



Internal Migration of New Zealand's 65+ Population



This paper was prepared by Kirsten Nissen of the Population Statistics unit of Statistics New Zealand as part of the article series: Structural Change and the 65+ Population.

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Summary of regional mobility patterns

The New Zealand resident population aged 65 years and over (the 65+ population) are increasingly mobile or are more likely to have moved to another residence within New Zealand during a five-year period.

The following points summarise the internal mobility patterns of the 65+ population (which regions in New Zealand they are moving to and from and why), as recorded by the 2006 Census and the Survey of Dynamics and Motivations for Migration in New Zealand: March 2007:

- Compared with the overall New Zealand population, people aged 65+ were less likely to have moved and more likely to have stayed living in the same region if they did move.
- Of the 16 regions, the combined flows of in- and out-migration (total moves in and out) were largest for the Auckland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions in the northern part of the North Island. These regions were followed by Canterbury in the South Island, and the Wellington and Manawatu-Wanganui regions in the south of the North Island.
- The Bay of Plenty region had the largest net population gain from internal migration of people aged 65+. Significant net gains were also recorded in the Canterbury and Waikato regions, whereas the Auckland region had a large net outflow of people aged 65+.
- In relation to population size, the lower populated regions in the top of the South Island (for example, Tasman and Nelson) had some of the highest in-migration flows of people aged 65+ from other regions.
- A high level of out-migration was recorded for those aged 65+ moving from the Auckland region to mainly neighbouring regions in the north (Northland, Waikato, and Bay of Plenty). These out-migrations were offset by a large number of overseas migrants aged 65+ moving to Auckland, which resulted in a significant population 'churn' among the region's 65+ population.
- People aged 65+ who moved within the Auckland region preferred to settle in the districts or cities with lower populations, whereas people moving within Canterbury preferred to keep living in the main centres of the region.
- As the commuting distance to work becomes less important for people in their 60s, desires such as wanting to live closer to a better natural environment, closer to better services and facilities and to family, or just wanting a lifestyle change were significant drivers of internal migration.

The internal migration analyses in the following sections are for the resident population who were aged 65+ at the time of the 2006 Census and also recorded a New Zealand region of residence at the 2001 Census. Because those who moved at some point during 2001–06 could have been as young as 60 years old at the time, it is worth noting that not all of their moves would have occurred after their eligibility for New Zealand Superannuation. The gradual increase in eligibility for New Zealand Superannuation from 60 to 65 years during 1992–2001 resulted in transitions associated with retirement happening at a later stage in 2006 compared with those made in 1996. Additionally, the marked increase in labour force participation of people aged in their 60s has meant some in this age group have made a more gradual transition to retirement.

Motivations for moving

The motivations associated with moving are described by factors that 'push' people away from their previous location, but also by factors that 'pull' people to their existing residence. Results from the *Survey of Dynamics and Motivations for Migration in New Zealand: March 2007 quarter* gave indications of these motivations for people who had moved within New Zealand during 2005–07. Described by broad-level reason categories, people aged 65+ most frequently moved from their previous location for environmental reasons (29 percent) followed by housing (27 percent) and social reasons (18 percent), whereas their current location had been chosen mainly for environmental reasons (38 percent) followed by social reasons (25 percent).

Mobility patterns

Although people of the older ages were less likely to have moved, one-third of the 65+ population at the 2006 Census (who also stated a residence in New Zealand at the previous census) had moved, whereas two-thirds had remained living at the same residence. Ten years earlier, during 1991–96, just over one-quarter (27 percent) of the 65+ population had moved. Overall, in 2006, just over half (52 percent) of the population who also lived in a New Zealand region in 2001 had moved address between 2001 and 2006 (compared with 49 percent in 1996).

People aged 65+ comprised 12 percent of the New Zealand resident population at the 2006 Census, which was similar to the percentage at the 1996 Census. However, in numerical terms, this age group increased by 72,900 to 495,600 over the decade (see table 1). Most markedly, in 2006, the number of people in this age group who had moved increased by more than one-third compared with 1996.

