

# **Prompting participation: can a personalised message to the newly enrolled have an impact on turnout?**

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New Zealand young people are losing the voting habit. In recent years the newly enrolled have been significantly less likely to enrol and to vote than have older cohorts. The New Zealand Electoral Commission ran two experiments at the 2005 general election encouraging the newly enrolled to vote through the use of personalised mail items and txt messages. The creation of the messages was based on political and social marketing theory and were designed by the same ad agency that creates the election information ads. This paper reports on the experiment and discusses implications for future interventions.

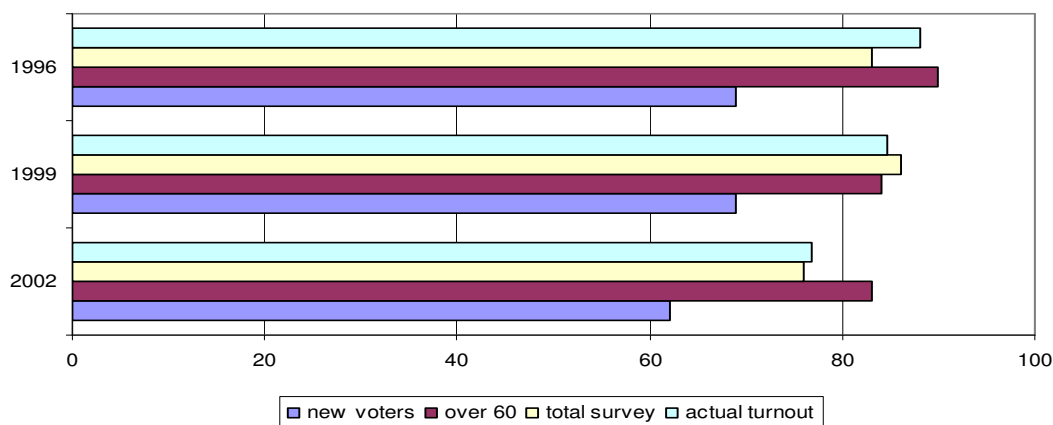
Declining turnout, especially amongst the young and new voters is a concern in most established democracies. Both voting and non-voting seem to be habitual so declining turnout amongst new voters will probably have a long term impact. In order to arrest the trend in declining turnout, an effective strategy with long term effects would be to maximise the number of newly enrolled people who vote and thus acquire the habit of voting. The New Zealand Electoral Commission set up an experiment to test the use of personalised messages to encourage newly enrolled people to vote. The experiment drew upon political science ideas of efficacy and on marketing best practice and theories on changing behaviour and attitudes through direct messages.

### The turnout problem

Voting is not compulsory in New Zealand but enrolment is compulsory for all who are eligible. Enrolment is continuous with targeted updates several months prior to each election. People who have turned 17 can provisionally enrol and will be automatically switched onto the roll on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. In 2005 95% of those eligible to enrol were enrolled. Over half of those not enrolled were under the age of 25 (Electoral Enrolment Centre 2005).

**Table 1 Turnout amongst different age groups.**  
(Vowles et al, 2004, 222, 1998)

	2002	1999	1996
new voters	62	69	69
over 60	83	84	90
total survey	76.1	86	83
actual turnout	76.9	84.7	88.2



Survey respondents are asked if they have voted. Non-voting is then validated using the master roll and the data weighted accordingly

Turnout as a percentage of the age-eligible population at the 2005 general election in New Zealand was higher than in 2002 but lower than at any other general election since 1978 (Vowles 2006). At 77 percent of age-eligible, turnout in 2005 is high by international comparison but the trend downwards is no less worrying. Given the experience in other established democracies New Zealand would be prudent in attempting to reverse the trend before it reaches the levels found elsewhere.

Survey data suggests that young people are less likely to vote than older people. In the last three elections turnout amongst those aged between 18 and 24 has been between 15 and 19 percentage points lower than the overall turnout (see Table 1). Voting is not only lower amongst young people but the difference in voting levels amongst the young and the old is increasing (Vowles 2006). Turnout levels in individual electorates indicate some stark differences too. Turnout in the Maori electorates is consistently lower than in general electorates to the extent that the Maori electorate with the highest turnout has a lower turnout than the general electorate with the lowest turnout. General electorates with low turnout tend to be in the poorer areas of the major cities, in particular Auckland where these electorates also tend to have a high Polynesian population. Demographic trends indicate changes in age and ethnic composition such that the young, Maori and Polynesians are becoming a larger proportion of the population (Statistic New Zealand 2006). Given the lower engagement levels, young people, and particularly Maori and Polynesian young people are clearly a group to be targeted in attempts to increase participation.

Another important reason for targeting new voters is that studies consistently demonstrate that both voting and not voting are habit forming activities such that declining turnout amongst new voters will have long term consequences (Catt 2005). A strong finding from Franklin's (Franklin 2004) study was the persistence of early behaviour: those who voted when they first could were more likely to repeat the behaviour and those who did not vote were likely to not vote again (Vowles 2006). Surveys of non-voters consistently find that many are repeat non-voters. In the New Zealand 2002 post-election survey a third of Māori and a fifth of non-Māori non-voters said that they had not voted in the past either (Vowles, Aimer et al. 2004). In the 2005 post-election survey 22 percent of non-voters reported not voting in the previous general election. As non-voting is generally heavily unreported and non-voters are less likely to complete election related surveys, the level of repeat non-voting is probably higher.

### **Marketing voting**

Both mass and direct marketing can assist with population and individual behaviour change. Among other things they can raise awareness, influence attitudes, provide information and access, give encouragement, and facilitate community action. Campaigns will often use a variety of media on a single campaign in order to maximise effectiveness.

Mass marketing techniques, using the mass media, generally emphasise communication to target groups within the general population of a single minded proposition delivered through creative and media choices appropriate to that population. For instance a TV ad played during programmes known to be popular with the target group or a print ad placed in a magazine known to be read by many in the target group. These ads will, of course, also be seen by many others not in the target group. Mass media advertising attempts to reach and influence its desired target market by considering advertising design, media selection, and placement within the selected media. Budget constraints and cost efficiency are important considerations.

