

## 2 THE MĀORI POPULATION

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*Donna Cormack*

Māori are tangata whenua. Not people in the land or over the land, but people of it. (Jackson 1993, p.71)

### **Key points**

- There were 565,329 people who identified as belonging to the Māori ethnic group in the 2006 Census, representing 15% of the total population.
- 18% of the total population (643,977 people) indicated in the 2006 Census that they had Māori ancestry.
- The Māori population continues to grow. Those identifying with Māori ethnicity increased by 7% between the 2001 and 2006 censuses, and by 30% since 1991. The Māori ancestry group also increased by 7% between the 2001 and 2006 censuses, and by 26% since the 1991 census.
- The Māori population is relatively young, with 35% of Māori aged less than 15 years, and 53% aged less than 25 years in 2006. However, the population is ageing overall and the proportion of older Māori (those aged 65 years and over) is projected to increase.
- In spite of a slight narrowing of the gap in life expectancy at birth between Māori and non-Māori in recent years, stark disparities remain.
- Fertility has decreased for both Māori and non-Māori in the last 50 years, but remains higher for Māori. In 2004, the fertility rate for Māori women was 2.7, compared with 1.9 for non-Māori women. The median age at birth of first child for Māori women was 26 years.
- The majority of Māori live in the North Island (87%) and in urban areas. Māori are more mobile than non-Māori, and were slightly more likely to have moved in the five years between the 2001 and 2006 census.

## Introduction

The Māori population can be described and defined in a number of ways, reflecting the diversity and dynamism of the population as well as changes in approaches to counting and describing Māori over time and context. Understanding the different ways in which the Māori population is measured and its demographic makeup provides an important background to discussions of Māori health and, in particular, Māori health statistics.

Any discussion of the Māori population must reiterate that tangata whenua rights do not depend on the numbers of Māori in the population. Even if there were only one Māori in the country that one Māori would still have all the rights of indigenous peoples. Thus indigenous rights prevent the 'minoritisation' of indigenous peoples and the subordination of their needs and interests to the 'greater good' (Churchill 1994; Trask 1999).

This chapter first describes how Māori have been and are currently recorded in official statistics and then outlines the demographic profile of the Māori population as a context to the data and discussions about Māori health presented in this book. To this end, the chapter focuses principally on definitions and data drawn from official statistics, while recognising that these may not reflect the different ways in which Māori define themselves.

## Definitions of the Māori population in official statistics

Estimates of the Māori population in official statistics are often drawn from the population census. There have been significant changes over time to the way in which ethnicity data has been collected and reported in Aotearoa/New Zealand in official data collections such as the population census. Of significance, this includes a move away from 'biological' definitions of Māori based on 'degrees of blood' (noted as a strategy in limiting government obligations to indigenous peoples), to definitions based on affiliation and self-identification with an ethnic group. In line with this, the ethnicity question in the population census has also changed over time and since 1986 has provided for people to self-identify with more than one ethnic group.<sup>1</sup>

The monitoring of trends over time has been affected by these changes in the definition of ethnicity, but also by the changes in the question used to collect ethnicity data in the five-yearly population census. For example, the ethnicity question in the census changed in the successive 1991, 1996, and 2001 censuses. In particular, the 1996 Census ethnicity question encouraged multiple ethnic affiliations in comparison to the 1991 Census question. In 2001 the census reverted to the 1991 question, and this question was retained for the 2006 Census (Figure 2.1).

The census also contains questions on Māori ancestry (Figure 2.2) and iwi affiliation, which provide other ways of measuring Māori populations. There are three broad

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<sup>1</sup> More in-depth discussions of ethnicity data issues are available in several documents including Robson and Reid (2001) and Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare (2000).



## Māori ancestry in official statistics

The ancestry question in the population census provides a count of people of Māori ancestry that is important for constitutional and legal arrangements in Aotearoa/New Zealand, including the right to enrol on the Māori electoral roll and to take a claim to the Waitangi Tribunal. In the 2006 Census, 643,977 people identified that they had Māori ancestry, 17.7% of the total population of Aotearoa/New Zealand. There were a number of people who identified with the Māori ethnic group, but indicated that they did not know if they had Māori ancestry (6,795) or did not have Māori ancestry (4,059) (Statistics New Zealand 2007c).

