

May 2025

Early Engagement on Te Tai Poutini West Coast Conservation Management Strategy Review – Summary of Responses



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

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About early engagement

Public survey

The Department of Conservation (DOC), in partnership with Poutini Ngāi Tahu and the West Coast Conservation Board, conducted a survey from 16 October 2024 to 16 December 2024.

The purpose of the survey was to gather information from the public to inform the drafting of the new Conservation Management Strategy for Te Tai Poutini West Coast which will support the management of conservation lands and waters on Te Tai Poutini West Coast.

A total of 1035 responses were received. 1017 responses were online and 18 were written and received via email, post or in person. We would like to thank all those who took part in the survey and shared their views.

Community drop-in sessions

We also held community drop-in sessions along Te Tai Poutini West Coast throughout November and December 2024 to gather feedback on conservation priorities and opportunities through in-person conversations with the community. These sessions provided an opportunity for locals, stakeholders, and interest groups to share their views, ask questions, and discuss key issues directly with DOC representatives. The insights gathered from these discussions complement the survey.

A note on the summary

This report provides a summary of survey responses and in-person discussions in the following formats:

- Multiple-choice and other quantitative questions are summarised in graphs to illustrate key trends, demographic patterns, and other statistical insights
- Open-ended questions are captured in key themes; however, views varied, and not all respondents shared the same perspective.

It is important to note not all the issues raised or views shared are within the scope of the CMS. However, where issues or views were frequently mentioned, these have been included in the summary for context. Issues and views which are out of scope of a CMS include but are not limited to:

- suggestions contrary to the Conservation Act or other relevant legislation
- matters governed by other legislation or regulations
- responsibilities of other central government agencies and local authorities
- concession processing timeframes and fees
- operational detail
- financial management of resources
- stewardship land reclassification decisions, however, the outcomes will be incorporated into the draft CMS, wherever possible.

The summaries below are the views received through the survey and do not represent the views of DOC.

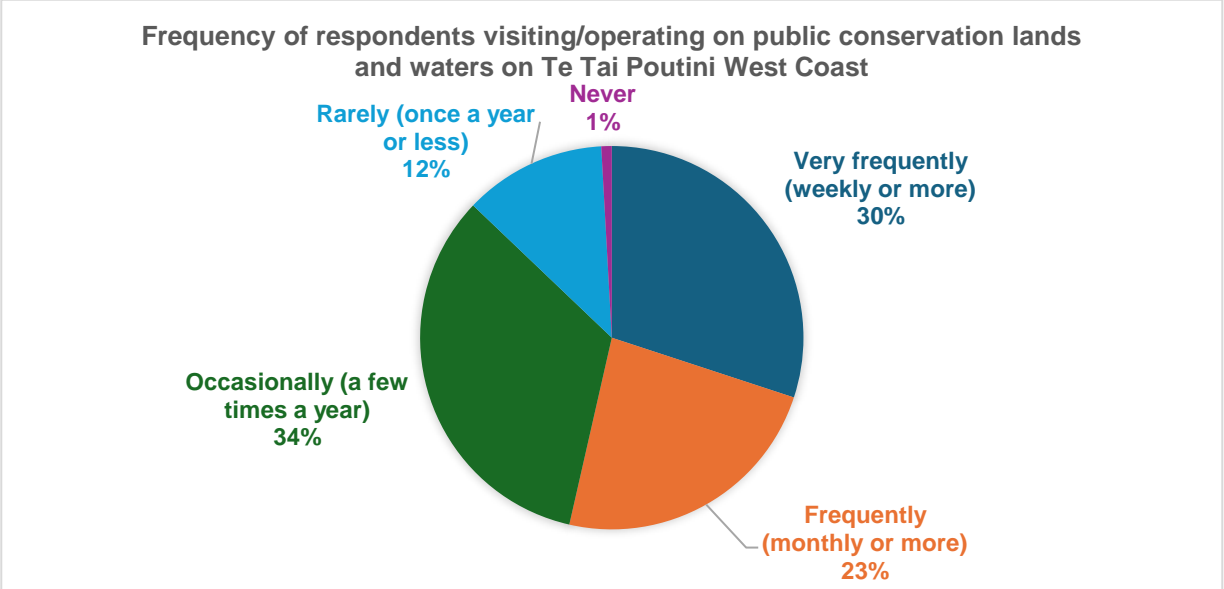
Next steps

Further updates on the CMS review will be provided on the CMS project website as the review process continues: [West Coast Te Tai o Poutini Conservation Management Strategy review: Have your say](#).

