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New Zealanders in Australia: migration, life and aspirations

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Executive Summary

This working paper reports on the motivations and aspirations of New Zealanders living and working in Australia. The report draws on research with 61 New Zealand citizens working and living in three major Australian urban regions, Brisbane/Gold Coast, Perth and Sydney. Participants were recruited for semi-structured, biographically-oriented interviews to explore their motivations, everyday lives and future plans. The report addresses six major themes that emerged across the three study sites: 1) pathways to Australia; 2) transferability of skills; 3) social support and changing life circumstances; 4) family and children; 5) belonging, ethnicity and inclusion; and 6) future plans and intentions.

Migration flows between Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia have been ongoing for over two centuries. In the early 1970s the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement (TTTA) formalised and codified the movement of citizens between the two countries. Nearly thirty years later in the early 2000s, Australian legislation passed under the Liberal-National government placed restrictions on the ability of New Zealanders migrating to Australia to access social welfare benefits, tertiary education schemes and pathways to citizenship. An initial downturn in migration flows was observed, although this was relatively short-term as migration flows grew again particularly after 2008 as a result of the Australian mining boom.

Media reports have long explained trans-Tasman migration based on perceived higher salaries and wages in Australia, focusing on economic factors as primary drivers of migration. Significant events in each country, such as the Christchurch earthquakes in 2010 and 2011 and the mining boom in Australia also help explain movement flows. In addition, lifestyle factors, including warmer weather and access to leisure activities as well as family reunification also underpin the ongoing migration of New Zealanders to Australia.

Existing research on trans-Tasman migration has paid close attention to the economic relationship between Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, and significant emphasis has been placed on the economic basis of cyclical migration flows. Other research has examined the TTTA framework, its impact on migration flows and the lives of New Zealand citizens in Australia. With the introduction of legislative changes in Australia in 2001, researchers noted there were no significant long term impacts on the flow of New Zealand citizens to Australia. However, there was a notable diminishment of the rights of some New Zealanders who were unable to access citizenship and could increasingly be characterised as 'indefinite temporaries.'

Pathways to Australia

Trans-Tasman migration occurs for multiple reasons, taking shape around shifting economic circumstances, aspirations for career advancement and opportunities to travel, as well as in relation to different life stage experiences and opportunities. In many instances the biographies of participants in this research highlighted migration pathways that related to a desire for change in life circumstances, responding to changing conditions,



and/or following family and friends who had already moved to Australia. Several themes were particularly consistent in the narratives of participants: perceptions that economic conditions were better in Australia, especially associated with higher wages and lower cost of living; experiences of inequality and discrimination in Aotearoa New Zealand; migration to Australia being undertaken in response to change of life circumstances, especially notable amongst those who moved in mid to later life; and migration to Australia as associated with aspirations for professional career development.

Transferability of skills

While potential income, employment opportunities and career aspirations were major drivers of migration our research revealed some differences in the extent to which people are able to transfer labour market skills in migration. Educational qualifications from New Zealand institutions were widely recognised by Australian employers, particularly for those participants in professional occupations. Equally, several participants worked in industries where regulatory frameworks and/or business practices were shared between Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. In a smaller number of cases, particularly associated with mining and building sectors, there was a need to gain certificates in Australia before gaining employment, regardless of how much experience job applicants had. The transferability of skills provides a platform of smooth transitions into the Australian workforce, a taken-for-granted infrastructure that supports ongoing migration across the Tasman sea.

Social support and changing life circumstances

A common theme in recent media accounts of trans-Tasman migration has been the lack of social security available to New Zealanders. For the majority of participants in this research, in contrast, limited access to social security and other government support was not identified as a significant issue. Indeed, some participants believed that, as non-citizens, New Zealanders should have no entitlement to government support in Australia. As many participants viewed wages as better in Australia, and living costs lower, the perception was that they had no need of any kind of social security support. Our research also revealed that for those participants who faced unanticipated life changes in Australia the impacts of limited social support can be significant. Participants who had accidents, experienced relationship breakdowns or faced business difficulties often found themselves in difficult social and economic situations in Australia but, as a result of limited job opportunities, debt or other issues, they were also unable to effectively return to Aotearoa New Zealand.

Family and children

Migration is often arranged around or has impacts on family, requires the maintenance of relationships transnationally, or can influence the extent to which people are settled in a particular place. For participants who were in relationships with and had children with other New Zealand citizens a substantial concern was the future rights of these children, whether they were born in Australia or had moved there at a relatively young age. Many were unclear about the rights accorded to children and were worried about where their children would live if it was no longer possible to remain in Australia. Participants with children who were or had been in relationships with Australian citizens had greater clarity



on their children's rights as Australian citizens but sometimes also faced particularly precarious situations themselves. A number of instances of domestic violence and broken relationships were discussed by participants, situations that often trapped New Zealand women in Australia – unable to return to Aotearoa New Zealand with their Australian citizen children and ineligible for government support even if sole parenting roles made employment untenable.

Belonging, Ethnicity and Inclusion

Participants in this research described varied experiences of belonging and inclusion that often related to ethnicity. Around two thirds of participants identified as Pākehā/New Zealand European and almost all articulated a view that they faced very few barriers to inclusion in their daily lives. By contrast, Māori, Pacific and Asian participants were much more likely to describe incidents of racial discrimination either as targets of racialised comments or as observers of incidents of racism. Some participants noted that while they were accepted as colleagues or peers in the workplace, this was not necessarily the case in an out-of-work environment.

Future Plans

All of the participants in this research had migrated to Australia within the previous decade. Notwithstanding some of the complex social situations that some encountered, participants were generally satisfied with their lives in Australia and felt that they had made the right choice in migrating there. For many, higher wages and an ability to get ahead financially was sufficient reward for the costs of being away from whanau/family and the places they grew up. No participants had applied for Australian citizenship or permanent residence although many expressed concern about their long-term status in Australia as New Zealand citizens. Most participants envisaged remaining in Australia over the next decade while a smaller number identified particular timeframes for return, often associated with retirement.

