

OFFSETTING THE PR EFFECT?

Party Mobilization and Turnout Decline in New Zealand, 1996-99

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ABSTRACT

The 1999 election produced probably the lowest voting turnout of any twentieth-century New Zealand election. Yet it was the second election after a change to proportional representation from a first-past-the-post system, which comparative research indicates should have had the effect of turnout increase. This puzzle is examined using pooled validated data from the 1996 and 1999 New Zealand Election Studies, with particular attention to the effects of partisan dealignment, party mobilization and the short-term effects of New Zealand's first experience of coalition government since the 1930s.

KEY WORDS ■ coalition ■ New Zealand ■ non-vote ■ PR ■ turnout

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Turnout decline is a trend in many of the longest established democracies (Norris, 2002 forthcoming; Wattenberg, 2000). However, the causes of the trend remain unclear. This article tests the hypothesis that the ability of political parties to mobilize and secure the support of potential voters provides a partial answer to an otherwise difficult puzzle. Why did a trend of turnout decline continue in New Zealand, one of the oldest modern democracies, despite a recent change to proportional representation (PR)?

Both theory and experience indicate that a change of electoral system to PR should have encouraged turnout revival. There is general agreement that, all other things being equal, turnout tends to be higher in countries with PR than in those with first-past-the-post (FPP) electoral systems (Blais and Carty, 1990; Jackman, 1987; Jackman and Miller, 1995). Disagreement emerges

only on the size of the effect and its explanation (Blais and Dobrzynska, 1998; Franklin, 1996).¹

However, one answer to the puzzle of turnout decline in New Zealand is suggested in the literature postulating a negative effect on turnout under PR if processes of coalition formation are perceived to be unresponsive to public preferences. This article also addresses that hypothesis.

New Zealand, Mixed-Member Proportional and the Party System

Electoral system effects and changes over time are difficult to estimate because stable democracies change their electoral systems rarely, if at all. New Zealand is a case where the effects of a change to PR on turnout trends may be examined. New Zealand changed its electoral system from FPP to a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system, and held its first PR election in 1996. The results were initially as expected, reversing a long-term downward trend. From the lowest age-eligible turnout of the twentieth century in 1990 (76 percent), turnout rose by 0.7 percent in 1993, almost certainly due to the referendum, and again by 1.7 percent in 1996 at the first PR election. This met the expectations of those who had recommended change. The Royal Commission Report advocating the switch to MMP anticipated that the adoption of PR would 'provide for slightly more effective voter participation' and produce 'a turnout higher than under plurality' (Royal Commission on the Electoral System, 1986: 56–7).

Electoral system change in New Zealand created new challenges and incentives for political parties, and more opportunities for voters. Because MMP is a mixed system, it retains single-member districts (SMDs), for which New Zealanders cast an electorate vote. Another 'party vote' distributes seats from party lists on a 'top-up' compensatory basis. List seats are a little less than half the total and make the system proportional, subject to a 5 percent party or one electorate seat vote threshold. In FPP systems with SMDs, competitiveness is usually confined to a relatively small number of electorates where parties concentrate their resources. In these electorates, parties are most likely to mobilize voters, and voters are more likely to perceive their vote as making a difference. In the remaining electorates, where party candidate votes can be separated by wide margins, parties have less of an incentive to mobilize and voters have less incentive to vote (Powell, 1980). Empirical evidence from the 1990 election in New Zealand confirms this (Vowles and Aimer, 1993: 48–9). Under MMP, however, parties have an incentive to mobilize everywhere and voters have equal incentives to vote since it is the party vote that is likely to determine the partisan composition of parliament (Denemark, 1998). Turnout in 1996 increased in non-competitive SMDs because party votes cast in those electorates could be as effective as any others (Banducci and Karp, 1999). Indeed, under MMP, competition for the electorate vote hardly influences turnout at all, and in 1999 the relationship was no longer statistically significant (Vowles, 2002a).

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Encouraged by a concurrent referendum on electoral system change, turnout among supporters of minor parties rose at the 1993 election, and maintained that level in 1996. Left-leaning voters were more likely to vote in 1996, reflecting their greater support for PR and expectations that left-wing parties would be more successful under the new system. Indigenous Maori became more likely to vote. While their prospects for representation were enhanced by the use of lists under PR, changes to the system of separate representation for Maori allowing seat numbers to rise in tandem with registration probably had greater effects, independent of the shift to MMP. This aside, all other findings provided preliminary evidence to support a 'PR effect' (Banducci and Karp, 1999).

