

# New Zealand's electoral system reform

The impact of MMP – expected and unexpected  
consequences

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# Three referendums, each one supports MMP

1992

## Part A

Should New Zealand **Keep** the First Past the Post (FPP) voting system?



I vote to <b>keep</b> the FPP voting system	15.3
I vote to <b>change</b> to another voting system	84.7

## Part B

If New Zealand were to change to another voting system, which voting system would you chose?



Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)	70.5
Preferential Voting (PV)	6.6
Single Transferable Vote (STV)	17.4
Supplementary Member system (SM)	5.6

1993



Vote Here

I vote for the present FIRST-PAST-THE-POST SYSTEM as provided in the Electoral Act 1956	46.1
I vote for the proposed MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM as provided in the Electoral Act 1993	53.9

TICK ONE PROPOSAL

2011

## Part A

Should New Zealand **Keep** the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) voting system?



I vote to <b>keep</b> the MMP voting system	57.8
I vote to <b>change</b> to another voting system	42.2

## Part B

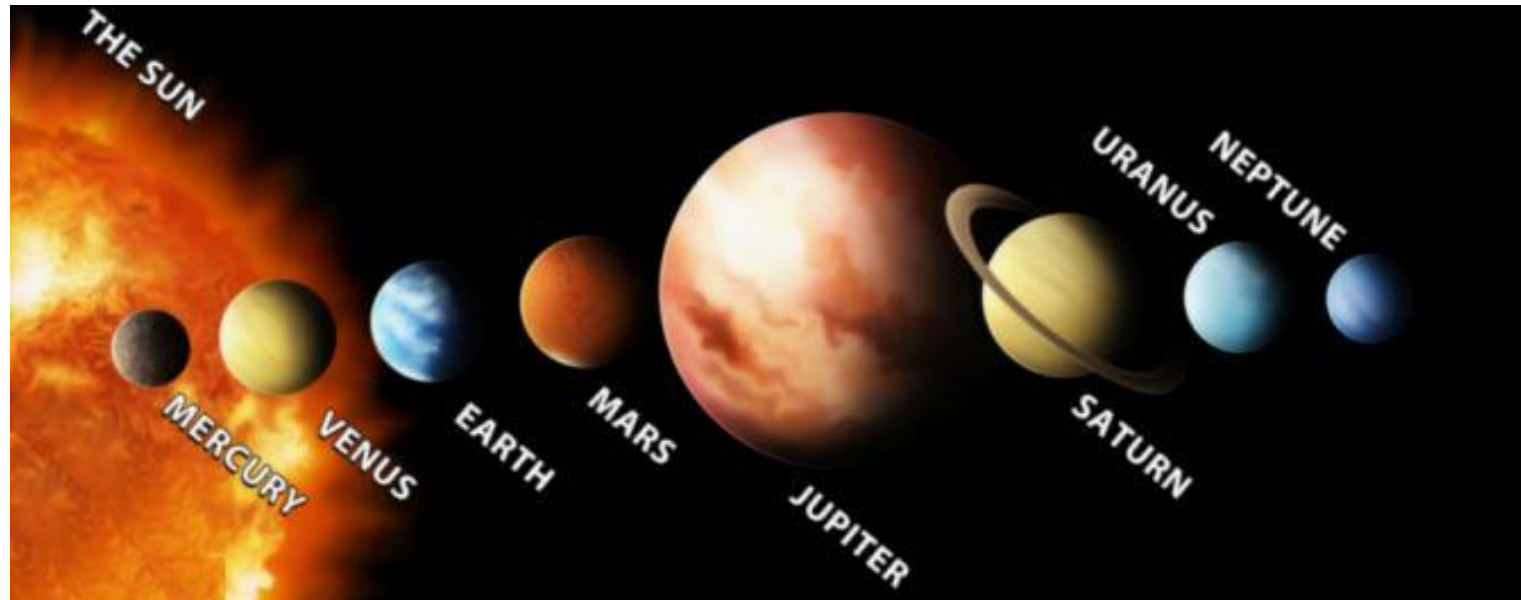
If New Zealand were to change to another voting system, which voting system would you chose?



First Past the Post (FPP)	46.7
Preferential Voting (PV)	12.5
Single Transferable Vote (STV)	16.7
Supplementary Member system (SM)	24.1

# Why the 'extraordinary' move to MMP?

Akin to the planets being aligned....



# The nuts & bolts of MMP

ELECTORATE  
59

No. on Roll:  
(To be entered here only)  
Page No. Line No.

Initials of  
Issuing Officer

**59**

**YOU HAVE 2 VOTES**

**PARTY VOTE**  
*Explanation*  
This vote decides the share of seats which each of the parties listed below will have in Parliament. Vote by putting a tick in the circle immediately after the party you choose.

**ELECTORATE VOTE**  
*Explanation*  
This vote decides the candidate who will be elected Member of Parliament for the WELLINGTON CENTRAL ELECTORATE. Vote by putting a tick in the circle immediately before the candidate you choose.

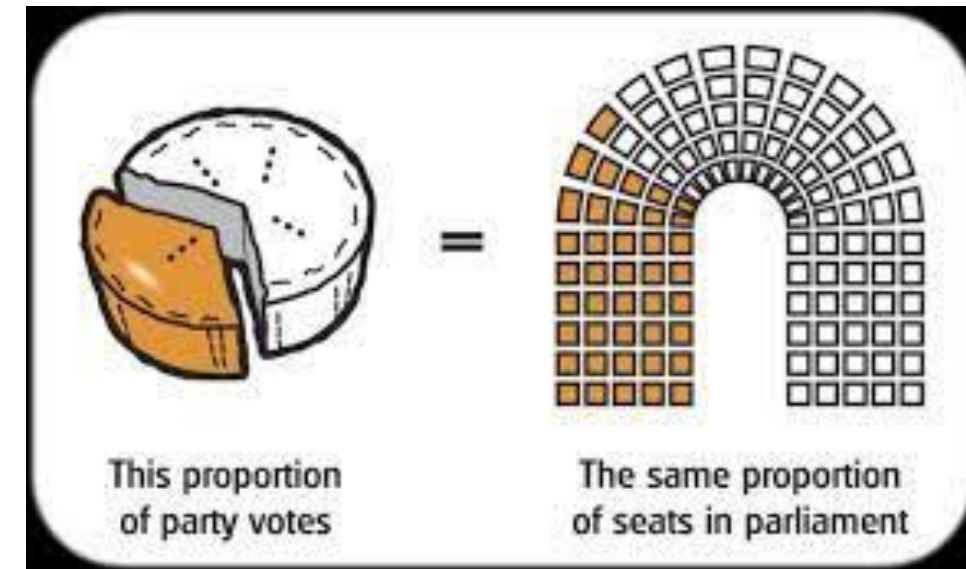
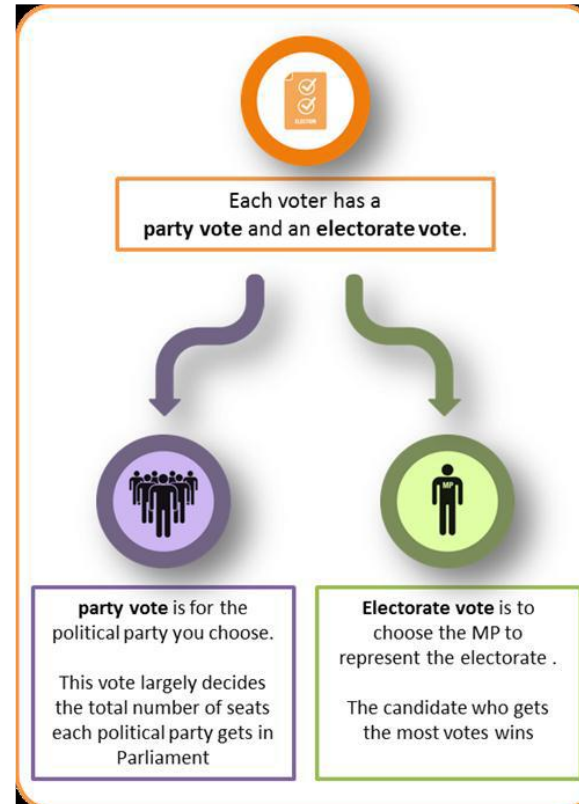
OFFICIAL MARK

