

40 Years of *New Zealand Sociology*: The Journal as a Mirror of Sociology in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract:

New Zealand Sociology (NZS) marks its 40th anniversary in 2026. This milestone provides us with a reason to celebrate the journal's achievements as a platform for sociological scholarship in Aotearoa New Zealand—and an opportunity to more closely examine its history. Analysing publication and author characteristics allows us to document trends and identify inequities to address in the future. In this article, we share key findings from a document/publication trend analysis of all the contributions published between 1986 and 2025, tracking contribution types, authorship and citations as well as thematic emphases of scholarship over time. Over the past four decades, research articles have become more prominent relative to other types of contributions. As has been common in the social sciences, authorship has been and remains highly individualised with nearly three quarters of all research articles sole-authored. Concerningly, author representation has been highly uneven. While gender representation has become more balanced over time, Indigenous and Pacific scholars remain underrepresented despite the journal's stated aims to support scholarship of relevance to Indigenous and Pacific communities. Despite these imbalances, we note that gender is one of the three most prominent topics (alongside social theory and neoliberalism) and that citation patterns complicate prestige, gender and racial hierarchies. Our analysis shows that while average citation numbers are modest (compared with the *Journal of Sociology* and *Kōtuitui*), highly cited articles are often authored by women, Māori and Pacific scholars. Overall, we use these findings to prompt a wider discussion of NZS's reach and future direction.

Keywords: New Zealand Sociology; academic publishing; publication trend analysis; document analysis; anniversary

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Introduction

It is our pleasure and honour to contribute this article marking the 40th anniversary of *New Zealand Sociology* (*NZS*). First and foremost, we extend our sincere thanks to the many individuals, institutions and organisations who have sustained the journal over the decades, as authors, reviewers, editors, readers and supporters. Since its inaugural issue in 1986, *NZS* has served as a vital platform for sociological scholarship based in Aotearoa New Zealand, while fostering connections with the broader international community. As *NZS* reaches this significant milestone, we see a timely opportunity to not only celebrate but also critically reflect on the journal's publication history: Whose voices have been represented? What topics have been most prominent? And what do publication trends tell us about broader social, political and epistemological shifts in Aotearoa New Zealand (and beyond)? To explore these questions, we conducted a comprehensive document/publication trend analysis of all the 1174 contributions published in *NZS* over the past 40 years. In presenting our findings, this article critically interrogates the patterns of and absences in the journal's publishing history, and it discusses these in relation to ongoing questions about power, positionality and the sociology of knowledge production in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our analysis reveals several key insights that call for both recognition and reflexivity. Among them: (1) the journal's publishing landscape has shifted considerably over time (particularly the past two decades), with a steady increase in the proportion of research articles and a relative decline in other formats such as book reviews; (2) authorship remains highly individualised, with a dominance of sole-authored contributions and a noticeable concentration of a small number of mostly Pākehā male scholars as the most prolific authors; (3) more broadly, patterns of representation show persistent gender and ethnic inequalities, with Māori and Pacific scholars significantly underrepresented despite the journal's aim to promote scholarship by and relevant to these communities; (4) analysis of research article topics highlights the vibrancy and breadth of sociological research in *NZS*. Despite gender disparities among authors, gender emerged as one of the most prominent research topics. At the same time critical Indigenous, Pacific and decolonial scholarship remain significantly underrepresented; and (5) citation patterns suggest that academic influence does not always follow conventional prestige hierarchies as highly cited articles in *NZS* often come from early career researchers (ECRs), women, Māori and Pacific scholars, especially when they challenge dominant paradigms or respond to epistemic gaps and injustices.

While these findings demonstrate the journal's important role in sustaining local sociology scholarship, they also raise some important questions for the journal's future and how we, as editors, scholars and sociology community members, may work toward a more equitable, pluralistic and socially engaged publishing future. This article thus serves not only as an invitation to celebration but also as a call to critical reflexivity. Celebrating *NZS* at 40 means honouring its legacy, acknowledging its limitations, and recommending and committing ourselves to the ongoing work of building a more inclusive, critical and reflexive sociology in, and beyond, Aotearoa New Zealand!

Publishing landscape

NZS, the official journal of the Sociological Association of Aotearoa New Zealand (SAANZ), is a Scopus-indexed, open access, peer-reviewed journal committed to promoting research, thought and debate on issues relating to Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond. *NZS* traces its origins to the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* (*ANZJS*), which was established in 1965 as the official journal of the Sociological Association of

Australia and New Zealand,¹ with Jerzy Zubrzycki serving as its inaugural editor (Barnwell & Ravn, 2025; Crothers & Gribben, 1986; The Australian Sociological Association, n.d.). In 1986, the New Zealand journal formally separated from its Australian counterpart, and *NZS* was launched as the flagship journal of SAANZ, with Dick Harker and Chris Wilkes at Massey University serving as its inaugural editors (Wilkes, 2014). Since then, *NZS* has had the explicit aim of publishing sociological research and theoretical work grounded in the sociological concerns of Aotearoa New Zealand. While the journal welcomes a broad spectrum of perspectives, ranging from theoretical and empirical to historical, comparative, policy-oriented and polemical, it explicitly encourages scholarship by, or relating to, Māori and Pacific Peoples. Between 1965 and 1985, the *ANZJS* published 97 articles either focused on or authored by scholars based in Aotearoa New Zealand (Crothers & Gribben, 1986). As Crothers and Gribben noted in the inaugural issue of *NZS*, nearly two thirds of these contributions were empirically grounded, primarily using survey methods, with very few using participant observation or ethnographic approaches. While a fuller picture of *NZS*'s publishing landscape would require revisiting these earlier *ANZJS* contributions, this article limits its scope to publications in *NZS* from 1986 onwards. All articles published in *ANZJS* remain accessible through the Australian Sociological Association's (TASA) *Journal of Sociology (JoS)*, and we recommend the 1986 overview by Crothers and Gribben (1986) for readers interested in the pre-1986 history of Aotearoa New Zealand-related sociological scholarship and its publishing landscape.

To contextualise our analysis, we briefly situate *NZS* within the broader transformation of academic publishing over time, both locally and globally. While *NZS* is a regional journal that operates independently from large global publishers such as Elsevier, Sage, Taylor & Francis and Wiley, it is nonetheless embedded in an increasingly globalised publishing ecosystem. Academic publishing has undergone significant changes, particularly over the last two decades, that have reshaped scholarly production, circulation and evaluation practices globally. One global trend is the significant rise in the volume of scholarly publications. As Flaherty (2019) reported, there has been an increase in the number of sociology journals: "The Social Science Citation Index's Journal Citation Reports listed 64 journals about sociology [in 1986], compared to 143 in 2016" (para. 10). A recent Italian study by Cicero et al. (2025) shows a sharp increase in research article output in the social sciences and humanities in Italy, especially during the decade of 2011–2021. This pattern is mirrored in other national contexts and disciplines, reflecting a wider intensification of publication pressures (see, for example, Hicks, 2012; Rauhut et al., 2018). Unfortunately, the growth in publishing does not necessarily imply flourishing science. It also reflects the commodification of academic publishing, taken advantage of by mega-publishers (Macdonald, 2025; Wang, 2025), with some problematising the emergent phenomenon of "junkification" in academic publishing, describing the increasing volume of "low-quality" content and products, especially in "predatory" journals (Rhodes & Linnenluecke, 2025).

These trends are often linked to the dominance of metrics-based research cultures, where publication quantity is used, explicitly or implicitly, as a proxy for research productivity, university rankings and institutional prestige. Indeed, publications or, more broadly, research impacts have become central criteria in academic recruitment and promotion and for securing research funding. The growth in publishing both drives and is driven by the prevailing 'publish or perish' culture in academia in which academics' individual career advancement and institutional success are closely tied, or perceived to be tied, to the number of publications produced (Pickering & Byrne, 2014; Purvis et al., 2023; Rawat & Meena, 2014). In Aotearoa New Zealand, the

¹ 2025 marked *Journal of Sociology*'s 60th anniversary. We acknowledge this remarkable milestone and the journal's longstanding contribution to sociology in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as its wider international influence. See Barnwell and Ravn (2025) for their anniversary editorial and special issue.

introduction of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) in 2004 saw a significant increase in research productivity, just like the rest of the world, as research-active staff were required to demonstrate research productivity, and universities became incentivised to prioritise research quantity and impact (Smart, 2009). Although the PBRF model was originally designed to reward quality over quantity, it has nonetheless contributed to the intensification of publishing pressures, especially on ECRs, contract/precarious academics, staff in smaller institutions and even doctoral students (Burns & Rajcan, 2019; Uekusa, 2025).

