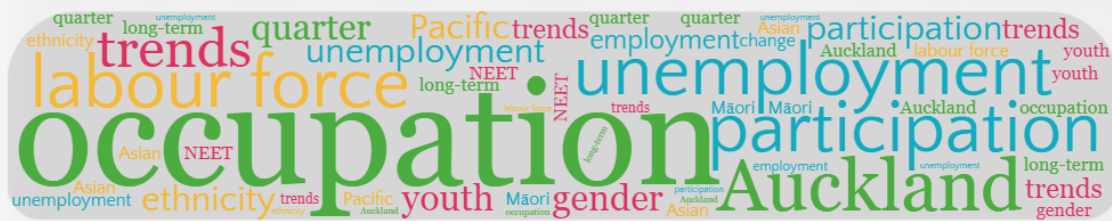


Auckland Regional Household Labour Force Survey: Quarterly Overview as at March 2023

Ross Wilson



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Research and Evaluation Unit (RIMU)

Auckland Council

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Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Overview and highlights	2
3	Labour force status and unemployment rate by age	4
4	Labour force status and unemployment rate by gender	5
5	Labour force status and unemployment rate by ethnic group.....	6
6	Employment by occupation.....	7
7	Employment by industry	8
8	Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) by age	9
9	Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) by ethnic group.....	10
10	Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) by broad location.....	11
11	Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) by local board area..	12
12	Appendix: Definitions and technical notes	13

1 Introduction

This report provides an overview of aspects of labour force participation in Auckland, as indicated by results of the quarterly Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS). Particular focus is provided on short and long-term trends across age and ethnic groups in Auckland, and the rate of youth who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).

The HLFS is a national sample survey undertaken by Stats NZ. It is primarily designed for national estimates. The national sample contains about 15,000 private households and about 30,000 individuals each quarter. The sub-sample size for Auckland is approximately 4500 households and 9000 individuals.

In order to ensure information is seasonally aligned, rolling annual averages are used throughout this report (with some exceptions) for reporting across time. As the HLFS is a sample survey, all statistics are subject to survey sampling error. Statistics presented here at the sub-sample (e.g. local board) and sub-variable (e.g. NEET) levels are also subject to additional sampling errors and should be treated as indicative. More information on the survey, and caveats to the use of the data are provided in technical notes at the end of the report.

It is useful to note that from the March 2020 quarter onwards, results have been affected to a greater or lesser extent by the effects of Covid-19 on the labour market, including border closures and lockdowns of various durations and levels of restriction.

Note for the March 2023 quarter: floods and Cyclone Gabrielle impeded data collection, requiring adjustments from Stats NZ, but still causing minor additional sampling and non-sampling errors for the region, and possibly major ones for worst-affected local board areas.

Note also that Stats NZ revise the backdata slightly each quarter to match ongoing population revisions arising from latest migration estimates. This report uses the latest version of backdata.

The information provided in this report supplements other freely available HLFS information and economic reporting:

- **Further labour market analysis** is available from MBIE: <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/employment-and-skills/labour-market-reports-data-and-analysis/>
- **National and some regional data released on Stats NZ website:** www.stats.govt.nz
- **Additional Auckland HLFS data** is available on request from the author: Ross.Wilson@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz
- **Auckland Economic Update (monthly)** – an overview of key economic trends in Auckland, prepared by the author, is available on the Knowledge Auckland website. <https://www.knowledgeauckland.org.nz/publications/auckland-economic-update-february-2023/>
- **Auckland Economic Quarterly** – an update on Auckland's economic challenges and opportunities including unemployment, housing, migration and more, prepared by the Chief Economist Unit, is available on the Auckland Council website: <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/about-auckland-council/business-in-auckland/Pages/economic-advice.aspx>

2 Overview and highlights

For the March¹ 2023 quarter, compared to the preceding quarter (December 2022)²:

- Auckland's unemployment rate was 3.4%, slightly below 3.5% in December 2022.³ This was Auckland's lowest March unemployment rate since at least 1995.
- The number of people who were unemployed fell slightly to 34,200 (-500).
- The number of people employed rose slightly to 976,900 (+6,900; full-time +8,300).
- The number of people not in the labour force (NILF) fell slightly to 347,800 (-2,400).
- The labour force participation rate rose slightly to 74.4% (December: 74.2%).

In addition, for the March 2023 quarter:

- The rate of young people aged 15 to 24 not in employment, education or training (NEET) was 11.7%, similar to December (10.8%) and the rest of New Zealand (12.8%).

Over the year ended March 2023, compared to the year ended March 2022:

- The unemployment rate averaged 3.4% for both 12-month periods.
- Unemployment for age groups 15-19 (14.5%) and 20-24 years (6.6%) had slight falls; ages 55+ (1.9%) rose slightly, and rates across other age groups changed minimally.
- The unemployment rate for females averaged 3.9%, higher than the previous year (3.5%). The rate for males averaged 2.9% (down from 3.4% a year prior), so the gap between males and females (1.0%) increased back to the 10-year average (1.1%).
- Changes in unemployment rates varied between ethnic groups: Māori unemployment rose slightly (to 7.4%), Pacific peoples fell slightly (to 6.3%) while Asian peoples (2.9%) and European peoples (2.5%) were similar to the year before.
- The labour force participation rate (LFPR) averaged 73.6%, higher than a year earlier (71.8%) and the record highest in at least 28 years.
- The labour force participation rate for females (69.0% – a record) rose significantly (up 2.2% from 66.8%); for males (a record 78.3%) it rose less (up 1.2% from 77.1%).
- Labour force participation rates rose for all age groups, especially ages 15-19 (47.4%, up 5.5% from 42.4%) and 20-24 (81.2%, up 3.4%); ages 40-54 (88.9%), 25-39 (87.3 %) and 55+ (51.5%), all rose slightly, to record highs.
- Labour force participation rates rose for all ethnicities, especially Asian (77.6%, a 2.2% rise), but also European (74.4%, up 1.3%), Māori (68.9%, up 1.2%) and Pacific (67.1%, up 1.0%). All groups were at record levels except Māori (69.9% in June 2018).

