

New Zealand Media Coverage of the 2008 Election Study

Preliminary Results

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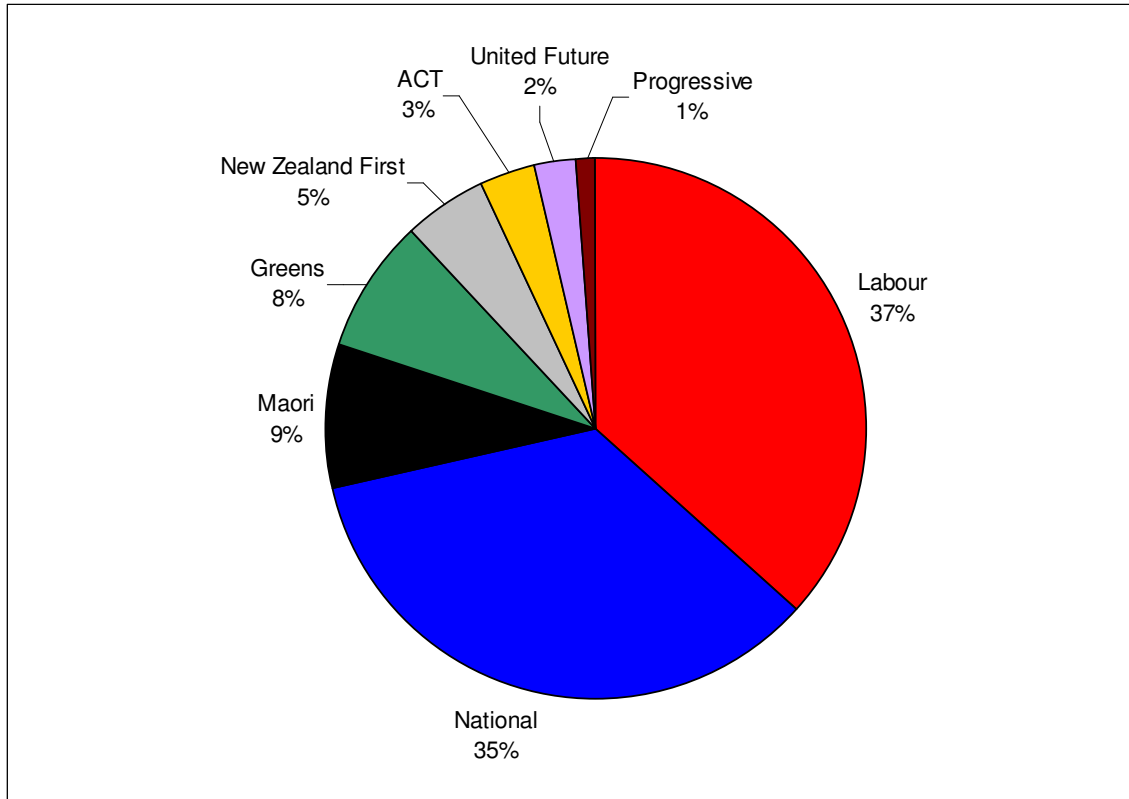
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Section 1: The Parties

1.1 Media Coverage of Leading Parties

- Labour led National 37% to 35% in media coverage devoted to parties
- Maori Party led Greens 9% to 8% amongst smaller parties

Figure 1: Volume of Media Coverage of New Zealand Parties



Party	Percentage of Coverage
Labour	37%
National	35%
Maori	9%
Greens	8%
New Zealand First	5%
ACT	3%
United Future	2%
Progressive	1%
Total	100%

1.2 Tone of Party Media Coverage

- National received the most negative coverage at 43% of their total coverage, followed by Labour at 35%
- Green Party received the most positive media coverage at 32% of their total coverage, followed by the Maori Party at 29%
- Labour's positive media coverage was third, while National's was seventh out the top eight parties
- National had 24% more negative coverage than positive, while Labour had 7% more negative than positive coverage. Green and Maori Parties received the greatest net positive coverage at +13% each