Table 1

Movers and Non-movers Aged 65+
Regional council areas
2006 Census

Region	Non-movers	Moved within region	Moved to region	65+ population ⁽¹⁾
Northland	12,066	4,818	1,863	21,459
Auckland	75,672	32,664	3,528	128,418
Waikato	27,324	11,343	4,329	47,628
Bay of Plenty	21,126	9,327	3,912	38,055
Gisborne	3,366	1,065	303	5,346
Hawke's Bay	12,663	4,902	1,152	20,493
Taranaki	9,726	3,474	702	15,411
Manawatu-Wanganui	19,509	7,164	2,274	31,755
Wellington	33,216	11,475	2,058	51,405
Tasman	3,756	1,056	750	6,072
Nelson	4,011	1,116	618	6,231
Marlborough	3,942	1,599	663	6,876
West Coast	2,790	855	324	4,332
Canterbury	45,156	18,648	2,841	72,615
Otago	17,187	5,949	1,179	26,814
Southland	8,058	3,042	552	12,639
New Zealand 65+ population ⁽²⁾	299,610	118,503	27,051	495,603

(1) Includes residents who moved from overseas, had no fixed abode or who did not specify a residence five years ago.

(2) Includes area outside regions.

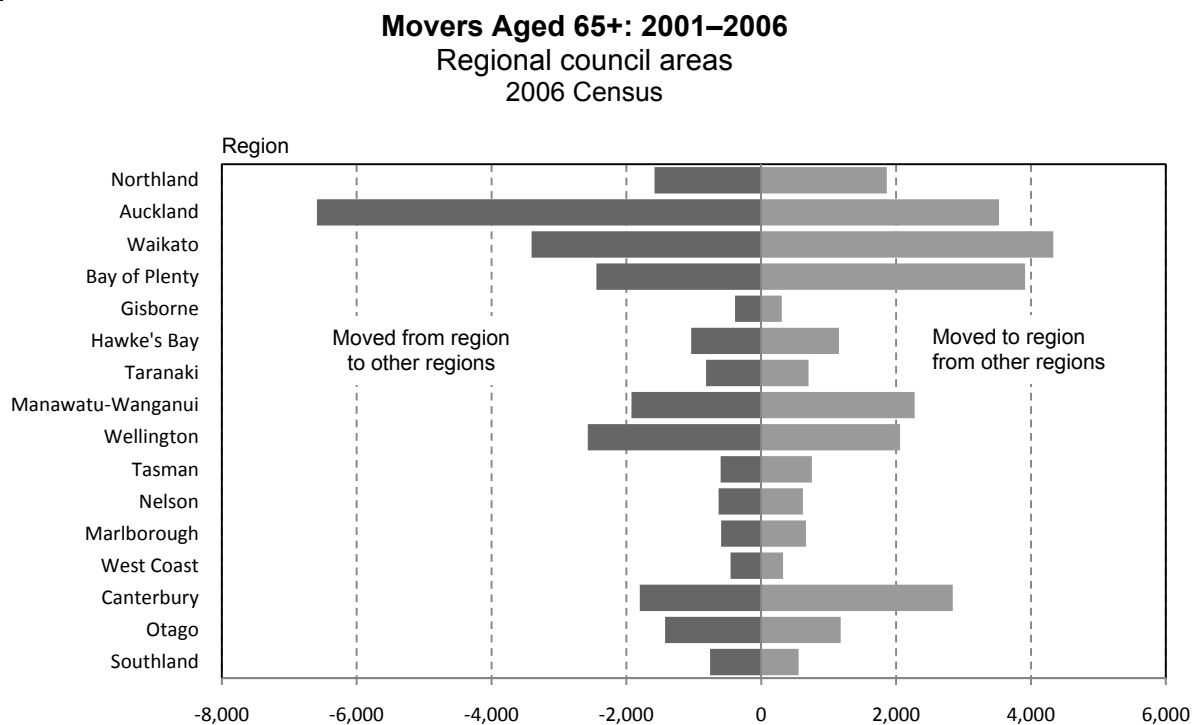
Moving between regions

The low number of people aged 65+ who chose to move to another region between 2001 and 2006 displayed a mobility pattern with high levels of in- and out-migration among regions in the north and south of the North Island, and in Canterbury of the South Island. However, in relation to population size, the lower populated regions in the top of the South Island experienced some of the highest in-migration from other regions during this period.

