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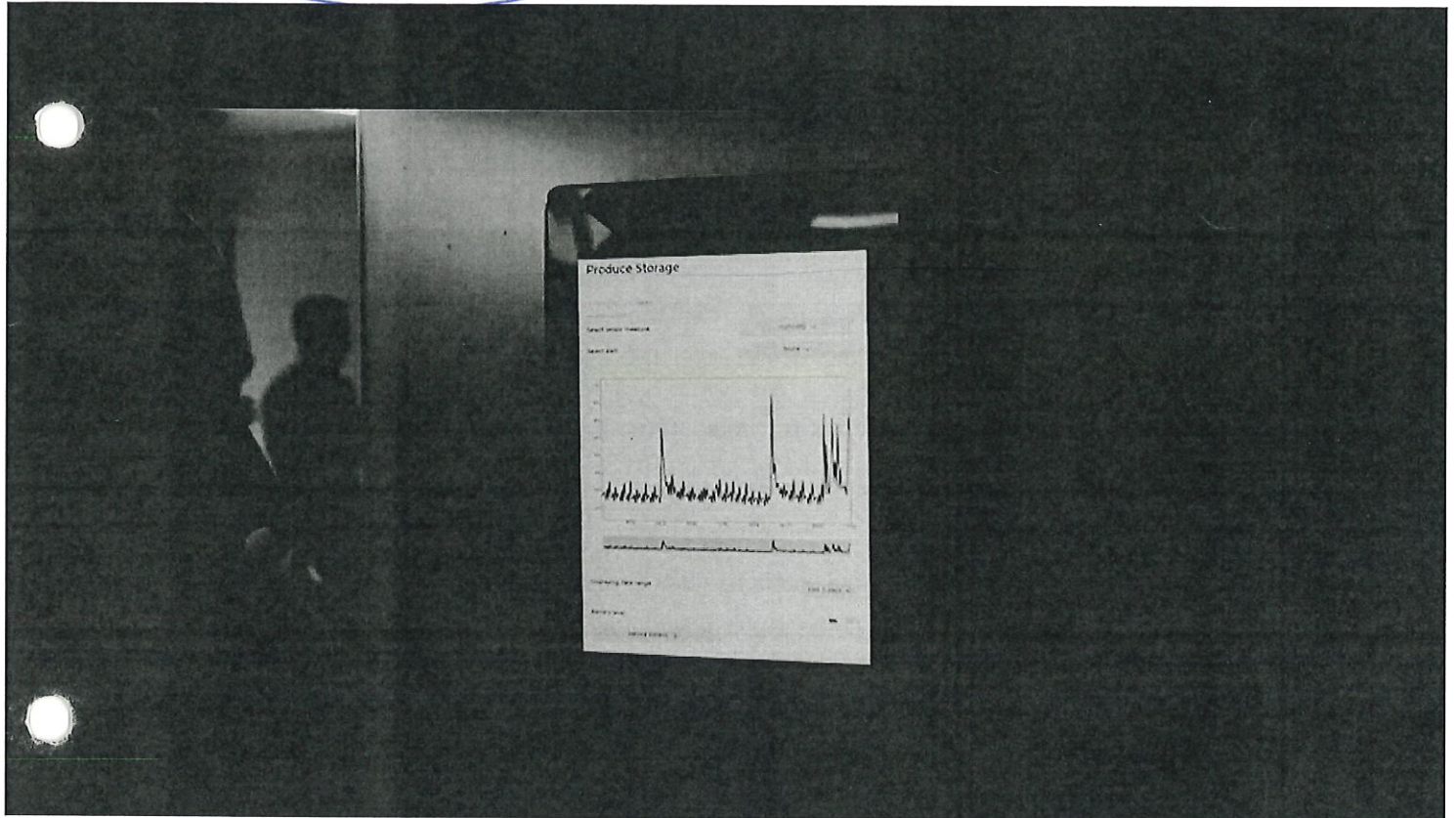
NZ Election 2020: Labour in the lead as Electoral Commission publishes advance voting results

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Watch: Voting has been underway across New Zealand. Credits: Image - Getty; Video - Newshub

The Electoral Commission has published the results of advance voting showing Labour in the lead on 50.5 percent, followed by National on 26.6 percent, ACT on 8.3 percent, the Greens on 7 percent and NZ First on 2.3 percent.

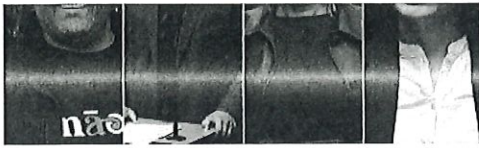
The results also show the Māori Party on 0.8 percent, The Opportunities Party (TOP) on 1.4 percent, New Conservatives on 1.4 percent, and Advance NZ on 0.9 percent, and the Legalise Cannabis Party on 0.2 percent.

How does that look as seats? Labour could govern alone with 65 seats. National would get 34 seats but with ACT's 11 seats, it's not enough for them to govern. The Greens would get 9 seats - one more than they currently have.

