in their own backyards. If so, then parties' distributional biases in 1996, though seemingly the product of both inertia and of unrealistic expectations for local campaign activity translating into party vote support, may have been tactically justifiable.

In either case, the 1996 election campaign, as for voters and parliamentarians who are both still adjusting their political vision, appears to have been transitional. Inertia and organisational inefficiency assured that vestiges of the logic of FPP could still be seen in parties' actions, though not in any dominant way. As such, the most difficult problem facing party strategists and campaign organisers in the lead-up to the 1999 election is not pursuing technical or organisational revisions to the campaign apparatus itself, but rather convincing tradition-bound colleagues in both Parliament and the party organisations of the benefits to be gained by pursuing a truly tactically dictated MMP election campaign.

Notes

1 Tony Timms, interview by author, 22 October 1996. (All of the interviews referred to in this chapter are transcripts of tape recordings held by the author.)
2 Lindsay Tisch, interview by author, 24 October 1996.
3 Richard Prebble, interview by author, 21 October 1996.
4 Tisch interview.
5 Prebble interview.
6 Matt McCarten, interview by author, 24 October 1996.
7 Ibid.
8 Timms interview.
9 McCarten interview.
10 Tisch interview.
11 Geoff Thompson, interview by author, 24 October 1996.
12 Tisch interview.
13 Thompson interview.
14 McCarten interview; Peter Dunne, interview by author, 23 October 1996.
15 Murray McCully, interview by author, 23 October 1996.

CHAPTER 7

VOTE SPLITTING UNDER MMP

Susan Banducci, Jeffrey Karp and Jack Vowles

MMP enables people to cast two votes, one for a candidate to represent their electorate, and another for a political party competing for seats in Parliament. Two votes allow people to express more than one preference, giving one party the party vote, and a candidate of a different party the electorate vote. Research on split voting elsewhere has focused on two models with different assumptions. The psychological view assumes that where electoral systems allow for multiple votes for different parties, splitters will be less informed, less interested, and less committed than other voters. The strategic or rational view assumes that given the opportunity, splitters are strategic animals seeking to maximise the effectiveness of their votes.

Studies based on psychological models focus on attachments and loyalties to parties and candidates. Early studies of voting behaviour in the United States found that voters who 'split their ticket' between presidential and congressional contests were most likely to be people who had a weak party identification or who had conflict in their feelings for the parties, policy stances and presidential candidates (Campbell & Miller 1957, 308). More recent studies have also looked at the weakening of party identification and thus an increase in voting based on other characteristics such as candidate preferences (Beck *et al.* 1992, 919–21; Darcy & Marsh 1994, 44; McAllister & Darcy 1992).[1]

Distinguished from psychological accounts of split voting, strategic models consider a split as designed to achieve an objective. These explanations assume at least some voters have a sophisticated view of the electoral contest and how the system works. Under MMP, the electorate vote is likely still to be shaped by the logic of FPP, which means that normally at most two parties are 'viable' in each electorate and voters preferring other alternatives may be tempted to vote for other more viable candidates in their electorates for which they may have a secondary preference. With MMP, the same incentives remain for strategic voting with respect to the electorate vote. With the party vote, however, voters may be able to express a more sincere preference which they could not effectively express under FPP, leading to a 'split vote'.

The psychological model indicates that split voting could also be the result of candidate effects, where a voter, perhaps with a relatively weak party

preference, prefers a candidate of a different party. Recent research on electoral behaviour in New Zealand prior to MMP indicates that candidate effects now play a stronger role in the vote choice than in the past, although partisanship remains the strongest influence (Bean 1992; Vowles *et al.* 1995). It is also consistent with the psychological model for voters to split their votes if they have equal preferences for different parties. Most theories of voting tend to assume people will invariably prefer one party above all others, but evenly balanced preferences between two or even more parties are conceivable, particularly where those parties may be closely proximate in 'ideological space'.

Because of the different incentives induced by two votes which translate into seats in Parliament in different ways, we should also expect some split voting to occur as a result of strategic rational behaviour. As discussed in Chapter 1, it has long been assumed that electoral systems influence the structure of party systems. Duverger's Law emphasises the importance of strategic voting in single-member FPP systems. A voter who prefers a candidate who may win a third of the vote will consider voting for an alternative candidate if that candidate has a better chance of defeating their least preferred candidate. Voters who might otherwise support 'unviable' parties will be reluctant to do so for fear of casting a wasted vote.

The party vote, on the other hand, is more likely to reflect a voter's pure preference, regardless of calculating whether or not their preferred party has a chance of winning in their electorate. While Duverger assumed that strategic voting is not relevant in PR systems, others have argued that such strategic voting can still occur under PR (Cox 1997). We recognise the potential for strategic voting with respect to the party vote in two cases. In the first case, voters may not cast a sincere party vote if their preferred party is unlikely to cross the 5 per cent threshold. Not wishing to waste their vote, they may cast it for a second or otherwise more viable preference. Secondly, the party vote can also be seen as a strategic vote where supporters of a larger party may have an incentive to assist a smaller allied party to cross the threshold. In Germany, many split votes are designed to help the small centre party over the threshold and thus ensure a coalition partner for the major party of the centre-right (Jesse 1988, 121; Cox 1997). In 1996 in New Zealand some National party supporters voted for their National electorate candidate but gave ACT their party vote (Johnston & Vowles 1997).

Analysing strategic voting with respect to the party vote is more problematic because few voters prefer marginal threshold parties. Assessing whether or not the party vote is sincere requires independent estimates of party preferences which we have for only seven parties: the main four, plus United, ACT, and the Christian Coalition.[2] While recognising that the party vote may sometimes be cast strategically, for the purposes of the analysis of split voting that follows we assume that the party vote is an expression of a sincere preference of the voter. Later in the chapter we will compare some party vote choices with independent party preferences. For most voters, as we shall see, the assumption seems to hold. Those for whom it does not are discussed further in Chapter 12.

