

# HAVE YOUR SAY

LEVEL 3 AND 4 TEACHING UNITS

YOUR VOICE, YOUR CHOICE



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*Resource developed by Lift Education for the Electoral Commission.*



**I vote NZ**



[www.elections.org.nz](http://www.elections.org.nz)

# YOUR VOICE, YOUR CHOICE HAVE YOUR SAY

## Introduction

The aim of this resource is to encourage students to have a say on the decisions that affect their lives now and in the future. It is based on civics education, which promotes engagement and participation in the democratic process.

This resource supports students to learn about their rights, duties, and responsibilities in a democracy and to develop understandings of how they can influence what happens in their school and community. It focuses on promoting students' critical thinking and their knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities to contribute and participate in decision-making.

Ideas for curriculum-aligned learning experiences, including teacher-and student-support materials are provided in the resource. The resource is aligned to the learning area of social sciences and is targeted at levels 3 and 4 of *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

*Have Your Say* is part of a suite of resources (*Your Voice, Your Choice; Votes for Women; and Tūranga Mua, Tūranga Tika*) available for download from the Electoral Commission website <http://www.elections.org.nz/resources-learning/school-resources>



# Links to The New Zealand Curriculum

<b>Vision</b>	<p>This resource focuses on students being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• connected: as members of their families, whānau, and communities</li> <li>• actively involved: by contributing to the social, cultural, economic, and environmental well-being of their communities</li> <li>• lifelong learners: as critical thinkers and informed decision makers.</li> </ul>
<b>Principles</b>	<p>This resource supports the principles of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inclusion: being non-discriminatory</li> <li>• community engagement: connecting and engaging with their families, whānau, and communities</li> <li>• future focus: citizenship.</li> </ul>
<b>Values</b>	<p>This resource models and explores the key value of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community and participation for the common good.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Competencies</b>	<p>This resource fosters in students the key competencies of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• thinking: to make sense of information, experiences, and ideas</li> <li>• participating and contributing: contributing as a group member and being actively involved in their communities.</li> </ul>

# Achievement objectives

<b>Social Sciences (Social Studies)</b>	
<p><b>Conceptual strand:</b> <i>Identity, Culture and Organisation</i></p> <p>Students learn about society and communities and how they function. They also learn about the diverse cultures and identities of people within those communities and about the effects of these on the participation of groups and individuals.</p>	
<b>Level 3 (Years 5–6)</b>	<p>Students will gain knowledge, skills, and experience to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand how groups make and implement rules and laws</li> <li>• understand how people make decisions about access to and use of resources.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 4 (Years 7–8)</b>	<p>Students will gain knowledge, skills, and experience to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand how the ways in which leadership of groups is acquired and exercised have consequences for communities and societies</li> <li>• understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities</li> <li>• understand how people participate individually and collectively in response to community challenges.</li> </ul>

# Pedagogical approach

This resource is based on a social inquiry approach. Social inquiry is a process for examining social issues, ideas, and themes and significant aspects of human society.

Using a social inquiry approach, students may follow these steps:

- **find out information:** ask questions, gather information and background ideas, and examine relevant current issues
- **explore values and perspectives:** explore and analyse people's values and perspectives
- **consider responses and decisions:** consider ways in which people make decisions and participate in social action
- **reflect and evaluate:** reflect on and evaluate the understandings they have developed and the responses that may be required
- **so what? Now what?:** identify what they now know, what their new learning means to themselves and others, what further learning they need, and what responses they could make.

For further information on the social inquiry approach, see *Approaches to Social Inquiry* (Ministry of Education, 2008). This can be downloaded from: <http://ssol.tki.org.nz>

# Developing conceptual understandings

Conceptual understandings to be developed in the resource are:

- people's beliefs and values towards issues in society can be different
- people can have more influence on what happens if they act collectively rather than alone
- democracy is an inclusive process because it gives people a say in who makes the rules of a country or community.

Concepts:

- participation
- contributing
- democracy
- decision-making.

For further information on building conceptual understandings in the social inquiry approach, see *Building Conceptual Understandings in the Social Sciences: Approaches to Building Conceptual Understandings* (Ministry of Education, 2009). This can be downloaded from: <http://ssol.tki.org.nz>

# Assessment

This resource supports formative assessment. Formative assessment is a way of showing student development of conceptual understandings. After individual activities or the entire unit have been completed, allow students time to reflect on what they have learnt, identify ideas that need further work, and review key points. Encourage students to think independently about how they have learned as well as what they have learned from the activities. These reflections provide valuable formative assessment data.

# Learning experiences

The following learning experiences may be taught sequentially. However, you are encouraged to adapt the activities to meet the specific learning needs and experiences of your students.

