ANNUAL SUMMARY 2025-26



HIGHLIGHTS FROM JULY 25-JUNE 26 AND THE LATEST REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Prepared by

WellingtonNZ







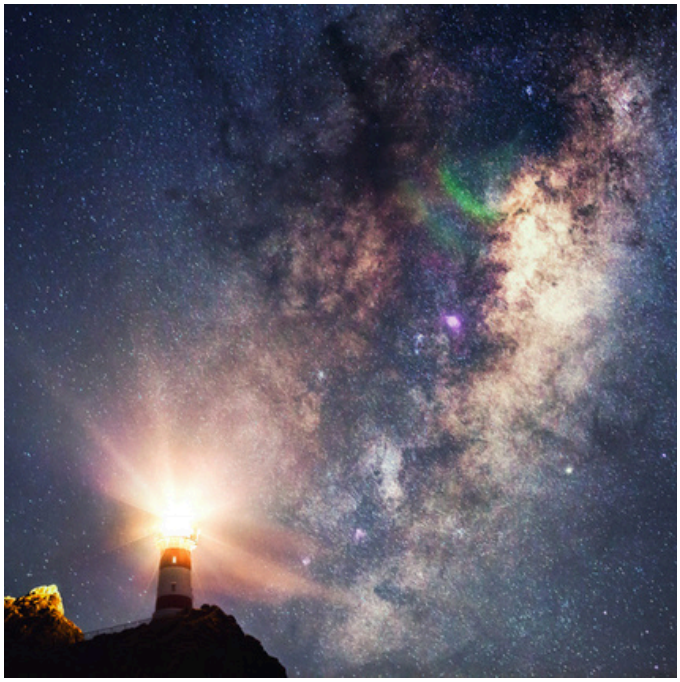




















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WELLINGTON REGIONAL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN
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Te Ūpoko o Te Ika stretches from the northern reaches of the Wairarapa near Pūkaha Mount Bruce and the Rangitīkei boundary, down through the Tararua and Remutaka ranges, encompassing the Kāpiti Coast, Porirua, Hutt Valley, Wellington City, and the southern Wairarapa. It is bound by the western coastline from Ōtaki to Te Whanganui-ā-Tara (Wellington Harbour) and extends eastward across fertile plains to the Pacific coast near Mātakitaki-a-Kupe (Cape Palliser)[1]

The long-term direction of economic development in Te Ūpoko o Te Ika is guided by the Wellington Regional Economic Development Plan 2022-2032 (REDP) which is owned by the Wellington Regional Leadership Committee (WRLC). The WRLC brings councils and iwi together to take collective action on shared challenges and strengthen outcomes for our region's communities.

WellingtonNZ manages the implementation of the REDP. This report covers highlights from some of the 33 initiatives in the plan over the past year (1 July 2025 - 30 June 2026) and the latest regional data for context.
WellingtonNZ's support for initiatives ranges from making connections, raising visibility, building capability and advocacy, to leading delivery.

Acknowledgement
Collectively, REDP initiatives are creating opportunities for businesses and developing our future workforce. We acknowledge the continued dedication of all the REDP initiative leads and key partners contributing to the growth and prosperity of our region.

REDP Refresh 2026
The REDP went through a refresh process this year which is in its final approval stages. The refreshed plan will inform delivery and priorities for 2026 and beyond.
The plan is refreshed every two years to ensure the content, narrative, challenges and opportunities it captures continue to reflect current economic conditions in the region.

REDP Snapshot

VISION	Build a future-focused, creative, sustainable, and thriving region for all to be proud of
AIM	Create and retain **decent jobs**[2] for our people now and into the future, and **improve quality of life** by supporting our region to be more productive, resilient, inclusive, and sustainable with thriving Māori and Pasifika communities.
FOCUS AREAS	**Key sectors** 1. Screen, creative and digital 2. Science, technology, engineering and high-value manufacturing 3. Visitor economy 4. Primary sector, food and fibre **Key enablers** 1. Māori economic development 2. Skills, talent and education 3. Water accessibility and security 4. Resilient infrastructure

Visit WellingtonNZ.com/REDP to:

- Read more about initiatives
- Sign up for our quarterly newsletter
- Read the full REDP and Annual Summaries from previous years

1 https://www.tematarau.co.nz/ Whai kōrero, Te Ūpoko o Te Ika
2 Decent work is productive, fairly paid, safe, enabling, with equal opportunity and social protection. https://www.ilo.org/topics-and-sectors/decent-work-and-2030-agenda-sustainable-development

WELLINGTON REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN
MONITORING AND REPORTING SUMMARY 2025-26

MONITORING METRICS: Indicators used to monitor progress against our strategic objectives

REGIONAL INDICATORS: Indicators monitored at a regional level

QUALITY OF LIFE

Overall satisfaction with life
Biennial results - 2026 vs. 2024.

AIM TO GROW

77%	Satisfied in Wellington Region*	▼ 1%

The ability of income to meet everyday needs
Biennial results - 2026 vs. 2024.

AIM TO GROW

39%	Could meet needs in the Wellington Region*	▼ 1%

EMPLOYMENT

Total employment
Annual figure - Year to March 2026 vs. March 2025

330,138	Total Employment	▼ 1.1%

GDP per capita
Annual figure - Year to March 2025 vs. March 2024

AIM TO GROW

$102,922	GDP per Capita	▼ 1.7%

TERRITORIAL AUTHORITY: Indicators monitored at a territorial authority level

Population
Monitoring growth is important for understanding the infrastructure and resource needs of our region. Change is between 2024 and 2025.

38,400	Horowhenua	▲ 0.5%
58,000	Kāpiti Coast	▲ 0.2%
61,500	Porirua	▼ 0.3%
210,800	Wellington	▼ 0.4%
114,200	Lower Hutt	▲ 0.7%
47,400	Upper Hutt	▼ 0.2%
12,200	Sth Wairarapa	▲ 0.4%
10,300	Carterton	▲ 0.0%
28,900	Masterton	▲ 0.7%

Average income per capita
Determines the average per-person income and evaluates the standard of living of our population.
Annual figure - Year to March 2026 vs. March 2025

$48,467	Horowhenua	▲ 5.5%
$61,746	Kāpiti Coast	▲ 4.5%
$62,073	Porirua	▲ 3.4%
$76,980	Wellington	▲ 2.3%
$62,564	Lower Hutt	▲ 4.1%
$64,291	Upper Hutt	▲ 3.6%
$65,208	Sth Wairarapa	▲ 5.7%
$59,538	Carterton	▲ 5.3%
$54,084	Masterton	▲ 4.0%

*Nielsen Quality of Life survey for 2026 does not include a Greater Wellington Regional sample and this is determined based on an average of participating TAs - Porirua, Wellington and Hutt City

Sources:
Quality of Life: Nielsen Quality of Life Survey 2026 | Wellington region (excludes Horowhenua)
Total Employment: Infometrics Regional Industry Employment Model | Wairarapa-Wellington-Horowhenua | March Year 2026
GDP per capita: Infometrics | Wairarapa-Wellington-Horowhenua | March Year 2025
Population: StatsNZ Subnational population estimates | TA Level | As at June 2025
Average income per capita: Infometrics | TA Level | March Year 2026

SECTOR

Screen, creative and digital

GDP
$1,512m ▼
2025: $1,532m

Employment
▼ 7,574
2025: 7,884

Business units
3,447 ▲
2024: 3,432

Our screen industry is a key pillar of our region's identity as the creative capital of New Zealand, attracting national and international talent to the region.

Highlights from REDP Screen initiatives this year include:

Screen Accelerator Project
Tall Poppy Films

14 producers participated in the 2026 course.

80% of the 2026 projects pitched have active interest from national and international buyers.

Content NZ
Screen Wellington

Market Ready Programme - 10 Wellington-based projects were selected for the programme to deepen their pitching, marketing and distribution capability among international markets.

A feasibility study into a national screen market event in Wellington was completed this year. An executive summary of findings is being prepared.

Screen Centre of Excellence
Massey University

The Centre of Excellence is based at the Massey Screen Hub. This year a Community Manager was hired to progress the Centre of Excellence initiative.

Screen Attraction Programme
Screen Wellington

The Attraction Programme advances Wellington as a key production region through targeted relationship-building and conversion work, both nationally and internationally.

5 familiarisation visits hosted with 400+ screen professionals. Famils provide an opportunity to showcase Wellington to key stakeholders. The 5 famils focussed on private investors, US producers, gaming industry, international production attraction, and creative tech.

