

## 1 Demography is Destiny

Like other industrialised countries across the globe, New Zealand's population is ageing at the same time the birth rate is declining. People over 85 (the 'oldest old') is New Zealand's fastest growing population group and the country's total fertility rate is down to 1.6 births per woman, the lowest ever. New Zealand women are having fewer babies and having them later.

## 2 Much Depends on Immigration

Because the total fertility rate of 1.6 is well below the 'replacement level' of 2.1, in the absence of migration, New Zealand's population will eventually stagnate and decline. Migration accounted for over half of New Zealand's population growth in the decade before COVID, and half of these migrants were from Asia.

## 3 The Future Looks Very Different to the Past

New Zealand is experiencing a period of demographic change that is unprecedented in its history. Historically New Zealand has been a country where young people far outnumber the old. But by 2019 there were more New Zealanders over 65 than there were under 5.

## 4 Households and Families are Changing Fast

Single person households are the second most common type of household in New Zealand and the fastest growing. More than 400,000 people now live alone. The family unit of two parents and two children is a thing of the past.

## 5 National Projections Mask Local Variations

The uneven way population change is occurring across New Zealand means that many provinces will stagnate or decline, leading to the hollowing out of some areas and the creation of zombie towns in others.

## 6 Auckland is Exceptional

Auckland is the exception. It makes sense to think of New Zealand as comprising two parts: Auckland, and everywhere else. Auckland is a monster primate city (with the same population as the next 12 biggest New Zealand cities combined). More than half of New Zealand's population growth is forecast to be in Auckland. And Auckland is already one of the most diverse cities in the world – being more ethnically diverse than Sydney, Los Angeles, London and even New York.

## 7 Social Capital Is Fraying

Alvin Toffler coined the expression 'future shock' to describe a sense of disorientation in the face of rapid social or technological change. New Zealand seems to be experiencing such a shock, driven by rapid social change. This is reflected in an increasing fractiousness and a decline in social capital. This is seen in declines in levels of trust of others, of feelings of safety, and engagement in public life.

## 8 Look at All The Lonely People

As a result of the demographic and social changes, loneliness and social isolation are becoming much greater problems in New Zealand. Social scientists believe that loneliness will be the next major social crisis New Zealand faces. This is a silent epidemic that affects people's physical health as well as their mental health.

## 9 The Built Environment Matters

Loneliness and isolation have deep-seated causes but the way we build our neighbourhoods makes a significant difference to our health and happiness. Livable neighbourhoods are about communing and connection. As COVID clearly showed, houses are not meant to be lived in 24/7. Accessible Third Places matter.

## 10 Through A Glass Darkly

As Yogi Berra said it's hard to make predictions, especially about the future. The truth is that nobody knows what the future will specifically look like, and you should distrust anyone who says they do. But trends and patterns enable us to draw some sensible conclusions about the general shape of what's ahead. Thinking in scenarios, and planning for surprises, seem the prudent approach in a time of rapid change.