

2025

Road Transport Workforce REPORT

Analysing demographic
trends in New Zealand's
truck driver workforce

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FOREWORD

Ia Ara Aotearoa Transporting New Zealand is proud to represent the 33,000-strong workforce that keeps our country moving. As the peak body for the nation's road freight sector, we are committed to advocating for the people who play the vital role of ensuring goods are delivered efficiently and reliably across Aotearoa.

Truck drivers make up 1.2% of New Zealand's total workforce, making it the 11th most common occupation in the country. With nearly 93% of New Zealand's total freight tonnage moved by road, the demand for road freight services will only increase as our population continues to grow. Ensuring that the sector is staffed with skilled, capable drivers is more important than ever.

In collaboration with Teletrac Navman, we are pleased to present the landmark Road Transport Workforce Report. This is an in-depth snapshot of New Zealand's trucking workforce produced as part of the Driving Change Diversity Programme. Drawing on data from three nationwide censuses, this report explores how the demographic makeup of the road freight industry has evolved over more than a decade.

Understanding who makes up the current workforce is critical to building a sustainable, resilient industry. The sector is facing several key challenges: a large portion of our experienced drivers are nearing retirement, and we are not seeing enough young people



entering the profession to replace them. Women also remain significantly under-represented in the industry.

But addressing these challenges isn't just about filling gaps in the workforce. We know that greater diversity in any workplace drives improved outcomes, boosting productivity, creativity, and problem-solving.

Welcoming people from a wide range of backgrounds into the road freight sector brings fresh ideas, perspectives, and energy. It's a win-win that we should all be actively working toward.

We hope this report provides valuable insights for Transporting New Zealand members, other industry stakeholders, policymakers, and the broader public as we collectively look to shape a more inclusive and future-ready transport sector.

Dom Kalasih

Chief Executive, Transporting New Zealand

Teletrac Navman is working alongside Transporting New Zealand to support an inclusive industry made up of all people from diverse communities. This report is just one part of the Te ara ki tua Road to Success Driving Change Diversity Programme, a ground-breaking initiative to celebrate and encourage transport industry diversity.

Supporting diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace is not just the right thing to do for your employees, it is also the smart thing to do. Research shows that a more diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace culture brings innovation, creativity, boosts morale and improves employee engagement. In turn, this helps to improve productivity, collaboration, decision making and problem solving.

If you're looking to build a more inclusive workplace culture, try these first steps:

- **Actively seek out unconscious biases**
- **Make a plan and measure your progress**
- **Learn about the activities and achievements of other organisations and consider what could work for yours.**

Teletrac Navman's goal is to empower the industries that transform and sustain our futures with simple and intelligent solutions that enhance the efficiency, safety, and sustainability of their operation. As a connected mobility platform for industries that manage vehicle and equipment assets, Teletrac Navman simplifies the complex so that its customers can transform the way they work through cloud-based solutions that leverage AI to unlock the power of operational insight.

Teletrac Navman manages more than 700,000 vehicles and assets around the world. The company operates globally, with offices worldwide and headquarters in Northbrook, Illinois.

For more information visit www.teletracnavman.co.nz. Teletrac Navman is a Vontier company.

ABOUT TELETRAC NAVMAN





A Heartfelt Thank You!


At Teletrac Navman, we recognise that the transportation industry is the backbone of New Zealand's commerce and daily life. Your dedication, resilience, and commitment to moving goods effectively keeps us connected with the world.


We are proud to support you with innovative transport solutions designed to enhance driver safety and improve fleet management across the industry. Your trust inspires us every day.

We recognise the complexities you face daily and it's your dedication that keeps the economy moving and communities connected. Together, we're building a smarter, safer, and more sustainable future for transportation.

With sincere appreciation,
Teletrac Navman



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KEY INSIGHTS



1 The truck driving workforce is rapidly aging

Drivers aged over 65 now make up **over 10 per cent of the workforce**. The national average age of 46.5 varies regionally, ranging from 44 in Auckland to over 51 in Northland. The sector is confronting a **workforce sustainability crisis** sooner than the broader New Zealand labour market (national average age of 46.5 for truck drivers vs 41.8 for other occupations).

2 Migrant drivers are becoming increasingly important

New Zealand-born drivers still make up the majority of the workforce, but their share has declined from 89 per cent in 2013 to 75 per cent in 2023. Drivers born in Asia have seen the most significant increase, now comprising over 10 per cent of the workforce.

