



The 2020 General Election and referendums: results, analysis, and demographics of the 53rd Parliament

June 2021

Executive Summary

- The General Election of 17 October 2020 was New Zealand's 53rd since New Zealand held its first in 1853, making New Zealand the ninth-oldest representative democracy in the world.
- The final results confirm five parties have won a total of 120 seats in Parliament, comprising 52 electorate seats and 48 list seats.
- New Zealand's per capita representation, at 2.4 MPs per 100,000 population, is lower than the 37 OECD member average of 2.7 MPs per 100,000 people for lower chambers.
- The Labour Party captured 50.01% of the party vote entitling it to 65 seats in parliament.
- This result is the highest share of the party vote, the highest number of seats, and the first single-party majority government achieved under MMP.
- Under FPP it took an average 14.4 days from the date of the election to the swearing in (government formation) of ministers; under all MMP elections the average is 25.4 days.
- Of 72 electorates, 37 were won by candidates with a majority (over 50%) of valid votes.
- Jacinda Ardern (Labour) achieved the largest winning margin (21,246) in Mt Albert.
- Willow-Jean Prime (Labour) had the lowest winning margin (163) in Northland.
- A record 58 women were elected in 2020, comprising almost half (48.3%) of the 53rd Parliament.
- There are 25 MPs who have self-identified as being of Māori descent, compared with 28 in the previous parliament. MPs of Māori descent comprise 20.8% of the 53rd Parliament.
- There are a record 11 MPs who identify as being of Pacific Peoples ethnicity (9.2% of Parliament).
- There are eight MPs who identify as being of Asian ethnicity (6.7% of Parliament).
- For the first time the New Zealand Parliament has two MPs from the Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA) grouping.
- The youngest MP is 26 years old; the average age of the 53rd Parliament is 47.3 years; the oldest MP is 68 years old.
- Over two-thirds of MPs (68%) are beginning their third term or less in 2020; that is 82 MPs have six years or less of parliamentary experience.
- There are now over a million voters (1,078,100) in the 60+ age group, which now accounts for over one-quarter (28.6%) of all voters.
- Of an estimated 3.8 million people eligible to vote in 2020, almost 900,000 people failed to do so. Of these one quarter (25.4%) were not enrolled, while three-quarters (74.6%) were enrolled, but did not turn out to vote.
- Nearly two-thirds (65.9%) of voters approved the referendum on the End of Life Choice Act.
- Just over half (51.2%) of voters did not support the Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill.
- The next General Election in New Zealand is likely to be held before Saturday, 13 January 2024.

Final Results after Special Votes

The General Election of 17 October 2020 was New Zealand's 53rd since New Zealand held its first in 1853, with the first Parliament convening in the (then) capital Auckland in 1854. This makes New Zealand the ninth-oldest representative democracy in the world, when ranked in terms of representative parliaments nationally elected on a continuous basis.¹

The 2020 election was the ninth election conducted under the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) voting system that was first used for the 1996 general election, and the first to return a single party majority government using MMP. Following the counting of special votes and the release of the official results, there are five political parties and 120 members represented in the 53rd Parliament.

This research paper summarizes differences between the preliminary (election-night count) and the final election results, compares the 2020 election results with those of 2017, shows trends in voter turnout, and analyses the demographic makeup of the 53rd Parliament. It also examines the results of the two referendums held at the same time as the 2020 election – the referendum on the End of Life Choice Act 2019, and the referendum on the proposed Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill.

Voting in the 2020 General Election began on 30 September 2020 when eligible overseas voters were able to cast a special vote – either by post, or in person at overseas posts. Voters in New Zealand were able to vote in advance of polling day by casting an advance vote during the advance voting period from 3 October to 16 October.

Several measures were put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These included: advance voting starting two days earlier than initially planned; 1,552 advance voting booths (compared to 485 in 2017) to help reduce queues and give voters more space; larger venues used for voting places such as schools, halls and marae; more limited use of voting places in shopping malls due to the need to provide room for physical distancing.²

Overall, almost two million (1,976,996) advance votes were cast in the 2020 election, over two-thirds (67.7%) of the nearly 3 million (2,919,073) total votes cast. In 2017, just over 1 million (1,240,740) voters cast an advance vote (47.2% of the total cast); in 2014, 702,137 voters cast an advance vote (28.7% of the total cast); in 2011 324,336 advance votes were cast, or 14.2% of the total cast.³

Table 1 shows trends in the number of candidates, seats, and parties for every MMP election since 1996. It shows, for example, that the total number of candidates contesting the 2020 election (654) was the highest since 2008. The 53 list only candidates was the lowest under MMP. The 48 list seats are also the lowest number of list seats in parliament to date (40% of all seats); the number of electorate seats is now 72 (60% of all seats), up from the 65 electorate seats first allocated in 1996. In its 2012 review of MMP, the Electoral Commission noted that consideration should be given to fixing the ratio of electorate seats to list

¹ Based on the year from which a national elected representative parliament was first assembled and then continued in regular sessions without interruption due to civil war, occupation, military coup or other event. It does not necessarily mean the parliament so elected was by universal suffrage or was a "responsible" or an independent parliament. The ten-oldest representative democracies on this basis are the United States (1789), United Kingdom (1801), Norway (1814), Belgium (1831), Iceland (1845), Netherlands (1848), Switzerland (1848), Denmark (1849), New Zealand (1854), Sweden (1866). See T. Mackie, R. Rose, 1991; *The International Almanac of Electoral History*; Inter-parliamentary Union, 1992.

² Electoral Commission, Media Kit: General Elections and Referendums 2020, p. 4. https://elections.nz/assets/2020-general-election/Media-Kit_September-2020.pdf; see also <https://elections.nz/assets/BIM/Electoral-Commission-2020-BIM.pdf>

³ Electoral Commission, Media Kit: General Elections and Referendums 2020, p. 21. https://elections.nz/assets/2020-general-election/Media-Kit_September-2020.pdf

seats at 60:40 to help maintain the diversity of representation and proportionality in parliament.⁴ The 60:40 ratio (72 electorate seats to 48 list seats) was reached at the 2020 election as a result of the redrawing of electoral boundaries by the Representation Commission following the 2018 Census.

Also of note is that 2020 is the fifth election under MMP when no overhang has been created, and that both the 2017 and 2020 elections have returned just five parties to parliament, the lowest number in MMP elections to date.

Table 1: Candidates, seats, parties at New Zealand general elections, 1996-2020

Election year	Candidates			Electoralates		Seats			MPs per 100,000	Parties [#]
	Electorate*	List only	Total	General	Māori	Total electorate seats	List seats	Total		
1996	611	231	842	60	5	65	55	120	3.2	6
1999	679	286	965	61	6	67	53	120	3.1	7
2002	593	90	683	62	7	69	51	120	3.0	7
2005	597	142	739	62	7	69	52	121	2.9	8
2008	522	160	682	63	7	70	52	122	2.9	7
2011	453	91	544	63	7	70	51	121	2.8	8
2014	483	71	554	64	7	71	50	121	2.7	7
2017	453	81	534	64	7	71	49	120	2.5	5
2020	601	53	654	65	7	72	48	120	2.4	5

* Includes candidates for Māori electoralates, electorate only candidates, and dual candidates (standing for both list and electorate).

Parties gaining parliamentary representation; excludes Independents.

The number of members of parliament (MP) per capita in 2020 was 2.4 MPs per 100,000 people, or one MP per 42,512 people. Table 1 shows that this represents a 25 percent decline on the 3.2 MPs per capita in the first MMP in 1996. This has occurred as a result of the number of seats being fixed at 120, while New Zealand's population has grown substantially in the last quarter of a century. Under the First-Past-the-Post (FPP) voting system, the number of seats was periodically adjusted upwards as New Zealand's population grew.

Compared to overseas jurisdictions, New Zealand ranks 14th highest among the 37 members of the OECD, in terms of per capita representation, but still below the OECD average of 2.7 MPs per 100,000 people for lower chambers. Of the 37 OECD members, over half have bicameral parliaments and 17 members (including New Zealand) have unicameral parliaments. The average among these unicameral parliaments is 4.3 MPs per 100,000 people. On this measure, New Zealand ranks 12th out of 17 OECD members, with just five OECD members – Portugal, Hungary, Israel, Turkey, and the Republic of Korea – having lower levels of representation per capita than New Zealand.

⁴ Electoral Commission, Report of the Electoral Commission on the Review of the MMP Voting System, 29 October 2012. Available at: https://www.parliament.nz/resource/en-NZ/50DBHOH_PAP23784_1/d31fb79f2760c226a746e78a40c48df760635ae3

Table 2: Final party vote and seat count⁵

	Valid Party Votes				Final Seats		
	Provisional (¹)	Final	Provisional Share (%)	Final Share (%)	Electorate	List	Total
Labour Party	1,169,397	1,443,545	49.1	50.0	46	19	65
National Party	638,393	738,275	26.8	25.6	23	10	33
Green Party	180,224	226,757	7.6	7.9	1	9	10
ACT New Zealand	190,106	219,031	8.0	7.6	1	9	10
New Zealand First	63,447	75,020	2.7	2.6	0	0	0
The Opportunities Party	33,718	43,449	1.4	1.5	0	0	0
New Conservative	35,954	42,613	1.5	1.5	0	0	0
Māori Party	23,938	33,630	1.0	1.2	1	1	2
Advance NZ	20,841	28,429	0.9	1.0	0	0	0
Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party	7,637	13,329	0.3	0.5	0	0	0
Other (²)	17,817	22,342	0.7	0.8	0	0	0
Total Valid Party Votes (³)	2,381,472	2,886,420	100	100			
Informal / Disallowed Votes (⁴)	15,645	32,653					
Totals	2,397,117	2,919,073			72	48	120

1. Provisional figures are as at election night 17 October; final figures are as at 30 November 2020. The preliminary results (announced on election night) include almost all ordinary votes – those cast by people who appear on the printed roll in the voting place they go to, and that are cast either on Election Day or in advance of Election Day. Provisional figures exclude 16,172 ordinary votes counted after election night and all special votes. Special votes include all voters: who enrolled after 13 September (Writ Day) and their name was not on the printed roll at the voting place; who voted outside their electorate; who voted from overseas; who used an alternative form of voting such as postal voting, and hospital and prison votes. Valid special votes are admitted to the final official count.
2. Final party votes for parties in the ‘Other’ category include: Heartland NZ (914); NZ Outdoors Party (3,256); ONE Party (8,121); Social Credit (1,520); Sustainable New Zealand Party (1,880); Tea Party (2,414); Vision New Zealand (4,237).
3. The difference between the provisional and the final valid vote totals (504,948) includes the 488,776 valid special votes counted after election night as well as a further 16,172 valid ordinary votes counted after election night. The total final ordinary vote total is therefore 2,397,644 votes (of which 2,381,472 were counted on election night and 16,172 after).
4. Informal Votes are votes cast by electors, qualified to vote, which are not counted because the ballot paper did not clearly indicate the party or the electorate candidate vote, or both. ‘Disallowed votes’ are votes disallowed for one of the following reasons: no ground stated for a special vote, arrived late, declaration not enclosed, incomplete declaration, ballot paper not enclosed, or address invalid for electorate.

