# SOCIOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHY:
A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE NEW ZEALAND POPULATION

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THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF HUMAN POPULATIONS

ECONOMY OR DEMOGRAPHY: WHICH COMES FIRST?

Putting the Economy First

In the previous study guide we began our sociological exploration of New Zealand society with economic life. It is there that we find what is surely the most fundamental and essential of all human activities – the work we perform to meet our survival needs. Survival is the most urgent of all imperatives. It seemed only logical, therefore, to start our survey of the human condition at this basic level.

Let’s reinforce that point by going right back to the origins of this country. When Polynesians arrived in their canoes on these uninhabited islands in the South Pacific around 1000 years ago, their first tasks were to locate sources of food and drinking water, and to figure out how to process local raw material into clothes, houses and tools. True, there were other important things to be done as well, such as performing sacred rituals, laying claim to communal territory, caring for the sick, making collective decisions and forging hierarchies of dominance and status. That is, all spheres of social life – culture, community, welfare and politics – swung into action simultaneously from the time the newcomers disembarked and began to create a home for themselves. The simple, stark fact remains that if they had not directed the bulk of their time, thought and energy to meeting basic survival needs they would have died of thirst, starvation or exposure, and the seeds of the new society would have perished before it had time to take root.

Of course, economic life in the postmodern New Zealand of the 21st century is a far cry from the subsistence needs of our
early ancestors. Only a small proportion of today’s labour force is directly involved in extracting, growing or processing natural raw materials. The majority of us devote our working lives to the production of sophisticated consumer goods or to providing services for one another. Above all, the making and spending of money (a concept that was unknown in traditional Maori society) has become a major economic activity in and for itself, to the point that when we speak of “the economy” we are usually referring to purely financial matters – the accumulation and investment of capital, the servicing of debt, the generation of income and so on. However, the bedrock of all economic activity, now as a thousand years ago, is the ongoing struggle of human beings to wrest their livelihood through labour and the use of tools from an often grudging and wayward natural world.

**Economic determinism**

Economic activity plays such a central and indispensable role in human affairs that some of the most influential thinkers of the last 300 years, such as Adam Smith in the 18th century, Karl Marx in the 19th and Milton Friedman in the 20th, operated on a philosophical assumption known as “economic determinism”. Put simply, economic determinism assumes that everything else that happens in society, from politics to poetry, is secondary to and shaped by economic necessities. Practical politicians share this assumption. No matter what lofty visions of the Good Society they may start out their political careers with, sooner or later they have to compromise their ideals in the light of economic necessities. The noblest dreams of social equality and justice will founder if the nation is unproductive, its resources not exploited, its coffers empty.

This is why we began our tour of the social map in the previous study guide with the economic sphere. We are not hard-line economic determinists like Karl Marx, since the whole point of this course is to demonstrate that all seven spheres of the map, from nature to culture, are equally important in shaping our lives, but we nevertheless placed it first on our list of topics to explore in recognition of the harsh reality that if the human species ceased to labour incessantly, it would quickly die out.
Sociology would then be redundant, as there would be no human society to study, and nobody to study it.

**Putting Population First**

We’ve just been making out a case for starting our sociological exploration of the social map with the economic domain. Just as strong a case, however, could be argued for starting our sociological journey of discovery in another equally basic and equally essential dimension of human life. This is life itself. To state the blindingly obvious, if there were no human population on our little islands in the South Pacific, there would be no raw material for sociologists to get their hands on.

**no Adam & Eve in Paradise**  
    Not so very long ago in broad historical terms, this was precisely the situation. For millions of years after these islands became detached from the great primordial land mass called Gwondanaland, their native flora and fauna lived undisturbed by that ecologically disruptive species known to itself as homo sapiens. It was an ecological paradise, with no Adam and Eve to destroy its rain forests, erode its soil, pollute its air and water, and destroy its indigenous species.

Then one day – we don’t know when for sure, but for convenience let’s say about a thousand years ago – the native birds of the nameless land spotted a canoe on the horizon. Others were to follow. Polynesians heading south-west across the great Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (the Pacific Ocean), probably from Tahiti via Raratonga, had discovered the land they were to name Aotearoa – the Land of the Long White Cloud. Paradise acquired its Adams and Eves from over the sea. A new species of life stepped ashore and set to work bending native flora and fauna, earth and water to its will. If those Polynesian voyagers had never started out, been blown off course or had perished on the way, the islands in the south would have remained nameless and undisturbed by human history.

**a precarious foothold**  
    That isn’t to be. The travelers do survive the journey. Let’s
go back to the moment when their canoes run up on the beach and the very first humans set foot on this land. The seeds of human society are now planted in Aotearoa.

It’s future, though, is by no means guaranteed. The first generation might also be the last. The newcomers could perish of hunger, thirst or exposure. They could fight amongst themselves until they had achieved mutually assured total destruction. They could all return to their waka, head out to sea and restore primordial tranquility to the native life forms.

None of these things happens, but a greater threat to the embryonic new society remains. This is the ageing process, which back then occurred much faster than it does today. Within a few decades, even the youngest of the first settlers will have grown old and died. Human society still has only a precarious foothold.

sex to the rescue

Fortunately, the human species has the same potential as all other life forms to evade the Grim Reaper – sex! Sexual reproduction does not immunise individuals from the ageing process, but it does ensure the continuation and proliferation of the group, as new-born members grow up to replace their elders. God’s first commandment to Adam and Eve was “Be fruitful and multiply”. Their Polynesian counterparts need no such divine prompting. The original canoes are mixed sex. They carry within themselves quite literally the seeds from which history will grow. Once ashore, in between meeting their survival needs, exploring and staking out territory and fighting amongst themselves, the first generation of migrants sets about the more enjoyable pastime of multiplication. If feeding was to be their most urgent priority, breeding came a close second. No sex – no society.

What we have just been saying about the very first human beings to arrive on our shores applied to all later sub-species of humanity whose descendants now make up the population of contemporary New Zealand. Be they British, continental
European, Asian, Pacific Islander or “Other”, their forebears were originally first generation migrants from over the seas, as with the Maori before them. Once established, each wave of newcomers sets about recruiting new members into its community through sexual multiplication, although they also inveigle stay-at-homes from their countries of origin to come over and join them.

The population lake is thus regularly replenished from two sources – reproduction and immigration. If either in-coming flow were to dry up for long, the lake would begin to shrink. That shrinkage is caused by the fact that it is constantly being drained by two out-flowing rivers at the other end. On the one hand, people quit the country to make their homes elsewhere: immigration is off-set by emigration. On the other hand, there is the ever-present Grim Reaper, unceasingly carrying off the present generation through violent death, illness or the inescapable ageing process. Hence the lake fills up through addition and multiplication (immigration and sexual reproduction), while at the same time it is being emptied through subtraction and division (emigration and death). We make our entrances across the great sea or from within the amniotic ocean within our mothers’ wombs. We exit through physical dissolution or voluntary exile.

As was said earlier, all this is blindingly obvious. Furthermore it applies to all life forms, not just humans. Their populations move around from place to place, sexually reproducing themselves as they do so. Numbers swell as new members make their entrances through immigration or birth, and are diminished as they exit via emigration or death. Ornithologists study these processes as they observe godwits flying to and fro between Siberia and New Zealand, record the numbers of little spotted kiwi being slaughtered by predators or rejoice when the sexually drowsy kakapo produce a new breed of chicks. Human demographers (the term will be explained in a minute) do precisely the same with social statistics.
Even though it’s basic and obvious to say that society is composed of human bodies, and that the bodies come and go, these elementary observations nevertheless have far-reaching implications both for sociologists and for the society they study. Those human bodies are the raw material out of which society is built. It is therefore essential that we know how many of those bodies there are, what kinds of bodies they are, where they are situated, at what rate they are being born and dying, how many are entering the country and how many are bailing out.

*which comes first...?*

It could well be argued that these physical processes are so basic and fundamental, it would be more logical to have started our exploration of the social map with population rather than the economy. After all, that ornithologist we mentioned would probably begin a study of godwits by counting their numbers, watching how many chicks are being hatched, observing their death rate and migrating habits. Those are the kinds of things a natural life scientist wants to know first about any species under investigation. It would have made perfect sense to have started our present enquiry into the human species known as the Kiwi in the same way.

After considerable hesitation, I decided to start the ball rolling with economics, out of deference to those economic determinists I mentioned earlier, but it was fairly much an arbitrary decision. Feeding and breeding are both functional necessities for human societies as for all life forms, and go on simultaneously – as does a third universal activity, fighting. As you will discover in the course of the present study guide, economic factors drive population change, but population factors in turn shape economic life, while both are accompanied by an aggressive drive for dominance. It’s one of those chicken-and-egg situations.

Let’s accept, then, that although this part of the course follows after the Economy study guide it could equally have logically preceded it. That point understood, it’s time to end the introductions and take a look at the structure, contents and
intentions of the present study guide. How do we go about the sociological analysis of human populations?
THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Demography

The words “demography”, “demographer” and “demographics” are going to crop up a lot in the following discussion. Demography is the scientific study of human populations. Demographers are essential to sociologists, because it is they who supply the raw material on which the latter operate. In New Zealand, the main source of demographic material is a government department called Statistics New Zealand, although a great deal of useful material is also generated by universities, private research agencies and companies who carry out social surveys.

The figures used in the present study guide for the most part have their ultimate source in Statistics New Zealand, though they were actually taken in large part from two useful documents The Social Report 2003 and Population and Sustainable Development 2003. The website addresses are in the concluding bibliography.

While on the subject of the figures that are sprinkled throughout the following discussion, a slight word of caution is necessary. Such figures have been used fairly sparingly, as I did not want to overburden the text with masses of instantly-forgettable statistics. They are included only to establish some benchmark facts. Readers interested in gaining a fuller picture will find data aplenty in the two documents mentioned above, and even more at the Statistics New Zealand website.

When numbers are cited in the following, they are usually indicative ballpark figures. Sometimes they are preceded with qualifiers like “approximately”, “roughly”, or “around”, but even when these cautionary terms are not actually used, they must be understood. What we are primarily interested in is the process of “doing sociology”, not small fussy details about percentages or decimal points. Whether there are 4 000 000 people in New Zealand or 4 000 100 is not really relevant: the
important point is that there are about four million of us, not sixty million. The figures, then, have been rounded out for readability. What we are really interested in are patterns and trends.

If this sounds a little unprofessional, there are three justifications for taking this rough-and-ready approach to the facts. In the first place, many of them were gathered in the past, probably the 2001 census. They had changed by the time this study guide was written, and will change again before it is read. Demographics are always on the move. By the time we have gathered facts, society itself has changed. We are always running to catch up – but never quite succeed.

In the second place, figures quoted in one official source sometimes differ from those in another, and there is no way of knowing which is right. Finally, even the hardest of apparently hard facts are always a little blurry around the edges. For instance, around 85 000 New Zealanders were unaccounted for in the 2001 census. It was as though an entire city had vanished over night. That’s quite a lot of people for whom demographic statistics are unavailable. Or again, you will see when you get to the discussion of ethnic composition that the figures add up to well over 100% owing to the confusing ways in which ethnicity is defined and information about ethnic identity is gathered.

The upshot is that although the figures you will be given are perfectly reliable as signposts, they should be taken as indicators only. You can trust them as far as they go, but don’t regard them as engraved in tablets of stone. Apparently hard facts often go soft on us.

**From Demography to Sociology**

After that brief digression, let’s return to our main subject. This is how we go about the business of studying human populations from a sociological perspective.
It is important to make a distinction between demography on the one hand and the sociological analysis of population on the other. Demographers spawn statistical facts, often presented in intimidating tables and charts. It is essential that sociologists are acquainted with these statistics, but in themselves they are rather dry and boring, and don’t actually mean very much. Unless we have a strong mathematical bent, they tend to go in one ear and out the other.

The job of sociologists is to take the dead facts provided by statisticians and bring them to life by explaining what they mean in real human terms. In a word, we must interpret the figures. The leap from demography to sociology requires moving from description to explanation – from compiling statistical data to understanding their causes and consequences, and confronting the issues they generate.

In the rest of this section of the study guide, you will be given a step-by-step guided tour of how such sociological interpretation is carried out – that is, how to uncover the social significance of demographic statistics. This requires working our way through the following methodological procedures.

| Identify the key demographic variables in the field you are studying |
| Learn the statistical facts about each such variable |
| Spot significant differences or changes in the figures |
| Trace causal links between demographic processes on the one hand, demographic characteristics on the other |
| Discover the social causes of the demographic phenomenon being studied |
| Explain the social consequences of this demographic phenomenon |
| Explore the issues to which all the above give rise. |

The first four of those relate only to demography. The final three take us from demography to sociology.
For the moment, the check list will not mean much to you. In the rest of this section, it will be unpacked and explained. The bulk of the study guide will then be devoted to showing how it works in practice. Right now, let’s work our way through the list, briefly explaining what each item means.

**Identify the Key Demographic Variables**

Although the statistical tables generated by demographers can be confusingly complex, they are really only concerned with a small number of key variables. A “variable”, if you are not familiar with the term, is simply anything we isolate for purposes of scientific study. Thus, if we want to research the weather, the variables in which we would be interested include temperature, rainfall or atmospheric pressure. If it is crime we are investigating, we would home in on variables like the rates of burglary, sexual assault and murder.

In the case of demography, there are six main variables at play. These in turn can be organised into two lists, each containing three variables. Here they are:

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<td>Births</td>
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<td>Composition</td>
<td>Deaths</td>
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<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Migration</td>
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The whole of this study guide will be structured around these six demographic factors. Each will be introduced in turn, and unpacked to reveal its implications. We will leave them for the moment, therefore, and go on with the other steps we must take to transform dead statistics into living issues.

**Learn the Statistical Facts About Each Such Variable**

Once again, we won’t spend any time for the moment on this, as figures will abound later on. It’s obvious, though, that if we...
are to have a meaningful discussion about population issues, we must furnish ourselves with empirical evidence. The kinds of things we need to know about the six key variables are:

- How big is the population we are studying?
- What social categories can it be broken down into?
- Where do people live?
- What are the birth and fertility rates? (The former refers to the number of babies born each year, the latter means the average number of children a woman of child-bearing age will have).
- What is the mortality rate – that is, how many people die each year.
- How many people are entering and leaving the country each year. (The balance of incoming and outgoing migrants is called net migration. It shows us whether New Zealand is gaining or losing residents overall, and by what amount.)

There are hosts of supplementary statistical facts for us to discover as we explore the demographic sector of the social map, but those will do as preliminary viewfinders.

Spot Significant Differences or Changes in the Figures

When we are presented with masses of undigested statistics, our eyes tend to skim over them without registering their significance. In a word, they can be boring. To make the figures come alive and grab our attention, we must look for interesting anomalies. Why are the figures in one box so different from those in another? Why does a line on a graph curve up, when the one next to it curves down? Why are the statistics for one date at such variance from those for another? In short, we must spot what appear to be significant differences or changes in the numbers. That will alert us to areas calling out for more research and explanation.

The present study guide will be studded with examples of this procedure in action. Time and time again, the situation at one
point in New Zealand history will be compared with that at another. For instance, regular contrasts will be made between the condition of New Zealand in the middle of the 20th century and the state of the country today. Similarly, situations in one place will be contrasted with the situation somewhere else at the same time. For example, regular comparisons will be made between the situation of Maori and Pakeha New Zealanders. This methodological procedure is both good science and plain common sense. After all, if nothing ever changed and we were all the same, there would be little to arouse our intellectual curiosity.

Trace Causal Links Between Demographic Processes on the One Hand, Demographic Characteristics on the Other

This advice may look a bit obscure, so let’s explain. As noted above, by “characteristics” is meant the size, composition and distribution of the population. By “processes” is meant rates of birth, death and migration. The first step to be taken when trying to explain the differences or changes noted above is to figure out the causal connections between the first three of these and the second three.

An example might help. Let’s focus on the population characteristic “composition”. Back in 1961, people of Asian and Pacific Island origin constituted around 1% of this country’s ethnic mix. They were virtually invisible. Today, those two ethnic groups make up over 13% and are growing rapidly. In Auckland in particular, Pacific Islanders and Chinese are highly visible.

There we have an empirical fact about a big change which has occurred in New Zealand’s ethnic composition. The next methodological step is to find some causal link between this and one of the population processes. You don’t have to be a genius to spot that link. It was immigration. After 1961, waves of Pacific Islanders and later of Asians swept into the country. If patterns of immigration change, so too does the composition of the host nation.
That’s a very simple example, of course, but nevertheless an important one. As you read the study guide, you will find many examples of one demographic phenomenon being initially explained by another one. It’s an elementary but necessary first step in the sociological interpretation of statistics.

Up to this point, we have been operating just in the domain of demography. We have divided demographic statistics into six key variables, found out the facts about each of these, spotted differences or changes that seem to call out for investigation, and have explained one set of figures by another set of figures. Now is the time to take the crucial step from demography to sociology. This requires us to move outside the world of statistics and start doing some detective work in other areas of the social map.

Discover the Social Causes of the Demographic Phenomenon Being Studied

Our intellectual curiosity should be whetted rather than satisfied when we have figured out that one demographic change caused another. Our interest aroused, we now want to trace lines of causality further back. We find that Auckland’s ethnic composition has changed because of altered patterns of immigration. Okay, we say, but what caused those floods of new migrants to come here in the first place? Demography alone cannot provide the answer. It’s time to step outside the sphere of the social map labeled Population and hunt for explanations in the other six spheres we introduced in Study Guide Two.

Once we start doing this detective work into social causes, we will discover that there is seldom one and only one suspect. A demographic phenomenon almost always has multiple causes. There may be one main culprit, but there are usually other collaborators at work as well. Therefore we’ve got to systematically check out every sector of society – and even
perhaps the natural world as well – for clues. Frequently the main causal agent lurks in the economic domain, but politics also often comes into it. Cultural factors could be at play as well, as could the quality of community life and the state of people’s health and wellbeing. Finally, it may be an event in the natural world, like an earthquake, drought or epidemic, which triggered off a chain reaction that ended in a major demographic shift.

As with the other methodological steps already discussed, you will find many places in this study guide where we push beyond population figures in an attempt to winkle out their social causes. When we come to the so-called “baby boom”, for instance, we don’t rest content with just saying a lot of babies were born after World War II – we try to understand why this happened. Similarly, we try to tease out the social factors that led to a subsequent dramatic decline in the birth rate from the mid-1970s. In pursuing these investigations, we never settle for just one explanation. Rather, we analyse the complex intertwining of many causes right across the social map from nature to culture.

**Explain the Social Consequences of the Demographic Phenomenon You are Studying**

We now know the “why” of things. We must next ask: “What then?” For instance, we have discovered the ethnic mix in New Zealand has changed since the 1960s, have accounted for that change by immigration, and have figured out the reasons why the immigrants came here. It’s just as important to analyse the impact that the newcomers make on their host society – and vice versa. What are the consequences of the outbreak of multi-culturalism?

As with our analysis of causes, an investigation of the social impact of a demographic phenomenon must take us into all spheres of the social map. One-by-one we must check out the implications for the natural world, the economy, the state, health and welfare, community life and culture. With each, we
must be alert to the fact that relationships are always two-way. New immigrants, for instance, can cause repercussions in the political domain (like enhancing the electoral appeal of the New Zealand First Party), while politicians in turn can make life easier or harder for immigrants. Furthermore, when teasing out social consequences, we must take into account both positives and negatives, advantages and disadvantages. Few things in human life are all good or all bad. They can be **functional** in some respects, **dysfunctional** in others.

This is not always and only a matter of objective outcomes. Whether a phenomenon like immigration is desirable or undesirable may depend upon people’s subjective attitudes and values. One of sociology’s most important roles is to tease out all the consequences, draw up a balance sheet, and above all discriminate between objective realities and subjective opinions. This brings us to the final step in our methodological procedure.

**Explore the Issues to Which All the Above Give Rise**

Human beings have a habit of disagreeing amongst themselves on just about everything, from whether to get involved in a war to who is boss of the family’s TV remote control. Serious or trivial, they always seem to make an issue of things.

The major social issues with which sociologists are concerned can be divided into two main categories. On the one hand, there are large, intractable problems which everyone agrees need to be tackled, but nobody is sure of the best way of going about it. They know the ends they want to achieve, but differ on the best means of getting there. The ageing of the New Zealand population is an example of this.

On the other hand, there are some more dangerous issues where people are divided on both means and ends. In these cases there may be a fundamental clash of world views and group self-interest. Material rewards like money and land may be at stake, but so too are less tangible things like identity and
honor. Race relations between Maori and Pakeha fit into this category.

By far and away the most important function of sociology is to clarify such issues. Note that we say “clarify”, not “solve”. Sociologists are not and should not be benign dictators, telling society what it should do. They have the humbler but nevertheless invaluable task of helping people to think their way logically through situations. This requires figuring out what interests are involved, what the objective facts are, how and why those facts are being distorted, what means different groups adopt to achieve their ends, and what consequences flow from them. Sociology can explain what is happening, why it is happening and what the possible outcomes might be. What sociology cannot do is dictate those outcomes. It can clarify means, but not dictate ends. For instance, sociologists may untangle the issues surrounding claims to Maori sovereignty, but cannot pronounce on whether or not Maori should be sovereign.

Many contemporary issues vexing New Zealanders will be touched on in the course of this study guide. Probably the three most important, however, are controversies about Maori sovereignty, the structural ageing of the population and the country’s immigration policy. Particular attention will be paid to the latter issue. Over half the following discussion will be devoted to immigration, and you will be able to write an essay on this topic if it interests you.
The rest of the study guide will be structured around the six key demographic variables introduced earlier. Just a quick reminder. Three of these may be termed “population characteristics”: these are its size, composition and distribution. The other three are population “Processes”: births, deaths and migration. As we work our way through these in turn, the various analytical steps through which we translate demography into sociology will be introduced. Again a quick reminder: our analytical procedure requires us to explore:

- Facts
- Interesting differences or changes
- The ways in which population processes influence population characteristics
- Social causes of demographic phenomena
- Social consequences of demographic phenomena
- The major issues surrounding population characteristics and processes

In the early part of the following material, clear signals will be given in the text whenever one of these comes into play. The words “issue”, “causes”, “consequences” or “changes” will be signposted in order to remind you of the methodology underpinning the discussion. However, to keep drawing your attention to our analytical procedure in this way could become heavy-handed and pedantic. We will therefore phase out overt references to causes, consequences and the like as the text unfolds. They will still remain quietly at work below the surface, though, discreetly drawing your attention to why things happened, what the consequences are, and what controversial issues make Kiwis hot under the collar.
SIZE

Let’s start with an easy question. How many people live permanently in New Zealand? Answer: In April 2003 it was announced with a loud media fanfare that the New Zealand population had reached four million. For the record, it had hit the one million mark in 1908, two million in 1952 and three million in 1973.

Spot Significant Differences or Changes in the Figures

Those are the bald facts. Now let’s start bringing them to life. The size of the New Zealand population starts to take on sociological significance if we take the advice given earlier and look for marked differences or changes. Here are just two examples.

slowing rate of natural increase

The figures just quoted show that it took only 20 years from the 1950s to the 1970s to jump from the two million to the three million mark. That was the time of the “baby boom”, and those born back then are nicknamed “boomers”. Then things slowed down considerably – 30 years were needed to notch up the next million. This was the so-called “baby bust”, only slightly relieved by a brief upsurge in births – the “baby blip” – around 1990. Peering into their crystal balls, demographer’s prophecy that the rate of growth is going to slow down further in the future. We may never hit five million. The implications of this will be discussed later on: for the moment we are just showing how even a quick glance at a few basic figures can reveal anomalies calling out for explanation. The anomaly in this case concerns the population’s rate of natural increase – that is, the part of its growth that can be accounted for by the biological processes of birth and death.

NZ’s comparatively small size

Similarly, the size of our population jumps off the page and clamors for attention once we spot some significant differences from other countries. As we know, there are around four million Kiwis. In itself that is neither here nor there, but it
becomes a rather startling figure if we compare this country with two others of roughly the same geographical size – Great Britain and Japan.

You might say that New Zealand is just a tiny country geographically – three little dots down the bottom right hand corner of the map. You could argue that if we have a small population, it is because we are physically a small country (for the record, our land area is around 269 million square kilometres). Surely we couldn’t fit many more in?

That’s not really an adequate explanation, however. Let’s take two other island nations which are geographically of much the same size as New Zealand. The UK is smaller than us with around 245 square kilometres, but it manages to fit in around 60 million inhabitants – fifteen times our size demographically. And if you think that must be a squeeze, look at Japan. True, it’s a little bigger than us, with a surface area of around 378 million square kilometres, but its population is around 127 million – that’s more than thirty times our size. Clearly, then, population size is not determined by geographical size. We could fit in a hundred million people if we wanted to.

**social consequences of our small size**

Unlike inhabitants of other island states like Britain, Japan, Taiwan and Singapore, where people are packed like sardines, New Zealanders have the luxury of a lot of space to knock around in. This can also be a boom for Mother Nature who, except in our big cities, is allowed some room to breathe. Being small in fact, is part of the much-talked-of “New Zealand way of life”: we wouldn’t want it otherwise.

Nevertheless, being a demographic pigmy has its liabilities as well as blessings, both economic and cultural. New Zealanders on their own could not possibly consume all the milk products churned out by the giant milk cooperative Fontera, nor could we eat all the sheep being slaughtered annually in our freezing works. The mind boggles at what would happen if we attempted to drink all locally-produced wine by ourselves. We
have a very small domestic market. If the only people our producers could sell things to were locals, we’d be pretty much a subsistence economy.

Similarly, there just aren’t enough music fans, novel readers and the like for local musos and writers to make a decent living. As an author you might be able to scrape a livelihood in England, where the potential market is fifteen times bigger, but it is rare for New Zealand writers, except for the occasional best-seller like Alan Duff, to survive on literature alone.

