



Ministry for the Environment commissioned customer research

Date Submitted:	17 August 2018	Tracking #: 2018-B-04630	
Security Level	UNCLASSIFIED	MfE Priority:	Non-Urgent

	Action sought:
To Hon David Parker, Minister for the Environment	Note
To Hon Nanaia Mahuta, Associate Minister for the Environment	Note
To Hon Eugenie Sage, Associate Minister for the Environment	Note
To Hon James Shaw, Minister for Climate Change	Note

Actions for Minister's office staff	Return the signed report to MfE.
Number of Attachments #	Nil
Note any feedback on the quality of the report	

Ministry for the Environment contacts

Position	Name	Cell phone	1 st contact
Principal Author	Chris Baylis	s 9(2)(a)	
Responsible Manager	Laurie Edwards		✓
Director	Vicki Connor		

Ministry for the Environment commissioned customer research

Key Messages

1. This briefing is to inform Ministers and Associate Ministers about research commissioned by the Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry).
2. Colmar Brunton was tasked with completing a baseline attitudes survey to better understand what New Zealanders think about climate change, water and waste issues.
3. This is the first time that the Ministry has undertaken this type of research. The research will be repeated to understand how perceptions of environmental issues change over time.
4. The full results can be made available to Ministers.

Environmental Attitudes Baseline Research by Colmar Brunton

5. The goals of the Partnerships and Customers Directorate of the Ministry are to engage and mobilise New Zealanders, help create policy that works, and promote environment reporting that answers people's questions.
6. To achieve this, the Ministry must have a good understanding of the priorities and motivations of New Zealanders in relation to the environment. This will allow it to produce communications that have a greater level of engagement.

This Colmar Brunton research is the first dedicated baseline research that the Ministry has conducted. While other environmental research exists, conducting the research ourselves allows us to regularly re-run the survey, measure the impact of our work over time. Running the survey regularly will also highlight those issues that are persistent.

Key climate research findings

7. Around one in three New Zealanders are worried about climate change.
8. Only 39 per cent of New Zealanders believe climate change is caused entirely or mainly by human activity, whereas 42 per cent say it is caused by a combination of nature and human activity.
9. While the majority of New Zealanders (57 per cent) think we are heading in the right direction on tackling climate change, there is a call for more decisive action - only 18 per cent feel that the Government is doing enough.
10. There is support (62 per cent) for a more ambitious emissions target.
11. New Zealanders are optimistic that individuals can make a difference (62 per cent) and are responsible for doing so (75 per cent). However, many show a reluctance to 'walk the talk' by changing their behaviours.

Key water research findings

12. Of those surveyed, 82 per cent of New Zealanders feel that it is very or extremely important to improve the quality of our water.
13. New Zealanders are divided as to the quality of our waterways, with 36 per cent feeling it is good, 38 per cent poor, and 22 per cent okay (5 per cent don't know).
14. New Zealanders feel that improving water quality is the responsibility of the Government,

businesses, and farmers. However, they do not consider that any of these groups are doing enough.

15. New Zealanders have a lower sense of personal responsibility for water quality, and there is generally low awareness of household behaviours that can impact water quality.
16. Most (83 per cent) accept that polluters should pay to improve water quality, but only 40 per cent think this should include ratepayers. This reflects a lower sense of culpability in terms of water quality.

Key waste research findings

17. Of those surveyed, 50 per cent of New Zealanders are very or extremely worried about the impacts of waste.
18. New Zealanders feel that the responsibility for waste reduction falls on everyone, but that the Government is not currently doing enough.
19. There is a high level of personal responsibility, combined with less preparedness to pay more in rates and taxes. This suggests a preference for changes in individual behaviour over taxpayer-funded initiatives. This could be symptomatic of a lack of understanding of the infrastructure required to transition to a circular economy.
20. There is an opportunity to raise awareness of recycling behaviours outside of the home, as well as many waste reduction behaviours.
21. The main barriers to reducing plastic waste are a lack of alternatives, the cost of reusable items, and forgetting to carry reusable items.
22. Reducing waste was rated as the third most important challenge facing New Zealand over the next 20 years, behind fixing hospitals and providing affordable housing.

How the Ministry will use the research

23. The research will be used to inform:
 - a. Future policy development:
 - i. The themes in the research will help inform the Ministry's policy work to ensure it aligns with areas of public concern.
 - b. Communication work:
 - i. The research helps the Ministry understand the motivations of different audience segments, which will be used to develop communications that these segments will be more receptive to.
 - ii. The results will be referenced in speeches, press releases and other communication activity.
 - c. Stakeholder engagement:
 - i. The Ministry will share the research with partners, where the insights will be valuable to their work.
 - ii. The Ministry will use the research to better develop strategic partnerships with key stakeholders.

Recommendations

We recommend that you:

- a. **Note** the Ministry for the Environment’s customer focused research. The findings are summarised above.
- b. **Note** the complete results are available on request.

Yes/No

Signature

Vicki Connor
Director Communications and Engagement, Communications and Engagement
Partnerships and Customers

Hon David Parker
Minister for the Environment

Date

Hon Nanaia Mahuta
Associate Minister for the Environment

Date

05/09/18

Hon James Shaw
Minister for Climate Change

Date

Hon Eugenie Sage
Associate Minister for the Environment

Date

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