

A society worth having

U3A Auckland Network

Auckland
25 July 2026

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Key points



What we did isn't working



A failure of imagination & understanding



Unicorns & short-termism



Better is possible; requires paying it forward

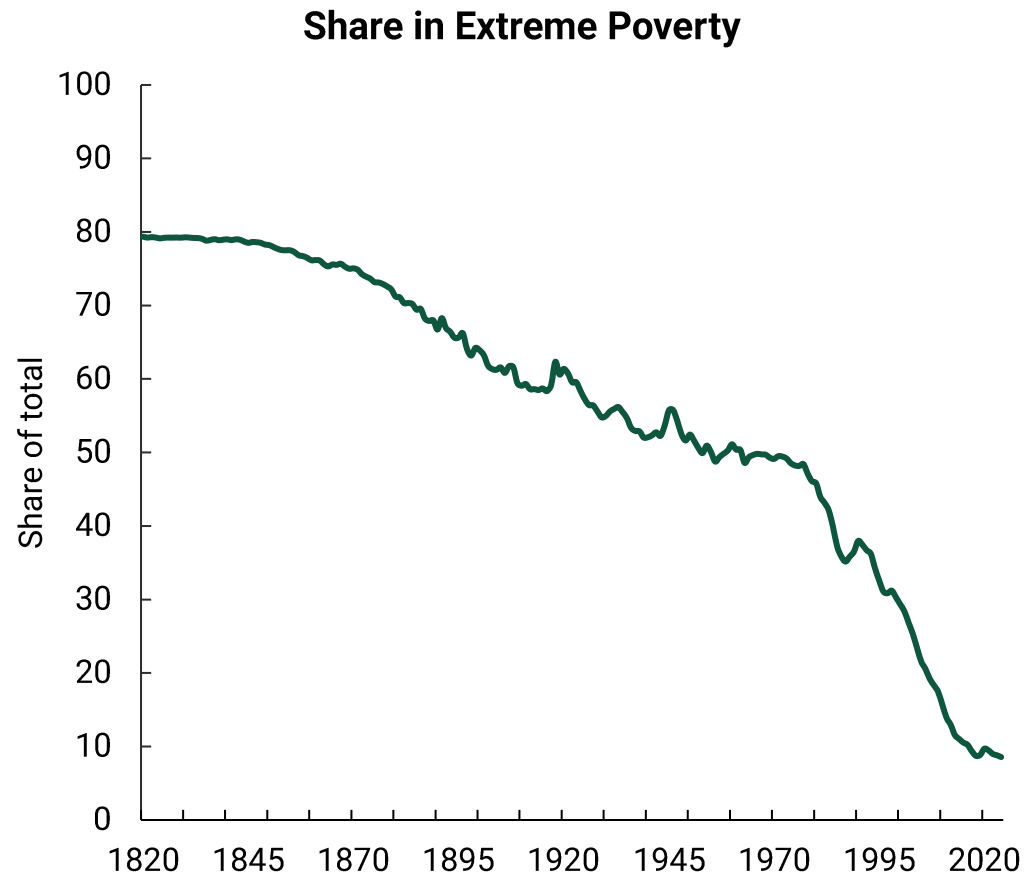


Actions: meaning, coordination, collective action.

