

A large crowd of stylized human figures in various shades of blue and purple, with one central figure in white. The figures are arranged in a dense, slightly blurred crowd, creating a sense of a large gathering or assembly. The central white figure stands out prominently, with its arms raised in a gesture of triumph or leadership. The overall composition suggests themes of community, leadership, and collective action.

# Politics and Power

# Karakia | MANAWA MAI

Manawa mai te mauri nuku  
Manawa mai te mauri rangi

Ko te mauri kai au

He mauri tipua

Ka pakaru mai te po

Tau mai te mauri

Haumi e, hui e, taiki e

Embrace the life force of the earth, embrace the  
life force of the sky

The life force I have fathered is powerful, and  
shatters all darkness

Come great life force,

Join it, gather it, it is done

# WAIATA PUREA NEI



- Pura nei, e te hau  
Horoia, e te ua  
Whitiwhitia, e te ra  
Mahea ake nga, poraruraru  
Makere ana, nga here
- E rere, wairua, e rere  
ki nga ao, o te rangi  
Whitiwhitia, e te ra  
Mahea ake nga, poraruraru  
Makere ana nga here (x2)

A photograph of a red pawn and a group of yellow pawns on a wooden surface. The red pawn is on the left, and the yellow pawns are on the right. The background is a blurred grey.

# Politics and Power

Sociology for social practice 2023

C Tunncliffe

With special acknowledgement to Peter Mathewson



# Democracy

## What is Democracy?

The word democracy comes from the Greek words "demos", meaning people, and "kratos" meaning power; so democracy can be thought of as "power of the people": a way of governing which depends on the will of the people.

There are so many different models of democratic government around the world that it is sometimes easier to understand the idea of democracy in terms of what it definitely is not.

Democracy, then, is not autocracy or dictatorship, where one person rules; and it is not oligarchy, where a small segment of society rules. Properly understood, democracy should not even be "rule of the majority", if that means that minorities' interests are ignored completely. A democracy, at least in theory, is government on behalf of all the people, according to their "will".

# Why democracy?

The idea of democracy derives its moral strength – and popular appeal – from two (2) key principles:

**1: Individual autonomy:** The idea that no-one should be subject to rules which have been imposed by others. People should be able to control their own lives (within reason).

**2: Equality:** The idea that everyone should have the same opportunity to influence the decisions that affect people in society.

These principles are intuitively appealing, and they help to explain why democracy is so popular. Of course we feel it is fair that we should have as much chance as anyone else to decide on common rules!

The problems arise when we consider how the principles can be put into practice, because we need a mechanism for deciding how to address conflicting views. Because it offers a simple mechanism, democracy tends to be "rule of the majority"; but rule of the majority can mean that some people's interests are never represented.

# Democracy in the modern world

While democracies share common features, there is no single model of democracy.  
*UN Resolution on promoting and consolidating democracy (A/RES/62/7)*

Today there are as many different forms of democracy as there are democratic nations in the world. No two systems are exactly the same and no one system can be taken as a "model". There are presidential and parliamentary democracies, democracies that are federal or unitary, democracies that use a proportional voting system, and ones that use a majoritarian system, democracies which are also monarchies, and so on.

One thing that unites modern systems of democracy, and which also distinguishes them from the ancient model, is the use of representatives of the people. Instead of taking part directly in law making, modern democracies use elections to select representatives who are sent by the people to govern on their behalf. Such a system is known as representative democracy.

It can lay some claim to being "democratic" because it is, at least to some degree, based on the two principles above: equality of all (one person – one vote), and the right of every individual to some degree of personal autonomy.

# Representative democracy

Representative democracy, also known as indirect democracy, is a type of democracy where elected delegates represent a group of people, in contrast to direct democracy.

Nearly all modern Western-style democracies function as some type of representative democracy.

Questions: Who represents you?

Who represents those who may be excluded?



# Problems with democracy

Democracy doesn't mean much if you are hungry or homeless, or have no health care or your children can't go to school; even if you have a vote, democracy is not effective.

*Susan George, President of ATTAC*

**Voter apathy:** For a number of years, there has been concern about the status of democracy, perhaps particularly in the more established democracies. Much of this is based on the decreasing levels of citizen participation at elections, which appear to indicate a lack of interest and involvement on the part of citizens. A low voter turnout calls into question the legitimacy of so-called democratically elected governments, which are, in some countries, actually elected by a minority of the total electorate.