3 The workforce is becoming more ethnically diverse

Despite this increase in ethnic diversity, the sector is still heavily of European ethnicity, followed by Māori. Both groups are over-represented compared to the national workforce.

4 There is a low, but increasing, number of female truck drivers

The truck driving workforce is **94 per cent male**. The number of female truck drivers grew 30 per cent from 2018 to 2023, while the number of male drivers decreased over the same period. On average, female truck drivers work six fewer hours per week than their male counterparts - the same gap as between female and male workers of other occupations.

5 Change is needed to support workforce development

Action is required from both industry and government to recruit and retain new drivers and address long-term skill shortage. This includes driver licensing support in schools, reform of the heavy vehicle graduated license system, and increased industry commitment to inclusive hiring and training.

TRANSPORTING NEW ZEALAND'S RESPONSE

- Road freight companies need to consider new ways of attracting people into truck driving, including casting a wider net during recruitment, ensuring women and people of different ethnicities and nationalities feel supported in their workplaces, and supporting retention through professional development and training opportunities.
- Young people need more support from Government to get their license and progress through the graduated heavy vehicle licensing system. This includes reviewing driver licensing rules, supporting driving training in schools, and increasing test capacity.
- While government and industry work to improve the driver development pipeline, migration settings should ensure New Zealand businesses can attract qualified, experienced drivers to act as an important supplement to the local workforce.
- The road freight industry must do more to promote truck driving as a rewarding career path, including supporting scholarships, driver training opportunities, and telling positive stories about the people who love working in the industry.
- Our *Te ara ki tua Road to success* pathway enables trainee drivers to be matched with host companies to enter the industry by gaining practical experience and qualifications. MITO also offers a free commercial road transport micro-credential.



AGE

The road freight sector faces a looming workforce sustainability issue – an ageing driver base. While the average age of a New Zealand worker is 41.8, for truck drivers it's 46.5.

While there is a sustained presence of drivers aged 55 and older, the numbers of younger entrants to the industry have stagnated. According to the latest 2023 data, 35 per cent of the trucking workforce are 55 and over, while just 24 per cent of non-truck drivers belong to this age group.

Drivers who are over the retirement age of 65 now make up over 10 per cent of the trucking workforce.

Additionally, while 15-39 year olds represent 46 per cent of New Zealand's overall workforce, only 34 per cent of truck drivers belong in the same age range.

Age of New Zealand's truck drivers (2023)

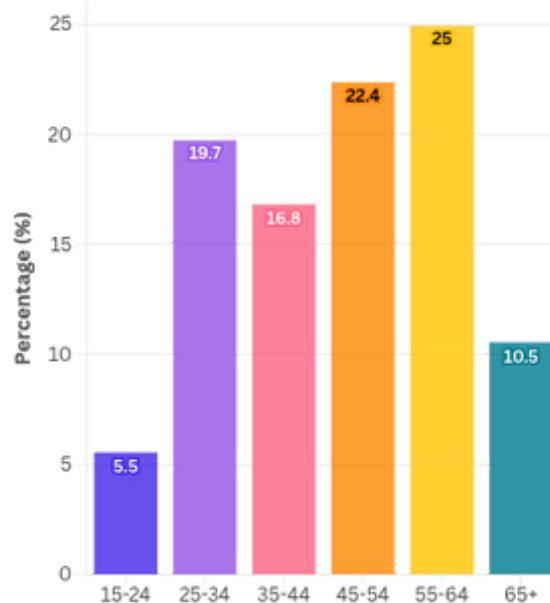
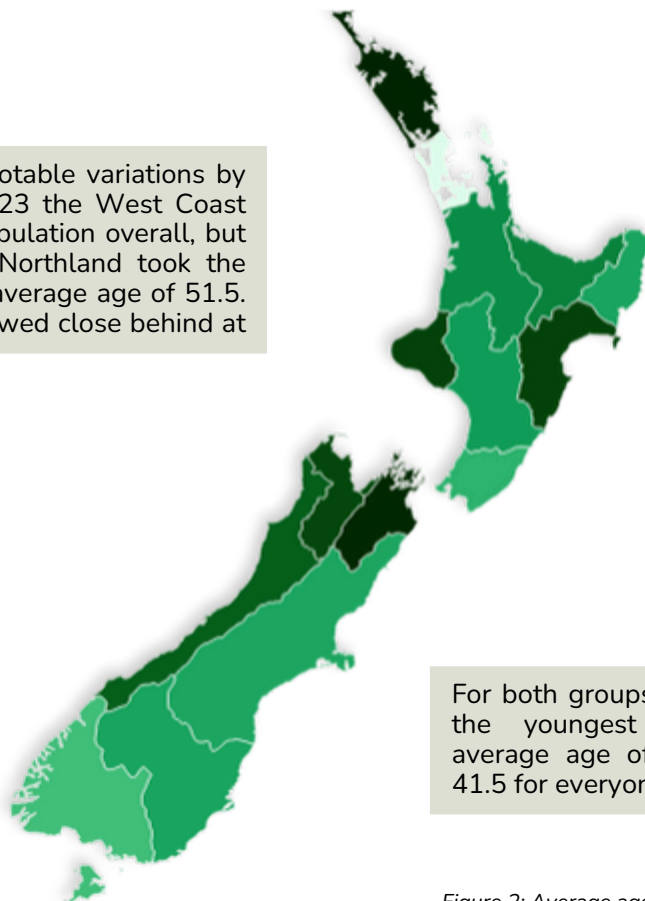