Understanding the System

In order to engage in strategic behaviour or to cast votes that are consistent with preferences, voters must understand the meaning of the two votes. Coming to grips with a new electoral system, New Zealand voters were particularly at risk of misunderstanding. During the election campaign the Electoral Commission continued its education programme, stressing the fact that 'you have two votes' and providing voters with the basic facts needed to cast an effective vote. The Commission stressed that the total size of each party in Parliament depends on the party vote, and described the role of each vote: 'your party vote is for the political party you most want to be represented in Parliament; your electorate vote is for the candidate you want to be the MP for your electorate'. Party literature also stressed the importance of the two votes and advised voters on how to use their two votes to gain optimum influence, with most parties appealing to voters for both votes. Some, notably the Alliance, failed to give their voters a clear message (Catt 1997). Arguably, the Alliance concentrated its resources more on electorate contests than a party in its position should have done (see Chapter 6).

Nearly two-thirds of voters felt they understood MMP (30 per cent well), whereas under 10 per cent felt they did not understand the system. Post-election survey respondents were asked which of the two votes was the most important in deciding which party will get the largest number of seats in Parliament. Table 7.1 indicates that just over half of all respondents (57 per cent) were correct in naming the party vote, while 8 per cent named the electorate vote and 26 per cent thought both votes were equally important.[3] Among those who claimed to have voted, however, the percentage giving the correct response was a somewhat higher 61 per cent. Seeing the two votes as equally important could be a sophisticated response, and nearly one in five of those respondents most knowledgeable about other aspects of politics chose the equally option – only somewhat less than average. Nonetheless, we can assume that those giving the equally response were more likely to be less rather than better informed about MMP.

General political knowledge was, as one would expect, associated with knowledge about MMP.[4] Among those who were very interested in politics, 66 per cent identified the party vote as most important, compared to 34 per cent naming the party vote who expressed no interest in politics. Likewise, education (which correlates somewhat with interest in politics) differentiates those who understand the new system. Of those with a university degree, 78 per cent correctly identified the party vote as the most important compared to 46 per cent who had no school qualification. People who split their votes were slightly more likely than straight voters to indicate that the party vote was most important. Those who said they understood MMP were somewhat more likely to understand the importance of the party vote.

Party voters for the main parties of the right were more aware than party voters for New Zealand First and Labour that the party vote was most important, with Alliance voters forming a medium category of awareness. New Zealand First party voters were less informed because they tended to be older and have lower education than other party voters. When controlling for these

factors as well as differences among the various groups of voters according to interest in politics, general political knowledge, and ethnicity, New Zealand First voters were more likely than Labour voters to be aware of the primacy of the party vote. Labour party voters remain less informed than other voters about a key element of MMP once these other factors are taken into account.[5]

Table 7.1: Understanding of MMP: Which Vote Is Most Important?

	Party vote	Equally	Electorate Vote	Don't know	N
Total	57	26	8	9	5015
Party Vote					
Labour	57	29	9	4	1,173
National	65	23	8	4	1,416
NZ First	53	31	10	6	557
Alliance	59	28	9	4	419
ACT	73	17	8	2	255
Christian	68	20	6	6	182
Education					
Low	46	31	12	11	2,430
Medium	65	23	8	4	1,770
University degree	78	11	6	4	656
Political Interest					
Very interested	66	22	9	2	1,042
Fairly interested	60	28	8	4	2,372
Slightly interested	47	27	13	12	1,161
Not at all	34	19	11	37	354
Political Knowledge					
High	69	22	9	2	991
Medium high	63	24	11	3	1,847
Medium low	53	28	10	8	1,208
Low	33	30	7	29	725
Behaviour/Understanding					
Split vote	66	22	8	3	1,576
Straight vote	58	28	9	5	2,532
Voted & understands MMP	68	23	7	2	2,814

Surveys conducted by the Electoral Commission show an even greater degree of understanding about the primacy of the party vote. This is almost certainly due to differences in question wording (see Chapter 2). The question used by the Commission did not give an option for both votes counting equally, and their most recent data prior to the election showed 71 per cent citing the party vote most important, up from 24 per cent in 1994 (Colmar-Brunton 1996, 27). Using a similar question, the campaign survey conducted in conjunction with part of the New Zealand Election Study also showed similar levels of understanding using a question that failed to prompt an 'equally' response. Responses to this question over the campaign also indicate that the general level of understanding about this crucial feature of MMP did not improve significantly over the campaign.

Most commentators have claimed that in Germany understanding about the importance of the two votes is lower than in New Zealand. There, the party vote is misleadingly labelled the 'second vote'. Following the 1987 election, 45 per cent of German voters identified the party vote as the most important vote while 20 per cent thought it was the electorate vote (the 'first vote'); 33 per cent thought both votes of equal importance (Jesse 1988, 119). However, this is one of two questions which are asked in Germany, the other being, 'which vote decides how many seats each party receives in Parliament?', where an 'equally' response is also not prompted. Data from a 1990 German Election Study shows 61 per cent of West Germans correctly identifying the second vote as the vote that decides how many seats each party receives in parliament (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen 1990). German understanding is still about 10 points lower than in New Zealand, when comparing the same form of question. The 1993 Referendum Panel conducted surveys to estimate the understanding of both FPP and MMP in New Zealand. Their data shows that less than half of respondents knew that under FPP 'the winning party may win a greater share of seats in Parliament than its proportion of overall votes', and a fifth wrongly thought that with FPP 'the number of MPs a party gets reflects its share of the nationwide party vote' (Phoenix Research 1993). This comparison suggests that understanding of MMP may be at least as good as understanding of FPP.