Screen Wellington coordinated studio tours, and major sector events, including the Creative Tech Summit, around the Avatar: Fire & Ash red-carpet premiere in December - utilising the major, globally-significant event to profile Wellington's screen sector.



'Caterpillar' filming
Credit: Rebecca McMillan



Screen Wellington-Creative Tech Summit
Credit: Creative Tech Summit



'Ready Gamer Mum'
Credit: South Pacific Pictures



Photo credit: South Pacific Pictures

14
producers participated in 2026

1
international major production

CASE STUDY

Screen Accelerator

The Screen Accelerator Project celebrated its fifth anniversary in May - a milestone that also signalled the release of its first major production, ‘Ready Gamer Mum’.

We covered the Screen Accelerator Project in last year’s Annual Summary and since then, the programme has continued to go from strength to strength.

Launched in 2022, the Screen Accelerator Project supports the development of unscripted content – including documentary, reality and formatted television – with the goal of turning local ideas into globally market-ready productions.

‘Ready Gamer Mum’ was developed by co-creator, and Aro Street video store worker, Tom Hutchison during his time on the Screen Accelerator Project in 2022. The show aired this May and has already attracted offshore attention, including interest from Australia, facilitated by South Pacific Pictures’ affiliation with the All3Media network.

There are at least two further productions confirmed from Screen Accelerator, and additional projects currently in discussions with investors.

The success of ‘Ready Gamer Mum’ is proof of what sustained effort, along with great ideas, expert guidance and patient investment can achieve.

The Screen Accelerator Project is delivered over six weeks, combining an intensive in-person workshop in Wellington with online mentoring from Emmy Award-winning producer, Jon Kroll, and the Tall Poppy Films team with sponsorship from Yoobee Creative College of Innovation and REDP funding.

Open to screen producers from emerging talent to seasoned professionals, it is the only incubator of its type in New Zealand.

The REDP was designed to turn regional ideas into real creative and economic outcomes. The Screen Accelerator Project demonstrates what this looks like in practice for local screen creatives.

“I came into the project pretty certain about what show I wanted to do, but I learned so much about the practicalities of this artform and market that I changed my idea. Now I love my new idea, and it has a much better chance of getting made” - 2026 participant



Screen Accelerator Project cohort 2026

SECTOR

Science, technology, engineering and high-value manufacturing (STEM)

GDP
$7,903m ▼
2025: $7,930m

Employment
27,670 ▼
2025: 28,769

Business units
5,646 ▼
2024: 6,021

Science, engineering and high-value manufacturing

The science, engineering and high-value manufacturing sub-chapter focuses on creating visibility for the ecosystem, addressing skills shortages and providing support for emerging companies to commercialise.

Highlights from REDP STEM initiatives this year include:

Summer of Tech
Summer of Tech

140 students hired into meaningful junior roles over the 2025/26 summer, including 94 in Wellington.

Increased number of placements by 8 compared to 2024/25 summer, a significant achievement given the pressures of the market.

Summer of Tech celebrate their 20th anniversary in 2026.

Mentor circles have been established this year to support intern development, with 30 mentors signing up.

Engagement with students and employers has begun in preparation for the 2026/27 summer.

PDIHQ
Pro-Dev

Pro-Dev have been preparing to launch the PDIHQ website this year to promote the project and provide key information for potential investors.

Pro-Dev have been assessing potential sites to host the facility. If you are looking to scale your STEM business or interested in investing, get in touch with Sam@pro-dev.co.nz

AWATOA: Ngāti Toa Rangatahi STEM pathways
Ngāti Toa Rangatira

Partnered with 7 schools across Porirua.

More than 185 tauira (students) have been involved in AWATOA progammes in 2025/26.

VR in the Pā project connected tamariki with virtual reality technology development, moving from play-based exploration to applied technology.

He Wawata Nui – Dream Big event in October 2025 brought together 400+ Māori and Pasifika rangatahi to explore what future careers in STEM could look like for them while standing strong in their cultural identity.

Preparations for He Wawata Nui 2026 are underway.



Summer of Tech 2026 Meet & Greet event
Photo credit: Lewis Ferris



Tauira at AWATOA in Porirua
Photo credit: AWATOA

SECTOR

Science, technology, engineering and high-value manufacturing (STEM)

Technology

The technology sub-chapter focuses on developing our entrepreneurial talent and workforce, upskilling leadership and attracting investment.

Graduate | Taiawa Tech Hub

Taiawa originated as an REDP initiative in 2022, designed to strengthen our technology sector by providing a central hub for tech businesses to connect with each other, investors, talent, and capability building opportunities.

Now co-owned by Wellington City Council and Te Herenga Waka Victoria University, Taiawa is located on the university's Pipitea campus, houses 15 tech businesses and has evolved into a nationally unique collaboration model.

The hub's economic impact on the region is significant and growing - contributing $11.9m to regional GDP and supporting 127 jobs in its first year (2024/25) which increased to $14.4m and 148 jobs in its second year (2025/26)

Storbie, a resident business, grew their active US customer base from 3 to 250 while based at Taiawa. Another resident business, **Factor**, was acquired for $24m by Gentrack.

Taiawa is a proven example of how strategic cluster development can strengthen regional prosperity, accelerate business growth and create high-value employment.

We are proud to say Taiawa has outgrown the REDP and is graduating from the plan in 2026.

If you are a tech business looking to go global, reach out to Dascha.Cooper@vuw.ac.nz

Technology and Innovation Leadership series

Creative HQ

Hosted *Movac Growth Jam 2025* event with 7 NZ leaders from Sharesies, Pam, Telos, Runn, Projectworks, Angel HQ and Movac sharing their investment stories with attendees.

Brought Mark Achler from MATH Venture Partners in Chicago to Wellington to host a masterclass at *Capital Capital*. Creative HQ organised for 5 local founders to have one-on-one sessions with Mark focussing on investment and exit strategies.

Coordinated *Techweek 2026* and supported 7 events including the headline event *Movac Growth Jam - Epic Fail Edition*.

Scaling Welly Tech event delivered at Hnry Stadium with 173 attendees, connecting local scale-ups with advisors across tech.

Scale up Wellington

Creative HQ

A cohort of Wellington tech companies has been confirmed for the 2026 programme, representing a total of 103 FTEs and $16m in revenue.

The programme consists of 3 retreats focussing on Leadership, Sales and Operations to enhance offshore growth.





Photo credit: Howie

5-part
series on local manufacturers

74k
views in the first 2 weeks across socials

CASE STUDY

STEM Maker Story

STEM Maker Story was designed to showcase the rewarding and diverse array of career opportunities in manufacturing and inspire the next generation of makers, innovators and problem-solvers - right here in the Hutt Valley!

STEM Maker Story, led and delivered by Hutt City Council, aims to address the awareness gap that our region, especially our rangatahi, has of our local manufacturing businesses and the creative and exciting career opportunities available in STEM.

Aimed at 16 to 21-year-olds, the initiative launched in June 2026 and uses short-form video to share authentic stories from local businesses, innovators and makers - with the first two videos in the series reaching 74,000 views across Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok in just two weeks.

Advanced manufacturing is one of our key regional strengths, driven by science, engineering, and innovation expertise. Maker Story highlights our region as a hub for world-class problem-solving and design while building local pride and inspiring our young talent to explore careers in STEM.

A crucial and foundational stage of investing into the future of our workforce is inspiration - young people can only aspire to be what they can see. By giving visibility to a sector that often excels quietly, Maker Story exposes rangatahi and our communities to the breadth of opportunity in STEM.

Since the pilot launched, more STEM organisations have proactively reached out wanting to get involved with the initiative, demonstrating the industry's support for the objectives of Maker Story and the REDP.

Heading into the 2026/2027 year, evaluation of the Maker Story pilot begins. The successes and lessons learnt from Maker Story will be key to exploring future options for the initiative.

Watch the full series here: Makers Story (huttvalley.nz)


Maker Story episode with RaceTech
Photo credit: Howie

SECTOR

Visitor economy

GDP
$5,133m ▲
2025: $5,081m

Employment
52,457 ▼
2025: 53,118

Business units
7,623 ▼
2024: 7,719

Developing iconic attractions and boosting our region's tourism product offering is key to lengthening visitor stays and increasing spend in the region.

Highlights from REDP Visitor economy initiatives this year include:

Wairarapa Dark Skies
Dark Sky Steering Group

Lonely Planet included Wairarapa in its *Best in Travel 2026* list of 25 destinations and 25 experiences worldwide for its stargazing, food and wine.

