

Do Citizens and Communities Have the News and Information they Need and Want in a Digital Age?

This article sets out evidence of social and technological trends that challenge traditional notions of civic engagement, particularly New Zealand's changing demography and media markets. It is intended to provide insight for future policies on civics and media matters.

The role of civics and media in a democratic society

News and information assist citizens and communities to participate in democratic processes, develop a sense of connectedness and attachment to New Zealand, solve problems, coordinate activities and establish systems of public accountability. In the digital age, news quality and access, and citizen engagement in democratic processes, are being transformed. Traditional forms of citizen engagement are supplemented by 'modern' methods of participation facilitated by technological media developments. The news media landscape is rapidly evolving. Citizens

have an abundance of news from around the world at their fingertips, at the same time as, in terms of quality, news favours immediacy over investigation and analysis. In so far as news and information are the fuel for the engine of a well-functioning society, New Zealand faces a fresh set of challenges and opportunities if we want to retain our position in the top tier of socially and economically successful societies.

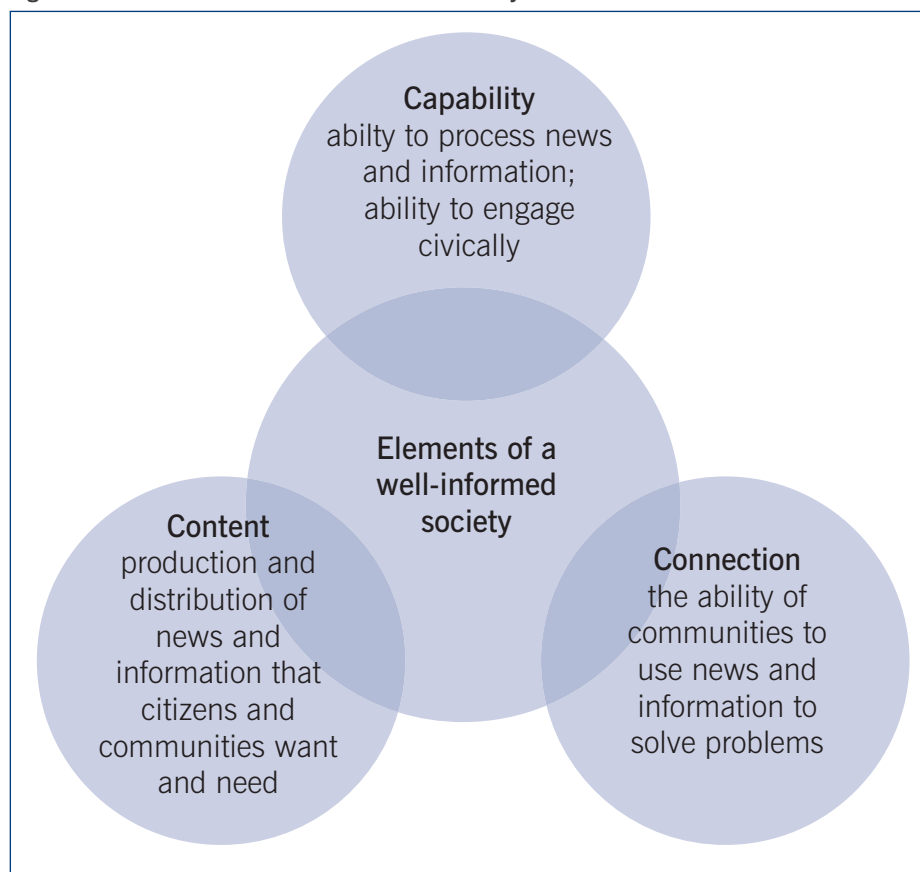
As Figure 1 shows, the infrastructure of a well-informed society includes capability, content and connection. Nations need inclusive economic and political institutions for continued

prosperity (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012). Countries that are inclusive economically and democratically thrive and outperform those that are not. Citizens, communities and businesses depend on well-functioning public and private institutions in order to make decisions. The fair and effective functioning, and legitimacy, of government relies upon citizens having a core level of trust in the governing institution.

