



Should New Zealand's national flag be changed?

The issue:

Prime Minister John Key has recently rekindled the debate about changing New Zealand's flag, and has suggested a referendum be held on the issue. The Prime Minister would like to see the national flag changed to a black flag with a silver fern; however, many different designs have been proposed.

Given the media coverage that this issue has received, we decided to track the general public's opinion. We now have a time series based on four measures; August 2011, February 2014, March 2014 and September/October 2014.¹

The poll question:

The following question was asked:

1. *On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?*
New Zealand should adopt a new national flag.

Key results:

The results to this question are presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Agreement that New Zealand should adopt a new national flag.

Q5H. NZ should adopt a new national flag

	September/October 2014	March 2014	February 2014	August 2011
	1,001	500	500	1,252
	%	%	%	%
Disagree/strongly disagree	43	37	37	52
Neutral	37	43	39	30
Agree/strongly agree	19	18	22	19
Don't know/refused	1	2	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100

Respondents' opinions were measured on an 11-point scale where 0=strongly disagree and 10=strongly agree. Respondents who gave a rating of 0 to 2 were categorised into the disagree/strongly disagree group, those who gave a rating of 3 to 7 were considered 'neutral', and those who gave a rating of 8 to 10 were categorised into the agree/strongly agree group.

- ◆ As shown in Table 1, over time there has been little change in the proportion of respondents agreeing that New Zealand should adopt a new flag (19 percent in 2011 and between 18 and 22 percent in the 2014 measures).

¹ Each measure has been completed by telephone as part of our monthly omnibus survey. Each omnibus survey is based on a nationally representative sample of n=500 New Zealanders, 18 years of age or more. The September/October measure is based on the results of two omnibus surveys combined.



- ◆ Further, in the current poll, more than twice the number of respondents disagree than agree that New Zealand should adopt a new flag (43 percent disagreed and 19 percent agreed).
 - ◆ It should also be noted that more than one-third (37 percent) of respondents gave a neutral response to this question.
- ◆ Of note, however, is that whilst the proportion of respondents who disagree that New Zealand should change the national flag has decreased since 2011 (from 52 percent in 2011 to 37 percent in February and March 2014 and 43 percent in October 2014), disagreement has significantly increased again since the previous two polls this year (43 percent in October 2014 compared with 37 percent in March and February 2014).

Demographic differences:

We also analysed the results to this question by a number of demographic variables including; age, gender, income, location, and ethnicity. The results to this analysis are as follows:

- ◆ There are relatively few differences by any of these variables.
- ◆ Younger respondents (aged 18 to 34 years) were significantly less likely than older respondents (aged 55 years and over) to agree that New Zealand should change the national flag (16 percent and 23 percent respectively).
- ◆ There were no other significant differences between the demographic groups, including ethnicity. That is, Māori were no more, or less, likely to agree that the New Zealand flag should be changed than New Zealand European/Pakeha respondents.



Comment:

“There is clearly no appetite for change at the moment, and despite the media coverage over the last 12 months in particular, twice as many New Zealander’s disagree with the notion that our national flag should change as agree that it should”, said Research New Zealand Director, Emanuel Kalafatelis.

The Research New Zealand polls were conducted in 1,001 people aged 18 years and over, by telephone from the 18th of September 2014 and the 24th of October 2014 (i.e. in two omnibus surveys). The maximum margin of error is +/- 3.2 percent (at the 95 percent confidence level). The data has been weighted to ensure it is an accurate representation of the general population of New Zealand. The polls were not taken on behalf of any organisation, but as part of Research New Zealand’s monthly survey of attitudes and opinions.

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TABULATIONS

September/October 2014 results by demographics

On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?: NZ should adopt a new national flag

Table 2: Gender

	Total	Male	Female
Base =	1,001	456	545
	%	%	%
Disagree	43	40	46
Neutral	37	40	34
Agree	19	19	19
Don't know/Refused	1	1	2
Total	100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 3: Age

	Total	18 to 34 years	35 to 54 years	55 years and over
Base =	1,001	200	394	407
	%	%	%	%
Disagree	43	47	40	42
Neutral	37	35	41	33
Agree	19	16	18	23
Don't know/Refused	1	1	1	2
Total	100	100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 4: Income

	Total	Under \$40,000	\$40,000 - \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	Don't know/refused
Base =	1,001	259	293	342	107
	%	%	%	%	%
Disagree	43	44	45	38	51
Neutral	37	35	36	41	30
Agree	19	18	20	21	16
Don't know/Refused	1	2	0	1	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



Table 5: Location

	Total	Upper North Island	Lower/Central North Island	South Island
Base =	1,001	311	381	309
	%	%	%	%
Disagree	43	40	44	44
Neutral	37	40	36	35
Agree	19	19	19	20
Don't know/Refused	1	2	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 6: Ethnicity

	Total	New Zealand European (or Pakeha)	Māori	Pacific	Other
Base =	1,001	671	84	29**	217
	%	%	%	%	%
Disagree	43	44	45	38	51
Neutral	37	35	36	41	30
Agree	19	18	20	21	16
Don't know/Refused	1	2	0	1	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

**Caution: low base number of respondents - results are indicative only.