

# New Zealand

Archetype **High-trust diffusers**

GDP / person **\$50k**

Population **5M**

10-yr trend **2.7%**

Gradual **15.5%** · #9

Fast **24.2%** · #18

## WHERE NEW ZEALAND STARTS

New Zealand enters the AGI era as a high-trust diffuser: rich, skilled and quick to put new tools to work. The scores show why. Language inclusion is 4.9 out of 5, near the top, because English is the working language of the frontier. AI diffusion capacity is 4.3, and climate and environmental resilience 4.6. It sits inside the alliance system that governs frontier access, with a geopolitics score of 4, and was Tier 1 in the 2025 US diffusion framework. Physical build speed is 4. What it lacks is capability of its own. Compute and energy access scores 2, and catch-up headroom just 2.1 — at about \$49,600 per person there is little ground to make up by copying others. Ten-year trend growth is 2.7% a year. Every scenario turns on whether New Zealand builds its computing power or rents it.

## THE THREE PATHS

These are simulations, not forecasts. The Modest path is the baseline; the two AGI scenarios fork from it. Under the Modest scenario, AI stays a normal technology. New Zealand would gain a small lift on trend: 3.1% growth a year, 69th of 157, with the economy doubling only every 23 years. High adoption would raise productivity, but nothing more. Under **Gradual** takeoff, growth would climb for two decades and reach 15.5% a year once AGI matures around 2045. That would place New Zealand 9th in the world. The long runway lets its trusted institutions and skilled workers absorb each advance as it lands. An economy growing at 15.5% doubles in under five years. Under **Fast** takeoff, growth would reach 24.2% a year from the early 2030s, a doubling every three years or so. Yet its rank would slip to 18th, because a fast world rewards the frontier compute New Zealand does not hold. Regulation and politics could slow or redirect any of these paths. How New Zealanders and their leaders respond to transformative AI is a variable the model holds constant.

## HOW YOU WOULD KNOW WHICH WORLD YOU ARE IN

The scenarios look almost the same until about 2030. So watch leading indicators, not GDP, and check them yourself rather than trust any snapshot. Three global signals matter most. First, whether the METR task-horizon curve keeps doubling every four to five months through 2027–28; METR publishes it at [metr.org](https://metr.org). Second, whether frontier-lab revenue and capital spending keep compounding; Epoch AI tracks both at [epoch.ai](https://epoch.ai). Third, whether growth in the ten to twenty most-ready economies — the United States and China above all — breaks above trend in the early 2030s. Double-digit growth there within a couple of years of 2030 would signal a fast world. A point or two above trend by the mid-2030s would signal a gradual one. A fade back to trend would signal a modest one. New

Zealand's own signals would arrive sooner than the growth data: fresh hyperscaler commitments beyond the Auckland cloud regions Microsoft and AWS have already opened, business adoption surveys, and new data-center demand showing up in Transpower's grid figures.

## IF GROWTH GOES EXPLOSIVE

Explosive is relative. At 15.5% growth a year, New Zealand would still trail the frontier, where the United States would compound at nearly 20%. Under Fast takeoff the gap widens: 24.2% against a frontier near 39%. Yet either rate runs far ahead of New Zealand's own history and its region, where the median is around 6%. The economy would double every three to five years, so a child starting school would finish it in a country several times richer. Services could shift from serving five million people to serving global demand, and rising wages would ease the long pull of young New Zealanders toward Australia. There is a way this leaves New Zealand worse off, and it is worth naming. Its AI runs on compute rented from firms and governments abroad. Capacity priced and controlled elsewhere can be throttled or repriced by decisions New Zealand does not make. The hedge is to own more of the stack — power, land and hosted capacity — rather than stay a comfortable customer. Even then, the pace-setter would shift to the state, testing how fast councils, the courts and the electricity regulator can permit, adjudicate and connect.

