

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

PERCEPTIONS OF INEQUALITY

- Only 24% of New Zealanders believe New Zealand is an egalitarian society.
- 71% believe the gap between rich and poor in New Zealand is widening.
- 78% believe that the overall effects of the widening gap between rich and poor have been bad.
- National voters are less concerned about inequality than Labour or Green voters but only 39% believe New Zealand is an egalitarian society; 51% believe the gap between rich and poor is widening and 61% believe the overall effect of that widening gap is bad.
- Given a choice, 54% of New Zealanders still prefer a New Zealand where individual efforts are fully rewarded and where big differences in wealth can occur. 31% plumped for the polar choice of a New Zealand where most people earn about the same amount and there are little differences in wealth.
- There are clear political differences on this issue. Amongst National voters, 74% plumped for individual efforts being fully rewarded and only 14% for a New Zealand where most people earn about the same amount. Amongst Labour voters, 51% prefer a New Zealand where most people earn about the same amount and there are little differences in wealth and 36% for a New Zealand where individual efforts are fully rewarded and where big differences in wealth can occur.
- There was a significant change in preferences on this count since this question was last asked in August 2000. 68% of New Zealanders then preferred a New Zealand where individual efforts were fully rewarded and where big differences in wealth can occur and 23% a New Zealand where most people earn about the same amount and there are little differences in wealth. There has been a 22% net shift towards preferring a more equal society in the last thirteen years.
- “Trickle down” is not believed by most New Zealanders. Only 6% believe they and their family personally benefit a lot when big businesses in New Zealand are doing well; 18% think they benefit a bit; 24% not that much; 19% hardly at all and 33% not at all.

Older New Zealanders and National voters are more likely to benefit a lot or a bit.

- New Zealanders generally believe that they do have the opportunity to succeed in life. 53% declared they were very satisfied and a further 38% somewhat satisfied with the opportunities they have had to succeed in life. Those on higher incomes are still much more likely to declare that they are “very satisfied” with their opportunities.
- New Zealanders also believe that children from low income families generally can succeed.

42% believe that any child born in New Zealand can succeed through education and hard work; 63% believe a child from a low income family can succeed but will have much less chances than those born in better off families and only 5% that children from lower income families have very little chance of success.

- Again, big political differences on this question are apparent with 61% of National voters believing that any child can succeed compared to only 24% of Labour voters.

QUALITY OF LIFE

- New Zealanders on higher incomes declare higher levels of general happiness and satisfaction with the way their life is going than those on lower incomes.
- Comparisons with a 1984 study show New Zealanders are now less likely to associate owning a high value house, having an annual overseas holiday, owning a swimming pool or spa with being rich.
- New Zealanders were now though more likely to associate employing cleaners and gardeners, buying mainly fashion designed or tailor made clothes and owning a holiday home with being rich than in 1984.
- In terms of the luxuries we actually enjoy compared to 1984, New Zealanders are much more likely to own dishwashers, houses with two bathrooms or more, buy mainly imported shoes, have wine with meals at least three times a week and to have annual overseas holidays than they were in 1984.
- On the other side of the equation, New Zealanders are more likely to believe that going without correct glasses or dentures, often falling behind in the payment of rent, mortgage or higher purchase, being unable to afford celebrations such as birthday and Christmas, delaying repairs to household appliances, not being able to afford a car and doing without a telephone are below a decent minimum standard of living than in 1984.
- Arguably the most stunning finding in this study, while more New Zealanders have more material possessions than in 1984 much higher levels of financial pressure were reported in 2013. New Zealanders now were much more likely to declare that they sometimes have to delay repairing household appliances, put up with feeling cold to keep heating costs down, have fewer than three days holiday away from home a year, sometimes postpone visits to the doctor, usually buy second hand clothes, go without correct glasses or dentures and are unable to afford celebrations like birthday and Christmas, than they did in 1984.

The only count going the other way was on not being able to afford a car. In 1984 10% of New Zealanders reported not being able to afford a car and in 2013, 7%.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON INEQUALITY

- Given three choices 42% of New Zealanders currently believe that the Government has the balance about right between encouraging people to take risks, invest and get an appropriate reward and trying to maintain a reasonably unified society where all feel they have a stake and there are opportunities for all regardless of family background; 34% think the balance is too far towards those taking risks and investing and 24% that it is tipped too much against the risk takers and investors.
- Only 3% of New Zealanders think that their total amount of tax they pay is too low; 50% think they pay about the right amount and 45% think they pay too much.

In 2005, 62% thought they were paying too much, 35% about the right amount and 1% not enough.

- Given a choice between a progressive or flat tax system, 73% prefer a progressive tax system and 27% a flat tax system. Amongst Labour voters 87% prefer a progressive system and 13% a flat tax system and amongst National voters 59% prefer progressive and 41% flat.
- New Zealanders believe that multi-nationals and big business are not paying enough tax. For big business 7% think taxes are too high; 15% about right and 54% that the taxes they pay are too low. The equivalent figures for multi-nationals are 5%; 13% and 59%.
- New Zealanders think people on low and middle incomes are paying too much tax and those on high incomes are not paying enough. For those on low incomes, 60% of New Zealanders think their taxes are too high; 29% they are about right and 4% too low. For those on middle incomes, 46% think the tax they pay is too high; 45% that it is about right and 3% too low. For those on high incomes, 14% think the taxes they pay are too high; 29% about right and 47% too low.