

# Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) in Auckland: Trends June 2011 to June 2021

Ting Huang

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Technical Report 2021/20





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Research and Evaluation Unit

Auckland Council  
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# Executive summary

## Introduction

Young people aged between 15 and 24 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) are at risk of becoming economically and socially disadvantaged, and have been particularly hard hit by the impacts of COVID-19. Auckland has been disproportionately affected, young Aucklanders have been most impacted by job losses, and secondary attendance rates have declined significantly (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Auckland Council is working closely with its partners to address the issue of youth NEET. In council's recently launched Economic Development Action Plan (Auckland Council, 2021), young people, especially those who are disengaged in the labour market and education, present a community with the greatest need – who are most at risk of socio-economic hardship and most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report uses publicly available data from Stats NZ's Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS) to provide an overview of the trends in young people who were NEET in Auckland for the years ended June 2011 to June 2021. It updates the 2018 report titled *Youth not in employment, education or training in Auckland* (Tuatagaloa and Wilson, 2018), which included data up to the year ended June 2018.

The data measures NEET in two aspects – the number of youth NEET and the youth NEET rate. The NEET rate is the total number of youth NEET as a proportion of the total youth population. Both measures are analysed in this report.

Note that at the time of writing, Auckland has been in a major Delta lockdown since mid-August 2021, which is outside the time period of the NEET data covered in this report. Therefore, the impact of the Delta lockdown in the second half of 2021 – which is still yet to be ascertained, is not shown here.

## Findings for Auckland

In the year ended June 2021:

- there were 32,150 young people aged between 15 and 24 NEET living in Auckland (approximately 40% of the national total) – up from 29,000 in 2018
- almost two thirds (66% or 21,125) of youth NEET in Auckland were from the 20-24 age group, with a higher NEET rate (17%) compared to the rate for those aged 15 to 19 (10%) and the overall youth NEET rate in Auckland (14%)
- just over half (51% or 16,475) of Auckland's NEET youth were females and 47 per cent (15,675) were males, with a youth NEET rate of 15 per cent and 13 per cent respectively

- gender differential in youth NEET rate is more pronounced for the 20-24 age group – 19 per cent for females and 15 per cent for males; the NEET rate among the 15-19 age group was around 10 per cent for both males and females
- New Zealand Europeans represented the largest number of youth NEET in Auckland (13,025), but had the second lowest youth NEET rate (11%), after Asian youth (10%)
- Māori youth had the highest NEET rate (23%) with a number of 8075 youth who were recorded as NEET
- more than 10,000 young Pacific People were NEET with a NEET rate of 20 per cent
- over a third (37% or 11,800) of Auckland's total NEET youth were in the Southern Initiative area made up of Māngere-Ōtāhuhu, Ōtara-Papatoetoe, Manurewa, and Papakura local boards, with a NEET rate of 20 per cent
- just over 5100 (16%) of young Aucklanders who were NEET were living in the Western Initiative local boards of Henderson-Massey, Waitākere Ranges and Whau, with a NEET rate of 15 per cent.

Over the 10 years from June 2011 to June 2021, the number of young Aucklanders who were NEET increased by 13 per cent overall (from 28,475). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Auckland's youth NEET rate rose to 14 per cent (from 11% in December 2019). This corresponds to a 28 per cent increase in the number of young Aucklanders who were NEET, reaching a peak of 32,700 in the year ended December 2020 (from 25,600 in December 2019).

Females had higher youth NEET rates than males, and this gender difference is more pronounced among the 20-24 age group. However, the gender gap in the youth NEET rate was generally narrowing after 2013, though starting to widen again in 2021. In the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NEET rate of females aged 20 to 24 rose to a peak of 19 per cent in March 2021 (up from 15% in December 2019), which was below their GFC (Global Financial Crisis) peak (30%). At the same time, the NEET rate of males aged 20 to 24 reached a peak of 17 per cent (up from 12% in December 2019) – three percentage points above their GFC peak (14%). The narrowing gender gap in youth NEET rates was coupled with a larger increase in labour participation rate for females in the 20-24 age group than their male counterparts.

Māori and Pacific youth aged 20 to 24 in Auckland persistently have higher NEET rates and tend to be more vulnerable to the shocks from COVID-19 than other age and ethnic sub-groups of young Aucklanders. In the first year of the pandemic, the NEET rate of Māori youth aged 20 to 24 reached a peak of 31 per cent (up from 26% in December 2019), which was similar to their NEET rates during the GFC. During the same period, the rate also increased noticeably for Pacific youth in this age group – from 20 per cent to 23 per cent, although below their GFC peak (30%).

## Caregiving as a contributor to youth NEET

This report also discusses caregiving as a contributor to youth NEET at the national level (as sub-sample sizes are too small for robust analysis at the Auckland level). In the year ended June 2021, there were 81,350 youth NEET in New Zealand. Of those, 19 per cent (15,300) were not in the labour force and not in education but were in caregiving roles.

Over the period between 2011 and 2021, young females made up over 90 per cent of New Zealand's NEET youth who were providing caregiving, and of those, above 80 per cent were taken up by females aged 20 to 24. The significance of caregiving as a contributor to youth NEET for females aged 20 to 24 was generally decreasing over time. Even with the presence of COVID-19, caregiving's contribution to their youth NEET rate have stayed around 7 to 8 per cent, compared to 12 per cent in 2011.

Trends vary across different ethnicities. The number of young Pacific females in New Zealand who were NEET and providing caregiving increased by 43 per cent between 2019 and 2021 (from 2100 to 3000), corresponding to an increase in the contribution to their NEET rate from 6 per cent to 8 per cent. This could reflect an increased pressure of caregiving or other family responsibilities facing young Pacific women during the pandemic. While caregiving has been a more significant contributor for young Māori females who were NEET than for other ethnic groups, its contribution to the NEET rate of this Māori sub-group was declining over time, and the pandemic has had little impact on this.

## Conclusion

This report shows that Māori and Pacific youth, young females and those aged between 20 and 24 are more likely to be NEET than other sub-groups of young Aucklanders. They have been disproportionately affected by the shocks from the COVID-19 pandemic, with significant increases in the number and rate of those who were NEET during the first year of the pandemic.

It is important to take a holistic approach that combines NEET data with ongoing research that seeks for more insights into backgrounds, needs and experiences of young Aucklanders who are disengaged from the labour market, education and training. This will help central and local government better identify areas and levers for programmes and policies supporting young Aucklanders' post-pandemic recovery and improving their long-term wellbeing.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Young people aged between 15 and 24 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) continue to be at risk of becoming economically and socially disadvantaged, especially those who have been disengaged for six months or longer (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2019a). People in this age range are typically at the transition of leaving school and moving on to further education or training, or into employment, which makes them more vulnerable in times of crises (International Labour Organisation, 2021; MartinJenkins, 2021; Poulton et al., 2020). This is evident from the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). The 15-to-24-year-olds in New Zealand experienced a sharper rise in their unemployment rate and had a slower recovery compared to the older cohorts (Kingstone et al., 2020; Statistics New Zealand, 2013, Tuatagaloa, 2019). This was accompanied with higher proportions of youth NEET for a prolonged period from late 2008 until 2013 (Tuatagaloa and Wilson, 2018).

Since the start of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has become a significant global crisis, and it is still unfolding. Worldwide, the percentage decrease in youth employment has been almost double that for older adults (International Labour Organisation, 2021), and the proportions of young people who are NEET have reached record highs (Elliott, 2021;<sup>1</sup> Brunet, 2020<sup>2</sup>). In New Zealand, as Auckland has experienced more lockdowns than the rest of the country since March 2021,<sup>3</sup> the region has been disproportionately affected and young Aucklanders bearing the brunt

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<sup>1</sup> In the UK, almost 60 per cent of the fall in employee numbers since the onset of the pandemic was attributable to those under 25, and the increase in number of youth NEET exceeded its peak in 2011. Please refer to *The Guardian* article “Sharp rise in 'Neets' shows impact of Covid lockdowns on UK young” (Elliott, 2021), which can be read at

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/mar/04/sharp-rise-in-neets-shows-impact-of-covid-lockdowns-on-uk-youngsters>.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada’s analysis (Brunet, 2020) reveals that the NEET rate for young Canadians rose to 18 per cent in March 2020 (from 12% in February 2020). This increased again to 24 per cent in April 2020, which was the highest in the last 20 years.

<sup>3</sup> Auckland has had four lockdowns by June 2021. New Zealand was in lockdown (Level 4 for five weeks then Level 3) between 23 March 2020 and 14 May 2020. About three months later, Auckland moved into a Level 3 lockdown again from 12 August to 30 August 2020. In the first quarter of 2021, Auckland had two Level 3 lockdowns in mid-February and early March which both lasted around a week. At the time of writing, Auckland has been in a major lockdown for a prolonged period since 17 August 2021, and this is outside the scope of this report. For details about the timeline, please refer to the COVID-19 website at: <https://covid19.govt.nz/alert-levels-and-updates/history-of-the-covid-19-alert-system/>.

of the lockdowns. The number of Aucklanders aged 18 to 24 receiving a JobSeeker (Work Ready) benefit<sup>4</sup> increased by over two thirds between March 2020 and March 2021, suggesting they were most impacted by job losses due to lockdowns (MartinJenkins, 2021). The pandemic has also been disruptive to Auckland's education sector, with significant declines in secondary attendance rates, particularly among low decile schools, and Māori and Pacific students (Ministry of Education, 2020). As remote learning is becoming the new norm, those with lack of access to digital devices, connectivity and a suitable home-learning environment face additional barriers to engaging in education and training.