In 2006, 24 percent of the 65+ population moved within their region and only 5 percent moved between regions (see table 1). The four northernmost regions and the two southern regions of the North Island, and the Canterbury region were the main recipients of those aged 65+ who chose to move to another region. About half (13,600) of those who moved to another region moved to the four regions in the north of the North Island between 2001 and 2006.

While the four northernmost regions received high numbers of residents from other regions, there were also high numbers of residents who chose to move away from these regions (see figure 1). As an example, in 2006, 1,900 people aged 65+ moved to Northland from other regions, whereas 1,600 moved out of the region resulting in a small net gain of 300 from internal migration. More significantly, in- and out-migration between regions resulted in a net loss to the Auckland region (3,100), while regions south of Auckland had large net gains from internal migration – the Bay of Plenty gained 1,500 and Waikato gained 900. The Canterbury region also had a large net gain of 1,000 people in the 65+ ages.

Figure 1



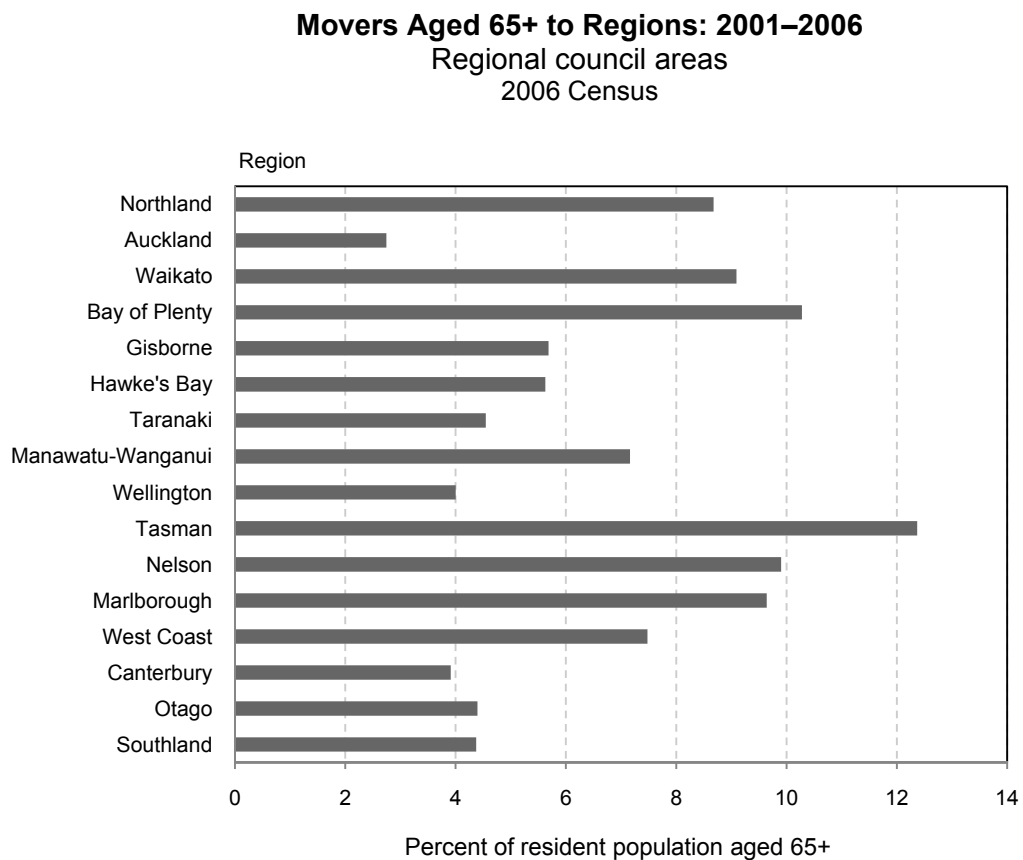
Where did people move to and why?

The main factors that pushed people aged 65+ away from where they used to live (factors that contributed to the pattern of mobility both within and between regions) were characterised by the previous residence being too large, personal and health reasons, retirement, and wanting to live closer to

family. On the other hand, the main factors that pulled the 65+ population to new locations were being closer to services and facilities, being closer to family, a more suitable town/region, and a better natural environment (results from the *Survey of Dynamics and Motivations for Migration in New Zealand: March 2007*).

