

## The Changing Face of Asian Peoples in New Zealand

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### Abstract

Richard Bedford has made a major contribution to the understanding of diverse Asian peoples in New Zealand. In particular, his work has demonstrated how changing immigration policies have led to new patterns of ethnic diversity, residential and business concentration, and settlement and employment trajectories, as well as changing family dynamics, mobility patterns and transnational networks (for example, Bedford & Ho, 2008; Bedford, Didham & Ip, 2009; Ho & Bedford, 2006, 2008; Spoonley & Bedford, 2012). This paper builds on this understanding to analyse the changing characteristics of Asian peoples in New Zealand since 1986, the year when New Zealand abolished a traditional source preference in the selection of prospective immigrants in favour of criteria based on individual merits, skills and qualifications. The discussion is organised into six parts to illustrate the multiple dimensions of difference within New Zealand's growing Asian communities: more diverse Asian ethnic groups, changing age-sex structure, different labour market experiences, growing mobility and transnational connections, complex patterns of mixed ethnicity, and increased concentration in Auckland. The study challenges the popular perception of 'Asian' as a single category.

The 2013 Census reveals that New Zealand's population is becoming increasingly diverse. In 1986, 85.1 per cent of New Zealand's population were of European ethnic origin, 12.4 per cent Māori, 4.0 per cent Pacific and 1.7 per cent Asian. By 2013, the non-European ethnic groups (Māori, Asian and Pacific) had all increased their proportion of the New Zealand population (to 14.9 per cent, 11.8 per cent, and 7.4 per cent respectively), and a new group had emerged, namely those who identified with ethnicities in the broad Middle Eastern, Latin American and African category (MELAA), accounting for 1.2 per cent of the population. Over this period, the Asian population increased almost nine-fold from 53,883 in

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1986 to 471,711 in 2013, and the proportion of the population who identified as European had dropped to 74 per cent.

The rapid growth of the Asian population over the recent decades is largely driven by immigration. The 1986 Census of Population and Dwellings is a very useful marker for the end of an era in New Zealand's history of immigration — it took place just before a fundamental change in government policy in August 1986 that abolished a traditional source-country preference (the United Kingdom, Ireland, Europe and North America) and opened up immigration to non-traditional sources. This policy change, combined with the subsequent introduction in 1991 of a points selection system which rated prospective immigrants on their qualifications, work experience, age and settlement factors, and the introduction of policy initiatives in the 2000s to facilitate the transition of international students to work and residence, has led to much larger and diverse flows of new immigrants of Asian ethnicities entering New Zealand over the recent decades (Bedford, Ho & Bedford, 2010; Bedford, Ho & Lidgard, 2002, 2005; Spoonley & Bedford, 2012; Trlin, 1992, 1997).

The term 'Asian' is increasingly used as an ethnic category in New Zealand but it does not have a universal, uncontested definition. The Statistics New Zealand definition refers to people who self-identify with ethnicities associated with the vast geographical region of Asia, from Afghanistan in the west to Japan in the east, and from China in the north to Indonesia in the south. Hence, the label Asian includes a wide range of ethnic groups such as Chinese, Indian, Korean, Filipino, Japanese and Thai, and these groups differ in terms of place of origin, language spoken, religion, culture, settlement history and so on. However, the meaning of the term Asian is often not well understood by the general public nor in policy contexts (Rasanathan, Craig, & Perkins, 2006). For example, there is a popular assumption that Asians in New Zealand were all born in Asia. Although a majority of the people who self-identify with Asian ethnicities were born in countries in Asia, one in five were born in New Zealand. There are also Asian migrants to New Zealand who were born in countries in Europe, Africa, the Americas or the Pacific. Another misconception is that people who self-identify with Asian ethnicities in New Zealand are non-European, non-Māori or non-Pacific. Yet the reality is that peoples of Asian ethnicities can and do identify with more than one ethnicity. Indeed, there is a trend towards higher degrees of mixed ethnicity as the New

Zealand-born component of the Asian population increases (Bedford & Ho, 2008).

This paper analyses the changing characteristics of the Asian population since 1986. It covers six themes that can be used to illustrate the growing diversity of the various ethnic groups that come under the broad label of Asian ethnicity: more diverse Asian ethnic groups, changing age-sex structure, different labour market experiences, growing mobility and transnational connections, complex patterns of mixed ethnicity, and increased concentration in Auckland. The paper concludes with a discussion of the challenges of understanding the multiple dimensions of difference within New Zealand's Asian communities.

### **More Diverse Asian Ethnic Groups**

New Zealand's two largest Asian ethnic groups, Chinese and Indian, have settled in New Zealand since the nineteenth century (Ip, 1995; Leckie, 2007; McKinnon, 1996). Together these two groups accounted for 78.4 per cent of the total Asian population in 1986 (Table 1). Until the mid-1980s, their proportions of the total New Zealand population remained very small – only 0.8 per cent of the total population were Chinese in 1986 and 0.5 per cent were Indian. Following immigration policy changes in 1986, the Chinese and Indian populations have increased dramatically. The 'new' Chinese and Indian immigrants come from a much wider range of source countries, and tend to have higher levels of education and skills and much more investment capital than their predecessors. The first wave of post-1986 Chinese immigrants came from Hong Kong and Taiwan, but since 2000, the majority of Chinese arrivals have come from China (PRC) (Ho & Bedford, 2006; Ip, 2003). Indian immigrants also come from various countries, including India, Fiji, South Africa, Zimbabwe, the United Kingdom and Malaysia. Much of the Indian migration from Fiji came after the military coup in 1987, but after 2000, immigrant numbers from India have grown significantly (Lewin et al., 2011). Indeed, between 2001 and 2013, the Indian ethnic group grew much more rapidly (150 per cent) than the Chinese ethnic group (63 per cent). By 2013, there were 171,411 Chinese and 155,178 Indians living in New Zealand, accounting for 4 per cent and 3.7 per cent respectively of the total New Zealand population (Table 1).

For people who self-identified with Other Asian ethnicities, their proportions of the total Asian population also changed dramatically between 1986 and 2013. Cambodia and Vietnam were the major sources of refugees for New Zealand during the 1970s and early 1980s (Statistics New Zealand, 1995). In 1986, the Cambodian and Vietnamese populations in New Zealand made up 7.4 per cent of the total Asian population. By 2013, although their numbers had increased (by 281 and 285 per cent respectively), they only accounted for 3.2 per cent of the Asian population as growth in Other Asian cohorts also increased from a broader base.

Over this post-1986 period the largest percentage increases were recorded for the Filipino, Korean and Thai groups. In 1986, the Korean population in New Zealand was fewer than 500. By 2013, it was 68 times as large as it had been two and a half decades earlier. The Filipino and Thai populations also increased from less than 1500 and 400 in 1986 to just over 40,000 and 8000 in 2013 – an increase of 2595 per cent and 1949 per cent, respectively. It is also interesting to point out that while the Korean population had increased very rapidly between 1986 and 2001, the Filipino ethnic group grew much faster (264 per cent) than the Korean ethnic group (59 per cent) between 2001 and 2013, and replaced the Korean ethnic group as the third largest Asian ethnicity in 2013, behind Chinese and Indian.

Percentage increases in the Sri Lankan and Japanese populations between 1986 and 2013, though not as large as those of the Korean, Filipino and Thai, were between 894 per cent (for Sri Lankan) and 690 per cent (for Japanese). It is also evident from Table 1 that many smaller Asian ethnic groups, such as Malay, Indonesian, Afghani, Pakistani, Burmese, Bangladeshi, Nepalese and Laotian, have all grown in size over the recent decades, resulting in new patterns of ethnic diversity within the Asian population.

Given the differences in Asian migration histories, it is not surprising that there are considerable variations in the proportions of the New Zealand-born in different Asian ethnic groups (Table 2). The Chinese, Indian, Cambodian and Japanese groups, which have longer settlement histories in New Zealand, have relatively large proportions of their populations born in New Zealand (ranging from 23.2 to 30.3 per cent). Among the more recently established groups, the Koreans have the lowest proportion (10.9 per cent) of New Zealand-born (Table 2).

**Table 1: Number of people in selected Asian ethnic groups, 1986, 2001 and 2013**

	Numbers			% change	
	1986	2001	2013	1986–2001	2001–2013
Chinese	26,616	105,057	171,411	294.7	63.2
Indian	15,810	62,190	155,178	293.4	149.5
Filipino	1,497	11,091	40,350	640.9	263.8
Korean	441	19,026	30,171	4214.3	58.6
Japanese	1,788	10,023	14,118	460.6	40.9
Sri Lankan	1,134	7,368	11,274	549.7	53.0
Cambodian	2,256	5,268	8,601	133.5	63.3
Thai	393	4,554	8,052	1058.8	76.8
Vietnamese	1,728	3,462	6,660	100.4	92.4
Malay	765	2,052	4,794	168.2	133.6
Indonesian	534	2,073	4,137	288.2	99.6
Afghani	36	807	3,417	2141.7	323.4
Pakistani	...	1,017	3,261	...	220.7
Burmese	249	573	2,187	130.1	281.7
Bangladeshi	...	1,140	1,623	...	42.4
Nepalese	36	387	1,590	975.0	310.9
Laotian	585	1,401	1,374	139.5	-1.9
Eurasian	...	...	1,365	...	...
Tibetan	...	39	93	...	138.5
SE Asian undefined	...	381	1,998	...	...
Other Asian undefined	...	4,122	5,859	...	424.4
<i>Total Asian</i>	<i>53,883</i>	<i>238,176</i>	<i>471,711</i>	<i>...</i>	<i>42.1</i>
<i>Total NZ</i>	<i>3,263,283</i>	<i>3,737,280</i>	<i>4,242,048</i>		

Source: Statistics New Zealand, *Census of Population and Dwellings*.

Notes: 1. Includes all people who stated each ethnic group, whether as Statistics New Zealand their only ethnic group or as one of several. Where a person reported more than one ethnic group, they have been counted in each applicable category.  
2. Data not available.

**Table 2: Proportion born in New Zealand, selected Asian ethnic groups, 2013 (%)**

	Male	Female	Total
Chinese	28.6	24.4	26.4
Indian	22.6	23.9	23.2
Filipino	15.9	12.5	14.0
Korean	11.6	10.3	10.9
Japanese	37.0	22.5	27.9
Sri Lankan	14.5	15.0	14.8
Cambodian	32.3	28.5	30.3
Thai	27.7	14.4	19.2
Other Asian	23.5	21.3	22.4
<i>Total Asian</i>	<i>23.6</i>	<i>21.3</i>	<i>22.4</i>

Source: Statistics New Zealand, *Census of Population and Dwellings*.

## Changing Age-Sex Structure

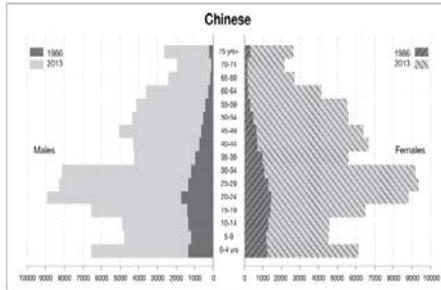
The changing age and sex structures of the Asian population in New Zealand between 1986 and 2013 reflect the impact of immigration. Figure 1 gives the age-sex pyramids of the Chinese, Indian, Other Asian and Total Asian populations resident in New Zealand in 1986 and 2013. It is readily apparent from the diagrams that the three Asian sub-populations display rather different age and sex structures in 2013 than they did in 1986.

Between 1986 and 2013, the proportions of children (aged younger than 15 years) and young adults (aged 15–24 years) dropped in the three Asian subgroups whereas the proportion of people aged between 25 and 59 years increased markedly. However, the compositions of the working-age population in the three Asian sub-populations differ. In the case of the Chinese, there is much more extensive growth in the 20–34 and 40–59 age groups; whereas for the Indian ethnic group, there is a more gradual expansion in a wide age range (25–54 years). The Other Asian population is quite different again from the Chinese and the Indian populations. A much more dominant feature of the age-sex pyramid of this sub-population is a distinctive female bias in the 25–59 age groups (Figure 1).

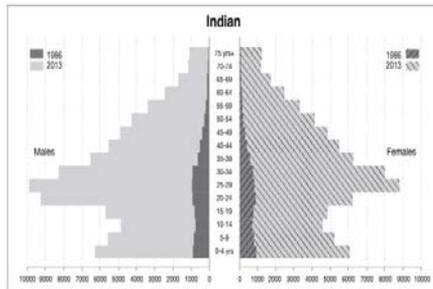
Because the Other Asian population includes a wide range of ethnic groups, the age and sex compositions of selected main Asian groups are further examined. Table 3 gives the age compositions of the Chinese, Indian, Filipino, Korean, Japanese, Sri Lankan, Cambodian and Thai ethnic groups in the 2013 Census. All groups have the largest proportion in the 25–44 age group (from 29.4 per cent to 38.6 per cent). The Japanese, Cambodian, Filipino and Indian groups also have high percentages of children whereas the Chinese, Korean and Thai groups have larger proportions in the 15–24 and 45–64 age groups. Although only 3.1 per cent of the total Asian population was over 65 years of age, the Chinese, Sri Lankan, Cambodian and Indian groups, which have longer settlement history in New Zealand, have much higher percentages of older people in their populations, ranging from 5.2 per cent (for Cambodian) to 8.4 per cent (for Chinese).

**Figure 1: Age-sex pyramids of Chinese, Indian, Other Asian and Total Asian ethnic populations, 1986 and 2013**

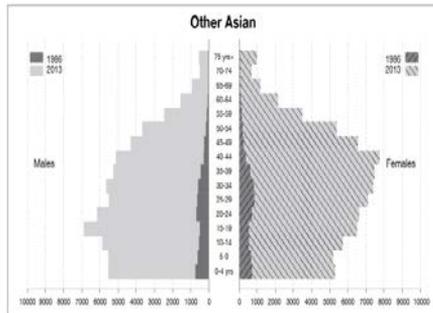
**Chinese**



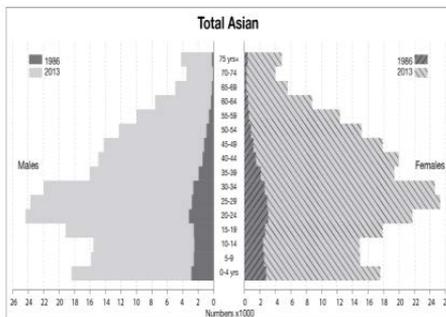
**Indian**



**Other Asian**



**Total Asian**



**Table 3: Proportion in each age group, selected Asian ethnic groups, 2013 (%)**

	<b>0–14 years</b>	<b>15–24 years</b>	<b>25–44 years</b>	<b>45–64 years</b>	<b>65 years and over</b>
Chinese	18.4	18.0	32.6	22.7	8.4
Indian	21.0	16.8	37.9	19.2	5.2
Filipino	24.0	15.6	38.6	19.6	2.1
Korean	17.9	22.7	29.4	26.4	3.7
Japanese	28.8	15.8	37.5	15.0	2.9
Sri Lankan	19.7	15.3	33.2	24.1	7.7
Cambodian	25.2	15.9	34.3	18.7	5.9
Thai	20.3	19.3	37.7	21.2	1.5
Other Asian	26.1	19.4	34.7	16.8	3.0
<i>Total Asian</i>	<i>20.6</i>	<i>17.6</i>	<i>35.2</i>	<i>20.8</i>	<i>3.1</i>

Source: Statistics New Zealand, *Census of Population and Dwellings*.

It is also interesting to examine the proportion of New Zealand-born by age group (Table 4). The majority (70.4 per cent) of Asian children were born in New Zealand, with much larger percentages in the Cambodian (88.4 per cent) and Chinese (83.4 per cent) groups. The proportion of New Zealand-born in the Asian population decreases with age, but there are considerable variations across ethnic groups, reflecting uneven immigration and different settlement histories. Of the older people born in New Zealand, nearly all were either Chinese or Indian (Table 4).

**Table 4: Proportion born in New Zealand by age, selected Asian ethnic groups, 2013 (%)**

	<b>0–14 years</b>	<b>15–24 years</b>	<b>25–44 years</b>	<b>45–64 years</b>	<b>65 years and over</b>
Chinese	83.4	27.8	9.9	9.5	8.3
Indian	71.9	24.2	6.6	7.2	3.3
Filipino	42.8	19.0	1.8	...	...
Korean	49.6	8.1	0.7	...	...
Japanese	74.2	26.6	4.7	3.3	...
Sri Lankan	57.1	16.8	2.6	...	...
Cambodian	88.4	39.7	4.7	...	...
Thai	70.5	20.9	1.8	...	...
Other Asian	63.6	20.6	4.3	1.5	...
<i>Total Asian</i>	<i>70.4</i>	<i>23.1</i>	<i>7.8</i>	<i>6.1</i>	<i>5.4</i>

Source: Statistics New Zealand, *Census of Population and Dwellings*.

