



Electoral Commission
Tē Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri

MMP Monitor
Pre-election survey 2005



Summary report

- understanding of MMP
- present thinking about the election
- information in the election campaign
- general attitudes to politics

Methodology

Released	30 June 2005
Poll conducted	30 May to 10 June 2005
Sample size	900
Sample error	+/- 3.3% at the 95% confidence level
Response rate	29.6% calculated by completed interviews / completed interviews + refusals. This response rate is above average for politics-related opinion polling.
Method	Standalone telephone survey using CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) conducted by TNS.
Sample	General population 18+, living in private houses with a telephone.
Weighting	No weighting has been applied. The age and gender breakdown for the sample is given at the back of the report. Throughout ethnic differences are not analysed as the numbers for Maori, Pacific peoples and Asians are too small to sustain such analysis.
Design	TNS & Electoral Commission
Analysis	Dr Helena Catt, Electoral Commission

For more information contact: Dr Helena Catt, Chief Executive,
Electoral Commission, catt@elections.govt.nz, tel +64 +4 +474 0676.

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Summary

Understanding of MMP

A majority of people think that MMP is easy to understand, twice as many as think that it is difficult. (Table 10)

The majority of people understand and remember that the party vote is the one that determines the share for each party in Parliament. This is the highest level in a pre-election poll since the first MMP election. Annual surveys on this question show an ebb and flow with the highest levels for correct answers immediately after an election and the lowest in the mid-year of the election cycle. This survey's results fit that pattern. (Tables 1 and 2)

However, of concern are:

- The quarter of respondents who think incorrectly that the electorate vote determines the share of seats each party has in parliament. (Table 1)
- The three-quarters of respondents who can not correctly identify both parts of the threshold (Table 5)
- The less than a fifth of respondents who cannot correctly identify the party vote as the one that determines the share for each party in Parliament and both parts of the threshold. (Table 9)

Present thinking about the election

Half say they will vote and already know who for. (Table 13) There are clear age differences - older people are the more likely they are to already know how they will vote, in line with theories on the habitual nature of voting. The youngest are the most likely to have not yet given the election much thought. (Table 14)

Information in the election campaign

When asked what information was most useful in deciding how to vote, party policy and who would make the best Prime Minister are seen as important by over two-thirds. (Table 16)

Opinion polls and scandal were seen as unimportant by the majority.

The content is given greater importance than the medium. For instance many more said an important consideration was who would make the best PM than thought the leaders' debates were important. (Table 18)

General attitudes to politics

About a third of potential voters believe people like them don't have any say in what a government does, with less (about a quarter) thinking they do. Nearly a fifth are neutral on this point. (Table 22)

However, a third also believed they understood what was going on in politics and about the same proportion believed parties and candidates discussed issues of real interest to voters during election campaigns. Again, about a fifth were neutral on the first point while a larger proportion (more than a quarter) were neutral on whether parties and candidates discussed issues of real interest to voters. (Table 23 and 24)

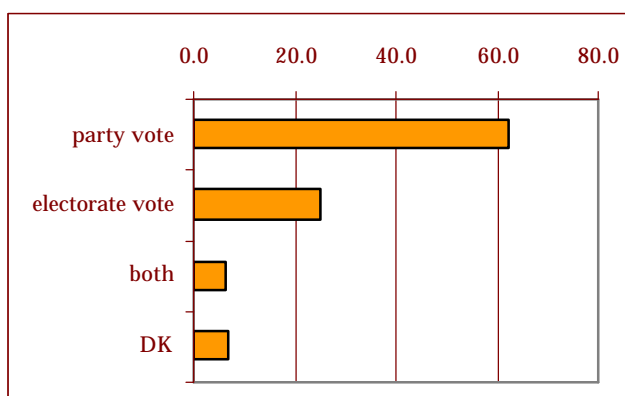
Understanding of MMP

‘From what you know and have heard, which of the two votes that you have in MMP is more important in deciding the number of MPs each party will have in parliament?’

- The party vote,
- The electorate vote’

Table 1

	Number	%
party vote	558	62.0
electorate vote	226	25.1
both	57	6.3
DK	59	6.6
Total	900	100.0



The correct answer is party vote

Results over time are in the table below. Previous surveys used a slightly different question, the 2003 version is given above table 2 although there have been some ‘tweaks’ over the preceding years.