In New Zealand 2014 election - 4.516 million (2014) - 85 percent of the eligible voting population voted in the 2014 General Election.

Some stats: Women (87 percent) were more likely to vote than men (83 percent). People in the older age groups were also more likely to vote than those in the younger groups. Seventy percent of people aged 18-24 voted, compared with 94 percent of those aged 65 and over

1.139 million did not vote



# To think about: your perfect world

Spend a few minutes reflecting individually, and then discuss in a small group:

- What would your ideal society, community or world be like?
- How would you balance the rights and freedoms of individuals, with some collective belonging and responsibility?
  - Should people care for each other in some way, if so how?
  - What is the role for the state, or Government?



Politics

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# Politics



Action and activities that concern how power is exercised (Harris, 2017, p.11)



The activities associated with the governance of a country or area, especially the debate between parties having power



the practice and theory of influencing other people on a global, civic or individual level. More narrowly, it refers to achieving and exercising positions of governance — organized control over a human community, particularly a state . . . the study or practice of the distribution of power and resources within a given community . . . as well as the interrelationship(s) between communities.



# Ideology, what do we mean?



*A system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy*



*a world view, a system of values, attitudes and beliefs which an individual, group or society holds to be true or important ; these are shared by a culture or society about how that society should function*

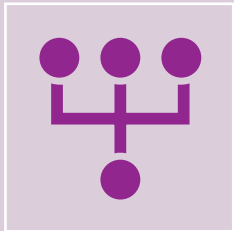


*a set of conscious and/or unconscious ideas . . . a comprehensive normative vision, a way of looking at things . . . a set of ideas proposed by the dominant class of a society to all members of this society*

# Political Ideology



A certain ethical set of ideals, principles, doctrines, myths, or symbols of a social movement, institution, class, or large group that explains how society should work, and offers some political and cultural blueprint for a certain social order. A political ideology largely concerns itself with how to allocate power and to what ends it should be used.



*May include two dimensions:*

*Goals: how society should work*

*Methods: the most appropriate ways to achieve the ideal arrangement*

# Principles for Wellbeing

Justice

Need

Risk

Equality

Freedom

Citizenship

Sustainable  
Development

Resilience

(Cheyne, O'Brien, &  
Belgrave, 2008)

to achieve well being, three broad questions:

Are we responsible for one another, as citizens, as taxpayers, as employees/employers, as family/whānau, or as members of an iwi or community?

If we are responsible, what form should this take: financial support, protection, or care?

Who should provide support or protection: the state, the market, the family, or charities? (Victoria University)

Different ideologies answer these questions differently



# Competing Ideological labels: Left and Right Wing

The terms left and right wing, and centre, centre-right, and centre-left are often used to describe political ideologies, positions, parties, and individual politicians

You may have heard the terms 'left wing' and 'right wing' before - a politician might be accused of being 'too left wing', or a newspaper might be known as a 'right-wing publication'. Both of these terms refer to the political spectrum.

**In a nutshell:** Think of the political spectrum as a scale with two opposite ends - the left and the right.

Each end represents a group of principles, and those on the left tend to oppose those on the right.

Most of these principles are about the best way to organise society in order for people to thrive.




## Fun facts

The terms *left* and *right* originated in the French Revolution, from 1789

Supporters of the revolution sat on the left - supporters of the monarchy (king) sat on the right.

Over the nineteenth century the terms gradually moved from seating positions to refer to political positions, and were adopted by parties, more so on the “left”

Came to be applied to British politics from the 1906 general election, which saw the emergence of the Labour Party



## Sociologist Robert MacIver, 1947

- *“The right is always the party sector associated with the interests of the upper or dominant classes, the left the sector expressive of the lower economic or social classes, and the centre that of the middle classes . . . The conservative right has defended entrenched prerogatives, privileges and powers; the left has attacked them. The right has been more favorable to the aristocratic position, to the hierarchy of birth or of wealth; the left has fought for the equalization of advantage or of opportunity, for the claims of the less advantaged”.*

The Left could  
include . . .

Progressives

Communists

Social democrats

Civil libertarians

Social-Liberals

Greens

*Socialists*

*Anarchists*



The **Right** could  
include . . .

