



BACKGROUND

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS ON PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

**POPULATION STRATEGY '99
SEPTEMBER 1999**

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The Past	1
Factors in Population Growth	5
Natural Increase	5
Migration	7
The Present: A Demographic Profile of PEI	11
The Future	16
Conclusion	17
Endnotes	18

INTRODUCTION

On June 24, 1999, the Population Strategy Initiative was announced by Premier Pat Binns, in fulfillment of a commitment in the 1998 Speech from the Throne. Prince Edward Island, in common with other Western societies, is facing a set of demographic trends which hold major implications for its future, including a slowdown in population growth, an aging society, and changing family and household structures. It is essential to PEI's economic, social, and cultural development to understand these trends, and, to the extent possible, to influence them in positive directions.

In support of this goal, an eight-member independent panel, coordinated by the Institute of Island Studies at UPEI, will conduct research and hold public meetings across PEI to gather the views and advice of organizations and individual Islanders on how best to promote strong, stable, appropriate population growth for Prince Edward Island. This Backgrounder has been prepared to provide some data and analysis regarding population and demographic patterns and trends on Prince Edward Island, comparisons to other parts of Canada, and projections for the future.

The Backgrounder opens with an historical overview, looking first at broad trends over time; next at the influence of natural increase (births minus deaths); and then at migration trends over time. It then turns to an assessment of current demographic patterns on PEI, with emphasis on age distribution, educational levels, language groups, and family structures. It closes with an overview of various population projections for the future.

THE PAST

Historical Overview Human habitation of the Maritimes is thought to have commenced about 10,000 years ago, after the retreat of the latest Ice Age. Several successive cultures have been tentatively identified during the pre-historic period, with today's Mi'kmaq people emerging about 2,000 years ago. While peak population numbers are not known, it is estimated that at the beginning of the historical period in the early 1500s, PEI's aboriginal population was in the order of 300 people. It was once assumed that the Mi'kmaq were only seasonal residents on Prince Edward Island before the period of European settlement, but archaeological evidence now suggests that aboriginal peoples may have lived here on a year-round basis, migrating within the Island.

There is some evidence that Viking seafarers may have coasted Prince Edward Island around 1000 A.D., but European contact was sporadic even after explorer Jacques Cartier claimed the Island for the King of France in 1534. Although it gradually acquired a name, Île Saint-Jean, and was part of several land grants, the Island was left to the Mi'kmaq until after mainland Acadia was ceded to Great Britain in 1713. In 1720, a company headed by the Comte de Saint-Pierre brought out 200 French settlers to a site at the entrance of Charlottetown Harbour. The venture failed and most of the settlers left, but "Port LaJoye" remained the administrative capital of the colony. Many of the first permanent settlers were French fishermen, who helped make St. Pierre on the North Shore the largest settlement, but gradually groups of Acadian farmers began to filter into the area.

Île Saint-Jean was intended as a "granary" for the nearby French fortress of Louisbourg, but the colony struggled to feed itself. By 1752, its population was only 2,663 people. The number doubled over the next six years as refugees fleeing the disintegrating political situation on the mainland made their way to French

territory. After the fall of Louisbourg in 1758, British troops arrived to deport Île Saint-Jean's Acadian population back to France. At least half of the population were rounded up. Hundreds more fled the Island. A handful of families escaped expulsion by hiding; along with returning exiles, these formed the basis for today's Acadian population in Prince Edward Island.

The Island was confirmed as a British possession by the Treaty of Paris in 1763. Over the next six years, it was first surveyed into 67 townships, then distributed by lot to various claimants on the Crown's largesse, and finally erected as a separate colony with its own government. The provision for leasehold land tenure on the Island became increasingly anachronistic in a continent that was moving rapidly towards freehold, and the "absentee proprietors" of popular history became convenient scapegoats for the colony's slow development.

Although proprietors were obliged to settle their properties with "foreign Protestants," a great deal of the subsequent immigration into the colony was undirected. Moreover, it was never "foreign" and only sometimes "Protestant." Highland Scots dominated the early British colonization period. After 1830, waves of English and Irish settlers provided the bulk of the new colonists. By 1827, the population had reached almost 23,000. Fourteen years later, in 1841, it had doubled to over 47,000. By mid-century, the Island's frontier had closed as the available farmland filled up, and immigration largely ceased. Subsequent population growth was almost entirely through natural increase.

Changing trade patterns and national tariff policies within the new Dominion of Canada shrank the Island's export markets in the decades after the colony joined Confederation in 1873. At the same time, a lack of natural resources made it difficult for Island industry to diversify following the eclipse of the once powerful shipbuilding industry. As the number of Islanders began to exceed the carrying capacity of the mainly agricultural economy, out-migration overtook natural increase and the population declined, falling steadily from an 1891 peak of 109,000 to 88,000 in the late 1920s.

Many Islanders migrated in a two-step emigration pattern, some moving first to PEI's towns and then out-of-province, others through a pattern of yearly excursions to the prairie grain harvest or the lumber camps of eastern North America that ended in permanent resettlement. By the early 1900s, former Islanders were living throughout Canada and the United States, often acting as conduits to attract other migrants. They still thought of themselves as Islanders, however, and many of their descendants retained a strong sense of attachment to their Island heritage.

In the 1930s, the continent-wide devastation of the Great Depression reduced opportunities elsewhere and brought some people back home. Improving conditions after the Second World War, keyed to significantly increased federal transfers, spurred a period of population growth that continues today.

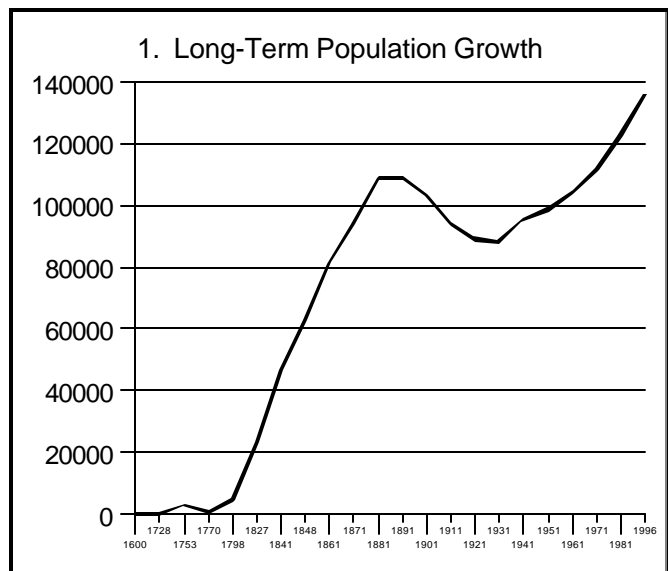
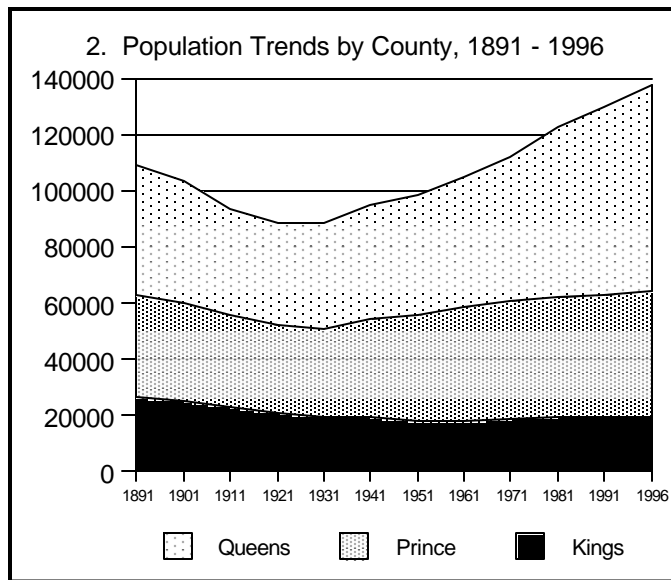


