

Hubris, nemesis and polarisation by gender and political ideology: Results of the 2022 IGPS Trust Survey

Simon Chapple & Kate C. Prickett

Working Paper 22/05



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA

Institute for Governance
and Policy Studies
A research institute of the School of Government

INSTITUTE FOR GOVERNANCE AND
POLICY STUDIES
WORKING PAPER
22/05

MONTH/YEAR

May 2022

AUTHOR

Simon Chapple

Kate C. Prickett

INSTITUTE FOR GOVERNANCE AND
POLICY STUDIES

School of Government

Victoria University of Wellington

PO Box 600

Wellington 6140

New Zealand

For any queries relating to this working paper, please
contact igps@vuw.ac.nz

DISCLAIMER

The views, opinions, findings, and conclusions or
recommendations expressed in this paper are strictly
those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect the
views of the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies,
the School of Government or Victoria University of
Wellington.

Introduction

This working paper presents the results of the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies' (IGPS) 2022 Trust Survey—the sixth iteration of the Trust survey—in the context of the five previous surveys conducted in 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. It explores two main themes: hubris and the associated nemesis, and trust polarisation. Moreover, it explores these themes by considering trust in the context of gender and by respondents' position on a left-right political ideological spectrum.

Methods and data

Data. Data come from the 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 IGPS Trust Surveys, which are administered around the same time in February/March each year. The data collection approach was consistent across all years. The survey was designed by researchers in the IGPS, with the web-based, self-administered survey implemented by Colmar Brunton/Kantar—a social science data analytics firm—surveying New Zealand-based residents who are part of their diverse and large sampling frame. Participants are contacted via email through Colmar Brunton/Kantar's existing social marketing sampling frame of over 100,00 New Zealand-based residents. Key socio-demographics of the sampling frame are known to Colmar Brunton/Kantar, with these characteristics used to ensure appropriate representation of those typically under-represented in surveys (e.g., young people, those identifying as Māori or Pacific). Survey takers are again screened at the beginning of the survey to ensure approximate representation by gender, age, income, region and ethnic bins.

Survey weights are further applied to the analyses to ensure nationally-representative estimates according to key sociodemographic characteristics. Despite being a diverse sampling frame, it is important to note that potential respondents are slightly more advantaged than the general population in terms of income and educational attainment, and more likely to identify as NZ European. They also need to have access to the internet and an electronic device in order to complete the survey.¹

Sample. At the 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 waves, approximately 1,000 people were surveyed at each wave. In the 2022 iteration, 1,003 people were surveyed from February 2nd through February 23rd, with a further 'top-up' sample of 572 one month later, surveyed between March 24th and March 30th. Thus, the final analytical sample for 2022 is 1,575. It is important to note that this period encompasses the anti-COVID-19 vaccine mandate protest and occupation of the New Zealand parliament grounds and surrounding precinct. Ancillary analyses were conducted to understand the

¹ To compensate respondents for their time, survey participants earn 10 Fly Buys points. Fly Buys is a popular national loyalty rewards programme where members can use their 'points' to redem rewards, such as gift cards and products.

potential impact of these protests on levels of trust between the 2022 main sample ($n = 1,003$) and the 2022 top-up sample ($n = 572$). On the key trust outcomes, there were no statistical differences between the main and top-up sample. Within gender differences indicated the potential for a slight increase in trust in government among women between the February main sample and the March top-up sample, but again, this was not statistically significant. Thus, we combine the main and top-up samples as the 2022 wave.

Variables. For this working paper we focus on two key trust outcomes. The first two questions which deliver outcomes we focus on asked “How much trust do you have in the government to do what is right for New Zealand?” and “How much trust do you have in government to deal successfully with national problems?” Respondents could choose from a four-point scale where 0 = very little/none; 1 = not much; 2 = a reasonable amount; and 3 = a great deal. We examine this scale both across all four scale points and also as a binary variable where 1 = a great deal or a reasonable amount and 0 = not much or very little/none. Another set of questions consisted of a series of 15 items (and an additional item in 2022) asked about trust in different institutions, such as the Police, medical practitioners, the media, and political parties. Specifically, respondents were asked “How much trust do you have in the following groups to do the right thing?”, with a response scale ranging from 0 = I have no trust at all through 4 = I have complete trust. The item order (e.g., trust in Police, charities, schools and colleges) was randomised on surveys, in line with best methodological practice for item-list questions.

In terms of descriptive dimensions along which we consider these outcomes, in addition to examining these trust outcomes across the survey years, we also examined whether these patterns for women compared with men. Furthermore, for the 2019-2022 survey waves—years when data were collected data for this measure—we also examined these patterns by political ideology. In addition to a prompt explaining that political parties in New Zealand tended to fall along a spectrum whereby those parties on the left tended to be more liberal believe government should have a larger role in helping the less fortunate and those parties on the right were more conservative and emphasises individual responsibility, respondents were asked “How would you place your political views using the scale below?” The response scale ranged from 0 = Left through 10 = Right, with 5 = Centre. Responses were used to create a five-category measure of political ideology: 1) Left [0-2 on the scale]; 2) Centre left [3-4]; 3) Centre [5]; 4) Centre right [6-7]; and 5) Right [8-10 on the scale].

Analyses. The analyses presented in this working paper are a combination of univariate and bivariate analyses. We also examined these trends by gender (all years) and political ideology (2019-2022). In analyses where we compared women to men, the very small number ($n < 10$) of respondents who identified as “gender diverse” were excluded. Those identifying as gender diverse, however, were

included in the main analyses by year. Similarly, for the analyses examining differences by political ideology, those who responded to the question on personal political ideology with “Don’t know” or “Prefer not to say” were excluded from those analyses (ranging from 5.1% of the sample in 2020 through 8.7% in 2022). Those missing political ideological information had slightly lower levels of trust. The detailed results for all trust outcomes, as scores, are included as an appendix.

Where appropriate, statistical significance testing (e.g., t-test, Chi² tests) between years by gender were conducted to test for statistical differences across key comparisons.

Ethics. The project was approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (HEC) (application number 0000030083).

Hubris and nemesis?

In ancient Greek society, if a person behaved in an arrogant manner with respect to the physical and moral rules of the world and in overestimation of his or her powers, hubris was committed. Ultimately hubris invites its antonym, "nemesis", or the wrathful vengeance of the gods. As, somewhat later, the Bible pithily put the concept: "Pride goeth before destruction: and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16: 18, King James version).² This working paper uses the organising concepts of hubris and nemesis, at a government rather than individual level, to explore changes in trust in government over the period of our surveys.³

We begin by examining two questions on government trust: "trust in government to do what is right for NZ" and "trust in government to solve national problems." The question has a four-point scale. We define positive trust as the top two responses "A great deal" and "A reasonable amount." What is the relationship between positive trust in government by these twin measures and concomitantly measured public political support for the government of the day as measured by opinion polling?

Figure 1 presents the average level of trust from the Trust Survey across time, and in comparison to political polling results that were collected around the same time as the Trust Survey data collection.⁴ The initial data collection in 2016 was the penultimate year of a third term of a longstanding centre-right coalition government, first elected in 2008. The Prime Minister at the time, and since the 2008 election, was John Key. The then National-led coalition had gained 58% of the popular vote in the 2014 election most immediately prior to data collection in 2016. When split out by gender, there was moderately higher male levels of trust compared with females in the centre-right government for both questions (on trust differences by gender, see Figures 2 and 3). The three public opinion polls on political support taken around the time of the 2016 data collection show average support for the centre-right coalition parties of 57%, little changed from the 58% result of the 2014 election.⁵ Depending on the question, trust in government was then between 47-48%. In 2016, there was

² See for example Eugene Sadler-Smith, "Hubris and the danger of leaders with extreme self-regard", <https://theconversation.com/hubris-and-the-danger-of-leaders-with-extreme-self-regard-71548>, *The conversation*, 21 January 2017.

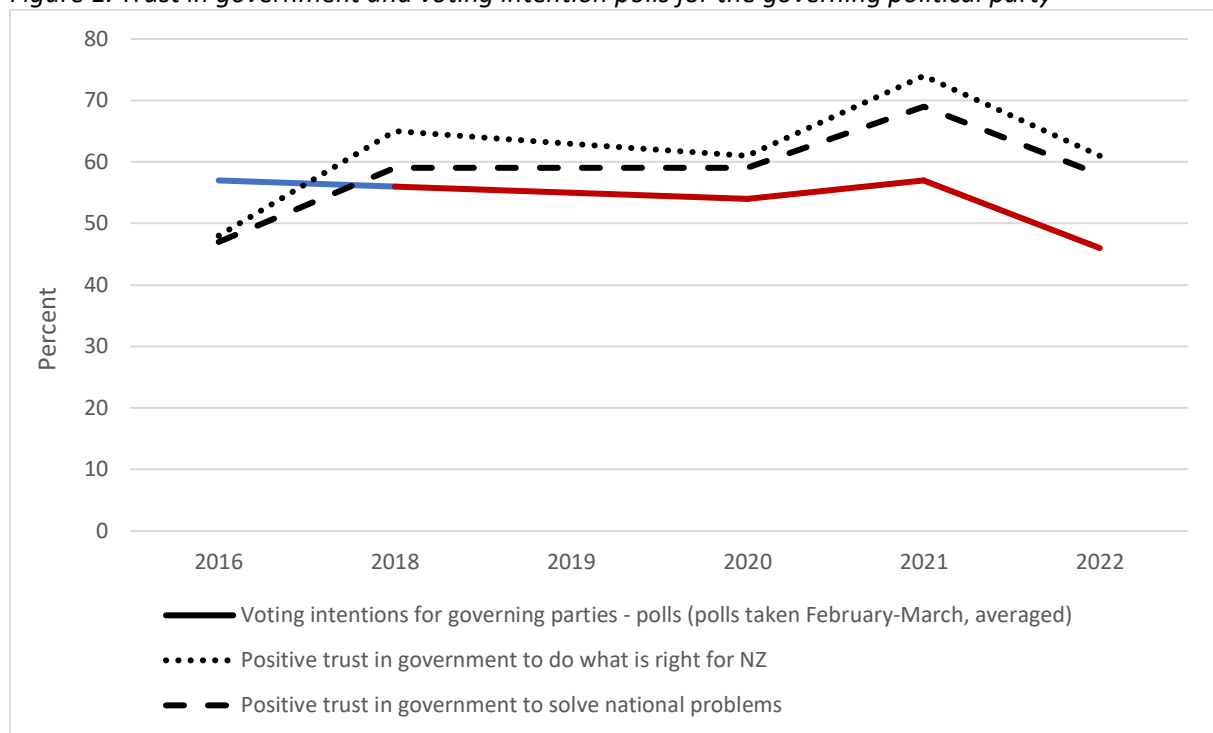
³ The uses of hubris and nemesis at a more aggregate, non-individual level is not uncommon: See Lincoln, Martha. "Study the role of hubris in nations' COVID-19 response." *Nature*, vol. 585, no. 7825, 17 Sept. 2020, p. 325. *Gale OneFile: Health and Medicine*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A635608964/HRCA?u=vuw&sid=googleScholar&xid=f6a414bb. Accessed 9 May 2022.