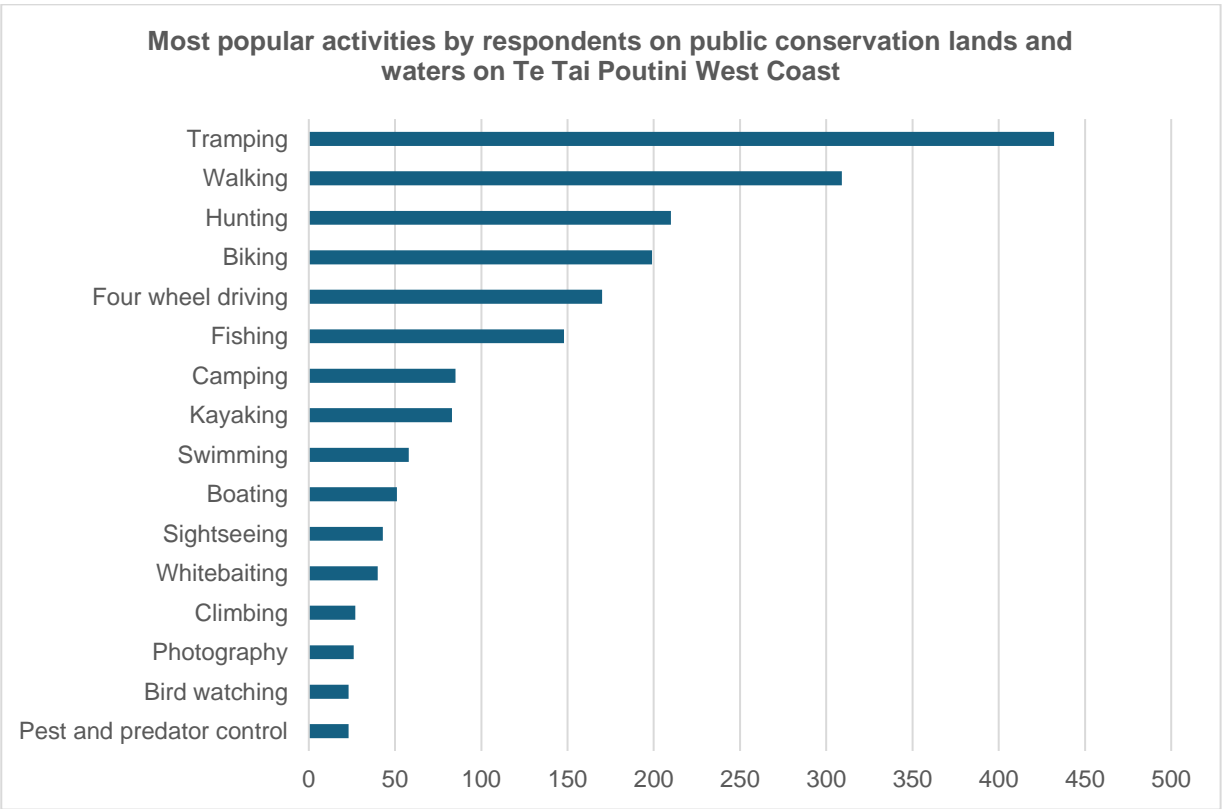
Summary of survey results

1. Frequency of use, activities and challenges

1.1 How often do you visit/operate on public conservation lands and waters on Te Tai Poutini West Coast?



1.2 What activities do you/your organisation do on Te Tai Poutini West Coast, and where?



In addition to the top 16 activities shown in the graph, respondents also indicated participation in various other recreational, commercial, educational, and voluntary activities, at various sites, highlighting the diverse opportunities available throughout the region.

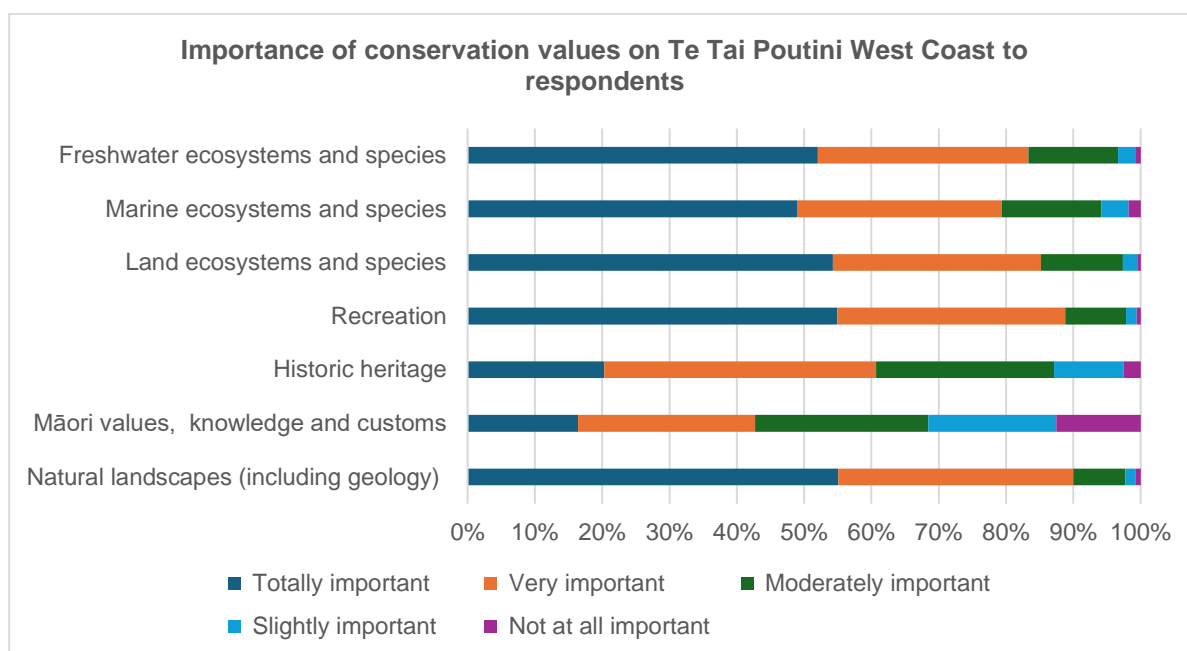
1.3 Please describe any challenges that you/ your organisation face with using public conservation lands and waters on Te Tai Poutini West Coast (e.g. regulations, permit requirements, infrastructure, access issues, etc.)

