**Horizon Research**

**Pay equity law changes**

**September 2025**

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# Introduction

These are the results of an online survey of 1,026 adults in New Zealand covering the Pay Equity Amendment Bill. The methodology is described in the [Appendix](#_Appendix_-_Methodology_1). The survey has a maximum margin of error of ±3.1% overall.

# Summary of results

Changes to pay equity law could put the current governing coalition at risk of losing power.

Results indicate that, depending on the prominence of the pay equity changes at the time, there is a risk of the coalition parties losing a nett **5.6%** (equivalent to 159,860) of their collective 2023 votes. The impact would be sufficient for a hung parliament outcome.

There is also a further risk: a nett 50,750 voters for parties not currently in parliament would be more likely to change their vote in opposition to the pay equity changes.

The effect, if all these votes transferred to parliamentary opposition parties and combined with the potential risk noted above, would be to give the current parliamentary opposition parties 61 seats at the 2026 election, two more than the current coalition parties.

**69%** understand the pay equity law changes either very well (18%) or somewhat well (51%). The greater the understanding of the bill, the greater the opposition to it**.**

**42%** of respondents overall opposed the pay equity law changes. Highest support comes from ACT (59%) and National (58%) voters. Despite the strongest opposition coming from Green (75%) and Labour (67%) voters, **the opposition to this Bill includes 28% of those who voted for one of the current Government coalition parties in 2023**.

The people who are more likely to strongly oppose the changes are:

• Professional/Government officials – **41%** strongly oppose

• Teacher/ Nurse/ Police or other trained service worker – **43%** strongly oppose

• Working in Government Administration or Defence – **45%**.

Overall, respondents thought that New Zealanders should have had a say on the pay equity law changes and that the changes will make it harder for women to seek fair pay. Respondents were asked to disagree or agree with a series of statement about the bill:

* New Zealanders think the public should have the opportunity to submit feedback on the Bill – **69%** agree with this (equivalent to around 2,667,000 adults). **40%** (1,538,000 adults) strongly agree.
* **50%** (1,940,000 adults) agree that the Bill makes it harder for women to seek fair pay.
* **49%** (1,879,000 adults) agree the Bill will disproportionately harm workers in female-dominated jobs such as nursing and teaching.
* **47%** (1,828,000 adults) agree that it undermines workers’ rights.
* **36%** (1,391,000 adults) agree that it will significantly reduce Government spending.

# Detailed report

Before answering questions about the Pay Equity Amendment Bill respondents were shown the following information.

*Pay equity is about ensuring that everyone is paid the same for work of equal value.*

*This means that jobs requiring similar skills, effort, responsibility and working conditions should be paid comparably. Even if the roles are different.*

*In May 2025, the Government passed the Pay Equity Amendment Bill.*

*This Bill was passed under urgency, without any advance notice or select committee hearings.*

*It cancelled 33 active pay-equity claims and raised the threshold for making future claims. Those who have already settled claims cannot make another one for 10 years.*

*The Government has said that this will result in an estimated savings of $12 billion.*

*Critics argue it undermines the rights of women in female-dominated professions.*

*Supporters say it corrects a flawed system and will save taxpayers billions.*

# Understanding pay equity law changes

**18%** of New Zealanders said they understood the changes to the pay equity law very well. This equates to around 696,000[[1]](#footnote-1) adults.

**51%** (1,952,000 adults) said they understood it somewhat.

**23%** (885,000 adults) understood very little.

**Overall, a third of respondents (32%) knew very little or nothing about the changes to pay equity law.**

*Base: Total sample n=1,026*

Sub-groups of the adult population and their levels of understanding of the pay equity law changes are detailed below.

Younger adults and people with lower incomes say they know very little or nothing about the changes.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***How well do you understand the changes to pay equity law?*** | **Total** | **Significantly more likely ▲** | |
| Very well | 18% | 55-64 year olds  Business Manager/ Executive  Working in Government Administration or Defence  Annual household income $70k-$100k  Annual household income $150k+  Annual personal income $150k+ | 25%  29%  35%  25%  26%  34% |
| Somewhat | 51% | 65-74 year olds  Business Proprietor/ Self-employed  Working in finance/insurance  Working in Property or Business Services  Annual household income $100k-$150k  Annual personal income $100k-$150k | 64%  63%  66%  74%  63%  65% |
| Very little | 23% | 35-44 year olds  Home-maker (not otherwise employed)  Annual personal income less than $50k  Annual personal income less than $20k | 33%  49%  29%  17% |
| I don't know anything about it | 9% | 18-24 year olds  25-34 year olds  Working in Manufacturing | 17%  16%  24% |