**Figure 2.2: 2006 Census Māori ancestry question**

**14** Kimihia te tohu 'haere ki' i muri i tō whakautu i te pātai nei.  
He tūpuna Māori ōu?

āe → **tohua tō whakautu, ā, me haere ki 15**

kāore

aua → **tohua tō whakautu, ā, me haere ki 16**

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**14** Look for the 'go to' instruction after you answer the question.  
Are you descended from a Māori (that is, did you have a Māori birth parent, grandparent or great-grandparent, etc)?

yes → **mark your answer and go to 15**

no

don't know → **mark your answer and go to 16**

Source: Statistics New Zealand 2006

Information on iwi affiliation is also collected in the census for those people who identify that they have Māori ancestry. Of the 643,977 persons stating that they had Māori ancestry in the 2006 Census, 80% identified affiliation with one or more of the iwi listed in the iwi classification.

## Growth in the Māori population

Māori continue to make up a growing proportion of Aotearoa/New Zealand's population. In 2006, 565,329 people identified with the Māori ethnic group, making up 15% of the total population, an increase of 7% since the 2001 Census and of 30% since the 1991 Census (Statistics New Zealand 2007c). The number of people identifying as having Māori ancestry was 643,977 in the 2006 Census, an increase of 7% since the 2001 Census and 26% since the 1991 Census (Statistics New Zealand 2007c). The following table shows growth in the Māori populations between 1991, 2001 and 2006 Censuses (Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1: Māori population, 1991–2006 Censuses**

Definition	1991	2001	2006
Māori only	323,998	294,726	289,500
Māori ethnic group	434,847	526,281	565,329
Māori ancestry	511,278	604,100	643,977

Note: Changes in classifications and questions between Censuses mean that comparisons should be interpreted with caution.

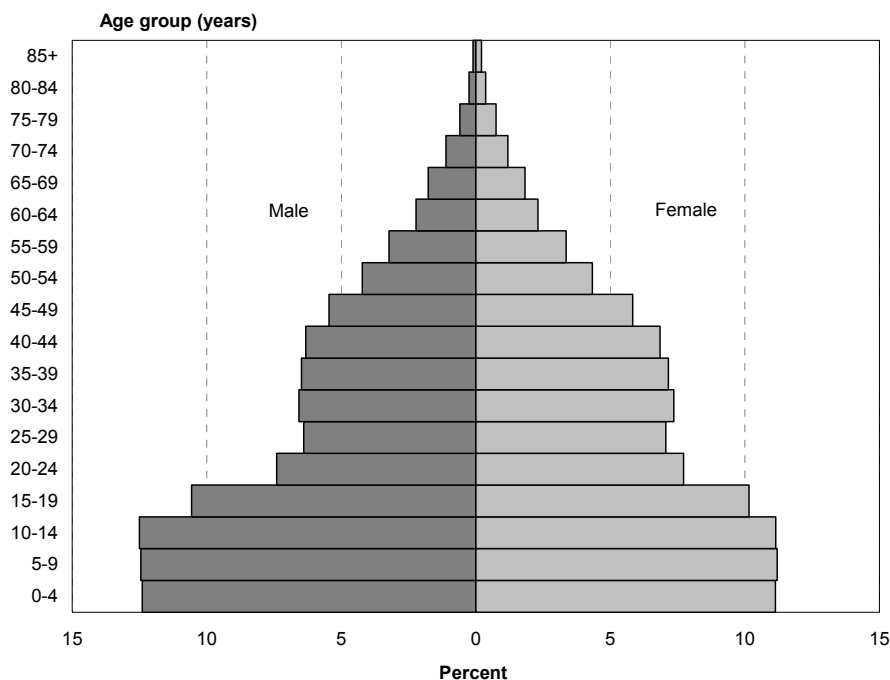
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It is projected that the Māori population will continue to increase, although more slowly than in the past (Statistics New Zealand 2005a).<sup>2</sup> Statistics New Zealand estimate that the Māori ethnic group will increase by 28% by 2021, to make up 17% of the total population. In contrast, the European population is projected to increase by 5% by 2021 (Statistics New Zealand 2005b). The drivers of Māori population growth include higher fertility rates and a younger age structure with more people in the main childbearing ages (Statistics New Zealand 2005a).

