New Zealanders in Australia

ANU Migration Hub Policy Insights 25/3

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Key takeaways: New Zealanders in Australia

Topic	Key Finding	Notes / Implications
Total Diaspora Size	**1.22 million+** New Zealanders in Australia	Includes citizens, NZ-born, and children of NZers; conservative estimate due to under-recording
Visa Status	**654,491** NZ citizens on Special Category Visa (SCV, Subclass 444) in 2021	SCV allows permanent stay but is legally temporary—limits access to services
Citizenship	**Only 34.5%** of NZ-born in Australia are Australian citizens.	For Māori: just **17.1%**. Post-2001 migrants face steep decline in naturalisation
Demographic Profile	Median age of NZ-born is **46**; diaspora highly urbanised but concentrated in **Queensland** and **WA**	SCV holders skew younger and male; significant populations in mining and outer-urban areas
Māori Population	**169,219** identified as Māori in Australia in 2021	**18%** of NZ-born in Australia are Māori; lower home ownership, citizenship, and educational outcomes
Educational Attainment	Māori and SCV holders have lower tertiary attainment, concentrated in **vocational pathways**	Only **~10%** of Māori men aged 35–39 hold a Bachelor's degree or higher
Labour Force	High employment rates for SCV holders	Strong representation in trades, personal services, and construction industries
Home Ownership	Only **56%** of NZ-born own homes vs. **71%** of Australian-born	SCV uncertainty and lack of welfare safety net linked to lower home ownership
Superannuation	NZ migrants withdrew heavily from super during COVID	Super was **36%** of NZ migrants' assets pre-pandemic—vulnerable to long-term financial insecurity
Fertility	NZ-born and Samoan-born women have **higher fertility** than Australian-born	Samoan-born TFR ~3.5 vs. ~1.8 for Australian-born; strong transnational family links
Health Outcomes	NZ-born people have **7–8 years shorter life expectancy** than Australian-born	Median age at death: NZ-born men ~73 vs. Aus-born men ~80
Suicide Rates	NZ-born population has **second-highest suicide rate** among all migrant groups	Indicates significant unmet mental health needs, especially for Māori and Pasifika
Homelessness	Over **5,400 NZ-born** people were homeless in 2021	Higher rates of marginal housing, caravan parks, and overcrowding than general population
Climate Risk	NZ-born residents highly concentrated in **climate-vulnerable electorates**	Five of the top ten electorates facing climate risk have above-average NZ-born populations

Introduction

Trans-Tasman migration is one of the world's most enduring and dynamic migratory corridors, shaped by deep historical ties, evolving legal frameworks, and shifting socio-political contexts. Despite its longevity, scale, and depth of integration, the New Zealand diaspora in Australia remains underexplored in both academic research and policy debate.

This diaspora is far from homogeneous. It encompasses overlapping identities—citizenship, country of birth, parental heritage, and ethnic ancestry—each captured differently in Australian census and migration data. These fragmented categories present conceptual and empirical challenges for accurately measuring the population's true scale and diversity of experience.

Recent improvements in data linkage—especially in the 2016 and 2021 Censuses—have marked a turning point. For the first time, census responses could be reliably linked to migration records, enabling a more granular and multidimensional analysis. This report leverages these integrated datasets to examine the New Zealand diaspora's composition, mobility patterns, socio-economic outcomes, and emerging vulnerabilities. It shows how each data source captures a different facet of the population and highlights the risks of over-relying on a single measure such as birthplace or citizenship status.

Drawing on the most comprehensive dataset available, we estimate that over 1.22 million people in Australia have ties to New Zealand through citizenship, birthplace, or ancestry. This figure includes Special Category Visa (SCV) holders, New Zealand-born Australian citizens, and Australian-born individuals with at least one New Zealand-born parent. Yet this is likely a conservative count: dual citizenship is not recorded, and Māori ancestry or New Zealand heritage may be under-reported due to data limitations and under-recognition of hybrid identities.

The definitional complexity of the diaspora is further reflected in visa and citizenship status. The SCV allows New Zealand citizens to live and work in Australia indefinitely, but does not confer full citizenship rights. It includes long-term residents, short-term workers, and tourists. Meanwhile, New Zealanders who have naturalised as Australian citizens no longer appear in visa statistics, and ancestry-based data lack legal status indicators. Only by triangulating across these categories can a fuller picture of the diaspora's size and structure be assembled.

This legal and bureaucratic ambiguity has real-world consequences. SCV holders live with limited access to social protections, homeownership support, and pathways to permanent status. This creates a stratified diaspora—divided between those with full citizenship and those without. These challenges are particularly acute for Māori and Pasifika New Zealanders, whose migration experiences and socio-economic outcomes diverge from the broader group.

In the chapters that follow, this report provides a comprehensive, data-driven analysis of New Zealanders in Australia. It examines their migration history, demographic profile, geographic distribution, labour market participation, educational attainment, fertility, and exposure to emerging risks. It also contextualises recent policy reforms—such as the 2023 expansion of citizenship eligibility for SCV holders—within a broader history of trans-Tasman migration governance. By illuminating the complexity of this long-standing migrant group, the report aims to inform more inclusive and equitable policy responses for one of Australia's most integrated yet institutionally marginalised diasporas.

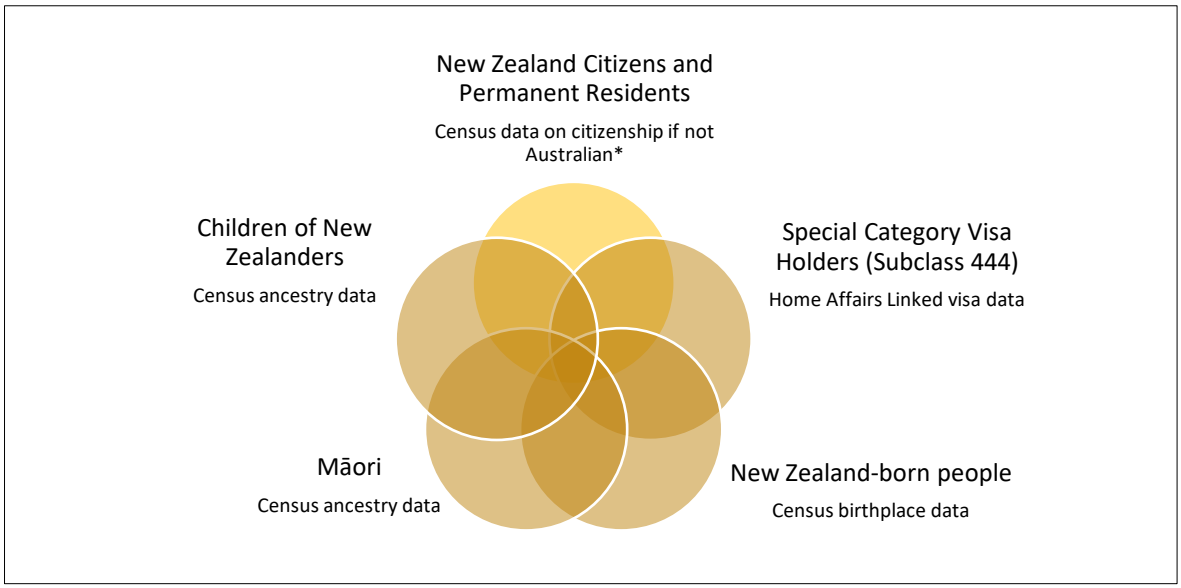
New Zealand's Diaspora in Australia: Scale, Mobility, and Composition

This section lays the empirical groundwork for the report. It begins by examining the definitional complexity of the New Zealand diaspora in Australia, before turning to estimates of its size, historical growth patterns, and the pivotal role of the Special Category Visa (SCV) in shaping contemporary trans-Tasman mobility.

Defining New Zealand's diaspora in Australia

Since diaspora is a question of identity, and identity is fluid, a definitive fixed estimate the diaspora's size ultimately may not be possible. We provide lower bound estimates of people who can be objectively classified New Zealanders using valid and reliable measures. Many more may count themselves New Zealanders or part of New Zealand's diaspora in particular moments or locations – such as major sporting events, disasters, conflicts, or celebrations – during which their New Zealand-ness is temporarily switched on or warmed up (Vertovec 1997; Brubaker 2005; Sôkefeld 2006; Dufoix 2008; Gamlen 2011).

Figure 1: New Zealand's diaspora in Australia, concept and data sources



** The Census does not collect data on dual citizens or NZ permanent residency status.*

Understanding the New Zealand diaspora in Australia requires navigating a set of overlapping identity categories—citizenship, birthplace, ancestry, and visa status—each captured differently in official data. Figure 1 illustrates this conceptual complexity through a Venn diagram of intersecting population groups. Depending on which dimensions are included, estimates of the diaspora's size can vary significantly.

The diagram highlights the need to triangulate multiple data sources to build an accurate picture of the population. For example, some individuals appear as New Zealand citizens under the Special Category Visa (Subclass 444), while others are captured through census categories such as country

of birth or parental birthplace. Still others are identified through self-reported Māori ancestry or New Zealand heritage.

Each of these categories contains gaps and overlaps. The SCV population includes tourists, temporary visitors, and children born in Australia who hold New Zealand citizenship—though the latter group is likely under-recorded. SCV data excludes New Zealanders who have since naturalised as Australian citizens or obtained permanent residency. Country-of-birth data captures only those born in New Zealand, omitting New Zealand citizens born elsewhere, such as children of New Zealanders born in Australia or third-country migrants with New Zealand passports. Together, these challenges demonstrate that no single data source can fully capture the scope of the New Zealand diaspora in Australia. A composite, multi-source approach is essential to understanding this complex and evolving migrant population.

Measuring the diaspora: Data sources and limitations

Accurately measuring the New Zealand diaspora in Australia requires drawing together multiple data sources, each of which captures a different aspect of this complex population. The five main population categories depicted in Figure 1 — citizenship, visa status, country of birth, ancestry, and parental heritage — are drawn from distinct statistical systems, each with its own strengths and limitations.

The Australian Census of Population and Housing (2021) provides key demographic information, including country of birth, citizenship, ancestry, and parental birthplace. While foundational for estimating the size of the diaspora, the Census does not capture dual citizenship or New Zealand permanent residency status, making it impossible to identify New Zealand citizens who are also Australian citizens.

The Australian Census and Temporary Entrants Integrated Dataset (ACTEID) links 2021 Census responses with Department of Home Affairs visa data. This allows identification of Subclass 444 visa holders — a critical component of the New Zealand diaspora — though it excludes naturalised citizens and those who no longer hold a temporary visa.

Department of Home Affairs visa records provide detailed data on SCV arrivals, departures, and current holders. However, these records are limited to individuals with an active visa status and do not include those who have transitioned to other visas or who have become Australian citizens.

These sources collectively allow for the identification of five intersecting categories within the New Zealand diaspora: New Zealand citizens and permanent residents, Subclass 444 visa holders, New Zealand-born individuals, people reporting Māori ancestry, and Australian-born children of New Zealanders. Each category is derived from a different combination of data sources and carries distinct limitations.

Significant data gaps remain. Dual citizens cannot be identified in any dataset. Ancestry may be under-reported or misclassified, particularly among those with Māori or Pasifika heritage (cf Gamlen 2007). Short-term visitors or temporary residents may be captured in visa data but not in measures of long-term settlement. Conversely, those who have naturalised as Australian citizens are omitted from visa datasets altogether.

In sum, no single data source offers a complete view. Only by triangulating these overlapping datasets can we produce a partial — but more robust — estimate of the scale and composition of the New Zealand diaspora in Australia.

Estimating the size of the diaspora

For triangulation purposes, we use 2 slightly different estimation methods. According to the most direct minimum estimate, as of 2021, the New Zealand diaspora in Australia was estimated at a minimum of 1.23 million people. This figure comprises three overlapping groups: 654,491 New Zealand citizens holding a Special Category Visa (SCV), 181,616 New Zealand-born individuals who had acquired Australian citizenship, and 420,514 Australian-born individuals with at least one New Zealand-born parent. These categories total 1,256,621 individuals, but an estimated overlap of 26,000 — primarily SCV holders also counted among the Australian-born children of New Zealanders — reduces the final estimate to around 1.23 million. This figure is lower bound. It excludes dual citizens who cannot be separately identified in current datasets, and likely undercounts individuals who claim New Zealand ancestry or Māori identity but are not captured through formal registration or limited survey categories.

Figure 2: New Zealand Citizens, Persons Born in New Zealand and Persons with Parents Born in New Zealand, 2021 Census of Australia

Birthplace of Person and Their Parents	SCV	Not SCV	Total
Born in New Zealand, both parents born in New Zealand	335,600	19,400	355,000
Born in New Zealand, one parent born in New Zealand	81,300	21,700	103,000
Born in New Zealand, neither parent born in New Zealand	77,100	24,900	102,000
Born in Rest of World, both parents born in New Zealand	29,500	48,400	78,000
Born in Rest of World, one parent born in New Zealand	18,500	410,500	429,100
Born in Rest of World, neither parent born in New Zealand	148,800	Unknown*	Unknown*
TOTAL	690,800	524,900**	1,215,700**

*Notes: Numbers adjusted for Census undercount and rounded to nearest 100. There were 530,492 New Zealand-born persons in the 2021 Census. The population born in New Zealand in the 2021 Estimated Resident Population was 559,980. All the raw numbers in the table above were blown up by the factor: 559,980/530,492. *There are persons in this cell who are, or who once were, New Zealand citizens, but they do not hold a Special Category Visa (SCV) Subclass 444 (probably mainly joint citizens of New Zealand and Australia). Numbers in this cell are not identifiable from the Australian Census. ** Excluding Unknown.*

A second approach to estimation is shown in Figure 2 below and leads to a slightly lower minimum estimate of just under 1.22 million New Zealanders in Australia. Based on the 2021 Census and adjusted to match the Estimated Resident Population, approximately 654,500 individuals were identified as holding a Special Category Visa (SCV, subclass 444) and either being born in New Zealand or having at least one parent born there. The largest share – 317,900 people – were born in New Zealand to two New Zealand-born parents. Another 77,000 were born in New Zealand with one New Zealand-born parent, and 73,000 were born in New Zealand to parents who were both born elsewhere. Among those born outside New Zealand, 28,000 had two New Zealand-born parents, and 17,600 had one. A further 141,000 individuals were SCV holders but born outside New Zealand to parents also born outside New Zealand. While many in this final group are likely current or former New Zealand citizens – particularly dual citizens of Australia and New Zealand – their

exact status cannot be confirmed from census data, and they are therefore excluded from the SCV-eligible estimate. Due to these exclusions and unknowns this estimate is also lower bound.

The New Zealand-born population: Historical mobility and growth

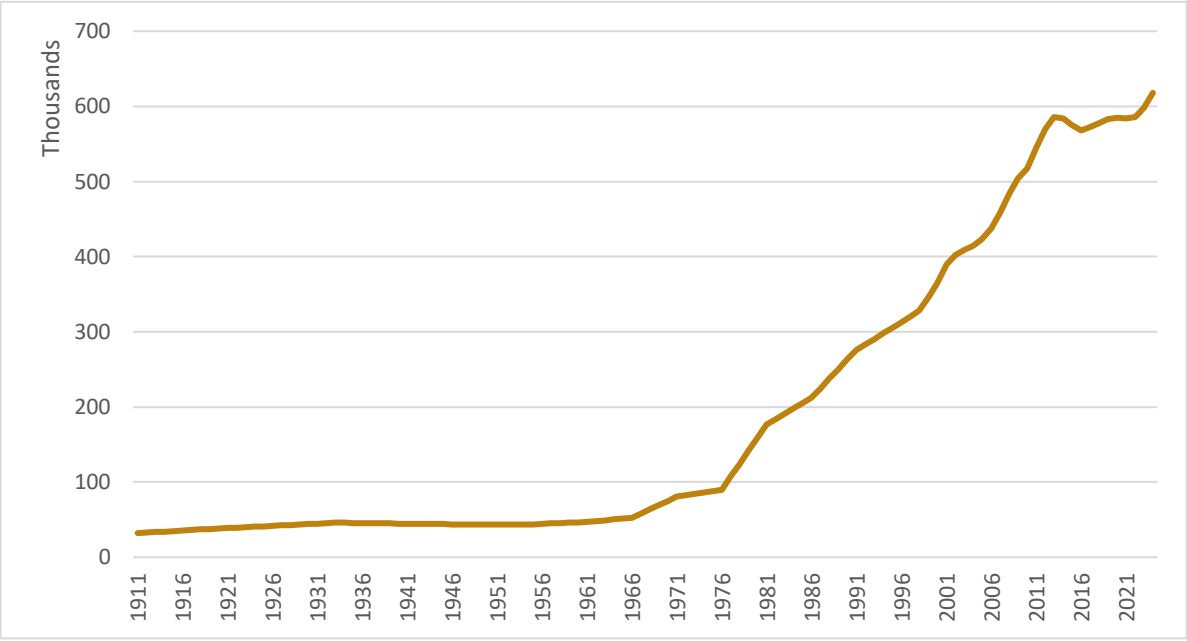
This section traces the long-term evolution of the New Zealand-born population in Australia, drawing on over a century of census and migration data. It highlights key inflection points — including changes in trans-Tasman mobility, visa frameworks, and economic cycles — and connects these shifts to broader migration dynamics (cf Carmichael 1993; Pool 1999; Lidgard & Gilson 2002; Bedford et al 2003; Bryant & Law 2005; Hugo 2006; Green et al 2008; Gamlen 2013; Hugo 2015).

To contextualise recent trends, we begin with data from the 2021 Census, which recorded 530,492 New Zealand-born individuals residing in Australia — a 9.7% increase since 2011. Country-of-birth data from the census has long served as a cornerstone for understanding the growth and transformation of this population, particularly in relation to pivotal policy developments: the expansion of trans-Tasman mobility in 1973, the introduction of the Special Category Visa (SCV) in 1994, the tightening of citizenship rules in 2001, and reforms in 2016 and 2023 (Carmichael 1993; Hugo 2015).

Long-run growth patterns

Figure 3 charts the number of New Zealand-born individuals present in Australia from 1911 to 2024. For much of the 20th century, growth was gradual and modest — well under 100,000 until the early 1970s. While the absolute number remained relatively stable, its share of the total Australian population declined from 0.7% in the 1910s and 1920s to just 0.2% by the mid-1960s. A turning point came in the mid-1970s, when the population began to climb sharply, driven by expanded mobility rights and broader global migration shifts.