New Zealand consistently ranks highly on international measures of good governance. In 2014 New Zealand ranked second on the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, and ninth on the World Press Freedom Index. In 2013 the World Bank rated New Zealand in the 98th percentile for 'voice and accountability' in its Worldwide Governance Indicators. In the OECD Better Life Index, New Zealand is ranked in the top third of OECD countries for civic engagement (OECD, 2015a): eighth of 36 countries for consultation on rule making, and 11th for voter turnout (higher than the average for the OECD, which was 68%). This state

Penny Gault is a policy adviser at the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. Todd Kriebel is a senior economist at the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research.

Figure 1: Infrastructure of a Well-informed Society



of affairs provides tremendous ‘public value’ because it keeps New Zealand an attractive place to live, work and visit (Moore, 1995).¹ As Suzanne Snively, Transparency International New Zealand chair, argues, ‘a clean reputation makes us attractive to do business with and secures qualified migrants and confident tourists’ (Transparency International New Zealand, 2016).

As for all countries, a changing demography, new technology and

rapidly evolving media markets present fresh challenges and opportunities for citizen participation. As Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out, each new generation is a new people who must acquire the knowledge, learn the skills and develop the dispositions or traits of private and public character that undergird a constitutional democracy (de Tocqueville, 1835). Those dispositions must be fostered and nurtured by word and study and by the power of example.

Democracy is not a machine that would go of itself, but must be consciously reproduced.

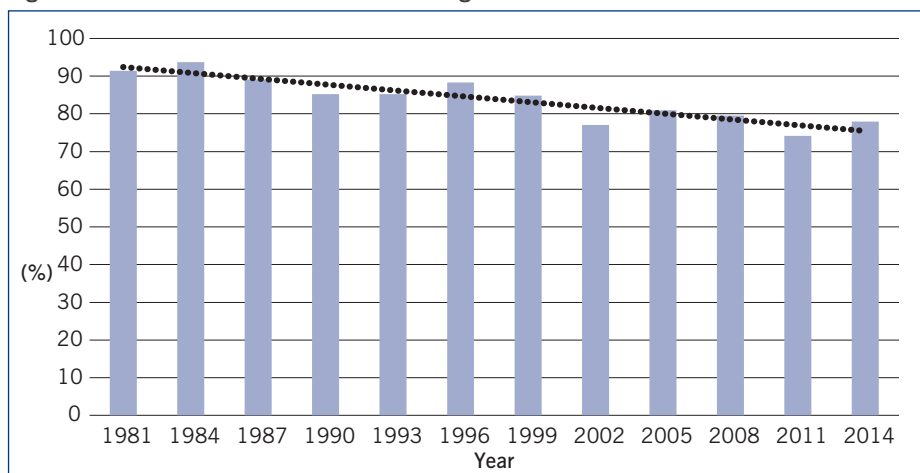
There are social and technological forces at work

A credible argument says it is ‘rational’ not to participate in civic life (Krugman, 1997). If civic engagement entails costs to the individual (e.g. acquiring information, attending town meetings), when the benefit to the individual is weakly associated with any one individual’s participation, then the individual may decide that it is in their interest not to participate. The result is a suboptimal outcome for democratic society as a whole. There are social and technological changes occurring in New Zealand that may influence participation further.

New Zealand fell from second to fourth place in the Corruption Perceptions Index in 2015. Transparency International predicts that further downgrades in New Zealand’s scores are likely ‘if areas such as access to information and governance of the environment fail to keep pace with the trends in northern European countries’ (Transparency International New Zealand, 2016). Voter turnout at New Zealand general elections is in decline, with less than 80% turnout of all enrolled voters in four of the last five elections, as shown in Figure 2. Among those enrolled voters who did not vote, the most commonly cited reason for not voting in 2008 and 2011 was disengagement: ‘I didn’t get round to it or I forgot about it/am not interested’.