## Age distribution

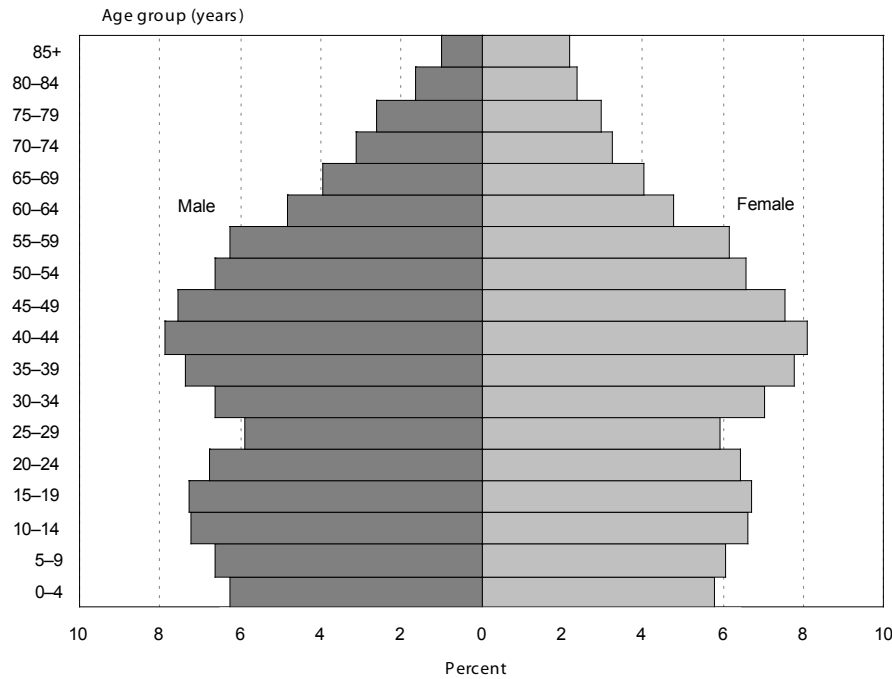
In 2006, 35% of the Māori population was aged less than 15 years, and 53% were aged less than 25 years (Statistics New Zealand 2007c). The median age for Māori was 23 years in 2006, an increase from 22 years in 2001. This compares with a median age of 36 years for the total population in 2006, reflecting the youthful Māori population. The median age for Māori is projected to increase to 27 years in 2021, as the population ages. The number of Māori children is projected to increase in coming years, although they will make up a smaller proportion of the Māori population in 2021 (Statistics New Zealand 2005a). The proportion of Māori aged 65 years and older is also growing, increasing from 3% in 2001 to 4% in 2006, and projected to increase to an estimated 8% by 2021 (Statistics New Zealand 2005a).

**Figure 2.3: Age distribution of the Māori population, males and females, 2006**



<sup>2</sup> The population projections included in this chapter are based on the Statistics New Zealand Series 6 projections from the 2001 Census. Series 6 assumes medium fertility, medium mortality, medium migration and medium inter-ethnic mobility (Statistics New Zealand 2005b).

**Figure 2.4: Age distribution of the non-Māori population, males and females, 2006**



Source: Statistics New Zealand 2007

## Life expectancy

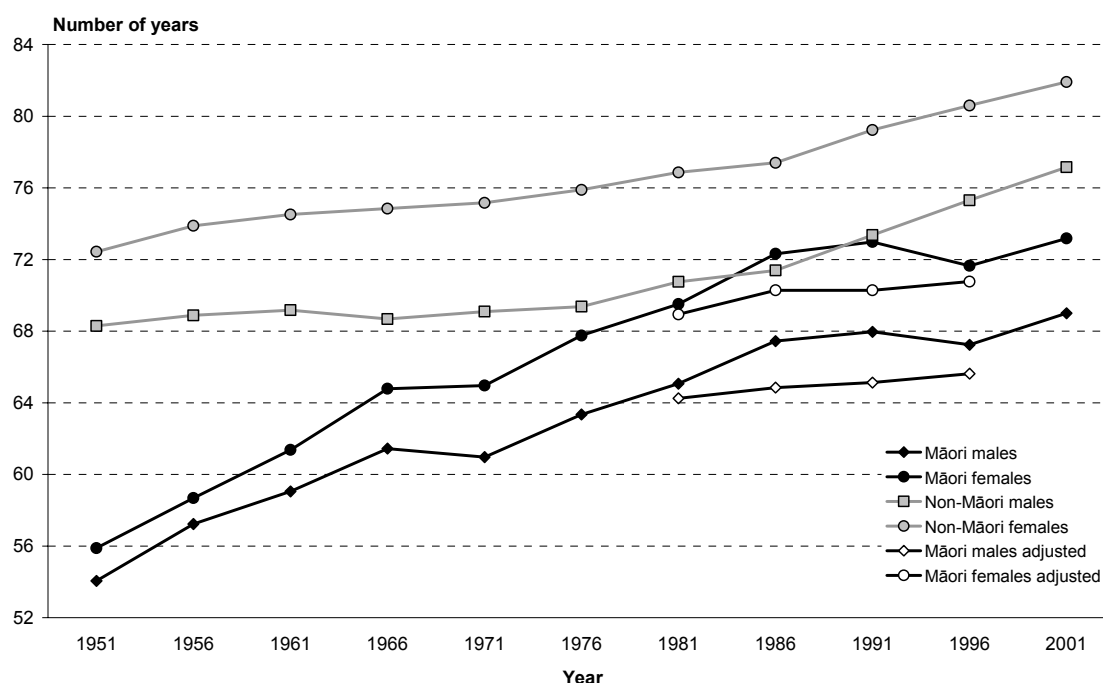
From the 1950s to the 1980s there was an increase in life expectancy at birth for both Māori and non-Māori. However, during the 1980s and 1990s, Māori life expectancy increased only slightly, while non-Māori life expectancy increased steadily. This led to a widening disparity in life expectancy during this period (Ajwani et al 2003).