In addition, over the year ended March 2023:

- The annual average NEET rate for Auckland was 11.0%, similar to the rest of New Zealand (11.3%), and slightly below the year ended March 2022 (11.9%).
- Auckland's NEET rate had fully recovered (fallen) to pre-pandemic levels 2016-2019.
- Auckland NEET rates were highest for Māori (19.4%) and Pacific (16.1%) ethnicities, Southern Initiative area (18.4%), and those aged 20 to 24 years (13.6%).

¹ See note in Introduction regarding impact of floods and Cyclone Gabrielle

² Results are not seasonally adjusted, and include Stats NZ revisions (usually minor) of previous periods' data.

³ The definition of 'similar/slightly' or 'different' is relative to survey sampling error margins produced by Stats NZ. For further details see 'Significant difference' in Appendix 1.

Table 1: Labour force status, comparison to preceding quarter and year

	Quarter end Dec 2022 (snapshot)	Quarter end Mar 2023 (snapshot)	Year end Mar 2022 (annual average)	Year end Mar 2023 (annual average)
Number employed	970.0	976.9	942.0	963.1
Number unemployed	34.7	34.2	33.6	33.6
Number not in the labour force (NILF)	350.2	347.8	382.4	358.0
Number in the working age population	1354.9	1358.9	1358.0	1354.7
Labour force participation rate (%)	74.2	74.4	71.8	73.6
Unemployment rate (%)	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.4

Note: Numbers are '000s of people.

Table 2: Overview of rates for age, gender and ethnic groups (%) (annual averages)

	Year end Mar 2022	Year end Mar 2023	Year end Mar 2022	Year end Mar 2023
	Unemployment rate		Labour force participation rate	
Total	3.4	3.4	71.8	73.6
15-19 years	16.2	14.5	42.4	47.4
20-24 years	7.0	6.6	77.8	81.2
25-39 years	3.1	2.9	86.3	87.3
40-54 years	2.2	2.0	87.9	88.9
55 years +	1.5	1.9	50.4	52.1
Female	3.5	3.9	66.8	69.0
Male	3.4	2.9	77.1	78.3
European	2.7	2.5	73.1	74.4
Māori	6.6	7.4	67.7	68.9
Pacific	6.9	6.3	63.4	67.1
Asian	3.0	2.9	75.4	77.6

Note: During the lockdowns (of varying coverage and restrictiveness) of 2020, 2021 and 2022, some people may not have met the criteria to have been actively seeking or available to start work, despite wanting a job. In these cases, the respondent will have been classified as 'not in the labour force' rather than 'unemployed'. Others remained employed due to government wage subsidies, with or without reductions in hours and pay. In addition, survey response rates sometimes fell, which may introduce bias.

3 Labour force status and unemployment rate by age

Labour force status by age group for the year ended March 2023 is shown in Table 3. Unemployment rates since 1996 are shown in Figure 1.

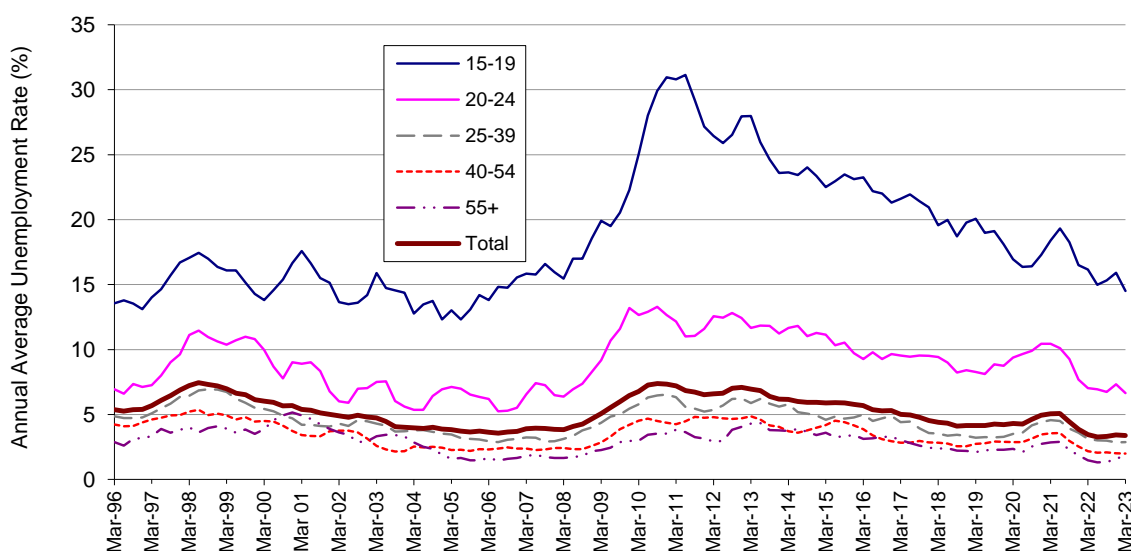
Table 3: Labour force status by age group, year ended March 2023 (annual averages)