⁴ The numbers behind this chart can be found in Table A1 in the appendix.

⁵ Two by Roy Morgan Research and one by One News-Colmar Brunton. See "Opinion polling for the 2017 New Zealand general election", https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion_polling_for_the_2017_New_Zealand_general_election, accessed 11 May 2022.

consequently a negative trust gap—defined as the difference in voting intentions and government trust—for the centre-right party coalition near what would be the end of their term.

Figure 1. Trust in government and voting intention polls for the governing political party



Data collected for the second time in March 2018 occurred relatively soon after the September 2017 election and the change in government from a centre-right to centre-left coalition led by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. There was a sharp rise in both measures of government trust in 2018: 65% of people trusted the government to do what was right for New Zealand and 59% trusted them to solve national problems. The Labour-Green-NZ First coalition won only a combined 50% of the popular vote in the 2017 election. The only opinion poll publicly released during the same period the 2018 trust survey was conducted indicated 56% support for the coalition parties.⁶ With the election of the new government in 2018, there was a shift from a negative to positive trust gap. That is, more people had high trust in the government than people who actually voted or politically supported the government.

Examining these trust trends by gender (Figures 2 and 3), women had a much stronger rise in government trust than men between 2016 and 2018 and, consequently, reported higher trust in government in 2018 than men. This gender trust gap was sustained for all of our surveys up to and

⁶ By One News-Colmar Brunton. See “Opinion polling for the 2020 New Zealand general election”, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion_polling_for_the_2020_New_Zealand_general_election, accessed 11 May 2022.

including 2022. Why? Generally, the international literature has found that in recent decades in rich countries women are more likely to democratically support left wing and men right-wing political ideologies.⁷ Indeed, the trust survey highlights a similar pattern finding, for example, in 2022 women modestly more likely to identify as being on the left-of-centre than men (36% vs. 32%, respectively) and less likely to identify as being on the right (35% vs. 39%). Hence, the shift in trust in government by gender may in part be driven by a change in government from a centre-left to a centre-right one. It may also be the case that men are more likely to trust a government where the Prime Minister is a man and women where the Prime Minister is a woman, so the shift was simply because a man was originally perceived as being in charge and this has shifted to a woman running the country.

Following on, are governments of the centre-right and the centre-left on a hubris-nemesis cycle with the public? At this point, our working hypothesis was along the lines of a hubris-nemesis saw-tooth time series in patterns of trust in government. We hypothesised that as a government progressed along its life-course, public trust was typically violated as the rulers developed a feeling that they had a right to rule, reinforced by their continued re-election and enjoyment of the reins of power, and this hubris was reflected in their decision making. Many of those who either voted for or initially trusted a government despite not voting for it would experience policy (in)actions that undermine their positive trust. Consequently, people became less and less trusting of the incumbents. When a new government is elected, the distrust slate is partially cleaned, and a margin of people who did not vote for a government newly and conditionally repose their trust in it. However, hubris again sets eventually in, and governments consequently act in a manner which again progressively erodes trust until nemesis strikes and they are voted out.

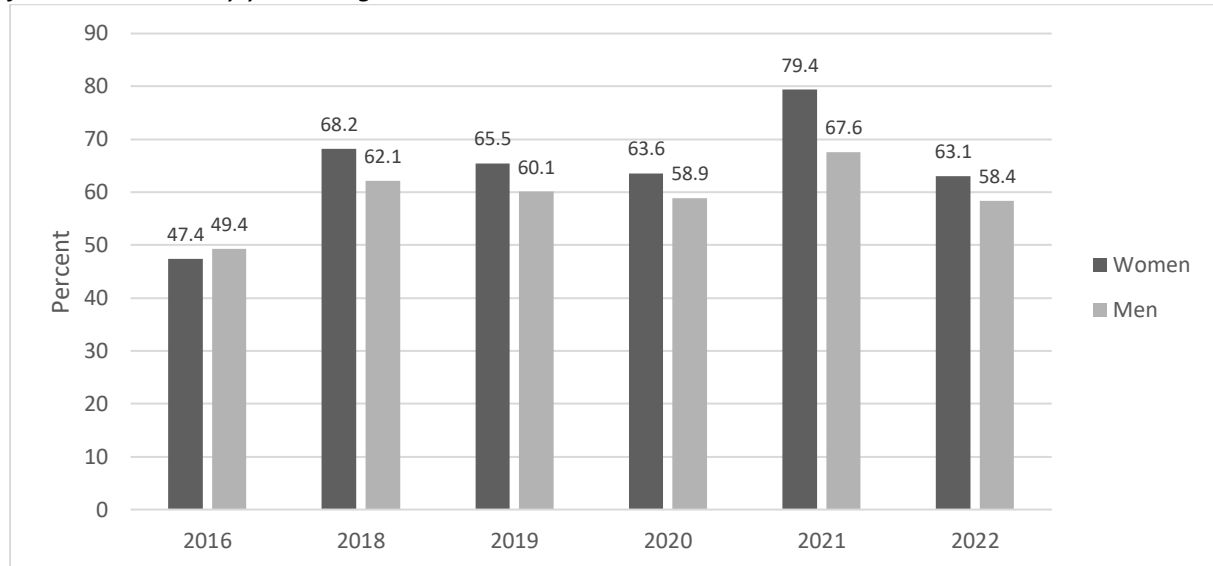
The data to examine this working hypothesis is shown in Figures 2 and 3.⁸ The National coalition had reached its hubris culmination point by the time of the arrival of their nemesis in the 2017 election, signalled perhaps (in retrospect) by their negative trust gap in 2016. This saw-tooth hypothesis was generally supported by the results of the 2019 and 2020 trust surveys. Particularly for trust in government to do what is right for New Zealand, a slow erosion of trust was observed from the highs of the new government in 2018. Ignoring 2021 data (which we return to), 2022 results confirm trust today is generally lower than what prevailed in 2018. It is additionally noteworthy, however, that trust in government, however, was still considerably stronger in 2022 than in 2016. Like 2016, the 2022 data were collected a year before a national election. This election, however, will just be the third for the Labour formal (2017) and informal (2020) coalitions, whereas the 2016 data were collected in the run

⁷ See for example Inglehart, R. and Norris, P., 2000. The developmental theory of the gender gap: Women's and men's voting behavior in global perspective. *International Political Science Review*, 21(4), 441-463.

⁸ Weighted means over time for the total sample are presented in Table A3 in the appendix.

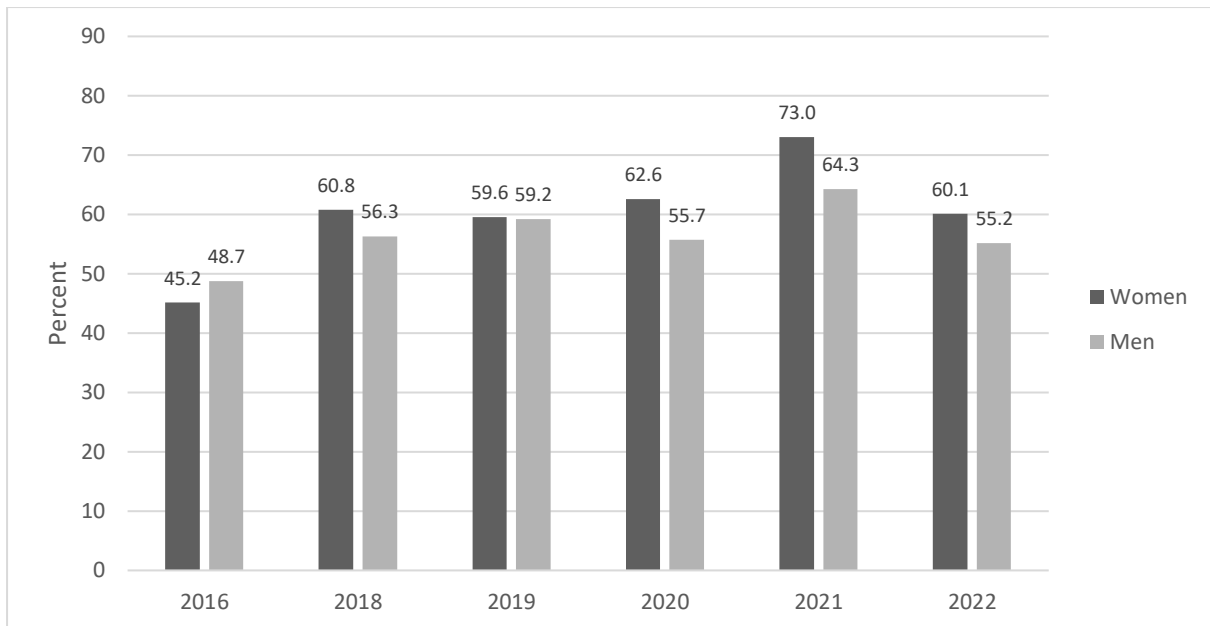
up to the fourth election for the National coalition. Consequently, the 2016 government trust trough and negative trust gap may reflect the fact that the third term National coalition was one election further along the hubris-nemesis cycle than the second term Labour coalition/majority government.

Figure 2. Percent with “a reasonable amount” or “great deal” of trust in government to do what is right for New Zealand by year and gender



The confounding feature of the hypothesised hubris-nemesis cycle is, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in a large rise in trust in government through the second three-quarters of 2020 because of positive public views of the government response. This response was ranked as one of the best in the world, resulting in some of the lowest COVID-19-related infection and mortality rates and a solid economic rebound. This trust boost was sustained, albeit at lower levels through 2021. That COVID-19 trust booster shot appears to have mostly worn off in 2022. Nevertheless, the positive trust overhang – higher trust in government than political polling support for government – has been sustained at considerable levels.

Figure 3. Percent with “a reasonable amount” or “great deal” trust in government to deal successfully with national problems by year and gender



Polarisation in government and media trust

Trust in government is important, but so too is trust in other pillars that uphold the social contract and sustain a functioning democracy, such as the media and the public service. A common narrative in recent times is that New Zealand is becoming more polarised as a society.⁹ In particular, questions of polarisation underpinned the 2022 anti-COVID-19 vaccine mandate protests on Parliament grounds and asked, generally, whether they reflected a further polarisation of society following the playing out of the pandemic and government and societal responses to the pandemic.

Have we become more polarised since the pandemic? And, if so, are the seeds of this polarisation part of a longer-term trend? The trust survey is uniquely situated to address these questions, given data were collected just on the cusp of the COVID-19 pandemic and during the duration of the 2022 anti-vaccine mandate protests. Moreover, our measures of trust dating back to 2016 allow us to examine these trust trends prior to the 2017 Labour-coalition government taking power to provide evidence of any potential longer-term trend.