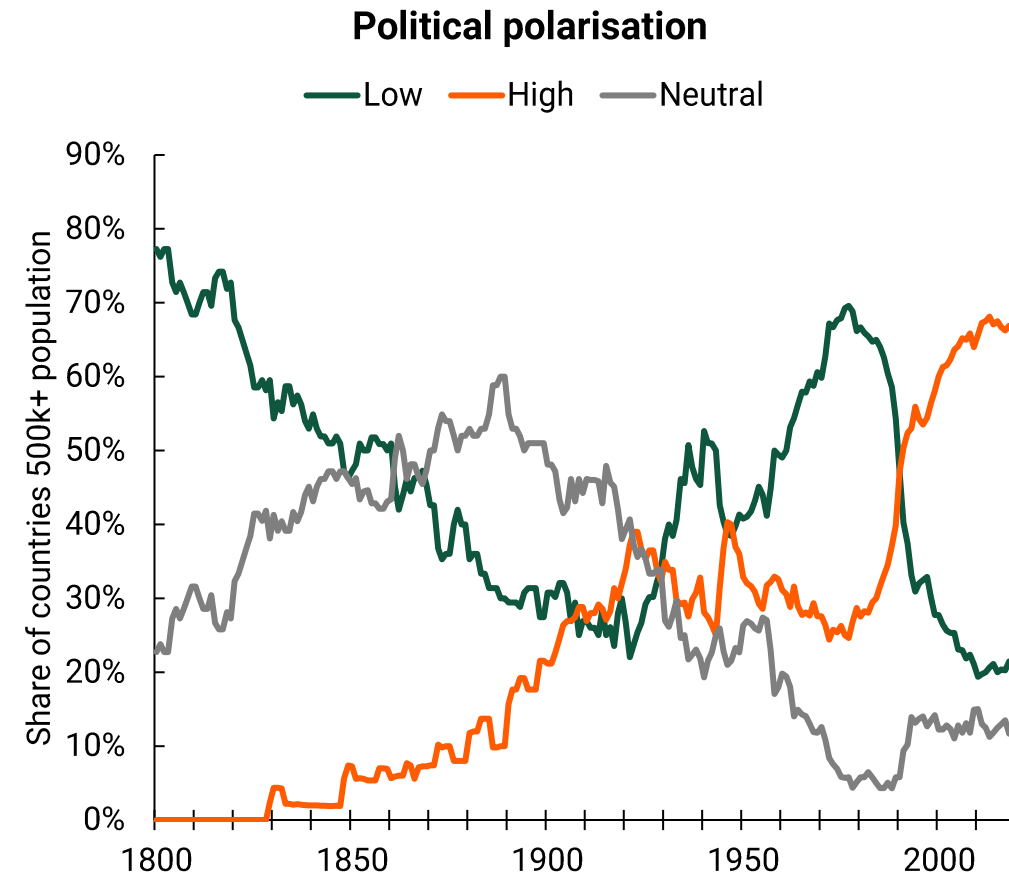
Global disorder

A long trend

The world is getting better & worse

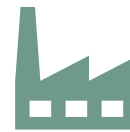


Source: World Bank, Michalis Moatsos (2021), Simplicity Research Hub



Source: Polity Project, Simplicity Research Hub

Institutions really matter



Proximate

Capital
Labour
Technology



Fundamental

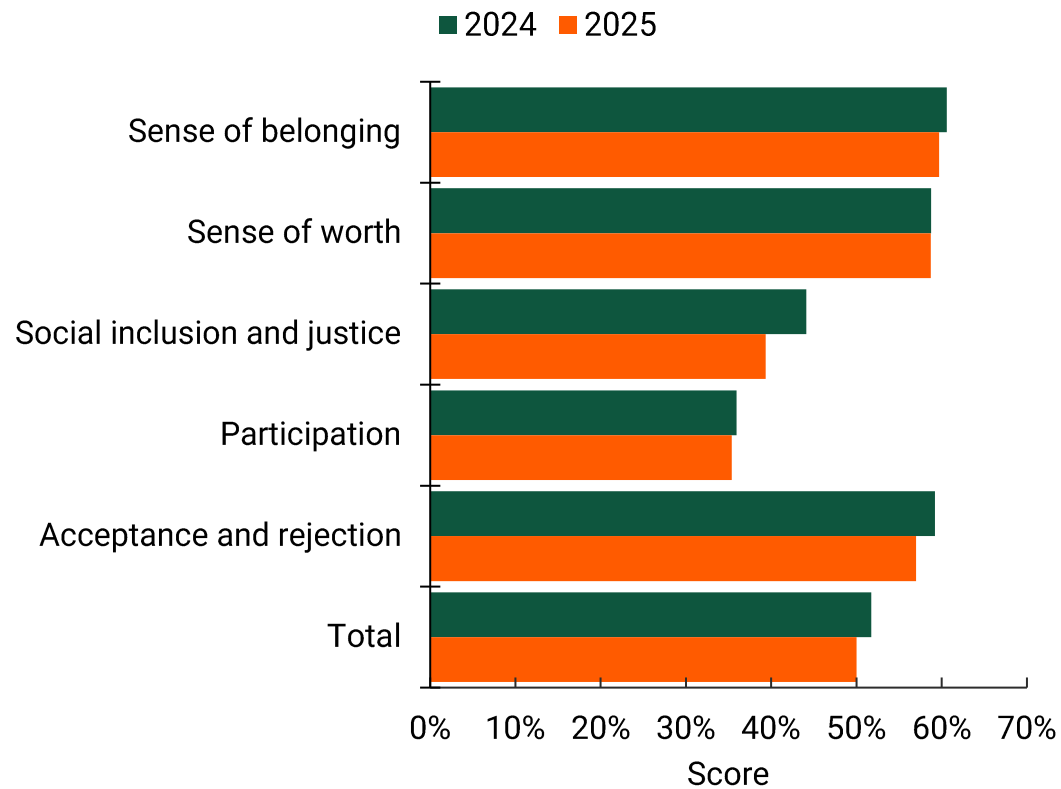
Culture
Institutions
Geography
Luck

We aren't immune

Fraying social cohesion

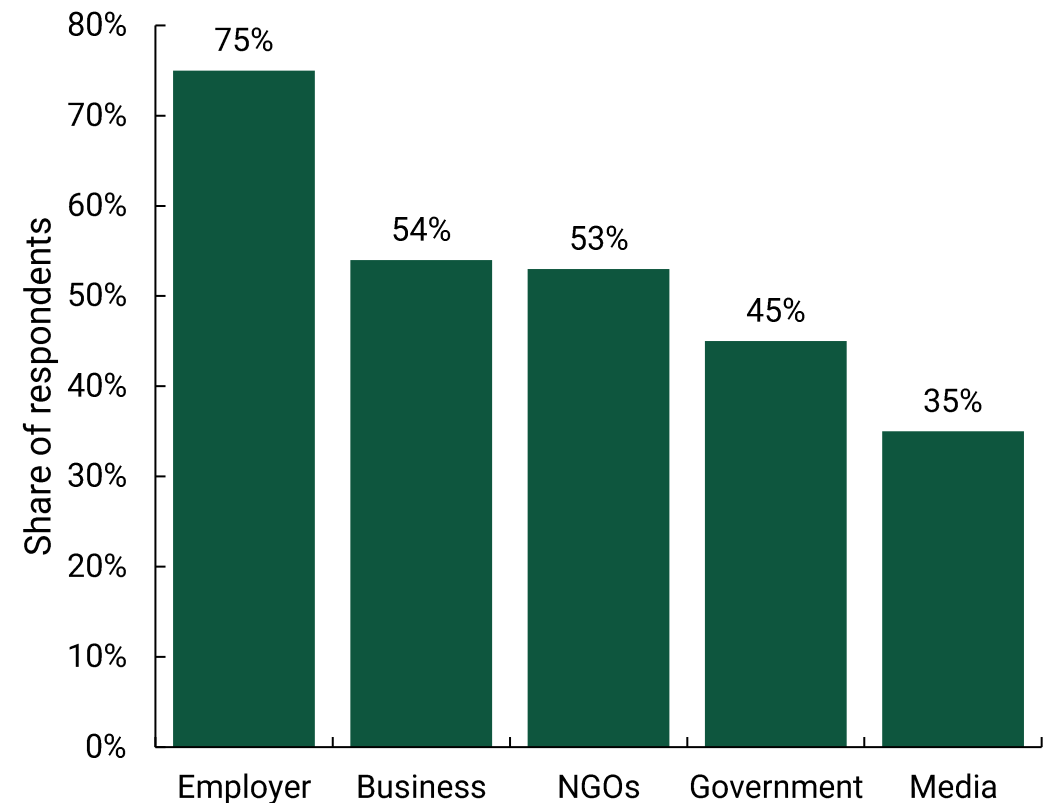
It's a wider malaise of society

NZ Social Cohesion Scores



Source: The Helen Clark Foundation

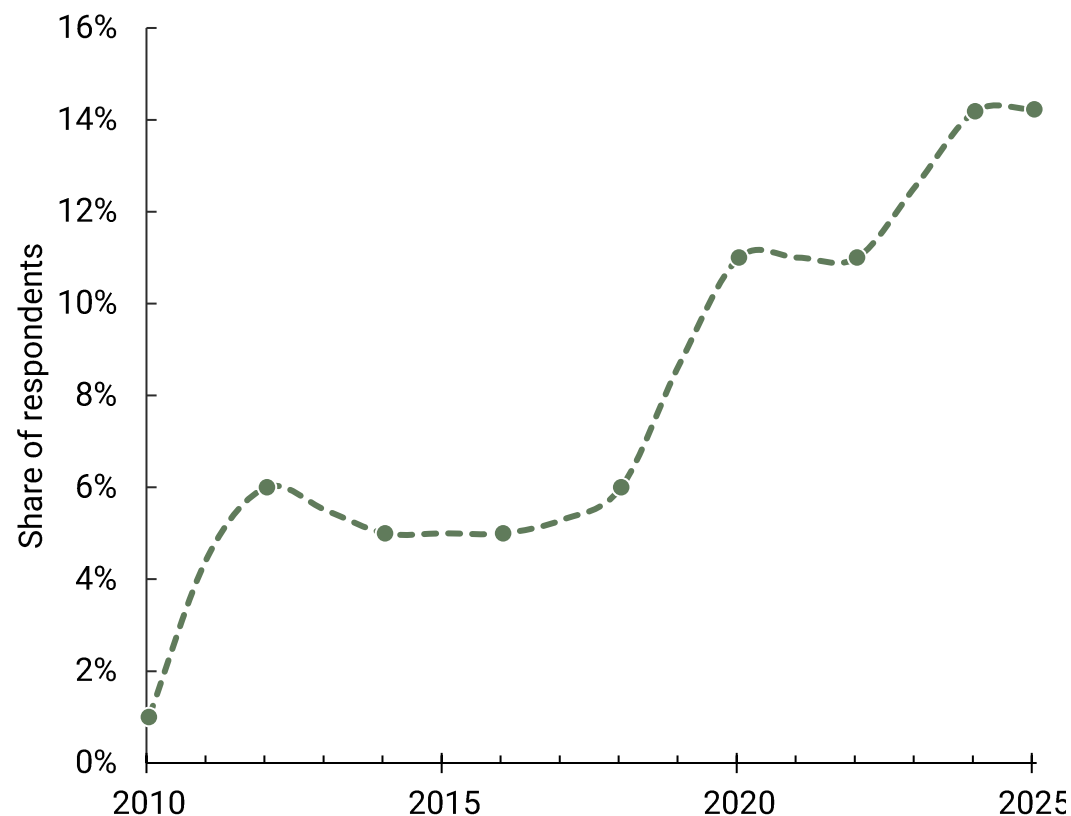
Trust in institutions



Source: Acumen-Edelman Trust, Simplicity Research Hub

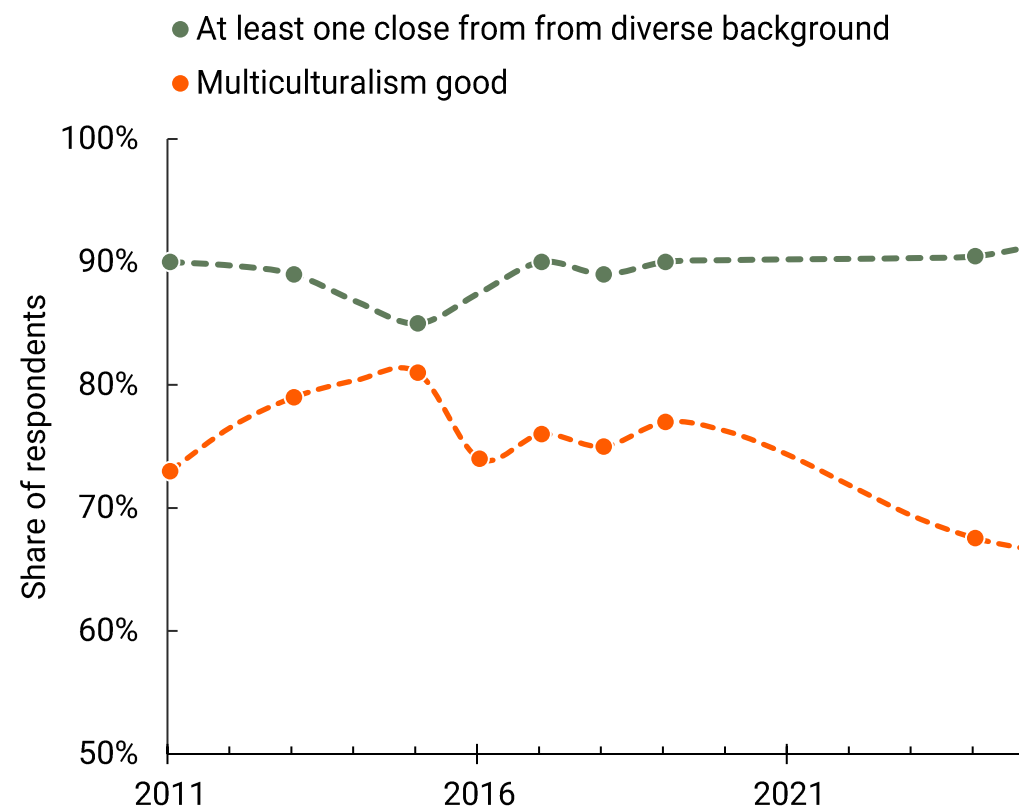
It is part of a broader trend

Feeling isolated often



Source: The Helen Clark Foundation

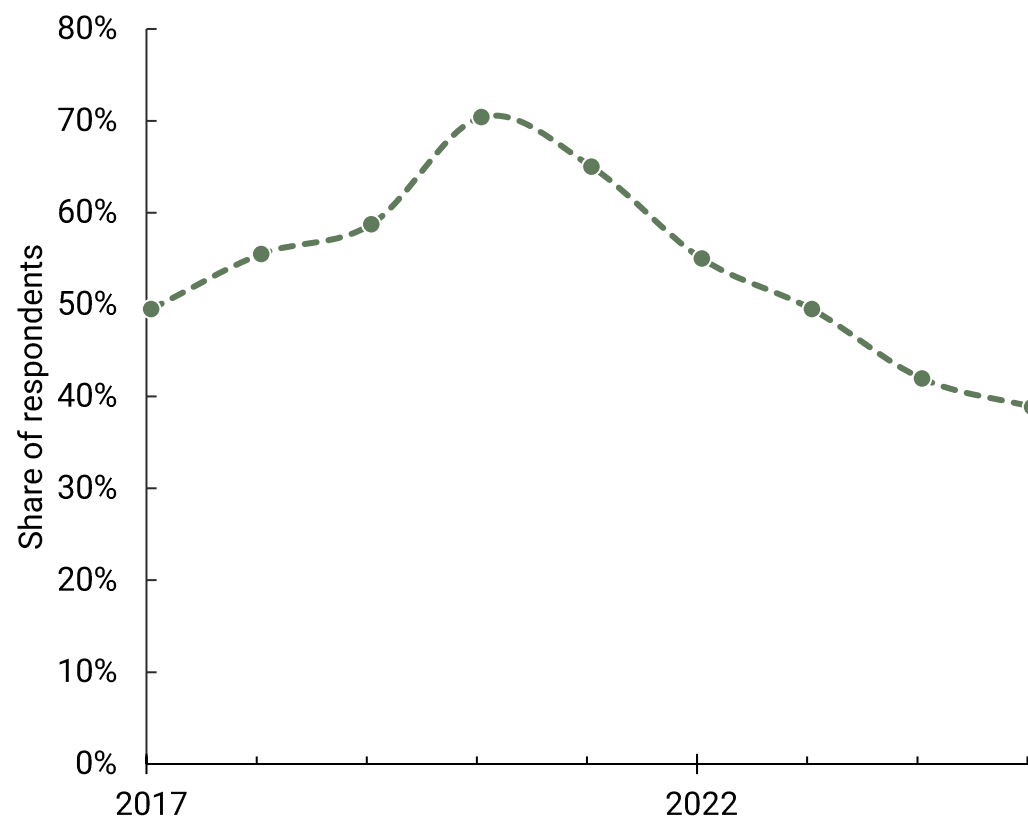
Diverse friends & multiculturalism



Source: The Helen Clark Foundation

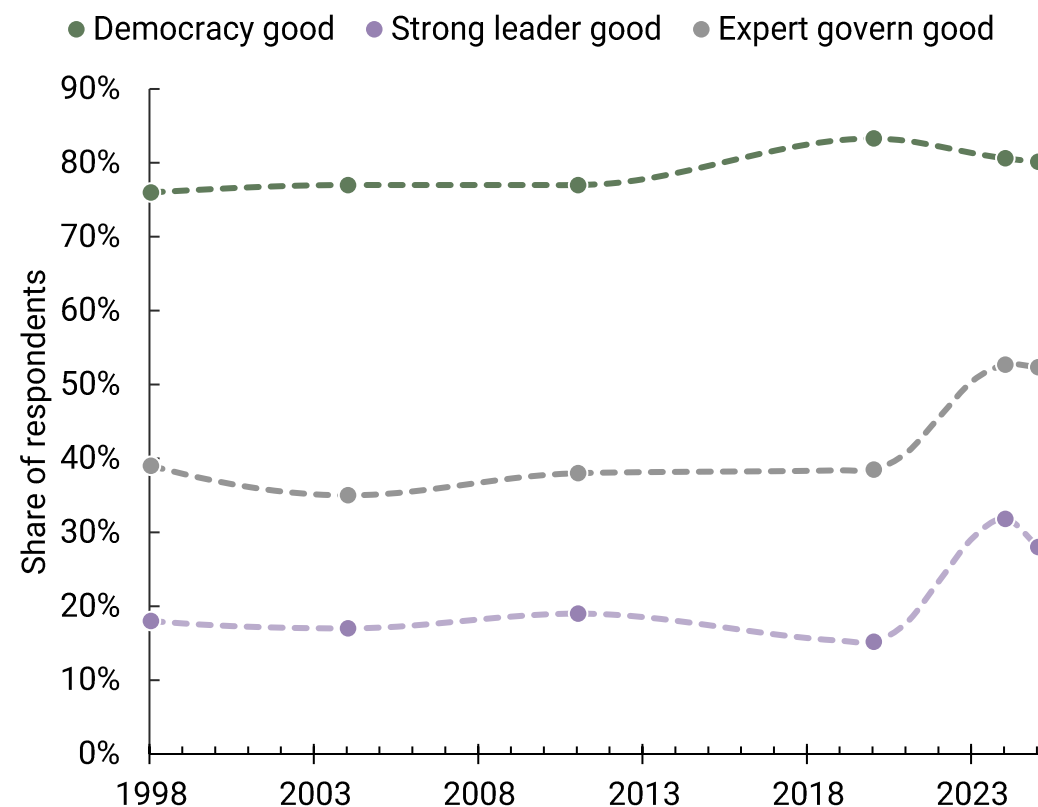
With important consequences

Trust in government



Source: The Helen Clark Foundation

Governance measures



Source: The Helen Clark Foundation

Fragmentation themes

Polarisation within cross-sections of society, by domain

Weighted eta-squared (proportion of variance explained by group membership)

