



Student Attitudes Towards National Identity and Progress

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Introduction

- In PNG, much is written about the country's affairs and its ongoing challenges, but very little is known about the views of the citizens.
- Public opinion polls are a useful tool to gauge public sentiment and help decision makers identify priority areas.
- High costs make it difficult to carry out public opinion polls in PNG.
- This survey studies the attitudes and perceptions of students from the University of Papua New Guinea School of Business and Public Policy.



Introduction

- UPNG ethics approval obtained on March 26 2024
- A total of 373 students from the Business Foundation year, 2nd year and 3rd year were surveyed.
- This research follows on from a 2012 survey at UPNG (Leach et al), allowing us to compare student demographics and attitudes towards national identity since then.
- The findings are representative of the young educated elite, most of whom are likely to become the next generation of leaders and decision makers.



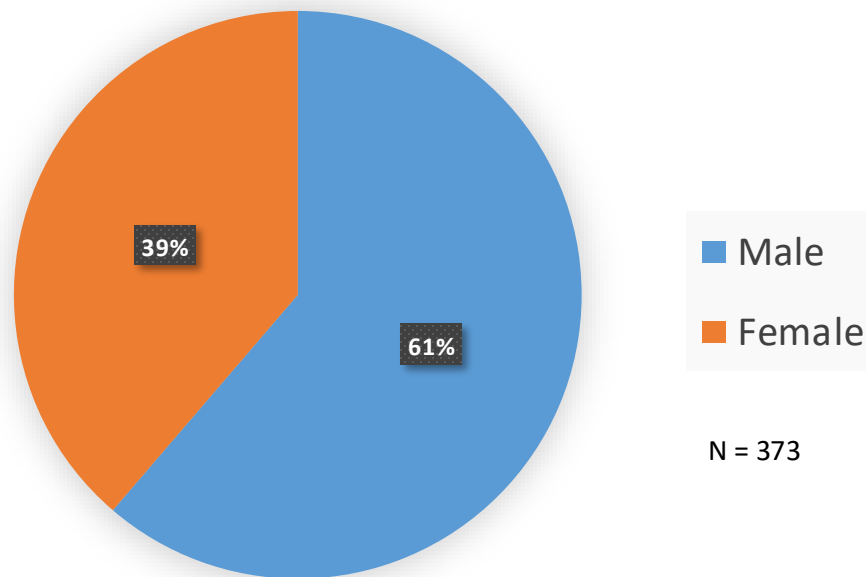
Structure

- Student characteristics
- Student attachments and loyalties, and views on national identity
- Student views on whether PNG is heading in the right or wrong direction
- Conclusion