Figure 3: New Zealand-born Persons Present in Australia, 1911-2024



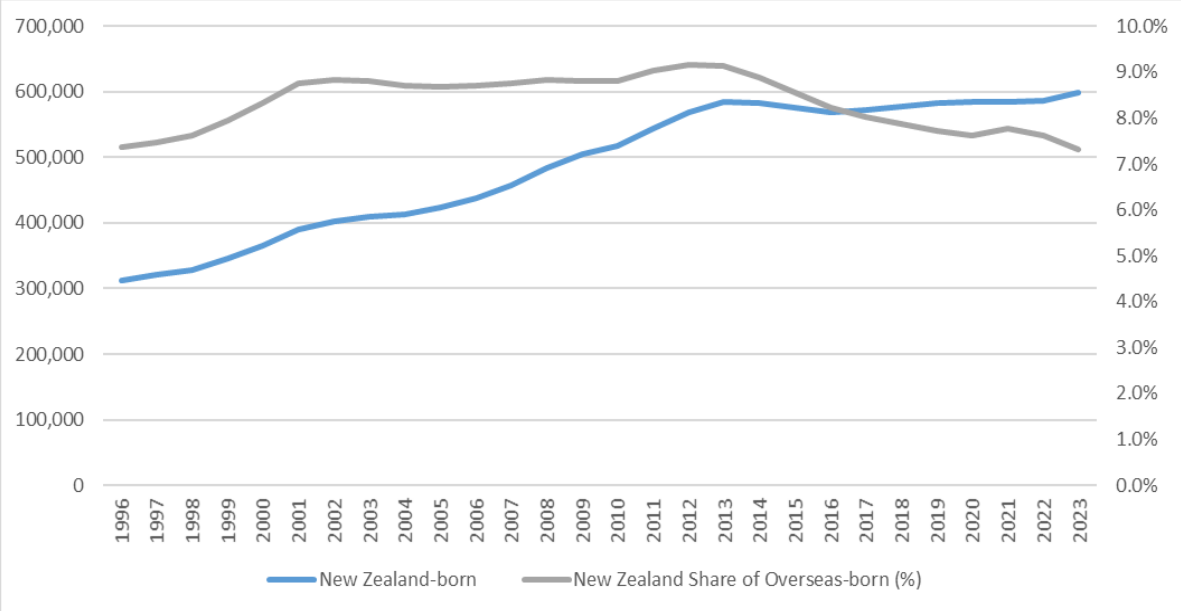
Source: ABS. 1911-1991 from census reports for the year, with interim years interpolated based on linear assumptions. 1996 onwards comes from Australia's Population by country of birth (ABS 34090DO001_2023)

Rapid growth continued through the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, peaking at around 586,000 in 2013. A plateau followed in the late 2010s, likely due to shifting economic conditions and return migration. Since 2020, growth has resumed, with the New Zealand-born population reaching its highest recorded level — over 600,000 — by 2024 (cf McDonald 2024).

Recent population dynamics

Figure 4 shows the nearly doubling of the New Zealand-born population in Australia between 1996 and 2023 — a 91.5% increase, reaching 598,090 by 2023. As of the 2021 Census, New Zealand ranked as the fourth-largest overseas-born group in Australia, behind England, India, and China. Its share of the overseas-born population has remained relatively stable in recent years (around 7.3%), though this represents a notable increase from historical levels: under 3.5% through the mid-20th century, and peaking at over 9% between 2001 and 2014 (Carmichael 1993, p. 37).

Figure 4: New Zealand-born population resident in Australia, 1996 to 2022

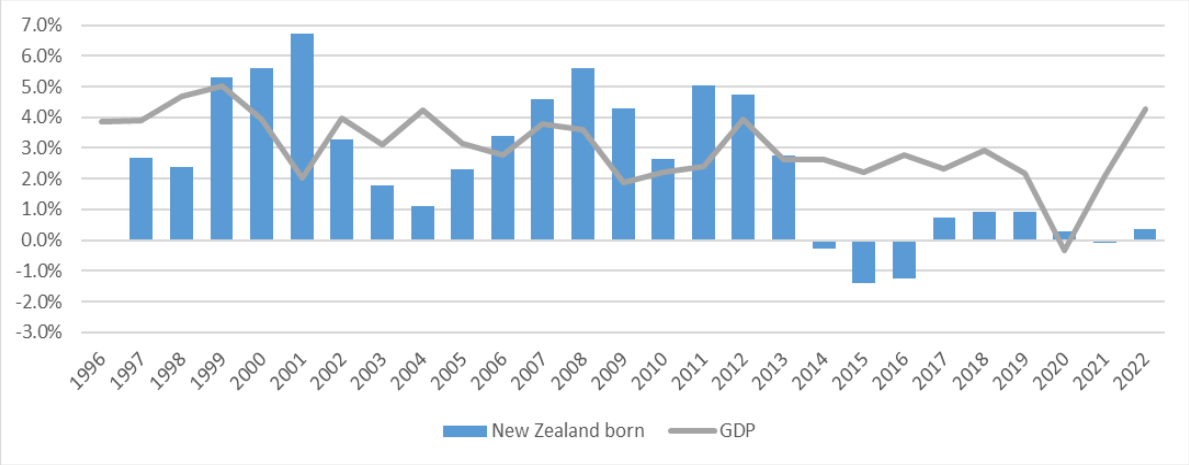


Source: ABS, Australia's Population by Country of Birth 2023, 2024

Economic cycles and migration flows

Figure 5 links population growth to Australia's GDP performance. Two periods — 1999–2001 and 2006–2012 — saw particularly strong growth in the New Zealand-born population, coinciding with sustained economic expansion and resource booms. Australia's resilience during the 2007–08 Global Financial Crisis also boosted its attractiveness, drawing migrants at a time when New Zealand's economy was contracting, albeit modestly (GDP fell just 1.2% between 2007 and 2008). By contrast, from 2013 to 2019, New Zealand's economy outpaced Australia's in terms of GDP growth. During this period, migration flows stabilised, and the size of the New Zealand-born population in Australia levelled off.

Figure 5: Annual change in New Zealand-born population resident in Australia, and GDP growth for Australia, 1996 to 2022

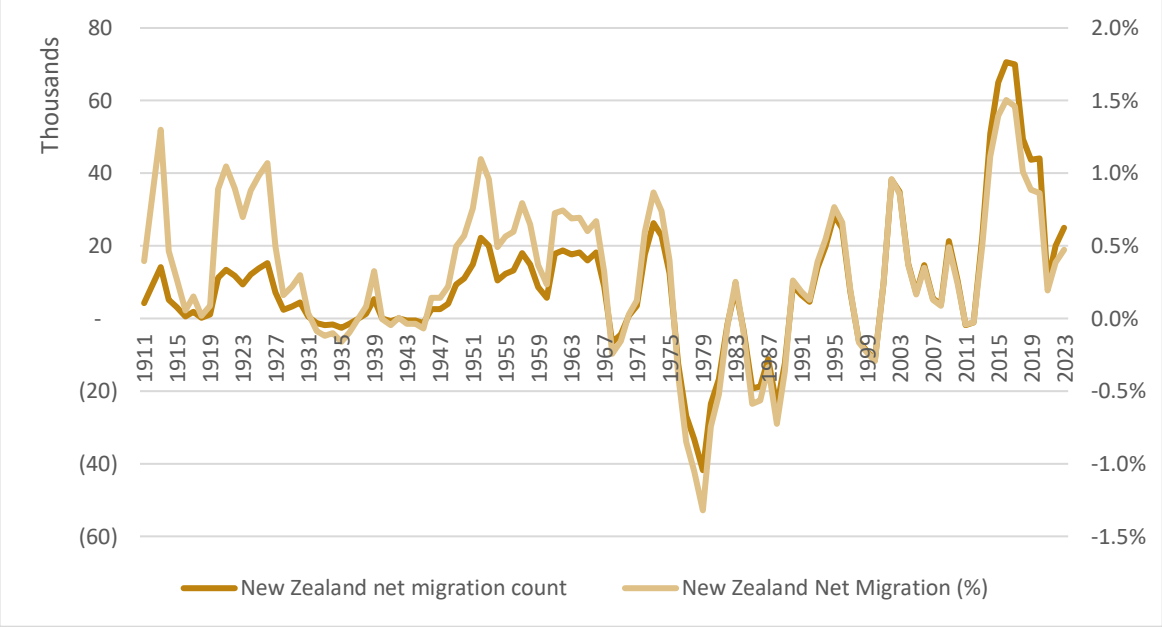


Source: ABS, Australia's Population by Country of Birth 2022; World Bank GDP growth (annual %) 2024

Net migration from the New Zealand side

Figure 6 illustrates this dynamic from the New Zealand perspective, showing net migration (both in absolute numbers and as a share of the national population) from 1911 to 2023. Periods of significant net emigration — notably the late 1970s and early 1980s — align with rapid growth in the SCV population in Australia. Since 2000, net migration has generally been positive, peaking around 2015–2019, then dipping during the COVID-19 pandemic before rebounding in subsequent years. In the context of relatively slow recent economic growth in New Zealand, concerns about renewed emigration — particularly to Australia — have resurfaced in public discourse.

Figure 6: New Zealand Net Migration, count and percent of NZ population, 1911-2023

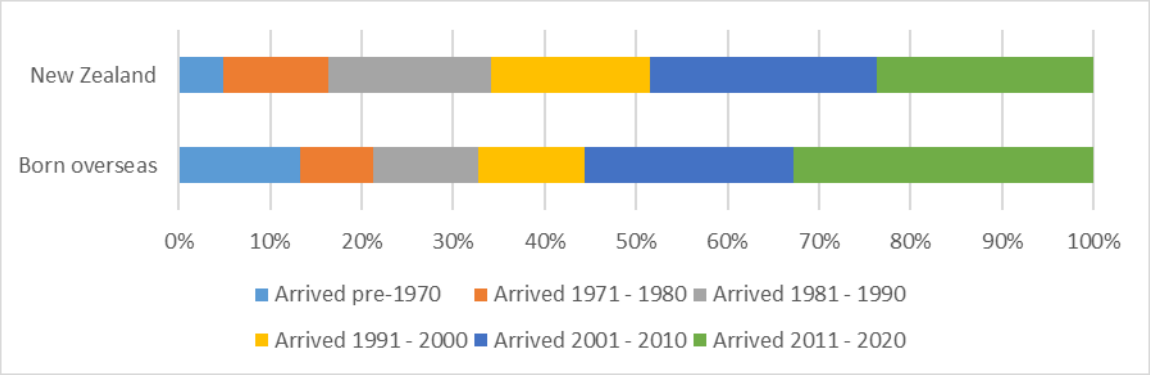


Source: Statistics New Zealand. Table reference ITM314AA, December years. NZ Population 1926-2015 is from https://countrydigest.org/new-zealand-population/#New_Zealand_population_growth_table. NZ population pre-1926 is from https://teara.govt.nz/en/1966/population/page-4

Arrival patterns and cohort timing

The 2021 Census provides further insight into the timing of migration. Figure 7 shows that one-third of New Zealand-born residents in Australia arrived during the 1980s (17.8%) or 1990s (17.4%), compared to just 23.1% of the total overseas-born population during that period. In contrast, other migrant groups were more likely to have arrived in the previous decade (2011–2021), whereas only 23.7% of New Zealanders had done so — reflecting longer-standing settlement patterns. By 2023, the New Zealand-born population in Australia had reached a new high of approximately 598,090, surpassing the previous record set in 2013. This confirms a post-pandemic rebound in migration and continued growth of the trans-Tasman diaspora.

Figure 7: Date of arrival for Overseas-born populations in Australia, 2021



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Recent Migration Trends and SCV Use

This section focuses on the Special Category Visa (SCV, Subclass 444), a unique migration instrument shaping the long-term settlement and lived experience of New Zealanders in Australia. While SCVs enable indefinite residence, work, and study rights, they are legally defined as temporary visas and do not automatically grant access to core social protections such as welfare payments, housing assistance, or voting rights.

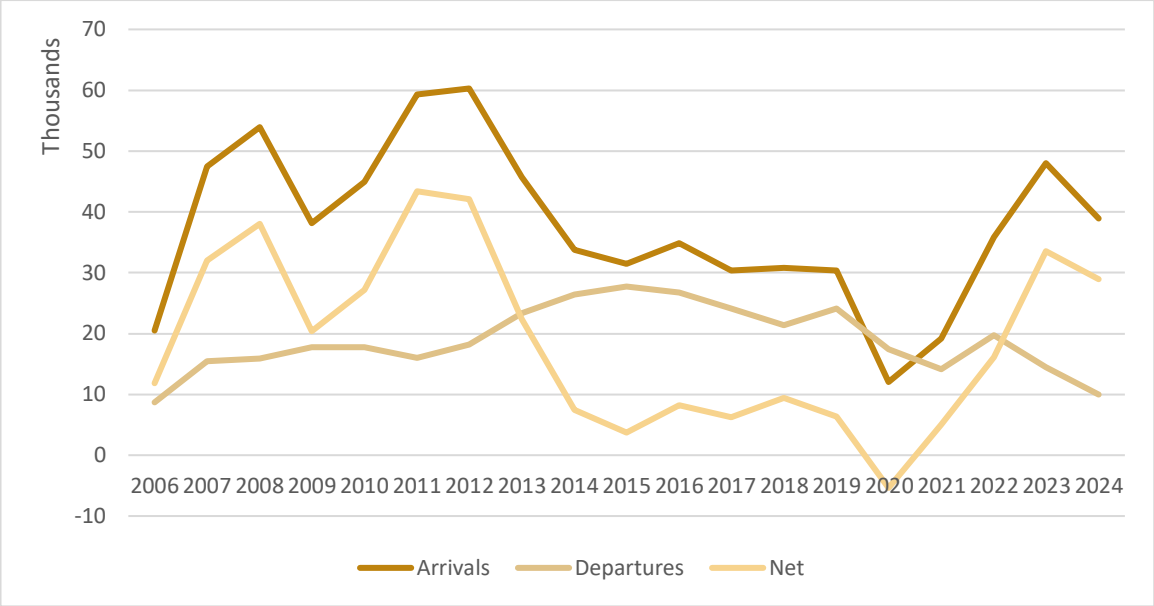
Exclusively available to New Zealand citizens, the SCV facilitates low-friction mobility but creates a bifurcated migrant experience. Many SCV holders live permanently in Australia, yet their legal status limits their access to public support systems unless supplemented by specific bilateral arrangements. Moreover, SCV data excludes New Zealanders who have acquired Australian citizenship or who enter on other visa streams, such as dual citizens — meaning the dataset only captures part of the population.

Mobility patterns and policy shocks

Figure 8 shows annual arrivals, departures, and net migration of SCV holders between 2007 and 2024. Migration peaked in 2012, with over 60,000 arrivals. After 2015, inflows and outflows converged, leading to lower net gains. COVID-19 triggered a sharp drop in arrivals in 2020–21, briefly pushing net migration into negative territory. From 2022, trans-Tasman mobility rebounded strongly, with net migration rising steeply again in 2023 before easing slightly in 2024. These fluctuations reflect the sensitivity of SCV migration to economic cycles, policy changes, and global

disruptions — reinforcing the volatility of trans-Tasman movement even under a long-standing free-movement regime.

Figure 8: Net Migration of Subclass 444 Visa-holders, 2007-24

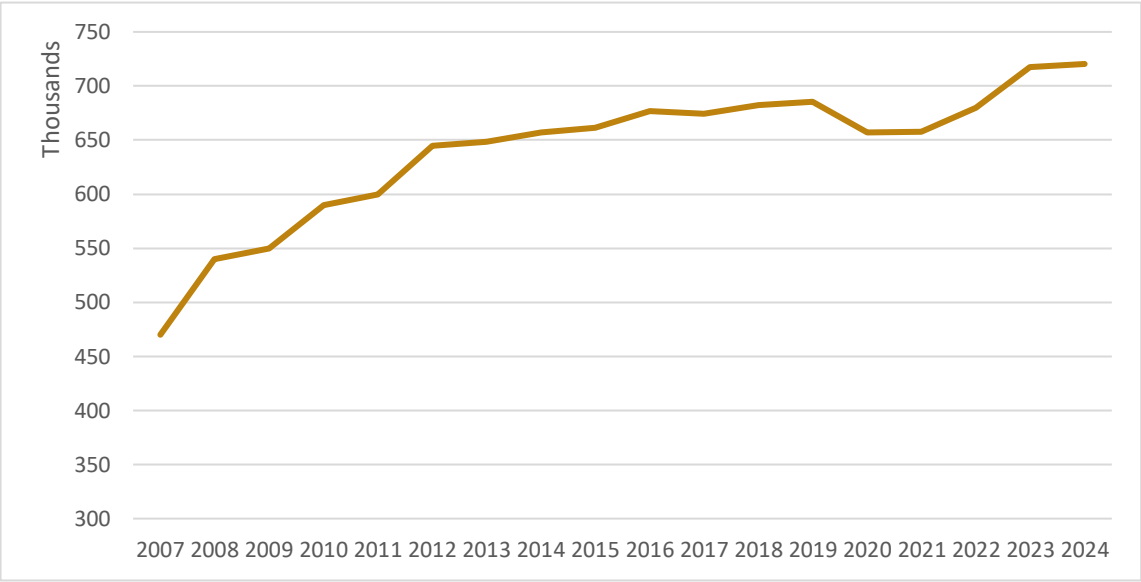


Source: ABS NOM Table builder, based on 12/16 system.

Trends in SCV population growth

Figure 9 tracks the total number of SCV holders residing in Australia. The population rose sharply from under 500,000 in 2007 to over 640,000 in 2013, and then continued growing more gradually until 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a temporary decline, but numbers rebounded strongly in 2023 and 2024, reaching a new high of over 720,000.

Figure 9: Special Category Visa-holders (Subclass 444) in Australia, 2007-24



Source: ABS, Australian Census and Temporary Entrants Integrated Dataset (ACTEID, 2021)

As of census night on 10 August 2021, 654,491 SCV holders were living in Australia. Of these, 72 per cent (470,991) were born in New Zealand, while 42,257 were born in Australia — likely children of New Zealand citizens. Although SCVs also cover short-term entrants and tourists, this share would have been unusually low in 2021 due to pandemic-related border restrictions.

