

Citizenship and government

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Citizenship and voting

Citizenship and immigrants

The relationship of migration to citizenship is a blurred one, with immigration often being seen primarily as a labour and employment rather than a citizenship matter. Immigration New Zealand used to be located within the Department of Labour and in 2012 moved with the labour department to the new Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). Citizenship, in contrast, is within the purview of the Department of Internal Affairs. This demarcation is absent in Australia, which has a department of immigration and citizenship.

The census itself does not gather data about ‘citizens’, the nearest categories are ‘usually resident’ and ‘New Zealand-born’. For their part, census ethnic classifications undermine, perhaps unwittingly, the common status of the New Zealand-born. There is no census ethnic category for New Zealand Chinese or New Zealand Indian, whereas there is one for New Zealand European.

The explanation for these patterns is historical. New Zealanders have always been uncertain about ‘citizenship’, because nationality was as long defined as ‘British’ – thus the same as nationality in the United Kingdom – as ‘New Zealand’; hence the preference for ‘settler’ or ‘colonist’ and later –and more formally – ‘British Subject and New Zealand Citizen’. ‘New Zealand European’ originated as a label for ‘standard non-Māori’. ‘Caucasian’ was experimented with but too many people did not understand the term; ‘European’ was criticized both by those who thought it excluded British and by nationalists. ‘Pākehā’ is used by some, but is unpopular with others. Accordingly, ‘New Zealand European’ persists despite the absence of ‘New Zealand Chinese’ etc.

More than descriptive categorization is involved; matters of civil rights and entitlement to welfare benefits are affected. The New Zealand practice is to be inclusive on the former – although there are limits on who can be an MP or hold some senior public servant positions – residents can vote, serve on juries etc. This practice is welcome. Welfare benefits are more troublesome, even leaving to one side the limits to welfare entitlements of New Zealanders in Australia. NZ Superannuation, for example, has residence (rather than citizenship) requirements and that is also welcome. But there are ‘downstream’ complexities – for example, some forms of overseas pension income are abated against New Zealand superannuation but other are not. Unless all relevant overseas governments adopted the same provisions for welfare payments as New Zealand does, there will always be difficult boundary decisions.

It seems unlikely that these questions can be resolved by investing ‘citizenship’ with greater significance. It is more a matter of using digital capacity to distinguish the different circumstances of individuals (and probably entailing a different popular attitude towards privacy).

Voter turnout

Voting is a mechanism for making governments accountable to the governed. The average turnout at the 2011 NZ general election at 74.2 percent was down on the 2008 (78.7 percent) and earlier polls and was in fact the lowest turnout since 1887.¹ But turnout in 2014 was higher, providing the third upturn in a long-term decline which started in 1987.²

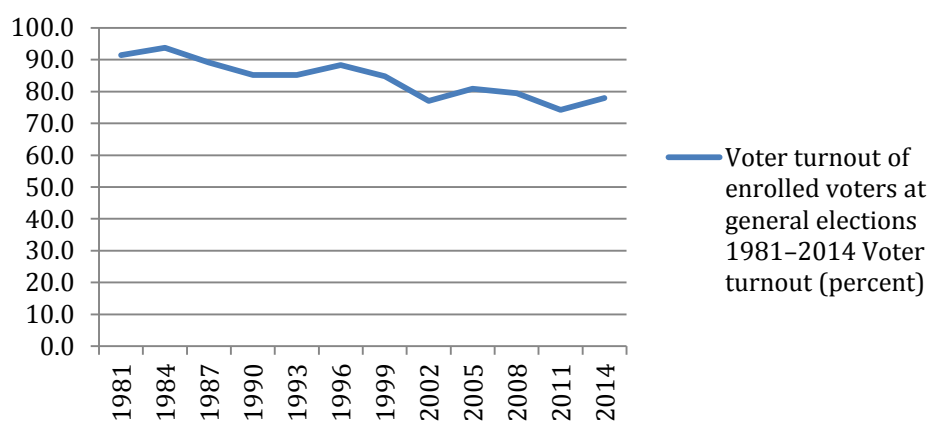


Figure 1. Voter turnout of enrolled voters at general elections 1981-2014 (percent)

Local government was substantially reformed in 1989, but for efficiency rather than accountability reasons. Voter turnout in local government elections has also declined – and also unevenly – since then. In 2013 as in 2007 (but not 2010) it was under 50 percent in region, city and district council elections.³ The average turnout in local elections in 2013, at 47 percent, was down on 2010’s 51 percent.⁴

Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) has discussed ‘strategies to enhance democracy.’⁵ The Department of Internal Affairs report, ‘Local Authority Election Statistics 2010’, identified age, ethnic diversity, proportion of migrants and council size as electorate characteristics influencing voter turnout.⁶ The electoral commission has been particularly interested in the voting behaviour of Māori, Pasifika, Asians, youth, people with disabilities, and non-voters. Many of these categories are relevant to the census results and are discussed below.

