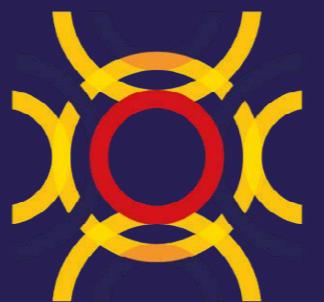


# The Changing Face of Aotearoa New Zealand

A Special Report Based on Current Population Intercensal Projections



Rangahau  
Aotearoa  
Research  
New Zealand



A New Zealand Population and Dwellings Census has been undertaken every 5 years since 1851.

The most recent Census was conducted in 2023 and took place on 7 March of that year. It was the 35th Census in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The government has decided that this Census will be the very **last** Census as we have come to know them. Please see pages 15-16 of this report for more information.





## This report

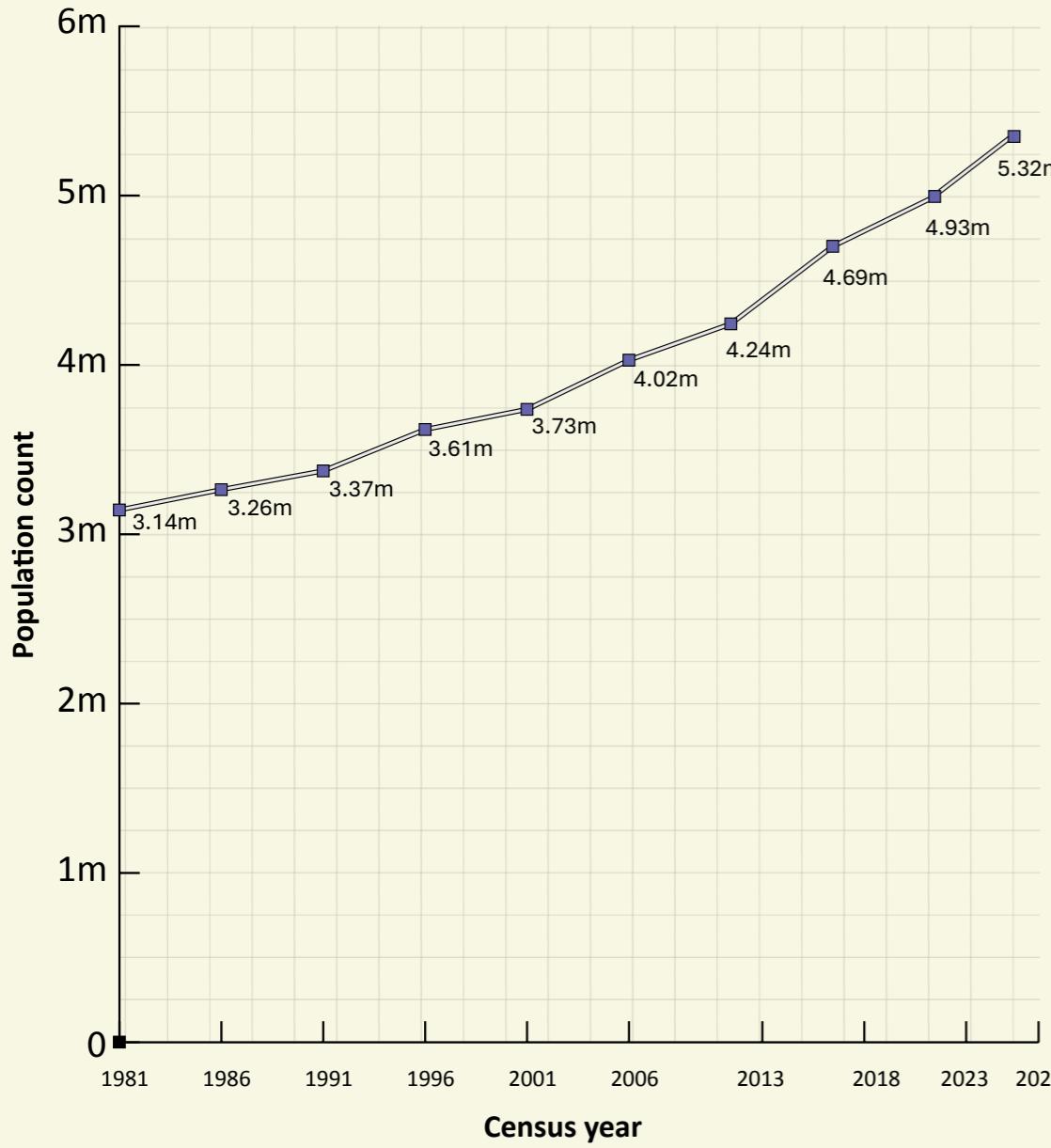
Historically, between Census years, Statistics New Zealand has published **intercensal projections**.