Some of the increase in people giving the correct answer may be due to the change in question which means people no longer have to remember the name of the vote.

Table 2

Just judging from what you know and have heard, which of those votes is more important in deciding the number of MPs each party will have in Parliament?’

	Nov 1995	Pre-election 1996	Post-election 1996	Oct 1997	Oct 1998	Pre-election 1999	Post-election 1999	Oct/Dec 2000	Oct/Nov 2001	Pre-election 2002	Post-election 2002	Oct 2003	Pre-election 2005
Party Votes decide shares of seats	31	70*	77*	55*	47*	58*	70*	58*	49*	55*	79*	50	62

*Includes correct response from additional probe.

Table 3 - Answers by age group

	age						Total
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
party vote	51.6%	65.0%	63.3%	60.8%	65.9%	60.0%	62.0%
electorate vote	23.4%	23.8%	21.9%	26.9%	22.5%	31.0%	25.1%
both	10.9%	3.5%	5.1%	8.5%	8.5%	3.9%	6.3%
DK	14.1%	7.7%	9.7%	3.8%	3.1%	5.2%	6.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 4 - Answers by gender

	gender		Total
	male	female	
party vote	68.1%	57.8%	62.0%
electorate vote	22.3%	27.0%	25.1%
both	6.5%	6.2%	6.3%
DK	3.0%	9.0%	6.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note there is no table showing ethnic differences as the samples of Maori, Pacific peoples and Asians are too small to sustain such analysis.

Commentary

The majority of people understand and remember that the party vote is the one that determines the share for each party in Parliament. This is the highest level in a pre-election poll since the first MMP election, although the change in question wording may have had some impact.

Within each age group the majority gave the correct answer. There is a gender difference with men more likely to give the correct answer and women more likely to say that they do not know.

A quarter of respondents think incorrectly that the electorate vote determines the share of seats each party has in parliament. This view is particularly prevalent amongst older voters, who used FPP for many elections.

(Looking at the answers to this question and the later question on the threshold it is clear that people are not saying “electorate” because of their understanding of the threshold required for seat allocation based on party vote (Table 9).)

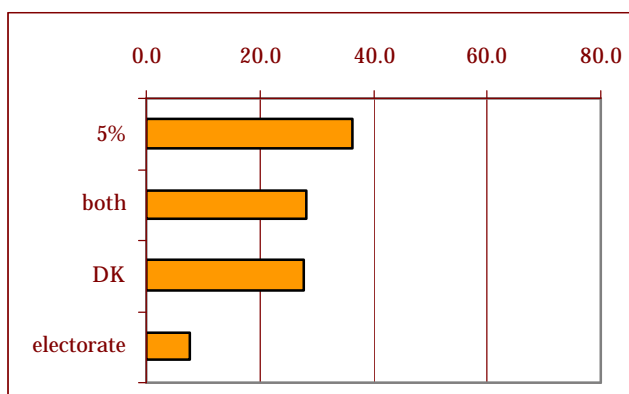
Those under the age of 25 are the most likely to say that they do not know.

'Party votes for a party are used to allocate seats in parliament for all parties which cross the threshold. Can you recall which of these a party has to do in order to cross that threshold?

- Win 5 percent of all party votes,
- Win one electorate,
- Both of these'

Table 5

	Number	%
5%	327	36.3
both	253	28.1
DK	251	27.9
electorate	69	7.7
Total	900	100.0



The correct answer is both.

Results over time are in the table below. Previous surveys used a question different enough to prevent reliable comparison. The 2003 version is given above Table 6 (although there were 'tweaks' over the preceding years). Some of the differences in levels of knowledge may be due to the change in question wording.

Table 6

'From what you have heard, what must a party do to qualify for list MPs?'