	Total	15 to 19	20 to 24	25 to 39	40 to 54	55 and over
Number employed	963.1	44.5	88.8	332.6	292.8	204.4
Number unemployed	33.6	7.6	6.3	9.9	6.0	3.9
Number not in the labour force	358.0	57.8	22.1	49.6	37.2	191.3
Number in the working age popn	1354.7	109.8	117.2	392.2	336.0	399.6
Labour force participation rate (%)	73.6	47.4	81.2	87.3	88.9	52.1
Unemployment rate (%)	3.4	14.5	6.6	2.9	2.0	1.9

Note: Numbers are '000s; numbers and rates are based on latest population estimates.

Annual average unemployment rates for the year ended March 2023 were similar to the year ended December 2022, and similar to a year prior, for all age groups. (Marginal fall for 15-19 and 20-24, marginal rise for 55+). The unemployment rate continued to vary based on age. It was highest for those aged 15 to 19 years (14.5%), and lowest for those aged 55 and over (1.9%). Unemployment rates for all age groups remained similar or slightly above the low rates seen just before the 2008 GFC.

Figure 1: Unemployment rate by age (rolling annual average), 1996-2023



Labour force participation rates (LFPR) in the year ended March 2023 (73.6%) varied from 47.4 per cent for those aged 15 to 19, to 88.9 per cent for those aged 40 to 54. The LFPR has been rising since March 2021 for all age groups, especially for those aged 15 to 19 (up by 9.2 percentage points, from 38.2%). Over the longer term, the LFPR for those aged 55 and over (52.1%) has doubled in the 37 years since June 1995 (26.2%), presumably linked to rising average retirement ages.

4 Labour force status and unemployment rate by gender

Table 4 shows labour force status for males and females for the year ended March 2023. Unemployment rates since 1996 are shown in Figure 2.

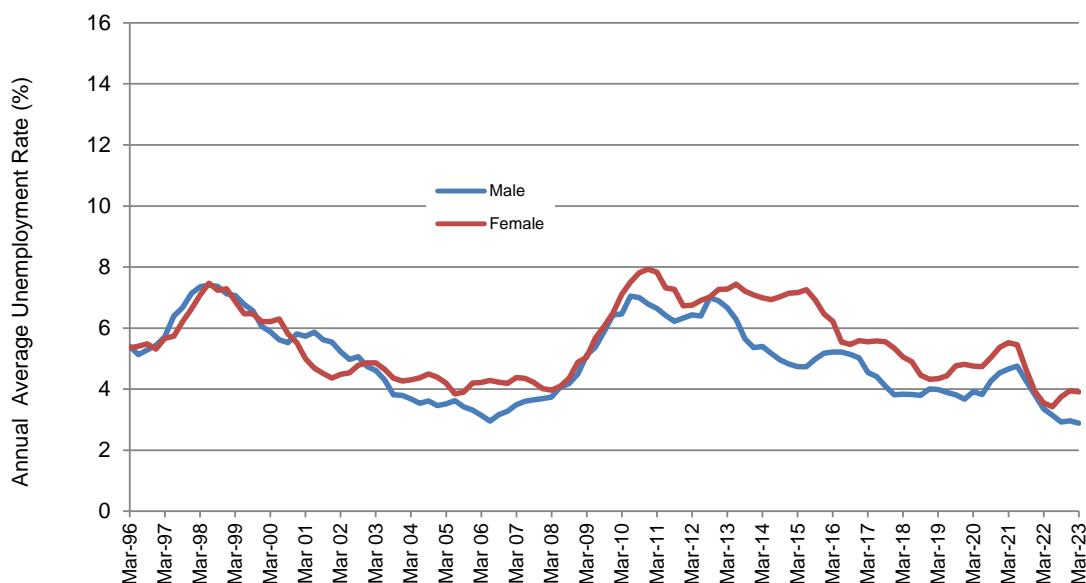
Table 4: Labour force status by gender, year ended March 2023 (annual averages)

	Total	Male	Female
Number employed	963.1	508.3	454.8
Number unemployed	33.6	15.1	18.5
Number not in the labour force	358.0	145.3	212.7
Number in the working age popn	1354.7	668.7	686.0
Labour force participation rate (%)	73.6	78.3	69.0
Unemployment rate (%)	3.4	2.9	3.9

Note: Numbers are '000s; numbers and rates are based on latest population estimates.

The unemployment rate for the year ended March 2023 was higher for females (3.9%) than males (2.9%), and both were at or near record lows. The female-male unemployment rate differential (1.0%) was similar to the 20-year average (0.8%), and still remained well below levels of 2013-2015, when it peaked at 2.5% (June 2015).

Figure 2 Unemployment rate by gender (rolling annual average), 1996-2023



The LFPR for females (69.0%) was the highest since at least 1995, but remained significantly lower than for males (78.3%). The LFPR gender differential (9.3%) was broadly similar to most of 2013 to 2021 (9% to 12%). Longer term it has halved since 1995 (19.0%), due to the male LFPR remaining largely unchanged since 1995 (76.1%), while the female LFPR rose by a fifth (11.7% rise from 57.3% in 1995), mostly since December 2013 (61.3%).