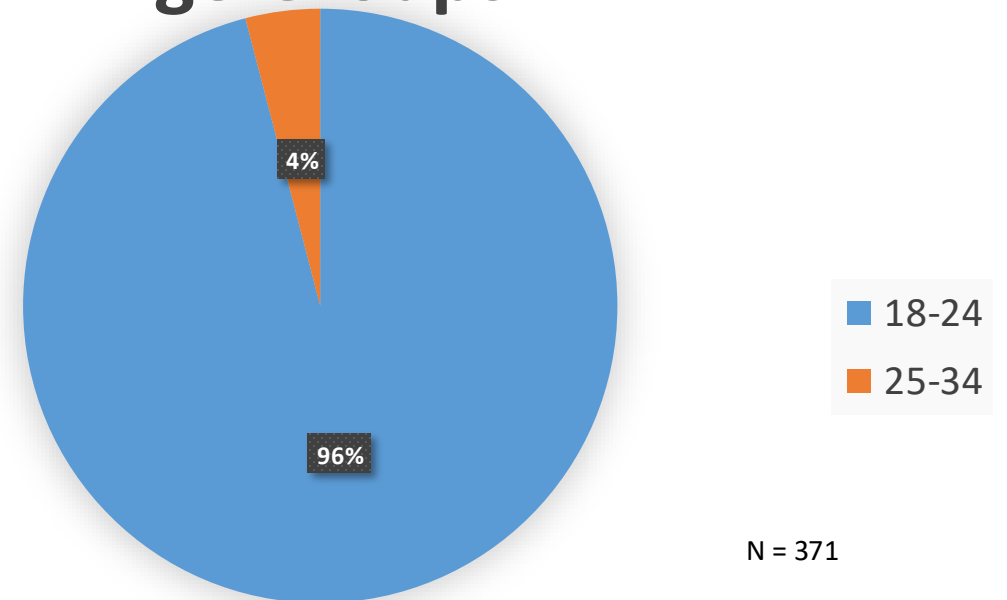


Demography

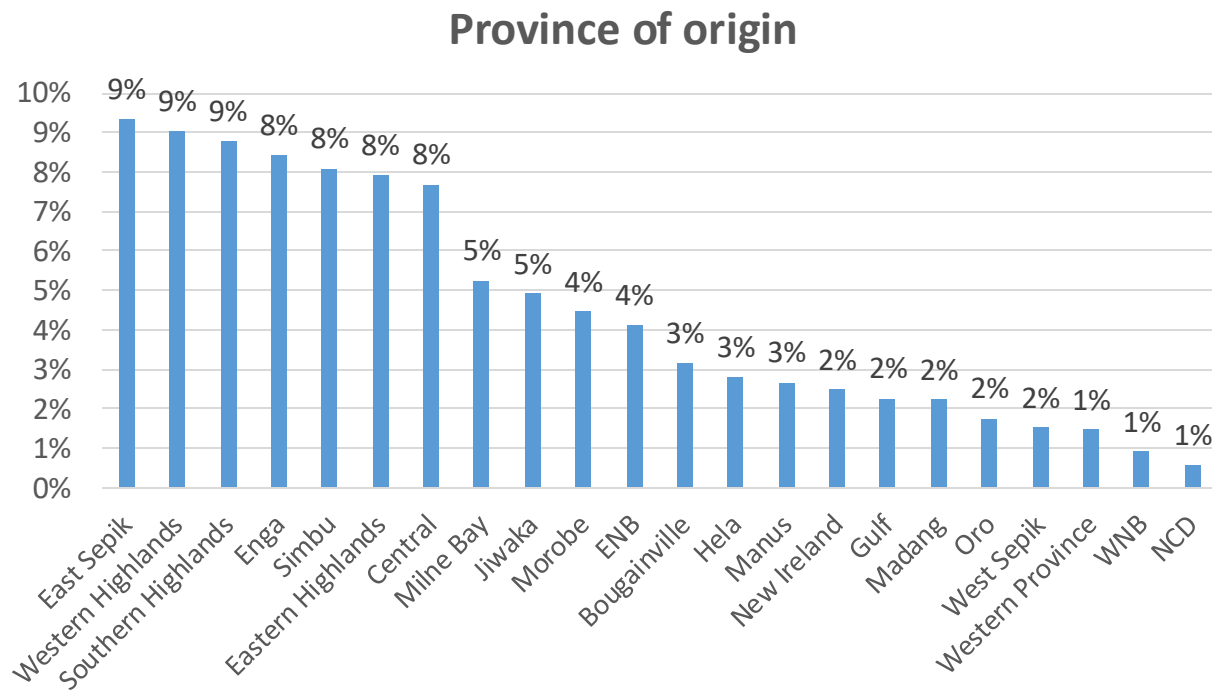
Sex



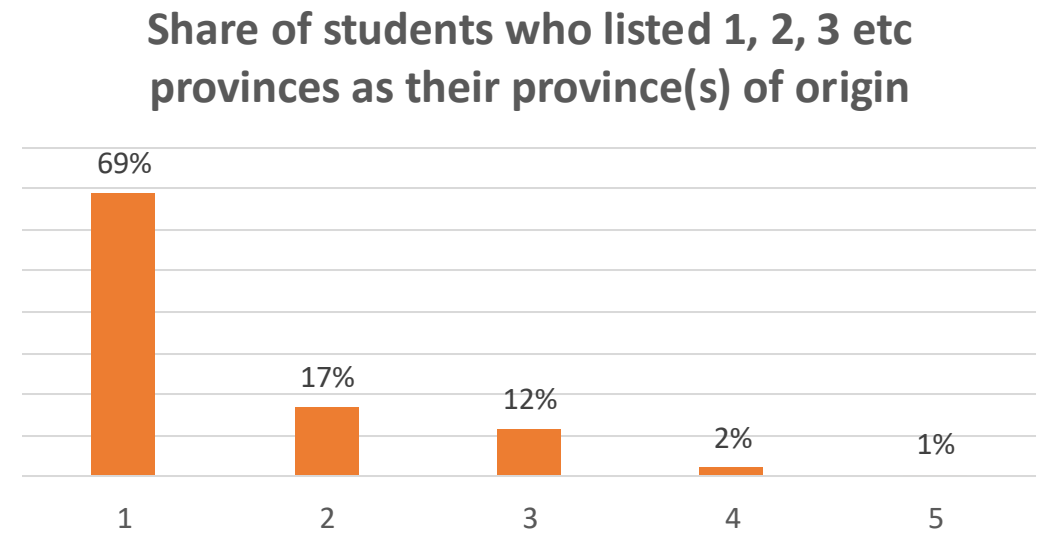
Age Groups



Provincial origins



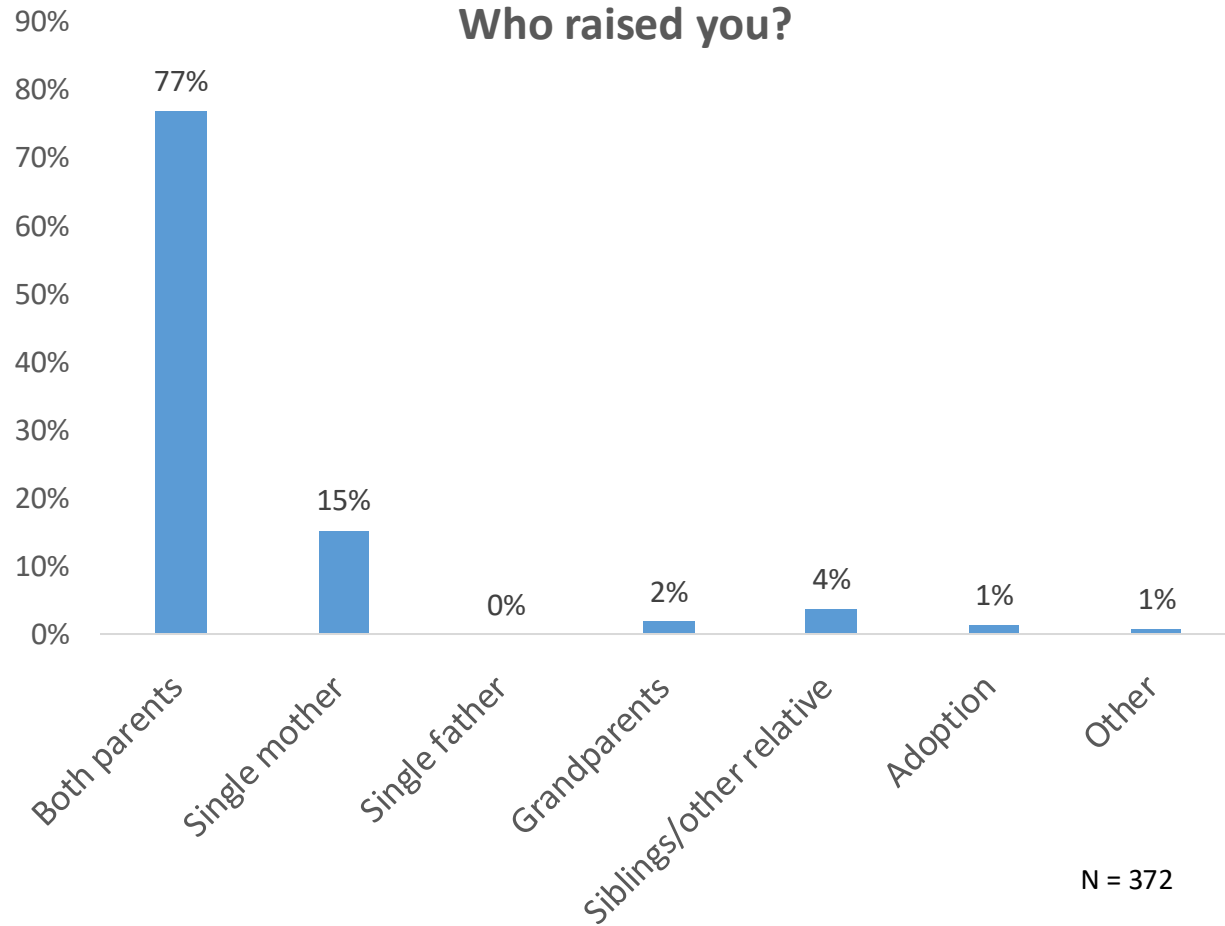
Note: Weighted averages



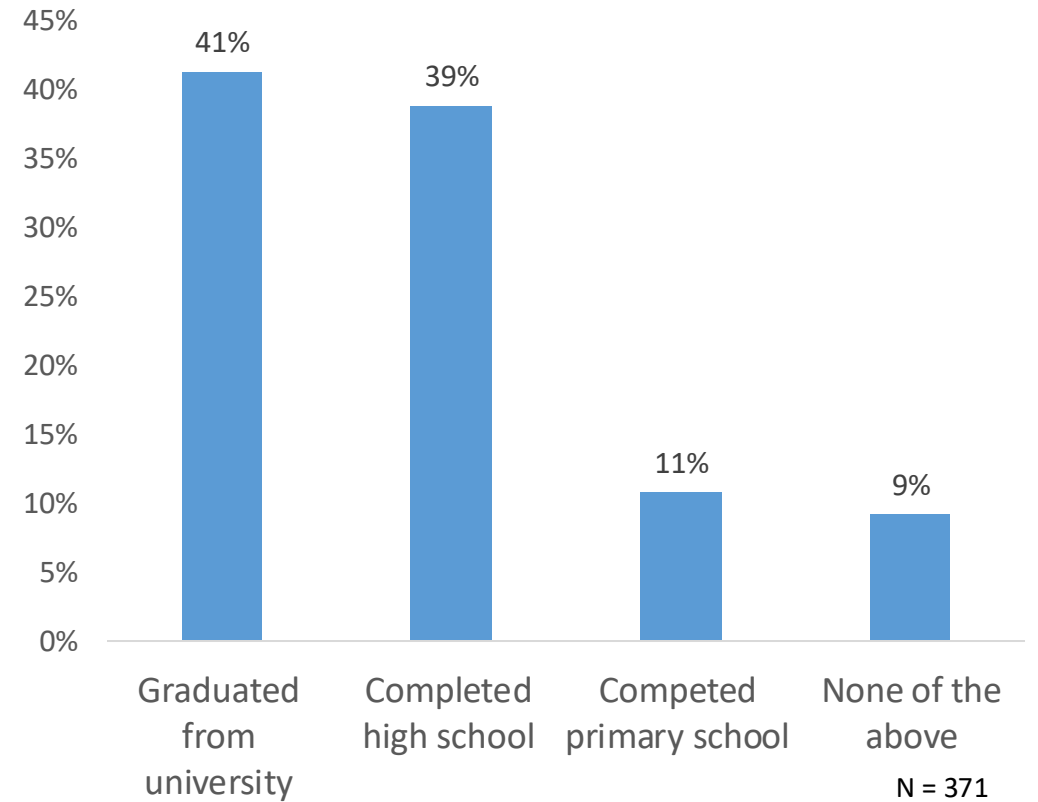
Note: The average student listed 1.5 provinces

Guardian characteristics

Who raised you?

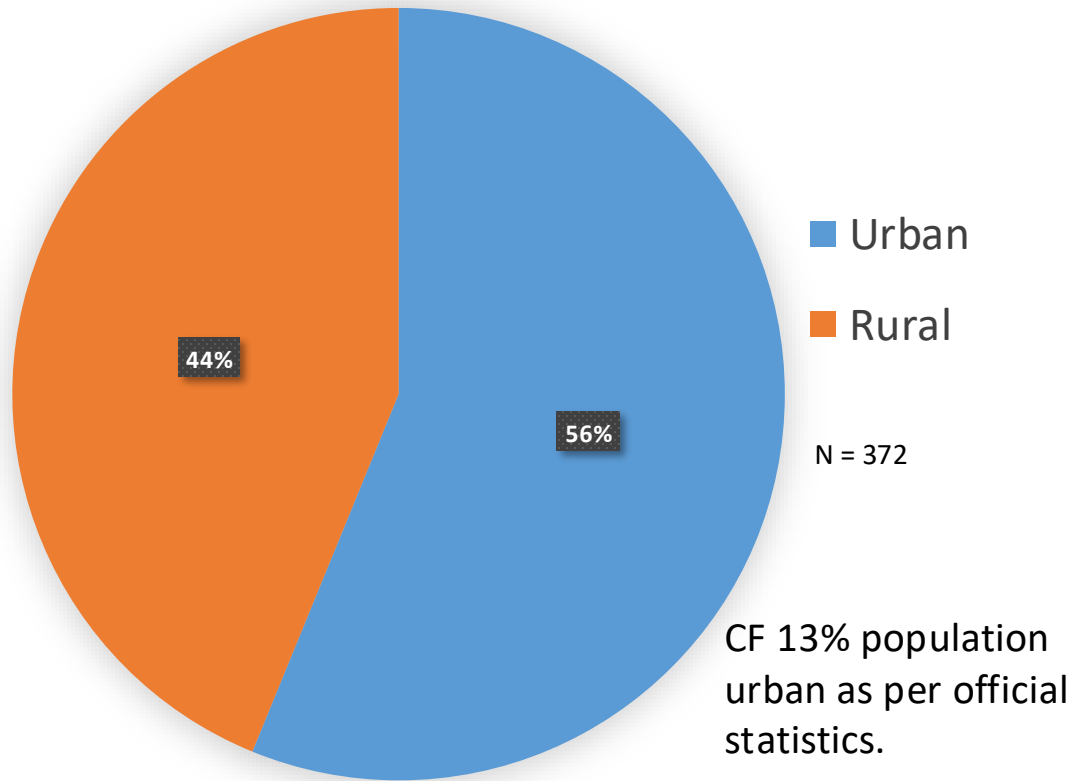


Guardians' highest level of education

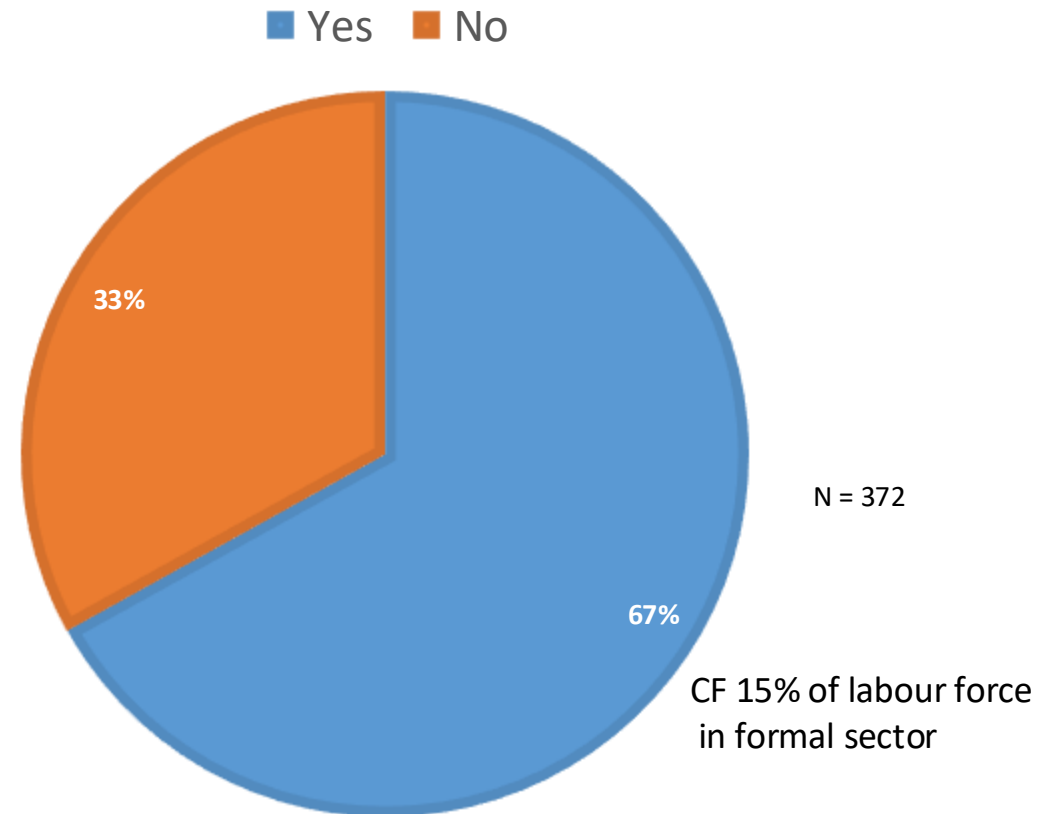


Guardian characteristics (cont)

Where were you raised?



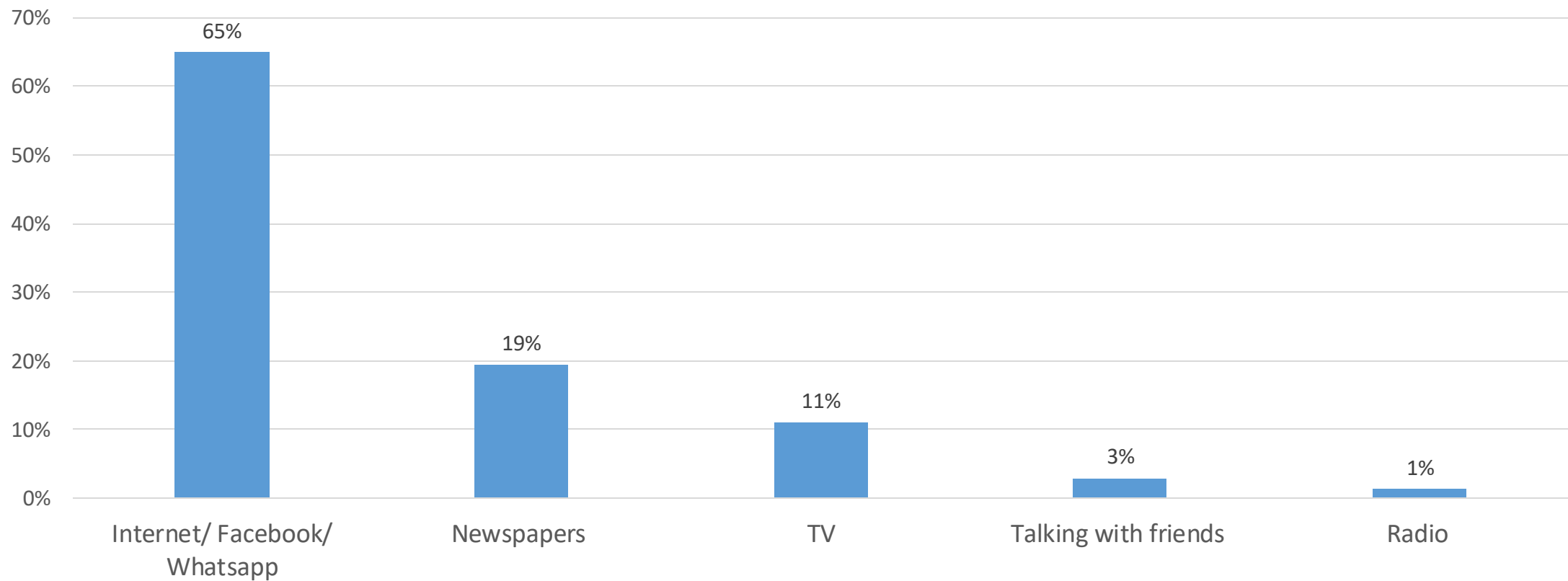
Did your parents have waged employment?





