

Tupu Ola Moui
Pacific Health Chart Book 2025

1

**Pacific Population
in New Zealand**



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Introduction

This report is part of the Tupu Ola Moui Pacific Health Chart Book series, which provides comprehensive and up-to-date data on the health of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Designed as a clear and accessible resource, this series offers straightforward descriptions of key health data to enable users to further analyse and interpret their implications. The Tupu Ola Moui series serves as a foundational reference point for understanding the current state of Pacific health.

This volume of the Chart Book series relates to [Te Mana Ola: The Pacific Health Strategy](#) priority area 3: Soalaupule – Autonomy and determination.

This priority focuses on 'better understanding the needs of Pacific peoples and communities and enabling them to exercise authority over their health and wellbeing'.

The other reports in this series are:



**Tupu Ola Moui
Volume 2:
Pacific Health
Workforce**



**Tupu Ola Moui
Volume 3:
Healthier
Environments**



**Tupu Ola Moui
Volume 4:
Health System –
Part One**



**Tupu Ola Moui
Volume 5:
Health System –
Part Two**



**Tupu Ola Moui:
Methodology
and Data**

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Glossary

Gagana Sāmoa	Samoan language.
General fertility rate	The number of live births per 1,000 women of childbearing age (usually aged 15–49 years) in a population during a specific time period.
Pacific peoples	<p>Refers to people who identify with one or more of the following ethnic groups: Samoan, Cook Islands Māori (Cook Islanders), Tongan, Niuean, Tokelauan, Fijian and other within the statistical definitions of 'Other Pacific peoples' and 'Pacific peoples not further defined (nfd)'.</p> <p>Defined comprehensively by Stats NZ within the 'Aria' classification tool.</p>
Other Pacific peoples	The ethnic groups of Indigenous Australian, Hawaiian, i-Kiribati, Nauruan, Papua New Guinean, Pitcairn Islander, Rotuman, Tahitian, Solomon Islander, Tuvaluan, Ni Vanuatu and Pacific peoples not elsewhere classified.
Pacific peoples not further defined (nfd)	An identity within the broader Pacific peoples ethnic group that has not indicated – or could not be coded to – a more specific Pacific ethnicity (such as Samoan, Tongan, Cook Island Māori or Niuean).
Pasifika rainbow+	<p>Pacific peoples who identify as part of the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), intersex and asexual (and/or aromantic/agender) identities, with the '+' symbol acknowledging additional diverse sexual and gender identities not explicitly listed (LGBTQIA+ communities), and/or › māhū (Hawaiian and Tahitian), vaka sa lewa lewa (Fijian), palopa (Papua New Guinean), fa'afafine (Sāmoan), akava'ine (Cook Islands Māori), fakaleiti or leiti (Tongan) and fakafine (Niuean) identities, with the '+' symbol encompassing other gender-diverse identities and expressions across the Pacific (MVPFAFF+ communities).
Te reo Māori Kuki 'Āirani	The Cook Islands Māori language.
Tagata sa'ilimalo	<p>Pacific disabled people and their families and carers. 'Tagata sa'ilimalo' is a gagana Sāmoa term developed by Tōfā Mamao, a grassroots collective of Pacific disabled peoples and their families and carers (learn more here: Tōfā Mamao Collective Pacific Disability Community). The Ministry of Health's Pacific Expert Advisory Group recommends use of this term.</p> <p>Other terms to describe Pacific disabled peoples include 'whaikaha Pacific'. Use of this term is not intended to reflect negatively on these alternatives.</p>

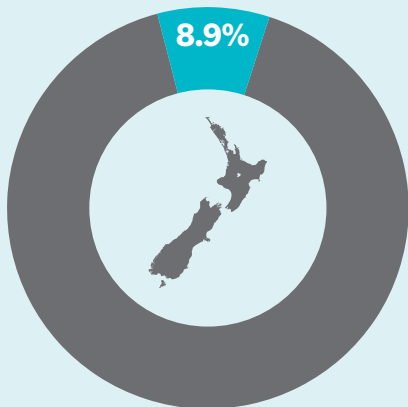
Summary



Pacific peoples: a growing, increasingly diverse and changing population

Understanding the demographic and cultural characteristics of the Pacific peoples population in New Zealand provides a foundation for designing and delivering health services and growing a workforce that meets the needs of Pacific communities.

► Population



442,632

There were 442,632 Pacific peoples in New Zealand in 2023, making up 8.9% of the total population.

Note: This data is based on the 2023 Census usually resident population counts. The population projections presented below are based on 2018 Census data and should be interpreted with this in mind.

► Population

664,600 by 2043

The Pacific population is projected to reach 664,600 by 2043, making up 11.2% of the total population.

Note: This data is based on the 2018 Census and may not align with the most recent 2023 population counts shown above.

► Age



Pacific peoples had a youthful age profile in 2023, with a median age of 24.9 years, compared to 38.1 years for the total New Zealand population. Around half (50.1%) of the Pacific population were younger than 25 years of age, compared to 30.1% of the total population. Only 5.9% were 65 years and older, compared to 16.6% of the total population.

► Ethnicity

43.3%

Pacific peoples belonged to more than one ethnic group in 2023

Two out of five (191,637 or 43.3%) Pacific peoples belonged to more than one ethnic group in 2023. This group included 90,648 Pacific peoples who whakapapa Māori or also identify as Māori, accounting for 20.5% of the total Pacific population and 32.7% (44,544) of Pacific peoples younger than 15 years.

