# Civic Engagement in New Zealand: Decline or Demise?

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ABSTRACT

There has been a major decline in civic engagement in New Zealand, particularly in its most politically salient forms such as voter turnout. The lecture traces the trends, discusses some explanations, and discusses difficulties of making empirically-grounded inferences about medium to long-term social change in New Zealand given the difficulty of conducting basic research.

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# SUMMARY

1. We have seen a major decline in civic engagement in New Zealand, although not a 'demise'. This decline is most apparent in the most instrumental and most politically salient forms of political participation.

2. In terms of valid vote/age-eligible base turnout in national elections, at 71.7 per cent in 2002 New Zealand probably remains in the top third of countries for which data is available, and its performance is better than frequent comparators such as Britain, the United States, and Canada. But New Zealand's relative performance is worsening. Of 22 advanced democracies, up to 1999 New Zealand's turnout decline since 1945 was the eighth steepest, well above average (pp 3-4).

3. Campaign funds available to political parties have declined from the late 1990s. Total campaign expenditures including the state-funded broadcasting allocation were 6 per cent down in 1999 compared to 1996, with inflation adding another 2-3 per cent in real terms. By 2002 expenditures were down 10 per cent compared to 1996, with the cumulative effects of inflation deducting perhaps another 10 per cent. In tandem with lower memberships, the result is an increasing inability of parties to mobilise voters during election campaigns (p. 5). 14 per cent contributed money to political parties in 1963, compared to less than 5 per cent in the late 1990s (p. 9).

4. Membership of one or more types of association fell from 85 per cent to 69 per cent between 1980 and 1999. The clearest picture of decline can be seen among those who reported attending meetings once a month or more (pp 7-8).

5. 20 per cent of the voting age population has participated in a demonstration, stable since the 1980s. More and more people are boycotting products, but these forms of participation tend to be less influential on public policy than those that are election-related (pp 10-11).

6. Explaining declining civic engagement is difficult due to an absence of basic social science research in New Zealand, particularly before the 1980s. Research on changes in social capital, for example, is greatly limited by paucity of data (p. 12).

7. Election studies beginning in 1963 provide the best available information. Pooled analysis indicates that turnout decline is generational, with the age cohort born after 1974 about 22 per cent less likely to vote than that born before 1934, probably throughout their entire life cycle. Unless the trend is halted, turnout will therefore continue to decline in the longer-term, as people in earlier generations die and are replaced by people in more recent generations less likely to vote. Social changes such as later marriage and an increasing proportion of Maori in the electorate are partly responsible, but lowering of the voting age and less competitive elections since the mid-20$^{th}$ century seem to play a larger part. The shift to proportional representation partly offsets the trend, with younger cohorts more likely to vote because of the change. Lower interest in politics and a lower sense of civic duty among the more recent age cohorts account have the largest impact on the generational effects (pp 17-23).

8. International research indicates that lower turnout has agenda-setting and policy implications, and if turnout decline continues it is likely to lead to increased social inequality in the longer term (p. 24).

9. To restore higher levels of civic engagement, various policy changes could be considered. Civic education could be strengthened in schools and in tertiary education institutions, and should focus on salient political issues and debates, not just on institutions and processes. Adult education, more support for political parties and encouragement of higher quality media coverage of politics are other options (pp 24-25).

10. The implementation of changes in local government elections such as postal voting and the implementation of the single-transferable vote have not been accompanied by research adequate to monitor and analyse their effects. Strategies to enhance political participation or changes to political institutions require regular data collection. The New Zealand Election Study is a high quality research programme for which funding has ceased, and thus it has been prevented from extending its work into local government at a time this would have been useful (pp 25-27).

11. The prognosis for such basic research that might deepen New Zealand social science, make it more robust, and better empirically founded, is still poor. Current funding models are too exclusively focussed on short-term outcomes, and priority areas are defined too narrowly. Outside of the priorities, the Marsden fund has too small a budget, and its focus excludes funding basic research over the medium to long term (pp 28-30).

The term ‘civic engagement’ comes from the conceptual vocabulary of Robert Putnam. Putnam is famous for reviving the related concept of ‘social capital’ that has had much currency in recent political discourse in New Zealand and elsewhere. Here, it has appeared in various government documents and even in the draft mission statement of the University of Auckland. Indeed, Professor Putnam visited the university as part of the knowledge wave conference.

Various types of ‘civic engagement’ are defined as dependent variables in the discussion and analysis that follows.[1] Civic engagement is here understood as involving *instrumental collective action towards achieving particular social and political purposes*. Under this instrumental aspect of ‘civic engagement’ one can identify a number of components of political participation, namely voting, membership in political parties, and supporting the activities of political parties, social movements, and candidates for national and local elections, by way of financial contributions and/or activism.[2] Attending meetings and holding office are other indicators of engagement. Signing petitions, writing letters for publication in the editorial pages of newspapers, talking part in protests, and participating in talkback radio also count. However, as elaborated later, not all forms of civic engagement are equal. A broader current of ‘civic participation’ is made up of participation in voluntary associations that do not have specific political objectives, or, at least, for which political objectives are secondary. They can be divided into those that are community, church, or work-related. Some have political and social goals, some do not.

The thesis of this paper is as follows: we have seen a major decline in civic engagement in New Zealand, although not a 'demise'. This decline is most apparent in the most instrumental and most politically salient forms of civic engagement.[3] Arising from this exercise, the paper goes on to discuss the difficulties of making robust empirically-grounded inferences about social change in New Zealand, given the lack of basic research in New Zealand social science.

There is a narrative that flows out of much social and political analysis and commentary in New Zealand and elsewhere. Once upon a time there was a golden age of high political participation and responsive party politics. This happy state of affairs came to an end in the 1970s with economic crisis and globalisation. Governments progressively lost the ability to make independent decisions that could satisfy public expectations. Without choices, ordinary people began to walk away from politics. Meanwhile developments in communications technology, notably television, were destroying social capital. Entertainment at home replaced community involvement, and the presentation of politics on television had the effect of enhancing cynicism, reducing the extent of political learning, and thus impoverishing political discourse and debate.