⁵ Electoral Commission: <http://www.electionresults.govt.nz/>

Table 2 shows the impact of the final vote count (including 488,776 valid special votes – accounting for 16.9% of the total valid votes cast in the 2020 general election), on the election night count. The final count saw the vote share of the Labour Party increase 0.9 percentage points to 50.0% of the vote, entitling the Labour Party to 65 seats, one more than on election night. The National Party’s final share of the party vote dropped 1.2 percentage points to 25.6%, resulting in the National Party’s initial allocation of 35 seats being reduced to a final entitlement of 33 seats. Te Paati Māori’s final share of the party vote increased 0.2 percentage points, enough to entitle the party to two seats in total, one more than on election night. For other parties, special votes altered their final share of the party vote without altering their final seat entitlement. The total number of MPs in the 53rd Parliament (120) was not affected by the final count.

Figure 1 shows the impact of special votes on the provisional election night allocation of seats across MMP elections to date. In 2020, for example, special votes impacted three parties and four seats. The Labour Party and Te Paati Māori gained one more seat while the National Party lost two seats from their election night total. More extensive changes occurred in 1999 when the impact of special votes meant five parties and 14 seats were affected. Significantly, the 1999 election-night coalition majority enjoyed by the Labour and Alliance parties was removed after the counting of special votes; subsequently those parties operated as a minority coalition government. Special votes in 1999 also markedly affected the Green Party. On election night it had no seats in parliament; after special votes were counted the Green party was entitled to seven seats in Parliament, including one electorate seat. In 2005 special votes reduced the total number of MPs in parliament from 122 to 121 and thereby reduced the threshold required for confidence and supply for the governing coalition parties.

Figure 1: The impact of special votes: seat Gains or losses by party

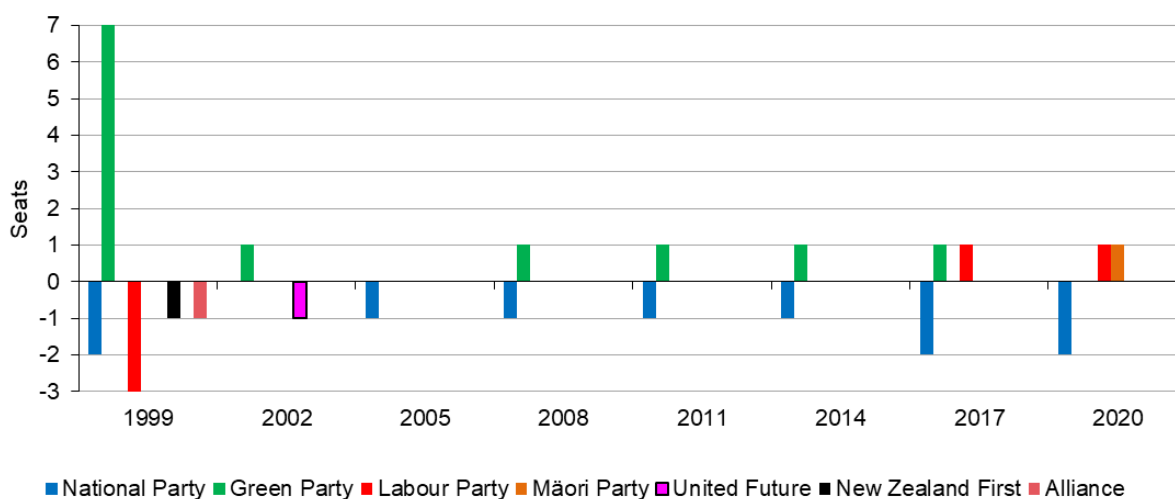


Table 3 compares the 2017 and 2020 election results for those parties with parliamentary representation in either 2017 or 2020. The New Zealand Labour Party saw an increase in both its party vote share (up 13.1 percentage points) and its seat entitlement (19 more seats) between the two elections. The National Party lost 18.8 percentage points and 23 seats compared to 2017. The Green Party gained 1.6 percentage points and two seats, ACT New Zealand gained 7.1 percentage points and nine seats, and the Te Paati Māori achieved the same party vote in 2020 as in 2017 but gained two seats. The New Zealand First Party lost 4.6 percentage points and all nine seats it won at the 2017 election.

Table 3: Party vote share and seats by parliamentary party: 2017 and 2020

	Final Party Vote Share (%)			Total Seats		
	2017	2020	Change (% points)	2017	2020	Change
Labour Party	36.9	50.0	13.1	46	65	19
National Party	44.4	25.6	-18.8	56	33	-23
Green Party	6.3	7.9	1.6	8	10	2
ACT New Zealand	0.5	7.6	7.1	1	10	9
Māori Party	1.2	1.2	0.0	0	2	2
New Zealand First	7.2	2.6	-4.6	9	0	-9
Total				120	120	0

Government formation 1969 - 2020

New Zealand's Westminster parliamentary system requires that ministers can only be appointed (issued ministerial warrants) if they have been elected as members of Parliament. This ensures direct accountability of those ministers to the House. There is however no statutory timeframe (contained in legislation) for issuing ministerial warrants (forming a government) following a general election.

The government formation process can begin immediately after election night. This is despite the official results of the election not being returned in the writ until two to three weeks after polling day and, as can be seen above, the potential for special votes to have significant impacts on both parties and potential coalition majorities. Although the government formation process can *begin* after election night it cannot *conclude* (by the issuing of ministerial warrants) until three conditions have been met.

First, that, in the absence of a single party commanding a parliamentary majority, parliamentary parties need to have successfully concluded an agreement to form a government; second, that public statements have been made to that effect; and third that the Governor-General can have confidence that those public statements are correct and or that the proposed government has the confidence (majority support) in Parliament.

By constitutional convention, the Governor-General's task in the government formation process is to ascertain where the support of the House lies, so that a Government can be appointed or confirmed in office. Accordingly, the Governor-General will, by convention, abide by the outcome of the government formation process in appointing a new ministry or accepting the right of the incumbent Government to remain in office. The Governor-General will also accept the decision of the party or parties as to which individual will lead the Government as Prime Minister.

According to Boston and Bullock, the shift to MMP was expected to make the government formation process more complicated and protracted than under FPP.⁶ This was because elections resulting in single-party majority government were thought less likely, requiring negotiations among multiple parliamentary parties before a government that had the support of a majority of MPs could be formed.

Table 4 shows that the government formation process, on average, has indeed been more protracted under MMP than under FPP. Under FPP it took an average 14.4 days from the date of the election to the

⁶ Jonathan Boston and David Bullock, 'Experiments in Executive Government under MMP in New Zealand: Contrasting Approaches to Multi-Party Governance', in *New Zealand Journal of Public and International Law*, Special Conference Issue: MMP and the Constitution, Vol. 7(1), June 2009, p. 46.

swearing in (government formation) of ministers; under all MMP elections the average is 25.4 days. To date the longest time to form a government was 65 days following the 1996 election, which was perhaps to be expected, given that this was the first time the government formation process under MMP took place. Excluding the 1996 election the average government formation time under MMP has been 20.5 days.

Table 4: Government formation following general elections 1969 - 2020

Election Date	Appointment of Ministers	Days from election to ministerial appointments	Parliament	Commission Opening	Days from ministerial appointments to Parliament opening
29/11/1969	22/12/1969	23	36th	12/03/1970	80
25/11/1972	8/12/1972	13	37th	14/02/1973	68
29/11/1975	12/12/1975	13	38th	22/06/1976	193
25/11/1978	13/12/1978	18	39th	16/05/1979	154
28/11/1981	11/12/1981	13	40th	6/04/1982	116
14/07/1984	26/07/1984	12	41st	15/08/1984	20
15/08/1987	24/08/1987	9	42nd	16/09/1987	23
27/10/1990	2/11/1990	6	43rd	28/11/1990	26
6/11/1993	29/11/1993	23	44th	21/12/1993	22
12/10/1996	16/12/1996	65	45th	12/12/1996	N/A
27/11/1999	10/12/1999	13	46th	20/12/1999	10
27/07/2002	15/08/2002	19	47th	26/08/2002	11
17/09/2005	19/10/2005	32	48th	7/11/2005	19
8/11/2008	19/11/2008	11	49th	8/12/2008	19
26/11/2011	14/12/2011	18	50th	20/12/2011	6
20/09/2014	8/10/2014	18	51st	20/10/2014	12
23/09/2017	26/10/2017	33	52nd	7/11/2017	12
17/10/2020	6/11/2020	20	53rd	25/11/2020	19
Average FPP 1969-1993		14.4			78.0
Average MMP 1996-2020		25.4			13.5
Average 1999-2020		20.5			13.5

Sources: J O Wilson, *New Zealand Parliamentary Record*, *New Zealand Gazette*, Journals

Table 4 also shows that the government formation process in 2020 took 20 days, which is the fourth-longest period under MMP elections to date. This is perhaps surprising, given that 2020 is the first time a single party majority government has been able to be formed, and one that did not require any negotiations of support with other parties. On 31 October, Jacinda Ardern announced that, despite the Labour Party having won enough seats to continue the Sixth Labour Government on their own, they had invited the Green Party to participate in a “cooperation agreement”. The subsequent agreement set out

three areas of cooperation: achieving the purpose and goals of the Zero Carbon Act; protecting New Zealand's environment and biodiversity; improving child wellbeing and marginalised communities.⁷

There is also no statutory requirement for ministers to be appointed prior to the opening of Parliament. A new Government would normally be in place before the new Parliament meets, but in 1996 Parliament opened before ministers were appointed, meaning that a caretaker government continued for four days beyond the opening of Parliament.

Table 4 also illustrates the legislative impact of the Constitution Act 1986 that sought to ensure a greater degree of accountability of ministers to Parliament, primarily by requiring Parliament to meet not later than six weeks after the day fixed for the return of the writs for that election.⁸ As can be seen from the table, the average duration between the formation of the government and the opening of Parliament was 78 days (11 weeks) under FPP elections, compared to under two weeks (13.5 days) under MMP.

Government type 1996-2020

Table 5 shows the type of government formed following general elections, the party or parties that are a formal part of the government, and the party or parties supporting the government. As the table shows, New Zealand's experience of multi-party governments under MMP takes one of four forms: single-party majority government, coalition majority government, single-party minority government and coalition minority government.