The following summary represents the views of respondents who provided feedback on challenges they face in accessing public conservation lands and water as:

- **Access:**
 - access challenges, including restrictions related to regulations, permits, unclear information related to permissibility of certain activities, as well as difficulties using private land to reach public conservation lands and waters
 - mountain bikers, hunters, and four-wheel drivers noted seasonal or vehicle access limitations
 - missing signage, unclear information on permitted routes and regulations, including restrictions on dog and horse access
- **Infrastructure and facilities:**
 - the need for improved maintenance of tracks, huts, bridges, parking areas, and other facilities
 - weather-related damage and general wear as causes of prolonged track closures, limiting access to certain areas
 - overcrowding in huts and campgrounds during peak seasons affecting overall visitor experience
- **Regulatory processes and statutory planning:**
 - challenges navigating current regulatory processes, including the timeframes for concession approvals, permit requirements, and clarity around relevant policies for public conservation lands and waters management
 - the need for updated statutory planning documents to reflect changing trends and evolving management needs.

2. Values

2.1 How important are the following conservation values on Te Tai Poutini West Coast to you/your organisation?



2.2 If you feel any of these values are important, please tell us why.

The following represents the views of respondents who provided feedback on the reasons why certain conservation values of Te Tai Poutini West Coast are important to them. While the question asked for reasons why values are important, a number of respondents also expressed that they did not consider some values important or relevant.

Land ecosystems and species

- unique, diverse and outstanding
- unique habitats for native flora and fauna that require protection to thrive
- essential for ecological balance and climate resilience
- contribution to the enjoyment of future generations

Natural landscapes including geology

- rare and geologically significant features
- integral to regional identity and sense of place
- support for recreation and tourism
- contribution to the enjoyment of future generations

Recreation

- connection with nature and contribution to environmental stewardship
- support for physical and mental well-being
- activities like tramping, hunting and fishing form part of the regional lifestyle and culture
- benefits to regional and local economy growth
- contribution to the enjoyment of future generations

Historic heritage

- community asset and cultural identity
- connection to the past and celebration of history
- preservation of historic sites and narratives that strengthen community sense of belonging

- educational value for residents, visitors, and future generations

Marine ecosystems and species

- rich in biodiversity and support for critical species
- current pressure on species and need for protection
- function of a blue carbon sink
- support for traditional fishing practices, tourism, and recreation
- resource sustainability and the resilience of coastal communities
- contribution to the enjoyment of future generations

Māori values, knowledge, and customs

- integral to the cultural and spiritual identity of Te Tai Poutini West Coast
- provision of a holistic approach to conservation
- help build resilience and foster sustainable practices in resource management
- deeper understanding of people, history and their connections with land

Freshwater ecosystems and species

- natural asset requires protection
- support for biodiversity and water quality
- cultural importance for Māori communities
- contribution to the enjoyment of future generations

3. Aspirations and opportunities

3.1 Describe the opportunities you see to improve management of public conservation lands and waters.

The following summary represents the views of respondents who provided feedback on opportunities to improve the management of public conservation lands and waters. Not all respondents shared the same views. While various suggestions were raised, this section highlights the most commonly mentioned opportunities and suggestions.