Some regions are attractive to people who are reducing their working hours in anticipation of leaving the work force or to those who are no longer in the work force. In particular, the regions north and south of Auckland attracted large proportions of their 65+ populations from other regions. In 2006, 10 percent of the 65+ population in the Bay of Plenty and 9 percent in the Waikato had moved from another region (figure 2). Residents from the Auckland region were particularly attracted to the neighbouring regions of Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Northland.

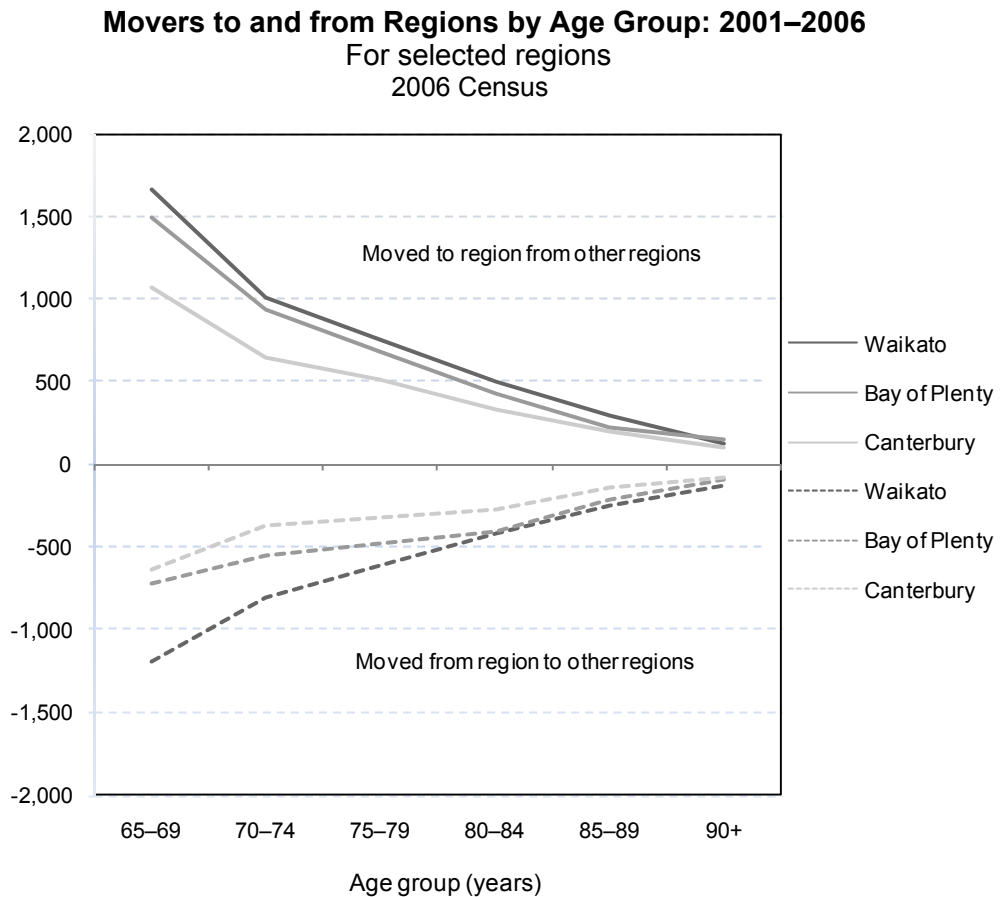
Figure 2



The lower populated regions in the north of the South Island attracted large proportions of their populations from regions mainly in the South Island. In the Tasman region, 12 percent of the 65+ population moved from other regions between 2001 and 2006. Similarly, 10 percent of the 65+ population of the Nelson and Marlborough regions moved to these regions from other regions. The most populated regions – Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury – received relatively low numbers of migrants aged 65+ from other regions over the same period.

As expected, most moves between regions among those aged 65+ occurred in the younger retirement ages and gradually declined with older ages. Among all the regions between 2001 and 2006, the highest inflows of people aged 65–69 years were in the Waikato (1,700), Bay of Plenty (1,500) and Canterbury (1,100) regions, and the net gain for this age group was highest for the Bay of Plenty (800).