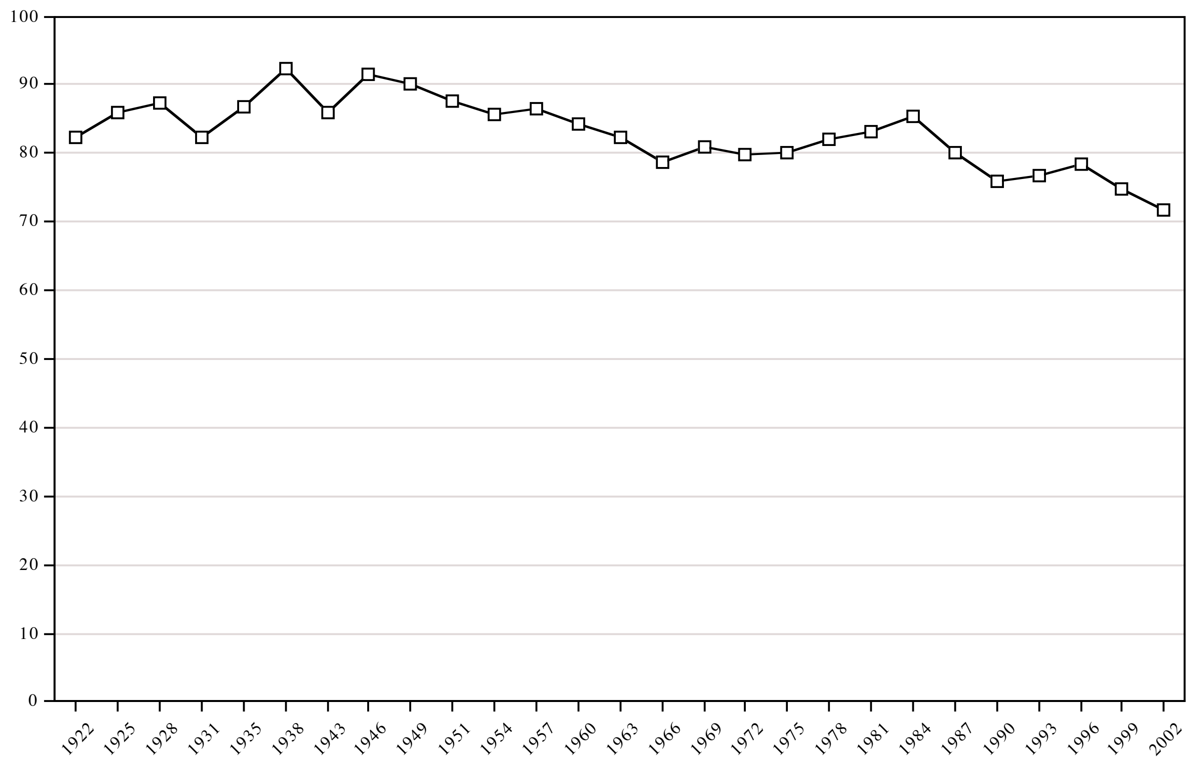
This narrative satisfies many. Some aspects of it are undeniable. Others are controversial and at times, ideological, and thus subject to debate. But many of the criticisms of the absence of choices current today were being made of politics in the golden age of the so-called welfare interventionist state. This is not to say that the existence of electoral choices is clear and non-problematic: in fact, this will be a major thrust of a comparative research programme into electoral systems in the next

few years, the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), based at the University of Michigan. The point is simply this: many of the changes said to account for declining civic engagement compare a less than desirable present with an ideal-typical construction of the past that obscures some aspects of that past that were equally less than desirable. That is why we need data. Otherwise, we may make judgements and policy decisions that are based on assumptions, not evidence.

Having introduced sufficient scepticism to discourage quick and easy inferences about the potential explanations for the trends, this paper outlines some of the most important changes in indicators of civic engagement in New Zealand: first, voting participation in national elections. The official figures are computed on a base of those on the electoral rolls, but those are never complete and their accuracy differs from one election to the next.[4] For this and some other reasons, an estimate of age-eligible population is the most appropriate denominator and valid votes the best numerator (Nagel 1988).

There are patterns and trends. Turnout peaks at just over 90 per cent at mid-century, at the peak of two-party politics. It rises when Labour governments are elected (not exclusively), except for 1972, when the voting age was lowered. In 1966, turnout reaches below 80 per cent for the first time. There is a period of recovery until 1984. 1987 and 1990 present two steep declines, followed by temporary recovery in 1993 and 1996. But in 1999 and 2002 the pattern of relatively steep decline reappears.[5]

**Figure 1: Age-Eligible Base Turnout in New Zealand, 1922-1988**



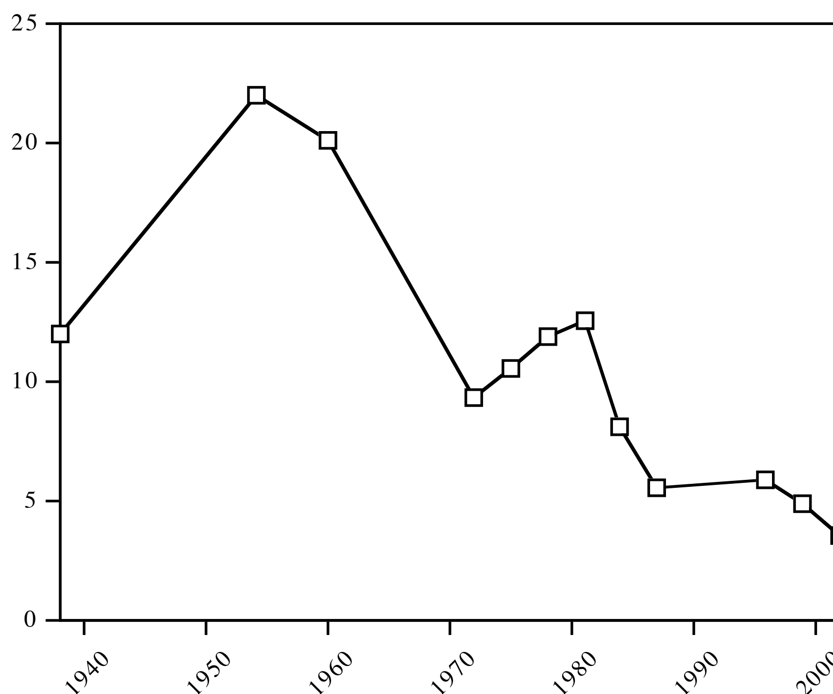

SOURCE: New Zealand Electoral Commission 2003; Nagel 1988; 1922 and 1925 estimates from an exponential curve between the 21 and over census populations.

In terms of turnout internationally, at 71.7 per cent in 2002 New Zealand probably remains in the top third of countries for which data is available, and its performance is better than frequent comparators such as Britain, the United States, and Canada.[6] But New Zealand's relative performance is worsening. Of 22 advanced democracies, up to 1999 New Zealand's turnout decline since 1945 was the eighth steepest, and well above average (Franklin 2004, 11).

The next set of data is more interrupted and incomplete: party membership. In contrast to the situation in other democracies (see for example, Katz and Mair 1994; Webb, Farrell, and Holliday 2002), New Zealand political parties are particularly reluctant to release data on their memberships and finances. Some years ago, the

Labour party allowed sufficient access to establish a time series for years preceding elections up to 1987, and the National party and Social Credit have allowed periodic publication for particular years. From 1996, total membership figures are available from the Electoral Commission, although they suffer from some incompleteness (Miller 2005 forthcoming, 8-10). Despite these problems, the data series available indicates some parallelism with turnout, most notably in the period from the early to mid-1970s up to 1984, when party memberships, like turnout, made a minor but significant recovery. These two data series provide strong evidence for a period of political mobilisation during this period, associated with increased ideological polarisation between the main political parties on a set of new issues.[7]

**Figure 2: Party Membership as a Percentage of the Adult Population, 1938-2002**




SOURCE: Vowles 1992, Vowles, Aimer, Karp, Banducci and Miller 2004, 30.

Contribution of money to political organisations by individuals, businesses, and other organisations on the borders between the political and social is a crucial element of civic engagement. Without funds, party organisation is virtually impossible. With respect to political parties, data on finances and numbers employed have so far proven impossible to collect over time. It is only since 1996, when the disclosure of information about donations to political parties and about national campaign expenditures was required that a serious study of political party finance can be undertaken in New Zealand. And even now, the gaps remain, as anonymous donations can continue to be reported, and political parties' internal funding from dues and fund-raising and related expenditures still remain closely guarded secrets. New Zealand political parties are relatively unique in their obsession with secrecy. One has to ask: what do they have to hide?