Conclusion

For many participants in this research migration to Australia has fulfilled expectations as a relatively easy, economically advantageous opportunity for New Zealand citizens. Participants undertook migration to improve their social and economic situation and many believed that this had been achieved. Equally, adaptation to life in Australia was relatively unproblematic for most participants, even if many had concerns about their or their family's future without the security of citizenship. What we have also seen, however, is that trans-Tasman migration is not only economically driven – it can be influenced by significant changes in personal circumstances or economic fortunes in Aotearoa New Zealand. Equally, while the majority of participants were satisfied with their situation in Australia, a notable minority had encountered difficulties associated with employment, health and family life that were clearly exacerbated by the lack of social and political rights that New Zealand citizens have in Australia.



1.0 Introduction

Migration between Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia has been commonplace since the 19th century, sustained by Māori social and economic activity, settler colonial relations and systems, and the growing diversity of migration flows into both countries (Bedford, 2019; Fraser, 2019). Since 1973, the relatively limited regulation of migration across the Tasman Sea has also been formalised in the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement, which provides for visa-free access for citizens of both countries as well as the ability to live and work indefinitely in each country (Bedford, 2006). As a result, trans-Tasman migration is often viewed as a right, particularly by New Zealand citizens who, since the 1960s, have migrated long-term across the Tasman in much greater numbers than Australian citizens have (Poot 2010). At the same time, in Aotearoa New Zealand trans-Tasman migration has generated national anxiety and political angst, because it is presumed to lead to brain drain, reflects relatively poor economic development in comparison to its closest neighbour, and denies the nation of many of its most important developmental resource - young people (Gamlen, 2013).

In the 2016 Australian census, there were 518,461 New Zealand-born people usually resident in the country, or 2.2% of the Australian population. This figure does not include Australian or overseas-born New Zealand citizens who have migrated to Australia. While there has been some research undertaken on the population of New Zealand citizens in Australia (Hugo, 2004), on Māori populations in particular (Hamer, 2007; Kukutai and Pawar, 2013), and on political rights and identity (Hamer, 2014 and 2018; MacMillan, 2017; Morey, 2020), there remains significant knowledge gaps around the drivers of migration, the different experiences that New Zealand citizens have in Australia and the long term implications of trans-Tasman migration.

This report provides an overview of the findings of a research project that has sought to examine the presence, practices and aspirations of New Zealand citizens in Australia in relation to shifting regulatory settings, conceptions of national identity and future planned mobility. The study examines both New Zealand- and overseas-born New Zealand citizens living in Australia in order to capture processes of outward migration alongside instances of multiple migration. In doing so, the study explores the place of New Zealand citizens in Australia with special reference to implications for imaginings and enactments of national identity and politics beyond the borders of the nation-state. The broader study, of which this project is a part, asks the following questions: What characterises the New Zealand population in Australia and how has it altered in relation to shifting regulation of migrant rights? What sorts of aspirations drive trans-Tasman mobility? How are these aspirations generated in imaginaries of Australia and future plans? What are the impacts of non-citizenship on the lives of New Zealanders in Australia? What role do national origin and ethnicity play in the daily lives and future mobility plans of migrants?

In this report we overview key findings from interviews undertaken with New Zealand citizens living in the Brisbane and Gold Coast, Perth and Sydney urban areas. We focus in



particular on summarising the pathways that migrants take to Australia; the transferability of skills for those working; social security and support; family and children; belonging, ethnicity and inclusion; and future plans. A comprehensive account of the research and more critical inquiry into key questions will be addressed in subsequent publications. In order to supplement our overview of findings from interviews, the report begins with a review of current literature on trans-Tasman migration, followed by a discussion of media reporting over the period of study (2008-2018), and a snapshot of the New Zealand-born population in Australia from the 2016 census and of recent migration patterns from Statistics New Zealand data on long-term departures and arrivals.

2.0 Literature Review

Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia have been described as having a ‘special and close relationship’ (Nolan, 2015) marked by robust political alliance and unhindered movement of people for most of the twentieth century. Settler colonial links, strong language ties, similar political and institutional structures, and cultural familiarity make Australia an attractive destination for New Zealand citizens seeking an overseas experience – short-term or long-term (Lidgard and Gilson, 2002). This special relationship was codified in February 1973 by New Zealand and Australia governments under the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement (TTTA) which granted rights to citizens of both countries to move freely between both nations (Bedford, 2006). This freedom of movement permitted living, working and studying in both nations for an unlimited period (Bedford, 2006). The TTTA is not binding on either country, however, and legislative changes since the 2000s have placed New Zealand citizens in an increasingly disadvantaged position, leading some commentators to see their status as ‘indefinite temporaries’ (Birrell and Rapson, 2001). While scholars note that the flow between the two nations has been ‘cyclical’ in terms of long-term departures and arrivals, the net balance of permanent and long-term migration since the mid-1960s has been heavily in favour of Australia (Poot, 2010; Sinning and Stillman, 2012).

In 2001 under the Liberal-National Government led by John Howard, Australia implemented legislation that began restricting New Zealand citizens’ ability to access social security benefits available to migrants, including blocking access to pathways to Australian citizenship, among other prohibitive measures. Commentators asserted at the time that this change was a result of the ‘crackdown’ on New Zealand citizens of ‘third-country origin’ (Birrell and Rapson, 2001), particularly people who had been born in Pacific island and Asian nations and refugees accepted by New Zealand from Africa and the Middle East (Bedford, et.al., 2003). Indeed, Faulkner (2015) notes that the 2001 changes can be perceived as ‘indirect race discrimination’ as the Howard Government was keen to discourage so-called ‘backdoor entry’ into Australia via third-country migrants obtaining New Zealand citizenship and subsequent immigration to Australia (see also Hamer, 2014; Poot and Sanderson, 2007). However, after a brief decline in departures post 2001, the flow of outbound New Zealanders returned to an upward trend and while trans-Tasman net



migration remains cyclical there have continued to be net losses of population from Aotearoa New Zealand to Australia in the first two decades of this century (see section 3.1).

