



NB-IRDT

New Brunswick Institute for
Research, Data and Training

New Brunswick Population Snapshot



Project Info

Project Title

POPULATION DYNAMICS FOR SMALL AREAS AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

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Research Team

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Partners

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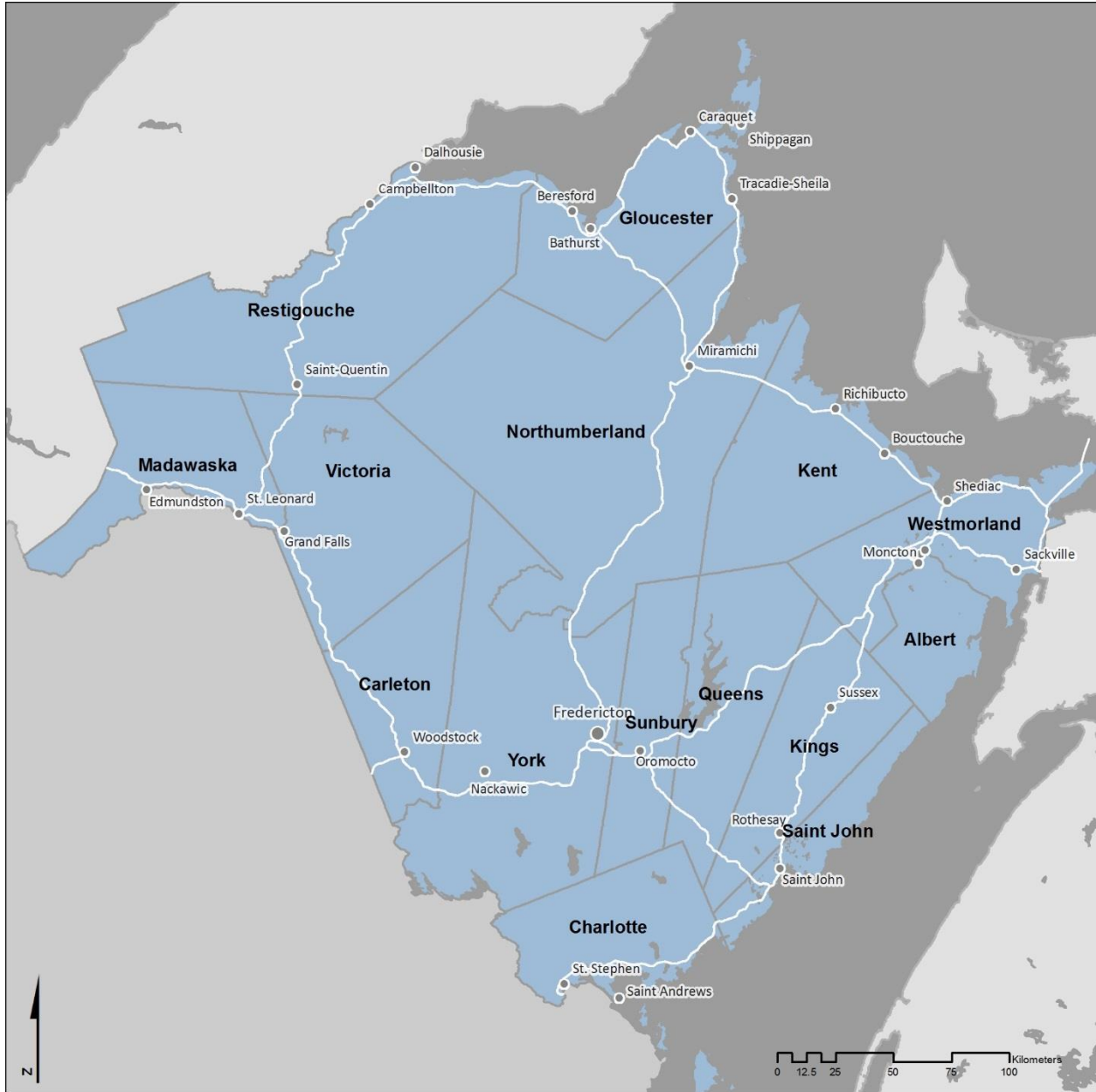
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I Executive Summary

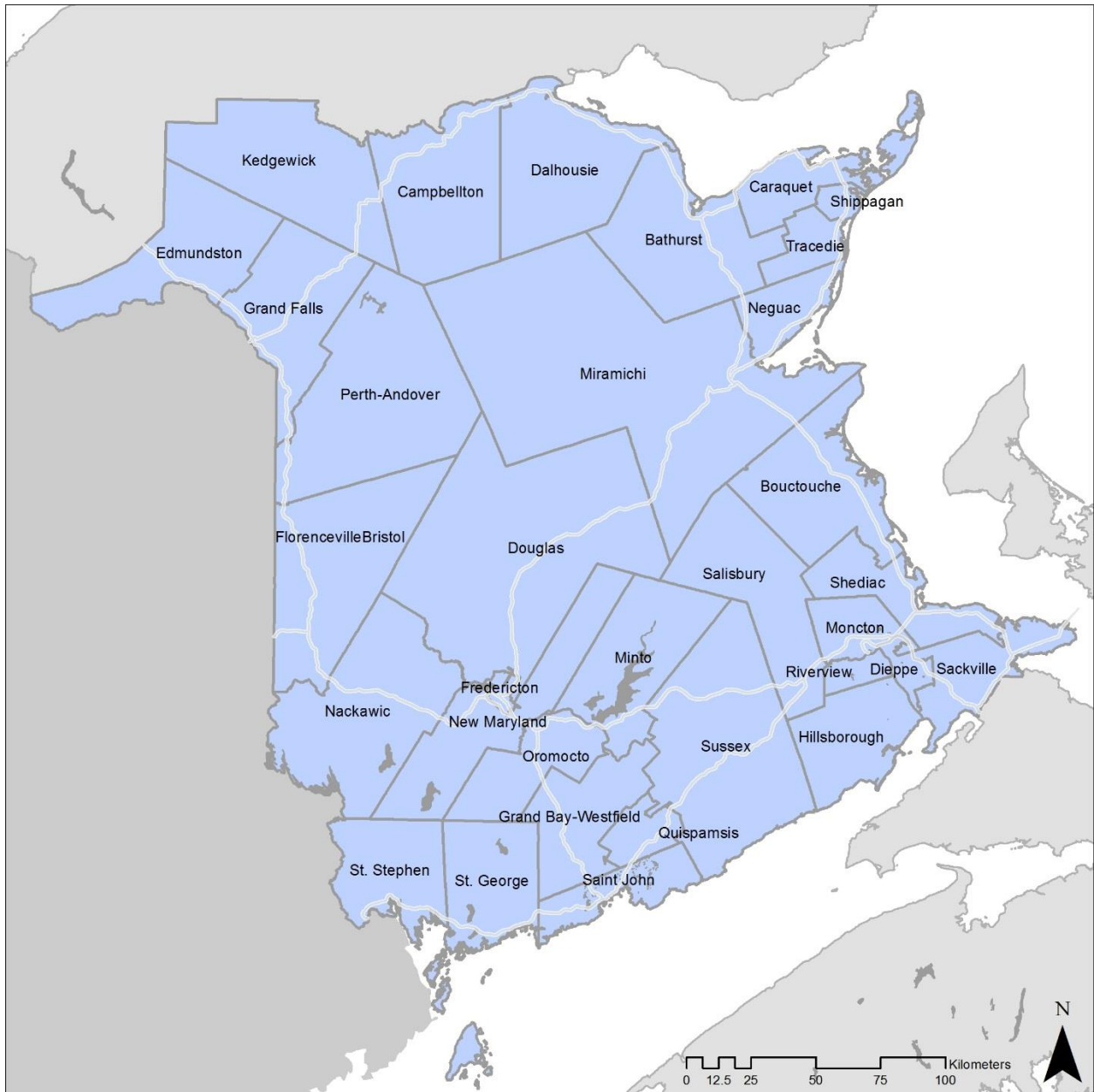
New Brunswick is at a critical juncture. Large net inter-provincial migration losses, low fertility, and low rates of international immigration are fuelling low rates of population growth. Past decades saw declining fertility rates in New Brunswick, to the point where they are now below replacement levels. Concurrently, life expectancy increased, with people living longer, especially females. Inter-provincial out-migration from New Brunswick is high, with large relative numbers of people leaving New Brunswick—some temporarily—for employment in other provinces, mostly Ontario and Alberta. Recently, international immigration to New Brunswick has increased. However prior to this uptick, immigration landings in New Brunswick were lower than other Canadian provinces. Although similar to other Maritime Provinces, New Brunswick is unique in Canada in this regard, where the patterns of migration are more pronounced and the population aging faster than other provinces.

In the short term, current trends indicate that there will be continued population decline in the province as a whole, with any growth concentrated in a minority of cities and regions. Over the long term, there is a potential for major demographic shifts, with implications for policy and planning. These shifts are currently driven by migration, where provincial out-migration in younger age groups is driven by employment; moves that were once temporary or seasonal are now becoming long-term or permanent. Nevertheless, the potential for rural to urban migration and strong growth in urban centres may provide an opportunity for retention of the population in New Brunswick.

