



MMP or First Past the Post – Which do the Voters Prefer?

The General Election this year will include a referendum on the voting system. Voters will be asked to indicate whether they want to retain MMP, and if not, which of four other options they would prefer, i.e. *First Past the Post*, *Preferential Voting*, *Single Transferable Vote*, or *Supplementary Member*.

Research New Zealand decided to find out whether New Zealanders do in fact want a change, and if so, what the relative level of preference is between MMP and First Past the Post. Most New Zealanders have only limited experience with the other voting systems that will be canvassed in the Referendum, and so it was felt that posing the question as a choice between the two voting systems most voters are familiar with, MMP and FPP, would give a reasonable indication of the preferences of the voting public.

The results show that there is a clear preference for MMP at 49 percent compared with FPP at 33 percent. Some five percent of respondents did not want either of the two voting systems, and 11 percent did not know.

The results indicate that voter preference is a function of age. Voters in the age group 18–34 favoured MMP (54 percent) over FPP (21 percent), whereas in the age group 55 years and over MMP was preferred by 49 percent and FPP by 40 percent. “Even so, at this stage MMP is favoured over FPP in all age groups”, said Research New Zealand Director, Emanuel Kalafatelis.

Maori and Pacific People express more of a preference for MMP than do other ethnic groups at 59 percent for MMP versus 20 percent for FPP.

The preference for MMP is slightly higher in the Lower/Central North Island at 56 percent, compared with 53 percent in the Upper North Island and 41 percent in the South Island, where, evidently, voters are more conservative. “However, there is an overall preference for MMP in all regions”, said Research New Zealand Director, Emanuel Kalafatelis.

Voters on higher incomes (\$80,000 or more p.a.) favour MMP by a significant margin at 54 percent versus 47 percent of those on lower incomes (less than \$40,000 p.a.).

“An information campaign is planned prior to the election and once this has run the result might be different, but at this stage it looks as if MMP is a clear winner”, said Research New Zealand Director, Emanuel Kalafatelis.

The Research New Zealand poll of 476 people aged 18 and over was conducted by telephone on 7–15 June 2011. The maximum margin of error for the sample as a whole is +/- 5.1 % (at the 95% confidence level). The data has been weighted to ensure it is an



accurate representation of New Zealand's general population 18 years and over. The poll was not taken on behalf of any organization, but as part of Research New Zealand's monthly survey of attitudes and opinions.

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Table 1:

Q10a. At the election this year, voters will be asked if they want MMP to be kept as it is, or if they want it modified. Supposing the choice was between MMP as it is and the old First Past the Post system, which would you prefer?

	Total	Male	Female
Base =	476*	214	262
	%	%	%
MMP	49	47	52
First past the post	33	36	31
Neither	5	5	6
Don't know	11	11	11
Refused	1	1	0
Total	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Sub-sample based on respondents 18 years or over.

Table 2:

Q10a. At the election this year, voters will be asked if they want MMP to be kept as it is, or if they want it modified. Supposing the choice was between MMP as it is and the old First Past the Post system, which would you prefer?

	Total	18-34 years	35 to 54 years	55 years and over
Base =	476*	82	164	230
	%	%	%	%
MMP	49	54	46	49
First past the post	33	21	37	40
Neither	5	6	5	4
Don't know	11	20	9	6
Refused	1	0	2	0
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Sub-sample based on respondents 18 years or over.



Table 3:

Q10a. At the election this year, voters will be asked if they want MMP to be kept as it is, or if they want it modified. Supposing the choice was between MMP as it is and the old First Past the Post system, which would you prefer?

Base =	NZ			
	Total	European/Pakeha	Maori/Pacific	Other
	476*	365	51	60
	%	%	%	%
MMP	49	49	59	41
First past the post	33	36	20	33
Neither	5	4	4	13
Don't know	11	11	15	11
Refused	1	0	2	2
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Sub-sample based on respondents.18 years or over.

Table 4:

Q10a. At the election this year, voters will be asked if they want MMP to be kept as it is, or if they want it modified. Supposing the choice was between MMP as it is and the old First Past the Post system, which would you prefer?

Base =	Total	Lower/Central North		
		Upper North Island	Island	South Island
	476*	216	106	154
	%	%	%	%
MMP	49	53	56	41
First past the post	33	30	39	35
Neither	5	5	2	7
Don't know	11	12	3	16
Refused	1	1	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Sub-sample based on respondents.18 years or over.



Table 5:

Q10a. At the election this year, voters will be asked if they want MMP to be kept as it is, or if they want it modified. Supposing the choice was between MMP as it is and the old First Past the Post system, which would you prefer?

Base =	Total 463* %	Under \$40,000 164 %	At least \$40,000 but less than \$80,000 153 %	\$80,000 or more 146 %
MMP	49	47	50	54
First past the post	33	35	33	31
Neither	5	5	5	4
Don't know	11	12	11	9
Refused	1	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Sub-sample based on respondents 18 years or over and who stated their income level.

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