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# 2023 Census confirms Auckland gains more new homes


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**Summary**

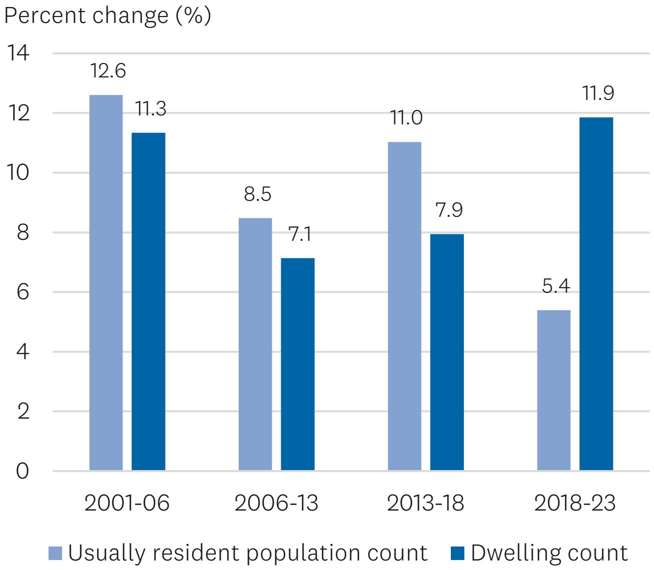
- New census data adds to the evidence that the more flexible land use permitted under the Auckland Unitary Plan has led to more new homes
- Growth in dwellings outpaced growth in the usually resident population in Auckland from 2018 to 2023 – a turnaround from the previous trend
- Auckland had the highest growth rate in dwellings among regions
- Within Auckland, the majority of the increase in dwellings occurred in local board areas outside of the Auckland isthmus


2023 Census data shows Auckland's dwellings grew at a faster rate than its population from 2018 to 2023. The dwelling count increased by 11.9% whereas the census usually resident population increased by 5.4%.[1] This is a turnaround from the pattern at prior censuses, where the dwelling growth rate has been consistently lower than the population growth rate, as Figure 1 shows.

The new census data confirms the picture in building consents and population estimates – Auckland has been building a lot of homes in recent years relative to its population. Without a doubt, our housing supply has become more responsive to demand for housing from a growing population.

This shift reflects the impact of the Auckland Unitary Plan, which, since becoming operative in late 2016, has allowed more flexible use of urban land for housing and created more opportunities for new homes.

*Figure 1: Auckland census population and dwelling growth*




Source: Stats NZ; Auckland Council Chief Economist Unit

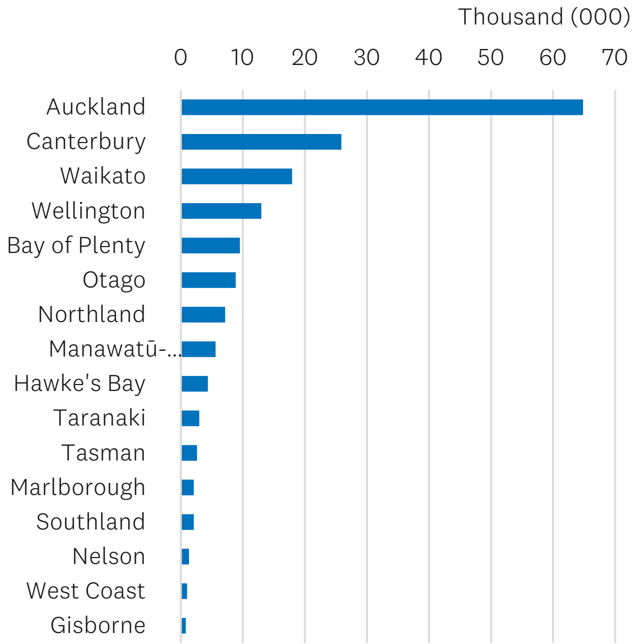
[1] The census usually resident population count comprises people who usually live, and were present in, New Zealand on census night. It excludes residents temporarily overseas. Usual residents who were temporarily elsewhere in New Zealand are included in the count for where they usually live.

These benefits are evident in published research which finds that more new dwellings have been consented as a result of the Auckland Unitary Plan than would otherwise have been the case in its absence.[2]

## Auckland compares well with other areas

To provide a sense of scale, the census dwelling count for Auckland increased by 64,800 between 2018 and 2023. Figure 2 shows that this increase was by far the largest among regions, as might be expected given Auckland's large and growing population.

