

INDIGENOUS BELIEF IN A JUST WORLD: NZ MĀORI AND OTHER ETHNICITIES COMPARED

An Executive Summary

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INTRODUCTION

Striking differences in economic outcomes exist within New Zealand for Māori relative to the non-Māori population.

This paper analyses whether certain beliefs and values differ systematically between Māori and non-Māori, while recognising that there is not a uniform culture for either group. Many of the beliefs and values we examine have been linked to the adoption of particular individual actions that may affect economic outcomes. For example, prior research indicates a person who believes that the world is not 'just', in the sense of believing that success is due to luck and connections rather than individual effort, may not be motivated to seek educational achievements, nor see the point of working hard at a job.

METHODOLOGY

The main source of our data is the World Values Survey. We use data from the 1998, 2004 and 2011 surveys.

The World Values Survey measures a variety of beliefs (positive statements about how the world works) and values (normative statements on how the world should work). We study beliefs that are economically relevant, though also select a set of supplementary non-economic beliefs, some of which may indirectly affect economic outcomes. Please see pages 15-16 of [Indigenous Belief in a Just World: New Zealand Māori and other Ethnicities Compared](#) for these questions.

We compare the beliefs of those people who identify themselves as Māori with those who do not. Of the full sample used in this research, 7.7% identify as being Māori. We also compare Māori to a left-right political spectrum of non-Māori. We then benchmark our results against a comparison of black and non-black Americans.

It is possible that observed differences in beliefs may not be caused by ethnicity, but instead by some other variable that is correlated with ethnicity. For example, if Māori are more highly represented in lower income and education groups, or have higher rates of unemployment, then their different beliefs (when compared to non-Māori) may be driven by these kinds of factors, and not by ethnicity per se. Our results hold, even after controlling for income, work status, sex, age and education level.

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RESULTS - ECONOMIC BELIEFS

Across all of our measures of economic beliefs, Māori are significantly more in favour of the leftist belief compared to non-Māori, both before and after controlling for other personal characteristics. The sizes of the effects are large. In other words, there appears to be a pure “ethnicity” effect.

Figure 1: Belief in Unfairness

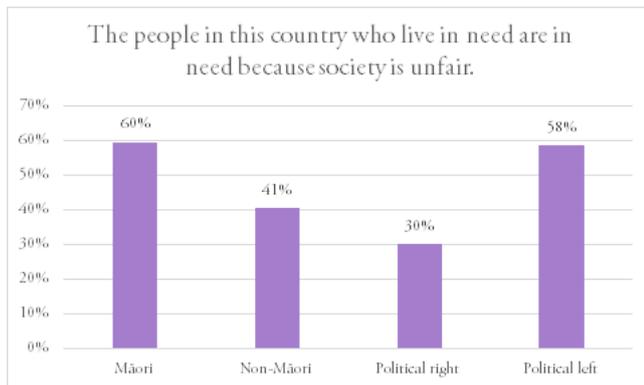
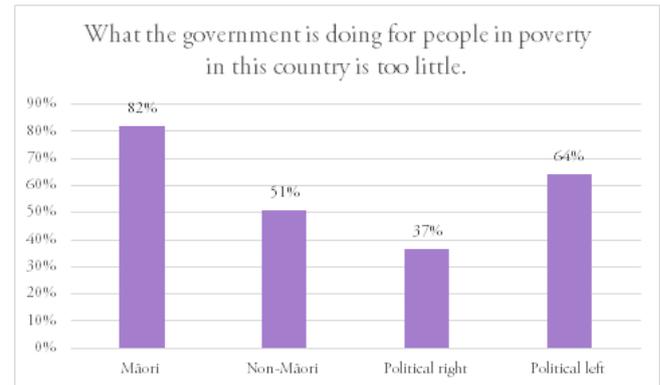


Figure 2: Belief in Government Support



Māori have more “leftist” beliefs than non-Māori (i.e., nearly 60% of Māori blame an unfair society compared to 41% of non-Māori). After controlling for income, work status, sex, age and education level, Māori are 18.2% more likely to respond that people in need have been treated unfairly, compared to non-Māori. As people get richer they are less likely to believe that treatment is unfair, with the top quintile being 15.3% less likely to share this belief than people in the bottom quintile. By contrast, the unemployed are 22.8% more likely to support the idea that the poor are being treated unfairly.

