

# Monitoring and improving relationships with Māori

NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA)

MAY 2024

# Background

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NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) are working towards developing stronger relationships with Māori as the Crown's partner under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This is being driven by the NZTA Māori strategy, Te Ara Kotahi, which provides a guiding framework for the organisation to work with and respond to Māori.

In 2022 a benchmark survey was conducted with Māori that NZTA engage with. This looked to:

- Better understand the needs of Māori and what is important in relationships.
- Determine how well NZTA were meeting these needs.
- Develop an SPE measure around the strength of relationships that NZTA have with Māori.
- Identify where improvements can be made to strengthen relationships with Māori.

The survey has been repeated again in 2023 and 2024 to gauge perceptions of the relationship in the eyes of Māori, how these may have changed over time, and identifying areas of focus to continue to strengthen relationships with Māori.

This report covers the findings and insights from the 2024 Māori Engagement Survey.



# What we did

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- A 10 minute online survey was conducted with Māori that NZTA engage with. This represents the third annual survey of Māori partners.
- The survey was sent to the complete client database of Māori that Waka Kotahi engage with (n=256) and was completed by n=54 respondents – giving a 21% response rate (vs 22% in both 2023 and 2022).
- Fieldwork was conducted between 14 March-11 April, 2024.
- It is important to note that the organisation was referred to as Waka Kotahi in the 2022 and 2023 surveys, but changed to NZTA in 2024 to reflect the name change of the organisation.
- Any changes in the report that are statistically significant have been highlighted. Small population significance testing indicates statistically significant differences in a range of +/- 7 to 12%, depending on the result.




# Agenda

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**01.** Understanding the general perceptions that Māori hold of NZTA.

**02.** Understanding perceptions of the relationship with NZTA.

**03.** Identifying areas for improving relationships with Māori.

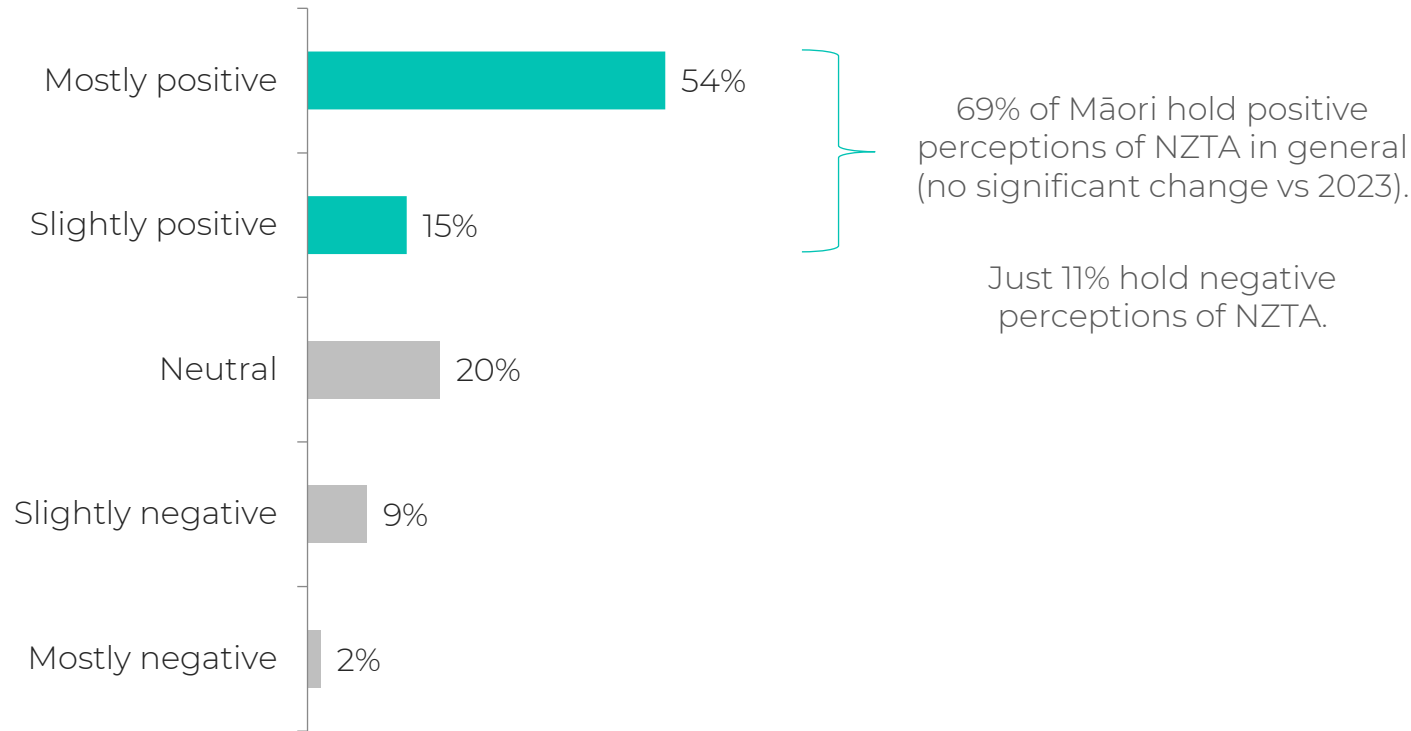
The background features a close-up, high-angle view of water ripples, creating a complex, organic pattern of light and dark teal and blue tones. A large, teal-colored speech bubble shape is positioned on the left side of the frame, containing white text. A smaller, dark teal circle is located at the bottom center of the speech bubble, containing the number '01.' in white.

