

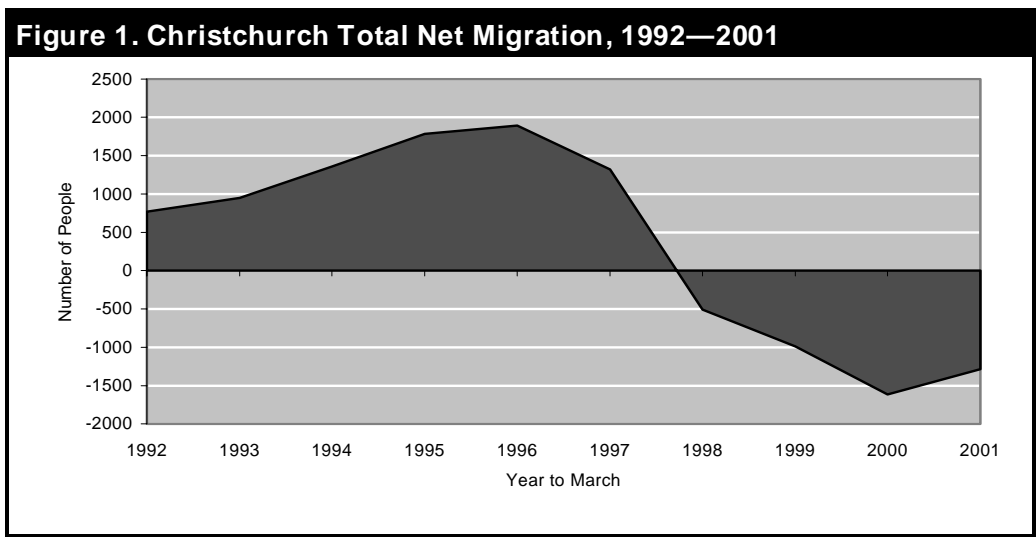
9. MIGRATION TRENDS

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The purpose of this report is to present the latest trends in permanent and long-term external migration¹ both in Christchurch and New Zealand.

During much of the last decade, migration from overseas drove high population growth both at a national level and in Christchurch. Between 1992 and 1997, for example, net migration contributed over 8,000 people to the city's population. During the same period the Auckland area gained nearly 61,000 residents, while New Zealand's population increased by 99,199 as a result of net migration. New Zealand immigration policy saw over 55,000 people approved for residency in 1995 alone.

This positive trend has reversed in recent years, with net migration losses experienced both locally and nationally. This has been caused by a greater flow of New Zealanders going overseas than of new migrants taking up residency here. During the year to March 2001, Christchurch had a total net migration loss of 1,286 people (Figure 1). This comprised a net loss of 3,415 New Zealanders and a net gain of 2,129 from other nationalities. This was a slight improvement from the previous year, which had a total net migration loss of 1,615.



Source: Statistics New Zealand, Migration data

The net outflow of migrants has affected population growth in Christchurch. The city's rate of population increase has slowed significantly over the last few years, from a peak of 2 per cent in 1995 (6,100 people) to 0.2% per cent (1,700 people) in the year to June 2000. Natural increase (more births than deaths) has promoted minimal growth in the face of negative external migration².

¹ Permanent and long-term migrants are people intending to stay in or depart from New Zealand permanently or for 12 months or more.

² Internal migration, or the movement of people between regions within New Zealand, is not reported here. This information is only collected every five years through the national census.

Christchurch Migrant Arrival Trends

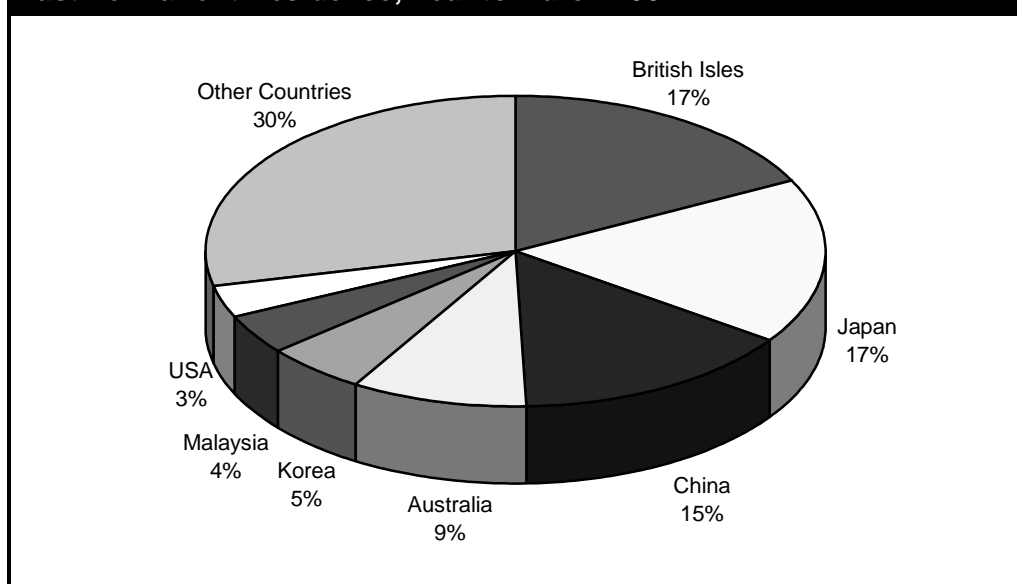
Table 1. Permanent and Long-Term Migrant Arrivals of Other Nationalities by Age Group and Country of Last Permanent Residence, Year to March 2001