Direct marketing, in contrast, provides an opportunity to fine-tune the message, the creative component and the delivery to an individual and what is known about them. Here messages are individually named and addressed when delivered to the target audience, whether by mail, e-mail, or phone/txt. Messages can use a range of information about the individual to provide a personalised message, when relevant individual information is known. Direct marketing is usually the most cost-effective method when it is possible to personally target people.

The Electoral Commission runs a full information campaign through the mass media in the three weeks prior to the general election containing information about the electoral system (Electoral Commission 2006). The electoral Enrolment Centre and Chief Electoral Office each run similar campaigns encouraging enrolment and providing information on where and when to vote. These campaigns are designed to reach the total adult audience with some additional targeting of young people, Maori and new migrant groups. The targeting occurs through placement of messages rather than in the use of specific messages. The core messages are provided in a range of languages.

A marketing campaign to encourage participation by new enrollees needs to go beyond information provision because it aims to change attitudes and behaviour. Electoral participation, like many other social behaviours, can be influenced by marketing campaigns. In the design of such campaigns both individual and social behaviour change models are important. The other vital component is to identify the probable disincentives to voting.

Social change models emphasise a range of external factors that play a role in whether a population will adopt and maintain a desirable behaviour. For instance a public health model (World Health Organisation 1986) stresses that, in addition to building individual skills, community action and a supportive social environment are also important to facilitate and endorse the desired behaviour, together with public policy (including law) and institutional design that facilitates and encourages the population collectively and as individuals. The Electoral Commission works on all of these drivers in its ongoing work (Electoral Commission 2004). In targeting the newly enrolled it is individual behaviour which is the target.

Attempts to influence individual behaviour need to take into account the ways in which people change their behaviour. Andreasen (Andreasen 1995) describes the stages of behavioural change an individual works through to adopt and maintain a desired behaviour as: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and confirmation. An individual's information and motivation needs are different at each stage, and thus the buttons and barriers to the desired behaviour at each stage also differ. Individuals in a population will be at different stages, and thus their receptivity and response to messages will differ markedly unless its design is tailored to the individual. Marketing that is not targeted to the individual needs to speak to individuals at each stage and to assist in movement to the next stage.

Encouragement to vote has to be targeted at the probable disincentives to voting. Consistently survey based research shows that those with high efficacy get involved in politics and those with low efficacy do not (Finkel 1985; Craig, Niemi et al. 1990; Niemi, Craig et al. 1991; Blais 2000). Efficacy is a state of mind, a habit and a self-fulfilling prophecy. In political terms the literature distinguishes between internal and external political efficacy: perceptions of self and government. Internal efficacy is broadly self-confidence or 'beliefs about one's own competence to understand, and to participate effectively in, politics' (Niemi, Craig et al. 1991: 1407). Important components are thinking that politics is interesting, and that it is not too complicated to understand. Interlinked with interest in politics is the extent to which people think that politics is relevant to their lives. In contrast, trust in the ways in which governments respond to citizen demands are at the core of external efficacy. It is often seen as 'beliefs about the responsiveness of government authorities and institutions to citizen demands' (Niemi, Craig et al. 1991: 1408). Feeling reward for voting is another aspect that Franklin (Franklin 2004) emphasises when looking at the habit of voting. Using rational choice arguments, he argues that people are more likely to repeat the act of voting if they felt that it was worthwhile. When the competition is tight then people are more likely to feel it was worthwhile because of a perception that their vote made a difference to the result.

Attempts to increase turnout need to first increase levels of efficacy. A TV campaign in the UK in 2004 emphasised the idea that politics is relevant to your life and therefore participation is worthwhile (Marshall and Lloyd 2004). The UK campaign aimed to change attitudes in the year before the election so that people are responsive to the election campaign once it starts. In contrast the New Zealand experiment was concentrated in the weeks before the election and so concentrated upon the other aspects of efficacy: that it is easy to understand the process and to participate. Whilst this was the primary focus the other aspects of efficacy influenced the overall tone and approach of the messages. Exhortations that voting is a civic duty are less likely to have the desired impact. In the election context, whether a first time voter votes or not will be a product of personal efficacy (including the promise of reward) along with practical knowledge of, and social comfort with, the mechanics involved.

### **The experiment**

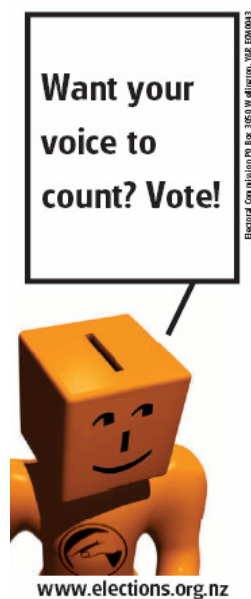
Sending a message to all new voters would be a large and expensive operation, so a small experiment which could test a number of permutations was seen as a sensible first step. The basic premise was to test the impact of a message delivered directly to the newly enrolled. The message was individually addressed but did not contain any other personally targeted component as relevant information for such targeting was not available. Using two sub-samples allowed for a test of a single message and of a series of messages, given generally demonstrable direct marketing theory that multiple contacts are likely to elicit a greater response rate. New voters were targeted in two different samples which allowed for two different forms of message. One of the sample groups was sent items through the post and the other sample group received txt messages to their mobile phone. All messages were well designed and purported to have been sent from 'elector' (see

Figure 1) the orange animated character who stars in the election advertising and thus appear to recipients to be part of the integrated television, radio, print, and online campaign .

*Post message sample - newly eligible enrolees who were enrolled by June 2005*

The target was all those on the electoral roll who had turned 18 since the last election. The sample was taken in June so it includes only those who had enrolled prior to the calling of the election on 25<sup>th</sup> July. Two distinct areas of the country were used for the research, one with low turnout and the other average turnout. South Auckland was chosen because it has low turnout and a multi-cultural population, in particular there are large numbers of Maori, Polynesian and Asian peoples. The electorates used were Manurewa and Manukau with low turnout rates (73% and 71% in 2002 compared to 78% nationally) and Clevedon with turnout the same as the national turnout. The other area used was in the centre of the North Island with a mix of medium and small towns and a significant Maori population, and turnout that has been close to the national average. Two electorates were used. Palmerston North is home to both a University campus and a military camp. Wanganui is a small town in a rural area. For both areas names from the relevant Maori electorate were also used: Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) and Te Tai Hauauru. Using a base of all enrolled people in these areas who had turned 18 since the 2002 election, 360 people were randomly selected from each electorate, except Te Tai Hauauru (240) giving a total sample of 2,400.

