

## New Zealand's Changing Migration Pattern: Effects of and Attitudes to the Growing Asian Population

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As a result of new immigration policies put in place in 1986-87 to attract skilled and entrepreneurial permanent residents to New Zealand, migrants from Asia, from China and India in particular, have increased dramatically, overtaking those from the UK and Ireland, the traditional sources, and now the largest overseas-born group of people is Asian. This is having a marked impact on the demography of New Zealand and giving rise to discussion about the future of the country's hitherto essentially bicultural policy framework as the number of Asian residents fast grows to the point at which it will overreach that of the indigenous Māori population. This paper will outline the nature of the demographic changes and discuss some of the most tangible effects of the growth in the Asian population.

### 1. Introduction

Asian migration to New Zealand is not a new phenomenon, beginning as it did in the second half of the 19th century with the arrival of Chinese gold diggers. Until the latter part of the 20th century, however, the country's preferred immigrants were "European settlers, particularly those of British, Protestant Anglo-Celtic origins" (Ward & Masgoret, 2008, p.227). A major shift in this migration pattern occurred after 1986-87 when changes in immigration policies were put in place to recruit skilled and entrepreneurial permanent residents who could be expected to contribute to the country's economic growth (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999). These policies attracted migrants from new sources and the number of Asian immigrants began to increase. As New Zealand's expert on demography and immigration, Paul Spoonley (2014), explained, at first these Asian immigrants were mainly from Hong Kong, Korea and Taiwan, but after a period during the late 1990s when the number of Asian immigrants decreased somewhat as a result of an economic downturn in Asian countries and the discouraging effect of New Zealand's anti-immigrant politics of the time, immigration from China and India increased dramatically from 2000.

Spoonley (2014), using data from the 2013 census (see Statistics New Zealand,

2013), originally scheduled for March 2011 but postponed until 2013 after the February 2011 Christchurch earthquake, made the magnitude of this increase in arrivals from Asia clear by noting that “[a] little over one-quarter of all New Zealand residents have been born overseas, but the growth in the size of Asian communities — both in terms of birthplace and ethnicity — is the most obvious factor”. He elaborated by saying that in 2001 the largest overseas birthplace population was from the UK and Ireland, while in 2013 people from these countries made up only 25 per cent of this population and that, at 32 per cent, people from Asia now made up the largest group of overseas born people in New Zealand.

Spoonley (2014), remarking that “[t]he release of the initial 2013 Census data has highlighted some interesting—and intriguing—trends for New Zealand”, reported that when looked at as percentages of the New Zealand national population the number of Asian-born people had almost doubled from 6.6 per cent in 2001 to 11.8 per cent, or 471,700 people, in 2013, and that the Māori population was 15 per cent, or 598,600 people, as compared to the Pacific population of 295,900 people. The estimated population of New Zealand in 2013 was a little over 4,400,000.

The extent of this diversification of the population is revealed by immigration trends between the 2006 and 2013 censuses as given in Asia New Zealand Foundation’s report, “Asian Auckland: The Multiple Meanings of Diversity” (Asia New Zealand Foundation, 2015a). According to the figures given, in absolute terms, the largest increase of people of Asian origin was of about 24,000 from India, a proportionate increase of 55 per cent. The growth in the number of people from The Philippines, at 144 per cent or about 22,000 people, amounted to the greatest proportionate increase from any country. People born in China made up the next largest increase from an Asian country, showing a net gain of about 11,000 people, an increase of about 14 per cent. There was also an increase of about 15,000 Indo-Fijians born in Fiji, and increases of 1,000 or more people from Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam, as well as smaller increases from various other Asian countries.

Spoonley (2014) clarified the nature and extent of this growth in the population of New Zealand by explaining that “[t]he number who identify with orthodox Christian religions continues to decline, but those who are Buddhists, Sikhs, Hindus or Muslims are growing” and that “Maori is the second most-spoken language after English, followed by Samoan, Hindi and Mandarin”.

## 2. Asian Immigration and Changing Auckland City

Auckland, as New Zealand’s largest city, has attracted a large share of the migrants coming to New Zealand since the 1986-87 changes in immigration policies. According to Asia:NZ’s (2015a) report on Asian Auckland, since this time the Asia-born population of the city has increased by about 16 times, reaching more

than 200,000 usual residents by 2013. In the same period the Pacific-born population has more than doubled while the UK and Ireland population has declined slightly.

