PRESS RELEASE

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Petrol-price concern surges to third as cost of living remains New Zealanders' leading issue

New Zealand / Aotearoa, October 2026 – Ipsos New Zealand has released the 35th 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 1,008 New Zealanders shows that *inflation / cost of living* remains the country's leading concern at 64%, followed by *healthcare / hospitals* at 45%. The major movement this wave is *petrol prices / fuel*, which has increased significantly by 14 percentage points to 31%, moving from seventh to third place and reaching its highest level recorded in the monitor.

Concern about *the economy* has fallen by 4 percentage points to 30%, moving from third to fourth place, while *unemployment* remains the fifth-ranked issue at 19%.

New Zealanders' assessment of the current government performance remains stable. The average rating is **4.1 out of 10**, unchanged from September, with 26% rating the government positively at 7–10 out of 10.

Other key findings include:

Issues

- **Inflation / cost of living (64%)** remains New Zealanders' number-one concern and has increased gradually since February 2025.
- **Healthcare / hospitals (45%)** remains the second-ranked issue and is at its highest level since the monitor began in 2018.
- **Petrol prices / fuel (31%)** has increased significantly by 14 percentage points since September, becoming the third-ranked concern.
- **The economy (30%)** has moved from third to fourth place after a 4-percentage-point decline this wave.
- **Unemployment (19%)** remains the fifth-ranked issue**,** ahead of **housing / price of housing (18%).**
- **Crime / law and order (14%)** continues to trend downward in the long-term and is 13 percentage points lower than in October 2024.

Government performance and party capability

- Government performance remains stable at 4.1 out of 10, with 26% giving a positive rating and 42% giving a negative rating of 0–3.
- **Labour** is perceived as the party most capable of managing all five of New Zealanders' leading concerns for the third consecutive wave.
- **Inflation / cost of living** shows a significant 7-percentage-point increase in Labour's perceived capability to 38%; National is at 24%.
- **Healthcare / hospitals** records Labour's largest capability advantage among the top five issues, at 42% compared with National at 21%.
- **Crime / law and order** remains the only issue on which National leads, but the gap has narrowed to 1 percentage point: National 29%, Labour 28%.

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Carin Hercock, Country Manager, Ipsos New Zealand, said: "While fieldwork for this wave of the Ipsos New Zealand Issues Monitor coincided with prominent media coverage of politicians engaging with gangs, New Zealanders are sending a clear message about what matters most to them as they head to the polling booth. Inflation and the cost of living remain the country's leading concern and continue to dominate the public agenda."

Amanda Dudding, Executive Director Public Affairs, Ipsos New Zealand, added: "As fuel prices climbed to near-record levels across New Zealand, concern about the cost of fuel has surged into the top three issues facing the country. The result highlights how sensitive New Zealanders remain to increases in everyday household costs and reinforces the importance of cost-of-living pressures in shaping voter sentiment ahead of the election."

For a full copy of the 35th 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 19 and 27 October 2026, with 1,008 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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