

# Pollies not answer on debt relief

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**John Howard and Kevin Rudd's competing economic claims have left voters cold, with many convinced the federal election will make little difference to their personal finances.**

Newspoll research conducted for debt relief company Fox Symes found almost half of those surveyed did not believe the election outcome would make any difference to their personal debt over the next few years.

Many said their own impulsive credit card use was a major cause of financial worries.

The results come after an interest rate reprieve for home buyers last week, when analysts agreed moderate new inflation data removed the threat of an immediate increase.

The poll suggests economic management may not play the same role it did in the last federal election, when voter doubts about then Opposition Leader Mark Latham's credentials played a key role in his defeat.

Almost 50 per cent of those surveyed said the election result would not affect their debt levels, while 20 per cent said a Rudd government would improve them.

Mr Howard retained a slight edge over Labor on the issue, with 25 per cent of respondents saying his government's return would help reduce their personal debt.

But many people blamed themselves for their deteriorating finances, with 40 per cent saying "new purchases" had pushed them further into the red over the past three months.

Fox Symes executive director Deborah Southon said a large majority of those polled said their debt level was a "serious concern".

"Purchases on high-tech equipment, new cars, holidays and other forms of self-indulgent spending are causing greater worry than cost-of-living increases and interest rate hikes," she said.

Despite widespread concern about personal balance sheets, 55 per cent of those surveyed said they had recently been approached with new or expanded credit card offers.

"The best advice I can give to consumers who are worried about household debt is to take some action now," Ms Southon said.

"Cutting up credit cards or planning a weekly budget can go a long way to easing concerns in 2007."