

Conclusion

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Migrants who have made New Zealand their home are important to the country's heritage, culture, and economy. The initial experiences of migrants when they arrive and during their first few years have a significant impact on their longer-term settlement and economic outcomes. These first years, during which migrants orient themselves to their new country, find housing, employment, and new friends and settle into neighbourhoods and schools, are often the most challenging. Understanding the factors relating to successful settlement will contribute to the development of effective immigration policy and settlement services for new migrants.

This report highlights many of the key factors that contribute to the early settlement experiences of new migrants to New Zealand. Findings from the Longitudinal Immigration Survey: New Zealand will continuously be used to inform the development of immigration policy. In addition to informing immigration policy, the findings will assist a variety of government agencies and community groups to develop services that will contribute to effective and positive settlement outcomes for migrants.

With these aims, the Department of Labour will be releasing ongoing special topic reports based on the LisNZ that address priority areas. These reports will contain more detailed analysis of key policy issues, thus providing valuable input into the policy review process.

Policy Implications

Sustainable immigration has to create win-win situations for migrants and the receiving country; the findings in this report suggest that this is generally the case for New Zealand. Immigration has been a positive experience for most migrants, judging by how well settled and satisfied they are with their life in New Zealand. Immigration has also benefited New Zealand based on the high number of skilled migrants filling shortages in the labour market. The outcomes of this research are largely positive by world standards; particularly for skilled migration, but also for New Zealand's migration programme overall.

One of the government's key priorities is to better match the skills of migrants with the employment needs of the economy – needs that change as the international and domestic economies change. The results from this, and subsequent reports, will help us to identify the key drivers of migration, and to understand the settlement experiences and outcomes for migrants from particular segments of the migrant population. This information can assist in promoting effective recruitment strategies, as well as providing needed support to migrants facing challenges; thereby maximising the positive outcomes for both migrants and New Zealand. In our competitive and changing immigration environment, it is essential that we continue to attract and support the settlement of skilled migrants who help drive innovation and productivity for New Zealand businesses.

Migrants' employment rates were generally high, especially for Skilled principal migrants. The LisNZ programme will continue to investigate the labour market outcomes for migrants approved through various immigration categories to match the skills of migrants with the employment needs of New Zealand. Labour market demand issues and the employment outcomes for skilled migrants in specialised occupational fields will also be an area for future research.

The results in this report lend strong support to immigration selection policies that value migrants with the language, skills, and previous experience that complement the needs of the New Zealand labour force. For example, the results indicate that better English language skills contribute to the economic and social integration of migrants by improving their employment opportunities and providing them with a wider access to social networks.



LisNZ provides a window into
the migration experience.

A large proportion of migrants had held a temporary visitor, work, or student permit in the three years before gaining residence approval. Not surprisingly, those migrants who had spent two or more years in New Zealand before gaining residence were more likely to feel settled than those who had never visited. This finding, along with the fact that the seeking work rate for onshore applicants is half that of those who applied offshore, suggests that encouraging more migrants to make use of temporary permits before applying for permanent residence in New Zealand may be beneficial to both migrants and New Zealand.

Future Research – The LisNZ Research Programme

The LisNZ research programme provides a unique opportunity to better understand the immigration process over time, from the initial motivations to come to New Zealand right through to medium-term outcomes. While the results presented in this report demonstrate that there are some general trends that apply to aggregated migrant groupings, many of the experiences and settlement outcomes of migrants vary depending on particular sub-group characteristics such as immigration approval category, region of origin, and region of settlement in New Zealand. The scale of the LisNZ allows analysis to be conducted at a level of detail that until now has not been possible. Researchers will make use of the longitudinal immigration data to assess the settlement outcomes and needs of these and other targeted segments of the migrant population and the results used to inform a number of priority areas.

In addition to assessing the economic and social integration of skilled migrants, the LisNZ research programme provides a unique opportunity to examine and understand the integration of smaller and less studied groups of the migrant population including Family Partner, Family Parent, Business, and Pacific migrants.⁶⁶ Additionally, the scope of the survey will allow researchers of all backgrounds to use the data to understand many different features of the settlement process.

The results demonstrate that migrants have diverse motivations for choosing New Zealand, including a combination of economic, lifestyle, educational, and safety reasons. As can be seen here, the reasons for choosing New Zealand tend to vary based on such group characteristics as immigration approval category and region of origin. Preliminary research examining how these reasons are associated with the social and economic integration of migrants is already underway.⁶⁷

Migrants' initial settlement experiences were largely positive, as was their overall satisfaction with life in New Zealand. Social networks appeared to play a key role for new migrants. Most migrants had friends and family already in New Zealand before they migrated, and these contacts were most often used as their main source of information. Previous international research has suggested that social networks not only contribute to the social integration of new migrants, but also play a significant role in their economic integration.⁶⁸ Future research will examine the impact of wider social networks on migrants' labour market outcomes.

Finally, international comparative research will enable the findings from the LisNZ to be assessed against findings from other surveys. The LisNZ provides information of a consistent nature to that collected by other migrant destinations such as Australia and Canada that have also undertaken longitudinal immigration surveys. Information gained from the LisNZ will provide insight into the New Zealand migration experience, and allow us to make cross-country comparisons to assess the effectiveness of New Zealand's immigration policies on an international level. In a world of increasing competition for skills it is vital that we understand what attracts migrants to New Zealand and what contributes to positive settlement outcomes. In the end, achieving social and economic integration is not only critical for migrants and New Zealand's economy, it is also necessary for the future viability of New Zealand society more generally.

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