This increase in the Asian population has affected different areas of Auckland in different ways. In Asia:NZ's (2015a) report it was explained that in some areas the new residents are largely Chinese or Indian, but in others there is a mixture of these and other Asian groups, for instance Korean and Filipino. Newly developed housing areas in and around Botany Downs and Dannemora, possibly unfamiliar to older European residents of Auckland, have populations that are between 60 and 80 percent Asian, and houses of the kind often preferred by Chinese, which "commonly feature large pillared entryways (said to be an element of feng shui) and occupy large proportions of the sections on which they sit" (as cited in Asia:NZ, 2015a, p.31). The population of these areas consists of a mixture of Chinese, who are typically in the majority, Indians, and Koreans, and in smaller numbers, Filipinos, Sri Lankans, Cambodians and Vietnamese. Indian immigrants are also to be found in concentrations in less expensive suburbs such as Papatoetoe and Manurewa in environments with a somewhat different look to those of the China-born populations. Immigrants making the move to New Zealand in the interests of the education of their children have often chosen older, relatively expensive suburbs like Remuera and Epsom which are zoned in a way that allows their children to attend the more prestigious public schools. These suburbs have notably large Asian populations. As well as the suburbs named above, which have particularly high concentrations of Asian residents, there are fifteen other areas with more than 50 per cent Asian populations.

Asia:NZ's (2015a) report described how the shops, restaurants, markets, festivals, places of worship and decorative art forms to be seen in areas of Auckland with significant concentrations of new Asian residents give them quite a different atmosphere to other parts of the city. It was noted, too, that in such areas languages other than English can often be heard on the streets and seen on signs, and Asian language print media and radio stations, as well as subscription TV channels, are available in Mandarin and Cantonese.

Of particular note is the way the character of Sandringham and nearby Dominion and Balmoral Roads, long the home of Pacific and Māori populations, has changed with the addition of Chinese and Indian residents. There is now "a distinctive 'Indian food neighbourhood' along Sandringham Road, especially in the main retail area", offering many varieties of Indian food in restaurants as well as in three Indian supermarkets. And along Dominion Road "Asian' shops are densely clustered along several stretches...and particularly notable are the number and variety of Chinese restaurants, representing many different regional cuisines of China, Taiwan and nearby regions" (Asia:NZ, 2015a, p.35).

The influx of migrants to Auckland and other large New Zealand cities has not come without creating issues which have been given some somewhat negative attention in the media, particularly in the case of Auckland. For example, “[t]he “Asian invasion” stereotype is enduring, with more New Zealanders saying Asians are to blame for rising house prices” is how Downes (2015, March 31) began an article referring to Asia:NZ’s (2015b) findings as reported in “New Zealanders’ Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples — 2014 Annual Survey”. Downes’ article focused first on concerns about the influence of Asian buyers on the housing market and the effects of Asian investment revealed by the survey. She reported that overall “39 percent of 1000 respondents agreed with the statement that Asian people were responsible for rising house prices, up from 33 percent in 2013”, and that “[t]his view was most likely to be held by Auckland residents, at 54 percent”. She also reported that the survey showed that “[m]ore people agreed that New Zealand was allowing too much investment from Asia, at 41 percent up from 36 per cent in 2013, while there was less agreement that investment from Asia would have positive impacts on New Zealand’s economy, at 64 percent, down from 74 percent in 2013”.

Asia:NZ’s (2015b) own report on this survey gave these same figures, but made it clear from the beginning, as Downes’ article did only later, that of those surveyed “the largest proportion (53 percent) was positive about the impacts of immigration on New Zealand”, stating also that “a quarter (25 percent) believed that immigration will have negative impacts” (p.7). The report summarized these conflicting accounts by saying that “[d]espite deepening concerns about investment from Asia and the influence of Asian buyers on the housing market, a number of the 2014 survey findings suggested that New Zealanders felt more positive towards or connected with people from Asia than in previous surveys” (p.24). As evidence of this, it was indicated that 50 per cent of New Zealanders had ‘a lot’ or ‘a fair amount’ to do with Asian peoples and cultures, the first increase in five years and up from 44 per cent in 2013. In Auckland the increase was up from 53 per cent in 2013 to 61 per cent in 2014.