► Childbearing



The median age of childbearing for Pacific women in 2017–2019 was 27.6 years. In 2023, the general fertility rate for Pacific women was 62 births per 1,000 women aged 15–44 years. This represents a 34% decline since 2008, which was faster than the overall national decline of 24%. In comparison, the same year, the general fertility rate among Māori women was 66.3 and that among non-Māori, non-Pacific women was 39.4.

► Households



Households with Pacific peoples were, on average, larger than those of the total population in 2018: 57.4% of Pacific peoples lived in households with five or more members, compared to 22.9% of the total population. One-third of Pacific households included extended families, many spanning three or more generations. Pacific peoples who lived in households with seven or more residents accounted for 25.5% of the Pacific population.

► Religion

70.8%

Pacific peoples
identified as religious

In 2018, 70.8% of Pacific peoples identified as religious, the predominant religion being Christianity. Approximately 40.7% of Pacific peoples were bilingual, and 2.9% were able to speak three or more languages. The rate at which Pacific languages were spoken varied among Pacific ethnic groups, from 50.4% (Samoan people who spoke gagana Sāmoa) to 8.9% (Cook Islanders who spoke te reo Māori Kuki 'Āirani).



We lack comprehensive information about Pacific rainbow+ people and tagata sa'ilimalo.

A companion report, *Tupu Ola Moui: Methodology and Data*, describes the methodology and provides additional supporting information, including the tables used to produce the charts in this report and details the source data used.

Data



Pacific population

There were 442,632 Pacific peoples in New Zealand in 2023.

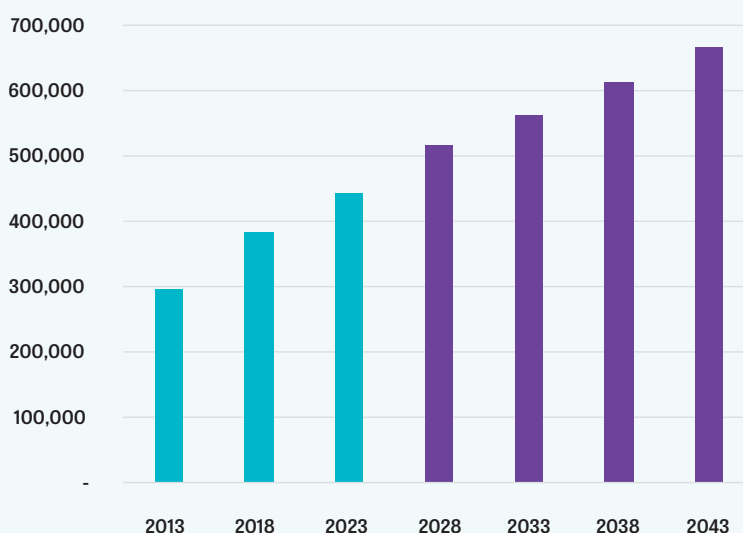
Pacific peoples made up 8.9% of the total population of New Zealand in 2023.

The Pacific population grew by 146,691 between 2013 and 2023 (a 49.6% increase).

By 2043, the Pacific population is forecast to increase to 664,600, when the population is predicted to make up 11.2% of the total population.

1. Some individuals may not have completed the Census, and imputation or statistical techniques were used to address non-response. This may affect the accuracy of certain categories.
2. Ethnicity data from Census 2023 may not be directly comparable to data from previous censuses due to changes in population, methodology, or classification systems.
3. Population forecasts for the period 2028 and 2043 based on Statistics New Zealand 'medium' projection assumptions.
4. This dataset includes total-response ethnicity, meaning individuals can identify with more than one ethnic group. As a result, the sum of percentages may exceed 100%, and counts may exceed the total number of respondents.

Figure 1: Pacific population in New Zealand, 2013–2043



Source: StatsNZ. 2024. Aotearoa Data Explorer.
URL: www.stats.govt.nz/tools/aotearoa-data-explorer/ (accessed 28 February 2025).
Note: The population projections (2028 onwards) are based on 2018 Census data. This is likely to differ from the latest population projections.

Pacific population, number by ethnic group

The population of all major Pacific ethnic groups increased between 2013 and 2023.

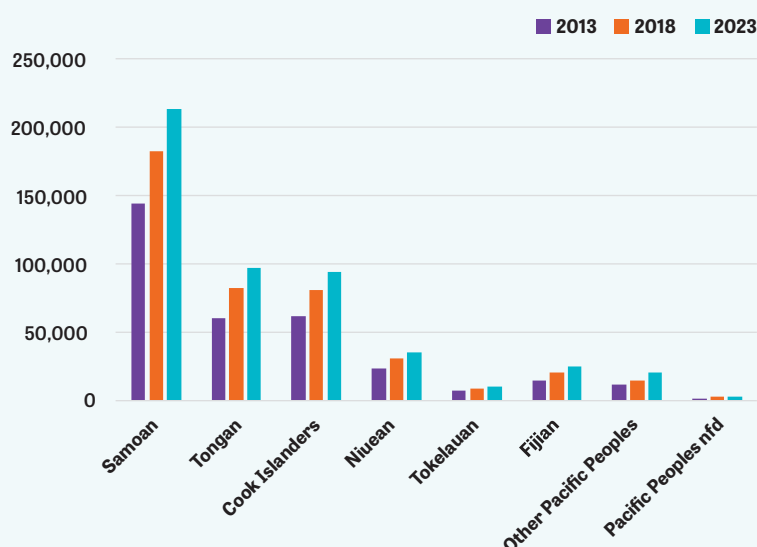
The largest numerical increase was among Samoans (up 68,931 or 47.8%) followed by Tongans (up 37,491 or 62.1%).