The available data does show that campaign funds available to political parties have declined from the late 1990s.[8] Total campaign expenditures including the state-funded broadcasting allocation were 6 per cent down in 1999 compared to 1996, with inflation adding another 2-3 per cent in real terms. By 2002 expenditures were down 10 per cent compared to 1996, with the cumulative effects of inflation deducting perhaps another 10 per cent. This 20 per cent decline over six years in the financial capacities of political parties to campaign is due both to state funding limits not yet raised to take account of inflation, and greater transparency in the process of making donations. This is likely to have discouraged large donors who desire confidentiality but are not prepared to use roundabout means to keep their donations confidential. In tandem with lower memberships, the result is an increasing inability of parties to mobilise their voters by means of personal contact during election campaigns, as

indicated by New Zealand Election Study (NZES) data collected since 1993 (Vowles, Aimer, Karp, Banducci and Miller, 108).[9]

Data is increasingly thin on other aspects of civic engagement, particularly over the longer term. Voluntary associations have been consistently identified as of major importance for social and community cohesion, and potentially for political participation, well before the recent Putnam-inspired interest in social capital. However, there is little or no official data in New Zealand that reports the membership of incorporated societies over time. Some data of this kind can be found piecemeal and with difficulty.[10]

Survey research is very thin on the ground in this area. 71 per cent of a 1966 Christchurch sample from the two electorates of Christchurch Central and St Albans, both urban Labour-tending electorates, reported themselves member of local clubs or associations. On this somewhat thin basis Austin Mitchell declared New Zealand to be 'a nation of joiners' (Mitchell 1969, 179). It was not until the early 1980s that systematic government survey research produced more comprehensive data (Department of Statistics, 1984). The 1999 New Zealand Election Study replicated the form of question used in 1980-81 in order to make a comparison over time, data that was subsequently published in the Ministry of Social Development's (MSD) Social Report (2001).

The picture is not fully consistent with a narrative of progressively declining social capital. Mitchell's data, for all its limitations, may be roughly comparable that generated in 1980-81 and 1999.[11] If so, associational membership was significantly higher across New Zealand in 1981 than it was in Christchurch in 1966. This provides

little support for a social capital theory-based inference that associational membership should have been higher in the 1960s than in 1980 and 1981. But changes between the early 1980s and 1999 provide support for a disengagement thesis. Membership of one or more types of association falls from 85 per cent to 69 per cent. The clearest picture of decline can be seen among those who reported attending meetings once a month or more. There, across all groups except those catering for hobbies, attendance is down across the board.

**Table 1: Membership of Associations and Attendance at Association Meetings, 1980 and 1999**

| | % Belonging to Association Type | | % Members or Nonmembers Attending a Meeting Once a Month or More | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 15 and Over, 1981 | 18 and over, 1999 | 15 and Over, 1980-81 | 18 and over, 1999 |
| One type of group | 85 | 69 | | |
| Work | 33 | 27 | 5 | 2 |
| Political | 13 | 14 | 1 | 0 |
| Interest | 5 | 17 | 2 | 2 |
| Church | 34 | 30 | 23 | 15 |
| Sports | 37 | 38 | 29 | 16 |
| Culture | 10 | 17 | 7 | 4 |
| Social | 26 | 27 | 16 | 10 |
| Youth | 5 | 12 | 4 | 2 |
| Service | 15 | 22 | 11 | 9 |
| Hobbies | 13 | 30 | 10 | 14 |
| N | 6891 | 5231 | | |
| Response Rate | 80 | 58 | | |

SOURCES: New Zealand Department of Statistics, 1984; NZES 1999.

Data from successive waves of the NZES and snapshots from data published by the New Zealand Values Survey provide more evidence. Union membership, of course, has trended downward since 1990, in large part associated with the Employment Contracts Act, and while this data derived from the NZES shows

nothing new, it is consistent with other series, and confirms that the NZES is a potentially rich source of data that can be used to explore trends in union membership across a wide range of social, demographic, and attitudinal, not to mention political variables (see Haynes, Vowles and Boxall 2005).

**Table 2: Election-Related or 'Conventional' Participation, 1963-2002**

| Did you: | 1963 | 1975 | 1993 | 1996 | 1999 | 2002 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Go to any political meetings or rallies? | - | - | 8 | 12 | 5 | 3 |
| Contribute Money? | 14 | - | 3 | 6 | 4 | 4 |
| Do any work for a party or candidate? | 9 | 9 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| N | 422 | 1555 | 936 | 2681 | 2863 | 3649 |

SOURCES: Victoria University Studies, 1963 and 1975; NZES

Questions estimating 'conventional' or election-related participation have been asked over the past ten years, and less frequently before that. As with associations, there is a clear trend towards declining attendance at political meetings over the 1990s. Very useful data from the Victoria University 1963 Election Study indicates, albeit from a small sample, that contributing money and active support of parties and candidates was significantly higher in the 1960s and 1970s, as one would expect in the light of the party membership data presented above. By the 1990s the proportions engaged are small.

The decline of political parties as membership-based organisations is well documented throughout most of the advanced democracies, although the trend is not uniform. Where this is the case, however, one vein of argument puts the case that declining 'conventional' or election-related participation is offset by increased participation in new social movements and 'unconventional' activity, such as

demonstrations, boycotts, and suchlike. The metaphor is a ‘democratic phoenix’, new forms of participation emerging to take the place of the old (Norris 2002).

**Table 3: Other Forms of Participation, 1985-2002**

| | *1985 | *1989 | 1993 | 1996 | *1998 | 1999 | 2002 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Signed Petition | 72 | 80 | 80 | 67 | 89 | 83 | 76 |
| Written to paper | - | 10 | 19 | 14 | - | 15 | 13 |
| Boycotted | 5 | 16 | 12 | - | 17 | 36 | 32 |
| Demonstrated | 13 | 22 | 19 | 20 | 19 | 21 | 20 |
| Phoned talkback | - | - | 10 | 9 | - | 9 | 8 |
| Occupied | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| N | 1185 | 1000 | 2249 | 5400 | 1900 | 5044 | 4617 |

SOURCES: New Zealand Values Surveys*, NZES.

A fifth of the adult population reports demonstrating at some time, a proportion that remains stable over the last decade. Phoning talkback radio remains relatively constant, although again perhaps slightly in decline. The biggest and perhaps most unexpected increase is in ‘joining in boycotts’. This tactic is a good example of strategies followed by new social movements, and its increase is in line with the ‘democratic phoenix’ argument. But one should consider the nature of this behaviour. Boycotting consumer goods does not require any public action, and only marginally qualifies as ‘collective’: it operates as a private decision made by consumers. It is not political participation as understood normally nor, arguably, is it a form of civic engagement. Advocacy and promotion of such a boycott would qualify: simply performing it does not.

There is a more deep-seated critique of the democratic phoenix argument. Its essence is that participation is alive and well, and that somehow an equivalent amount of unconventional can simply replace conventional participation with neutral effects

on the quality and quantity of democracy. This tacitly assumes that all forms of participation are equal. Yet in terms of its instrumentality, is attending a demonstration equivalent to membership of a political party, let alone participating in a boycott? Demonstrations, in general, have long been understood in political science as the means used to publicise their opinions by members of relatively powerless groups whose voices have not been heard in the corridors of power (Lipsky 1972; Harris 1989). Most often, such groups object to public policies that have been implemented without their approval or support. For example, anecdotal evidence suggests that in New Zealand farmers were more likely to demonstrate from the 1980s onward than in the 1950s. Does this apparently new militancy compensate for the significantly lower representation farmers now have in Parliament, not to mention government? Far more effective strategies are those that make it possible for concerned groups to shape policies before they have been decided upon. A cynic will respond that political parties are not in general known for their internal democracy. Yet they constitute the key channel for the recruitment of political elites. Those who work their way into positions of power in democratic politics still do so through political parties. Leaders of new social movements who wish to gain effective influence will eventually join or form political parties. Green parties are an obvious example.

