

# Repair Survey

A report by Repair Café Aotearoa NZ, December 2023

## Why this Survey

With the increasing waste generation and disposal of household waste in Aotearoa<sup>1</sup>, Repair Café Aotearoa NZ (RCANZ) (2020) set out to foster a repair culture in Aotearoa by supporting the setting up of local repair cafés and creating a national network for repair. This first Repair Survey intends to help us learn more about people's thoughts on repair and experience with repairing items. The survey design draws inspiration from the Ministry for the Environment's Behavioural Trend Monitoring Report<sup>2</sup>, as well as the Wānaka Wastebusters' 2023 Resourceful Communities Survey<sup>3</sup>, with a focus on issues around repair.

## Objectives and Methodology

- The main objective of this survey is to explore the connection between people's attitudes towards the environment and towards repair, behaviours around repair, and facilitators and barriers to repair.
- This survey provides a baseline to track the impact of ongoing work of Repair Café Aotearoa NZ, as further annual surveys are planned for the years ahead.
- The survey was conducted online between 1 September and 31 October 2023.

## Profile of Respondents

The results of this survey are based on questions asked of members of the RCANZ network, including those who supported advocacy on the Right to Repair and those attending repair cafés. n=2,831 engaged in the survey, possibly indicating a strong interest in the issue of repair.

The profile of the respondents is presented in detail on the next page. The vast majority of respondents were based in the Auckland region, followed by Wellington and Canterbury. Two-thirds of respondents identified as female. The older age groups were very well represented with half of the respondents being over the age of 60, a population that often still holds the knowledge and skills of repair. Two-thirds of respondents lived with a spouse/partner, while one-quarter lived alone. European/pakeha was the most represented ethnicity, making up 91% of respondents.

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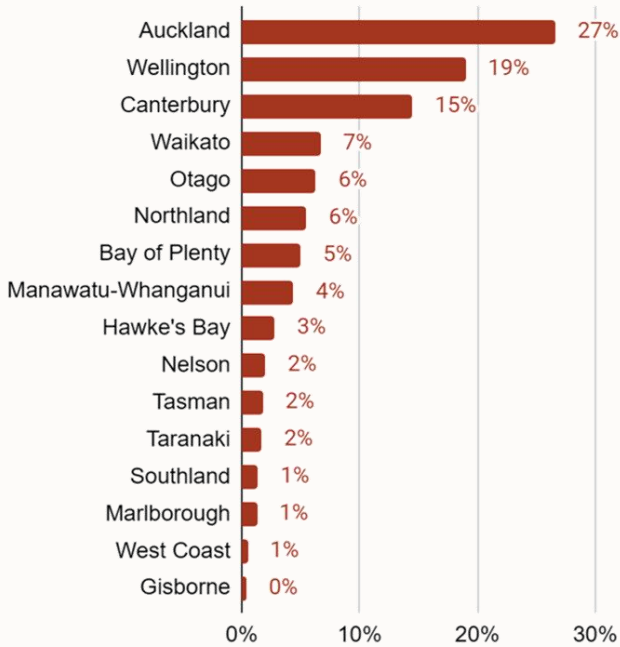
<sup>1</sup> [Waste generation and disposal data. Ministry for the environment.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Behavioural trends monitoring survey report 2023. Ministry for the environment.](#)

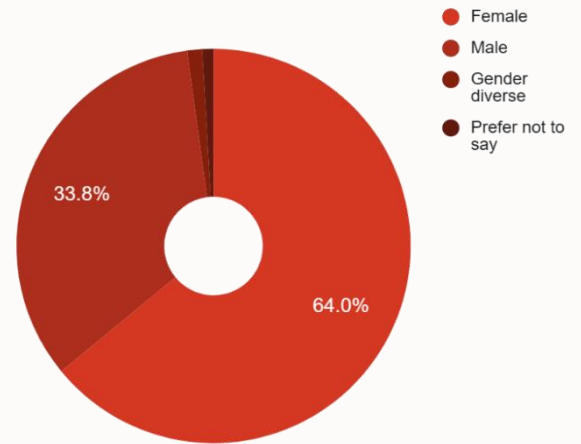
<sup>3</sup> [Resourceful communities survey 2023. Wastebusters.](#)

