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UPDATED

**MORE
ABOUT**

MMP

MMP (Mixed Member Proportional) is the new way of electing New Zealand's Parliament. It will be used at the next general election.

This new electoral system was supported by the majority of people who voted in the 1993 referendum on whether we should alter the way we elect our Members of Parliament.

We begin this booklet with a summary of the basic facts about **MMP** that every voter needs to know in order to cast an effective vote. After examining each of the basic facts in more detail, we will answer some of the questions commonly asked about **MMP**.

This updated version of the booklet contains recent changes to electoral law.



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The basic facts you need to know about **MMP**

FACT 1

You will have *two votes*

- Your *Party Vote* is for the political party you most want to be represented in Parliament.
- Your *Electorate Vote* is for the candidate you want to be the MP for your electorate.

FACT 2

Parliament will usually have *120 MPs*

- 60 MPs will represent 60 General Electorates. They will be chosen by voters on the General Electoral Roll using their *Electorate Votes*.
- 5 MPs will represent 5 Maori Electorates. They will be chosen by voters on the Maori Electoral Roll using their *Electorate Votes*.
- 55 MPs will be *list MPs*. They will be elected to Parliament from lists of candidates nominated by political parties.

FACT 3

MMP is a *proportional voting system*

- The total number of MPs in Parliament from each party will depend on its share of all the *Party Votes*.
- However, a political party must win at least 5% of all the *Party Votes* **OR** win at least one electorate seat through the *Electorate Vote* to receive a proportional allocation of seats in Parliament.

More details about the 3 basic facts

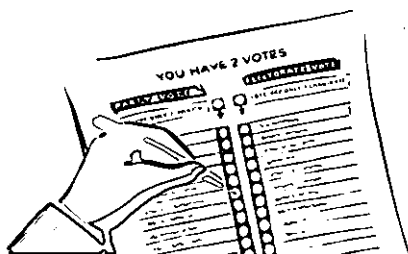
FACT 1

You will have two votes

You will be able to cast two votes at the next general election.

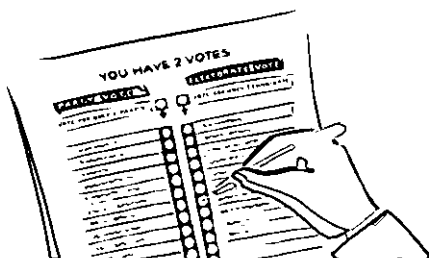
One vote is your *Party Vote*. This part of the ballot paper shows all the registered political parties that have nominated lists of candidates for the election.

To cast this vote, tick the circle after the name of the party you most want to be represented in Parliament, like this:



Your other vote is your *Electorate Vote*. This part of the ballot paper shows the names and parties of all the candidates nominated for election as the Member of Parliament to represent your electorate.

You vote by ticking the circle before the name of the candidate you prefer, like this:



See pages 8-9 for more information about voting.

FACT 2**Parliament will usually have 120 MPs**

An MP can be elected to Parliament as an *electorate MP* or as a *list MP*.

Each of the 60 General electorates, and each of the 5 Maori electorates, elects its own *electorate MP*.

The candidate who wins the most *Electorate Votes* in an electorate becomes its *electorate MP*.

A *list MP* is elected to Parliament from a list of candidates nominated by a registered party before the general election. There are likely to be 55 *list MPs* elected at the first **MMP** general election.

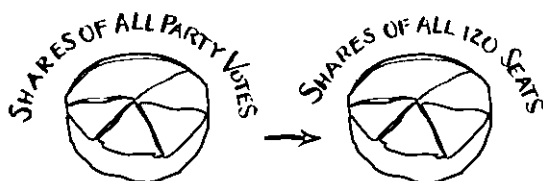
So the total of 120 MPs is made up like this:

$$\begin{array}{r} 60 \text{ GENERAL ELECTORATE MPs} \\ + 5 \text{ MAORI ELECTORATE MPs} \\ + 55 \text{ LIST MPs} \\ \hline 120 \text{ MPs IN TOTAL} \end{array}$$

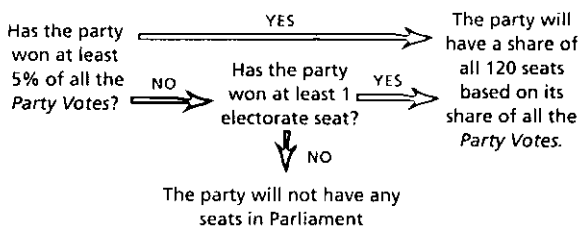
It is, however, possible for there to be more than 120 MPs, or fewer than 120 MPs, after a general election; see page 15.