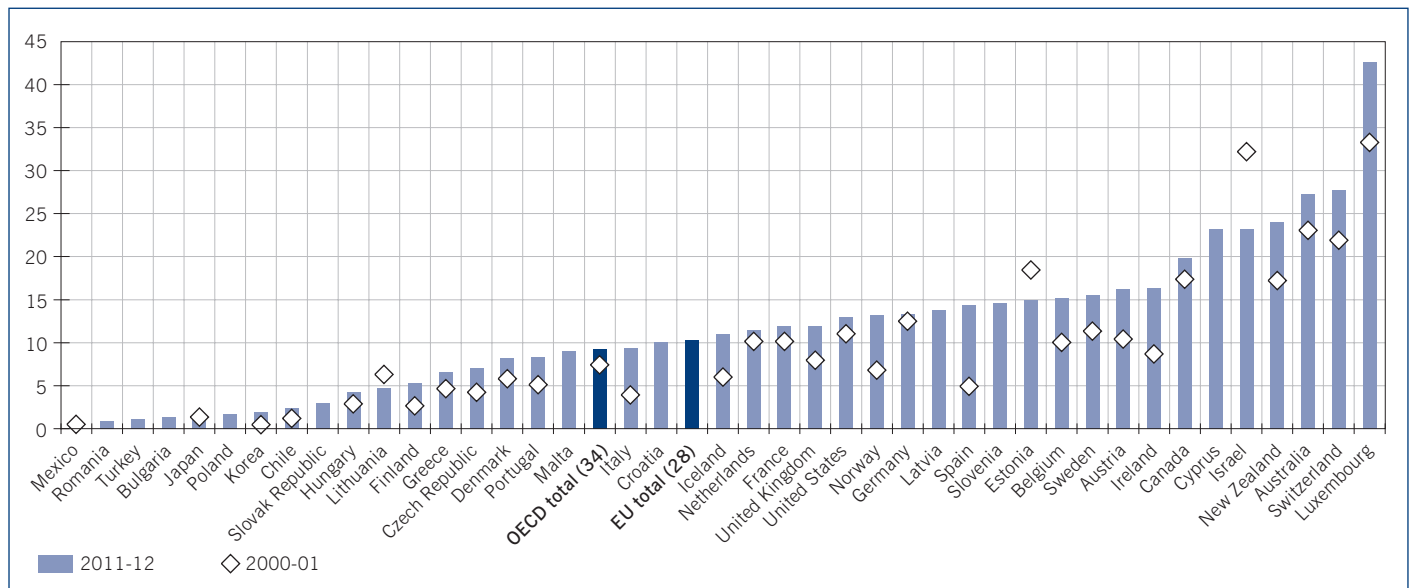
The distribution of young New Zealanders’ civics knowledge and intentions is the widest of 36 countries in the 2008 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study, with some of the highest and lowest scores for civic knowledge (Schulz et al., 2009). Ethnicity, gender and parents’ occupational status have an apparent impact on students’ civics knowledge and intentions (Hipkins and Satherley, 2012). Results from the study showed that mean civics knowledge scores for students identifying as European or Asian were considerably higher than those of students identifying as Māori or Pasifika; girls generally achieved higher results than boys; and Māori and Pasifika

Figure 2: Voter turnout of enrolled voters at general elections



Source: Electoral Commission, December 2014

Figure 3: Foreign-born population, 2000-01 and 2011-12 – Percentage of total population



Source: Settling In: OECD Indicators of Immigrant Integration, OECD, 2015

boys’ civics knowledge was particularly low (ibid.).