The feature reached a global audience of 272 million during Oct 2025 - Jan 2026, representing an Advertising Value Equivalent of $4.2m.

10 tourism operators were supported to participate in a targeted workshop series to develop, define and price their astro-tourism offerings specifically targeting international markets to ensure the region is well-placed to meet demand generated by the Lonely Planet feature.

LoCarb Sustainability Programme
Hospitality NZ, WellingtonNZ

90 hospitality businesses across the region have joined the LoCarb programme, led in partnership with Hospitality NZ, actively monitoring their emissions and taking action to reduce waste and energy consumption.

PōnekePay is now in development. PōnekePay is based on the successful European visitor rewards programme, DestinationPay.

Porirua Adventure Park
Select Contracts

Porirua Adventure Park are preparing to lodge their application with the NZ Overseas Investment Office. If accepted, this would allow Canadian project partner Ridge North to support the project and progress this initiative.

Graduate | Footsteps of Change

Footsteps of Change is an interactive, 3D, self-guided walking tour around Wellington's parliamentary precinct.

The tour takes visitors through 8 historically significant moments in Wellington that shaped our democracy and country over time including the Treaty of Waitangi Act and Women's Suffrage movement.

Footsteps of Change launched in October 2025 as part of the Wellington Heritage Festival. The tour starts at Tākina and ends at the National Library.

Since its launch, the tour has attracted 1,800 users on the mobile tour version.

A physical Storymapp® box has been installed at the National Library for users to engage and interact with the tour stories.

The Footsteps of Change initiative provides another active, low-cost and central activity for visitors to add to their itineraries, supporting longer stays. Extending the length of visitor stays in the region is key to boosting visitor spend and maintaining tourism's social licence in the region.

Following the launch, the team are now exploring extending the concept to include other key partners in the region.

Check out the tour here: Footsteps of Change



Footsteps of Change Parliamentary Precinct Tour



Red Tape Track. Photo Credit: Friday Photography

CASE STUDY

Regional Trails

105 jobs
est. to be created by P2P trail by Y5+*

$14.9m
est. visitor spend created by P2P trail by Y5+*

2
regionally significant trail initiatives

Our diverse landscapes and compact layout make our region an ideal location for nature based experiences. Pāuatahanui to Paekākāriki trail and Wairarapa Five Towns Trail initiatives address key gaps in our regional trail network that will strengthen our position as a prime destination for cycle tourism.

Pāuatahanui to Paekākāriki (P2P) trail will build out the trail connection across Battle Hill Farm Park and Mt Wainui providing a critical link that would create a multi-day route with accommodation options - a key requirement for cycle trail tour operators.

This year, Kāpiti Coast Trails Trust which leads the P2P initiative, completed an economic impact assessment for the trail.

The economic impact assessment found that the trail had the potential to attract 53,000 annual users, generate $3.63m in visitor expenditure and create 26 FTE jobs in the first 1-2 years post-construction.
*5+ years post-construction, this is projected to increase to 98,000 annual users, $14.9m in visitor expenditure, and 105 FTE jobs.

Kāpiti Coast Trails Trust are continuing to develop plans for the trail working in partnership with mana whenua and other key stakeholders to secure approvals and prepare for construction.

Wairarapa Five Towns Trail Trust lead the Five Towns Trail initiative aiming to develop trail connections between Martinborough, Featherston, Greytown, Carterton, and Masterton with the goal being to eventually create a 200km connected trail network in Wairarapa.

The Five Towns Trail initiative has several workstreams with development happening across the five towns to connect existing trails including the Waiohine trail bridge project, covered by The Post in January: Waiohine Bridge: Key to Wairarapa's ambitious trail vision

Wairarapa Five Towns Trail Trust are working on an economic impact assessment to support discussions with key stakeholders.



Western Lake Road, Remutaka Cycle Trail
Photo credit: Caleb Smith Photography

SECTOR

Primary sector, food and fibre

GDP
$1,985m
2025: $1,993m

Employment
12,130
2025: 12,296

Business units
3,447
2024: 3,510

90% of food and fibre production in the region comes from Kāpiti Coast, Horowhenua and Wairarapa.

Highlights from REDP Primary, food and fibre initiatives this year include:

Kāpiti-Horowhenua Kai Connect

Kāpiti Coast Economic Development Kotahitanga Board

The Kāpiti food and beverage cluster is a critical part of this initiative - bringing together local food and beverage producers, strengthening outcomes through collective action and opportunity.

Kāpiti Artisan Pantry was launched at Coastlands mall in time for the Christmas retail period selling product from 17 cluster businesses. The pantry achieved $55,000 in sales, increased brand awareness for vendors, and was received extremely positively by both vendors and the public.

The Block Party was held in February 2026 in Kāpiti's Food and Beverage Cluster precinct. The event hosted 2,500 attendees and 2 precinct businesses reported trading increases of over $20,000 as a direct result of the event.

A Cluster Leadership Committee has been established to formalise the industry-led cluster, comprising 12 members from across the sector.

Wairarapa Food and Fibre

Wairarapa Economic Development Strategy PMO

9 businesses representing 7200 ha participated in the Wairarapa Capability Boost pilot undertaking a detailed one-on-one assessment to identify what support will be most useful. The programme will provide targeted, in-depth and advanced capability support.

A funding application for $3.8m the Lower North Island Arable Processing and Storage Facility was submitted to Kānoa - MBIE Regional ED & Investment Unit. The funding application strengthens the project's commercial foundations and investment case.

The facility would reduce the sector's reliance on out-of-region facilities and improve market access immediately, while increased revenue and job creation for the sector at large are expected medium to long-term benefits.

Wairarapa Harvest Hub Limited has been established as the commercial vehicle to drive the facility project forward and support conversations with private investors.

The Shared Narrative Project aims to develop Wairarapa's food and fibre provenance by creating a clear, authentic story of place and support investment attraction. An engagement programme that will capture the perspectives of industry and community in Wairarapa is being prepared.



Kāpiti Artisan Pantry Pop up in Coastlands Mall



Ata Rangi vineyard

ENABLER

Māori economic development

The Māori economy is fast-growing and outpacing forecasts - the national Māori economy asset base was forecast to reach $100b by 2030; it reached $126b in 2023*

Highlights from REDP Māori Economy initiatives this year include:

Greater Procurement Access
Te Matarau a Māui, WellingtonNZ

Takitini Procurement Pilot, developed and led by Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira, began in March. Takitini delivers on Streams 1-3 of the WellingtonNZ Project Uaki framework - Tender Readiness, Warrant of Readiness, and Inclusive Market Engagement.

Takitini Pilot supports Māori-led SMEs to develop their tender readiness and capability.

Following WellingtonNZ's initial investment, Te Puni Kōkiri have also confirmed they will invest in the programme. This will allow Takitini to scale and expand to include delivery support for SMEs in the programme.

Māori Business Needs Assessment
Te Matarau a Māui, WellingtonNZ

Te Kotahitanga survey tools were created and distributed to pakihi Māori by Te Matarau a Māui. Te Kotahitanga provides a database of needs and support requirements from businesses across the region to inform decisions.

Both initiative leads are supporting BizHub Porirua and regularly engaging directly with the 292 registered businesses in this space. This engagement has provided practical insights into real-time business needs, enabling the teams to provide tailored support.

Project Kaweake delivered a visual model that outlines pathways for SMEs looking to explore or strengthen exports. Kaweake clarifies the regional export ecosystem and improves connectivity between businesses and support organisations.

Celebrate Māori Business
Te Matarau a Māui

Tipu Pakihi 2025 brought together 85 attendees to honour rangatira and business leaders across the region. Tipu Pakihi advances the Māori economy through connection and celebration of Māori business while maintaining cultural integrity.

Te Matarau a Māui along with 4 Māori business networks across the region signed a partnership agreement, Mahitahi Whakaaetanga - committing to improve access to capital, capability-building programmes, and visibility for Māori enterprise across Te Ūpoko o Te Ika. Tipu Pakihi 2026 will be co-organised by the partners.

WellingtonNZ Māori Business Support team published WellingtonNZ's first bilingual business story featuring Māori-owned Huia Publishers.