This report presents the most up-to-date population projections, as at June 2025, and sets the scene for how future population calculations will be made.

## Key statistics

1. The estimated resident population of Aotearoa New Zealand, as at June 2025, was **5.32 million**, representing a 6.5% increase on the population recorded in the 2023 Census (4.99 million).
2. Population growth has **slowed**. In the 12 months to June 2025, the resident population of Aotearoa New Zealand grew by 34,700 (0.7%); significantly less than the rate of growth in the two previous June years (2.3% in 2023 and 1.7% in 2024).
3. Population growth **slowed in all 16 regions** of Aotearoa New Zealand in the months to June 2025. Canterbury was the fastest growing region in the June 2025 year (1.1 %), whereas Nelson and Marlborough decreased the most (-0.3%).
4. Three of every four New Zealanders live in the North Island. Auckland's population is now **in excess of 1.82 million**.
5. The resident population of Aotearoa New Zealand has continued to become **more ethnically diverse**. The group increasing the fastest comprises people of Asian ethnicities.
6. The resident population of Aotearoa New Zealand also **continues to age**. The projections indicate that all ethnicities will have more people, and a higher share of their population, in the 65 years and over (65+) age group, including Māori and Pacific peoples.





Resident population count,  
1981–2025

Census year	Number
1981	3,143,307
1986	3,263,283
1991	3,373,926
1996	3,618,303
2001	3,737,277
2006	4,027,947
2013	4,242,048
2018	4,699,755
2023	4,993,923
*2025	5,324,700

\* 2025 count is intercensal estimate.

**The resident New Zealand population is now estimated to be well over 5 million; however, population growth is slowing**

Aotearoa New Zealand's resident population grew 0.7% in the year ending June 2025, to 5.32 million people. This rate of growth is **slower** than in the previous two June years; 2.3% in 2023 and 1.7% in 2024.

For the first time since 2013 – excluding the COVID-19 pandemic years of 2021 and 2022 – **natural increase** (births minus deaths) made a larger contribution to population growth than did net migration (arrivals minus departures).





## Population growth has slowed in all of Aotearoa New Zealand's 16 regions

With population growth slowing in mind, Canterbury was the fastest growing region in the 12 months to the end of June 2025 (1.1%), followed by **Auckland and Waikato** (each 1.0%). These three regions were also the fastest growing in the 12 months to the end of June 2024 when they grew 2.1%, 2.5%, and 2.0% respectively.

In comparison, **Nelson and Marlborough** decreased in population by 0.3% in the 12 months to the end of June 2025, while **Gisborne and Hawke's Bay** populations also dropped slightly (by 0.1%).

**Wellington and Taranaki** regions had almost no change in their total population in the 12 months to the end of June 2025.

In comparison, there were **no** regions with population decreases in the June 2024 year.

