

New migrants snapshot



Overview

New Zealand's ethnic make-up is changing.

After New Zealand began reopening its borders in early-mid 2022, and especially once they were fully opened on 1 August 2022, there was a sharp rebound in migration. This influx was dominated by non-New Zealand citizens, and the pattern of source countries was quite different from before the COVID-19 period.

The largest numbers of migrants relocating to New Zealand in the wake of COVID-19 came from India, the Philippines, China, Fiji and Sri Lanka in the peak migration period between 2022 and 2024.¹ The largest surge occurred in 2023, when total long-term arrivals exceeded 200,000 – the highest ever recorded.

This pattern continues. In the 12 months to January 2026, citizens of India, China, the Philippines and Sri Lanka drove net migration gains.²

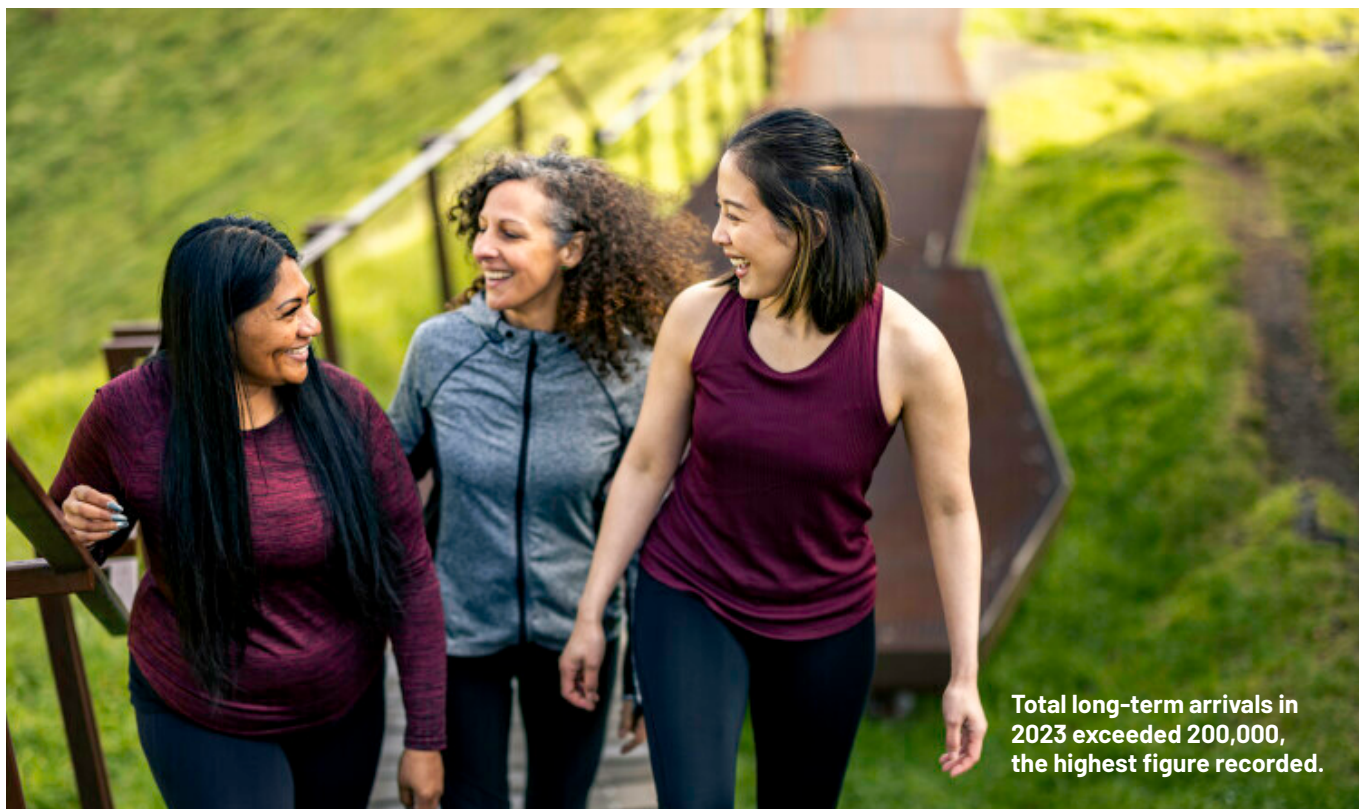
This represents a permanent shift in New Zealand's migration mix, away from traditional European dominance towards Asia-Pacific-led migration.