Huia Publishers



WellingtonNZ Māori Business Support team



BizHub Porirua
Photo credit: BizHub

*Te Ōhanga Māori 2023 Report | MBIE



Photo credit: Te Matarau a Māui

New
REDP Initiative

9
participating pakihi

CASE STUDY

Te Aka Pakihi Tuakana-Teina support

Te Aka Pakihi + Te Aka AI pilot brought together 9 pakihi Māori (Māori businesses) and connected them with Māori mentors on a three-month tuakana-teina (mentor-mentee) programme.

Te Matarau a Māui set out to address a gap in business ownership and self-employment between Māori and the rest of the region's population - 10% of Māori in the region are self-employed compared to 17% of the rest of the region.

Nearly 60% of the region's Māori are under 30. This represents a significant pipeline of potential future business owners and an opportunity for growth in our region.

The pilot, led by Te Matarau a Māui, ran from April to June 2026, beginning with a kick-off event in April.

The programme comprised three key components to support the growth and development of participating pakihi:

The Tuakana - A high-trust, one-to-one advisory pairing. Each tuakana is an expert in their field; the tuakana brings experience, connections and challenges participant thinking.

Te Aka AI - An AI tool that houses the context of each pakihi including kaupapa, goals and key data. Te Aka AI bridged the gap between sessions, allowing pakihi to access tailored decision-making support.

The cohort - The peer network of pakihi in the programme is a key part of the value for participants. Cohorts are small, allowing pakihi to form meaningful relationships over the 3 months.

Through the pilot evaluation, participating pakihi have reported they have increased their number of employees, have improved processes to win back valuable time for their business and developed new plans to achieve their goals.

One business reported that coming into the programme they thought they would need to expand to a national model to achieve their output goals. However, with their tuakana, they formed a plan to achieve the same output locally, ensuring sustainable and robust growth.

In 2026, Pakihi Capability Support has been added to the REDP as an initiative following the success of the pilot. The initiative combines Te Aka Pakihi and Te Aka AI with He Kete Mātauranga, an online resource hub.

The second Te Aka Pakihi programme began mid-September 2026.

ENABLER

Skills, talent and education

Skills, Talent and Education play a critical role in the development of our economy.

Highlights from REDP Skills initiatives this year include:

GRADUATE | House of Science

House of Science provides schools with scalable, bilingual and reusable science kits to increase participation, interest and understanding of science among our tamariki.

House of Science exemplifies that effective economic development requires early investment into our future workforce. Early investment underpins how our economy will grow for generations to come.

In 2022, House of Science was added to the REDP as an initiative at a time when the Wellington region was one of the lowest-performing branches.

After 4 years, House of Science now provides kits to 185 (78%) of our region's schools with 38,000 students accessing their kits.

In 2025, House of Science's national social value reached $54m and achieved a social return of $21.90 for every $1 invested.

House of Science secured a $40m contract with the Ministry of Education earlier this year to deliver kits to every state and state-integrated schools and kura across the country.

This incredible achievement showcases that increasing participation in STEM learning, and strengthening pathways into science and technology careers, is not only a regional priority but a national one as well.

We are proud to say House of Science has outgrown the REDP and is graduating from the plan in 2026.

If you are keen to support, House of Science are seeking sponsors for additional kits and delivery vehicles. Please reach out to Sandra.Kirikiri@houseofscience.nz

Tūhura Tech
Tūhura Tech

Tūhura Tech won the Hutt City Supreme Award at the 2025 Wellington Airport Regional Community Awards.

As part of the opening of Te Matapihi ki te Ao Nui (Wellington Central Library), Tūhura Tech ran sessions for the public on game development, 3D printing and NAO robots.

Tūhura Tech has empowered rangatahi through free technology education and access across Wellington, Porirua and Hutt Valley.

Tūhura Tech have had to cease operations this year due to a reduction in funding sources. We acknowledge and thank Tūhura Tech for their dedication and passion over the years.

Pasifika Business Enablement
WellingtonNZ

The Pasifika Student Networking Series aims to inspire Pasifika students by connecting them with Pasifika business and industry leaders in a speaker series held at Massey and Victoria Universities. Events this year included:
- VUW: Tech, Design, Gaming and Business
- VUW: Media, Biotechnology and Business
- Massey: Film, Creative Arts and Gaming

Boost Your Business, delivered by Wellington Pasifika Business Network, continues to support Pasifika business growth. 2 series were run in Hutt City this past year, consisting of 8 workshops with 20-25 attendees per session.

In 2026, this initiative will be replaced by Pasifika Student Networking Series and Boost Your Business as 2 distinct initiatives.



Chris Duggan, Founder of House of Science, and the Wellington volunteer team
Photo credit: House of Science



196
enrolled students since 2023

103
participating students in 2026

CASE STUDY

Full-STEAMM programme

196 Wellington students have been supported to prepare for their futures through a specialised extracurricular programme, Full-STEAMM, which supports young women and gender-diverse students to develop critical skills aligned with STEAMM careers.

The Full-STEAMM programme takes a holistic approach to student development, building students' 'Personal STEAMM' (Skills, Talent, Experience, Attitude, Mindset and Motivation) to help them realise their potential in 'Career STEAMM' (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics and Manufacturing).

Full-STEAMM launched in 2023 and now partners with three Wellington schools - Wellington East Girls' College, Wellington High School, and St Mary's College.

In 2026, 103 students are participating in Full-STEAMM's weekly workshops, regular speaker sessions with STEM industry experts, and workplace and university visits.

This year, over 70 Full-STEAMM students attended Shadowtech day at Westpac to learn more about a career in tech, and also participated in 'The Colours of Wellington in my eye' exhibition with Wellington artist Brendan Grant, hosted at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University. Students created and showcased their own artwork alongside Brendan's at the event and Brendan shared insights on self-belief and creative confidence. The artworks were displayed for an audience that included students and their whānau, key programme supporters and local councillors.

Full-STEAMM is led and delivered by Wellington's E2E Centre. After a successful year enrolling new Year 9 students, the programme is working toward its aim to enrol 100 students a year and support 500 students in total by 2029.

By supporting students to build strong foundations for careers in STEAMM industries, Full-STEAMM contributes to the long-term pipeline of talent in the region.

"Full-STEAMM helped me believe I can aim higher - now I actually see myself in a STEAMM career" - Student participant

"The programme bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-world opportunities. Our students are inspired and more engaged in science and math" - School Head of Science/Maths

Water accessibility and security
Resilient infrastructure

For our communities and businesses to thrive, reliable infrastructure and water supply are critical foundations.

Wairarapa water resilience is a key focus for the REDP and this year we will continue to advocate for it as a regional priority while Wairarapa navigates a period of change with the establishment of Waitī Water.

Highlights from REDP Water and Infrastructure initiatives this year include:

Wairarapa Water Resilience Implementation
Wairarapa Water Resilience Strategy Governance Group (disestablished 2026)

The Waingawa Process Water Plant formally opened this year, demonstrating the region's commitment to supporting industrial growth and water security.

The plant provides non-potable water to industrial areas in Waingawa for businesses to use for activities that don't require drinking water, such as washing machinery and manufacturing processes. The plant manages water usage, enabling businesses to access a water supply for industrial use while conserving potable water.

Read more from Carterton District Council here: Waingawa Process Water Plant

WEDS PMO supported CDC to complete a water demand assessment for the Carterton Water Storage project. CDC has purchased land in Waingawa which is earmarked to become a water storage facility.

The proposed reservoir will initially store 500,000–1,000,000 m³ of water and could be expanded in future stages.

The reservoir has the potential to support water-intensive industries, enable higher-value agricultural production, and improve the region's resilience to drought and climate variability.

Over the 2025/26 summer, the Summer Series was delivered. This engagement initiative aims to build awareness of the region's water story, and connect communities and industry with current and planned projects.

The series brought together 110+ farmers, industry and government representatives

Industrial Land Requirements
Industrial Land Steering Group

The Industrial Land Steering Group was established last year to deepen collaboration across councils and enable regional alignment to identify industrial land opportunities.

The group's work aims to provide opportunities for industrial businesses to expand beyond their existing facilities while remaining in the region, helping to retain economic activity and jobs across Greater Wellington.



Tararua Ranges from Wairarapa
Photo credit: Jet Productions



Photo credit: Greater Wellington Regional Council



$1.5b
potential economic activity

3,800
potential new jobs

CASE STUDY

A Case for Action - Wairarapa Water Resilience

A Case for Action identifies the potential $1.5b in economic activity and 3,800 additional jobs that could be unlocked by 2050 through improved water resilience in Wairarapa.

