MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

TE AO HURIHURI: OUR CHANGING DEMOGRAPHY AND THE ROLE OF IMMIGRATION

Paul Spoonley
Distinguished Professor Emeritus
Population Seminar Series
January 2026



DEMOGRAPHIC DISRUPTION

disruption

noun [C or U]

the action of preventing something, especially a system, process, or event, from continuing as usual or as expected:

demography

the study of changes in the number of births, marriages, deaths, etc. in a particular area during a period of time:

DEMOGRAPHIC DISRUPTION

Now demography is pulling in the direction of a more permanent shortage of labour because the baby boomers are retiring from the labour market on a massive scale and are replaced by the relatively small generations of the 1980s onwards.



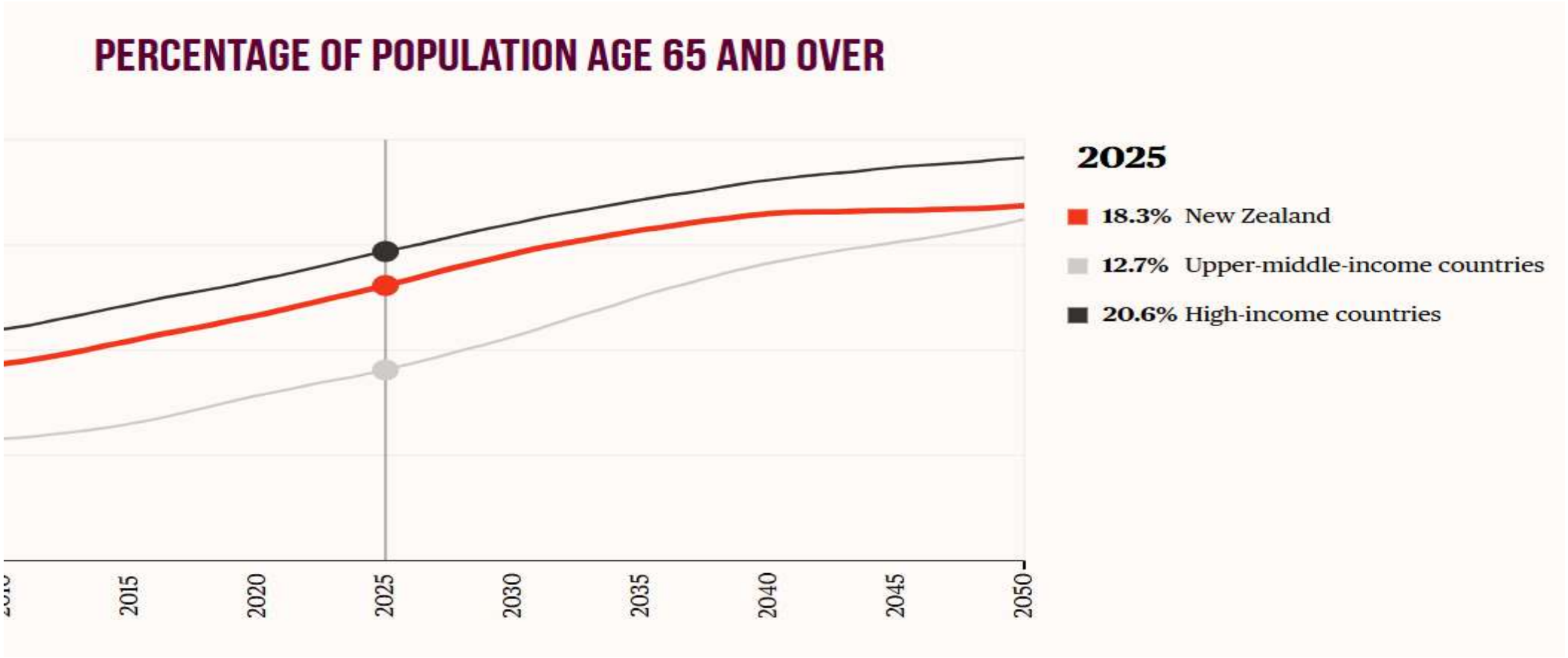
Helge J. Pedersen

Nordea Group Chief Economist

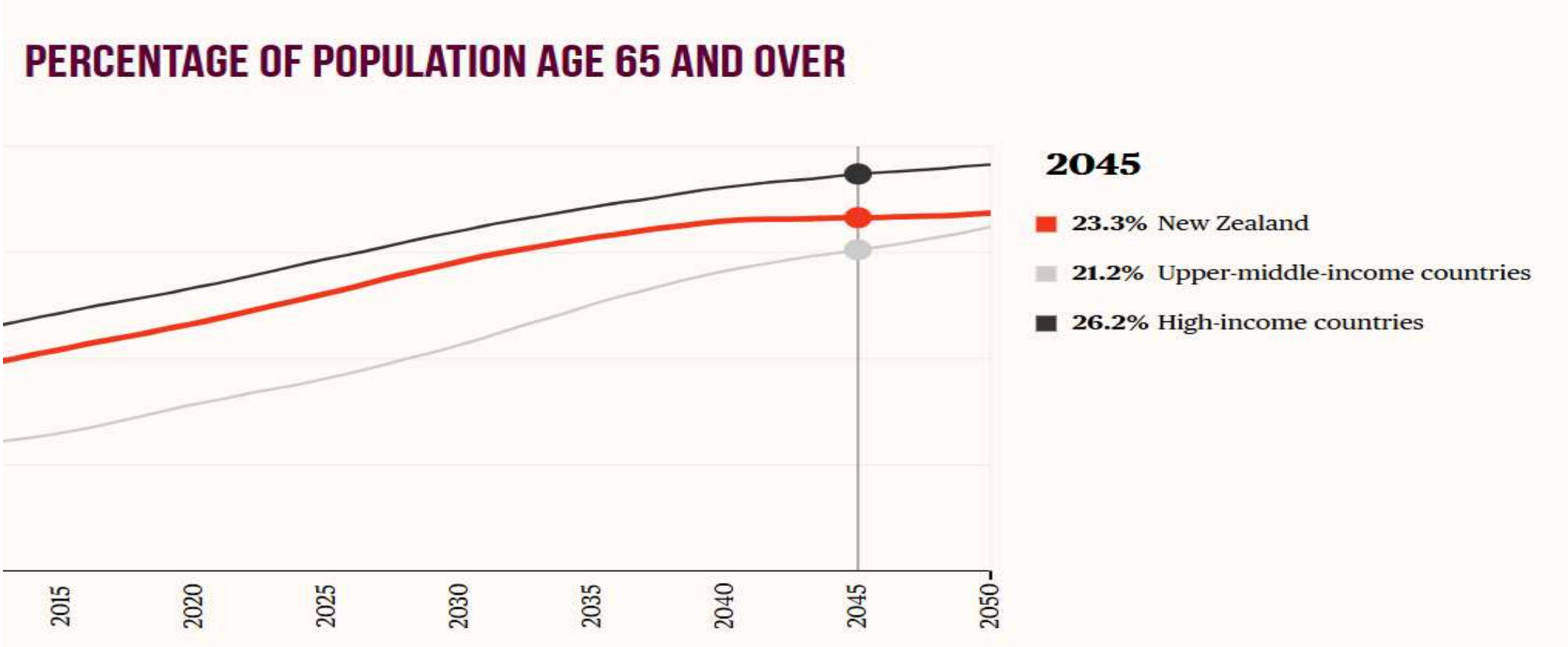


#1 There will be many more of us aged 65+...and more exiting the workforce

WHY AGEING MATTERS

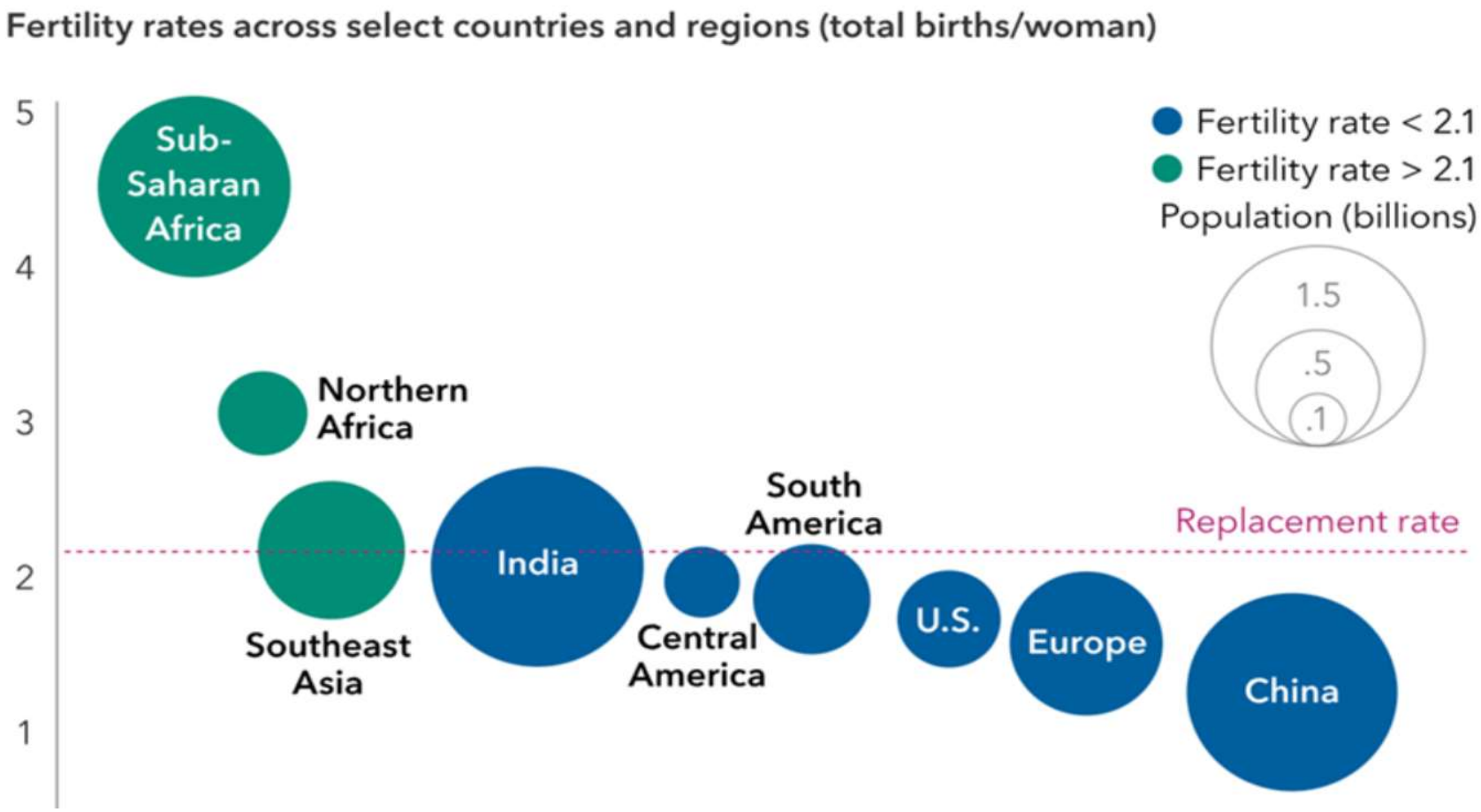


