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Resisting the Red Wave? The Māori Party's return to parliament

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On election night 2020, voters watched as a so-called red wave of support for Labour swept across many safe National seats (RNZ 2020). The final election result led to the first single-party majority government since the introduction of the mixed-member proportional (MMP) electoral system in 1996—a feat very few predicted in the leadup to the election (1News 2020). While the election night coverage focussed on the historic Labour victory, Māori Party candidate for Waiariki, Rawiri Waititi, celebrated his fortieth birthday, joining in a televised rendition of ‘Happy Birthday to You’ with musician Rob Ruha. It was a birthday Waititi will never forget; as the evening progressed, his whānau (family) and supporters watched the gap between him and Labour Party incumbent Tāmami Coffey narrow, and then build in Waititi’s favour. A tense wait for the special votes over the following weeks confirmed that Waititi had won the electorate and the Māori Party had maintained its 2017 share of the overall party vote at 1.2 per cent. As a result, wahine (woman) Māori Party co-leader Debbie Ngarewa-Packer joined Waititi in the fifty-third parliament. Waiariki was the only electorate lost by a Labour incumbent in 2020.

The victory by the Māori Party (Te Pāti Māori) in Waiariki was significant not only in the context of Labour’s historic win, but also because it returned the party to parliament. Te Pāti Māori had first entered parliament in 2004

when former Labour MP Tariana Turia won the Te Tai Hauāuru by-election after walking away from the Labour Party over the *Foreshore and Seabed Act 2004*. Turia and others subsequently established the Māori Party (Godfery 2015). In 2005, the Māori Party won four of the seven Māori electorates, with just over 2 per cent of the party vote. In 2008, the party had its best result, winning five of the Māori electorates, with its highest percentage of the party vote, at almost 2.5 per cent. The party supported the National-led coalition from 2008 to 2017, during which time its popularity declined, from winning three electorates in 2011 to just one in 2014. In 2017, the Māori Party found itself out of parliament entirely (Greaves and Hayward 2020). The win in Waiariki in 2020 was unexpected; even Māori Party co-leader John Tamihere had lamented that 2020 was not going to be their year and that he had set his hopes on 2023 for a Māori Party return (Manch 2020).

How did the Māori Party get back into parliament in 2020, particularly when the Labour Party was so dominant? In this chapter, we use data from the NZES to test four possible explanations. We base these on speculation in the media at the time of the election in conjunction with existing scholarship from previous elections. First, had Labour lost Māori support over its handling of issues such as the situation at Ihumātao and Covid-19? Second, did Māori voters perceive Te Pāti Māori's 'unapologetically Māori' campaign as a shift to the left, thereby competing more with Labour ideologically? Third, did the new Māori Party leaders win the party greater support, despite the popularity of Labour leader Jacinda Ardern? Fourth, did the Māori Party's campaign for the electorate vote and efforts to contact Māori roll voters boost its election result? Our analysis of these questions reveals, overall, that Te Pāti Māori is building its relationship with Māori on the Māori roll. Even in the face of Labour's historic victory, Te Pāti Māori held or increased its voter support. Before turning to these questions, we describe the election study, explain how we define Māori voters, and provide an overview of the election results in the Māori electorates.

Rangahau Tōrangapū o Aotearoa/ the New Zealand Election Study

Like other chapters in this book, we draw on data from the NZES. For the 2020 election, we trialled new design elements that were more inclusive of Māori. The survey was available in te reo Māori (the Māori language)

online, the survey logo was updated to include the te reo Māori name ‘Rangahau Tōrangapū o Aotearoa’, and a te reo Māori coversheet was added. All translations were provided by Hēmi Kelly, an expert translator and creator of the ‘Everyday Māori’ initiatives. As the NZES had done in 2005, the survey included additional questions specifically for Māori participants relating to, for example, identity, cultural connection, Treaty settlements, and voting in *rūnanga* (iwi/tribal council) elections.¹ In addition, following past NZES waves, we ‘oversampled’ Māori voters by sending more surveys to that group than their representation in the population to ensure sufficient numbers to make robust conclusions.² The final response rate for voters of Māori descent was 19.9 per cent, which compares favourably with similar studies (for a discussion, see Greaves et al. 2020).

Voters of Māori descent have a choice to enrol to vote on either the Māori roll or the general roll. Those who choose the Māori roll (currently 52 per cent of the Māori descent population; Electoral Commission 2018) vote in the Māori electorates. Recognising this, we took several steps to identify Māori voters and construct categories for data analysis. We have discussed elsewhere the complexity of Māori identity and the minimum level of acknowledgement required to register on the Māori roll (Greaves and Hayward 2020). The *Electoral Act 1993* defines a Māori elector as ‘a person of the Māori race of New Zealand; and includes any descendant of such a person’. We drew descent from the roll: 33.4 per cent of the total NZES sample said they were of Māori ancestry on the roll; 66.6 per cent did not.³ Identifying as Māori is a fluid process, so we took the broadest possible definition of Māori for our analyses: if someone recognised their *whakapapa* (Māori descent) on *either* the roll *or* the survey, we counted them as a Māori voter. Overall, we considered 35.1 per cent of the sample to be Māori voters ($n = 1,310$ —that is, of Māori descent and thus able to register on the Māori roll).

1 In 1999, the NZES commissioned a Māori Election Study using face-to-face interviews.

2 Oversamples date from 1996 and, until 2020, were of those on the Māori roll only. The 1999 main dataset had no oversample, but Māori respondents were added from the Māori Election Study.

3 We also asked all NZES participants the same ancestry question in the survey: 33.4 per cent of participants said ‘yes’ to being of Māori descent, 64.1 per cent said ‘no’, and 2.4 per cent ‘don’t know’. However, these survey responses did not perfectly align with the electoral roll. For example, we found that 1.9 per cent of participants had said they were Māori on the roll but did not say they were Māori in the descent question in the survey (2.5 per cent went the other way). Of those who said they ‘don’t know’ about descent in the survey, 77.5 per cent were on the general roll and 22.5 per cent were on the Māori roll.

As with our analysis of the 2017 general election (Greaves and Hayward 2020), we split voters into three categories for comparison:

1. Māori on the Māori roll (n = 603)
2. Māori on the general roll (n = 707)
3. all non-Māori (n = 2,420).⁴

We now provide an overview of the key election events and results in the Māori electorates, before moving on to explore the NZES data.

The Māori electorate results in 2020

The Māori Party won only the Waiariki electorate in 2020 but, before the election, it appeared that three of the seven Māori electorates were potentially winnable by Māori Party candidates: Waiariki, Te Tai Hauāuru, and Tāmaki Makaurau (Te Ao 2020a, 2020c, 2020d; Neilson 2020a). We discuss the results of these three electorates to set the scene for our subsequent analysis of the broader dynamics between the Māori and Labour parties.