While *NZS* continues to operate independently of commercial mega-publishers, these broader transformations in academic publishing, both locally and globally, provide important context for understanding *NZS*'s publishing patterns and for interpreting the results of our document/publication trend analysis. As a regionally grounded sociology journal, *NZS* needs to navigate: (1) the tension between its commitment to community-embedded scholarship and the structural pressures of a global academic economy increasingly governed by publication metrics and citation logics; (2) the challenges of staying relevant in an increasingly expanding and competitive journal landscape; and (3) the difficulty of attracting submissions when scholars are expected to publish in high-ranking/impact journals.

Document/publication trend analysis and data sources

To critically interrogate *NZS*'s publishing history, the authors (all current members of the *NZS* editorial team) jointly conducted a document/publication trend analysis. Document analysis is a useful method for systematically examining historical records and archival materials without needing direct interaction with participants—in this case, the authors who have published in the journal since its launch in 1986 (see Gross, 2018 for more detail on document analysis). Our publication trend analysis involved examining the frequency and patterns of published articles in *NZS*. The team manually reviewed all 1174 contributions published in *NZS* between 1986 and 2025. While we did not employ statistical software or automated tools (except Google Spreadsheets and Microsoft Excel), we gathered, entered and quantified the data in several areas to identify key trends and patterns. The areas of interest were determined by the team, drawing on previous similar journal trend analyses (e.g., Crothers & Gribben, 1986) and standard demographic characteristics such as gender, sex, race and ethnicity.

To facilitate data entry, organisation and analysis, we created a shared online tracking spreadsheet (Google Sheets).² For each contribution, we recorded information across multiple categories, including title, contribution type, author names (up to four), institution and whether any overseas author(s) contributed, author gender and (academic) role, up to five keywords per article, up to three topic areas per article, research type (empirical or theoretical), citations, editor, editor gender, and whether the article was part of a special issue.

Given that five team members were involved in the data entry, ensuring interrater reliability and consistency was critical. After an initial discussion, we independently reviewed articles (between 202 and 262 articles per member) and entered the data for the assigned articles. We had regular team meetings throughout the process to discuss challenges and reflections, refine interpretations and improve consistency. However, we encountered difficulties, particularly in categorising older articles where abstracts, keywords and contributor information were unavailable. Abstracts were introduced in 2008 and keywords in 2015, meaning that earlier entries had to be manually and subjectively analysed through a close reading of the article's introduction and main text. Moreover, although all the articles have been digitised and are available via the journal's website or

² This data set is available via the *New Zealand Sociology* website under the [Supplementary Materials](#) section for further analysis. By sharing this with later generations, we hope that this project can be a starting point for longitudinal study.

Informit,³ articles published before 2008 were scanned from the print edition, complicating access and text recognition.

All data were manually coded and, where needed, re-coded for descriptive statistical analysis. To illustrate our approach, article topics were coded with up to three descriptions based on content (or keywords, if provided by authors). For example, an article that analyses family support for ageing Asian migrants was coded under ‘ageing’, ‘family’ and ‘migration’, and an article that examines discrimination in Māori sentencing in courts was coded as ‘criminal justice system’, ‘Māori’ and ‘racism’. While we acknowledge that these topic codes may oversimplify the content of articles, we prioritised consistency and clarity given the large volume of data and time constraints. After data entry was complete, the team revisited all the entries, cleaned the data and proposed a set of high-level topic categories based on a review of all the topic entries. These categories were discussed and refined during the meetings, and, where needed, new high-level categories were added rather than replacing the initial descriptors. Once all the articles were grouped under these high-level categories, we revisited the initial topic codes to gain deeper insights. The full list of high-level categories can be seen in Appendix 1.

In addition to topic and content, we attempted to capture patterns in authorship by analysing author characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, institutional affiliation and academic role. As with topic coding, these demographic variables required additional interpretation. Since *NZS* has not historically systemically collected demographic information, (except when authors included author bios), we relied on a combination of personal knowledge and publicly available sources (e.g., university staff online profiles, biographies, pronoun usage and iwi/hapū affiliation where provided) to identify author characteristics. Ethnicity was coded using the definitions outlined in Appendix 2. Identifying authors’ academic roles also posed additional challenges. For earlier articles, academic role information was missing, and identified roles may not reflect the author’s actual positions at the time of publication. The introduction of author bios in 2003 significantly helped in the collection of relevant information, particularly regarding institutional affiliation, academic role, iwi/hapū affiliation and research interests. However, gaps and inconsistencies remain, and we acknowledge the limitations and potential inaccuracies in our categorisation of author demographics.

We used Google Scholar to identify each article’s citations. Although a more comprehensive citation analysis would have been useful in measuring the relative importance or impact of articles published in *NZS*, we decided not to conduct a separate citation analysis due to time and resource constraints. This is another area of interest for future study.

While this approach has limitations, it offers a broader view of structural patterns in representation across the journal’s history. The findings from our descriptive statistics are presented and discussed in the following sections. The team has performed the statistical analysis and collectively interpreted and drafted the findings section. While we made every effort to ensure consistency, transparency and reflexivity in our document/publication trend analysis, some limitations were unavoidable. These include incomplete or ambiguous metadata, subjective data-coding decisions, and the interpretative challenges inherent in a collaborative manual process. We view this document analysis as a starting point for future, more systematic, longer-term investigations into epistemic justice, representation and knowledge production in Aotearoa New Zealand’s sociological publishing landscape.

Contribution types

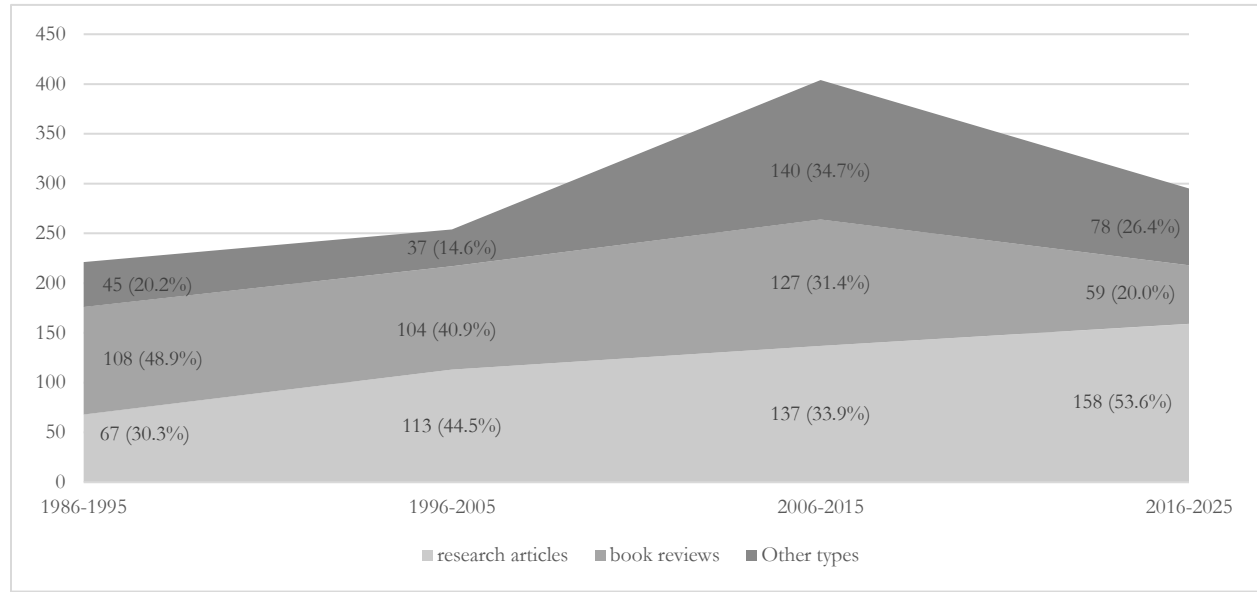
³ <https://search.informit.org/loi/nzs/>

