Who wants to change the flag? Results of a national representative survey

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Abstract

New Zealand is considering whether to not to change its flag: a first referendum has been held to decide on the alternative flag, and a second referendum pitting the alternative flag against the current flag will be held in March 2016. Through 2015, polls have consistently shown 60-70% favour keeping the current flag, while opinions expressed in the media often express support for change (possibly by a factor of 2-3 to 1). This begs the question, whose views are being over-represented in the media? This article reports analyses from a representative survey – the International Social Survey Programme 2015 survey for New Zealand – on the factors associated with views on changing the flag. Results showed that 60% favour keeping the existing flag, in line with poll results. Groups strongly in favour of keeping the flag include women, those who are socio-economically deprived, who have low levels of education, who work in semi-skilled jobs, who feel they have less influence on government and indeed mistrust government, and those who think being born in New Zealand is important for New Zealand identity. There is, however, no group strongly in favour of change. It is concluded that, barring a substantial shift in public opinion before March 2016, the New Zealand flag will not change. Those lobbying for change may need to develop a message that resonates with women, the socio-economically disadvantaged, and the politically inefficacious and wary.

Keywords: New Zealand flag, socio-economic, citizenship, politics, identity

Introduction

On 15 October 2014, New Zealand Prime Minister John Key announced that there would be binding referendums to decide whether or not to change the New Zealand flag (Herald online, 15 Oct 2014). The John Key-led National government was not the first to suggest the possibility of changing the flag – politicians from both sides of the house have periodically raised this for debate

at least since the mid 1970's (Pollock, 2014) – but this is the first time that flag change has moved from an interesting topic of debate to a real possibility of happening.

The current New Zealand flag – a British Blue Ensign with four red stars representing the Southern Cross – was first designed and hoisted in 1869, but did not become the official flag of New Zealand until 1902. Prior to that, the United Tribes of New Zealand flag (designed in 1834), and the Union Jack were both in use (Pollock, 2012).

The current New Zealand flag has been criticized on at least three grounds. First, it looks like – and is often confused with – the Australian flag, which is also a Blue Ensign with four red stars representing the Southern Cross, but with six white stars rather than four blue stars. As a recent example of this, organisers of the 2015 Water Polo Junior World Championships welcomed the New Zealand team with an Australian flag (albeit the maritime Red Ensign version) rather than the New Zealand flag (stuff.co.nz, 17 Aug 2015a).

Second, the flag is seen is as a sign of colonial (British) subservience, with the Union Jack having pride of place. Economist and commentator Gareth Morgan calls the current New Zealand flag "an anachronism" (stuff.co.nz, 17 Aug 2015b), which "symbolises colonial domination" (Herald online, 15 May 2015), while political commentator Morgan Godfery argues that the flag is "a constant reminder of colonialism" (Herald online, 18 July 2015).

Third, the flag is considered to not represent Māori or the current multicultural population. Mixed views have been expressed regarding the flag's representation of Māori. For example, Morgan Godfery says, "The current flag certainly doesn't represent Maori. If anything, it's quite antagonistic having the Union Jack anchored up there in the left corner" (Herald online, 18 July 2015). Kai Tahu kaumatua, David Ellison, takes issue with the Southern Cross rather than the Union Jack, and argues that "The Southern Cross represents the New Zealand Government, not the New Zealand people… The same politicians who chose our current flag are the same people who confiscated Maori [land] and sold them for votes to settlers" (Stuff.co.nz, 19 Aug 2015). Against this, the Māori Anglican Church supports the current flag, saying it "best reflected the country's journey and sense of history" (Stuff.co.nz, 26 Aug 2015). Te Arawa iwi also highlight the historical significance of the current flag to them: "It is important that you are made aware of the authority granted by Queen Victoria to Te Arawa to fly the Royal Ensign on their marae" (Herald online, 28 Sep

2015). Regarding New Zealand's multicultural population, Gareth Morgan argues that "The descendants of British settlers are only one of the peoples of this land, but all of us are New Zealanders - and we need a flag that acknowledges that and tells our story" (Herald online, 15 May 2015).

The process set in motion by Prime Minister John Key involves two referendums: the first (20 November – 11 December 2015) to choose which of several shortlisted designs will run against the current flag using a preferential voting system; while the 'chosen' flag will run against the current flag in a second referendum, where people vote to either change to the 'chosen' flag or keep the current flag (3-24 March 2016; www.govt.nz, accessed 15 Dec 2015). The order of these referendums has been widely criticised, with a poll suggesting nearly 80% support for a "Do you want flag change?" question to be included as part of the first referendum (Herald online, 1 May 2015), and a petition signed by more than 30,000 people asking for the inclusion of such a question was presented to Parliament in May 2015 by Labour MP, Trevor Mallard (Herald online, 7 May 2015). Nonetheless, the process remained unaltered.

To oversee the flag consideration process, on 26 February 2015 a flag consideration panel was appointed, chaired by Emeritus Professor John Burrows, former deputy vice-chancellor of the University of Canterbury, and comprising prominent New Zealanders in the area of sports, literature, academia, business, local politics (New Zealand Government Online, accessed 15 Dec 2015). The two main tasks of the flag consideration panels were to (i) oversee public engagement, and (ii) consider flags for first referendum.

As part of public engagement, the flag consideration panel sought the opinion of the public through a series of public meetings. These were very poorly attended - a total of 739 people attended *across* 25 public meetings (average = 29; Herald online, 14 July 2015). More successful was a 'What do you stand for' campaign run from 5 May to 16 July 2015, in which New Zealanders were asked to write on a card (sent to all on the electoral roll) – or enter on a website portal – some words or phrases which describe what they stand for. The flag consideration panel then turned this into a 'word cloud', in which words and themes are represented in font sizes commensurate to the number of times they had been expressed. The results revealed words/themes like equality, history, freedom, respect, heritage, and family were most often expressed (Standfor, accessed 15 Dec 2015). However, reanalysis of these data

from an independent company, Entopix, revealed that comments critical of the process or expressing support for the current flag were ignored in the "Stand For" analysis; when included in the reanalysis the most common themes include, "Keeping the current flag", "New Zealand", and "Wasting money" (Herald online, 13 Nov 2015).

During the same time period as the 'What do you stand for' campaign (5 May – 16 July 2015) the flag consideration panel allowed the public to submit their prospective New Zealand flags to a dedicated website. During this period a total of 10,292 were submitted, and from this a 'long-list' of 40 flags were chosen on 10 Aug 2015. This list was reduced to 39 after one flag – the 'Modern Hundertwasser' – had to be removed because of copyright concerns.

