

91279R



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

QUALIFY FOR THE FUTURE WORLD
KIA NOHO TAKATŪ KI TŌ ĀMUA AO!

Level 2 Social Studies 2021

91279 Demonstrate understanding of conflict(s) arising from different cultural beliefs and ideas)

Credits: Four

RESOURCE BOOKLET

Refer to this booklet to answer the questions for Social Studies 91279.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–10 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

YOU MAY KEEP THIS BOOKLET AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.


THE NATURE AND CAUSE OF THE CONFLICT SURROUNDING LOWERING THE VOTING AGE IN NEW ZEALAND

INTRODUCTION

The conflict around the right to vote has been one that has rippled throughout our history. From restrictions based on land ownership, gender, and now age – the fight for our democratic rights continues.

A brief history of the voting laws in Aotearoa

When voting first started in New Zealand following the passage of the Constitution Act of 1852, only males over the age of 21 who owned, leased, or rented property of a certain value could vote. This rule excluded almost all Māori, who owned land communally. The Māori Representation Act of 1867, among other things, extended voting rights to all Māori males aged 21 and over. Universal suffrage (the right to vote) for all males aged over 21 followed in 1879, before the breakthrough law change of 1893, which extended universal suffrage to women aged over 21.



There was finally some movement on the voting age, albeit minimal, in 1969 when it was reduced to 20. After taking more than a century to get to 20, the next change came quickly when the current age of 18 was introduced in 1974. This was a period of great demographic change resulting from the post-war “baby boom”. The enormous expansion of secondary and university education to cater for the growing number of young New Zealanders focused attention on the political and legal rights of the 18–20-year-old age group. The Vietnam War also proved to be a catalyst for change. The highly visible anti-Vietnam War protests on university campuses here and around the world led some to question why if someone was old enough to fight for their country, they were not old enough to vote? While some disagreed with the student protestors, others wondered if this would be a good way to channel youthful political passions. For that reason, most western democracies (including New Zealand), lowered the voting age to 18 during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

RESOURCE A: The fight for lowering the voting age

Currently, young New Zealanders at the age of 16, can, among other things:

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But they cannot vote, and this has become a subject of great debate within New Zealand.



A Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at Victoria University of Wellington asked what is the worst that could happen if we lowered the voting age? She found that in broad terms, the arguments for and against lowering the voting age could be summarised in the diagram below.

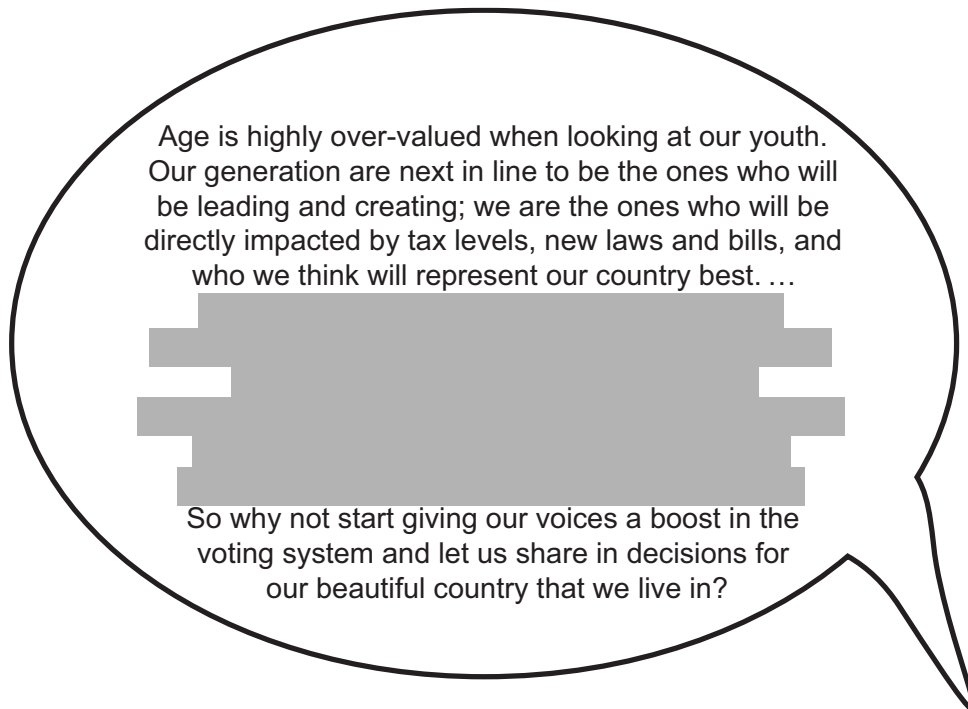


POINTS OF VIEW, VALUES AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE INDIVIDUALS/GROUPS INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT

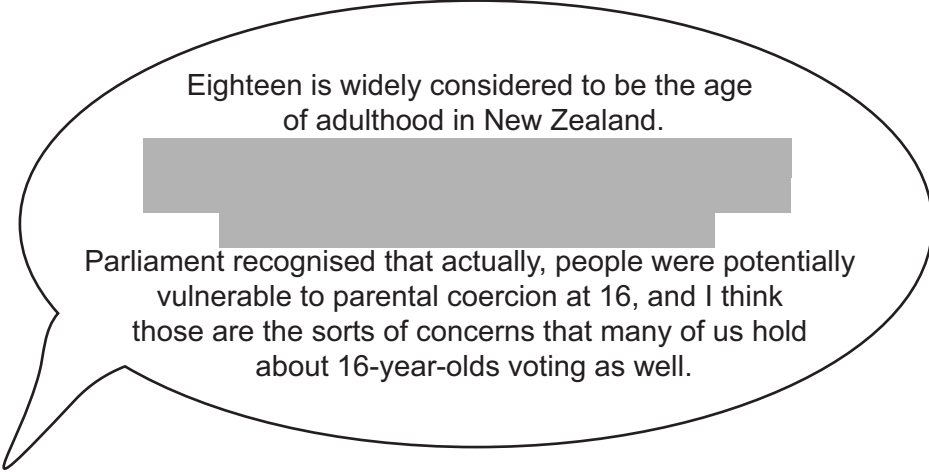
Relevant social studies perspectives

Activist	A person who takes action in support of, or in opposition to, one side of a controversial issue.
Ageist	A person who is prejudice or discriminatory towards others, based on a person's age.
Conservative	A person who commits to traditional values and ideas with a strong opposition to change or innovation.
Liberal	A person who shows willingness to be open-minded or not strict in the observance of traditional or established forms or ways.

RESOURCE B: Who is involved?



A Make it 16 campaign member in 2020

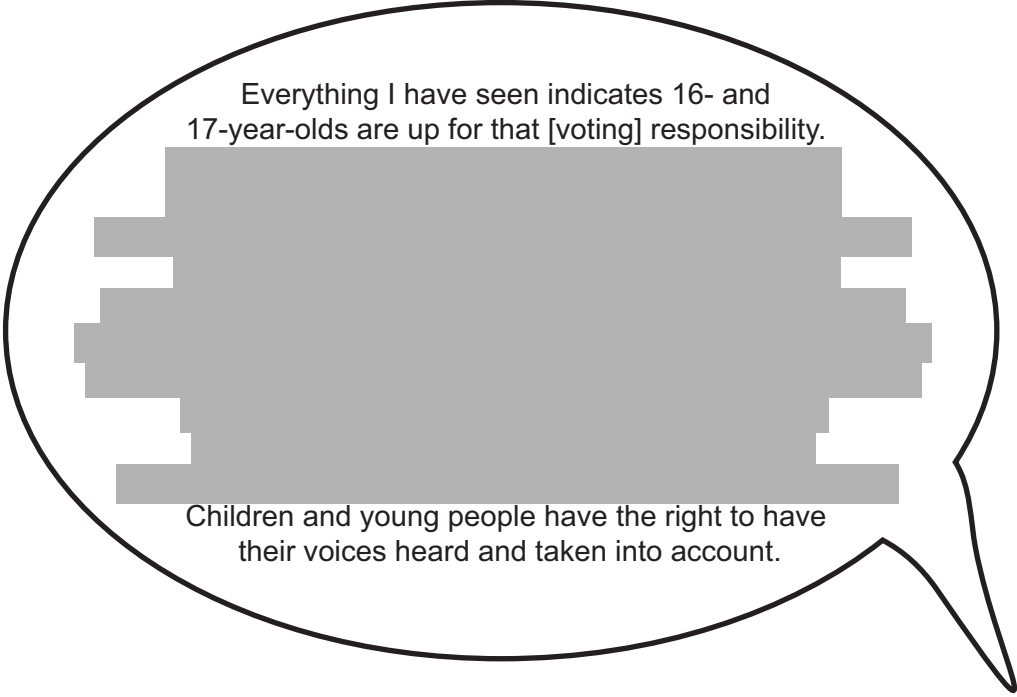


Eighteen is widely considered to be the age of adulthood in New Zealand.

[REDACTED]

Parliament recognised that actually, people were potentially vulnerable to parental coercion at 16, and I think those are the sorts of concerns that many of us hold about 16-year-olds voting as well.