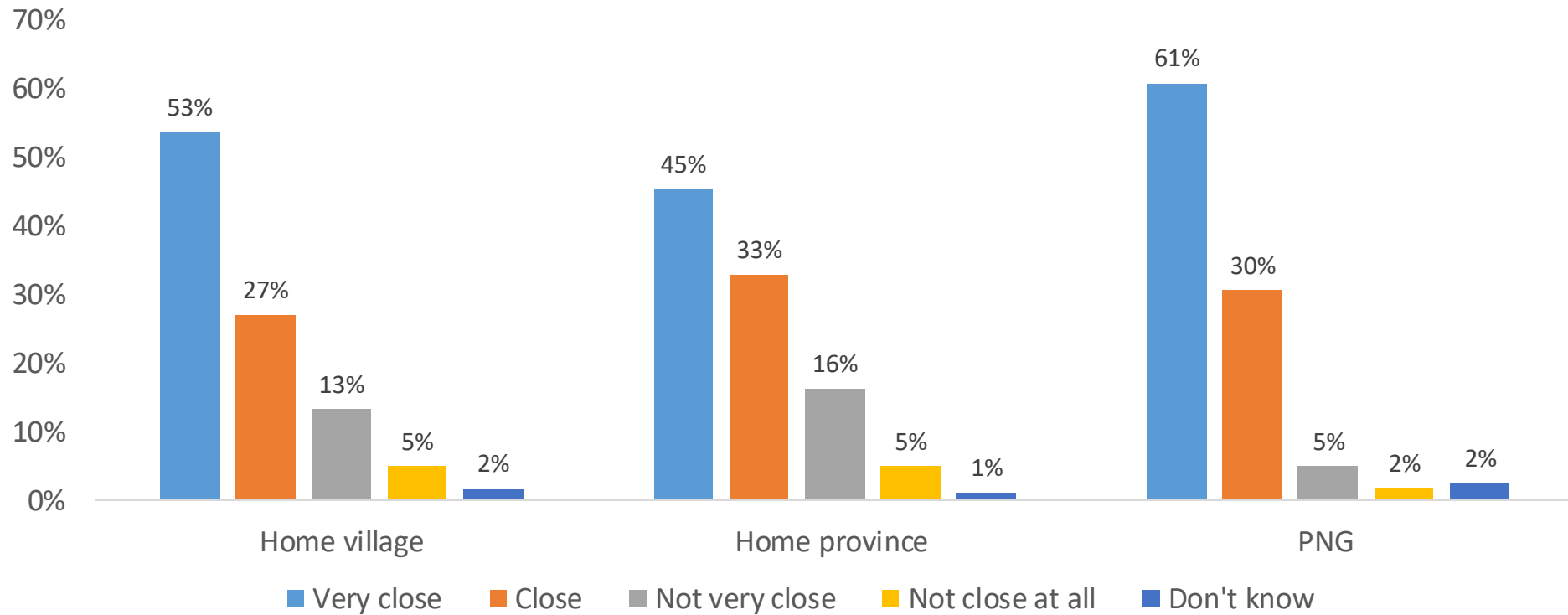
Sources of news

Main mode of receiving news about PNG



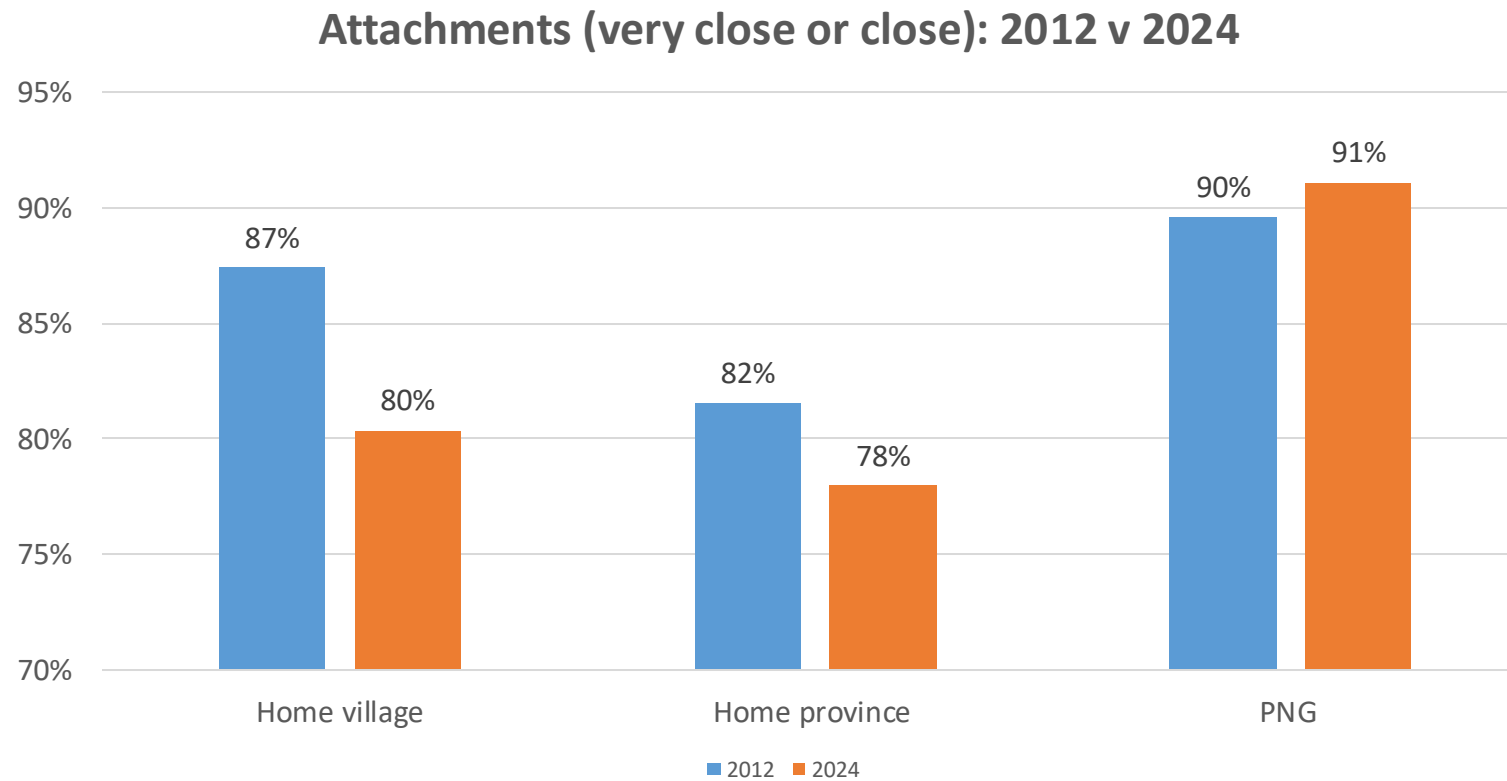
Student attachments

How close or emotionally attached do you feel to:



N = 371

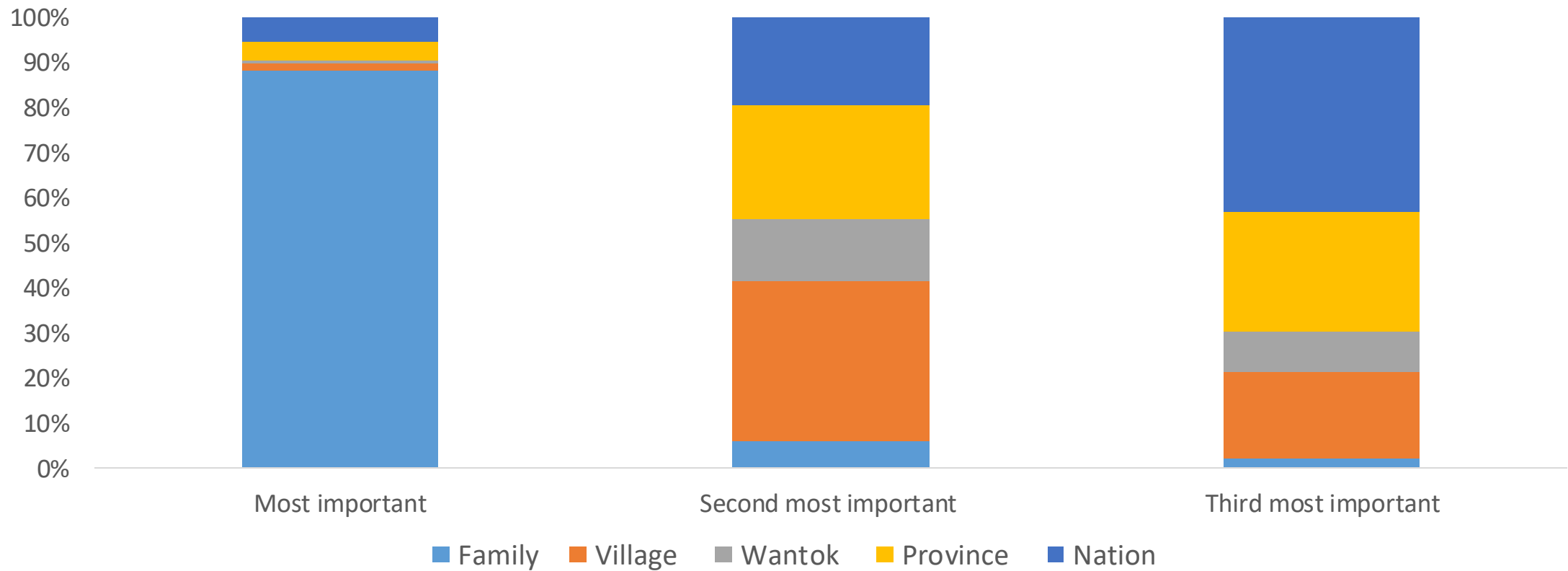
Attachments: 2012 v 2024





Loyalties

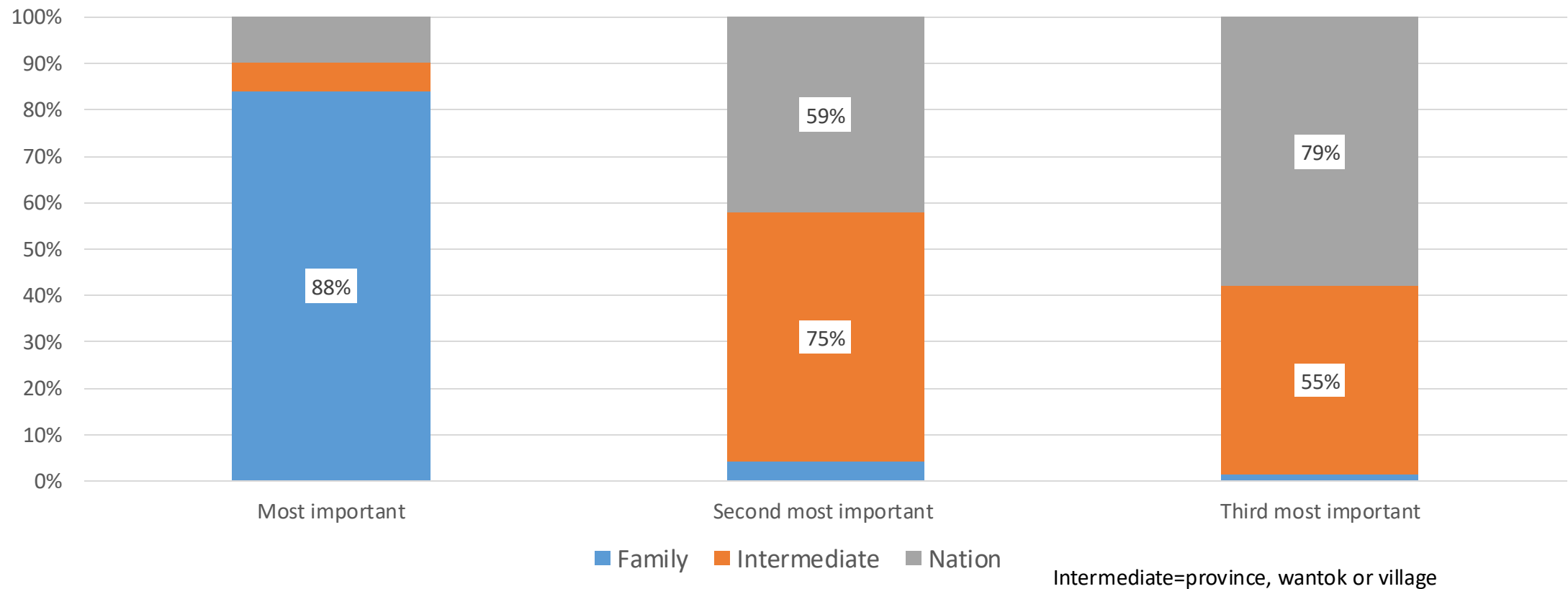
Which of these are you more obligated/loyal to?





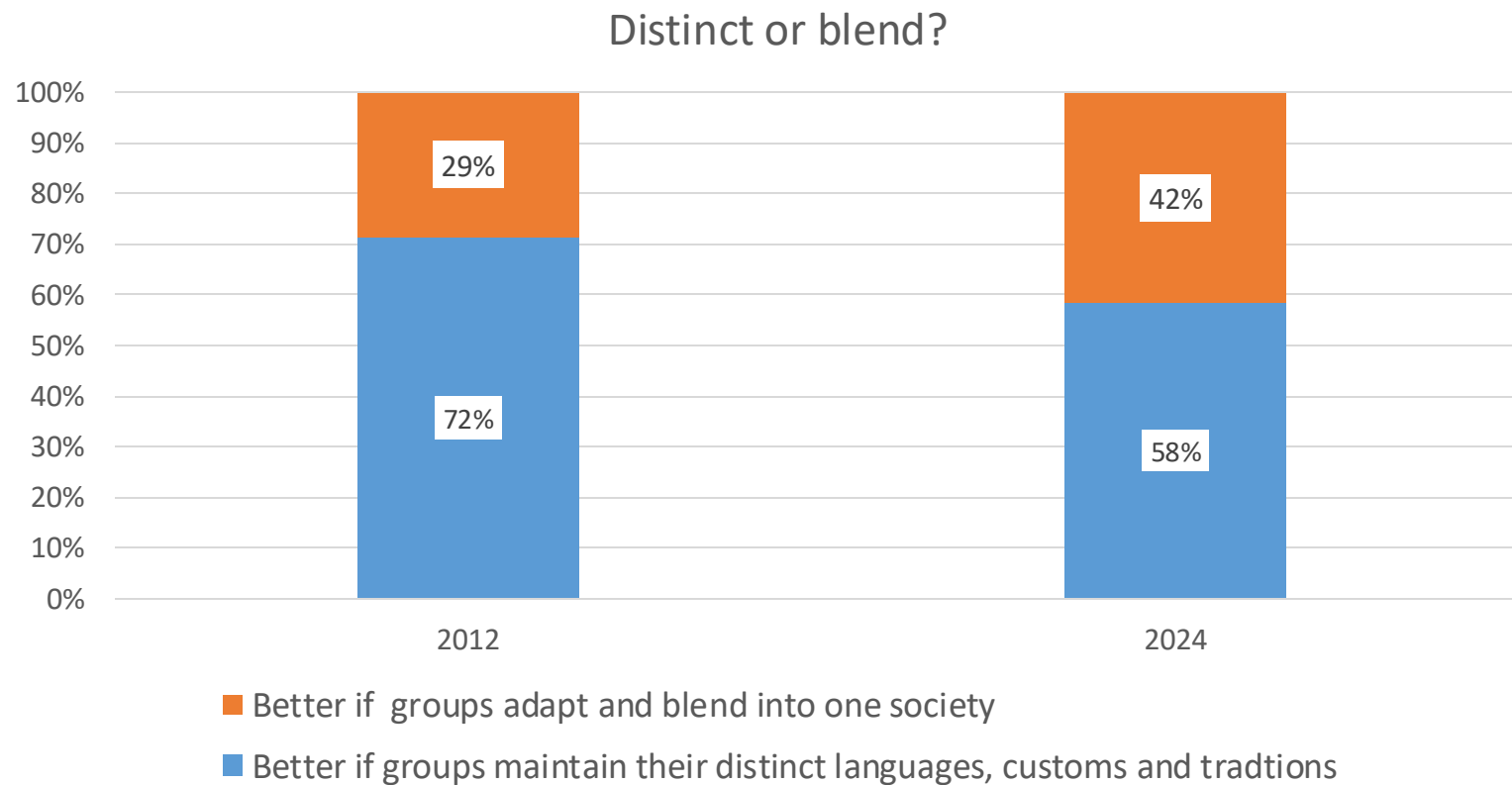
Loyalties (simplified)

Which of these are you more obligated/loyal to?