5 Labour force status and unemployment rate by ethnic group

Labour force status for the four main ethnic groups for the year ended March 2023 is shown in Table 5. Unemployment rates since 1996 are shown in Figure 3.

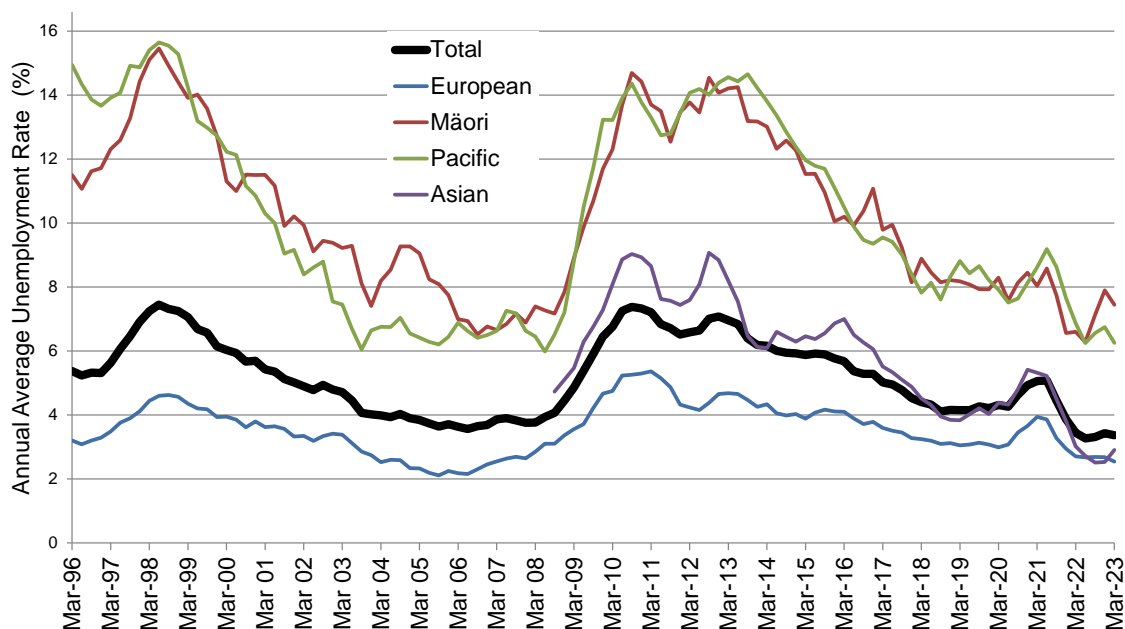
Table 5: Labour force status by ethnic group, year ended March 2023 (annual average)

	Total	European	Māori	Pacific	Asian
Number employed	963.1	525.1	88.9	115.4	295.5
Number unemployed	33.6	13.7	7.2	7.7	8.9
Number not in the labour force	358.0	185.5	43.4	60.3	87.8
Number in the working age popn	1,354.7	724.3	139.4	183.4	392.1
Labour force participation rate (%)	73.6	74.4	68.9	67.1	77.6
Unemployment rate (%)	3.4	2.5	7.4	6.3	2.9

Notes: Numbers are '000s; sums may exceed totals due to respondents selecting multiple ethnic groups. "Other ethnicities" not shown. These numbers are indicative only as sub-sample sizes are small. Data is based on latest population estimates.

Unemployment rates for the year ended March 2023 were similar or slightly lower than a year prior for most broad ethnic groups – Asian (2.9%, similar to 3.0%), Pacific peoples (6.3%, down slightly from 6.9%), European (2.5%, down slightly from 2.7%); Māori were slightly higher (7.4%, up slightly from 6.6%). As Figure 3 shows, March 2023 unemployment rates were among the lowest since 2009, across all broad ethnic groups.

Figure 3: Unemployment rate by ethnic group (rolling annual average), 1996-2023



Note: Asian Ethnic Group was included in Other (not shown) until December Quarter 2007.

LFPR varied by ethnicity, from 67.1 per cent for Pacific peoples (up from 55.6% in 2013) to a record 77.6 per cent for Asian (65.1% in 2013). Rates were higher for all groups compared to the previous year (between +1.1% (Māori) and +3.7% (Pacific)).

6 Employment by occupation

Auckland's largest occupational categories in the quarter ended 31 March 2023 were Professionals (27.5% of Auckland's total employment), and Managers (24.5%), followed by Technicians and Trades Workers (10.1%) and Clerical and Administrative Workers (10.3%) (see Table 6).

Between the December 2022 and March 2023 quarters, the 6,900 increase in total employment included notable changes in the numbers employed in the following occupations:

- Managers (+10,700, a rise of 4.7% and 0.9% rise in their share)
- Labourers (-9,500, a fall of 14.3% and 1.1% fall in their share)
- Clerical and Administrative Workers (+8,500, a rise of 9.2% and 0.8% rise in share)

Table 6: Employment by occupation – comparison to preceding quarter (quarterly data)

Occupation (ANZSCO 1-digit)	December 2022 quarter	March 2023 quarter	December 2022 quarter	March 2023 quarter
	Number		Share (%)	
Managers	228.6	239.3	23.6	24.5
Professionals	261.5	268.3	27.0	27.5
Technicians and Trades Workers	94.2	98.3	9.7	10.1
Community and Personal Service Workers	76.4	73.8	7.9	7.6
Clerical and Administrative Workers	91.9	100.4	9.5	10.3
Sales Workers	85.2	80.0	8.8	8.2
Machinery Operators and Drivers	57.3	52.6	5.9	5.4
Labourers	66.5	57.0	6.9	5.8
Total	970.0	976.9	100.0	100.0

Notes: Numbers are '000s. Total includes not elsewhere included. Data is based on latest population estimates.

