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MEDIA RELEASE (Embargoed: 4pm Tuesday, 29 May 2007)

Poll reveals what's on our minds

While health remains the most significant top-of-mind issue for New Zealanders, education is becoming increasingly significant, the latest Research New Zealand polling shows.

The poll about the topics and issues that are most important to New Zealanders shows that health remains the number one concern for most people, Research New Zealand director Emanuel Kalafatelis said.

Those taking part were asked: *“what particular topics or issues would you say are of the most importance to you at the moment?”*

“We found that 26% of those surveyed rated personal health issues or the health system as one of their main concerns,” Mr Kalafatelis said.

“Health has consistently rated as one of New Zealanders’ main preoccupations, also polling around the 25% mark when we asked this question in May and December 2006.”

The second most frequently mentioned topic of importance, which appears to be increasing in significance, is children’s education or education generally, Mr Kalafatelis said.

“Of those we surveyed, 21% rated it as a topic that was important to them as opposed to 14% a year ago and 18% in December 2006,” Mr Kalafatelis said.

“Education appears to be increasingly significant in line with the debate around educational standards,” Mr Kalafatelis said.

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But, while New Zealanders see health and education as important issues, they seem to be becoming less concerned about their financial situation.

“Concerns about personal financial situation have fallen sharply in the space of one year, from 30% in May 2006 to 10% in this poll.”

Also reflecting an increased sense of financial security is a decrease in job-related issues (11% in May 2006 to 6% in May 2007).

However, off-setting these downwards trends are two emerging trends – one in relation to a concern with housing costs (up from 1% in May 2006 to 6% in May 2007) and the other a concern with tax and superannuation (up from 3% in May 2006 to 7% in May 2007).

Some key differences between the sexes, for different age groups, and those in different income brackets, emerged in the poll:

- ◆ Females are more concerned about health (32% of females; 19% of males) and their children's education than males are (28% of females; 13% of males).
- ◆ Males on the other hand are more likely to consider tax or superannuation as an important topic (12% of males; 3% of females).
- ◆ Older people are more concerned than anyone about crime-related issues (19% of those aged 60+; 6% of those aged 30-39).
- ◆ The older people get, the more concerned they become about personal health issues or the health system in general (38% of those aged 60+; 12% of those aged 15-29).
- ◆ Those nearing retirement age worry more about personal financial issues (19% of those aged 50-59; 8% of those aged 15-29).
- ◆ People in the higher income bracket (\$70,000+) are more likely to identify 'Government/economic issues' as being of importance to them than those in lower income brackets (15% of \$70,000+; 7% of those on \$69,000 or less).

The omnibus survey of 499 randomly selected people aged 15 and over was conducted by telephone between May 1 and 5. The margin of error is +/- 4.7% (at the 95% confidence level). The data has been weighted to ensure it's an accurate representation of New Zealand's general public. The poll was not taken for any particular client but conducted as part of Research New Zealand's monthly survey of attitudes and opinions.

Research New Zealand is an independent, New Zealand-owned research organisation undertaking social and business research.

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Note to reporters: A full breakdown of results by gender, age and income is attached below.

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Media contact: John King 027 610 88 96

Table 1: Important issues (by gender)

	May 2006 n=501 %	Dec 2006 n=502 %	May 2007 n=499 %	Male n=246 %	Female n=253 %
Children's education/education	14	18	21	13	28
Issues relating to children in general	12	7	8	5	11
Job-related issues	11	9	6	5	7
Personal financial issues	30	13	10	11	9
The cost of living	17	6	13	13	13
Personal health issues or health system	25	25	26	19	32
Relationship issues	5	4	1	1	2
Crime-related issues	7	15	10	10	11
The environment	6	5	8	6	10
Sports	3	2	1	1	0
Global warming	0	4	5	4	6
Housing costs'	1	2	6	8	5
Anti-smacking bill	0	0	4	4	4
Tax or superannuation	3	5	7	12	3
Government or economic issues	10	9	10	12	8
Other	21	28	19	21	17
None	6	6	6	7	5
Don't know	2	3	3	2	5
Total	**	**	**	**	**

Note: Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.

Table 2: Important issues (by age)

	May 2006 n=501 %	Dec 2006 n=502 %	May 2007 n=499 %	15 to 29 n=70 %	30 to 39 n=101 %	40 to 49 n=98 %	50 to 59 n=97 %	60+ n=133 %
Children's education/education	14	18	21	21	26	22	16	17
Issues relating to children in general	12	7	8	12	11	6	7	4
Job-related issues	11	9	6	9	7	4	6	2
Personal financial issues	30	13	10	8	11	3	19	12
The cost of living	17	6	13	15	15	11	16	10
Personal health issues or health system	25	25	26	12	25	23	37	38
Relationship issues	5	4	1	2	1	2	1	1
Crime-related issues	7	15	10	5	6	13	8	19
The environment	6	5	8	9	10	8	8	5
Sports	3	2	1	1	0	1	0	2
Global warming	0	4	5	6	2	4	11	3
Housing costs'	1	2	6	6	7	8	6	5
Anti-smacking bill	0	0	4	1	7	3	7	5
Tax or superannuation	3	5	7	9	9	6	10	4
Government or economic issues	10	9	10	5	11	11	12	10
Other	21	28	19	24	19	19	15	16
None	6	6	6	7	1	6	6	9
Don't know	2	3	3	6	3	3	0	2
Total	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**

Note: Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.

Table 3: Important issues (by income)

	May 2006 n=501 %	Dec 2006 n=502 %	May 2007 n=499 %	Under \$40,000 n=167 %	40,000 - \$69,999 n=118 %	\$70,000 plus n=172 %	Don't know/refused n=42 %
Children's education/education	14	18	21	19	23	19	27
Issues relating to children in general	12	7	8	9	8	8	2
Job-related issues	11	9	6	9	3	6	0
Personal financial issues	30	13	10	10	13	8	12
The cost of living	17	6	13	12	16	12	14
Personal health issues or health system	25	25	26	25	24	26	32
Relationship issues	5	4	1	2	2	1	0
Crime-related issues	7	15	10	9	10	11	11
The environment	6	5	8	9	9	7	4
Sports	3	2	1	1	1	1	0
Global warming	0	4	5	4	7	5	4
Housing costs'	1	2	6	2	9	8	12
Anti-smacking bill	0	0	4	4	5	4	2
Tax or superannuation	3	5	7	5	4	12	9

Table 4: Important issues (by income) (continued)

	May 2006	Dec 2006 n=502 %	May 2007	Under \$40,000	40,000 - \$69,999	\$70,000 plus	Don't know/refused
Government or economic issues	10	9	10	7	7	15	9
Other	21	28	19	20	22	18	13
None	6	6	6	7	5	5	8
Don't know	2	3	3	3	2	4	5
Total	**	**	**	**	**	**	**

Note: Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.