

National Centre for Research on Europe

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External Perceptions of the European Union

A Survey of New Zealanders'
Perceptions and Attitudes
towards the European Union

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O WAITAHA

UNIVERSITY OF



CANTERBURY

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External Perceptions of the European Union

A Survey of New Zealanders' Perceptions and Attitudes towards the European Union

**A Study by the National Centre for Research on Europe
(in cooperation with NFO World Group, Wellington)**

February-March 2003

**Sponsored by the European Commission
Directorate-General for Education and Culture**

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Introduction

The changing profile of New Zealand society, the possible weakening of traditional ties to the UK, as well as New Zealand's potential Asian "identity", all serve to underline the need for empirical analysis of contemporary general public perceptions of Europe, one of the dominant economic, political and cultural partners for New Zealand. On the other side of this important relationship, the European Union places great value on its external relations. This initial study offers a unique view of the EU from the outside; the findings constitute the beginning of a longer-term analysis of NZ-EU perceptions.

This brochure presents the results and concluding comments of a quantitative study of the perceptions of the EU among New Zealand citizens. The study was launched and carried out by the National Centre for Research on Europe, at the University of Canterbury. These results are the first of their kind in New Zealand. There has been no previous study that explores public opinion on the EU within New Zealand. It is hoped that this report will be useful to all those interested in this important region. It is also anticipated that the survey will be repeated at regular intervals to track the trends in New Zealand views of the EU.

The objectives of this brochure are to present readers with a selection of findings from the first national survey, and to inform and to clarify the following issues:

- 1) Current images of the EU in contemporary NZ society and what they are based on;
- 2) The perceptions and attitudes towards the EU and individual European countries among New Zealand citizens;
- 3) The degree of knowledge and understanding of the EU and its evolution within the general public of New Zealand;
- 4) New Zealand sources of information about the EU.

Technical Specifications

Fieldwork

Data collection was carried out during February and March 2003

Methods

- Telephone interviews (lasting on average 15 minutes) using Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) technology
- Pre-tested questionnaire
- Up to five call backs to respondents at different times and on different days of the week
- Interviewing during weekdays, evenings and weekends to ensure a representative sample of the population
- Completed data file in SPSS format

Coverage

NZ citizens/residents aged 18 and over

Sample size

1,000 respondents

Margin of error: $\pm 3.1\%$

Institute responsible for conception, analysis and summary

National Centre for Research on Europe, University of Canterbury, NZ

Institute responsible for fieldwork

NFO World Group, Wellington, NZ

This brochure was written by

Prof. Martin Holland, Director, NCRE

Dr. Natalia Chaban, Post-Doctoral Fellow, NCRE

Maureen Benson-Rea, University of Auckland, Advisory Board, NCRE

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Who are the Kiwis?

Portrait of the New Zealanders Surveyed on the European Union

Population

New Zealand's resident population is provisionally estimated to be 3.997 million (www.stats.govt.nz, June 2003).

The sample of 1,000 respondents selected for this survey is representative of the population based on size and area. According to *Statistics New Zealand*, New Zealand's official statistical agency (www.stats.govt.nz, June 2003):

- The North Island now contains 2,991,300 people compared with an estimated 947,500 people in the South Island.
- Thirty-two out of every 100 New Zealanders now live in the Auckland Region. At 30 June 2002, about 1,251,400 people lived in the Auckland Region.
- The next largest region is Canterbury with an estimated resident population of 503,800 at 30 June 2002.
- Over three-quarters of New Zealanders live in urban areas

Sample

A list of telephone numbers for the survey was randomly generated by computer throughout New Zealand in proportion to the distribution of the population by area (Graph 1).

One person per household was interviewed. If more than one person in the household qualified for the survey, the individual who was next to have a birthday was selected.

Age

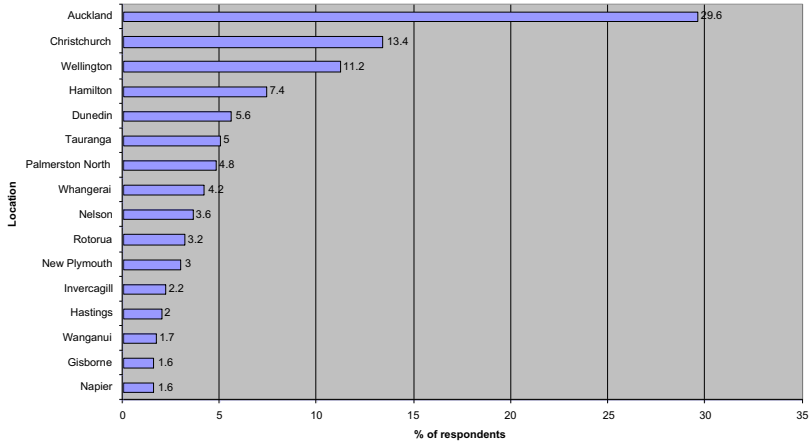
Statistics New Zealand states that half of the population of New Zealand is over 35 years old. Twelve percent of the population is aged 65 years and over (www.stats.govt.nz, June 2003). These trends are reflected in the sample (Graph 2).

Gender

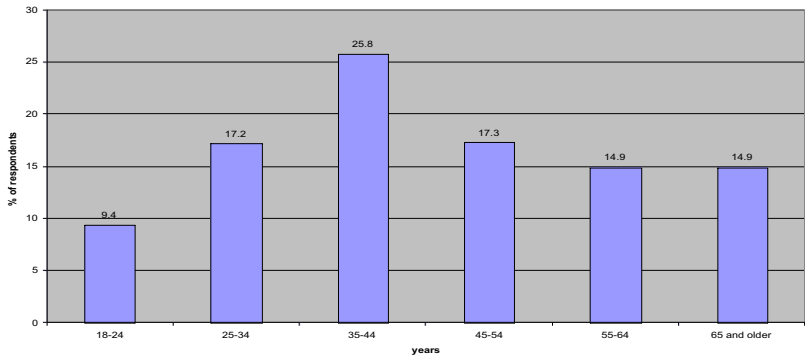
There are more females living in New Zealand than males. At 31 March 2003, there were 1,965,100 males and 2,032,200 females (www.stats.govt.nz, June 2003). The gender profile of the survey respondents reflects this population trend (Graph 3).

As random telephone interviewing normally produces a sample skew towards females and older people, the data for this survey have been re-weighted so that the final age and gender mix within each area represents the actual population based on 2001 census statistics.

Graph 1: SMS location

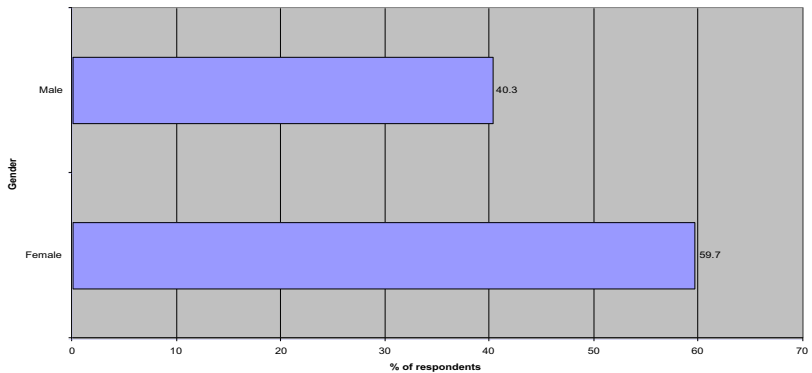


Graph 2: Age



Omits percentage of 'refused'

Graph 3: Gender



Ethnicity

In 2001, New Zealand's European population was estimated at 3.07 million (76.8% of NZ population). The Māori population was 586,000 (14.6%), the Asian population was 272,000 (6.8%), and the Pacific population was 262,000 (6.6%) (www.stats.govt.nz, June 2003).

As ethnicity is a key demographic variable, a minimum quota for the Māori and Pacific Island groups (10% and 3% respectively) was imposed. This resulted in n=75 and n=29 interviews respectively. These numbers were then re-weighted back to their true incidence in the population with greater confidence (Graph 4).

Education

The 2001 New Zealand Census Education Reference Report provided information on the educational qualifications of New Zealand's population (Table 1).

