

Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand 2024 – Summary report

Purpose of this report

This report provides updated data for indicators included in Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion measurement framework. The report uses data available as at the end of September 2024.

This report is a resource that brings together data from a range of sources to provide a snapshot of social cohesion. Government and community organisations can draw upon data in this report as relevant to support strengthening of social cohesion as outlined in Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion Strategic Framework.

Introduction

Aotearoa New Zealand is an increasingly diverse country. Our population includes individuals from varied intersections of culture, ethnicity and race, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, religion and spirituality, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Over a quarter of the New Zealand population (28.8%) was born overseas, and this rate has been steadily increasing over the past decade.¹ The ethnic composition of the country is increasingly diverse: 67.8% identify as European, 17.8% as Māori, 8.9% as Pacific peoples, 17.3% as Asian, and 1.9% as Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African (MELAA). These are not mutually exclusive categories either – in 2018 11% of the population reported belonging to more than one ethnic group.²

Our population also differs in ability, gender, and sexual orientation. One in four New Zealanders have a disability (24%),³ though this rate is significantly higher for those aged over 65 (58.8%).⁴ A sizeable percentage of young people in school years 9 to 13 identify as something other than straight/heterosexual (17%) or the rainbow grouping (20%).⁵

Given the diverse range of identities in Aotearoa New Zealand, it is crucial to both celebrate our differences and nurture a shared sense of unity. It is also widely understood that people existing in the intersections across these identities are more likely to experience multiple forms of disadvantage.⁶

Social Cohesion measurement framework

The outcomes outlined in Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion Strategic Framework⁷ were developed in collaboration with community stakeholders engaged in the social cohesion process. By co-creating the definitions for outcomes with the community, the framework sought to ensure that the indicators reflected community perspectives while also drawing on established literature to ensure they were valid and reliable for measuring social cohesion outcomes.

There is no single measure of social cohesion; instead, a range of proxy indicators have been developed to capture social cohesion outcomes in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The outcomes describe the components of social cohesion, including the following:

People, families, whānau and communities:

- are connected and feel like they belong
- are willing and able to participate
- are included and experience equity
- are recognised for who they are and respect others
- trust each other and institutions.

We also know that to support these outcomes, the places people live, work, and play need to be safe, inclusive, and supportive and institutions and sectors must be fair, responsive, and accountable.

Limitations

The report intends to provide a summary of data sources where available for outcomes that we know are important for social cohesion. It does not measure activities related to social cohesion.

These indicators come from a range of data sources and surveys, collected between 2016 and 2024. Data available up until September 2024 has been included. In addition, many of the indicators included were not collected or had not been updated at the time of writing.

The report draws heavily upon regularly collected national surveys such as the General Social Survey. While these data sources are useful for providing an overall picture of key outcomes related to social cohesion, they do not provide data for smaller groups. As a result, indicators do not fully capture the experience of many people.

1 Stats NZ Aotearoa Data Explorer • Totals by topic for individuals, (NZ total), 2013, 2018, and 2023 Censuses.

2 Institute of Public Administration New Zealand. (2020). Understanding Multi-Ethnicity in Aotearoa.

3 Stats NZ. (2014). One in four New Zealanders identified as disabled. One in four New Zealanders identified as disabled | Stats NZ.

4 Stats NZ. Ngā Tūtohu Aotearoa – Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand: Wellbeing data for New Zealanders.

5 Malatest International. (2022). whataboutme.co.nz – The national youth health and wellbeing survey 2021: overview report October 2022.

6 Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. Stanford Law Review, 43(6), 1241-1299. Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.

7 The Ministry of Social Development. (2022). Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion – Strategic Framework: Social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand 2022.



People, families, whānau and communities are connected and feel like they belong

This outcome area means that people:

- have strong social networks and support systems that provide a source of positive, meaningful interaction
- feel a sense of belonging to a community which includes those based on:
 - identity (whakapapa/whanaungatanga, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, age, faith)
 - place (tūrangawaewae, marae, neighbourhoods, cities, regions, and including New Zealand as a whole)
 - interest (sport, arts, unions/employee networks).