Young people engage differently

Traditional forms of citizen engagement are now supplemented, or replaced, by ‘modern’ methods of participation. Largely facilitated by technological media developments, these methods bring new ways for communities to engage and participate. For example, Wellington City Council used Loomio to gather ideas and feedback from the public for new alcohol policies. Loomio, and similar technologies such as NationBuilder, can help build consensus rather than conflict. Research conducted by Ipsos shows that traditional forms of engagement are still utilised, including taking an active role in the community; joining a political party; presenting views to an elected representative; attending a demonstration; standing for office; taking an active part in a lobby or campaign; boycotting products for political or other value-based reasons; signing a petition. But these are supplemented by contemporary forms of engagement, including using social media; contributing to blogs; getting involved in an E-campaign; joining an online advocacy group; and engaging in crowd-sourced funding for a cause (Evans, Stoker and Halupka, 2015).

Not only are younger generations using contemporary tools to engage; Pew research in the United States suggests that younger generations engage with civic

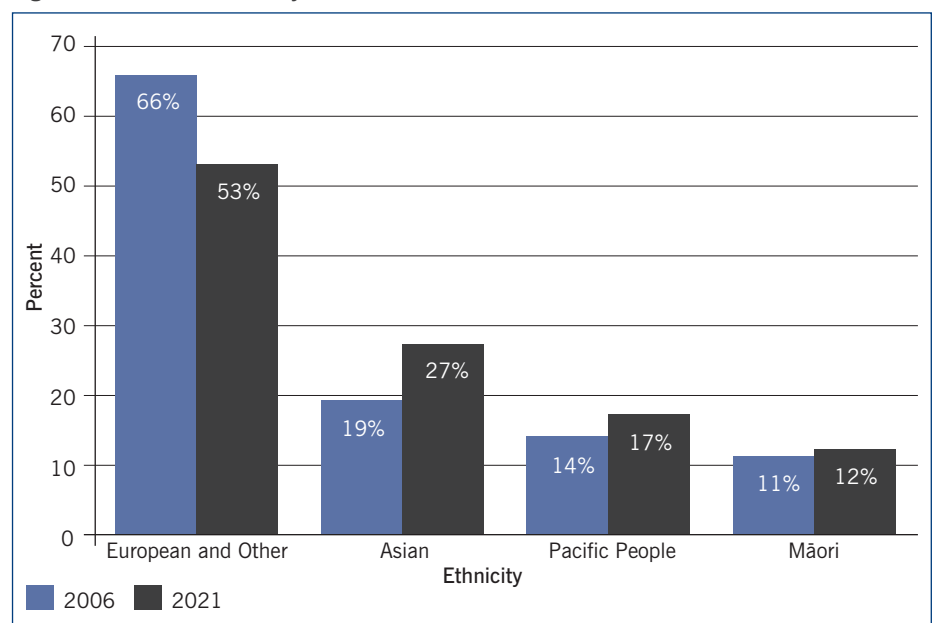
issues independently from organised politics (2014). As digital natives in the centre of online networks interacting with different people all over the world, millennials (ranging in age from 18 to 33) manage their engagement with a diverse range of issues. Although half of US millennials describe themselves as political independents, they have strong liberal views on many political and social issues (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Research conducted by the Museum of Australian Democracy shows agreement across the generations on the current state of democracy (Evans, Stoker and Halupka, 2015). Young Australians are

interested in democracy, but participate very differently from older generations. Generation Y (born between the early 1980s and early 2000s) uses a wider range of sources to gather information about politics and elections than older generations, including friends, family and social networking sites. Despite a wider breadth of ways to engage, however, Generation Y sees elections as the most effective tool for participation. This is followed closely by a combination of traditional forms and more contemporary forms of engagement.

