Rangahau Aotearoa
Research New Zealand

**MEDIA RELEASE** **EMBARGOED UNTIL 12PM SUNDAY 1 NOVEMBER**

# We may not like all politicians, but endangering their lives is just not on!

## The topic

Independent Australian MP Helen Haines was recently attacked in her hometown close to Melbourne by a disgruntled constituent using his car as a weapon. Despite the best efforts of hospital staff, both her legs have been amputated.

Australian MPs have long valued their ability to work freely in their community, as they have here in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, as a result of this event, there are now calls that all politicians should receive official protection as they go about their work.

## The survey

A nationally-representative sample of n=1,041 New Zealanders, 18 years of age and over were interviewed online between 22 to 26 October 2026. We asked the following questions:

Q1. "Thinking about the political scene in Aotearoa New Zealand, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- In the lead up to the New Zealand General Election on 7 November, the political scene in New Zealand has become more negative than it has in the past.
- Many New Zealanders form their opinions of New Zealand politicians based on what they read and see on social media posts.
- New Zealand politicians, from all parties, should receive official taxpayer-funded protection all the time.
- New Zealand's female politicians are more at risk of personal threats.
- The current cost of living situation is contributing to people's attitudes to politicians.

Q2. And how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- Coping with threats is just part of working in politics now.
- If the current level of threats continues, politicians will have to stop directly engaging with the general public.
- If the situation becomes worse, it will affect the quality of the people who choose to stand as MPs."

# High-level findings

1. By way of context:

    - Almost six times as many respondents agreed as disagreed that 'the political scene in New Zealand has become **more negative** than it has in the past' (59% agreed cf. 12% disagreed).

    - The large majority of respondents agreed that the 'current cost of living situation is **contributing** to people's attitudes to politicians' (81% agreed cf. 6% disagreed).

    - Many respondents agreed that 'many New Zealanders form their opinions of New Zealand politicians based on what they read and see on **social media posts**' (70% agreed cf. 8% disagreed).

2. Against this background:

    - Almost two-thirds of respondents agreed that 'coping with threats is **just part of working** in politics now' (60% agreed cf. 16% disagreed).

    - Just on one-half of respondents agreed that 'female politicians are **more at risk**' (51% agreed cf. 21% disagreed).

3. The net effect of the above is that more respondents **agreed** than disagreed that:

    - If 'the current level of threats continues, politicians will have to stop directly engaging with the general public (44% agreed cf. 27% disagreed).

    - If 'the situation becomes worse, it will affect the quality of the people who choose to stand as MPs' (56% cf. 15%).

4. However, fewer **disagreed** than agreed that 'New Zealand politicians, from all parties, should receive official taxpayer-funded protection all the time' (28% agreed cf. 40% disagreed).

## Comment

*"The results of this poll were almost predictable! You need to be brave and/or have a thick skin to be involved in politics.*

*However, what was less predictable, but very concerning, were opinions relating to the quality of New Zealanders who choose to come forward and become involved in politics. That would not bode well for anyone's future."*

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# Key findings – almost six times as many respondents agreed as disagreed that 'the political scene in New Zealand has become more negative than it has in the past'

Respondents were asked to say whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements relating to the current political scene and what might have contributed to the scene.

The key findings are as follows:

- Almost six times as many respondents agreed as disagreed that 'the political scene in New Zealand has become **more negative** than it has in the past' (59% agreed cf. 12% disagreed):
    - This is a universally held opinion, with the same opinion held by most people regardless of who they are or their background. However, older respondents were more inclined to agree and this may reflect what they have been used to in the past.
- Many respondents agreed that:
    - … the 'current cost of living situation is **contributing** to people's attitudes to politicians' (81% agreed cf. 6% disagreed)
    - … 'many New Zealanders form their opinions of New Zealand politicians based on what they read and see on **social media posts**' (70% agreed cf. 8% disagreed.

**Table 1: How much do you agree or disagree …?**

| | OCT 2026 % | STRONG-LY AGREE % | AGREE % | NEITHER % | DIS-AGREE % | STRONG-LY DISAGREE % | DON'T KNOW % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The political scene in New Zealand has become **more negative** than it has in the past | **100** | 22 | 37 | 23 | 10 | 2 | 6 |
| The current cost of living situation is **contributing** to people's attitudes to politicians | **100** | 41 | 40 | 10 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Many New Zealanders form their opinions of New Zealand politicians based on what they read and see on **social media posts** | **100** | 25 | 45 | 15 | 6 | 2 | 6 |

## Key findings – over twice as many respondents agreed as disagreed that 'female politicians are more at risk'

Over twice as many respondents agreed as disagreed that 'New Zealand's female politicians are more at risk of personal threats' (51% agreed cf. 21% disagreed):

- There are **no** significant differences by any demographic variable. That is, everyone held the same opinion. For example:
    - The same percentage of male and female respondents agreed that this was the case (51% of male respondents cf. 50% of female respondents).
    - Similarly, there were no differences by age group (52% of respondents 18-34 agreed, 49% of respondents aged 35-54 agreed, and 52% of respondents aged 55+ agreed).