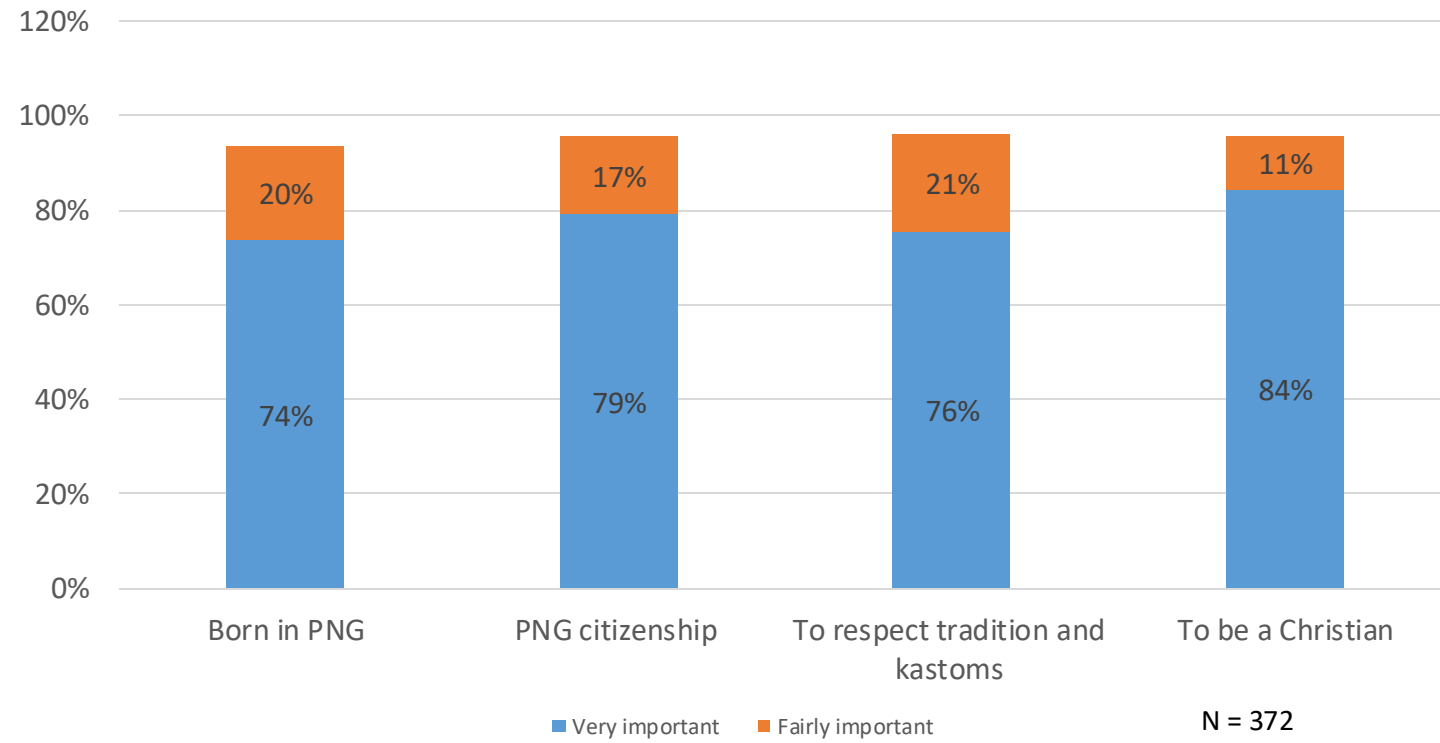


Should groups remain distinct or blend?



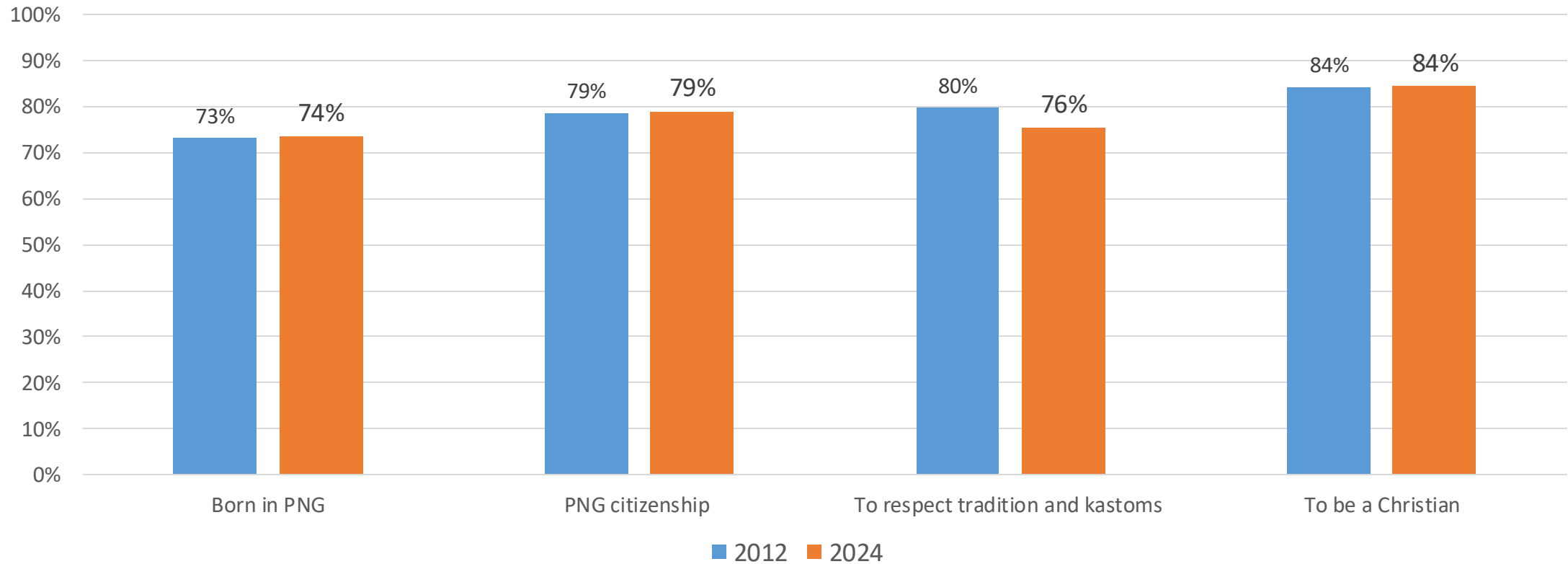
National identity

How important are these for being truly Papua New Guinean?