Asia:NZ’s (2015a) report described some of the aspects of Auckland’s cultural diversity that many of the city’s non-Asian inhabitants have come to appreciate. The most notable example is the growing number of Asian food outlets which “is sometimes described as part of a ‘diversity dividend’ resulting from the increased number and diversity of migrants coming to New Zealand” and that “[t]his ‘dividend’ tends to refer to the benefits of immigration for the wider population, and in the case of food is made conspicuous by the increasing adoption of Asian cuisines by non-Asian populations” (p.32). The marked but unquantifiable increase in the number of Asian restaurants and cafes which have also become a much appreciated aspect of the living environment of Aucklanders in general was also

remarked on.

The report also noted how ethnic festivals have become regular events in Auckland. The biggest is the three-day-and-night Lantern Festival, held during Chinese New Year, which “attracts large crowds representing the many (dominant and minority) ethnicities of Auckland, who come for the lanterns, music, dance, food and retailing” (p.36). This Festival is supported by the Asia New Zealand Foundation, as is Diwali, the Indian ‘festival of lights’, to which “Indians and non-Indians alike are attracted to the food, music, dance and retail stalls, with the highlight possibly being the annual Bollywood dance contest” (p.36). Asia:NZ’s (2015b) survey also reported on the festivals by noting contributors to their forum remarked that “[t]hese celebrations are positive and joyful experiences for the Asian cultures concerned and New Zealanders felt that celebrating them with Asian people was a way of understanding and engaging with these cultures” (p.26).

These aspects of cultural diversification are now a part of the life of many New Zealanders of all ethnicities and the changing attitude to the growing Asian population seems to be in accord with the findings of Ward and Masgoret (2008) that “showed that New Zealanders, in the main, have positive attitudes toward immigrants and that they strongly endorse multiculturalism” (p.239). They went on to say their research showed that “[f]irst, there is strong evidence that enhancing an appreciation of cultural diversity and a general acceptance of multiculturalism will directly lead to greater support for current immigration policies” and “[s]econd, increasing intercultural contact leads to more positive attitudes toward immigrants” (p.242).

### **3. Māori Attitudes to Asian Immigration**

There is, however, one sector of the New Zealand population that is finding accepting Asian immigration and the coming shift to multiculturalism difficult — the indigenous Māori people — and the reasons for this are important to understand when considering their attitude to New Zealand’s increasing cultural diversity.

Figures released by Statistics New Zealand (2015, 25 May) showed that the proportion of people identifying as Māori is projected to grow to nearly 20 per cent in 2038. However, those who identified with an Asian ethnicity are projected to grow to nearly 21 per cent in that year. It is apparent, then, that as of 2013, “Maori remain a significant proportion of the population at 15% (598,600 people) and an important consideration in terms of ethnic identity and group rights. But an important moment will come in the next decade or so when Asian people begin to outnumber Maori in New Zealand” (Spoonley, 2014). The issue that has arisen as the result of these fast changing demographics is the pressure that the relative

growth of the Asian population compared with that of the indigenous Māori population has put on the country's bicultural policy framework (Butcher, 2010).

Some fifteen years ago Fleras and Spoonley (1999) stated that Māori had long had deep concerns about Asian immigrants and their effect on the Māori community at large and on the labour market for Māori among whom unemployment is high. They argued at the time that:

At the core is a distinction between the circumstances and rights of indigenous peoples and those of immigrants and their descendants, whether they are part of a majority or minority ethnic group. Cultural identity increasingly has come to provide an alternative basis for entitlement, and the question is how much further should this go, and how to reflect indigenous rights in these arrangements (p.253).

They clarified the reason why the growth in the Asian population is seen to be an issue by relating it to the importance for Māori of the Treaty of Waitangi:

The cultural imperatives are equally worrying. Asian immigrants are accused of marginalising Māori by diluting their status as the original occupants (*tangata whenua*) with special rights to sovereignty. They are also chided for importing values into the country that are at odds with those of Māori and that lack a commitment to Treaty principles...The failure of the government to consult Māori about proposed changes to immigration is taken as proof of yet another *Pākehā* [European] default on Treaty obligations (p.184).

Chang (2009) explained the significance given to the Treaty of Waitangi in the way some Māori groups view Chinese immigration and Māori-Chinese interactions by saying that “[f]or some, *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* [The Treaty of Waitangi] is a permission slip. It allowed the Queen of England to settle her people, and ‘there have been no requests from any other nation or permission given, deriving from that agreement to allow any other settlements to occur’ (as cited in Chang, 2009, p.203)”, and that “[f]ollowing such a literal interpretation of the Treaty, positive Māori-Chinese interactions would be difficult since Chinese do not have specific permission to settle in Aotearoa New Zealand” (p.203).