The experience of the 1999 election poured cold water over the positive PR effect. Age-eligible turnout fell to a new twentieth-century low point for New Zealand: 75 percent. Figure 1 displays the trends since the beginning of effective party competition in New Zealand elections. The figures since 1928 are valid votes on an age-eligible basis (Nagel, 1988; New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2000) and those before are official turnout (Mackie and Rose, 1991). However, age-eligible and official figures tend to diverge by less than 1 percent before the late 1940s, so the official figures provide a provisional guide to the earlier period. All elections between 1914 and 1993 inclusive were fought under FPP. Those of 1908 and 1911 were contested under a Second Ballot system requiring a second election between the two highest candidates where the plurality winner had failed to win an absolute majority in the first round.

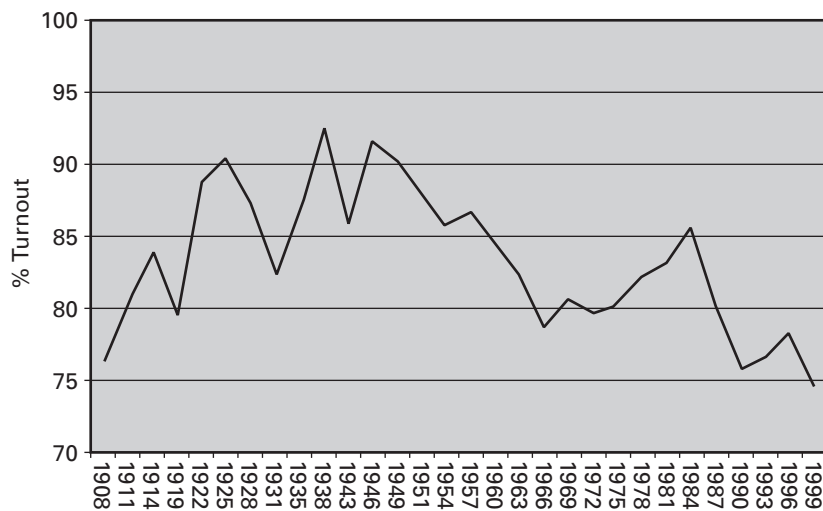


Figure 1. Turnout in New Zealand Elections 1908–1999

Source: Mackie and Rose, 1991; Nagel, 1988; New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2000.

The figure indicates a turnout peak in the late 1930s through to the late 1940s, broken by the effects of war, followed by decline to the mid-1960s. Since the 1960s, New Zealand's international reputation as a country with very high turnout has become increasingly undeserved, although it continues to be asserted.² A recovery did emerge through the 1970s to the mid-1980s, but it was followed by further steep decline, a minor upswing associated with the change to PR, and a further downward shift in 1999. Up to 1 percent of the 3.5 percent decline on an age-eligible base could be due to a more accurate base estimate being applied to the 1999 figures (see New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2000). None the less, in combination with electoral system change the turnout decline presents a puzzle. While some observers might be satisfied with a simple explanation that a prior trend has reappeared, this begs the question of the causes of that trend, and why it has become re-established.

Theories and Expectations

Two hypotheses have so far been advanced as potential explanations of turnout decline in 1999: a possible failure of political party mobilization, and a negative public reaction to problems of coalition government. Taking the latter first, the consensus of the literature indicates that under PR turnout is encouraged by the equal value of all votes wherever they are cast, and by a greater sense of efficacy among those who favour small parties. However, if small parties capture a pivotal place in the party system, government formation may be determined by negotiations between parties not necessarily reflecting the preferences of a voter majority. Where government formation is seen as lacking a popular mandate, turnout may be discouraged because voters may feel a lower sense of efficacy. Thus PR may have both encouraging and discouraging effects on turnout, depending on the party system and processes of coalition formation (Jackman, 1987). The first PR election in New Zealand led to a situation that could create a negative PR effect. The centre-right New Zealand First Party captured 17 out of 120 seats. It was in a position to offer itself as coalition partner to either Labour or the dominant centre-right National Party, the incumbent government since 1990. On the basis of most of its rhetoric, most voters – including those for New Zealand First – expected the party to join with Labour, but it eventually chose National (Miller, 1998). The coalition broke up in August 1998, and opened up a fissure in New Zealand First. Enough of its members defected to ensure a centre-right majority for the remainder of the parliamentary term. There was strong public disapproval of these developments (Karp and Bowler, 2001).

Evidence to support the party mobilization hypothesis in New Zealand has already emerged. Party mobilization was almost certainly a major factor accounting for New Zealand's turnout recovery and subsequent renewal of decline between 1963 and 1990. Party membership revived significantly in

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the 1970s and early 1980s in tandem with turnout recovery, thus increasing the resources available to political parties to mobilize their votes. Party membership fell again in the late 1980s, and the two-party system dealigned into multiparty politics. Despite an increase in the number of parties, in general parties' organizational resources were much reduced. Political interest also fell (Vowles, 1994). Both the level and strength of party identification have fallen over the long term in New Zealand (for time-series data, see Vowles, 2002b). The shift to PR in 1996 has had little apparent effect on that trend. Identifications with smaller parties so far remain low, rather than consolidating as might have been expected.