**"LOWER NET MIGRATION GAINS IN THE JUNE 2025 YEAR LED TO SLOWER POPULATION GROWTH ACROSS ALL REGIONS."**

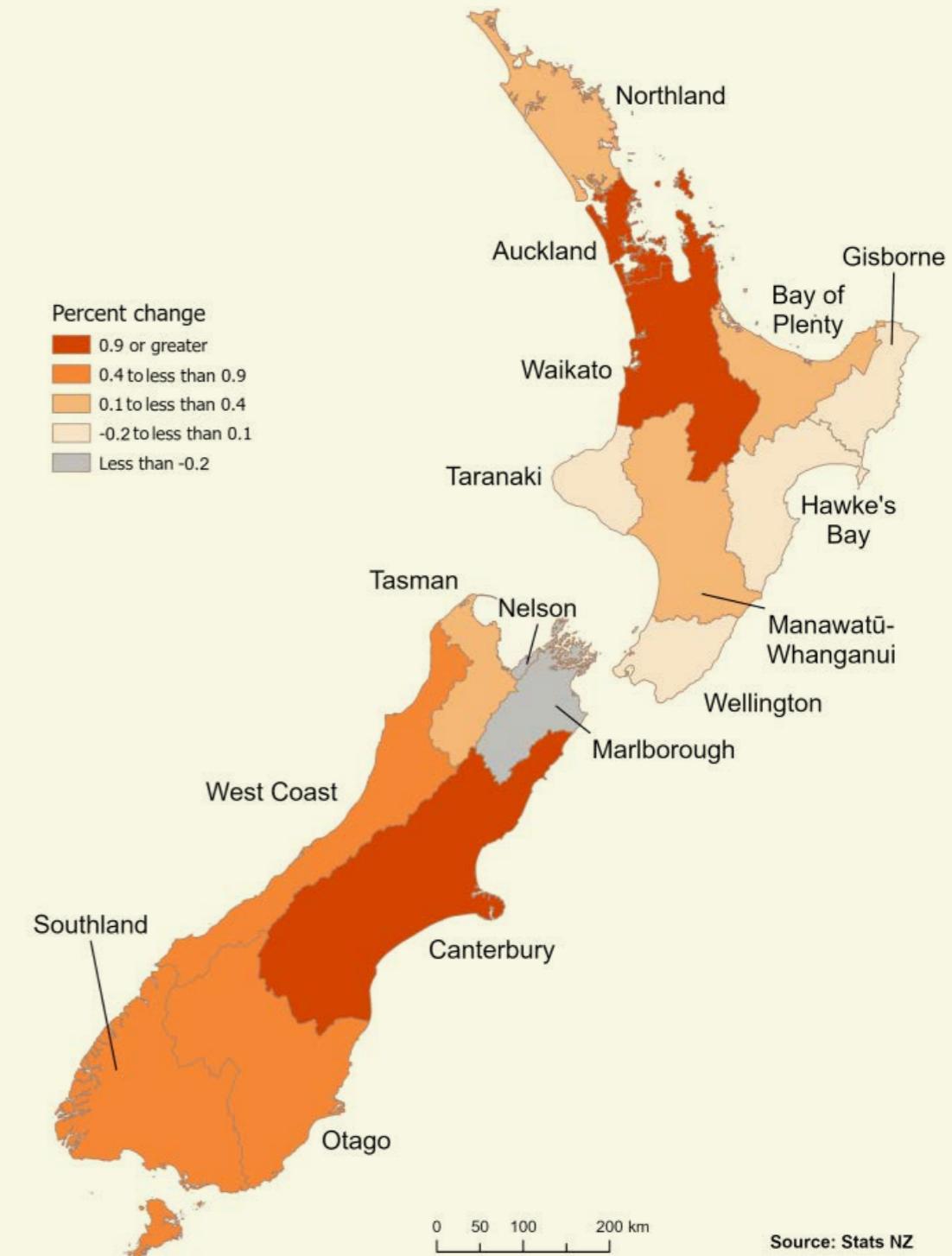
– Victoria Treliiving (Statistics New Zealand population estimates, projections, and coverage spokesperson)



# Estimated resident population change, by regional council, year ended 30 June 2025

The map shows the regional council areas, each assigned a colour to show the rate of change in the estimated resident population in the year ending 30 June 2025.

The colours are grouped into annual percent change from July 2024 to June 2025, with brown showing the areas experiencing the greatest increase (0.9% or more) and grey the areas experiencing the greatest decreases (0.2% or more).



Source: Stats NZ

## Reflecting the slow rates of growth, seven regions had more people move out than move in

All regions had lower net migration gains in the June 2025 year than in the previous year, with seven having **net migration losses**. Net migration is the difference between migrant arrivals and migrant departures. It includes both internal migration, where people move within New Zealand, and international migration, where people move to or from New Zealand.