Auckland Council is working closely with its partners<sup>5</sup> to address the issue of youth NEET. In council's recently launched Economic Development Action Plan (Auckland Council, 2021), this group are identified as a community with the greatest need – who are most at-risk of socio-economic hardship and most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Action Plan has identified series of actions to help improve the economic and social wellbeing of young people under the uncertainties and challenges of the pandemic, with a focus on developing skills and connections that lead to quality career opportunities.<sup>6</sup> The Southern Initiative (TSI) and the Western Initiative (TWI) of council are also partnering with businesses and communities to improve the gap in digital connectivity to ensure a more equitable access to employment and learning opportunities (The Southern Initiative, 2020a & b).<sup>7</sup> Council's ongoing work in this area strategically aligns with the directions the Auckland Plan 2050 (Auckland Council, 2018) has set for delivering a prosperous economy with many opportunities and better standard of living for everyone.

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<sup>4</sup> Job Seeker (Work Ready) benefit is for those people who are without a job but are actively seeking work or in training to find work.

<sup>5</sup> These include council-controlled organisations (CCOs) such as Auckland Unlimited and Community Education Trust Auckland |Te Hononga Akoranga (COMET Auckland), central government, other non-governmental and private sector organisations.

<sup>6</sup> For more details, please refer to page 26 of the Action Plan, which can be read at <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/topic-based-plans-strategies/DocumentsEDAP/economic-development-action-plan-2021-31.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> The Southern Initiative (TSI) and The Western Initiative (TWI) are a place-based social innovation unit embedded in South and West Auckland communities striving for radical socio-economic change. TSI covers the four south Auckland local board areas of Māngere-Ōtāhuhu, Ōtara-Papatoetoe, Manurewa, and Papakura. TWI covers the local board areas of Henderson-Massey, Waitākere Ranges and Whau in West Auckland. To find more about the work being undertaken for TSI and TWI please refer to the website <https://www.tsi.nz/>.

This report updates the 2018 report titled “Youth not in employment, education or training in Auckland” (Tuatagaloa and Wilson, 2018), which covered data for the period between the years ended December 2004 and June 2018. Given the major disruptions Auckland has experienced from COVID-19 since 2020,<sup>8</sup> it is important to have a more up-to-date understanding of the trends in youth disengagement, using NEET statistics as an indicator.<sup>9</sup> This adds to the evidence base for developing initiatives, policies and research that contribute to supporting the recovery and improving the long-term economic and social wellbeing for young people in Auckland.

Note that Auckland has been in a major lockdown since 17 August 2021 due to the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus. However, the latest NEET data available at the time of writing this report was for period up to June 2021. Thus, the Delta lockdown is outside the scope of this report, as its impact is still yet to be ascertained.<sup>10</sup> It is also considered appropriate to exclude data post June 2021 to make the analysis in this report more comparable to our previous report in 2018.

## 1.1 Definition of youth NEET

Stats NZ has been publishing data on youth NEET since 2011. They adopt the international definition of youth NEET as young people aged 15 to 24 years who are:

- unemployed and not engaged in education or training, or
- not in the labour force, and not engaged in education or training.

This is illustrated in the diagram shown in Figure 1.

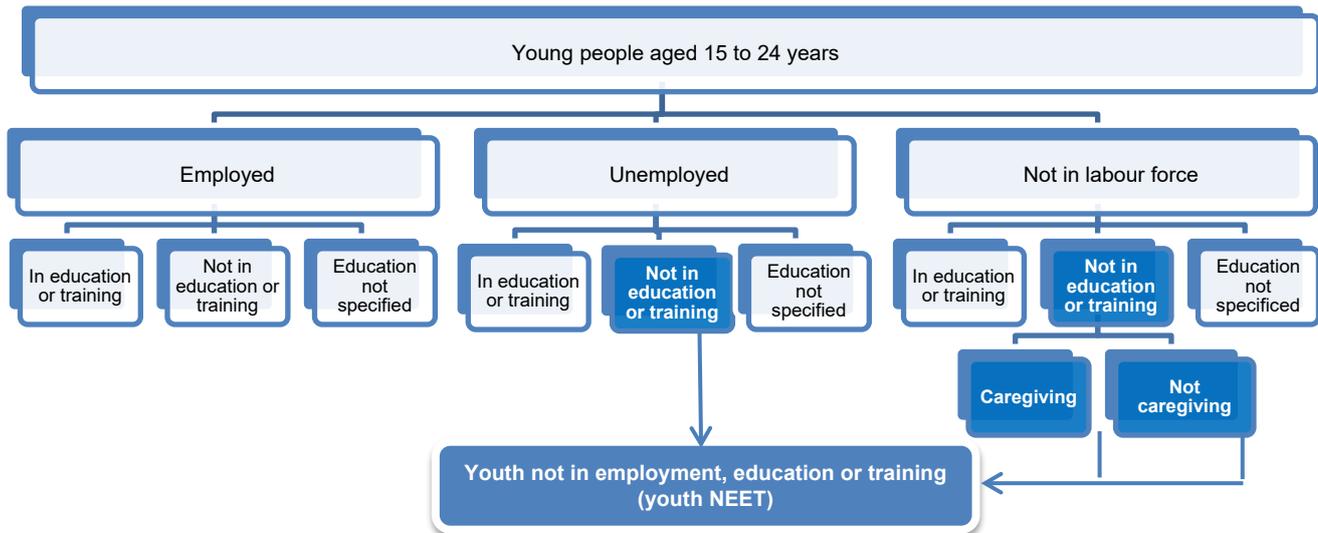
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<sup>8</sup> Provisional estimates from Infometrics’ Quarterly Economic Monitor shows the year-on-year change for Auckland’s GDP (in 2020 dollar value) for the four quarters after March 2020 was between -2% and -5%.

<sup>9</sup> Youth NEET rates are now an official statistic in New Zealand, and are described as an indicator of youth disengagement (Statistics New Zealand, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> We acknowledge that NEET data for the September quarter 2021 has become available in November – after this report was written. Despite this new release includes a portion of the Delta lockdown, data shows little change in the proportion (10.6%) of young people who are NEET in Auckland from the June quarter (11.3%), and the annual average for this rate in the year ended September 2021 (13.2%) was slightly down from that in the year ended June 2021 (13.8%) (Wilson, 2021). We expect that the impact of the Delta lockdown would be better reflected in the December data, which is expected to be released in early February 2022.

**Figure 1: Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)**



Source: Statistics New Zealand (2011)

The purpose of the NEET measure is to capture the extent to which young people are disengaged from both the labour market and education. Thus, it provides greater insight of youth engagement than the traditional measure of unemployment.

## 1.2 Data source

New Zealand's first official series of NEET data was released in December 2011 with quarterly data dating back to March 2004. The data is made available via the Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS). The HLFS produces quarterly estimates of the NEET rate and number at national and regional levels, and allows further breakdowns by demographic, educational and labour market characteristics.

The HLFS gives a point-in-time estimate of whether people were NEET at the time they were surveyed. It does not show the duration of those who were NEET, whether they have had recurring phases of being NEET, or the reasons for being NEET.

Some young people are in the labour force because they are looking after children or relatives, travelling, or volunteering. Some have more involuntary reasons such as a lack of jobs, living with long-term disabilities or suffering from long-term sickness, substance abuse, or criminal offences (International Labour Organisation, 2017). Given these limitations, care should be taken when using and interpreting data on NEET.

All data produced from the HLFS, including data on NEET, is subject to sampling error. Data presented in sub-groups (e.g., by location, by ethnicity, by age and by gender) is subject to additional sampling errors and therefore should be seen as indicative only.

Also note that NEET data is subject to seasonal influences – for example, NEET rates tend to be higher in the March quarter and lower in September.<sup>11</sup> This report uses moving annual averages to ensure information is seasonally aligned. This is done by taking the average of the four consecutive quarters including the most recent one. The report covers the moving annual average data for the year ended June 2021, as well as time series data for the June years between 2011 and 2021.

### **1.3 This report**

This report provides an overview of the trends in NEET statistics for young people aged 15 to 24 years in Auckland. It also identifies the sub-groups that are more affected – by age, gender, ethnicity and location, and how the rates and number of youth NEET have changed over the last 10 years between June 2011 and June 2021.

A particular focus is given to comparative trends between teenagers aged 15 to 19 years, and young adults aged 20 to 24 years, between males and females, and across the main ethnic groups in Auckland. The report also includes comparisons between Auckland and the rest of New Zealand, and how the rates of youth NEET and trends vary across the geographic areas in Auckland.

The report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 gives a snapshot of the annual averages for the year ended June 2021, starting by describing youth NEET in Auckland and the rest of New Zealand. This is followed by looking at youth NEET by the two age groups (15-19-year-olds and 20-24-year-olds), gender, as well as the four main ethnic groups – New Zealand European, Māori, Pacific People and Asian. The distribution of NEET youth by Auckland's geographic area is also provided.
- Section 3 looks at trends in the rates and number of youth NEET in Auckland from years ended June 2011 to June 2021, by area, gender, age group and ethnicity.
- Section 4 examines caregiving as a contributor to gender and age differences in youth NEET. This section looks at trends in New Zealand as a whole as Auckland-level data on caregiving is not available.

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<sup>11</sup> Note that this pattern also holds for the March quarter and September quarter in 2020.

## 2.0 Overview of youth NEET in the year ended June 2021

This section provides a high-level overview of young people aged 15 to 24 not in employment, education or training in Auckland in the year ended June 2021. It describes the numbers of NEET youth and the proportion of Auckland’s youth population who were NEET (i.e., NEET rate). National figures of youth NEET and rate are provided for comparison, and differences since our last analysis in 2018 are noted.

To further understand youth NEET in Auckland, this section also examines some of the characteristics of this group of young people – age, gender, ethnicity, and area of residence. A particular focus is provided on those living in the parts of Auckland that make up the Southern and Western Initiatives (TSI and TWI) – areas of high socio-economic deprivation where Auckland Council is working in partnership with multiple stakeholders to drive social and economic transformation.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.1 Youth NEET in Auckland and the rest of New Zealand

In the year ended June 2021, there were 32,150 people aged 15 to 24 who were NEET in Auckland. This represented approximately 40 per cent of the national total – up slightly from 38 per cent for the year ended June 2018. This proportion was slightly higher than Auckland’s share of New Zealand’s total youth population (36%).