Chart 1 depicts these ebbs and flows of population over the past four centuries in Prince Edward Island.¹ Later in this paper, the elements of this population growth will be examined in greater detail.



Changing Settlement Patterns

The past century's waves of settlement and migration had very different effects on PEI's regions. In 1891, PEI was covered with a dense network of small mixed farms. The early decades of the twentieth century also saw the peak level of farm use of PEI's land base, with almost 90% of its 1.4 million acres in farms, compared to 47% today.²

As shown in Chart 2, left, the four decades of population decline following that peak took an uneven toll across the province, with Kings County's population falling by 28%, Queens County by 19%, and Prince County by 14%. The ensuing seven decades of growth have primarily benefited Queens County, and, to a lesser extent, Prince

County, while Kings County has seen minimal growth. Accordingly, Kings County's share of PEI's total population has fallen from 24% in 1891 to 14% in 1996, Prince County's share has stayed relatively constant at about 33%, and Queens County's share has increased from 43% in 1891 to 53% in 1996.

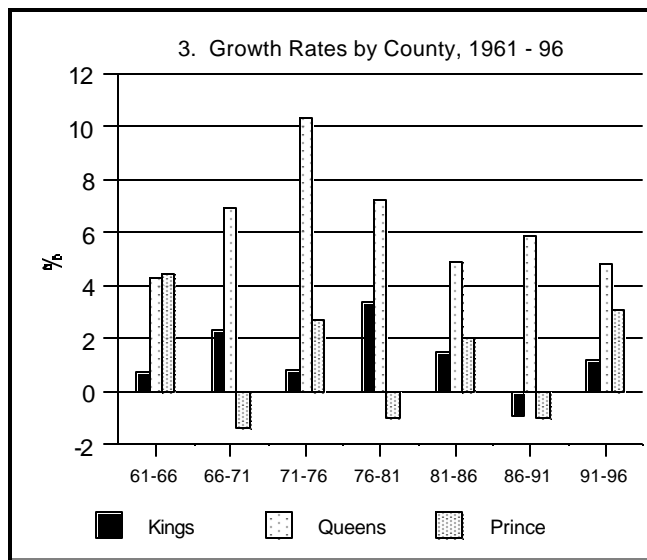
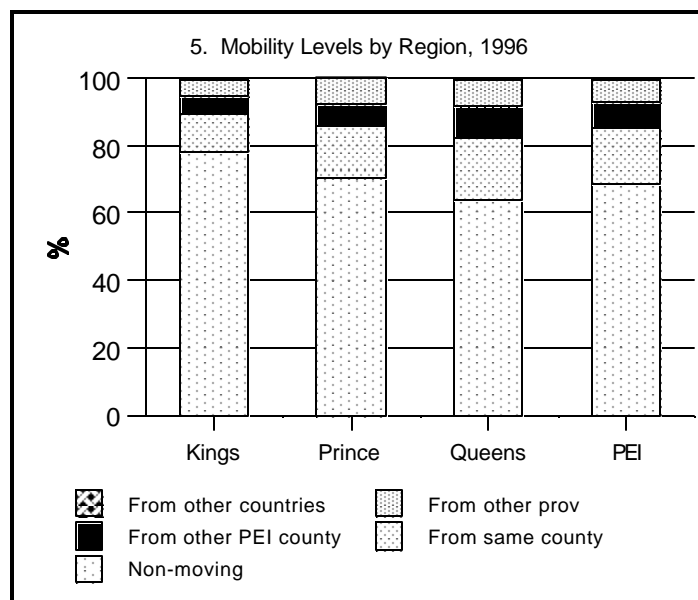
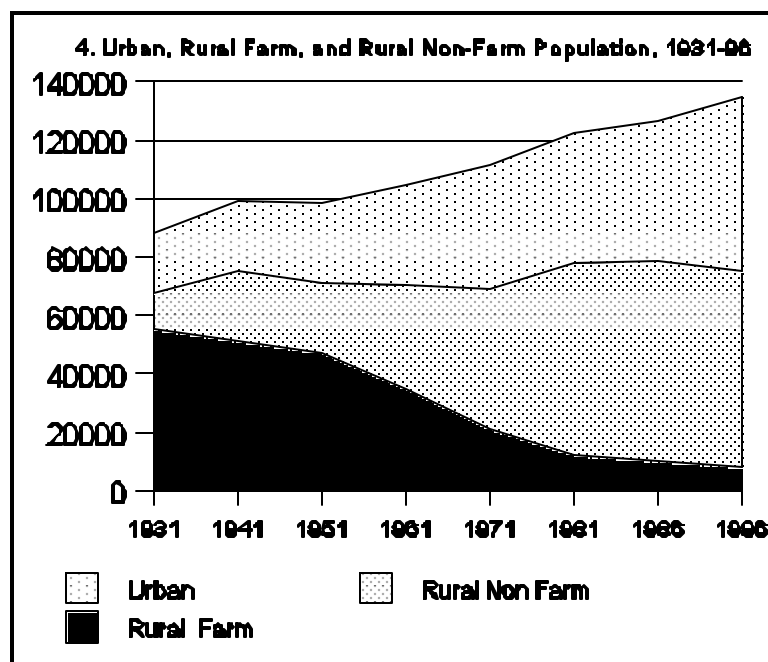


Chart 3, to the left, shows the different growth rates in the three counties over the past four decades. It indicates that Queens County has seen strong and steady growth, Prince County has alternated periods of growth with periods of modest decline, and Kings County has seen very low rates of growth throughout the period.