Cross-section	Sense of belonging	Sense of worth	Social inclusion & justice	Participation	Acceptance & rejection	Total
Financial comfort						
Political allegiance						
Employment						
Housing tenure						
Age						
Religiousness						
Region						
Ethnicity						
Social media use						
Number of adults in household						
Number of children in household						
Gender						
NZ/foreign born						

Polarisation of views:

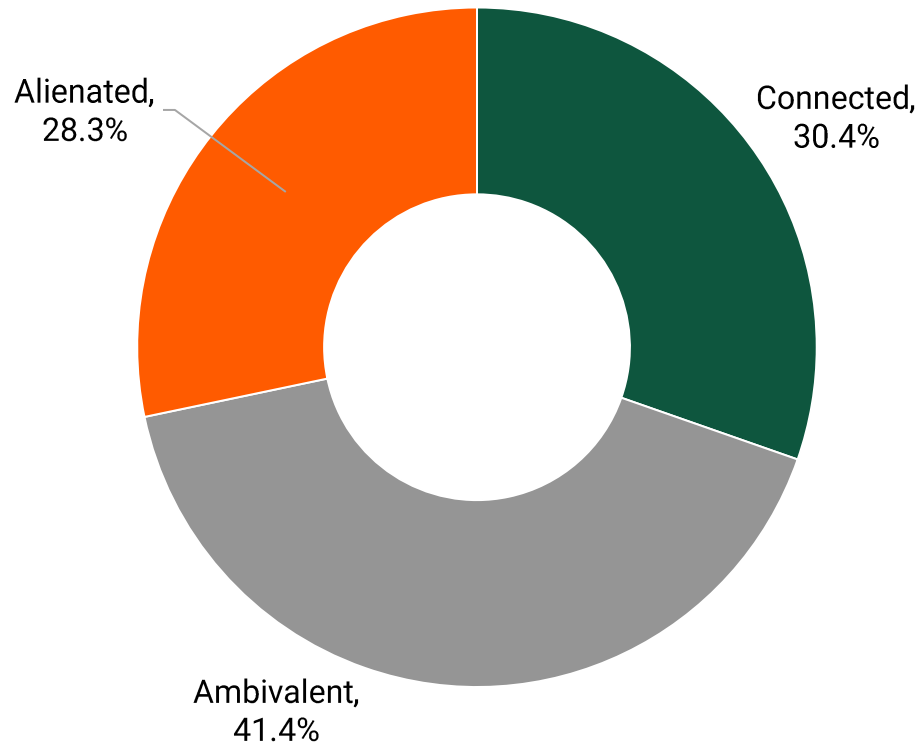
Low

Medium

High

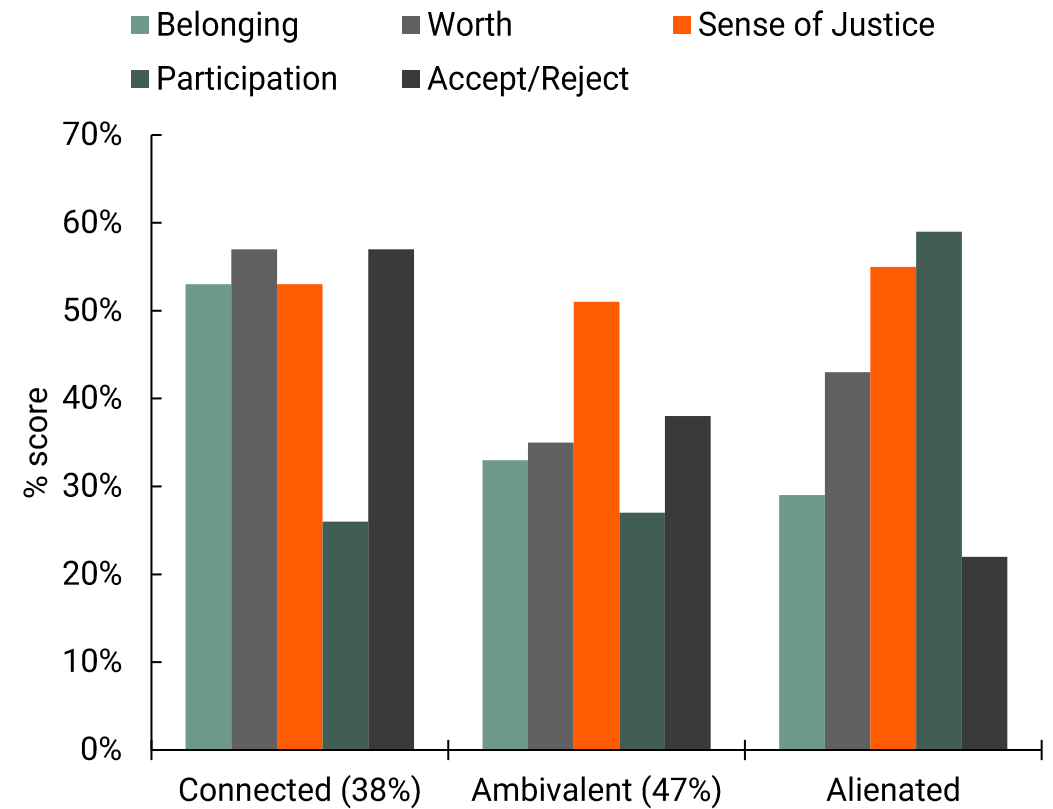
Three New Zealands

Social cohesion clusters



Source: The Helen Clark Foundation

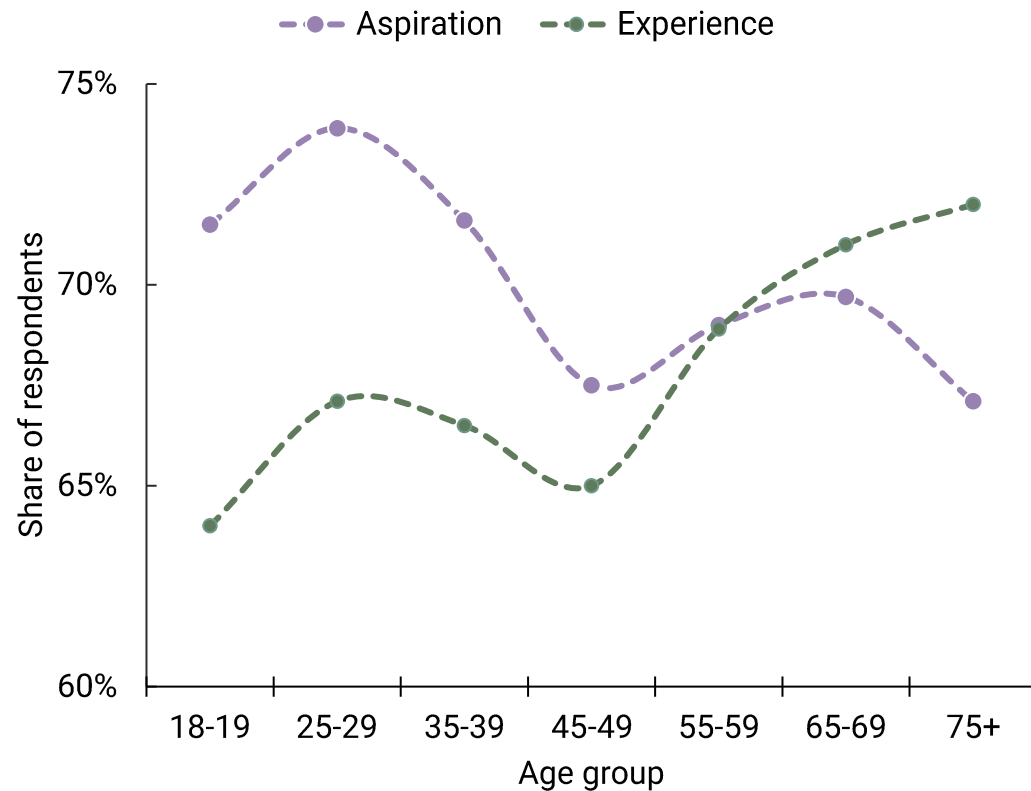
Social Cohesion Components by Cluster



Source: The Helen Clark Foundation