**Figure 1 Example of 'elector' at work**



This sample was sent material by post, addressed to them by name. The first item was posted to arrive a few days before EasyVote packs which arrived with all voters a week to 10 days before the election. The second item was posted to arrive a few days after this (mid election week). Both items used the orange

'elector' cartoon figure that features in advertising by the electoral agencies (see

Figure 1). Each item was well produced, in colour and was interesting with a 'fiddle' component.

The first item featured elector taking the plunge in a bungy jump and listed the steps first time voters could take in preparation for voting. The strong graphic image and an actual elastic bungy cord attracts attention to the message. The overall tone is reassuring and encourages voters to engage with preparation. The second item contained an actual self-adhesive note sheet pre-printed "Election Saturday 17 September 9am-7am :-)" with the message "No excuses! Stick this note where it will help you remember to vote on Saturday 17 Sep!". Again this element encourages interaction with the item and the emphasis is on easy steps to take in order to vote.

Design elements were closely linked to the range of theories discussed above, as illustrated in Table 2 in the Appendix. Whilst designed with political science and marketing research in mind there were a few unknowns and possible risks. Without research to confirm the situation in New Zealand it cannot be assumed that because an individual has enrolled they are already contemplating voting. It may be that the timely enrolment was completed simply to be compliant, and without focus on the prospect of voting that it enabled.

The bungy item had a number of potential risks, for instance the fear component of the analogy may be too strong for those that would never contemplate bungy jumping.

Asking a direct question had the potential to elicit a "no" answer. Further, there was a possibility that a low efficacy first-timer might perceive steps 1 & 2 (brush up on MMP and suss out the parties) as too hard without the fuller explanation of how to do this that provided elsewhere. Therefore there was a risk that in specifying the steps needed those with low efficacy might be scared off further engagement or voting. In the second message suggesting takeaways and a night in to watch the results on TV might be perceived as a "loser" option and thus diminish the impact of the mailpiece amongst image conscious young people. However we felt that these risks were mitigated by the intrinsic attractiveness of the mailpiece that encouraged further examination by recipient.

*Txt message sample - newly enrolled who sent a text asking for an enrolment pack*

In the enrolment campaign, the Electoral Enrolment Centre introduced a freephone text number (3676) to which people could text their name and address and be sent an enrolment pack. This campaign was very successful and became the most popular way for people to request an enrolment pack (other sources being web, freephone and postshops).

People who had sent such a message in June were used as the population to draw samples for a test of the impact of text messages encouraging voting.

People with an address in the electorates used for the other sample were excluded from the population before the samples were drawn, to avoid duplication of messages. As there was no guarantee that the person who had asked for an enrolment form had then completed form and returned it a larger sample were drawn to ensure sufficient enrolees to allow a test of voting. In total 4,800 names were selected. This guess at the need to double the original sample was accurate as just over half of the sample was found on the electoral roll just after the election.

For the sub-sample receiving a series of messages there were three messages over the three weeks of the campaign. The final message, and the one received by the sub-sample receiving only one message was sent of election day. The message purported to be from the orange elections guy who is used in mass advertising. All played on the pun of the message that under MMP you have two ticks. The first message started " Who u gonna tick?" , the second "Tick tick ... " and the third, on election day "Tick tick... dingaling!". The first two encouraged preparation and the third was action focussed to vote today. The text messages were also designed with the theories discussed above in mind (see Table 3 in Appendix)

The impact of the messages would be tested by checking all names in the samples on the marked roll to see if each person had voted. After every election one process prior to the final count is to create a master roll in each electorate which indicates whether or not each person on the electoral roll was issued with a voting paper. These master rolls were used to check all of the people in the two samples, with a control group, which did not receive any messages, used for comparison. The wider information programme will also have been an influence on our samples, together with the broader influences on population behaviour discussed earlier, along with the activities of parties and candidates, other participants (e.g. lobby groups), and the news media. Therefore using a control group for comparison allows concentration upon the impact of the experimental messages. Data collected on the control groups also allows for some analysis on turnout, quite separate from the experiment. Turnout can be compared between samples and also against the general election turnout for each election to show the turnout for the newly enrolled. There has been no previous comprehensive analysis of voting levels amongst new enrolees using the marked rolls.

Marketing campaigns seek to prompt a response, such as calling an 0800 number, accessing a website, or in this case voting. Usually the success of a marketing campaign considers the marketing cost of each desired response. In this case the measure of success does not include the cost component and looks just at the response rate because the aim in this experiment was to increase the level of voting. However to ensure wider applicability of the experiment the brief for the design of the direct mail components specified an assumed unit cost budget that could be sustained in a mass application. The costs of sending the txt messages are minimal.



So the experiment was designed to test the following:

1. did receiving a direct message from 'elector' on behalf of the Electoral Commission increase turnout amongst the newly enrolled?
2. did receiving a series of messages have a greater impact than receiving one message?
3. was there a different impact in the two samples?
4. was there a different impact on voters in low turnout areas and voters in high turnout areas?
5. was the impact the same on Maori and non-Maori?
6. was the control group turnout different between the two samples?
7. was control group turnout different in electorates that usually have high and low turnout?
8. how does turnout amongst the newly enrolled compare to turnout for all in the electorate?

Little work has been done internationally on the extent to which an intervention can increase turnout. Two studies in 1998 and 1999 in USA found an increase in turnout amongst people who had received a non-partisan mobilisation message (Gerber and Green 1999; Gerber, Green et al. 2003). One test used door-to-door canvassing and reported that turnout amongst the treatment group was 6 % points higher. A further study testing both door-to-door messages and mailed messages also showed an increase in turnout at the immediate election and at an election a year later. Studies where the target group were interviewed as part of an opinion poll also demonstrated an increase in voter turnout amongst those who had been interviewed (Kraut and McConohay 1973; Yalch 1976). All of these experiments were conducted in the USA where turnout is routinely lower than in New Zealand. We could find no reports on similar research in a context of higher turnout.

