

Te Kaunihera-ā-Rohe Ruapehu
Ruapehu District Council



Long Term Plan

Environmental Scan

2024-2034



CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Global Trends.....	4
Economic Outlook.....	4
Geopolitical Outlook	5
Cost of Living Crisis	6
Natural Disasters and Extreme Weather Events.....	6
Goeconomic Confrontation.....	6
Failure to Mitigate Climate Change.....	6
Erosion of Social Cohesion and Societal Polarisation.....	6
Global Trade	6
COVID-19	7
Climate Change.....	7
Technology Advancement and Cyberattacks	8
National Trends.....	9
Economic Outlook.....	9
Migration	10
Infrastructure.....	10
Cyclone Gabrielle	10
Geopolitical Outlook	10
Trade	10
Ukraine War.....	11
Impacts of Covid 19	12
Supply Chains.....	12
Labour Market	12
Construction Sector	12
Climate Change.....	13
National Adaption Plan 2022	13
Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading Reform) Amendment Act 2020	14
Emissions Trading Scheme	14
Electric Vehicles Programme.....	15
Central Government Reform.....	15
Water Services Reform	15
National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management	16
National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity.....	17
Resource Management Reform	18
Future for local Government.....	19
The Ruapehu District	21
Iwi/Hapū	21
Te Awa Tupua- Whanganui River	22
Te Waiū-o-Te-Ika—Whangaehu River	22
Tongariro National Park.....	22
A Snapshot of Ruapehu.....	23
Business at a Glance	27
Standard of Living at a Glance.....	27
Purpose Of Local Government, A Wellbeing Focus	28
Social:	28

Economic:	28
Environmental:	28
Cultural:	28
Pūwhenua ki Ruapehu-Living in Ruapehu	29
Pūwhenua ki Ruapehu Study.....	29
Pūwhenua ki Ruapehu- Living in Ruapehu Portal	29
Social	30
Safe, Healthy Communities.....	30
An Ageing Population.....	30
Deprivation	30
Education.....	31
Housing.....	33
Financial Stability	36
Food Insecurity	36
Health Outcomes.....	37
Crime Rate.....	37
Cultural.....	37
Vibrant and Diverse Living	37
The Living Standards Framework and He Ara Waiora.....	38
Environmental.....	41
Thriving Natural Environment.....	41
Climate Change.....	41
Impacts Of Climate Change In The Ruapehu	41
Economic.....	45
Thriving Community.....	45
Covid-19	46
Cost of Living	46
Labour shortage.....	46
Employment forecasting.....	46
Structure of Regional Economy (Economic Profile)	47
Afforestation.....	47
Pricing of Agricultural Emmisions.....	49
Manawatū-Whanganui Economic Action Plan	49
Accelerate 25.....	50
Te Pae Tawhiti	50
Mayor’s Task force for Jobs.....	50
Labour Market Self-Sufficiency	50
Taumarunui Manunui Spatial Plan	51
Ohakune Spatial Plan	51
Town Revitalisation.....	51
Raetihi Community Hub	51
Tourism.....	52
Challenges:	54
Covid 19.....	54
Closure of the Chateau Tongariro	54
RAL in Receivership.....	54
Inequity of Technology/ Rural Connectivity	55

Economic Opportunities	56
Transport.....	56
Rail.....	58
References	60

INTRODUCTION

The Ruapehu District Council begins its next long term planning cycle within a context of constant and rapid change. It is crucial to use information to explore a range of future scenarios and identify robust strategic options, while also retaining the flexibility to cope with a future that cannot always be foreseen.

Environmental scanning is a fact-based research process that analyses and interprets data about the internal and external changes that may affect the operating environment of the Ruapehu District Council (RDC). Looking at the environment within which the Council operates is key to ensuring that what the Council decides to deliver in the future is relevant and of value to our communities.

The Environmental Scan (the Scan) provides a snapshot of information so that everyone who references it has a shared understanding of the current issues and opportunities facing the Ruapehu District, to provide standard sets of information for direct input into the Council's long-term planning process. The scan considers the global, national, and regional trends, along with local data to support decision-making. The information contained in this report has been obtained from a wide range of resources, primarily at a desktop level.

GLOBAL TRENDS

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

There is widespread uncertainty around the global economic outlook in the short to medium term (3–5 years). Global growth is projected to fall from an estimated 3.4 percent in 2022 to 2.9 percent in 2023, then rebound to 3.1 percent in 2024 (International Monetary Fund, 2023). The World Bank has a conflicting view, forecasting the global economy to slow to 1.7% in 2023 and 2.7% in 2024. The sharp downturn in growth is expected to be widespread, with forecasts in 2023 revised down for 95% of advanced economies and nearly 70% of emerging market and developing economies (World Bank Group, 2023).

Growth in 2022 was dampened by:

- Higher interest rates to fight inflation.
- China's subdued growth
- War in Ukraine

However, China reopening to the world, a strong US labour market with cooling inflation and a mild winter in Europe keeping energy costs down has prevented the forecasted worst. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects growth to bottom out in 2023 and inflation to fall.

Risk remains due to:

- A possible escalation of the war in Ukraine
- Rising interest rates with high global debt

The IMF states that a return to sustained and inclusive global growth requires policy to:

- Fight inflation
- Limit health crisis
- Address rising debt.
- Ensure financial stability.
- Support the vulnerable
- Transition to the green economy

(International Monetary Fund, 2023)

The OECD unemployment rate was stable at 4.9% in December 2022, the sixth consecutive month at this record low since the start of the series in 2001 (OECD, 2023).

Domestic food prices and inflation remain high around the world. Approximately 87.3% of high-income countries are experiencing high food price inflation (The World Bank, 2023).

GEOPOLITICAL OUTLOOK

The first years of this decade have heralded a particularly disruptive period in human history. (World Economic Forum(a), 2023). The worlds transition to a ‘new normal’ following the Covid-19 pandemic has been disrupted by the war in Ukraine, resulting in a compounding crisis in food and energy. The Global Risks Report 2023 describes a "polycrisis" dominated by the cost-of-living crisis, the climate crisis, and political instability that is threatening to reverse hard-fought gains in development and growth (World Economic Forum(a), 2023).

Global Risks Report 2023



Top 10 Risks

“Please estimate the likely impact (severity) of the following risks over a 2-year and 10-year period”

2 years



10 years



Risk categories

■ Economic
 ■ Environmental
 ■ Geopolitical
 ■ Societal
 ■ Technological

Source: World Economic Forum, Global Risks Perception Survey 2022-2023

COST OF LIVING CRISIS

The fallout from Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine is driving up the price of necessities. This could fuel social and political instability and cause humanitarian emergencies in developing economies (United Nations, 2022). Compounding crises are impacting a greater number of societies than the traditionally vulnerable populations, destabilising economies worldwide. A global cost-of-living crisis is already being felt because of the most severe risks that are predicted to occur in 2023, such as the "Energy supply crisis," "Rising inflation," and "Food supply crisis" (World Economic Forum(a), 2023).

NATURAL DISASTERS AND EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

Natural disasters, many driven by climate change, including floods, cyclone and heat waves caused global economic losses of \$313 billion in 2022, of which less than half was insured (Reuters, 2023). More than one hundred million people were affected. Climate change means that these events are five times more likely today than 50 years ago (World Meteorological Organization, 2021).

GEOECONOMIC CONFRONTATION

Conflict over Economics will become more common which could further drive-up prices and foster mistrust between countries (World Economic Forum(a), 2023).

FAILURE TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE

Resources committed to addressing other crisis will limit climate mitigation efforts placing increased strain on vulnerable communities and ecosystems (World Economic Forum(a), 2023).

EROSION OF SOCIAL COHESION AND SOCIETAL POLARISATION

Declining social mobility and increasing inequality are fueling frustration which could eventuate in an existential threat to political systems around the world (World Economic Forum(a), 2023).

GLOBAL TRADE

Following a record year, global trade growth now turns negative. Demand for foreign goods proved resilient throughout 2022, with trade volumes increasing by 3 per cent. Trade of East Asian economies has shown more resilience, South-South trade has lagged during third quarter of 2022. Geopolitical frictions, persisting inflation, and lower global demand are expected to negatively affect global trade during 2023.

Negative factors:

- Lower economic growth
- High prices of traded goods
- Concerns of debt sustainability

Positive factors:

- Improvements in the logistics of global trade
- Trade agreements coming into fruition

Other factors affecting international trade patterns:

- Reshaping of global supply chains
- Transition towards a greener global economy

(UNCTD, 2022)

COVID-19

Globally as of February 2023 there have been 758 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 6.8 million deaths reported to WHO. There have been 13,228,728,467 vaccine doses administered and 5,073,870,238 persons fully vaccinated.

More than three years have gone by since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global pandemic. Since then, vaccines have been developed and more has been learned about the virus and what can be done to mitigate its spread. In many parts of the world, life has returned to a semblance of normality. But with governments lifting mandates for preventive measures, the risk of COVID still looms large worldwide. As pandemic fatigue continues to impact all aspects of the COVID-19 response, WHO sees the need to continue communicating to people and vulnerable groups the risks of COVID-19 (World Health Organisation(b), 2023).

Countries of the World Health Organisation have begun negotiations on a global accord on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response to protect nations and communities from future pandemic emergencies.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is affecting nature, people's lives, and infrastructure, this is increasingly evident in every region of the world. These impacts impede efforts to meet basic human needs and jeopardise sustainable development across the globe. Human-induced climate change is a consequence of more than a century of net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from unsustainable energy use, land-use and land use change, lifestyle and patterns of consumption and production. Without urgent, effective, and equitable mitigation actions, climate change increasingly threatens the health and livelihoods of people around the globe, ecosystem health and biodiversity.

People living in urban areas face higher risks of heat stress, reduced air, lack of water, food shortages and other impacts caused by climate change and its effect on supply chains, transport networks and other critical infrastructure. Globally, climate change is increasingly causing injuries, illness, malnutrition, threats to physical and mental health and well-being, and even deaths. Changes in temperature, rainfall, and extreme weather have increased the frequency and spread of diseases in wildlife, agriculture, and people.

Global emissions need to halve by 2030 and reach net zero by around 2050 to have a 60% chance of staying below potentially catastrophic levels of climate change. A strong and interdependent relationship between climate, nature and people is essential to reaching these goals. A healthy planet is fundamental to secure a livable future for people on Earth and that is why the needs of climate, nature and local communities must be considered together and prioritised in decision making and planning.

Climate governance, through laws, strategies, and institutions, based on national circumstances, aids mitigation by providing frameworks through which a variety of stakeholders interact, and provides a basis for policy development and implementation. This is most effective when it integrates across multiple policy domains and connects national and regional policymaking levels.

Climate governance will be most effective when it has meaningful and ongoing involvement of all participants from local to global levels, including individuals and households, communities, governments at all levels, private-sector businesses, non-governmental organisations, Indigenous Peoples, religious groups, and social movements.

(IPCC, 2022).

Points to be aware of:

- The latest nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to decarbonisation made at the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP27) still fall short of the 1.5°C goal set out in the Paris Climate Agreement.
- Global temperature rise above 1.5°C is more likely to trigger six global tipping points, making responding to climate change harder. An increase beyond 2°C risks crossing all 16 tipping points and affecting the life-supporting systems of the planet (IPCC, 2018).
- The current trajectory is expected to steer the world towards a 2.5°C warming (UNCC, 2022).
- Oxfam's inequality report notes rich countries are responsible for an estimated 92% of all excess historic emissions, and the world's wealthiest 1% create double the carbon emissions of the bottom 50% (Gore, 2020).
- Governments around the world are going to need to balance the needs of populations dependent on carbon intensive industries with international commitments.

TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENT AND CYBERATTACKS

Technology will exacerbate inequalities while risks from cybersecurity will remain a constant concern.

The technology sector will be targeted by Intensified state intervention and stronger industrial policies. The next decade will see research and development into new technologies progress rapidly, fueled by government funding, military spending, and private investment, leading to advancements in biotechnology, quantum computing, and artificial intelligence, among other fields. New technologies will provide some solutions to emerging crisis, e.g., new health threats, healthcare capacity, food insecurity and climate mitigation for those countries that can afford to invest. Inequality and divergence will grow for those who cannot. Risk is high for all economies from these technologies from widening misinformation and displacement of employment.

Points to be aware of:

Attempts to disrupt critical technology-enabled resources and services will become more common, attacks are anticipated against:

- agriculture
- water
- financial systems
- public security
- transport
- energy
- domestic, space based and underwater communication infrastructure.

(World Economic Forum(a), 2023)

“New Zealand's strength and resilience to global forces are about to be tested again by the combination of a global economic downturn, high inflation here and around the world, and a geopolitical situation dominated by war, trade disputes and ongoing supply chain issues”.

Hon Grant Robertson, Minister of Finance (*Robertson, 2022*).

New Zealand has so far avoided an economic recession, with a 2% quarterly increase in GDP to December 2022. However other economic indicators point towards a challenging economic outlook that is expected to lead to slower growth in the period ahead, overall economic activity was robust over 2021/22, continuing the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Economic Activity is supported by strong employment and wage growth, elevated levels of investment and the rebound in international visitor spending. However, ongoing demand growth has come up against supply constraints both foreign and domestic (*The Treasury, 2022*).

Although real GDP growth fell short of the forecast in the Budget Economic and Fiscal Update 2022 demand for labour has been strong. This, combined with the fall in labour supply growth experienced over recent years, has seen the unemployment rate at or around historical lows since late 2021, and nominal wage growth has picked up sharply as a result. The global outlook is highly uncertain and will be dependent on the effectiveness of central banks' monetary policy tightening and the absence of further negative geopolitical shocks. Even weaker global growth would likely see a faster abatement of global inflation pressures, lower export prices and reduced demand for Aotearoa New Zealand exports (*The Treasury, 2022*).

Points to be aware of:

- Global growth in 2023 is likely to be the lowest since the early 1990s excepting the global pandemic and global financial crisis. Many economies are expected to contract for at least two quarters by the end of 2023 (*The Treasury, 2022*).
- Cyclone Gabrielle and upper North Island flooding has had a major impact on lives and will have a prolonged impact on the New Zealand economy.
- Economic activity, food prices, house prices, and expected inflation reflect an easing of domestic demand.
- Strong global activity keeps pressure on central banks to continue hiking rates.
- The unemployment rate was 3.4% at the end of the December 2022 quarter (*Stats NZ(a), 2022*).
- In the year to the March 2022 quarter, private sector wages increased by 3.1% over the year while public sector wages increased by 2.7% (*Stats NZ(b), 2022*).
- The Official Cash Rate continues to rise due to increasing inflation. The Reserve Bank increased the OCR to 5.25% in April 2023 (*Reserve Bank of New Zealand, 2023*).
- There has been the biggest drop in house prices over the last six months since records began in 1992. The national median house price is now \$800,000 (*Ninness, 2022*).
- Wage growth is strengthening, driven by record low unemployment, but is still falling short of inflation. Wage inflation is at its highest level since the March 2009 quarter (*StatsNZ(c), 2022*).

MIGRATION

Projections from Westpac signal that they expect to see net migration return to modestly positive in the year ahead, settling at around 25,000 people a year over the longer term (Gordon, 2022). The government's migration policy 'reset' is likely to be a complicating factor in a return to pre-COVID migration numbers, with a clear focus being put on less reliance on migrant labour than we saw in the years before COVID-19 (Gordon, 2022).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Infometrics' Infrastructure Pipeline Profile is projecting that network infrastructure spending over the next decade may increase by 56% compared to the last decade, driven largely by maintenance and upgrades of local networks. This is likely to lead to increased competition in an environment where resources (materials and labour resourcing) are already under significant pressure. Roading is expected to dominate network infrastructure spending, accounting for around 44% of spending on infrastructure. Water, stormwater, and waste are expected to account for around 19% of spending. Suppliers are limiting their risk and exposure to a volatile market by providing pricing with very short-term validity. This increases our risk of project costs escalating over the lifetime of a project (Olsen, 2022).

CYCLONE GABRIELLE

The impact of Cyclone Gabrielle is widespread and significant, requiring a National State of Emergency declaration for the third time in New Zealand's history, and the first for severe weather. Cyclone Gabrielle caused devastation across six regions, with wind gusts reaching a maximum of 160kph in some areas, and catastrophic flooding from heavy sudden rain in others. Towns were submerged and others were cut off completely due to landslides including the Coromandel Peninsula and entire communities on the East Coast. Damage assessment is still in the preliminary stages, but economic costs will be severe. The need to rebuild in a more resilient fashion may add further cost and time to the rebuild process. Additional demand in the economy will add to general, nationwide inflationary pressure. Consequently, Cyclone Gabrielle could result in the Reserve Bank keeping interest rates higher for longer than otherwise, displacing some activity that otherwise would have taken place. The biggest economic costs will take the form of lost capital and lost economic opportunity. New Zealand will spend time and resources on repair and remediation work, diverting opportunities and existing plans to improve the capital stock, either by delaying planned investment or via the monetary policy response (The Treasury, 2023).

GEOPOLITICAL OUTLOOK

TRADE

International trade (exports and imports) makes up around 60% of New Zealand's total economic activity. In the year ended December 2022 New Zealand exported \$89.91 billion of total goods and services to the rest of the world, and imported \$107.05 billion, being a total trade value of \$196.96 billion. Dairy remains our largest export good (over \$21 billion in 2022) followed by meat (year to December 2022). China is our largest trading partner with imports of \$19 billion and exports of \$21.39 billion (Stats NZ(d), 2022).