ACT and Green Party voters are significantly more likely to know about the pay equity law changes. Among voters for the parties currently in parliament, National Party and New Zealand First voters were the least likely to know about the pay equity changes.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***How well do you understand the changes to pay equity law?*** | **All** | **PARTY VOTE 2023** | | | | | |
| **ACT New Zealand** | **Green Party** | **Labour Party** | **National Party** | **New Zealand First** | **Te Pāti Māori** |
| Very well | 18% | 32% | 27% | 23% | 14% | 22% | 25% |
| Somewhat | 51% | 54% | 57% | 52% | 56% | 43% | 48% |
| Very little | 23% | 10% | 12% | 19% | 24% | 26% | 22% |
| I don't know anything about it | 9% | 4% | 4% | 6% | 5% | 9% | 6% |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| N (unweighted) | 1,026 | 89 | 130 | 295 | 265 | 57 | 33 |

BLUE = significantly higher than total sample RED =significantly lower than total sample

There are no significant differences among males or females in their understanding of the pay equity law changes.

*Base: Total sample*

Business Managers, Executive and Business owners are more likely to have an understanding of the pay equity law changes.

*Base: Total sample*

🡩🡫 *Significantly higher or lower than total sample*

# Opinion of pay equity law changes

Opinion on the pay equity law changes is divided.

**42%** (1,631,000 adults) oppose the pay equity law changes.

* **25%** (962,000 adults) strongly oppose the changes.

**39%** (1,488,000 adults) support the changes, with **14%** (526,000 adults) strongly supporting them.

**19%** (746,000 adults) are unsure.

**39%** support pay equity changes

**42%** oppose pay equity changes

*Base: Total sample n=1,026*

The people who are more likely to strongly oppose the changes are:

* Professional/Government officials – **41%** strongly oppose
* Teacher/ Nurse/ Police or other trained service worker – **43%** strongly oppose
* Working in Government Administration or Defence – **45%.**

*Base: Total sample*

🡩🡫 *Significantly higher or lower than total sample*

Those more likely to strongly support are 55-64 year olds **(21%).**

People who are more likely to be not sure are:

* 18-35 year olds - **27%**
* Pasifika – **33%.**

There are no significant differences between males and females on the law changes.

*Base: Total sample*

Highest support comes from ACT **(59%)** and National **(58%)** voters.

Strongest opposition from Green **(75%)** and Labour **(67%)** voters.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Do you support or oppose the pay equity law changes?*** | **All** | **PARTY VOTE 2023** | | | | | |
| **ACT New Zealand** | **Green Party** | **Labour Party** | **National Party** | **New Zealand First** | **Te Pāti Māori** |
| Strongly oppose | 25% | 10% | 65% | 47% | 10% | 10% | 40% |
| Somewhat oppose | 17% | 18% | 10% | 20% | 18% | 17% | 3% |
| Somewhat support | 25% | 27% | 10% | 14% | 36% | 36% | 16% |
| Strongly support | 14% | 32% | 5% | 7% | 22% | 13% | 21% |
| Not sure | 19% | 13% | 10% | 13% | 15% | 24% | 21% |
| **TOTAL OPPOSE** | **42%** | **28%** | **75%** | **67%** | **27%** | **27%** | **43%** |
| **TOTAL SUPPORT** | **39%** | **59%** | **15%** | **21%** | **58%** | **49%** | **37%** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| N (unweighted) | 1,026 | 89 | 130 | 295 | 265 | 57 | 33 |

BLUE = significantly higher than total sample RED =significantly lower than total sample

**A majority of those who understood the law changes opposed them**. Note that the greater the knowledge about the changes to pay equity law, the greater the opposition to the changes.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Do you support or oppose the pay equity law changes?*** | **All** | **How well do you understand the changes to pay equity law?** | | | |
| **Very well** | **Some-what** | **Very little** | **I don’t know anything at all** |
| Strongly oppose | 25% | 46% | 29% | 8% | 3% |
| Somewhat oppose | 17% | 10% | 22% | 16% | 8% |
| Somewhat support | 25% | 15% | 30% | 31% | 3% |
| Strongly support | 14% | 28% | 12% | 7% | 12% |
| Not sure | 19% | 1% | 8% | 39% | 74% |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTAL OPPOSE** | **42%** | 56% | 51% | 24% | 11% |
| **TOTAL SUPPORT** | **39%** | 43% | 41% | 38% | 15% |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| N (unweighted) | 1,026 | 207 | 535 | 212 | 72 |