This report overviews the historic population trends in New Brunswick, setting the stage for further analysis of future population trends.



Map I: Map of New Brunswick counties



Map 2: Map of New Brunswick Health Council Communities

2 Population snapshot of New Brunswick

New Brunswick's future population is often the focus of public debate in the Province. The last decades have seen a variety of studies, policies, and workshops to discuss the rate of population growth, levels of out-migration, population aging, labour force change, skills shortages, and rising immigration, amongst others. Various workshops and public consultations have been performed to determine public views.¹ New Brunswick's declining population growth rate has been identified as a key challenge to sustaining and growing the province and its economy. New Brunswick has one of the fastest aging populations, lowest number of youths settling in the province, lowest immigration rates, and fastest declining fertility rates in Canada. These demographics have significant implications for the labour force, healthcare, long-term care, social support, the tax base, and the broader economy.

New Brunswick has developed several population growth strategies in recent years. These strategies are part of a labour force and skill development strategy aimed at building a stronger economy.² The key areas of focus identified for growing the province's population are investing in youth retention programs, decreasing outmigration, and attracting and settling newcomers. The government has proposed several approaches to growing the population. Some approaches include addressing immigration legislation bottlenecks with the federal government, increasing immigration and interprovincial migration efforts, targeted immigration to attract highly skilled workers and business immigrants to meet labour force, attracting international students to education programs in line with industry needs, and leveraging opportunities presented by a growing First Nations population.

To understand population change in New Brunswick, it is first necessary to understand the current and historic population issues. This report describes the nature of population change in New Brunswick using annual data for the Province and for individual counties. From the information presented here, avenues for understanding population dynamics can be identified.

2.1 Low population growth

There has been significant public discourse over low rates of population growth in New Brunswick. Figure 1 shows the growth in the population from 1951 through 2011, including the proportion of the population residing in rural or urban areas. Overall, the population of New Brunswick increased from 516,000 in 1951 to 751,000 in 2011. The proportion of urban and rural residents has shifted several times over the last 50 years, changing from 58% rural in 1951, 43% rural in 1971, 52% rural in 1991, and last enumerated as 48% rural in 2011. Some changes may

¹ Population Growth Secretariat. *Be our future: New Brunswick's Population Growth Strategy*. Fredericton, NB; 2008.

Province of New Brunswick. *New Brunswick Population Growth Strategy 2013-2018*. Fredericton, NB; 2013.

Population Growth Secretariat. *It's time to Act: Towards New Brunswick's Population Growth Strategy*.

Fredericton, NB; 2007.

Government of New Brunswick. *New Brunswick Population Growth Strategy 2014-2017: Putting our Resources to Work*. Fredericton, NB; 2014.

² Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. *New Brunswick's Labour Force and Skills Development Strategy*. Fredericton, NB: Government of New Brunswick; 2013.

come from modifications to how ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ are defined, but it stands that close to half the population of New Brunswick resides in rural areas and small towns.

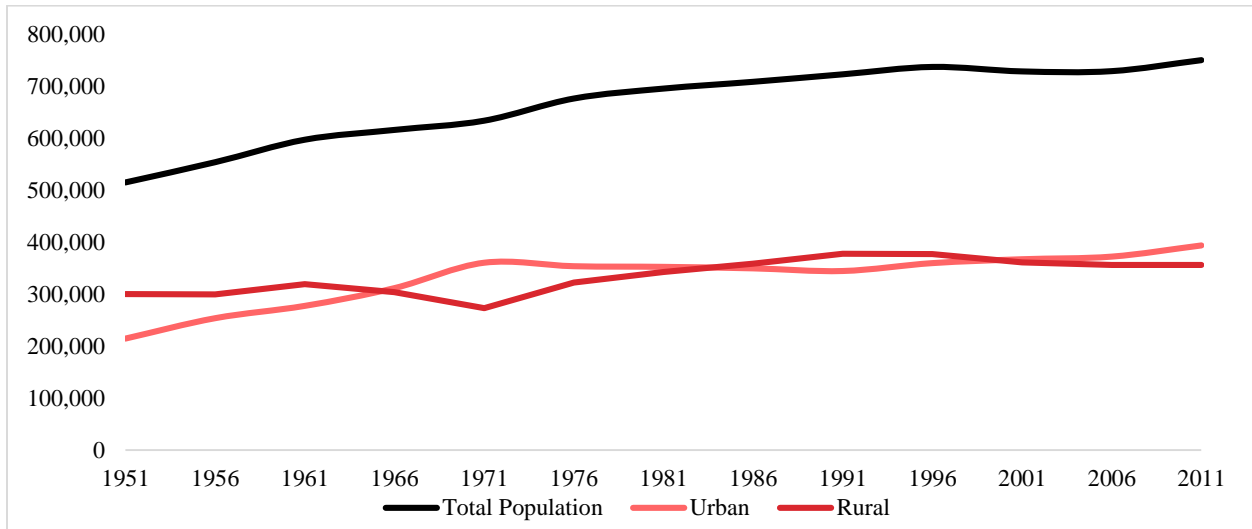


Figure 1: Population of New Brunswick, urban and rural, 1951-2011

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 051-0001—accessed Nov. 2016.

While the total population demonstrates slow growth over the long term (Figure 3), the population growth rate of New Brunswick has been highly variable, with a peak of 1.85% per annum in 1975 to a low of -0.33% per annum in 2006. Peak periods occurred in 1975, 1983, 1991, and 2009. Low periods were in 1981, 1986, 1998, 2006, and 2013.

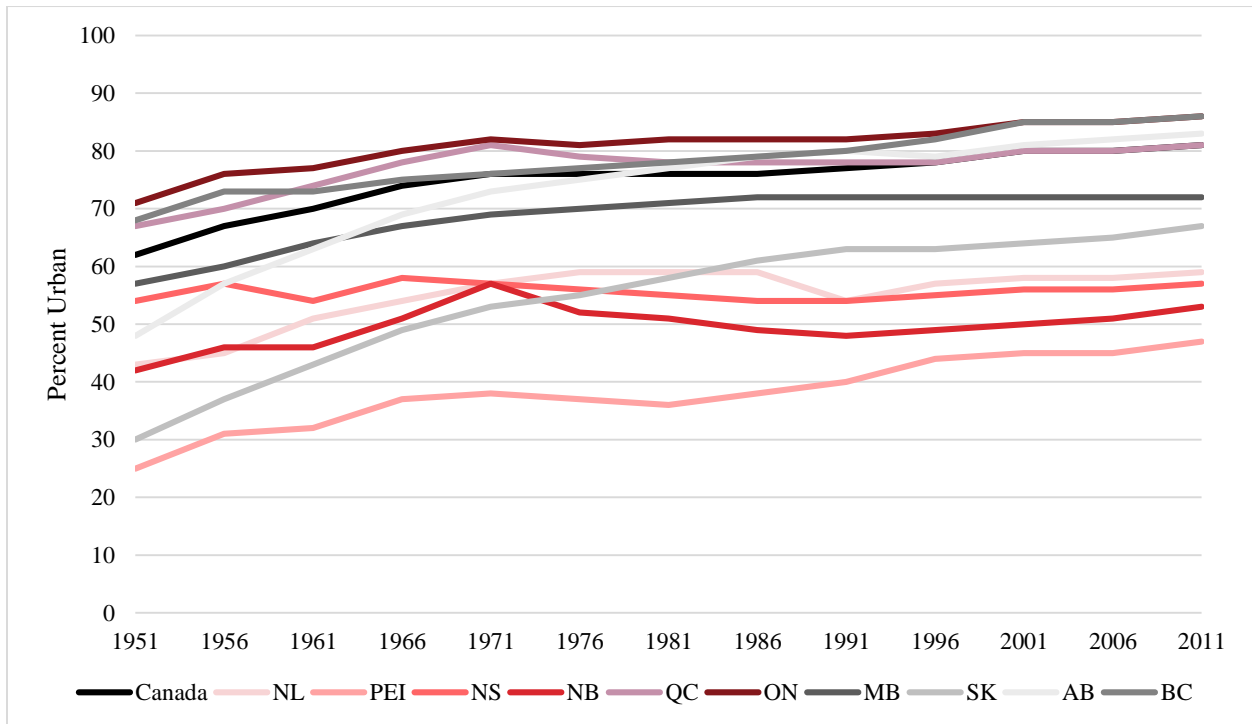


Figure 2: Percent of urban population, by province, 1951 - 2011

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 051-0001—accessed Nov. 2016.

One feature that remains evident for the Maritime Provinces—New Brunswick in particular—is the extent to which they have remained rural. In 1951, Canada was 62% urban, with New Brunswick on the low-end of this at 42%. By 2011, Canada was 82% urban, while the percent of the New Brunswick population living in urban areas had only increased by 11% to 53%. Compare this to Saskatchewan, which in 1951 was only 30% urban but had increased to 67% by 2011. Similarly, Alberta increased from 47% urban in 1951 to 83% urban in 2011, largely through the growth of two metropolitan regions: Calgary and Edmonton.

