

MEDIA RELEASE (embargoed until midday 26 September) 21 September 2021

New Zealanders are committed to combatting Covid-19...

The topic:

As other countries start to ease their Covid-19 restrictions, and Auckland faced a fifth week of Level 4 lockdown, we decided to ask New Zealanders their opinions on what New Zealand should be doing to manage Covid-19.

Our poll surveyed n=1,002 New Zealanders, 18 years of age and over, and was completed between 17 and 20 September 2021. We asked two questions in order to:

- ◆ **Gauge whether the public think New Zealand should continue aiming to eliminate Covid-19 through lockdowns, or whether we should ease restrictions.**
- ◆ **Measure the level of agreement that vaccination should be mandatory for certain frontline groups, overseas visitors, restaurant and bar patrons, and businesses that request it.**

Key findings

- ◆ **Almost three quarters (70%) support lockdowns to eliminate Covid-19, although most of this support (47%) is for lockdowns until the vaccination target has been reached.**
 - ◆ Aucklanders are less in favour (66% compared to 72% for the rest of the country).
- ◆ **Another fifth (19%) are in favour of ‘strict rules’, but without lockdowns** (e.g. mask wearing, testing and quarantine) but not lockdowns.
- ◆ Just seven percent **disagree** with the current approach and any approach based on ‘rules’ around mask wearing, testing and quarantine.
- ◆ Reflecting the support for lockdowns and vaccination, 80% think our international borders should **only be opened** to those with vaccination passports and a recent negative test (79
- ◆ There is strong support for vaccinating New Zealanders **operating on the ‘frontline’** of the pandemic:
 - ◆ Around eighty percent agree vaccination should be mandatory for certain essential workers, e.g. health and quarantine frontline workers (85%).
- ◆ However, there is less support for rules that impinge on **businesses’ and personal freedoms**:
 - ◆ Over one-half think businesses should be able to make vaccination and testing compulsory for continued employment (57%), while more than one-quarter disagree (28%).
 - ◆ One-half (50%) agree that restaurants and bars should only serve vaccinated patrons, while one-third disagree (32%).



- ◆ One-third (34%) think unvaccinated people should not be disadvantaged in terms of where they can go and what they can do, while one-half (4%) disagree.

Key results – Managing Covid-19

When New Zealanders were asked what New Zealand should be doing to manage Covid-19:

- ◆ Seventy percent stated they think New Zealand should **aim to eliminate Covid-19 from New Zealand with lockdowns**:
 - ◆ **until Covid-19 is no longer a threat** – supported by almost one-quarter (23%).
 - ◆ **until enough New Zealanders are vaccinated** – supported by almost one-half (47%).
- ◆ One-fifth (19%) think New Zealand should stop having lockdowns, but **continue having ‘strict rules’ to manage the spread of Covid -19** (e.g. mask wearing, testing and quarantine).
- ◆ Only 7% want to return to life as it was before Covid-19, with no lockdowns or rules around mask wearing, testing and quarantine, and four percent are unsure.

Table 1: Q1 In your opinion what should New Zealand be doing to manage Covid-19?

	Total	Auckland	The rest of NZ
Unweighted base =	1002	336	666
	%	%	%
Total: Aim to eliminate Covid-19 from New Zealand with lockdowns	70	66	72
Aim to eliminate Covid-19 from New Zealand with lockdowns, as required, until Covid-19 is no longer a threat .	23	25	22
Aim to eliminate Covid-19 from New Zealand, with lockdowns, as required, until enough New Zealanders are vaccinated.	47	41	50
Stop having lockdowns, but continue having rules to manage the spread of Covid -19 (e.g. mask wearing, testing and quarantine).	19	21	17
Return to life as it was before Covid-19, with no lockdowns or rules around mask wearing, testing and quarantine.	7	9	6
I'm not sure.	4	4	5
Total	100	100	100

- ◆ Compared to the rest of New Zealand, Aucklanders are significantly less likely to support:
 - ◆ Lockdowns to eliminate Covid-19 (at 66% compared to 72% for the rest of NZ)
 - ◆ Using lockdowns until enough New Zealanders are vaccinated (at 41% compared to 50% for the rest of NZ).
- ◆ In terms of overall support for lockdowns, it is the middle-aged who are less in favour – with 65% of 35 to 54 year olds in support, compared with 73% of 18 to 34 year olds and 74% of those aged 55 or older.
- ◆ Older New Zealanders (aged 55 plus) are more likely to support lockdowns ‘until enough are vaccinated’ – at 55%, compared to 40% of those younger.
- ◆ While younger people (aged 18 to 34 years) are the most likely to support lockdowns, as required, ‘until Covid-19 is no longer a threat’ – at 29% compared to 21% of those older.