Almost 14 per cent of Aucklanders aged 15 to 24 were NEET, which was higher than the rate in the rest of the country (12%) and New Zealand as a whole (12%). Compared with the figures in our 2018 report, Auckland’s youth NEET rate increased by two percentage points (from 12%), whereas the rates stayed similar for the rest of New Zealand and the country.

**Table 1: Youth NEET numbers and NEET rates (%) for Auckland and the rest of New Zealand, annual average<sup>13</sup>, year ended June 2021**

	NEET numbers	NEET rate (%)
Auckland	32,150	13.8
Rest of New Zealand	49,200	11.8
<b>New Zealand total</b>	<b>81,350</b>	<b>12.5</b>

<sup>12</sup> For further information refer to [www.tsi.nz/](http://www.tsi.nz/)

<sup>13</sup> These are rolling annual averages (or moving annual averages) which are calculated by taking the average of the four consecutive quarters including the most recent one. Refer to Section 1.2.

As the rest of this section shows, there are substantial differences across Auckland with regard to age, gender and ethnicity, and across broad geographic areas.

## 2.2 Youth NEET by age group

Breakdown of Auckland's youth NEET data by age shows significant differences in the numbers and proportions of people who were NEET between the two sub-age groups – those aged between 15 and 19, and those aged between 20 and 24.

In the year ended June 2021, 21,125 Aucklanders aged 20 to 24 were NEET. This group made up two thirds (66%) of the total NEET youth in Auckland, which was down by four percentage points compared to their relative share in our 2018 analysis. The remaining 11,025 were from the 15-19 age group which made up 34 per cent of Auckland's NEET youth population (Figure 2).

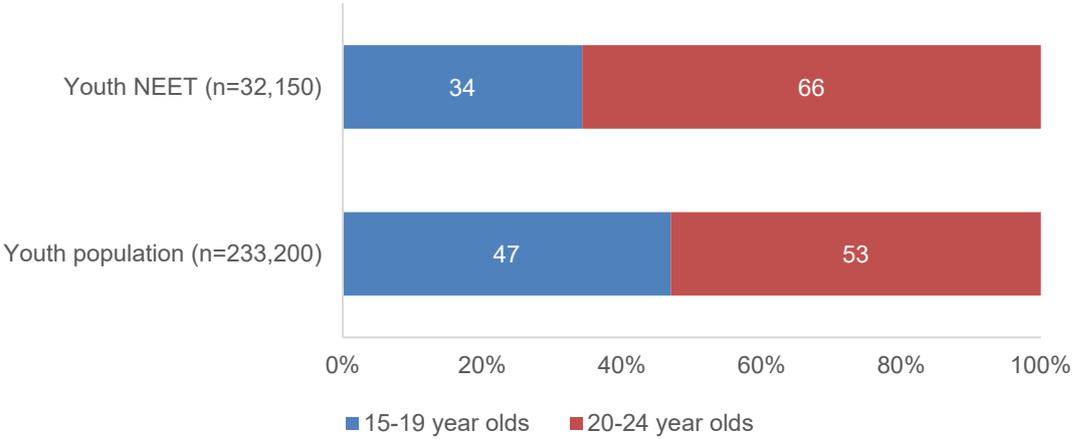
The 20-24 age group was over-represented in the Auckland's total NEET youth compared to their relative share in the region's youth population. However, there was also an overall decrease in Auckland's youth population over the last three years.<sup>14</sup> An explanation for the fall in the 20–24-year-olds relative share in Auckland's NEET youth is the larger decline in the population of the 20-24 age group than that of the 15-19 age group.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Both HLFS and Stats NZ's population estimates show a decline in the number of Aucklanders aged 15 to 24 – around 3 per cent indicated by HLFS and 6 per cent by the population estimates.

<sup>15</sup> Annual averages of HLFS's working age population data indicates that, population of Aucklanders aged 20 to 24 decreased by 6 per cent between years ended June 2018 and June 2021 (from 132,150 to 123,650). Whereas the number of those aged 15 to 19 increased by less than 0.5 per cent (from 109,050 to 109,550).

**Figure 2: Share of youth NEET and youth population<sup>16</sup> in Auckland by age group, annual average, year ended June 2021**



As higher proportions of those aged between 15 and 19 tend to be in compulsory education<sup>17</sup> compared to those aged 20 to 24, it is not surprising that the younger group’s NEET rate (10%) is significantly lower than the older group (17%). The NEET rates for both cohorts increased from the figures reported three years prior (up from 8% for those aged 15 to 19 and from 14% for those aged 20-24), and the age differential slightly increased by one percentage point (from 6%).

**2.3 Youth NEET by gender and age**

In the year ended June 2021, just over half (51%) of Auckland’s youth who were NEET were females and 47 per cent were males.

Almost 15 per cent of females aged between 15 and 24 in Auckland were NEET, compared to 13 per cent for young males. Table 2 shows that gender differential in the youth NEET rate is more pronounced when data is further broken down by age. Almost a fifth (19%) of females aged between 20 and 24 were NEET while the rate was 15 per cent for their male counterpart. The proportions of those who were NEET among the 15-19 age group were similar between males and females.

<sup>16</sup> In HLFS, working-age population is defined as the non-institutionalised, New Zealand resident population aged 15 years and over. It is derived from the estimated resident population aged 15 years and over by excluding people usually resident in institutions. This is different to Stats NZ’s population estimates, which is based on the census usually residential population count, with adjustments for census undercount; residents temporarily overseas on census night, and net migration between census night and the date of the estimate.

<sup>17</sup> Schooling in New Zealand is compulsory from age 6 to 16. Source: Ministry of Education. <http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/our-role-and-our-people/education-in-nz/>.

**Table 2: Youth NEET numbers and NEET rates (%) by gender and age group in Auckland, annual average, year ended June 2021**

Gender	15 to 19 years		20 to 24 years		Total youth	
	NEET numbers	NEET rate (%)	NEET numbers	NEET rate (%)	NEET numbers	NEET rate (%)
Female	5,275	9.8	11,200	19.0	16,475	14.6
Male	5,775	10.4	9,900	15.4	15,675	13.1

## 2.4 Youth NEET by ethnicity

There remain large differences in the numbers and proportions of young people who were NEET across the four main ethnic groups in Auckland, namely, New Zealand European, Māori, Pacific People and Asian.<sup>18</sup>

In the year ended June 2021, New Zealand Europeans made up half of Auckland's youth population, and represented approximately 41 per cent (13,025) of those young Aucklanders who were NEET (Figure 3). This share was down by three percentage points compared to our analysis in 2018. However, their youth NEET rate increased to 11 per cent (from 9.5%) over the last three years. This contrast is driven by a much larger decline in the demographic of New Zealand European youth in Auckland (11% decrease) relative to the decline in those young New Zealand Europeans who were NEET (3% decrease) between 2018 and 2021.

The broad Asian category had the smallest number and proportion of young people who were NEET (5975 and 10%) across the main ethnic groups in Auckland, although their youth NEET rate increased slightly (from 9%) since 2018. While Asian group constituted 16 per cent of Auckland's total youth population, this was lower than the share of young Asians in Auckland's total NEET youth (19%).

Although Māori had the second smallest number of young people recorded as NEET (8075), they had the highest youth NEET rate across the four main ethnic groups – 23 per cent, which was up by six percentage points from our analysis in 2018. The change in the Māori youth NEET rate over the last three years was largely driven by a 50 per cent increase (from 5400) in the number of Māori NEET youth, which

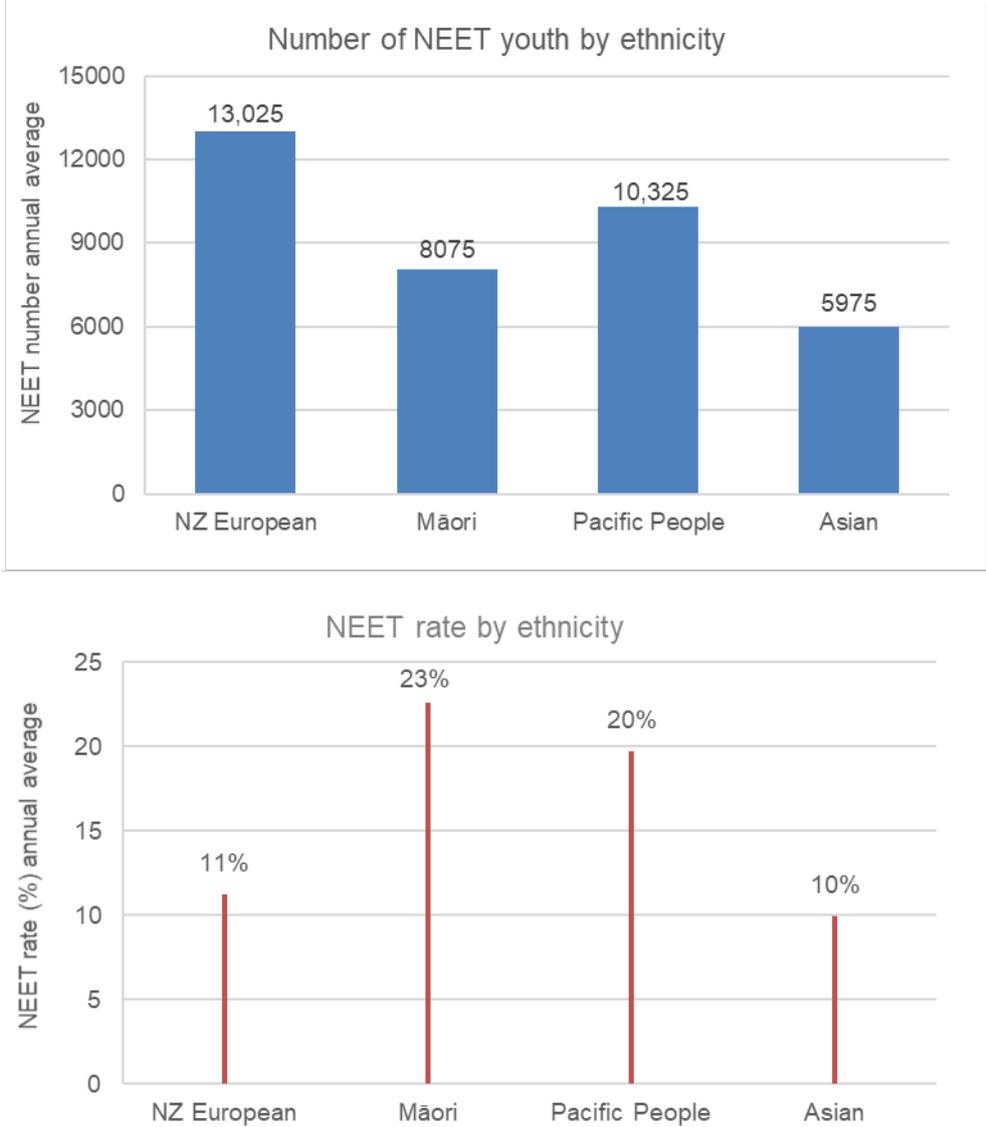
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<sup>18</sup> All other ethnic groups make up approximately five to seven per cent of total youth NEET and are excluded due to their high error margins.