As seen in figure 3, the net population growth rate over time in New Brunswick is similar to Nova Scotia, but differing from Prince Edward Island. This is likely due to the nature of population change in the Maritimes, where the largest component of change is inter-provincial migration associated with economic change in other provinces.

The annual net growth rates for Canada do not follow the same pattern as the Maritime Provinces. This could be because the largest component of population change in Canada over this time was immigration, which is less tied to national or regional economic shifts than inter-provincial migration.

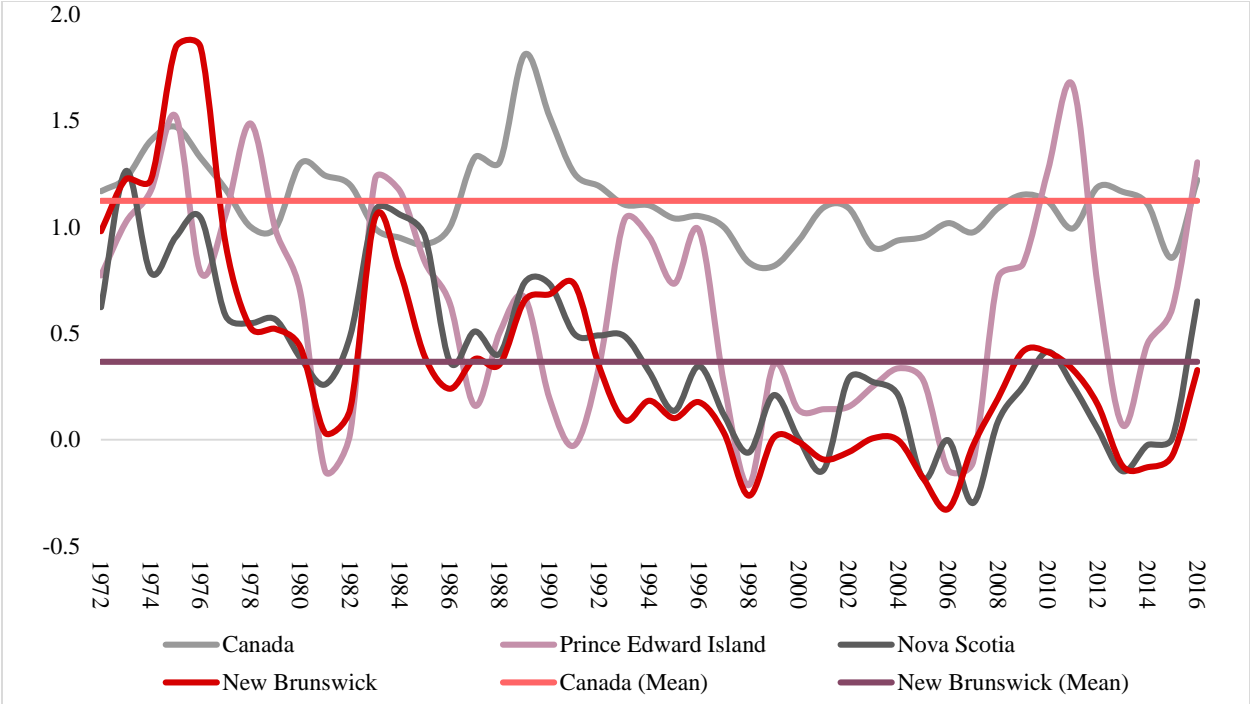


Figure 3: Net population growth rate of NB, PEI, NS, and Canada, 1971 – 2016.
 Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 051-0001—accessed Nov. 2016.

The primary components of population change in New Brunswick are illustrated in Figure 4. Between 1971 and 2015, the number of births declined from 12,000 in 1971 to 6,718 in 2015. Concurrently, the number of deaths increased from 5,000 in 1971 to an estimated 7,036 in 2015. (While the number of deaths has increased, the age-standardised mortality rate has decreased given an increasing and aging population.) The above components have been consistent in their change and mirror changes occurring elsewhere in Canada.

While provincial trends in births and deaths mirror national trends, Figure 4 demonstrates the variable nature of inter-provincial migration and immigration, and the effect that this has on

population change. The net inter-Provincial migration has fluctuated since 1971. Conversely, immigration was consistent from 1981 through 2005, with 500 and 900 persons per year. However, since 2005 the number of immigrants landing in New Brunswick has increased, rising from 1,386 in 2005 to an estimated 4,435 in 2015.

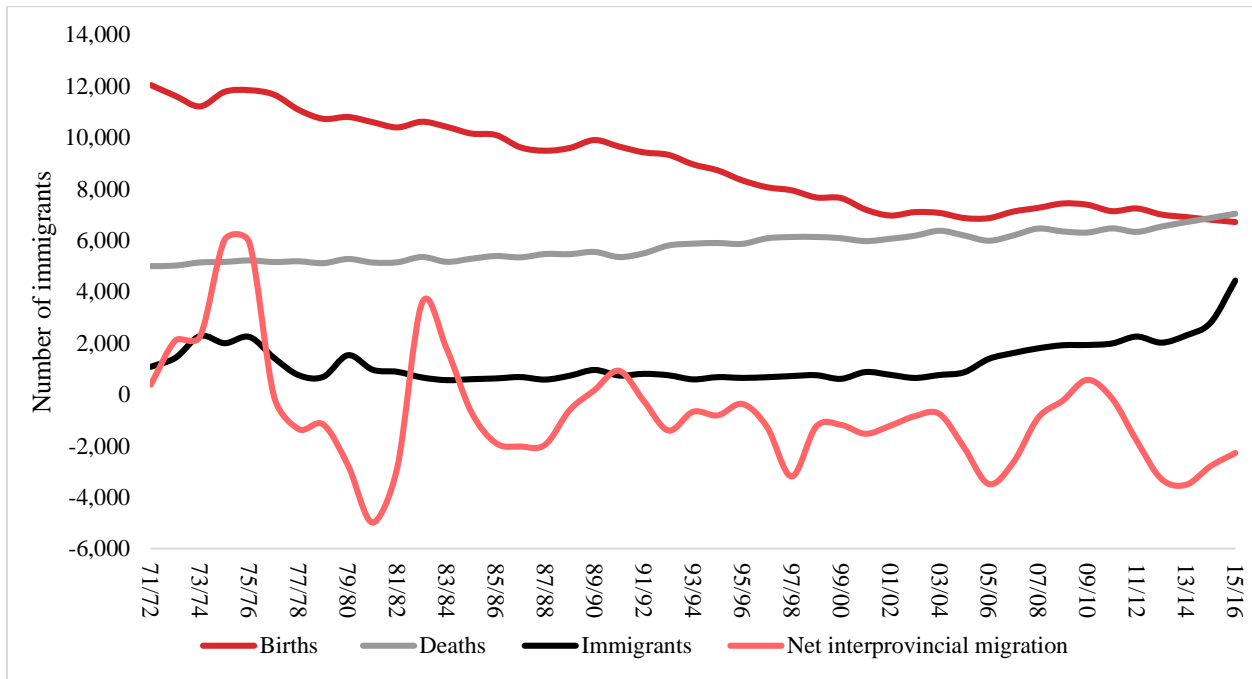


Figure 4: Components of population change in New Brunswick, 1971-2016

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 051-0063—accessed Nov. 2016

Figures 2-5 reinforce the notion that short-term shifts in population change for New Brunswick are driven by changes to inter-Provincial migration rates, and only more recently by immigration. In contrast, the long-term decline in population growth has been largely due to a declining fertility rate and an aging population.

The following sections focus on the nature of the changing population age structure of the province, inter-provincial migration to and from New Brunswick, and the changing competitiveness of New Brunswick as an immigration landing point.

2.2 Changing population age structure

Although the total population of New Brunswick showed a slight increase from 749,819 in 2001 to 753,871 in 2015, this increase is driven by the growth of the older population. The number of people aged below 14 years decreased from 131,463 in 2001 to 109,058 in 2015 and the working population aged 15 to 64 years decreased from 518,251 in 2001 to 501,669 in 2015. Those aged 65 years and older increased from 100,105 in 2001 to 143,144 in 2015.

These shifts suggest that a decreasing work force will have to support a growing dependent older population while also addressing worsening prospects for long term sustainability as smaller younger populations will enter the work force. New Brunswick's 2015 population pyramid, like that of Canada, has an "urn" shape typical of declining populations. Figure 5 shows similar structures for 2001 and 2015, with some differences. The 2015 urn has a narrower base indicating

declining birth rates, a shift in the beginning of the bulge from 35 years to 50+ years because of the baby boomers, and a widening of the top of the pyramid, as people are living longer.