Figure 2: Negative Party Coverage during the 2008 Election Campaign

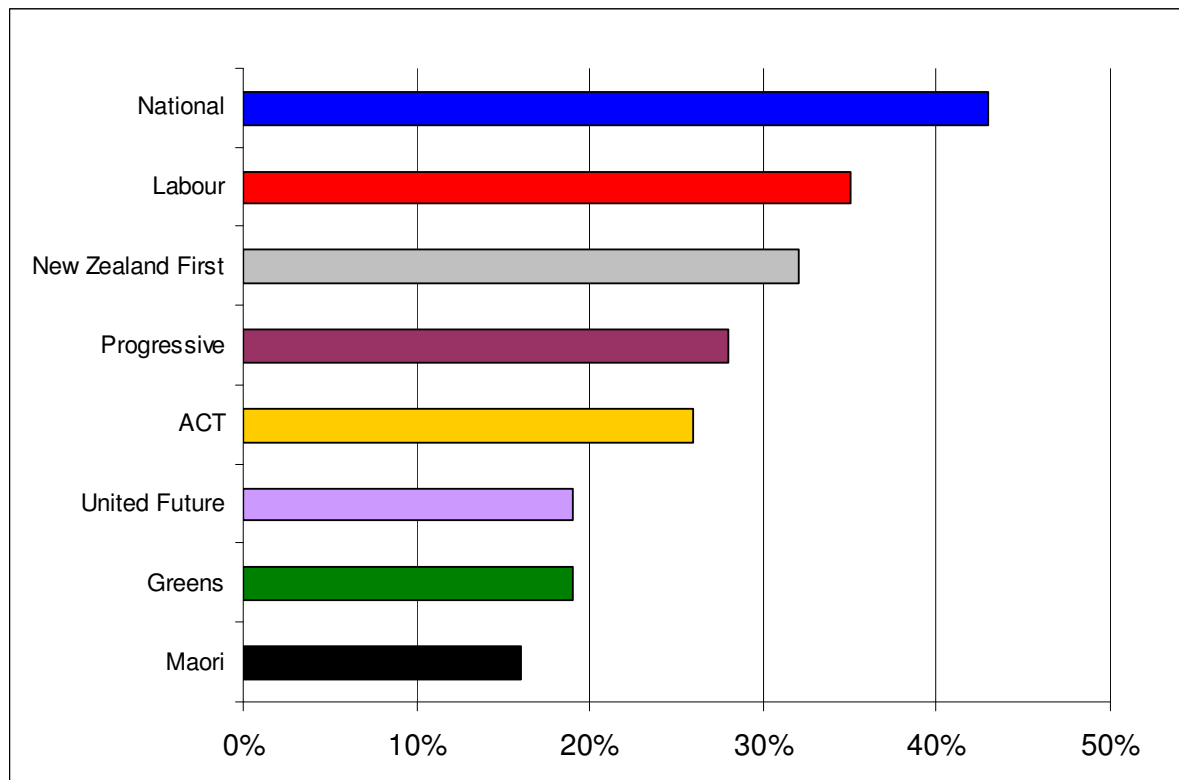
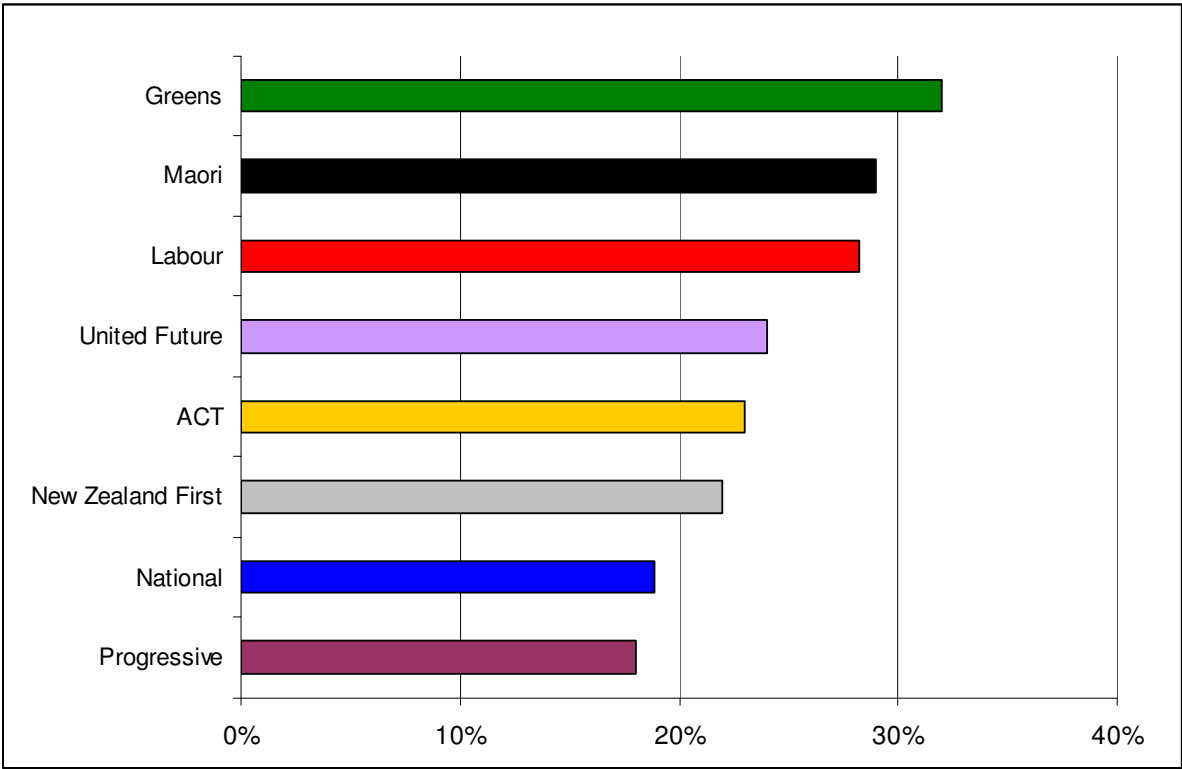