While further research is required to examine the current state and trends

Figure 4: Auckland ethnicity 2006-2021



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Figure 5: Funding Public Media in 15 Democracies

| Country | Year | Public Funding (millions) | Non-Public Funding (millions) | Total Revenue (millions) | Per Capita Public Funding | Per Capita Total Revenue |
|-------------------------|------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Australia (ABC) | 2008 | 728.9 (82.3%) | 157.0 (17.7%) | 885.9 | 34.01 | 41.34 |
| Belgium (VRT/RTBF) | 2008 | 805.1 (77.8%) | 229.8 (22.2%) | 1,034.9 | 74.62 | 95.92 |
| Canada (CBC) | 2008 | 1,013.3 (63.6%) | 579.7 (36.4%) | 1,593.0 | 30.42 | 47.83 |
| Denmark (DR) | 2008 | 717.0 (91.0%) | 70.9 (9.0%) | 787.9 | 130.52 | 143.42 |
| Finland (YLE) | 2007 | 526.0 (95.0%) | 27.7 (5.0%) | 553.7 | 99.00 | 104.21 |
| France (F2/F3) | 2008 | 3,211.1 (74.0%) | 1,128.2 (26.0%) | 4,339.3 | 51.56 | 69.68 |
| Germany (ARD/ZDF) | 2008 | 10,778.5 (86.2%) | 1,721.5 (13.8%) | 12,500.0 | 131.27 | 152.23 |
| Ireland (RTE) | 2008 | 317.1 (45.6%) | 378.3 (54.4%) | 695.4 | 71.65 | 157.13 |
| Japan (NHK) | 2009 | 6,900.0 (100%) | --- | 6,900.0 | 54.03 | 54.03 |
| Netherlands (NPO) | 2007 | 822.3 (68.0%) | 386.9 (32.0%) | 1,209.2 | 50.00 | 73.53 |
| New Zealand (TVNZ/NZoA) | 2008 | 126.5 (38.5%) | 202.4 (61.5%) | 328.9 | 29.63 | 77.05 |
| Norway (NRK) | 2007 | 636.9 (95.0%) | 33.6 (5.0%) | 670.5 | 133.57 | 140.62 |
| Sweden (SVT) | 2008 | 533.5 (93.0%) | 40.1 (7.0%) | 573.6 | 57.87 | 62.22 |
| United Kingdom (BBC) | 2009 | 5,608.8 (77.9%) | 1,593.4 (22.1%) | 7,202.2 | 90.70 | 116.43 |
| United States (PBS/NPR) | 2008 | 1,139.3 (40.0%) | 1,710.0 (60.0%) | 2,849.3 | 3.75 | 9.37 |

Source: Benson and Power, Free Press, 2011

of civic engagement in New Zealand, it appears that these emerging trends have a global reach.

Our demography is changing fast

New Zealand has been diversifying faster than almost any other OECD country, as shown in Figure 3. The percentage of people living in New Zealand who were born overseas was 25.2% in 2013, compared with 19% in 2001. This diversity enriches New Zealand. But the speed and breadth of change over the last 20 years may present some challenges for civic engagement.

With 40% of the population made up of migrants, Auckland is a ‘superdiverse’ city (McNichol, 2013), with Toronto the only more diverse city in comparable countries. Projections for Auckland suggest that by some time in the mid-2020s no ethnic group will exceed 50% of the population, as implied by Figure 4.

Results from Statistics New Zealand’s 2014 General Social Survey show that people with Māori ethnicity are far more likely to say they feel very strongly that they belong to New Zealand (71%), compared with Europeans (56%), Pasifika people (45%) and Asian people

(24%). New Zealanders on the whole find it either easy or very easy to express their identity; however, there is a wide distribution between ethnicities.

Media markets are in flux

Newspapers have traditionally been a central source of the news and information that is needed and wanted by citizens and communities. The Advertising Standards Authority reports advertising industry turnover for newspapers in New Zealand dropping from \$790 million in 2004 to \$494 million in 2013 (Advertising Standards Authority, 2014). Over the same period, the newspaper share of total advertising dropped from 38% to 22%. By contrast with newspapers, there is a history of public funding to support ‘broadcast’ news media. New Zealand per capita public broadcasting expenditure puts us in a group with Australia and Canada, below many European nations and above the US, as shown by Figure 5.

NZ On Air research shows that New Zealanders are making use of new media and new technology (NZ On Air, 2014). The research also suggests that traditional media, such as linear television, live radio and newspapers (including online), still

dominate and will do so for some time; but roughly half of Facebook and Twitter users get news on those sites, according to the Pew Research Center (2014).

