



LIVING THE KIWI DREAM?

POLITICS AND PUBLIC OPINION
IN NEW ZEALAND



LORD ASHCROFT KCMG PC

LORD ASHCROFT POLLS





NEW ZEALAND

SOUTH
PACIFIC
OCEAN

North
Island

East
Cape

Tasman
Sea

SOUTH
PACIFIC
OCEAN

South
Island

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INTRODUCTION BY LORD ASHCROFT

If it seems odd that a British businessman and philanthropist should devote nearly three months to researching and analysing politics and public opinion on the other side of the world, let me explain.

The first reason is that over the years I have been fortunate enough to spend a good deal of time in New Zealand. I have many friends there, and I'm always eager to discover more about this beautiful and remarkable country. I hope this research – encompassing New Zealanders' attitudes to political and social issues, the economy, their country's overall direction and its place in the world – will prove valuable to anyone interested in the subject.

The second is that I was keen to see how the dynamics that have shaped recent politics in the UK, the US and Europe, where I have conducted most of my research to date, are making themselves felt in other democracies. As honorary chairman of the International Democrat Union, the global alliance of centre-right political parties, I have a further interest in studying how voters around the world view the challenges and opportunities that face them and the impact this has on political debate.

Third, New Zealand has enjoyed unaccustomed worldwide attention thanks to its response to the covid pandemic, propelling Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to the status of an international celebrity. I was intrigued to find out more about her apparent political success and to see whether New Zealanders themselves accord their leader as much reverence as do the pundits overseas – and where this leaves the National Party opposition.

In fact, my research – comprising a 5,000-sample poll and focus groups of New Zealanders from a wide range of backgrounds throughout the country – found very wide support for the way Ardern handled the pandemic in its initial stages. Although people readily acknowledge that geography played a part in helping shield New Zealand from the virus, her decision to lock down “fast and hard” when the crisis struck is widely applauded. Her ability to speak for and to the country – as in the aftermath of the Christchurch mosque shootings in 2019 – are appreciated across the political spectrum.

More than eighteen months after the covid outbreak, however, an unmistakable element of frustration has begun to creep in. Many see the country's sluggish vaccine programme as a failure that has held back the return to normality (“there are countries that end with ‘-stan’ that have had better vaccine rollouts than we have,” as one voter complained). The government's recent move away from its “zero covid” policy, which many saw as a recipe for permanent isolation and endless lockdowns at a time when the rest of the world was approaching business as usual, is no doubt partly an acknowledgment of that growing impatience.

Despite this, Ardern dominates the scene after last year's convincing election victory and is far and away the country's most popular political figure. The National Party, by contrast, seems to people to be divided

and demoralized, and with no clear sense of direction. It is hard to escape the parallels with the UK Conservatives in the early years of Tony Blair, when the Tories found it hard to gain a foothold in public debate. Add to that the presence of covid as the pre-eminent issue of the day, and – again, in common with Britain’s current Labour opposition – it is an uphill struggle to win any kind of hearing.

There is no quick or easy way back for a party in such a position, and no substitute for hard work and patience. (Former Tory leader William Hague predicted at the time that voters’ attitude to Blair’s New Labour would go through four phases: fascination, admiration, disillusionment and contempt. As he now says, he was right, but he didn’t expect it to take 13 years). This is especially true in the absence of a seismic catalyst for change on the scale of Brexit, which radically realigned party support in Britain and helped propel Boris Johnson to an 80-seat majority with the backing of many former Labour voters in seats the Conservatives would once have thought unwinnable.

But we did detect some straws in the wind. Whether people feel life in their country is better or worse than it was 30 years ago can be a telling barometer of opinion. The fact that I found voters split down the middle on this question does not signal a general moral malaise but a nagging doubt as to whether the kind of life New Zealanders would recently have aspired to as a matter of course was now attainable for any but the most fortunate. Voters rate housing as the single most important issue facing the country, even ahead of dealing with the pandemic. Whatever the causes – new infrastructure failing to keep pace with immigration, or homebuyers being priced out by investors driven into property by low interest rates – the results are clear to them: growing inequality between those on and off the property ladder, parents worried about prospects for their children, and young people wondering at the point of trying to make a go of things in New Zealand. Some told us they felt that whether or not they were successful in life was now completely out of their hands.

Such views are not universal – most still feel lucky to be in what they believe is still one of the best places in the world to live – but other pressures are crowding in. The cost of living was spiralling, people told us; healthcare was not what it should be (the Starship national children’s hospital having to screen TV ads to fundraise for new intensive care beds was cited many times), transport infrastructure was lacking, and crime was becoming a frightening feature of daily life in what people had always considered an unusually safe and peaceful country.

Nor is Ardern herself politically invulnerable. Her saintly demeanour has so far served her well, but this was the subject of more than a few tongue-in-cheek references during our research. There is also a feeling that she benefits from very professional but tightly controlled PR. When we asked our focus groups to imagine each political party as a house (another revealing exercise, however fanciful it may sound), most thought Labour’s would be a normal, cheerful, comfortable sort of place – but “there would be portrait of Jacinda in the hallway, like Mother Theresa” and the Prime Minister herself would be “in the kitchen, pretending to cook.”

No-one will criticise a leader for good presentation, but these things could soon start to grate as attention turns from the pandemic towards her biggest Achilles heel: delivery. The failure of the Kiwibuild scheme to come anywhere close to meeting its homebuilding targets is only the most glaring example of the gap people are beginning to see between empathy and results.

This presents an opportunity for the National Party, but there is also a trap. Parties often assume that the things that most annoy them about their opponents are also their opponents' biggest weaknesses, but this is not always true. One big concern for the current opposition is the government's approach to the rights of indigenous people, crystallised in the plan for a new Māori Health Authority to work alongside Health NZ. The concern – respectable enough and shared by many New Zealanders – is that separate institutions and public services based on culture and ethnicity are more likely to divide people than unite them. But as with so much in politics, motivation is crucial: such a message must go alongside a clear determination to deal with the real problems – in this case, serious health inequalities – that gave rise to the idea in the first place. By the same token, there is no mileage for the right in trying to politicise questions like transgender rights, which voters from all parties told us they consider a private matter of personal decency and social acceptance. Launching any kind of “war on woke” by putting such cultural questions at the forefront of party political debate would be regarded as horrifyingly American and met with distaste.

One advantage National has over its Blair-era sister party is that its brand is not nearly as badly broken. It needs to be reinvigorated, but not detoxified. National is not seen as the nasty party, as the Tories once were, and many still associate it with business and sound economic management. In time, a left-leaning government failing to deliver on its promises while a generation wonders where its opportunities will come from ought to provide ideal territory for a pro-enterprise centre-right party. As things stand, however, its lunch is being eaten by ACT, whose distinctively libertarian message is finding a ready audience among those who feel the principal opposition has run out of steam. But as the bigger and more established party, only National is seen as an alternative government.

As anyone who was there during the Tories' extended stint in opposition will tell you, there are no short-cuts back to power for a party ejected from office. What matters is the voters. As in the UK and elsewhere, they are willing to cut the government some slack while it deals with a crisis. But the post-covid questions are piling up, on housing, crime, transport, health, infrastructure and the restoration of the “Kiwi dream”. Before long, the voters will be looking for answers. Parties on either side that drift off into their own marginal preoccupations will come unstuck. Parties that have those answers will be in government.

Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC

October 2021



NEW ZEALAND AND COVID

PANDEMIC PERFORMANCE

Most New Zealanders said they thought the government had done a good job handling various aspects of the pandemic. Large majorities of all parties' voters said it had done well on controlling the spread of the virus, introducing restrictions at the right time, following the right scientific advice, communicating the rules clearly, having rules that were sensible and proportionate and protecting people's jobs and incomes.

Opinion was more mixed when it came to providing New Zealanders with a covid vaccine. While 62% thought the government had done well on this measure (including 76% of 2020 Labour voters), 4 in 10 National voters and nearly half (49%) of ACT voters thought it had done badly.

On most measures, women were more likely than men to say the government had done well, and older voters were more likely than younger voters to give the government credit. This effect was most pronounced when it came to protecting jobs and incomes: only 50% of 18-24s said it had done well on this score (though they were more likely to give a neutral response than to say it had done badly), compared to nearly 7 in 10 of those aged 65 or over.

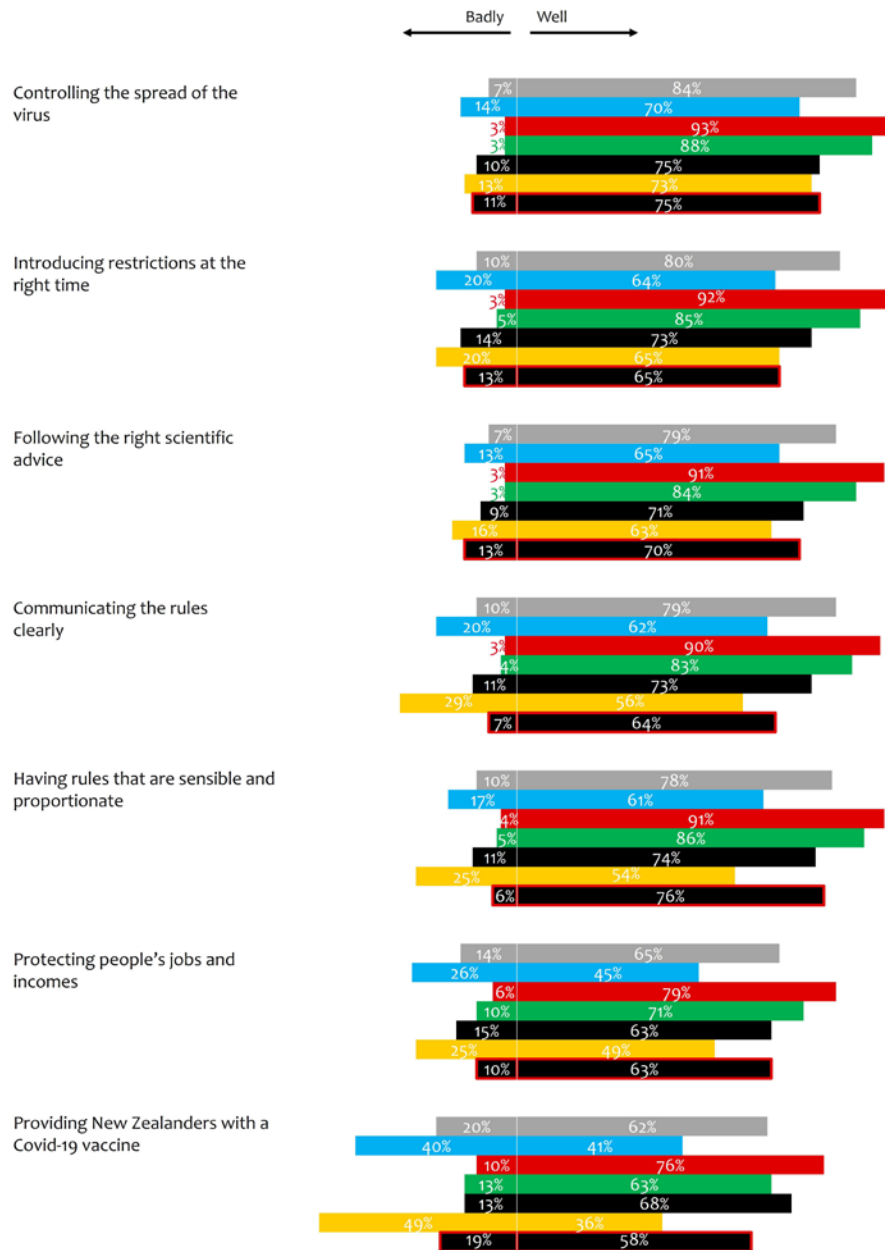
Though broadly approving of its performance on most aspects of the pandemic, voters overall tended to feel that the government had if anything underreacted to covid. Again, there was little variation between parties, though National and ACT voters were the most likely to think the authorities had overreacted, with Labour and NZ First voters the most likely to think the opposite.

Labour and Green voters felt more strongly than most that the covid response had given them greater confidence in the authorities' ability to make the right decisions during a crisis. National and ACT voters were the only groups which leaned towards the opposite view, that the pandemic had undermined their confidence in the authorities.

In our focus groups, voters of all political persuasions agreed that the country had responded well in the early stages of the pandemic. Even if New Zealand had been helped by its geography and small population, most felt the government had acted correctly and decisively in imposing early restrictions.

As time went on, however, a degree of frustration had begun to set in. Many felt that the authorities were using the same tools now as they had at the beginning of the pandemic, while the approach in the rest of the world had evolved.

When it comes to dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, how well or badly do you think the government has done in each of the following areas?



2020 vote



Lord Ashcroft Polls

@LordAshcroft

Here are several pairs of statements. In each case, please indicate where your own view lies on a 100-point scale, where zero means you completely agree with the first statement and 100 means you completely agree with the second.

[NB Mean scores]



Lord Ashcroft Polls
@lordashcrofts

"I think the government did a good job, but they haven't changed in all the time we've been in covid. The strategy with Delta is the same as it was in March last year. They're not taking into account that the world's changed."

"At the time it was the best way to handle it. What frustrates me is that we have had a decent period of time to sort things out, to learn from what happened last year, and we haven't. It's like Groundhog Day."

"We felt quite good 18 months ago when the rest of the world was in major lockdown, but now it feels like they're all opening up and we're just stuck here. We can't see the light at the end of the tunnel."

In particular, many blamed what they saw as the unnecessarily slow vaccine roll-out for the continuation of what they considered an inflexible and heavy-handed approach. This was especially true on the South Island, where the risk of contracting the virus seemed extremely low.

"Locking down was the right decision, but we can't keep using lockdown as a tool going forward. When most people get vaccinated, public sentiment is going to change because it will be, 'I'm vaccinated, but I can't do anything. So what's the point?' There have to be more rewards to encourage people and give people more freedoms."

"The initial strategy worked, but now we're on Delta. If the vaccine rollout was done earlier, we should have avoided this lockdown."

"I feel like we went from being one of the best countries in the world with our response to COVID to one of the worst in vaccine rollout. There are countries that end with '-stan' that have had better vaccine rollouts than we have."

"We are waning a bit in the South Island. I can appreciate that Aucklanders are having it much tougher than us. But having restrictions on what we can and can't do in the South Island is definitely hard to follow when we don't have any cases. My business is suffering and there is no wage subsidy to cover the cost of the losses."

A feeling that there seemed to be no "light at the end of the tunnel" added to the frustration. Few felt that there was a clear plan for life to return to something closer to normal, and many decisions seemed to be taken at the last minute.

"It's really weird being only a few days ahead what's happening. People are quite smart and could probably deal with 'if this happens, then in six months' time we expect this."

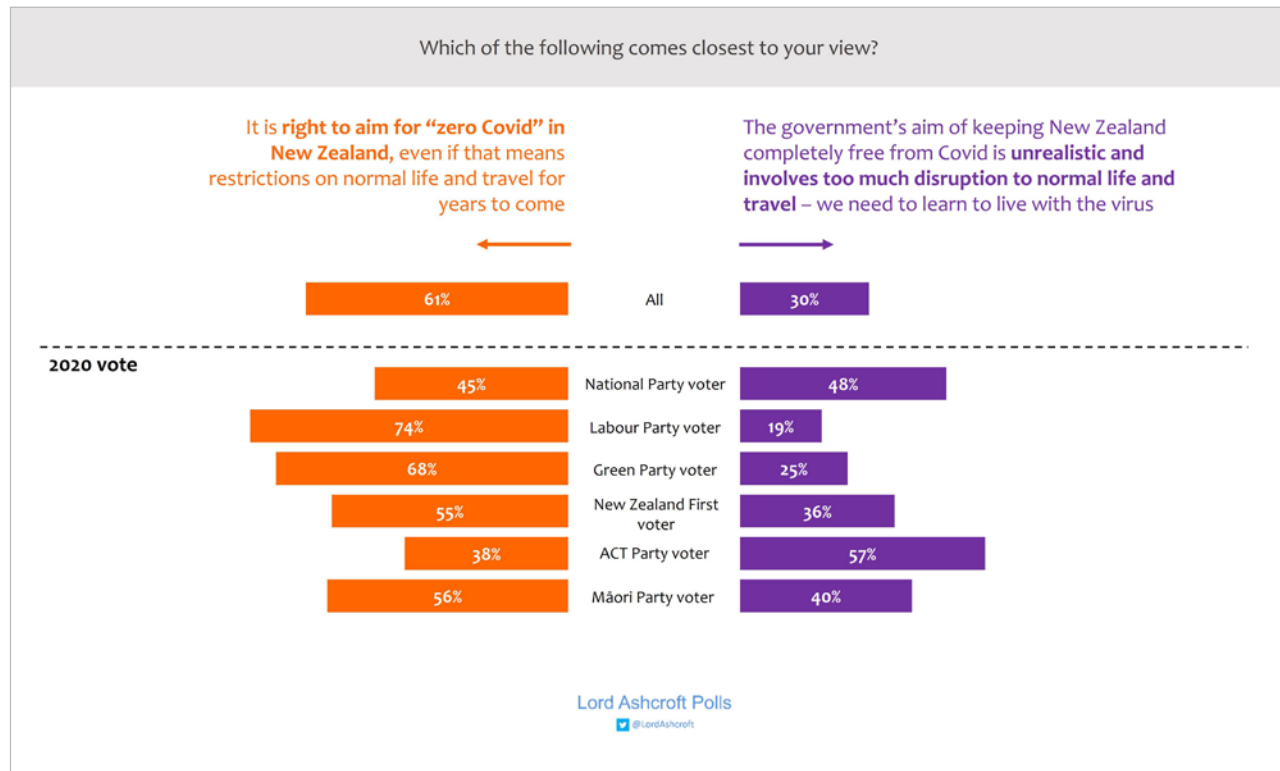
"As a small business owner, we've got no idea what's going on. We don't know where they're going to go, and they won't communicate anything so people can't prepare and organise their lives. It's frustrating at the moment."

"It's quite sad for the young Kiwis overseas at the moment that there's not a better way to let more of them come back home. We need a better plan."

"There are no targets after vaccination. If you get a jab, then what? You can't leave the country. We still don't have dates for anything, which is not good."

ZERO COVID?

Just over 6 in 10 New Zealanders (61%) said they thought it was right for the country to aim for “zero covid,” even if that meant restrictions on normal life and travel for years to come. Support for the policy was highest among those who voted Labour (74%) or Green (68%) at the 2020 election.



Just 3 in 10 agreed with the opposing statement that “we need to learn to live with the virus” because keeping New Zealand completely free from covid was unrealistic and involves too much disruption to normal life and travel. National Party voters were the most likely to think this (48%), though they were almost evenly divided on the question. ACT voters were the only political group among whom a majority (57%) took this view.

Support for the zero covid policy was slightly higher among women (63%) than men (58%). In terms of age, support was lowest among 25-34s (54%) and rose to 68% among those aged 65 or over. There was slightly higher agreement with the policy among white New Zealanders (63%) than among Māori (52%) and people with an Asian background (56%).

Similarly, there was relatively little difference between political groups when it came to the idea of the government mandating compulsory vaccination to protect society from infectious diseases. However, women and (especially) younger people, as well as Māori and Pacific Islanders, were more likely to have

some sympathy for the opposing statement that the government should not interfere in people's private healthcare decisions by making vaccines compulsory.

Many in our focus groups were sceptical about the government's policy, then still in force, of aiming for "zero covid" in New Zealand. Often they had reasoned that since the virus would not be eliminated world-wide, keeping it out of New Zealand forever would mean permanent restrictions on travel or an endless series of lockdowns, while the rest of the world was learning to adapt.

"I think we have to live with covid. We should all get vaccinated to avoid future lockdowns. I doubt an elimination strategy would work."

"I feel like the rest of the world is getting on with it now and learning to live with it. Most of us get a flu jab every year. We haven't got rid of it, we've just learned to live with it. I feel like we're getting left behind because of our take on some things."

This view was not universal, however. Some, particularly supporters of the current government, felt it was right to be taking a very cautious approach.

"I think the government is doing the best it can to stop the spread."

"There is the socio-economic cost, but we are talking about the cost of human life. There will be a cost which will take some time to regain, but once you die there is no coming back."

Healthcare more generally was a serious concern for people in our research, especially older voters. Many felt the pandemic had exposed weaknesses that had been building for some time.

"It's just not been run properly. The government is spending billions of dollars a week on stuff that should have been dealt with a while ago. And you've got hospitals like Starship, the National Children's Hospital, having to resort to raising funds by advertising on TV for ICU beds. They shouldn't be having to do that."

POLITICIANS AND THE PANDEMIC

In our focus groups there was widespread praise for Jacinda Ardern's handling of the pandemic, especially in its early stages. Voters from across the political spectrum felt she had acted decisively and effectively

during the initial crisis and had done a good job of reassuring and communicating with New Zealanders. Some were also quietly proud that New Zealand and its Prime Minister had been acclaimed around the world for their handling of the situation, at least at the outset. However, some were less impressed with her approach as time wore on.

"She's had a really tough time. Probably going back to the wars, I don't know that there's a Prime Minister who's had the issues she's had with the shootings and now the pandemic. I think she's done really well. And part of that is personality, because she's a very empathetic person."

"It puts us on the map and it puts us in the news. We're a small country and we like it when we see our name being put up there positively in the world news, BBC, Fox, CNN or whatever. We like to see our name out there when we do good things."

"Jacinda's a good communicator and was good in crisis management, but ultimately she lacks leadership in coming up with a clear strategy."

Few had been impressed with how the opposition parties had handled themselves during the pandemic. While a few had noted the National Party and ACT asking legitimate questions about the strategy and especially its economic consequences, many complained that National in particular had been either too compliant or unduly critical. Several commented that David Seymour and former Prime Minister John Key had been the most effective opposition voices.

"It depends who you look at in the National Party. Some will praise the government but others, all they do is criticise."

"If Jacinda came out and said the sky was blue, you'd hear Judith saying 'no, it's not.'"

"She criticised Siouxsie Wiles for not wearing a mask, then she got caught in Queenstown not wearing a mask in a café. It's quite hard to follow a party when things like that happen."