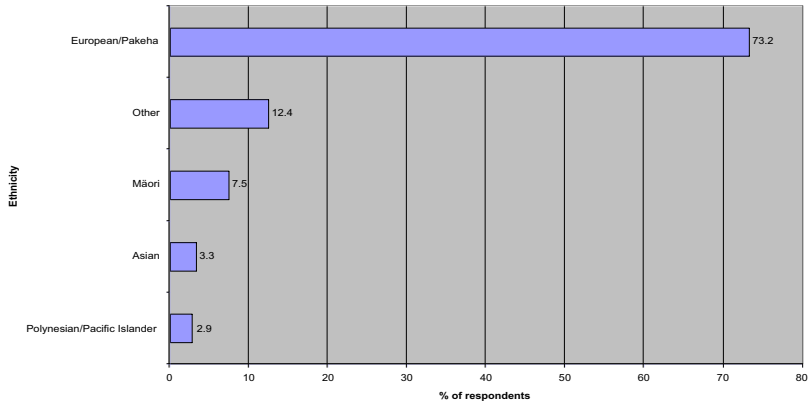
These data correlate to the sample profile in terms of the respondents' highest education qualifications (Graph 5).

Table 1. New Zealand Population: Highest Qualification 2001

Highest Qualification	Percent 2001
No Qualification	27.6
Fifth Form Qualification	15.7
Sixth Form Qualification	11.4
Higher School Qualification	6.3
Other NZ Secondary School Qualification	0.1
Overseas Secondary School Qualification	6.6
Basic Vocational Qualification	4.3
Skilled Vocational Qualification	5.5
Intermediate Vocational Qualification	2.2
Advanced Vocational Qualification	8.4
Bachelor Degree	8.1
Higher Degree	3.7
Not Elsewhere Included(1)	...
Total	100.0

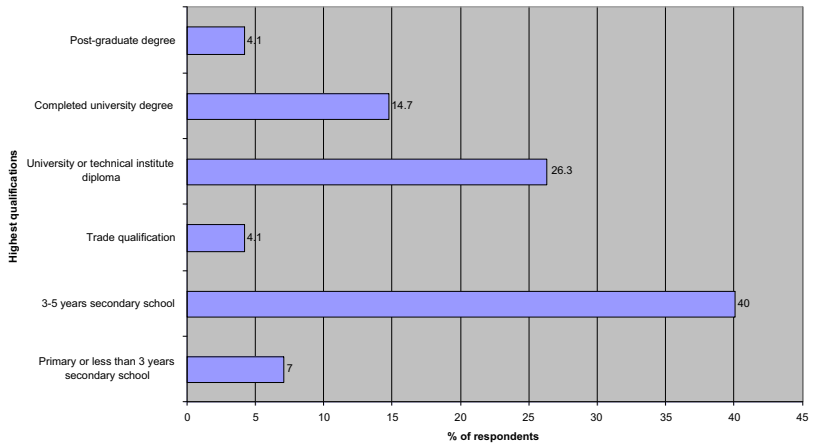
Source: New Zealand Census: Education (2001) - Reference Reports

Graph 4: Ethnic groups



Omits percentage of 'refused'

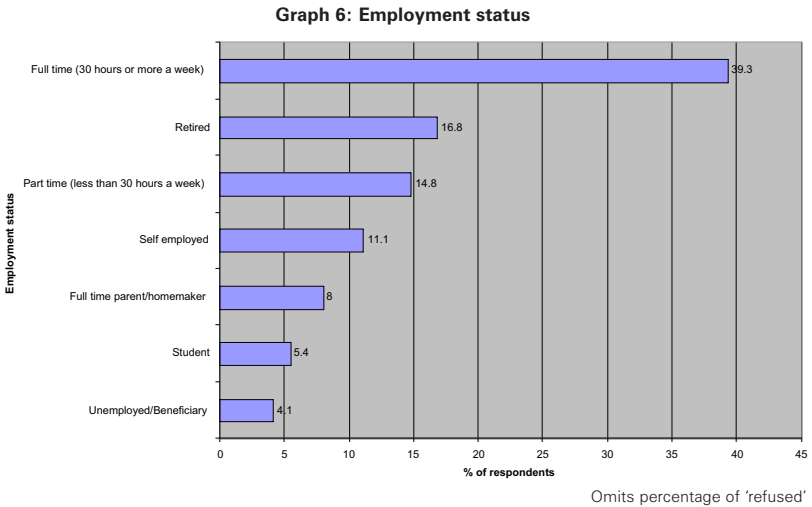
Graph 5: Highest education qualification



Omits percentage of 'refused'

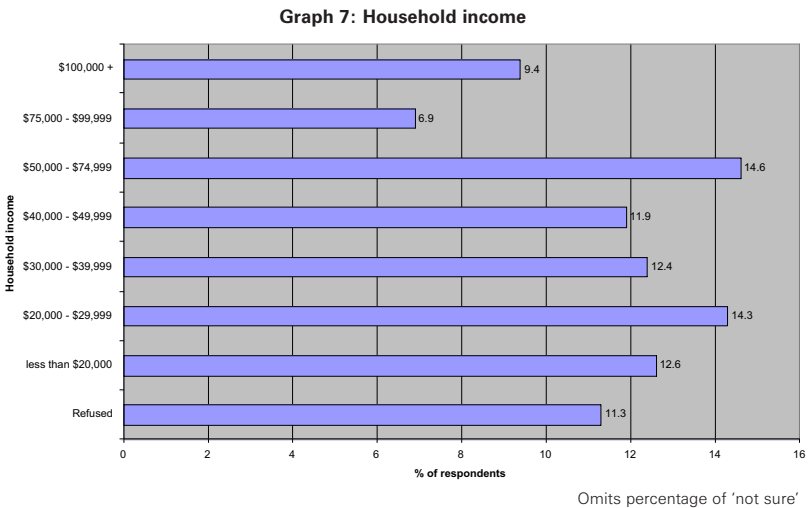
Employment status

The employment status of the sample respondents is shown in Graph 6.



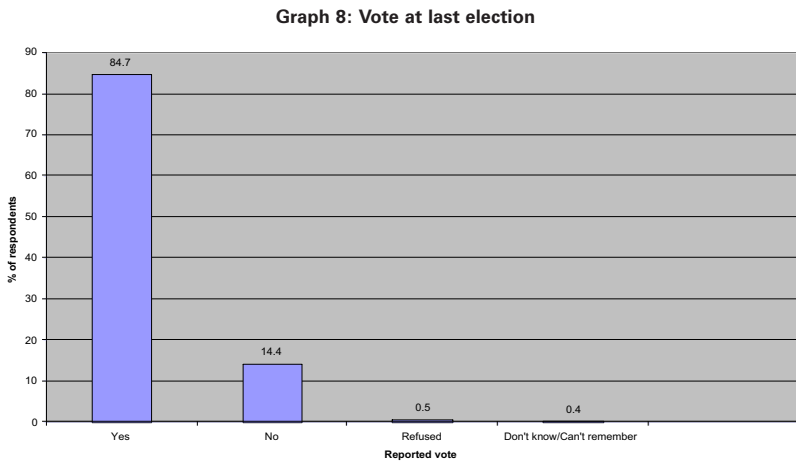
Household income

The total household income of the sample respondents is shown in Graph 7.



Political activity

The sample's involvement in political activity, as indicated by whether or not they voted at the last election, is shown in Graph 8.



Responses to the first NZ national survey on the EU came from men and women who could be described as 'opinion formers' through both their professional and private activities: 43% of respondents are between 25 and 44 years old (Graph 2), 41% have a university degree and/or university/technical institute diploma (Graph 5), 39.3% of respondents are full time workers (Graph 6), 55.2% of respondents had a household income over NZ\$30,000 per year (Graph 7), and 84.7% voted in the last election (Graph 8).