Figure 3: Positive Party Coverage during the 2008 Election Campaign

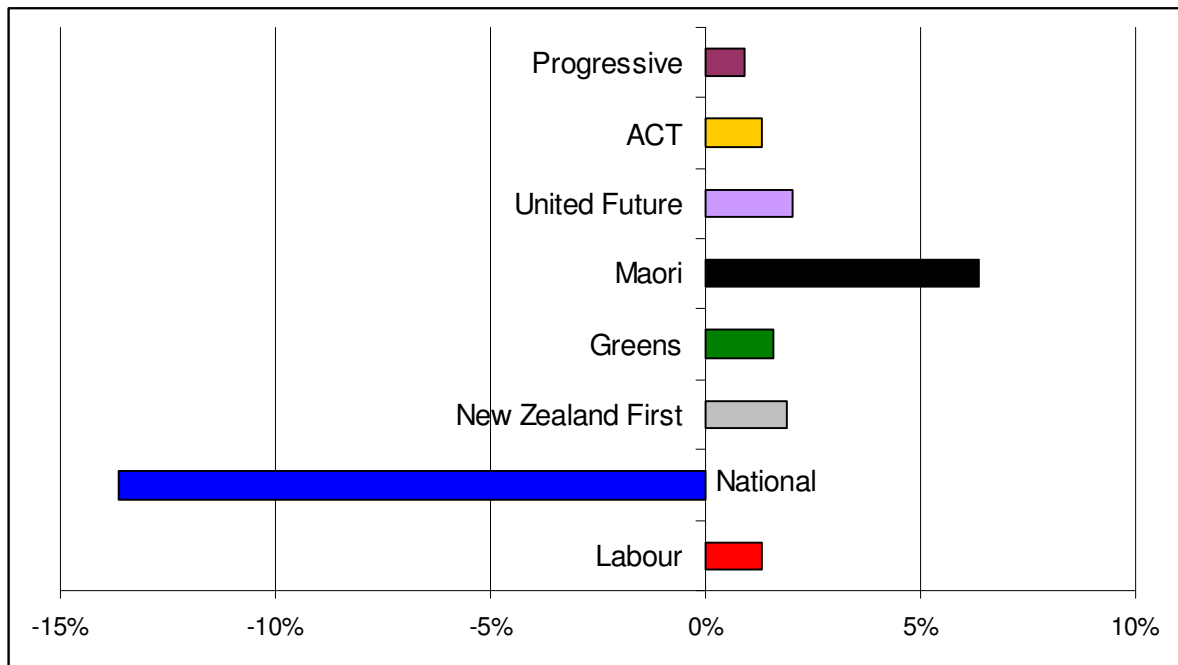


Party	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Positive/Negative Difference
National	43%	19%	38%	-24%
Labour	35%	28%	37%	-7%
New Zealand First	32%	22%	46%	-10%
Progressive	28%	18%	54%	-10%
ACT	26%	23%	51%	-3%
Greens	19%	32%	49%	13%
United Future	19%	24%	57%	5%
Maori	16%	29%	55%	13%

1.3 Media Coverage of Parties versus Polling Support

- Every party received more media coverage than public opinion support (as manifested in polls) during the 2008 election with the exception of National, which received 13.6% less media coverage than public opinion support
- Smaller parties had the support of 14.7% of the people, yet received 28.7% of the media coverage

Figure 4: Difference between Media Coverage and Public Opinion Support of Parties during the 2008 Election Campaign