For the 2000–2002 period life expectancy at birth was 69.0 years for Māori males and 77.2 years for non-Māori males. For Māori females life expectancy at birth was 73.2 years, compared with 81.9 years for non-Māori females. There was a slight closing of the gap in life expectancy between Māori and non-Māori, from 8.2 years in 1995–1997 to 7.6 years in 2000–2002 (a reduction of 0.6). However, stark disparities in life expectancy between Māori and non-Māori remain (Ministry of Social Development 2006).

Life expectancy varies at different ages, as it is an estimate of how long people could be expected to live at different stages of their life (Table 2.2).

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**Figure 2.5: Life expectancy at birth, by gender and ethnicity, 1951–2001**



Note: This figure includes adjusted life expectancy using data from the New Zealand Census Mortality Study (Ajwani et al 2003). This life expectancy data adjusts for the undercount of Māori deaths during the 1980s and 1990s due to issues with the collection of ethnicity data.

Source: Ajwani et al 2003; Statistics New Zealand

**Table 2.2: Life tables for the Māori and non-Māori population, by gender, 2000–2002**

Age	Expected years of life remaining (years)		Expected years of life remaining (years)	
	Māori female	Non-Māori female	Māori male	Non-Māori male
0 years	73.2	81.9	69.0	77.2
25 years	49.3	57.7	45.6	53.3
45 years	30.4	38.3	27.3	34.4
65 years	15.1	20.2	12.7	16.9
85 years	5.2	6.5	5.2	5.2

Note: Age is calculated in exact years.

Source: Statistics New Zealand 2004

## Fertility

Fertility has fallen for both Māori and non-Māori over the last 50 years.<sup>3</sup> However, the total fertility rate<sup>4</sup> for Māori remains higher than for non-Māori. The fertility rate for Māori females was 2.7 in 2004, compared with 1.9 for non-Māori females (Ministry of Health 2006). The fertility rate for Māori decreased to 2.6 in 2005 (Statistics New Zealand 2007b), but remains well above replacement level. The median age at

<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to have accurate estimates of the fertility rate over time due to changes in the way in which ethnicity data has been collected on birth registrations since 1996. This means that rates from 1996 onwards cannot be compared directly with earlier rates.

<sup>4</sup> According to Statistics New Zealand, the total fertility rate reflects the “average number of births a woman would have during her life if she experienced the age-specific fertility rates of that year. It excludes the effect of mortality” (Statistics New Zealand 2006).

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childbirth has increased over time for both Māori and non-Māori. In 2004 the median age at childbirth for Māori females was 26 years, compared with 30 years for the total population (Statistics New Zealand 2007b).

## Geographical distribution and migration

According to the 2006 Census, 87% of Māori live in the North Island (Statistics New Zealand 2007c). Most Māori live in urban areas (areas with a population of more than 30,000). However, Māori are also more likely to live in minor urban areas (areas with a population between 1,000 and 9,999) when compared with the total population (13% and 8% respectively) (Statistics New Zealand 2002).

Table 2.3 contains the Māori and non-Māori populations of each District Health Board (DHB), by age group.