	Nov 1995	Pre-election 1996	Post-election 1996	Oct 1997	Oct 1998	Pre-election 1999	Post-election 1999	Oct/Dec 2000	Oct/Nov 2001	Pre-election 2002	Post-election 2002	Oct 2003
Threshold criteria												
- 5% of Party Votes	43	51	54	35	30	42	57	39	41	49	54	33
- win electorate seat	33	36	38	28	31	31	43	35	32	34	42	30
- both criteria	19	28	31	18	18	20	37	26	21	27	34	21

In the surveys shown in Table 6 respondents were not prompted with possible answers. Anyone who mentioned '5% of the party' vote is recorded in that line and anyone mentioning 'win an electorate' is recorded in that line and also in the 'both line'. So in order to compare values to the 2005 data, the 'both' number has to be subtracted from each of the other values: in 2003 12% said only 5% of party vote; 7% said only win an electorate; 21% mentioned both of these.

Table 7 - by age group

	age						Total
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
5%	28.1%	34.3%	36.7%	34.0%	43.4%	38.1%	36.3%
electorate	7.8%	6.3%	8.2%	7.1%	7.8%	9.0%	7.7%
both	32.8%	22.4%	27.6%	33.0%	28.7%	25.2%	28.1%
DK	31.3%	37.1%	27.6%	25.9%	20.2%	27.7%	27.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 8 - by gender

	gender		Total
	male	female	
5%	40.6%	33.4%	36.3%
electorate	6.5%	8.4%	7.7%
both	34.9%	23.5%	28.1%
DK	18.0%	34.7%	27.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note there is no table showing ethnic differences as the samples of Maori, Pacific peoples and Asians are too small to sustain such analysis.

Commentary

Only one quarter of people correctly answer ‘both’ with a third choosing only the 5% of party vote answer. Another quarter says they do not know.

There is little clear impact of gender or age.

A third of young voters were correct with another third unsure.

Table 9 - combined knowledge of MMP

	Threshold Q2				Total
	5%	electorate	both	DK	
Q1 party vote	27.2%	3.4%	17.8%	13.6%	62.0%
electorate vote	6.4%	3.0%	7.2%	8.4%	25.1%
both	1.8%	0.7%	2.2%	1.7%	6.3%
DK	0.9%	0.6%	0.9%	4.2%	6.6%
Total	36.3%	7.7%	28.1%	27.9%	100.0%

Table shows the % of respondents in each combination of answers to the two questions about MMP. (For instance, 27.2% think the party vote is most important and that the threshold is 5%; and ‘both’ was given as the answer to each of the questions by 2.2% of the respondents.)

Commentary

Less than a fifth of respondents (17.8%) gave the correct answer to both questions.

72% were correct with a least one of the questions, the majority on the importance of the party vote in deciding the number of MPs each party will have in parliament.

*‘Thinking about the system we use for voting in elections – MMP. How easy do you think it is for people like you to understand MMP?’
(5 point scale)’*

Table 10

	Number	%
easy	293	32.6
very easy	195	21.7
neither	161	17.9
difficult	159	17.7
very difficult	66	7.3
DK	26	2.9
Total	900	100.0

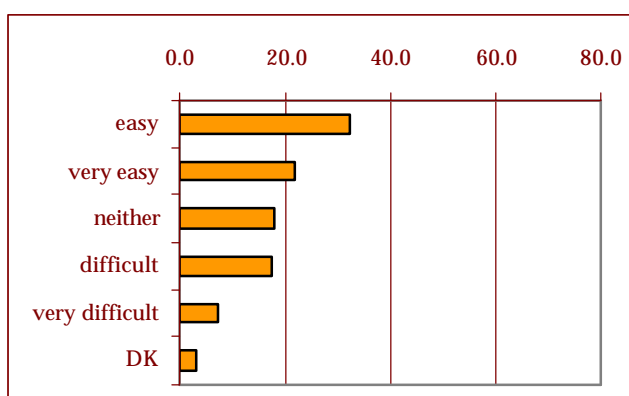


Table 11 - by age group

	age						Total
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
very difficult	9.4%	2.1%	7.7%	6.1%	6.2%	13.5%	7.3%
difficult	25.0%	16.1%	19.4%	16.0%	15.5%	18.1%	17.7%
neither	18.8%	27.3%	15.3%	13.7%	20.9%	15.5%	17.9%
easy	20.3%	31.5%	35.7%	36.8%	29.5%	31.6%	32.6%
very easy	17.2%	18.9%	18.9%	25.9%	26.4%	19.4%	21.7%
DK	9.4%	4.2%	3.1%	1.4%	1.6%	1.9%	2.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 12 - by gender