Rural-Urban Shifts

Across the continent, the twentieth century has seen a very steep decline in the proportion of population living and working on farms, and a major population shift from rural areas to urban centres. The former trend has certainly not passed Prince Edward Island by; however, the shift to urban areas is much less pronounced here than in many other jurisdictions, with strong growth in rural non-farm population until the early 1980s. Chart 4, right, depicts the evolution of these population groups during the past seven decades of population growth.³



Varying Mobility Patterns

One effect of these various trends has been to create a far more mobile population in some regions of the province than in others, as shown in Chart 5, left. In the central area of the province, greater proportions of the population have moved from elsewhere in all categories: within the county, from another county of PEI, from another province of Canada, and from another country. In the eastern and western ends of PEI, meanwhile, a much higher proportion of the population is likely to be living in the same place as in the previous census. Although Prince County appears to be similar to the provincial average, data at the census subdivision level indicate differences within the county, with East Prince

resembling Queens County in the mobility of its population, while West Prince is more similar to Kings County.

Interprovincial Comparisons Around the time it joined Confederation, Prince Edward Island accounted for 14.3% of the Maritime provinces' population, and 2.5% of Canada's population (bearing in mind that Newfoundland was not included in these proportions). Since that time, the combination of PEI's population decline and Canada's dramatic, migration-fuelled growth in the early years of the century has resulted in a sharp decline in these shares. In more recent decades, PEI's share of the Canadian population has continued to decline, although much less steeply than in the early decades of the century, while its share of

the Atlantic region's population (now including Newfoundland) has levelled out and then in recent years increased slightly. Forecasts call for both those trends to continue.⁴

Table 1. PEI's Share of Regional and National Population, 1881–2031						
	1881	1951	1971	1991	2011	2031
% of Region	14.3	6.1%	5.4%	5.5%	6.0%	6.3%
% of Canada	2.5%	0.7%	0.52%	0.46%	0.43%	0.37%

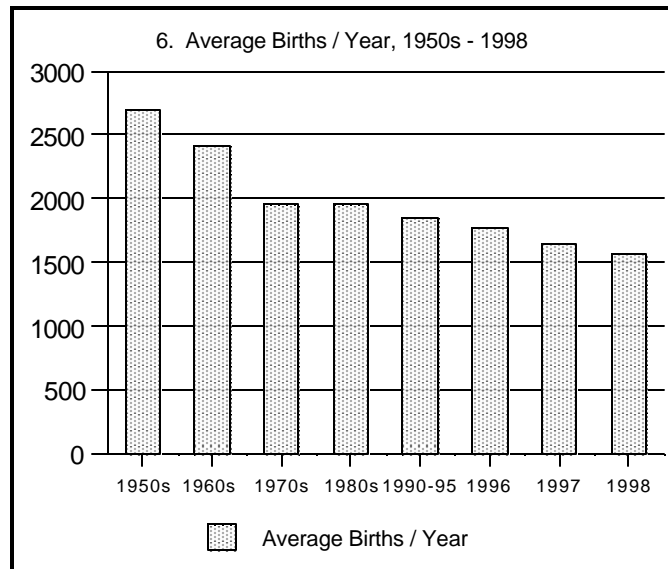
FACTORS IN POPULATION GROWTH

The key factors in population change are natural increase (the number of births minus the number of deaths), net migration, and the interplay between these elements. These factors are in turn driven by fertility rates, the age structure of the population, mortality rates, life expectancy, and rates of in- and out-migration. This section examines each of these factors in turn to identify their patterns over the past several decades and their influence on PEI's present and predicted population level.

Natural Increase

Fertility Rates Declining

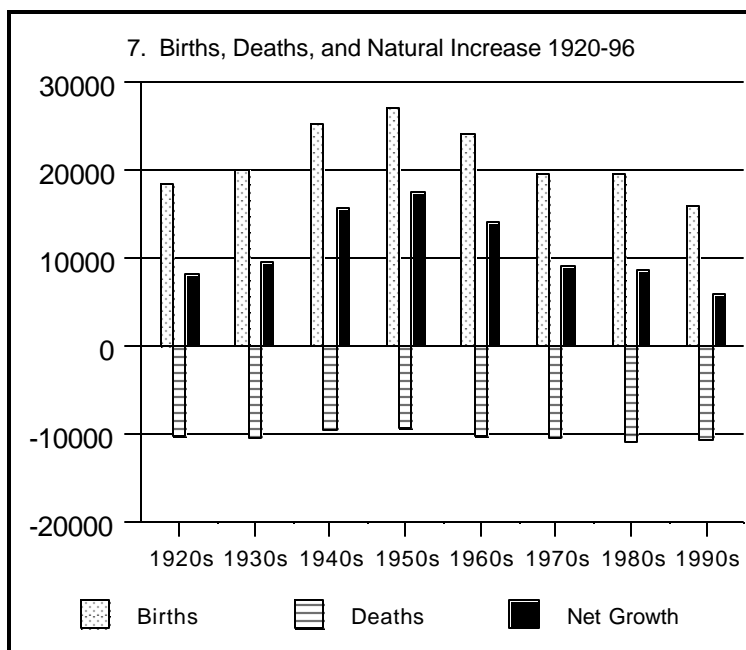
Births in any given year are a function of two factors: the number of women in child-bearing age categories, and the expected fertility rates of each of those categories. The well-known “baby boom” of the late 1940s to the early 1960s stemmed from a combination of these factors: a high rate of post-war family formation by a youthful population, combined with a significant increase in fertility rates. Across industrialized countries, the fertility rate began to decline in the early 1960s, falling sharply for the next decade and creating a “baby bust” in most jurisdictions. Fertility rates declined more slowly during the late 1970s and early 1980s, then experienced a modest “echo” in the late 1980s and early 1990s as the baby boom generation went through its peak childbearing years. As the youngest female baby-boomers passed through their childbearing years in the mid-1990s, the fertility rate began to fall again.



These trends, described more fully in the best-selling book *Boom Bust and Echo* by demographer David Foot, have been experienced in most industrialized jurisdictions, at slightly varying levels and times. Although PEI has not been immune to these trends, it has benefited from off-setting factors. Its fertility rates have consistently been above the regional and national average, exceeded only by the Prairie

provinces during the past several decades. As well, as described further below, PEI's in-migration has tended to include a large proportion of people in their late twenties and early thirties, thus increasing the size and proportion of PEI's population of peak child-bearing age. Together, these factors minimized the extent of PEI's "baby bust" in the 1970s and early 1980s. During the 1990s, however, PEI's fertility rate and its level of births have fallen substantially, mirroring more closely the trends of the rest of the region and the country. This decline in birth rates is depicted in Chart 6, above. It is notable that Islanders had 1,385 fewer births in 1998 than in the peak year of 1963, a decline of 47%, despite a population increase of 28,500, or 26%. Expressed another way, PEI had 11.5 births per thousand population in 1998, compared to 27.3 births per thousand population in 1963.