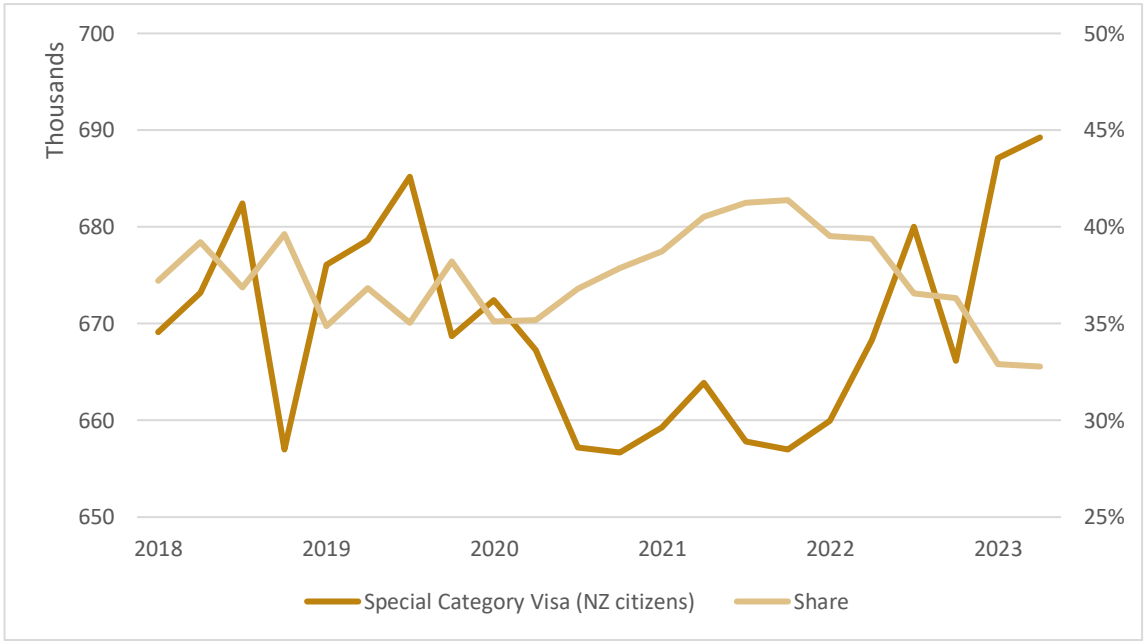
The Covid-19 'mobility shock'

The Covid-19 pandemic had a profound impact on international migration flows between 2020 and 2023 (cf Gamlen 2020). As illustrated above, it disrupted long-standing patterns of trans-Tasman mobility (cf Collins 2020). This section uses temporary visa statistics from Australia's Department of Home Affairs to study how New Zealand citizens on Special Category Visas (SCV) were affected during this period.

While most New Zealanders residing in Australia during the pandemic were long-term residents, the SCV's classification as a temporary visa shaped their experience in distinct ways. Prior to the pandemic, Australia's temporary migrant population peaked at 2.4 million in December 2019. At that time, New Zealanders on SCVs accounted for 668,685 individuals — approximately 28 per cent of the total.

By September 2021, this number had fallen significantly. The overall population of temporary visa holders had declined by 800,000, to 1.64 million. Despite this contraction, SCV holders made up a growing share of the temporary migrant population. As shown in Figure 10, New Zealand citizens accounted for 40 per cent of temporary migrants by September 2021 — more than 657,000 individuals. Between late 2020 and mid-2022, they consistently represented more than one-third of Australia's temporary migrant population, a sharp increase from pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 10: Special Category Visa Holders in Australia and their share of total temporary migration, 2019-2023



Source: Department of Home Affairs, Temporary entrants visa holders pivot table at February 2024, 2024

This disproportionate retention reflects the deeper integration and longer-term settlement patterns of SCV holders compared to other temporary migrants, many of whom returned home or were unable to enter Australia due to border closures. It also highlights the unique status of New Zealanders under the SCV framework — legally temporary, but functionally permanent in many cases.

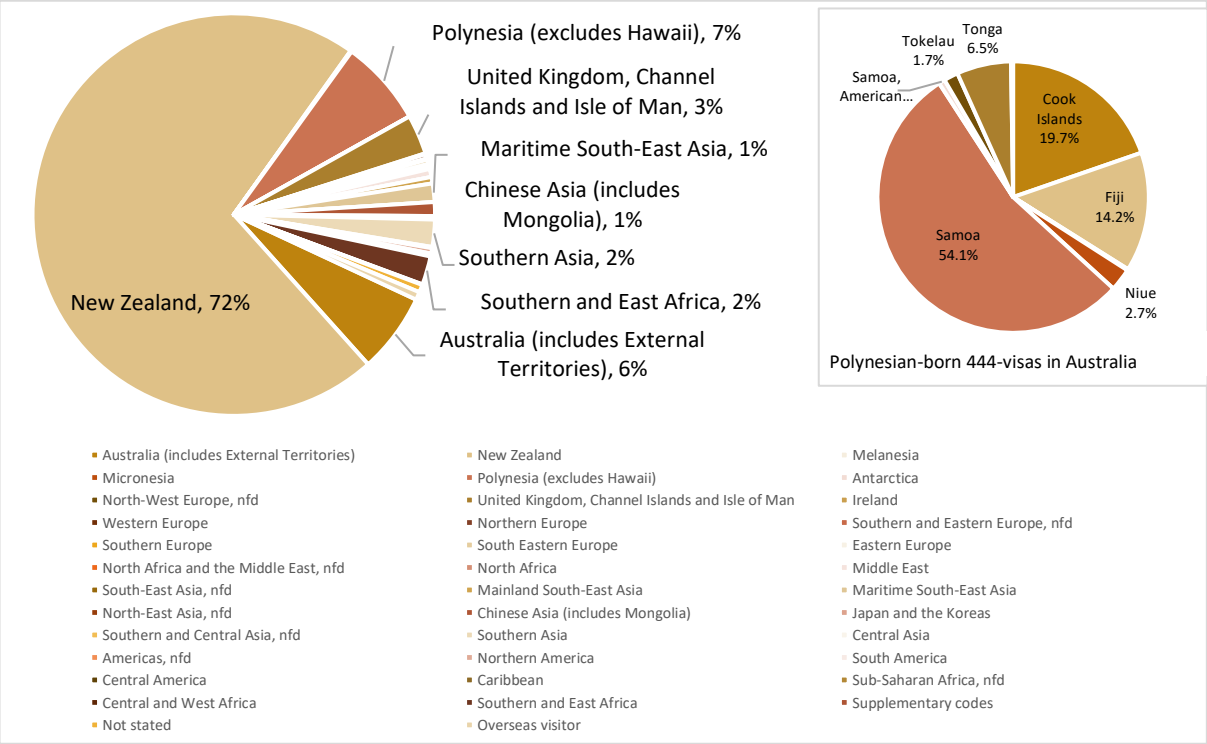
Since international borders reopened in early 2022, the number of temporary migrants in Australia has surged. Between March 2022 and February 2024, the temporary migrant population grew by 54 per cent to 2.8 million. As of February 2024, 714,308 of these were New Zealand citizens on SCVs (25.4 per cent of all temporary visa holders).

Demographic profiles

The New Zealand diaspora occupies a distinctive place in Australian society, shaped by deep historical ties, the 1973 Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement, and a "myriad of diverse and strong economic, social, cultural and family linkages" (Hugo 2015, p. 41. Cf Lockhart & Money 2011). Unlike other migrant groups whose demographic and geographic profiles are often shaped by restrictive visa regimes — concentrating them in major hubs such as Sydney and Melbourne — New Zealanders in Australia exhibit greater internal diversity and broader patterns of settlement. This reflects both their unique migration status and the long-standing embeddedness of the diaspora.

Birthplace

Figure 11: Region of birth of Special Category (Subclass 444) Visa Holders, 2021



Source: ABS, Australian Census and Temporary Entrants Integrated Dataset (ACTEID, 2021)

The majority of Special Category Visa (Subclass 444) holders were born in New Zealand (72 per cent), shown in Figure 11. However, a significant minority (28 per cent) were born in other regions, indicating the visa's broad reach and the diasporic nature of New Zealand citizenship. This includes people born across Polynesia, Europe, and Southeast Asia, a reminder that citizenship and birth country are not always aligned.

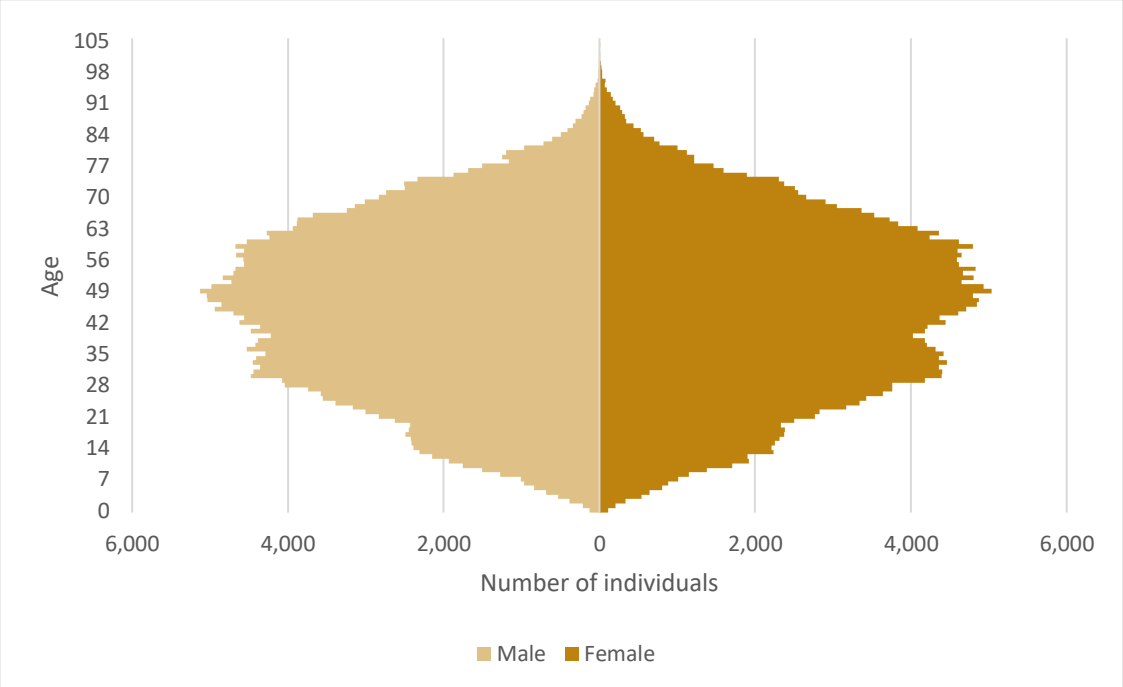
In the top-right inset of Figure 11, a breakdown of the 'Polynesia' category shows that among SCV holders born in the Pacific, the largest share were born in Samoa (54.1 per cent), followed by the Cook Islands (19.7 per cent) and Fiji (14.2 per cent). Smaller shares originate from Tonga (6.5 per cent), Niue (2.7 per cent), Tokelau (1.7 per cent), and American Samoa (0.7 per cent). This diversity within the SCV population illustrates the interwoven nature of New Zealand's diasporic links across the Pacific.

Age-sex composition

The age and sex structure of the New Zealand diaspora in Australia has shifted markedly over the past seven decades. Migration from New Zealand was slightly female-dominated in the mid-20th century, became male-dominated in the late 20th century, and is now approaching gender parity. In 1971, the sex ratio stood at 105.7 men per 100 women. This ratio remained relatively stable until the early 2000s but had declined to 101.6 men per 100 women by 2021.

In 2023, the median age of the New Zealand-born population in Australia was estimated at 46 years — older than both the total overseas-born population (43) and the Australian-born population (35). This ageing trend reflects a maturing migrant cohort and lower rates of recent arrivals compared to other groups.

Figure 12: Age profile of New Zealand-born population by sex, 2021



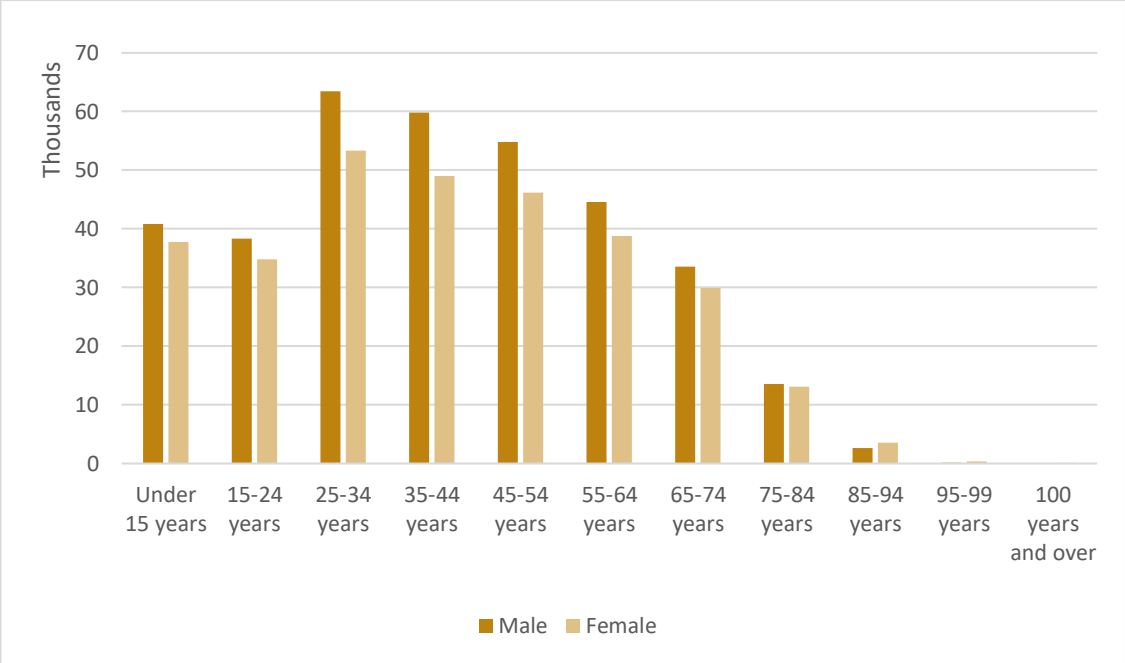
Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Figure 12 displays the 2021 age–sex profile of the New Zealand-born population. It shows a predominance of middle-aged individuals, with a relatively even gender distribution across most age groups and a more pronounced female presence in older age brackets, consistent with broader patterns of female longevity.

Figure 13 shows the age–sex profile of Special Category Visa (Subclass 444) holders. This group is younger on average than the total New Zealand-born population, with concentrations in the prime working-age groups of 25–44. Men significantly outnumber women across most age bands except the oldest, where the gender gap narrows.

Although not shown in the charts, data indicate a decline in the number of children under 10 among SCV holders between 2016 and 2021. State-level variation also exists: Queensland and Western Australia have more mid-career New Zealanders, while Victoria shows a slightly younger or more balanced age profile.

Figure 13: Age-sex profile of Special Category Visa-holders (Subclass 444), 2021



Source: ABS, Australian Census and Temporary Entrants Integrated Dataset (ACTEID, 2021)

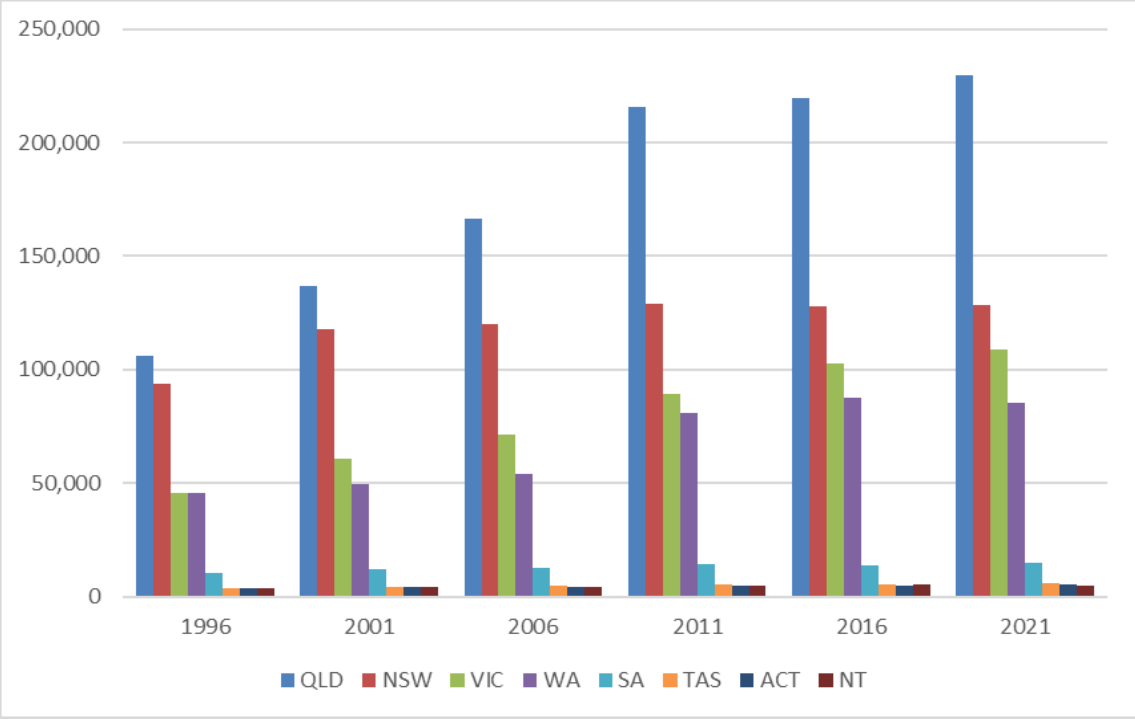
Overall, the New Zealand-born population in Australia is characterised by an ageing demographic, while SCV holders skew younger and more male — reflecting recent mobility patterns and economic migration drivers.

Geographies of residence

Unlike many other migrant groups in Australia, the New Zealand diaspora is geographically dispersed (cf DITRDCA 2023). In 2021, 39 percent of the New Zealand-born population lived in Queensland, 22 percent in New South Wales, 19 percent in Victoria, and 14 percent in Western Australia. By contrast, most other migrant groups — excluding those born in the Pacific — are concentrated in New South Wales and Victoria, which together account for 64 percent of the total overseas-born population and 41 percent of New Zealand-born residents.

Figure 14 shows that from 2001 to 2021, over half of the New Zealand-born population in Australia lived in Queensland and Western Australia — compared to only 30 percent of the total Australian population. In 2021, New Zealanders were the largest overseas-born group in Queensland, accounting for 26.7 percent of the state's overseas-born population, and 9 percent of Western Australia's.

