



## Should New Zealand adopt a new national flag?

### The issue:

New Zealand adopted its current national flag in 1902. In August this year, legislation was passed allowing referenda on changing the flag. The first referendum is scheduled to take place in November this year and voters will be asked to rank five alternative flag designs.

The most-preferred design from that first referendum will then go to a second binding referendum in March 2016, where voters will choose between the current flag and the most preferred alternative.

The move to change New Zealand's flag has sparked wide debate across the country, not only in relation to the five designs that have been chosen as possible alternatives, but also as to whether or not the current flag should be changed at all.

In order to gauge public opinion about changing the national flag, we decided to conduct a poll with a nationally representative sample of adult New Zealanders in September 2015.

### The poll questions:

The following questions were asked:

1. *Do you agree or disagree that New Zealand should adopt a new flag?*
2. *The panel overseeing the possible change of the NZ national flag has recently announced a short-list of 4 designs. There has been some public support for a fifth design called 'the Red Peak'. Do you agree or disagree that the Red Peak should be/should have been added to the list of 4 that will be rated in the postal referendum in November?*
3. *Which of the 4 officially short-listed designs [or the Red Peak] do you prefer the most?*

### Key results:

- ◆ As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents (61 percent) **did not agree** that New Zealand should adopt a new flag.
  - ◆ Just over one-quarter (28 percent) were in favour of changing the flag, while 11 percent were undecided.
- ◆ Of the 39 percent who either agreed, or were yet to make up their minds as to whether or not New Zealand should adopt a new flag, opinions were divided on the inclusion of the Red Peak.
  - ◆ Forty three percent felt the Red Peak should have been added to the list, while 45 percent did not (Table 2).



- ◆ Again, based on the 39 percent of respondents who either agreed, or were yet to make up their minds about changing the New Zealand flag, there were mixed views on which of the five flag designs were preferred.
- ◆ One-third (31 percent) selected the black, white and blue Silver Fern with Southern Cross as their first preference. The red, white and blue version of the same flag was first choice for 23 percent. Both flags were designed by Kyle Lockwood.
- ◆ Red Peak was selected as first choice by 22 percent. In contrast, just five percent picked the Koru as their first choice, and one percent selected the black and white Silver Fern.
- ◆ Nine percent could not decide which option they preferred, while 10 percent did not like any of them.

### **Demographic differences:**

We also analysed the results to these questions by a number of demographic variables including: age and gender. The results to this analysis are as follows:

- ◆ There were no statistically significant differences between demographic sub-groups for whether NZ should adopt a new national flag.
- ◆ However, males were more likely to support the inclusion of the Red Peak (60 percent, compared with 27 percent of females), as were respondents aged 18 to 54 years (50 percent, compared with 31 percent of respondents aged 55 years and older).
- ◆ In terms of the preferred new flag designs, female respondents were significantly more likely to rank the black, white and blue Silver Fern with Southern Cross as their first preference (48 percent, compared with 13 percent of males), whereas males were significantly more likely than females to prefer the Red Peak (37 percent, compared with just 7 percent of females).
- ◆ Older respondents (aged 55 years and older) were significantly more likely to rank the red, white and blue Silver Fern with Southern Cross as their first preference (39 percent, compared with 15 percent of respondents aged 18 to 54 years).

The results to these questions are presented in the following tables:



**Table 1: Agreement that New Zealand should adopt a new national flag**

*Do you agree or disagree that New Zealand should adopt a new flag?*

	September/ October 2015
Base=	277 %
Agree	28
Disagree	61
Don't know	11
Total	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.  
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

**Table 2: Agreement that the Red Peak flag should be included as an option in the November referendum**

*Do you agree or disagree that the Red Peak should be added [should have been added] to the list of 4 that will be rated in the postal referendum in November?*

	September/ October 2015
Base=	110* %
Agree	43
Disagree	45
Don't know	12
Total	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.  
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.  
Sub-sample excludes respondents who felt New Zealand should not adopt a new flag.