On 1 September 2015, the long list was reduced to a short-list of four: three silver fern designs (two of which included the Southern Cross and differed only in the colour scheme), and one koru design. Almost immediately there was outrage that such a sameness of design could have been chosen. As a commenter on twitter wrote: "After choosing 4 flags, the committee went out and got ice cream. They chose Chocolate, Double Chocolate, Similar Chocolate, and Terrible." (David Buck, @_d__d_, 11.20am, 1 Sep 2015) There were also claims of conflicts of interest, with one of the panel, Julie Christie, sitting on a government board promoting the Fern Mark logo, and another panel member, Nicky Bell, declaring a conflict of interest which was not revealed (Herald online, 11 Sep 2015). Criticisms also came from the design community. Designers Institute of New Zealand CEO, Cathy Veninga, suggested "there may have been more successful and well-liked options if designers had been involved on the panel from the outset" (Stuff.co.nz, 23 Sep 2015).

These criticisms and outrage culminated in growing support for a fifth flag, Red Peak, which designers favoured because it adhered better to design principles (Stuff.co.nz, 23 Sep 2015). Following an intense social media campaign, a petition with over 50,000 signatures in support of Red Peak was submitted to Parliament (Herald online, 15 Sep 2015). Then, after a good deal of political squabbling, Red Peak was added to the ballot on 24 September 2015, Herald online, 2015), and was included as one of the five flags in the first referendum run from 20 November – 11 December 2015.

The primary motivation for the current research is this. Through 2015, polls have consistently shown few favour change (60-70% want to keep the current flag in seven of eight polls from May to November 2015: UMR,

2015a;b; Aardwolf polls [Stuff.co.nz, 15 May 2015; 15 Sep 2015; 1 Oct 2015]; Reid Research [Herald online, 21 Sep 2015]; Herald Digipoll [Herald online, 1 May 2015]; the eighth poll [a Herald Digipoll] reported 53% want to keep the current flag [Herald online, 1 Sep 2015]). However, opinions expressed in the media often express support for change: in opinion articles identified from the Herald online website (part of the New Zealand Media and Entertainment group of news media) from 26 February 2015 (when the flag consideration panel was constituted) to 20 November 2015 (when the first referendum began), 20 articles expressed support for change versus 11 expressing support for keeping the current flag. In stuff.co.nz (part of the Fairfax media group of news media), the ratio was 34 to 10 over the same period (see Appendix). The question becomes, then, whose views are being over-represented in the media? What are the characteristics of people who want to change the flag and what are the characteristics of those who want to keep it?

This research makes use of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2015 survey run in New Zealand beginning in July 2015, which includes questions on demographic and socio-economic questions, citizenship, political views and actions, and identity. To these questions a single question was added on the flag debate:

> There is a referendum planned for later this year on changing the New Zealand flag. Do you think New Zealand should change its flag?
> (1) No, I do not support changing the flag
> (2) Possibly, depending on the design of the new flag
> (3) Yes, I support changing the flag
> (9) Can't choose.

Note, that because the survey began in July 2015, it was not possible to include questions on different flag designs, as these had yet to be released, nor was it possible to focus on the final design chosen, which at the time of writing had just been announced as the Silver Fern (Black, White and Blue). The question could, however, distinguish those definitely for change, those against, and those considering it, based on the final design chosen.

This article describes answers to the flag question cross-tabulated with questions from the survey. Of particular interest are questions around (i) ethnic and immigrant communities: Are Māori more or less likely to want to change the flag? What about other ethnic groups? Are foreign born more likely to want change?; (ii) geography: Is there an urban, rural divide?; (iii) socio-economics: Does socio-economic positioning have an effect on views on flag change?; (iv):

political beliefs: Do voting patterns and political spectrum positioning affect flag change preference?; What other political beliefs and actions impact on wanting flag change; and (v) Identity: Do beliefs about identity affect flag change preference?

Methods

Sample.

A sample (n=2500) was randomly selected from the New Zealand electoral roll (ages 18 years and older) to be sent the survey. A total of n=901 participants returned the survey, a response rate of 36%. Compared to the electoral roll sample, the sample of respondents was older, contained fewer individuals of Māori descent, under-represented those from Auckland, over-represented those in rural areas, under-represented those living in deprived areas, and over-represented those in professional occupations. To account for this pattern of over- and under-representation, weights were computed based on the inverse probability of responding, estimated using a logistic regression model. Applying these weights produces a sample that is representative of the electoral roll, at least for the factors assessed (age, gender, Māori descent, region of country, rurality, area level deprivation, and occupation). These survey weights will be used in all analyses reported in this article.

Survey.

The survey was part of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP, http://www.issp.org/index.php), which runs social science surveys annually across a number of participating countries, with a different topic (module) assessed each year, rotated on a 8-10 year cycle. The modules for 2014 and 2015 were Citizenship and Work Orientation, respectively. However, as no ISSP survey was run in New Zealand in 2014, both the Citizenship and Work orientation modules were assessed in the 2015 survey. The current investigation will focus on the Citizenship module along with various demographic and socio-economic questions that are routinely assessed as part of each survey.

The *Citizenship module* contains questions on:

(i) Opinions on what it takes to be a good citizen (9 items);
(ii) Political and social actions undertaken (11 items);
(iii) Affiliations with groups and associations (6 items);
(iv) Views on democratic rights (10 items);
(v) Perceptions of political efficacy (5 items);

(vi) Interest and engagement in politics and consumption of political news (7 items);
(vii) Opinions on the political process (3 items);
(viii) Perceptions of corruption in New Zealand (4 items);
(ix) Political party voting in the 2014 General Election, and self-reported position on the political spectrum (2 items);
(x) Views of New Zealand identity (16 items);

As well on the electoral roll demographic information on age, gender, Māori descent, region of country, rurality, area level deprivation (NZDep2013, Atkinson et al., 2014), and occupation (using the major group level of the Australian-New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations, Australian Bureau of Statistics and Statistics New Zealand, 2006), the questionnaire also asked about ethnicity, education-level, place of birth and income.

In addition to these questions, a single item was added on the New Zealand flag (see p128).

Procedure.

The survey mail-out was undertaken by the Centre of Methods and Policy Application in the Social Sciences (COMPASS) at the University of Auckland. The survey was sent along with a cover sheet which described the survey and explained (i) that participation was optional and that the survey was approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (reference number 014807); (ii) that all respondents go into a draw to win one of four $100 gift cards ('Prezzy' Cards); and (iii) who funded the survey.

