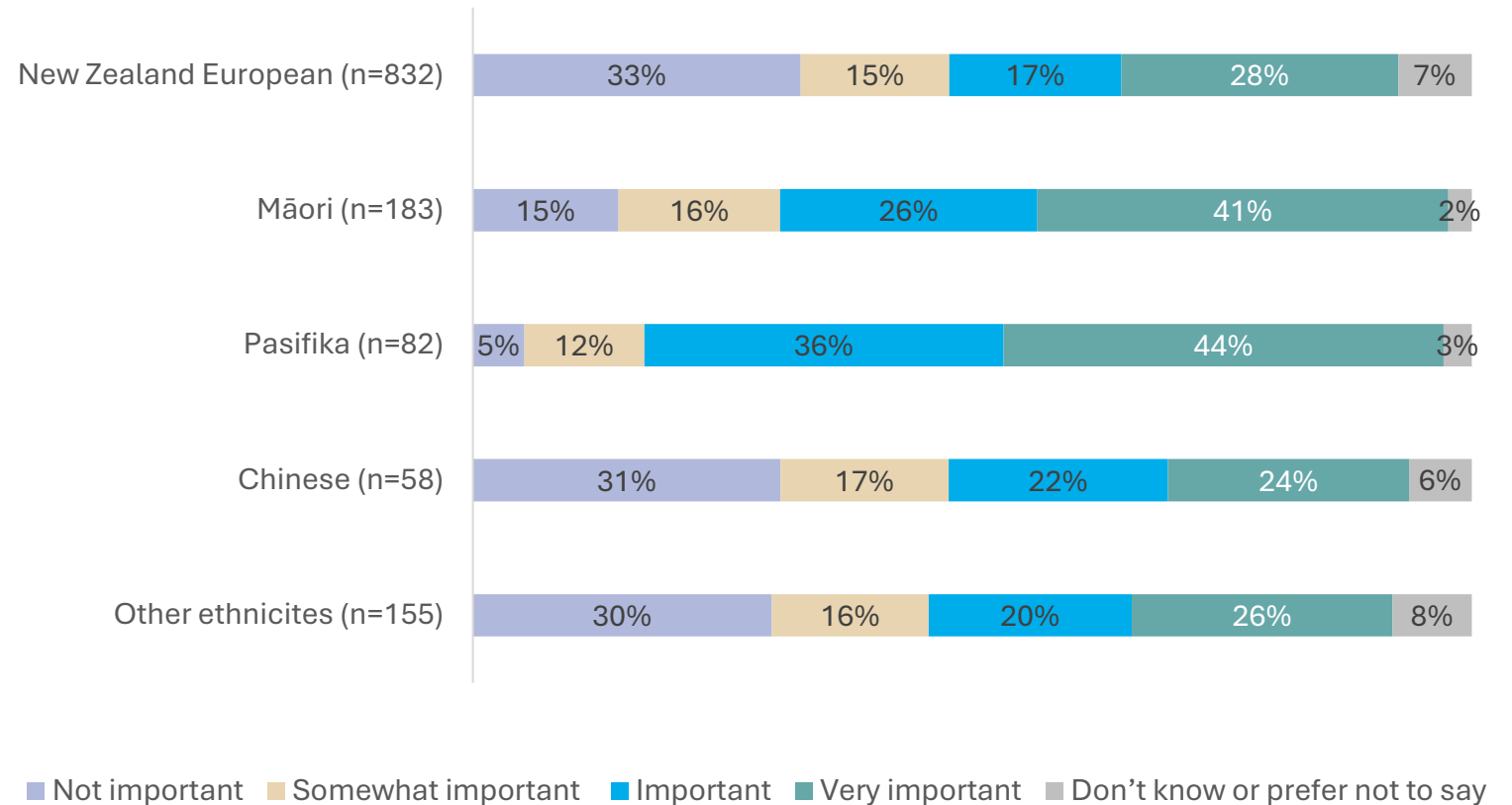
“Asking questions with empathy so that you can better understanding of the patients' background and cultural beliefs.”

# Te Tiriti o Waitangi

- Respecting Te Tiriti o Waitangi is recognised as important (or very important) in the doctor-patient relationship by nearly half of New Zealanders (49%). This increases to 67% for Māori and 80% for Pasifika.

+ How important are the following in your relationship with your doctor(s)?

Respects Te Tiriti o Waitangi / Treaty of Waitangi principles



Ethnic groups of greater than n=50 are reported. Respondents can identify as belonging to multiple ethnicities.