Between the March 2022 (not shown) and March 2023 quarters, the 38,400 increase in total employment (a rise of 4.1%) included notable changes in the numbers employed in the following occupations:

- Professionals (+23,300, a rise of 9.5%)
- Managers (+19,300, a rise of 8.8%)
- Labourers (-8,700 a fall of 13.2%)
- Sales Workers (+6,900, a rise of 9.4%)

In addition (not shown), full-time employment rose slightly (+8,300 or 1.0% rise), while part-time employment fell slightly (-1,400 or 0.8% fall), between the December 2022 and March 2023 quarters. The part-time share fell from 17.2% to 16.9% of total employment, similar to March 2022 (16.9%) and comparable to the last four years (16.6% to 18.3%), but still lower than 2009-2016 (mostly 18.8% to 21.8%).

7 Employment by industry

In the quarter ended 31 March 2023, Auckland’s largest sectors in terms of employment were Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (113,200 people; 11.6% of total employment), Construction (105,800 people; 10.8% of total employment), and Health Care and Social Assistance (99,600 people; 10.2% of total employment) (See Table 7).

Between the December 2022 and March 2023 quarters, the largest changes in the number of people employed were in the following industries:

- Manufacturing (-6,100, a fall of 7.2% to its second lowest share since at least 2009)
- Construction (+3,900, a 3.8% rise).

Between the March 2022 (not shown) and March 2023 quarters (+6,900, a rise of 1.8%), there were notable changes in the numbers employed in:

- Health Care and Social Assistance (+12,400, a rise of 14.2%)
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (+10,700, a rise of 10.4%)
- Public Administration and Safety (+5,600, a rise of 12.0%).

Table 7: Employment by industry – comparison to preceding quarter (quarterly data)

Industry (ANZSIC06)	December 2022 quarter	March 2023 quarter	December 2022 quarter	March 2023 quarter
	Number employed		Share (%)	
Primary Industries	9.4	9.8	1.0	1.0
Manufacturing	84.6	78.5	8.7	8.0
Electricity Gas Water and Waste Services	7.6	9.7	0.8	1.0
Construction	101.9	105.8	10.5	10.8
Wholesale Trade	44.2	42.4	4.6	4.3
Retail Trade	87.8	83.5	9.1	8.5
Accommodation and Food Services	49.8	51.5	5.1	5.3
Transport Postal and Warehousing	52.5	52.6	5.4	5.4
Information Media and Telecommunications	18.9	21	1.9	2.1
Financial and Insurance Services	46.6	49.2	4.8	5.0
Rental Hiring and Real Estate Services	27.9	26.7	2.9	2.7
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	109.8	113.2	11.3	11.6
Administrative and Support Services	38.1	35.9	3.9	3.7
Public Administration and Safety	50.8	52.1	5.2	5.3
Education and Training	69.2	68.1	7.1	7.0
Health Care and Social Assistance	96.9	99.6	10.0	10.2
Arts and Recreation Services	22.8	20.6	2.4	2.1
Other Services	40	43.4	4.1	4.4
Total	970	976.9	100.0	100.0

Notes: Numbers are '000s, rounded to nearest hundred. Total includes “Not elsewhere included”. Data is based on latest population estimates.

8 Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) by age

In the quarter ended 31 March 2023, the overall percentage of young people (aged 15 to 24) who were not in employment, education or training (NEET) in Auckland (11.7%) was slightly below the rest of New Zealand (12.8%) over the same period (see Table 11). However, quarterly NEET rates are typically subject to substantial seasonal effects, while annual averages are not. In the year ended March 2023, the annual average NEET rate for Auckland (11.0%) was similar to the rest of New Zealand (11.3%) over the same period.

Statistics for the year ended March 2023 for young people (aged 15 to 24, and split by age: 15-19 years and 20-24 years) in Auckland who were NEET are shown in Table 8. NEET rates since 2005 are shown in Figure 4.

The NEET rate for the year ended March 2023 (11.9%) continues to differ by age group: 8.3 per cent for those aged 15 to 19, and 13.6 per cent for those aged 20 to 24.