Social authoritarians

*Neoliberals*

Conservatives

Theocrats

Monarchists

Nationalists

Neo-Nazis

Capitalists

*Economic libertarians*

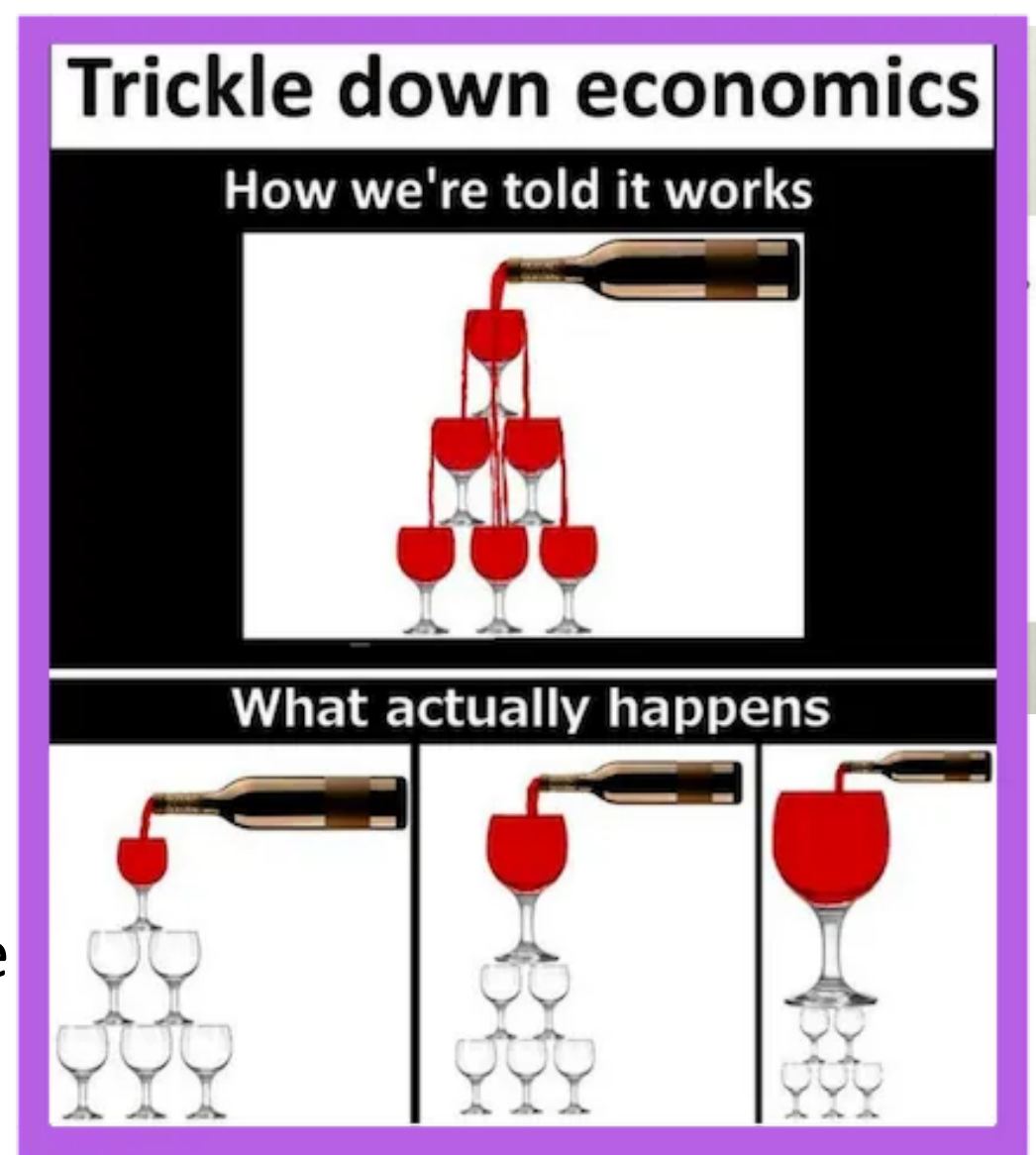
*Fascists*

# Right wing is associated with

- Individual responsibility
- Private property
- Free market economics
- Economic growth and development, freedom for business to grow and prosper, employers' rights
- Competition, ruthless efficiency
- Limited government, deregulation
- Minimal taxation, flatter tax rates
- Global free trade

## Right continued . . .

- *Trickle down*
- Welfare a minimal *safety net* only
- *Family values*
- *One law for all*
- Punitive emphasis in criminal justice (privatised prisons)
- Strong military defence



# Left wing is associated with

- Social justice, egalitarianism
- Collective responsibility for a just and caring society
- Social policies that advantage the working class and other disadvantaged groups, may include “positive discrimination”
- Government intervention in the economy where needed for good of community and people’s wellbeing
- Environmental protection
- Regulation where needed



## Left continued . . . .

- Industrial relations policies supporting workers' rights
- Government provision of health, education and social services
- Progressive taxation to fund government services and redistribution
- Welfare as a citizen's right to support according to need
- Rehabilitation emphasis in criminal justice
- Peace and disarmament



But it's  
complicated . . .

