

eXplore PARLIAMENT



How do we choose who will represent us?

Imagine if all New Zealanders had to meet together to make decisions about laws or about how taxes should be spent. This would be very difficult, if not impossible. Instead, we choose a small number of people to represent our views in Parliament, where these decisions are made. This is what happens in a **democracy** (a word that comes from the Greek language meaning “people rule”).

Who can be a representative in Parliament? How are representatives chosen? How do they get into Parliament?

Candidates and parties

Representatives are chosen every three years in a general election. There is an Act of Parliament that outlines the rules for an election. The Electoral Commission is responsible for running the election and making sure that the rules are followed.

All New Zealand citizens who are enrolled as voters can offer themselves as **candidates** for election. Most candidates belong to a **political** party, which is a group of people with similar views on how our country should be run. Belonging to a party greatly increases a candidate’s chance of being elected. People who offer themselves for election are keen to contribute to decision-making in New Zealand.

Electorates

New Zealand is divided into 71 geographical areas called “**electorates**”, or “seats”, including seven Māori Electorates. Each electorate is represented by one member of Parliament (MP).

When a general election approaches, political parties select candidates to stand for Parliament. There are often several people who want to be candidates for a party, but only one can be chosen for each electorate.



THAT'S INTERESTING !

The youngest person ever to be elected to the New Zealand Parliament is James Frederick Stuart-Wortley. He was 20 when he came into Parliament in 1853. The youngest woman to be elected is Marilyn Waring. She was 22 when, in 1975, she became the National member of Parliament for Raglan.

General elections

A general election is held every three years. On the day of the election, New Zealand **citizens** and permanent residents aged 18 years and over choose who they want to represent them in Parliament. They do this by going in person to polling booths and casting their votes. The votes are counted, and the initial results are published that evening. The candidate who wins the highest number of votes in each electorate becomes a member of Parliament. Sometimes the results change after special votes are counted. Special votes are made by people who are eligible to vote but can't get to polling booths on election day for a particular reason, such as they are overseas, in hospital, or are outside their electorates. It can take a few days for special votes to be counted. If two candidates have nearly the same number of votes on election day, the special votes can change the result.

MMP

In New Zealand, we elect our members of Parliament using a system called mixed-member proportional (MMP) representation: some members of Parliament are electorate MPs and others come from party lists. This means that people have two votes: one for their electorate MP and one for the party they want to be in the Government. The system is proportional because the number of seats a party wins in Parliament is proportional to the share of votes it wins in the election.

Before MMP, voters had only one vote – for their electorate MP. This is because New Zealand had a first-past-the-post (FPP) system. Under

MeTe Kingi Paetahi, MP for Western Māori 1868-1870

(Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref: ½-058461-F)

FPP, the party that gained the most electorates got to form the Government, even if it gained fewer total votes than another party. Every MP represented an electorate – there were no party lists and no list MPs. The MMP system has been used since 1996.

Party lists

Political parties choose party members to be on their party list and rank them in order of preference. They also choose party members to be candidates in each electorate. A party member can be on the party list and be an electorate candidate at the same time. The higher they are on the list, the more likely they are to become an MP.

The number of seats a party wins in Parliament depends on how many party votes it gets. A party's MPs can be made up of some electorate MPs and some list MPs.

For example, if a party gets 20 percent of the party vote, it will be entitled to roughly 24 MPs in Parliament (20 percent of 120 = 24 seats). So, if it wins 10 electorate seats, its top 14 list candidates will also become MPs, making a total of 24.

Some parties have only list MPs because they won a percentage of the party vote but did not win any electorate seats. To win any seats in Parliament, a party must receive at least 5 percent of the party vote or win an electorate.

List MPs do not represent a particular electorate. They support the policies of their party and take part in all the business of Parliament.



How are members of Parliament elected?

YOU HAVE TWO VOTES

PARTY VOTE

This is a vote for your preferred political party. The party votes decide how many seats each party gets in Parliament.

Vote for only one party

▲ Triangle Party

● Circle Party

■ Square Party

★ Star Party

ELECTORATE VOTE

This is a vote for the person you want to represent your local electorate. The candidate who gets the most votes wins.

Vote for only one candidate

SMITH, Bob
TRIANGLE PARTY

CRANE, Jillian
CIRCLE PARTY

PAKI, Stephanie
SQUARE PARTY

ARAWHAIA, Hemi
STAR PARTY

DID YOU KNOW ?

The next time you see a \$10 note, look for Kate Sheppard's face. Kate is famous for leading the campaign to win the right for women to vote (women's suffrage). In 1893, as a result of hard work over several years, she and her supporters succeeded in pressuring Parliament to change the law. As a result, New Zealand became the first self-governing country in the world to give women the right to vote. In most other countries (including Britain and the United States), women did not gain the right to vote until after the First World War.

HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED

The first general election was held in 1853, but only male landowners had the right to vote. This meant that some Māori could also vote; however most could not because Māori owned land communally as iwi, hapū, or whānau. After the land wars of the 1860s, politicians thought that Māori participation in Parliament would help to bring peace between Māori and Pākehā. They also wanted to reward iwi who had fought alongside Pākehā. In 1867, four Māori electorates were established, and all male Māori over the age of 21 gained the vote. This was 12 years before all Pākehā men gained the same right. The first Māori members of Parliament, elected in 1868, were Tareha te Moananui (Eastern Māori), Frederick Nene Russell (Northern Māori), John Patterson (Southern Māori), and MeTe Kingi Paetahi (Western Māori).

ELECTION FACTS

General elections are held every three years.

A by-election is held when an electorate MP resigns or dies between general elections.

Elections are always held on a Saturday, which is called "polling day".

To vote, a person must be 18 years or over and be a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident. (There are some exceptions to this rule.)

Votes are cast in secret in polling booths, which are usually in places such as schools and church halls.

Māori can choose to register to vote in a general electorate or in a Māori electorate.

Candidates and parties put out lots of advertisements and pamphlets leading up to an election. There are rules around what they are allowed to do for advertising.

Ballot papers (for voting) have two parts: one for the preferred electorate MP and one for the preferred party.

People called scrutineers make sure that the voting process is followed properly and that votes are counted accurately.

Initial election results are announced on the evening of polling day. Special votes take longer to count.

When all counting has been completed, the Chief Electoral Officer declares how many list seats have been won by each party.

Discussion and activities



1. True or false?

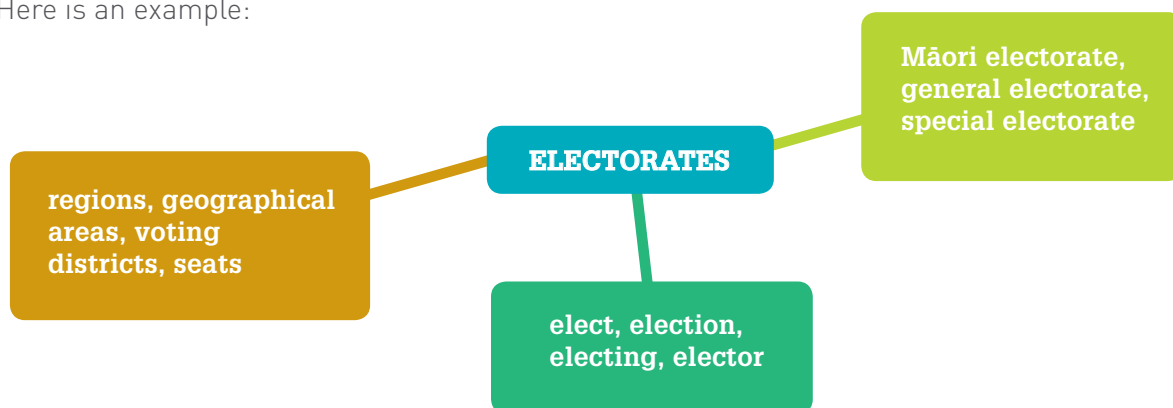
Working in pairs or small groups, decide if these statements are true or false.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. <i>There are around 120 seats in Parliament.</i> | <i>True or false?</i> |
| 2. <i>Every electorate is represented by one MP.</i> | <i>True or false?</i> |
| 3. <i>There is a total of 77 electorates.</i> | <i>True or false?</i> |
| 4. <i>In MMP, parties can join together to form the Government.</i> | <i>True or false?</i> |
| 5. <i>An MP can be on a party list and still represent an electorate.</i> | <i>True or false?</i> |
| 6. <i>MMP stands for mixed-member proportional.</i> | <i>True or false?</i> |
| 7. <i>In 1868, all males were given the right to vote.</i> | <i>True or false?</i> |
| 8. <i>A political party can have MPs in Parliament even if it doesn't win an electoral seat.</i> | <i>True or false?</i> |
| 9. <i>New Zealand women won the right to vote before men.</i> | <i>True or false?</i> |
| 10. <i>Any person living in New Zealand can vote in an election.</i> | <i>True or false?</i> |

2. Election vocabulary and concepts

Create a word map (either in your book or using a digital tool) for each of the words that are in bold type in the text. Write the bolded word in the first box. In the next group of boxes, write other words and phrases that can have the same meaning. Now list other words associated with the bolded word. Finally, write other words that come from the same root word.

Here is an example:



3. Try this

If you were standing for the student council at your school, how would you persuade your classmates to vote for you? What ideas, suggestions, and plans do you have that would make a difference for the students? Write a short speech that outlines what you would do if elected.

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