## WHAT NEW ZEALAND CAN DO NOW

Three levers follow from the scores. Start with the no-regret one. Physical build speed is already a strength at 4, and it carries real weight even if AI stays ordinary, so the task is to protect it, not repair it. That means keeping permitting fast: statutory time limits, one-stop approvals and less room for litigation to stall energy and transmission projects. A cautious government can do this today and lose nothing if the skeptics are right. The second lever is the bet. Compute and energy access, at 2, barely moves growth in a modest world, but under a fast takeoff it becomes New Zealand's single biggest lever. Closing it means packaging renewable power and land to anchor hyperscale investment, and securing chip access through its alliances. The third lever, catch-up headroom at 2.1, is also a bet: staying open to trade, investment and technology transfer keeps the door to fast diffusion open. New Zealand can adapt a working model from its own archetype. Sweden turned cheap hydropower and a cool climate into data-center clusters — Meta's Luleå campus runs on renewable power and free cooling. New Zealand's hydro and geothermal offer the same draw. To see how moving these scores changes New Zealand's path under each scenario, open the atlas's [policy editor](#).

## The three levers — and which pay off regardless

### Catch-up headroom

score 2.1 / 5 · weight 16 under skeptic → 6 under fast takeoff

Counts under the Modest scenario too (16→6). Closing this gap pays off whether or not AGI arrives.

No-regret

### Compute & energy access

score 2 / 5 · weight 8 under skeptic → 24 under fast takeoff

Weight climbs from 8 to 24 as takeoff nears. It barely moves growth if AI stays ordinary — the lever that needs a view on the takeoff.

AGI bet

### Physical build speed

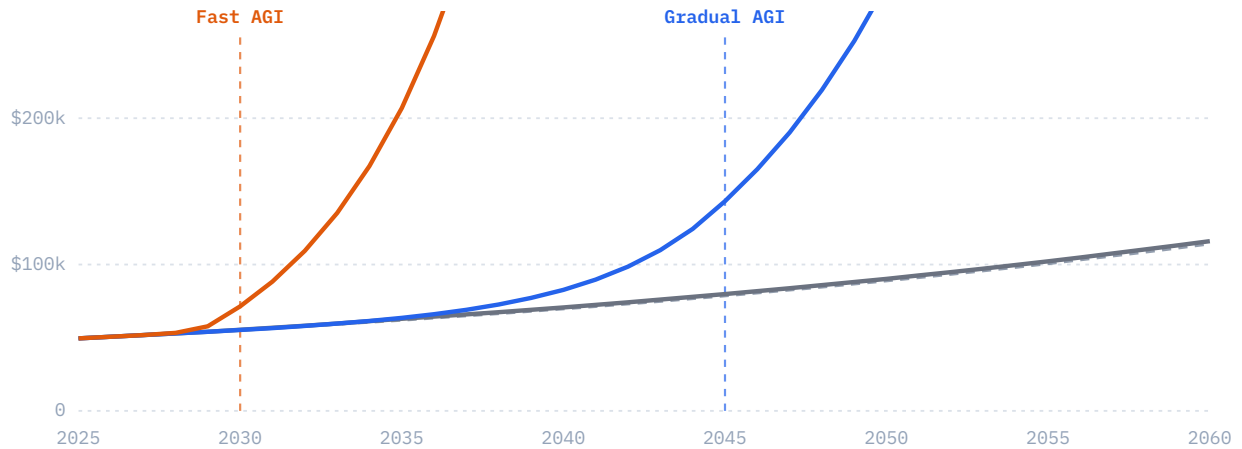
score 4 / 5 · weight 8 under skeptic → 17 under fast takeoff

Weight climbs from 8 to 17 as takeoff nears. It barely moves growth if AI stays ordinary — the lever that needs a view on the takeoff.