WHY AGEING MATTERS



#2 Youth scarcity – and worker shortages - will become more significant

DECLINING FERTILITY AND DEPOPULATION GLOBALLY



THE RAPID DECLINE IN FERTILITY

Chart 2. New Zealand's total fertility rate falling



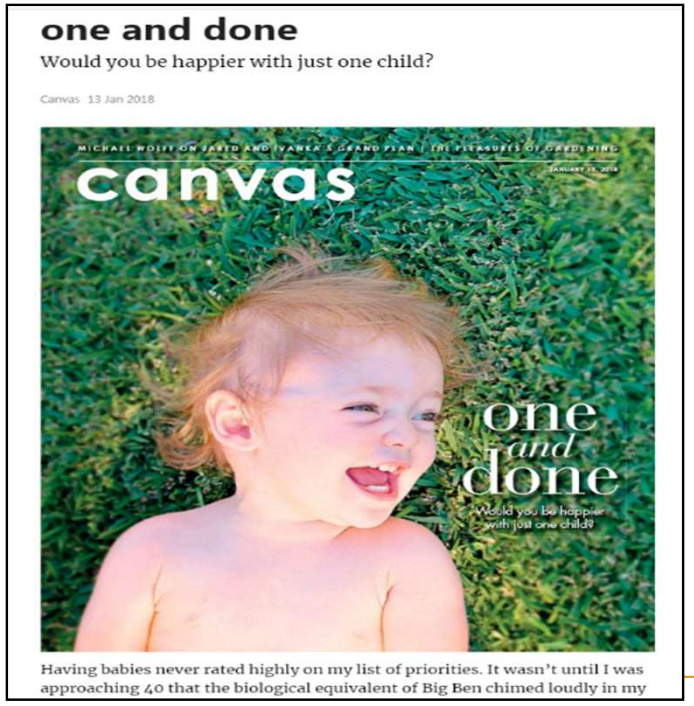
The total fertility rate estimates the average number of live births that a woman would have during her life if she experienced the age-specific rates of a given year

Chart: Nick Brunsdon/Infometrics • Source: Stats NZ • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

DECLINING FERTILITY

Record low fertility rate

Between 2022 and 2023, there was a 3 percent decrease in the number of births, while there was a 3 percent increase in the number of women aged 15–49 years (the ages at which most births occur).



one and done

Would you be happier with just one child?

Canvas 13 Jan 2018

Having babies never rated highly on my list of priorities. It wasn't until I was approaching 40 that the biological equivalent of Big Ben chimed loudly in my