While these changes in Australia have had an impact on the status of New Zealand citizens (MacMillan, 2014), they have not had a significant influence on the number of New Zealand citizens moving to Australia, particularly at times when economic factors are advantageous there. Net migration to Australia reached as high as 32,300 in 2008 and 39,668 in 2012, although by 2016 that figure had reduced to less than 4,000.

Research on trans-Tasman migration has framed this ongoing movement as evidence of Australia and New Zealand 'constituting one labour market' (Hugo, 2004; see also Brosnan and Poot, 1987), which leads to persistent movements towards Australia given the relative availability of labour market opportunities (Poot and Sanderson, 2007). In previous research, many New Zealanders reported that economic factors, including job opportunities unavailable in New Zealand, were reasons for migrating to Australia (Green et.al, 2008). In other instances, however, research has identified migration to Australia as being associated with aspirations to get away from violence, limited opportunities, family responsibility and racist stereotyping, particularly for Māori and Pacific peoples (Hamer, 2007; George and Rodriguez, 2009). Despite reported levels of dissatisfaction with life in New Zealand, cultural and sporting ties are reported to remain strong amongst New Zealanders identifying themselves as such. Lifestyle, better climate and family unification are also strong factors in New Zealanders' decisions to relocate to Australia (Green, 2009).

Despite the continued migration flow westward, obtaining Australian citizenship has proven to be extremely difficult for New Zealanders since 2001 (McMillan 2014; Morey 2020). As a result of the changes in Australia's social security legislation in 2001, New Zealanders no longer have access to a range of welfare benefits, often leaving some in 'welfare limbo' (Nolan, 2015). In addition, institutional barriers and obstacles to student loans and education schemes (Hugo, 2004) have added to the notion of the creation of a sizeable underclass with permanently inferior rights and limited pathways to citizenship, exacerbating inequalities (Faulkner, 2013; Hamer, 2018). These restrictions mean that while migration to Australia can still offer economic advantages to New Zealand citizens, it appears to be increasingly delinked from prospects for long-term citizenship, especially for those who do not have the professional status or economic capital to qualify for residence rights through Australia's skilled migration programme (Morey, 2020). This situation raises significant questions about the current and future composition of the New Zealand citizen population in Australia, their levels of integration into each national context (McMillan, 2017) and the impact of indefinite non-citizen status on migration, everyday life and future aspirations.



3.0 Population and Migration of New Zealanders in Australia

To provide a demographic context for the research discussed in this report we provide an overview of recent migration patterns from Aotearoa New Zealand to Australia and the characteristics of the New Zealand-born population in Australia.

3.1 Recent Migration from Aotearoa New Zealand to Australia

Data on recent migration patterns to Australia draws on international travel and migration statistics held by Statistics New Zealand. The data presented here was generated from information provided on arrival and departure cards at New Zealand airports.¹

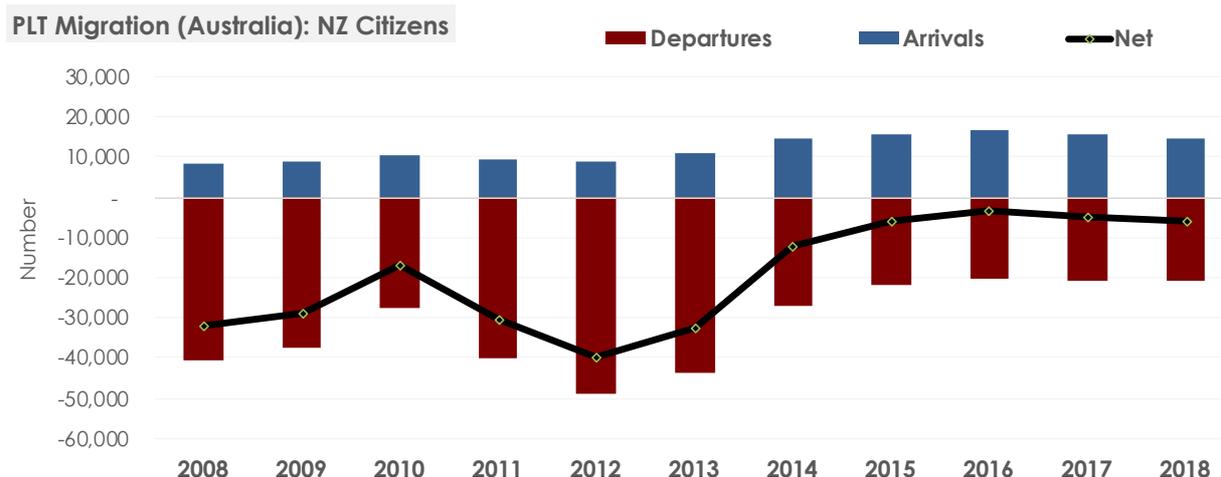


Figure 1: PLT Migration to Australia: New Zealand Citizens

Figure 1 presents information on PLT (Permanent and Long-Term, 12 months or more) departures and arrivals as well as net flows. Reflecting historical patterns evident since the 1960s (Poot 2010), the period between 2008 and 2018 has seen a consistent net loss of New Zealand citizen migrants to Australia, although the actual number of departures decreased substantially between 2013 and 2018 and net flows reached almost zero. The decrease in departures and slight increase in PLT arrivals since 2013 aligns with an economic downturn in Australia particularly associated with the mining industry.

¹ Departure cards have been phased out since 2018 and Statistics New Zealand have developed new techniques for measuring arrivals, departures and net migration. While these measures are arguably more precise they do not provide the ability to analyse occupation that is an important dimension of context for this study.