Deaths Increasing Slightly As with birth rates, death rates are a function of two factors: the number of people in each age grouping, and the life expectancy for those age groupings. Life expectancy and death rates in PEI are very similar to the national average, and have been far more stable over the years than the birth rate. During the past two decades, deaths have increased slightly, partly because growth in life expectancy has levelled off after improving throughout the twentieth century, partly because of an increased number of people in the older age cohorts where death rates are higher, and partly because the overall population is larger.



Slowing Natural Increase

The combined effect of these trends can be seen in Chart 7, left, which shows the cumulative births, deaths, and resulting net increase for each decade since the 1920s. (It should be noted that the data for the 1990s is incomplete as it only takes in the nine years from 1990 to 1998.) Key factors to note in the chart are the very high levels of births during the middle decades of the century, the decline since then, the slight increase in deaths, and the resulting decline in the net natural increase in population—down from a peak of over 17,000 during the 1950s to less than 6,000 so far in the 1990s. Moreover, the influence of net increase on population growth can be expected to decline

further as fertility rates continue to fall and death rates continue to increase. At some point, later than in many other industrialized societies, deaths are expected to outnumber births in PEI, resulting in population decline unless compensated for by net in-migration.

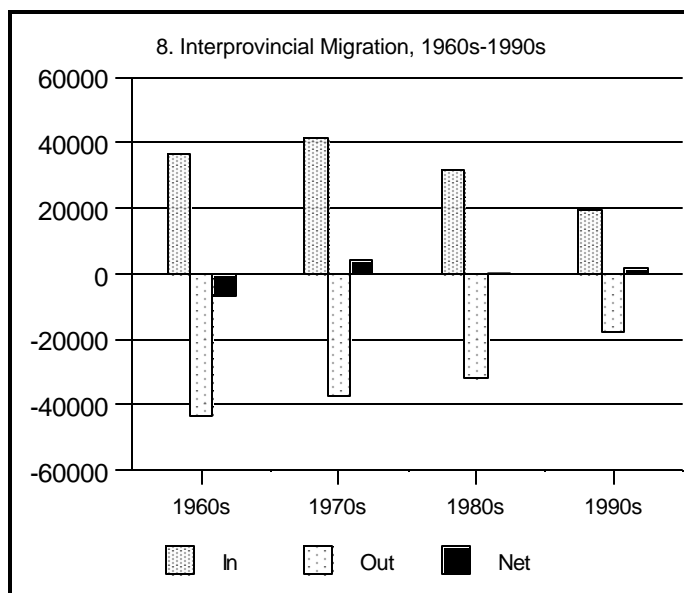
Migration

Population growth rates are also influenced by the rates of in-migration and out-migration. Indeed, throughout much of PEI's history, as outlined at the beginning of this paper, migration has played the dominant role in shaping its population, throughout the inflows of the 1800s and the outflows of the early 1900s. In recent decades, migration has played a smaller role in population growth; however, it has had significant impacts on the cultural and demographic characteristics of the population. Now and in the future, with the declining and eventually negative effects of natural increase described above, migration patterns can be expected to play a growing role in determining population and demographic trends, as they have already done in many industrialized jurisdictions.

Migration patterns are closely linked to the economic vitality of a region, often with some lag between economic indicators and demographic responses. Until the 1970s, PEI experienced substantial net out-migration. With the advent of the Comprehensive Development Plan, a sustained period of net in-migration took place throughout much of the 1970s. In the late 1970s, PEI had net out-migration as a number of Islanders migrated to Western Canada, drawn by the energy boom. The mid-1980s witnessed a slight but consistent in-migration as a strong Island economy compared to the West reversed the previous flow of migrants to Ontario and the West. The move of the federal Department of Veterans Affairs head

office from Ottawa to Charlottetown also contributed population to PEI. The closure of the Summerside air base was a factor in a large net out-migration in the early 1990s, followed by net in-migration, drawn by strong employment growth due in part to construction of the Confederation Bridge. With bridge completion, PEI saw net out-migration of over 800 people between July 1, 1997, and June 30, 1998, the most recent data available.⁵ On the whole, however, the fluctuations in migration have narrowed in the past two decades, resulting in smaller net effects for PEI. These migration patterns are further explored below.

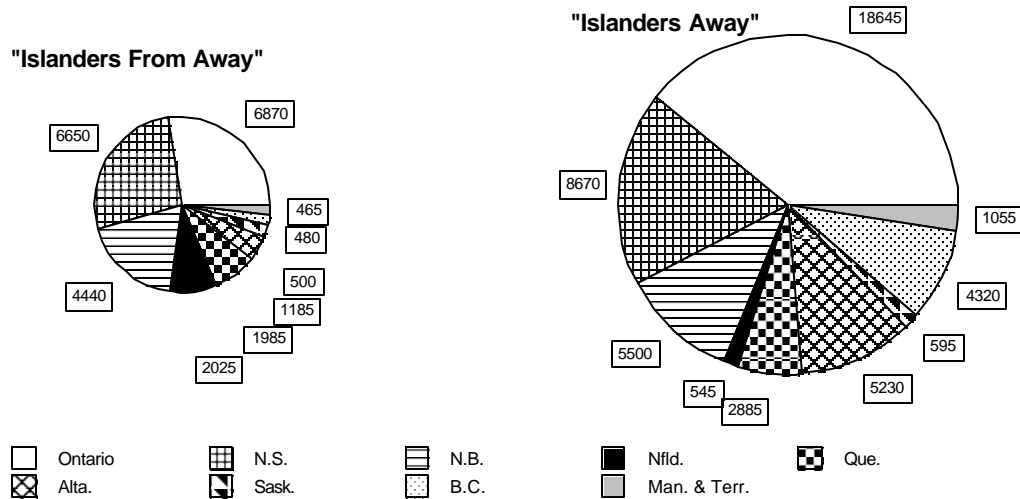
Interprovincial Migration As can be seen in Chart 8 on the preceding page, PEI has had substantial out-migration of its population to other provinces, and at the



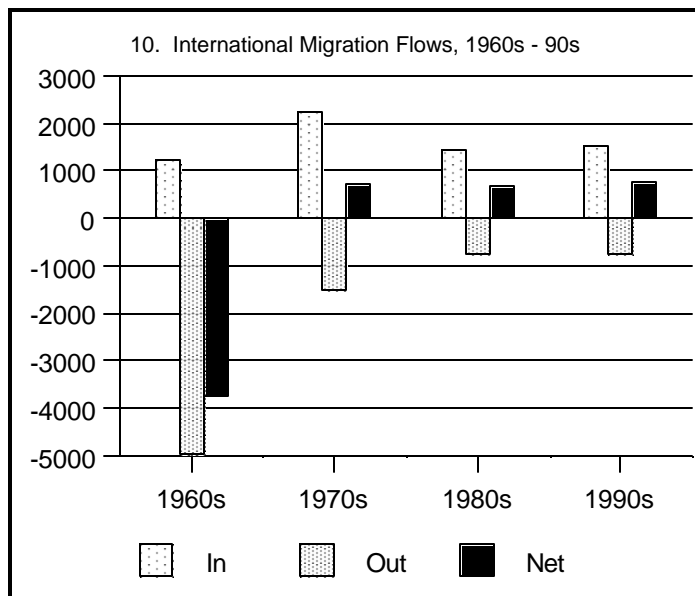
same time has had significant inflows from other parts of Canada; yet the net effect on the population level has been relatively small. Moreover, outflows, inflows, and net effects have all declined in the past two decades.

These migration patterns have, however, had substantial effects on the make-up of PEI's population at home and its population of "Islanders away." According to the 1996 census, almost 47,500 people born in PEI are now living in other provinces of Canada, while 24,600 people who are Islanders today were born in other provinces of Canada. The destinations of these "Islanders away" and the origins of these "Islanders from away" are shown in Chart 9, above. It indicates that Ontario has gained the most population from PEI, with almost three times as many former Islanders living in Ontario as former

9. Interprovincial Migration Patterns, 1996



Ontarians living in PEI. The other Maritime provinces follow, with a more equal exchange of population. Alberta and B.C. are magnets for Islanders, attracting about ten times as many Islanders as they contribute, attesting to the importance of economic conditions in migration. Quebec, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba trail as both destinations and origins of population. Newfoundland, meanwhile, runs counter to the trend, contributing almost four times as many people to PEI as it attracted away, again demonstrating the role of economic and employment conditions.⁶

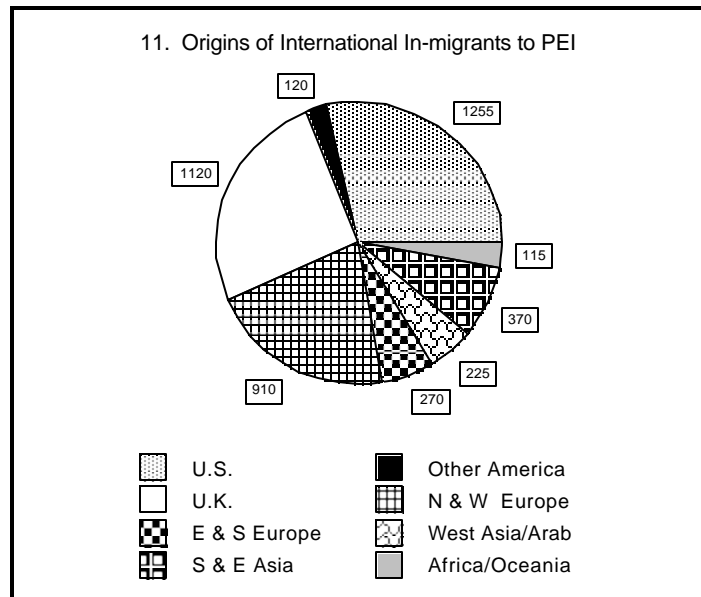


International Migration

Immigration from other countries has played a much smaller role in Prince Edward Island's recent history than in most other Canadian provinces. Indeed, in the 1960s, PEI experienced a significant loss of population to other countries. During the past three decades, however, PEI has benefited from a modest but steady gain of population from other countries, as shown in Chart 10, to the left. In addition to increasing PEI's population, these international in-migrants also enrich

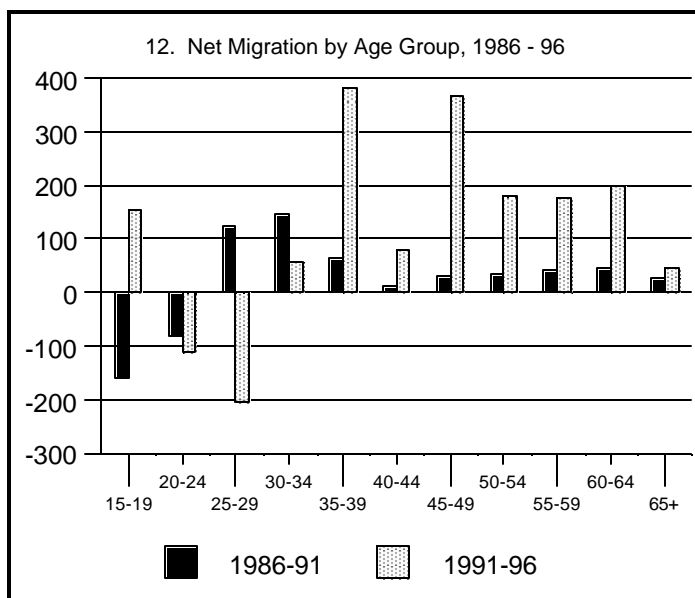
PEI's society and economy by contributing cultural diversity and linkages around the globe.

The origins of PEI's international citizens are shown in Chart 11, right. In total, at the time of the 1996 census from which the data is drawn, PEI had just under 4,400 residents, or 3.3% of its total, who had emigrated from other countries to PEI, with the majority coming from the U.S., the U.K., and Northern and Western Europe. These international in-migrants are most likely to have settled in Queens County.



A Mobile Population Stereotypes, both past and present, have tended to portray Prince Edward Island as a settled, stable place, outside the mainstream of population change. The data outlined above give the lie to this assumption, demonstrating that the Island has experienced substantial inflows and outflows of population throughout its history. Among Canadian provinces, only B.C. and Alberta have a higher proportion of population who have moved to the province from elsewhere; only Manitoba and Saskatchewan have a higher number of native born residents who have moved elsewhere.⁷ However, B.C. and Alberta have largely experienced inflows, and Manitoba and Saskatchewan have largely experienced outflows, while PEI has experienced both. These migration patterns now link the Island and

its people to every part of North America and beyond—a significant advantage in a global economy.



Demographic Characteristics of Migrants

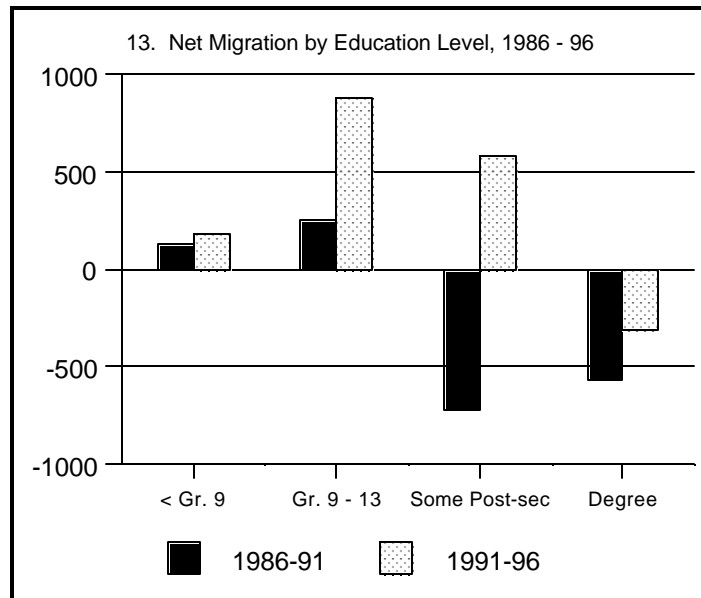
In addition to its contribution to the total population level, migration also affects the demographic profile of the population. This section examines the effects of net migration on PEI since 1986, with regard to age, education, and language group, drawing on data from the 1986, 1991, and 1996 censuses.