Figure 14: Residence of New Zealand-born population by State, 1996-2021

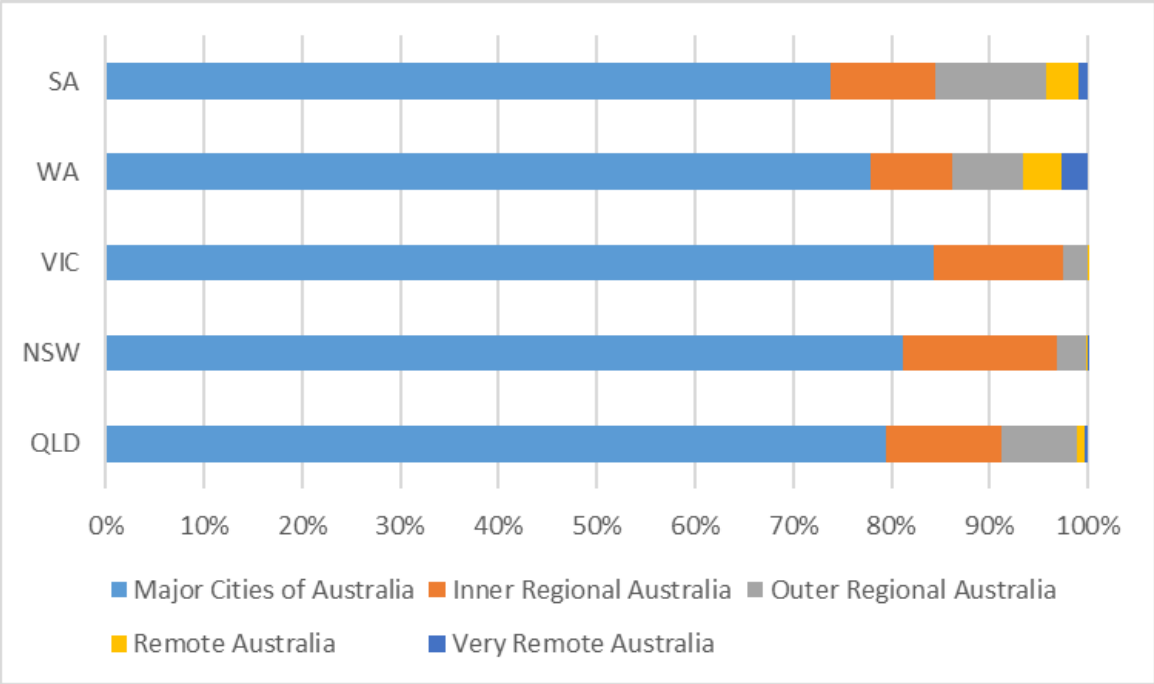


Source: ABS, Australia's Population by Country of Birth 2023, 2024,

The New Zealand diaspora is also highly urbanised, with 80 percent residing in major cities. In 2021, Brisbane and the Gold Coast together accounted for over a third of the New Zealand-born population (21.4 and 15.9 percent, respectively), followed by Melbourne (19.3 percent) and Sydney (17.4 percent). In 2001, Sydney was home to nearly a quarter (23 percent) of New Zealand-born Australians (Hugo 2004). Figure 15 confirms the dominance of urban centres, though significant shares of New Zealanders in South Australia, Western Australia, and Queensland also live in regional or remote areas — often associated with mining and resource sectors.

The rate of growth has varied by state. Queensland, Victoria, and Western Australia have seen significantly faster growth in their New Zealand-born populations than New South Wales, mirroring broader urbanisation and economic trends. Between 2016 and 2021, Greater Brisbane grew at an annual average of 1.7 percent, compared to 0.9 percent in Greater Sydney.

Figure 15: Residence of New Zealand-born population by Remoteness Areas, 2021



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Within Queensland, 53.7 percent of the New Zealand-born population lived in Greater Brisbane. Suburbs with the largest New Zealand-born populations included Redbank Plains (2,405), North Lakes (1,641), and Marsden (1,440). While only 22 percent lived in the Gold Coast, many of Queensland's most densely populated New Zealander suburbs were located there. Upper Coomera had the highest New Zealand-born population in the state (2,981), followed by Pimpama (2,690) and Southport (2,178).

In New South Wales, 72 percent of the New Zealand-born population lived in Greater Sydney. Blacktown had the highest number (907), followed by Mosman (719) and Randwick (615). Port Macquarie, located 400km north of Sydney, also had a notable concentration, with 739 New Zealand-born residents.

In Victoria, 84 percent of the New Zealand-born population lived in Greater Melbourne, with concentrations in the western suburbs. Point Cook (2,500), Tarneit (2,049), and Werribee (1,329) had the highest numbers.

In Western Australia, 79 percent of the New Zealand-born population lived in Greater Perth, mainly in outer suburbs. Baldivis had the highest population (2,290), followed by Ellenbrook (1,171) and Gosnells (757).

Elsewhere, the New Zealand-born population was relatively small: around 3 percent lived in South Australia, and only 1 percent each in Tasmania, the Northern Territory, and the Australian Capital Territory.

Figure 16: Top 20 Local Government Areas by %of Special Category (444) Visa Holders, with regional industries

Local Government Area	LGA	444%	Remoteness	Main regional
Coolgardie, Western Australia	3,478	10.37	Very remote	Mining
Logan, Queensland	345,098	9.97	Major city	Urban/Industrial
Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Western Australia	29,306	9.67	Outer regional	Mining
Leonora, Western Australia	1,588	9.24	Remote	Mining
Ipswich, Queensland	229,208	8.33	Major city	Urban/Industrial
Gold Coast, Queensland	625,087	8.06	Major city	Urban/Industrial
East Pilbara, Western Australia	9,760	7.4	Very remote	Mining
Port Hedland, Western Australia	15,684	6.93	Outer regional	Mining
Mount Isa, Queensland	18,727	6.51	Remote	Mining
Rockingham, Western Australia	135,678	6.51	Inner regional	Urban/Industrial
Laverton, Victoria	1,333	6.41	Very remote	Mining
Koorda, Western Australia	361	6.32	Outer regional	Agriculture
Victoria Plains, Western Australia	802	6.32	Outer regional	Agriculture
Kwinana, Western Australia	45,867	6.25	Major city	Urban/Industrial
Wyndham, Western Australia	29,2011	6.14	Very remote	Remote
Ashburton, Western Australia	7,391	6.03	Remote	Mining
Moreton Bay, Queensland	476,340	6.02	Major city	Urban/Industrial
Dundas, Victoria	677	6	Inner regional	Mining
Yilgarn, Western Australia	1,173	5.78	Remote	Mining
Yalgoo, Western Australia	340	5.24	Remote	Mining

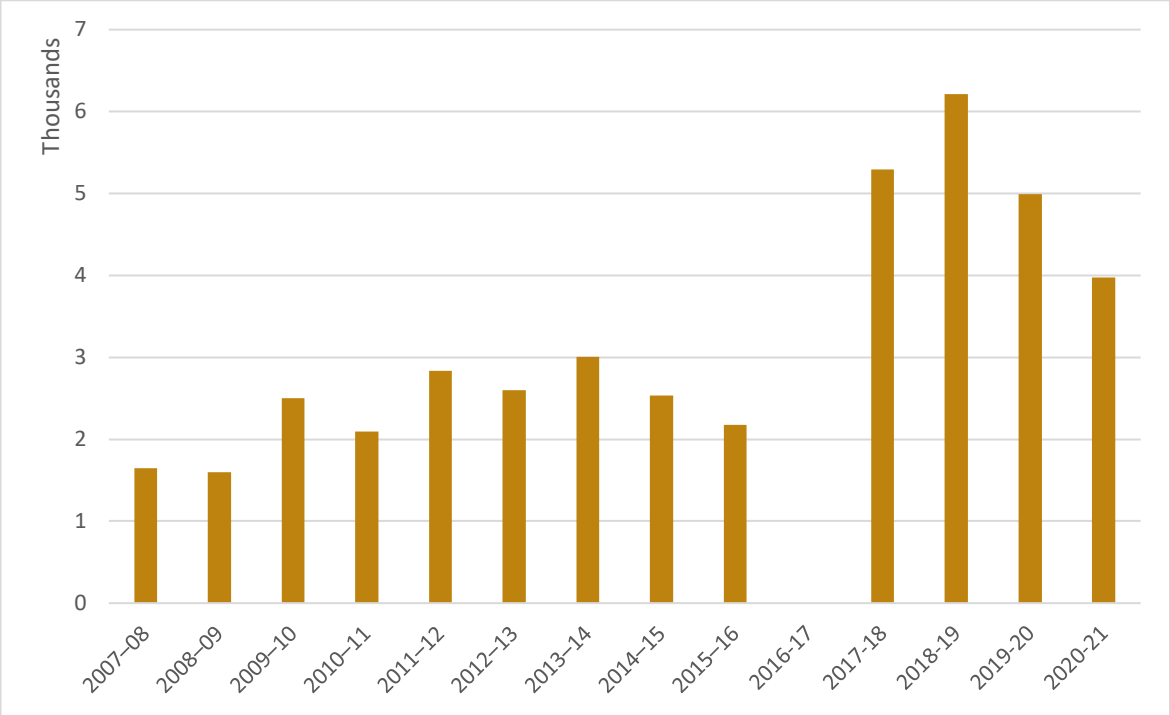
Source: ABS, Australian Census and Temporary Entrants Integrated Dataset (ACTEID, 2021)

Figure 16 lists the top 20 local government areas (LGAs) by share of residents holding Special Category Visas (Subclass 444), the majority of whom are New Zealand citizens. The highest concentrations are found in regions with strong mining or industrial economies, such as Coolgardie (10.37 percent), Kalgoorlie–Boulder (9.67 percent), and Logan (9.97 percent). Other notable areas include Ipswich, Rockingham, and the Gold Coast — outer urban areas characterised by affordable housing and proximity to labour markets. This distribution reflects the dual pull of regional employment opportunities and accessible metropolitan living.

Naturalization and citizenship

Access to Australian citizenship has long played a decisive role in shaping the rights, security, and settlement experiences of New Zealanders in Australia. While New Zealanders benefit from unique mobility rights under the Special Category Visa (Subclass 444), their ability to naturalise has been increasingly restricted since 2001. This section examines patterns of permanent residency grants, the impact of policy changes on citizenship acquisition, and recent reforms that are reshaping the naturalisation landscape for New Zealand citizens.

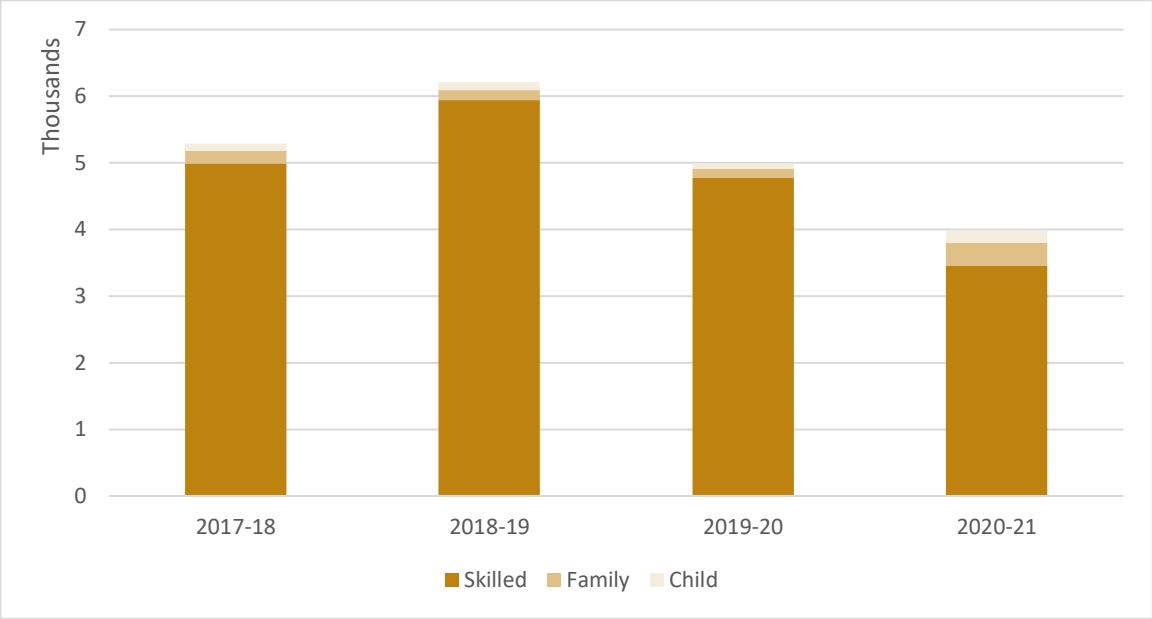
Figure 17: Permanent residence visas granted to New Zealand Citizens



Source: Department of Home Affairs

Figure 17 illustrates the number of permanent residence visas granted to New Zealand citizens each year between 2007–08 and 2020–21. During the first decade of this period, visa grants remained modest and stable, fluctuating between 1,500 and 3,000 annually. A significant shift occurred in 2017–18, when grants more than doubled to over 5,000. The following year, in 2018–19, saw a peak of over 6,000 visas issued — the highest in the 14-year span. This surge corresponds with the introduction of the Skilled Independent (Subclass 189) New Zealand stream, which created a dedicated pathway to permanency for eligible New Zealand citizens. Although numbers declined slightly in subsequent years — likely due to COVID-19-related disruptions — they remained significantly above pre-2017 levels, with around 5,000 grants in 2019–20 and just under 4,000 in 2020–21.

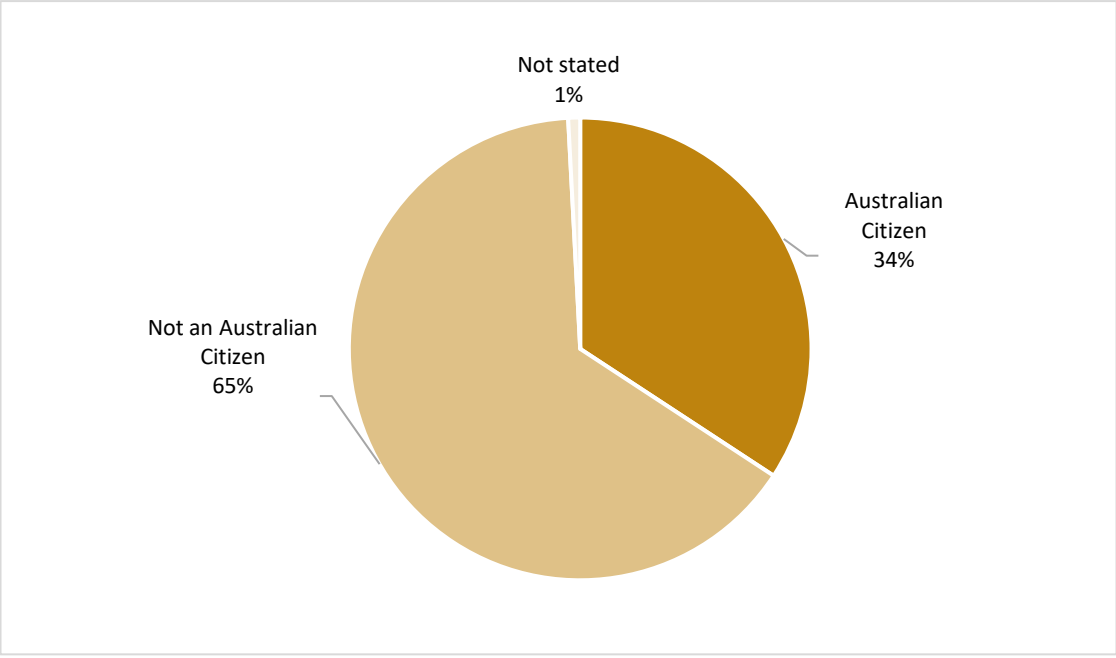
Figure 18: Conversion to Australian Permanent Residence



Source: Department of Home Affairs

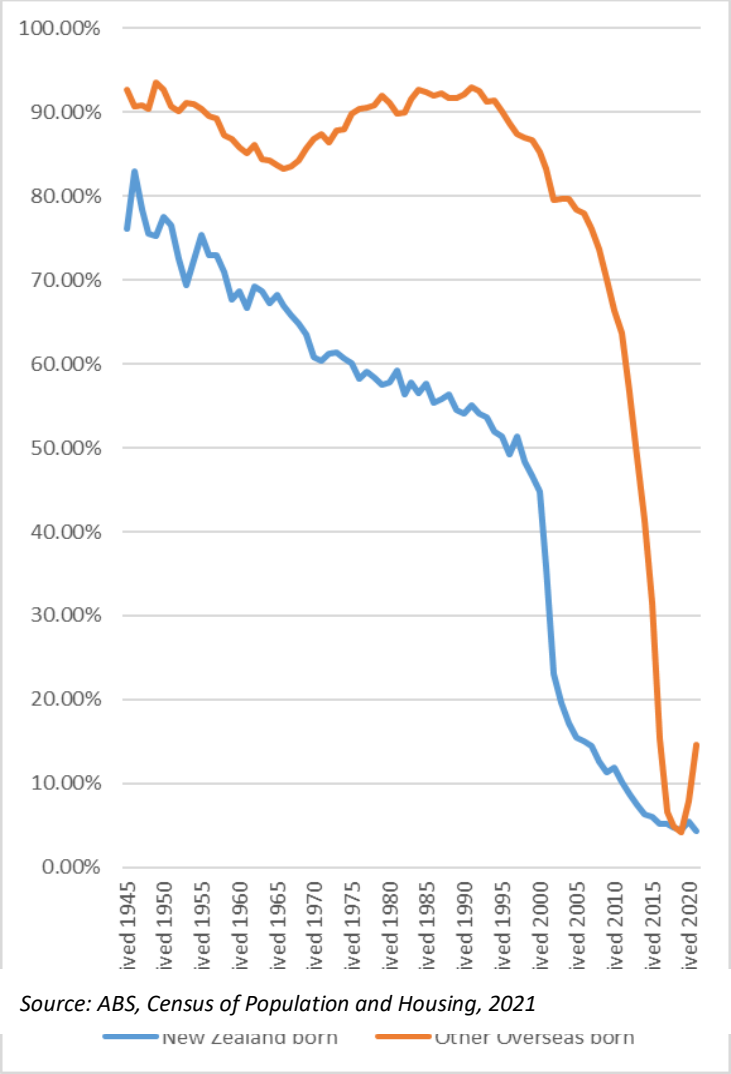
Figure 18 disaggregates these conversions by visa stream. Between 2017–18 and 2020–21, the Skilled stream dominated, accounting for the vast majority of permanent residence grants to New Zealand citizens. Smaller numbers were processed through the Family and Child streams. The trend reinforces the centrality of the skilled migration program in shaping New Zealanders' pathways to permanency during this period.

Figure 19: Australian Citizenship Status of the New Zealand-born population, 2021



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Figure 20: Percentage of New Zealand-born and Other Overseas born holding Australian citizenship by date of arrival, 2021



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

According to the 2021 Census, 34.5 percent of New Zealand-born residents in Australia were Australian citizens (Figure 19). This represents a modest increase from 30.8 percent in 2016 and 32.5 percent in 2011. However, from 2001 until mid-2023, New Zealanders seeking citizenship were required to first obtain permanent residency — a process involving significant cost, income thresholds, and eligibility tests. Applicants needed to meet the Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold (TSMIT), and pass both health and character assessments. Altogether, the pathway to citizenship could cost over AU$4,500, excluding delays or indirect barriers. While SCV holders enjoy broad access to employment and residency rights, these financial and procedural burdens deterred many from naturalising (cf Morey 2020a).

Figure 20 shows the pronounced impact of the 2001 policy change. Among New Zealanders who arrived before 2001, around half had acquired Australian citizenship by 2021. For those arriving after 2001, this figure dropped to roughly 10 percent. Although other migrant groups also experienced declining naturalisation rates due to rising thresholds and longer qualifying periods, the divergence is particularly stark for New Zealanders. For example, among those who arrived in the 1980s and 1990s, the average gap in citizenship acquisition between New Zealanders and other migrants was around 35–38 percent. For arrivals between 2000 and 2015, that gap widened to 57.4 percent. If this later cohort had matched earlier patterns, an estimated additional 20,000 New Zealand-born individuals would have become citizens.