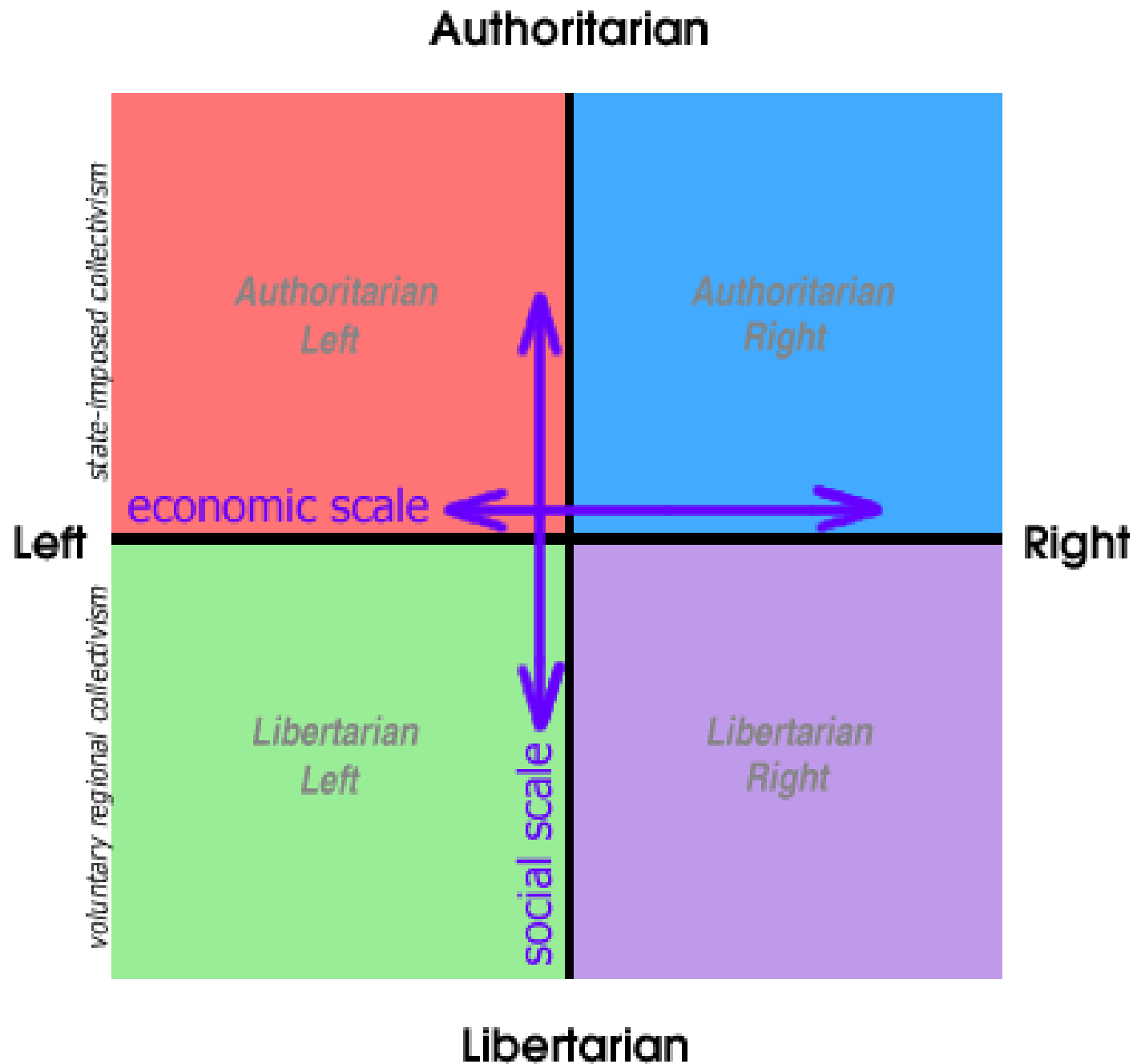
- Categories not clearly mutually exclusive, some overlap, eg *Third Way*
- Some authors have suggested a continuum, however no agreed precise measure or scale of left or right-ness
- Positions / parties that don't easily fit:
  - Indigenous parties, eg Te Pāti Māori
  - Populist parties, eg New Zealand First
  - Parties / governments in non-Western countries, eg Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood
- Problem of adoption of a package of positions on a range of issues that is not necessarily logical or consistent

Labels can simplistically conflate quite  
different positions . . .  
Left wing?



