

Analysis of a Poll of Voting Changes

May 2011

The following table is taken from <http://www.horizonpoll.co.nz/page/122/act-breaks-t> HORIZONPOLL: Potential Party Vote 12-14 May 2011

Voters were asked the following Question:

If a New Zealand general election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for, or which do you have a preference towards at the moment?

Current Voting Preference	Total	Which party did you vote for at New Zealand's last general election in 2008?											
		ACT New Zealand	Green Party	Jim Anderton's Progressive Party	Labour Party	Maori Party	National Party	New Zealand First Party	United Future	Other Party	Chose not to vote	Not Eligible to Vote	Don't know or can't remember
ACT New Zealand	5.3%	64.4%	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%	0.7%	4.9%	5.3%	0.0%	6.1%	0.0%	14.9%	0.0%
Green Party	9.8%	0.0%	69.6%	19.6%	9.9%	12.2%	1.6%	0.8%	0.0%	10.6%	10.7%	8.7%	13.4%
Jim Anderton's Progressive Party	0.6%	2.6%	0.2%	23.3%	1.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
Labour Party	26.9%	0.8%	13.5%	28.4%	65.7%	13.6%	6.2%	10.7%	1.4%	4.1%	31.0%	29.9%	15.9%
Mana Party	2.3%	0.0%	4.8%	0.0%	2.0%	30.5%	0.0%	0.0%	17.2%	1.7%	9.0%	2.8%	0.0%
Maori Party	2.1%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	1.4%	34.5%	1.2%	0.0%	5.8%	0.0%	6.5%	0.0%	1.8%
National Party	36.6%	22.9%	4.0%	0.0%	9.4%	1.3%	78.0%	8.1%	16.3%	27.5%	19.5%	25.8%	24.6%
New Zealand First Party	6.8%	2.1%	5.1%	21.8%	5.6%	1.1%	3.3%	68.6%	9.4%	18.6%	10.0%	3.5%	4.0%
United Future	0.9%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	1.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%
Other party	1.9%	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	4.8%	31.4%	0.0%	3.2%	10.5%
Choose not to vote	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.1%	4.9%	6.3%
Don't know	4.9%	2.2%	0.3%	7.0%	3.7%	4.9%	2.5%	6.5%	11.8%	0.0%	5.2%	6.3%	21.1%

Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
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*Totals may not sum exactly owing to rounding

Base	1744	46	140	15	529	43	719	70	22	21	40	40	59
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Margin of error 2.3%

Note: This result is based on respondents who did not rule out voting and who were eligible to vote. It combines the results for those who have already decided how they will vote, with the results from those who are not sure, but have a preference for one party or another.

Commentary: This interesting poll looks at whether people who voted for a particular party at the 2008 Election have changed their vote, and to what. Some discussion follows (by Barry McDonald)

ACT New Zealand: The table shows 64% of former (2008) ACT voters are intending to vote ACT in the next election. This is up from the mid-April count of only 49% of ACT voters intending to stay loyal (see table below for April). The rise coincides with the change in leadership from Rodney Hide to Don Brash. Nearly a quarter of former ACT voters are intending to vote National instead, but this is more than compensated by nearly 5% of former National voters who are now intending to vote ACT. It will be interesting to see if the support remains this high in the lead-up to the election.

Note this column has a small base of 2008 voters (only 46 people). The Base figures at the bottom of the table show the number of people in the sample who voted for each party at the 2008 election.

Green Party: Green voters in 2008 have maintained a relatively high degree of loyalty (70%) but this is down from 77% in April and 84% in December 2010. Only 13.5% say they are switching preference to Labour (more than in April). More crucially they have lost 5% of their supporters to the new Mana Party. Figures also show a 5% drift to New Zealand First, which confirms the drift noted in April. Despite their losses, the Greens have picked up sufficient new supporters from other parties or new voters to let them maintain their overall vote of 9.8%.