Relatedly, almost two-thirds of respondents agreed that 'coping with threats is just part of working in politics now' (60% agreed cf. 16% disagreed):

- With the exception of age, there are **no** significant differences by any demographic variable:
    - Older respondents were more likely to agree (53% of respondents 18-34 agreed, 61% of respondents aged 35-54 agreed, and 66% of respondents aged 55+ agreed).

**Table 2: How much do you agree or disagree … ?**

| | OCT 2026 % | STRONG-LY AGREE % | AGREE % | NEITHER % | DIS-AGREE % | STRONG-LY DISAGREE % | DON'T KNOW % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| New Zealand's female politicians are more at risk of personal threats | **100** | 19 | 32 | 20 | 15 | 6 | 8 |
| Coping with threats is just part of working in politics now | **100** | 12 | 48 | 20 | 13 | 3 | 5 |

## Key findings – many respondents agreed that if the situation becomes worse, it will affect the quality of the people who choose to stand as MPs'

Well over twice as many respondents agreed as disagreed that 'if the situation becomes worse, it will affect the quality of the people who choose to stand as MPs' (56% agreed cf. 15% disagreed):

- There were significant differences by several demographic variables. For example:
  - Male respondents were more likely to agree that this would be the case (60% of male respondents cf. 52% of female respondents).
  - Similarly, younger and older respondents were more likely to agree than those in mid-life (59% of respondents 18-34 agreed, 53% of respondents aged 35-54 agreed, and 56% of respondents aged 55+ agreed).

The other downstream effect respondents believed would also happen is that '… politicians will have to stop directly engaging with the general public' (44% agreed cf. 27% disagreed):

- There are significant differences by age:
  - Younger and older respondents were more likely to agree than those in mid-life (49% of respondents 18-34 agreed, 44% of respondents aged 35-54 agreed, and 40% of respondents aged 55+ agreed).

**Table 3: How much do you agree or disagree …?**

| | OCT 2026 % | STRONG-LY AGREE % | AGREE % | NEITHER % | DIS-AGREE % | STRONG-LY DISAGREE % | DON'T KNOW % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| If the situation becomes worse it will affect the quality of the people who choose to stand as MPs | **100** | 14 | 42 | 21 | 12 | 3 | 8 |
| If the current level of threats continues politicians will have to stop directly engaging with the general public | **100** | 9 | 35 | 23 | 22 | 5 | 7 |

## Key findings – although respondents recognise the negativity of the situation facing politicians, fewer agreed than disagreed that they should receive taxpayer-funded protection all the time'

Significantly respondents disagreed than agreed that 'New Zealand politicians, from all parties, should receive official taxpayer-funded protection all the time' (28% agreed cf. 40% disagreed):

- There were significant differences by several demographic variables. For example:
  - Male respondents were more likely to agree that politicians should receive taxpayer-funded protection all the time (33% of male respondents cf. 23% of female respondents).
  - Similarly, younger were more likely to agree than those in mid-life or in the older stage of life (38% of respondents 18-34 agreed, 26% of respondents aged 35-54 agreed, and 21% of respondents aged 55+ agreed).
  - Respondents living in Auckland were also more likely to agree that politicians should receive taxpayer-funded protection all the time (32% of respondents living in Auckland, 29% living in the remainder of the North Island, and 21% living in the South Island).

**Table 4: How much do you agree or disagree …?**

| | OCT 2026 % | STRONG-LY AGREE % | AGREE % | NEITHER % | DIS-AGREE % | STRONG-LY DISAGREE % | DON'T KNOW % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| New Zealand politicians, from all parties, should receive official taxpayer-funded protection all the time | **100** | 7 | 21 | 26 | 26 | 14 | 7 |

## Method

This survey of 1,041 respondents aged 18 years and over was conducted online, between 22 to 26 October 2026. 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 Rangahau Aotearoa Research New Zealand's social poll of New Zealanders' opinions about topical issues.

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