

## New Zealand History

New Zealand is a sovereign island country in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. The country has two main landmasses—the North Island (Te Ika-a-Māui), and the South Island (Te Waipounamu)—and around 600 smaller islands. It has a total land area of 103,500 square miles. New Zealand is about 1,200 miles east of Australia across the Tasman. Because of its remoteness, it was one of the last lands to be settled by humans. During its long period of isolation, New Zealand developed a distinct biodiversity of animal, fungal, and plant life. The country's varied topography and its sharp mountain peaks, such as the Southern Alps, owe much to the tectonic uplift of land and volcanic eruptions. New Zealand's capital city is Wellington, and its most populous city is Auckland.

Sometime between 1250 and 1300, Polynesians settled in the islands and developed a distinctive Māori culture. In 1642, Dutch explorer Abel Tasman became the first European to sight New Zealand. In 1840, representatives of the United Kingdom and Māori chiefs signed the Treaty of Waitangi, which declared British sovereignty over the islands. In 1841, New Zealand became a colony within the British Empire and in 1907 it became a dominion; it gained full statutory independence in 1947 and the British monarch remained the head of state.

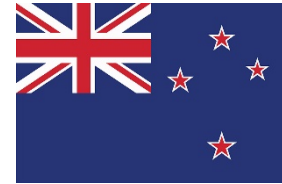


Today, the majority of New Zealand's population of 4.9 million is of European descent; the indigenous Māori are the largest minority, followed by Asians and Pacific Islanders. Reflecting this, New Zealand's culture is mainly derived from Māori and early British settlers, with recent broadening arising from increased immigration. The official languages are English, Māori, and New Zealand Sign Language, with English being very dominant.

A developed country, New Zealand ranks highly in international comparisons of national performance, such as quality of life, health, education, protection of civil liberties, and economic freedom. New Zealand underwent major economic changes during the 1980s, which transformed it from a protectionist to a

liberalized free-trade economy. The service sector dominates the national economy, followed by the industrial sector, and agriculture; international tourism is a significant source of revenue.

Nationally, legislative authority is vested in an elected, unicameral Parliament, while executive political power is exercised by the Cabinet, led by the prime minister. Queen Elizabeth II is the country's monarch. In addition, New Zealand is organized into 11 regional councils and 67 territorial authorities for local government purposes.



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Zealand#History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand#History) , <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode>