

Māori Australians

- Māori began travelling to Australia to trade, acquire skills and learn new ideas soon after British settlement in the late 18th century^{3,ii}. Māori were exempt from the *White Australia Policy*ⁱⁱⁱ. Significant migration began in the 1960s with increased numbers of Māori looking for employment opportunities in Australia^{2,3}.
- The Māori population is now the largest Pacific Islander population in Queensland. The population grew by 44 per cent in the five years between the 2001 and 2006 Censuses².
- Māori migration to Australia has followed the pattern of overall migration from New Zealand with Māori drawn to Australia by economic opportunities, lifestyle, and to join family and community already settled in Australia³.
- Māori comprise 14 per cent of the total population of New Zealand⁵.
- **Language:** Māori or *te reo Māori* is commonly known as *te reo* and is the native language of Māori and an official language of New Zealand⁶. The *White Assimilation Policy* of New Zealand affected up to three generations of Māori with many not being able to speak or understand *te reo*⁷. According to the 2006 New Zealand Census, 23.7 per cent of the New Zealand Māori population spoke *te reo*⁸.
- **Religion:**
 - In the early 19th Century many Māori embraced Christianity. The concepts of Christianity were combined with traditional Māori religion⁹.
 - There are now several Māori religions that combine aspects of Christianity with traditional and non-traditional Māori philosophies⁹. These include: Ratana, Ringatū, Pia

Population of people with Māori ancestryⁱ in Australia (2006 Census): 92,912^{1,2}

Total number estimated at between 115,000 and 125,000³.

Population of people with Māori ancestry in Queensland: 31,076 Queenslanders^{1,2}

Population of people with Māori ancestry in Brisbane: 7096⁴

Population of people with Māori ancestry in Gold Coast: 6891⁴

Population of people with Māori ancestry in Logan: 4105⁴

Gender ratio: 99.6 males per 100 females (2006 Census cited in ²)

Age distribution Māori in Queensland (2006 Census)¹:

Age	Per cent
0-19	35%
20-39	36%
40-59	24%
60+	5%

Marire, Hauhau and the church of the Seven Rules of Jehovah. Of these, Ratana is the most practiced with 50,565 people stating this as their religion in the 2006 New Zealand Census⁹.

- Large numbers of Māori joined the Church of England and the Catholic Church and both religions are highly influential in Māori society⁹.
- Today, many Māori public gatherings begin and end with Christian prayer⁹. Many Māori bless their *kai* (food) before eating and pray at the beginning and end of the day⁷.

Language and religion in Australia (2006 Census for Māori ancestry)

- About 6.1 per cent of Māori living in Queensland speak *te reo* at home (2006 Census cited in ²).
- About three per cent of Māori living in Queensland are affiliated with the Ratana (Māori) religion (2006 Census cited in ²).

Communication

- A traditional Māori form of greeting is the *hongi*. The *hongi* involves touching the forehead and nose to another person's forehead and nose long enough so that the breath is shared. It is symbolic of sharing everything with one another and showing respect.
- When meeting and when leaving, a firm handshake with good eye contact is suggested. Men generally wait for a woman to be the first to extend their hand. Women do shake hands with other women.
- It is appropriate to address a person using their title (Mr, Mrs, Miss), followed by their full name.

Health in Australia

- There is little data available on the health of the Māori population in Australia².
- From 2005 to 2007 in New Zealand, life expectancy at birth was 79 years for non-Māori males and 70.4 years for Māori males. Life expectancy at birth was 83 years for non-Māori females and 75.1 years for Māori females.
- In New Zealand, Māori have slightly higher rates of cancer than non-Māori people, but their all-cancer mortality rates are twice as high¹⁰. The leading causes of cancer death in women are lung, breast, colorectal, stomach and cervical¹⁰. The leading causes of cancer death in men are lung, prostate, colorectal, stomach and liver¹⁰.
- Māori have higher rates of heart attack, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease than the total New Zealand population¹¹.

- The prevalence of smoking in Māori in New Zealand is about 50 per cent, which is double that of non-Māori population¹².
- Māori are 50 per cent more likely to be obese and almost three times as likely to be obese smokers compared to the non-Māori population in New Zealand¹³.
- The Māori population of New Zealand have been shown to have a greater prevalence of mental health problems, suicide and attempted suicide compared to the non-Māori population^{14,15}.

Health beliefs and practices

- Good health is seen as a balance between mental (*hinengaro*), physical (*tinana*), family/social (*whānau*) and spiritual (*wairua*) dimensions¹⁶.
- Māori tend to see their health connected to the health of their family and larger social group. Doing *one's own thing* is seen as unhealthy. Wellbeing is seen to be a function of participating in the Māori world⁵.
- Extended family (*whānau*) involvement in the care of the ill is seen as crucial and visitors are actively encouraged to stay with a sick relative².
- Prayer is conducted openly and family are encouraged to be present for prayers with the ill².
- Nursing staff who have cared for a Māori person during a period of illness become kin by association¹⁷.
- Some Māori use traditional medicine (*rongoa*) and therapeutic massage (*mirimir*) to complement Australian medicine².

Social determinants of health

- The concept of family (or *whānau*) is central to Māori social structure. *Whānau* refers to family and extended family. The *whānau* is a member of a social group (*hapū*) which in turn is a member of the larger social group (*iwi*). About 20 per cent of Māori live in private dwellings with extended family and about half have three generations of family under one roof¹⁸.

- Māori are have a high degree of reliance on people from within the Māori community for support – the *whānau*, the *hapū* and the *iwi*².
- The use and knowledge of the *te reo* language has been shown to be steadily declining among Māori in Australia³.
- Like other indigenous peoples, Māori have been impacted by a history of colonisation resulting in a loss of culture, land, voice, population, dignity, and health and wellbeing⁵.
- Some Māori leave New Zealand because of negative experiences with gangs, drugs and crime, domestic violence and abuse, negative stereotyping and media coverage of Māori, and negative attitudes towards success within their own families³.
- **Education:** Based on the 2006 Census, the Queensland Māori population had a lower level of higher non-school qualification than the total Queensland population – only three per cent of the Māori population had a bachelor or post-graduate level qualification compared to 18 per cent of the total Queensland population².
- **Employment:** In a study on Māori living in Australia, the majority of respondents indicated that they moved to Australia seeking better employment opportunities and higher income. Of

those who answered the question, 74 per cent said that they had *much better* employment since migration and 13 per cent said it was *a bit better*³.

- Based on country of birth, there is evidence that Māori may be over-represented in Australian prisons^{3,19}.
- In Queensland, relatively high numbers of Māori live in lower socio-economic suburbs³.

Utilisation of health services in Australia

- Collectivist cultures such as Māori have a high reliance on their own social group for care and support and this may delay their use of health services. Minor health issues are often expected to be cared for within the family or social unit and health services used only if emergency care is required²⁰.
- Barriers to health (including mental health) service access and utilisation include language, cultural differences, lack of appropriate information, communication and stigma²¹.



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It should be noted that there is great diversity within communities and people do not fit into a pre-determined cultural box or stereotype. The information presented here will not apply to all Māori Australians and this profile should be considered in the context of the acculturation process.

ⁱ This may be an underestimation of the population with Māori ancestry as one study found that more than 14 per cent said that they would not indicate they had Māori ancestry in the Australian Census

ⁱⁱ Some Māori believe that their ancestors had contact with Aborigines prior to British settlement.

ⁱⁱⁱ A phrase used to describe the restrictive immigration policies of the colonial and Australian Governments from the 1850s until the 1970s that aimed to maintain a predominantly white population in Australia.