

# MĀORI VOTING AND DIGITAL INTERFACES

A snapshot of digital interfaces and Māori voting trends for iwi runanga and other governance entities

**RESEARCH PROJECT** The purpose of this research project was to examine how digital interfaces might assist in fostering forms of political awareness amongst Māori that will lead to other forms of political participation, including voting. Very little research has been conducted about how digital interfaces might support Māori political participation. For this project a review of existing academic literature and digital interfaces in New Zealand and internationally was conducted.

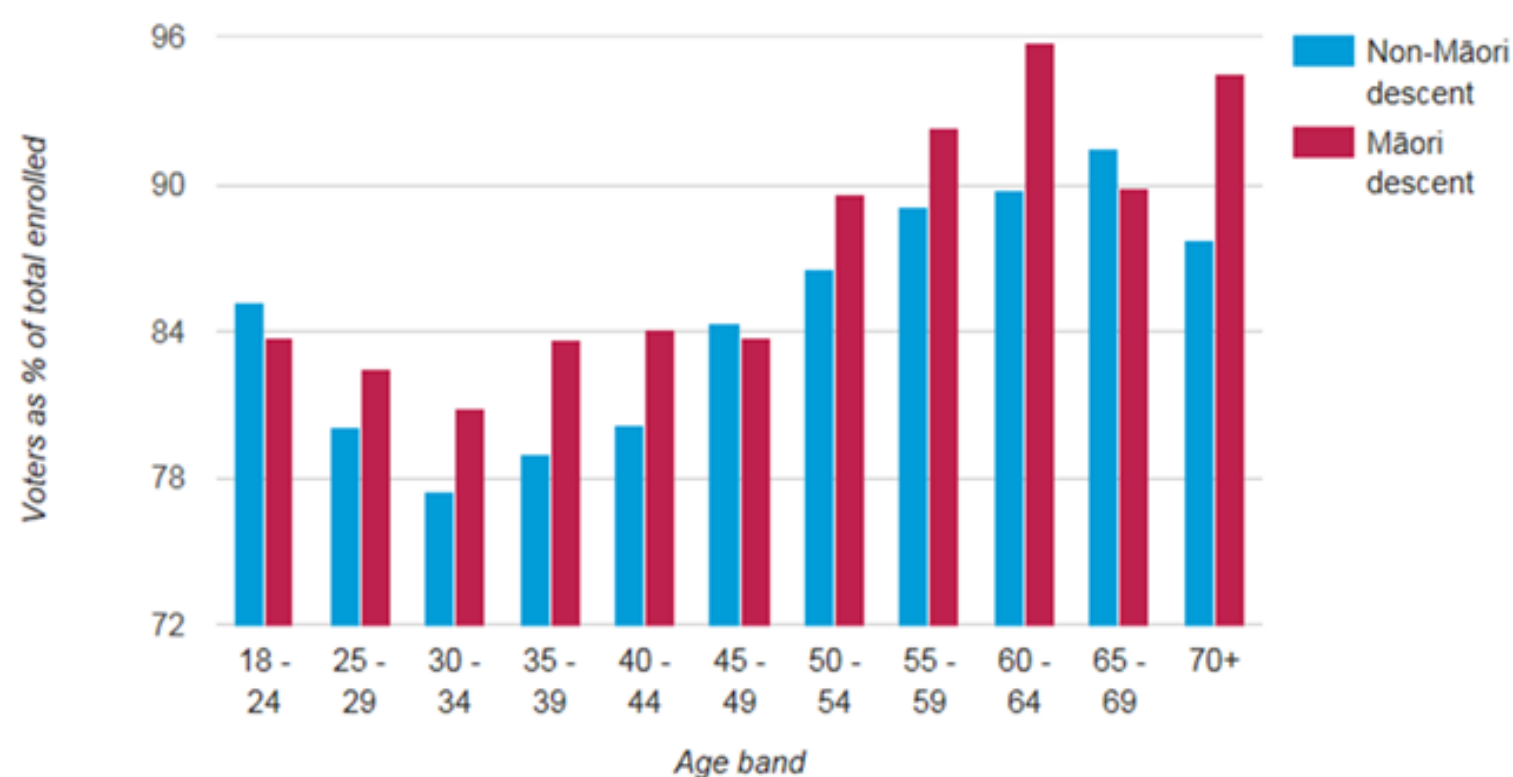


## DIGITAL INTERFACES

85% of Māori aged 15-24 use the internet for social media networking (Te Puni Kokiri 2016) and research shows that initiatives providing greater options for participation will improve the interest and participation in political issues and systems (Tawhai 2007:6). Digital interfaces can be a useful tool to encourage political participation with a minimal commitment of time and effort (Vitak et al. 2008; Waitoa et al. 2015; Kahne and Middaugh 2012; Rice et al. 2016).