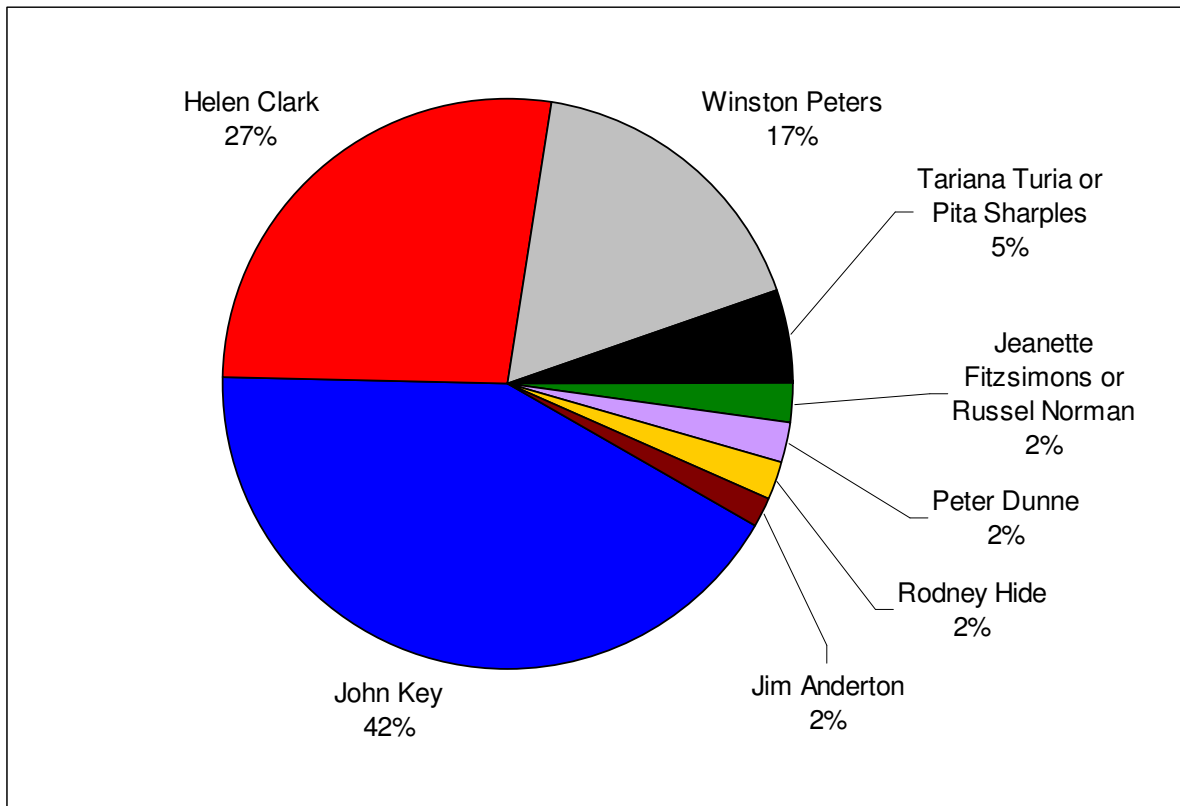
Party	Poll Average (Preferred Party)	Media Coverage	Poll/Media Difference
Labour	35.3%	36.6%	1.3%
National	48.3%	34.7%	-13.6%
New Zealand First	3.1%	5.0%	1.9%
Greens	6.6%	8.2%	1.6%
Maori	2.4%	8.7%	6.3%
United Future	0.4%	2.4%	2.0%
ACT	1.9%	3.2%	1.3%
Progressive	0.3%	1.2%	0.9%

Section 2: The Party Leaders

2.1 Media Coverage of Party Leaders

- John Key received the greatest media coverage amongst party leaders at 43%, followed by Helen Clark at 27% and Winston Peters at 17%
- Except for Winston Peters, all other small party leaders received a combined coverage of 13%

Figure 5: Volume of Media Coverage of New Zealand Party Leaders



Leaders	Percentage of Coverage
John Key	42%
Helen Clark	27%
Winston Peters	17%
Tariana Turia or Pita Sharples	5%
Jeanette Fitzsimons or Russel Norman	2%
Peter Dunne	2%
Rodney Hide	2%
Jim Anderton	2%
Total	100%

2.2 Tone of Party Leaders Media Coverage

- Winston Peters and John Key received the most negative coverage amongst party leaders at 38% of their total media coverage each
- Jim Anderton received the largest percentage of positive coverage at 37% of his total media coverage, followed by Helen Clark at 29%
- John Key received 13% more negative coverage than positive, while Helen Clark had 1% more negative coverage than positive