Since its first issue in 1986, *NZS* has published 1174 contributions to promote dialogue and exchange between New Zealand sociologists and the global community of sociology. As shown in Table 1, these contributions comprise 475 research articles (40.5 per cent), 398 book reviews (33.9 per cent), and 301 further contributions (25.6 per cent), which are made up of editorials, symposia, review essays (non-books), obituaries, research notes, commentaries, as well as thesis summaries and more. It is worth noting that, as shown in Figure 1, research articles have not always been the dominant form of publication in *NZS*. During the decade 1986–1995, for example, book reviews made up 48.9 per cent of all contributions, with research articles much lower at 30.3 per cent. During the decade 1996–2005, book reviews decreased to 40.9 per cent, with research articles being slightly higher than book reviews at 44.5 per cent. In contrast, the past decade (2016–2025) shows a notable shift: 53.6 per cent of contributions were research articles, while book reviews decreased to 20.0 per cent. Although book reviews were once a prominent contribution format, both the number and proportion of research articles have steadily increased each decade from 67 research articles (30.3 per cent in 1986–1995) to 158 research articles (53.6 per cent in 2016–2025), possibly reflecting a broader scholarly emphasis on peer-reviewed original research, changing expectations around scholarly outputs and, as discussed earlier, the contemporary publication landscape. Indeed, as Savage and Olejniczak (2022) note, while books remain an important form of research output among sociologists and social scientists, the field’s publication ecology has become increasingly journal article-dominant, similar to that of the ‘hard’ sciences where journal articles are often treated as the de facto currency of evaluation.

Table 1: Contribution type, number and percentage of total (1986–2025)

	Frequency	%
Research article	475	40.5%
Book review	398	33.9%
Symposium	51	4.3%
Editorial	48	4.1%
Review essay/review article	40	3.4%
Obituary	23	2.0%
Research note	22	1.9%
Comment	18	1.5%
Other	15	1.3%
PhD thesis summary	14	1.2%
Postgraduate essay prize winner	13	1.1%
Debate	11	0.9%
Plenary session	11	0.9%
Research programme report	10	0.9%
Polemic	6	0.5%
Interview	4	0.3%
Teaching report	4	0.3%
Commentary	4	0.3%
Conference review	2	0.2%
Keynote	2	0.2%
Film review	1	0.1%
Inaugural lecture	1	0.1%
Recently completed theses	1	0.1%
Total	1174	100%

Figure 1: Number and percentage of research articles, book reviews and other types by decade (1986–2025)



While we only have access to detailed editorial and publication data since 2017, when *NZS* adopted the current journal digital platform (Open Journal System [OJS]),⁴ and full integration of all editorial workflows from submission to online publication was only completed in 2025, the preliminary journal overview and metrics from 2025 nonetheless provide useful insights into current publishing trends and editorial practices. In 2025, following a couple of years of relatively low submissions and publications, *NZS* saw an increase in activity: 41 submissions were received, and 14 were accepted for publication. Across 2025, *NZS* published two issues (including one special issue) containing 22 contributions. Our current acceptance rate is 38.0 per cent. Editorial processing times also offer insight into the journal’s functioning. On average, the current editorial team takes 18 days to make a first editorial decision (whether it is a desk rejection or to be sent out for review), and, from submission to acceptance, the full editorial process takes an average of 209 days. This long publication time frame reflects the fact that, until late-2025, all articles could not be published until the full issue was released (currently, articles are published as Online First ahead of the issues). While this timeline also reflects the realities of working within a voluntary editorial and peer-review model, with limited institutional support, it highlights the importance of strengthening the journal’s infrastructure and resourcing. For comparative purposes, the *JoS* reports a cumulative acceptance rate of 25.1 per cent and an average of 37 days to first editorial decision (see the *JoS* website for the latest overview and metrics).⁵ While *JoS* operates under a different publishing model and with the support of a commercial and more robust editorial infrastructure,⁶ such comparisons are useful for situating *NZS* within a wider publishing landscape.

Authorship

Individual authorship and concentration of authorship

⁴ <https://openjournalsystems.com>

⁵ <https://journals.sagepub.com/overview-metric/IOS>

⁶ Currently, *JoS* publishes with Sage and uses the ScholarOne Manuscripts system.

Five hundred and four unique authors have been identified across the 475 research articles published since 1986. Notably, the authorship is overwhelmingly skewed towards individual authorship: 341 articles (71.8 per cent) are sole-authored, with 89 co-authored by two people, 22 by three authors, and 23 by four or more contributors. However, while the dominance of sole authorship persists, recent years have seen a modest shift: between 2016 and 2025, 62.7 per cent of research articles were sole-authored, compared with 71.8 per cent of research articles published over the journal's history (since 1986). These patterns may be symptomatic of the nature of the discipline and/or broader structural incentives in Aotearoa New Zealand's academic system, particularly the PBRF, which continues to reward individual scholarly output (see, for example, Boston et al., 2005). This emphasis on individual authorship may reinforce entrenched academic conventions and narrow definitions of scholarly merit, while inadvertently constraining interdisciplinary, cross-institutional and community-engaged collaborative research practices. Interestingly, this pattern is not unique to *NZS*. As Praus (2025) reports, while co-authorship has become the norm in the fields of engineering and the natural sciences, single-authored publications continue to dominate in the social sciences, humanities and arts. While we may not necessarily agree with their interpretation, Firat and Atasoy (2023) argue that single-authored articles tend to receive more citations and are often perceived as more cohesive and easier to read than co-authored ones. Indeed, seven of the top 10 most-cited articles in *NZS* are sole-authored (see Table 5). However, these claims demand critical scrutiny, particularly in light of collaborative, relational and collective research practices and knowledge production traditions in social science scholarship. Although still less common in *NZS* publishing patterns (e.g., 11 out of the 14 research articles published in *NZS* in 2025 were sole-authored), collaborative, relational and collective practices challenge the individualism and neoliberal logics embedded in dominant academic cultures and publishing landscapes.

In addition to the dominance of single authorship, the concentration of authorship is evident in patterns of prolific publication. Charles Crothers stands as the most prolific contributor in the last 40 years of *NZS*, with 80 publications across all contribution types. His dominance and his sole-authored publications are consistent across different metrics:

- 76 all contributions types (as first author)
- 57 all contribution types excluding editorials (in any position)
- 53 all contribution types excluding editorials (as first author)
- 8 research articles (all author positions), of which 6 are sole-authored.

Other leading contributors include David Pearson (22), Paul Spoonley (19), Steve Matthewman (18) and Martin Tolich (17). Among research articles specifically, Charles Crothers published 8, tied in first place with Martin Tolich (8) and Roy Shuker (8), followed closely by Brian Roper (7). Even though Charles Crothers sadly passed away in 2023 before *NZS*'s 40th anniversary, his scholarly contributions, editorial leadership and institutional memory have left an indelible mark on the journal and on sociology in Aotearoa New Zealand more broadly. In celebrating this milestone, we also therefore acknowledge with deep respect the passing of one of the discipline's most enduring figures, a scholar whose commitment to building and sustaining *NZS* remains a legacy for future generations of sociologists in Aotearoa New Zealand. At the same time, without downplaying these contributions, we also note that, as elaborated later, these leading contributors are predominantly Pākehā men. We observed a clear concentration of authorship within this powerful group, although citation patterns show a somewhat different picture.

Authors' institutional affiliation and career stage

For research articles, across all author positions, the top 10 institutional affiliations overall are shown in Table 2. The University of Auckland is in the first place, with 144 research article author affiliations (across all positions). Given that the university has a sizeable and research-active Sociology Department, this finding is not surprising.