The initial mail out took place on 8 July 2015. Participants were able to complete the survey either on the questionnaire provided or online via SurveyMonkey (2015). For those yet to complete the survey, a reminder postcard was sent on 1 August 2015, and a second questionnaire, along with a pen, was sent on 27 August 2015. A cut-off for returns was set for 30 November 2015, and the vast majority (all but n=15) were returned between 11 July and 30 September 2015.

Statistical methods.

Cross-tabulations were computed between the demographic and citizenship items and responses (1-3) to the flag question above (i.e., n=41 [4.6%] who either selected "Can't choose" or did not answer were excluded from analyses). Measures of association were estimated using the chi-squared statistic. For simplicity of analysis and interpretation, citizenship items that were answered

on Likert scales were converted into binary measures comparing one end of the scale to the remainder. How this was achieved for each item is explained in the results section. Scales for items measuring (or purporting to measure) the same construct are not reported as it was found that constructs for which internally consistent scales could be computed did not reveal anything not already apparent from analysis of the individual items. Moreover, showing associations for all items gives the fullest picture of the items that are – and are not –most strongly associated with flag change.

Results

60% of the sample did not support changing the flag, 28% possibly support changing the flag depending on the design, while 12% were unconditionally in favour of changing the flag. Those who completed the survey online (20%) were no more or less likely to support changing the flag (p=0.62). Support for changing the flag did not differ between respondents who completed their surveys *before* the final four flags were announced on 1 September 2015 (62% against change; 27% possibly for change; 11% for change), compared to those who completed their surveys after the flags were announced (56%; 30%; 15%; p=0.25). Note that there were too few surveys returned after "Red Peak" was added as a fifth design (24 September 2015) to assess its effect.

Demographic factors.

Table 1 shows the effect of gender, age, ethnicity, and place of birth on opinions on flag change. There are clear effects of gender and age: males are less likely than females to want to keep the current flag (55% vs 65%), and support for keeping the current flag tended to *decrease* with age, e.g., while 73% of those 25 or younger want to keep the current flag, only 54% of those aged 46-65 shared this opinion. The only significant findings for ethnicity and place of birth were that those of Pacific ethnicity, and those who were born in the Pacific, were overwhelmingly in favour of keeping the current flag (90% and 93% support, respectively) though caution is advised when interpreting the findings on Pacific ethnicity and place of birth as they are based on relatively small numbers of observations.

Geography

Table 2 shows opinions on flag change stratified by region, island (north, south) and rurality (major urban, minor urban, rural). Support for keeping or changing the flag did not differ by either island, or rurality, and that only one region

Table 1. Support for changing the New Zealand flag by gender, age, ethnicity, and place of birth. Significant associations are in bold.

	Do not support flag change	Possibly support change, depending on design	Support flag change	p
Gender				
Male (n=412)	**55%**	**28%**	**17%**	<0.001
Female (n=446)	**65%**	**27%**	**8%**	
Age				
18-25 (n=84)	**73%**	**18%**	**10%**	0.01[a]
26-35 (n=129)	**67%**	**24%**	**9%**	
36-45 (n=149)	**60%**	**30%**	**10%**	
46-65 (n=316)	**54%**	**32%**	**14%**	
>65 (n=183)	**61%**	**26%**	**14%**	
Ethnicity				
New Zealand European (n=494)	58%	30%	12%	0.29
Māori (n=87)	67%	22%	12%	0.37
Pasifika (n=20)	**90%**	**10%**	**0%**	**0.02**
Asian (n=50)	68%	22%	10%	0.49
Place of birth				
New Zealand (n=657)	59%	29%	13%	0.29
Australia (n=9)	89%	11%	0%	0.20
Pacific Islands (n=15)	**93%**	**6%**	**0%**	**0.03**
United Kingdom (n=57)	72%	18%	11%	0.14
Asia (n=29)	66%	24%	10%	0.83
Other (n=82)	56%	35%	9%	0.21

[a] Compares under 35s to over 35s

Table 2. Support for changing the New Zealand flag by location. Significant associations are in bold.

	Do not support flag change	Possibly support change, depending on design	Support flag change	p
Region				
Northland (n=29)	66%	21%	13%	0.68
Auckland (n=291)	65%	25%	10%	0.12
Waikato (n=75)	53%	29%	17%	0.29
Bay of Plenty (n=48)	60%	25%	15%	0.83
Hawkes Bay, Gisborne (n=38)	68%	26%	5%	0.35
Taranaki, Wanganui, Manawatu (n=71)	63%	28%	9%	0.59
Wellington (n=103)	**45%**	**39%**	**17%**	**0.003**
Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast (n=35)	63%	26%	11%	0.94
Canterbury (n=106)	58%	30%	12%	0.82
Otago, Southland (n=62)	65%	19%	16%	0.26
Island				
North Island (n=657)	60%	28%	12%	0.84
South Island (n=203)	60%	27%	13%	
Rurality				
Major Urban (n=613)	61%	28%	12%	0.87[a]
Minor Urban (n=119)	60%	26%	14%	
Rural (n=128)	57%	30%	13%	

[a]Chi-squared test across all groups

differed from others: those from Wellington are less likely to want to keep the current flag (45%) and more willing to consider change (possibly support change: 39%; support change: 17%).

Socio-economic factors.

Table 3 compares groups supporting and not supporting the flag on a number of socio-economic measures. There are strong socio-economic effects across measures. For example, 68% of those in households with income <$40,000 want to keep the current flag, while only 9% in this income bracket want to (unconditionally) change the flag. In contrast only 43% of those in households with income >$150,000 want to keep the current flag, and 25% in this income bracket want to change the flag.

Table 3. Support for changing the New Zealand flag.

	Do not support flag change	Possibly support change, depending on design	Support flag change	p
Household income				
<=$40,000 (n=137)	**68%**	**23%**	**9%**	**<0.001[a]**
$40,001-$70,000 (n=129)	**68%**	**23%**	**9%**	
$70,001 - $150,000 (n=186)	**54%**	**34%**	**12%**	
>$150,000 (n=91)	**43%**	**32%**	**25%**	
Education				
No qualifications (n=102)	**72%**	**25%**	**4%**	**<0.001[a]**
School qualifications (n=160)	**66%**	**23%**	**11%**	
Post-school qualifications (n=187)	**65%**	**24%**	**11%**	
Tertiary degree (n=199)	**48%**	**37%**	**15%**	
Occupation				
Managers (n=79)	**44%**	**39%**	**17%**	**0.01**
Professionals (n=135)	53%	31%	16%	0.19
Technicians and trades workers (n=86)	**50%**	**29%**	**21%**	**0.03**
Community and personal service workers (n=33)	70%	21%	9%	0.51
Clerical and administrative workers (n=54)	57%	30%	13%	0.92
Sales workers (n=36)	**81%**	**14%**	**6%**	**0.04**
Machinery operators and drivers (n=29)	52%	35%	14%	0.64
Labourers (n=46)	74%	20%	7%	0.13
Not in workforce (n=277)	**67%**	**25%**	**8%**	**0.006**
NZDep 2013 Index				
Deciles 1-2 (least deprived) (n=176)	**52%**	**32%**	**17%**	**0.003[a]**
Deciles 3-4 (n=183)	**53%**	**35%**	**13%**	
Deciles 5-6 (n=169)	**62%**	**28%**	**11%**	
Deciles 7-8 (n=160)	**63%**	**23%**	**14%**	
Deciles 9-10 (most deprived) (n=169)	**72%**	**20%**	**8%**	