Figure 6: Negative Coverage of Party Leaders during the 2008 Election Campaign

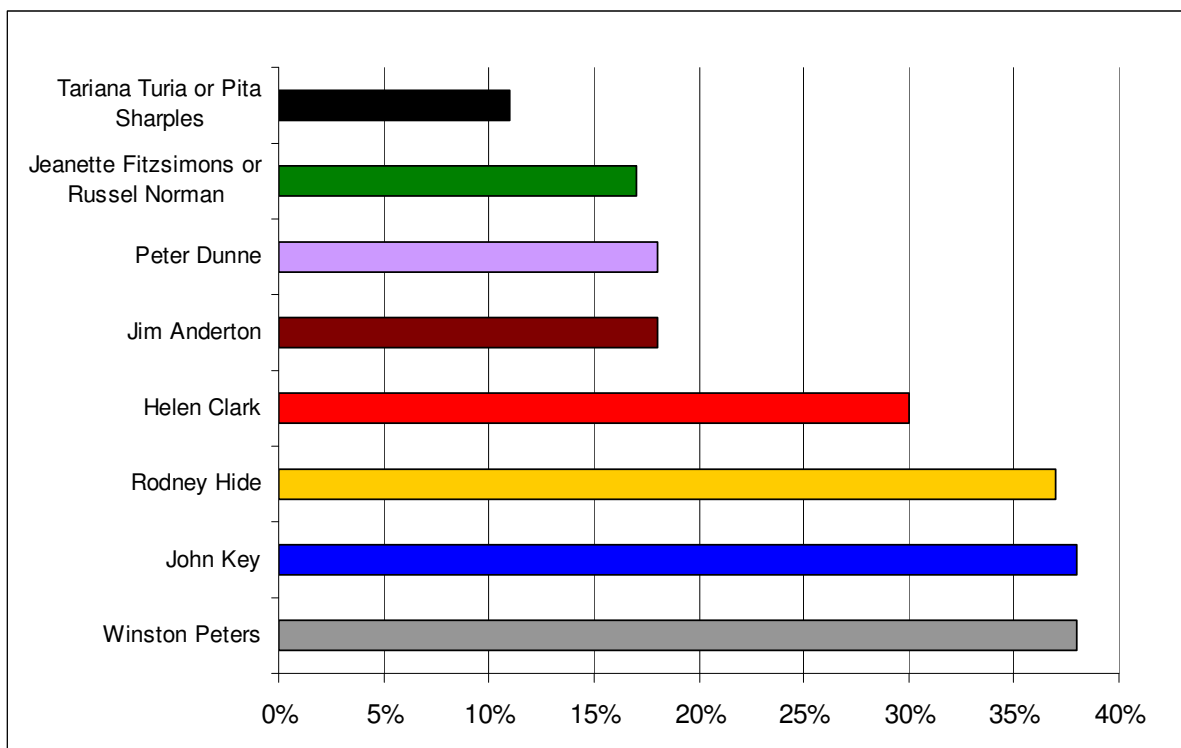
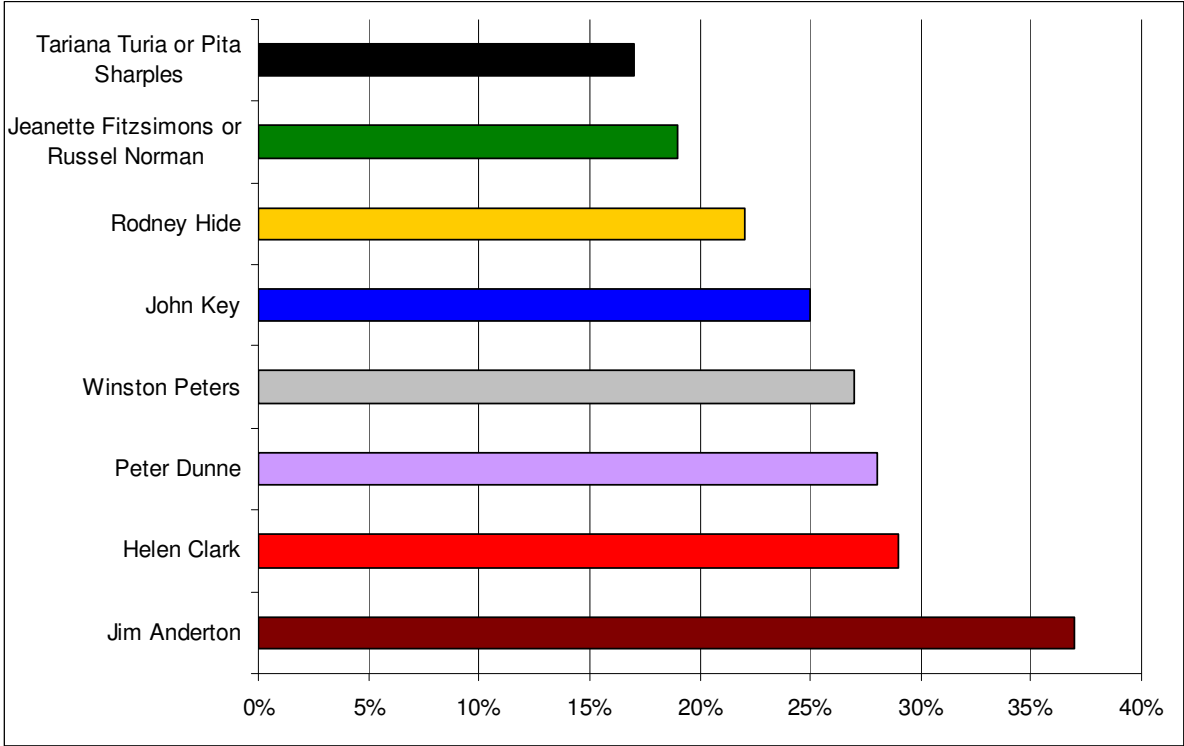