**the immigration issue**

There are some people in this country – notably free-market globalisers – who would like to kick the economy into life by broadening its population base. This could be done virtually over-night if the country were to throw open its doors to an unlimited horde of immigrants. Why limit our domestic market to only four million consumers? Why not 60 or 120 million? That would give businesspeople something to get their teeth into, while governmental coffers would brim with the tax in-take. For those who like variety, it would also make New Zealand infinitely more culturally diverse. On the other hand, the resident population would become a small minority in its own land, the built infrastructure would collapse under the weight, and Papatuanuku – Mother Earth – would be trampled, depleted and polluted.

We are going to discuss the immigration issue later. For the moment, the focus is on the way we can tease out fascinating and highly controversial strands by making a few simple demographic comparisons. The minute we compare New Zealand’s puny population of four million with Japan’s 120 or so million, a host of fraught issues start flitting around in our minds.

**COMPOSITION**

Knowing there are round about four million Kiwis is a necessary starting point for our sociological enquiry, but
doesn’t really get us very far. It’s more useful to know the various categories of which the population is composed. How we divide the total population into different classificatory pigeonholes depends on what it is we are studying, but for the moment we will concentrate on just three dimensions of population composition: ethnicity, age and socio-economic status.

Ethnicity

The term “ethnicity” is used widely by social scientists, politicians, journalists and members of the general public. There is an Office of Ethnic Affairs, and a plethora of local Ethnic Councils. Clearly, then, the word must mean something. Unfortunately, the closer we look at it, and the harder we try to find a definition that actually corresponds to social reality, the more elusive it becomes. To avoid getting paralysed by this terminological problem, and therefore being unable to get on with our present discussion, the following definition is offered. It has its inadequacies, and could be debated at length. We don’t have the space here for such debates, so will just baldly state that an ethnic category possesses the following characteristics:

- Physical Appearance
  Within very broad limits, its members resemble one another physically. This is the result of inter-marriage for many generations within the same broad gene pool. However, physical appearance alone is not a reliable guide to ethnicity, as the gene pool itself can have become very mixed through the historical intermingling of once-distinct racial populations. For instance, even before some of them migrated to new Zealand the English were a hybrid lot, their diverse looks resulting from the ways they combined genes from Celts, Romans, Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Vikings, Normans and many other sources. The scrambling process continued once they settled in New Zealand and added Polynesian genes to the mix. A further complicating fact is that someone may look from the outside like a member of a
certain racial group, but not identify with it subjectively. The upshot of all this is that although biologically-determined physical appearance is certainly one component of ethnicity, it cannot and must not be used as its sole defining criterion. Race and ethnicity are intertwined, but not synonymous.

- **Culture**
  To differentiate ethnicity from biological race, it is essential to add the cultural component. An ethnic group shares a common world view and style of life. At a superficial level, its members tend to dress the same, enjoy the same diet, and partake in the same forms of artistic and recreational activities. At a deeper level, they share similar values and attitudes, often though not necessarily based on a common religion.

- **Communal bonds**
  Members of an ethnic group feel they belong together, a feeling which is particularly strong when their shared identity is threatened by outsiders. This sense of communal solidarity stems from the fact that they have journeyed through history together down the generations, and that they share the same actual or spiritual homeland. This home may be the one they occupy in the present, but it may also be the one from which their distant ancestors migrated.

Communal solidarity, however, is not the main defining characteristic of an ethnic category. On the contrary, the diverse groups of which it is composed are often mutually antagonistic, as evidenced by long-running feuds and vendettas. People with the same ethnicity may envy, resent or hate one another more than they do ethnic outsiders.

- **Comparatively large size**
  Finally, the term “ethnicity” refers to a fairly large social category, not a small communal group like a tribe or village. Ethnic categories are always federal, as it were,
being made up of many sub-categories. It is important to include the size factor in our definition, since if we operated by the above three criteria alone we would be logically obliged to treat each individual hapu or tight-knit rural town as an ethnic group in its own right, which it clearly is not.

There is much more that needs to be said on the subject of ethnicity, but the temptation must be resisted. For our present purposes, the defining characteristics sketched above will have to suffice. Equipped with this definition, we can begin our enquiry into the ethnic composition of contemporary New Zealand.

**Pakeha**  
By far the biggest ethnic category in this country is of British descent, augmented by descendants of immigrants from mainland Europe. Although the terms are not acceptable to everyone, we will refer to these throughout this course as “white New Zealanders” or “Pakeha”. If you are uneasy with these labels, please accept them simply as convenient shorthand expressions. It’s quicker to say “Pakeha” than “New Zealanders of European, mainly British, origin”. Around 80% of New Zealanders identified with this category in the 2001 census. Of these, about 72% said they were of European ancestry only.

**Maori**  
The second biggest ethnic group comprises the 15% who self-identify in the census as Maori. Of these, more than 40% claim mixed ethnic descent. That is, far more Maori than Pakeha acknowledge they have two or more ethnic identities. The proportion of New Zealanders identifying themselves as Maori is growing faster than the Pakeha section of the population. Between 1991 and 2001, Maori increased by 21%, Pakeha only by 3%.

**Asians**  
After that come an amorphous category collectively labeled “Asians”, who make up around 6.6% of the New Zealand population, narrowly beating Pacific Islanders to third place.
“Asian” is an unsatisfactory term, as it encompasses a wide range of nations with very different histories and cultures. The bulk of New Zealand Asians actually comprise Chinese people from a variety of countries (Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and the Chinese homeland itself). The term “Asian” also includes Indians (mainly from the Punjab, Gujarat and Fiji) along with former nationals of many other Eastern countries, including representatives from South Korea, Japan, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Sri Lanka amongst others. This is the fastest growing ethnic category. Between 1991 and 2001 it grew by 138%.

Pacific Islanders comprise around 6.6% of the New Zealand population. Up till recently they were the third largest ethnic category, but are now slightly outnumbered by Asians.

We must again pause over terminology as we did with the word “Asian”. Putting all Pacific Islanders together in one amorphous ethnic category is clumsy, imprecise and possibly insulting. They come from a number of quite distinct and geographically scattered “micro-states” in the South Pacific, including the Cook Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Fiji and Western Samoa (the latter providing the largest contingent of New Zealand Islanders). They are often lumped together in the public mind as the undifferentiated category Pacific Islanders (or just PI), but this obscures the fact that they comprise quite different communities with distinct histories and cultures. That said, the boundaries between these communities are blurring with each successive generation, owing to the comparatively high rate of inter-marriage between different island groups, and between Islanders and non-Islanders.

“others”

Finally, there is a small, heterogeneous demographic category often lumped together under the vague term “Other”. It contains people from just about everywhere in the world, including the Americas, Africa, the Middle East and Russia, many of them refugees. They collectively comprise around
1% of the New Zealand population.

**ethnic self-identification** You will have spotted that the above figures add up to well over 100%. This is not because we’ve got our facts wrong, but because a certain amount of conceptual confusion and imprecision surrounds the whole business of “ethnicity”. In earlier censuses, people were fitted into ethnic groups depending on how much so-called “racial blood” they possessed. For instance, people who had 50% Maori ancestry were classified as “Maori” – and only Maori. Today, however, it’s a matter of self-identification. You are Maori, to stay with that example, if you “feel Maori”. It doesn’t matter that you have only one remote Maori forebear – or none at all, for that matter. It is this, amongst other things, which makes ethnicity so hard to define and pin down. You could be 100% Celt, but if you feel as though you are Maori you are able to register as such in the census. In 2001, around 7,000 people with absolutely no tangata whenua ancestry signed up as Maori on their census forms.

**multiple identities** Furthermore – and this is where the confusion about numbers comes in – you can belong to as many ethnic groups as you like. If you have one Maori, one Chinese, one white and one Samoan grandparent, you can appear in the census figures belonging to all four ethnic groups. That’s why we end up with an ethnic total of more than 100%.

Pushing this statistical muddle to one side, the important facts about New Zealand’s ethnic composition to hang on to are that around 72% of the population identify as Pakeha only, 15% identify as partly or totally Maori, and that 13% are either Asian or Pacific Islander, with the former slightly outnumbering the latter. The Asian category is the fastest growing ethnic sector of the population.

**social consequences for Maori** As we work through the rest of this study guide, a great deal more will be said on the subject of ethnic relations in New Zealand. For the moment, we will just pause to reflect on one of the procedural steps listed earlier through which we
transform dead statistics into living issues. The step in question requires us to explain the social consequences of the demographic phenomenon we are studying. What do we discover if we apply this to the situation of the tangata whenua?

The bald demographic fact, as noted above, is that Maori today constitute around 15% of the New Zealand population. This is not just a neutral statistic, however. The innocent-looking figure 15 has major implications for Maori across every sector of the social map. We must remind ourselves that in 1769 – the year Captain Cook’s ship *Endeavour* sailed over the horizon – Maori constituted exactly 100% of Aotearoa’s population. Even after British immigrants began arriving in significant numbers from 1839 (when the first New Zealand Company settlers disembarked at Petone), Maori remained in the majority, outnumbering the British until the 1860s. After that, however, they were swamped by the newcomers and their descendants, till their proportion of the national population reached a low point of around 4%. Today’s 15% is a considerable improvement on that, but the fact remains that Maori are still outnumbered by about seven to one in a country which they once had entirely to themselves.

What, then, are some of the social consequences for the tangata whenua of this demographic phenomenon? Screeds have been written on this subject, but here we will limit ourselves to a quick survey of the various spheres of the social map, noting one consequence in each.

- **Nature and the economy**
  The Maori’s main economic asset was their ownership of the resources abounding in land and water. However, it was precisely to obtain land that the British came to New Zealand. The Maori were in their way. As white colonists pushed into the hinterland in ever-increasing numbers, the Maori population was dispossessed of its land in order to make room for the newcomers and their sheep. The settlers
alleged it was not fair that a comparatively small number of natives should monopolise vast tracts of land, much of which they apparently did not use. It seemed to white colonists eminently reasonable that they themselves should occupy this “waste land”, and the original inhabitants be limited to territory in proportion to their numbers.

In many parts of the country, this meant allocating to Maori the so-called **tents** – nine parts of the land for the growing number of white settlers, one part for the less numerous local Maori. In practice, Maori frequently did not even retain ownership of that tenth. Today, many tangata whenua trace their economically disadvantaged situation back to 19th century immigration and land settlement policies which replaced Maori by white colonists on this country’s most important natural resource – land.

- **Politics**
  British settlers replaced a political system of tribal self-government by one of nation-wide representative democracy. This is a **Majoritarian** system, in which power resides in numbers. In the long run, the majority always gets its way. If throughout New Zealand history Maori people had outnumbered whites as they did in the 1840s, they might thereby have retained their sovereignty. As it was, they were massively out-numbered and out-voted by the white majority. It is often claimed that democracy is the fairest form of government humanity has invented for itself. It seems considerably less equitable to minority groups within the nation whose interests are consistently pushed to one side by the majority. Politics is a numbers game. Taking a broad overview of New Zealand history, demography must surely be the key issue for Maori people. If Maori were again to become the largest ethnic group in the country, democracy might finally work for rather than against them.

- **Health**
As will be explained later, one of the reasons why Maori numbers declined in the 19th century was the poor state of Maori health. They succumbed at an alarmingly high rate to imported European diseases. Today, Maori health has improved (though still markedly worse than that of non-Maori) and their numbers have increased accordingly. The original undermining of their collective health status, however, was a direct result of sailors and settlers infecting them with previously unknown diseases.

- **Community and Culture**
  Demographic majorities impose not only their own political and legal systems on minorities but also their culture. Just as whites replaced Maori on the land, so the English language supplanted te reo Maori (the Maori tongue). Education was conducted in the majority language, as was every other aspect of social life. Many Maori themselves began to feel that their native language served little practical purpose in a nation where more than 95% spoke only English, and whose affairs were all conducted in that language. The Maori tongue and the traditional culture of which it was the vehicle fell largely out of use. With its decline, the bonds of community life were also weakened. Formerly tight-knit, rural-based kin groups unraveled as Maori were forced to assimilate to the more individualised ethos of the white majority. This, like the matter of Maori health, will be discussed more extensively later in the study guide.

The above comments were not intended as an exhaustive summary of the situation of Maori people. Their intention, rather, was simply to demonstrate how sociologists go about translating apparently neutral demographic statistics into highly charged social issues. One way of doing this is to put the social map introduced in Study Guide Two to work. The apparently harmless figure 15% starts to take on real human significance if we follow through its implications in each sector of the map, from nature and the economy through to community and culture.
Age

The median age of New Zealanders is around 35 (that is, half the population is over this age). A population is considered young if the median is under twenty, and old if the median is over forty. We are thus well on the way to being an old population. 22% of New Zealanders are under 15, 66% are between 15 and 64, and 12% are 65 and over.

These figures must be refined by ethnicity, however. Maori and Pacific Islanders are considerably over-represented in the younger age groups, and under-represented in the elderly ones. Putting it a bit simplistically, “young New Zealand” tends to be brown, “old New Zealand” is white. Asians, for their part, tend to be over-represented in the “young adult” category. For the record, the median age of Pakeha is around 37, that of Asians is 28, of Maori is 22 and Pacific Islanders 21.

Socio-Economic Status (SES)

Socio-economic status refers to people’s position in the social hierarchy. SES is measured in different ways by different researchers. The socio-economic scales researchers devise may combine a whole raft of indicators, like whether people are on a state benefit, whether they rent or own their accommodation, or even whether they have a telephone. The three most important factors, however are income, occupation and education. Another term for SES is “social class”, although this is an expression which politicians and the mass media prefer to avoid, perhaps because it smacks of Marxism, perhaps because it sounds snobbish.

Around 20% of New Zealanders can be considered “poor”. This is a rather imprecise term, but is most commonly taken to mean people living on 60% or less of the median disposable household income. Maori and Pacific Islanders are significantly over-represented in this category, as are the elderly and children living in one-parent households. We will leave it there for the moment, but expand considerably on the
issue of social inequality in the next section and throughout the rest of the study guide.

**DISTRIBUTION**

We have just been looking at two characteristics of the New Zealand population – its size and composition, making a few sociological observations about social causes, consequences and issues on the way. The third question we ask about population characteristics concerns how the bodies we are studying are distributed around the country. Who lives where? This, in turn, raises the matter of population **density** -- how tightly are people packed together?

*linking distribution to composition*

We want to know the distribution and density both of the population as a whole – all four million of us – and also about the different social categories, such as ethnic groups, we identified when studying its composition. Are some parts of the country more “Maori” than others? Do Pacific Islanders tend to congregate in certain enclaves within cities, while Chinese cluster in others? We may also want to introduce age into the equation: do some regions of the country have a markedly older or younger population than others? Again, it is sociologically important to have a socio-economic map of the terrain: do the well-off reside in certain suburbs, the poor in others?

*some facts*

Although as a nation we depend heavily on primary commodities – that is, those that are extracted from the natural world – comparatively few of us live close to Papatuanuku, the Earth Mother. Only about 15% of Kiwis live in the rural hinterland. New Zealand, in fact, is one of the most highly urbanised populations in the world, even though the cities in which we live are not as vast and impersonal as most big overseas ones.

The North Island is considerably more heavily and densely populated than the South Island: three-quarters of the
population live in the former, including a massive 88% of Maori. Most heavily populated of all is the Auckland area, where over a third of the New Zealand population resides. Furthermore, Auckland is growing much faster than the rest of the country, partly because the majority (53%) of immigrants settle there. As a result, Auckland is not only bigger than other cities but also more densely packed. You only have to get onto one of its motorways at rush hour to realise the frustrating significance of Auckland’s population density – its transport system has not kept pace with its mushrooming demography.

**ethnicity**

Although people from different ethnic groups frequently live side-by-side in the same neighborhoods, there is a tendency for ethnic enclaves to develop. This is not because we have a stated-imposed system of apartheid, as in the old South Africa, but simply because “birds of a feather flock together” – and birds with different feathers prefer to nest elsewhere. Some rural parts of the country, such as Northland and the Bay of Plenty/East Coast regions, have a much higher proportion of tangata whenua than others. A large majority of Asian and Pacific Island immigrants and their offspring are concentrated in the Auckland area. Within Auckland itself, a distinct ethnic map has evolved with Pacific Islanders and Maori gravitating southwards to places like Manukau City; the North Shore is largely white, while the eastern suburb, Howick, has attracted so many Chinese it is referred to in certain circles as “Chowick”.

**tribal territories**

Particular mention needs to be made of the geographical distribution of Maori iwi and hapu (tribes and sub-tribes). In traditional Maori society, these were virtually mini-nations in their own right, each self-governing within its own tribal rohe (territory). Even back then it was difficult to draw up a definitive and stable iwi map, as there were frequent migrations, tribal groups divided like amoebas to form new ones, and some vanished into obscurity. Tribal mapping is even more difficult today, as the majority of the tangata whenua have left the rural heartlands of their ancestors to form new communities in the cities, sometimes even forgetting their
tribal affiliations. To make matters even more complicated, where a traditional sense of identity still remains strong, different iwi, hapu or even whanau (extended families) may lay claim to ownership of the same territory, creating major headaches for one another and for the various agencies trying to resolve claims to land and natural resources under the Treaty of Waitangi.

Thus, trying to map Maori hapu and iwi onto the geographical landscape is a fraught and highly contested affair. Nevertheless we are reproducing here an approximate map of the main tribal areas. It is necessary for all New Zealanders to be acquainted with such a map, even though it glosses over many important details, as those Maori people to whom tribal affiliation is important identify themselves not just with the names of their iwi and hapu but also those of geographical features of their rohe, such as a mountain, river or lake.

We must remember that going back in time before 1840, each tribal territory was more or less a national entity in its own right, just as, in the Middle Ages, Europe contained hundreds of small independent countries. When looking at a map of tribal distribution today, it is as though we are scraping away the modern nation state of New Zealand to reveal the plethora of micro-nations that lies just below its surface. They were buried for many decades, but today are reasserting their identity and even aspiring to autonomy. In fact, two totally different political systems exist side-by-side in this country, and many contemporary race relations issues are generated by the tension between them. All New Zealanders should be aware of the existence of those micro-nations and their geographical location.
Socio-Economic Maps

Now we will return to the matter of socio-economic status or SES that was introduced briefly earlier. As with ethnicity and tribal affiliation, social class can be mapped geographically. We all know from first-hand experience that some suburbs, neighbourhoods and even individual streets in the town where we live are more “posh” than others, just as we are aware of the districts that are run-down, seedy, even dangerous. In the old days, people used to be socially classified as coming from “the right side of the tracks” or “the wrong side of the tracks”, the former being respectably middle class, the latter disreputably lower class.

Examples of “desirable” neighbourhoods would include Auckland’s Remuera, Wellington’s Kelburn, Nelson’s Port Hills and Christchurch’s Fendalton. At the other extreme we might list Auckland’s Otara, Hastings’s Flaxmere, Palmerston North’s Highbury, Wellington’s Porirua and Christchurch’s Sydenham. On a larger scale, whole towns or regions may
vary according to their level of socio-economic affluence or deprivation: Northland, for instance, is a considerably poorer region than the Auckland area. Things can change, though. Formerly down-at-heels suburbs like Ponsonby in Auckland and Newtown in Wellington can go up in the world as they are colonised by the trendy upper middle class, while a farming boom can reverse the fortunes of a previously declining province like Southland.

**housing classes**

Sociologists use the term “housing class” to describe city enclaves where people of the same SES cluster. These clusters – we might even term them class ghettos – are characterised by the intertwining and mutual reinforcement of several key factors – economic, cultural and even psychological. To illustrate, let’s contrast living conditions in, say, the roughest street in Otara and the classiest one in Remuera. There will be individual exceptions, of course, but on the whole the following generalisations hold good.

- **Income**
  People in that Otara street will have much lower incomes than their upper class counterparts in Remuera, and they are far more likely to be living on a state benefit. They will also own far fewer capital investments – if any.

- **Occupation**
  They will be much less likely to be employed. If they do have jobs, these will probably be poorly paid, low status, dead end manual ones.

- **Housing**
  They will probably rent their housing, rather than owning their own homes like the Remuera bourgeoisie. Their houses will be smaller and in much worse condition than the Remuera ones and contain fewer amenities such as washing machines. Furthermore, they are likely to be overcrowded, members of several families being packed in cheek by jowl, whereas individuals in “Remmers” have plenty of personal space to rattle around in.
Education

Educationally, inhabitants of the lower class neighbourhoods are likely to have left school early with few if any qualifications, unlike their upper class counterparts who take university education for granted. Furthermore, the former may have a negative mind set towards the education system generally – they don’t feel as “at home” in school and university as those over in Remuera. To use a sociological term, middle and upper class people have more cultural capital than those in the lower classes. The latter may be extremely street-wise, but knowing where to score dope is not the kind of cultural capital that will enable them to go up in a world where there is ever greater economic emphasis placed on academic and linguistic competence.

Health

The health of our Otara denizens is also likely to be considerably worse than that of the nobs in Remuers. They will be prone to so-called “third world” diseases like tuberculosis, rheumatic fever and meningococcal disease, to disabling conditions like deafness, to bodily or mental trauma, to chronic heart conditions and diabetes, to drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse. On average, they will live ten years less than their healthier Remuera counterparts.

Their comparatively poor health stems from a combination of factors, including unhygienic and over-crowded living conditions, bad diet, financial inability to pay for medical care, the prevalence of physical and emotional violence, ignorance of the causes and treatment of illness, and negative attitudes towards health professionals from ethnic groups other than their own. In some respects they are victims of their poverty and living conditions, but in others they are agents of their own misfortune, as when the heavy and constant intake of junk food, alcohol and cigarette smoke brings on disabling or fatal conditions.
We have just mentioned five dimensions of SES – income, occupation, education, housing and health. We could add other factors to the list, such as the heavy over-representation of teenage pregnancies and one-parent families on the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder. However, probably the most important sociological observation to be made about the geographical distribution of wealth is that Maori and Pacific Island people cluster in low SES areas. There is a tendency, both within cities and between regions, for ethnicity and socio-economic status to converge on the map. Putting it a bit crudely, the white zones of the map tend to be more prosperous, the brown ones to be more disadvantaged. When SES and ethnicity thus combine, sociologists refer to the social outcome as an “eth-class”. In New Zealand, Polynesians, both Maori and PI, collectively constitute the nation’s disadvantaged eth-class.

**Practical Uses of Distribution Maps**

As well as being of demographic and sociological interest in and for themselves, maps showing how the New Zealand population is distributed (especially when the figures are broken down by factors like ethnicity, socio-economic status and age) have important practical uses. Government agencies and other bodies concerned with sharing out national resources like money and service provision use such maps to identify deprived areas most in need of help.

*school deciles*  
For instance, all school catchment areas are classified into socio-economic “deciles”. That is they are ranked from one to ten according to factors such as the average income of people living in the area, with around 10% of the population in each decile. Decile 1 is the poorest, decile 10 the richest. Because, as we saw above, educational attainments are poorest in lower class neighbourhoods, schools in those areas need a helping hand by way of extra financial resources to assist them close the gaps. The lower the decile, the greater the funding. It is argued that in higher class areas students are already equipped
for academic success from their family background, the schools tend to attract the best teachers, and parents are wealthy enough to pay for extra facilities which those in lower decile areas cannot afford.

*health funding*

District Health Boards (DHBs), the main public funders in the health field, use similar maps of socio-economic distribution to identify the areas where, because of the correlation mentioned above between poverty and poor health, medical services are in most urgent need of financial assistance. The ethnic dimension is included in such mapping, since Maori and Pacific Islanders tend to have higher health needs than other New Zealanders. As with education, government wants to spend the health dollar as effectively as possible and detailed distribution maps of SES and ethnicity help them pinpoint the geographical areas where disadvantages are the greatest. Primary Health Organisations (PHOs) are then established in those areas to supply health facilities more cheaply than in better-off neighbourhoods.

**From Population Characteristics to Population Processes**

We have now concluded our introductory guided tour of the three key demographic variables – size, composition and distribution – which we have labeled “population characteristics”. The remaining sections are devoted to the three population “processes” – births, deaths and migration. When making this transition, the important methodological point to remember is that these two sets of variables bounce off one another, as it were. There is a two-way causal flow between size, composition and distribution on the one hand, fertility, mortality and migration on the other: they shape one another.

For instance, a change in the birth rate will obviously affect the overall size of the country. The faster we produce babies, the more rapidly the population will grow. On the other hand, the birth rate itself is determined by the ethnic and age
composition of the nation. As the average age gets older, fewer women will be having babies. Maori and Pacific Island women, however, are younger on average than Pakeha, so their birth rate will be higher. This then will feed back into the future ethnic composition. As we advance into the 21st century, the Polynesian quota in the overall population mix will increase, the Pakeha will decline.
POPULATION PROCESSES: BIRTHS AND DEATHS

In the foregoing, we explored the first three of the six key demographic variables. Some basic indicative facts about size, composition and distribution were given, some important changes and differences highlighted, lines of cause and effect were traced and a few important issues touched upon. There will be plenty more to say on these subjects later in the study guide, but the time has come to introduce the second set of key variables. These relate not so much to the characteristics of the New Zealand population as to the processes through which the human bodies of which it is composed make their entrances and exits. We will be looking at the ways through which a population produces and reproduces itself, and also at the factors which threaten it with extinction.

It’s all very simple really. There are only two ways the population as a whole, or the ethnic groups it comprises, can acquire new members – by having babies or allowing outsiders to move into their territory. By the same token, there are only two ways it loses members – feet first in a coffin, or by packing their bags and flying off. In three words: birth death and migration. It is to the first two of these that the present section is devoted.