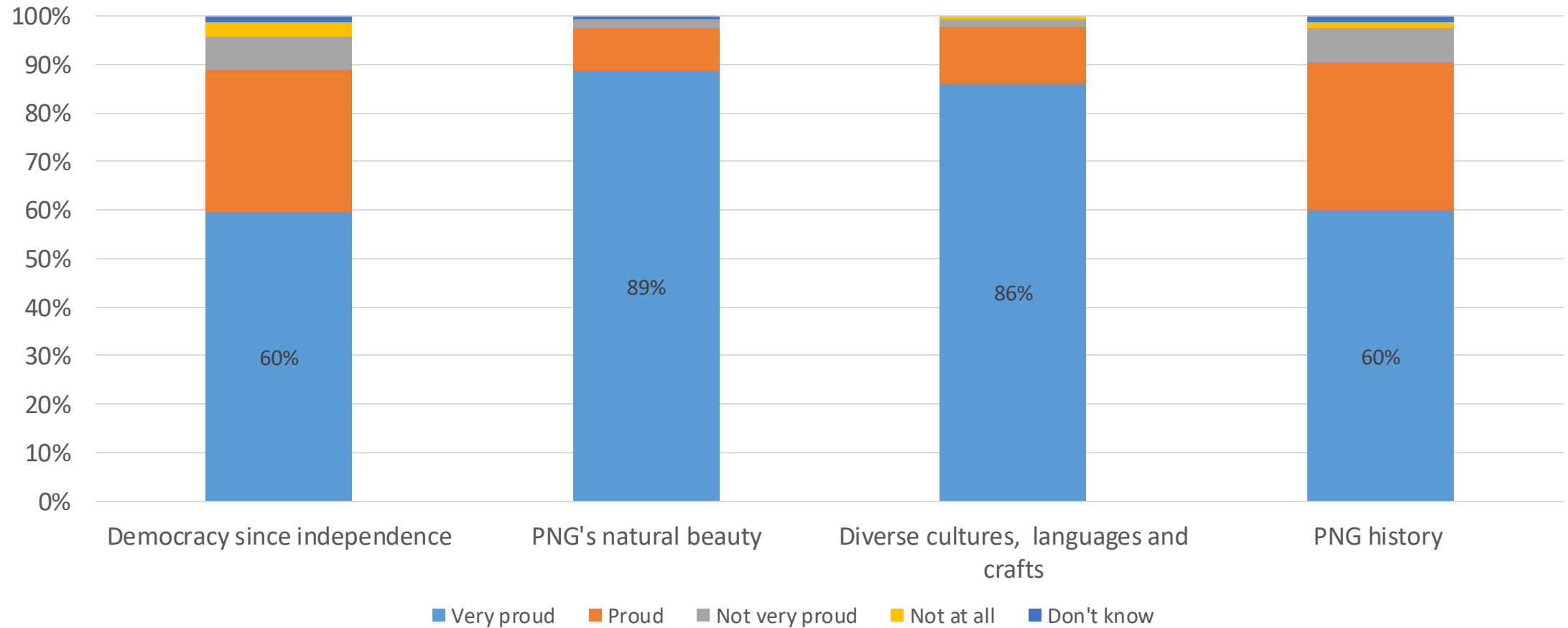


National identity: 2012 v 2024

% responding "very important"

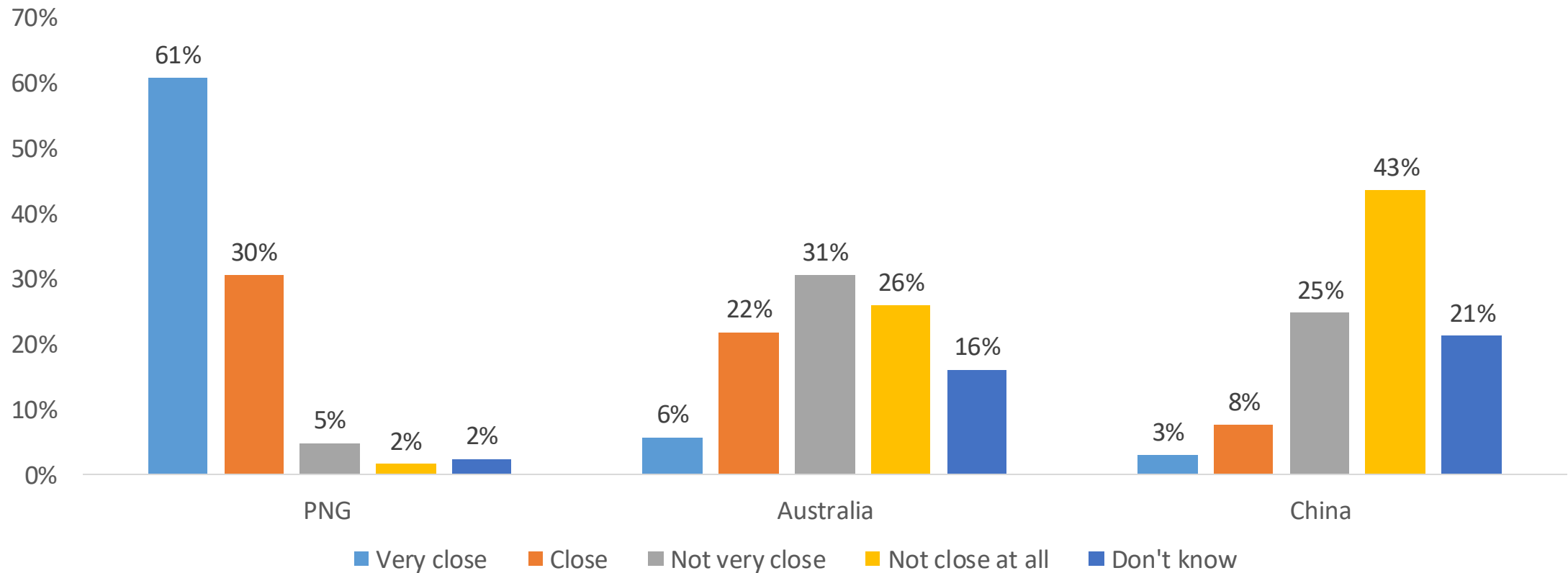


Sources of national pride



Closeness to Australia and China

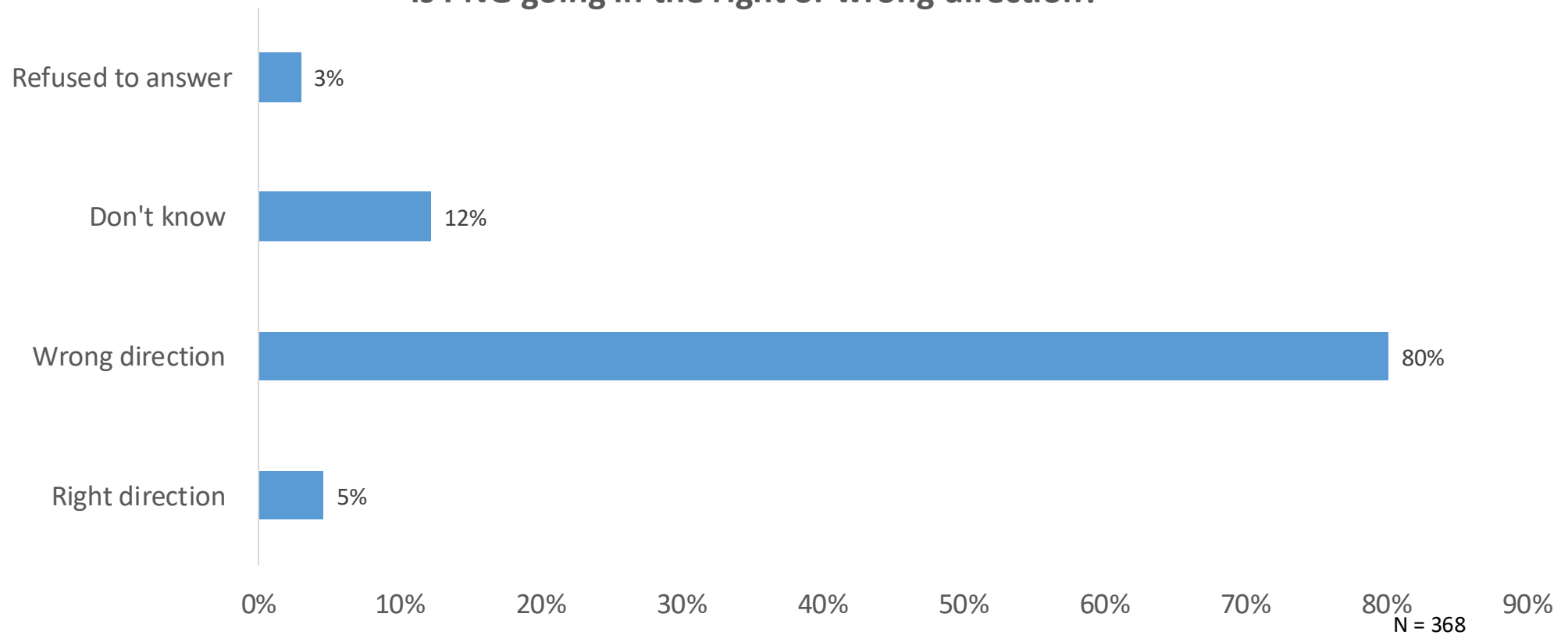
How close or emotionally attached do you feel to:





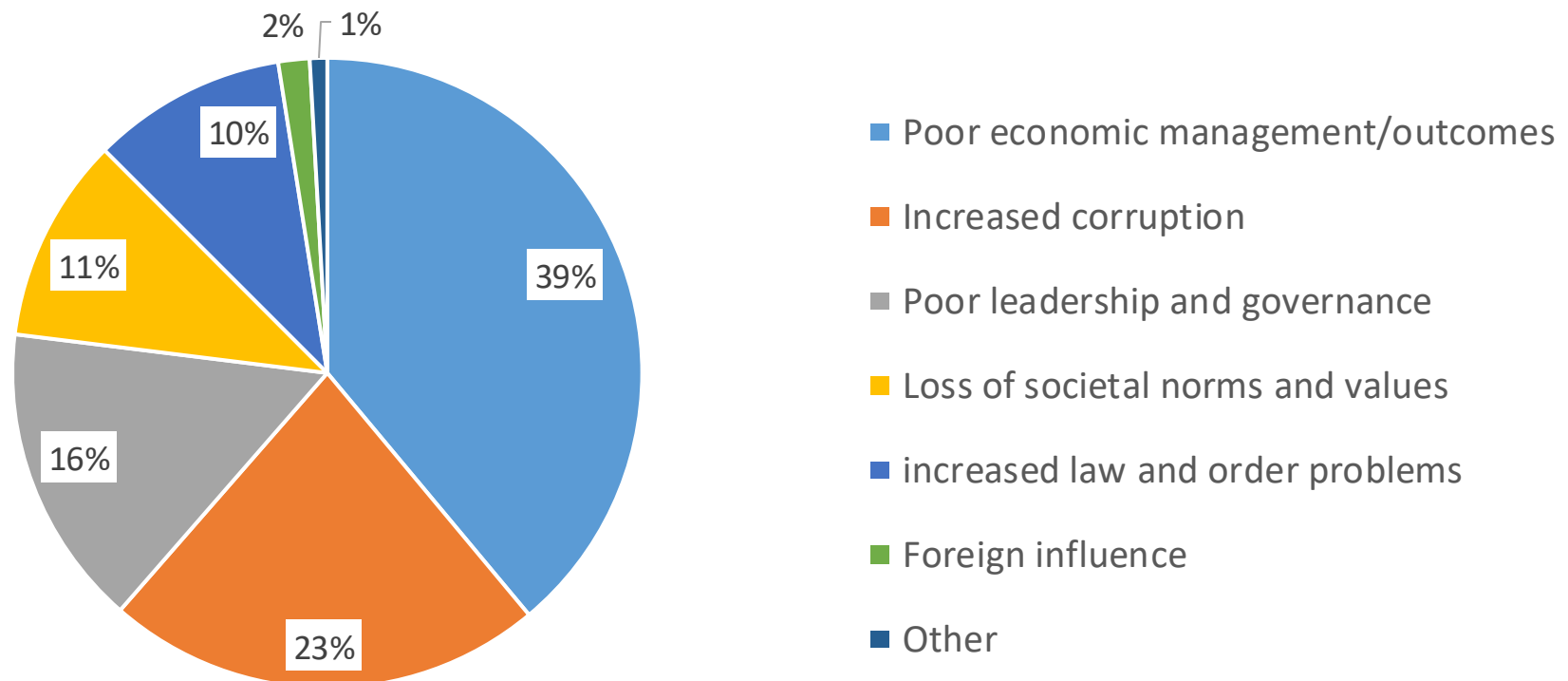
National direction

Is PNG going in the right or wrong direction?

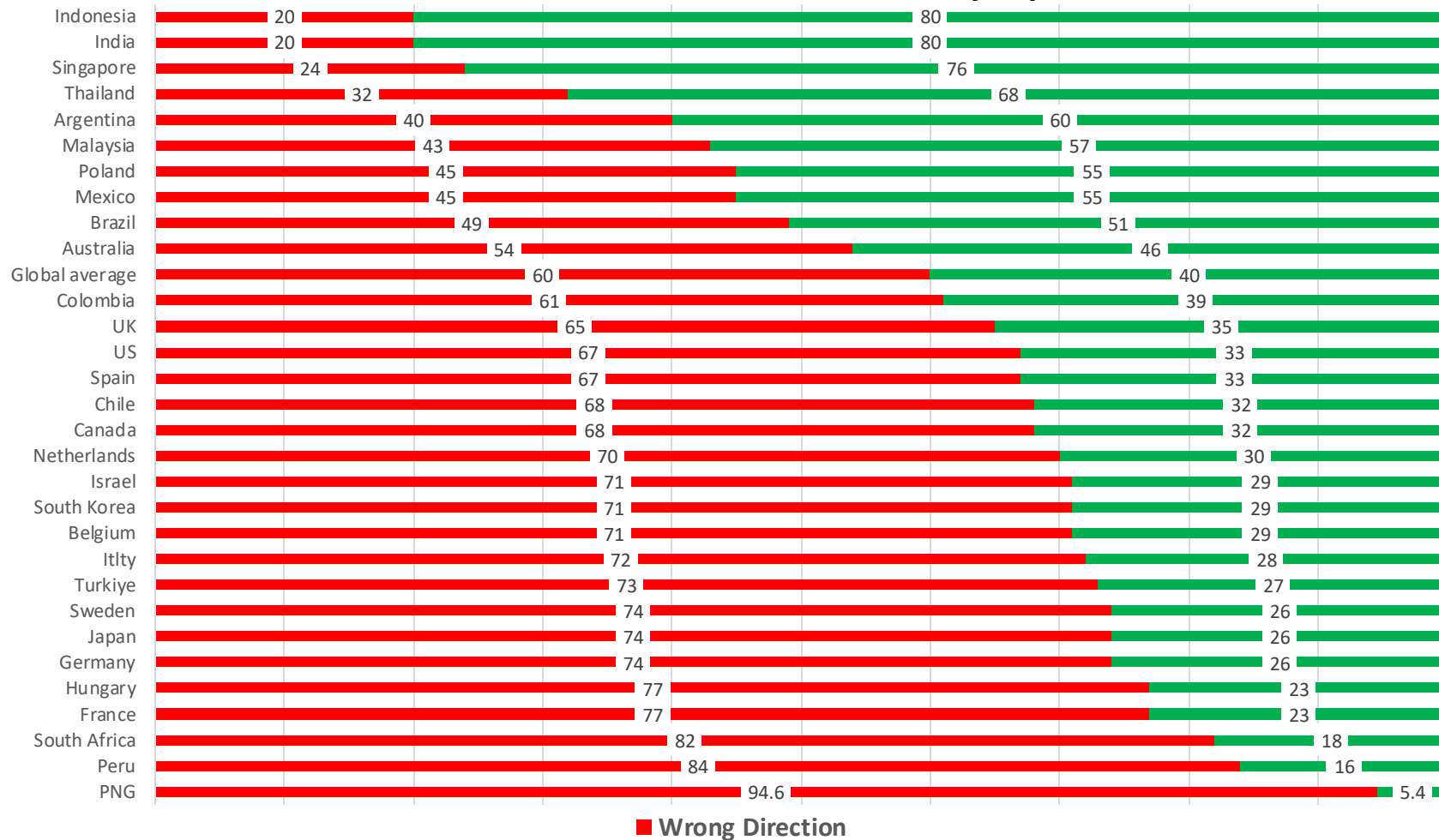




Reasons why PNG going in the wrong direction



PNG students are extremely pessimistic by int'l standards



Notes:

1. Data on other countries from <https://qery.no/public-opinion-on-national-direction-right-track-or-wrong-track/> and collected in early 2024.
2. "Don't know" responses and those who didn't answer excluded.



Conclusions: student characteristics

- 2/3 of students surveyed male and nearly all aged 18-24.
- UPNG students are from significantly more affluent family backgrounds than the average PNG citizen
- 2/3 get their national news from the internet or social media



Conclusions: attachments, loyalties, and national identity

- Students are more attached to the nation than to their village or province.
- Village attachments are declining over time.
- However, taken together, “intermediate” loyalties (between family and nation) are more important than national ones.
- A growing minority, now 40%, is in favour of more blending and less distinctiveness of different groups.
- Christianity is the most important defining PNG characteristic, and the country’s natural beauty and diverse cultures the biggest sources of national pride.
- Students feel closer to Australia than China.



Conclusion: national direction

- UPNG students are very pessimistic about PNG's national direction.
- For every 1 student who thinks the country is going in the right direction, 17 think it is going in the wrong direction.
- This pessimism is higher than any of the 30 countries for which this question was recently asked.
- The main reason for pessimism is poor economic management/outcomes (39%), followed by corruption (23%), and poor leadership (23%). Surprisingly, law and order only 10%, just below loss of societal norms (11%).



Final remarks

- Further analysis could look for differences by gender and region.
- Further surveys could address a range of issues.
- Given the difficulty of conducting national surveys, and the importance of UPNG students as a group, surveys of these students should be undertaken on a more regular basis.