[a] by income, education, occupation, and area level deprivation (NZDep2013 Index). Significant associations are in bold Chi-squared test across all groups

Similarly – though not as stark – support for keeping the flag decreases and support for change increases as education level *increases*, and as area-level deprivation *decreases*. Among occupations, managers and technicians and trades workers are significantly *less* likely than those in other occupations to want to keep the current flag, while sales workers and those not in the workforce are significantly *more* likely to want to keep the current flag.

Opinions on citizenship.

Tables 4-12 show tabulations between flag change groups and endorsement of items assessing various aspects of citizenship, and assesses whether those endorsing the items differ from those who do not.

Table 4 shows items on what it takes to be a good citizen, and the proportion supporting each flag option among those indicating that each item is an "important" aspect of being a good citizen (i.e., endorsing either a 6 or 7 on a 7-point Likert scale where 1=not important and 7=very important). There is little evidence that opinions on what it takes to be a good citizen are associated with opinions on changing the New Zealand flag.

Table 4. Support for changing the New Zealand flag by opinions on what it takes to be a good citizen. Items rated on a 7 point scale (1=not important, 7=very important), and panels show percent across flag support groups who rated each item as either a 6 or 7. Significant associations are in bold.

	Do not support flag change	Possibly support change, depending on design	Support flag change	p
Always to vote in elections (n=665)	59%	29%	12%	0.69
Never to try to evade taxes (n=713)	**58%**	**29%**	**13%**	**0.05**
Always to obey laws and regulations (n=708)	60%	29%	12%	0.47
To keep watch on the actions of government (n=479)	60%	28%	12%	0.83
To be active in social or political associations (n=162)	56%	33%	11%	0.26
To try to understand the reasoning of people with other opinions (n=473)	59%	28%	13%	0.61
To choose products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons, even if they cost a bit more (n=292)	58%	28%	14%	0.74
To help people in New Zealand who are worse off than yourself (n=459)	60%	29%	11%	0.26
To help people in the rest of the world who are worse off than yourself (n=238)	62%	28%	10%	0.40

There was only one significant association: those who think it is important to never to try to evade taxes are slightly *less* likely to want to keep the current flag (58%) than those who did not consider this important (69%, p=0.047).

Table 5 shows the proportion endorsing each of the flag change options among those who have undertaken various forms of political and social action. Again, there is little evidence that opinions on changing the New Zealand flag differ by whether respondents had undertaken political and social action. The one exception was that those who had expressed their views in the media were *more* likely to support flag change (21%) than those who had not (11%).

Table 5. Support for changing the New Zealand flag among those who indicated they had ever undertaken various forms of political and social action. Significant associations (compared against those who *had not* undertaken each form of political and social action; percentages not shown) are in bold.

	Do not support flag change	Possibly support change, depending on design	Support flag change	p
Signed a petition (n=673)	59%	28%	13%	0.76
Boycotted, or deliberately bought, certain products, for political, ethical, or environmental reasons (n=462)	57%	30%	14%	0.10
Taken part in a demonstration (n=187)	62%	24%	14%	0.27
Attended a political meeting or rally (n=227)	59%	30%	11%	0.61
Contacted, or attempted to contact, a politician or public servant to express your views (n=206)	57%	28%	15%	0.61
Donated money to or raised funds for a social or political activity (n=405)	56%	31%	14%	0.08
Contacted or appeared in the media to express your views (n=128)	**51%**	**28%**	**21%**	**0.005**
Expressed political views on the internet (n=120)	61%	27%	13%	0.93
Volunteered time for a social or political activity or organisation (n=300)	55%	33%	12%	0.06
Completed jury service (n=234)	57%	30%	13%	0.70
Made financial contributions to family/friends (n=632)	59%	29%	12%	0.49

Table 6 shows the proportion endorsing each of the flag change options among those who belong to various groups and associations. Opinions on changing the New Zealand flag do not differ by group membership.

Table 6. Support for changing the New Zealand flag among those who belong to different groups and associations. Significant associations (compared against those who *do not* belong in each group; percentages not shown) are in bold.

	Do not support flag change	Possibly support change, depending on design	Support flag change	p
A political party (n=86)	67%	24%	8%	0.27
A trade union, or business or professional association (n=165)	60%	27%	13%	0.88
A church or other religious organisation (n=226)	58%	29%	12%	0.87
A sports, leisure, or cultural group (n=343)	57%	29%	14%	0.54
Another voluntary association (n=230)	60%	28%	12%	0.94
An online group that is focused on a particular political or social activity (n=93)	57%	26%	17%	0.36

Table 7 shows items on people's rights in a democracy, and the proportion supporting each flag option among those indicating that each item is an "important" aspect of people's rights in a democracy (i.e., endorsing either a 6 or 7 on a 7-point Likert scale where 1=not important and 7=very important). There is no evidence that opinions on changing the New Zealand flag differ by belief about people's rights in a democracy.

Table 8 shows items on the respondent's self-rated political efficacy and understanding, and the proportion supporting each flag option among those indicating that they "agree" with the items (i.e., endorsing either a 1 or 2 on a 5-point Likert scale where 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree). Two of the four items were significantly associated with views on changing the flag: those who agreed that they did not have any say in what the government does were more likely to want to keep the current flag (67%) compared to those who did not agree (55%, p=0.002); and those who agreed that the government doesn't care about what people like them think were also more likely to want to keep the current flag (68%) compared to those who did not agree (50%, p<0.001). The other two items approached significance, and these indicated that low self-

rated understanding about the political issues facing New Zealand (p=0.10), and being ill-informed about politics and government (p=0.06) were associated with higher support for keeping the current flag.

Table 7. Support for changing the New Zealand flag by opinions on people's rights in a democracy. Items are rated on a 7 point scale (1=not important, 7=very important), and panels show percent across flag support groups who rated each item as either a 6 or 7. Significant associations in bold.