BIRTHS: THE SOCIOLOGY OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

Once a new group of migrants enters and occupies a territory, the embryonic society it establishes can only last one generation if for some reason it fails to reproduce itself. Maybe its members are of only one sex, are sterile or they simply don’t want to have children – we’ll come back to all three of these soon. An essential functional prerequisite for the survival of New Zealand society as a whole, and for the
different ethnic groups of which it is composed, is that its members engage in heterosexual intercourse, and that this in turn leads to the birth and survival of children. This may seem too obvious to need spelling out, but its significance can be highlighted by looking at a few cases, past and present, where procreation threatened to dry up.

**Chinese Men Without Women**

There were Chinese people in New Zealand since the gold rushes of the 1860s, but until recently the overall Chinese population was very small, and at one point actually dwindled in numbers. This was not a demographic accident. Pakeha governments self-avowedly wanted a white New Zealand and took active measures to keep out “the yellow peril”. One obvious way of doing this was to prevent male “Celestials” already in the country from breeding with their own kind. This was achieved by the simple expediency of making it extremely difficult – for many years downright impossible – for Chinese women to join their menfolk in the New Gold Hill (as New Zealand and other gold rush sites were called). By keeping the Chinese population of this country largely unisexual, governments hoped it would eventually grow old and die out.

The state could not prevent Chinese men having sex with non-Chinese women, of course, and there was a certain amount of ethnic inter-marriage, particularly with Maori women. However, there was a strong social taboo against such inter-breeding, which was regarded at the time as causing the degeneration of the nation’s “racial stock”. Not to put too fine a point on it, New Zealand’s population policy as regards the Chinese was to exterminate it altogether by denying male access to sexual partners of their own race, and discouraging sexual intercourse between Chinese men and British or Maori women.
Declining Maori Fertility

If 19th century white settlers openly and actively sought to severely limit the numbers of Chinese in their midst, there were also many who secretly hoped that the native Maori race would eventually die out, leaving its lands conveniently vacant for occupation by British colonists. This was not converted into an anti-Maori population policy like the overtly anti-Chinese one: it was simply widely believed, even by some Maori themselves, that the original occupiers of New Zealand were a dying race – a belief apparently confirmed by the dwindling size of the Maori population throughout the 19th century.

This drop in numbers was due in large part to the high death rate, caused by the exposure of Maori to imported diseases like measles, scarlet fever and the common “flu”, against which they had developed no immunity during their thousand or so years isolation from the rest of the world. High mortality was aggravated, however, by a low birth rate. Maori were dying off faster than they could renew themselves. There were probably three causes contributing to this. Amongst the imported diseases just mentioned were sexually transmitted ones like syphilis and gonorrhea, which Maori women, then their male partners, began to contract from the first day sex-starved European sailors came ashore in the mid-18th century. One effect of the various forms of “pox” that became endemic in Maori tribes after they had been penetrated by their lusty, lustful guests was infertility. Nobody realised it at the time, but by having sex with outsiders, then with their own menfolk, Maori women were unwittingly smuggling in a potentially genocidal weapon of white imperialism – sterility.

There were two other factors as well which contributed to the declining Maori birth rate. Amongst other victims of imported disease were many young Maori girls, who died before they reached child-bearing age. That is, there was a shrinking pool of women to undertake the socially crucial function of reproduction. Finally, though less tangibly, the drop in Maori fertility may have been in part due to the general
demoralisation of Maori once they became a subordinated, colonised people. In this, they were similar to indigenous races in many parts of the world, which experienced population decline during the first decades after they had been taken over by an imperial European power.

**society depends on sex**

As we know, the 19th century belief that the Maori were a dying race was very much mistaken. After reaching a demographic low point around the year 1900, their demographic decline halted and their numbers picked up again. Today there are more than 500,000 New Zealanders who identify as Maori – considerably more than when the Treaty was signed. Furthermore, the Maori population is growing at a faster rate than the Pakeha. Even so, 100 years or so ago there was at least a possibility that the Maori as a people would not make it into the present century at all. Why we are mentioning this possibility is to bring home in a particularly dramatic form the commonplace but crucial sociological observation that human society, like all animal life, depends in the last instance on sex for its very existence. Not just sex, though – fruitful, heterosexual intercourse that engenders new life.

**Miscegenation and Ethnic Cocktails**

While we are on the subject of sexual intercourse, there is another important sociological issue that needs mentioning. It concerns what used to be termed “miscegenation”, although the term has now gone out of favour. This refers to inter-breeding between members of different races or ethnic groups. Its product probably appeared in New Zealand nine months after the first European sailor indulged in some “rest and recreation” with a local girl. By the time of the Treaty, there were a considerable number of so-called “half-castes” (an expression which has definitely gone out of favour) in this country, with mixed European and Polynesian ancestry. Since then, ever greater numbers of casual sexual liaisons, marriages and de facto partnerships have inter-mingled the gene pools of once
distinct racial groups and produced ever more New Zealanders of mixed ethnic identities. Furthermore, younger New Zealanders tend to have more multiple ethnicities than their forebears – that is, the nation appears to be growing more of an ethnic melting pot with each generation. In 2002, for instance, one in five new babies had mixed ethnic ancestry, as compared with only one in ten of their mothers. The Samoan novelist Albert Wendt invented the term “ethnic cocktails” to refer to the many Kiwis with ancestors from two or more ethnic backgrounds.

Viewed one way, such sexual and cultural cross-pollination may be a very healthy social process. It breaks down the mutual suspicion, intolerance and even hostility that often exists when different ethnic groups live sealed off in separate enclaves. It promotes cross-cultural understanding and national integration. However, not all ethnic communities welcome such inter-mingling of ancestry and culture. It may be perceived as a threat to the distinct identity of the group, the “purity” of which is diluted – some might even say polluted – by inter-breeding. The arrival of a new-born baby may be a cause of anger rather than rejoicing if it is the product of a sexual union across ethnic lines. It all depends on how assiduously the in-group guards the purity of its ancestry and communal identity.

On occasions, then, ethnic and other communities have practiced their own informal population policies, bringing pressure to bear on young members to develop sexual partnerships with insiders and shun them with outsiders. It is not necessarily the sex itself that is frowned on, as the babies it may produce and the consequent blurring of community identity. Thus, liaisons between British men and Maori women were not at all uncommon in the early days of contact, when white women were in short supply. However when colonial society consolidated itself and nubile young ladies from the old world began arriving by the boat-load, inter-marriage with the tangata whenua was discouraged in “polite society”. Maori, for their part, have not always been happy about partnerships
forming between their young people and ethnic outsiders. Thus, although a great deal of cross-pollination has occurred since first contact, there have been people on both sides of the Maori/Pakeha divide – probably more on the Pakeha than the Maori side – who have brought pressure to bear on the young to “stick to their own kind”.

the hunt for suitable partners

Such pressure has at times been much stronger in other, smaller ethnic groups. Having only a limited pool of potential partners to draw on in this country, Chinese, Indian, Yugoslav and other communities have sent their offspring off on visits to their country of origin to acquire in-group spouses. Alternatively, as with orthodox Jews, whole families have migrated to Australian cities like Melbourne where the pool of suitable potential partners is much larger than in New Zealand.

The important sociological point we are making is that although biological reproduction is a functional necessity for the survival of a population, human communities can be very picky about how this function is undertaken. Ethnic, class, religious and other forms of collective identity are at stake, not just the biological survival of the species. When studying the birth rate, then, we are not interested only in how many babies are being born and how fast, but in the nature of the sexual liaisons that engendered them, and how communities feel about such liaisons. For “New Zealand” as an abstract demographic entity, matters of parentage are irrelevant, but for the real flesh-and-blood groups of which it is composed it may be a matter of profound concern whose genetic and cultural ancestry a newborn baby bears.

Disability and the Eugenics Movement

At the start of this discussion, we mentioned the deliberate attempts made by successive New Zealand governments to prevent Chinese sojourners reproducing by the simple expedient of keeping their women out of the country. However, it was not just the Chinese who were victims of policies designed with the express purpose of preventing
breeding. A similar approach was taken towards those members of the white race itself deemed “degenerate”.

During the latter part of the 19th century and the first four decades of the 20th, just about all human traits and conduct were explained in terms of a purportedly scientific theory known as “social Darwinism”, a philosophy which led in many countries to the practice of so-called “racial eugenics”.

**biological determinism**

In a word, everything in human affairs boiled down to one thing – biology. Social Darwinists were what is termed “biological determinists”. It was unquestioningly accepted that all human qualities from intelligence to moral character were determined from birth by what was then called “blood”, “breeding” or “stock”, and which today we would call “genes”.

**evolution & misguided philanthropy**

In his 1859 book, The Origin of Species, Charles Darwin propounded the theory that species evolve through a process of natural selection. The “fittest” – that is, those best adapted to their environment – breed and proliferate, the unfit perish. Life is a ceaseless struggle for survival and dominance in and between life forms. However – according to the theorists who applied Darwin’s ideas to human society – through mistaken notions of compassion, such natural weeding-out of the unfit no longer occurred in human society. The weakest were not allowed to go to the wall. The result was that families of inferior breeding spawned generations of degenerate offspring, thereby contaminating the purity of the race, undermining its health, morality and intelligence, and even threatening its chances of survival in the evolutionary struggle.

**stop them breeding**

The solution was simple: encourage people of good stock to breed, while preventing “degenerates” from doing so. In New Zealand, as in many other Western countries, there was a strong eugenics movement up till World War II. It was directed in particular to those deemed mentally defective, since
it was thought that social problems like crime, alcoholism and prostitution had their origins in feeble-mindedness. They were to be prevented from producing future defective generations, either through sexually segregating them in colonies for the mentally infirm such as the Templeton and Levin farms, or by sterilising them, or at least keeping them compulsorily on contraceptives. At the same time, Dr Truby King launched the Plunket movement to ensure that people of “good stock” produced a plentiful supply of healthy, bouncing babies to strengthen the New Zealand branch of the Anglo-Saxon race in its biological mission to dominate the world.

The simplistic and ruthless application of evolutionary theories to the human species fell out of intellectual and moral favour when it was widely realised after the Second World War what Nazis had been doing in the name of racial eugenics – that is, exterminating all those deemed of degenerate stock, including the intellectually disabled, gypsies, homosexuals and Jews. Nevertheless, the practice of sterilising the intellectually disabled, performing abortions on them or giving them long-acting contraceptive injections – all without their consent – continued in this country and elsewhere after the war. Furthermore, there is increasing pressure today, with the advance of pre-natal screening, for women carrying impaired fetuses to abort them. The actual terms social Darwinism and racial eugenics have long since disappeared from the national vocabulary, but the drive to prevent the birth of children with physical or mental impairments still continues. Now as at the height of the eugenics movement, the birth of some babies is more welcome than that of others.

Is the Kiwi Heading for Extinction?

Much of what we have been saying about the sociology of sexual reproduction looks backwards into the past. Today, Chinese men are not deprived by the state of sexual partners of their own ethnicity, Maori constitute a growing rather than declining proportion of the overall New Zealand population,
influential thinkers, politicians and doctors do not mount public campaigns to prevent disabled people from breeding, and the rate of sexual and cultural cross-fertilisation between ethnic groups is increasing with each generation. There is at least one major demographic issue relating to fertility and the birth rate, however, which still features prominently on the national agenda, and will be of increasing concern the further we advance into the 21st century.

**declining birth rate**

This is the steady decline in the number of babies that are being born – a decline that will probably continue into the foreseeable future. It is particularly marked in the Pakeha population, although it will ultimately also affect Maori and other ethnic groups. Quite simply, white New Zealanders are not reproducing themselves fast enough to replace the older generation as it dies out. The replacement fertility level is an average of 2.1 live births to women of child-bearing age. The Pakeha level is 1.9 – and falling. This is still higher than in many other developed countries (Spain, for instance, is down to 1.1), but since New Zealand usually follows overseas trends, it is highly likely we will experience a baby famine in the not-too-distant future. In the early years of the 21st century, births were still outnumbering deaths, thanks to the comparatively large number of young Polynesian people available for the socially necessary task of sexual reproduction, but as the population ages there will come a point in time – demographers calculate it as around the year 2035 – when we will be dying off faster than we can breed. If left to natural increase alone our population will begin to dwindle.

**social causes of the baby boom**

This is in marked contrast to the baby boom mentioned earlier which New Zealand (along with the rest of the world) experienced during the years of rapid natural increase that occurred during the quarter-century after World War II. Back then, a vast cohort of babies (i.e. those born around the same point in history) came pouring out of the national womb faster than society could cope with them.
Right near the start of this study guide, seven procedural steps were outlined for the conversion of demographic statistics into sociological analysis. It was suggested that the transition point between demography and sociology is the moment when we stop playing the numbers game and start sleuthing around the social map to find explanatory causes for the phenomenon we are studying. Let's try that out on the boomers.

The obvious explanation for New Zealand coming out in a rash of babies was that people were again producing large families, as they had in colonial times. Unfortunately, this explanation is wrong. It applied to Maori in the post-war period, but Pakeha were only having the regulation 2.5 children.

The actual explanation lies in a constellation of different factors which came together to generate the so-called “cult of domesticity”. Kiwis threw themselves into an orgy of nest-building and breeding. Just about everyone got married (a necessary prerequisite for parenthood back then), they got married young (women thought of themselves as old maids if they were still spinsters at 25), they started having babies straight away, and they had their children in rapid succession. None of this was planned or compulsory: it was just the mood of the times. Girls barely questioned the social expectation that their main ambition after leaving school was to get a husband and immediately become pregnant. If they found employment, it was just a stop-gap measure before they began the real business of life – being a wife and mother.

The cult of domesticity, then, was first and foremost a matter of cultural expectations and community pressure. However, the economic climate was also propitious and the state supportive. Jobs were plentiful and pay reasonably good, so a male head of household could support his family comfortably on a single wage: there was no economic imperative for women to find paid employment. The state, for its part, smoothed the way for these young nest-builders by helping them into their first house, paying a child allowance and picking up the tab for extra costs right down to free milk in
schools. The result was that the nation became a giant incubator, with “Nappy Valleys” springing up throughout suburbia. Baby ruled.

**social consequences**

The country’s institutions and resources groaned under the weight as the baby boom cohort passed through the various stages of the life cycle. Boomers first put pressure on maternity hospitals and pre-school facilities, then the education system and after that the job market. In a few years, they will reach retirement age, at which time they will need financial support, rest homes, disability services and finally the intensive care required by the dying. The bulge made by this cohort passed through the body of New Zealand society like a missionary passing through the body of a boa constrictor. Its needs and interests have dominated social life ever since they came marching out of the womb, and will continue to do so for decades to come.

**the baby bust & its causes**

The generations that followed in the footsteps of the great baby boom army did not seem to share their parents’ passion for nest-building and procreation. From around the mid-1970s, the rate of childbirth slowed down considerably, particularly in the Maori world. The “baby blip” (a mini baby boom) that occurred around 1990 (when the children of the boomers started reproducing) gave the country some demographic forward momentum that will keep it comparatively young for a decade or so yet, but the underlying trend is downwards.

As with the boom that preceded it, the baby bust had no one social cause, but was rather the product of a range of interweaving factors from every sphere of the social map. Here is a quick check list of a few such causal factors:

- **Contraception and abortion**
  
  From the 1960s, women had at their disposal an almost 100% reliable form of contraception – the pill. It had the potential to make unwanted pregnancy a thing of the past. If some fish slipped through the net, as it were, the much greater social, legal and medical acceptability of abortion
offered a second, if possibly less palatable, line of defence. Since then, the “morning after” pill has slowed down the rate of unplanned childbirth even further.
• **Sex education and family planning**
  Although it was strongly opposed in some circles, notably amongst fundamentalist Christians, sex education and family planning were introduced into the education system. Ideally, young children should not indulge in promiscuous sex. In reality, an increasing number did, so systematic (if not always successful) attempts were made to ensure that sexually active school children should at least protect themselves from the consequences. Even today, though, ignorance of contraception, or at least the failure to use it, remains high among young New Zealanders, particularly Maori and Pacific Islanders.

• **The changing definition of women’s role**
  The availability of effective contraception and knowledge about it are necessary but not sufficient conditions for reducing unwanted pregnancies. It can only work if people want to use it. That, in turn, requires a new collective mind set about the role of women in society. While the cult of domesticity reigned, young women actively wanted children, and they wanted them straight away. By the 1970s, however, something like a gender revolution had begun transforming the Western world. Feminism had arrived.

  Women began seriously re-thinking the meaning of their lives, and challenging the patriarchal ideology that confined them in perpetuity to the roles of home-makers. They demanded the same right as men to personally fulfilling lives and meaningful careers, rather than existing only for their husbands and children. Some even dared suggest they could get on quite well without either. At the very least, they didn’t have to start breeding the minute they left the education system, and once children did arrive their mothers were not obliged to stay at home and look after them till they were adults.

  Women thus discovered there were many options on offer. Biology was not destiny after all. Today, there are far more
voluntarily childless women (including the Labour Prime Minister Helen Clark) to act as positive role models. Those who do have children often delay their advent. Over the last 30 years, the median age for a woman to have her first baby has risen by five years from 25 to 30. There are far fewer teenage mothers than formerly – although the rate is considerably higher for Polynesian than for non-Polynesian New Zealanders.

- **Economic factors**
  Another important factor to add to the equation was the worsening economic climate. As a result both of the 1970s recession and the free market reforms of the 1980s, it was increasingly more difficult for male breadwinners on their own to bring home a sufficient wage to support their wives and children. It became a household necessity for married women to find paid employment, either to supplement their partner’s pay packet, or else to substitute for it if the male had joined the ranks of the permanently unemployed.

Sometimes voluntarily, sometimes out of hard necessity, women in ever-increasing numbers joined the paid labour force. In order to do so, they had to collectively re-think their attitude to having children. It is difficult, though by no means impossible, to pursue a fulfilling career – or even earn a decent wage – if you have to care for young children at the same time. The outcome of women’s migration into paid employment was that they delayed having children, they had fewer of them, and in increasing numbers they renounced parenthood altogether.

The sociological message we are emphasising through this particular example is that if we wish to uncover the causes of some major demographic change, our detective work must take us into every sphere of the social map. In this case, the cultural sphere invented effective contraception, educated young people about it and redefined women’s roles. Community attitudes towards childless women changed. The health system provided safe medical techniques for terminating pregnancies. The state launched a programme to reduce the national scourge
of unplanned, unwanted parenthood. Finally, economics came into play: on the one hand, pharmaceutical companies promoted the new contraceptives for commercial ends; on the other, economic necessity obliged working women to avail themselves of those contraceptives. All these and other non-demographic variables converged to generate one demographic outcome: the growing scarcity of babies.

The above comments apply more to Pakeha than to the tangata whenua. For the moment, Maori have the edge on Pakeha in terms of fertility. At around 2.4 live births for women of child-bearing age in 2002, they are still over the replacement level. Furthermore, the Maori population on average is much younger than the Pakeha one, so there will be a larger reproductive pool active for considerably longer than its Pakeha counterpart.

Despite their present demographic advantage, however, the Maori birth rate is dropping rapidly. Maori family photographs from the 1960s show numerous offspring clustered around their parents, like similar photos of white families back in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the 1960s, the Maori fertility rate was over 6. Since then, though, Maori family size has shrunk dramatically, to the point where their fertility rate is coming down close to parity with the Pakeha one. Eventually they will drop below replacement level. The effects will not be noticed for a long time, since as was just mentioned the Maori population is young, and even though each couple will have fewer babies, there will be a lot of those couples around to keep the reproductive momentum rolling. A time must eventually come, however, when the Maori population, like its Pakeha counterpart, will begin to dwindle numerically.

DEATHS: THE SOCIOLOGY OF MORTALITY

Now let’s jump from the start of the life cycle to the end. The only thing we can be absolutely certain about during our
sojourn in this mortal world is that one day it will end. The
Angel of Death awaits us all: nobody can escape. Physical
extinction, the fear we have of it and the grief it engenders in
those left behind, is the somber backdrop against which the
dramas of life, be these heroic or banal, are played out. It
haunts us as individuals, but it also has major implications for
society at large. The manner in which members of a given
population perish and the rate at which they are carried off play
a major role in shaping all features of the social map from the
economy to culture. At an even more basic level, as has
already been mentioned on several occasions, death may
threaten the very existence of entire societies. The populations
of whole communities may be wiped out through famine,
disease, war, genocidal persecution, natural disasters or the
physical inability to reproduce themselves. Directly or
indirectly, a great deal of ingenuity, work and emotional
energy is expended, both at the individual and the social level,
warding off the Grim Reaper or coping with the effects of his
visitations.

Premature Death

three score years & ten

Given the fact that most of us are frightened or resentful that
we and our loved ones must inevitably die, we fervently desire
that we should at least be allowed to live out our natural life
span and pass away at a ripe old age. Following a tip given in
the bible, we permit ourselves to hope for “three score years
and ten”. In reality, until the 19th century even the healthiest
of Western populations would be lucky to average half that,
while today those same societies aim considerably higher. The
technical term for the number of years we can expect to live is
“life expectancy” – a subject to which we will return a little
later.

Unfortunately, many people are not able to live out their
natural life span. Instead of their bodies just wearing out
through the attrition of the years, their lives are prematurely cut
short. The rate of such premature death is a major contributing
factor to the average life expectancy of a given population. In
places like Africa where HIV/AIDS is rampant, for instance, life expectancy is much shorter than in those like New Zealand where the virus is under control.

**causes of premature death**

Fate can snip short the threads of our lives in many ways. Here is a short check list of the major causes of premature death:

- infant and maternal mortality
- accidents
- natural disasters
- illness
- war
- homicide
- suicide

These vary in importance in different societies and in the same society at different points in history. Furthermore, within the same society diverse communities may experience different rates of those various causes of early mortality. In New Zealand, the most important variation is between the Polynesian and non-Polynesian populations, so it is on this that we will focus in the following.

**infant & maternal mortality**

Until the 20th century, one of the great demographic scourges of entire populations, as well as a source of grief to individual families, was the high rate of infant mortality. Children died in large numbers at birth or in early infancy. Any novel or biography you read set in the 19th century or earlier will be studded with sad references to little sons or daughters, brothers or sisters, who appeared briefly in the family chronicles, only to have their candles prematurely snuffed out. Families were large back then, but they would have been considerably larger still if all their progeny had made it into adulthood.

It wasn’t just the babies who died, though. Those same novels or biographies include frequent references to wives dying in childbirth. Literature of an earlier time is densely populated with grieving widowers and orphaned children. While babies
were considered a blessing, they were frequently the agents of their own mothers’ demise. Childbirth was a risky business for both players in the parturition game.

By the start of the 21st century, risks to both mothers and infants were considerably reduced. Infant mortality fell from 76 per 1,000 in the early 1900s to 40 per 1,000 in the 1930s. By 2001 it had fallen to below seven per 1,000. This is still worryingly higher than for a number of other developed countries, but infant mortality is no longer the key demographic variable it was in earlier times. The same applies to women dying in labour. Tragically, this still does happen, but it is now very much the exception.

The drop in infant mortality was particularly dramatic in the Maori world. In 1952, Maori babies were dying at three times the rate of non-Maori. By 2001, the former only exceeded the latter by one infant death per thousand live births. Even so, death in infancy is still more prevalent in the Polynesian world than in white New Zealand. This can be seen in cases of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), where an apparently healthy baby dies for no apparent reason. The SIDS rate for Polynesian New Zealanders is around three times higher than in Pakeha families. Moreover, proportionately more Polynesian than Pakeha or Asian children die at the hands of their own parents. This introduces a grim subject which will keep recurring throughout this section: Death is a more frequent visitor to the houses of Maori and Pacific Islanders than to non-Polynesian households.

**accidents**

The vast majority of us survive the potential perils of birth and early infancy, but the world remains a dangerous place for unwary players. Accidents are always waiting to happen, unexpectedly transforming everyday activities into tragedies. At home, toddlers are at constant risk from medicine cupboards, electric heaters, swimming pools and fires. In adulthood, industrial accidents reap their yearly harvest of deaths at the work place, despite campaigns for better industrial safety waged by the Accident Compensation
Corporation (ACC), Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and the Department of Labour. For instance, in the year up to June 2002, OSH investigated 73 work-related deaths – a considerable increase from the previous year, and much worse than in comparable developed countries. Adventurous recreational activities like mountaineering, and violent contact sports such as boxing, add their quota to the toll.

Routine travel is also a major killer. In colonial times, the coasts of New Zealand were so littered with shipwrecks, the rivers so treacherous, that death by drowning was known as “the New Zealand death”. Today, water still claims its victims every year, be these swimmers, rafters or fishers, but the main carnage occurs on the roads. Admittedly, the road death toll has dropped significantly over recent times. In 1986, it was around 23 deaths per 100,000 of the population, but had fallen to around 10 in 2002, thanks to safer cars and public campaigns against drunk or reckless driving. Nevertheless, we still put our lives on the line every time we take to the road – particularly if the road in question is a rural one.

Accidents do not strike entirely at random. Some occupations, activities and social categories are more at risk than others. Manual occupations are more dangerous than sedentary white collar jobs, industrial fatalities clustering particularly in the construction, quarrying, forestry, extraction and farming sectors, and in factory work involving heavy machinery and chemicals. The so-called “working class” is therefore more exposed to workplace fatalities than the middle class. Since Maori and Pacific Islanders are over-represented amongst manual workers, their death rate through industrial misadventure is higher than for other ethnic groups. In fact, the death rate by accidents of all sorts is considerably higher amongst Polynesian New Zealanders. Young Maori males, for example, are much more prone to death on the roads than other New Zealanders.

The likelihood that you will be murdered or die at your own
hands is far less than being killed in a road accident. Nevertheless, the homicide rate has increased significantly in this country since “the good old days” when every murder called for newspaper headlines. Today, unless they are particularly bizarre, gory or heart rending, homicides are merely routine news items. We are still safer at the hands of our fellow citizens than many other countries, but not as safe as we once were, nor as safe as many societies at a similar level of development. Maori and Pacific Island people are over-represented in homicide statistics, both as agents and as victims.