*Figure 2: Growth in dwelling count by region, 2018 to 2023*



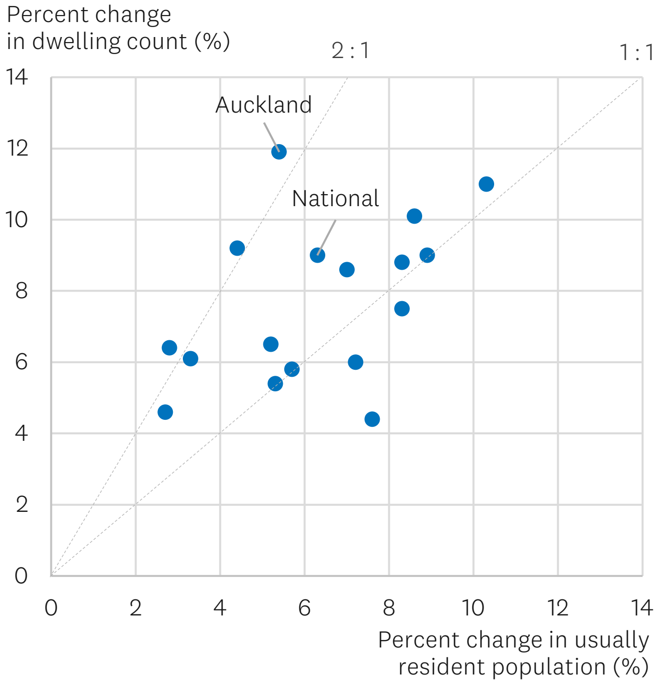

Source: Stats NZ; Auckland Council Chief Economist Unit

Putting that growth in dwellings alongside growth in the usually resident population shows how housing supply in regions has responded to additional demand. Figure 3 compares the percentage change in the census usually resident population (horizontal axis) between 2018 and 2023 with that in the dwelling count (vertical). The diagonal line labelled 1:1 represents points where, in percentage terms, growth in the stock of dwellings matches that in the usually resident population count.

Auckland performed well, with its percentage increase in dwellings (11.9%) being the highest among regions and one of the few to be more than double its increase in population. This means Auckland had more dwellings for its population in 2023 than in 2018, even after recovering from its pandemic-related loss of 2020-22.

[2] One example attributes, conservatively, 21,800 dwellings consented between 2016 and 2021 to the Auckland Unitary Plan. See Ryan Greenaway-McGrevy, Peter C.B. Phillips, "The impact of upzoning on housing construction in Auckland", *Journal of Urban Economics*, Volume 136, 2023

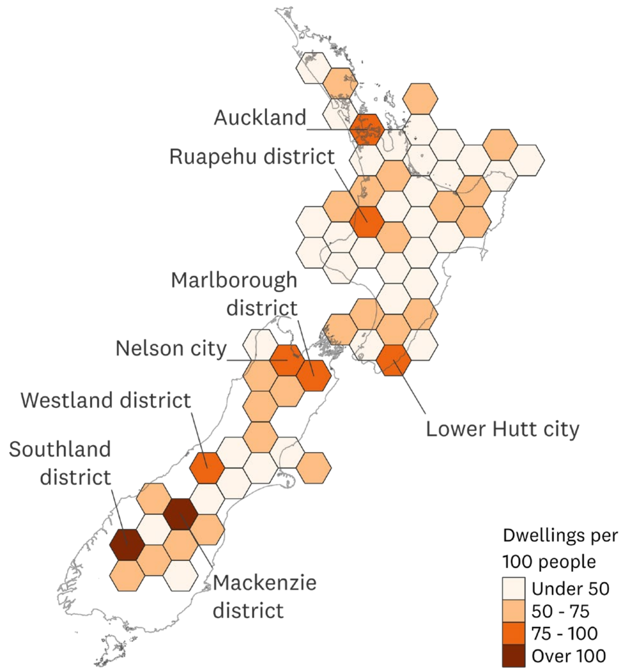
*Figure 3: Change in census population and dwelling counts by region, 2018 to 2023*




Source: Stats NZ; Auckland Council Chief Economist Unit

Figure 4 focuses on territorial authorities and displays a ratio of change in dwelling count to change in usually resident population. The ratio shows the number of additional dwellings per 100 people added. While not definitive, it can be interpreted as a measure of the relative responsiveness of the housing supply.

*Figure 4: Ratio of dwelling growth over population growth by territorial authority, 2018 to 2023*




Source: Stats NZ; Auckland Council Chief Economist Unit

Each hexagon represents a territorial authority and allows for an equal visual weighting. The positioning approximates the actual geographic location of each territorial authority.

