

Changing Populations

Population change

Population growth is occurring in areas within 1-2 hours drive of Melbourne, both coastal and inland. Most regional cities continue to expand and there has been growth along the Murray River and around the Gippsland Lakes. Places which have experienced population decline include smaller towns in the western dry-land farming areas, some cities, towns and rural settlements in Gippsland and the north east

Indigenous populations

While Indigenous people make up 0.5% of Victoria's population as a whole, the figure for regional Victoria is higher at 1.0%. Furthermore, some centres in Victoria, have larger Indigenous populations, for example Robinvale with 9.0%.

Natural decrease

The difference between numbers of births and numbers of deaths (natural increase) has been fairly stable over the past half century. However the impacts of declining fertility rates since the 1970s, and the increasing numbers of older people in the population are now starting to change this balance. Within the next 30 years Victoria will move towards natural decrease, however many regional areas are experiencing natural decrease already.

Population characteristics

Even where population is showing little numerical change, inflows and outflows of people can create significant changes in community characteristics. Such changes can occur over the short term (eg. in-migration of high income people to a fashionable location) or over the long term (eg. higher levels of education gained within a community).

An integrated picture of Changing Populations

Peak Population

Resident populations are only one way in which population can be measured. In some regions, seasonal populations are much more significant and can represent a 4 or 5-fold increase in some towns' populations. Such peaks are important for planning infrastructure and services.

Migration

Most regional areas experience a loss of young adults as they leave for education and employment, but they receive a net gain of older adults and retirees. Increasing net losses of young people in regional areas over the past two decades have not been due to many more people leaving – it has been influenced by fewer young adults moving from Melbourne. Most overseas migrants favour large cities where community support and services are more likely to be located.

