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Comparison of voters and non-voters: Results from the General Social Survey 2013

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By: Tony Stones-Havas

       Social Researcher

       Research Investigations and Monitoring Unit

       Auckland Council

Background

The New Zealand General Social Survey (NZGSS) is a two-yearly national survey conducted by Statistics New Zealand that provides information on the well-being of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over. This is the third in the series, since 2008. Face-to-face interviews with 8,550 individuals were conducted by Statistics New Zealand between April 2010 and March 2011.

This report presents data for a representative sample of 1,880 Auckland respondents of voting age. The purpose of this report is to provide a profile of voters versus non-voters in local government elections. Reasons for not voting are also presented.

The results presented are based on survey fieldwork conducted between April 2012 and March 2013. Therefore findings relate to local body elections conducted in 2010.

Results

Respondents were asked the following: *Local government elections also happen every three years. The last time you can remember a local government election in an area you were living in, did you vote?*

Overall, 62 per cent of respondents aged 18 and over said they had voted in the most recent local government elections they could remember. This level has not changed over previous surveys held in 2008 and 2010.

Figure 1: Comparison of incidence of voting over time
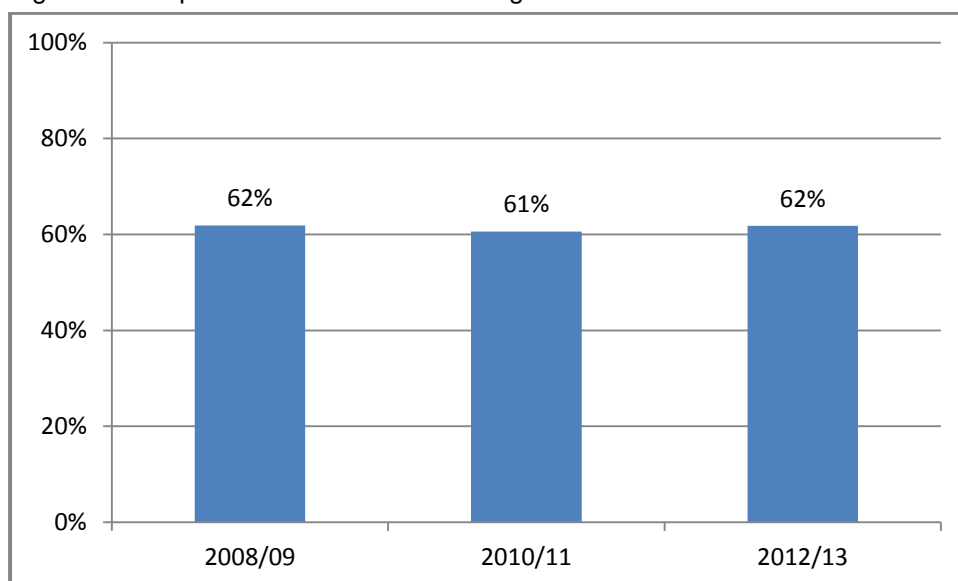
There is a strong relationship between incidence of voting and voter age: the older the respondents, the more likely they are to vote. Of those aged 18 to 24 years, only a third (33%) had voted in local government elections. For those aged 25 to 39 years voting incidence rose to 53 per cent, and for those aged 40 to 64 it rose further to 70 per cent. Highest incidence of voting was 87 per cent for those aged 65 years and over.