In the United Kingdom, the Ofcom annual review of public service broadcasting 2014 observed that the proportion of the adult population who claim to use the internet for local news was up 28% between 2007 and 2014. In the same period the number of internet users who agreed the internet is very influential in shaping public opinion about political and other important issues rose from 52% to 75%. People aged 16–24 were more likely than those aged 55 and over to use the internet to access news (60% compared with 21%), and were less likely to use the television (56% compared with 90%) (Ofcom, 2014). This trend is also evident in Canada, where 57% of 28–34 year-olds use the internet as their primary source of news, as shown in Figure 6.

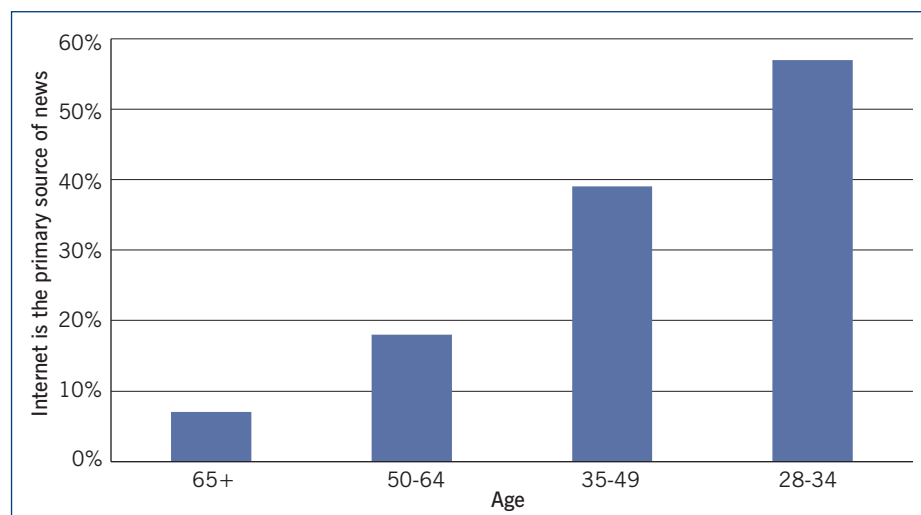
In New Zealand, online news reading continues to grow, as print news readership is declining. According to Nielsen, since 2008 the number of New Zealanders accessing news online has grown from 25% to 54% (Nielsen, 2015). Radio New Zealand reports that as at 16 June 2015,

users of its website radionz.co.nz were up 75% compared to the previous year, with 3.31 million users (Gibson, 2015). In the month of January 2016, radionz.co.nz had 977,256 users and 4.1 million page views, while The Wireless, its site for those 'who have grown up in the digital age', had 108,020 users and 169,060 page views (Radio New Zealand, 2016). In response to media consumption trends, Television New Zealand launched ONE News Now in July 2015 as a purpose-built platform for multiple devices, delivering anywhere, anytime news. ONE News Now is designed to capture both the younger, online news demographic and the older, linear television news demographic.

The internet allows for new forms of self-expression, and empowers citizens to choose where to get their content, how to share it and how to report it themselves. This is, overall, positive; however, citizens may have difficulty finding information and establishing source reliability. The benefit of wide distribution of news through a diverse range of channels has come at the expense of information gathering and investigative reporting, which can ultimately shift the balance of power: as Bill Girdner observed, 'when journalists don't have presence, others control the information process' (as cited in Federal Communications Commission, 2011).

Additional choice is good for consumers, but also puts financial pressure on the production of 'hard

Figure 6: Internet as a primary source of news (Canada)



Source: Canada Media Fund, 2015

news', and in some cases the accuracy and quality of news. It also results in fragmentation, which in turn has led to new forms of aggregated content that may or may not be well curated from a public interest perspective. UMR research conducted in 2014 shows that 68% of the New Zealand public agree that 'political' news on television focuses too much on politicians' personalities and not enough on real issues (UMR and Coalition for Better Broadcasting).