Of course, various other theories have been advanced to explain changes in turnout, and also need to be taken into account. Socio-economic explanations assume that those with fewer resources are less aware of the relevance of politics to their lives, because they lack basic information and skills (Verba and Nie, 1972; Verba et al., 1995). Demographic explanations follow the same logic, assuming that those who are younger, unmarried and less integrated into society have less experience and less commitment to society (Converse and Niemi, 1971). Attitudinal theories are rooted in the dominant tradition of research into electoral behaviour, the Michigan model. Here the relevant variable is party identification, but there are others measuring other aspects of political culture, the relations between parties and electors, and attitudes to the political process (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000; Pharr and Putnam, 2000). Negative attitudes to the political process may be shaped not only by government performance, but also by perceptions of the state of the economy. There is evidence that economic adversity depresses turnout directly by encouraging pessimism and passivity (Rosenstone, 1982).

Rational choice theory adds the critical insight that for self-regarding individuals the costs of casting a vote normally outweigh the likely benefit given the small effects of a single vote (Downs, 1957). This opens up a number of possibilities. Where the civic attitudes identified in the Michigan model become weak, rational-choice insights are more likely to be of value (Blais, 2000). The more competitive an election, the more likely rational voters will consider that their votes might be effective, and thus be more prone to vote, either in their SMD or nationally if competition is also intense at that level. Mobilization theories suggest that political and social organizations – not just political parties – can act to mobilize people to vote who otherwise might not do so (Gray and Caul, 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). All these theories provide potential explanations for turnout and turnout change.

Influences on Turnout Decline

Competitiveness and Campaign Expenditure. Competitiveness at the SMD level does not influence turnout under MMP, except at the margins (Vowles,

2002a). None the less, on rational-choice grounds people's perceptions of the competitiveness of the election in general could still have had some turnout effects. If people consider the election close, the more likely they will consider the possibility that their vote could be important. During the campaign as a whole, the 1999 election was more competitive than that of 1996, in which National began with a big lead in the polls and retained it throughout (Johnston, 1998). In 1999, National and Labour were close rivals as the campaign began. Most polls indicated that Labour only moved ahead in the second half of the campaign (Vowles, 2000). This should have enhanced turnout in 1999. However, perceptions of competitiveness at the time of voting are likely to be more decisive. By the last week of the 1996 campaign, about half of the electors expected Labour to be in government, indicating a high level of perceived competition (Vowles, 1997). In 1999, that expectation was 10–20 points higher over the same period (Miller, 2002). Indeed, a comfortable Labour victory was predicted by election commentators just before election day, to the extent that party officials later expressed concern about possible turnout effects. This is a difference between the two elections for which the effects cannot easily be estimated. However, analysis of pre- and post-election campaign panel data from 1999 provides no evidence that perceptions of the competitiveness of the election shaped turnout choices (Vowles, 2002a).

Campaign expenditure is considered to be one of the main indicators of mobilization. Official data distinguish between the expenditure of candidates competing for the electorate SMD vote, expenditure controlled by the national party organizations mainly targeted at the party vote, and broadcasting expenditures which are state-funded and also focus on promoting parties' national campaigns. Total expenditure for the SMD contests was down by about 7 percent (Vowles, 2002a). Allowing for inflation, overall campaign expenditure must have been about 10 percent lower in 1999, with the biggest decline in the funds available for the national campaign. Lower campaign expenditure could provide part of the explanation for turnout decline. However, estimating the effects of the total decline in expenditure is problematic, as the effect cannot be separated from other differences between the two elections.

One can estimate the effects of differences in campaign expenditure at the SMD level. In electorates where campaign expenditure was high in 1996, turnout also appeared to be high ($r = 0.30$) – but not in 1999. Perhaps the lower level of 1999 expenditure in the electorates was partly responsible for the difference. Spending also appeared to be better targeted toward competitive electorates ($r = 0.19$ in 1999, $r = 0.10$ in 1996). This targeting was doubtless more difficult in 1996 given the change in the electoral system. None the less, electorate-by-electorate variations in campaign expenditure had no significant association with turnout in 1999, casting doubt upon this potential explanation.

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Campaign Contact, Political Activity and Other Organizational Mobilization. Other party activity is perhaps more likely to have had mobilizing effects. Direct contact between party workers and voters can boost registration, and have turnout effects (Kramer, 1970; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Wielhouwer and Lockerbie, 1994). The more direct and frequent the contact between parties and voters, the more effective the mobilization (Bochel and Denver, 1971, 1972). The individual-level data to which the analysis moves on come from national samples generated by the 1996 and 1999 New Zealand Election Studies (NZES), for which the turnout data have been validated against marked rolls. More details are available in the data appendix. From the five parties for which there are data, respondents could have been contacted in four different ways: by telephone, by a personal visit, by being sent a letter, or by being given or sent a pamphlet. The measurable maximum was 20 contacts. Campaign contacts as a percentage of all possible contacts were 20 percent in 1996 and only 15 percent in 1999.³ The table also indicates that there is an association between number of contact types and turnout.