The largest percentage increase was among Fijians (up 73.3%).

Please refer to the Tupu Ola Moui – Data and Methodology volume for information on the number of people in the twelve Pacific ethnic groups with fewer than 5,000 members in 2023.

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3. This dataset includes total-response ethnicity, meaning individuals can identify with more than one ethnic group. As a result, the sum of percentages may exceed 100%, and counts may exceed the total number of respondents.

Figure 2: Usually resident Pacific population by ethnic group, 2013–2023



Source: StatsNZ. 2024. Aotearoa Data Explorer.
URL: www.stats.govt.nz/tools/aotearoa-data-explorer/ (accessed 28 February 2025).

Pacific population, percentage share by ethnic group

Almost half of New Zealand's Pacific population identified as Samoan in 2023.

Samoans (213,069) made up the largest share (48.1%) of Pacific peoples in New Zealand in 2023.

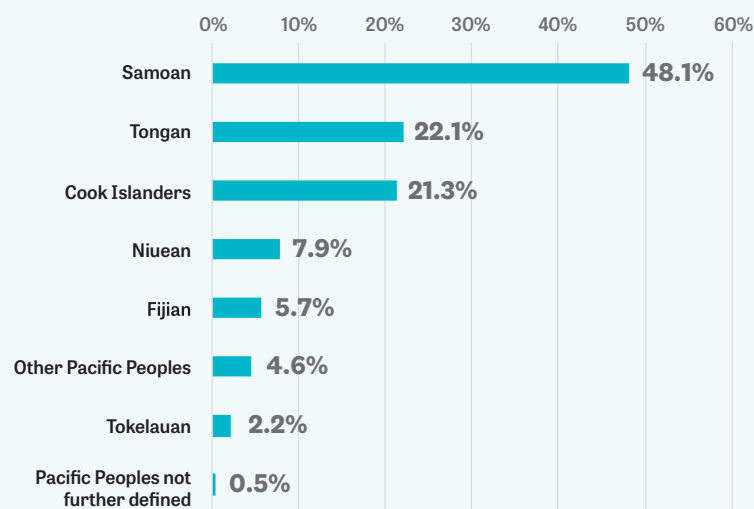
The next largest groups were Tongans (97,824 or 22.1%) and Cook Islanders (94,176 or 21.3%).

Smaller groups included Niueans (34,944 or 7.9%), Fijians (25,038 or 5.7%) and Tokelauans (9,822 or 2.2%).

Other groups included 'Other Pacific peoples' (20,154 or 4.6%) and undefined categories (Pacific peoples not further defined) (2,271 or 0.5%).

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2. Ethnicity data from Census 2023 may not be directly comparable to data from previous censuses due to changes in population, methodology, or classification systems.
3. This dataset includes total-response ethnicity, meaning individuals can identify with more than one ethnic group. As a result, the sum of percentages may exceed 100%, and counts may exceed the total number of respondents.

Figure 3: Pacific population by ethnic group, 2023



Source: StatsNZ. 2024. Aotearoa Data Explorer.
URL: www.stats.govt.nz/tools/aotearoa-data-explorer/ (accessed 28 February 2025).

Identification with multiple ethnic groups

More than 40% of Pacific peoples identified with more than one ethnic group in 2013–2023.

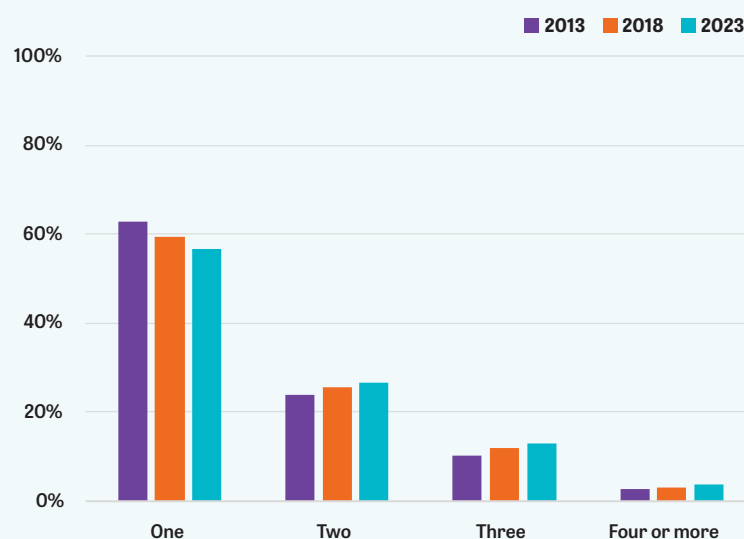
The number of Pacific peoples who identified with more than one ethnic group increased from 110,100 (or 37.2%) in 2013 to 191,637 (or 43.3%) in 2023.

There were 90,648 Pacific peoples who also identified as Māori in 2023, accounting for 20.5% of the total Pacific population.

One in three (32.7% or 44,544) Pacific peoples under the age of 15 years of age also identified as Māori.