Figure 2: Incidence of voting by age
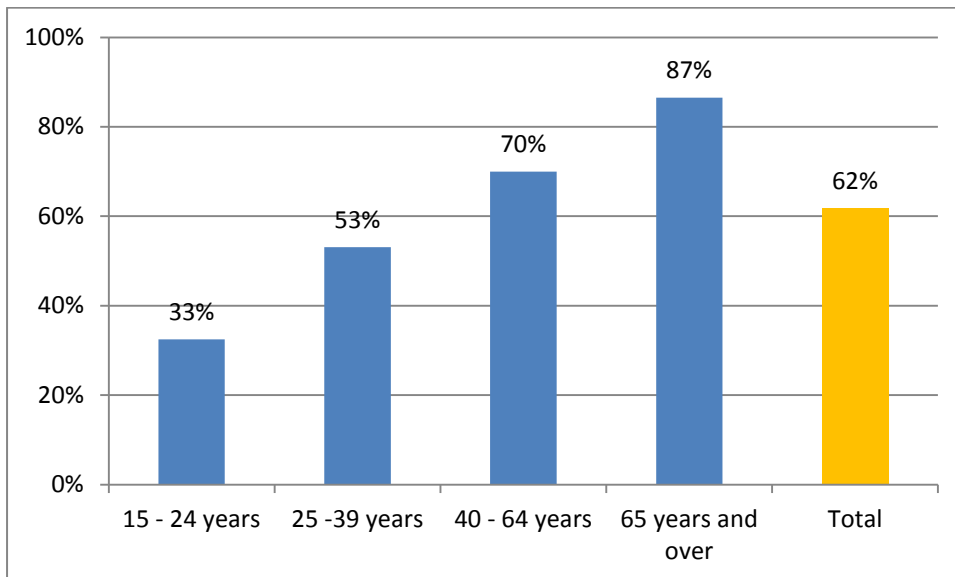
Demographic differences are evident for other demographic groupings. Voting incidence is higher for respondents:

- with a partner (70%) vs. non-partnered (50%);
- couples without children (72%);
- in professional or managerial occupations (both 69 per cent);
- with personal incomes of over $70,000 (73%), and to a lesser extent, those earning $40,001 to $70,000 (66%);
- with postgraduate qualifications (diploma, Masters or Doctoral Degrees) (74%);
- those living in least deprived areas (Deprivation Index 1 and 2: 73%).

These results are shown graphically below.