Land ecosystems and species

- Improve pest and predator control to protect biodiversity and ensure ecosystem health
- Review pest control approaches to balance effectiveness with environmental considerations
- Strengthen habitat protection and monitoring for vulnerable species and the environment
- Enhance public education to build awareness, minimise damage and foster responsible behaviour
- Adopt a balanced management approach that integrates conservation with responsible use and access
- Encourage research and use expert advice to inform conservation decisions
- Restrict vehicle access in sensitive areas
- Improve wild and game animal management to maintain ecosystem balance

Recreation

- Maintain current access level to ensure continued enjoyment of outdoor opportunities
- Improve access for a wider range of recreational activities, including allowing the development of new opportunities
- Maintain and improve the hut and track network
- Enhance access for vehicles including bikes, four-wheel drive vehicles and motorised boats
- Adopt a balanced approach to conservation efforts and recreational needs.
- Prioritise preservation and protection of natural values in recreation planning and management

- Improve DOC's engagement and collaboration with organisations and other groups
- Improve access for dogs and horse riding
- Refine hunting policies to better support recreational and subsistence hunters
- Review fees for access, parking and huts, including reduced fees for New Zealanders where costs are introduced

Marine ecosystems and species

- Prioritise preservation and protection of marine ecosystems and species
- Expand marine protected areas and marine reserves to protect marine mammals and restore marine life
- Regulate and limit commercial activities, including stricter rules on resource extraction
- Adopt a balanced approach to integrate economic and environmental considerations
- Encourage research and monitoring, and use expert advice to guide marine management decisions
- Strengthen regulation and enforcement
- Prevent pollution and/or sedimentation
- Improve education and awareness

Historic heritage values

- Preserve heritage sites for future generations, ensuring historic places are well-maintained and accessible
- Increase the number of interpretive signs, improve information and storytelling to help visitors understand the history of Te Tai Poutini and enhance visitor experiences
- Improve public education and awareness
- Improve DOC engagement and collaboration with groups and organisations

Māori values, knowledge, and customs

- Improve signage at sites with cultural significance, to support the storytelling of Māori history and mana whenua values
- Understand, recognise and protect Māori values, including preserving historic sites with cultural significance, respecting Māori culture and place names, and listening to Māori voices
- Balance and respect cultural heritage and environmental interests of all communities
- Improve public education to understand Māori customs and knowledge

Natural landscapes including geology

- Prioritise protection of natural landscapes and significant geological features, advocate for strengthening conservation efforts to minimise human impacts
- Limit commercial activities such as mining and infrastructure development with negative environmental impacts
- Provide opportunities for the public to experience and connect with natural landscapes while ensuring the unique ecosystem is protected
- Enhance pest and weed control to protect ecosystem integrity
- Improve signage and information to educate visitors about the geological significance of the area
- Strengthen DOC engagement with organisations and local groups
- Adopt a balanced approach aligning conservation and economic needs

Freshwater ecosystems and species

- Preserve and protect freshwater ecosystems and species to maintain water quality and healthy freshwater fish stocks

- Strengthen protections for whitebait species and habitats, including maintaining control over whitebait fishing and continue to preserve whitebait breeding grounds
- Limit commercial activities, especially those with negatively impact the freshwater environments
- Improve scientific research, monitoring, and use of expert advice
- Prevent pollution and sedimentation
- Improve public education and awareness
- Review potential aquatic impacts of terrestrial pest control methods
- Adopt a balanced approach to conservation efforts and economic needs

Commercial

- Promote responsible and sustainable commercial activities to ensure they are low-impact and well-managed
- Strengthen regulations on commercial activities to prevent environmental degradation
- Limit commercial aircraft access to minimise noise pollution
- Maintain or improve commercial opportunities given their importance to regional economy
- Adopt a balanced approach that supports local businesses while maintaining environmental sustainability
- Prioritise preservation and protection of public conservation lands and waters
- Improve support for concessionaires
- Enhance collaboration between DOC, businesses, and local communities

3.2 Please list any local/ community projects on Te Tai Poutini West Coast that are important to you, or you would like to see started. Please describe any goals these projects may have.

Community feedback highlighted a strong interest in conservation, recreation, and local development initiatives across Te Tai Poutini West Coast. Community projects mentioned fit into the following categories:

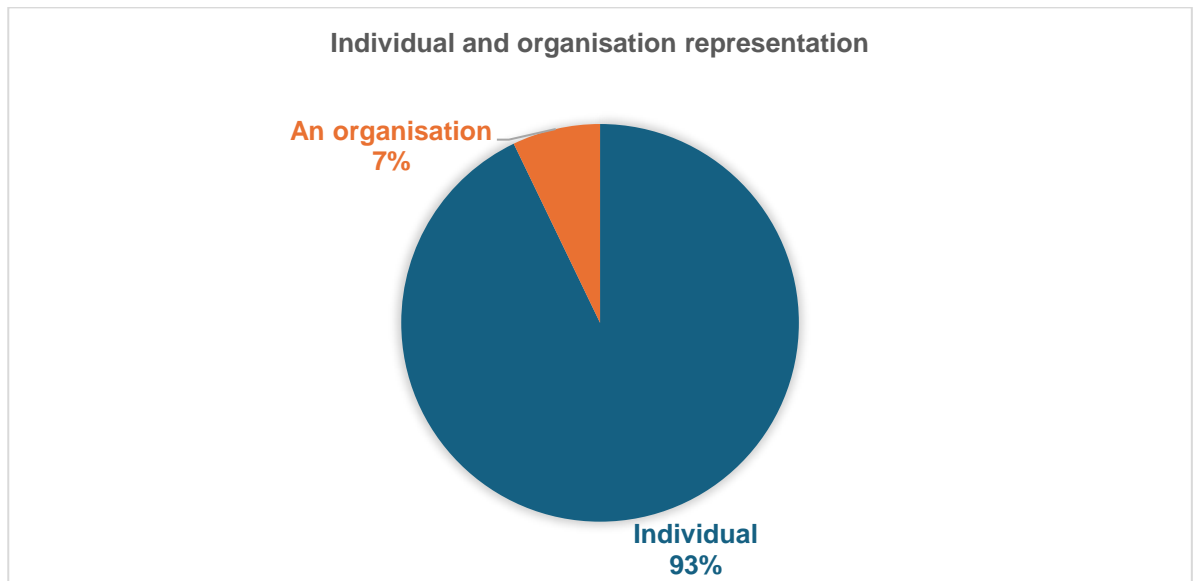
- predator and pest control: predator-free initiatives, community-led trapping programmes, targeted eradication of species such as possums, stoats, deer, goats, and invasive plants.
- biodiversity and habitat restoration: projects with a focus on wetland and whitebait habitat protection, native tree planting, and conservation projects focused on species such as kiwi, blue penguins, and petrels.
- recreation and public access: improved track and hut maintenance, expanded cycling and walking trails, better access to wilderness areas, and improved motorised access for responsible users.
- community-led conservation: more community-driven conservation programmes, better public education on environmental issues, and stronger partnerships between DOC and local groups.
- infrastructure and sustainable development: improved visitor facilities, more toilets and waste management solutions, and sustainable energy initiatives such as small-scale hydro projects.

3.3 If there is any additional information you think will help us to draft the new CMS, please share it below.

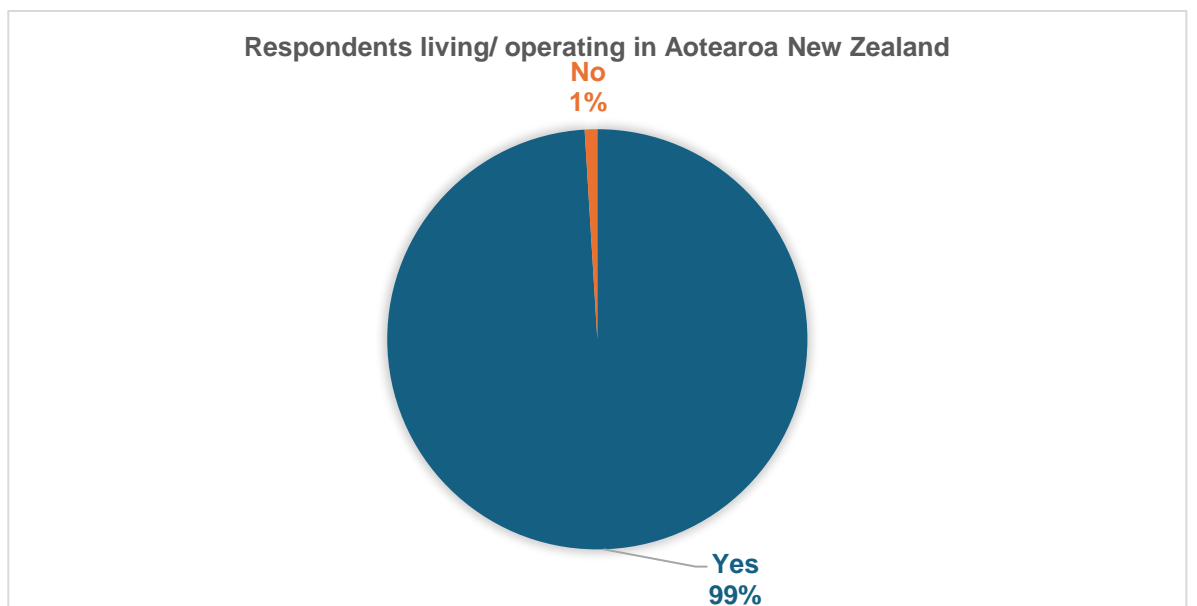
Individuals and organisations provided additional information highlighting issues and topics relevant to their areas of focus. These included but were not limited to conservation protection and compliance measures, provision and regulation of recreational activities, tourism and visitor management, the need for infrastructure support, electricity transmission and renewable energy development, and support for concessionaires.