Split Voting Across the Electorates

Overall, data from the NZES indicates 61 per cent of voters cast straight votes compared to 38 per cent who split their votes, while 1 per cent used only one of their votes. Comparing these levels with the official results shows that this data provides a representative sample, with 37.01 per cent of all ballot papers being split votes compared to 38.3 per cent of the sample.[6] These figures are high compared to Germany, where split voting increased from 4.3 per cent in 1961 to 15 per cent in the 1980s (Jesse 1988, 114–115). Survey data from the 1994 German elections suggests that the level of split voting has remained relatively stable, with about 13 per cent splitting their votes in 1994.[7]

To analyse the relationship between the two votes, we first use the final results of the election to compare, by electorate, the difference between the votes cast for a party and a party's candidate. Figures 7.1 to 7.5 provide a series of graphs which plot the party's party vote in an electorate on the horizontal axis by the vote for the party's candidate on the vertical axis. For this purpose we assume that the party vote is the more sincere vote and therefore expect it to influence, but not completely determine, the pattern of electorate votes. The scatterplots also show the results of regressing the party vote on the electorate vote (the regression line is shown as a solid line). If there is a one-to-one correspondence between the party and electorate vote, meaning that for every party vote the party's candidate also receives a vote, the party has not lost votes because of a non-viable candidate, nor has the candidate gained

Figure 7.1: Labour Party Vote by Labour Electorate Vote

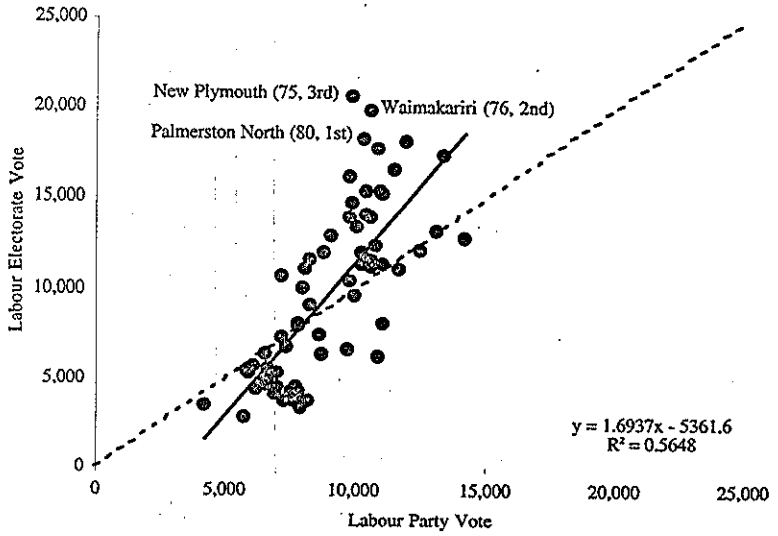


Figure 7.2: National Party Vote by National Electorate Vote

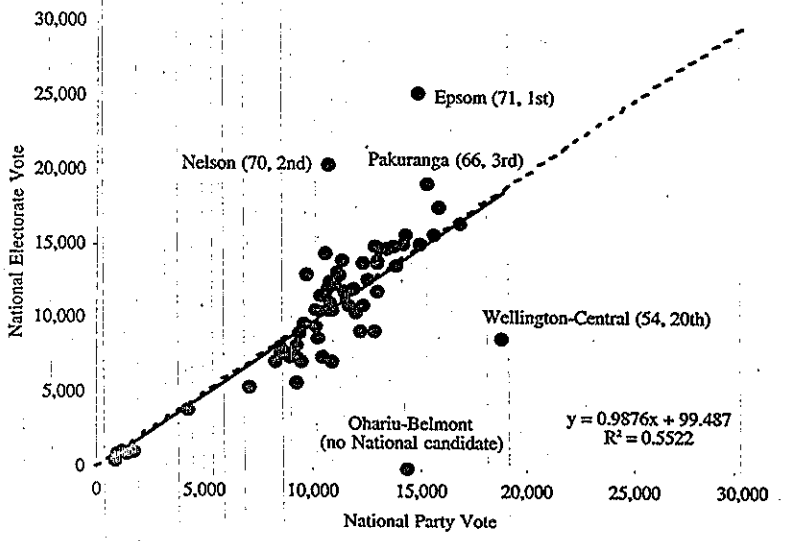
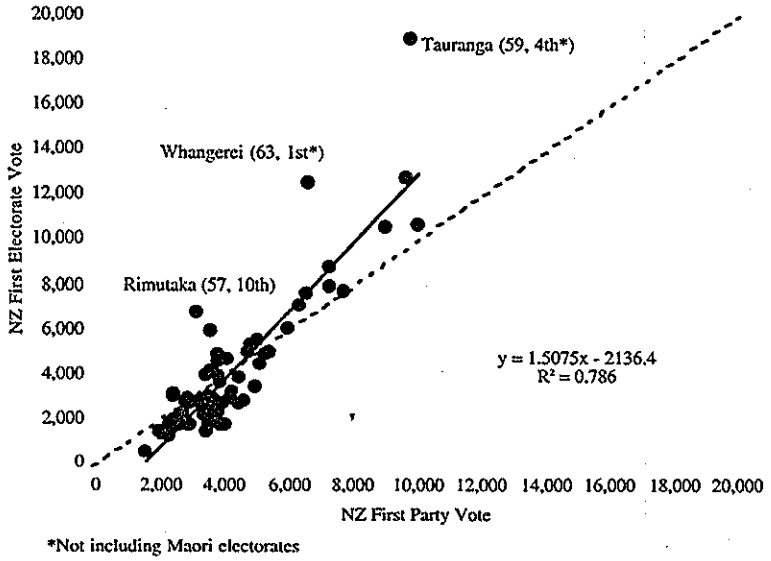