**Vote for only one party**

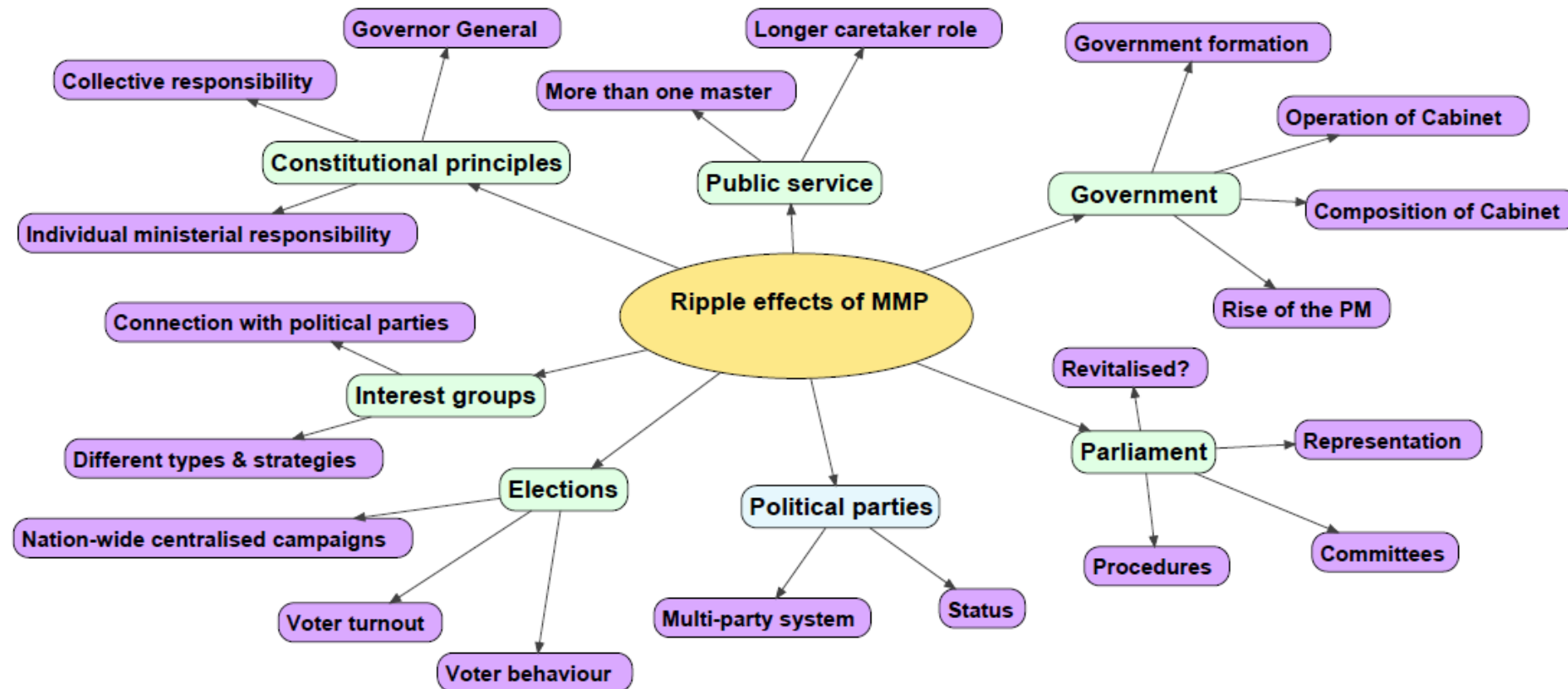
	AOTEAROA LEGALISE CANNABIS PARTY	<input type="radio"/>
	ALLIANCE	<input type="radio"/>
	NEW ZEALAND FIRST PARTY	<input type="radio"/>
	LIBERTARIANZ	<input type="radio"/>
	NATIONAL PARTY	<input type="radio"/>
	LABOUR PARTY	<input type="radio"/>
	GREEN PARTY	<input type="radio"/>
	CONSERVATIVE PARTY	<input type="radio"/>
	ACT NEW ZEALAND	<input type="radio"/>
	DEMOCRATS FOR SOCIAL CREDIT	<input type="radio"/>
	MANA	<input type="radio"/>

**Vote for only one candidate**

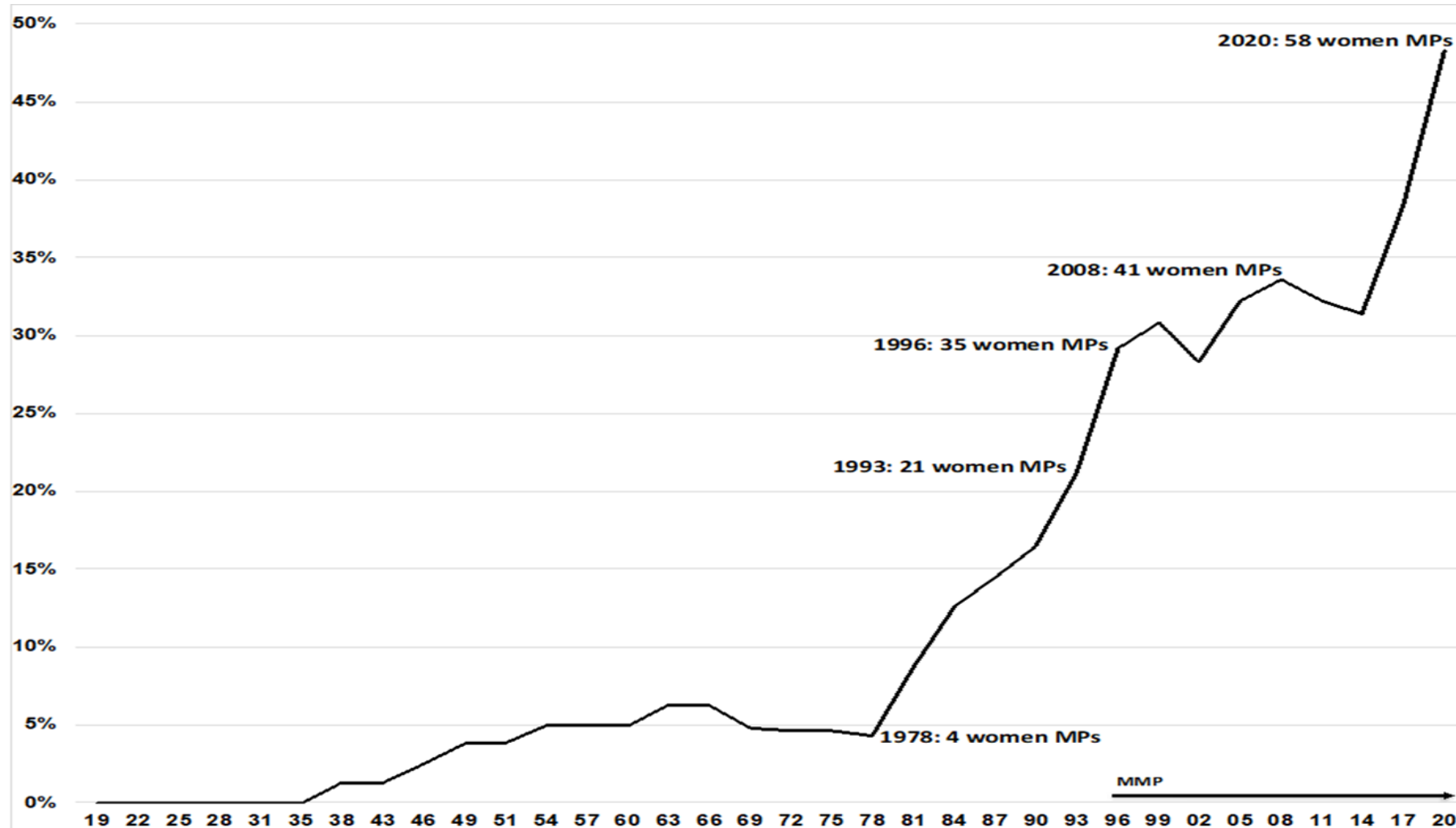
	APPLEBY, Michael AOTEAROA LEGALISE CANNABIS PARTY	<input type="radio"/>
	BOOMERT, Laurence NEW ECONOMICS PARTY	<input type="radio"/>
	BUCHANAN, Kelly ALLIANCE	<input type="radio"/>
	CRAVEN, Ben NEW ZEALAND FIRST PARTY	<input type="radio"/>
	CUTTING, Reagan LIBERTARIANZ	<input type="radio"/>
	FOSTER-BELL, Paul NATIONAL PARTY	<input type="radio"/>
	KARENA, Puihi INDEPENDENT	<input type="radio"/>
	RICKERBY, Gynn PIRATE PARTY OF NEW ZEALAND	<input type="radio"/>
	ROBERTSON, Grant LABOUR PARTY	<input type="radio"/>
	SHAW, James GREEN PARTY	<input type="radio"/>
	STIPKOVITS, Paul CONSERVATIVE PARTY	<input type="radio"/>
	WHITTINGTON, Stephen ACT NEW ZEALAND	<input type="radio"/>



