Home Ownership and Civics: Are Owners more likely to Vote and Volunteer?

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Abstract:
Are home owners better citizens and neighbours than renters? Research in many settings finds owners more likely to undertake civic duties, such as voting and to contribute to local social capital, such as by volunteering, than do renters. These positive external effects of ownership may be used to justify policies favouring owners over renters. This paper examines evidence from New Zealand on whether home owners are more likely to vote and to volunteer than are statistically similar renters. We use data on individual voting in a General Election from two New Zealand Electoral Surveys (NZES) and area data on volunteering from the last three Censuses of Population. To account for one cost of voting which may be correlated with ownership rates we geo-referenced data on polling booth locations and include distances from the local neighbourhood of NZES respondents to the nearest polling booth in our voting models.

Presenter: Professor John Gibson