

### 3. Understanding of MMP

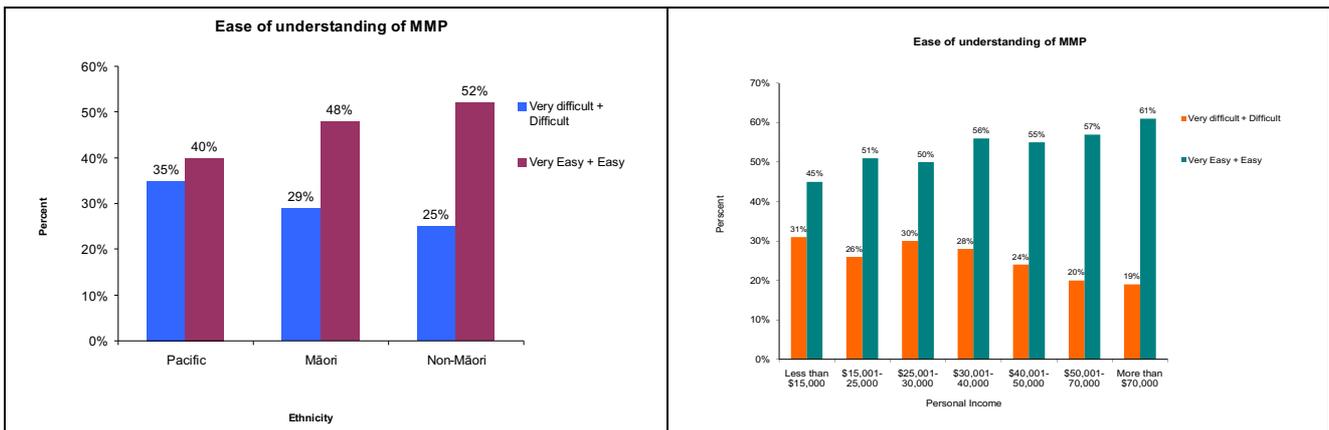
#### 3.1 Perceived ease of understanding MMP

After dipping markedly in the 2005 post-election survey, declared understanding of MMP recovered to similar levels to those seen in the pre-election survey in 2005. 51% of New Zealanders now consider MMP to be easy to understand (19% very easy), while 26% say that it is difficult (6% very difficult).

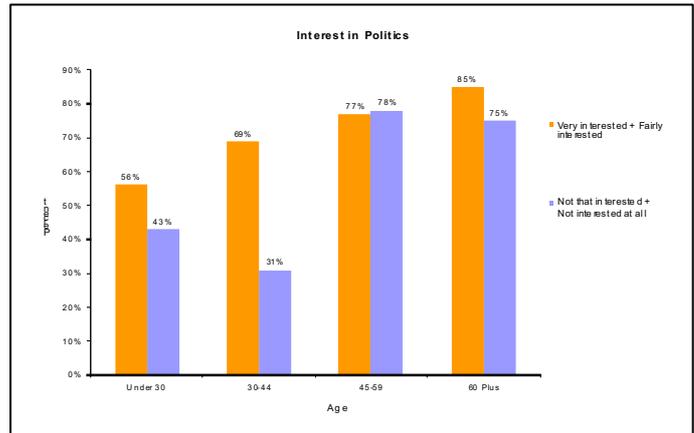
The movement after the 2005 election was largely from positive to neutral and negative positions, and this trend has been reversed in 2007. The proportion of people describing MMP as ‘neither easy nor difficult to understand’ dropped 9% to 21%, and the proportion saying that that it was difficult to understand fell by 8%. The shift in 2005 was almost certainly a reaction to circumstances in the 2005 election, such as when no clear government emerging straightaway and the impact of electorate contests in Epsom and other seats. The recovery in 2007 suggests that the impact of this confusion is wearing off.

The demographics for this question show solid trends.

- Declared understanding of MMP is reasonably strongly related to personal income, with 61% of those with personal incomes over \$70,000 saying that MMP was easy to understand, compared with 45% of those with personal incomes of \$15,000 or less.
- The clearest trend is for ethnicity. 6% of all respondents declare that they find MMP very difficult to understand, but amongst Pacific Peoples this rises to 22%. 40% of Pacific People find MMP easy to understand, compared with 52% of European New Zealanders and 48% of Māori.



