

Summary

2006

(Statistics NZ, 2007)

New Zealander responses to the ethnicity question have increased since 1986 and were expected to increase again in 2006. 429,429 people gave New Zealander as the only or other ethnicity question. This represents 11.1 percent of the total population of New Zealand, and compares with 2.4 percent in 2001.

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It is recognised when asking about self-identified cultural affiliation that there may be changes over time in the way people identify their ethnicity or in the underlying make-up of society. A statistical approach requires balancing relevance with consistency of ethnicity information. In line with changes in New Zealand society, categories were added to the ethnicity classification in 2005. One of these categories was for New Zealander responses, included in a larger group Other Ethnicity. Previously these responses were classified with European.

Although the 2006 Census recorded a change in response to New Zealander, to date other collections of official statistics have not seen a similar pattern. The way that information is collected, the population the information is collected from, and the context the collection takes place in, may affect ethnic group responses. The patterns seen in collections other than census may reflect the underlying trend of a lower level of New Zealander responses, which may or may not change over coming years.

In the 2006 Census, those identifying as New Zealander:

- cover all ages
- are more likely to be male
- have higher regional proportions in the South Island than in the North Island
- are most often born in New Zealand.

In contrast to the total population those identifying as New Zealander:

- have an older median age
- have higher incomes
- are less likely to have Māori descent
- are healthier, in terms of smoking less than the total population
- are more likely to live in a rural area
- tend to have more educational qualifications.

This profile provides a brief background, with analysis showing some of the differences and similarities between New Zealander responses and other categories. Some characteristics have been age standardised (see appendix 1) to allow for the effect of age structure differences between the groups. A subsequent report will provide a more detailed discussion of statistical implications of the increase in New Zealander responses, and include guidelines on how census ethnicity data may be used in conjunction with data from other sources.

It may be concluded that the public debate on the ethnicity question that preceded the census contributed materially to the increase in New Zealander responses. The relative contribution will become apparent in later censuses.

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