# Demographics : Who took part in the online survey

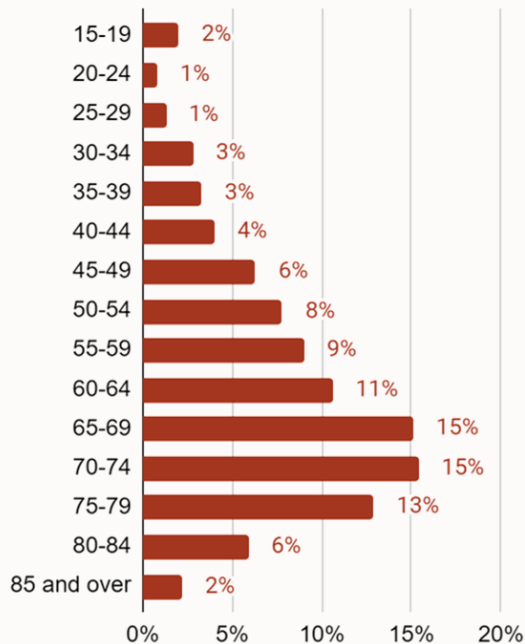
## Region



## Gender



## Age group



## Ethnicity

European	91%
Other ethnicity	6%
Māori	6%
Asian	3%
Pacific peoples	2%
Middle Eastern/Latin American/African	1%

## Household occupants

Spouse/partner	61%
Live alone	26%
Children under the age of 18	16%
Other adult family members	12%
Flatmates	5%
Parents	4%
Other	3%

# Key findings

## Frequency of repair behaviours

- People who participated in this survey were avid repairers: two-thirds said that they either always or often get broken/damaged items repaired where possible.
- Interestingly, most respondents (85%) had not been to a Repair Café.
- Between respondents who had and had not been to a Repair Café, there was no notable difference in the frequency of repair behaviours, attitudes, or demographics.

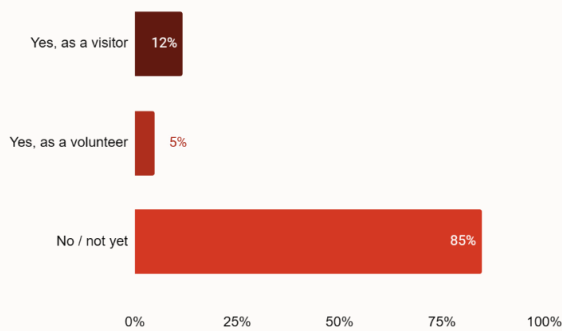


Figure 1 - Respondents who have ever been to a Repair Café

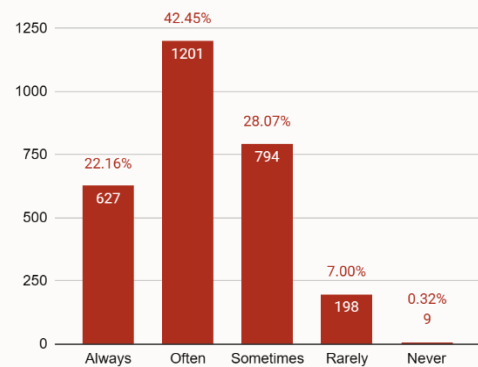


Figure 2 - How often respondents got broken or damaged items repaired where possible

## Repair behaviours

- To get items repaired respondents most commonly repaired it themselves (77%), paid someone to repair it (73%), or sought assistance from a friend or family member (58%).
- Repair cafés had a smaller role, with 9% of respondents commonly taking items to a repair café. From the comments given, some respondents would like to take things to a repair café, but there is no café in their area or at a suitable time.
- Being a repair-inclined population of survey respondents, only 2% stated not generally repairing items.