There has been a significant increase in exports to the ASEAN region in particular Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. Indonesia jumped by 60.3% to become New Zealand's sixth largest market overtaking Taiwan and the UK. It is expected that export prices will come under pressure in 2023 due to the damage from Cyclone Gabrielle. This will affect many of New Zealand's Key primary sector export industries. Although China is likely to rebound due to the end of the zero-COVID policy, it will take time to rebuild the capacity of airlines as New Zealand welcomes back Chinese tourists and students (Smith, 2023).

UKRAINE WAR

The war will have an impact on longer-term global geo-political and structural economic settings that New Zealand will be subject to and must contend with. It is expected the invasion will reinforce transitions in the global economy already underway from existing pressures on globalisation including the China/US dynamics and the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside long-standing but increasingly time dependent challenges such as climate change and the need for a "green transition".

Impacts could consist of:

- a further shift from globalisation to regionalisation, which could increase production costs and drive-up global inflation and interest rates.
- Global supplies of labour and energy could become scarcer and less accessible to New Zealand.
- Capital investment could suffer and pressure to spend on national security and prop up flagging living standards could further stretch government balance sheets already under pressure from ageing populations.
- As an exporter of primary products, higher food prices will be beneficial for New Zealand exporters, but lower global growth forecasts and other countries' measures to secure their food supply such as export bans may pose risks in the longer term.

(Blackmore, Coghill, van Dyke, & Morrall, 2022).

Issues to be aware of:

- New Zealand is experiencing significant cost escalation, supply chain issues, labour shortages and increasing inflation, in part due to the war in Ukraine and tensions in the South China Sea. This is impacting capital programmes.
- Trade flows could be rearranged due to geopolitics, war, strikes and who you 'side' with (Smith, 2023).
- New Trade deals will help but a drop in Global consumption and high dairy inventory in China will impact export growth (Smith, 2023).
- Cyber-attacks could disable businesses, infrastructure, and facilities, or hold the community, businesses, residents, or RDC to ransom. Of the 350 incidents recorded by the GCSB in 2021/2022, 34% showed links to suspected state sponsored actors, compared to 28% in the 2020/2021 year (GCSB, 2022).
- The invasion of Ukraine is causing volatility in global energy markets. In March 2022 the New Zealand Government announced a cut to excise duties and road user charges by 25 cents per litre to help alleviate rising fuel costs. This will remain in place until at least June 2023 (NZTA(a), 2023).

IMPACTS OF COVID 19

The New Zealand economy recovered quickly from the impacts of COVID-19 due to effective virus containment, measures to protect jobs and incomes and highly expansionary macroeconomic policies. It is now overheating, and house prices and the cost of living have soared. The Reserve Bank has begun to tighten monetary and macroprudential policies with a view to achieving price and financial stability objectives. Together with policy measures to increase housing supply, this should help moderate housing price inflation (OECD, 2022). Concerns around an exacerbation of existing gender and ethnic discrimination during New Zealand's initial pandemic response are reported, mirroring contexts. The lack of consultation and involvement with Māori during the pandemic response has also been criticised (Morgan et al, 2022).

SUPPLY CHAINS

- Supply chain disruptions have become a major challenge for the global economy since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The relaxation of Covid-19 measures globally has led to some easing of supply chain pressures.
- There has been a significant increase in commercial flights around the world, boosting airfreight capacity. However, prices paid by businesses have remained elevated as higher commodity prices continue to filter through to overall costs for companies.
- Globally, supply chains remain under pressure, causing challenges with importing capital goods into New Zealand and manufacturing inputs.
- New Zealand and Australia freight rates from China have tripled since early 2020. While they have recently eased from their peak in early 2022, they remain well above pre-Covid levels and could rise further.

(Carren, 2022).

LABOUR MARKET

Border closures in New Zealand have had significant impacts on the labour force. The unemployment rate was 3.4% at the end of the December 2022 quarter (Stats NZ(a), 2022), resulting in a highly competitive labour market and employers are struggling to attract and secure talent.

CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

Investment in infrastructure has been used to stimulate the economy throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (Marker & Van Der Merwe, 2022). There has been a record number of annual new dwelling consents, with 50,732 new dwellings consented for the year September 2022. This was 7.0% more dwellings consented than in the September 2021 year (StatsNZ(e), 2022).

In despite the solid pipeline of construction work, the building and construction sector may potentially be facing capacity constraints (such as shortage of workers and materials) as well as cost pressures, which could place further constraints on business operating margins (MBIE, 2022).

Labour costs remained one of the key constraints for businesses. Wage inflation for the sector rose 0.8% in the September 2022 quarter (compared to the June 2022 quarter). This increase was below the all-industry average of 1.1% for the same time period. Annually, wages in the construction sector rose by 4.1% (MBIE, 2022).

CLIMATE CHANGE

2022 was Aotearoa New Zealand's warmest year on record, surpassing the record set in 2021. The nationwide average temperature for 2022 (calculated using NIWA's stations) was 13.76°C, being +1.15°C above the 1981-2010 annual average, surpassing 2021 by +0.20°C. The top-4 warmest years on record have now all occurred since 2016, a trend that is consistent with climate change (NIWA, 2022).

Rainfall was above normal (120-149% of annual normal) or well above normal (>150% of annual normal) for parts of Northland, Tauranga, Gisborne, the Central Plateau, southern Taranaki, parts of Manawatū-Whanganui, much of Wellington, Nelson, northern Marlborough, parts of Tasman, the West Coast near Westport, and pockets of Canterbury. Rainfall was below normal (50-79% of annual normal) for pockets of Southland and Dunedin. Much of the country experienced near normal rainfall (80-119% of annual normal). 2022 was New Zealand's 8th most unusually wet year on record, based on an analysis of NIWA's Virtual Climate Station Network dating back to 1960 (NIWA, 2022).

There were a variety of climate drivers that contributed to the unusual warmth and rainfall in 2022. The primary driver was La Niña, marked by cooler than average ocean temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific. La Niña influences atmospheric circulation patterns in the Pacific Ocean and has flow-on effects to the climate across the globe. Both 2022 and 2021 were La Niña years and are ranked 1st and 2nd warmest years on record for New Zealand. 2022 was the third consecutive year of La Niña, known as a "triple dip", an uncommon occurrence that last happened in 1998-2000 (NIWA, 2022).

Communities and infrastructure can be dramatically affected by extreme weather events that cause flooding or drought, Auckland's 2020 drought cost over \$200m for emergency drinking water supplies (Ministry for the Environment & Stats NZ, 2023). The economic impacts of cyclone Gabrielle are still unknown; however, Finance Minister Grant Robertson has estimated it in the region of \$13 billion (Tame, 2023).

NATIONAL ADAPTION PLAN 2022

The National Adaption plan looks at the impacts of climate change, now and into the future and sets out how Aotearoa New Zealand can adapt and what actions the Government will take over the next six years. Councils have statutory responsibilities to avoid or mitigate natural hazards and to have regard to the effects of climate change when making certain decisions. They are also responsible for civil defense and emergency management, as well as improving community resilience through public education and local planning. The plan outlines a programme of work to support local councils to act and adapt to climate change. It brings together existing actions and proposes future work to:

- enable better risk-informed decisions.
- drive climate-resilient development in the right places.
- lay the foundations for a range of adaptation options including managed retreat.
- embed climate resilience across government policy.

Councils will need to have regard to the national adaptation plan in their plan making process from November 2022. The plan advises the use of recommended climate change scenarios when making or changing policy statements or plans under the Resource Management Act

1991, including to give effect to the provisions of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010. (The New Zealand Government, 2022)

CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE (EMISSIONS TRADING REFORM) AMENDMENT ACT 2020

The Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act (Zero Carbon Act) provides a framework to develop and implement clear and stable climate change policies that contribute to the global effort under the Paris Agreement to limit the global average temperature increase to 1.5° Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

What the amendment act does:

- sets a new greenhouse gas emissions reduction target for New Zealand.
- establishes a system of a series of emissions budgets to act as steppingstones towards the long-term target.
- requires the Government to develop and implement policies for climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- establishes a new, independent Climate Change Commission to provide expert advice and monitoring to help keep successive governments on track to meeting long-term goals.

(Ministry for the Environment, 2021)

IMPLICATIONS FOR RDC

Local authorities and council-controlled organisations are required (as “reporting organisations”) to provide the following information to the Ministry of Environment relating to climate change adaptation:

- A description of the organisation’s governance in relation to the risks of, and opportunities arising from, climate change.
- A description of the actual and potential effects of the risks and opportunities on the organisation’s business, strategy, and financial planning.
- A description of the processes that the organisation uses to identify, assess, and manage the risks.
- A description of the metrics and targets used to assess and manage the risks and opportunities, including, if relevant, time frames and progress.
- Any matters specified in regulations.

(PWC, 2022)

EMISSIONS TRADING SCHEME

The New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme (NZETS) is the Government’s main tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The NZETS helps reduce emissions by doing three main things:

- requiring businesses to measure and report on their greenhouse gas emissions.
- requiring businesses to surrender one ‘emissions unit’ (known as an NZU) to the Government for each one ton of emissions they emit.
- limiting the number of NZUs available to emitters (i.e., that are supplied into the scheme).

The Government sets and reduces the number of units supplied into the scheme over time. This limits the quantity that emitters can emit, in line with New Zealand’s emission reduction targets.

Businesses who participate in the NZ ETS can buy and sell units from each other. The price for units reflects supply and demand in the scheme. This price signal allows businesses to make economically efficient choices about how to reduce emissions.

The agriculture sector reports its emissions through the NZ ETS but does not have surrender obligations. The Government has agreed to work with the primary sector to reduce emissions through He Waka Eke Noa: Primary Sector Climate Action Partnership.

(Ministry for the Environment, 2022)

ELECTRIC VEHICLES PROGRAMME

Electric vehicles (EVs) are vehicles that run on electricity, and which can be plugged in to recharge. They can be powered solely by electric batteries, known as pure electric vehicles, or a combination of batteries and a conventional engine, called plug-in hybrid electric vehicles.

Central Government encourages the uptake of electric vehicles alongside other low-emission forms of transport to help reduce climate damaging emissions, but to also reduce harmful local air pollution. Supporting the uptake of electric vehicles also supports the Government’s overall drive towards a net-zero emissions economy.

To Date:

- Road user charges exemption for light electric vehicles extended until 31 March 2024.
- Introduction of CO₂ emission standard for imported new and used light vehicles announced.
- Clean Car Discount consisting of rebates and fees based on CO₂ emissions for new and used eligible vehicles the first time they are registered in New Zealand.

(NZTA(b), 2023)

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

The roles and responsibilities of local government are expanding. The introduction of the four wellbeing’s (social, economic, environmental, and cultural), as well as regulatory and legislative changes that impose new standards and specific requirements, have widened the scope of local government. Cumulatively, this changing environment may require additional council resourcing and therefore, have ongoing financial implications.

New Zealand’s three-yearly election cycle adds a degree of uncertainty. The current government is undertaking several significant policy initiatives that have implications for local government, particularly in relation to the environment. A change in government in 2023 (or at a future time), may result in major shifts in policy direction, which could impact on RDC’s work program.

WATER SERVICES REFORM

Central Government has identified that the nations’ water systems are under pressure, struggling with the challenges of ageing infrastructure, population growth, climate change and natural disasters.

The Government is implementing reform of water services through a suite of three new pieces of legislation:

- The Water Services Entities Act
- The Water Services Legislation Bill
- The Water Services Economic Efficiency and Consumer Protection Bill

The government has proposed that the responsibility for water services will shift from 67 individual councils to ten new, publicly owned Water Services Entities (WSE) delivering New Zealand's drinking water, wastewater and stormwater services. The WSE will be owned by local councils on behalf of the public but will be operationally and financially independent from them.

The ten WSE will 'go live' in a staged approach, from early 2025 to 1 July 2026, rather than the original start date of 1 July 2024.

Each water services entity will be governed by a professional board, with members appointed for their competencies and skills. Every territorial authority owner – and therefore every community – will be represented in their respective entity's regional representative group. There will be an equal number of mana whenua and council representatives on the entity's regional representative group. Under Te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi, mana whenua have the right to participate in decisions that relate to water services. Iwi/Māori also have responsibilities as kaitiaki to protect Te Mana o te Wai, the health of our water.

(Department of Internal Affairs, 2023).

NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR FRESHWATER MANAGEMENT

The National Policy Statement for Freshwater 2020 provides local authorities with updated direction on how they should manage freshwater under the Resource Management Act 1991.

Requirements of the Freshwater NPS include:

- Manage freshwater in a way that 'gives effect' to Te Mana o te Wai:
 - through involving tangata whenua
 - working with tangata whenua and communities to set out long-term visions in the regional policy statement.
 - prioritising the health and wellbeing of water bodies, then the essential needs of people, followed by other uses.
- Improve degraded water bodies and maintain or improve all others using bottom lines defined in the Freshwater NPS.
- An expanded national objectives framework:
 - two additional values - threatened species and mahinga kai - join ecosystem health and human health for recreation, as compulsory values.
 - councils must develop plan objectives that describe the environmental outcome sought for all values (including an objective for each of the five individual components of ecosystem health).
 - new attributes, aimed specifically at providing for ecosystem health, include fish index of biotic integrity (IBI), sediment, macroinvertebrates (MCI and QMCI), dissolved oxygen, ecosystem metabolism and submerged plants in lakes;

councils will have to develop action plans and/or set limits on resource use to achieve these attributes.

- tougher national bottom lines for the ammonia and nitrate toxicity attributes to protect 95% of species from toxic effects (up from 80%)
- Avoid any further loss or degradation of wetlands and streams, map existing wetlands and encourage their restoration.
- Identify and work towards target outcomes for fish abundance, diversity and passage and address in-stream barriers to fish passage over time.
- Set an aquatic life objective for fish and address in-stream barriers to fish passage over time.
- Monitor and report annually on freshwater (including the data used); publish a synthesis report every five years containing a single ecosystem health score and respond to any deterioration.

The Freshwater NPS is one of four pieces of national direction for managing New Zealand's freshwater.

Local authorities are also required to give effect to:

- National Environmental Standards for Freshwater
- Stock exclusion regulations
- Water measurement and reporting regulations.

Things to consider:

- Under British common law, naturally flowing freshwater is not owned by anyone, but is treated as a public good. This is still the legal position in New Zealand today.
- There is an unresolved issue as to Māori rights to freshwater. The Waitangi Tribunal Stage 2 Report on the National Freshwater and Geothermal Resources Claims in 2019 concluded that the RMA was in breach of Te Tiriti because the Crown had refused to recognise Māori proprietary rights during the development of the Act. As a result, features of the RMA relating to freshwater are in breach of Te Tiriti.
- The Tribunal made recommendations for reform of the RMA and the freshwater management system more broadly, relating to co-governance and co-management.

(Ministry for the Environment, 2023)

NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR INDIGENOUS BIODIVERSITY

The Government has released a National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB) exposure draft. The NPSIB is a response to biodiversity decline in Aotearoa and aims to protect, maintain and restore indigenous biodiversity. The NPSIB works alongside the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020 (NPS-UD). The NPSIB includes policies that promote a certain amount of indigenous vegetation cover in urban environments and the NPS-UD recognises open space as a feature of a well-functioning urban environment.

The objective of the NPSIB is to protect, maintain and restore indigenous biodiversity in a way that:

- Recognises tangata whenua as kaitiaki, and people and communities as stewards, of indigenous biodiversity.

- Provides for the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of people and communities, now and into the future.

Managing Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) and other provisions in the NPSIB will ensure indigenous biodiversity is maintained overall, including no reductions in:

- The size of populations of indigenous species
- Indigenous species occupancy across their natural range
- The properties and function of ecosystems and habitats
- The full range and extent of ecosystems and habitats
- Connectivity between, and buffering around, ecosystems
- The resilience and adaptability of ecosystems

The NPSIB is consistent with the purpose of the RMA, which is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources (Ministry for the Environment, 2022)

SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS

The NPSIB requires councils to consistently identify areas with significant vegetation and habitats of significant indigenous fauna. Councils will need to manage their protection through regional and district plans, and consent processes under the RMA. The intent of these provisions is not to identify all indigenous biodiversity but to ensure the indigenous biodiversity that is most significant and precious is identified and protected (Ministry for the Environment, 2022).

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT REFORM

The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) is being replaced with three new pieces of legislation that are designed to speed up and simplify planning processes, reduce costs, and deliver better outcomes for people and the environment.

The Government is planning to introduce three new pieces of legislation:

- Natural and Built Environments Act (NBA) – the main replacement for the RMA, it will protect and restore the environment while making development easier.
- Strategic Planning Act (SPA) – provides a strategic and long-term approach to how we plan for using land and the coastal marine area.
- Climate Change Adaptation Act (CCA) – will address issues associated with managed retreat.

The new pieces of legislation are an opportunity to improve:

- the quality of the natural environment
- housing supply and development within environmental limits
- outcomes for towns and cities.

Proposed legislation:

THE SPATIAL PLANNING ACT

- The SPA will provide long-term, coordinated regional planning.
- Regions will be required to provide 30-year regional spatial strategies to guide major strategic decisions about land use and environmental protection.

