



New Zealand  
Immigration Service  
*Te Ratonga Manene*

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Immigration Research Programme

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**Work Permits and Residence  
Qualitative Research**

May 2001



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New Zealand Immigration Service  
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# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this qualitative research project was to develop a better understanding of the mechanics of the onshore residence market by identifying some of the personal factors driving work and residence permit applications. To achieve this, the research explored the intentions of work permit holders to apply for residence and the key motivations for this. The research also explored the reasons and the key motivations for recently approved residents, who had previously held work permits, applying for residence.

The research provided the opportunity to explore participants' attitudes to using the Internet as a medium for processing immigration applications. This information will be of use to the New Zealand Immigration Service's (NZIS) E-Services group, which is to be established in the near future.

## 1.2 Background

Linking temporary immigration policy with residence policy can have significant benefits for both migrants and New Zealand. People already in New Zealand holding "skill shortage"<sup>1</sup> work permits have been identified as potentially valuable residents, as they possess skills that are in demand and have proven New Zealand work experience. Having participated in New Zealand society, skill shortage workers are likely to settle well and to contribute to advancing the Government's growth policies.

## 1.3 Methodology

To effectively meet the objectives, a qualitative research design was used and the main technique employed was semi-structured interviews.

Two populations were of interest. The first was recently approved residents<sup>2</sup> who had previously held work permits, while the second was people currently<sup>3</sup> in New Zealand holding work permits. Only people of the top five nationalities of work permit holders in 1999/2000 were included in the two samples. The five nations were:

- India;
- Japan;
- South Africa;
- The United Kingdom (UK); and
- The United States of America (USA).

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<sup>1</sup> "Skill shortage" work permits are those granted when an employer is unable to recruit a New Zealand candidate, and are essentially quite different to work permits granted on the basis an applicant's relationship with a New Zealand resident or other criteria.

<sup>2</sup> "Recently approved residents" in this research were defined as applicants approved for residence between 1 October 2000 and 31 January 2001.

<sup>3</sup> "Currently" was operationalised as skill shortage work permits granted during the period 1 October 2000 to 31 January 2001.

## **1.4 Findings**

Many of the responses that work permit holders and residents gave to questions were thematically similar, and therefore much of this section aggregates the responses of the two samples - where appropriate.

## **1.5 Demographic characteristics**

Contrasts in the demographic characteristics of the two groups of participants were evident. The work permit holders were, as a group, younger and less well qualified than the residents.

## **1.6 Factors in choosing to apply for a New Zealand work permit and residence**

There were many similarities in the factors that participants reported as being influential on their decision to apply for a New Zealand work permit and for residence. Liking the lifestyle in New Zealand was the most fundamental commonality. This was expressed in a number of ways, with participants stating that they liked New Zealand and New Zealanders, the comparatively low levels of violence and aggression, the small population, the pace of life, the recreational possibilities and the cultural parallels with their own background. Participants formed these views, either initially from the accounts of family and friends already living in New Zealand or by living and working in New Zealand for a period.

In addition to the above influences, a number of participants applied for New Zealand work permits to advance their careers either by taking on more responsibilities or by undertaking more diverse types of work.

## **1.7 Other factors influencing participants' decision to apply for residence**

Both recently approved residents and work permit holders gave similar reasons for applying for residence. In addition to lifestyle characteristics outlined above, participants applied, or wanted to apply, for reasons of *convenience*, for *certainty* and *to maintain established networks*.

### **1.7.1 Convenience**

Many of the participants desired residence for the many benefits the status conferred. For example, unlike work permit holders, residents are free to change jobs and locations within New Zealand. Participants also valued the ability residents have to move in and out of New Zealand without needing to make applications.

### **1.7.2 Certainty**

Participants saw residence as a way of taking charge of their own lives and future and no longer being dependent upon skill shortages in the labour market to continue living in New Zealand. Being a resident removed transient feelings for some, while others saw benefits, such as, having the "credibility" to obtain a mortgage and the right to vote.

### **1.7.3 Networks and careers**

A number of the participants said that they had settled quickly into New Zealand, made friends, had good jobs, and had children attending schools. Obtaining residence was seen as a way of preserving these important and valued personal and family structures.

### **1.8 The length of time participants had originally planned to stay in New Zealand and when they decided to apply for residence**

Very few of the participants had planned to stay in New Zealand for longer than about two years when first applying for a work permit. However, many had started applying for residence after having worked in New Zealand for two years. Almost all of the work permit holders wanted to stay in New Zealand as residents.

### **1.9 The benefits of work permit holders to their employer, industry and New Zealand**

Most of the participants said that their employers and New Zealand had benefited from their skills and experience. Many participants also said that they had provided training for others in New Zealand and replaced those lost to the "brain drain". By definition, the participants were all doing jobs that suitable New Zealanders could not be found to do. However, it was not possible to objectively measure the benefits derived from the participants having work permits.

### **1.10 Use of the Internet for immigration applications**

The area, other than demographic characteristics, where the two samples differed the most, was to do with the use of the Internet for immigration applications. The recently approved residents were generally cautiously in favour of conducting certain components of applications electronically, while most of the work permits holders were not.

### **1.11 Conclusion**

Perhaps the most significant issue to emerge from this research was the finding that, at the time of applying for a work permit, few participants were planning to stay in New Zealand for more than two years. However, after having worked and lived in New Zealand for a period, many of the participants decided, or wanted, to become residents. This has several implications. First, it suggests that direct experience of life in New Zealand is a major influence in peoples' decision to apply for residence. Second, it appears that there may be an opportunity to boost the number of skilled migrants to New Zealand, by facilitating access to residence for people granted work permits.

Another issue raised by the research was that a number of the participants wanted to become residents and had been in New Zealand holding a series of work permits for periods totalling many years. However, they were unable to meet the General Skills Category passmark. Typically, this paradoxical situation arose because, under the current policy settings, a work permit holder was either too old or lacked formal qualifications.