Auckland is our most diverse city. Stats NZ population projections (2023 (base)-2053) forecast Auckland will account for 40 to 50% of New Zealand's total population growth, with international migration identified as the main driver of that growth.

This snapshot is important for Sport New Zealand and the sector to ensure current programmes and initiatives are relevant to the changing population dynamic.

Drawing on data collected through the Active NZ survey 2024/25, we aim to understand participation levels, preferences and attitudes towards being active of young people aged 5 to 17. Specifically, we are focusing on those who have been in New Zealand for less than 5 years, whose parents chose to move here when the borders opened.

Comparisons are made with New Zealand-born young people and supported with insights from adult new migrants for context, where appropriate.



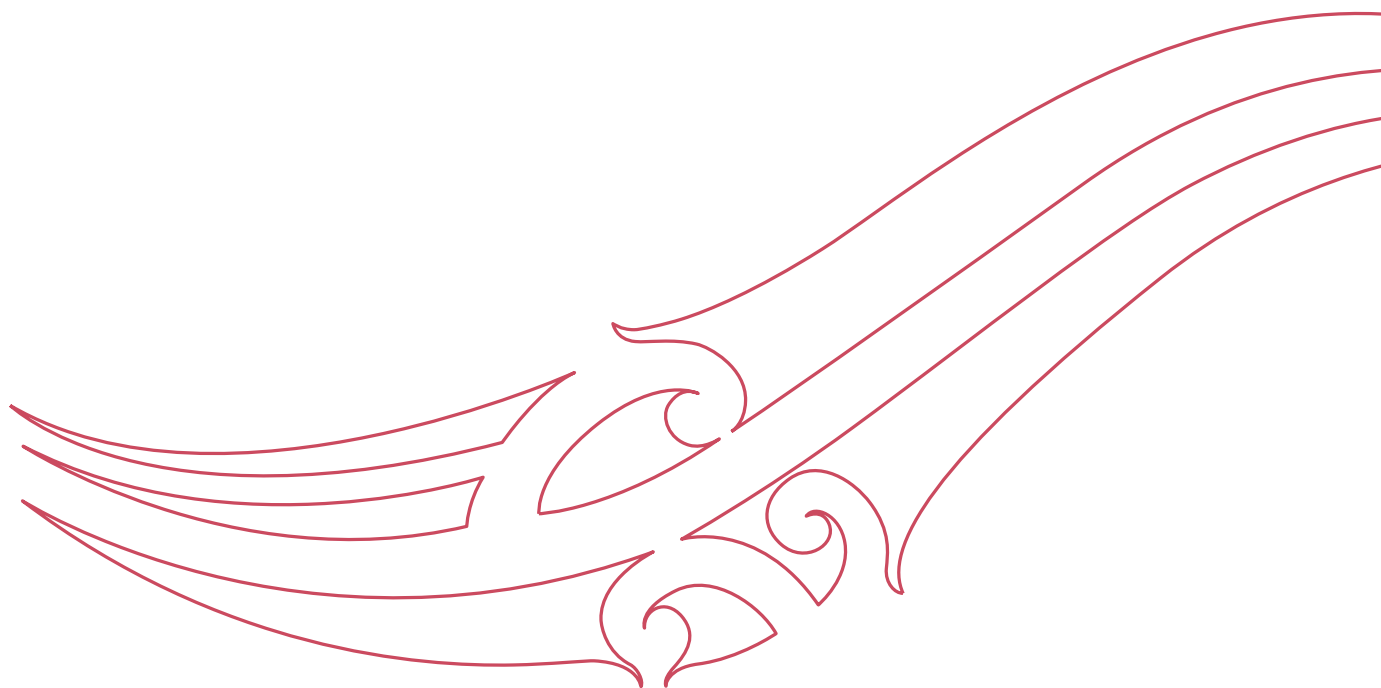
Total long-term arrivals in 2023 exceeded 200,000, the highest figure recorded.