A Case for Action was developed on behalf of the Wairarapa Water Resilience Governance Group, providing a shared evidence base to inform regional decision making, strengthen advocacy efforts and support future infrastructure investment.

Infrastructure solutions require long-term investment. A Case for Action helps position Wairarapa to advocate for investment in water resilience backed by evidence rather than aspiration.

By establishing water resilience as both an environmental and economic priority, the report supports the growth and sustainability of water-dependent industries in Wairarapa and communities across the region.

Water resilience in Wairarapa is one of the most significant long-term challenges our region faces, while A Case for Action highlights why investing in strengthening water resilience is also one of our most significant economic opportunities.

The Wairarapa Economic Development Strategy (WEDS) team works closely with industry, governance and communities in Wairarapa. WEDS funded the development of A Case for Action, taking an economic approach to this issue and drawing on decades of research, planning and stakeholder engagement.

The report compares two scenarios for the Wairarapa: a water-constrained future and a water-resilient future. The water-constrained scenario is based on little intervention occurring, while the water-resilient scenario assumes investment has been made in water supply infrastructure. The water-resilient scenario identifies $1.5b of economic activity and 3,800 jobs that could be created by 2050.

Read the full report here: A Case for Action

> **"Security of supply to protect our economy and jobs are significant considerations that we can no longer ignore"** - Mike Butterick, Wairarapa MP on the findings of A Case for Action

REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

This regional snapshot is provided as an overview of our regional performance since the REDP was launched in August 2022.

A key measure of regional performance is how satisfied residents feel with their overall quality of life.

In 2026, 77% of people living in the Wellington Region* reported being satisfied, down 1% from 2024 but still slightly above the national average of 76%.

Across all participating territorial authorities (TAs), declining financial wellbeing continues to be the main driver of reduced quality of life. Respondents who reported improved quality of life most often linked this to better health and wellbeing.

Financial pressures remain a significant issue for the region. Only 39% of residents said their income was enough to meet their everyday needs in 2026, reflecting ongoing cost-of-living challenges.

At a national level, an average of 35% of residents said their income was enough to meet everyday needs. Wellington City averaged 43% which was significantly higher than the rest of the participating Territorial Authorities.

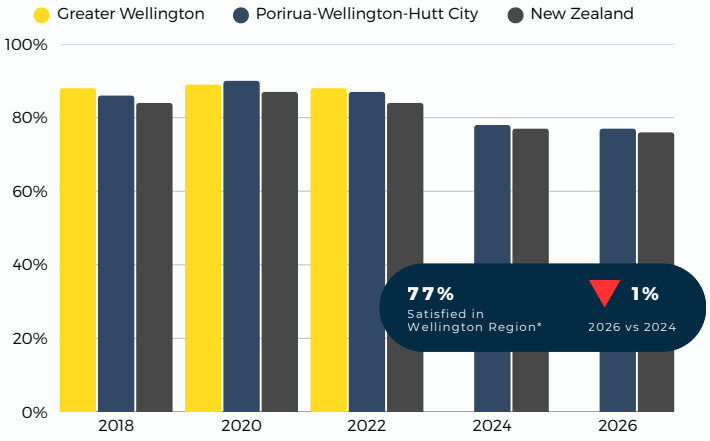
Housing affordability, measured as the ratio of average house values to average household incomes, shows the Wairarapa-Wellington-Horowhenua region was more affordable than the national average, with a ratio of 4.6 regionally against 5.9 nationally in March 2026.

Housing affordability ratios have continued to decrease (become more affordable) from the 2022 peak of 7.2.

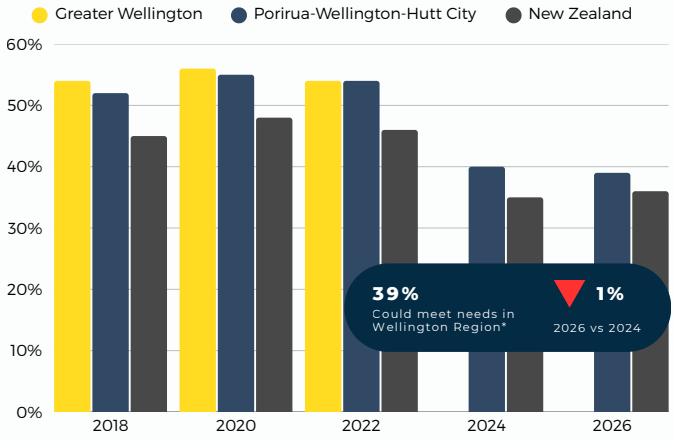
At 4.6 in 2026, the ratio was at its lowest since 2016.

*Note: Greater Wellington did not participate in the 2026 Quality of Life survey. Data is drawn from Porirua, Wellington City, and Hutt City and used as a proxy for the wider region. Averages have been backdated to support comparison.

Overall Satisfaction with Quality of Life
Greater Wellington Region - excludes Horowhenua



Ability of Income to Meet Everyday Needs
Greater Wellington Region - excludes Horowhenua



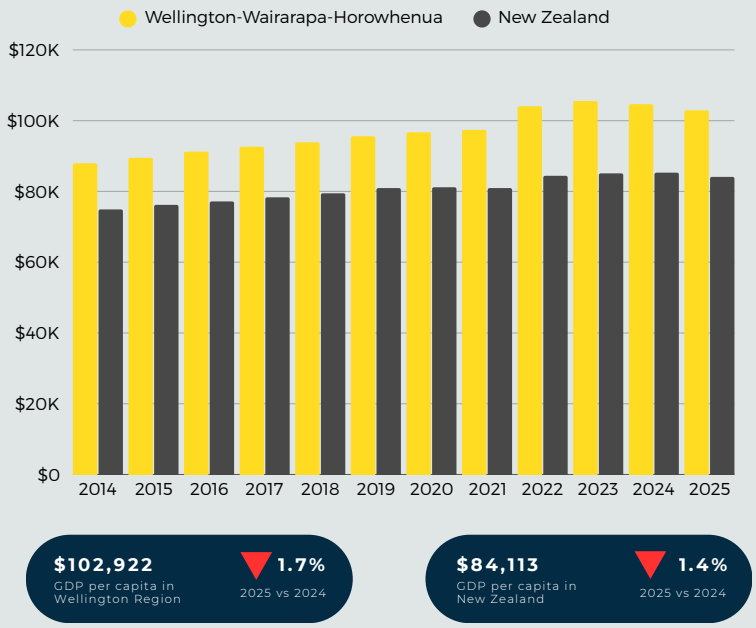
Overall satisfaction with quality of life, Ability of income to meet everyday needs | Nielsen's Quality of Life Survey | Point in time of survey data - sampled Mar-May 2026
Pre 2024 reference to 'Greater Wellington Regional Council' area excludes Horowhenua
2024-2026 results are determined based on an average of participating TAs - Porirua, Wellington and Hutt City.
Housing affordability | Infometrics | March 2026 year

GDP PER CAPITA

The region continues to see large disparities in GDP per capita with Wellington City ($176,711) the highest nationally of all Territorial Authorities by a margin of over $80,000, and Horowhenua ($37,279) the lowest nationally.

As a whole, the Wairarapa-Wellington-Horowhenua region maintained a competitive edge nationally with the highest regional GDP per capita.

GDP per capita is reported annually. This is due to national population estimates being released annually in June and regional GDP figures being released annually in March.

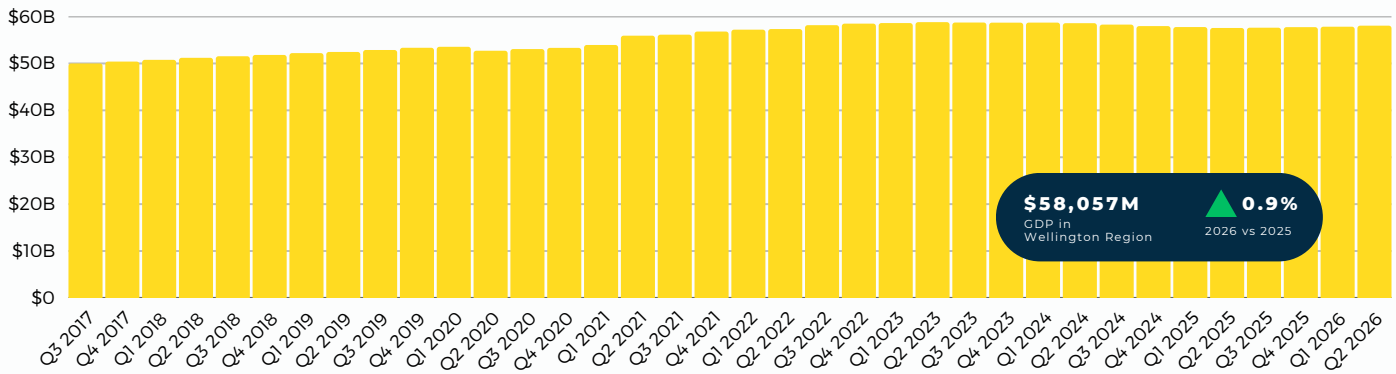


GDP

GDP in the Wairarapa–Wellington–Horowhenua region was provisionally measured at $58.06 billion in June 2026, up 0.9% from June 2025. This was below national GDP growth of 1.7% over the same period.