## **2 INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The main purpose of this qualitative research project was to explore some of the personal factors driving work and residence permit applications in New Zealand. The research aimed to explore the intentions of work permit holders to apply for residence and to investigate the key motivations and catalysts behind these. Two groups of participants were selected for study. One consisted of recently approved residents who had previously held work permits, while the other was comprised of people currently holding work permits.

The research also provided the opportunity to explore participants' attitudes to using the Internet as a medium for processing immigration applications. This information will be of use to the New Zealand Immigration Service's (NZIS) E-Services group, which is to be established in the near future.

This report is structured in four main parts. The first introduces the research, provides some background to the project, specifies the objectives, delineates the methodology used, outlines limitations of the research and explains the terms used in the report. In the second part, the findings of the research are presented, with separate sections for the analysis of recently approved residents' responses and work permit holders' responses. The third part provides a discussion of the key findings and a conclusion. The final part contains appendices to the report.

### **2.2 Background**

Linking temporary immigration policy with residence policy can have significant benefits for both migrants and New Zealand. In recent years changes to immigration policy explicitly linking temporary policies with residence policies have facilitated the approval under the General Skills Category of migrants who might not otherwise have been approved for residence. For example, migrants who are within five points of the General Skills category passmark, may apply under Temporary Entry policy for a multiple entry work permit or visa to enable to them to seek an offer of employment in New Zealand. If evidence of a suitable offer of employment is provided to the NZIS within a specified time, the General Skills application is further assessed. Points can also be awarded for a New Zealand qualification or previous New Zealand work experience.

People already in New Zealand holding "skill shortage"<sup>4</sup> work permits have been identified as potentially valuable residents, as they possess skills that are in demand and have proven New Zealand work experience. Having participated in New Zealand society, skill shortage workers are likely to settle well and to contribute to advancing the Government's growth policies.

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<sup>4</sup> "Skill shortage" work permits are those granted when an employer is unable to recruit a suitable local candidate. They are essentially quite different to work permits granted on the basis of the applicants' relationship with a New Zealander.

In the last financial year (1999/2000) about half as many people (18,175) were approved for skill shortage work permits as for residence (36,034)<sup>5</sup>. This comparison suggests that a large untapped pool of high quality, skilled migrants may exist.

Understanding more of the dynamics linking temporary migration and permanent residence will assist the NZIS in developing more appropriate and responsive policy criteria. It is in the interests of both potential residents and New Zealand to better understand how, and why, some temporary permit holders go on to become residents while others do not.

## **2.3 Aims and Objectives**

The main purpose of this qualitative research project was to develop a better understanding of the mechanics of the onshore residence market by identifying some of the personal factors driving work and residence permit applications.

The specific research objectives were:

1. To ascertain the reasons why participants applied for a New Zealand Work Permit;
2. To ascertain how participants secured their first paid employment in New Zealand;
3. To identify the perceived benefits of work permit holders to their employer, to their industry, and to New Zealand;
4. To determine workers' awareness of residence policy and their eligibility for residence;
5. To explore self reported factors influencing recently approved residents' decisions to apply for residence;
6. To identify self reported intentions of the people holding work permits to apply for residence;
7. To determine the intentions of people who knew they were ineligible for residence in New Zealand;
8. To establish the willingness of work permit holders and residents to use alternative visa and permit application delivery systems, such as, electronic and mailed applications; and
9. To document any other important comments or findings.

## **2.4 Methodology**

### ***2.4.1 The research design***

To effectively meet the objectives, a qualitative research design was used and the main technique employed was semi-structured interviews.

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<sup>5</sup> This data is based on a Management Information System (MIS) report, generated on 5 January 2001.

Two populations were of interest. The first was recently approved residents<sup>6</sup> who had previously held work permits, while the second was people currently<sup>7</sup> in New Zealand holding work permits. It was important to explore the intentions and decision making processes of both groups to get an understanding of factors influencing the onshore residence market. Also, the intentions people have can be quite different to what they ultimately do in practice. Therefore, it was important to include participants who had actually progressed from work to residence permits. Brief descriptions of skill shortage work permit policy and General Skills residence policy are included in Appendix C.

### **2.4.2 Sampling**

To allow for some basic analyses of the interview material by nationality, only people from the top five nationalities of work permit holders in 1999/2000 were included in the two samples. These five nations were:

- India;
- Japan;
- South Africa;
- The United Kingdom (UK); and
- The United States of America (USA).

Participants were selected by querying the NZIS's Management Information System (MIS). From this, two lists of individuals eligible for the samples were generated. The individuals were then matched with addresses held in the NZIS's Application Management System (AMS). To ensure a high response rate was achieved, a letter was then drafted (see Appendix A: Letter to potential participants) and sent out to each of the people on the lists, notifying them that they might be contacted and asked to participate in the research. It was intended that 40 participants could be recruited from the total of 200 names and addresses.

### **2.4.3 Interview guides**

Interview guides for each of the two sample groups were developed, drawing on the information needs of the policy analysts and managers who would be using the research findings (see Appendix B). The guides, which were designed to take approximately 45 minutes to administer, were pre-tested<sup>8</sup> and amended prior to finalisation.

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<sup>6</sup> "Recently approved residents" in this research were defined as applicants approved for residence between 1 October 2000 and 31 January 2001.

<sup>7</sup> "Currently" was operationalised as people granted a skill shortage work permit during the period 1 October 2000 to 31 January 2001.

<sup>8</sup> The interview guides were pre-tested by one of the interviewers. This involved interviewing five of the potential participants. This resulted in some minor alterations to the interview guides.