Our record on suicide is even worse. Tragically, New Zealand youth are driven to kill themselves at a much greater rate than in almost any other society. Nobody has been able to explain what amounts almost to a deadly epidemic amongst young people in this country.

disease

Although the numbers of deaths by accident, murder or suicide is a source of national concern, premature death by illness makes a considerably larger demographic dent. Illnesses can attack anyone, but tend to proliferate amongst lower socio-economic groups. Putting it crudely, the poorer you are, the more likely you are to fall ill.

This association of poverty with disease is caused by a confluence of factors, including bad and over-crowded housing, unhygienic living conditions, poor diet, ignorance of effective medical means of prevention and cure, and inability or unwillingness to consult medical professionals or to take appropriate medicine. Since the free market so-called “reforms” of the mid-1980s, and the gap these opened up between middle and middle class New Zealand, the health of the latter has degenerated, as indicated by the reappearance in this country of “third world” maladies like TB and rheumatic fever – illnesses thought to have been virtually eliminated under the old welfare state. The situation is aggravated by the fact that some sectors of the national community are unwilling
to have their children inoculated against common communicable diseases.

**poor Maori health** Historically, as was mentioned earlier, Maori were highly vulnerable to imported European diseases. Even when immunity began to develop in the early 20th century, poor sanitary conditions in rural Maori areas kept mortality from disease disproportionately high. The most traumatic manifestation of the health gap between Maori and Pakeha occurred during the great influenza epidemic that swept the world in 1918-19. The Maori death rate was much higher than the non-Maori one, to the point where entire lines of family whakapapa (genealogy) were virtually erased. Today, comparatively poor Maori health remains a major national concern, as Maori tend to cluster on the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder where, as we have just seen, the diseases of poverty also cluster. The source of the problem is poverty, not ethnicity, but it may be aggravated by negative attitudes in some Maori circles to a medical system dominated by and culturally oriented towards Pakeha.

Paradoxically, Maori and Pacific Islanders also suffer disproportionately from a uniquely modern malaise – diseases of affluence. A number of potentially fatal conditions, like heart, circulatory and respiratory diseases, strokes, cancer and diabetes, are brought on not by deprivation but over-indulgence. Excessive consumption of junk food, soft drinks, tobacco and alcohol, along with diets saturated with fat, salt and sugar, is arguably the biggest killer in the West today. It is their intake, and the obesity which accompanies it, that brings on the fatal conditions just mentioned. Furthermore, the negative effects of unhealthy consumption patterns is considerably aggravated by lack of exercise – another characteristic of affluent Western societies. The white middle class has become aware of the dangers and cut back on fatty foods, cigarettes, excessive salt and sugar, while conscientiously attempting to take more exercise. Their life span has lengthened accordingly. The working class, however, amongst which Maori and Pacific Islanders are heavily over-
represented, continues to over-indulge in the good things of life, and suffers accordingly. Maori, for instance, experience a much higher rate than non-Maori of diabetes Type 2, brought on by unhealthy eating and drinking habits, while Maori women have about the highest rate of lung cancer in the world, due in part to their heavy smoking. Some Maori and Pacific Islanders quite literally eat, drink and smoke themselves into early graves.

**War**

The demographic havoc wreaked by total war is only a distant memory for most New Zealanders in the 21st century. While they raged, however, the two world wars made significant inroads into the section of the population directly engaged in them – that is, young men. In World War I, the death rate among Kiwi soldiers per head of population was amongst the highest for all combatants. Nature quickly righted the demographic balance, however, as hosts of new babies replenished the national stock. War deaths were a national tragedy, but in the long run only a minor demographic blip.

This is not entirely the case with the Maori world, though. During World War II, the Maori battalion suffered disproportionately high casualty and death rates, due perhaps in part to the spirit of swashbuckling courage with which their warriors threw themselves into the heat of battle. This won them the admiration of allies and foes alike, but sometimes had disastrous social consequences back home. The male flower of entire Maori communities was destroyed, not only cutting of whakapapa lines but also diminishing the pool of potential leadership in post-war Aotearoa.

**Life expectancy**

If we successfully evade premature death by accident, disease or human violence, our bodies must eventually wear out through the ageing process (although this usually manifests itself in the form of a terminal illness like pneumonia, Alzheimer’s disease or cancer). Biological destiny lays down a natural life span, which only on rare occasions extends to a century. However, what precise life span is regarded as natural or normal varies considerably from population to
population, and from one point in time to another. These variations, in turn, have major social implications.

In New Zealand, there are four key points to highlight:

- **Increased longevity**
  People are steadily living longer. In 1840, the average life expectancy was probably around 30 (nobody knows for certain) for both British and Maori: you were an elder if you made it to your mid-forties. At the start of the 21st century this had more than doubled. It was around 76 for men and 81 for women. Moreover, the rate of longevity is accelerating. As a rough rule of thumb, life expectancy is increasing by around two years every decade. As the 21st century advances, there will be ever more elderly people in the population, more “old old” (i.e. over 85) and more receiving telegrams from the monarch to congratulate them on hitting a century.

- **Female longevity**
  Women live much longer than men. From the figures just quoted, you will see that females on average outlive males by around five years. This means that there are, and will remain, a lot of lonely (or merry) old widows living in one-person households or rest homes. The sex gap is closing, however, since male life expectancy is increasing faster than that of females. Perhaps this is because men are living healthier, less stressful lives today, perhaps because contemporary career women are now experiencing the same kinds of pressures as their male counterparts – or perhaps a combination of the two.

- **The class gap**
  There is a startling mortality gap between rich and poor. People in the highest socio-economic decile can expect to live on average around nine years longer than those in the lowest decile. Money might not be able to buy us love, but it can at least purchase longevity.
• **The ethnic gap**

The final point to stress flows logically from the socio-economic one we just made. As we have had several occasions to remark, Maori people are heavily over-represented on the lower rungs of the class ladder. This translates into a major gap between Maori and non-Maori life expectancy. The former on average live around ten years less than their non-Maori counterparts. Indeed, this gap even exists between middle class Maori and non-Maori at the same socio-economic level. This is not to say that Maori are now dying younger than they used to, only that their life expectancy is not increasing anywhere near the national average. New Zealand as a nation is growing healthier and therefore living longer, but the benefits are not shared equally. As was remarked earlier, the Angel of Death still remains a more frequent visitor to Maori than to Pakeha households.

**THE DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION AND STRUCTURAL AGEING**

In this section, we have been watching New Zealanders making their biological entrances via the womb and exits via the coffin. We have seen the rates of birth and death altering down the years, and the transformations these have produced in the size and composition of this country. Now let’s stand further back and place the New Zealand experience within a much broader historical framework. What happened in these little islands was simply a miniature reflection of a global demographic phenomenon that has radically altered the relationship between the human species and its natural environment.

**The Great Demographic Transition**

Demographers agree that over the last few hundred years the human population of the planet has undergone a major transition. It has happened at diverse times and rates in
different countries, but the overall pattern is much the same everywhere. The great demographic transition occurred in three phases.

**the old equilibrium**

When Europeans and Maori first began inter-mingling in the middle of the 18th century, both had fairly stable population sizes. Women had many children, but the rate of infant and maternal mortality was high, and life expectancy was short. Though there was a high turn-over rate of individual members, populations tended to remain roughly the same size down the generations. We might call this “the old equilibrium”, where a high death rate was balanced by a high birth rate.

**population explosion**

Around the 18th century, something unprecedented happened. It began in Europe but eventually spread to the rest of the world. As a result of medical advances and improved public hygiene, the death rate dropped dramatically. The birth rate, however, remained high, with the result that populations began to expand rapidly – so rapidly, in fact, it has been called the population explosion. The British immigrants to New Zealand had already lived through this. Indeed, it was in part responsible for so many people leaving over-crowded Britain for the wide open spaces abroad.

Maori, however, experienced a major setback before they could embark on their own local population explosion. As we have seen, for several decades their abrupt incorporation into global society produced not an expansion but a potentially terminal decline in their numbers. The same thing happened with many indigenous people around the world after they had been colonised by white nations. As a result of imported diseases and widespread demoralisation, their populations dwindled to the point of extinction. It was called fatal contact. It was only in the 20th century that the tangata whenua recovered from the trauma induced by British imperialism, and their numbers began to expand. They remained in this transitional state, typified by a very high birth rate and increasing longevity right up to the last quarter of the 20th century.
In the West, the 20th century was characterised by a new and more benign equilibrium than had existed before the population explosion. As a result of the wide use of reliable contraceptives and of changing definitions of the female role in society, the birth rate declined sharply. Population size once again stabilised, although now there was a much slower individual turn-over rate. There were fewer people, but they lived longer. Women of child-bearing age didn’t have to labour overtime to keep pace with the death rate.

Maori people were approaching this new equilibrium early in the 21st century. This was considerably later than for Pakeha, but once their fertility began to decline after the 1960s, it did so at a dramatically faster rate than for non-Maori. Today they are approaching the Western norm, although their birth rate is still significantly higher. They will probably reach the new steady state in a few decades.

There have, of course, been many variations and exceptional cases, but demographers generally agree on the broad overall pattern just sketched. An age-old malign equilibrium, where people had to breed frantically to keep up with the high death rate, was replaced by a happier state of affairs where populations stabilised around low fertility and extended longevity. In-between these two forms of population stasis there was an unstable transition period during which populations exploded as deaths declined – an explosion eventually brought under control by judicious family planning.

Well, that was the model demographers, medics and politicians played with till the last decade or so. They first focused on getting the death rate down, then on coping with the consequent population explosion. Towards the end of the 20th century, however, a chronic new demographic problem reared its head in developed countries, a problem which will preoccupy policy makers for the foreseeable future.
This is a phenomenon to which we have already alluded. Quite simply, in so-called “advanced” societies like New Zealand, the new equilibrium just described has broken down. The birth rate is dropping behind the death rate: mortality is outstripping fertility. This is particularly marked amongst the white middle classes of affluent societies, where having babies seems to have gone out of fashion. Whereas the Great Minds of the early 19th century, like the British demographer Thomas Malthus, believed the galloping rate of natural increase was the greatest problem facing the human species, today’s policy makers are facing the opposite problem – natural decrease. It’s not that the human species as a whole is declining in numbers – the population explosion continues apace in many developing countries – but for the privileged club of post-industrial societies of which New Zealand is a member, the decline in fertility has become, if not an imminent crisis, at least a serious talking point. Amongst other things, it forces us to think long and hard about future immigration policies – a subject to which we will devote the rest of this study guide, after a few concluding remarks about the issues raised by the declining birth rate.

**Structural Ageing**

Before embarking on our extended survey of the final key demographic variable – migration – we will pause for a moment to wrap up everything said above about births and deaths. In doing so, we will focus on a major demographic issue that will confront this country in the near future. It is one of those issues where everyone agrees on the nature of the problem, and there is no dispute about the facts, but people disagree as to what should be done about it. It can be summed up in two words: “structural ageing”.

It has become quite clear in the foregoing that a major transformation is taking place in the nation’s age composition. Because people are living longer while fewer children are being born, the average age of the population is steadily climbing. The elderly – by whom we mean those over 65 –
will make up an ever greater proportion of the population. In the 2001 census, around 12% of New Zealanders were 65 or older. Peering into the entrails of the future, demographic soothsayers predict that this figure could be as high as 25% by mid-century, and there could be a million old people in the country, out-numbering children by three to one.

It’s not so much the actual number that matters as the ratio of retired people to those of working age – and this ratio is climbing all the time. Putting that another way, there are fewer and fewer productive, tax-paying workers to support ever more dependent elderly.

**dependency of the elderly**

This is a problem for a number of reasons. For a start, only a small minority of New Zealanders save enough during their working years to live on in retirement. The rest depend entirely on a minimal old age pension from the state. In the second place, health needs mount with age, becoming particularly pressing as death approaches. The medical care in question becomes increasingly intensive and therefore expensive in those final years. Furthermore, more than half those over 65 have physical or mental impairments which require special aids and home care services. Finally, though less tangibly, the elderly risk becoming socially isolated – something experienced particularly keenly if their partner of many years has died. They need company to mitigate the misery of loneliness, but that company is in increasingly short supply as the youthful section of the population itself ages.

Much of the responsibility for the “old old” may fall on the shoulders of their daughters, who themselves may be around retirement age. In fact, a new social phenomenon has emerged over recent years, nicknamed “the sandwich generation”. It comprises middle-aged women who are responsible at the same time for the wellbeing of aged parents and of still-dependent children.

**a financial issue**

One of the solutions to the problem of having such a high proportion of dependent old people in the population lies with
“social capital”, by which is meant warm, tightly-knit, supportive communities. The main issue, though, is a financial one. Government must find the money to pay for rest homes, medical services, home help, disability appliances and – above all – regular incomes for state beneficiaries. In the latter respect, the labour coalition government set up a superannuation fund in its first term of office as a nest egg against the time when the baby boomers would start retiring in large numbers. This, however, will not be enough to meet all the day-to-day living costs of the elderly, not to mention their health and disability needs. Furthermore, in its early years at least, the fund lost rather than made money through being invested overseas at a time of international recession. Above all, the fund does not and cannot address the real root of the problem. This, as we have just seen, lies in the age structure. Quite simply, there will not be enough productive workers in New Zealand to generate national wealth and to pay the taxes on which the elderly depend.

The situation is considerably aggravated by the fact that some of the young people who are coming on stream into the work force are not sufficiently well equipped to carry the load. As has been remarked on several occasions, “young New Zealand” is disproportionately of Maori or Pacific Island ethnicity. It must be stressed that the point is not their Polynesian ethnicity as such but the fact that Maori and Islanders still tend to be over-represented amongst the lower SES classes where unemployment, state dependence, educational under-achievement and poor health remain endemic, despite the long struggle to escape from the eth-class poverty trap. Not all young Polynesian New Zealanders are ideally suited to step into the harness of the Knowledge Economy and pull it triumphantly into the future. On the contrary, a disproportionately large number are themselves heavily dependent upon the state. The country thus faces a future where a large number of predominantly old folk will depend for their wellbeing on the productive capacity of a younger generation which is not yet fully equipped by
education and attitude to take up the economic and social responsibility.

This would appear to be a slowly evolving demographic crisis of major proportions. It is one, moreover, which left to their own human resources New Zealanders are incapable of forestalling, given the apparently irreversible processes of natural population decline and increasing longevity, coupled with the country’s class and ethnic composition.

There is, however, an answer at hand. It lies not within the country itself, but with the inexhaustible supplies of able and willing young adults who are queuing up overseas, notably in Asia, to make their homes in New Zealand. Of ourselves we cannot right the balance between productive workers and retired people, but it could quickly be rectified by the simple expedient of throwing out the welcome mat to large numbers of working-age immigrants. New Zealand could rejuvenate itself at the stroke of a pen. That, however, opens a quite different can of worms: we will devote the rest of the study guide to inspecting its contents.
MIGRATION 1: IMMIGRATION

Up to this point we have only been considering population increase, decrease or equilibrium in so-called “natural” terms – that is, the balance between the birth and death rates. A third major factor has been waiting in the wings, another way people join or quit a given population. Being born here is not the only way to become a New Zealander; dying is not the only way of making an exit. This other factor is summed up in one word – migration. The size, composition and distribution of the New Zealand population are the product not just of who get born or die, but just as importantly by who come here from overseas (immigration), who pack their bags and leave (emigration), and who shift from one part of the country to another (internal migration).

DIASPORAS

We will begin our exploration of these processes with immigrants. These are people who have voluntarily decided to make New Zealand their permanent home. They have applied for residency through official channels, usually at a New Zealand embassy or consulate in their countries of origin, and have waited patiently in the queue while their application was processed. (This can often be a long wait, sometimes lasting for more than a year.) Once granted a residency permit, in most respects they acquire the rights and responsibilities of New Zealand citizens, although they do not technically possess full citizenship. To become New Zealand nationals, they must make a formal application to be naturalised, a process which climaxes in a small ceremony during which an oath of allegiance to the British Crown is sworn. Naturalisation does not actually make much practical difference to the status of long-term residents. It is more a symbolic act, showing that an immigrant now feels 100% Kiwi at heart.
There are two special subsets of immigrants, comprising refugees and asylum-seekers, who acquire residency through different channels, but we will discuss them a little later. For the moment, we will focus on what will be termed “regular immigrants”.

**NZ’s Diasporic Origins**

Like all nations, New Zealand has constantly been washed over by in-coming human waves from the outside world, and in its turn has sent little ripples out into that world. Round the globe, populations have always been and still remain restlessly on the move. The term given to these migrating hordes who quit their own homelands to settle on other parts of the earth’s surface is “diaspora”. It originally referred to the exile of the Jews from Israel, but now covers any national or ethnic population living in places other than its country of origin.

In every nation a large core never strays beyond its borders; indeed, communities may live for generation after generation on their own little patch, knowing nothing at first hand about life in other parts of the country, let alone the big, wide world. At the same time, just about every country also has a diasporic fringe of those whom desperation or a sense of adventure have driven to make new homes in other parts of the world. At first these exiles are just *expatriates* – that is, people sojourning in a foreign country with their hearts back home – but as the years roll by, particularly when children are born, ties with the homeland weaken while allegiance to the host nation grows. They end up with a sometimes confusing dual ethnic identity, such as German Jew, Mexican American, Chinese Malaysian or Fiji Indian.

**Successive Waves of Migration**

Our own little islands in the south Pacific were amongst the last land masses to be occupied by the human species. The New Zealand nation of the 21st century is the outcome of successive diasporas from different parts of the globe. The
first wave arrived around 1000 years ago, marking the furthest limit of a Polynesian diaspora that possibly had its origins in what today is called Taiwan. By dint of getting here first, they claim the title of indigenous people of the land.

**the British**

Some 800 years later, the descendants of those first migrants were swamped by an even larger Anglo-Celtic diaspora which had already engulfed most of North America and created a British ruling class in India, Africa and elsewhere. By the 1870s, the white immigrants outnumbered their Polynesian hosts, irreversibly transforming the demographic history of this nation. Britain remained the major source country of immigrants until the 1990s. There was a particularly large in-flow in the decades after World War II, a time when New Zealand was experiencing a major labour shortage. From 1947 to 1975, the New Zealand government operated an assisted passage scheme through which British migrants were offered financial incentives to come and put their shoulders to the economic wheel. (The scheme was also open to a select number of other nationals, notably the Dutch.)

**other Europeans**

Small diasporas from other parts of Europe and further afield also established expatriate enclaves here in the 19th century. The most socially visible of these were:

- French settlers in Akaroa, who in 1840 were pipped at the post by the British in their attempt to claim New Zealand for France
- Chinese from around Canton, who came originally as gold miners, then took up market gardening and laundering
- Indians, mainly from Gujarat and Punjab, who market gardened, and later ran corner dairies
- Dalmatians from the south of Croatia, who dug for gum in Northland, then pioneered New Zealand’s wine industry
- Scandinavians from Denmark and Norway, who cleared the heavy bush around Norsewood and Dannevirke
- European Jews, who injected business acumen and artistic cultivation into the young nation’s economic and cultural bloodstream.
Later the ethnic mix was enriched by:

- The Dutch, who appeared in significant numbers from the late 1940s, contributing cultural variety and entrepreneurship to towns where they settled.

The above is only a sample list, of course. By the mid-20th century, there were representatives of many other nations occupying small niches within predominantly Anglo-Celtic New Zealand, such as the Italian fishing community at Wellington’s Island Bay. Today, there are over 100 different nationalities represented in this country, though admittedly most of these are very small.

**chain migration**

New settlers often came out to New Zealand through a process known as “chain migration”. One or two members of a family or local community would be lured by agents of a migration company to this alleged paradise in the South Pacific. They would then act as bait to attract other members of the family or community. Sometimes almost entire villages were transplanted from one side of the globe to the other. This started happening back in the 1840s with the British settlers whom Edward Gibbon Wakefield’s New Zealand Company brought out. It subsequently happened with Scandinavians and Dalmatians in the later 19th century, with the Chinese on the eve of World War II, and continues today with Pacific Islanders, Asians and refugees from many countries. The New Zealand government annually issues residency permits to family members of previous immigrants, and around a quarter of the annual immigrant in-take involves family reunion.

**residency through marriage**

Still on the subject of families, there is a short-cut path to acquiring New Zealand residency by way of the marriage bed. People can become Kiwis by marrying one. For instance, after the wars in which we have been involved there was a significant influx of “war brides”, brought back here from the countries where New Zealand troops were stationed. More recently, there has been a fashion for “mail order brides”, Kiwi men importing partners on spec from places like the
Philippines and Russia, contact having been made through agents or on the net. There are also “marriages of convenience” whereby a New Zealand citizen marries a foreign national – sometimes for cash – to gain that person citizenship in this country. This is a ploy upon which the New Zealand government (like governments everywhere) frowns.

MID-20TH CENTURY MONOCULTURALISM

Up to the 1960s, the small ethnic enclaves mentioned above were very much the exceptions, jointly constituting less than 2% of the population. In the middle of the 20th century, New Zealand was a massively monocultural society, overwhelmingly dominated by the white, English-speaking, middle class ethos evolved by descendants of British immigrants. Even Maori occupied only a marginal position in the national narrative.

EXCLUSIONARY IMMIGRATION POLICIES

This demographic hegemony did not happen by sheer chance. On the contrary, the ethnic dominance of New Zealand by the British and their descendants (with a little room allowed for a few immigrants from congenial European sources) was the outcome of deliberate population policies pursued by successive governments right up till the mid-1980s.

There are several key demographic variables over which the state has little direct control. It cannot force people to have babies. It cannot stop people dying. It cannot (without being unacceptably despotic) stop people leaving New Zealand. What it can and does control, however, is the flow of newcomers into the country. Like members of an elite club, those already safely ensconced as New Zealand citizens exercise the self-appointed right to pick and choose new
members. Government policy determines the following factors:

- How many immigrants will be allowed in each year
- What qualities they should possess
- What countries they should be sourced from
- How immigrants should be treated.

Let’s work our way through those one-by-one.

**How Many Annual Immigrants Do We Want?**

As far as numbers go, white New Zealand has always been moderately hungry for new recruits from overseas. This hunger was ravenous in the early colonial decades, when vast numbers of farmers, labourers and craftspeople were needed to clear and settle the land, build the transport infrastructure and houses, and to inject capital into a cash-starved economy – not to mention gaining the numerical ascendancy over Maori. Demand has fluctuated since then, but always been fairly high, as demonstrated by the policy of assisted passages after World War II, when government actually paid for British and Dutch immigrants to come here. It still remained high at the dawn of the 21st century, some politicians maintaining that the economic growth to which the country aspired could only be achieved through a vigorous, if selective, immigration policy. Furthermore, today such immigrants are essential to balance the declining birth rate mentioned earlier, and to off-set the ageing of the resident population.

In 2001, government set itself the target of bringing in around 45 000 new residents a year – equivalent to a medium-sized town.

> *avoiding being swamped* There are limits, of course, to how many annual newcomers the country is prepared to tolerate. It could never declare open slather for immigrants, letting in everyone who wanted to come. Incumbent Kiwis have no desire to be swamped under a
human tidal wave – even though this is precisely what happened to Maori in the 19th century. Present members of the national club want to ensure they always comfortably outnumber future ones. That apart, there are definite limits to how much pressure the country’s infrastructure – its roads, sewerage, water and electricity systems, its housing stock, schools, hospitals and employment opportunities – can bear. In theory, there’s no reason why the country couldn’t let in millions of immigrants a year, till we reached Britain’s population of around 60 million, or Japan’s of double that. In practice, this could not be allowed to happen, as the country would collapse under the pressure. There is even heated debate about the comparatively modest number of residency permits currently allocated. New Zealand First, for instance, would like the numbers chopped back to around 10,000 a year.

What Qualities Should Immigrants Possess?

Arguments about the actual number of immigrants is only the start of the story. It must also be decided what qualities our new fellow citizens should possess. We don’t want just anyone. Ever since immigration began, a certain amount of screening has been carried out to try to ensure that immigrants are assets rather than liabilities. This screening has focused on four main factors:

- While making humane allowances, we want the bulk of newcomers to be healthy and able-bodied: we are wary of importing diseases like leprosy, TB and Aids, and of people who might be a drain on the Health system.
- We want them to be of good moral character, not drunken lay-abouts, criminals, and certainly not terrorists.
- They must be able to make a significant contribution to the economy, either through their labour power or their possession of investment capital.
- Finally, we expect them to be culturally compatible with something we vaguely but staunchly regard as “the New Zealand way of life”. Newcomers must be able and willing
to fit in and assimilate themselves, not form alien enclaves. This means they should speak our language, dress like us, share our religious festivals, eat the same food etc. We also prefer them to resemble us physically in terms of skin colour and facial features.

Countries of Origin

The matter of “fitting in” brings us to the next issue, and a highly controversial one at that. Given that New Zealanders on the whole want new members of the club to adopt its rules, acquire its ways and generally become Kiwified, what source countries should be tapped for new club members? This issue has been of such historical significance, it is worth dwelling on for a few moments.

The “White New Zealand” Policy

The answer to the question of which countries should be tapped for immigrants was suggested earlier in this study guide when discussing the anti-Chinese measures taken by successive governments from colonial times to the mid-20th century. Although it was never explicitly formulated in these precise terms, for over a hundred years New Zealand practised a systematic “white New Zealand” immigration policy. The term “white” here meant first and foremost the British (though for preference not Irish Catholics) with immigrants from north-west Europe runners-up. Southern Europeans, such as the Dalmatians, were not particularly welcome, while Chinese were quite beyond the pale.

