

MEDIA RELEASE

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Research finds lack of living Kiwi heroes

Finding the next great New Zealand hero has many of us stumped after the death of Sir Edmund Hillary, according to a recent Research New Zealand poll.

The poll taken between 8 and 10 September asked “Who do you believe is the greatest living New Zealander?” and just over a third (36 percent) of respondents said they didn’t know. A further 15 percent chose Sir Edmund Hillary despite his death in January 2008.

Former Prime Minister Helen Clark topped the list of living New Zealanders. She was chosen by 9 percent of respondents, followed by former All Black Captain Sir Colin Meads with 5 percent, and triple Olympic gold medallist Sir Peter Snell with 3 percent.

Our current Prime Minister John Key was next, along with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, both polling at 2 percent.

Research New Zealand Director Emanuel Kalafatelis said the poll showed how beloved Sir Edmund was and that finding a new hero to match him wasn’t going to be easy.

“Sir Edmund conquered Everest in 1953 and so many of us either remember the historic day or grew up with tales of his amazing achievements and the good work he did for the Nepalese people. To find a new hero to match his legendary status is tough.

“A third of Kiwis were stumped and couldn’t name any great living New Zealanders. It’s a significant percentage of us and shows the field is wide open for a new hero to emerge.

Mr Kalafatelis said Helen Clark’s number one position as a living hero was a step away from New Zealanders’ tendency to name sports people as their heroes.

“Kiwis who receive international recognition impress us and her recent appointment to the number three position in the United Nations has made us proud. We love a Kiwi who does well overseas,” Mr Kalafatelis said.

However, the lack of business people named on the list was a disappointment said Mr Kalafatelis.

“This is tragic given New Zealand’s desperate need to make our economy more successful, particularly at the international level. Stephen Tindall is there but I suspect that is more about his philanthropic work,” he said.



The poll asked the respondents' reason for selecting the person. Of those who named someone, 41 percent said they chose them because of their achievements, and 18 percent said it was because they liked what they stood for.

The Research New Zealand poll of 500 people aged 18 and over was conducted by telephone between the 8 September and 10 September. The maximum margin of error is +/- 4.4 % (at the 95% confidence level). The data has been weighted to ensure it is an accurate representation of the New Zealand population 18 years and over. The poll was not taken on behalf of any organisation but as part of Research New Zealand's monthly survey of attitudes and opinions.

Participants were asked: *"Who do you believe is the 'Greatest Living New Zealander'?"*
"And what is the main reason for this?"

Table 1: The greatest living New Zealander

Who do you believe is the 'Greatest Living New Zealander'?

	Base =	Total 500 %	Male 250 %	Female 250 %
Sir Edmund Hillary		15	15	15
Helen Clark		9	7	10
Sir Colin Meads		4	7	1
Sir Peter Snell		3	4	2
John Key		2	2	3
Dame Kiri Te Kanawa		2	1	2
Willie Apiata		1	1	2
Peter Jackson		1	1	1
Dan Carter		1	2	1
John Walker		1	2	0
Richie McCaw		1	1	0
Sarah Ulmer		1	0	1
Sir Paul Reeves		1	0	2
Sir Howard Morrison		0	0	1
Sir Richard Hadlee		0	0	1
Other		19	18	19
No one		1	0	1
Don't know		36	35	37
Refused		2	1	2
Total		100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



Table 2: Reason for being the greatest living New Zealander

And what is the main reason for this?

	Sir Edmund Hilary Base = n=76 %	Helen Clark n=44 %	Colin Meads n=22** %	Sir Peter Snell n=14** %
Because of their achievements	56	53	33	73
Because I like what they stand for	16	22	13	0
Because of their skills/talents	1	9	12	20
Because they represent the NZ character	5	9	15	7
Because of their humbleness	5	2	14	0
Because I can relate to them or their story	0	0	0	0
Other	17	4	13	0
Don't know	5	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

**Caution: Results are indicative only due to the low base numbers.

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