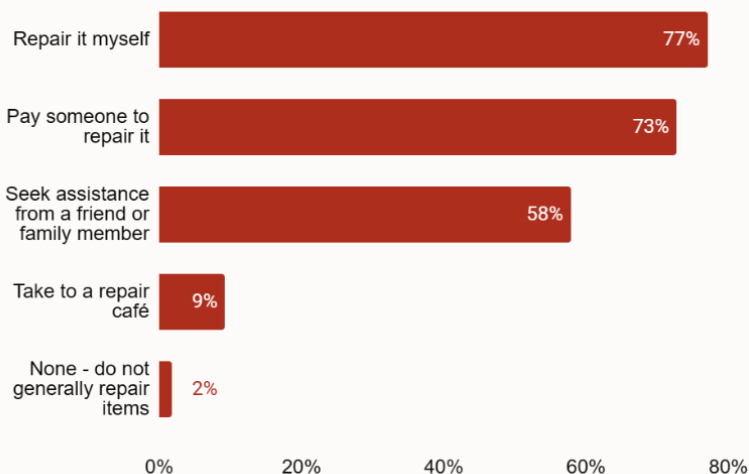


Figure 3 - What respondents do to get items repaired

## Qualitative responses

We found 68 substantive qualitative responses submitted on **what respondents do to get items repaired**. Below, those responses have been organised by themes with examples:

### Youtube or online resources

“Watch repair videos online”  
“Youtube tutorials”  
“Internet/ Youtube”

### No repair space available

“There is nowhere in small towns to repair”  
“I don’t know a repair café”  
“No repair café in our area”

### Take back to retailer / warranty

“Take back to shop where I bought it”  
“Ask landlord, ie dishwasher”  
“Repair under warranty”

### Try to repair it myself first

“Try to repair it myself first...”  
-”and then try to find someone who can repair it”  
-”and then ask on social media”

### Family member

“Husband repairs whenever possible”  
“My grandma likes to make things new again”

### Aspiring to attend a repair café

“I plan to visit a repair café but...”  
”haven’t managed yet”  
”haven’t had time”  
“Planning to go to repair café”

### Use other repair space

“Maker space at School of Engineering”  
“Menz shed”

### Not economical to repair

“It costs more to repair than to get a new one!”  
“More expensive than replacing”

### Can't afford to repair

“I’d pay to repair more things but I genuinely can’t afford it”  
“Repair costs too much”

### Give away

“Give to someone who’ll repair & use it”  
“Give useful items to op shops to repair”

### Delay repair

“It gets put aside for repair at another time when we are not so busy”  
“Plan to repair, items still waiting...”

# Motivations for repair

- Respondents were nearly equally motivated to repair by reducing impact on the environment (75%) and by saving money (72%).
- Some respondents stated enjoying repair and having DIY skills (42%), and some were attached to particular items (33%).
- A minority of respondents found it easier to repair than to replace (17%), and a few knew who to ask or where to go to get items repaired (14%).
- As a repair-inclined population, only 1% said that they don't usually repair items.

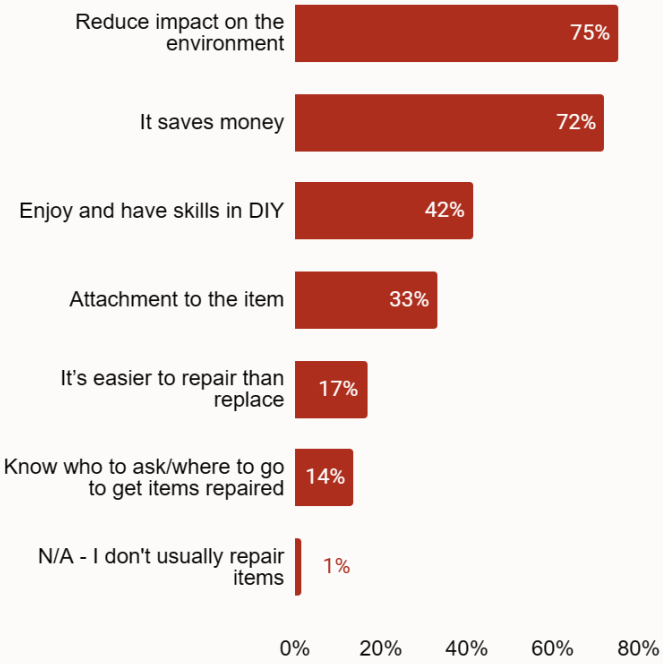


Figure 4 - Why respondents repair their items?