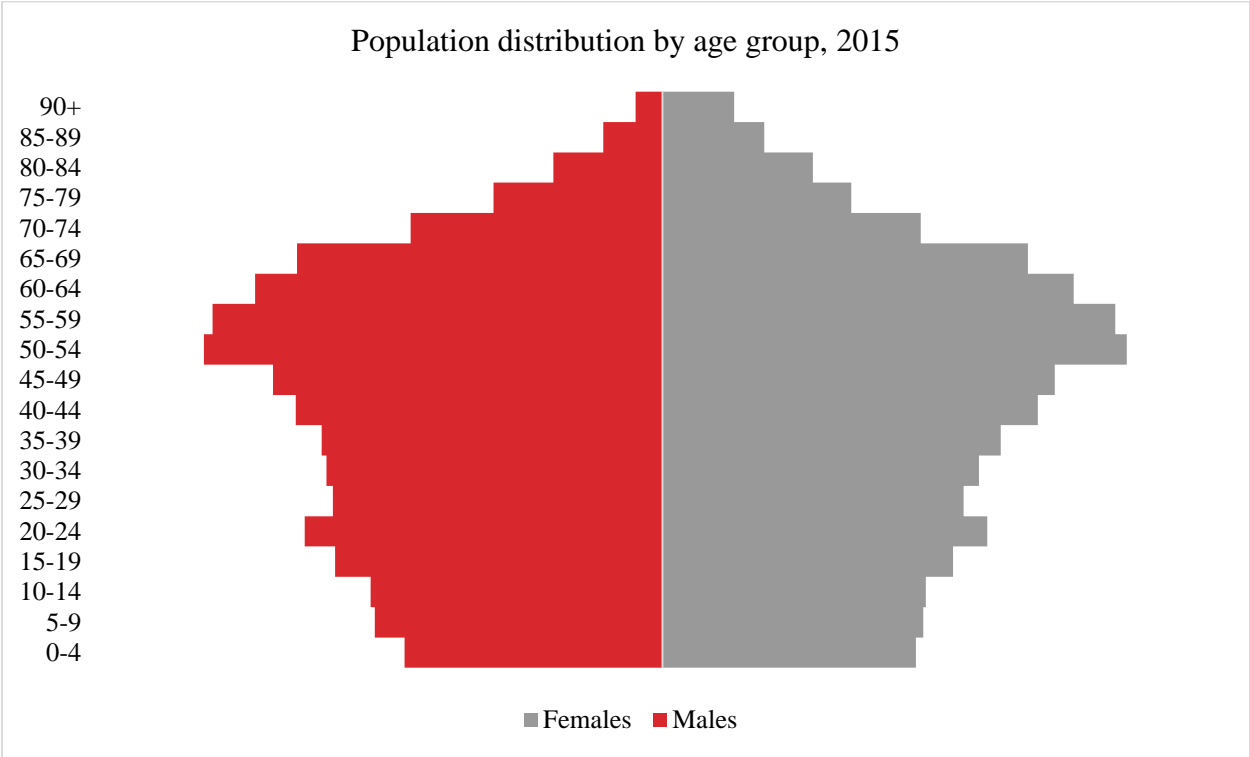
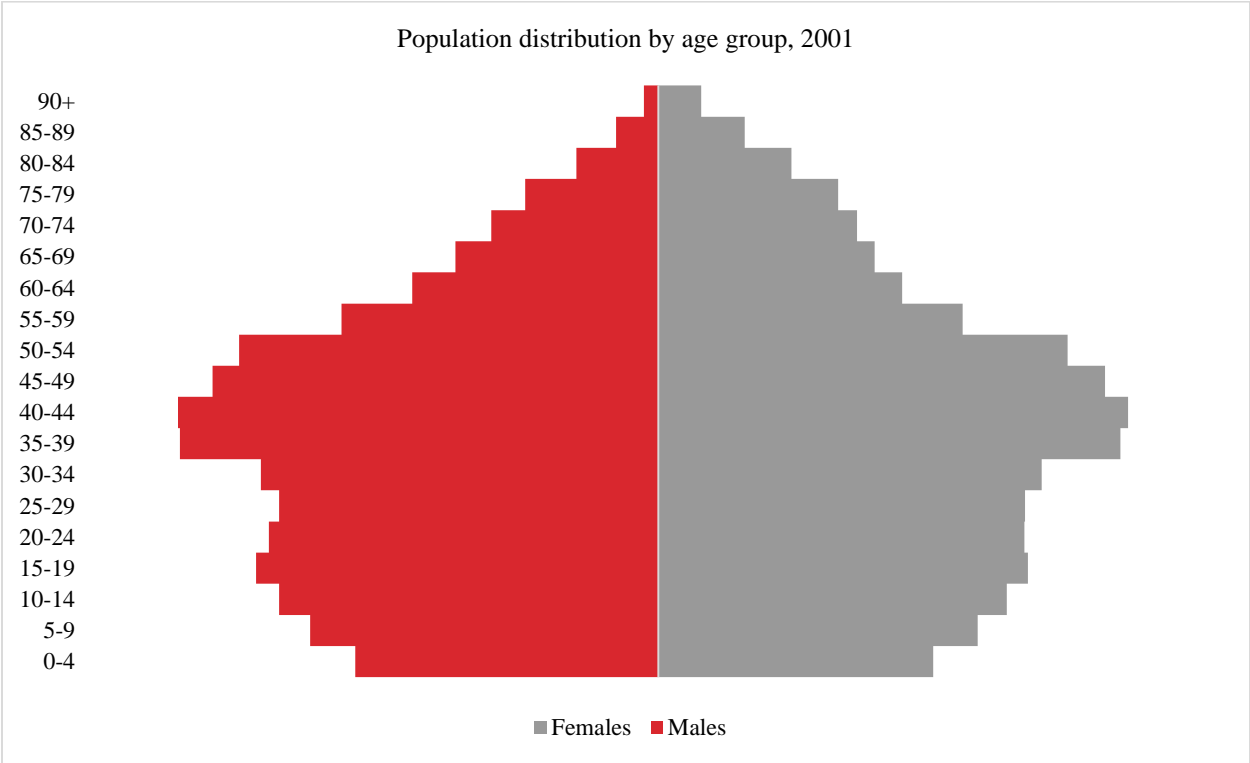


Figure 5: Population pyramids for New Brunswick, 2001 and 2015

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 051-0063—accessed Nov. 2016.

As can be seen from the population pyramids above, there are differences in the proportion of males and females depending on the age group. Figure 6 shows the proportion of the population in each five-year age group among males. In 2001, the proportion of the population that was male in the youngest age groups was over 1.0, indicating more males than females in the younger age groups. By 35 years, this ratio has decreased to parity, remaining roughly stable until about 60-65 years of age, when the proportion of males decreases markedly.

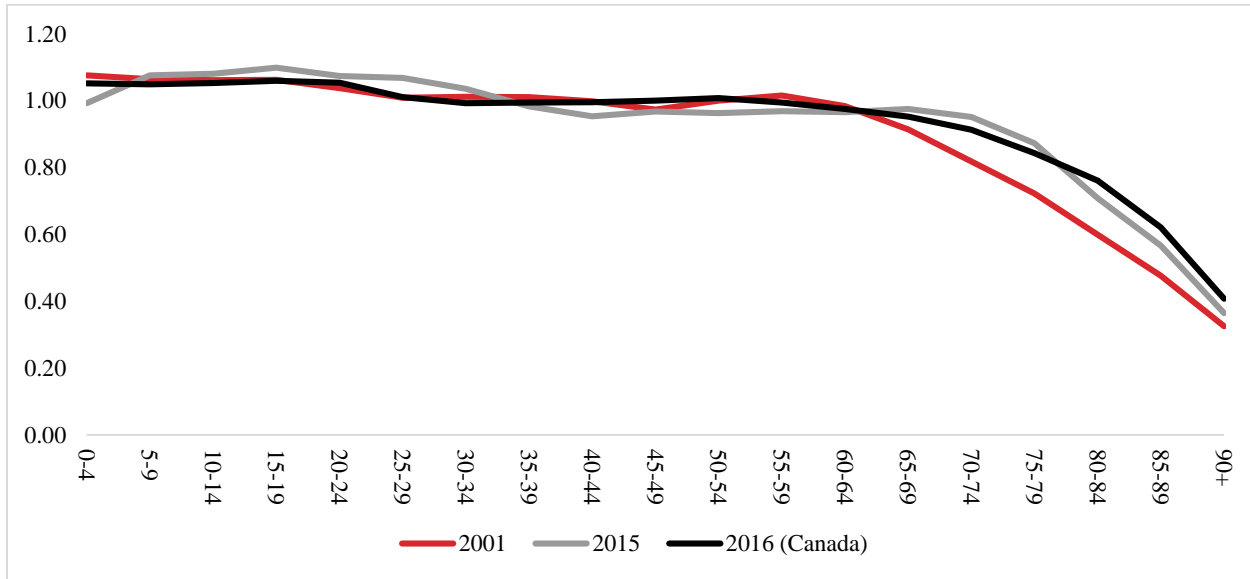


Figure 6: Proportion male, by age group, 2001 and 2015.

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 051-0063—accessed Nov. 2016.