The Waiariki electorate encompassing Tauranga, Whakatāne, Rotorua, and Taupō was previously held by former Māori Party leader Te Ururoa Flavell (2005–17). As the 2020 campaign unfolded, it proved to be a close race between incumbent Labour MP Tāmami Coffey and Rawiri Waititi of the Māori Party. Waititi had experience campaigning in Waiariki, having contested the seat for Labour in 2014 before announcing his support for the Māori Party in 2016. Several electorate-specific issues were highlighted during the campaign that could have impacted on the choices of Waiariki voters, although it is difficult to test whether this is the case due to small sample sizes (90 NZES participants were enrolled in Waiariki). At debates and *hui* (gatherings), the issue of overlapping Treaty claims between the Tauranga Moana Iwi Collective and Pare Hauraki Collective was often a central topic of discussion. Tauranga Moana have criticised the settlement practices of the Crown and claimed that redress has been allocated incorrectly to Pare Hauraki (Macfarlane 2020). Waititi repeatedly expressed support for the Tauranga Moana viewpoint at electorate debates and highlighted a need for Treaty settlement reform (Te Ao 2020b). Other key issues in

4 These numbers slightly over-represent Māori on the general roll: 54 per cent of our sample were on the general roll compared with 48 per cent on the Māori roll after the 2018 Māori electoral option (Electoral Commission 2018).

Waiariki included concerns from Whareroa Marae about the effects of air pollution from industrial areas in Tauranga and court challenges to the bottling of water from Otakiri Springs (Jones 2019; Tebbutt 2020). Some speculated that Hannah Tamaki, Waiariki candidate for Vision NZ, split the vote (Te Ao 2020b). Māori Television polling showed Coffey ahead of Waititi by only 12 per cent in the leadup to the election (Te Ao 2020c). When Rawiri Waititi won the Waiariki electorate in 2020 by 836 votes, he credited the victory to a ‘comprehensive ground game and social media campaign’ (Neilson 2020a).

Waiariki was not the only Māori electorate to watch, as Te Tai Hauāuru and Tāmaki Makaurau looked to be close races. In Te Tai Hauāuru, Labour Party incumbent Adrian Rurawhe was challenged by Māori Party candidate Debbie Ngarewa-Packer, a former local councillor and environmental campaigner. An extra boost to Ngarewa-Packer’s profile came when she was named co-leader of the Māori Party in April 2020. Rurawhe is descended from several Western Māori MPs and Rātana movement founder, Tahupōtiki Wiremu Rātana, an important figure in Māori politics and religion who led the Rātana movement into a political alliance with Labour in the 1930s. Rurawhe had held the seat since 2014 and, in 2017, he retained it by a margin of only 1,039 votes against the Māori Party candidate. This result, combined with Ngarewa-Packer’s profile and history in the *rohe* (region), led many to speculate that the Te Tai Hauāuru electorate would be the closest race across the Māori electorates (TVNZ 2020). However, Rurawhe ultimately won the electorate, holding his 2017 margin with 1,053 votes. Additionally, due to Waititi’s win in Waiariki, Ngarewa-Packer was able to enter parliament from the party vote (1.2 per cent overall).

The third electorate in play, Tāmaki Makaurau, covers a large part of Auckland. Here, Labour incumbent Peeni Henare was challenged by several high-profile Māori politicians. These included controversial figure John Tamihere of the Māori Party, as well as Marama Davidson, the Green Party co-leader. Just 10 days before the election, Māori Television polling showed Tamihere trailing only 6 per cent behind Henare (Te Ao 2020d). Henare was ultimately successful in retaining his seat; however, the results demonstrated a move towards the Māori Party in the electorate.

Table 5.1 shows the final election results across the Māori electorates. From 2017 to 2020, Labour increased its share of the party vote in every Māori electorate, although in two cases—Waiariki and Tāmaki Makaurau—the electorate vote for Labour candidates declined. Across all the Māori

electorates, the Māori Party vote was up marginally, by 0.6 per cent to 12.8 per cent. The Māori Party electorate vote increased significantly more, up by 5.4 per cent to 34 per cent. Labour's electorate votes dropped by 1.6 per cent to 51.8 per cent, but its party vote increased by 2.1 per cent to 62.2 per cent. By exploring NZES data, we can observe possible patterns of discontent among Māori voters with Labour or moves towards the Māori Party. We begin by exploring whether there was any signal of growing dissatisfaction with Labour across the data, particularly in relation to how it handled the major issues relating to Māori in its first term of government.

Table 5.1 Election results in the Māori electorates for the 2017 and 2020 general elections

Electorate	2017 party vote	2020 party vote	2017 candidate vote winner (vote majority)	2020 candidate vote winner (vote majority)
Te Tai Tokerau	57.9% Labour 11.1% NZ First	60.1% Labour 10.2% Māori Party	Kelvin Davis, Labour (4,807)	Kelvin Davis, Labour (8,164)
Tāmaki Makaurau	59.3% Labour 11.0% Māori Party	60.0% Labour 12.7% Māori Party	Peeni Henare, Labour (3,809)	Peeni Henare, Labour (927)
Hauraki-Waikato	61.5% Labour 11.3 % Māori Party	63.4% Labour 12.0% Māori Party	Nanaia Mahuta, Labour (9,223)	Nanaia Mahuta, Labour (9,660)
Waiariki	58.1% Labour 19.4% Māori Party	59.8% Labour 17.5% Māori Party	Tāmami Coffey, Labour (1,719)	Rawiri Waititi, Māori Party (836)
Ikaroa-Rāwhiti	64.7% Labour 13.0% Māori Party	66.1% Labour 11.9% Māori Party	Meka Whaitiri, Labour (4,210)	Meka Whaitiri, Labour (6,045)
Te Tai Hauāuru	58.5% Labour 15.0% Māori Party	61.0% Labour 15.4% Māori Party	Adrian Rurawhe, Labour (1,039)	Adrian Rurawhe, Labour (1,053)
Te Tai Tonga	55.8% Labour 12.5% National	58.7% Labour 11.5% Green Party	Rino Tirikatene, Labour (4,676)	Rino Tirikatene, Labour (6,855)

Note: For a full overview of Māori electorate results from 2002, see Greaves and Hayward (2020, 219–20).

Source: Electoral Commission (2020).

Did Labour generally lose Māori voter support?