Figure 7: Positive Coverage of Party Leaders during the 2008 Election Campaign

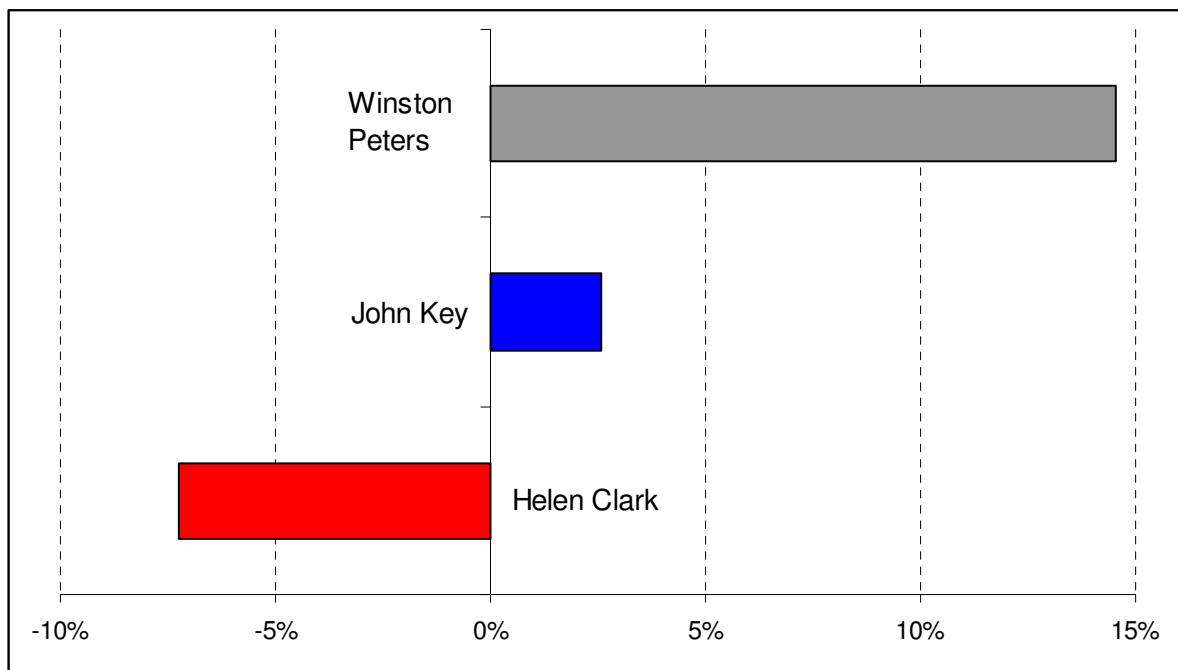


Leaders	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Positive/Negative Difference
Winston Peters	38%	27%	35%	-11%
John Key	38%	25%	37%	-13%
Rodney Hide	37%	22%	40%	-15%
Helen Clark	30%	29%	41%	-1%
Jim Anderton	18%	37%	45%	19%
Peter Dunne	18%	28%	53%	10%
Jeanette Fitzsimons or Russel Norman	17%	19%	64%	2%
Tariana Turia or Pita Sharples	11%	17%	73%	6%

2.3 Media Coverage of Party Leaders versus Polling Support

- Helen Clark received 7.3% less media coverage than public opinion support as preferred leader (as measured by polls), while John Key received 2.6% more media coverage than support
- Winston Peters received 14.5% more media coverage than public opinion support as preferred leader

Figure 8: Difference between Media Coverage and Public Opinion Support of Party Leaders during the 2008 Election Campaign



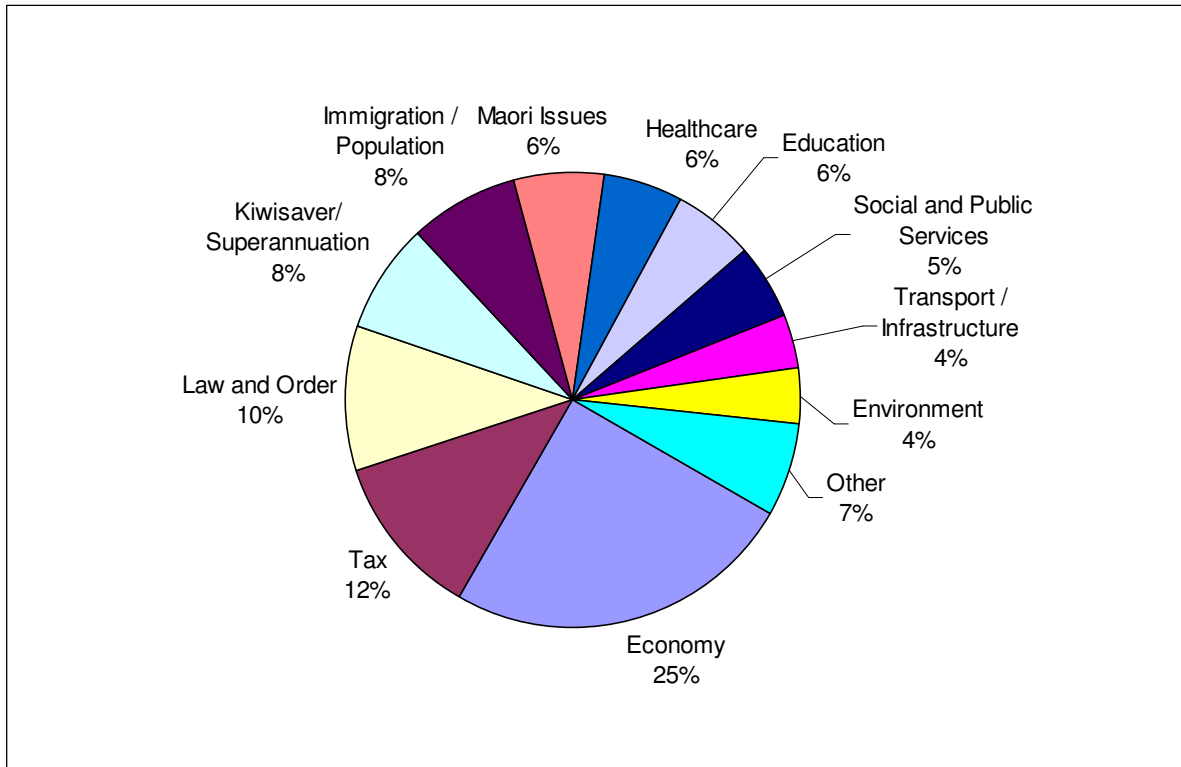
Leader	Poll Average (Preferred Leader)	Media Coverage	Difference
Helen Clark	34.6%	27.3%	-7.3%
John Key	39.3%	41.9%	2.6%
Winston Peters	2.8%	17.3%	14.5%