However, closer analysis shows that academics affiliated with Massey University accounted for the largest share of research article contributions (first author) in the first two decades (1986–2005) of the journal, while the University of Auckland took the top spot in 2006–2015 and retained it in 2016–2025. These patterns likely reflect both the historical strength and size of these departments, as well as the editorial influence of scholars affiliated with them (see the authors’ biographical notes at the bottom of the first page of this article for more detail). Indeed, many of the journal’s most prolific contributors have been based at either Massey University or the University of Auckland at different points in time, including *NZS*’s most prolific contributor, Charles Crothers, who worked at the University of Auckland as a lecturer and senior lecturer in the 1980s and 1990s. While most of the articles are authored by New Zealand university-based academics, 8.9 per cent of all research articles across the journal’s history had one or more overseas contributors. Beyond the eight New Zealand universities, overseas universities and other tertiary institutions, research articles have also been authored by academics, public servants and practitioners from a range of government agencies (e.g., Stats NZ, New Zealand Police, New Zealand Treasury, Tasman District Council, Northland Health District Board), organisations (Project Ihumātao, Plant and Food Research, Motu Economic and Public Policy Research, Whakauae Research for Māori Health & Development), secondary education (Otumoetai College) and the private sector (Business and Economic Research Ltd).

Table 2: Top 10 institutional affiliations (research articles; all author positions)

University of Auckland	144
Massey University	105
Victoria University of Wellington	65
University of Otago	62
University of Waikato	44
University of Canterbury	41
Auckland University of Technology	36
Lincoln University	13
Griffith University, La Trobe University & Unitec	5 each
Monash University, University of Sydney & Stats NZ	3 each
Total	655

Note: The total is greater than the number of research articles due to there being more than one author per article.

The most common academic roles among first authors of research articles published in *NZS* over time include senior lecturers, lecturers, professors and PhD candidates. Sabharwal (2013) found that social scientists publish journal articles at the highest rate during mid-career (e.g., senior lecture and associate professor) and books at the highest rate at later-career stages. However, examining the relationship between career stages and publishing activity is challenging because the availability of detailed author information, unfortunately, varies across decades. As mentioned earlier, in the earlier years of the journal’s history, such data were sparse, as author bios were not collected until 2003. The lack of biographical detail makes it difficult to ascertain trends with precision for the first two decades of publication. In contrast, from 2006 onwards, with consistent inclusion of author bios, clear patterns emerge. In the 2006–2015 decade, the most common academic roles among first authors were senior lecturer (20) and associate professor (16). In the 2016–2025 decade, the most common academic role among first authors of research articles was that of PhD candidate (31), followed by senior lecturer (21). This rise in doctoral student authorship likely reflects broader structural and cultural shifts in academia and academic publishing. As Burns and Rajcan (2019) found, New Zealand PhD students in sociology who completed their degrees between 2013 and 2017 published an average of 2.1 articles per student, with nearly half producing at least one sole-authored output. The growing prominence of doctoral candidates as first authors may be the result of increasing demands to publish early. Universities offer the option to

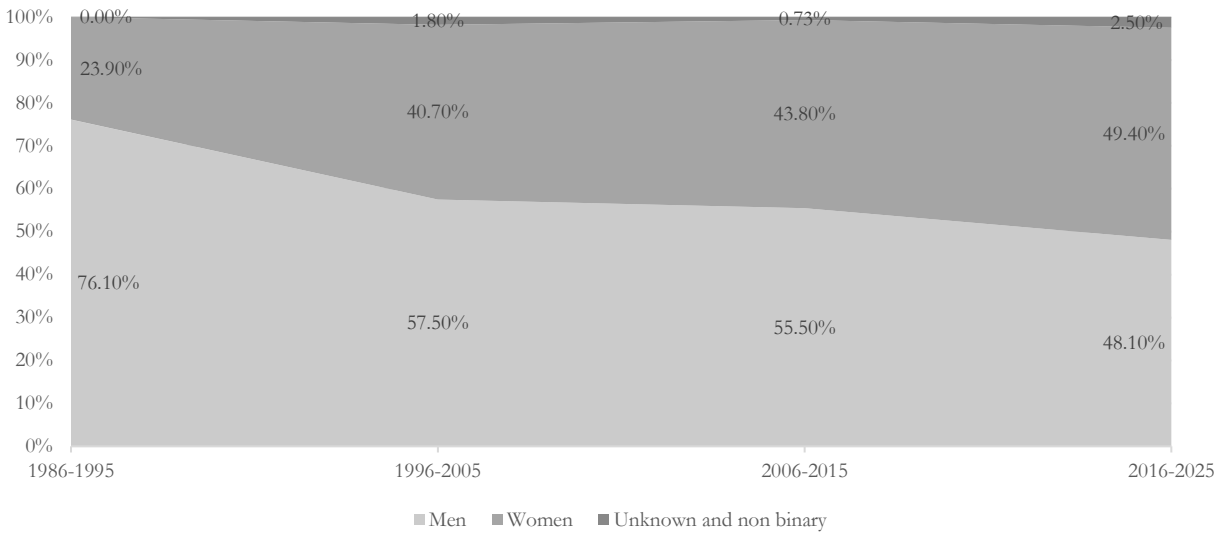
complete a PhD thesis with a set number of publications (see Lee & Kamler, 2008; Robins & Kanowski, 2008). At the same time, this pattern also reflects the role of *NZS* in supporting emerging scholars. Aligning with the values of the wider SAANZ community, *NZS* encourages ECRs to publish through the graduate prize, special issues, feedback process, etc., and has indeed functioned as a valuable platform for emerging scholars in Aotearoa New Zealand. Nonetheless, the broader academic precarity facing ECRs, especially those outside traditional university pathways or on short-term contracts, raises important questions about whose research makes it to publication, and whose does not.

Gender and ethnic/racial representation

Another key dimension of our analysis are the gendered and racialised patterns of knowledge production in *NZS*, focusing on the question of who produces sociological publications in Aotearoa New Zealand. Sociologists have long highlighted the costs of excluding women and scholars of Colour from the disciplinary mainstream: who produces knowledge matters because it shapes what knowledge is produced, how it is framed, and who it serves (Lockhart et al., 2024). Key standpoint theorists such as Collins (1986), Smith (1974) and others argue that marginalised and minoritised scholars bring not only different material concerns and interests but also ‘privileged’ perspectives from which to radically and sociologically critique dominant theories and generate new insights, including concepts such as intersectionality. Indeed, one finding (as discussed above) that gave us pause for thought is that all the leading contributors to the journal are Pākehā male academics. Bearing in mind the data limitations noted earlier, analysis revealed clear gender and ethnic disparities among the authors.

Across the journal’s history, men make up more than half (59.3 per cent) of all contributors (for all article types across all author positions), while 36.9 per cent of contributors are women and 3.8 per cent are gender diverse or unspecified authors. Focusing on research articles (all author positions), men account for 55.6 per cent of authors and women 42.5 per cent, with gender diverse and unspecified authors constituting 2.0 per cent. As shown in Figure 2, in the first decade of the journal (1986–1995) when the gender gap was greatest, men comprised three quarters of research article first authors. Notably, during that period, women (as first authors) made up a higher proportion of book reviewers than they did as authors of research articles (32.4 per cent versus 23.9 per cent). However, by the most recent decade (2016–2025), women comprised 49.4 per cent of first authors of research articles, outnumbering men (48.1 per cent). In contrast, men continue to outnumber women as first authors of book reviews (55.9 per cent versus 37.3 per cent). Overall, these figures show modest improvement over time but also suggest that structural gender inequality and sexism in academia, particularly in access to research time, resources and mentorship, continues to shape who publishes, how often and with what visibility (see, for example, Fox, 2005; Leahey et al., 2008; Llorens et al., 2021). Indeed, similar publication trend analyses of international sociology journals likewise report persistent gender inequalities in authorship. Hunter and Leahey (2008), for example, found lower rates of first- and sole-authored publications among women in sociology journals, and Akbaritabar and Squazzoni (2021) also showed that the *American Sociological Review* and the *American Journal of Sociology*, the two most prominent journals in sociology, published disproportionately more articles by male authors.