Key indicators for this outcome area include:

- social contact
- access to support systems
- isolation and loneliness
- positive meaningful social connections
- sense of belonging to community
- sense of belonging to place.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, most people maintain weekly contact with family and friends and generally have easy access to support systems.

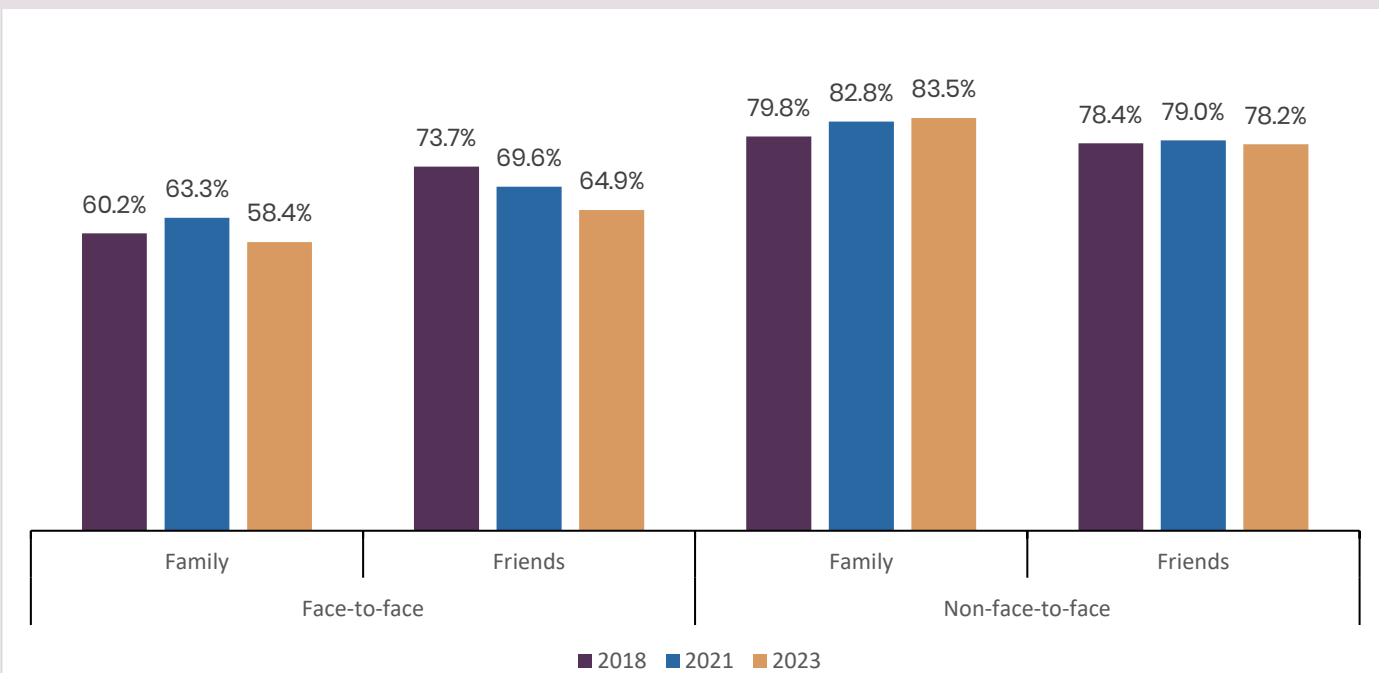
Recent migrants, transgender individuals, and Asian people report lower levels of access to these resources. Loneliness is more common among young people and transgender individuals.

Despite these challenges, most people express satisfaction with their social connections and have meaningful relationships with friends and family.

The majority feel connected to their families, religion, and workplace.

Only around half of the population feel a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, and there has been a decline in the overall sense of belonging to New Zealand.