Note: ... Percentages are not given because of very small numbers.

In 2013, there were 93 men per 100 women in the Asian population (Table 5). A much more balanced age-sex distribution is found for the Indians and the Sri Lankans, but gender imbalances were particularly evident in the Thai (56 per 100), Japanese (59 per 100) and Filipino (80 per 100) populations, especially from 25 years onwards. This pattern can be partly explained by intermarriages of Asian women, especially Filipino, Japanese and Thai, with New Zealand men of European, Māori and Pacific ethnicities (Bedford & Ho, 2008; Friesen, 2008). There were also larger proportions of females than males in the Chinese, Korean and Cambodian populations aged 25 years and older. This is suggestive of the transnational family phenomenon, especially amongst Chinese and Koreans (Ho, 2002; Pe-Pua, Mitchell, Iredale & Castles, 1996; Skeldon, 1994). The growing transnational migration of Asian peoples in recent decades will be discussed in a later section of this paper.

**Table 5: Sex ratios of selected Asian ethnic groups, 2013**

	0–14 years	15–24 years	25–44 years	45–64 years	65 yrs and over	All ages
Chinese	106	101	81	79	92	89
Indian	105	135	106	101	95	109
Filipino	107	100	76	54	32	80
Korean	105	104	74	84	107	89
Japanese	100	78	38	42	46	59
Sri Lankan	101	112	108	100	101	105
Cambodian	103	106	89	82	70	92
Thai	110	97	39	28	36	56
Other Asian	104	97	85	84	75	92
<i>Total Asian</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>93</i>

Source: Statistics New Zealand, *Census of Population and Dwellings*.

## Different Labour Market Experiences

New Zealand's immigration policies since the mid-1980s have been focused on recruiting people with skills and investment capital that are deemed to be important for the country's economy. However, in the late 1980s and 1990s, immigrants from ethnic minority backgrounds faced formidable barriers to employment opportunities in New Zealand. The biggest barriers were the non-recognition of overseas qualifications and experiences and the reluctance of employers to hire new immigrants from a different

culture or ethnicity. This meant that many highly qualified and skilled Asian immigrants who entered New Zealand under the points system were not able to transfer former training and skills into jobs in New Zealand, and had to accept positions not commensurate with their education and experience, or had remained unemployed (see, for example, Basnayake, 1999; Boyer, 1996; Department of Internal Affairs, 1996). Immigrants who entered under business immigration schemes also experienced difficulties transferring their proven business skills to the New Zealand market (Forsythe Research, 1998; Ho, Bedford, & Goodwin, 1999). After 2000, incremental adjustments to immigration policy meant that some of the major difficulties concerning professional qualifications and statutory registration requirements were reduced (Spoonley & Bedford, 2012). However, analysis of the 2001 Census data showed that labour market performance among immigrants of Asia ethnicities remained poor, with higher proportions not in the labour force and higher rates of unemployment in comparison with immigrants from Australia, Europe, South Africa and North America (New Zealand Immigration Service, 2003; Statistics New Zealand, 2004). Furthermore, recent Asian immigrants (those who have lived in New Zealand for less than five years at the time of the census) have lower labour market participation rates and employment rates than more established immigrants (Boyd, 2003).

There are considerable variations in English language ability and educational qualifications among immigrants of Asian ethnicities, and these characteristics can impact on labour market outcomes. In order to better understand how well Asian immigrants fare in the labour market in the first five years after their arrival, the labour market outcomes of the four largest Asian ethnic groups (Chinese, Indian, Filipino and Korean) are compared using data from the 2013 Census, with particular emphasis on working-age migrants (15–64 years). The key indicators of labour market outcomes used in this analysis are labour force status and employment status. In addition, data relating to educational qualifications and English language ability of the four Asian ethnic groups are examined.

In 2013, there were 107,403 recent immigrants of Asian ethnicities living in New Zealand (Table 6). Of these, 34 per cent were Indian, 28.1 per cent Chinese, 14.3 per cent Filipino and 5.9 per cent Korean. Altogether, recent immigrants made up 22.8 per cent of the total Asian population (Table 6). Across ethnic groups, the Filipino group had a considerably

higher proportion of recent immigrants (38.2%) compared with the Indian, Korean and Chinese groups (23.5%, 21% and 17.6%, respectively).

**Table 6: Number and proportion of recent immigrants, selected Asian ethnic groups, 2013**

	Recent immigrants <sup>1</sup>			% of total ethnic population		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Chinese	13,563	16,623	30,186	16.8	18.3	17.6
Indian	20,454	16,056	36,510	25.3	21.6	23.5
Filipino	7,098	8,310	15,408	39.6	37.0	38.2
Korean	2,844	3,495	6,339	20.0	21.9	21.0
<i>Total Asian</i>	<i>52,527</i>	<i>54,876</i>	<i>107,403</i>	<i>23.1</i>	<i>22.4</i>	<i>22.8</i>

Source: Statistics New Zealand, *Census of Population and Dwellings*.

Note: <sup>1</sup> People born overseas who have lived in New Zealand for less than five years at the time of the census.