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Voting has been open since October 3 and wrapped up at 7pm on Saturday. Overseas voters have been able to cast their ballot since September 30, and the final election results - including special votes - will be announced on November 6.

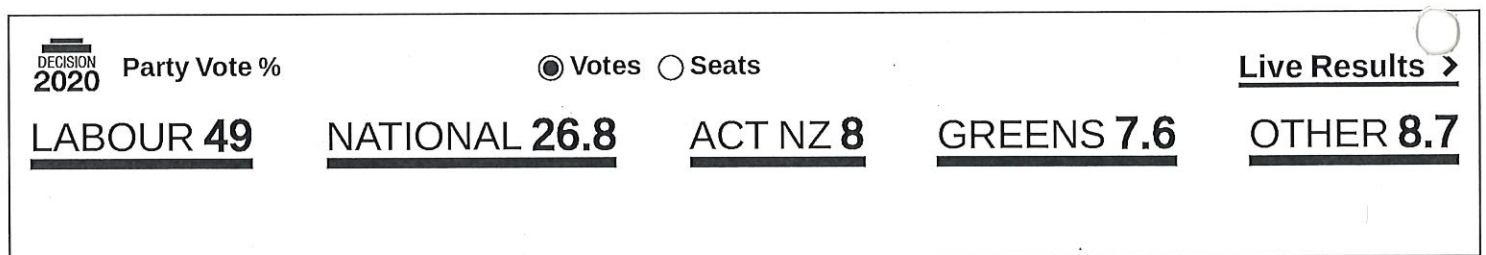
That's because tallying up all the special votes from overseas can take some time. Special votes also include those who enrolled to vote on the day - an opportunity the Government changed the law to allow for this time.

In the meantime, the Electoral Commission has revealed the results of the last two weeks' advance voting, which has seen record numbers of Kiwis - more than 1.7 million - cast their ballot before election day.

That figure is well ahead of the 1.2 million New Zealanders who cast their advance ballots during the last election and means 50.7 percent of the country's 3.4 million enrolled voters already had their say.

The Electoral Commission has been counting the remaining votes from Kiwis who cast their ballots on election day. As per the Electoral Act, it's illegal to promote or be seen to promote a political party on election day to avoid influencing voters. That period finished at 7pm.

While the advance voting results don't give us the final election outcome, it gives a good indication of where the election is going. There could yet be a surge in support for another party in ballots made on election day and from overseas.



Overseas voting actually gave Labour and the Greens an extra seat each at the last 2017 election. It gave Green MP Golriz Ghahraman her chance to become a lawmaker.

The Electoral Commission started publishing the advance voting results from 7pm and it aims to have 100 percent of the non-special votes - that's all the ballots cast in New Zealand, not overseas - by Sunday morning.

But by 11:30pm, the Electoral Commission aims to have 95 percent of the ballots filed on election day counted from 7pm - so stay tuned for those results.

How does it compare to polling?

The latest Newshub-Reid Research poll was unveiled on Friday night. It was the most up-to-date numbers before polling day. It showed Labour leader Jacinda Ardern getting three more years running the country.

But it wasn't cut and dry. The poll showed Labour with the slimmest of a majority of 45.8 percent, down 4.3 points. National rose by 1.5 points to 31.1 percent, while ACT got 7.4 percent and the Greens 6.3 percent.

In terms of seats in Parliament, Labour had 61 on Newshub's poll meaning it had a one-seat majority and could govern alone. National and ACT's combined 51 seats would not be enough to form a Government on the poll results. The Greens would keep their 8 seats on the poll results.

If the poll were reality, only those four parties would make it back into Parliament. NZ First got 3.5 percent, below the 5 percent threshold to make it back. It was the same for Maori Party, New Conservatives, The Opportunities Party (TOP) and Advance NZ.

What about the referendums?

We have to wait a bit longer for this. The results of the recreational cannabis and euthanasia referendums won't be published until Friday October 30. It's also important to remember the difference between the two referendums.

A proposed legal regime is outlined in the Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill, but there's no legal obligation for it to be adopted if the referendum passes. It will still need to go back to Parliament where MPs will be able to debate the details.

The End of Life Choice Act - the piece of law that would legalise assisted dying in some circumstances - is binding and will become law if it passes the referendum.

So basically, if the cannabis referendum passes, it won't become law. It will still need to be passed by Parliament. But if the euthanasia referendum passes, it will become law.

How does it compare to 2017 election?

The last election was a bit confusing because while National got the most votes - 46 percent - it didn't end up forming the Government. That's because National's 46 percent equated to 58 seats which wasn't enough for it to govern alone so it needed NZ First's nine seats.

But NZ First leader Winston Peters decided to form a coalition with Labour which had 45 seats. That still wasn't enough, so Labour signed a confidence and supply agreement with the Greens - sort of like a less powerful coalition agreement.

That's how we ended up with the Labour-NZ First-Greens Government we have today.

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