Among the authorities identified as 'Tier 1' urban areas in the National Policy Statement on Urban Development, Auckland and Lower Hutt had the highest ratios. Both have benefited from increased flexibility through changes to their land use policies, as shown in recent research.[2, 3]

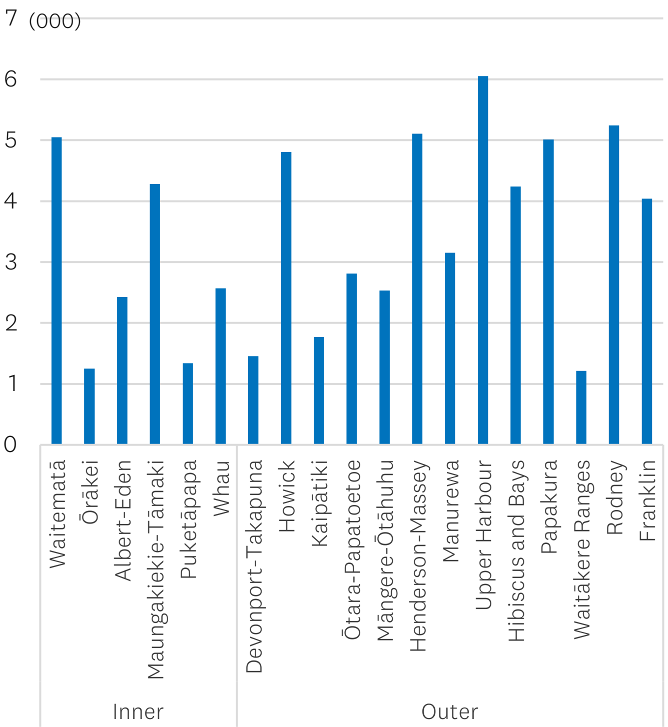
Overall, the new census data supports existing evidence that shows how our land use policies can have powerful impacts on housing market outcomes. This insight matters, as housing in Auckland remains expensive and enabling more homes will help address this.

## Growth across Auckland local boards

The increase in dwellings among local boards shows the broad pattern of growth across Auckland between 2018 and 2023. Figure 5 groups local boards into 'inner' (on the Auckland isthmus) and 'outer' (all others), and then sorts them by median residential land value (L-R) as an indicator of relative demand for housing.

The largest increases in dwelling count were Upper Harbour (6,100), Rodney (5,200), Henderson-Massey (5,100), Waitematā (5,000) and Papakura (5,000). Local board areas outside of the Auckland isthmus together accounted for the majority of the increase in dwellings (74%). This outcome broadly reflects the balance of enabled capacity for residential growth.

*Figure 5: Dwelling growth by local board (ordered by median land value per sqm and inner vs outer)*



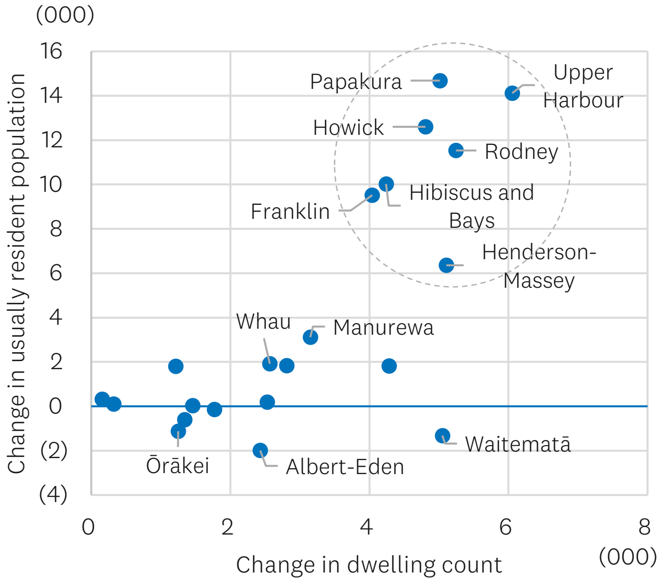

Source: Stats NZ; Auckland Council Chief Economist Unit

Figure 6 shows the relationship between changes in dwelling counts and usually resident population among local boards from 2018 to 2023. The identified cluster shows local boards with the largest increase in dwelling counts also tended to have large increase in usually resident population, as might be expected.

Put in perspective, the pattern of housing growth in the first five years of the Auckland Unitary Plan has been less dispersed than the five years prior (e.g., the share of dwellings consented within 20km of the city centre increased from 50% to 60%).[4] This is because land use rules have allowed a diverse mix of housing that uses less land per dwelling, closer to areas of higher demand.

On the other hand, the pattern of growth has been more dispersed than would be the case if more flexible land use was possible – particularly in inner areas that tend to be in higher demand for their proximity to jobs, transport and amenities.

*Figure 6: Change in dwelling count and change in usually resident population by local board area*




Source: Stats NZ; Auckland Council Chief Economist Unit

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[3] Matthew Maltman and Ryan Greenaway-McGrevy "Going it Alone: The Impact of Upzoning on Housing Construction in Lower Hutt" Economic Policy Centre working paper 18, 2024

[4] Ryan Greenaway-McGrevy and James Allan Jones "Can zoning reform change urban development patterns? Evidence from Auckland" Economic Policy Centre working paper 12, 2023