The latter were not explicitly discriminated against by name in legislation, as this would have caused diplomatic problems with the British government which had friendship treaties with China, but indirect ways were improvised to keep them out. These included requiring aspirant Chinese immigrants to pay a large poll tax, which most of them could not afford, and setting a difficult English language test designed for failure. Most effectively of all, from 1920 the Minister of Customs had the
arbitrary power to refuse applications for residency, with no explanation required nor any right of appeal. This authority was quietly but systematically exercised behind the scenes for several decades to impose an embargo on Chinese immigration. The embargo was only partially lifted when the Japanese invaded China before World War II, at which point the wives and children of Chinese men sojourning in New Zealand were allowed to join them, but even this was intended as only a temporary humanitarian gesture to be reversed once the war was over.

New Zealand’s attitude towards the Chinese was only the most extreme expression of a more general behind-the-scenes policy. Much the same happened to Indians, and indeed to all “alien” races. The club was for whites only – with the exception, of course, of the Maori, who had to be tolerated because they were already in residence when the club was set up.

**How are Immigrants Treated?**

This observation brings us to the final issue we mentioned above, namely the way immigrants are to be treated in their new home. From what has just been said, the answer is fairly predictable, and has already been suggested on several occasions. Non-white New Zealand residents tended to be shunned and stigmatised. “Aliens” were the objects of contempt, loathing, fear and suspicion on the part of the white settler community, emotions which were fanned and exploited by influential politicians such as Prime Minister Dick Seddon. Chinese were particularly reviled, followed closely by Indians, but southern Europeans, notably Dalmatians, were also victims of prejudice and discrimination. They were branded with pejorative (or at least ethnically inaccurate) nicknames, like Chink, Chow, Celestials, Mongolians and the Yellow Peril for Chinese, Dallies, Austrians or square-heads for Dalmatians.

Even amongst the British themselves a certain ethnic caste system operated, imported to New Zealand from the home
country. Here as there, the Anglican English ruled the roost. Presbyterian Scots were respected as decent, well-educated hard-working people, but not quite out of the top drawer. As for their Celtic cousins from across the Irish Sea, they were socially outside the pale. The Irish Catholics were regarded by Protestants as an irresponsible and volatile bunch, prone to superstition, fighting, drunkenness and excessive breeding, with dubious loyalty to the British Empire. Basically, the only way to be accepted in the “England of the South Pacific” was to shed one’s distinctive ethnic identity, adopt the standard Kiwi accent and merge inconspicuously into Pakeha society.

This is what happened with the descendants of most immigrant groups, so that by the middle of the 20th century very few traces were left of once distinctive communities, other than family and place names, religious observation, and bouts of sentimental nostalgia aroused in Dunedinites by the sound of bagpipes. By the 1950s, something like a new Pakeha ethnicity had been forged, obscuring whatever cultural diversity had existed in colonial society. Conformity to the Kiwi norm was mandatory for social acceptability.

Such total conformity, however, was not possible for those, like the Chinese and Indians, whose skin colour and facial features remained distinctively different from their fellow citizens. Though they dressed, spoke and perhaps even thought like Pakeha, their physical differences marked them off as “the Other”. Even today, it is not uncommon for sixth generation descendants of Chinese immigrants to be asked: “Where are you from?” – meaning what country, not what part of New Zealand. Carrying the mark of their difference stamped on their features, it is assumed they are not really “one of us”.

The foregoing comments refer mainly to the treatment of those regarded by Pakeha as ethnic aliens – those whose manifest difference from the Anglo norm stamped them with the stigma of “otherness”. This kind of hostility was not nearly so marked in the case of the large bulk of immigrants who spoke fluent English, who could not be distinguished in physical
appearance from Pakeha, and who assimilated rapidly and inconspicuously to the New Zealand way of life. Such newcomers were not usually the objects of ostracism or harassment.

Even so, the experience of many was not always entirely happy. They were the victims of sins of omission, rather than sins of commission. That is, they complained of community indifference and bureaucratic inconsiderateness. In the latter respect, the length of time that many were kept waiting while their applications were processed was a source of frustration, even hardship and suffering. The latter occurred, for instance, when the government abruptly changed the rules of the immigration game. This happened in 2002 with the pass mark for the IELTS English test, and again in 2003 with the criteria for selection. People who in all good faith had made preparations for residency in New Zealand, possibly burning their boats back home as they did so, suddenly discovered they were no longer eligible.

As for community indifference, many immigrants complained at the absence of any Welcome mat. One should be careful to avoid sweeping indictments here. There were a significant number of non-governmental organisations as well as private individuals who went out of their way to be helpful and hospitable. In the main, though, it would probably be fair to say that the general impression was one of benign neglect. Non-Anglophone immigrants felt that not nearly enough was done to help them brush up their English, and even Anglophones thought much more could be done to assist them into meaningful employment and generally learn the ropes in their new homes.

“*I came to NZ to drive taxis***”

One particularly poignant complaint was that certain professional bodies refused to recognise the educational qualifications, occupational skills and work experience that immigrants had gained overseas. A rather sick joke did the rounds. A European doctor was asked why he had wanted to
immigrate to New Zealand. His answer: “I wanted to drive a taxi”. The image of a qualified doctor being obliged to drive a taxi for a living encapsulated a more widespread phenomenon: the failure of New Zealanders to appreciate, respect, and thereby benefit from the expertise immigrants brought to the country. It was a paradoxical and self-defeating policy – or, rather, lack of policy. In theory, skilled workers were wanted for the contribution they could make to the economy; in practice, they found it difficult to put those skills to use. This situation lasted right up to 2003, at which point the government revised its policy in order to ensure a better match between aspirant immigrants and actual jobs – but we are getting ahead of ourselves.

Without over-stating the case and being excessively critical, then, we can probably risk the generalisation that New Zealand was at best a lukewarm host. It tolerated a certain number of immigrants each year (so long as they were “like us”) and in some epochs actively encouraged them. Once they were here, however, they tended to be left pretty much to their own devices. They had been accorded the privilege of joining the national club – it was now up to them to fit in as best they could. At least until recently there was no coherent and systematic government policy to make them feel at home.

These attitudes – hostility towards “alien” immigrants and indifference towards even those “like us” – were already around in the middle of the 20th century (the point in history we have been discussing up till now). They became even more marked, and more of a divisive national issue, as we come closer to the present. From the 1960s, new waves of immigration swept in from the Pacific Rim, which severely tested this country’s capacity for tolerance, and challenged the Pakeha cultural hegemony through which national cohesion had been attained in the 1950s.
THE NEW POLYNESIAN DIASPORA

Back in the 1950s, immigration had not been much of an issue for most New Zealanders. The unofficial white New Zealand policy had kept most “aliens” out, there was virtually no immigration during the pre-war depression and the war years that followed, and although streams of British and Dutch newcomers arrived after the war there were plenty of jobs to go round, and in all events they were ethnically acceptable.

Things began to change dramatically in the 1960s, and by the 1990s there were large chunks of New Zealand – notably Auckland – where the old Kiwi monoculturalism was going the way of the moa. In fact, the New Zealand way of life, as it had developed during the nation’s first century, was revolutionised. In the first instance, the revolution was a demographic one, brought about by changed patterns of immigration, but it quickly spread across all sectors of the social map.

The revolution occurred in two stages, one before the watershed year 1986, the other after. The first wave was not the calculated outcome of officially formulated governmental policy: it “just happened”, as it were. The second wave was the planned outcome of new policy directions announced in 1986, and put into effect through a series of immigration Acts, culminating with the milestone 1991 Immigration Amendment Act. Between 1986 and 1991 there was a profound sea-change in New Zealand’s population policy – a major re-think about what kind of country we wanted to be demographically, economically and culturally.

The first wave involved what we might term “the browning of New Zealand”. As early as the 1950s, a trickle of Pacific Islanders from places like the Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau and Western Samoa left their homelands to try out their fortunes in New Zealand. By the early 1970s, this trickle had turned into a flood – at least in the minds of already resident Pakeha and Maori. New Zealand became the principal host nation for a
post-war Pacific Island diaspora, caused by a population explosion at home coupled with economic depression.

Labour migration

The people who came here were therefore first and foremost labour migrants, looking for the kind of paid employment that was lacking within their own threadbare economies. New Zealand, for its part, was hungry for semi- and unskilled manual workers. It seemed a happy symbiosis – but more of that in a minute.

The First Phase: Grudging Acceptance

Many of the first generation immigrants did not intend to make New Zealand a permanent home for themselves and their descendants. They came out to make money and/or to receive a New Zealand education. They remitted much of their pay back home – some of the small Pacific economies relied on such remittances as their major source of income – and eventually went home themselves (or at least intended to). New Zealand was simply a path to upward social mobility back in the old country. They were sojourners – temporary expatriates, in whose minds and hearts the home village and its tight-knit kin community were more real than the streets of Ponsonby.

Chain migration & NZ-born Islanders

However, as time passed the process of chain migration discussed earlier set in, entire family dynasties moving south and reconstituting themselves in Auckland – a city that became known as “the Polynesian capital of the world”. Some of the smallest Pacific states ended up with more of their nationals in Auckland than at home.

Polynesian babies were born in increasing numbers out here, with no first-hand knowledge of their homelands. For them traditional customs, kin ties and religion had less relevance than the life style of native-born Kiwis of their own age. By the 1990s, more Pacific Islanders in this country had been born here than there were first-generation immigrants. We are now
into the third generation. For them, New Zealand is home, Samoa or Rarotonga just a distant, second-hand family memory. Young Islanders are more likely to be steeped in hip hop culture than the traditions of their ancestors.

Islanders were NZ citizens

When they first started coming to this country in significant numbers, Islanders were more-or-less tolerated exceptions to the white New Zealand policy. Indeed, even if governments had wanted to keep them out they were not legally able to, since countries like the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau had a special relationship with New Zealand which automatically conferred New Zealand citizenship on all their inhabitants. Samoans who were born before that country’s independence from New Zealand in 1962 also arguably had an automatic right to New Zealand citizenship. In practice this right was not recognised by the New Zealand government, but it did acknowledge Samoa’s special historical links with this country by according it from Independence a quota of 1100 immigrants a year – a figure which in practice was often exceeded. Pacific Islanders, then, were exceptions to the usual policy of accepting immigrants only from white nations. The exception was an historical necessity, stemming from New Zealand’s earlier colonial ambitions. For all intents and purposes, Cook Islanders and the others were New Zealanders.

NZ’s need for manual workers

Over and above this important legal technicality, throughout the late 1950s, the 1960s and the early 1970s, New Zealand businesspeople and politicians actively encouraged Islanders to find work here. The country was in need of labourers to work in factories, clean buildings, wash laundry and do the many other low status manual jobs which upward-mobile white workers no longer wanted. Samoa and the other islands provided a convenient pool of cheap labour. They were not exactly welcome, but their presence was tolerated as it served a necessary economic function. Derogatively termed “coconuts” were at the bottom of the heap, sometimes subjected to discrimination in housing and white collar employment, but they were accepted because their labour was needed.
The Second Phase: The Anti-Islander Backlash

This grudging tolerance evaporated, however, with the “oil shock” of 1973 and the subsequent recession. Unemployment soared, and the very Islanders who had been encouraged to come and work here were now accused of stealing the livelihood of “real” New Zealanders. From their presence in this country being tolerated, it now became widely and bitterly resented, even amongst the vast majority who had no personal contact with Pacific Islanders, and whose jobs were in no way under threat from them. The country had entered a period of collective anxiety in the wake of the economic down-turn, and people wanted to vent their resentment on a scapegoat. Polynesian immigrants were a highly visible, easily identifiable target, and were subjected to witch hunts by the media, politicians and the national community generally. They were the “Other”, awakening in New Zealanders the xenophobia which had always lurked just below the surface of national life, muted in times of prosperity but easily aroused when hard times came round again.

“bash a Pom”

It should be added, though, that Pacific Islanders were not the only victims of the epidemic of xenophobia that broke out in the mid-1970s. Even new immigrants from familiar source countries like Britain were made to feel unwelcome. It was trendy for a while to sport T-shirts bearing the slogan: “Bash a Pom a Day”.

socially disruptive behaviour

It should also be added that some Pacific Islanders, particularly the young male of the species, were not entirely innocent victims of prejudice. Living in a new country, unshackled from the customary authority of traditional elders and the church, free to wallow in the fleshpots of Auckland and Wellington, some young Polynesian men ran amok, drinking heavily and committing far more than their share of violent and sexual crimes. Their own social disruptiveness was in part to blame for the low esteem in which they were widely held. True, they were the victims of racial discrimination and prejudice, being stereotyped as drunken,
violent, promiscuous, irresponsible and emotionally immature. It was also true, however, that the behaviour of some Polynesian immigrants did actually conform to the stereotype, thereby fanning the flames of prejudice.

The dawn raids & special squad Things came to a head in the mid-1970s, to the point where Islanders were singled out for attack by Rob Muldoon during his 1975 election campaign. In theory this hostility was directed only to illegal overstayers – people who had come into the country on short-term visas, then disappeared from sight into the resident community. In practice, just about anybody with a brown skin and Polynesian features (including some tangata whenua) found themselves under suspicion and surveillance. This ranged from being arbitrarily stopped on the streets to have their identity papers checked to the notorious dawn raids, in which police broke into homes suspected of sheltering illegal overstayers. A special police task force was created for the express purpose of cracking down on Pacific Islanders. Although overstayers were the overt target of such harassment, entire Pacific Island communities were under a shadow.

Third Phase: Growing Acceptance of Pacific Identity

All this, however, happened a generation ago. After their low point in the second half of the 1970s, race relations between Pacific Islanders and other New Zealanders became considerably more cordial. Polynesian identity is now an accepted strand in the national tapestry. The vast majority of ethnic Islanders are second or third generation New Zealanders, not foreigners fresh off the boat. The improved economic and employment state of the country has blunted the edge of competition in the labour market. Many Kiwis have grown to enjoy rather than resent the cultural colour Pacific Islanders inject into the life of the country, particularly in Auckland. For their part, the interests and concerns of New Zealand Pacific Islanders are incorporated into the machinery of state through the creation of a Ministry of Pacific Island
Affairs, their arts are funded by Creative New Zealand, and their representatives have become Members of Parliament.

Polynesian celebrities

Indeed, many New Zealanders today take an active pride in the outstanding contributions individual Pacific Islanders have made to the cultural and sporting life of the nation. The Wellington International Arts Festival one year made a special feature of Pacific Island culture, notably the work of the mixed-media artist Michel Tuffery. The poems, fiction and plays of creative writers such as Alistair Te Ariki Campbell, Albert Wendt, John Pule, Samson Samasoni and Oscar Kightley have made a significant contribution to New Zealand’s literary culture. A new, hybrid musical form – Polynesian reggae/rap – has been forged by groups and individuals like Herbs, Pauly Fuemana, King Kapisi, Che Fu and Nesian Mystics. The dance group Black Grace experiments with avant-garde styles, while craft workers around the country keep the traditional arts of their homelands alive in their new country. A very short sample list of Pacific Island New Zealand sporting legends would include rugby players Jonah Lomu and Michael Jones, boxer David Tua, netballers Ana No’ovao and Bernice Mene, and discus thrower Beatrice Faumuina.

It is true that Pacific Islanders still cluster, along with Maori, on the bottom rungs of the socio-economic ladder, with poorer housing, educational attainments, health and employment status than non-Polynesians, but they are no longer regarded as the shunned Other. In part, this is because they have become more “like us” in outlook and behaviour with each generation, in part it is due to greater mutual familiarity, in part to greater tolerance for ethnic diversity than existed 30 years ago.

NEW ASIAN IMMIGRANTS

It was just suggested that softened attitudes towards New Zealand Pacific Islanders might have been due to increased acceptance of ethnic diversity in this country. However, we
should perhaps be cautious on this point. It may be that New Zealanders stopped worrying so much about Islanders because they had another perceived threat to their way of life to upset them. This came from a new wave of immigration from further north on the Pacific Rim. By 2003, Pacific Islanders had been supplanted by Asians as this country’s third largest ethnic category. Having grown used to a Pacific presence, New Zealanders – particularly Aucklanders – were confronted with a new Other in their midst with Oriental rather than Polynesian features. They called it “the Asian invasion”.

A Sea-Change in Immigration Policy

As mentioned earlier, 1986 was the watershed for this country’s immigration policy. In that year, the Minister of Immigration Kerry Burke produced an influential policy document advocating the country should launch a recruitment drive for skilled workers and business entrepreneurs chosen for their personal qualities regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion or other extraneous qualities. This new doctrine was given legislative expression through immigration Acts in 1987, 1990 and, most influentially, 1991.

The desired qualities in immigrants inscribed in these Acts were very different from those possessed by the earlier Pacific Island workers. The latter had been semi- or unskilled manual labourers, brought in to do the donkey work required by an industrial economy. They were incorporated into the bottom end of the labour market. The immigrants envisaged by the 1991 Immigration Amendment Act were intended to inject new human and financial capital into the top end of a post-industrial economy. New Zealand didn’t need brawn any more, it needed brains.

New Zealand had been suffering a severe “brain drain” since the economic down-turn of the mid-1970s, losing well over 100,000 professional and technical workers in a decade as they sought greener pastures overseas. The country was also starved of investment capital, and just as importantly of
business initiative, to develop the new post-industrial economy. In order to be globally competitive, New Zealand had to get smart. We had to transform ourselves into a “Knowledge Society” where mental skill and initiative was at a premium. Not possessing sufficient of these qualities ourselves, nor the business flair and financial resources to harness and direct them, the country had to look elsewhere.

In the event, the “elsewhere” in question was eastern Asia. However, we will put this issue on ice for the moment. Before discussing the social significance of the ethnic identity of the newcomers, a few words of explanation are necessary about the precise criteria through which immigrants, no matter what their country of origin, were selected after the introduction of the 1991 Immigration Amendment Act. We will not go into these in much technical detail, as the system in practice can be complicated and sometimes bewildering even to those who specialise in immigration matters. Furthermore, this bewilderment and the associated frustration has been compounded by the fact that the rules of the game have been frequently changed in mid-play. Any attempt to give a definitive and detailed description of selection criteria would thus be tedious, confusing and probably out-of-date by the time you read it. Let’s just look at the broad basic principles as they were laid down in 1991, then tinkered with over the next decade or so.

There were four broad categories established by the 1991 Act – humanitarian, family reunion, general skills and business investment. Here we shall focus just on the latter two, as they were the most significant in both numerical and economic terms. As was noted above, New Zealand was after human and financial capital to help grow a post-industrial economy in a rapidly globalising world. It was therefore primarily after economic migrants. Allowing close relations to join the family breadwinner was necessary from a humane point of view, but not the primary function of the scheme. As for the “humanitarian” aspect of immigration policy, this will be dealt with later when refugees are discussed.
skilled workers  

To acquire the so-called “human capital” it was after, a “General Skills” category was created, operating through a points system. Points were allocated for things like formal education, work experience, the amount of cash people could bring to help them settle, whether there were people in New Zealand willing to sponsor them, whether they had jobs lined up and so on. Age was also a factor – the older applicants were, the fewer points they got. This may sound like “ageism”, but in fact simply reflected the need for New Zealand to rejuvenate its population. Because of the structural ageing discussed earlier, there were ever fewer workers to support ever more people in retirement. The country needed a youthful imported labour force to pick up the burden its native-born population were unable to shoulder.

English language proficiency was another key consideration. Immigrants had to score a designated mark out of nine in a language test called the International English Language Testing System – IELTS. Immigrants who did not reach that mark had to pay for English lessons when they got here. Finally, being of good health and moral character were basic prerequisites.

In principle, applicants who chalked up a specified number of points were eligible for New Zealand residency. In practice, their hopes could be dashed as the number of points required for entry was constantly changed, depending on how many applicants were in the pipeline from month to month.

2003: from self-selection to headhunting  
The points system established in 1991 had a major flaw. It helped ensure a flow of high calibre workers, but did not guarantee they were assimilated into the job market. Notching up points did not guarantee people would acquire meaningful employment. A great deal of human capital was consequently squandered, and many immigrant hopes dash. As mentioned earlier, the lack of fit between newcomers’ abilities and the labour market’s willingness to employ them was compounded by some professional bodies not recognising overseas qualifications, encapsulated in the image of an immigrant
doctor driving a taxi.
In 2003, therefore, the Minister of Immigration Lianne Dalziel changed the rules. From henceforward, New Zealand immigration agents would headhunt amongst applicants for those whose occupational skills were most relevant to the requirements of the local labour market. That is, people were to be targeted in line with this country’s specific employment needs. Before 2003, entry had been granted those who wanted to come; after that date, they were granted entry if New Zealand wanted them.

business migrants
So much for human capital. The other function of the new immigration policy was to attract financial capital and entrepreneurship to an economy hungry for investment and enterprise. To this end, a stripped-down, fast-track system was devised for business immigrants. The main criterion for entry was that they should be moderately wealthy, and prepared to inject some of that wealth into the local economy (as with other things, the precise amount required was changed from time to time).

shortcomings of the business stream
Like the general skills category, the business stream was a good idea in principle, which did not quite work out so well in practice. Neither government nor the Kiwi business establishment made life easy for entrepreneurial newcomers. For their part, incoming capitalists did not always play the game the way it was intended. Some bought expensive property here, installed their children, then resumed their business activities back home. Whether because they were frozen out or cynically manipulating the system, (the situation was interpreted differently by different New Zealanders) some overseas businesspeople used Auckland simply as a repository for their children and loose capital.

“We are Part of Asia Now”

The new immigration policy introduced at the start of the 1990s was in itself a fairly major overhaul of the system. The
most important innovation, however, and the one which was to generate most controversy, was not the points system nor the fast-tracking of business entrepreneurs, but the ethnic populations to which they were applied. This is where we get back to “the Asian invasion”.

**new trading partners**

National Prime minister Jim Bolger startled his fellow Kiwis in the 1990s by announcing that New Zealand was now part of Asia. Their response mingled consternation with ribaldry, but Bolger was only giving hyperbolic expression to a sea-change that was taking place generally in the way New Zealand was re-thinking its place on the globe. The apron strings to Mother England, both economic and sentimental, had been well and truly cut, and a growing proportion of our overseas trade was conducted with Asian nations like Japan, China, Taiwan and South Korea. Such countries were no longer regarded as the remote East but the comparatively close north with whom our economic destiny was becoming increasingly entangled. This new orientation in our patterns of trade was given expression, amongst other things, in the creation of the Asia 2000 Foundation, aimed at forging and enhancing commercial, cultural and communal bonds with our new friends on the Pacific Rim.

**from liabilities to assets**

It was also reflected in a systematic campaign to entice skilled workers and shrewd businesspeople from that region to come and live here. Far from being regarded as evolutionarily backward, as they had been in the 19th and early 20th century, Asians were now seen as a pool of sophisticated workers and entrepreneurs to be siphoned in our direction. The country’s leaders did a U-turn: the presence of Asians in our midst, it now appeared, was not a liability but a national asset. Between 1991 and 1996 the floodgates opened, and Asian immigrants arrived in such numbers that they exceeded those from our traditional source country Britain. In particular, we recruited ethnic Chinese from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and eventually China itself, with a separate ethnic contingent from South Korea. Unlike the Pacific Island immigrants who preceded them, they did not regard New
Zealand as a path to economic upward mobility (they were financially well enough off back home) but somewhere to enjoy their affluence in a relaxed, uncluttered environment with plenty of open space. It was life style they were after, along with an Anglophone education for their children, not a rise from rags to riches.

The Anti-Asian Backlash

A fundamental law of natural physics is that for each action there is an equal and opposite reaction. The same may be true of social physics. The actions taken by both Labour and National governments from 1986 which caused a sudden influx of Asian migrants, also triggered an increasingly hostile reaction amongst their unprepared hosts. This reaction, or ethnic backlash, was particularly strong in Auckland, where the vast bulk of the new economic immigrants and their families settled, but there was a more diffuse national moral panic about “the Asian invasion” throughout the country. Anti-Chinese sentiment, which had been in abeyance for 50 years, flared up again in a new form. It was even shared by members of the old Chinese community which had been established in New Zealand for generations, had worked hard to overcome stigma and create a respected public image of itself, and resented that image being tarnished by sometimes brash newcomers.

In small part, the new Chinese immigrants themselves provoked this resurgence of racial prejudice, and justified the resentment of New Zealand-born Chinese. As mentioned above, some cynically abused the business migrant system by ostensibly bringing in a large amount of capital, buying an expensive house, enrolling their children in the New Zealand education system, then quietly removing themselves and their wealth back home. Indirectly, this had the side-effect of inflating Auckland house prices, thus making it more difficult for native Kiwis to afford homes. Furthermore, a small minority of the newcomers introduced forms of organised crime – the notorious triads – into the country. The actual
crime rate amongst Chinese immigrants was well below the national average, but whenever there was a case of Chinese kidnapping, prostitution, fraud, drug peddling, exploitation of fellow immigrants, paua smuggling or whatever, it received wide media coverage and confirmed the fears of non-Chinese. Even law-abiding ones, which the vast majority were, sometimes had difficulty adjusting their driving habits to local conventions – a sin for which they were roundly condemned by Aucklanders, those paragons of road courtesy.