#### **2.4.4 The fieldwork**

The fieldwork began with the three interviewers calling participants by phone several days after the letter had been sent. Of those people contacted, only one out of 41 declined to participate. It was planned for 15 interviews to be conducted in Wellington where the researchers were located, and 25 to be conducted in Auckland where most recent migrants settle. However, three of these interviews did not eventuate due to interview arrangements falling through. Therefore, 14 interviews were conducted in Wellington and 23 were conducted in Auckland. Of these interviews, 17 were with residents who had previously held work permits and 19 were with work permit holders.

The interviews were conducted in a range of venues including offices, participants' homes and work places, and cafes. During the interviews, interviewers took notes and ticked pre-coded responses on the interview guides, writing up a summary of each interview as soon after the interview as possible.

#### **2.4.5 The analysis**

The interviewers entered summaries into two large tables - one for residents, and one for work permit holders. The information in the tables was used as the basis for the analysis and report.

### **2.5 Limitations**

The findings in this report are based on the qualitative responses and perceptions of those interviewed, and while real, may not be generalisable to the populations that the participants are part of.

The sampling was purposive in selecting participants of the top five nationalities approved for work permits in 1999/2000. The findings may have been different had a more varied sample been interviewed.

NZIS records were used to select the names, addresses and phone numbers of the participants. In many cases, individuals had changed their address and were unable to be contacted. It is not possible to estimate what effects this may have had on the research findings.

It is also important to note that when participants outlined the benefits of their work permits to their employer, industry and New Zealand, the responses were the perceptions of participants and were not based on a standardised objective assessment.

### **2.6 Ethical considerations**

The research followed the Association of Social Science Researchers' Code of Ethics. The main areas taken into account were:

- undertaking preliminary work, to establish that the research was necessary;
- preserving the confidentiality of the participants and their responses;

- maintaining accountability by taking reasonable steps to ensure the research was undertaken professionally; and
- submitting drafts of the report for peer review.

## **2.7 Interpreting the findings**

The findings reported are based on the responses and perceptions of the research participants. In certain cases the perceptions of policies and regulations were at odds with the actual settings. For example, one participant believed that only New Zealand citizens were legally permitted to purchase land and houses.

## **2.8 Definitions**

A number of terms have specific meaning in the context of this report. These are briefly discussed below.

**IT** – This is an abbreviation for information technology.

**Participant** - This term is used to refer to individuals interviewed for this research and covers both recently approved residents and work permit holders.

**Residents** - This refers to people who were approved for residence during the period 1 October 2000 and 31 January 2001 and who had at some time after 1 July 1997 held a skill shortage work permit.

**Skill shortage work permit** – These are work permits approved because of the non-availability of a New Zealand resident to fill a vacancy. Criteria for these differ from other work permit criteria where an individual may be granted a work permit because they are, for example, the spouse/ fiancé(e)/ partner of a New Zealander.

**UK** - The NZIS for administrative purposes uses the nationality of "Great Britain" because this is what appears on peoples' passports. In this report, however, Great Britain has been replaced with the general usage abbreviation for the United Kingdom "UK".

**Work permit** – Only the skill shortage work permits are referred to in this report



## 3 FINDINGS

### 3.1 Introduction

Two analyses were undertaken - one of the data pertaining to recently approved residents; the other, data relating to work permit holders. Within each of these analyses, a migration life cycle framework orders the findings. Accordingly, the resident analysis begins by examining the rationale the residents gave for choosing to apply for a New Zealand work permit. Following this are accounts of:

- the ways in which residents obtained their first jobs in New Zealand;
- the length of time participants had planned to stay in New Zealand when they applied for a work permit;
- the perceived benefits of work permits to employers, industry and New Zealand;
- the perceived skills transfer and upskilling resulting from work permits;
- the stage at which the participants decided to apply for residence;
- the total time participants were in New Zealand on work permits;
- the main factors influencing participants in their decision to apply for residence; and
- the willingness of participants to use the Internet as a medium for making immigration applications.

The analysis of the responses of work permit holders is sequenced in a way similar to the above. It, naturally, omits material that is pertinent only for residents and includes an exploration of work permit holders' intentions *not* to apply for residence.

### 3.2 Recently approved residents

#### 3.2.1 Demographic information about the residents

Tables 1 to 3 below, show that the majority of participants were aged between 30 and 49 years, and that more participants worked in the IT industry than in any single other industry.

**Table 1. The residents' nationalities**

Nationality	Number
India	3
Japan	3
South Africa	3
UK	4
USA	4

**Table 2. The residents' age groups**

Age	Number
20-29	2
30-39	8
40-49	6
50 +	1

**Table 3. The industries the residents worked in<sup>9</sup>**

Industry	Number
Hospitality	4
Education	2
Information Technology	6
Technical <sup>10</sup>	2
Other <sup>11</sup>	1

### ***3.2.2 Reasons residents chose to apply for a New Zealand work permit***

Residents reported choosing to apply for New Zealand work permits for a variety of reasons. In a number of cases residents had been convinced by the reports of friends that New Zealand was a good place to work in. A participant from the UK visited a friend who had migrated to New Zealand, "loved the New Zealand environment", and wanted to stay so applied for a work permit during the visit. An American was lured to New Zealand by friends, desiring to live in a less aggressive and less violent society than the United States.

New Zealand's small population was a "pull" factor for residents from countries with large populations such as India, Japan and the UK. A number of participants from the UK and South Africa said they selected New Zealand because of cultural similarities with their country of origin, mentioning cricket and rugby. A lack of serious crime motivated South Africans, who tended to have a relatively high level of awareness of New Zealand.

### ***3.2.3 The ways residents secured their first paid employment in New Zealand***

Employment agencies and friends were the most frequently cited resources residents used to secure employment in New Zealand. For example, a participant from South Africa was curious about New Zealand and approached an IT recruitment agency over the Internet and was placed within a matter of weeks. Most, however, arrived and then contacted recruitment companies or applied for jobs advertised in newspapers.

Ethnic networks were also reported as being used to obtain paid work in New Zealand. For example, one resident secured work which was advertised in a Japanese magazine available in New Zealand.