- The SPA will link with other legislation important to natural and built environments, including the Local Government Act 2002, and the Land Transport Management Act 2003.

THE NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT ACT

- The NBA will set out the rules for land use and resource allocation in a region.
- Regions will be required to provide a natural and built environment plan (NBE plan), which will replace more than 100 district and regional plans in the current system. It will focus on positive outcomes for both our natural and built environments.
- The NBA will also provide a National Planning Framework that will draw together more than 20 current pieces of national direction. This will provide consistency and mean a stronger and more active role in the new system for central government.

THE CLIMATE ADAPTATION ACT

- The CAA will support Aotearoa New Zealand's response to the effects of climate change.
- It will address the complex legal and technical issues associated with managed retreat and with funding and financing adaptation.
-

Objectives of the Reforms:

- Protect and where necessary restore the natural environment, including its capacity to provide for the wellbeing of present and future generations.
- Better enable development within environmental biophysical limits including a significant improvement in housing supply, affordability and choice, and timely provision of appropriate infrastructure, including social infrastructure.
- Give effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to provide greater recognition of te ao Māori, including mātauranga Māori.
- Better prepare for adapting to climate change and risks from natural hazards as well as mitigating the emissions that contribute to climate change.
- Improve system efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce complexity, while retaining appropriate local democratic input.

(Ministry for the Environment – Manatū Mō Te Taiao, 2022)

FUTURE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Review into the Future for Local Government was established in April 2021 by the Minister of Local Government as an independent, two-year Ministerial Review. The purpose of the Review is to identify how our system of local democracy and governance needs to evolve over the next 30 years, to improve the wellbeing of New Zealand communities and the environment, and actively embody Te Tiriti partnership. The questions and recommendations within the draft report come under five categories where shifts are required:

- Strengthened local democracy.
From low public trust and participation in local government to renewal of local democracy that builds a foundation for the future of a strengthened and inclusive local democracy.
- Authentic relationships with hapū, iwi and Māori
From variable relationships between councils and hapū/iwi/Māori

To strong, authentic relationships between councils and hapū/iwi/Māori that enable self-determination and shared authority.

- A focus on wellbeing
From councils often narrowly focused on delivering services and infrastructure
To councils focusing on holistic strategies to improve the wellbeing of their communities
- Genuine partnership between central and local government
From low trust between local and central government
To genuine partnership to co-invest in and deliver wellbeing outcomes for communities
- More equitable funding
From an over-burdened and constrained funding system
To an equitably funded system that enables communities to thrive

The Review is now undertaking a submissions process to gather public feedback on the recommendations, findings, and questions ahead of the final report.

(Review into the Future for Local Government, 2022)

THE RUAPEHU DISTRICT

The Ruapehu District covers an area of approximately 6,734km². It is one of New Zealand's largest districts by land area, yet we have one of the smallest permanent population counts of approximately 12,948 (Pūwhenua Ki Ruapehu, - Ruapehu District Council, 2023), made up of many small, diverse and geographically spread out rural communities.

The District contains the western half of the Tongariro National Park, a dual World Heritage location, including most of Mount Ruapehu and the western sides of Mount Ngāuruhoe and Mount Tongariro, as well as part of the Whanganui National Park. The district is also home to the world famous Raurimu Spiral on the North Island Main Trunk railway line.

In the north of the District lies Taumarunui at the intersection of the Whanganui and Ōngarue Rivers, the district's largest township. In the center of the district is National Park Village which sits next to the World Heritage Tongariro National Park and Whakapapa Village, which is within the National Park at the base of Mt Ruapehu, on the northern side.

In the south sits Waiouru the southern gateway to Ruapehu and home to a large army base and the National Army Museum. Nearby Ohakune sits at the base of the western side of Mt Ruapehu and access to the Tūroa ski field. Neighbouring is historic Raetihi established in 1893 and the smaller community of Pipiriki on the banks of the Whanganui Awa. The southern section of the infamous Desert Road section of State Highway 1 runs through the east of the district, from Waiouru to Rangipo.

The district's landscape is varied, ranging from pastoral hill country and indigenous forest to the volcanic plateau of the Desert Road and New Zealand Army land at Waiouru, boasting a rich history and diverse wildlife.

The Ruapehu District borders the Rangitikei and Whanganui Districts in the South, Waitomo District in the North, Taupō District to the East and the Stratford and New Plymouth Districts to the West.

Ruapehu has little in the way of heavy industry or high intensity residential development attracting visitors who seek to visit natural landscapes with cycleways and other projects under development, this growth is expected to continue (Ruapehu District Council, 2021).

IWI/HAPŪ

Many of the district's Iwi have settled or are pending settlement.

Following is a list of Iwi that have settlement:

- Maniapoto Claims Settlement Act 2022 (Post Settlement Governance Entity, Te Nehenehenui)
- Ngāti Maru (Taranaki) Claims Settlement Act 2022 (Post Settlement Governance Entity, Maruwharanui)
- Ngāti Rangī Claims Settlement Act 2019 (Post Settlement Governance Entity, Te Totarahoe o Paerangi)
- Ngāti Tuwharetoa Claims Settlement Act 2018 (Post Settlement Governance Entity, Te Kotahitanga)
- Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017 (Post Settlement Governance Entity, Ngā Tāngata Tiaki)

Following is a list of Iwi with settlements in process:

- Ngāti Hāua
- Te Korowai o Wainuiārua
- Whanganui Land Settlements

TE AWA TUPUA- WHANGANUI RIVER

In March 2017, the Whanganui River was granted the status of legal personhood, Te Awa Tupua:

“an indivisible and living whole from the mountains to the sea, incorporating the Whanganui River and all of its physical and metaphysical elements”

(Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act, 2017)

This law conferred Te Awa Tupua all the rights, powers, duties, and liabilities of a legal person to be expressed through a newly created governance authority.

TE WAIŪ-O-TE-IKA—WHANGAEHU RIVER

The Whangaehu River is subject to the Ngāti Rangī Claims Settlement Act 2019, which has established the Te Waiū-o-Te-Ika framework.

“Te Waiū-o-Te-Ika is a living and indivisible whole from Te Wai ā-moe to the sea, comprising physical (including mineral) and metaphysical elements, giving life and healing to its surroundings and communities”

(Ngāti Rangī Claims Settlement Act 2019).

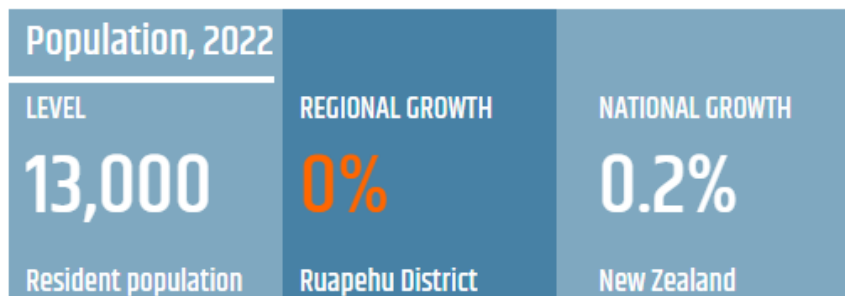
Te Wai ā-moe means the Crater Lake, Mount Ruapehu.

TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK

The Tongariro National Park is New Zealand’s oldest national park, it is listed as a world heritage area and is a significant attraction for tourists both domestic and international. The park includes the Whakapapa and Tūroa ski fields as well as important walks such as the Tongariro alpine crossing. visitor numbers at three sites around the central plateau (Taranaki Falls, Tongariro Alpine Crossing and Tongariro Northern Circuit) continue to increase year on year (Ruapehu District Council, 2021).

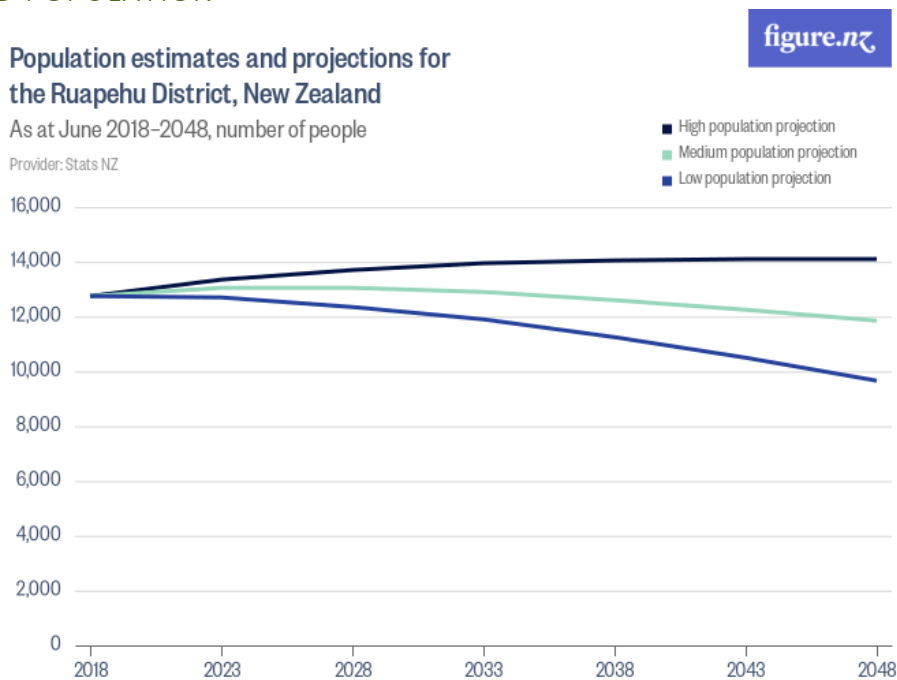
POPULATION AT A GLANCE

POPULATION AT A GLANCE



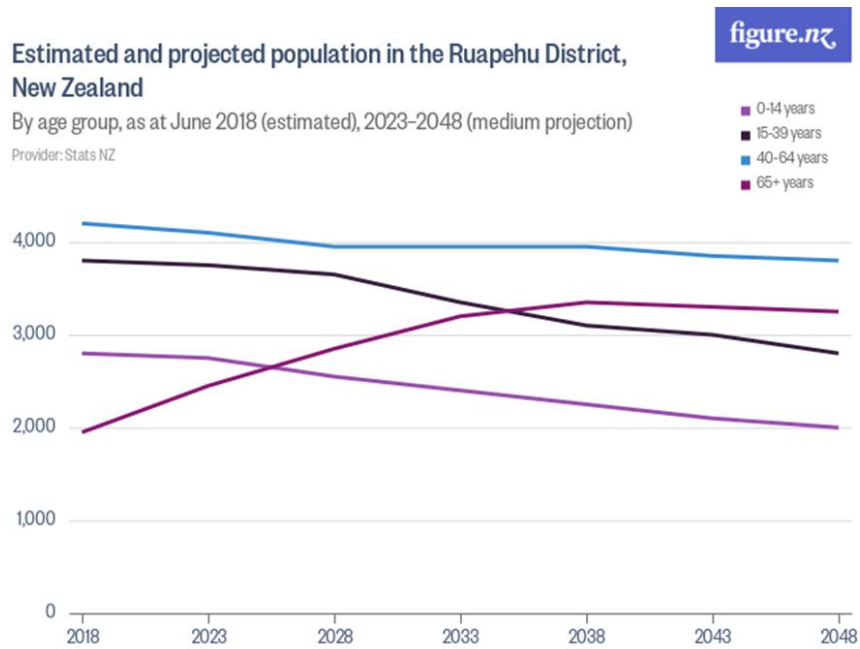
(Infometrics(c), 2023)

PROJECTED POPULATION



(Figure NZ Trust, 2018)

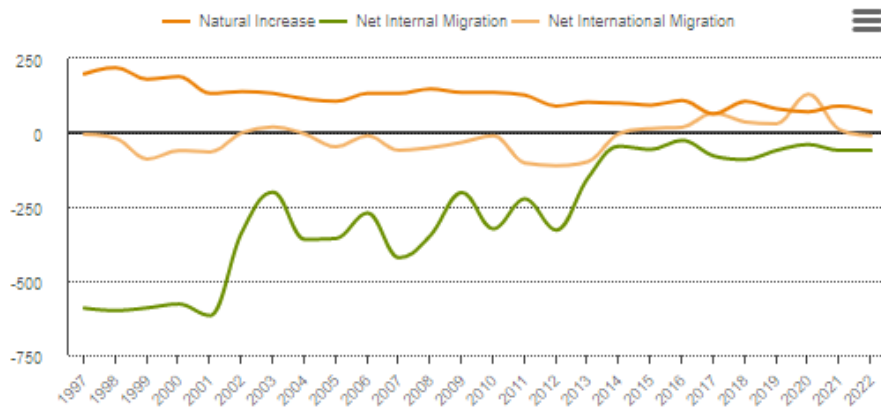
PROJECTED POPULATION BY AGE GROUP



(Figure NZ Trust, 2018)

POPULATION SOURCE.

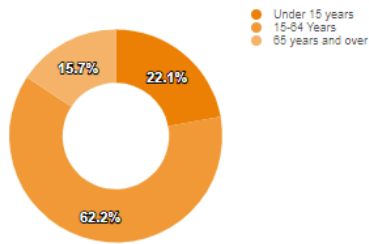
Population source of Ruapehu District, 1997-2022



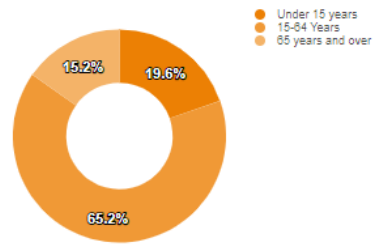
(Infometrics(b), 2023)

AGE DISTRIBUTION

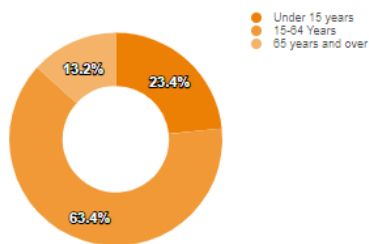
Proportion of Ruapehu District in 2018



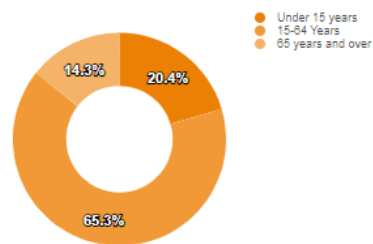
Proportion of New Zealand in 2018



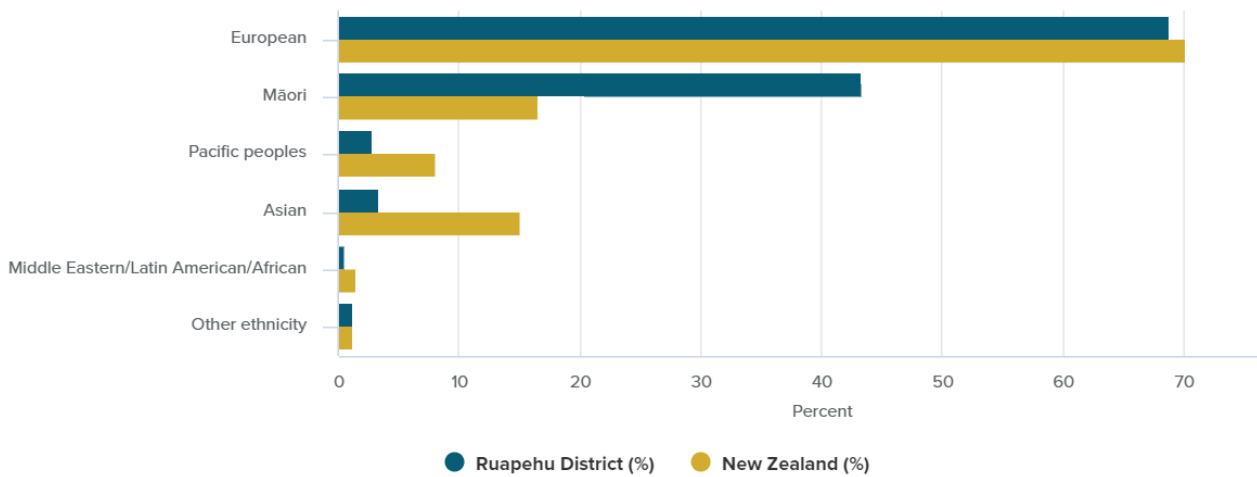
Proportion of Ruapehu District in 2013



Proportion of New Zealand in 2013



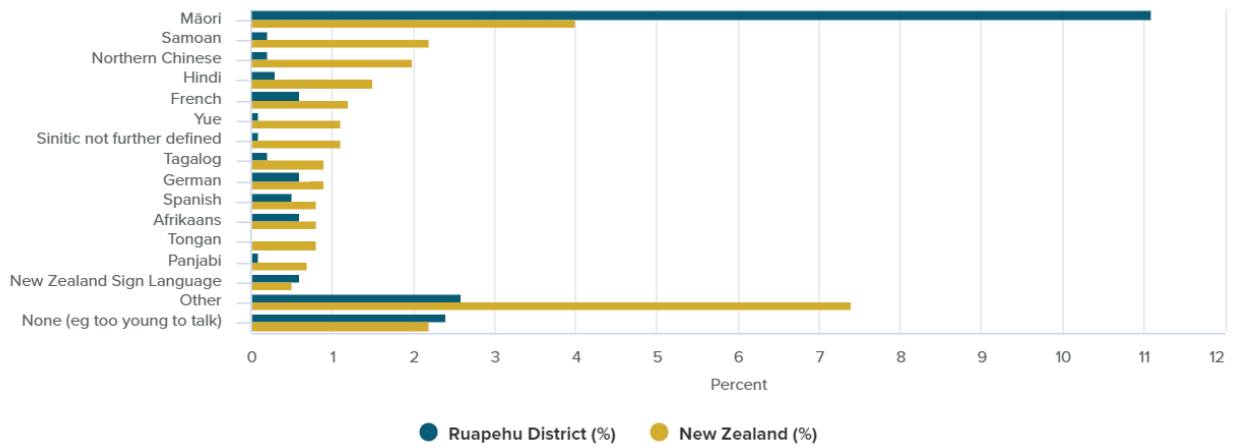
ETHNICITY BREAKDOWN



(StatsNZ, 2018)

LANGUAGES

Languages spoken by people in Ruapehu District and New Zealand, 2018 Census



(StatsNZ, 2018)

MEDIAN AGE

The Median age in the Ruapehu District is 39 (StatsNZ, 2018)

MĀORI MEDIAN AGE

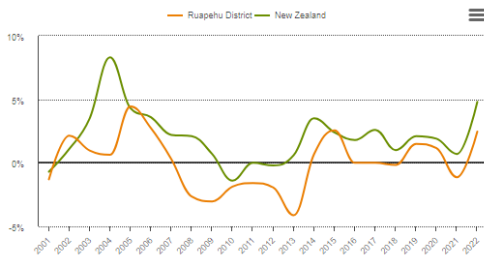
The Māori median age in the Ruapehu District is 27 years (StatsNZ, 2018).