PLT Departures to Australia (NZ citizens)

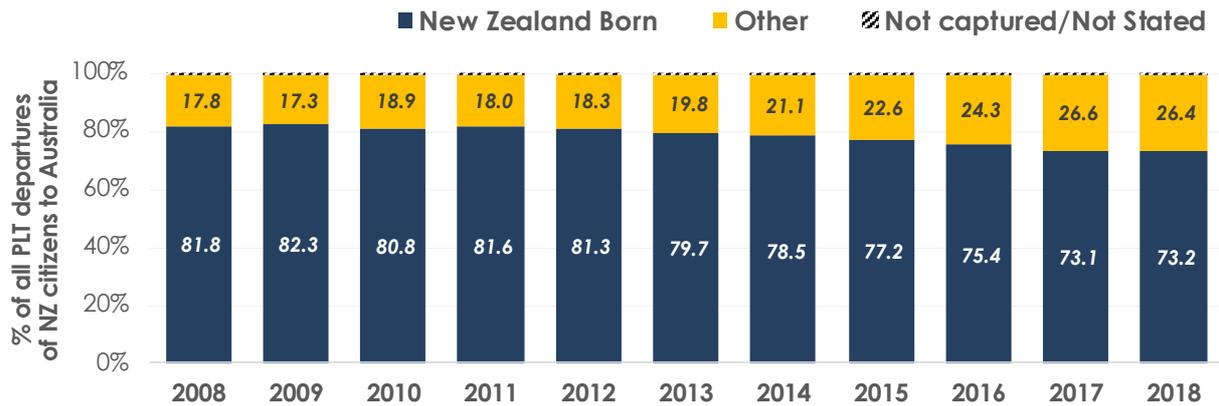


Figure 2: PLT Departures to Australia, New Zealand Citizens by Birthplace

Figure 2 breaks down PLT departures by birthplace. The graph shows that the proportion of overseas-born citizens departing to Australia has increased throughout this period, from 17.8% in 2008 to 26.4%, a figure that is relatively close to the 27.4% overall proportion of overseas-born population resident in Aotearoa New Zealand at the time of the country's 2018 census.

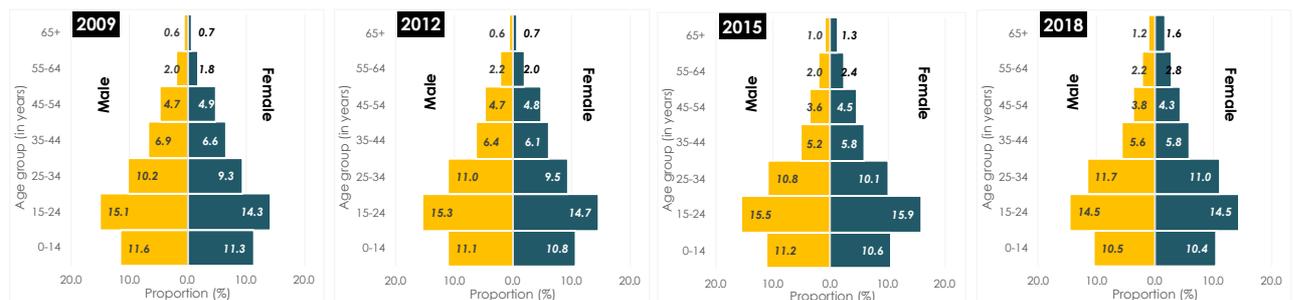


Figure 3: Age and sex patterns for New Zealand citizen PLT departures, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018

Figure 3 provides the age-sex breakdown of PLT departures in four years, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018. These patterns are relatively consistent in each year with people under 35 years of age making up almost three quarters of all departures in each year, and those aged 15-24 alone constituting almost one in three departures. These patterns reflect the focus of Australia-bound migration on labour market opportunities for younger workers. The fact that over 20% of all departures in each year are aged 14 years and under highlights the importance of family migration as well.



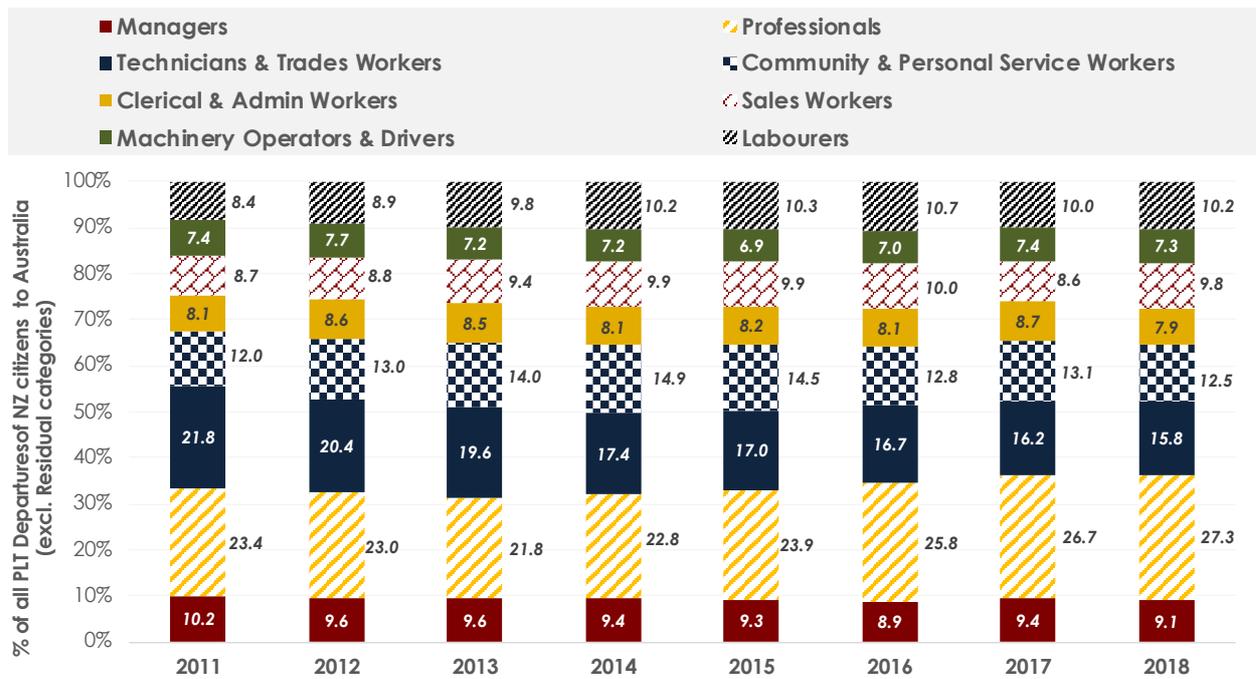


Figure 4: Occupational categories of New Zealand citizen PLT departures

Lastly, Figure 4 shows the occupational categories of PLT departures of New Zealand citizens between 2011 and 2018 using the Australia and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (data up to 2010 was gathered using the New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations).² Over the eight years it is notable that the proportion of Professionals amongst New Zealand citizen departures has increased from 23.4% to 27.3%, while there has been a concurrent decrease in Technicians and Trades Workers from 21.8% to 15.8%. Over the same period there has been a slight increase in the proportion of Labourers from 8.4% to a peak of 10.7% in 2016 and a decrease since 2014 of Community and Personal Service Workers from 14.9% to 12% in 2018. It should be noted that all of these changes in percentages have occurred as the overall number of New Zealand citizen departures have declined since 2012 (see Figure 1).