FACT 3**MMP is a proportional voting system**

This means that each party's share of all the *Party Votes* decides its share of all 120 seats in Parliament.



But in order to be eligible for a share of all the seats based on its share of all the *Party Votes*, a party must cross the threshold: it must win at least 5% of all the *Party Votes*, or it must win at least 1 electorate seat. This means that parties without significant support will not have any seats in Parliament.



If a party does cross the threshold, its total number of MPs will be made up of any *electorate MPs* it has plus enough *list MPs* to reach its final share of all 120 MPs.

For example, a party that wins 30% of all the *Party Votes* will have 36 seats (30% of 120). If it won 15 electorate seats, it will have 21 list seats to bring it to its total of 36:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 15 \text{ ELECTORATE MPs} \\
 + 21 \text{ LIST MPs} \\
 \hline
 36 \text{ MPs}
 \end{array}
 \longrightarrow$$

The first 21 candidates on the party's list who haven't won an electorate seat will be elected to Parliament as list MPs for the party

If a party crosses the threshold but wins no electorate seats, all its MPs will be *list MPs*.

Here's a fictitious election result showing how MMP works:

	Party							TOTAL
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
% of all party votes	41	25	17	6	4	4	3	100
Total number of seats	53	32	22	8	5	0	0	120
Number of electorate MPs	34	21	9	0	1	0	0	65
Therefore number of list MPs	19	11	13	8	4	0	0	55

In this example, Party E, Party F, and Party G won fewer than 5% of all the *Party Votes*. But because Party E won an electorate seat, it crossed the threshold and so it was entitled to a share of all 120 seats based on its share of all the *Party Votes*. Party F and Party G did not cross the threshold, so they won't have any seats in Parliament.

Each party that crossed the threshold has a slightly higher percentage of all the seats than its percentage of all the *Party Votes*. That is because shares of seats are based on shares of *Party Votes* after excluding those cast for parties that do not cross the threshold (i.e. Party F and Party G). In this example, 7% of all *Party Votes* were cast for those two parties, and so seat allocations were based on 93% of all the *Party Votes*. Party A's share of seats has therefore increased to 44% ($41 \div 93$), and the shares of seats of other parties that crossed the threshold have also increased.

Answers to questions often asked about MMP

QUESTION

Do I have to cast both votes?

ANSWER

No. You can cast both votes, or only one.

QUESTION

If one of my votes is informal, will the other vote still count?

ANSWER

Yes, provided it is not informal as well. However neither of your votes will count if you cast your *Electorate Vote* for an electorate for which you are not enrolled. That is why it is important that you know which electorate you are enrolled in.

QUESTION

Can I vote for a candidate from one party with my *Electorate Vote* and for a different party with my *Party Vote*?

ANSWER

Yes. You can give your *Electorate Vote* to a candidate from the same party as your *Party Vote* by ticking circles alongside each other on the ballot paper. On the other hand, you can vote for a candidate from a different party or for an Independent candidate if there is one standing in your electorate by ticking circles on different lines of the ballot paper.

QUESTION

Which vote is more important, the *Party Vote* or the *Electorate Vote*?

ANSWER

Both votes are important, but for different reasons.

The *Party Vote* is clearly important, because each registered party's share of all the *Party Votes* decides its share of all 120 seats in Parliament. The more seats a party has in Parliament, the more influence that party is likely to have in deciding what laws will be passed and how the country will be run.

But the *Electorate Vote* is also important. You can use it to say who you think would be the best person to represent your electorate in Parliament.

QUESTION

Why do parties register?

ANSWER

A party has to be registered with the Electoral Commission before it can nominate a party list and be on the ballot paper for the *Party Vote*. In order to be registered, a party must have at least 500 current financial members who are eligible to register as electors.