**Table 2.3: District Health Board populations, by age group, Māori and non-Māori, 2006**

DHB	0–14 years		15–24 years		25–44 years		45–64 years		65+ years		Total	
	Māori	Non-Māori	Māori	Non-Māori	Māori	Non-Māori	Māori	Non-Māori	Māori	Non-Māori	Māori	Non-Māori
Northland	15,555	19,242	6,849	10,302	10,794	24,882	7,473	31,776	2,685	18,696	43,518	104,982
Waitemata	15,303	89,250	7,881	59,826	12,315	130,719	6,024	107,160	1,263	51,738	42,891	438,750
Auckland	8,742	67,344	5,694	61,524	9,348	126,834	4,740	81,633	1,212	37,611	29,862	375,030
Counties-Manukau	25,308	86,751	12,051	53,043	18,216	105,858	9,564	84,132	1,989	36,267	67,251	365,823
Waikato	23,778	53,505	12,354	36,537	17,772	72,393	10,269	69,855	2,829	39,921	67,488	271,746
Bay of Plenty	16,200	27,396	7,314	15,270	11,859	36,996	7,734	41,241	2,313	28,614	45,624	149,289
Tairāwhiti	6,804	4,842	3,141	2,613	5,100	6,105	3,564	6,960	1,197	4,167	19,767	24,735
Lakes	10,968	12,852	5,256	7,218	8,376	18,363	5,094	18,510	1,452	10,284	31,374	66,942
Taranaki	5,649	17,061	2,802	10,290	4,155	23,043	2,397	23,487	717	14,712	15,828	88,494
Hawke's Bay	12,102	21,957	5,718	12,546	8,892	29,181	5,466	31,893	1,515	19,041	33,909	114,372
Whanganui	5,106	8,718	2,526	5,346	3,726	11,517	2,337	13,230	702	9,075	14,412	47,796
MidCentral	9,849	24,063	5,088	19,014	7,044	33,885	3,732	33,879	957	21,330	26,709	132,144
Hutt	7,686	23,157	3,888	14,604	6,084	33,024	3,156	29,064	525	14,853	21,474	114,612
Capital & Coast	8,592	43,329	5,229	37,137	8,031	77,226	3,783	55,158	771	27,243	26,502	240,189
Wairarapa	2,067	6,102	909	3,315	1,356	7,734	879	9,957	267	6,048	5,496	33,123
Nelson-Marlborough	3,840	21,927	1,923	12,762	2,976	31,080	1,725	34,569	405	18,762	10,953	119,106
Canterbury	11,814	79,890	6,444	60,027	9,219	122,397	4,749	109,071	1,134	61,635	33,459	432,945
West Coast	1,005	5,430	444	2,928	690	7,698	423	8,358	105	4,206	2,925	28,407
South Canterbury	1,182	9,342	570	5,238	744	12,225	477	14,382	153	9,564	3,162	50,712
Otago	3,699	28,224	2,682	29,004	2,895	42,189	1,608	43,125	399	25,494	11,469	167,925
Southland	3,828	17,973	2,109	11,583	2,988	28,086	1,746	24,615	537	13,326	11,304	95,526

Source: Public Health Intelligence, Ministry of Health

Māori are slightly more mobile than non-Māori. Sixty percent of Māori changed their place of residence between the 2001 and 2006 Censuses, compared with 54.8% for the total population (among those aged over five years) (Statistics New Zealand 2007a). It is likely that this mobility is influenced by differences in age structure and home ownership for Māori and non-Māori (Statistics New Zealand 2005a). Information on migration for Māori is limited, as ethnicity data is no longer collected for arrivals into



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and departures from New Zealand. It is therefore difficult to have reliable intercensal estimates of migration in and out of New Zealand.

## Summary

The Māori population is a youthful and growing population. Although there will be more older Māori (as a proportion) in coming years, Māori will continue to have a relatively young population. Fertility rates for Māori women are higher than those for non-Māori, and well above replacement level, contributing to the growing Māori population. The demographic profile of Māori, including those measures briefly outlined in this chapter, is important in understanding the current context of Māori health, but also in planning effectively and appropriately for the future.

There are a number of ways in which Māori are defined in official statistics. Having an overview of these ways helps us to interpret health statistics and understand something more about the context of health status and disparities in health experiences and outcomes. They also provide us with tools to monitor the Crown. While these definitions are important in this sense, they do not diminish the rights of Māori, as individuals and collectives, to define ourselves in our own ways for our own purposes.

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