Our first possible explanation for the Māori Party's return to parliament via Waiariki is that the Labour Party had generally lost Māori voter support in 2020. In the leadup to the 2020 election, the Labour Party (and particularly Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern) was enjoying very high levels of popularity due to the successful Covid-19 response. The Labour-led government elected in 2017 also had a sizeable Māori caucus after winning all the Māori electorates. But despite this general support, there were areas of vulnerability in Labour's response to Māori policy issues. Where did Māori voters see themselves in relation to the 'Team of Five Million'? Since the 2017 election, Labour had grappled with a situation at Ihumātao, in Auckland, involving Māori land, and Oranga Tamariki (the Ministry for Children) had been strongly criticised for the uplifting of *tamariki* Māori (Māori children) (Greaves and Morgan 2021). The emergence of Covid-19, which began in late 2019, added further tension to Labour's relationship with Māori voters. Health experts—aware of the impacts of the Spanish flu on Māori communities in the early twentieth century, the H1N1 pandemic, and general health inequities—advocated strongly for a targeted policy response for Māori, which was something the government was reluctant to do (Te Rōpū Whakakaupapa Urutā n.d.). As a result, *iwi* leaders and community organisations mobilised to address the specific needs of Māori (Parahi 2020). Community-based action included *hapū*-led roadblocks to educate the public about the lockdowns and the formation of Te Rōpū Whakakaupapa Urutā, a national Māori pandemic group (Bargh and Fitzmaurice 2021). Perhaps it was not entirely surprising that the Māori Party withstood the red wave in one electorate. And perhaps the policy solutions for the Team of Five Million did not work for Māori. To test this possibility, we consider Māori responses to the government's actions on Ihumātao and Covid-19.

The government's handling of Ihumātao

In 2016, the site of a proposed housing development in South Auckland was contested by activist group Save Our Unique Landscape (SOUL). Described as 'protectors', the group lived on the *whenua* (land) at Ihumātao with the goal of preventing construction and spurring the government to return

the land to *mana whenua* (those with original territorial rights to the land). How the land was originally taken from Māori and the possible solutions to redress the historical grievance were complex matters that attracted widespread media attention (Godfery and Hayward 2021). The Māori Party was among those who called for the government to purchase the land and return it to *mana whenua* (McCarron et al. 2019). Labour's coalition partner, New Zealand First, was vocal in its opposition to government intervention at Ihumātao. In 2019, the government paused construction at Ihumātao but it had not resolved the issue by the 2020 election.

Given the prominence of the Ihumātao situation, the NZES included two questions on the topic to gauge voters' opinions on the government's handling of the situation: one for a general audience and one just for Māori voters. We asked all NZES survey participants, 'Do you approve or disapprove of the government's handling of the dispute over land ownership at Ihumātao?', on a five-point scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The first finding was the degree to which the issue was too complex for a proportion of the population to form an opinion on. In survey development, a high percentage of the sample saying they 'don't know' normally indicates that the topic (or question wording) is beyond the participants' knowledge (De Vaus 2013). A large minority of non-Māori (38.4 per cent) and Māori on the general roll (32.6 per cent) selected 'don't know' in response to the Ihumātao question, compared with 20.1 per cent of Māori on the Māori roll. These findings suggest that Ihumātao is a complex issue that a significant proportion of the electorate could not understand or on which they did not form an opinion. The issue was best understood by Māori on the Māori roll.

Māori on the Māori roll also rated the government's response to Ihumātao more favourably than other groups. Of those who did rank the government's handling of the situation, there was a small but statistically significant difference: Māori on the Māori roll and Māori on the general roll both had a higher average approval rating of the government's response compared with non-Māori.⁵ However, when we controlled for the extent to which each group 'likes' Labour, the effect was no longer statistically significant. This indicates that there is no real difference between Māori on the Māori

5 Māori on the Māori roll ($M = 2.69$) and Māori on the general roll ($M = 2.61$; $p = 0.861$) both had a higher average approval rating of the government's response than non-Māori ($M = 2.51$; $p_s < 0.05$; $F(2, 2,409) = 5.16$, $p = 0.006$).

roll and Māori on the general roll in support of the government's handling of the Ihumātao issue. Any small difference is likely due to participants on the Māori roll holding higher support for the Labour government generally.

Ihumātao also raised the question of the extent to which government action (or inaction) can precipitate a collective Māori political response. To test this with a Māori audience in 2020, we returned to the 2005 NZES, which asked participants how much they agreed with the statement: 'The foreshore and seabed legislation unfairly discriminated against Māori.' As mentioned earlier, when the Labour government legislated to ensure Māori could not test their claim to the foreshore and seabed in the courts, it evoked substantial protests from Māori and led to the creation of the Māori Party (Godfery 2015).

In the 2005 NZES, there was a high level of negative sentiment among Māori towards Labour over its handling of the foreshore and seabed issue. The striped bar in Figure 5.1⁶ shows the results for Māori-descent voters for four parties in 2005. The results from 2005 showed that Māori Party voters agreed the most that the Act unfairly discriminated against Māori, with an average score of 4.4 out of five. But Māori Labour ($M = 3.8$) and Green ($M = 3.9$) voters also tended to agree. To test whether there was residual feeling about the foreshore and seabed issue in 2020, we asked participants to rank the statement again. The solid dark-grey bar represents sentiment about the foreshore and seabed issue and shows that, 15 years on, there is a strong sentiment that the fifth Labour government's response was unfairly discriminatory towards Māori. Indeed, our results suggest that this view could have grown among Green and National party Māori voters.

Inspired by the wording of the 2005 study, in 2020, we swapped out the name of the issue ('Ihumātao' for 'foreshore and seabed') and asked Māori participants to rate their level of agreement. Māori Party ($M = 3.8$) and Green Party voters ($M = 3.6$) agreed more than Labour voters ($M = 3.1$) that Labour's Ihumātao solution discriminated against Māori, while National Party voters disagreed the most ($M = 2.4$). Therefore, Māori Party and Green voters carry the most negative sentiment towards Labour over its handling of Ihumātao, but more voters have retained negative opinions over time for the foreshore and seabed response.

6 In some parts of this chapter, we present results according to whether someone voted for a certain party using both party *and* electorate vote. That is, someone is counted as a voter for X party if they gave *either* the electorate *or* the party vote to that party. We do this to boost sample size, given that the Māori Party had an electorate vote-only strategy (discussed later); in 2020 only 84 of our participants gave their party vote to the Māori Party, but 205 gave it their electorate vote.

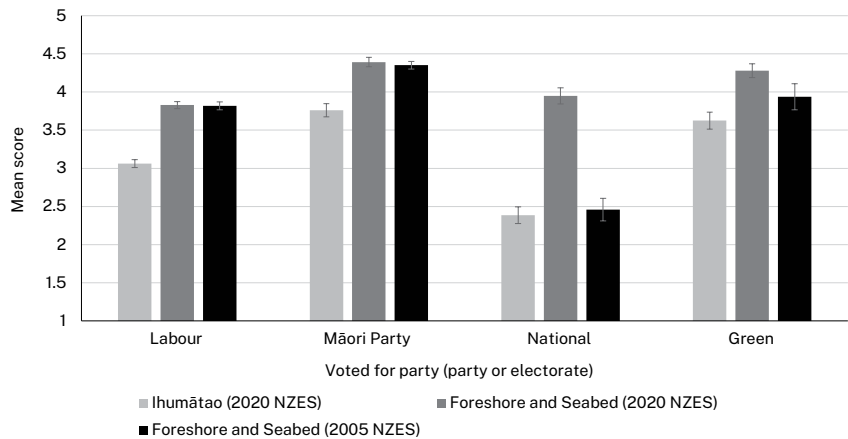


Figure 5.1 The average level of agreement among participants of Māori descent with statements about events unfairly discriminating against Māori, broken down by vote (party and electorate vote combined)
Source: 2020 NZES (Vowles et al. 2022).