1. Some individuals may not have completed the Census, and imputation or statistical techniques were used to address non-response. This may affect the accuracy of certain categories.
2. Ethnicity data from Census 2023 may not be directly comparable to data from previous censuses due to changes in population, methodology, or classification systems.
3. The sum of the total number of people by the count of the number of ethnic groups they reported in 2018 was 381,639 in the source data published by Statistics New Zealand. We have used 381,642 as the total.
4. This dataset includes total-response ethnicity, meaning individuals can identify with more than one ethnic group. As a result, the sum of percentages may exceed 100%, and counts may exceed the total number of respondents.

Figure 4: Number of ethnic groups reported by Pacific peoples, 2013–2023



Source: StatsNZ. 2024. Aotearoa Data Explorer.
URL: www.stats.govt.nz/tools/aotearoa-data-explorer/ (accessed 28 February 2025).

Country of birth

In 2023, two-thirds of Pacific peoples had been born in New Zealand.

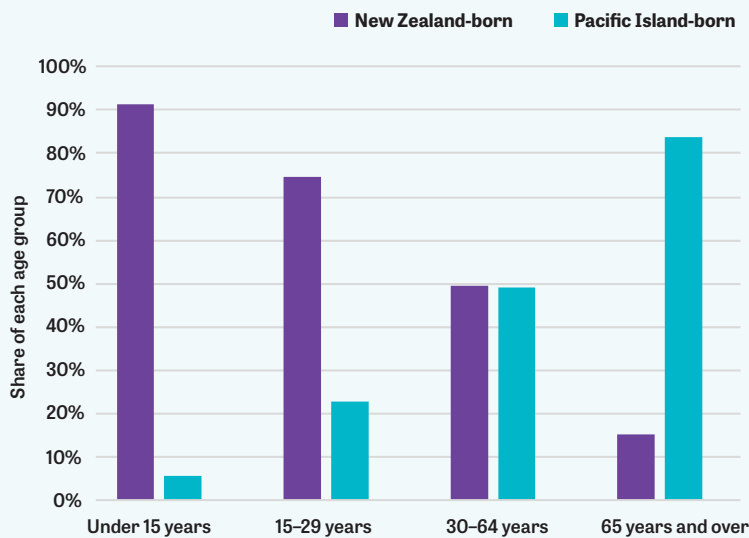
Most Pacific peoples in 2023 (293,583 or 67.4%) had been born in New Zealand.

Most of the New Zealand-born Pacific population was under the age of 30 years (213,552 or 72.7%). By contrast, most of the Pacific-born Pacific population was over the age of 30 years (96,918 or 73.4%).

Almost all (91.4% or 122,685) Pacific peoples under the age of 15 years had been born in New Zealand.

There were 21,507 Pacific Island born Pacific peoples aged 65 years or older in 2023, accounting for 83.9% of that age group.

Figure 5: Pacific peoples by place of birth – New Zealand and Pacific Island Country born, 2023



Source: StatsNZ. 2024. Aotearoa Data Explorer.
URL: www.stats.govt.nz/tools/aotearoa-data-explorer/ (accessed 28 February 2025).

Note: This chart is based on data for Pacific peoples who were born either in New Zealand or in Pacific Island countries.

1. Some individuals may not have completed the Census, and imputation or statistical techniques were used to address non-response. This may affect the accuracy of certain categories.
2. Ethnicity data from Census 2023 may not be directly comparable to data from previous censuses due to changes in population, methodology, or classification systems.
3. Excludes people born in other areas and for which birthplace data is not available. This group represented between 2–3% of all Pacific peoples in 2023.
4. This dataset includes total-response ethnicity, meaning individuals can identify with more than one ethnic group. As a result, the sum of percentages may exceed 100%, and counts may exceed the total number of respondents.



Age structure

Half the Pacific population was younger than 25 years old in 2023.

The median age of the population was 24.9 years. Around half (50.1%) were younger than 25 years, compared to 30.1% of the European population.

In contrast, 5.9% of Pacific peoples were aged 65 years and older, compared to 16.6% of the general population.

The number of males and females was mostly equal across all age groups. However, in older age groups, there were slightly more females than males. This is a typical pattern in many populations because of the higher life expectancy of females compared to males.

Figure 6: Pacific population pyramid: age distribution for females and males, 2023