Proportion of people who have weekly contact with family and friends in 2018, 2021, and 2023



Source: GSS 2018, 2021, and 2023

Proportion of people who feel a sense of belonging to New Zealand as a whole and mean score in 2023, by demographic group⁸

Demographic Group	Percentage of sense of belonging scores of a 7 or higher	Mean sense of belonging score
Māori	86.2%	8.5
European	83.6%	8.2
Pacific peoples	83.1%	8.2
Asian	81.1%	7.8
Born in NZ	85.6%	8.4
Recent migrant	72.5%	7.3
Total population	83.4%	8.2

Source: GSS 2023

⁸ The sense of belonging score responses range from 0 (no sense of belonging) to 10 (very strong sense of belonging).



People, families, whānau and communities are willing and able to participate

This outcome area means that people:

- have a focus on the collective good and sense of solidarity
- do things for each other, are actively involved, and contribute to whānau and communities (including through tikanga, mahi aroha and volunteering)
- take part in arts, culture, sports, and leisure activities
- are involved and participating in political and civic life (including at the local and national levels)
- are actively involved or participating in employment, education, or training.

Key indicators for this outcome area include:

- solidarity/reciprocity
- unpaid contributions/volunteering
- club/association membership
- sports/cultural participation
- employment
- education and training
- civic participation – local and central.

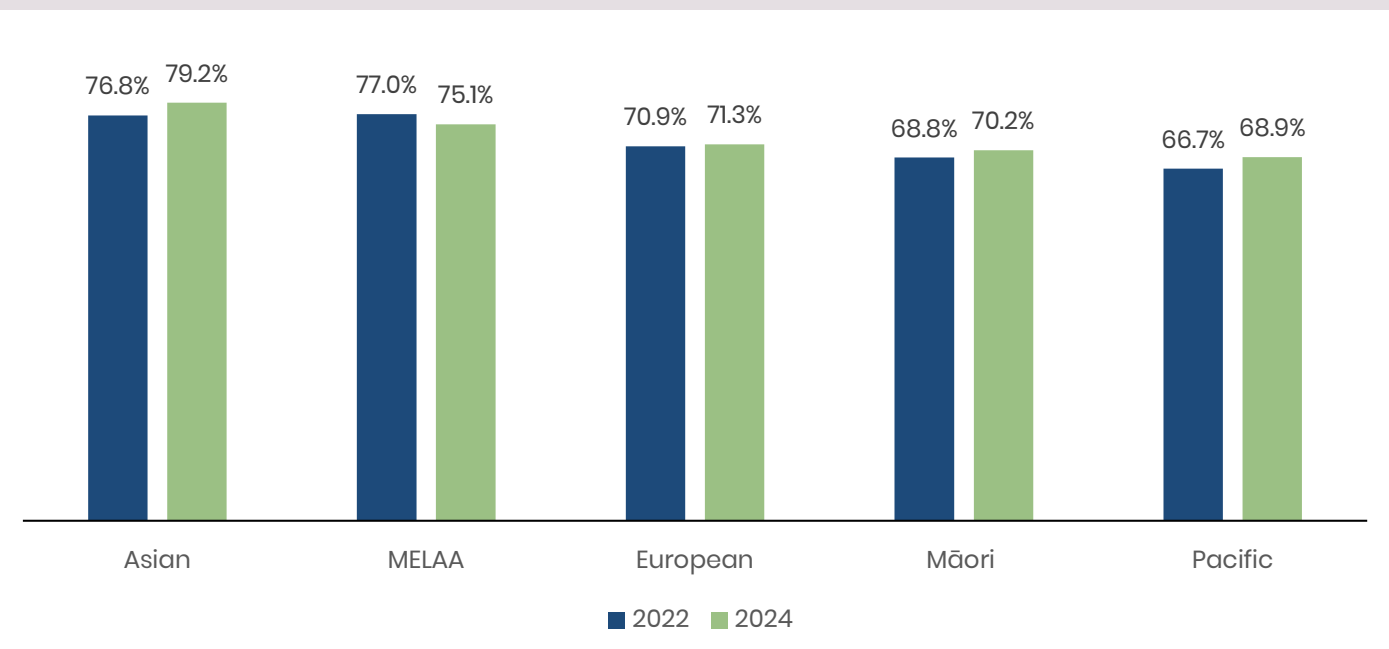
While most people value the importance of community in their neighbourhoods, only about half actually experience it.