Figure 1: Percentage of truck driver workforce by age group

Average truck driver age by region

44 51.5

There are some notable variations by region, too. In 2023 the West Coast had the oldest population overall, but for truck drivers Northland took the top spot with an average age of 51.5. Marlborough followed close behind at 51.4.



For both groups Auckland is home to the youngest workers, with an average age of 44 for truckies and 41.5 for everyone else.

Figure 2: Average age spread of truck drivers by region



Northland is home to the country's oldest tree - and the oldest truck drivers

New Zealand’s ageing trucking workforce matches broader global trends. The International Road Transport Union (IRU) recently reported that 3.4 million drivers over 36 countries will retire by 2029¹.

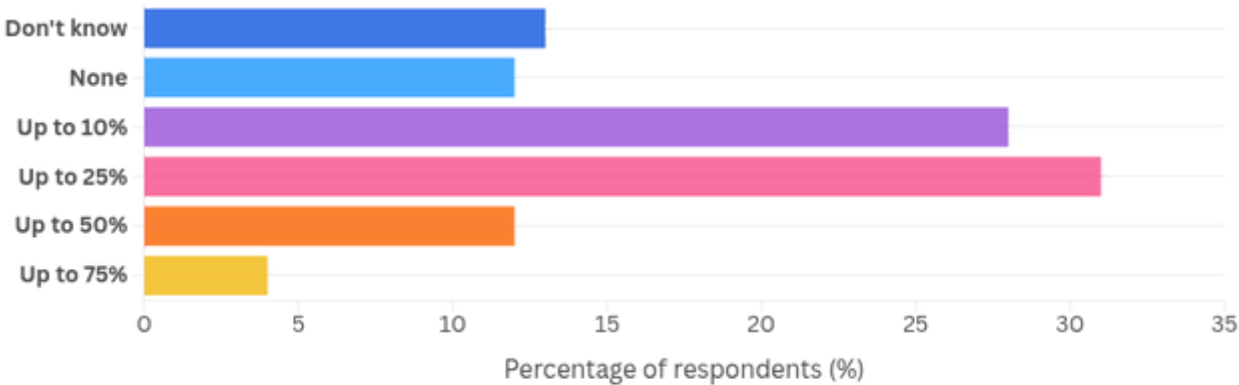
Findings from Transporting New Zealand’s National Road Freight Survey indicate that 31% of participating businesses expect up to a quarter of their drivers to retire within the next five years².

These figures raise concerns around long-term workforce sustainability and highlight the need for succession planning. Attracting young people to the sector will be a key priority deserving of additional research and resources.

The supply of skilled young drivers in New Zealand’s trucking workforce can be improved in the following ways:

- offering driver licencing programmes in schools
- a simplified licensing process that removes redundant licence classes
- an industry commitment to diversity and inclusion
- a societal and market acceptance that truck driving is a skilled and valued occupation, which is recognised in industry rates.

What percentage of your business's current road freight drivers do you expect will retire/leave the industry in the next 5 years?