### **Did the messages increase turnout?**

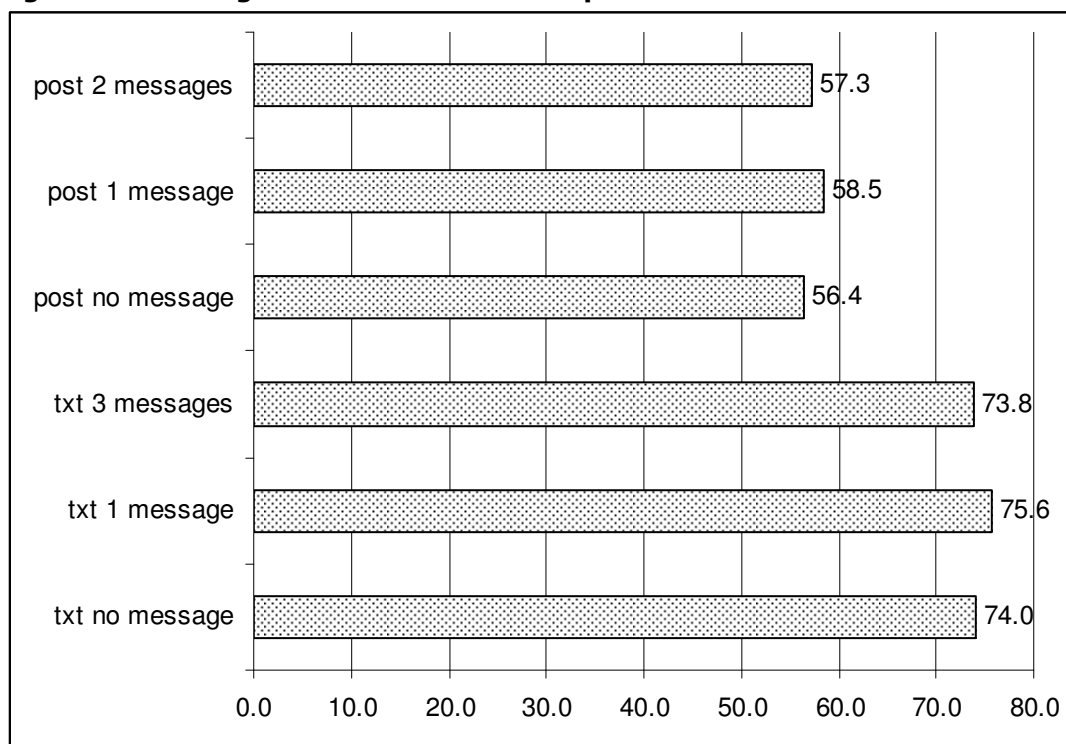
The first questions that the experiment was designed to test were:

1. did receiving a direct message from the Electoral Commission increase turnout amongst the newly enrolled?
2. did receiving a series of messages have a greater impact than receiving one message?

The primary test was the impact of a personalised message on turnout. In each case there was very little difference in turnout between those who had not been sent a message, and those who had been sent a message (see

Figure 2 ). The second question was the impact of a series of messages or one message. Those receiving one message were slightly more likely to have voted than those who did not receive a message (2.1% points higher with post and 1.6% points higher for txt). However those receiving more than one message had the same or lower turnout than those receiving only one message. None of the results are statistically significant indicating that there is no guarantee that the results would be the same if the exercise was repeated. The initial finding is that a personalised message, either individually or a series, did not increase turnout in a statistically significant way.

**Figure 2 Percentage who voted in each sample**



The full tables are at the end of the paper

The next set of questions seeks any differences in impact between various sub-groups:

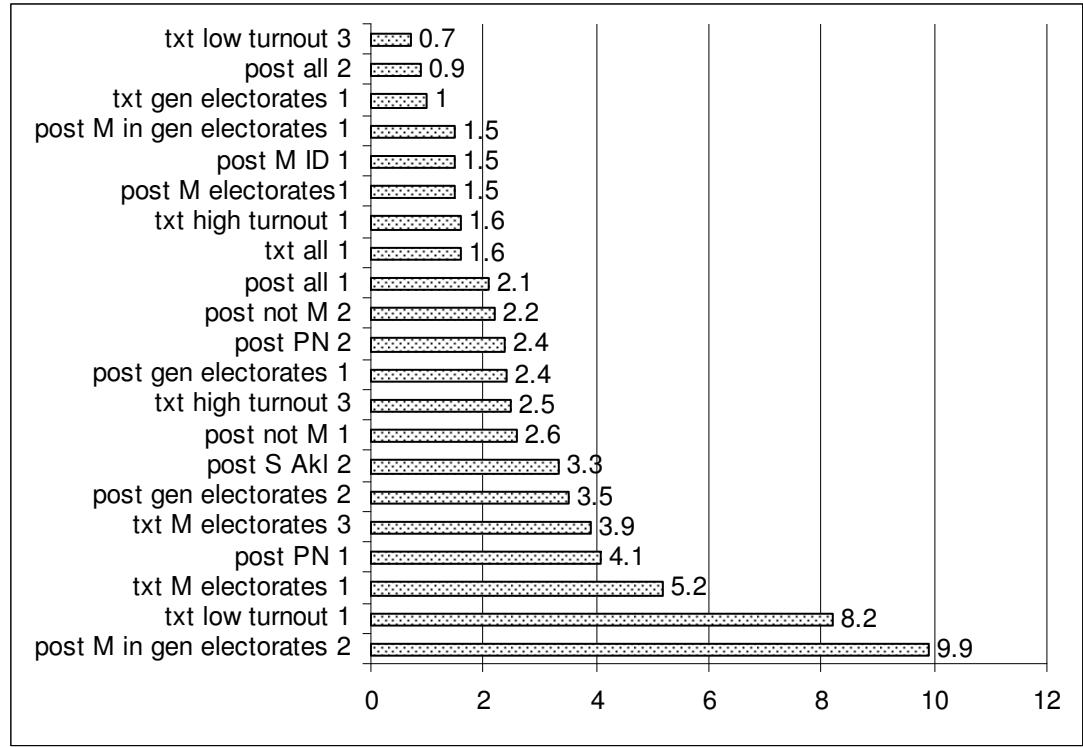
3. was there a different impact in the two samples?
4. was there a different impact on voters in low turnout areas and voters in high turnout areas?
5. was the impact the same on Maori and non-Maori?