The rate of population aging is not uniform across the province. Figure 7 shows the proportion of child and older dependents compared to the working population (15-64 years) by census divisions.

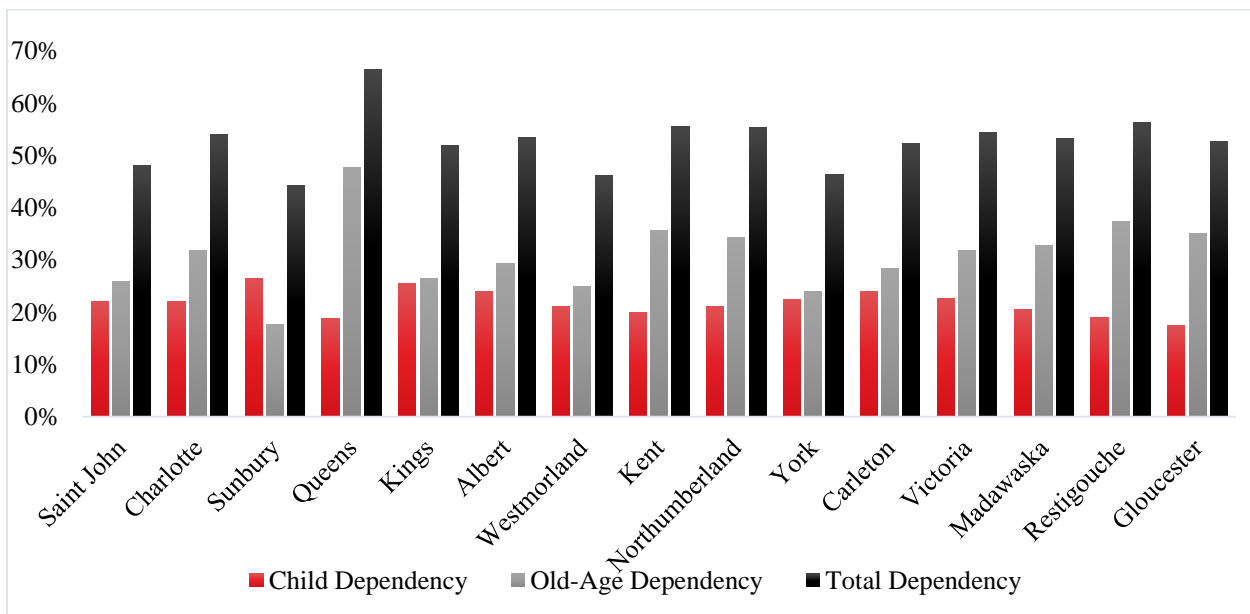


Figure 7: Dependency ratios for New Brunswick census divisions, 2015

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 051-0063—accessed Nov. 2016

Overall, Queens County showed the highest dependency ratio of 66%, driven by the highest old age dependency (48%) in New Brunswick. The location with the next highest dependency ration was Restigouche (56%), followed by Northumberland (55%) and Kent (55%). Sunbury had the lowest total dependency ratio, and was the only region in which child dependency was greater than old age dependency.

As seen in Figure 8, all regions have increased dependency rates in 2015 compared to 2001, driven mainly by old age dependency, itself driven by the aging of the baby boomers and higher life expectancy. Further, this figure shows old age dependency is higher, and child dependency lower in all counties in New Brunswick in 2015 compared to 2001. This emphasizes the declining natural growth of the Province’s population.

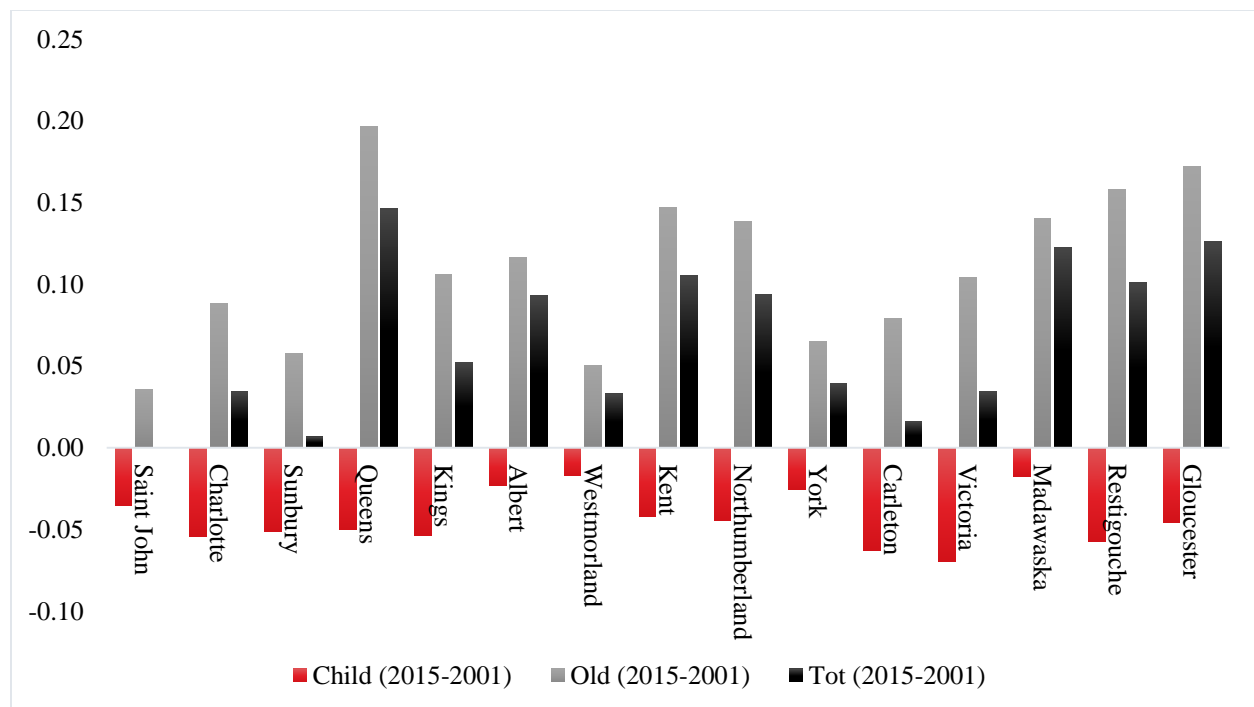


Figure 8: Changing dependency ratios by region (NB census divisions), 2015-2001.

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 051-0063—accessed Nov. 2016

Population aging trends in New Brunswick, as shown in figures 6-9, are only partly responsible for the changing composition of the provincial population. As seen in Figure 4, the largest and most variable component of population change is inter-provincial migration.

2.3 Net inter-provincial migration loss

The notion that changes in economic opportunities influence migration between provinces can be seen in Figure 9, as strong economic growth, increased employment, and favourable wages attract migration. New Brunswick experienced its greatest net migration loss between 1976 and 1981, a period corresponding with an economic boom in other provinces, mainly Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, leading to individuals travelling therefor economic opportunities. This trend was reversed during the economic recession of 1981 to 1986 as people returned to New Brunswick.

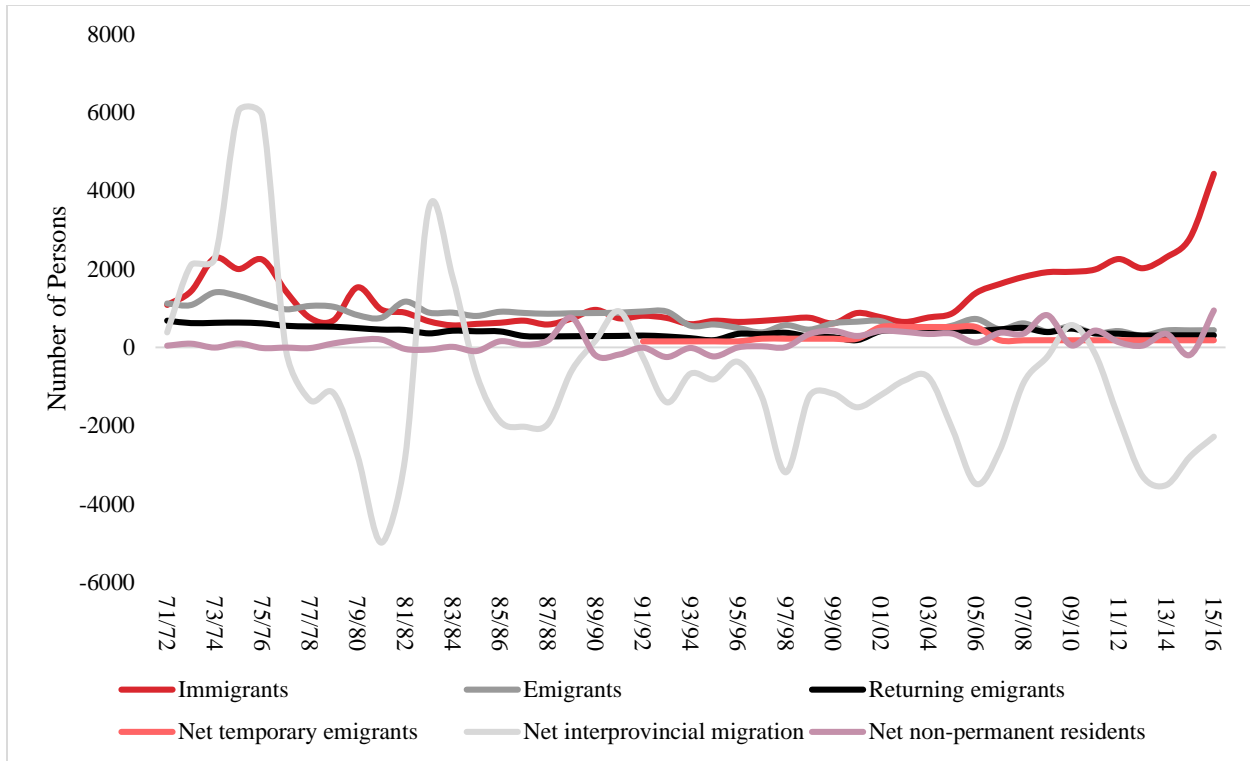


Figure 9: Components of migration in New Brunswick, 1971 – 2016.