Civics on the public agenda

The purpose of this article has been to establish the nature and magnitude of the current trends in civics and media, so that consideration can be given to whether they should be on the agenda of society, media

and government. Current trends present both dangers and opportunities. There are dangers that the quality of democracy will be diminished. But there are also wonderful opportunities presented by technological innovation and changing patterns of civic engagement. It remains to be seen whether a new equilibrium of supply and demand for the news and information needed for informed civic participation will be found. At this stage the issue is firmly on the agenda, as the Civics and Media Project goes on to examine.

¹ As Timo Meynhardt explains, 'public value is value for the public ... Any impact on shared experience about the quality of the relationship between the individual and society can be described as public value creation' (Meynhardt, 2009).

References

- Acemoglu, D. and J. Robinson (2012) *Why Nations Fail: the origins of power, prosperity, and poverty*, New York: Crown Publishing Group
- Advertising Standards Authority (2014) *New Zealand Advertising Revenue Turnover: December 2013*, retrieved from http://www.asa.co.nz/industry_turnover/Advertising%20Industry%20Turnover%20Table%20and%20Notes%202013.pdf
- Aspen Institute (2009) *Informing Communities: sustaining democracy in the digital age; the Report of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy*, Washington: Aspen Institute
- Auckland Council (2012) *The Auckland Plan*, Auckland: Auckland Council
- BBC (2015) *Future of News*, retrieved from http://newsimg.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/28_01_15futureofnews.pdf
- Benson, R. and M. Powers (2011) *Public Media and Political Independence: lessons from the future of journalism from around the world*, New York: Free Press
- Canada Media Fund (2015) *The Digital-Only Media Consumer: key findings from a conversation with all-digital millennials*, retrieved from http://trends.cmf-fmc.ca/media/uploads/reports/Digital_Only_Report_Final_v04.pdf
- Evans, M., G. Stoker and M. Halupka (2015) 'Generational divide when "doing politics" vanishes on need to fix it', *The Conversation*, 3 March, retrieved from <http://theconversation.com/generational-divide-when-doing-politics-vanishes-on-need-to-fix-it-37167>
- Federal Communications Commission (2011) *The Information Needs of Communities: the changing media landscape in a broadband age*, retrieved from www.fcc.gov/infoneedsreport
- Gibson, C. (2015) 'RNZ reducing headcount, investing \$10m in capex', *National Business Review*, 17 July
- Hipkins, R. and P. Satherley (2012) *New Zealand Students' Intentions towards Participation in Democratic Processes*, Wellington: Ministry of Education
- Krugman, P. (1997) 'Rat democracy: economics explains a political scandal', *Slate*, 16 May
- Lang, K. (2008) *What Do New Zealand Students Understand about Civic Knowledge and Citizenship?*, Wellington: Ministry of Education
- McNichol, S. (2013) 'Auckland's future: super-diverse city', *Conversations in Integration; a monthly review of good ideas*, 28 November, retrieved from http://citiesofmigration.ca/ezone_stories/aucklands-future-as-a-super-diverse-city/#sthash.hKB0tPTq.dpuf

