

Human effects on Auckland



Auckland is growing fast

Human activity and a growing population have a big impact on Auckland's natural resources and ecological systems. In turn, the population drives economic activity, growth and consumption – what we buy, what we want, where we go – and these also affect the environment.

Auckland is the fastest growing city in Australasia, with the population constantly increasing for well over a century.

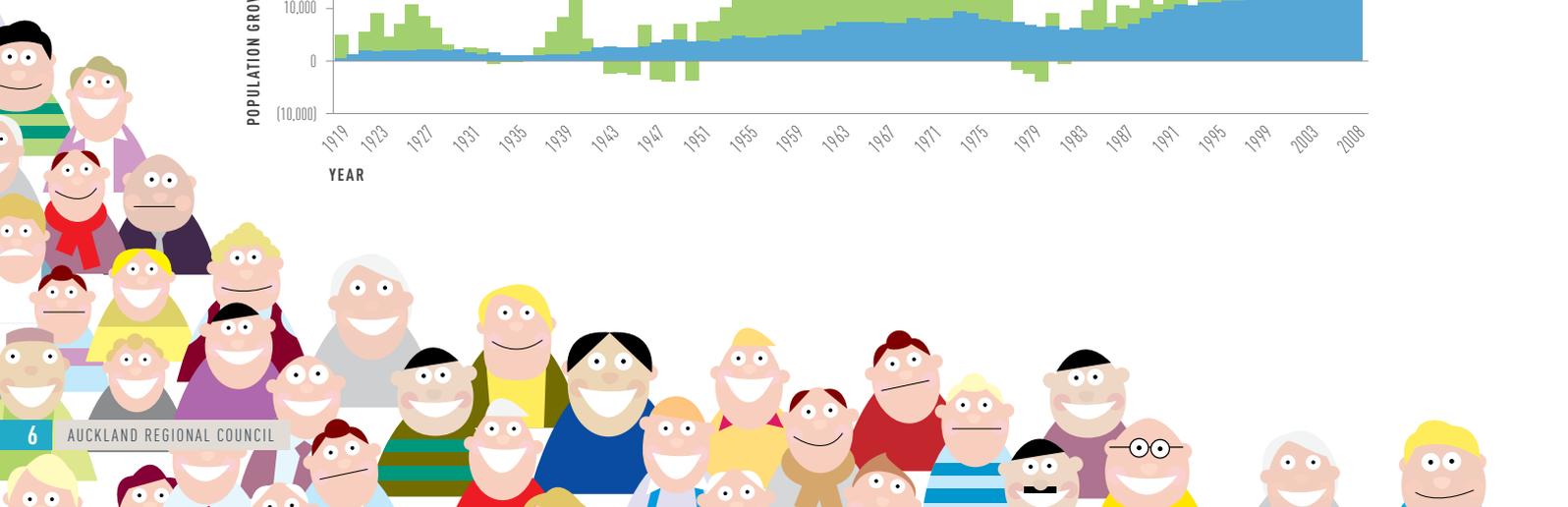
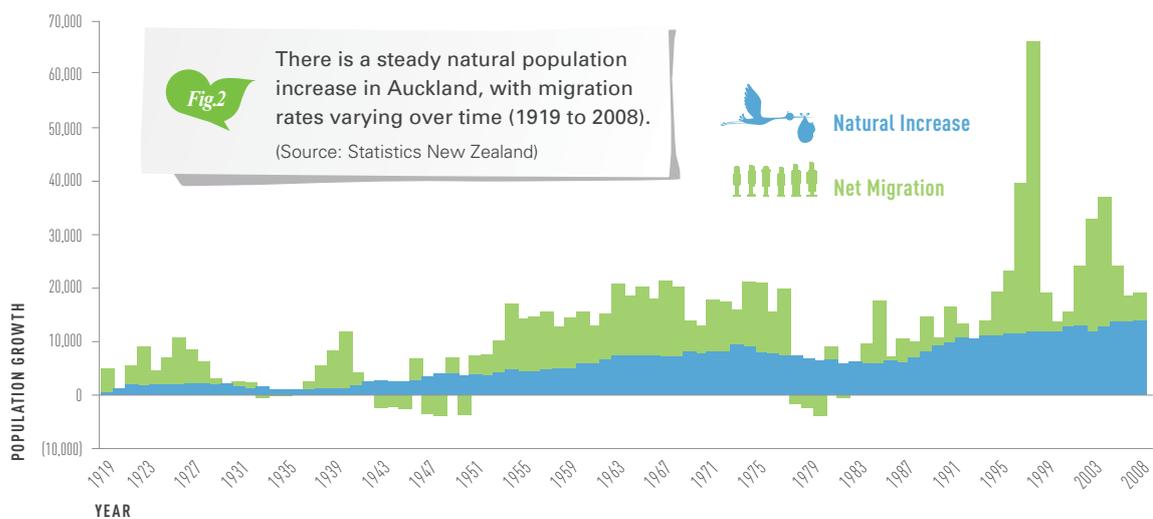
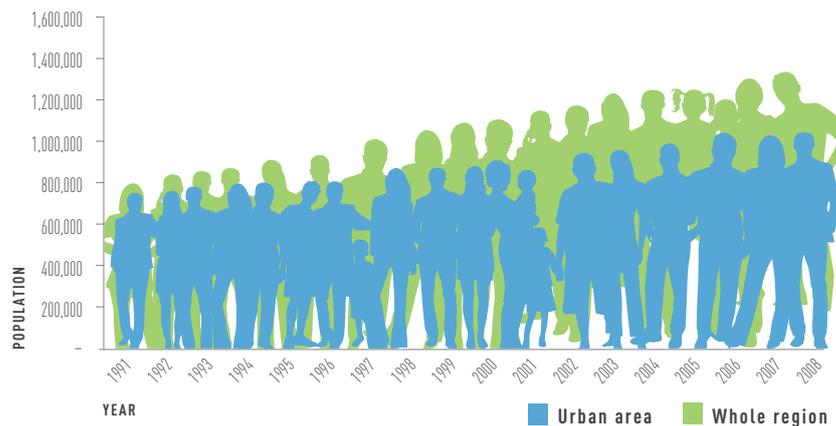
Auckland is home to over 1.3 million people – more than a third of New Zealand's total population. Over 90 per cent of Aucklanders live in the urban area (see Figure 1).