Primary school enrolments drop, as national roll growth slows

9:42 pm on 23 November 2025

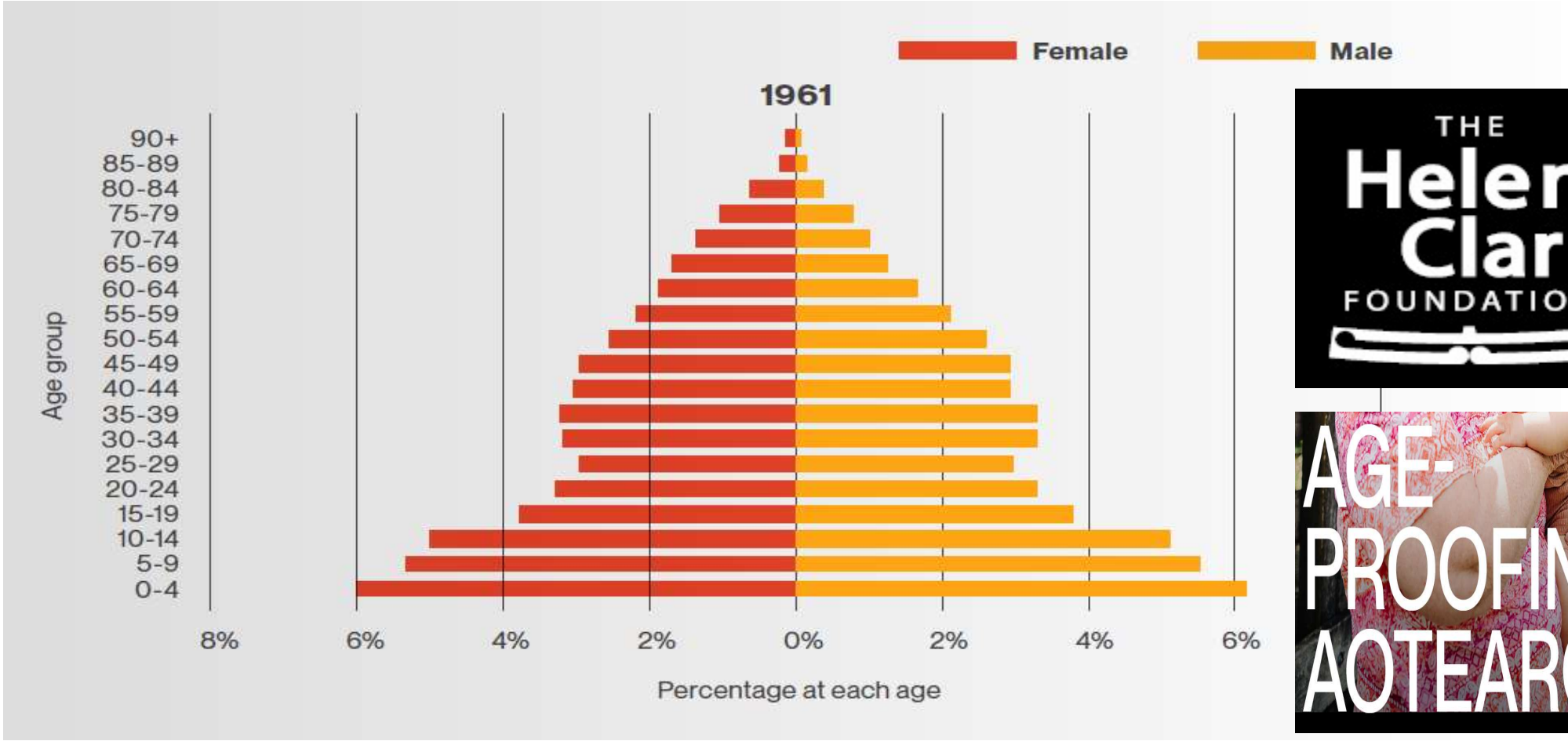
Share this

There will be 30,000 fewer school-aged children in 2032, ministry predicts

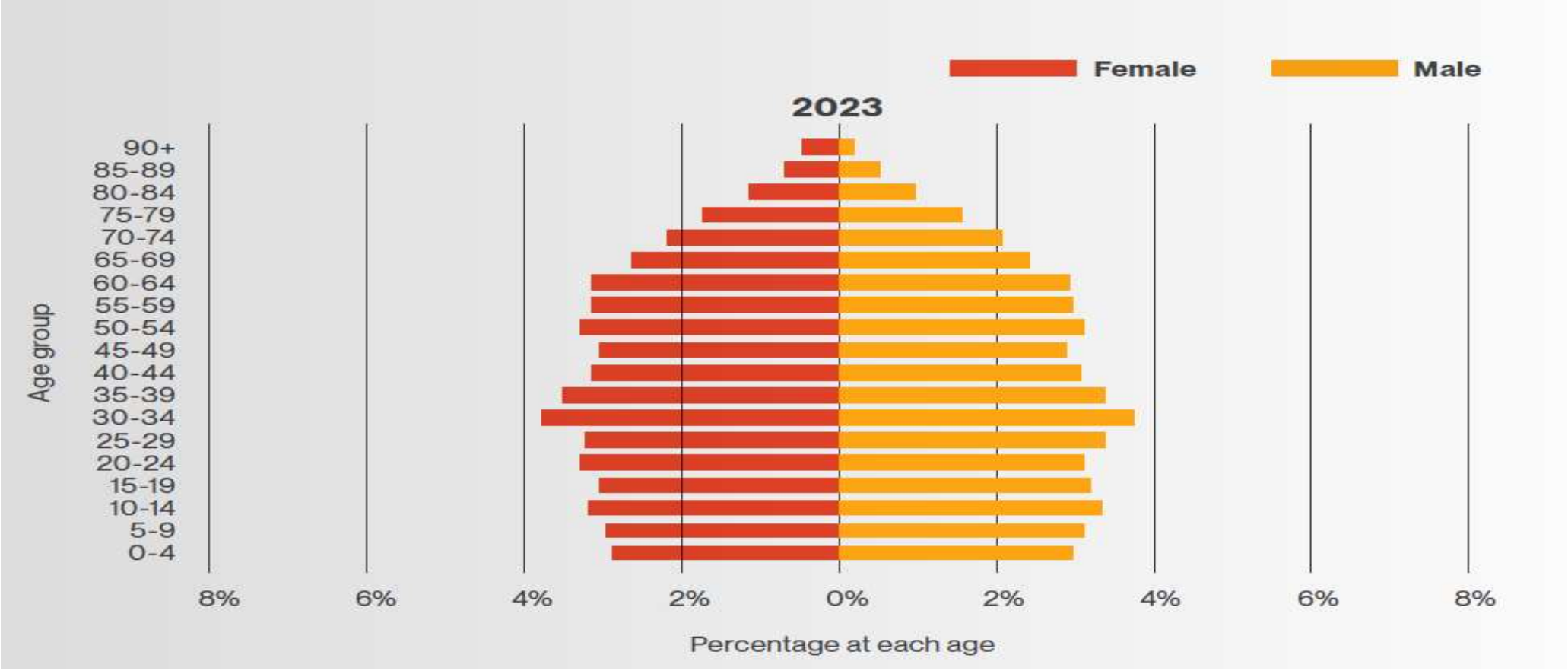
By John Gerritsen

RNZ - 13 Mar, 2023 10:37 AM 5 mins to read

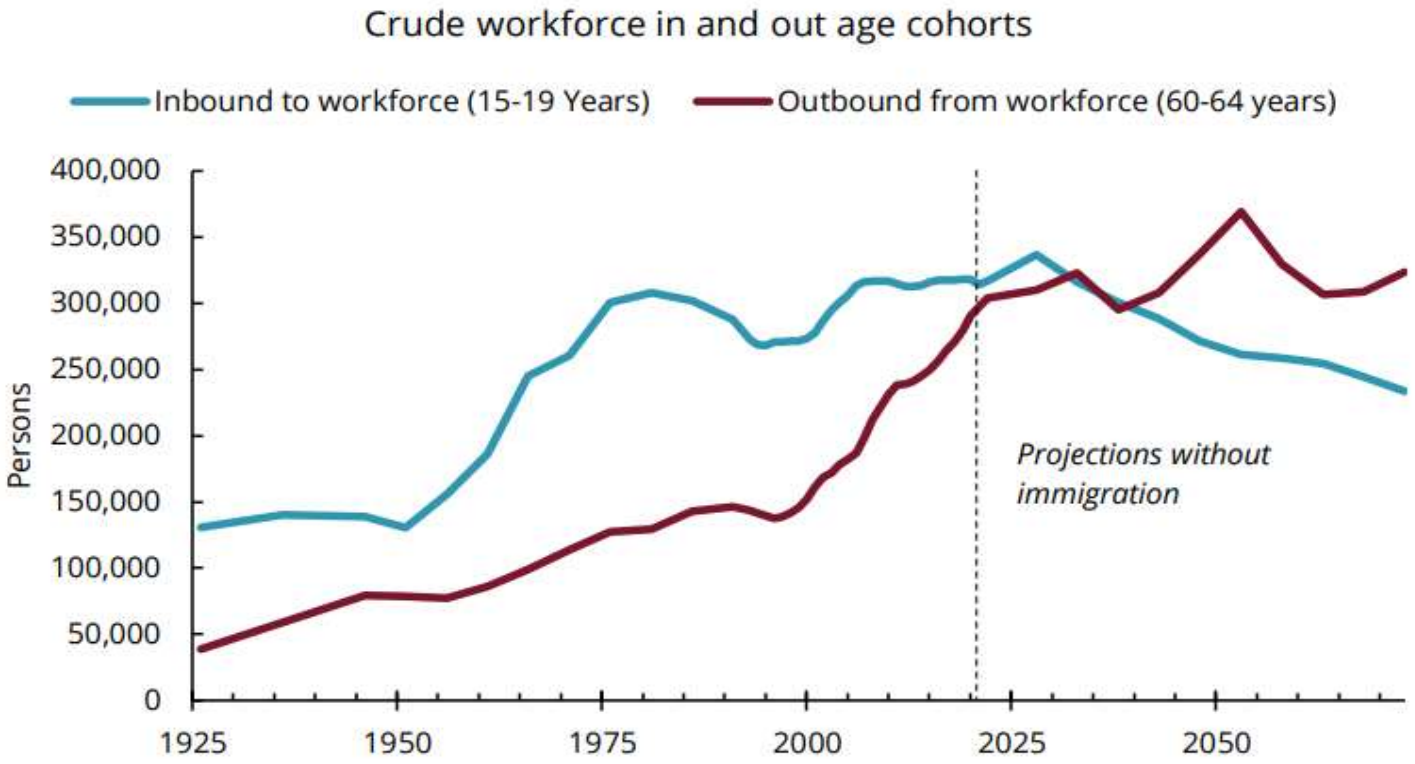