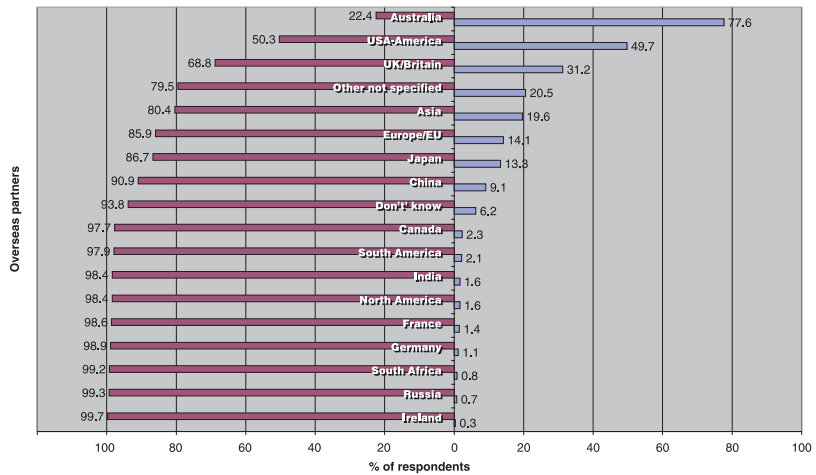
The Importance of the European Union for New Zealand

The survey results show that, currently, the most important overseas partners for New Zealand are considered to be (in order of significance) Australia, the USA, the UK, Asia, Europe/EU, Japan and China (Graph 9). (no=not important; yes=important)

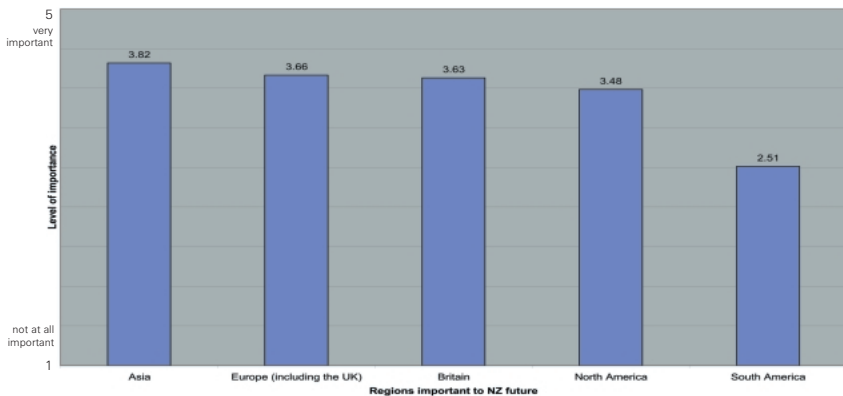
Regions important to New Zealand's future

The survey also measured people's perception of major world regions' importance to New Zealand's future (Graph 10). The regions included in the survey are Asia, Britain, Europe (including the UK), North America, and South America.

Graph 9: The importance of overseas partners for NZ



Graph 10: Importance of overseas regions to NZ future

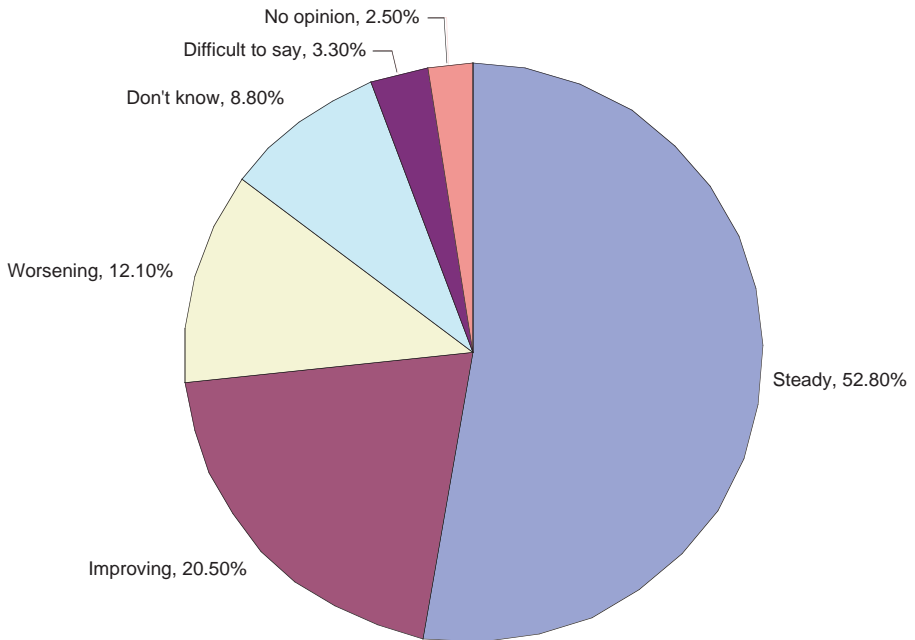


Average scores are based on a scale of 1 - 5

Knowledge and Perceptions of the European Union

As Graph 11 shows, most New Zealanders feel that the relationship between New Zealand and the EU is steady (52.8%), or improving (20.5%). However, a considerable number of respondents (14.6%) do not have a definite idea about this relationship, answering "Don't know" (8.8%), "Difficult to say" (3.3%), and "No opinion" (2.5%). 12.1% of interviewed perceived this relationship as worsening.

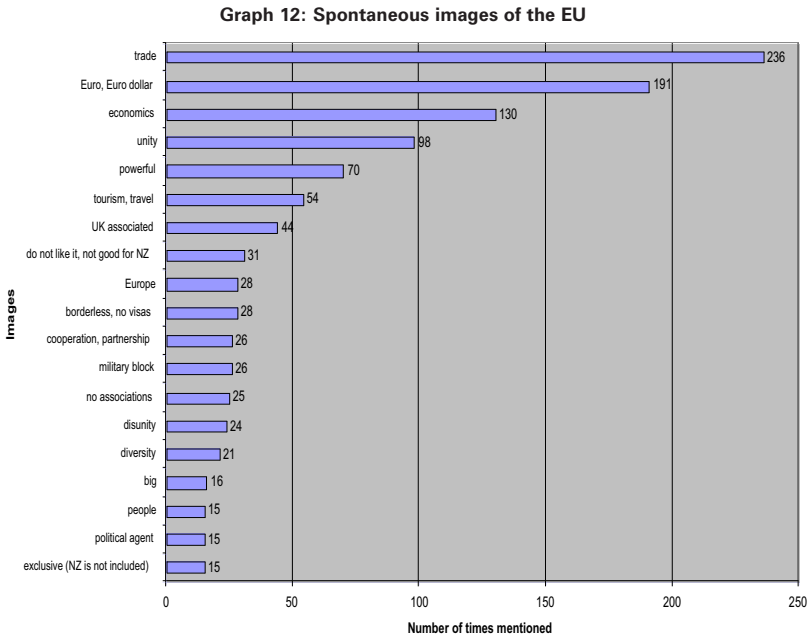
Graph 11: The state of the New Zealand-EU relationship



Spontaneous Images of Europe

To understand what New Zealanders think of the EU, it is important to identify the images they have of Europe/EU. Respondents were asked to list three thoughts that come to mind when they hear the phrase “the European Union”.

The generated list of spontaneous images of the EU includes 1,459 entries. The most frequently mentioned ones (1% or more of all entries) are presented in Graph 12:



Impact of the EU on NZ (coded list)

The survey measured New Zealanders' opinions on the EU in terms of its perceived level of impact on NZ. The respondents were presented with a list of some of the major economic, political and social issues. The interviewees were asked to indicate which ones most concerned them (Graph 13).