Around half of New Zealanders volunteer, and more than half are active members of clubs or organisations. A majority also participate in sports and cultural activities.

Employment rates are high, with nearly three in four working-age New Zealanders are employed. Labour force participation is slightly lower among women and Pacific people. More young women than men are not engaged in employment, education, or training.

Voter turnout is higher for general elections than for local elections, though participation in both has been declining.

Annual average labour force participation rates in March 2022 and 2024, by ethnicity



Source: Household Labour Force Survey 2022, 2024

Proportion of people who consider it important to feel a sense of community in their neighbourhood and the proportion who feel this sense of community in their neighbourhood

Year	Believe a sense of community in their neighbourhood is important		Feel a sense of community in their neighbourhood	
	Agree/strongly agree	Disagree/strongly disagree	Agree/strongly agree	Disagree/strongly disagree
2020	70%	7%	50%	20%
2022	70%	7%	49%	21%

Source: Quality of Life Survey 2020 and 2022



People, families, whānau and communities are included and experience equity

This outcome area means that people:

- are economically and socially included through equitable access to the determinants of health and wellbeing (housing, education, employment, health)
- have a sense of purpose and are hopeful about the future.

Key indicators for this outcome area include:

- life satisfaction
- sense of purpose
- hope for future and sense of control now
- family and whānau wellbeing
- financial wellbeing
- general health
- mental wellbeing.

Life satisfaction in New Zealand has slightly decreased, particularly among LGBT+ and non-European individuals.

While most people feel hopeful about the future and in control of their lives, significant disparities remain among disabled, transgender, and low-income groups.

Family wellbeing tends to be higher among Asian individuals and recent migrants. Single parents and disabled individuals report lower levels of wellbeing.

Financial wellbeing is a growing concern, with two in five New Zealanders lacking adequate incomes.

Less than half the population reports excellent health, with disabled individuals, Māori, and those with low incomes facing poorer health. Older people and recent migrants report higher mental wellbeing than the general population.

Proportion of people with a self-rated overall life satisfaction score of 7 or higher in 2023, by demographic group⁹



Source: GSS 2023

Proportion of people reporting cost-saving measures in the previous twelve months, in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2023

Cost-saving measures	2014	2016	2018	2023
Spent less on hobbies or other special interests	53.1%	49.4%	59.7%	58.5%
Done without or cut back on trips to shops or other local places	42.5%	38.5%	46.0%	56.9%
Gone without fresh fruit or vegetables	19.7%	18.2%	23.3%	47.7%
Put up with feeling cold	23.3%	20.2%	28.1%	28.1%
Delayed replacing or repairing broken or damaged appliances	30.5%	28.0%	36.5%	34.4%
Postponed or put off visits to the doctor	23.5%	21.4%	25.0%	28.0%

Source: GSS 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2023¹⁰

⁹ The overall life satisfaction score responses range from 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied).

¹⁰ Please note that 2021 GSS data on cost-saving measures is not publicly available.



People, families, whānau and communities are recognised for who they are and respect others

This outcome area means that people:

- are connected to and find it easy to express their full selves (including language, cultural practices, faith, sexual orientation) and are valued for who they are
- are free from discrimination
- feel safe
- accept and value diversity
- are willing to engage with others who have different views to them and people feel they can disagree respectfully.

