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Maori Information

The Population

NEW ZEALAND

Planning
Council

*Te Kaunihera Whakakaupapa
Mo Aotearoa*

NZPC

Maori Information Papers -

Paper 1: The Population

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By: Denise Brown,

erek Wallace, Trilley Reedy

Acknowledgements

Denise Brown
Derek Wallace
Tilley Reedy

This paper draws on information contained in the reports of the Planning Council's Population Monitoring Group. The most recent report is:

Diversity and Change: Regional Populations in New Zealand

Introduction

There are four main things to know about a population.
These are:

- size and growth;
- factors affecting growth;
- the age structure;
- the geographical distribution.

Without knowledge of these, it is impossible to predict demands for resources and services in such areas as health, education, housing, and employment.

On the following pages, we look in turn at each of the four main elements as they apply to the Maori population.

Size and growth

The situation

At the last official count, or census, of the New Zealand population, in 1986, the Maori population passed 400,000 for the first time. Altogether, Maori people made up 12.3% of the total New Zealand population.

The Maori population is continuing to grow, and at a slightly faster rate than the Pakeha population. But it has slowed right down in recent years. You can see from the figure opposite that around 1960 the Maori population was increasing by 4% per year, but by the 1980s had dropped sharply to only about 1% per year.

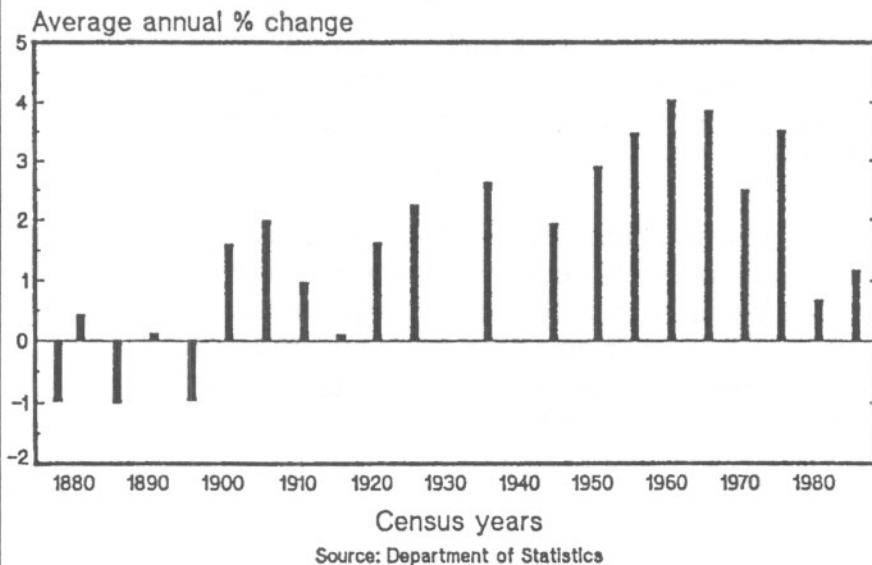
We will look more closely at the reason for this on the next page. But briefly, it has to do with the number of children being born. Around 1960, Maori women were having lots of children, whereas today they are having relatively few.

But at other times in the last hundred years, it wasn't the number of births that was the main influence on the size of the Maori population, but the number of deaths. As the graph shows, the Maori population was actually shrinking by about 1% a year during most of the 1880s and 1890s. This was the time when the ravages of disease, and the despair which followed alienation of land, were at their peak.

Again around 1915 the Maori population almost stopped growing. This was when the men were away at the first world war, which meant there was a low number of births and a high number of deaths occurring at the same time.

If the present slow rate of growth continues, the Maori population will increase by about 100,000 — or 25% — over the 25 years between 1986 and 2011. The total would then be 500,000. This compares with an increase of 200,000 — or 100% — over the previous 25-year period (from 1961 to 1986).

Average Annual Growth of the Maori Population 1878 - 1986



Implications

This trend of slow population growth should mean a bit less pressure than in the past to provide enough of life's necessities for everybody. Instead, there may be more of a chance to look at the overall needs and aspirations of different iwi, and to implement programmes to meet those needs.

Let's now take a more detailed look at the mechanics of population growth.

Factors affecting growth

There are three main factors influencing the growth rate of a population. One is the number of births that each woman has on average, for which we use the term *fertility*. A second relates to the number of deaths as a proportion of the population, the term for which is *mortality*. Each of those factors is looked at in turn below.