Links to the social inquiry approach	Learning experiences	What you need
<b>Topic 1: Getting started – who makes decisions?</b>		
<b>Find out information</b>	<p><b>Activity 1</b></p> <p>Divide the class into four groups. Tell them that each group is going to create a team game to play against another team. The only equipment they can use in the game is one ball, two hoops, and one skipping rope. The students are to decide the rules of the game and where it is played, for example, on a netball court, on a playing field, or inside the school hall. Allow ten minutes of planning time. Then ask each group to explain how the decisions were made about the game and the rules. Ask: “Was everyone part of the decision-making?” The students could play the games they designed as part of a PE lesson.</p>	
<b>Topic 2: Is your voice heard?</b>		
<p><b>Explore values and perspectives</b></p> <p>What do I think?</p>	<p><b>Activity 1</b></p> <p>Explain that everyone has the right to participate in decision-making that affects them. Ask students to stand in the middle of the space. Explain that you will read out some statements and that they are to place themselves along a continuum going from “always” to “never”. Read the following statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Adults at home listen to what I have to say (about things that affect me).”</li> <li>• “Adults at school listen to what I have to say (about things that affect me).”</li> <li>• “Adults in the community listen to what I have to say (about things that affect me).”</li> </ul> <p>Have the students place themselves on the continuum (or allocate spaces in the classroom) for the following responses:</p> <p><b>always</b> ..... <b>most of the time</b> ..... <b>sometimes</b> ..... <b>hardly ever</b> ..... <b>never</b></p> <p>Give students an opportunity to discuss the kinds of decision-making they participate in/do not participate in after each statement is read.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open classroom space</li> </ul>

Links to the social inquiry approach	Learning experiences	What you need
<b>Topic 3: Rights and responsibilities (rules and laws)</b>		
<p><b>Find out information</b></p> <p>What groups do I belong to?</p> <p>What are my rights and responsibilities in decision-making within these groups?</p>	<p><b>Activity 1</b></p> <p>Ask students to think-pair-share on the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What groups do you belong to? (For example: home, school, sport, or community groups.)</li> <li>• What is your role in decision-making in these groups?</li> </ul> <p>List the groups on a chart or the board. As a class, discuss the decision-making of each group. Prompting questions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who makes the rules for these groups?</li> <li>• Who makes the rules at home/school/in the community?</li> <li>• How are students' voices heard?</li> <li>• Who ensures rules are followed?</li> </ul> <p>As a class, discuss the current class/school rules, including questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who makes them?</li> <li>• What is taken into consideration when making these rules? (For example: health and safety or laws.)</li> </ul>	

Links to the social inquiry approach	Learning experiences	What you need
<b>Topic 3 cont.: Rights and responsibilities (rules and laws)</b>		
<p><b>Consider responses and decisions</b></p> <p>What are some decisions that have been made that affect me?</p>	<p><b>Activity 2</b></p> <p>As a class, discuss some decisions that will affect students' lives, such as those that say we need to be a certain age to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• start school</li> <li>• leave school</li> <li>• get married</li> <li>• retire</li> <li>• drive vote.</li> </ul> <p>Divide the class into six groups and have them discuss one of the points above. Ask students: "What reasons are there for these decisions? Who decided them? Why do you think they were made? Do you agree with them? Why/why not?"</p> <p>In their groups, have students write an argument for or against the decision, giving four valid reasons. Ask them to include what might make them change their mind about their position (for example, changes in their views as they get older).</p>	
<p><b>Reflect and evaluate</b></p> <p>What qualities do leaders have?</p>	<p><b>Activity 3</b></p> <p>Show the students the images and, as a class, discuss who the leaders are, what they lead, what their roles are, and what makes them a good leader.</p> <p>List the leadership qualities that these people display.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "How did they become leaders?"</li> <li>• "Does a person have to be good at something to become a leader?"</li> <li>• "Why do people follow leaders?"</li> </ul>	<p>Images of well-known leaders, possibly from the newspaper or online images (for example: leaders in sports, politics, the community, or the school)</p>

Links to the social inquiry approach	Learning experiences	What you need
<b>Topic 4: What is an election?</b>		
<p><b>Find out information</b></p> <p>What do we know about the electoral process?</p>	<p><b>Activity 1</b></p> <p>Create a graffiti wall (or use the letter box strategy or a digital in-school class forum) where students can either write or post responses to the questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is an election?</li> <li>• Why do we have elections?</li> <li>• What happens during an election?</li> </ul> <p>In groups of three, have students discuss the questions before adding their ideas to the graffiti wall. To differentiate the responses and make it easier to collate, you could assign different coloured pens or sticky notes for each question.</p> <p>Collate the responses, and then have the class summarise the key ideas from the responses and post them to the wall under these headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We think an election is ...</li> <li>• We think elections are held to ...</li> <li>• In an election ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wall space</li> <li>• Large sheets of paper</li> <li>• Sticky notes</li> <li>• Pens</li> </ul>

