

VOTE

ONLINE PANEL

*Amplifying the voices of
rangatahi in Aotearoa*



Save the Children.

Watch our Y vote online panel to learn more about the Make it 16 debate.

Share your views and complete this survey as you join the panel.

The Voting Age Debate in Aotearoa

Learning resource for rangatahi and secondary schools



The Make it 16 Movement and the Supreme Court



If you are 18 years and up and a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident, you have a right to vote. Many people and organisations believe that the voting age should be lowered to 16.

In November 2022 the Supreme Court declared that it was a breach of rights under the Bill of Rights Act that 16 year olds are unable to vote. This was a massive win for the movement! Upon hearing this the Prime Minister at the time announced that a bill would be put forward to Parliament to lower the voting age from 16 to 18, but this has not happened.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Not only does the Bill of Rights support the lowering of the voting age based on non-discrimination due to age, the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, to which Aotearoa New Zealand is a signatory, also specifies that children should have their voices heard on issues important to them. Having 16 year olds involved in voting is a way to meet these obligations.

You can learn more about your rights as a child [here](#).

The Case for Making it 16



Young people under 18 are as impacted by government decisions as those over 18. In Aotearoa, 16 year olds can...

- Be employed
- Pay income tax
- Be a parent
- Consent to sex and medical procedures
- Leave school, live alone, and pay rent
- Drive on public roads
- Serve a prison sentence

16 year-olds' can already have big responsibilities and make big life decisions. Make It 16 advocates that 16 and 17 year-olds are mature enough to be able to vote too.

Low voter engagement is a major problem in Aotearoa New Zealand. Several studies from Germany, Austria and Scotland have shown that lowering the voting age improves voter engagement and creates life long voters.

The recent council elections are an example of low-voter engagement. Only 35% of registered electors in Auckland voted, with young adults the lowest voters at only 21% of the entire vote! Lowering the voting age to 16 could be an effective strategy to increase long-term participation in both local and general elections, and as a way to engage young people in our democracy.

We're inheriting a world of challenges. Top of mind issues include emissions reduction, government spending, and the impact of COVID-19 on our education system. These are all issues that will ultimately impact young people the most. For that reason, 16 and 17-year-olds should be able to vote, so we can have our say. Making the voting age sixteen is a solution. It is a solution to young people feeling disenfranchised.

Caeden Tipler, Make it 16



What Happens when the Voting Age is 16?

The voting age varies between 16 to 25 around the world. Several South American countries including Brazil, Ecuador and Argentina have had a voting age of 16 since the 1980s.

Austria has had a voting age of 16 since 2007, Scotland lowered the age to 16 in 2014, followed by Malta in 2018. In 2021 Germany lowered the voting age to 16 at federal level and for European Parliament elections. Belgium has also lowered the voting age for European Parliament to 16. There are movements in a number of countries to lower the voting age to 16 including Ireland, Canada and Aotearoa New Zealand.



Countries where 16 year olds can vote in local or general elections.

In Scotland and Germany, young people who voted at 16 were more likely to turn out to vote in subsequent elections in greater numbers than those who started voting at 18.

Research from Scotland shows that voting at 16 boosts confidence and gives young people an enhanced sense of trust in the democratic process. Young people who vote at 16 describe it as a major life event, but people who begin at 18 do not view it this way.

Research from Austria showed that after lowering the voting age to 16, young people were more motivated and felt an obligation to learn more about politics.