⁹ For several examples see Pete McKenzie “Aotearoa’s unique identity crisis” <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/the-rot-of-nzs-polarisation-crisis>, *Newsroom* August 27, 2020; Liam Dann “We are a polarised country - the qualities we’ll need to get through”, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/liam-dann-we-are-a-polarised-country-the-qualities-we-ll-need-to-get-through/G46MGNPJF3577NVWRCBQUASAMI/> *New Zealand Herald*, 24 October 2021; Eugene Bingham and Adam Dudding “Tick. Tick podcast: Survey shows powerful polarisation along party lines”, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/122327028/tick-tick-podcast-survey-shows-powerful-polarisation-along-party-lines>, *stuff*, 4 August 2020; Peter Dunne “Why we must separate the protesters’ cause from the protest itself”, <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/why-we-must-separate-the-protestors-cause-from-the-protest-itself>, *newsroom*, 10 March 2022.

This section examines the polarisation question, in terms of 1) polarisation in trust in government; and 2) polarisation in trust in information sources, including the media. This examination is salient given these represent dimensions along which much of the popular discussion of polarisation has explicitly or tacitly flowed.

In these next set of analyses, we define polarisation as a hollowing out of the middle responses in a distribution of replies to a trust question and a concomitant thickening in *both* tails—those with very high trust and those with very low trust—of the distribution simultaneously.¹⁰ Examining the *change* in proportion in those with very high and/or very low trust, versus changes in the proportion of people with middle-tier level of trust, then, is one way to access polarisation.

Figures 4 and 5 present changes in trust in government to do the right thing and to deal with national problems, respectively, by gender from 2020 (pre-pandemic) to 2022. To consider longer-term change in trust, Figures 5 and 6 present the same comparisons but examining change between the first data collection wave in 2016 and data collected in 2022. We present the findings by gender to examine whether there is any evidence of women’s and men’s trust distributions changing in different ways across time.¹¹

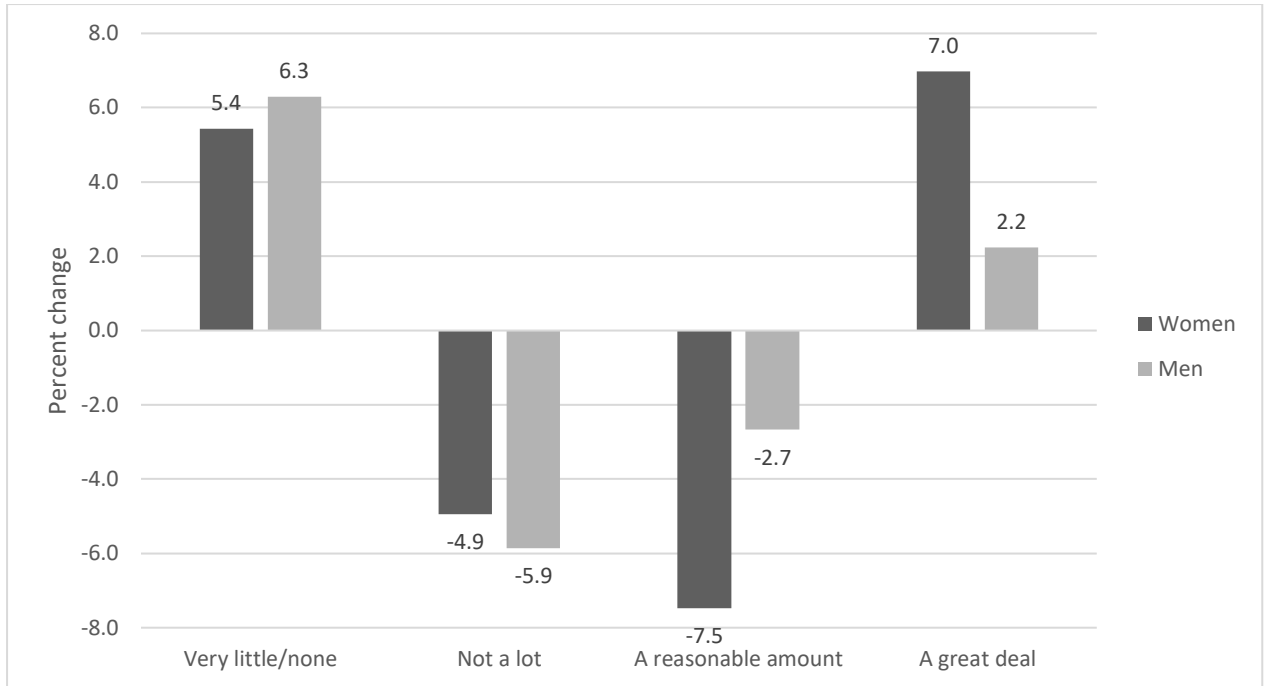
Figures 4 and 5 demonstrates evidence of a hollowing middle and fattening tails for both government trust measures from just prior to during the COVID-19 period. For example, the proportion of women and men who had very little or no trust in government to do what is right for New Zealand increased by 5.4 and 6.3 percentage points, respectively, from 2020 to 2022. At the other end, the proportion of women and men who had a great deal of trust in the government increased by 6.3 and 2.2 percentage points in 2022 from 2020.

Figure 4. Percentage point change in trust in government to do what is right for New Zealand by gender: 2020 to 2022¹²

¹⁰ There are many different definitions of polarisation in a wide range of academic literatures. Our definition – a change process of hollowing out the middle and thickening of the tails of a distribution is however widely employed – see Hamnett, C., 1994. Social polarisation in global cities: theory and evidence. *Urban studies*, 31(3), pp.401-424 or Pratschke, J. and Morlicchio, E., 2012. Social polarisation, the labour market and economic restructuring in Europe: an urban perspective. *Urban Studies*, 49(9), pp.1891-1907, for example.

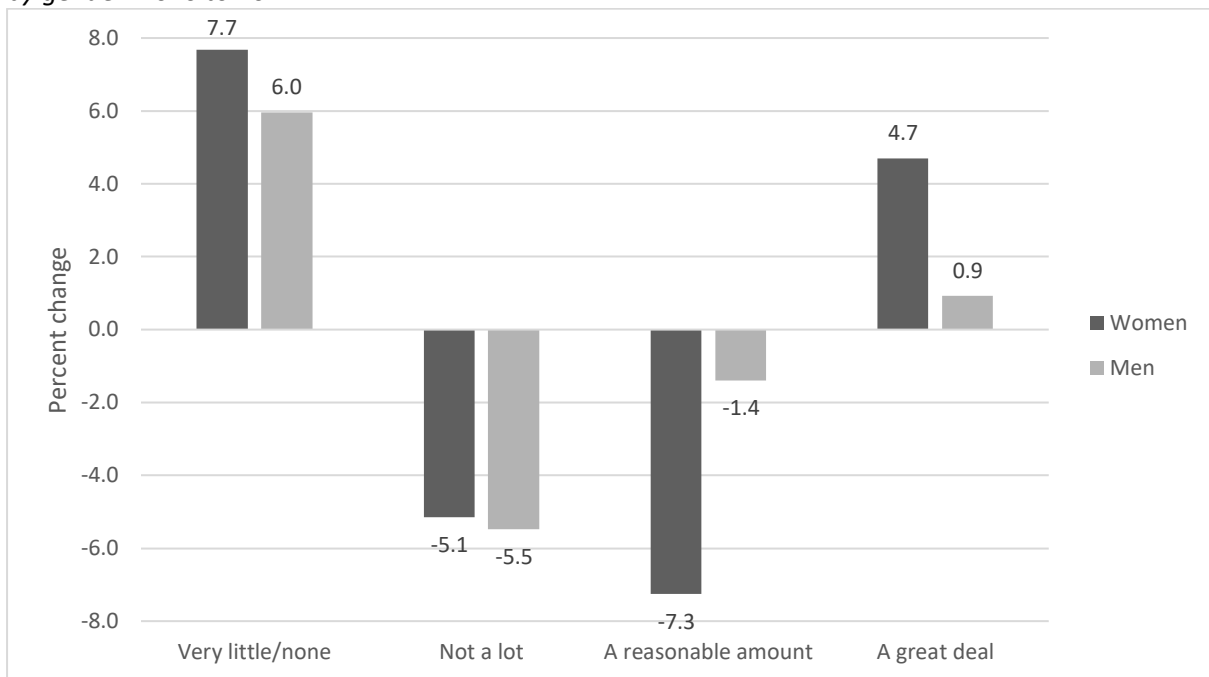
¹¹ Figures corresponding to absolute levels of trust for these respective ‘change’ figures can be found in Figures A1 through A4 in the appendix.

¹² Chi² tests indicated that change from 2020 to 2022 was statistically different from zero at $p < 0.05$ for: very little/none (women and men); a reasonable amount (women); a great deal (women).



Overall, there were increases in both the very low and very high trust tails away from the moderate trust groups for men and women. However, men reported similar increases as women in the proportion who had very low trust in the government, whereas the increase in very high trust was much larger for women than men. The findings suggest that trust in government is becoming more polarised for both women and men, but the polarisation phenomena is driven more so for men by higher levels of distrust, whereas women’s polarisation is driven by both increases in very low and very high trust.

Figure 5. Percentage point change in trust in government to deal successfully with national problems by gender: 2020 to 2022¹³



Figures 6 and 7 display trust polarisation across the longer-term examining changes from 2016 to 2022. In contrast to the polarisation pattern when comparing trust in 2022 to 2020, comparing 2016 to 2022 shows instead a redistributive upward shift in trust, with a decrease in those with very low or moderately low trust, and equal increases in moderately high and very high trust. This pattern appeared stronger among women than men.

While examining just the shorter-term COVID-19 period (change from 2020 to 2022) paints a picture of polarisation, expanding this view to the longer term indicates that New Zealand in 2022 is no more (or less) polarised in terms of government trust than we were seven years previously in 2016. The distribution seems to have shifted upwards, with the negative trust categories slimming out and the positive trust categories fattening, more strongly for women than men

¹³ Chi² tests indicated that change from 2020 to 2022 was statistically different from zero at $p < 0.05$ for: very little/none (women and men); not a lot (women); a reasonable amount (women); a great deal (women).