Jim Anderton's Progressive Party: As Jim Anderton nears retirement his party looks to be doing the same, with only 24% of previous voters remaining loyal, but this is based on only 15 people. In April the loyalty figure was 43%. Some are opting for Labour (28%), and about 20% each for the Greens and for New Zealand First. With Jim retiring and the Progressive Party being unable to maintain its voter base, it looks to be heading to extinction.

Labour Party: The Labour Party appears to have been deserted by over one third of its party voters, with only 66% remaining loyal (confidence interval 62% to 70%). This is up slightly from April (64%) but down from 68% loyal in December 2010. Almost 10% of former Labour voters have expressed a preference for the Greens, and this is up from 8.4% in April and 5.1% in December. Will this trend continue? Another 9.4% of those who deserted Labour have in fact gone to their nemesis National, but the drift is less than in April (12.7%). The drift back to Labour may be because of the mooted changes to Kiwisaver, and attacks on John Key, but Labour need to do more to reverse the drift. Perhaps some of those who have gone from Labour to National are people who, in 2008, preferred to “stick with the devil you know rather than the devil you don’t”, and now that they have experienced a National-led government are less worried. In terms of raw numbers in the poll, about the same number of ex-Labour voters (50) expressed a preference for National as vice-versa (45). The other places former Labour voters are going is to New Zealand First (5.6%), which is a similar level to April. Only 2% of Labour voters have expressed interest in the new Mana Party, but if one multiplies by the base figure (529) this suggests a similar number of actual voters switching from Labour to Mana as from the Maori Party to Mana (11 vs 13). So Mana is not just a problem for the Maori Party.

At this point it is worth making a comment about the poll methodology. On their web site Horizon say “People are invited to join the HorizonPoll national online research panel based on the profile of the population at the 2006 census. Less than 5% of the panel is self-enrolled and an iterative raking weighting system, using up to six factors at one time, including party vote 2008, ensures results are robust within the confidence levels stipulated.” So the Horizon poll is not based on a random sample of New Zealanders, but rather on a sample of people enrolled on the Horizon Research panel. Horizon provides poll information to the Stuff website and related newspapers. The panel is composed of people who don’t mind answering surveys on all sorts of subjects in exchange for virtual dollars, and such people *may* not have the same spread of different political views as you would find in a random sample. For example they may be slightly more politically interested, or have more time on their hands, compared to the average person. Horizon do try to ‘weight’ their sample results i.e. scale numbers up or down to reflect the relative proportions of people with different ages, genders, geographic region, income and education to ensure “a representative sample of the New Zealand population”. The consequence of this weighting is that you can’t simply go from the figures for the different parties, times their Base figure, to add them up to give the Total column. It means, for instance, that even though there are far more Maori in the April sample than in the May sample, all this does is give less chance of error to the results: the difference in base numbers shouldn’t *in itself* alter the total vote percentages much.

On the other hand the bulk of the above table relates to the question of whether panel members who voted one particular way may have changed their vote. My gut feeling is that panel members are likely to change their minds just as much as a random sample of New Zealanders would. (I might well be wrong). Anyway I am going with my gut feeling and treating the preferences within each column of numbers as if they were a random sample of such voters. This assumption feeds through to the confidence interval calculations I have quoted. Note the width of the intervals depend on the Base numbers as well as the percentage loyal that we are talking about.

Maori Party: The Maori Party have only retained 34% of their party voters, and lost 30.5% to the Mana Party. This must be extremely worrying for them as you may recall in 2008 that many people split their vote, supporting the Maori Party candidates in Electorates but giving their party vote to Labour. So relatively few had voted for the Maori Party as such, realising that their party vote was effectively 'wasted' as they got more Parliamentary seats via Electorates than their Party vote entitled them to – leading to an 'overhang' in Parliament. The upshot is that these Maori Party Voters were more likely to be deeply committed supporters, and it is many of these who have deserted the party. Labour has gained 14% of them and Greens 12%, both similar figures to the April poll. Aside from Mana, the biggest change from April is that in April 9.7% opted for New Zealand First (now only 1.1%) Note the Base numbers are much lower for Maori in the May poll than in the April poll, but this is probably because Horizon did a special study of Maori voters in between-time.