	Do not support flag change	Possibly support change, depending on design	Support flag change	p
That all citizens have an adequate standard of living (n=702)	60%	28%	12%	0.70
That government authorities respect and protect the rights of minorities (n=553)	59%	28%	12%	0.95
That people be given more opportunities to participate in public decision making (n=502)	62%	27%	11%	0.08
That citizens may engage in acts of civil disobedience when they oppose government actions (n=197)	58%	31%	11%	0.58
That governments respect democratic rights whatever the circumstances (n=486)	57%	31%	12%	0.18
That people convicted of serious crimes lose their citizen rights (n=437)	60%	28%	12%	0.68
That long-term residents of a country, who are not citizens, have the right to vote in that country's national elections (n=297)	60%	25%	15%	0.13
That citizens have the right **not** to vote (n=328)	59%	27%	14%	0.44
That citizens living abroad can continue to vote at home (n=412)	57%	31%	12%	0.25
That healthcare is provided for everyone (n=730)	58%	29%	13%	0.18

Table 8. Support for changing the NZ flag by self-rated items on political efficacy and understanding. Items rated on 5 point scale (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree), and panels show percent across flag support groups who rated item as either 1 or 2. Significant associations in bold.

	Do not support flag change	Possibly support change, depending on design	Support flag change	p
People like me don't have any say about what the government does (n=330)	**67%**	**22%**	**11%**	**0.002**
I don't think the government cares much about what people like me think (n=430)	**68%**	**22%**	**10%**	**<0.001**
I feel I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing New Zealand (n=527)	58%	28%	14%	0.10
I think most people in New Zealand are better informed about politics and government than I am (n=126)	69%	22%	9%	0.06

Another item on political efficacy (not tabulated) asked how likely it was that "the government would give serious attention to your demands" if you tried to do something about a proposed law that you thought to be unjust or harmful. Here, low political efficacy was also associated with wanting to keep the current flag: those who thought it was "not very likely" or "not at all likely" that the government would give their demands serious attention were more likely to want to keep the current flag (63%; vs 46% who answered "fairly likely" or "very likely"; $p<0.001$).

Table 9 show associations between views on changing the New Zealand flag and items assessing interest in politics. The table indicates some small effects: those who often or sometimes discuss politics with friends and colleagues are slightly *less* likely to want to keep the current flag (56%; vs 64% who "rarely" or "never" discuss politics; $p = 0.04$); and those who watch political news on television daily are slightly more likely to support changing the flag (17%; vs 10% who do not watch political news on television daily; $p = 0.02$).

Table 9. Support for changing the New Zealand flag by measures of political interest (percentages for comparison groups are not shown). Significant associations are in bold.

	Do not support flag change	Possibly support change, depending on design	Support flag change	p
Interest in politics				
Very or fairly interested in politics (n=497)	59%	27%	14%	0.19
Often or sometimes discuss politics when you get together with friends, relatives, or fellow workers (n=432)	**56%**	**32%**	**13%**	**0.04**
Often or sometimes try to persuade your friends, relatives, of fellow workers to share your views (n=309)	57%	29%	13%	0.58
Political news (daily)				
Read the political content of a newspaper (n=163)	59%	24%	17%	0.09
Watch political news on television (n=272)	**59%**	**24%**	**17%**	**0.02**
Listen to political news on the radio (n=155)	54%	28%	18%	0.05
Use the Internet to get political news	56%	28%	15%	0.48

Table 10 shows associations between political beliefs and behaviours and views on changing the flag. The upper panel shows self-rated positioning on the political spectrum, where respondents rated themselves on an 11-point scale (0=left, 5=centre, 10=right) and were grouped into either left (0-3), centre (4-6) or right (7-10). Not shown in the table is that many (n=192) were unable to place themselves on the political spectrum, and those that couldn't (or wouldn't) were overwhelmingly in favour of keeping the flag (74%; vs 56% who could place themselves on the political spectrum; $p<0.001$). Among those who could place themselves on the spectrum, those in the centre were slightly *more likely* to favour keeping the current flag (61%, $p=0.02$), while those on the right were slightly *less likely* to favour keeping the current flag (56%, $p=0.02$)

The lower panel of Table 10 shows party voting in the 2014 General Election by views on changing the flag. Two things are worth stating before discussing the results of this panel. The first is that 67% of respondents indicated their party vote – the remaining 33% either did not vote in the 2014 General Election or did not indicate who they voted for. While this is lower than the voter turnout in 2014 (78%, *www.electionresults.govt.nz/electionresults_2014/e9/html/e9_part9_1.html)*, respondents who indicated their party vote did not differ from respondents who did not in the views on flag change ($p=0.29$). The second is that the party vote indicated by respondents matched closely the party vote from the 2014 General Election for each of the four major parties. All were within confidence limits: 49.8% (95% CI: 45.6% – 54.3%) of respondents voted for National, compared to 47.0% in the 2014 General Election; 25.9% (21.8% – 29.8%) voted for Labour, compared to 25.1% in the 2014 General Election; 11.3% (8.3% - 14.2%) voted for the Greens, compared to 10.7% in the 2014 General Election; and 8.0% (5.6% - 10.4%) voted for New Zealand First, compared to 8.7% in the 2014 General Election. Thus, respondents are representative of the New Zealand population with respect to political voting.

The lower panel of the table shows that National voters are slightly *less* likely to want to keep the current flag (54%, $p=0.04$), while Labour voters are slightly *more* likely to want to keep the current flag (66%, $p=0.03$).

Table 10. Support for changing the New Zealand flag by political spectrum and party voting in the 2014 General Election. Significant associations are in bold.

	Do not support flag change	Possibly support change, depending on design	Support flag change	p
Political spectrum				
Left (n=125)	56%	30%	14%	0.96
Centre (n=342)	**61%**	**29%**	**11%**	**0.02**
Right (n=200)	**48%**	**34%**	**19%**	**0.01**
2014 General Election Party Vote				
National (n=286)	**54%**	**32%**	**14%**	**0.04**
Labour (n=147)	**66%**	**28%**	**6%**	**0.03**
Greens (n=63)	57%	30%	13%	0.95
New Zealand First (n=47)	64%	21%	15%	0.41
Minor party (n=29)	66%	28%	7%	0.65

Table 11 shows views on changing the flag by opinions about the political process. Two of the three items were significantly associated with flag change: those who agreed that political parties do not give voters choice were slightly *more* likely to want to keep the flag (64%; vs 56% who did not agree; p=0.05); while those who agreed that referendums are good ways to decide important political questions were slightly *less* likely to want to keep the flag (55%; vs 64% who did not agree; p=0.03).