Figure 7.3: NZ First Party Vote by NZ First Electorate Vote



*Not including Maori electorates

Figure 7.4: Alliance Party Vote by Alliance Electorate Vote

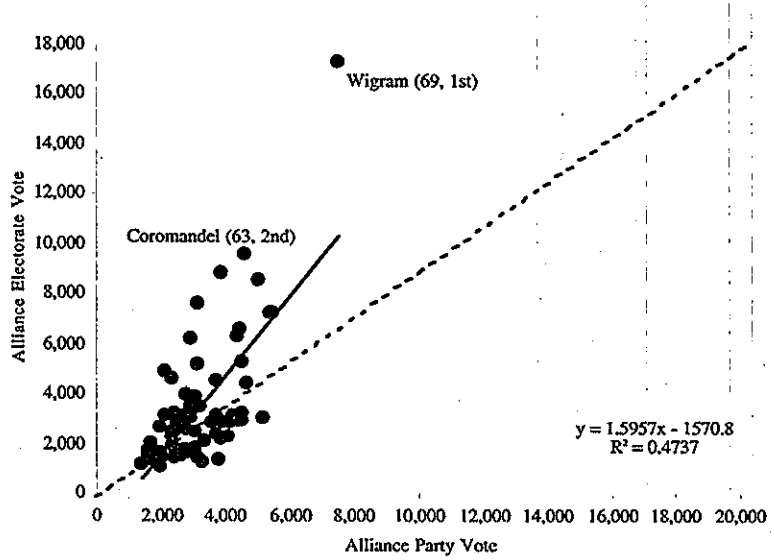
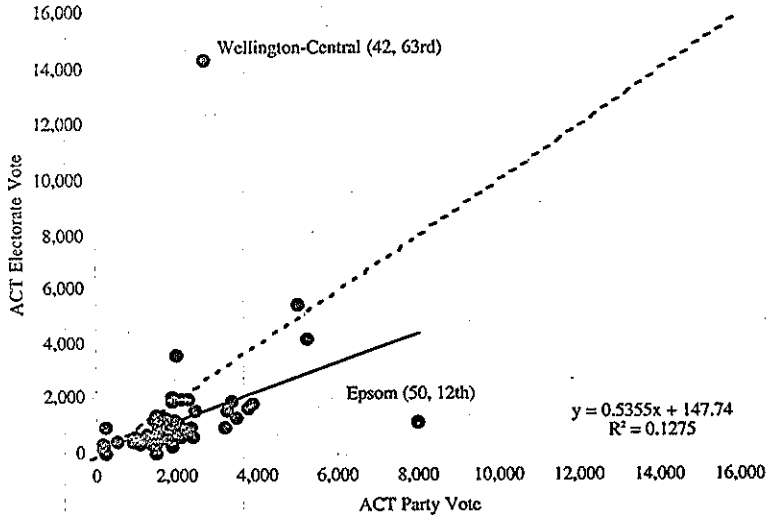


Figure 7.5: ACT Party Vote by ACT Electorate Vote



votes beyond the strength of the party in the electorate. Therefore, when there is no drop-off from the party vote or spill-over from the candidate to the party, the coefficient for the bivariate regression should be 1 and dots representing the various electorates should be aligned along the left-to-right diagonal (shown as a broken line). Electorates above this diagonal line are those where candidates outperformed their party: the candidate received more votes than the party. Electorates below the diagonal line are those where the party received more votes than its candidate, indicating a weaker candidate or drop-off from the party.

Given that most third-party candidates were not viable in the electorates, we would expect that the party vote would be higher than the candidate vote as minor-party voters cast sincere votes with their party vote and then opted for a candidate in the electorate who had a greater chance of winning. Therefore, the majority of electorates for third parties will be below the diagonal line. For major parties, which in most cases had viable candidates in the electorates, we expect that the candidate would pull a similar or a higher number of votes than the party and that most of the electorates will be close to the line or above. Electorates that show an exaggerated difference between electorate and party votes have been indicated.

The scatterplots and the regression analyses together indicate the expected close association between the party and electorate votes, differing between the parties very much as theory predicts. The relationship is steepest between the Labour party and electorate votes; for every 1 vote increase in the Labour party vote, the Labour electorate vote increased by close to 1.7 votes. Nationally, Labour had the biggest gap between the party and electorate votes, indicating, in general, more popular Labour candidates than those for other parties, which is confirmed by our survey data on candidate popularity (see

below). National had almost a one-to-one correspondence between the party votes and the electorate vote. For every 1 vote increase in the National party vote, the electorate vote increased by close to 1 (b = .9876) vote. This close correspondence between the party and electorate votes reflects the lack of overwhelming candidate effects and the lack of defection from the party vote to support other candidates. As expected, for parties other than National or Labour, most electorates were below the line. The Alliance and New Zealand First had a few electorates where popular candidates pulled many more votes than their party. ACT was the only party where the party vote increased the electorate vote by less than 1 vote. For ACT, one vote up the party vote ladder only delivered a half vote on the electorate ladder, reflecting its much worse performance as an electorate party.

Actual estimates of split voting by electorate can be calculated from the final election results released electronically by the Chief Electoral Office. These give the number of voters who cast a vote for the same party with their electorate vote as their party vote. Using these figures, the number of voters who split their votes can be calculated for each party within each electorate. The number of split voters can be calculated in two ways. First, the number of voters who defected from their party vote is calculated by subtracting the number of straight-ticket voters for a party from the total number of votes for the party. For example, National received 15,812 party votes in Albany and, according to the official data, there were 12,686 National party voters who did not split their votes. Therefore, 3,126 National voters (15,812–12,686) defected from their party vote to cast an electorate vote for a candidate of a different party. Looking at the question the other way about, the second way to estimate the number of splitters is to calculate the number of voters who voted for a candidate in the electorate but not for their party in the electorate vote. In Albany, 17,639 voters chose the National candidate. We already know 12,686 National voters did not split their votes. Therefore the number of voters who voted for the National candidate but voted for another party with their party vote is 4,953 (17,639–12,686). Table 7.2 shows only split voters who defected from their party vote to cast a vote for a candidate of a different party (the first method of calculating the number of splitters).

Comparing the results in the scatterplots based on aggregate electorate data to the estimates of split voting provided by the Chief Electoral Office allows each to confirm or deny inferences from the other. The scatterplots indicate the electorates that are 'outliers', where specific strategic or candidate effects led to higher split voting. We also bring to bear data from the post-election survey from a question which asked voters to rate the personal qualities of the candidates in their respective electorates. These candidate ratings and derived rankings, based on the average responses to the post-election survey in each electorate (0–100), are indicated beside the named electorate in the scatterplots. For example, National received many more candidate votes than electorate votes in Epsom. The influence of a popular candidate, Christine Fletcher, is evident from her average rating of 71 in the electorate and her ranking as the most popular (1st) National candidate. Epsom had the highest levels of ACT and United splitting as supporters from these parties probably defected from their parties in support of Fletcher. In addition, it is likely that

Table 7.2 Defections from Party Vote

	Lowest		Highest		Total
Labour	New Plymouth	3.9	Whangarei	63.7	26.0
National	Nelson	4.9	Wellington Central	66.3	27.3
NZ First	Tauranga	6.2	Wellington Central	78.8	34.5
Alliance	Wigram	4.7	Wellington Central	80.3	43.2
ACT	Wellington Central	12.4	Epsom/Nelson	94.5	83.4
Christian	Te Puku O Te Whenua	31.4	Wellington Central	77.3	75.3
United	Ohariu–Belmont	7.6	Epsom	95.1	76.9
Total	Mangere	23.2	Ohariu–Belmont	69.3	37.0

Source: Electoral Commission (E9 data)
Notes: Voters who defected from party vote calculated as follows: (PV–SV)/PV where PV = Party Vote and SV = number of straight voters

many of the voters who gave their party vote to ACT in Epsom were National supporters who gave their electorate vote to Fletcher.