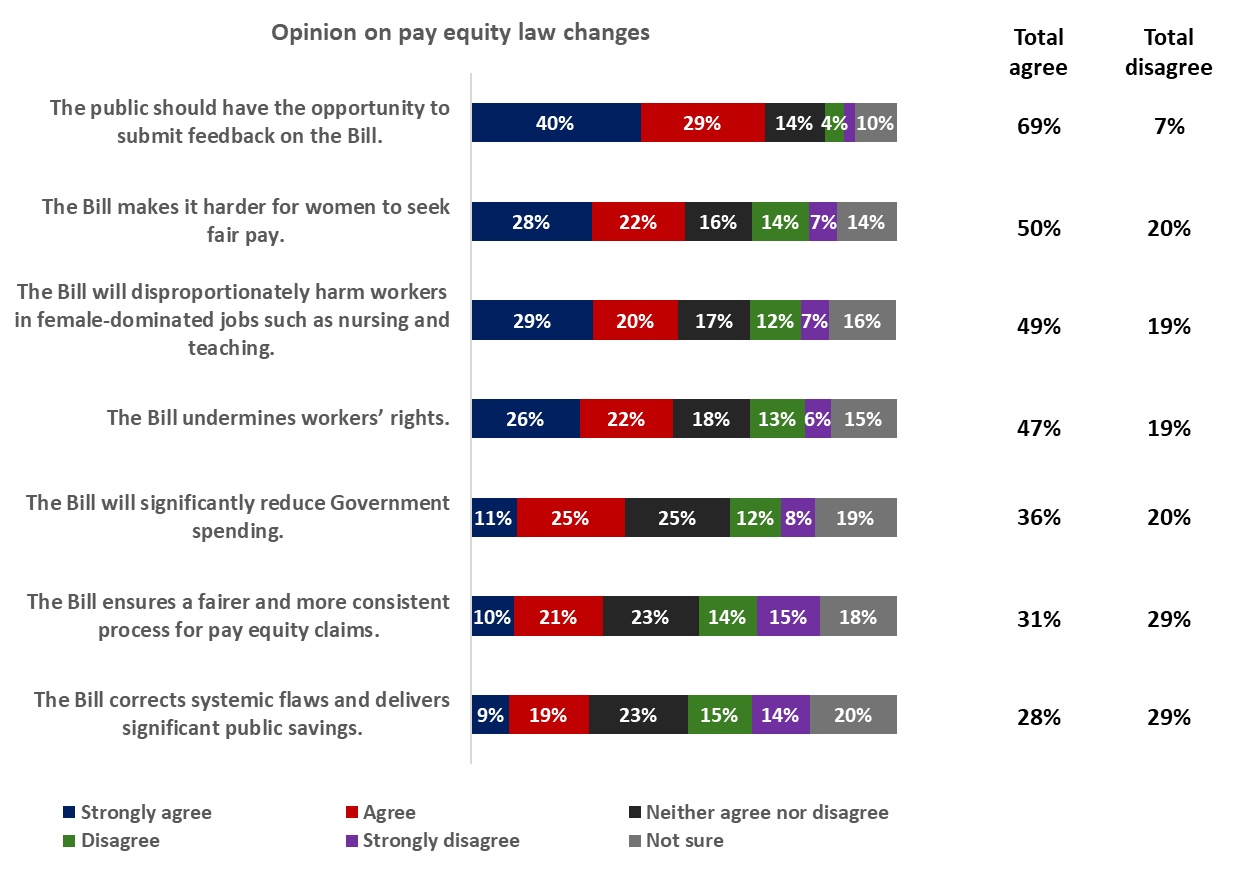
BLUE = significantly higher than total sample RED =significantly lower than total sample

# Opinion of pay equity law changes

Overall people think New Zealanders should have had a say on the pay equity law changes and that the changes will make it harder for women, especially those in female dominated jobs.

