



Vote Different

How to Have a TOP Conversation

Here at TOP, we love evidence! So here's some evidence-based guidelines to what influences people to change their minds, and what gets people to support ideas and campaigns. Use it wisely!

As TOP Advocates, we are going to be going out and having a lot of tough conversations with people, and we ultimately want to win their support. That means we want to change people's minds! And the evidence on changing people's minds is pretty clear - It doesn't happen unless people trust the messenger. So, our number one priority out there on the streets is that we want to build trust between TOP and the public.

The best way to invite somebody to trust you is to listen to them and clearly let them know you understand what they are saying (even if you disagree. Showing you understand does not mean you agree, it lets them know they can trust you). People have lots of views about politics, and everybody has things that concern them. Ask people for their opinions. Listen to what they tell you, and be sure to show them that you've heard them. Identify the concern that they're sharing with you.

That's right people: Telling people you are right and that they are stupid if they don't agree doesn't change minds.

When you have figured out what they care about, you then can have an opportunity to tell them what TOP would do differently to help with their concerns. Ask permission to give your own perspective, this keeps the interaction as a conversation and lets the person you're talking to know they can trust you. When it's your turn to speak, try not to dictate or lecture what is right or what is true - that's implicitly making the other person wrong, and that's threatening! Just present your point of view.

As soon as people feel like they are “wrong” they will go into fight or flight mode - ie, become argumentative, or shut down. That leaves no room for changing their minds.

Another thing that research shows about people changing their minds is that it seldom happens in a single interaction. Our interactions with people are just one step along the conveyor belt that eventually leads to them supporting us! The most important thing is to leave people with a positive emotional wake every time. When people enjoy the experiences they have with you, whether or not they agree with what you're saying, you have moved them forwards. If we as a team can do this enough times, we will win support. The most important thing is they have a positive interaction and are then open to TOP next time, in person or in the media.

Summary

LISTEN to what people tell you

SHOW that you hear them

ASK for permission to present your view

SHARE your point of view - don't TELL them what is right.

LEAVE on a positive note

For more detail here is a link to a [video](#) from TOP volunteer and “Crucial Conversation” expert Jane O’Shea.

Remember that 70% of people never change their vote. So don’t feel bad if you hit a brick wall with some people, just move on and focus on the 30% of people that are open to new ideas. Also remember that not all voters agree with all of a party’s policy (and they don’t need to)!

It is about finding what is most important for people, not telling them what is most important for you.

The guide below takes you through the four issues where TOP’s position most connects with the public. These aren’t a script, you can find a way to talk about things that uses your own words and works for you. However the basic formula (Shock, Pain, Frustration, Fragile Hope, Strong Hope) is again an evidence based approach to take people through what is a quite different way of looking at the world.

TOP.

Vote Different

TOP General Pitch

We have had 20 years (some would say 70 years) of National and Labour tinkering around the edges and not dealing with the long term problems we face as a society. Young people today face unaffordable housing, an environmental crisis and a deluge of disruptive technology. Career politicians don't have the answers and if they do they are too risk averse to do anything meaningful.

TOP is the party of fundamental change. We will look long term and do what works to fix our broken system. We want everyone to have a fair go at making something of their lives.

If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got. In 2020 it is time to Vote Different.

If you can, just show people our manifesto video:

<https://www.facebook.com/topnz/videos/2434383976659888/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aYb9aASuD4&t=16s>

TOP Housing Policy One-pager

1. Shock. New Zealanders have more of our money tied up in housing than any other country in the world. This is mostly due to speculation, not higher quantity or quality of housing! As a result we have some of the most **unaffordable housing in the world**. Rents have been rising faster than incomes for 30 years, and now the lowest 20% of income earners are spending almost half of their money on housing. And the housing is crap - [20 kids end up dead and 30,000 in hospital](#) every year because it is cold and damp. Number of homeless? Up. Overcrowded households? Up. Median rents? Up. Home ownership rate? Down. Every indicator is telling us we've got a huge and growing problem.

2. Pain. Housing costs are **by far the number one cause of poverty in New Zealand**. Kids living in cars or overcrowded houses can't study for school and end up in hospital. Tax free capital gains are also the main reason the wealthy have gotten wealthier. There's indisputably a housing crisis in New Zealand right now. Everyone can look around and see the effect it's having on their lives, from unending rent increases to skyrocketing house prices, to the people living rough and in cars, to the family and friends crashing on the couch. Businesses are doing it rough too; many can't get the money they need to invest in their business (cos its all tied up in housing), or find staff (who can't afford to live where the jobs are). Something is very clearly wrong.