3.2 New Zealand-born Population in Australia

Data on the New Zealand-born population in Australia draws on results from the 2016 Australian Census. A total of 518,461 NZ-born people were living in Australia at the time of the 2016 Census, including 104,041 in Brisbane, 46,084 in Gold Coast, 60,017 in Perth and 80,453 in Sydney.

² ANZSCO was developed in 2006 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Statistics New Zealand to 'to provide an integrated framework for storing, organising and reporting occupation-related information' that is comparable across the two countries and internationally. It is used extensively in the allocation of work visas and granting points for residence applications in both countries, it was revised in both 2009 and 2013. See www.abs.gov.au/ANZSCO.



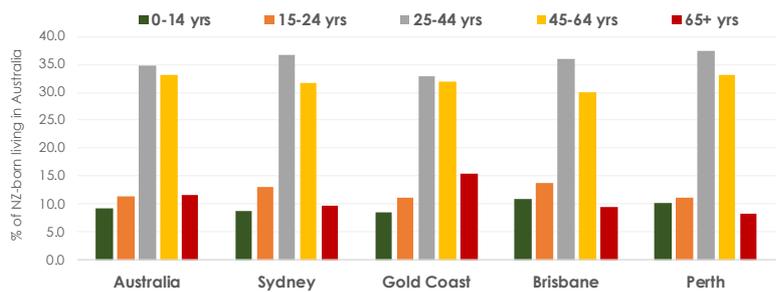
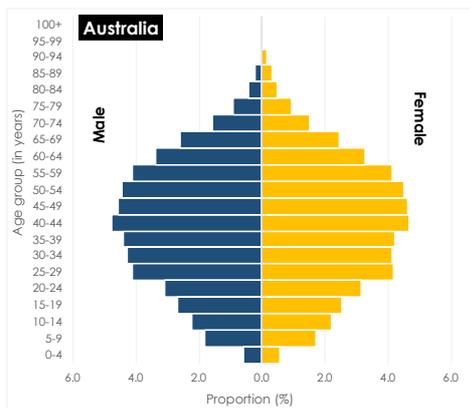


Figure 5: Age-Sex of NZ-born living in Australia

Figure 6: Age groups of NZ-born living in Australian cities

Figure 5 provides the age-sex breakdown nationally for NZ-born in Australia and Figure 6 shows the percentage of NZ-born of different ages living in each of the different metropolitan regions relevant for this study. Similar to other migrant populations, the New Zealand-born population in Australia is concentrated in working ages with low proportions of children and people over sixty years of age. Similarly, Figure 6 shows that in all four metropolitan regions discussed in this report, 65% or more of NZ-born people are between 25 and 64 years of age. Gold Coast reveals a slightly different pattern with a higher percentage of NZ-born 65 years and older (15.4% compared to less than 10% in all other cities), and a lower proportion of 25-44 year olds (33% compared to 34.7% for all of Australia).

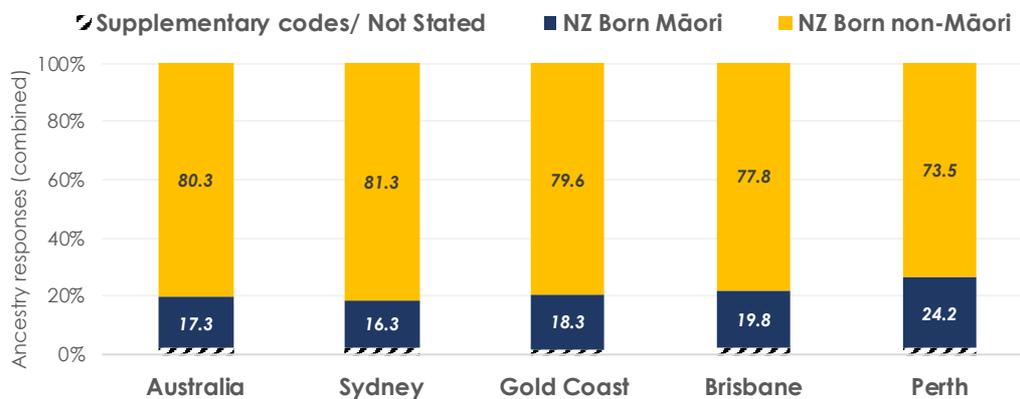


Figure 7: Ancestry responses (combined) Māori and non-Māori

Figure 7 shows the combined ancestry responses for NZ-born in relation to Māori and non-Māori. Overall, 17.3% of the NZ-born population in Australia in 2016 identified with Māori ancestry, slightly higher than the 17.1% identified by Kukutai and Pawar (2013) from the 2011 Australian Census. Māori make up a particularly high percentage of NZ-born in Perth (24.2%) while only 16.3% of NZ-born in Sydney identify with Māori ancestry.