Figure 6. Percentage point change in trust in government to do what is right for New Zealand by gender: 2016 to 2022¹⁴

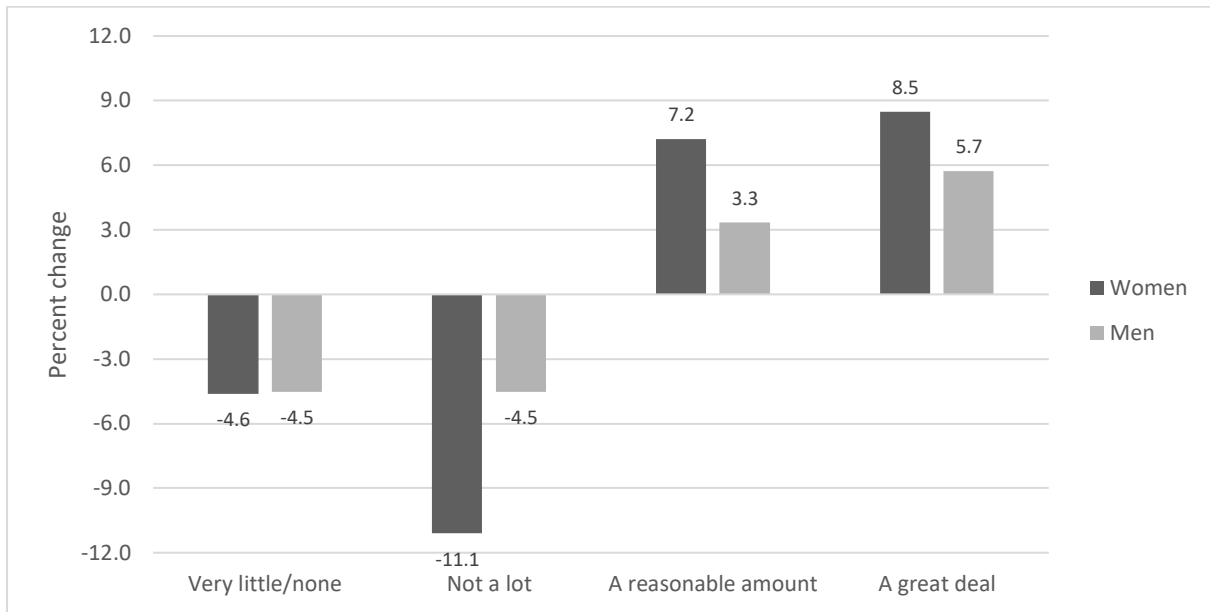
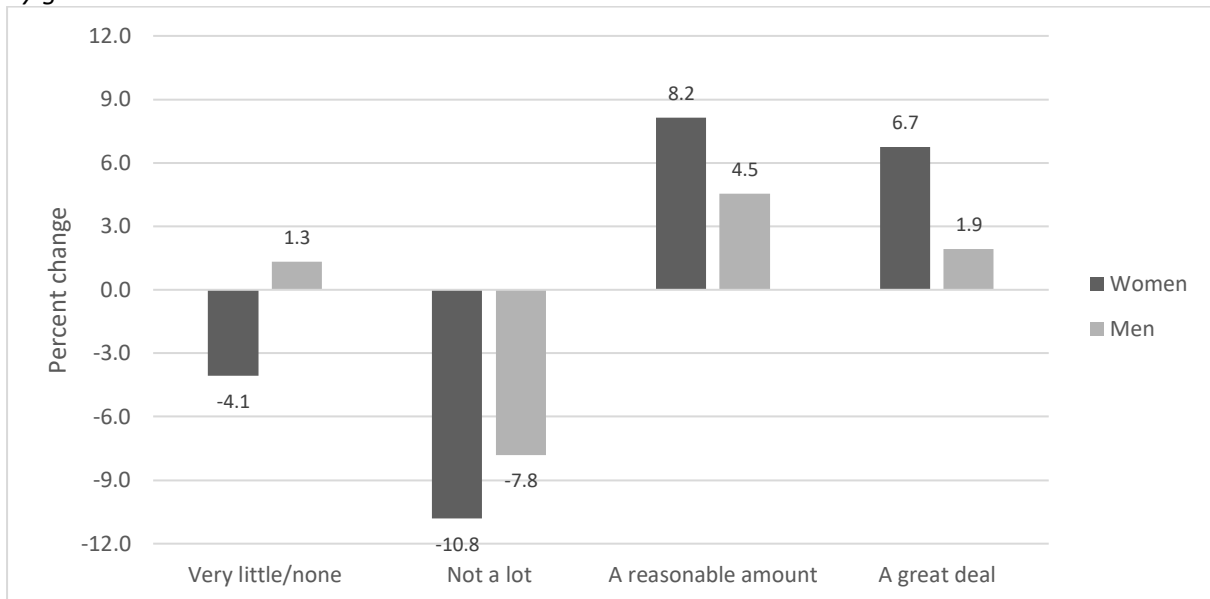


Figure 7. Percentage point change in trust in government to deal successfully with national problems by gender: 2016 to 2022¹⁵



¹⁴ Chi² tests indicated that change from 2016 to 2022 was statistically different from zero at $p < 0.05$ for: very little/none (women and men); not a lot (women); a reasonable amount (women); a great deal (women and men).

¹⁵ Chi² tests indicated that change from 2016 to 2022 was statistically different from zero at $p < 0.05$ for: not a lot (women and men); a reasonable amount (women); a great deal (women).

In addition to government trust, international evidence has also pointed to increasing polarisation in where people receive their news and information, and potential distrust in traditional media sources. From 2016 through 2022, the trust survey has asked questions about trust in two major sources of information. First, respondents are asked about trust in TV/Print media, what might be described colloquially as “the mainstream media” or alternatively “the traditional media”, and an industry currently facing a crisis of financial sustainability of their funding models. Second, respondents are asked about their trust in bloggers/online commentators, an information source that some might describe as “the new media” or the “alternative media.” Answer responses were in these cases on a five-point scale ranging from “no trust at all” through to “complete trust.” Similarly to the examination of polarisation of government trust, we again examine whether the high trust and low trust tails have gotten bigger over time (i.e., in line with a polarisation story), and how these patterns differ by whether examining the COVID-19 period (2020 vs. 2022) compared with the longer term (2016 vs. 2022). We again examine whether these trends differ by gender.

Beginning with examining changes in trust in 2022 from 2020, Figures 8 and 9 show the changes in the trust distributions for TV/Print media and Bloggers/online commentators, respectively.¹⁶ There is no strong U-shaped polarisation pattern in the TV/Print media data for either gender (Figure 8). For men, one might make a case for some polarisation at the very extremes of the distribution and a hollowing out of the middle. However, the changes below the middle response basically cancel out: overall men appear to be migrating to the upper end of the trust distribution. For women, there was not a strong pattern of change, with no change between 2020 and 2022 in terms of the proportion who had lots of or complete trust in the TV/print media or Bloggers/online commentators. When examining trust in TV/print media, there was a 1.6% increase in the proportion who had no trust at all, but a decrease in proportion who had little trust. When examining trust in bloggers/online commentators, there was a general downward shift from the middle trust tiers to the low trust tiers, but not the higher trust tiers.

.

¹⁶ Figures corresponding to absolute levels of trust for these respective ‘change’ figures can be found in Figures A5 through A8 in the appendix.

Figure 8. Percentage point change in trust in TV/print media by gender: 2020 to 2022¹⁷

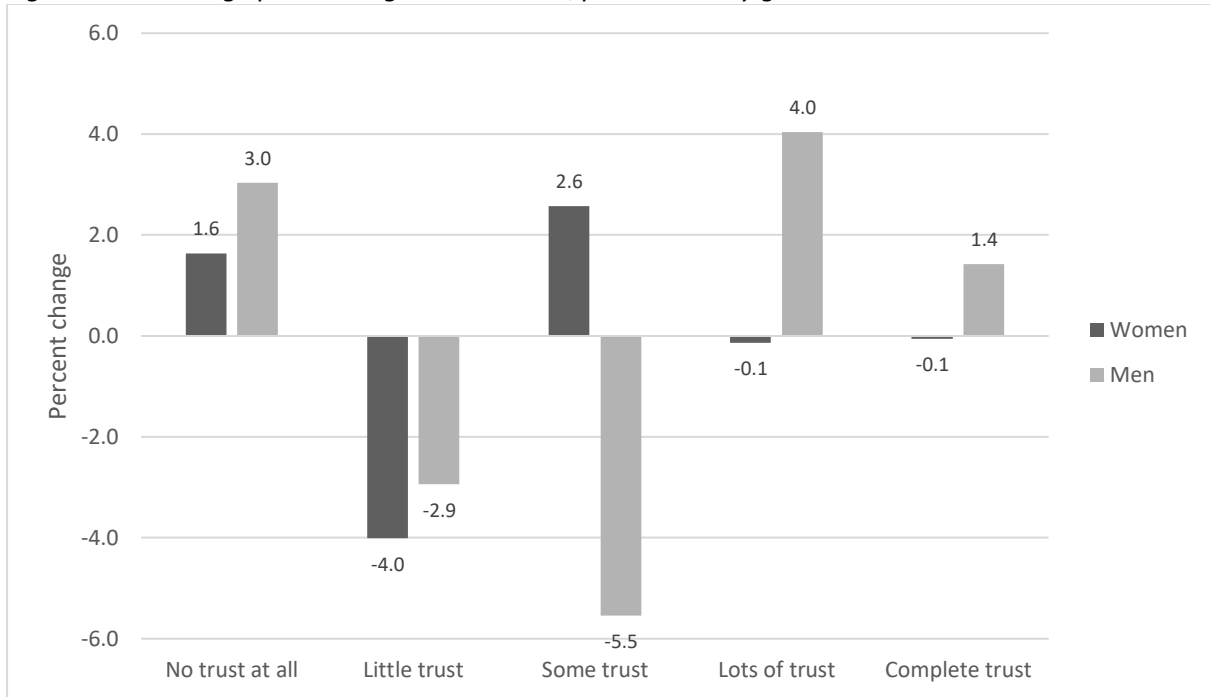
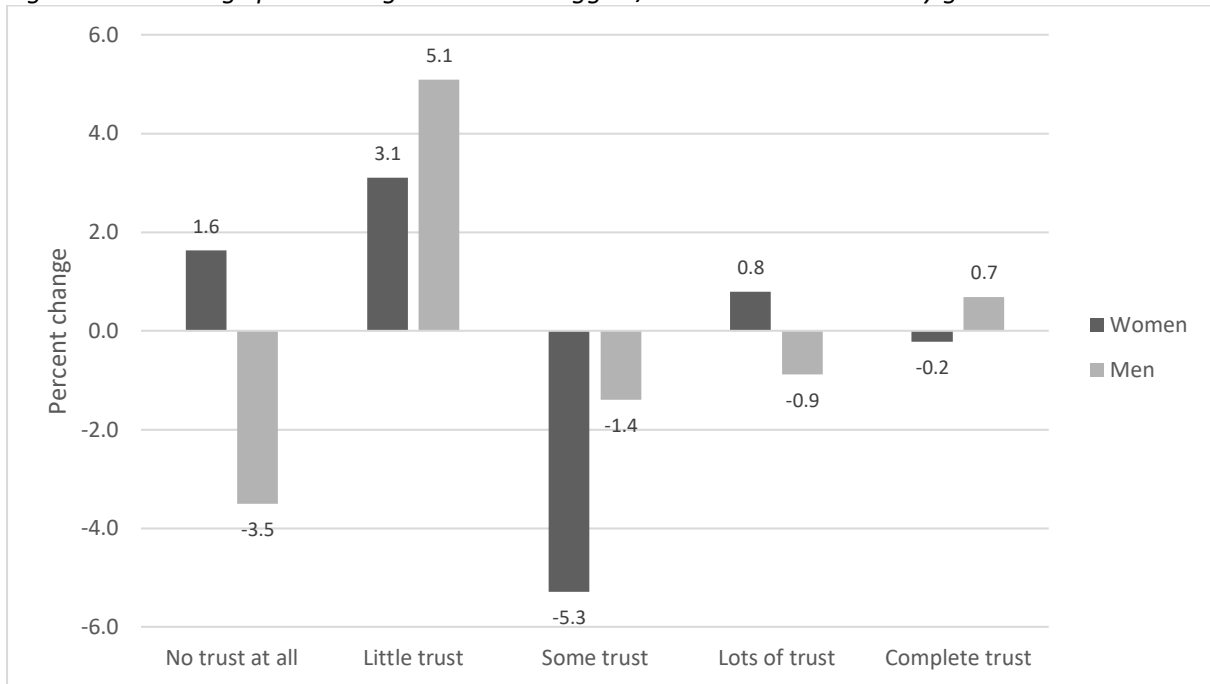


Figure 9. Percentage point change in trust in bloggers/online commentators by gender: 2020 to 2022¹⁸



¹⁷ Chi² tests indicated that change from 2020 to 2022 was statistically different from zero at $p < 0.05$ for: complete trust (men).