QUESTION

Do all parties have to register?

ANSWER

No. Candidates for unregistered parties and Independent candidates can stand for electorate seats, but they cannot stand for list seats.

YOU HAVE 2 VOTES

PARTY VOTE
Vote for only one party

<input type="checkbox"/>	CARROT
<input type="checkbox"/>	PEACH
<input type="checkbox"/>	SQUASH
<input type="checkbox"/>	BANANA
<input type="checkbox"/>	BROCCOLI PARTY
<input type="checkbox"/>	STRAWBERRY
<input type="checkbox"/>	PEAR
<input type="checkbox"/>	EGGPLANT
<input type="checkbox"/>	KUMFRUIT
<input type="checkbox"/>	APPLE
<input type="checkbox"/>	ASPARAGUS PARTY
<input type="checkbox"/>	CHERRY
<input type="checkbox"/>	TOMATO
<input type="checkbox"/>	CABBAGE

ELECTORATE VOTE
Vote for only one candidate

<input type="checkbox"/>	ALLENBY, Fred
<input type="checkbox"/>	BARHADO, Mary
<input type="checkbox"/>	DUNMLOP, Alabair
<input type="checkbox"/>	EDLINGTON, Antony
<input type="checkbox"/>	GALAXY, John
<input type="checkbox"/>	IPONBONGER, Anne
<input type="checkbox"/>	McMADDOSON, Emma
<input type="checkbox"/>	NECTAR, Elizabeth
<input type="checkbox"/>	OMEGA, Sebastian
<input type="checkbox"/>	PAYLESS, Richard
<input type="checkbox"/>	QUEST, Oliver
<input type="checkbox"/>	RAWHAL, Where
<input type="checkbox"/>	RURKIN-BROOK, Robin
<input type="checkbox"/>	SMITH, Tarquin
<input type="checkbox"/>	TULLIP, Edna

QUESTION**What is a party list?****ANSWER**

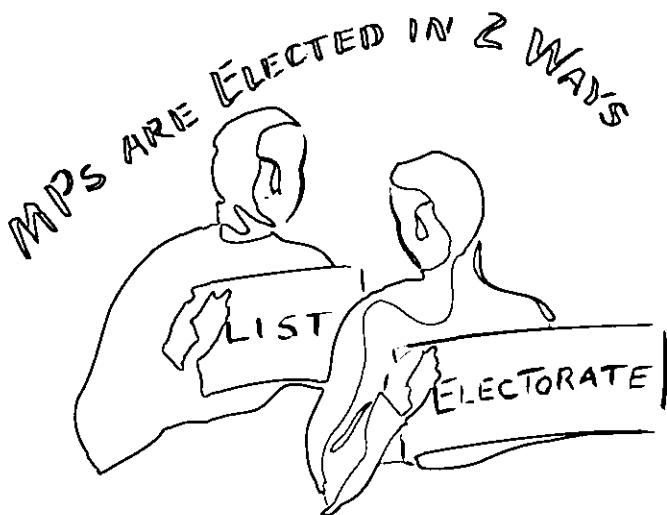
A party list is a list of the names of the party's list candidates in the order that the party wants to see them elected to Parliament.

QUESTION**Who decides who will be a party's list candidates?****ANSWER**

By law, each registered party must allow its members and/or their delegates to have a say in selecting its list and electorate candidates. If a registered party does that, it can choose its list and electorate candidates according to its own rules.

QUESTION**How will I know who is on each party's list?****ANSWER**

Party lists will be included in information sent to each household about a week before election day. They will also be available in the polling booth when you go to vote, and the parties are likely to advertise their lists.



QUESTION

Can voters change the order of candidates on the party list?

ANSWER

No. Each party decides the order of the candidates on its list.

QUESTION

Can someone be a candidate in an electorate and also on a party list?

ANSWER

Yes. If they win the electorate, their name is deleted from the party list and the following candidates on that party's list move up one place.

QUESTION

What will *list* MPs do?

ANSWER

List MPs will have the same parliamentary responsibilities as *electorate* MPs. Whether *list* MPs will also do constituency work similar to *electorate* MPs will depend on how their parties view their role.