"Other than ACT, everyone's giving them a bit of a free ride because of the danger. It's been a year or so, so people are starting to think about the economic consequences, but the opposition aren't really doing that. What are we going to do with all this debt? It's like everyone's focused on the here and now, and they're squabbling over MIQ [Managed Isolation and Quarantine] lotteries. Is that the most important thing for the country?"

HEALTH AND THE STATE

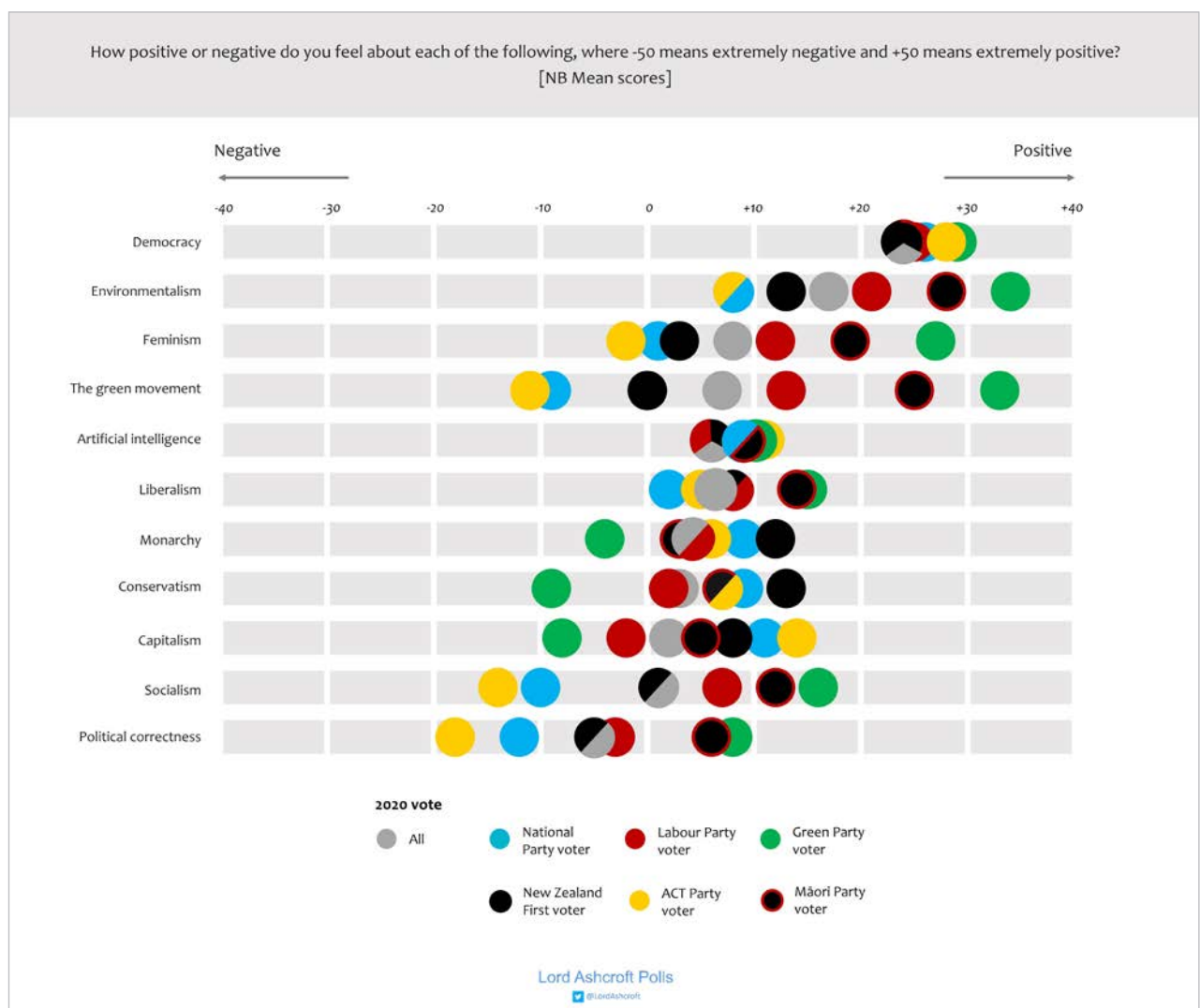
A broader question about the government's role in public health revealed bigger differences by party support than by demographic group. Green voters leant towards the view that the state should do more to make sure people live healthy lifestyles through things like taxes on unhealthy foods; National and ACT voters were more likely to think people should make their own lifestyle choices without interference from the government. Labour voters were close to the centre of gravity of opinion, which was balanced between the two propositions.



CULTURE AND SOCIETY

SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

We asked our poll respondents how they felt about various political ideas, on a scale from -50 (extremely negative) to +50 (extremely positive). Democracy was seen very positively, with little variation between political groups – though the oldest voters gave it a much higher score (+31.5 among those aged 65 or over) than the youngest (+16.9 among 18-24s). White voters (+25.4) also had a more positive view than Māori (+15.4).

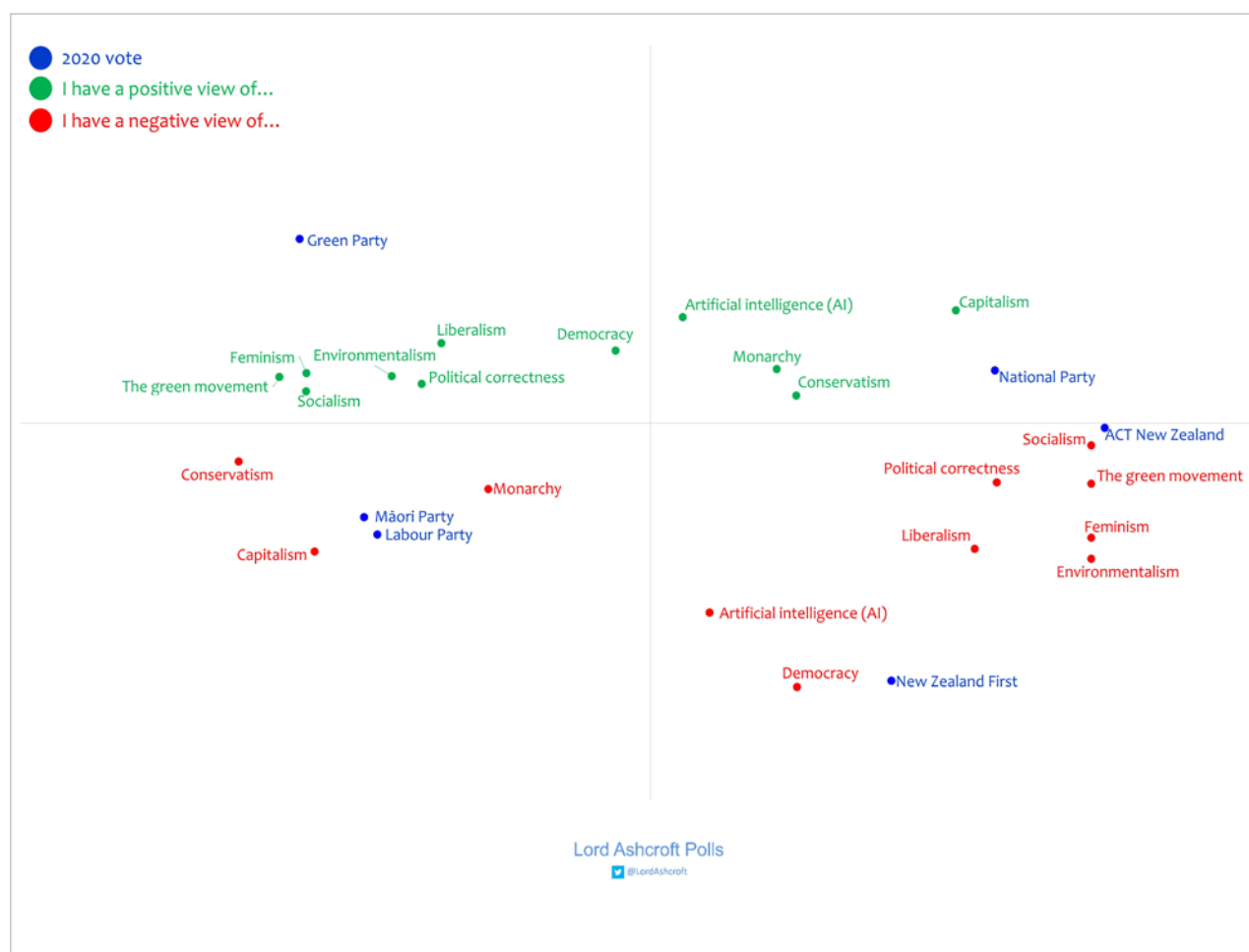


New Zealanders took a net positive view of monarchy, though only just (+4 overall), with NZ First (+12.1) the most positive. Green voters (-4.29) were the only political group whose net view of monarchy was more negative than positive. Otherwise the most notable differences were between younger voters (+0.3 of 18-24s and -0.16 among 25-34s) and older voters (+11.9 among those aged 65+).

New Zealanders as a whole took a marginally positive view of capitalism, with ACT and National voters the most positive and 2020 Green voters the most negative. Asian-background respondents (65% of whom had a positive view) were more favourable than white (53%) or Māori (55%) voters.

Green voters were the most positive about socialism – measurably more so than Labour voters – with National and (especially) ACT voters the most opposed. More than two thirds of 18-24s put themselves on the favourable side of the scale, compared to 41% of those aged 65 or over. All groups took a more negative view of political correctness than of socialism.

While all groups took a positive view of environmentalism, Green and Labour voters were much more enthusiastic than those who had vote National or ACT. It was also notable that environmentalism as a cause received significantly higher scores than the green movement itself, especially from National, ACT and older voters.



Political maps like this one show how different attributes and opinions interact with one another. The closer the plot points are to each other the more closely related they are. In this example, we can clearly see the relationship between different parties' voters and how they see these ideas. For example, those who voted National or ACT in 2020 are closest to those most likely to have a positive view of capitalism and a negative view of socialism, political correctness and the green movement. Those with the most positive views of socialism, feminism and environmentalism are equidistant between those most likely to have voted Green and Labour.

OPPORTUNITY AND SUCCESS

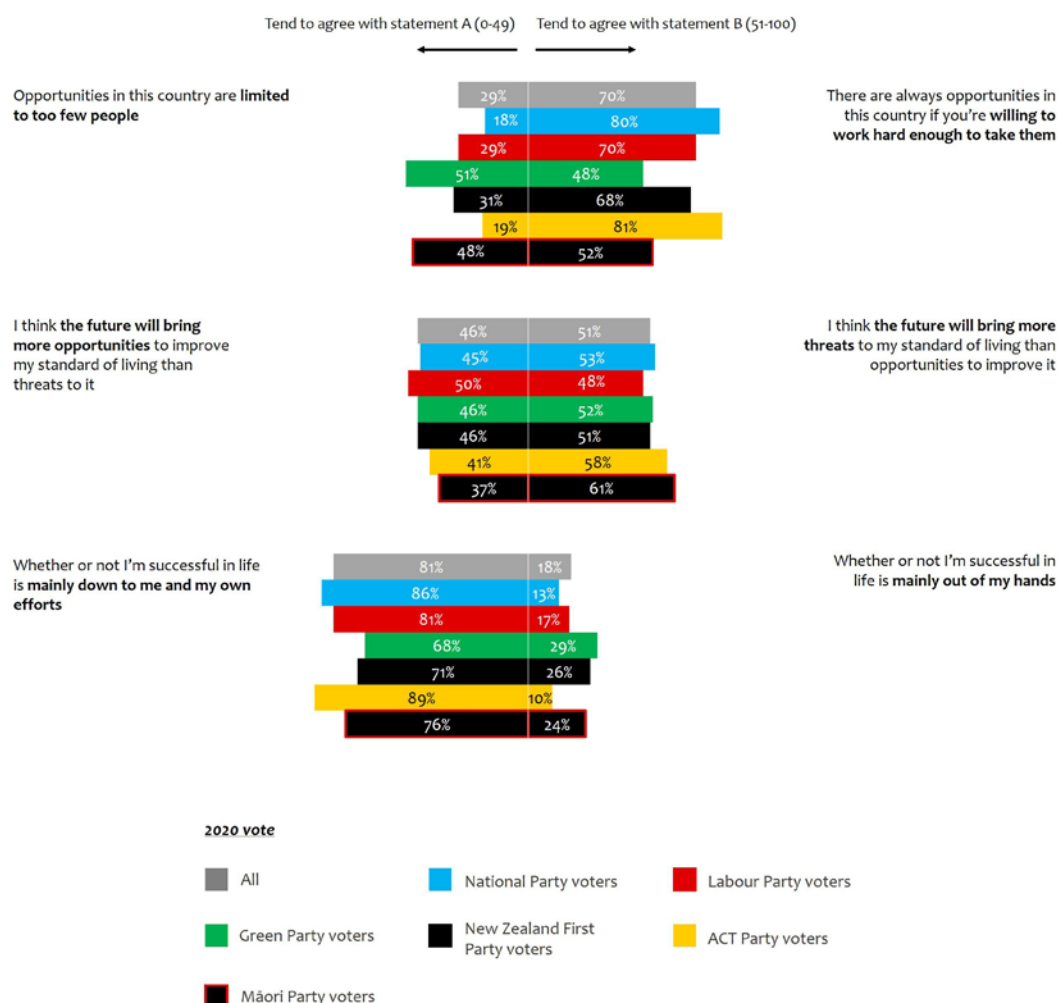
Respondents as a whole – and especially National and ACT voters – tended to agree that there are always opportunities in New Zealand for those willing to work hard enough to take them. Green voters were the only political group more likely to lean towards the view that opportunities in the country are limited to too few people. 85% of voters aged 65+ tended to the view that opportunities are readily available for the hard-working, compared to just over half (58%) of 18-24s.

By even bigger majorities, most New Zealanders tended to agree that whether or not they are successful in life was down to them and their own efforts, rather than that their success or otherwise was out of their hands. However, nearly three in ten (29%) of those aged 18-24 and nearly a quarter (24%) of 25-34s took the latter view, compared to just 8% of the oldest voters. Māori voters were more likely to lean towards feeling that whether or not they were successful was out of their hands (32%) than Pacific (24%), white (15%) or Asian-background voters (26%).

Despite these attitudes to the relationship between success and individual effort, most groups leant marginally to the view that the future would bring more threats to their standard of living than opportunities to improve it. Labour voters were the only political group more likely to lean to the expectation that the future would bring more opportunities to improve their standard of living than threats to it. All demographic groups were closely divided on the question; Asian-background voters were the only group to tend towards the optimistic view.

New Zealanders were almost evenly split as to whether life in the country was now better (50%) or worse (48%) than it was 30 years ago. This was also true of voters for the major parties, though Labour and Green voters leaned more to the view that things were better, while ACT and NZ First voters tended more to the opposing view. While white voters were also evenly split, Asian-background voters were more likely to think things had improved, while Māori voters leaned in the other direction. Notably, the youngest (55% of 18-24s) and oldest (53% of those aged 65+) were the age groups most likely to say life in New Zealand had improved over the last 30 years.

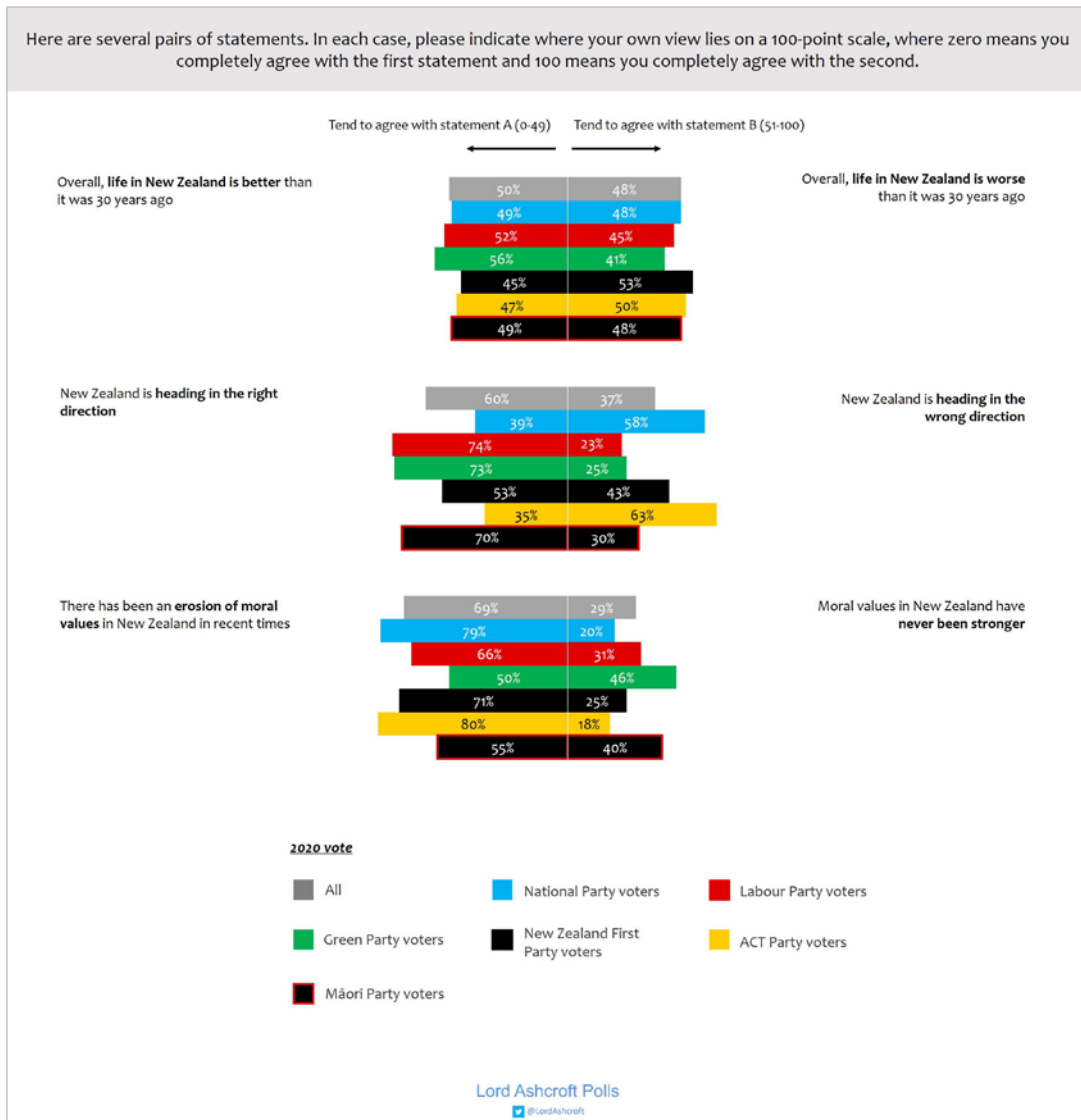
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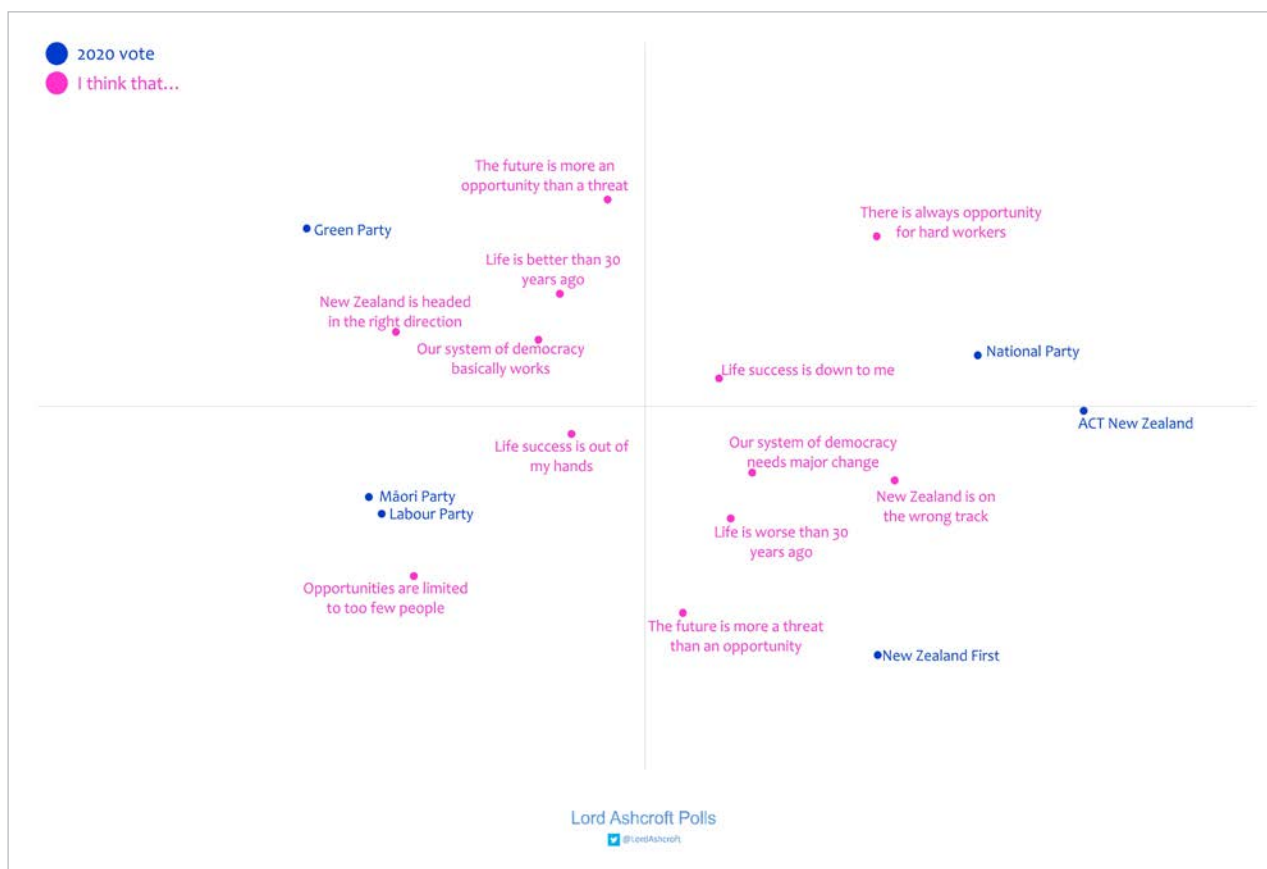
However, a clear majority felt there had been an erosion of moral values in New Zealand in recent times. This was especially true among white, male and older voters, though majorities of all parties voters except the Greens (who were evenly divided) tended towards this view.