Links to the social inquiry approach	Learning experiences	What you need
<b>Topic 5: New Zealand's system of government</b>		
<p><b>Find out information</b></p> <p>What do we know about the New Zealand democratic system?</p>	<p><b>Activity 1</b></p> <p>Ask students: "What do you know about how the New Zealand democratic system works?"</p> <p>Explain the KWL chart and have students think-pair-share to fill in the K (what you <i>know</i>) and W (what you <i>want</i> to know) sections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graphic organiser: KWL chart</li> </ul>
<p><b>Find out information</b></p> <p>What is a democracy?</p>	<p><b>Activity 2</b></p> <p>As a class, brainstorm what you know about the concepts of democracy, participation, and collective action.</p> <p>Start a "wonder wall" for these concepts, including vocabulary, definitions, and examples. Add to this during the topic study.</p> <p>Have students fill in the Concept circle graphic organiser. Ask them to find out what each of the four words mean and write one or two sentences to explain how they are related.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wall space</li> <li>• Graphic organiser: Concept circle</li> </ul>
<p><b>Find out information</b></p> <p>How does our democratic system work?</p>	<p><b>Activity 3</b></p> <p>Have the students read the factsheet (or read it to them). Using the information on the factsheet and from the resource links, guide the class to create a mind map showing how New Zealand's democratic system of government works. Discuss how (and at which stage) the people influence the system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factsheet: New Zealand's democratic system of government</li> </ul>

Links to the social inquiry approach	Learning experiences	What you need
<b>Topic 6: Representatives of the people</b>		
<p><b>Find out information</b></p> <p>How are we represented in decision-making?</p>	<p><b>Activity 1</b></p> <p>Show the class the map of New Zealand electorates. Ask: “Why do you think the electorates are divided this way? Is every electorate the same?”</p> <p>Explain that the electoral names and boundaries are reviewed and changed after a census. Ask: “Why do you think this happens?” Have students locate their electorate on the map and then research who represents their electorate in Parliament. This could include list MPs as well as the electorate MP.</p> <p>Explain that Māori have the choice of two electoral rolls. They make a choice after each census.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map of New Zealand divided into electorates, available at <a href="http://www.elections.org.nz/voters/find-my-electorate">http://www.elections.org.nz/voters/find-my-electorate</a></li> <li>• Information about how electorates work, available at <a href="http://www.elections.org.nz/voting-system/electorates">http://www.elections.org.nz/voting-system/electorates</a> (optional)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Find out information</b></p> <p>Who can vote?</p>	<p><b>Activity 2</b></p> <p>Ask the class: “Who can vote? What are the criteria for enrolment?”</p> <p>In groups, have students investigate and record their findings on the retrieval chart. A good source of information is <a href="http://www.elections.org.nz/voters/enrol-check-or-update-now/who-can-and-cant-enrol">http://www.elections.org.nz/voters/enrol-check-or-update-now/who-can-and-cant-enrol</a></p> <p>As a class, share the results of each group’s investigations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graphic organiser: Retrieval chart – who can vote</li> </ul>

Links to the social inquiry approach	Learning experiences	What you need
<b>Topic 7: Going to Wellington (after the election)</b>		
<p><b>Find out information</b></p> <p>Where are the decisions made?</p>	<p><b>Activity 1</b></p> <p>Have students work in groups or as a class to investigate how Parliament works. Ask: “How are decisions made? What do parliamentarians do? What decisions are made?”</p> <p>To investigate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have students visit the websites for more information on the role of Members of Parliament</li> <li>• have students take a virtual tour of Parliament or watch Parliamentary TV.</li> </ul> <p>If possible, organise a class visit to Parliament or to the Visitor Centre at Government House to find out more.</p> <p>As a class, revisit the democratic system mind map from Topic 5, Activity 3. Ask: “Can we add to this? For example, who makes the constitutional and law decisions?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to the websites listed in the resource links</li> <li>• Democratic system of government mind map</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Activity 2</b></p> <p>Ask students why they think people hold different values and viewpoints. Introduce the idea of the survey.</p> <p>Have students survey their family, whānau, and community (without names) and record the answers given to the survey questions.</p> <p>As a class, use a visual representation to summarise the collated results (for example, a graph or table).</p> <p>Discuss the responses. Ask: “What information did people use (such as the media or their own experiences) that influenced their viewpoint? Do the responses give a fair representation of views? How could you get a wider range of viewpoints?”</p> <p>Discuss other ways surveys are carried out, for example, by telephone, online, and by street surveys.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graphic organiser: Explaining viewpoints survey</li> </ul>