QUESTION

How much can a party spend on its election campaign?

ANSWER

A registered party's spending on election advertising in the 3 months before election day is limited to \$20,000 for each electorate in which it has nominated a candidate, plus \$1 million if the party is on the *Party Vote*. In addition to these limits on party spending, each electorate candidate can spend up to \$20,000 on advertising for their own personal campaign. Candidates and registered parties must provide returns after the election showing what they have spent. These returns are open to public inspection.

QUESTION

Do parties and candidates have to disclose their donations?

ANSWER

Each registered party must provide an annual return showing the name and address of anyone who has during the year donated a total of more than \$1,000 at electorate level or \$10,000 at national level. In addition, each electorate candidate must provide a return after the election showing the name and address of anyone who donated a total of more than \$1,000 for the candidate's personal campaign. All returns are open to public inspection.

QUESTION

When will we know the final election results?

ANSWER

Final results cannot be declared until 10 days after election day (the same was true under the old system). This is because the election night count excludes all the special votes cast in New Zealand that are cast outside the electorate for which the voters are enrolled, and all the special votes cast overseas. These special votes must be delivered to the appropriate Returning Officer within 10 days of election day. Final counts are then done and the results declared.

QUESTION

What happens to *Party Votes* cast for parties that do not cross the threshold?

ANSWER

These *Party Votes* are disregarded when it comes to the allocation of seats. As a consequence those parties that cross the threshold may receive a slightly higher percentage of all the seats in Parliament compared to their shares of all the *Party Votes*. See the table on page 7 for an example.

QUESTION

Who is the government between election day and the declaration of the final results?

ANSWER

The government in power when the election is called continues to stay in office until a new government is sworn in. A government that has been defeated is called a "caretaker government" during the period between election day and when the new government takes office. By convention, a caretaker government does not make any major decisions unless they are absolutely necessary. Its main task is to continue the day to day business of government. If a major decision does have to be made, the incoming Prime Minister or the leaders of other parties would normally be consulted.

QUESTION

Who decides who will be Prime Minister after the election?

ANSWER

The Governor-General has the formal power to appoint the Prime Minister, but that power must always be exercised in a way that is politically neutral and in accordance with democratic principles. Ultimately, MPs voting in Parliament will have the final say, because the government has to have the support of the majority of MPs who vote on a vote of confidence.

QUESTION

What is a vote of confidence?

ANSWER

In order to stay in office, any government must be able to win certain crucial votes in Parliament, called "votes of confidence". The government may lose other votes in Parliament, but it stays in office as long as it does not lose a vote of confidence. Votes in Parliament on raising or spending money (e.g. the government's

annual Budget) are always matters of confidence in the government. Secondly, the government can declare a vote in Parliament on an issue to be a matter of confidence in the government. That lets all MPs know that the government has decided that the issue is so important that it will resign if it loses the vote. Finally, there are some debates in Parliament when an opposition party can move a motion expressing lack of confidence in the government.

QUESTION

What happens if a government loses a vote of confidence in Parliament?

ANSWER

The government has to resign. The Governor-General then has to decide whether the leader of a party should be asked to form a new government that has the confidence of Parliament, or whether a general election should be held.

QUESTION

If no single party wins more than half the seats in Parliament at a general election, who becomes the government?

ANSWER

New Zealand would then have either a *majority coalition government* or a *minority government*.

In a *majority coalition government*, several parties which together have more than half of all MPs agree to cooperate to form a government. If that happens, there will be ministers from more than one party in Cabinet.

In a *minority government*, a government is formed from one or more parties that do not have a majority of MPs. A minority government needs the support of other parties that are not part of the government in order to win votes of confidence.

QUESTION

Could there be more than 120 MPs in Parliament after a general election?

ANSWER

Yes. It is possible for a party to win more electorate seats than the total number of seats it should receive on the basis of its share of all the *Party Votes*. If that happens, the party keeps the extra MPs and the total number of seats in Parliament is increased by that number, but only until the next general election. For example, suppose a party wins 10% of all the *Party Votes* and is entitled to a total of 12 seats in Parliament. If it won 14 electorate seats, it keeps the 2 extra seats and Parliament will have 122 seats until the next general election. Seats won by other parties are not affected.