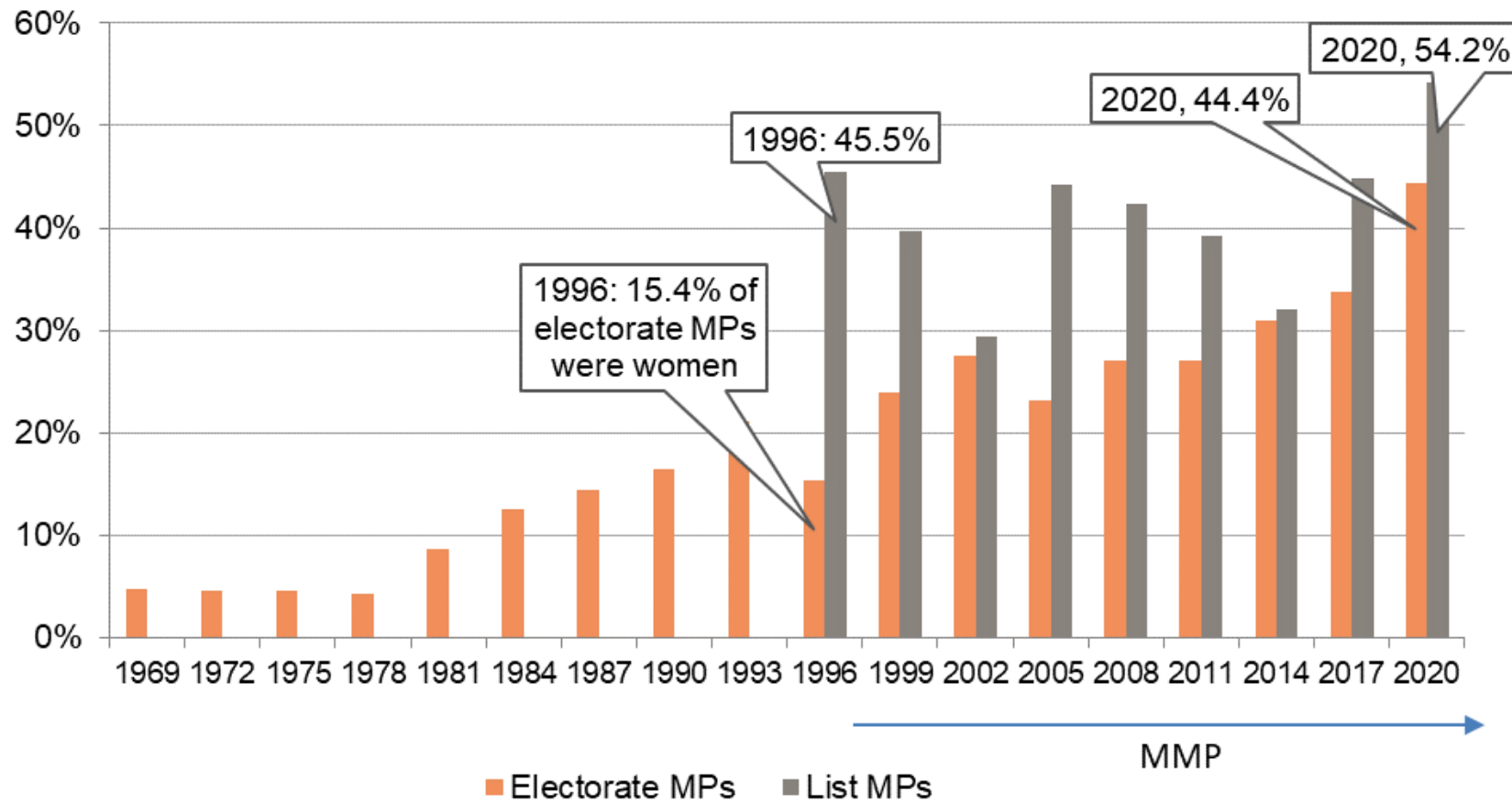
# The ripple effects of MMP



# 1. Greater diversity: Women in Parliament (%) 1919-2020

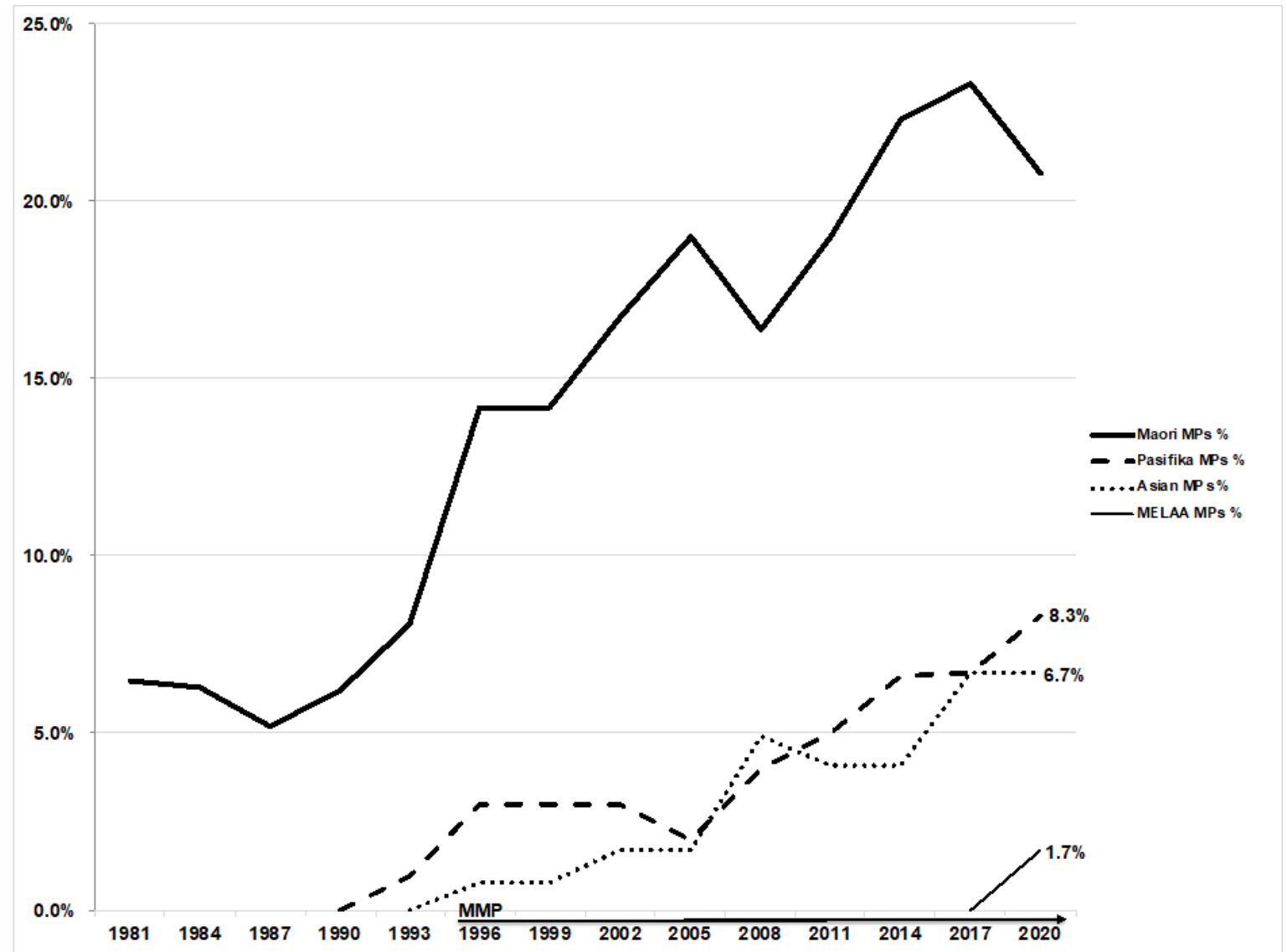


# Share of women elected to electorate & list seats 1981-2020



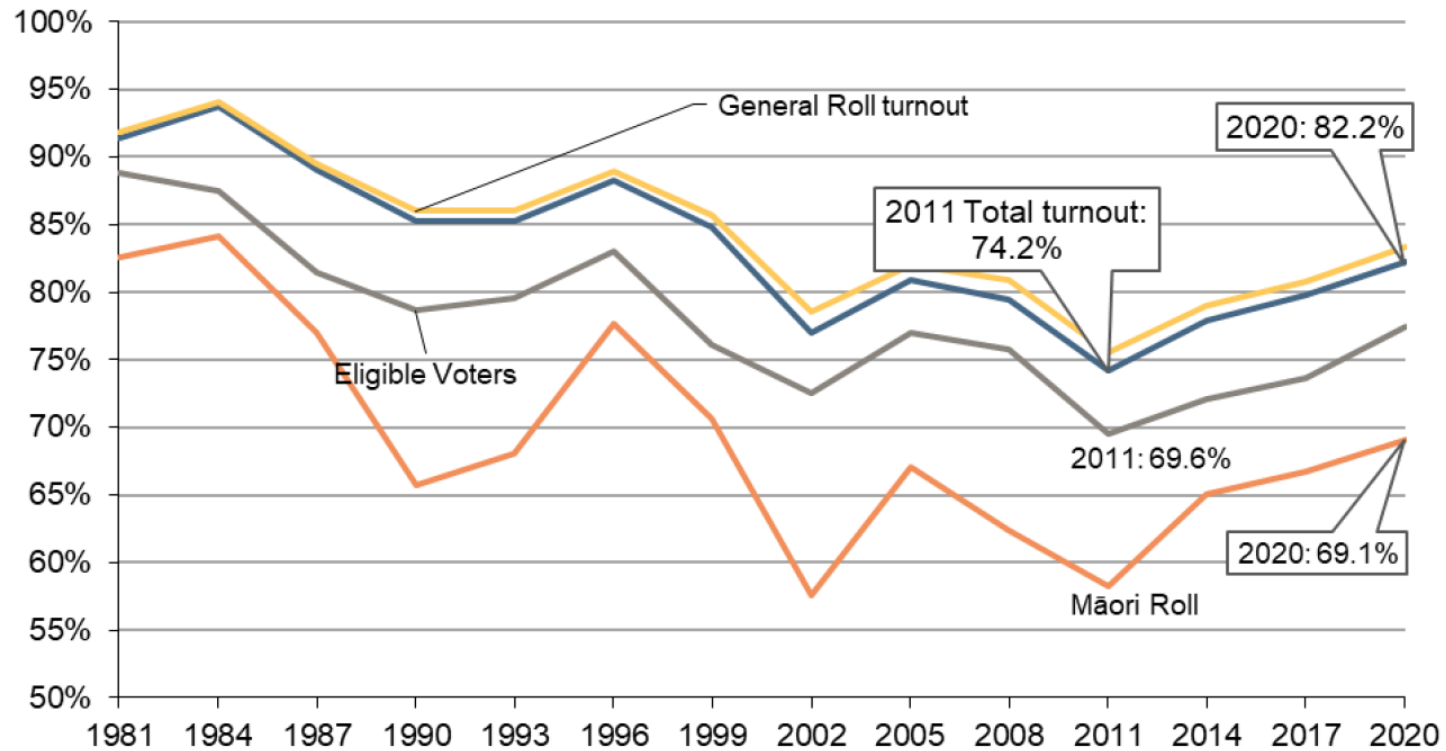
Source: NZ Parliamentary Library