Thus, there were some real problems and legitimate cause for concern. “There’s no smoke without fire”. These, though, were not the real root of the anti-Asian backlash. This could be found in the two words “xenophobia” and “resentment”.

xenophobia again

On the one hand, Chinese and Koreans were disliked for no other reason than that they were overtly different from the resident population. It made Kiwis uneasy and hostile to see signs in a language they could not understand, and to hear foreign tongues spoken in public places. Even greater discomfort was experienced when so many overtly foreign faces, neither familiarly Anglo-Celtic nor Polynesian, suddenly made their appearance in the streets. Xenophobia was at work again.

resentment of success

On the other hand, the newcomers were resented for qualities which, in Pakeha, would have been admired. Some of them were wealthier than the average Aucklander, and on occasions gave visible expression to their affluence by supplying themselves and – even more scandalously – their children with the kinds of houses and cars most Kiwis could only dream of. They also frequently surpassed their hosts in terms of human capital. On average they were better educated and possessed greater technical skills, while their children, steeped in a work ethic unfamiliar to many relaxed New Zealand students, regularly outshone the competition in the fields of scholarship and artistic ability. That they were wealthy and achievers was
scarcey surprising since they had been hand-picked for those very qualities – qualities which were assets to their country of adoption. However, this did not dampen the envy of the lower-flying Kiwis as they watched Chinese immigrants buying up-market houses in Howick, and their kids driving past in flash cars, walking off with the top academic scholarships or regularly winning classical music competitions. The paradox in all this is that a century earlier the Chinese had been despised for their alleged inferiority to other New Zealanders; now they were resented for their superior attributes and achievements.

While some members of the general populace grew increasingly uneasy about the influx of Asian immigrants through the first half of the 1990s, the political establishment was generally enthusiastic. Some even attributed New Zealand’s comparatively good economic performance from the mid-1990s to the boost given by Chinese and Korean immigrants to the capital and labour markets. The prominent exception was Winston Peters, whose New Zealand First party was to some extent built on the back of anti-Asian sentiment, and whose unexpectedly successful 1996 election campaign fed upon it. In the 2002 elections and in subsequent years, Peters renewed his attack on the government’s immigration policy, again attracting unexpectedly large support for New Zealand First. His political opponents and the liberal establishment accused him of being a racist demagogue, blatantly making political capital out of the ugly streak of xenophobia and resentment in the New Zealand national character. His supporters – and even many who did not actually vote for him – claimed he was only raising legitimate questions about a immigration policy that had proved itself socially divisive, and was threatening to undermine community cohesion in host cities like Auckland.

The 1990s, then, witnessed something like a re-run of the 1970s with new actors. Both were times of national anxiety that vented itself on ethnic newcomers and was given voice by
a populist politician. The big difference was that 20 years earlier, it was those at the bottom of the socio-economic heap who were singled out, while in the 1990s it was the immigrant elite.

**unease in China**

Bowing to the sector of public opinion that had been aroused by Peters’ 1996 election campaign, the government radically tightened entry criteria. The immediate consequence was a major down-turn in immigration from Asia in the 1996-97 year. This apparent hardening of attitudes did not go unnoticed overseas. Word quickly got round in source countries like Taiwan and China about the anti-Chinese sentiments being expressed in New Zealand, and our previously positive image as a friendly host was tarnished accordingly. Numbers picked up again around the turn of the 21st century, augmented by large cohorts of young Asian people coming to this country to study. The creation of a Ministry of Ethnic Affairs in 1999 helped pour oil on troubled waters, while community Ethnic Councils around the country worked to foster better race relations. However, New Zealand’s reputation was damaged again in Asian circles by Peters’ renewed attacks on immigrants in the 2002 elections. Coupled withshonky goings-on(683,747),(716,769)(716,747),(749,769) in the English language industry (to which we shall return later), a crisis of confidence developed in Chinese circles about this country’s fitness to care for their expatriate nationals.

**The New Cosmopolitanism**

We don’t want to end this survey of immigration on a sour note, however. True, it has sometimes generated xenophobia. True, too, New Zealanders have been tempted to regard newcomers as cash cows to be milked without accepting responsibility for their wellbeing. This, in turn, has damaged the country’s reputation in source nations, whose prospective emigrants and students may opt for more accommodating hosts. Granting all this, the fact remains that New Zealand society has undergone a massive sea-change from the white, Anglophone cultural hegemony of the 1950s. In a word, we
have become cosmopolitan. This is particularly true of Auckland, where one in three people today are born overseas (the national average is one in five, but even this is a surprisingly high figure). Pakeha and Maori have been leaving the country in fairly large numbers, and have been replaced by New Zealanders of markedly different ethnic origins. The 72% of New Zealanders claiming purely European ancestry still far outnumber any other ethnic block, but the nation is far more demographically diverse than it was 50 years ago, a demographic diversity which in turn has translated into growing acceptance of multi-culturalism.

At least in the big cities, we have begun to redefine “the New Zealand way of life”. Today, it accommodates a much wider range of dress and adornment, cuisine, religious beliefs, festivals, customs and accents than could have been conceived back in the 1950s. Some New Zealanders resent this exotic variety, but it would probably be fair to guess that there are as many Kiwis who actively enjoy the cosmopolitan flavour it has added to national life as there are those whose identity it threatens.

Government, whose policies were largely responsible for this demographic transition, has committed itself ideologically to the new multi-culturalism. It works as vigorously today to promote the ideal of cohesion through diversity as it did in the past to that of cohesion through similarity. In the 1950s, society was glued together by the fact that everyone was pretty much the same. Today, a new social glue is required, of which the most important ingredients are tolerance and respect for difference. New Zealand has entered a new phase of nation-building in the 21st century, one where unthinking conformity to the Pakeha norm is no longer sufficient to generate social cohesion.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers
Before concluding the discussion of our newly cosmopolitan image, four important distinctions need to be emphasised. These are between:

- Immigrants and refugees
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- First and second generation immigrants
- Immigrants and visitors.

We will deal with the first two of these in the present section, the others in subsequent ones.

**Refugees**

There is a significant historical, economic, communal and even psychological difference between the kinds of regular immigrants discussed till now and a special subset of these designated as “refugees”. The former (who constitute the overwhelming majority of newcomers) have made a voluntary choice to leave their homelands to create a new life abroad, and have personally singled out New Zealand as their destination. True, their decision to join the diaspora may in large part have been made because of the unpleasant economic and social situation back home – things like unemployment, a claustrophobic class system, religious intolerance, ethnic persecution or over-crowding. Two groups who came to New Zealand in the late 1980s and the 1990s because of a hostile ethnic climate back home, for example, were white South Africans and Fiji Indians.

**migration is a free choice**

With the vast majority of regular immigrants, however, nobody actually chased them out, and nobody was going to torture or kill them if they stayed. They applied of their own free will to New Zealand immigration agencies in their home countries, and set about the formalities of migration in a systematic, peaceful and unconstrained manner.

**involuntary exile from intolerable**

Things have been very different for others. They have fled their countries against their will to escape from international or
circumstances
civil war, ethnic, class or religious persecution, despotic
totalitarianism or the equally murderous anarchy of rival war
lords. They didn’t want to go into exile: it was imposed upon
them by intolerable conditions at home. As hot spots erupt
around the globe, each throws out its human detritus of
displaced people, fleeing across frontiers to find some vestige
of security. They are usually bereft of material possessions
and financial resources, have experienced a violent dislocation
of family and community life and are frequently psychically
traumatised by what happened – and may still be happening –
to them and their loved ones.

refugee camps & the
UNHCR
Once they have escaped, they are usually packed together in
unwholesome refugee camps, where they eke out a bare
subsistence living, are culturally and communally disoriented,
and sometimes victims of predatory fellow-refugees or camp
officials. They are not welcome in the unwilling host country
across whose borders they have fled. Short of peace, security
and tolerance being established in their own countries, their
only sparse hope for a better future is resettlement in a new
home through the United Nations High Commissioner on
Refugees (UNHCR). What that new home might be, however,
is out of their hands: it is for the UNHCR to decide, in
negotiation with the very small handful of countries willing to
take in a few refugees. Each year, there are millions more
displaced people in the world than there are offers of refuge.
They live in a condition of historical, social, economic and
emotional limbo, their destinies totally in the hands of the few
nations prepared to make a humanitarian gesture on their
behalf.

NZ’s refugee quota
New Zealand is one of the nations prepared to make such a
gesture. It has agreed with the UNHCR to take in a modest
annual quota of refugees – this was fixed in the 1990s at 750,
plus some leeway for reuniting families. The annual total
including family members comes to around 1250. This does
not sound particularly generous, till one remembers that New
Zealand is one of only ten countries prepared to accept even
tiny refugee quotas on a regular basis.

**Polish child refugees**

The first refugees to arrive in significant numbers were 733 Polish children, accompanied by 108 adults, who escaped from under the heels of Hitler and Stalin to arrive here in 1944. We do not have space to narrate it here, but the story of these Polish children and the misery inflicted on many of them by their New Zealand hosts in the name of ethnic assimilation is a whole fascinating story in itself.

In the remainder of the 20th century, exiles from many other traumatised countries arrived on our shores. The following is a sample list of where they came from, and when.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Origin</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949 – 1952</td>
<td>Displaced persons in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956 – 1958</td>
<td>Hungarians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962 – 1971</td>
<td>Chinese from Hong Kong &amp; Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Russian Christians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968 – 1971</td>
<td>Czechoslovaks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972 – 1973</td>
<td>Asian Ugandans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974 – 1991</td>
<td>Eastern Europeans: Polish, Czechoslovak, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Yugoslav &amp; Soviet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 – 2000</td>
<td>Vietnamese, Cambodians &amp; Laotians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979 – 2000</td>
<td>Iranians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988 – 2000</td>
<td>Iraqis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 – 2000</td>
<td>Afghans</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Burmese</td>
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*[Source: www.rms.org.nz]*

The above list at first glance simply looks like a bland succession of geographical place names. In reality it is an appalling historical chronicle of the international and civil wars, the religious and political persecution, the torture and genocide that have afflicted humanity since the end of World War II.
War II. The names constitute an atlas of human cruelty, including ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, the suppression of democracy and national independence in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the expulsion of an entire ethnic population in Uganda, the extermination of millions in Cambodia in the name of Marxist purity, the suppression of the Baha’i faith in Iran and the Christian one in Communist China. A small selection of the human carnage was washed up on New Zealand soil, giving its inhabitants a first-hand glimpse of atrocities they had previously only seen on television.

One experience they all had in common was an initial sojourn in a centre for displaced persons at Mangere. For many, this was not a happy time. Some suffered from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, all were haunted by their pasts, were ripped out of their secure family and community settings, were financially impoverished and culturally lost. To compound these, their treatment at the hands of their host nation was not always appropriate, considerate or even humane. True, they were assisted by the Refugee and Migrant Service, a non-government organisation set up on their behalf in 1976. True, too, there were a considerable number of philanthropic agencies like churches, as well as compassionate individuals, who took them under their wings. Furthermore, the Ethnic Councils and the Office of Ethnic Affairs were concerned about their well-being, along with that of regular immigrants.

Even so, it could be argued that not nearly enough was done to make them feel at home. Until comparatively recently, for instance, the fact that many were suffering from psychological trauma was not recognised nor treated. In the Mangere Centre they were expected to eat food that was strange and often distasteful to them. Furthermore, in the bad old monocultural days they were actively discouraged from forming their own ethnic communities for mutual support. They were expected to assimilate as quickly as possible to the Pakeha norm, to which end they were deliberately kept isolated from one another – one of the reasons for the unhappiness of many of the Polish
children mentioned earlier. It should be stressed, though, that such isolation has not been official policy for quite some time. On the contrary, the government today endorses the creation of ethnic community groups and pan-ethnic councils as expressions of the multi-cultural national ethos it is trying to nurture.

**hate crimes against refugees**

Particularly shocking to the national conscience are occasional “hate crimes”, culminating in physical attacks and even murder, committed against refugees and other immigrants by young members of established ethnic groups – Pakeha, Maori and Pacific Island alike. These do not happen as often as in many other countries, but the media and general public find something particularly repugnant and tragic about assaults on individuals who have been through so much suffering in their former lives, and looked to New Zealand as a safe haven from persecution. There is probably considerably more harassment of a non-physical kind, such as the painting of racist slogans and use of pejorative nicknames.

Epidemics of such anti-foreigner hatred tend to break out particularly in response to events overseas. This first happened on a big scale in World War I, when anyone and anything with a remotely German association, including pianos and dachshunds, were objects of anti-Hun hysteria. During and after World War II, many New Zealanders were unable to perceive the difference between Nazis and the German or Austrian Jews who took refuge here from the scourge of the swastika. More recently, the 11 September attack on New York’s World Trade Centre in 2001 triggered a minor wave of insults, threats and harassment directed towards anyone who looked Arab. However, the very fact that the vast majority of New Zealanders feel outraged by the victimisation of refugees suggests there is a considerable reservoir of goodwill and empathy for them, even if this does not always translate into sufficient day-to-day support and understanding.

**Asylum Seekers**
Just as there is some confusion in the minds of the general public and certain politicians between regular immigrants and refugees, so a similar confusion exists between the latter and the fairly rare phenomenon of asylum seekers. Refugees come through official channels, are hand-picked and screened in advance of arrival. Asylum seekers, on the other hand, just turn up in the country, usually at airports, sometimes with no documents or false ones, and throw themselves on the mercy of the New Zealand government. Like other refugees, they claim to have been victims of persecution at home, and allege they will be tortured, killed, or at least suffer terrible deprivation, if they are sent back.

**people smuggling**

Illegal immigrants of this sort are a massive problem in many countries where large numbers of desperate people arrive in leaky boats, in suffocating trucks, or stowed away on trains. They may pay extortionate amounts of money to be smuggled across frontiers by organised criminals who have scant regard for the wellbeing or even the lives of their clients. People smuggling, in fact, has become as lucrative an industry as drug trafficking.

Because of its geographical remoteness, having no land borders with other countries and being surrounded by vast tracts of ocean, New Zealand does not attract as many asylum seekers as other nations, even Australia, which has had to ward off waves of “boat people” from Indonesia. Nevertheless, asylum seekers do turn up here with stories of the savage persecution that forced them to flee their homes.

**queue jumping**

Their situation is not always regarded with the sympathy their dire situation might seem to call for. For one thing, they are accused of “queue jumping”. Other refugees have filled in all the right forms and meekly waited their turn to be selected. Asylum seekers, on the other hand, have short-circuited official channels and, in effect, demanded special consideration not given to those stagnating in refugee camps. Asylum seekers for their part are likely to respond that such official channels and camps did not exist in their part of the
world, or were too dangerous to access. They had no alternative but to take matters into their own hands.
The moral rights or wrongs of queue-jumping apart, asylum seekers present immigration officials, politicians and liberal-minded members of the public with a number of headaches. If they turn up with false passports, or have destroyed their documents along the way, their identity has to be established – which may be no easy matter, especially if their honesty is suspect in the first place. Then their stories about persecution back home have to be checked out. Are they genuine victims, like those who fled the Pol Pot genocide in Cambodia, or are they simply economic migrants spinning yarns in order to take advantage of New Zealand’s relative affluence? Would they really be executed if packed off back home, and if so is this a matter that should concern the New Zealand government?

Finally, there are questions about their health status and moral character – things for which all other immigrants are screened. They could be carrying a dangerous infectious disease like Aids. They could be professional criminals. They could – a matter of particular concern since 11 September 2001 – be terrorists, either targeting New Zealand, or else using it as a back door into another country.

Then there is the vexed question of what to do with the embarrassing arrivals until answers are found to the above questions. If they are frauds, particularly if they are dangerous frauds, they should not be allowed to wander free, nor would it be appropriate to put them with bona fide refugees in the Mangere Centre. Although much more humane than the Australians, who herd asylum seekers en masse into virtual concentration camps, this country on occasions has not treated them with the consideration their plight, if genuine, would seem to merit.

The problem of what to do with suspect asylum seekers was highlighted by the case of an Algerian called Ahmed Zaoui who arrived here in 2002, claiming he would be tortured or killed if sent back. He was granted official refugee status by the Refugee Status Appeal Authority, but was accused of being
an Islamic terrorist by the NZ Security Intelligence Service (SIS) on the basis of information supplied by their overseas counterparts, and was kept locked up in the maximum security prison Paremoremo. The grounds on which he was accused of being a security risk were not released to Zaoui or his lawyers. They might have been true, might have been based on malicious rumour, or might simply have been a muddle-headed mistake (which even secret intelligence security agencies are capable of making). If innocent, he would never know the charges brought against him, and would have no right of appeal against deportation.

**humanitarianism vs. national security**

New Zealanders were divided on the Ahmed Zaoui case, some feeling that the government was displaying legitimate caution in a global environment infested by terrorism. Many prominent liberals, however, felt his detention in jail after being cleared to receive refugee status was a scandalous violation of his human rights. The former put national security first, the latter natural justice. Liberals accused the security establishment of being swayed by the wave of collective paranoia that swept the world in the wake of the Twin Towers attack. The equally persuasive response was that New Zealanders would be naive to believe their country could be exempt for ever from the kinds of atrocities committed by terrorists in other parts of the world. Government had an obligation to protect its citizens: security risks had to be taken seriously.

**The Tampa affair**

To balance our account of the Zaoui affair, it should be mentioned that the government can employ a velvet glove as well as an iron fist in its treatment of asylum seekers. This was displayed to much international approval over the Tampa affair.

In 2001 the Norwegian vessel Tampa picked up a boatload of illegal immigrants being smuggled into Australia from Afghanistan via Indonesia. The Australian government refused them entry, but the New Zealand government provided a
humane way out of the impasse by offering to take in a significant proportion of the boat people as part of its annual refugee quota, later to be joined by other family members. This, of course, was rather unfair on legitimate refugees who would otherwise have been allowed in, but it greatly enhanced our image as a decent, compassionate nation by contrast with the heartless Aussies.

New Zealand has thus oscillated between the ostentatious humanitarianism of the Tampa case and the apparent callousness of the Zaoui affair. It must be remembered, though, that although refugees and asylum seekers have a high public profile, statistically speaking they are fairly unimportant by comparison with the 45,000 or so normal immigrants. They have occupied a place in the nation’s imagination, enflamed by the political rhetoric of Winston Peters, well beyond their numbers and social impact. That is why it is important always to make the distinction between asylum seekers and refugees, and between the latter and the immigrants who constitute the vast bulk of new Kiwis. Misled by the rhetoric of the anti-immigration lobby, many New Zealanders are tempted to view all lawful immigrants with the suspicion which might reasonably be directed towards a handful of asylum seekers – although the danger to the nation posed even by the latter is probably greatly exaggerated. Real terrorists are unlikely to advertise their presence by requesting asylum.

**FIRST AND SECOND GENERATION IMMIGRANTS**

A third important distinction we must make, along with those between regular immigrants and refugees, and between refugees and asylum seekers, is between first generation migrants – by which we mean those who were born overseas – and subsequent generations who were born in this country. (There is also an in-between category of those who were born elsewhere but came here with their parents as children. It is debatable whether they should be considered first or second generation Kiwis, but we do not have space here to explore this
issue. To keep the discussion manageable, therefore, it will focus just on the distinction between adults born overseas and their native-born offspring.)

The First Generation

First generation migrants inhabit a marginal social space between two worlds. Their personalities, values and attitudes were forged by different experiences and in different cultures from those of native-born New Zealanders. No matter how resolute they may be to fit into their host society, it is inevitable they will sometimes look back over their shoulders to the homeland, especially if they still have strong family ties back there. These ties may include the obligation to remit a significant amount of their income to the folks back home, and to subsidise the process of chain migration through which other family members join them in New Zealand. Obligations apart, some amongst the first generation may feel emotionally closer to their country of origin than of adoption. Nostalgic memory may be more real than the alien here-and-now.

The past is not always rose-tinted, though. On the contrary, some immigrants, particularly refugees, may bear deep psychic wounds from the experiences that drove them into exile. Jewish survivors of the Nazi holocaust, for example, may be haunted all their lives by their own or their families’ experiences in the death camps – nightmares aggravated in some cases by a sense of guilt that they are now safe while their loved ones have perished.

Some migrants, then, have nostalgic memories of the Old Country, remain in close contact with their communities back home and may dream of returning one day, while others have had such ties severed, are traumatised by the past and have no desire to return to the scene of former tragedies. Either way, though, for a certain number of first generation immigrants, during their early years at least, the country in which their personalities and world views were forged tend to loom larger in their imaginations than the actual landscape of the present.
Though physically resident in New Zealand, spiritually they remain expatriates, even exiles: strangers in a strange land.

**the language barrier**

Their tendency to feel isolated from their host community is compounded for those whose first language is not English by the difficulty they experience in communicating with **Anglophones** – that is, fluent English speakers. No matter how intelligent and mature they may be, they are reduced, at least in their first years here, to a state of frustrated infantilism, unable to understand much of what is being said, and even more unable to express themselves adequately. They risk appearing stupid or child-like, and they may indeed possess less linguistic fluency than an Anglophone child. Frustrated by the language barrier, they may retreat from the English-speaking world into small enclaves of fellow expatriates.

**cultural alienation**

Their sense of alienation is heightened if their religious beliefs, moral norms and customary behaviour depart markedly from accepted New Zealand standards. Practices like female circumcision, which at home were not only normal but mandatory, may be disapproved – even illegal – in their country of adoption. “Fitting in” means abandoning customs which have become second nature, and are underpinned by intensely held religious convictions. The alternative is to remain sealed in ethnic ghettos, where they can preserve their traditional identities but at the expense of remaining perpetual outsiders in their host country.

**isolation of immigrant women**

The situation is particularly difficult for first generation female immigrants, especially if they are from cultures where women are expected to stay at home while their menfolk sally out and deal with the external world. Women are often the “invisible immigrants”, segregated in a domestic ghetto while their husbands pick up at least sufficient English to cope in the work place. The men, for their part, may be content enough that their women are linguistically handicapped. It keeps them in their place – dependent on the male head of the household. The sense of social isolation in the present and exile from the
past may thus be experienced most intensely by first generation female immigrants.

Their unhappiness is compounded if their husbands’ imposition of patriarchal authority extends to beating them up. In some traditional cultures, wife-beating is the norm, one of the customary rights of the male head of household. Immigrant women discover that in New Zealand such an abusive right need not – should not – be tolerated. They may retreat from domestic violence to a women’s refuge, where they can forge new relationships across ethnic lines, but leaving their husbands, no matter how obnoxious the latter may be, can compound their sense of social estrangement.

Perhaps most poignantly of all, immigrant parents from non-Anglophone countries may become culturally estranged from their own children. They want their offspring to do well in their country of adoption, to acquire fluency in its language and customs, and to take advantage of its education system to get on in the world. They are proud when their children do well at school, and proud of their fluency in a language in which they themselves stumble. They may even insist that the children speak only English at home, thinking this the quickest and most effective way of ensuring they are accepted and assimilated by the outside world. The corollary, however, is that parents and children may become linguistically alien to one another. Quite literally, they don’t speak the same language. The sense of isolation already experienced by the mother deepens as she listens to her Kiwified kids turning into cultural strangers.

A qualification needs to be made about the preceding evocation of immigrants as “strangers in a strange land”, however. Our generalisations apply mainly to newcomers from non-British countries. Immigrants from Britain itself, like those who came in large numbers under the assisted passage scheme from 1947 to 1975, often experienced a certain amount of initial “culture shock”. Their new home
seemed English in many ways, yet in many others was subtly but significantly different. This culture shock was sufficient to cause some of them to turn tail and re-migrate back home. The large majority, however, found it easy enough to assimilate Kiwi ways and fit in, even if they never acquired the standard antipodean accent. Visits back to the increasingly over-crowded, polluted and socially fractious Motherland usually convinced them they had done the right thing in escaping.

Our poetic expression “strangers in a strange land”, therefore, does not fit this particular category of first generation immigrants. On the contrary, after a bit of adjustment they felt more at home Down Under than they had in Britain. It refers mainly to newcomers from other ethnic groups. As a rough rule of thumb, the wider the ethnic gap between immigrants’ home and host countries, the greater is the culture shock on arrival, and the harder it is to assimilate.

The Next Generation

Children from non-English ethnic backgrounds may also suffer from the rift between the language and customs of home and those of the host country, but in a different way from their immigrant parents. Technically speaking they are not immigrants at all, but native-born New Zealanders, identical in citizenship to all other Kiwis. Nevertheless, the second generation may not be entirely at ease with themselves and their social environment. Like their parents, they are marginal – but in a different way. They may experience this unease as a conflict of loyalties between their respect, love and affection for their parents on the one hand, their desire to be accepted by the mainstream community on the other. This acceptance by the outside world may not come easily: it has to be worked at. Though they speak with Kiwi accents and wear the same clothes as their peers, their skin colour and facial features mark them off as the Other. Childhood is a time when the drive for conformity to
the group norm is perhaps at its most intense. Kids who look
different may be singled out for ostracism, teasing or bullying.
Consequently, they may become ashamed of their physical
appearance, and equally ashamed of their parents’ ethos – the
food they eat, the way they talk, the rituals and festivals they
observe, the artifacts they have about the house. They are also
likely to rebel against the rigid authoritarianism of their
parents, unquestioned in traditional society back home but
anathema to postmodern Kiwi kids. They may therefore
experience profound ambivalence about their ethnic identities,
being simultaneously proud of their traditional culture and
embarrassed by it.

**resolving the identity dilemma**

The children of immigrants are thus likely to face a profound
dilemma generated by their dual identities. They don’t want to
be restricted by the traditional ways of their forebears, but are
not – and perhaps don’t want to be – totally assimilated into
the host society.

They cope with this in different ways. A minority reject the
new world and cling to the traditional culture of their parents.
Some go the other way, disowning their immigrant identity and
embracing mainstream culture with almost religious zeal.
Others again have a foot in both camps – Samoan, Chinese,
Somali, Jew, Moslem or whatever at home, Pakeha in public.
It is not always easy, though, to keep the two worlds apart – the
old conflict of loyalties always threatens to tear them apart.

**hybrid youth sub-cultures**

However, there is a fourth way of resolving the tension
generated by living simultaneously in two worlds. This is for
second generation immigrants to forge a hybrid sub-culture of
their own. It is different from both their parents’ traditions and
mainstream Pakeha culture, though incorporating elements of
both. It also throws into the melting pot large chunks of raw
material adapted from overseas cultures with which the young
generation feel a particular affinity. The most publicly visible
manifestation of such cross-pollination is the new PI identity
that has evolved in this country since Bob Marley gave an
influential concert at Western Springs in 1979, introducing Polynesian youth to reggae. Many young islanders and Maori re-branded themselves as South Pacific Rastafarians, combining elements of hip-hop with allusions to Pacific identity, as well as to the gritty urban realities of contemporary Auckland.