1996 is the only election to date to result in a coalition majority government. Minority coalition governments have been most common, with five occurrences since 1996. Single-party minority governments are the next most common, with four instances during the MMP era. The 2020 election is the first to result in a single-party majority government, confirming the comment by Boston and Bulloch above that the move to proportional representation has made this type of government less likely under MMP.

⁷ New Zealand Labour Party & Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand Cooperation Agreement, 53rd Parliament, 6 November 2020 at: https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/beachheroes/pages/14331/attachments/original/1604127899/Labour_Greens_Cooperation_Agreement.pdf?1604127899

⁸ Constitution Act 1986, Section 19; http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1986/0114/latest/DLM94245.html?search=sw_096be8ed80762277_opening+of+parliament_25_se&p=2&sr=25

Table 5: Type of Government formed under MMP elections 1996-2020

Government Period	Type of Government	Government Party / Parties (seats)	Government Support Party/Parties (seats)*	Total seats held by Government Parties and Support Parties (Total seats in Parliament)
Dec 1996 – July 1998	Majority coalition	National-New Zealand First (61)	N/A	61 (120)
Aug 1998 – Dec 1999	Single party minority	National (44)	ACT (8); Independent (8); United NZ (1); Mana Wahine Te Ira Tangata (1)	62 (120)
Dec 1999 – Aug 2002	Minority coalition	Labour-Alliance (59)	Green Party (7)	66 (120)
Aug 2002 – Oct 2005	Minority coalition	Labour-Progressive (54)	United Future (8)	62 (120)
Oct 2005 – Nov 2008	Minority coalition	Labour-Progressive (51)	United Future (3); NZ First (7)	61 (121)
Nov 2008 – Nov 2011	Single party minority	National (58)	ACT (5); United Future (1); Māori Party (5)	69 (122)
Dec 2011 – Sept 2014	Single party minority	National (59)	ACT (1); United Future (1); Māori Party (3)	64 (121)
Oct 2014 – Sept 2017	Single party minority	National (60)	ACT (1); United Future (1); Māori Party (2)	64 (121)
Oct 2017 – Oct 2020	Minority coalition	Labour-New Zealand First (55)	Green Party (8)	63 (120)
Nov 2020 –	Single party majority	Labour (65)	Green Party (10)	75 (120)

*Government support party / parties refers to those parties who promise either support or abstention on votes of “Confidence and Supply” in exchange for either ministers or spokesperson roles outside cabinet. See Jonathan Boston and David Bullock, ‘Experiments in Executive Government under MMP in New Zealand: Contrasting Approaches to Multi-Party Governance’, in *New Zealand Journal of Public and International Law*, Special Conference Issue: MMP and the Constitution, Vol. 7(1), June 2009.

Party Vote Share and Seats in Parliament: 1969-2020

Under elections conducted under the FPP voting system, from 1969 to 1993, representation in parliament was dominated by the two major parties, Labour and National. The MMP voting system, introduced in 1996, has seen the combined vote share of the two major parties decrease by about ten percentage points, but has more than doubled the vote share of those minor parties achieving representation in parliament.

For example, over the nine elections conducted under FPP voting system, from 1969 to 1993, the National Party averaged 41.7% of the vote while the Labour Party averaged 41.4%. Over the nine elections conducted under the MMP voting system, from 1996 to 2020, the National Party has averaged 37.1% of the party vote which compares to the 35.9% average for the Labour Party.

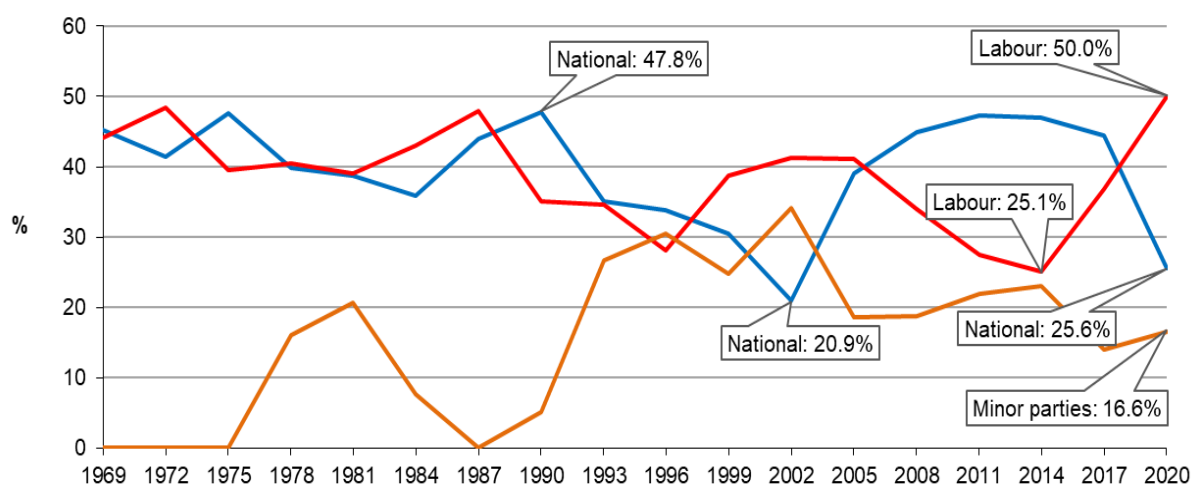
However, the total vote share for the minor parties gaining representation in parliament has more than doubled under MMP compared to FPP elections – from an average of 8.5% over the FPP elections from 1969 to 1993 to an average of 22.5% under MMP elections from 1996 to 2020. In 2020 the three minor parties gaining parliamentary representation obtained well below this average at 16.6% share of the party vote; this is the second lowest (after 2017) combined share of the party vote for the minor parties in any MMP election.

Across the nine MMP elections to date, for the other current parliamentary parties who have contested more than one election, the average party vote share has been: 7.5% for the Green Party; 3.9% for ACT New Zealand; and 1.6% for Te Paati Māori.

Figure 2 shows that the Labour Party's share of the vote in 2020 (50.01%) is not only the highest it has achieved under MMP elections to date, but also higher than any election since 1969. In fact, in only two elections in Labour's history has the party achieved a better result – the 1938 election (55.8%) and the 1946 election (51.3%).

For the National Party the 2020 election was its worst result since 2002, and the second-worst result in the party's history. The National Party's best election result under MMP was achieved in 2011 with 47.3% of the vote; in only four other elections in National's history has the party achieved a better result – 1946 (48.4%), 1949 (51.9%), 1951 (54.0%), and 1990 (47.8%).

Figure 2: Party vote share of parties represented in Parliament: 1969-2020



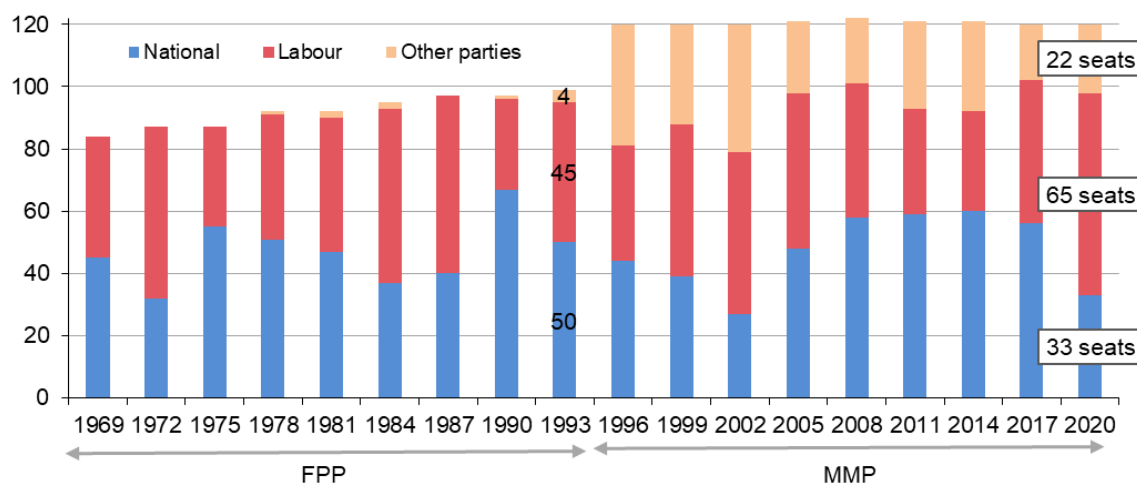
Source: Parliamentary Library

Differences can also be seen in terms of the share of seats in parliament under FPP or MMP elections. On average, the National and Labour parties captured 98.8% of the seats in parliament from a combined average of 83.1% of the vote from 1969 to 1993. In MMP elections between 1996 and 2020, Labour and National together have, on average, won just over three-quarters (76.7%) of the seats in parliament from a combined average of less than three-quarters (72.9%) of the total party vote. In the 2020 election, the two major parties won 81.7% of the seats between them (98 seats) from 75.6% of the total party vote.

Under FPP elections from 1969 to 1993, minor parties that gained parliamentary representation won about 1.1 seats on average each election – about 1.2% of the seats from an average of 8.5% of the vote. In MMP elections, from 1996 to 2020, minor parties that gained parliamentary representation won,

combined, around 28 seats on average each election – or less than one-quarter (23.3%) of the seats from less than one quarter (22.5%) of the vote. In the 2020 election, the three minor parliamentary parties won 22 of the 120 seats (18.3%) from 16.6% of the vote – well below both the average seat share and the average vote shares for the minor parliamentary parties under MMP (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Seats won by major and minor parliamentary parties



Source: Parliamentary Library

The Electorates

Following the 2019/2020 boundary review by the Representation Commission, 35 electorates (30 general electorates and five Māori electorates) saw varying degrees of change to their boundaries. The main areas of change were to electorates in the Auckland, Waikato, Canterbury, Otago and Southland regions. A new general electorate, Takanini, was created in South Auckland, taking total general electorates to 65. The number of Māori electorates remained at seven, taking total electorates to 72.

Of the 72 electorate candidates who won their seats on election night, 69 were confirmed as the electorate representative after the counting of special votes and the final count. In three electorates (Whangārei, Maungakiekie, and Northland) the electorate winner on election night was overturned after the counting of special votes.

Of the 72 electorate seats, a majority (46) were won by the Labour Party, 17 more seats than it held following the 2017 election. The Labour Party won 17 seats from the National Party: Whanganui, Hamilton West, East Coast, Rangitata, Hutt South, Wairarapa, Ōtaki, Nelson, Northcote, New Plymouth, Hamilton East, Ilam, Tukituki, Maungakiekie, Upper Harbour, Whangārei, and Northland. In addition, it won the new electorate of Takanini. The Labour Party lost the seat of Waiariki to Te Paati Māori.