3. Frustration. Three terms of National's efforts didn't fix the problem, and this current Government has failed to get a capital gains tax through or increase supply with Kiwibuild. We know the solutions that are needed, but neither major party is prepared to do what it would take to make housing affordable. We're still in a crisis today, in fact things continue to get worse. We need a different approach.

4. Fragile Hope. TOP will reform the tax system so that housing is taxed at the same level as other investments (like shares and term deposits). At the same time, we'll drop taxes on income to give hard working people a break. We will increase housing supply by reforming the RMA, investing in infrastructure and bring down the cost of building supplies. We will strengthen renters rights and encourage community housing providers to expand; creating more social housing and an at cost, affordable rental market.

5. Strong hope. Tax reform will stem the flow of speculative money into the housing market and give prices a chance to stabilise instead of continuing to grow out of reach. It will put more money in the pockets of working people. It'll also strongly incentivise empty houses to be rented out, and empty land to be developed so that there's more housing available. Our housing supply policy will encourage truly affordable, climate-friendly development where people have a real choice of transport options. That, together with more social housing will make housing affordable again.

FAQ

Won't taxing housing make it more expensive for renters? No, rental prices are set by supply and demand. Our tax policy penalises people for letting rentals sit empty, so it encourages more supply, and lower rents.

Can't we just reform the RMA? Yes, TOP would do that also.

Isn't the problem greedy landlords? Landlords are profiting from the problem, but they're not causing it. It's our broken tax and planning systems that allow them to make the profits they do. If we want to change the situation, we have to change those systems. Punishing landlords might feel good but it won't solve the problem.

Will I pay more under that equity tax? No, not unless the equity in your house is more than 8 times your annual income. Otherwise, you'll have more money in your pocket every year. 80% of Kiwis would be better off, and the other 20% will finally pay their fair share of tax. In the long run we would all be better off with lower house prices and a more vibrant economy.

Don't we just need to build more houses? Every market has demand and supply. We need to address both. For more information check out this [blog](#).

Resources for more info

For a factual deep dive on NZ's tax system, here is a [video](#) and a [blog](#) as well as [TOP's tax policy](#).



Vote Different

TOP Environment Policy One-Pager

1. Shock. We face a climate emergency, a freshwater crisis and a biodiversity catastrophe. [Around 80% of our land animals are threatened with extinction](#). [Two thirds of our rivers aren't swimmable](#). We have to get our carbon emissions to zero in 2050, yet they are [20% higher than they were in 1990](#) (and still rising). We have the 5th highest emissions per person in the OECD. We each produce [10 times our own body weight](#) in trash every year, which puts us 10th in the world.
2. Pain. New Zealand rivers have become unswimmable over our own lifetimes. In some places our water pollution has become so bad that it is exposing citizens to risk of bowel cancer! We risk losing more species in our lifetime. Climate change threatens global security, our biggest industry, agriculture. The resulting sea level rise threatens [\\$20b of buildings](#) and at least [\\$14b of infrastructure](#) within this century. Asia is no longer willing to take our trash.
3. Frustration. We've known about problems like water quality and carbon emissions for decades, yet successive governments have done nothing about it. In fact, things continue to get worse. Meanwhile, some people are making massive profits off of using our freshwater and polluting our water, land, and air. We can't blame them for that because we (the country) has let them do it - we haven't made them pay for the harm their pollution causes.
4. Fragile hope. We all need to do our bit to protect our environment, and we can make it happen so long as we work together. To encourage a sustainable, circular economy we need to reduce the taxes on hard work and innovation and increase them on pollution and resource use. TOP will make polluters face the true cost of their business models. It's only fair, and it will put their products back on an even footing with products produced in more sustainable ways. Commercial water users should also pay to use a public resource (including water bottlers). We will also resolve Māori rights over fresh water. The money raised will be used to help those industries and communities adapt to climate change and transition to environmentally friendly ways of living. It's a win-win.
5. Strong hope. Politicians love to play off farmers against city folk, but in reality everybody wants to see our environment restored and protected, and everyone has a role to play in getting us there. We'll introduce our pollution pricing gradually so we give businesses a chance to change, and we'll support them by encouraging investment in innovation. Water is the oil of the 21st Century so we need to protect this precious resource, and make sure we get the maximum value from it for NZ Inc. We can have a successful economy and a clean environment, and if we act quickly we will even be able to sell our innovations to the world! TOP's aim is to have the greenest economy in the world - finally living up to our promise of being clean and green.