In July 2023, Australia introduced a major reform allowing SCV holders to apply directly for citizenship after four years of residence, without needing to first acquire permanent residency. The response was immediate. Within the first 100 days of the new policy, over 30,000 New Zealanders submitted citizenship applications — more than half within the first 45 days — indicating strong pent-up demand and the enduring significance of legal status for long-term settlement. It was also

announced that children born in Australia would be deemed citizens at birth if they have a parent who is a protected Special Category Visa holder, permanent resident, or Australian citizen. Moreover, children born in Australia on or after 1 July 2022 to a parent holding a non-protected Special Category Visa would likewise recognized as citizens from birth henceforth.

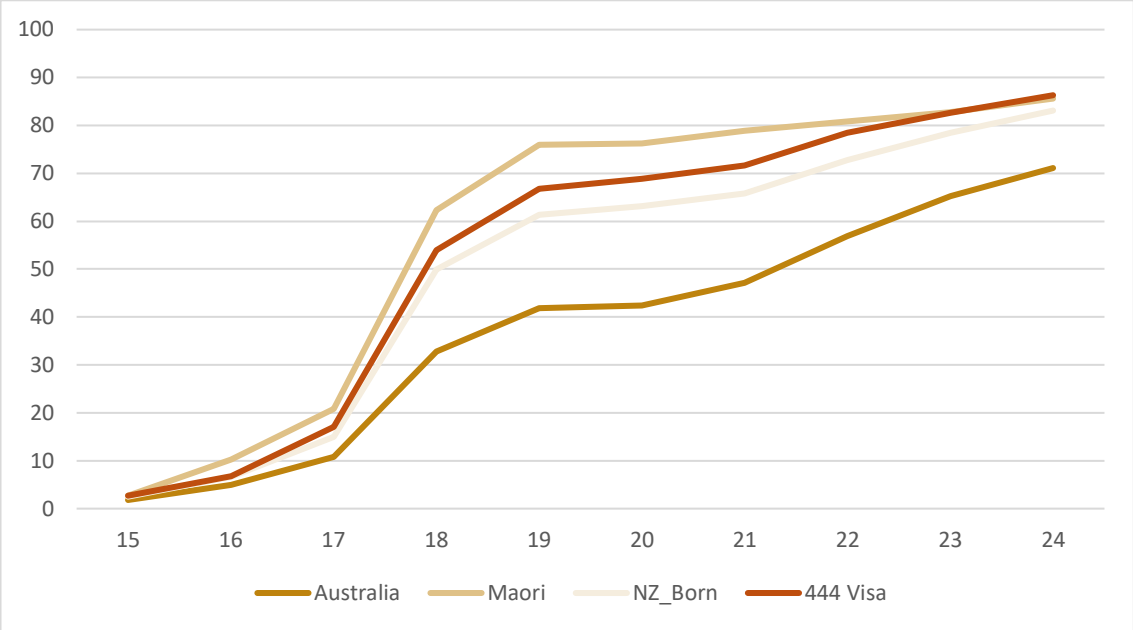
Socio-economic outcomes

The socio-economic position of New Zealanders in Australia reflects a complex interplay of migration history, legal status, ethnicity, and access to public services (cf Nolan 2015; Collins & Nandedkar 2020). While many New Zealand-born individuals and SCV holders actively participate in Australian society, their outcomes vary considerably depending on demographic factors and structural access (cf Forrest et al 2009; McMillan 2014; Doan et al 2022; Doan et al 2023; Faleolo 2023). This section uses census data to explore educational attainment as a key indicator of opportunity and integration, comparing outcomes across generations, genders, and visa status—particularly among Māori and Special Category Visa holders.

Educational attainment

Figure 21 shows the percentage of young people enrolled in education at each age from 15 to 24, based on the 2021 Census. It compares four groups: Australia-born youth, Māori youth, New Zealand-born youth overall, and youth on the Special Category (Subclass 444) visa. At ages 15 to 17, school participation is near-universal and closely aligned across all groups. From age 18 onward, differences emerge. Māori youth show the steepest drop in education participation at age 18, with rates stabilising around 40 percent through the early 20s. Australia-born youth also see a decline at 18, with gradual recovery from age 21 onward, reaching about 70 percent by age 24. By contrast, New Zealand-born youth and especially those on 444 visas maintain higher rates of participation throughout early adulthood. From ages 19 to 24, 444 visa holders consistently have the highest education attendance rates, reaching over 85 percent by age 24. This chart highlights diverging post-school educational engagement, with Māori and Australia-born youth showing lower continued participation, while 444 visa holders and other NZ-born youth remain more consistently engaged in education into their mid-twenties.

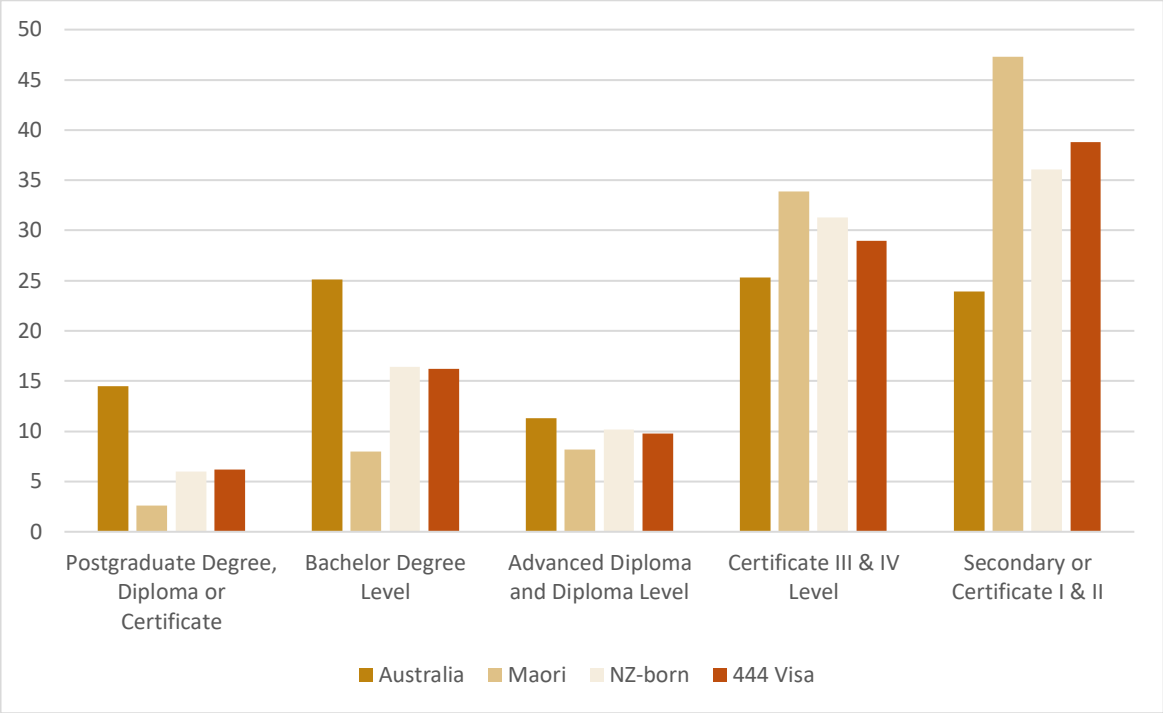
Figure 21: Percentage Attending Education, 15-24, 2021 Census



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Figure 22 shows the highest level of education attained by men aged 35–39, disaggregated by Australia-born, Māori, New Zealand-born overall, and 444 visa holders. The data reveal marked educational stratification across groups. Australia-born men are the most likely to hold a bachelor's degree (around 25 percent) or postgraduate qualification (just under 15 percent). In contrast, Māori men show lower rates of tertiary attainment, with fewer than 10 percent holding a bachelor's degree and only a small proportion holding postgraduate qualifications. Māori men are overrepresented at the Certificate III & IV and Secondary or Certificate I & II levels, where more than 40 percent fall into the latter category – the highest of any group. Men on 444 visas and NZ-born men overall also show elevated representation in vocational certificate levels, especially Certificate III & IV, with a majority completing education at this level or below. This chart underscores a pattern of lower formal educational attainment among Māori and 444 visa holders, with a concentration in vocational or lower-secondary qualifications, in contrast to Australia-born men who are more likely to hold university-level credentials.

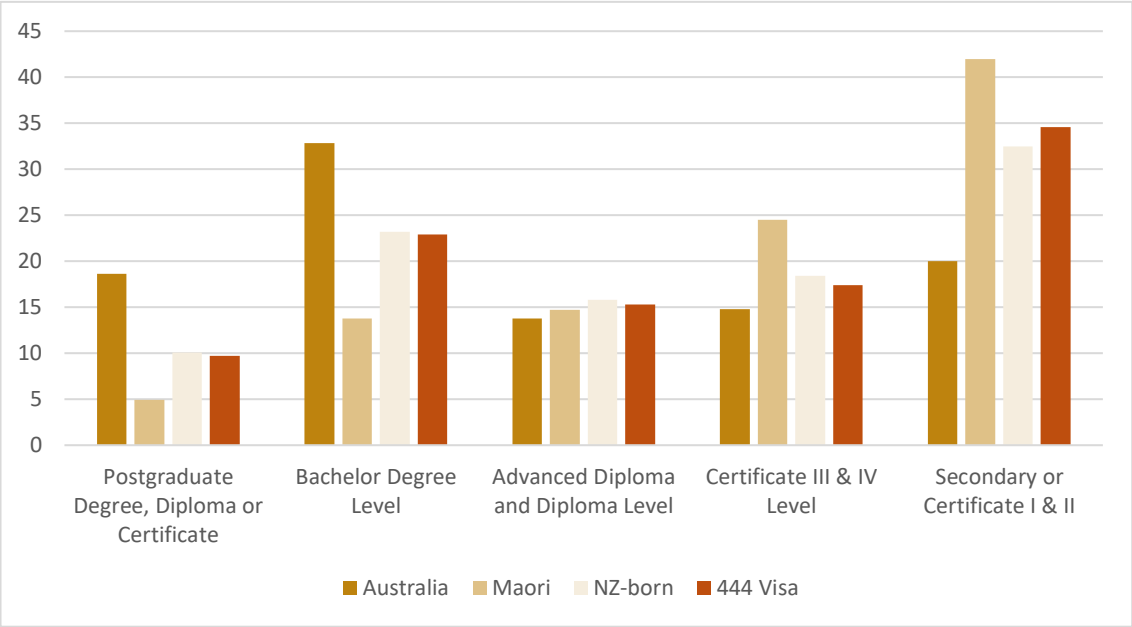
Figure 22: Highest Educational Qualification, Males Aged 35-39, by population



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Figure 23 compares the educational attainment of women aged 35–39 across the same four groups. Australian-born women are the most likely to hold university qualifications, with over 30 percent having completed a bachelor's degree. By contrast, Māori and 444 visa holder women have lower rates of university attainment and are more likely to have completed Advanced Diplomas or Certificate III & IV qualifications. New Zealand-born women overall fall between these extremes, with moderate representation at both vocational and university levels.

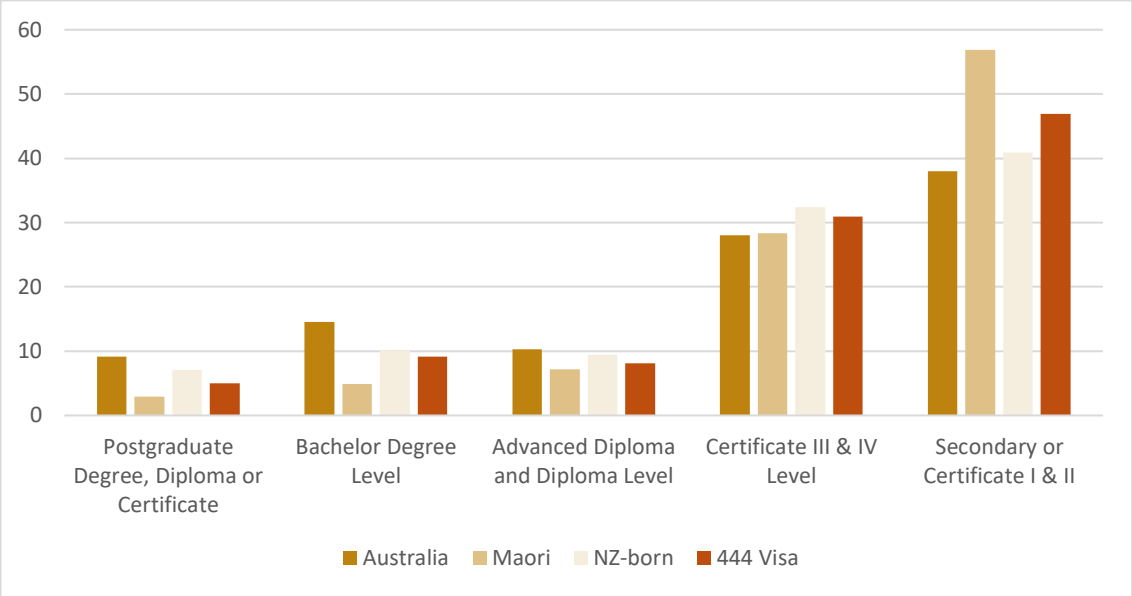
Figure 23: Highest Educational Qualification, Females Aged 35-39, by population



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Figure 24 turns to men aged 60–64, offering a generational contrast. The older cohorts are more heavily concentrated in lower education categories. Over 50 percent of Māori men and women in this group fall into the Secondary or Certificate I & II levels. Tertiary attainment is low across all groups, but Australia-born individuals—especially women—are slightly more likely to hold university qualifications. The consistency in vocational and trade qualifications among older men suggests that Certificate III & IV pathways have historically played a significant role in workforce participation.

Figure 24: Highest Educational Qualification, Males Aged 60-64, by population

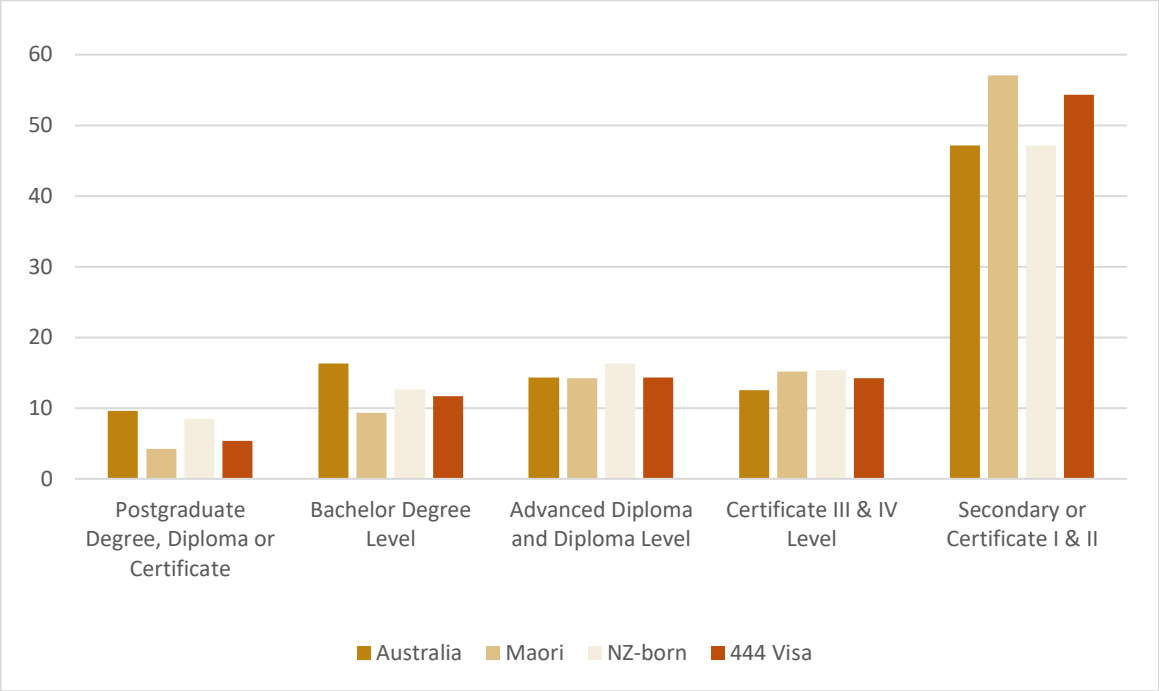


Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Figure 25 shows educational outcomes for women aged 60–64. Like their male counterparts, most are clustered in lower qualification bands, with Māori and 444 visa holders especially concentrated at the Secondary and lower-certificate levels. A modest share of Australia-born women in this group hold bachelor's or postgraduate degrees, suggesting early but limited gender parity in higher education access among this generation.

Taken together, these charts reveal generational shifts in education access, as well as persistent structural disparities by visa status and ethnicity. The younger 35–39 cohort shows stronger educational attainment overall but also greater inequality—particularly among Māori and 444 visa holders—suggesting that legal and systemic barriers continue to shape long-term socio-economic outcomes.