Source: Statistics Canada, Cansim table 051-0004

Figure 10 highlights two trends that appear throughout this report: volatile net inter-provincial migration, and rising international immigration. Net interprovincial migration, as illustrated here, has represented the largest component of population change since the beginning of the period considered. However, since 2005—particularly following 2013—immigration has played an increasingly important role in population growth, and if sustained, serves to become the major driver of potential growth.

2.3.1 Key regions for inter-provincial migration loss

Migration rates in New Brunswick are not uniform; there is a wide degree of variation between regions. The highest out-migration values in New Brunswick were from the areas with large cities: Westmorland (Moncton area), York (Fredericton area) and Saint John regions, where migration numbers were higher in 2014/2015 compared to 2001/2002.

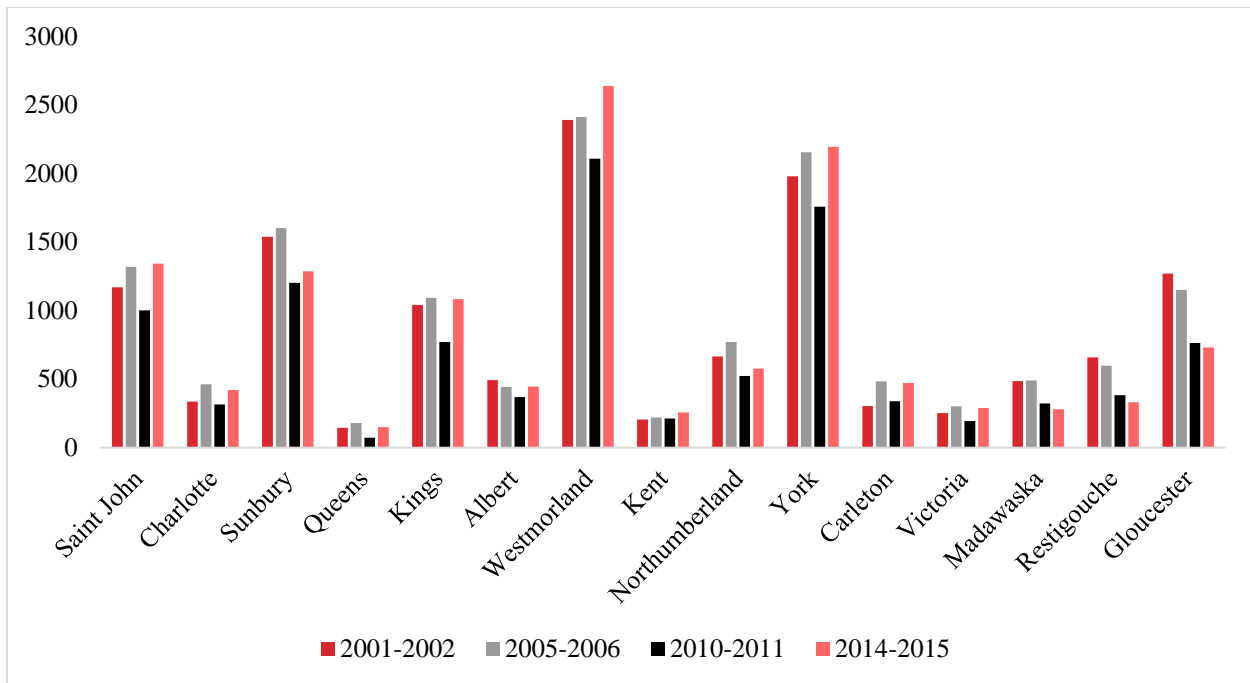


Figure 10: Interprovincial migration, selected years, by county

Source: Statistics Canada, Cansim table 051-0004

Figure 10 shows the interprovincial out-migration numbers for four periods. The difference between 2001-2001 and 2014-2015 out-migration levels is small in each of the 15 regions. However, in the 2010-2011 period the out-migration was reduced in most of the counties. The reduction coincides with an overall reduction in out-migration following the 2008/2009 financial crisis.

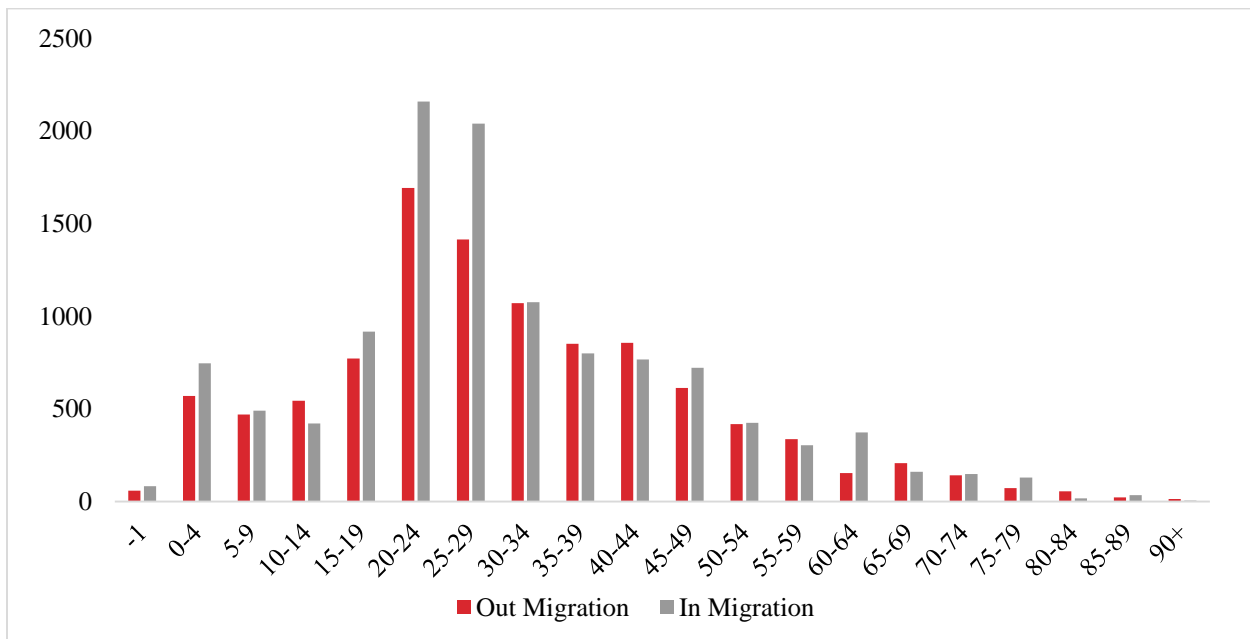


Figure 11: In-migration and out-migration comparison by age group, 2010/2011.

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 051-0004

Figure 11 compares out-migration and in-migration in the 2010/2011 period by age group. For this period, in-migration was higher than out-migration for the 20 to 29 year age groups, with other age groups being approximately the same. By comparison, Figure 12 shows that in the 2014/15 period, out-migration was considerably higher for the 20 to 29 year age groups. This difference is reflective of the overall shift in inter-provincial migration numbers (Figure 9) that fluctuate between years.