If you feel comfortable sharing, please tell us what behaviours or actions would show that your doctor respects the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi?

New Zealanders of varying ethnic backgrounds shared advice to doctors on how to respect the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The following are key themes from n=279 respondents.

**7% (n=88)** - Showing respect in interactions and communication towards all people, respecting cultural beliefs and choices, and providing equal treatment and quality of care.

**3% (n=36)** - Acknowledging, understanding and respecting Māori culture, values, and beliefs.

**3% (n=36)** - Having a compassionate communication manner, a warm greeting, asking questions, listening attentively and being empathetic.

**2% (n=23)** - The use of te reo Māori in greetings and communication as a sign of respect.

**2% (n=23)** - Establishing a partnership with patients and involving them in decisions about their care.

**2% (n=23)** - Having awareness or knowledge of Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles or being open to learn about them.

**2% (n=21)** - Providing a culturally safe environment, gaining permission to examine patients, and informing them of procedures.

**2% (n=19)** - Acknowledging and respecting traditional approaches to healthcare and health and wellbeing values.

**1% (n=13)** - Involving whānau/family in the healthcare process if the patient desires this.

“ I think all doctors should be aware of the principles in order to respect all people regardless of race and ethnicity and understand that different people have different cultural practices.

“ I am not Māori, but I would expect doctors to understand that people come from different cultures in NZ (and in particular, the Māori culture) and this needs to be respected.

“ Greeted warmly and respectfully, making sure they are comfortable in your space, and include whānau if they would like them to be with them.

“ Greet me in te reo Māori. Demonstrate cultural awareness. Don't touch head without asking first. Be clear where samples go and disposal at end.

“ Make health decisions together with Māori patients, rather than simply informing them.

“ I don't expect them to have the entire thing committed to memory...but I do hope that they've at least made an effort to become familiar with it and what it represents and to be aware of the fact that how Māori view and understand it, is going to be different to how Pakeha and majority of other New Zealanders do.

“ Acknowledge that hauora is bigger than health. Learn and respect kaupapa Māori approaches to health.

## These quotes from Māori and Pasifika reflect core themes around respecting the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and practical guidance for the doctor-patient relationship

🗨️ *It's like respecting all other cultures, and their beliefs and what they value in life. People should always be our priorities no matter what our backgrounds.*

*Tino rangatiratanga, respect what was taken from us and allow us to practice our traditions without dismissing them or pretending to listen. A medical degree can teach you the dynamics of physiology/biology/medical science, but it won't teach you how to treat others with respect, trust and dignity.*

*Respect that my principles will be firmly entrenched in taha Māori.*

*They care about Māori opinions, traditions and ideals.*

*Greet me in te reo Māori. Demonstrate cultural awareness. Don't touch head without asking first. Be clear re where samples go and disposal at end.*

*Ask before touching my body. Waiting outside the door when I need to change. And good communication with big smiles.*

*Clear communication. Encouraging self-advocacy and advocating for me. Respect my autonomy and ability to know or understand my body too (and then supporting with technical or supporting knowledge). Helping me understand my plan of care and including me in decision making.*

*To truthfully show empathy, to treat everyone with the same manner & to not base any judgements on one before understanding & knowing what that person has gone through regardless if they are Māori or not.*

*The doctors are more supportive and respectful when patient and family do karakia (prayer).*

*Using basic reo - even greetings. Asking whether translation is needed, enquiring about traditional practices. Asking for explicit consent when taking tissue/blood/samples, explaining what will happen to it and if it can be returned or not.*

*The doctor would ask the patient how they would prefer to be treated and ask if there is anything culturally sensitive that may need to be addressed before treatment.*

*Sound knowledge of the treaty or at least an effort to know so.*

*Respectful and friendly, fairly treating me as a patient.*

*Being kind and respectful when they talk. Being patient when I ask them questions.*

