Age and Ethnic Structure

With 16.1 per cent aged 65+ years in 2013, the population of the Taranaki Region is New Zealand’s sixth-oldest (of 16 regions; nationally 14.2 per cent is aged 65+ years). However age structures differ markedly by ethnic group. Figure 7 compares the age structures of the Taranaki Region’s European and Māori populations*, which account for 76 and 15 per cent of the total (compared with 65 and 13 per cent nationally—note that these data are based on multiple count ethnicity and thus sum to more than 100 per cent). In 2013 the median age for the region’s Māori population was 23.6 years (that is, one-half of the Māori population was aged less than 24 years), compared with 41.1 years for those of European origin. The graphs also show how each population has aged structurally since 2001 (unshaded bars), due to the demographic changes already discussed. The Taranaki Region is somewhat less multi-ethnic than is the case nationally, with just 1.4 per cent Pacific Island, 3.0 per cent Asian, 0.4 per cent Middle Eastern/Latin American/African, and 4.5 per cent ‘not identified’, compared with 6.3, 10.1, 1.0 and 4.9 per cent respectively at national level.

Summary

The population of the Taranaki Region has grown slowly over the past 27 years, from 107,499 in 1986 to 109,700 in 2011 and 110,500 in 2013 (+2.8 per cent). The population is projected to grow slowly over the next two decades with the Statistics New Zealand medium series projections indicating a population of 111,460 by 2031. However numbers could range as high as 125,500 (high series) or as low as 97,750 (low series).

Net migration gains at younger and several older ages partially offset that loss, but are not perfect substitutes because the sustained loss at young adult ages compounds over time to reduce the primary reproductive age groups (20-39 years), and thus the number of children. The trends have resulted in the Taranaki Region having the sixth-oldest population of New Zealand’s 16 regions, albeit the region is not aging as fast as many.

The major cause of the region’s growth is natural increase, with net migration loss occurring across most of the 1990s and 2000s, but decreasingly so. Increasingly, ‘natural increase’ will be driven by growth at 65+ years, as the baby boomer cohorts move into these age groups and numbers rise due to increasing longevity. Eventually the same cohorts will drive the end of natural growth, as deaths will increase and will not be replaced by births.

The Taranaki Region experiences an ongoing problem in terms of net migration loss at 15-19 and 20-24 years of age; however that loss has reduced over the past three Census periods.

Components of Change

The major component of the Taranaki Region’s population growth has long been natural increase (the difference between births and deaths) (Figure 2). Significant net migration loss occurred across most of the 1990s and to a lesser extent across the 2000s, with that loss completely offsetting natural increase across the period 1996-2001 and explaining the overall decline. Although the region’s natural increase experienced a small rise over the mid-to-late-2000s (as elsewhere in New Zealand), this component of growth is steadily reducing as the population ages and larger proportions reach the age at which they have completed childbearing.

References:

Components of Change by Component Flow

Using New Zealand’s first ‘demographic accounting model’ (Jackson & Pawar 2013), the broad components of the Taranaki Region’s population change can be broken down to give an approximation of their underlying flows. Figure 3 shows that between 2008 and 2013, the Taranaki Region grew by approximately 3,000 persons (+2.8 per cent). Natural increase (births minus deaths) accounted for 3,177 persons, slightly reduced by an estimated net migration loss of 177 persons. The natural increase component was in turn comprised of 7,053 births partially offset by 4,658 deaths. From estimated net migration (-177) we then account for ‘known’ net migration (-1,029), comprised of net internal migration (-237) and net international permanent/long term (PLT) migration (-792). This leaves an unaccounted component of 5,698, or 18.7 per cent of the total change.

Migration by Age

Figure 4 shows that the Taranaki Region’s overall net migration loss between 2008 and 2013 was largely accounted for by those at 15-19 and 20-24 years of age; however losses at these ages has reduced quite systematically over the last three Census periods. Across the 2001-2006 and 2008-2013 periods, small net gains occurred at 0-9 years, and larger gains at 25-39 years, indicating the net arrival of young adults/parents and children (note that these data have allowed for change in cohort size). Between 2008 and 2013 there was also a small increase in net migration gain at 60-69 years, indicating the increasing arrival of retirees. The underlying data show that most age groups saw both internal and international arrivals and departures, with around half of the 2008-2013 net gain at 30-34 and 60-69 years being of international migrants.

Taranaki’s Movers and Stayers

Data from the 2013 Census indicate that 71 per cent of those enumerated as living in the Taranaki Region on Census night 2013 (March 5th) had been living there in 2008, similar to the proportion at the 2006 Census but lower than in 1996 and 2001 (76 per cent). At the 2013 Census, those who had not been born in 2008 accounted for the single largest component of arrivals (accounting for 7.2 per cent of the 2013 population), followed by those who had been living elsewhere in New Zealand but not further defined (5.0 per cent). The next largest contingents were those who had been overseas in 2008 and those who did not state where they had been living (4.6 per cent each). Internally, the next largest contributions came from Auckland, Manawatu-Wanganui, the Waikato and Wellington.

Population Ageing

As elsewhere, declining birth rates, increasing longevity, and—in Taranaki’s case—net migration loss at 15-24 years, are causing the population to age structurally. Currently, the Taranaki Region has the sixth oldest age structure of New Zealand’s 16 regions, but it is not ageing as fast as some; in 2006 it had the second oldest age structure. The New Plymouth and Stratford Districts are slightly older (17 per cent aged 65+ years), and South Taranaki slightly younger (15.3 per cent aged 65+ years). At regional level, all age groups below 65 years are projected to decline in size across the period 2011-2031, and those at 65+ years to increase (Figure 6). By 2031, 26.2 per cent of the population of the Taranaki Region is projected to be aged 65+ years, up from 16.1 per cent in 2011. The Taranaki Region and Stratford District can expect to have more elderly than children by 2021, around five years earlier than for total New Zealand, while this will occur for New Plymouth a little earlier, around 2016. The Taranaki Region in 2008 but were living elsewhere at the 2013 Census show marked similarity to the main regions of origin, the single-largest proportions of leavers going to Auckland, Wellington, Manawatu-Wanganui, followed by Waikato.

Perhaps the most interesting observation from these data is that the patterns have been remarkably consistent over the past four Censuses, the regions of origin and destination of Taranaki’s internal migrants remaining almost identical over time, although in both 1996 and 2006 Manawatu-Wanganui out-performed Auckland as the main region of destination.