Figure 3



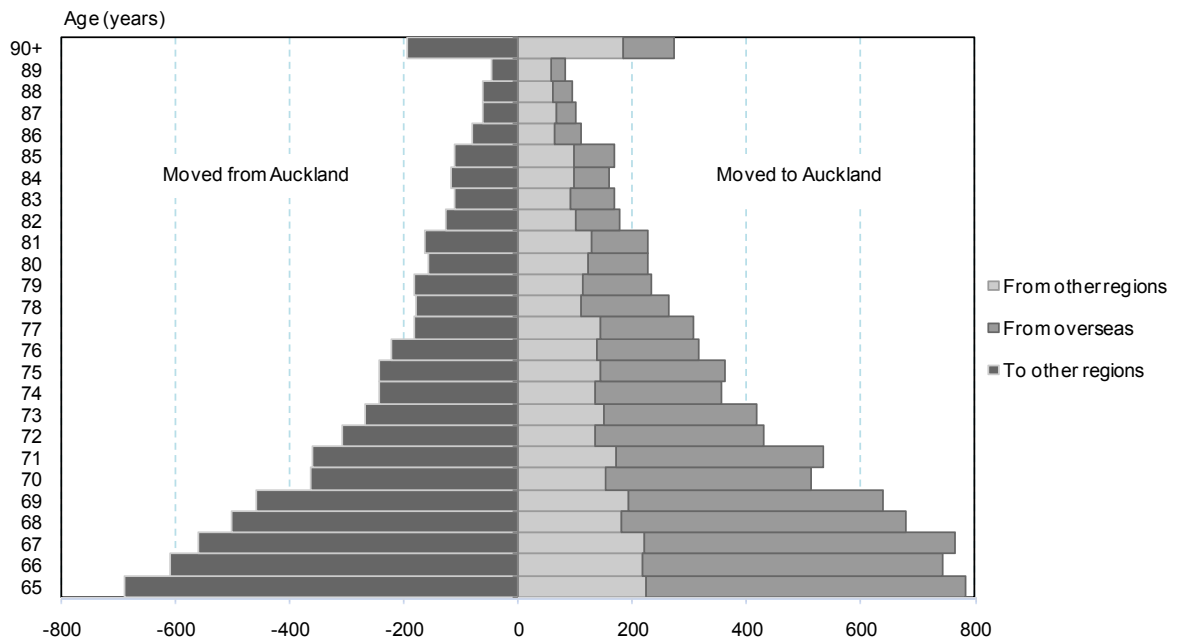
Moving in Auckland and Canterbury

Auckland and Canterbury are the two most populated regions in New Zealand. From 2001 to 2006, their respective 65+ populations who moved within their region showed high mobility levels. However, relatively speaking, the numbers of moves that those aged 65+ made to these two regions were the lowest of all the regions (as recorded by the 2006 Census). The mobility patterns of the 65+ population within the Auckland and Canterbury regions were different; people moving within the Auckland region preferred to move away from the main cities to the lower populated cities or districts, whereas people moving within the Canterbury region preferred to keep living in the main centres.

The Auckland region had the lowest inflow of 65+ migrants from other regions. However, Auckland's large net loss of internal migrants was compensated by a significant inflow of overseas migrants aged 65+. About half of the people aged 65+ who moved to New Zealand between 2001 and 2006 settled in the Auckland region (5,600), and about half of these overseas migrants were less than 70 years old. Including the large number of people of similar ages who preferred to move to other regions, this implied a significant 'churn' of people aged 65–69 years in Auckland. As these moves occurred in the five years before the census, some people would have moved before their eligibility for New Zealand Superannuation and some would have moved afterwards. Nevertheless, these moves correspond to a transitional phase in a person's life, a time of change in working patterns and personal finances.

Figure 4

Movers to and from Auckland Region by Age: 2001–2006 2006 Census



In the Auckland region between 2001 and 2006, there was a significant outflow to other regions of people aged 65–69 years (2,800) and a much lower outflow of people aged 70–74 years (1,500). By contrast, moves to the Auckland region from other regions occurred at quite a steady rate in relation to the population size of each of the five-year age groups – about 3 percent of each age group moved there in 2006.