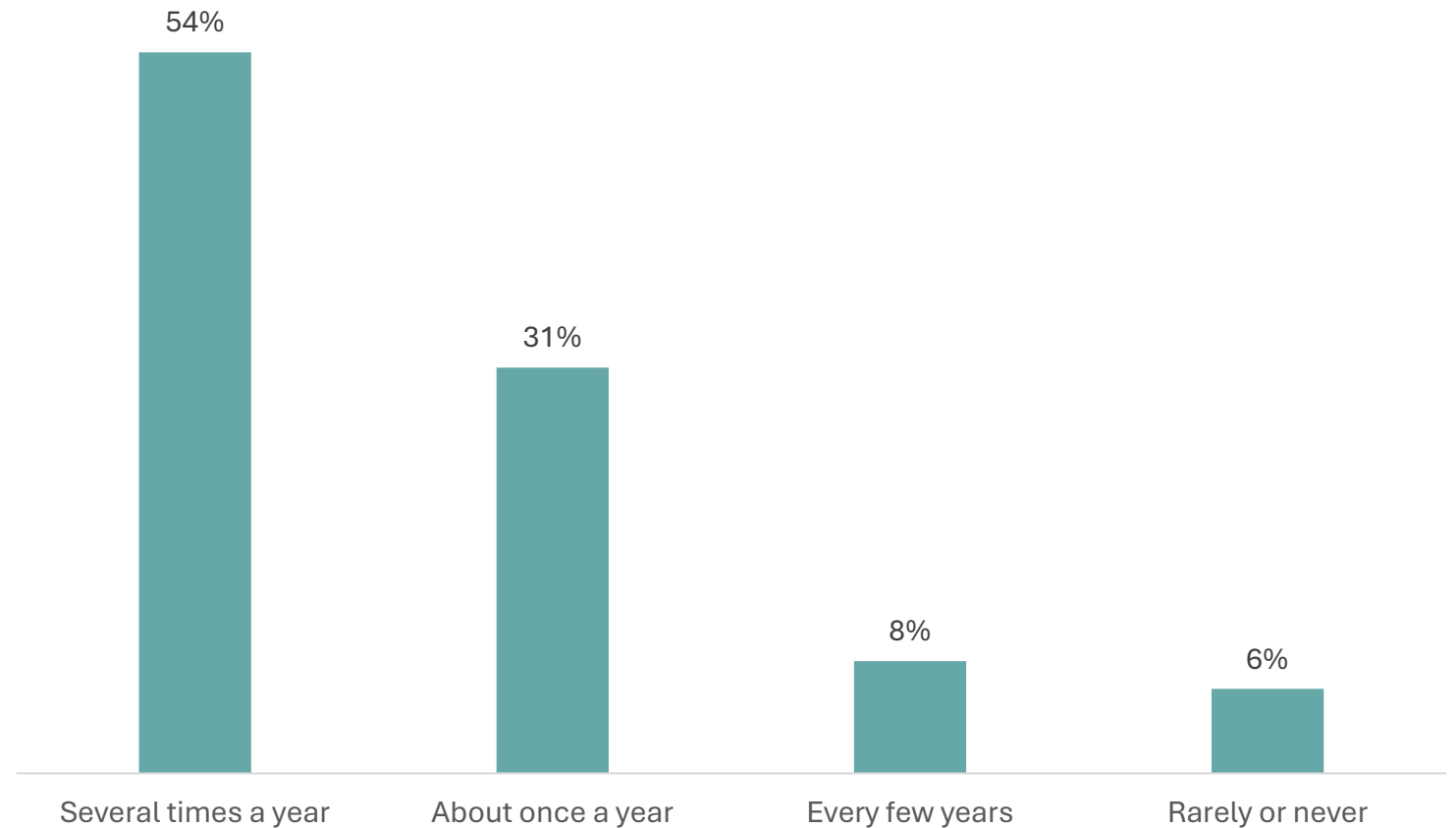
05

## Healthcare Experience

# Interactions with Doctors

- The standards set in Good Medical Practice (GMP) affect virtually the entire population with 85% seeing a doctor at least once a year, including 54% several times per year.
- This highlights the importance of medical practice standards, such as GMP, with even small refinements in professional standards having a large impact on health outcomes, patient satisfaction and public confidence.

+ How often do you typically see a doctor (GP or specialist)?



