

Alana Mackay – Cambridge Community Board - Yes

If it was accompanied by civics education in school.

The youth represent the future, decisions made in council directly impact the future of our district and I feel that younger people should have a say in that.

Andrew Brown – Waipā District Council - Yes

I do not have a strong view re the voting age. It's fine with me to lower it to 16. Those with strong political views will vote but the vast majority will not - unfortunately.

Clare St Pierre – Waipā District Council - Yes

I support the lowering of the voting age to 16 for local body elections. I expected it would also be lowered for the general election as that was the direction from the Supreme Court. I'm hoping the lower age will generate more interest from younger people in voting and being across what councils do in the community. From that could grow more involvement from this demographic in council decision making.

Crystal Beavis – Waikato District Council – Yes

Only if civics education is re-introduced to the school curriculum and not just relegated to a school leavers' 'toolkit'.

The current age might be inconsistent with the Human Rights Act, but if we are going to drop the age to vote then we should also re-introduce civics education into schools at the same time. Research shows education is associated with higher levels of voting intention.

Young people need a basic understanding of our political system and the law to understand their rights and responsibilities in New Zealand, including voting.

Research also indicates that voting is a habit. It may be easier to instil a habit of voting among those who are still in school and live at home. With regards other age-related restrictions, research into brain development and teenage risk behaviour has supported graduated staging of driver licensing from 16. Other restrictions that recognise age

and maturity include under-18s require a court order to marry, and under-18s can't join police college or graduate from defence force training. Voting is a different type of responsibility from these.

Dale-Maree Morgan - Waipā District Council – Yes

Based on the recommendations of the “Independent Electoral Review - Interim report”: Executive summary, and their recommendations for a fairer, clearer, and more accessible electoral system document, released June 2023:

Particular attention to points in the report:

19. The right to vote is a fundamental right, recognised and protected by international and New Zealand law. Having reviewed the evidence before us, we recommend lowering the voting age to 16. The small risk of giving the vote to some young people who may not be ready to exercise that right is outweighed by the potential benefits of enfranchising those who are ready.

20. Keeping the voting age at 18 could be viewed as a proportionately greater unjustified age discrimination against Māori. The eligible voters of a given population – and those who turn out to vote – get to choose who represents them. Relative to non-Māori, a greater proportion of the Māori population is aged 16 or 17. These young people are currently represented through the votes of those who are eligible to vote. This means there are proportionately fewer votes to represent the entire Māori population.

Earlier points in the report, that need including as well:

Upholding te Tiriti o Waitangi / the Treaty of Waitangi, which is as relevant within local government.

6. One of the Crown's most essential tasks is upholding its obligations under te Tiriti o Waitangi / the Treaty of Waitangi (te Tiriti / the Treaty) as they relate to our most fundamental of democratic rights: the right to vote and contest free, fair, and regular elections. The Crown must redress past breaches, actively protect Māori electoral rights, and provide equitable opportunities for Māori electoral participation. Decades of systematic breaches by the Crown have resulted in consistently lower

rates of Māori voter engagement and participation. The Crown must do better.

7. We recommend that the Electoral Act explicitly requires decision-makers to give effect to te Tiriti / the Treaty and its principles when exercising all functions and powers under the Act and become an explicit statutory objective of the Electoral Commission. A statutory obligation will ensure the Electoral Commission has clear authority to continue its work to reach Māori voters and candidates. We also recommend the Commission works with Māori to enable Māori governance over Māori electoral data.

Here is the link to the report: <https://electoralreview.govt.nz/assets/PDF/IER-Interim-Report-Executive-Summary.pdf>

Liz Stolwyk - Waipā District Council - Yes

I have mixed views on this and thought I would canvas those around my dinner table. Friends and family in their youth enthusiastically want to see change and vote from 16yrs and those 30+ prefer to leave it status quo (18 years). Before this poll I was a 'status quo' but listening to the views this is where I have landed.....

If a person feels they wish to influence the leadership, governance and direction of their community and country then they should be permitted to do so. Schooling and higher education is certainly a current issue at present and more youth voices on future directions should be taken into account.

Marcus Gower – Waipā District Council - Yes

Yes, old enough to drive etc, more representation from a younger voice.

Mike Montgomerie - Waipā District Council - Yes

I support lowering the voting age for local body elections. We need higher participation rates to maintain a healthy democracy. I believe there is evidence that voting earlier in life is more likely to lead to habitual voting.

Also, younger members of our community clearly have a strong interest in our long term direction of travel so deserve democratic input into that direction.