Population increase happens in two ways. Natural growth is the number of new births minus deaths, and migration includes those coming to the region from elsewhere in New Zealand and from overseas. Recent population increase in the region is fairly evenly split between steady natural growth and more variable migration (see Figure 2).

Auckland provides work, business and education opportunities and strong cultural ties to those living here, so natural increase and migration are expected to continue for some time.

Population growth is the main force of environmental change in the region.

Fig.1
Population continues to increase in Auckland, with most people living in the urban area.
(Source: Statistics New Zealand)





A growing economy

Over 680,000 of the 1.3 million Aucklanders go to work and a third of all New Zealand businesses are in Auckland. In 2008 the Auckland regional economy contributed about 35 per cent to New Zealand's Gross Domestic Product – that's around a third of the total value of all New Zealand's goods and services.

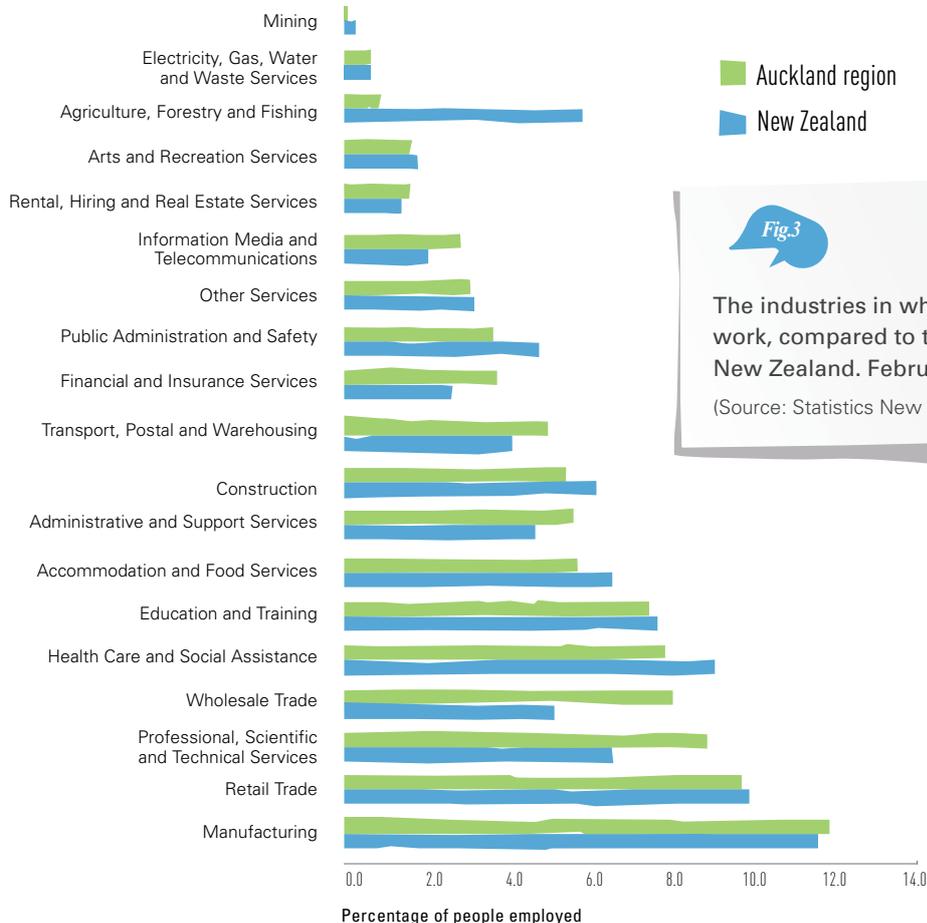
In 2008, 69 per cent of all international visitors to New Zealand arrived here. International trade is important to the region, with a third of all export cargo by value passing through here. At year end 2007, \$4.4 billion, or 81.5 per cent of New Zealand's air-freighted exports passed through Auckland International Airport, while Ports of Auckland handled 37 per cent of all container trade for the country.

Ninety per cent of the land in the region is described as rural, with rich volcanic soils and enjoying abundant

rain and a favourable climate. Auckland's rural economy is based around agriculture including sheep and cattle farming (dry stock and dairy), fruit and vegetable growing (horticulture), light manufacturing in small centres such as Kumeu and Pukekohe as well as quarries supplying gravels and sand to the construction industry. Specialised and intensive horticulture have increased, such as vineyards, orchards, specialised plant nurseries, glasshouses and specialised grazing animals. New technologies and patterns of consumption are driving these trends.

Sale prices of rural land in Auckland are higher than the national average. Pastoral land sells at around 2.6 times the national average. To offset high land values, Auckland rural producers strive to produce goods efficiently and sell high value products to earn good rates of return.

Rural land owners in Auckland subdivide and sell parcels of their land to generate income. Fragmenting farms can change the way land is used, creating environmental challenges.



Auckland region
New Zealand

Fig.3

The industries in which Aucklanders work, compared to the rest of New Zealand. February 2008.

(Source: Statistics New Zealand)