<sup>9</sup> Two residents were undertaking full-time tertiary study, so were excluded from this table.

<sup>10</sup> Included in this category were a specialised mechanic and a dental technician.

<sup>11</sup> The person classified as 'other' worked in retail management.

### ***3.2.4 The length of time residents intended to stay in New Zealand at the time of applying for their work permits***

About half of the residents said that they had intended to stay in New Zealand for between one and two years at the time of applying for their first work permit. Most of the remaining residents had not decided upon a specific period, while a small number of South African and British residents had planned to use work permits as a strategy to obtain residence.

### ***3.2.5 The perceived benefits of work permit holders to employers, industry and New Zealand***

Having previously held skill shortage work permits, the residents had, by definition benefited their employer, their industry and New Zealand. Many simply stated that there was a deficiency of New Zealanders with their specific skill sets. For example, an Indian chef stated that he had worked in five star hotels and possessed specialised chef competencies. A dental technician said that he brought to New Zealand ten years of experience and superior Japanese training.

Others were a little more specific. A number of IT workers said that they had provided their employers with advice and technical expertise, and had served New Zealand by redressing the "brain drain" and creating jobs. One resident believed that his presence in New Zealand was responsible for the migration of at least five other skilled workers from South Africa.

### ***3.2.6 The skills transfer/upskilling resulting from individuals being granted work permits***

Many of the residents believed that they had, to some extent, transferred skills to other workers in New Zealand. Some had run courses or training sessions, for example, a chef had provided courses in Japanese and Asian cooking. Others reported less formal training they had provided, or the training had happened by "osmosis".

### ***3.2.7 How residents found out about their eligibility for residence***

The NZIS's web site, the Self Assessment Guide for Residence in New Zealand and NZIS staff were the most widely used resources by participants in the search for information about residence. Other sources of information and assistance included friends and colleagues, immigration consultants and employers. Participants generally reported that information was readily available and reasonably clear.

### ***3.2.8 The length of time residents were in New Zealand holding work permits and the number of work permits held before residence approval***

Two years was the most frequently reported period that participants had been in New Zealand prior to being approved for residence. However, there was a considerable range of intervals. One year was the minimum and nine the maximum. The number of work permits held also varied considerably. Generally, the residents had been granted fewer than five work permits, however, one Japanese resident had been granted a much larger number of work permits due to the nature of his work as a tour

guide. This work required him to make many trips to and from New Zealand with each trip requiring a separate work permit.

### ***3.2.9 Main factors influencing the decision to apply for residence and when participants decided to apply***

Most of the residents had not planned to apply for residence prior to entering New Zealand. About half had come to New Zealand as visitors to holiday or for working holidays; half had arrived with work visas. As a consequence, the majority of residents decided to apply for residence only after a period of working in New Zealand. The response of one participant was typical:

"I decided to apply for residence after I arrived. There is not much information about New Zealand in India. An Indian company recruited me to work here."

Four main groupings of factors contributing to the residents' decision to apply for residence emerged from the interviews. These were:

- Convenience;
- Lifestyle;
- Certainty;
- Maintaining established networks and careers.

These are discussed in more detail below.

#### 3.2.9.1 Convenience

Many of the residents said that they applied for residence because of the many benefits the status conferred. Being able to change jobs and location in New Zealand without needing to apply for a variation of conditions of their work permit was seen as a significant benefit of residence by almost all participants. Being able to travel in and out of New Zealand, unfettered by the requirement and cost of a work permit application, was also a factor in certain participants' residence decisions. One participant summarised the convenience of residence saying:

"I considered applying for residence a year ago. I could have renewed my work permit, but it was overall cheaper to get residence."

#### 3.2.9.2 New Zealand lifestyle

Most participants mentioned the New Zealand lifestyle and culture as key elements in their desire to become residents. A resident from the United States said that the comparatively low levels of violence in New Zealand - epitomised by the fact that police do not routinely carry guns - was a significant inducement to stay as a resident. The climate, the people, and recreational activities available were all recurrent lifestyle themes cited as influencing participants' decision to apply for residence. The balance in New Zealand between work and play was particularly important for Japanese residents.

"In New Zealand I feel like a human being. In Japan work, work, work - no personal life outside work. I love fishing."

New Zealand's small population and climate were influential factors for many. A resident from the UK remarked that in New Zealand you could have a city job with a country lifestyle.

#### 3.2.9.3 Certainty

On becoming a resident the participants reported that they could plan and have control over their own lives and not be dependent on the vagaries of work permit applications and possible changes in the job market.

#### 3.2.9.4 Maintaining established networks and careers

A number of the participants said that friends were an important factor in their decision to apply for residence. A participant from India said that he settled very quickly (much to his surprise), found people friendly and felt very much at home in New Zealand. For other participants, work or career opportunities were key elements. Participants from the United States believed there were more opportunities and career choices in New Zealand than in America.

#### ***3.2.10 The residents' intentions to stay long term in New Zealand***

The majority of participants expressed the aspiration to remain in New Zealand for the long term and a smaller number said they would like to become citizens. The participants from India, Japan and South Africa appeared most strongly committed to staying in New Zealand for the long haul.

#### ***3.2.11 The willingness to use electronic visa and permit application***

Those residents experienced in using computers generally said they would be willing to use the Internet for aspects of immigration processes. Difficulties in providing documentation such as medical test results and police certificates were identified as barriers, as were security, document tracking and confidentiality issues. The residents tended to agree that the most useful new use of the Internet would be for visually tracking the progress of applications as can now be done by phone using a PIN number.

"Being able to see application status on line. Could be given a pin number to access personal information. Would be comforting to know. You hand over all the forms but don't know whether they are in the process. This would mean applicant and NZIS were working together, rather than a sense of them and us."

### 3.3 Work permit holders

#### 3.3.1 Introduction

This sub-section provides an analysis of the responses of work permit holders and it is of note that many of the themes identified above for residents were evident here too. As stated earlier, the structure of this analysis will mirror that of the preceding section.

