Age and Ethnic Structure

With 16.4 per cent aged 65+ years in 2013, the population of the Northland Region is New Zealand’s second-oldest (of 16 Regions; nationally 14.2 per cent is aged 65+ years). However age structures differ markedly by ethnic group. Fig 7 compares the age structures of the Northland Region’s European and Māori populations, which account for just on 62 and 26 per cent of the total (compared with 65 and 13 per cent nationally). In 2013 the median age for the Region’s Māori population was 26 years (that is, one-half of the Māori population was aged less than 26 years), compared with 46 years for those of European origin. The graphs also show how each population has aged structurally since 2001 (unshaded bars), due to the declining birth rates, increasing longevity, and net migration loss at the key reproductive ages already discussed. The Northland Region is somewhat less multi-ethnic than is the case nationally, with just 2.6 per cent Pacific Island, 2.3 per cent Asian, 0.3 per cent Middle Eastern/Latin American/African, and 7.4 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 Northland Region has grown slowly but steadily over the past 27 years, from around 127,656 in 1986 to 158,700 in 2013 (+23.4 per cent). Under the medium case assumptions, the population is projected to grow slowly to approximately 173,490 by 2031 (+9.6 per cent), most of the growth accounted for by those aged 65+ years.

The major cause of the Region’s growth and that of its TAs is natural increase, net migration, contributing significantly between 2001 and 2006 and 2009-2010 only. Increasingly, ‘natural increase’ will be driven by growth at 65+ years, as the baby boomer cohorts (born 1946-65) move into these age groups and numbers rise due to increasing longevity. Eventually however, the same cohorts will drive the end of natural growth, as deaths will increase and will not be replaced by births.

The Northland Region and its TAs experience an ongoing problem in terms of net migration loss at 15-19 and 20-24 year ages. Net migration gains at most younger and older ages partially offset this loss, but are not perfect substitutes because the sustained loss at young adult ages compounds over time to reduce the primary reproductive age group (20-39 years), and thus the number of children. The trends have resulted in the Northland Region having the second-oldest population of the 16 Regions. The Far North District has a slightly younger population than the regional average, and the Whangarei and Kaipara Districts, slightly older.

Summary

The population of the Northland Region has grown slowly but steadily over the past twenty-seven years, from 127,656 in 1986 to around 158,700 in 2013 (+23.4 per cent) (Fig 1). The population is projected to grow slowly over the next two decades with the Statistics New Zealand medium case projections (2066-base) indicating a population of 173,490 by 2031. However numbers could range as high as 192,280 (high series) or as low as 154,830 (low series).

Fig 1: Population of Northland Region 1986-2011 and Projected to 2031

Components of Change

The major component of the Northland Region’s growth has long been Natural Increase (the difference between births and deaths), augmented on occasions by spurts of net migration gain. Significant net migration gain occurred between 2001 and 2006 and 2009-2010. Net migration loss almost completely offsets natural increase around 2000-2001, and this situation threatened again over the last two years.

Fig 2: Components of Change: Northland Region


NORTHLAND REGION AND ITS TERRITORIAL AUTHORITIES – KEY DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Natalie Jackson

Northland Region Population Size and Growth

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Components of Change by Component Flow

Using New Zealand’s first ‘demographic accounting model’ (Jackson & Pawar 2013), the broad components of Northland’s population change can be broken down into their underlying flows. Fig 3 shows that between 2008 and 2013, the Northland Region grew by approximately 4,000 persons. The Natural Increase component was in turn comprised of 11,371 births partially offset by 6,623 deaths. From Estimated Net Migration we then account for ‘known’ Net Migration (3,956), comprised of Net Internal Migration (+318) and Net International Permanent/Long Term (PLT) Migration (-4,274).

Fig 3: Components Flows—Northland Region 2008-2013

Northland’s Movers and Stayers

Data from the 2013 Census indicate that almost 67 per cent of those enumerated as living in the Northland Region on census night 2013 (March 5th) had been living there in 2008, almost identical to the proportion at each of the previous three censuses. At the 2013 Census, those who had been living elsewhere in New Zealand but not further defined in 2008 accounted for the single largest component of Arrivals (7.8 per cent), followed by those who had not been born in 2008 (7.0 per cent). The next largest contingent were internal migrants from the Auckland Region (5.6 per cent), followed by those who did not state where they had been living in 2008 (4.6 per cent), and those who had been overseas in 2008 (3.9 per cent). Internally, the next largest contributions came from the Waikato Region (1.1 per cent), Bay of Plenty (0.57 per cent), Canterbury (0.53 per cent) and Wellington (0.51 per cent).

Fig 5: Northland’s Movers and Stayers 2008-2013

The past four censuses indicate that just on two-thirds of people enumerated as living in the Northland Region at each census had been living in the Region five years previously.

Population Ageing

As elsewhere, declining birth rates, increasing longevity, and—in Northland’s case—net migration loss at young adult ages, are causing the population to age structurally. Between 2011 and 2031, numbers at 0-9 years are projected to decline, and those at 65-74, 75-84 and 85+ years to increase significantly (Fig 6). By 2031, 27.7 per cent of the population of the Northland Region is projected to be aged 65+ years, up from 16.4 per cent in 2011. The Far North District has a slightly younger population than the regional average, and the Whangarei and Kaipara Districts, slightly older. Fig 6 shows that the trends for Northland and its TAs are not that different to those for total New Zealand, which also experiences minor decline at 15-24 and 40-54 years. The Far North and Whangarei Districts can expect to have more elderly than children by 2031, around five years earlier than for total New Zealand, while this will occur for the Kaipara District a little earlier, around 2016.