Key indicators for this outcome area include:

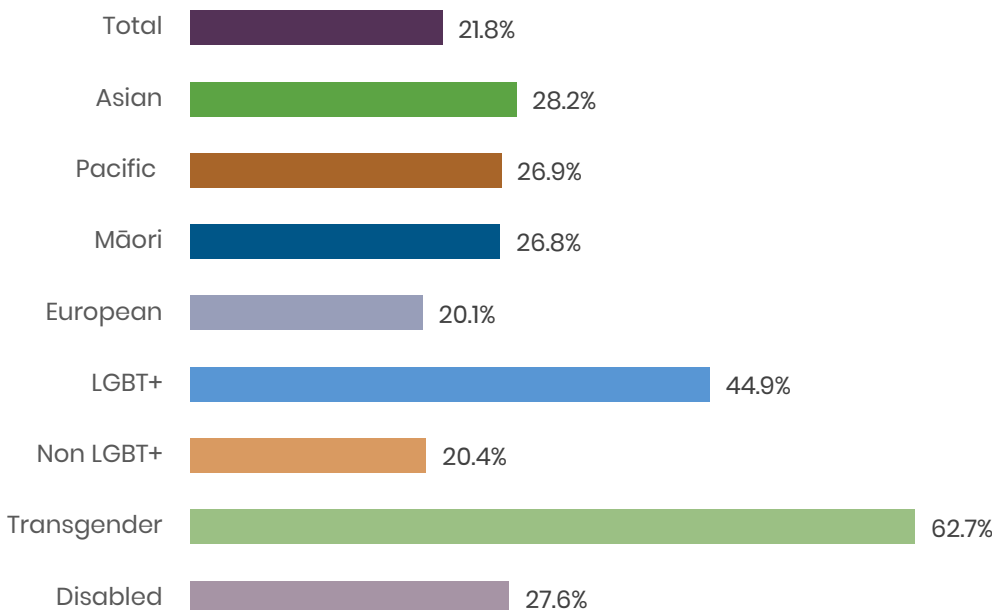
- connection to identity
- ability to express identity
- experience of discrimination
- perception of discrimination as an issue
- acceptance of diversity
- value of diversity
- willingness to engage with others
- perception that people can disagree respectfully.

Most New Zealanders feel a strong connection to their cultural heritage, and many Māori have explored their whakapapa.

The majority of people claim to be accepting of differences, and nearly three-quarters value diversity in New Zealand.

Many individuals feel less comfortable expressing their identity, and discrimination rates are on the rise.

Proportion of people who have experienced discrimination over previous 12 months in 2023



Source: GSS 2023



People, families, whānau and communities trust each other and institutions

This outcome area means that people:

- have high levels of trust in others
- feel like they are represented in decision making positions
- feel like their voice is heard
- feel they are treated fairly
- believe services will meet their needs
- have confidence that issues will be addressed.

Key indicators for this outcome area include:

- trust in others
- perception of representation
- perception that voice is heard
- trust in institutions
- perception of fair treatment.

Trust in others remains strong, particularly among Asian people and recent migrants. However, many people do not feel that their voice is heard in political decision-making.

Furthermore, trust in New Zealand's institutions, including parliament, health, and education systems, has declined in recent years.

Proportion of people who hold trust in people in New Zealand and mean score in 2023, by demographic group

Demographic group	Percentage of trust held for people in New Zealand scores of a 7 or higher	Mean trust held for people in New Zealand score
Asian	68.9%	7.1
Māori	39.5%	5.7
Disabled (ages 15+)	43.2%	5.7
Recent migrants	76.1%	7.5
Sole parents	40.9%	5.6
Total population	58.9%	6.5

Source: GSS 2023

Mean trust in New Zealand institutions scores in 2016, 2018, 2021, and 2023¹¹

	2016	2018	2021	2023
Police	7.8	7.9	7.7	7.4
Courts	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.4
Education system	7.0	7.0	6.8	6.3
Health system	7.0	6.9	6.6	6.1
Parliament	5.4	5.7	5.6	4.9
Media	4.8	4.9	4.7	4.3

Source: GSS 2016, 2018, 2021 and 2023

¹¹ The trust in institutions score responses range from 0 (no trust) to 10 (complete trust).