The **Wellington** region had the largest net migration loss (1,700), with this driven by moves overseas rather than to other parts of New Zealand.

Other regions with net migration losses included **Hawke's Bay** (470), **Taranaki** (220), **Bay of Plenty** (210), **Gisborne** (170), **Marlborough** (120), and **Nelson** (110).

By comparison, there were **no** regions with a net migration loss in the June 2024 year.





## Three out of four New Zealanders live in the North Island

However, the South Island population has been growing at a faster rate; growing by an average of 1.4% since 2018, compared with 1.3% for the North Island.

1.82 million people live in the Auckland region; however, its rate of growth has slowed as noted earlier. It halved between 2018 and 2023 compared with the previous intercensal period (5.4% and 11.0% respectively) and was 1.0% in the 12 months to the end of June 2025, growing by 17,700.

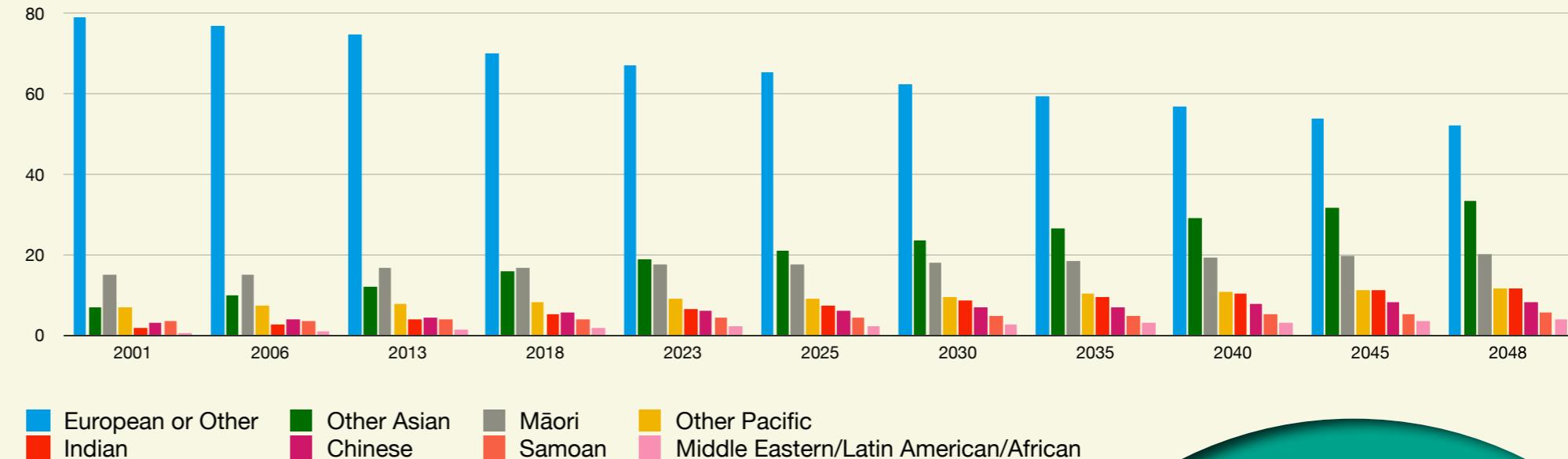
Auckland had a net internal migration loss of 3,200 in the 12 months to the end of June 2025 year, but this was offset by an international migration gain of 9,500 and natural increase of 11,400.





## The ‘European or Other’ ethnic population continues to be the dominant ethnic group

However, at 65%, this is significantly lower than in 2023 (67%) and is projected to drop even further to around 52% by 2048.



