



Results of Survey of Māori on the General Electoral Roll

What are some of the reasons why the shift in movements across rolls is occurring? In order to gather further information about the shifts, I conducted an anonymous survey of people of Māori descent on the General Electoral Roll between September and December 2019. I received permission from the Electoral Commission to use names and addresses from the electronic Electoral Roll. This ensured that I had certainty the people I contacted, and those who responded, were recorded by the Electoral Commission as of Māori descent and on the general electoral roll. Names were selected randomly from across the 11 Regional Council areas in the North and South Islands and internationally. Each posted letter contained an information sheet, survey and small chocolate as a token of thanks for people taking part. Respondents could reply by post, using the enclosed reply envelope, or by scanning a QR code and completing the survey online using Qualtrics.

Results

Of 1,000 surveys I received 118 responses. 23 of 118 (19%) completed their survey online. 14 respondents indicated they believed they were on the Māori electoral roll and one stated that they were not Māori.

Why?

The main aim of the survey was to determine why people chose to be on the general electoral roll. The two core questions of the survey were:

1. Why have you chosen the general electoral roll?
2. What would make you change to the Māori electoral roll?

For the first question (Why have you chosen the general electoral roll?), respondents had 15 statements to select agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, disagree or unsure including on issues such as identity, skill distribution, Labour party, tino rangatiratanga, electorate size, knowing someone, being related to someone and choice of candidates.

80% of respondents agreed (agreed and somewhat agreed) that

- 'There is more choice of candidates on the general roll' and;
- 'Māori don't all think the same and its good to have Māori on both electoral rolls'

Comments added to the responses indicated that there were several variations around the 'more choice' response. For some it was more choice of people who perhaps they had some knowledge of: "Because I didn't have the choice to vote for people I wanted to, only Maori candidates who I have never heard of when on Maori roll". This also connected with comments about the greater amount of information about General electorate candidates: "It's easier to vote on the general roll. I know more information about my local general roll hopeful. There is more information around about them."

For others it was that those on the General roll had a higher chance of being aligned to their values and views: "More candidates to better reflect my values and goals", "I think the

broader range of parties and candidates available to me on the General Roll are more in line with my political preferences.”

Others saw the General roll as presenting a greater chance of having influence:

“Because I wanted to have more of a say in the choosing of our Government. When I started voting there was limited choice in the FPP system and only 2 parties to choose from. There is still limited choice with the Maori seats as they have traditionally been held by Labour/NZ First.”

There were two places in the survey where the issue of the Māori electorates was queried. One was a response to the question ‘Why have you chosen the general electoral roll?’ and stated, “I don’t think there should be a Māori roll”. In answer 56% disagreed and 9% somewhat disagreed. The question was also asked again after a question about whether Māori should be able to change electoral roll at any time and there 56% of respondents disagreed with the statement “There shouldn’t be a Māori electoral roll”, and 21.6% indicated they were neutral. Overall, the majority of respondents indicated support for the Māori roll, despite being on the General roll themselves. This suggests that the numbers of people on the General roll should not be used to infer that those electors believe the Māori electoral roll should be abolished.

What would make respondents change General to Māori electoral roll?

For the second major question of the survey “what would make you change to the Māori roll?”, respondents again had 15 statements to select agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, disagree or unsure and the issues were similar, but phrased differently to those in response to the first question. Answers received less consensus than those to the first main question. The top three results were:

- 57% of respondents agreed they would change to the Māori electoral roll “To support more Māori in parliament”,
- 55% said they would “If the electorates were smaller and the MPs could better represent me”.
- 52.6% said they would shift “If candidates from lots of different political parties stood in Māori electorates”.

The majority of respondents to the survey stated they do not vote in their iwi elections (70%), Of those aged 35-39 and 45-49, 100% stated they do not vote in iwi elections. It is difficult to ascertain if these responses are particular to those who chose to reply to this survey, or whether there is a correlation to being on the General roll and a low level of engagement in iwi politics. While it did not ask specifically about iwi elections or which electoral roll people are on, the StatsNZ Te Kupenga survey from 2013 reported that 89% of Māori adults said they knew their iwi and 62% of adults said they had been to their marae with only 34% having done so in the last 6 months (Te Kupenga 2013).

When are they changing?

Most respondents, 68%, indicated that they had not changed electoral rolls since they enrolled. This percentage is significantly lower than is reported during Māori Electoral Options when between 1997 and 2018 an average of 95% of Māori remained on the same roll. This may indicate that those who chose to complete this survey already had an above average interest, including in changing rolls. Of those 21% of respondents who said they have changed electoral roll, 44% said they have changed more than once and 21% said they had done so in the 2018 Māori Electoral Option (21%).

Voting method

While overall respondents indicated they would vote online if able to do so in General, Local and iwi elections, significantly fewer across all age groups indicated they would for iwi elections. This was even the case for those who said they voted in their iwi elections.

70% of respondents stated they would vote online in general elections if able to do so and 69% would vote online in local government elections but only 53% stated they would for iwi elections. 54% of those who stated they did vote in iwi elections said they would vote online in the iwi election (58% of the same group said they would vote online for general and local government elections so they were less likely in general to favour online voting).

While the results of this survey cannot be taken as representative, they suggest that although some argue the Māori Electoral Option is a litmus test/referendum of Māori support for the Māori electorates (Geiringer 2003) this may not be the case. Frustrations around political parties not standing in Māori electorates, for whatever reason, and thereby reducing Māori choice appears to be more the source of complaint than the existence of the electorates themselves.

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Survey Results



81%
of respondents
completed the survey via post, whilst
19% completed online



80%
of respondents
agree or somewhat agree that
'there is more choice of candidates on
the general roll'
'Māori don't all think the same and it's
good to have Māori on both electoral
rolls'



56%
of respondents
Agree that 'there should be a Māori roll'
9% Somewhat agree



of respondents agreed they would change to the Māori electoral roll. "To support more Māori in parliament"



of respondents agreed they would change to the Māori electoral roll. "If the electorates were smaller and the MPs could better represent me"

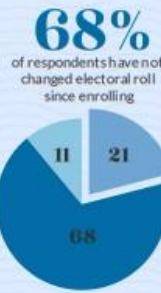


of respondents agreed they would change to the Māori electoral roll. "If candidates from lots of different political parties stood in Māori electorates"

70%
of respondents did not
vote in their iwi
elections



100%
of those who were of the
ages 35-39 and 45-49 did
not vote in their iwi elections



● Have
● Have not
● No response

44%
of those who had changed rolls
had changed more than once



● Other
● Changed in 2018 Māori Electoral Option
● Have changed more than once

Online Voting