Figure 2: Gender distribution (first authors of research articles)



One of the most pressing concerns emerging from our analysis is the underrepresentation of Māori and Pacific scholars, despite the journal’s stated aim to explicitly encourage scholarship by, or relating to, Māori and Pacific Peoples.⁷ Overall, only 3.1 per cent of all contributors (first authors) to *NZS* are identified as Māori and 1.4 per cent as Pacific Peoples, with very few Asian, Middle Eastern and South/Central American authors (1.4 per cent). Focusing on research articles (all author positions), out 354 recorded author ethnicities, 9.0 per cent of authors are identified as Māori, 4.9 per cent as Pacific Peoples, and 2.0 per cent as Asian, Middle Eastern and South/Central American—while Pākehā authors (New Zealand European) comprise 70.6 per cent. The remaining 13.5 per cent comprise authors from Europe, Australia, North America and South Africa. These figures are alarmingly low in a country where Māori are tangata whenua and Pacific Peoples form a significant and growing proportion of the population. Moreover, there are no Māori or Pacific identified first authors of research articles in the journal’s first decade (1986–1995). The first Māori-authored research article appeared only in 2003, and the first Pacific-authored article in 2004. While the last decade has shown some progress—8.2 per cent of first authors of research articles between 2016 and 2025 were Māori, and 5.7 per cent Pacific—these figures remain insufficient given the calls for decolonising sociology, for centring Indigenous and Pacific worldviews in social science research and for epistemic justice. Consistent with Hermanowicz and Clayton’s (2020) finding that minority scholars (African American and Latinx in their publication trend analysis of *American Sociological Review* and *American Journal of Sociology*) were more likely to publish sole-authored articles than their White (and Asian) counterparts, we found that 12 of the 13 research articles (92.3 per cent) published in *NZS* authored by Pacific scholars are sole-authored. By contrast, while 71.8 per cent of all *NZS* research articles are sole-authored overall, half of Māori-authored research articles (50.0 per cent) are sole-authored. Because exploring the relationship between race/ethnicity and publication productivity was unfortunately beyond the scope of our study, we suggest that future research explore these patterns in *NZS* in more depth. Hermanowicz and Clayton (2020) propose that lower rates of co-authorship among minority scholars may reflect methodological preferences, while Alfred (2001) and Verugo (2003) suggest that they may reflect reported isolation and social marginalisation within their institutions and wider academic community.

⁷ It is unfortunately unknown at what point this officially became part of the scope of *NZS*.

Given the historical domination of science in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere by Western, Pākehā/White and male scholars, it is unsurprising that authorship in sociology journals globally remains less diverse in terms of gender and race/ethnicity, even though higher percentages of PhDs, ECRs and full-time academics in sociology today are women and ethnic/racial minorities (Lockhart et al., 2024). The demographic composition of authors matters, with implications for what and how knowledge is produced in sociology. We acknowledge that marginalised and minoritised scholars do not automatically produce ‘good’ knowledge, but, as Collins (1986) and Smith (1974) would argue, more active engagement with Māori, Pacific and other minoritised and migrant scholars is essential for helping sociological knowledge production in Aotearoa New Zealand (and beyond). In this sense, their underrepresentation in *NZS* is deeply concerning, and addressing it should be a priority task for the current and future editorial teams.

Citation patterns and knowledge hierarchies

Although *NZS* does not track impact factors, citation data available via Google Scholar and Scopus suggest that the journal maintains a modest but consistent readership (see Table 3), particularly among Aotearoa New Zealand-based scholars, with some degree of international engagement. Notably, one of the top cited articles (see Table 4), Tunufa‘i’s (2016) article “Pacific research: Rethinking the Talanoa ‘Methodology’”, has attracted significant Pacific and international engagement: 41.8 per cent of its citations came from authors based outside Aotearoa New Zealand,⁸ mostly from Pacific nations but also including Australia, South Africa and Japan. Overall, the average citation count per article (across all contribution types published between 1986 and 2025) remains relatively low with a mean of 7.9 and a median of 4. This is perhaps unsurprising for a local sociology journal that primarily serves a regionally grounded academic community and is not embedded in the core circuits of global publishing and citation economies. For comparison, the average citation counts per article for *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online* and the *JoS* between 2015 and 2024 were 9.2 and 16.6, respectively,^{9, 10}. It is important to acknowledge that citation counts are dynamic and continually updated as new publications become available daily. Our citation analysis offers a snapshot in time, based on data collected between March and July 2025, and reflects access to Google Scholar, Scopus and SciVal at different points throughout that period. While this provides a useful overview of general citation patterns, it does not represent the most current citation data available at the time of publication.

Table 3: Distribution of citations as of 31 July 2025 ($n = 650$) (excluded are 522 other types of contributions)

Citations	Frequency
50+	11
40–49	5
30–39	18
20–29	22
10–19	102
1–9	360
0	115
Unknown	17

Importantly, citation patterns do not map neatly onto traditional academic hierarchies. As shown in Table 4, citation concentration does not reflect authorship patterns as discussed above. While some long-

⁸ Data source: Scopus (<https://www.scopus.com>).

⁹ Data source: SciVal (<https://www.scival.com/home>).

¹⁰ Data source: SciVal (<https://www.scival.com/home>).

standing scholars feature prominently, others with high publication counts are less frequently cited. Conversely, some of the highly cited works are by Māori, Pacific, women and ECR scholars; for example, Tunufa'i's (2016) highly cited article on Pacific research methodology exemplifies how publications dealing with pressing sociological issues can achieve significant reach beyond national borders, particularly when they speak to notable gaps in dominant methodological and sociological paradigms. Similarly, University of Otago-based scholars such as Chris Brickell (2003) have produced highly cited articles that continue to shape sociological research and conversations within and beyond Aotearoa New Zealand. These examples highlight that citation impact in *NZS* is often driven less by author prestige or institutional affiliation, and, presumably, more by the relevance, originality and timeliness of the research itself. At the same time, the relatively low average citation rate overall may also reflect broader structural limitations unfortunately: the marginal status of local journals within global academic capitalism, and the enduring biases within citation practices that privilege dominant Western knowledge producers and mainstream sociological research.

Thematic and epistemological trends

The breadth of topics in *NZS* is extensive; however, in this article, we focus on four key thematic areas of interest: (1) gender, (2) social theory, (3) neoliberalism, and (4) Indigenous and Pacific scholarship. Nevertheless, as shown in Table 5, while the diversity of topics is commendable (see Appendix 1 for a list of the topic categories we identified across the *NZS* articles), there is a notable tendency for certain thematic clusters to dominate, especially those aligned with established Western theoretical traditions such as gender, neoliberalism and policy. This is not to suggest that these themes are not important; rather, their prominence may point to the enduring influence of particular theoretical canons and analytic agendas in shaping what is most visible and most frequently taken up within *NZS*. By contrast, topics such as decolonisation, biculturalism, populism, migration, environmental adaptation and climate change resilience, which are central to today's sociopolitical and socioenvironmental life in Aotearoa New Zealand, are relatively recent additions to the journal's repertoire. This thematic imbalance reflects broader tensions within sociology as a discipline in Aotearoa New Zealand; for example, between challenging settler colonialism and complying with it, and between openness to epistemic pluralism and the reproduction of academic canons. As such, we note that, as discussed in the following sections, *NZS*'s thematic shifts over time are not just a record of changing sociological concerns, but also index the discipline's responsiveness (or lack thereof) to the demands of Indigenous resurgence, Pacific scholarship, feminist praxis and other critical interventions. In this sense, *NZS* is not just an archive of published sociology, it is a mirror of sociology in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Table 4: Top 10 cited articles

Citations	Author	Title	Issue	Institution
114	Chris Brickell	Performativity or performance: Clarifications in the sociology of gender	2003, 18(1)	University of Otago
110	Laumua Tunufa'i	Pacific research: Rethinking the Talanoa 'methodology'	2016, 31(7)	Auckland University of Technology
72	Liz Beddoe	Feral families, troubled families: The spectre of the underclass in New Zealand 2011–2013	2014, 29(3)	University of Auckland
64	Brian Easton	Poverty in New Zealand: 1981–1993	1995, 10(1)	Economic and Social Trust, Wellington
59	Brett McEwan et al.	New Zealand culture of intoxication: Local and global influence	2010, 25(2)	University of Waikato
59	Rebecca Stringer et al.	“My entire career has been fixed term”: Gender and precarious academic employment at a New Zealand university	2018, 33(2)	University of Otago
56	Brendan Hokowhitu	Māori masculinity, post-structuralism and the emerging self	2003, 18(2)	University of Otago
55	Edgar Burns	Positioning a post-professional approach to studying professions	2007, 22(1)	Eastern Institute of Technology
53	Vivienne Elizabeth	From domestic violence to coercive control: Towards the recognition of oppressive intimacy in the Family Court	2015, 30(2)	University of Auckland
53	James Rimumutu George and Lena Rodriguez	Hybrid youth identity in the Māori/Pacific Island diaspora in Australia: A study of young urban Polynesian men in Sydney	2009, 24(1)	University of Newcastle

