



**Horizon Research**

**Planting Survey**

**Prepared for  
Greater Wellington Regional Council**

**November 2023**



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## Survey Overview

### Introduction

This report gives the results of a survey conducted from 13 to 27 November 2023 on the Wellington Regional Council's planting communications.

### Method and sample details

The online survey was conducted using the Greater Wellington Regional Council's *Greater Say* research panel supplemented by "opt-ins" from links on Facebook directed to people living in the Wellington Region. Greater Say is a panel managed by Horizon Research. Panel members represent the adult population in the GWRC's constituent councils.

404 respondents completed the survey. The sample has been weighted on age, gender, ethnicity and local government area to reflect the Wellington Region population. The survey has a maximum margin of error of  $\pm 4.9\%$  overall.

The geographical breakdown of responses across the Region at the beginning of the survey was as follows (unweighted numbers):

From	n=
Pōneke / Wellington City	184
Te Awa Kairangi / Lower Hutt	62
Te Awa Kairangi ki Uta / Upper Hutt	32
<b>Total Hutt Valley</b>	<b>94</b>
Porirua-Tawa	37
Kāpiti Coast District	54
Wairarapa (Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa Districts)	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>404</b>

### Overall research objective

The survey aimed to assess public awareness of the reasons for planting and determine what kind of stories about this would resonate most with people in the Wellington region.

### Specific objectives were

- To assess public **awareness** of the purpose of planting
- To assess public opinion on the **importance** and **priority** of the reasons for planting
- To assess public opinion of the **importance** and **priority** of different planting activities
- To determine which **major environmental issues** related to planting inspire people the most
- To assess **topic** and **level of interest** in hearing about Greater Wellington's planting activities
- To assess willingness to attend a planting event.

## Summary of results

### Reasons for planting

**62%** of Greater Wellington residents were *very/fairly confident* they knew the reasons for planting.

**24%** said they were *very confident*.

**80%** of **Kapiti Coast** residents were *very/fairly confident* they know the reasons.

When asked to explain what they thought the reasons were, the top three themes that came through were:

- Prevent/Reduce erosion (**39%**)
- Biodiversity (**31%**)
- Restoration (**29%**).

### Benefits of planting

Respondents were shown some of the benefits of planting and asked how important they thought each benefit was.

Seven of the benefits were considered *extremely important* by **60%** or more of respondents.

The top three benefits considered *extremely important* were:

- Provide habitat for wildlife to thrive
- Improve water quality for drinking, recreation, and food gathering by reducing erosion and sediment run-off
- Clean air.

	Extremely important	Very important
Provide habitat for wildlife to thrive	66%	25%
Improve water quality for drinking, recreation, and food gathering by reducing erosion and sediment run-off	63%	32%
Clean air	63%	24%
Absorb carbon from greenhouse gases in the atmosphere	61%	19%
Protect people, houses, and land against flood risk	60%	29%
Protect and enhance land for future generations	60%	31%
Reduce damage from hill country erosion, i.e. to houses, roads, power lines, fences and waterways	60%	31%

### Importance and interest in Greater Wellington's planting activities

Respondents were shown a list of planting activities asked how important they thought they were.

They said the most important activity was *restoring wetlands*, followed by *planting the riverbanks*.

	Extremely important	Very important
Restoring wetlands	64%	22%
Planting our riverbanks	59%	27%
Planting in regional parks	46%	30%
Planting farms and private lands	37%	29%

They were then asked how interested they are in each of the planting activities.

Of the four Greater Wellington planting activities, *restoring wetlands* was the most popular with **41%** saying they were *extremely interested* in the activity.

	Very interested	Somewhat interested
Restoring wetlands	41%	42%
Planting our riverbanks and flood protection	33%	45%
Planting in regional parks	28%	46%
Planting farms and land management	16%	34%

When asked what they would be interested to know about Greater Wellington's planting activities, the three main themes were:

- Where are they happening? **(22%)**
- How to get involved **(22%)**
- When are they happening? **(21%)**.

## Greater Wellington Planting Days

64% said they were very/moderately interested in attending community planting days.

- 33% were *very interested* in attending a community planting day.
- Residents in Porirua-Tawa are extremely interested in attending community planting days.

## The environment

Respondents ranked the environmental issues they felt strongly about.

23% rated *biodiversity and thriving ecosystems* as the *most important*, with an average rating of 2.8 out of 6<sup>1</sup>.

*Climate change action* was rated as second most important with 20% saying it was *most important* environmental issue and an average rating of 3.5.

*Flood protection* was also important, with 20% saying it was the *most important* issue (average rating 3.6).

Overall people like to spend time outdoors. When asked how they relate to the environment

- 25% said they *spend of lot of time outdoors in nature and connect with nature at a personal level, doing what they love doing*
- 20% want to contribute. *They want to make a difference and will do what they can to help*
- 19% are *deeply passionate about the environment, do everything they can to look after it and actively encourage others to get involved.*

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<sup>1</sup> Rating was 1 (most important) to 6 (least important).