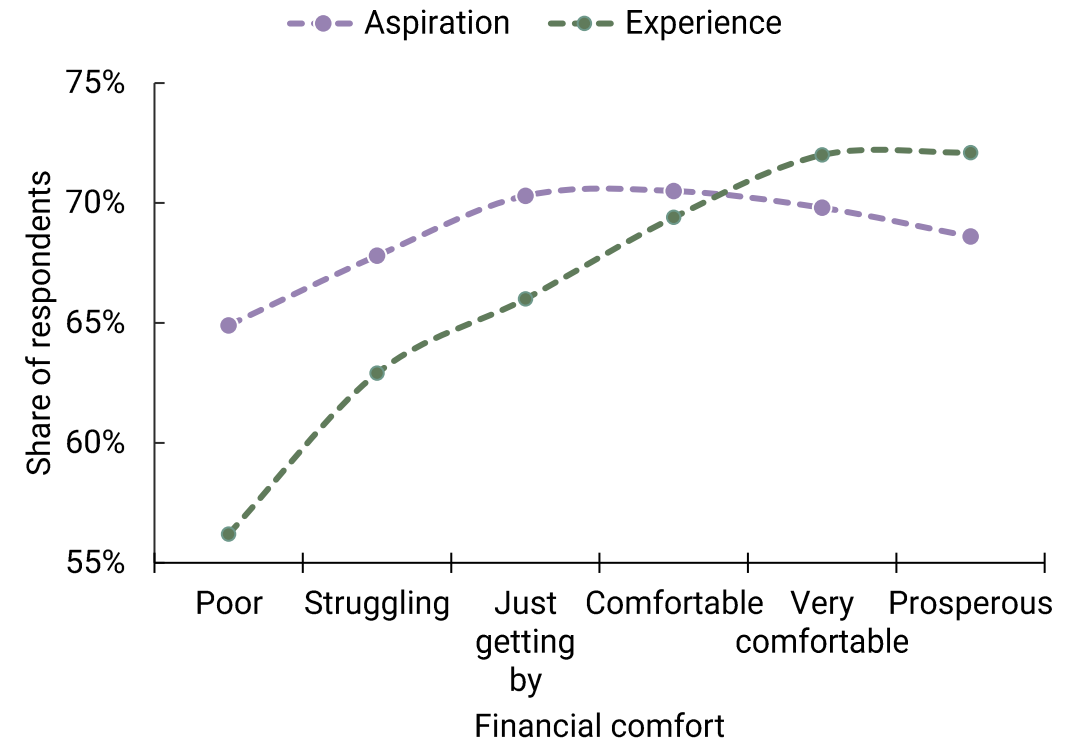
Hope & experience

Social cohesion aspiration vs experience by age



Source: The Helen Clark Foundation

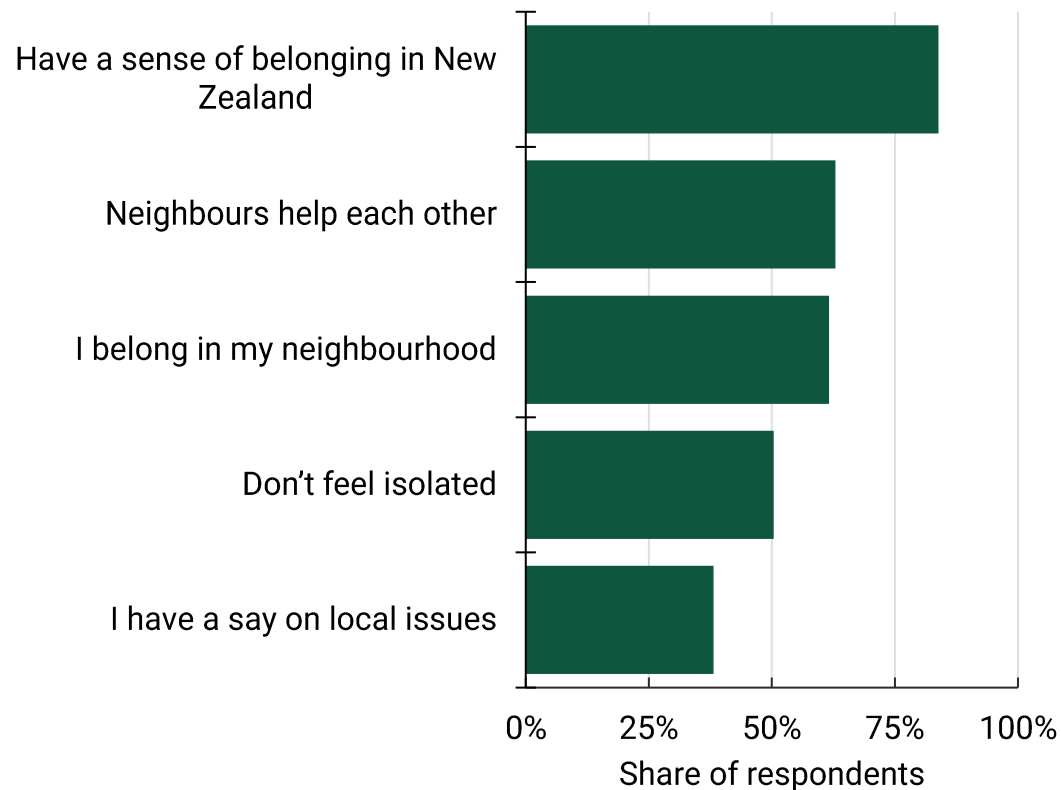
Social cohesion aspiration vs experience by finances



Source: The Helen Clark Foundation

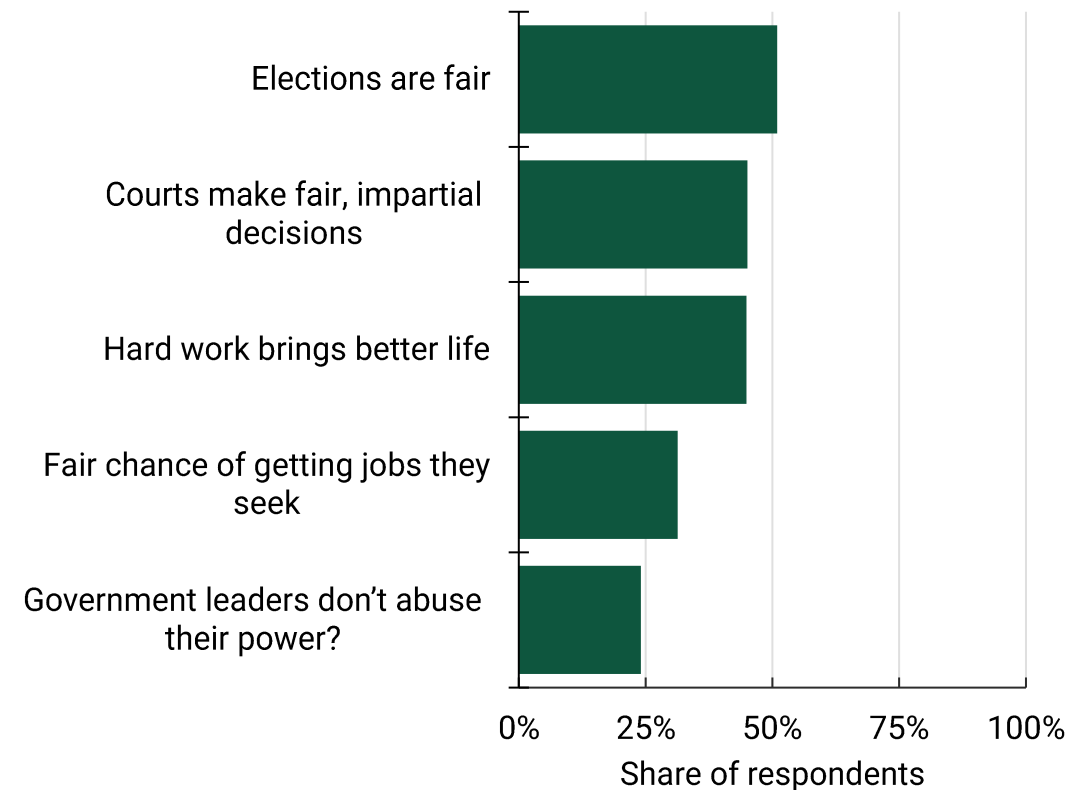
Ideals are a start, but experience...

Sense of belonging



Source: The Helen Clark Foundation

Trust in institutions

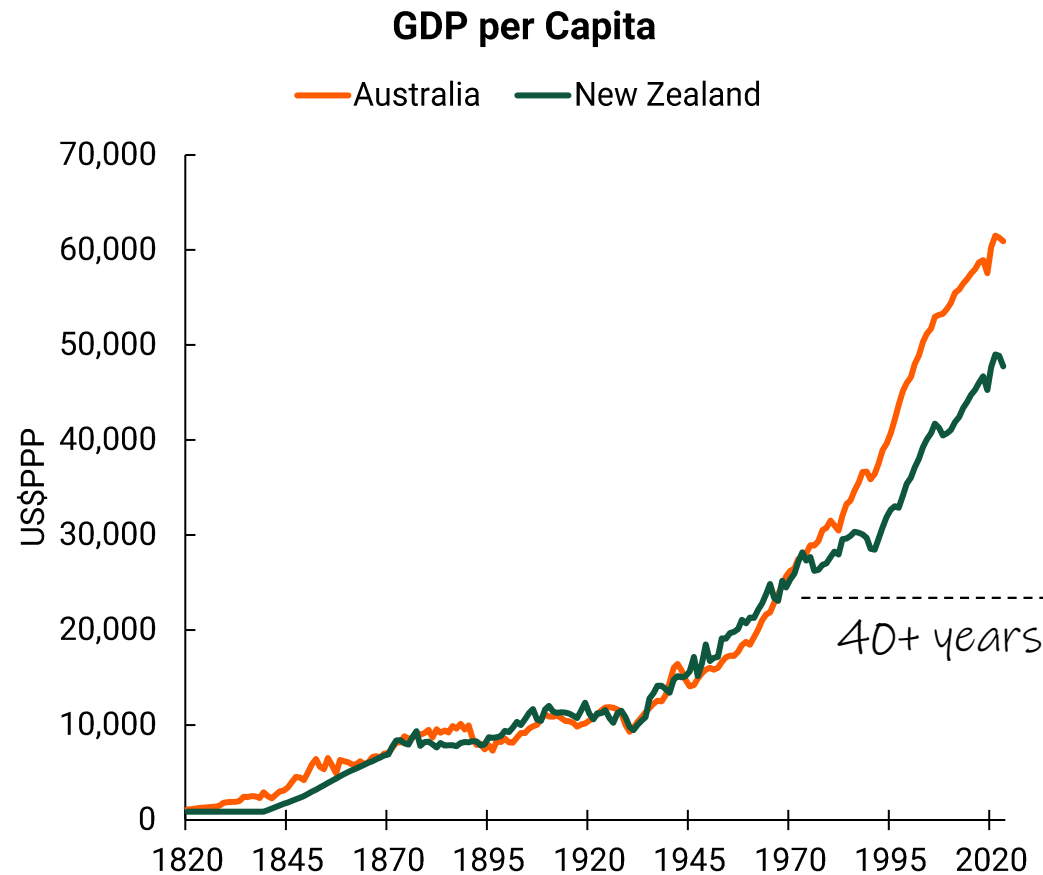


Source: The Helen Clark Foundation

We have pressures

We are running out of time

What we did isn't working



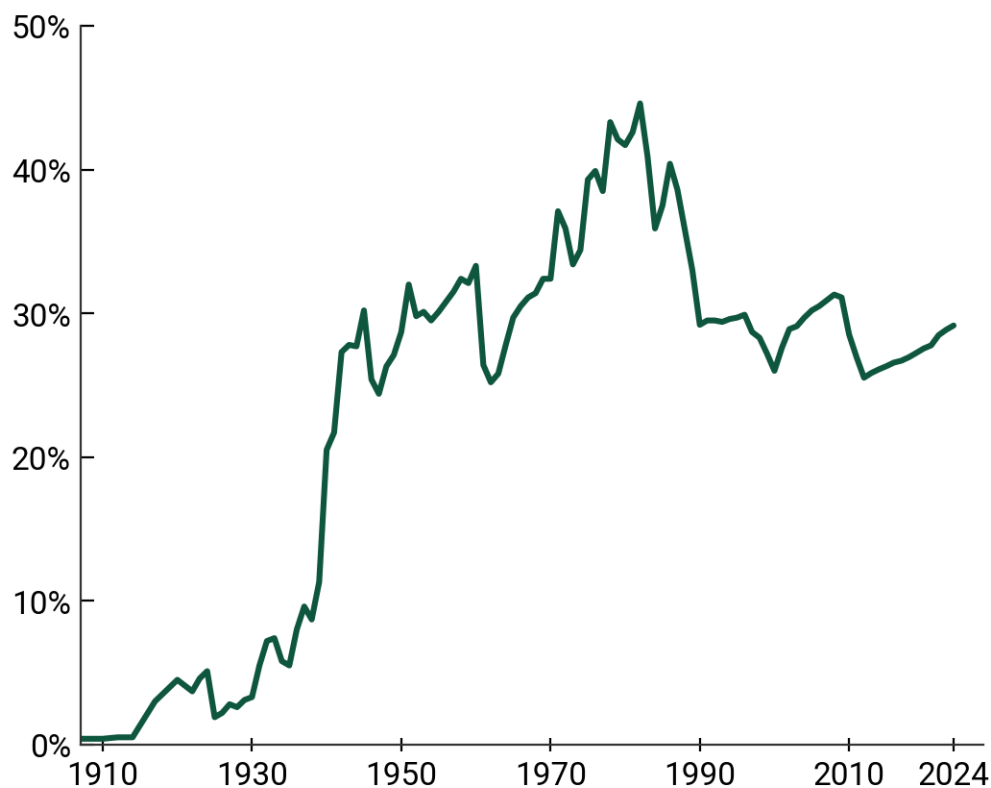
Source: Maddison Database, IMF, Simplicity Research Hub