The proportion of Māori who want the government to do more to assist those in poverty considerably exceeds even the proportion of non-Māori left wingers. After running our controls, we find Māori are 30% more likely to respond that the Government is doing “too little” for those in need. The unemployed have a 19.2% higher chance of wanting more government help for the poor (compared to the employed), and as people get richer the likelihood of supporting leftist beliefs decreases.

Figure 3: Belief in Sole Ownership

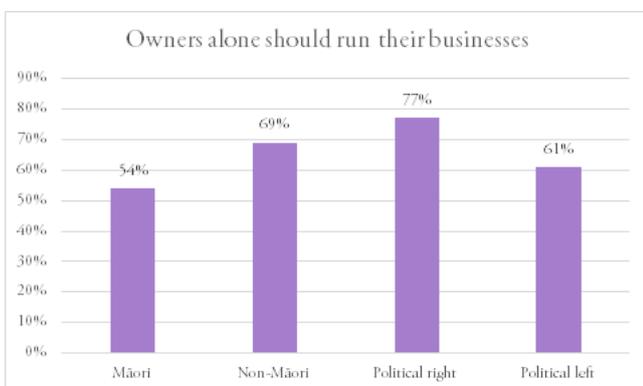
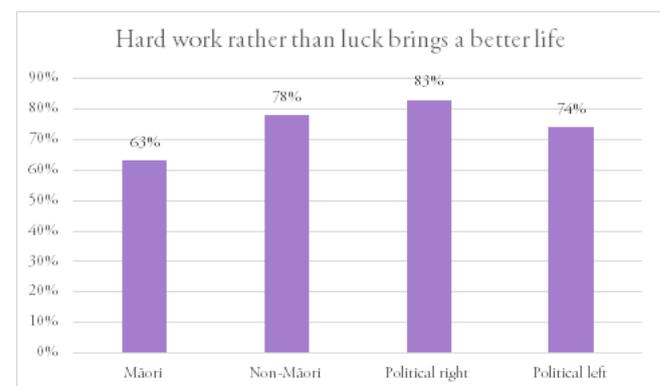


Figure 4: Belief in Hard Work



Māori are less supportive of owners alone running their businesses. After running controls, Māori are 12.6% more likely to support the belief that business and industry should not be run solely by the owners, or their appointed managers, compared to non-Māori.

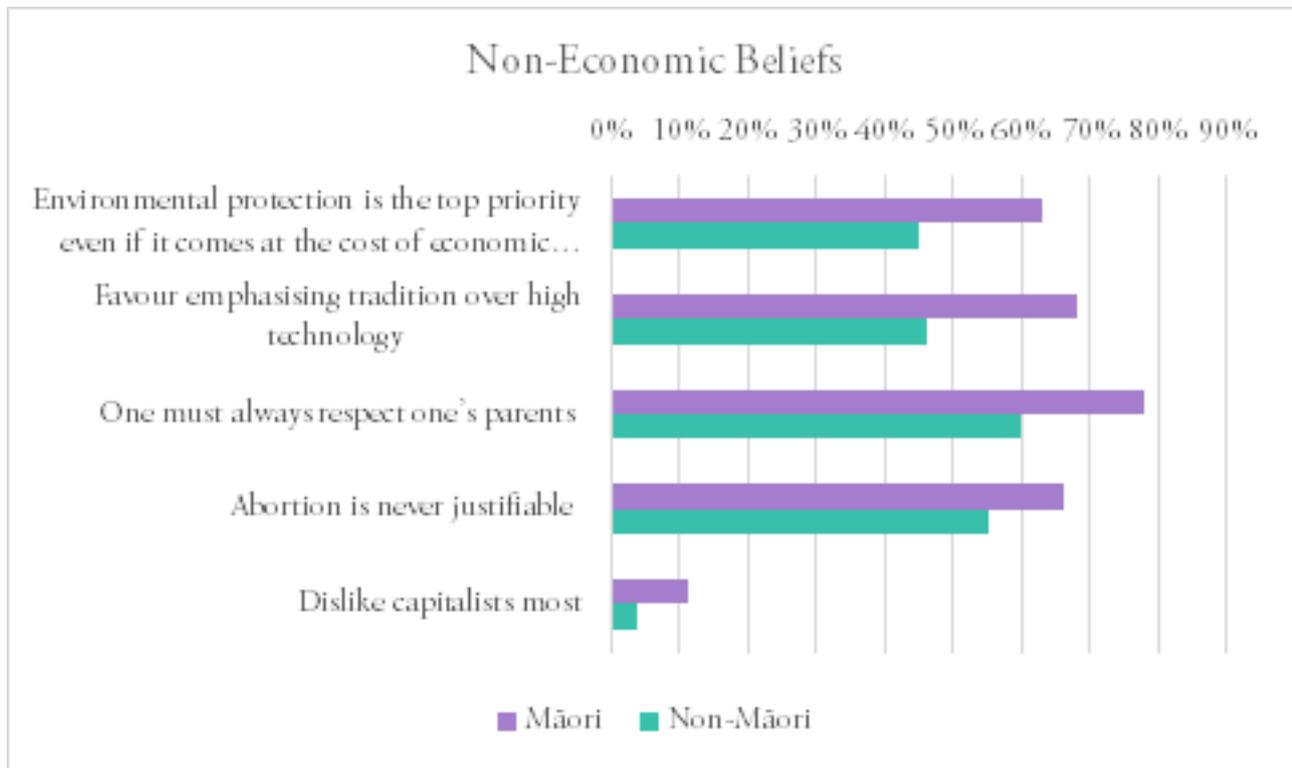
For Māori men, 59% believe that hard work pays off compared to 66% of Māori women. As before, Māori beliefs on the role of hard work are to the “left” of non-Māori left-wingers (37% of Māori believe that success is more about luck whereas only 26% of non-Māori left leaning voters hold this belief). After controls, Māori are 11.5% more likely to believe that success is driven by luck.

Finally, Māori are 5.9% more likely than non-Māori to believe that it is not fair for a more efficient and more reliable secretary to be paid more than another doing the same job. Those with a University education tend to hold the opposite view, and are 6.4% less likely to hold this belief. Similarly, people in higher income quintiles and males are also less likely to say that paying the better secretary more is unfair.

RESULTS - NON-ECONOMIC BELIEFS

Māori have strong environmental beliefs and tend to value tradition over technology. When it comes to authoritarian tendencies and moral values, Māori appear to be more inclined to respect authority figures regardless of their qualities and faults, and tend to be religious conservatives in the sense of being averse to, for example, abortion.

Figure 5: Non-Economic Beliefs



63% of Māori believe environmental protection should be prioritised, even at the cost of economic growth and jobs, compared to 45% of non-Māori. There is a clear difference between the sexes, with 69% of Māori women stating a stronger preference in favour of environmental protection compared to 56% of Māori men. After controlling for income, work status, sex, age and education level, Māori are 8.6% more likely to respond that protecting the environment should be given top priority even at the cost of economic growth. There is also strong support for emphasizing the environment by those with a university education. These individuals are 22.3% more likely to give the environment priority, compared to those who have not completed high school.

When asked whether they favour tradition over high technology, 68% of Māori prefer tradition while only 46% of non-Māori have this preference, with left and right voters holding similar views. However, there is a difference by gender, with 53% of non-Māori women favouring tradition, compared to 38% of non-Māori men. After controls are included, Māori have a 20.4% higher probability of supporting tradition over technology, compared to non-Māori. By contrast, those in the top income quintile are 11.3% less likely to support tradition than those in the bottom quintile.

Māori show considerably greater support for parental respect at 78% than non-Māori (60%), surpassing even the right-wingers.