4. Demographic overview

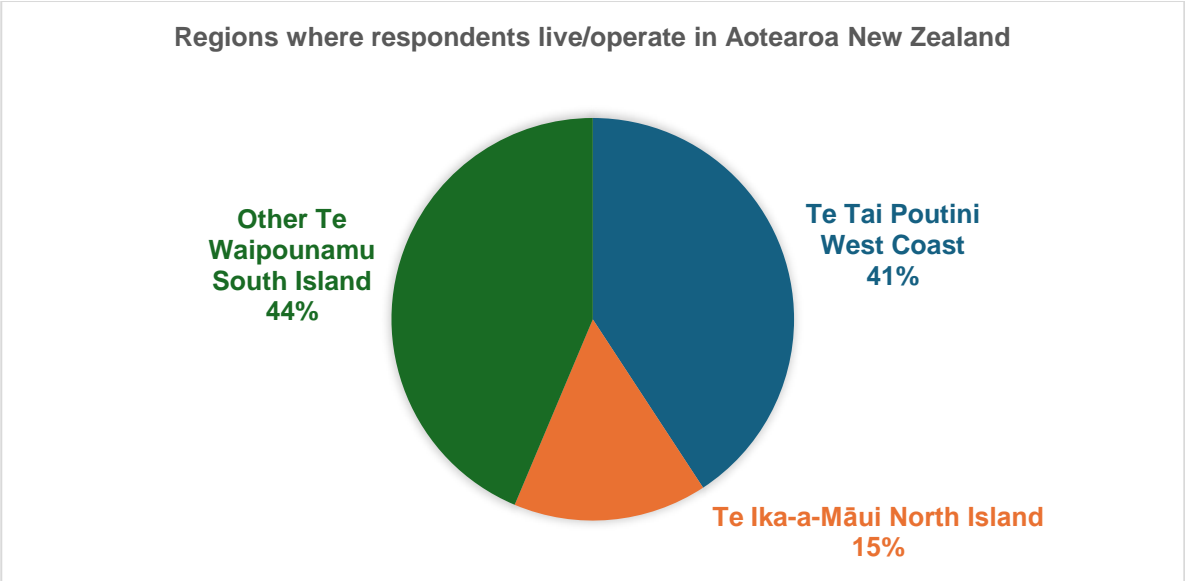
4.1 Are you commenting as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?



4.2 Do you normally live/operate in Aotearoa New Zealand?



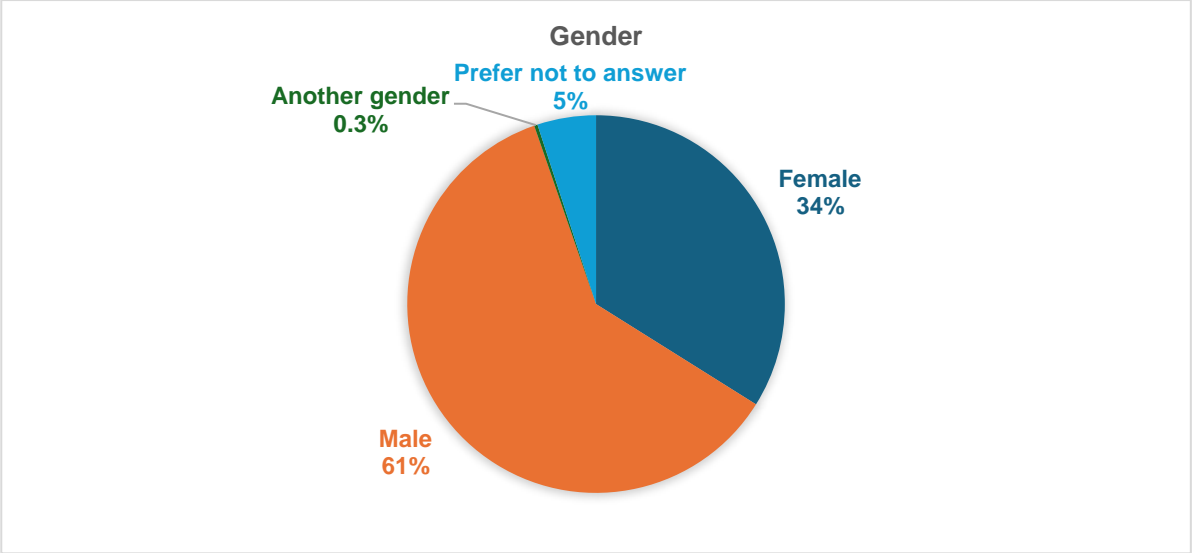
4.3 Where do you normally live/operate in Aotearoa New Zealand?