**Table 3: Preference of the flag design options in the November referendum**

*Q16. Which of the 4 officially short-listed designs [or the Red Peak] do you prefer the most, the second most, etc.? [Table shows results for first preference].*

	Base=	First choice 110* %
Silver Fern with Southern Cross (black, white and blue)		31
Silver Fern with Southern Cross (red, white and blue)		23
Red Peak		22
Koru		5
Silver Fern (black and white)		1
None of these		10
Don't know		9
Total		100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.  
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.  
Sub-sample excludes respondents who felt New Zealand should not adopt a new flag.



**Comment:**

“As other research has shown, this poll shows that the general public have limited appetite for changing the New Zealand flag”, said Research New Zealand Director, Emanuel Kalafatelis.

*The Research New Zealand poll was conducted with 277 people aged 18 years and over, in an online survey from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September to the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2015. The maximum margin of error is +/- 6.7 percent (at the 95 percent confidence level). The data has been weighted to ensure it is an accurate representation of the general population of New Zealand. The polls were not taken on behalf of any organisation, but as part of Research New Zealand’s monthly survey of attitudes and opinions.*

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## TABULATIONS

**Table 4: Agreement that New Zealand should adopt a new national flag (by gender)**

*Q13. Do you agree or disagree that New Zealand should adopt a new flag?*

	Base =	Total	Male	Female
		277	122	155
		%	%	%
Agree		28	29	28
Disagree		61	60	62
Don't know		11	11	11
Total		100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.  
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

**Table 5: Agreement that the Red Peak flag should be included as an option in the November referendum (by gender)**

*Q14. Do you agree the 'Red Peak' should be added/should have been added to the list of 4 that will be rated in the postal referendum in November?*

	Base =	Total	Male	Female
		110*	49	61
		%	%	%
Agree		43	60	27
Disagree		45	28	62
Don't know		12	13	11
Total		100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.  
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

\*Sub-sample excludes respondents who felt New Zealand should not adopt a new flag.

**Table 6: Preference of the flag design options in the November referendum (by gender)**

*Q16. Which of the 4 officially short-listed designs [for the Red Peak] do you prefer the most, the second most, etc.? [Table shows results for first preference].*

	Base =	Total	Male	Female
		110*	49	61
		%	%	%
Silver Fern with Southern Cross (black, white and blue)		31	13	48
Silver Fern with Southern Cross (red, white and blue)		23	21	26
Red Peak		22	37	7
Koru		5	4	5
Silver Fern (black and white)		1	0	1
None of these		10	15	7
Don't know		9	12	7
Total		100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.  
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

\*Sub-sample excludes respondents who felt New Zealand should not adopt a new flag.



**Table 7: Agreement that New Zealand should adopt a new national flag (by age)**

*Q13. Do you agree or disagree that New Zealand should adopt a new flag?*

	Base =	Total 277 %	18-54 years 131 %	55 years and over 146 %
Agree		28	26	34
Disagree		61	62	58
Don't know		11	12	8
Total		100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.  
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

**Table 8: Agreement that the Red Peak flag should be included as an option in the November referendum (by age)**

*Q14. Do you agree the 'Red Peak' should be added/should have been added to the list of 4 that will be rated in the postal referendum in November?*

	Base =	Total 110* %	18-54 years 49 %	55 years and over 61 %
Agree		43	50	31
Disagree		45	37	60
Don't know		12	13	9
Total		100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.  
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

\*Sub-sample excludes respondents who felt New Zealand should not adopt a new flag.

**Table 9: Preference of the flag design options in the November referendum (by age)**

*Q16. Which of the 4 officially short-listed designs [or the Red Peak] do you prefer the most, the second most, etc.? [Table shows results for first preference].*

	Base =	Total 110* %	18-54 years 49 %	55 years and over 61 %
Silver Fern with Southern Cross (black, white and blue)		31	31	30
Silver Fern with Southern Cross (red, white and blue)		23	15	39
Red Peak		22	24	16
Koru		5	6	2
Silver Fern (black and white)		1	0	2
None of these		10	12	8
Don't know		9	12	4
Total		100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.  
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

\*Sub-sample excludes respondents who felt New Zealand should not adopt a new flag.