Local body election type	Election year								
	1989	1992	1995	1998	2001	2004	2007	2010	2013
	Percent								
Regional council	56	52	48	53	49	45	43	47	43
City mayor	52	48	49	51	45	43	41	46	41
City council	52	48	49	51	45	43	41	46	39
District mayor	67	62	59	59	56	52	49	50	41
District council	65	61	59	61	57	51	49	50	48

Table 1. Voter turnout in local body elections

Voting and representation

Youth

Enrolment percentages are significantly lower (under 80 percent) for those under 30, a population which accounts for 20 percent of the electorate. Parliament’s research report on the 2011 general election observed that while ‘eligible voters under 30 years represent just over one-fifth (22 percent) of the total voting age population, this age group accounts for over two-thirds (67 percent) of the total eligible voters who were not enrolled in 2011. In the context of the party vote, the 138,108 eligible voters under 30 who were not enrolled was the 5th largest block of voters.’ The report does not give statistics on the proportion of enrolled under 30 year olds who voted.⁷

A *sample* survey of voters in the 2014 election showed that youth voters continued to be disproportionately not enrolled or non-voting – 88 percent enrolled for those 29 or under, compared with 97 percent for those 30 and over.

In Auckland Central enrolment was particularly low in 2011, but it was consistent across most other electorates (exclusive of Māori electorates, which cannot be measured in such fashion).

Local Government New Zealand submitted to the 2013 representation commission as follows: *‘We believe that the Electoral Commission and the Ministry of Education should play a critical role in the process of building citizenship and both should be resourced appropriately. Youth must be a key issues and strategies and tactics need to be developed that resonate with young people.’*⁸

LGNZ noted the existence of the ‘Growing Active Citizens’ group: a network of officials from agencies interested in citizenship education, such as the Electoral Commission, Parliamentary Services, LGNZ, the Ministry of Education and Auckland Council.⁹

Migrants and ethnic minorities

The Electoral Commission provides information in many languages. In 2011, registration to vote (compulsory) did not appear to be significantly lower in high migrant electorates, for example Mt Albert, Mt Roskill, Pakuranga and Botany than it was nationally.

Overall, Asians ‘under-participate’ in the electoral process. The 2014 post-election survey conducted by the Electoral Commission showed that only 84 percent of those of Asian ethnicity were enrolled to vote

compared with 97 percent of those of non-Asian ethnicity. 12 percent of those of Asian ethnicity had a poor understanding of how to vote compared with three percent of those of non-Asian ethnicity.¹⁰ In 2011, Asian ethnicity was the most significant of a range of socio-economic variables influencing non-voting.¹¹ Asians continue to be under-represented in Parliament, accounting for only four percent of MPs compared with a nine percent representation in the population at the 2013 census.

On the other hand, when the voting behaviour of different groups of overseas-born are compared, those from Asia do not 'under-perform'. About the same proportion of overseas-born from India and from the UK are registered to vote, but more Indian-born actually voted – 68 percent compared with 54.8 percent (as might be expected the Chinese percentage for enrolment was somewhat lower but nearly the same percentage (53 percent) voted as did Britons)¹². This suggests relatively high levels of identification with the political system on the part of new migrants. It could also be inferred that the divergence between the Asian and the total population in this respect may not be that long lasting.

The Office of Ethnic Communities 'keeps a database of New Zealanders from ethnic communities who are suitably qualified to be considered for appointment to a number of government boards, committees and advisory groups, including those of Crown companies.'¹³

Māori

In Parliament, Māori representation, which reached 22 percent of all MPs at the 2014 election, the highest ever percentage, is now greater than the Māori proportion of the population.

A survey of Māori voting tells a different story although it is difficult to draw firm conclusions because enrolment on the Māori roll is elective. At the 2011 election 233,100 (55 percent of the eligible Māori population) were on the Māori roll and 188,608 individuals of Māori descent (45 percent) were on the general roll.

It may be that the turnout of Māori on the general roll was similar to that of Māori on the Māori roll. The turnout in 2011 of voters on the Māori roll was 58.2 percent – a decrease from the 2008 Māori roll turnout of 62.4 percent.¹⁴ The relative youth of the Māori compared with the non-Māori population underlines the merits of tackling low levels of Māori participation in the parliamentary process.