Ultimately, NZES data suggest that for Māori voters Ihumātao was an issue that created some negative sentiment. However, there was not the same degree of negative sentiment towards Labour as there was (and still is) over the foreshore and seabed legislation, which led to the formation of the Māori Party in 2004. It may be that the regional nature of Ihumātao meant that it was not seen as an injustice towards Māori as a collective, or that Labour had learnt from past mistakes and improved its response generally. In addition, the issue was ambiguous and complex, with different opinions among *mana whenua*. Thus, although Ihumātao sheds light on some important issues for Māori, the NZES data suggest it has had a limited impact on voting.

Covid-19 and other ‘big’ issues

The second topic we consider in terms of Labour’s handling of issues of policy significance to Māori is the Covid-19 response. As soon as the Covid-19 threat emerged, concerns were raised that the virus would disproportionately affect Māori when it arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand (Steyn et al. 2020). So, how did Māori rank the government’s response to Covid-19 by the time of the election in 2020? We asked respondents to rank their approval of the government’s response to Covid-19 on a scale of one (strongly disapprove) to five (strongly approve). Māori on the Māori roll had an average score of 4.5—significantly higher than both Māori on the general roll ($M = 4.3$) and

non-Māori ($M = 4.3$).⁷ The NZES results show that, if anything, Māori on the Māori roll had a *more* positive view of the government's Covid-19 performance than did others. To that extent at least, the idea of the Team of Five Million might have resonated with Māori voters.

Given the strength of support, we explored the importance of the Covid-19 response for Māori relative to other major policy issues. The NZES asked participants to identify the single most important issue for them in the 2020 election. Participants wrote their issue into an open-ended survey question, and we coded the data and further grouped them into categories based on similar issues (for example, we combined the economy, tax, and business). We then tested where there were statistically significant differences across groups. The biggest issues for Māori on the Māori roll related to poverty, housing, and inequality (19.6 per cent), followed by Covid-19 (17.9 per cent), then the economy, tax, or business (8.8 per cent). In contrast, the biggest issues for Māori on the general roll were related to Covid-19 (19.8 per cent), followed by inequality (16.1 per cent), and the economy (11.9 per cent). More non-Māori named Covid-19 as the biggest issue (23.5 per cent), with the economy second (18.1 per cent), and inequality third (13.3 per cent). Therefore, while Māori on the Māori roll gave the government its highest Covid-19 approval ranking, this group considered issues of inequality to be more important than the pandemic.

For the three groups of issues—the economy, inequality, and Covid-19—there was a statistically significant difference between Māori on the Māori roll, Māori on the general roll, and non-Māori ($p < 0.05$). We also explored which party the survey respondents thought dealt best with the issue. These responses came only from those participants who named each issue as the most important for them. Those participants who named Covid-19 as the most important issue overwhelmingly thought that Labour was the best party to respond to the pandemic (Māori on the Māori roll at 95.3 per cent and non-Māori at 88.9 per cent). Māori on the Māori roll, who were most concerned about issues relating to inequality, were also significantly more likely to think that the Labour Party was best placed to respond to the issue (57.0 per cent) than Māori on the general roll (45.9 per cent) and non-Māori (42.8 per cent). In relation to the economy, only Māori on the Māori roll were more likely to rank Labour higher than National, and here the contrast was very clear: 55.8 per cent of Māori on the Māori roll

⁷ $p < 0.001$; $F(2, 3,660) = 11.94$, $p < 0.001$.

chose Labour, while 51.8 per cent of Māori on the general roll and 62.3 per cent of non-Māori chose National as best suited to deal with the economy. Only 25 per cent of those on the Māori roll who rated the economy, tax, or business as their top issue thought National was best placed to deal with it. This illustrates that the National Party must continue to work to build a relationship with Māori on the Māori roll even for those who prioritise similar issues to that party. At the time of the 2020 election, National had not stood candidates in the Māori electorates since 2005.

In summary, 2020 was the Covid-19 election and Labour enjoyed substantial support for its pandemic response—most of all from Māori on the Māori roll. But those voters were also still more concerned about issues of poverty and inequality than Covid-19, and they will be looking to the government's response to these issues as they head into the 2023 election. Moving beyond the specific issues of the 2020 election, how much do Māori voters 'like' Labour overall? We turn to this question next.

How much did Māori voters generally 'like' Labour?

Stepping back from specific policy issues such as Ihumātao and Covid-19, we sought to understand the extent to which the fortunes of the Labour and Māori parties were entwined in 2020. Previous research has shown a more complicated relationship between the two parties than the simple assumption that the Māori Party will do well when the Labour Party declines in popularity among Māori (Sullivan et al. 2014; Greaves and Hayward 2020). In 2020, did the Māori Party's gain mean Labour's loss, or vice versa?

To answer this question, we explored the degree to which our voter groups 'liked' Labour and Te Pāti Māori. The results in Figure 5.2 show that all three groups followed the same general trend of liking Labour less in 2014, with increases in 2017 and 2020. Māori on the Māori roll, however, consistently liked Labour more than Māori on the general roll and non-Māori. More specifically, in 2017, the mean likeability of Labour among voters on the Māori roll was 7.4, increasing to 8.1 in 2020. Trends for liking the Māori Party over time show a different pattern. Figure 5.3 shows that voters on the Māori roll had an increase in support for Te Pāti Māori, from 6.1 in 2017 to 6.5 in 2020. But for Māori on the general roll the mean likeability of the Māori Party decreased between 2014 and 2020, from 5.0 to 4.4, and for

non-Māori, likeability slightly increased in 2014, then stayed steady across 2017 and 2020. These results suggest that the Māori Party appealed least to Māori roll voters in 2014, while simultaneously appealing more to Māori on the general roll, potentially due to the party's support for successive National governments. The average likeability of Labour for Māori on the Māori roll increased by 0.7 of a point between 2017 and 2020, but only increased by 0.4 for the Māori Party. However, overall, there is no evidence that Labour Party likeability faltered for Māori voters in 2020 or that the Māori Party experienced a substantial increase in likeability among Māori roll voters. This trend suggests that the Māori Party could be appealing more to voters on the Māori roll over time.