Links to the social inquiry approach	Learning experiences	What you need
<b>Topic 8: Taking action</b>		
<p><b>Find out information</b></p> <p>How can people have their voices heard?</p>	<p><b>Activity 1</b></p> <p>Explain that people can have more influence on what happens if they act together rather than alone, and that groups are able to share opinions and solve problems.</p> <p>Have the class brainstorm the types of activities that people can do to have their voices heard (such as: petitions, protests, referenda, letters to the editor, action groups/pressure groups). Record their ideas on the board. Explain that actions should not be irresponsible or aggressive.</p>	
<p><b>Find out information</b></p> <p>How can people have their voices heard?</p>	<p><b>Activity 2</b></p> <p>Divide the class into four groups to investigate one of the following group actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1975 Māori land march</li> <li>• 1978 Bastion Point protest</li> <li>• 1981 Springbok rugby tour protests</li> <li>• 2004 Foreshore and seabed hīkoi.</li> </ul> <p>Ask: “What was the issue? What action did the pressure/protest group take? What was the outcome of the action/protest?”</p> <p>Have each group create an oral or visual presentation for the class. This could be in the format of a cartoon, graphic novel, role play, or a radio or television news report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet access</li> </ul>

Links to the social inquiry approach	Learning experiences	What you need
<b>Topic 9: Referenda</b>		
<p><b>Find out information</b></p> <p>How else can we have a say?</p>	<p><b>Activity 1</b></p> <p>Say: "In democracy today, a petition is still the mechanism that voters can use to force an issue into Parliament. A petition can result in a Citizens Initiated Referendum, where voters can have their say on an issue that affects their community. A Citizens Initiated Referendum gives everyone who is enrolled the opportunity to vote on a specific question. A referendum is held when at least 10 percent of the people enrolled to vote sign a petition calling for one. The results of Citizen Initiated Referenda indicate the views held by voters on specific questions and are not binding on the Government."</p> <p>Have students use the factsheet and online sites to investigate the referenda process and recent New Zealand Citizens Initiated Referenda and Government Initiated Referenda. Have students record their findings as a flow chart.</p> <p>Bring the class together and share their flow charts. Ask: "If the outcome of the referendum is not binding, have peoples' voices been heard? Why/why not?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factsheet: Referenda</li> <li>• Access to the following websites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="http://www.elections.org.nz/voting-system/referenda">http://www.elections.org.nz/voting-system/referenda</a></li> <li><a href="http://www.justice.govt.nz/publications/publications-archived/2001/the-citizen-initiated-referenda-act-1993/publication">http://www.justice.govt.nz/publications/publications-archived/2001/the-citizen-initiated-referenda-act-1993/publication</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Links to the social inquiry approach	Learning experiences	What you need
<b>Topic 10: Being part of decision-making</b>		
	<p><b>Activity 1</b></p> <p>Explain that the Christchurch earthquake has given Christchurch children the opportunity to be involved in decision-making. Share the article, videos, and the outcome of the competition with the class. Discuss why it was important for children to be involved in the design of the playground.</p> <p>Have students search the Internet for other examples around New Zealand of what other students have done (for example: approaching their councils to get new playgrounds, road crossings, better libraries, skateboard parks, and so on). Ask: "Can you suggest a project in the community that the class could be involved in?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Education Gazette</i> article "The Amazing Place", available at <a href="http://www.edgazette.govt.nz/Articles/Article.aspx?ArticleId=8727">www.edgazette.govt.nz/Articles/Article.aspx?ArticleId=8727</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>So what? Now what?</b></p> <p>How can we have our voices heard?</p>	<p><b>Activity 2</b></p> <p>Read the factsheet (You can still have your say if you're not 18) with the class. Discuss ways that students could comment on, and be part of, classroom and school decision-making (such as: group consultation, student council, comments box, discussion board, forum on the school website). Discuss which would be best, and implement it for a trial period.</p> <p><b>Activity 3</b></p> <p>As a class, brainstorm ways that students could have their say on decision-making in the community. Introduce the concept of letters to the editor and have students read your examples. As a class, survey the students and their families to find out how they feel about this issue (you could use an online survey tool such as Survey Monkey). Collate the responses and write group letters or a class letter to the editor in response to the issue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factsheet: You can still have your say if you're not 18</li> <li>• Letters to the editor (printed or online access) on a local or national issue</li> </ul>

Links to the social inquiry approach	Learning experiences	What you need
<b>Topic 10 cont.: Being part of decision-making</b>		
<p><b>So what? Now what?</b></p> <p>How can I have my voice heard?</p>	<p><b>Activity 4</b></p> <p>Facilitate a class discussion about what would happen if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there was a change to the voting system</li> <li>• people decided not to vote</li> <li>• enrolment was not compulsory</li> <li>• we no longer had elections</li> <li>• you lived in a country where you were unable to vote and could not have a say.</li> </ul> <p>Have students write an argument/report on one of these aspects justifying their opinion.</p> <p>Have students come up with practical and interesting strategies that would encourage people to cast their vote in elections (local or national). Have them create a poster or fridge magnet to encourage people to participate in the democratic voting process.</p> <p>As a class, look at effective promotional posters used in previous elections or promotions. Discuss what makes these posters effective. Have students create a promotional poster to raise awareness about a school issue, such as littering or bullying or to promote positive behaviour, being sun-smart, or wearing school sun-hats.</p> <p><b>Activity 5</b></p> <p>Have students identify a school or local community issue that they care about. Explore what individual and collective actions they could take to make change. Create an action plan to follow as a class project.</p>	