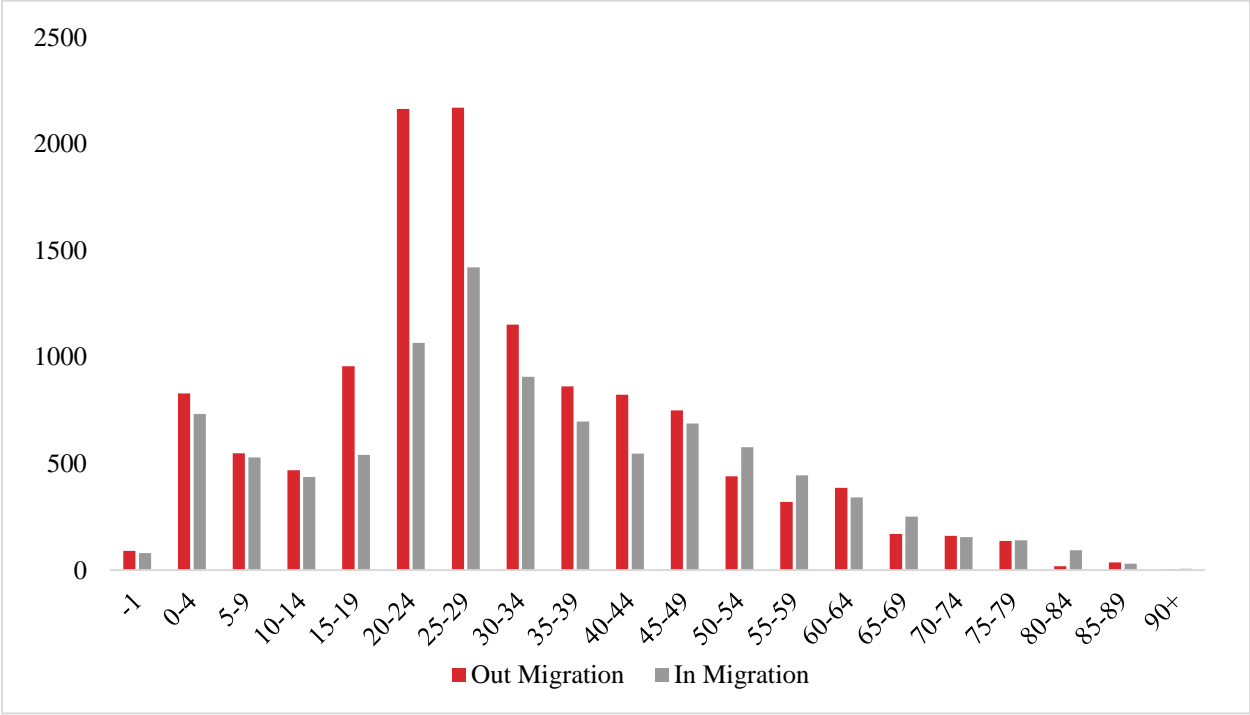


Figure 12: In-migration and out-migration comparison by age group, 2014/2015.

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 051-0004

As has been illustrated above, inter-provincial migration rates are the primary contributor to population change in New Brunswick. While overall out-migration numbers are high across the life-course, it is continued out-migration in the 20 to 29-year age groups that is driving this change

2.4 International immigration

Immigration is becoming a major component of population change in New Brunswick. While overall immigration levels have traditionally been low for New Brunswick relative to other provinces, this has change markedly in recent decades, particularly the last few years. While inter-provincial migration from New Brunswick is difficult to control, immigration is one component of population change that can be sensitive to policy. By attracting more international immigrants and maintaining a large proportion in the province, New Brunswick could potentially counter-balance continued provincial out-migration.

Part of the recent change in international immigration includes the type of immigrants that are being attracted to New Brunswick. Where previous immigration was predominantly among middle age groups, recent immigration has been focussed on families with children. These differences are visible in Figure 13, where the proportion of immigrants by age group for 2000/2001 showed the

highest rates between the ages of 20 and 34. In contrast, for the 2015/2016 period, it is estimated that the highest rates were between 0 and 9 years of age, with an additional lower peak from 30 to 39 years of age.

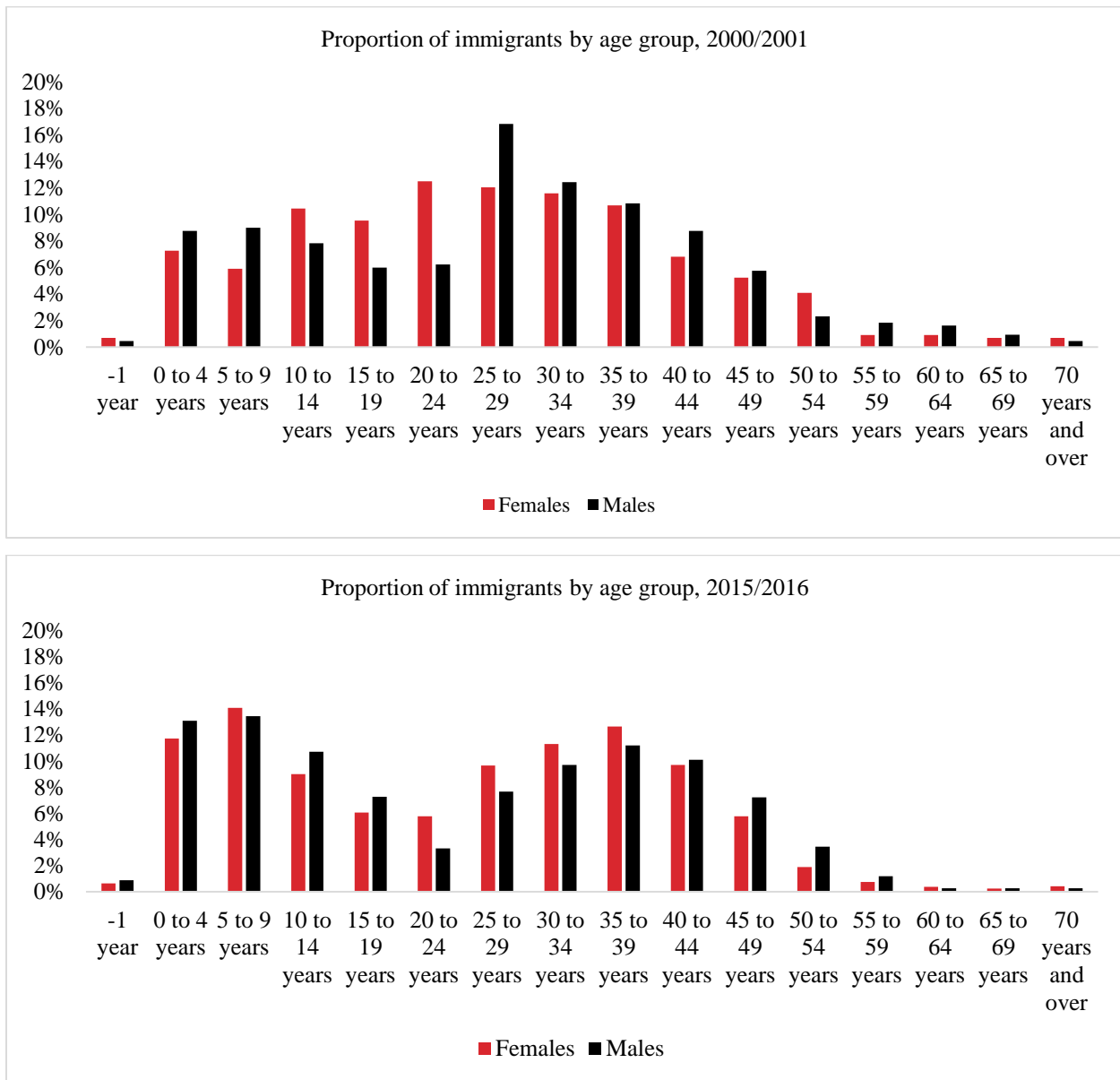


Figure 13: Proportion of immigrants to New Brunswick by age group, selected years.

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 051-0011.

While there has been a recent increase in the overall number of immigrants arriving in New Brunswick in comparison to the prior decades, the rates of immigrants arriving in New Brunswick are not unprecedented. When immigration to New Brunswick is examined as a proportion of all immigrants to Canada (figure 15), the proportion of Canadian immigrants landing in New Brunswick fluctuated between 0.9% and 1.2% in the latter part of the 1970s. This proportion steadily declined through the 1980s and 1990s, to a low of 0.3% in 1994. By the most recent year

of data available, it is projected that New Brunswick will accept approximately 1.4% of all immigrants to Canada, in line with the proportion in Nova Scotia and higher than in Prince Edward Island.