On balance, the evidence supports a decline in civic engagement in New Zealand. Voter turnout, party membership, and declining attendance at meetings provide the best evidence. Other forms of engagement show lower decline, but they are less politically potent, and those showing signs of increasing behaviour are more private, involving less social interaction.[12] The question remains: why? But this is

difficult to answer, given inadequacies of data already explained. Compared to the United States, where Putnam and others have been able to draw on a variety of useful datasets from the 1950s on, New Zealand social science has generated very little information that can be used for that purpose. This is particularly the case for the period of the 1970s and earlier, when levels of civic engagement were higher, reputedly at least. Data from the 1950s would be particularly valuable, but there is virtually none. New Zealand social scientists reading Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000) in contrast to Statistics New Zealand's *Framework for the Measurement of Social Capital in New Zealand* (Spellerberg 2001) can only weep at the comparison between data wealth and data poverty between the two countries that it exposes. Also apparent is the discontinuity between various attempts of government departments to collect social data over time, making assessment of change difficult, if not impossible.

University-based or investigator-driven research is therefore essential. More emerges in the 1980s, although there are still data limitations. The New Zealand Values Survey was in the field in 1985, 1989, and 1998, but except for that of 1989 these datasets are unavailable for secondary analysis at the individual case level: despite their affiliation with an international research programme, the World Values Study, which does normally release data in this way (published data may be found in Gold and Webster, 1990; Perry and Webster, 1999). Access to individual-level data for secondary analysis is essential in terms of using it to its full potential, particularly for the use of sophisticated techniques of data analysis that entail pooling data from different surveys in order to perform longitudinal multivariate analysis.[13]

The best, and probably the only data for time series analysis back to the 1960s and 1970s are provided by election studies, data from which has already been displayed. The first was conducted at Victoria University in 1963, followed by a second in 1975. Both drew on internal university research funds. In 1981 there was a multi-campus effort creatively using government funding then available to employ students during the summer (reported in Bean 1984). From 1987, national election studies have been mounted, funded by the FRST between 1993 and 2002. The 1963 and 1981 studies have some limitations, as they are not national, sampled from Wellington and Palmerston North. They therefore represent large urban and provincial urban New Zealand, with limited rural data from the surroundings of Palmerston North. But they are all we have from those crucial early elections.

Analysis is assisted by insights that can be gathered from a rich international literature. Electoral turnout is one of the most comprehensively researched topics within political behaviour and its theoretical analysis is also increasingly well tuned. The dominant and richest vein of theory comes out of the rational choice tradition (reviewed recently in Blais 2000). The rational choice theory of turnout begins in the classic work of Antony Downs (1957) who generated the then original insight that it was more useful, first, to consider why people vote, before asking why they do not. The model consists of the probability of vote (pV) conditioned by, first, and negatively, the costs to an individual involved in casting a vote (C); second, positively, the benefits the individual expects if their party or candidate were to be elected (B); and third, the probability that vote of the individual concerned might determine the result (P). More specifically, the relationship between B and P is assumed to be multiplicative rather than additive, that is: $pV= (B*P) - C$.

Some models, however, add a fourth variable, D, which stands for civic duty (Riker and Ordeshook, 1968). On the surface, this appears inconsistent with a rational choice model, which rests on the assumption of utterly self-regarding individuals out to single-mindedly maximise their utilities without any concern for others. But it has some logic as a solution to a Prisoners' Dilemma. After repeated games within which players fail to cooperate and therefore achieve suboptimal overall results, individuals learn that cooperation is better than competition in consistently maximising their utilities in the long run (see, in general terms, Schelling 1978; Shepsle and Boncheck 1997). One may, or may not, be convinced by this logic, and the leap from enlightened self-interest to a sense of civic duty is a long one. But it is worth noting that it runs parallel to Putnam's model of social capital, within which trust is what is learned during repeated games and thus what generates – or constitutes – social capital.

Meanwhile there are two main thrusts in the recent empirical literature. One develops a surprisingly neglected aspect of Downs, namely, that the costs associated with voting are not, as is normally assumed, just the time and effort needed to go to the polling place and cast a vote (Milner 2002). The more significant costs are acquisition of the information necessary to cast a vote with confidence. To cast a vote in the absence of such information is pointless, or worse, risky, and one may be better advised not to vote at all. One only has to consider the dilemma presented to many people at the recent local government elections when presented with long lists of people about most of us knew next to nothing, standing for election in Council wards or for district health boards. Leaving aside the matter of whether or not one was

being asked to tick up to a certain number of them, or rank as many as one wished – neither task difficult in itself, or in comparison with the other – the basic problem was in the lack of information about what benefits each candidate might offer, or, except in the cases of well-known incumbents, their probabilities of being elected. We need to know more to address the problem of declining local election turnout, but those who make decisions about social science funding in New Zealand have recently, and at least twice, failed to allocate sufficient funds for comprehensive research into local government elections.

The other thrust in the empirical literature focuses on competitiveness, the focus of Mark Franklin's important recent book on voting turnout that covers 22 countries since 1945, including New Zealand (Franklin 2004). Franklin has a provocative thesis for which he marshals significant empirical support. The main driver of turnout is electoral competitiveness. Bound up in that concept is the related question: 'do elections matter?' If institutional arrangements make it difficult to translate vote choices into accountable and responsible government, one might expect turnout to be low. The extreme cases in his study fit the model well: the United States, where federalism, the separation of powers, and divided government conspire against responsive government, and Switzerland, where the same parties have formed a coalition government since 1959. In 2003 there was a revolutionary change, in Swiss terms at least, when one of the government parties lost one Cabinet seat to another government party. Both of these countries have turnout much lower than average.

Built into Franklin's model is a related argument based on generations, or age cohorts. Findings in many countries have long indicated a strong correlation between age and turnout, young people being less prone to vote and older people more likely to do so. Typically, this has been interpreted as an effect based on the life cycle, with people becoming more likely to vote as they age. Increasingly, this assumption is under question. The growing consensus is that the main age effects are generational. This applies in the United States (Miller and Shanks 1996; Lyon and Alexander 2000; Putnam 2002) in Canada (Blais, Gidengil, Nevitte and Nadeau 2004) and several European countries (Franklin 2004, 59-89). There are worrying implications: not only are young people now less likely to vote than their counterparts when the same age in earlier generations. It is also possible that even as they grow older they will continue to vote less than previous generations. Franklin builds this argument into his model, arguing that the effects of effective competitiveness act most strongly on young voters. Thus as Swiss governments failed to change, older voters conditioned to vote under the earlier more competitive conditions continued to do so, but those entering vote age were less likely to vote. Over time, people in the older generation die, and are replaced by incoming younger people much less likely to vote.

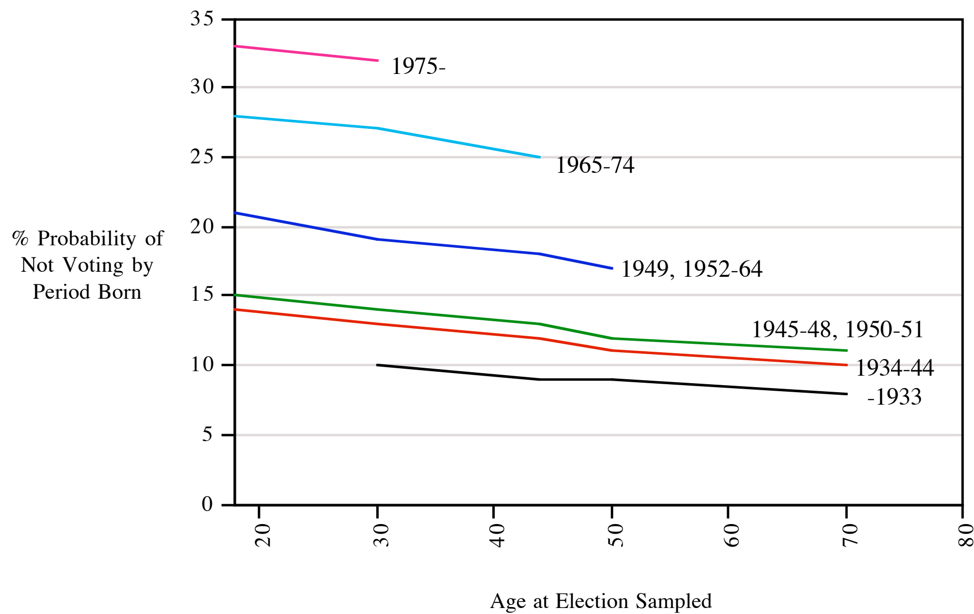
Most controversially, Franklin goes on to argue that a key driver of turnout decline was the lowering of the voting age. The propensity to vote is learned behaviour, and is facilitated by social cohesion that incorporates young adults into social networks that give them a sense of belonging. Persons 21 and older are more likely to be in such stable and society-sustaining relationships than those between 18 and 20. Franklin argues that the first opportunity to vote is crucial. If first-time voters

fail to vote, this leaves a ‘footprint’, and the probability of voting at later elections is lower than if that first chance to vote had been taken.