National received far fewer electorate votes than predicted in Wellington Central, and of course none at all in Ohariu–Belmont, where it failed to stand a candidate in order to clear a path for United's Peter Dunne. Consequently Ohariu–Belmont had the highest overall level of split voting. All National party supporters (14,454) had to cast their electorate votes for a candidate of a different party. The strong candidacy of Dunne was likely to attract voters who had cast party votes for parties other than United. Most of these voters would have been National supporters, but Dunne was also likely to attract supporters of other centre-right parties.

Similar circumstances were evident in Wellington Central. ACT leader Richard Prebble was well known as a former Labour Cabinet Minister and ally of neo-liberal Finance Minister Roger Douglas in the 1980s Labour government. Polls indicated he had a good chance of winning the seat, which has a recent history of extreme marginality. National voters as well as others on the right saw an opportunity to help ACT cross the threshold by supporting Prebble's candidacy with their electorate vote. These voters seized their chance, and Wellington Central had the highest number of party vote defections from National. On the left, those voters who had supported the Alliance with their party vote also registered the highest number of defections, presumably choosing to support the Labour candidate who had the best chance of defeating Prebble. Meanwhile, with a viable ACT candidate in Prebble, ACT supporters had little incentive to defect from ACT with their electorate vote. As a result, Wellington Central had the lowest level of voters who voted for ACT with their party vote and then gave their electorate vote to another candidate.

Our survey data supports these inferences, although we must note that the sample from Wellington Central is small (N = 111), which indicates a high margin of possible error. Nevertheless, our data suggests that 65 per cent of those voters who gave their party vote to National gave their electorate vote to ACT. A similar proportion of Alliance voters chose to support the Labour

candidate with their electorate vote, supporting the interpretation that these voters also acted strategically in an effort to defeat Prebble. Meanwhile, of the Labour voters in Wellington Central, 80 per cent cast straight votes. However, Richard Prebble was the most unpopular successful candidate who was a party leader. With a score of 43, he was also the third-equal from the bottom of the ranking of ACT candidates! Events in Wellington Central indicate a story of strategic party calculation rather than candidate attraction.

For Labour, a significantly higher than average electorate vote as compared to the party vote is found in New Plymouth. As no strategic reason for the extent of the effect is apparent, the popularity of the incumbent Labour MP, Harry Duynhoven, is the obvious explanation. The third most popular Labour candidate, Duynhoven pulled 20,746 votes but the Labour party gained only 9,833 votes in the electorate. The other two most popular Labour candidates, Steve Maharey in Palmerston North and Mike Moore in Waimakariri, also pulled significantly more candidate votes than party votes.

A very good performer for New Zealand First in the electorates was Brian Donnelly in Whangarei, where strategic and candidate factors may have had combined influence. Whangarei had the highest proportion of Labour splitting, although on a base of a small party vote of only 23 per cent. In Whangarei the incumbent National MP re-elected more narrowly than expected was John Banks, a National backbencher and outspoken moral conservative moonlighting as a talkback radio host, who tends to polarise opinions. Indeed, our data indicates that he was one of the least popular National electorate candidates (scoring 41, with a ranking of 51st). Labour held Whangarei for the last time from 1972 to 1975, and had little chance of winning it in 1996. Brian Donnelly was a popular local school principal, and the highest-rated New Zealand First candidate in a general electorate.

As for the Alliance, party leader Jim Anderton's electorate of Wigram shows the strongest candidate effect, although there are smaller electorate effects for Dunedin South, Coromandel, and Auckland Central. The Alliance candidates in Coromandel and Dunedin South, Jeanette Fitzsimons (Green Party co-leader) and Leah McBey respectively, were the second and third most popular Alliance candidates.

Another popular National candidate was Nick Smith in Nelson, whose average candidate rating was 70, making him the second most popular National candidate. Smith attracted votes from supporters across all parties who gave him their electorate vote on a personal basis but the party vote to a preferred party. In Rimutaka, former National MP Peter McCardle ran as an unsuccessful New Zealand First electorate candidate. He, therefore, was likely to attract voters on the right who then did not give their party vote to New Zealand First. Our candidate data confirms the popularity of these members (see Table 7.3). New Zealand First also did significantly better in the electorate vote in party leader Winston Peters' seat of Tauranga.

The levels of split voting give us an indication of whether a party was deserted by strategic voting. National and Labour gained more votes for the candidate than the party in over half of the seats, while the reverse is true for the other parties. This is the same pattern in Germany, where the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Socialist Party (SPD) receive more candi-

date than party votes, and the smaller parties get more party than candidate votes. In 1983 the CDU received more party than electorate votes in only 3 of the 248 electorate (Jesse 1988, 111–13). This result also reflects some expectations of how MMP would work, with voters concentrating on the main contenders in the electorate vote, which tend to be the larger parties, and giving votes to a wider range of parties in the party vote.

Split Voters: Directions and Combinations

Thus far we have relied almost entirely on aggregate data to investigate patterns of split voting, supplemented by candidate evaluations and survey data from Wellington Central. We now examine the survey data in more depth, giving us further opportunity to examine the extent and type of split voting at the individual level. We began by comparing party and electorate votes by electorate. Table 7.3 compares the party vote to the electorate vote, focusing on the party voters' choices for the electorate vote. The table indicates in the top left corner of each cell the shares of the party votes cast that went into the various options for the electorate vote. The figures in the bottom right of each cell indicate the percentage of each combination of party and electorate votes among voters in general. The diagonal cells, which represent the 'straight' voters, are shaded.