Section 3: The Issues

3.1 Leading Policy Issues

- The economy was the leading election issue of the 2008 campaign, garnering 25% of all media coverage, followed by tax at 12% and law and order at 10%

Figure 9: Leading Policy Issues during the 2008 Election Campaign



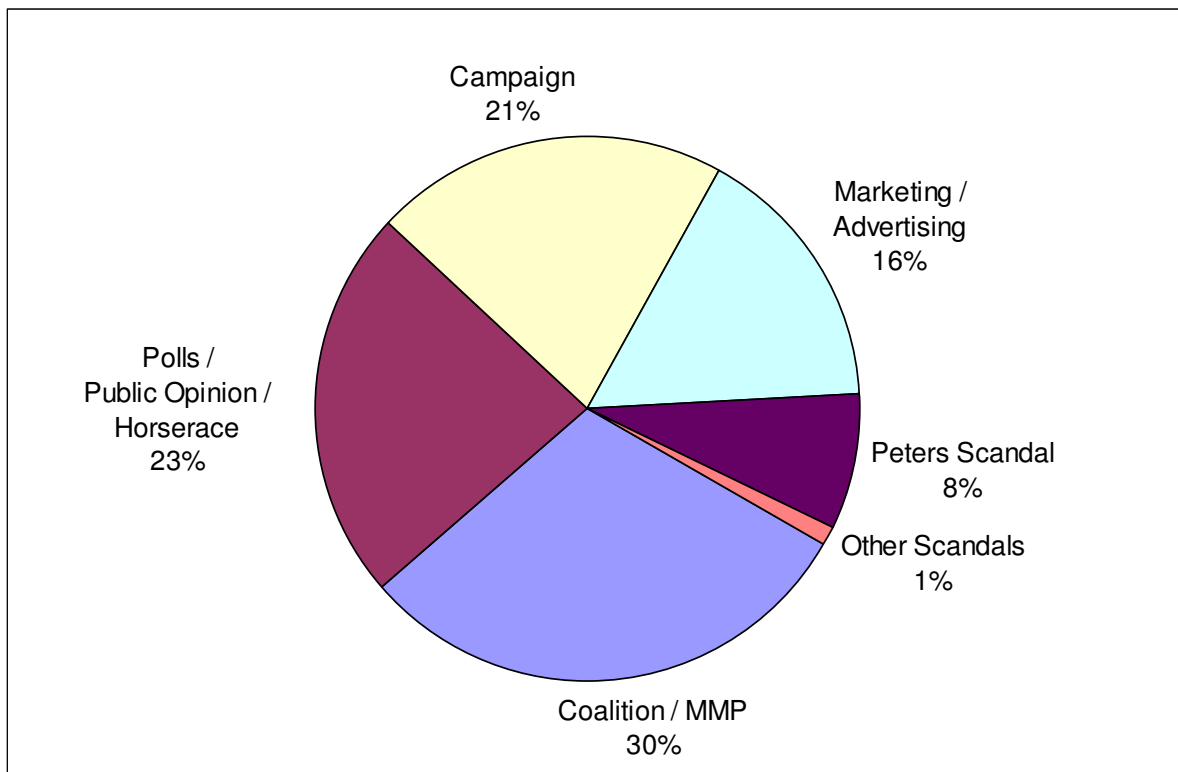
Issues	Percentage of Coverage
Economy	25%
Tax	12%
Law and Order	10%
Kiwisaver / Superannuation	8%
Immigration / Population	8%
Maori Issues	6%
Healthcare	6%
Education	6%
Social and Public Services	5%
Transport / Infrastructure	4%
Environment	4%
Other*	7%

* Other issues (all of which received under 2% coverage) included defence & security, arts, culture & sports, broadcasting & media, business issues, science, technology & innovation and state owned assets.