- Age is not an important divide for this question. Interest in politics is a key differentiator, with 57% of those who were interested in politics finding MMP easy to understand compared with 36% of those who were not interested.



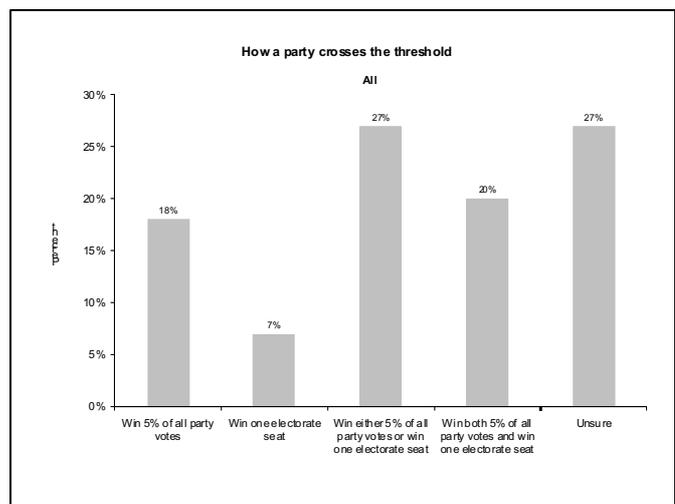
### 3.2 Understanding of key elements of MMP

In addition to declared understanding, we tested New Zealanders' actual understanding of MMP with two questions. The first involved asking them whether the party vote or electorate vote was more important, while the second asked respondents to choose the elements of the MMP threshold.

65% of New Zealanders correctly state that the party vote is more important in deciding the number of MPs each party will have in parliament. This represents a 10% improvement since the post-election survey from 2005, but is similar to that recorded in the 2005 pre-election survey, when 62% chose the party vote as the more important. The 2005 post-election result was however fairly low in historical terms (although equal to what was recorded in the last mid-term survey in October 2003), perhaps reflecting the fact that for two parties in 2005 (Māori Party and Progressives) the number of seats they gained in parliament was actually determined by the number of electorates they won (United Future and ACT also gained seats in parliament only because they won an electorate seat, but unlike the other two parties their party vote gave them more seats in parliament).

In terms of the MMP threshold, just a quarter of New Zealanders (27%) correctly identify the qualifying criteria as being winning either 5 percent of the party vote or an electorate seat. This question has been changed substantially from that asked in 2005, which in itself was a new question, meaning that we do not have robust trendlines for this question. Of those who choose incorrect answers:

- 18% say that a party has to win 5% of the party vote without mentioning electorate criteria.
- 7% say that a party has to win an electorate seat but do not mention the party vote
- 20% say that a party has to win both 5% of the party vote and an electorate seat.

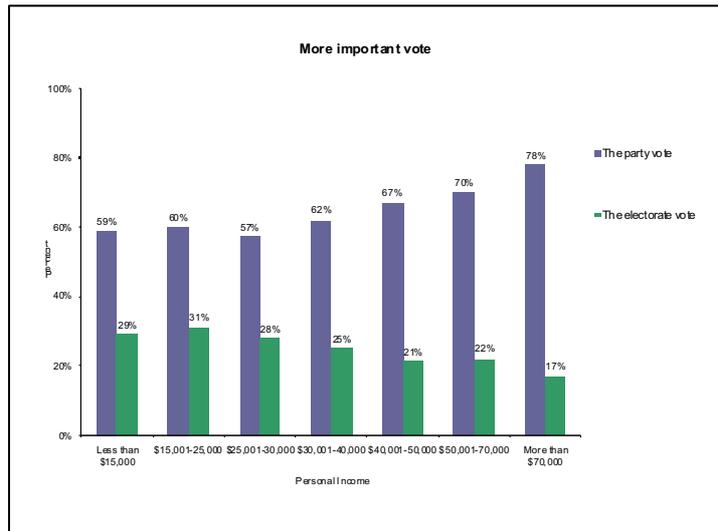


A further 27% of our sample was unable to choose one of these options. While again we should be cautious with comparing the results with those from previous questions as the wording