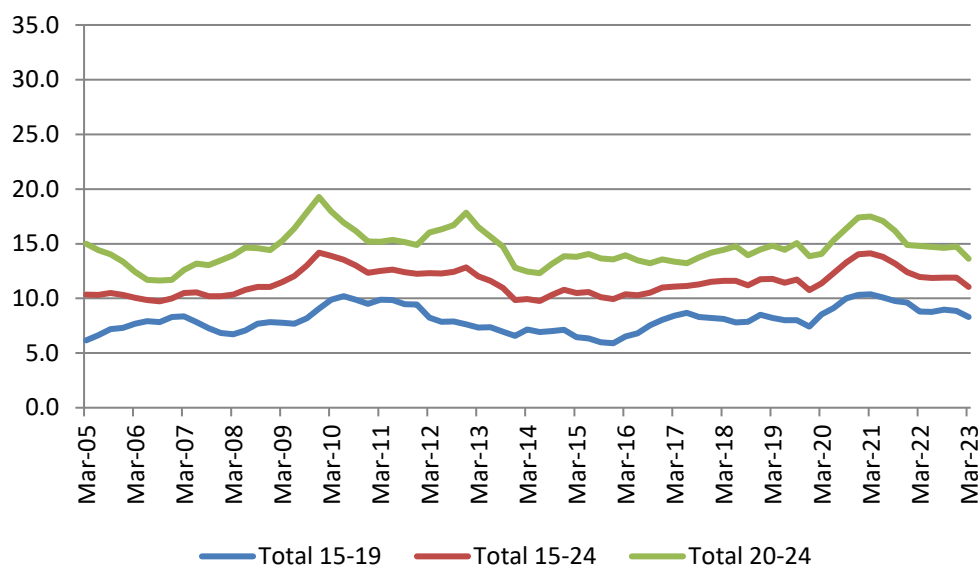
Table 8: NEET statistics by age, year ended March 2023 (annual averages)

	Total 15-24 years	15-19 years	20-24 years
Number in the selected population	227.0	109.8	117.2
Number NEET	25.1	9.1	16.0
NEET rate (%)	11.0	8.3	13.6
NEET rate (%) a year earlier	11.9	8.8	14.8

Note: Numbers are '000s; numbers and rates are based on latest population estimates.

The annual average NEET rates for the year ended March 2023 were slightly below recent quarters, and below the March 2021 peak, for both age groups 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years.

Figure 4: NEET rate (%) by age (rolling annual average), 2005-2023



9 Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) by ethnic group

NEET statistics for those aged 15-24 for the four main ethnic groups for the year ended March 2023 are shown in Table 9. NEET rates since 2005 are shown in Figure 5.

The annual average NEET rates for the year ended March 2023 were slightly below a year prior for all broad ethnic groups except Asian (similar). The highest was still Māori (19.9%), followed by Pacific peoples (16.1%), and lowest were European (8.4%) and Asian (7.4%).

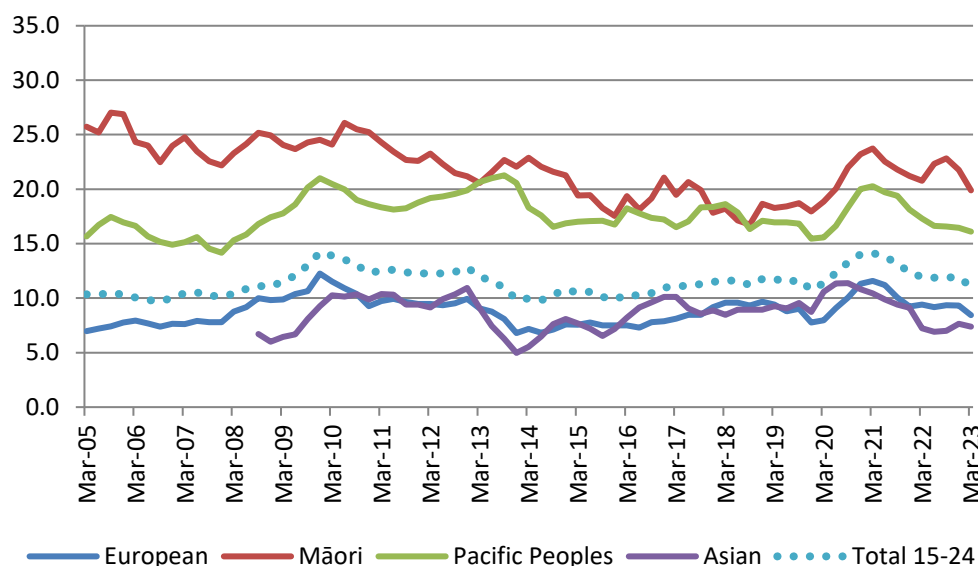
Table 9: NEET statistics by ethnic group, year ended March 2023 (annual average)

	Total	European	Māori	Pacific	Asian
Number in the selected population	227.0	114.0	40.0	49.9	58.3
Number NEET	25.1	9.6	8.0	8.0	4.3
NEET rate (%)	11.0	8.4	19.9	16.1	7.4
NEET rate (%) a year earlier	11.9	9.4	20.8	17.3	7.2

Notes: Numbers are '000s; sums may exceed totals due to respondents selecting multiple ethnic groups. "Other ethnicities" not shown. These numbers are indicative only as sub-sample sizes are small. Data is based on latest population estimates.

As Figure 5 shows, NEET rates across all ethnic groups spiked up in 2020 to levels comparable to 2009 (post-GFC) but have since been falling towards pre-Covid levels. Rates have probably been falling more slowly among Māori and faster among the Asian category, but survey sampling error margins of up to a third add uncertainty.

Figure 5: NEET rate (%) by ethnic group (rolling annual average), 2005-2023



Note: Asian Ethnic Group was included in Other (not shown) until December Quarter 2007.

10 Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) by broad location

NEET statistics for those aged 15-24 for Auckland and New Zealand for the year ended March 2023 are shown in Table 10. NEET rates since 2005 are shown in Figure 6.