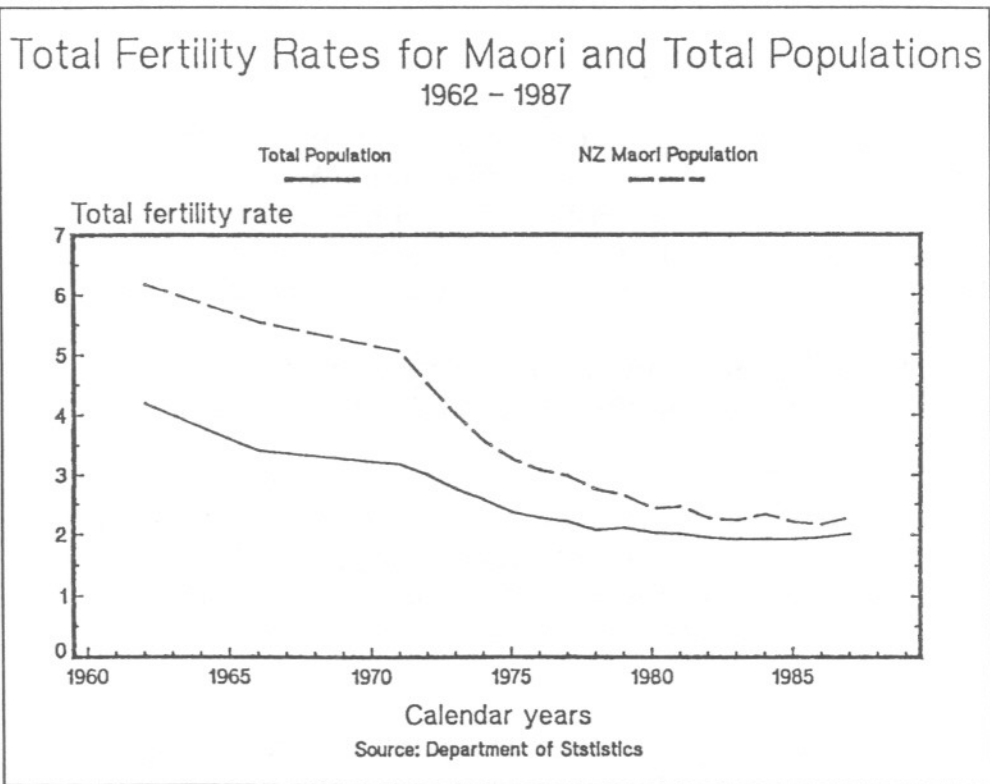
Generally, a population grows when the number of births exceeds the number of deaths, but there is one other factor that is sometimes very important, and that is *migration*. Part of the reason for the slow growth rate of the Maori population in recent years is the large number of Maori who have emigrated to Australia.

Fertility

There has been a sharp decline in Maori fertility over the last 20 years, as the graph opposite shows. At the beginning of the 1960s, Maori women were bearing, on average, more than six children each. Today, the average is just over two, slightly higher than the figure for Pakeha women.

There are no doubt many reasons for this decline, but the main one is likely to be economic: that many Maori families today simply can't afford to have more children. Knowledge and use of contraception have also contributed to this decline.

A large proportion of Maori births are to young women. In 1988, for example, 60% of all Maori births were to women under 25 years of age. One in every five Maori births today is to an unmarried teenage mother.



Implications

A concerted thrust is needed towards identifying iwi, hapu, and whanau groups, and to providing whanau support services and appropriate health services for young Maori mothers.

Mortality

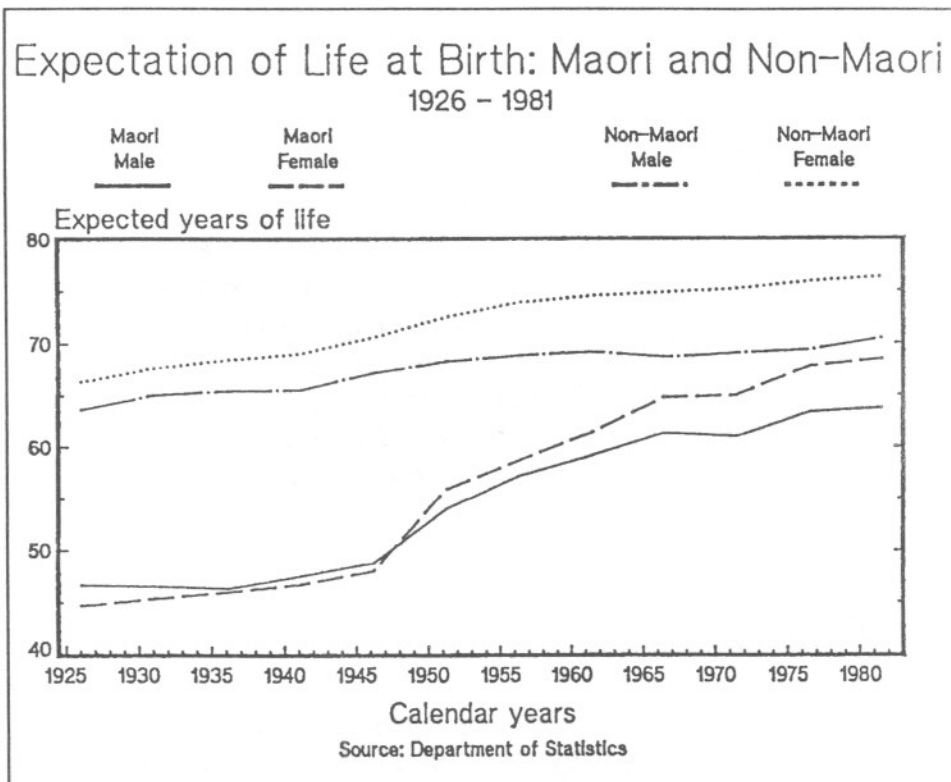
There have been few greater achievements in New Zealand this century than the massive reduction in Maori mortality, which has extended the average life span by 25-30 years. A new-born Maori boy today can expect to live to about 64 years, and a Maori girl to about 69 years.