By the 21st century, being a Pacific Islander in Auckland meant something very different from what it had to the immigrant parents or even grandparents who made their cautious way here from the islands in the 1950s and 1960s. The latter looked back to the pre-modern world of their forebears; young Polynesians today celebrate a distinctive postmodern culture they have ad libbed for themselves, which owes more to a globalised “black” identity than to the customs of the ancestors.

The first generation’s traditional culture is also weakened by the increasing number of cross-ethnic sexual partnerships. As noted much earlier, each successive generation becomes more of an “ethnic cocktail”. If you have, let us say, Samoan, Niuean, Maori and Pakeha grandparents, you are less likely than someone of purely Samoan descent to identify with just one ethnic community. You tend, rather, to forge communal bonds with other products of ethnic cross-pollination, thereby increasing the size and solidarity of the new hybrid sub-culture you and they are improvising.

**SHORT-TERM VISITORS**

There are approximately four million people in this country who live here permanently. Of these, around 80% are New Zealanders by right of birth, while the remaining fifth were born overseas but have acquired the status, rights and responsibilities of New Zealand citizens, either through being officially accorded residency, or else through the more definitive step of renouncing their old identity and being
naturalised as New Zealand nationals. That’s by no means the end of the demographic story, however. At any given point in time there could be more than seven million rather than four million bodies knocking around New Zealand. Nobody knows the numbers for sure. It is well within the bounds of possibility that in the near future there could be more non-Kiwis than Kiwis in the country. Those extra millions are not strictly speaking immigrants, as they have not been accredited through official channels, and in all events don’t intend to stay here longer than a few weeks, months or years at most. They are simply guests or sojourners of one sort or another.

These birds of passage are a fairly recent phenomenon, who only started flocking here in significant numbers from the 1990s. Today, however, they make a major impact on our economy, culture, community life and the natural environment. They also forge new bridgeheads between this geographically isolated country and the global society with which its destiny is intertwined. They have become a significant feature on the New Zealand social map, and definitely require a few words in their own right.

Some of them are just out here to visit families or friends, but these apart there are three major categories of visitors – workers, tourists and students. Each benefits New Zealand by injecting cash into the economy and helping forge international bonds, but each also may have a negative impact on the host society. Local councils, service organisations and private entrepreneurs must weigh up the pros and cons of throwing out the Welcome mat to visitors. In the first and last instance, however, how many sojourners we take in is a matter of national policy for central government to formulate, since it is the government that issues entry visas, and also regulates the terms which overseas visitors must observe.

**Workers**

Nationals from other countries may find employment here for various lengths of time if they are granted temporary work
permits. Such migrant workers mainly come in one of two packages. On the one hand, New Zealand has reciprocal agreements with a number of countries through which young people may find temporary work in one another’s labour forces. On the other hand, work visas may be issued to foreigners to take up specific jobs, usually of a professional or technical nature, for which there are no suitably qualified or experienced New Zealand candidates. If temporary workers are perceived to be potential long-term assets to the economy, they will be encouraged to acquire permanent residency.

Quite apart from the social usefulness of the work they perform, temporary workers are probably on balance a fiscal asset (“fiscal” being the technical word for the raising and spending of public money). They pay their taxes like everyone else, but because they are young, fit and unencumbered by dependents, they do not put as much pressure on the state coffers as Kiwis generally. They are not in need of old age pensions, schooling for their children, disability services and so on. Depending on their status, they may even have to pay their own hospital expenses. On average, then, they are likely to put considerably more into the public purse than they receive from it.

Those who abide by the (sometimes rather complicated) official regulations are not an issue. Problems do arise, though, when visitors come to the country without work permits, then get jobs on the black market as it were. Ostensibly here as tourists, family members or students, they “seagull” for work, often accepting under-rate pay as they do so. From time to time, we read stories in the newspapers about gangs of fruit-pickers and the like who have been caught under-cutting the locals by illegally working without the requisite permits. This is done with the active connivance of the employers, who can pay them cheap rates and do not have to worry about things like ACC, holiday pay etc. Furthermore, this under-cover work force is very biddable because they are working illicitly and therefore dare not complain if they are exploited or abused. Such exploitation and abuse on occasions
extends to down-right slavery, sometimes of a sexual kind, in
the massage parlours and restaurants of our big cities, where
immigrants themselves may take ruthless advantage of their
fellows, including family members.

Another issue which crops up from time to time concerns
medical costs incurred by those on temporary visas, be they
family members, tourists, workers or students. The state picks
up the tab for New Zealanders and also for long-term
residents, but does it have the same responsibility for short-
term guests? This is a rather grey area, but in 2003 the
government took three steps which seemed to indicate it was
not prepared to be as open-handedly generous to visitors as it
had in the past.

First, overseas students were expected to take out health
insurance before they came to the country. Second, pregnant
foreign women could no longer expect to get free maternity
services at the expense of the New Zealand taxpayer. (It was
discovered some were coming for the express purpose of
having their babies here, partly to avoid the bills back home,
partly to obtain dual nationality for their children). Finally, the
government decided it could not afford to provide expensive
medical treatment, such as kidney dialysis, to desperately ill
patients from countries – notably the Pacific Islands – where
such services were not available. The latter decision was a
particularly poignant, even tragic one, since it virtually meant
condemning some overseas patients in our public hospitals to
death. It troubled the conscience of the nation generally and
medical specialists in particular that fiscal considerations had
to over-ride compassion.

We will now put complicating issues like black market labour
and medical costs to one side, and focus our attention on two
flocks of overseas geese which of recent years have begun to
unexpectedly lay golden eggs in this country – tourists and
students.
Tourists

Even as far back as the later 19th century, when sea travel from the northern to the southern hemisphere was a long and often dangerous business, New Zealand attracted a few tourists, out here to marvel at natural wonders like the pink-and-white terraces, and to be given an exotic frisson by Maori at Rotorua. For the best part of a century, landscape and commercialised Maori culture remained the mainstays of what little tourist industry we had. Tourism was something New Zealanders did overseas, not what they expected overseas people to want to do here. In fact, most non-New Zealanders would have been quite incapable of locating the country on the world map in the first place. Until the 1980s, tourism scarcely made a blip on the GDP radar that measures our economic performance.

At the end of the 20th century, the country underwent a transformation of which few inhabitants of these isolated islands could previously have dreamed. It was turned from a Timbuktu into a Mecca. Not only did far more people come, but they were from a much greater diversity of countries, including large contingents from Asia. They also came for a wider range of attractions. Maori and nature still topped the bill, but the former started developing tourist initiatives, like whale watching at Kaikoura, that went well outside the traditional orbit of hangi, waiata, haka and geysers at Rotorua. As for nature, tourists were given a much more action-packed, hands-on encounter with the landscape than merely contemplating its sublimity from a safe distance. They shot deer and pigs, fought trout and marlin, went snow and jet skiing, hiked, bungie jumped and white water rafted.

Even dimensions of national life New Zealanders had previously regarded as too boring, or else too inferior in quality to risk displaying, were turned into commercial assets. Farmers discovered that urbanised cosmopolitans would pay good money to come and stay on their farms, ride horses, feed lambs and generally immerse themselves in a bucolic life style. At the other extreme, tourists were encouraged to sample local
artistic culture – our ceramics, paintings, plays, literature, music and the like – about which many New Zealanders themselves were ignorant. They were taken on craft trails around Nelson, sculpture walks around Wellington, literary walks around Dunedin. The creation in the 1990s of Te Papa as a temple to national culture was a major drawing card, as was the annual Nelson Wearable Art competition and the biennial Wellington International Arts Festival.

**Kiwis get sophisticated**

All these activities were accompanied by libations of the up-market, prize-winning new wines New Zealand was producing. There was food to match the wine, too. From serving about the stodgiest meals in the world, the country’s proliferating restaurants began cooking food that excelled in the quality of both raw material and presentation. Service also smartened up its act. New Zealand waiters and waitresses used to be notorious for their churlish attitudes towards customers. By the 21st century they were learning to smile and be prompt. From being a very dowdy bird indeed back in the 1970s, the Kiwi discovered how to be chic. It set about transforming itself from a country cousin into a sophisticated cosmopolitan.

Tourists came in many shapes and forms, from backpackers in youth hostels to billionaires in luxury yachts. By 2003 there were well over two million of them annually, and the hospitality industry was the fourth biggest income earner in the country, pulling in around six billion dollars a year and accounting for one job in ten in the labour force.

**Kiwi initiatives**

A number of factors combined to turn New Zealand from a tourist backwater into a flood, some of which we could take the credit for, while others had more to do with the changing mood and tastes in wealthy overseas countries. In the former respect, the tourist industry, backed by government, launched an aggressive overseas marketing campaign. Local councils, businesspeople, iwi and private individuals got a lot more tourist savvy. New potentials were spotted, and the quality of goods and services was improved. Big one-off bonanzas like
the America’s Cup and the international success of the films The Lord of the Rings and The Whale Rider did a great deal to put the country on the international map. So, too, did our international PR campaign to brand New Zealand as Clean and Green in an increasingly environmentally conscious international climate. These and other factors, along with favourable word-of-mouth reports abroad, caused the world to “discover” New Zealand as an unspoilt natural playground.

**extraneous factors**

Just as importantly, perhaps, after terrorist attacks in New York and Bali, and consequent fears of further attacks in traditional holiday destinations, New Zealand was perceived as being one of the safest tourist destinations remaining on the globe. Justified or not (New Zealand has one of the highest crime rates in the developed world) people felt secure in coming to this country for a fun holiday, and its hospitality industry thrived accordingly. A British survey in 2003 revealed that New Zealand was that country’s most favoured tourist destination. The boom was also kicked-started by the low value of the NZ dollar during the 1990s. In competing for tourists with other destinations, we had a favourable exchange rate on our side.

**possible pitfalls for the tourist trade**

Most New Zealanders are aware of the economic benefits of tourism, as well as being mildly flattered that their country is apparently so attractive to others. Nobody is proposing to limit the flow. On the contrary, every effort is made to pull in ever more tourist geese to lay their golden eggs here. It is acknowledged, however, that a tourist bonanza also has its snags.

**9/11 & SARS**

One is that the hospitality industry is vulnerable to extraneous circumstances quite beyond its control. We saw that after 9-11 when airborne terrorist attacks made people too frightened to fly, as they were again in 2002 with the outbreak of the highly infectious and potentially deadly SARS epidemic. In the event, New Zealand’s tourist trade suffered less and recovered more quickly from both waves of panic than that of many other
countries, but the possibility remains that some future global crisis could again bring international travel to a near stop. So, too, could a disaster at home, like the bombing of Te Papa or the outbreak of foot-and-mouth or “mad cow” disease – the latter two devastated rural tourism in England in the 1990s.

**the pressure of numbers**

Such catastrophic eventualities apart, the very success of the local tourist industry in itself brings mixed blessings. All those bodies pouring into the country put immense strain on the natural and the built infrastructure. Water, sewerage and transport systems can’t keep up with the demands placed on them. Rubbish piles up and excreta contaminates the water. There are times of year when the Heaphy Track and Abel Tasman National Park resemble Auckland at rush hour. People flock here to enjoy our unspoilt natural wilderness, but their presence in large numbers spoils the very thing they came for.

It may also spoil things for native New Zealanders. They have to share their once solitary mountains, hiking tracks, fishing grounds and beaches with hordes of foreigners. The old relaxed, down-market life style has been largely supplanted by the new commercial bustle and hype. Once lazy, remote holiday spots are over-run in the tourist season by an international multitude. Furthermore, international travelers tend to spend money at a rate the locals cannot match. The cost of living soars in tourist Meccas like Queenstown, as do house prices. Local residents are pushed out by the ineluctable economic law of supply and demand. Even the local entrepreneurs who benefit during the peak of the tourist cycle are plunged into a corresponding trough during the off-season.

The upshot of such considerations is that while New Zealand Inc may collectively benefit from the tourist trade, specific individuals or groups may suffer. There may well be many Kiwis who look back nostalgically on the good old days when they had the place to themselves.


Export Education

Since the introduction of refrigerated shipping in the 1890s, New Zealand earned almost all its export income from selling three staple commodities – wool, meat and dairy products – to a mainly British market. From the 1970s, it diversified its production into things like timber, kiwifruit, wine and industrial electricity, and it also diversified its markets around the world, looking particularly to Asia. The basic fact remained, however, that until the 1990s the country relied for its livelihood on the exploitation of raw material from Papatuanuku – Mother Nature.

We have just seen how this heavy reliance on natural products was substantially augmented from the end of the 20th century by a new economic harvest from an unexpected source – international tourism. Around the same time, the country also realised it had been sitting all along on another massive economic asset it had never noticed, an asset, moreover, that was infinitely renewable and therefore inexhaustible. It was the English language itself. New Zealand had the good fortune to be an Anglophone country, and a reasonably secure one at that, at a time when – thanks to the growing global hegemony of the United States – the English tongue had become the dominant world language, particularly in the business domain. It became mandatory to teach English in some Asian schools. As well, Asian parents wanted their children to learn it from the horse’s mouth itself – that is, an Anglophone country.

New Zealand was not necessarily top favourite, but it had the attraction when the rush began in the 1990s of having a low-priced dollar and therefore being cheaper than rivals like the States, England and Australia. New Zealand suddenly discovered it had a new and valued commodity on its hands, and exploited it for all it was worth. Education was added to its list of key exports. We found we could make money out of culture as well as nature.
“Export education” came in a number of packages. For foreign students just wanting to learn English, custom-designed language schools sprang up, some individually, some in chains. Their mushrooming was highly visible in the big cities. Back in the 1980s, down-town Auckland and Wellington were glittering with mirror glass banks and other commercial buildings. Twenty years later these had largely vanished, replaced on Queen Street and Lambton Quay by language schools.

Many student customers wanted not just the language itself but wider qualifications from an English-speaking educational system. Older ones enrolled for degrees in tertiary institutions, particularly targeting business studies and information technology. Younger ones started further down the educational food chain in secondary or even primary schools. By 2002, it was estimated there were around 82,500 fee-paying international students in the New Zealand education system, up 50% on the previous year and generating a healthy cash flow for the country.

Selling education to foreigners had major economic advantages for teaching institutions, the local community and the nation generally. Cash-starved schools and universities came to rely on them for a significant proportion of their operating costs – overseas students had to pay full fees, whereas local ones were heavily subsidised by the government. Outside the orbit of the traditional classroom or lecture hall, a whole new language school industry came into existence, as did professional career opportunities for New Zealanders with qualifications in the teaching of ESOL (English for speakers of other languages). In fact, training the new breed of language teachers became an academic business in itself.

Those on the fringes of the gold rush also benefited commercially, notably private households offering home stay facilities. In university towns, business picked up for night
clubs, restaurants, taxi companies and others. A secondary wave of economic spin-offs was generated by parents coming out to visit their children. More intangibly and distantly, it was hoped that when members of the student diaspora returned home with warm memories of their sojourn in New Zealand, it would forge lucrative business links with our trading partners.

One large fly in the ointment, however, was that the memories just referred to were not always so warm. Some students returned home with the sense they had been badly treated. They felt they had been exploited as cash cows, but not given the pastoral care, the community support – or even the education – to which they were entitled.

It may well be that some universities, schools, language institutes, recruiting agents and families offering paid accommodation rushed into the export education business without adequate preparation, their greed outstripping their ability to provide competent services. Worrying stories began to mount up of foreign teenagers running wild, and young children being deposited in the country without adequate guardianship. Inevitably, word that their offspring were sometimes being economically exploited but not properly cared for spread amongst Asian parents and tarnished New Zealand’s image as a friendly host country.

The situation was aggravated when in 2003 a large chain of language schools collapsed, accompanied by media rumours of not just incompetence but fraud. It should be added, though, that sins of omission or commission were not the sole prerogative of greedy Kiwis: Asian entrepreneurs were also sometimes involved.

These internal matters apart, the export education industry, like tourism, is vulnerable to extraneous factors over which local entrepreneurs have no control. For instance, it was mentioned above that the language boom, like the tourist one, was kick-started by the favourable exchange rate of the Kiwi dollar. This changed at the start of the present century, when
its price rose considerably. New Zealand was no longer a cheap destination, and thus lost its competitive edge on rivals like Australia. At the same time, the SARS epidemic in China hit student numbers from that country badly. This was a problem for all potential host nations, but New Zealand made it worse for itself by over-reacting and placing an embargo for a while on the issuing of student visas.

**a rescue mission to China**

These factors – poor pastoral care, shonky business practices, the price of the kiwi dollar and our reaction to the SARS epidemic – combined in 2003 to cause a major drop in numbers from our major student market – China. The situation was sufficiently worrying to prompt Education Minister Trevor Mallard to visit China that year in an attempt to get the education business back on track. He needed to reassure his Chinese counterpart that in future New Zealand would do more to take care of the welfare of guest students, and to ensure they got the education for which they had paid.

**biting off more than they could chew**

Even without such problems, the export education industry could cause headaches for its most ardent apostles. New Zealand hosts – notably the universities – sometimes found they had bitten off more than they could chew. Excited by prospective fees, they threw themselves into recruitment drives for overseas students in areas like Business Studies without regard to the teaching resources in their institutions. Staff had to cope with very large classes of predominantly Asian students whose grasp of academic English was far from perfect. In at least one case, a university set the basic English requirement at an unrealistically low level with the express purpose of trumping its rivals. Lecturers had to conduct classes in slow, elementary English, and were perplexed as to how to grade assignments where they sometimes could only guess at the writers’ intentions. Anglophone students grew restless at being talked down to for the benefit of foreigners, while the latter felt they were not given enough assistance in their struggle to understand and express themselves in English. In their greed to harvest the golden eggs they had just
discovered, some educational entrepreneurs did not take the
time to lay down an adequate infrastructure, over-extended
themselves or failed to foresee the negative side effects of their
money-making projects. They thereby risked killing the geese
that laid the golden eggs.

Perhaps many of these matters were just teething troubles that
could be rectified with time. Prompted by the government, the
industry is maturing and becoming more responsible. Language
institutes have to pay into a fund in order to
indemnify students if a school collapses, and have an
agreement to provide tuition for those affected by such a
collapse. Government, for its part, has laid down a Code of
Practice to be followed by those providing institutional or
home stay services for foreign students, requiring they take
more responsibility for their pastoral care. Going even further,
from 2003 young overseas students were not allowed to enroll
for primary or intermediate schools unless they had a parent
living with them here, or else were in reputable boarding
schools. Universities became more realistic about the level of
English required for study at the tertiary level and raised their
entry requirements.

Through a combination of self-regulation and state regulations,
the export education business is bedding down into a regular
and respectable dimension of New Zealand’s economic
activity. Indeed, the presence of international students in our
educational institutions has already become a regular feature of
everyday life, some such institutions having come to rely on
them for their very viability. Money apart, the language game,
along with immigration and tourism, has injected a
cosmopolitan element into the national bloodstream virtually
inconceivable in the monocultural backwater of the mid-20th
century.
MIGRATION 2: EMIQUALION AND INTERNAL MIGRATION

EMIQUALION

Much earlier, we imagined the New Zealand population as a lake, being constantly filled by two rivers from one end, and drained by two at the other. We have now dealt with three of these – the two inflowing streams fed by birth and immigration, and the outflow caused by death through illness, accident or the ageing process. We will now introduce the other river that regularly drains the demographic lake. This is emigration – the steady flow of New Zealand citizens and residents out of the country. Like its opposite number immigration, emigration makes a significant impact on the changing size and composition of the population, and thereby on the state of the nation’s economy and community life. We will keep our discussion of it shorter than the foregoing one on immigration, however, as although it is an important subject, it can be summarised fairly quickly.

So far as we know, very few if any Maori left these shores before the arrival of the first Europeans. Things were different with all subsequent immigrants. Even Maori, once a convenient means of travel presented itself, developed wanderlust. As for the British and their Pakeha descendants, there were moments in history when more of them left the country than arrived or returned from overseas.

The flight from this Pacific Paradise began almost as soon as the first New Zealand Company immigrants landed. Conditions in colonies like Wellington and Nelson were far from as idyllic as they had been painted by the Company’s driving force Edward Gibbon Wakefield. The land promised to capitalists was often unavailable, unsuitable or its ownership contested by Maori, while the labouring classes had to scratch
to find remunerative work. Most stuck it out, but a significant minority turned tail and fled.

**flight from depression**

This outward-bound trickle became a flood during the 1880s, when there was a deep and extended depression. The previous decade had seen a South Seas boom (or possibly bubble) generated by Julius Vogel’s public works schemes to develop the country’s infrastructure. Encouraged by the apparent prosperity and the abundance of work, and spurred on by a vigorous recruiting campaign, British immigrants poured into the country in the 1870s. When the bubble burst, they were left stranded here without employment or apparent hope of any, so cut their losses and decanted themselves elsewhere. Then as now, this “elsewhere” in the first instance meant Australia, which is where the bulk of refugees from Paradise tend to end up.

**the brain drain**

Around 100 years later, there was a further major wave of departures in the wake of another depression – this time the one that was triggered by the oil shock of 1973. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, the country experienced a net migration loss of around 100,000 – that is, 100,000 more people left the country on a long-term basis than arrived or returned here. Jokes went round about the last person to leave turning out the light. Of particular concern was the fact that many emigrants had professional, technical or entrepreneurial skills the country badly needed to hold on to as it transformed itself from an industrial to a post-industrial society – that is, from one based on muscle power to one where the mind was at a premium. This brain drain continued through the 1990s, exacerbated by the heavy debts run up by New Zealand students after the introduction of a partial “user pays” principle in tertiary education, and by the lower pay and profits that could be earned here than in greener pastures like Australia, the US and Britain. It was this heavy drain on our human capital which caused the re-think of immigration policy in the mid-1980s discussed earlier. If skilled, brainy and resourceful Kiwis were flitting the nest in droves, Asian replacements had to be found.
The instances mentioned above are only dramatic examples of a much broader phenomenon. Every year, a larger or smaller contingent packs its bags and seeks its fortunes abroad. Many, of course, are just going off for “the big OE” (overseas experience) with every intention of coming back. A considerable proportion, however, find permanent work abroad, raise families there and return home only for occasional visits. They may remain Kiwis at heart, experiencing occasional twinges of nostalgia for an idealised childhood, but their destiny now lies with their new host country.

**lack of economic opportunities**

The main factor motivating such expatriates is economic. They can make more money abroad than they can at home. This, in turn, is linked to the comparative lack of occupational opportunities in this country. With only four million inhabitants, New Zealand has simply not been able to offer fulfilling career paths for people with a strong entrepreneurial drive or exceptional talents. The funding and facilities required by top scientists have not been available, the audiences are too meager for directors, actors and musicians, the markets too limited for businesspeople.

**the quest for international recognition**

There’s also the matter of “recognition”. A considerable number of highly gifted New Zealanders – opera singer Kiri Te Kanawa is only one instance amongst a myriad – who have “made it” on the world stage. Their light would have remained largely hidden under a bushel if they had been content to remain home bodies. Admittedly, this has changed over recent years: Peter Jackson has brought Hollywood to Wellington, for example, rather than migrating to California himself. The fact remains that for many particularly talented, ambitious or enterprising godwits, the local coop simply does not give them sufficient opportunity to spread their wings and soar.

**emigration is an economic barometer**

It’s not just a few high-fliers who have the urge to try out fresh fields and pastures new, however. People in all walks of life may feel cramped and frustrated by the limited opportunities on offer back home. This is particularly the case during times
of economic recession like the ones mentioned above. Emigration is a sensitive and accurate measure of the state of the nation’s economic climate. During good times, people stay at home and expatriates return. As we slide into an economic recession, the emigration barometer climbs proportionately. Without knowing the annual GDP and growth rate, one could devise a fairly accurate economic history of New Zealand by looking at the changing emigration rate alone. The higher that rate, the more depressed the economy. This is why there was jubilation in government circles in 2003, when it could be announced that there were fewer New Zealanders leaving the country on a long-term basis and more returning to it than there had been for a long time. It indicated that the country was in reasonably good shape – a great improvement on the brain drain of the last quarter of the 20th century.

**the social climate**

Economics is not the only force driving emigration, however. There is another factor which might be vaguely labeled “the social climate”. It can’t be measured, but there are certain moments in history when Kiwis feel good about their country, others when things turn sour. For instance, there was a short-lived honeymoon period when Prime Minister Norm Kirk came to power in 1972. Expatriate New Zealanders heard on the grapevine that something exciting was happening back home, notably a new non-aligned, anti-nuclear foreign policy, which they wanted to be part of. The weather changed abruptly just a few years later when Rob Muldoon became Prime Minister in 1975. While immensely popular in some quarters, in others he was blamed for generating an ugly mood in the country which may have fuelled the exodus that had already begun after the oil shock. We can never be sure precisely what motivates people to bail out of the country or to return from exile, but it is reasonable to surmise that the emotional as well as the economic climate may be involved. If people “feel good” about New Zealand, they will want to live here.

**emigrating immigrants**

It should be added that it is not just native-born Kiwis who
sometimes fly the coop. Almost entire immigrant communities may quietly slip away after sampling the New Zealand way of life. For instance, in the wake of the Vietnam war there was an influx of refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in the mid-1970s. By the 1990s, however, the tide had largely gone out again, drawn by the gravitational pull of big Australian cities like Melbourne.