Mike Pettit – Waipa District Council - Yes

With between 17% to under 40% of 18 plus year olds voting in local body elections, could 16-17 year olds really be any worse. I say give them a chance to lead the way.

Pamela Storey – Waikato Regional Council – Yes

I'm certainly not against 16 year olds voting, but I do think civics should be taught in schools to ensure our rangatahi understand our democratic process and to empower them to be engaged and informed voters. In saying that, we must first focus on improving basic literacy and numeracy skills, which are fundamental to active citizenship.

Stuart Kneebone – Waikato Regional Council – Yes

I figure that those making the effort to vote will be thinking ahead about the future and will make an informed decision which must be a good thing.

Sue Milner – Cambridge Community Board – Yes

16 seems young for a voting age, but people can leave school at 15 and enter the workforce at 15, why should they not have the right to vote?

I am unsure that at 16 there are many who would want to exercise the right to vote, some may be very interested and others will be disinterested, but that could be said of other members of the community too.

Giving people the right to vote at 16 could be a good thing and at the same time there was a bigger part played by the education system in teaching our young people about what it means to be a citizen of New Zealand, why we have local government and why and how we have a Parliament.

There will be some who will be very interested and want to know about this, but equally there will probably be those who will not.

Susan O'Regan - Waipā District Council - Yes

Despite initially opposing the notion of lowering of the voting age, having listened to various arguments and considered the idea at a more fundamental level, I am now more supportive of considering a change.

I am eager for Local Government to be better at reflecting younger generations' viewpoints and aspirations. If you are true to this idea, then it would be disingenuous to not enable that age group the right to vote.

However as with all rights, so to flows a responsibility, which in this situation is the obligation to use your vote wisely. It would be crucial therefore that the extension of right to vote is one piece of a bigger picture which includes the teaching of civics in our school curriculum.

If we are to expect our younger community members the opportunity to have their say, then they need to have the chance to have a greater level of understanding of the mechanics of government in our country and the importance the exercise of such a vote has.

Andrew Myers – Cambridge Community Board - No

If we lower the voting age at one end, should we introduce a voting age cap at the other end at the same time??! Regarding 16 year olds, when I was that age, I had little comprehension of the how government worked and the effect of policies on the rest of New Zealand.

I think allowing younger people to vote could see precious money directed their way, when it could be better spent on parents in need.

Angela Holt – Te Awamutu and Kihikihi Community Board - No

Teenagers have some great ideas etc however I don't believe they have enough life experience and interest in politics to make an informed vote. If they vote I believe they will most likely vote the same as their parents. Even at 18 I was very influenced by my parents' views on politics rather than doing my own research. I had other interests!

Barbara Kuriger – Taranaki-King Country MP - No

I don't believe the voting age should be changed to 16. By 18, after leaving school and fully understanding the ability to stand on one's own is soon enough.

Bruce Thomas - Waipā District Council – No

Those who are 16 and a little older that I have asked the age for voting question, the answer was overwhelming that they have no interest in local body elections. This is depicted in below 40 per cent voter turnout.

The majority of our ratepayers aren't interested.

Clyde Graf – Waikato Regional Council - No

No, I don't think the voting age should be lowered to 16.

Left-wing governments and liberals already have an excessive influence on children while at school. If voting is reduced to 16 years of age, school grounds will become even more irresistible to the "progressive," politically persuasive predators to take further steps toward influencing the minds of the young. Further exposure to socialist agendas, climate change hysteria, gender confusion and the sexually distorted lifestyles that go with it, and all in the hope of scrambling a few more ticks for the left. I say, leave the kids alone.

Jacqui Church – mayor, Waikato District Council – No

Our council made a submission for the 2022 Local Government Elections Inquiry that we do not support lowering the voting age. I support that view.

In general, teenagers at that age are not very aware of what goes on in both local and central government. There needs to be a robust civic education programme to be introduced in schools. Currently, students' knowledge of things like how laws are made, how voting works and how to deal with government, is probably minimal.

Central government needs to develop the education programme and make it a formal part of the secondary school curriculum before lowering the voting age to 16 can be considered.

Jill Taylor – Te Awamutu and Kihikihi Community Board – No

No as voters should be adults.

Jo Davies-Colley – Cambridge Community Board - No

The majority of 16-year-olds have not yet fully experienced some of the issues facing New Zealand that need consideration when voting. Often, it's not until you have had to support a family, pay the bills, navigate the public hospital system, run a farm or business and pay taxes do you fully understand which political party aligns best with your views and experience.

John Wood – Te Awamutu and Kihikihi Community Board – No

The majority of 16 and 17 year olds lack majority in their decision making processes. They often have difficulty judging how their actions affect the future. At that age, their parents and other significant adults such as teachers have a major influence on their decisions.