Table 1: NZ-born ancestry responses

Ancestry 1st Response	Australia		Sydney		Gold Coast		Brisbane		Perth	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Oceanian	147,031	28.4	26,807	33.3	10,876	23.6	31,600	30.4	17,605	29.3
North-West European	331,250	63.9	44,180	54.9	32,947	71.5	65,385	62.8	38,602	64.3
Southern and Eastern European	5,258	1.0	1,009	1.3	545	1.2	896	0.9	565	0.9
North African and Middle Eastern	1,687	0.3	669	0.8	61	0.1	144	0.1	101	0.2
South-East Asian	2,806	0.5	665	0.8	91	0.2	458	0.4	139	0.2
North-East Asian	8,178	1.6	2,999	3.7	363	0.8	1,421	1.4	391	0.7
Southern and Central Asian	6,720	1.3	1,932	2.4	168	0.4	1,068	1.0	528	0.9
Peoples of the Americas	604	0.1	116	0.1	43	0.1	121	0.1	59	0.1
Sub-Saharan African	2,388	0.5	185	0.2	61	0.1	368	0.4	625	1.0
Supplementary codes/Not Stated	12,545	2.4	1,895	2.4	939	2.0	2,585	2.5	1,405	2.3
Total	518,462	100.0	80,454	100.0	46,087	100.0	104,036	100.0	60,017	100.0

Table 1 shows the full ancestry 1st (of 2) responses for the NZ-born population in Australia. The Oceanian category includes ‘New Zealand Peoples’ (covering Māori and New Zealander) as well as Polynesian and Australian Peoples, amongst others. Regional variation is apparent for some ancestry groups, particularly ‘North-West European’ who represent nearly 71.5% of NZ-born in Gold Coast but only 63.9% nationally and 54.9% in Sydney. There are much higher numbers of North African and Middle Eastern, South-East Asian, North-East Asian and South and Central Asian New Zealanders living in Sydney than in other urban areas, collectively making up 7.7%. NZ-born of Sub-Saharan African ancestry are more likely to live in Perth than in other cities.

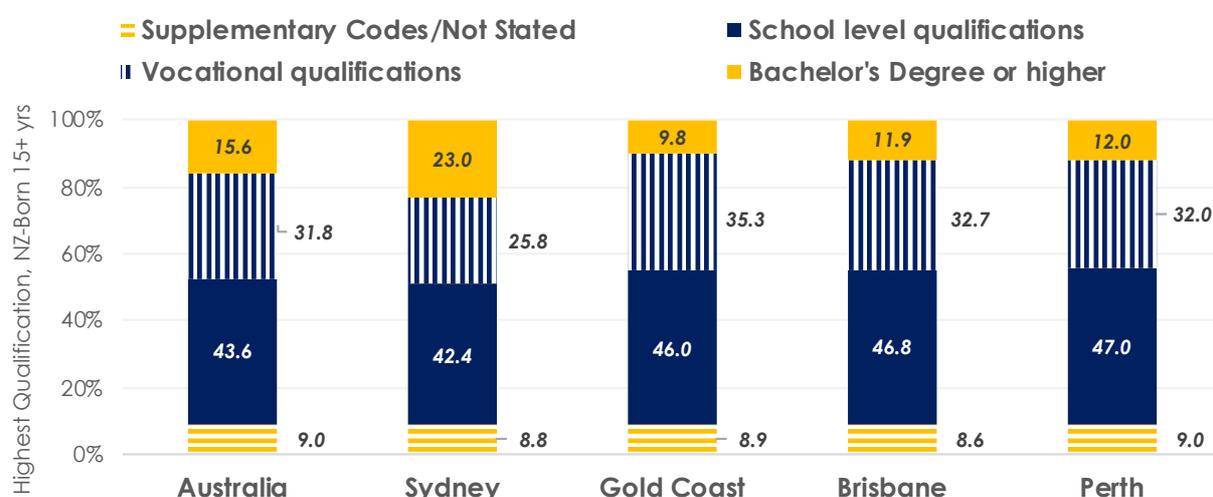


Figure 8: Highest qualification, NZ-born 15+

Figure 8 presents information on the education levels of the NZ-born population. For those 15 years and older, 43.6% have school level qualifications, 31.8% have vocational qualifications and 15.6% have bachelor’s degrees or higher. In contrast, 23.2% of the usually resident New Zealand population have a bachelor’s degree or higher and 28.1% have vocational qualifications. Amongst the NZ-born population in Australia it is notable that those living in Sydney are much more likely to have bachelor’s degree or higher (23.0%) and less likely to have vocational qualifications in particular (25.8%).