Ethnic proportion of New Zealand population, median projection, 2001–2048

Year	European or Other	Other Asian	Māori	Other Pacific	Indian	Chinese	Samoan	Middle Eastern/Latin American/African
2001	79.2	7	15.1	6.7	1.8	3.1	3.3	0.7
2006	76.8	9.7	14.9	7.2	2.8	4	3.6	0.9
2013	74.6	12.2	16.7	7.8	4	4.4	3.8	1.2
2018	70.2	15.7	16.7	8.3	5.3	5.5	4	1.6
2023	67.2	18.7	17.5	8.9	6.5	5.9	4.3	2
2025	65.3	20.8	17.4	9.1	7.2	6.2	4.4	2.2
2030	62.4	23.7	18	9.6	8.4	6.7	4.6	2.5
2035	59.5	26.5	18.5	10.1	9.4	7.1	4.9	2.9
2040	56.7	29.1	19.1	10.6	10.3	7.6	5.2	3.2
2045	54	31.7	19.7	11.1	11.3	8	5.4	3.6
2048	52.3	33.3	20	11.4	11.8	8.2	5.6	3.8

**“THE ‘EUROPEAN OR OTHER’ ETHNIC POPULATION IS THE ONLY MAJOR ETHNIC GROUP PROJECTED TO DECREASE AS A PROPORTION OF NEW ZEALAND’S POPULATION.”**

Victoria Treliving (Statistics New Zealand population estimates, projections, and coverage spokesperson)



**“OUR ETHNIC POPULATIONS ARE CHANGING AT DIFFERENT RATES BECAUSE OF A COMBINATION OF DIFFERENT AGE STRUCTURES, BIRTH AND DEATH RATES, AND PATTERNS OF MIGRATION.”**

Victoria Treliving (Statistics New Zealand population estimates, projections, and coverage spokesperson)

**Around one-third of Aotearoa New Zealand’s population are likely to identify with Asian ethnicities in 2048**

This is the projection from Statistics New Zealand, up from 19% in 2023.

Within the broad Asian grouping, those identifying with Indian ethnicities are projected to increase from 7% of New Zealand’s population in 2023 to around 12% in 2048.

Over the same period, those identifying with Chinese ethnicities are projected to increase from 6% to around 8%.



## **The projections also indicate above average growth of the populations identifying with Māori, Pacific, and Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA) ethnicities over the next two decades**

As a result of different growth rates, the proportion of New Zealand's population identifying with **Māori** ethnicity is projected to increase from 18% in 2023 to around 20% by 2048.

Over the same 25-year projection period, the **Pacific** ethnic proportion is likely to increase from 9% to around 11% percent, and the **MELAA** ethnic proportion from 2% to around 4%.

