



PRESS RELEASE

Inflation remains top concern for Kiwis; Government rating rebounds from record low as concern for unemployment eases among under-35s

New Zealand / Aotearoa, 2 March 2026 – The latest Ipsos New Zealand Issues Monitor reveals that *Inflation / cost of living* continues to be the most important issue facing New Zealanders with 59% identifying it as a key issue. *Healthcare* (38%) remains the second most important issue for Kiwis, having declined from its peak as an issue (44%) recorded in August '25. *The economy* (33%) is growing in prominence and continues its upward trajectory, holding steady as the nation's third most important issue.

Concern for *Housing / price of housing* (38%) remains in 4th place and is showing early signs of a resurgence after a significant drop in the previous wave and a steady downward trend since early 2024. *Crime / Law and order* (20%) remains steady to round out the top five concerns.

Meanwhile, the government's performance rating has seen a significant increase, rising to 4.2 out of 10 from a record low of 3.9 in October 2025. National has made significant gains in public perception, closing the capability gap with Labour on four of the top five issues, and now sits equal with Labour on their perceived capability to manage *The economy*. Labour is perceived as the most, or equally capable of, managing 15 out of the top 20 issues.

Other key findings include:

Issues

- *Inflation / cost of living* (59%) remains the number one issue facing New Zealanders, although the level of concern has stabilised compared to previous waves.
- The ranking of top five issues facing the country are unchanged since October 2025: *Inflation / cost of living* (59%), *Healthcare / hospitals* (38%), *The economy* (33%), *Housing / price of housing* (25%), and *Crime / law and order* (20%).
- Concern around *Petrol prices / fuel* has seen a significant increase this wave, re-entering the top 10 issues at 9%. In contrast, *Education* has seen a significant drop in concern and is no longer a top-10 issue.
- *Healthcare / hospitals* remains the second most pressing issue for Kiwis (38%). However, it is the primary concern for older Kiwis, with 58% of those aged 65+ selecting it as their top issue.
- Additionally:
 - While *Housing / price of housing* is the fourth-ranked issue nationally (25%), it has resurged as the second-most important issue for those aged 18-34, with 34% citing it as a major concern.
 - *Unemployment* (19%) remains a top-five concern for young New Zealanders (aged 18-34), at 26%, which is significantly higher than the national average.

Government performance

- New Zealanders' rating of the current government's performance has seen a statistically significant increase from a mean score of 3.9 out of 10 in October 2025 to 4.2 out of 10. The proportion of New Zealanders scoring the government's performance in the top 4 (7-10) has also risen significantly to 27% from 23%.



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- A shift has occurred in public perception of economic management, with the gap between the two main parties closing: Labour and National are now tied at 32% when it comes to perceived ability to manage *The economy*.
- Labour is perceived as the political party most capable or equally capable of managing four of the top five issues – *Inflation / cost of living, Healthcare, The economy, and Housing*.
- National continues to be seen as the most effective party for managing *Crime / Law & Order* (34% vs Labour's 27%) and equally as capable of managing *The economy*. National has significantly narrowed the capability gap on both *Inflation / cost of living* and *Healthcare / hospitals*.

Carin Hercock, Country Manager, Ipsos New Zealand, said: "As we enter an election year, Inflation, healthcare and the economy are the clear issues that New Zealanders will be assessing political parties against and the battle ground is firmly set, with a neck-and-neck race on capability of managing the economy."

Amanda Dudding, Executive Director Public Affairs, Ipsos New Zealand, added: "There are some surprises in the issues rated as less important by New Zealanders. Immigration is an issue to watch, jumping 4 places up the ranking to just sit outside the top 10, and no change for Climate Change as an issue given the devastating impacts of severe weather events this summer."

For a full copy of the 31st Ipsos Issues monitor, New Zealand edition, please visit our website <https://www.ipsos.com/en-nz>

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For further information contact:

Carin Hercock
Managing Director, Ipsos NZ
Email: carin.hercock@ipsos.com
Phone: 021 394 508

Amanda Dudding
Research Director, Ipsos NZ
Email: amanda.dudding@ipsos.com
Phone: 021 612 264



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About the Study

This study did not have any external sponsors or partners. It was initiated and run by Ipsos, because we are curious about the world we live in and how citizens in New Zealand and around the globe think and feel about their world.

The study was conducted using online research panels between 11 and 18 February 2026, with 1,000 New Zealanders aged 18 and older representing the adult New Zealand population. Quotas were set to ensure representativeness.

The precision of Ipsos online surveys is calculated using a credibility interval. Here, the total New Zealand results have a credibility interval of +/-3.5 percentage points. For more information on the Ipsos use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.

ABOUT IPSOS

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“Game Changers” – our tagline – summarizes our ambition to help our 5,000 clients navigate with confidence our rapidly changing world.

Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos has been listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120, Mid-60 indices, and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

ISIN code FR0000073298, Reuters ISOS.PA, Bloomberg IPS:FP

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Contacts: Amanda Dudding
Executive Director, Public Affairs
Ipsos New Zealand
Amanda.dudding@ipsos.com

Carin Hercock
Country Manager,
Ipsos New Zealand
Carin.hercock@ipsos.com