Links to the social inquiry approach	Learning experiences	What you need
<b>Topic 11: What do we now know?</b>		
<p><b>Reflecting and evaluating</b></p> <p>What have you learned?</p> <p>So what do we now know about participating in the electoral process?</p>	<p><b>Activity 1</b></p> <p>Revisit the key ideas from the graffiti wall from Topic 4, Activity 1. Ask: “With what you now know, can you change, add, or delete key ideas?” This could be done using different coloured sticky notes or a different coloured pen.</p> <p>Have students complete the L (what I have <i>learned</i>) section of the KWL chart.</p> <p><b>Reflection on learning</b></p> <p>Have students, either independently or in small groups, reflect on what they’ve learned about the importance of having a voice in decision-making. Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do people have a say in decision-making in our democratic society?</li> <li>• In what ways can you voice your opinions to decision-makers when you are not yet eligible to vote?</li> <li>• What are the possible consequences of non-participation in the election process?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of key ideas from graffiti wall (Topic 4, Activity 1)</li> <li>• KWL chart (Topic 5, Activity 1)</li> </ul>

## Resource links:

New Zealand's system of government: <http://www.elections.org.nz/voting-system/new-zealands-system-government>

Who can and can't enrol: <http://www.elections.org.nz/voters/enrol-check-or-update-now/who-can-and-cant-enrol>

Voting and electoral systems: <http://newzealand.govt.nz/>

Voting in an election (instructions): <http://www.elections.org.nz/voting>

MMP voting system (including video): <http://www.elections.org.nz/voting-system/mmp-voting-system>

How are MPs elected?: <http://www.elections.org.nz/voting-system/mmp-voting-system/how-are-mps-elected>

Registered political parties: <http://www.elections.org.nz/parties-candidates/registered-political-parties-0>

Parliament: <http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/> <http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/about-parliament/>

How Parliament works: <http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/about-parliament/how-parliament-works/>

Parliamentary television and radio: <http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/about-parliament/see-hear/ptv/>

Parliament virtual tour: <http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/about-parliament/visiting/virtual-tour/>

Parliamentary Services education resources <http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/about-parliament/education/>

New Zealand Government – participate and be involved: <http://newzealand.govt.nz>

Aotearoa Youth Voices network: <http://www.myd.govt.nz/young-people/>

Panorama of the parliamentary debating chamber: <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/interactive/debating-chamber-galleries>