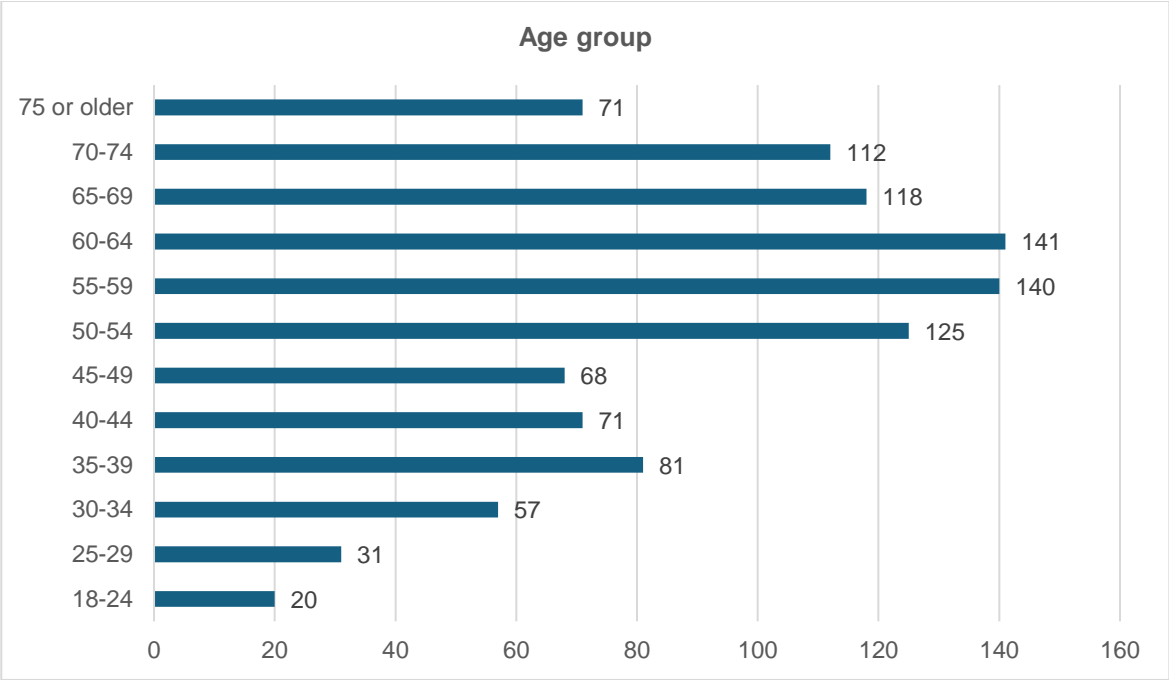
4.4 Where do you normally live/ operate on Te Tai Poutini West Coast region?

Respondents represent a broad geographic spread across Te Tai Poutini West Coast, with notable clusters in Hokitika, Greymouth, Westport, Reefton, Haast, Franz Josef, Fox Glacier, and South Westland. Many operate across multiple locations, including Barrytown, Kumara, Whataroa, Harihari, and Charleston. Some indicated regional or district-wide operations, particularly those involved in recreation, conservation, tourism, and land management activities. Additionally, respondents included individuals and organisations that visit or operate on Te Tai Poutini West Coast from outside the region.

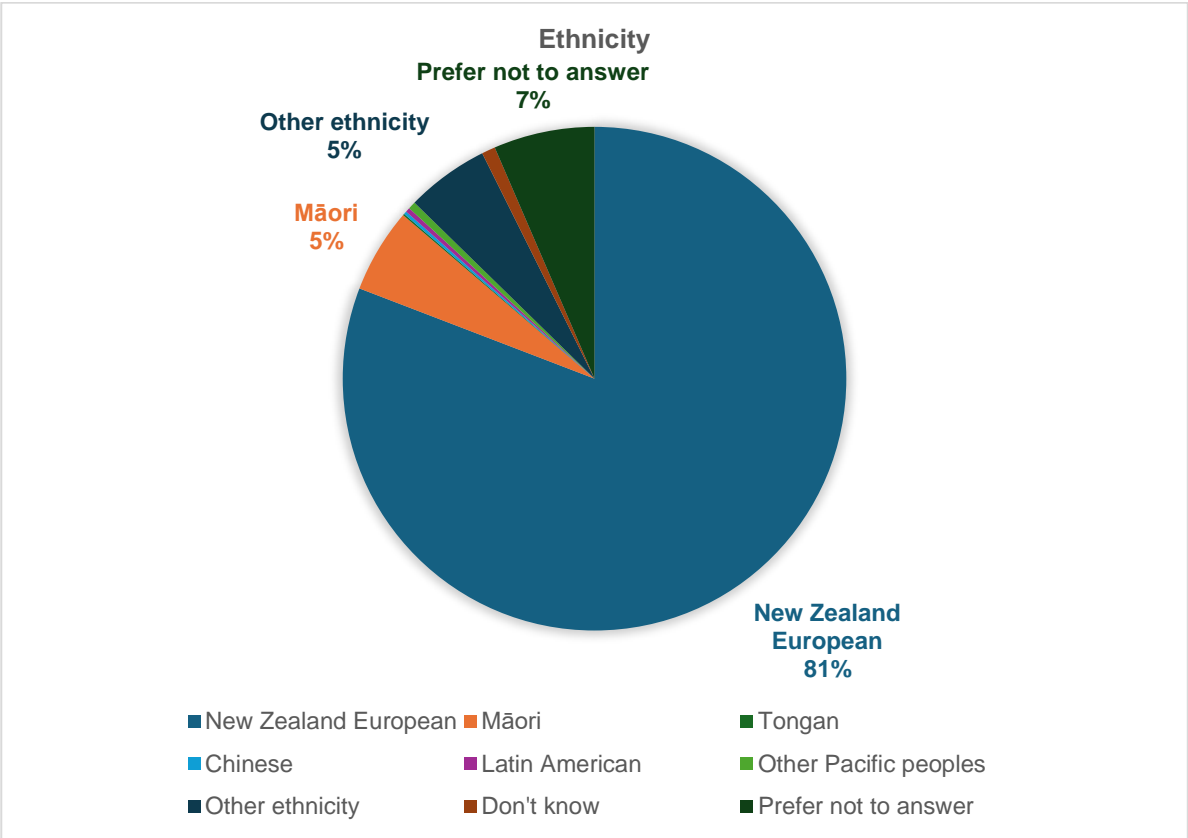
4.5 What gender do you identify as?