Demand and supply – consumer needs

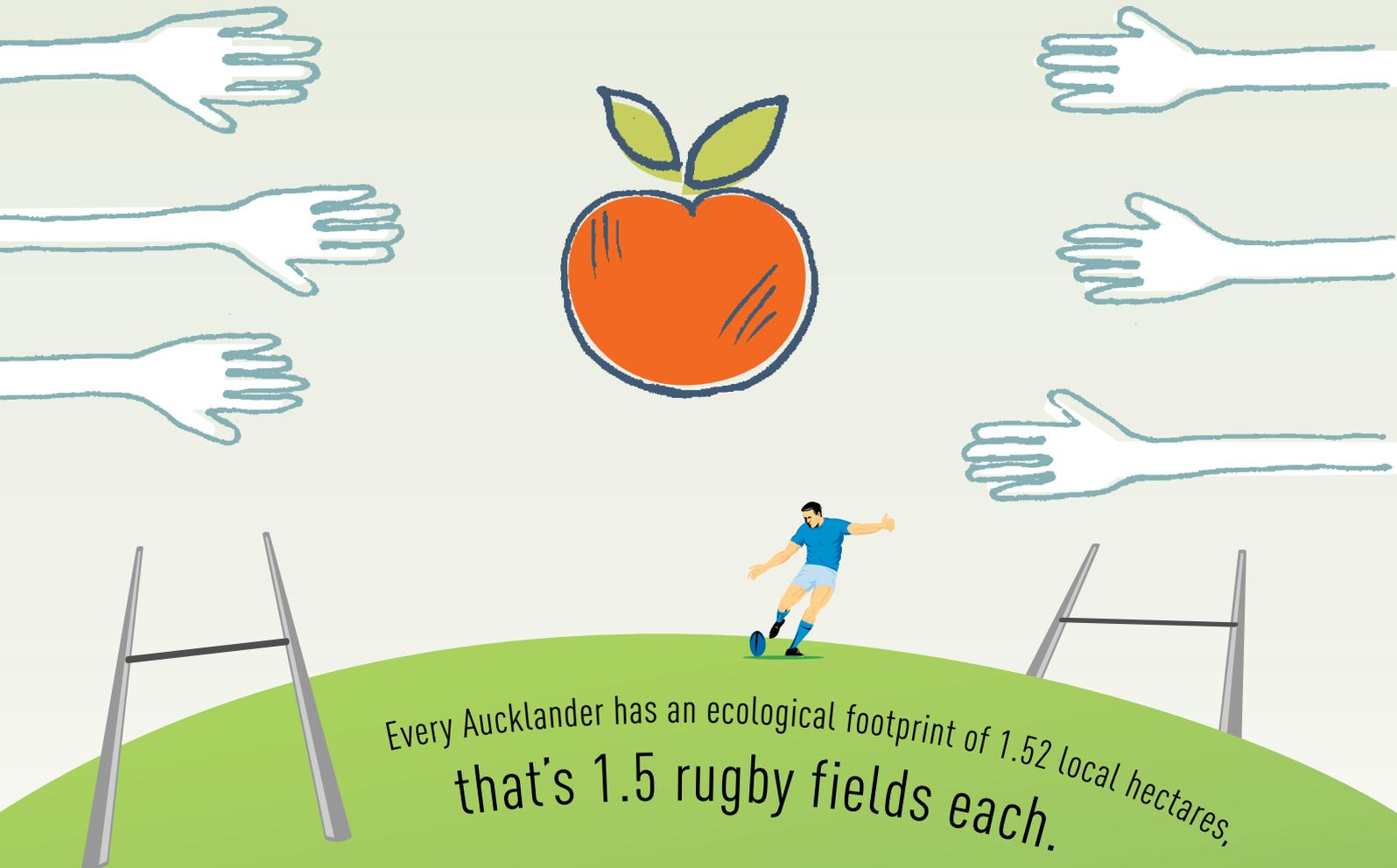
Individuals, households, businesses and industry use and need all manner of products and services. In the last 30 years some goods have become cheaper, so more affordable. Technology allows mass production of previously complex items like cell phones, computers and cars.

New Zealanders' spending has risen by 47 per cent over the last decade, with most money going on household goods, clothing, food and drink. The average Auckland household currently spends 9 per cent more a week than other New Zealanders on goods and services.

Our homes are getting bigger (up from 140m³ to 220m³ between 1991 and 2006) and we own more cars than in the past (17 per cent of households have more than three cars).

In Auckland, some factors may have helped increase consumption in recent years. High rates of employment, readily available credit such as interest free deals, the 'wealth effect' where house price rises give home-owners the idea that they have wealth in their property, and new technology and mass production have reduced the price of many goods.

Many of the goods we use in Auckland come from elsewhere, but whether made locally or brought in from elsewhere in New Zealand or overseas, resources are used to create, shift, store goods and then dispose of the waste. Resources including energy, water, fuel and food, are generated and replenished to fulfill our needs, but using these resources comes with an environmental cost.



Every Aucklander has an ecological footprint of 1.52 local hectares,
that's 1.5 rugby fields each.

Our ecological footprint is the area of productive land needed to produce the resources that we consume and assimilate the waste that we create.

It is made up of the land used for the production of meat, crops, wool, milk and so on; the marine area used to produce seafood; the forest area used to produce wood, pulp and fuel wood; the land used for urban areas, transport networks, industry, housing and so on, and the area of land required to absorb carbon dioxide emissions from energy consumption.

In 2003/04, the ecological footprint of the Auckland region was 2 million local hectares and every Aucklander had an ecological footprint of 1.52 local hectares.

Our footprint takes into account the amount of land used within the region and in other regions of New Zealand and overseas to produce the goods and services we use. Only about 20 per cent of the regional footprint is from land in the region, land from other New Zealand regions makes up 45.5 per cent and the remaining 34.5 per cent is made up of land overseas.