	gender		Total
	male	female	
very difficult	7.9%	6.9%	7.3%
difficult	13.1%	20.8%	17.7%
neither	16.1%	19.1%	17.9%
easy	32.4%	32.6%	32.6%
very easy	27.2%	17.8%	21.7%
DK	3.3%	2.6%	2.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note there is no table showing ethnic differences as the samples of Maori, Pacific peoples and Asians are too small to sustain such analysis.

Commentary

A majority of people think that MMP is easy to understand, twice as many as think that it is difficult.

There is a clear age difference with older voters (used to FPP) thinking MMP is difficult, and those in their 30s to 50s saying it is easy. Young voters are evenly split between those finding it easy and those finding it difficult.

Present thinking about the election

'Which of these best describes your thoughts on the election to be held later this year?'

- *I've already made up my mind who I will vote for in the election*
- *I've already decided not to vote*
- *I will vote but I haven't decided who to vote for*
- *I'm not sure whether I will vote*
- *I haven't given the election much thought yet'*

Table 13

	Number	%
know will vote & who for	459	51.0
will vote, not sure who for	307	34.1
not thought much about it	72	8.0
know will not vote	34	3.8
not sure if will vote	28	3.1
Total	900	100.0

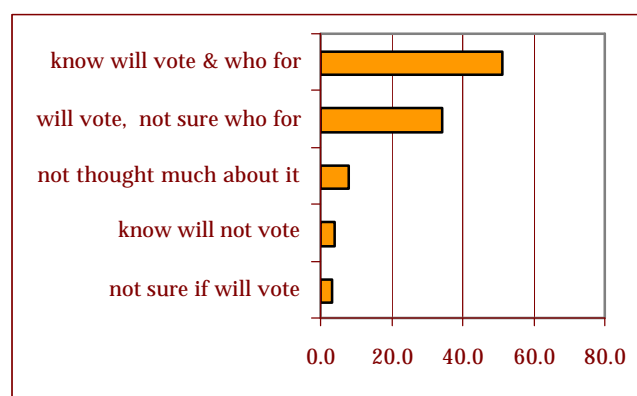


Table 14 - by age group

	age						total
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
know will vote & who for	29.7%	40.6%	45.9%	52.4%	63.6%	63.9%	51.0%
know will not vote	7.8%	3.5%	2.0%	4.2%	3.1%	4.5%	3.8%
will vote, not sure who for	39.1%	37.8%	39.8%	33.0%	27.9%	27.7%	34.1%
not sure if will vote	3.1%	6.3%	2.6%	1.9%	2.3%	3.2%	3.1%
not thought much about it	20.3%	11.9%	9.7%	8.5%	3.1%	0.6%	8.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 15 - by gender

	gender		Total
	male	female	
know will vote & who for	52.0%	50.3%	51.0%
know will not vote	3.8%	3.8%	3.8%
will vote, not sure who for	33.0%	34.9%	34.1%
not sure if will vote	3.5%	2.8%	3.1%
not thought much about it	7.6%	8.3%	8.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note there is no table showing ethnic differences as the samples of Maori, Pacific peoples and Asians are too small to sustain such analysis.

Commentary

The total saying that they will vote, 85%, is higher than recent turnout levels (76.9% in 2002), indicating that some will not and/or that those who do not intend to vote may have been less likely to participate in the survey.

Half say that they already know who they will vote for. This figure is in line with historic and international trends.

Only 8% have not yet given the election much thought.

There are clear age differences - older people are the more likely they are to already know how they vote, in line with theories on the habitual nature of voting.

The youngest are the most likely to have not yet given the election much thought.