1 Stats NZ topics migration

2 International migration: January 2026 Stats NZ

Key points

- Young and adult new migrants are less active than those who are New Zealand-born.
- Young new migrants participate in fewer sports and activities each week.
- Young new migrants are less likely to participate in competitions, tournaments and training, or be club members.
- Despite less activity overall, especially in organised sport, young new migrants are similar to New Zealand-born young people with their attitudes towards being active.
- Young new migrants' physical literacy³ matches that of New Zealand-born young people and they also share the same top 2 motivations to be active – fun and spending time with family and friends.
- Young new migrants and New Zealand-born young people agree they have support in the community to be active and have access to spaces and places to do their activities of choice.
- In contrast, adult new migrants are less likely to understand why being active is important, less likely to encourage their young people to be active, or to agree they have access to spaces and places for themselves to be active.
- Despite this, adult new migrants have a stronger appetite to increase their participation than New Zealand-born adults.
- Young new migrants feel they have a stronger connection with spaces and places to be active than New Zealand-born young people and, along with adults, are more likely to agree they have a chance to explore their culture or heritage through physical activity than those who are New Zealand-born.
- The belief that being active is an important part of New Zealand culture is shared by both young and adult New Zealand-born people and new migrants. Adult new migrants are more likely to believe high performance sport brings communities together.



³ Physical literacy is a combination of their motivation, confidence and competence to be active, along with their knowledge and understanding of how being active contributes to their life.

1. Young and adult new migrants are less active than those who are New Zealand-born.

Young migrants are less likely to meet the physical activity guidelines.

Although there is no difference between New Zealand-born young people and new migrants in inactivity, young new migrants are less active overall.

Compared with those who are New Zealand-born:

- Almost double the number of new migrants fall into the ‘fairly active’ category – active for between 30 and 149 minutes each week – 19% compared with 10%.
- Each week young new migrants are active just over 3 hours less on average than New Zealand-born young people. This means they spend 28% less time being active each week.

Young people aged 5 to 17	Meeting guidelines	Inactive	Fairly active: between 30-149 minutes each week	Average active weekly hours
New Zealand-born	57%	8%	10%	11.37
New migrants <5 years	44%	9%	19%	8.24 (28% less time; 3.13 hours)

Meeting guidelines: 420 minutes or more each week for young people. Inactive: less than 30 minutes each week.

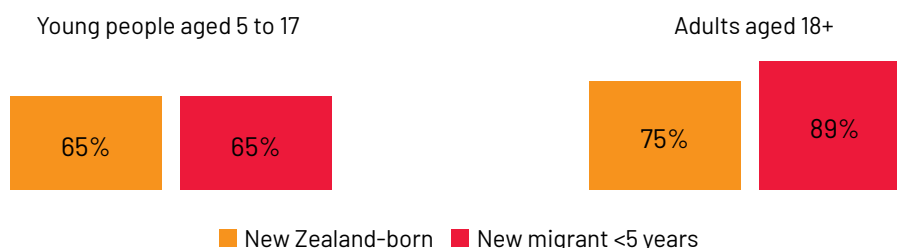
A similar activity pattern follows for adults. Compared with New Zealand-born adults, more adult new migrants fall into the ‘fairly active’ group and spend on average 1.29 hours less time being active each week, or 21% less time.

Adults aged 18-plus	Meeting guidelines	Inactive	Fairly active: between 30-149 minutes each week	Average active weekly hours
New Zealand-born	63%	21%	16%	6.24
New migrants <5 years	42%	30%	28%	4.95 (21% less time; 1.29 hours)

Meeting guidelines: 150 minutes or more each week for adults. Inactive: less than 30 minutes each week.

Adult new migrants are more likely to want to increase their activity levels than New Zealand-born adults, while there is no variation between young new migrants and those born in New Zealand.