BUSINESS AT A GLANCE

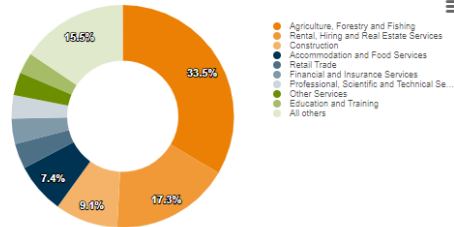
(Infometrics(c), 2023)

BUSINESS UNITS AT A GLANCE

Business units, 2022		
LEVEL	REGIONAL GROWTH	NATIONAL GROWTH
1,872	2.5%	4.8%
Units	Ruapehu District	New Zealand



Share of business units by ANZSIC Level 1 industry, 2022



Biggest contributors to growth in business units last 10 years

Financial and Insurance Services	30
Construction	27
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	27
Administrative and Support Services	21
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	9
All other industries	-63
Total increase	51

(Infometrics(c), 2023)

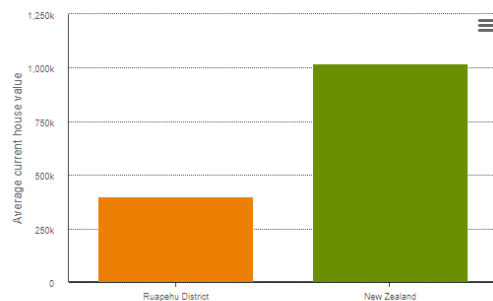
STANDARD OF LIVING AT A GLANCE

(Infometrics(c), 2023)

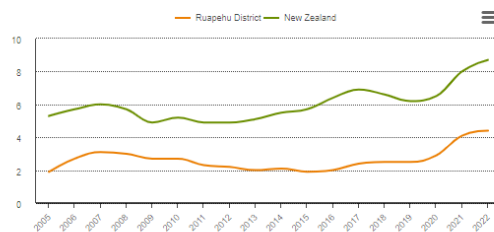
STANDARD OF LIVING AT A GLANCE

Mean income, 2022		
LEVEL	REGIONAL GROWTH	NATIONAL GROWTH
60,482	2.7%	5.6%
Mean earnings	Ruapehu District	New Zealand

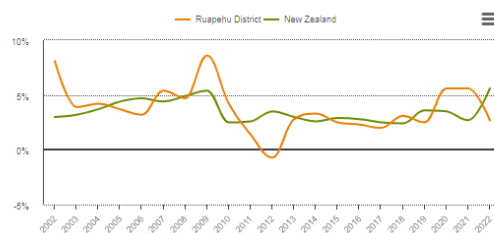
Average current house values, 2022



Housing affordability, 2005-2022



Mean earnings growth, 2002-2022



PURPOSE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, A WELLBEING FOCUS

The Local Government (Community Well-being) Amendment Act 2019 has resulted in a change of focus in local government, which is now to promote community wellbeing. Local authorities are responsible for improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of our communities.

SOLGM has provided the following guidance on the meaning of the four wellbeing's:

SOCIAL:

Involves individuals, their families, whanau, hapū, iwi, and a range of communities being able to set goals and achieve them, such as education, health, the strength of community networks, financial and personal security, equity of opportunity, and rights and freedoms.

ECONOMIC:

Looks at whether the economy can generate the employment and wealth necessary to provide many of the requirements that make for social well-being, such as health, financial security, and equity of opportunity.

ENVIRONMENTAL:

Considers whether the natural environment can sustainably support the activities that constitute healthy community life, such as air quality, fresh water, uncontaminated land, and control of pollution.

CULTURAL:

Looks at the shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and identities reflected through language, stories, visual and performing arts, ceremonies and heritage that make up our communities.

(SOLGM).

RDC has a statutory responsibility to lead its communities through 'era-scale' change in ways that protect and augment social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being and increase equity (Pride, 2020). Local government's role in championing and activating local wellbeing is crucial due to its assets, influence, and proximity to communities. RDC's contribution to wellbeing is multi-faceted, through regulating land use (managing the activities of people and businesses so they do not negatively impact on others or the natural environment), choosing and funding local facilities, and planning and investing in essential infrastructure. Its contribution is important, empowering communities to make their own choices and communicates and shapes government decisions for the needs of people at place (The New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2019).

Local government is the form of government most closely intertwined with people's day-to-day lives and is with them 'at the coalface' in good times and in bad (Lyons, 2007). This has never been more evident than during the recent National Crisis of Cyclone Gabrielle, where Local Government played a pivotal role in communication, support, and networking. Amidst the displacement of thousands of people, The Wairoa Council Chambers became a central hub for people seeking and offering help and where recovery efforts were concentrated (Dennett, 2023). Council Elected Members, Council Staff, MSD, Iwi Organisations, FENZ and the Rural

Support Trust formed outreach missions to visit and assess the welfare needs of remote communities organising food drives and providing support through Mayoral Relief funds (Collis, 2022).

PŪWHENUA KI RUAPEHU-LIVING IN RUAPEHU

PŪWHENUA KI RUAPEHU STUDY

The “Living in Ruapehu” (Pūwhenua ki Ruapehu) study was a deep analysis of the challenges faced by the Ruapehu District population, in the response to a lack of fit for purpose data, The study focused on:

- housing
- health
- education
- employment
- environment
- economy
- social wellbeing

RDC worked with the Ministry of Social Development, Dot Loves Data and Datacom to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to combine official statistics with community narratives, in order to provide RDC with a better understanding of the specific needs of the community and help develop work that would increase the quality of life for everyone in the district.

PŪWHENUA KI RUAPEHU- LIVING IN RUAPEHU PORTAL

To ensure that this study became a well utilised resource, a live web portal was established to provide RDC, NGOs, government agencies and other key stakeholders live up-to-date data, a first in New Zealand. The Portal has been instrumental in RDC accessing funding and providing a robustness to decision-making, while building confidence with other stakeholders to work and invest with RDC on resolving entrenched well-being issues helping to lift trust and confidence in government (LG Web, 2023).

AN AGEING POPULATION

Population ageing is occurring in all developed countries, although at varying speeds. As it is an unprecedented phenomenon, there is significant uncertainty about the ways in which it will affect society (van Rensburg, Domican, & Kennedy, 2021). The nature of Ruapehu's population is changing, with the over 65 age group growing. A significant proportion of the rating base will be comprised of an increasing number of retired ratepayers, which may impact on the financial sustainability of rates revenue. Disproportionately fast growth in the 65-years and older age group means that younger age groups are expected to decline as a share of the population, despite growing in number (Infometrics(b), 2023).

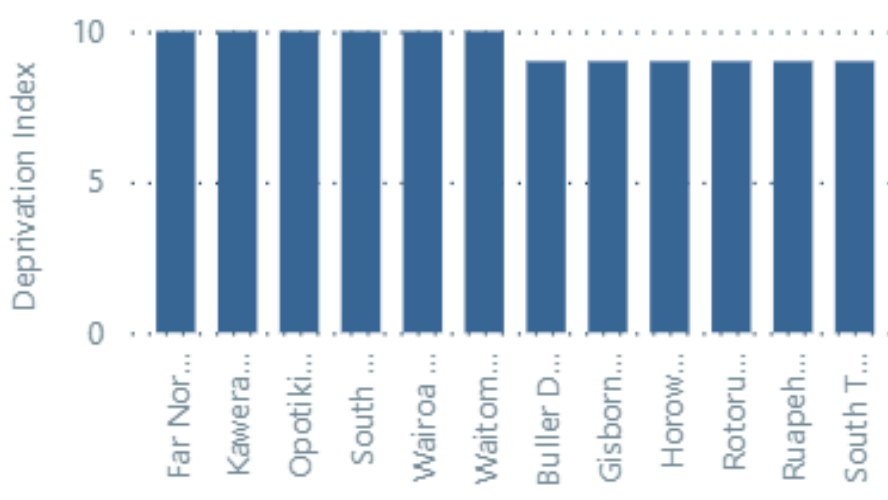
DEPRIVATION



Deprivation is a state of observable and demonstrable disadvantage relative to the local community or the wider society or nation to which an individual, family or group belongs. Deprivation comprises of material and social aspects (Townsend, 1987). Evidence shows a strong association between area-based measure of deprivation and social and health outcomes (Exeter, Brown, Crengle, Lee, & Zhao, 2017). Ruapehu is a 9 on the Deprivation Index, 1 represents the least deprived areas and an index of ten represents the most deprived (Pūwhenua Ki Ruapehu, - Ruapehu District Council, 2023).

Given the wellbeing focus of local government, improving health outcomes, education, pathways to employment, food security, and housing security and condition are areas in which RDC has an interest. This may be through developing specific council-led initiatives, partnership with other agencies, or assisting groups to access government funding.

Districts ordered by Deprivation Index

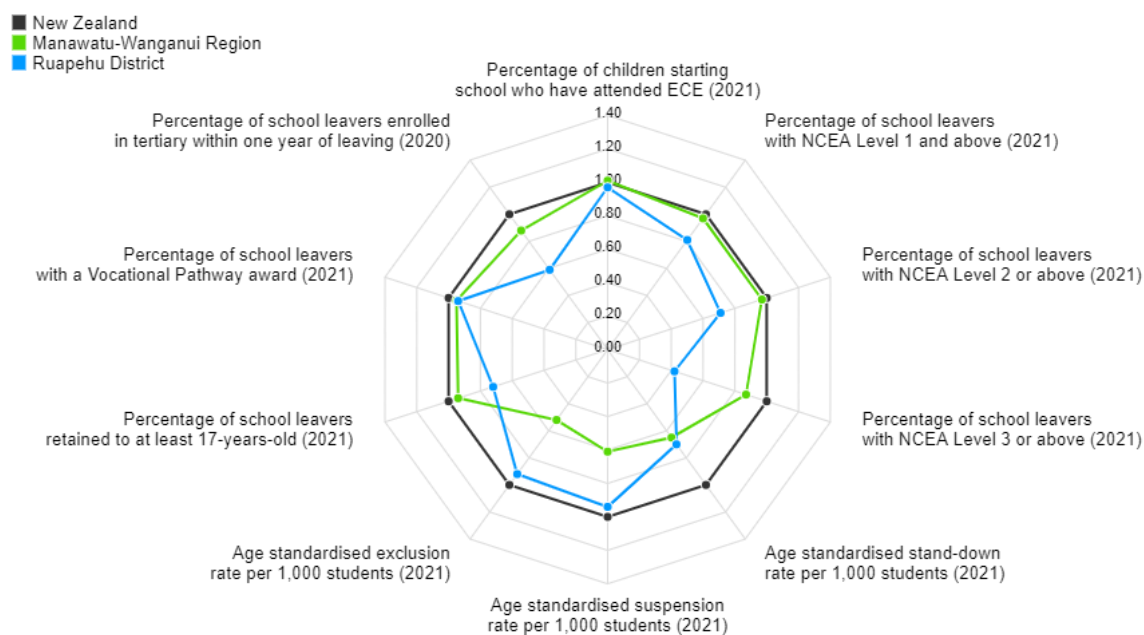


(Pūwhenua Ki Ruapehu, - Ruapehu District Council, 2023)

EDUCATION

The ability to access good education from preschool to high school is important for liveability and well-being. Community narratives reveal issues with accessibility and transport are experienced by the RDC community. The district also loses families and students at year nine or above to boarding schools and that has implications for the wellbeing of both extended families and communities. Having to move location to obtain these services is not ideal for liveability and well-being (Pūwhenua Ki Ruapehu, - Ruapehu District Council, 2023).

RUAPEHU EDUCATION AT A GLANCE



Description	Territorial Authority Measure	NZ Measure
Number of students (2022)	2,026.0	815,151.0
Number of teachers in state and state integrated schools (2021)	211.0	63,657.0
Number of schools (2022)	22.0	2,544.0
Percentage of children starting school who have attended ECE (2021)	94.0	96.8
Percentage of school leavers with NCEA Level 1 and above (2021)	70.3	87.3
Percentage of school leavers with NCEA Level 2 or above (2021)	55.9	78.7
Percentage of school leavers with NCEA Level 3 or above (2021)	23.7	55.8
Age standardised stand-down rate per 1,000 students (2021)	38.4	26.8
Age standardised suspension rate per 1,000 students (2021)	3.3	3.1
Age standardised exclusion rate per 1,000 students (2021)	1.2	1.1
Percentage of school leavers retained to at least 17-years-old (2021)	58.5	81.4
Percentage of school leavers with a Vocational Pathway award (2021)	11.9	12.6
Percentage of school leavers enrolled in tertiary within one year of leaving (2020)	38.0	64.8

(Ministry of Education, 2023)

ATTENDANCE

In 2022 primary school regular attendance fell to 42 percent (Education Evaluation Centre - Te Ihuwaka, 2023). A pattern of non-attendance can place students at risk of poor achievement and early drop-out, thus compromising their later outcomes in life across a range of social and economic measures (Education Review Office, 2020).

ACHEIVEMENT

30% of Secondary school leavers in the Ruapehu District have no NCEA qualification, 15% leave with Level 1, 32% with Level 2 and 23% with Level 3. The Secondary school retention rate is 59% (Pūwhenua Ki Ruapehu, - Ruapehu District Council, 2023).

RURAL POPULATION DYNAMICS

- The Southern Ruapehu catchment relies on tourism, and the population increases significantly over the winter months as skiers and tourism workers come into the area. School rolls fluctuate during this time.
- Traditionally, many rural families in the district choose to enrol children for secondary education in boarding schools which are located outside the catchment.
- Many of the schools are geographically isolated. As a result, it can be more difficult to attract and retain staff, attend professional learning and development, manage maintenance of school property and to access agency support for students.
(Ministry of Education, 2022)

MĀORI LEARNERS/ĀKONGA

In 2022 there were 1,258 Māori students enrolled in the Ruapehu District (Ministry of Education, 2023)

According to the Ministry of education in their 2022 Network Plan:

- Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ngāti Rangi is the only Māori medium option for Tamariki in Southern Ruapehu, providing Māori immersion learning for approximately 20 year 1-8 tauira/pupils.
- In 2021, in Taumarunui there were 76 ākonga engaged in Māori medium immersion education. There are two Māori medium options for tamariki, Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Taumarunui and Te Kura o Ngāpuke.
- Te Reo programs are offered at Ruapehu College and Taumarunui High School.
- A new kōhanga reo is to be built at Taumarunui Primary School.
- Māori medium network strategies are underway for the Whanganui and Waikato area. The goal is to provide a connected pathway across the rohe for all ākonga.

TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL

- Taumarunui are developing vocational pathways and training across the catchment, to retain and attract a skilled workforce. The main employment focus in the catchment is tourism, agriculture, and forestry.
- Ruapehu College offers agricultural pathways and has strong relationships with UCOL Manawatū who offer Trades Academy programs in graphic design and technology through Te Pae Tata (the Ruapehu Community Learning & Tech Hub).
- The Manawatū-Whanganui Skills & Talent Advisory Group was established as part of Accelerate 25, the regional growth strategy. They aim to enhance employment training and to develop pathways to employment for school leavers in the Ruapehu district.

- Taumarunui High School runs a successful Trades Academy offering 70 places to students seeking Tertiary Trades qualifications in building, farming, hairdressing, hospitality, and tourism. In 2013, 53% of Trades Academy students were transitioning into other training. In 2019, this had increased to 82%.
- Tertiary training opportunities are brokered into the Taumarunui area by Te Awanui a Rua Charitable Trust and currently a select number of programs are available from UCOL, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, Toi Ohomai, and Land Based Training.
- The Ruapehu Skills and Talent Working Group is also proactively working to connect local employment opportunities, particularly in growth sectors, with schools and other education providers.