Nationally, despite some anticipated growth in the short-term and strong primary sector activity being a key driver, continued global uncertainty is likely to affect economic recovery across the country in 2026.

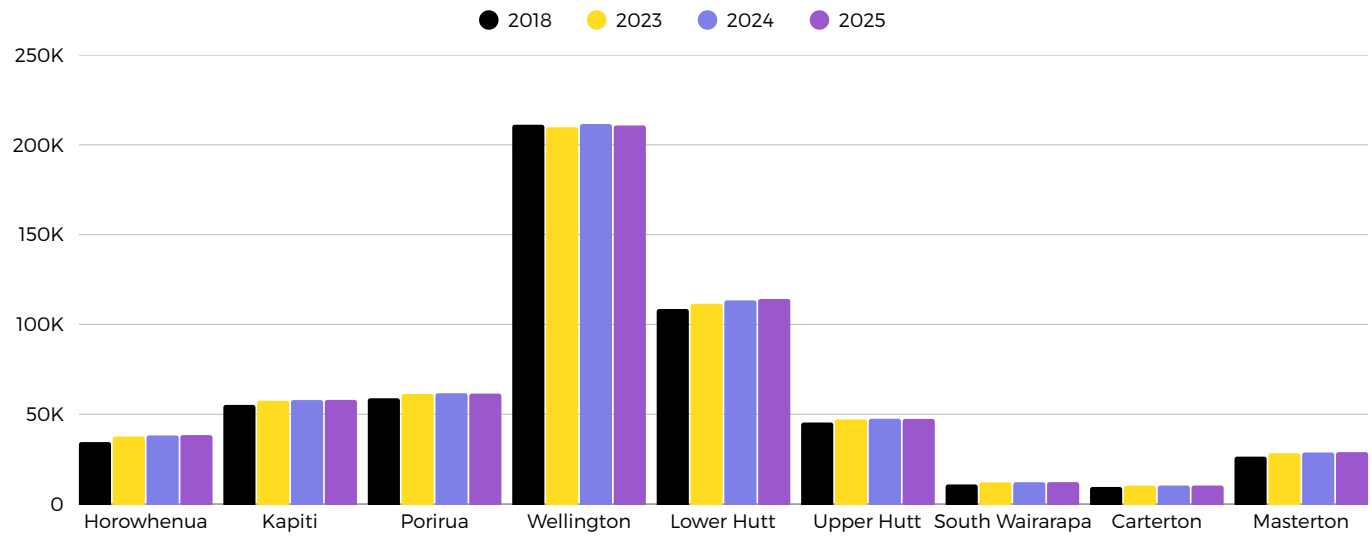
*Note: GDP figures are provisional from Q3 2025 onwards and may be revised.



GDP per capita | Infometrics | Annual - March 2025 | Wairarapa-Wellington-Horowhenua
GDP | Infometrics | Quarterly through to Q2 2026 | Wairarapa-Wellington-Horowhenua

WELLINGTON REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN
TERRITORIAL AUTHORITY LEVEL

TOTAL POPULATION



SOURCES OF GROWTH (Year to June 2025)

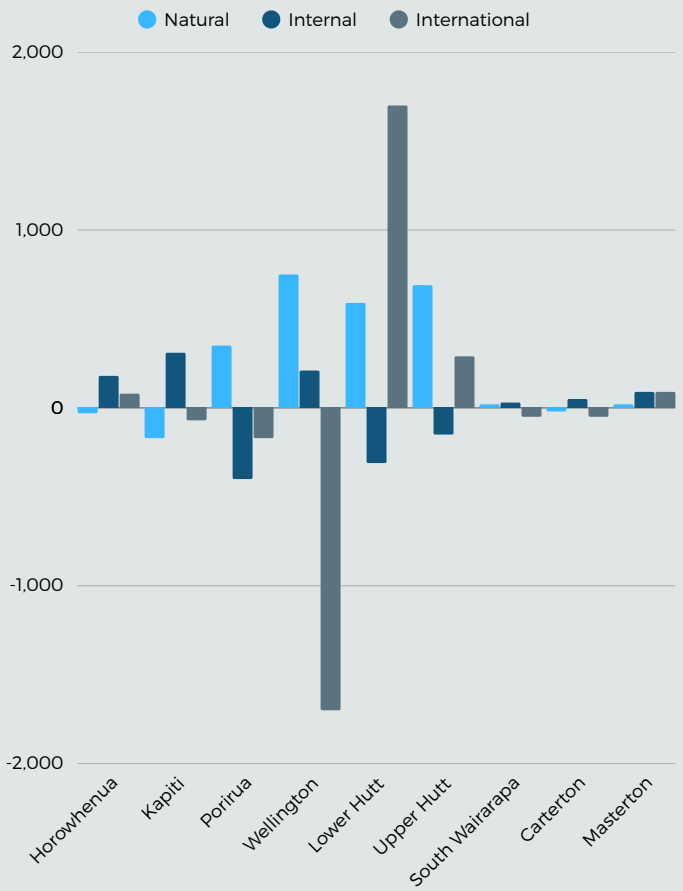
Changes in an area's population are influenced by two main factors: natural increase (births minus deaths) and net migration (arrivals minus departures).

A strong regional economy with good job opportunities helps retain existing residents and attract newcomers from other parts of the country and overseas.

On balance, Wairarapa–Wellington–Horowhenua population achieved 0.0% growth in the year to June 2025. The population decreases of Wellington City, Porirua, and Upper Hutt were offset by increases in Lower Hutt, Kāpiti Coast, Horowhenua, Masterton, and South Wairarapa.

As the largest population base in the region, Wellington City accounts for 36% of the region's population and experienced -0.4% growth, which is largely attributed to net international migration.

At the same time, Lower Hutt's largest source of population growth was net international migration.



Population growth | Infometrics | June 2025 | Based on Stats NZ's Estimated Resident Population for Wairarapa-Wellington-Horowhenua
Source of growth - Population | Infometrics | June 2025

EMPLOYMENT SNAPSHOT

TOTAL EMPLOYMENT

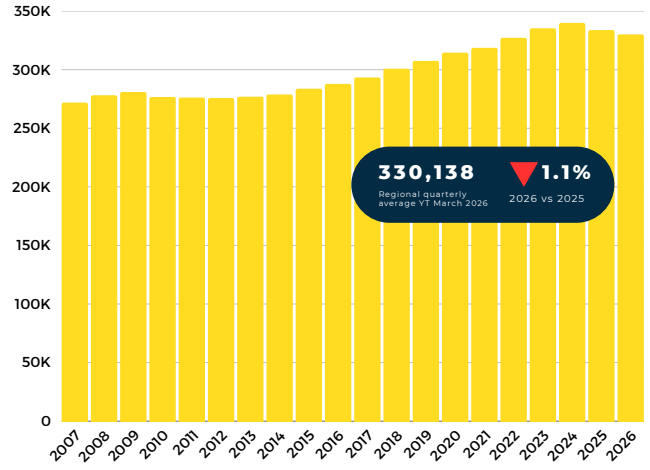
Employment in the Wairarapa–Wellington–Horowhenua region was measured at 330,138 in the year to March 2026, down 1.1% from a year earlier.

Employment growth in the region averaged 1.4% a year over the 10 years to 2026 compared with average employment growth of 1.5% a year nationally.