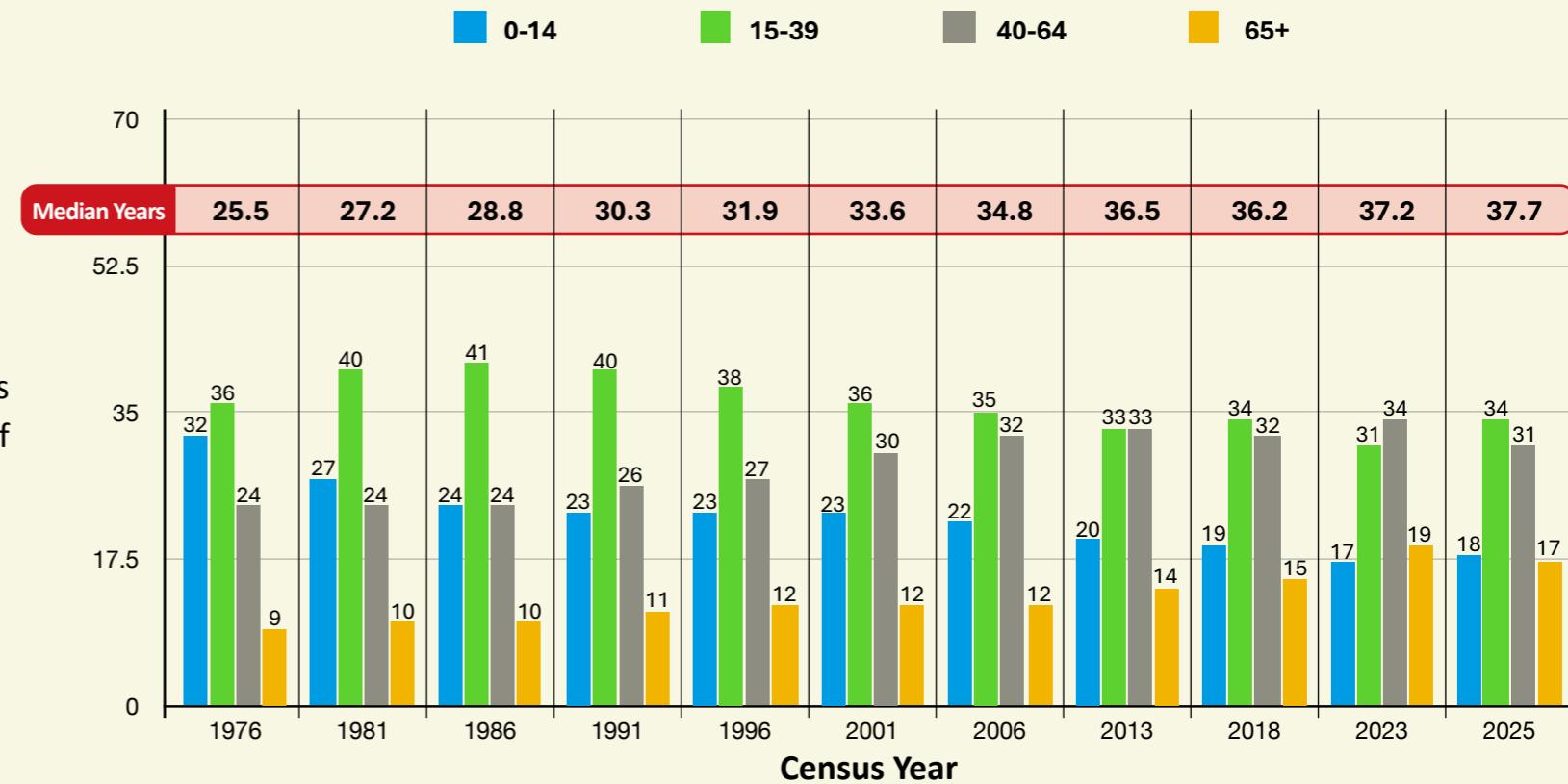


## The population continues to age

Reflecting the ageing of the population, the median age of the population is currently 37.7 years (i.e., half the population are younger than this, and half are older), compared with 37.2 years in the 2023 Census and 36.2 years in the 2018 Census.

The current median age of females is 39.0 years and 27.4 years for males.