We turn to New Zealand survey data, sampled at the level of the individual voter, to test some of these claims. The data is from election surveys in 1963, 1975, 1981, and 1987 through to 2002. The early data is less than perfect, given that surveys usually over-report vote. That said, after much international research there is a general consensus this tends not to bias findings in any serious way. From 1990 onwards, respondent turnout is validated by inspection of the marked rolls. The hypothesis that age effects are primarily generational, not life-cycle, is well supported, although there is some evidence of the latter. Pooled election studies with a combined N of about 25,000 respondents provide the evidence.

Figure 2 shows that about the age of 30 – the age at which all component samples contain a reasonable overlap – a person born in 1970 and after is about 22 per cent less likely to vote than a person born in 1933 or earlier. The model includes controls for the special circumstances of all elections, compared to the most recent in 2002. There is some evidence of an effect for the reduction of the voting age. The group affected – those born in 1949 (with the lowering of the age to 20) and from 1952 – are 5 to 6 per cent less likely to vote than their immediate predecessor cohort, and a significant gap opens up at this point. Yet there is obviously more going on, given that later cohorts no more affected by the lowering than those who first experienced it are even less likely to vote.

**Figure 2: Per Cent Probabilities of Not Voting by Generations, at Elections 1963-2002**

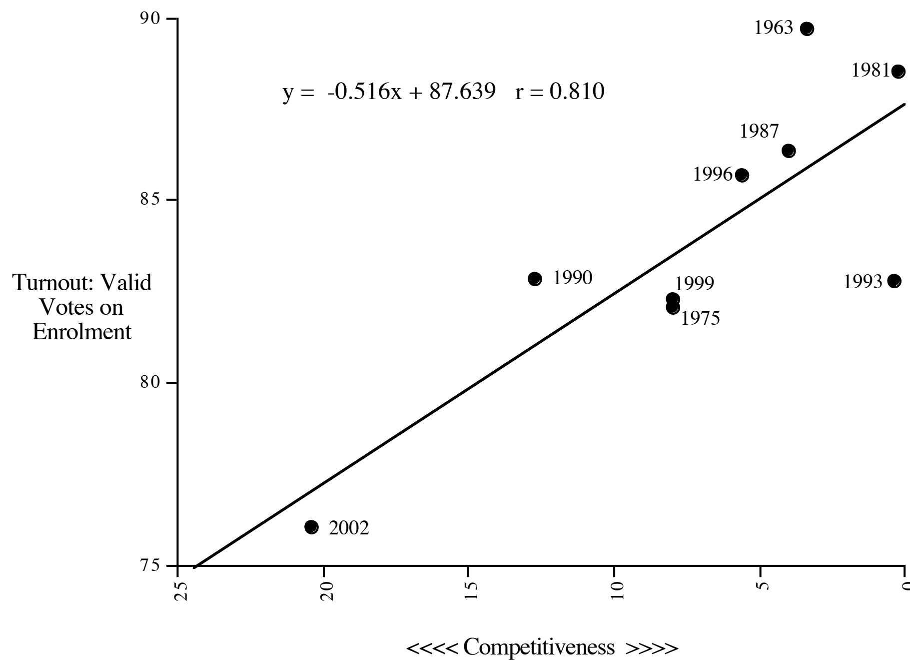



SOURCE: Victoria University Studies 1963, 1975; 1981 Study; NZES 1987-2002. Pooled Sample, derived from Model I, see Appendix,

What about Franklin's argument about electoral competitiveness? Returning to official data, Figure 3 is a plot of the absolute distance between the National and Labour vote percentages at each election that supplies data against turnout (in this case, valid votes on an enrolment base, as this is the frame of most of the sampling data). The relationship is close, with a correlation of 0.81.[14] The first pooled model setup, results of which have been displayed, uses dummy variables for each election save one to stabilise the estimates (this makes little difference to the slopes for each cohort). An alternative version substitutes competitiveness for each election – the absolute difference in vote percentages between the two main parties – in place of the election dummies (see Appendix). Adding this control for competitiveness indicates that half the generational effects can be accounted for by the competitiveness of the

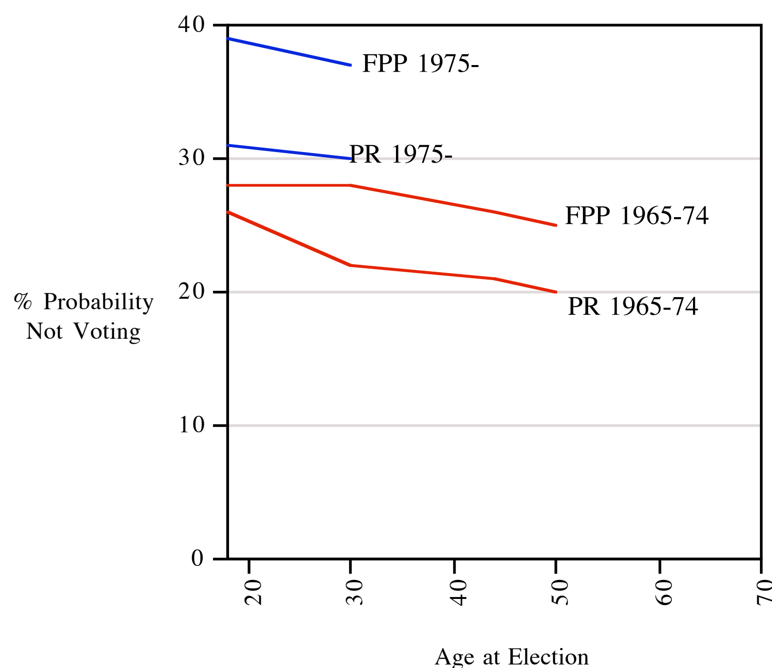
election at which respondents were sampled. In this setup, no generational effects prior to the suffrage reduction cohort remain significant.

**Figure 3: Competitiveness of Elections and Turnout**




The model can be elaborated further. The question of the effects of electoral system change can be addressed by introducing a proportional representation (PR) code of 1 for the elections from 1996 onward, 0 for those before. Adding this to the competitiveness, cohort, and life cycle model replicates the consistent finding in the international literature that PR facilitates higher turnout, albeit a small but significant effect of about 4 per cent (see Appendix). More important, the shift to PR appears to facilitate even higher turnout than would otherwise have been the case under first past the post among those born after 1975: an 8 per cent effect. The effect reduces in the older generations to only a marginal difference in the oldest cohort.

**Figure 4. Effects of the Change to Proportional Representation on the Two Youngest Generations**




Depending on the model setup, the negative effect of belonging to the post-1974 generation on turnout is between 20 and 30 per cent. The estimates that follow are based on the effects of the changes other variables make to that probability when added to the model, thereby decomposing the effects of the age generations, and thereby explaining them. (Similar albeit smaller effects are generally found on the other later generations as well).