#### 3.3.2 The demographic characteristics of work permit holders

Tables 4 to 6, below, indicate that the majority of work permit holders were aged between 20 and 39 years. The hospitality industry employed more work permit holders than any other industry. There was quite a diversity in the types of jobs participants had, as is evidenced by the size of the "Other" industry category.

**Table 4. Work permit holders' nationalities**

Nationality	Number
India	5
Japan	4
South Africa	3
UK	2
USA	5

**Table 5. Work permit holders' age groups**

Age	Number
20-29	5
30-39	8
40-49	3
50 +	2
NA <sup>12</sup>	1

**Table 6. The industries work permit holders were employed in**

Industry	Number
Hospitality	6
Education	2
Information Technology	2
Technical <sup>13</sup>	3
Other <sup>14</sup>	6

#### 3.3.3 Reasons work permit holders applied for a New Zealand work permit

Work permit holders said they selected New Zealand to work in for an array of reasons, with most reporting multiple motives.

<sup>12</sup> The age of one participant was not available.

<sup>13</sup> This classification covered industries employing engineers of varying types.

<sup>14</sup> Included in this category were industries ranging from health care to tailoring and journalism.

One of the most frequently mentioned reasons was "liking New Zealand". This included liking New Zealanders and the New Zealand way of life. South African and Japanese participants tended to advance these reasons and a recurrent antecedent was contact with New Zealand or New Zealanders - often as a consequence of sporting events such as rugby tours. Japanese participants seemed, more than most, drawn to New Zealand by its pace of life and recreational options.

Participants also frequently cited having family members or friends already in New Zealand as influential in their decision to apply for a work permit. An example is that of an Indian participant, who chose New Zealand because he had four brothers already here.

Career opportunities were reported as important factors also. For example, an American participant whose medical qualifications were recognised in New Zealand, said that his position gave him a diversity of duties and a chance to expand his experience in another English speaking culture. Likewise, a UK work permit holder came to New Zealand for the opportunity to do interesting work with a reputable consulting company. Better pay and working conditions were mentioned by an Indian participant as incentives to work in New Zealand. Many of those wanting to progress their careers had responded to positions advertised internationally.

#### ***3.3.4 How work permit holders secured their first job in New Zealand***

As stated above, a number of the participants had seen, applied for and secured their first job while offshore. Some obtained work through the contacts of family and friends. Others made direct approaches to employers or applied for jobs in the situations vacant section of newspapers. One participant had tried to set up a job using the Internet while in the United States, but was unsuccessful. After arriving in New Zealand this participant found employment within a matter of weeks.

#### ***3.3.5 The length of time work permit holders intended to stay in New Zealand***

Most of the participants stated that they planned to stay in New Zealand long term at the time they applied for their work permits. "Long term" appeared to be subjectively defined, however, with some viewing two to three years as long term and others seeing the period as "indefinite".

#### ***3.3.6 The length of time work permit holders had been in New Zealand and the number of work permits they had held***

The length of time for which participants had held work permits varied considerably, as did the number of work permits held. The most frequent period for holding a work permit was two years or less, while the longest time was eight years and the briefest six months. The majority of participants had held only one work permit and no participant had held more than five.

### ***3.3.7 The perceived benefits of being granted a work permit to the employer, industry and New Zealand***

Almost all work permit holders identified that since they had been granted skill shortage work permits they were, by definition, providing their employers and New Zealand with rare and special skills. Most participants also added that they brought to New Zealand valuable experience in their particular field of expertise, an international perspective and replaced the vacuum left by the "brain drain". A few participants said that they had assisted the enterprises in which they were employed to expand, and one mentioned the tax paid by his employer as a benefit.

### ***3.3.8 Skill transfers from work permit holders to New Zealand workers***

Many of the participants reported that they had provided training for their peers at work or had supervised and mentored trainees. For example, one participant, as a part of his job, provided training in the use of a software package. Another participant was involved in upskilling apprentice welders, while a further participant supervised registrars in a hospital.

### ***3.3.9 Work permit holders' awareness of residence policy and their eligibility for residence***

The NZIS Self Assessment Guide for Residence and NZIS staff were most frequently mentioned as sources of information about residence. An immigration consultant was mentioned by only one participant. Most of the participants said they knew whether they would, or would not, achieve the passmark for residence under the General Skills Category points system. Those participants who would not meet the passmark because of a lack of qualifications were particularly aware of this.

### ***3.3.10 The intentions of work permit holders to apply for residence and the reasons behind their decisions***

Almost all of the participants said that they wanted to become residents. Some had already submitted applications, while others were working towards applying.

The factors influencing the participants' desire to become residents can be grouped into the same categories as those used for the residents, earlier in the report.

#### **3.3.10.1 Convenience**

Being able to explore other parts of New Zealand and freely change jobs were major convenience factors which residence was seen to facilitate. The ability to obtain a bank loan in order to buy a house was another convenience of residence, identified by a number of the work permit holders.

#### **3.3.10.2 New Zealand life style**

A desire to continue living in New Zealand because of the people and lifestyle was the most critical factor in many participants' desire to become a resident. Personal safety was mentioned by a number of South Africans, while a slower pace of life attracted

Japanese to New Zealand. Participants from India valued the working conditions and standard of living here.

#### 3.3.10.3 Certainty

Some participants said they were intending to apply for residence to eliminate the possibility that they could be forced to leave the country if changes in the labour market resulted in their skills no longer being in demand. One participant said that as a work permit holder he:

"...could not vote [and] felt transient, as a resident I could vote [and have] more power to do things in New Zealand."

#### 3.3.10.4 Maintaining established networks and careers

A number of participants reported that they had settled well into New Zealand society, with good jobs and, occasionally, children at schools. These structures were valuable to them and residence would permit these to be maintained.