Government House tours: <https://gg.govt.nz/tours>

Wellington school trips: <https://www.wellingtonnz.com/discover/>

## GRAPHIC ORGANISER A

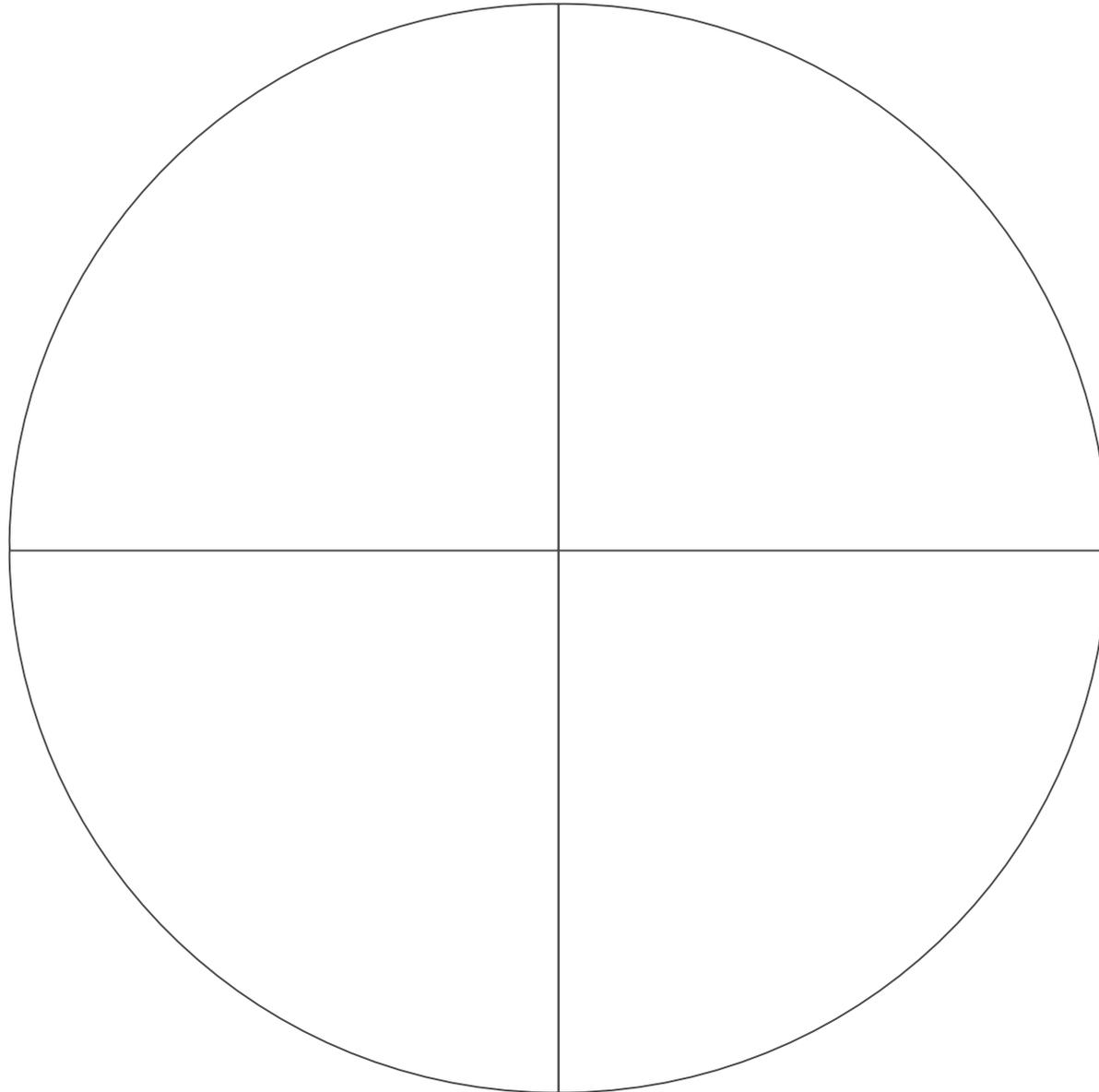
# KWL chart

What I <i>know</i> about ...	What I <i>want</i> to know about ...	What I have <i>learned</i> about ...

# Concept circle

**Decision-making**

**Participation**



**Democracy**

**Representation**

**GRAPHIC ORGANISER C****Retrieval table (who can vote)**

You can vote if you are ...	You can't vote if you are ...

# Explaining viewpoints survey

**I vote because ...**

**The issues I am most concerned about are:**

- health
- environment
- education
- transport
- other \_\_\_\_\_

**What information do you consider before you vote?**

---

**I vote because ...**

**The issues I am most concerned about are:**

- health
- environment
- education
- transport
- other \_\_\_\_\_

**What information do you consider before you vote?**

**I vote because ...**

**The issues I am most concerned about are:**

- health
- environment
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- transport
- other \_\_\_\_\_

**What information do you consider before you vote?**

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**I vote because ...**

**The issues I am most concerned about are:**

- health
- environment
- education
- transport
- other \_\_\_\_\_

**What information do you consider before you vote?**

# FACTSHEET A New Zealand's democratic system of government

New Zealand is what's called "a constitutional monarchy." This means that we have a Queen who is our Head of State. But most of the decisions that affect our country are really made by our Government and Parliament, which the people of New Zealand elect to represent them.

## Who's in charge?

### The Queen and the Governor-General

The Queen is New Zealand's Head of State, and the Governor-General is her representative in New Zealand. The Governor-General has many official roles in New Zealand, but they do not participate in the day-to-day running of the country. You can find out more about the role of the Governor-General at <http://gg.govt.nz>

### Government

After an election, the party that won the most seats in Parliament usually forms a Government. Sometimes this party will have a majority (more than half) of all the seats. They may form a Government alone, but usually they will join with one or more smaller parties to gain the majority.

The Government's job is to run the country. It does this through proposing new laws and other rules, as well as making sure everything works the way it is meant to.

### Parliament – House of Representatives and Members of Parliament

Parliament is made up of the House of Representatives and the Governor-General.

The House of Representatives ("the House") is made up of a lot of different people from different backgrounds. These people are called Members of Parliament, or MPs. Each MP has a seat in Parliament, and there are (usually) 120 seats.

New Zealand has a system of laws that tells us what is legal and what is illegal. These laws are created by our Parliament. A proposed new law is called a bill. Most bills come from the Government, who can propose a new one whenever it likes. But any MP can draft a bill. Members' bills are randomly selected out of a ballot. If the bill is selected it will be considered too. The bill can change a lot before it is finalised. If more than half of MPs vote for the final bill, the Governor-General signs it and it becomes a law.

MPs have another important job. They can ask the Government questions about its decisions and to highlight things they think it could be doing better.