resulted in a significantly higher share of Māori in Auckland’s NEET youth (25%) compared to the share of Māori in Auckland’s youth population (15%).

In the year ended June 2021, one in five (20%) young Pacific People in Auckland were NEET. This was up by two percentage points from the NEET rate of Pacific youth presented in our 2018 report (18%). The number of Pacific NEET youth also increased by 16 per cent (from 8900 to 10,325). While Pacific People made up 22 per cent of Auckland’s total youth population in 2021, this ethnic group represented nearly a third (32%) of those young Aucklanders who were NEET.

**Figure 3: Youth NEET numbers and NEET rates (%) by ethnic group in Auckland, annual average, year ended June 2021**



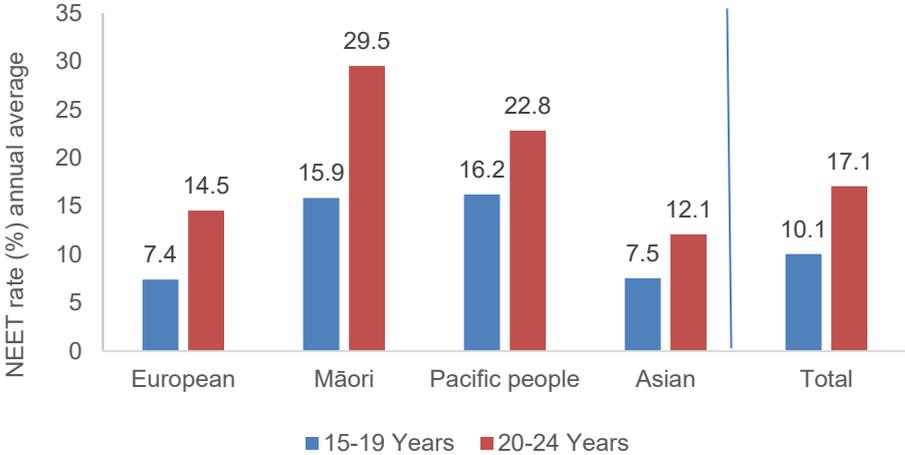
Note: The groupings of ethnicities are not mutually exclusive because people can and do identify with more than one ethnicity.

### 2.4.1 Youth NEET by ethnicity and age

The pattern of higher NEET rates among those aged 20 to 24 is evident across all four main ethnic groups in Auckland (Figure 4). NEET rates were markedly higher among Māori and Pacific youth aged 20 to 24 (approximately 30% and 23% respectively) compared to other ethnic groups.

Since 2018, the gap in youth NEET rates between the two age groups widened for New Zealand European and Māori. The increases in their NEET rates among the older age cohort markedly exceeded the increases among the younger age cohort. This is more pronounced for Māori. The NEET rates of young Māori aged 15 to 19 and those aged 20 to 24 increased by four percentage points (from 12%) and by seven percentage points (from 22.5%) respectively. This is the opposite for Pacific youth. The narrowing age gap in the NEET rate among Pacific youth was driven by a substantial increase in the rate among those aged 15 to 19 (up from 11% in 2018) and a two-percentage point decrease among those aged 20 to 24 (down from 25%).

**Figure 4: Youth NEET rate (%) by ethnicity and age group, annual average, year ended June 2021**



Note: The groupings of ethnicities are not mutually exclusive because people can and do identify with more than one ethnicity.

## 2.5 Youth NEET across Auckland's geographic areas

Table 3 displays the number of NEET youth and the youth NEET rate by Auckland's local board area for the year ended June 2021.<sup>19</sup>

The four TSI local board areas, namely Māngere-Ōtāhuhu, Ōtara-Papatoetoe, Manurewa and Papakura, generally had larger numbers of young people who were NEET and higher youth NEET rates than most of the others. Whau, one of the TWI local boards (along with Henderson-Massey and Waitākere Ranges), also had a higher youth NEET rate than many other local board areas.

Some local board areas, like Albert-Eden and Howick, had large numbers of youth NEET while the youth NEET rates were relatively low. This reflects a larger youth population in those areas. On the other hand, some areas had small numbers of youth NEET but relatively high youth NEET rates, for example, the Puketāpapa Local Board area.

**Table 3: Youth NEET number and NEET rate by local board area, annual average, year ended June 2021**

Local board area	NEET numbers	NEET rates(%)
Hibiscus and Bays	1400	9.7
Upper Harbour	1500	20.0
Kaipātiki	1850	17.6
Devonport-Takapuna	1100	11.0
Henderson-Massey	2325	15.0
Waitākere Ranges	1167	14.8
Whau	2033	19.0
Waitematā	1267	13.4
Albert-Eden	2025	9.8
Puketāpapa	1300	17.7
Ōrākei	1233	10.0
Maungakiekie-Tāmaki	1850	16.0
Howick	1750	9.8

<sup>19</sup> Data by local board is indicative only. Data is not shown for the Aotea / Great Barrier Local Board area due to insufficient sample size for analysis.

Local board area	NEET numbers	NEET rates(%)
Māngere-Ōtāhuhu	2575	18.7
Ōtara-Papatoetoe	3200	19.7
Manurewa	3975	21.1
Papakura	2050	22.0
Franklin	1250	10.4

### 2.5.1 Youth NEET within south and west Auckland

As shown in Table 4, in the year ended June 2021, over 11,000 and 5000 young people who were NEET lived in the TSI and TWI areas respectively. This corresponds to a NEET rate of 20 per cent and 15 per cent – higher than the NEET rate for the rest of Auckland (12%).

The TSI area is over-represented in Auckland’s NEET youth figures. In 2021, over a third (37%) of Aucklanders aged between 15 and 24 who were NEET were from the TSI area, compared to a quarter (58,100) for its share in Auckland’s youth population. The proportion of young Aucklanders living in one of the TWI local board areas (15%, or 34,100) was similar to the TWI area’s share in Auckland’s NEET youth (16%).

The higher youth NEET rate in the TSI area could be associated with the relatively high proportions of Māori and Pacific People living in South Auckland. These groups tend to have a higher NEET rate than other ethnicities (refer to Section 2.4).

**Table 4: Youth NEET numbers and NEET rates (%) for the TSI area, TWI area and the rest of Auckland, annual average, year ended June 2021**

	NEET numbers	NEET rate (%)
The Southern Initiative	11,800	20.3
The Western Initiative	5125	15.0
Rest of Auckland	20,375	11.6
<b>Auckland total</b>	<b>32,150</b>	<b>13.8</b>

### 3.0 Long-term trends in youth NEET rates

Some studies have indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected young people disproportionately. Young people face greater job insecurity due to their tendency to be employed in low-paid jobs and in those industries that are most affected by lockdown and physical distancing – retail, tourism, hospitality for example (MartinJenkins, 2021; Puerto and Kim, 2020). The lockdowns also disrupt education and training, which put off decisions to pursue advanced education and training (Light, 2020), as well as placing additional barriers for those seeking to enter the labour market or to move between jobs (International Labour Organisation, 2020).

This section looks at trends in Auckland’s youth NEET rates from the years ended June 2011 to June 2021. It begins with a brief overview of the trends in the youth NEET rates in Auckland, the rest of New Zealand, TSI and TWI followed by the trends in NEET rates by age, gender and ethnicity.

#### 3.1 Overall trends in youth NEET rates

As the economy gradually recovered from the GFC, the youth NEET rate in Auckland was generally decreasing between 2011 and 2014, and returned to the pre-GFC level of 10 per cent by the end of 2013 (Figure 5). However, an upward trend started to pick up again after 2015. As the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020 and the subsequent rounds of lockdowns in Auckland took place,<sup>20</sup> the region’s youth NEET rate has increased sharply and stayed around 14 per cent – similar to the GFC level.

From the years ended June 2011 to June 2021, the number of young Aucklanders who were NEET increased by 13 per cent overall (from 28,475). The NEET youth number increased significantly since the pandemic as Auckland’s youth NEET rate rose sharply. It reached 32,700 in the year ended December 2020, which was a 28 per cent increase from the number one year prior (25,600). This was despite a 2 per cent decline in Auckland’s youth population during the same period (from 237,775)<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Please refer to the government’s COVID-19 website at <https://covid19.govt.nz/alert-levels-and-updates/history-of-the-covid-19-alert-system/> for a full timeline of the alert levels and lockdowns to date. Note that the major lockdown in the second half of 2021 (since 17 August 2021) is outside the scope of this report.