Table 7.3: Electorate and Party Votes: Defections from the Party Vote

	Electorate vote								
Party vote	Labour	National	NZF	Alliance	ACT	Christian	United	Other	
Labour	72.2 *20.5*	4.2 *1.2*	8.3 *2.4*	11.1 *2.9*	1.3 *0.4*	0.4 *0.1*	1.6 *0.5*	1.6 *0.5*	1176 *28.3*
National	10.2 *3.4*	71.1 *24.0*	3.5 *1.2*	2.3 *0.8*	6.1 *2.0*	0.7 *0.2*	4.6 *1.6*	1.6 *0.6*	1399 *33.7*
NZ First	19.3 *2.3*	7.8 *1.0*	62.2 *8.3*	5.1 *0.7*	2.4 *0.3*	0.6 *0.1*	0.2	2.3 *0.4*	555 *13.4*
Alliance	31.2 *3.2*	2.7 *0.3*	6.1 *0.6*	57.0 *5.8*	0.3	0.3	0.8 *0.1*	1.4 *0.1*	422 *10.2*
ACT	10.7 *2.0*	52.6 *3.2*	2.0 *0.1*	1.0 *0.1*	26.8 *1.6*	0.3	4.9 *0.3*	1.8 *0.1*	253 *6.1*
Christian	14.4 *0.6*	34.2 *1.4*	9.3 *0.4*	11.1 *0.5*	2.8 *0.1*	21.1 *0.9*	3.4 *0.2*	3.4 *0.1*	173 *4.2*
United	20.2 *0.2*	42.2 *0.4*	1.4	7.0 *0.1*	2.8		21.5 *0.2*	4.9	37 *0.9*
Other	27.0 *0.9*	14.8 *0.5*	10.7 *0.4*	13.7 *0.4*	2.2 *0.1*		1.8 *0.1*	29.9 *1.0*	134 *3.2*
	32.0	*32.0*	*13.3*	*11.4*	*4.6*	*1.3*	*2.6*	*2.8*	

Note: Due to rounding error, number in cells may not sum to column and row percents exactly.

Theory and common sense together suggest three main reasons why people might choose to split their votes. As we saw in the previous discussion, candidate preferences clearly led many to 'defect' from their party vote. On average, Labour candidates had the most personal appeal. The mean Labour electorate candidate rating was 59, compared to only 52 for National. Looking at the figures in the lower right-hand corner of the cells in Table 7.3, 3.4 per cent of voters gave their electorate vote to Labour and their party vote to National. On the other hand, only 1.2 per cent gave their electorate vote to National and their party vote to Labour. Of all voters who split their votes (those in the non-diagonal cells in Table 7.3), the largest group is the 3.4 per cent who gave their electorate vote to Labour and their party vote to National. We explore the ideological implications of this combination below, but preference for a Labour candidate by someone otherwise more disposed to National presents the most obvious explanation. All those who voted National for the party vote and Labour for the electorate vote were more than twice as likely than other voters to like their Labour candidate (85 per cent did so).

Another reason for vote splitting is that some voters who think that their preferred candidate cannot win in their electorate will cast a vote for another candidate who has a better chance of winning. Our earlier discussion of Wellington Central, the only electorate in which ACT was 'viable', illustrates this well. Economically liberal voters who prefer ACT would do best to vote ACT for the party vote and National in the electorate in all electorates but Wellington Central. Similarly, a leftist voter would, in most cases, do best to vote Alliance for the party vote and Labour in all but six electorates, where Alliance had enough support to be 'first past the post'. To determine which parties were viable in the electorates, we rely on a combination of past performance in 1993 and, in some cases, current performance in 1996.[8] Parties are classified as viable if their vote share is within a 10 per cent two-party swing. If a 10 per cent or more two-party swing was necessary to make an electorate change hands, the electorate is classified as one-party dominant and only the dominant party is considered viable. The number of electorates where each party is viable is displayed in table 7.4.

Table 7.4: Viable Electorates by Party

Party	No. electorates viable
Labour	44
National	45
NZ First	10
Alliance	6
ACT	1
United	6
Christian	0

As Table 7.3 has shown, the second and third largest groups of splitters were Alliance party voters giving their electorate votes to Labour and ACT party voters giving their electorate votes to National. Of the Alliance party/

Labour electorate vote splitters, only 6 per cent had a viable Alliance candidate in their electorate, and for 83 per cent Labour was the only viable party of the two. The same logic applied to New Zealand First party/Labour electorate vote splitters. Only 12 per cent voted where New Zealand First had viable electorate candidates, whereas Labour was the only viable party of the two for 63 per cent of voters in the category. The choices of voters on the centre and left who split their votes giving Alliance or New Zealand First an electorate vote and Labour a party vote were less strategically sound, however. Only 18 per cent casting electorate votes for the Alliance and party votes for Labour had a viable Alliance candidate (and Labour was viable as well in slightly over half of those cases). Somewhat more New Zealand First electorate voters and Labour party voters (31 per cent) cast votes for viable New Zealand First candidates, and in well over half of these cases the Labour candidate was not viable.

As for the ACT party/National electorate vote splitters, none had a viable ACT candidate in their electorate, making their strategic choice a very clear one. All in our sample who voted ACT in Wellington Central either voted an ACT straight ticket or voted ACT in the electorate and National for the party. The reason is obvious. The message for strategic voters in Wellington Central focused almost entirely on the role of the electorate vote, but most people casting a strategic electorate vote for ACT would cast a strategic party vote as well.