## Qualitative responses

The survey collected 92 substantive qualitative responses on **motivations for repair**. Below, those responses have been organised by themes with examples:

### Believe in repair

“It’s better to repair than to replace”  
“Because we ought to do it!”  
“It is the right thing to do”

### Hate waste

“Do not like throwing stuff away”  
“I can’t bear waste – if it can be repaired, it should be!”

### Not repairing is wasteful

“Not [repairing] feels wasteful, and that feels inherently wrong”  
“It’s wasteful to throw away good items”

### Being resourceful

“I grew up in a home where we were poor so we had a culture of not wasting stuff”  
“Being a child of the ‘40s/’50s it’s what we did”

### Extend life of item

“Often they’re things that have plenty of life in them and it’s something simple broken”  
“I want my stuff to last the distance”

### Prefer quality of older items

“Quality of original items often better than new items”  
“I prefer to keep using things if they still work, even if others see them as outdated”

### Satisfaction of fixing

“Sense of accomplishment doing something myself while learning a new skill”  
“I like to learn how things work”

### Reverence for item

“Respect life and utility of the object and workmanship of the maker”  
“Get very attached to old items”

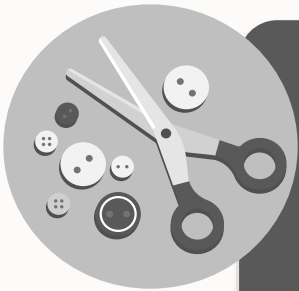
### Save money

“Can be cheaper to repair than replace”  
“To buy new is often prohibitive cost-wise”

### Avoid shopping

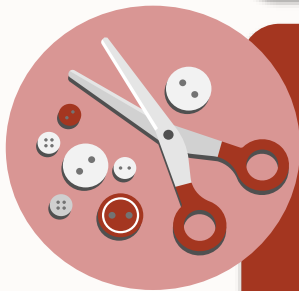
“We live too far from town to hop in the car and buy something new”  
“I hate shopping”

## Top 5 Barriers vs Top 5 Facilitators to Repair



### Top 5 Barriers

1. Some items cannot be repaired (76%)
2. Limited repair options close to where I live or work (56%)
3. I don't know where to go to get it fixed (46%)
4. It's cheaper to replace than to repair (43%)
5. If under warranty, retailers replace it rather than repair it (33%)



### Top 5 Facilitators

1. Build a culture where repair is expected and supported (65%)
2. Repair being made more affordable / cheaper than buying new (63%)
3. Manufacturers & retailers offering repair programmes (61%)
4. Promotion of repair options (42%)
5. A list of local repairers (41%)



## Barriers to repair: in-depth

- The top barrier to repair was that some items cannot be repaired (76%).
- Not having options nearby (56%) or not knowing where to get items fixed (46%) presented major barriers.
- The financial aspect was a factor, with 43% saying items can be cheaper to replace than repair.
- Some respondents reported that when under warranty, retailers will replace rather than repair a product (33%).