<sup>21</sup> Moving annual averages of HLF’s working age population data indicate there were 237,775 and 233,255 people aged 15 to 24 in Auckland in the December years 2019 and 2020 respectively.

While trends in the rest of New Zealand followed a similar pattern for 2011 and 2015, its youth NEET rate was relatively steady after that. The rate was staying around 12 per cent since the year ended December 2018. Since the pandemic, the number of youth NEET in the rest of the country has only increased by less than 4 per cent from the pre-pandemic level (from 50,400 in December 2019). A possible related factor could be the fewer number of lockdowns experienced by the rest of country compared to Auckland between March 2020 and June 2021.

Figure 5 also reveals higher youth NEET rates in the TSI and TWI areas compared to the rest of Auckland,<sup>22</sup> with the difference more pronounced in the TSI area. The youth NEET rate in the area fell rapidly between 2012 and 2015, and reached just below 15 per cent by the end of 2015 – though still slightly higher than the peak rate for Auckland (14%). Interestingly, although TSI's youth NEET rate started to pick up again since 2017, the COVID-19 pandemic has not yet caused a sharp rise. The rate increased to 21 per cent in the year ended December 2020 – up by two percentage points from the level one year prior (19%). In contrast, the TWI responded to the pandemic with a surge in its youth NEET rate – a five-percentage point increase (from 11%) between December 2019 and December 2020. Nevertheless, the youth NEET rates in TSI, TWI and the rest of Auckland have been slowly improving after 2020 – at least for the time period shown in this report.

It is important to note data for the period during the Delta lockdown post June 2021 is not included in the analysis due to data availability at the time of writing (refer to Section 1). We expect that the impact of the Delta lockdown on Auckland's youth NEET should be better reflected in later releases of Stats NZ's HLFS data.<sup>23</sup> Some economic commentaries have indicated that with sustained demand for goods and services, high building activity and increasing vaccination rates, impact from the Delta lockdown on regional economies may not be as bad (Infometrics, 2021).<sup>24</sup>

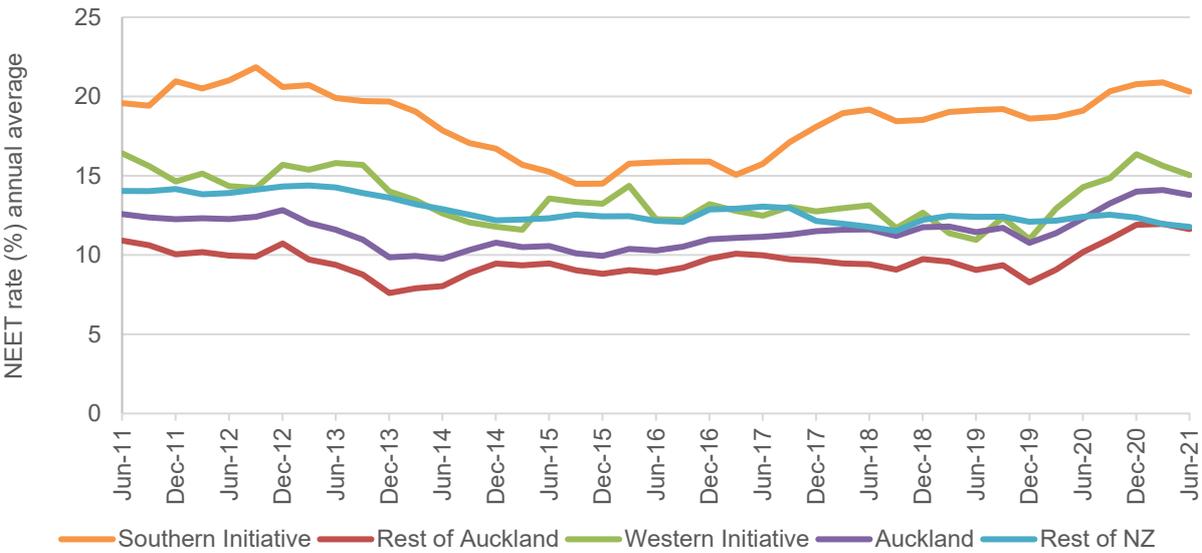
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<sup>22</sup> Results at the TSI and TWI level are based on small sub-sample sizes and are indicative.

<sup>23</sup> Stats NZ has released HLFS data for September 2021 shortly after this report was written. Data for Auckland for annual average for September 2021 shows little change in youth NEET rate by area, age, gender and ethnicity from data for June 2021.

<sup>24</sup> This can be read on Infometrics' website at <https://www.infometrics.co.nz/media-release-regional-economies-solid-despite-delta-setback/>.

**Figure 5: Youth NEET rates (%), years ended June 2011 to June 2021**



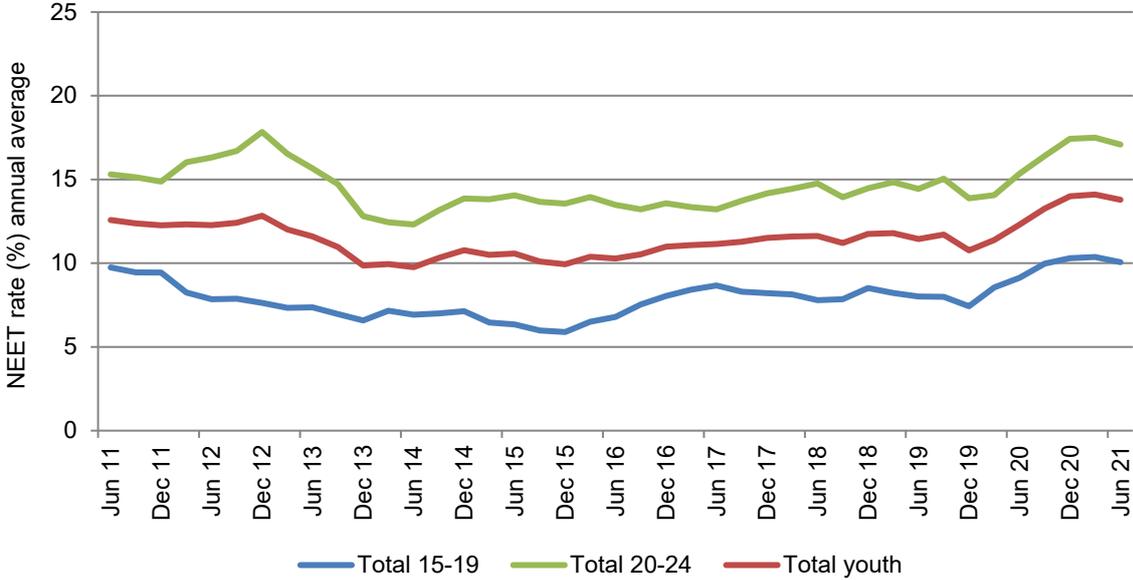
### 3.2 Trends by age

The age gap in the youth NEET rate persisted over the 10 years between June 2011 and June 2021 (Figure 6), with the rate among the 20-24 age group significantly above that for the 15-19 age group.

Notwithstanding the persistent age differential, both age groups have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both the younger and the older groups saw a three-percentage point rise in their NEET rates between the years ended December 2019 and December 2020 – up from 7 per cent for the younger group and from 14 per cent for the older group.

The gap between the two age groups could be that those aged 15 to 19 tend to stay longer in education or taking up education during periods of uncertainty. Those aged 20 to 24 tend to work in sectors more prone to the external shocks from crises – such as hospitality and retail, and often on casual contracts (Light, 2020).

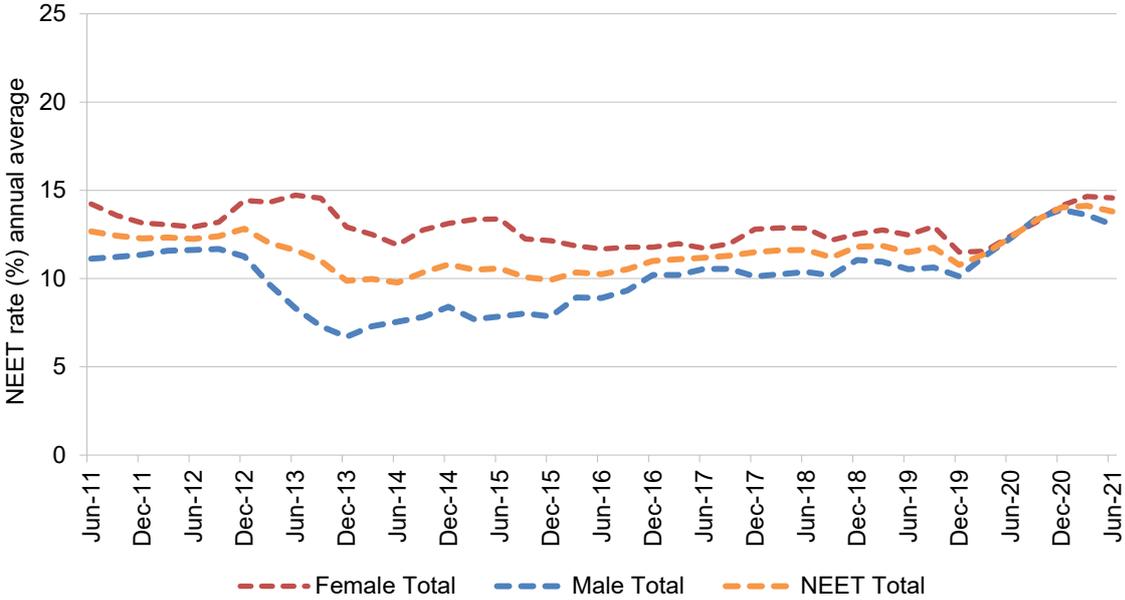
**Figure 6: Youth NEET rates (%) by age group in Auckland, years ended June 2011 to June 2021**



### 3.3 Trends by gender and age

Generally speaking, in Auckland, females aged 15 to 24 tend to have a higher NEET rate than males (Figure 8). This gender gap was widened to around six to seven percentage points in 2013 but started to narrow after that. Interestingly, while the youth NEET rates for both males and females rose sharply in 2020 due to the pandemic, they were also both converging to the Auckland average (14%), which was three percentage points below the GFC peak for females (17% in September 2009). After 2020, their youth NEET rates have started diverging again, which increased to 15 per cent for females and decreased to 13 per cent for males in June 2021.

