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Embargo: Not for publication until 5am Tuesday 26 May Cost of Living Remains Top Concern for Kiwis; Soaring Petrol Prices Surge into Top Five Issues

New Zealand / Aotearoa, 25 May 2026 – Ipsos New Zealand has released the 32nd edition of the Ipsos Issues Monitor, which tracks the most important issues facing New Zealanders today and which political parties are perceived as best able to manage them. The survey has been running since 2018.

The latest survey of 1,001 New Zealanders reveals that **Inflation / cost of living** remains the most pressing issue, with 61% identifying it as a top concern. The most significant change this quarter is a significant surge in concern for **Petrol prices / fuel**, which has jumped 17 percentage points to 26%, making it the 4th most important issue. The top three issues remain unchanged, with Healthcare / hospitals (39%) and the Economy (33%) holding firm in second and third place, respectively.

Meanwhile, concern for **Housing / price of housing** has seen a significant decrease, falling to its lowest level since reporting began, though it remains in the top 5 at 21%. Going into an election year the monitor also shows the rating of Government performance has stabilised at 4.2 out of 10, unchanged from February 2026.

Other key findings include:

Issues

- **Inflation / cost of living (61%)** continues to be the number one issue facing New Zealanders, a position it has held since February 2022.
- The sharp increase in concern for **Petrol prices / fuel** (from 9% in Feb 2026 to 26% in May 2026) has pushed **Crime / law and order** (16%) out of the top five issues for the first time in three years.
- Concern for **Housing / price of housing** (21%) and **Crime / law and order** (16%) both saw significant decreases of 4 percentage points compared to the previous quarter.
- A clear generational divide is apparent. Younger New Zealanders (aged 18-34) are significantly more concerned about immediate financial pressures, including **Petrol prices** (35%), **Housing/Price of housing** (34%), and **Unemployment** (29%).
- Conversely, **Healthcare / hospitals** is the primary concern for older Kiwis, with 60% of those aged 65+ citing it as a top issue—significantly higher than the national average (39%).
- After a significant increase in importance as an issue in February 2022, **Immigration** has declined by 2ppt to 6% and is now ranked 13th.

Government performance

- New Zealanders' rating of the current government's performance has stabilised with a mean score of 4.2 out of 10. The proportion of New Zealanders rating the performance positively (7-10 out of 10) has held steady at 27%.
- The Labour party is perceived as the political party most capable of handling 4 of the top 5 issues: **Inflation / cost of living**, **Healthcare / hospitals**, **Petrol prices / fuel**, and **Housing /**



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price of housing.

- The National party is now solely perceived as being the most capable of managing **The economy**, holding a 5-point lead over Labour on this issue.
- Beyond the top five issues, the Green Party is seen as the most capable party for managing **Climate change and Environmental pollution**, while Te Pāti Māori leads on **Issues facing Māori**.
- When compared to Australia, New Zealanders show higher levels of concern for **Healthcare** (39% vs. 20% in Australia) and **The economy** (33% vs. 25%). Australians, in turn, are more concerned about **Housing** (40% vs. 21% in NZ) and **Immigration** (23% vs. 6% in NZ).

Carin Hercock, Country Manager, Ipsos New Zealand, said: “New Zealanders are making it very clear that this issues that they think are most important leading up to this year’s election are inflation, the economy and healthcare. The race is tight between the two major parties on these issues with Labour leading on inflation and healthcare and National regaining the lead on the economy.”

Amanda Dudding, Executive Director Public Affairs, Ipsos New Zealand, added: “Concerns about fuel prices have surged into the top 5 issues facing New Zealanders post the Iran conflict, far higher than concerns about immigration that have now slipped back to the bottom 5 issues we monitor ”

For a full copy of the 32nd Ipsos Issues monitor, New Zealand edition, please visit our website <https://www.ipsos.com/en-nz>

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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 15 and 20 May 2026, with 1,001 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.



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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).

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