# Marlborough Local Insights Report: February 2022

**Marlborough REGIONAL SKILLS LEADERSHIP GROUP.**

## TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS - HEALTH SPOTLIGHT


Photo credit: MarlboroughNZ

**The health workforce is in the spotlight with the high dependency unit at Wairau Hospital temporarily merged with the inpatient unit, and a shortage of general practitioners (GPs).** The Chief Executive of the district health board (DHB) said recruitment is the biggest issue across all health professions, and the number of times when there are no applicants for an advertised position is increasing. This is a new occurrence for the top of the south. The DHB's population projections show another ward will be required at Wairau Hospital by 2035.

**The Marlborough Primary Health Organisation (PHO) is responding to the GP shortage with a $20,000 international recruitment campaign to attract new general practitioners (GPs).** The PHO says a number of factors have contributed to the shortage of GPs, including retirement and resignation, while Marlborough's population has continued to grow increasing demand for services. The PHO has struggled to attract younger GPs to Marlborough, as they preferred to train and work in cities.

**More work placements outside of cities are needed during GP training** to encourage graduates to move to smaller towns or rural areas according to the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners. There has been a noticeable decline in the number of GPs in rural areas over the past decade.

**More training will be available in Marlborough through the Nelson-Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT).** A Bachelor of Nursing degree is planned, and the NZ Certificate in Study and Career Preparation will be available as a bridging programme to prepare students who don't meet the degree entry requirements.

## DECEMBER 2021 - TRENDS AT A GLANCE

**3.0% Unemployment rate:** the fourth lowest of all regions - Manawatū-Whanganui 2.6 percent, Otago 2.8 percent, Wellington 2.8 percent.

**9.9% the underutilisation rate:** dropped 1.6 percentage points from a year ago, higher than the national average of 9.2 percent.
*Source: Statistics New Zealand, Household Labour Force Survey, December 2021*

**1,281 on Jobseeker Support December 2021**. Since COVID-19, Jobseeker numbers peaked in September 2020 at 1,491 and have since declined. Jobseeker numbers are still higher than pre-COVID levels, there were 945 on Jobseeker Support in December 2019.

**366 Māori on Jobseeker Support December 2021.** Māori Jobseeker numbers peaked at 474 in September 2020. Pre-COVID, 288 Māori were on Jobseeker Support in December 2019.

**582 Work Ready Jobseekers**, numbers peaked at 909 in September 2020, but are still higher than pre-COVID levels, there were 492 Work Ready Jobseekers in December 2019.

**699 Jobseeker - Health Condition or Disability,** numbers increased from 453 December 2019 pre-COVID. The largest increase is in Psychological conditions, from 228 in December 2019 to 342 December 2021. This mirrors feedback from stakeholders about high levels of anxiety and mental health issues in general.
*Source: MSD, Benefit facts sheets Regional Councils data tables - December 2021*
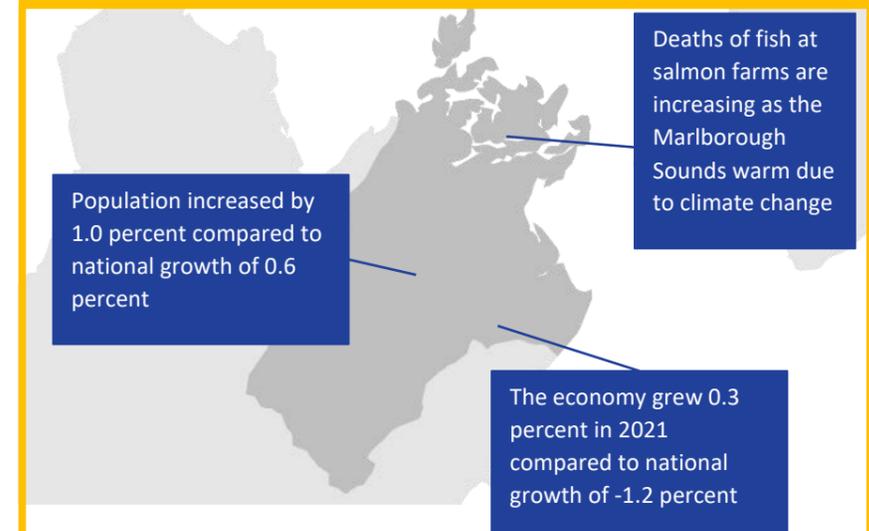
## TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

1. **A campaign to market the region as a great place to work and live** is being designed by employers working together with Marlborough District Council and Destination Marlborough (regional tourism organisation). A regional HR forum identified that multiple employers were recruiting for permanent, senior roles, and recognised this is a great opportunity to work together on a regional solution to promote opportunities in Marlborough.

2. **NMIT has stepped in to offer Youth Guarantee training (NCEA tertiary training for youth, without fees) in the region.** In 2021 Community Colleges New Zealand (Comcol) announced it was closing its Marlborough site. This was expected to have wide effects as it was the only provider of Youth Guarantee training (see November 2021 LIR). NMIT's offer fills a potential gap in Marlborough and provides the opportunity for Youth Guarantee trainees to progress on to other NMIT courses.

3. **Marlborough based company Smart Machine secured funding for the Oxin driverless tractor**. The autonomous vehicles can carry out multiple tasks in the vineyard and provide an opportunity to significantly increase productivity and manage industry growth in a region with a tight labour market. MPIs' Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures provided the funding.

## TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

1. **Wineries continue to report staff and skills shortages for vintage 2022**. The majority of vintage positions have been filled, however, the skills shortages for vintage 2022 are among the worst the industry has seen. A higher proportion of vintage staff have no previous experience, and this will put additional pressure on experienced staff who are also managing the potential effects of Omicron.

2. **Employers are preparing for the effects of Omicron on staff and business continuity**. Marlborough Chamber of Commerce and other organisations are assisting businesses to prepare business continuity plans and learning lessons from overseas experiences about key person dependencies. A group of CBD cafes have formed a support group and are assessing options to share resources if staff or supplies are unavailable.

3. **The labour market is extremely tight with many vacancies and few applicants.** Employers are struggling to fill vacancies across the board, from high-skill, high-wage, permanent roles through to seasonal roles. At the same time Ministry of Social Development Jobseeker benefit recipients' numbers are still higher than pre-COVID levels. People receiving Jobseeker - Health Condition or Disability benefits with psychological conditions could benefit from flexible working and/or job share arrangements.

## THE MARLBOROUGH REGION



Deaths of fish at salmon farms are increasing as the Marlborough Sounds warm due to climate change

Population increased by 1.0 percent compared to national growth of 0.6 percent

The economy grew 0.3 percent in 2021 compared to national growth of -1.2 percent

## OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 2 MONTHS:

Engaging with the community and stakeholders on the Marlborough regional workforce plan: Consultation document

Consultation is open until 14 March 2022 https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/18699-marlborough-regional-workforce-plan-consultation-document