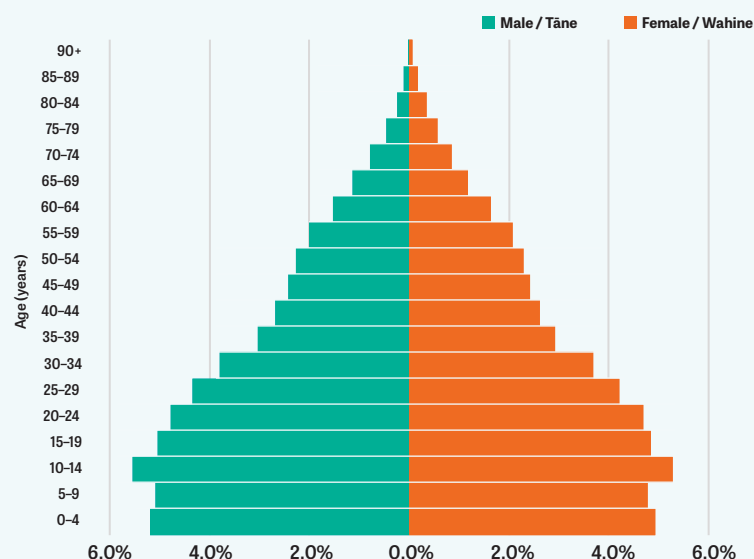
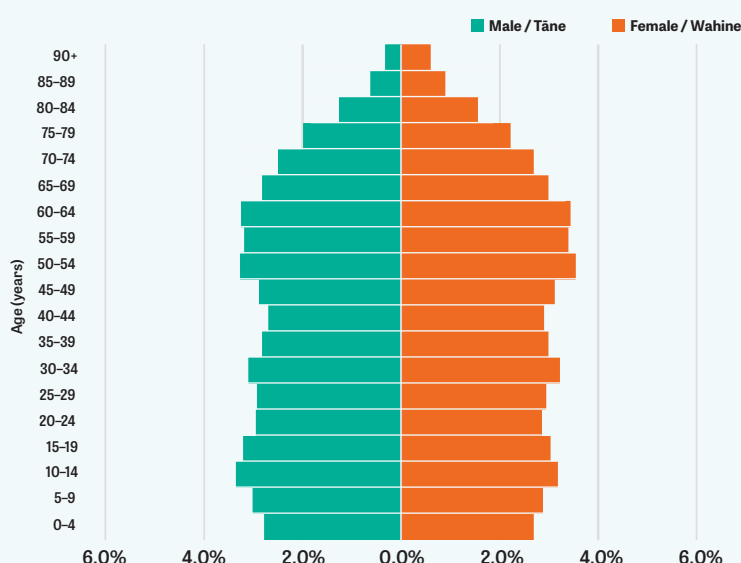


Figure 7: European population pyramid: age distribution for females and males, 2023



1. Some individuals may not have completed the Census, and imputation or statistical techniques were used to address non-response. This may affect the accuracy of certain categories.
2. Ethnicity data from Census 2023 may not be directly comparable to data from previous censuses due to changes in population, methodology, or classification systems.
3. Another gender / He ira kē anō not presented in the supporting figure in volume 1 because of the small numbers involved.
4. Data on gender diversity in Census 2023 may not be directly comparable to previous censuses, as this is a relatively new area of data collection.
5. Counts of gender diverse populations may be small and subject to greater variability or uncertainty. Percentages should be interpreted cautiously.
6. Age data is presented in grouped categories, which can mask variation within groups. When interpreting data, consider the limitations of aggregated age ranges.
7. This dataset includes total-response ethnicity, meaning individuals can identify with more than one ethnic group. As a result, the sum of percentages may exceed 100%, and counts may exceed the total number of respondents.

Source: StatsNZ. 2024. Aotearoa Data Explorer.

URL: www.stats.govt.nz/tools/aotearoa-data-explorer/ (accessed 28 February 2025).

Residence by region

Pacific peoples were highly urbanised in 2023.

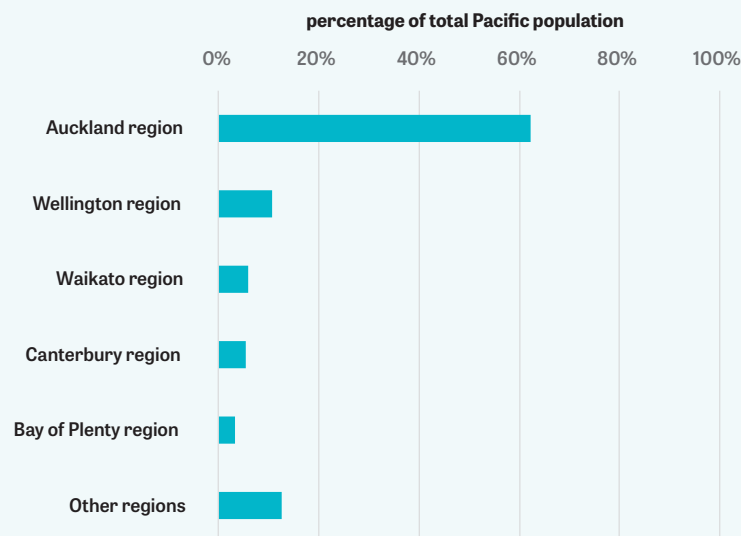
In 2023, 62.1% of Pacific peoples lived in Auckland. Other major regions with large Pacific populations were Wellington (10.7% of New Zealand's Pacific population), Waikato (5.9%) and Canterbury (5.4%).

Overall, 7% of Pacific peoples lived in rural areas, mainly in Waikato, Northland, and Manawatū-Whanganui.

Samoan people made up the largest number of Pacific peoples in most regions. The two exceptions were the Bay of Plenty (where Cook Islanders made a slightly larger share) and Gisborne (where Tongans made up a slightly larger share).

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2. Ethnicity data from Census 2023 may not be directly comparable to data from previous censuses due to changes in population, methodology, or classification systems.
3. This dataset includes total-response ethnicity, meaning individuals can identify with more than one ethnic group. As a result, the sum of percentages may exceed 100%, and counts may exceed the total number of respondents.

Figure 8: Pacific population by region, 2023



Sources: StatsNZ. 2024. Aotearoa Data Explorer.
URL: www.stats.govt.nz/tools/aotearoa-data-explorer/ (accessed 28 February 2025).

Note: This figure excludes participants in the Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme who were not 'residents'. This scheme has the effect that at some times of the year there can be concentrations of Pacific peoples in some (generally rural) communities.