National Road Freight Survey 2025

Figure 3: Estimated percentage of retiring drivers 2025-2030; based on the opinions of 194 industry participants from 128 road freight businesses

GENDER DIVERSITY

As a traditionally male-dominated profession, it is encouraging to see census data show increasing female participation rates in truck driving right across the country.

Despite a substantial increase in female truck driver numbers, there is still a lot of progress to be made.

Female truck drivers made up 6% of the workforce in 2023. The number of women working as truck drivers increased by 239% between 2013 and 2023.

Despite the overall number of drivers declining between 2018-2023, the number of female drivers still grew by 30%.

Of the 43 professional groupings recorded by Stats NZ, Road and Rail Drivers ranked 38th for percentage of women in the workforce:

- 37 Storepersons (18.6%)
- 38 Road and Rail Drivers (8.7%)
- 39 Mobile Plant Operators (5.7%)
- 40 Construction and Mining Labourers (4.1%)
- 41 Construction Trades Workers (2.7%)
- 42 Electrotech & Telecomm Workers (2.5%)
- 43 Auto. & Eng, Trades Workers (1.9%)

While it is encouraging to see the sector outperforming construction, plant operator and automotive trades, the transport industry must continue to lift female participation rates.

Total truck drivers by gender over time

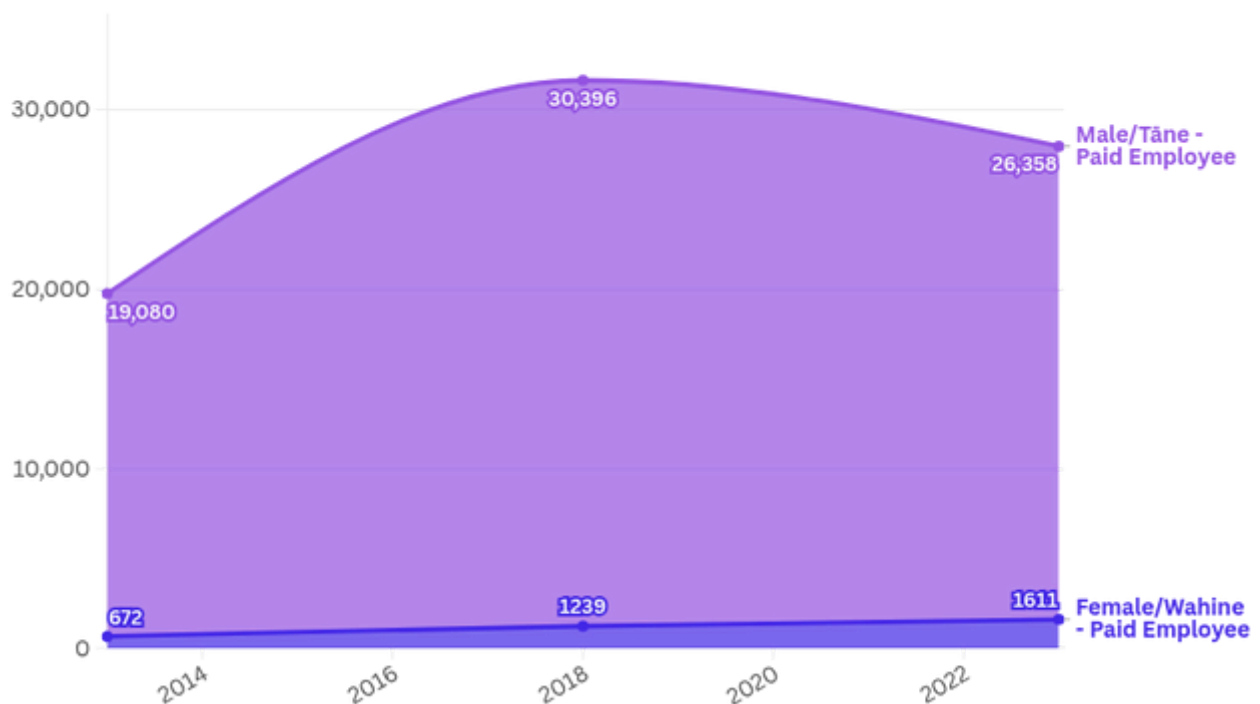


Figure 4: Total truck drivers by gender over time

Note: Census data restraints mean these figures do not reflect gender diverse or non-binary drivers present in the workforce.