Figure 3: Incidence of voting by selected demographics

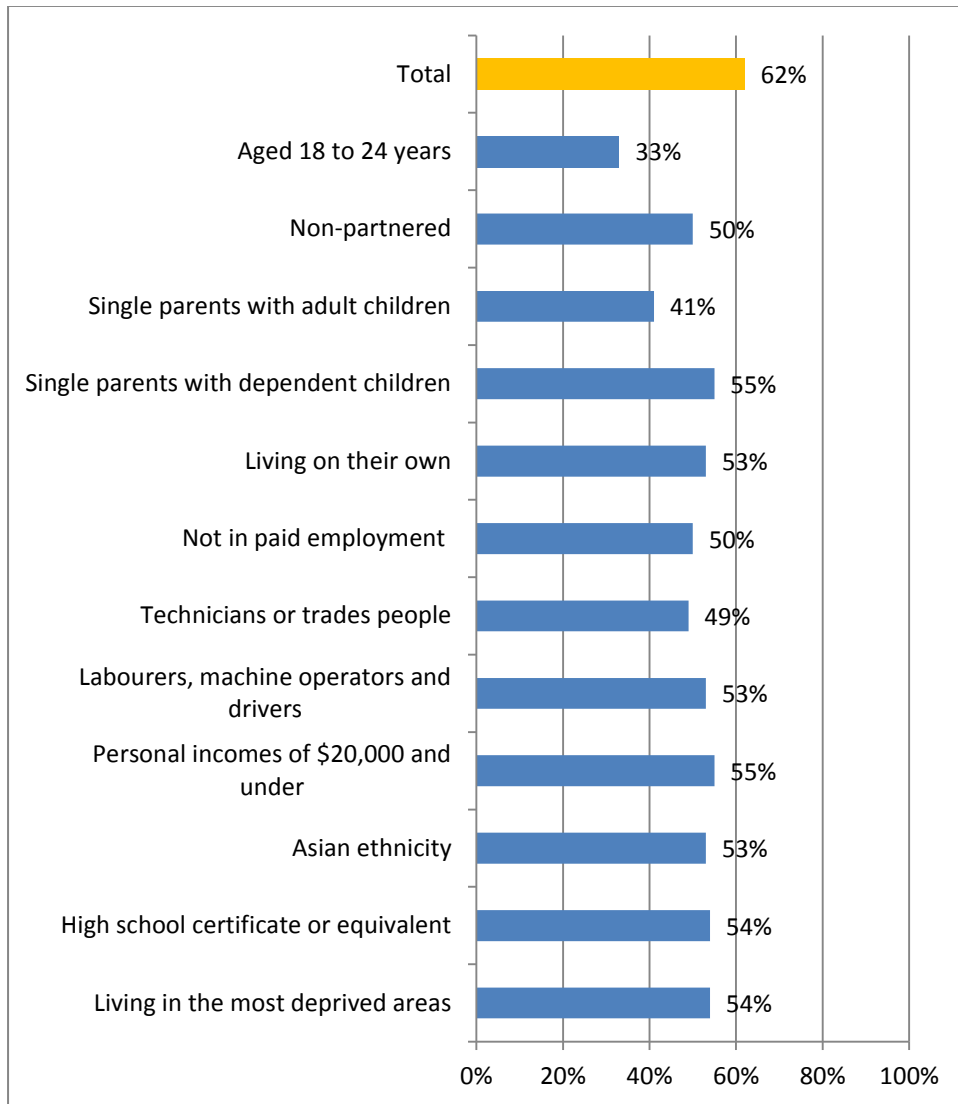| Category	Percentage
Total	62%
With partner	70%
Couples without children	72%
Professional or managerial occupations	69%
Personal income over $70,000	73%
Highest qualification levels [Masters, PhD, Diploma]	74%
Living in least deprived areas	73%
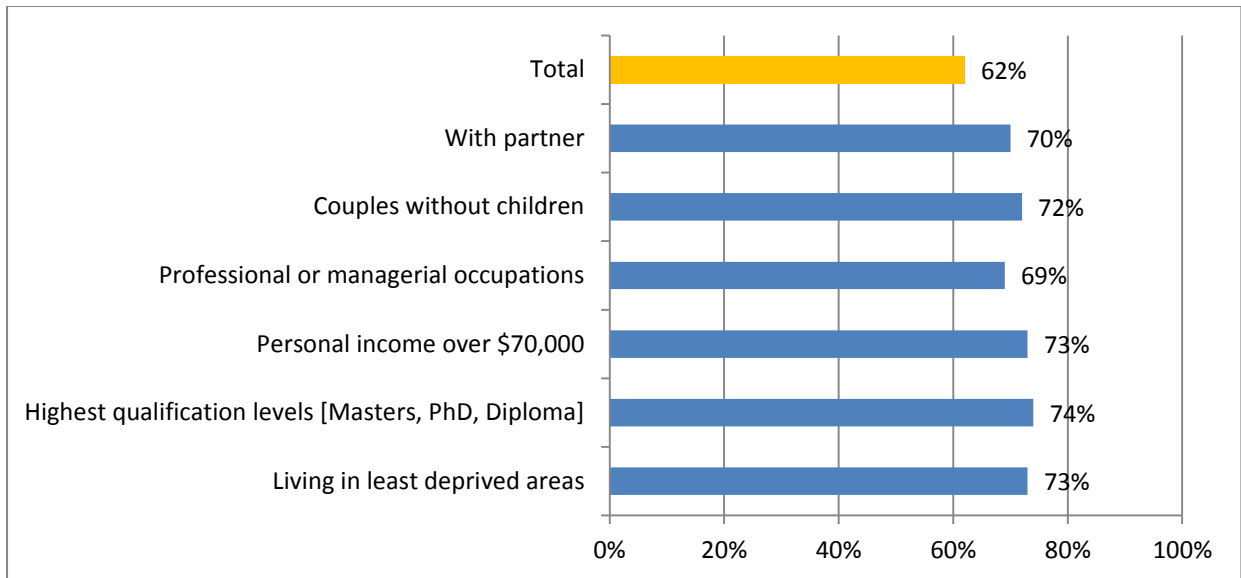
Voting incidence is lowest for:

- those aged 18 to 24 years (33%);
- non-partnered individuals (50%);
- single parents with adult children (41%) and single parents with dependent children (55%);
- those living on their own (53%);
- those not in paid employment (50%);
- technicians or trades people (49%), and labourers, machine operators and drivers (53%);
- those with personal incomes of $20,000 and under (55%);
- those of Asian ethnicity (53%);
- those with high school certificate or equivalent (54%);
- those living in the most deprived areas (Deprivation Index 9 or 10: 54%).

These results are produced graphically below.

Figure 4: Demographic groups showing lower than average incidence of voting

Group	Percentage
Total	62%
Aged 18 to 24 years	33%
Non-partnered	50%
Single parents with adult children	41%
Single parents with dependent children	55%
Living on their own	53%
Not in paid employment	50%
Technicians or trades people	49%
Labourers, machine operators and drivers	53%
Personal incomes of $20,000 and under	55%
Asian ethnicity	53%
High school certificate or equivalent	54%
Living in the most deprived areas	54%

Respondents who had not voted were asked to choose a reason for not voting from a pre-coded list. The main reasons for not voting were *I meant to vote but I didn't get around to it or I forgot about it* (given by 19 per cent of those who had not voted), *I didn't know enough about the people standing for election* (13%), *I didn't know about the election* (10%).

Technical note: Method and sample

Interviews were conducted by Statistics New Zealand between April 2012 and March 2013. The personal questionnaire was answered by 8,462 individuals aged 15 years and over, who were interviewed in their homes. Interview durations averaged 45 minutes. The Auckland sample size was 1,970, including 1,880 aged 18 and over. The overall response rate was 78%.

Data was collected using household and personal questionnaires. Households were selected at random using a multistage sample design. One individual in the household was selected to answer the household questions, which related to all those usually resident there (e.g. family relationships and household income). Then an individual in the household was selected at random to answer the personal questionnaire. Data was collected using computer-assisted personal interviews, supervised by trained interviewers.

Owing to rigorous sample design, findings based on survey respondents can be interpreted as being representative of Aucklanders. However, each percentage point is associated with a margin of error. The size of the margin of error depends on two things, (1) the size of the sample or sub-sample, and (2) the value of p, the percentage value. As to the percentage value, for any sample size, margin of error is maximum when p=50% but is less for values of p above 50% as well as below 50%. Hence it is difficult to prescribe any simple rule of thumb for specifying the margin of error for any specific p value. A rough guide based on sample size is provided by the following table, setting p=50%.

Table: Margins of error by sample size

Sample size	1,970	1,500	1,000	900	800	700	600	500	400	300
Maximum margin of error (%)	±2.2	±2.5	±3.1	±3.3	±3.5	±3.7	±4.0	±4.4	±4.9	±5.7

Sample size	200	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30
Maximum margin of error (%)	±6.9	±9.8	±10.3	±11.0	±11.7	±12.7	±13.9	±15.5	±17.9

Sample

As stated above, the sample is treated as being representative of people aged 15 and over living in the Auckland region. The following sample description

demonstrates how representative the sample actually is by comparing the proportions of the main respondent demographic categories against their proportions as shown by the 2013 Census. These values must agree closely for the sample to be considered as representative of the Auckland population, aged 15 years and over.

Three sets of figures are shown for each demographic group, raw, weighted and Census values. Raw values are the actual numbers and proportions of respondents. The weighted values are the result of statistical procedures used to adjust imbalances as a result of sampling procedures. In any random sample, variations can be expected to occur, resulting in the over-representation of some groups and under-representation of others. These imbalances are corrected for by a statistical weighting procedure.[1] Census values are the actual occurrences of the various demographic categories. In a well-constructed sample, the weighted percentage values and the 2013 Census values for Auckland should agree closely.