Despite this, New Zealanders were more likely than not to think the country was now heading in the right direction. This was especially true of Labour and Green voters, around three quarters of whom thought things were heading the right way, while NZ First voters agreed by a smaller margin. Majorities of those who voted National or ACT in 2020 thought things were heading in the wrong direction. Again, the youngest and oldest voters were more likely than 25 to 64-year-olds to think things were on the right track.



In a separate question, the great majority of respondents were inclined to think of New Zealand as one of the best places to live in the world. More than 7 in 10 18-24s took this view, rising to 90% of those aged 65 or over. White voters were slightly more likely to think this (83%) than Māori (74%) and Asian-background voters (72%).

This map shows how peak agreement with each of these propositions is distributed in relation to peak support for each party at the last election. For example, those most likely to feel that opportunities are limited to too few people and that whether or not they are successful in life is out of their hands are closest to peak support for Labour, while those most likely to feel the future is more of an opportunity than a threat and that life in New Zealand is worse than it was 30 years ago are closest to NZ First territory. Peak support for the National Party in 2020 is closest to peak belief that there is always opportunity in New Zealand for those willing to work hard enough to take them.



Our focus groups shed further light on these views about life and opportunity in New Zealand. Most said they felt fortunate to be in the country and particularly valued what they felt was an unusually friendly, open and tolerant society.

"I find that younger people are more accepting of other people, other ways of living."

"Things are getting tougher but there are still opportunities around. You just need to go looking for them. People still take care of each other and look out for each other here."

"I'm pretty much grateful to be in New Zealand. And I think if you keep your nose clean, you make sure you're educated, there's no reason you can't create opportunity for yourself here. Some people have bad luck, but I think we're fortunate to have quite a few opportunities here, especially as women."

However, all groups felt that it was harder to get on and achieve the "Kiwi dream" than it had once been because of the rising cost of living, and of housing in particular. People blamed a combination of factors, including large-scale migration without a corresponding investment in infrastructure, and low interest rates

making property a relatively more attractive investment vehicle. As a result, many worried that they or their children may never be able to afford their own home. Some worried that this would lead to many feeling demoralised (as some admitted they already did), that they had no prospect of gaining a real stake in the country and looking to move to Australia or further afield. Growing inequality between homeowners and others was another worrying consequence for our groups.

"The population has grown so fast. They let all these skilled workers in because we need them, but it's caused so many problems. I wish we could train our own people that are living here first, and then if we're short, look overseas. We've brought in all these people and haven't got the infrastructure to cope."

"We'd like to believe we're an equal society, we're all the same, we've got equal opportunity, but in the last few years we've realised that's a fallacy. Inequality levels are rising super-fast. If you're in the housing market you'll probably be OK, but our kids are not going to be OK."

"I had a superb education and did everything by the book and went overseas and had my eyes opened. And then I came back and did the same thing for my children. But as soon as my son was offered a position at a university overseas, I said 'Go! Get away from New Zealand as fast as you can!'"

"As soon as you break the contract where they don't believe there's anything in New Zealand for them, why would they stick around? Why would they work hard and try to get ahead? If you're in your late 40s and onwards, it's the good life, but I think about the hollowing out of that 22 to 35 bracket. If no-one thinks they can buy a house or anything they'll either go to Australia or think, 'why bother?'"

"It's 100% beyond my control. We have reasonable jobs, but we're probably never going to get onto the housing market if it continues at this rate. The Kiwi dream that I grew up with, kids, a quarter acre in the city, none of that is possible anymore."

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Our survey included two questions designed to assess attitudes to matters of law and order. Asking people where they stood between two propositions – "I favour more jail time for criminals" and "The justice system

should be more about rehabilitation than punishment” – revealed sharply divergent opinions between different parties’ voters. Those who voted for the National Party or ACT in 2020 placed themselves well to the “more jail time” end of the spectrum, while Green and Māori Party voters put themselves even further towards the “more about rehabilitation” end of the scale. Labour voters were close to the centre, and to the centre of gravity of opinion overall.

Women were marginally closer to the first statement than men, but there was a clear progression by age group. While 18-24s placed themselves on the “rehabilitation” side of the line with a mean score of 55, those aged 65 or over were the mirror image, with 45. Asian-background voters were further towards the “jail time” end of the scale (41) than white (46) and Māori voters (56).



When it came to the trade-off between security and civil liberties, political differences were much less pronounced. ACT, Green and Māori party voters put themselves on the “freedom, privacy and civil liberties” side of the line while NZ First, National and Labour voters – as well as the mean score for New Zealanders as a whole – were slightly on the side of saying it was more important “to protect our safety and security”. However, all parties’ voters were centred within the range of 47 to 55. There was little variation by age or between men and women, though voters from an Asian background leaned more towards safety and security (56) than white (53) or Māori (48) respondents.

Crime was mentioned as an issue of growing concern by many in our focus groups, whatever their political background. Many believed violent crime was rising, and many had local examples to illustrate the point. The groups believed that drugs, gangs and guns had become much more prevalent in New Zealand in recent months and years. Several cited the Christchurch mosque shootings as a prompt to reconsider the idea that New Zealand was an unusually peaceful and orderly society.

"The sentences you get for crimes are quite ridiculous. It's just a slap on the hand with a wet flannel sometimes. There was a case recently where a 27-year-old bashed an 82-year-old and all he got was community service."

"Crime, drug use, gangs. Every neighbourhood, every suburb, would have a known house that you could go into that has something. I'm pretty sure I've got neighbours round the corner dealing something out of their house."

"You never used to read about murders, but there have been about three in the last week."

"You spend all this money, you work so hard, and then a house three doors down is getting broken into. Then two doors down. You think, we're next. It's a real issue here."

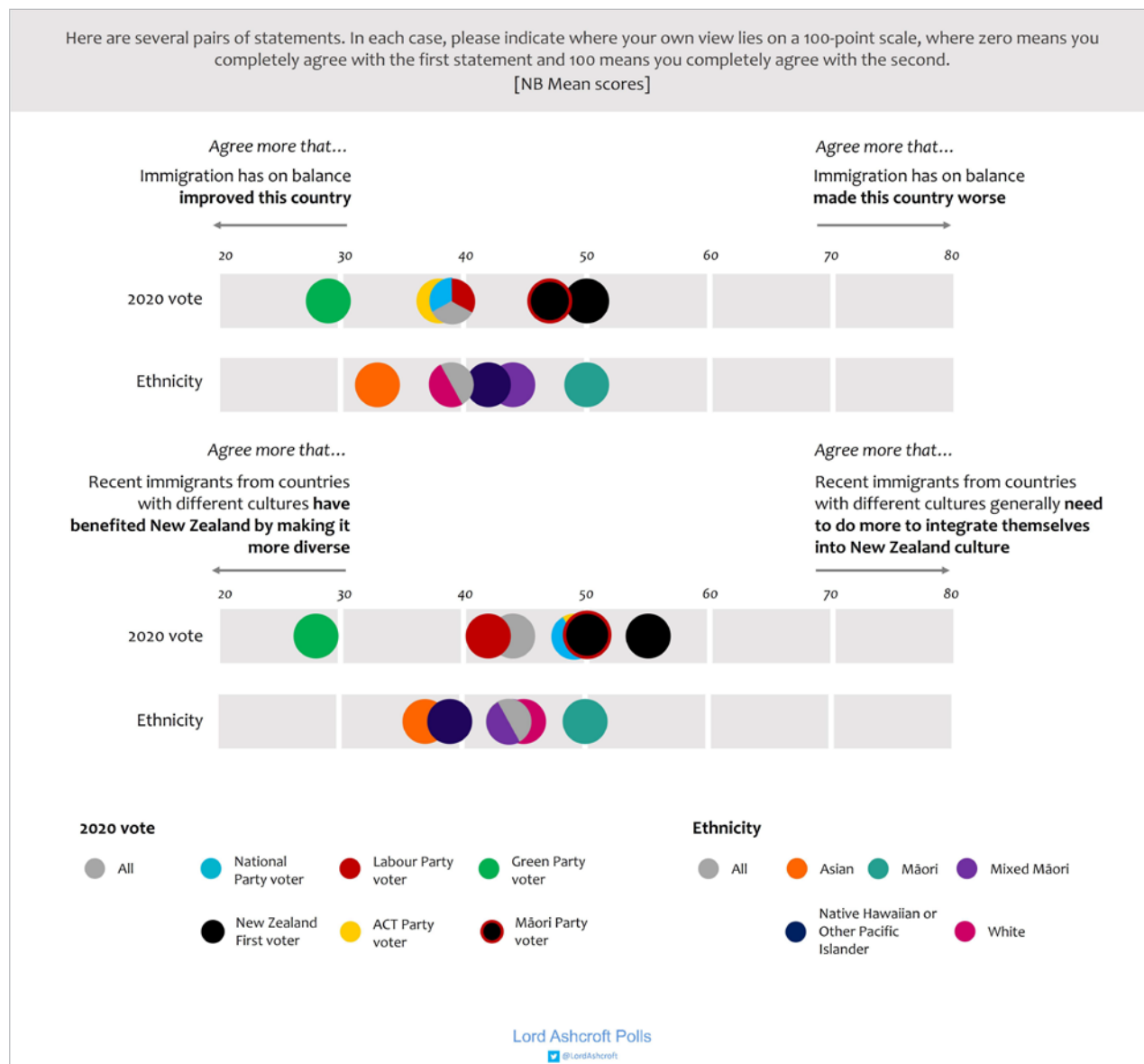
"The Christchurch attack took another thing off the list, that New Zealand is no longer special. We're not immune to these problems. Bad stuff happens in New Zealand that shouldn't happen. I'm hopeful about New Zealand, but we need to get more realistic about our society."

IMMIGRATION, IDENTITY AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

New Zealanders as a whole were more likely to think that immigration had on balance improved the country – especially 2020 Green voters – than to have made it worse. NZ First voters were the most ambivalent on the issue. Māori voters were closely divided on the question, while those from an Asian background felt most strongly that immigration had been a force for good.

There was a somewhat broader spread of opinion between political groups as to whether recent immigrants had benefited New Zealand by making it more diverse, or if recent immigrants from countries with different cultures needed to do more to integrate themselves. New Zealanders as a whole tended towards

the former first statement, with Green voters again doing so the most strongly. NZ First voters were the only political group more likely to call for greater integration. Once again, the centre of gravity of Māori opinion was exactly between the two statements. Older voters were slightly more likely than younger people to feel more integration was needed.



A much greater divergence of opinion was evident on the question of indigenous rights. Green, Māori and Pacific voters felt the most strongly that the government needed to do more to recognise indigenous and Māori rights, while National and (especially) ACT voters were equally far to the other end of the spectrum, believing the government had already done too much on the issue. The balance of opinion among white and Asian-background voters, as well as of New Zealanders as a whole, was slightly against doing more to recognise Māori rights. Women were more in favour of greater recognition than men, and support for this

view declined sharply with age: more than 7 in 10 18-24s felt the government should do more, compared to just over 3 in 10 of those aged 65+.



Overall, New Zealanders were more inclined to agree that having laws, institutions and public services that apply to everyone whatever their background was the best way to ensure everyone was treated fairly, rather than having some laws, institutions and public services dedicated to Māori and indigenous people. ACT and National voters felt the most strongly on the issue, while Green and Māori voters were much more closely divided. Asian-background and white voters were had a similar preference for a universal approach over Māori-dedicated services and institutions. Men, women and all age groups were on the same side of the scale, but with men and older voters further towards the universal end.

Many in our focus groups saw much that was positive in the effort to promote the rights and interests of indigenous people, especially in recognising the place of the te reo Māori language, promoting a broader understanding of the country's history and heritage, and addressing inequalities in terms of health, education and opportunity.

"We actively promote multiculturalism in New Zealand, we do a really good job of that. That's one reason it's a really nice place to come and be. I think we really do embrace the melting pot."

"I'm Māori but I grew up in a very Pākehā world, and when I went to school learning Māori wasn't even an option, but it was compulsory to learn Latin. So I'm encouraged by the resurgence of te reo Māori and the true learning and understanding of our history, which has been a very Anglo-Saxon view of the world and has not been honest."

"There's a lot of historical grievances that the modern population have to deal with. They're overrepresented in prison populations, poor health outcomes, poor education outcomes, you name it. So they've got a lot to be angry about."

"I think it's fine as long as it's in moderation. If it's a way of reaching out to people who've maybe had a raw deal in the past or have inherited social problems, that's fine by me."

There were some areas of concern, however, which were not confined to older voters or those on the right of the political spectrum. Some detected an attempt to disown the European element of the country's history, or felt they were being blamed for historical injustices for which they were not themselves responsible. Some also disliked what they saw as an emphasis on points of difference between New Zealand's various people and cultures, which they thought would be more likely to stoke division than promote unity.

"I'm a big fan of inclusivity and equity, but I feel like the push for te reo [the Māori language] has been quite intense. Working in a public sector agency, I don't know whether I'd have got my job if I'd applied today because it's so heavily focused on the need to know te reo. I think we're creating a bit of a pidgin language."

"Companies, even Victoria University of Wellington, they're now putting the Māori name first, and the street names. Even the name of our country they want to change. I feel like they want to take down all those statues of white men and deny that piece of history that is a significant part of who New Zealand is today. I don't think they should just replace that history with Māori New Zealand."

"The reason we left Sri Lanka was the unsettled time when there were ethnic riots. I belong to the minority group, and it all started with language. It created division. There is a real push for Māori which is not going to help New Zealand in the long run."

"I speak to a lot of people who have emigrated to New Zealand and see us heading down the South African path. That biculturalism in New Zealand could end up the way South Africa is now."

"It's quite balanced at this stage, but we seem to focus on smaller, petty issues and forget the holistic approach. For example, you keep increasing the minimum wage and businesses keep increasing costs, so nobody is winning. It's addressing major issues like that which will bring inclusivity and bring everyone together."

"I'm not responsible for what happened 250 years ago. Nobody owns the land, it's not owned by anyone. I'm not responsible for what happened, I can't change it. We all need to live together but we're divided, very divided, and the government is pandering to the minority groups."

"Our history was our history, but let's just move on as one people, instead of always having it thrust at us that we're two people."

We explored these issues further with questions about two specific proposals. First was the plan to create two new healthcare bodies, Health New Zealand and a new Māori Health Authority. As a whole, New Zealanders were nearly twice as likely to oppose the idea as to support it. While 31% agreed it was "right to have a Māori Health Authority which can focus on the needs of Māori people," 59% (including 79% of National voters and 86% who voted for ACT) said it was "wrong for New Zealand to have separate healthcare systems divided along racial lines." Green Party and Māori-background voters were the most supportive of the idea, with 7 in 10 of both groups in favour. Half of Pacific voters said they supported the idea. More than 6 in 10 were opposed to the idea among both white and Asian-background voters. Women (35%) were more favourable towards the proposal than men (27%), while support declined sharply with age: 50% of 18-24s were in favour, compared to just 1 in 5 of those aged 65 or over.

In our focus groups there was some support for the proposal, largely but not exclusively from Labour and Green-leaning voters, usually on the grounds that Māori and indigenous people are more predisposed to certain health conditions than other parts of the population and are less inclined to seek help through the system's existing structures.

"There's a lot of unspoken racism inside the system as it is. And they're just a bit shy to ask for help, or it's not in their cultural ways to ask, so they need better navigation through the system."

"My first reaction was 'why do we need this?' But the issues that affect all the Pacific Islanders are considerably different to Pākehā, Chinese, other New Zealanders. The way they need to be treated or have those needs met are different as well."

"Creating a separate Māori Health Authority just allows those issues to be addressed. It creates greater social cohesion for everyone."

"I think people do need to be treated differently so that there is equality because if you group everyone under the same category you can't meet the needs of the different people."

However, there was a good deal of concern – largely but again not exclusively from those inclined towards the National Party or ACT – that the proposed reorganisation would create division without necessarily solving the problems it was designed to address. Those who had come from other countries with profound divisions often said they worried about introducing separate ethnicity-based institutions in New Zealand.

"All these treaty negotiations to try and get us back to a singular country, and now we're splitting out all these different authorities to give preference to a particular group."

"The government is pandering to about 15% of the population. There are other percentages of the population to be considered."

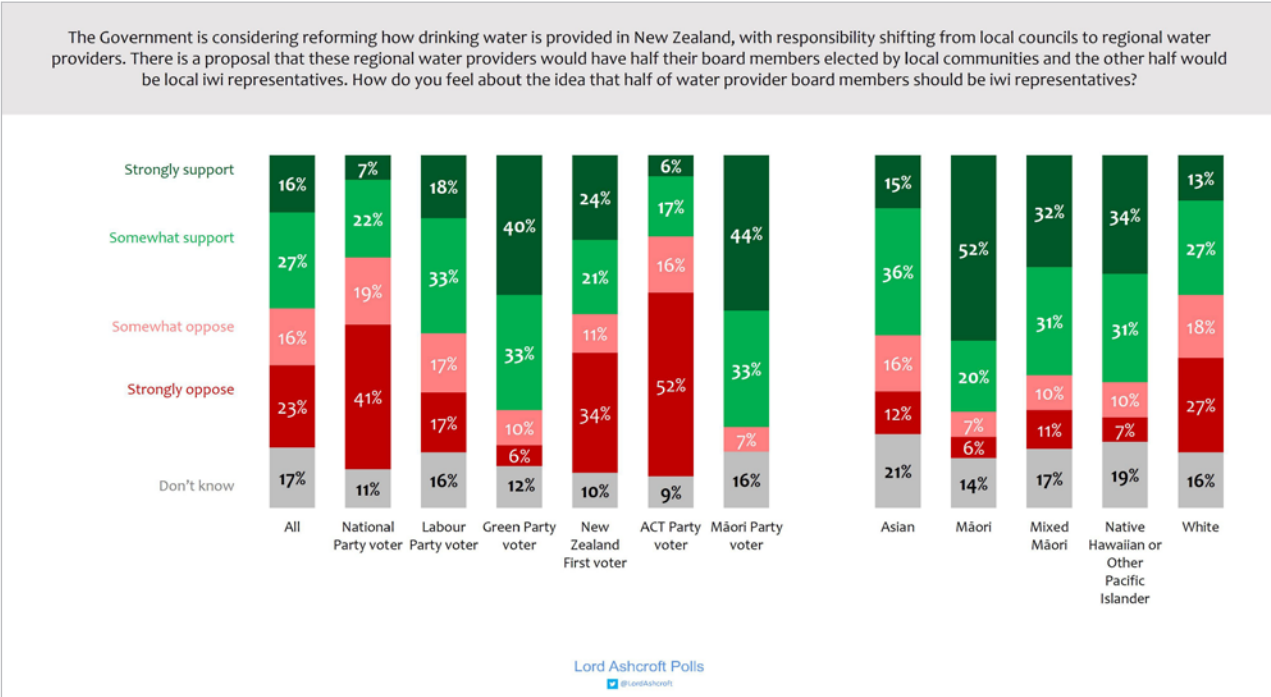
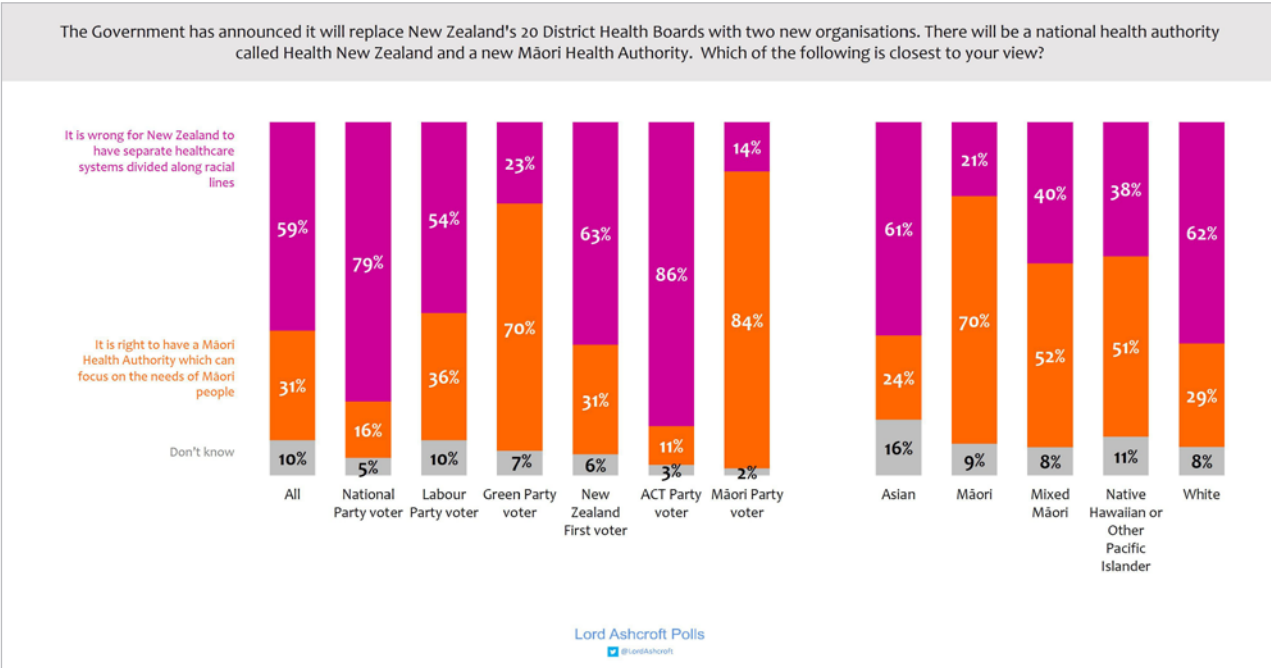
"I grew up in the Middle East where I've seen this all my life, different institutions for different people, whether it's ex-pats and locals or something else. To me, that was like discrimination. You could still address the issues within one authority which would be more inclusive."

