



PRAY FOR EAST ASIA

Pray for New Zealand

Therefore tell the people: This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Return to me,' declares the Lord Almighty, 'and I will return to you,' says the Lord Almighty.

— Zechariah 1:3

Country Profile

New Zealand is an island country in the Southwest Pacific. Comparable in geographic size to the United Kingdom or the Philippines, New Zealand has a diverse multicultural population of over four million people. This makes it one of the least crowded countries in the world. Population growth in New Zealand is mainly attributed to net migration, especially in the 15-39 age group. In fact, immigration over the last 25 years has changed the face of New Zealand from a predominately Western culture to a multi-ethnic society. In the late 2000s, Asia (mainly China, India, the Philippines and South Korea) overtook the UK and Ireland as New Zealand's largest source of overseas migrants. Many came as students who later stayed on to live and work in New Zealand.

New Zealand's economy has been expanding since 2010. Known as a major agricultural exporter, New Zealand also has a flourishing manufacturing sector, thriving tourism, and a strong geothermal energy resource base. Unemployment is relatively low, at around 4.6%. Despite this, there is growing income inequality in New Zealand. An increasing number of New Zealanders, especially children, have been pushed into poverty (that is, households living at below 60% of the national median income).

Historically New Zealand was a Christian country, but today, it is one of the most secular countries in the world. Less than half of its population identify themselves as Christian, according to the country's 2013 Census. More than 40% declare no religion at all, and among Christians, only about 15% actually go to church. The Pacific Island peoples, Chinese, Koreans and Filipinos are now the dominant people groups in New Zealand's churches. Other non-Christian religions are growing due to immigration. Although the majority of Kiwis have turned away from traditional religions, they are seeking alternative spiritual paths.

Against this backdrop, the New Zealand church faces the challenges of consumerism and a perceived lack of relevance in a post-modern context. Churches are struggling to engage with younger generations, who are increasingly non-religious and tend to be wary of joining established institutions. Yet, this is a great season of opportunity due to the influx of migrants, and diaspora ministries have huge potential for growth.

In the past few decades, the church has also experienced a change in its approach to mission. From being one of the largest sending countries per capita, now the nations are coming to New Zealand. Still, there is an important place for sending agencies, like OMF New Zealand, to speak into the New Zealand church, and to see growth in the number of people being called to serve cross culturally and be involved in missions overseas and at home. Growing partnership between major sending agencies and churches, and collaborating and sharing resources with a kingdom perspective is encouraging. The partnership and unity of these sending agencies is very exciting.



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Population

- **Total:** 4.8 million
 - **European:** 71.2%
 - **Maori:** 14.1%
 - **Asian:** 11.3%
 - **Pacific Islanders:** 7.6%
 - **Others:** 2.7%
 - *(note: percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents were able to identify more than one ethnic group (2013 Census est.))*

Religions

- **Christianity:** 49%
- **Non-religious:** 42%
- **Hindu:** 2%
- **Buddhist:** 1%
- **Muslim:** 1%
- **Others:** 1%

Lord, thank you for your blessing on the people of New Zealand. Please help your church to stand firm in spite of the challenges, and may it use all that you've given to be a blessing to other peoples. We pray for the encouragement which comes from working together, and for many young people and their churches to be inspired, equipped, and challenged to be more fully involved in God's world.