Source: MSD, NZIER, Statistics New Zealand, Simplicity Research Hub

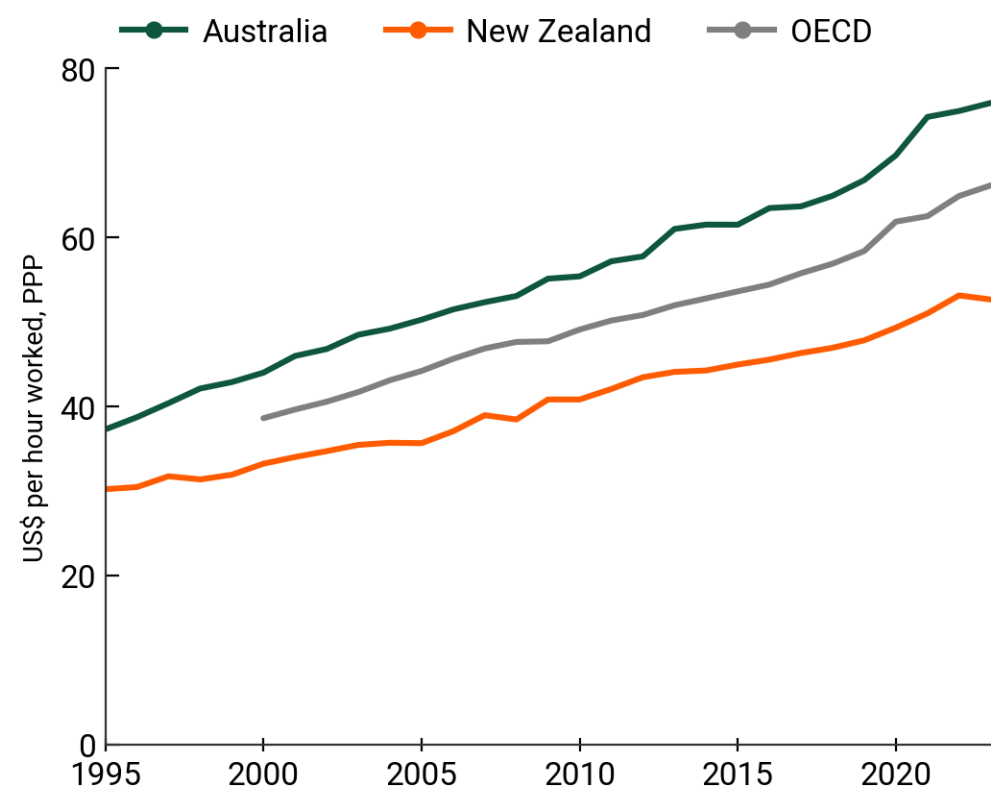
Lower taxes, but...

Average marginal income tax rate, NZ, 1907–2024



Source: IRD, Treasury, Statistics NZ, Simplicity Research Hub

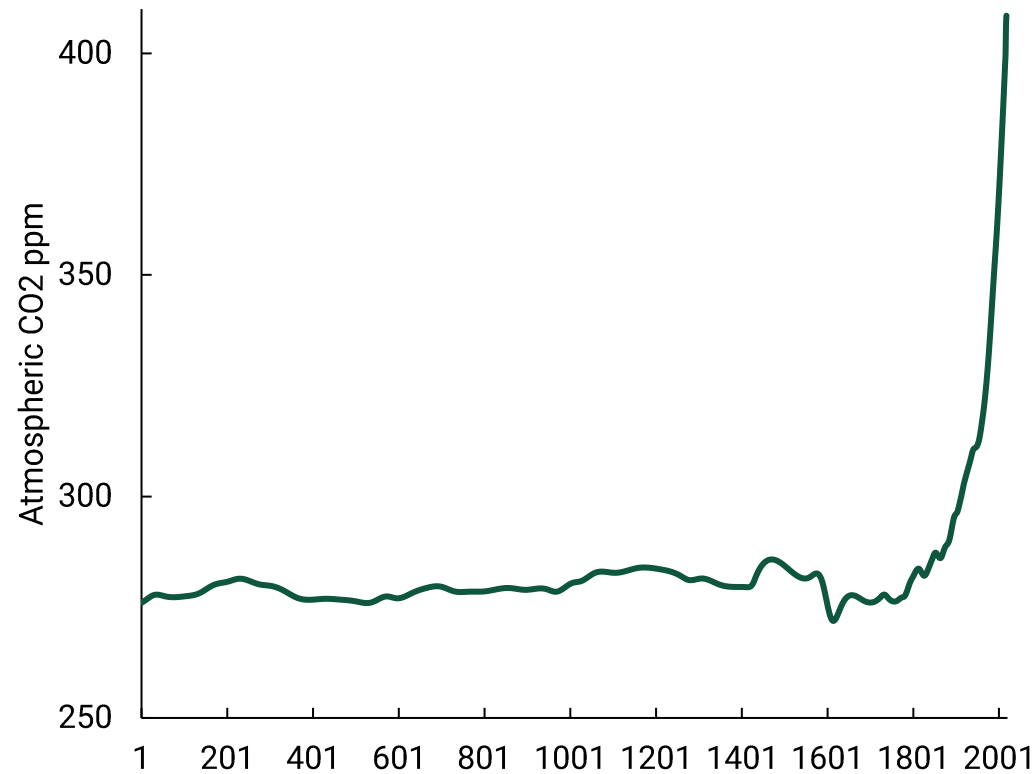
GDP per hour worked



Source: OECD, Simplicity Research Hub

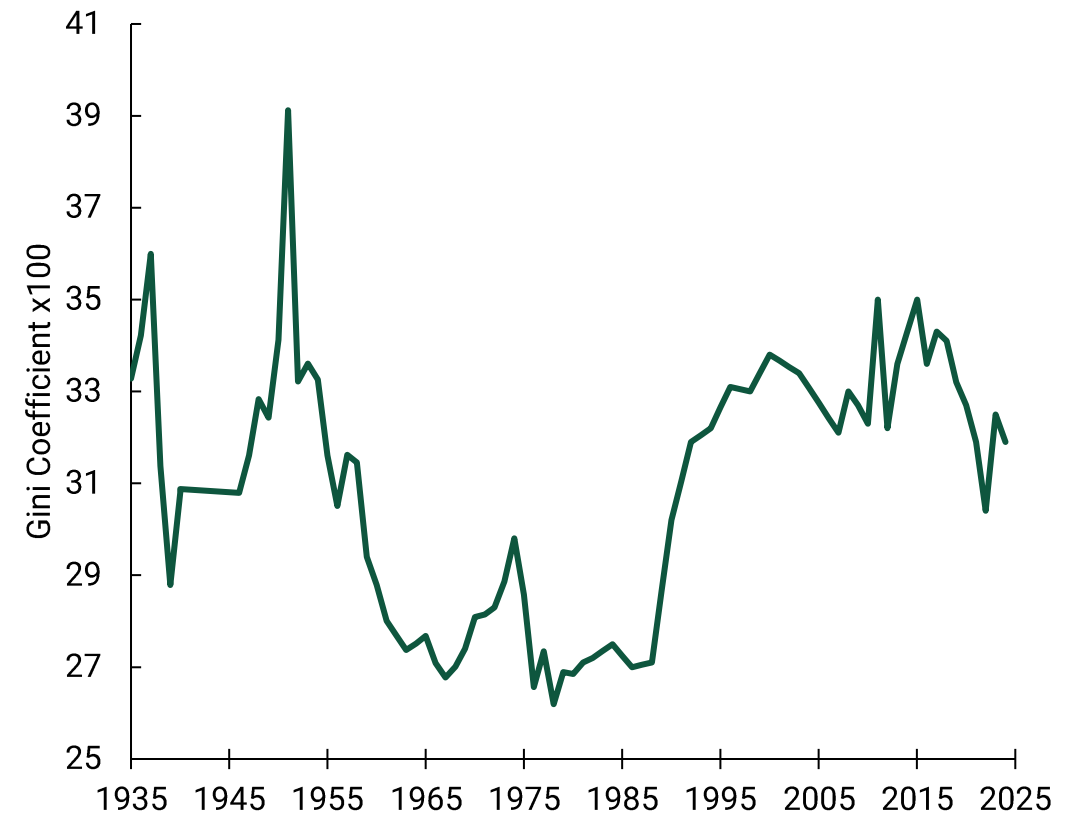
Infrastructure deficit plus...

Atmospheric CO2



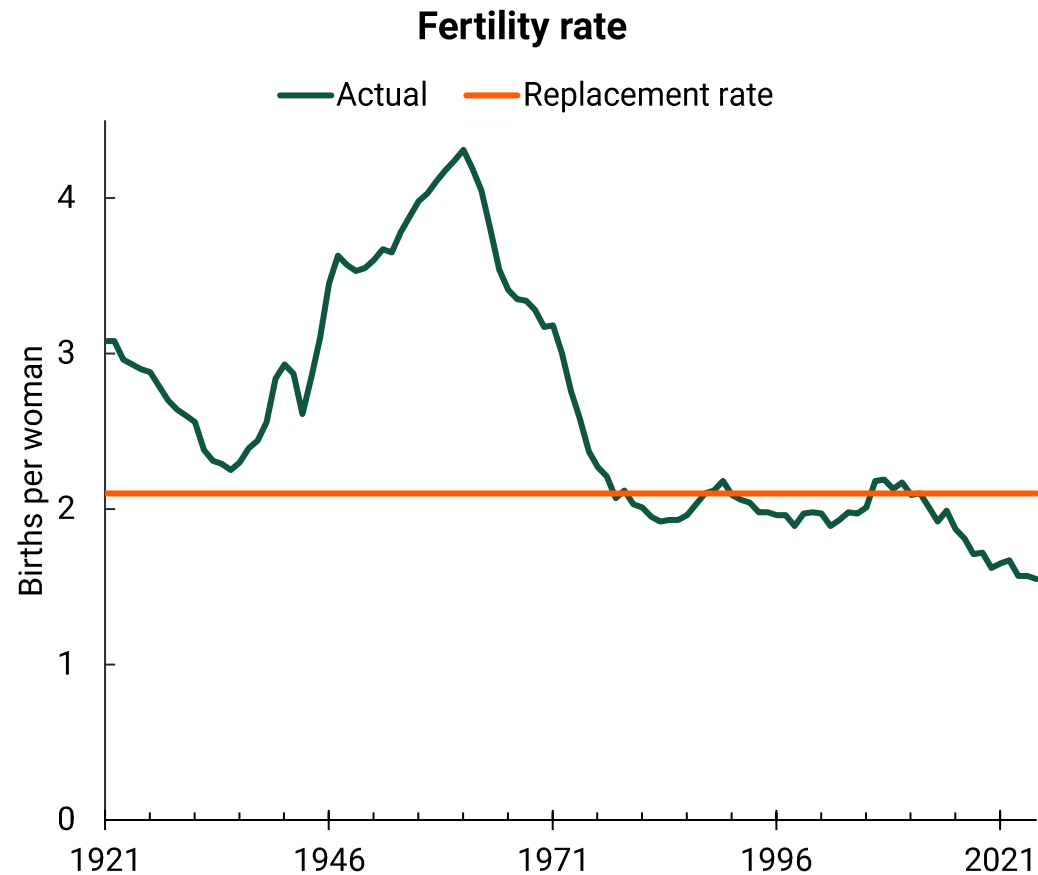
Source: Scripps CO2 Program, NOAA, Simplicity Research Hub