Analysis of 2013 Census data shows that recent immigrants from the four Asian ethnic groups experienced a range of labour market outcomes (Table 7). While Filipino and Indian recent immigrants had considerably high labour force participation and employment rates, especially for men, Chinese and Korean recent immigrants had much lower labour force participation and higher unemployment rates. Overall, Filipino recent immigrants had the highest labour force participation rates (84.6 per cent for men; 76.2 per cent for women) and the lowest unemployment rates (5.9 per cent for men; 8.1 per cent for women). On the other hand, Chinese recent immigrants had the lowest proportion in the labour force (44.5 per cent for men; 40 per cent for women) and the highest proportion unemployed (15.1 per cent for men; 17.4 per cent for women).

With regard to employment status, a majority of Filipino and Indian recent immigrants were paid employees (92.1 to 96.8 per cent). In comparison, a lower proportion of Korean and Chinese recent immigrants were paid employees (75.7 to 84.2 per cent). Across ethnic groups, self-employment rates were highest among Koreans (5.4 per cent of females and 8.6 per cent of males were employers, and 5 per cent of females and 7.4 per cent of males were self-employed without employees), followed by the Chinese. Filipino recent immigrants were the least likely to be employers or self-employed (Table 7).

On the whole, recent Asian immigrants were highly qualified, with more than a quarter (28.9 per cent for men; 32.4 per cent for women)

holding university qualifications. Filipino and Indian recent immigrants were the most likely to have university degrees, especially women (46.9 per cent for Filipino; 41.1 per cent for Indian). In addition, more than 90 per cent of Filipino and Indian recent immigrants indicated that they were English speakers (Table 7). In comparison, the proportions of English speakers among Chinese and Korean recent immigrants were much lower, and more than a quarter did not speak conversational English.

**Table 7: Labour force status, employment status, highest qualification and language indicators for recent immigrants of selected Asian ethnic groups, aged 15 to 64 years, 2013 (%)<sup>1</sup>**

	Chinese		Indian		Filipino		Korean		Total Asian	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<i>Labour force status</i>										
Participation rate <sup>2</sup>	44.5	40.0	84.1	66.4	84.6	76.2	52.8	39.4	69.0	54.4
Full-time employment rate <sup>3</sup>	64.0	51.4	74.8	63.0	81.3	70.5	71.7	57.2	72.5	59.9
Part-time employment rate <sup>4</sup>	20.9	31.2	17.7	22.6	12.8	21.5	17.7	32.9	18.2	26.3
Unemployment rate <sup>5</sup>	15.1	17.4	7.5	14.4	5.9	8.1	10.6	9.9	9.3	13.8
<i>Employment status (for those employed full time or part time)</i>										
Paid employee	82.3	84.2	93.3	92.1	96.8	96.8	75.7	79.3	90.9	89.8
Employer	4.3	3.3	0.7	0.7	...	...	8.6	5.4	1.7	1.7
Self-employed	6.0	5.2	2.9	2.5	0.7	0.7	7.4	5.0	3.3	3.3
Unpaid family worker	2.1	3.4	0.4	1.2	...	...	...	2.2	0.9	1.9
Not specified	5.3	3.9	2.7	3.5	...	...	8.3	8.1	3.2	3.3
<i>Highest qualification</i>										
Degree and above	22.4	24.4	34.1	41.1	36.1	46.9	14.1	18.1	28.9	32.4
<i>Language indicators</i>										
Not English speaker	24.4	26.0	5.2	8.7	1.7	1.7	25.2	28.8	12.2	15.7
English speaker	73.2	71.9	93.3	90.1	96.8	97.5	71.5	69.5	86.0	82.8
Speaker of other languages	78.2	82.0	62.8	71.5	78.5	81.7	84.6	86.4	72.3	79.4

Source: Statistics New Zealand, *Census of Population and Dwellings*.

Notes: <sup>1</sup> People born overseas and resident in New Zealand for less than five years.

<sup>2</sup> The proportion of people aged 15 to 64 years who, at the time of the census, were working or looking for work.

<sup>3</sup> The proportion of people aged 15 to 64 years who were employed full-time at the time of the census, out of all people who are in the labour force.

<sup>4</sup> The proportion of people aged 15 to 64 years who were employed part-time at the time of the census, out of all people who are in the labour force.

<sup>5</sup> The proportion of people aged 15 to 64 years who were without a paid job and were looking for work, out of all people who are in the labour force.

... Percentages are not given because of very small numbers.

Labour force participation rates of Chinese and Korean immigrants tended to improve with duration of residence in New Zealand. However, participation rates of all Chinese and Koreans aged 15 to 64 years in the 2013 Census were still 10 to 20 percentage points below the Indian and Filipino groups, whereas unemployment rates of Koreans (10.9 per cent for men; 12 per cent for women) were two to four percentage points higher than Filipinos, Indians and Chinese (Figure 8). Part of the discrepancy in labour market outcomes between Asian ethnic groups can be explained by differences in English language proficiency. Large proportions (15.5 to 21.1 per cent) of Chinese and Koreans aged 15 to 64 years did not speak conversational English at the time of the 2013 Census, compared with only 1 to 7 per cent of Filipinos and Indians (Figure 8). Besides, educational qualifications are not necessarily transferable: migrants from non-English-speaking countries may find it more difficult to find employment in line with their qualifications than migrants from English-speaking countries.

Although employment is a major factor for positive settlement, not all migrants choose to come to New Zealand for economic reasons. Among Asian migrants, a desire for a more relaxed lifestyle, an opportunity to live in a clean and safe environment, and the possibility of a better future for children are some of the commonly cited reasons for choosing to live in New Zealand (Lewin et al., 2011; Meares, Ho, Peace, & Spoonley, 2010a, 2010b).