Understanding  
the general  
perceptions that  
Māori hold of  
NZTA

**01.**

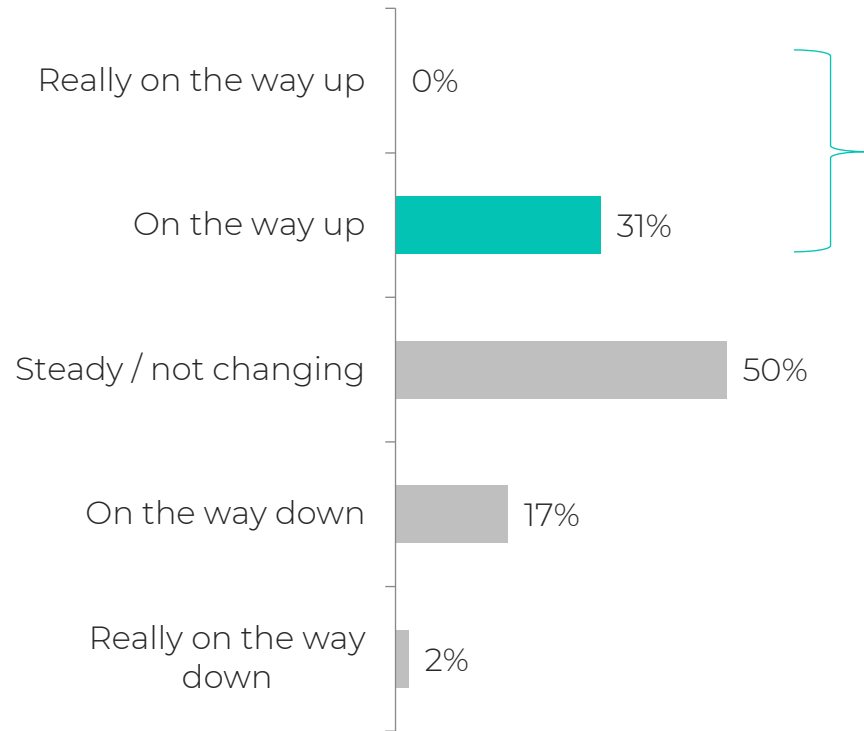
# General perceptions that Māori hold of NZTA as an organisation remain largely positive

Thinking about your general perceptions of NZTA as an organisation, are they...?



# However, significantly fewer Māori feel NZTA is moving in a positive direction compared to last year

Thinking about the direction that NZTA are heading as an organisation, would you say it is...?



31% of Māori feel that NZTA are moving in a positive direction as an organisation – down significantly from 57% in 2023.

While 19% feel the organisation is moving in a negative direction – up significantly from 8% in 2023.

# Why do some Māori feel like NZTA is moving in a negative direction as an organisation?

The new government and the change to English first in NZTA's name are the biggest concerns mentioned.

*"What this question refers to 'NZTA' without Waka Kotahi being mentioned is deeply concerning. Over the last decade Waka Kotahi has become a progressive government organisation that has embraced bicultural awareness in its operations and delivery. This is to the benefit of all involved, no less the day to day end users. The new coalition government direction to remove reo Māori from government department names reflects a retrogressive anti-Tiriti stance that is undoubtedly just the tip of the iceberg."*

*"I am not happy with the forced name change. Waka Kotahi was a name with mana - reversing the name back to NZTA takes that mana away. Makes me sad."*

*"New government, means no certainty and also potential changes to how the business engages with hapuu and iwi."*

*"Why go backwards e.g. Waka Kotahi back to NZTA. It was going in the right direction."*

*"Disappointed in the withdrawal of te reo Maori."*

*"New government. Different priorities."*

We know that these specific concerns are recent with the change of government in late 2023 and the organisation name change announced in February 2024, only a few weeks before the survey. We need to understand if they are having any impact on the perceptions that Māori currently hold of their relationship with NZTA.



A large teal speech bubble graphic on the left side of the slide, containing the main title text.