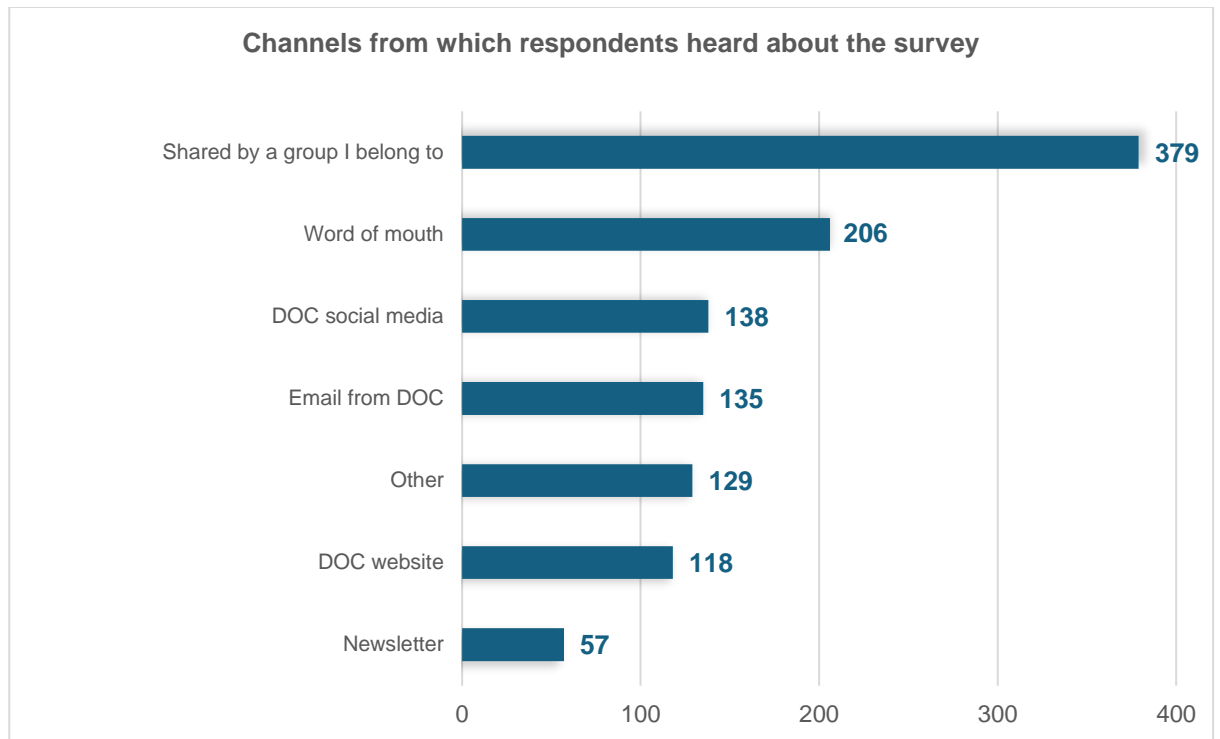
4.6 What is your age?



4.7 What ethnicity do you identify as?



4.8 How did you hear about the survey?



Summary of community drop-in sessions

As part of the pre-notification engagement for the WCTP CMS review, 17 drop-in sessions were held across different locations on Te Tai Poutini West Coast. These were attended by local residents, stakeholders, and interest groups to discuss conservation priorities and opportunities with DOC staff.

Key themes of feedback received at these sessions included:

1. Recreation and public access
 - opportunities for new bike tracks and walking trails
 - improved access for dog walking, horse riding, and hunting
 - clearer guidance on recreational access to public conservation lands and waters
2. Concessions and land use
 - streamline the concessions processes for tourism, grazing, and commercial activities
 - promote sustainable tourism and improve visitor infrastructure
3. Biodiversity and climate change impact management
 - support pest control efforts
 - manage climate change impacts on conservation land
4. Regional planning and collaboration
 - align local economic development and infrastructure planning
 - support coordinated efforts on coastal and freshwater management

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