**People leaving New Zealand permanently and long-term having most recently lived in Christchurch**

This note gives data on young people leaving from New Zealand where the last place they lived was Christchurch. It compares the pattern of departures from Christchurch with the pattern in the rest of New Zealand.

**Christchurch**

We have compared three distinct periods of time: January to June 2009, 2010 and 2011. The results are shown in Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1: Number of monthly permanent and long term leavers aged 15-39 from greater Christchurch in first half of 2009, 2010 and 2011**

Source: Statistics New Zealand

Note: Greater Christchurch means the local authorities of Christchurch City and Selwyn and Waimakariri Districts.

As expected, there was a spike in departures for all age groups between February and April 2011 – a response to the effects of the earthquake. The numbers of people leaving in the 15-39 year age groups reduced again toward the middle of 2011, suggesting that the earthquake’s effect on decisions to leave New Zealand may not have been very long lasting.

As expected the groups with the greatest propensity to leave were the 20-24 and 25-19 year age groups – these groups are the most mobile as people in these age groups are independent but less likely to have children or to own houses. The 20-24 year age group showed an especially sharp peak in departures.

The population with the greatest change in pattern is the 15-19 year group of leavers. In previous years, this group, as expected, had a relatively small number of departures, with most leaving in January. However, in 2011, this group of leavers spiked in March before dropping away.

**New Zealand excluding Christchurch**

Figure 2 shows permanent and long term leavers from anywhere in New Zealand except for Christchurch and surrounds over the same time periods.

**Figure 2: Number of monthly permanent and long term leavers aged 15-39 from New Zealand excluding greater Christchurch, first half of 2009, 2010 and 2011**

Source: Statistics New Zealand

Note: Greater Christchurch means the local authorities of Christchurch City and Selwyn and Waimakariri Districts.

Figure 2 shows that permanent and long term departures were higher nationally in the first half of 2011 than they were in the first half of 2010 and 2009. While there was a spike among 20-30 year olds from around the time of the earthquake in Christchurch in February 2011, there was also a spike around the beginning of 2009 and 2010 as well, suggesting that the overall pattern for 2011 is not very different from that of the two previous years.

**An occupational analysis of migration**

The graphs below set out the occupational distribution of emigrants, in greater Christchurch and in the rest of New Zealand, for the months of March, April and May 2010 and 2011.

Between 2010 and 2011, there was a rise in departures in all occupational categories. The rise occurred in the country as a whole, as well as in Christchurch. But the extent of the rise in Christchurch was much greater – an increase of 81% as opposed to 19% for the rest of New Zealand.

The largest group is the ‘not elsewhere included group’ which includes students, those without work, those not in the labour force etc.

There is clearly a loss of skills from Christchurch to migration – with the departures of people in skilled occupations much higher (in percentage terms) in Christchurch than in the rest of the country.

**Figure 3: Number of permanent and long term leavers March-May, 2010 and 2011**

**a Greater Christchurch**

**b New Zealand excluding Christchurch**

Source: Statistics New Zealand

Note: Greater Christchurch means the local authorities of Christchurch City and Selwyn and Waimakariri Districts

All numbers are subject to sampling errors. Sampling errors are larger for the greater Christchurch data

The difference between Canterbury and the rest of New Zealand is even starker if we look at net migration (immigrant numbers minus emigration numbers). See the trend in Figure 4 below. Until the earthquakes, Canterbury had closely mirrored the trend in New Zealand. While there has been some recovery, there remains a gap between this region and the rest of the country.

**Figure 4: Monthly net migration as a percentage of the population, greater Christchurch vs New Zealand, January 2010 – June 2011**

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Source: Statistics New Zealand

**Conclusion**

* The earthquake in late February appears to have had a strong short-term effect on migration patterns of young people from Christchurch. However, for the time being at least, this looks to be relatively short lived.
* There has been a loss of skills to the region with increased departures of people in high-skill occupations.
* However, we need to continue to monitor the trends as housing decisions may have a longer term effect on migration.