NZ Income inequality

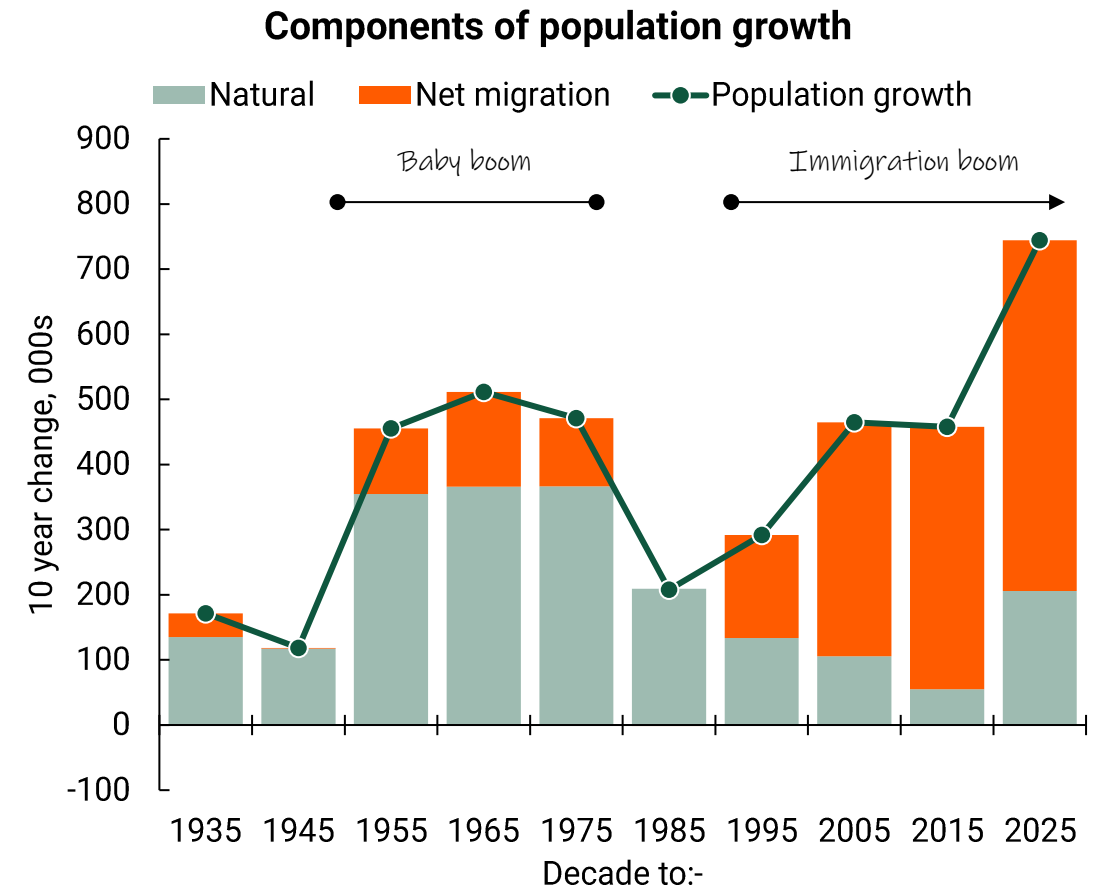


Source: MSD, NZIER, Statistics New Zealand, Simplicity Research Hub

Not enough babies

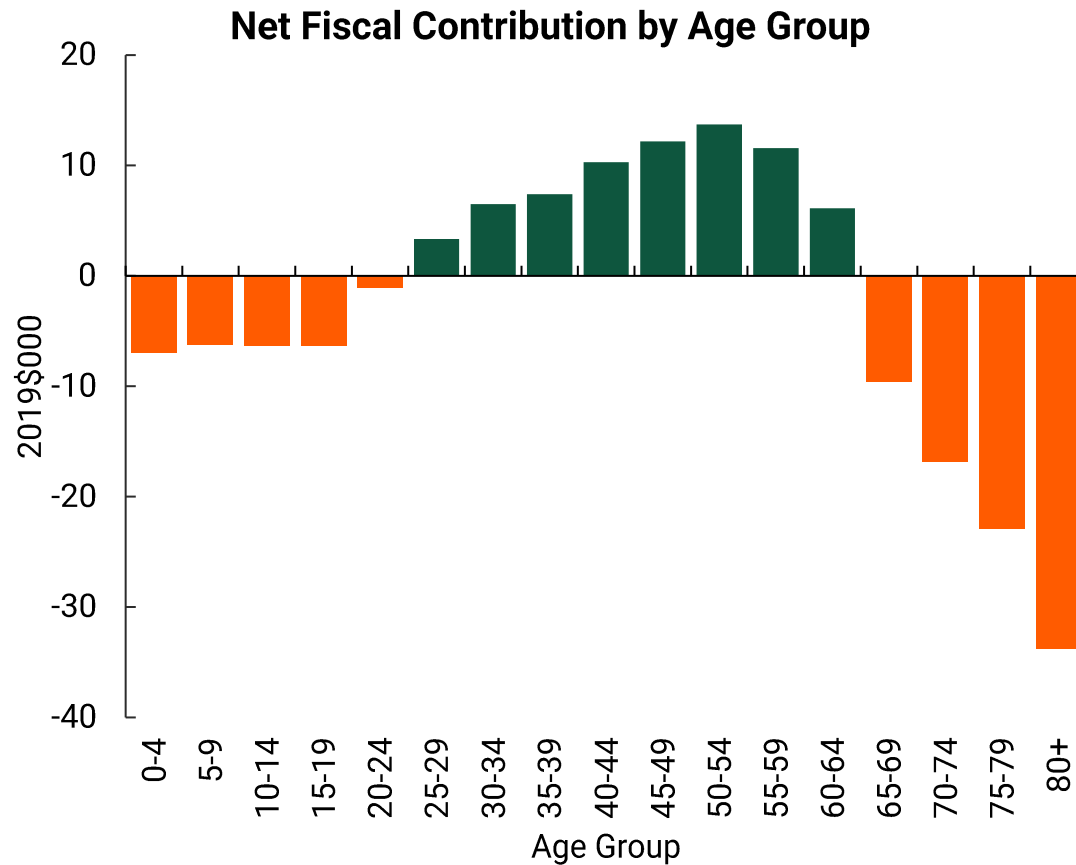


Source: Statistics NZ, Simplicity Research Hub

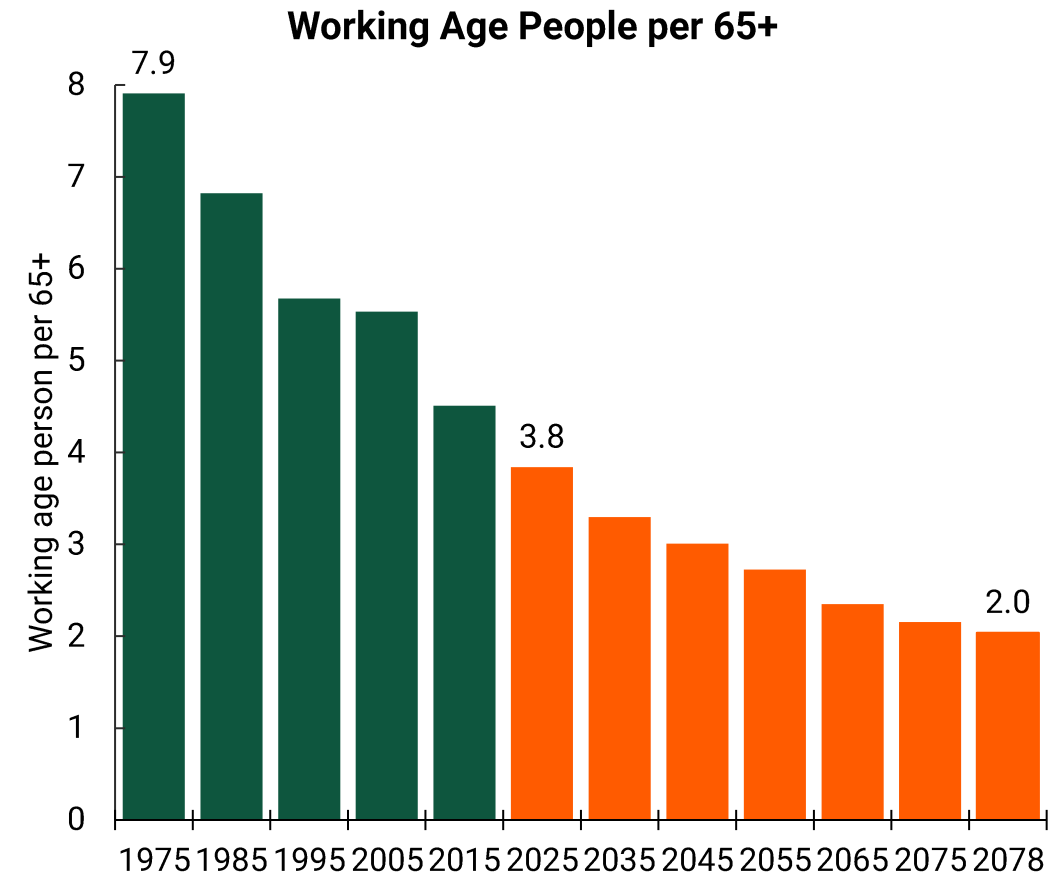


Source: Statistics NZ, Simplicity Research Hub

We are set for a young population



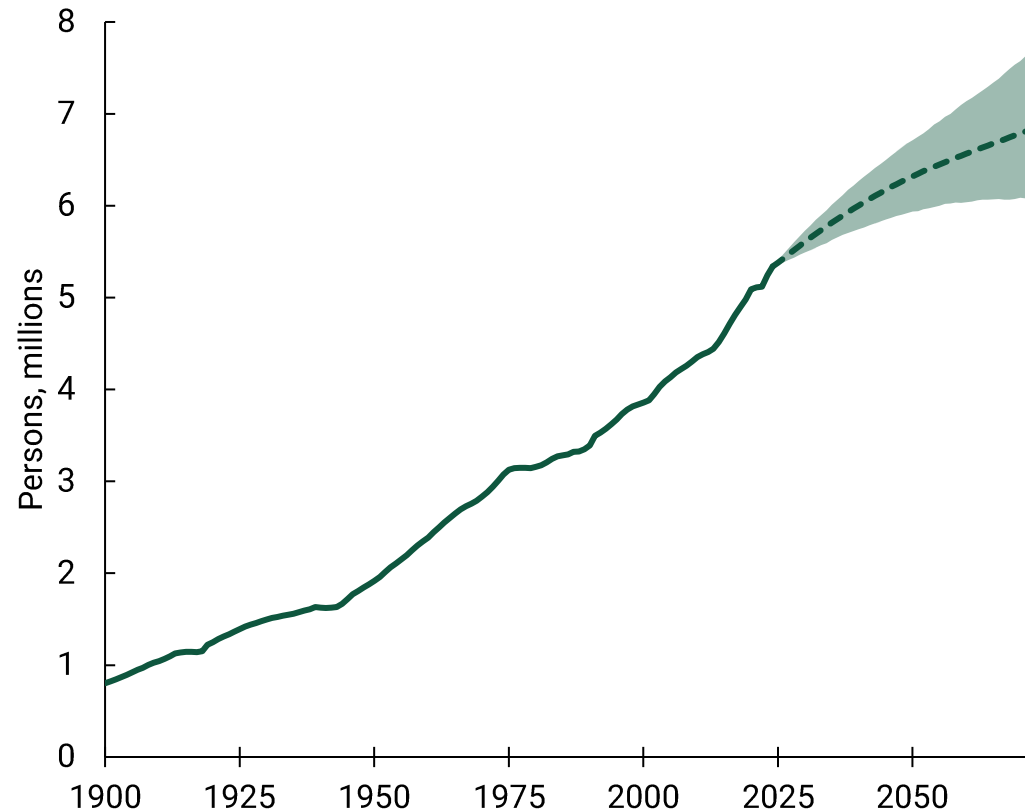
Source: NZ Treasury, Simplicity Research Hub