Table 11. Support for changing the New Zealand flag by opinions about the political process. Items are rated on a five point scale (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree), and panels show percent across flag support groups who rated each item as either a 1 or 2. Significant associations (compared against those who rated items as 3, 4, or 5; percentages not shown) are in bold.

	Do not support flag change	Possibly support change, depending on design	Support flag change	p
Political parties encourage people to become active in politics (n=213)	59%	26%	15%	0.59
Political parties do not give voters real policy choices (n=345)	**64%**	**24%**	**12%**	**0.05**
Referendums are good ways to decide important political questions	**55%**	**32%**	**13%**	**0.03**

Table 12 shows four items on corruption in New Zealand and their association with views on flag change. Belief that corruption is widespread in New Zealand

was consistently and strongly associated with wanting to keep the current New Zealand flag: of those who thought the counting and reporting of votes in the 2014 General Election was very or somewhat dishonest, 90% want to keep the current flag; of those who thought the opportunities for candidates and parties to campaign in the 2014 General Election was very or somewhat unfair, 76% want to keep the current flag; of those who think the public service in New Zealand is not very or not at all committed to serving the people, 73% want to keep the current flag; and of those who think a lot of people or almost everyone is involved in corruption in the public service in New Zealand, 86% want to keep the current flag.

Table 12. Support for changing the New Zealand flag by opinions on corruption in New Zealand (percentages for comparison groups are not shown). Significant associations are in bold.

	Do not support flag change	Possibly support change, depending on design	Support flag change	p
Thinking of the 2014 General Election, how honest was it regarding the counting and reporting of votes? Very or somewhat dishonest (n=20)	**90%**	**5%**	**5%**	**0.009**
Thinking of the 2014 New Zealand General Election, how fair was it regarding the opportunities of the candidates and parties to campaign? Very or somewhat unfair (n=86)	**76%**	**20%**	**5%**	**0.001**
Thinking of the public service in New Zealand, how committed is it to serving the people? Not very or not at all committed (n=190)	**73%**	**19%**	**8%**	**<0.001**
How widespread do you think corruption is in the public service in New Zealand? A lot of people / almost everyone is involved (n=81)	**86%**	**9%**	**5%**	**<0.001**

New Zealand identity.

Tables 13 and **14** show tabulations between flag change groups and views about being a New Zealander. **Table 13** shows the extent to which respondents feel "very close" or "close" to their town, New Zealand as a whole, and the wider region, and how these differ by views on changing the New Zealand flag. There were no associations between feelings of closeness to New Zealand and the neighbouring area and views on flag change.

Table 13. Support for changing the New Zealand flag by feeling 'close' to New Zealand and the neighbouring region. Items are rated on a four point scale (very close, close, not very close, not at all close), and panels show percent across flag support groups who rated each item as either "very close" or "close". Significant associations (compared against those who rated items as "not very close" or "not at all close"; percentages not shown) are in bold.

	Do not support flag change	Possibly support change, depending on design	Support flag change	p
Your town or city (n=706)	61%	28%	12%	0.32
New Zealand (n=810)	60%	27%	13%	0.60
The Trans-Tasman region of Australia and New Zealand (n=487)	57%	31%	13%	0.16
The Pacific region (n=354)	55%	32%	13%	0.07
The Asia-Pacific region (n=174)	56%	32%	13%	0.54

Table 14 shows a series of items that respondents may or may not feel are important to "truly being a New Zealander" (quote taken directly from the survey question), and tabulates flag groups for those endorsing "very important" or "fairly important" for each item. Six of ten items show small effects: those who believe that to truly be a New Zealander it is important to (i) have been born in New Zealand; (ii) have New Zealand citizenship; (iii) to have lived in New Zealand most of your life; (iv) to be living in New Zealand currently; and (v) to have New Zealand ancestry, are slightly *more* likely to want to keep the current flag. In contrast, those who believe that to truly be a New Zealander it is important to respect the Treaty of Waitangi are slightly *less* likely to want to keep the current flag.

A final item about identity (not tabulated) asked whether respondents see themselves as New Zealanders first, or as a member of an ethnic group first. Results showed that those who see themselves as a member of an ethnic group first are more likely to want to keep the current flag (72%) compared to those who see themselves as New Zealanders first (58%, p=0.005).

Covariate-adjusted models.

To assess whether the significant effects found for the citizenship and identity items were due to socio-economic differences among those endorsing the items, a series of multinomial regressions were undertaken, with each item as a predictor, and gender, education, occupation and area level deprivation entered as covariates. Age and income were not significant predictors in the presence of

the other demographic and socio-economic variables, suggesting that the variance

Table 14. Support for changing the New Zealand flag by opinions about the things that are important to "truly being a New Zealander". Items are rated on a four point scale (very important, fairly important, not very important, not at all important), and panels show percent across flag support groups who rated each item as either "very important" or "fairly important". Significant associations (compared against those who rated items as "not very important" or "not at all important"; percentages not shown) are in bold.

	Do not support flag change	Possibly support change, depending on design	Support flag change	p
To have been born in New Zealand (n=589)	**62%**	**28%**	**10%**	**0.006**
To have New Zealand citizenship (n=749)	**60%**	**29%**	**12%**	**0.05**
To have lived in New Zealand most of your life (n=607)	**60%**	**29%**	**11%**	**0.05**
To be living in New Zealand currently (n=539)	**62%**	**27%**	**11%**	**0.05**
To be able to speak English (n=730)	60%	29%	12%	0.30
To be a Christian (n=147)	61%	29%	10%	0.59
To respect New Zealand political institutions and laws (n=757)	60%	28%	12%	0.70
To respect the Treaty of Waitangi	**57%**	**31%**	**12%**	**0.02**
To feel like a New Zealander (n=779)	60%	28%	13%	0.87
To have New Zealand ancestry (n=373)	**63%**	**28%**	**9%**	**0.02**

explained by age and income is adequately explained by the other variables; as such, age and income were not included as covariates in the citizenship and identity models. This model assumes that the socio-economic differences may be causally related to views on citizenship and identity, but that the reverse is not true. While this seems to me to be the more likely causal direction, if some items on citizenship and identity *do* causally affect the socio-economic variables, then the analyses presented represent an *over-control*, as the socio-economic variables would then be mediators of the association.

This caveat notwithstanding, modelling revealed that the majority of the significant citizenship and identity items remained significant after controlling for the demographic and socio-economic covariates (see Table 15). Items that remained significant included: appearing in the media to express views; all

Table 15. Multinomial models of flag change groups against the significant citizenship and identity items from Tables 4-14, adjusted for gender, education, occupation and area level deprivation.