A History of Voting in New Zealand



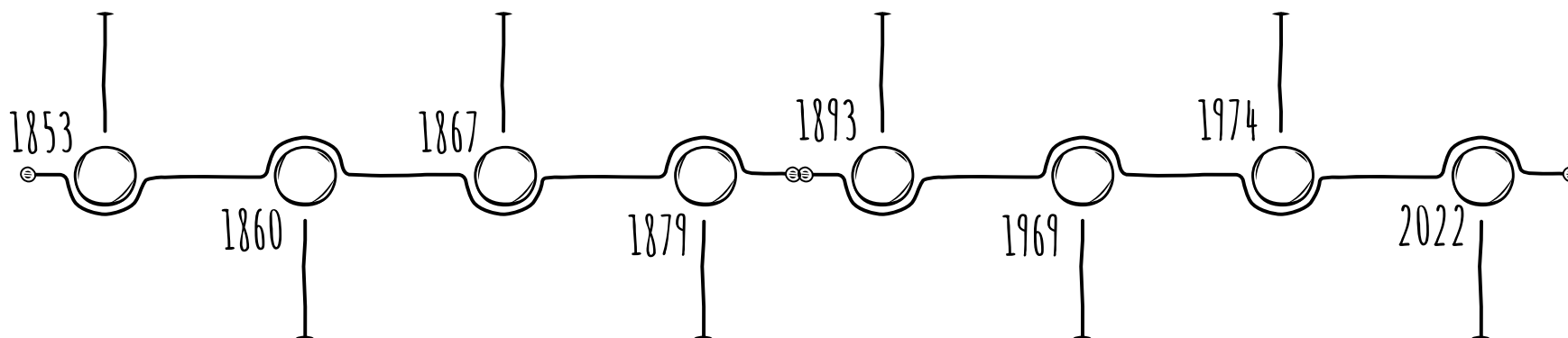
If you are a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident, and over the age of 18, you have the right to vote in Aotearoa. This is regardless of gender, culture, language, religion or sexuality, however this hasn't always been the case.

New Zealand's first parliamentary election. Only male British subjects aged 21 and over who owned or rented property worth significant money were able to vote. Māori land ownership was largely collective, excluding them from voting.

Māori men aged 21 and over are able to vote for 4 Māori electorates. Māori must choose whether to be on the Māori electoral role or the general roll.

Women over 21 years of age are given the right to vote.

The voting age is lowered to 18.



Men who were miners and over 21 were allowed to vote regardless of property status.

All men over 21 are given the right to vote.

The voting age is lowered from 21 to 20.

The supreme court declares that it is a breach of human rights under the Bill of Rights Act that 16 year olds are unable to vote.

Why Vote?

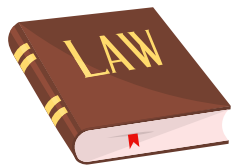
In Aotearoa we have general and local elections and both are really important! If the people don't vote, the people in power do not represent you and the issues that your community cares about.

General Elections

These elections decide who represents New Zealanders in Parliament. Parliament decides on the laws of Aotearoa, updating and making new ones, and decides how tax money is spent. They represent New Zealanders by giving a voice to different ideas and people. It is so important that you are represented in Parliament through your vote!



- You vote for candidates that you want to represent your local area, this is the electoral vote.
- If you are Māori, your electoral vote can be for the general electorate or the Māori electorate - you can choose.
- You also get a party vote to vote for the political party that you want to represent you in Parliament.



Equal rights



Local Elections

These elections decide who will be making decisions about your local area.

- You vote for the mayor.
- You vote for local councillors.
- You vote for local board members.



The people you elect are responsible for so many things that impact your daily life! Including...

- How your local natural environment is protected.
- Music, cultural, and sporting events near you.
- Libraries, pools, parks and playgrounds.
- Transport, cycle paths and public art.
- Water quality from the tap, at the beach, and in your stream.



Take Action

Do you feel strongly about the voting age? Take action today.

- Head to makeit16.org.nz and get involved in the movement.
- Tell your whānau, teachers, and community members about the reasons for lowering the voting age.
- Write a letter to your local MP outlining why you believe 16 year olds should be given the right to vote.
- If you are 17 and over, make sure you are enrolled to vote! You can [register](#) from 17 so that you will automatically be enrolled when you turn 18. Your voice on important issues and who represents you matters!

Advocate

Check out the Make it 16 cheat sheet [here](#), with the ultimate list of talking points and arguments when having open kōrero about lowering the voting age

Teacher Ideas

Watch the Panel [here](#)!

Make a case - Students write, draw, debate, discuss a side of the Make it 16 debate, representing their view in a medium of their choice.

Referendum - Run a mock referendum in your school community on the voting age.

Research - Students investigate past policies of politicians and political parties, and compare what was promised during a campaign, and what was actually delivered.

Take Action - Write a letter to a local MP about the Make it 16 movement.

Enrol together! Students who are 17 can enrol to vote ready for when they turn 18!

Curriculum Links

Social sciences Level 5

- Understand how systems of government in NZ operate and affect people's lives.
- Understand how the ideas and actions of people in the past have an impact on people's lives.
- Understand how people define and seek human rights.

Key Competencies

- Participating and contributing.



Save the Children