Source: Statistics NZ, Simplicity Research Hub

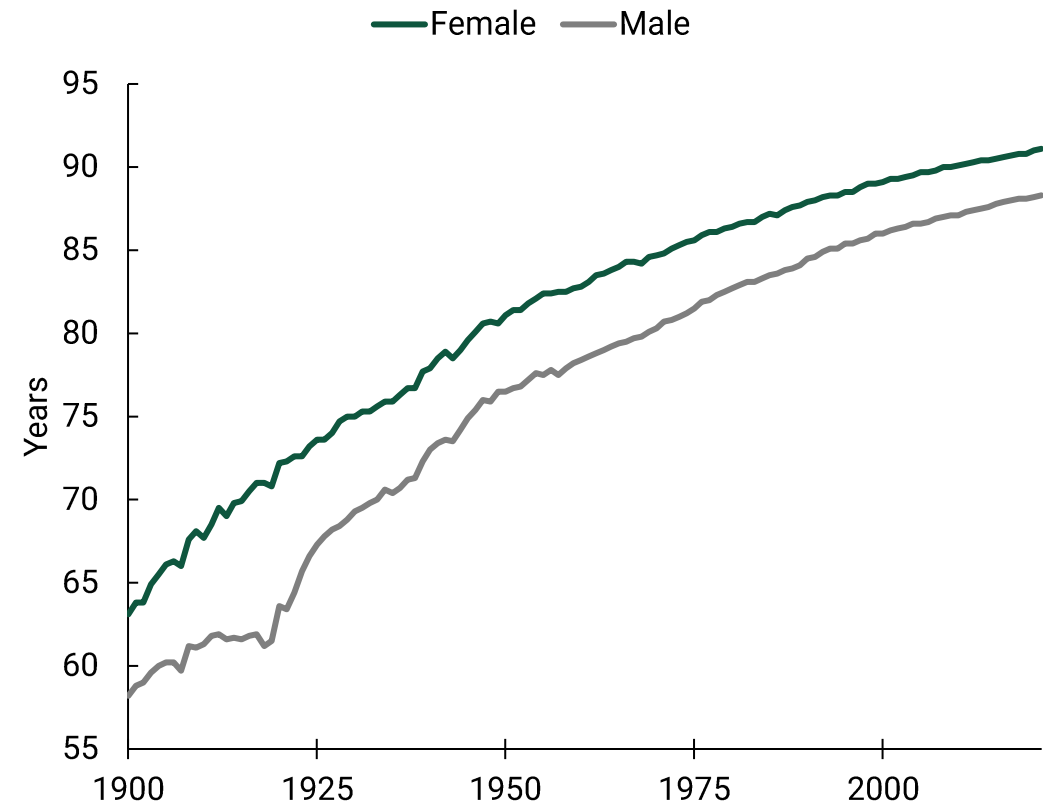
There are reasons to be hopeful...