Religion

Two-thirds of Pacific peoples had a religious faith in 2023.

In 2023, 65.1% of Pacific peoples reported being religious, down from 82.5% in 2006.

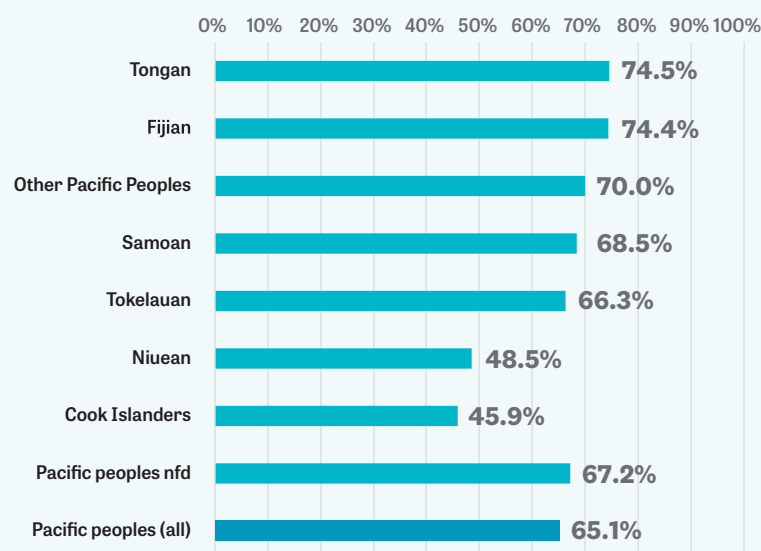
Most (63.1% of the total Pacific population) were Christians; 27.0% reported having no religion, 7.9% objected to answering and 3.3% reported non-Christian religions.

The groups with the lowest percentage of people reporting a religious affiliation included Cook Islanders (45.9%) and Niuean people (48.5%).

Rates of religious affiliation were highest among Tongans (74.5%) and Fijians (74.4%).

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2. Ethnicity data from Census 2023 may not be directly comparable to data from previous censuses due to changes in population, methodology, or classification systems.
3. Individuals may select more than one religion which may overstate the results.
4. This dataset includes total-response ethnicity, meaning individuals can identify with more than one ethnic group. As a result, the sum of percentages may exceed 100%, and counts may exceed the total number of respondents.

Figure 9: Religious faith by Pacific ethnic group, 2023



Source: StatsNZ. 2024. Aotearoa Data Explorer.
URL: www.stats.govt.nz/tools/aotearoa-data-explorer/ (accessed 28 February 2025).

Note: The source dataset included multi-responses, meaning individuals could report more than one religious affiliation.

Languages spoken

Two out of five Pacific peoples were bilingual or multilingual in 2023.

In 2023, 38.8% of Pacific peoples could speak more than one language: a decrease from 45.3% in 2006. A small proportion (2.7%) could speak three or more languages.

A majority (56.4%) of Pacific peoples aged 65 years or older could speak two or more languages, compared to 24.7% of Pacific peoples under 15 years of age.

In 2018 around half (50.4%) of Samoan people could hold an everyday conversation in their Pacific language. These rates varied by ethnic group: Tongan (40.1%), Fijian (23.7%), Tokelauan (23.3%), Niuean (12.2%) and Cook Islanders (8.9%).

Figure 10: Number of languages spoken by Pacific peoples, 2006 to 2023

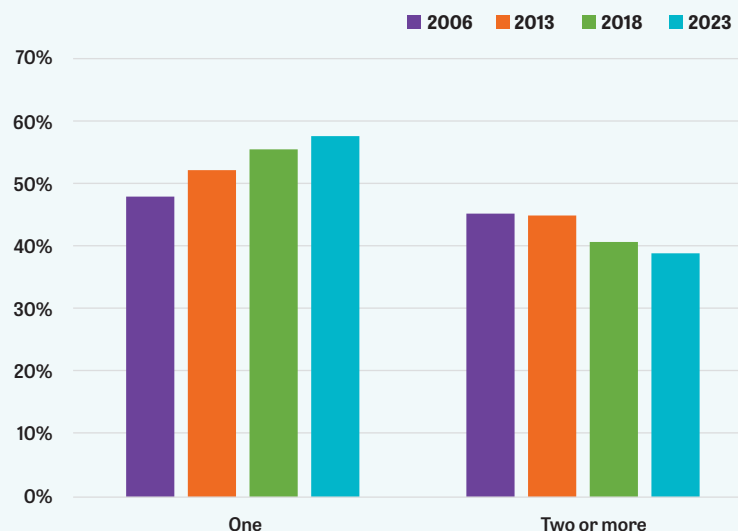
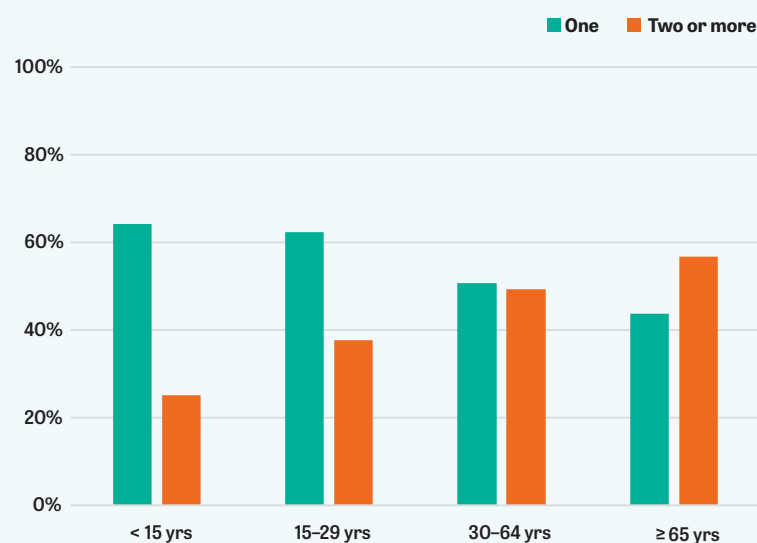