Information in the election campaign

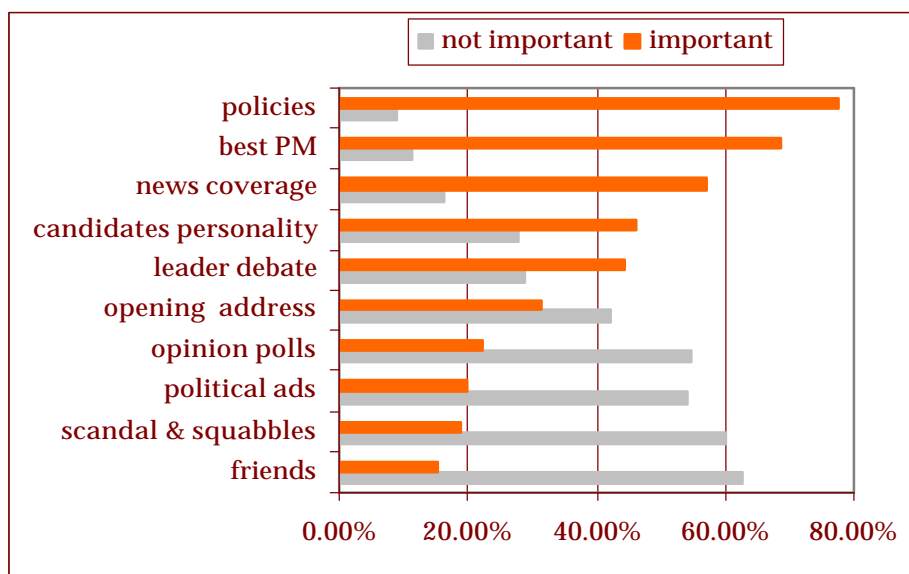
‘Thinking ahead to the election campaign, on a scale of one to five, where five is very important and one is not at all important, how important do you think each of the following is likely to be in helping you decide, or confirm, how you will vote?’

Respondents were given a 5 point scale. The table and graph have merged ‘not at all important’ with ‘not important’ and have merged ‘very important’ with ‘important’. Not shown on the graph or table are those who said 'neutral' or 'don't know'

Table 16

	not important	important
Information about party policies	10.7%	77.6%
Who will make the best prime minister	14.0%	68.2%
News coverage	22.1%	51.1%
Candidates’ personalities	30.3%	45.4%
Debates between party leaders	33.0%	45.0%
Televised opening and closing addresses	47.1%	29.3%
Political advertising	59.8%	16.4%
Opinion poll results	60.9%	19.0%
The scandals and squabbles	66.1%	16.8%
What my friends and family say	69.6%	13.0%

Table 17



Commentary

Parties’ policies and potential prime ministers are clearly seen as the most important. These two, plus news coverage are the only three seen as important by over half of the respondents.

Opinion polls and scandal are seen as unimportant by the majority.

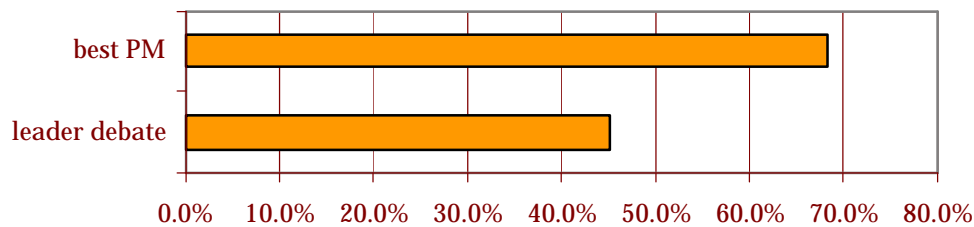
The material from political parties was also not given a high level of importance.

Responses from those aged 18-34, who are the least likely to have already decided how to vote' put the different factors in the same order, with the one exception that the last two items in Table 17 are reversed in order.

Separating the different forms of information that were included in the question into those that refer to the content and those that refer to the medium shows some clear distinctions.