¹⁸ Chi² tests indicated that change from 2020 to 2022 was statistically different from zero at $p < 0.05$ for: little trust (men).

Next we examine these patterns over the longer time period, comparing change from 2016 to 2022. The findings are presented, by gender, in Figures 10 and 11. The longer-term trends in trust for TV/Print media (Figure 10) suggest some weak evidence of trust polarisation, although what is driving that polarisation differs slightly for men compared with women. For men, the decrease in the proportion of people with mid-level trust has shifted to an 8.8% increase in the proportion of those with “lots of trust” and a mild increase (1.9%) in those with no trust at all. For women, the modest decreases in the mid-tier trust levels were compensated with more modest but equal increases in the proportion of those with no trust at all (4.0% increase) and those with lots of trust (3.3% increase).

Figure 10. Percentage point change in trust in TV/print media by gender: 2016 to 2022¹⁹



A different picture emerges when examining the longer-term change in trust in Bloggers/online commentators (Figure 11) where, for both men and women, there seems to have been a redistributive shift from the mid-tier trust levels to the lower trust tiers. For example, the proportion with “some trust” in Bloggers/online commentators decreased by 13.0% and 9.7% from 2016 to 2022 for women and men, respectively. There was, however, a 11.6% increase in the proportion of women who had the lowest levels of trust (i.e., “no trust at all”) and a more modest increase of 4.5% among men. There was no change in the proportion who had lots of trust or complete trust in bloggers/online commentators between 2016 and 2022. Overall, the broad-brush picture presented by the Figures

¹⁹ Chi² tests indicated that change from 2016 to 2022 was statistically different from zero at $p < 0.05$ for: little trust (men); lots of trust (women and men).

supports mild to non-existent longer-term polarisation and a distribution which is modestly again shifting leftwards, signalling a small decline in trust.

Figure 11. Percentage point change in trust in bloggers/online commentators by gender: 2016 to 2022²⁰



²⁰ Chi² tests indicated that change from 2016 to 2022 was statistically different from zero at $p < 0.05$ for: no trust at all (women and men); little trust (women and men); some trust (women and men) lots of trust (women).

Trusting institutions attract more trust

In past IGPS trust publications, we have drawn attention to a longer-term pattern of changes in institutional trust that we have dubbed the Matthew effect – initially high trust institutions have gained more trust than initially lower trust institutions.²¹ Of course, this means that the initial inequality in trust across various institutions has become more unequal. This might be argued to be another form of polarisation – polarisation *between* rather than *within* institutions.

Table 1 illustrates the broad pattern across institutions between 2016 and 2022 in terms of the proportion of people with “Lots” or “complete trust” in the institution.²² The Table ranks the institutions from the highest to the lowest trust in 2016, alongside the 2022 data and change between 2016 and 2022. Overall, many institutions had a meaningful rise. There were no institutions where there has been a meaningful fall in trust, although trust in Churches and Bloggers/online commentators stagnated.

Institution (ranked high to low in 2016)	2016	2022	Change in trust
Medical Practitioners	55.7	71.5	15.8*
Police	53.0	62.9	9.8*
Schools and Colleges	35.9	48.8	12.9*
Judges/Courts	34.3	53.6	19.3*
Universities	32.6	48.2	15.6*
Small businesses	30.6	44.6	14.1*
Charities	27.9	32.3	4.4*
Churches	23.2	22.8	-0.4
Local government	11.9	17.8	5.9*
Corporations/large businesses	10.8	13.2	2.4
Government Ministers	9.6	15.0	5.4*
TV/Print Media	8.2	14.8	6.6*
Members of Parliament	7.8	13.1	5.3*
Bloggers/online commentators	4.6	4.5	-0.1

* indicates change statistically different from zero at at least $p < .05$.

There appears to be two possible reasons for this weak pattern of trust growth in churches, although our analysis is necessarily speculative. One is the lack of trust which New Zealanders place in Evangelical churches and the relatively high and often negative profile that such churches have had in the media in recent years (Destiny Church, in various guises including recent anti-COVID-19

²¹ Doan Nguyen, Kate Prickett and Simon Chapple, “Results from the IGPS March 2020 Trust Survey”, IGPS Working Paper 20/04, 2020.

²² Weighted means of the scales are presented in Table A2 in the appendix.

vaccine mandate protests, and the Gloriavale Christian community being the most obvious examples).²³ At the same time, the mainstream Christian denominations, such as the Anglicans and the Catholics, may have had trust in them undermined by emerging of a number of revelations of historical child abuse in their educational and other establishments and associated failures of the leadership to persuasively address the issues involved. The large growth in the low trust end of the distribution for churches (the bottom two “little trust” or “no trust at all” categories grew from 34% in 2016 to 45% in 2022), while the top end (“Lots” or “Complete trust”) held up well, actually rising marginally from 21% to 24%. This pattern suggests that those more neutral towards churches, likely to be very largely non-attenders or believers, are the ones who have lost trust.

Position on the political spectrum and trust in government to do what is right for New Zealand through the COVID-19 pandemic

We return to the question of changes in trust in government over time, this time focussing on people’s position on the left-right political spectrum between 2019, when we first began collecting this political spectrum data, and 2022. We focus on the question of government doing right for New Zealand. The descriptive results are shown in Table 2. Changes in the proportion who trust the government a reasonable amount or a great deal by political ideology and gender are presented for change between 2019 and 2022 and 2020 and 2022 in Figures 12 and 13, respectively.

Table 2: Trust in government to do what is right for New Zealand by gender over time (% a reasonable or a great deal of trust)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	Change 2019 to 2022	Change 2020 to 2022
<i>Women</i>						
Left	82.4	78.6	88.9	90.6	8.2	12.1
Centre-left	85.3	84.7	92.1	85.8	0.5	1.1
Centre	63.7	55.4	84.0	64.0	0.3	8.6
Centre-right	54.4	62.7	71.0	45.7	-8.7	-17.0
Right	38.4	42.6	48.3	31.4	-7.0	-11.2
<i>Men</i>						
Left	66.4	75.8	92.0	63.3	-3.1	-12.5
Centre-left	80.1	81.7	87.5	83.9	3.8	2.2
Centre	61.5	59.5	67.2	61.6	0.0	2.1
Centre-right	58.1	55.2	60.3	48.7	-9.4	-6.4
Right	35.3	37.6	44.8	37.9	2.6	0.3

2019 to 2022: Chi² tests indicated change for any political ideology x gender group was not statistically different from zero at $p < .05$.

2020 to 2022: Chi² tests indicated change was statistically different from zero at $p < .05$ for Centre-right women.

²³ On low public trust in Evangelical Christianity see Simon Chapple and Kate Prickett, *Who do we trust in New Zealand? 2016 to 2019*, IGPS, Wellington, 2019.

As intuitively expected and in line with the other findings, the results show a broad diminishing trust in government under a centre-left government across all the cross-sections as one heads from left to right across the ideological spectrum. Again, generally speaking, at *any* point along the political spectrum, trust in government to do what is right is lower for males than for females, perhaps reflecting a disproportionately positive impact of female political leadership on female trust, regardless of political orientation (as already discussed above). Additionally, depending on the time-period, a small majority or significant minority of those on the centre-right or even the right of the ideological spectrum trust the government. The lowest trust cell observed is for right-wing men in 2020. However, even in this case one third of right-wing men express a reasonable amount or complete trust in government. That's an unanticipated strong result, which suggests trust in government to do right for New Zealand is not a tightly shackled prisoner of a particular ideology, even at the outer and apparently antithetical ends of the political spectrum to a centre-left government run by a woman.

The biggest government trust losses over time, and especially over the COVID-19 period, have been amongst centre-right and right-wing women, where positive trust percentages have fallen by 17.0 and 11.2 percentage points, respectively. The declines in trust have been nearly as large, however, amongst left-wing men, where positive trust percentages have declined by 12.5 percentage points. On the other hand, there have been trust gains as well. Centre and left-wing women have increased their trust by 8.6 and 12.1 percentage points respectively.

As with the positive and negative overhangs in trust in government considered above which indicate that trust in government is not synonymous with party political opinion polling, these data suggest that trust in government is not merely trust expressed in a government which broadly aligns with a person's ideological convictions.