Understanding  
perceptions of  
the relationship  
with NZTA

A black circular graphic containing the number '02.', positioned at the bottom of the teal speech bubble.

02.

# There are a range of areas Māori feel are working well in their relationship with NZTA

There is a sense that NZTA and staff have been trying to better understand and partner with Māori. Strong communication is also playing a key role to help strengthen relationships with Māori.

*"While Te Ao Māori may be beyond their sphere of experience, Waka Kotahi staff have typically been approachable, considerate and respectful. Some are great advocates for bicultural, inclusive process and are a credit to the organisation. Their attitude and approach is influential on the organisational cultural nous and relationship building."*

*"NZTA's engagement (with hapū) has for the past 5+ years seen improved understanding of the partnership model and working collaboratively with mana whenua."*

*"NZTA trying to understand Māoritanga and how it fits into NZTA management."*

*"The staff at Waka Kotahi are proactive and committed to ensuring this partnership is healthy and successful."*

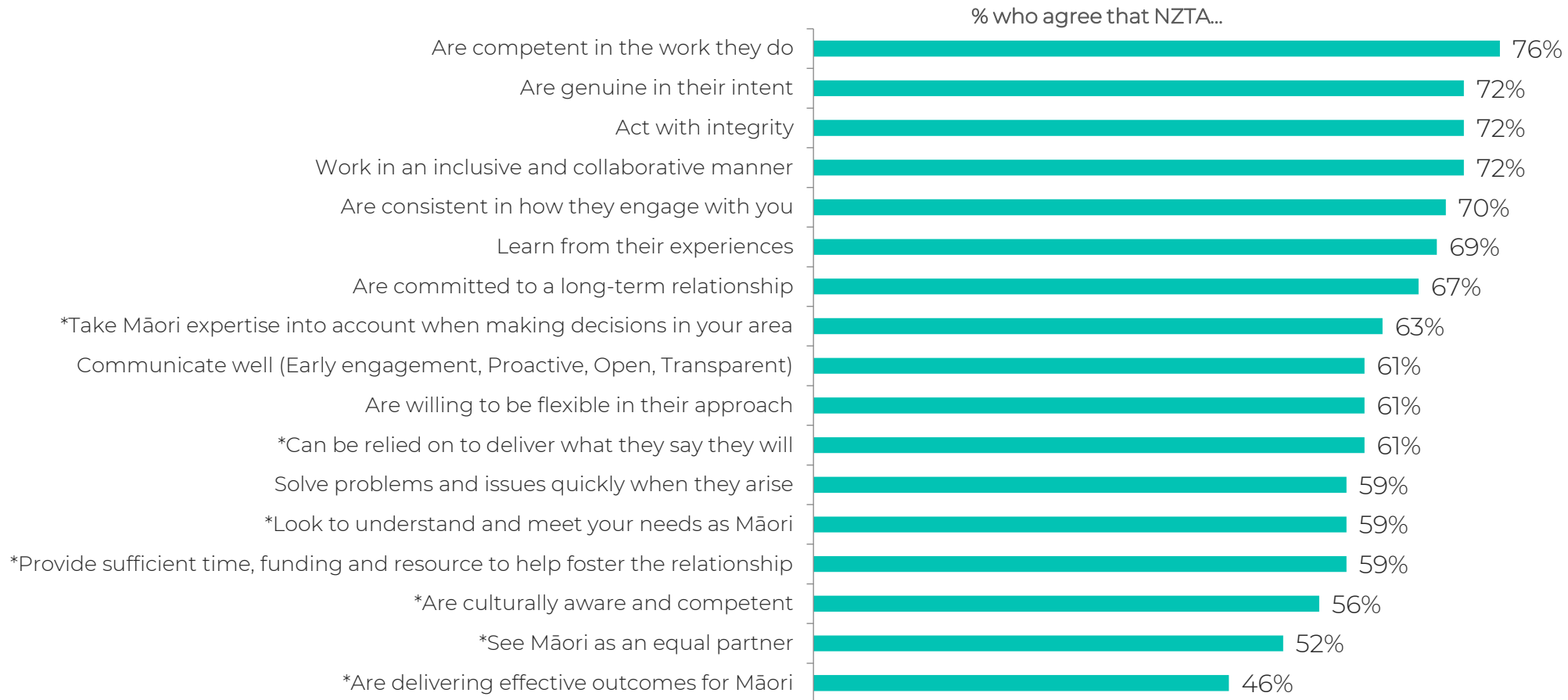
*"Regular contact on many levels from governance to on the ground. Consistently communicate well."*

*"They try to achieve aspirations presented within the boundaries of available resources."*

*"NZTA staff we deal with have been in their positions for a while now and it is that familiarity that is very important."*

*"We have reasonably good interaction with NZTA Waka Kotahi Māori staff. They are quick to respond and understand our capacity and capability."*