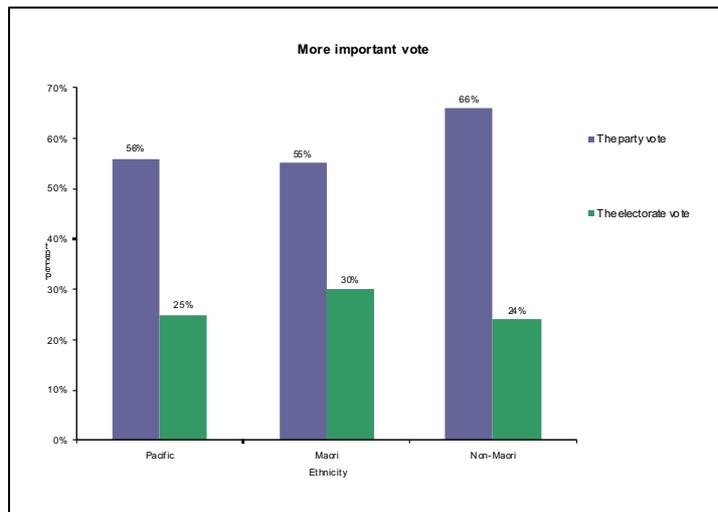
has changed, the proportion unable to express an opinion on this question has remained similar to that recorded in 2005 but has dropped markedly since the last mid-term survey in October 2003 (when 57% were unable to express an opinion)

As with declared understanding of MMP, knowledge of key elements of MMP is strongly related to personal income, although the increase predominantly occurs once income categories rise beyond \$30,000. Ethnicity and age are also relevant factors.

- 59% of those with personal incomes less than \$15,000 say that the party vote is more important, as do 57% of those with personal incomes of \$25-\$30,000. The proportion choosing the correct answer rises to 67% for those with incomes of \$40-\$50,000, and 78% for those with personal incomes higher than \$70,000.
- Similarly, 22% of those with personal incomes of \$25-\$30,000 choose the right option for the MMP threshold, compared with 44% of those on over \$70,000.



- Knowledge of the primacy of the party vote is lower amongst Pacific Peoples (56%) and Māori (55%) than amongst Europeans (66%), although the fact that the Māori Party won representation because of its performance in the electorates rather than because of its party vote may have affected the response for Māori. 37% of Pacific People incorrectly state that a party must win both 5% of the party votes and one electorate seat, compared with 31% of Māori and 19% of Europeans.



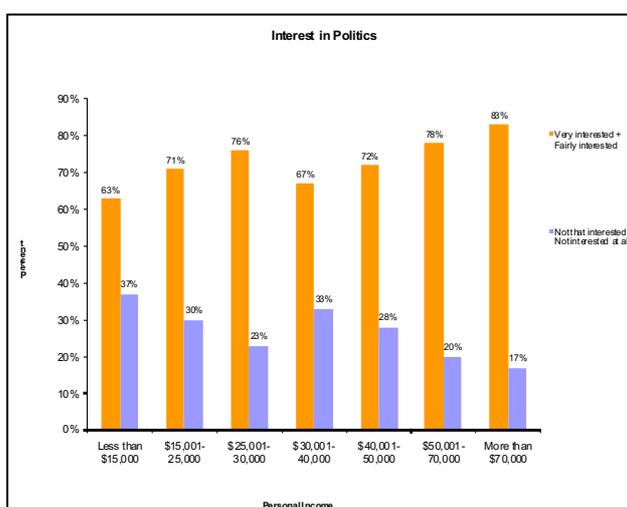
- 24% of over 60s say that the party vote is the only criteria for seat allocation, compared with 11% of under 30s. On the other hand, 64% of over 60s say that the party vote is more important, compared with 60% of under 30s.

- If we combine the 'half-right' option of mentioning the 5% threshold as the criteria for seat allocation with the number who choose the correct 'either / or' option, ethnicity, income and age remain important demographic differences. There are only small variations between demographic groups in terms of how many choose ANY option on the threshold question, and variations between the demographic groups are caused mainly by differences in the number choosing the wrong option rather than by differences in the number admitting that they do not know enough to comment.