Figure 25: Highest Educational Qualification, Females Aged 60-64, by population



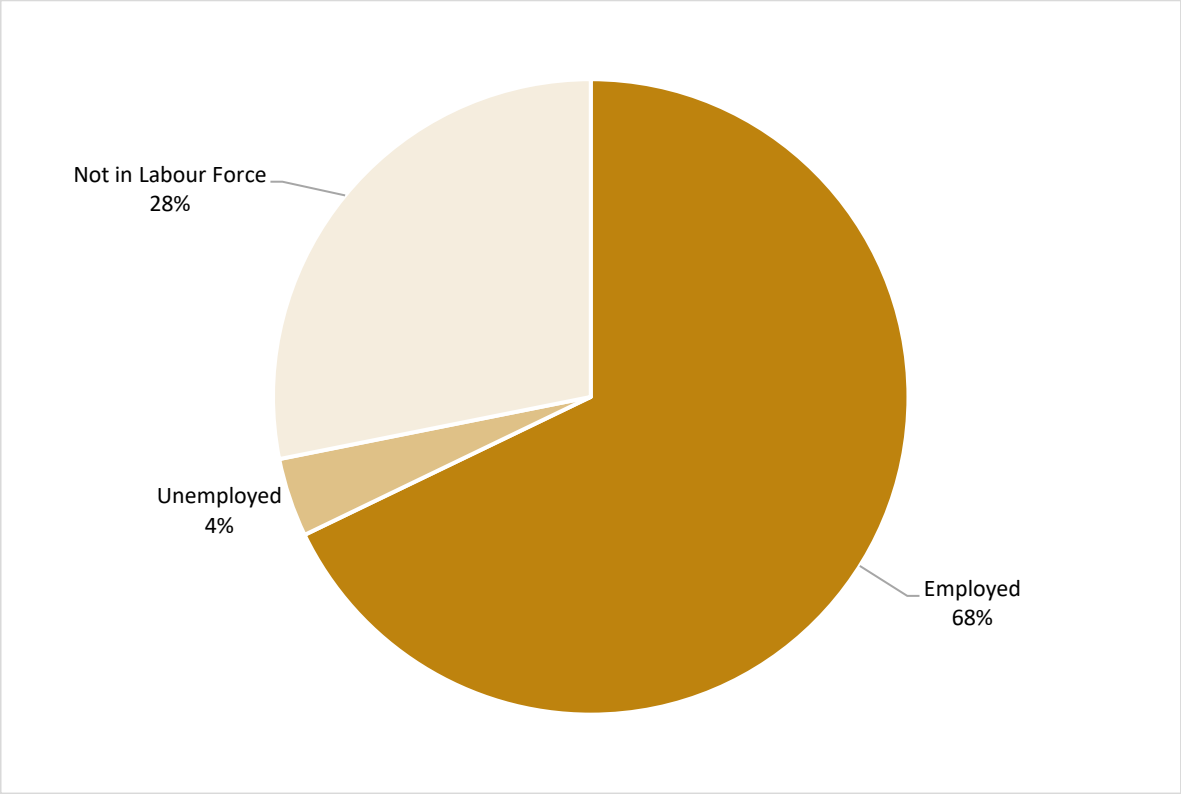
Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Labour force participation and occupation

Labour force participation among New Zealanders in Australia is high, reflecting strong patterns of employment and economic integration. However, this participation is marked by variation across visa status, gender, and ethnicity. Many Special Category Visa (Subclass 444) holders are concentrated in trade, service, and manual labour roles, while others work in professional sectors. This section uses Census and ACTEID data to examine employment rates, occupational skill levels, and sectoral distribution among SCV holders and the wider New Zealand-born population, with particular attention to Māori employment patterns.

Figure 26 illustrates the employment status of people holding a Special Category (Subclass 444) visa. The vast majority are employed, making up the largest segment of the chart. A small proportion are unemployed, actively seeking work, while a significant minority are not in the labour force—a category likely to include students, carers, retirees, and others not currently working or seeking work. Overall, the chart highlights strong workforce participation among 444 visa holders, with relatively low unemployment and a moderate share outside the labour force entirely.

Figure 26: Labour Force Status of Special Category (Subclass 444) Visa Holders

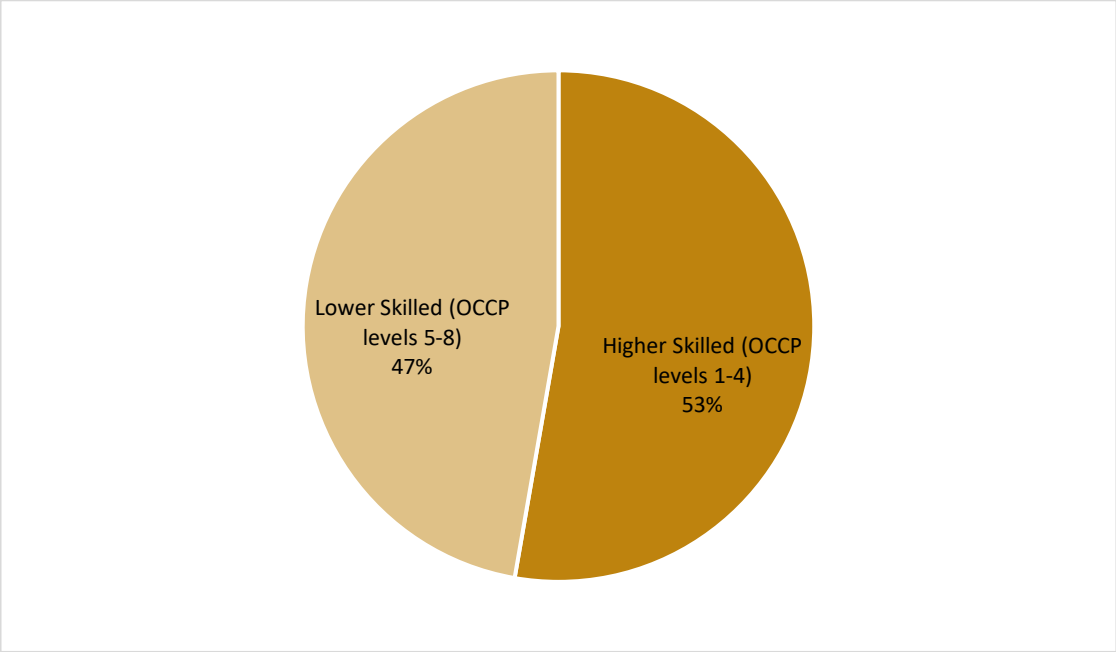


Source: ABS, Australian Census and Temporary Entrants Integrated Dataset (ACTEID, 2021)

Figure 27 shows the proportion of 444 visa holders working in higher-skilled versus lower-skilled occupations, based on the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) skill levels. The chart reveals an almost even split, with roughly half of employed 444 visa holders in higher-skilled roles (levels 1–4)—such as managers, professionals, and skilled trades—and the other half in lower-skilled roles (levels 5–8)—including sales, clerical, labouring, and machinery operation. This balance suggests that 444 visa holders are not concentrated at one end of the labour market, but rather span a wide spectrum of skill levels, reflecting the diversity of their qualifications, work experience, and economic integration in Australia.

Figure 28 displays the distribution of occupations among employed holders of the 444 visa. The chart shows a broad spread across all major occupation groups, with notable shares in Technicians and Trades, Community and Personal Service, Clerical and Administrative, and Labourer roles. Smaller but visible proportions of visa holders work as Managers, Professionals, and Machinery Operators, while Sales Workers make up a relatively minor share. A small segment is marked as inadequately described or not stated, indicating some gaps in occupational reporting. Overall, the data suggest that 444 visa holders are employed across a wide range of sectors, with a strong representation in practical, hands-on, and service-related jobs.

Figure 27: Skill Level of Special Category (Subclass 444) Visa Holders



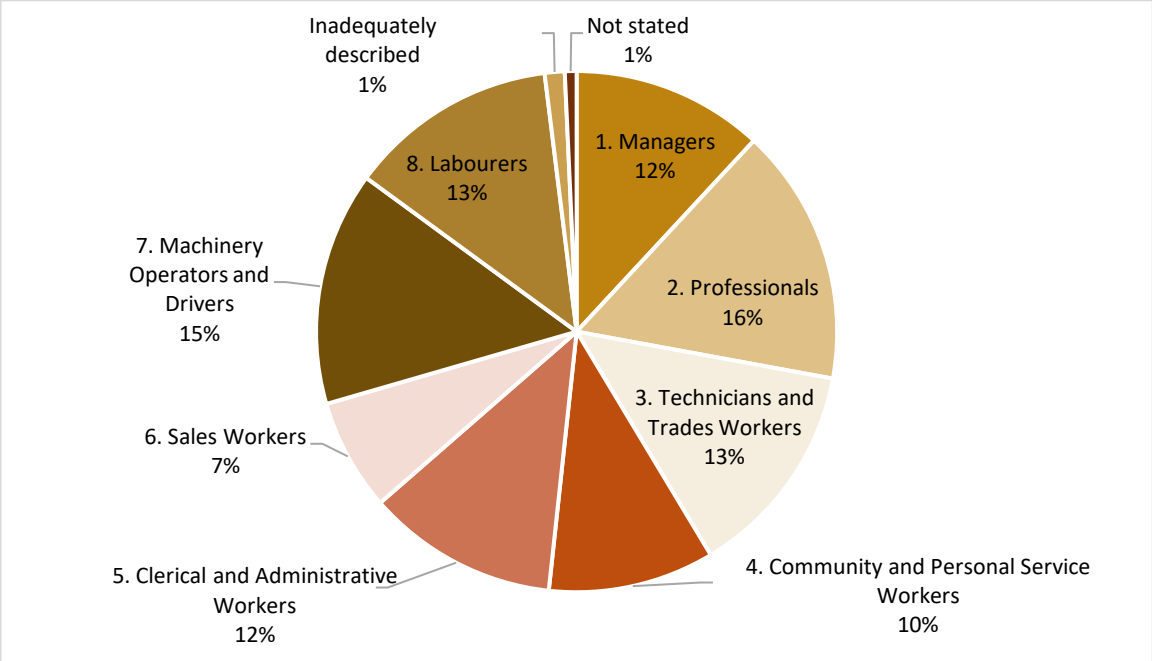
Source: ABS, Australian Census and Temporary Entrants Integrated Dataset (ACTEID, 2021)

At a national level, leading sectors of employment for New Zealanders are similar to those for the Australian-born population. For women, top sectors include healthcare and social assistance (23.2 percent), retail trade (10.6 percent), and education (9.6 percent). For New Zealand men, leading sectors include construction (18.4 percent), manufacturing (10.0 percent), and transport, postal and warehousing (6.3 percent). The New Zealand diaspora is slightly overrepresented in professional, scientific and technical services, and slightly underrepresented in public administration—likely due to citizenship requirements.

Australia's Māori population displays distinct employment dynamics. A greater proportion of Māori men are employed in construction (23.8 percent) and manufacturing (11.5 percent) compared to the broader New Zealand diaspora. Māori women are less likely to work in healthcare (19.9 percent) than the overall New Zealand-born population, but more likely to work in accommodation and food services (10 percent, compared to 8 percent for New Zealand-born overall).

In recent years, Australian states and territories have actively recruited frontline workers from New Zealand—particularly police officers, healthcare workers, and teachers. For example, in 2023 the Queensland Police launched a campaign offering AU$20,000 to incentivise New Zealand police officers to relocate. Similarly, the Western Australian government has offered significant relocation support to New Zealand teachers, including eight weeks of accommodation and access to subsidised housing. These efforts reflect both labour shortages in key sectors and wage differentials between the two countries.

Figure 28: OCCP Occupation of Special Category (Subclass 444 Visa Holders)



Source: ABS, Australian Census and Temporary Entrants Integrated Dataset (ACTEID, 2021)

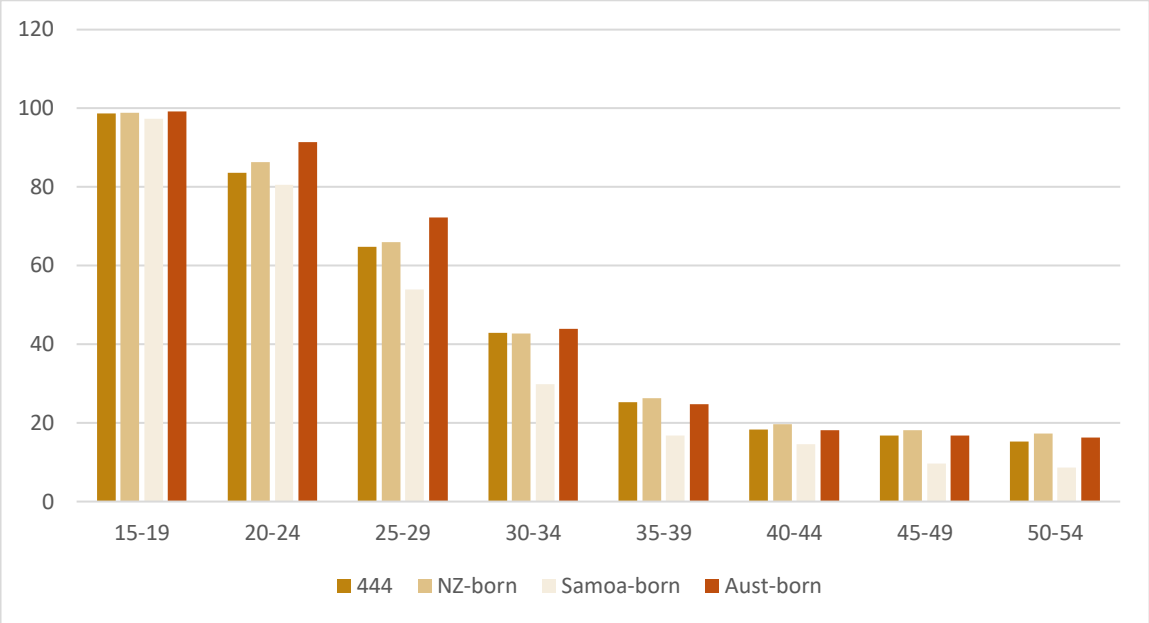
However, data from the 2021 Census suggests limited success in attracting recent migrants to these sectors. While 23.7 percent of the New Zealand-born population in Australia had arrived since 2011, only 16 percent of New Zealanders working in policing services arrived in that timeframe. In education, 28 percent of preschool teachers, 13 percent of primary teachers, and 14 percent of secondary teachers were recent arrivals. Healthcare figures show a similar pattern: 17 percent of hospital workers, 19 percent of medical service workers, and 16 percent of residential care workers had arrived since 2011. These proportions suggest that while employment in frontline sectors remains strong among the diaspora, recent migration incentives had not yet significantly shifted sectoral composition by 2021.

Fertility and family formation

Patterns of fertility and family formation within the New Zealand diaspora in Australia reflect diverse trajectories shaped by ethnicity, visa status, and place of birth. Fertility behaviour among New Zealand-born and SCV-holding women differs from that of the Australian-born population, and notable intra-diaspora variation exists, particularly among Pasifika populations such as Samoa-born women. This section uses 2021 Census and vital statistics data to examine age-specific childbearing, completed fertility, and intergenerational family patterns across these groups.

Figure 29 shows the percentage of women with zero parity (i.e. who have not had any children) across different age groups, based on the 2021 Census. It compares this percentage for four groups: women holding the Special Category (Subclass 444) visa; New Zealand-born women; Samoa-born women; and Australia-born women. Younger age groups (ages 15–19 and 20–24) have near-universal zero parity across all groups (close to 100 percent), due to youth. From age 25–29 onwards, zero parity begins to decline as more women begin to have children.

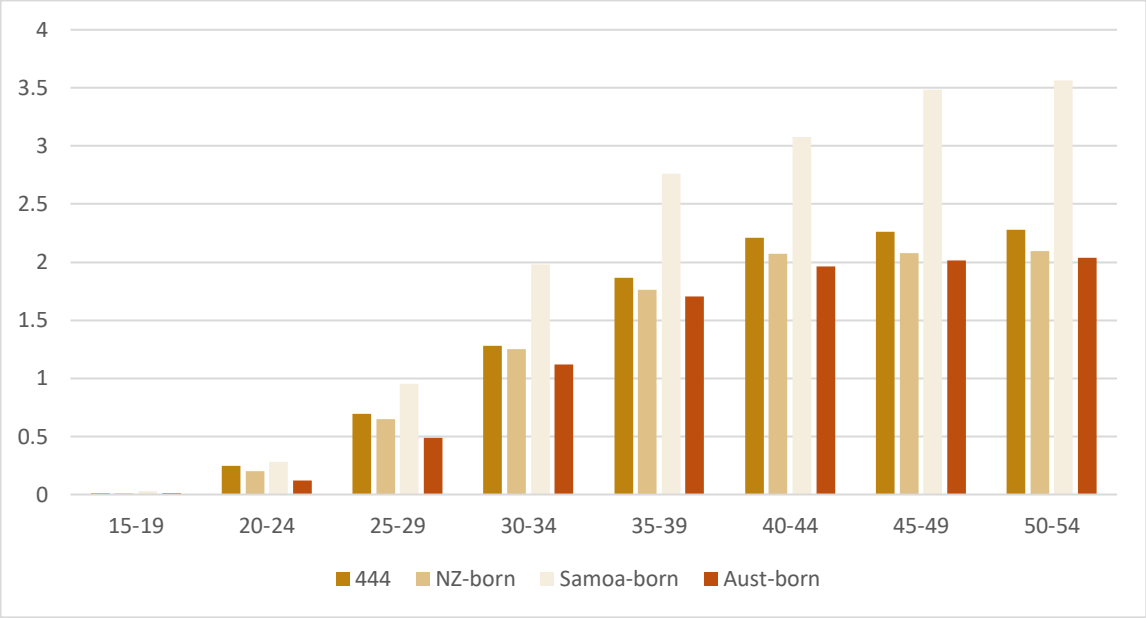
Figure 29: Percentage of women who have not had any children, by age and population



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Samoa-born women show a steeper decline in zero parity in the 25–34 age ranges, suggesting earlier or higher rates of childbearing. Australia-born women maintain higher levels of zero parity into their 30s compared to Samoa-born and New Zealand-born women. By age 50–54, parity levels across all groups converge, but Samoa-born women have the lowest percentage of childless women in the older age brackets, indicating higher completed fertility rates.

Figure 30: Mean Number of Children Ever Born, by age-group and population, 2021



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Figure 30 shows the average number of children born to women across different age groups, based on the 2021 Census. It compares the same four groups. In the youngest age groups (15–19 and 20–24), all groups have very low average numbers of children, as expected. From age 25–29 onwards, differences in fertility patterns become apparent. Samoa-born women show significantly higher mean numbers of children at every age group, indicating earlier and more intensive childbearing. By contrast, Australia-born women have the lowest average number of children across all age groups from 30 onwards. Women on 444 visas and New Zealand-born women fall between these two patterns, with fertility levels generally closer to the Australia-born group. By age 50–54, Samoa-born women have had more than 3.5 children on average, substantially higher than the other groups, while Australia-born women average under 2 children. This chart underscores marked differences in timing and intensity of childbearing across groups.