The National Party won 23 electorates, 18 fewer than the number of electorates it won in 2017. In addition to the 17 seats it lost to the Labour Party, National also lost the seat of Auckland Central to the Green Party. ACT New Zealand won the Epsom electorate, the same electorate it held after the 2017 election. The Green Party won Auckland Central from the National Party. Te Paati Māori won the Waiariki electorate from Labour, the seat it last held in 2014.

Of 72 electorates, 37 were won by candidates with a majority (over 50%) of the valid electorate votes; 35 electorates were won with a plurality (less than 50% of the votes but more votes than any other party) of

the valid electorate votes. The electorate with the *lowest* share of the electorate (candidate) vote was Auckland Central, where Chlöe Swarbrick (Green Party) won with 35.5% of the electorate vote. The electorate with the *highest* share of the electorate (candidate) vote was Māngere, where Aupito William Sio (Labour Party) won with 77.1% of the electorate vote.

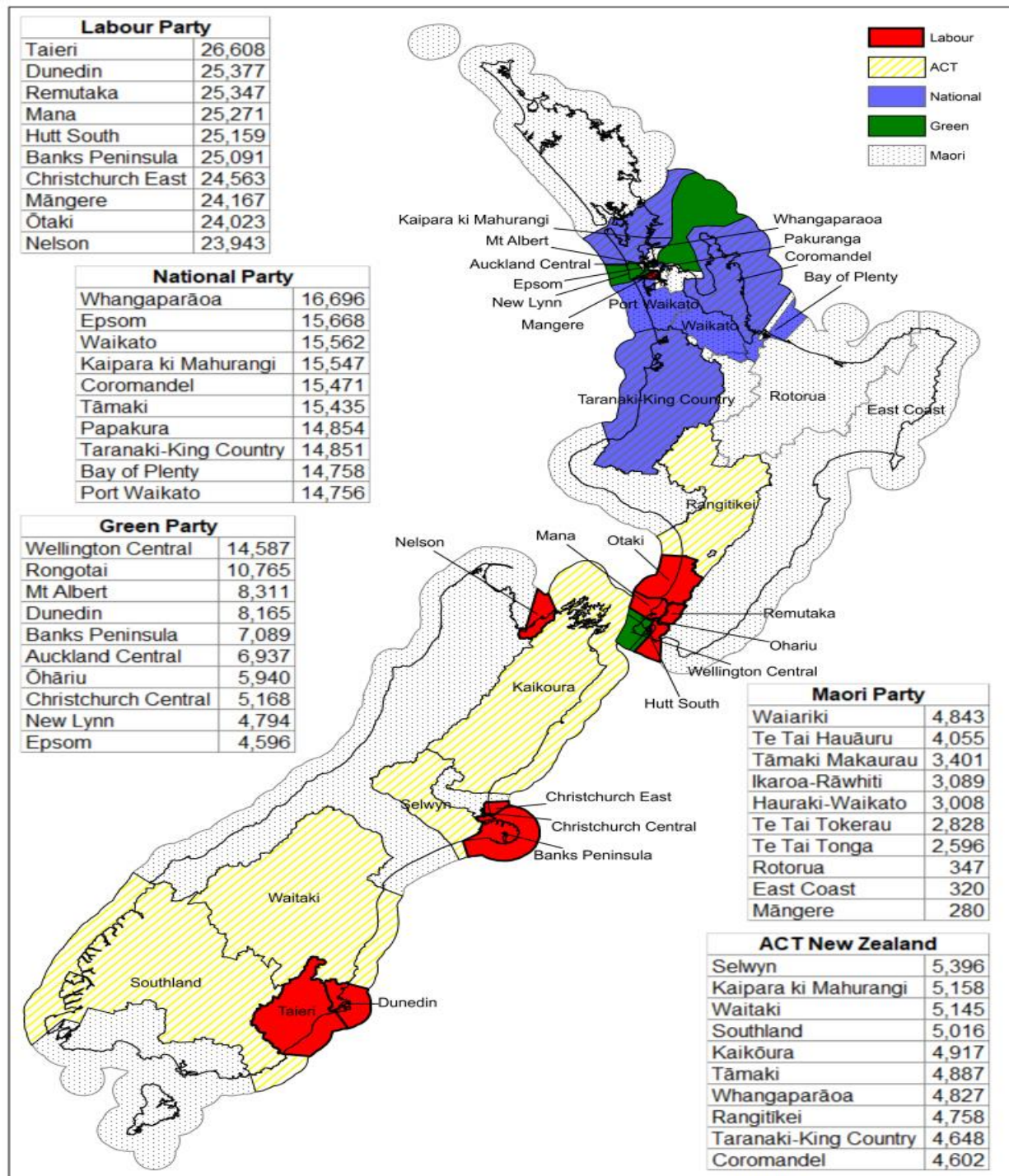
Table 6 below shows both the ten electorates with the highest winning margin over the second-placed candidate, and the ten electorates with the smallest winning margin. For example, Jacinda Ardern (Labour Party) achieved the largest winning margin (21,246) in the Mt Albert electorate in 2020; Willow-Jean Prime (Labour Party) had the lowest winning margin (163) in Northland.

Table 6: Electorates with the ten largest and ten smallest winning margins in 2020

Electorate	Winning Candidate	Party	Share of Valid Electorate Votes (%)	Margin (n)
Mt Albert	Jacinda Ardern	Labour	71.6%	21,246
Remutaka	Chris Hipkins	Labour	68.6%	20,497
Māngere	Aupito William Sio	Labour	77.1%	19,396
Rongotai	Paul Eagle	Labour	58.1%	19,207
Wellington Central	Grant Robertson	Labour	57.7%	18,878
Panmure-Ōtāhuhu	Jenny Salesa	Labour	77.0%	18,626
Christchurch East	Poto Williams	Labour	63.3%	17,336
Manurewa	Arena Williams	Labour	73.0%	17,179
Mana	Barbara Edmonds	Labour	62.0%	16,244
Kelston	Carmel Sepuloni	Labour	64.5%	15,660
...				
Waimakariri	Matt Doocey	National	46.7%	1,507
Auckland Central	Chlöe Swarbrick	Green	35.5%	1,068
Te Tai Hauāuru	Adrian Rurawhe	Labour	48.7%	1,053
Tāmaki Makaurau	Peeni Henare	Labour	41.0%	927
Waiariki	Rawiri Waititi	Māori	46.8%	836
Rotorua	Todd McClay	National	43.3%	825
Maungakiekie	Priyanca Radhakrishnan	Labour	44.8%	635
Whangārei	Emily Henderson	Labour	40.8%	431
Invercargill	Penny Simmonds	National	45.5%	224
Northland	Willow-Jean Prime	Labour	38.1%	163

Figure 4 below looks at the top ten electorates for each party in terms of the highest number of party votes. For example, the Labour Party's top ten electorates are spread evenly between the North and South Islands, with five top polling electorates in each island. Four of its North Island electorates are in the Wellington region, with Mangere the only Auckland electorate in Labour's top ten. In the South Island the Taieri and Dunedin electorates are the highest-polling electorates for the Labour Party. Two Christchurch electorates and Nelson round out the Labour Party's top ten polling electorates for the party vote. (Please note that some electorates in Figure 4 feature in the top ten electorates for more than one party.)

Figure 4: Ten electorates with highest party votes by party



By contrast, the National Party has no South Island electorates among its ten highest-polling electorates for the party vote. Five of National's top polling electorates are in the Auckland region, with Whangaparāoa its highest-polling electorate. The remaining five highest-polling electorates are in the upper half of the North Island.

The Green Party's ten highest-polling electorates are concentrated in the main urban centres: four in Auckland, three in Wellington, two in Christchurch, and one in Dunedin.

The Selwyn electorate in the South Island was ACT New Zealand's highest-polling electorate. Three other South Island electorates featured in the party's top ten, along with three from the Auckland region.

For Te Paati Māori, all seven Māori electorates featured in its ten highest-polling electorates for the party vote.

Table 7 shows the contribution of the ten-highest polling electorates to each party's total party vote. It shows, for example, that the Labour Party was supported by just under five in ten voters (45.1%) across its top ten electorates; this is slightly lower than its party vote share across New Zealand as a whole (50.01%).

Table 7: Contribution of top ten electorates to party vote by party

Effective party votes*	Labour Party	National Party	Green Party	ACT New Zealand	Te Paati Māori
Party vote sub-total for ten-highest electorates (a)	249,549	153,598	76,352	49,354	24,767
Combined sub-total for all parties' ten-highest electorates (b)	553,620	553,620	553,620	553,620	553,620
Party's share of combined total (a)/(b)	45.1%	27.7%	13.8%	8.9%	4.5%
Total valid party votes all electorates (c)	1,443,545	738,275	226,757	219,031	33,630
Ten-highest electorates as share of total valid party votes (a / c)	17.3%	20.8%	33.7%	22.5%	73.6%

*Effective party votes exclude those party votes for parties not eligible for list seats

The National Party averaged 27.7% party vote support across its top ten electorates, somewhat higher than its party vote share across New Zealand as a whole (25.6%). Likewise, both the Green Party (13.8%) and ACT New Zealand (8.9%) did considerably better across their highest-polling electorates than nationwide. Te Paati Māori had almost four times (4.5%) the party vote support in its highest-polling electorates than across New Zealand as a whole (1.2%).

The final row in the table shows the relative contribution the top ten electorates made toward each party's total support. An even distribution would see about 14% party vote support for every ten electorates; figures higher than this show the level of concentration of party vote support among each party's party vote support. For example, Te Paati Māori had the most concentrated support with nearly three-quarters (73.6%) of all party votes for the party coming from just ten electorates. Over a third (33.7%) of all Green Party votes were concentrated in its ten highest-polling electorates. ACT New Zealand and the National Party saw some concentration of support with 22.5% and 20.8% support respectively in those parties' ten

highest-polling electorates. The Labour Party had the least concentrated support, with less than one-fifth (17.3%) of total Labour voters coming from its ten highest-polling electorates.