### 3.3 Interest in issues

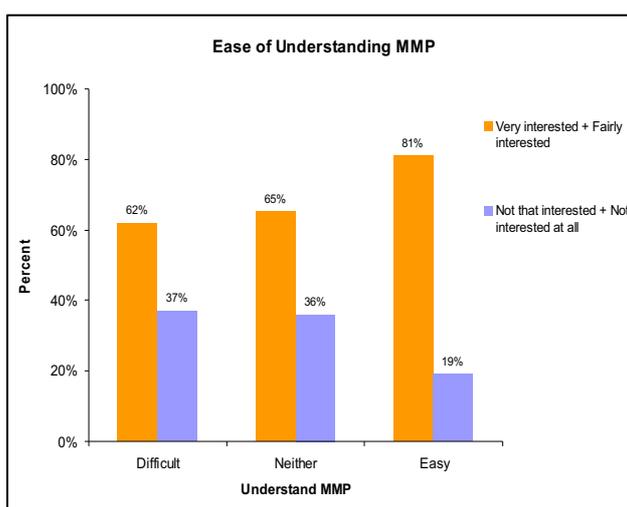
72% of New Zealanders claim to be interested in politics, with 16% being very interested.

- Income and age again emerge as important factors, with over 60s (85%) and those earning more than \$70,000 (83%) particularly likely to say that they are interested, while under 30s (56%) and those with personal incomes under \$15,000 (63%) less likely to declare an interest. The age trend is even clearer when the age categories are broken down further, with 89% of over 75 year olds saying that they are interested in politics compared with 40% of 18 and 19 year olds.



62% of those who say that MMP is difficult to understand say that they are interested in politics, compared with 81% of those who think it is easy to understand.

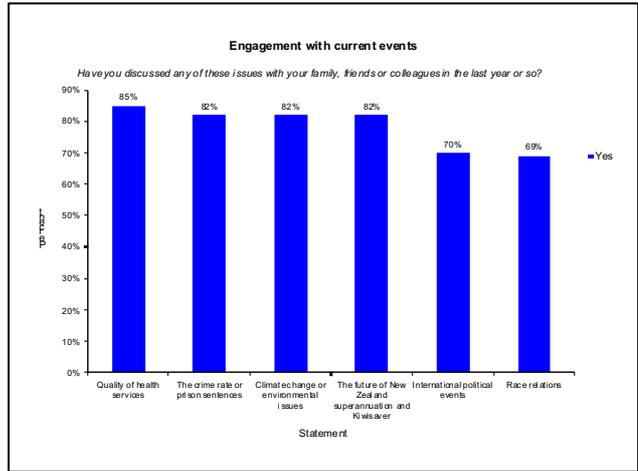
- Although Pacific Peoples are more likely to say that MMP is difficult to understand, they are almost as likely to say that they are interested in politics (70%). Māori are a little more likely than Europeans to say that they find MMP difficult to understand, but are as likely to say that they are interested in politics.



As well as directly asking New Zealanders about their interest in politics, we also asked them whether or not they have discussed issues potentially related to politics with their family or friends over the last year. Propensity to talk about these issues is related to interest in politics, although almost all those who say that they are not interested in politics claim to have discussed at least one of a range of specified issues

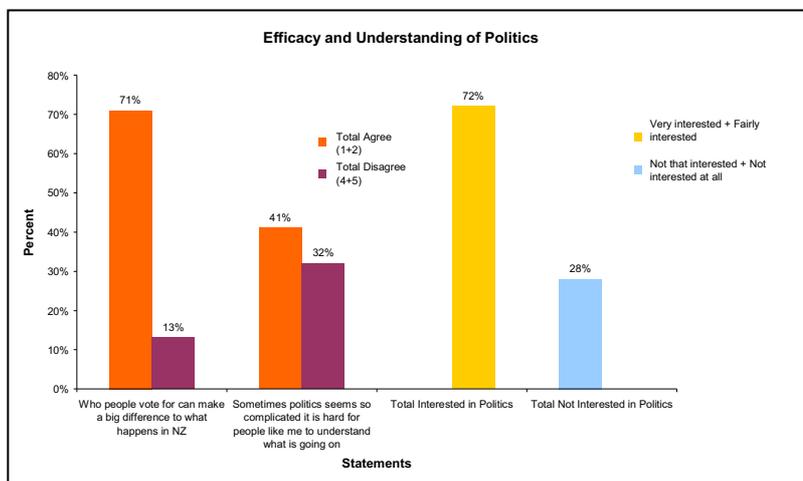
potentially related to politics over the last year. 99% of respondents said that they had discussed at least one of the six topics we tested (health services, crime, environmental issues, superannuation, race relations and international political events), while 36% claimed that they had discussed them all.