QUESTION

Could there be fewer than 120 MPs in Parliament after a general election?

ANSWER

Yes. It is possible that a party might not nominate enough list candidates to fill all the seats it was entitled to have on the basis of its share of all the *Party Votes*. It would then not be able to fill those seats, which would remain vacant until the next general election. If that happened, Parliament would have fewer than 120 seats until the next general election. Seats won by other parties would not be affected.



QUESTION**Will there still be by-elections under *MMP*?****ANSWER**

Yes, but only for electorate seats. If an MP who represents an electorate dies or resigns from Parliament, a by-election is held just as was done under the first-past-the-post system. If a list member dies or resigns from Parliament, however, the next candidate from that party's list who is still a member of that party and is willing to become an MP is appointed to Parliament in their place until the next general election.

QUESTION**Will *electorate MPs* and *list MPs* be able to change parties while staying in Parliament?****ANSWER**

Yes. There is no legal barrier to an *electorate MP* or a *list MP* resigning from one party and either joining another party, or forming a new party, or becoming an Independent while still remaining an MP.

QUESTION**How are fractions rounded when seats are allocated?****ANSWER**

Although percentages are a convenient way of explaining *MMP*, in fact the Chief Electoral Officer allocates seats proportionally using the "St Laguë" formula which avoids the need to round up or down. Briefly, the Chief Electoral Officer divides the number of *Party Votes* won by each party that crosses the threshold by the series of odd numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, and so on, until the highest 120 quotients are obtained. The number of quotients each party has in the highest 120 quotients is the total number of seats to which that party is entitled.

QUESTION

What happens if an Independent candidate wins an electorate seat?

ANSWER

The total number of electorate seats won by Independent candidates and by candidates for parties that are not on the *Party Vote* are deducted from 120 before seats are allocated according to parties' shares of all the *Party Votes*. So if an Independent candidate won an electorate seat, 119 seats would be available for proportional allocation.

QUESTION

Who draws electorate boundaries?

ANSWER

An independent body called the Representation Commission draws the boundaries of General and Maori electorates following the Maori option that is held after each 5-yearly population census. The change to **MMP** meant that new electorate boundaries had to be drawn before the 1996 census, and a special Maori option was held in 1994.

QUESTION

What is the Maori option?

ANSWER

It is the name of the period after each 5-yearly population census when each person on the Maori roll, and each person on the General roll who said they were of Maori descent when they last enrolled, is able to choose whether to be enrolled on the Maori roll or on the General roll. The number of Maori electorates is based on the results of the Maori option and on the number of people (adults and children) who said they were of Maori descent at the census. The next Maori option is due to be held in 1997. The Representation Commission will then meet to draw the boundaries of the General and Maori electorates.

QUESTION**Do other countries use *MMP*?****ANSWER**

Many countries elect their parliaments using proportional voting systems of one type or another. ***MMP*** is one type of proportional system. Germany is the only other country that uses ***MMP***. It has been used there since 1949.

QUESTION**When will *MMP* be reviewed?****ANSWER**

The Electoral Act 1993 requires a parliamentary select committee to begin reviewing the ***MMP*** system in the year 2000 and to report to Parliament by mid-2002. The committee must also consider whether there should be a further referendum on changes to the electoral system.

QUESTION**How do I enrol so I can vote?****ANSWER**

You can get on the roll for your electorate by filling in a form called *Application for registration as a Parliamentary elector*. This is available at any Post Shop or Postal Agency, from your local Registrar of Electors (contact details are in the White Pages of your telephone directory under New Zealand Post Limited) or by phoning toll-free **0800 800 610**.

QUESTION**How will I know where to go to vote?****ANSWER**

The locations of polling places in each electorate will be advertised before election day. A toll-free 0800 number will also be advertised before election day so

voters can ring to get further information about polling facilities in their electorates.

QUESTION

What is the Electoral Commission?

ANSWER

The Electoral Commission is an independent body established by law. Its main functions are to register political parties, to inform the public about electoral matters, and to receive parties' returns of election expenses and donations.