As mentioned above, the Chinese and Korean ethnic groups fare worse in the labour market than do the Indian and Filipino groups. In order to cope with the challenge of unemployment or being under-employed in New Zealand, the Chinese and Koreans have adopted a number of approaches including opting for early retirement, upgrading their qualifications, or establishing their own businesses and becoming self-employed. Figure 8 shows that in 2013, rates of self-employment (with or without employees) were highest among Koreans (35.2 per cent for men; 26.9 per cent for women) and lowest among Filipinos (3.6 per cent for men; 3.5 per cent for women). Many Koreans may opt for self-employment because of the difficulty in obtaining suitable waged or salaried employment in the New Zealand labour market (Meares et al., 2010a). The Chinese also had high self-employment rates (24.8 per cent for men; 16.9 per cent for women) in 2013. This group has a strong tradition of self-employment and are the most likely to have gained residence under

business migration provisions (Ho et al., 1999; Meares et al., 2010b). Taken as a whole, it is more common for Asian peoples to be self-employed without employees than to be employers (Figure 8).

**Table 8: Labour force status, employment status, highest qualification and language, selected Asian ethnic groups, aged 15 to 64 years, 2013 (%)**

	Chinese		Indian		Filipino		Korean		Total Asian	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<i>Labour force status</i>										
Participation rate	67.7	58.5	82.0	69.3	84.5	77.9	64.9	56.3	74.6	63.1
Full-time employment rate	76.5	65.1	80.0	67.6	81.0	71.8	70.6	54.4	77.6	65.0
Part-time employment rate	14.9	25.5	13.0	22.1	12.9	21.3	18.5	33.6	14.4	25.1
Unemployment rate	8.6	9.5	6.9	10.2	6.1	6.9	10.9	12.0	8.0	9.9
<i>Employment status (for those employed full time or part time)</i>										
Paid employee	70.1	78.1	81.0	86.3	94.2	94.2	58.6	64.6	77.1	82.4
Employer	9.7	6.4	4.5	2.9	0.7	0.9	12.3	10.1	6.4	4.5
Self-employed	15.1	10.5	10.2	6.1	2.9	2.6	22.9	16.8	11.9	8.2
Unpaid family worker	2.4	2.9	1.3	1.7	0.1	0.4	3.3	5.8	1.7	2.3
Not specified	2.7	2.6	3.0	3.0	2.1	1.9	2.9	2.7	2.9	2.6
<i>Highest qualification</i>										
Degree and above	33.3	34.7	38.8	34.5	34.7	44.4	25.8	27.5	30.6	33.6
<i>Language indicators</i>										
Not English speaker	15.5	16.9	4.5	6.8	1.7	1.4	19.8	21.1	10.0	12.0
English speaker	82.0	80.7	93.5	91.6	96.9	97.5	78.0	73.2	87.8	85.9
Speaker of other languages	75.5	79.2	66.3	72.6	75.0	74.4	88.2	89.5	72.9	77.6

Source: Statistics New Zealand, *Census of Population and Dwellings*.

Note: For definitions of labour force status categories, see Table 7 above.

In addition to the above options, Asian migrants have also employed the strategies of astronauting, return migration and onward migration to a third country. The next section discusses the mobility patterns and transnational connections of New Zealand's Asian populations in recent decades.

## Growing Mobility and Transnational Connections

In today's highly globalised world, migration is no longer viewed as a permanent one-way movement as described in the traditional settler migration model. Increasingly, scholars recognise that contemporary

migrants lead transnational lives and often maintain economic, cultural, social and familial links with their homeland (Chiang, 2004; Ho, 2003; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Yeoh, 2009). In New Zealand, a family strategy commonly practised by Chinese middle-class migrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan, especially in the 1990s, was the strategy of 'astronauting' where one or more parents returned to their country of origin to work, leaving their children to be educated in New Zealand (Ho & Farmer, 1994). This is a deliberate strategy of living in two (or more) countries in order to maximise lifestyle, education, employment, business and travel opportunities for family members.

Recent research suggests that transnational mobility has intensified through the course of life. Of particular note is the return migration or on-migration to a third country of young Asian migrants. Unlike their parents' generation who chose return migration as a strategy to cope with problems of unemployment and under-employment, young Asians in early career stages are opting to relocate to their former homeland or re-migrate to a third country in search of more enriching life experiences, higher salaries and better career prospects (Ho & Bedford, 2008). Another growing feature of transnational families is the movement of older members. Rather than being left behind in one country, older people are increasingly circulating between two or more locations to visit spatially dispersed family members and to provide care to children and grandchildren (Ho, Lewin, & Ip, 2011).

Transnational mobility is by no means confined to migrants of Chinese descent. The mobility patterns of new immigrants to New Zealand between January 1998 and December 2004 has been the topic of a study by New Zealand's Department of Labour (Shorland, 2006). Using an immigration database that has been set up by the Department, the study explored two dimensions relating to migrants' subsequent movement patterns after taking up residence in New Zealand: the total amount of time spent away from New Zealand since taking up residence, and the number of periods of absence from New Zealand. There were 257,230 migrants in the database. Table 9 below gives the subsequent movement patterns of new migrants from China (PRC), India, South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

There were 85,784 new migrants from the six sources in Asia approved for residence between January 1998 and December 2004 and who

had taken up residence by December 2004. A majority (73.5 per cent) came from PRC China (33,476) and India (29,609). The numbers from the other four sources were much smaller: 9570 from South Korea, 6705 from the Philippines, 4438 from Taiwan, and 1986 from Hong Kong (Table 9). Most of the migrants from South Korea and the Philippines had low absence rates: half (49.5 per cent) of the migrants from the Philippines and one-third (33.3 per cent) from South Korea had spent no time absent from the country, and a further 39.9 per cent and 49.4 per cent, respectively, were absent for less than 25 per cent of the time since taking up residence. In terms of the number of periods of absence, about one in 10 migrants from South Korea had five or more periods of absence over the analysis period; people in the older age groups (45–64 and 65+) were more likely to spend lengthy periods absent. On the other hand, only 3 per cent of migrants from the Philippines had five or more periods of absence (Table 9).