- 85% of all New Zealanders say that they have discussed the quality of health services, including 74% of those who are not interested in politics.
- 82% say that they have discussed the crime rate or prison sentences, while the same proportion say that they have discussed climate change or environmental issues, or the future of New Zealand superannuation and Kiwisaver. Amongst those who are not interested in politics, 77% claim to have talked about the crime rate, 72% say that they have discussed climate change or the environment, and 74% claim to have discussed superannuation.
- 69% of New Zealanders say that they have talked about race relations, although we know from other research that this can become just as much of a ‘hot topic’ as the other issues when new developments occur (such as the High Court decision on the foreshore and seabed in 2003). 55% of those who are not interested in politics nevertheless say that they have discussed race relations.
- Age is an important differentiating factor on these questions, with the key divide being those aged under 30 years and those aged older than this. Although under 30s are consistently less likely to say that they have discussed the issues we tested, solid majorities said that they had discussed superannuation / Kiwisaver (80%), climate change / the environment (77%), the crime rate (76%), health services (75%) and / or race relations (64%).



### 3.4 Perceived Impact and understanding of politics

Most New Zealanders agree with the basic impact statement, ‘who people vote for can make a big difference to what happens in New Zealand’. Using a 5 point scale where 1 means strongly agree, 48% give this statement a ‘1’ and 23% give it a ‘2’. Only 6% choose a ‘5’ (strongly disagree).



- Although interest in politics and understanding of MMP increases in line with personal income, perceived efficacy actually decreases. 53% of those with personal incomes below \$15,000 strongly agree with this statement, compared with 40% of those with personal incomes above \$70,000.
- There is also a gender divide, with 51% of women strongly agreeing with this statement compared with 44% of men.
- Interest in politics is not surprisingly related to perceived efficacy, although 39% of those who say that they are not interested in politics still strongly agree that who people vote for can make a big difference.

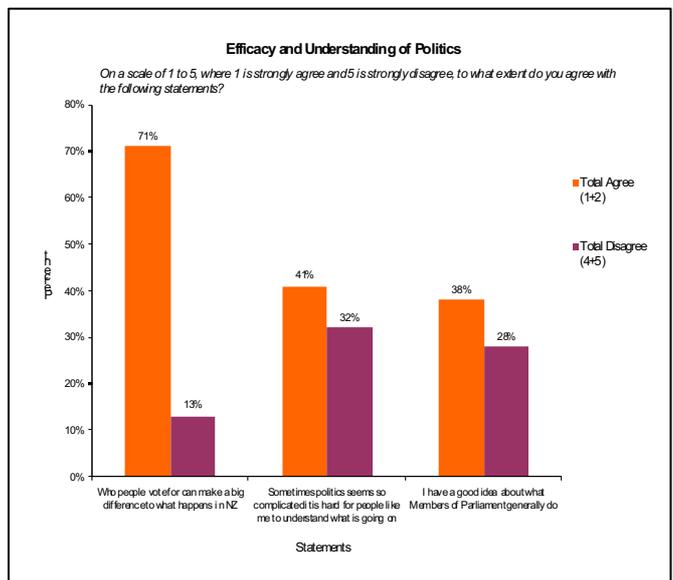
While numbers for efficacy are reasonably strong, there is again reasonable evidence of confusion about the way politics works. Using the same 5 point scale where 1 means strongly agree:

- 41% agree that 'sometimes politics seems so complicated it is hard for people like me to understand what is going on' ('1' or '2' out of 5), including 21% who strongly agree. Agreement with this statement has increased since the pre-election study in 2005, when 33% gave it a '1' or a '2'. 29% of those with personal incomes below \$15,000 strongly agree with this statement as do 29% of Pacific Peoples. This compares with 20% of Europeans and 9% of those with personal incomes over \$70,000. 31% of those who say that they are not interested in politics strongly agree with this statement.