# Looking at how Māori feel NZTA are performing across the different of relationship drivers



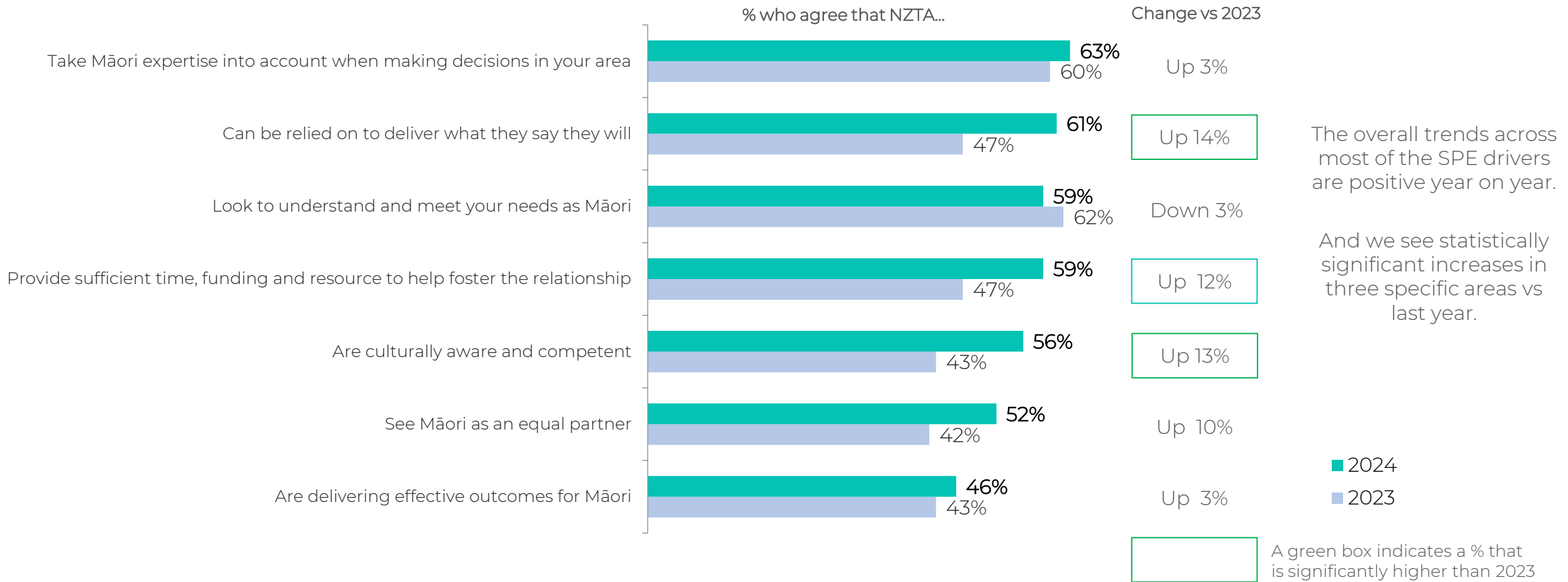
These are currently our relative strengths in our relationships with Māori.

The average performance score across all of the relationship drivers has increased 8% year on year.

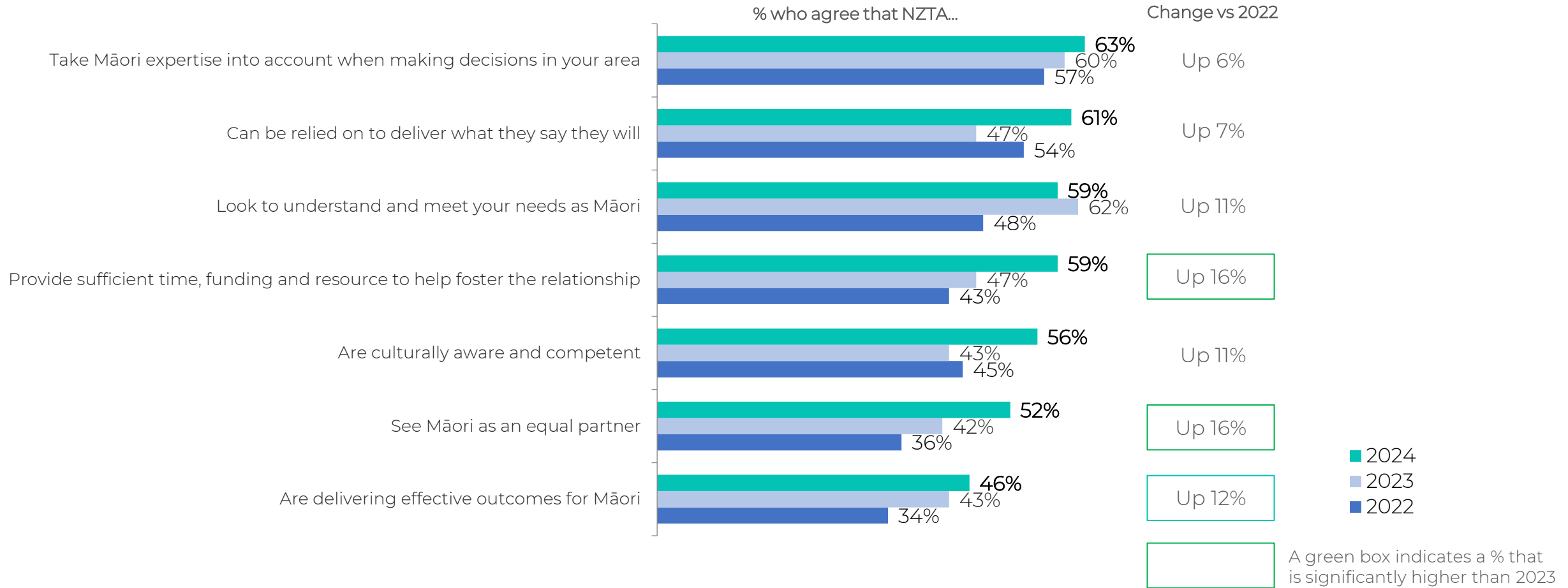
These are currently our relative weaknesses in our relationships with Māori.