AGI bet

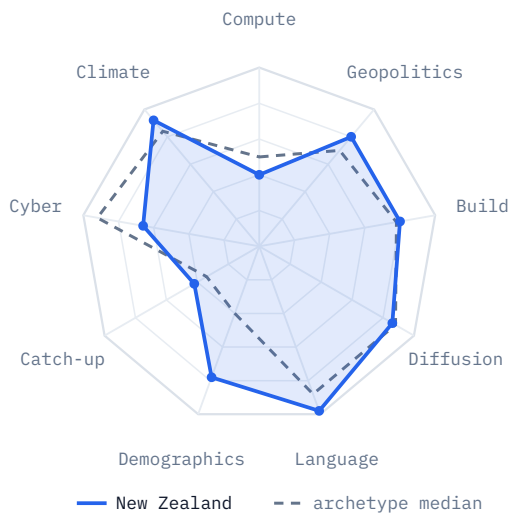
The no-regret levers pay off in every scenario, so a cautious government can act on them today. The AGI bets become decisive only if takeoff is real.

## GDP per person to 2060, by scenario



Linear scale; solid lines are the three scenarios, dashed grey the no-AI baseline. Growth ramps from 2027 to each scenario's rate at its AGI year (Fast ~2030, Gradual ~2045), then holds. Timing and divergence are the point, not end levels; steep paths exit the top of the capped axis.

### The nine factors



Solid: New Zealand. Dashed: the median of its archetype. Scores are relative to the other 156 countries (3 ≈ global median, 5 = leading today).

### Outcomes under each scenario

| SCENARIO | GROWTH / YR | WORLD RANK | INDEX | DOUBLING |
|----------|-------------|------------|-------|----------|
| Modest   | 3.1%        | 69 / 157   | 72.9  | 22.7 yrs |
| Gradual  | 15.5%       | 9 / 157    | 71.5  | 4.8 yrs  |
| Fast     | 24.2%       | 18 / 157   | 70.1  | 3.2 yrs  |

Post-AGI growth rate, rank among 157 countries, AGI Growth Index (0–100, scenario-weighted), and the implied economy doubling time. The Modest path is the baseline the AGI scenarios fork from.

### THE THREE SCENARIOS

#### Modest the Acemoglu view

##### AI as a normal productivity tool

Intelligence was never the binding constraint on growth, so AI delivers real but ordinary gains. Each country gets a one-time boost of a couple of percent of GDP, phased in through 2035; growth then returns to trend. The mainstream-economics view.

≤0.66% TFP over a decade – a one-time gain

New Zealand: 3.1% growth a year · #69 of 157

#### Gradual Erdil & Besiroglu, base case

##### Broad automation, on a long timeline

Broad automation of remote work arrives around 2045, with gains building slowly from the late 2020s. Growth then reaches up to ~20% a year for the best-positioned countries — ten times today's frontier trend. A slow arrival gives countries time to adapt, so the gains are wide but uneven.

up to ~20%/yr after 2045 – 10× the frontier trend

New Zealand: 15.5% growth a year · #9 of 157

#### Fast Erdil & Besiroglu, fast takeoff

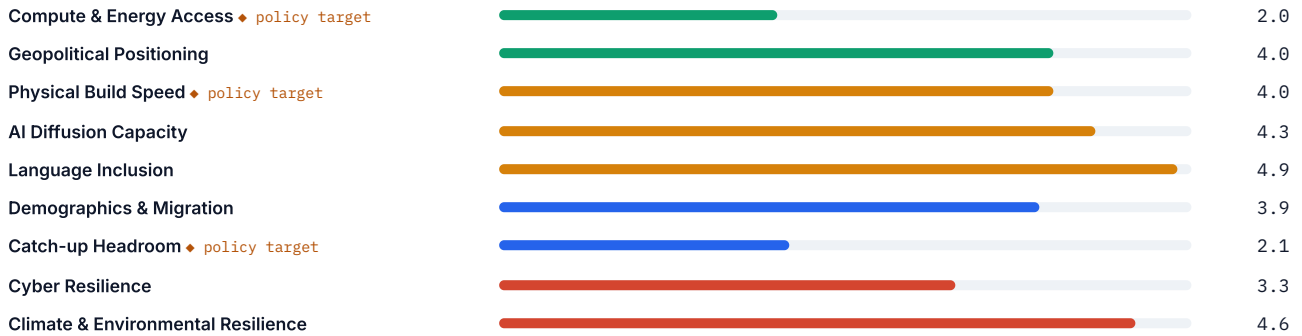
##### Fast takeoff — today's infrastructure decides