NZ Population: Actual & Projections



Source: Statistics NZ, S Eaqub

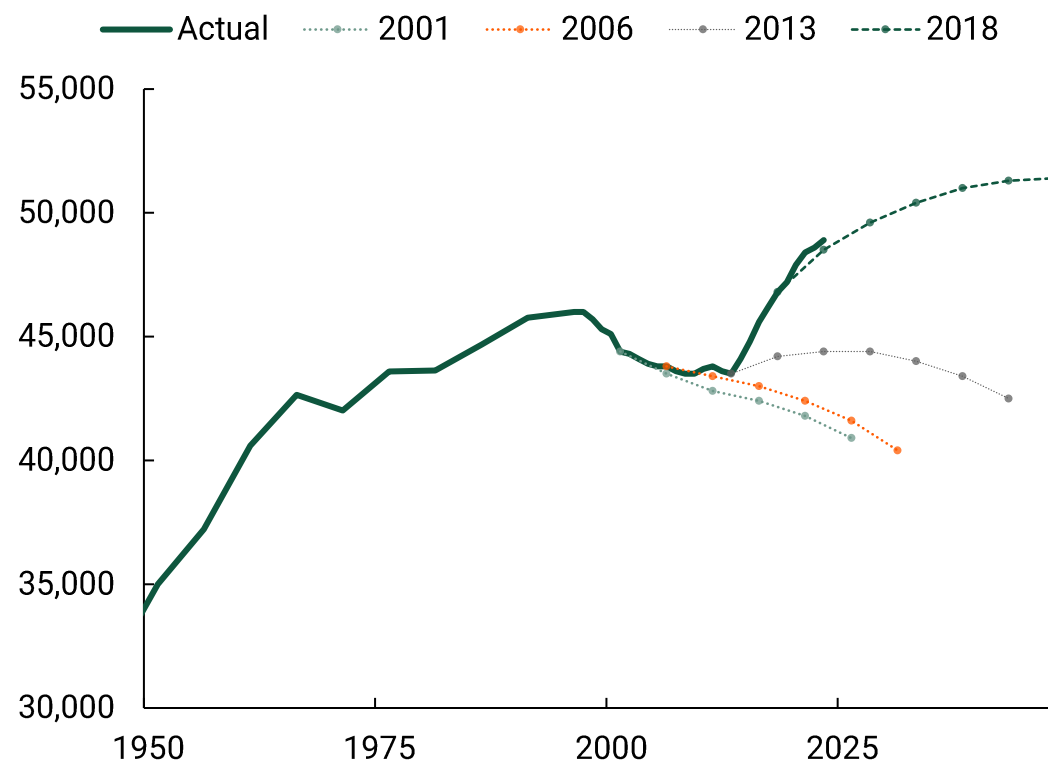
Life Expectancy at Birth



Source: Statistics NZ, S Eaqub

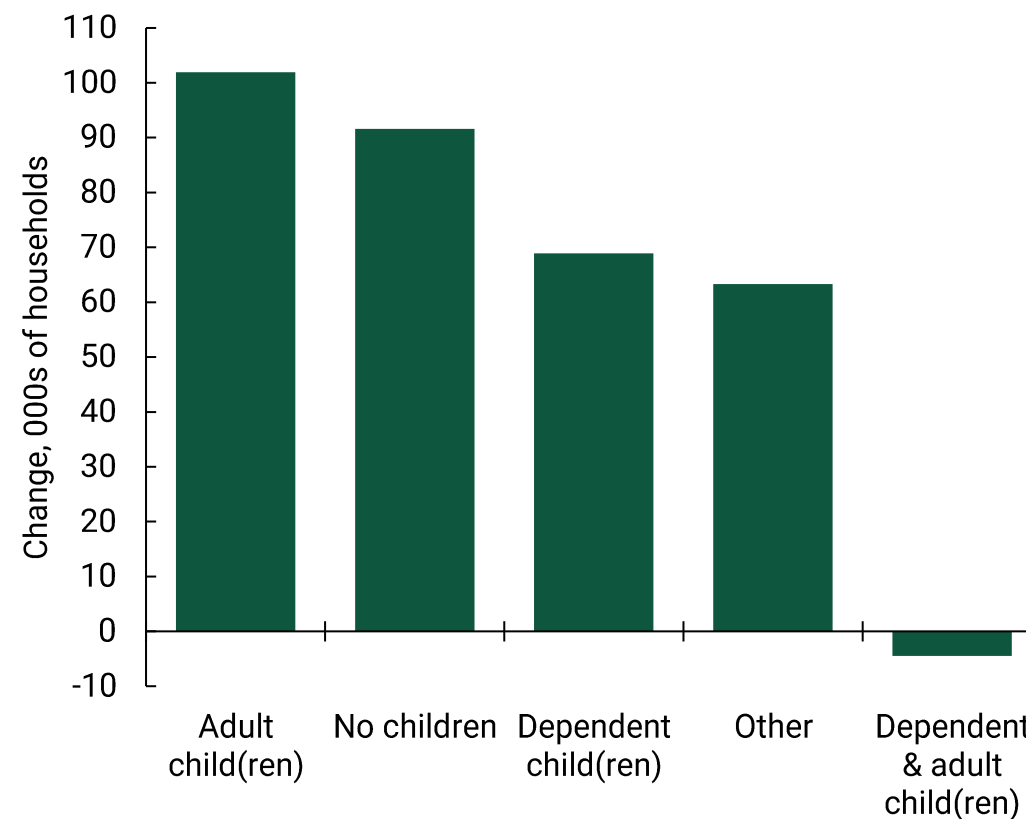
The future will surprise

**Whanganui Population:
Actual & projection vintages**



Source: Statistics NZ, S Eaqub

Growth in households by broad child status

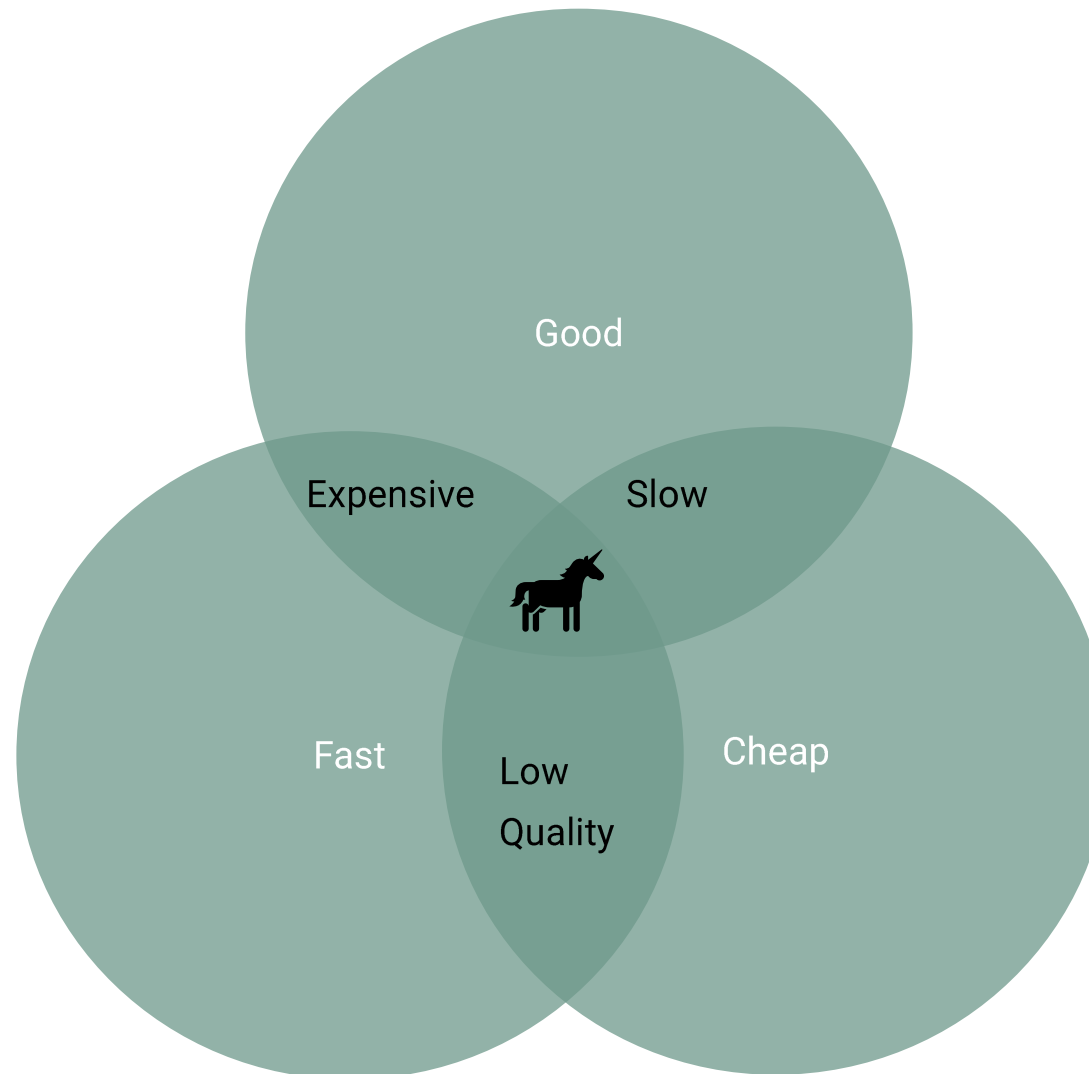


Source: Statistics NZ, S Eaqub

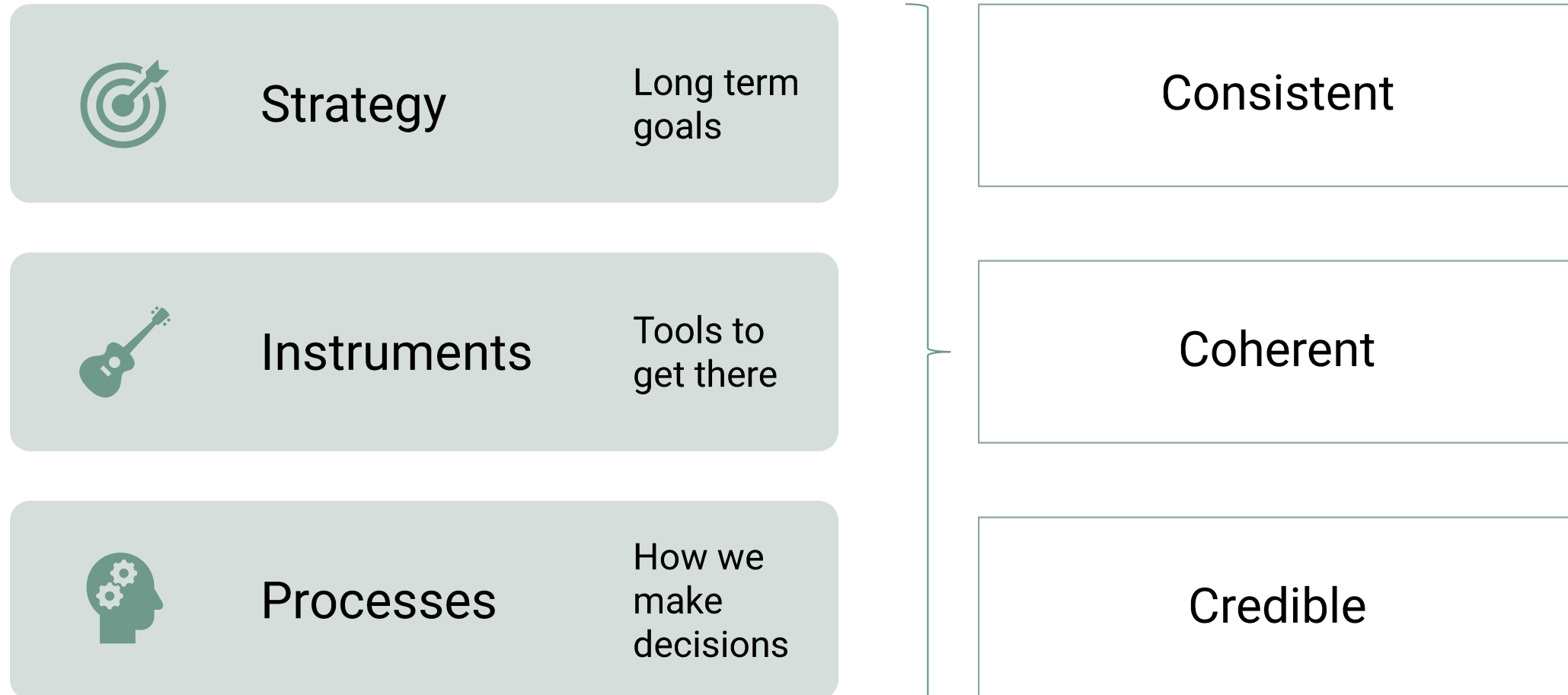
So what could work?

Invisible hand of the market vs the invisible fabric of society

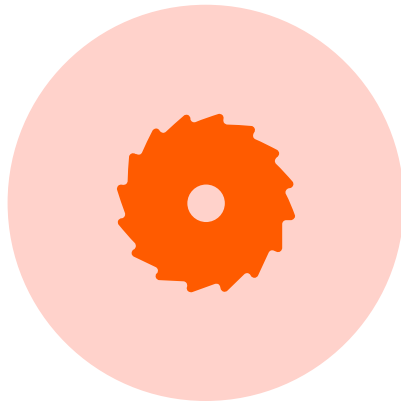
From unicorns...



...to what actually works



Theory of change: what?



Tinkering with existing
ways



Introduce new ways



Change the goals of
what we want to achieve

The big ideas are the same



Investing in our people



Lifting our gaze...



Investing in social infrastructure



...bearing costs and...

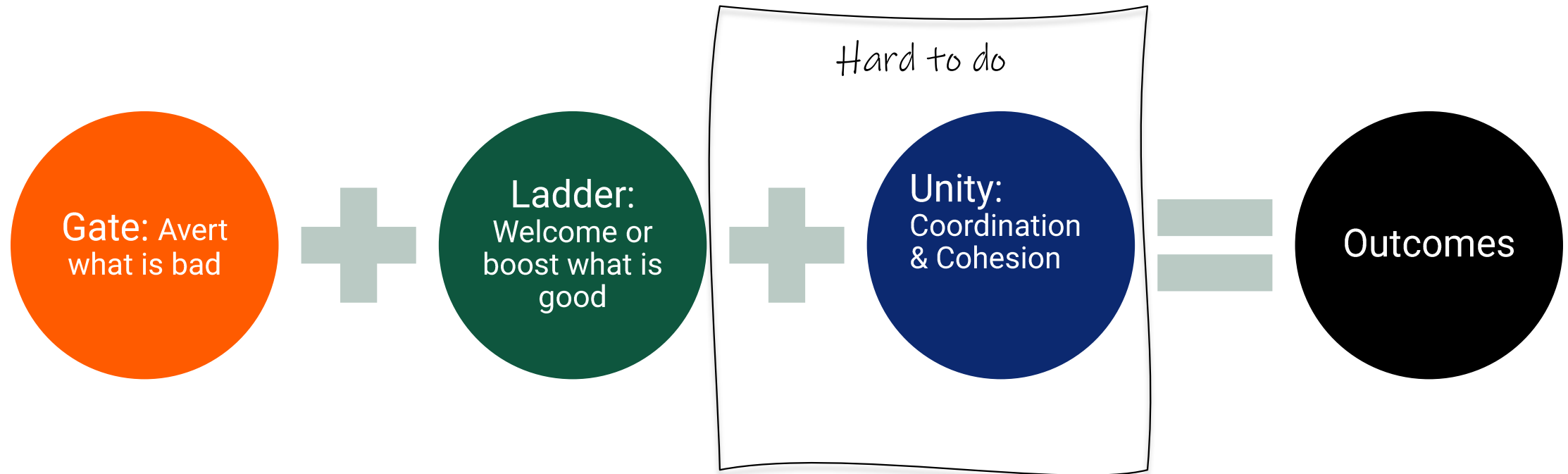


Investing in physical infrastructure



...sharing benefits

Theory of change: How?

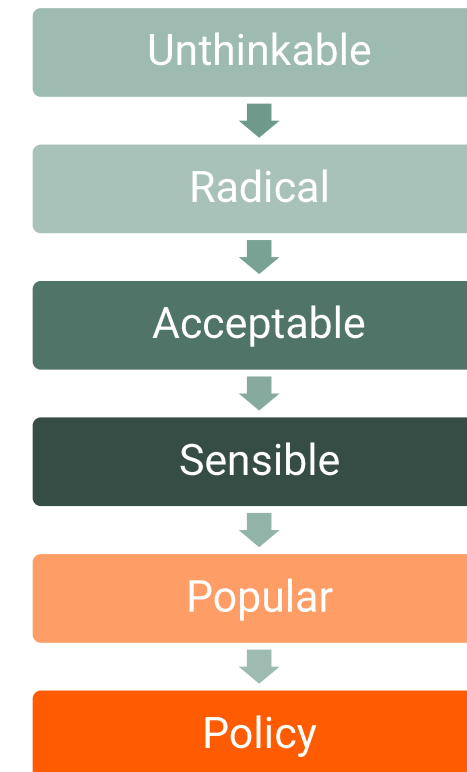


What role will you play?

Agents of social change

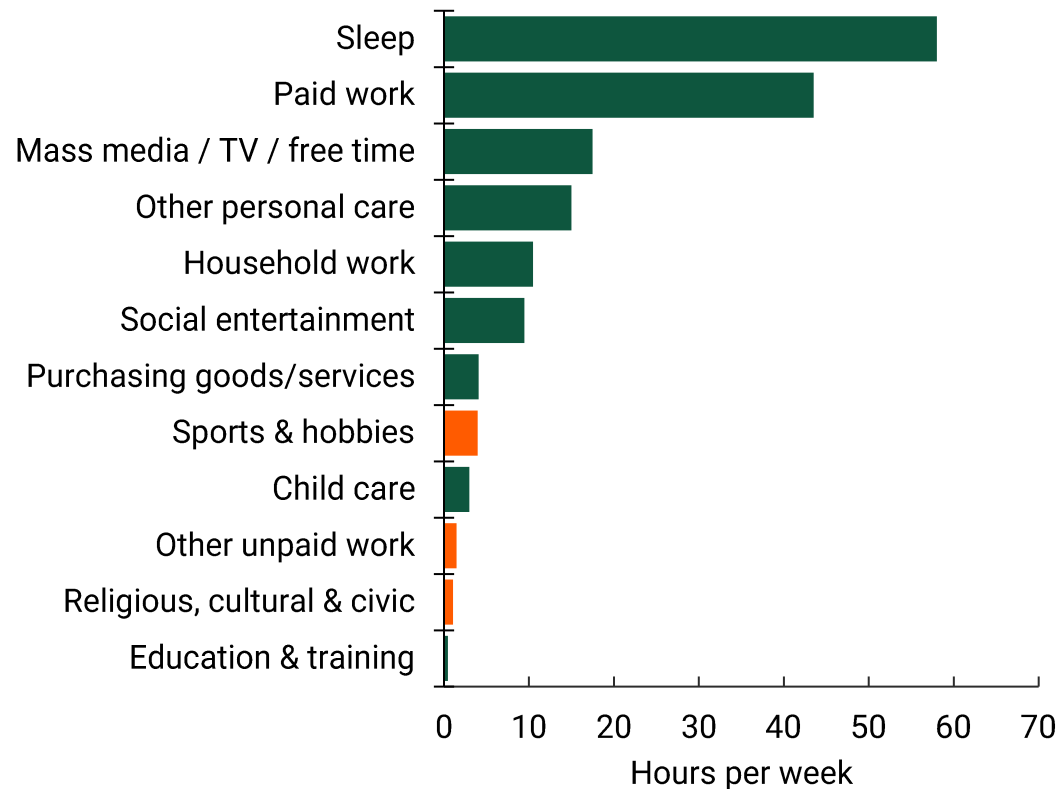
Rebel	(e.g. Just Stop Oil or Extinction Rebellion)
Citizen	(e.g. general public and influencers)
Reformer	(e.g. Sustainable Development Goals or green growth)
Change Agent	(e.g. degrowth)

Overton window



Meet across difference

The average week of a worker



Source: Statistics NZ, Simplicity Research Hub

Individual action

- Show up: sport, culture, faith, civic life
- Volunteer: time is a great equaliser
- Donate and bequeath
- Invest in impact
- Small actions ripple: none need be tectonic

More in common? Solidarity, stewardship & lifting our gaze.





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