Figure 12. Percentage point change in proportion who trust the government to do what is right for New Zealand a reasonable amount or great deal by political ideology and gender: 2019 to 2022²⁴

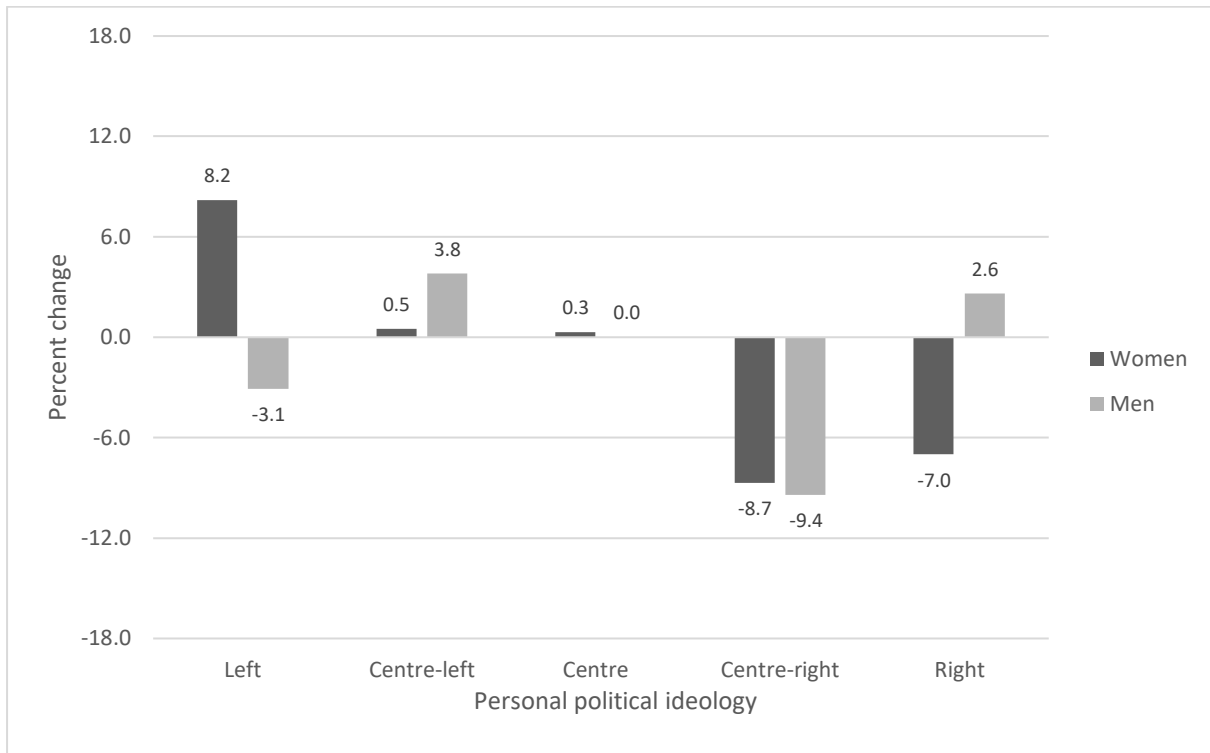
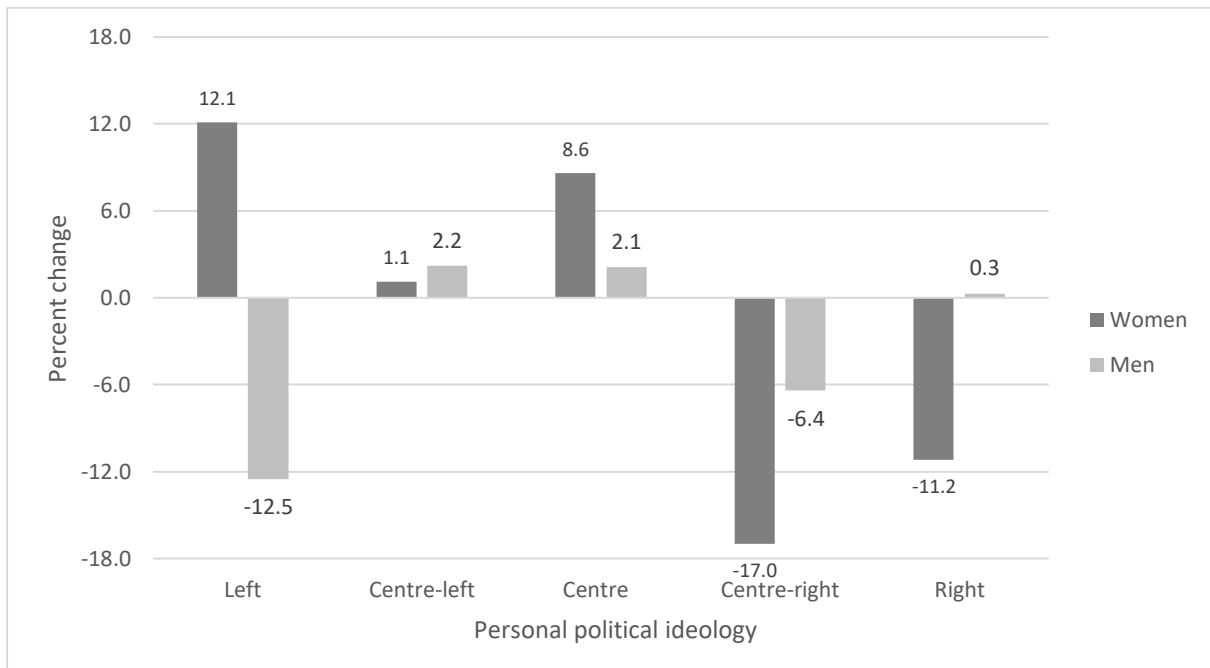


Figure 13. Percentage point change in proportion who trust the government to do what is right for New Zealand a reasonable amount or great deal by political ideology and gender: 2020 to 2022²⁵



²⁴ Chi² tests indicated that change from 2019 to 2022 for any political ideology x gender group was not statistically different from zero at $p < 0.05$.

²⁵ Chi² tests indicated that change from 2020 to 2022 was statistically different from zero at $p < 0.05$ for: Centre-right (women).

Appendix: Trust tables and figures, 2016 to 2022

Figure A1. Trust in government to do what is right for New Zealand by gender: 2020 and 2022

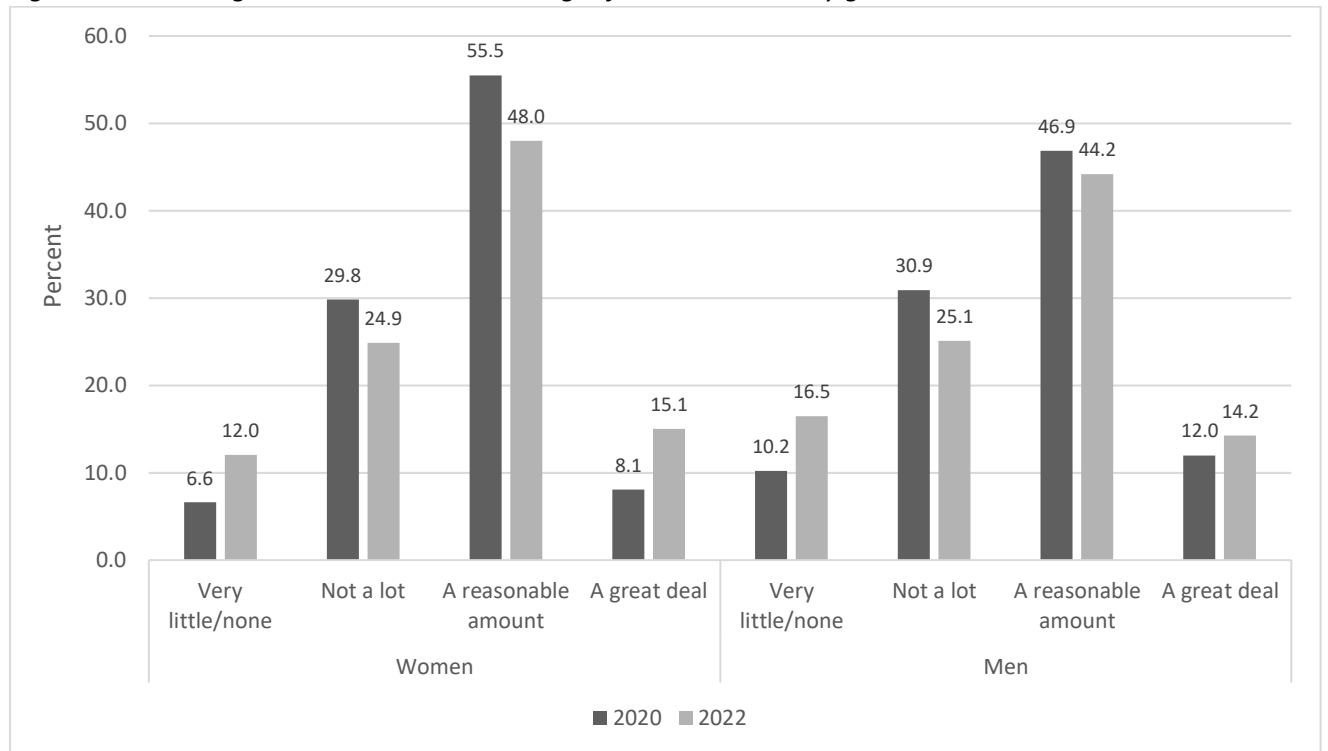


Figure A2. Trust in government to deal successfully with national problems by gender: 2020 and 2022

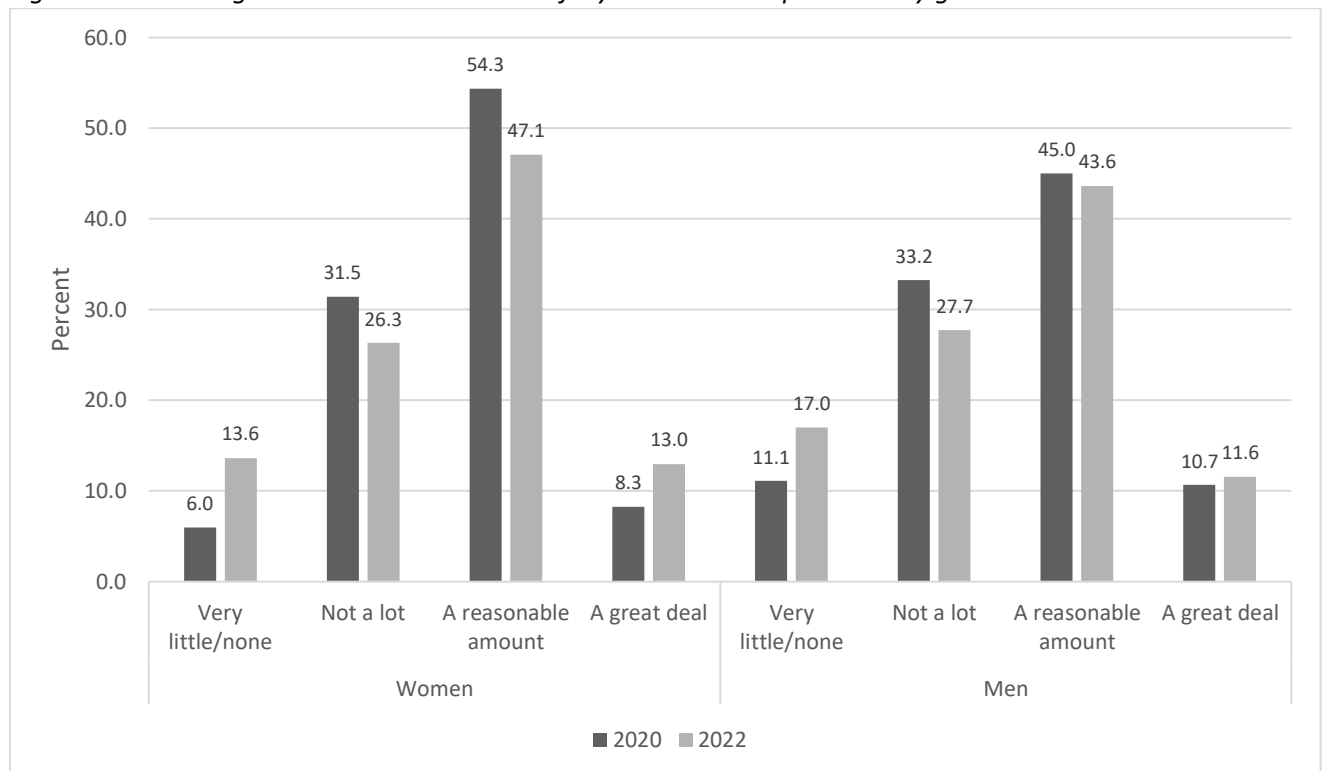


Figure A3. Trust in government to do what is right for New Zealand by gender: 2016 and 2022