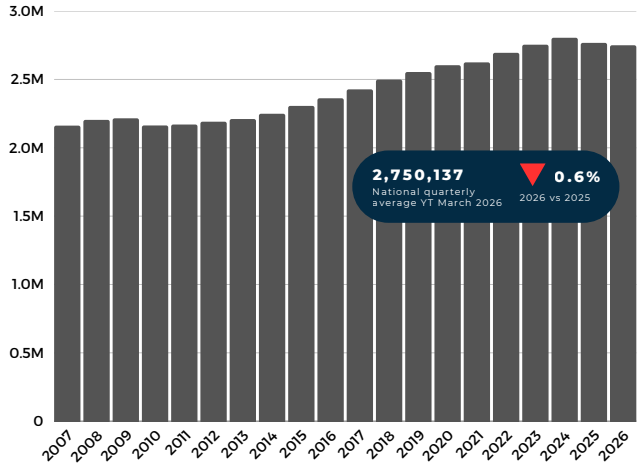
Employment growth in the region reached a low of -1.8% in 2025.

Wairarapa–Wellington–Horowhenua accounted for 12.0% of national employment in 2026.

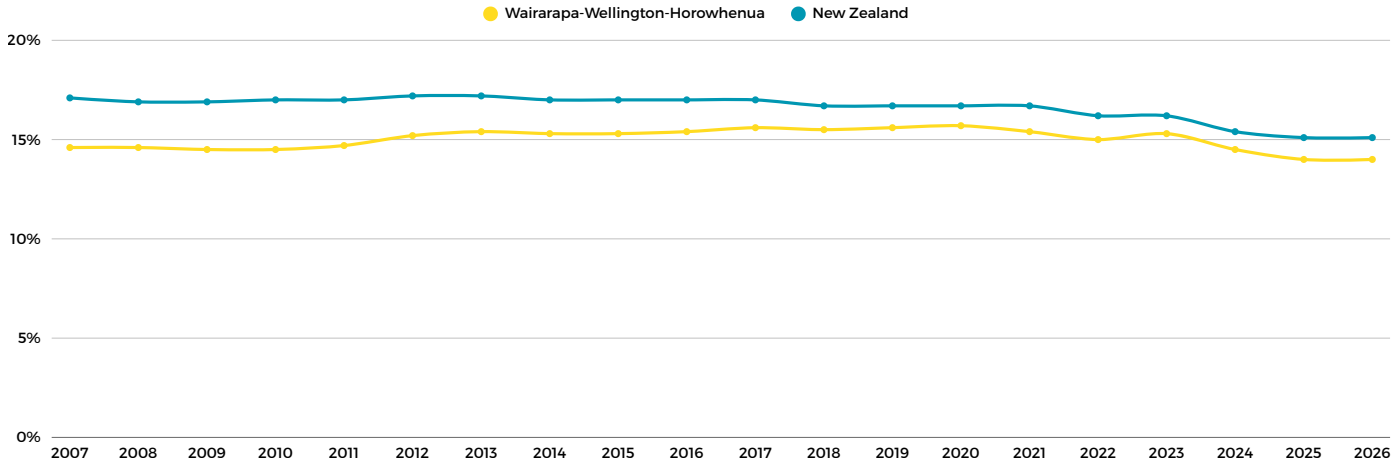
Regional Employment



National Employment



SELF-EMPLOYMENT RATE



Total Employment | Infometrics | Wairarapa-Wellington-Horowhenua | March Year 2026
Self-employment Rate (Percentage of employed persons who are self-employed) | Infometrics | Wairarapa-Wellington-Horowhenua | March Year 2026

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

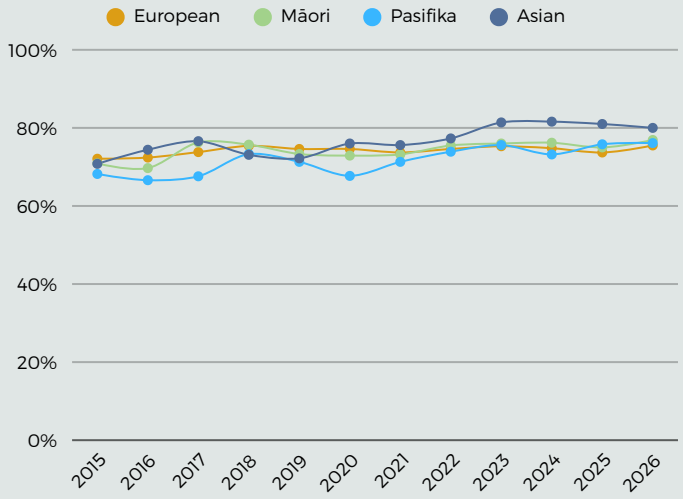
The labour force participation rate is determined by dividing the total number of individuals who are employed or seeking employment by the entire working-age population. The REDP breaks this down further by ethnic groupings to understand what levels of representation each group has in labour force participation.

Māori recorded the highest increase in participation rate between 2025 and 2026 (1.9 percentage point increase) and the second highest rate overall.

Asian populations make up the second largest workforce in the region. Despite a decline in labour force participation in 2026 (-1.0 pp) they continue to have the highest labour force participation rate in the Wellington Region.

Pasifika labour force participation has increased more than that of other groups since 2020.

Nationally, participation continued to decline in the second half of last year - September 2025 rate was 70.3%, the lowest level since December 2020. As of June 2026, the national participation rate has risen slightly to 70.7%.



UNEMPLOYMENT

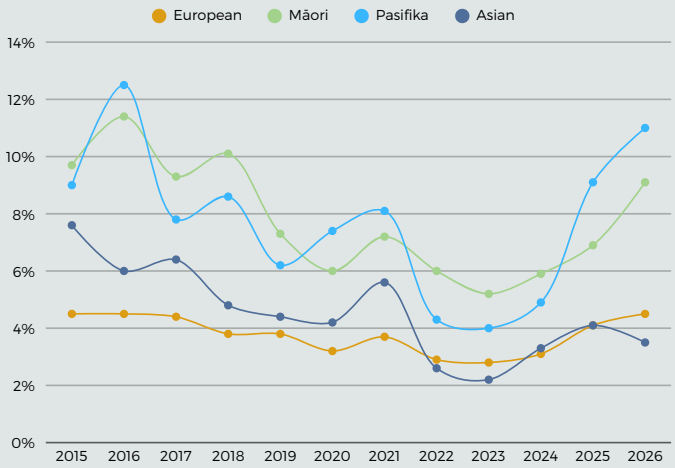
Unemployment rates in the region in 2026 highlight significant disparities between ethnic groups.

Māori and Pasifika unemployment rates have increased significantly since 2025, compared with those of Asian and European populations.

The gap between ethnic groups, which narrowed between 2022 and 2024, is now widening again, with Māori and Pasifika experiencing disproportionately large increases in unemployment to 9.1% and 11% respectively in 2026. By comparison, Asian and European populations recorded unemployment rates of 3.5% and 4.5% the same year.

Compared to New Zealand averages, Māori, Pasifika and Asian unemployment rates in the region remain below their respective national rates in 2026.

The region's European unemployment rate of 4.5%, however, is slightly above the national rate of 4.1%.

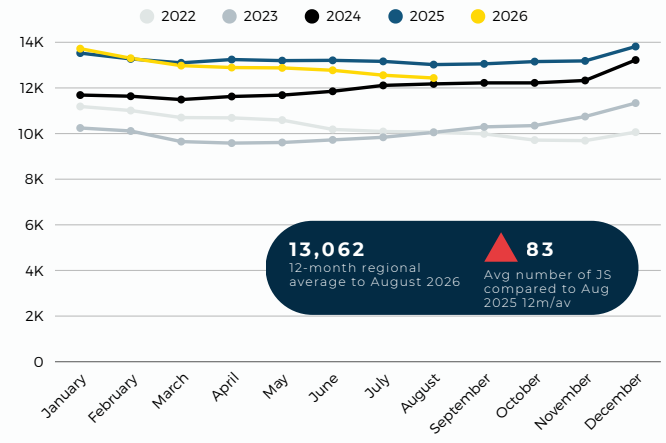


Labour Participation | Stats NZ Household Labour Force Survey | Q2 2026 | Greater Wellington Regional Council (excludes Horowhenua)
Unemployment | StatsNZ Household Labourforce Survey | Q2 2026 | Greater Wellington Regional Council (excludes Horowhenua)