The places people live, work, play and learn are safe, inclusive and supportive

This outcome area means our built, natural and online environments:

- are physically, culturally, and spiritually safe
- are inclusive and accessible to individuals, whānau and communities with different needs
- support community and whānau -building activities
- support positive interactions between different communities.

Key indicators for this outcome area include:

- perceived safety where people live
- physical safety where people work, play, and learn
- victimisation
- cultural and spiritual safety
- inclusion and accessibility where people live, work, play, and learn
- supportive environments where people live, work, play, and learn.

Safety is a growing concern, with many people feeling less safe in their communities. While, on the whole, young people generally feel safe, rainbow and disabled youth report lower levels of perceived safety.

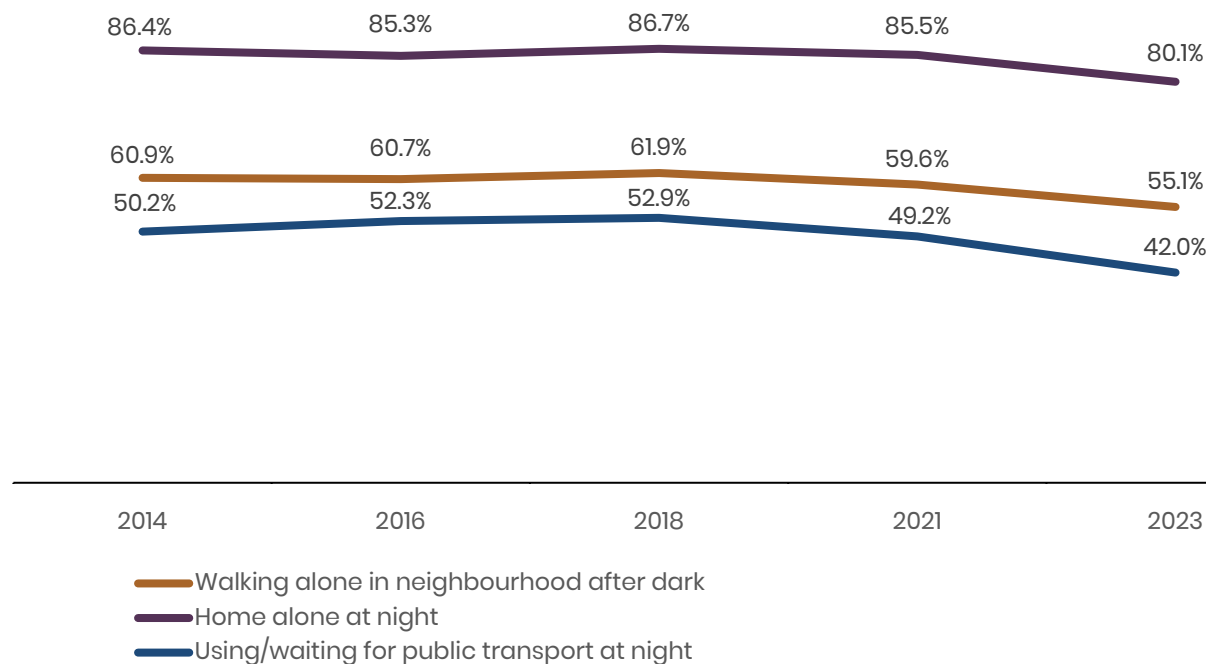
Concerns about online safety have decreased since the pandemic but are still higher than before.

One in three New Zealanders have been victims of crime in the past year.

People outside urban areas face more challenges accessing public facilities, and the cost of healthcare is an increasing barrier to access.

Most public service staff feel their work environment is inclusive, and digital inclusion is steadily increasing across the country. However, people's pride in their communities has diminished.