NEET rates for the year ended March 2023 were again higher for the Southern Initiative area⁴ (18.4%) than for the rest of Auckland (9.1%) and the rest of New Zealand (11.3%). All were similar to a year earlier, except the rest of Auckland, which was slightly lower.

Table 10: NEET statistics by location, year ended March 2023 (annual average)

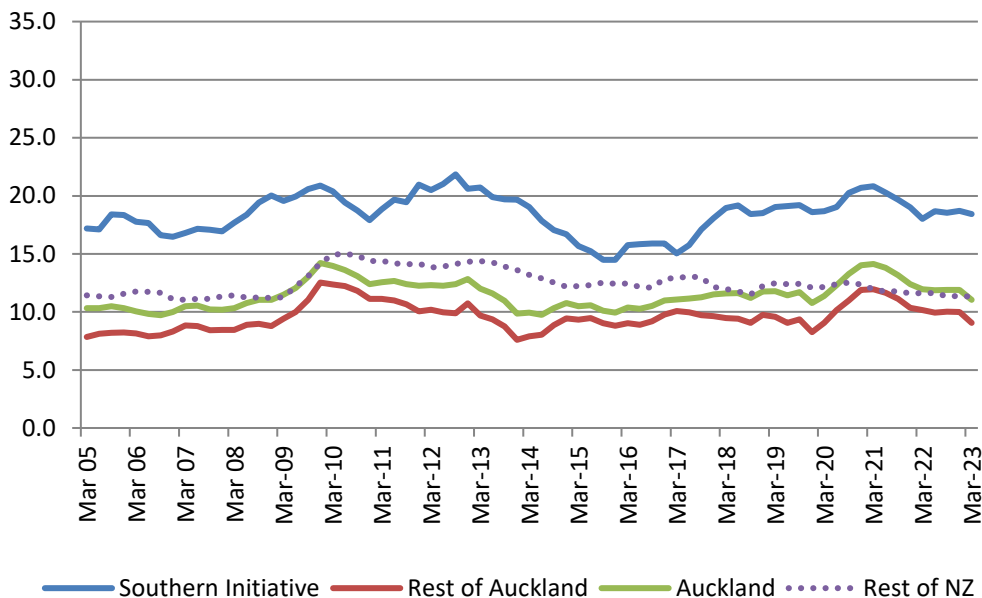
	Total Auckland	Southern Initiative	Rest of Auckland	Rest of NZ	New Zealand
Number in the selected population	227.0	48.3	178.7	412.8	639.8
Number NEET	25.1	8.9	16.2	46.7	71.8
NEET rate (%)	11.0	18.4	9.1	11.3	11.2
NEET rate (%) a year earlier	11.9	18.0	10.2	11.6	11.7

Notes: Numbers are '000s; numbers and rates are based on latest population estimates. Rest of NZ is New Zealand excluding Total Auckland.

As Figure 6 shows, NEET rates in Auckland (rolling annual average) spiked up in 2020 then fell in 2021; however, the 2020 increase was less pronounced in Auckland’s Southern Initiative area, and largely absent in Rest of New Zealand.

NEET rates during 2022 were largely flat for all the broad areas shown, and most dipped slightly in March 2023.

Figure 6: NEET rate (%) by location (rolling annual average), 2005-2023



⁴ The Southern Initiative was established by Auckland Council for four local board areas in South Auckland. The area is made up of the Māngere-Ōtāhuhu, Ōtara-Papatoetoe, Manurewa, and Papakura Local Board areas.

11 Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) by local board area

Indicative NEET rates for the various local board areas for the latest quarter and year are shown in Table 11. Due to small sub-sample sizes, this information is not always available for some local board areas ('..S'/blank), and is never available for Great Barrier (not listed). The other local board NEET levels and rates have varying error margins (18% to 56%; e.g. at 56% error margin, '10% NEET rate' could be anywhere between 4.4% and 15.6%).

Table 11: NEET statistics by local board area – quarter and year ended March 2023

Local board area	Population Age 15-24(000)	Quarterly NEET (000)	Quarterly NEET rate (%)	Annual average NEET Rate (%)
Rodney	7.4	..S	..S	..S
Hibiscus and Bays	18.1	..S	..S	6.4
Upper Harbour	9.4	..S	..S	13.7
Kaipātiki	9.8	1.7	17.4	12.1
Devonport-Takapuna	15.0	..S	..S	11.0
Henderson-Massey[W]	17.0	1.3	7.5	11.1
Waitākere Ranges [W]	9.5	1.9	20.5	16.5
Waiheke	..S	..S	..S	..S
Waitematā	10.1	1.4	14.3	12.9
Whau [W]	12.5	1.8	14.3	13.7
Albert-Eden	10.2	1.3	12.9	10.4
Puketāpapa	3.3	..S	..S	..S
Ōrākei	11.9	..S	..S	8.9
Maungakiekie-Tāmaki	11.7	1.5	13.1	15.5
Howick	18.5	1.7	9.2	8.8
Māngere-Ōtāhuhu [*]	9.4	2.3	23.9	20.5
Ōtara-Papatoetoe [*]	15.3	3.4	22.2	18.0
Manurewa [*]	10.3	1.5	14.7	17.6
Papakura [*]	6.8	..S	..S	27.8
Franklin	10.4	1.3	12.4	12.2
Southern Initiative [*]	41.9	7.6	18.2	18.4
Rest of Auckland [*]	176.1	17.8	10.1	9.1
Western Initiative [W]	39.0	5.0	12.8	12.0
Auckland total	217.9	25.4	11.7	11.0
Rest of New Zealand	424.3	54.4	12.8	11.3
Total New Zealand	642.3	79.8	12.4	11.2

Notes: Data is based on latest population estimates. Any finer geography than Auckland total is below the design level of the survey; local board area estimates should be treated as indicative only and used with caution...S = data suppressed due to base numbers being too small (e.g. NEET below 1000 for the quarter (quarterly) or for all of the four quarters (annual average)). [*] The Southern Initiative is made up of the Māngere-Ōtāhuhu, Ōtara-Papatoetoe, Manurewa and Papakura Local Boards. [W] = Western Initiative area.