The populations of the Auckland and Canterbury regions had the highest rate of mobility within their regions. At the time of the 2006 Census, about one-quarter of the 65+ population of each region had moved to another locality within the same region. The districts surrounding the four cities of Auckland had the highest proportions of their 65+ populations who had moved to the districts from other areas within the region. Migration between the territorial authorities of the Auckland region between 2001 and 2006 was characterised by a significant outflow from Auckland city that resulted in net gains to the other territorial authorities in the region. However, only the districts and Waitakere city had net gains of the 65+ population from moves between all territorial authorities in the Auckland region. Clearly, the lower populated districts in Auckland are attractive to the 65+ age group because they provide the opportunity for a 'quieter' lifestyle or environment, while still being within commuting distance of the main cities and the special services they offer.

Table 2

**Movers Aged 65+ Within and Between Territorial Authorities
in the Auckland Region
2006 Census**

Usual residence 2006	Moved within region 2001–2006		Population aged 65+	Moved from TA 2001–2006	Net gain or loss from moves within region 2001–2006
	Moved within TA	Moved to TA			
Rodney district	2,475	1,755	13,347	876	879
North Shore city	4,440	1,095	22,251	1,344	-249
Waitakere city	2,793	1,452	17,349	1,152	300
Auckland city	7,212	1,815	38,778	3,045	-1,230
Manukau city	5,361	1,572	27,426	1,704	-132
Papakura district	606	636	4,563	441	195
Franklin district	990	618	6,159	381	237

Note: Figures for the Franklin district include part of the Waikato region.

In comparison, the mobility of the 65+ age group within the Canterbury region was characterised by a high level of mobility within the main centres of the region. For example, in Christchurch city and in the Ashburton and Timaru districts more than 20 percent of their 65+ populations moved within these centres. As expected, the districts surrounding Christchurch city, the Waimakariri and Selwyn districts, had the highest proportions of their 65+ populations who moved who moved there from other territorial authorities in the region. These districts offer opportunities like lifestyle block developments that are attractive to people who no longer need to commute to work every day.

Table 3

**Movers Aged 65+ Within and Between Territorial Authorities in
the Canterbury Region
2006 Census**

Usual residence 2006	Moved within region 2001–2006		Population aged 65+	Moved from TA 2001–2006	Net gain or loss from moves within region 2001–2006
	Moved within TA	Moved to TA			
Kaikoura district	72	24	540	45	-21
Hurunui district	213	129	1,494	234	-105
Waimakariri district	1,077	678	5,967	492	186
Christchurch city	10,833	1,098	47,193	1,092	6
Selwyn district	339	399	3,021	339	60
Ashburton district	1,014	162	4,470	192	-30
Timaru district	1,776	279	7,848	264	15
Mackenzie district	39	27	489	87	-60
Waimate district	225	69	1,380	120	-51

Note: The Canterbury region part of the Waitaki district has been excluded.

Characteristics of internal migration flows

Significant increases in the number and proportion of people aged 65+ who moved between 2001 and 2006 have consolidated distinct mobility patterns across the North and South Island regions. As the commuting distance to work becomes less important for people in their 60s, desires such as wanting to

live closer to a better natural environment, closer to better services and facilities, closer to family, or just wanting a lifestyle change were significant drivers of internal migration.

Among the few people aged 65+ who chose to move to another region between 2001 and 2006, the migration flows were characterised by significant outflows from Auckland to the surrounding regions, mainly the Bay of Plenty and Waikato. These outflows were partly explained by the large number of overseas migrants aged 65+ who settled in Auckland (which resulted in pressure on the local housing market and associated infrastructure). In the south of the North Island, the Manawatu-Wanganui region mainly gained migrants from Wellington region, whereas in the South Island, the Canterbury region mainly gained people aged 65+ from the Otago region followed by the Auckland and Southland regions.

The migration flows of the 65+ population within the regions were partly driven by the advantages smaller populated districts and cities have to offer for this age group compared with the main centres. For example, there were significant outflows of people aged 65+ from Auckland city to surrounding cities and districts in the Auckland region, and from Christchurch city to surrounding districts in the Canterbury region.

Information sources

1996 and 2006 Censuses of Population and Dwellings.

Survey of Dynamics and Motivations for Migration in New Zealand: March 2007 quarter

<http://www.stats.govt.nz/products-and-services/info-releases/survey-dynamics-motivations-migration-new-zealand.htm>