66% of Māori believe abortion is never justified, compared to 55% of non-Māori. 51% of non-Māori left-leaning voters believe that abortion is never justifiable, so Māori are again closer to right-leaning voters with respect to this attitude, and again with a more marked view. After controls, Māori are 10.1% more likely to be anti-abortion.

11.4% of Māori dislike capitalists (more than any other group) whereas only 3.9% of non-Māori hold a similar belief. After controls are run, Māori have 5.1% higher probability of viewing capitalists as the least liked group in society.

TRENDS

With respect to economic beliefs, the only significant trend across the three surveys is an increase in support by Māori for the government to do more to help the poor (compared to non-Māori). Between 1998 and 2011 the proportion of Māori believing that “too little” is being done for those in poverty rose from 81.1% to 83.6%. However over the same period the proportion of non-Māori holding this belief fell from 61.0% to 36.2%. With respect to non-economic beliefs, none showed any evidence of a significant time trend (consistent with the idea that many cultural traits are slow moving).

The evidence suggests that Māori under 50 years old are less inclined to support their elders’ view that the government should do more to support those in poverty, whereas for non-Māori, age has no effect. Furthermore, although a university education is associated with being more pro-environment (over economic growth) for non-Māori, it is not associated with making any difference to the beliefs of Māori.

COMPARISON WITH BLACK AMERICANS

Blacks in the USA are significantly more likely to support the belief that people live in need because society has treated them unfairly and also that the government is doing too little to help those in poverty. In other words, their beliefs in these areas are in the “leftist” direction, similar to Māori. They are also more likely to believe it to be unfair to pay a more efficient secretary more than a less efficient one. However there are no significant differences between black and non-black Americans in terms of how business and industry should be managed, and of whether or not hard work brings success.





With respect to non-economic beliefs there are even more striking differences. Black Americans are significantly less likely to believe that the environment should be given top priority than non-blacks, whereas Māori hold the opposite belief compared to non-Māori. This possibly reflects the fact that Māori are indigenous to NZ whereas black Americans trace their roots to a different continent.

Furthermore, whereas Māori favour more tradition over high technology, and consider capitalists to be more threatening to the social order than other groups, no such effects are present for blacks. In other words, Māori may be described as having more “leftist” beliefs, compared to non-Māori, across all three of these questions, whereas blacks have more “rightist” beliefs than non-blacks on the environment and there are no differences on the role of tradition and the desirability of capitalists. Finally, both Māori and blacks more strongly believe that parents should be respected, regardless of whether they’ve earned it, and that abortion is not justifiable, compared to others in their respective countries.

SUMMARY

Overall, our findings suggest that Māori beliefs are more aligned with giving importance to collectivism, non-materialism, the environment and kinship ties, relative to non-Māori. In contrast, black Americans appear to have bought into the capitalist system more than Māori (relative to the dominant group).

We cannot say whether the determinants of Māori beliefs that are less favourable to capitalism pre-date the colonisation experience, or are related to historical injustices and grievances, or are related to more recent experiences of discrimination. Whatever the cause, the international literature that has examined the effects of beliefs on economic performance suggests that some of the gap between Māori and non-Māori economic outcomes may be attributed to cultural differences in values and beliefs.

Our findings that Māori beliefs are more aligned with collectivism, non-materialism and kinship ties, compared to non-Māori, may explain why Māori enterprises are built more on a stakeholder, than a shareholder, approach. The extent to which these institutions will improve overall Māori well-being depends not only on income generation but also on non-economic factors, like environmental and kinship outcomes.

The difference in beliefs between Māori and non-Māori also has relevance for crafting institutions across New Zealand. Creating a common set of rules for the whole population becomes more difficult when beliefs differ. This is especially true as research shows there is greater adherence to rules when affected parties are included in their drafting. This suggests that special efforts to engage Māori in political and regulatory processes (such as formal requirements for consultation with Māori in resource management matters) are warranted.

The research presented here is still exploratory. It could be useful to undertake further research to develop a deeper understanding of the role of history, culture, and institutions in the economic development outcomes of all New Zealanders, reflecting the diversity of beliefs and values within the country.