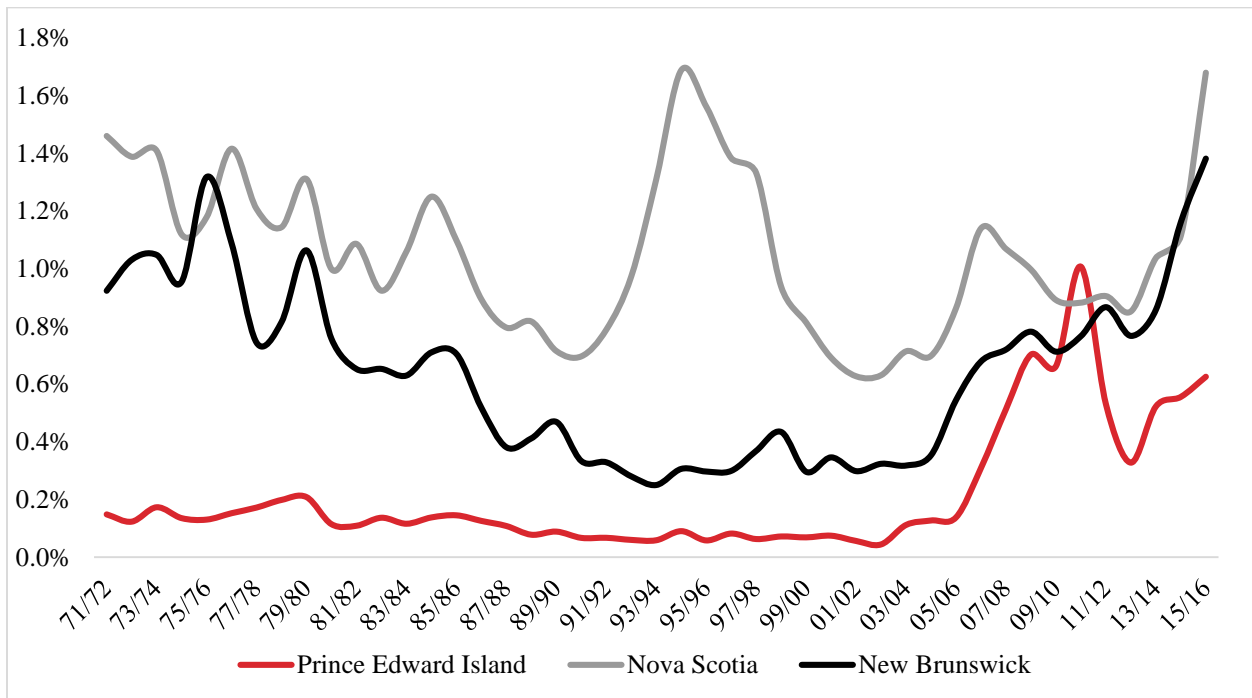


Figure 14: Proportion of all immigrants to Canada arriving in Maritime Provinces, 1971-2016.

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 051-0011.

A major issue in the Maritimes is the proportion of immigrants landing in the Province on arrival who stay in that Province. As seen in Figure 15, overall retention rates in the Maritimes are lower than other provinces. New Brunswick’s retention rate is 65.8%.

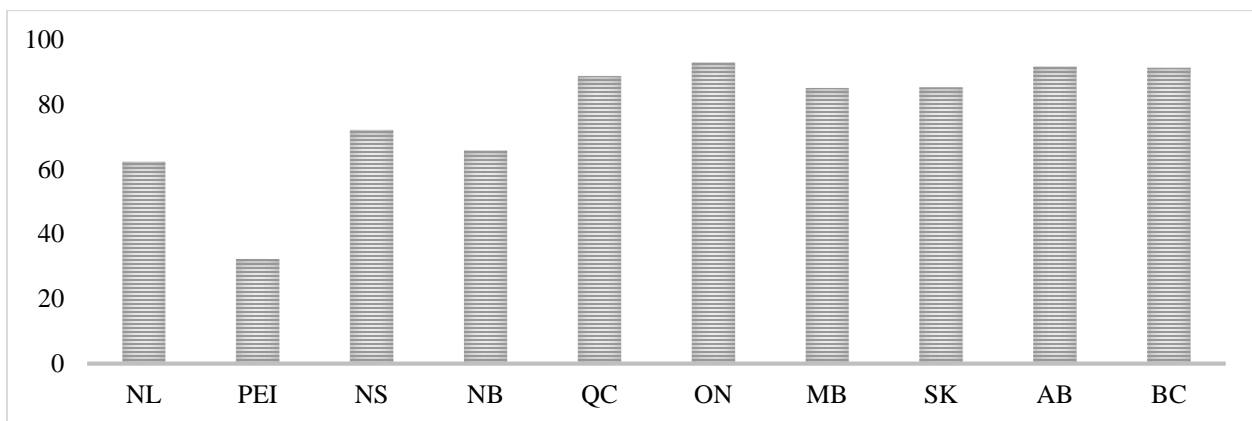


Figure 15: Immigrant retention rates (%), 2006-2011

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2014). *Interprovincial Mobility of Immigrants in Canada, 2006-2011*. (http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/ircc/Ci4-47-2015-eng.pdf)

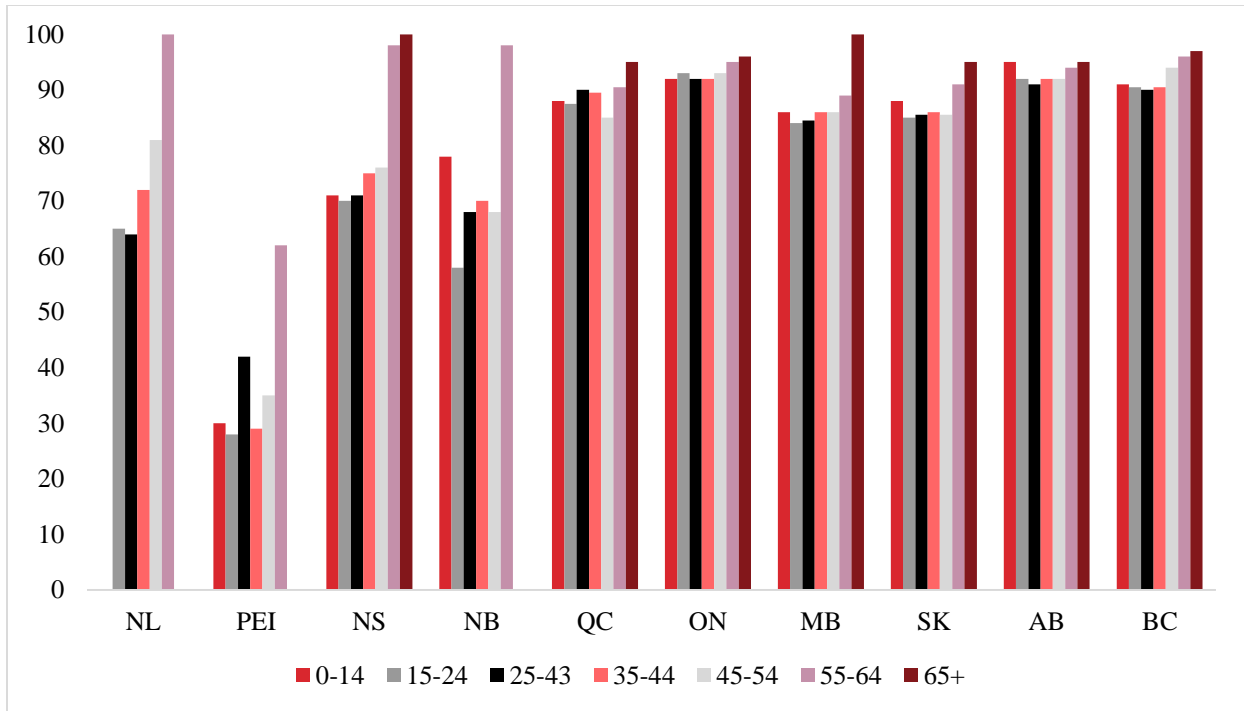


Figure 16: Retention rates (%) of immigrants landed 2006-2011, by Province of destination and age group at landing, 2011

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2014). *Interprovincial Mobility of Immigrants in Canada, 2006-2011*. (http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/ircc/Ci4-47-2015-eng.pdf)

The retention rates by age group shown in Figure 16 provide additional information for understanding migration in New Brunswick. Retention rates for the youngest and oldest age groups are high, with those in the middle age groups lower. The 15-24 age group is the lowest, and shows the largest decrease relative to other age groups as compared to the other provinces. This mirrors the out-migration rates by age group shown earlier, where it is within the 15-24 year age group that out-migration is highest.

Overall, the summary of immigration in New Brunswick shows promise, where continued increases in immigration, particularly of young families, stand to bring the growth rate of the province into the positive and slow the increase of dependency ratios. However, in order for this to be the case, there must be targeted policies and programs in place.

3 Summary and Conclusions

In this report we have identified several current population issues for New Brunswick:

- Population growth is only evident near the cities of Moncton, Fredericton & Saint John
 - New Brunswick has not seen the same urban growth as other provinces
- There is a continued aging of the population, with very high old-age dependency ratios
- Fertility continues to decline
 - Fertility of new immigrants is high
- Inter-provincial out-migration is driving population change in the New Brunswick
- Immigration has increased only recently but stands to provide growth

Opportunities to reverse the current trends of low growth, net inter-provincial migration losses, and traditionally low immigration exist in the areas of:

1. **Focussing the economy by:**
 - a. Building on growth in urban areas through targeted investments
 - b. Improve economic & physical links between the three primary cities
 - c. Moving away from ‘chasing’ big projects which have high volatility, to those that favour stability and allow for permanent movement of people
 - d. Investing in long-term employment rather than cyclical, resource-based jobs that contribute to high internal migration
2. **Focus on new immigration opportunities:**
 - a. Providing services, training, and cultural support for new immigrants & families
3. **Address continued out-migration by:**
 - a. Providing high-quality and low-cost educational opportunities for youth
 - b. Invest in cultural capital targeted towards youth and young families
 - c. Generate opportunities within New Brunswick, even if not within hometowns
 - d. Ensure level of government services matches that available in other provinces