*1.* As an aspect of social cohesion, we would expect trends of later marriage among more recent generations to partly explain lower turnout. *This has the expected effect, although it is small (about 3 per cent).*

2. High proportions of more recent generations with university education should increase apparent age effects when added to the

model: that is, this should act against the generational trends toward lower turnout. *However, no such effect is found.*

3. Persons in more recent generations will be less likely to identify with political parties than persons in older generations at the same point in the life cycle: if so, this may partly explain generational effects. *Party identification strongly influences turnout but not through generational differences as hypothesised.*

4. Those in manual households are less likely to vote, and declining proportion of manual occupations available to people in recent generations will make them more likely to have higher status nonmanual jobs making them more disposed to vote, thus acting against generational effects on turnout. *But there are no such occupational or class effects associated with the generations.*

5. Maori are less likely to vote in the absence of electoral competition in their electorates (except in 1996 and 1999) and because they are less integrated into the political system, and with lower levels of political knowledge and education. An increasing proportion of the electorate among more recent generations, that increase will be responsible for some of the generational effects on turnout. *There is an effect, but it is very small, of the order of only 2 per cent.* However, data on ethnicity is available only in the 1975 and datasets from 1987 and after.

6. Immigrants will be less likely to vote, against for reasons of lower political integration. As the proportion of immigrants rises, their

higher concentration in more recent generations will partly account for generational differences in turnout. *No such effects are found.*

7. The effect of generational change on turnout will run through interest in politics: that is, the younger generations are less interested in politics and therefore adding interest in politics to the model will apparently reduce the generational effects. *This is supported moderately well, with about a 9 per cent effect.*

8. Younger generations will have a lower sense of civic duty: thus adding this to the model will also apparently reduce the generational effects. *This has the strongest effects of all, about 13 per cent, roughly half of the generational effects.*

After all this analysis, about half the generational effects are still unaccounted for in the most comprehensive model that can be constructed, drawing only on the post-1990 datasets.

To sum up, structural effects (marriage, changing demography) are weak. Lower interest in politics and a more attenuated sense of civic duty, much as expected, provide most of the available explanation for lower turnout in the more recent generations. Reduction of the voting age, at most, explains about 6 per cent (the difference between the turnout probability of baby-boomers affected or not affected by the change). Yet the ebbing of voting turnout among the younger generations does begin to take hold at about this time, that is, 1969-72. Given this, it is highly likely that reduction of the voting age overlaps with cultural changes that began during this period, the effects of which have intensified on those coming to

maturity later. Later generations probably have a more privately focussed and apolitical political culture, the effects of which will continue to intensify. On the other hand, the more competitive elections are, the more likely the younger generations are to vote. The shift to proportional representation also seems to have significantly offset the tendencies of the youngest generation not to vote.

Some implications can also be drawn for social and educational policy, and in terms of support for and funding of social science research. Among policy-makers in Wellington, and among those who commission social science research, there is evidence of concern about the low levels of social integration of the young into society. They appear less concerned with political integration. In the wake of the local government elections, interest has increased in the problem declining voter turnout. It remains to be seen how long that interest lasts, and what, if anything, comes out of it.

Normally, it is difficult to justify research into political behaviour in terms of generating specific outcomes, which is now the focus of most government-funded research. Research into elections and the foundations of political choice tends to be seen as abstract academic enquiry, of little value for practical policy-making. The change of electoral system to proportional representation changed this mindset sufficiently to maintain funding of the NZES after the 1993 referendum. However, those who set social science funding priorities have now determined that no more research is needed into the transition, despite the likelihood that electoral system change is very likely to return to the political agenda within the next few years.

Beyond this, though, research into electoral choice is important, and does matter. Returning to turnout decline, there is a school of thought to the effect that it is not a major problem and could, indeed, reflect satisfaction with government. However, recent international research suggests otherwise. Established effects on election outcomes in partisan terms are, admittedly, minimal in the United States, (Grofman, Owen, and Collet 1999; Highton and Wolfinger 2001; Citrin, Schikler and Sides 2003), but may be more significant elsewhere (Pacek and Radcliffe 1995). But there are sufficient studies on public policy effects both within the United States and cross-nationally to indicate that the level of turnout probably does have agenda-setting and policy effects. As turnout declines, it tends to do so more among low-income groups. Where people on lower incomes become an increasing part of the electorate, governments respond with more welfare expenditure (Husted and Kenny 1997). In jurisdictions where turnout is low, governments spend less on welfare (Hill and Leighley 1992; Hill, Leighley, and Hinton-Andersson 1995). This suggests that, over the long term at least, social problems associated with poverty and income inequality are more likely under conditions of sustained turnout decline (Brady 2003; Mueller and Stratmann 2003).

Developing a better understanding of the foundations of electoral choice – in particular the choice to vote or not – should therefore have social policy implications. The preceding data and analysis provide some essential foundations for a strategy that might seek to enhance civic engagement among those people moving into adulthood. Proportional representation has, apparently, offset youth disengagement to some degree. More research is needed into the social networks of early adulthood and how, if at all, such networks might be reinforced and connected into other networks more

supportive of civic engagement. Ways to promote interest in politics, greater knowledge and understanding of politics, and a sense of civic duty should be investigated, perhaps through greater promotion of civic education in secondary schools. International research indicates, however, that such programmes are of limited value if they simply focus on institutions and processes. Where they tackle and address controversial matters, they are more successful, but this can cause political problems secondary schools are often reluctant to deal with.[15]

The findings do suggest – consistent with American research – that having higher proportions of the more recent generations with university degrees does not deliver higher levels of political interest or knowledge overall. Having a Bachelor of Commerce degree or even a PhD in Particle Physics does not automatically ensure a high level of political sophistication. The inclusion of civic education in General Education programmes such as that being developed at the University of Auckland might be a useful step – even at the level of a course on New Zealand politics. Research is needed to investigate further options that might encourage turnout more generally: for example, greater encouragement of adult education, more resources for political parties – perhaps through an expansion of state funding – and efforts to enhance the amount and quality of television coverage of politics. While it is unlikely to gain support, we should not rule out considering compulsory voting.

Maintaining a continuous time series of election studies would, meanwhile, provide the basic data required to monitor continuing trends in civic engagement and to discern the effects of policy initiatives designed to address the problem in future.[16] Extension of data collection to the level of local government would also be useful.

Extensive survey research both before and after the shift to postal voting would have answered many questions we now ask about its consequences. With the shift to the single-transferable vote for some Council elections, we have missed another opportunity to monitor and analyse change, understand it better, and assess its advantages and disadvantages on the basis of comprehensive evidence.

Since the 1990s, international research into political behaviour has been moving into a higher level of sophistication, employing exciting new methodologies and engaging with increasing depth with developments in cognitive psychology. With excellent baseline data from the 1990s, electoral research in New Zealand is now in a strong position to contribute even more insights. Despite the weaknesses of the earlier studies and the limited range of variables, the data and analysis offered above is of great value to those wishing to come to grips with ways to better incorporate young people into the community, and, in particular, to encourage them to enrol and cast a vote.

The datasets contain a wealth of information relevant to contemporary debates such as social capital (analysed exhaustively from this perspective in Hubscher, 2003). A wide variety of secondary analysis is possible using NZES data, including international comparisons. Modules of questions in the 1996 and 2002 NZES datasets are incorporated in the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) dataset, containing in Module 1, 34 countries and, in Module 2, probably more. These datasets are freely available from the CSES website at the University of Michigan (www.cses.org), and are increasingly used as the basis of innovative and original

comparative research into various aspects of political behaviour (for an introduction see Norris 2004).