Transformation lands around 2030, before countries can adjust. Whoever already owns compute, capital and the ability to build wins; the gap between countries widens dramatically — and some are left growing slower than they would have without AGI.

up to ~40%/yr from 2030

New Zealand: 24.2% growth a year · #18 of 157

## Factor scores — and where policy bites



♦ marks this country's highest-leverage policy targets: the weakest factors carrying the most weight under the AGI scenarios. The atlas's interactive policy editor ([agigrowth.org/#editor](https://agigrowth.org/#editor)) simulates how raising any score changes growth under each scenario.

## Archetype: High-trust diffusers

**Rich, skilled and quick to absorb AI — including the big aging economies whose adoption outweighs their demographics.**

**Wins:** The diffusion era — every year before full automation compounds their head start.

**Watch:** Little frontier capability of their own: dependent on alliance access and open weights; slow to build.

|                    |                    |                           |                         |                      |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Canada 18.3% · #3  | Ireland 17.4% · #4 | United Kingdom 16.9% · #5 | Australia 16.1% · #6    | Singapore 15.7% · #7 |
| Sweden 15.1% · #12 | Norway 14.7% · #14 | Germany 14.5% · #17       | Switzerland 14.3% · #18 | France 13.9% · #20   |

## The regional picture — Two absorbers, and a fragile periphery.

Australia and New Zealand absorb AI the way the Nordics do — high trust, high measured adoption — and they sit inside the alliance system that governs frontier access: both were Tier 1 in the 2025 US diffusion framework, and neither has reason to expect exclusion. Australia holds a card few absorbers have: energy, land, a cool southern hosting climate, and the minerals of the AI hardware stack. Whether it becomes a genuine build-out destination or remains a comfortable customer is a choice its permitting system will make during the 2030s. The Pacific periphery faces the opposite problem: Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands combine weak state capacity with thin connectivity — both sit in the high-risk tier — and for them the AGI era arrives, if at all, through mobile networks, remittances and aid rather than data centers. One region, both ends of the readiness spectrum.

## Method, in brief

Each country is scored 1–5 on nine factors from public data (World Bank, Epoch AI, ITU, IMF and national sources). A scenario-weighted average forms the AGI Growth Index (0–100), which maps to a post-AGI growth rate inside ceilings derived from Erdil & Besiroglu (2023): ~20% growth a year for the best-positioned country under Gradual takeoff (AGI ~2045), ~40% under Fast (AGI ~2030); growth ramps convexly from 2027. The scenario sets the growth rates on offer; the index only decides where each country sits within them. The Modest scenario is the skeptics' baseline — a small uplift on each country's own ten-year trend. These are simulations for structured thinking, not forecasts; no probabilities are attached to any scenario.

**Watch the global signals live:** the METR task-horizon curve at [metr.org/time-horizons](https://metr.org/time-horizons) · frontier-lab revenue at [epoch.ai/ai-companies](https://epoch.ai/ai-companies) · AI-chip spending at [epoch.ai/ai-chip-sales](https://epoch.ai/ai-chip-sales).

**Explore further:** full methodology [agigrowth.org/#methodology](https://agigrowth.org/#methodology) · map & rankings [agigrowth.org/#explore](https://agigrowth.org/#explore) · country profiles [agigrowth.org/#countries](https://agigrowth.org/#countries) · policy editor [agigrowth.org/#editor](https://agigrowth.org/#editor)