POPULATION PYRAMID –NEW ZEALAND 1961



POPULATION PYRAMID–NEW ZEALAND 2023



LABOUR AND SKILLS GAP GROWS



Source: Statistics New Zealand, Sense Partners

The future of workforce supply

250,000 shortfall by 2048

Report to BusinessNZ
GROWING PROSPERITY AND POTENTIAL

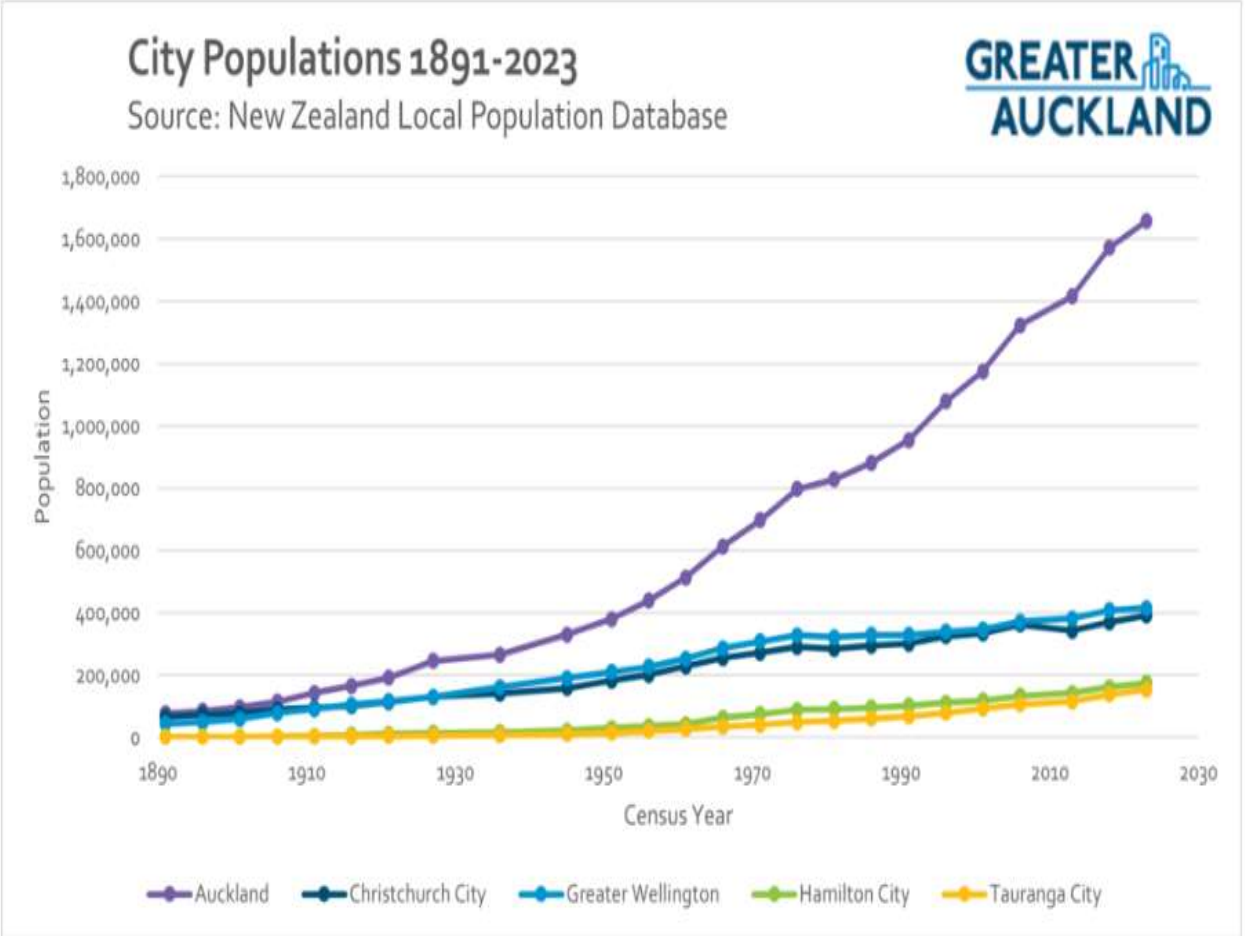
#3 Auckland becomes home to 40% of all New Zealanders

GROWTH HOT POINTS (2024)