Maori can be identified in a number of ways. In both samples the turnout in the Maori electorates and the general electorates can be compared. For the sample who received the postal message we can also identify those who identify as being of Maori descent because this question is on the enrolment form. Therefore we can distinguish between Maori on the general roll and the Maori roll. Electorates can also be grouped according to turnout at the general election. Two groups have been used: the ten electorates with the highest turnout and the 10 general electorates with the lowest turnout. As turnout is lowest in the Maori electorates, this second group of low turnout in general electorates was used. Using census data based electorate profiles to rank electorates based on the proportion of young people and the proportion of students in an electorate did not prove useful. In the following graph the categories are not mutually exclusive but show the range of ways that the sub-groups can be distinguished. For instance in Manurewa, 59 of the 301 identify as Maori.

There is no difference in the impact of receiving a message between the two samples, with no real impact for either the single message nor the series of messages in each sample. However there are some differences in impact between various sub-groups (see

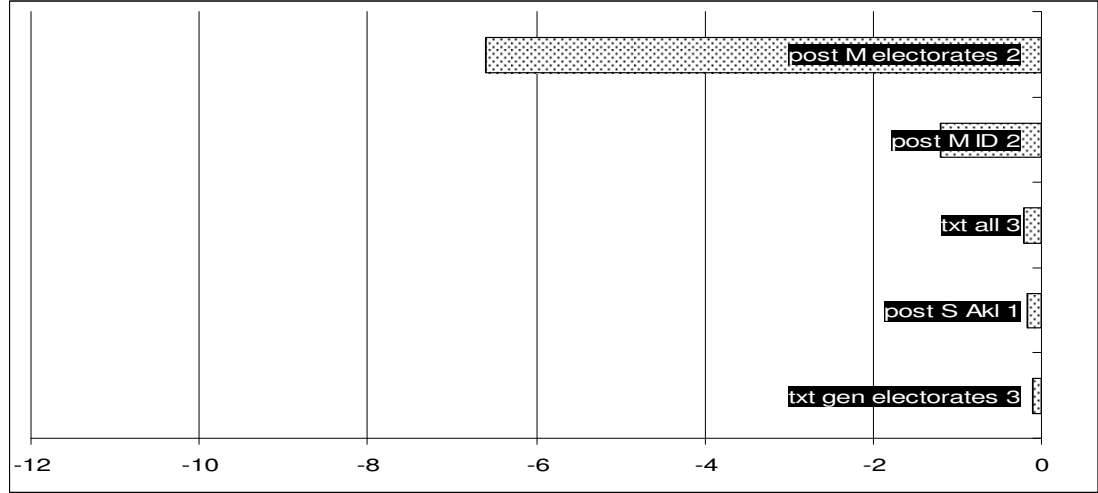
Figure 3) and although none of the results are statistically significant, the patterns will be briefly described because they all point to the same pattern.

**Figure 3 Impact of messages (difference in turnout between the group and the control), for those with a positive impact**



The full tables are at the end of the paper

**Figure 4 Impact of messages (difference in turnout between the group and the control), for those with a negative impact**



The full tables are at the end of the paper

In three instances there was a positive impact of between 5% and 10% points. All of these are areas of lowest turnout in general elections. The highest was for Maori in general electorates who received a series of postal messages. The other two are for Maori electorates and general electorates with low turnout who received only the election day txt. The general electorates with low turnout also have higher levels of Polynesian people. In five sub-groups there was a negative impact (see Figure 4). Again areas of low turnout feature, this time the Maori electorates and those who identify as Maori (mostly the same people). So areas of low turnout responded well to the series of post messages when they were general electorates and badly when Maori electorates. The single message worked in areas of low turnout but the series of txt messages in the same areas had negative effect. Clearly the different factors in the experiment work (or not) in combination.