"We're getting more and more New Zealanders all the time, and everyone will have different health needs. How many health boards will we need in the future?"

"It will create a them-and-us feeling and widen the gap, rather than fix the concerns with the existing system. Who's going to manage it, who's going to fund it, who's going to work there and who's going to work here? I would rather we came together and fixed the things that are not working. I'd rather be seen as part of the whole team rather than separate."

"It's segregation, at the end of the day. It can feel a bit racist."

New Zealanders as a whole were slightly more likely to support than oppose the idea of new regional water authorities, half of whose board members would be elected while the other half would be local iwi representatives. However, a similar pattern was seen, with National, ACT and older voters the most likely to be opposed.



The survey found a wide diversity of opinion between different groups on a number of other currently controversial issues. Green Party voters were the most strongly in agreement that “someone who identifies

as a woman is a woman, whatever their biological sex". The mean position of voters up to the age of 34 was also on that side of the argument, while older, National and ACT voters were more inclined to the view that "someone who was born male can change their identity and their body, but they cannot actually become a woman". For New Zealanders as a whole, the centre of gravity of opinion was balanced between the two propositions but slightly towards the latter.

Our focus groups noted that issues of gender and identity were becoming more prominent, and most were quite comfortable with this – including those who tended to vote for centre-right parties. Many spontaneously that being "accepting" was an important part of the national character, and several cited the country's support for Laurel Hubbard as part of the New Zealand women's Olympic weightlifting team as an example. The groups tended to see the issue as a private or social matter rather than one of public policy or political debate.

"You have to be mindful. I think if you address someone and it's incorrect, then the common thing is to say 'OK, sure' and address them that way and move on. I would feel bad for people to have to hide who they really are for fear of being embarrassed or persecuted."

"We had that weightlifter, Laurel Hubbard, and it wasn't a big issue. There wasn't much of a row here about it. I mean, she was ridiculed by the world, but New Zealand has just accepted her."

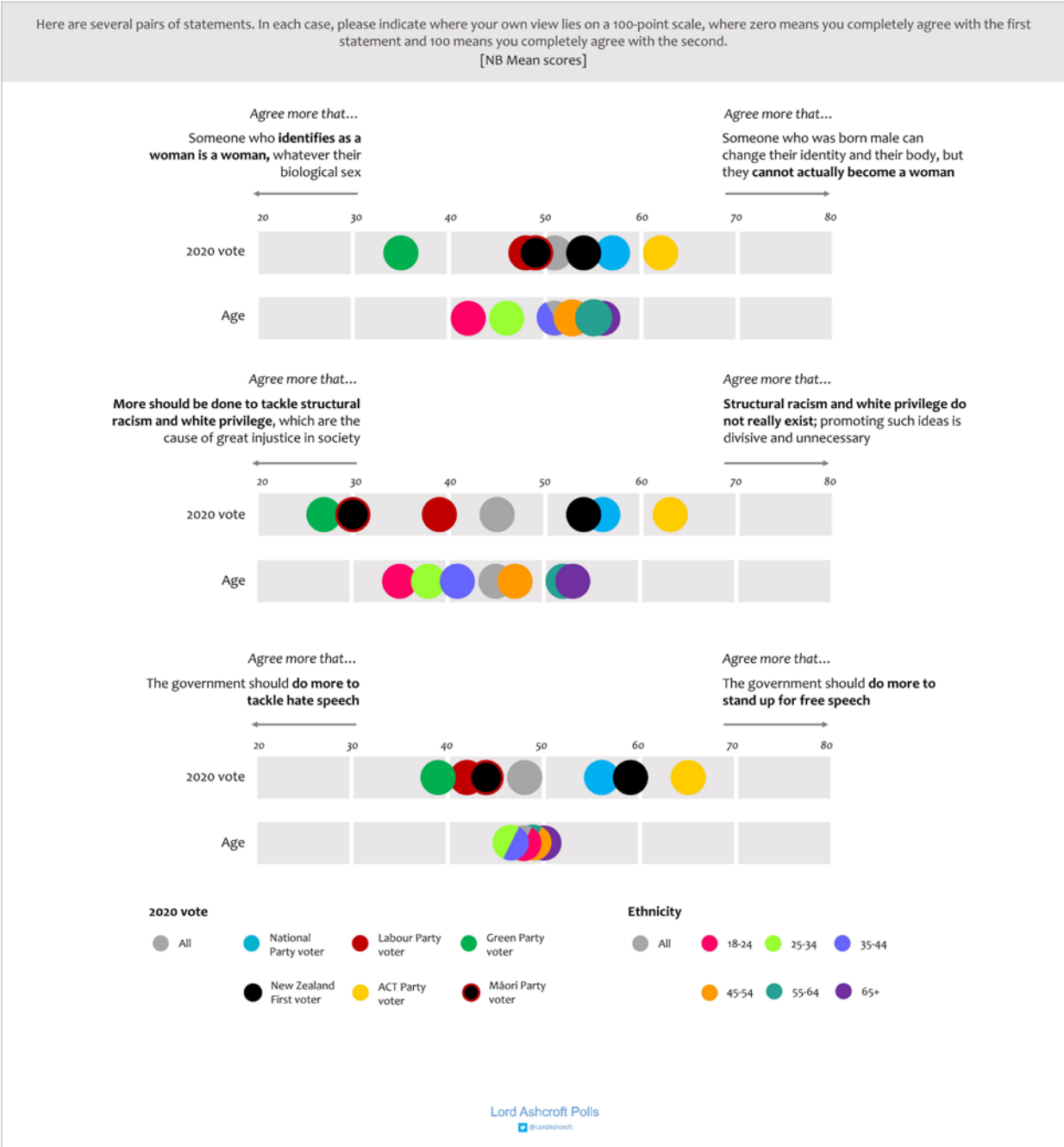
"We're quite a tolerant society. There's the health issue, the housing issue, the climate issue, the things Kiwis have concerns about, but these are minor issues. We accept them. If that's what they want to do, that's what they want to do."

"A lot of older New Zealanders have been subjected to huge changes socially in a short period of time, and I think they've taken it on the chin. In a lot of countries, like America, no-one can agree on anything, but here it's just sort of 'oh, OK'."

"I don't think of it as a big political thing, it's more of a moral thing. It's not so much left or right, but if one party had these things as their whole platform, I'd probably disregard anything else they had to say."

"What I really like about the New Zealand system is that someone like the ACT party might be the most right on the spectrum, but they're still really liberal. In other countries you'll see right-leaning parties being really fundamentalist. It's good that New Zealand is still overall really liberal."

Those who raised concerns were worried that promoting the rights of particular groups might ultimately lead to discrimination against others. Some also complained about what they saw as an unnecessary focus on these issues by employers and public agencies.



"A very small observation is that when I go out shopping, there's a lot of, I don't know, different kinds of sexually oriented staff working in places. And I feel like, when my child who is just straight wants to get a job, is he going to be not given a job because the employer wants to be seen as supporting this race or sexuality?"

"I don't like it when it's forced across. You have companies and government agencies now that have a focus on gender and being diverse. They have briefs that take people away from the average day, and online packages that you have to complete, and quizzes and booklets you have to read. They're addressing a problem that I don't think is there."

Green voters also agreed the most strongly that "more should be done to tackle structural racism and white privilege, which are the cause of great injustice in society." ACT voters leaned the most strongly to the opposing view that "structural racism and white privilege do not really exist; promoting such ideas is divisive and unnecessary". National and NZ First voters also tended towards this position but the centre of gravity of opinion for New Zealanders as a whole, including all age groups under 55, was slightly towards the view that structural racism and white privilege were real and needed to be tackled. Women, Asian-background and Māori voters also felt this more strongly than New Zealanders in general.

The different age groups, and New Zealanders as a whole, were quite evenly balanced between the propositions that the government "should do more to tackle hate speech" or "should do more to stand up for free speech". The spread of political opinion was wide, however, with ACT voters decisively favouring the latter view, NZ First and National voters also on that side of the debate, and Labour and Green voters feeling more strongly than the country as a whole that tackling hate speech was the greater priority. There was very little variation in opinion between ethnic groups on the question.

Few in our focus groups had heard about the government's current proposals to restrict "hate speech" and none were aware of the detail. While there were some concerns about potential restrictions on freedom of speech, others wondered more about the practicalities. However, even some right-leaning voters were open to the idea of further regulation in this area.

"I'd like to know more about it rather than just deciding I don't like it, but it does seem a bit as if you're not going to be able to have a bit of banter or a joke anymore, potentially, and I'm not sure how healthy that is. We've just got to be responsible people."

"It's incredibly difficult to police. There's no black and white, it's opening a can of worms. What might hurt me might not hurt someone else. Where does it become hate speech?"

"I feel like hate speech is more dangerous now than it was before because of social media. You can reach vulnerable minds with what you say. It was one thing when someone might walk down to the pub and spew this and that. But now they can target vulnerable people through social media, I think it does need looking at."



"There might be 80 year-olds who don't believe in gay marriage, and if they want to share that at their coffee group, then I think that's fine. But if there's someone who's trying to convince people that all Muslims are terrorists, that shouldn't be allowed. I think that's dangerous and that should be regulated."

Those who voted National in the 2020 election felt the most strongly that cannabis ought not to be legalised. In this case ACT voters leaned slightly to the view that it makes more sense for cannabis to be legalised and taxed, as did New Zealanders as a whole. Green voters were the most favourable towards legalisation.

There was comparatively little difference in view between political groups when it came to assisted dying and abortion, with no group showing a majority in opposition. Notably, ACT voters were among the most liberal on both questions.

This map shows how these different attitudes relate to party support at the 2020 election. In Labour/Green territory we find those most likely to feel strongly that the government should do more to tackle hate speech, that anyone who identifies as a woman is a woman, that more needs to be done to tackle structural

racism, and that laws, institutions and services dedicated to Māori and indigenous people are a good thing. Those most sceptical about these ideas are to be found close to peak support for National and ACT.



ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

To help understand the political outlook of different voter groups we put to them various propositions about the economy. In nearly all cases, Green and ACT voters marked the opposite ends of the spectrum of opinion.

Those who had voted Green in 2020 were by far the most likely to favour higher taxes and public spending, to think profits should be passed on to workers and customers, and to support government regulation on business. ACT voters – closely followed by those who had voted National – were the most inclined to favour lower taxes and government spending, to see profits as a necessary part of economic growth, and to think regulation is often an unnecessary burden on business (while still believing on balance that it is often necessary). The exception was on globalisation, which ACT, Green and National were slightly more inclined to think had had more upsides than downsides for New Zealand.

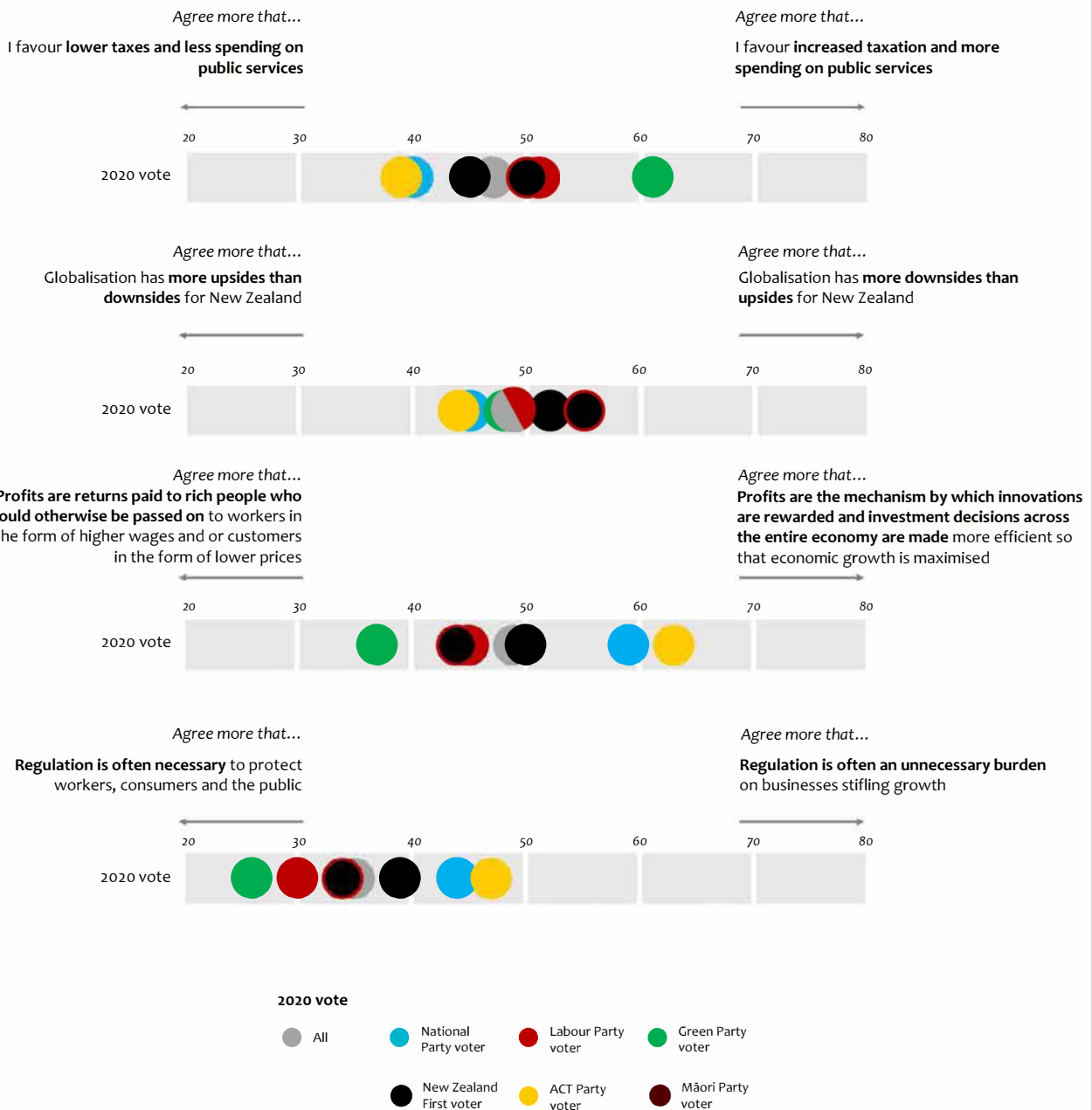
Younger voters were more likely than their older counterparts to favour lower taxes and less government spending, and Asian-background and white voters took a much more favourable view of globalisation than Māori, only 36% of whom thought it had brought more upsides than downsides for the country.

Voters for all parties were more likely to say they were “conscious all the time of how much money I am spending and whether I can afford things” than that they “don’t generally need to worry about money on a day-to-day basis”. Those aged 45-54 felt slightly more financially pressed than older and younger voters, and women more so than men. There was no significant difference between ethnic groups.

However, there were wide disparities of opinion on government benefits and the minimum wage. Once again, Green voters felt the most strongly that struggling people have a right to seek government benefits and that the minimum wage should be increased significantly. ACT voters were the most inclined to think a higher minimum wage would push up unemployment and prices, while National voters leaned furthest to the view that benefits were too readily available to people who had contributed nothing in return. The centre of gravity of opinion in general, and for all other parties’ voters, was towards a higher minimum wage and the right to seek benefits. Male, white and Asian-background voters were more doubtful about both than New Zealanders in general. Older voters were also more sceptical than younger ones about the right to welfare payments, but not about raising the minimum wage.

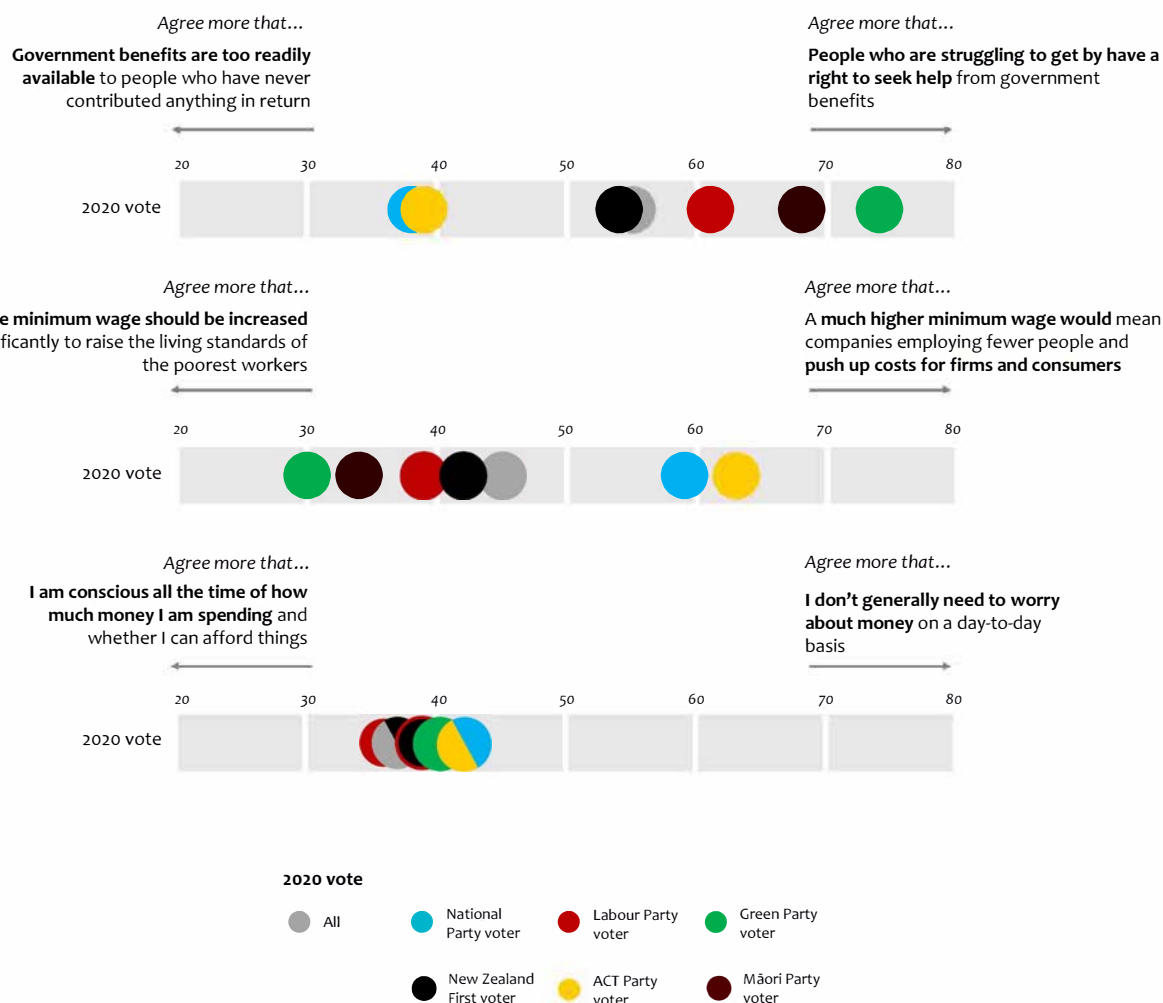
Here are several pairs of statements. In each case, please indicate where your own view lies on a 100-point scale, where zero means you completely agree with the first statement and 100 means you completely agree with the second.

[NB Mean scores]



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[NB Mean scores]



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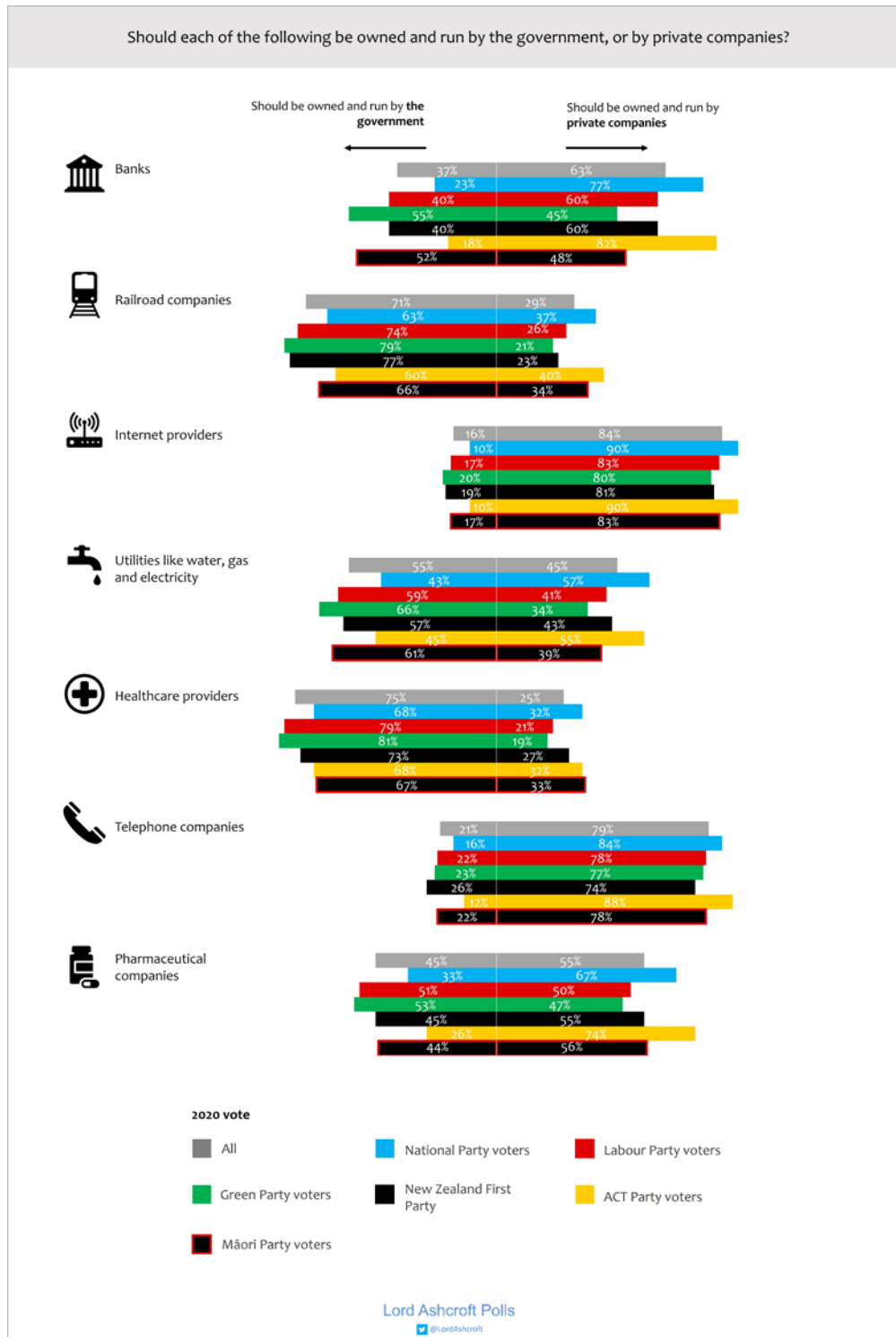
THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION

Green voters also took the most left-leaning view when we asked whether various industries should be owned and run by the government or by private companies.