Key results – Managing Covid-19

When asked if vaccination should be mandatory for people entering New Zealand from overseas and certain essential workers there was strong support:

- ◆ Around eighty percent agree vaccination should be required for health and quarantine frontline workers (85%), emergency services (82%), airline workers (81%) and teachers and childcare workers (78%). Slightly less agree it is essential for postal workers and couriers (71%).
- ◆ Relatedly, 80% think our international borders should only be opened to those with vaccination passports and a recent negative test (79%).

However, when it comes to rules affecting businesses, there was less support for mandatory vaccination:

- ◆ Over one-half agree that businesses should be able to decide whether to make vaccination and testing a requirement for continued employment (57%), while more than one-quarter disagree (28%).
- ◆ One-half (50%) agree that restaurants and bars should only serve vaccinated patrons, while one-third disagree (32%).

One-third (34%) think unvaccinated people should not be disadvantaged in terms of where they can go and what they can do, while one-half (46%) disagree.

Table 2: Q2 Which of the following do you agree with...?

Unweighted base = 1002	Yes I agree %	No I disagree %	I am not sure %
Vaccination should be mandatory (required) for all:			
• Health and quarantine frontline workers	85	11	4
• Emergency services (i.e. police, ambulance and fire)	82	13	5
• Airline workers	81	13	7
• Teachers and childcare workers	78	15	7
• Postal workers and couriers	71	20	9
Our international borders should only be opened to those with vaccination passports and a recent negative test	79	12	8
Businesses should be able to decide whether to make vaccination and testing a requirement for continued employment	57	28	15
Restaurants and bars should only serve vaccinated patrons	50	32	18
People who are not vaccinated should not be disadvantaged in terms of where they can go and what they can do.	34	46	21



- ◆ The views of Aucklanders are very similar to those of the rest of the country, except they are more likely to think that restaurants and bars should only serve vaccinated patrons - at 54%, compared to 48% for the rest of NZ.
- ◆ Seniors (aged 55 or older) are the most likely to support wide-spread vaccination, with the majority agreeing that:
 - ◆ Vaccinations should be mandatory for those essential workers listed, e.g. health and quarantine frontline workers (93%)
 - ◆ People entering NZ should have vaccination passports and a recent negative test (85%)
 - ◆ Businesses should be able to decide whether to make vaccination and testing a requirement for continued employment (62%), and
 - ◆ Restaurants and bars should only serve vaccinated patrons (61% agree).
- ◆ Younger New Zealanders are more likely to agree that people who are not vaccinated should not be disadvantaged in terms of where they can go and what they can do, including two-fifths (42%) of those aged 18 to 34 years and one-third (36%) of those aged 35 to 54 years. This compares to one-quarter of seniors (24% of those aged 55 or older).

Comment:

“These results demonstrate that on the whole most New Zealanders are pragmatic. Despite the massive disruptions and inconvenience – with almost three quarters in favour of lockdowns and another fifth in favour of ‘strict rules’ without lockdowns to try and eliminate Covid-19. Less than ten percent are renegades, railing against restrictions.

However, the clear message sent through this poll is that it’s all about the nation of 5 million getting vaccinated – almost one-half regard lockdowns as the solution until the vaccination target has been met, and most want mandatory vaccination for our essential workers, and people entering New Zealand. There is a sense that younger people are less in favour of mandatory vaccination, although this may be due to timing with vaccination appointments opening to younger age groups this month.

Despite this, there is also an element of libertarianism reflected in the results for those who are not vaccinated, restaurant entry requirements and whether businesses should be able to laud it over their staff!”

Research New Zealand Managing Partner, Emanuel Kalafatellis.

This survey of 1,002 respondents aged 18 years and over was conducted online between 17 and 20 September 2021. The maximum margin of error is +/- 3.1 percent (at the 95 percent confidence level).

*The sample has been weighted by gender and age to ensure the results are representative of the population 18 years plus based on these demographic criteria. The survey was **not** undertaken on behalf of any organisation, but as part of Research New Zealand’s social poll of New Zealanders’ opinions about topical issues.*



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