## Report

### 1. How confident about knowing reasons for planting

Respondents were told:

*Greater Wellington put almost 1 million plants in the ground this year. We plant trees, shrubs and grasses in our parks, alongside our rivers and across the land. We grow many of the plants ourselves and often run planting events with local communities and schools to help us plant.*

*This year, Greater Wellington planted:*

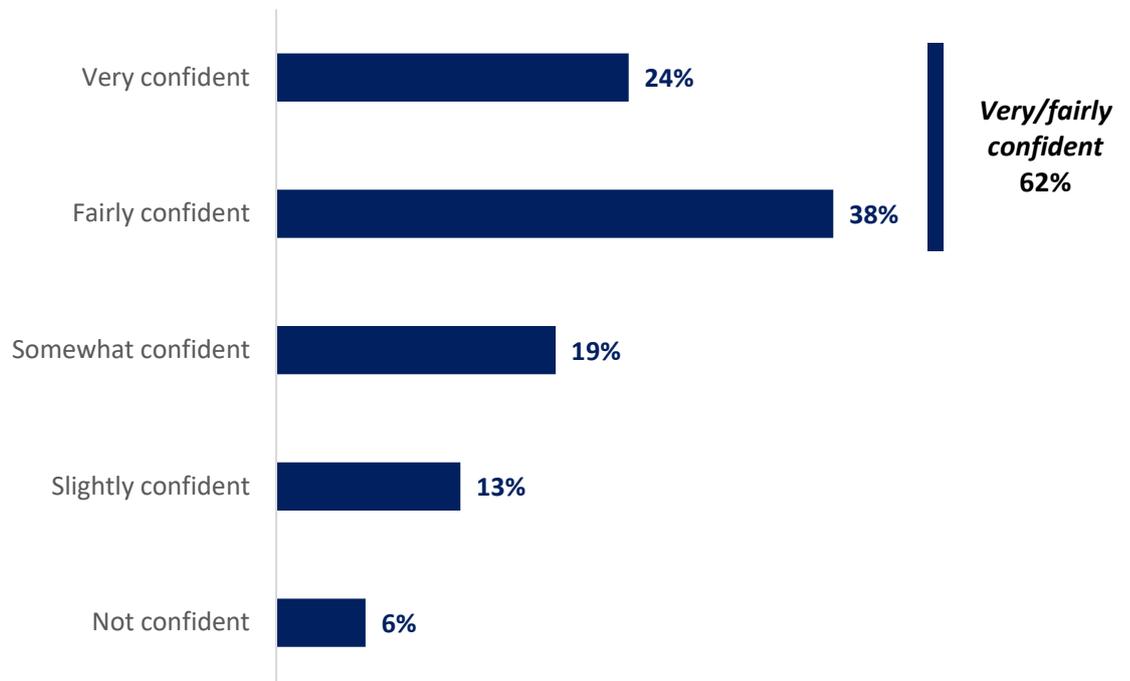
- 421,612 plants (240,369 natives and 135,227 exotics) on farms and lands belonging to people in the Wellington region
- 364,116 native plants in our regional parks
- 73,942 native plants in our wetlands
- 72,687 plants (63,687 natives and 9,000 exotics) next to our waterways.

They were then asked how confident they knew what the reasons for planting were.

**62%** were *very/fairly confident* they knew the reasons for planting.

- **24%** said they were *very confident*.

**How confident are you that you know what the reasons for planting are?**



Sample: n=404

Residents of **Kapiti Coast** were the most confident in knowing the reasons for planting. **80%** were *very/fairly confident* and **40%** were *very confident*.

How confident are you that you know what the reasons for planting are?	ALL	Where in our region do you live?					
		Kāpiti Coast	Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai / Lower Hutt	Porirua-Tawa	Te Awa Kairangi ki Uta / Upper Hutt	Wairarapa	Pōneke / Wellington City
Not confident	6%	3%	1%	0%	10%	13%	8%
Slightly confident	13%	8%	22%	5%	15%	3%	14%
Somewhat confident	19%	9%	14%	40%	42%	9%	18%
Fairly confident	38%	40%	52%	25%	21%	49%	34%
Very confident	24%	40%	11%	30%	11%	27%	27%

N (unweighted)	404	54	62	37*	32*	35*	184
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BLUE = significantly higher than total sample RED =significantly lower than total sample  
 \*Indicative results

## Reasons for planting

Respondents were asked what they thought the reasons for planting were. This was an open end question and the key themes left by 394 respondents who commented are detailed below.

Prevent/Reduce erosion	39%
Biodiversity	31%
Restoration	29%
Habitat	28%
Native	25%
Climate	24%
Protect	20%
Soil	18%
Environmental	14%
Waterway	13%
Flood	13%
Species	11%
Management	10%
Stability	6%

Below is further detail of what respondents had to say in relation to the top three themes.

### **Prevent/Reduce erosion**

Planting will prevent and reduce the risk of erosion.

*Restoring native habitats - creating habitats for wildlife. Preventing erosion. Climate change. General quality of life/niceness of immediate environment.*

*To increase indigenous biodiversity. To filter stormwater before it reaches the awa. To enhance and beautify our region. To improve/reduce risk of river erosion. To fight climate change.*

*Erosion control, mitigating climate change, beautification, increasing biodiversity, restoring native ecosystems, etc.*

*Stopping erosion, improve water and native bird population.*

*Clean waterways, climate change resilience, shade, biodiversity, bird corridors, beauty, soil erosion, moral obligation given the natural environment is so marginal and endemic species are still going extinct, shelter, wellbeing benefits, carbon storage.*

*Cleaner water, reduce erosion, habitat for insects birds and animals, cooler city temperatures, can aid biodiversity, capture carbon, makes for better mental health for people, nice places for people to exist.*

### **Biodiversity**

People see planting as helping with biodiversity and increasing it.