# Parliament by ethnic share 1961- 2020



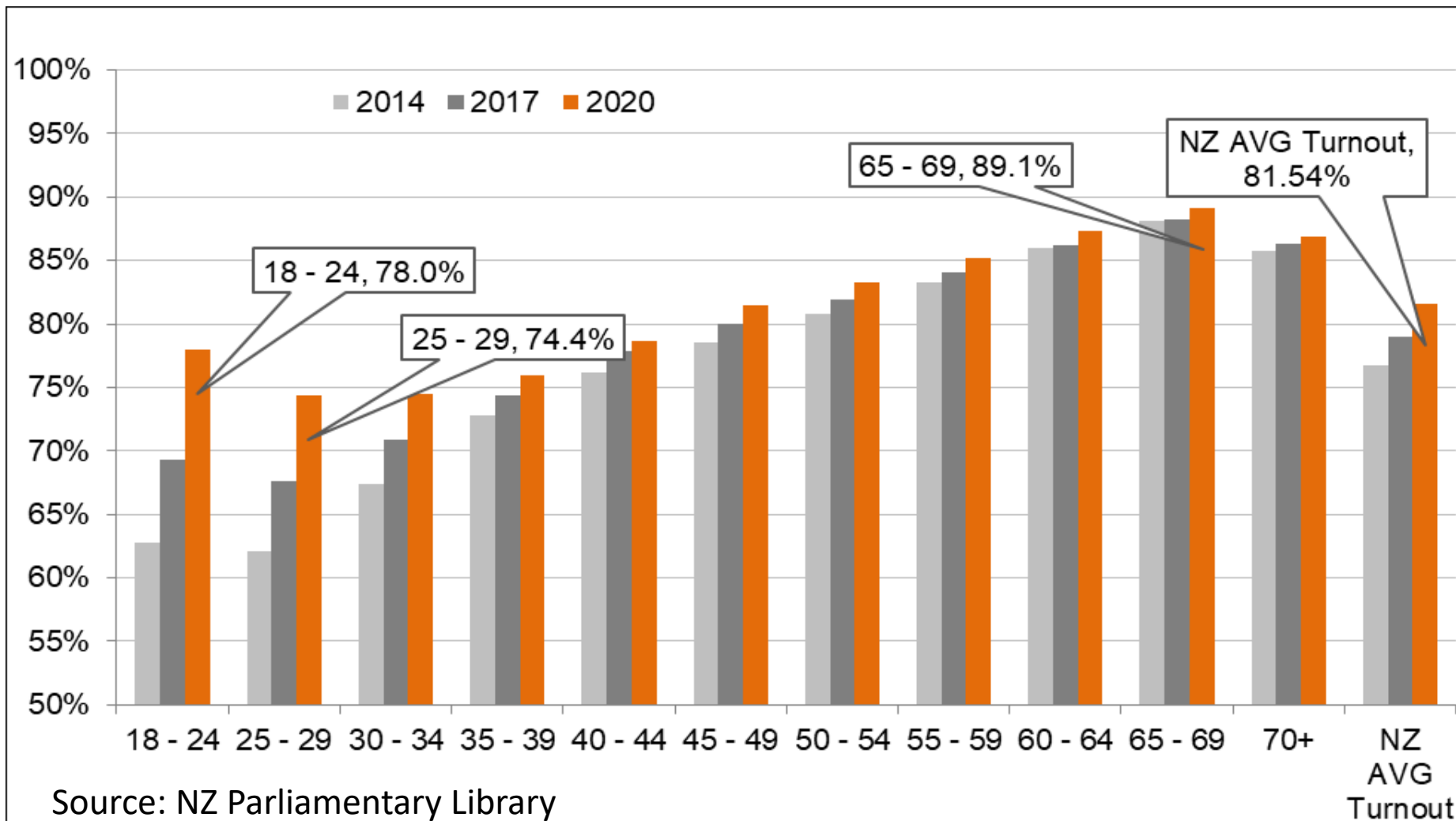


## 2. Voter turnout by roll, 1981-2020

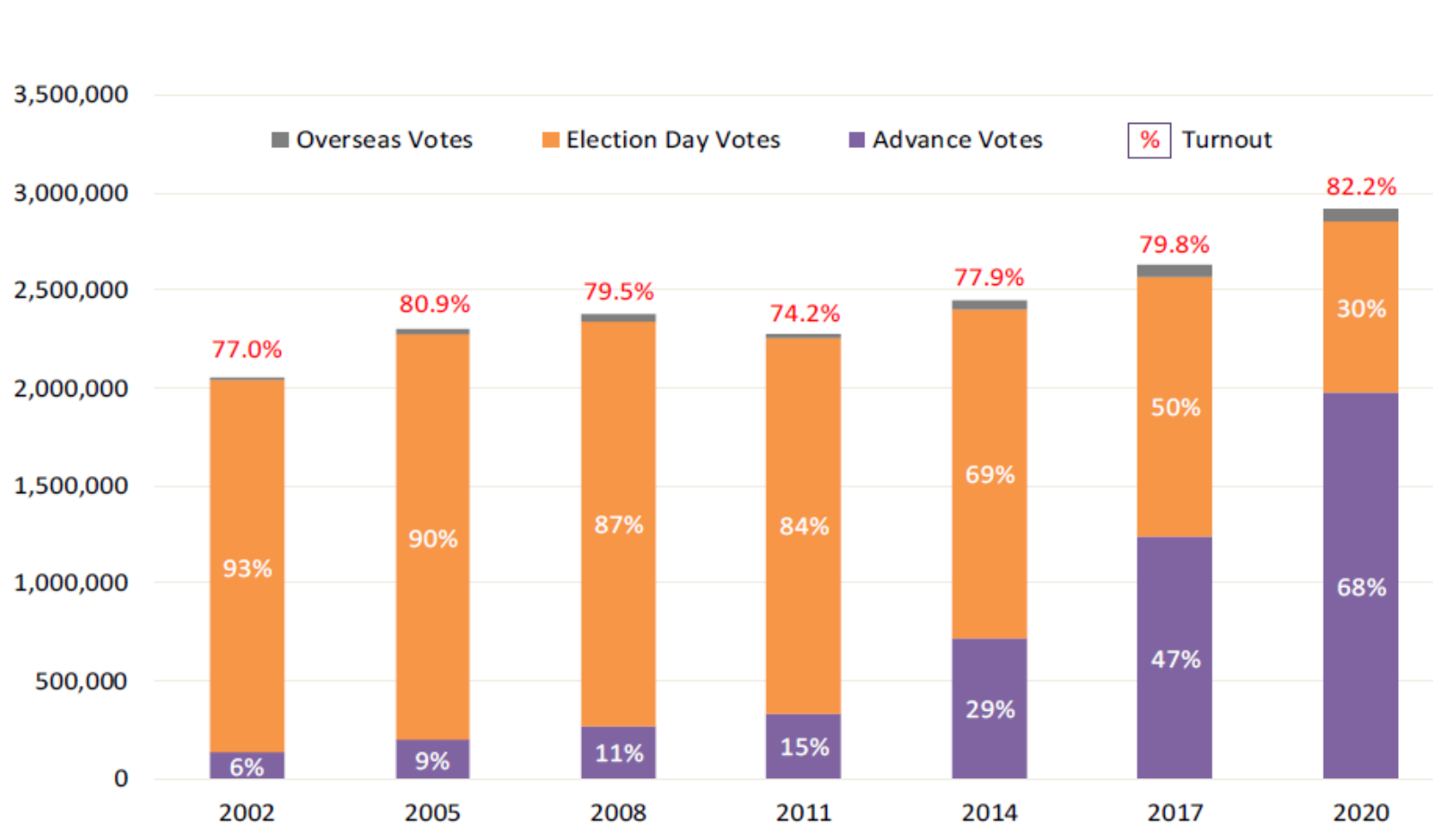


Source: Parliamentary Library

# Voter turnout by age band 2014, 2017 & 2020

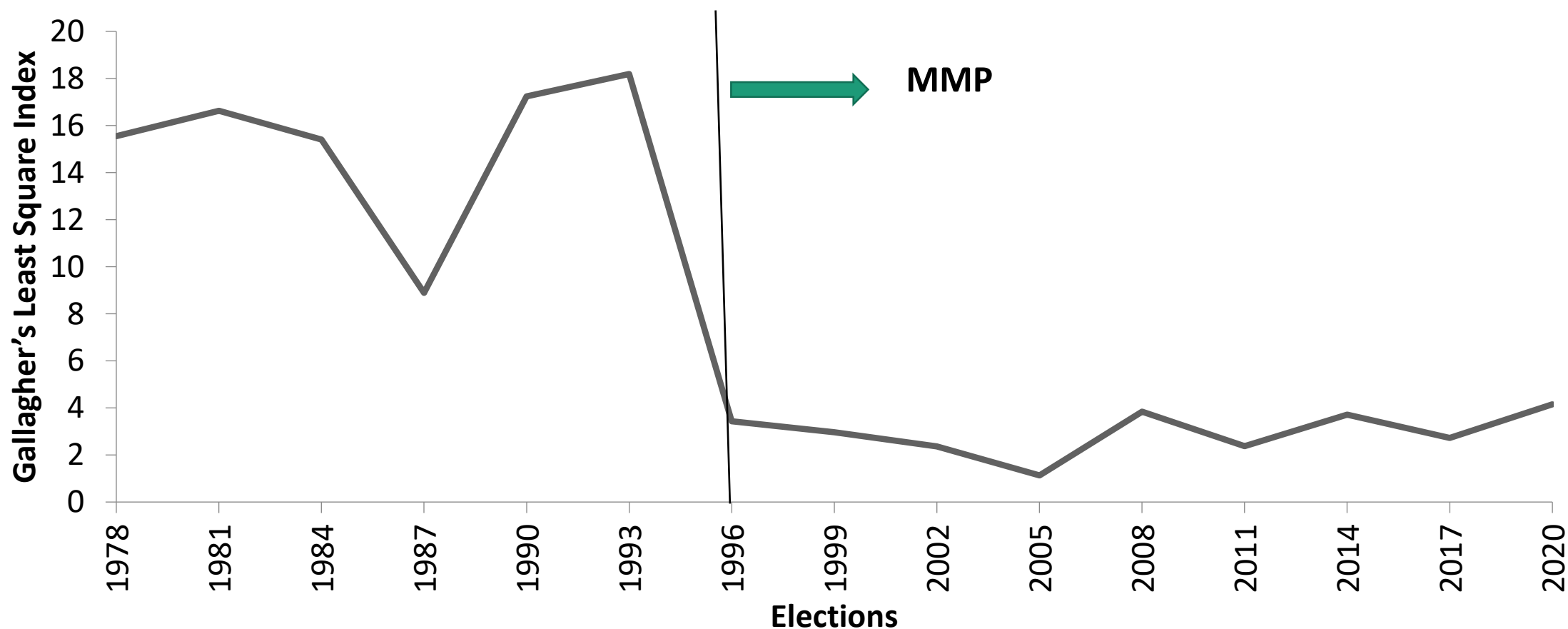


# Turnout & total votes cast, 2002-2020

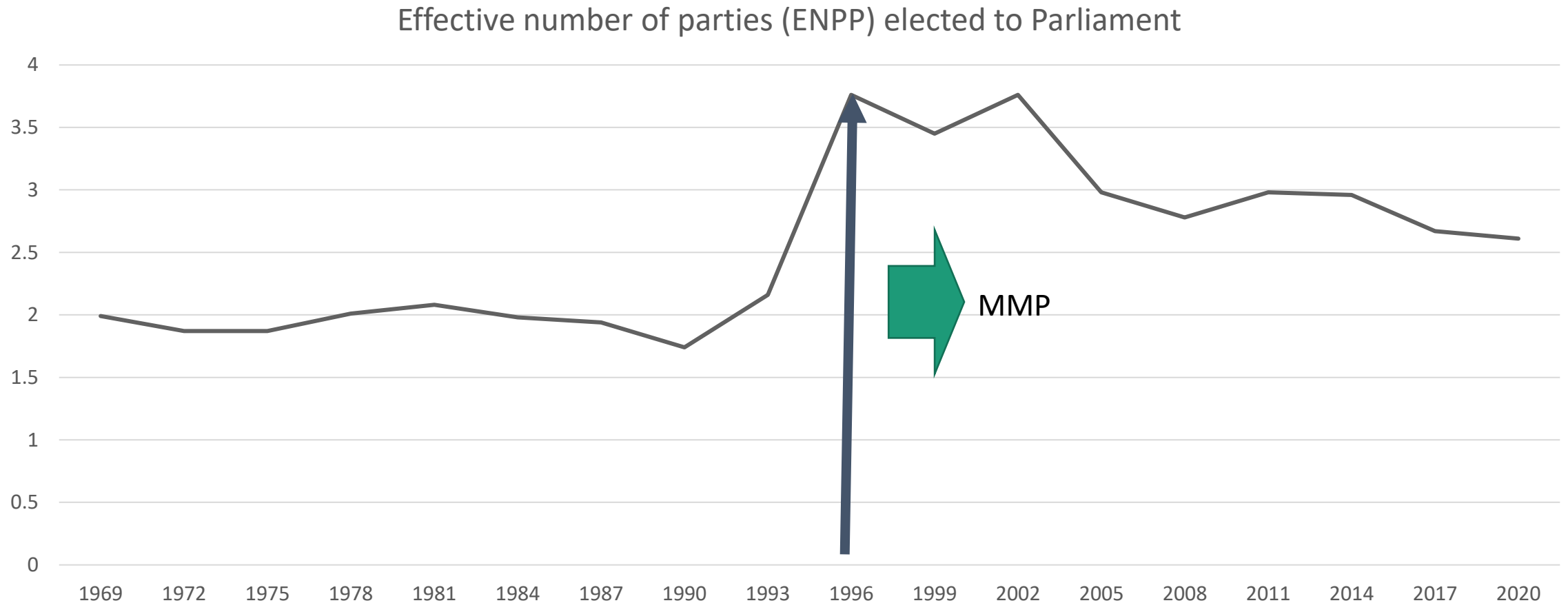


Source: NZ Parliamentary Library

### 3. More proportional: lower disproportionality since MMP



# And more political parties elected to Parliament

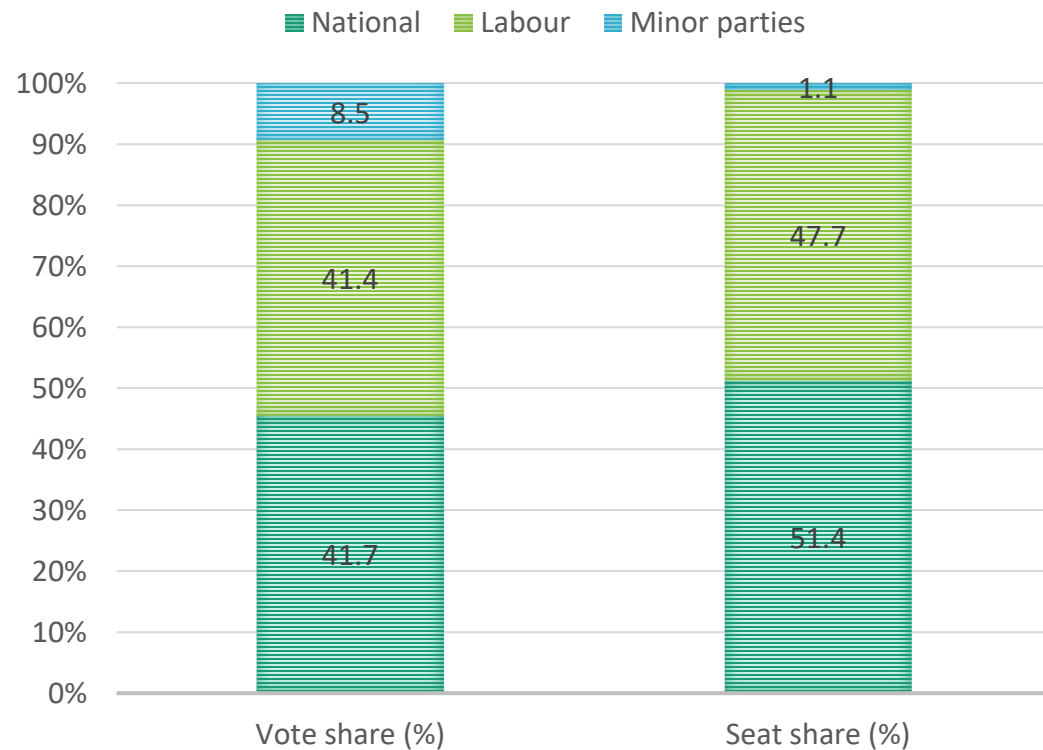


ENPP – formula  $N=1$  divided by the sum of seats (i) squared