\*SPE Measures

# There are positive improvements across most of the key strategic drivers within the SPE measure vs last year



# All key SPE relationship drivers have shown improvement since the 2022 benchmark survey

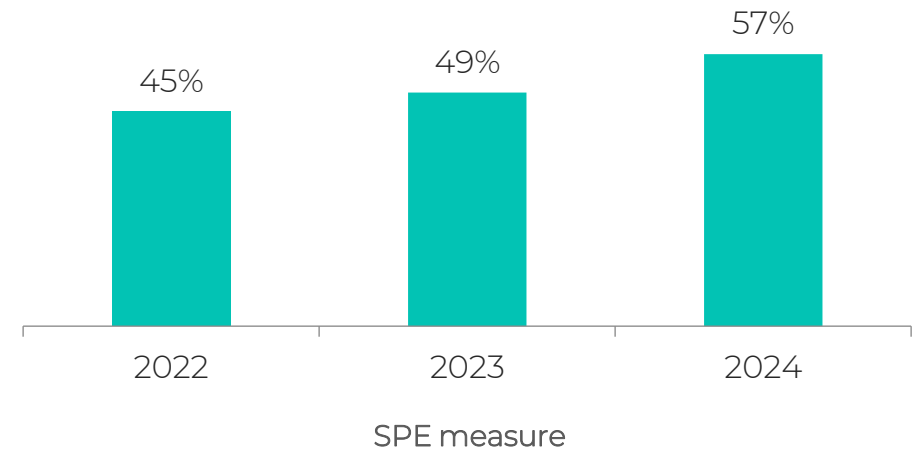


# The SPE measure has shown incremental improvements each year since the benchmark in 2022

The SPE measure takes the average performance score across 7 key strategic drivers of the relationship (the % who agree that NZTA...)

- See Māori as an equal partner
- Are culturally aware and competent
- Look to understand and meet your needs as Māori
- Provide sufficient time, funding and resource to help foster the relationship
- Are delivering effective outcomes for Māori
- Taking Māori expertise into account when making decisions in your area
- Can be relied on to deliver what they say they will

The SPE measure has increased 8% this year and 12% vs 2022.



# There are also improvements in other aspects of the relationship that NZTA have with Māori vs last year

Learn from their experiences

69% - up 11% vs 2023

Work in an inclusive and collaborative manner

72% - up 19% vs 2023

Are genuine in their intent

72% - up 14% vs 2023

Are competent in the work they do

76% - up 18% vs 2023

*"They seem to genuinely want to do the right thing and are prepared to learn and develop as the relationship progresses."*

*"Communication is regular and clear. Great team who are collaborative and work hard to execute the shared plan."*

A green box indicates a % that is significantly higher than 2023

# IMPLICATION: We see positive improvements in many aspects of the relationship that NZTA have with Māori

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## Looking at the key SPE relationship drivers

Performance has improved 8% on average year on year.

With significant improvements in particular areas this year;

- Can be relied on to deliver what they say they will
- Are culturally aware and competent
- Provide sufficient time, funding and resource to help foster the relationship

While all key SPE relationship drivers have shown improvement since the benchmark survey conducted in 2022 – up 12% on average.

## Looking at the rest of the relationship drivers

Performance has improved 8% on average year on year.