According to Chang, these are the beliefs underlying the resentment on the part of some Māori about not being consulted with regard to Asian immigration, and their associated dislike of Chinese immigrants, who are, they say, here without the kind of permission Europeans received. Chang adds, however, that “[t]hey were in fact allowed to enter and settle in the country by the Crown” (p.203).

The Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 by representatives of the Crown and various Māori chiefs, but “[b]etween the mid-nineteenth century and the 1980s, the Crown generally ignored Māori interests and grievances related to land, identity, or political voice” (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999, p.18). During that time Māori were deprived of their lands, and their culture and language all but disappeared. Māori activism of the 1970s, however, prompted the government and the people of New Zealand to recognize the importance of the Treaty, and since then the process of settling claims and grievances related to it has been a central theme of New Zealand’s politics and society and has included an apology from the Crown to Māori claimant groups as part of the reconciliation process (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999).

After the gains achieved in the 20th century and on into the 21st century, it is not surprising that some Māori now feel anxious about what their future will be when New Zealand’s demographic changes deprive them of their status as an ethnic group in a bicultural society to one in a diverse multicultural society. As Butcher (2010) explains, “[s]ome commentators have raised concerns about the implications of a growing Asian population on bicultural relations between the Crown and Maori, the understanding and goodwill around the Treaty of Waitangi and related claims and the secure place of Maori as tangata whenua”, and that, as the Asian population looks set to overreach that of the Māori, “the need for a distinction between tangata whenua (indigenous New Zealanders) and tauwiwi (foreigners, or non-indigenous New Zealanders) seems all the more salient” (p.140).

Ward and Masgoret (2008), as well as examining attitudes towards immigrants and immigration, also assessed feelings of threat and competition in relation to immigrants and the position of Māori in New Zealand. They emphasized that:

Alleviating Maori disadvantage and acknowledging the importance of Maori cultural recognition and maintenance are precursors to a successful immigration policy. Maori have occupied a special place in New Zealand as the indigenous peoples and partners in what has historically been a bicultural nation. A sense of Maori security and their acceptance of current policies, if not their active support, are required for New Zealand to evolve into a truly multicultural society (p.243).

And yet it seems that this goal may be receding as the Asian population grows. This was indicated in a media report from 2014 which stated that “Maori dislike Asian immigrants more than any other group of New Zealanders, a new poll shows” and that “Asians are blamed for taking jobs from Maori, driving Maori to Australia, lacking understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi and

competing for cultural funding” (Day, 2014). Day went on to explain the attitude to Asian immigration of some Māori groups by quoting Māori Party leader Te Ururoa Flavell who insists that “Maori have a unique position in New Zealand and advancing their cultural and social needs must be put ahead of the needs of immigrants”, and that “I think that the most important thing is that the people of the country recognize our unique part in the fabric of this nation.”

Already in 1999 Fleras and Spoonley were arguing with reference to immigration that it had become one of the pivotal images of the 1990s and that:

Its importance goes beyond the question of economic benefits or demographic imbalances. The significance of immigration is inseparable from the process of society-building: it is about who we are as New Zealanders and what kind of society we want to become (p.188).

Since this statement was made more than fifteen years ago, the number of Asian immigrants has increased beyond the expectations of that time and some issues associated with this growth have become increasingly clear. Two raised here concern the way new Asian immigrants have been blamed in the media for the shortage and high cost of housing in Auckland, and, more importantly, the feelings of threat Māori are experiencing about their future standing in New Zealand. Experts can provide explanations for housing problems (see Asia:NZ’s articles, “Housing and Immigration: Is the Tail Wagging the Dog?” (2014a) criticizing the country’s housing building record, and “The Migration Roller Coaster and House Prices” (2014b) suggesting returning New Zealanders wanting housing had more impact on house prices than immigrants), and this indicates that these issues and the tendency to place blame for them on new immigrants could be ameliorated by appropriate action. However, the successful integration of the country’s traditional bicultural framework, based on the recognition of the culture, values and rights of the indigenous Māori, into the increasingly culturally diverse framework of 21st century New Zealand seems unlikely to eventuate without the ongoing application of effort, understanding and goodwill on the part all stakeholders.

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