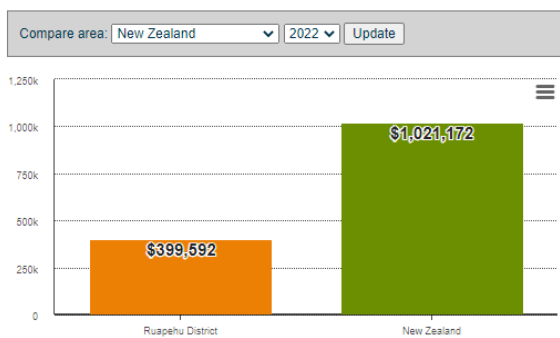
(Ministry of Education, 2022)

HOUSING

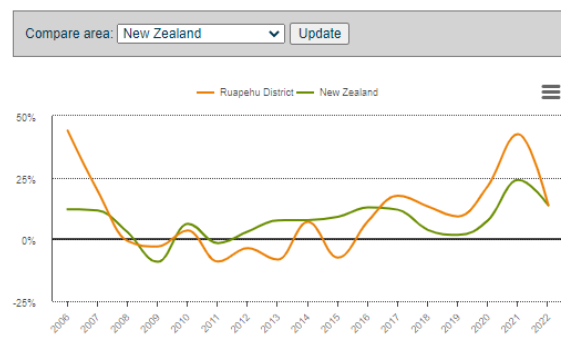
HOUSE VALUES

Expenditure on housing is a major component of household spending. This section describes the average current house values¹ in Ruapehu District, relative to the rest of the country.

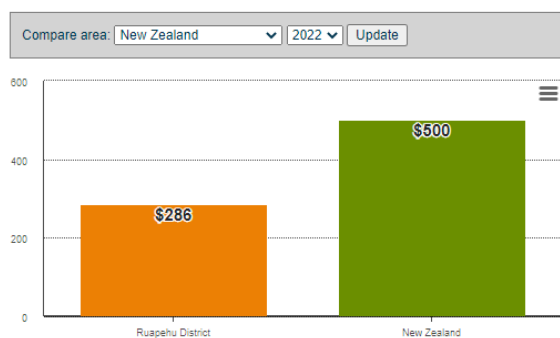
Average current house values, 2022



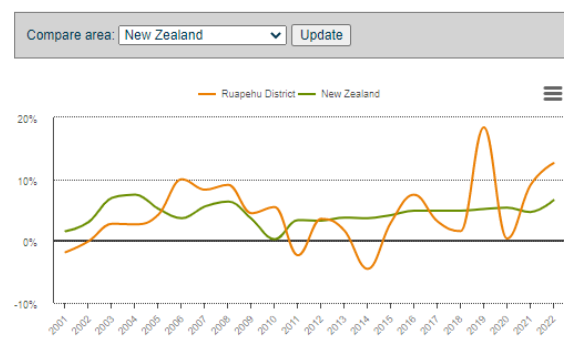
House value growth, 2006-2022



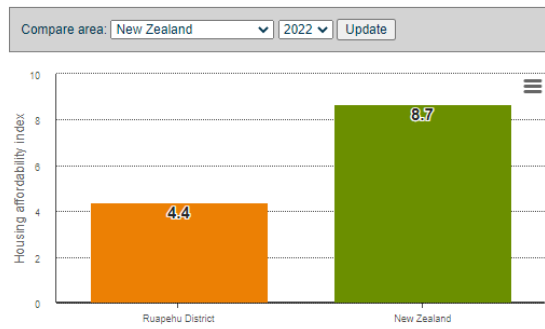
Average weekly rent, year to Mar 2022



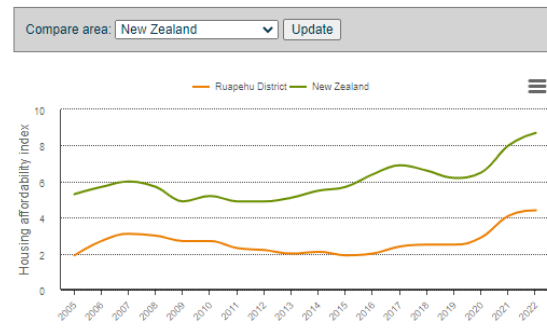
Growth in average rent, 2001-2022



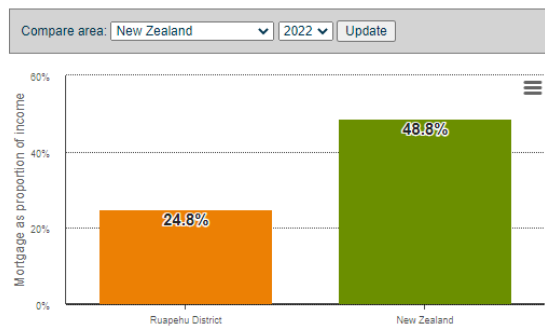
Housing affordability index, 2022



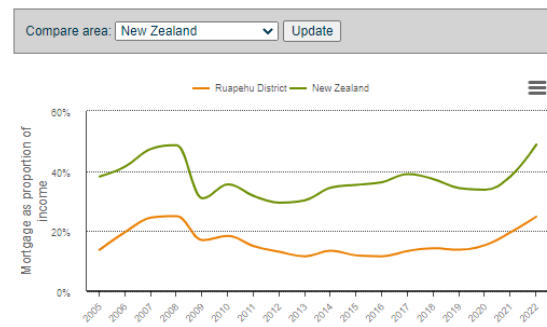
Housing affordability, 2005-2022



Mortgage proportion of income, 2022



Mortgage proportion of income, 2005-2022



(Infometrics(c), 2023)

- Median Property Value \$434k
- Median Rent Price \$308
- Home ownership 40%

Ruapehu has good rental and purchasing affordability, despite this Ruapehu has very low homeownership, ranking 60th of the 68 districts in New Zealand in home ownership (Pūwhenua Ki Ruapehu, - Ruapehu District Council, 2023).

Housing and economic challenges in the Ruapehu district impact community wellbeing. Stable, affordable housing in good condition is important for high livability and wellbeing outcomes. However, narratives and data gathered from Ruapehu communities indicate that access to housing appropriate to need is becoming increasingly difficult, and that these issues are affecting health, education, employment, and are also perceived to be contributing to social issues (Pūwhenua Ki Ruapehu, - Ruapehu District Council, 2023).

Community narratives indicate that high income earners from out of district, a strong tourism industry focus, holiday homes, and the national housing crisis, are pricing locals out of the rental housing and ownership markets, affecting the quality and stability of housing accessible to permanent residents and those seeking to move into the district for long term and seasonal employment (Pūwhenua Ki Ruapehu, - Ruapehu District Council, 2023).

RDC’s 2022 livability research has revealed a hidden housing crisis where some residents are living in overcrowded and poor housing or may be rough sleeping, and not registered for social housing as the registration system is not “user friendly” or people feel there is little point in registering because there are no homes available.

In early 2020 RDC identified the growing housing challenges that are impacting on all sectors of the community and across all social and income levels.

The demand for more social and affordable housing is increasing:

- There is a growing waiting list for council's social housing for older persons (60+ years) and residents of younger age groups (21 - 60 years) also registering and needing access to council's social housing.
- The number of those on the Ministry of Social Development's Social Housing Register have more than doubled in 2020 (from 22 to 61) and the numbers registered on council's social housing waiting list increased by 20 (from 48 to 68). It was recognised that these statistics are not a true reflection of need as not everyone is entitled to public housing registers.
- There are challenges in the supply of affordable homes for key workers such as tradespeople, construction workers, teachers, fire workers, and nurses who cannot access homes either for affordable rental or to buy.
(Morrison Low, 2023)

HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS IN OHAKUNE

RDC was successful in early 2021 in securing \$2.4M in funds from Crown Infrastructure Partners (CIP) for funding to help build more public and affordable homes. The development of six social houses at 11-13 Moore Street Ohakune was completed in October 2022, surplus funds were diverted to upgrade eight existing council social houses to meet healthy homes standards (Morrison Low, 2023).

PUBLIC AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING ASSET AND TENANCY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

A Public and Affordable Housing Asset and Tenancy Management Strategy was developed in mid-2020 with a primary objective to support the district's economic growth, development, and community wellbeing through housing.

The aim of this strategy was:

- To regenerate RDC public (social) housing and where possible, through partnership, encouraging fit for purpose public housing within the district, with an initial 10-year plan.
- To collaborate with Iwi, Central Government, or Crown controlled entities such as Kāinga Ora, accredited Community Housing Providers and local businesses or investors, so that a greater supply of land suitable for new public and affordable housing can be enabled and built on.
- With new ownership models, enable families to become homeowners.
- Update tenancy management practices to "best practice" which includes extending eligibility criteria and developing pathways to home ownership and independence. The strategy needs to satisfy RDC's rates neutral policy. (Ruapehu District Council, 2020)

This strategy was consulted on in September 2020 with significant public support. It was adopted in November 2020.

BETTER OFF FUNDING

As part of the three waters reform the Government developed a \$2 billion 'Better Off' funding package for councils to invest in their future and lift community wellbeing. Ruapehu's share of the \$2 billion package is \$16.4m available in two separate payments of \$4.12m (Tranche 1) and

\$12.35m (Tranche 2). The Government has decided not to go ahead with Tranche 2 of the 'Better Off' funding due to changes to planned Water Reforms (Department of Internal Affairs, 2023) however Tranche 1 is confirmed.

Three funding proposals were accepted.

- Waimarino social housing upgrade - \$540,000
- A contestable fund of \$500,000 for projects to be chosen from those submitted by the community as part of the consultation process in 2022. A process is being developed around how the \$500,000 will be allocated.
- \$3m toward existing Town Revitalisation projects.

COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDER (CHP) AND THE TAUMARUNUI COMMUNITY KOKIRI TRUST

The Council is working alongside the Taumarunui Community Kokiri Community Trust to assist it in obtaining registration as a Community Housing Provider (CHP). The Trust has been invited by the Community Housing Regulatory Authority (CHRA) to apply to become a CHP, which is currently underway.

PAPAKAINGA DEVELOPMENT

There is wide support for the development of papakāinga. There is a significant amount of whenua Māori (Māori land) on the edge of and just outside of the existing urban boundary of Taumarunui. While this whenua Māori is zoned rural in the current Ruapehu District Plan, the existing provisions of the District Plan do allow papakāinga development to occur as identified in the Taumarunui Manunui Spatial Plan which supports this land being developed by the respective Māori landowners/Trusts in a way that will meet their needs (Ruapehu District Council, 2022). RDC are looking to develop a Papakāinga Policy in the future.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Elevated housing costs are impacting on financial stability. The Reserve Bank of New Zealand (RBNZ) reports that 'The high level and concentration of household sector debt remains the largest single vulnerability of New Zealand's financial system' (Reserve Bank of New Zealand, 2019). Among households with mortgages, the average percentage of disposable income dedicated to debt servicing is expected to rise from a recent low of 9 percent to 20 percent, based on current mortgage rates. Repayment increases will be particularly significant for many households that first borrowed in the past two years (Reserve Bank of New Zealand, 2022).

FOOD INSECURITY

Food security is a key issue for the health of New Zealanders. While rates of food insecurity have been of concern in New Zealand for a long time, COVID-19 and the associated increases in the cost of living have further exacerbated the problem. Food Security is defined as sustainable access to affordable and nutritious food. It has been shown to be associated with worse health outcomes, including obesity, asthma, behavioral or developmental problems, greater rates of psychological stress and parenting stress, and barriers to receiving medical care. Research has shown 19 per cent of New Zealand children were living in households which experienced severe-to-moderate food insecurity (Macaulay, Simpson, Parnel, & Duncanson, 2022). Children from low-income families, those who live in areas of high deprivation, and those who identify as Māori or Pacific Islander had greater rates of household food insecurity

(Ministry of Health, 2019). Food insecurity is anticipated to be a challenge in the Ruapehu District given the risk factors present (poor household incomes, areas of extreme deprivation).

HEALTH OUTCOMES

The issue of access to health providers negatively impacts the lives of people and puts rural communities at a disadvantage for health care. This was discussed in a submission to the Productivity Commissions enquiry into economic inclusion and social mobility *A fair chance for all*. In the submission RDC spoke of health issues that were exacerbated by a shortage of primary health care, long travel distances and associated costs to access specialist health care, minimal public travel services and boundary confusions. The Ruapehu District is split between two District Health Boards (DHB), the Waikato and the Whanganui narratives from the community outline the difficulties of access to health care and confusion in the community of National Park regarding which DHB to access. Consistent narratives expressed by community members throughout the district were, “long wait times to access primary healthcare”, and “financial barriers and inadequate public transport prohibiting access to secondary health care” (Pūwhenua Ki Ruapehu, - Ruapehu District Council, 2023)

RURAL HEALTH STRATEGY

The Rural Health Strategy is expected to be published by the Ministry of Health in July 2023. The first Rural Health Strategy in New Zealand, it will set the direction and priorities for improving the health in rural communities, including building a flexible and adaptable rural health workforce to meet the broad health needs of rural communities (Ministry of Health, 2022).

CRIME RATE

For the past twelve months to January 2023, the Ruapehu district had a crime rate of 35 incidents per 10,000 people, increasing from a low of 32 in the twelve months to July 2022. These incidents were predominantly unlawful entry, theft, and assault. In December 2022, Ruapehu had the 32nd highest crime rate across New Zealand, up from 31st in November 2022. A substantial proportion of this crime is centered in Taumarunui and Ohakune (Ruapehu District Council (a), 2023).

CULTURAL



VIBRANT AND DIVERSE LIVING

Culture can be defined as:

“the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group ... it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (UNESCO, 2001).

David Throsby (1999) defines tangible culture as existing in:

“buildings, structures, sites and locations endowed with cultural significance (commonly called “cultural heritage”) and artworks and artefacts existing as private goods, such as paintings, sculptures, and other objects’. It can become part of a community’s cultural

heritage, such as whare tipuna, heritage buildings, paintings, carvings, sculptures, korowai, movies, and literature” (Throsby, 2020).

Cultural involvement is crucial in realising New Zealanders' capacity to lead fully satisfying, expressive, and creative lives. Although the degree to which this connection exists will vary greatly, many people believe that cultural well-being and civic involvement are related, particularly at the local level (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2019). Councils play a significant role in providing and supporting cultural activities like libraries, festivals celebrating culture, pavement, lighting, and street furniture, as well as the funding of local and regional arts organisation. While libraries, sports facilities, museums, and galleries are important, the promotion of culture or cultural well-being goes beyond this (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2019).

Cultural well-being also connects with broader policies and programmes such as:

- Central Governments Sustainable Development Programme of Action, which includes cultural values that are consistent with the focus of the Local Government Act 2002.
- Pride of Place Fund
- Creative Communities Funding
- Sport NZ Rural Travel Fund
- Community Hall Repairs and Maintenance Grants
- Whanganui River Enhancement Charitable Trust
- Better Off Funding
- Township Revitalisation

Councils have responsibilities under various pieces of legislation for heritage management and protection, notably the Resource Management Act 1991, Heritage New Zealand Act 2014, Building Act 2004, and Local Government Act 2002.

THE LIVING STANDARDS FRAMEWORK AND HE ARA WAIORA

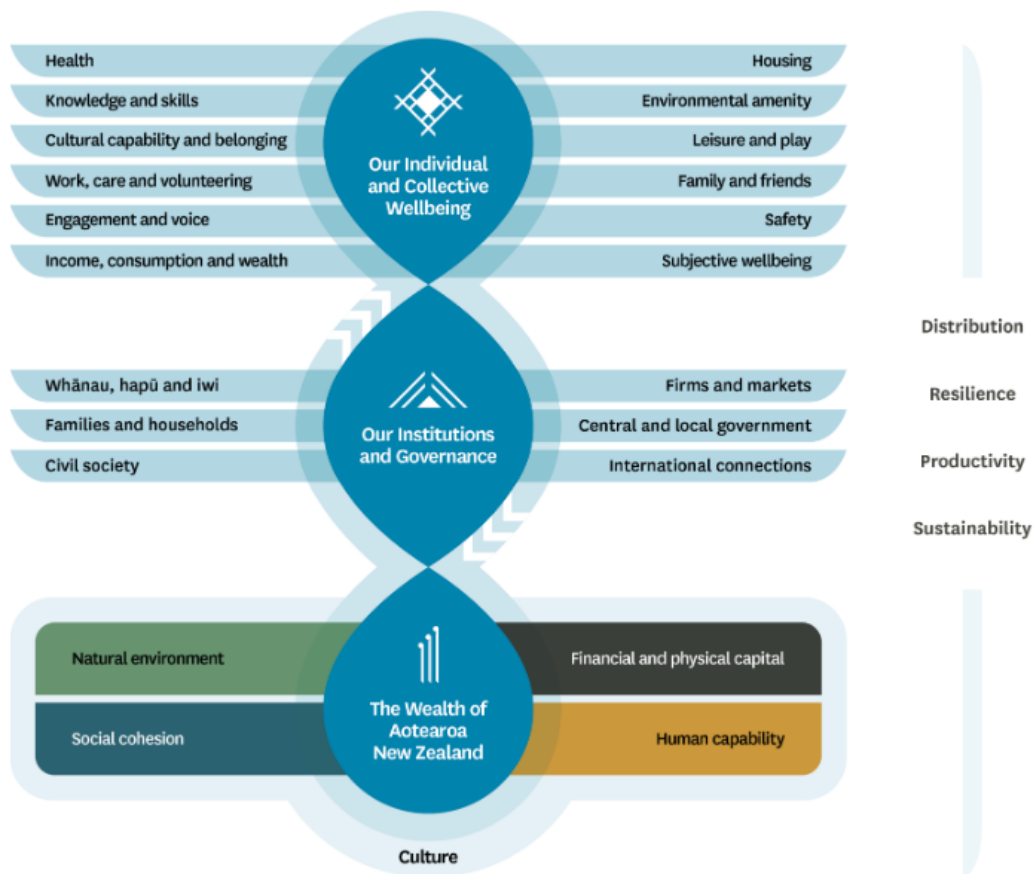
The Treasury developed The Living Standards Framework (LSF) and He Ara Waiora to explore wellbeing from diverse cultural perspectives, values and knowledge systems. The frameworks can be utilised to support a wellbeing approach in policy, strategy and decision making.