Economics, trade and agriculture

Economic issues with a New Zealand angle are perceived to be the most important. In order of perceived impact these are:

- Cattle disease epidemics
- EU as a market for NZ meat
- EU as a market for NZ dairy
- EU and European agricultural subsidies
- EU actions as a world trade power
- EU as a market for NZ organic produce
- EU as a market for NZ wine
- EU economic actions
- EU food labeling regulations

The EU international role

The second most important group of issues could be categorised as a view of the EU as an international actor:

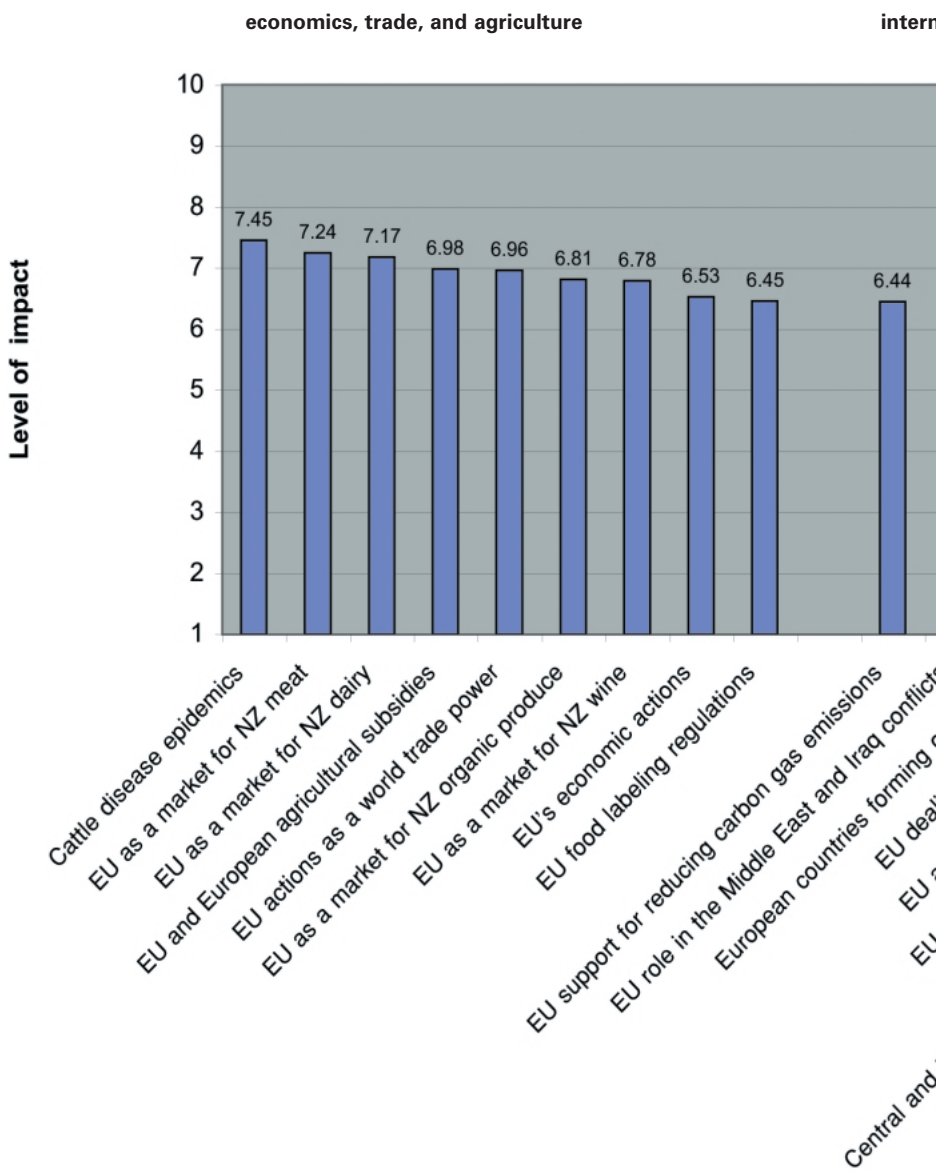
- EU support for reducing carbon gas emissions
- EU role in the Middle East and Iraq conflicts
- European countries forming one union
- EU dealings with the USA
- EU actions as a political power
- EU dealings with the Pacific countries

Internal EU issues

The third group of issues which rates lowest in terms of the perceived impact on NZ could be combined under the heading category "Internal EU issues". These are, in order of importance:

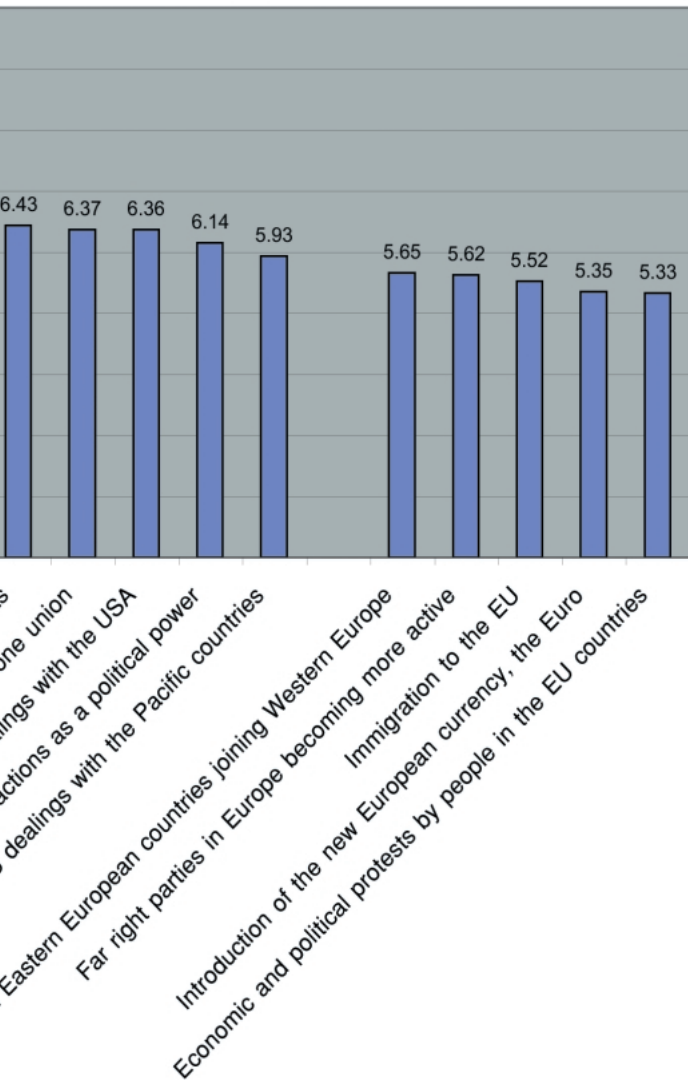
- Central and Eastern European countries joining Western Europe
- Far right parties in Europe becoming more active
- Immigration to the EU
- Introduction of the new European currency, the Euro
- Economic and political protests by people in the EU countries

Graph 13: Levels of perceived impact of the EU on NZ



national role

internal issues



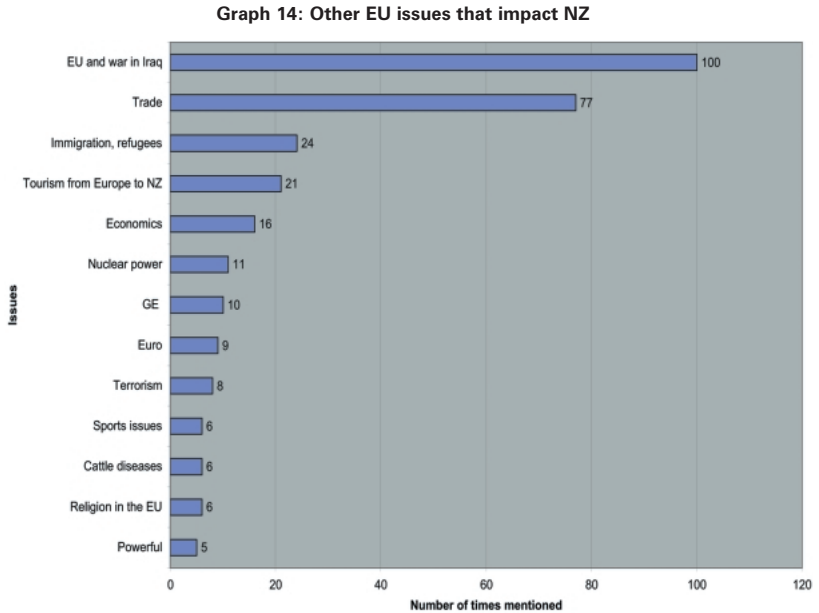
■ Average

Average scores are based on scale of 1-10

es

Impact of Other EU Issues on NZ (open list)

Respondents were also asked to list any other issues relating to Europe/EU that could have a significant impact on New Zealand. There are 432 issues listed. The most frequently mentioned entries (1% of entries and above) are given in Graph 14.