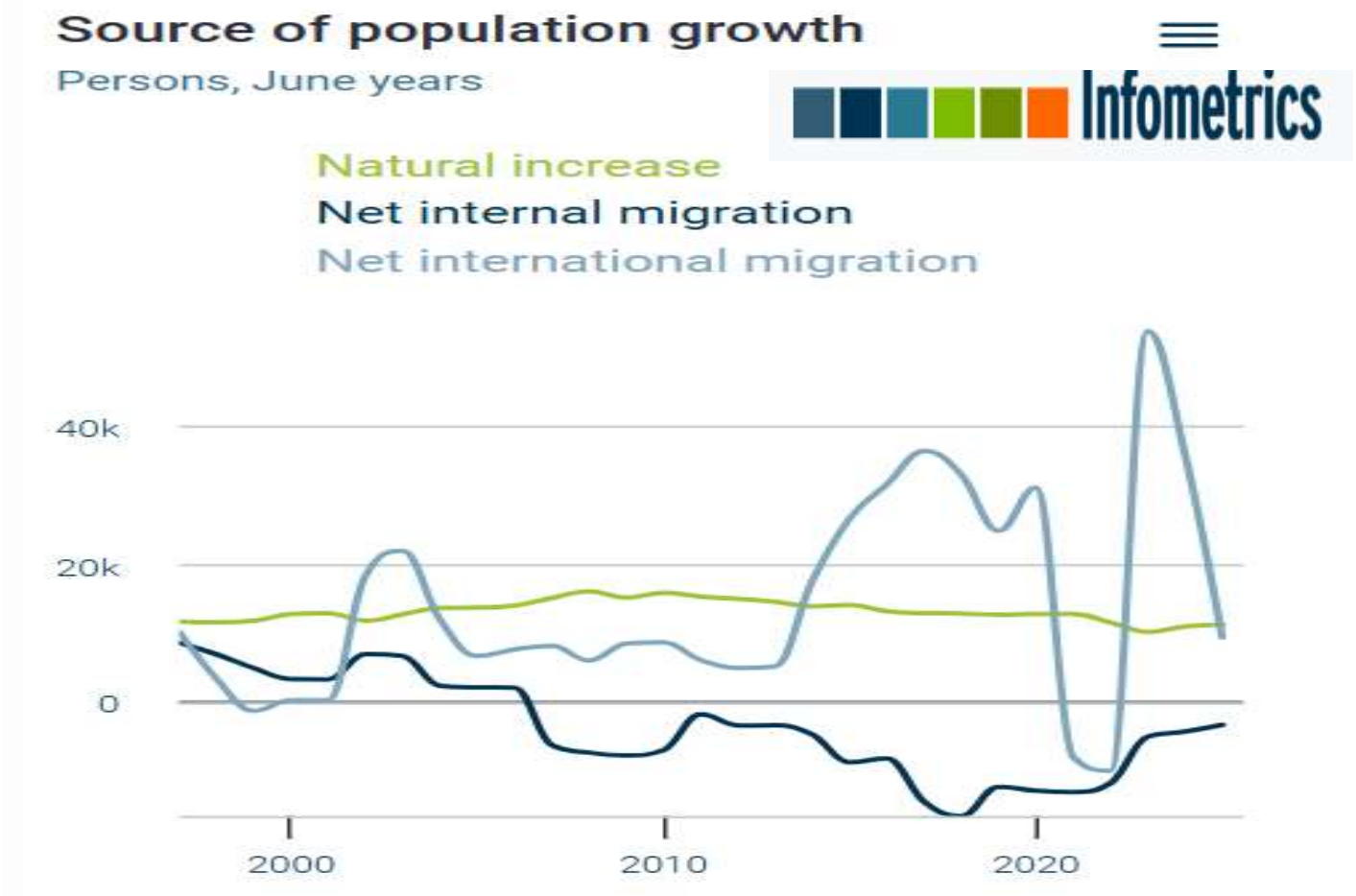
New Zealand 93,500

- North Island 76,000 (81%)
- South Island 17,500

1. Auckland 44,600 (47.7%)
2. Hamilton 5,900
3. Christchurch 4,800
4. Selwyn 3,300
5. Q-Lakes 1,400



POPULATION GROWTH IN AUCKLAND





THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA WITHIN THE AUCKLAND, HAMILTON AND TAURANGA TRIANGLE REMAINS THIS COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC POWERHOUSE AND THERE ARE SOME MEGATRENDS AT PLAY.

#4 Immigration – the source of population growth, skills supply and superdiversity

IMMIGRATION 2024

Permanent and long-term and temporary arrivals (February 2024)

Net Gain/Loss	+131,000
Arrivals	+253,200
Non-NZ Citizens	+178,600
NZ Citizens	-52,500



IMMIGRATION 2025

Permanent and long-term and temporary arrivals (August 2025)

Net Gain/Loss	+10,600
Arrivals	+138,600
Non-NZ Citizens	+58,500
NZ Citizens	-47,900



IMMIGRATION IMPACTS ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY

RNZ中文 / RNZ中文 英语新闻

RNZ

Asian ethnicities to make up 33% of population by 2048

15:13 11/9/2025

RNZ 中文, RNZ Chinese
chinese@rnz.co.nz



IMMIGRATION TRENDS

- **Highly cyclical** – four major spikes that have driven annual population growth since 1990

  (2.3% in 2023, **85%** a result of net immigration)
- **Brain exchange** – significant churn with the departure of NZ citizens an important feature
- Changing nature of the **origin country** of immigrants – with further changes likely
- Significant increase in arrivals on **temporary** work/study visas.

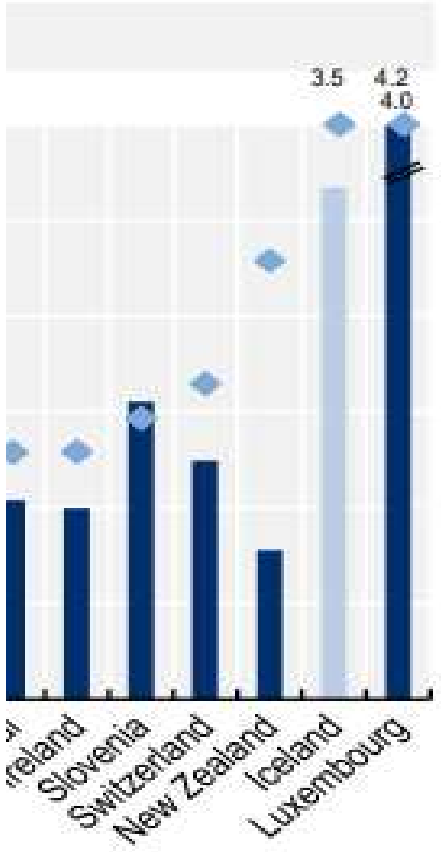
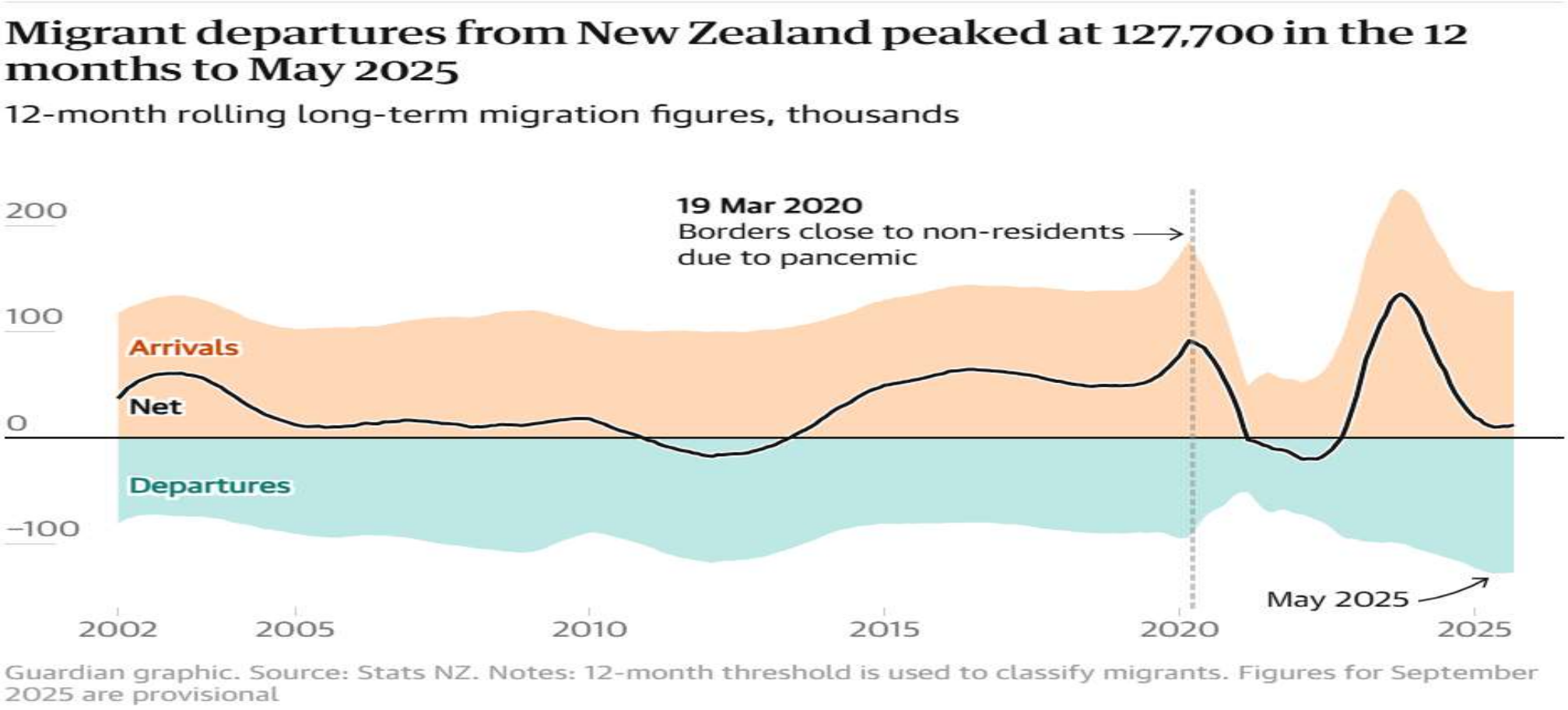