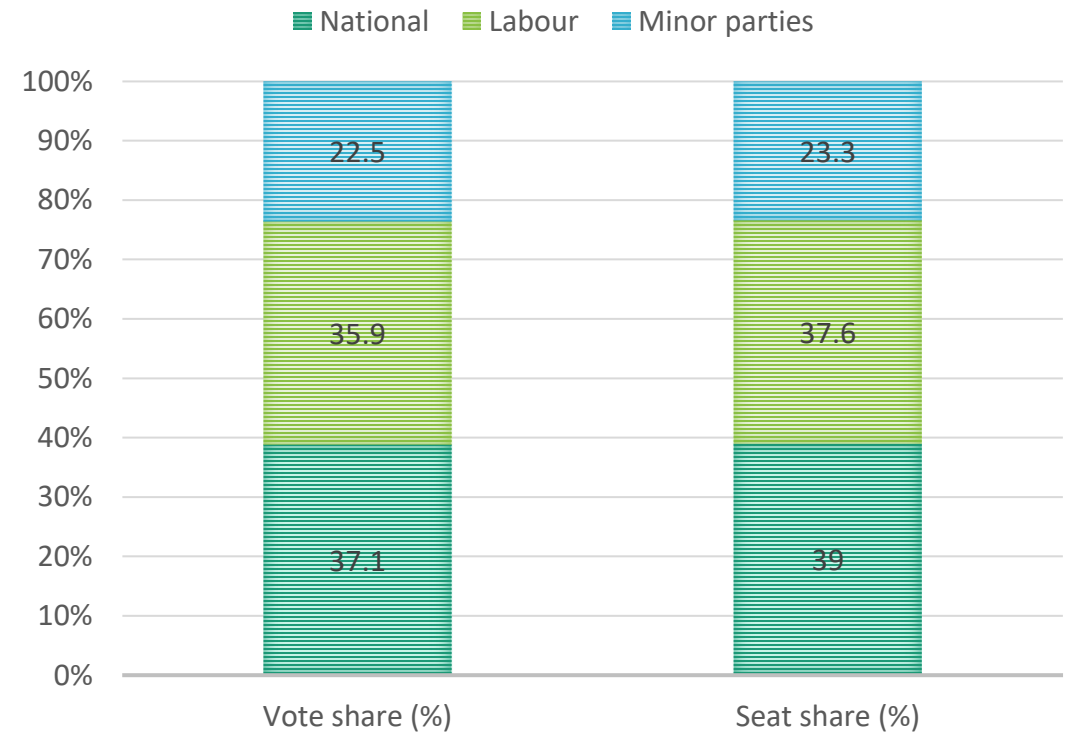
Source: [https://www.tcd.ie/Political\\_Science/people/michael\\_gallagher/ElSystems/Docts/ElectionIndices.pdf](https://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/people/michael_gallagher/ElSystems/Docts/ElectionIndices.pdf)