Age distribution over time, 1976-2025

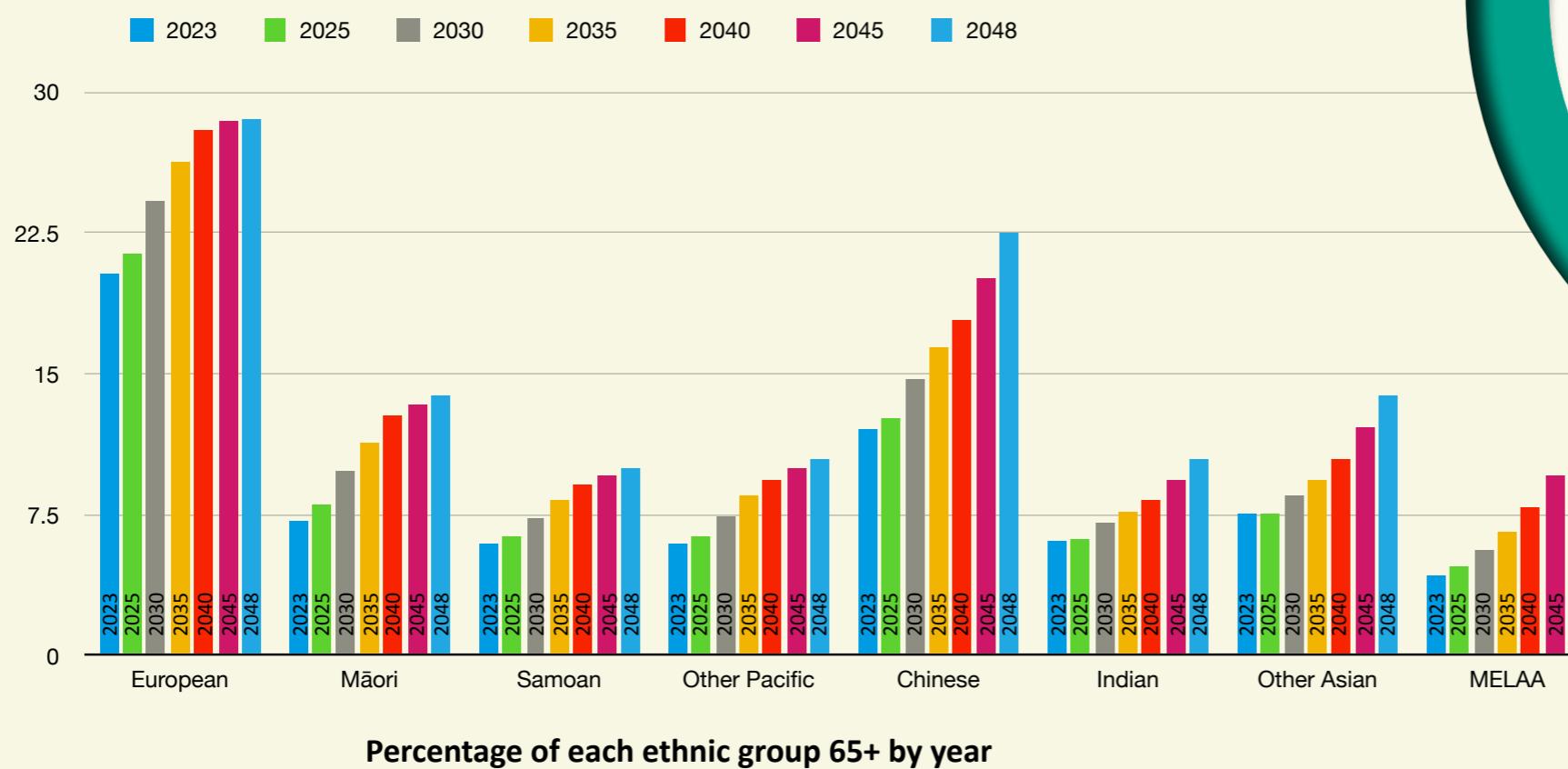


# All ethnicities are increasing in age

The share of the 'European or Other' ethnic population aged 65+ is projected to increase from 20% in 2023 to around 29% in 2048.

Proportionately greater increases are projected for the following:

- MELAA – from 4% in 2023 to 11% in 2048.
- Māori – from 7% in 2023 to 14% in 2048.
- Chinese – from 12% in 2023 to 23% in 2048.
- Pacific peoples – from 6% in 2023 to 10% in 2048.
- Indian – from 6% in 2023 to 10% in 2048.



**"ACROSS ALL ETHNIC POPULATIONS, THIS AGEING IS DRIVEN BY LOWER FERTILITY RATES OVER TIME. MIGRATION AND INCREASING LIFE EXPECTANCY ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO AGEING."**

Victoria Treliiving (Statistics New Zealand population estimates, projections, and coverage spokesperson)

## The future of the Census

The 2023 Census was estimated to have cost the New Zealand taxpayer \$337 million, including \$37 million to cover additional costs incurred, for example, as a result of delays caused by Cyclone Gabrielle.

Considering the cost and other issues such as lower response rates by certain population groups, as well as the fact that life in Aotearoa New Zealand is much different from the way the very first national Census was conducted, on 8 May 2024 Statistics New Zealand began a public consultation process aimed at 'reimagining and modernising' the way we think of the Census as we have come to know it. Submissions closed on 19 June 2024.



## The decision

In June 2025, Statistics Minister Shane Reti announced that there will be no 2028 Census.

Instead, the Census will be replaced with a combination of administrative data from other government agencies and smaller annual surveys that a sample of the population will complete.

The administrative data used will include information from tax records, education enrolments, health data, student loans and allowances and ACC injury claims.

The new system is planned to take effect from 2030.





# THE CHANGING FACE OF AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

A Special Report based on Statistics NZ's Victoria intercensal projections following the 2023 Census'.

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