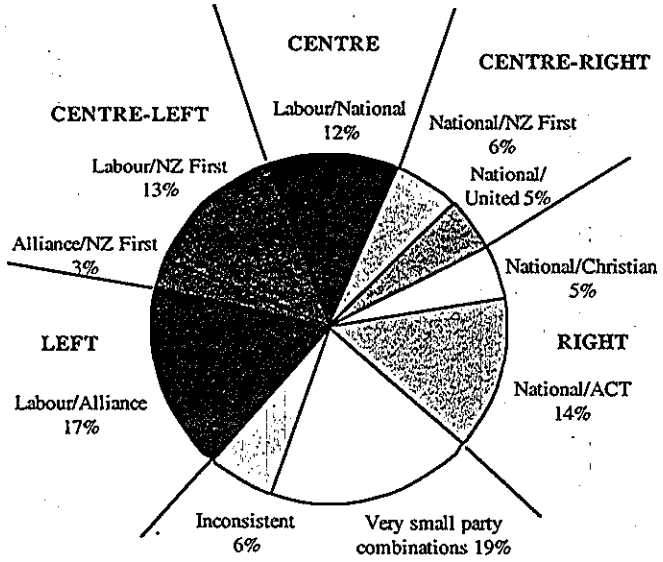
Underpinning the strategic implications of split-vote pairings are, of course, the ideological similarities and differences between parties. Indeed, as we will see, some voters had apparent equal preferences for two parties, and MMP allowed them to express both preferences. Figure 7.6 displays the pairings regardless of the party vote/electorate vote details. As we will see in Chapter 9, policy differences on traditional left–right issues strongly differentiate support for the parties (some more so than others). ACT and National are on the right, Christian Coalition, United, and New Zealand First in the centre and Labour and Alliance on the left. Those voters choosing to split between the parties on the right and on the centre-right account for 30 per cent of all those who split their votes, while voters splitting between Labour and Alliance amount to 17 per cent. Another 16 per cent split between Labour or the Alliance and New Zealand First. This is a wider centre-left grouping which, before the election, many considered a possible combination, with Labour and New Zealand First in coalition and Alliance giving them parliamentary support.

Another 12 per cent split between National and Labour. As National and Labour each formed the core of a potential government either of right or left, and had spent the last half century or more in bitter opposition, the size of the group splitting between National and Labour combination is surprising. While preferences for Labour candidates were partly at work among these voters, there were other factors. Those in the National/Labour combination were a little less likely to have a party identification, and where they did it tended to be weaker than among other voters. However, the National/Labour splitters were substantially more likely to be National identifiers and were less likely to identify with Labour. They were a little more likely than other voters to place

themselves spatially on the left–right scale, and more likely to be found slightly to the right side of centre than other voters. Forty per cent could be interpreted as favouring a 'grand coalition' of the two main parties, as has occurred in Germany, as compared to 17 per cent of voters in general who wanted to see both National and Labour as part of the next government.

This leaves about 6 per cent of splitters whose combination is not consistent with the parties' ideological stances and another 19 per cent where one of their choices was a very small 'other' party not expected to cross the threshold. Essentially, about a third of voters split in some kind of left or centre-left pairing, another third split on a right or centre-right pairing, and the others split in ways that cannot be easily interpreted in terms of ideological consistency.

Figure 7.6: Split Voter Combinations in Ideological Space



So far we have been assuming that the party vote is a 'sincere' vote, expressing an authentic party preference. However, this is not always the case. Voters fully understanding MMP may cast a party vote strategically for a smaller party if they support a major party but wish to try to assist a potential coalition partner over the threshold. Voters discouraged in casting a party vote for a very small party not expected to cross the threshold may vote strategically for a more viable party. And because many voters did not understand the prime importance of the party vote, we cannot assume that the party vote always reflected their sincere preference. An expression of party preference independent of vote is needed.

Party identification is typically used as an indicator of party loyalty, but because it is a loyalty from which a voter can deviate, it is not very useful in indicating a present preference, particularly as party identifications tend to have weakened in recent years. Instead we take an estimate from a question which asked people to indicate their likes or dislikes of the seven main political parties on a scale of 0 to 10.[9] We assume and record a sincere party preference if a person rates one party above the others. In addition, we can also identify a significant number of respondents who expressed an equal dual preference for two parties. Vote splitting may have given many of these people an opportunity to express that dual preference. Finally, we can identify those people who had no party preference independent of vote and for whom vote splitting may have been a consequence of relative indifference.

Table 7.5 shows these patterns of splits together with those who gave their preferred party their party or electorate votes. With independent party preferences in the picture, we can identify new patterns of split voting: those voters who give their party vote to their one preferred party; other voters who give their electorate vote to their one preferred party; those who prefer two parties equally (dual preference) and give one vote to each, or give at least one vote to one of the preferred parties; those with a party preference giving neither vote to the preferred party; and finally, those voters who do not have a clear preference or preferences. The first category, those giving the party vote to the preferred party and the electorate vote to a candidate of a different party, are likely to be the strategic voters whose first party preference is not viable in the electorate. Unless they assisted a potential coalition partner over the threshold, voters who gave away their party vote to a less preferred party did not help the fortunes of their most preferred party as the number of seats a party wins is determined by the party vote.

The results from Table 7.5 show that 16 per cent of all voters split by giving their party vote to their preferred party, whereas only 6 per cent split by giving their electorate vote to their preferred party. Another 6 per cent gave each of their votes to two parties for whom they had expressed equal preference. Those who had a preference for Labour and National were more likely to be straight voters than those who had preferences for other parties. Labour and National fielded viable candidates in about two-thirds of electorates, so there were fewer strategic reasons for major party supporters to desert their preferred party. The number of straight voters decreases dramatically among those who preferred threshold parties (ACT and Christian Coalition) or parties that were close to the threshold in pre-election polling. Supporters of these parties were more likely to give their preferred party their party vote and then cast the electorate vote for a different party. For example, 45 per cent of voters who preferred ACT split their votes, giving ACT their party vote but another party their electorate vote. While party preference has some influence on split voting, close to half of those without a clear party preference still cast a straight vote.

As hypothesised in the psychological model, those with high levels of political interest have a greater understanding of the voting system and therefore should be more likely to vote consistently with preferences or engage in strategic behaviour. As expected, those with high political interest were

slightly more likely to cast straight votes and, among those splitting their votes, were more likely to give their party vote to a preferred party. Among the splitters, those with low interest were more than twice as likely to give neither vote to a preferred party or have no preference.