Like New Zealanders as a whole but by bigger margins, 2020 Green voters thought railroad companies, utilities and healthcare providers should be in the public sector. Unlike most voters, however, they were also more likely to think banks and pharmaceutical companies should be owned and run by the state than by

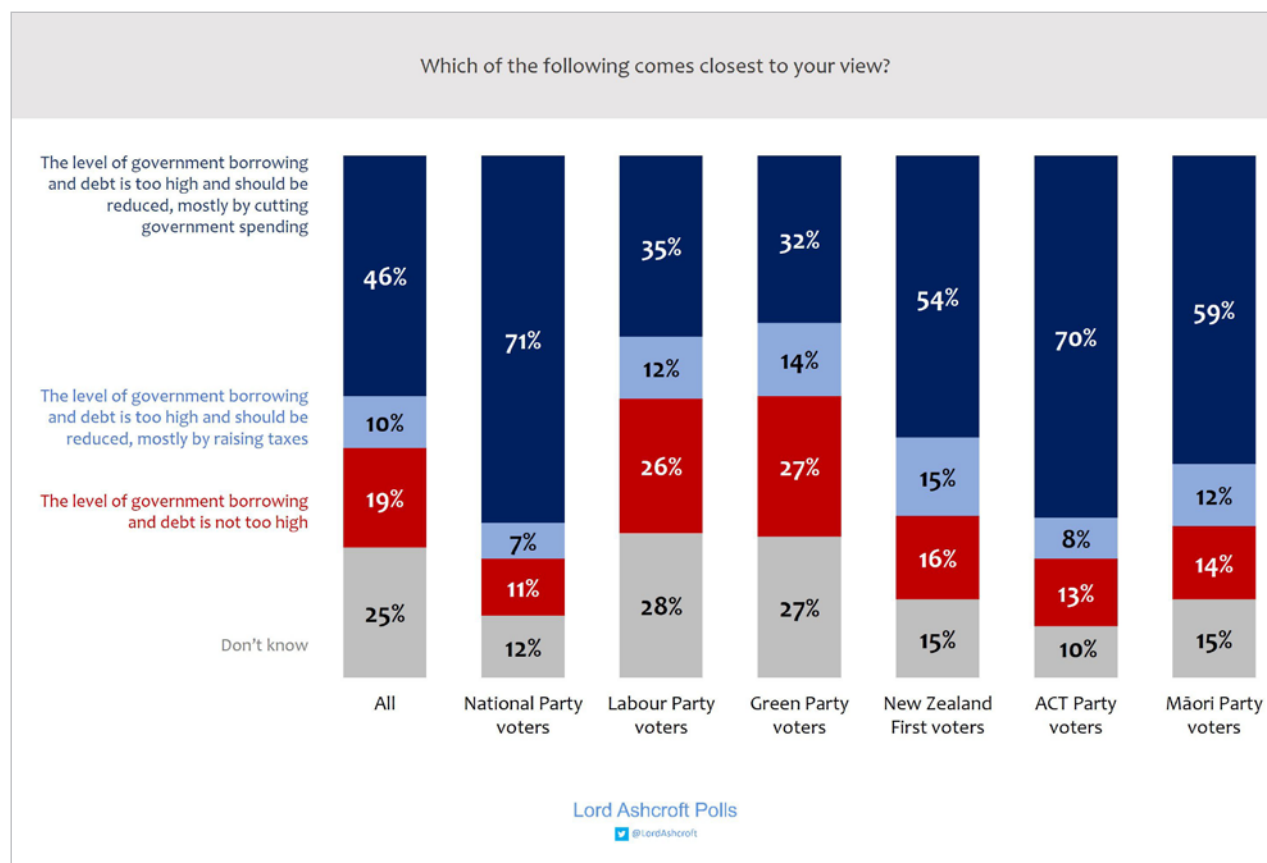
private firms. Labour and NZ First voters were also more inclined to favour state ownership for each industry than the public as a whole.

National and ACT voters were the most in favour of private ownership in each case, and were the only groups among whom majorities thought that water, gas and electricity should be in private hands.



BORROWING AND DEBT

Nearly half of New Zealanders (46%) – including 7 in 10 National and ACT voters – said they thought the level of government borrowing and debt was too high and should be reduced, mostly by cutting government spending. A further one in 10 thought borrowing should be reduced by raising taxes.



Just over a quarter of Labour and Green voters said they did not think government borrowing and debt were currently too high, making the most likely to do so. Nearly a quarter said they didn't know, including 37% of 18-24-year-olds.

CLIMATE CHANGE, INDUSTRY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

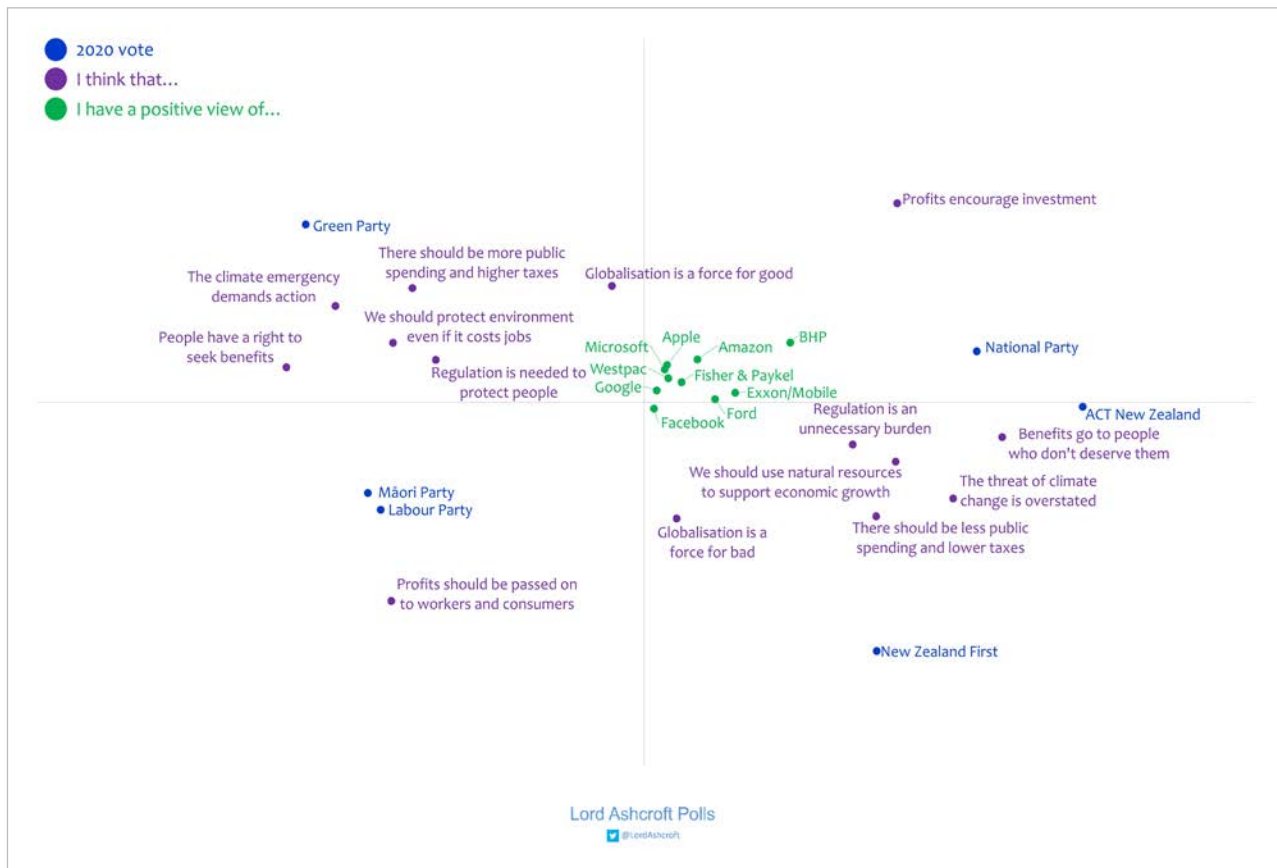
New Zealanders as a whole were more likely to feel that action is needed to tackle climate change than that the threat is made up or exaggerated. NZ First, ACT and National voters felt less strongly about the need for

urgent action, but only around one third of each party's 2020 supporters aligned themselves more closely with the second proposition. Women and younger voters felt more strongly about the need for urgent action than men and older people, but again a clear majority in all groups identified more closely with the first statement than the second.



There was a somewhat wider spread of opinion as to whether New Zealand should “protect our environment even at the cost of resource extraction industries” or “use our natural resources to support economic growth”. While New Zealanders as a whole leaned slightly in the direction of prioritising the environment, ACT and National voters aligned themselves more with using resources to promote growth, and those who voted NZ First in 2020 were equidistant between the two.

There was little difference on the question between men and women or ethnic groups, but support for using natural resources to promote growth rose with age to the point where older voters were finely balanced between the two statements. Those aged 18-24 were closer to the position of the public as a whole than Green voters, who were the most decisive in favouring the environment over extraction industries.



This map shows how these various attitudes to the economy and the environment relate to party support at the last election. Peak support for the view that more action is needed to tackle climate change and that the environment should be prioritised over resource extraction industries are not surprisingly to be found close to peak support for the Green Party in 2020, but so are those most likely to favour higher taxes and public spending. Those who feel most strongly that profits promote economic growth are closest to peak support for the National Party, while those most likely to believe profits should be passed on to workers and consumers are closest to Labour territory.



BLUFF
NEW ZEALAND
LATITUDE 37° 54' S
LONGITUDE 168° 21' E
AA
NEW ZEALAND

LONDON 18958 km

NEW YORK 15008 km

HOBART 1680 km

CAPE REINGA 1401 km

SYDNEY 2000 km

DOG ISLAND 6 km

WELLINGTON 784 km

RUAPUKE ISLAND 21 km

ISLAND 35 km

NEW ZEALAND IN THE WORLD

FRIEND OR FOE

We asked New Zealanders whether they saw various countries more as friends and allies, or as adversaries or threats. Close neighbour Australia was only third on the list of friends and allies with 78% putting the country in this category – slightly behind Canada (81%) and the UK (80%). Five countries on the list were seen more as threats or adversaries than friends and allies: Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, China, and (especially) Russia and Iran.

Only 52% of Māori voters saw Australia more as a friend than an adversary, compared to 70% of Asian-background voters and 83% of whites. Two thirds of those who voted for NZ First said they saw Australia as an ally, compared to 81% of NP and 87% of ACT voters.

Only just over half (51%) of Māori voters saw the UK as a friend and ally, compared to 73% of Asian-background voters and 84% of whites. ACT (87%), National (83%) and Labour (81%) voters were slightly more likely to do so than those who voted Green (77%) or NZ First (72%).

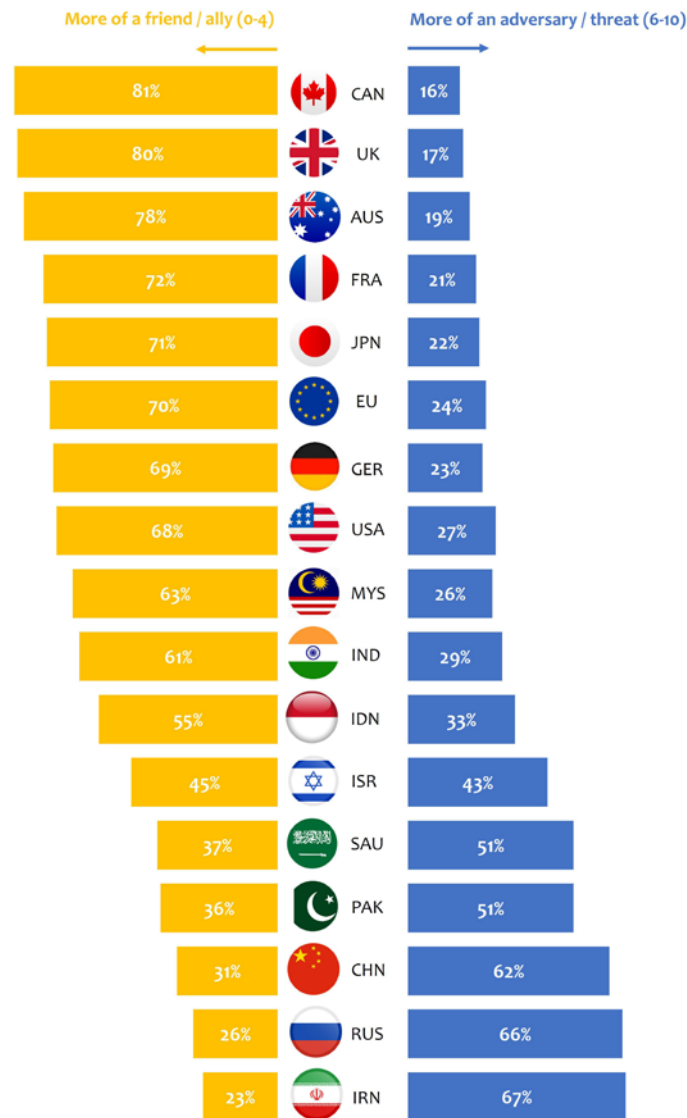
Four out of five of those aged 65+ saw the USA as a friend and ally, compared to 54% of those aged 18-24. Three quarters of National and 80% of ACT voters did so, compared to 61% of Greens. Only 41% of Māori voters saw the US as a friend, compared to 64% of Asian-background voters and 73% of whites.

Men, older people and National and ACT voters were the most likely to see Israel as a friend and ally, while Māori and Green voters were by far the least inclined to do so.

NZ First (75%) and ACT (67%) voters were more likely to see China as an adversary or threat than National, Labour and Green voters, each of whom took a similar view to that of New Zealanders as a whole. Nearly 7 in 10 (69%) of those aged 65+ took this view, compared to just over half (54%) of 18-24s.

Green and ACT voters were slightly more likely than National, Labour and NZ First voters to see Russia as a threat or adversary, and older voters were progressively more likely to do so than younger voters.

Please say whether you see each of the following more as a friend and ally of New Zealand, or as an adversary or threat to New Zealand – where 0 means a close friend or ally and 10 means very much an adversary or threat, and 5 means neither.



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INTERNATIONAL FIGURES

To shed further light on the political outlook of different kinds of voters we asked their views about a number of international figures.

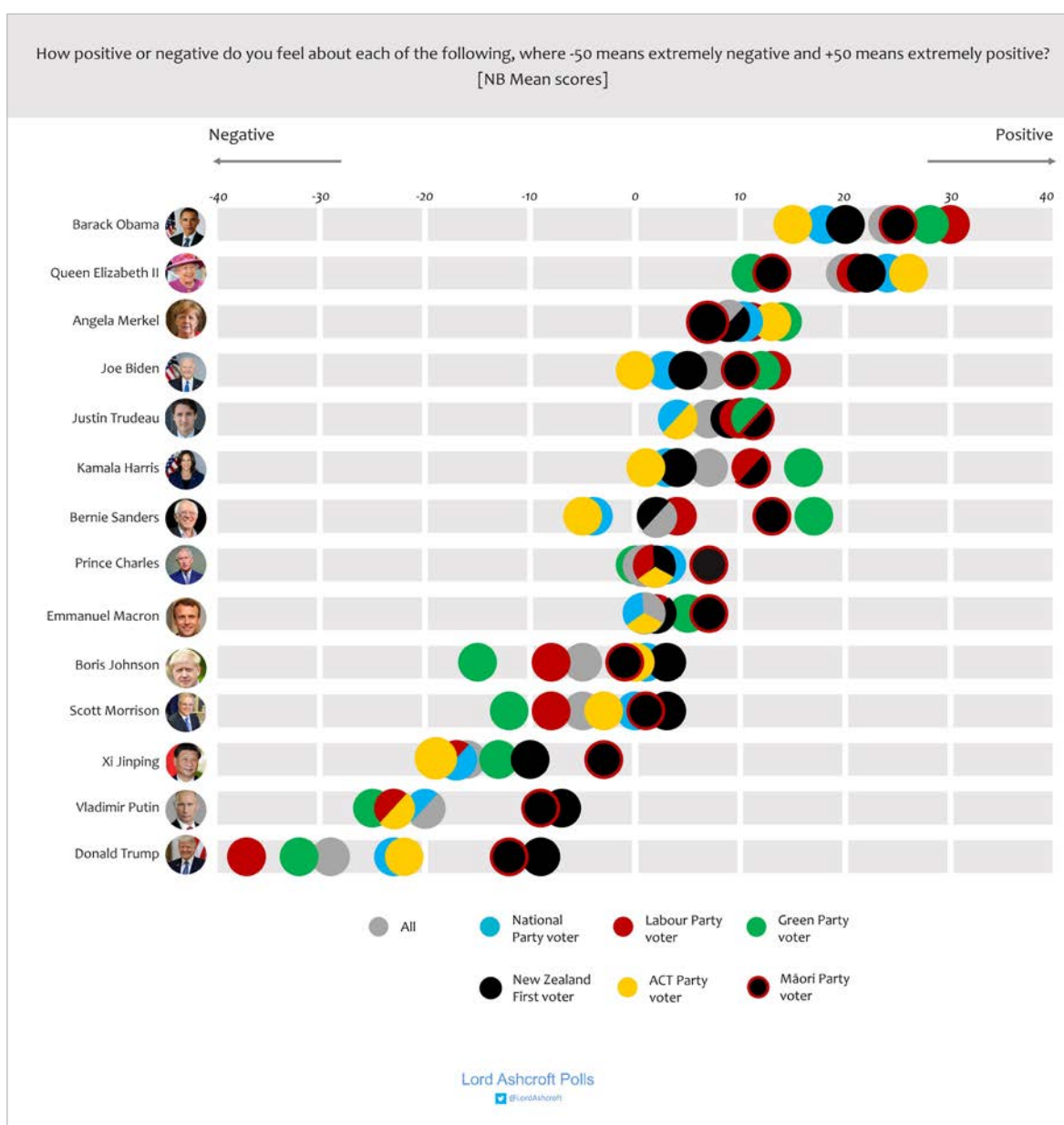
The most popular on the list was Barack Obama, closely followed by Queen Elizabeth II (who topped the list for ACT, National and NZ First voters, and for people aged over 55).

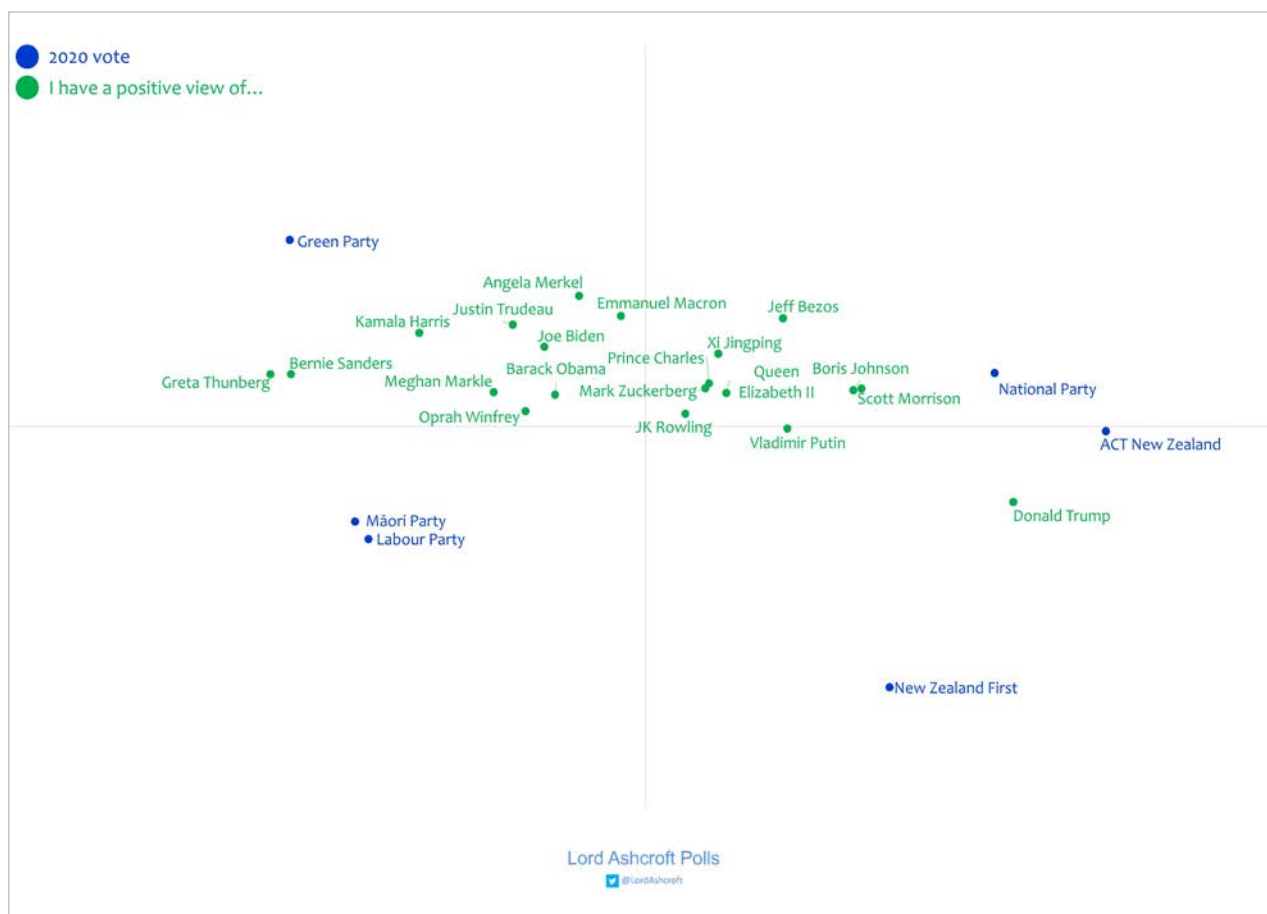
Angela Merkel came slightly ahead of Joe Biden, Justin Trudeau and Kamala Harris, each of whom inspired a relatively narrow spread of opinion between voter groups.