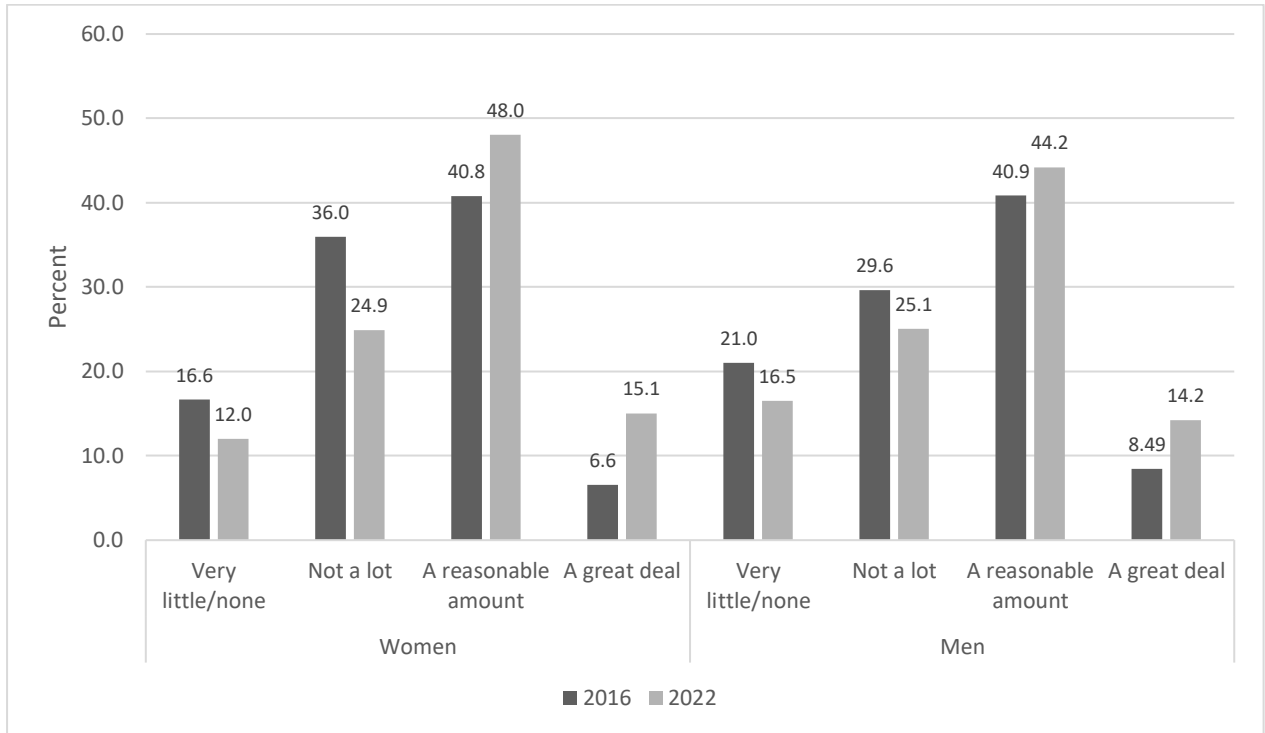


Figure A4. Trust in government to do what is right for New Zealand by gender: 2016 and 2022