		Unweighted		Weighted		Census Auckland 2013
Sex	male	881	44.7%	946	48.0%	48.6%
	female	1089	55.3%	1024	52.0%	51.4%
	Total	1970	100.0%	1970	100.0%	
Age	15 - 24 years	243	12.3%	371	18.8%	18.9%
	25 -39 years	548	27.8%	557	28.2%	26.3%
	40 - 64 years	804	40.8%	758	38.5%	40.3%
	65 years and over	375	19.0%	284	14.4%	14.6%
	Total	1970	100.0%	1970	100.0%	
Marital Status	partnered	1055	53.6%	1157	58.7%	59.4%
	non- partnered	915	46.4%	813	41.3%	40.6%
	Total	1970	100.0%	1970	100.0%	
Employment Status	employed	1214	61.6%	1269	64.4%	61.5%
	unemployed	95	4.8%	100	5.1%	5.4%
	not in the labour force	661	33.6%	601	30.5%	33.1%
	Total	1970	100.0%	1970	100.0%	

..continued

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[1] For a discussion of this procedure, refer to the Statistics New Zealand web site: http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/people_and_communities/Households/nzgss_HOTP2012/ Data%20Quality.aspx

		Unweighted		Weighted		Census
Occupation	Managerial/ professional	519	26.3%	533	27.0%	26.7%
	Clerical/ Service / Sales	382	19.4%	424	21.5%	19.2%
	Trades/ Technical	138	7.0%	146	7.4%	6.8%
	Labourers/ Machine Operators/ Drivers	148	7.5%	135	6.8%	7.5%
	Not in paid employment	783	39.7%	733	37.2%	39.7%
	Total	1970	100.0%	1970	100.0%	
Personal Income	$20,000 or under	693	35.2%	737	37.4%	39.0%
	$20,001 - $40,000	516	26.2%	464	23.5%	22.6%
	$40,001 - $70,000	469	23.8%	468	23.8%	22.5%
	Over $70.000	292	14.8%	301	15.3%	15.9%
	Total	1970	100.0%	1970	100.0%	
Household income	$25,000 or less	290	14.7%	257	13.0%	14.1%
	$25,001 - $50,000	460	23.4%	406	20.6%	19.0%
	$50,001 - $70,000	296	15.0%	288	14.6%	13.1%
	$70,001 - $100,000	345	17.5%	359	18.2%	17.6%
	$100,001 - $150,000	329	16.7%	342	17.4%	18.6%
	Over $150,000	250	12.7%	318	16.1%	17.6%
	Total	1970	100.0%	1970	100.0%	
Educational attainment	No qualification	309	15.7%	254	12.9%	14.9%
	High School Certificate or equivalent	581	29.5%	616	31.3%	36.6%
	Trade Certificate/ Level 4	178	9.0%	170	8.6%	7.0%
	Advanced Trade/ Technical Diploma	285	14.5%	267	13.5%	8.2%
	Bachelor's Degree or equivalent	273	13.9%	293	14.9%	15.1%
	Postgraduate Diploma/ Master's/ Doctorate	214	10.9%	228	11.6%	6.8%
	Not stated	130	6.6%	142	7.2%	11.4%
	Total	1970	100.0%	1970	100.0%	

In this sample, weighted values for Sex, Age, Marital status, Employment Status, Occupation, Personal Income and Household Income agree very closely with corresponding Census values. In terms of Educational Attainment, those with High School Certificate are slightly under-represented, and those with Advanced Trade or Technical Diplomas and those with Postgraduate Diplomas, Master's Degrees or Doctorates are slightly over-represented. Overall, it can be concluded that this is a well-constructed and therefore representative sample.