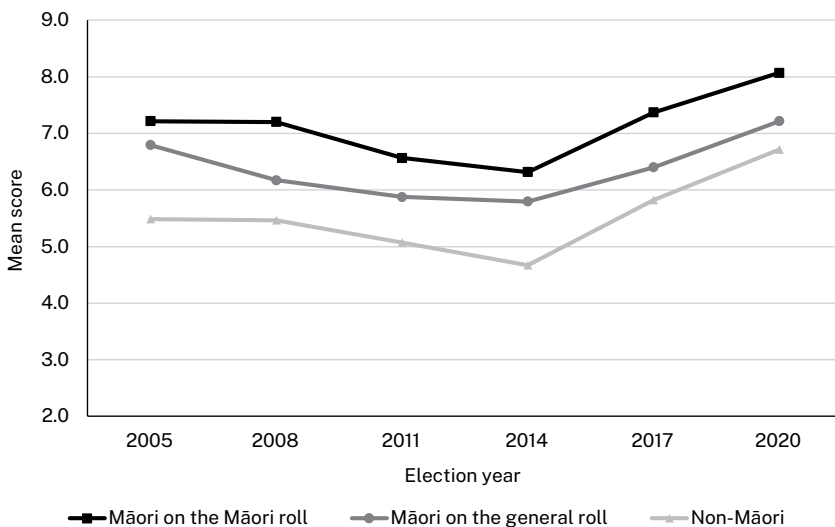


Figure 5.2 How much participants liked the Labour Party on a scale of 0 (dislike) to 10 (like) across elections for Māori on the Māori and general rolls, alongside non-Māori

Source: 2020 NZES (Vowles et al. 2022).

In addition, Figure 5.4 shows the percentages of Māori on the Māori roll, Māori on the general roll, and non-Māori who said they trusted the Labour Party across elections. Unfortunately, data were not collected in 2017 and the NZES did not ask a question about trust in the Māori Party. Overall, however, there was a trend of decreasing trust in the Labour Party over time, with a large increase in trust around 2020. This result adds to the picture that there seems to be no great break with Labour for Māori voters: Māori on the Māori roll liked and trusted Labour *more* in 2020, while simultaneously

liking the Māori Party a little more. Thus, there is no evidence that Māori moved away from Labour and none to suggest that it is a zero-sum game between Labour and the Māori Party for support; a decline in likeability of one party does not mean an increase for the other.

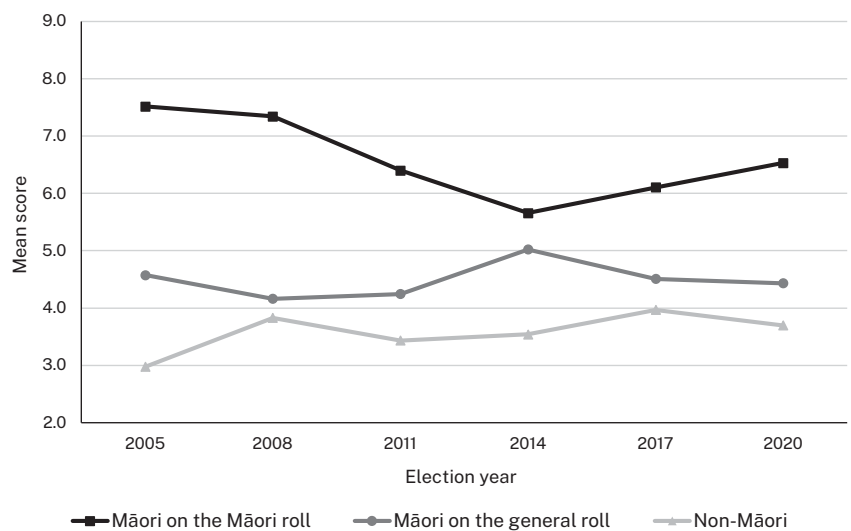


Figure 5.3 How much participants liked the Māori Party on a scale of 0 (dislike) to 10 (like) across elections for Māori on the Māori and general rolls, alongside non-Māori

Source: 2020 NZES (Vowles et al. 2022).

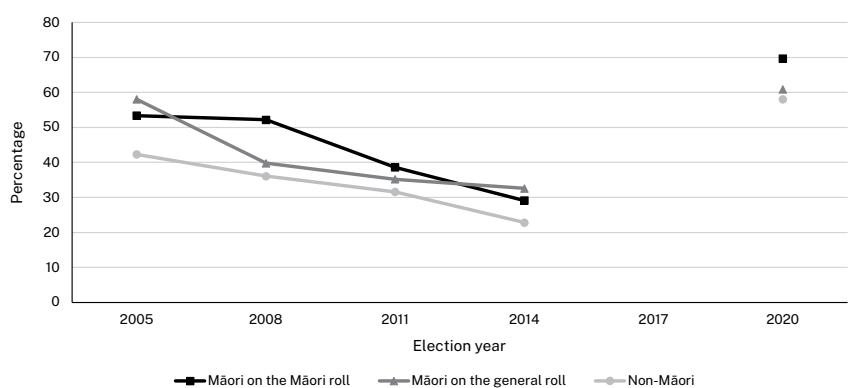


Figure 5.4 The percentage of participants who said they trusted Labour split by Māori on the Māori roll, Māori on the general roll, and non-Māori

Source: 2020 NZES (Vowles et al. 2022).

Did the Māori Party shift to the left?

The second possible explanation we explore is the suggestion that voters saw the Māori Party as ideologically repositioning itself in 2017. Since it was first established, the Māori Party has promised to be ‘neither left nor right, but Māori’ (Godfery 2017). But when the Māori Party failed to have any candidates elected to parliament in 2017, analysis of NZES data from that election showed that this was the result of a continued decline in support for the party during its years supporting National-led coalition governments (Greaves and Hayward 2020). Māori on the Māori roll are consistently shown to be more left-wing than Māori on the general roll (Greaves and Hayward 2020) and more concerned about issues aligned with a left-wing platform such as poverty (Te Ao 2020a, 2020b, 2020d). The renewal of the Māori Party for the 2020 campaign involved policies that voters could have viewed as taking a more left-wing position, such as lifting the minimum wage, doubling welfare benefits, and making them easier to access (Te Pāti Māori 2021). But did voters perceive this shift to the left and did this bring the party more in line with Māori roll voters?

The NZES asked voters to place all the main parties on a scale of zero (left-wing) to 10 (right-wing). Figure 5.5 presents the results for voters’ perceptions of the ideological position of the Māori Party going back to 2005. As an overall trend, Māori on the Māori roll view the Māori Party as further to the right (that is, with a higher score in Figure 5.5) than do Māori on the general roll and non-Māori. In 2020, Māori on the Māori roll gave the Māori Party a score of 4.1, not far below (or to the left of) the scale midpoint of five, yet it was rated as 3.6 by Māori on the general roll and 3.2 by non-Māori. Although these are small differences, they show that Māori on the Māori roll view the Māori Party as closer to the centre than do other voters. All voters viewed the party as more right-wing in 2014 (Māori on the Māori roll rated it 5.3), although this perception shifted to the left in 2017 (4.7), and then further left again in 2020 (4.1). Generally, although voters overall consider the Māori Party to be shifting left, does the rating further right by Māori on the Māori roll simply reflect their own position as more left-wing than other Māori voters?