LIVING STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

The LSF is one of two wellbeing frameworks prompting inquiry into policy impacts across different dimensions of wellbeing, as well as long-term and distributional issues and implications of policy.

New Zealand's LSF and accompanying dashboard of indicators are a publicly available data bank of the trends, distribution, and sustainability of the country's wellbeing.

The new LSF has three levels and a series of analytical prompts that apply to each one:



(The Treasury(b), 2021)

Level 1: Our Individual and Collective Wellbeing

This level of the framework captures those resources and aspects of our lives identified by research or public engagement as being important for our wellbeing as individuals, families, whānau and communities.

Level 2: Our Institutions and Governance

This level captures the role that our political, economic, social, and cultural institutions play in facilitating the wellbeing of individuals and collectives, as well as safeguarding and building our national wealth. This level captures the role that, for example, schools have in the wellbeing of children, marae have in the wellbeing of tangata whenua, or the fisheries regulatory system has in sustaining Aotearoa’s fisheries for the benefit of all.

Level 3: The Wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand

This level captures how wealthy we are as a country, including aspects of wealth not fully captured in the system of national accounts, such as human capability and the natural environment. The word ‘capital’ is only used for financial and physical capital, which together with human capability, social cohesion and the natural environment are collectively referred to as the Wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand

Culture sits at the bottom of the framework to emphasise that all aspects of our wealth, our institutions and our wellbeing are cultural - culture is in every part of the framework.

HE ARA WAIORA

He Ara Waiora is a framework that helps the Treasury to understand Waiora, often translated as a Māori perspective on wellbeing. The Treasury's vision is 'lifting living standards for all New Zealanders.' He Ara Waiora gives an indigenous and uniquely Aotearoa New Zealand tikanga-based approach to wellbeing.

The term 'waiora' speaks to a broad conception of human wellbeing, grounded in wai (water) as the source of ora (life). He Ara Waiora presents a holistic, intergenerational approach to wellbeing. While its principles are derived from mātauranga Māori, many of its elements are relevant to lifting the intergenerational wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

He Ara Waiora articulates both the ends, or what are important elements in Māori perceptions of wellbeing, and the means, or the tikanga values or principles that help us achieve the ends.

The ends are:

- Wairua (spirit) is at the center to reflect that it is the foundation or source of wellbeing. Values, beliefs, and practices related to wairua are essential to Māori conceptions of waiora.
- Te Taiao (the natural world – the environment), is paramount and inextricably linked with human wellbeing. Humans have responsibilities and obligations to sustain and maintain the wellbeing of Te Taiao.
- Te Ira Tangata (the human domain) encapsulates human activities and relationships, including the relationships between generations. The concept of mana (power, authority) is seen as key to wellbeing.

The means, or key principles, are:

- Kotahitanga – working in an aligned, coordinated way.
- Tikanga – making decisions in accordance with the right values and processes, including in partnership with the Treaty partner.
- Whanaungatanga – fostering strong relationships through kinship and/or shared experience that provide a shared sense of wellbeing.
- Manaakitanga – enhancing the mana of others through a process of showing proper care and respect.
- Kaitiakitanga – guardianship, stewardship (e.g., of the environment, particular taonga, or other important processes and systems).

(The Treasury(a), 2021)

TE REO

In the 2018 census 11.15 of Ruapehu residents spoke te reo Māori, in stark contrast to the 4% nationally (StatsNZ, 2018). For Māori and Pacific Island people living in Aotearoa New Zealand, language, identity, and wellbeing are inter-linked and multifaceted. The link between identity and wellbeing is strengthened by being able to speak te reo Māori. Access to Māori cultural institutions (both built and intangible) are important wellbeing indicators for Māori (Matika, Manuela, Houkamau, & Sibley, 2021).



THRIVING NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Ruapehu is home to a wide range of species and habitats including the iconic Tongariro World Heritage Area and the Whanganui River. The ecosystems and services they provide are essential to us for the water and food we rely on; forests and wetlands absorb floodwater and reduce erosion and provide spiritual wellbeing and recreation.

The environmental challenges that we already face will be exacerbated by climate change. Land use, invasive species, and changing climatic conditions challenge the resilience of our ecosystems and the ability to adjust and adapt. On the other hand, restoring natural environments can go a long way to improve the resilience of both ecosystems and communities.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change continues to be a focus for RDC, with the potential to dramatically affect the region's physical environment, infrastructure, communities, and economy. An integrated response will be required using the full range of tools available to council, such as land use and resource management planning, asset management approaches and community engagement

RUAPEHU CLIMATE

The elevation of towns in the north of Ruapehu ranges from 187m to 443m above sea level, while the elevation of towns in the south of the district ranges from 524m to 1123m above sea level.

The average annual temperature in the north of the district's townships ranges from 11.6 – 13 Degrees Celsius while the average annual temperature of townships in the south of the district range from 8.1 – 11.1 Degrees Celsius.

The average annual rainfall for townships in the north of the district range from 1342mm – 1776mm while the average annual rainfall for townships in the south of the district range from 1103mm – 2775mm (NIWA, 2019).

At an altitude of 199m above sea level, Taumarunui experiences a significant amount of rainfall during the year with seasonal projections showing rain is set to increase by 7% – 16% during winter and decrease up to 5% during Autumn by 2090.

The average annual temperature for Taumarunui is 12.9 °C, reaching low-mid 30s in the summer and -1 or -2 in the winter (NIWA, 2022).

Impacts Of Climate Change In The Ruapehu

Impacts are predicted to be:

- A reduction in the number of snow days experienced annually is projected throughout New Zealand, including the Central Plateau.
- Greater warming in summer / autumn and less in winter and spring.
- Increase in water temperatures. The amount of warming will depend on river elevation, catchment size and water source (if the snow melts or not).

- An expected increase in hot days with 50-60 hot days per year between Taumarunui and Whanganui.
- A decrease in frost / cold nights. Larger decreases at higher elevations of the Central Plateau are also predicted.
- Annual average precipitation is predicted to increase 15-20% by 2090. (NIWA, 2019)

Even under a low emissions scenario, more snow and rainfall in winter in western parts of the region is expected, with Raetihi potentially receiving up to 15% more precipitation during winter by 2090. Assuming the worst-case scenario, the northern part of our region could experience up to 20% more snow and rainfall during winter, compared to 20% less precipitation in the south-eastern area (Horizons Regional Council, 2019).

It is projected that temperatures are likely to increase up to 1.2°C across the region by mid-century, with little variation at a district level, an increase of 10-15 hot days in areas with lower elevations is predicted, whilst those areas such as Waiouru and Ohakune are expected to experience 0-5 more hot days than present day (NIWA, 2016).

IMPLICATIONS FOR RUAPEHU

- Prolonged increased temperatures and reduced rainfall can lead to drought conditions, which are projected to increase in frequency and intensity throughout the region.
- Winter rainfall by the end of the century is projected to increase by 20% in the northwest of the region and decrease by 20% in the southeast of the region.

(NIWA, 2016).

- Risks to business, especially tourism, in districts such as Ruapehu from reduced snow and ice are already present and projected to increase with climate change.
- Social inequalities will be exacerbated as a result of changes in climate across the region.
- Land production and animal welfare are of concern, with pastoral land having increased risk to flooding due to their exposure and the impact excess water can have on pasture and product growth.
- Increases in precipitation can lead to the increased frequency and intensity of inland flooding and landslide events. Due to geography (e.g., vast river networks) and geology (e.g., erodible soils) increased precipitation is likely to exacerbate the impacts from these climate-induced hazard events.

(Horizons Regional Council, 2021).

- With Storm surges, flooding and storms predicted to increase over the next 30 years, network resilience is a significant issue, particularly on the Desert Road and State Highway 4 North of Whanganui. Changing weather patterns have increased risks in relation to RDC infrastructure, parts of which are already vulnerable (NZTA, 2020).

Balancing the demand for significant infrastructure investment while responding to global issues is challenging for a small district with a low ratepayer database to implement. Improved access to data and information will continue to allow RDC to communicate with our communities clearly and consistently.

4 Summary of climate change risks

Risks from physical changes in climate for the Manawatū-Whanganui region are broad, incapsulating change through time across what our community values. Across all community values, risks are seen to increase in severity with time, with **extreme** risks making up over 50% of the risks identified for Te Ao Tūroa | Natural world, Hauora | Wellbeing, Business, and Infrastructure. Over 50% of present day risks are rated as **moderate** or above for Business and Infrastructure., All identified risks for Hauora | Wellbeing and the vast majority of Infrastructure risks are rated as high or extreme by 2100.

Figure 4.1 shows this increasing risk profile with time, along with the presence of high and extreme risks across all community values and associated timeframes.

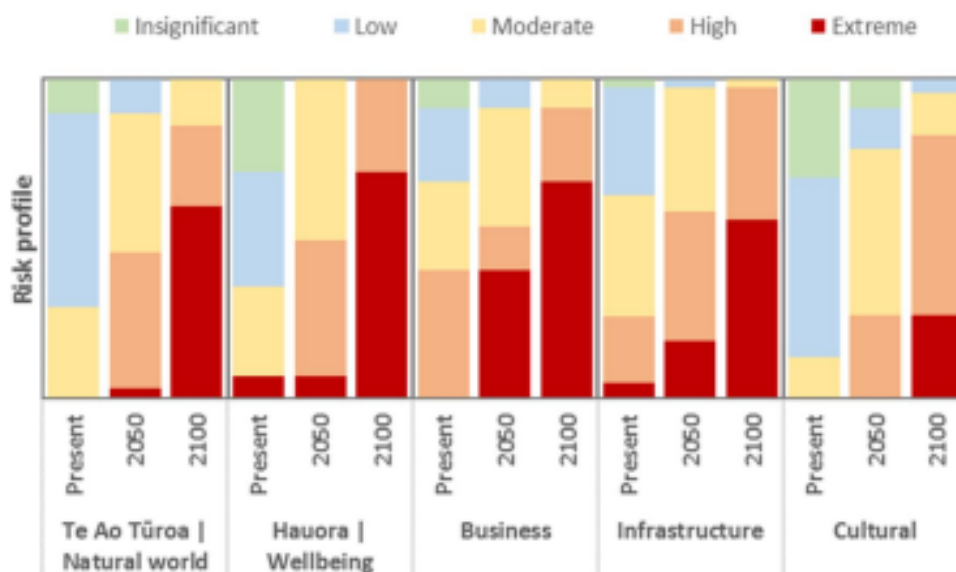


Figure 4.1: Summary risk profiles for each community value across present, 2050 and 2100 timeframes.

(Horizons Regional Council, 2021)

REGIONAL EMISSIONS

The Manawatū-Whanganui Region's 2021 total emissions were calculated at 5,816 total kilotons carbon dioxide equivalents (CO₂-e) in 2021 which is down from pre-Covid emissions in 2019 of 5,900 (StatsNZ, 2021).

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

Central Government declared a climate change emergency in December 2020; accordingly, government agencies are expected to be carbon neutral by 2025. RDC are developing a climate change strategy. The purpose of a climate change strategy is to develop a framework of how to improve current practices to address potential issues that the Ruapehu district is vulnerable to, and to create a framework for decision making, responses and investment outcomes.

- RDC is working to measure council's carbon emissions to establish a baseline understanding of the current risks and opportunities present within the district. Phase two of this work is to develop a suitable climate change/sustainability strategy.
- RDC has signed a Memorandum of understanding to work regionally with Horizons Regional Council and other regional territorial authorities. A regional climate change risk assessment has been completed.

- RDC is also in the initial setup phase of recording and monitoring their carbon footprint. Some climate-related practices have already been incorporated into asset management practices.

(Ruapehu District Council, 2021)

BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Critical infrastructure like water and energy supplies, roads and bridges sustain and connect our communities. These may be susceptible to damage from slips, storms, and flooding. It is important these services are maintained to sustain our economy and society and are particularly vital to rural communities.
- Transport and urban design are key elements in making it easier for people to reduce their carbon footprint.
- Alternative energy sources can be integrated into urban settings e.g., Palmerston North's 100k solar and use of captured gas from landfills, used to power wastewater plants.

(Horizons, 2020)

CLIMATE ACTION JOINT COMMITTEE

The Horizons Regional Council has established a Climate Action Joint Committee with representation from each of the region's eight councils, and tangata whenua representatives. Objectives of the committee included development of a regional Climate Action Plan.

The purpose of the Committee is to:

1. Receive scientific evidence and mātauranga Māori to inform strategic leadership on how the Manawatū-Whanganui Region could achieve climate change mitigation and adaptation; and
2. Inform the development of climate change adaptation and mitigation objectives, share information, and facilitate collaborative action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for climate change impacts.

(Horizons, 2020)

THE MANAWATŪ-WHANGANUI CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN TOWARDS A CLIMATE-RESILIENT REGION

The Manawatū-Whanganui Climate Change Action Plan Towards a Climate-Resilient Region provides an overview of the work being undertaken by councils in accordance with their joint commitment. It identifies the need for local Government to support the transition of communities to a low-emissions economy. The plan contains recommendations to councils, including incorporating climate change impacts into planning processes, agreeing on areas where councils can work together and talking to communities about potential impacts of climate change in the region (The Manawatū-Whanganui Climate Action Joint Committee, 2023).

WASTE MANAGEMENT AND MINIMISATION PLAN

The Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (WMMP) sets out Ruapehu District Council's plans for managing waste in our community. It has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Waste Minimisation Act 2008 (WMA).

RDC's vision regarding waste is "Zero Waste by 2040". 'Zero Waste' is described as a mindset and approach to waste management and minimisation, rather than an absolute target. It is supported by the priority goal: "Minimising Waste to Landfill" reflecting the intention of moving the district away from relying on landfill disposal, instead, putting maximum effort into diversion from landfill and using landfill disposal as last resort (Ruapehu District Council, 2018).

In the period of June 2021-June 2022 Ruapehu Transfer stations:

- Diverted 52,456.3kgs from landfill.
- Rehomed 48,558 items.
- Used 922 volunteer hours.
- Generated \$66,661.45 in income.
- Daily averages: 298kgs and \$378

NATIONAL DISASTER RESILIENCE STRATEGY

The National Disaster Resilience Strategy outlines the vision and long-term goals for civil defense emergency management in New Zealand and the objectives to be pursued to meet those goals. It sets out what we expect in respect of a resilient New Zealand, and what we want to achieve over the next 10 years.

RUAPEHU CIVIL DEFENCE

The Civil Defense and Emergency service aim is:

- To increase community awareness, understanding and participation in emergency management.
- To enhance local capabilities to manage emergencies and recover from disasters.

The role of the Ruapehu District Council is to:

- Ensure that it can fully function, even though this may be at a reduced level, during and after an emergency.
- Plan and provide for Civil Defense emergency management within the district.

ECONOMIC



THRIVING COMMUNITY

Ruapehu is a wonderful place to live and work. Being economically relevant in a fast-changing global economy requires the encouragement and development of new business ideas and collaboration between diverse types of industries. Supporting Ruapehu's economic wellbeing requires ongoing investment in infrastructure, which supports business activity.

The liveability of Ruapehu is an advantage that can attract highly skilled workers. Good land use planning can also be used to incentivise investment in the region. RDC aims to achieve its policy goals using a wellbeing approach in order to improve the living standards of Ruapehu residents and to ensure the council's decision making is driven by what is important to Ruapehu residents, rather than solely relying on traditional measures of success such as gross domestic product (GDP) and towards more expensive indicators of wellbeing.

COVID-19

Covid has become the new norm, our business communities across the region are continuing to feel the ongoing effects of staff shortages and delays in supply as they contend with recovery from the pandemic.

COST OF LIVING

It is important to acknowledge there are some in our communities who are doing it incredibly tough and experiencing considerable pressures on their household income and are limiting their spending, accordingly, making difficult choices daily. One in four New Zealanders struggle to make ends meet at least once a month while many have felt increasingly nervous about their financial security over the past 12 months, including fears over losing their homes, as inflation hits 7.3 per cent (Orange Sky Aotearoa, 2022).