With regard to **age group**, during the 1986–91 period, out-migration was concentrated in the 15–24 age bracket,

with a small net loss in the over-65 age group, while PEI had net in-migration in all other categories, particularly strong in the 25–34 and 0–14 groups.

During the 1991–96 period, the pattern changed somewhat, with much stronger in-migration overall, and with population loss concentrated in the 20–29 and over- 70 age groups, and in-migration particularly strong among people in their late thirties, late forties, and sixties.

With regard to **education levels**, during the 1986–91 period, PEI had net in-migration of 480 people with less than Grade 12, and net out-migration of 1,390 people with grade 12 and above, including a net loss of 570 people with a college diploma and 565 people with a university degree. During the 1991–96 period, the situation improved somewhat, with a net gain of 580 people with a college diploma or some other post-secondary education. PEI continued, however, to experience a net loss of its most highly educated citizens, with net out-migration of 315 people with university degrees. These losses were concentrated in the younger age groups, with net out-migration of 150 degree-holders aged 20–24, 265 degree-holders aged 25–29, and 80 degree-holders aged 30–34. All groups aged 35 and over had net in-migration of people with university degrees.

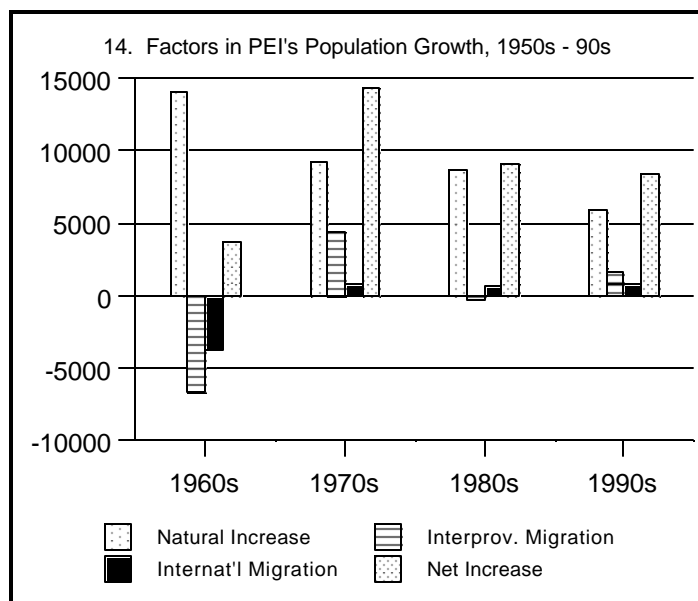


With regard to language group, migration is reducing the diversity of an already very homogenous population (as described later in Chart 16):

- C PEI gained 20 anglophones in the 1986–91 period and a further 1230 in the 1991–96 period, for a total gain of 1,250;
- C PEI lost 605 francophones in the 1986–91 period and gained 320 in the 1991–96 period, for a net loss of 285;
- C PEI lost 240 allophones (people who are neither anglophone nor francophone) in the 1986 period and a further 90 in the 1991–96 period, for a total loss of 330.

Taken together, these data suggest that net migration is offsetting the effects of an aging population for PEI by contributing young families; however, it is also reducing the pool of skilled human resources available to the PEI economy and reducing the cultural diversity of PEI’s society. These effects pose both challenges and opportunities for a population strategy to address.

Migration of Growing Importance As noted earlier, the net effect of migration has tended to be fairly small in recent decades; it is, however, taking on growing importance in building PEI's total population. Chart 14, below, summarizes the effects of natural increase and migration on PEI's population for the past four decades. It indicates that PEI experienced a significant loss of population both to other provinces and



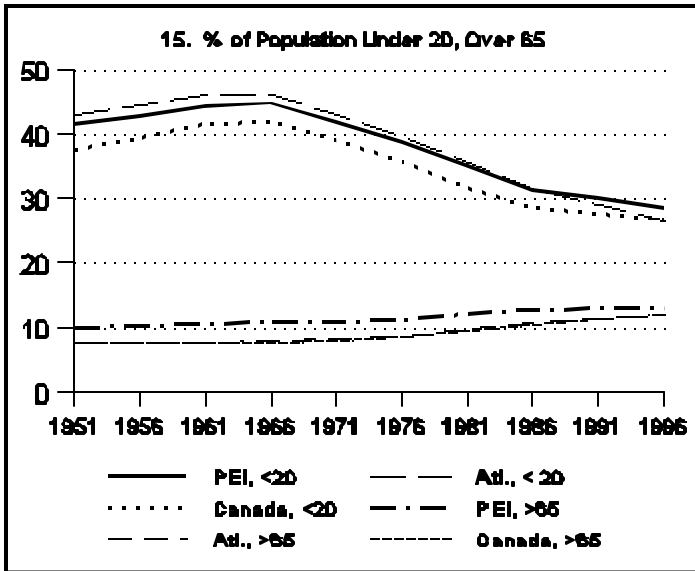
other countries in the 1960s. Even with the substantial natural increase of the final years of the baby boom, PEI saw only modest population growth in the 1960s. In the 1970s, natural increase fell, but in-migration increased strongly, resulting in substantial population growth. In the 1980s, growth abated slightly in natural increase and international migration, while PEI experienced a small net out-migration to other provinces. In the 1990s, natural increase declined again, while in-migration increased. In total, in the 1980s, net migration accounted for 4% of PEI's population growth, while in the 1990s thus far, it has accounted for 29%. With the likelihood of further declines in the role of natural increase, and eventually a negative impact as the population ages, the role of

migration will continue to grow in importance, further underlining the need for a population strategy for the province.

THE PRESENT: A DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PEI

An Aging Population The dominant demographic trend of our times is the aging of the population. Throughout history, the combination of a high birth rate and a high death rate has produced a population pattern shaped like a pyramid—broad at the bottom with the youngest age groups, steadily narrowing as mortality took its toll in each age category. The advances in public health and life expectancy throughout the twentieth century have had the effect of increasing the number of people in the older age categories, and “rounding” the pyramid in the middle cohorts. In recent decades, the baby boom has had a powerful effect on the age pattern of society as on every other aspect, creating a bulge moving up through the population pyramid over the decades. Popular culture heralds each new milestone for the baby boomers, the first of whom are now entering their fifties. In the coming decades, the continued aging of the huge baby boom cohort and the decline in fertility rates are expected to change the pattern of the population pyramid from the triangle we have known throughout history, to an almost rectangular shape. In a number of societies, seniors already outnumber youth; in many others, they will soon do so.