Table 5: Top 10 topic categories

Topic category	Total number	Most common related categories
Gender	49	Work (12), sexuality (7), deviance (6), family (6), social theory (6), health (5), research methodologies (5) [30 unique categories]
Social theory	49	None (11), research methodologies (5), class (4), gender (4) [18 unique categories]
Neoliberalism	42	Education (7), work (6), policy (5), politics (5), inequalities (4) [26 unique categories]
Policy	39	Neoliberalism (5), politics (4), children and youth (3), education (3), environment (3), sociology as discipline (3) [28 unique categories]
Sociology as a discipline	38	None (13), education (4), policy (3) [20 unique categories]
Culture	37	None (15), nationhood (4), settler state (3), technology (3) [19 unique categories]
Research methodologies	36	None (14), social theory (6), gender (5) [14 unique categories]
Politics	34	None (5), neoliberalism (5), policy (5) [20 unique categories]
Work	34	Gender (12), neoliberalism (6), migration (5), family (4). [23 unique categories]
Education	33	Neoliberalism (7), none (4), sociology as discipline (4), inequalities (3), migration (3), policy (3), social theory (3) [19 unique categories]

Key themes explored

Gender

As one of the most prominent topics overall, gender has been prevalent throughout the journal's history. In the first decade of the journal (1986–1995), six research articles were coded as having gender as a key theme, increasing to 16 articles across the second decade. There was a noticeable drop in the third decade (2006–2015), with only nine articles pertaining directly to gender. However, the most recent decade (2016–2025) has so far seen an increase, with 18 articles related to gender. The earlier decades saw authors engaging with a range of theoretical orientations to discuss gender. For instance, authors often wrote about gender from a critical Marxist

perspective (see Bedggood, 2000; Roper, 1988; Saville-Smith, 1987), or a poststructuralist one (Atmore, 1994; Brickell, 2003; Hokowhitu, 2003; O'Neill, 2000). A focus on topics around gender in connection to work (in public and private spheres), and especially gendered experiences of work in rural or small-town communities in Aotearoa New Zealand was notable across earlier decades. For instance, Clifford-Walton et al.'s (1997) empirical study of rural South Island women navigating the impacts of economic deregulation in agriculture documents an increase in women's labour—both paid and unpaid—illustrating a phenomenon which may be referred to as the “double shift” in contemporary critical feminist scholarship (Fraser & Leonard, 2016). Other research articles published around this time also chart the increasing impacts of neoliberal governance on the gendered distribution of labour in workplaces and across family life (Baker, 1999; Bedggood, 2000; Copas, 2001). From the late 2010s onwards, this focus shifted slightly to examinations of the prevalence of gendered experiences of precarious employment, lack of access to career progression, and unstable representation within academia (Brown et al., 2020; Stringer et al., 2018; Toyibah, 2020).

The connection between gender and race, class, sexuality and other identifiers is unevenly accounted for in research articles across the four decades. It was common for articles discussing gender in earlier decades to conceptualise gendered experiences of several issues, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, in a manner that unwittingly universalised such experiences through a Pākehā, middle-class and hetero- and cis-normative viewpoint. This could be reinforced by Pākehā/White authors not always questioning or engaging with the social construction of gender vis-à-vis a ubiquity of whiteness akin to the settler-colonising context of Aotearoa New Zealand. There were some notable exceptions to this, however, including Bev James's (1986) multifaceted reflexive account of feminist research in Aotearoa New Zealand, published in the journal's first year. Building on Smith (1974), James (1986) called both sociology and Western feminist scholarship to account, arguing that they must both address their discipline's politics of exclusion and work towards accounting for lived experiences of women (and all people) in an intersectional manner. While James does not herself use the term intersectionality, she does engage with race and class substantially through critically interrogating the limits of her own positionality as a Pākehā feminist researcher, and arguing that those excluded from research processes must be centred for both sociological and feminist research to be relevant to the whole population. Hokowhitu (2003) also articulates how gender, race and power are key mechanisms of the “civilising” project and ongoing colonisation of Aotearoa New Zealand. Furthermore, the increase in engagement with gender in the most recent decade has seen more pluralistic, dialogical and reflexive approaches. Recently, Berryman-Kamp (2025) developed a Māori theory of gender rooted in local contexts and experiences, highlighting the limitations of Western gendered theory and its material disconnection to Indigenous lived realities, while extending and deepening Butler's (1999) performativity in dialogue with lived experience and community context. These increasingly critical and pluralistic threads of engagement with gender also feature within the authors' development of social theory.

Social theory

Alongside gender, social theory was an equally prominent topic. The first two decades of the journal saw relatively more scholarship about social theory than has been published in the latter two. In 1986–1995, there were 13 research articles about social theory (which was the primary topic for 11 of these), and in 1996–2005, there were 17 research articles about social theory (the primary topic for 11 of these). In 2006–2015, this had dropped to 12 (of which 7 were primarily about social theory), and in the most recent decade of the journal, there were just seven articles about social theory, of which only three primarily concerned this topic.

In the first decade of the journal, authors debated social theory across volumes and issues, with ‘replies to’ articles a feature of this period. The 1980s saw a focus on class and materialism, with applications including

social inequality and feminist materialism. Although most authors wrote from a Marxist or Gramscian perspective, Roy Nash (1986, 1987) argued for rational choice theory using Boudon. The early 1990s saw a shift towards language and discourse (though with class still a concern); Bourdieu and Latour also feature. In the years 1996–2005 Latour, Callon and Actor Network Theory (ANT) dominated the corpus of social theory articles, largely due to a 2002 special edition on ANT in which it was applied to diverse areas from 9/11 to policy analysis to decolonisation. Language again features in a critique of the representational/linguistic/semiotic turn (Beilharz, 2001). Chris Brickell (2003) contrasts Butler and Goffman in his article, asking whether gender is a matter of performativity or performance; and, as mentioned above, Brendan Hokowhitu (2003) writes about Māori masculinity using Foucault's post-structural theories.

In the third decade of the journal, theorists like Latour, Lacan, Bourdieu, Deleuze and Guattari were applied to diverse applications including bodies, religion, Facebook, education and work. Conflicts and crises feature: second- and third-wave feminism collide in Jean Sergent-Shadbolt's (2015) dissection of Germaine Greer's "inflammatory rhetoric" about transgender people. The winner of the 2005 postgraduate prize for scholarship in sociology, Wendy Bolitho (2006), ponders where to go after the linguistic, post-structural turn, suggesting a "radical creative approach" that draws on Marxism, feminism and psychoanalysis. In the most recent decade of the journal, David Neilson (2016, 2018) brings Marx back in his articles about neoliberalism, capitalism, class and development; Seonaid Espiner (2018) advocates feminist utopianism (with anarchism and radical environmentalism) as an alternative to capitalism; and hope and utopianism feature in several articles in a 2024 special section. Maia Berryman-Kamp (2025) closes the decade with her Māori theory of gender performativity, challenging and extending Butler.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism has also been growing as a popular topic in *NZS*. While we found 42 articles that primarily focused on neoliberalism, many more articles beyond this count still include discussion of neoliberalism. The first decade of the journal only saw four articles primarily on neoliberalism, and the second decade had five. However, this increased substantially in the third decade to 12 articles on the topic, and almost doubled again in the most recent decade to 21 articles. This trend may be consistent with increasing critical scholarly attention since 2008 to neoliberalism through Foucauldian and Marxist lenses (see Roper, 2024, p. 50). We note that the third and fourth decades of the journal also include the years in which Charles Crothers was editor, where there were often several issues within a volume. There was also a 2018 Special Issue: *Neoliberalism and Tertiary Education*, with numerous contributions on neoliberalism and the university, which also make up these higher numbers for the most recent decade. Throughout the decades, Roper has critically traced neoliberalism, the state and society, beginning with his two-part Marxist account of New Zealand's transition from Keynesianism to New Right neoclassicism (neoliberalism) in 1991, to more recently reflecting on how neoliberalism can most fruitfully be made sense of via historical materialist analysis, as well as mapping out vantage points of resistance that sow seeds of hope for collective liberation from neoliberal hegemonies (see Roper, 1991a, 1991b, 2011, and 2024, p. 56). Roper concludes these reflections by emphasising dynamic, multifaceted forms of resistance, both on the ground and through academic publications, which are flourishing in this space—much of which is led by young people (see also Nairn et al., 2022). Many of the contributions on neoliberalism, particularly in relation to work, inequality, class and political economy, are rooted in Marxist critique and dialectical approaches to understanding the social implications of neoliberal governance (Bedggood, 2000; Murray, 2015; Ongley, 2013; Taylor & Grey, 2014).

