

**Horizon Research**

# **Inspecting the wreck of Niagara**

**June 2023**

Prepared for  
**Hauraki Gulf Forum**



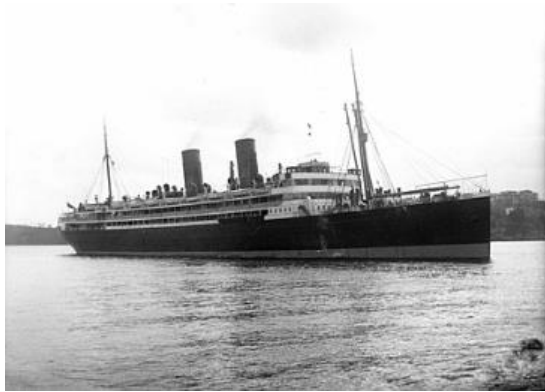
## Approach

These results are from a Horizon Research omnibus survey conducted between 8 and 12 June 2023. The total sample size was 1,100 adults, 18 years of age and over.

The maximum margin of error is  $\pm 3\%$  (at the 95% confidence level). The data was weighted on age, education, ethnicity, gender, Party Vote 2020 and region to be representative of the adult New Zealand population.

Respondents were asked what they think the Government should do about the potential risk of heavy fuel oil being released from the RMS Niagara.

Respondents were given the following information.



*We'd like your view on whether or not the potential risks of a major oil spill from a shipwreck in the Hauraki Gulf should be investigated...*

*Here's some background to help you answer the next question. (It's a little long, but we think you'll find it interesting)...*

*In June 1940 the 160m long passenger ship RMS Niagara left port in Auckland and hit one of 200 mines laid across the entrance to the Hauraki Gulf by a German ship.*

*It sank 30 kilometres offshore, 40 kilometres southeast of Whangārei at a depth of around 100 metres. It lies just inside the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.*

*A 2018 report estimated it might still have up to 1600 tonnes of heavy fuel oil in its tanks.*

*However, no-one knows for sure how much oil may still be aboard. There have been regular small wisps of oil from the wreck over many years.*

*In 2018 Maritime New Zealand, responsible for wrecks, recommended the government spend between \$850,000 and \$1.6 million to investigate the wreck and determine the risk of the oil being released, as a result of on-going corrosion of its steel fuel tanks.*

*Cabinet did not agree to funding.*

*The Government now argues finances are tight and investigating the wreck may disturb and release any remaining fuel.*

*Those wanting the wreck investigated argue that an initial non-invasive assessment, looking at steel thickness and fully mapping the wreck, can be done with minimal risk.*

*They say that eventually the tanks holding any remaining oil will corrode through, potentially releasing the oil and polluting the Poor Knight Islands and Goat Island marine reserves, the Hen and Chickens islands, Omaha, Kawau and the Great Barrier and Waiheke Islands.*

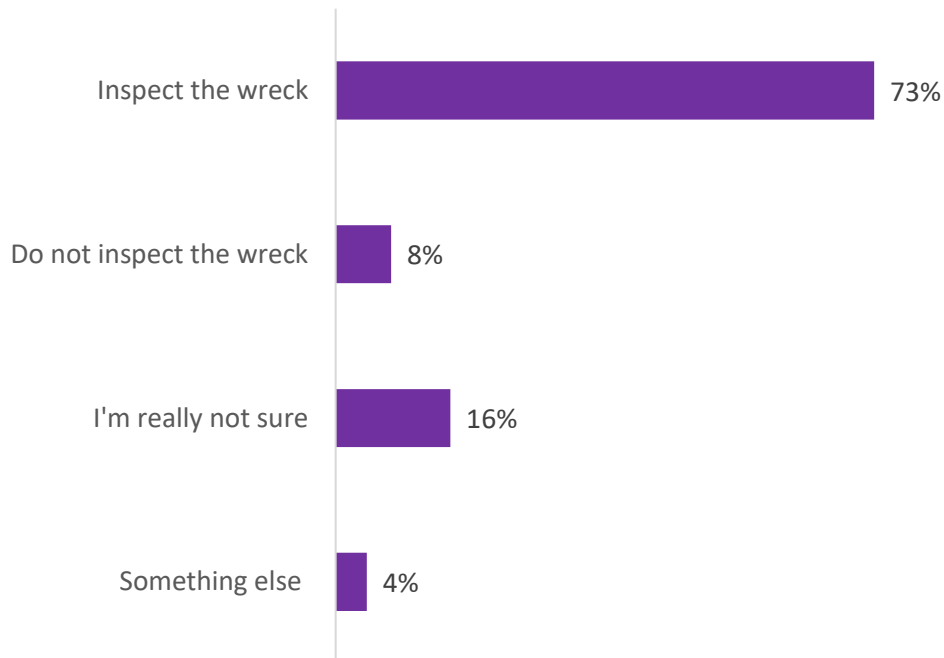
*By way of comparison, the oil spill from the 2016 wreck of the ship Rena near Tauranga released 330 tonnes of oil and the beach clean-up cost around \$47 million. This does not include the damage to wildlife.*

### **Summary**

When asked what they think the government should do about the wreck, **73%** said it should be inspected. **8%** said it should not be inspected.

**72%** of adults living in Auckland think the wreck should be inspected.

What do you think the Government should do about the potential risk of heavy fuel oil being released from the 83 year-old wreck of the RMS Niagara?



*Sample size n=1,100*

There are no significant differences across demographic groups who think the wreck **should be inspected**.

The people who are more likely to think the wreck should **not** be inspected are:

- 75+ year olds (16%)
- People who voted for National Party at the 2020 general election (12%).

	ALL	AGE									
		18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65-74 years	75+ years	Under 35	35-54 years	55+ years
Inspect the wreck	73%	75%	69%	73%	74%	74%	76%	69%	71%	73%	74%
Do not inspect the wreck	8%	8%	7%	7%	6%	6%	8%	16%	8%	7%	9%
I'm really not sure	16%	17%	23%	18%	14%	13%	11%	10%	20%	16%	11%
Something else	4%	0%	2%	3%	6%	8%	6%	5%	1%	5%	7%

N (unweighted)	1,100	125	202	185	170	183	133	102	327	355	418
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Figures in **BLUE** are significantly higher than the overall result (ALL) at a 95% confidence level.

Figures in **RED** are significantly lower than the overall result (ALL) at a 95% confidence level.

	ALL	PARTY VOTE 2020					
		ACT	Green Party	Labour Party	Te Pāti Māori	National Party	New Zealand First
Inspect the wreck	73%	69%	78%	75%	81%	69%	66%
Do not inspect the wreck	8%	13%	7%	5%	2%	12%	21%
I'm really not sure	16%	12%	12%	16%	17%	16%	9%
Something else	4%	6%	3%	5%	0%	3%	4%

N (unweighted)	1,100	109	120	449	34	194	31
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Figures in **BLUE** are significantly higher than the overall result (ALL) at a 95% confidence level.

Figures in **RED** are significantly lower than the overall result (ALL) at a 95% confidence level.

4% said something else should be done. Appended are the verbatim comments from this group.

The majority of comments say to inspect the wreck and with some saying to remove the oil.

## Methodology

Results are from a Horizon Research omnibus survey conducted between 8 and 12 June 2023.

The total sample size was 1,100 adults, 18 years of age and over.

Respondents were from Horizon's two specialist online research panels (general and Māori populations 18+) and third party research panel for source diversity.

The maximum margin of error is ±3% (at the 95% confidence level). The data was weighted on age, education, ethnicity, gender, Party Vote 2020 and region to be representative of the adult New Zealand population.