Ways of increasing Māori representation on local authorities have long been debated. The decision of the Bay of Plenty regional council to have dedicated council seats for Māori is one example. The demographic configuration of Northland and East Coast is similar to that of the Bay of Plenty and a number of districts also conform. Most of these regions/districts have retained about the same proportion of Māori population as they had in 2006.¹⁵

Pasifika

In evaluating Pasifika participation in the political process it is noteworthy that the post-election survey conducted by the Electoral Commission in 2014 found that only 88 percent of Pasifika were likely to be enrolled compared with 96 percent of non-Pasifika. 19 percent of Pasifika respondents did not vote because they were overseas, compared with four percent for non-Pasifika and 29 percent of Pasifika adduced work commitments compared with seven percent of non-Pasifika.¹⁶ These findings suggest that Pasifika voting participation could be significantly enhanced by facilitating voter registration and stressing the ease of voting before Election Day.

Pacific people are under-represented in almost all areas of decision-making that affect their lives.¹⁷

However, Pasifika MPs accounted for six percent of the 2014 parliament compared with five percent in 2011 and three percent in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This is close to the Pasifika proportion of the total population; however the Labour Party (in opposition) had more Pasifika MPs than the National Party although in 2014, for the first time, a Pasifika National MP had a ministerial position other than that of Pacific Island affairs.

Government and citizens

Differential access to government services

The table below shows changes in the total numbers between 2006 and 2013 in groups that, from past experience, have had either greater need for or greater difficulty in accessing government services than is the case for the population as a whole. Most of these categories have increased at a greater rate than that of the total population, some of them substantially so, for example the over-65 Māori population. Note that the census did not collect data on disability. The Ministry of Social Welfare is a first point of reference for those affected, through both the Office for Disability Services and a variety of agencies and services.¹⁸

	2006	2013	Percent change, 2013 to 2006
Usually resident population	4,027,947	4,242,048	5.3
Aged 75 and over	230,000	261,000	13.5
Non-English speakers ¹⁹	158,000	153,000	-3.2
Low income (\$20,000 or less in 2006; \$25,000 or less in 2013) ²⁰	1,226,352	1,392,717	13.6
Low income aged 15-19 ²¹	222,624	246,480	10.7
Low income aged 20-64	708,090	807,077	14.0
Low income aged 65 and over ²²	295,626	339,195	14.7
Māori aged	23,127	32,181	39.1
Sole parent, 4+ dependent children	8,148	7,248	-11.0

Table 2. Changes in the total numbers between 2006 and 2013 in groups that from past experience have had either greater need for, or greater difficulty in, accessing government services than is the case for the population as a whole

The 33 percent increase in households having internet access between 2006 and 2013 (from 60.5% of households in 2006 to 76.8% in 2013), if it plateaus, and the shift to e-government, may combine to deepen an existing digital divide between those with both access to, and familiarity with, on-line services and those with neither.

Māori and Pasifika

Deprivation amongst Māori and Pasifika – and likely reliance on government services – is geographically concentrated. That can facilitate the targeting of government services while reducing the likelihood of adaptive economic and social change.

The correlations between Māori and Pasifika ethnicity, low levels of income and education and limited internet access are demonstrated in the next two tables. These are correlations, not a neat fit – that is, the respondents in any one category are not necessarily identical with the respondents in another.

Territorial authority area	Māori	\$25k or under*	Internet access	No qualification
Whakatane District	39.9%	15.9%	62.1%	23.1%
Kawerau District	54.6%	21.4%	51.4%	31.4%
Opotiki District	53.6%	21.2%	49.6%	27.4%
Gisborne District	45.1%	17.7%	58.9%	24.1%
Wairoa District	59.4%	20.4%	51.3%	31.6%
Ruapehu District	40.7%	22.1%	56.2%	28.3%

Table 3. 2013 Census regional summary tables – part 1&2. * Figure for Total Household Income.

Areas with high concentrations of Pasifika peoples have very low numbers of persons 65 and over. For instance in Auckland’s Mangere-Ōtahuhu board district (60.1 percent Pacific peoples) just under 8.1 percent of the population were 65 and over (compared with 14.3 percent nationally; though this compared with only 6.8 percent for Mangere-Ōtahuhu in 2006). This raises distributive issues nationally – the political tension of an increasingly non-white working population and a retired predominantly white – or Asian – population.