You can read more about New Zealand's system of government at <http://www.elections.org.nz/voting-system/new-zealands-system-government>

## How do they get to be in charge?

You put them in charge! MPs are people that are voted in by New Zealanders to represent them in Parliament.

People over the age of 18 in New Zealand can vote for the party and person they think will represent them best in Parliament. This means they work to make the country's laws and speak up for what they think people need and want.

If you voted for the party or person who then became the Government, your views get represented there too.

You can read more about who can vote at <http://www.elections.org.nz/voters/enrol-check-or-update-now/who-can-and-cant-enrol>

### Mixed Member Proportional – MMP

MMP is the current system of voting that New Zealand uses for elections to Parliament.

Each voter gets two votes – one for the party they want and one for the candidate to represent their electorate. MMP is a proportional system, which means that the proportion of votes a party gets will largely reflect the number of seats it has in Parliament. For example, if a party gets 25% of the votes, they should get 25% of the seats. This is what makes a proportional system.

You can read more about the MMP system and how voting works at <http://www.elections.org.nz/voting-system/mmp-voting-system>

There are also specific Māori seats in the New Zealand Parliament. You can read more about these here: <http://www.elections.org.nz/m%C4%81ori-and-vote/m%C4%81ori-seats-under-mmp>

## Political parties

A political party is a group of people who believe similar things about how the country should be run. If enough people vote for them or one of their members, they get seats in the House.

Political parties represented in Parliament usually vote together on issues so their votes have more influence on the result.

MPs can either be part of a party or independent.

You can read more about historical and current political parties at <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/political-parties>

## How are laws made?

A bill is a proposal for a new law. MPs introduce bills to Parliament. Once the bill is “introduced” into Parliament MPs discuss the different issues around it. A bill must pass through several stages of being looked at and discussed as it goes through a three-stage voting process. It may change a lot through this process as the MPs work on making it better. If the bill is approved by Parliament (which means the majority of MPs agreed it should be passed) it receives Royal assent before becoming an Act of Parliament and passing into law.

## Government bills

The Government has more ability to put bills through Parliament than other MPs. The Government usually introduces bills supporting their policies. Government policies can range from issues like how much money should go into education, to how we should keep our fisheries sustainable. The Minister responsible for the area introduces the bill to Parliament. For example, the Minister of Education would introduce a bill about education.

The Government is also in charge of the Ministries, which support the day-to-day running of the country.

## Members’ bills

MPs who are not Ministers can also put bills before the Parliament. Members’ bills are put forward less often than Government bills (every second Wednesday during Parliament), but are still an important part of the New Zealand government system. However, because Parliament doesn’t have time to consider every bill, a ballot system is used to decide which members’ bill will be presented next.

## Select committees

Select committees are set up after each general election. One of their roles is taking part in the development process of a bill. After the first vote, if the majority of MPs agree the bill could be a good thing, the bill goes to a select committee. This is a smaller group of MPs from different parties that debate the bill in more detail. This is also the chance for the public to have their say about the bill. Anyone can make a submission to a select committee to give their opinion on a bill. This makes sure that a variety of points of view are heard and that laws are effective and representative. For example, for the Marriage Equality Bill in 2012, many thousands of New Zealanders gave their opinion through the select committee, before it was passed into law in 2013.

You can read more about bills and how Parliament works at:

<https://www.parliament.nz/en/visit-and-learn/how-parliament-works/>

<http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/about-parliament/education>

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/parliament>

## FACTSHEET B Referenda

In New Zealand, we usually rely on our Members of Parliament (MPs) to represent us in Parliament, consult with their communities, and decide what is best for the country. But sometimes, the government or a group of people want to know what the whole country thinks about a particular issue. So they ask them!

### What is a referendum?

A referendum is a way for the people of New Zealand to have a say on one specific issue. It tells Parliament what the people think about a particular issue, policy, or law.

**Referendum** is a Latin word: We have one referendum, but two referenda.

### What do they do?

There are two types of referendum: binding and non-binding. Binding means that the Government has to follow what the people say and the referendum vote decides whether the policy becomes law or not.

Non-binding means that the referendum is useful for the Government to consider when deciding about the policy, but the decision is made by Parliament.

### Who can start a referendum?

The Government can decide to have a referendum when they choose. This is called a Government Initiated Referendum (GIR). They may decide to do this if they think the policy is controversial, or that many people feel very strongly one way or another about it. This information can help them make the best decision, or help MPs decide which way to vote on a bill.

A referendum can also be started by an ordinary citizen, if there are enough people who support having it. If you think that the Government is not listening to the people about a particular issue, you can propose a referendum. This is called a Citizens' Initiated Referendum (CIR). To get the referendum through, you design a petition. A petition is a piece of paper that people sign to say that they also want to have a referendum on the issue. Ten percent of the people who are enrolled to vote must sign your petition before a referendum will be held.