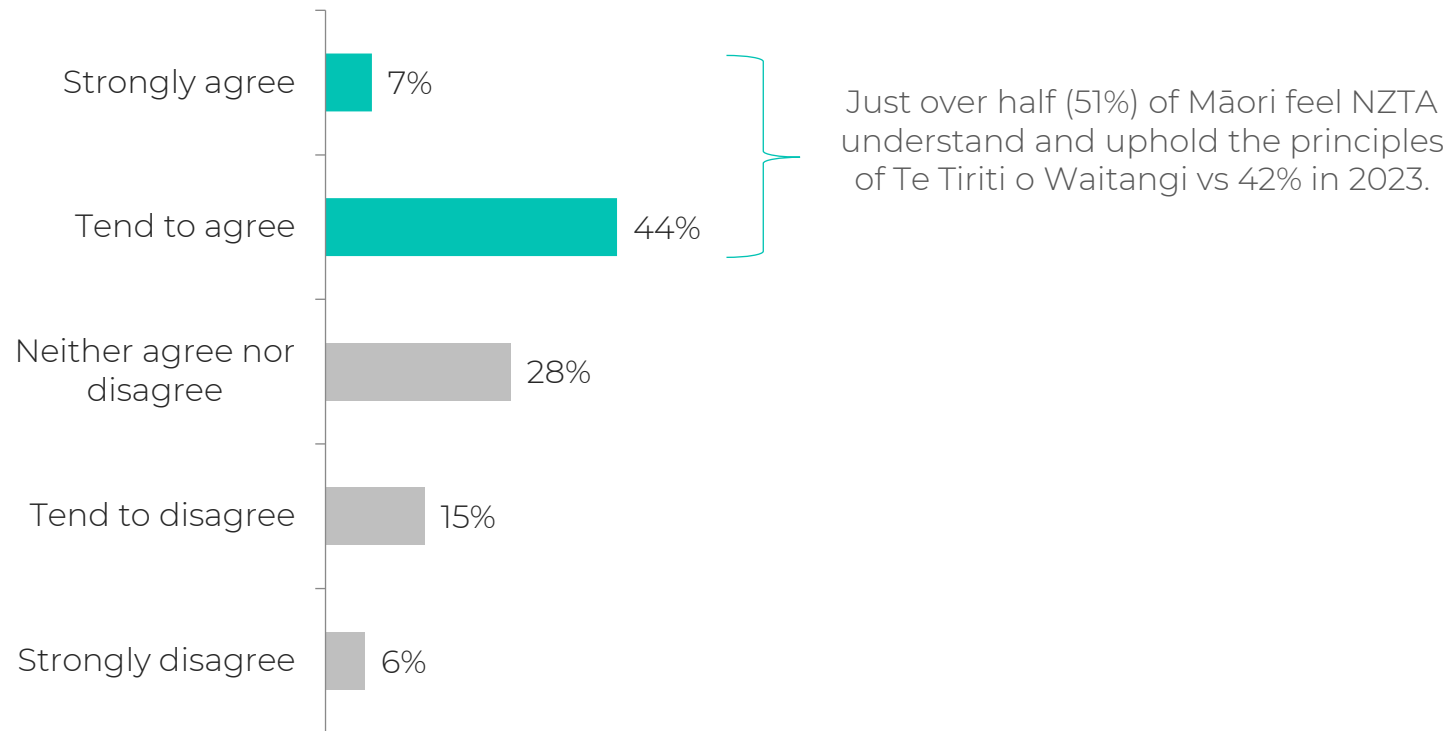
With significant improvements seen in particular areas this year;

- Are competent in the work they do
- Are genuine in their intent
- Work in an inclusive and collaborative manner
- Learn from their experiences



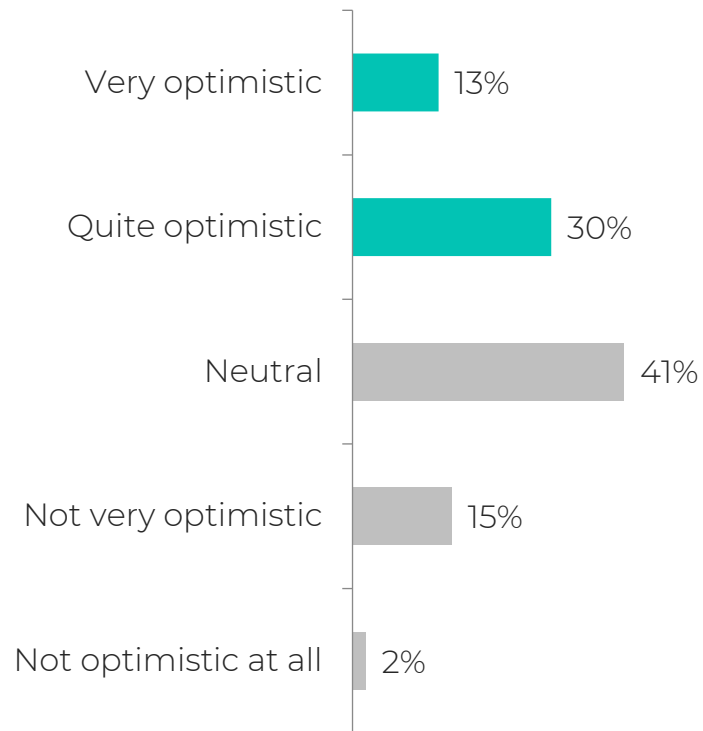
# There is also slight improvement in how Māori feel NZTA understand and uphold the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi

How much do you agree or disagree that NZTA understand and uphold the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi?