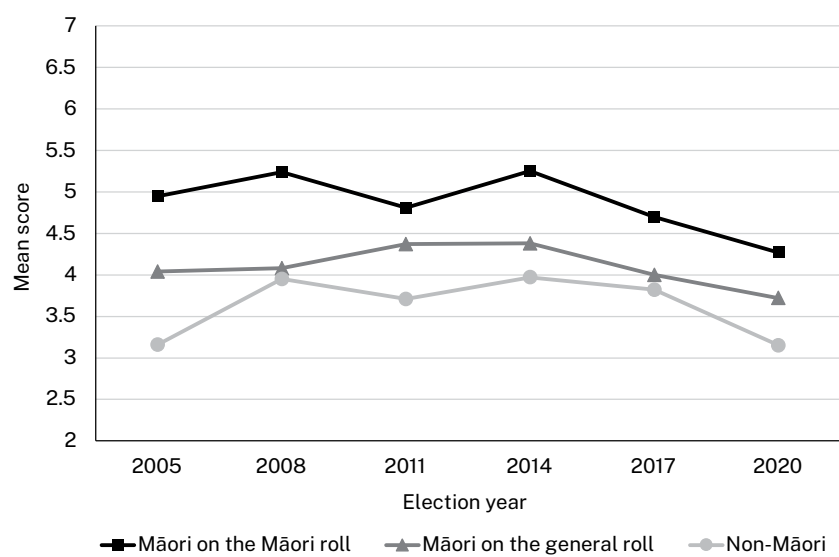


Figure 5.5 Differences across Māori on the Māori roll, Māori on the general roll, and non-Māori for 0 (left) to 10 (right) ratings of the ideological position of the Māori Party

Source: 2020 NZES (Vowles et al. 2022).

Table 5.2 The position in which participants placed the Māori Party on a scale of 0 (left) to 10 (right) minus where they placed themselves on that same scale

Election	Māori on the Māori roll	Māori on the general roll	Non-Māori
2005	0.33	-0.79	-2.31
2008	0.10	-1.31	-1.63
2011	-0.05	-0.83	-1.92
2014	0.28	-0.86	-1.89
2017	0.26	-0.88	-1.58
2020	-0.64	-1.36	-2.14

Source: 2020 NZES (Vowles et al. 2022).

Table 5.2 shows where each voter group placed the Māori Party on the scale from zero (left) to 10 (right), minus the average of where the group placed themselves on that same scale. A negative score indicates that the group viewed themselves as more left-wing than the Māori Party, a positive score as more right-wing. Te Pāti Māori has been consistently within one point of Māori on the Māori roll over time, suggesting it has been well aligned ideologically with its potential voter base. Māori on the Māori roll (on average) now view the party as slightly more left-wing than themselves,

but note that this is less than one point on an 11-point scale. Therefore, there is no evidence in the NZES data to suggest that the Māori Party shifted closer to the average Māori roll voter on perceived ideology at the 2020 election. When we explore where voters generally place themselves on a left to right scale, we see that Labour voters rated themselves as a 4.6 (4.6 for non-Māori and 4.8 for voters of Māori descent), whereas Māori Party voters gave a rating of 4.7 for themselves. This shows that both Labour and the Māori Party were well aligned ideologically with the average Māori roll voter in 2020 and that both parties were viewed as slightly left of centre.

We also considered the suggestion that the Māori Party is ‘neither left nor right but Māori’ to understand voters’ perceptions of the party’s positioning. In 2020, Te Pāti Māori ran an ‘unapologetically Māori’ campaign to advocate for Māori interests (Neilson 2020a). The 2020 survey asked participants of Māori descent: ‘Thinking about your life as a whole, how important is it for you to be involved in things to do with Māori culture?’ Answers were given on a five-point scale from ‘not important at all’ to ‘very important’ (drawn from the Māori social survey Te Kupenga; StatsNZ 2018). As established elsewhere (Fitzgerald et al. 2007; Greaves et al. 2017), Māori on the Māori roll view their culture as more important to them than do other Māori voters, with 73.0 per cent rating it as quite or very important, compared with 29.6 per cent of Māori on the general roll. Only 3.4 per cent of Māori on the Māori roll rated it as ‘not important at all’ versus 20.2 per cent of Māori on the general roll. Figure 5.6 displays the importance of Māori culture to Māori voters, grouped according to the party for which they vote. It shows that Māori who find their Māori culture most important tend to vote for the Māori Party.

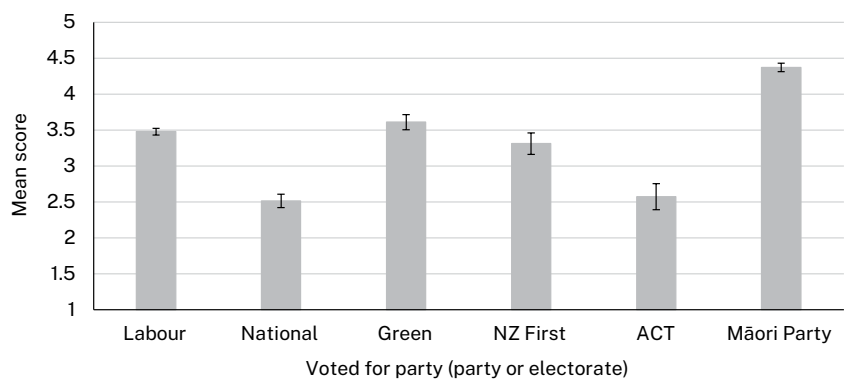


Figure 5.6 Differences in self-ratings of how important being involved in Māori culture is for voters of Māori descent
Source: 2020 NZES (Vowles et al. 2022).

Overall, voters *do* see the Māori Party as shifting to the left after its time supporting the National-led governments. More importantly for the party, our data show that Māori who have close associations with Māori politics and culture are much more likely to support the Māori Party. The original party mantra, ‘neither left nor right but Māori’, is still relevant for Māori on the Māori roll, but perhaps not for other voters, who view the party as more left-wing.

What did Māori voters think of the parties’ leaders?

A third possible explanation for the Māori Party’s success is that its change of leadership for the 2020 election impacted on the result. After the 2017 election result, both Māori Party co-leaders, Te Ururoa Flavell and Marama Fox, resigned. The Māori Party renewed its party leadership and a new, younger executive leadership was announced: Che Wilson became president and Kaapua Smith deputy president of the party (aged 42 and 35, respectively). In 2018, Debbie Ngarewa-Packer and John Tamihere were selected as wahine and tāne (man) party co-leaders. Ngarewa-Packer has a track record in local government politics, having served as the Deputy-Mayor of South Taranaki District Council. She was also a campaigner against seabed mining and a long-term advocate for Māori health and environmental issues. Tamihere has held several political roles over the past two decades and is CEO of the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency. His appointment as co-leader attracted some controversy due to his statements suggesting that women in the Labour Party received preferential treatment due to their gender and making victim-blaming comments regarding a high-profile sexual assault case (Palmer 2019). In this section, we consider Māori roll voters’ views of different political leaders, including the new Māori Party co-leaders and Labour leader Jacinda Ardern.