#### ***3.3.11 The intentions of work permit holders who were not eligible for residence***

A number of work permit holders said they were not eligible for residence. A few of these people reported undertaking activities, such as study towards qualifications, which would boost the points they could score under the General Skills policy. One participant was prepared to remain in New Zealand holding a series of work permits, while another had approached an MP. Another said:

"I will appeal if I am not accepted. I won't go quietly. The Transitional Policy is another possibility, but I'm not thinking about it too much."

#### ***3.3.12 Work permit holders not wanting New Zealand residence***

Only one participant did not want residence in New Zealand, saying that the pay was too low and price of living too high.

#### ***3.3.13 The willingness of work permit holders to use alternative visa and permit application systems such as the Internet***

Overall, the work permit holders did not endorse the use of the Internet for application processing. There were two main reasons for this. First, many of the participants did not use the Internet, so the question was irrelevant to them. The second reason, voiced by a few participants, was that they preferred face to face communication, believing it was more effective. One participant said that Asians might be disadvantaged unless they had very good English skills. Another said that paper documentation would still be required.

Of the few participants in favour of using the Internet for applications, most suggested online processes could be used to make appointments to reduce queuing.

One participant summed up the views of those receptive of the Internet:

"E-mail address to give contact with the service and get reply. Wouldn't have to wait on phone - takes a long time. PIN number to track application"

## 4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### 4.1 Introduction

The main objective of this qualitative research project was to develop a better understanding of the onshore residence market by identifying some of the personal factors driving work and residence applications. The key findings of the research are summarised and briefly discussed below. Since many of the responses that work permit holders and residents gave to questions were thematically uniform, much of this section aggregates the responses of the two samples.

#### *4.1.1 Demographic characteristics*

Contrasts in the demographic characteristics of the two groups of participants were evident. The work permit holders were, as a group, younger and less well qualified than the residents. For example, the majority of the work permit holders were aged between 20 and 39 years, while the majority of residents were aged between 30 and 49 years. The single largest industry grouping residents were employed in was the IT industry, while the hospitality industry was the single biggest employer of work permit holders. These observations must, however, be considered within the context of the limitations stated earlier, that is, the findings may not be generalisable to the populations that the participants were part of.

#### *4.1.2 Factors in choosing to apply for a New Zealand work permit and residence*

There were many similarities in the factors that participants reported as being influential on their decision to apply for a New Zealand work permit and for residence. A liking of the New Zealand lifestyle was the most fundamental commonality. This was expressed in a number of ways, with participants stating that they liked New Zealand and New Zealanders, the comparatively lower levels of violence and aggression in the society, the small population, the pace of life, the recreational possibilities and the cultural parallels with their own background. Participants formed these views principally by living and working in New Zealand for a period, or from the accounts of family and friends already living in New Zealand.

In addition to the above influences, a number of participants applied for New Zealand work permits to advance their careers either by taking on more responsibilities or by undertaking more diverse types of work.

#### *4.1.3 Other factors influencing participants' decision to apply for residence*

Both recently approved residents and work permit holders expressed generally similar rationales for applying for residence. As summarised earlier, in addition to lifestyle reasons, participants applied, or wanted to apply, for reasons of convenience, for certainty and to maintain established networks.

Many of the participants desired residence for the many benefits the status conferred. For example, unlike work permit holders, residents are free to change jobs and locations within New Zealand. Participants also valued the ability residents have to move in and out of New Zealand without needing to make applications.

Participants saw residence as a way of taking charge of their own lives and futures and no longer being dependent upon skill shortages in the labour market to continue living in New Zealand. Being a resident removed transient feelings for some, while others saw it as conferring the "credibility" to obtain a mortgage and the right to vote.

#### ***4.1.4 The length of time participants had planned to be in New Zealand and when they decided to apply for residence***

Some of the most interesting findings are clustered around the intentions of participants when first applying for a work permit. Very few of the participants had planned to stay in New Zealand for longer than about two years when first applying for a work permit. However, many had decided to apply for residence after working here for two years. Almost all of the work permit holders wanted to stay on in New Zealand as residents.

#### ***4.1.5 Use of the Internet for immigration applications***

The area where the two samples differed the most, was to do with the use of the Internet for immigration applications. The recently approved residents were generally more favourably disposed to conducting certain components of applications electronically than were the work permit holders. This could, perhaps, be explained by the fact that many of the work permit holders, such as chefs for example, did not use the Internet in their day to day business.

#### ***4.1.6 Participants' first jobs***

The majority of participants secured their first job in New Zealand after their arrival in the country. About half found work by means of friends and family and half by going to recruitment agencies or through newspapers. Participants had difficulty trying to arrange work while offshore. The exceptions were for highly specialised jobs advertised internationally.

#### ***4.1.7 The benefits of work permit holders to their employer, industry and New Zealand***

Most of the participants said that both their employers and New Zealand had benefited from their skills and experience. Many participants also said that they had provided training for others in New Zealand and replaced those lost to the "brain drain". By definition the participants were all doing jobs that suitable New Zealanders could not be found to do. However, it was not possible to estimate the magnitude of the benefits derived from the participants having work permits.

## **4.2 Conclusion**

Perhaps the most significant issue to emerge from this research was the finding that, at the time of applying for a work permit, few participants were planning to stay in New Zealand for more than two years. However, after having worked and lived in New Zealand for a period, many of the participants decided, or wanted, to become residents. This has several implications. First, it confirms that direct experience of life in New Zealand, and of New Zealand's lifestyle, is a major influence in peoples'

decision to apply for residence. Second, it appears that there may be the opportunity to boost the number of skilled migrants to New Zealand, by facilitating access to residence for people granted work permits.

Another issue raised by the research was that a number of the participants had been employed in New Zealand for a number of years and wanted to become residents yet were unable to reach the General Skills Category passmark. Typically, this paradoxical situation arose because, under the current policy settings, a work permit holder was either too old or lacked formal qualifications.