A sceptic might suspect that less politically interested people being contacted or receiving such material might simply forget having done so. Those who did not vote might be under-reporting such contact. The findings might simply be an artefact of this. However, multivariate analysis should take care of this problem by controlling for political interest and other associated variables.

Further boosting confidence in the findings above, other indicators confirm a decline in participation and mobilization in 1999. Table 2 shows both cross-sectional and panel data. Given that observed changes between two cross-sectional surveys may be the result of sampling error or changes in the composition of the electorate, the results from a panel where the same

Table 1. 1996 and 1999 – Did Anyone From the Following Political Parties Contact you During the Campaign?

<i>% Number of contact types</i>	1996	1999	1999 <i>nonvote</i>
0	8	17	25
1	8	11	18
2	11	13	21
3	12	16	12
4	15	10	10
5	27	21	13
6–7	14	9	8
8 or over	5	3	9
% all possible contact types*	20	15	
N	2799	2924	2852

*Personal, letter, phone, or pamphlet.

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Table 2. Further Indicators of Election Mobilisation, 1996 and 1999

	<i>Cross-sections</i>			<i>Panel</i>		
	1996	1999	<i>Diff</i>	1996	1999	<i>Diff</i>
Discuss politics with others?	92	89	-3	91	91	-1
Talk to any people about how they might vote?	39	31	-8	35	28	-8
Go to any political meetings or rallies?	12	5	-7	12	7	-5
Contribute money to a political party or candidate?	6	4	-2	9	6	-3
Do any work for a political party or candidate?	3	3	0	3	3	1
N	2681	2863		1600	1600	

individuals have been surveyed three years later are also included. The consistency of the patterns indicates the findings of change are robust. The table indicates noticeable changes on various indicators of engagement. A substantially smaller proportion of the electorate reported trying to persuade people to vote in a particular way in 1999 compared to 1996. These changes are also evident in the panel indicating that individuals were less likely to be actively engaged than previously. As for the more costly forms of participation, almost half the proportion reported attending political meetings or rallies. In 1996, about 8 percent said they contributed money, but in 1999 only 5 percent did so. While small, this is a statistically significant difference in the panel data and consistent with official data indicating that membership of political parties fell from 5.8 to 4.8 percent of the adult population between the two elections (Vowles, 2002b). For those working for a party or candidate there was little change. But this group now constitutes just 3 percent of the electorate.

One other source of political mobilization remains: membership of social organizations such as trade unions (Caul and Gray, 2000). In New Zealand, some trade unions are affiliated to the Labour Party, and those unions and sometimes others encourage their members and their families to vote, and sometimes provide Labour with organizational assistance. In the NZES samples, people in union households declined from 25 percent in 1996 to 20 percent in 1999. Declining union membership could well help explain turnout decline.

Attitudes, Perceptions and Loyalties. Table 3 sets out findings for indicators of attitudes and perceptions. Here the prime focus is on the effects of people's perceptions of the political process under MMP, and the extent of

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possible disillusion with the outcomes of electoral system change. Two key variables support MMP and coalitions.

All variables in the table are expressed on a scale from 0 to 10. Independently of electoral system change issues, there was more economic dissatisfaction in the air in 1999 than in 1996, and that dissatisfaction did tend to be weakly associated with a tendency not to vote. Support for MMP declined between the two elections, although it was only weakly negatively correlated with failure to vote in 1999. None the less, less support for MMP could be expected marginally to reduce turnout in line with the negative PR effect hypothesis. Approval of coalition compared to single-party government certainly declined between the two elections. This indicator reflects responses to questions asking people to express a preference for coalition government or single-party government on four indicators: government stability, making tough decisions, keeping promises and 'doing what the people want'. The average score on this variable in 1996 was 6.1 percent, giving a healthy edge to approval of coalitions. In 1999 the average score was closer to an even balance. This variable provides the most direct test of the negative PR effect, but preference for coalitions versus single-party government had no influence on turnout in 1999, throwing some doubt on the claim that disappointment with coalitions under PR might be responsible for turnout decline.