Figure 5.7 shows the average likeability score of each leader for Māori on the Māori roll, Māori on the general roll, and non-Māori. Jacinda Ardern was significantly more popular than any other leader among all voters, and more popular among Māori on the Māori roll than with other voters. It also shows that both Māori Party co-leaders were liked by Māori on the Māori roll considerably more than by other Māori and non-Māori voters. This indicates that they were a popular choice for the party to attract support from those voters. Other leaders who were more popular with Māori roll voters than

other voters were the Green Party co-leaders and Winston Peters from New Zealand First (the party that won all the Māori electorates from Labour in 1996). Only two leaders were significantly less popular among voters on the Māori roll, Judith Collins (National) and David Seymour (ACT).

Next, we tested whether there was a significant gender difference in support for the party leaders. Gender and leadership are explored in more detail in Chapter 7 of this volume. Here we test the idea that John Tamihere, in particular, was unpopular among Māori women due to his past controversial comments. We test for differences in mean likeability between *wāhine* and *tāne* Māori for each leader. *Wāhine* Māori liked Tamihere more ($M = 4.1$) than did Māori men ($M = 3.6$), which is surprising and contradicts our expectations. However, *wāhine* Māori consistently rated leaders higher than did *tāne* Māori, except for David Seymour and Winston Peters (the differences were not significant), and Judith Collins, whom *wāhine* Māori ($M = 2.6$) liked significantly less than did *tāne* Māori ($M = 3.1$). Overall, this shows that although the new Māori Party leadership was relatively liked by Māori roll voters, Ardern's popularity was high in 2020 and, despite various controversies about Māori issues, she was even more popular among Māori on the Māori roll than among other voters.

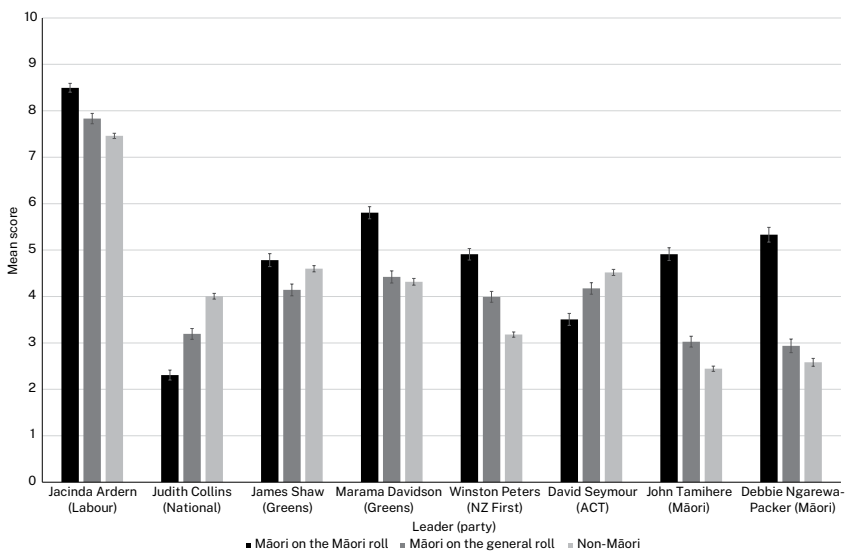


Figure 5.7 How voters across Māori on the Māori roll, Māori on the general roll, and non-Māori rated the likeability of each leader on a scale from 0 (strongly dislike) to 10 (strongly like)

Source: 2020 NZES (Vowles et al. 2022).

Did the Māori Party's campaign strategy change?

The fourth and final possible explanation for the Māori Party's relative success in 2020 that we test is that the party's campaign strategy had a positive impact on the result. We analyse results with a particular focus on how changes between the 2017 and 2020 campaigns may have helped the Māori Party. In 2020, Te Pāti Māori actively promoted a 'two ticks for Māori' strategy, which the media described as the 'Māori two-fer' (Maxwell 2020b). More than ever before, Māori Party candidates encouraged Māori electorate voters to give their electorate vote to the Māori Party and their party vote to Labour. The 'two for one' message was delivered by all Māori Party candidates at every opportunity (Maxwell 2020a). The purpose of this strategy was to maximise the impact of the Māori vote by electing Māori Party MPs in the Māori electorates, while at the same time returning Labour's Māori candidates to parliament through the Labour Party list ('two-fer' the price of one; Neilson 2020b). It was precisely this strategy that returned Labour candidate Tāmami Coffey to parliament via the Labour Party list despite his loss in Waiariki to Māori Party candidate Rawiri Waititi. But was this two-fer strategy a success beyond Waiariki? At a glance (as shown in Table 5.1), the Labour Party increased its share of the party vote in all the Māori electorates, even where the margin in the electorate vote closed in favour of the Māori Party candidate. Furthermore, despite not calling for the party vote, the Māori Party won 1.2 per cent of the party vote (as in 2017), which got Debbie Ngarewa-Packer into parliament from the party list.

What do NZES data reveal about the impact of this strategy? First, a caveat: although this is a sample recruited through statistically robust methods, some of these results are based on small numbers. Acknowledging this, our results are nonetheless revealing. We asked participants which party they most wanted to be in government after the 2020 election. Of the 81 voters who said they *most wanted* the Māori Party to be in government on election day, 65.7 per cent gave their party vote to the Māori Party and 82.6 per cent gave the party their electorate vote. This suggests that among their greatest supporters, the majority gave them their party vote anyway, although there is some difference between the electorate and party votes, suggesting some supporters followed the strategy. It is interesting to note also that not all of those who preferred the Māori Party voted for them; it could be that some voters were concerned the Māori Party would not win a seat and voted for

Labour instead. Indeed, 11.6 per cent of those who most wanted the Māori Party to be in government gave their electorate vote to Labour, and 22.9 per cent gave Labour their party vote.