As is the case across the wider workforce, female drivers record lower average hourly pay than men.

However, the gender pay gap is narrower than across truck driving than the general New Zealand workforce.

Industry can continue to close this gap by promoting truck driving as a rewarding and sustainable career for women. Road freight businesses can also consider how to address the barriers to entry discussed below.

Average hours of work also vary between male and female drivers. On average, female truck drivers work six fewer hours per week than their male counterparts. This is the same gap as between female and male workers of other occupations.

Truck drivers generally work longer hours than people in other work types, regardless of gender. This reflects the demands of the freight industry which can at times be inflexible and heavily dependent on road conditions and customer demands.

Getting more women into truck driving

Attracting more women into truck driving and retaining them for the long term would go a long way towards addressing the industry's long term skill shortages.

A 2019 study from the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence (Ako), identified five main barriers to women entering the trades, that are applicable to road freight:

- Lack of knowledge about the opportunities within the industry
- Lack of work experience
- Finding employers willing to employ women
- Male-dominated culture of the trades
- Lack of support for women in the trades

Encouraging more women into truck driving will require fresh thinking from road freight businesses, and support from procurers of freight services.





ETHNIC DIVERSITY

The truck driver workforce is becoming more ethnically diverse over time, but remains heavily European and Māori dominated, echoing the ethnic makeup of the general New Zealand population.

Between 2013 and 2018, the trucking workforce grew significantly across all ethnic groups.

The number of Asian drivers increased by 230%, while drivers of Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African backgrounds grew by 150%. Pacific peoples saw a 126% increase, and Māori drivers grew by 67%.

Although European drivers continued to make up the majority of the workforce, their growth rate during this period was comparatively lower.

From 2018 to 2023, the total numbers of truck drivers dropped considerably. However, the number of drivers with an Asian background increased from 2,673 to 5,052, and the Middle Eastern/Latin American/African contingent also grew by 63 drivers.

When compared to the ethnic makeup of the entire workforce, truck driving has a relatively higher proportion of Māori and Pacific participants.

These demographic changes highlight the importance of road freight businesses ensuring differences in customs, religious practices and communication styles are catered to.

Supporting resources can be found at the Driving Change Diversity - *Diversity Toolbox* page³.