National List MP and Early Childhood Education and Youth Spokesperson's party view in 2019

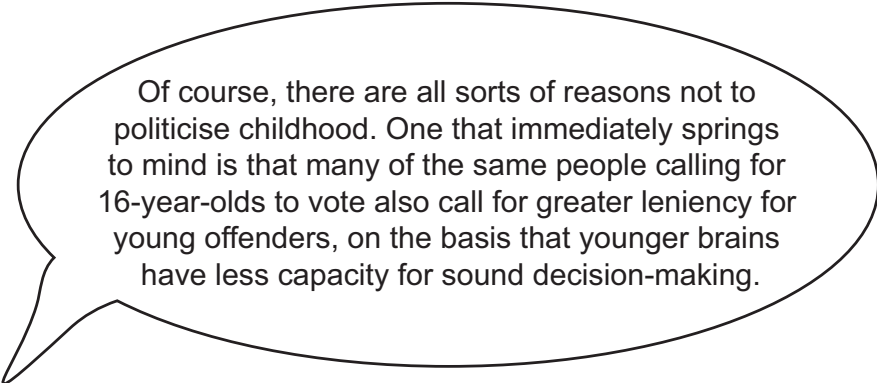


Everything I have seen indicates 16- and 17-year-olds are up for that [voting] responsibility.

[REDACTED]

Children and young people have the right to have their voices heard and taken into account.

Children's Commissioner speaking in front of Parliament's Social Services Select Committee in 2018 and Make it 16's campaign launch in 2019



Of course, there are all sorts of reasons not to politicise childhood. One that immediately springs to mind is that many of the same people calling for 16-year-olds to vote also call for greater leniency for young offenders, on the basis that younger brains have less capacity for sound decision-making.

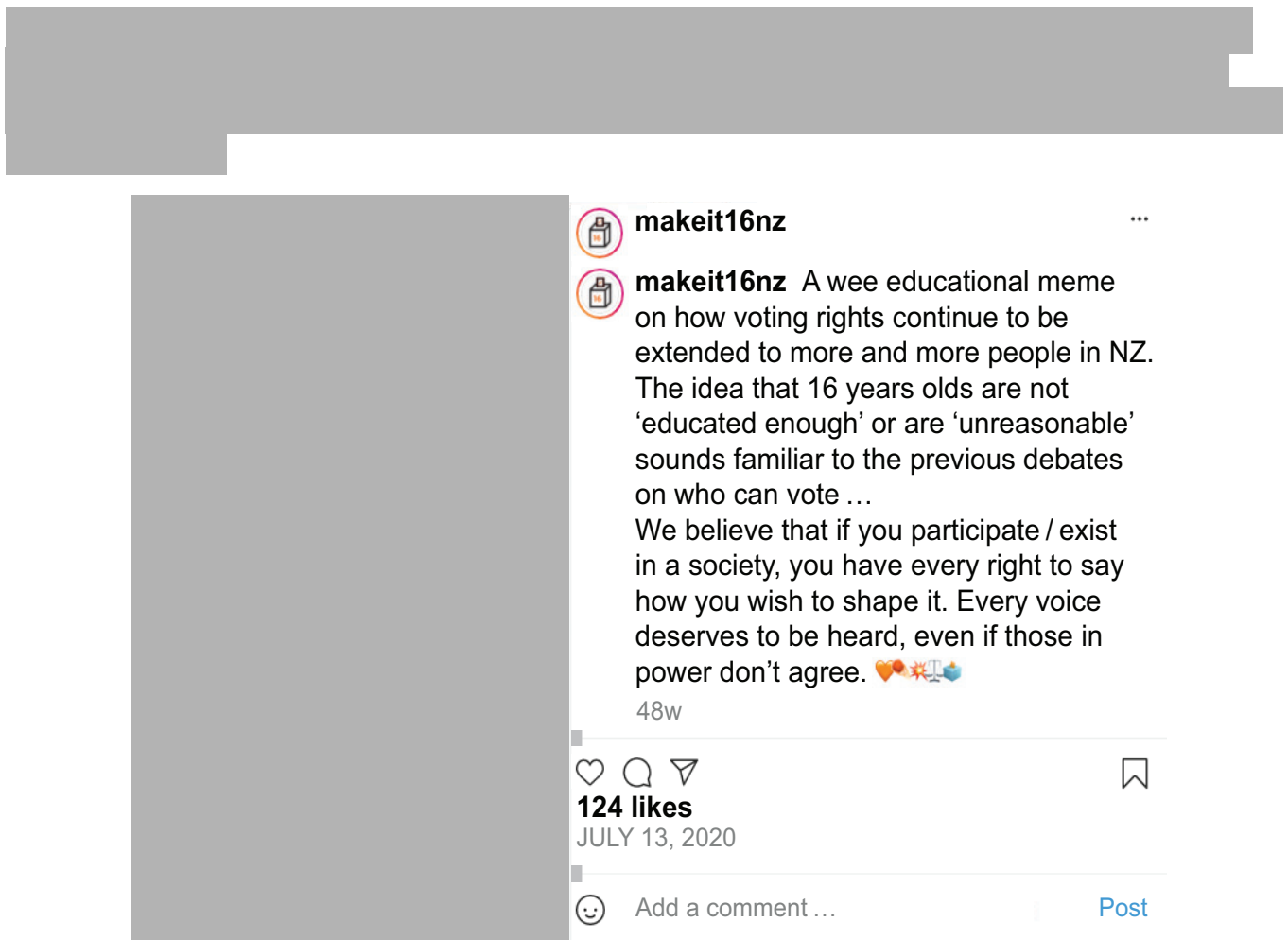
A lawyer and political commentator writing in 2019