There is also evidence of a decline in satisfaction with the way democracy works, of a similar order, another perception associated with turnout decline. Perhaps this is an indirect effect of the coalition experience. If so, the absence of a direct effect of coalition opinion is puzzling. Moreover, political efficacy slightly increased in 1999. According to the negative PR effect hypothesis, one would have expected a decline, although this could have been offset by a relatively popular change of government as a result of the election. Political efficacy is an indicator made up of responses of agreement or disagreement

Table 3. Attitudes, Perceptions and Nonvoting

<i>Means of scales between 0 and 10 (appendix variables multiplies by 10)</i>	1996	1999	1999 Correlation with nonvote
Economic dissatisfaction	4.6	5.1	0.06**
Support for MMP	5.7	4.7	-0.02*
Coalition Approval	6.1	5.3	0.01
Satisfaction with Democracy	6.0	5.2	-0.08**
Political Efficacy	4.0	4.2	-0.05**
Strength Party Identification (0-10)	4.2	3.4	-0.10**
Interest in Politics	6.1	5.9	-0.20**
Follow campaign in newspapers	5.8	6.1	-0.15**
Civic Duty	8.1	8.1	-0.24**

*significant at $p < .05$; **significant at $p < .01$.

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with five questions: 'most members of Parliament are out of touch with the rest of the country'; 'people like me don't have any say about what the government does'; 'I don't think politicians and public servants care much about what people like me think'; 'you can trust the government to what is right most of the time'; 'the New Zealand Government is largely run by a few big interests'. Because these responses were post-election it is possible that they may have been influenced by respondents' knowledge of its result. However, the result was widely anticipated before the election. People who felt greater political efficacy post-election were significantly more likely to have voted, although the substantive relationship is weak.

There was substantial decline in party identification and its strength between the two elections. In the scale, very strong partisans score 10, fairly strong 6.6, not very strong 3.3 and non-partisans 0. Absence or weakness of partisanship is also significantly correlated with non-voting. Interest in politics slightly declined between the two elections, but people paid more attention to the campaign in newspapers in 1999 than they did in 1996. Both of these variables were substantially associated with the choice of whether or not to vote. The largest correlation with turnout was civic duty, based on agreement or disagreement with the statement 'it is a citizen's duty to vote'. There was strong agreement with this view, but no change between 1996 and 1999. So far, then, one finds apparent confirmation of the party mobilization hypotheses, but not of the 'negative PR effect' associated with coalition government.

Decomposing the Effects. The effects of the various variables on the increased non-vote in 1999 are summarized in Table 4, which displays estimates from regression models from a pooled sample of the 1996 and 1999 NZES datasets. On an enrolment basis, turnout declined by about 3.4 percentage points between 1996 and 1999. While a turnout decline estimate based on the age-eligible turnout rate might be preferable, the samples available contain too few non-registered individuals for such estimates to be reliable. An enrolment base on this occasion avoids uncertainty associated with the addition of a census undercount estimate to calculate the 1999 age-eligible population. The model is restricted to those variables with statistically significant effects in the full model, except where non-significant variables were of central theoretical importance. The addition of blocks of variables decomposes the turnout difference between the two elections, indicated by the '1999 election' effect probability estimates in the top row of the Table (for their means of calculation, see the appendix).

The order of the various additions assumes a certain causal progression of effects. Long-term socio-economic and demographic changes come first, but are unlikely to have greatly influenced turnout change over a 3-year period, unless their effects all run in the same direction. Maori and Pacific Island populations grew, and each group has been shown to be less prone to vote in earlier studies. The percentage married, a group more likely to

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vote, has remained constant. Those in manual occupations slightly increased and the electorate very slightly aged. Such small effects are partially offsetting, but their combined effects, and most notably a slightly older and more educated population, should have slightly increased turnout in 1999.

Another longer-term effect is declining union membership in New Zealand since 1991. This offsets the marginally positive effects of social and demographic change, and accounts for about 0.2 of a percentage point of turnout decline. Although it is more short-term, another effect independent of electoral system change is economic dissatisfaction. This adds a more substantial 0.6 of a percentage point to the explanation. The order of most of the remaining variables is less logically obvious. In order to give two central variables the most opportunity to have effects in the decomposition, they are added next. But MMP and coalition versus single party government add only 0.1 of a point and, of these, the crucial variable of preference for coalition versus single-party government is not statistically significant.⁴ Lower satisfaction with democracy adds a further 0.3 of a point, indicating that broader democratic dissatisfaction has some role to play. Whether or not this increased dissatisfaction was triggered by electoral system change is unknown, but there is no direct evidence. The two biggest effects on turnout decline turn out to be associated with the main party-centred hypothesis: decline in party identification and in campaign party contact. These are entered as late as possible in the model to ensure that their effects are measured conservatively. Even so, their addition reduces the 1999 effect to statistical non-significance. However, the final addition to the model of newspaper readership, political interest and civic duty restores a large part of the puzzle. These variables are either stable or show change that should have fostered turnout in 1999 – particularly the increase in newspaper readership.