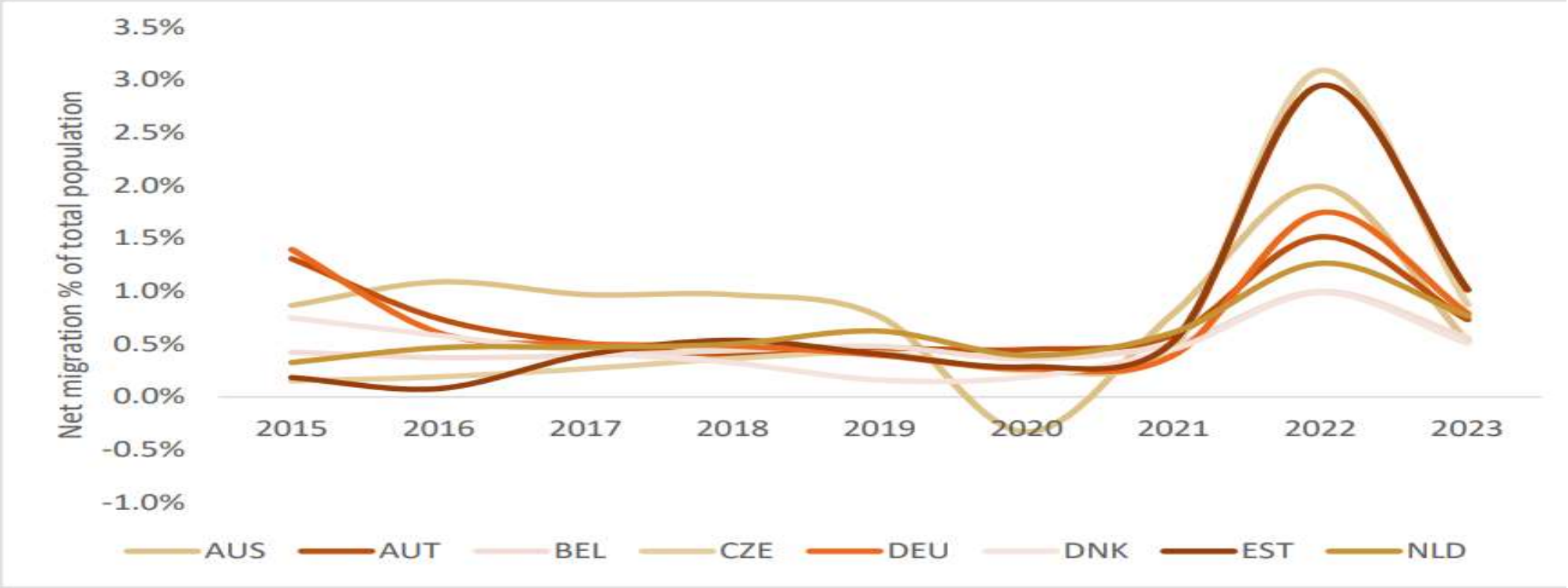
Figure 1.5. Permanent-type migration to OECD countries as a percentage of the total population, 2019 and 2023

IMMIGRATION TRENDS – PRE AND POST-COVID



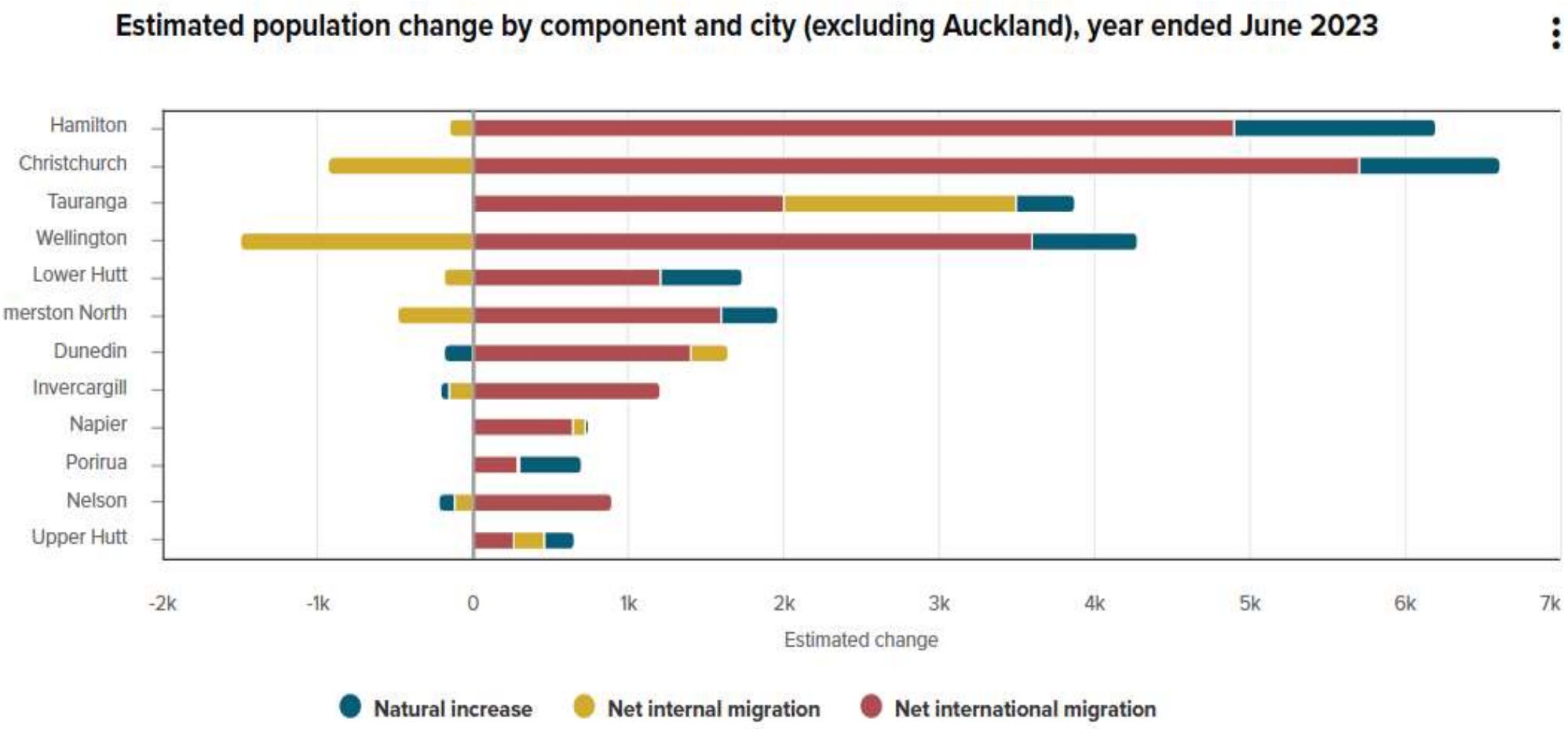
POST-PANDEMIC NET IMMIGRATION WHIPSAW EFFECT

