

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report presents a picture of the quality of life in the six largest cities of New Zealand. The Councils of these cities - Auckland, Christchurch, Manukau, North Shore, Waitakere and Wellington - are concerned about the impacts of growth and urbanisation and the effects of this on the wellbeing of citizens. All are committed to ensuring their cities remain vibrant urban centres where citizens experience a high quality of life.

This project began in 1999 with an objective of establishing indicators of social wellbeing in these cities - which accommodate around 40% of New Zealand's population. The project soon grew to include economic and environmental indicators to enable monitoring of whole quality of life. The second part of the project was to use these indicators to assess trends and changes and highlight common themes relevant to an urban environment. These are recorded in this report.

The next step is to work in partnership with others to address matters raised in this report and to continue the monitoring programme.

OVERVIEW OF ISSUES AND INDICATORS

The process of identifying issues and indicators, collecting data, analysing, and report writing has taken almost two years. The work has been carried out with the technical assistance of a broad range of people and their organisations - to these people, a grateful thanks.

The work resulted in monitoring demographic changes, housing, community safety and health, educational levels, employment and the economy, the urban environment, community cohesion and matters around democracy. The report layout shows a chapter on each of these nine issues and the indicators used for monitoring and analysing each issue. The findings and key points are also included and are summarised below.

OVERVIEW OF KEY RESULTS

There are vast differences in the socio-demographic makeup across the six cities, but all share the common factor of being large urbanised areas, with inherent impacts on physical and social infrastructure. Furthermore, it is estimated that the four cities of Auckland will account for more than half of the projected population growth of New Zealand over the next 20 years. Some socio-demographic characteristics of the six cities include ethnic diversity and growing migrant populations, increasing income inequality and an increasing number of children living in low-income families, with Maori, Pacific Islands and Asian children over-represented in comparison to their proportion within the general population.

Most of New Zealand's high income earners live in the six cities but so do most of the low income earners. This latter group is most affected by the accommodation costs of city living where there are high house prices, rent and mortgage costs (particularly in Auckland, North Shore and Wellington Cities). These factors influence home ownership rates and the makeup of communities. Housing costs are also a factor impacting on the number of people living in each house. In fact 1.4% of urban households could be considered crowded compared with 0.9% of rural households.

Crowded households are considered a primary factor in the incidence of disease and in 1999, for example, over half of New Zealand's tuberculosis cases were found in our largest cities. Addressing the underlying determinants of health (such as housing) is a priority given their impact on health status and quality of life for citizens. The impact of these determinants, along with behaviours such as smoking, alcohol and drug use and level of exercise (the latter is lower in young city dwellers), impacts on longevity and mental health. There is a strong correlation between socio-economic status and health, particularly among Maori and Pacific Islands populations who experience relatively poor health outcomes.

The underlying socio-economic status of communities is also reflected in big differences between educational outcomes in the six cities where one third of children attend schools with a low decile ranking. However, participation rates in education pre and post school are generally healthy. The highest qualification gained in the six cities is also showing some improvement but the percentage of the total population with no qualifications is still significant, as is the percentage of school leavers with no qualifications. An encouraging statistic is the falling levels of school leavers without qualifications in Manukau and Waitakere Cities, which otherwise tend to show poorer levels of participation and achievement in education.

This lack of qualifications impacts on employment levels and therefore productivity and economic growth in the six cities. In 1999, the Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury Regions that include the six cities accounted for 60% of New Zealand's economy and around 41% of the national workforce. Local economies are affected by factors such as the international environment, domestic factors, the regulatory environment and infrastructure issues. However, education and training, to ensure labour force skills match employer needs, are essential for a healthy local economy.

While the urban economies and the populations are growing, so are concerns about safety in some cities. Citizens' perception of safety in the six largest cities indicates that people feel safer during the day than at night. Burglary and traffic fatalities are dropping, and road traffic fatalities and rates of unintentional injuries to children are considerably lower in the six largest cities than in the rest of New Zealand.

Traffic fatalities can be further reduced by changing transport habits, particularly in Manukau, North Shore and Waitakere Cities. Here, citizen surveys revealed that over half of respondents never used public transport, generally preferring car based travel. Perceptions of public transport are more favourable in Wellington and Christchurch than in the Auckland Region. The high use of the motor vehicle is also a key contributor to air and water pollution and high noise levels in the cities. This affects citizens' perception about their area.