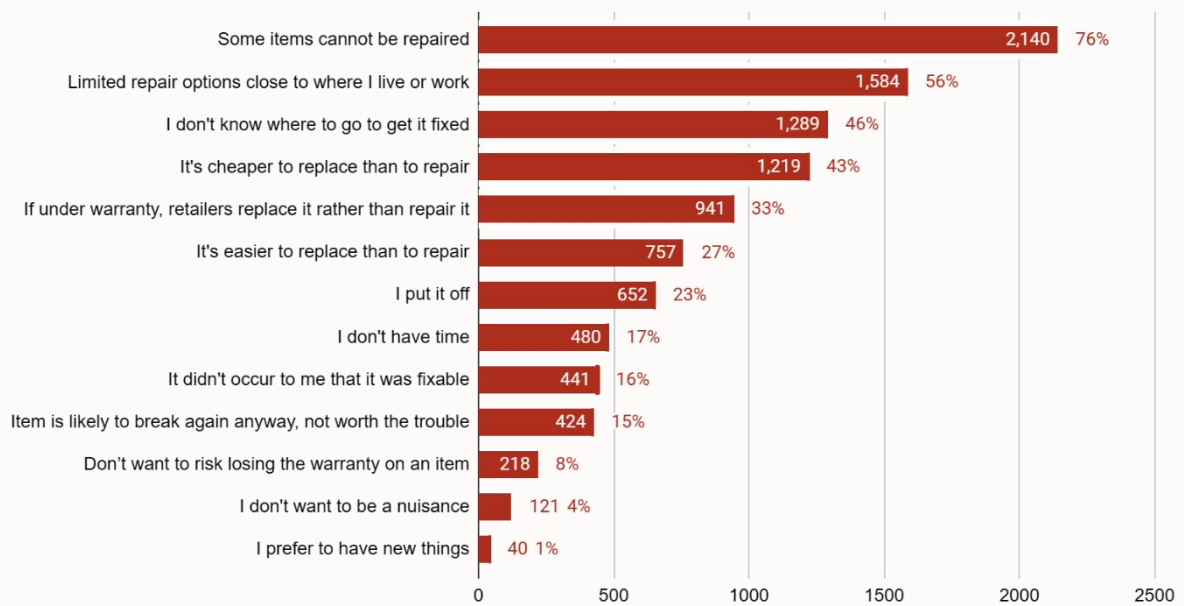


Figure 5 - Top 5 things preventing respondents from getting as many items repaired as possible

## Promoters of repair: in-depth

- Building a culture of repair (65%), repair being made more affordable (63%), and repair programmes from companies (61%) were all major factors that respondents identified as potentially helping them get items repaired more often.
- Promoting repair options (42%) and having lists of local repairers (41%) were also noted as helpful to choosing repair more often.

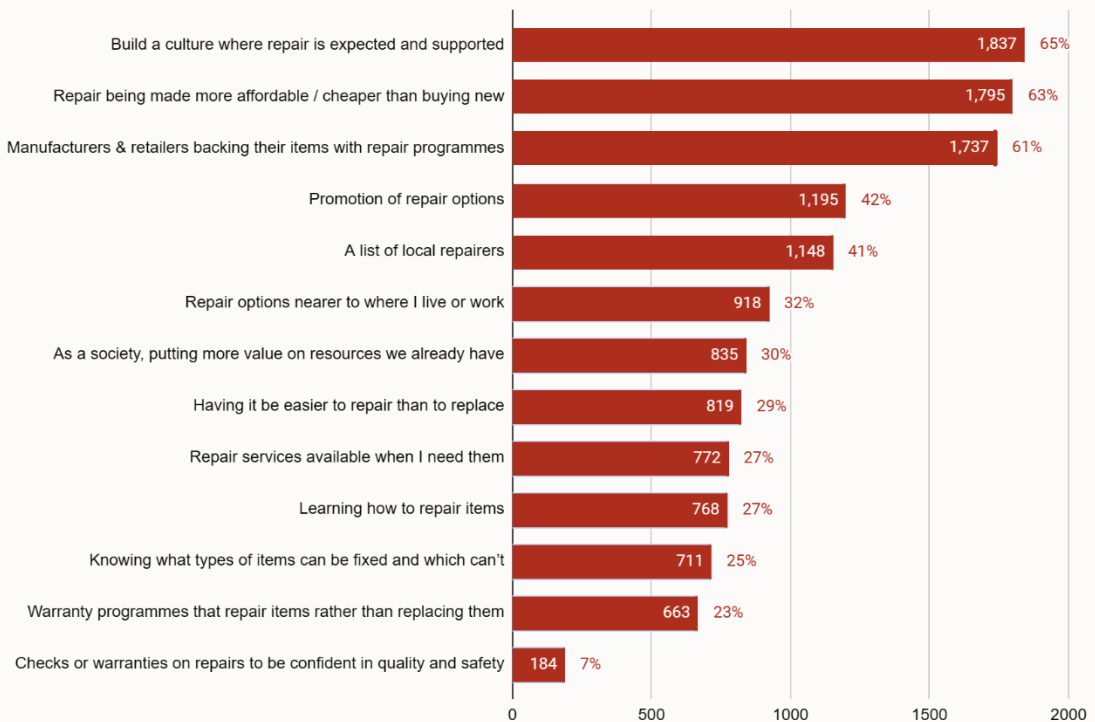


Figure 6 - Top 5 things motivating respondents to get items repaired as often as possible

