

# New Zealanders are in favour of parliamentary reform!

## The topic

Twelve months ago we surveyed the public on some proposed parliamentary reforms proposed by Sir Geoffrey Palmer. At that time, according to StatisticsNZ, the public's trust in Parliament had fallen. We decided to repeat the proposed parliamentary reform questions, to see if there were any shifts in support.

Because of the link between the public's trust in Parliament and the election of a Government, we also decided to check-in on the public's interest in this year's General Election. In the last General Election in 2023, the Electoral Commission reported there was a 78.2% voter turnout, down from 82.2 percent at the 2020 election.

## The survey

A nationally-representative sample of n=1,010 New Zealanders, 18 years of age and over were interviewed online between 7 to 9 March 2026. We asked the following questions:

Q. "The role of our New Zealand Parliament (the 123 MPs, plus the Governor General) is to make laws, approve how tax money is spent, and to check and challenge the decisions of Government (Ministers and their departments/agencies). How much do you agree or disagree that...?"

### The five reforms polled on:

- The maximum term of the New Zealand Parliament (between elections) should be extended from three years to four years
- Voting in New Zealand General Elections should be made compulsory
- The voting age should be lowered to 16 years (from 18 years)
- There should be more education about how our Parliament works (including the electoral system, history, and role of government)
- There should be a limit to the amount that can be donated to political parties by individuals

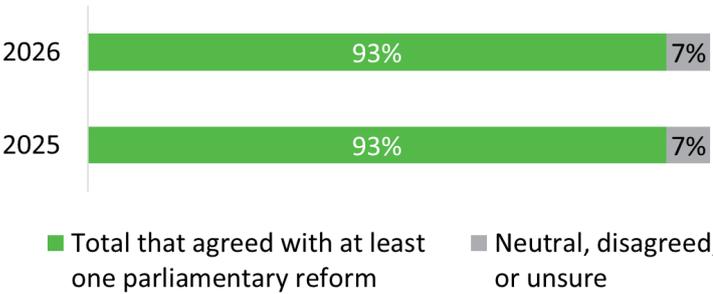
### In addition, we asked whether respondents agreed with the statement:

- I plan to vote in this year's General Election."

## High-level findings – the mood for change remains high

Overall, this year’s poll confirmed the high level of support for parliamentary reform reported last year. The same proportion - 93% of respondents - reported they agreed with at least one of the five proposed parliamentary reforms. There is clearly strong interest in changing aspects of our current parliamentary system. (Refer to Figure 1 below.)

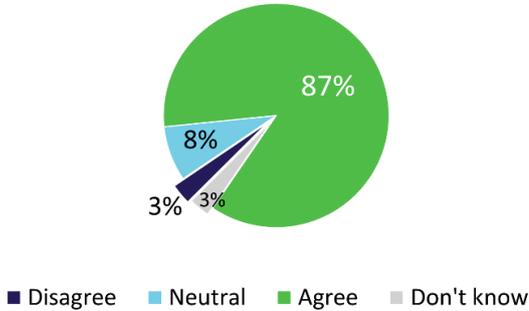
**Figure 1: Proportion that ‘agreed’ with at least one of the proposed parliamentary reforms measured. By year.**



This year’s poll showed:

- Strong support for **more education** about how our Parliament works (with 81% in agreement – a significant increase from 74% in 2025), and over two-thirds (69%) stated there **should be limits** to the amount individuals can donate to political parties.
- Around one-half were in favour of voting in New Zealand General Elections being made **compulsory** (50%), and that the maximum term of the New Zealand Parliament (between elections) should be **extended from three years to four years** (46%).
- Just over one-fifth agreed that the voting age should be **lowered to 16 years** (22%).
- 87% agreed they **plan to vote** in the upcoming General Election, which is 9% higher than the voter turnout of 78.2% three years ago. (Refer to Figure 2 below.)

**Figure 2: How much do you agree or disagree that... I plan to vote in this year's General Election.**



## Comment

*“This poll confirms that most New Zealanders are interested in some type of parliamentary reform. There is particularly strong support for **more education** about Parliament, across all age groups. At the same time, most respondents indicated they were planning to vote in this year’s General Election, which suggests it should be an interesting time and possibly result.”*

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# Key findings – there continues to be an appetite for parliamentary reform ...

Respondents were asked to say how much they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements related to potential parliamentary reforms.

Compared to the previous poll we completed in 2025:

- Overall, 93% agreed with at least one of the parliamentary reforms we asked about – the same result as last year. (Refer to Figure 3.)
- This year there has been a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who reported they ‘agreed’ that ‘there should be more education about how our Parliament works’ – from 74% last year up to 81% in the current poll.
- The level of agreement appears to be trending up this year for all the statements, although the increases are not statistically significant:
  - Limits to the amount individuals can donate to political parties (now 69%)
  - Voting to be compulsory (50%)
  - The parliamentary term to be increased from 3 to 4 years (46%)
  - The voting age to be lowered to 16 years (22%).