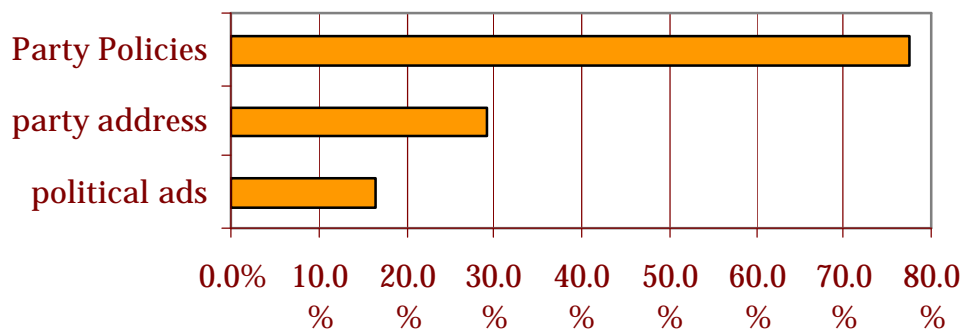
For instance many more said an important consideration was who would make the best PM than thought the leaders debate was important (68% and 45%).

Table 18



Likewise party policy is vastly more popular than two of the common sources of such information during an election campaign.

Table 19



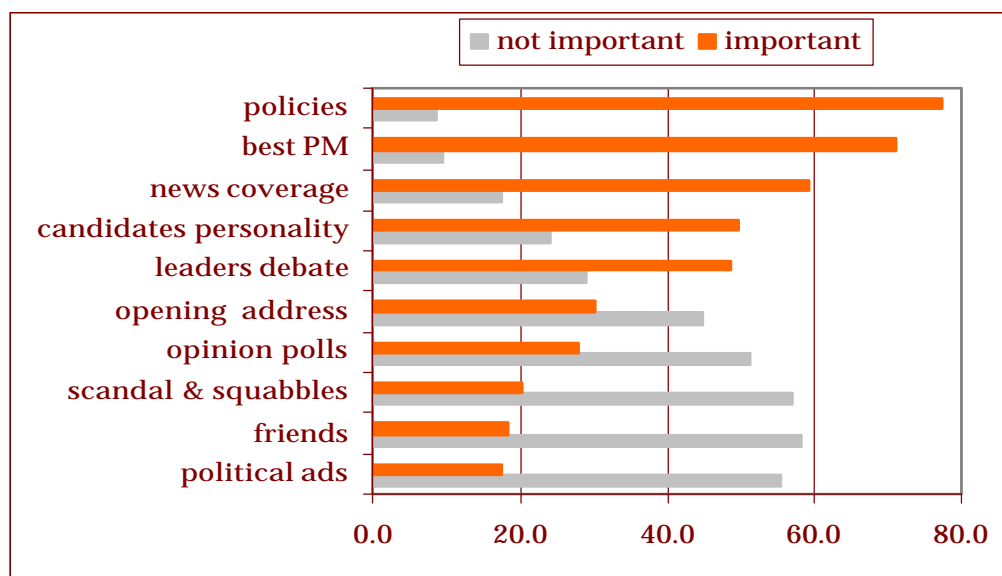
For all respondents who say they have not yet decided if they will vote or who they will vote for – 470 people:

Table 20 – not decided if or for who voting

	not important	important
Information about party policies	8.85%	77.64%
Who will make the best prime minister	11.30%	68.80%
News coverage	16.22%	57.25%
Candidates' personalities	28.01%	46.19%
Debates between party leaders	28.75%	44.47%
Televised opening and closing addresses	42.26%	31.45%
Opinion poll results	54.79%	22.11%
Political advertising	54.05%	19.90%
The scandals and squabbles	59.95%	18.92%
What my friends and family say	62.65%	15.23%

Not shown on the graph or table are those who said 'neutral' or 'don't know'

Table 21



Commentary

The descending order is the same for the full set of respondents and for the half who have not already made a decision about the election.

General attitudes to politics

About a third of potential voters believe people like them don't have any say in what a government does, with less (about a quarter) thinking they do. Nearly a fifth are neutral on this point.