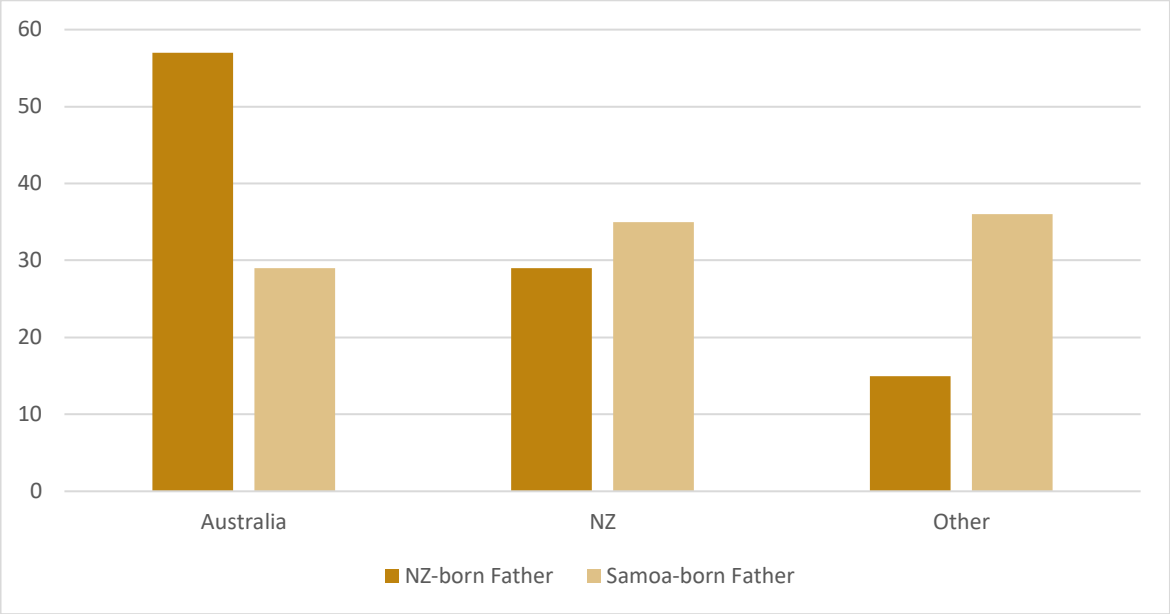
Figure 31: Total Fertility Rate (births per woman), by Mother's birth-country

Source: Births Australia, annual

Figure 31 presents the total fertility rate (TFR) from 2020 to 2023 for women born in Australia, New Zealand, and Samoa. Across all years, Samoa-born women had consistently higher fertility rates—over 3 births per woman in 2020, declining slightly but remaining above replacement level through to 2023. New Zealand-born women had intermediate fertility rates, gradually declining from above 2.0 to around 2.0 by 2023. Australia-born women had the lowest TFRs across the period, staying just under 1.8. This highlights a persistent fertility gradient by maternal birthplace, with Samoa-born women tending toward larger families.

Figures 32 and 33 examine the birthplaces of mothers and fathers in registered births in 2022, showing family formation trends and intergroup partnering patterns.

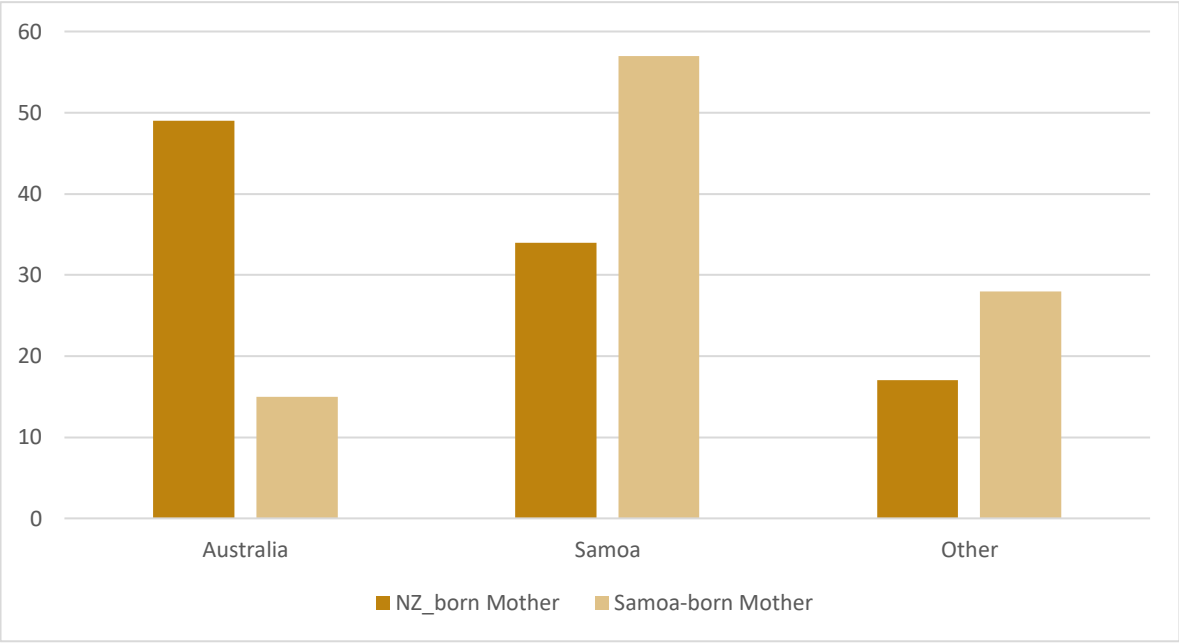
Figure 32: Country of Birth of Mother (%: 2022 data), by father's birth country



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Among children with New Zealand-born fathers, 57 percent of mothers were born in Australia, 29 percent in New Zealand, and 14 percent elsewhere. For children with Samoa-born fathers, only 29 percent of mothers were Australian-born, 29 percent were New Zealand-born, and 36 percent were from other countries. This suggests that New Zealand-born men are more likely to have Australian-born partners, while Samoa-born men have more diverse partner origins, reflecting stronger transnational and intra-diaspora links.

Figure 33: Country of Birth of Father (%: 2022 data), by mother's birth country



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Conversely, children with New Zealand-born mothers had fathers most commonly born in Australia (49 percent), followed by New Zealand (34 percent), and other countries (17 percent). In contrast, children of Samoa-born mothers had fathers most commonly born in New Zealand (57 percent), with 14 percent Australian-born and 28 percent from other countries. This demonstrates that Samoa-born mothers are far more likely to partner with New Zealand-born men, reinforcing strong diaspora linkages, while New Zealand-born mothers show greater integration into the Australian-born population through intermarriage.

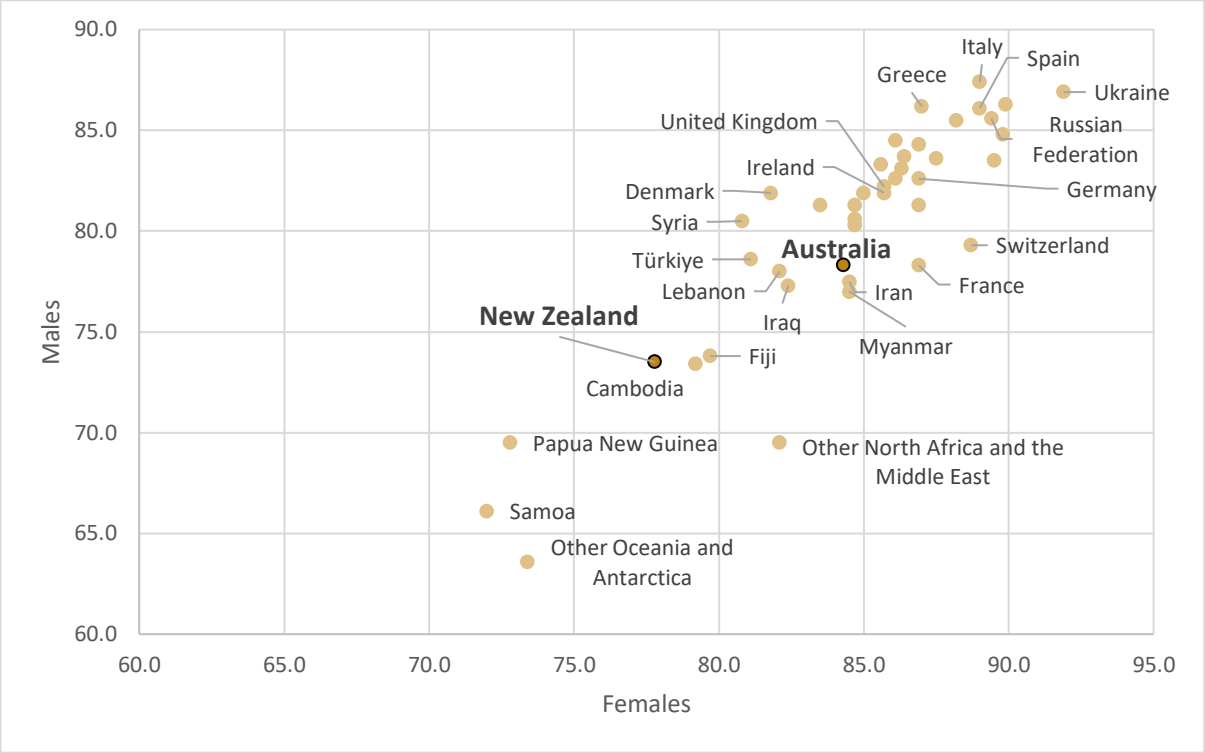
Health and mortality

Despite their geographical proximity and historical integration, New Zealand-born individuals in Australia experience markedly poorer health outcomes than both the Australian-born population and many other migrant groups. This section draws on recent mortality and cause-of-death data to explore differences in longevity and suicide rates by country of birth, revealing persistent and striking health inequalities among the New Zealand diaspora, particularly for Māori and Pasifika populations.

Figure 34 plots the median age at death for males (vertical axis) and females (horizontal axis) from a range of birth countries, highlighting differences in longevity by sex and birthplace among people who died in Australia. Each point represents a country, with Australia-born and New Zealand-born individuals highlighted in orange. A key observation is that both New Zealand-born males and females have noticeably lower median ages at death compared to their Australian-born counterparts. Australian-born women have a median age at death around 85, and men around 80, while New Zealand-born women are closer to 77 and men around 73. This reflects a significant mortality gap between the two groups—approximately 7–8 years shorter life expectancy for New Zealand-born individuals, with the gap slightly larger for men.

This difference may reflect socioeconomic disparities, differences in healthcare access, occupational exposures, or behavioural risk factors, and the distinct demographic composition of New Zealand migrants in Australia, particularly the overrepresentation of Māori and Pasifika populations, who face well-documented health inequities. Compared to other birth countries, New Zealand-born individuals are among those with lower median ages at death, clustered near countries like Cambodia, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea, and far from higher-longevity countries like Italy, Greece, and the Netherlands. In contrast, Australian-born individuals sit closer to the median of all countries represented, though they still lag behind many European-born migrants. Overall, the chart starkly illustrates the unequal health outcomes experienced by New Zealand-born migrants in Australia, despite their geographic proximity and legal ease of movement.

Figure 34: Median Age at Death, by Sex and Country of Birth

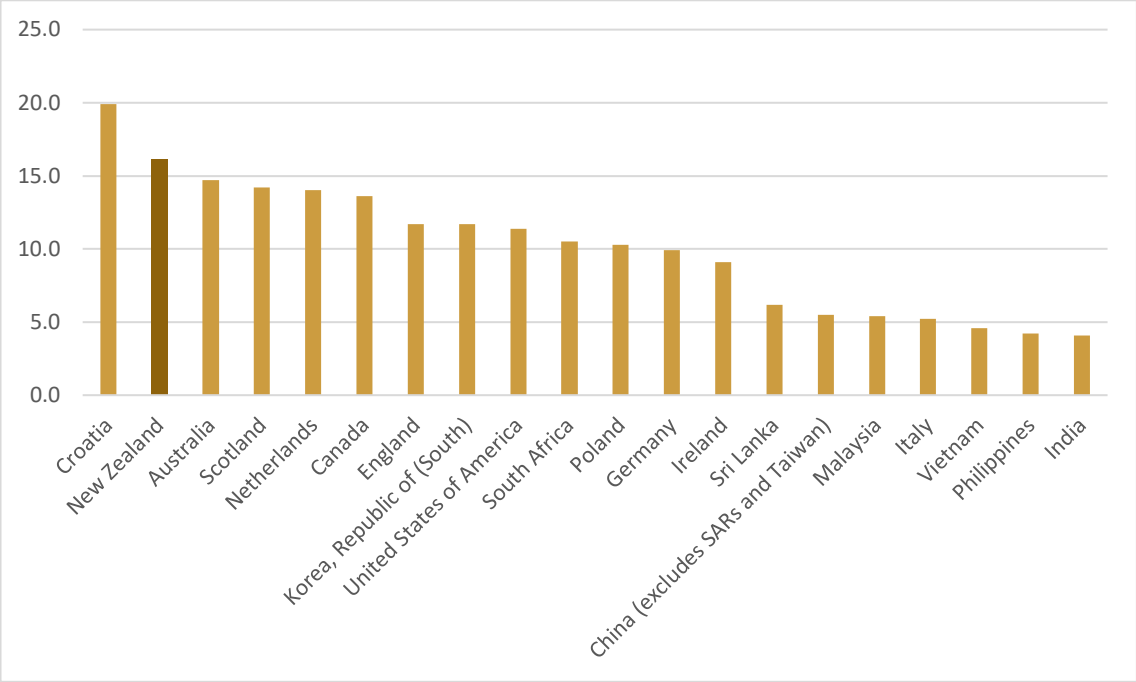


Source: ABS, Deaths, Australia, 2023

Figure 35 displays suicide rates per 100,000 population for various migrant groups in Australia, adjusted for age differences. New Zealand-born individuals have the second-highest suicide rate among all countries shown, just behind Croatia, and notably higher than the Australian-born population, which ranks third. This places New Zealanders well above many other English-speaking migrant groups—including those born in the UK, Canada, and the United States—and far above migrant groups from Asia, such as India, Vietnam, and China, which have some of the lowest suicide rates in the chart.

The elevated rate for New Zealand-born individuals is concerning and may be linked to a range of intersecting social determinants, including mental health stigma, experiences of discrimination, economic disadvantage, and—particularly for Māori and Pasifika migrants—structural barriers to healthcare and social support. While the Australian-born suicide rate is already relatively high compared to most migrant groups, the New Zealand-born rate is even more pronounced, underscoring a critical need for targeted mental health responses within this population. The chart highlights how country of birth remains a significant factor in suicide risk, with New Zealand-born migrants facing a disproportionate burden relative to both the host population and other migrant groups.

Figure 35: Age-standardized suicide rates by Country of birth, 2019-2023



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Causes of Death, Australia 2023

Māori in Australia: A stratified migration experience

Australia's Māori population forms a significant and growing component of the New Zealand diaspora, yet their migration and settlement experiences reveal distinct patterns of legal status, socio-economic outcomes, and cultural continuity (cf Bedford et al 2004; Hamer 2007, 2009, 2018; Kukutai & Pawar 2013; Howitt 2022). This section draws on 2021 Census data to explore the composition, citizenship status, age structure, language use, and geographies of residence among Māori in Australia, offering insight into how structural barriers and intergenerational shifts are shaping their presence and trajectories across the country.

For the purpose of this report, Australia's Māori population is defined as those identifying Māori ancestry in their responses to the 2021 Census. At the time of the census, 169,219 people in Australia identified as having Māori ancestry. Of these, 55.4% were born in New Zealand and 43.4% were born in Australia. A further 6.9% of this population were at least third-generation Australians, meaning that both of their parents were also born in Australia. Another 1.2% were born elsewhere, mostly across Oceania. Based on the 2021 Census, of all Māori individuals residing in Australia, an estimated 46.1% held Australian citizenship. Among those born in Australia, an estimated 83.3% possessed Australian citizenship, whereas only an estimated 17.1% of Māori born in New Zealand did. Again this estimate is based on 2021 Census figures.

It is important to highlight that there is a discrepancy of approximately 30,000 between the number of Māori New Zealand citizens identified in the 2021 Census, and the number recorded in

the Australian Census and Temporary Entrants Integrated Dataset (ACTEID).[1] This discrepancy is not fully explained. Preliminary investigations by the ABS have ruled out data lag as a primary cause, by confirming that the Temporary Visa Holders (TVH) file, which sources subclass 444 visa data from the Department of Home Affairs, was fully synchronised with the Travel and Immigration Processing System (TRIPS) and up to date at the time of data linkage.[2] While some degree of Census undercount (roughly estimated by ABS to be under 10,000) may contribute, a more likely explanation is thought to be misreporting in the Census by New Zealand citizens who mistakenly believe they hold Australian citizenship.

This likely affects a significant number of children born in Australia. An Australian-born child of two New Zealander parents may believe they are entitled to birthright citizenship. This is famously the case in the USA and Canada and was the case in New Zealand until 2006. Australia also granted birthright citizenship in the past, but stopped this practice in August 1986. Since then, the Australian-born children of migrants on temporary Australian visas, including New Zealanders, are still entitled to apply for birthright citizenship, but only if they remain in Australia for the first ten years of their life. This is not granted automatically: they must actively apply. It is therefore possible and indeed likely that a substantial Australian-born New Zealanders believe that they hold Australian citizenship but do not. If so, it seems reasonable to expect that they are misreporting their citizenship status in the Census. These classification inconsistencies may affect the alignment between self-reported Census data and legal visa status, and should be considered when interpreting estimates based on these sources. This is an Issue ripe for future research.

Among the New Zealand-born population in Australia, 18% identified as having Māori ancestry, either alone or in combination. Māori born in New Zealand possessed Australian citizenship at significantly lower rates than the New Zealand-born average. While 34.5% of the broader New Zealand-born population held Australian citizenship in 2021, only 17.1% of New Zealand-born Māori did. This discrepancy likely reflects differences in migration timing and pathways. As noted earlier, it became more difficult for New Zealanders to obtain Australian citizenship from 2001 onwards. While 49% of the total New Zealand-born population in Australia arrived after 2001, this figure rises to 62% among New Zealand-born Māori. In both groups, about 83% of those who arrived before 2001 have since naturalised.

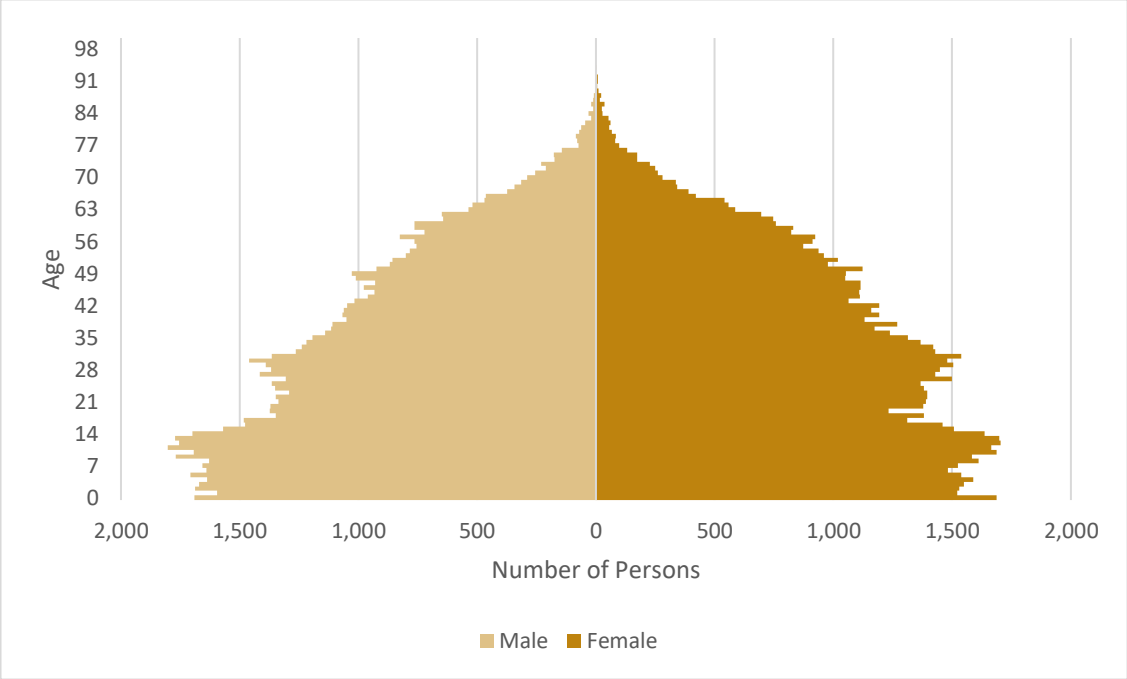
Figure 36 shows that Australia's Māori population remains relatively young, although it has aged considerably over the past decade. In 2011, 80% of the population was under the age of 25; by

[1] The Australian Census and Temporary Entrants Integrated Dataset (ACTEID) is a linked dataset produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), which combines information from the Census of Population and Housing with administrative data on temporary visa holders sourced from the Department of Home Affairs. ACTEID links 2021 Census data to records from the Temporary Visa Holders (TVH) file, enabling analysis of the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of temporary migrants in Australia. The integration is done using data linkage techniques that match individuals across datasets based on shared identifiers and probabilistic methods. ACTEID is particularly useful for analysing the temporary migrant population (e.g., international students, working holiday makers, New Zealand citizens on subclass 444 visas) using Census-level detail.