*Increase biodiversity, protect waterways, provide more habitat, decontaminate water, restore native habitats, flood protection.*

*To enhance the natural biodiversity of the areas, erosion control and shelter in parks and playgrounds.*

*To ensure continued biodiversity To keep are environment clean and green To prevent erosion To store carbon dioxide.*

*Restore biodiversity - birds/insects/lizards etc Improve soil health. Absorb carbon. Enhance well-being of people through green spaces. Provide shade. Recloak Papatuanuku for future generations Preserve native species.*

*Restoration of native biodiversity, protection against erosion, providing natural ecosystems for native flora, fauna, insects.*

### **Restoration**

Planting is all about restoring green spaces.

*Riparian planting for shade on the waterways, protecting native fish and improving water quality. Restoration of wetlands and planting on old paddocks or the dunes acts to stabilize lands, acts as a carbon sink and restores habitat for birds, lizards and insects.*

*Absorbing carbon dioxide and greenhouse gas emissions; beautifying the area; restoring the environment to how it once was.*

*Biodiversity, water quality. Soil health, carbon sequestration, landscape restoration.*

Restoration of native biodiversity, protection against erosion, providing natural ecosystems for native flora, fauna, insects.

Restore and maintain the diversity of native plants, replace weed plants with natives, reduce silt and fertiliser run-off from farmland, make NZ look great again.

## 2. Benefits of planting

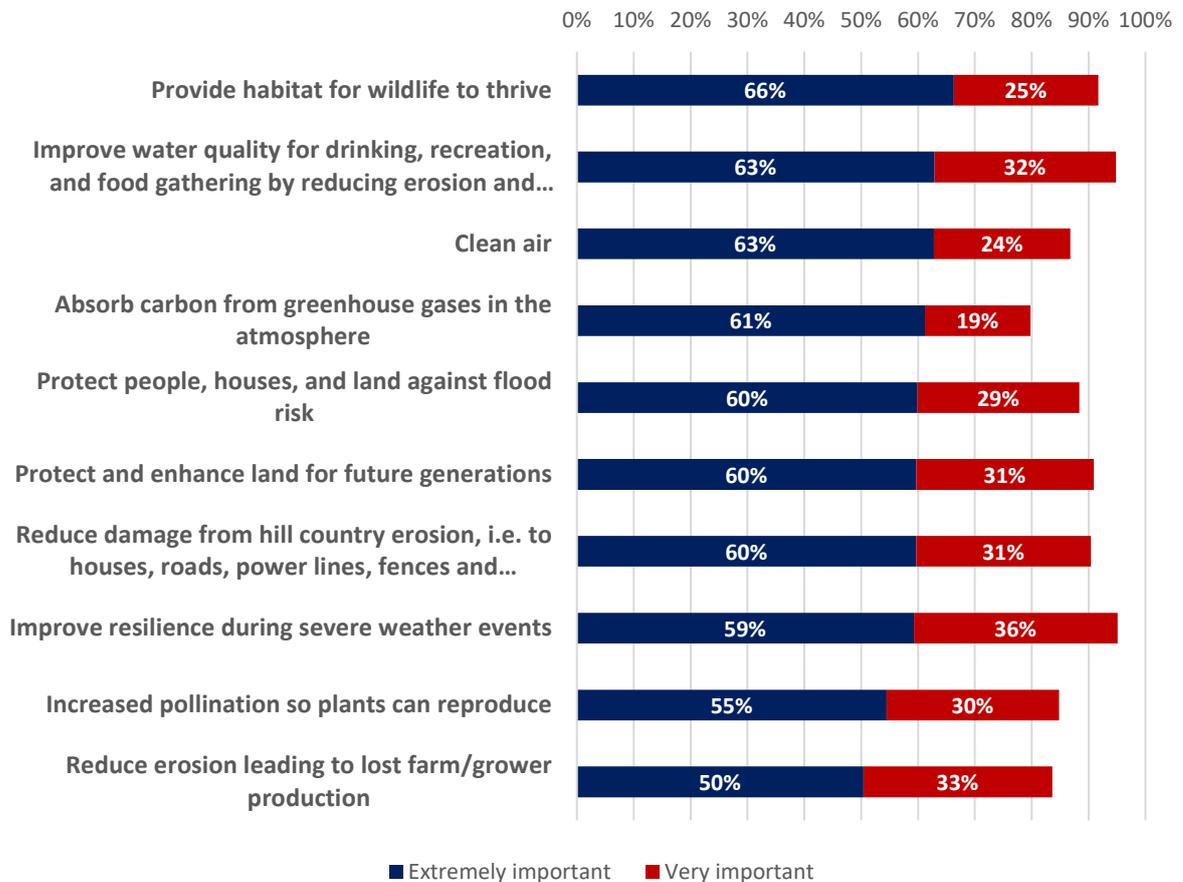
Respondents were shown some of the benefits of planting and asked how important they thought each benefit was.

The chart below shows the top 10 benefits respondents thought were *extremely/very important*.

- **66%** said that providing habitat for wildlife to thrive was extremely important, followed by
- Improve water quality for drinking, recreation, and food gathering by reducing erosion and sediment run-off – **63%** said it was extremely important
- **63%** said *clean air* was extremely important.

These are just some of the benefits of planting. In your opinion, how important is each benefit?