FAQ

Climate change is a myth!

There is a vague possibility, but getting all those scientists to fabricate the same evidence and data over decades is way more unlikely. There are a variety of projections for the next century and the really bad ones have a high enough probability that we need to act now (don't bother trying to change their mind on the matter, just affirm your own belief to them.)

New Zealand is so small, we don't matter.

Yes that is right, we are small. But we have a huge per capita footprint - 5th in the OECD. This is a world problem and every bit of carbon out there increases the warming. If we don't we face massive upheaval. Either way, we need to prepare.

Isn't this just bullying farmers?

Actually, farmers want to protect the environment every bit as much as we do. Many of the leaders of the sustainability movement are farmers. Our policy rewards those farmers for doing their bit to protect and clean up our environment, and gives those who aren't the incentives they need to change. Remember it's not just costs - we're also returning all the collected money right back to the land to invest in sustainability. Finally, this isn't just about rural areas - our cities will need to change just as much (if not more).

Will New Zealand end up covered in trees?

Not under our approach. We favour the right tree in the right place, not wholesale use of forestry to soak up carbon.

Don't we need to go faster?

Yes, absolutely. We need to act quickly to not only reduce our impact on the environment but also prepare for the changes in climate ahead.

How are you different from the Greens here?

We believe the environment should be front and centre, always represented in government. Our willingness to work with either Labour or National will give the environment the bargaining power needed. The Green party gambles on Labour being in power, and if they aren't then the Greens and the environment don't have a voice. We also believe that a clean environment can be compatible with a modern market economy. We need to keep capitalism, and make sure it works for us.

TOP UBI Policy One-Pager

1. Shock. The future of work is changing. Workers can expect numerous career changes over their lifetimes, and a regular need to re-skill or up-skill. Around half of workers are expected to need [new skills](#) in the next five years. The gig economy means people will move in and out of work, and there will be periods during everybody's lives where they won't be earning an income. Our complex and bureaucratic welfare system won't be able to cope. All it does is create paperwork and stigma. We already spend five times as much investigating benefit fraud as we do tax evasion, even though the value of tax evasion is 40 times larger. Meanwhile we have thousands of people doing unpaid work and society places no value on their effort.
2. Pain. Our welfare system is broken - the welfare expert advisory group could not have been more clear about this. Beneficiaries are actually being punished for working by excessive clawbacks, sanctions and stand down periods when they do, and the difficulty of getting what we're entitled to from WINZ in general. Young people and people with kids under 5 struggle in particular - half of people with kids under 5 undergo at least a year of poverty. We have 295,000 children living under the 60% median income poverty line in New Zealand, and 155,000 living in material hardship (missing out on things like doctor's visits, heating, healthy food, shoes).
3. Frustration. More people are having to rely on the assistance of the state at some point in their lives too, because careers don't work like they used to. We need to change the way the state supports people who need it in a way that reflects our changing world, and which actually works to move people from benefit dependency towards prosperity, not keep them trapped in poverty.
4. Fragile hope. TOP is proposing to remodel our tax and welfare system towards an Unconditional Basic Income (UBI). This is a big project and it's going to take a lot of time, but we can start by focusing on our young people. We want to offer an unconditional basic income to all families with children under 3 and all 18-23 year olds. Evidence shows us that money spent on these groups gives us the most bang for our buck and gets our future citizens on the right path from day one. It will also finally start to value the real work that parents and caregivers to which keeps our country running.
5. Strong hope. Rather than subject people to barrages of tests, people just get support from the government, no questions asked. When they then earn extra money, we don't take it away with the other hand. People have a real chance to get ahead, and it doesn't feel like trying to run up the down escalator any more. Even better, UBI encourages people to take risks such as starting new businesses or improving their education without losing everything - the type of risks which strengthen our economy. It will boost innovation and improve our productivity. Unpaid work is also finally valued.

FAQ

Exactly how much and to who?

\$200 per week for each family with a child under 3 (under 6 if fostered or adopted), and \$200 per week to each person aged 18-23

This UBI isn't universal!

We acknowledge that. Moving from where we are to a full UBI is going to take time, and this is what we have costed and what we can promise in the upcoming term of government. Long term we want to move everybody onto a UBI.

A UBI is too expensive!