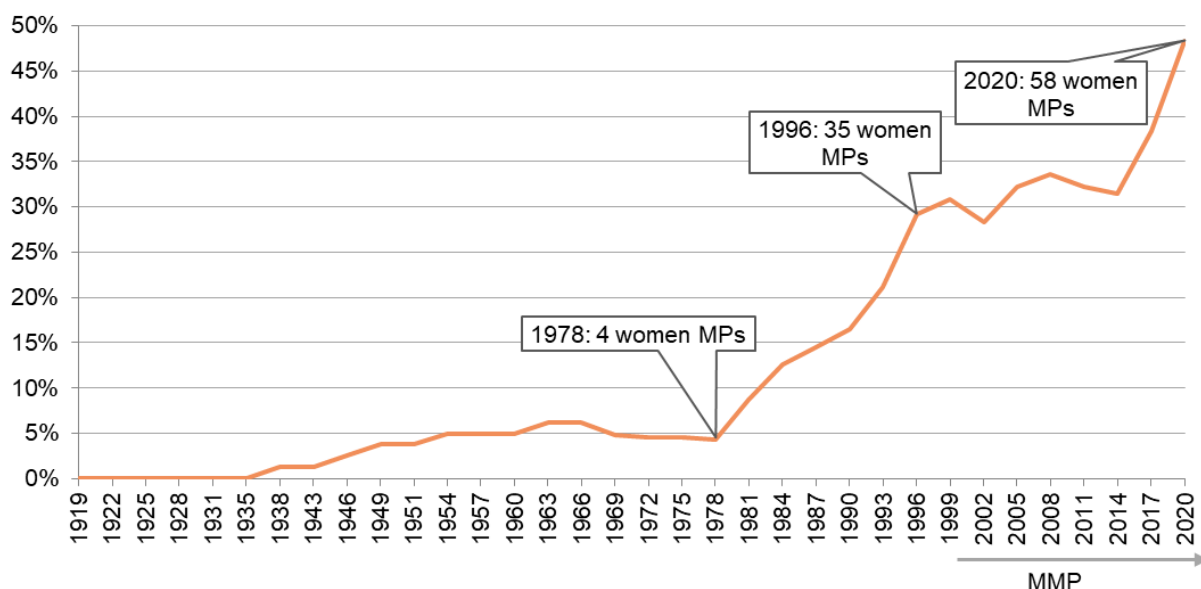
Across all 72 electorates, the Labour Party achieved a majority (>50%) of the party vote in 34 electorates, and a plurality (less than half but more votes than any other party) in 37 electorates. Epsom was the only electorate in which the National Party (37.5%) achieved a greater share than Labour in the party vote (36.0%), a difference of 590 party votes.

Demographic Makeup of the 53rd Parliament

As a proportional representation system, MMP helps voters' party preferences to be proportionally reflected in the party composition of parliament. This has resulted in a greater number of political parties gaining representation in parliament than occurred under the FPP system. Indirectly, MMP has also contributed to achieving a parliament that is more diverse and more representative of the New Zealand population as a whole; parties are able to choose candidates who resemble the electorate in terms of demographic characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and age. Consequently, it is argued that "one central virtue of proportional systems is the claim that they are more likely to produce a parliament which reflects the composition of the electorate".⁹

Until the 1980s, for example, the representation of women in parliament rarely exceeded 5%. Figure 5 shows that on gender grounds, the representativeness of parliament has increased significantly since the advent of MMP in 1996 and is now approaching the gender balance in New Zealand society as a whole. The 2020 general election saw a record 58 women elected to the 53rd Parliament, surpassing the previous record of 46 women elected to the 52nd Parliament in 2017. Overall, women now comprise almost half (48.3%) of the new Parliament, the highest share obtained by women since women were first eligible to stand for parliament over a century ago (1919).

Figure 5: Number and share (%) of women in Parliament after general elections 1919-2020



Source: Parliamentary Library

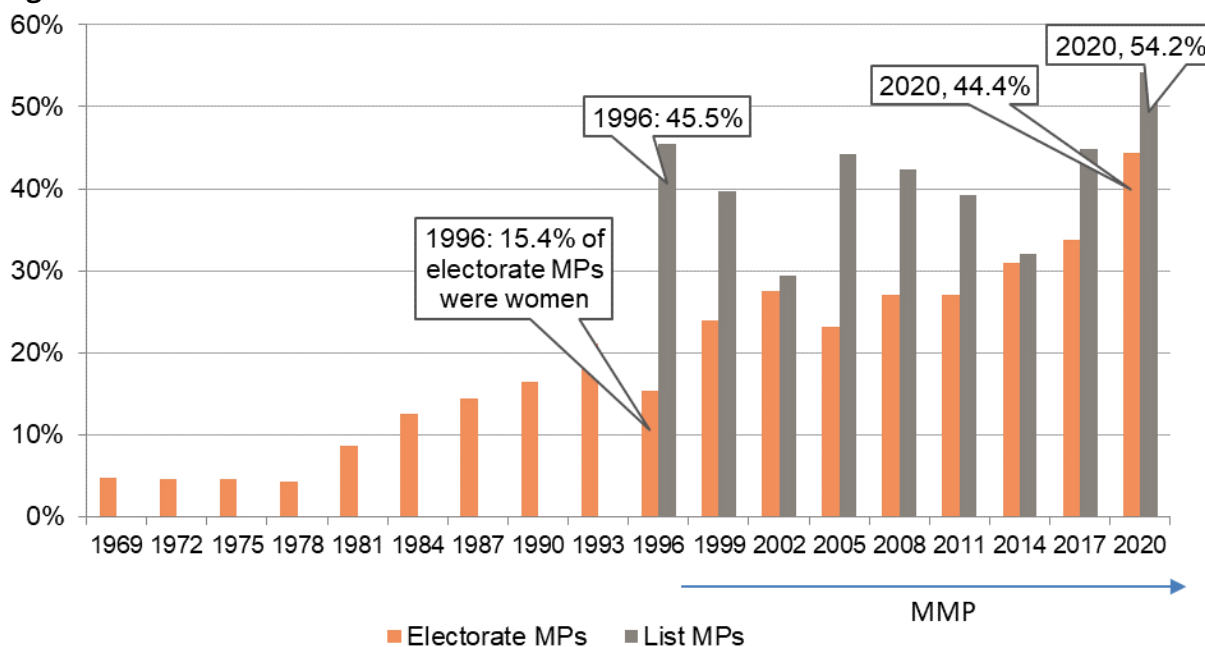
⁹ P. Norris, 'Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems', *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 18, 1997, p. 309.

Internationally, this level of representation of women in parliament places New Zealand in 5th place, up from 17th place in 2017. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, only Rwanda (61%), Cuba (53%), Bolivia (53%), and United Arab Emirates (50%) have higher proportions of women represented in their lower chambers.¹⁰ Mexico (48%), Nicaragua (47%), and Sweden (47%) have similar levels of representation of women in their lower chambers as New Zealand (48.3%).

Even after the introduction of MMP, however, there are still noticeable differences between the proportion of list MPs who are women and the proportion of electorate MPs who are women. (Electorate MPs are elected through the electorate vote which is conducted under a FPP voting system). From 1996, women have been able to achieve a higher level of representation in the list seats when compared to their levels of representation in the electorate seats. Figure 6 shows the gender differences in representation between electorate and list seats.

In 1996, for example, less than one-fifth (15%) of electorate MPs were women, compared to 45% of the list MPs. In 2002 and 2014 these gender disparities were less marked, with less than a 2% divergence. In 2020 there was a ten percent divergence – 44% of electorate MPs were women compared to 54% of list MPs. Nevertheless, the 2020 election saw record levels of representation, both in women MPs’ share of electorate MPs (44%), and women MPs’ share of list MPs (54%).

Figure 6: Share of women in electorate and list seats 1969-2020



The party list mechanism under MMP has also enabled a more ethnically diverse range of candidates to be elected (see Figure 7). The 53rd Parliament has 25 MPs who have self-identified as being of Māori descent, compared with the 28 who did so in the previous parliament. Overall, MPs who identify as being of Māori descent comprise about one-fifth (20.8%) of the new Parliament, about the same proportion of the total

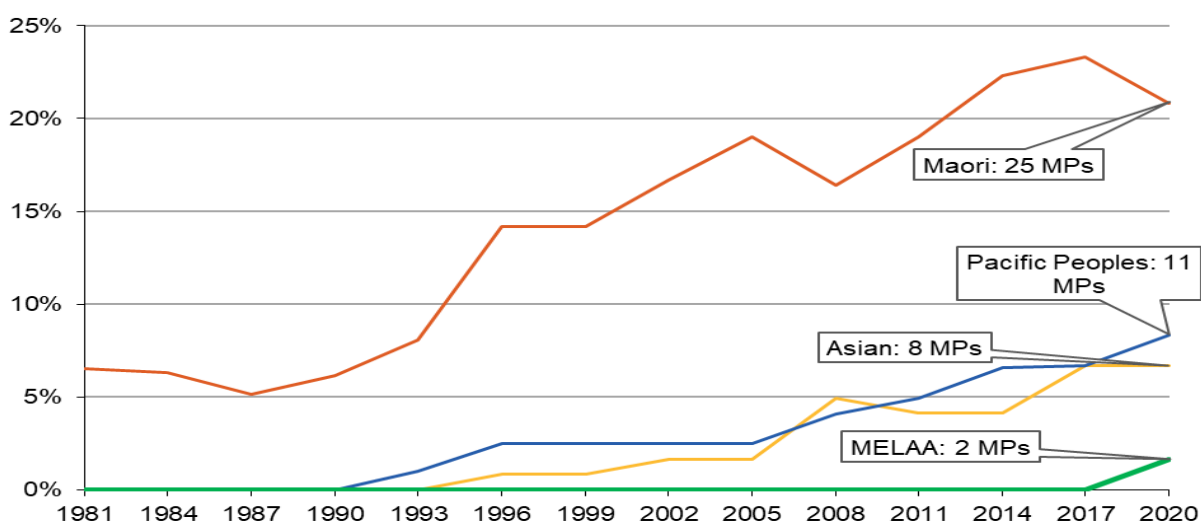
¹⁰ Inter-Parliamentary Union, Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments, October 2020, available at: <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=10&year=2020>

New Zealand population who stated they identified as being of Māori descent in the 2018 census (19.1%, or 896,567 people).¹¹

The new Parliament has a record 11 MPs who identify as being of Pacific Peoples ethnicity, three more than in the previous Parliament. Overall, MPs who identify as being of Pacific Peoples ethnicity comprise 9.2% of parliament, slightly above the proportion of the population who identified as being of the Pacific Peoples ethnic group in the 2018 census (8.1%).¹²

The 53rd Parliament has eight MPs who identify as being of Asian ethnicity, the same number as in the previous Parliament. Overall, MPs who identify as being of Asian ethnicity comprise 6.7% of the parliament, which is less than half the share (15.1%) of the population who identified as being of the Asian ethnic group in the 2018 census (15.1%).

Figure 7: Parliaments by ethnic share 1981-2020



Source: Parliamentary Library

For the first time the New Zealand Parliament has two MPs from the Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA) grouping used by Statistics New Zealand. Overall, MPs who identify as belonging to the MELAA grouping comprise 1.7% of the 53rd parliament, which is similar to the share of the population who identified as being of the MELAA grouping in the 2018 census (1.5%).