- Meynhardt, T. (2009) 'Public value inside: what is public value creation?', *International Journal of Public Administration*, 32 (3–4), pp.192–19
- Moore, M. (1995) *Creating Public Value: strategic management in government*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press
- New Zealand Law Commission (2013) *The News Media Meets 'New Media': rights, responsibilities and regulation in the digital age*, Wellington: New Zealand Law Commission
- Nielsen (2015) *Media Trends 2015: how we consumes newspapers, magazines, TV, radio & digital content*, retrieved from https://www.tvnz.co.nz/content/dam/images/tvzn-sales/Insights/TM_New%20Zealand%20Media%20Trends%202015_Summary.pdf
- NZ On Air (2014) *Where are the Audiences?*, retrieved from <http://www.nzonair.govt.nz/research/all-research/where-are-the-audiences/>
- OECD (2013) 'International migration', retrieved from <http://www.compareyourcountry.org/migration?cr=OECD&cr1=null&lg=en&page=0>
- OECD (2015a) *Better Life Index: edition 2015*, retrieved from <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=BLI>
- OECD (2015b) *Settling In: OECD indicators of immigrant integration*, retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/Indicators-of-Immigrant-Integration-2015.pdf>
- Ofcom (2014) *Public Service Broadcasting Annual Report 2014*, retrieved from http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/broadcast/reviews-investigations/psb-review/psb3/PSB_Annual_Report_2014.pdf
- Pew Research Center (2013) *News Use across Social Media Platforms*, retrieved from <http://www.journalism.org/2013/11/14/news-use-across-social-media-platforms>
- Pew Research Center (2014) *Millennials in Adulthood: detached from institutions, networked with friends*, retrieved from <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/>
- Radio New Zealand (2016) 'RNZ audiences', Retrieved from <http://www.radionz.co.nz/about/audience-research>
- Reporters Without Borders (2015) *World Press Freedom Index 2015*, retrieved from <http://index.rsf.org/#!/index-details>
- Schulz, W., J. Ainley, J. Fraillon, D. Kerr and B. Losito (2009) *ICCS 2009 International Report: civic knowledge, attitudes, and engagement among lower-secondary school students in 38 countries*, Amsterdam: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
- Statistics New Zealand (2015a) *2013 Census QuickStats about culture and identity*, retrieved from <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-culture-identity/birthplace.aspx>
- Statistics New Zealand (2015b) *New Zealand General Social Survey: 2014*, Wellington: Statistics New Zealand
- Statistics New Zealand (2015c) *New Zealand Social Indicators: voter turnout*, retrieved from http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/snapshots-of-nz/nz-social-indicators/Home/Trust%20and%20participation%20in%20government/voter-turnout.aspx
- de Tocqueville, A. (1835) *Democracy in America*, London: Saunders and Otley
- Transparency International (2015) *The 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index*, retrieved from <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014>
- Transparency International New Zealand (2016) 'Corruption free? – NZ drops again', retrieved from <http://www.transparency.org.nz/docs/2016//CPI-2015-TINZ-Media-Release.pdf>
- TVNZ (2015) 'TVNZ launches ONE News Now', 6 July, <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/entertainment/tvzn-launches-one-news-now-q00163>
- UMR and Coalition for Better Broadcasting (2014) *Television Advertising*, UMR Research, retrieved from http://betterbroadcasting.co.nz/files/2314/1933/2467/CBB_UMR_Research_Jul-14.pdf
- World Bank (2014) *World Governance Indicators: country data report for New Zealand, 1996–2013*, retrieved from <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#countryReports>

Sir Frank Holmes Memorial Lecture in Policy Studies given by
Professor Lavanya Rajamani, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi

The Making of the 2015 Paris Agreement

The 2015 Paris Agreement represents a historic achievement in multilateral diplomacy. After years of deeply discordant negotiations, parties harnessed the political will necessary to arrive at a climate change agreement that strikes a careful balance between the ambition of global efforts to address climate change and differentiation between developed and developing countries.

Professor Rajamani will trace the four-year negotiation process for the

Paris Agreement. In so doing, she will discuss the fundamental disagreements between groups of parties that persisted until agreement was reached, as well as the ingenious compromises they arrived at to accommodate their red lines. She will also explore the key building blocks of the Paris Agreement — ambition and differentiation — and the challenges that lie ahead in implementing the Agreement.

When: Wednesday 18 May 2016

5–6pm Lecture

6–7pm Refreshments

Where: Lambton Room,
InterContinental Hotel,
Grey St, Wellington

RSVPs essential by Friday 13 May.

Email igps@vuw.ac.nz with

'Sir Frank Holmes' in the subject line, or
phone 04-463 6588.

Capital thinking. Globally minded.