LABOUR SHORTAGE

Rural communities are disproportionately affected by labor shortages and inflation. Businesses throughout the Ruapehu district describe amplified effects, which is stagnating economic growth and limiting job creation in the district (MBIE, 2022). Businesses in Raetihi and Ohakune are also reporting further strains with worker shortages which are affecting services levels, reducing opening hours, and in some cases resulting in closure (MBIE, 2022).

EMPLOYMENT FORECASTING

Employment led by public admin, health, manufacturing, and education over the 2022-2030 period, regional employment is projected to be led by:

- Public administration (292 jobs per year)
- Health (217)
- Manufacturing (176)
- Education (155)
- Over this period, agriculture employment is forecast to start softening by 35 jobs per year
- Construction will remain a significant industry, however, a small decrease in employment is forecast after peaking in 2023.

Over the 2030-2054 period, growth is expected to become more muted across all industries. Employment growth will continue to be led by:

- health (104 jobs per year)
- public administration (89 jobs per year)
- Employment in retail trade is forecast to ease by 52 jobs per year over 2030-2054, as the sector continues to evolve with online shopping and automation
- Employment in agriculture is forecast to reduce by 68 jobs per annum, reflecting higher carbon pricing throughout this period.

(Infometrics, 2023).

STRUCTURE OF REGIONAL ECONOMY (ECONOMIC PROFILE)

RETAIL CONSUMPTION

Less transactions occurred in the Ruapehu district in 2022-2023 compared to 2021-2022, and less is being spent in those transactions. When comparing April 2022 - March 2023 with April 2021 - March 2022, the average number of transactions fell 16.2%, the total value of transactions fell 18.5%, and the average value of each transaction fell 2.7%. The Ruapehu district displays more seasonality than surrounding districts (which is to be expected due to Ruapehu's large winter ski season, and the proportion of its spending which comes from out of town) (Ruapehu District Council (a), 2023).

BUSINESS ACTIVITY

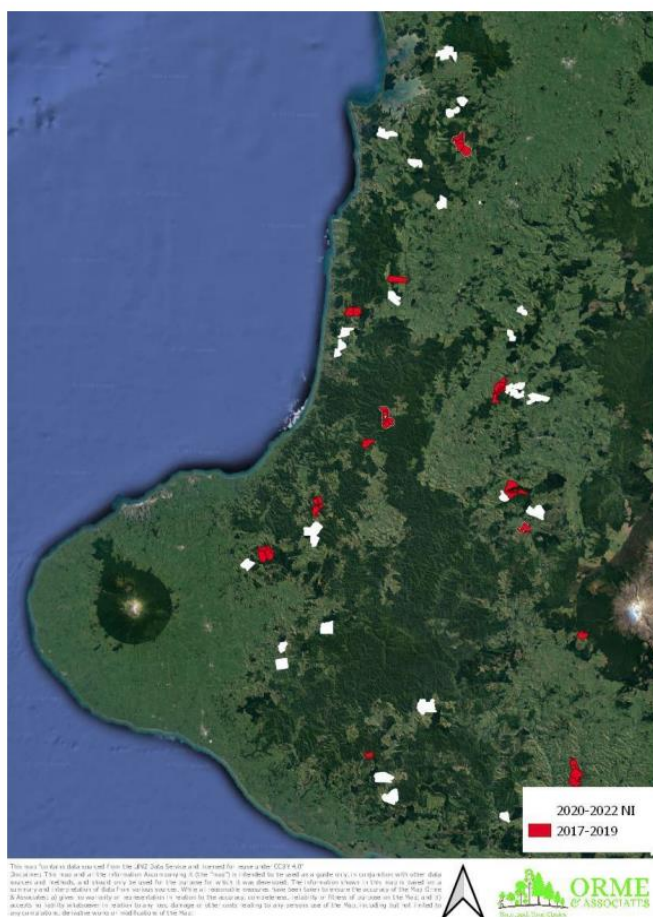
There were 6 business openings and 4 business closures in January 2023. This was 2.1% and 3.3% of all businesses in Ruapehu District (Ruapehu District Council (a), 2023).

AFFORESTATION

Due to the addition of carbon revenues, projected returns on forestry investments are increasing, forestry is prepared to pay more for the land than traditional farming and some landowners have chosen to take this opportunity to move on to the next farm or next stage in life. From 1/1/2020 to 30/6/2022 the gross land area of whole farm planting is estimated at 102,234 ha (Orme & Associates Limited, 2022). New Zealand hill country is the lifeblood of the sheep and beef sector as lambs and calves are born on the hill country and finished on lower land. If the rate of sale of sheep and beef farms continues there will be flow-on effects for

many farmers on flatter land – and further impacts on New Zealand's ability to produce and export food, in addition to negative impacts on rural communities. Beef + Lamb New Zealand, farmers and rural communities have expressed concern about the speed and scale of productive sheep and beef land being converted into pine trees as a result of climate change policies, including the Zero Carbon Act and reforms to the ETS, and other policy changes (BakerAg, 2021).

In addition to the increase in whole-farm sales, there has also been strong interest by farmers in integrating trees within their farms. Integration of trees into exotic, indigenous and mānuka plantings are identified as a good way for farmers to manage their landscapes, and potentially contribute to meeting climate change targets (BakerAg, 2021). Farmers are looking objectively at their total farming operation, analysing at a



paddock-by-paddock level the best use of land to support their chosen farm model. Rising costs associated with fuel, fertilizer, additional feed, and other on-farm costs add pressure, along with a shortage of staff in some regions are challenging the industry. Many farmers see benefit in an integrated approach, incorporating trees in areas on their farms less suited to food production (Orme & Associates Limited, 2022). Beef + Lamb New Zealand's position is that there are significant opportunities for New Zealand to meet its climate change targets through encouraging the integration of trees within farms, rather than the current policy settings which are encouraging whole farm conversions, which is in line with provisions in the Paris Agreement about food production (BakerAg, 2021).

AFFORESTATION EFFECTS ON THE COMMUNITY

Converting productive farmland to pine plantations for carbon credits means less jobs in that region. Forestry, and especially carbon farming, supports far fewer jobs than the red meat sector (BakerAg, 2021). With those job losses we are likely to see the loss of local businesses, schools and services essential to rural communities. Wholesale land conversion will also impact on New Zealand's economy. The red meat sector generates over \$12 billion in income per year nationally (Beef + Lamb New Zealand, 2022) After 2030, weakening agriculture employment will be keenly felt in predominantly rural districts such as Ruapehu, Tararua and Rangitikei, reflecting higher carbon pricing through this period (Infometrics, 2023).

A report into the impacts of Afforestation on Rural Communities (2021) carried out in Tararua provided narratives from the community including:

- Individuals and groups feel they are not part of these large-scale decisions, their voices are not being heard, they are not included in the changes that impact on their lives and the lives of their families/whanau and their mokopuna.
- A loss of agency - change is happening to them rather than with them.
- The loss of a finite resource - the land – and the loss of opportunity for current and future generations. Most described a loss of their identity as farmers, of community, of intergenerational connections with their community and land, and of the change in social norms that shape how these communities operate.
- Although a strong polarisation of views was widely reported, common ground exists. Farmers, foresters, and other land users are not anti-trees or anti-forestry, a focus of the right tree in right place was widely viewed.
- Narratives from some iwi members reflected the struggle with the concept of the right tree, right place differing from Te Ao Māori worldview. What gives anyone the right to determine what is planted where? How can we override Papatūānuku, our earth mother?
- The challenge identified in this research is: what is considered best or right and who has the right to decide what is right? Furthermore, if the right tree right place concept does not reflect all cultural beliefs, how can 'right tree right place' reflect the community's view about the future of their landscapes, rural communities, and future opportunities?

(Collins & McFetridge, 2021)

Communities and council currently have limited control over afforestation and the change in land use from agriculture and forestry. The ways council can influence afforestation is:

- To take an active role in discussions with the development of Government policy and regulation and continue to lobby central government for greater input and control by local government.
- For a whole of community viewpoint to protect productive land and biodiversity:
 - Encourage any economic assessments of land use change to take a holistic viewpoint (to include social, environmental, and cultural perspectives and impacts).
 - Consider any potential second and third order impacts (externalities) on communities (for example, impacts on tourism, provision of local community services, impacts on other industries and their viability not being directly measured).
 - The impacts of losing agricultural production and the adverse impact of monoculture forestry on biodiversity are considerations in addition to addressing climate change and New Zealand’s international commitments.
- Note that over time, as the forested areas grow, connectivity could reduce for electromagnetic transmission such as mobile, wireless and radio telephone services.

(Collins & McFetridge, 2021).

PRICING OF AGRICULTURAL EMISSIONS

In 2022 the central government proposed a farm-level levy for the pricing of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions. The levy seeks to set separate prices for biogenic methane and long-lived gases, that is to be implemented from 2025. The proposal included details of how agricultural emissions pricing will work, how the levy will be set, governance arrangements, how farmers and growers will report and pay for emissions, what on-farm actions, including sequestration, will be rewarded and the use of the pricing system revenue (Ministry for the Environment, 2022).

RDC partnered with the Ruapehu branch of Federated Farmers in support of two community meetings held in Taumarunui and Raetihi, in relation to the proposal. The purpose of the meetings was to make the community aware of the adverse socio-economic consequences that the proposed emissions pricing levy could have for the Ruapehu district.

The final decision in relation to the implementation of the emissions pricing scheme is yet to be released, however whatever form the final scheme takes, it will have an economic impact on the Ruapehu district. The farming community are great supporters of the District’s local businesses and economies; however, their ability to continue to provide that support will be limited by the reduction in income and spending resulting from the implementation of pricing scheme.

MANAWATŪ-WHANGANUI ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN

In July 2015, Central Government, in consultation with Horizons Regional Council and district and city councils, commissioned a Regional Growth Study identifying a number of opportunities and key enablers to help realise economic prosperity in our Region.

Released in 2016, the Manawatū-Whanganui Economic Action Plan is the region’s strategy for increasing job opportunities and quality of life – by connecting people, business and our environment. Developed by business leaders, iwi, communities, hapū, and councils, in

partnership with central government, the plan is about realising a short and long-term vision now and through to 2025 (Horizons, 2020).

ACCELERATE 25

The implementation program from the Regional Growth Study is Accelerate25. Under this program, the Manawatū-Whanganui Economic Action Plan was created by business, iwi, and local and central government. The Plan’s purpose was to unlock the potential within the region to create opportunities by providing enablers, identifying priorities to implement and key agencies to work with. In 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Accelerate25’s resources were redirected to support the Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce as they worked with numerous community groups, businesses, and agencies to aid recovery in the Manawatū-Whanganui Region (Horizons, 2020).

TE PAE TAWHITI

Te Pae Tawhiti sets out an inter-generational strategy for Māori economic development in Manawatū-Whanganui (2016-2040). Its purpose is to provide direction and support for Māori to pursue economic development as whānau, hapū, iwi, enterprises and communities, individually and collectively, within and across Manawatū-Whanganui. Te Pae Tawhiti is premised upon the notion that collaboration through alliances among Māori across Manawatū-Whanganui could accelerate growth for the benefit of Māori and non-Māori in this region. Te Pae Tawhiti is being implemented in parallel to the Action Plan and the Māori members of the governance group over-see its implementation. (Mika, et al., 2016).

MAYOR’S TASK FORCE FOR JOBS

Mayor’s Taskforce for Jobs is an initiative that focuses on getting youth into jobs, established in mid-2021 in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). An agreement was signed with King Country REAP (Rural Education Activity Program) to help 50 young people over the next 2 years into sustainable employment or training. MSD also runs a number of programs to maximise local jobs for local people, including running industry partnership programs with new businesses and operating “work ready” schemes to assist people into employment (Ruapehu District Council, 2022).

LABOUR MARKET SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Table 4: 2018 Census live and work data – labour market self-sufficiency

Territorial Authority	% of total workers by residence that live and work in the same District	
	2013	2018
Ruapehu District	97.9%	99.6%
Whanganui District	95.0%	97.8%
Rangitikei District	75.4%	84.3%
Manawatū District	55.9%	71.7%
Palmerston North City	93.3%	95.7%
Taranaki District	91.0%	93.1%
Horowhenua District	84.5%	90.5%

Place of work data from the 2018 Census found that 99.6% both live and work in the Ruapehu District (Stats NZ(a), 2022).

TAUMARUNUI MANUNUI SPATIAL PLAN

The Spatial Plan for Taumarunui and Manunui townships provides a blueprint for the growth and development priorities for the townships and how to get there reflecting key community wants around the need for more housing, jobs and opportunities, appropriate community properties and facilities, protection of productive land, the environment and areas of cultural and historical significance.

Spatial Plan outcomes:

A long term, coordinated approach to growth and infrastructure planning in the Taumarunui/Manunui area by:

- Outlining a vision and priorities for growth
- Establishing an overall spatial strategy for the area sustainable enough to meet future challenges, and
- Identifying broad locations for future growth and development, including critical infrastructure, services, and other investment.

OHAKUNE SPATIAL PLAN

The Ohakune Spatial Plan (OSP) uses the values and aspirations that RDC, Ngāti Rangī, Ohakune Inc, and key community stakeholders have identified. It sets out key priorities for Ohakune, looking at how Ohakune grows and responds to the key pressures, risks and opportunities that exist. Presenting a balanced approach to growth to ensure Ohakune can continue to pursue ways to provide housing options that meet the needs of the local community, with a focus on:

- Housing and Growth
- The Natural Environment- including A 'green belt' and Green 'Biodiversity' Corridors/links.

(Miskell, 2022)

TOWN REVITALISATION

Town revitalisation is in the planning phase for many of the towns in the Ruapehu district. RDC are working with local communities to move these projects forward. With the confirmation of Ruapehu's share of the first tranche of Better Off Funding, it is anticipated that work on these projects will proceed soon.

RAETIHI COMMUNITY HUB

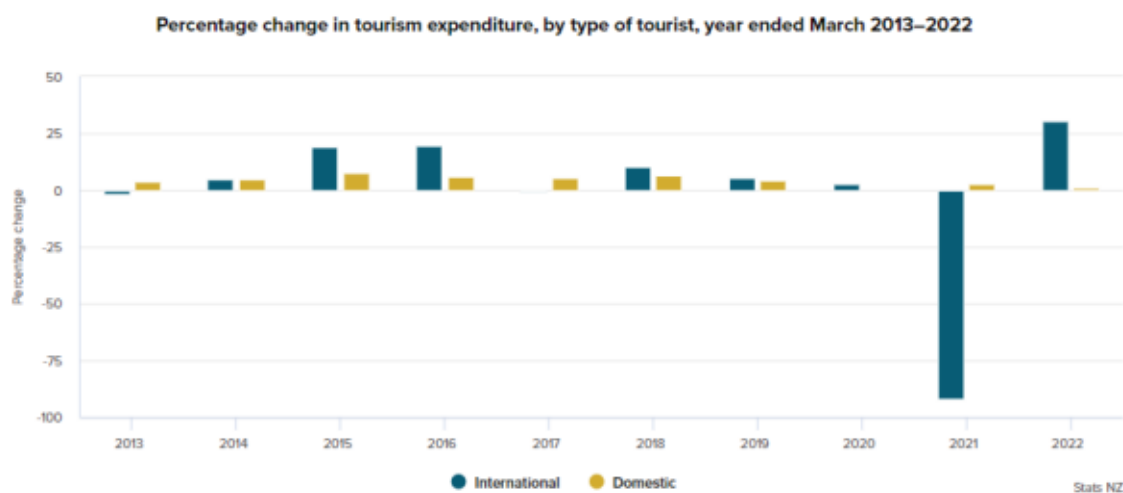
RDC and Uenuku Charitable Trust (UCT) are exploring the possibility of jointly creating a shared multi-purpose Community Hub for the Raetihi area, to accommodate and provide for their separate activities, as well as for present and possible future community activities. A period of public consultation has been completed and hui was arranged to obtain feedback on the project (Uenuku Charitable Trust, Ruapehu District Council, 2021).

TOURISM

The Ruapehu district is a popular destination due to its Ski Areas, Tongariro Alpine Crossing, Mountain Biking, Whanganui River, and increasingly the Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail.

The potential for Aotearoa New Zealand’s tourism industry to enrich the lives of visitors, while simultaneously enriching the lives of New Zealanders and te taiao, is a logical and necessary evolution (The Tourism Futures Taskforce, 2020). Partnering with Ngāti Hikairo, the Department of Conservation are working to address concerns around over-tourism and the preservation of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing and limiting carbon emissions. RDC is committed to facilitating infrastructure investment to support these and other initiatives, ensuring future developments are inclusive and accessible to people of all abilities (Visit Ruapehu, Waihua Ventures Limited, 2023).