National Party: This party has maintained the highest loyalty figures (78%, confidence interval 75% to 81%), down only 1% from April. Of those wanting to change votes, 6.2% drifted from National to Labour, 4.9% to ACT and 3.3% to NZ First. A further 2.5% are undecided: to put this in context this represents somewhat more than the total number of voters for the Progressive Party in 2008, and somewhat less than the total number of voters for United Future in 2008.

New Zealand First: Not surprisingly NZ First voters in 2008 have maintained a strong degree of loyalty to the party (68.6% but down from 75% in April). I say not surprisingly since at the 2008 election it was fairly clear to NZ First supporters that their Party Votes were very unlikely to lead to Parliamentary seats: so those who chose to ignore this fact and vote NZ First on principle anyway, are likely to have been deeply committed to the party, and hence unlikely to switch votes now when there is a sniff of returning to Parliament. Of those changing their vote, 11% prefer Labour, 8% National, and 5% ACT. Only 6.5% specified Don't Know, so on the face of it there is not a large group of NZ First voters waiting to be soaked up by other parties, although this may change if, again, NZ First ends up polling below the 5% threshold with no safe Electorate seat.

United Future: Things are looking bleak for this party. Last election, despite Peter Dunne having a fairly safe seat, the party did not pick up enough Party votes to get the deputy leader back into Parliament. History is likely to repeat itself as UF is now retaining only 33% of its voters. The Base numbers for this party are small (22) so it is risky to try to suggest trends. (The Horizon website comments that United Future have contributed a lot of the support for Mana, because the % figure on that row is 17.5%. This is clearly wrong as 17.5% of former UF voters is only 2 people: Mana have picked up much more support from the 2% of Labour voters who have switched preference)

Other Party: This category includes: people who voted for the Bill and Ben Party; Kiwi Party (a revamped Future NZ); Family Party (a revamped version of Destiny NZ); the Democrats (a revamped version of the Social Credit Party, and former part of the Alliance along with Jim Anderton's New Labour, the Greens and Mana Motuhake); the ultra-right-wing Libertarianz; Alliance (left-wing party with Laila Harre and Matt McCarten) and others. 31% of people who voted for one of these intend to continue to vote for that party (each one is so different from the others that there is unlikely to have been switching between them). In the latest poll 27% switched to National but Base numbers are really too small to suggest trends.

Chose Not to Vote: Of those who chose not to vote last time, 31% have decided to favour Labour. These may have included people who were tired of Labour but couldn't bring themselves to vote for anyone else. The others have mostly gone fairly evenly for Green (11%), National (20%) and NZ First (10%) parties. 8% intend not to vote next time.

Not Eligible to Vote: These are mostly young people or immigrants. 26% intend voting National and 30% Labour. Interestingly a higher proportion opted for ACT (15%) than the Total percentages suggest, perhaps indicating that younger people are more susceptible to radical ideas.

Don't Know or Can't Remember: These are mostly people who are not particularly interested in Politics. As such they may or may not carry out their voting intention. The current poll shows 21% intending to vote National and 16% Labour but 21% Don't Know. Again numbers are small. Since they may not turn up at the Polling Booth their opinion may not be counted anyway. (Contrast with Australia that has compulsory voting so parties have to chase up all the "Don't Know and Don't Care" people.)

Above commentary from Dr. Barry McDonald

Past Polls of Voting Changes April 2011

The following table is taken from <http://www.horizonpoll.co.nz/page//115/party-vote-3> HORIZONPOLL: Potential Party Vote 15-20 April 2011

Voters were asked the following Question:

If a New Zealand general election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for, or which do you have a preference towards at the moment?