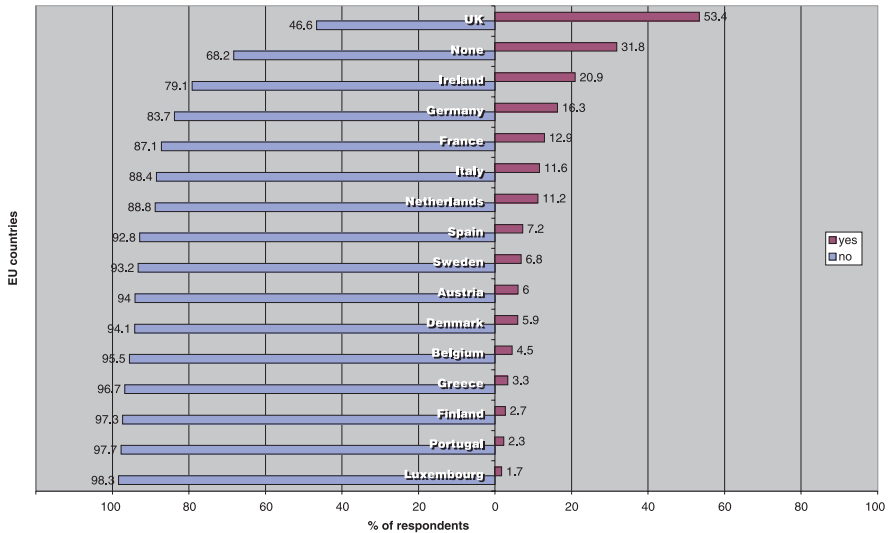


As can be seen from the three generated lists of spontaneous images (Graph 12) and perceived impact (Graphs 13 and 14), people in NZ view the European Union foremost in economic terms - trade, agriculture, and economic themes are the most important in public opinion. The issue of the war in Iraq is highlighted due to the timing of the survey.

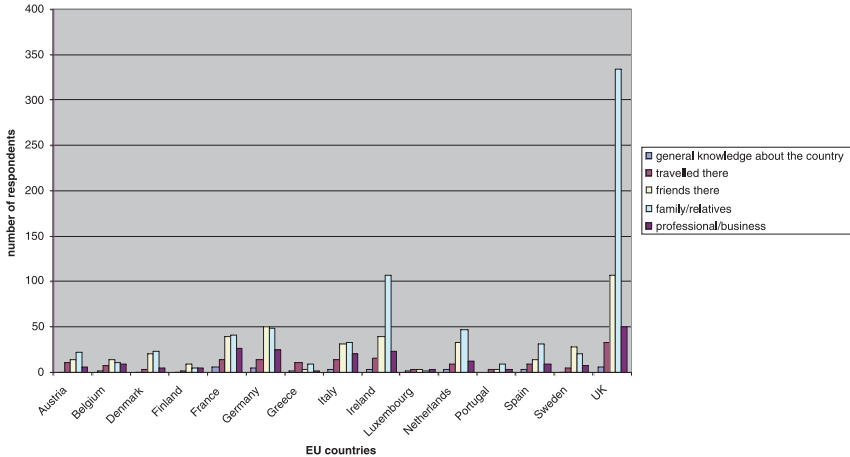
Personal & Professional Contacts with the EU Countries

A number of the survey questions looked at types and location of New Zealanders' personal and professional contacts with the 15 EU Member countries (Graphs 15 and 16), as well as the 10 Accession countries set to join the EU on 1st May 2004 (Graphs 17,18, and 19).

Graph 15: EU countries with which New Zealanders have personal & professional contacts



Graph 16: Types of NZ connections with the current EU countries

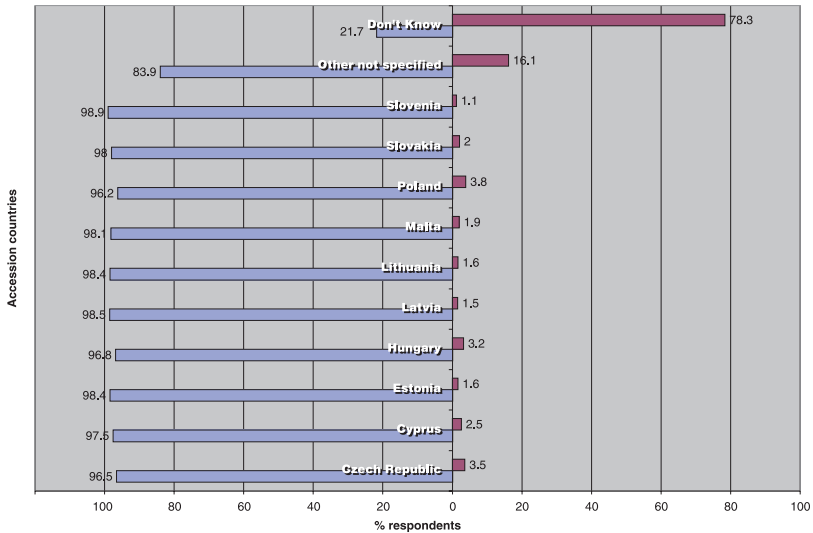


The UK is the country with which NZ respondents are the most personally and professionally involved. Other countries that showed relatively high personal and professional contacts are: France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, and the Netherlands. Some highlights include:

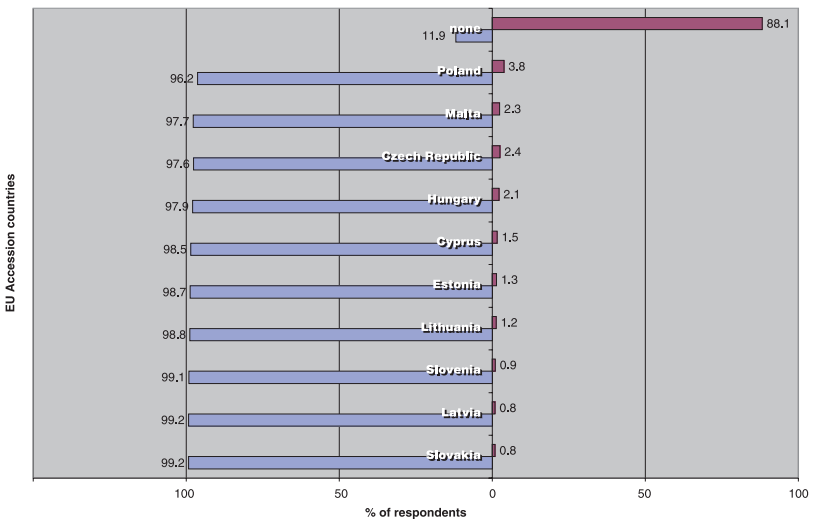
- EU countries about which New Zealanders have most general knowledge (based on the respondents' estimation): France (7 respondents), UK (6), Germany (5)
- EU countries to which New Zealanders have travelled most: UK (33), Ireland (16), Italy (15), France (15), Germany (15), Austria (12), Greece (12), Spain (10)
- EU countries with the largest number of friends living there: UK (108), Germany (51), France (39), Ireland (39), Netherlands (33), Italy (31), and Sweden (29)
- EU countries with the largest number of family/relatives living there: UK (335), Ireland (107), Germany (49), Netherlands (48), France (41), Italy (33), and Spain (31)
- EU countries with the largest number of respondents with professional/business contacts: UK (50), France (27), Germany (26), Ireland (24), Italy (20)
- EU countries in which most respondents' ancestors were born: UK (61), Ireland (44), France (6), Germany (5), Italy (5)
- EU countries in which the largest number of respondents had been born: UK (40), Netherlands (6)
- EU countries with the biggest number of people from there now living in New Zealand and known to respondents: UK (8)

A number of questions assessed people's knowledge about current EU developments, particularly, the enlargement process. As Graph 17 shows there is a striking lack of knowledge among New Zealanders about this project - 78.3% of respondents could not name any Accession or candidate country, and 16.1% named wrong ones.