With all the variables added, marriage, New Zealand birth, women and older age all help to enhance turnout significantly in both elections, while younger age, low education and Maori significantly reduce it. Contrary to earlier findings that those on low incomes are more prone not to vote (Vowles, 1994), those on benefits were not significantly more or less likely to vote. Net of the effects of all other variables in the model, Maori were about 10 percent more likely not to vote, taking the 1996 and 1999 elections together. Taking each election separately, Maori became almost twice more likely not to vote in 1999 as they were in 1996 (by about 13 percent to 6 percent). The effects of age on turnout significantly increase in 1999. This is unexpected, as the Green Party made a substantial breakthrough at the 1999 election and it appealed strongly to younger people who otherwise might not have voted. In the absence of an electorally viable Green Party, only possible under MMP, turnout would have almost certainly been lower. Similarly, under FPP turnout would probably have been lower in less competitive electorates. Arguably, both of these effects, too hypothetical to estimate precisely, could have offset the very small negative PR effects

Table 4. Decomposition of Effects, Nonvoting at the 1999 and 1996 Elections

Effect	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		1996		1999		9		s.e.
	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	b	a	b	a	b	
1999 Election	0.25**	3.4	0.30**	3.7	0.28**	3.5	0.23**	2.9	0.23**	2.8	0.20**	2.5	0.20**	1.7	0.14	1.0	0.08	-0.44*	-0.11	0.40	0.39*	0.16	0.08
University	-0.53**		-0.52**		-0.47**		-0.44**		-0.44**		-0.42**		-0.42**		-0.42**		0.08	0.43	0.40	0.40	0.39*	0.12	0.12
Low Education	0.49**		0.48**		0.46**		0.46**		0.46**		0.44**		0.44**		0.48**		0.45**	0.43	0.40	0.40	0.39*	0.16	0.16
Married	-0.46**		-0.44**		-0.42**		-0.43**		-0.42**		-0.42**		-0.42**		-0.43**		-0.41**	-0.23*	-0.49**	-0.49**	-0.36**	0.07	0.07
NZ Born	-0.31**		-0.31**		-0.30**		-0.32**		-0.32**		-0.32**		-0.32**		-0.31**		-0.31**	-0.32**	-0.34**	-0.34**	-0.33**	0.10	0.10
Female	-0.29**		-0.29**		-0.30**		-0.31**		-0.31**		-0.31**		-0.31**		-0.30**		-0.29**	-0.43**	-0.28**	-0.28**	-0.33**	0.07	0.07
Pacific	0.44*		0.48*		0.47*		0.46*		0.46*		0.46*		0.46*		0.50*		0.53*	0.50	0.34	0.34	0.41	0.23	0.23
Maori	0.57**		0.60**		0.57**		0.60**		0.58**		0.58**		0.58**		0.61**		0.62**	0.46*	0.80**	0.80**	0.67**	0.11	0.11
Age	-1.63**		-1.65**		-1.72**		-1.74**		-1.75**		-1.74**		-1.75**		-1.65**		-1.55**	-0.59**	-1.15**	-1.15**	-0.89**	0.14	0.14
Benefit	0.00		-0.03		-0.08		-0.07		-0.07		-0.07		-0.07		-0.07		-0.07	0.05	-0.19	-0.19	-0.08	0.08	0.08
Union	-0.27**		-0.30**		-0.30**		-0.28**		-0.27**		-0.27**		-0.27**		-0.26**		-0.25**	-0.25	-0.19	-0.19	-0.23*	0.09	0.09
EcDisat	0.91**		0.93**		0.93**		0.93**		0.973**		0.973**		0.973**		0.67**		0.69**	0.42	0.74*	0.74*	0.61**	0.22	0.22
MMP	-0.29**		-0.29**		-0.29**		-0.26**		-0.26**		-0.26**		-0.26**		-0.28**		-0.26**	-0.02	-0.30*	-0.30*	-0.18*	0.09	0.09
Coalitions	0.24		0.24		0.24		0.24		0.24		0.24		0.24		0.17		0.18	0.16	0.26	0.26	0.22	0.15	0.15
DemSat	-0.55**		-0.55**		-0.55**		-0.50**		-0.50**		-0.55**		-0.55**		-0.50**		-0.45**	-0.04	-0.38	-0.38	-0.20	0.16	0.16
Party ID	-0.72**		-0.72**		-0.72**		-0.72**		-0.72**		-0.72**		-0.72**		-0.72**		-0.70**	-0.63**	-0.20	-0.20	-0.40**	0.11	0.11
Contact	-0.07*		-0.07*		-0.07*		-0.07*		-0.07*		-0.07*		-0.07*		-0.07*		-0.10**	-0.07*	-0.05*	-0.05*	-0.06*	0.02	0.02
Newspaper	-0.60**		-0.60**		-0.60**		-0.60**		-0.60**		-0.60**		-0.60**		-0.60**		-0.60**	-0.60**	-0.36*	-0.36*	-0.47**	0.12	0.12
Duty	-2.16**		-2.16**		-2.16**		-2.16**		-2.16**		-2.16**		-2.16**		-2.16**		-2.16**	-2.16**	-1.99**	-1.99**	-2.04**	0.16	0.16
Interest	-1.26**		-1.26**		-1.26**		-1.26**		-1.26**		-1.26**		-1.26**		-1.26**		-1.26**	-1.26**	-0.85**	-0.85**	-1.06**	0.16	0.16
(Constant)	-1.78**		-0.47**		-0.41**		-0.77**		-0.37		-0.37		-0.37		-0.10		0.14	-1.96**	-1.87**	-1.79**	-1.79**	0.24	0.24
Cox/Snell R ²	0.00		0.06		0.06		0.06		0.06		0.06		0.06		0.07		0.08	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.11	0.11	0.11