There are 13 MPs in the 53rd Parliament who have publicly stated that they identify as a member of the Rainbow or LGBTIQ+ community.¹³

¹¹ Statistics New Zealand, *Deriving the 2018 Māori descent electoral population*, Wellington, September 2019, p. 7. Available at: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Methods/Deriving-the-2018-Maori-descent-electoral-population/Deriving-the-2018-maori-descent-electoral-population.pdf>

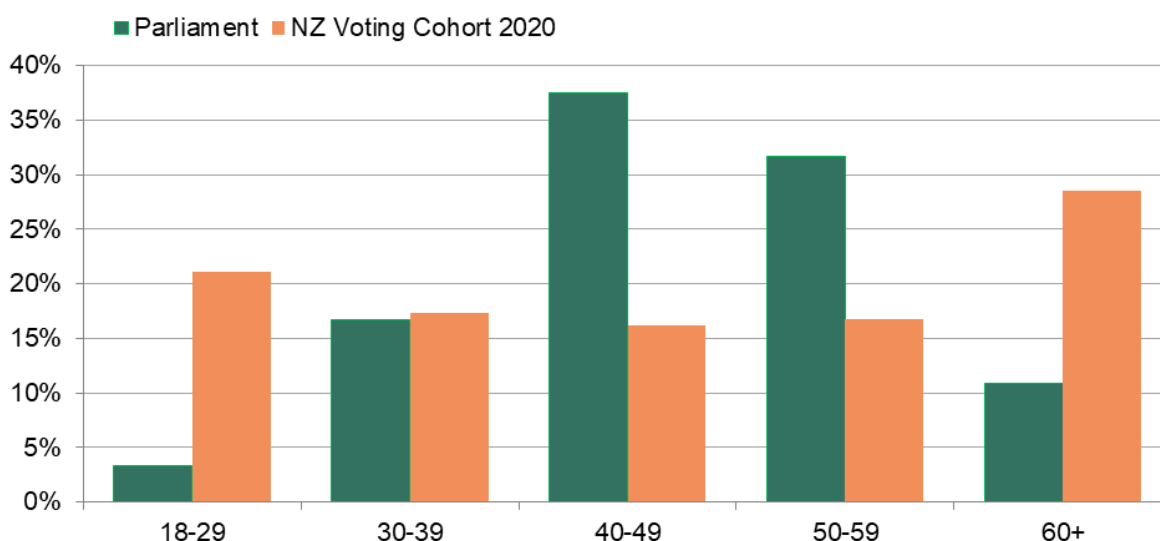
¹² Pacific, Asian and MELAA ethnic population data can be found at Stats NZ, Census ethnic groups dataset. Available at: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/2018-census-ethnic-groups-dataset>

¹³ LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or other). Sources include the MPs maiden speech, official party websites, official party social media, or public statements.

In terms of age, Figure 8 shows that those aged 18-29 years, and those aged over 60, are under-represented in the 53rd Parliament. These age groups comprise nearly half (21.1% and 28.6% respectively) of the New Zealand voting age cohort (18+) population, but just one-seventh (3.3% and 10.8% respectively) of the New Zealand Parliament. By contrast, the 40-49 and 50-59 age groups are over-represented in parliament when compared to the general 18+ population.

In generational terms, over two-thirds (69.2%) of the 53rd Parliament are 'Generation X', less than one-quarter (23.3%) are 'baby boomers'. There are no MPs from the generation born prior to 1946 (also known as the 'silent generation'). In 2020 the New Zealand Parliament also has nine MPs (7.5%) representing the "millennials" (also known as "Generation Y"), or those born from 1986 to 2005.¹⁴ The average age of the 53rd Parliament is 47.3 years; the median age is 48.0 years. The youngest MP is 26 years old; the oldest, 68 years.

Figure 8: The composition of the 53rd Parliament by age group



Source: Parliamentary Library

Table 8 sets out the previous occupations of MPs as a share of successive parliaments since 1996. In 2020 23 MPs (19% of all MPs) listed their previous occupation as 'businessperson'. Since 1996, this has usually been the single biggest previous occupational category in New Zealand parliaments, apart from 1999 and 2008 when 'teacher' and 'manager / administrator' were the highest respectively. Lawyers make up about one-fifth (19%) of the 53rd Parliament, the highest share in any parliament since 1996. A further 13% of the Parliament listed their previous occupation as a 'manager or administrator', confirming a recent trend for increasing numbers of these professionals to enter parliament.

Public servants, the education sector, and local government are the other most frequent occupational backgrounds for MPs, with teachers featuring less prominently from 2011. Farmers were more common in parliaments up till 1999, although teachers have outnumbered farmers in parliaments since 1996.

¹⁴ Although there is much debate about the dates and lengths of these generational cohorts, it is generally accepted that for meaningful cohort analysis a generation is about 20 years long, and that all generational cohorts should be the same length. Here the pre-World War Two generation is defined as those born from 1926 to 1945 inclusive, baby boomers are those born from 1946 to 1965 inclusive, Generation X are those born from 1966 to 1985 inclusive, and Millennials / Generation Y are those born from 1986 to 2005 inclusive.

MPs who had a media background have become more numerous since 2011. Three percent of MPs in 2020 were previously union workers, the second-lowest share in the 1996-2020 period, while declines in the share by accountants and engineers can also be noted.

Table 8: Previous occupations of MPs as share of Parliament (%)¹⁵

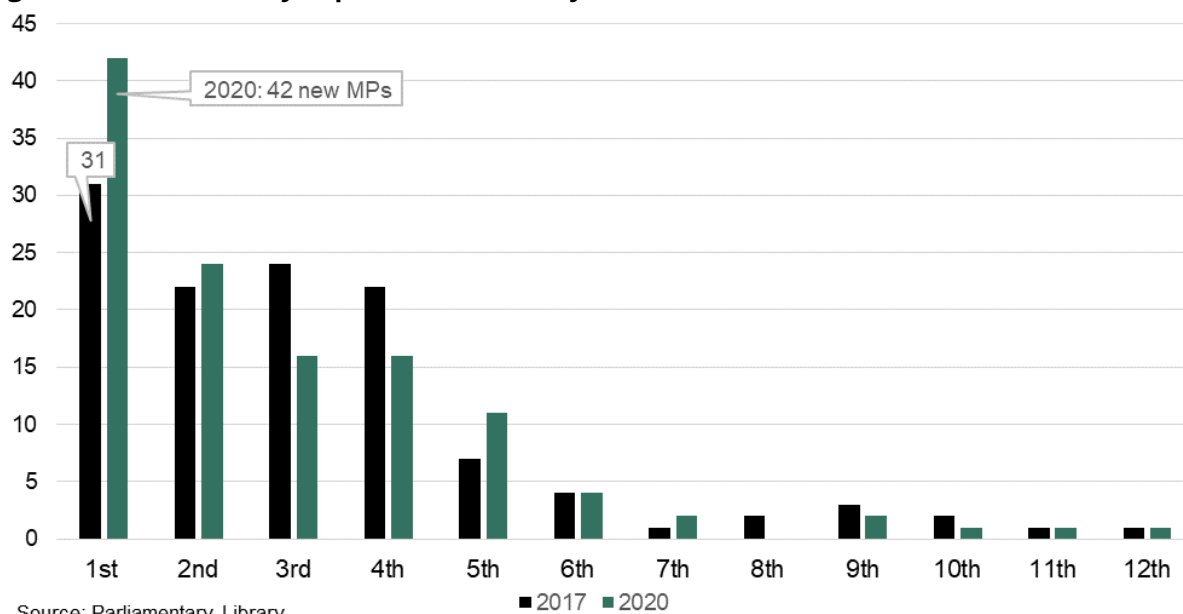
Occupation	1996	1999	2002	2005	2008	2011	2014	2017	2020
Businessperson ^(a)	18	17	19	20	11	20	23	20	19
Lawyer	8	8	10	7	15	10	8	11	19
Manager/ Administrator ^(b)	8	6	8	9	16	13	17	14	13
Public servant ^(c)	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	9	12
Teacher ^(d)	17	18	18	15	14	7	10	8	8
Local Government	3	5	6	3	2	8	9	10	6
Media	3	2	2	1	3	5	5	7	6
Health professional ^(e)	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	4
Farmer	13	12	8	10	8	7	5	7	3
Trade Unionist	7	6	8	7	5	4	2	3	3
Community / NGO ^(f)									3
Accountant	4	3	2	2	4	1	1	1	2
Engineer	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	2
Consultant	6	8	6	7	2	4	3	3	0
Other (or not stated) ^(g)	11	13	12	17	16	19	6	4	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

- (a) 'Businessperson' includes chief executives, company directors, the self-employed, real estate agents, investment bankers, and chairpersons in the private sector.
- (b) 'Manager/Administrator' includes manager, administrators, and chief executive officers in the state or public sectors.
- (c) Includes policy and ministerial advisers, and consultants working in the public or parliamentary sectors. Prior to 2014, public servants and health professionals were included in the 'Other' category.
- (d) 'Teacher' includes academics, lecturers and school principals.
- (e) Includes medical doctors, nurses and other health professionals.
- (f) "Community / NGO" includes activists and those working in the community, voluntary, and non-government sectors. Prior to 2020 these were included in the "Other" category.
- (g) 'Other' (after 2014) includes those working in miscellaneous sectors, or MPs whose previous occupation is publicly unavailable.

¹⁵ Sources include NZ Official Yearbook; MPs' biographies as listed on public websites, social media, and political party websites.

Figure 9 shows the number of parliamentary terms for MPs in the 53rd Parliament. The number of terms served by an MP includes complete terms and any partial or incomplete terms. The number of terms is cumulative and does not necessarily represent continuous service; that is, an MP may have had a break in their parliamentary service due to an unsuccessful election. In 2020 there are 42 new MPs without previous parliamentary experience (1st termers), or over one-third (35%) of the 53rd Parliament. The second-largest category is the 24 MPs entering their second term in 2020, one-fifth (20%) of the Parliament. Over two-thirds of MPs (68%) are beginning their third term or less in 2020; that is 82 MPs have six years or less of parliamentary experience. One MP has completed 11 terms and is beginning their 12th term in 2020; that is, they begin the 2020-2023 parliamentary term with 33 years' prior experience in parliament.