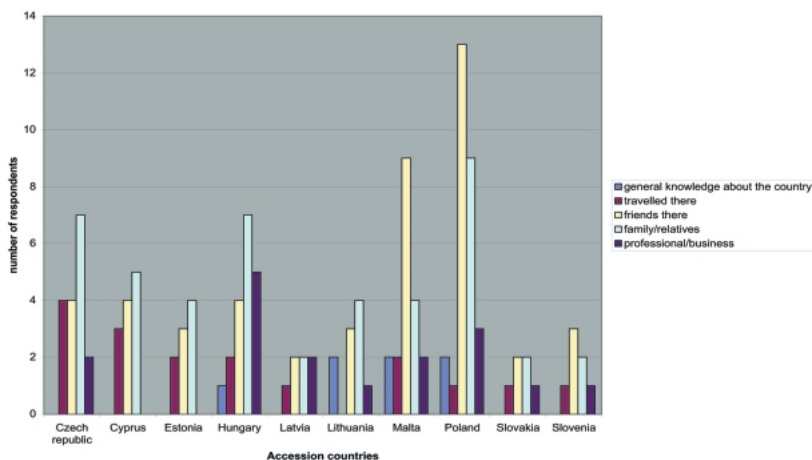
Graph 17: Knowledge of the EU Accession countries



Graph 18: The EU Accession countries with which New Zealanders have personal or professional contacts



Graph 19: Types of NZ connections with the EU Accession countries



With EU enlargement coming in 2004, NZ respondents showed a very low level of contact with the Accession countries (Graph 18).

Additionally, respondents showed a very limited personal or professional involvement with the EU Accession countries (Graph 19).

Poland and Malta are the Accession countries with which New Zealanders have the most personal involvement in terms of having friends from these places. The most business contacts are with Hungary. The most visited destinations are Czech Republic and Cyprus. Furthermore:

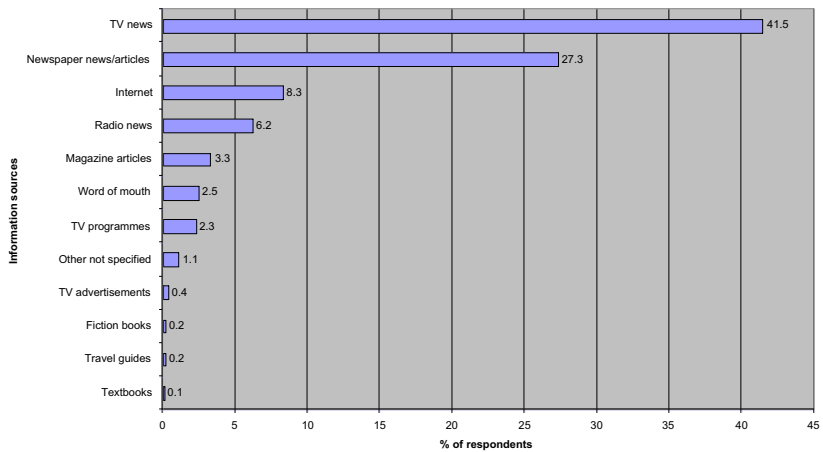
- EU Accession countries about which New Zealanders have most general knowledge (based on the respondents' estimation): Lithuania (2 respondents), Malta (2), Poland (2)
- EU Accession countries to which New Zealanders have travelled most: Czech Republic (4), Cyprus (3)
- EU Accession countries with the largest number of friends living there: Poland (13), Malta (9)
- EU Accession countries with the largest number of family/relatives living there: Poland (9), Czech Republic (7), Hungary (7)
- EU Accession countries with the largest number of respondents with professional/business contacts: Hungary (5), Poland (3)
- EU Accession countries in which most respondents' ancestors were born: Poland (6)
- EU Accession countries in which the largest number of respondents had been born: Hungary (2)
- EU Accession countries with the biggest number of people from there now living in New Zealand and known to respondents: Czech Republic (2), Hungary (2), Malta (2), Slovakia (2)

Sources of Information about the EU

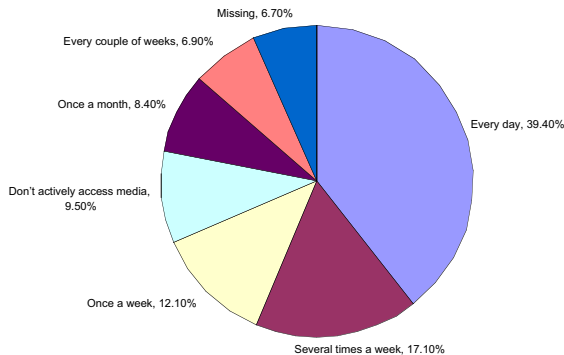
New Zealanders get their knowledge about the European Union primarily from the media. TV news and newspaper news are the most popular sources of information - 41.5% and 27.3% of respondents respectively (Graph 20).

The NZ respondents regularly sought news about the EU from national media (Graph 21).

Graph 20: Sources of information on the EU



Graph 21: Frequency of accessing the media for news about the EU



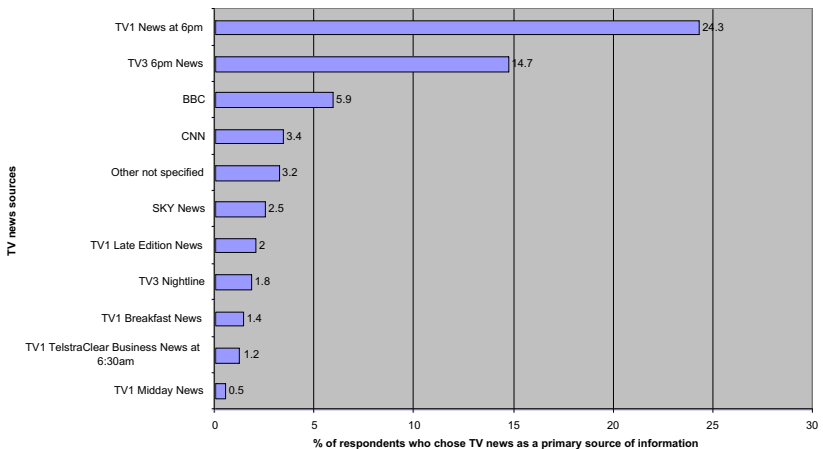
Broadcast Media as a Source of Information on the EU

TV news was identified as the leader in providing the NZ general public with information about the EU (41.5 % of respondents). According to the survey results, the most popular TV news programmes to access information about the EU are TV1 News at 6pm (24.3% of respondents) and TV3 6pm News (14.7% respondents). The international news networks follow the national news in providing information on the EU - BBC (5.9%), CNN (3.4%), and SKY News (2.5%) (Graph 22).

TV programmes other than TV news providing information about the EU were identified by only 2.3% of the respondents (Graph 23).

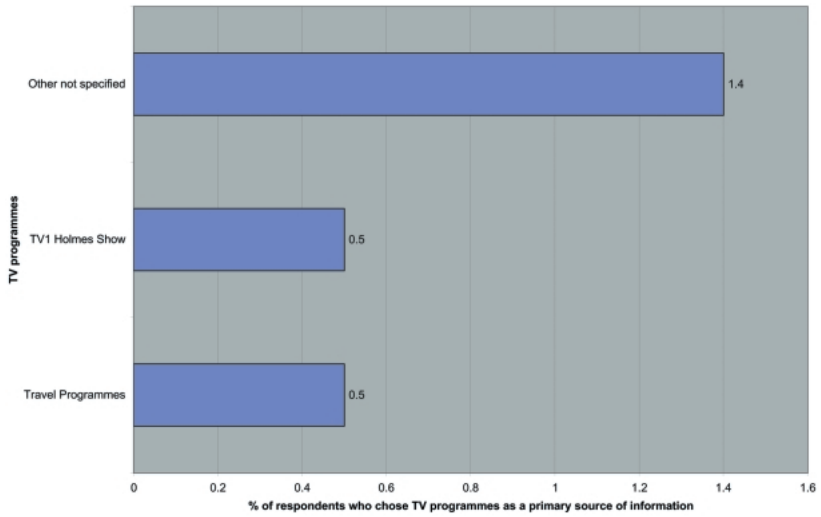
Radio news was identified by 6.2% of respondents as their preferred source of information on the EU. The most popular radio programmes to inform respondents about the EU are given in Graph 24.