Most of the NZES data is also available for secondary analysis at the individual case level, and can be downloaded from the NZES website (www.nzes.org). Excluding access by those associated with the project, NZES data was downloaded by nearly a hundred researchers around the world between May and early October this year. Sixty downloads were within New Zealand, including other scholars at all major universities, and staff at the MSD, the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, Treasury, and the Maxim Institute. In the Auckland Political Studies Department, four graduate students are currently using the data. Overseas downloads were to scholars in Canada (4), Germany (4), the UK (4), and the United States (14), the latter including individuals at various campuses of the University of California, Harvard, and the University of Michigan.

Despite all this (including a series of highly regarded books, one on each election since 1990, published by Auckland University Press)[17], the Foundation for Research, Science, and Technology (FRST) failed to continue funding for the NZES after the 2002 election. This decision took place under a process with no longer includes external peer review, and according to the FRST because the research did not conform sufficiently closely to its research priorities. A further attempt to gain infrastructural support from the Tertiary Education Commission for the NZES, including its extension to the study of local elections, and with other related projects, proved unsuccessful, for apparently similar reasons.

One is usually reluctant to discuss such matters, given that remarks of this kind could be simply taken as sour grapes. And the FRST did generously fund the NZES over nearly ten years, for which we remain grateful. Mounting an election study every three years is a treadmill, and there are other things those of us associated with the NZES can do and are doing that can advance our careers and reputations. On the other hand, many people without a direct interest have expressed their belief to us that an ongoing election study is essential basic research that ought to continue in a democratic society.

The experience leads to reflection on more general grounds. The prognosis for basic research that might deepen New Zealand social science, make it more robust, and better empirically founded, is still poor. Current funding is still low, much of it is lost in administration and other transaction costs, and what does get through is increasingly focussed on applied social policy, with government priorities operating in a difficult-to-define dialectic with stakeholders or 'end users', whoever they happen to be. In many cases they are government departments. With the exception of the Marsden fund, attracting research dollars is no longer a matter of demonstrating excellence and importance within the context of the relevant state of knowledge, judged by one's peers. Instead, it is a political process under which one rounds up end users and networks among those likely to belong to or appoint the members of 'reference groups'.

The current New Zealand social science research model could be said to be as much about social therapy as social research.[18] In my opinion it does not encourage the pursuit of knowledge that might provide a more fundamental understanding of the

reasons for social problems in the first place. In a document still open to consultation at the time of writing, the general principle of 'an inclusive society' is applied quite narrowly, with 'priority areas' covering 'improving Outcomes for Children and Young People'; 'Improving Participation in Work, Earnings and Quality of Employment'; and 'Enhancing Wellbeing in and Ageing Society'.[19] These are worthwhile objectives, but it is open to question whether all big-budget social science in New Zealand should be aligned to what are, essentially, such specific social policy objectives of government. One can of course understand why research funded under government priorities might seek to exclude wider issues of politics and power.

These criticisms do not of course apply to the Marsden fund. Unfortunately, the Marsden budget could meet only 7 per cent of the requests made for support in 2004. An effective budget ceiling limits the amount one can apply for under operating expenses, which need to be substantial to fund large-scale empirical social science research. 'Big-budget' research is hard to squeeze under Marsden's social sciences umbrella, and this is getting harder. A minimum salary buyout component, plus increasing overhead attached to it, and pressure to fund more projects without sufficient increases in funding add to the squeeze factor.

There is a more serious problem: the Marsden fund, although often described as such, is not for basic but for 'innovative' and 'cutting edge' research. An advice sheet for applicants makes it quite clear that it is not intended to fund research 'to accumulate information', it is not 'a general fund for basic research' nor a 'general data collection fund', and results are recommended within three years.[20] The Marsden Fund ought, of course, to be favouring innovative, forward-looking, and

original research, and those doing basic research can usually demonstrate enough of these features to compete. But continuous funding is unlikely under the current inadequate budget limits and the consequent low success rate for funding applications.

Further, the degree of innovation possible is constrained within programmes of long-term basic research. Continued pressure for innovation may militate against continuing to collect data consistently so that changes can be tracked and analysed over time. If there are no funds available to generate basic research data, all kinds of research opportunities are cut off before they can begin. As a result, like those who wish to study social capital in New Zealand, one can search with great difficulty for basic data from which one could draw inferences about change over time. Failing that, as happens so often, we can bring in an overseas expert to tell us what is known elsewhere.

APPENDIX

## Appendix Table 1: Logistic Regressions: Turnout, Competitiveness and PR, Full Model

| | I: Base Model | | | | II: PR and Competitiveness | | | | III: Full model, 1990- | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Prb# | | S.E. | B | Prb# | | S.E. | B | Prb# | | S.E. |
| Born 1934-44 | 0.27 | **0.04** | * | 0.10 | 0.26 | **0.03** | ** | 0.08 | 0.35 | **0.03** | | 0.17 |
| Born 1945-51 | 0.36 | **0.05** | ** | 0.12 | 0.33 | **0.04** | ** | 0.09 | 0.51 | **0.05** | * | 0.22 |
| Born 1952-64 | 0.77 | **0.11** | ** | 0.15 | 0.72 | **0.10** | ** | 0.10 | 0.72 | **0.07** | * | 0.29 |
| Born 1965-74 | 1.18 | **0.19** | ** | 0.19 | 1.13 | **0.18** | ** | 0.13 | 1.20 | **0.15** | ** | 0.37 |
| Born 1975- | 1.43 | **0.26** | ** | 0.22 | 1.40 | **0.25** | ** | 0.16 | 1.21 | **0.16** | ** | 0.44 |
| Age (18-100) | -0.01 | **-0.06** | | 0.00 | -0.01 | **-0.07** | * | 0.00 | 0.01 | **0.08** | | 0.01 |
| 1999 | -0.32 | **-0.04** | ** | 0.05 | | | | | -0.39 | **-0.04** | ** | 0.08 |
| 1996 | -0.58 | **-0.06** | ** | 0.06 | | | | | -0.57 | **-0.03** | ** | 0.09 |
| 1993 | -0.09 | **-0.01** | | 0.08 | | | | | -0.32 | **-0.05** | * | 0.13 |
| 1990 | -0.12 | **-0.01** | | 0.08 | | | | | -0.57 | **-0.03** | ** | 0.14 |
| 1987 | -0.49 | **-0.05** | ** | 0.12 | | | | | | | | |
| 1981 | -0.41 | **-0.04** | ** | 0.12 | | | | | | | | |
| 1975 | 0.12 | **0.01** | | 0.12 | | | | | | | | |
| 1963 | -0.11 | **-0.01** | | 0.15 | | | | | | | | |
| Competitiveness | | | | | 0.03 | **0.07** | ** | 0.00 | | | | |
| PR | | | | | -0.30 | **-0.04** | ** | 0.05 | | | | |
| Female | | | | | | | | | -0.11 | **-0.01** | * | 0.06 |
| House Income | | | | | | | | | 0.00 | **-0.01** | | 0.00 |
| Married | | | | | | | | | -0.26 | **-0.02** | ** | 0.07 |
| University | | | | | | | | | -0.37 | **-0.03** | ** | 0.09 |
| Maori | | | | | | | | | 0.69 | **0.08** | ** | 0.09 |
| Born Elsewhere | | | | | | | | | 0.34 | **0.03** | ** | 0.08 |
| Party Identity | | | | | | | | | -0.31 | **-0.03** | ** | 0.06 |
| Political Interest | | | | | | | | | -1.16 | **-0.12** | ** | 0.12 |
| Civic Duty | | | | | | | | | -2.89 | **-0.48** | ** | 0.12 |
| Constant | -1.75 | | ** | 0.31 | -2.00 | | | 0.17 | 0.64 | | | 0.63 |
| Cox and Snell $R^2$ | 0.05 | | | | 0.05 | | | | 0.12 | | | |
| % concordant | 83.0 | | | | 83.0 | | | | 86.4 | | | |

** significant at < .01 * significant at < .05

\# Probability effects are those between the maximum and minimum values of each variable, setting the values of all other variables at their means. Most of the variable values are 0 or 1, or range from 0 to 1. Exceptions are age (measured between 18 and 100), income, measured in $000s, and competitiveness (0.2 to 20.4).