We can easily afford it by reforming our tax system and cutting superannuation payments to the retirees who are independently wealthy. Vulnerable retirees will still be supported as we already do! Giving money from your taxes to the rich is not necessary, or desirable. That spending will be redirected under our policy.

Won't this just encourage people to stop working?

Evidence has shown that total hours worked stay roughly the same. Those people who stop working are overwhelmingly doing so to retrain or instead care for their families - young and old. We're proud to say we see this is a good thing.

Won't this encourage beneficiaries to just stay on the dole?

No. Our UBI system rewards beneficiaries for taking paid work, our current system actually punishes them for doing so. The real winners from the UBI are the working poor.

TOP Drug Policy One-Pager

1. Shock. Prohibition has failed. It's time for a change in our drug policy. Around [80% of people](#) try cannabis under the age of 25. Our prison population is the second highest per capita in the Western World, and poor mental health and drug use is a major driver. Organised crime uses the supply of cannabis as a big earner, and they even use their grip on the markets to force people from cannabis onto much more harmful substances like P. Meanwhile legal drugs like alcohol create around 3 times the amount of [harm as cannabis](#).
2. Pain. Most of the harm caused by cannabis is because it is illegal. Buyers are put in touch with organised crime. Users have no quality control over the substance, nor access to education on less harmful approaches to use. Users are also criminalised, which takes up police time and puts more people into our expensive criminal justice system instead of giving them the support they need to manage mental health issues. Finally we know that putting people in prison actually perpetuates crime!
3. Frustration. The war on drugs is a war on people. Whatever you think about cannabis, it's impossible to argue that prohibition of cannabis has worked. It has led to significantly more harm due to gangs controlling supply, imprisonment of users, a tainted and unsafe supply hurting people, and legal alternatives killing so many more. All this harm has been done, and it hasn't even reduced cannabis use! Māori and Pasifika people have been particularly hurt due to racial bias in conviction and sentencing, and due to their generally fewer opportunities. It has also put barriers in the way of those who need to access help to reduce their drug use.
4. Fragile hope. It's time for a change. We should legalise, tax, and regulate cannabis, and treat it as a health issue. Many other countries have done this now without the sky falling in. Supply will be regulated by the government to ensure potency and safety of the product, and ensure that prices don't fall so far as to increase use. We will invest the money raised from taxation in mental health and addiction treatment. Those who need help with addiction will be able to access it without stigma or fear of punishment. Police will have more time to fight crime that actually has victims involved.
5. Strong hope. Our policy will remove a huge source of income for organised crime, and instead feed that money to legal suppliers and to the government. This will provide much needed jobs in our regions, and generate tax revenue to invest in improving mental health and addiction services. Ultimately New Zealand could have a successful export industry. Legalisation will remove the harm done by imprisonment and punitive approaches, and start to reverse the shameful overrepresentation of Māori in our prison system. It will ensure that supply is at the right price not to increase use, and ensure the safety of the product for users. Smart drug law can reduce harm instead of increasing it, and we are long overdue for smart drug laws.

FAQ

I don't want cannabis sold in my neighbourhood.

Fine - we will let communities choose for themselves whether to allow retail outlets in their area.

What about young people?

Overseas experience shows that good quality regulation and education can help reduce the use of cannabis from underage people.

Drug use is morally wrong!

You might be right, but if you want to reduce drug use, prohibition has shown conclusively not to work. If you want to reduce use, we need to do the same as we do with, for example, cigarettes - make them legal, tax them, and regulate them. That is what we propose with cannabis.

What about alcohol?

We acknowledge the harm done by alcohol too - in fact, alcohol causes more harm in New Zealand than any other drug. We propose raising the legal drinking age (for off licenses) to 20, and increase the price of alcohol by 10% to reduce use and harmful use in particular.

What about other drugs? Will you legalise everything?

Every drug has different harm profiles, and we propose to treat them one at a time. But our overriding goal is to reduce harm, and where that is best achieved by legalisation and treating them as health issues, we will do that.

I'm concerned about drugged driving!

Drugged driving is already a problem on our roads, and will remain illegal after legalisation of cannabis. New Zealand police already have a robust way to deal with this, and will continue to do so. New research on testing is on the horizon, and will allow better enforcement in the future.

Won't legalised cannabis lead to people using heavier and more dangerous drugs?

There is no significant evidence to suggest that smoking cannabis leads to other drugs. Making it legal will remove the criminal interaction which evidence does show leads to harder drugs.