* New Zealanders think *the public should have the opportunity to submit feedback on the Bill* – **69%** (2,667,000 adults) agree with this. **40%** (1,538,000 adults) strongly agree.
* **50%** (1,940,000 adults) agree that *the Bill makes it harder for women to seek fair pay.*
* **49%** (1,879,000 adults) agree *the Bill will disproportionately harm workers in female-dominated jobs such as nursing and teaching.*
* **47%** (1,828,000 adults) agree that it*undermines workers’ rights.*

**36%** (1,391,000 adults) agree that it will *significantly reduce Government spending*.



*Base: Total sample*

The table below shows groups who are significantly more likely to agree or disagree with each of the statements about pay equity.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **More likely to agree[[2]](#footnote-2)** |  | **More likely to disagree[[3]](#footnote-3)** |  |
| The public should have the opportunity to submit feedback on the Bill. | Teacher/ Nurse/ Police or other trained service worker  Working in health and community service  Voted Green Party in 2023  Voted Labour in 2023 | 86%  87%  89%  83% | 55-64 year olds  Business Proprietor/ Self-employed  Work in construction  Voted ACT in 2023 | 14%  17%  20%  19% |
| The Bill makes it harder for women to seek fair pay. | Females  Professional /Senior Government Official  Teacher/ Nurse/ Police or other trained service worker  Working in Government Administration or Defence  Voted Green Party in 2023  Voted Labour in 2023 | 57%  61%  74%  73%  85%  77% | 55-64 year olds  65-74 year olds  Males  Business Proprietor/ Self-employed  Have personal income $100-$150k  Voted ACT in 2023  Voted National in 2023  Voted New Zealand First in 2023 | 30%  29%  26%  34%  30%  52%  35%  34% |
| The Bill will disproportionately harm workers in female-dominated jobs such as nursing and teaching. | Professional /Senior Government Official  Teacher/ Nurse/ Police or other trained service worker  Voted Green Party in 2023  Voted Labour in 2023 | 61%  69%  83%  75% | 55-64 year olds  65-74 year olds  Males  Business Proprietor/ Self-employed  Have personal income $150k+  Voted ACT in 2023  Voted National in 2023  Voted New Zealand First in 2023 | 25%  29%  25%  30%  33%  57%  27%  44% |
| The Bill undermines workers’ rights. | Professional /Senior Government Official  Teacher/ Nurse/ Police or other trained service worker  Working in Government Administration or Defence  Indian  Voted Green Party in 2023  Voted Labour in 2023 | 61%  67%  73%  62%  83%  74% | 55-64 year olds  65-74 year olds  Males  Business Proprietor/ Self-employed  Have annual household income $150k+  Have personal income $150k+  Living in Bay of Plenty  Voted ACT in 2023  Voted National in 2023  Voted New Zealand First in 2023 | 29%  34%  24%  36%  27%  36%  37%  63%  33%  43% |
| The Bill will significantly reduce Government spending. | Professional /Senior Government Official  Have household income $200k+  Have personal income $150k+  Voted ACT in 2023  Voted National in 2023 | 48%  48%  52%  48%  48% | Teacher/ Nurse/ Police or other trained service worker  Māori  Voted Labour in 2023  Voted Te Pāti Māori in 2023 | 38%  29%  30%  43% |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **More likely to agree[[4]](#footnote-4)** |  | **More likely to disagree[[5]](#footnote-5)** |  |
| The Bill ensures a fairer and more consistent process for pay equity claims. | 55-64 year olds  Business Manager/ Executive  Asian  Living in Auckland  Voted ACT in 2023  Voted National in 2023 | 42%  42%  46%  38%  55%  52% | Professional /Senior Government Official  Teacher/ Nurse/ Police or other trained service worker  Working in Government Administration or Defence  Working in Education  Working in health and community service  Māori  Voted Green Party in 2023  Voted Labour in 2023  Voted Te Pāti Māori in 2023 | 39%  53%  51%  40%  45%  38%  69%  56%  51% |
| The Bill corrects systemic flaws and delivers significant public savings. | Males  Business Manager/ Executive  Have annual household income $200k+  Asian  Voted ACT in 2023  Voted National in 2023 | **33%**  **40%**  **40%**  **38%**  **66%**  **45%** | 55-64 year olds  Professional /Senior Government Official  Teacher/ Nurse/ Police or other trained service worker  Working in Government Administration or Defence  Māori  Voted Green Party in 2023  Voted Labour in 2023 | **42%**  **41%**  **48%**  **53%**  **36%**  **68%**  **52%** |

# Pay equity law change and Party vote

All respondents were asked whether the Government’s pay equity changes would be likely to change, or not change, their party vote at the next general election.