Māori voting rates across the country are uneven and in some places higher than non-Māori. For example in the Wellington Central Electorate in the 2014 general election, a higher percentage of Māori voted than non-Māori (Electoral Commission 2014).

Wellington Central Electorate (Electoral Commission 2014)



## QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Is there potential for a WebApp like 'On the Fence' for Māori and specifically focused on the issues important to them? What other opportunities are there for the use of digital interfaces?

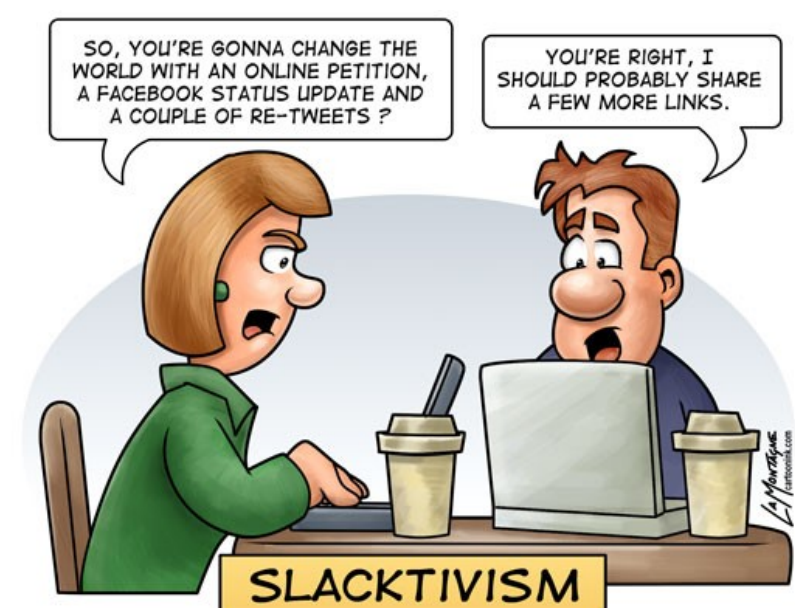
### References:

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## INTRODUCTION

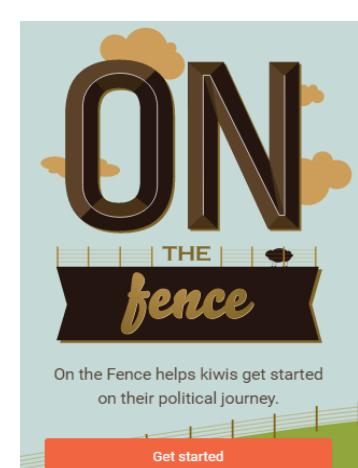
Māori sites of politics are different from those of non-Māori and voting is only a small part of political participation (Bargh 2013). Voting turnout has historically been lower among Māori than non-Māori (UMR Research 2006) with Māori who are younger and less well off the least likely to vote (Fitzgerald et al. 2007:4). However some suggest that Māori are more often than not involved with politics. They point to Māori involvement in marae, hapu and iwi activities (Bargh 2013), treaty claims (Crown Forestry Rental Trust 2003) and environmental activism (Hill 2009).

## CAUTIONARY TALES



The table below discusses some of the issues to watch out for when using digital interfaces.

Slacktivism	Slacktivism is engaging in feel-good forms of political participation that have little or no impact on affecting change (Vitak et al. 2008)
Fake news	The media has widely theorised that fake news influenced the outcome of the recent American election (The Guardian 2016). The spread of fake news on social media such as Facebook and Twitter should be considered when using digital interfaces for political discussion.
Echo chambers	An online echo chamber is where social media users only encounter individuals, information and perspectives in which they are already interested in (Kahne et al. 2011). This occurs because social media users are able to select the content that they are exposed to (such as when a user likes a page on Facebook).
Indigenous Data Sovereignty	Indigenous data sovereignty is the right of native people to govern the ownership and application of their own data (University of Auckland 2016). Digital interfaces make it hard to control cultural misappropriation and the cultural integrity of online data.
Short-term impact	Fads such as the Pokemon Go app (which lost a third of its daily users a month and a half after launching) (NZ Herald 2016) highlight the risks of digital interfaces having a short term impact and raise questions around whether long term change can be made through them.



On the Fence ([www.onthefence.co.nz](http://www.onthefence.co.nz)) is a web tool which educates users to find a best match from New Zealand's political parties.

**On the Fence attracted over 170,000 users during the 2014 election (Massey University 2016).**

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