# New Zealand facts sheet (2018)

**Capital:** Wellington

**Population:** 4,327,944

**Brief History of New Zealand:**

The first inhabitants arrived in the year 1000 AD. They were the Moa hunters and were people of Polynesian ancestry.

The first European to discover New Zealand was Dutch navigator Abel Tasman. British explorer James Cook began to explore the coastline in 1769. New Zealand became a British colony in 1840. The first settlers warred with the Maori tribe's people, but today the ancestors of the Maori and the people of European ancestry all live together as New Zealanders.

**The Geography of New Zealand**

**Total Size:** 268,680 square km     **Continent:** Oceania

The country is made up of two mountainous main islands 1,600 km southeast of Australia.

**Highest Point:** Aoraki-Mount Cook 3,754 m

**Climate:** temperate with sharp regional contrasts

**Major cities:** Auckland 1.36 million; WELLINGTON (capital) 391,000 (2009)

**The People of New Zealand**

Type of Government: parliamentary democracy

Languages Spoken: English (official), Maori (official)

Independence: 26 September 1907 (from UK)

**Religion:** Christian: 53%

There is a rapid falling away from the Christian Faith. Rather than turning to other religions, many New Zealanders are choosing to be "non-religious". The last 20 years have seen significant decline in church attendance. Those claiming to be non-religious increased from 1.1% in 1951 to 40.9% in 2010; at current rates of change, Christianity will cease to be the majority religion before 2020.

**Economy of New Zealand**

Major Industries: food processing, wood and paper products, textiles, machinery, transportation equipment, banking and insurance, tourism, mining

Agricultural Products: wheat, barley, potatoes, pulses, fruits, vegetables; wool, beef, lamb and mutton, dairy products; fish

Natural Resources: natural gas, iron ore, sand, coal, timber, hydropower, gold, limestone

Major Exports: dairy products, meat, wood and wood products, fish, machinery

**Currency:** New Zealand dollar (NZD)