Figure 11: Number of languages spoken by Pacific peoples by age group, 2023



1. Some individuals may not have completed the Census, and imputation or statistical techniques were used to address non-response. This may affect the accuracy of certain categories.
2. Excludes data relating to people who spoke no language. This group made up 3.6 per cent of the Pacific population and were predominantly under the age of 15 years.
3. Excludes data relating to people who were reported as 'not elsewhere included' which is a catchall category for ambiguous or incomplete responses.
4. This dataset includes total-response ethnicity, meaning individuals can identify with more than one ethnic group. As a result, the sum of percentages may exceed 100%, and counts may exceed the total number of respondents.
5. Excludes individuals who do not have a spoken language, generally young children.

Source: StatsNZ. 2024. Aotearoa Data Explorer.
URL: www.stats.govt.nz/tools/aotearoa-data-explorer/ (accessed 29 March 2025).

Family type

Between the 2018 and 2023 Censuses, the family composition of Pacific peoples has remained largely stable.

The proportion of Pacific couples with child(ren) remains relatively stable, with a modest decrease to 62.0% in 2023 compared to 63.6% in 2018. This is higher than couples in the total New Zealand population (56.2% in 2023 and 56.9% in 2018).

Similar patterns can be seen across 2018 and 2023 for Pacific peoples without children, with only a slight increase from 8.9% in 2018 to 10.2% in 2023. This is lower than couples in the total New Zealand population (28.1% in 2018 and 28.7% in 2023).

In 2023, 27.8% of Pacific peoples identified their family type as one-parent with child(ren), compared to 27.5% in 2018. This is higher than the total New Zealand population (15% in 2018 and 15.1% in 2023).

Figure 12: Percentage of population by family type, Pacific peoples and Total New Zealand population ethnic groups, 2018–2023



Source: Stats NZ. 2023. Aotearoa Data Explorer.
URL: <https://tools.summaries.stats.govt.nz/ethnic-group/pacific-peoples#families-and-households> (accessed 16 April 2025).

1. This dataset includes total-response ethnicity, meaning individuals can identify with more than one ethnic group. As a result, the sum of percentages may exceed 100%, and counts may exceed the total number of respondents.
2. To be counted as a child in a family, a person must usually reside with at least one parent and have no partner or child(ren) of their own living in the same household. This can apply to a person of any age, i.e. people over 15 can be coded as children if they live with their parents and have no partner or children of their own.
3. Census data has had fixed random rounding applied to protect confidentiality. Individual figures may not sum to totals.



Household composition

Pacific peoples are more likely than the total New Zealand population to live in multi-family households.

Majority of Pacific peoples (72.3%) lived in one-family households, similar to the total New Zealand population (77.3%).

In 2023, 18.2% of Pacific peoples lived in two-family households, compared to 7.7% of the total New Zealand population. Similarly, 3.0% of Pacific peoples lived in households with three or more families compared to 0.8% of the total New Zealand population.

One-person households were less common among Pacific peoples (2.5%) than the total New Zealand population (8.5%).

Figure 13: Percentage of population by household composition, Pacific peoples and Total New Zealand population ethnic groups, 2023



Source: Stats NZ. 2023. Aotearoa Data Explorer.

URL: <https://tools.summaries.stats.govt.nz/ethnic-group/pacific-peoples#families-and-households> (accessed 16 April 2025).



1. This dataset includes total-response ethnicity, meaning individuals can identify with more than one ethnic group. As a result, the sum of percentages may exceed 100%, and counts may exceed the total number of respondents.
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3. Census data has had fixed random rounding applied to protect confidentiality. Individual figures may not sum to totals.

Fertility and birth rates

Pacific women had the highest fertility rate in New Zealand between 2008 and 2023.

The estimated average number of live births that a Pacific woman would have during her life was 2.19 births in 2021. This rate was higher than the average for all women in New Zealand (1.61).

The median age at which Pacific women gave birth over 2017–2019 was 27.6 years. This rate has been stable over the past two decades.