Top 10 - Extremely important



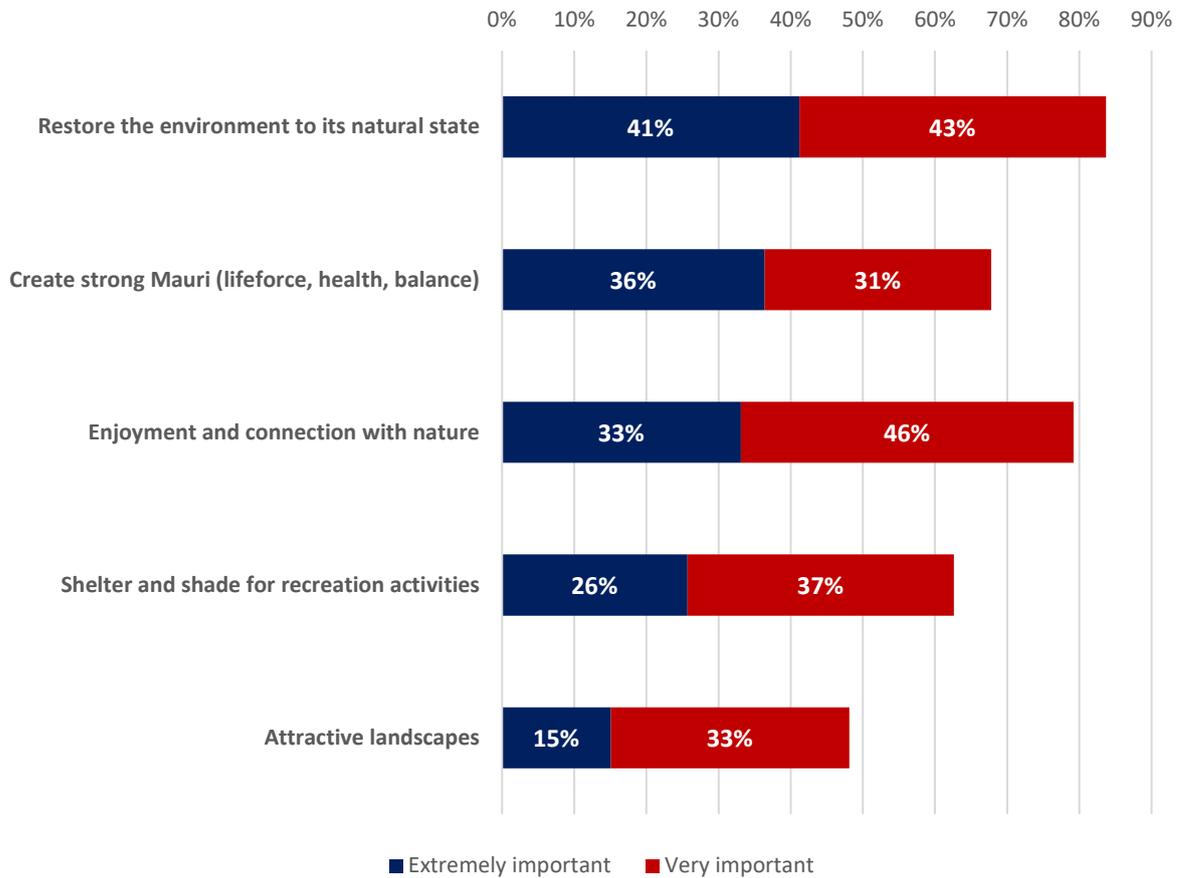
Sample: Answered for each statement<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Question was set up for each respondent to answer up to eight statements.

The chart below shows what respondents consider the least important benefits of planting. With *attractive landscapes* considered as *extremely important* by 15%.

These are just some of the benefits of planting. In your opinion, how important is each benefit?

**Bottom 5 - Extremely important**



Sample: Answered for each statement<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Question was set up for each respondent to answer up to eight statements.

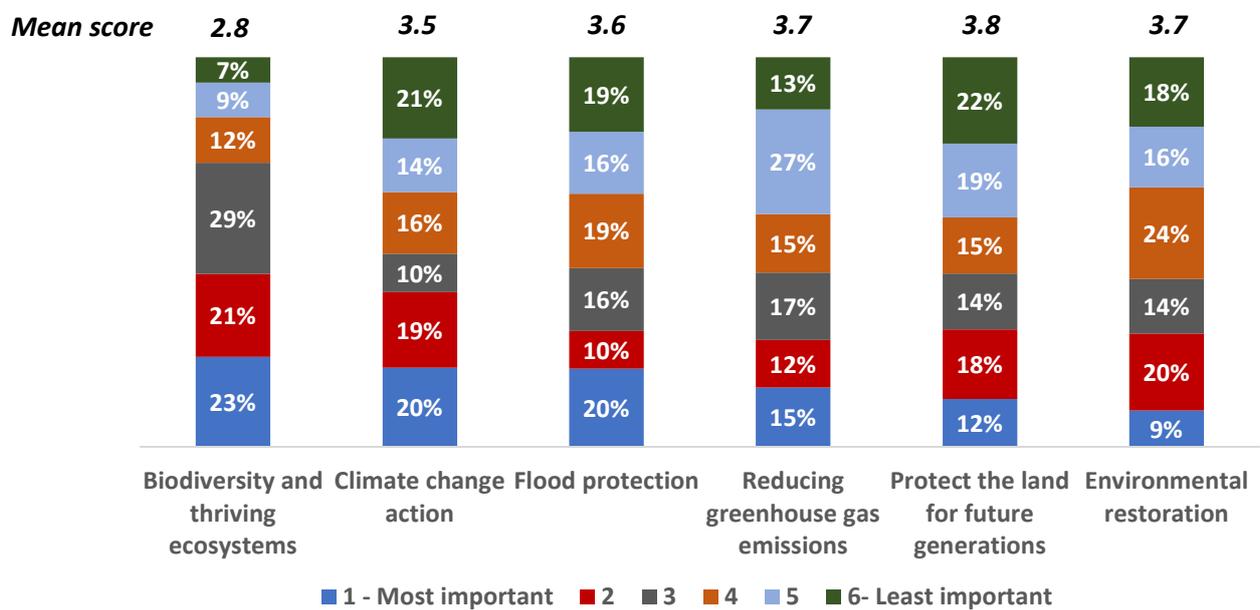
### 3. Environmental issues people feel strongly about