Right wing?





# One Alternative: the Political Compass



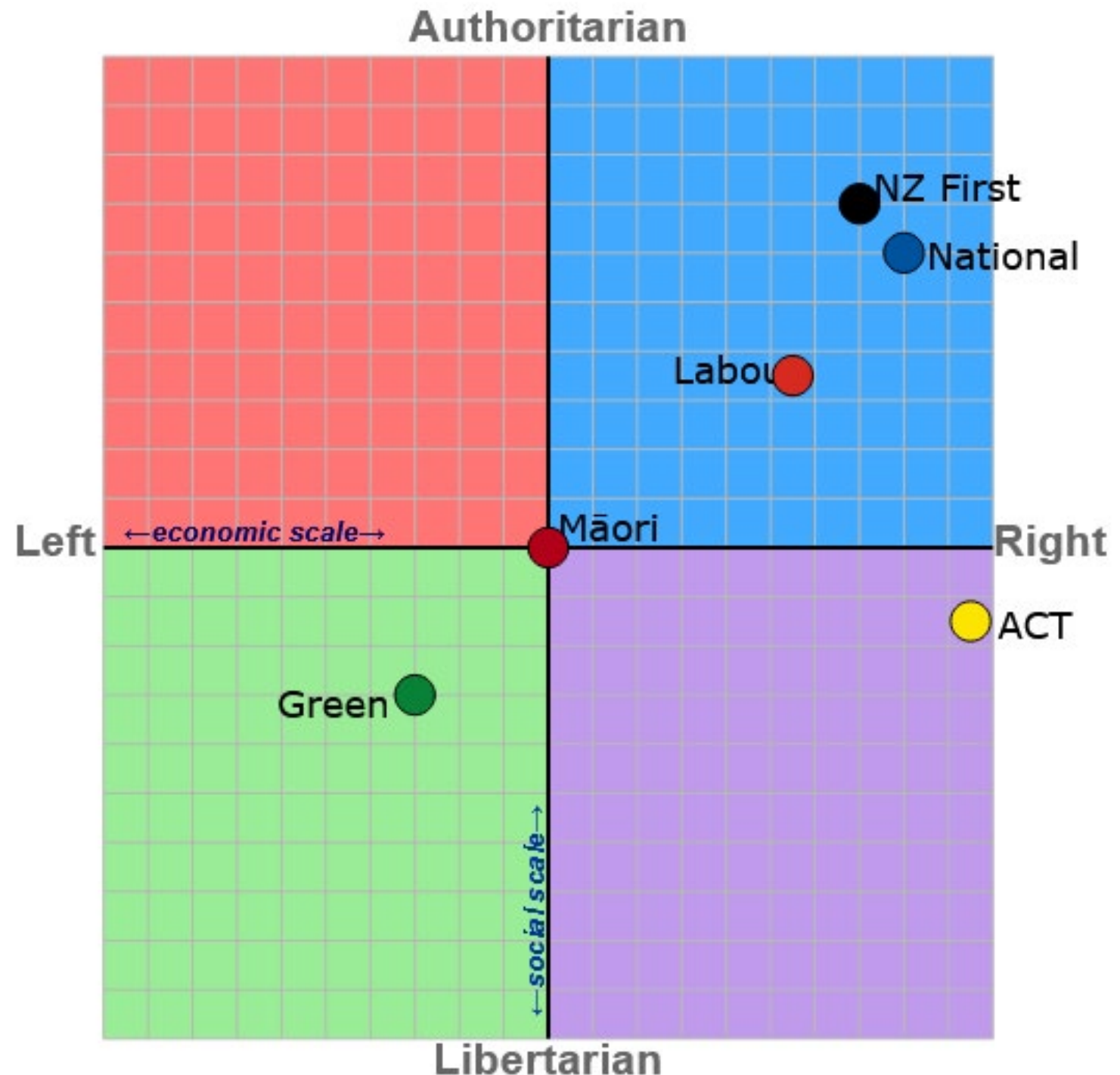
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## About the Political Compass