# Attitudes towards repair & the environment

- Statements relating repair to the environment had virtually all respondents agree or strongly agree with each statement.
- It is interesting to note that the statement respondents most strongly agreed with wasn't about environmental issues, but about values: "Throwing out something that might be able to be repaired feels wrong to me." (85% Strongly agree).
- That didn't mean that respondents weren't worried about the environment. The statement most agreed with was "I am worried about the impacts of rubbish on the environment." (96% Agree or strongly agree).
- Though still with a high level of agreement, there was less support for the statements "Reducing greenhouse emissions is important to me" (72% Strongly agree, 19% Agree) and "Repairing more things will help reduce carbon emissions" (70% Strongly agree, 21% Agree).
- This may be worth exploring more in the future, with many indirect links between repair and carbon emissions. When items are discarded and replaced rather than repaired, this generates more resources and carbon emissions in the manufacture and transport of new items, as well as the impact from increasing landfill.

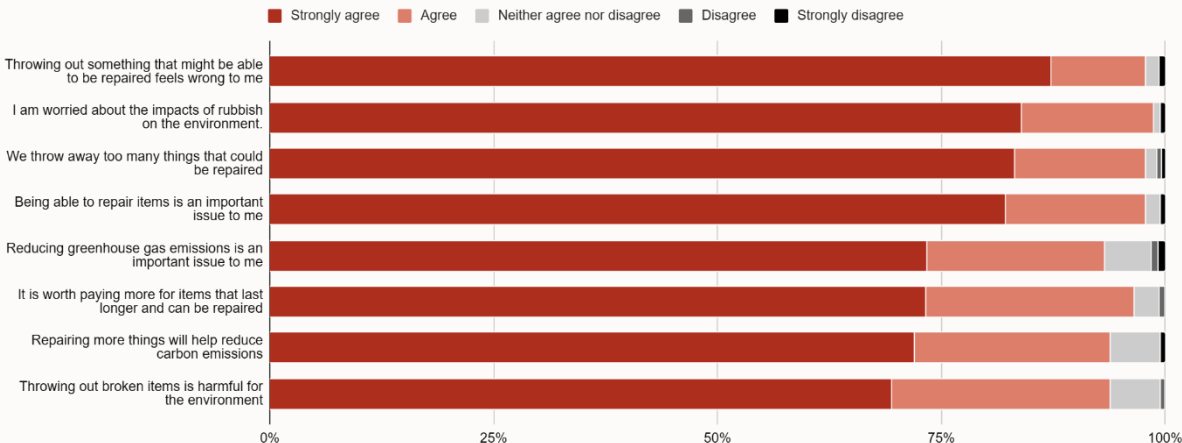


Figure 7 - Ratings on the extent to which respondents agree or disagree with the following statements

## Summary

Respondents to this survey were likely to be familiar with the concept of repair since they were recruited through repair networks and voluntarily took part in a survey about repair. The fact that only 1-2% said they didn't usually get items repaired underlines that this was a repair-inclined subset of the population. The most common options for repair were identified as in to repair something themselves or taking it to a professional, with just under 10% of respondents commonly going to repair cafés.

Respondents noted the main barrier to an item being repaired as an issue associated with obsolescent product design and manufacturing rather than repair services. The next two most common barriers did relate to repair services, in terms of their availability or cost. However, logistical barriers reported to repair were limited repair options close to where people live/work, not knowing where to get something repaired, that it can be cheaper to replace than to repair, and that if under warranty retailers tend to replace rather than repair.

Despite the barriers to repair, and many products not being repairable, respondents were trying to overcome those barriers by figuring out how to repair themselves, paying for repairs, seeking assistance from family and friends, or seeking out help from retailers, warranty programs or repair cafés.

In terms of what could make repairing more possible, respondents called strongly for building a culture of repair in Aotearoa where repair is expected and supported, making repair more affordable than buying new, for manufacturers and retailers to back their items with repair programmes, promoting repair options, and having lists of local repairers available.

While respondents were motivated by environmental concerns, their responses showed that their main intrinsic motivation to repair was a strong support for repairing rather than putting something to waste.

In summary, results from this first Repair Survey offered help in learning more about people's thoughts on repair and experience with repairing items, which will inform Repair Café Aotearoa NZ about potential future projects in support of fostering the development of a culture of repair in Aotearoa.

## Acknowledgements

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