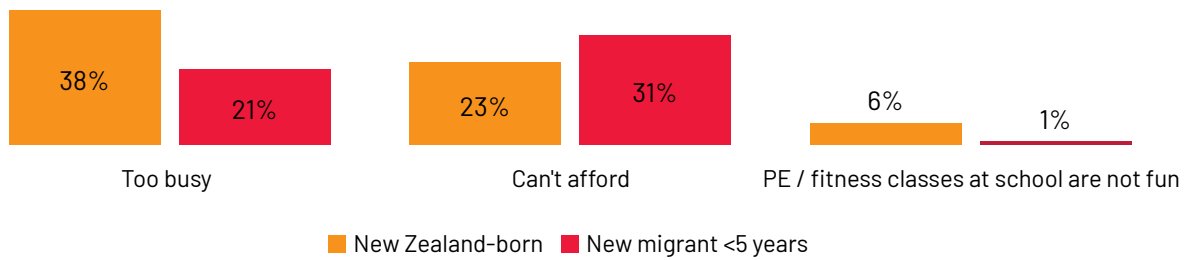
Young people and adults – would like to be doing more activity % agree



2. Barriers to increasing activity levels differ between young migrants and New Zealand-born young people.

Being busy and PE not being fun are lesser barriers for young new migrants than those New Zealand-born, while affordability is a stronger barrier.

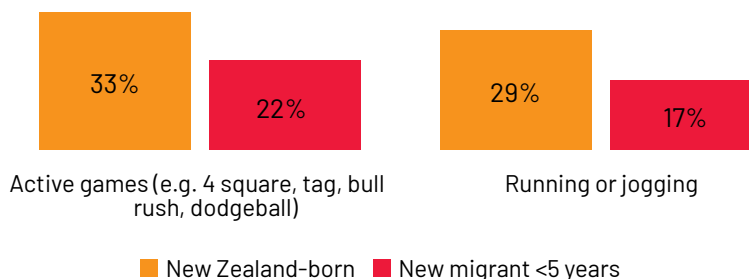
Young people – barriers to doing more
% agree



3. Young new migrants have different preferences and participation settings.

Young new migrants participate in a smaller range of sports and activities each week and have lower participation in 2 of the more popular activities for young people – active games and running/jogging.

Young people – differences in participation in sports and activities % weekly participation



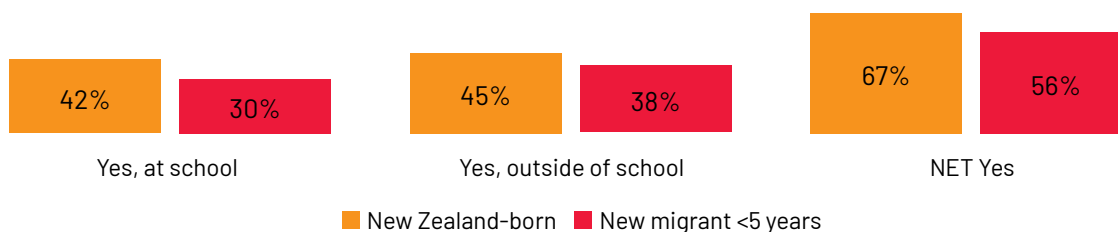
Active NZ captures the settings where young people are active: informal (play and independent exercise) and organised (competition/tournament, training with a coach and PE). The only setting where there is variation in participation between New Zealand-born young people and new migrants is competitions/tournaments and training with a coach (27% compared with 19%).

Reflecting this, young migrants have lower levels of sports club membership.

Young new migrants participate in fewer sports and activities each week than their New Zealand-born counterparts.