Respondents were asked to rank environmental issues they felt strongly about.

**23%** rated *biodiversity and thriving ecosystems* as the *most important*, with an average rating of **2.8** out of 6<sup>4</sup>.

*Climate change action* was rated as second most important with **20%** saying it was *most important* environmental issue.

With 1 being the most important and 6 being the least important, please rank these major environmental issues you feel most strongly about?



Sample: Answered for each statement

<sup>4</sup> Rating was 1 (most important) to 6 (least important).

The table below shows significant issues-importance ratings differences across the Greater Wellington region.

Most important Significantly higher ▲		
<b>Biodiversity and thriving ecosystems</b>	<b>Climate change action</b>	<b>Flood protection</b>
Living in Porirua-Tawa 41% Living in Upper Hutt 47%	Living in Pōneke/ Wellington City 29%	Living in Lower Hutt 40% Living in Wairarapa 38% Living in urban area 33%
<b>Reducing greenhouse gas emissions</b>	<b>Protect the land for future generations</b>	<b>Environmental restoration</b>
No significant differences	No significant differences	Living in Kāpiti Coast 21%

#### 4. Which planting activities are important?

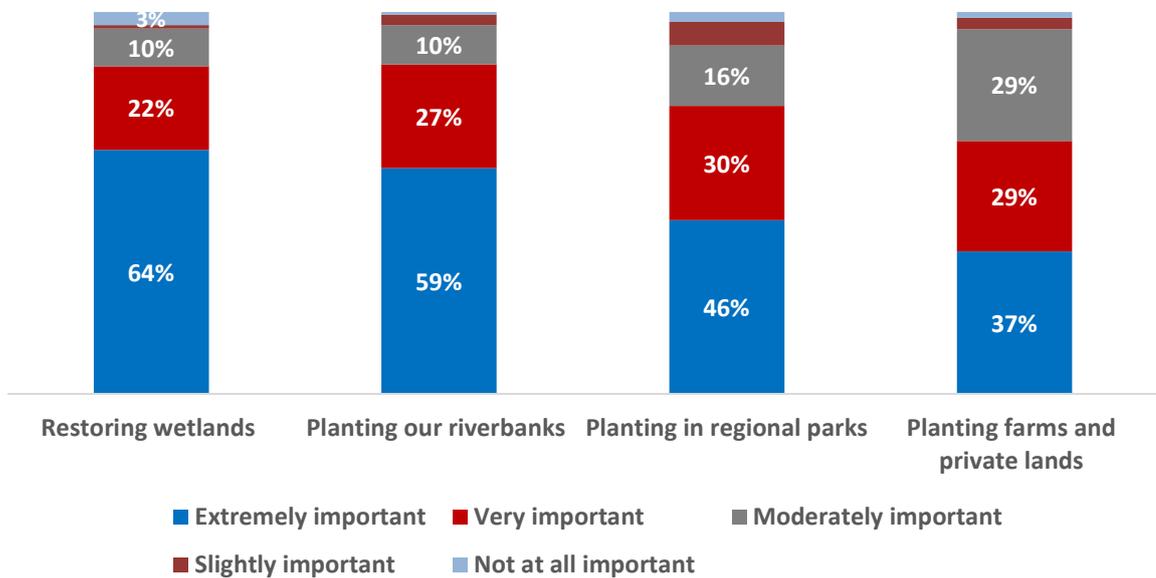
Respondents were shown the planting activities below and asked how important they thought they were.

- **Planting in regional parks** - Restore land and grazed land to its natural state; and forests absorb carbon which helps protect against climate change
- **Restoring wetlands** - Support a diverse range of plants and animals; improve water quality as a natural filter; slow floodwaters; and can store carbon which helps protect against climate change
- **Planting our riverbanks** - Stabilise riverbanks to reduce erosion and help reduce flood risks heightened by climate change
- **Planting farms and private lands** - Helping farmers, growers and landowners manage the impact of farming, slips and erosion that affect the freshwater environment and downstream, and manage flood risks.

64% said that restoring wetlands was extremely important, followed by 59% who said that planting our riverbanks was extremely important.

Planting farms and private lands was considered as lowest importance with 37% saying it was *extremely important*.

In your opinion, which of these planting activities do you think are important?