**Figure 7: Youth NEET rates (%) by gender in Auckland, years ended June 2011 to June 2021**

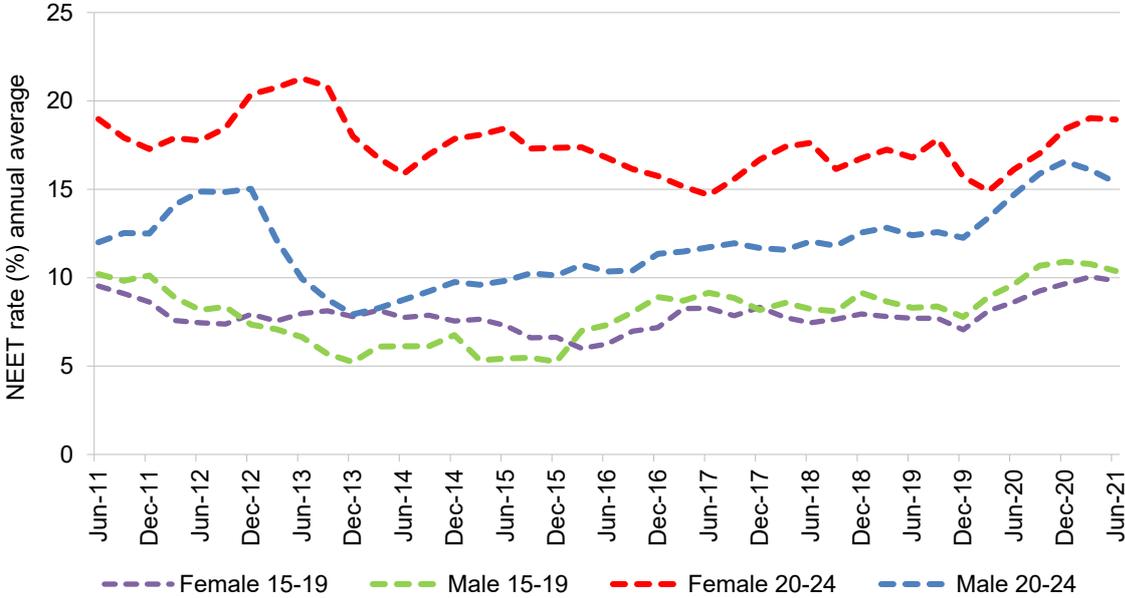


A further breakdown by age indicates that the gender gap in Auckland’s youth NEET rates over the last 10 years was largely due to the differentials between males and females aged 20 to 24 (Figure 8). Trends by gender among this age cohort followed a similar pattern as shown in Figure 7 above, though with a more pronounced differential. In the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NEET rate of females aged 20 to 24 rose to a peak of 19 per cent in March 2021 (up from 15% in December 2019). This was however significantly below their GFC peak (30% in June 2009). In comparison, the pandemic’s impact on young Auckland males in this age group seems to be greater compared to that of the GFC, as the peak for this group of young males during the pandemic (17%, up from 12%) was noticeably above their GFC peak level (14% in June 2010).

It is unsurprising to find that the narrowing gender gap in the youth NEET rates was coupled with an increased proportion of females aged 20 to 24 participating in the labour force. Between June 2011 and December 2019 (just before the pandemic), labour participation rate of females in this age group increased from 66 per cent to 77 per cent. This compared to an overall increase from 75 per cent to 78 per cent for the males aged 20 to 24. Other possibilities for the narrowing gender gap could be that more females are taking up education or training, and/or an increased proportion of young females are staying in the workforce instead of providing caregiving or childcare. Having said that, the sharp rise in the youth NEET rate among females during the pandemic could reflect increased pressure on young females for undertaking caregiving roles, especially during lockdowns (MartinJenkins, 2021). The

role of caregiving will be described in Section 4 as a contributing factor to the youth NEET rate.

**Figure 8: Youth NEET rates (%) by gender and age in Auckland, years ended June 2011 to June 2021**



### 3.4 Trends by ethnicity

Over the last 10 years, the youth NEET rates among Auckland’s Māori and Pacific youth were substantially higher than New Zealand European and Asian and the overall youth NEET rate in Auckland (Figure 9). This is conversely for the New Zealand European and Asian ethnic groups.

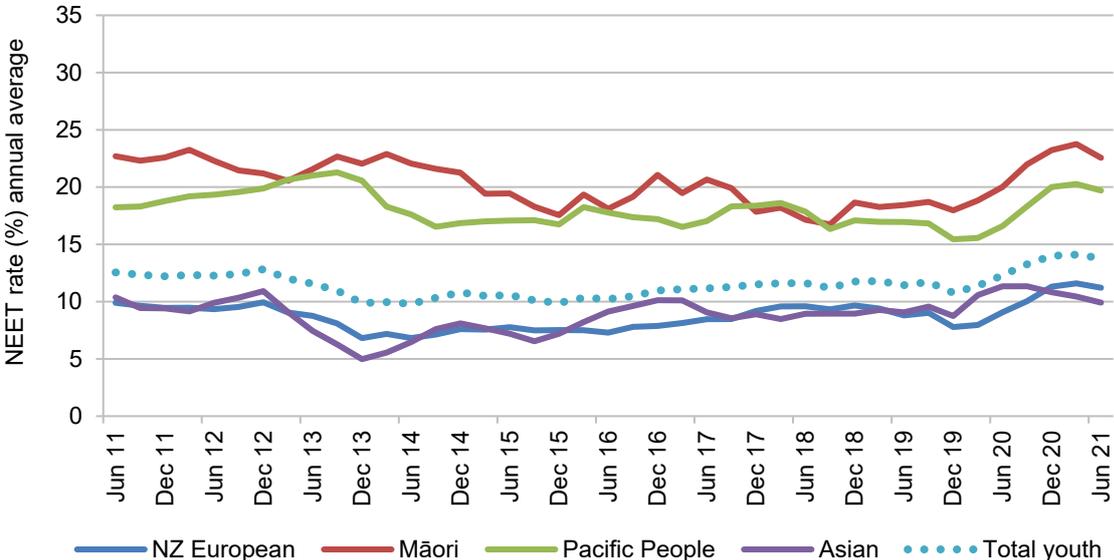
Since 2013, as the economy already recovered from the GFC, the youth NEET rates of Māori and Pacific People were generally moving on a slight downward trend until December 2019. Their youth NEET rates converged for the period between 2017 and 2018, with both rates reached 16 per cent in September 2018. In comparison, the youth NEET rates of the New Zealand European and Asian ethnic groups were increasing slowly during the December years between 2013 and 2019.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the youth NEET rates of all four ethnic groups to levels similar to those during the GFC. However, the impact has been more disproportionate on Māori and Pacific youth. During the first year of the pandemic, Māori youth NEET rate rose by six percentage points (from 18% in December 2019) and reached 24 per cent in March 2021. The proportion of Pacific youth in Auckland who were NEET reached a peak of 20 per cent in March 2021 – from 15 per cent in

December 2019. The differences in the NEET rates between the pandemic peak and pre-pandemic levels were four percentage points for New Zealand European (up from 8%) and three percentage points for Asian (up from 9%) respectively.

It also appears that the youth NEET rate of Asian has started to recover soon after a peak of 12 per cent was reached in June 2020, while the rates for other ethnic groups were still on the rise – at least for time period covered in this report. This could suggest that young Asians may be more resilient to the negative shocks of COVID-19 compared to young people from other ethnic groups in Auckland.

**Figure 9: Youth NEET rates (%) by ethnicity in Auckland, years ended June 2011 to June 2021**



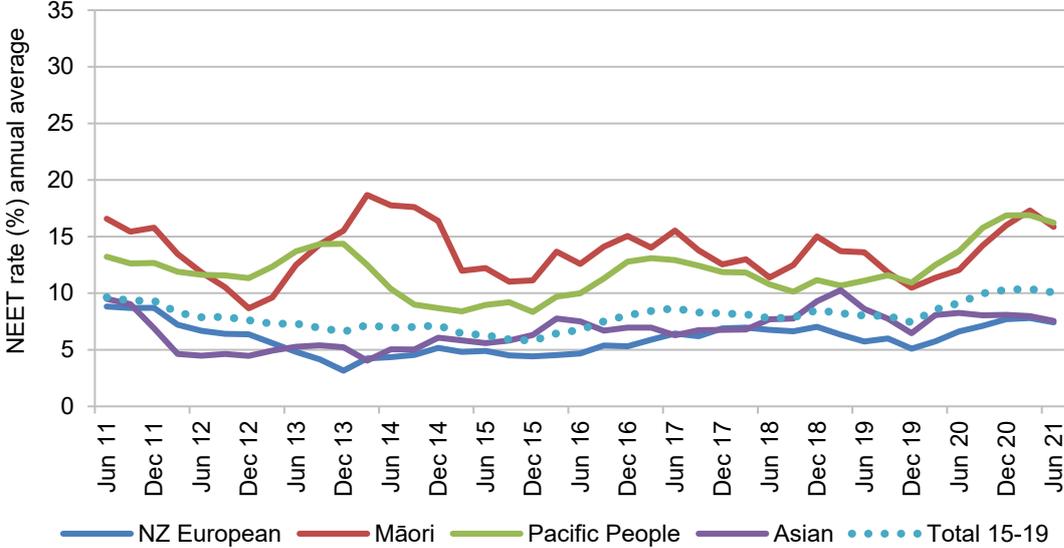
Note: The groupings of ethnicities are not mutually exclusive because people can and do identify with more than one ethnicity.