This aging trend is less marked on PEI than in many other jurisdictions. Historically, PEI has had a large proportion of its population in the under 15 and over 65 age groups, due to its high birth rate and the out-migration of its young people. For many years, in fact, PEI had a much higher proportion of seniors than the regional or national average, as shown in Chart 15, left. In recent years, Saskatchewan has taken the lead, with 14.7% of its population over the age of 65 at the 1996 census. Manitoba and New Brunswick



now exceed PEI's proportion of seniors as well. Continued high birth rates and immigration of young families have held down growth in the proportion of seniors in PEI's population, while other provinces have increased the elderly's share of population. At the other end of the age scale, PEI's population now has a higher proportion of children than any other province except the Prairie provinces, whose very youthful native population sways their numbers. Chart 15, left, depicts historical trends comparing PEI to the regional and national averages since 1951⁸, while Table 2 on the following page summarizes the current proportions for all Canadian provinces⁹.

Table 2. Population by Selected Age Groups for Canada and the Provinces, 1996 Census (%)			
	Under 15	15 - 64	65+
Canada	20.5	67.3	12.2
PEI	21.6	65.4	13
Newfoundland	19.9	68.3	10.8
NS	19.8	67.1	13.1
NB	19.6	68.8	12.6
Quebec	19.2	68.8	12
Ontario	20.6	67	12.4
Manitoba	22	64.3	13.7
Saskatchewan	23.1	62.2	14.7
Alberta	22.8	67.3	9.9
BC	19.7	67.5	12.8

Dependency Ratios A commonly used measure in demographic analysis is the “dependency ratio”—the number of youth and elderly in relation to the number of working age population, i.e., aged 20 to 64. The higher the ratio, the greater the number of “mouths to feed,” so to speak. PEI has historically had one of the highest dependency ratios in Canada, given the age structure depicted above, and projections call for this to continue. When the ratio is based on the number of people actually in the labour force, however, PEI fares much better due to its high level of labour force participation; by this measure PEI has exceeded the region since the mid-seventies and had overtaken Canada at the 1996 census. Projections call for PEI’s favourable ranking to continue well into the next century.¹⁰

Slight Differences Among Counties Within PEI, meanwhile, some differences exist among the counties with regard to the age structure. As can be seen in the Table 3 on the following page, Kings County has a higher than average proportion of youth and elderly, and Queens County a higher than average proportion of working age population. As with other indicators, however, data at the census subdivision level indicates differences within Prince County, with East Prince closer to the Queens County age structure, and West Prince similar to Kings County.

Table 3. Population by Selected Age Groups for Regions and PEI, 1996 (%)				
	Under 15	15-44	45-64	65+
PEI	21.6	44.2	21.2	13
Kings County	22.6	42.6	20.9	13.8
Queens County	21.2	44.8	21.3	12.7
Prince County	21.9	44	21.1	13

PEI's changing age structure has major implications for every aspect of its economy, society, and culture, and for every area of public policy— implications which the Population Strategy Panel will seek to explore more fully through its research and consultations.

Changing Family Structures Prince Edward Island, like other provinces, has seen significant changes in family structures during the past two decades. Traditional two-parent families with children at home still comprised a bare majority of all families at 50.3% in 1996, but account for a shrinking share of the total and indeed declined in absolute terms in PEI between 1986 and 1996. This category is, however, still well above the national average of 45%. Meanwhile, the number of now-married couples without children is increasing, to 27.5% of the total in 1996, reflecting the aging of the baby boom.

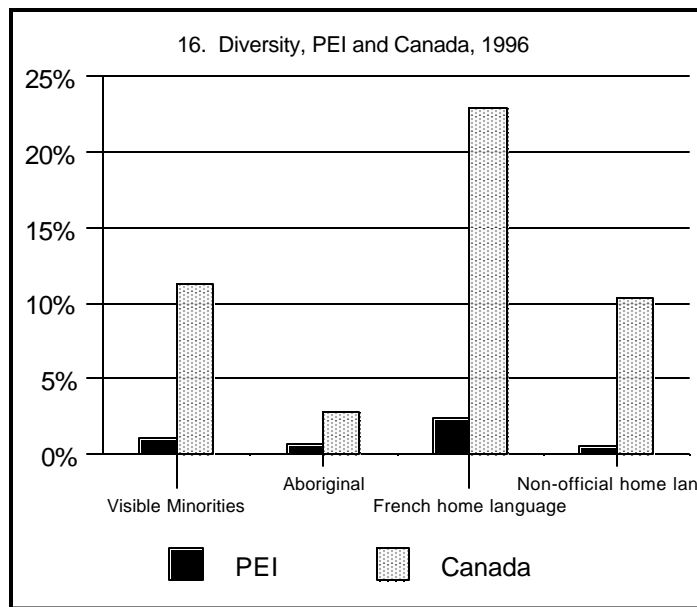
Families of common-law couples are still less common throughout the Atlantic Provinces than in the rest of Canada, and are the lowest in the country in PEI, at 7.7% of all families. However, this category is catching up, with particularly sharp increases in New Brunswick and Newfoundland, followed by PEI. While in most Canadian provinces, the number of common-law families with children is growing more strongly than those without children, PEI and Newfoundland are bucking the trend, with faster growth among common-law couples without children than among those with children.

Lone-parent families are also on the increase nationally, with male parents making up a very small share of the total but growing faster than female lone parents. In this area, PEI very closely mirrored the national picture in 1996, with 12.1% of all families headed by lone female parents and 2.4% of all families led by lone male parents. Growth among lone parents was slightly slower in PEI than for Canada as a whole between 1986 and 1996.¹¹ Overall, these data suggest that a growing share of younger cohorts are bearing and/or rearing their children outside a traditional married two-parent family structure, a trend which holds implications for many policy areas including health, education, and social services.

