

New Zealand women buck global voting trend

June 25 2013

Research carried out at Victoria University has found little difference in how men and women cast their party vote at the 2011 New Zealand general election, except in the case of one political party.

Dr Hilde Coffé from Victoria's School of History, Philosophy, [Political Science](#) and International Relations has found that substantially fewer women than men supported New Zealand First in the last election, but there was little gender difference in votes for other major parties.

Dr Coffé says having similar numbers of men and women voting for National and Labour in 2011 shows that New Zealand is bucking the modern global trend of women being more likely to support left-wing parties.

"My analysis of men's and women's positions on policy issues showed that women assign a greater role to government than men do, in areas such as providing a job for everyone who wants one, decent living standards for old people and the unemployed, and free health care for everyone."

But, she notes, despite holding these typically left-leaning policy positions, New Zealand women still did not favour Labour more or National less than men did.

"Among other aspects, I analysed the 'John Key factor', to find out whether support and sympathy for the Prime Minister specifically as leader could resolve this puzzle. This turned out not to be the case—in

fact, women and men were found to be equally supportive of John Key as Prime Minister and the rationale behind [party](#) preferences turned out to be quite similar for both men and women."

Dr Coffé says no substantial [gender differences](#) were found in the 1981 and 1990 elections either, but previous research revealed an increased number of women voted Labour in the 1996 election.

"This could be attributed to the leadership of Helen Clark, with more women showing sympathy and support for a female leader. Similarly in Australia's last election, where no clear pattern of a modern [gender gap](#) in voting choice had previously occurred, more women voted for the Labour Party because of Julia Gillard."

Dr Coffé suggests that although the Green Party had a female co-leader in the last election, this does not seem to have led to an increased number of [women](#) supporting the Greens.

Dr Coffé's paper 'Gender and party choice at the 2011 New Zealand general [election](#)' has been published in the latest issue of *Political Science*, New Zealand's professional political science journal.

Provided by Victoria University

Citation: New Zealand women buck global voting trend (2013, June 25) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-06-zealand-women-buck-global-voting.html>

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