SOCIAL FORCES THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE CONFLICT, AND THEIR EFFECTS

RESOURCE C: Campaigning

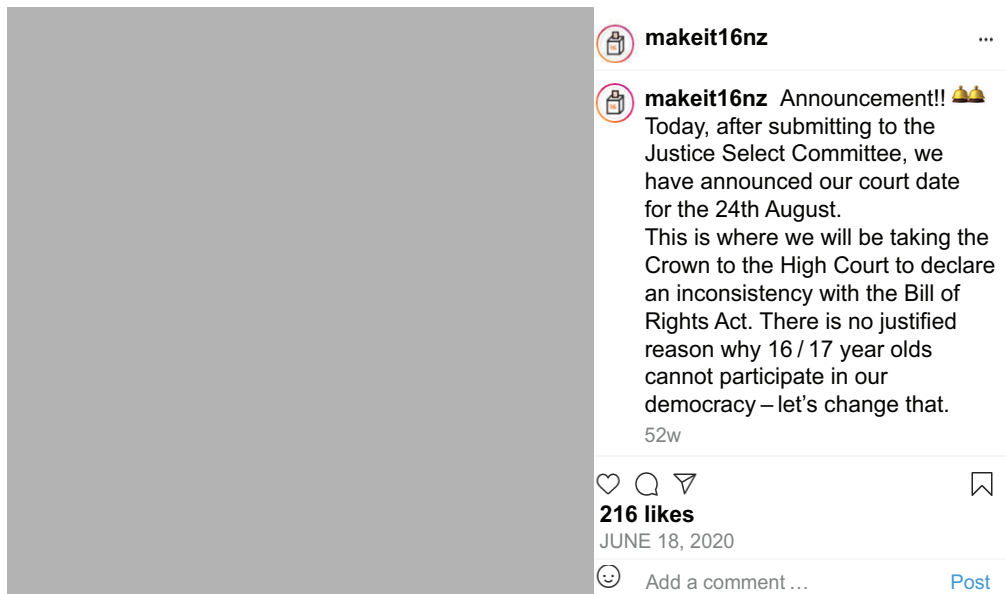
Make it 16 Campaign

Since 1974, the voting age in New Zealand has been 18. This is something Make it 16 wants to change. Make it 16 was formed in July 2019 out of a group of young activists, both above and below the present voting age, seeking to lower the voting age in Aotearoa New Zealand. Make it 16 is a party-neutral, youth-led campaign, advocating for more people's voices to count in New Zealand's democracy.



Since 2019, Make it 16 has launched at Parliament, fostered public discussion through media mentions, submitted to a select committee around electoral reform, connected with overseas movements to extend the voting age to 16, become an incorporated society, and filed at the High Court for inconsistency with the Bill of Rights Act of 1990, around age discrimination.

Make it 16's lawyer acknowledged that the current voting age of 18 was legally valid, but argued that 16- and 17-year-olds were "competent and mature enough to vote".