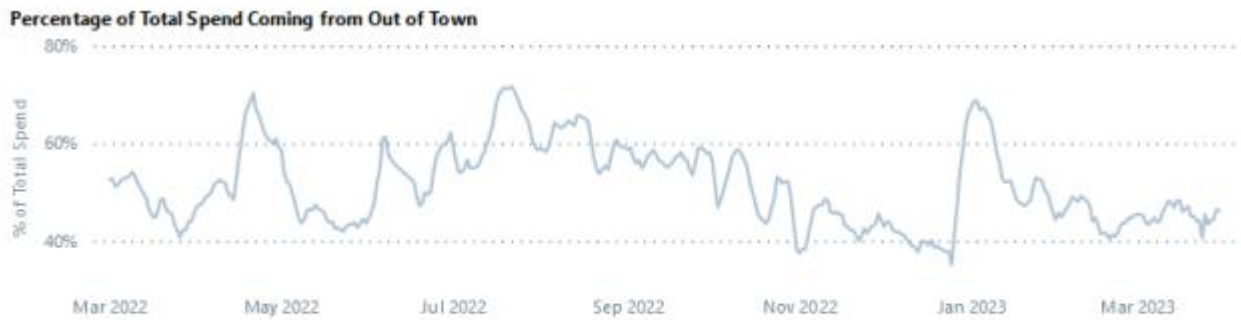
Around 1,500 people were employed in tourism-focused industries in the Ruapehu district in 2022, making up almost one-quarter (23%) of total employment. Almost one-third (32%) of people employed in tourism-focused industries in the Ruapehu district were employed in Taumarunui, 22% in National Park and 29% in Ohakune (Infometrics(a), 2023). Comparing tourism across Ruapehu District pre-pandemic (2018) and post-pandemic (2022), employment in tourism-focused industries fell 9%. The fall in tourism-focused employment across the district happened mainly because of falls in Taumarunui (down 15%) and National Park (down 25%). These falls were offset to a degree by rises in Ohakune (up 10%), Raetihi (up 25%) and Waiouru (up 99%, but from a very small base) (Infometrics(a), 2023).



(Infometrics, 2023)

TOURISM SPEND

In the year ending March 2023, 53% of the total eftpos spending in the Ruapehu district came from outside of the district. The majority of Ruapehu’s out of town spending continues to come from Auckland in March 2023, followed by spending from Wellington. While Auckland makes a large contribution of out-of-town spending, spending from within Ruapehu District still makes up the majority of electronic transactions.



(Updated) Figure 1G - Out of town spending as a percentage of all eftpos spending in Ruapehu, March 2022 - March 2023.

(Ruapehu District Council, Dot Consulting, 2023)

THE NEW ZEALAND TOURISM FUTURES TASKFORCE

The New Zealand Tourism Futures Taskforce is an independent public private partnership to lead the thinking on the future of tourism in New Zealand amid a pandemic which effectively ended global tourism. It defines a desired 'Future State' where the wellbeing of communities is at the center of the tourism eco-system (The Tourism Futures Taskforce, 2020). The integration of visitor economy planning in local long-term plans and connecting those to a national planning framework is vital. Furthermore, it is important, the destination plans are co-created with communities and take a long-term view aligned with regenerative outcomes. The Taskforce also noted that development of the plans properly will require funding support and they will need to be reviewed regularly (The Tourism Futures Taskforce, 2020).

VISIT RUAPEHU - REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANISATION

A Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) is responsible for promoting the region at both a domestic and international level. RDC contracts out the RTO function in the belief that industry specialists will deliver the services better and more efficiently. The RTO for Ruapehu is Visit Ruapehu Limited (VR), which is a Council Controlled Organisation. VR supports the tourism infrastructure of the district and works with local, regional and national partners. VR is an essential part of RDC's economic and community development strategy, particularly the promotion of Ruapehu as a visitor destination, both for the domestic and international markets, in partnership with operators/providers. (RDC LTP)

VR received \$700k of funding through the Tourism Communities: Support, Recovery and Re-set Plan, which is in addition to what was allocated under the Strategic Tourism Asset Protection Programme in 2020/21.

TAHIA KO PUANGA- DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

Visit Ruapehu partnered with Waihuia Ventures Limited to create the Destination Management Plan - Tahia Ko Puanga. Engaging with marae, hapū & iwi, local & central government, local rangatahi and whānau, and tourism operators. Tahia Ko Puanga reflects the needs and wants of Ruapehu as a destination and sets out a pathway that ensures tourism is sustainable, regenerative, and benefits our local communities (Visit Ruapehu, Waihuia Ventures Limited, 2023).

TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

The Tourism Infrastructure Fund (TIF) provides up to \$25 million annually to develop tourism-related infrastructure that supports regions facing pressure from tourism growth. At this stage six rounds of funding have been complete and applications for round 7 closed on 8 May 2023.

RDC received funding in Rounds:

- Round 4 2019
 - \$3,991,370 for upgrade of Ohakune Water Treatment Plant
 - \$115,500 for Ohakune/Raetihi Wastewater Treatment Plant Feasibility Study
- Round 3 2019
 - \$129,808 for installation of Big Belly bins in key locations.
 - \$32,900 for a Feasibility Study into Pipiriki Water and Wastewater
- Round 1 2017
 - \$748,500 to build car parks, toilets, footpaths, and a dump station in the National Park village.
 - \$100,000 to build new toilets and ablution blocks at Raetihi.
 - \$155,000 for a feasibility study on wastewater management issues for Ohakune and Raetihi.

(MBIE, 2023)

CHALLENGES:

COVID 19

The devastation wrought on New Zealand's tourism industry by the necessary closing of borders and restrictions on movement will have a lasting impact. There is a heightened understanding of the need to build sustainability and resilience across the tourism sector.

(Tourism Data Leadership Group, 2022)

CLOSURE OF THE CHATEAU TONGARIRO

Iconic Ruapehu hotel the Chateau Tongariro closed on the 5th February 2023 following a seismic assessment, which found that some of the hotel infrastructure no longer meets safety standards. The decision to close was also influenced by the uncertainty of the Ruapehu ski fields (Bathgate, 2023). The Chateau Tongariro was built in 1929 and is listed by Heritage New Zealand as a Category 1 historic place.

RAL IN RECEIVERSHIP

Ruapehu Alpine Lifts Limited (RAL) has gone into voluntary administration after three challenging ski seasons, due to the lack of snow and the Covid-19 pandemic. RAL owns and operates the Whakapapa and Tūroa ski areas. PwC were appointed voluntary administrators of RAL in 2022.

RAL is vitally important to Ruapehu's wellbeing and economic prosperity. The ski fields, Sky Waka Gondola and the other visitor services provided by RAL support the equivalent of 650 full-time employees in the Ruapehu district. For every \$1 spent on the maunga, \$5 is spent in the wider economy. Jobs and expenditure are created and sustained within accommodation, food, transport, and service sectors (Hutch Consulting, 2022). John Fisk administrator for RAL

on behalf of PwC places the economic benefit to the region at \$100 million a year (Maher, 2022). Central government has advanced a further \$6 million bridging funding to allow time for MBIE through Kanoa-RDU to support the development of an alternative commercial solution (Nash, 2022).

INEQUITY OF TECHNOLOGY/ RURAL CONNECTIVITY

RURAL BROADBAND INITIATIVE

MBIE's Rural Broadband Initiative aims to reduce the number of rural households and businesses that cannot access broadband speeds of at least 20 Mbps download (this was assessed at 90,000 nationally in 2017). As part of the initiative, 13 private sector contractors have signed contracts with Crown Infrastructure Partners to carry out the work. The programme will be funded with \$47 million from the Government's COVID Response and Recovery Fund.

MOBILE BLACK SPOTS FUND

The Mobile Black Spots Fund (MBSF) is an initiative to improve the availability of mobile services on state highways and improve visitor experience at tourist destinations. Mobile coverage currently covers areas where over 95% of New Zealanders live and work. However, our geographic coverage was sitting at around 50%.

RURAL CAPACITY UPGRADES

In February 2022, the Government announced the formal commencement of a \$47 million package of investments to bolster the capacity in wireless networks in rural areas which is expected to benefit up to 47,000 rural households and businesses as a Rural Capacity Upgrade (RCU). Work is in progress on new towers and upgrades to existing towers (and some fibre backhaul) to improve network performance in rural areas.

REMOTE USERS SCHEME

The Remote Users Scheme was launched in November 2022 aiming to equip as many rural and remote New Zealanders as possible with the connectivity infrastructure needed to access broadband services where they live. The Scheme is also available in rural areas where internet download speeds are very slow, and the household is not covered by any other government connectivity programme.

(Crown Infrastructure Partners, 2022)

These initiatives are intended help to bring equality to internet access between rural and urban areas, but a discrepancy exists where many rural areas have been still waiting to have access to broadband and mobile reception, while some parts of New Zealand are already being introduced to 5G (the next generation of mobile broadband technology with exponentially faster upload and download speeds).

Research suggests that:

- that those who do not have internet access tend to have lower subjective wellbeing than those who do have access.
- people without internet access are less engaged in civic activities such as voting in general elections and making submissions to government.

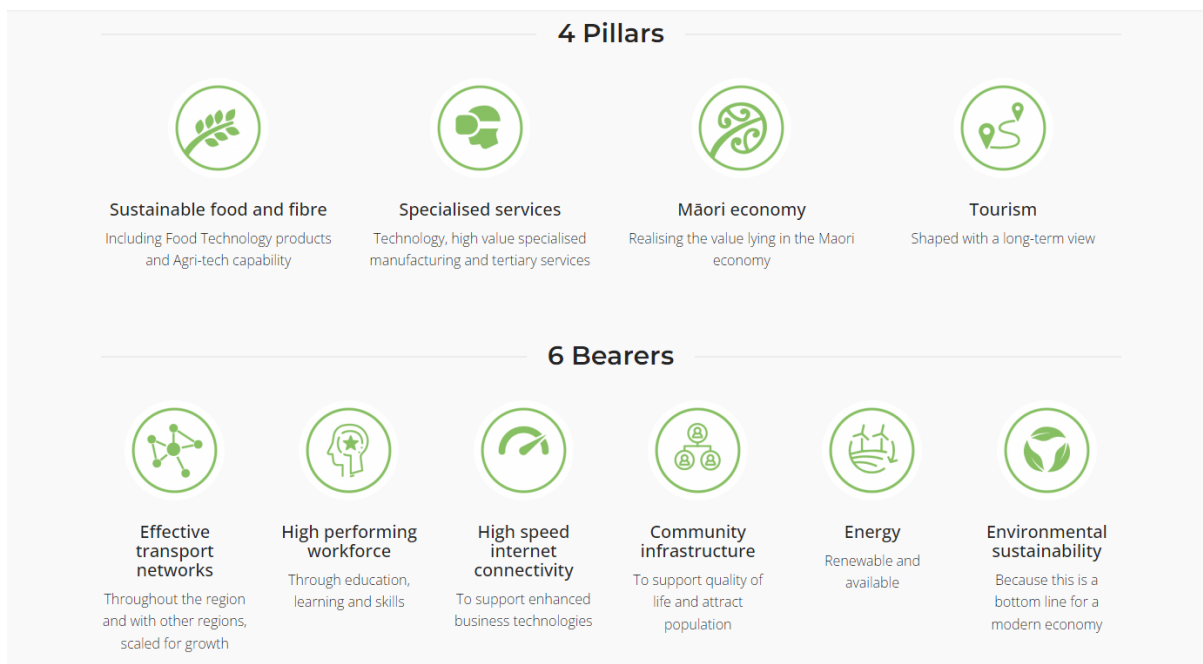
- Identifies two particularly at-risk groups of inequality due to lack of internet access: social housing residents, and individuals with disabilities.

(Grimes & White, 2022)

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

PILLARS AND BEARERS

Accelerate 25 identified four Pillars and six Bearers as priority areas to drive economic growth within the Manawatū-Whanganui Region. Pillars are the wealth creation drivers of the economy that create regional comparative advantage, the Bearers are the essential foundations and enablers upon which the pillars rest and depend on.



(Accelerate25, 2023)

TRANSPORT

Transport is essential for the lives of every New Zealander – it allows us to access economic and social opportunities within New Zealand and to connect globally. For New Zealanders to flourish we need an effective, healthy, and safe domestic transport system with strong links to the rest of the world. Land Transport is Ruapehu's largest single expenditure item accounting for almost half of RDC's annual expenditure at 45 % (RDC Annual Plan 2022/23).

THE ROAD NETWORKS

The Council has infrastructure assets of:

- 488km of sealed roads
- 847km of unsealed road
- 340 bridges and large culverts
- 70km of footpaths
- 1,334 streetlights

GOVERNMENT POLICY STATEMENT ON LAND TRANSPORT 2021/2022 – 2030/2031

The Government Policy Statement on Land Transport (GPS) outlines the Government's strategy to guide land transport investment over the next 10 years. It took effect on 1 July 2021. It sets out how funding is allocated between activities such as road safety policing, state highway improvements, local and regional roads, and public transport (Ministry of Transport, 2020).

The strategic priorities for GPS 2021 are:

- Safety - Developing a transport system where no-one is killed or seriously injured.
- Better Travel Options - Providing people with better transport options to access social and economic opportunities.
- Improving Freight Connections - Improving freight connections for economic development.
- Climate Change - Developing a low carbon transport system that supports emissions reductions, while improving safety and inclusive access.

The Ministry of Transport is currently developing the next GPS, which will set the Government's priorities for land transport for the 10-year period 2024/25–2033/34.

The Indicative Priorities for GPS 2024 are:

- sustainable urban development
- safety
- integrated freight system
- maintaining and operating the system
- resilience

The Government has communicated that the indicative transport priorities signed off by Cabinet last year will change in the wake of Cyclone Gabrielle, to ensure the GPS has a greater focus on reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, as well as building greater resilience so our transport network can better withstand the increasing frequency of extreme weather events. Public consultation on the Draft GPS24 is expected to begin in May 2023 (Transport, 2023).

HORIZONS REGIONAL COUNCIL'S REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT PLAN 2022-2032

This Regional Public Transport Plan, prepared by Horizons Regional Council is a strategic document that sets the objectives and policies for public transport in the Horizons Region, and contains details of the current and proposed future public transport network for the next 10 years.

Its objectives include:

- Travel Choice - Transport users in the region have access to affordable transport choices that are attractive, viable and encourage multi-modal travel.
- Connectivity and Efficiency - The regional transport network connects central New Zealand and is efficient, reliable, and resilient.
- Safety - The transport network is safe for all users.
- Environment - The impact of transport on the environment, and the transport system's vulnerability to climate change, is minimised.
- Land use Integration - Transport and land use are integrated to support well-connected communities that promote a strong regional economy and livable region.

RESHAPING STREETS REGULATORY CHANGES

The Minister of Transport is proposing a set of regulatory changes to make it easier for local authorities (like councils) to make street changes that support public transport, active travel, and placemaking. These proposals would enable local authorities to make street changes more efficiently and provide new ways for communities to be involved in changes that affect them.

The proposed regulatory changes include:

- a new 'Street Layouts' land transport rule for local authorities, as road controlling authorities (RCAs), to use for changing street layouts, piloting street changes, restricting vehicles, establishing Community Streets and School Streets, and for deciding on other street changes.
- amending sections in the Local Government Act 1974 covering pedestrian malls, transport shelters (like bus shelters), and temporary road closures.
- changes to other rules and regulations so that local authorities can reduce speed limits as part of pilots, trial Traffic Control Devices more effectively, and to make legislation more accessible.

(Ministry of Transport, 2022)

ROAD TO ZERO STRATEGY

New Zealand's Road Safety Strategy 2020 - 2030 sets a vision of a New Zealand where no one is killed or seriously injured in road crashes. It has five focus areas:

- infrastructure improvements and speed management
- vehicle safety
- work-related road safety
- road user choices
- system management

SPEED MANAGEMENT

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency is the responsible road controlling authority (RCA) for state highways and local councils are RCAs for local roads. As of 19 May 2022, there is a new framework for setting speed limits across New Zealand using speed management plans.

The new framework, established by a new Land Transport Rule: Setting of Speed Limits 2022 means that it is now easier for RCAs to set safe and appropriate speeds, alongside considering safety infrastructure and safety cameras, to keep road users safer.

Speed limits around schools (including kura) are required to change, based on the risk profile of schools and the roads around them. Schools will be divided into two categories with the speed limit set to 30km/h or 40 km/h for Category one, and up to 60km/h for Category two. These limits must be in place by the end of 2027. RDC are in the process of preparing a Speed Management Plan that will be consulted on with the public in 2023.

RAIL

Taumarunui was reinstated as a scheduled stop on the main trunk line as of 4 December 2022, on the Northern Explorer Service. This Scenic service stops in Taumarunui, National Park, and Ohakune. Passenger services on the North Island Main Trunk Line currently focus on tourism.

The North Island Main Trunk Railway Group (NIMT) is a collective of 20 councils situated along the North Island main trunk line. NIMT is working for the reinstatement and development of

passenger services on the North Island main trunk line. The NIMT have funded a feasibility study, the North Island Regional Passenger Rail Study, as the first stage of work toward the development of an Indicative Business case, which will be followed by a Detailed Business Case. Notably it concerns the feasibility of establishing the missing link to Hamilton and Palmerston North.

The Government's Transport and Infrastructure Committee has opened an inquiry into the future of inter-regional passenger rail in New Zealand. The case for North Island Regional Passenger Rail along the North Island main trunk line is to be presented at Parliament to the Transport and Infrastructure Committee.

The return of rail passenger services to the North Island main trunk line would deliver the following benefits:

- Provide a critical regional and community link.
- Support social connectivity and economic growth.
- Provide an alternative transport option.
- Reduce greenhouse emissions.
- Help improve road safety by lessening car and truck movements.
- Improve the resilience and capacity of the North Island transport corridor.
- Aligns with strategic Government policy on land transport, road safety and climate change amongst others.

(rpsgroup, 2022)

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