PERCEPTIONS AND REALITY: MEASURING NEW ZEALANDERS’ ATTITUDES TOWARDS INJURY RISK

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Background The New Zealand Injury Prevention Strategy was launched in 2003 with the aim of improving New Zealand’s overall injury performance. The strategy provided a framework for policy development and injury prevention activities that would hopefully lead to a ‘safety culture’ in New Zealand. This ‘safety culture’ focused on six injury priority areas: motor vehicle traffic crashes, suicide and deliberate self-harm, falls, assault, workplace injuries and drowning.

Aims/Objectives/Purpose One of the immediate requirements was the establishment of a baseline measure of New Zealanders’ beliefs and attitudes to such a culture. This was undertaken by Research New Zealand as a telephone survey of a nationally representative sample of n=1000 New Zealanders, 18 years or more (May 2007). To establish the baseline, the survey sought to answer questions about New Zealanders’ awareness of injury risk and their attitudes towards the preventability of injury.

Results/Outcome While many more people felt that New Zealand was a fundamentally safe country (41%) than thought it was an unsafe country (7%), and its safety record was generally improving, there was a significant disconnect between people’s awareness of where New Zealanders were ‘at risk’ of injury compared to where they were actually being injured.

For example, 71% of respondents felt New Zealanders were personally at risk on the road, but injuries on the road accounted for just 5% of accident insurance compensation claims in 2005–2006 and 7% of associated costs.

Significance/Contribution to Field The development of policy and injury prevention activities must take into account the mind-set of New Zealanders, if these activities are to be effective in achieving their desired outcomes.