1. Election effect without controls. 2. Election Effect plus social structure and demography 3. Plus union household 4. Plus Economic Dissatisfaction 5. Plus MMP and Coalition government 6. Plus Satisfaction with democracy 7. Plus Party Identification 8. Plus party contact 9. Plus newspaper readership, civic duty, and political interest.

** significant at $p < .01$; * significant at $p < .05$.

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identified. Campaign contacts enhance turnout – approximately reversing the probability from non-vote to vote, each type of campaign contact by party could improve the chance of an individual voting by 0.6 of a percentage point, net of the effects of all other variables (for example, the chance might increase from 85 percent to 85.6 percent). Location in a union household increased the probability of voting by about 3 percent, again, all other things being equal. Economic dissatisfaction had some effects, bigger in 1999. Support for MMP did significantly enhance turnout. Compared to a supporter of FPP, a supporter of MMP was about 2 percent more likely to vote. Neither satisfaction with democracy nor coalition government preferences had significant effects. Attention to newspapers, political interest, civic duty and party identification had substantial effects overall, although the effects of party identification weakened in 1999, so much so that it dropped out of statistical significance when controlling for the effects of all the other variables.

The apparent failure of party identification to encourage turnout in 1999 calls for further explanation. Could it be an indirect effect of electoral system change? The 1999 election was held in conjunction with a non-binding citizens' initiated referendum to reduce the size of Parliament, increased from 99 to 120 at the change of electoral system. In this sense, one could argue that this aspect of electoral system change may have promoted dissatisfaction, but not PR as such. The referendum on the size of Parliament encouraged anti-political sentiments, perhaps even among partisans, thus weakening their resolve to go to the polls in ways that are not captured by the other variables in the model. The unexplained turnout difference may be made up at least partly of 'global' differences that cannot be separated from the '1999 effect': for example, declining real national campaign expenditure and a less stimulating and interesting 1999 campaign than that of 1996. Or, perhaps, the unexplained difference may represent a trend for which the contributing factors have not been captured by the models. The available data lack full measures of 'social capital', such as associational memberships. None the less, the models presented here address some of the most significant hypotheses for testing and generate significant findings.

Conclusions

Consistent with a party-centred mobilization hypothesis, the two biggest effects on turnout decline in New Zealand between 1996 and 1999 were weaker party identifications and reduced party campaign contact. But declining campaign expenditure did not seem to contribute anything to the explanation, not at least when measured at the electorate level.

Between the first and second MMP elections in 1996 and 1999, disapproval of coalitions and declining political efficacy had no effect in explaining

turnout decline. Indeed, political efficacy slightly increased. Declining support for MMP and satisfaction with democracy had only minor effects, and these fell from statistical significance in the most complete version of the model. The hypothesis that there were negative effects of PR on turnout through perceptions of unaccountable coalition government appears to be refuted.

Economic dissatisfaction, a sentiment that waxes and wanes, had some effects. Union membership, which is now slightly recovering under new industrial law, also had a minor effect. Most importantly, those variables that most influenced turnout decline represent aspects of party performance that could respond to organizational mobilization – the recovery of party organizations and the revival of individual loyalties to political parties. While perhaps PR could help facilitate those processes in the longer term, it is clear from the experience of the 1999 election that in the short term its positive effects may be outweighed by other factors.

Data, Acknowledgements, Method and Variables

The data used in this chapter, excepting the data used in Table 2, are from the new and campaign samples of the 1996 and 1999 New Zealand Election Study (NZES), excluding between-election panel respondents. The NZES is funded by New Zealand's Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST), with supplementary funding from the University of Waikato. The research is partly supported by a James Cook Fellowship administered by the Royal Society of New Zealand. Acknowledgements are also due to Marty Wattenberg for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Vote and non-vote are based on validated samples. The datasets have been pooled ($N=6956$) and weighted to ensure that both samples accurately reflected those on the electoral rolls, by education, gender, age, vote choice, district distribution and non-vote by electorate. An age-eligible weighting was considered but not used, as the samples include almost no one not on the rolls. Respondents for one electorate for 1999 and three for 1996 were dropped because no non-voters could be found in the samples. The data are available from the Australian Social Science Data Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