Prince Charles was seen in broadly neutral terms, with an overall score of +1 among New Zealanders as a whole, again with little variation by demographic group or party support.

Boris Johnson was seen in neutral or marginally positive terms by ACT, National and NZ First voters, but much less so among Labour and especially Green voters, and received an overall negative score. A very similar pattern was seen for Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

The widest spread of opinion was for Donald Trump, whose score ranged from -37 among those who had voted Labour in 2020 to -9 among NZ First voters (who also gave the least negative scores to Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin).





This map shows where the most positive views of these figures (and others) are to be found in relation to peak support for each party at the last election. (JK Rowling was given generally high scores by all groups except Green Party voters.)

NATIONAL INTERESTS AND DEFENCE

Asked where they stood between thinking it was more important for a country to protect its own interests or to work together on shared objectives, New Zealanders as a whole leaned more towards the second of the two, with 2020 Green voters doing so the most strongly. NZ First voters were the only party group to lean marginally towards protecting national interests. There was little variation between other demographic groups.

New Zealanders as a whole were broadly neutral between thinking that defence spending should be raised or cut. Green voters were the only group to lean decisively towards a reduction in defence spending.



THREATS TO NEW ZEALAND

In our survey, we asked which of 13 potential threats were the most serious facing New Zealand. For respondents as a whole the biggest concern – ahead of climate change and covid – was mental health issues. Concern about covid increased with age, pushing climate change and mental health further down the list. Obesity, the risk of a new economic crisis and inequality were considered bigger threats than excessive immigration, terrorism or loss of jobs to artificial intelligence and robotics.

Climate change was considered among the three biggest threats by 2020 Labour, Green and Māori Party voters but did not appear among the top six for National, NZ First or ACT voters. A new economic crisis was the biggest perceived threat by ACT voters and second after covid for National voters. For Green voters, covid was fourth on the list behind climate change, mental health issues and inequality.

On a 100-point scale, how serious a threat is each of the following to New Zealand today, where 0 means it is not a threat at all and 100 means it is an extremely serious threat?
[NB Mean scores]

Biggest perceived threats facing New Zealand

All

	Mental health issues	75.7
	Covid-19	73.3
	Climate change	70.7
	Obesity	70.2
	A new economic crisis	67.5
	Inequality	63.9

National

National Party voters

	Covid-19	73.4
	A new economic crisis	71.7
	Mental health issues	71.6
	Obesity	69.7
	Division in society	64.9
	Opioid abuse	63.2







Labour

Labour Party voters

	Mental health issues	77.5
	Covid-19	76.3
	Climate change	75.9
	Obesity	71.6
	Inequality	66.5
	A new economic crisis	65.4

Green

Green Party voters

	Climate change	85.5
	Mental health issues	79.3
	Inequality	76.8
	Covid-19	74.3
	Obesity	70.9
	Division in society	67.6

NEW ZEALAND FIRST

New Zealand First voters

	Covid-19	72.1
	Mental health issues	72.0
	Obesity	69.8
	Division in society	68.7
	A new economic crisis	67.3
	Attacks on freedom of speech	65.7

act

ACT Party voters

	A new economic crisis	73.1
	Mental health issues	71.9
	Covid-19	70.2
	Obesity	69.8
	Division in society	67.5
	Attacks on freedom of speech	67.3

māori

Māori Party voters

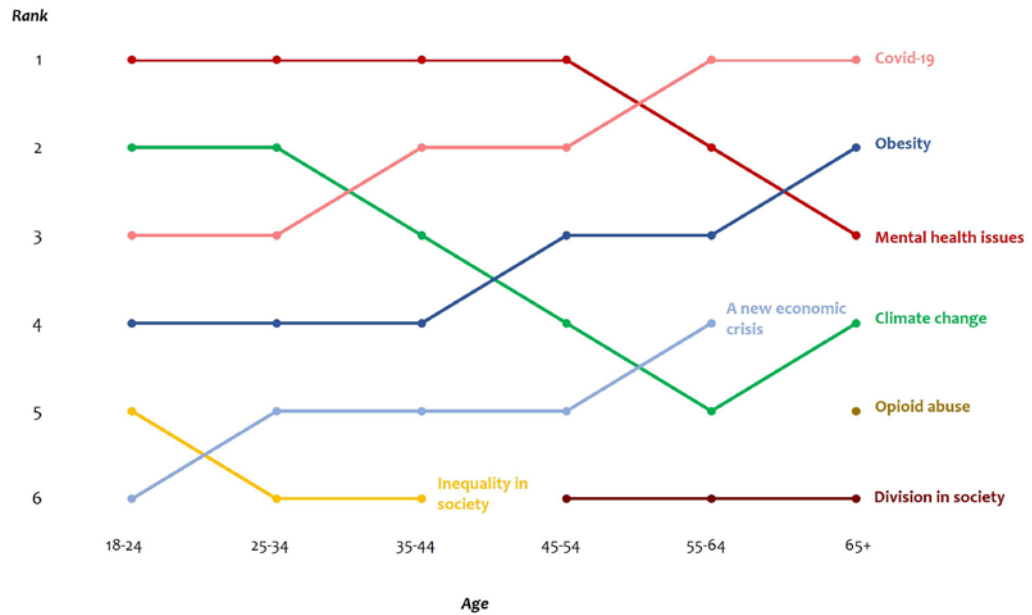
	Climate change	81.8
	Mental health issues	76.0
	Covid-19	73.1
	Inequality	71.5
	Obesity	70.6
	A new economic crisis	65.9

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Mental health issues were the biggest concern for all age groups up to the age of 54, while the perceived threat of covid, obesity and a new economic crisis rose with age. Climate change was a close second behind mental health issues for 18-34 year-olds, before dropping down the list for older groups.

On a 100-point scale, how serious a threat is each of the following to New Zealand today, where 0 means it is not a threat at all and 100 means it is an extremely serious threat?

Biggest perceived threats facing New Zealand by age



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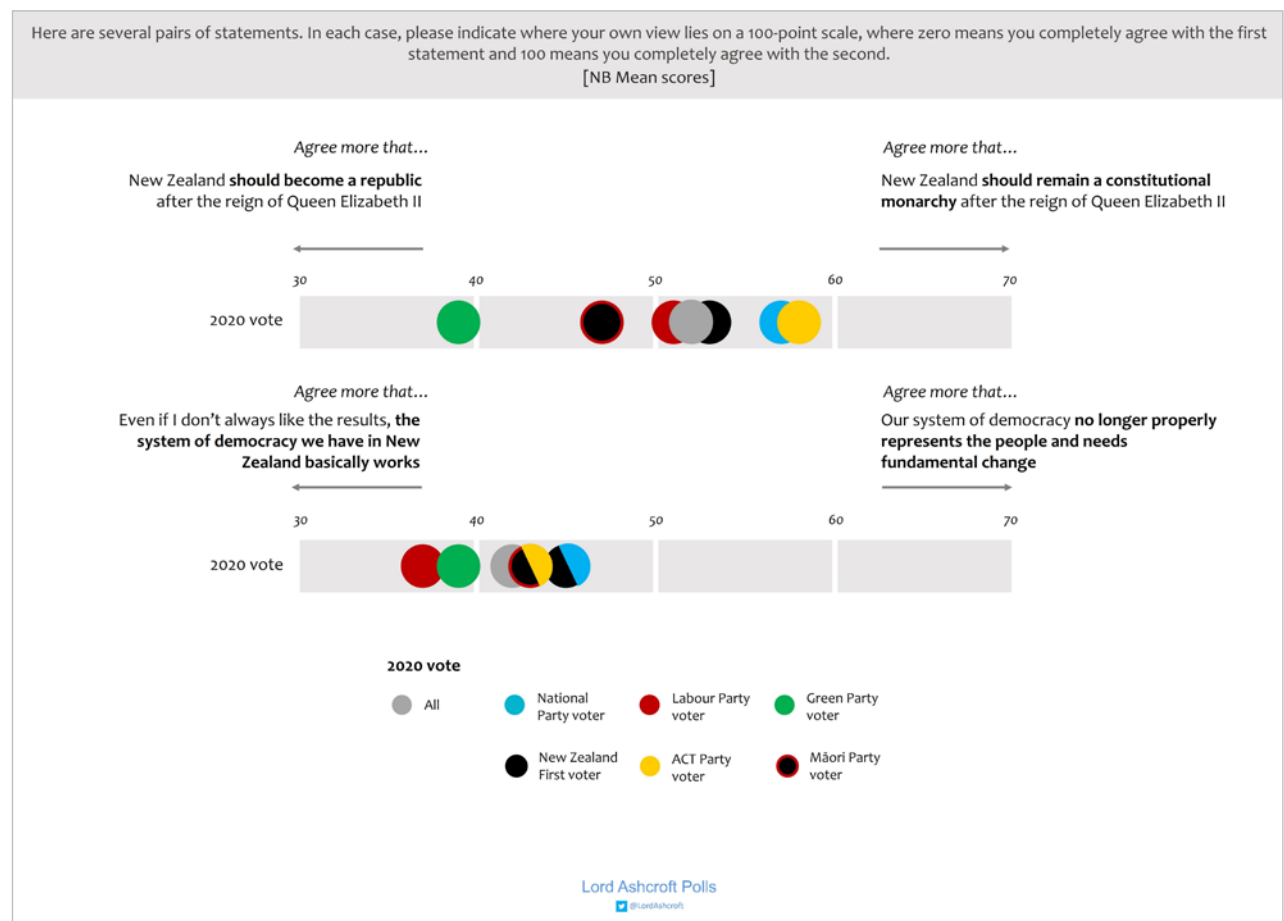


POLITICS, PARTIES, AND LEADERS

THE SYSTEM

New Zealanders as a whole were more inclined to think that the country's system of democracy basically works, even if they don't always like the results, than that it no longer properly represents the people and needs fundamental change. Labour voters were the most likely to be satisfied with the current system, with National and NZ First voters also on that side of the line, if more grudgingly.

Older voters were the most likely to be happy with the system as it is; Māori participants were more likely than white and Asian-background voters to think it needed fundamental reform.



In a separate question, nearly two thirds (65%) of New Zealanders said they could usually find someone to vote for who more or less represents what they think. The remainder were slightly more likely to say none of the parties really represents them because they are too similar (15%) than that they were too extreme (11%).

Only 37% said New Zealand should keep the current MMP voting system, but only 17% said they would rather switch to First Past the Post; 36% said they didn't know. Green (56%) and Labour voters (47%) were the happiest with the current system. Those who voted National in 2020 were the only group to prefer FPP to the current MMP system.

In our focus groups, many observed that there seemed to be a good deal of overlap between the two main parties. There were few complaints about this – indeed it often helped confirm people's perception of New Zealand as a moderate, common-sense, broadly united country – though it did sometimes lead to “argument for arguments’ sake” between government and opposition.

“I don’t understand die-hard National or Labour supporters. They’re not that different. If it’s a Venn diagram, they overlap on 70% of things. It doesn’t matter because we’re so stable and moderate as a country.”

Several (especially Labour and Green-leaning voters) cited the MMP system as evidence that the system took into account the full range of political opinion in the country and ensured representation for a wide range of voices in parliament.

“We’re pretty middle-of-the-road to be honest, and MMP provides us with some checks and balances so that there is a voice for the extremes.”

“I like the fact that you have the main party, but they always have someone else on the side just to keep them in check.”

However, right-leaning voters sometimes complained that the system had kept the National Party out of government in 2017 even though it had won the most votes and seats.

“Two elections ago [NZ] First came third, and second, third and fourth came first. A minor party like NZ First, Winston Peters, was the one actually deciding who was going to be the government.”

“I felt really sorry for Bill English. He won that election.”

There was also concern, raised by a few, that politicians of all stripes seemed too ready to go along with the prevailing liberal consensus, with the result that debate on some issues seemed restricted and freedom was gradually being curtailed.

"We're going down a dangerous path. The government is telling us what to say and what to do. We're getting a new tax because they want all vehicles to be electric, we're not allowed to smoke, we're not allowed to do this and that. I'm finding that New Zealand is becoming less democratic. The government forgets they are public servants. I'd like to see them listening to us a bit more."

There was a much broader spread of opinion on the question of New Zealand's constitution when the reign of Queen Elizabeth II comes to an end. For New Zealanders as a whole, the centre of gravity of opinion was towards the view that the country should remain a constitutional monarchy, with ACT and National voters taking this view the most strongly. While Labour voters were close to neutral on the subject, those who voted Green in 2020 leaned strongly to the view that New Zealand should become a republic.

Asian-background (55%) and Māori voters (56%) were more likely than white voters (44%) to lean towards New Zealand becoming a republic, but there was relatively little variation between age groups: 35-44s were the most likely to want a change in the constitution after the current reign (53%), compared to 40% of those aged 65 or over.

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES

We presented poll respondents with a list of 18 issues and asked which three they considered the most important facing New Zealand today.

For New Zealanders as a whole the most important issue was housing – the only issue to be named in the top three by more than half of respondents (51%). This compares to 40% who chose dealing with the covid pandemic, 33% who chose healthcare and 27% who chose the economy and jobs. Voters for five of the six main parties in 2020 put housing at the top of their lists; the exception was Green voters, for whom it was second behind environmental issues and climate change.

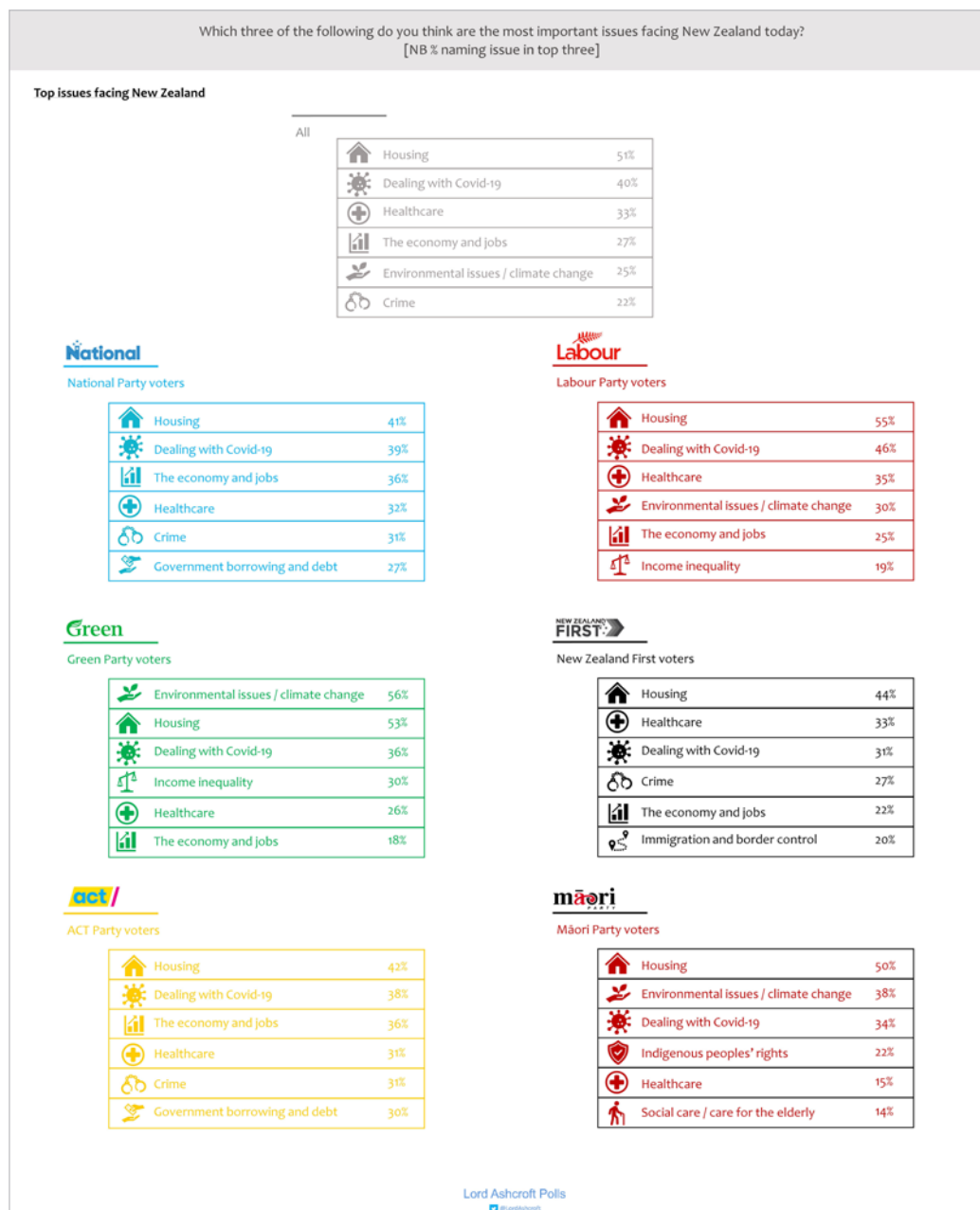
Labour and National voters shared four of the six top priorities: housing, covid, healthcare and the economy. However, while 2020 National supporters prioritised crime and government borrowing, Labour voters were more likely to choose climate change and income inequality.

National and ACT voters were the only groups to name government borrowing among their top six,

while NZ First voters were the only group who prioritised immigration and border control (though only one in five of them chose the issue among their top three).

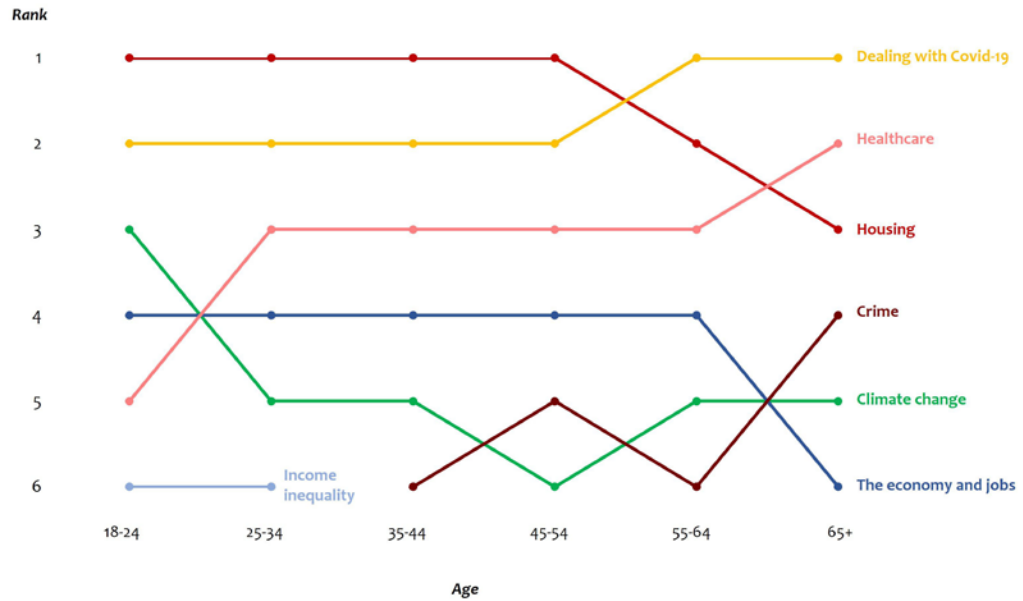
There were also notable differences by age. Housing topped the list for all age groups up to 54, falling to second (behind covid) for 55-64s and third (behind covid and healthcare) for those aged 65 or over. Dealing with covid was the second most-named issue for voters aged up to 54, becoming the top priority for those aged 55 and over.

Healthcare also rose in importance with age, from 5th among 18-24s to second among those aged 65 and over. The age effect was more dramatic still with crime: the 10th most chosen issue among 18-24s, but the fourth among the oldest age group.



Which three of the following do you think are the most important issues facing New Zealand today?

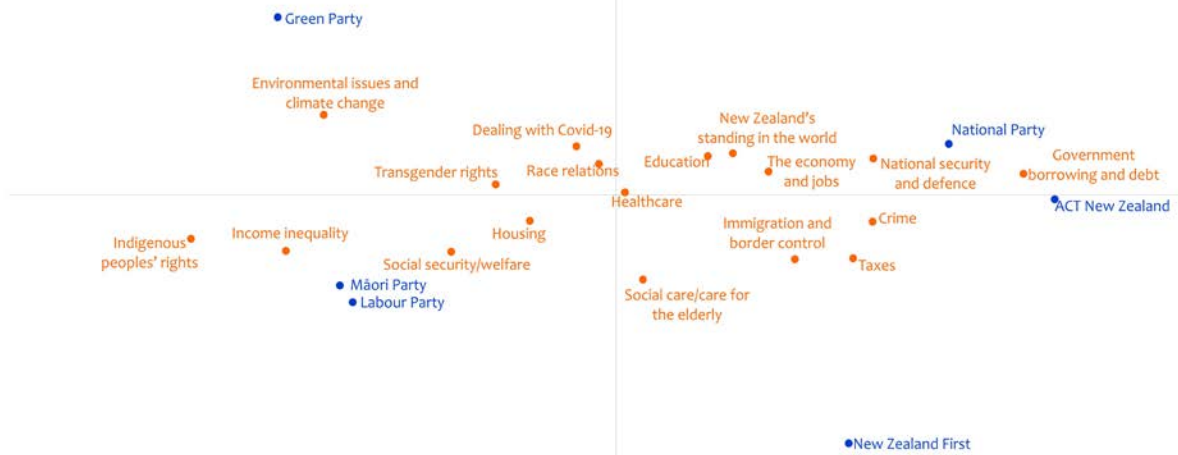
Most important issues facing New Zealand by age



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2020 vote

The most important issues facing New Zealand are...