Table 7.5 Patterns of Split Voting by Party Preference, Strength of Partisan Attachment and Political Interest

	Straight voters	Split voters			
		Gave preferred party party vote	Gave preferred party electorate vote	Gave dual preference both votes	Gave preferred party neither vote/no preference
Preferred Party					
No preference	48.6	–	–	21.6	29.8
Labour	74.0	17.4	7.0	–	1.7
National	70.3	19.2	8.5	–	2.0
NZ First	68.4	19.4	8.8	–	3.4
Alliance	60.8	23.7	11.3	–	4.2
ACT	39.6	44.7	9.5	–	6.2
Christian	31.9	54.6	0.8	–	12.7
United	23.0	24.2	4.5	–	48.2
Political interest					
High interest	63.7	14.6	6.2	5.7	9.8
Low interest	57.9	11.4	9.1	1.2	20.4
Strength of party identification					
No party	51.0	16.5	6.4	7.0	19.2
Weak	54.1	18.1	6.6	7.5	13.7
Strong	78.1	11.9	4.0	3.1	2.8
Total	61.5	16.0	5.9	5.8	10.7
N	2187	570	211	206	382

Notes: Preferred party model: chi-square = 1613.9 $p < .05$
Political interest model: chi-square = 21.5 $p < .05$
Strength of party identification model: chi-square = 240.2 $p < .05$

In recent years a decline in party identification has contributed to increased voter volatility. Not surprisingly, as the psychological model suggests, those with weak party attachments are more likely to split their votes than those with stronger attachments. Of those with a strong attachment, 78 per cent cast a straight vote compared to 51 per cent who did not identify with a party. Among the splitters, those without strong party attachments (weak or none) are much more likely not to vote consistently with preferences, or to have no preference.

Conclusion

Vote splitting among New Zealand voters under MMP has some similarities with aspects of voting behaviour elsewhere. Studies of 'split tickets' tend to begin from conflicting assumptions. Past studies focusing on psychological explanations of split voting have found that voters with weak party attachments and low information are more likely to split their votes. Likewise, there is evidence that some voters behave strategically when preferred candidates are not likely to win. Our evidence for New Zealand suggests that split votes came at least as much from voters with weak affiliations as from those who had strategic goals. Those who have a high interest in politics were slightly more likely to cast a straight vote and slightly less inclined towards splitting. But split voters were more likely to know that the party vote is the important one and less likely to think the two are equal.

Split voting in New Zealand in 1996 was much higher than it has ever been in Germany. West Germany took up MMP in the aftermath of World War Two. Prior to the Nazi era, Germany had a pure list form of PR. New Zealand took up MMP in very different circumstances, after more than a century's experience of FPP. High split voting may be a consequence of New Zealand's different pathway to MMP, and should, perhaps, subside to a lower level as MMP consolidates. On the other hand, there is no precedent for this situation.

New Zealand voters' first experience of managing their two votes has produced a heterogeneous group of splitters, some of whom behaved as the psychological model predicts, and others as set out in the rational or strategic model. Some, such as National supporters who gave ACT their party vote, were consciously strategic voters seeking to assist a potential parliamentary ally across the threshold; others, whose preferred party candidate had no chance of winning in the electorate, deployed their electorate vote in a strategic way to affect the contest between the two parties most likely to win. Others again responded to the pull of a popular local candidate to deviate from their preferred party. Some voters had dual preferences which MMP allowed them to express. Some voters had a clear idea both of their preferences and how best to express those in their votes, but others had weaker and less certain preferences, and less understanding not only of the electoral system but also of the strategic implications of their choices. The nature of vote splitting under MMP has obvious implications for the assessment of MMP as an electoral system for New Zealand. We return to this discussion in Chapter 12.

Notes

1 For a discussion of some further relevant literature see Catt 1997.

2 In theory, we could have asked respondents for their open-ended independent preferences for all parties. We did not, but where open-ended data is available, such as for party identification, this gives us grounds for confidence that very few people preferred parties well below the threshold.

3 Claiming understanding of MMP and actual understanding measured by knowledge of the primacy of the party vote correlates at r = 0.23 among those respondents who voted.

4 The political knowledge index is constructed by adding correct responses to the second, third, and fourth items in question F12. Three responses correct scores 1, two scores 0.66, one scores 0.33, and none scores 0.

5 For more details on the interpretation of this table see Appendix B.

Party Vote Most Important: OLS Regression with Influence of Party Vote, Education, Political Interest, Knowledge, Age, and Ethnicity.

	b	se	t ratio	beta
Constant	0.40	0.03	13.70	0.00
Alliance vote	0.09	0.03	3.60	0.06
NZ First vote	0.11	0.02	4.75	0.08
National vote	0.17	0.02	9.76	0.17
ACT vote	0.19	0.03	6.15	0.10
Christian vote	0.22	0.04	5.86	0.09
(against Labour vote)				
Education low	–0.10	0.02	–6.06	–0.10
University	0.11	0.02	4.89	0.08
Political interest*	0.16	0.03	5.45	0.09
Political knowledge	0.21	0.03	8.40	0.13
Age**	–0.02	0.00	–4.03	–0.07
Maori	–0.15	0.03	–4.92	–0.07
N = 4366				

*Scaled from 1 = very interested to 0 = not at all interested.
**Age in decades from 18 to 96.
Residual for party votes is vote Labour. All party vote estimates can be interpreted as percentage differences from this base. All estimates significant at $p < .01$. Adjusted $R^2 = .11$

6 Our estimate of 38.4% split voters is very close and well within the margin of error (95% confidence level) given our sample size of 4,568 voters who indicated both voting choices.

7 Based on an analysis of survey data collected by Forschungsgruppe Wahlen (1994). This data was obtained from the Institute for German Studies at Johns Hopkins University, Washington DC and we gratefully acknowledge the assistance of James McDonald.

8 Past performance is generally a good predictor of viability, but in some cases it is not. For example, four of the five Maori electorates were safe Labour seats on 1993 estimates but by the time of the election most involved believed that they were marginal. In other cases, new parties such as ACT and United would not be classified as viable if we were to rely entirely on past performance. In the case of United, we assume that six incumbent MPs defending electorates very close to their old electorates would have had sufficient influence to reasonably convince at least some voters they were viable candidates. Thus our measure is an 'objective' or imputed viability rather than voters' own estimates of viability, because these can be distorted by misunderstandings about MMP and lack of information about strategic options.

9 From question B7 (see Appendix A).