Territorial authority area	Percent Māori	Percent Pacific Peoples	Percent \$25k or under*	Percent 65 years and over	Internet access	Percent no qualification
Auckland local board area						
Mangere-Otahuhu Local Board Area	14.6%	55.0%	14.1%	8.1%	55.1%	25.2%
Otara-Papatoetoe Local Board Area	14.3%	41.9%	13.2%	8.6%	58.8%	23.5%

Table 4. 2013 Census regional summary tables – part 1&2. * Figure for Total Household Income.

Deprivation can also be measured in relationship to health indicators. The Ministry of Health’s survey of child health shows significant variation from national standards in certain regions; in Northland, for example, twice as many child visits to a GP (which do not attract a fee) were hampered by transport problems as was the case nationally. In Counties-Manukau DHB, child dentist visits (which also did not attract a fee) were significantly below the national average. Obesity and asthma were more than twice as, and fifty percent more, prevalent respectively amongst children in the Tairāwhiti DHB as amongst children nationally.²³

Non-English speakers

The number of individuals recording no knowledge of English fell slightly between 2006 and 2013 (from 158,000 to 153,000); however it can be assumed that some of the 946,000 who indicated they could speak language(s) other than English would be more at home in another language. Between the two censuses there were particularly big rises in the number of Tagalog (12,500 to 29,000) and Hindi (44,000 to 66,000) speakers; whilst Chinese speakers taken altogether (including Cantonese and other Chinese

languages as well as Mandarin) accounted for 147,000; other significant language groups with likely a percentage of individuals favouring a language other than English were Samoan, Tongan and Korean.

It seems reasonable then to assume that up to 300,000 people would prefer to conduct transactions in languages other than English and that this figure may increase over the next 25 years. At present provision is made for non-English language access in mainstream government agencies but it is not always easy to find online (and possibly via other means); for instance the Ministry of Social Development does not appear to make any provision for non-English speakers through its introductory web pages at www.msd.govt.nz (other than users of New Zealand sign language) although in Europe and Canada, the 'common assumption is that approaching people in their own language is hugely successful as many immigrants not only have difficulty with understanding the language but also with the jargon used by government in providing services.'²⁴

Work and Income NZ, a part of the Ministry of Social Development, provides telephone assistance at <http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/contact-us/language-lines/index.html>, in Chinese, Hindi and Punjabi, Arabic, Farsi and Somali, and Samoan and Tongan – a good effort, but not readily findable from MSD's home page.

The Office of Ethnic Communities provides telephone interpreting through <http://ethniccommunities.govt.nz/browse/language-line>; not uncharacteristically though, the introductory information is only in roman alphabet/English.

Immigration New Zealand's settlement services division, <https://www.newzealandnow.govt.nz/> does not provide information in other languages but does link to Citizens Advice Bureau's language link <http://www.cab.org.nz/acabnearyou/language/link/Pages/home.aspx>, which provides assistance in 24 African, Asian, European and Pacific languages.

The Royal Society of New Zealand produced a paper, Languages in Aotearoa New Zealand, in 2013. It highlighted that New Zealand was home to '160 languages, with multi-ethnic depth forecast to deepen even further.' It argued the case for some state involvement in, for example, English language support for non-English speakers. It equally pointed out that the language knowledge of immigrants was potentially a very important resource, with many immigrating to New Zealand from important or emerging trade partners.

New migrants and the labour market

The Auditor-General's overview of Immigration New Zealand's \$17m budget for assisting new migrants found significant weaknesses in post-arrival support for new migrants during the initial settlement period.²⁵ Such support is likely to remain important given the continuance of present long-term migration trends over the next quarter century. The weaknesses applied particularly to secondary skilled migrants (who are usually family members of a principal skilled migrant) and to holders of temporary work visas gaining permanent employment – the route by which many skilled migrants secure residency rights. In particular those on temporary work visas were not eligible for many settlement support services. The Auditor-General called on MBIE to provide 'appropriate context information and data about principal and secondary skilled migrants and improving methods for reporting on retention' and to 'work with other agencies to rationalize and better target resources to overcome known barriers to employment.'²⁶

Conclusion

The digital revolution presents opportunities to recast and reinvigorate the relationship between

government and the citizenry. Younger people expect to be able to engage digitally, and just as postal voting was accepted after a period of being controversial, so digital participation in civic affairs will have to be accommodated. The serious questions will be the extent to which participatory democracy can be more direct without losing the deliberation and judgment provided in Parliament's procedures (but not always well utilized even now).