**3.4.1 Trends by ethnicity and age**

When the data is further broken down by ethnicity and age, it is apparent that Pacific and Māori youth have higher NEET rates in both youth age groups.

For the 15-19 age group, NEET rates across the ethnic groups were generally following similar trends as the trends for their total youth population (refer to Figure 9). One difference is that, since late 2019, trends for Pacific and Māori aged 15 to 19 have been moving closely with each other, with similar rates pre-pandemic (11%) and at the pandemic peak (17%)

**Figure 10: Youth NEET rates (%) by ethnicity for 15-to-19-year-olds in Auckland, years ended June 2011 to June 2021**

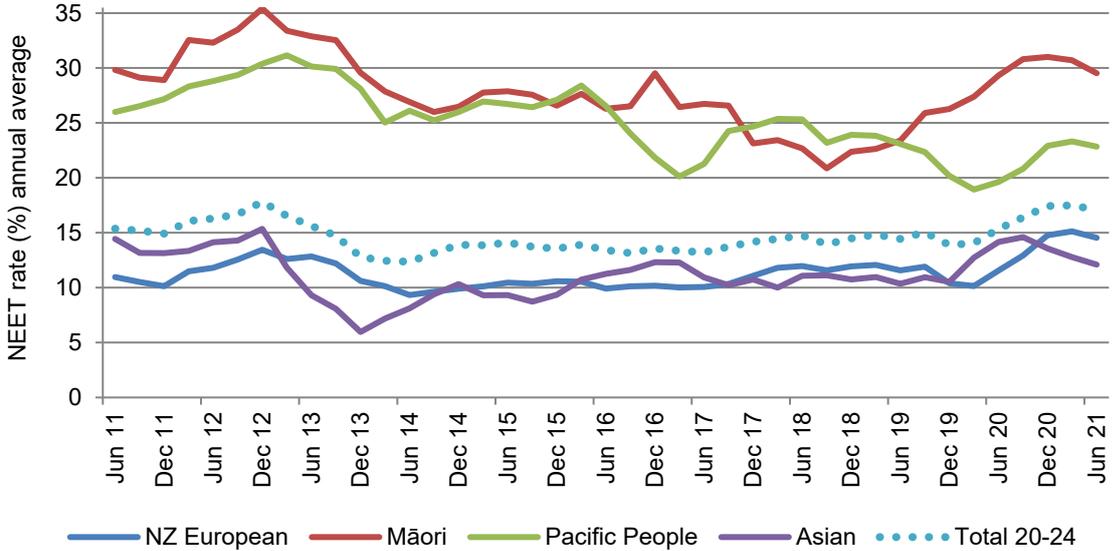


Note: The groupings of ethnicities are not mutually exclusive because people can and do identify with more than one ethnicity.

Although trends show higher NEET rates among Aucklanders aged 20 to 24 than those aged 15 to 19 across all four ethnic groups, the difference by ethnicity was also more pronounced among the 20-24 age group (Figure 11). Trends in the NEET rates of Māori and Pacific People in this cohort tend to follow a similar pattern for their overall youth population but at significantly higher rates.

It is also observed that Māori aged between 20 and 24 tend to be most vulnerable to the shock from COVID-19. In the first year of the pandemic, their NEET rate reached a peak of 31 per cent (up from 26% in December 2019), which was similar to their NEET rates during the GFC. The rate also increased noticeably for Pacific youth aged 20 to 24 during the same period – from 20 per cent to 23 per cent, significantly below the GFC peak of 30 per cent. The extent of the pandemic’s impact on young Māori adults may have been similar to the extent experienced during the GFC.

**Figure 11: Youth NEET rates (%) by ethnicity for 20-to-24-year-olds in Auckland, years ended June 2011 to June 2021**



Note: The groupings of ethnicities are not mutually exclusive because people can and do identify with more than one ethnicity.

## 4.0 Caregiving as a contributor to youth NEET

This section discusses the significance of caregiving as a contributor to youth NEET. It presents an analysis of New Zealand’s youth NEET data broken down by gender and category of NEET for the years ended June 2011 and June 2021, as such data is only available at the national level.

The section starts with an analysis of youth NEET by gender and outlining the percentage of the country’s youth NEET who were taking caregiving roles.

### 4.1 Youth NEET by gender and NEET category

In the year ended June 2021, more than 36,000 of youth NEET in New Zealand (45%) were not in the labour force, not in education and not providing caregiving. Those not in the labour force, not in education but providing caregiving made up approximately 19 per cent (15,300) of New Zealand’s total youth NEET. The rest 29,300 (36%) were unemployed and not in education.

As Table 6 shows, there is clearly a gender difference in those providing caregiving. In 2021, about one in three (32% or 13,900) young females in New Zealand who were NEET took up the caregiving role. This compared to only 4 per cent (1400) for young New Zealand males.

**Table 5: Share of youth NEET by gender and type in New Zealand, year ended June 2021**

Youth NEET type	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
NILF, not in education, not caregiving	55	36	45
NILF, not in education, caregiving	4	32	19
Unemployed, not in education	41	31	36
Total	100	100	100

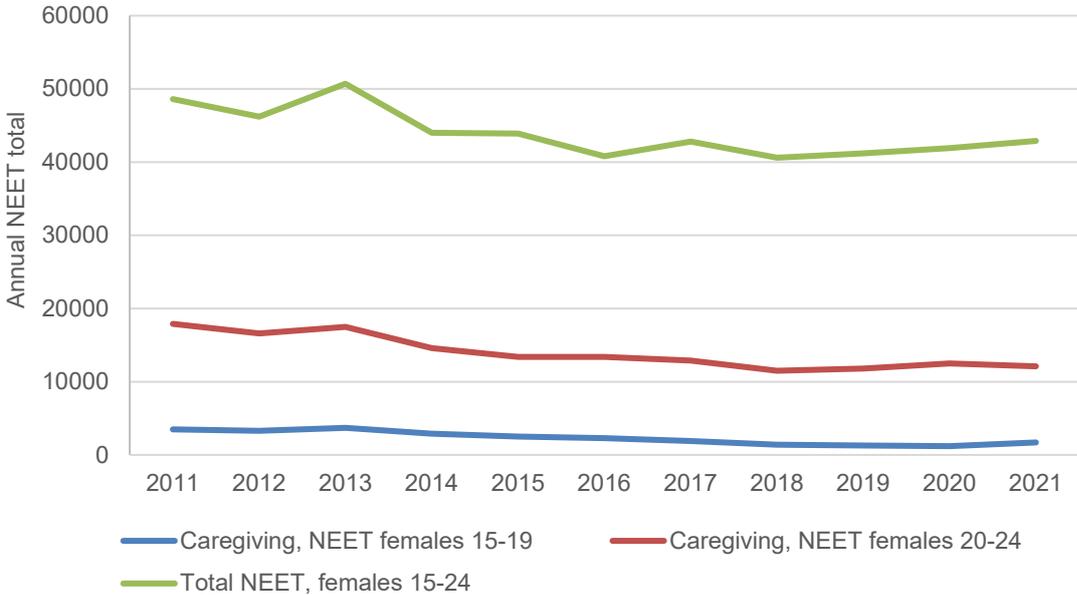
Note: NILF refers to Not in the Labour Force.

### 4.2 Trends in NEET youth providing caregiving

Over the period between June 2011 and June 2021, young females made up over 90 per cent of New Zealand’s NEET youth who were providing caregiving, and of those, over 80 per cent were taken up by females aged 20 to 24.

The number of NEET females who were in caregiving roles were generally moving on a downward trend (Figure 12), with an overall decrease of 1800 (from 3500) for the 15-19 age group and 5800 (from 17,900) for the 20-24 age group respectively. However, females among both age groups saw slight increases in this NEET category between 2019 and 2021 – from 1300 to 1700 for the younger group and from 11,800 to 12,100 for the older group.

**Figure 12: Annual NEET numbers of females in caregiving roles by age, New Zealand, years ended June 2011 to June 2021**



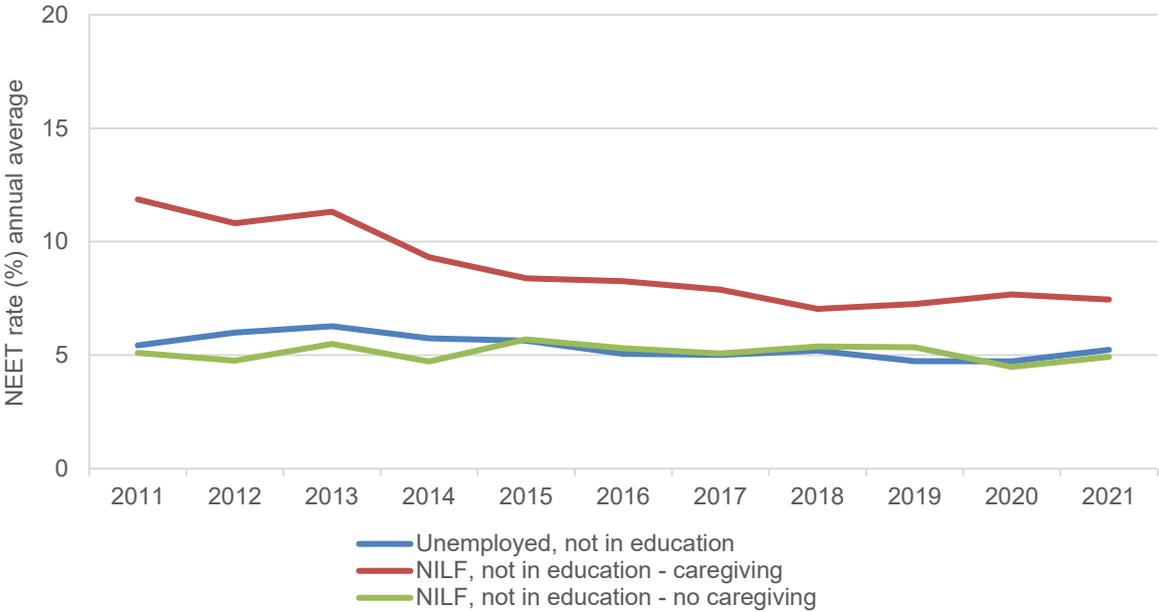
**4.2.1 Trends in contribution to NEET rate of females aged 20 to 24**

