



Evidence at a glance: Economy

For a more detailed exploration of this topic, see the full evidence brief: [Economy / Te Ōhanga \(Manatū Taonga\)](#)

The cultural system makes a significant contribution to New Zealand's economy, demonstrating resilience despite broader economic constraints. There is strong potential for growth, with global demand for New Zealand's creative industries and unique cultural identity driving future opportunities.

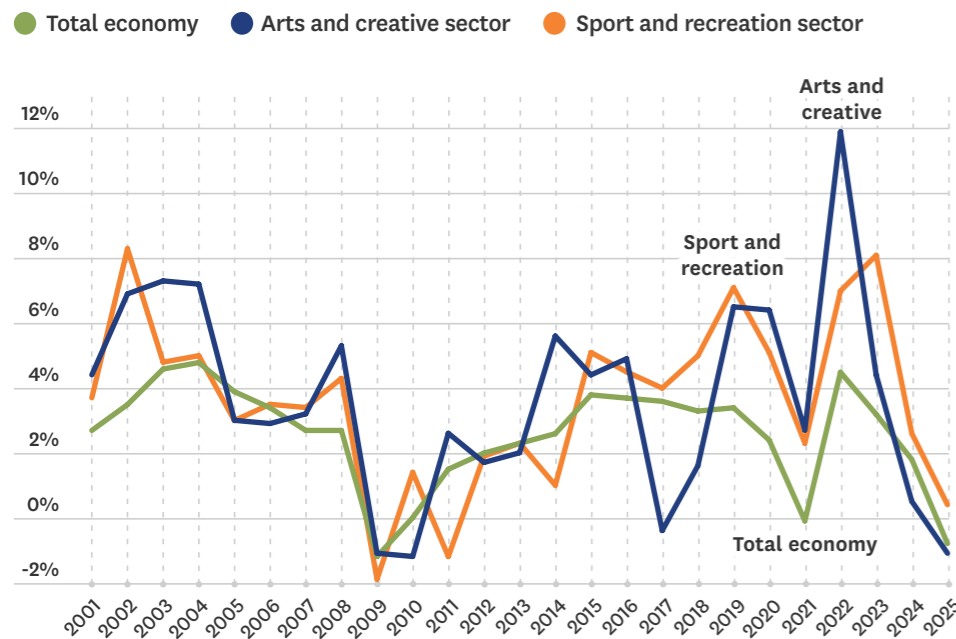
In the year to March 2025*

\$26.1 billion Total economic contribution of the arts and creative and sport and recreation sectors to New Zealand's economy

- **\$18.5b** Arts and creative sector (including arts, culture, heritage and media)
- **\$7.6b** Sport and recreation sector

↑ **The average GDP growth rate** per year over the last 5 years was **3.6%** for the arts and creative sector and **4.0%** for the sport and recreation sector, compared to 1.7% for the total economy

GDP growth (% change) 2001–2025 for arts and creative sector, sport and recreation sector and total economy. Source: Infometrics, 2026



*Source: Infometrics, 2026, for all figures above

Work and volunteering

In the year to March 2025†

Over 197,000 people held primary employment across almost 57,000 businesses in the arts and creative sector and sport and recreation sector

- **122,013** filled jobs in the arts and creative sector
- **75,186** filled jobs in sport and recreation sector
- **Over 24,000** Māori held primary employment across both sectors

Business growth was greater than the total economy:

↑ **0.5%** total economy ↑ **1.3%** arts and creative sector ↑ **3.0%** sport and recreation sector

Over the next five years (to March 2031), employment is expected to grow by just under **8,200 net new jobs** in the arts and creative sector (following initial job losses in 2026) and **8,400 new jobs** in the sport and recreation sector

† Source: Infometrics, 2026, for all figures above

1 in 4 adults volunteer to support arts, culture and heritage activities (Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2026)

\$1.2 billion volunteer contributions in time, skills, and professional expertise to support the live performance sector (in the year to June 2024) (Carter et al., 2024)

Over 1 million people volunteered to support sport and recreation in 2024, contributing \$3.1b in value (Sport New Zealand, 2024)

Spending

\$3.3 billion total annual spend on arts and culture market in New Zealand (Creative New Zealand, 2025)

8.3% New Zealand household expenditure on recreation and culture in 2023 (Stats NZ, 2024)

\$2.7 billion international tourism expenditure linked to the New Zealand screen industry in 2024 (NZIER and Verian, 2025)

\$2.3 billion total spend of the 2.3 million people who attended live performances in the year to June 2024 (Carter et al., 2024)

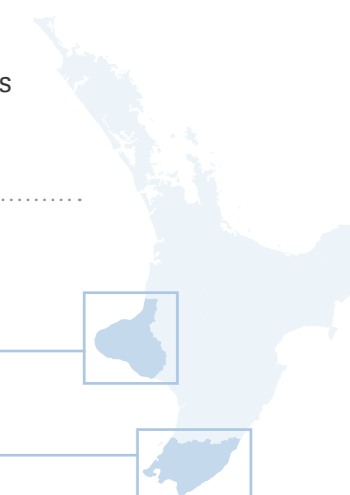
Flow-on effects to the wider economy

36% of gross value added by the sport and recreation sector was generated in other parts of the economy e.g., building, construction and manufacturing (Sport New Zealand, 2024)

\$32 million educational value of student visits to museums and galleries in 2022/23 (Museums Aotearoa & BERL, 2024)

Live events generate economic activity for the regions where they are held. For example:

- **\$24 million** added to Taranaki region from Te Matatini 2025 (Te Matatini, 2025)
- **\$31.8 million** added to Wellington region from WOW 2024 (Wellington NZ, 2024)



\$8.7 billion social benefits of live performance sector in 2023, including to mental health, wellbeing and civic participation (SROI \$3.20 returned to \$1 spent) (Carter et al., 2024)

\$16.8 billion social benefits of recreational physical activity, including \$9 billion in health benefits (SROI \$2.12 returned to \$1 spent) (Sport New Zealand, 2022)

Exports and trade

\$3.8 billion value of New Zealand's creative exports in 2023 (UNCTAD, 2025)

Creative exports were **New Zealand's 4th largest commodity** in 2023 after dairy, meat and wood (Eaqub et al., 2025)

Over \$700 million in annual exports per sector for the New Zealand game development and screen sectors (NZGDA, 2025; NZIER, 2017)

Productivity

Productivity in the arts and creative sector has been growing over the past 25 years

- **\$171,918 GDP** per FTE in arts and creative sector vs. \$174,045 for total economy (Infometrics, 2026)
- **\$346,000 GDP** per FTE in creative industries when adjusted for hours worked (Eaqub et al., 2025)