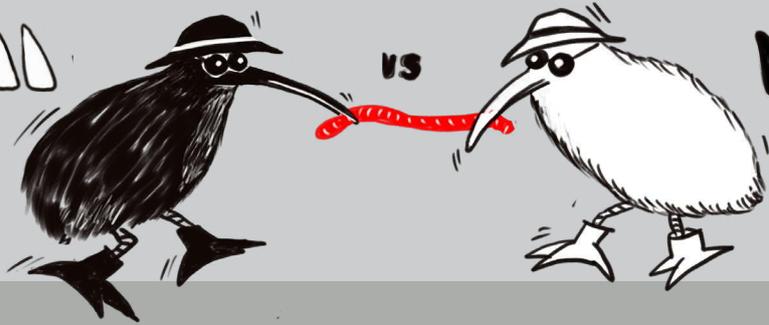


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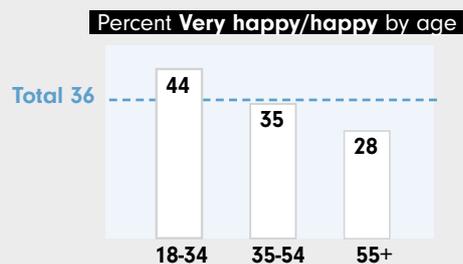
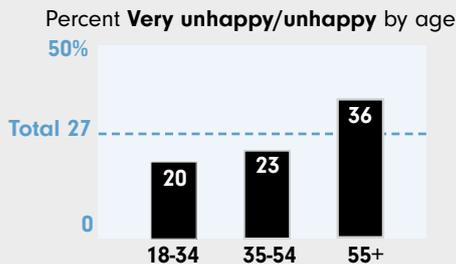
...or how the lifting of mandates is polarising New Zealand

After the lifting of most of the vaccine mandates was announced on 23 March, we asked New Zealanders how they felt about these changes, and why.

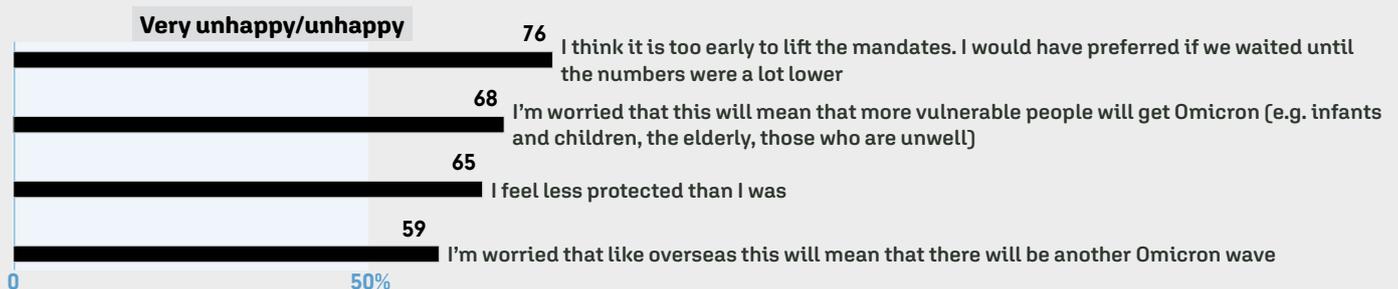


More than a quarter (27%) of respondents stated they were **unhappy or very unhappy** with the **lifting of mandates** while **over a third (36%)** were happy or very happy. The proportion of **neutral** respondents was also **36%**.

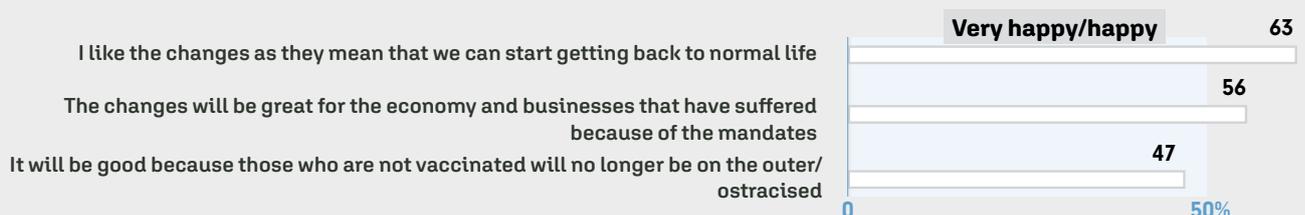
The most significant differences in responses were in terms of age with almost **twice as many unhappy older respondents (36% of those aged 55+)** compared to **20% of the younger group (18-34 years)**. Conversely, **younger respondents were happier** with the mandates lifting (**44%**) than the **older group (28%)**.



The main reasons given by those "unhappy/very unhappy with the mandates being lifted":



The main reasons given by those "happy/very happy with the mandates being lifted":



MEDIA RELEASE (embargoed until midday 3 April 2022)

New Zealand's polarised about the lifting of mandates

The topic:

On Wednesday 23 March 2022, Prime Minister Ardern announced that New Zealand would lift most mandates, including those relating to teachers and the Police, on 4 April 2022. On the day of the announcement, 11 new COVID-19 deaths were reported and over 20,000 new community cases.