The criticality of such approaches, alongside as well as interwoven through Roper's (2024) recent analysis, build space for ongoing, deep interrogation of neoliberalism as it continues to permeate local and

international contexts. Some of the dialectical approaches to neoliberalism by authors of this journal have gestured towards how it operates as a vehicle for ongoing colonisation in Aotearoa (Curtis, 2015), as well as highlighting intersectional failures of neoliberalism across different contexts (Bedggood, 2000; Reynolds et al., 2020; Stringer et al., 2018). However, almost all the authors who have contributed on neoliberalism are Pākehā/White, which may have resulted in a less detailed engagement with neoliberalism's entrenchment within the workings of our settler-colonising context, and the colonial agenda underpinning political economy and Crown claims to governance in Aotearoa, on the whole.

Indigenous, Māori and Pacific scholarship

Across the journal's publication history, we identified 17 and 19 articles, respectively, that examine topics pertaining to Māori communities and Pacific Peoples, while 14 articles centre Indigeneity. The latter code was used for articles that employ Indigenous knowledge and foreground Indigenous rights rather than, for instance, for analyses that involve Māori or Pacific people as research participants. Some articles were coded with two of these topic categories (either Māori and Pacific Peoples [5] or Māori and Indigeneity [3]), and some with multiple codes; therefore, the analysis comprises 43 individual articles.

All but two of these 43 articles were published in the 2000s. Exceptions are "Institutional racism and the 'retention' of Māori students in Northland" (Peters & Marshall, 1990) and "Resisting legal marginalisation: Inserting identity in critical socio-legal thought" (Tie, 1998). More than half of all the articles (27) were published in the most recent decade, 2016–2025. It is especially noteworthy that 12 out of 19 articles that discuss topics pertaining to Pacific Peoples were published in two special issues, in 2016 and 2022. While special issues serve to highlight thematic issues and address gaps, the fact that few general issues include such articles presents a concerning form of containment of Pacific knowledge and themes.

As Keil et al. (2026) have argued, there is a problematic history of non-Pacific and non-Māori scholars dominating research and publications that are 'about' Māori and Pacific 'issues'. In *NZS*, we found mixed results: approximately half of all the articles pertaining to Māori topics were written by Māori authors, whereas Pacific-focused articles were largely written by Pacific authors.

Over time, research articles that examine questions in relation to whānau Māori have traversed the fields of youth, education and work, health, gender and sexuality, and criminal justice, while those focused on Pacific communities have primarily analysed migration and the places and practices that shape diaspora identities as well as youth, sexuality and health. Much of this scholarship reflects a strengths-based approach and many scholars have sought to centre people's lived experience and expertise in order to critique and counter institutional oppression. For instance, Martin's (2023) work on cultural imperialism and Webb et al.'s (2022) examination of Māori and Samoan experiences of youth justice in three settler societies foregrounded insider narratives to critique the systemic racism of the criminal justice system. Most of the articles focus on Aotearoa, with a few exceptions that focus on Australia, including Māori and Pacific youth in the Australian diaspora (George & Rodriguez, 2009), an analysis of public opinions about Indigenous land rights in Australia (van den Eynde & Dharmalingam, 2008), and three articles discussing how migration (Macpherson, 2008), telecommunications technologies (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2016), and New Zealand gang culture (Faleolo, 2016) have influenced populations in the Pacific islands.

Recent articles have notably shifted towards foregrounding Māori and Pacific knowledge and Indigenous aspirations of rangatiratanga and mana motuhake with respect to scholarship (e.g., Barnes, 2022; Forster, 2022), land rights (Hancock et al., 2020), food systems (Forster, 2013), and policy development (Boulton, 2019). Challenging hegemonic Western discourses, several articles promote Indigenous-led understandings of, for instance, bodies (Gillon et al., 2022) and gender (Berryman-Kamp, 2025), while others

advance Māori and Pacific research methodologies (e.g., Tunufa'i, 2016) as well as the intersections between Māori and Pacific “research relations” (Smith & Wolfgramm-Foliaki, 2022).

Book reviews

Since its inception, *NZS* has maintained a strong tradition of publishing book reviews, positioning the journal not only as an outlet for original sociological research but also as a key site for showcasing and engaging with the deep scholarship in monographs as well as with edited collections and textbooks of interest to New Zealand sociologists. Between 1986 and 2025, the journal published 398 book reviews (reviews of single books) and review essays (thematic reviews covering multiple books), making up 34 per cent of all contributions to the journal. While the number of reviews initially increased, their prominence has gradually waned: reviews made up nearly 50 per cent of contributions in the first decade, but only 20 per cent in the most recent decade. The period from 2009 to 2017 certainly marked a high point, with 140 book reviews, or approximately 15–16 reviews per year.

Global publication trends (see Hodge et al., 2023) demonstrate a dwindling of book reviews, partly owing to journal citation metrics. Not only do we continue to place value on sharing and discussing the contributions of scholarly monographs but also the relationships we have developed with academic publishers in Aotearoa New Zealand (particularly Bridget Williams Books and university presses—Massey, Auckland, Otago and Victoria) and internationally (particularly Polity, Bloomsbury, Cambridge University Press and Oxford University Press). Our analysis shows that approximately two thirds of the books reviewed (245 or 61.6 per cent) were focused on Aotearoa New Zealand, while the remaining 153 (38.4 per cent) reviewed works with an international or geographically comparative focus.

As with research articles, we note distinct gender and ethnic disparities in review authorship. The top five review contributors are Charles Crothers (16), David Pearson (11), Peter Beatson (8), Paul Spoonley (8) and Steve Matthewman (7), reflecting the dominance of Pākehā men within the landscape of book review publications in *NZS*. Gender analysis of the book reviewers across all 398 published book reviews in *NZS* further shows that 232 (58 per cent) were first-authored by men and 153 (38 per cent) by women, with one author identifying as non-binary and 12 reviewers where gender could not be determined from the available information. Assessing authors' ethnicity proved challenging due to limitations in available data. Nonetheless, where identifiable, Pākehā scholars dominated the reviewer pool. By contrast, only a very small number of reviewers represented a broad array of ethnic backgrounds, including Māori, Chinese, Bangladeshi, Fijian, Yugoslavian, Indian, Trinidadian, Samoan and various European groups, with most of this diversity emerging in the new millennium.

In terms of career stage, *NZS* book review authorship is dominated by Aotearoa New Zealand's academic staff across various career stages and postgraduate students like PhD candidates. This pattern mirrors authorship of research articles in the journal (see above). In institutional terms, scholars based at Massey University have been the most frequent contributors, with 104 book reviews authored by its affiliates, followed by the University of Auckland (64), Victoria University of Wellington (31), Auckland University of Technology (22), the University of Waikato (17), University of Canterbury (14), University of Otago (12), and Lincoln University (3). While the majority of contributors are based within New Zealand universities, the journal has also published reviews by authors affiliated with other sectors, such as the Asia New Zealand Foundation and the Ministry of Education, as well as a small number of reviewers from overseas institutions, including universities in Australia, the UK and North America.