**Table 9: Total time spent absent since taking up residence and number of periods of absence, by selected Asian nationalities**

	Nationality					
	China	India	S. Korea	Philippines	Taiwan	HK
Total number	33,476	29,609	9,570	6,705	4,438	1,986
Proportion of time spent absent since taking up residence (%)						
None	27.5	36.3	33.3	49.5	5.2	14.3
<25%	38.9	41.5	49.4	39.9	28.9	37.2
25–<50%	10.3	6.7	6.7	3.7	9.9	9.5
50–<75%	7.1	5.1	3.9	2.7	9.9	8.5
75–<100%	16.2	10.4	6.7	4.1	46.0	30.6
Number of periods of absence (%)						
0	27.5	36.3	33.3	49.6	5.3	14.2
1–2	51.1	53.2	42.7	39.7	56.7	52.0
3–4	13.8	7.6	13.4	7.8	19.5	19.3
5–10	6.6	2.4	8.6	2.4	14.8	11.4
11+	1.0	0.5	2.0	0.6	3.7	3.0

Source: Shorland, 2006.

During the analysis period, migrants from China and India were more mobile, with 16.2 per cent and 10.4 per cent respectively spending 75 per cent or more of their residence absent. Like the South Koreans, Indians in the older age groups (45–64 and 65+) were more likely to spend lengthy periods absent. However, for migrants from China, those aged younger than 16 years or in the 25–44 and 45–64 age groups were more likely to have spent three-quarters or more of the time since taking up residence

overseas (Table 9). In terms of the number of periods of absence, the Chinese who had moved tended to have had more periods of absence than the Indians.

Migrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan had quite different patterns for the aggregate time absent — only 5.2 per cent of migrants from Taiwan and 14.3 per cent from Hong Kong had spent no time outside New Zealand since arrival. At the other end of the scale, Taiwanese topped the high absence rate with almost half (46 per cent) living overseas for more than three-quarters of the time during the analysis period. In the case of Hong Kong, a third (30.6 per cent) had spent 75 per cent or more of the time since taking up residence living outside New Zealand (Table 9). Across age groups, migrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan in the working-age groups (25–44 and 45–64) were much more likely to spend lengthy periods away from New Zealand. Children under the age of 16 years also had high absence rates, but they were less likely to have five or more spells of absence. Those migrants who had spent considerable time out of New Zealand after taking up residence might have included entrepreneurs who were involved in business activities both within New Zealand as well as other parts of the world; some might have been spouses or children who spent time away from New Zealand to be with family members overseas; and some might have been people who had returned to their former homeland to work, or re-located to a third country while maintaining family ties in New Zealand. As mentioned previously, these transnational strategies are popular options for immigrants from Taiwan and Hong Kong in an effort to maximise opportunities for education, employment and social advancement for family members (Ho, Ip, & Lewin, 2010).

What is clear from this analysis is that immigrants from different parts of Asia have distinctive strategies relating to both residence in New Zealand as well as to ongoing links with other countries after taking up residence, as these are reflected in the number of trips they subsequently make away from New Zealand. There is great potential to leverage these transnational networks in ways that will benefit New Zealand (Ho, Ip, & Lewin, 2010). So far, however, there is a lack of coordinated and deliberate strategies to tap into the opportunities and potential resources offered by the growing transnational networks in Asia.

## Complex Patterns of Mixed Ethnicity

Another topic of interest is the mixed ethnic background of Asian peoples. Over recent decades, the proportion of Asian peoples who belong to more than one ethnic group has changed. In 1986, nearly one in four Asians said they had multiple ethnicity, compared with one in 23 (4.3 per cent) New Zealanders overall (Statistics New Zealand, 1995). Between 1986 and 2013, the proportion of multi-ethnic Asians had reduced significantly, from 22.5 per cent to 8.6 per cent (Table 10). The main reason for this was the substantial increase in Asian immigration during this period, with a majority of the overseas-born Asian immigrants belonging to only one ethnic group. However, Asian ethnic groups vary greatly in the proportion of people belonging to more than one ethnic group. Table 10 shows that in 2013, the Cambodian, Thai and Japanese groups had large proportions (ranging from 15.1 to 27.2 per cent) of people of mixed ethnic background. Koreans and Sri Lankans were the least likely to belong to more than one ethnic group (Table 10).

**Table 10: Proportion of selected Asian ethnicities who belong to more than one ethnic group, 1986, 1991 and 2013 (%)**

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>2013</b>
Chinese	26.5	15.9	12.1
Indian	23.3	11.9	8.0
Filipino	21.9	13.8	8.7
Korean	8.8	7.4	2.8
Japanese	22.3	20.0	27.2
Sri Lankan	10.3	5.4	5.1
Cambodian	5.3	8.1	15.1
Thai	23.5	14.9	17.0
<i>Total Asian</i>	<i>22.5</i>	<i>13.1</i>	<i>8.6</i>

Source: Statistics New Zealand, *Census of Population and Dwellings*.

