

MEDIA RELEASE

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Limited support for Christianity as official religion

The majority of New Zealanders are against recognising Christianity as the country's official religion, a Research New Zealand Poll shows.

The research shows that 58% of those polled disagreed with recognising Christianity as the country's official religion, Research New Zealand Director Emanuel Kalafatelis said.

"In comparison, just over a third (35%) agreed with the idea of having Christianity officially recognised," Mr Kalafatelis said.

"To put this in context, in the 2006 Census, more than 2 million New Zealanders or 55.6% of those who answered the Census question about religious affiliation, said they were affiliated with a Christian religion," Mr Kalafatelis said.

Research New Zealand conducted the poll between June 7 and 9. It was taken after Destiny Church Bishop Brian Tamaki called for official recognition of Christianity. He was speaking at a protest outside an international conference on religious tolerance at Waitangi on May 29.

Mr Kalafatelis said that the idea of not recognising Christianity was supported more strongly by men than women.

"Of the men we polled, 63% were opposed to making Christianity the official religion compared with 54% of the women," Mr Kalafatelis said.

Younger people were also much more likely to disagree with making Christianity the official religion than older people, Mr Kalafatelis said.

The research also showed that nearly two-thirds (66%) of those polled were in favour of making it compulsory for schools to teach about the different religions of the world, Mr Kalafatelis said.

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One of the outcomes of the international conference on religious tolerance at Waitangi in May was a call by religious leaders for education about different religions to be included in the public curricula of all schools.

As part of the survey, respondents were asked: *There has been a call for New Zealand to be officially recognised as a Christian country. Do you agree or disagree that Christianity should be made the official religion of New Zealand?*

Tabular results by gender and age are as follows.

There has been a call for New Zealand to be officially recognised as a Christian country. Do you agree or disagree that Christianity should be made the official religion of New Zealand?

Base =	Total 501	Male 250	Female 251
Agree	35%	30%	40%
Disagree	58%	63%	53%
No opinion	4%	5%	4%
Don't know	2%	2%	3%
Refused	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

There has been a call for New Zealand to be officially recognised as a Christian country. Do you agree or disagree that Christianity should be made the official religion of New Zealand?

Base =	Total 501	15 to 29 80	30 to 39 88	40 to 49 100	50 to 59 98	60+ 135
Agree	35%	21%	25%	33%	46%	44%
Disagree	58%	73%	66%	57%	51%	50%
No opinion	4%	5%	8%	5%	1%	4%
Don't know	2%	1%	1%	5%	2%	1%
Refused	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Respondents were also asked: *There has also been talk of making it compulsory for schools to teach students about the many different religions of the world; so they may learn to be more accepting and tolerant of other peoples religious beliefs and practices. Do you agree or disagree that schools should teach students about different types of religions?*

Tabular results by gender and age are as follows.

There has also talk of making it compulsory for schools to teach students about the many different religions of the world; so they may learn to be more accepting and tolerant of other people's religious beliefs and practices. Do you agree or disagree that schools should teach students about different types of religions?

Base =	Total 501	Male 250	Female 251
Agree	66%	67%	65%
Disagree	31%	30%	32%
No opinion	2%	2%	2%
Don't know	1%	1%	1%
Refused	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

There has also talk of making it compulsory for schools to teach students about the many different religions of the world; so they may learn to be more accepting and tolerant of other people's religious beliefs and practices. Do you agree or disagree that schools should teach students about different types of religions?

Base =	Total 501	15 to 29 80	30 to 39 88	40 to 49 100	50 to 59 98	60+ 135
Agree	66%	66%	68%	64%	70%	62%
Disagree	31%	29%	31%	32%	27%	36%
No opinion	2%	3%	1%	3%	2%	1%
Don't know	1%	3%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

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The omnibus survey of 501 randomly selected people aged 15 and over was conducted by telephone between June 7 and 9. The margin of error is +/- 4.7% (at the 95% confidence level). The data has been weighted to ensure it is an accurate representation of New Zealand's general population. The poll was not taken on behalf of any organisation but as part of Research New Zealand's monthly survey of attitudes and opinions.

Research New Zealand is an independent, New Zealand-owned research organisation undertaking social and business research.

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