This huge improvement has been largely due to control of infectious diseases, particularly in infancy and early childhood.

But despite the improvement, Maori mortality still exceeds that of Pakeha, as the figure opposite demonstrates. Life expectancy is 7 years shorter for Maori males, and 8.5 years shorter for females, compared to the Pakeha population.

Of particular concern is the high death rate among Maori infants. A Maori child born today is about three times more likely than a Pakeha child to die between the first and the twelfth month of life. A major cause of this is cot death.

Among Maori adults, too many deaths are occurring as a result of various forms of heart disease, respiratory disease, asthma, and motor vehicle accidents.



Implications

Lifestyle factors such as cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, poor diet and lack of exercise undoubtedly contribute to premature death amongst Maori. Policies and programmes must be aimed at reducing disease through changes in lifestyle, and at improving the overall standard of living of Maori people — for example, through better housing.

Age structure

Introduction

Many needs and demands for goods and services are concentrated in particular age-groups. In other words, total numbers in a population may be less important in some cases than the age composition. If, for example, we know what the age structure of the population is likely to be a decade from now, we will be better able to anticipate the demand for school places, jobs, care for the elderly, and so on.

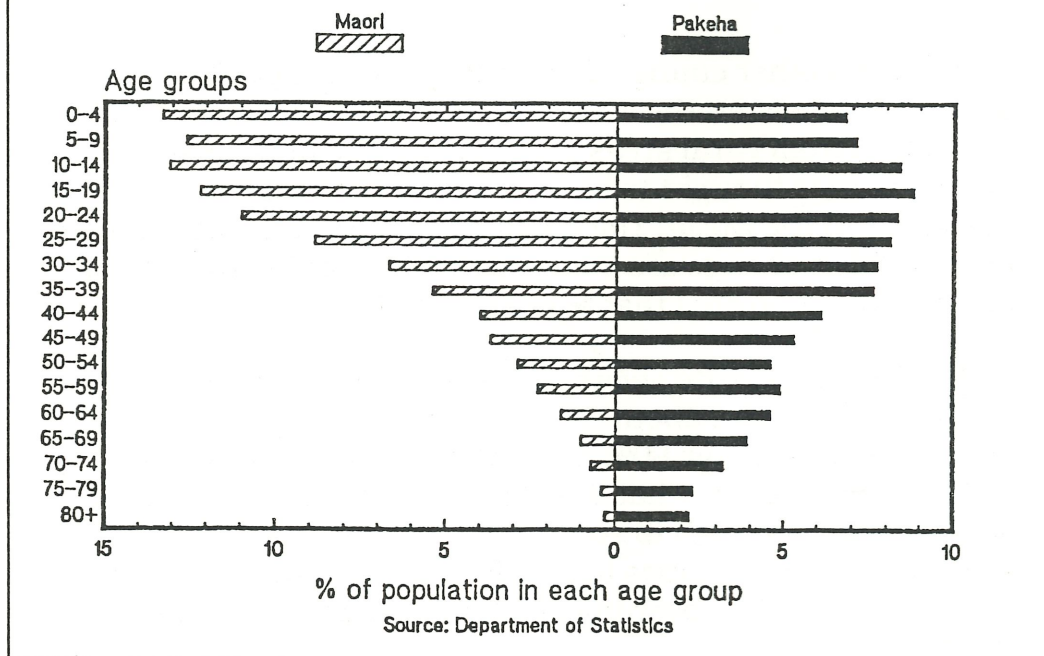
The situation

The figure opposite divides into age-groups the Maori and Pakeha populations as they stood in 1986. You can see immediately that the Maori population is concentrated at the younger end of the scale, whereas the Pakeha population is spread more evenly, with comparatively few at a very young age and many more at older ages.