**Figure 3: How much do you agree or disagree that...**

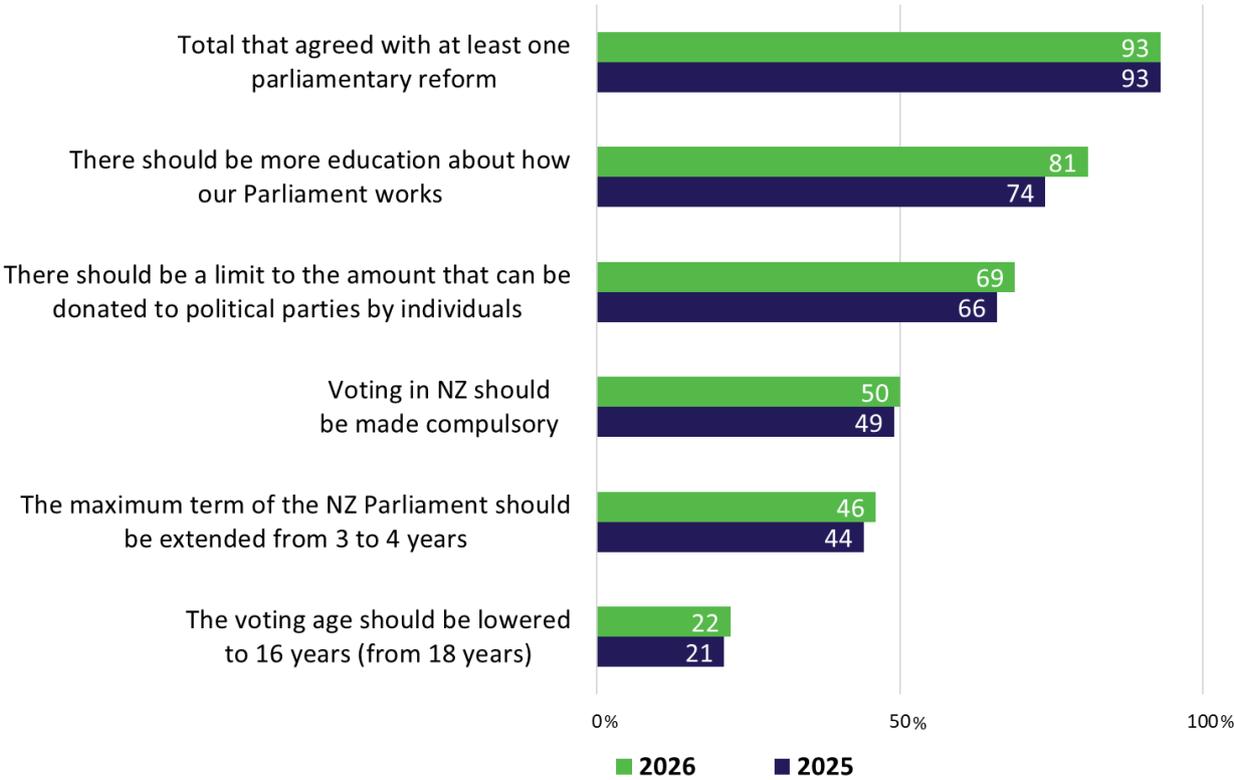


Table 1 below provides the results for the current poll by age group, which was the most discriminating demographic variable.

The key findings are as follows:

- Two-thirds (69%) agreed there should be limits to the amount individuals can **donate to political parties**.
  - Younger respondents had significantly lower agreement (61% aged 18 to 34 agreed).
- Almost one-half (46%) supported **extending the parliamentary term** to four years.
  - Older respondents were significantly more in favour (50% of those aged 55 or older).
- There was less support for **lowering the voting age** to 16 years – at 22% agreement overall.
  - Agreement was significantly higher amongst those aged 18 to 34 (30%) and 35 to 54 (26%), compared to just 12% support from those aged 55 or older.
- While, overall, 87% reported they plan to vote in this year’s General Election, older voters were significantly more likely to be planning to vote – 93% of those aged 55 years or older reported they intend to vote compared to 78% of the younger age group (18 to 34 years).

**Table 1: The proportion who “agreed” that... By age.**

Unweighted base =	TOTAL 1010 %	18-34 291 %	35-54 355 %	55+ 364 %
<b>Total – Agreed with at least one parliamentary reform*</b>	<b>93</b>	91	94	94
I plan to vote in this year's General Election	<b>87</b>	78	87	93
There should be more education about how our Parliament works	<b>81</b>	81	81	82
There should be a limit to the amount that can be donated to political parties by individuals	<b>69</b>	61	71	73
Voting in New Zealand should be made compulsory	<b>50</b>	54	48	49
The maximum term of the New Zealand Parliament (between elections) should be extended from three years to four years	<b>46</b>	40	48	50
The voting age should be lowered to 16 years (from 18 years)	<b>22</b>	30	26	12

\*Based on all statements except “I plan to vote in this year's General Election”.

## Method

This survey of 1,010 respondents aged 18 years and over was conducted online, between 7 to 9 March 2026. The maximum margin of error is +/- 3.1 percent (at the 95 percent confidence level).

The sample has been weighted by gender and age to ensure the results are representative of the population 18 years-plus, based on these demographic criteria.

The survey was not undertaken on behalf of any organisation, but as part of Rangahau Aotearoa Research New Zealand's social poll of New Zealanders' opinions about topical issues.

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