Base: Total n=1,155

# Comfort with Visiting the Doctor

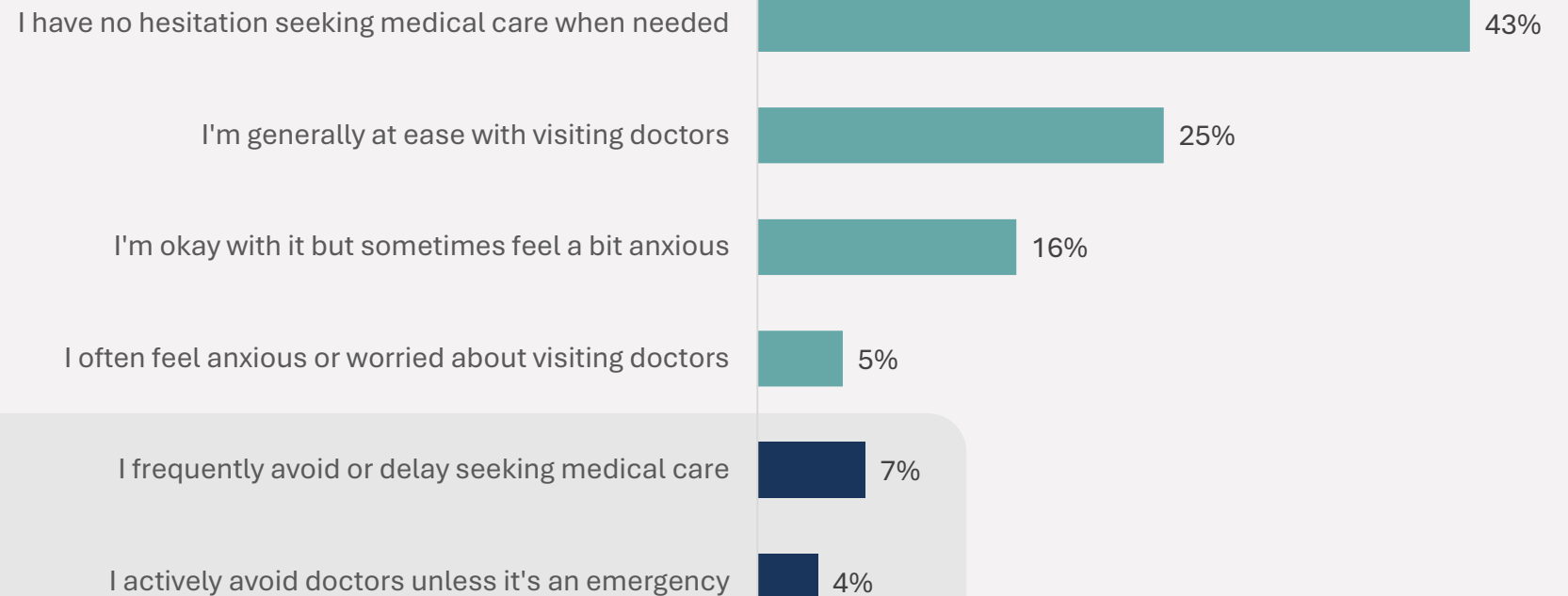
- New Zealanders are generally at ease and have no hesitation about visiting doctors (68%), with no statistically significant differences across people of varying ethnicities. There are 11%, however, who avoid doctors for various reasons (e.g., the high cost, difficulty with getting appointments, and being anxious about their health). Although only 4% of New Zealanders avoid visits to a doctor due to a lack of trust in doctors, it is a key contributor to avoidance behaviour.

If you feel comfortable sharing, thinking only about the individual doctors, not cost or healthcare systems, can you tell us why you avoid visiting doctors?

43% of those who avoid visits to a doctor do so due to a lack of trust in doctors. This represents 4% of all New Zealanders. Lack of trust is manifest in the following ways:

- Not feeling listened to or feeling ignored
- Not being thorough with them or feeling rushed
- Not taking their concerns seriously or feeling judged or dismissed
- Not being treated with respect or care
- Lack confidence in prescribed treatment or medicine and not treating the root cause

+ How do you generally feel about visiting or contacting a doctor when you need medical care?



06

# Demographics

# Demographics

Gender		Age - years		Ethnicity		Region	
Female	52%	18-24	13%	NZ European	71%	Northland	3%
Male	48%	25-34	16%	Māori	17%	Auckland	33%
		35-44	18%	Pasifika	7%	Waikato	12%
		45-54	18%	Chinese	5%	Bay of Plenty	7%
		55-64	16%	Indian	3%	Gisborne	<1%
		65-74	11%	European (e.g., British)	3%	Hawke's Bay	3%
		75+	8%	Southeast Asian	2%	Taranaki	2%
				South African	1%	Manawatu-Whanganui	5%
				Australian	1%	Wellington	11%
				Korean	1%	Tasman-Nelson-Marlborough	2%
				Other	3%	West Coast	<1%
						Canterbury	13%
						Otago	5%
						Southland	1%

Pasifika	
Samoan	4%
Tongan	1%
Cook Island Māori	1%
Fijian	1%
Other Pasifika ethnicities	1%

**Thank you**