Figure 4: The whipsaw effect in pandemic-era net migration, selected countries



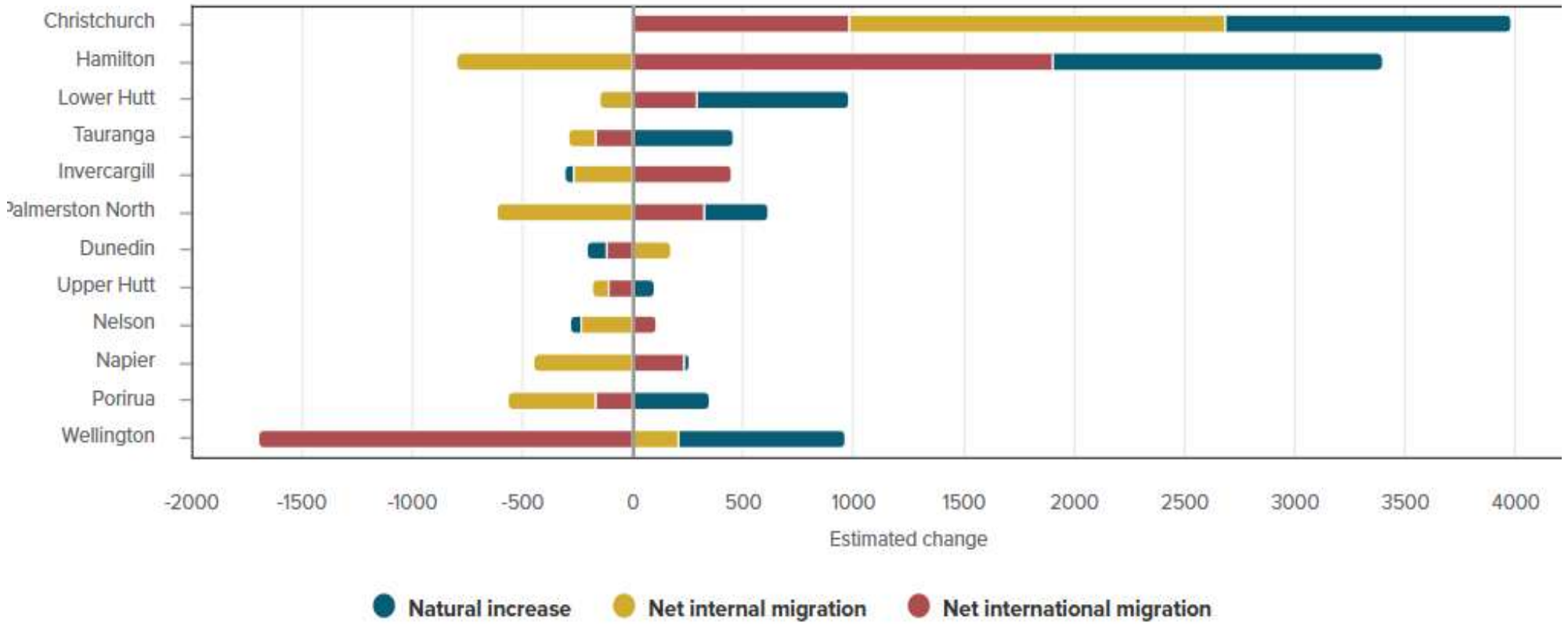
Source of net migration estimates data: Gaskin and Abel 2025, https://arxiv.org/abs/2506.22821

IMMIGRATION AS A CONTRIBUTOR TO GROWTH 2023



IMMIGRATION AS A CONTRIBUTOR TO GROWTH 2025

Estimated population change by component and city (excluding Auckland), year ended June 2025 (provisional)



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IMMIGRATION TO GROWTH

Population growth is now confined largely to the regions with major cities –Auckland, Waikato and Canterbury. Wellington and Taranaki are experiencing population stagnation (no growth), while Nelson, Marlborough, Gisborne and Hawke's Bay have seen population decline.

Growing, going, gone: latest numbers show NZ now at risk of population stagnation



Published: November 14, 2025 3.54pm NZDT

"HOLLOWING OUT" OF REGIONS AND SOME CENTRES?

The rural towns fighting for survival as New Zealand grapples with a growing exodus

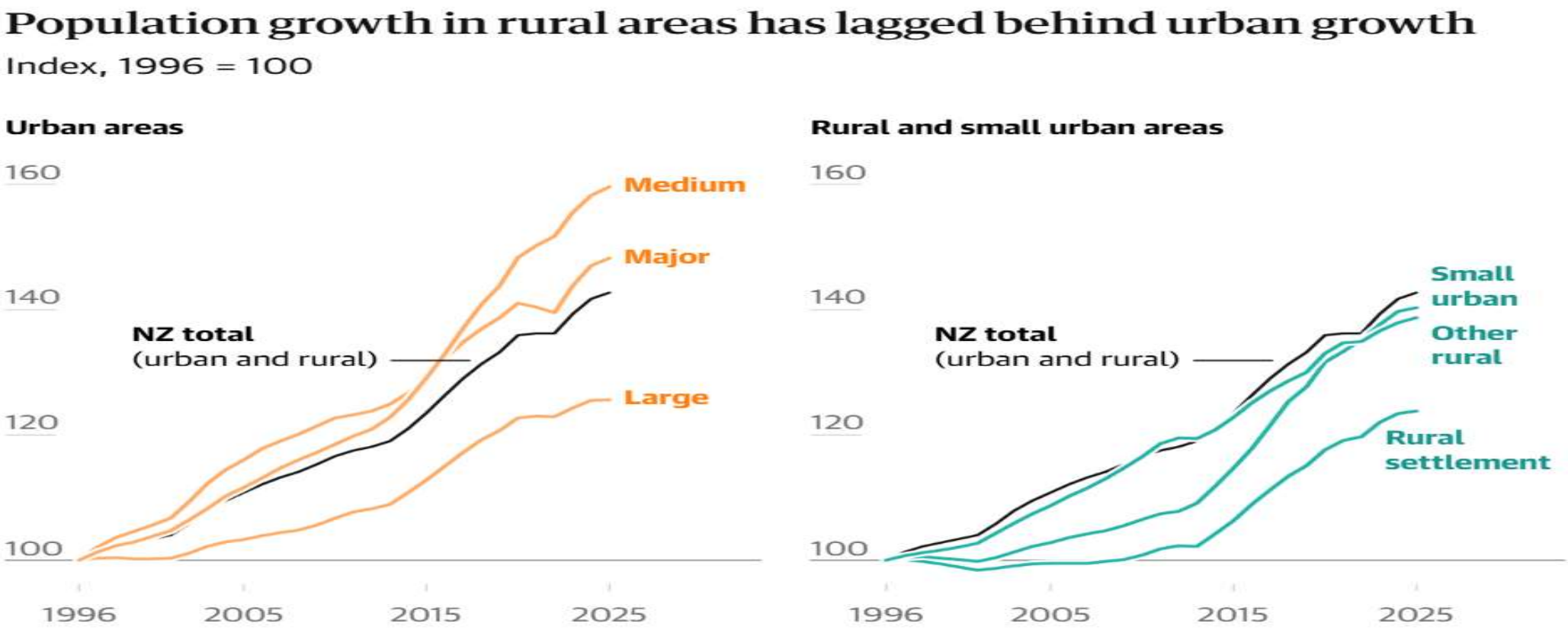
Ruapehu is emblematic of question facing New Zealand: how to prevent rural regions – and the country at large - from hollowing out

By Eva Corlett in Ohakune

Wed 17 Dec 2025 01.12 GMT

The Guardian

"HOLLOWING OUT" OF REGIONS AND SOME CENTRES?