There is a higher degree of mixed ethnicity among New Zealand-born Asians and children. A recent study using 2006 census data showed that six out of 10 (61.8 per cent) Filipinos born in New Zealand identified with more than one ethnicity, whereas the proportions of mixed ethnicity among New Zealand-born Chinese and New Zealand-born Indians were 40 per cent and 30.2 per cent, respectively. On the other hand, the great majority of the overseas-born component in the three groups — 96 per cent of overseas-born Filipinos, 96.6 per cent of overseas-born Chinese and 97.3

per cent of overseas-born Indians — identified with only one ethnicity (Bedford & Ho, 2008). Asian children aged between 0 and 14 years are more likely to belong to more than one ethnic group. A third (33.1 per cent) of the Filipino children in the 2006 census were recorded as being of mixed ethnicity, while for Chinese and Indian children the proportion was 27.1 per cent and 17.3 per cent, respectively (Bedford & Ho, 2008). Looking to the future, when there will be a much larger proportion of New Zealand-born in the Asian populations, there will be higher proportions of Asian peoples who belong to more than one ethnic group.

Amongst Asian people of mixed ethnicity, the most frequently reported non-Asian ethnicity was European (Table 11). At least one in four Chinese and Indians of mixed ethnic background were of Māori descent, and similar proportions of Chinese and Indians of mixed ethnicity also had Pacific ethnicity. In the case of Cambodians, however, people of other Asian ethnicities made up the majority (60.3 per cent) of those of mixed ethnicity. In all Asian groups, only a very small proportion gave Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA) and Other ethnic groups as part of their ethnic identity (Table 11).

**Table 11: Mixed ethnicity of major Asian ethnic groups, 2013 (%)**

Ethnic group	People of Asian ethnicity and					
	% with European	% with Maori	% with Pacific	% with Other Asian	% with MELAA	% with Other
Chinese	63.9	26.2	26.5	20.2	1.3	3.0
Indian	61.7	27.2	28.0	13.0	2.2	3.6
Filipino	74.7	12.7	6.0	16.1	1.4	4.3
Korean	64.4	12.6	5.4	25.5	1.4	4.7
Japanese	81.3	13.0	6.8	10.6	1.9	3.7
Sri Lankan	60.7	4.2	6.8	28.8	1.6	11.0
Cambodian	31.4	10.9	5.8	60.3	--	5.5
Thai	73.9	11.0	3.5	26.5	0.9	6.4

Source: Statistics New Zealand, *Census of Population and Dwellings*.

## Increased Concentration in Auckland

At the 2013 Census, about two-thirds of the Asian population lived in the Auckland region. Between 1986 and 2013, the numbers and proportions of Asian peoples resident in the Auckland region increased from 22,026 (40.9 per cent) in 1986 to 52,602 (52.8 per cent) in 1991, then to 151,602 (63.7

per cent) in 2001 and 307,233 (65.1 per cent) in 2013. When compared with New Zealand's total population, Auckland was home to one-third of all New Zealanders in 2013, up from 27 per cent in 1986. The growing concentration of Asians in the Auckland region is primarily because a majority of new Asian immigrants who arrived in New Zealand after 1986 have settled in this region (Ho, 2013).

As Table 12 shows, the Korean group had the greatest concentration (72.9 per cent) in the Auckland region in 2013 (Table 12). This region was also home to at least two-thirds of Chinese, Indians, Afghani, Pakistani and Bangladeshi, and at least half of Filipino, Sri Lankans, Vietnamese, Thai, Malays, Indonesians and Laotians. Although less than half of Nepalese, Eurasians, Japanese, Cambodians and Burmese lived in the Auckland region in 2013, the region was still the most common region lived in by these groups (Table 12).

**Table 12: Asian ethnic groups living in the Auckland region, 2013**

Ethnic group	Number	%
Chinese	118,230	69.0
Indian	106,326	68.5
Korean	21,981	72.9
Filipino	20,502	50.8
Sri Lankan	6,906	61.3
Japanese	6,720	47.6
Vietnamese	4,359	65.5
Cambodian	4,188	48.9
Thai	4,152	51.6
Malay	2,508	52.3
Indonesian	2,484	60.0
Afghani	2,421	70.9
Pakistani	2,253	69.1
Bangladeshi	1,092	67.3
Burmese	1,056	48.3
Laotian	822	59.8
Eurasian	630	46.2
Nepalese	534	33.6
<i>Total Asian</i>	<i>307,233</i>	<i>65.1</i>

Source: Statistics New Zealand, *Census of Population and Dwellings*.

The Chinese, Indian and Other Asian populations show different residential patterns in the Auckland region (Freisen, 2008; Mehta, 2012). Auckland suburbs with the greatest density of Chinese people are Auckland Central, Epsom, New Lynn and Dannemora, while high Indian

population density is noted in Auckland Central, Sandringham, Mount Roskill, Mangere and Dannemora. Koreans are mostly concentrated on the North Shore, whereas Vietnamese and Cambodians are mostly found in southern Auckland, especially in Otahuhu, Papatoetoe and to the west of Manukau Central. Overall, the residential patterns of various Asian groups in Auckland have changed over the past 20 years. The majority are living among other ethnic groups, rather than living in relatively exclusive residential communities. However, their high visibility in certain suburbs in Auckland may create a false impression that they are clustering in particular neighbourhoods and forming distinctive ethnic enclaves.

## **Conclusion**

The Asian population in New Zealand is not a homogeneous group. The people grouped under the generic label of Asian are very diverse along many characteristics including ethnic origins, place of birth, spatial distribution, period of arrival, duration of residence in New Zealand, English language proficiency, socio-economic status, health status and so on. Given the complexities within the Asian communities, interpreting population statistics using Asian as a single category is misleading (Horner & Ameratunga, 2012; Rasanathan et al., 2006). To avoid overgeneralisation and the problem of the averaging effect, it is necessary to disaggregate data where appropriate to give a better understanding of the experiences of New Zealand's diverse Asian communities. While this study has only focused on six themes to illustrate the multiple dimensions of difference within this population, more remains to be done.

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