The following chart shows the overall results for this question, including those who did not vote in the 2023 general election and those who voted for minor parties who did not achieve seats in parliament.

**8%** overall were likely to change their vote in support of the Bill, while **25%** said they were likely to change their party vote in opposition to the Bill.

*Base: Total sample*

**However, the potential effect on voting patterns at the next general election is best viewed by analysis of the collective effects on the parties currently forming the coalition government and those currently forming the parliamentary opposition.**

Analysis indicates that of the voters in the 2023 general election[[6]](#footnote-6):

* An overall **14.8%** (222,720) of voters for one of the current Government coalition parties would be likely to change their party vote in opposition to the Government’s pay equity law changes.
* An overall **5.3%** (62,860) of voters for one of the parties currently in the parliamentary opposition would be likely to change their party vote in support of the Government’s pay equity law changes.
* Applying these percentage changes to the final results of the 2023 general election indicates that:
  + Government coalition parties have 222,720 votes at risk, with an offsetting potential gain from parliamentary opposition parties of 62,860 votes. This is a potential nett loss to Government coalition parties of 159,860 votes or **5.6%** of the votes cast for them in 2023.
  + If this was the only issue being considered at election time and all of the 222,720 at risk votes transferred to the current parliamentary opposition parties, plus all of the 62,860 votes transferred from parliamentary opposition parties to the current Government coalition parties, the outcome would be a hung parliament with current Government coalition and opposition parties each having 60 seats[[7]](#footnote-7).
* Although minor parties (i.e. those who are not currently in parliament) only received 159,585 votes collectively in the 2023 general election, **45.8%** of their voters (equivalent to 73,090 voters) said they would change the party they had voted for in opposition to the Government’s pay equity law changes. **14.0%** voters (equivalent to 22,340 voters) said they would change the party they had voted for in support of the Government’s pay equity law changes. If the overall nett of 50,750 voters changed their vote to one of the parliamentary opposition parties, the effect would be to change the hung parliament noted above to give the current parliamentary opposition a 2-seat margin with current coalition parties having 59 seats and current parliamentary opposition parties having 61 seats.

**Overall, this suggests that, depending on the prominence of this issue at the time, the pay equity changes constitute a risk to the Government coalition parties at the next general election.**

Respondents who had voted in the 2023 general election for the parties making up the current Government coalition and said they were **likely to change their vote** **in opposition to the Bill** tended to be:

* Younger (**40%** were under 35 years; average age 44.0 years) than those who were unlikely to change their party vote (18% under 35 years, 54% 55 years of age or over; average age 54.9 years)
* **51%** male/**49%** female *versus* 56% male/43% female/1% another gender for those who were unlikely to change their party vote.
* **80%** employed versus **68%** employed for those who were unlikely to change their party vote.
* Higher average household and personal incomes than the population overall and higher than those who were unlikely to change their party vote.
* Less likely than the population overall to have children in their households.
* Ethnically, a similar split to the population overall.
* **60%** resident in the northern North Island (Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty) and less likely than the average for the sample to be resident in the South Island (18% *v* 23%).
* **79%** had voted for the National Party at the 2023 general election.

Respondents who had voted in the 2023 general election for the parties making up the current parliamentary opposition and who said they were **likely to change their vote** **in support of the Bill** tended to be:

* Younger (**55%** were under 35 years; average age 35.6 years) than those who were unlikely to change their party vote (25% under 35 years, 40% 55 years of age or over; average age 49.4 years)
* More male (**55%**) than female (**45%**).
* **82%** employed versus **62%** employed for those who were unlikely to change their party vote.
* Lower average household income than the population overall but higher than average personal income.
* Significantly more likely than the population overall to have children in their households.
* Ethnically, less likely than the population overall to be pākehā
* **70%** resident in the northern North Island (Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty) and less likely than the average for the sample to be resident in the South Island (10% *v* 23% overall).
* **75%** had voted for the Labour Party at the 2023 general election.

A demographic profile is shown in the accompanying table set.