More broadly and recognising that under MMP many parties may form a government, the NZES also asked which parties participants wanted in government. Some 57.7 per cent of Māori on the Māori roll, 21.5 per cent of Māori on the general roll, and 11.2 per cent of non-Māori wanted to see the Māori Party in government, suggesting that the majority of those on the Māori roll wanted to see the Māori Party have influence in government. We next explored the reported party and electorate votes for those who said they wanted the Māori Party to be in government. Most of those on the Māori roll who wanted the Māori Party in government gave their electorate vote to the Māori Party candidate (54.1 per cent), whereas many still gave their electorate vote to Labour (38.9 per cent). This reinforces the inference that many of those on the Māori roll simultaneously support the Māori and the Labour parties. Turning to the electorate vote, of those who wanted the Māori Party to be in government and were voting on the Māori roll, 22.1 per cent gave their party vote to the Māori Party, versus 59.3 per cent to the Labour Party. The difference in numbers between the electorate (54.1 per cent) and party (22.1 per cent) votes for those who wanted the Māori Party in government, and between electorate (82.6 per cent) and party (65.7 per cent) votes for those who *most wanted* the Māori Party in government suggests that to some extent the voters who support the Māori Party followed the party's 'two-fer' strategy. In summary, while many voters followed the party's wishes, many others still wanted to give their party vote to the Māori Party, especially those who liked them the best. This indicates that, although many voters on the Māori roll vote strategically for what is likely to be a range of reasons, many will still vote for their favourite party.

Another significant aspect of the Māori Party campaign was the extent to which it directly contacted potential voters in the Māori electorates. The NZES provides data relating to the extent to which participants were contacted by political parties across a range of mediums, from pamphlets and door-knocking to social media. Table 5.3 presents the results of all these added together to answer the question: what percentage of Māori on the Māori roll were contacted by the Māori Party?

Table 5.3 The percentage of Māori on the Māori roll, Māori on the general roll, and non-Māori contacted by each party in the leadup to the 2020 general election

	Māori on the Māori roll	Māori on the general roll	Non-Māori
Labour	65.2	61.8	61.4
National	43.4	57.4	64.1***
Green	28.9	26.4	28.7
New Zealand First	18.6	18.5	15.6
ACT	13.6	18.7	18.3*
Māori Party	39.6	11.3	5.0***
TOP	9.6	11.9	9.4
New Conservatives	8.8	14.9	14.3***
Advance NZ	10.8	10.3	9.0

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

Note: Statistically significant differences are presented in bold; n Māori roll = 603; n Māori on the general roll = 707; n non-Māori = 2,420.

Source: 2020 NZES (Vowles et al. 2022).

These results show that the Māori Party placed its efforts in contacting Māori roll voters, contacting 39.6 per cent of Māori roll voters versus 11.3 per cent of Māori on the general roll and only 5.0 per cent of non-Māori. This was a slight increase from 2017 when the party had contacted 38.0 per cent of Māori on the Māori roll, 8.9 per cent of Māori on the general roll, and 4.3 per cent of non-Māori. In contrast, Labour had contacted 61.4 per cent to 65.2 per cent of all voters. These results show that the Māori Party in 2020 managed to contact a large minority of those on the Māori roll, although by no means as many voters as Labour, which had more funding and a larger campaign team. However, 2017 and 2020 make an interesting comparison: in 2017, Labour contacted 70.3 per cent of Māori on the Māori roll—a greater proportion than Māori on the general roll (63.7 per cent) and non-Māori (59.9 per cent). Indeed, this difference was statistically significant in 2017, but not in 2020, perhaps speaking to Labour’s aggressive commitment to win the Māori electorates in 2017. During that campaign, Labour candidates in the Māori electorates took an all-or-nothing approach; they did not stand on the Labour Party list but rather ran electorate-only campaigns to show their commitment to winning all seven electorates back from the Māori Party (Greaves and Hayward 2020).

Based on the observation that the Māori Party was particularly active on social media (Greaves and Morgan 2021) and that Māori politics is increasingly taking place online (Waitoa et al. 2015), we tested whether there was a significant difference in social media contact by each party across the rolls. There were differences for both the Labour and the Māori parties, indicating that the parties were more likely to contact Māori on the Māori roll (compared with Māori on the general roll or non-Māori) on 'Facebook or other social media'. The Labour Party contacted 11.9 per cent of Māori on the Māori roll, 10.0 per cent of Māori on the general roll, and 7.5 per cent of non-Māori. In comparison, the Māori Party contacted 8.6 per cent of the Māori on the Māori roll, 2.8 per cent of Māori on the general roll, and 1.5 per cent of non-Māori. This gap (of 11.9 per cent for Labour versus 8.7 per cent for the Māori Party) is much smaller than the overall contact gap between parties (of 65.2 per cent versus 39.6 per cent of Māori roll voters). NZES data show that, taken together, the Māori Party contacted a similar proportion of its potential Māori roll voters in 2020 as it did in 2017, with Labour contacting relatively fewer when compared across both elections. However, the Māori Party (39.6 per cent) was able to contact fewer Māori roll voters than Labour (65.2 per cent). Minor parties such as the Māori Party have fewer resources for campaigning than Labour, which is important to note given the huge geographical size of some Māori electorates. However, using social media could help to even this out in future, as there is greater capacity to target potential voters, even with limited budgets.

Overall, in terms of the impact of the new strategy, we conclude that Te Pāti Māori campaigns did not deter some voters from supporting the party despite the campaign encouraging voters to be strategic with their party vote.

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn on data from a sample of Māori voters in the NZES to understand the dynamics that led to the Māori Party's unexpected victory in Waiariki. We tested several possible explanations. First, only Māori on the Māori roll felt that Labour discriminated against Māori in the handling of Ihumātao, and that group gave the government its highest rating in terms of the Covid-19 response by the time of the 2020 election. It seems difficult to argue therefore that Labour lost support generally among Māori voters through these policies. We followed up this line of inquiry by asking which

party voters like most. This showed that despite some specific Māori policy challenges for Labour, Māori on the Māori roll had a positive evaluation of Labour in 2020 with no associated uptick in support for the Māori Party.

Second, in relation to whether the Māori Party shifted to the left in 2020, our findings indicate that both Labour and the Māori Party were ideologically aligned with the average Māori roll voter in 2020 and both were viewed as left of centre. Our findings suggest that the idea of the Māori Party as ‘neither left nor right but Māori’ is fertile ground for future campaigns. Voters who identify more with Māori culture are more likely to vote for the Māori Party and this is a better predictor than left–right ideology. Third, regarding the impact of leadership, although the new Māori Party leadership was reasonably popular with Māori roll voters, they were much less liked than Labour leader Jacinda Ardern. Fourth, perhaps the best example of the two-fer strategy in action was the win in Waiariki. The ‘unapologetically Māori’ campaign seems to be an effective one, given that Te Pāti Māori appeals most to Māori voters who connect strongly with Māori politics and are motivated by issues of relevance to Māori.

Overall, these results suggest that the Māori Party is building relationships with Māori on the Māori roll and could be appealing more to them over time. Even in the exceptional circumstance of the 2020 red wave, Te Pāti Māori held or increased support among its core voter base. Consequently, the two Māori Party MPs effectively served as opposition from a pro-*hāpori* (community) Māori perspective in the fifty-third parliament and held the Labour government (and opposition parties) to account at every turn.

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