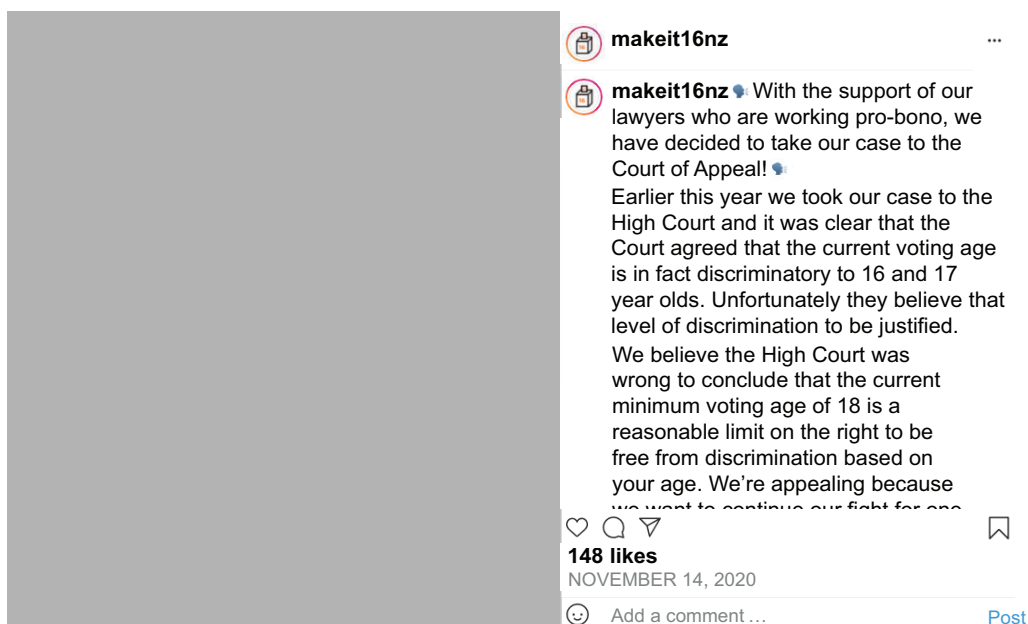


As part of their campaign, Make it 16 members spoke to several media outlets, including Three's *The Project* and TVNZ's *Breakfast*, online magazine and news site *The Spinoff*, and radio network *Newstalk ZB*.

The case was unsuccessful, with the High Court Justice issuing a decision stating that “restricting voting to people aged 18 was a justified limit on the right not to be subject to age discrimination”. She pointed out that “other New Zealand laws put the line between adults and children at 18 years; 18 was within the range of reasonable alternatives; and the vast majority of countries had a voting age of 18”.



In November 2020, the group decided to take their case to the Court of Appeal.



RESOURCE D: Popular views

Although some people in society want to lower the voting age in New Zealand, it is difficult to achieve this change when the popular view is to keep the “status quo” (the way it is).

Saying “no” to 16

The idea of lowering the voting age in New Zealand has not tended to be popular. A poll in 2014 of nearly 3,000 adults found that only seven per cent thought it should happen.

[Redacted]

Emotional immaturity, susceptibility to manipulation, and lack of life experience were commonly cited as reasons not to lower the voting age. Here are a selection of the responses:

- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]

An opinion piece by the law and order spokesperson for New Zealand First in 2019


The Make it 16 movement is campaigning for the voting age to be lowered to 16, taking the issue to the courts.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]



The fact that youth don't vote is not a poor reflection on politics, but a very real reflection of the laziness and apathy that plagues our younger generations. The responsibility actually should be placed squarely on the youth that cannot even be bothered turning up to vote – not the system. The system clearly does not have to change when the 18–24-year-olds already have the highest enrolment numbers. What needs to change is the sense of personal responsibility in our young people. It seems they all want the 'personal freedoms' that our great country provides but are unwilling to accept the 'personal responsibilities' that must come with it in equal measure.

Acknowledgements

Material from the following sources has been adapted for use in this examination (accessed 14 June 2021).

Introduction

Text: Watters, S. (2021, January 21). *Should the voting age be lowered to 16?* New Zealand History. <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/classroom/contexts-activities/should-voting-age-be-lowered-to-16>

Resource A

Texts: Watters, S. (2021, January 21). *Should the voting age be lowered to 16?* New Zealand History. <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/classroom/contexts-activities/should-voting-age-be-lowered-to-16>

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Texts: Watters, S. (2021, January 21). *Should the voting age be lowered to 16?* New Zealand History. <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/classroom/contexts-activities/should-voting-age-be-lowered-to-16>

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Images: Make it 16 NZ [@makeit16nz]. (2020, July 13). *A wee educational meme on how voting rights continue to be extended to more and more people in NZ*. [Meme]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CCKsSXlg61o/>

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Resource D

Texts: Wood, B. (2017, July 31). *What's there to fear from lowering the voting age?* Victoria University of Wellington—Te Herenga Waka. <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/news/2017/07/whats-there-to-fear-from-lowering-the-voting-age>

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