AUSTRALIA AND CANADA

JANUARY 22, 2025 | APPEARED IN THE OTTAWA SUN

Number of newcomers to Canada set to drop significantly

Has high immigration fallen out of favour in Australia?

By business reporter Gareth Hutchens

Australia's immigration is not 'out of control' - it's trending lower and has been for over a year

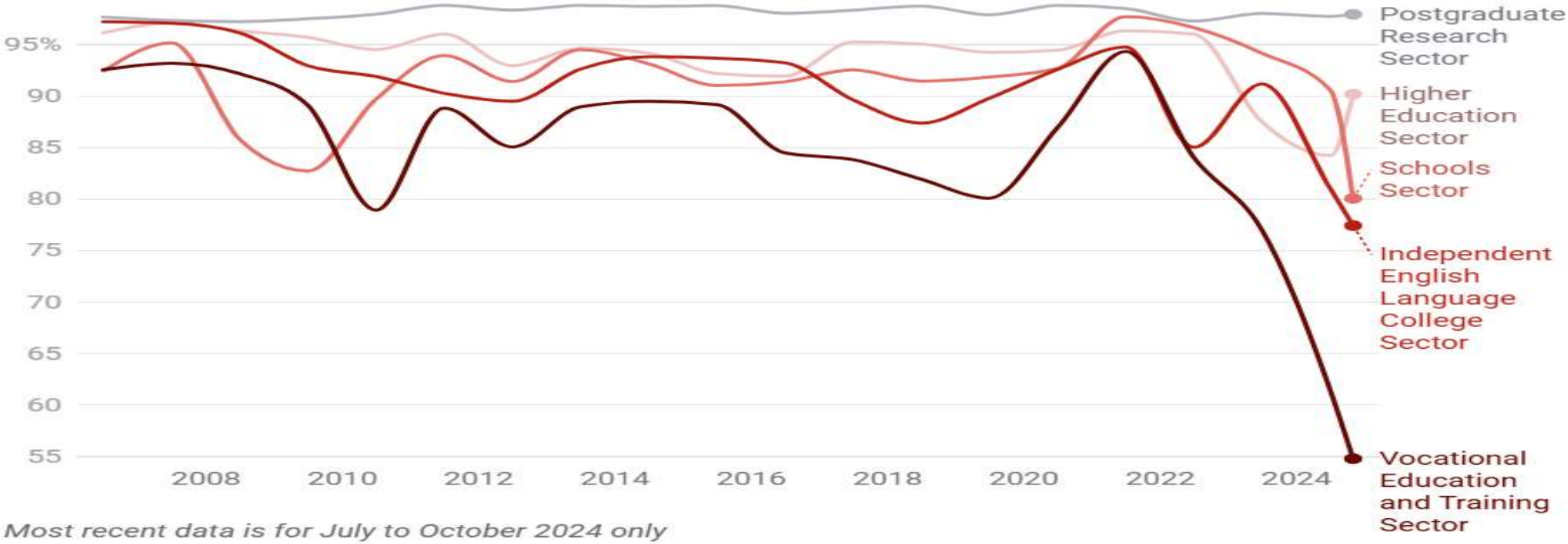
Patrick Commins

Economics editor

AUSTRALIA

Visa approval rates have fallen since the government introduced new directions to slow visa approvals

International student visa approval rates by education sector in financial year ending in June



Most recent data is for July to October 2024 only

Chart: The Conversation • Source: Department of Home Affairs • Get the data • Embed • Download image • Created with Datawrapper

#5 Political backlash against immigration and immigrants – a challenge to the social licence

ANXITIES AND OPPOSITION TO IMMIGRATION/IMMIGRANTS

Reform prepared to deport 600,000 under migration plans

7 hours ago

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Jennifer McKiernan
Political reporter, BBC News • @_JennyMcKiernan

Joshua Nevett
Political reporter



ORBAN'S IMMIGRATION MANIFESTO: SWEEPING AWAY DEMOCRACY

Why Trump's alarmist message on immigration may be resonating beyond his base

Politics Apr 1, 2024 3:29 PM EDT

ANXITIES AND OPPOSITION TO IMMIGRATION/IMMIGRANTS

Winston Peters: 'Careless' immigration 'transforming cities', Nigel Farage's Reform 'compelling'



Jamie Ensor

Political reporter · NZ Herald · 27 Jul, 2025 06:29 AM 9 mins to

WORLD / IMMIGRATION

Video of Destiny Church haka at UK anti-immigration protest spreads on social media

7:57 am on 19 September 2025

Share this

Indian community slams Shane Jones' 'Singh, Patel' barb

RNZ

ANXIETIES AND OPPOSITION TO IMMIGRATION/IMMIGRANTS

The public is losing faith in the capacity of governments to manage migration. Opinion polls in a wide range of countries suggest that the share of the public holding extreme anti-immigration views has grown in recent years and that these extreme views are more frequently heard in public debates. In part, this is due to the perception that no end is in sight for large migration inflows and that countries have lost control over them.

We need to address the migration backlash

Written by: Stefano Scarpetta, Director, OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs

#6 Policy challenges arising from demographic change – and the role of immigration

#1 KEY POLICY CHALLENGES – MAXIMISING TALENT

Better **utilisation** of immigrant skills and experiences onshore

- The importance of employer attitudes and practices when it comes to the utilisation of immigrant workers/employees
- Transition of immigrants to ensure they adjust to the New Zealand labour market (language acquisition, local network development, onboarding

Deloitte.

Institute for Canadian Citizenship

Talent to win

Employer perspectives on immigrant underemployment and the immense upside of solving it.

#2 KEY POLICY CHALLENGES – SOCIAL COHESION

Invest in **social cohesion** to ensure that immigrant settlement has positive outcomes, that social capital is recognised and maximised for both immigrant and host communities, and that diversity is seen as a strength, nationally/locally

- The current phase which sees DEI initiatives politically and publicly opposed creates tensions and fractures social cohesion and trust

Winston Peters, NZ First follow Donald Trump's anti-DEI path with new Bill



Jamie Ensor

Chief Political Reporter · NZ Herald · 7 Mar, 2025 1

#3 KEY POLICY CHALLENGES – UNEVEN REGIONAL GROWTH

Should immigration be used to flatten the contrast between the country's **fast** and **slow growth** regions and centres?

- Should there be something similar to the Canadian Provincial Nominee Programme so that regions play an active part in immigrant recruitment and approval?
- What do regional immigration policies look like?

Fast vs. Slow: How Different Immigration Rates Can Impact Canada's Economic Challenges and Regional Disparities

Daniel Hiebert

INSTITUT C.D. HOWE INSTITUTE

#4 KEY POLICY CHALLENGES – POPULATION POLICY

Develop a **population policy** which considers migrant flows/composition alongside other demographic change

- The importance of understanding the implications of demographic change over a medium- and long-term horizon
- Consider whether to opt for slower population growth and minimal immigration (and an increased Old Age Dependency Ratio) or to grow the country faster (increased net immigration)



#5 KEY POLICY CHALLENGES – WHY NZ?

What are our **value propositions** as a country?

- Why should migrants consider migrating to New Zealand? And what can we do to ensure that we are as attractive as possible?
- What's in it for New Zealanders? What does immigration add to the New Zealand economy and society?

Migrants' experiences of New Zealand: Expectation versus reality



Stuff

British migrants flee New Zealand citing expensive rentals and heavy traffic