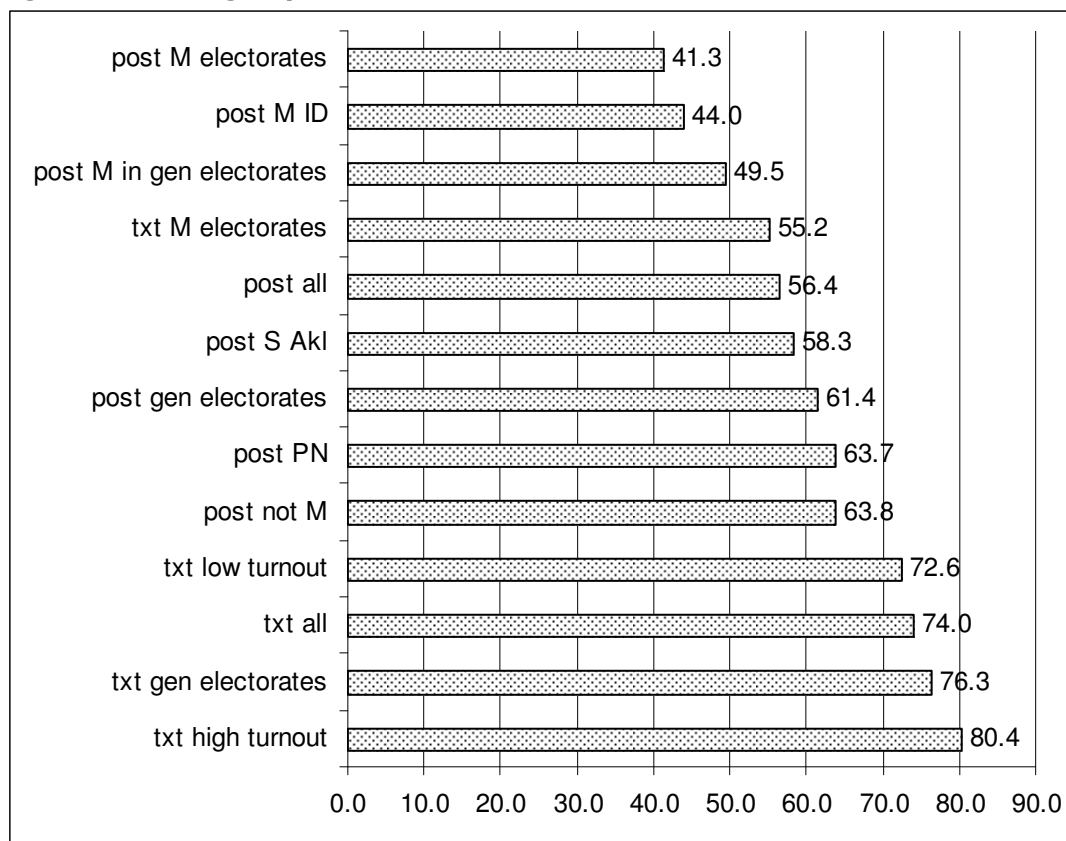
### **Turnout amongst newly enrolled**

The third set of questions utilise the control groups data to analyse difference in turnout amongst the sub-groups encompassed in the samples:

6. was the control group turnout different between the two samples?
7. was control group turnout different in electorates that usually have high and low turnout?
8. how does turnout amongst the newly enrolled compare to turnout for all in the electorate?

There is a marked difference in turnout between the control groups in the two samples indicating a higher propensity to vote amongst those who enrolled after June by txting for a form (74%) compared to those already enrolled in June (56%) (see Figure 5). Those who enrolled later may have seen enrolling and then voting as parts of one process whereas for those who had enrolled by June there were two separate processes which they may not see as being inextricably linked.

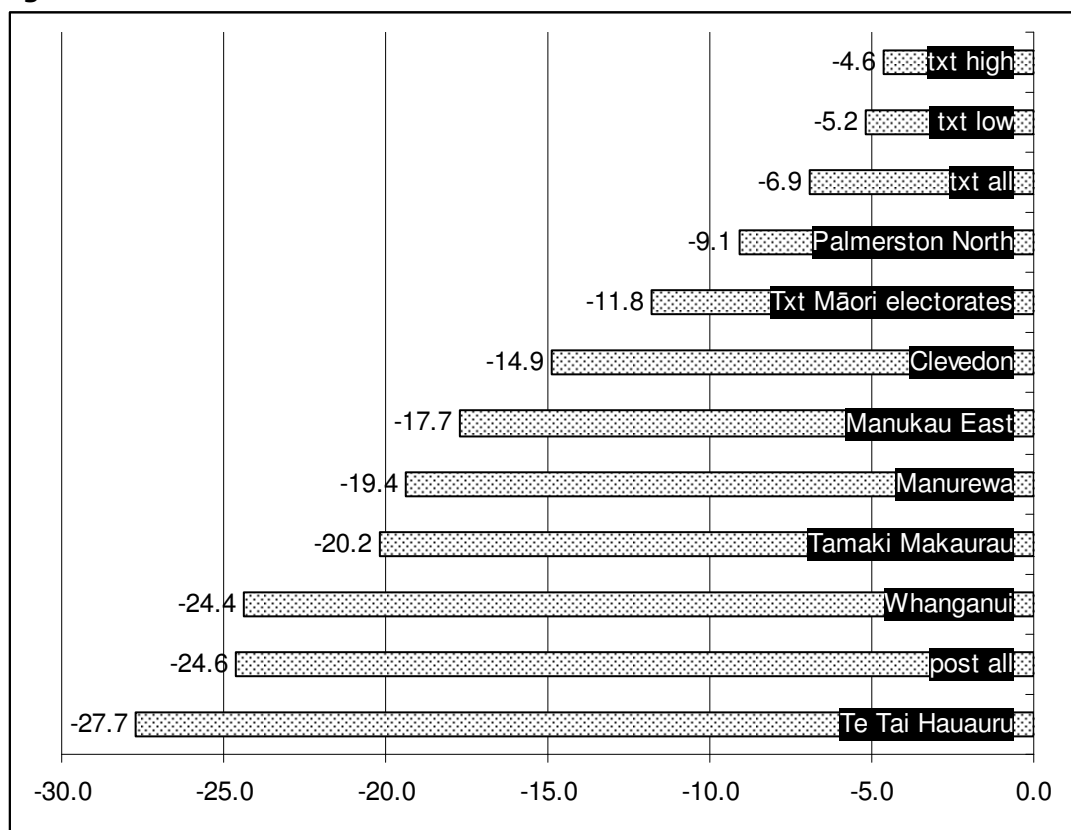
**Figure 5 Control group, % voted**



The full tables are at the end of the paper

Turnout was lowest in the Maori electorates and amongst those who identify as Maori in general electorates. All of these are situations that tend to have low turnout in general elections. The highest turnout was amongst those in the txt sample who were in one of the top ten highest turnout electorates. In the post sample the highest turnout of the control group is those who do not identify as Maori. Overall the pattern seems to be the same amongst the newly enrolled as for the full electorate. Possible explanations for this effect may be because there are localised structural influences and that the behaviour of others encourages or discourages voting.

**Figure 6 Difference in turnout between control and the whole electorate**



The full tables are at the end of the paper

The newly enrolled consistently had a lower turnout level than for the electorate as a whole but with a large range from -5 to -28 % points (see

Figure 6). Turnout amongst the newly enrolled is much closer to the overall turnout amongst those who enrolled in June after using txt to request an enrolment pack. The largest difference amongst the txt groups is in the Maori electorates with a 12% points deficit, half the size for those in the post sample.



## Discussion

What can we learn from the experiment to assist future attempts to increase participation rates amongst the newly enrolled? None of the relationships are statistically significant meaning that a repeat of the experiment with a new sample would not necessarily produce the same results. However in those areas where the impact happens in the same way consistently across a number of samples then the results can be used to indicate areas worth further research. The main message is that there are different reactions to both the number and form of message amongst different sub-groups of voters. Therefore for greater impact the message needs to be differentiated and targeted, with more research needed on exactly what works for each sub-group.

The highest impacts of the message are amongst groups that are usually hard to motivate: Maori voters, Maori electorates and low turnout areas. However there was also a negative impact for some of these same groups, with the difference being the number of messages delivered and the form of the message. The biggest lesson seems to be that different groups of newly enrolled voters respond differently.