	Possibly support change, depending on design OR (95% CI)	Support flag change p	OR (95% CI)	p
Citizenship activities				
Important: never to try to evade taxes	1.75 (0.96 - 3.17)	0.07	1.31 (0.66 - 2.62)	0.44
Political and social action				
Ever contacted or appeared in the media to express your views	1.12 (0.68 - 1.84)	0.65	**1.95 (1.12 - 3.40)**	**0.02**
Political efficacy				
Agree: People like me don't have any say about what the government does	**0.64 (0.44 - 0.92)**	**0.02**	0.81 (0.49 - 1.32)	0.39
Agree: I don't think the government cares much about what people like me think	**0.50 (0.35 - 0.73)**	**<0.001**	**0.46 (0.28 - 0.77)**	**0.003**
Agree: Government would give serious attention to your demands if you opposed an unjust or harmful law	**1.72 (1.08 - 2.74)**	**0.02**	**2.70 (1.54 - 4.73)**	**0.001**
Political interest				
Often or sometimes discuss politics with friends, relatives, or fellow workers	0.77 (0.91 - 1.84)	0.15	1.05 (0.67 - 1.65)	0.84
Daily: Watch political news on television	0.80 (0.55 - 1.17)	0.26	**1.75 (1.07 - 2.85)**	**0.03**
Political spectrum and party voting				
Political spectrum: Centre	0.98 (0.57 - 1.70)	0.95	0.75 (0.37 - 1.50)	0.41
Political spectrum: Right	1.22 (0.69 - 2.17)	0.49	1.47 (0.72 - 3.02)	0.29
Party vote 2014 General Election: National	1.21 (0.70 - 2.11)	0.50	1.27 (0.61 - 2.64)	0.53
Party vote 2014 General Election: Labour	0.96 (0.52 - 1.76)	0.88	0.51 (0.20 - 1.33)	0.17
Political process				
Agree: Political parties do not give voters real policy choices	**0.68 (0.47 - 0.98)**	**0.04**	0.78 (0.48 - 1.27)	0.32
Agree: Referendums are good ways to decide important political questions	**1.53 (1.06 - 2.21)**	**0.02**	1.11 (0.70 - 1.77)	0.66
Corruption				
Very or somewhat dishonest: Counting and reporting of votes	**0.10 (0.01 - 0.74)**	**0.03**	0.27 (0.03 - 2.21)	0.22
Very or somewhat unfair: Opportunities of the candidates and parties to campaign, 2014 General Election	**0.44 (0.24 - 0.79)**	**0.006**	**0.19 (0.06 - 0.57)**	**0.003**
Not very or not at all committed: Public service in New Zealand	**0.46 (0.30 - 0.72)**	**0.001**	**0.43 (0.23 - 0.79)**	**0.007**
A lot of people / almost everyone involved in corruption in the New Zealand public service	**0.17 (0.07 - 0.43)**	**<0.001**	**0.26 (0.09 - 0.72)**	**0.01**
Important to truly being a New Zealander:				
To have been born in New Zealand	0.96 (0.65 - 1.42)	0.84	**0.56 (0.34 - 0.94)**	**0.03**
To have New Zealand citizenship	1.28 (0.72 - 2.28)	0.39	0.60 (0.29 - 1.23)	0.16
To have lived in New Zealand most of life	1.21 (0.80 - 1.83)	0.36	0.70 (0.42 - 1.16)	0.17
To be living in New Zealand currently	0.93 (0.64 - 1.36)	0.71	0.68 (0.42 - 1.11)	0.13
To respect the Treaty of Waitangi	**1.86 (1.26 - 2.75)**	**0.002**	1.30 (0.78 - 2.18)	0.32
To have New Zealand ancestry	1.22 (0.85 - 1.75)	0.29	0.70 (0.45 - 1.11)	0.13
Identity				
Consider yourself a New Zealander first	1.39 (0.79 - 2.43)	0.25	**3.68 (1.04 - 12.96)**	**0.04**

Panels show odd ratios (95% confidence intervals) for (i) possibly supporting flag change, depending on design, vs not supporting flag change; and (ii) supporting flag change vs not supporting flag change (i.e., not supporting flag change is the reference group). Significant associations are in bold.

political efficacy items; watching political news daily on television; all items on the political process, all items on corruption; two items on what is important for truly being a New Zealander: being born in New Zealand, and respecting the Treaty of Waitangi; and considering oneself a 'New Zealander' first. Items no longer significant included: the importance of never evading taxes; discussing politics with friends, relatives, and work colleagues; all political spectrum and party voting items; and the remaining items on what is important for truly being a New Zealander.

Discussion

This article has two main findings. The first is that most New Zealanders want to keep the current flag: 60% favour keeping the existing flag, 28% would consider change depending on the design of the alternative flag, while only 12% are firmly in favour of change. This is in line with most poll results over the past year, which have indicated support for keeping the current flag is in the 60-70% range (UMR, 2015a;b; Stuff.co.nz, 15 May 2015; 15 Sep 2015; 1 Oct 2015; Herald online, 1 May 2015; 21 Sep 2015).

Second, this article gives a clear picture of who does not want change, but a less clear picture of who does. Groups strongly in favour of keeping the existing flag include women, those who are socio-economically deprived, who have low levels of education, who work in semi-skilled jobs, who feel they have less influence on government and indeed mistrust government, and those who think being born in New Zealand is important for New Zealand identity. There is, however, no group strongly in favour of change. Even groups more in favour of change often still include a greater proportion against change than for it. For example, men are more likely to want to change the flag than women, but even among men 55% support keeping the current flag. Further, even though there is a strong education gradient in support of flag change, only 15% of those with a tertiary degree are unconditionally in favour of flag change, while just under half (48%) want to keep the current flag; the remaining 37% could go either way. This finding highlights that those lobbying for flag change have work to do with all groups, but have more work to do with some groups than with others. Nonetheless, what this study does report about who is more

likely to want flag change (male, educated, politically interested) may give some indication of whose views are being over-represented in the media.

The finding that women are more likely to want to keep the current flag is in line with poll results (Herald online, 1 Sep 2015), as is the finding that support for keeping the flag is greatest among younger voter (UMR, 2015a). The finding that those on the right of the political spectrum, and that those who vote National, are more likely to want change, is also in line with some polls (UMR, 2015a), though the finding in the current survey appears to be explained in part by the socio-economic factors that correlate with being on the right of the political spectrum.