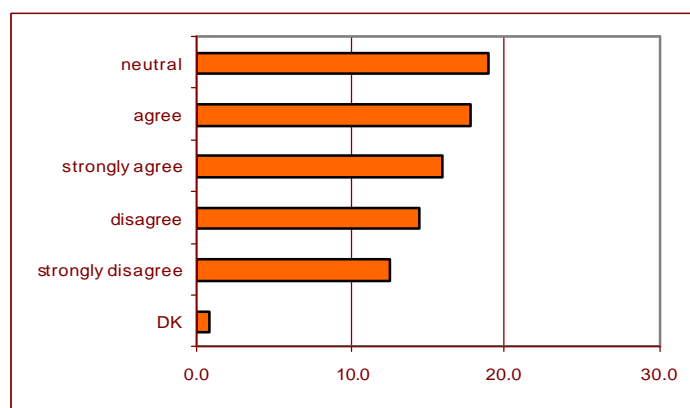
However, a third also believed they understood what was going on in politics and about the same proportion believed parties and candidates discussed issues of real interest to voters during election campaigns. Again, about a fifth were neutral on the first point while a larger proportion (more than a quarter) were neutral on whether parties and candidates discussed issues of real interest to voters.

'On a scale of one to five, where five is strongly agree and one is strongly disagree, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?'

'People like me don't have any say in what the Government does.'

Table 22

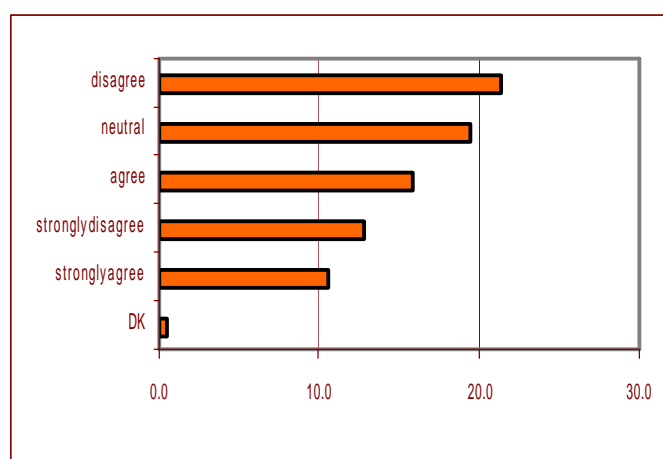
	Number	%
strongly agree	179	16.0
agree	198	17.7
neutral	212	18.9
disagree	161	14.4
strongly disagree	140	12.5
DK	10	0.9
Total	900	100.0



'Sometimes politics seems so complicated it is hard for people like me to understand what is going on.'

Table 23

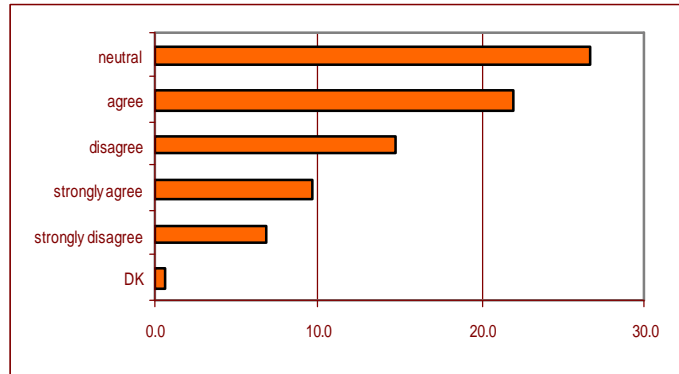
	Number	%
strongly agree	118	10.5
agree	177	15.8
neutral	218	19.5
strongly disagree	143	12.8
disagree	239	21.4
DK	5	0.4
Total	900	100.0



‘During election campaigns, political parties and candidates discuss issues that are of real interest to me.’

Table 24

	Number	%
strongly agree	108	9.7
agree	246	22.0
neutral	299	26.7
disagree	164	14.7
strongly disagree	76	6.8
DK	7	0.6
Total	900	100.0



Sample breakdown

Table 25 – Age of respondents

	Number	%
18-24	64	7.1
25-34	143	15.9
35-44	196	21.8
45-54	212	23.5
55-64	129	14.3
65+	155	17.2
Total	900	100.0

Table 26 - Gender of respondents

	Number	%
male	367	40.7
female	533	59.3
Total	900	100.0

The survey questionnaire and data tables are available on the Elections New Zealand website at <http://www.elections.org.nz/researchers.html>

This is a summary report. The Electoral Commission will be doing further analysis of the questions against demographics and general attitudes to politics.