4.0 | **4.84**
Young new migrants | New Zealand-born

Young people – club membership % members



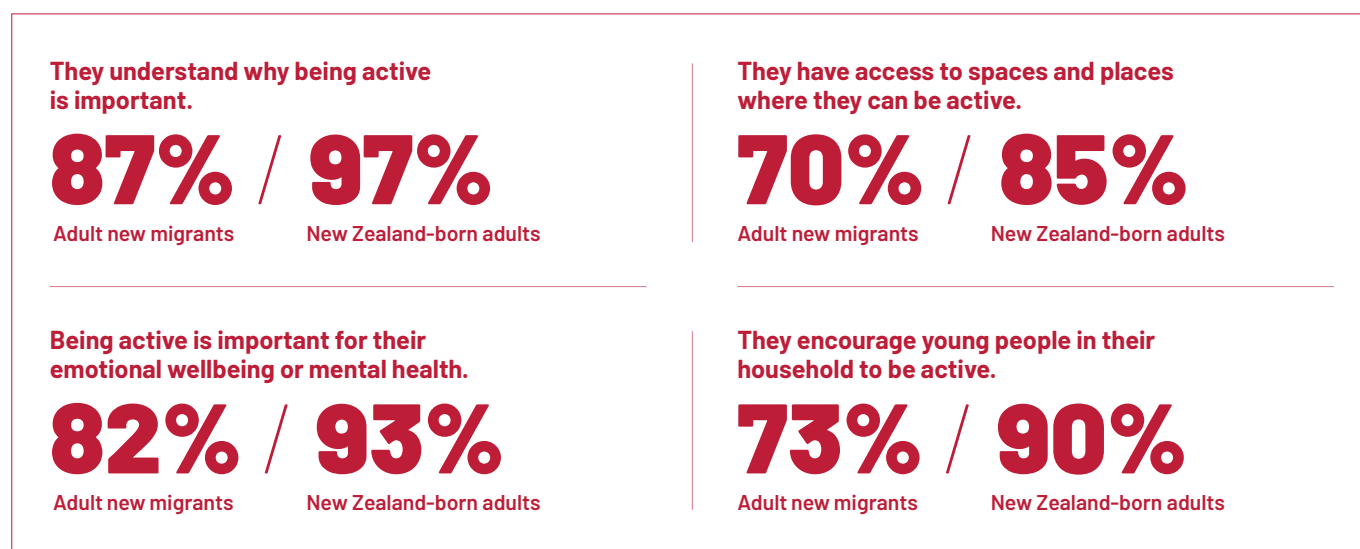


4. Despite lower activity levels, there are similarities between young new migrants and their New Zealand-born counterparts.

- Young new migrants and New Zealand-born young people share the top 2 motivations for being active: fun (75% compared with 79%) and spending time with family and friends (51% compared with 53%).
- Young new migrants' physical literacy matches that of New Zealand-born young people. They understand why being active is important and feel encouraged and motivated. They also agree they have opportunities to be active and feel both confident and competent in their abilities.
- They are just as likely to agree they have support in their community to be active (66% compared with 73%) and that they have access to spaces and places to do their activities of choice (77% compared with 82%).

5. Adult new migrants hold influence – young new migrants live in an adult world.

Compared with New Zealand-born adults, adult new migrants are less likely to agree:



6. Having the opportunity to explore their culture through being active has stronger agreement for young and adult new migrants than for those who are New Zealand-born.

- Young new migrants are more likely to agree they have the chance to explore their culture, heritage and whakapapa through being active – 44% young new migrants compared with 36% of those who are New Zealand-born. This pattern is also evident for adults, with 37% agreement from new migrants compared with 19% for New Zealand-born adults.
- Supporting this, young new migrants feel a stronger connection to the spaces and places available for them to be active than those who are New Zealand-born – 74% agree compared with 65%.

7. Leverage high performance sport and New Zealand's physical activity culture.

- Around 4 in 5 (79%) adult new migrants agree high performance sport⁴ brings communities together – higher than those who are New Zealand-born at 67%.
- 'Being active is an important part of New Zealand culture' is a sentiment shared by young and adult new migrants and New Zealand-born individuals – young people 75% and 75%; adults 83% and 83%.



Four in five adult new migrants

agree high performance sport brings communities together.

8. How can we support young new migrants to be more active?

- There is an opportunity to explore how we might better engage with new migrants. Although they share the same level of interest in increasing their activity level and physical literacy as New Zealand-born young people, they are less active overall.
- To improve activity levels there is a need to explore how to make traditional organised sport structures more engaging, flexible and inclusive for new migrants.
- Addressing affordability is crucial to enabling young new migrants' participation levels.
- Unlike young new migrants, adult new migrants' appetite to increase their participation is greater than New Zealand-born adults. Removing access barriers to spaces and places could help convert positive predisposition into activity.
- Improving adult new migrants' overall physical literacy will help to improve their influence on young new migrants through role modelling and encouragement.
- Young and adult new migrants value the opportunity to explore their culture through physical activity more than their New Zealand-born counterparts. They are also more likely to agree that high performance sport brings communities together. Consider ways to leverage opportunity to explore culture through physical activity and a positive relationship with high performance sport to improve activity levels.

⁴ High performance sport is all forms of sport that are played at the nationally representative and international levels. It includes things like Olympic and Paralympic athletes, national teams (eg, All Blacks) and professional teams (eg, Wellington Pulse netball team, the New Zealand Breakers basketball team).

