

The Deaf of New Zealand

The Sign Language Community of New Zealand

New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) is a full language, distinct from spoken English and Maori. NZSL became an official language of New Zealand in 2006. Deaf Maori also use NZSL. Maori culture is different to “pakeha” (non-Maori, predominantly European) culture. Special Maori interpreters fluent in both Maori and NZSL as well as English are required to speak on marae (Maori communities). “Maori NZSL” and “Pakeha NZSL” are the same language, but there are some differences in signing when covering Maori concepts. It is assumed that Pasifika (Pacific Islanders living within NZ) Deaf would use NZSL if they were born in NZ.

Image Unavailable

The standard method of education for deaf children was “oral” until the late 1970s. Students were expected to learn to speak English and read lips. In the late 1970s a move towards “Total Communication” came about. In turn has led to more acceptance of NZSL in the classroom—officially used first in 1993. However the use of NZSL is not always practical when trained teachers or interpreters are not available.

Awareness of Deaf communities among the general population has increased over recent years. One reason is that following the major Christchurch earthquake in 2011, half-hour media updates were broadcast showing interpreters signing. This was done on behalf of the Deaf community of Christchurch, but the decision to do so was made at government level.

Religious terminology differs from church to church and from city to city. There are currently at least five worshipping communities of Deaf Christians. These are mainly associated with hearing churches. Home study groups for the Deaf exist. The Catholic Church has four chaplains for the Deaf throughout the country including one who is Deaf, and another who has a Deaf wife.



Primary Religion:

Christianity

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

Possible 1-4%

Churches:

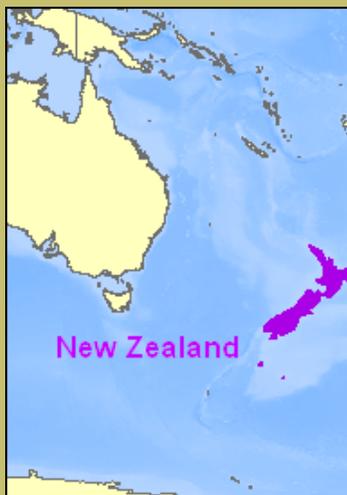
5

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

None

Population (date):

4,000 (2012)



The Deaf of New Zealand

Have They Heard The Gospel?

Believe In Jesus As God And Only Savior (%)	Estimated Less than 5%
Number of Missionaries Working	4 - 1 Deaf chaplain/counselor. 3 Deaf lay pastors (part-time). Other part-time (qualified) interpreters and (unqualified) communicators.
Response to the Gospel	The vast majority have not yet seen ("heard") the Gospel in an understandable form, much less in their heart language. There has been some response among those who have understood the Gospel.
Number of Communities	Unknown Estimate 20 (one or more in each city)
Number of Churches	5, plus a few others in other cities
Is The Word Of God Translated?	Jesus video (non-DVD) with NZSL signed in corner. NZSL was the 700 th language the Jesus video was translated into.
What Kind Of Missionaries Needed? Comment	Various roles – and this is not an exhaustive list. Deaf Christians Intercessors Interpreters Video technicians SL Linguists Encouragement of the NZ Deaf Christians is possibly one of the biggest contributions outsiders can make. Building their capacity for ministry is vital. People who can pass their skills on to the Deaf are required.

The Deaf of New Zealand

Group Description

Population

An estimated 1 in 1,000 of the overall population of the country use sign as their preferred language. This is a high estimate since many in developed countries prefer to lip read and talk. It does not include people who are only hard of hearing or who have become deaf as young or older adults.

Language/Linguistics

Primary Language

New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL)

Second Languages

English, Maori

Linguistically Related Languages

Australian Sign Language (AusLan) and British Sign Language (BSL)

Comment:

NZSL uses the same manual alphabet as Auslan and BSL. Deaf Maori also use NZSL. Maori culture is different to “pakeha” (non-Maori, predominantly European) culture. Special Maori interpreters fluent in both Maori and NZSL as well as English are required to speak on marae (Maori communities). “Maori NZSL” and “Pakeha NZSL” are the same language, but there are some differences in signing when covering Maori concepts.

It is not known what if other sign languages are in use in other ethnic communities. It is assumed that Pasifika (Pacific Islanders living within NZ) Deaf would use NZSL if they were born in NZ. There may be other communities.

Active Language Programs

Yes

Education/Youth

Primary Schools

There are now two main centres of Deaf school education in New Zealand. Auckland has Kelston Deaf Education Centre (roots going back to 1940s), and in Christchurch there is Van Asch Deaf Education Centre (opened in 1880). St Dominic’s School for the Deaf in Feilding from 1953 closed a number of years ago.

Comment:

Currently about 80% of Deaf students are “mainstreamed”—included with other students in state schools. This would be especially true outside Christchurch and Auckland. One significant effect of mainstreaming is that Deaf children are not given Deaf role models.

At tertiary level, Victoria University (Wellington) has a Deaf Studies unit which is part of the Linguistics department. This has been responsible for publishing printed and online NZSL dictionaries, a grammar and other scholarly papers. Students can also study for a degree in NZSL Interpreting at AUT in Auckland.

The Deaf of New Zealand

Language of Instruction

The standard method of education for deaf children in NZ was “oral” until the late 1970s. Students were expected to learn to speak English and read lips. In the late 1970s a move towards “Total Communication” came about. That in turn has led to more acceptance of NZSL in the classroom – officially used first in 1993. However the use of NZSL is not always practical when trained teachers/interpreters are not available.

Society

Social Habits/Groupings.

The effects of different approaches to schooling can be seen in the use of different signs amongst different communities. Older Deaf (now in their 70s) will mouth English words and use some SL. Those born in the 1950s, when the first rubella epidemic broke out, through to those who went to school in the 1980s under Total Communication will predominantly use NZSL and mouth English words at the same time. Younger generation Deaf will use NZSL with little or no lip patterning.

Local Language Broadcasting:

Comment:

Awareness of Deaf communities among the general population has increased over recent years. One reason was the disappearance and murder of a young Deaf woman in Christchurch 2007. At the subsequent trial, the role of interpreters was of interest. And following the major Christchurch earthquake in 2011, half-hour media updates were broadcast showing interpreters signing. Television cameras did not even move. This was done on behalf of the Deaf community of Christchurch, but the decision to do so was made at government level.

The Deaf of New Zealand

Status of Christianity

Church Growth

Bible Schools	0 for the Deaf
Christian Clinics/Hospitals	0 for the Deaf (or hearing) Hospitals and Medical clinics are generally run by the state
Christian Literacy Centers	0 for the Deaf or hearing Schools are generally run by the state

Religion & Response

Attitude to Christianity	Somewhat receptive
Recommended Approaches	Deaf congregations need to be established, rather than interpreted ministries. Encouragement of the NZ Deaf Christians is possibly one of the biggest contributions outsiders can make. Building their capacity for ministry is vital.
Scripture Translation Status Comment	None Deaf in NZ have not taken to Sign Writing. Any “written” communication would have to be recorded on video. Bible Story Telling is planned to start teaching to Deaf in 2013.
Other Forms of Gospel Available:	Jesus Video, Alpha Course