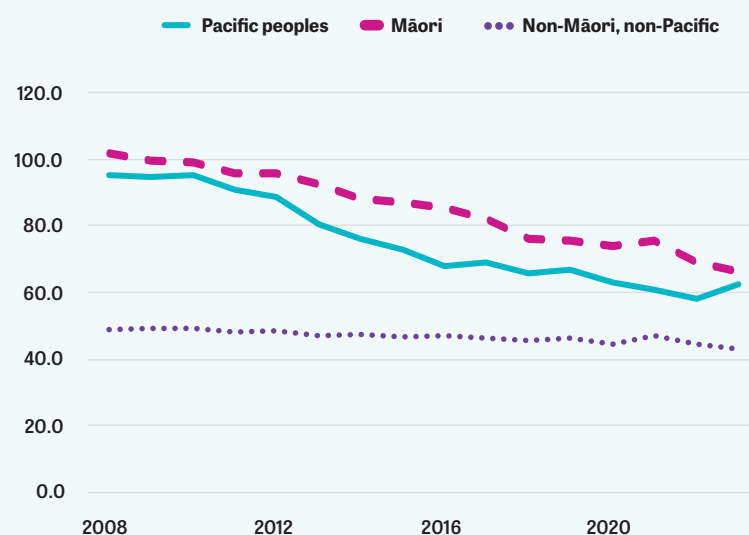
Comparable ages for women of other ethnicities were 27.0 years for Māori women, 30.8 years for European women and 31.7 years for Asian women.

Fertility rates among Pacific women declined in line with national and international trends.

The number of live births for Pacific women was 62 births per 1,000 women in 2023, representing a decline of 34% since 2008.

1. Live births data (numerator) uses prioritised ethnicity of the baby. For babies who identify as both Māori and Pacific peoples, they are counted under Māori.
2. The Stats NZ population estimates (denominator) uses prioritised ethnicity of females 10 to 44 years-old.
3. Rates are not age-adjusted, so differences in age structure may influence comparisons.

Figure 14: Births per 1,000 females aged 15–44 years, by ethnic group, 2008–2023



Source: HNZ. 2024. Health NZ internal live births data.

Stats NZ. 2023. Estimated NZ population, December 2023 update.
<http://tewhātuora.shinyapps.io/populations-web-tool/> (accessed May 2024)



Disability

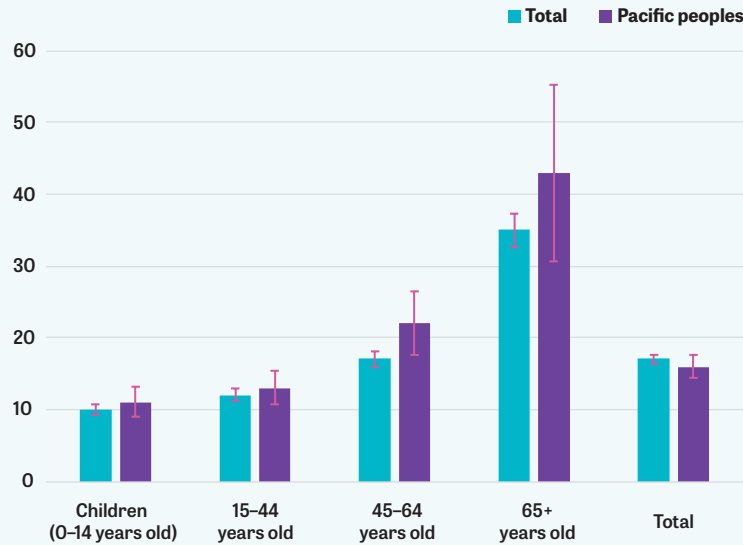
In 2023, around one in six (16%) of Pacific peoples were tagata sa'ilimalo.

The 2023 Disability Survey estimated that there were around 57,000–75,000 disabled Pacific peoples in 2023. The prevalence of disability among Pacific peoples was estimated at 16% (95% CI: [14.4%, 17.6%]). The rate of disability in the Pacific population was similar to that reported for the population as a whole (17% (95% CI: [16.4%, 17.6%])).

Disability rates increase with age. The percentage of Pacific peoples aged 65 years or older who were tagata sa'ilimalo in 2023 was 43% (95% CI: [30.7%, 55.3%]). The comparable rate for all people in that age group was 35% (95% CI: [32.7%, 37.3%]).

Disabled Pacific peoples were less likely than Europeans to access assistive equipment or technology (8% versus 22%) and be in paid employment (17% versus 44%) in 2023. They were however less likely to report an unmet need for support (5% versus 12%) including see health professionals when they needed to (5% versus 15%), or accessing medication (3% versus 11%).

Figure 15: Disability rate by ethnic group, 2023



Source: Stats NZ. 2025. Disability statistics: 2023 – estimates of disability prevalence.
URL: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/disability-statistics-2023/>
(accessed 28 March 2025).

1. The disability prevalence rate is the percentage of the total household population in each demographic group (eg, male adults) that was disabled. Percentages are calculated on unrounded numbers.
2. Households' includes the usually resident population who are either living in private dwellings or in 'residential & community care facilities'. All other types of non-private dwellings are excluded from the target population and these estimates. For more information on dwelling classifications, see: <https://aria.stats.govt.nz/aria/#ClassificationView?url=http://stats.govt.nz/cms/ClassificationVersion/QyJwry9WljF9nyZe>
3. People who only belong to an ethnic group other than European, Māori, Pacific, or Asian, or whose ethnic group is unknown, are included in the total column only.

4. Ethnicity data comes from Census 2023.
5. Absolute sampling error. Sampling error arises when numbers are estimated from a selection of people (a sample) and not calculated from the whole population. A 95 percent confidence interval for each estimate in this table is the estimate itself plus and minus the ASE.
6. People with a gender other than male or female, or where gender was not provided, are included in the total estimates only.
7. This dataset includes total-response ethnicity, meaning individuals can identify with more than one ethnic group. As a result, the sum of percentages may exceed 100%, and counts may exceed the total number of respondents.



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