Note that a majority (**73%**) of those who voted for the current coalition government parties at the 2023 general election are unlikely to change their vote because of the bill. **12%** were unsure.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Thinking about the Government's pay equity law changes, how likely are they to change or not change your Party vote at the next general election?** | **Current Government coalition party voted for in 2023** | | |
| **ACT New Zealand** | **National Party** | **New Zealand First** |
|  |  |  |  |
| More likely to change my party vote in opposition to the Bill | 12% | 16% | 9% |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| N (unweighted) | 89 | 265 | 57 |

# Comments on pay equity

Some 336 respondents made further comments on the pay equity issue.

Below are the key themes that came through, with examples of comments in opposition and in support of the changes.

**Workplace and Economic Impact (49%)**

Many commented on outcomes in the workplace in relation to wages, workers, employers, and broader economic effects.

*The only group that comes out equal in pay equity law is the employers.*

*It devalues women’s work. Luxon's derision of some of the examples shows his lack of understanding and his prejudice.*

*The bill continues to maintain the pay inequality between male and female workers. This was so the government could save money to fund other promises at women's detriment.*

*Someone is benefiting from this Bill and it's not the common worker.*

**Gender and Representation (44%)**

Respondents highlight the gendered nature of pay equity, especially for professions like teaching and nursing.

*I am very angry about the amendment, especially as it affects the teaching and nursing professions. Teachers and nurses work harder than most and are paid far less than they deserve.*

*It shows the government's sly way of working. We nurses, cleaners and shop staff kept going during covid, and showed our value to society.*

**Government and Politics (37%)**

The issue is strongly politicised with references to government decisions and political parties.

*Disgusted with the government, but I was already disgusted with them.*

*I was appalled that this happened as well as 'how' this happened with no consultation.*

*I was shocked how it was done - without prior warning or consultation. Very high-handed and would make me change votes if I were likely to vote right wing (which I wasn't).*

**Fairness and Equality (31%)**

They talk about pay equity in terms of fairness, equality, and justice. Some see it as necessary, others as flawed.

*Pay equity under labour was stupid. Thank goodness for the common sense of our new govt.*

*When introduced the Pay Equity scheme contained flaws and led to poor outcomes - such as inappropriate comparisons. These flaws needed to be addressed.*

*It is very alarming that women are once again disadvantaged- those making this decision earn a lot of money and should be ashamed of themselves for sneaking this bill through.*

Other comments were about

* Timing & Process **(12%)**
* Public Spending & Costs **(12%)**
* Lack of understanding and awareness overall **(11%).**

# Appendix - Methodology

This survey was commissioned by Horizon Research as part of its public interest research programme.

**Research method**

An online survey of adults living in New Zealand aged 18 and older.

**Sample sources**

Members of two nationwide Horizon Research panels and a third-party panel (used for source diversity).

**Fieldwork dates**

28th August to 4th September 2025

**Sample size**

1,026 adults.

**Weighting**

The total sample is weighted on age, gender, ethnicity, region and party vote at the 2023 general election to reflect the New Zealand adult population.

**Maximum predicted margin of error**

±3.1% at the 95% confidence level.

**Population estimates in the report**

These are based on the Stats NZ Census 2023 population of 3,865,235 people aged 18 or more. All population numbers are to the nearest thousand.

**Party vote impact analysis**

* The final 2023 general election results were downloaded from Elections NZ (<https://elections.nz/media-and-news/2023/official-results-for-the-2023-general-election/>).
* A nett % figure was calculated for collective potential loss of voters in 2023 for current Government coalition parties who said they would change their party vote in opposition to the pay equity changes (14.8% of voters for current Government coalition parties).
* A nett % figure was calculated for potential collective gain of votes from those who voted for parliamentary opposition parties in 2023 and who said they would change their party vote in support of the pay equity changes (5.3%).
* These percentages were applied to the actual 2023 general election result counts. This indicated 222,720 current Government coalition voters who would potentially change their party vote in opposition to the pay equity changes and 62,860 current parliamentary opposition voters who would potentially change their party vote in support of the pay equity changes: a nett overall loss to current Government coalition parties of 159,860 votes or 5.6% of their collective vote.

1. *All population numbers based on the Stats NZ Census population of 3,865,235 people aged 18+. All population numbers are to the nearest thousand.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Strongly agree/agree [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Strongly disagree/disagree [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Strongly agree/agree [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Strongly disagree/disagree [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. https://elections.nz/media-and-news/2023/official-results-for-the-2023-general-election/ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. https://elections.nz/stats-and-research/mmp-seat-allocation-calculator/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)