

Information Sheet: Population aging

What is population aging?

“Population aging is term used when the demographic transition of a country indicates that there are or will be proportionally more older people than young people. It is expected that the numbers of older people in New Zealand will reach 60 percent by 2051” (Population Aging Technical Advisory Group, 2008:8).

Implications of population aging

The OECD has predicted that globally we will experience a fall in the labour force as our population becomes older. More people will be dependent due to their age and fewer people will be working. This will mean it might be harder to keep current living standards.

Why is it relevant to the western Bay of Plenty sub-region?

Population aging is a phenomena that is particularly relevant to the western Bay of Plenty sub-region as this region has one of the highest proportions of older people in New Zealand (MOH, 2007 in Population Aging Technical Advisory Group, 2008:8). When compared with other districts, the Bay of Plenty District Health Board already has the highest percentage population over the age of 65 years. There are high numbers of 50 to 60 year olds in the current western Bay of Plenty sub-region population (see figure 1). It is thought that the number of people aged 80+ will grow from fewer than 3,000 in 2006 to 35,000 in 2050.

Figure 1 – Age structure of the western Bay of Plenty sub-region (2006)

Source: Population Aging Technical Advisory Group, 2008:10

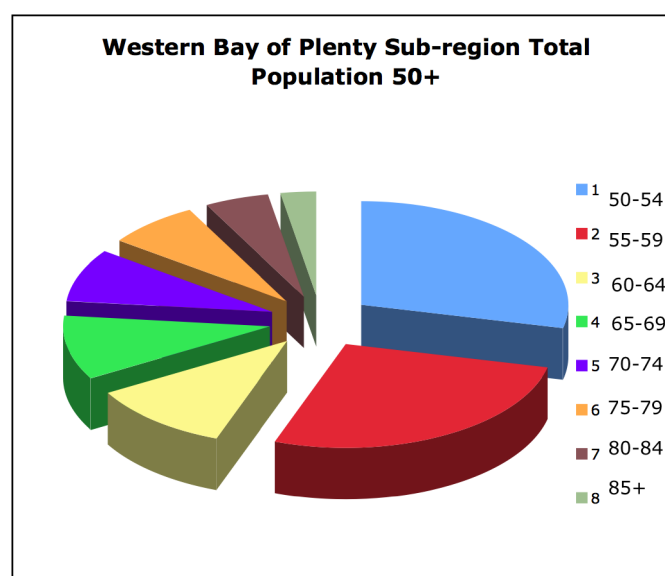


Figure 1 Showing the Western Bay of Plenty Sub-region 50-85+ Age Cohorts 2006

There are a number of factors that affect the increased number of older people globally, and in New Zealand and in the western Bay of Plenty sub-region specifically and these include:

- Increased longevity (living longer)
- Declining birth rates (fewer babies)
- Migration (older people moving into the sub-region)
- Tangata whenua aging dynamics (high Māori birth rate in under 20s and tangata whenua who tend not to move for retirement)

Additional facts about the western Bay of Plenty sub-region demographics include:

- Population growth is fastest among older people aged over 75 years.
- There are currently 24,591 people in the sub-region aged 65+ and 2,616 aged over 80 years.
- One in three people aged over 85 years had moved home at least once (2001-2006).
- The projected increase of people over the age of 65 is 118 percent in Western Bay of Plenty District and 77 percent in Tauranga District.

(Source: *Population Aging Technical Advisory Group, 2008:10*)

What are we doing about population aging in the western Bay of Plenty sub-region?

SmartGrowth and the Western Bay of Plenty District Health Board have combined to develop a Smart Aging Action plan.

Consider: What kind of life will you want when you are 75?



OECD Ageing and Transport 2001

References and additional reading:

SmartGrowth and Bay of Plenty District Health Board, Population Aging Technical Advisory Group. 2008. *Smart Aging Action Plan 2008 – 2012*.