Country of Last Permanent Residence	Under 15 Years	15-24 Years	25-39 Years	40-59 Years	60 Years & Over	Total
British Isles ³	107	78	286	90	34	595
Japan	6	231	345	6	0	588
China	22	361	85	25	12	505
Australia	92	43	123	42	12	312
Korea	48	52	37	35	7	179
Malaysia	33	50	12	41	2	138
USA	17	18	44	33	6	118
Other Countries	219	258	309	147	39	972
Total	544	1,091	1,241	419	112	3,407

Source: Statistics New Zealand, Migration data

Migrant arrivals of other nationalities to Christchurch are coming from several main sources (Table 1). In the year to March 2001, 595 people (17%) named the British Isles as their place of last permanent residence, with 588 people (17%) coming from Japan. China was also another significant source country, with 505 people (15%). Australia, Korea, Malaysia and the US also supplied a number of permanent and long-term migrants (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Arrivals of Other Nationalities to Christchurch by Country of Last Permanent Residence, Year to March 2001



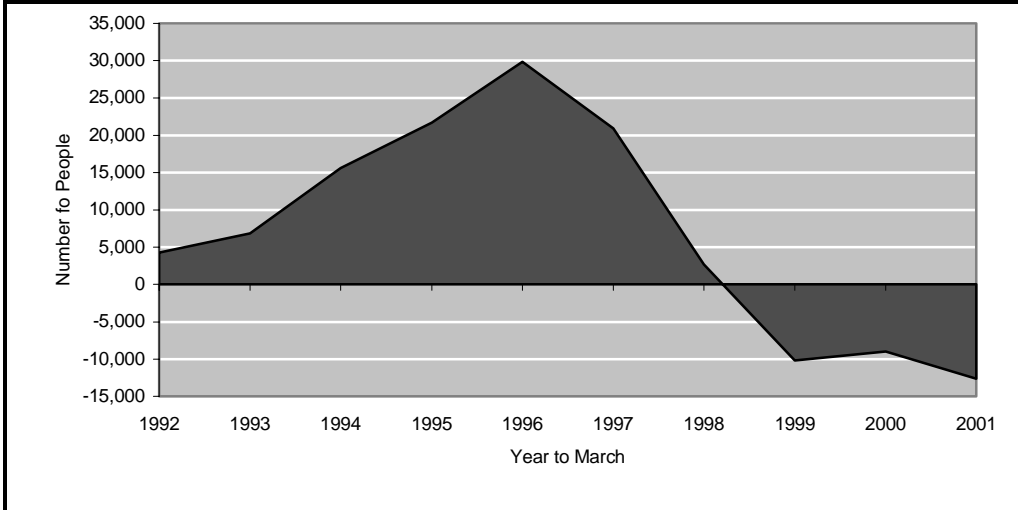
Source: Statistics New Zealand, Migration data

Certain age groups are also becoming significant sources of migrants to Christchurch. In the last year, 286 permanent and long-term migrants from the British Isles (48% of arrivals from there) were aged 25-39 years. Likewise, 59% of migrants from Japan (345 people) were aged 25-39 years, with a further 39% (231 people) aged 15-24 years. China also supplied a number of migrants in this younger age group (361 people or 71%). Presumably many of those aged 15-24 have come to New Zealand to study at a secondary or tertiary level.

On a national scale there was a total net loss of 12,600 permanent and long-term migrants for the year to March 2001 (Figure 3). A greater net loss than the previous year by over 3,500 people, it consisted of a net loss of 42,328 New Zealand citizens and a net gain of 29,728 people of other nationalities. Lower migration flows are attributable to a number of factors, including the tightening of immigration policy by central government during the mid 1990s. The weaker New Zealand economy over the last few years and economic problems abroad, particularly in Asia, have also had an impact.

³ British Isles includes England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales

Figure 3. New Zealand Total Net Migration, 1992—2001



Source: Statistics New Zealand, Migration data

THE TRANS-TASMAN EXPERIENCE

The buoyant Australian economy has also tempted New Zealand residents to cross the Tasman in search of better work opportunities. Over 42,000 (54%) of all permanent and long-term departures from New Zealand in the last year named Australia as their intended destination. Christchurch reflected this trend, with 3,478 people crossing the Tasman on a permanent or long-term basis in the last year (53% of all migrant departures from the city). This has been a growing trend since 1994, when a change of government policy allowed New Zealanders to travel to Australia with a passport (no longer requiring a visa). However, since February this year, New Zealand citizens arriving in Australia have to apply for a permanent residence visa if they want to receive any social security payments or gain Australian citizenship, with a two-year qualifying period. A higher outflow of permanent and long-term migrants to Australia in January and February preceded the change. However, since that time it appears that numbers have been gradually decreasing.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Monthly external migration figures released since March indicate that New Zealand has passed the lowest point of the current trough. Year-on-year comparisons for June show migrant arrivals to be increasing, along with a decrease in the number of permanent and long-term departures. There are several factors likely to promote this trend. The current immigration target for residency approvals is now at 38,000 people per annum, up from 28,000 at December last year. Along with the increased target, there has also been an easing of immigration rules, encouraging more applications for residency. While targets have not been met for many years, these changes are likely to increase the number of permanent and long-term migrants to New Zealand in the near future. The changes to Australian immigration policy may also limit the number of departures across the Tasman, indicating that both New Zealand and Christchurch look to be heading towards a positive net migration phase once more.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the information be received.