Table 4 gives logistic regressions that decompose the effects of a dummy variable for the 1999 election in a pooled sample of the 1996 and 1999 NZES new sample and campaign samples. The estimates of the '1999 effect' were derived, first, by calculating the sum of the constant and the parameter estimates of all other variables in each successive model (S). For each model, let the parameter estimate for the 1999 effect = P. For each respondent in the pooled dataset, for each version of the model, the algorithm $[\exp(S + P)]/[1 + \exp(S + P)]$ creates a new variable indicating the predicted probability of not voting in 1999, and $[\exp(S)]/[1 + \exp(S)]$ another indicating the predicted probability of not voting in 1996. The difference

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between the means of these probability variables is the estimated effect. I am grateful to Clive Bean for introducing me to this procedure. Probabilities for other variables mentioned in the text were calculated in the same way.

Missing values were replaced by variable means.

Dependent Variable: No Vote = 1, Vote = 0 (validated from marked rolls, post-election).

Independent Variables:

Education Low = 1, Others = 0

University Degree = 1, Others = 0

Married = 1, Not Married = 0

New Zealand Born = 1, Non-New Zealand born = 0.

Women = 1, Men = 0.

Manual Household = 1, Others = 0

Maori Identity = 1, Others = 0

Pacific Island Ethnic Identity = 1, Others = 0

Age is a continuous variable, transformed so that age 70 = 1 and 18 = 0.

Union Household = 1, Others 0.

Economic Dissatisfaction: A scale 0–1, made up of responses to questions ‘What do you think of the state of the economy these days in New Zealand’ (very good, good, neither, bad, or very bad) and ‘How does the financial situation of your household now compare with what it was 12 months ago’ (a lot better, a little better, about the same, a little worse, a lot worse).

Support for MMP: ‘If there had been a referendum held on the electoral system at the same time as the election, how would you have voted: to keep MMP, return to the first-past-the-post system, or for an alternative, neither MMP nor FPP?’ MMP scored 1, don’t know or an alternative 0.5, and FPP 0.

Coalition Approval: Responses to ‘Do you think a government formed by one party or more than one party would be (1996) is (1999) better at doing the following things’, on four indicators: government stability, taking tough decisions, keeping promises and doing what the people want, scaled 0 to 1.

Satisfaction with Democracy: ‘On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in New Zealand’, scored 0 to 1.

Strength of Party Identification: Very strong partisans score 1, fairly strong 0.66, not very strong 0.33, and non-partisans.

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Party Total Contact: The number of contact types by party reported by respondents, which could range from 0 to 20.

Attention to Newspapers: 'During the . . . campaign. How often did you follow political news, discussions and advertising in newspapers?' (Often, sometimes, rarely, not at all), scored 0 to 1.

Civic Duty: Agreement or disagreement with: 'It is a citizen's duty to vote', from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree, scored 0 to 1.

Interest in Politics: Generally speaking, how much interest do you usually have in what's going on in politics? (very, fairly, slightly, not at all), scored 0 to 1.

Variables discussed but not included in the model because of their lack of significant or substantive effect on turnout were:

Electorate Safety/Marginality (Competitiveness): Based on the two-party swing margin at the previous election coded by electorate, with election results redistributed into new boundaries (McRobie 1996, 1998).

Campaign Expenditure: Total campaign expenditure (all parties) by electorate (see Vowles, 2002a).

Political Efficacy: Made up of 5-point agree or disagree responses as above to five questions: 'Most members of Parliament are out of touch with the rest of the country'; 'people like me don't have any say about what the government does'; 'I don't think politicians and public servants care much about what people like me think'; 'you can trust the government to what is right most of the time'; 'the New Zealand Government is largely run by a few big interests'. Scored 0 to 1.

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Notes

- 1 Studies differ on the base on which turnout is calculated, some taking enrolled or registered voters, others the age-eligible population, therefore building in non-registration to the non-voting camp. Of the two most recent studies showing the largest effects, one used a registration base (Franklin, 1996) the other age eligibility (Norris, 2002 forthcoming).
- 2 In the 1960s, New Zealand turnout on an age-eligible base averaged by decade has been estimated at tenth in a ranking of 19 countries; in the 1970s at eighth,

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- and in the 1980s at tenth once more (Jackman, 1987; Jackman and Miller, 1995). Data available from International Idea (1997) provide a similar picture.
- 3 Percentage possible contacts was calculated by summing the numbers of all contacts (nc) and dividing those by the maximum number of contacts (mc multiplied by the sample size (N): that is, $nc/(mc*N)$).
 - 4 Had these two variables indicated strong effects, one might have added them later. Given that their effects are so small and they refute a central hypothesis, it seemed appropriate to give them the maximum opportunity to add to the explanation.

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