Environmental Health Indicators for New Zealand

EHI #3

March 2011

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POPULATION DENSITY

Population density is an important driving force for environmental health, as it can affect the environment and ecosystems in both positive and negative ways. High population density can promote sustainable development if planned for appropriately. For example, high density areas often benefit from better provision of services such as public transport systems and reticulated water supplies.

However, high population density may also indicate that there is a heavy burden on the surrounding environment. Rapid changes in population density may also place pressures on the local infrastructure and services (Briggs 1999). Furthermore, in some cities, the large number of people in high density areas may lead to more traffic on the roads, which can increase air pollution.

The following update from the EHI project presents data on the population density in 2006 by territorial authority (TA), measured as the number of people per square kilometre (people/km^2).

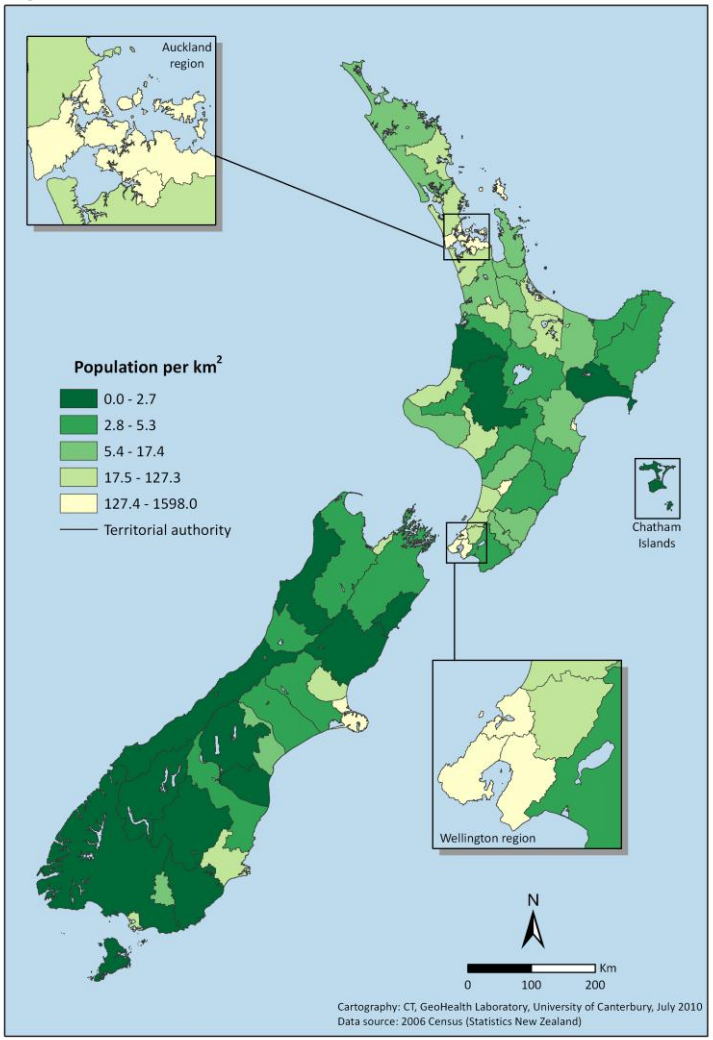
Although New Zealand has an overall population density of 15 people per square kilometre, the density varies markedly as a large amount of the land is covered in national parks, and the population concentrated in cities and towns.

Figure 1 presents the population density by TA for 2006. In general, the highest population densities were in the main urban areas. The three most densely populated TAs were:

- North Shore City 1594 people per km^2
- Hamilton City 1319 people per km^2
- Wellington City 619 people per km^2

To a certain extent, these results are dependent on the land area size and urban nature of the TA, as well as where administrative boundaries are located.

Figure 1: POPULATION DENSITY BY TA, 2006, PEOPLE PER SQUARE KILOMETRE



References

- Briggs D. 1999. Environmental Health Indicators: Framework and methodologies. Geneva: World Health Organization.