# Comparing average vote share and average seat share, NZ Parliament 1969-2020

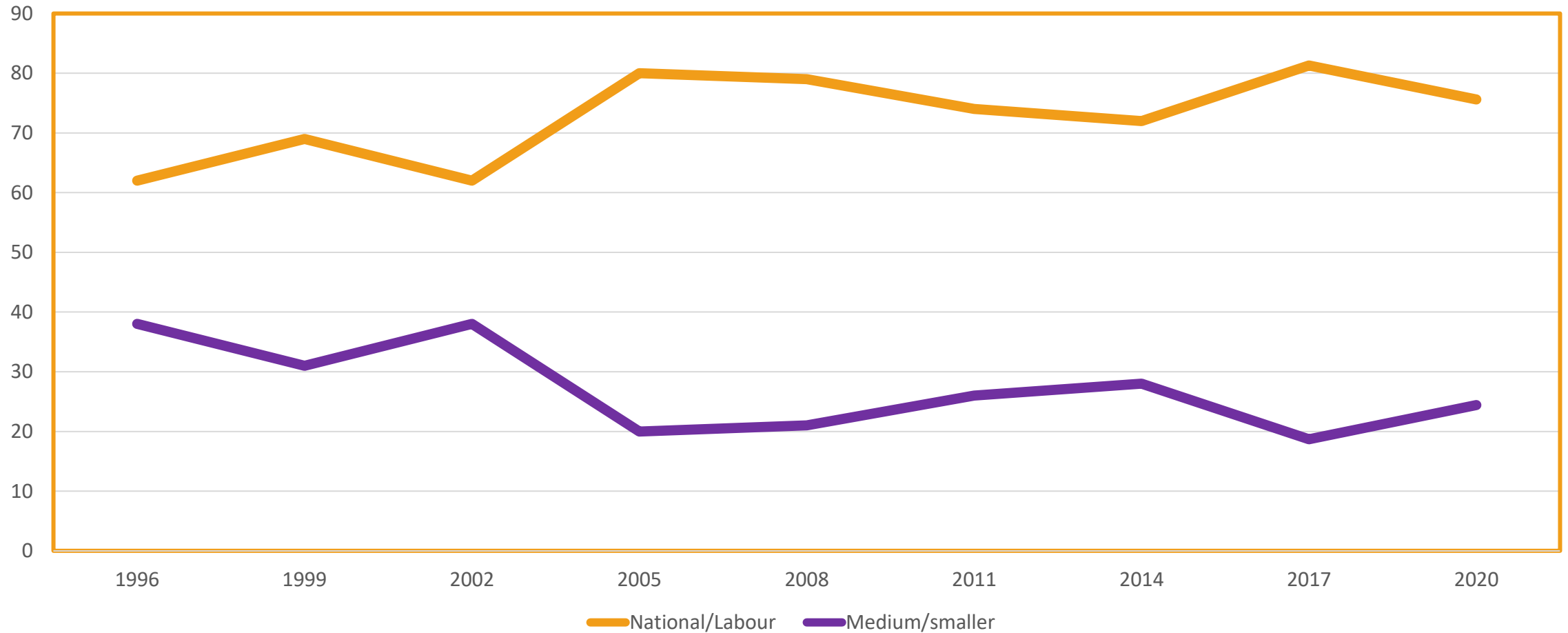
## FPTP 1969-1993 (9 elections)



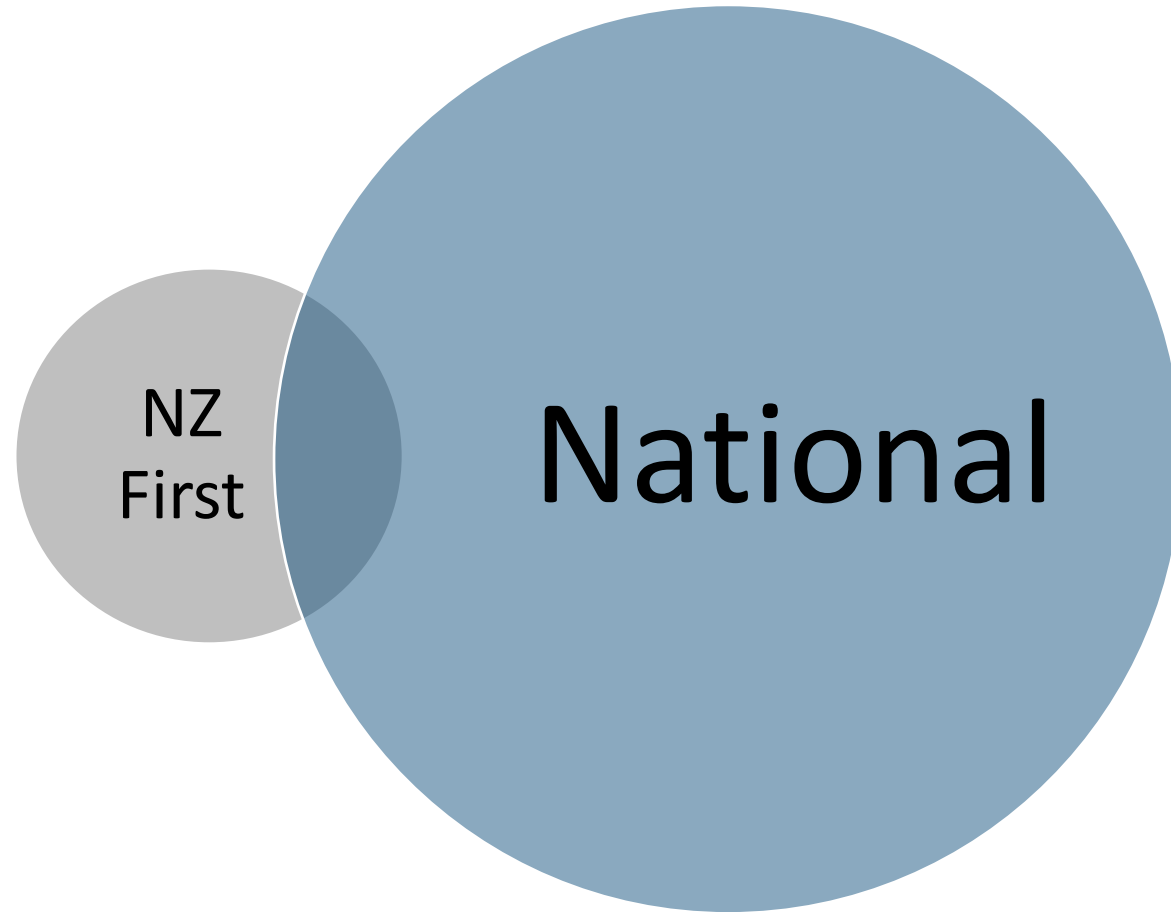
## MMP 1996-2020 (9 elections)