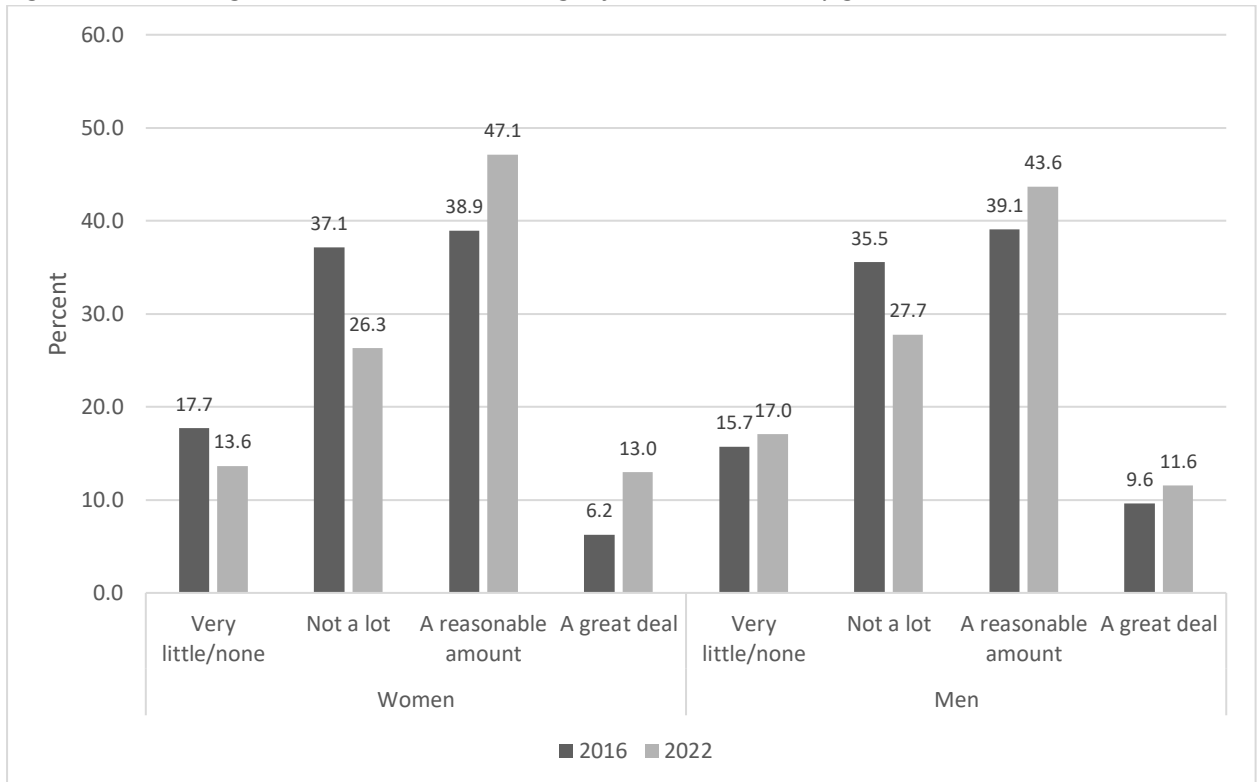


Figure A5. Trust in TV/print media by gender: 2020 and 2022

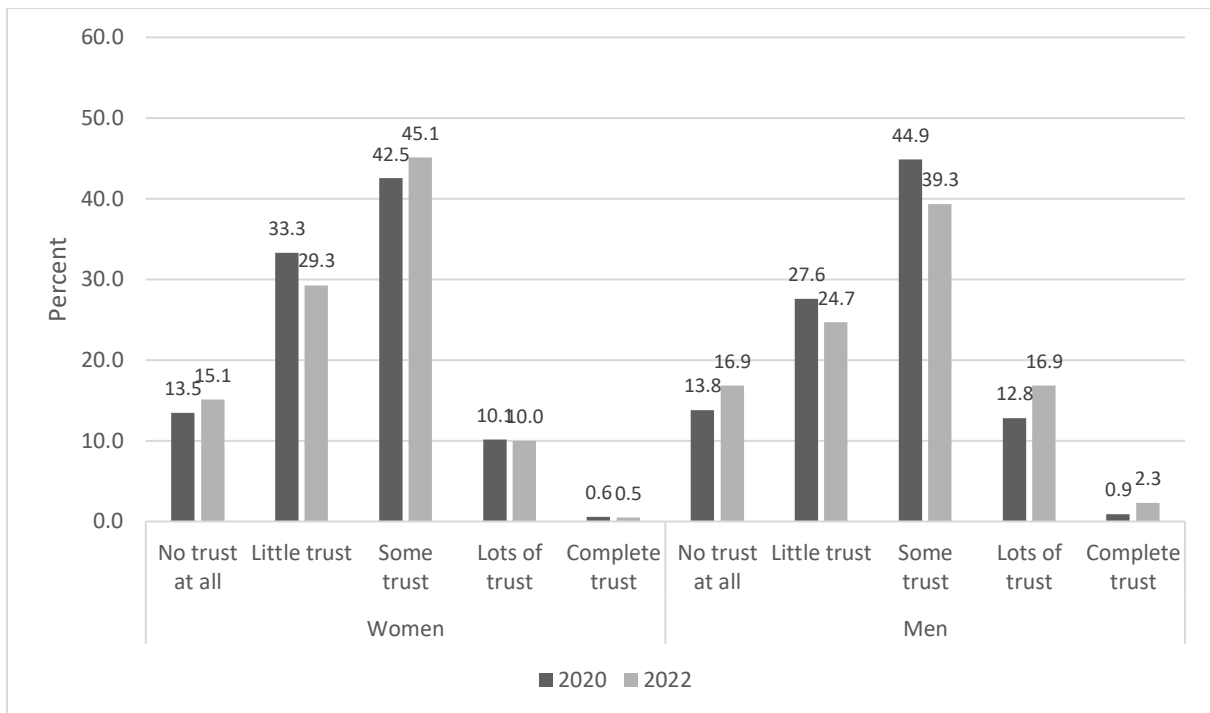


Figure A6. Trust in bloggers/online commentators by gender: 2020 and 2022

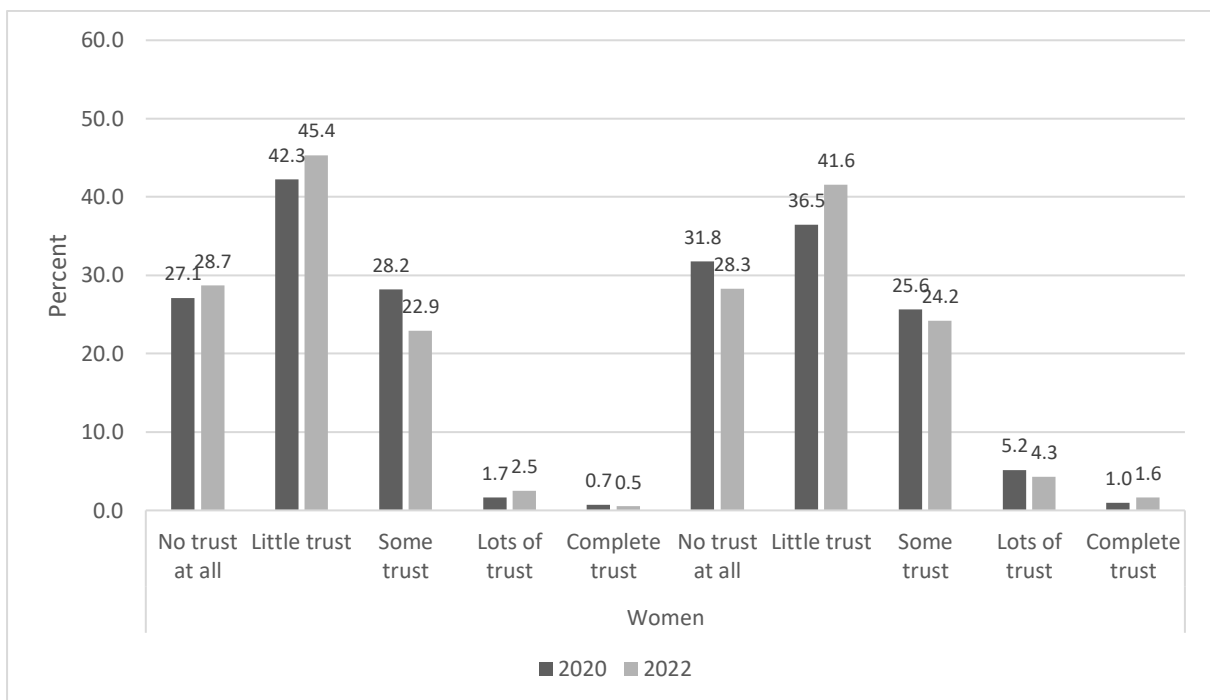


Figure A7. Trust in TV/print media by gender: 2016 and 2022

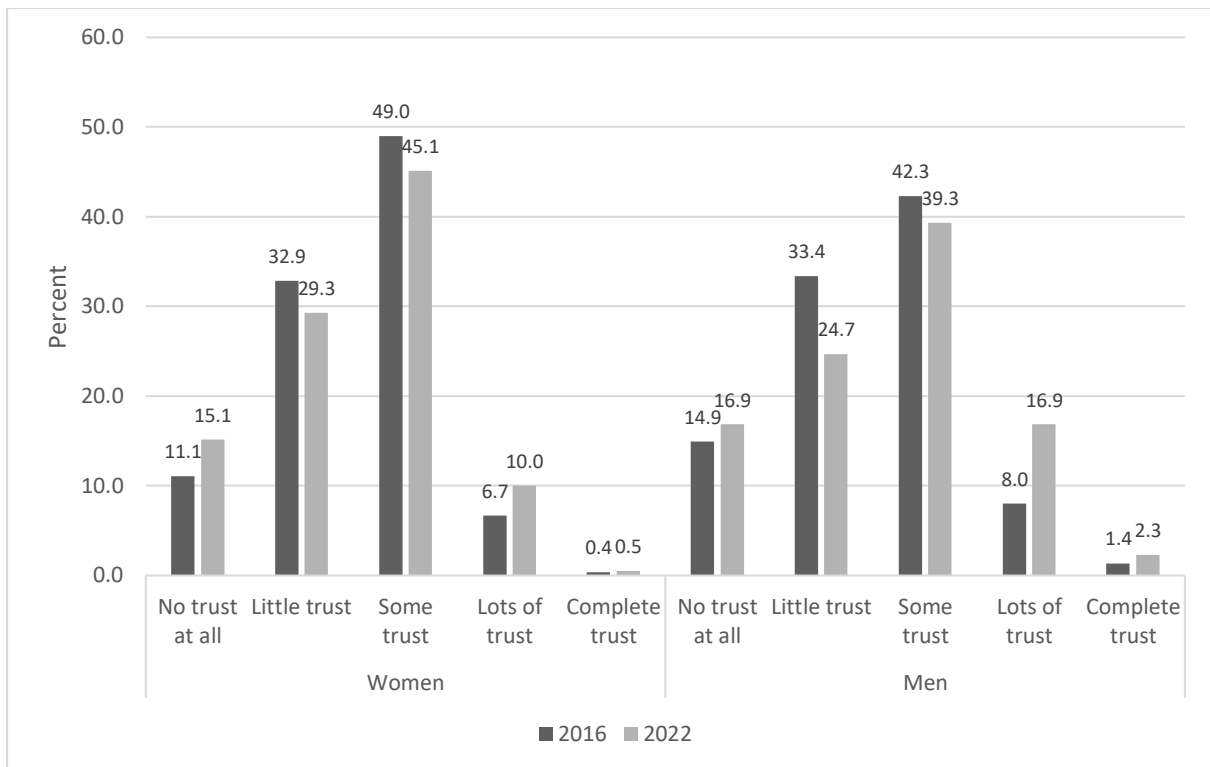


Figure A8. Trust in bloggers/online commentators by gender: 2020 and 2022

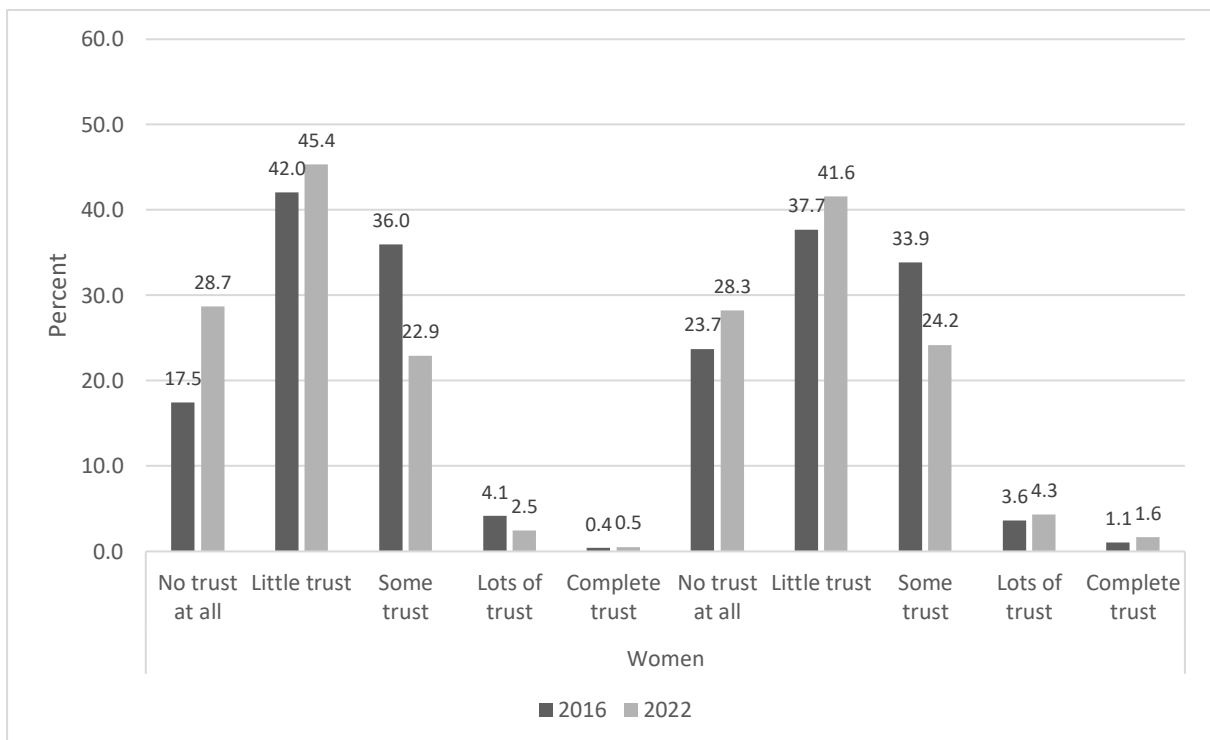


Table A1: Persistent positive trust overhang for government since 2018 even after COVID-19 booster shot wears off

	Voting intentions for governing parties - polls (polls taken February-March, averaged)	% high trust in government to do what is right for NZ	% high trust in government to solve national problems
2016	57% (3 polls)	48%	47%
2018	56% (1 poll)	65%	59%
2019	55% (2 polls)	63%	59%
2020	54% (3 polls)	61%	59%
2021	57% (4 polls)	74%	69%
2022	46% (5 polls)	61%	58%

Note: The voting intentions column in 2021 and 2022 includes the Greens as part of the government, despite the lack of a formal coalition agreement. Sources: As above for 2016-2019 and for 2020 onwards the data used were obtained from

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion_polling_for_the_next_New_Zealand_general_election.

Table A2: How much trust do you have in the following groups to do the right thing?
(0=no trust at all through to 4= I have complete trust): Weighted means, ranked high to low in 2022

	2016	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Medical Practitioners	2.59	2.60	2.77	2.76	2.79	2.82
Science	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.77
Police	2.48	2.55	2.69	2.66	2.61	2.65
Judges/Courts	2.20	2.28	2.41	2.45	2.46	2.47
Schools and Colleges	2.29	2.29	2.38	2.39	2.41	2.44
Universities	2.25	2.21	2.36	2.34	2.37	2.41
Small businesses	2.23	2.21	2.27	2.27	2.34	2.40
Charities	2.06	1.99	2.13	2.12	2.14	2.16
Corporations/large businesses	1.57	1.61	1.61	1.62	1.65	1.68
Local government	1.56	1.71	1.67	1.64	1.69	1.67
Churches	1.86	1.75	1.72	1.76	1.68	1.65
TV/Print Media	1.50	1.46	1.50	1.55	1.54	1.57
Government Ministers	1.36	1.67	1.55	1.51	1.70	1.57
Members of Parliament	1.36	1.67	1.49	1.47	1.63	1.55
Political parties	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.33	1.44	1.40
Bloggers/online commentators	1.24	1.23	1.15	1.07	1.02	1.05

Table A3: How much trust do you have in the following? (0=very little/none to 3=a great deal): Weighted means, ranked high to low in 2022

	2016	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Trust in neighbours to make informed choices about future of local area	1.69	1.65	1.64	1.60	1.63	1.66
Trust in govt to do what is right for NZ	1.37	1.69	1.64	1.63	1.84	1.61
Trust in govt to deal successfully with national problems	1.38	1.60	1.58	1.60	1.77	1.55
Trust in local MP to do what is right for you and your community	1.46	1.52	1.51	1.52	1.58	1.48
Trust in fellow NZers to make informed choices about country's future	1.50	1.48	1.48	1.43	1.48	1.46
Trust in govt to deal successfully with international problems	1.33	1.44	1.49	1.48	1.57	1.43
Trust in local govt to deal successfully with local and community problems	1.43	1.45	1.46	1.45	1.44	1.40
Trust in the way political parties are funded	1.05	1.13	1.11	1.01	1.14	1.15