Current Voting Preference	Total	Which party did you vote for at New Zealand's last general election in 2008?											
		ACT New Zealand	Green Party	Jim Anderton's Progressive Party	Labour Party	Maori Party	National Party	New Zealand First Party	United Future	Other Party	Chose not to vote	Not Eligible to Vote	Don't know or can't remember
ACT New Zealand	3.7%	49.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	3.0%	4.2%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	9.5%	2.7%
Green Party	9.9%	0.0%	77.1%	5.9%	8.6%	13.0%	1.8%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	13.3%	14.7%	9.6%
Jim Anderton's Progressive Party	1.0%	2.2%	2.0%	42.6%	0.4%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%
Labour Party	23.9%	6.3%	9.9%	14.2%	64.2%	12.7%	4.6%	8.6%	15.5%	4.8%	30.6%	16.0%	7.3%
Maori Party	2.4%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.8%	46.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	12.0%	6.8%	3.9%	2.1%
National Party	37.7%	27.7%	3.0%	8.8%	12.7%	5.4%	79.1%	4.3%	14.2%	19.3%	14.5%	24.9%	23.5%
New Zealand First Party	7.4%	4.1%	3.4%	20.5%	6.0%	9.7%	3.6%	75.3%	3.8%	4.8%	12.7%	3.2%	3.7%
United Future	1.1%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	34.3%	0.0%	2.4%	2.8%	0.0%
Other party	3.1%	7.6%	1.4%	8.0%	0.7%	4.9%	0.7%	0.0%	12.5%	59.1%	5.9%	5.4%	5.5%
Chose not to vote	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	1.2%	0.9%	1.6%	8.5%	0.0%	2.3%	1.9%	0.0%
Don't know	8.4%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	5.4%	7.1%	5.2%	4.9%	7.7%	0.0%	11.5%	12.3%	41.8%

Total	99.6%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	94.7%	100.0%
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*Totals may not sum exactly owing to rounding

Base	1831	42	140	14	564	142	653	73	21	23	52	41	66
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Margin of error 2.3%

Note: This result is based on respondents who did not rule out voting and who were eligible to vote. It combines the results for those who have already decided how they will vote, with the results from those who are not sure, but have a preference for one party or another.

December 2010 Poll:

Which party did you vote for at New Zealand's last general election in 2008?

Current Voting Preference	Total	ACT New Zealand	Green Party	Jim Anderton's Progressive Party	Labour Party	Maori Party	National Party	New Zealand First Party	United Future	Other Party	Chose not to vote	Not Eligible to Vote	Don't know or can't remember
ACT New Zealand	2.0%	44.4%	0.0%	11.4%	0.1%	0.0%	1.6%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Green Party	8.9%	0.0%	84.3%	15.5%	5.1%	7.3%	0.8%	0.0%	3.8%	4.9%	15.1%	13.5%	6.7%
Jim Anderton's Progressive Party	1.3%	0.0%	1.1%	32.2%	1.6%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	3.2%
Labour Party	28.3%	9.7%	10.6%	9.9%	67.8%	9.0%	6.4%	11.0%	5.2%	3.9%	31.4%	31.3%	31.4%
Maori Party	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	43.2%	0.2%	2.8%	0.0%	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	5.2%
National Party	40.4%	32.7%	2.6%	5.6%	12.4%	19.0%	83.6%	4.8%	38.2%	0.0%	21.5%	41.6%	18.3%
New Zealand First Party	8.9%	2.9%	1.5%	25.4%	8.3%	18.4%	5.0%	69.9%	0.0%	9.9%	17.9%	0.0%	5.0%
United Future	1.2%	10.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	46.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%
Other party	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	69.8%	6.1%	0.0%	0.8%
Don't know	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%	3.1%	0.9%	10.3%	6.2%	7.2%	5.7%	13.6%	27.7%

Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
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*Totals may not sum exactly owing to rounding

Total - All Interviews	1718	32	110	14	566	35	710	65	18	23	52	28	65
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