

Growing and younger Māori populations

Compared with pākeha, the Māori population is younger and increasing at a faster rate. Considerable social and economic disparities affect them, but there are signs of positive, if slow change. Māori values and practices are increasingly influencing Aotearoa more than you may expect just from population size.

What we're seeing

Rapid population growth

In 2021 the Māori population grew by 2.4%, compared with 0.6% growth for the population as a whole. The proportion of Māori is expected to increase from 17% of the population in 2018 to around 21% by 2043. People with European ancestry will decline from 70% to 64% over that time.¹

It is anticipated that over the next 20 years the largest increases in Māori will be in the Auckland, Waikato and Canterbury urban regions. But Māori populations are expected to increase in all regions.²

A decade younger

The age profile of Māori is substantially younger than the general population. The median age of Māori males and females is 11 years younger, at 25 and 27 years, respectively, than the national.²

Substantial inequalities persist

While past injustices are increasingly being recognised Māori continue to face substantial social & economic inequalities. Health & education outcomes are lower than for pākeha, their average incomes and rates of home ownership are also lower, and it is often more difficult for Māori to access capital. Some improvements are being made, but often slowly, while in other cases disparity is increasing.^{3,4}

The 'as Māori' approach

Increasingly, Māori are designing solutions and creating new opportunities for themselves. There are a growing number of Māori-centric sport and recreation activities (such as Waka Ama⁵ and Iron Māori⁶), and Māori-led initiatives such as MaraeFit that support physical activity in an 'as Māori' context.⁷

Cultural shift

A national cultural shift is underway. This isn't solely due to population growth, but a broader recognition of the benefits that Māori perspectives and beliefs bring to the nation. The growing use of te reo and normalisation of Māori words in every day conversations, and by the media, government and businesses signals a continuing shift towards a more bi-cultural society.⁸ As does the establishment of the Matariki national holiday, and the growing participation and interest in Māori arts and cultural activities, such as Kapa Haka. In 2021 TikTok established a hub to showcase Māori creativity.⁹

The use of mātauranga Māori as the framework for reporting on environmental performance¹⁰ illustrates, how Māori perspectives and values are reshaping how the country views the world around us.

Potential implications

Create

- **Build upon rather than replace existing community activities and interests**

Relate

- **Western-style approaches and structures become less relevant.**

Consume

- **New opportunities to develop engaging activities that better fit with lifestyle and culture**

Degrade

- **Other economic and social factors need to be addressed to reduce inequalities**
- **Top down "we know best" attitudes hinder success**

Connect

- **Activities will need to connect with community values to build participation and engagement.**

Define

- **What do bi-cultural and multi-cultural mean in practice?**
- **Who are the emerging leaders to catalyse the changes?**

More information (links)

¹ [Stats NZ population projections](#)

² [Stats NZ Māori population estimates](#)

³ [Fact check of disparities between Māori and pākeha](#)

⁴ [Wai 2575 Māori health trends report 2020](#)

⁵ [Waka ama case study](#)

⁶ [Iron Māori](#)

⁷ [MaraeFit case study](#)

⁸ ['Māori has gone mainstream'](#)

⁹ [Celebrating the Māori community on TikTok](#)

¹⁰ [Environment Aotearoa 2022](#)