Over half of the citizens of the six largest cities are generally comfortable with the community in which they live. They are satisfied with the look and feel of their city, they perceive that their community works together, and that people support each other. Perceptions of community support were strongest in Manukau and Wellington Cities, with all cities having some positive perceptions that people from different cultures and lifestyles made their city a better place. One concern is the lower level of volunteerism in the six cities compared to the rest of New Zealand.

All Councils have structures and processes in place to work with tangata whenua. The diversity of cultures and lifestyles in the six cities would ideally be evident in local governance structures. However, representation is influenced by voter turnout, which is lower in New Zealand's six largest cities compared to the rest of New Zealand. Europeans appear to be over-represented on school boards of trustees in relation to the ethnic population of their area. Pacific Islands and Maori people are reasonably well represented in Auckland and Manukau Cities, but under-represented in all other cities. While there are no hard statistics available on the composition of local councils and community boards, the pattern appears similar to school boards.

DATA ISSUES

In monitoring conditions for this report, it became clear that there were many issues around data availability and collection that could not be resolved, at least at the time of writing. These include the lack of comparable data over consecutive years, inconsistency of data, and data not being available at the six city level nor in many cases, at a ward level (except for 1996 Census data). For some indicators, the cost of the data put it beyond the scope of the current project's budget. These factors influenced the selection of the final set of indicators and therefore the issues reported in this document.

CONCLUSIONS

This project has provided valuable experience in the use of indicators, building relationships with others managing similar projects, analysis of statistics and working together as Councils. Planning is now underway to update this report in around two years (perhaps in collaboration with Central Government). The next steps include working with Central Government on some of the issues raised in this report. In particular, on the matters of:

- population growth and poverty pockets in the Auckland Region
- unemployment
- crowded households and housing affordability and quality
- immigrant and refugee health, and the underlying determinants of health
- school leavers with no qualifications
- recreation for youth
- risk to children and youth
- public transport issues and air, water, noise and graffiti pollution
- support for volunteers and community organisations
- willingness to stand for election by non-European citizens and voter turnout at elections
- indicator selection, data collection, perception surveys and outcome measurement.

Measuring quality of life should become a regular exercise contributing to the development of more effective partnerships. It is a key tool for looking at the effects of the work of the public sector in the effort to enhance the quality of life in New Zealand.

Thank you to those who have provided time, energy, experience and thinking to this report.

Key Results

This chapter provides a list of the key results of monitoring against the indicators recorded in the previous chapter. A more detailed analysis is provided in the chapters following this.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Around thirty nine percent of New Zealand's population live in New Zealand's six largest cities. Population growth in the major metropolitan areas (especially the Auckland Region) continues to be higher than in the rest of New Zealand. This has significant implications for the planning and provision of both local and central government services.
- One quarter (26.8%) of Maori and three quarters (73.7%) of Pacific Islands people live in New Zealand's six largest cities.
- Ethnic diversity is more pronounced in New Zealand's six largest cities than elsewhere in the country. New immigrants are more likely to settle in the six largest cities than in the rest of New Zealand. In addition, just over half of the nation's speakers of more than one language live in the six largest cities.
- There are higher proportions of people aged 20 to 44 years living in the six largest cities than in the rest of New Zealand.
- There are proportionately more high income earners living in the six largest cities than in the rest of New Zealand. However, there are also higher proportions of those earning less than \$20,000 per annum in the six largest cities than the rest of the country.
- Population ageing is occurring in New Zealand's six largest cities but at a slower rate than the rest of New Zealand. This is due to the younger age structures of Pacific Islands, Maori and Asian population groups who make up a significant proportion of large urban city populations.

HOUSING

- Although home ownership remains the dominant form of tenure in the six largest cities, it is declining - a pattern also seen in the rest of New Zealand. Home ownership rates are lowest in Auckland and Wellington Cities, where median house prices are the most expensive.
- In June 2000, median weekly rents in the six largest cities varied from \$173 in Christchurch to \$257 in North Shore City compared with a median of \$178 nationally. Rents tend to be more expensive in the Auckland Region.
- The six largest cities have seen an emergence of higher density housing developments (such as apartment and terraced housing developments and townhouses) over the last decade in response to a number of trends, including population growth and changing household formation and composition patterns. Auckland and Wellington Cities have seen higher levels of higher density housing development than the other large cities. In the year to June 2000, 65.3% of all new dwellings in Auckland City and 56.1% in Wellington City were higher density units, compared to 12.7% in Manukau City.
- With the exception of Christchurch and North Shore Cities, there are higher proportions of people living in crowded households in the six largest cities than in the rest of New Zealand. Manukau City in particular has a relatively high proportion of people living in crowded households (10.4% in 1996).