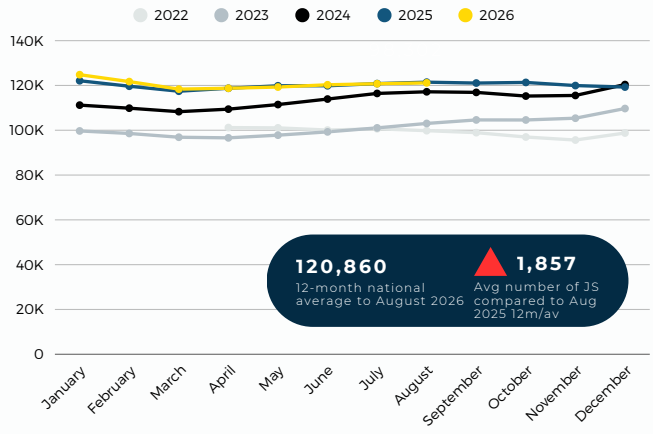
WELLINGTON REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN
TERRITORIAL AUTHORITY LEVEL

WORK-READY JOBSEEKERS - NATIONAL COMPARISON

Work-Ready Jobseekers
Wellington Region



Work-Ready Jobseekers
National

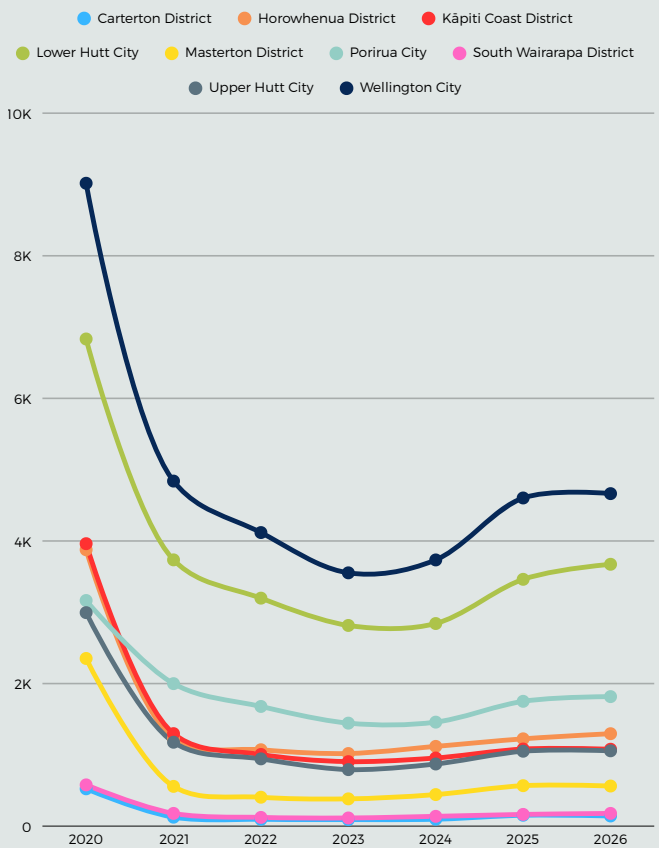


JOBSEEKER SUPPORT - TERRITORIAL AUTHORITY

Jobseeker Support provides financial assistance to people actively looking for work or preparing to enter the job market, including those limited to part-time work or facing temporary health-related barriers.

The trend generally follows unemployment: as unemployment rises, more people can be expected to access Jobseeker Support.

The number of Jobseeker Support recipients across most of the region has increased. However, growth from 2025 to 2026 was generally slower than the sharp increases recorded between 2024 to 2025 for most TAs, with Masterton, Carterton, and Kāpiti Coast even recording small decreases.



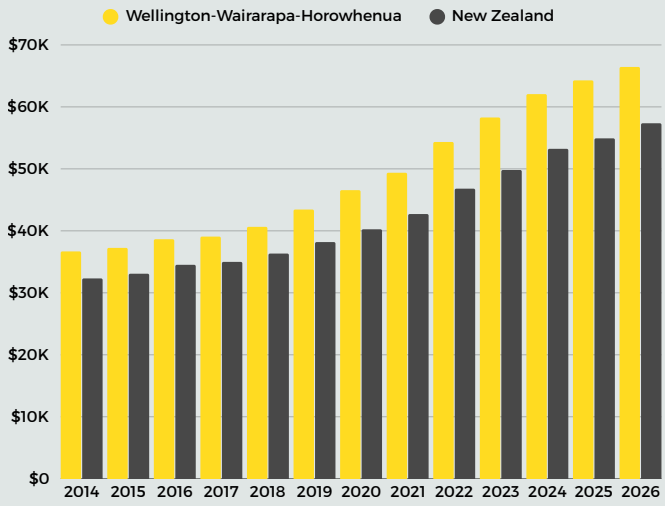
PER CAPITA INCOME - NATIONAL COMPARISON

Per capita income is a useful indicator of the economic resources available to households.

In the Wellington-Wairarapa-Horowhenua region, per capita income reached $66,445 in 2026, up 3.4% from 2025. This remained well above the national average of $57,358, as well as Auckland ($60,566) and Christchurch City ($54,899).

Income increased across every territorial authority in the region in 2026, but growth was uneven. South Wairarapa recorded the strongest increase, rising 5.7% to $65,208, followed by Horowhenua (5.5%) and Carterton (5.3%).

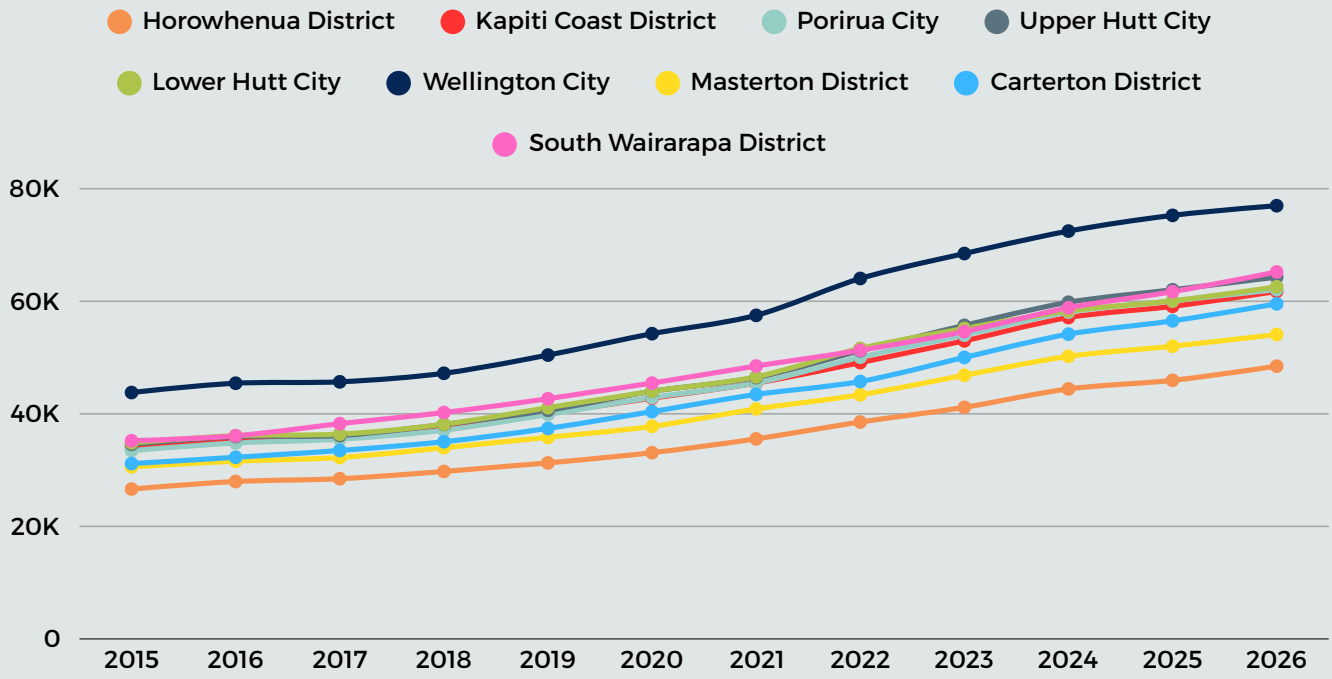
Wellington City remained the highest-income territorial authority at $76,980, but recorded the slowest annual growth at 2.3%. As a result, several lower-income parts of the region grew faster than Wellington City over the year, although substantial differences in per capita income remain across the region.



$66,445 3.4%
Income per capita in Wellington Region
2026 vs 2025

$57,358 4.4%
Income per capita in New Zealand
2026 vs 2025

PER CAPITA INCOME - TERRITORIAL AUTHORITY LEVEL



Per capita income | Infometrics | Annual - March 2026 | Current prices | Wairarapa-Wellington-Horowhenua

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