The following day, we started polling New Zealanders about this announcement. In total, n=1,001 New Zealanders, 18 years of age and over were interviewed between 24-29 March 2022. We asked two questions:

- **A vaccine mandate is where vaccination is compulsory. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has announced that all COVID-19 vaccine mandates (except for health and disability, aged care, corrections and Border/MIQ workers) will be removed from April 4, 2022.**

How do you feel about the changes to vaccine mandates? (And measured this on a 5-point 'happiness' scale.)

- **What are your reasons for this? (And presented a list of seven possible positive and negative reasons, reflecting the conversation at the time.)**

Key findings

- **New Zealand is polarised about the lifting of the mandates.**
 - Over one-quarter of respondents (27%) stated they were 'unhappy' about the lifting of the mandates.
 - In comparison, 36% stated they were happy, with the difference statistically significant.
- **Reasons for and against the lifting of the mandates were predictable.**
 - Those in favour of the lifting of the mandates most frequently stated this was because it meant that New Zealand could get back to **some semblance of 'normality'** (63%).
 - In comparison, those not in favour of the lifting of the mandates most frequently stated this was because they felt it was **'too early to lift the mandates and we should wait until the number of cases was lower'** (76%).



Key results – ‘Happiness’ with the lifting of the mandates

Table 1 shows the level at which respondents were happy or not happy with the lifting of the mandates. This table breaks down the results by age.

As usual, the results to the two poll questions have been examined by a range of demographic variables, and the most significant differences are in terms of age. Less significant differences are apparent in terms of gender and surprisingly, region.

In the case of the regions, respondents in Auckland were slightly less ‘happy’ with the lifting of the mandates than respondents in other regions of the country.

The table shows:

- Younger respondents, aged 18-34, more likely to state they were ‘happy’ with the lifting of the mandates compared with older respondents, aged 55+ (44% compared with 28% respectively).
- However, it should be noted that 20% of the younger age group was ‘unhappy’, whereas 28% of the older age group was ‘happy’ (and 36% ‘unhappy’).

In the case of the regions, respondents in Auckland were significantly less likely to state they were ‘very happy’ with the lifting of the mandates than respondents in other regions of the country (13% and 20% respectively).

Table 1: Percentage of respondents who state they are happy or unhappy with the lifting of the mandates – by age

	Total	18-34	35 - 54	55+
Unweighted base =	1001	295	372	334
	%	%	%	%
Very unhappy	8	8	8	8
Unhappy	19	12	15	28
Neutral	36	34	40	34
Happy	19	23	18	15
Very happy	17	21	17	13
Don't know	1	1	2	1
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



Key results – Reasons for being ‘happy’ or ‘unhappy’ with the lifting of the mandates

Table 2 shows the reasons why respondents were ‘happy’ or ‘not happy’ with the lifting of the mandates. The table shows:

- Those in favour of the lifting of the mandates most frequently stated this was because it meant that New Zealand could get back to **some semblance of ‘normality’** (63%).

Other reasons, also frequently given by substantial numbers, included that the lifting of the mandates meant that ‘businesses and the economy in general would no longer be suffering’ (56%) and those New Zealanders who were not vaccinated ‘would no longer be ostracised’ (47%).

- In comparison, those not in favour of the lifting of the mandates most frequently stated this was because they felt it was **‘too early to lift the mandates and we should wait until the number of cases was lower’** (76%).

Other reasons, also frequently given by substantial numbers, included a ‘concern for more vulnerable people such as infants and the elderly’ (68%), a ‘concern that (with the lifting of the mandates) they felt less protected’ (65%) and a concern ‘that there would be another Omicron wave as was the case overseas’ (59%).

Table 2: Reasons why respondents stated they were ‘happy’ or ‘not happy’ with the lifting of the mandates – by ‘happiness’ groups

Unweighted base =	Total 1001 %	Unhappy 256 %	Neutral 362 %	Happy 370 %
I'm worried that this will mean that more vulnerable people will get Omicron (e.g. infants and children, the elderly, those who are unwell)	38	68	41	12
I feel less protected than I was	31	65	29	8
I'm worried that like overseas this will mean that there will be another Omicron wave	30	59	27	11
I think it is too early to lift the mandates. I would have preferred if we waited until the numbers were a lot lower	36	76	34	9
I like the changes as they mean that we can start getting back to normal life	32	4	24	63
The changes will be great for the economy and businesses that have suffered because of the mandates	33	11	27	56
It will be good because those who are not vaccinated will no longer be on the outer/ostracised	24	5	16	47
Don't know	5	3	8	2

Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.



Comment:

“Two years ago, when New Zealand first went into lockdown at the end of March 2020, we completed a special survey of New Zealanders to see how they were managing. As a result of that survey, we categorised approximately 25% as ‘worriers’ – obviously concerned at the prospect of catching COVID-19, or people close to them, and exhibiting this concern in various behaviours.

This group of worriers has stayed with us throughout the intervening period, and it is not therefore surprising to see them again in this current poll.

What is also interesting is the fact that younger people are the most positive about the lifting of the mandates. It was not that long ago (February 2022) that we were identifying this group as the group who were pulling back on going out and curtailing other behaviours because they were concerned with the impending Omicron wave.

However, overall, the jury is still out about the lifting of the mandates and only time will tell whether this has been a good or bad move.”

Research New Zealand Managing Partner, Emanuel Kalafatelis.

This survey of 1,001 respondents aged 18 years and over was conducted online, from 24-29 March 2022. 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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