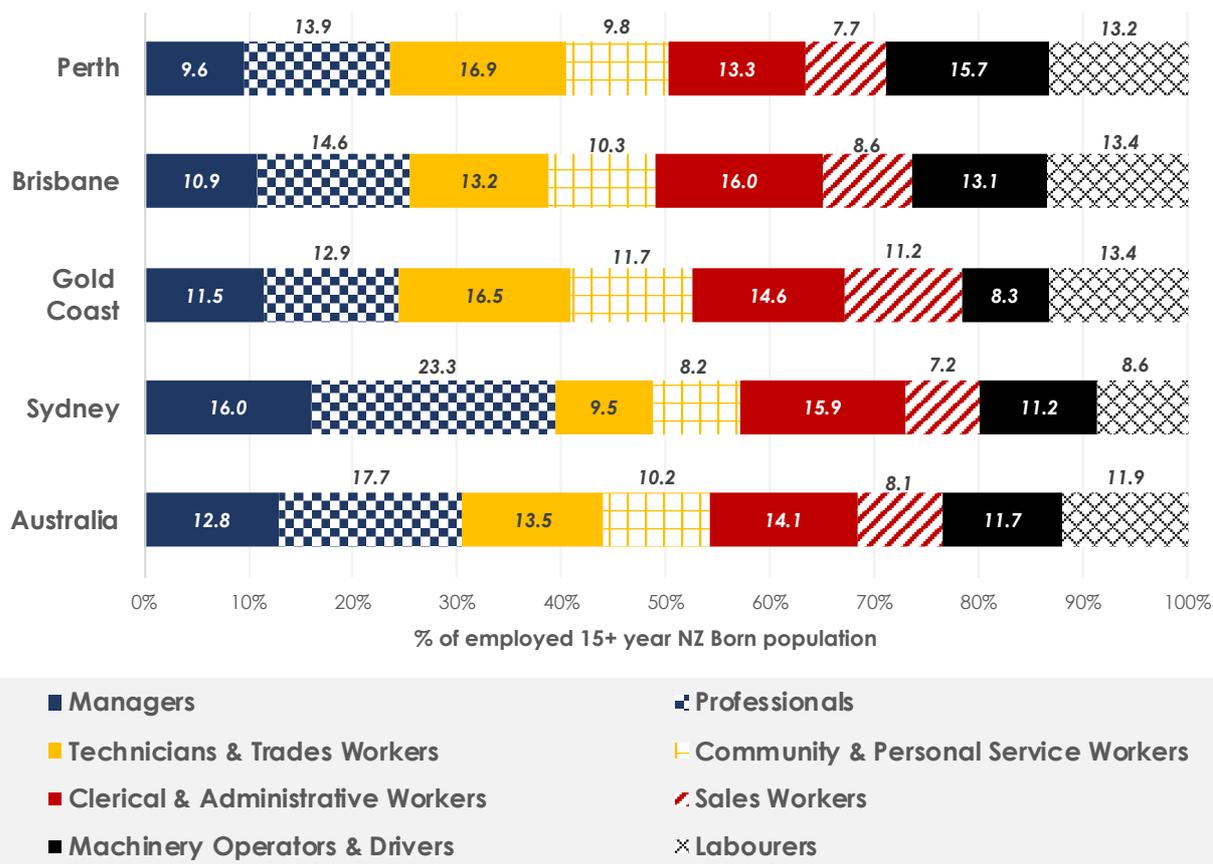


Figure 9: Occupation of employment (employed, 15+ years)

In relation to labour force status, 70.1% of the NZ-born population in 2016 was employed in full or part-time work, ranging between 69.4% (Gold Coast) and 72.9% (Sydney) across the metropolitan regions. Figure 9 presents information by major occupation types. Reflecting the regional variation in education levels of Australia’s NZ-born population, people in Sydney are more likely to be employed as Managers and Professionals. Other notable geographical variations include 11.2% of NZ-born in Gold Coast working as sales workers (compared to 8.1% across Australia) and 15.7% of NZ-born in Perth working as machinery operators and drivers (compared to 11.7% nationally), likely connected to mining activity in Perth.



Table 2: Industry of employment (employed, 15+ years), NZ-born

Industry of Employment	Australia		Sydney		Gold Coast		Brisbane		Perth	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	5,527	1.7	166	0.3	128	0.4	331	0.5	264	0.7
Mining	10,361	3.2	134	0.3	315	1.1	818	1.3	3,475	8.9
Manufacturing	24,699	7.6	3,493	6.6	2,102	7.3	6,322	9.7	2,353	6.0
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	3,674	1.1	487	0.9	185	0.6	715	1.1	481	1.2
Construction	34,818	10.6	4,995	9.4	4,250	14.7	7,106	10.9	5,475	14.1
Wholesale Trade	11,115	3.4	2,395	4.5	839	2.9	2,525	3.9	1,286	3.3
Retail Trade	27,825	8.5	4,152	7.8	2,895	10.0	5,880	9.0	3,290	8.5
Accommodation and Food Services	20,091	6.1	2,465	4.7	2,371	8.2	3,370	5.2	2,031	5.2
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	22,895	7.0	4,119	7.8	1,422	4.9	5,881	9.0	2,969	7.6
Information Media and Telecommunications	5,418	1.7	1,685	3.2	432	1.5	911	1.4	316	0.8
Financial and Insurance Services	12,248	3.7	3,830	7.2	729	2.5	2,236	3.4	879	2.3
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	6,266	1.9	1,011	1.9	926	3.2	1,375	2.1	652	1.7
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	21,185	6.5	5,421	10.2	1,442	5.0	3,651	5.6	1,931	5.0
Administrative and Support Services	14,037	4.3	2,228	4.2	1,513	5.2	2,903	4.5	1,692	4.3
Public Administration and Safety	16,631	5.1	2,471	4.7	1,022	3.5	3,280	5.0	1,896	4.9
Education and Training	18,831	5.8	2,976	5.6	1,493	5.2	3,524	5.4	1,868	4.8
Health Care and Social Assistance	37,330	11.4	5,132	9.7	3,312	11.4	7,554	11.6	3,917	10.1
Arts and Recreation Services	5,462	1.7	1,019	1.9	788	2.7	824	1.3	489	1.3
Other Services	11,400	3.5	1,596	3.0	1,200	4.1	2,448	3.8	1,477	3.8
Not Stated/Inadequately described	17,233	5.3	3,176	6.0	1,623	5.6	3,580	5.5	2,164	5.6
Total	327,046	100.0	52,951	100.0	28,987	100.0	65,234	100.0	38,905	100.0

Table 2 presents information on industry of employment for the NZ-born in Australia in 2016. The data shows that NZ-born are employed across a variety of industries in Australia. There are also regional variations of particular note. In Sydney there were higher proportions in professional, scientific and technical services (10.2% compared to 6.5% nationally) and financial and insurance services (7.2% compared to 3.7% nationally). Perth and Gold Coast have over 14% in construction (compared to 10.6% nationally) and 8.9% of NZ-born in Perth are employed in mining (compared to 3.2% nationally). In Brisbane higher percentages were employed in manufacturing (9.7% compared to 7.6% nationally) and transport, postal and warehousing (9.0% compared to 7.0%).

4.0 Media Accounts of Trans-Tasman Migration

Over the course of the last decade trans-Tasman migration has been a perennial feature in New Zealand media with commentary placing particular emphasis on economic changes as a driving force of migration flows.³ Other factors that emerge regularly relate to differences

³ In order to set the social backdrop for this research on the migration experiences and aspirations of New Zealand citizens in Australia we undertook a review of media accounts of trans-Tasman migration between 2008 and 2018. Large daily newspapers and newswires in New Zealand were examined via the Newztext media database. Newspapers such as The New Zealand Herald, Otago Daily Times and Dominion Post as well as online national news media outlets such as Stuff were included in the analysis. Keywords entered into the search engine included trans-Tasman migration, Australia, New Zealand, Kiwi, New Zealand citizen, and New Zealand emigration to Australia. Relevant articles were selected according to search criteria and entered in an



in costs of living, particularly around housing, lifestyle and climate, and an intermittent focus on the rights of New Zealanders in Australia including, in recent years, the deportation of non-Australian citizens who have criminal convictions or are deemed by Australian authorities to be of “bad character”. Foregrounding these media discourses is important because it draws attention to some of the wider factors involved in instances of migration between Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. Moreover, because media discourses construct meaning about migration and its desirability (King and Wood 2013), the significant attention placed on trans-Tasman migration in New Zealand media can be understood as a key social force in instigating the migration patterns we examine later in this report.

