

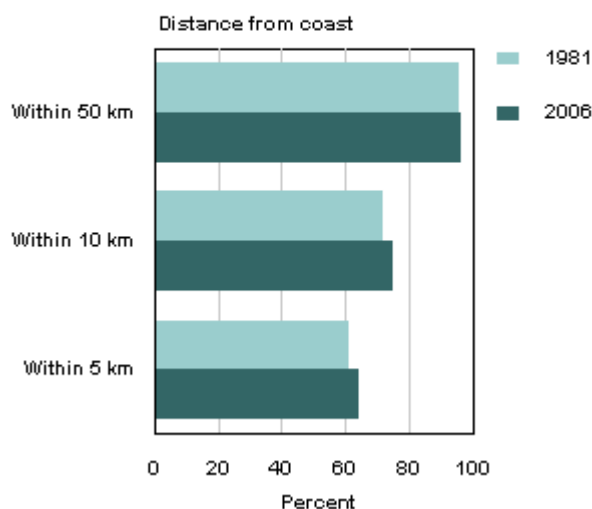
Internal Migration

# Are New Zealanders living closer to the coast?

## Commentary

Sixty-five percent of New Zealanders lived within five kilometres of the coast in 2006, compared with 61 percent in 1981. The proportion living within 10 kilometres of the coast also increased, from 72 percent to 75 percent.

**Figure 1**  
**Percent of New Zealand Population**  
**Living Within 5, 10 and 50 km of the Coast**  
*1981 and 2006 Censuses*



Proximity to the coast differs substantially between regions. In Otago, the proportion of the population living within five kilometres of the coast has fallen since 1981 because of growth in the Queenstown Lakes District. (Queenstown residents live near lakes rather than sea.) In Bay of Plenty, the proportion has risen because of the growth of Tauranga.

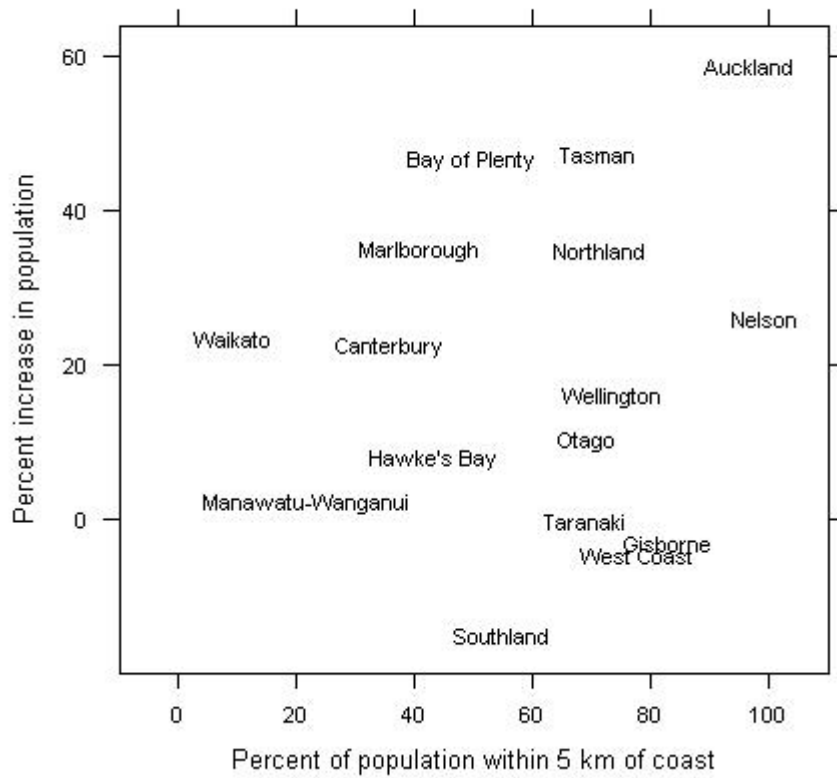
**Table 1**

<b>Percent of Population Within 5 km of the Coast</b> By New Zealand regions, 1981 and 2006 Censuses		
Region	1981	2006
Nelson	100	99
Auckland	97	96
Gisborne	83	86
Wellington	74	76
West Coast	78	75
Northland	71	72
Taranaki	69	72
Tasman	71	72
Otago	69	64
Bay of Plenty	50	60
Southland	55	54
Hawke's Bay	43	42
Marlborough	41	40
Canterbury	36	36
Manawatu-Wanganui	22	22
Waikato	9	11

Regions where populations are more concentrated on the coast have tended to grow faster. On average, an extra 10 percentage points of population living near the coast in 1981 translated to an extra 3 percentage points of population growth over the next 25 years.

Figure 2

Population Growth 1981-2006 Versus Percent of Population Within 5 km of the Coast in 1981



## Information sources

1981 and 2006 Censuses of Population and Dwellings and 2006 Census digital boundaries.

## Technical notes

The distribution of the population by distance to the coast was estimated from data on meshblock boundaries and data on the census usually-resident population. A meshblock is the smallest geographical unit in the census. The distance from the centre of a meshblock to the coast was calculated using GIS software. This distance was then assigned to everyone living in the meshblock.

Treating everyone as if they lived in the centre of their meshblock is obviously an approximation. However, it is a good approximation, because most meshblocks are small. Fifty percent of the New Zealand population lives in meshblocks that are 0.07 square kilometres or less, and 90 percent live in meshblocks that are 4.4 square kilometres or less. Moreover, meshblocks tend to be smaller, even for the same population size, the closer they are to the coast.

Electronic data on [meshblock boundaries](#) can be downloaded from the Statistics New Zealand website, [www.stats.govt.nz](http://www.stats.govt.nz).

The following table presents the data from the figure 1.

**Table 2**

<b>Percent of New Zealand Population Living Within 5, 10 and 50 km of the Coast</b>		
1981 and 2006 Censuses		
	1981	2006
Within 5 km	61.1	64.6
Within 10 km	72.1	75.0
Within 50 km	95.6	96.6

The labels in the second chart are centered on the percent of the population within five kilometres of the coast.

The estimate of 3 percentage points of extra growth was obtained by fitting a regression line to the data shown in the second chart, with weights equal to 1981 population sizes.

## Glossary

Please refer to [Glossary](#).

## Further information

This page is part of a web-based analytical report by Statistics New Zealand.

The report includes more than 10 topics. To see the other topics, go to the [Internal Migration report](#) introduction page.