3.2 Leading Non-Policy Issues

- Discussions surrounding coalition building after the election and MMP was the most widely referenced non-policy issue of the 2008 election campaign, accounting for 30% of all non-policy issue coverage. This was followed by references to polls and public opinion at 23% and the nature of the campaign itself at 21%

Figure 10: Leading Non-Policy Issues during the 2008 Election Campaign



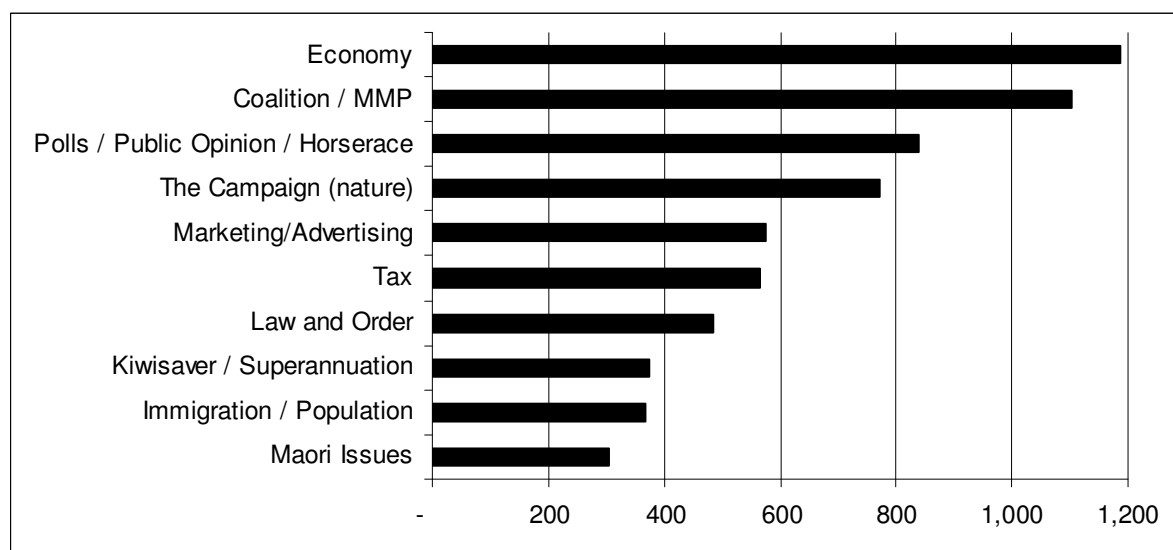
Issues	Percentage of Coverage
Coalition / MMP	30%
Polls / Public Opinion / Horserace	23%
Campaign	21%
Marketing/Advertising	16%
Peters Scandal	8%
Other Scandals	1%

3.3 Policy versus Non-Policy Issues

- Overall, the New Zealand media provided more coverage of policy issues than non-policy issues by a margin of 57% to 43%
- While the economy was the top issue overall, four out of the top five issues were non-policy issues

All Issues	References	Percentage of Total
Policy Issues	4,770	57%
Non-Policy Issues	3,627	43%
Total	8,397	100%

Figure 11: Leading Policy and Non-Policy Issues during the 2008 Election Campaign



Leading Issues	References	Percentage of Total
Economy	1,186	14%
Coalition / MMP	1,102	13%
Polls / Public Opinion / Horserace	839	10%
The Campaign (nature)	772	9%
Marketing/Advertising	576	7%
Tax	565	7%
Law and Order	486	6%
Kiwisaver / Superannuation	376	4%
Immigration / Population	367	4%
Maori Issues	303	4%
Other	1,825	22%
Total Policy and Non-Policy	8,397	100%

Methodology

This study is based on a content analysis of the leading New Zealand newspapers (New Zealand Herald, Dominion Post and The Press) and television news programmes (TV1 and TV3 evening news). The entire study is conducted over an eight-week timeline beginning from Helen Clark's announcement of the election date on 12 September 2008 and ending on Election Day (8 November 2008). The findings of this particular document only cover the first six of these weeks (12 September to 24 October). Over the first six weeks, 574 stories were analysed. It is expected that the entire study will incorporate over 900 stories. Stories were selected if they met the following criteria:

- Newspapers: From front page, election/politics section or editorial. At least 50% of the content related to the election
- Television: From first 10 news stories. At least 50% of the content related to the election

Within each story, references for the following categories were identified and coded: parties (Labour, National, etc.), leaders (Clark, Key, etc.), policy issues (economy, tax, etc.) and non-policy issues (polls, scandals etc.). In total, over 10,000 references were identified based on the following distribution amongst the different media sources:

Source	Number of References
TV1	1,158
TV3	1,319
New Zealand Herald	3,932
The Press	2,106
Dominion Post	1,728
Total (N =)	10,243

For public opinion information, data from 12 different polls by five media organisations/polling companies over September and October 2008 was amalgamated, creating a poll of polls.

While this study goes into significantly more depth on a number of issues, much of which will be analysed after the election, this preliminary summary provides highlights from some of the most interesting findings to date, including:

- 1) Which parties received the greatest media attention? Was their coverage more positive or negative? Do parties receive more or less media coverage than public opinion support?
- 2) Which party leaders received the greatest media attention? Was their coverage more positive or negative? Do party leaders receive more or less media coverage than public opinion support?
- 3) Which issues (policy and non-policy) received the greatest media attention?