Proportion of people who feel safe in different situations where they live in 2014, 2016, 2018, 2021, and 2023



Source: GSS 2014, 2016, 2018, 2021, and 2023

Proportion of people who find it difficult to access different public facilities in 2018, by urban-rural profile

Urban-rural profile	Nearest supermarket or dairy	Doctor	Public transport
Urban - major	1.4%	2.4%	6.3%
Urban - large	0.9%	2.7%	9.9%
Urban - medium	1.8%	3.1%	21.9%
Urban - small	1.6%	4.1%	56.7%
Rural	8.1%	9.5%	75.2%

Source: Stats NZ, GSS 2018



Institutions and sectors are fair, responsive and accountable

This means that institutions and sectors:

- reflect the diverse make-up of Aotearoa New Zealand (including at decision-making levels),
- develop policies, services and practices that are accessible and effective in meeting diverse community aspirations and needs,
- undergo meaningful and effective consultation processes,
- collect diverse data to inform decision-making,
- develop policies and processes that are clear, transparent, and reliable.

Key indicators for this outcome area include:

- representation
- accessibility and effectiveness
- meaningful consultation
- inclusive data collection practices
- transparency
- accountability.

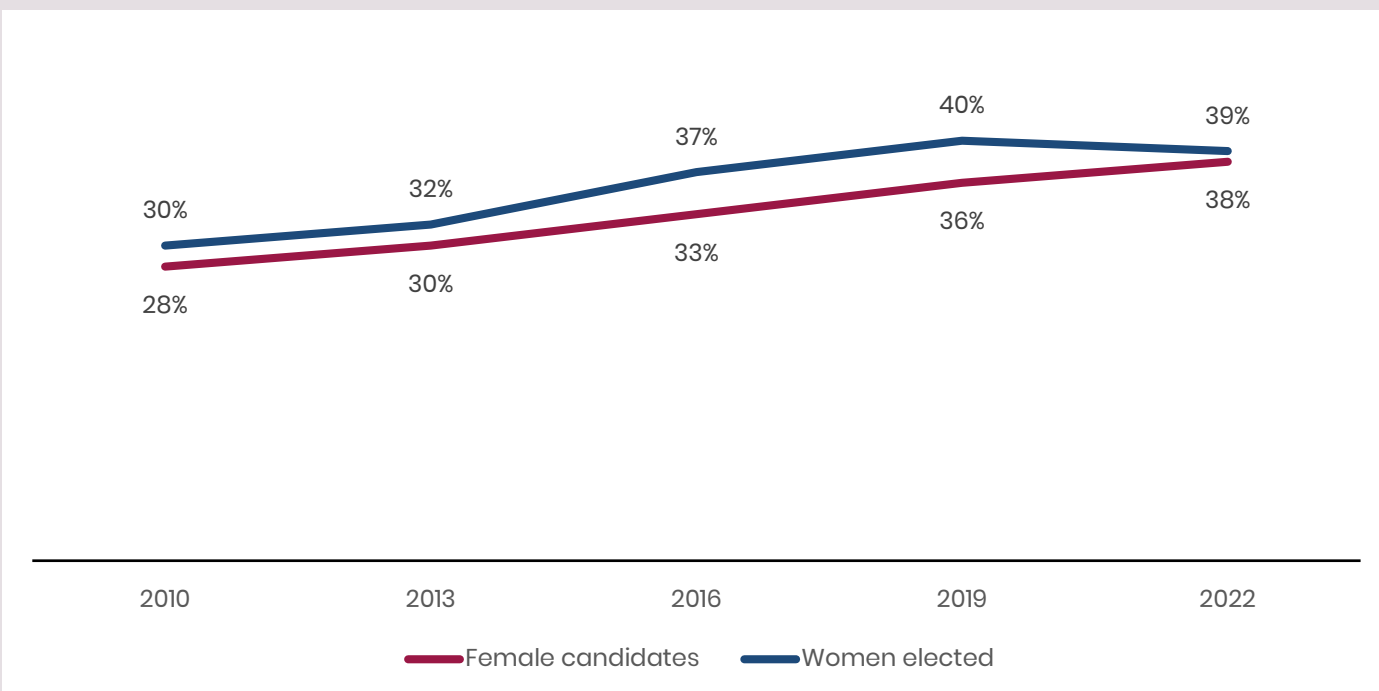
In terms of representation, while more women are being elected in local elections, ethnic diversity among MPs slightly decreased between the 2020 and 2023 General Elections.