# Despite the positive gains made, optimism around the future of the relationship with NZTA is significantly lower

How optimistic do you feel about the relationship that you and your organisation have with NZTA going forward?



43% of Māori feel optimistic about the future of their relationship with NZTA - down significantly from 60% in 2023.

While 17% are not feeling optimistic about the future of the relationship – up significantly from 8% in 2023.

# There are some areas of the relationship that Māori feel are not working so well

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Again, we see concern from some around the direction they feel the new government is taking around Māori, and how this has translated for NZTA to date with the recent name change. These are causing some uncertainty around what the future holds for their relationship with NZTA. Some also feel there is still a lack of understanding around Māori needs, aspirations and cultural practices.

*“A healthy relationship relies on mutual understanding and ongoing maintenance. The potential impact of retrogressive direction and meddling from above is concerning. Waka Kotahi was heading in a good direction in its consideration of Te Tiriti relationships, but that now appears to be under threat by coalition government design and decree.”*

*“We are not happy with the name change after they were gifted a name. No one uses the full name anyway just NZTA.”*

*“I am in disagreement with the current govt wishing to put the name Waka Kotahi as a secondary title. The number of years we took to establish a presence and then have it all ignored again in the first month of a political term leaves a foul taste.”*


*“The results would have been more positive if I had confidence in how Waka Kotahi will (or will need to) respond to the new government.”*

*“Better understanding of our tikanga and kawa.”*

*“We had a cultural violation of our Cultural Sites of significance and the mamae has not been addressed in a meaningful and respectful way.”*

*“Sometimes engagement feels tokenistic or not supported in terms of achieving iwi aspirations.”*

*“Lack of jobs and scholarships for our people to upskill.”*



Identifying areas  
for improving  
relationships with  
Māori



03.

# Māori are looking for NZTA to show commitment towards Te Tiriti o Waitangi and their relationships

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Many Māori are currently feeling some uncertainty around what the future holds for their relationship with NZTA given recent signals and actions. They are looking for NZTA to demonstrate commitment towards upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi and genuinely partnering with Māori.

*“Continue to recognise Te Tiriti o Waitangi as fundamental to organisational culture, direction and operations in order to build upon and strengthen Tangata Whenua relationships.”*

*“Continue to develop our relationship together, one that is genuine, meaningful and upholds the intent of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and He Whakaputanga.”*

*“Get back to being Waka Kotahi and therefore show a commitment to your Māori Treaty partner.”*

*“Don’t let the current govt waste the good work and progress achieved by Waka Kotahi in the last few years.”*

*“A clear understanding of the constraints their minister has placed on them when it comes to Māori specific initiatives.”*

*“Te Tiriti o Waitangi training for NZTA staff.”*

# Māori have some specific suggestions on what could be done to help strengthen relationships

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These suggestions cover a broad range of aspects of the relationship - giving the necessary time and energy to the relationship, being open, honest and trustworthy, listening to Māori, being collaborative, ensuring Māori are at the decision making table, engaging with Māori early in planning, being culturally aware and competent.

*“Proactive relationships take time and energy, which means prioritising the relationship first. There is value in doing so, and this needs to be at a governance level.”*

*“Consulting with iwi and hapū early on in the planning stages, seeking their input and incorporating their perspectives into project designs.”*

*“Establishing and maintaining relationships takes time and effort to build trust.”*

*“Trust, honesty, transparency are the key elements in maintaining strong relationships.”*

*“Continue to recognise Te Tiriti o Waitangi as fundamental to organisational culture, direction and operations in order to build upon and strengthen Tangata Whenua relationships..”*