### How do they work?

Referenda are a nationwide vote. Everyone who is enrolled can vote in a referendum. Groups, individuals, or political parties may also put out information about the issue, trying to convince people to vote one way or another, but there are strict limits on how much money anyone is allowed to spend on advertising. That stops individuals or groups with plenty of money using lots of advertising to convince people of their own opinion.

For most referenda, voting forms are posted to each registered voter. As a voter, you can take your time to consider the information given and do your own research. When you've made your decision, you tick the box saying whether you agree or disagree with the question, and send the form back before the voting deadline.

All the votes received are then counted, and the results are presented to the public and to Parliament.

## What are they about?

Referenda can be about any issue of concern. Most of the referenda in New Zealand have been about alcohol laws and voting systems. The last Government Initiated Referendum in New Zealand was held in 2011 and asked voters two questions:

- The first question asked: *Should New Zealand keep the **Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)** voting system?*
- The second question asked: *If New Zealand were to change to another voting system, which voting system would you choose?*

The four alternative voting systems voters chose from were:

- **First Past the Post (FPP)**
- **Preferential Voting (PV)**
- **Single Transferable Vote (STV)**
- **Supplementary Member (SM)**

The last Citizens Initiated Referendum in New Zealand was held in 2013 and asked voters:

- *Do you support the Government selling up to 49% of Meridian Energy, Mighty River Power, Genesis Power, Solid Energy and Air New Zealand?*

You can read more about referenda in New Zealand at:

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/referendums>

<http://www.elections.org.nz/voting-system/referenda>

<https://www.parliament.nz/en/get-involved/have-your-say/seek-a-referendum/>



## FACTSHEET C You can still have your say if you're not 18

Even if you are under 18 and can't vote yet, it doesn't mean you can't have your say. There are lots of other ways of letting community leaders and policy makers know what you think about issues that concern you.

As New Zealand citizens, it's our job to help build the kind of society we want to live in. If we don't like the way something works, we should try to change it.

Rather than moaning about things you don't like, be constructive, get active, and start working to get some changes made.

### Get in touch

Contact your electorate MP and let him or her know what issues are important to you. You can ring, fax, email, write a letter, or even go to see them in person. It's their job to find out what the big issues are for the people in their electorate.

Find out the contact details for your electorate MP and for the list MPs who work in your area. This website will help: <https://www.parliament.nz/en/mps-and-electorates/>

### Write

You can write to an MP at:

**Parliament Buildings  
Wellington**

(You don't even need a stamp.)

If something concerns you, why not write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper? It's a good way to get other people thinking about issues.

### Team up

You've probably seen protests on television or in the newspaper, or you may even have been part of one. Protesters are people who feel strongly about an issue and want to raise awareness of it by having a march or demonstration.

Sometimes people who feel strongly about an issue will form a pressure group. Such groups will usually focus on a single issue and pressure decision-makers to make certain choices about it.

Choose a pressure group and find out about it. What issue or issues are its members concerned about? What action have they taken? Do you agree with what they are doing?

### Some interest groups you may like to check out:

Amnesty International – [www.amnesty.org.nz](http://www.amnesty.org.nz)

Federated Farmers – [www.fedfarm.org.nz](http://www.fedfarm.org.nz)

Greenpeace – [www.greenpeace.org/new-zealand/en](http://www.greenpeace.org/new-zealand/en)

Grey Power – [www.greypower.co.nz](http://www.greypower.co.nz)

New Zealand Council of Trade Unions – [www.union.org.nz](http://www.union.org.nz)

Forest and Bird – [www.forest-bird.org.nz](http://www.forest-bird.org.nz)

Sensible Sentencing Trust – [www.sst.org.nz](http://www.sst.org.nz)

## Sign a petition

Signing a petition is an easy way of being active. It can be very effective. If enough people sign a petition approved by the Clerk of the House of Representatives, a [Citizens' Initiated Referendum](#) can be held where everyone gets the chance to vote on the issue.

## Go to a meeting

Sometimes forums and meetings are held where people discuss particular issues that they are concerned about. Your city might have a youth council where young people discuss issues that affect people their age.

## Debate the issues

People don't always agree on everything. This is what makes our society interesting. Think how boring it would be if we all thought the same. Your viewpoint on an issue will differ depending on who you are and what's important to you. If you don't agree with what's going on, it's up to you to make your voice heard. Nobody will know your view unless you make it known.

## Work out your own ideas

Open your eyes to what is going on around you. What are the big issues in our society?

Find out what other people think about the issues. Then ask yourself "What do I think? Where do I stand? What kind of world do I want to live in?"

Talk over your ideas with your friends and family. If they disagree with you, don't be afraid to start a friendly debate. It's a good way of developing your ideas even further.

No one can tell you what to think. It's something that you need to work out for yourself.