**Appendix Table 2: Per Cent Probabilities of Not Voting Under PR Versus First Past the Post by Generations**

| Generations | -1933 | 1934-44 | 1945-52 | 1953-64 | 1965-74 | 1975- |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| At Age | | | | | | |
| | | | **PR** | | | |
| 18 | | 13 | 14 | 19 | 26 | 31 |
| 30 | 9.5 | | | | 22 | 30 |
| 44 | 9 | 11 | 12 | 16 | 21 | |
| 50 | | | | | 20 | |
| 70 | 7 | 9 | 10 | 14 | | |
| | | | **FPP** | | | |
| 18 | | 17 | 18 | 24 | 28 | 39 |
| 30 | 13 | | | | 28 | 37 |
| 44 | 11 | 14 | 15 | 21 | 26 | |
| 50 | | | | | 25 | |
| 70 | 10 | 12 | 13 | 18 | | |

SOURCE: Appendix Table 1, Model II.

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NOTES

[1] The relation between 'civic engagement' and 'social capital' is a close one, so much so that it has been asserted that Putnam at times seems to regard social capital as the same thing as civic engagement, and at other times as its cause (Milner 2002, 214). In a nutshell this exposes the essence of Putnam's argument: social capital constitutes a complex of variables acting together and thus reinforcing a 'virtuous circle'. This also illustrates one of its key flaws: the absence of a clear conceptual boundary between two variables, even more dangerous given their respective roles as an independent and a dependent variable (see Gerring 2001).

[2] Under participation Putnam also includes interest in politics and political knowledge (and, further on, party identification), but none of these constitute social action. With the act of voting, Putnam asserts that 'strictly speaking', they are not forms of social capital, because they are done alone (2000, 37). This is a matter of debate, given that even if the ballot is secret voting is a public act and normally takes place in the social arena of the polling place (leaving aside for the moment increasing tendencies toward mail and absentee voting). Interest in politics, political knowledge, and party identification are not, in themselves, forms of instrumental action, and need to be defined as independent variables, not part of the dependent variable.

[3] Much of the data that follows is sourced from the New Zealand Election Study. I want to acknowledge the contributions of others who have been involved in that programme to varying degrees – in particular, Peter Aimer, and also Jeffrey Karp, Susan Banducci, Raymond Miller, Ann Sullivan, Helena Catt, Jim Lamare. Charles Crothers, Richard Johnston, Andre Blais, and David Denemark. Funding was, for the most part, provided by the Foundation for Research, Science, and Technology. A James Cook Fellowship funded two years of research for me to investigate longer-term trends, of which this is one aspect.

[4] For this reason these figures, as reported in a recent study of voting in New Zealand (Atkinson 2003), are not the most useful.

[5] Various responses to turnout decline are already on record (Levine and Roberts, 2003, 21): 'It is easy, but unwise, to make too much of this. By international standards, New Zealand's level of voter turnout remains fairly high.' On the basis of 1990s data, Banducci and Karp conclude that New Zealand turnout remains 'comparatively high and stable' (2004, 158). But this claim is based on a 1990s average nearly 9 points higher than the latest 2002 low point.

[6] The Ministry of Social Development's 2004 Social Report puts New Zealand's turnout as 15th out of 30 OECD countries (http://www.socialreport.msd.govt.nz/civil-political-rights/voter-turnout.html, accessed 20/9/2004). However, their source, International Idea's Turnout database (http://www.idea.int), does not provide age-eligible data since the late 1990s, so the comparison is almost certainly flawed.

[7] This could be said to have constituted a 'failed realignment': a failure because it was not sustained after the mid to late 1980s (Vowles 1997).

[8] Donations and expenditure data are available on the website of the New Zealand Electoral Commission, http://www.elections.org.nz/esyst/parties.html, filenames partydonations-96-02.pdf; partyelectionsexpenses96-02.pdf, partyallocations-96-02.pdf.

[9] The shift to proportional representation also complicates the incentives for on-the-ground mobilisation (Karp, Banducci and Bowler 2002) but the key factor, declining membership, predates electoral system change.
[10] I want to acknowledge the ongoing work of Andrew McVey, who is tenaciously dredging for it and other aspects of social capital as part of his MA thesis research.
[11] One could hypothesise that Mitchell under-estimated national associational membership in 1966 because his two electorates were urban and with relatively low average incomes. Wealthier and more rural electorates might be expected to have more social capital in this sense. The national sample from the 1999 NZES does find a statistically significant difference across the urban-rural divide, but nothing on the basis of Labour party vote. But a purely big city estimate of associational membership would deflate the national membership by only one per cent in 1999. If urban associations were less vital in 1966, the difference between large urban and the rest of the country could have been greater.
[12] The same caution applies to the increasing use of the internet for political purposes, but the jury is still out on the implications of this.
[13] A social science data archive set up in the early 1990s at Massey University that might have facilitated better data access appears to have become inoperative after 1996. The International Social Science Survey module has been run in New Zealand since 1991 by Massey University's Department of Marketing, using Massey University internal funding, and is available from the Central Archive for Empirical Research at the University of Cologne. Recent modules on Social Networks (2001) and the current module on Citizenship (2004) have considerable potential for addressing some of the questions raised here while situating New Zealand in a comparative framework.
[14] The correlation with turnout calculated on an age-eligible base is even higher, at 0.87, indicating that competitiveness has a small influence on the comprehensiveness of the rolls as well.
[15] See a Symposium on Civic Education in the American Political Science Association's Quarterly professional journal, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 2004, 2, 231-264 and the introductory summary article (Westheimer 2004). Also see Galston 2001, Torney-Purta 2002, Dudley and Gitelson 2002.
[16] Requests made to the Chief Electoral Office and the Parliamentary Services Commission indicate that their budgets are insufficient to make allocations to help fund election study research. A request to the Electoral Commission for limited support awaits confirmation of its research budget by government.
[17] Vowles and Aimer 1990; Vowles, Aimer, Catt, Miller and Lamare 1995; Vowles, Aimer, Banducci and Karp 1998; Vowles, Aimer, Karp, Banducci, Miller and Sullivan 2002; Vowles, Aimer, Karp, Banducci, and Miller 2004.
[18] Criticism of this model is increasingly widespread among New Zealand scientists in general. One could reflect further on the model of social policy that is implicit in the objectives. It can be justified as sensitive to the concerns and interests of those being researched, and it seeks to address specific social problems in terms of delivering tangible outcomes. This kind of post-modern research is advocated eloquently by Flyvberg (2001). Even here one of the models for emulation is Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti's research as reported in *Making Democracy Work* (Putnam 1993), a study of Italian

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regional governments from the 1970s into the 1980s. This began the current focus on social capital and relied on longitudinal surveys of elites and ordinary people going back twenty years with the objective of monitoring the performance of regional governments set up at the beginning of the period.

[19] See http://www.frst.govt.nz/Research/ProposedPortfolios-Social.cfm (accessed October 8 2004).

[20] 'Hints for preparing applications to the Marsden fund', at http://www.rsnz.org/funding/marsden_fund/info.php (accessed October 8 2004).