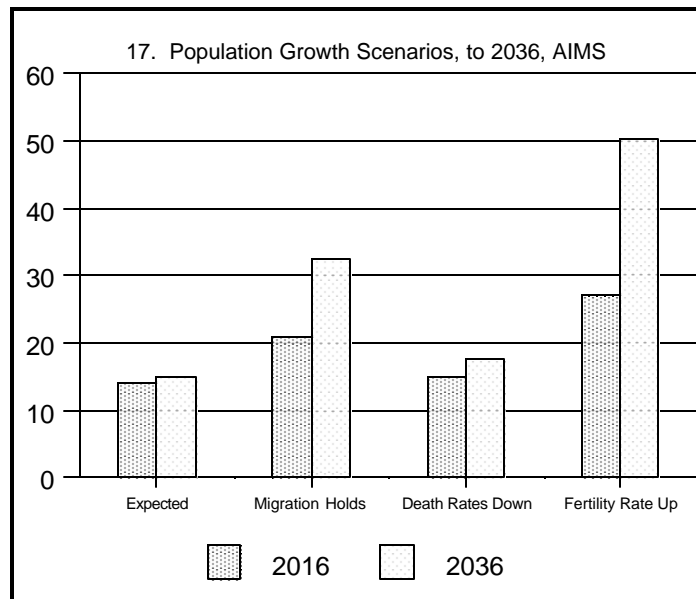
Education Levels Prince Edward Island has made substantial gains in the education levels of its people during the past three decades; however, it still lags behind the country and to a lesser extent some of its sister provinces in the region in its proportion of highly educated citizens. As well, differences in education levels exist among PEI's counties, such that Queens County is well above the national and regional averages in the education levels of its citizens, while Kings and Prince Counties are lower. These categories and the differences among them are summarized in the following table.

Table 4. Comparative Education Levels, 1996 Census (% of Population over Age 15)						
	PEI	Kings County	Queens County	Prince County	Other Atl. Provinces	Canada
< Grade 9	13.3	17.5	9.1	17.9	14.5	12.1
< Grade 12	28.3	32.6	24.9	31.7	26.6	22.7
Grade 12	10.4	11	9.7	11.3	11.5	14.3
Trades Cert./Dip.	3.4	3.2	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.7
Total, El- Sec. Only	55.4	64.3	47.1	64.2	55.2	52.8
Some Coll.	4.3	4.2	4.6	3.8	4.0	6.5
Diploma	18.2	16.6	19.7	16.2	18.8	17.7
Some Univ.	11.5	8.2	14.1	8.5	10.6	9.7
Univ. Degree	10.6	6.5	14.3	6.6	10.5	13.3
Total with Post-Sec.	44.6	35.7	52.9	35.8	44.8	47.2

As might be expected, the younger age cohorts exhibit significantly higher levels of education than do the older cohorts, reflecting the major improvements in access to education achieved in PEI during the 1970s and 1980s. Data on participation in education by Island youth are mixed, indicating good progress on reducing secondary school drop-out rates; slower growth than elsewhere in the proportion of youth attending university, such that PEI is slipping from its previously leading position in this area; and faster than average growth in the proportion of youth attending college. As a result of these trends, PEI is now in the middle of the pack with regard to educational participation of its youth; however, as noted above, the effect of migration is a net loss of population with post-secondary education and a net gain of population with less than high school. As such, migration is offsetting the effects of improved educational access and participation to some extent.



Diversity As noted previously, PEI has a very homogenous population compared to the rest of Canada. In this respect, its profile is somewhat similar to Newfoundland, while Nova Scotia has a higher proportion of visible minorities and New Brunswick of course has a much higher proportion of francophones. Chart 16, to the left, draws on data from the 1996 census to compare the population share of various groups in PEI and Canada. The data indicate that PEI's share in each case is one-tenth or less the Canadian level, except for the aboriginal population, whose share is one-quarter the Canadian level.



THE FUTURE

Population projections for PEI's future are available from a number of sources, including the provincial government's Statistics, Economics, and Federal Fiscal Relations Division in the Department of Provincial Treasury, as well as Statistics Canada. These projections are shaped by the assumptions used on the factors discussed earlier: fertility rates, death rates, and migration patterns. Minor adjustments in these factors can lead to significant variations in forecasts, which broaden over time.

Population Growth Scenarios A recent study by the Atlantic Institute of Market Studies (AIMS) examined population trends in the Atlantic provinces, and developed forecasts for future growth, based on various assumptions. Their growth projections for PEI are shown in Chart 17, above, which shows the total number of people added to PEI's 1996 population of 136,200 by 2016 and 2036. The first scenario, far left, is their expected future: it indicates modest growth to 2016, virtually levelling off for the next twenty years to a 2036 level of 151,000, up 15,000 people from the 1996 level of 136,000. The second scenario assumes that the migration patterns of 1992–1997 continue to prevail—an optimistic prediction for PEI given the strong positive effect of Confederation Bridge construction during those years. This scenario suggests continued population growth throughout the four decades, reaching a level of 168,500 in 2036.

The third and fourth scenarios focus on the factors in natural increase. The third scenario assumes that further improvements are achieved in bringing down death rates and improving life expectancy. As can be seen above, this scenario achieves only a modest improvement over the base forecast, with a total population of 154,000 by 2036. The fourth scenario—a rise in fertility rates—has the most dramatic impact on population growth, achieving strong continuing growth with a population level of 187,000 by 2036. While these projections are open to debate, they offer useful insights into the potential impact of the various strategies and interventions that could be pursued to promote population growth.

In all four population scenarios, as well, the AIMS study predicts that PEI will experience a lesser degree of aging than the other three Atlantic Provinces, achieving an age structure in both 2016 and 2036 that is much closer to the Canadian average than to the regional average. Nonetheless, the proportion of Islanders over 65 is forecast to double by 2036, from 13% to 26%, while the proportion of Islanders under 20 is forecast to fall from 29% to 20%.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that population and demographic trends hold major implications for Prince Edward Island's future. Over the coming months, the Population Strategy Panel will seek to identify these implications more fully through further research, and to explore the choices they pose for PEI, through public consultations. The consultations are intended to gather the advice and views of Islanders on some critically important questions—the appropriate rate and level of population growth that would be desirable for PEI; whether PEI should take action to influence population trends in support of these goals, and if so, what priorities it should pursue; and what strategies and interventions it might use to promote strong, stable, appropriate population growth for the province.

ENDNOTES

1. *Prince Edward Island Statistics: Past and Present* (Economics, Statistics, and Fiscal Analysis Division, PEI Department of Finance, 1990) Tables 1 and 2; and *PEI 25th Annual Statistical Review 1998*, (Economics, Statistics, and Federal Fiscal Relations Division, PEI Department of Provincial Treasury, 1999), Table 1.
2. *PEI Statistics: Past and Present*, op.cit, Table 43, and *25th Annual Statistical Review 1998*, p. viii.
3. *Ibid.*, *PEI Statistics past and Present*, Table 4, and *Annual Statistical Review 1998*, p. viii.
4. AIMS study.
5. Statistics Canada, CANSIM, Matrices 5772 to 5778.
6. Statistics Canada, 1996 Census, Nation Series, Edition 3.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Atlantic Institute of Market Studies, *Population Change in Atlantic Canada* (Halifax, 1998) Table 1.
9. Statistics Canada, 1996 Census.
10. AIMS, op.cit., pp. 33.
11. Statistics Canada, 1996 Census.