Total number of truck drivers by ethnicity

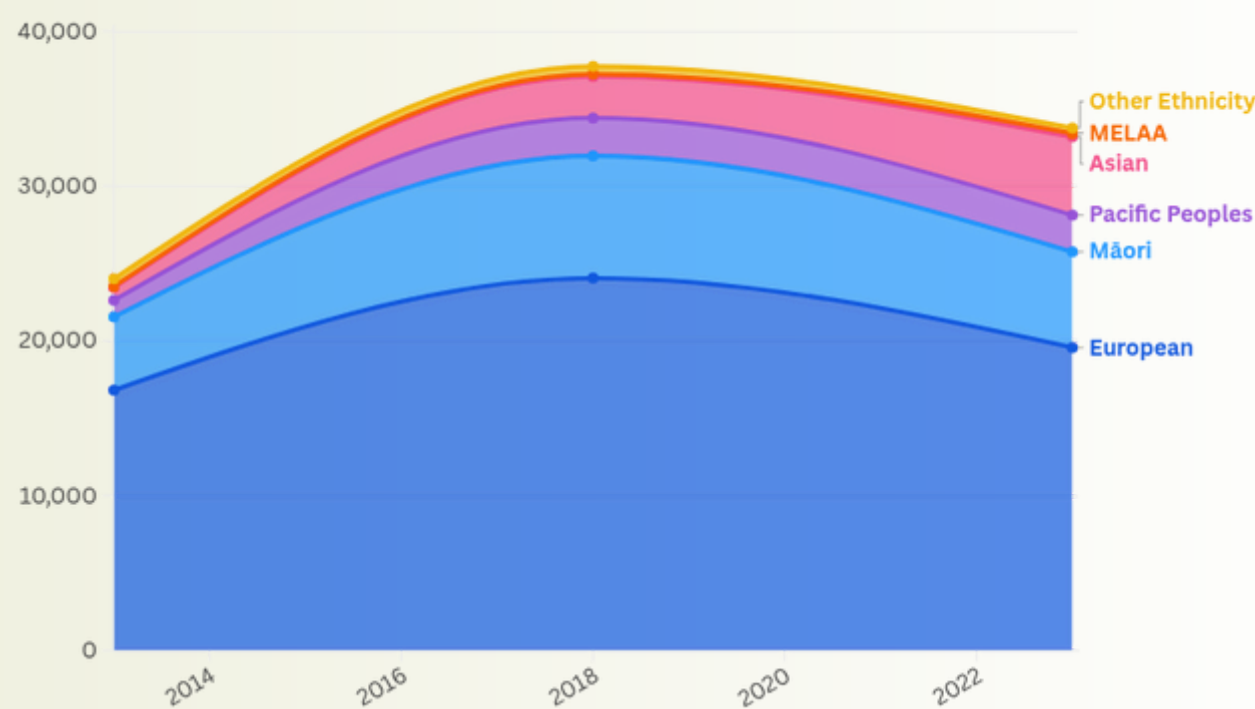


Figure 5: Total numbers of truck drivers by ethnicity over time

NATIONALITY

We can attribute much of the trucking workforce's ethnic diversity to migrant drivers, who are increasingly important in maintaining workforce numbers.

While the vast majority of our truck drivers were born in New Zealand, that proportion is decreasing as migrant employment grows.

The percentage of drivers from Asia has grown by nearly 10% since 2013, mostly comprised of Indian and Filipino migrants³. Pacific Islanders are also increasingly entering the New Zealand trucking workforce, comprising 6.3% of drivers as of 2023.

Additional data from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) showed that most accredited-employer work visas (AEWVs) granted to migrant truck drivers were for people aged between 20-40⁴. There is great value in continuing to supplement the local workforce with younger drivers from overseas.

Keeping migrant drivers safe

Hiring workers from outside New Zealand is one way to address critical staff shortages.

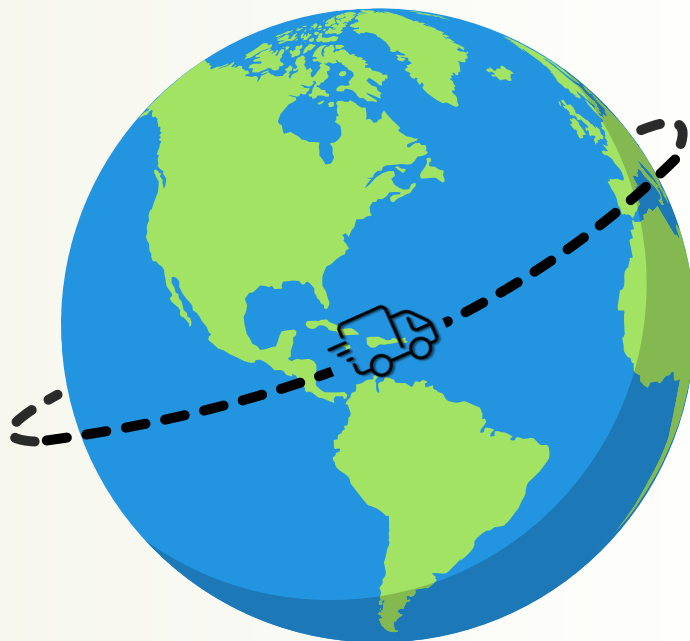
If you own a business and you're interested in hiring drivers from overseas, there are some key things to be aware of.

Migrant workers are inherently vulnerable to exploitation as they are less familiar with New Zealand's employment laws.

Transporting New Zealand has partnered with **Working In** to host webinars and release member communications about best practice when employing migrant drivers.

Working In suggests that prospective employers consider the following questions to ensure their recruitment process is secure⁵:

- How did your candidates learn about your job vacancy and company?
- Are they collaborating with an agency? Be aware that offshore agencies may impersonate candidates when applying for positions advertised in New Zealand.
- Who is handling your candidates' visa applications? Offshore agents often assist



Birth regions of New Zealand's truck drivers (2023)

New Zealand	75.34%
Asia	10.8%
Pacific Islands	6.30%
UK/Europe	2.99%
Other	2.40%
Australia	0.95%
Americas	0.94%
Africa	0.23%
Middle East	0.07%

with visa applications, but it's vital to ensure they are Licensed Immigration Advisers or are exempt from licensing requirements under the Immigration Advisers Licensing Act 2007.