[2] The Travel and Immigration Processing System (TRIPS) is an internal system used by the Australian Department of Home Affairs to manage and monitor the legal status and movements of non-citizens, including visa holders. TRIPS provides the foundational data for visa-related systems such as Visa Manager, which in turn feeds into the Temporary Visa Holders (TVH) file. It is dynamically updated with key "triggers" such as visa grants, cancellations, arrivals and departures, and acquisition of Australian citizenship. These updates ensure that the TVH file reflects the current visa or citizenship status of individuals at the time of linkage with the Census.

2021, this share had declined to 45%. As of the 2021 Census, 37% of Australia's Māori population was under 20 years old, and 31% were aged 20 to 39. This ageing allows for more meaningful analysis of education, income, and employment outcomes than was previously possible.

Figure 36: Age-sex profile of persons with Māori ancestry in Australia, 2021 Census



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

In 2021, 8.6% of Māori living in Australia reported speaking Te Reo Māori as their primary language at home—an increase from 6.3% in 2011 and 5.7% in 2006. Among those who spoke Te Reo at home, 37.5% were born in Australia. The share of Te Reo speakers increased for both New Zealand-born and Australian-born Māori: 11.0% of New Zealand-born and 5.3% of Australian-born Māori spoke the language at home in 2021, up from 8.2% and 2.4% respectively in 2011. Interestingly, 2,982 individuals (25.3%) who listed Te Reo Māori as their main home language did not identify Māori ancestry—likely reflecting Pacific Islander or multicultural households with overlapping linguistic identities.

Working-age adults (20–59 years) were disproportionately likely to speak Te Reo Māori at home. While 31% of the Māori population fell in the 20–39 age range, they made up 34% of Te Reo speakers. Similarly, 28% of Te Reo speakers were aged 40–59, despite this group comprising only 23% of the overall Māori population. Younger cohorts under 20 were less likely to speak the language at home, although children aged 0–9 were slightly overrepresented among speakers (19% of speakers, but only 16% of the Māori population), suggesting some intergenerational transmission.

The geographical distribution of Australia's Māori population mirrors that of the broader New Zealand-born population in some states, but differs in others. In 2021, 38% lived in Queensland, 23% in New South Wales, 18% in Western Australia, and 15% in Victoria. This is a reversal of the trend for New Zealand-born individuals, among whom Victoria has a larger share than Western Australia.

In Queensland, 58% of the Māori population lived in Greater Brisbane. Key suburbs included Redbank Plains (1,235), Marsden (835), and Eagleby (703). On the Gold Coast, Pimpama (1,504), Upper Coomera (1,448), and Coomera (1,141) had high Māori concentrations. In New South Wales, 72% of Māori residents lived in Greater Sydney, with the highest numbers in western suburbs such as Blacktown (490), St Clair (327), and St Marys (238)—a distribution differing from the broader New Zealand-born population, which is more evenly spread across the city. In Victoria, 84% of Māori lived in Greater Melbourne, with Point Cook (1,014), Tarneit (759), and Werribee (686) as the top suburbs—mirroring New Zealand-born settlement patterns.In Western Australia, 78% of Māori lived in Greater Perth. Baldivis had 1,381 Māori residents, Ellenbrook had 681, and Butler—unlike among the New Zealand-born—ranked third with 483. Only 2% of Australia's Māori population lived in South Australia, and approximately 1% each in the Northern Territory, Australian Capital Territory, and Tasmania.

Emerging challenges for the New Zealand diaspora in Australia

Despite their long-standing presence and formal migration freedoms, many New Zealanders living in Australia face structural vulnerabilities that are distinct from those of other migrant groups. These challenges stem in part from the unique legal status of the Special Category Visa (SCV), which provides near-unrestricted mobility and work rights but does not guarantee permanent residency, social protections, or access to citizenship. This section explores how these vulnerabilities manifest in areas such as financial security, housing access, and homelessness, with particular emphasis on the economic shocks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

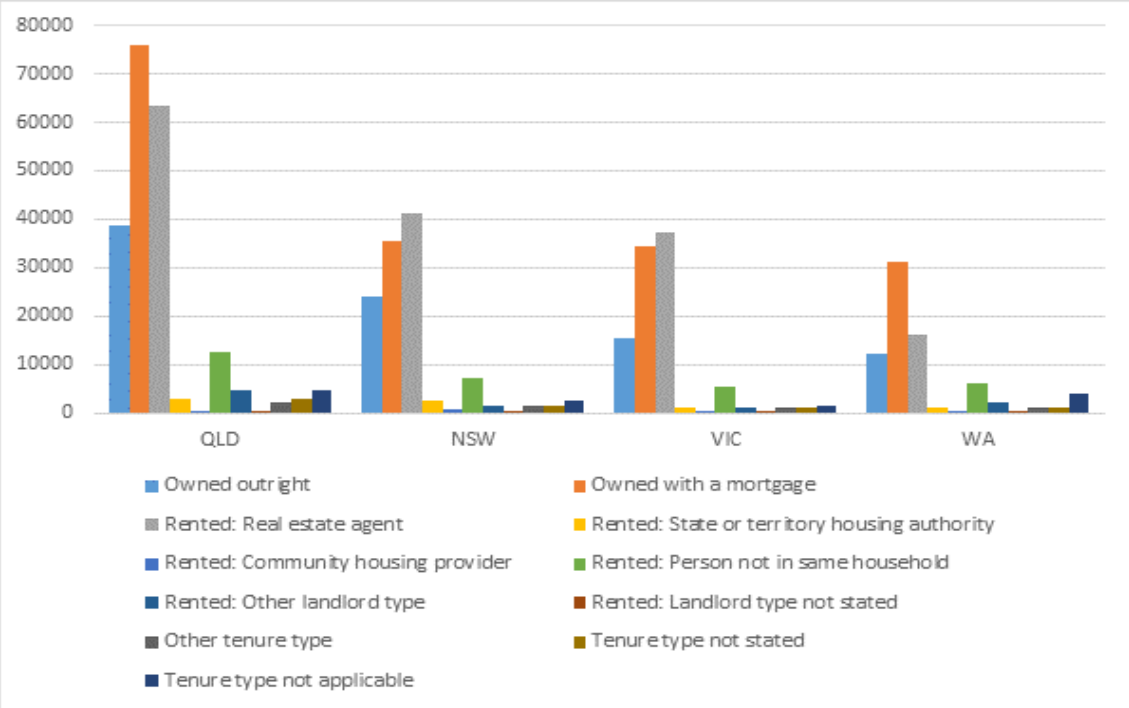
Economic insecurity and housing

As part of the Commonwealth Government's economic response to COVID-19, individuals were allowed to withdraw between AU$10,000 to AU$20,000 from their superannuation accounts. During 2020, 3.05 million individuals received AU$37.8 billion through the early release of superannuation scheme.

The Australian Taxation Office identified temporary migrants as 7% of the total approved applicants for early release superannuation. Of all approved applicants, 3% were student visa holders and 1% were temporary skilled work visa holders. Other temporary resident visa holders — including New Zealand citizens on the SCV — represented 3% of all approved applicants, withdrawing AU$665 million. As New Zealanders made up more than half (56%) of all other temporary migrants resident in Australia at the end of 2020, it is likely that they comprised the majority of these early withdrawals from superannuation.

Before the pandemic, superannuation represented a third of household assets (36%) for New Zealand migrants in Australia. Comparatively, superannuation constituted 29.6% of assets for the Australian-born and 21.5% for other migrant groups (Doan 2022, p. 299). Behind property, superannuation was the second largest component of household assets for New Zealanders. As a result, the early release of superannuation during COVID-19 had significant implications for both the current asset mix of New Zealanders in Australia and their long-term financial resilience.

Figure 37: Housing tenure of New Zealand-born population by state, 2021



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Property remains the largest component of household wealth across all groups, yet New Zealanders own a smaller proportion of property assets (46%) than other migrant groups (58%) (Doan 2022, p. 299). As shown in Figure 37, home ownership patterns among New Zealanders vary by state. Those living in Queensland and Western Australia are more likely to hold mortgages — increasing their exposure to rising interest rates — while those in New South Wales and Victoria are more reliant on the rental market and therefore more vulnerable to rental inflation.

Unlike other migrant groups, non-citizen New Zealanders are treated as domestic buyers in Australia's property market and are exempt from foreign investment restrictions. Despite this advantage, home ownership among New Zealanders remains comparatively low. In 2021, 71% of Australian-born adults owned their home (27% outright, 44% with a mortgage), and 64% of other overseas-born individuals owned theirs (27% outright, 37% with a mortgage). In contrast, only 56% of New Zealand-born adults were homeowners (19% outright, 37% with a mortgage), and just 49% of SCV holders owned their home (14% outright, 34% with a mortgage). As a result, a disproportionate share of New Zealanders rely on Australia's private rental market, increasing their exposure to housing insecurity and financial stress.

Although legally permitted to purchase property, many New Zealanders may be disincentivised from doing so due to the uncertainty associated with SCV status. The temporary nature of the visa, combined with limited access to welfare and housing support, increases the financial risks of home ownership. Furthermore, fewer New Zealanders rely on assets as their main source of income compared to other groups. In 2021, only 4% of the New Zealand-born population reported investment income as their primary income source, compared to 6% of other migrants and 5% of Australian-born individuals.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated that 0.8% of the population — or 215,674 people — were experiencing homelessness on census night in 2021. Of these, 5,476 individuals were born in New Zealand. Nationally, homelessness is most commonly experienced through severely crowded dwellings (22%) or other forms of insecure housing (38%), followed by boarding houses (10%), supported accommodation (11%), and temporary stays with other households (8%).

For New Zealanders, patterns of homelessness diverge from the national average. A higher proportion of homeless New Zealanders lived in 'other' or severely crowded dwellings (40% and 23% respectively), and a greater proportion lived in caravan parks (7% compared to 4% nationally). Conversely, a smaller share of homeless New Zealanders accessed supported accommodation (5% vs. 11%) or stayed in temporary housing (3% vs. 4%). These patterns reflect the precarious position of New Zealanders on the SCV — legally allowed to live and work in Australia, but often excluded from government support services due to their temporary visa classification.

Homelessness rates also vary by state. In New South Wales, 1,536 New Zealand-born individuals (1.3% of the state's NZ-born population) were homeless on census night. Of these, 41% were in other crowded dwellings, 24% in severely crowded dwellings, 19% in boarding houses, and 6% with other households. In Victoria, 1,230 New Zealand-born people (1.2% of the NZ-born population) were homeless. Forty-four percent lived in other crowded dwellings, 28% in severely crowded dwellings, and 6% accessed supported accommodation — compared to 15% of the total homeless population in Victoria. In Queensland, 1,979 New Zealand-born individuals (0.9% of the state's NZ-born population) were homeless. While patterns mirrored the general population, a slightly higher proportion of New Zealanders lived in caravan parks (10%) than the state average (8%). In Western Australia, 495 New Zealand-born people (0.7%) were homeless. They were more likely to live in caravan parks (11% vs. 6%) or in improvised dwellings (8% vs. 14%), suggesting increased exposure to marginal housing and rough sleeping. Smaller numbers of New Zealanders experiencing homelessness were recorded in South Australia (96), Tasmania (28), the Northern Territory (79), and the ACT (37).

These data highlight the structural vulnerabilities of New Zealanders in Australia who, despite long-term residence and deep social ties, remain precariously situated due to the enduring temporariness of their visa status. Prior to 2023, the legal and financial barriers to citizenship excluded many from accessing housing assistance or long-term security — reinforcing cycles of disadvantage that will require continued policy attention even in the wake of recent reforms.

Environmental and disaster risk exposure

Climate change is intensifying environmental hazards across Australia, exposing increasing numbers of residents to the effects of flooding, bushfires, cyclones, storms, and other extreme weather events. These risks are not distributed evenly. They disproportionately affect outer urban, coastal, and regional areas — many of which are home to significant New Zealand-born populations. This section explores the spatial intersection between climate vulnerability and the New Zealand diaspora in Australia, highlighting issues of disaster relief access and emerging challenges related to insurability and housing security.

Many Australian residents live in areas that are becoming more vulnerable to extreme weather events such as flooding, bushfires, storms and cyclones. As a result of climate change pressures, these communities are facing higher and more frequent maintenance, repair, relocation, and

insurance costs, as well as social and psychological pressures. While disaster-related Commonwealth Government funding is generally only available to citizens and permanent residents, New Zealanders on the SCV have typically had special access to disaster relief provided by the Australian Government — a recognition of the historical and legal closeness between the two countries.

In their 2022 report *Uninsurable Nation: Australia's Most Climate-Vulnerable Places*, the Climate Council estimated that one in 25 houses (4%) in Australia could become uninsurable by 2030, with nearly 10% of properties likely to be underinsured. In the ten federal electorates identified as most at risk, one in seven properties (15%) could become uninsurable due to escalating climate risk. As shown in Figure 38, five of these high-risk electorates are in Queensland — a state that contains some of the densest concentrations of New Zealand-born residents in Australia.

Electorates such as Moncrieff and Wright — which include coastal and peri-urban communities in southeast Queensland — not only face some of the highest exposure to cyclonic and flood-related events, but also rank among the top locations for New Zealand settlement. In Moncrieff, for example, more than 6% of the population was born in New Zealand, a share significantly above the national average. The exposure of New Zealanders to environmental risk is thus not incidental but embedded in settlement patterns that have evolved around affordable housing, labour opportunities, and family networks in outer-urban and regional Australia.

Figure 38: Leading Electorates of Climate Change Risk and their New Zealand-born population, 2021

Electorate	State	New Zealand-born population in Electorate	New Zealand-born population share of Electorate Population
Nicholls	VIC	1672	1.0%
Richmond	NSW	4148	2.5%
Maranoa	QLD	2341	1.5%
Moncrieff	QLD	11636	6.4%
Wright	QLD	8099	4.5%
Brisbane	QLD	5540	3.0%
Griffith	QLD	5535	3.1%
Indi	VIC	1465	0.9%
Page	NSW	2131	1.3%
Hindmarsh	SA	1263	0.7%

Source: Nicki Hutley, Dr Annika Dean, Nathan Hart and Jordie Daley. Uninsurable Nation: Australia's Most Climate-Vulnerable Places, Climate Council of Australia 2022

As climate pressures intensify, this spatial concentration may carry new implications. It may exacerbate existing vulnerabilities for SCV holders, especially given their reduced access to long-term income support, social housing, and structural protections. Although ad hoc disaster relief is often extended to New Zealanders during specific events, there is no guarantee of consistency or adequacy — raising concerns about resilience in the face of repeated and compounding climate-related shocks.

Summary and Conclusion

This report provides a detailed data-driven examination of the New Zealand diaspora in Australia, with a particular focus on the evolving demographics, policy frameworks, and social challenges facing this population. Drawing on linked Australian census and migration datasets, it estimates the New Zealand diaspora at over 1.22 million people, including citizens, those born in New Zealand, and children of New Zealanders. These populations are shaped by overlapping but distinct identities—citizenship, birthplace, ancestry, and visa status—underscoring the complex nature of trans-Tasman migration.

The report provides key insights on mobility dynamics. Trans-Tasman migration has fluctuated significantly over time in response to economic cycles, policy changes, and external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The Special Category Visa (SCV), while enabling mobility and work rights, has also created long-term challenges due to its temporary classification.

The report also provides an overview of demographic trends. The New Zealand-born population in Australia is ageing and primarily concentrated in Queensland and Western Australia, often outside of the major hubs typical of other migrant groups. Māori make up a significant portion (18%) of this diaspora, with distinctive migration pathways and socio-economic experiences.

The report also discussion socio-economic participation. SCV holders display strong workforce participation and are present across all occupational sectors, but many face barriers to citizenship, home ownership, and long-term financial stability—partly due to limited access to social protections.

The report further discusses education and fertility characteristics. Younger New Zealanders in Australia, including those on SCVs, show high levels of engagement in education. Fertility rates vary across subgroups, with Samoan-born women exhibiting higher fertility than both New Zealand and Australia-born women.

Finally, the report discusses emerging challenges. There are growing concerns related to superannuation gaps, housing insecurity, and homelessness. The unique “temporary-but-permanent” status of many New Zealanders increases their vulnerability, especially in times of crisis. Many in the New Zealand diaspora reside in areas with high exposure to climate-related risks, such as flooding and bushfires, raising long-term questions about resilience and support for non-citizen residents.

New Zealanders in Australia constitute one of the country’s most longstanding and integrated diasporas, yet they continue to face distinct policy, social, and economic challenges rooted in their unique migration status. The SCV framework, while facilitating mobility, has functionally stratified the diaspora into those with full citizenship rights and those subject to exclusion from core aspects of the welfare state. Although recent reforms allowing direct access to citizenship for long-term SCV holders mark a significant step forward, disparities remain entrenched—particularly for Māori and other subgroups facing intergenerational disadvantage. More than 30,000 citizenship applications were submitted in the first 100 days, underscoring latent demand.

The findings of this report suggest that a more inclusive and responsive policy framework is needed to support the long-term wellbeing of New Zealanders in Australia. This includes ensuring equitable access to housing, retirement income, social security, and climate resilience measures. As Australia

and New Zealand continue to evolve their shared migration architecture, it is crucial that reforms address the gaps created over the past two decades—especially those that have left many New Zealanders effectively permanent yet institutionally temporary.

By recognising the depth of this diaspora's contributions and the breadth of their vulnerabilities, policymakers can better support one of Australia's most intertwined and dynamic migrant communities. As bilateral migration frameworks evolve, a rights-based approach to trans-Tasman mobility will be essential for ensuring equity and social cohesion.

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