Sample: Answered for each statement

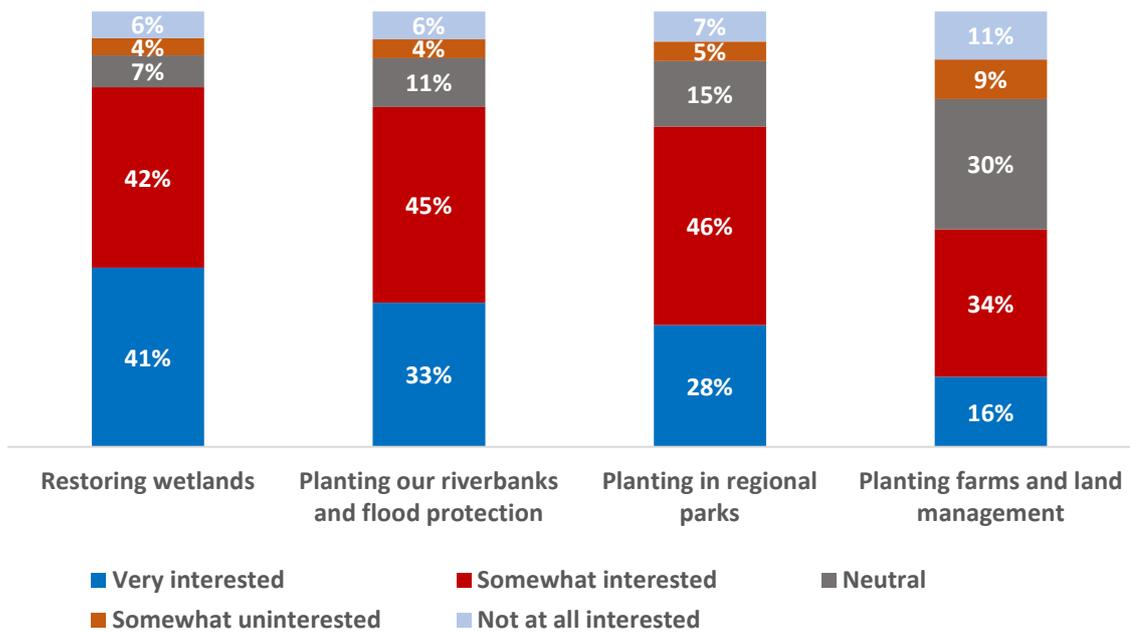
There were no significant differences across the Greater Wellington region in what people thought was an *extremely important* planting activity.

## 5. Interest in Greater Wellington planting activities

Of the four Greater Wellington planting activities, *restoring wetlands* was the most popular with **41%** saying they were extremely interested in the activity.

The activity with the lowest interest was *planting farms and land management*.

How interested are you in the following Greater Wellington's planting activities?



Sample: Total sample

There were no significant differences in areas where people were very interested apart from residents of Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai / Lower Hutt: **47%** said they were very interested in *planting on riverbanks and flood protection*.

## Information about planting activities

Respondents were asked what they would like to know about Greater Wellington's planting activities. This was an open end question and the key themes of comments made by 282 respondents are detailed below.

Where are they happening?	22%
When are they happening?	21%
How to get involved	22%
What is being planted?	16%
What is involved?	13%
Updates on progress	8%
What is the cost	3%
Don't know	2%

Below are some examples of information people would like to know about planting activities.

### Where are they happening?

*When and where they occur. And how I can be involved as an individual and as an organisation.*

*Just where the planting is happening and exactly what is being planted.*

*A timetable with different locations. Also interested in opportunities for secondary schools to be involved*

### When are they happening?

*Days and times, or where and when to pick up resources so that I can organise our Scout Group to come help out.*

*When they are happening, the specific purpose of what is trying to be achieved in the area, the consequence of not planting in the chosen areas, the perceived benefits. And updates on longer term projects.*

*When and where I guess - come planting season you can basically go to a planting every single weekend, so it's prioritising it over others.*

### How to get involved

*What species are being planted and where. How people can get involved in urban improvement (built wetlands, native carbon forests etc.).*

*Where and when to help out, how landowners can contribute, what new things we try and how successful they are.*

### What is being planted?

*Just where the planting is happening and exactly what is being planted.*

*Context, why planting is needed, how this state has come about, plan to address symptoms (i.e. prevent recurrence), planned planting approach, what is being planted, and post-planting plans to provide best chance of survival.*