The most positive component in low turnout areas was the single txt message on election day. Success in this sub-group could be due to the nature of the area, the people, the delivery or the message. In areas of normally low turnout there is a larger pool of potential non-voters who could be influenced to vote. In areas of high turnout those who are ambivalent may be encouraged to vote anyway because of the local contagion whereas the ambivalent in low turnout areas have no such influence on them. We do not have sufficient information to confidently explain these differences.

The general electorates with low turnout have a large Polynesian population. Useful research could test whether Polynesians are particularly responsive to a prompt to vote, and indeed if they need such a prompt.

Those who had sent a txt requesting an enrolment pack had already engaged with the idea of the election and with 'elector' through txt communication. Whilst in the txt environment there was a long gap between interactions with elector there is evidence that some people were comfortable chatting to him. In response to each initial request for an enrolment pack the person received an immediate txt message confirming that an enrolment pack would be sent. Some people sent a reply txt thanking 'elector' or 'orange guy'. After the message on election day some of the replies again talked to election guy: *'thanks orange electoral guy!!'*, *'Did u vote mr orange guy'*, *'Okay den orange election guy'*, and our favourite *'I am a little orange girl wanna do coffee?'*. There is no guarantee that those who received the postal message had an existing connection with 'elector' and voting. Another difference is that the final txt message was on election day with an immediate action suggested whereas the postal message was again suggesting preparation for a future action. There is a possibility that the early messages provide an early decision point to opt out of the election, rather than the desired opportunity to opt in.

The series of posted items seems to not work with new Maori enrollees and more work needs to be done to understand why. There is a difference in response between Māori and non-Maori and also between Māori electorates and general electorates. This difference is evident in the impact as well as amongst the control groups. We do not have sufficient other research to understand underlying differences in participation rates between these different groups.

Clearly more research is needed on different sub-groups. However in mass marketing terms it will always be easier and cheaper to run a single campaign that works for all people. So whilst a targeted and differentiated message seems to be needed work is also needed on the best common approach. The aspect that seems to work is the call to action on election day so future projects should build the "it's now!" feeling and provide more reminders that today is election day. Whilst for politicians, political scientists and electoral administrators election day is a red letter day indelibly marked on the personal calendar this excitement and focus is not shared by many people. Coming full circle back to efficacy, the job is still to ensure that more people think the election is important and a day to mark by casting a vote.

## Appendix

**Table 2 design elements of the postal items in relation to the theoretical basis of the experiment**

**Item 1 – Bungy posted to arrive in advance of EasyVote pack.**

	<b>Element description and content</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
<b>Front</b>	“Ready to take the plunge?” graphic of a falling “orange elections guy”	Question and graphic seeks to engage recipient with the mail piece  Strong creative linkages with core elections advertising campaign.
	Opening piece reveals actual bungy cord and copy graphic imitating string “1. Brush up on MMP and how to vote at <a href="http://www.elections.org.nz">www.elections.org.nz</a> 2. Suss out the parties and candidates you might vote for 3. VOTE! at a polling place near home on election day – Saturday 17 September”	Gives key messages to enable preparation by first time voters.  Language choice deliberately informal.  Actual bungy cord creates an interactive experience which together with good production values gives greater intrinsic value to the mailpiece than a standard letter.
<b>Reverse</b>	“Hi there! Now you’ve got the vote, Saturday 17 September is your big chance to use it!”	Engages pre-contemplatives.  Centres mailpiece on election day and provides date reminder.
	“Your first election is just a couple of weeks away, so now is the time to take the plunge and make yourself heard.”	Urges contemplatives towards preparation.  Establishes conceptual link between mailpiece design/headline and the general election.
	“MMP means every single Voter can influence the makeup of the next parliament and who gets to be the government – and that affects everyone!”	Assists preparation by describing purpose.  Pushes external efficacy (vote can make a difference) and rational choice (voting is worth it) messages.
	“What you can do between now and polling day is get yourself clued up on where the parties stand on the things that matter to you or the people you care about, and you think will best represent you. How – and what – you decide are entirely up to	Assists preparation by suggesting the range of factors (consistent with MMP) that could be considered in decision making while emphasising decision making process and decision is personal

	you.”	choice.  Internal efficacy messages.
	“Voting itself is easy. You’ll get an EasyVote card and a bunch of information on how to vote. On polling day, just take your EasyVote card to a polling place near home, swap it for your ballot paper, and then give your chosen party and favoured candidate one big tick each.”	Assists preparation by warming recipient up to forthcoming EasyVote pack, introduces the mechanics of voting and the two ticks of MMP.
	“Sound easy? It is! See you Saturday 17 September! In the meantime, if you want to find out more or have any questions then check out <a href="http://www.elections.org.nz">www.elections.org.nz</a> , see your EasyVote pack or phone my team on 0800 36 76 56. :-) Orange Elections Guy”	Addresses internal efficacy.  Seeks self-commitment to vote.  Offers routes to find out more to assist preparation.

**Item 2 – Reminder posted to arrive in week of election.**

	<b>Element</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
<b>Front - Panel 1</b>	"Hey! Your first election" graphic of "orange elections guy" looking around the edge of the page	Establishes personal and event relevance of the mailpiece to the recipient.  Strong creative linkages with core elections advertising campaign.
<b>Front - Panel 2</b>	"is just around the corner!" Actual self-adhesive note sheet pre-printed "Election Saturday 17 September 9am-7am :-)" "No excuses! Stick this note where it will help you remember to vote on Saturday 17 Sep!"	Gives key messages to enable preparation by first time voters.  Language choice deliberately informal.  Inclusion of self-adhesive note invites interaction with the mailpiece as well as offering opportunity to influence personal and household behaviour by placing it somewhere.
<b>Front - Panel 3</b>	"The general election is this Saturday, 17 September, so I thought I'd send you a quick note to remind you how to make yourself heard on election day. "1. Put a tick next to the party you most want to help put in parliament – that's your party vote and helps share out all the seats in parliament and decide who gets to be the government. "2. Put another tick next to the person you'd most like to speak for you in parliament as your local MP – that's your electorate vote. "3. Get some takeaways in and watch the results on TV!" Sound easy" It is! See you on Saturday 17 September!  :-) Orange Elections Guy  "Want to know more about MMP and the voting process? Take a look at <a href="http://www.elections.org.nz">www.elections.org.nz</a> "	Offers reassurance to those in preparation.  Repeats (in more casual language) MMP Two Ticks messages contained in EasyVote pack.  Addresses external efficacy "they listen" and rationale choice "vote can make a difference". Urges contemplatives towards preparation.