The public sector is becoming more diverse overall, though senior management remains less diverse.

New Zealand ranks well for low perceived corruption, and complaints to the Human Rights Commission have decreased slightly, with a higher proportion of people surveyed satisfied with the mediation process.

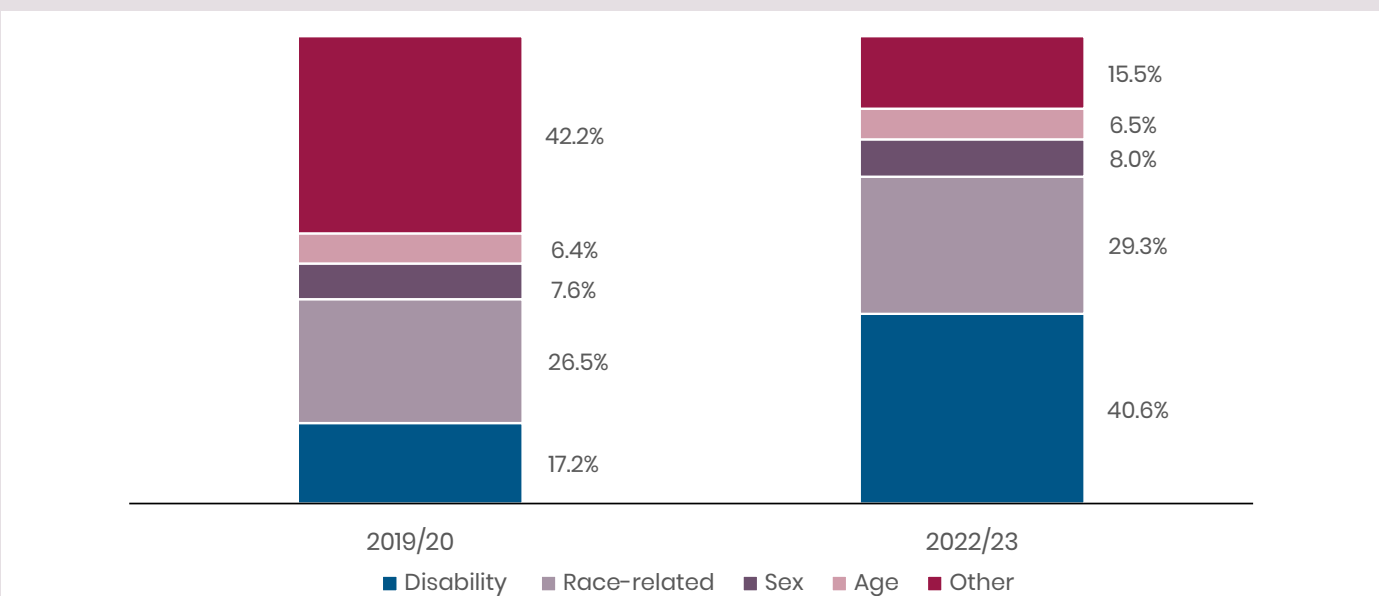
While complaints to the Health and Disability Commission have increased, the majority are satisfied with the way these complaints are handled.

Proportion of female candidates and women elected (councils, mayors, local boards and community boards) in 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019, and 2022



Source: Electoral Commission – Local Authority Election Statistics 2022

Alleged unlawful discrimination complaints and enquiries by type¹²



Source: Stats NZ, GSS 2018

¹² This figure shows the breakdown of what the 1,445 of 2020/21 and 887 of 2022/23 unlawful discrimination complaints were citing.