Graph 22: TV news accessed the most to get information on the EU

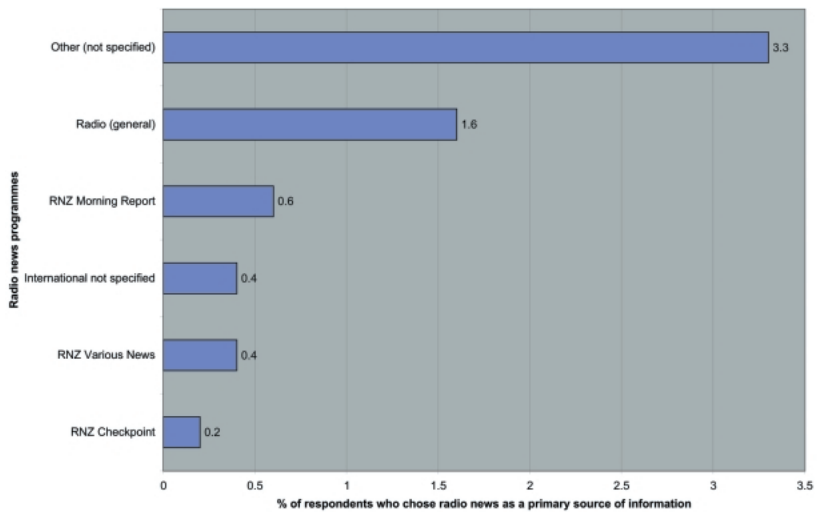


Omits percentage of 'don't know'

Graph 23: TV programmes accessed the most for information on the EU



Graph 24: Radio news accessed the most for the information on the EU



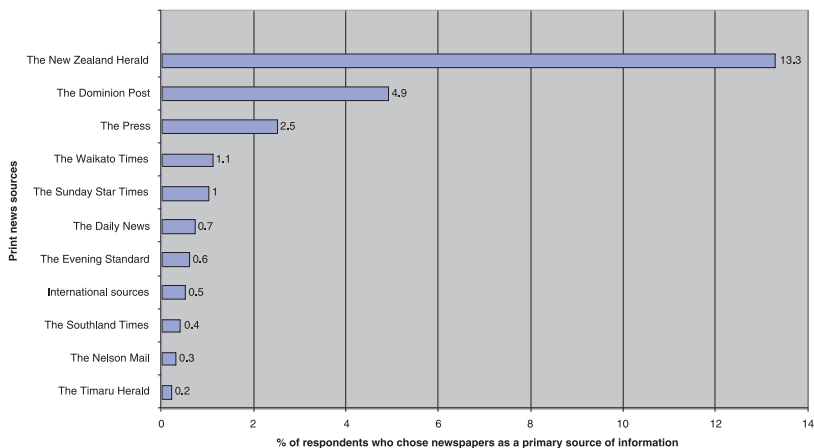
Print Media as a Source of Information on the EU

Newspapers are the second most popular source of information about the EU. For those respondents, the most popular New Zealand newspapers to access information about the EU were identified (Graph 25).

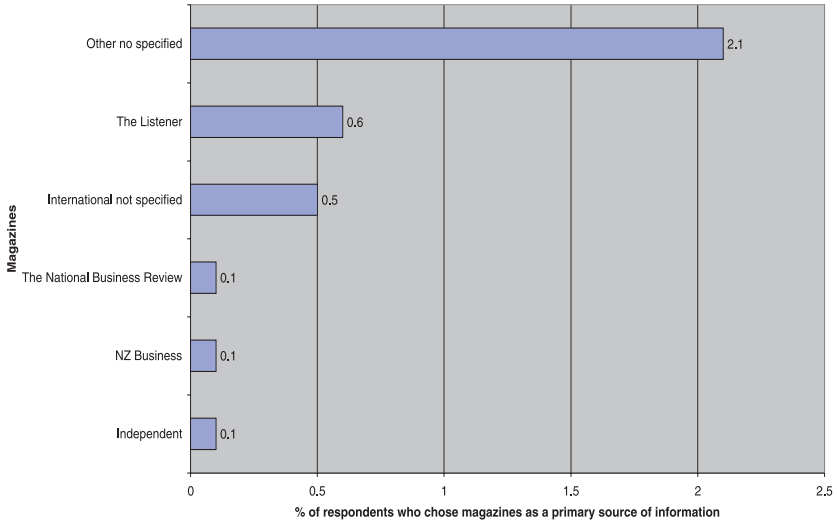
Statistics shows that more people in New Zealand are buying newspapers — most metropolitan dailies have increased circulation over the past years (*The National Business Review*, 17.05.02). *The Press* (15.05.02) states that for six months of 2002, the country's largest newspaper, *The New Zealand Herald*, increased its circulation 0.4% to 210,841; *The Press*, the second largest daily newspaper and the largest in the South Island, has increased its circulation 1.9% to 92,713 daily sales; *The Dominion* grew 3.1% to 70,565; *The Waikato Times* was up 1.7% and now averages 41,121 daily sales; and *The Timaru Herald* increased 2.1% to 14,308. Circulation is also on the rise for *The Otago Daily Times*, *The Nelson Mail* and *The Daily News*.

For those respondents who identified magazines as their primary source of information (33%) the preferences are distributed in Graph 26.

Graph 25: Newspapers accessed the most to get information on the EU



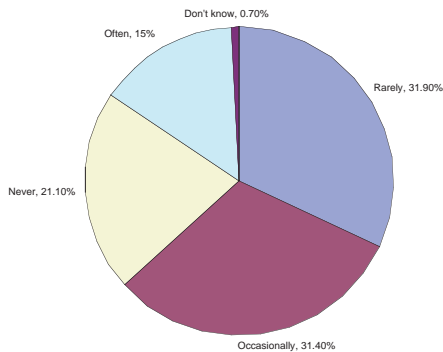
Graph 26: NZ magazines accessed to get information on the EU



Interpersonal Communication

Word-of-mouth as a source of information is also mentioned, but with a low percentage of responses - 2.5% (see Graph 21). While 15% of respondents discuss EU-related issues often, 21.1% of the interviewees never discuss the EU in their intimate circles, 31.9% rarely, and 31.4% occasionally (Graph 27).

Graph 27: How frequently NZers discuss EU-related issues with family and friends

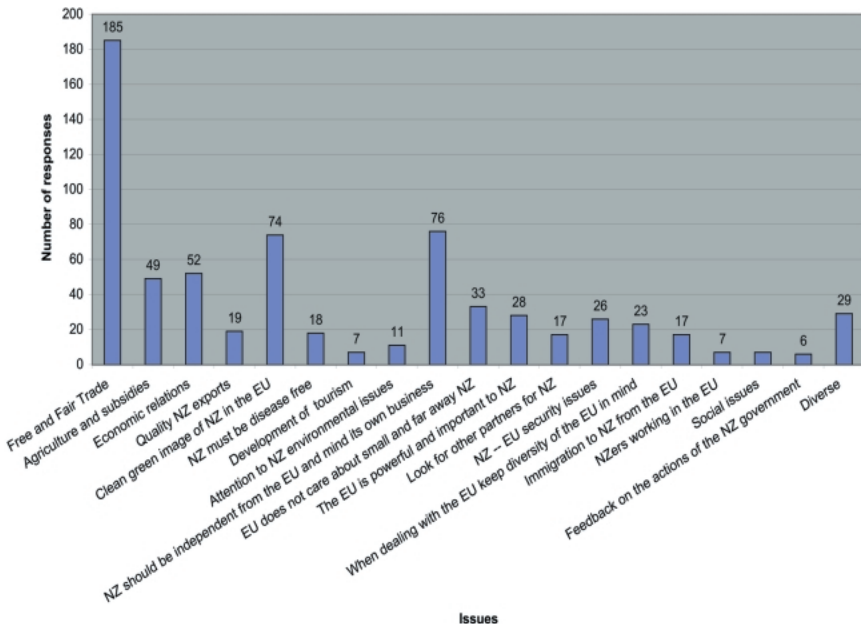


Suggestions for the NZ-EU agenda

The respondents were asked what issues should be kept in mind when the New Zealand government is developing trade or government policy relating to the EU. Some 731 suggestions have been generated. Those suggestions are grouped into 21 categories (Graph 28).