- The starting point of the (original) Political Compass was in 2001, when we recognised the inadequacies of the standard political measure: single left-right axis
- It's certainly fine for discussing economics but to this day is still widely — and wrongly — used to describe social attitudes. France's National Front, for example, is popularly described as “far right”, yet its economic policies have sometimes been to the left of even the French Socialist Party. The party's real extremism is in its social attitudes. That's why we **added a social scale**.
- Our essential point is that Left and Right, although far from obsolete, are essentially a measure of economics. As political establishments adopt either enthusiastically or reluctantly the prevailing economic orthodoxy — the neo-liberal strain of capitalism — the Left-Right division between mainstream parties becomes increasingly blurred. Instead, party differences tend to be more about identity issues. In the narrowing debate, our social scale is more crucial than ever.

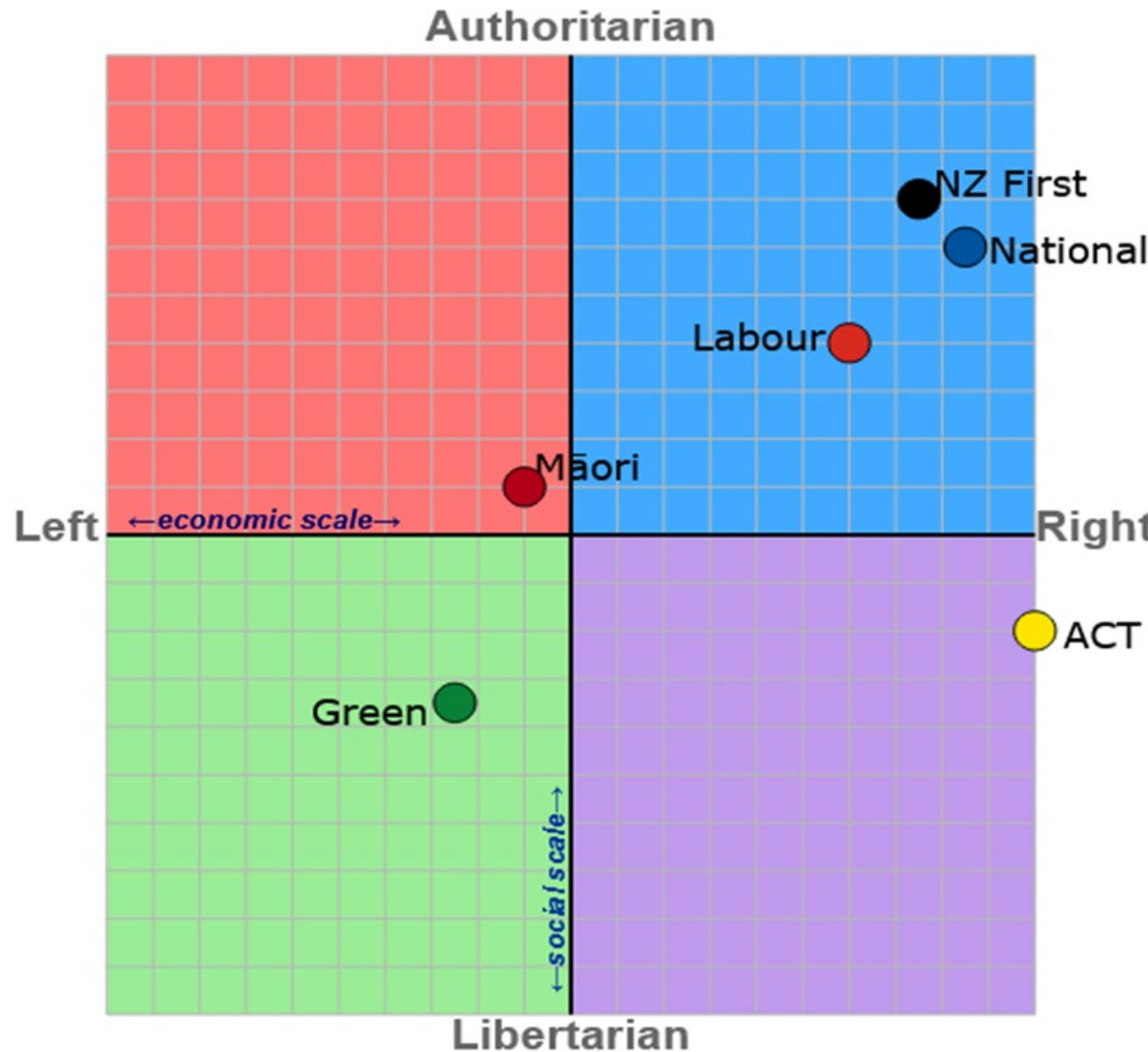


# New Zealand Election 2020 (Political Compass)





# New Zealand Election 2023 (Political Compass)



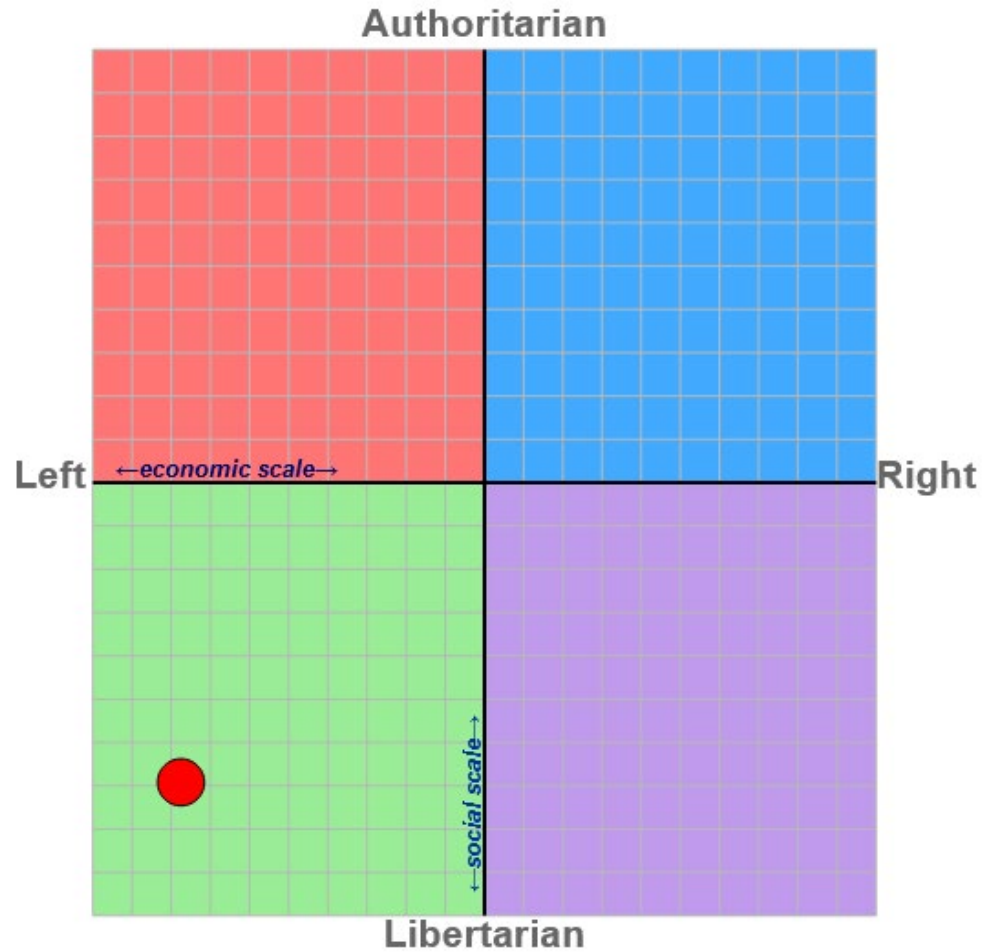
# Take the test

- <https://www.politicalcompass.org/test>

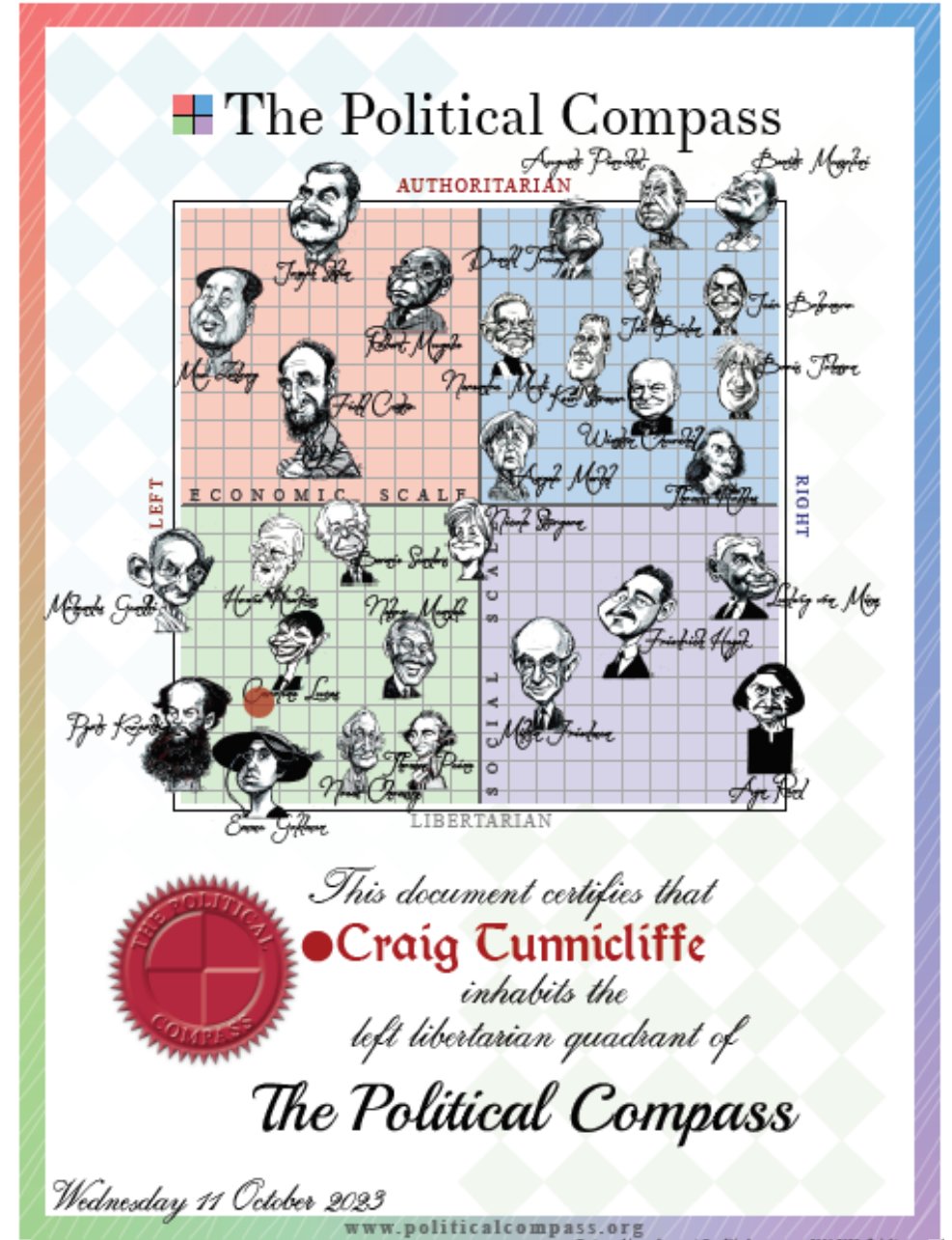
# Your Political Compass

Economic Left/Right: -7.75

Social Libertarian/Authoritarian: -6.92



# My results



# Why does it matter?

- **Why does it matter?**
- It's useful to understand the political spectrum for three reasons:
- **It can help you to spot bias.** If a newspaper, news channel, or news site is known as having a left-wing or right-wing bias, it's useful to keep that in mind when reading or watching their reports, as it might affect how they present certain people and events.
- **It can help you to reflect on your own bias.** As you read through this guide, think about whether you lean more towards the left or right, and how this might impact your own views and interpretation of events.
- **It can help you to understand why a new policy or law is made.** Very often, political parties will suggest policies that align with their place on the spectrum. These policies can then become law.
- Here's a brief video introduction: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5u3UCz0TM5Q>

# 1 news vote compass: How do your views compare with the political parties?

- **Where do you sit? Find out [here](#) at [1News.co.nz/VoteCompass](https://1News.co.nz/VoteCompass)**
- Nearly half a million people used the academic-designed tool during the last election.
- By using [Vote Compass](#), New Zealanders can find out which political parties they are with on the key issues facing the country
- You can choose to agree or disagree with 30 statements about issues like health, education, the environment, and tax. Vote Compass will then analyse your answers with the policies of different parties and show you how similar they are to your own views.