<b>Reverse</b>	<p>How to vote!</p> <p>First time? No worries! Follow these simple steps and you'll be in and out in a couple of ticks!</p> <p>Go to a polling place near your home between 9am and 7pm on Saturday 17 September – or if that won't be easy check out your EasyVote pack, <a href="http://www.elections.org.nz">www.elections.org.nz</a> or 0800 36 76 56 about how you can vote in advance or outside your electorate.</p> <p>Swap your EasyVote Card at the desk for your ballot paper. (You can still vote if you've lost your card or didn't get one, just tell the person on the desk your name and address.)</p> <p>Take your ballot paper to a booth, grab the orange market pen and give your ticks to the party and to the candidate you want to vote for. Fold it in half and pop your completed ballot paper in the box.</p> <p>Give yourself a pat on the back – you've voted, and your vote could make all the difference to who gets into parliament or forms the government!</p>	<p>Completes preparation with messages focused on describing and demystifying the process in the polling booth.</p> <p>Pushes internal efficacy (understanding - of the process) external efficacy (vote can make a difference) and rational choice (voting is worth it) messages.</p>
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**Table 3 design elements of the txt items in relation to the theoretical basis of the experiment**

<b>Message</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Monday 5 <sup>th</sup> September 6pm: Who u gonna tick? The election is 11 days away, so time 2 check out who U might vote 4! NE ?s on MMP & voting? <a href="http://www.elections.org.nz">www.elections.org.nz</a> :-) Orange Elections Guy	Encourages contemplation through direct message and facilitates preparation through provision of further information source.
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> September noon: Tick tick ... U ready 2 represent? There's still time 2 decide who U want 2 vote for this Sat! NE ???s Go to <a href="http://www.elections.org.nz">www.elections.org.nz</a> :-) Orange	Encourages preparation while "giving permission" for late contemplation.

Elections Guy	
Election Day (17 <sup>th</sup> September) at 9am: Tick tick... dingaling! It's election day! Polls R open NOW til 7. So head 2 a polling place & get voting! U'll be in & out in 2 ticks! :-) Orange Elections Guy	Action focused, while reinforcing relevance of the election to the recipient and reprising on key MMP (Two ticks) messages.

*(translation for those not conversant with txt language: NE ?s means 'any questions'; 'represent' connotes standing up, having a voice, as well as the normal democratic meaning)*

**Table 4 tables relating to graphs in the text**

**Percentage of the newly eligible who voted, by number of posted messages**

N= 2,340 (60 had moved electorate since June)

Number of messages	None	Election day	Series	Total
not voted	43.6	41.5	42.7	42.6
voted	56.4	58.5	57.3	57.4

**Percentage of the newly enrolled who voted, by number of txt messages**

**N = 2,662**

Number of messages	None	Election day	Series	Total
not voted	26.0	24.4	26.2	25.5
voted	74.0	75.6	73.8	74.5

**Comparing Māori and General electorates within each sample**

**Percentage voted**

Number of messages	None	Election day	Series	Total	Sample size
txt General electorates	76.3	77.3	76.2	76.6	1798
post General electorates	61.4	63.8	64.9	63.3	1111
txt Māori electorates	55.2	60.4	59.1	58.3	183
post Māori electorates	41.3	42.8	34.7	39.6	232

**Comparing Māori and Non-Māori voters within posted message sample**

**Percentage voted**

Number of messages	None	Election day	Series	Total	Sample size
Māori ID	44.0	45.5	42.8	44.1	875
not Māori	63.8	66.3	65.9	65.3	1465

**Percentage voted**

Number of messages	None	Election day	Series	Total	Sample size
General electorates	49.5	51	59.4	53.3	289
Māori electorates	41.3	42.8	34.7	39.6	586

**Comparing Electorates in posted message sample**

Percentage voted

Number of messages	None	Election day	Series	Total	Sample size
Sth Auckland general					
electorates	58.3	58.2	61.7	59.4	1048
Clevedon	65.5	59.3	64.7	63.2	351
Manukau East	55.5	64.7	62.9	61	347
Manurewa	56.4	57	63.8	59.1	350
Palmerston North area					
general electorates	63.7	67.8	66.1	65.9	706
Palmerston North	73.3	76.7	73.7	74.6	353
Whanganui	56.4	61.2	59.2	58.9	353
Māori electorates	40.5	41.5	34.0	38.7	586
Tāmaki Makaurau	41.8	43.9	35.4	40.4	292
Te Tai Hauauru	40.8	41.7	34	38.8	294

**Comparing electorates with high and low turnout in txt message sample**

Percentage voted

Number of messages	None	Election day	Series	Total	Sample size
highest 10	80.4	82.0	82.9	81.7	382
lowest 10 general electorates	72.6	80.8	73.3	75.4	411

**Percentage of the additional names who voted, by number of txt messages**

N = 181

messages	None	Election day	Series	Total
not voted	32.70	16.90	30.00	27.00
voted	67.20	83.00	70.00	72.90

**Comparing the control group in posted message sample with electorate**

Percentage voted

	control	electorate	difference	sample
Palmerston North	73.3	82.4	9.1	116
Clevedon	65.5	80.4	14.9	119
Manukau East	55.5	73.2	17.7	119
Manurewa	56.4	75.8	19.4	117
Tāmaki Makaurau	41.8	62.0	20.2	98
Whanganui	56.4	80.8	24.4	117
Te Tai Hauauru	40.8	68.5	27.7	98
all	56.3	80.9	24.6	784

**Comparing the control group in the txt message sample with actual result**

Percentage voted

	control	electorate	difference
highest 10	80.4	85.0	4.6
lowest 10 general	72.6	77.8	5.2
Māori	55.2	67.0	11.8
all	74	80.9	6.9

None of the relationships are statistically significant



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