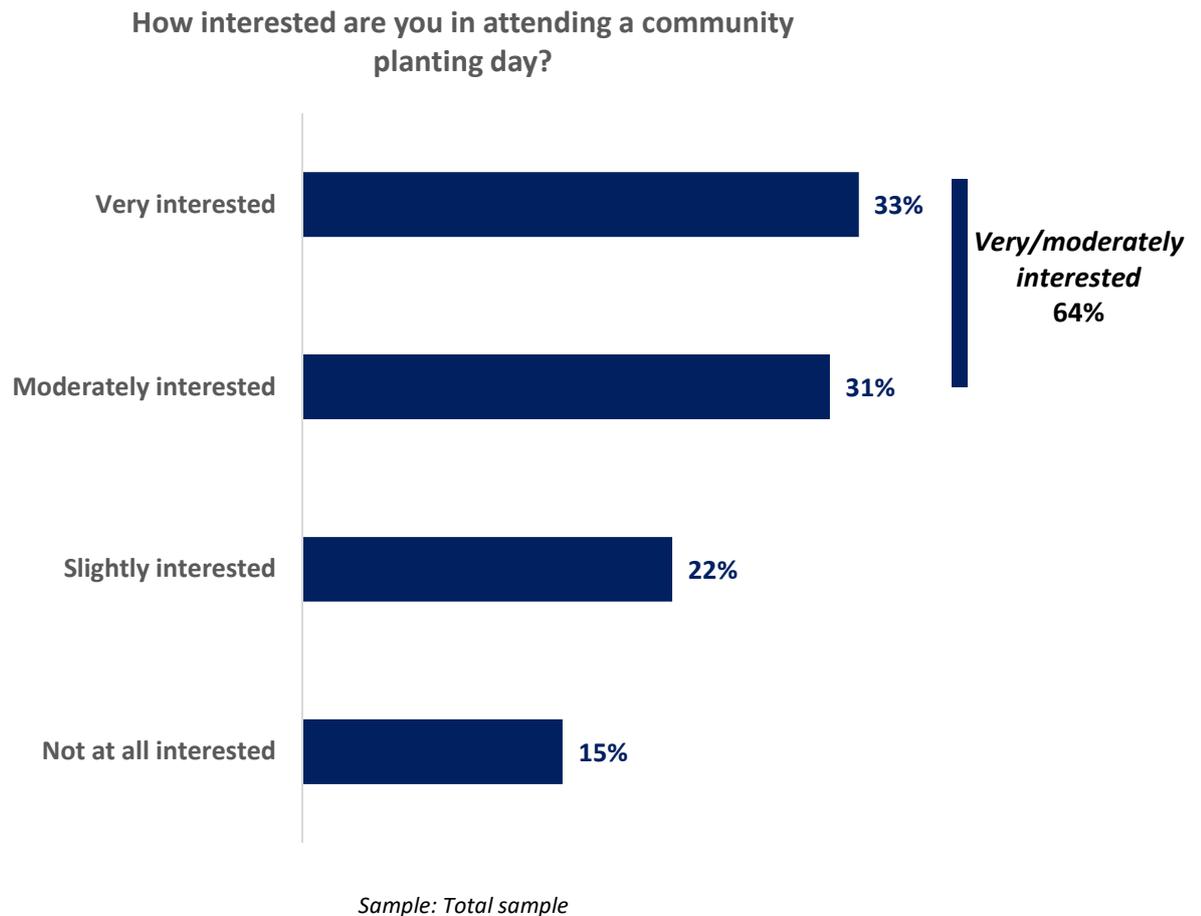
## 6. Interest in attending community planting days

Respondents were told:

*More than 25,000 trees are planted each year by the community at regular Greater Wellington planting days.*

**64%** said they were very/moderately interested in attending community planting days.

- **33%** were *very interested* in attending a community planting day.



Residents in Porirua-Tawa are extremely interested in attending community planting days.

How interested are you in attending a community planting day?	Where in our region do you live?						
	ALL	Kāpiti Coast	Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai / Lower Hutt	Porirua-Tawa	Te Awa Kairangi ki Uta / Upper Hutt	Wairarapa	Pōneke / Wellington City
Not at all interested	15%	21%	13%	8%	9%	25%	15%
Slightly interested	22%	11%	17%	12%	29%	27%	26%
Moderately interested	31%	49%	32%	30%	23%	20%	30%
Very interested	33%	19%	38%	50%	38%	27%	29%

N (unweighted)	392	54	62	36	31	32	177
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BLUE = significantly higher than total sample RED =significantly lower than total sample