It involved a process of reverse chain migration. Refugee families who had settled in smaller towns like Palmerston North were attracted by the larger community in Auckland. They, in turn, would hear from friends and relatives in Melbourne that there were better jobs on offer across the Tasman, and that the social climate was more congenial for ethnic enclaves. Once a certain critical mass had built up in Auckland, a large section of its Vietnamese and Cambodian communities re-migrated en masse. A similar if less conspicuous process occurred with New Zealand’s small community of orthodox Jews, who also responded to the magnetic pull of Melbourne. Again it was a matter of critical mass. The larger size of the Jewish community in Australia made it easier for members to observe their traditional religious customs, and also to find like-minded marriage partners, than in a country where there were comparatively few Jews, and even fewer who observed the orthodox faith.

**The Kiwi Diaspora**

As a nation, New Zealand came into existence as the by-product of overseas diasporas. They rippled into our little rock pool at the bottom of the world, and improvised a small human ecosystem of their own. Preoccupied with the problems of co-existence within our small local pool, we tend to be less aware that we ourselves have sent small ripples out into the great world ocean. We have our own Kiwi diaspora.

Ever since late colonial times, New Zealanders like physicist Ernest Rutherford, painter Frances Hodgkins and writer
Katherine Mansfield have opted for an expatriate life abroad. The writer Robin Hyde encapsulated the phenomenon in the title of her novel *The Godwits Fly*. Today, as much as a fifth of those born in this country live in self-imposed exile. Around 400,000 – including a significant number of Maori – live fairly close to home across the Tasman, but you will find them in all parts of the world, often doing the most amazing things.

**a national loss or asset?** Viewed one way, they are a great loss to their native land: their talent and drive would contribute immensely to both the economic and the cultural life back home. Viewed another way, they are major national assets, registering the existence of this rather obscure little country on international radar screens and fostering a positive image of it. This was not a priority back in the middle of the 20th century, when we were parochial in culture and protectionist in trade, but now that we accept we are an ineluctable part of the global village, the Kiwi diaspora can play a significant role in establishing bridgeheads between this country and the rest of the world by promoting trade, enhancing our humanitarian reputation, contributing to international sport, arts and scholarship – or just being decent, down-to-earth folk.

This diaspora will never impinge on world history like those from larger, more culturally distinct or militarily powerful places like China, central Europe or Britain, but in its modest way it adds a new Kiwi flavour to the global diet. By and large, New Zealand enjoys reasonably high standing in the eyes of the world. “Reputation” is an intangible but important quality. If New Zealand is thought well of abroad (to the extent it’s thought about at all) this is due in no small measure to an inadvertent export industry we have only recently begun to appreciate – the exporting of Kiwis themselves.

**INTERNAL MIGRATION: THE MAORI DIASPORA**

When we talk about “migration”, we usually have in mind people moving over borders from one nation to another, often
crossing long expanses of sea as they do so. It is important to remember that populations are constantly on the move within as well as across national boundaries. Such internal migration does not, of course, affect the overall size of a nation, but can have a major impact on two other key demographic variables we have been looking at in this study guide – composition and distribution.

New Zealanders have always been on the move within their own little rock pool. True, many cluster in local ecological niches from which they and their descendants seldom budge. This was particularly the case in settler times, when towns like New Plymouth, Wanganui, Wellington, Nelson and Christchurch were separate little colonies in their own right, cut off geographically from one another, their inhabitants risking “the New Zealand death” every time they traveled by water. Even today, there are family members who have lived in the same spot for generations, and who regard even fellow New Zealanders – not to mention immigrants – as outsiders. That said, there are also hordes of geographically mobile itinerants. Some pull up their roots in one place only to settle down permanently in another, but others are regularly on the move, pursuing employment or educational opportunities, questing for an idyllic life style, joining or getting away from families. We also like just looking around New Zealand. Earlier it was mentioned that overseas tourists generate mouth-watering billions for the local hospitality industry: more than half as much again, however, is spent by Kiwis on holiday in their own country.

Even the face of one city may be radically transformed as entire classes move their positions on the urban chess board. When Pacific Islanders first came to Auckland, for instance, they congregated in places like Ponsonby and Grey Lynn. Since the 1960s, however, these suburbs have undergone a process of “gentrification” – that is, they became fashionable haunts of the white middle classes. As prices went up, the local island population moved down-market to places like Glen Innes, Avondale, Otara and Mangere. A similar

*migration between city suburbs*
migration occurred from Wellington’s Newtown to Porirua.

**Maori on the Move**

The most dramatic and sociologically significant internal migrations, however, have occurred within the Maori world. Near the start of this study guide, a map was provided showing the home rohe (territories) of the major Maori tribes. While useful so far as they go, such maps can give a misleading impression of demographic stasis. They suggest that for each tribe there is one homeland, a homeland they have occupied from time immemorial, still inhabit today and presumably will continue to do so in the future.

Why this is misleading is because although each iwi and hapu does indeed have its own turangawaewae, Maori society – both traditional and modern – has also been extremely mobile. When Maori first arrived, they progressively fanned out across the country searching for food supplies, natural raw materials and ground for cultivation. Even when territorial boundaries between tribes became fixed, they were no guarantee of security and permanence. Hapu and iwi regularly acquired new land and resources through military conquest, the original inhabitants being driven into exile (perhaps to conquer someone else) if not massacred or enslaved. In fact, the institution of slavery – only abolished when New Zealand became part of the British Empire – was itself the agent of enforced internal migration, conquered peoples being forcefully removed to the rohe of the victors.

**pre-Treaty migrations** One of the reasons why Treaty negotiations are so complex today is that a number of territories are the subject of claims by different iwi or hapu, some citing right of prior occupation, others right of conquest. Perhaps the internal migration best known to Pakeha historians is that of the near-legendary Te Rauparaha (probably the creator of the famous haka “Ka Mate Ka Mate, Ka Ora Ka Ora”) and his redoubtable son-in-law Rangihaeata. In the 1820s, after military defeats at home, they led a loose federation including Ngati Toa, Ngati Tama, Ngati
Mutunga, Te Ati Awa and Ngati Raukawa down from the North Taranaki and Kawhia area to settle around both sides of Cook Strait. Te Rauparaha established his Ngati Toa headquarters on Kapiti Island, from which he dominated the musket trade with overseas vessels, his shadow falling not only along the nearby coast but reaching far down into the South Island. Te Ati Awa settled what is today Wellington, while Ngati Tama and Ngati Mutunga pushed the migration further south to the Chatham Islands. Since all these lands were already occupied by other tribes, such as Ngai Tahu, Ngati Ira and the Moriori, large numbers of local people were displaced, slaughtered or enslaved during the invasion from the north.

These demographic upheavals, which occurred during the 20 years that preceded the signing of the Treaty, have been mentioned as just one particularly memorable instance of a much more widespread demographic characteristic of Maori society in the old days. Though consolidated around tribal cores, the Maori world was and remains very fluid. A map of iwi and hapu distribution in 1840 would have looked very different to a similar map drawn up a couple of decades earlier. When the Crown tries to adjudicate today on who owns what, its task is complicated by the fact that historically several people have occupied a given patch of land, either successively or simultaneously. Furthermore, the same tribe may claim territory in different parts of the country, some on the basis of prior occupation, some through conquest.

Although the consequences of internal migration by Maori themselves could be traumatic, even tragic, for those whose territory was invaded, a much greater catastrophe overtook the whole Maori world after white settlers began arriving in large numbers from 1839. Displacement and exile from their homelands became the lot of successive generations across vast tracts of the country. From occupying its core, many Maori were driven to the fringes of what was once their own land.
This displacement of entire tribal populations happened in a variety of ways and went on for over a century. In some cases it was effected through the allegedly lawful purchase of enormous blocks of land – one alone encompassing the bulk of the South island. The legality of such purchases was often more apparent than real: in some cases the local owners never agreed to sell in the first place; in some cases chiefs handed over land without consulting all the hapu involved; in others their land was sold from under them by smart operators like Te Rauparaha from different tribes; in yet other cases they were grossly misled about how much land the foreigners were claiming. To compound matters, during the early years of contact Maori and British operated with totally different concepts of land ownership: Maori believed they were simply giving a group of white people the right to settle amongst them and make use of the land, not alienating it in perpetuity.

Even when the nature of the sale was fully understood and agreed upon, the terms of exchange were always extortionate, the price paid for land being far below its true market value in a capitalist economy. The root of the whole problem, though, was the imposition by the British newcomers of an alien legal system based upon the market economy just mentioned. Under customary Maori law, land was owned collectively by a tribal group, and individual members of the community could not unilaterally extinguish their title to a portion of tribal territory. Under the new British law, title to land was individualised, and any member of the tribe could sell off a particular block. Personal greed was institutionalised over and against collective interests, an innovation which caused considerable acrimony within tribes, and entangled them for generations in Land Court litigation.

Most devastatingly of all, the privatisation of tribal land triggered a major civil war in this country which began in 1860 with a dispute over the Waitara block in northern Taranaki, and didn’t really end till the arrest of Te Whiti and Tohu and the destruction of their headquarters at Parihaka in 1881.
In the course of the New Zealand wars, the process of displacement accelerated. Legal land purchase (no matter how fraudulent or extortionate) gave way to outright confiscation in places like Taranaki, Waikato, Bay of Plenty and the East Coast. Many Maori were driven into exile, or at most allowed to exist on the fringe of the land which had once been theirs. Even when they remained the nominal owners, they were sometimes obliged to lease out their land at a purely token price to white farmers. Some tribes who had remained neutral, or even collaborated with the settlers, were victims of these confiscations, as it was the wealth locked up in their lands in which politicians, speculators and settlers were interested, not niceties of British justice.

**further land alienation**

Land alienation and the enforced Maori diaspora it engendered did not end with military conquest and confiscations. It continued, although under a legal guise, right up to the end of the 1960s. On the one hand, settler governments wanting to open up regions of the country for small farmers invented the rule that any land other than that which Maori actually lived on, cultivated or contained wahi tapu (sacred places) was “waste land” and therefore belonged to the Crown. On the other, particularly in wartime, Pakeha governments granted themselves the right to seize Maori land for public works such as the construction of military air bases. Even if the confiscated property was never actually used for the stated purpose, it seldom went back to its Maori owners, and even then only after protracted disputes.

**internal refugees**

The upshot of all this is that for over a hundred years, many Maori people lived as de facto refugees in their own land. While New Zealand opened its frontiers to displaced persons from many trouble spots around the world, until the mid-1980s it paid little serious attention to indigenous exiles within its own border, and even then attempts to resolve the land issue were prompted more by vigorous Maori protest action than by a proactive desire on the part of government to rectify past wrongs.
The Great Urban Migration

Although they were catastrophic for those they affected, and although they have come back to haunt the heirs of the governments responsible, the land purchases, confiscations and requisitioning discussed above were probably less sociologically significant in the long term than a truly epochal Maori diaspora that occurred in the two decades or so after World War II. It was so widespread, and its impact so great on national life – both Maori and non-Maori – the phenomenon deserves having caps: The Great Urban Migration.

Starting as a ripple during the war but become a flood in the 1960s, Maori people – particularly the young ones – left their rural turangawaewae to pour into the major cities. Today, the overwhelming majority of Maori people are urbanites born and bred just like their non-Maori counterparts.

*economic causes*

The new urban diaspora was caused by a combination of factors, but the main driving force was economic. Back home, there had been something of a population explosion in the Maori world. There were too many bodies around to be supported by the severely depleted amount of farm land still in the hands of hapu and iwi. In all events, modern farming no longer actually required a large labour force. Life on the land, for Maori as for Pakeha before them, was not a realistic economic option for most young people. The post-war cities, on the other hand, were hungry for manual workers to operate their burgeoning industrial plant – freezing works, canning factories, car assembly lines, construction sites and so on. Up to the 1970s, there were more than enough urban jobs to go around, and good money to be made. Tertiary educational opportunities in universities, polytechs and Teachers’ Training Colleges were also on offer for those seeking professional careers. The cities thus offered tempting wages to those content to remain in the working class, and career possibilities for the upward mobile.
There was a rather more frivolous driving force at work as well. In all times and countries, the heady life style of the big city has acted as a magnet to young people from the rural backblocks. There are pleasures and attractions seductively on offer amongst the bright city lights that are yawningly absent back home. Just as importantly, there is the liberty to wallow in the fleshpots away from the watchful eyes of elders and the tittle-tattle tongues of neighbours. Whatever the merits of small rural communities, they can be claustrophobic for the young, especially when they have learned about the kicks they can get in the Big Smoke. Serious things like employment and education apart, the urban migration was driven to no small extent by Maori youth wanting to swap the monotony of the marae for a good time in the city.

**Traditionalism and Modernity**

Mass exodus from the country to the town was not a uniquely Maori phenomenon. On the contrary, it was a defining feature of one of the most significant historical transformations the human species has ever imposed upon itself – the transition from traditionalism to modernism. This transition cannot be dated exactly, as it took place over several centuries, but for convenience we can say that the turning-point was the 18th century.

“Modernism” is one of those vast terms that encompasses just about everything in human affairs from technology through politics and warfare to the arts, but for the moment we will consider it only in its demographic aspect. In Europe between the 18th and 20th centuries, two epoch-making demographic events occurred: a population explosion and the depopulation of the countryside. On the one hand, there were too many people for the land to support, agricultural science made human labour largely redundant, and they were driven off the land by a new breed of capitalist farmers. On the other hand, the new urban factories of the industrial revolution offered paid employment which, while exploitative, was still much
better than what could be scratched out of the earth. Money apart, the brash new cities provided pleasures for hedonists, excitement for the adventurous, learning for the intellectually curious and social advancement for the ambitious far beyond anything stagnant rural backwaters had to offer.

**Tonies: Community vs. Society**

Whether through necessity or free choice, millions migrated to the city. From the vast majority of the human species being country-dwellers, the vast majority became denizens of Metropolis. The transformation was so massive, its historical consequences so momentous, it gave birth to a whole new academic discipline to study it – a discipline called Sociology.

One of this new discipline’s most influential founding fathers, the sociologist Ferdinand Tonnis, devoted his major work *Community and Society* to the new form of society that had come into existence in the wake of the exodus from the countryside. It was an elegiac work, mourning the passing away of the old world. Tonnis looked back with nostalgia on what humanity was losing – the bond with the earth, the ancestral customs and religious ties that united communities, the continuity of past and present, the social hierarchies through which social identities and roles were allocated. He tended to romanticise the warm, emotional bonds of “Community”, as opposed to the cold, impersonal interactions characteristic of new urban “Society”.

**Marx & Durkheim: alienation & anomie**

By contrast, other founding fathers of Sociology, such as Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim, accepted and even celebrated the new form of society, which Marx contrasted favourably with the “rural idiocy” of peasant life. Even they, however, devoted much of their writing to the evils of the modern world. These were encapsulated in Marx’s term “alienation” – a state in which people are divorced from their true humanity and subjected to the domination of degrading and hostile economic and political institutions. For Durkheim, the main culprit was “anomie”, a psychological condition where traditional restraints on human appetites are removed, people have no
clear moral directives, their desires rage unchecked and they become dangerous to themselves and others.

Whatever the evils and the benefits of modernity, the early sociologists agreed that humanity had crossed a major watershed somewhere over the last two centuries or so, and that one of the major causes for this was the rural diaspora. If the mass exodus from the countryside in Europe was thus one of the major catalysts for the creation of a new human science called Sociology, then clearly New Zealand sociologists today must take a similar exodus by Maori very seriously.

The shortened time frame

There is one major difference between the Maori urban migration and the earlier European one. The latter took place slowly over many generations: although it was massively disruptive, people had several centuries in which to adjust. The Maori counterpart occurred within one generation, and was packed into two or three decades, not centuries. It was accordingly far more socially and psychologically traumatic, both for those who migrated to the cities and those left at home. Maori people are still adjusting to the magnitude and speed of the transition.

Colonisation or modernisation?

The preceding digression into the historical transition from traditionalism to modernity was introduced in order to raise an important question about the nature of the problems that beset Maori people today. There is no definitive answer to this question, but it must be asked because it touches on issues which polarise Maori communities and their leaders. This polarisation is generated by opposed interpretations of what it means to be Maori in the contemporary world, and what forms of action should be taken to improve the disadvantaged situation of the tangata whenua.

The crux of the matter is whether Maori disadvantage has been caused by white colonisation or by the more general historical process of modernisation. If colonisation is the culprit, it has
to be rejected. Modernity on the other hand is inescapable, and therefore must be accepted and worked through.

**the argument for modernisation**

Even if Aotearoa had never been colonised, Maori people would still have had to come to terms with the advent of modernity, and with the capitalist economy, urban way of life, advanced technology, consumer luxuries, mass media, democratic institutions, weakening of kinship bonds and questioning of traditional beliefs and values that modernity brings in its wake. In the New Zealand case the advent of modernity was inextricably associated with colonialism and the subsequent hegemony of white people over brown, but Pakeha or no Pakeha, the tangata whenua would sooner or later have had to cross the great historical watershed from the traditional rural community to modern urban society.

**mixed blessings of modernisation**

So far, modernisation has been a mixed blessing for Maori people. They have perhaps experienced both its advantages and disadvantages more intensely than their European counterparts. If they are still in a transition period between the old and the new worlds, it may be premature to draw up a balance sheet weighing credits and debits: The long-term impact of modernisation on Maori may not be clear until the new pattern has settled into place over the coming century. An interim audit, however, shows that the plus and minus sides of the ledger are both packed. Whether the overall balance is positive or negative depends largely upon which sectors of Maori society one is looking at, and on what comparisons are being made.

**benefits of modernisation**

On the plus side, the urban migration has brought Maoridom closer to the national average in terms of income, health and education. There is a romantic notion that life in the rural backblocks is happier and healthier than in the big, bad city. In cold statistical reality, rusticity is not always as idyllic as it is made out to be. The move to the city has increased Maori life expectancy, raised incomes, provided more amenities and improved educational outcomes, as well as opening up career possibilities and offering a more diverse and interesting life
style. These benefits have accrued particularly to a newly emergent Maori middle class of professionals, managers, technicians, artists and business entrepreneurs. In comparison both with their parents’ generation and with the Pakeha norm, such people have on balance benefited from the urban migration.

_The downside_

On the debit side of the ledger, there are many city Maori who have experienced the downside of modernisation without its accompanying benefits. When times were good during the early years of the urban migration they took up manual working class jobs, but the supply of these dried up as a result of the recession that began in 1973, the neo-liberal restructuring of the economy after 1984, and the subsequent transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy – that is, to one where educational qualifications were at a premium rather than muscle power. A large section of the newly urbanised Maori population was left stranded down the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. Due partly to external circumstances and partly to their own attitudes, they became a city “under class”, characterised by greater family dysfunctionality, a higher crime rate, and poorer health, housing and educational attainments than the national average.

_Maori alienation & anomie_

Their condition could aptly be summed up in Marx’s term “alienation” and Durkheim’s “anomie”. They lived in an alien middle class world, estranged from both mainstream Pakeha society and their traditional tribal roots. No longer restrained by the customary authority of the old kin-based community, some slid into a condition of anarchic anomie, manifest amongst other things in excessive consumption of alcohol and drugs, in resentment of their more successful fellow citizens, and in emotional and physical violence often directed towards members of their own families.

_Class not ethnicity_

In drawing up this depressing litany, however, it must be stressed it is not a uniquely “Maori” phenomenon. On the contrary, to describe the negative aspects of modern Maori life
is to describe the condition of the alienated under-classes in all societies of no matter what ethnicity. The root of the problem lies in the class structure, not ethnicity as such. It was compounded by colonisation in settler societies such as New Zealand, but arguably the causes of urban pathology lie in modernisation, not white imperialism. The cure, therefore, lies not in attacking an outside racial enemy, but in addressing dysfunctional attitudes within the Maori world itself – attitudes that expose many within it to the ills of modernism while being unable to participate in its benefits.

There are many Maori, however, who would strongly disagree with the assertion that the main issue confronting Maori in the 21st century is modernisation, not colonialism. In fact, the Maori world today has a major fault line running through the middle. On the one side are urban Maori and their spokespeople like the Labour politician John Tamihere, on the other are iwi traditionalists and their tribal representatives such as Ngai Tahu’s Sir Tipene O’Regan.

The former are largely “de-tribalised”. The city, not the marae, has been their home for generations, they are often the product of partnerships with non-Maori, they may not know their whakapapa, the customs of their ancestors nor the Maori language. They still possess Maori identity, but it is a new, more amorphous way of “being Maori”, born and bred in the city. For them, the major issue is how to survive and flourish in the modern urban environment. This requires breaking out of the poverty trap, shaking off welfare dependency, eradicating destructive behaviour patterns, acquiring an education relevant to a post-industrial economy, getting meaningful careers and so on.

On the other side of the divide are “iwi fundamentalists”. For them, “being Maori” requires allegiance to the traditional community, fluency in Maori, the struggle to regain lost land and customary rights, knowledge of whakapapa and the like. The main problems facing Maori, from this perspective, are not
generated by the class structure and the urban migration but by British imperialism and the consequent dispossession of the tangata whenua. The top priority, therefore, is to reassert tribal sovereignty – the “tino rangatiratanga” enshrined in the second article of the Treaty of Waitangi. Matters like education, employment, health and the elimination of family abuse are, of course, very important, but they are to be tackled within a collective iwi framework. Maori destiny is to be determined by an on-going struggle between traditional tribal entities and the Crown through which ancestral mana is to be reasserted and ancestral territories regained.

Debate between the leaders of these two camps is frequent, intense and sometimes acrimonious. One side has its roots planted deep in local soil, the other is street-wise and metropolitan. Both claim to be spokespeople for “real” Maori, but the realities to which they appeal are very different. Urban leaders have numbers on their side, iwi traditionalists have whakapapa. It is a re-run, in Polynesian guise, of the great debate between Community and Society which preoccupied early sociologists, and is no less preoccupying to those studying New Zealand sociology today.
CONCLUSION

At the very start of this study guide, a check list was provided of the various steps sociologists take as they translate dry demographic tables into living social realities. Let’s quickly remind ourselves of these:

- Identify the key demographic variables in the field you are studying
- Learn the statistical facts about each such variable
- Spot significant differences or changes in the figures
- Trace causal links between demographic processes on the one hand, demographic characteristics on the other
- Discover the social causes of the demographic phenomenon being studied
- Explain the social consequences of this demographic phenomenon
- Explore the issues to which all the above give rise.

By way of concluding and summarising this study guide, let’s briefly apply these principles to the case of internal Maori migration we have just been discussing.

- The major demographic characteristic we are studying is its distribution. Where do Maori people live?
- The facts of the matter are that the large majority of Maori people live in cities, not their rural tribal heartlands, and they tend to cluster in low socio-economic areas.
- The change that concerns us is the great urban migration that occurred after World War II.
- The explanatory demographic factor we use to explain this move is, of course, internal migration.
- The main social cause of this migration was economic. Because their numbers were increasing and they had lost most of their land through sale or confiscation, Maori people could no longer support themselves on natural resources. They went to the cities to look for employment.
A subsidiary explanation can be found in the domains of community and culture: Maori were attracted by the modern urban life style.

- The social **consequences** for Maori in particular and the nation generally range right across the social map:

**Economically** some made good careers for themselves, while others were locked into an urban poverty trap.

**Politically**, some supported the Labour Party in the hope of improved social conditions, while others promoted various parties pushing for Maori sovereignty.

In terms of **health and welfare**, the overall wellbeing of Maori people improved, as measured by longevity, but they were still over-represented amongst those suffering from diseases generated by both poverty and over-indulgence, as well as experiencing a higher rate of traumatic injury. They were also considerably more dependent on state welfare benefits than were Pakeha.

In the domain of **community**, the fabric of traditional hapu and iwi life unraveled, the mana of elders declined and extended families dissolved. In their place, urban Maori forged new “families” for themselves, through organisations like city marae and urban authorities, kohanga reo, health and welfare collectives, gangs, sports teams and performance groups.

**Culturally**, there was a serious erosion of the Maori language, knowledge of whakapapa and traditional Maori culture generally. Young Maori often opted instead for local variations on international “black” culture, much stemming in the first instance from Jamaica. Hip-hop iconography replaced that of the meeting house. However, from the “Maori Renaissance” of the 1970s, there was a growing resurgence of interest both in traditional Maori culture and in exploring contemporary artistic forms through which new ways of “being Maori”, at once local and global, traditional and postmodern, could be expressed.
• Of the **controversial issues** that beset relations between Maori and non-Maori, as well as dividing the Maori world internally, probably the two most important are claims to tino rangatiratanga on the one hand, and on the other the poverty trap in which many Maori people are caught. Maori leaders are divided between those fighting the legacy of colonisation and those addressing contemporary economic and social problems.

**LEARNING HOW TO THINK SOCIOLOGICALLY**

That, of course, is a vastly over-simplified summary of what in reality are extremely complex social and psychological processes. The intention was not to do full justice to these complexities, but rather to demonstrate the sociological usefulness of the analytical framework provided in this study guide. We can employ it in exactly the same way to describe and explain all other demographic phenomena that have been mentioned in the course of our discussion, be these the declining birth rate, the structural ageing of the population, changes in immigration policies, the mushrooming growth of Auckland, the ethnic composition of the nation and even its overall size.

The intention of the study guide, then, was partly to provide you with some basic facts, but more importantly to show you how to think about those facts from a sociological point of view. Once we train ourselves to identify key issues and to trace intertwining lines of cause and effect right across the whole face of the social map, dense and bewildering tables of statistics can be coaxed into revealing their human significance. This is important both for our own personal understanding and for the policy makers who must resolve contemporary issues if social life in these little islands is to be bearable.
FURTHER READING


http://socialreport.msd.govt.nz

http://www.med.govt.nz/irdev/econ_dev/population/
This website contains the document Population and Sustainable Development 2003.

http://www.stats.govt.nz
This website is the gateway to a vast array of demographic statistics generated by Statistics NZ.