## 5 APPENDIX A: LETTER TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

5 February 2001

Name  
Address 1  
Address 2  
Address 3

Dear Name

I am writing to you to tell you that we are carrying out research on work permit policy. The researchers will be interviewing 40 people from our records of people who have had work permits.

One of the researchers may contact you in the next few days to arrange an interview with you. Should you agree to participate, anything you say in the interview will remain confidential and you will not be named or be identifiable in the research report. Participation in the research is, of course, voluntary. However, I hope you choose to participate if called, as it will assist us in developing more informed policy.

The names of the researchers doing the interviewing are:

- Kim Saffron;
- Natasha McMillan; and
- Val Norton.

If you have any questions about the study please contact Philippa Shorland, Research Analyst:

Phone (04) 915-4108

E-mail [philippa.shorland@nzis.dol.govt.nz](mailto:philippa.shorland@nzis.dol.govt.nz)

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Little  
Manager, Policy, Research and Development Group  
New Zealand Immigration Service



## 6 APPENDIX B: THE INTERVIEW GUIDES

### NEW ZEALAND IMMIGRATION SERVICE

#### RESIDENCE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

##### **Introduction**

Nature and purpose of the study.

The Department of Labour is keen to improve the way in which people obtain residence to New Zealand.

##### **Interviewer**

Contracted as an independent researcher by the Department of Labour to do this interview.

##### **Confidentiality.**

Participation in the study is confidential.

Will not be identified as the source of any information you provide.

Interviewer is the only person who knows the person is being interviewed for the study.

##### **Recording**

Making detailed notes of conversation

##### **Report**

All together 40 people are participating in this study.

The research information will be used as the basis of a report for NZIS.

Summary of the report will be available.

Name

Age

Gender

Country of Nationality

Date of arrival in New Zealand

Training/ qualifications

Current work

##### **Application for residence**

##### **When and why did you apply for residence in New Zealand?**

Probe: Why NZ specifically?

**Was NZ first choice**

*Code/prompt*  
*career/business opportunities*  
family here  
friends here  
better than home country  
better than other countries  
NZ environment / landscape  
on-migration to Australia  
good for family/ children

Probe: before or after arrival in NZ?

Probe: Specific factors that influenced application

*Code/prompt*  
*coming/staying in NZ*  
leaving home country

*Probe: Did person obtain work permit with the intention of applying for residence?*  
Information and sources of support  
How did you find out about residence in New Zealand?

Code/Prompt  
Internet  
NZIS case manager  
Immigration consultant  
NZ Embassy  
National call centre  
Personal contact

**How easy was it to get the information?**

**How straight forward was the application process?**

*Probe: letter from NZIS*  
*NZIS case manager*  
*interview*

Probe: What were the helpful things

Probe: What were the frustrating things

**Were you told by NZIS how long it would take**

Were there any delays in processing?  
code/prompt

delay  
notified  
not notified

**Looking back, is there anything that would have made it easier?**

Code/Prompt  
internet application  
mail application  
translation of information  
clearer instructions  
accessible immigration staff

**How might this best be done?**

**Conclusion**

**Is there anything else you want to say?**

Thank you!

Copy of the summary report? Yes    No

Name and address for posting report

## NEW ZEALAND IMMIGRATION SERVICE

### Work Permit Interview Schedule

#### *Introduction*

- **Nature and purpose of the study.**

The Department of Labour is keen to improve the way in which people obtain residence to New Zealand.

- **Interviewer**

Contracted as an independent researcher by the Department of Labour to do this interview.

- **Confidentiality.**

Participation in the study is confidential.

Will not be identified as the source of any information you provide.

Interviewer is the only person who knows the person is being interviewed for the study.

- **Recording**

Making detailed notes of conversation

- **Report**

All together 40 people are participating in this study.

The research information will be used as the basis of a report for NZIS.

Summary of the report will be available.

Name

Age

Gender

Country of Nationality

Date of arrival in New Zealand

Training/ qualifications

Current work

#### **Work permit**

Why did you want a work permit?

*Probe: Short stay*

*Long stay*

*Intention to gain residence*

**Residence**

Are you intending to apply for NZ residence?

If yes, why?

How will you go about that?

If no, why not?

Is there anything that would make you change your mind?

**Eligibility**

What did you have to do to gain your work permit?

*Probe: Documents required*

*People*

*Other*

**Information and sources of support**

How did you go about it?

*Probe: Sources of information:*

*Internet*

*Pamphlets*

*NZIS case manager*

*Immigration consultant*

*NZ Embassy*

How easy / how hard was the application process?

Probe: What were the good / helpful things

*Probe: What were the hard / frustrating things* How long did it take from your first enquiry until being granted a work permit?

What took the most time?

Why?

Looking back, what would have made it easier

*Probe possibility of completing application: On internet*  
*By mail*

How might this best be done?

## **Conclusion**

Is there anything else you want to say?

Thank you!

Copy of the summary report? Yes    No

Name and address for posting report

## APPENDIX C: IMMIGRATION POLICY

### 5.1 General Skills policy objective

Migrants are selected on the basis of key human capability indicators and their ability to settle. Applicants in the General Skills category are assessed by a points system. Residence will be declined if the applicant's points total does not exceed the automatic fail mark. An applicant may apply for an open work permit if they are within five points of passing.

#### 5.1.1 Minimum points required

Applicants in the General Skills category must be awarded a minimum of one point for work experience and 10 points for qualifications (unless a New Zealand qualification). Applicants who fail to attain those levels of points for work experience and qualifications will not be approved.

