



appendix 1

Context and process

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3.8 Public Opinion Survey: the process

Introduction and objectives

As part of the process of conducting the Commission, the Commissioners have consulted widely with various interested parties, including members of the general public. However, in order to ensure the opinions of the general public were fairly canvassed in a representative way, the Commissioners decided to commission a public opinion survey.

The survey was conducted by BRC Marketing & Social Research. Key findings of the survey are presented in Appendix 3 (see “Analysis of Public Opinion Survey”). The process for conducting the survey is described below.

The specific objectives of this survey were to measure the following:

- the awareness (both unprompted and prompted) of genetic modification (in the context of it being an issue of importance to New Zealand)
- an understanding of genetic modification
- perceptions of the extent to which genetic modification is already used in New Zealand, across a range of areas or categories (commercial crops, farm animals, pest control, processed foods, medicines and vaccines, research using plants, research using animals, medical research)
- perceptions about the advantages and disadvantages of genetic modification in relation to each of these categories
- approval or disapproval of genetic modification in relation to each of these categories
- overall perceptions of how much genetic modification has to offer New Zealand
- the extent to which the general public believe themselves to be informed about genetic modification
- the extent to which genetic modification is an issue of personal importance
- belief about the importance to New Zealand’s future of the use of genetic modification

Method

This survey was completed between 22 March and 8 April 2001 by telephone, with a nationally representative sample of 1153 New Zealanders, 15 years of age and over.

Maori were over-sampled to ensure the reporting of the results for this population group could be undertaken with confidence. Maori were given the opportunity to be interviewed by a Maori interviewer. A total of 238 Maori were interviewed.

A ‘weighting’ procedure at the analysis stage rebalanced the sample by ethnicity to ensure that any results based on the total sample were correctly representative. Any result based on the total weighted sample is subject to a maximum error margin of plus or minus 2.9%, at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for sub groups of respondents are greater and are noted where necessary.

Prior to the interviewing commencing, a general introductory letter referring to a survey about a social issue of importance to New Zealand was sent by BRC to all prospective respondents, to help maximise the response rate. The Commission was not identified as the sponsor of the survey, in the letter or at any stage during the interview. However, if respondents requested, they were told that the survey was commissioned by the Royal Commission at the end of the interview.

Key results of the survey are presented Appendix 3 (see “Analysis of Public Opinion Survey”). Supplementary information is provided in three appendices to the Public Opinion Survey: *Public Opinion Survey: Tabular results*, which contains tabular results for all questions by key demographic variables, including age, gender, ethnicity, occupational status, employment, etc, and *Public Opinion Survey: Verbatim comments*, which contains verbatim comments relating to all open-ended survey questions and summary of results by demographic description. These documents are available on the Commission website.