For the period between 2011 and 2021, caregiving was a more significant contributor to the NEET rate of young New Zealand females aged 20 to 24 compared to the other two NEET categories. However, its contribution to their youth NEET rate was also decreasing overtime (Figure 13). In 2018, caregiving contributed 7 per cent to the NEET rate of this sub-group of young females, which was down by five percentage points from the contribution in 2011 (12%). This corresponds to a 36 per cent decrease (from 17,900 to 11,500) in the number of NEET females aged 20 to 24 providing caregiving during the same period. The NEET rate contribution increased slightly to 8 per cent by 2020 as the number of NEET females aged 20 to 24 in caregiving roles increased by 1000 since 2018.

While in recent years, still around 28 to 30 per cent of NEET females in the 20-24 age group were in caregiving roles, this was a considerable decrease from the share

of this NEET category in 2011 (37%). This could be linked to the narrowing gender gap in the youth NEET rates over time.

**Figure 13: Contributions to NEET rate (%) by NEET category for females aged 20 to 24 years in New Zealand, years ended June 2021 to June 2021**



**4.2.2 Significance of caregiving in female NEET youth by ethnicity**

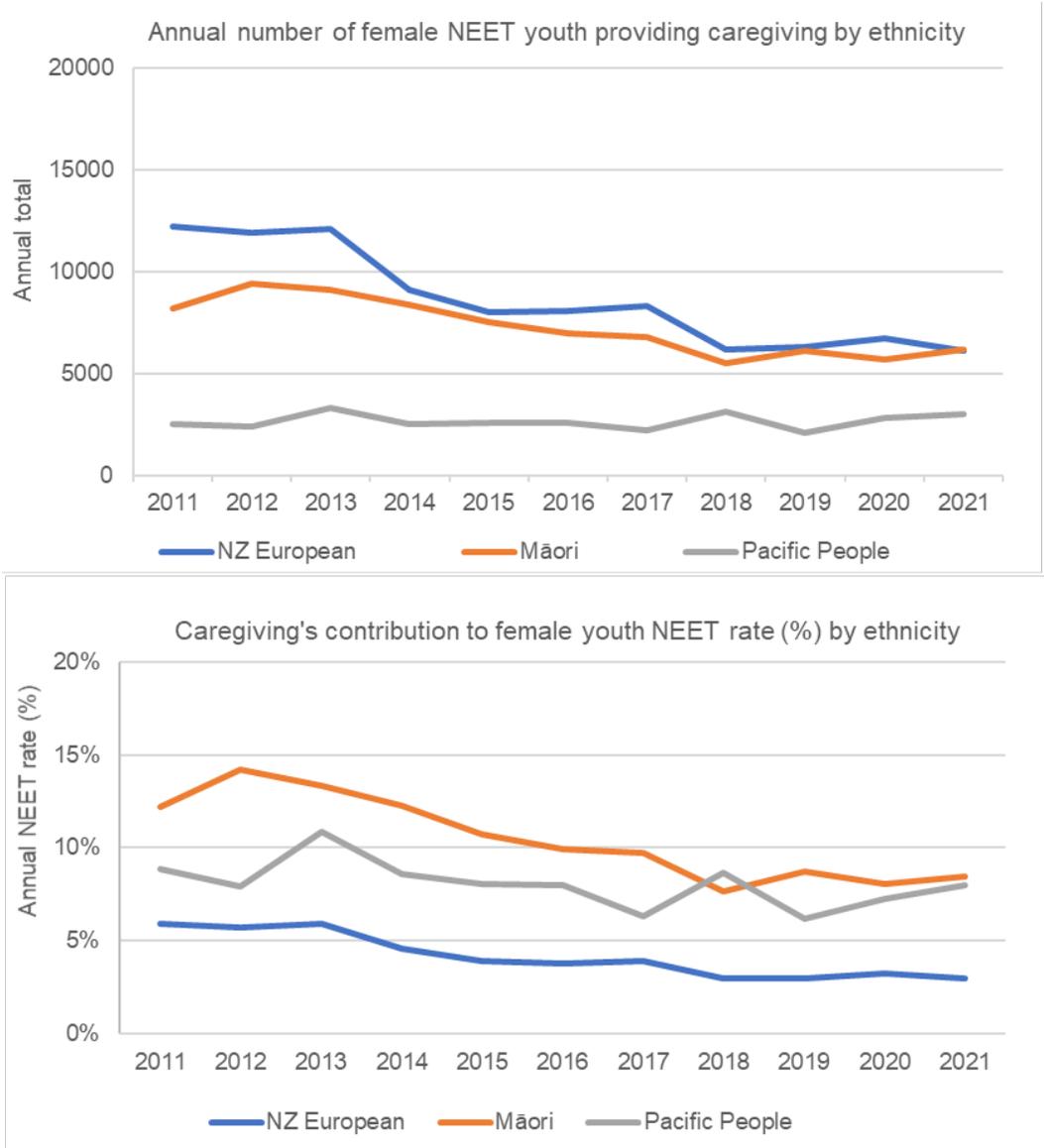
However, trends in caregiving might look differently across ethnicities (Figure 14). From 2011 to 2021, the contribution of caregiving to female NEET youth was generally on a downward trend for the main ethnic groups in New Zealand, except for Pacific People. Caregiving’s NEET rate contribution for young Pacific females fell from 8 per cent to 6 per cent between 2011 and 2019 as the number in this NEET category fell to 2100 in 2019. However, with a 43 per cent increase (from 2100 to 3000) in the number of young Pacific females who were NEET and providing caregiving between 2019 and 2021, the associated NEET rate contribution rose by two percentage points (to 8 per cent), which was similar to that in 2012. This could reflect an increased pressure of caregiving or other family responsibilities facing young Pacific females during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For Māori females, caregiving has had a greater contribution to their youth NEET rate than for other ethnic groups. However, its contribution to their youth NEET rate decreased from 12 per cent to 8 per cent between 2011 and 2021 as the number of those in caregiving roles had an overall decrease of 2000 (from 8200). While there were 500 more young Māori females who were NEET taking up caregiving between

years ended June 2020 and June 2021, this had a little effect on contribution to their NEET rate – stayed roughly at 8 per cent.

Young females among the New Zealand European group saw the largest decrease in the significance of caregiving as a NEET category. Between 2011 and 2021, caregiving’s contribution to their youth NEET rate halved to 3 per cent as the number of their female NEET youth in caregiving roles halved from 12,200 to 6100. The pandemic has had little impact on this downward trend.

**Figure 14: Number of NEET youth in caregiving roles and contribution to youth NEET rate (%), by ethnicity, years ended June 2011 to June 2021**



Note 1: The groupings of ethnicities are not mutually exclusive because people can and do identify with more than one ethnicity.

Note 2: The Asian ethnic group is excluded from this graph as data for this group is not available for the full 10-year period covered.

## 5.0 Concluding remarks

Young people aged between 15 and 24 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) represent a group of people in Auckland who are disadvantaged and vulnerable to negative shocks. In the year ended June 2021, two in five of New Zealand's youth who were NEET were located in Auckland, with an over-representation of those in the 20-24 age group. The proportion of young Aucklanders who were NEET rose sharply to 14 per cent in the recent two years, largely driven by the COVID-19 pandemic that eventuated in early 2020. The local board areas of Māngere-Ōtāhuhu, Ōtara-Papatoetoe, Manurewa and Papakura in South Auckland were found to have higher numbers and proportions of their youth population recorded in the NEET statistics. These areas are over-presented with Māori and Pacific population compared to other parts of the region.

Results have also highlighted significant differentials in youth NEET in Auckland by age, gender and ethnicity. In particular, Māori and Pacific youth, females and those aged between 20 and 24 have higher tendency to become disengaged from the labour market, education or training than other sub-groups of young Aucklanders. They have also been more disproportionately affected by the negative shocks from the current COVID-19 pandemic, with their youth NEET rates similar to or exceeding their GFC peak levels.

Several possible factors could be contributing to those differentials. Females in the 20-24 age group, especially those in Māori and Pacific communities, have greater caregiving and other family responsibilities (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2019). The pressure for taking up those responsibilities tend to be elevated during times of lockdowns (MartinJenkins, 2021), making it harder for those young females to get back to the workforce or the education system. The pre-existing digital divide and inequalities in schooling among Māori and Pacific youth adds another barrier for accessing the employment and learning opportunities available. Also, those aged 20 to 24 tend to find themselves in employment that has low job-security and prone to the shock from the pandemic, such as jobs in the hospitality, retail and tourism sectors and/or on casual contracts (Elliott, 2020; Light, 2020).

It is clear that COVID-19 has magnified the existing issues and challenges for this group of people in Auckland who are most at-risk. While NEET data is useful and fills an important gap in our understanding of young people in Auckland, this should be combined with ongoing research that seeks for more insights into their backgrounds, needs and experiences. This holistic approach helps central and local government better identify areas and levers for programmes and policies supporting young Aucklanders' post-pandemic recovery and improving their long-term wellbeing.

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