



# Spirituality in New Zealand: overview of health related research

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## Aim & Method

Drawing on published New Zealand (NZ) spirituality in health related papers, this poster offers an overview of findings and challenges in the NZ context.

## New Zealand Context

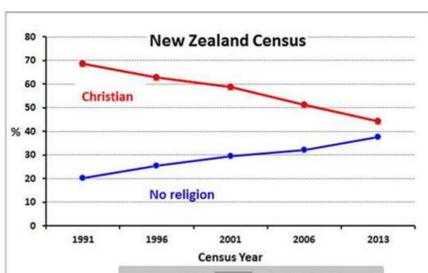


## Background

New Zealand has the potential to lead the world in inclusive spiritual care approaches, but there is a long way to go to reach such a goal. Spiritualities in NZ are many and varied in the context of our social democratic political system, multi-cultural society and bicultural partnership between Māori (indigenous people) and Pākehā (non-Māori). Fiercely secular, but broadly spiritual, our non-church going populations draw on multiple sources to find meaning, purpose, values, beliefs, identity and the sacred.

## NZ Context (religion & spirituality)

- 8-12% church / synagogue / temple attendance
- Growth of 'nones' (no religion on Census) & 'spiritual but not religious'
- Growth of 'other' religious traditions (other than Christianity)
- Growth of diversity, eclecticism, multiple identities and values



Morris, P. (2013). The 2013 Census and Religion: submission for Our Futures: Te Pae Tawhiti review. Royal Society of New Zealand.

## Results

### Study details

30 papers between 2000- 2018

Methods: 6 mixed methods / 9 qualitative / 6 quantitative / 8 commentary / 1 review

Topics: hospice/palliative care, nursing, aging, cancer care, renal, healthcare professions, professional development, dementia, mental health, adventure, gambling, migrant / general / young / student / people's health, chaplaincy, health promotion, death, Māori healers. Books were excluded from the search.

### Māori contribution

"Te taha wairua [spirituality] is generally acknowledged to be the most basic and essential requirement for health".

"Without a spiritual awareness, the individual is considered to be lacking in wellbeing..."

Durie, M. (1985). "A Māori Perspective of Health." *Social Science & Medicine*. 20(5): 483-486.



Artist: Robyn Kahukiwa

## Key points

- Spirituality is widely affirmed as important.
- Māori models, especially Te Whare Tapa Whā, are named and affirmed.
- Definition components across the studies are reasonably consistent; some enthusiasm for the term suggested.
- Spiritual needs understood to be high; though clinically, lack assessment or attention.
- Spiritual experts / chaplains lack an evidence base and are not integrated into the system. Spiritual care seen as part of holistic, whole person care, more informal/implicit than formal / explicit.
- Spirituality education is understood as important, largely missing and lacking consensus about content.



Artist: Jane Crisp

## Final Thoughts

- Does NZ need a national consensus statement about spirituality: what it is, is not, how to attend to it across the atheist to religious continuum, and policy directions?
- More research is needed, using a range of methods, especially intervention studies.
- The Treaty of Waitangi (NZ founding document) is seldom referenced. And given the disparities, how might Māori spiritual care be better addressed?

## Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge all my collaborators/co-authors, and the other NZ researchers who are leading the way in this developing area of research. Please contact me for a list of references.