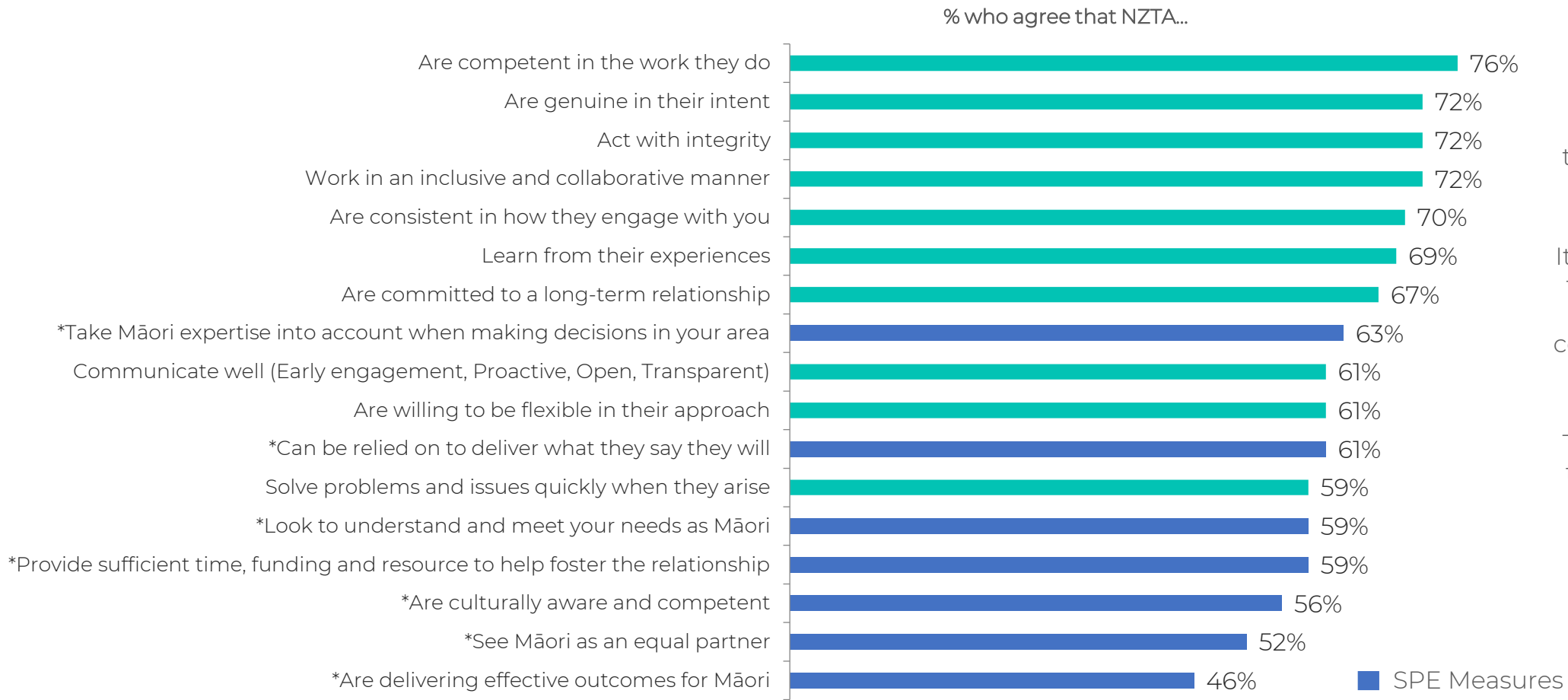
*“Understanding of overlapping interests and associations of neighbouring iwi / hapū.”*

*“Actively involve Māori communities in decision-making processes related to transportation projects that may impact their land or resources.”*

*“Understanding our tikanga and kawa should be better.”*

*“Listen and find ways to overcome barriers.”*

# Continued focus on the relationship drivers, especially the SPE measures will be important in ensuring relationships are strong



There have been strong gains made on the relationship drivers over the last 2 years, including the SPE measures.

It is important to maintain the positive momentum that has been built and continue to focus on these key drivers.

Taking positive actions in these areas will also help to reinforce NZTA's commitment to Māori.

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**Ngā mihi nui!**



The background is split diagonally from the top-left to the bottom-right. The upper-left portion is black, and the lower-right portion is white. On the black background, there are several teal-colored geometric shapes: a large thick ring on the left, a thin circle at the top, and a solid circle in the middle. The word "Appendix" is written in a teal serif font on the white background.

# Appendix

# Profiling those who completed the survey

Last time dealt with someone at NZTA		
	2024	2023
Within the last 12 months	87%	81%
Within the last 1-2 years	7%	13%
Within the last 3-5 years	6%	6%
How long have been engaging with NZTA		
Less than 12 months	13%	19%
1-2 years	11%	13%
3-5 years	37%	23%
6-10 years	22%	32%
More than 10 years	17%	13%

How often deal with NZTA		
	2024	2023
Weekly or more often	20%	14%
Every 2-3 weeks	13%	23%
Monthly	33%	19%
Quarterly	15%	17%
Less often	19%	28%
Role		
Leadership / Governance	52%	47%
Management	15%	15%
Kaitiaki	15%	21%
Operations	13%	6%
Some other role	6%	11%