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- 1 <http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/parl-support/research-papers/00PLLaw2012021/final-results-for-the-2011-new-zealand-general-election-back-to-1981>; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_New_Zealand (for earlier dates)
 - 2 http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/snapshots-of-nz/nz-social-indicators/Home/Trust%20and%20participation%20in%20government/voter-turnout.aspx#info15; for 2014 see http://www.electionresults.govt.nz/electionresults_2014/e9/html/e9_part9_1.html
 - 3 http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/snapshots-of-nz/nz-social-indicators/Home/Trust%20and%20participation%20in%20government/voter-turnout.aspx#info15;
 - 4 <http://www.lgnz.co.nz/assets/Submissions/LGNZ-Submission-The-2013-Elections.pdf> explains differences between total turnout (sums voting across all councils) and average turnout (calculates from the sum of turnout by council, irrespective of electorate size; LGC prefers this because doesn't bias in favour of large councils – Auckland had a particularly low turnout – but arguably is misleading in terms of assessing participation generally)
 - 5 Cited in <http://www.lgnz.co.nz/assets/Submissions/LGNZ-Submission-The-2013-Elections.pdf> p 9
 - 6 Cited in <http://www.lgnz.co.nz/assets/Submissions/LGNZ-Submission-The-2013-Elections.pdf> p 6
 - 7 <http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/parl-support/research-papers/00PLLaw2012021/final-results-for-the-2011-new-zealand-general-election>, section on voter enrolment and turnout; see also <http://www.elections.org.nz/research-statistics/enrolment-statistics-electorate>.
 - 8 Cited in <http://www.lgnz.co.nz/assets/Submissions/LGNZ-Submission-The-2013-Elections.pdf> p 9
 - 9 <http://www.conferenceteam.co.nz/yilg2008/documents/GrowingActiveCitizens.pdf>
 - 10 http://www.elections.org.nz/sites/default/files/plain-page/attachments/final_electoral_commission_-_post_2014_election_survey.pdf
 - 11 Jack Vowles. 'Down, Down, Down: Turnout in New Zealand from 1946 to the 2011 Election' Paper for presentation at the Annual Conference of the New Zealand Political Studies Association, Wellington, November 25-27 2012.
 - 12 Representing a diverse Aotearoa", Paper presented to Future New Zealand [conference], Massey University, 27 March 2014
 - 13 <http://ethnicaffairs.govt.nz/story/nominations-service>
 - 14 <http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/parl-support/research-papers/00PLLaw2012021/final-results-for-the-2011-new-zealand-general-election>, section on voter enrolment and turnout
 - 15 E.g. Far North, 44.0% 2006/44.5% 2013; Whāngārei, 25.2%/26.2%; Waikato district, 24.4%/24.2%; Hamilton city, 19.9%/21.3%; Rotorua, 36.6%/37.5%; Taupō, 28.2%/29.0%; Gisborne, 47.3%/48.8%.
 - 16 http://www.elections.org.nz/sites/default/files/plain-page/attachments/final_electoral_commission_-_post_2014_election_survey.pdf
 - 17 <http://www.mpia.govt.nz/assets/documents/news-archive/2009/MPIA-Auckland-Pacific-Strategic-Plan-2009.pdf>
 - 18 <http://www.odi.govt.nz/>; <http://www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/disability-services/index.html>
 - 19 This is a residual gained by deducting English speakers from the 'total stated'; see further discussion on non-English speakers below
 - 20 The Reserve Bank inflation calculator uses the consumer price index to convert \$20,000 in the first quarter of 2006 to \$23,807 in 2013, so the numbers for 2013 are somewhat greater than a strict comparison between the two years would produce.
 - 21 73% earn \$5000 or less or made a loss – a more useful measure might be of those in the paid labour force
 - 22 A subset of row 3. Refinement in the statistics reveals demonstrate the 'pig in the python' phenomenon: in both years the numbers on low income clustered, but around a different income level; In 2006 153,537 individuals (52% of the total) were on between \$10,000 and \$15,000; in 2013 132,726 (39%) were on between \$15,000 and \$20,000 – the 'move in the pig' reflects the higher rates of national superannuation payable in 2013 compared with 2006.
 - 23 <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/regional-results-2011-2013-new-zealand-health-survey>
 - 24 Miriam Lips, communication to committee, ?Sep 2013
 - 25 <http://www.oag.govt.nz/2013/new-migrants>, report released 18 Nov 2013
 - 26 <http://www.oag.govt.nz/2013/new-migrants/our-recommendations.htm>