12 Appendix: Definitions and technical notes

Definitions used in the HLFS

Employed: Those HLFS respondents who during their survey reference week had either:

- worked for one hour or more for pay or profit, as employee/employer/self employed
- worked without pay for one hour or more for a relative's farm or business
- had a job but were temporarily not at work.

Labour force: Members of the working-age population who during their survey reference week were classified as 'employed' or 'unemployed'.

Labour force participation rate: The total labour force expressed as a percentage of the working-age population.

NEET rate: Calculated as the total number of youth (aged 15-24 years) who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), as a proportion of the total youth working-age population (aged 15-24 years).

Not in the labour force: Any person who is neither employed nor unemployed. This category includes, for example:

- retired persons
- persons with personal or family responsibilities such as childcare, unpaid housework
- persons attending educational institutions
- persons permanently unable to work due to physical or mental handicaps
- persons who were not actively seeking work (see note below regarding unemployed).

Significant difference: The HLFS is a sample survey, so all statistics are subject to survey sampling error – the random variation between the sample and the total population. For a difference to be statistically significant, it must exceed this margin of error (see also technical note on sampling errors).

Unemployed: Unemployed persons are those in the working-age population who were without a paid job, available for work and had either actively sought work in the past four weeks ending with the reference week, or had a new job to start within the next four weeks. (Note: 'Actively sought work' does not include people whose only job search method was to look at job advertisements in newspapers or online.)

Unemployment rate (UER): The number of unemployed expressed as a percentage of the labour force.

Working age population (WAP): total population (i.e. of all labour force statuses) aged 15 or over (including over 65), who have or propose to live in New Zealand for at least 12 months, but excluding institutionalised people (in prison, or long-term residents of homes for older people, hospitals, and psychiatric institutions); sometimes restricted to a particular specified sub-group such as by gender or ethnicity – and sometimes also for a sub-group defined by age e.g. youth (aged 15-24).

Technical notes

HLFS survey sampling: Households are sampled on a statistically representative basis from areas throughout New Zealand, and information is obtained for each member of the household aged 15 or older. Each quarter, one-eighth of the households in the sample are rotated out and replaced by a new set of households.

Seasonality and annual averages: In order to ensure information is seasonally aligned, rolling annual averages are used throughout most of this report for reporting across time. Remaining quarterly data in this report will be subject to seasonality (and may differ from some of the HLFS headline numbers published by Stats NZ that are ‘seasonally adjusted’).

Revisions: The survey and some back-data were revised by Stats NZ in October 2020 and again in January 2021 to match revised regional population estimates. There are also ongoing minor revisions to recent population backdata due to revisions of migration estimates. In addition, the survey and all back-data since 2009 was revised in June 2016 when ‘searching online ads only’ was redefined from ‘official unemployed’ to ‘looking at job ads only’ (i.e. not actively seeking employment, therefore Not In Labour Force). This overview uses the revised data, but back-data for before 2009 still uses the old definition.

Sampling errors: As the HLFS is a sample survey, all statistics are subject to survey sampling error. Statistics presented here at the sub-sample (e.g. local board or ethnic groups) and sub-variable (e.g. NEET for ages 15-24) levels are also subject to additional sampling errors and should be treated as indicative only. Note also that in some cases a difference can be significant for a sample but not for any of its component sub-samples (e.g. ethnic groups).

Survey questionnaire changes: In June 2016, the HLFS questionnaire was changed to identify more self-employed people (who would previously have been Not In Labour Force and/or NEET), and to include members of the armed forces living in private dwellings (previously not part of ‘Working Age Population’). Consequently, employment and unemployment rates and other affected data prior to June 2016 are not fully compatible with later periods.

For further information

Technical notes on the HLFS on Stats NZ website:

<https://datainfolplus.stats.govt.nz/item/nz.govt.stats/6a13af44-0057-4a63-835a-c1a0c6f8ef91>

June 2016 questionnaire changes:

http://archive.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/income-and-work/employment_and_unemployment/improving-labour-market-statistics.aspx#gsc.tab=0

2020 and 2021 Covid-19 impacts:

<https://www.stats.govt.nz/methods/covid-19-and-labour-market-statistics-in-the-june-2020-quarter>

<https://www.stats.govt.nz/methods/covid-19-and-labour-market-statistics-in-the-december-2021-quarter>

Stats NZ Guide to unemployment statistics (Third edition)

<https://www.stats.govt.nz/assets/Reports/Guide-to-unemployment-statistics-third-edition/guide-unemployment-statistics-third-edition.pdf>

Find out more: phone 09 301 0101, email rimu@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz or visit aucklandcouncil.govt.nz and knowledgeauckland.org.nz