### 3.5 Perceptions of list and electorate MPs

Just 38% of New Zealanders agree with the statement, 'I have a good idea about what Members of Parliament do', including 16% who strongly agree. Perceived understanding is clearly related to age, with 24% of over 60s strongly agreeing with this statement compared with 7% of under 30s.

Using the same 5 point scale where 1 means strongly agree, we asked New Zealanders to respond to statements related to the perceived roles of list and electorate MPs. These show some cynicism about the role of list MPs, although opinions were fairly evenly spread from positive to negative.



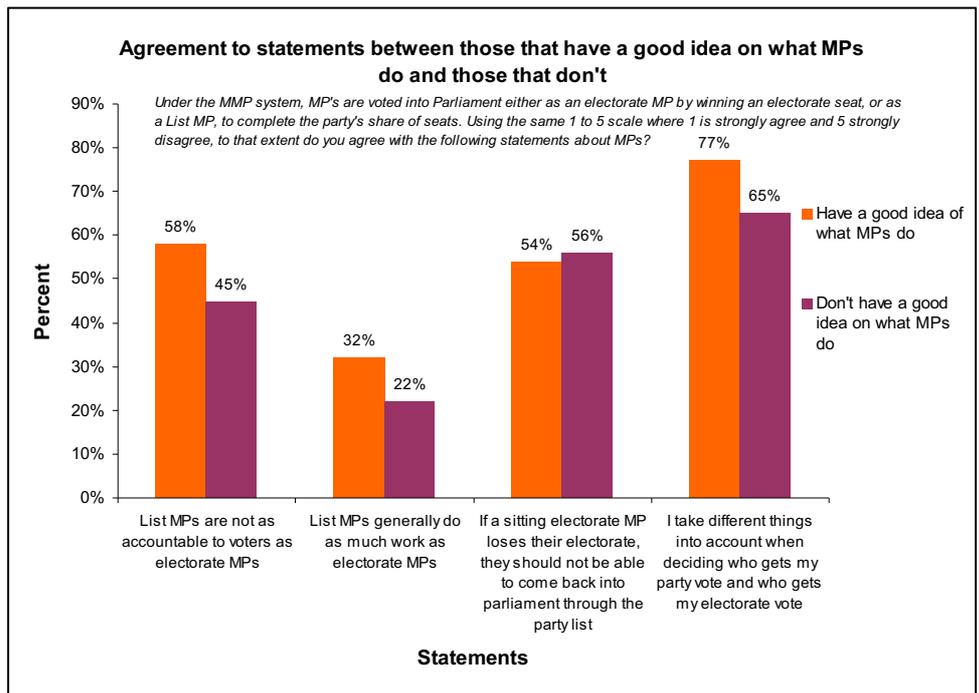
- 50% of New Zealanders strongly agree with the statement 'list MPs are not as accountable to voters as electorate MPs' ('1' or '2' out of 5) while 22% disagree. This represents a substantial drop since we last asked this question in November 2000, when 61% agreed that list MPs were not as accountable.

- On the other hand, only 27% disagree with the statement 'list MPs generally do as much work as electorate MPs' ('4' or '5' out of 5), the same as the proportion who agree with it. 46% choose either the neutral position ('3' out of 5) or say that they are unsure.
- 53% of New Zealanders agree with the suggestion that 'if a sitting electorate MP loses their electorate, they should not be able to come back into parliament through the party list', including 39% who strongly agree. 52% of those aged 60 or over strongly agree with this statement compared with 21% of under 30s, although this difference is largely due to higher proportions of under 30s choosing neutral positions. 47% of those who think that MMP is difficult to understand strongly agree with this statement.
- 71% of New Zealanders claim that they take different things into account when deciding who gets their party and electorate votes, including 48% who strongly agree with this statement. 57% of Pacific People and 57% of Māori strongly agree with this statement.