Figure 9: Parliamentary experience of MPs by term in the 53rd Parliament



Source: Parliamentary Library

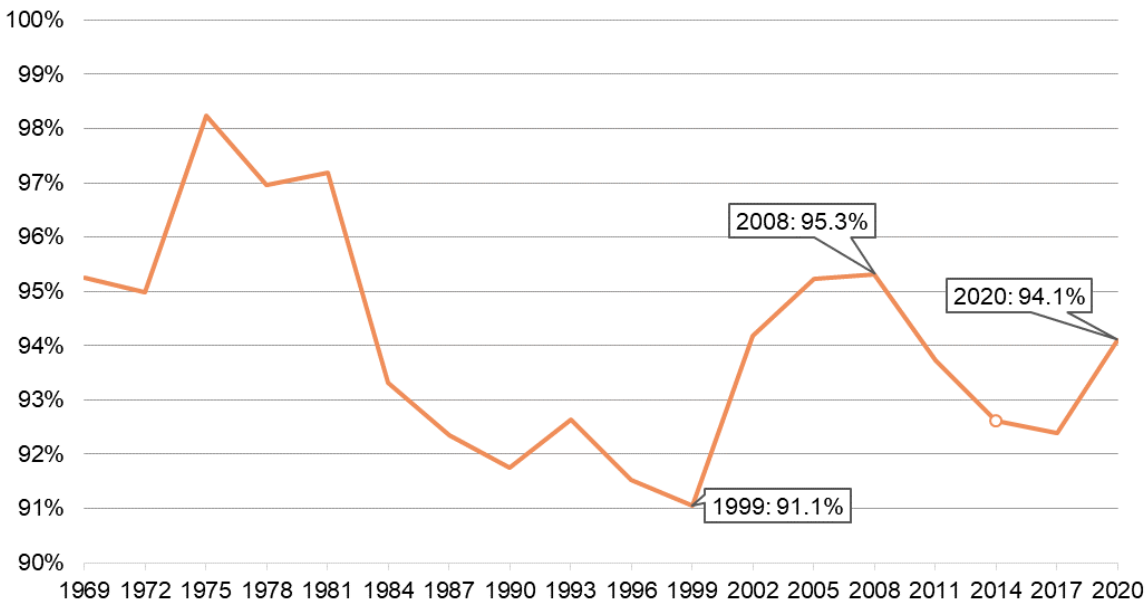
Voter Enrolment has increased since 2017

For the first time, the 2020 election saw people able to enrol and vote on Election Day. In previous elections, they had to enrol by midnight the day before Election Day. At the 2017 election approximately 19,000 people who turned up to a voting place and cast special votes on Election Day didn't have their votes counted because they weren't enrolled.

By the close of polls, over 3.5 million people had enrolled to vote in the 2020 general election. This was 94.1% of the estimated 3.8 million people eligible to vote (voting age population or VAP) – about one percentage point higher than the average enrolment ratio for all MMP elections (93.3%) to date. Figure 10 shows that the 2008 enrolment rate (95.3%) is the highest enrolment rate achieved under MMP to date. Under FPP elections, enrolment rates tended to be higher until 1981; from 1984 to 1993 the average enrolment rate under FPP (92.5%) was somewhat lower than the MMP average (93.3%).

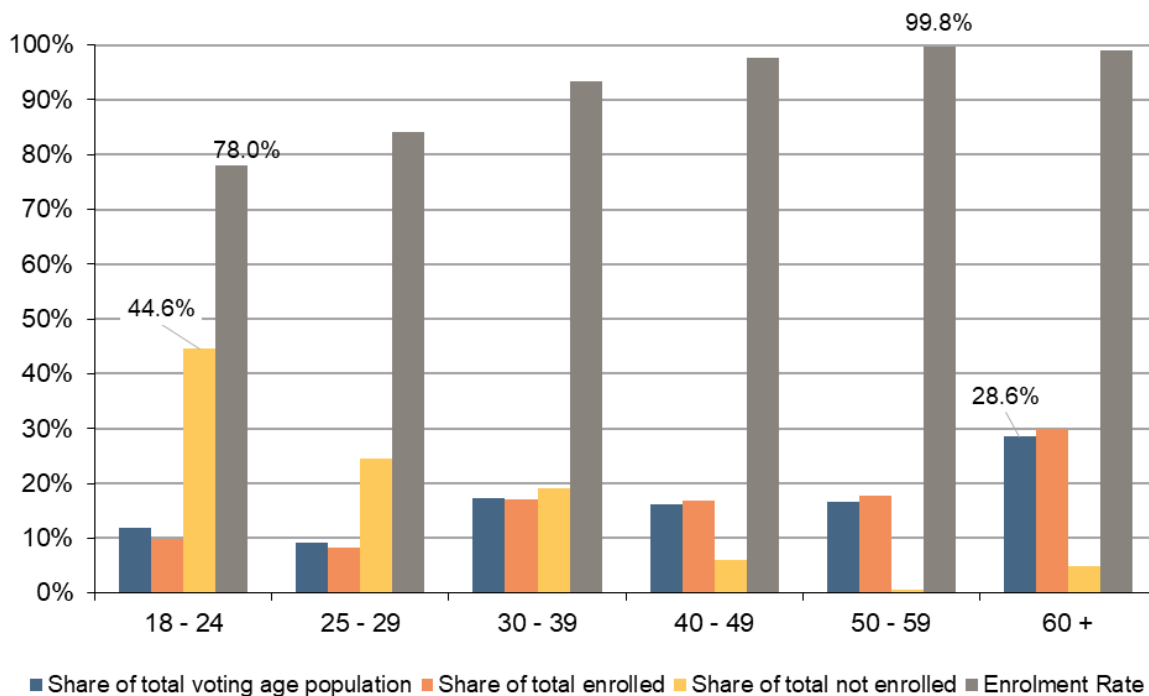
Of the estimated 548,997 Māori descent population eligible to vote, 535,472 (97.5%) were enrolled for the 2020 election. Of enrolled Māori descent voters, 276,013 (51.5%) were enrolled on the Māori roll and 259,459 (48.5%) were enrolled on the general roll. Collectively, the 535,472 New Zealand voters of Māori descent who were enrolled comprised 15.1% of the total New Zealand voters enrolled for the 2020 general election.

Figure 10: Enrolment rates of the eligible voters under FPP and MMP elections 1969-2020



Despite a relatively high overall enrolment rate there are significant differences in enrolment rates across different age groups, which are compounded by the relative size of each age cohort. For example, Figure 11 shows there are now over a million voters (1,078,100) in the 60+ age group, which now accounts for over one-quarter (28.6%) of all voters. In 1993 this cohort accounted for just over one-fifth (21%) of the total eligible voters. By comparison, while voters under 30 in 1993 accounted for over one-quarter (26%) of all eligible voters; in 2020 the share of this cohort has declined to about one-fifth (21.1%).

Figure 11: Age-group shares of voting age population, enrolment, non-enrolment 2020



Source: Parliamentary Library

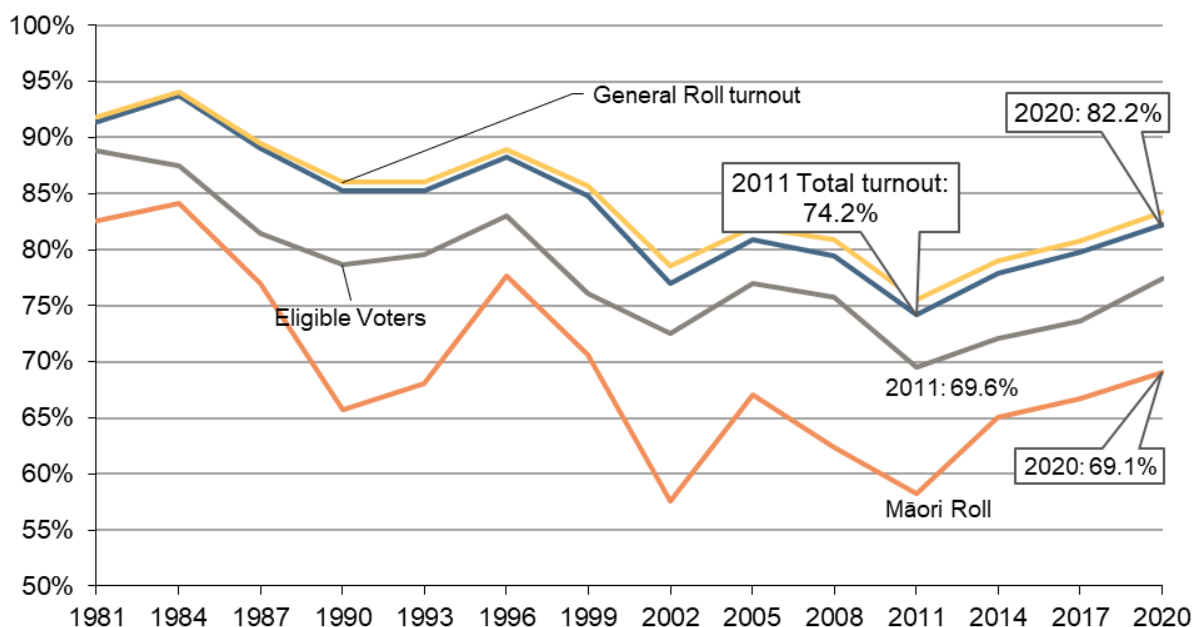
Figure 11 combines these age cohort shares with enrolment rates by age group. The lowest enrolment rate is for those aged 18-24 (78.0%); the highest for those aged 50-59 (99.8%). Voters aged over 40 years tend to enrol at a higher proportion compared to their share of the total voting age population. On the other hand, while age cohorts under 40 years of age comprise just over one-third (35.3%) of the total enrolled, this cohort accounted for almost nine in ten (88.4%) of the 222,520 people who failed to enrol for the 2020 election. Nearly half (44.6%) of the total who failed to enrol were aged 18-24.

Enrolment by electorate is also not uniform. Of the ten electorates with the lowest enrolment rates, eight are located in cities with high student populations: Auckland Central (73.7% of the VAP enrolled); Wigram (83.7%); Southland (84.7%); Christchurch Central (85.6%); Manurewa (88.5%); Hamilton East (88.7%); Dunedin (89.8%); Hamilton West (90.4%); Rangitata (91.1%); Palmerston North (91.2%).¹⁶

Voter Turnout Increasing since 2011

Figure 12 shows that total voter turnout (total votes cast as a proportion of enrolled electors) for the 2020 General Election was 82.2% overall, eight percentage points higher than the lowest MMP turnout that occurred in 2011 (74.2%). The highest turnout under MMP to date was the first MMP election in 1996 when 88.3% of those enrolled voted. Over two-thirds (69.1%) of those enrolled on the Maori roll turned out to vote in 2020, 11.5 percentage points higher than the lowest Maori roll turnout that occurred in 2002 (57.6%).

Figure 12: Voter turnout by roll, 1981-2020



Source: Parliamentary Library

¹⁶ For voting age population turnout and the demographic characteristics of electorates see individual electorate profiles compiled by the Parliamentary Library at: <https://www.parliament.nz/en/mps-and-electoralates/electorate-profiles/>

As a measure of political engagement, total voter turnout in New Zealand under MMP between 1996 and 2020 has averaged 80.5% – a high level of voter participation when compared with other Western democracies.¹⁷

In FPP elections from 1981 to 1993, average total voter turnout was somewhat higher at 88.9%.