The Maori population, then, is a young one. At the 1986 Census, 62% of all Maori were under 25 years of age, compared to 39% of Pakeha. At the other end of the scale, only 2% of Maori were aged 65 and over, compared to 12% of Pakeha.

Over the next 25 years, the Maori population will lose some of its youthfulness. We have already seen some of the reasons for this: the fact that Maori women are having few children at present, together with the fact that Maori are living longer. Indeed, the most rapid growth in the Maori population will occur amongst the very old. Between 1986 and 2006 the number of Maori aged 65 and over is expected to more than double, to over 4% of the total Maori population.

Age Composition of the Maori and Pakeha Populations 1986



Implications

This maturing, or ageing, of the population, already a big issue for Pakeha, will have to be a concern for Maori in the future. For example, what will happen to the Maori youth of today as they get older? They have been a particularly disadvantaged and under-privileged group in recent years. They have borne much of the brunt of the economic recession. Unless training and jobs are provided for these young people, at present aged 15 to 34, they will continue to be disadvantaged at every stage of their lives.

But for the present, the priority for Maori is still on matters related to the youthfulness of the population — the need for better infant and maternal health; the need to address and overcome high levels of youth unemployment; the need for improved and more appropriate educational services.

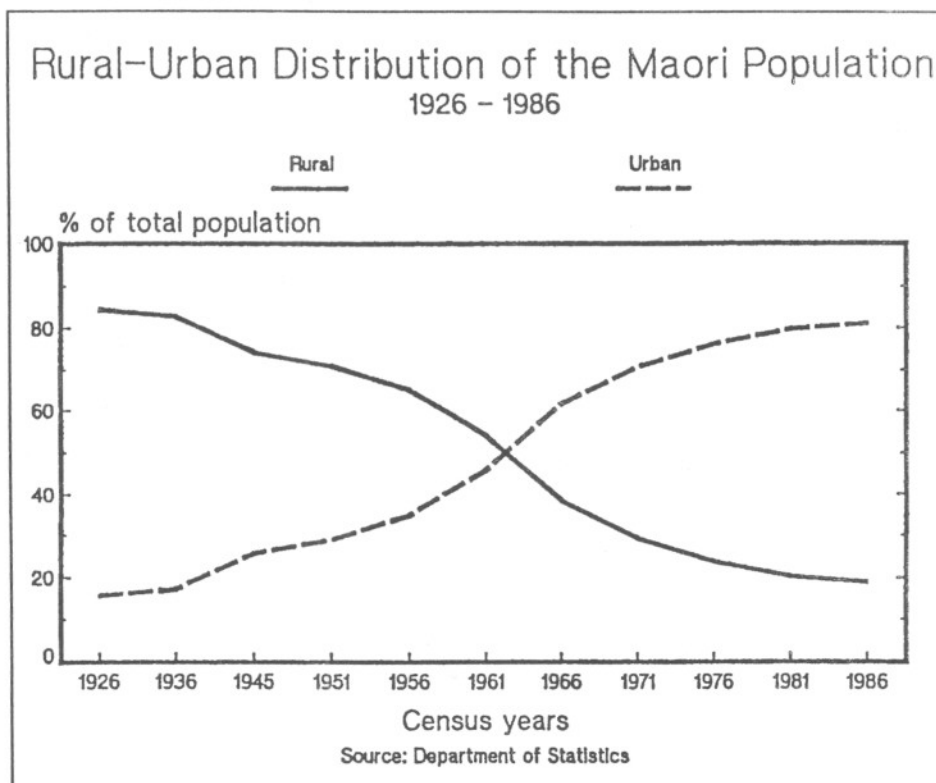
Distribution

Probably no other change this century has had such a profound impact on the lives of Maori people as their movement from rural areas to the cities. The urbanisation of the Maori is thought to be one of the most rapid anywhere in the world. The social, economic and cultural effects of this change are immense, and are at the root of many of the problems that Maori face today.

As the figure opposite shows, there has been a complete turnaround. Where about 80% of Maori lived in the country in 1925, now 80% live in the city. The reasons are well enough known: what little land was left to the Maori was no longer enough to support the growing population, so they came to the cities to look for work, a move that was encouraged by the government who wanted to assimilate the Maori.

The overwhelming majority of Maori — 90% — live in the North Island, particularly the north and east. Four in every five live in urban areas — a level almost equal to that of the total population. The largest concentration of Maori (17%) is in central and southern Auckland.

Recently there has been evidence of a return migration of both younger and older Maori to their tribal homelands.



Implications

The migration of Maori back to their iwi bases may well have positive implications, especially with the devolution of Maori Affairs to the iwi. Although the return of younger Maori may add to an already serious rural unemployment problem in the short term, they could make a big contribution to getting iwi development off the ground. And the return of kaumatua will strengthen the leadership required at this important time.

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