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Housing was the top issue, chosen by similar numbers, for all ethnic groups. While covid was second among all groups, the proportions actually naming it as a priority varied widely: 43% of white voters named it among their top three, compared to 30% of Māori and 37% of Asian-background voters. The economy and jobs – fourth overall among all age groups up to the age of 64 – was more likely to be chosen by Asian-background voters (35%) than by white (26%) and Māori (22%) voters.

This map shows the relationship between peak support for each party at the 2020 election and those most likely to name each issue as being among the most important facing New Zealand. Those prioritising national security, crime and government borrowing were closest to peak support for National and ACT, while concern about income inequality and social security were close to peak support for Labour. Care for the elderly was equidistant between Labour and NZ First territory.

In a separate question, three quarters of respondents felt that overseas non-residents should not be allowed to purchase land or property in New Zealand.

BEST PARTY ON ISSUES

When we asked which party they thought would do the best job in each case, the Labour party led on 15 of the 18 issues. The biggest Labour leads were on dealing with covid, income inequality, social security, care for the elderly and healthcare. On housing, named as the most important issue by New Zealanders as a whole, Labour led the National Party by 10 points.

Labour leads were much narrower when it came to the economy and jobs (3 points over the National Party), taxes (4 points), national security and defence (1 point), and indigenous people's rights (4 points over the Māori Party).

Labour and National were tied on the issue of government borrowing and debt, and the Green Party led Labour by 16 points on environmental issues and climate change.

The National Party led on one issue – crime – by one point.

Nearly one third of voters named Labour as the best party on covid, while 3 in 10 considered the Greens the best party on climate change and the environment.

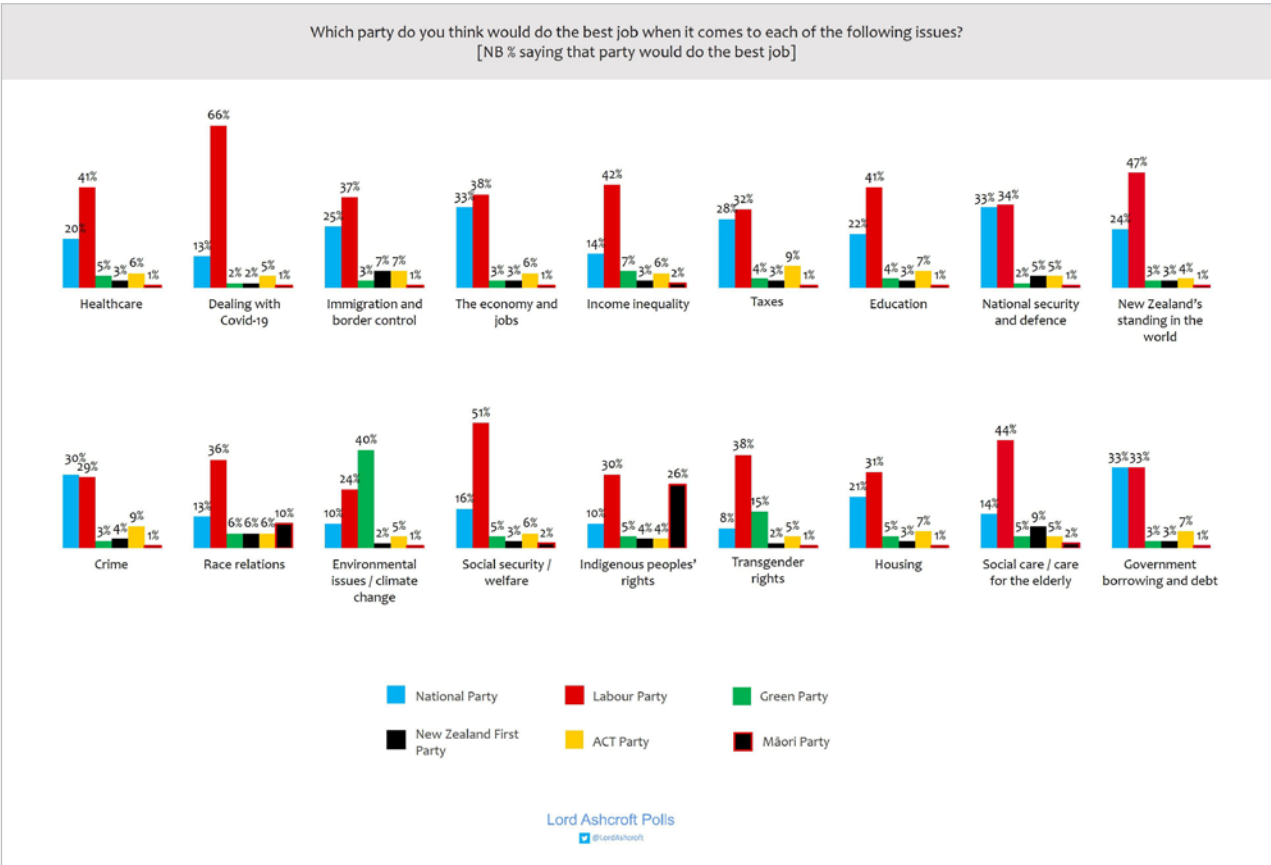
Those who voted Green in 2020 put Labour ahead on all issues except income inequality, race relations, the environment, trans rights and housing.

NZ First put their own party ahead on all issues except healthcare, covid and New Zealand's standing in the world (on which they named Labour) and the economy and jobs (on which they named National).

In most cases, National voters were nearly as likely as ACT voters to say none of the parties would do a good job. Those who voted ACT in 2020 put their own party furthest ahead on taxes, housing and

government borrowing. They named Labour as the best party on covid, National on the economy and jobs, and NZ First on income inequality.

Nearly a quarter of voters said no party would do a good job on healthcare, border control, income inequality, taxes, crime and race relations.



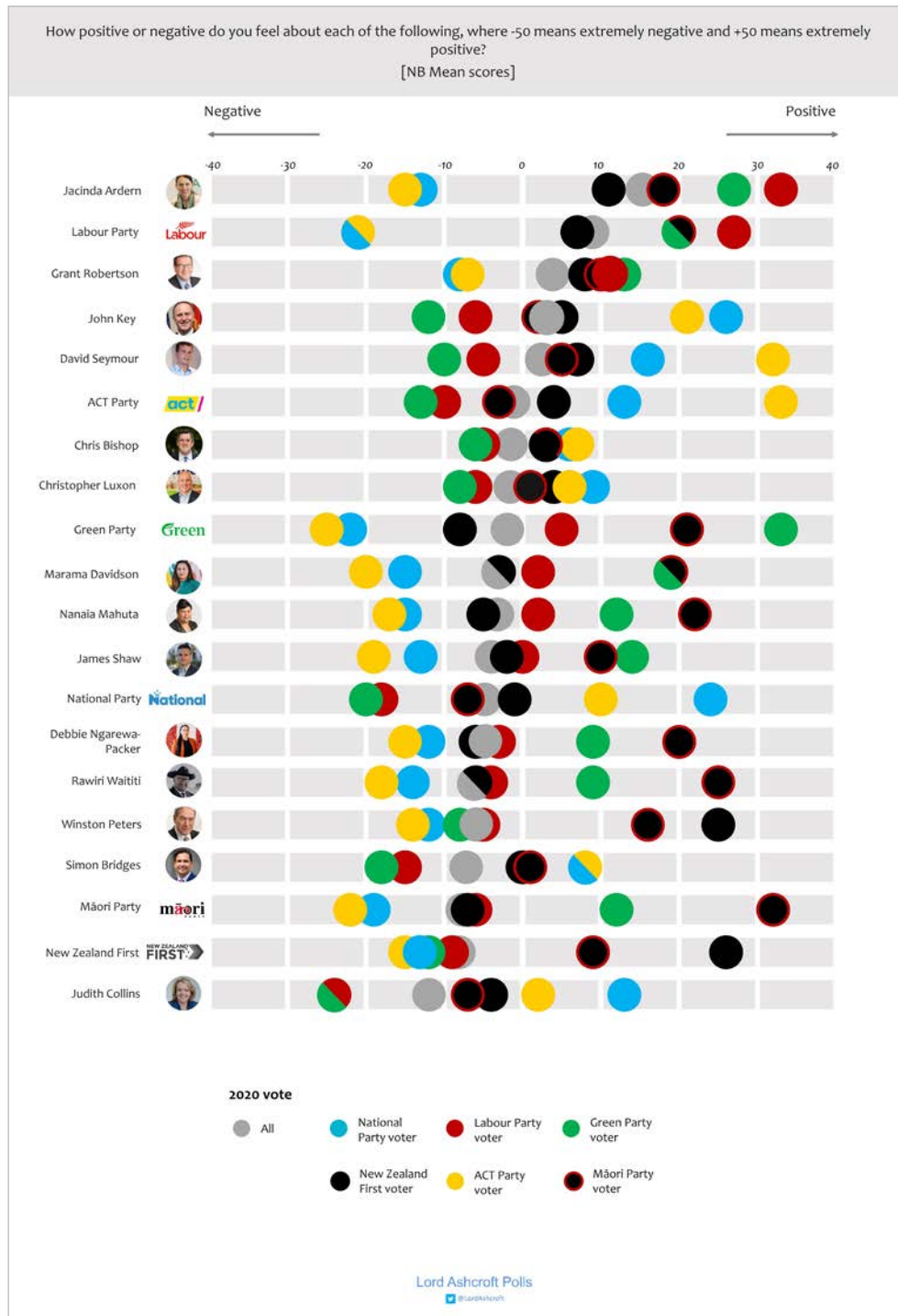
PARTIES AND LEADERS

We asked how positively or negatively New Zealanders felt about political parties and leaders – as well as other prominent figures – on a scale from -50 (extremely negative) to +50 (extremely positive). The National and Green parties both received higher scores than their respective leaders; the opposite was true for Labour, ACT, NZ First and the Māori Party.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was by far the most highly regarded, with a mean rating of +15.3 among New Zealanders as a whole. Her rating was higher among women (+19.2) than among men (+11.4), and declined with age, from +23.5 among 18-24s to +10.4 among those aged 65 or over. Ardern received a more positive rating from Māori voters (+27) than white voters (+15.3) and those from an Asian background

(+16.5). She was given a mean rating of +32.7 by 2020 Labour voters – the highest score for any party leader among their own supporters (just ahead of David Seymour, with a score of 32.3 among 2020 ACT voters).

Like its leader, the Labour Party received a positive score overall (+8.9) and was given a higher score by women (+12.6) than by men (+5.3). Similarly, its ratings declined with age: its mean score was +16.6 among 18-24s, falling to +3.9 among those aged 65 and over.



Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson was also given a net positive rating (+3.8), but with no significant difference between men and women. Unlike Ardern, his scores generally rose with each age group, from +1.9 among 18-24s to +7 among those aged 65 or over. However, there was much less variation between ethnic and political group than was the case with Ardern or the Labour Party as a whole.

Former Prime Minister John Key was the most popular National Party figure and the only one to receive a net positive score from New Zealanders as a whole. He received higher ratings from Asian-background (+13) than white (+3) and Māori voters (-9). ACT voters (+21) gave him a score nearly as high as National voters (+26). National Party leader Judith Collins received a more positive score from men (-9.1) than women (-14.7). She was given higher marks by voters from an Asian background (-0.9) than Māori (-14.2) and white voters (-13.6). National Party 2020 voters gave her a score of +13.2; the next most positive groups were ACT (+2) and NZ First voters (-4.32). Her predecessor Simon Bridges scored slightly more positive ratings among all groups.

The National Party received an overall score of -4.8. Women (-7.5) were slightly more negative than men (-2.1). Asian background voters gave the party a positive score of +8.9; this compared to -6.2 among white voters and -12.4 among Māori. The National Party also received a positive score (+10.3) among 2020 ACT voters, and a neutral score (-0.9) from those who voted for NZ First.

Green co-leader Marama Davidson was given a marginally higher score across the board (-3) than her party colleague, climate change minister James Shaw (-4). The Green Party as a whole received a score of -1.94, though with notable variations between men (-7) and women (+3.1) and by age (+12.5 among 18-24s, -13.4 among those aged 65 or over). It also received a higher score from its own 2020 voters (+32.9) than any other party.

ACT leader David Seymour was the only current party leader to score an overall net positive rating (+2.5) from New Zealanders other than Jacinda Ardern. He was given slightly higher marks by men (+4.85) than women (+0.1), and slightly higher scores by older voters than younger ones. As well as a high rating (+32.3) from ACT voters, he enjoyed positive scores from those who voted for the National Party (+16.2) and NZ First (+7.2) in 2020. There was a similar pattern for the ACT party as a whole, though with scores a few points below those of its leader.

Winston Peters was given an overall net rating of -5.92. There was little difference between men and women, but he was slightly less popular with older voters (-10.7 among 55-64s, -5.6 for those aged 65 or over) than younger people (-1.1 among 18-24s). He received a higher net score among Māori voters (+9.3) than white voters (-7.6) and those from an Asian background (-9.9). Those who voted ACT or National in 2020 gave him more negative scores (-13.9 and -12.3 respectively) than those who voted Labour (-5.3) or Green (-7.7). Again, there was a similar pattern for the NZ First party as a whole, but with each score a few points below that of its leader.

Debbie Ngarewa-Packer and Rawiri Waititi received similar ratings overall and between men and women. Both scored positively among younger voters, falling into net negative territory with age groups over 35. Both leaders scored higher than the Māori Party as a whole, except among Māori voters. The party was given net negative scores by 2020 Labour, NZ First and (especially) ACT and National voters, but achieved a positive score of +12.3 among Green voters.



This map shows how the most positive views of parties and leaders relate to each party's support at the last election, and to those who say they would never vote for each party. Notably, those with the most positive view of David Seymour and ACT are to be found closest to peak support for the National Party in 2020.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: LABOUR

We asked poll respondents to write down the first word or phrase that came to mind when they thought of each of the political parties.



Responses for Labour were dominated by Jacinda Ardern. There was a wide selection of positive comments including “fair,” “good,” “keep their promises,” “kind,” “united” and “reliable.” Less complimentary comments included “incompetent,” “liars,” “control,” “arrogant” and “fake.”

In our focus groups, only a few of those who had voted Labour in 2020 said their handling of the pandemic as the main reason (“I would have voted for a rat that was doing a reasonably competent job,” as one put it.” More often, they spoke about the qualities of Jacinda Ardern and the contrast they saw between the incumbent Labour government and the National opposition.

“I would have voted for a rat that was doing a reasonably competent job. I just didn’t want to switch in the middle of a pandemic.”

“I think any government would have made a good decision. To me, there was just no clear leadership from National.”

“I see her as a good communicator, and she’s a quick learner. When an issue comes up she addresses it, maybe a bit late, but it gets addressed.”

“She has charisma and a personality, and she speaks to the country like we’re human beings and we actually matter.”

“When we had the terrorist attack just recently, she spoke for the whole of New Zealand. I think she handled that really well.”

"She's such a big personality that I almost see her as separate from the Labour government. Like Bill Gates and Microsoft."

For those who had criticisms of Jacinda Ardern, the biggest complaints were about broken promises and lack of delivery; many cited Kiwibuild as an example. Some also felt that her empathetic approach, much valued at times of national crisis, was less well-suited to some of the practical challenges New Zealand faced as it emerged from the pandemic. There was also a suspicion among some that the government was keeping covid at the top of the agenda in order to divert attention from other issues.

"When she was campaigning, she seemed to mean what she said. All the big promises – 100,000 Kiwibuild homes, plant a billion trees, no tax increases – like every politician. She went back on it when it was convenient. It's not that she's worse than anyone, I'm just disappointed that she turned out to be the same as everyone."

"Great with the media, but we haven't seen much of delivering the goods."

"They're very careful to make sure they put her in the right situations and don't put her with any bad PR."

"They've tried to keep covid fresh and alive and constantly at the forefront of everything. They haven't had to follow through on any of their policies. Kiwibuild has been a bit of a fiasco and they've been able to brush that away."

"Jacinda won the hearts of a lot of people, but I'm frustrated that she's still got that warm, soft-touch approach when we probably need a bit of a harder message from our leader at this point. The soft approach worked during lockdown, but with things like crime it should be 'come on guys, get your shit together or we're going to arrest you.'"

"I think she can be a bit authoritarian. Sometimes it's good to be able to put your foot down and get things done. But you have to balance the needs of different people, and if you want to make radical change you must bring the people along with you."

'The Labour house'

As a way of further exploring people's underlying perceptions we asked the groups to think about the question: if each political party were a house, what kind of house would it be? The Labour house was usually described as a normal family home.

"Practical, comfortable. Not plush or wealthy. Extended family living there."

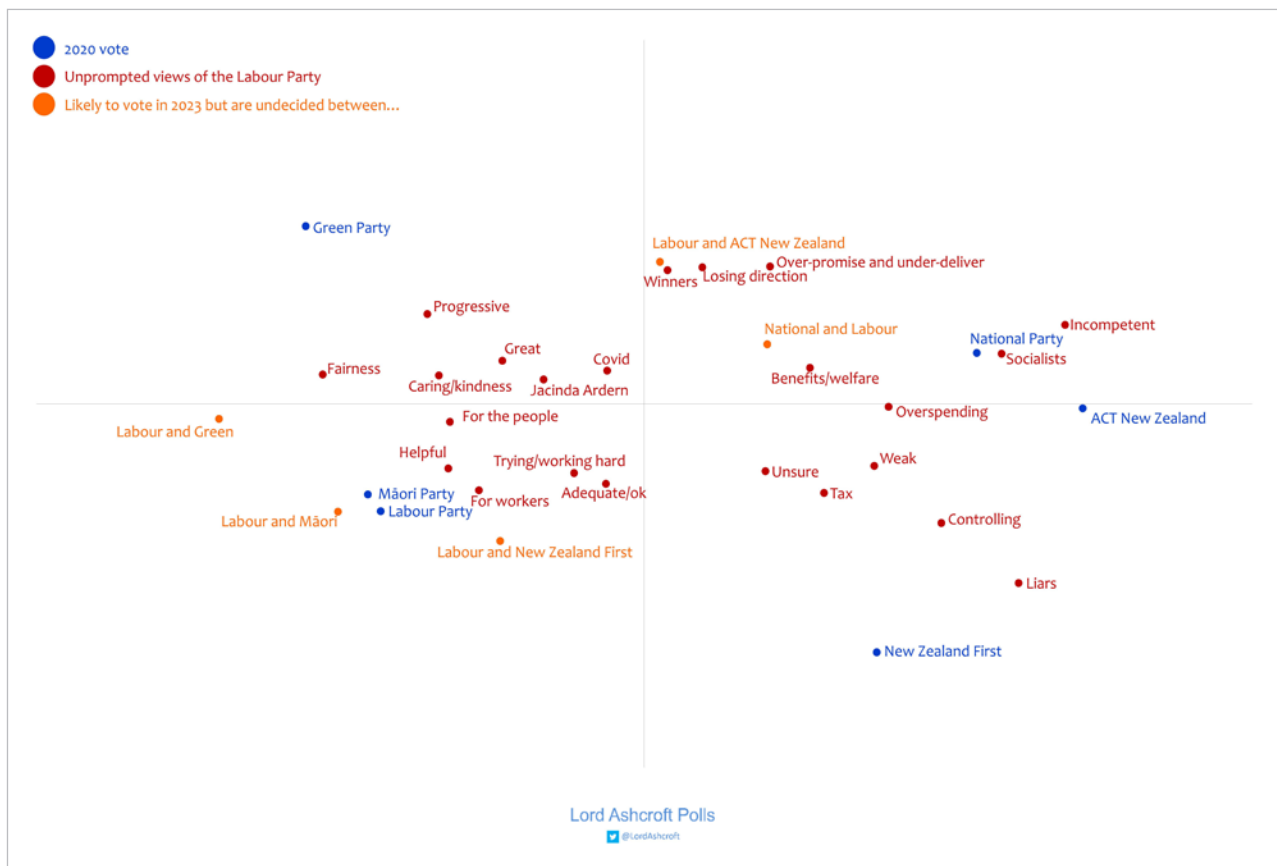
"Welcoming, not formal."

"You'd see kids' toys. You'd see the washing sitting there waiting to be folded. Busy and lots of people and a bit messy."

"A comfy bungalow on the edge of town. Sort of an untidy garden, but nice."

"Smell of freshly-baked bread just out of the oven."

Some descriptions were more disparaging, often focusing on undelivered promises or a preoccupation with presentation over substance.



"It's not been built yet, it's still in planning mode. It's just a promise of a house"

"A run-down townhouse, and they just put a new coat of paint on it."

"Modern but not too modern, because it's trying to appeal to the everyman."

"People with degrees who work in Wellington and have a certain worldview and work for the government."

"We'll find Jacinda in the kitchen, pretending to cook."

"There's a portrait of Jacinda in the hall, like Mother Theresa."

This map shows how views about the Labour Party – distilled from unprompted comments in our online poll – relate to 2020 support for each party, as well as voters undecided between two parties at the next election. For example, those torn between National and Labour are close to the centre of gravity of those who think of the Labour Party in terms of welfare benefits and overspending, and those undecided between Labour and ACT are close to those most likely to see Labour as winners, but also those who feel the party is losing direction and has a tendency to over-promise and under-deliver.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: NATIONAL

As with Labour, many of the open-ended comments about the National Party focused on its leader. Many of the positive or neutral responses referred to the economy, stability, or a "pro-business" agenda. However, the balance of the overall response was negative, with many considering the party "divided" or "disorganised" or even "nasty," and "for the rich."

Asked what they thought the National Party stood for, our focus group participants often mentioned business, sound economic management and openness to the world. However, this was often put in the past tense, with many reflecting that the party seemed to have lost its way in recent years.