The costs of including this age group would have to be borne by local bodies.

Kane Titchener – Te Awamutu and Kihikihi Community Board - No

Voters need more life experience before voting.

Lou Brown - Waipā District Council - No

Most 16 and 17 year olds don't contribute to rates through rents or rates.

The majority would still live as members of a ratepaying family and attend educational institutions and would not be readily fully aware of the financial ramifications of populist policies.

Finally, the increased cost to territorial authorities to administer the reduced age election stretching an already strained financial budget.

Louise Upston – Taupō MP – No

Everybody should have an equal say in how their local city or district is run. That is how a democracy works. Voting is both a right and a responsibility. Constituents need to make informed decisions.

Children are ineligible to vote because most are unable to understand the complexities and implications of voting in local government elections.

They could be manipulated to vote a certain way by peers, parents, teachers, or social media for example. They do not pay rates (or rent) and therefore shouldn't have a say in how local government spends ratepayers' money.

The question of whether 16- and 17-year-olds should be able to vote in local body elections partly depends on these things.

At this stage, National does not support lowering the voting age. We have to draw the line somewhere, and we're comfortable with 18. New

Zealand is one of many countries that has 18 as the legal age to vote. We have seen no compelling case to change the status quo.

Draft legislation will enable this issue to be debated in the house. Everyone's views can be put forward for discussion. That is when we can consider all the evidence and make an informed decision.

I am more concerned about low voter turnout than the age of voters. How a district or city is run should be of interest to all of us. We pay rates, either directly or indirectly, and we should be concerned about how our money is being spent and what sort of environment is being created for us to live in.

I would like to see more education in this area so people understand our political systems and how they can, and should, participate in them. If people are informed about who and what they are voting for, age is less of an issue.

I was encouraged by the interest shown in our democracy at a recent Youth Advisory Board I held for students across the electorate, and at a Careers Expo in Cambridge. There are 16- and 17-year-olds who inform themselves about our political system and current issues, but I'm concerned they are a minority.

Mike Keir, Waikato District Council - No

If this is done it has to be done in conjunction with civics education in schools including training in factfulness so that young people are informed of how government works including local government and that they have a good understanding of the real state of the world and our nation, not what is portrayed in the media.

For instance, the fact that globally life expectancy has increased from 30 in the 1920s to over 70 today and that in NZ it is over 80. That is just one fact that gets very little press in the avalanche of doom and gloom.

Another is the hundreds of millions who have been lifted out of poverty over the same period.

Philip Coles - Waipā District Council - No

In my view I do not believe that by dropping the voting age it will increase the voter turnout of younger voters. The data from the previous

election cycles continuously demonstrates that interest for voting at local body elections comes from the senior members of the community.

During the last two election cycles I've approached local secondary schools offering to have the opportunity to talk with Year 13 students making them aware of the election process and the importance of the younger members of the community to have a say in their town. I encourage families to have conversations within their homes of the important issues both locally and domestically. But naturally there must be an interest for them to talk over these items in the first place.

Sally Whitaker – Te Awamutu and Kihikihi Community Board - No

In my view 16 and 17 year olds lack the experience and understanding of our governance system, among other things to be able to make a sensible, well informed, mature vote. Young people are heavily influenced by adults such as parent's and teacher's and therefore subject to coercion.

Interestingly the Court decision was not that 16 and 17 year olds should be able to vote, but that the restriction on voting to those 18 or over had not been justified in the legislation. The government has decided not to try and justify the 18 year old limitation.

The Bill provides for compulsory registration on a separate youth electoral roll which is in itself discriminatory, go figure?...

Roger Gordon – Waipā District Council – Don't Know/Not Sure

I acknowledge all the activity that there has been in this area. And if it happens it happens. But to be honest it's not in my priorities right now. I believe there are more important issues to focus on now. If it is a question of local democracy, then just increasing the number of people allowed to vote isn't going to address the current apathy of the majority of voters in participating in in the basic process. The turnout of voters, the participation in consultation exercises, the representative reflection around the Council table, and even in some degree the picture painted by the recent satisfaction survey, are suggesting that the current system is not fit for purpose, a little broken. We need to concentrate on that challenge. There are many ideas globally about increasing localism in

decision making and enabling effective voice through participatory democracy. We have begun some work on this by the new initiative World Cafe, and the Community Boards Review are both a step in the right direction, but there are many other models and ideas we could consider. In allowing 16 year olds the vote are we not just promulgating the problem? more people, more apathy! I would prefer to see more of a representation of different sectors including youth in our democratic decision making process whatever form that takes.