# But the two major parties still strong: party vote share of major v smaller parties under MMP

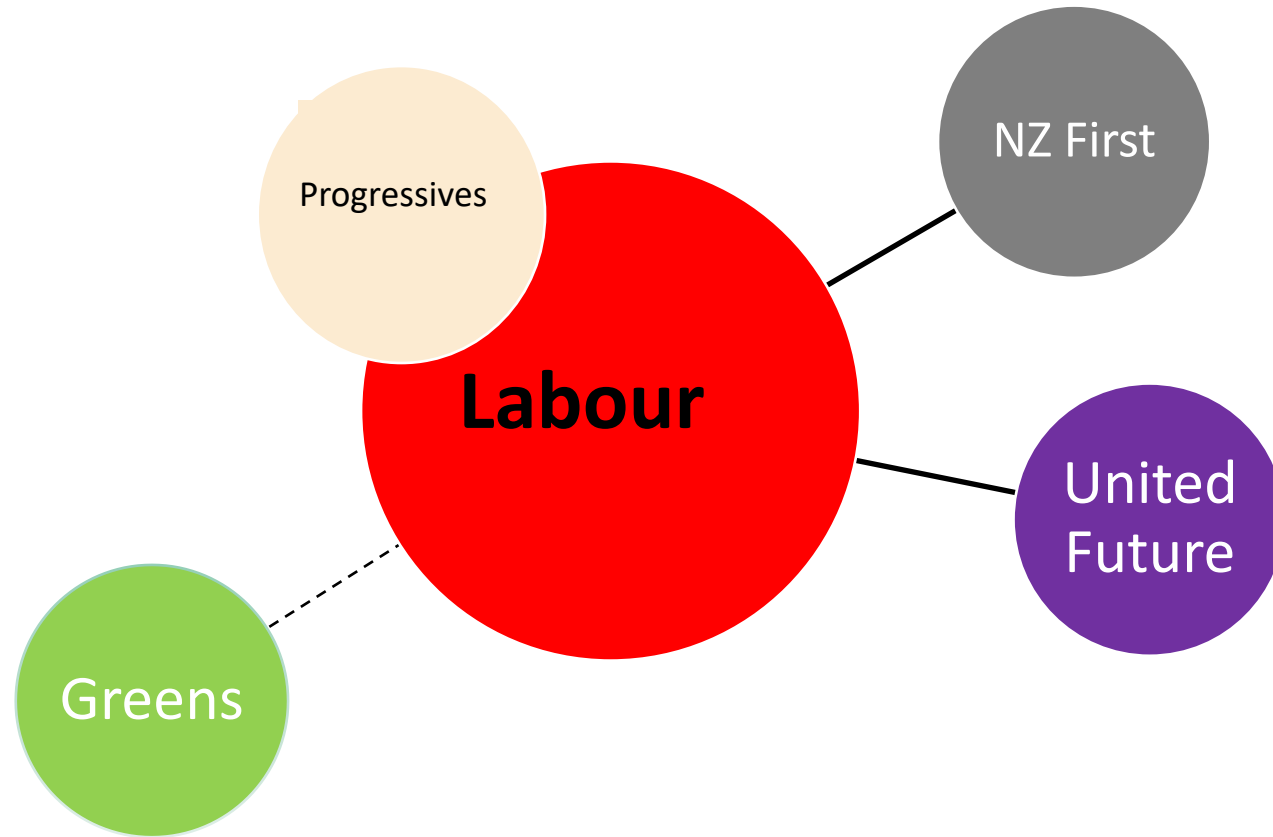


#### 4. Governing arrangements: 'expected' majority coalition government, 1996

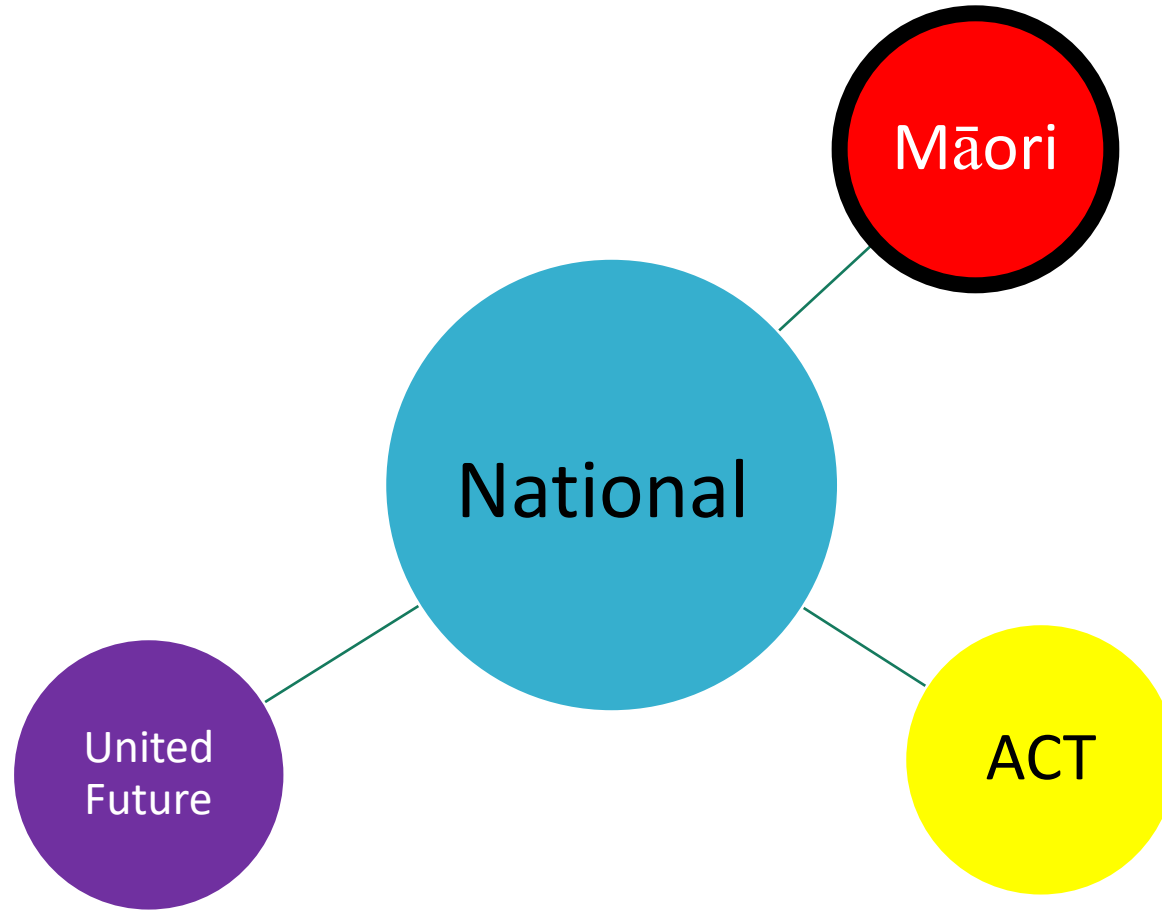




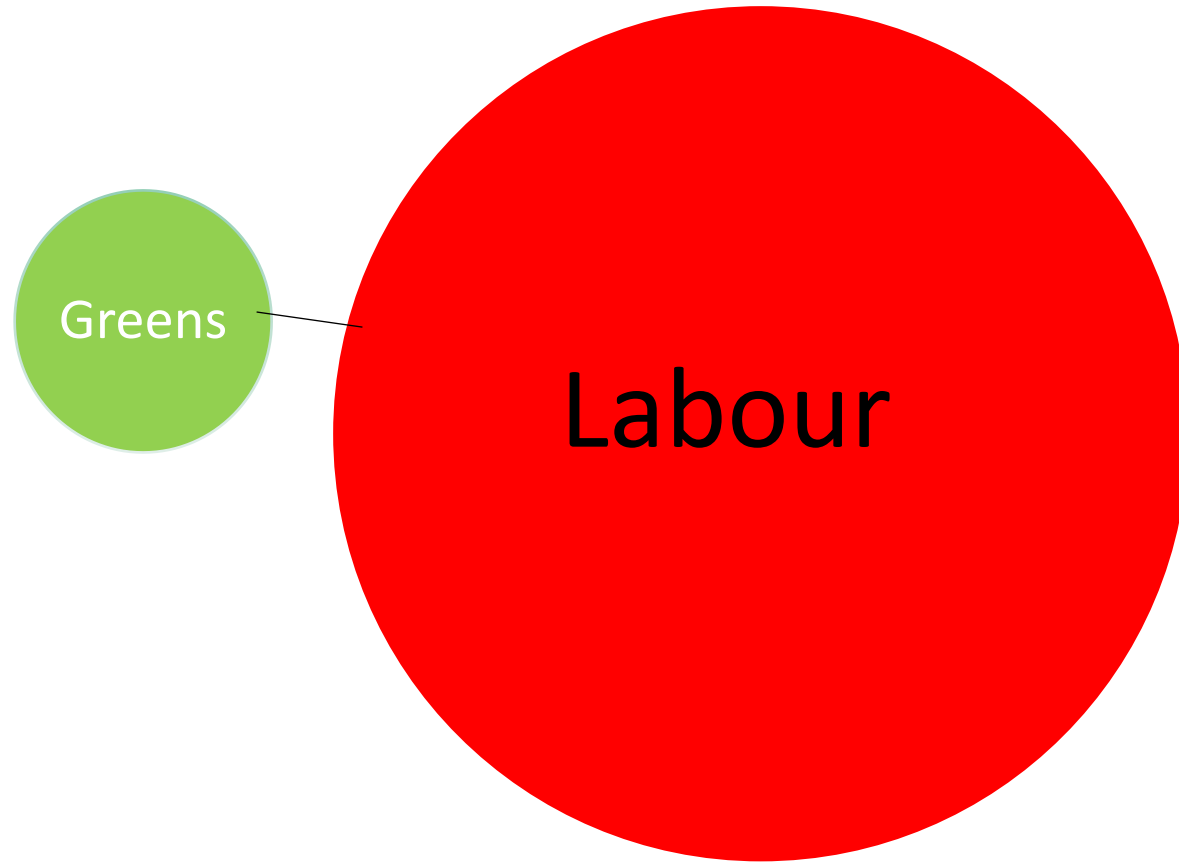
The 'unexpected' governing arrangements:  
minority coalitions with 'enhanced' support, 2005 ....



...minority National governments with 'enhanced' support,  
2008-2014



...single party majority government, 2020 –  
also unexpected





Who you are,  
where you are  
and where you  
want to go”  
Richard Katz





# Lessons learned – a kiwi ‘user’s guide’ to electoral reform

1. There is no ‘perfect’ electoral system
2. The process matters – not just *legal*, but also seen as *legitimate* by voters.
3. Take the time to get the process right, at the start – get independent , expert advice early on
4. The referendum rules are critical to the outcome
5. ‘Let the people decide’ – to help choose both the alternate system(s) on offer and to confirm the final choice
6. Invest in the highest quality public education campaign available – accessible and neutral, but give them licence to be brave
7. Remember, electoral reform is not for the faint of heart
8. Expect the unexpected (or as kiwis would say ‘\$#&@’ happens) so roll with the punches
9. Blind luck and plain bad luck will play a part – remember to stay calm and carry on.