Associations with socio-economic factors revealed that flag change has little support among those with low incomes, low levels of educations, those who live in areas of high deprivation. It is unclear why this is, but one possible explanation is that those in poor socio-economic conditions have other more pressing things to worry about than whether or not the flag changes. Also, the strong support for keeping the flag may be a reaction to the money spent on the process that might otherwise have been spent helping the socio-economically deprived.

One of the strongest and most interesting associations found was with respondents opinions on corruption in New Zealand. Those who think the 2014 General Election was dishonest in the counting of votes and was unfair in the opportunities to campaign, those who think the public service is uncommitted to serving New Zealand, and those who think corruption is widespread in the public service in New Zealand are overwhelming in favour of keeping the current flag. This may indicate that those who mistrust the government also mistrust their intentions for conducting flag referendums, and may suggest cynicism in the New Zealand public towards the flag process and perhaps politicians generally (Rose et al., 2005).

Other factors associated with wanting to keep the current flag include: a belief of not having any say in what the government does, a belief that the government doesn't care what 'people like me' think, a belief that political parties do not offer real policy choices, and less-than-daily watching of political news on television. Together these suggest that those who feel unable to influence government decisions or take little interest in political matters, also cannot see the point of changing the flag. Interestingly, those who think referendums are good ways to decide important political questions are slightly

more likely to want to change the flag – but only slightly; 55% are still in favour of keeping the flag.

Very few associations were found between identity beliefs and flag change preference, which is surprising given that the debate on flag change has often been framed as a debate about identity (e.g., see Herald online, 15 May 2015). A series of identity beliefs about what is important to truly being a New Zealander were weakly associated with wanting to keep the flag, and only two of these remained significant after controls for socio-economic factors were included: a belief that being born in New Zealand is important to being a New Zealander; and a belief that respecting the Treaty of Waitangi is *not* important to being a New Zealander

In some respects, the factors that were *not* found to be important for flag change were as revealing as those that were. For example, there was no evidence that support for keeping the flag was higher in the 'heartland' of New Zealand. There were no differences between the North and South islands, nor between major urban, minor urban and rural areas, and there was only one difference among the regions: respondents from Wellington were *less* likely than those from other regions to want to keep the current flag. The notion that the current flag is "antagonistic" to Māori was not borne out by the survey results: Māori were no more likely than other ethnic groups to want to change the flag (e.g., 67% of Māori want to keep the current flag, compared to 58% of New Zealand European). In is interesting in this respect that there appeared to be a lack of interest in first referendum among Māori – the overall voter turnout in the Māori electorates was just over half that of the general electorates (27.4% vs 50.5%; Election Results, 2015); which represents a far greater disparity than was found for the 2014 General Election (65.1% vs 79.0%; Election Results, 2014).

The idea that the current flag does not represent New Zealand's diversity was also not borne out by the results: those of Pacific and Asian ethnicity were no more likely to want to change the New Zealand flag (in the case of Pacific they were actually *less* likely, though this result is based on small numbers), and those born outside of New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom were no more likely to want to change the New Zealand flag.

The strengths of this study include the use of a sample from the electoral roll, so the sample matches the population eligible to vote in the referendums. The weighted sample of respondents matched electoral roll characteristics (age,

gender, Māori descent, region of country, rurality, area level deprivation, and occupation), and also matched an external benchmark - party voting in the 2014 General Election - which gives some confidence that the sample used is representative of the voting population. Another strength is that the survey did not have the flag debate as its focus, so people would not have been attracted to do (or repelled from doing) the survey based on strong views they have on the flag.

However, the study's findings must be considered in light of several limitations. First, the survey was first sent in July, *before* the final set of flags for the first referendum was announced, so it was not possible to assess the factors associated with preference for particular flags. UMR Research (UMR, 2015b) has done this to some extent, but without the breadth of questions from this survey. Second, only one question on the flag was added to an existing survey so it was not possible to explore the reasons *why* respondents support change or support keeping the current flag, or indeed to ask other questions one might in a survey specifically on the flag. Third, numbers were low for some groups (particularly Pacific ethnicity, and voting for specific minor parties), which hampers drawing definitive conclusions about those groups. Fourth, it was decided not to undertake adjustment for the multiple statistical tests that were performed, so it is possible that type I error is elevated and that some associations are spurious. However, associations found were, for the most part, consistent within areas (e.g., socio-economic findings were consistent, political efficacy findings were consistent, corruption findings were consistent, etc.), and it seems unlikely that findings from these entire areas are spurious. Fifth, the survey was conducted in English only, so those who do not speak English or for whom English is their second language may not have responded to the survey, and this may serve to under-represent some ethnic and immigrant groups. Sixth, the coding of articles from the Herald online and stuff.co.nz was undertaken by the author alone, so it is possible that others may have differing views on whether an article supported change or supported keeping the flag (readers themselves can review the articles in the Appendix). It is also possible that media (including social media) that were not accessed may not show the same pattern of opinions expressed. Seventh, little reference to the academic literature has been made in this article, largely because the process and the debate has been played out in the public sphere, and media outlets are the best sources for this information. Eighth, while weighting managed to account for

the under- and over-representation of certain groups in the sample, it may not account for all groups if these don't correlate with the factors used in the weighting algorithm. If this is the case, representativeness may be compromised. Finally, it should be acknowledged that this article does not attempt to critique the process or the designs or the political motives behind any of the actions taken with regard to the flag process; the focus has simply been on what New Zealanders think and who the New Zealanders are who support – or do not support – flag change.

So what can be concluded? Barring a substantial shift in public opinion before March 2016, the New Zealand flag will not change. There has been consistent support around 60-70% for keeping the current flag and this has not budged during 2015. It is possible for things to change before March 2016, however, and for people to warm to the possibility of a new flag now that the field has narrowed to one. A lot will depend on what the supporters of flags other than the Black, white and blue fern flag selected as part of the first referendum will do now that a one-on-one choice exists between the existing flag and a flag that is not their favourite. Will supporters of other flags rally behind the old flag, or will they accept that a flag that is not their first preference is still better than the existing one? ? Voter turnout may also have an influence if this is low (e.g., 50%) and those who do vote in the March referendum are skewed towards one side or another.

Finally, the findings presented might be instructive for those lobbying for change. Clearly, their message is not getting through to all the people it should, and even those groups more supportive of change are not totally convinced. Developing a message that resonates with women, the socio-economically disadvantaged, and – if possible – the politically inefficacious and wary, would broaden the base of voters who might consider change and give the possibility of changing the New Zealand flag more hope. Messages about the type of flag one wants "stitched on a Kiwi traveller's backpack outside a bar in Croatia" (from Prime Minister John Key; Stuff, 10 Dec 2015), likely target a more middle class and educated sector of the population, and may be missing the demographic that most needs convincing.

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