"Pro-business, that's what you think of when you think of National. Agriculture, farming, tourism, they're very strong in those respects. But I do think they let us down a bit when it comes to things like climate change."

"They stand for 'we're not Labour.' That's pretty much it. I think initially they stood for progress and business and trying to take New Zealand to the world, and in John Key's time they did pretty impressive things. But the succession was not there. They keep stumbling and need to get their act right."

Judith Collins was seen as a leader struggling to hold her party together or articulate a coherent alternative to Labour beyond day-to-day criticism of the government's performance. Though many thought she had been an effective minister, few saw her as a future Prime Minister.

"When she first came on, I thought, finally we've got someone who's saying the right things. But I think internally there's just too much conflict and she's only just holding it together."

"I think she's on a hiding to nothing. I think John Key would struggle against this current government with the virus."

"She's taken the Auntie Cindy moniker too far."

"They're just kind of grasping at straws to see if anything will take hold, and if they can make it work, they will run with it. But none of it is working, and it's turning into criticism for criticism's sake just to get some airtime."

"I think Judith took over because nobody else would. It was like, 'OK, anyone who wants to be leader put your hand up.' So she ended up doing it."

'The National house'

Our focus groups' conception of the 'National house' reflected a view of prosperity but not always of comfort or harmony.

"One of those big, old, renovated villas up on the hill above Oriental Bay, with 180-degree views over the harbours."

"The North Shore, somewhere posh. With an SUV outside."



"A penthouse apartment or a new build. A mum who does some part-time work, maybe a receptionist at the doctor's. They have nice linen sheets and subscribe to a few food services and look forward to their holiday every year overseas."

"Large, but cold. Four garages. It's tidy because they have a housekeeper."

"Rural, with farm animals, because they're farmers. Actually, they probably have a city house and a country house, which explains a lot about them as well."

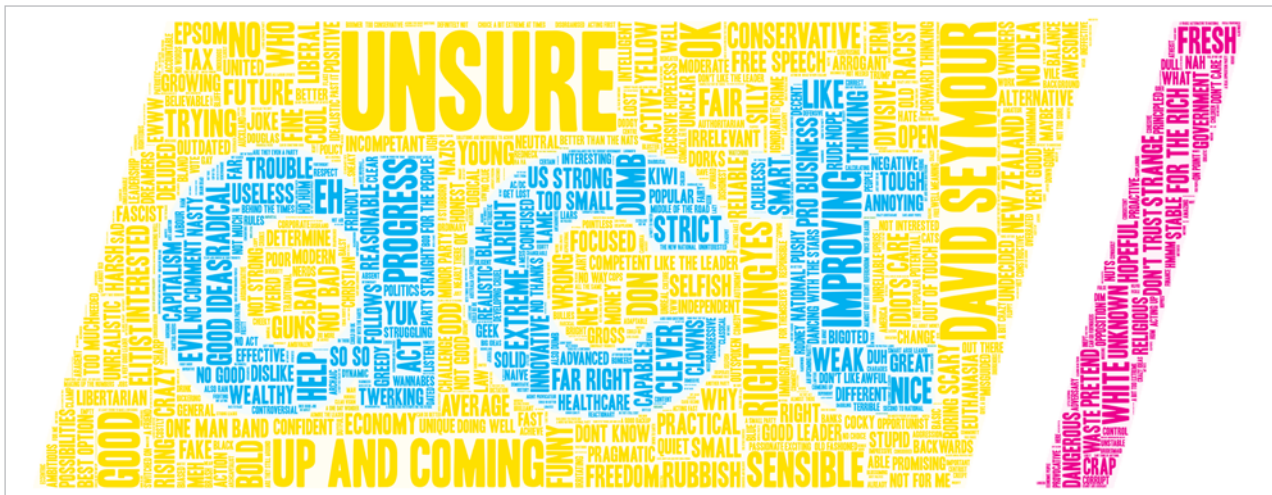
"There would be a leak. It would be a leaky building. And a couple who don't love each other."

"A two-storey brick house but half of it is under renovation. The kitchen's under renovation, the bathroom's under renovation."

In a similar map of views about the National Party, we see that those undecided between National and Labour are close to those most likely to see National as tough but fair, but also those who believe the party

to be divided. Peak support for National in 2020 is also close to the epicentre of the view that the party is the only realistic alternative to Labour.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: ACT NZ



“Unsure” was the single most frequent word used when it came to ACT. However, there were a number of positive phrases including “up and coming,” “progress,” “improving,” “sensible,” “hopeful” and “freedom.” More critical contributions included “far right,” “extreme” and “for the rich.”

In our focus groups, people often described the party as bold, clear, and standing for common sense. Several drew a contrast between David Seymour and ACT on the one hand and the National Party on the other.

“I would seriously consider voting for ACT at the next election because I don’t think there’s anything cohesive in the current National Party. I think he’s got some of the same charisma that John Key had.”

“There’s absolutely no waffle. I understand every word he says. He just comes across as a little bit of common sense.”

“Seymour came out with ‘this is what I want to do, ABC.’ It was all very clear, and his politics was for me. I felt like National was just playing opposition for opposition’s sake.”

"I've traditionally voted for National but I felt the internal politics were a little messy, with the changes of leader and everything. I liked what ACT said and felt they had convictions."

"I'd never really paid attention to the minority parties because, with all due respect, it's a wasted vote. But last time ACT was the only viable option because they were saying the right things, the other two were busy mucking around and I thought 'you're going to get my vote because if enough people feel like I do, you've got a real shot here.'"

Those with a negative view of the party often felt it stood for privileged parts of society, and criticised David Seymour's opposition to new hate speech laws and government proposals on indigenous rights.

"He's always opposing hate speech legislation, opposing anything to get accountability for violence against minority groups."

"I think he's like an institutional racist in that he thinks everything should be equal for everybody, we shouldn't give a handout to people who need it and should just be equal now. He's an institutional racist rather than someone who goes around yelling slurs at black people."

'The ACT house'

Asked to describe ACT as a house, the focus groups usually imagined wealthy people, probably with no children, living a life somewhat removed from most people's experience.

"University students. Or yuppies."

"Modern. Gated, with security cameras."

"Either a mansion in Remuera or a two-bed brick and tile house outside Linton military base with a 23-year-old private who has gun-related viewpoints."

"They're temporarily living in one of their investment properties while they get one of their others done up and living on their capital gains."

"It's large for a couple with no kids. You can't bring your kids around because they've got nice stuff and your kids might break the nice stuff."

"Flashy but probably doesn't work."



As this map shows, positive views about ACT – especially that the party is progressive, sensible and strong – are to be found closest to peak support for the National Party at the 2020 election, and to those most likely to be undecided between ACT and National in 2023. Those undecided between ACT and Labour are closest to those most likely to see the party as the real opposition, but also to those most inclined to see it as a one-man party.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: NZ FIRST

Winston Peters also featured prominently among comments about NZ First. No single theme dominated the responses, but contributions often included words like “fading,” “outdated,” and “old.”

We see from this map that those most likely to be undecided between NZ First and Labour are close to those who see the party as being for the elderly and those who believe concern about immigration is high on its agenda. Those undecided between NZF and ACT are close to those who see the party as standing for fairness, but also to those who most identify it with Winston Peters and consider it a one-man outfit.



'The Green house'

For our focus groups, the imaginary Green Party house would be home to idealistic young people living in an eco-friendly way that was beyond what most people would choose.

"A city apartment with young people. Close to the cafés."

"A log cabin with students. A lot of artwork or political posters."

"Open house. People come and go. It's pretty fragrant."

"Hydroponics and a greenhouse. Compostable toilets and a worm farm."

"The middle of nowhere, next to a stream. It's a mud house made of mud bricks."

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: MĀORI PARTY

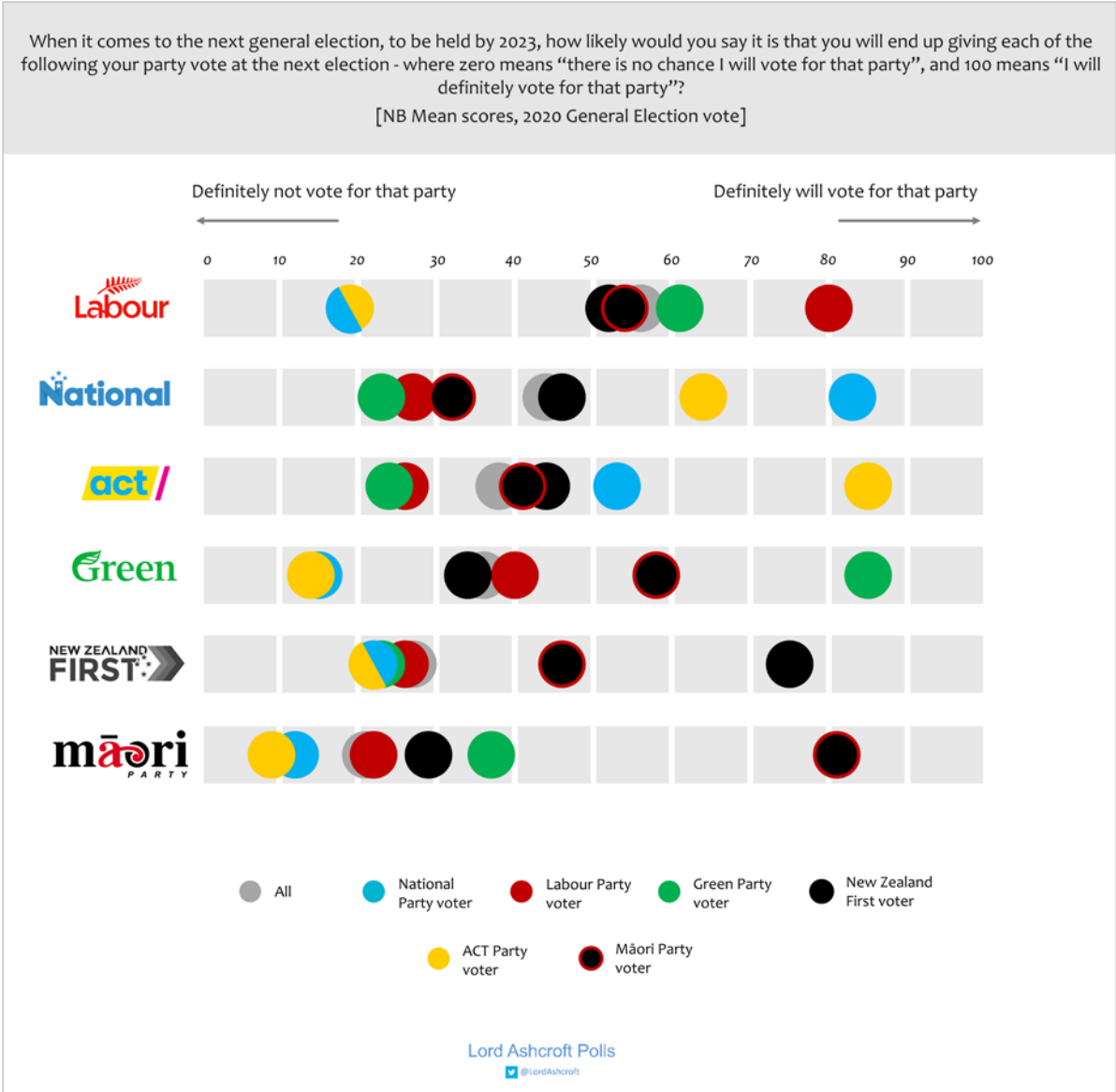


“For Māori” and “indigenous rights” were the predictable main themes when it came to the Māori Party. “Potential,” “proud” and “brave” also featured. However, “race-based,” “racist,” “divisive” and “single issue” were frequent criticisms.

Those who voted for the party in 2020 or are considering doing so in 2023 were closest to those who identify the party with rights, fairness, and Māori language and heritage. In territory between Labour and

Green voters are those most likely to see the party as small and focused on a single issue (albeit one with which, judging from answers to other questions, they have a good deal of sympathy). Closer to National and ACT territory we find those most likely to see the Māori Party as separatist and divisive.

THE 2023 ELECTION



We asked voters how likely they thought they were to vote for each party at the next general election. Among those who said they intended to turn out, ACT and Green party voters from 2020 showed the highest propensity to stay with their previous party in 2023, with mean likelihood scores of 85.1 and 84.8

respectively. National Party voters said they were more likely to vote the same way again next time (83.4) than were Labour voters (79.7).

Women gave a higher likelihood of voting Labour (60.4/100) than men (52.1). Younger voters were also generally more likely to say they would vote Labour than older voters: 18–24-year-olds gave a mean likelihood of 67.3, compared to 49 among those aged 65 or over. Labour voters from 2020 were more likely to switch to the Greens (39.7) than to any other party; likewise, 2020 Green voters gave a higher likelihood of switching to Labour (61.4) than to any other party.

There was a gender disparity in the opposite direction for the National Party, with men saying they were more likely to vote National in 2023 (48.5) than women (40.2). However, there was little variation between age groups: 18–24s and those aged 65 and over gave identical likelihood scores when it came to the National Party (45.3).

Women (39.8) were more inclined to vote Green than men (31.3), and there was a marked variation between age groups: mean likelihood scores declined from 53.2 among 18–24s to 22.9 among those aged 65 or over.

The mean likelihood of voting for the ACT Party was higher among men (41.7) than women (33), and higher among those aged 65 and older (39.1) than the youngest voters (33).

Younger voters gave a slightly higher mean likelihood of voting for New Zealand First (32 among 18–24s) than older voters (27 among those aged 65 or over). Māori voters rated themselves more likely to vote for NZF (46.7) than white (25) and Asian-background voters (27.7).

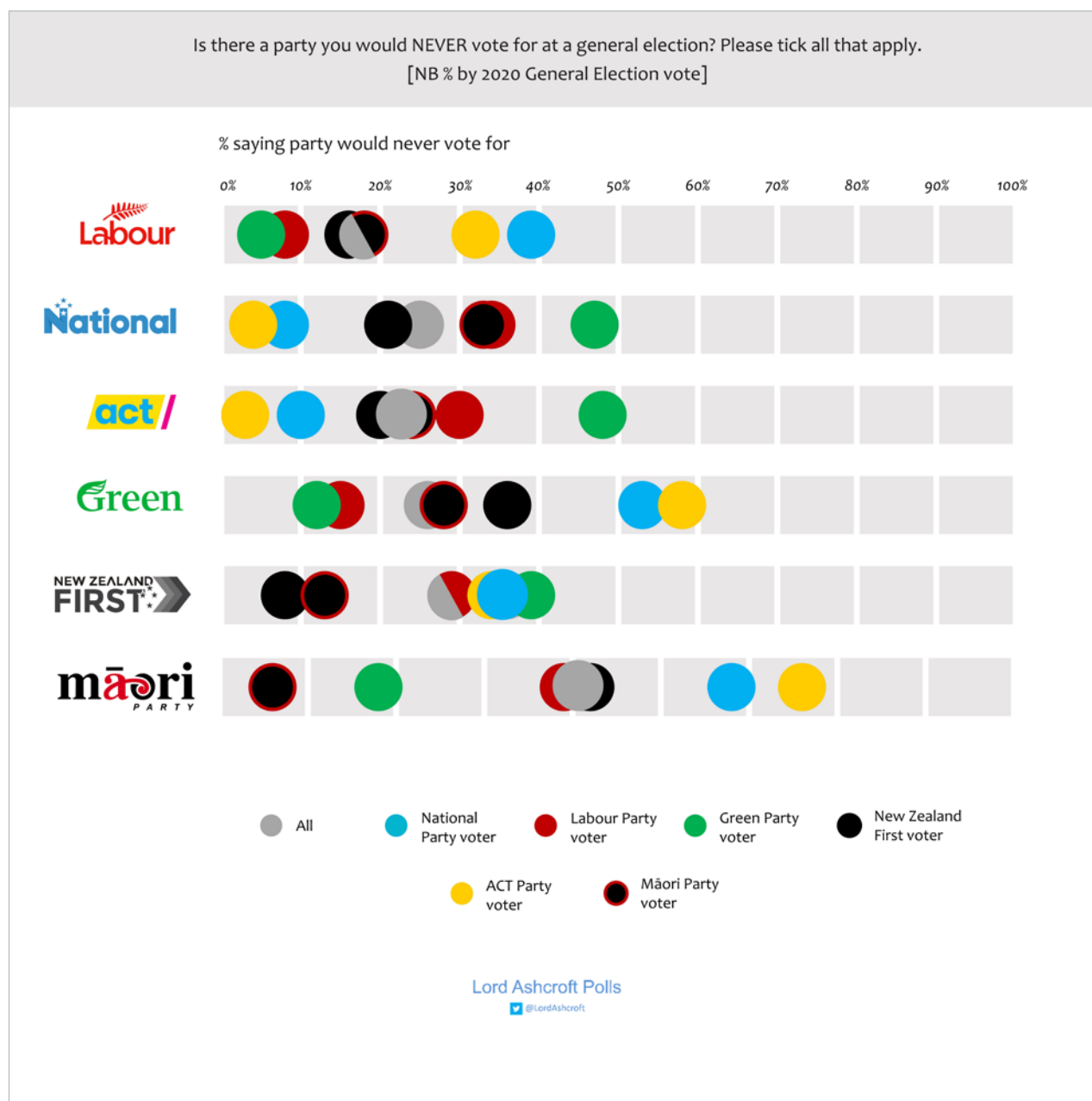
Māori-background voters were most likely to vote Labour (73.8), compared to 59.4 for the Māori Party, 52.8 for the Greens, 46.7 for NZ First and 36.3 for National. Pacific voters were also most likely to say they would back Labour (75.6), with the Greens second at 49.3. Asian-background voters were slightly more likely to say they would vote National (60.9) than Labour (54.5), with ACT on 42.6 and the Greens at 36.4. White voters' mean likelihood to vote Labour was 55.8, ahead of National (43), with similar scores for ACT (36.6) and the Greens (34.2).

National Party voters from 2020 said they were more likely to switch to ACT than any other party, their mean likelihood of doing so (52.9) was well below that of staying with National (83.4). Their mean likelihood of switching to Labour was just 19.2.

New Zealand First voters from 2020 were more likely to switch to Labour (52.1) than to the National Party (46) or to ACT (43.9) but were more likely to stay put (75.3) than to move at all.

ACT voters from 2020 had a relatively high likelihood of switching to the National Party (63.9) – much higher than to NZ First (21.8) or Labour (18.6) or the Greens (13.6) – but were much more likely to repeat their previous vote (84.8) than to switch at all.

OUT OF THE QUESTION?



We also asked people which parties, if any, they would never vote for at a general election.

Labour was the party least likely to be ruled out, with 18% of all voters saying they would never vote for them. They were followed by ACT (23%), the National Party (25%), the Green Party (26%) and NZ First (29%), with 41% saying they would never vote for the Māori Party. Fewer than one in five voters (19%) said they did not rule out voting for any of them.

39% of 2020 National Party voters ruled out voting Labour, compared to 34% of Labour voters who ruled out voting National. Only 5% of 2020 Green voters said they would never vote Labour, compared to 16% of NZ First and 32% of ACT voters. Those aged 65 or over were nearly twice as likely to rule out voting Labour (23%) as those aged 18-24 (12%).

The National Party was most likely to be ruled out by 2020 Greens, nearly half of whom (47%) said they would never vote for it. National was also ruled out by 21% of NZ First voters but only 4% of those who voted ACT in 2020. Just under half (44%) of Māori-background voters would never vote for the National Party, compared to 24% of white voters.

Nearly one third of men said they would never vote for the Green Party, compared to one in five women. Those aged 65 or over were much more likely to rule out the Greens (42%) than those aged 18-24 (18%) and 25-34 (16%). More than half of 2020 National (53%) and ACT (58%) voters said they would never vote Green, compared to just 15% of Labour and 36% of NZ First voters.

New Zealand First was most likely to be ruled out by those who voted Green (39%), National (36%) or ACT (34%) in 2020. Only 11% of Māori voters said they would never vote for NZ First, compared to 32% of white and Asian-background voters.

ACT was most likely to be ruled out by 2020 Green voters, nearly half of whom (48%) said they would never vote for the party, followed by Labour voters (30%). Only one in five NZ First and one in ten National voters ruled out voting for ACT.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

5,129 adults in New Zealand were interviewed online between 9 and 24 August 2021. Data have been weighted to be representative of all adults in New Zealand. Full data tables can be found at lordashcroftpolls.com

Eight focus groups were conducted online between 27 and 30 September 2021 with voters in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Manawatu and Tauranga. Participants were drawn from a range of social, ethnic and political backgrounds, and the research included equal numbers of men and women.





ABOUT LORD ASHCROFT

LORD ASHCROFT KCMG PC is an international businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. He is a former treasurer and deputy chairman of the UK Conservative Party. He is also honorary chairman and a former treasurer of the International Democrat Union. He is founder and chairman of the board of trustees of Crimestoppers, vice-patron of the Intelligence Corps Museum, chairman of the trustees of Ashcroft Technology Academy, a senior fellow of the International Strategic Studies Association, former chancellor of Anglia Ruskin University and a former trustee of Imperial War Museums. His political books include:

Smell the Coffee: A Wake-Up Call for the Conservative Party

Call Me Dave: The Unauthorised Biography of David Cameron

Hopes and Fears: Trump, Clinton, the Voters and the Future

Well, You Did Ask: Why the UK Voted to Leave the EU

The Lost Majority: The 2017 Election, the Conservative Party, the Voters and the Future

Jacob's Ladder: The Unauthorised Biography of Jacob Rees-Mogg

Diagnosis of Defeat: Labour's Turn to Smell the Coffee

Going for Broke: The Rise of Rishi Sunak

Reunited Nation? American Politics Beyond the 2020 Election

Red Knight: The Unauthorised Biography of Sir Keir Starmer

Victoria Cross Heroes, Volumes I and II

Special Forces Heroes

George Cross Heroes

Special Ops Heroes

Heroes of the Skies

White Flag? An Examination of the UK's Defence Capability

Unfair Game: An Exposé of South Africa's Captive-Bred Lion Industry