In 2020 turnout of eligible voters, or VAP (voting age population), was 77.4%, the highest since 1996. The lowest VAP turnout since the Second World War occurred in 2011 when it was 69.6%. In total, 877,614 people did not vote in 2020. Of these 222,520 (25.4%) were not enrolled, while 655,094 (74.6%) were enrolled but did not turn out to vote.

Table 9 lists the general electorates with the highest and lowest turnouts in 2020. Of the ten general electorates with the highest turnouts (valid votes cast as a percentage of enrolled electors), four are from the Wellington region and four are from the Canterbury region. All ten of the general electorates with the lowest turnout are from the Auckland region. As can be seen from Table 7, the general electorate with the lowest turnout (Panmure-Ōtāhuhu, previously Manukau East) had lower turnout (67.6%) than all but two of the Māori electorates.

¹⁷ See Electoral Commission, *Media Kit: General Elections and Referendums 2020*. Available at https://elections.nz/assets/2020-general-election/Media-Kit_September-2020.pdf p. 21.

Table 9: Selected electorates by turnout 2011-2020 (%)¹⁸

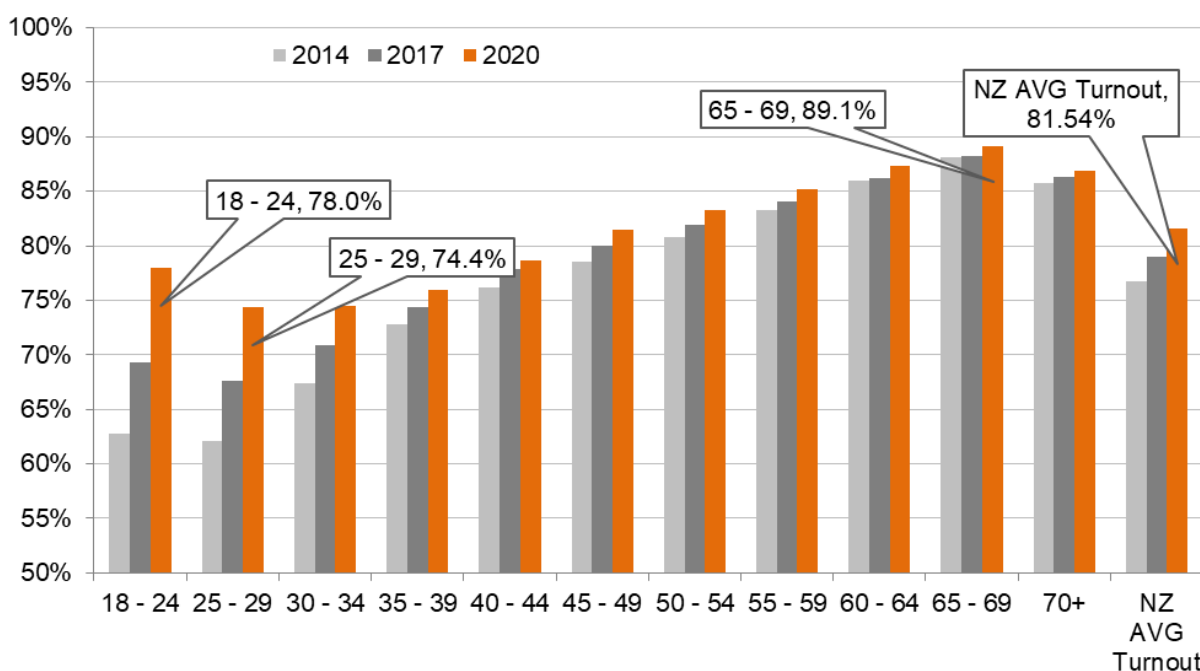
<i>Highest turnout (general electorates)</i>	2011	2014	2017	2020
Selwyn	79.2	84.4	87.2	89.4
Wellington Central	82.4	84.6	86.6	89.4
Banks Peninsula (Port Hills)	77.4	81.9	85.3	89.1
Waitaki	78.7	82.0	85.0	88.2
Ōhāriu	81.6	83.7	86.1	87.7
Rongotai	81.5	83.6	85.4	87.6
Waimakariri	77.1	81.8	83.6	87.5
Dunedin (Dunedin North)	75.1	80.2	82.7	87.1
Ōtaki	80.2	83.1	85.3	86.9
Kaipara ki Mahurangi (Helensville)	75.7	82.9	84.4	86.8
Average turnout (all general electorates)	75.5	79.0	80.8	83.3
<i>Lowest turnout (general electorates)</i>	2011	2014	2017	2020
Pakuranga	71.9	75.5	77.1	79.1
Upper Harbour	...	74.3	75.7	78.6
Te Atatū	72.4	75.9	76.8	78.2
Kelston	...	74.3	75.2	77.6
Mt Roskill	71.8	75	75.9	76.5
Takanini	74.4
Botany	67	71.9	72.6	74.0
Manurewa	67	70.2	67.5	69.8
Māngere	67.1	69.4	67.1	68.4
Panmure-Ōtāhuhu (Manukau East)	67.8	69.7	66.1	67.6
<i>Turnout Māori Electorates</i>	2011	2014	2017	2020
Te Tai Tonga	57.0	63.6	68.3	75.0
Te Tai Hauāuru	58.7	65.9	68.7	69.7
Te Tai Tokerau	61.6	69.3	69.4	69.4
Waiariki	59.9	66.3	68.6	69.3
Hauraki-Waikato	56.9	63.6	65.4	68.1
Ikaroa-Rāwhiti	58.8	66.3	67.4	67.1
Tāmaki Makaurau	54.8	60.6	59.2	65.1
Average (all Māori electorates)	58.2	65.1	66.7	69.1
Total turnout (All General and Māori Electorates)	74.2	77.9	79.8	82.2

¹⁸ NZ Electoral Commission, 2020 election results, <https://www.electionresults.govt.nz/>

Since 2014 the Electoral Commission has been providing a breakdown of voter turnout by age band.¹⁹ Figure 13 shows that those age cohorts over the age of 50 had above average (81.5%) turnout in the 2020 election. Those aged 65-69 had the highest turnout (89.1%), followed by those aged 60-64 (87.3%). The age cohorts under 50 had below average levels of turnout in the 2020 election; those aged 25-29 had the lowest turnout, with under three-quarters (74.4%) turning out to vote.

Nevertheless, improvements in voter turnout rates can be noted for all age cohorts when compared to their participation rates in previous elections. The 18-24 age cohort showed the most improvement, increasing their voter turnout by 8.8 percentage points between 2017 and 2020. When compared to 2014, voter turnout among those aged 18-24 has improved by 15.3 percentage points. Other age cohorts to have increased voter turnout since 2014 include those aged 25-29 (12.3%), and those aged 30-34 (7.1%). Despite this improvement in turnout for younger cohorts, close to half (46.3%) of those who were enrolled in 2020 but who did not turn out to vote were aged under 40.

Figure 13: Voter turnout by age band 2014, 2017, 2020



Referendum Results

Two government-initiated referendums were held at the same time as the 2020 general election – a binding referendum on the End of Life Choice Act 2019, and a non-binding referendum on the proposed Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill.

After final results, nearly two-thirds (65.9%) of valid votes cast approved the referendum on the End of Life Choice Act. Referendum papers for all electorates went into the same ballot box at voting places which means the Electoral Commission is unable to provide a separate count by individual electorate; that is, only combined figures for both general and Māori electorates are available. On this basis, of the 65 combined electorates, 63 approved the referendum on the End of Life Choice Act, ranging from Mt Roskill

¹⁹ See, for example, Electoral Commission, 2020 General Election and referendums: [Voter turnout statistics for the 2020 General Election](#)

/ Tāmaki Makaurau (55.7% voted Yes), to Auckland Central / Tāmaki Makaurau / Te Tai Tokerau (76.9%). Three combined electorates did not approve the referendum: Māngere / Tāmaki Makaurau (38.4%); Manurewa / Tāmaki Makaurau (46.8%); Panmure-Ōtāhuhu / Tāmaki Makaurau (47.5%).

The End of Life Choice Act will come into force 12 months from the date of the final results, that is, 6 November 2021. Until then, assisted dying remains illegal in New Zealand. The End of Life Choice Act will be administered by the Ministry of Health.

After final results, just over half (51.2%) of valid votes cast did not support the Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill. The referendum result will mean that recreational cannabis use will remain illegal in New Zealand.

On a combined electorate basis, 46 of 65 combined electorates voted against the Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill, ranging from Botany / Hauraki-Waikato / Tāmaki Makaurau (33.2% approval) to Remutaka / Ikaroa-Rāwhiti / Te Tai Hauāuru / Te Tai Tonga (49.8%).

A further 19 electorates out of 65 voted for the Bill ranging from Northcote / Tāmaki Makaurau / Te Tai Tokerau (50.4% approval) to Wellington Central / Ikaroa-Rāwhiti / Te Tai Hauāuru / Te Tai Tonga (73.3%).

Next Steps

In accordance with Section 8(1) of the Electoral Act 1993, the Electoral Commission must report within six months of the return of the writ (20 November 2020), on the administration and delivery of the 2020 General Election.²⁰ Among other matters, the Commission must report on enrolment and voting statistics.

It is also usual for the Justice Select Committee to hold an inquiry into each general election; the Committee initiated its inquiry into the 2020 general election, including the cannabis and end of life choice referendums, on 9 December 2020. The committee called for submissions from the public by 6 April 2021. The committee chose four key themes it is particularly keen to investigate.²¹ These themes are:

- The resilience of New Zealand's electoral system in the face of civil emergencies, with a particular focus on lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The integrity and security of New Zealand's electoral system in light of emerging challenges, with a particular focus on technology and social media.
- The rise of advance voting, with a particular focus on whether any rules governing the regulated period should change in light of the increase in advance voting.
- The accessibility of the voting system for people with disabilities and New Zealand's growing ethnic communities whose first language may not be English.

The 53rd Parliament must dissolve by 20th November 2023, a writ for the next general election must be issued by 27th November 2023, and the writ for the next general election must be returned 60 days later or by 26 January 2024. Allowing for the counting of special votes, the date for the next New Zealand general election is likely to be on or before Saturday, 13 January 2024.

²⁰ See Electoral Act 1993 available at: <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1993/0087/latest/DLM307519.html>

²¹ New Zealand Parliament, Inquiry into the 2020 General Election and Referendums at https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/make-a-submission/document/53SCJU_SCF_INQ_104172/inquiry-into-the-2020-general-election-and-referendums

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For electorate results by electorate, and census data by electorate (including social and economic statistics), see the electorate profiles compiled by the Parliamentary Library at: <https://www.parliament.nz/en/mps-and-electorates/electorate-profiles/>

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