#### 5.1.2 Summary of General Skills Points Table

POINTS FACTOR	POINTS
<b>QUALIFICATIONS</b>	
<b>1. Qualifications</b>	
Applicants must attain a minimum of ten points for qualifications to be approved under this category.	
Base qualification	10
Advanced qualification	11
Masters degree or higher	12
<b>2. New Zealand Qualifications</b>	
Additional one point awarded for a New Zealand qualification recognised for points, except for qualifications gained with NZODA assistance.	
	1
<b>EMPLOYABILITY</b>	
<b>3 Work Experience</b>	
Applicants must attain a minimum of one point for work experience to be approved under this category, unless they have completed a qualification in New Zealand that is eligible for points and was not gained with NZODA assistance.	
2 years	1
4 years	2
6 years	3
8 years	4
10 years	5
12 years	6
14 years	7
16 years	8
18 years	9
20 years	10
<b>4 Offer of employment</b>	5
<b>5 Age</b>	
18-24 years	8

	25-29 years	10
	30-34 years	8
	35-39 years	6
	40-44 years	4
	50-55 years	2
	56 years of age and over may not be approved under this category	0
<b>SETTLEMENT FACTORS</b>		
	Maximum points for settlement factors	7
<b>6</b>	<b>Settlement Funds</b>	
	\$100,000	1
	\$200,000	2
<b>7</b>	<b>Spousal Qualifications</b>	
	Base qualification	1
	Advanced qualifications, masters degree or higher	2
<b>8</b>	<b>Family Sponsorship</b>	
	Sponsorship by a close family member	3
<b>9</b>	<b>New Zealand Work Experience</b>	3
	1 year	1
	2 years	2

## 5.2 Work Visa/Permit Policy

These provisions apply in addition to those contained in the **Generic Temporary Entry Policy** section of the New Zealand Immigration Service's Operations Manual.

### 5.2.1 *Work policy objective*

**The objective of the work visa/permit policy is to protect employment opportunities for New Zealand citizens and residents while still allowing:**

- New Zealand employers to recruit temporary workers from overseas to meet particular or seasonal skill needs which cannot be met from within New Zealand; and
- New Zealand to meet its obligations, under bilateral agreements negotiated with the governments of neighbouring countries in the South Pacific, to provide opportunities for citizens of these countries to undertake temporary employment; and
- visitors to New Zealand to lawfully work while on holiday provided this does not take away employment opportunities from New Zealand citizens or residents; and
- permission to work to be granted on a reciprocal basis to people entering New Zealand under approved working holiday schemes.

### 5.2.2 *Standard work policy requirements*

- a) Work visas/permits may be issued to applicants who meet the standard requirements for a temporary visa/permit and who, unless otherwise

specified, also meet the policy requirements for a work visa/permit. The policy requirements are that applicants must:

- i) produce evidence that they are suitably qualified by training and experience to do the job they have been offered, and that they can meet any New Zealand certification or registration requirements if these are required to carry out the job in New Zealand; and have an offer of employment for which there is no suitably qualified and experienced New Zealand citizen or resident available; or
  - ii) meet the requirements as specified in any one of the Special Categories that follow.
- b) All job offers (in i) above) must be tested against the New Zealand labour market unless otherwise specified.

### ***5.2.3 Requests for approval in principle to recruit overseas***

Requests for approval in principle to recruit temporary workers from overseas may be made by New Zealand employers before the lodgement of applications for work visas by individual applicants. Requests of this nature must include a case for the recruitment of workers from overseas. The case must confirm that there are no suitably qualified and experienced New Zealand citizens or residents available to undertake the work.

### ***5.2.4 Funds/sponsorship requirements***

Applicants for work visas/permits must have:

- sufficient funds for maintenance and accommodation; or
- sponsorship by a relative or friend in New Zealand. Sponsors must be:
  - New Zealand citizens or
  - New Zealand residence permit holders without requirements imposed under section 18A; or
  - exempt under section 12 (1) of the Immigration Act 1987 from the requirement to hold a permit; or
- a guarantee of maintenance and accommodation by their employer; or
- a proposed salary that is considered by a visa/immigration officer to be sufficient to cover maintenance and accommodation.

### ***5.2.5 Onward travel requirements for work visa/permit applications***

- a) Applicants for work permits are required to show evidence of the travel arrangements made to leave New Zealand at the end of their stay, such as:
  - i. actual travel tickets (confirmed or open-dated) out of New Zealand to a destination in which the applicant has the right of entry; or
  - ii. (only for applicants on arrival in New Zealand) a work visa endorsed to show that the onward travel requirement has been met or waived; or
  - iii. written confirmation from an airline/travel agency that onward travel has been booked and paid for; or
  - iv. sponsorship covering repatriation, which can include a written guarantee of repatriation from the New Zealand employer.
- b) A visa officer may also request the above evidence from applicants for work visas.

### **5.2.6 *Maximum currency of work permits***

Subject to any special directions to the contrary, where an applicant meets work permit policy, a work permit may be:

granted for the period for which employment is offered, up to a maximum of three years. Further work permits are subject to the applicant meeting the standard requirements and a further labour market test. (This provision does not apply to applicants holding working holiday scheme work permits.)

### **5.2.7 *Definition of employment***

- a) Employment is defined as any activity for “gain or reward” (section 2 of the Act).
- b) “Gain or reward” includes any payment or benefit which can be valued in terms of money i.e., board and lodging, goods (for example, food or clothing) and service (for example, transport).
- c) A person is considered to be undertaking employment whether the payment or benefit for the activity is being provided by a New Zealand resident or an overseas resident.
- d) Full-time employment is based on a 30 plus hour week.

### **5.2.8 *Local labour market test***

- a) When policy requires a local labour market test, immigration officers should be satisfied that there are no New Zealand citizens or residents available to do the job offered, by one or a combination of the following:
  - i. the employer making a case for each individual application;
  - ii. NZIS offices in New Zealand and overseas checking an offer of employment through the Department of Work and Income;
  - iii. NZIS offices seeking labour market advice from others in the particular industry.
- b) Depending on the circumstances, the immigration officer will decide in any particular case whether or not one or more or all of the above enquiries are to be made, or whether other enquiries should be made.