- If you are working with a recruitment agency, investigate their candidate sourcing methods and fees charged to candidates. Ensure the agency operates ethically before entering into an agreement.
- Are you using a labour hire company? These companies must hold Triangular Accreditation, adhering to strict requirements and processes.

For more information on hiring migrant drivers and/or becoming an Accredited Employer, visit www.immigration.govt.nz.

DATA NOTES & SOURCES

This report was prepared by Transporting New Zealand with data from Stats NZ and analysis provided by Ethan Gullery of E.G Data Perspectives.

The data referenced in this report was sourced from three New Zealand censuses, conducted in 2013, 2018 and 2023.

Earlier census data was excluded due to significant changes in occupational classifications and survey methods over time, making direct comparisons unreliable. 2013 serves as the earliest reasonable baseline for longitudinal analysis while maintaining data integrity.

The data was delivered in discrete packets, limiting the ability to cross-compare. For example, income data was broken down by gender and region, but not ethnicity.

Occupation Classifications

For the purposes of this report, "Truck Drivers" refers to individuals classified under the Truck Driver (General) code (733111), including heavy truck drivers and delivery services drivers where specified. "Other Occupations" includes all remaining employed persons across all sectors excluding those classified as a Truck Driver (General).

Please note that data for similar occupations such as Aircraft Refueller (733112), Furniture Removalist (733112), Tanker Driver (733114) and Tow Truck Driver (733115) fall under "Other Occupations" in this report.

Care has been taken to ensure that the comparison groups are mutually exclusive.

Data Quality and Consistency

While the census provides the most complete view of occupational demographics, some inconsistencies exist between years.

The 2013 census data is not fully aligned with the more detailed 2018 and 2023 collections. Differences in occupation coding, question wording, and processing methods mean that direct comparisons involving 2013 data should be treated cautiously.

Wherever possible, trends have been highlighted, but some figures, especially for smaller subgroups, should be seen as indicative rather than definitive.

Additional references

¹ Widening age chasm compounds truck driver shortage crisis: new IRU report. (2025, May 12). IRU. <https://www.iru.org/news-resources/newsroom/widening-age-chasm-compounds-truck-driver-shortage-crisis-new-iru-report>

² *National Road Freight Survey*. (2025). Transporting New Zealand & Research NZ. https://www.transporting.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Report_Transporting-NZ_State-of-the-Sector_FINAL.pdf

³ *Diversity Toolbox - Road to success*. <https://www.roadtosuccess.nz/diversity-toolbox/>

⁴ Transporting New Zealand. (2025, May 1). *Responding to the truck driver shortage*. <https://www.transporting.nz/news/responding-to-the-truck-driver-shortage>

⁵ Working In. *Understanding migrant exploitation*. https://workingin.nz/brochures/Guide_Migration_Exploitation.pdf

Cover Image: Thanks to Naomi and Iaeli, truck drivers at Alexander Group.

Appendix: Data Tables

Table 1: Percentage of truck driver workforce by age group

Age range	Percentage
15-24	5.54%
25-34	19.75%
35-44	16.83%
45-54	22.38%
55-64	24.95%
65+	10.55%

Table 2: Average age spread of truck drivers by region

Region	Mean age
Northland Region	51.5
Auckland	44
Waikato	48.8
Bay of Plenty	49.1
Gisborne	48.1
Hawke's Bay	50.8
Taranaki	50.8
Manawatū-Whanganui	48.3
Wellington	47.6
West Coast	50.1
Canterbury	48
Otago	48.1
Southland	47.2
Tasman	50.7
Nelson	50.6
Marlborough	51.4

Table 4: Total truck drivers by gender over time

Census Year	Female/Wahine - Paid Employee	Male/Tāne - Paid Employee
2013	672	19080
2018	1239	30396
2023	1611	26358

Table 5: Total numbers of truck drivers by ethnicity over time

Census Year	European	Māori	Pacific Peoples	Asian	MELAA*	Other Ethnicity
2013	16803	4731	1086	810	66	504
2018	24042	7896	2451	2673	165	501
2023	19563	6177	2370	5052	228	354

*Middle Eastern, Latin American, African descent

**DRIVING
CHANGE
DIVERSITY**