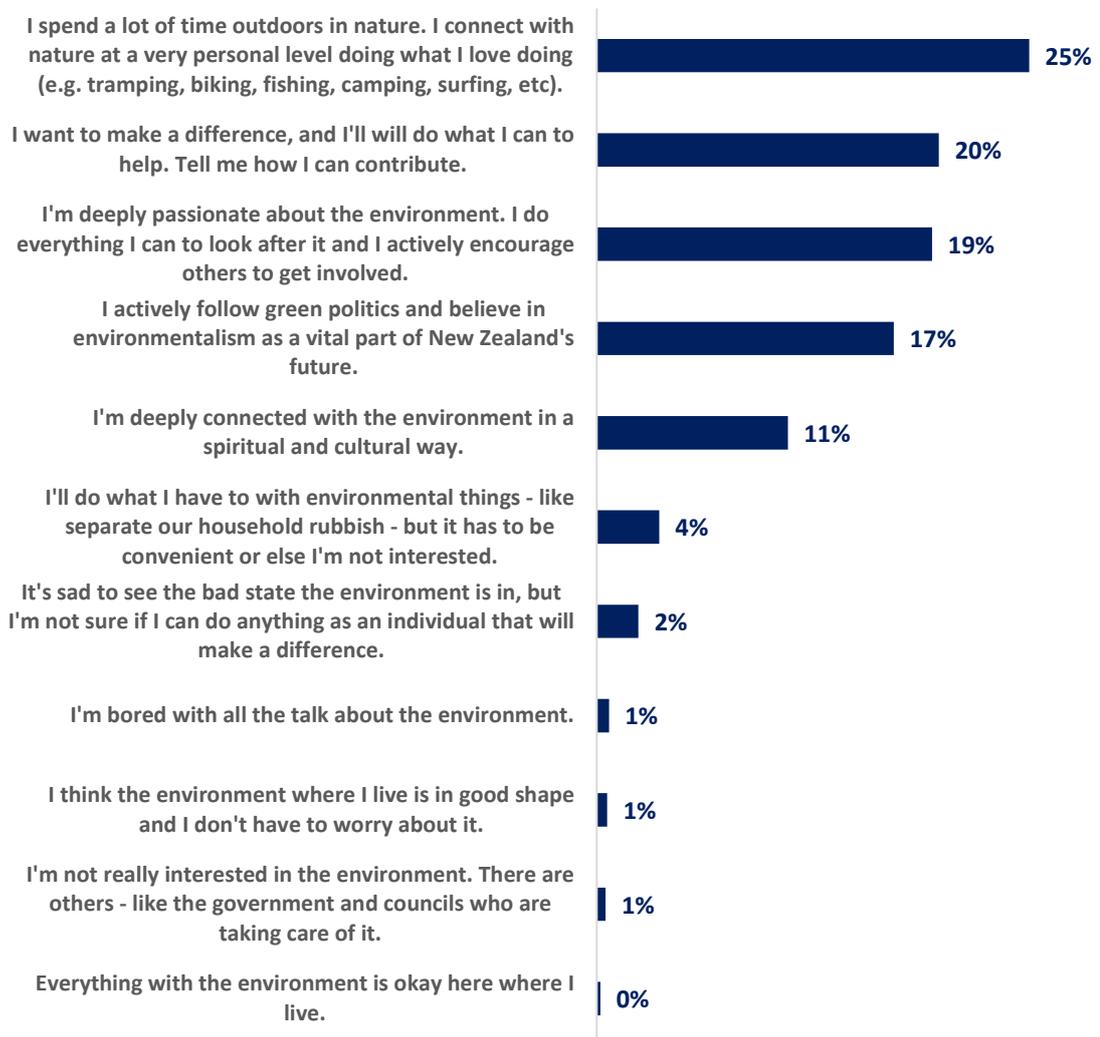
## 7. How people relate to the environment.

When asked how they relate to the environment, **25%** said they *spend of lot of time outdoors in nature and connect with nature at a personal level, doing what they love doing.*

**20%** want to contribute. *They want to make a difference and will do what they can to help.*

**19%** are *deeply passionate about the environment, do everything they can to look after it and actively encourage others to get involved.*

Please select the description that best matches to how you relate to the environment personally.



The table below shows some differences across the region.

Please select the description that best matches to how you relate to the environment personally.	ALL	Where in our region do you live?					
		Kāpiti Coast	Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai / Lower Hutt	Porirua-Tawa	Te Awa Kairangi ki Uta / Upper Hutt	Wairarapa	Pōneke / Wellington City
I spend a lot of time outdoors in nature. I connect with nature at a very personal level doing what I love doing (e.g. tramping, biking, fishing, camping, surfing, etc).	25%	52%	31%	5%	17%	43%	17%
I want to make a difference, and I'll will do what I can to help. Tell me how I can contribute.	20%	10%	31%	28%	37%	7%	14%
I'm deeply passionate about the environment. I do everything I can to look after it and I actively encourage others to get involved.	19%	16%	11%	24%	19%	15%	25%
I actively follow green politics and believe in environmentalism as a vital part of New Zealand's future.	17%	8%	17%	13%	17%	8%	23%
I'm deeply connected with the environment in a spiritual and cultural way.	11%	9%	4%	24%	4%	13%	13%
I'll do what I have to with environmental things - like separate our household rubbish - but it has to be convenient or else I'm not interested.	4%	2%	2%	1%	4%	9%	4%
It's sad to see the bad state the environment is in, but I'm not sure if I can do anything as an individual that will make a difference.	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%
I'm bored with all the talk about the environment.	1%	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%
I think the environment where I live is in good shape and I don't have to worry about it.	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%
I'm not really interested in the environment. There are others - like the government and councils who are taking care of it.	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Everything with the environment is okay here where I live.	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
N (unweighted)	382	52	61	36	29	33	171

## Appendix 1 - Other comments

When respondents were asked if they had more comments, 180 responded, leaving comments with these main themes:

<b>Keep it up/Like to see more</b>	26%
<b>General positive comments</b>	27%
<b>Cost and spend priorities</b>	14%
<b>Suggestion for specific areas</b>	9%

Below are some examples of the three main themes. All verbatim comments are in the data tables accompanying this report.

### **Keep it up/Like to see more**

*Don't slow down with your mahi!*

*Please do more around coastlines!*

*Keep up the planting it's awesome, planting more each year than the previous would be cool*

*I believe farmers still need to do much more to protect our waterways and plant shelter trees for stock, as animals often have no shade from the sun. Good work GWRC.*

*Provide more advice for home gardeners*

*No matter how much effort I personally put in, the change must be institutional as well.*

### **General positive comments**

*Great work so far - have seen the effects of the work done.*

*I love it. I am so proud of what is happening around the region.*

*I think it's amazing that GWRC has taken this all so seriously & is actively working towards improving the natural environment for our region. Awesome!*

### **Cost and spend priorities**

*Please ensure you are running a structure that is making the most of every hard earned rate payers dollar... cut out money wastage... improve efficiency.*

*Yes, they are waste of taxpayer's money!*

*Stop spending on this stuff and look after basics e.g. water*

*More rubbish collection from littering- especially from places near waterways. The motorway bears between Porirua and Plimmerton are terrible for rubbish.*