At the same time, we know that only 27% of voters actually split their votes. This suggests that many more people consider splitting their vote than actually do. The logical conclusion from this is that while many people do take different things into account when deciding who gets their party and electorate votes, these different considerations lead them to the same conclusion at present. The numbers do however suggest that there is much more potential for vote splitting than occurs at present.

Amongst those who feel that they have a good idea about what MPs do:

- 58% say that list MPs are not as accountable
- 32% say list MPs generally do as much work
- 77% claim to take different things into account for their party and electorate votes.



## 3.6 Non-voters

- As in the 2006 Māori Electoral Participation research we conducted for the Electoral Commission, we defined non-voters for this study as being those aged 20 or older who said that they did not vote in 2005. 18-19 year olds were excluded on the grounds that in most cases they would not have been age-eligible to vote at the time of that election (the minimum age someone who was 18 at the 2005 election would have been when the fieldwork was conducted was 19 years 10 months).
- Indications that non-voters are not disillusioned with the system include:
  - only 33% of them complain that list MP's are not accountable, compared with 53% of voters.
  - 69% of them believe that who people vote for can make a difference, while the equivalent figure amongst voters was 70%.
- The numbers suggest that non-voters are not so much disillusioned with the political system as uninterested in it and disconnected from it. Their levels of knowledge are low:
  - 33% say that they find MMP easy to understand, compared with 55% of voters. The difference here, however, is largely in the number saying that they are neutral rather than saying that they find it difficult to understand (31% of non-voters say it is difficult to understand compared with 25% of voters)
  - 53% say that they are interested in politics (7% very interested), compared with 75% of voters (17% very interested)
- In line with the fact that non-voters are less likely to say that MMP is easy to understand:
  - only 46% choose the party vote as more important (67% amongst voters)
  - 50% of them say politics is complicated (40% amongst voters)

## EASE OF UNDERSTANDING MMP

*Thinking about the MMP system we use for voting in general elections. How easy do you think it is for people like you to understand MMP?*

	Pre-election 05* %	Post-election 05** %	Jun / Jul 07 %
Very easy	22	13	19
Easy	32	22	32
<b>TOTAL EASY</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>51</b>
Neither difficult nor easy	18	30	21
Difficult	18	18	20
Very difficult	7	16	6
<b>TOTAL DIFFICULT</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>26</b>
Unsure	3	3	2

Base: All, n=3000

\* Results sourced from a TNS telephone interview pre-election survey of 900 New Zealanders aged 18 and over, conducted from 30 May to 10 June 2005.

\*\* Results sourced from a TNS telephone interview pre-election survey of 1004 New Zealanders aged 18 and over, conducted from 18 to 30 September 2005.

### MORE IMPORTANT VOTE (trendline)

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

	Nov 95 %	Pre-elect-ion 96 %	Post-elect-ion 96 %	Oct 97 %	Oct 98 %	Pre-elect-ion 99 %	Post-elect-ion 99 %	Oct/Dec 00 %	Oct/Nov 01 %	Pre-elect-ion 02 %	Post-elect-ion 02 %	Oct-03 %	Pre-elect-ion 05 %	Post-elect-ion 05 %	Jun / Jul 07 %
The party vote	31	70	77	55	47	58	70	58	49	55	79	50	62	55	65
The electorate vote	23	18	14	21	18	14	17	15	17	19	13	15	25	7	25
Both	-	-	-	-	-	6	5	6	9	5	2	7	6	32	3
Unsure	46	38	9	22	35	23	8	21	25	22	6	28	7	7	8

Base: All, n=3000

\*Note: Surveys prior to 2005 used a slightly different question, "Just judging from what you know and have heard, which of those votes is more important in deciding the number of MPs each party will have in Parliament?", and there have been some 'tweaks' over the preceding years. Some of the changes may be due to the change in question which means people no longer have to remember the name of the vote.