Journal editors

Over the four decades, the journal has been guided by 18 editors (excluding associate editors and guest editors). A close look at editorial data from 1986 to 2025 reveals persistent trends of gender and ethnic/racial inequality as well as institutional concentration in editorial leadership, despite some recent signs of diversification. While these trends broadly mirror the authorship patterns discussed earlier, we have decided to present editorial composition as a separate area of analysis. This is because, unlike authorship where the journal does not have control over who contributes, the selection of editors is not random. Editorial appointments are made through deliberative and opportunistic processes, and, as such, editorial composition may more directly reflect both the structural inequalities within the discipline and the composition of the sociology community in Aotearoa New Zealand (and beyond). By closely examining who has held editorial power, we seek to better understand how institutional, gendered and racialised dynamics have shaped the journal's leadership and, by extension, the contours of publishing knowledge. Editorial roles are central to shaping what is published, cited and legitimised within academic fields, and thus requires different analytical attention. As such, this section highlights how editorial decision-making power has historically been concentrated within a relatively narrow group and reflects on emerging efforts to diversify and redistribute that power.

During the journal's first two decades, editorial roles were overwhelmingly occupied by men. With the exception of Mary Murray (1997–2000), all the editors were men. While gender representation became more even over time, the editorial team was also predominantly Pākehā/White throughout the journal's history (except Rob Webb, who is Māori), with no known women of Colour in editorial roles. Massey University, which hosted the journal in its early years, featured prominently as the institutional home of many editors, alongside Victoria University of Wellington and, later, Auckland University of Technology. Two editors were occasionally appointed, although sole editorship happened in three instances. From 2002 to 2007, a three-editor model was briefly adopted before returning to a two-editor structure. Despite *NZS*'s aim to challenge sexism in academia and to promote Māori and Pacific scholarship, the editorial history of *NZS* during these early years suggest that formal decision-making power remained largely concentrated in Pākehā, male and institutionally privileged hands. While we respect earlier leaders who significantly contributed to the development of Aotearoa New Zealand's sociology, as editorial roles are central to shaping what is published, cited and legitimised, this historical homogeneity has likely influenced the content and direction of *NZS* in ways that merit ongoing scrutiny.

It is only in the most recent decade (2016–2025) that the journal has achieved a more balanced gender representation among its editors. The years from 2017 to 2025 have featured one female and one male editor. For instance, Louise Humpage and Bruce Curtis served as co-editors from 2017 to 2021, Jessica Terruhn and Casimir MacGregor from 2022 to 2024, and since 2025, Jessica Terruhn and Shinya Uekusa have been serving as co-editors. This represents an improvement in gender parity, though, as noted above, the editorial team remains predominantly Pākehā.

Institutional affiliations have also shifted over time. Up until 2022, journal editorship typically changed hands every five years. Customarily, a new team from a new institution took over the role. The most recent editors have instituted a new editorial structure that is designed to address inequities and achieve greater continuity. This shift entails having two editors-in-chief from different institutions (currently, the University of Waikato and University of Canterbury) and a larger team of associate editors, who represent most New Zealand universities and include academics of diverse gender, ethnic and career-stage backgrounds who also bring varied fields of expertise. While Massey University no longer dominates the editorial landscape as it did in earlier decades, the most common affiliations in recent years include the University of Waikato, University of Canterbury, University of Auckland and organisations such as the Building Research Association of New

Zealand (BRANZ). These developments suggest a partial decentralisation of editorial power and a more inclusive approach to journal stewardship. That said, scholars from regional universities and community-based institutions remain largely underrepresented in editorial roles, pointing to the need for continued efforts to broaden participation and dismantle structural barriers to academic leadership.

Special issues have been edited by 34 individuals, of which 14 editors are women, 18 are men, one is gender diverse, and one editor's gender is unknown. In terms of ethnicity, the majority of editors appear to be Pākehā or of unknown ethnic identity, with five guest editors identified as Māori or Pacific. Despite the noted data limitations, these findings signal some shifts in the recent years. Institutions represented among special issue editors mirror those of general issues: the University of Waikato, Auckland University of Technology, the University of Auckland, Victoria University of Wellington and the University of Otago. Despite some improvements in gender diversity, racial/ethnic and institutional imbalances persist, limiting the potential for *NZS* to function as a fully inclusive platform for epistemic justice and sociological pluralism.

Conclusion: Where to from here?

Reflecting on the journal's history and looking ahead, the significance of *NZS* at 40 years lies not only in what it has achieved but in what it chooses to become (see also Terruhn et al., 2026, for our roundtable discussion on the past, present and future of *NZS*). Our publication trend analysis suggests that the journal remains an important intellectual home for sociological scholarship in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly for locally grounded, critical and publicly relevant work. However, the publication patterns we identified also point to clear gaps, challenges, opportunities and priorities for the future. If *NZS* is to continue as a meaningful, independent, community-grounded and vibrant journal, it must move beyond simply acknowledging the current publication landscape and inequalities in authorship and knowledge production, and take more active steps to reshape them. This includes improving pathways for Māori, Pacific and other minoritised scholars, supporting postgraduate students and emerging researchers, and fostering a publishing culture that encourages collaboration, plurality, epistemic justice and criticality alongside rigorous scholarship. As the journal enters its next decade, the question is not merely how to preserve *NZS*'s legacy, but how to build on it in ways that better reflect Aotearoa New Zealand's sociological communities, the publics and the futures to which the journal is accountable. Where to from here, then, is an editorial (and collective) question. For the journal, it means continuing to develop strong critical scholarship while also asking who is being invited in, who is still missing, and what forms of sociology are being supported or constrained through existing publishing norms and practices (see also Terruhn et al., 2026, for some gaps and challenges identified during our roundtable conversation). For the SAANZ community (and wider sociology communities and communities beyond sociology), it means treating *NZS* not simply an outpost of our research work but as a living site of knowledge exchange, disciplinary formation and community building, which can contribute to the development of more inclusive, decolonising and socially engaged sociology in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond. Therefore, reaching 40 years offers an opportunity to reimagine the journal's purpose, role and commitment, to expand its intellectual horizons, and to support the ongoing work of contributing to sociology that is more justice-oriented, reflexive and responsive to the changes and challenges of the present world (and ahead). We have developed a publication data set available for the public via the journal website under the Supplementary Materials section for further and future analysis. By sharing this with future generations, we hope that this publication trend analysis as part of *NZS*'s 40th anniversary can be a starting point for longitudinal study. Besides regular editorial tasks, we encourage the current and future editorial team to regularly update the database.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: High-level topic categories

Ageing	Nationhood
Agriculture	Neoliberalism
Children and youth (if not part of families)	Pacific Peoples
Class	Place
Communities	Policy
Consumption	Politics
Corporations	Population
Crime	Poverty
Criminal justice system	Professions
Culture	Racism
Death	Religion
Deviance	Research methodologies
Discrimination	Rural sociology
Economy	Settler society
Education	Sexuality
Emotions	Social movements
Environment	Social enterprise
Ethnicity	Social theory (only if specifically a theoretical discussion rather than applying a concept)
Family	Social work
Food	Sociology – as discipline
Gender	Sports
Globalisation	Technology
Health	Tourism
Housing	Urban sociology
Indigeneity	Violence
Inequalities	Wellbeing
Knowledge production	Work
Language	
Law	
Leisure	
Māori (different from 'Indigeneity')	
Media (different from 'culture')	
Migration	

Appendix 2: Coding ethnicity

Like gender, contributor ethnicity was rarely recorded, and so was largely entered on the basis of personal knowledge or internet search. In later years, it became more common to record iwi affiliation (or Pacific affiliation), from which ethnicity can be derived. For our analysis, we have used the following definitions:

Asian	Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, Malaysian/Chinese, South Asian, Sri Lankan, Asian, Japanese
Australian	Australian, White Australian
European	European, Austrian, British, Dutch, English, French, German, Norwegian, Russian, Scottish, Slovenian, White Austrian, White British, White Scottish, Yugoslavian
Māori	Including authors who specified other ethnicities with Māori listed first (e.g., Māori/Pākehā, Māori/Niuean)
Middle Eastern	Iranian
North American	US American, White American, White Canadian
Pacific	Pacific, Cook Islands, Fijian, Indigenous Fijian, Native Hawaiian, NZ-born Samoan, Samoan, Tongan, (includes multiple ethnicities where Pacific ethnicity listed first)
Pākehā	Pākehā (includes one author coded Pākehā and Australian)
South/Central American	Bolivian, Brazilian, Trinidadian
South African	South African, White South African
Unfilled	was not filled by analysts
Unknown	marked 'unknown' by analysts