HEALTH

- With the exception of Manukau City, infant mortality rates in New Zealand's six largest cities were lower than that found in the rest of New Zealand. Aligning with national trends infant mortality rates in the six cities are higher among Maori and Pacific Islands groups than other ethnic groups.
- Meningococcal disease in children is more prominent in the Auckland Region at 24 cases per 100,000 children under 15 years, compared to 15 cases per 100,000 children under 15 years nationally. With the exception of Wellington City, notified case rates for children under fifteen were highest among Pacific Islands children (in Wellington City rates were highest among Maori children).

- In 1999, 58% of New Zealand's tuberculosis (TB) cases were found in New Zealand's six largest cities. Rates were highest within the 'Other' ethnic group, which may reflect immigrants and refugees arriving from countries where TB is prevalent.
- For the period 1993 to 1997, the numbers of suicides in New Zealand's six largest cities were highest in the 25 to 39 year age group. The exception to this was Manukau City which had slightly more suicides in the 15 to 24 year age group.
- Hillary Commission Push Play Research undertaken in 1999 indicated that young people living in New Zealand's six largest cities are less active than their counterparts living elsewhere in New Zealand.

EDUCATION

- With the exception of Manukau and Waitakere Cities, participation rates in early childhood education are comparable to, or higher than, rates for the rest of the under 5 years population in New Zealand.
- A third (35%) of children in New Zealand's six largest cities attend schools with a decile ranking of 1 to 4 (lower rankings). However, in Manukau and Waitakere Cities around 60% of children attend schools in the lower decile categories.
- School stand-downs and suspension rates across all six cities appear to be broadly comparable. Rates of suspensions among Maori and Pacific Islands young people are higher than for other ethnic groups.
- The average number of people in New Zealand's six largest cities without a qualification (20.6%) is considerably lower than the average for the rest of New Zealand (27.1%).
- With the exception of Manukau and Waitakere Cities, the rate of school leavers in the largest cities leaving school with no qualifications is lower than for New Zealand as a whole. In many cases, Maori and Pacific Islands young people are over represented among those leaving without qualifications.
- The percentage of adults participating in community education is higher in New Zealand's six largest cities than for the rest of New Zealand. Generally speaking, females are more likely than males to participate in community education courses.

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMY

- In 1999, the Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury Regions that include the six largest cities accounted for 60% of New Zealand's economy and around 41% of the national workforce.
- From 1995 to 1999 (with the exception of Christchurch City), workforce numbers in New Zealand's six largest cities increased at a higher rate than the national average.
- In 1996, the proportion of labour force within each city who were employed in skilled, technical and professional occupations ranged from 34.2% in Manukau City to 58.1% in Wellington City. These are higher proportions than for the rest of New Zealand (33%).
- From 1996 to 1999, unemployment rates rose for New Zealand as a whole, from 6.9% to 7.5%. However, in March 2000 the rate had dropped back to 6.7%, reflecting a stronger economy. Throughout the period the Auckland Region has had lower unemployment than New Zealand as a whole, possibly due to its large and reasonably diverse economy. There are clear patterns between unemployment rates and ethnicity, with higher proportions of Maori and Pacific Islands people being unemployed than other ethnic groups.
- From 1995 to 1999, the average hourly wage in the largest cities increased from 13.5% (Wellington City) to 16.9% (Auckland City). Wage increases in all six cities were higher than for the rest of New Zealand, at 12.2%.
- From 1995 to 1999, the Food Price Index for both New Zealand and the Auckland Region rose by 9.1%. The Wellington and Canterbury Regions experienced smaller increases.
- Retail expenditure increased across New Zealand from 1997 to 1999. This reflected general economic growth during the period. Major changes included growth in clothing expenditure in the Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury Regions (compared to New Zealand as a whole), and a considerable decrease in motor vehicle expenditure (in the urban regions and nationally).

Conclusions

Commentary

The quality of life in New Zealand's six largest cities is affected by many inter-linked factors. To achieve quality of life and ensure sustainable development in urban environments, all of the issues reported in this document must be considered alongside each other, rather than as separate matters to be dealt with in an isolated fashion. This will require key sectors working together in new forms of partnerships.

For example, the anticipated population growth in New Zealand's six largest cities, particularly in the Auckland region, has significant implications for the planning, provision and speed of preparedness of local and central government. This rapid growth will impact on services, infrastructure, economic development and the environment. A co-ordinated and integrated approach is called for to manage the effects of this.