### HOW A PARTY CROSSES THE THRESHOLD

*Party Votes are used to allocate seats in Parliament for all parties which cross the threshold. Which ONE of the following does a party have to achieve in order to cross the threshold?*

	JUN/JUL 07 %
Win 5 percent of all party votes	18
Win one electorate seat	7
Win either 5 percent of all party votes or win one electorate seat	27
Win both 5 percent of all party votes and win one electorate seat	20
Unsure	27
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>
Base: All, n=3000	

## INTEREST IN POLITICS

*How interested would you say you are in politics?*

	JUN/JUL 07 %
Very interested	16
Fairly interested	56
<b>TOTAL INTERESTED</b>	<b>72</b>
Not that interested	21
Not interested at all	7
<b>TOTAL NOT INTERESTED</b>	<b>28</b>
Unsure	-

Base: All, n=3000

## STATEMENT TESTING

*On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?*

	JUN/JUL 07 %							TOTAL DISAGREE (4+5)	Unsure
	1 – Strongly Agree	2	3	4	5 – Strongly Disagree	TOTAL AGREE (1+2)			
Who people vote for can make a big difference to what happens in New Zealand	48	23	16	7	6	71	13	1	
Sometimes politics seems so complicated it is hard for people like me to understand what is going on	21	20	27	16	16	41	32	-	
I have a good idea about what Members of Parliament generally do	16	22	32	16	12	38	28	2	

Base: All, n=3000

### STATEMENT TESTING – POLITICS IS COMPLICATED (tracking)

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

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

	Pre-election 05 %	Jun / Jul 07 %
1 – Strongly agree	13	21
2	20	20
<b>TOTAL AGREE</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>41</b>
3	24	27
4	27	16
5 – Strongly disagree	16	16
<b>TOTAL DISAGREE</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>32</b>
Unsure	-	-

Base: All, n=3000

\* Results sourced from a TNS telephone interview pre-election survey of 900 New Zealanders aged 18 and over, conducted from 30 May to 10 June 2005.

## STATEMENT TESTING

*Under the MMP system, MP's are voted into Parliament either as an electorate MP by winning an electorate seat, or as a List MP, to complete the party's share of seats. Using the same 1 to 5 scale where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, to what extent do you agree with the following statements about MPs?*

	JUN/JUL 07							TOTAL DISAGREE (4+5)	Unsure
	1 - Strongly Agree	2	TOTAL AGREE (1+2)	3	4	5 - Strongly Disagree	%		
I take different things into account when deciding who gets my party vote and who gets my electorate vote	48	23	71	13	5	7	12	3	
If a sitting electorate MP loses their electorate, they should not be able to come back into parliament through the party list	39	14	53	16	14	12	26	5	
List MPs are not as accountable to voters as electorate MPs	29	21	50	19	10	12	22	10	
List MPs generally do as much work as electorate MPs	11	16	27	28	15	12	27	18	

Base: All, n=3000

### STATEMENT TESTING – LIST MPs ARE UNACCOUNTABLE (tracking)

*Under the MMP system, MP's are voted into Parliament either as an electorate MP by winning an electorate seat, or as a List MP, to complete the party's share of seats. Using the same 1 to 5 scale where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, to what extent do you agree with the following statements about MPs?*

*List MPs are not as accountable to voters as electorate MPs*

	NOV 00* %	JUN/JUL 07 %
1 – Strongly agree	35	29
2	26	21
<b>TOTAL AGREE</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>50</b>
3	18	19
4	9	10
5 – Strongly disagree	6	12
<b>TOTAL DISAGREE</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>
Unsure	6	10

Base: All, n=3000

\*Note: Results sourced from the UMR survey on attitudes to MMP conducted for the Select Committee on the Electoral System, the sample for which was 750 New Zealanders aged 18 and over, conducted from 10 to 17 November 2000.

## ENGAGEMENT WITH CURRENT EVENTS

*Have you discussed any of these issues with your family, friends or colleagues in the last year or so?*

	JUN/JUL 07 %
Quality of health services	85
The crime rate or prison sentences	82
Climate change or environmental issues	82
The future of New Zealand superannuation and Kiwisaver	82
International political events	70
Race relations	69
<b>DISCUSSED AT LEAST ONE OF THESE ISSUES</b>	<b>99%</b>

Base: All, n=3000