This list is not exhaustive and suggestions are personal, but some assumptions can be made about the issues that concern and influence public perceptions of the EU within NZ. A flavour of the comments made concludes this report. The most common issue mentioned are related to free and fair trade (185 comments), the importance of NZ independence from EU interference (76), the advantage of New Zealand’s “clean, green” image when dealing with the EU (74), economic relations (52), and agricultural subsidies (49).

Graph 28: Issues to keep in mind when developing NZ-EU relations



“Free and fair trade”

“Make sure it’s a two-way 2 way street ...not to tariff our products going in...(so they are able) to be bought at an affordable price so that we can both benefit from it.”

“Keep export and import relationship going good.”

“(Make sure that) we have really good ambassadors for our exports”

“We have to keep in touch with our trading countries like the European countries.”

“I think that we have to be sensitive with our relationship with the EU in terms of free trade”

“It’s a big market and therefore should be chased, and we should develop the potential for bigger and better trading”

“(Given) New Zealand’s economic situation, we need EU for trade”

“Look at new markets. We have a brand to sell. We are producing good products. Look at creating new partners for trading”

“(Take steps so) that New Zealand can get a fair deal, the exporter”

“Honesty, fair trade”

“Make sure they are honest”

“Agriculture and subsidies”

“We should remember we are New Zealanders and we rely on a blade of grass. Without the farmers New Zealand would be nothing.”

“We have to look after more (the) agricultural relationship with EU”

“They shouldn’t have subsidies when we haven’t”

“Europe is being unfair to NZ... they get a lot of subsidies and they don’t want our products...”

“Get rid of subsidies... compete”

“Economic relations”

“(It is important to have) stable currencies for both partners and the ... assurance for both governments to support it”

“Develop an international monetary policy particularly for overseas trade, keeping the euro and dollar in mind”

“To better integrate with existing industrial super structure i.e. business and manufacturing alliances and partnerships”

“Current policy is fine, government encourages business(es) to compete by themselves, the government does not interfere with the market price”

“The outside of the UK the European business culture is based on long-term stable relationships, we must build those and (that) takes time ... (The) government has an important role to play. The NZ entrepreneur hasn’t got the time or money to build those relationships, so government has to help facilitate those.”

“Quality NZ exports”

“All the stuff we send should be really high quality”

“Keep up our standards”

“They have a very high standard in Europe, so they have put pressure for the standard we export them”

“Clean green image of NZ”

“We have got a better ‘healthy country’, ‘clean green’ image, no pollution our food is better (than theirs)”

“(Keep) the idea of clean green New Zealand products which they like”

“(Promote) the Zealander’s Clean and Green and produce high quality (goods). Put more energy into promoting economic produce”

“NZ should stay GE Free (people will want to buy our GE Free products)”

“NZ must be disease free”

“The diseases that the European area has as far as marketing goes, especially with red meat...”

“I think when it comes to disease we should be careful when we import meat so that we don’t get other diseases over here”

“(P)rotection, ...broader protection, preventing diseases and pests entering our country”

“Development of tourism”

“(Promote) New Zealand as a safe destination for tourism”

“(Keep) borders open for travellers”

“Attention to NZ environmental issues”

“I think the green house gas (issue) is becoming important and critical”

“Kyoto Protocol, environmental issues in general”

“NZ should be independent and mind its own business”

“New Zealand’s independence”

“(R)etain our identity and our individuality”

“We should worry about ourselves first”

“Make sure that the decisions are made for the benefit of New Zealand”

“NZ is self-sufficient and (we) don’t rely on them (Europeans) so much”

“(K)keep our identity as a stand alone country”

“I don’t think the EU is for the best interest for NZ, the closest ties don’t exist any more”

“I think NZ shouldn’t be so dependent on the European Union, just be responsible, keep to our principles”

“We are unique and (should) not fall into the trap to be overtaken by the political power”

“(We) have to remember we’re a Pacific nation, not European”

“NZ is a small country”, “the EU does not care about us” “The EU is far from NZ”

“We give more consideration to them than they give to us. They don’t take New Zealand into much consideration, it’s only with the old ties with Britain....”

“(The EU is) much bigger and stronger than us — they will turn around ...and not keep their word.”

“The EU is not going to go away and they are not interested in NZ...”

“We are a really small country on the other side of the world, and most of Europe doesn’t care. We all speak English which is a disadvantage in Europe”

“(W)e are fairly insignificant”

“(W)e’re small bikkies and they’re big bikkies”

“(T)hey’re not really interested in our interest”

“(T)hey may not know very (much) about NZ”

“We are long way away, they don’t really care”

“We are so far away from anywhere, we are an English colony”

“Just the fact they are on the opposite side of the world...”

“Europe is a long way from NZ”

“The EU is powerful and important to us”

“NZ needs to be skilful in negotiating with EU because they have so much power”

“At some point in the future the EU is probably is going to become world power and world influence”

“Try not to be too out of step with them in terms of: environment, trade, finance, legislation. You have to keep fairly close to them and live like them to some extent”

“I think that it (our relationship with the EU) should be (an) alliance, it should

be encouraged, away from North America”

“Don’t turn your back on your old partners, the ones you’ve always done business with”

“The more contact (good) with any country must be beneficial to NZ ... more good relationships must make a big impact”

“We really need to improve our stances with the EU”

“(W)e are part of a world, and we should not be isolationist, and we will be right down the tube because we will not support anybody”

“Look for other partners for NZ”

“Don’t put all eggs in one basket, spread it out”

“We are descendants of Europe but (we) should not forget our own identity of belonging to the Pacific. It’s important to develop bonds with Europe but not at the expense of nearer regions”

“EU (countries) will look to protecting themselves, (and) we have to look towards Asia, America”

“Asia is a lot closer (we could be dealing more with Asia)”

“NZ — EU in security issues”

“(Regarding) the Iraq situation, be careful who we support. We become more of a target if we join the EU, (be)cause they are supporting the war”

“Be careful something might go wrong, especially when these big countries are talking war”

“I think they should toe the line. We should sit back in the background and (do) not say, ‘yeah we will go and fight”

“New Zealand’s loyalty to peace keeping”

“New Zealand should maintain itself peaceful and keep itself neutral with regards to war. NZ should keep itself out of it”

“When dealing with the EU keep diversity of the EU in mind”

“Respect religious and cultural ethics of people who are from EU countries while dealing with them”

“The union is a group of independent countries ... (W)e can’t make a pitch because they (EU countries) aren’t all the same”

“We have to have a great deal of care when dealing with them because of the multi-cultural aspects in the EU. Because it will control what we have to put into the EU”

“The key thing is just dealing with a multitude of different countries and different cultures under one umbrella”

“Immigration to NZ from the EU”

“We should encourage immigration from European countries”

“Don’t want workers over here from Europe”

“(Regarding) immigration into New Zealand they (the NZ Government agencies) should monitor those that come into our country especially for disease. We are bringing too many foreigners into the country.”

“The main thing is to keep our standard high on the immigration”

“Immigration issues - be careful not to be overrun”

“New Zealanders working in Europe”

“(Work on) employment law and (examine) how it impacts on our people and the workers in Europe”

“Social issues”

“Keep up democracy; take care of people’s needs ...

“Feedback on the actions of the NZ government”

“We have a good Prime Minister with a good head on her shoulders”

“The government (officials) don’t listen to what the majority of people want anyway”

“Our officials could push the issues and put a stronger case for us if they had the right people to do that for us”

An Agenda for Further Research

The findings of this first-ever survey of NZ public opinion on the EU have produced some revealing and provocative data. Clearly, the EU is recognized as an important partner for New Zealand, and yet knowledge and understanding of the EU remains limited. Perhaps most significantly, there is widespread lack of awareness of the EU enlargement process and of the 10 Accession countries who will become new EU members in 2004.

While a single survey is interesting and valuable in its own right, the conclusions that can be drawn lack context. A series of surveys taken regularly is needed so that changes in New Zealanders’ perceptions can be traced and analyzed over time. The National Centre for Research on Europe anticipates conducting this survey annually to establish a comprehensive and informative data-base on EU-NZ perceptions.



National Centre for Research on Europe
Level 2, Geography Building
University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch
New Zealand

Phone: 64 3 364 2348

Fax: 64 3 364 2634

Email: office@cre.canterbury.ac.nz

URL : <http://www.europe.canterbury.ac.nz>



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