Socio-demographic factors across the six cities such as population diversity, the young age structure of those diverse populations, poverty pockets and low education and work skills imply the need for a unique approach to governance and perhaps a closer collaboration between central and local government (of the six cities). This collaboration should, in the first instance, consider reviewing policy relating to immigration, education and employment given the scale of impact on the population of the six cities.

Housing policy should continue to be reviewed. The high proportions of people living in crowded households in Auckland, Manukau and Waitakere have implications for the health of those families. This, coupled with poverty, and the negative impact on educational achievement, employment and social cohesion, shows a cycle that is difficult to break. Central government along with councils of the six cities must consider policies that facilitate affordable accommodation choices and styles to meet the differing demands of the diverse populations living in those cities.

As with some housing issues, the populations that enhance ethnic and cultural diversity in the six cities appear to be those worst affected by poor health. Addressing the underlying determinants of health is a priority given their impact on health status and quality of life.

Educational achievement and skill levels are pre-requisites to participation in the workforce and are necessary for a strong economy. Given that the six cities account for 60% of the national economy then the statistics regarding educational achievement and skill levels are cause for concern. There are likely connections between low socio-economic status (which is reflected in school decile rankings), lower participation in early childhood education, and high levels of school leavers with no qualifications. Programmes to track this connection could provide a key to sustainable quality of life for today's children into the future.

All cities record air, water, noise and graffiti pollution. Air pollution as a result of private motor vehicle use is a huge concern in the Auckland Region where carbon monoxide levels are higher than in London. Collaboration between central government and the councils of the six cities on public transport issues, and policy and legislation to reduce the use and minimise the impact of private motor vehicles would be beneficial.

Graffiti can be related to school dropout rates, crime levels and juvenile offending and affects residents' satisfaction with the way their city looks. Drop-out rates may also be linked to young city dwellers' lower involvement in physical activity and merits investigation.

Whilst graffiti has contributed to negative perceptions of safety in the six cities, safety indicators, generally, are showing improvement. A partnership between central and local government through Police and Safer Community Councils has had a positive impact on burglary and traffic fatalities. A recurrent safety theme however is risk to children and youth. A similar partnership might be beneficial to reduce this risk.

A survey conducted within the six cities suggests that residents generally feel okay about the community in which they live. Results of the survey indicated some community cohesiveness with around 50% of survey respondents expressing positive comments in regard to feelings of safety, communities working together and supporting each other. There is room for improvement in this area. Given that volunteering in the six cities is lower than for the rest of New Zealand, this may be an area to focus on in the first instance.

Lower levels of volunteering may also be linked to the low levels of participation in governance and democratic matters in the six cities. Representation on governance structure is disproportionately European, raising the issue of interpretation of culturally diverse points of view in local decision making. Motivation to vote and willingness to stand for election by non-European citizens are issues that warrant further exploration.

While compiling this report several problems were encountered in relation to data collection. Many of these were connected to central government (e.g. health statistics), with some specific to local authorities (e.g. graffiti counts). A collaborative approach to indicator selection, data collection, perception surveys and outcome monitoring would be beneficial.

This project provides one example of working together and has involved collaboration between the six participating city councils. Factors that have contributed to this process include:

- the support of the Chief Executives of participating councils
- motivated council officers willing to work together collaboratively
- sharing costs for travel, data purchase and publication
- a co-ordinating role undertaken by Manukau City Council
- a consultation process, which resulted in valuable feedback on the draft indicator set from a wide range of agencies
- co-operation by government departments, regional councils, Statistics New Zealand, and other agencies
- all data collection and liaison with agencies undertaken by one person, with the result that all data is held on one central database

The project has provided valuable experience in the use of indicators, building relationships with others working on similar projects, analysis of statistics and working together as councils.

Using this report

Participating councils will consider the findings of this report as part of their strategic and annual planning processes. Issues raised in the report will also be used for advocacy purposes and key city issues will be highlighted to relevant central government politicians.

It is intended to host a workshop for interested organisations on data and technical issues as a follow up to the publication of this report. This will enable an exchange of learning related to indicators and use of data.

Next steps

The next steps include working with central government on some of the issues of concern to the six cities raised in this report and highlighted in these conclusions.

Planning is underway to update the report in around two years (perhaps in collaboration with central government). Measuring quality of life should become a regular exercise contributing to the development of more effective partnerships. It is a key tool for looking at the impacts of the work of the public sector in the effort to enhance the quality of life in New Zealand.