A key theme in the late 2000s was a set of claims about the influence of the mining boom on outward migration flows from Aotearoa New Zealand to Australia. Particular emphasis was placed on the number of people taking up jobs in the transport sector (truck driving) of mining which were reported to offer lucrative and attractive incomes for New Zealand citizens. For example, a report in the *New Zealand Herald* from September 2008 referred to the ‘demand from the booming mining sector for drivers’ (Flight to familiar territory, *NZ Herald* Sept 2008) which attributed an increase in outward migration from Aotearoa New Zealand to Australia for those seeking highly-paid jobs. In that same month a report in *The Press* cautioned against attributing an increase in migration from New Zealand solely to the mining sector: ‘People say it's all about mining, but if you take mining out of their productivity figures and take agriculture, forestry and fishing out of ours, you have still got a huge [wage] gap with Australia’ (New Zealand lifestyle not good enough to keep Kiwis home, *The Press*, September 2008). This focus on wage differences between Australia and New Zealand was particularly highlighted in the extractive industry with media reporting that salaries fell into a range between ‘AUD 70,000 and AUD150,000’ (One town’s export line: Kiwis to OZ, *NZ Herald*, May 2012; Kiwis flight will reverse, *Nelson Mail*, Mar 2012).

Media reports described both New Zealanders who resided in Australia full-time during the mining boom as well as those who chose to ‘fly in and fly out’ (FIFO) for driving work. For example, a May 2012 *New Zealand Herald* report noted that, ‘New Zealand workers would spend five weeks in Australia then be flown home for a fortnight’ (One town’s export line: Kiwis to OZ, *NZ Herald*, May 2012). Another media report in the same year referred to New Zealanders who ‘who fly in and out of Western Australia to drive mining trucks for six-figure salaries’ (Australia lure hard to resist, *Sunday Star Times*, June 2012).

The emphasis on economic drivers of migration remained a consistent theme throughout the period on which our review focused, although the coverage incorporated both positive and negative impacts on migration. In the wake of the Global Financial Crisis, Australia was particularly strong in its recovery, attracting New Zealanders to its shores: ‘Official statistics show that Australians enjoy incomes one-third higher than New Zealanders do, and some market-watchers predict that as our neighbour comes out of the slow-down

Nvivo data management software system in order to identify themes associated with media reporting on trans-Tasman migration.



faster than New Zealand, the gap will increase to around 40 per cent' (Oz: Our pot of gold next door, *Herald on Sunday*, Dec 2009). So while the outward flow of migration from Aotearoa New Zealand was particularly strong during the late 2000s, by mid-2015 other factors, as reported in the media around New Zealand's 'strong economic growth, political stability and budget surplus' were claimed to have brought many New Zealanders back from Australia (Exodus to New Zealand, *The Age*, February 2016), although actual statistics presented earlier suggest that there are not great variations in numbers returning from Australia. This trans-Tasman movement was echoed by experts claiming that 'trans-Tasman migration is highly dependent on economic factors' (*The Age*, 2016) in both countries.

Another particular media theme that emerged during the period under review was the impact of the Christchurch earthquakes on migration to Australia. In the aftermath of the most damaging quake in February 2011, there was a range of reports about New Zealanders who joined family in Australia or decided that the earthquakes provided the necessary reason for a trans-Tasman move. For example, reports in the *New Zealand Herald* in June 2011 noted that 'higher wages and living standards in Australia were always an attraction for Kiwis, and the earthquake gave them "added incentive" to move' (Record Exodus to Oz, NZ Herald, June 2011), or as noted in the *Herald on Sunday* in July 2012, '[...] lot of them [New Zealanders] have gone from Christchurch, in the wake of the big earthquake.' Another report claimed the earthquake had 'pushed the number of people leaving Christchurch for greener pastures to 1100' (Christchurch quake exodus slows, Business Day, April 2012), although this report did not specify that those who left migrated to Australia.

Apart from the mining boom and the earthquakes, other media themes used to discuss migration to Australia included climate, employment, lifestyle, and living standards. Warmer temperatures, in particular in Queensland, were framed as drawcards for many New Zealanders. Indeed, a 2008 article begins with 'better pay, better weather, better prospects...The big barren is luring Kiwis as rarely before and many of those left behind are clearly tempted to join the departure queue' (40% ponder Tasman shift, *NZ Herald*, September 2008). In a report in the *Northern Advocate*, a Northland woman who moved to Queensland reported the costs of everyday items such as groceries were significantly lower in Australia. She acknowledged, however, that while '[...] climate and better wages were all attractions for New Zealanders, [...] most Kiwis she knew of moved over there foremost to find work (Exodus to Aussie, *Northern Advocate*, August 2011).

Beyond warmer climes and proximity to water and other leisure activities, a focus on career opportunities and higher wages was highlighted in many media reports. In 2012 the *Sunday Star Times* reported on a young New Zealand woman who moved from Christchurch to Sydney. There was no indication in this report that her motivation for a shift was a result of the earthquake in early 2011. Rather her motivations for moving were largely focussed on lifestyle and employment: 'I always wanted to live in Sydney for lifestyle reasons, for career opportunities and money as well.' In this account then, exposure to a larger job market increases future career prospects: 'I always knew that to



further my career and get the experience I wanted I would have to move away from Christchurch.' The prospects of a broader job market and, as a result, further career opportunities and higher wages, have recurring themes since the 1980s.

A slight shift in perspective was observed in the middle of the 2010s. According to media reports, New Zealand was described by HSBC's chief economist Paul Bloxham in 2014/2015 as a 'rock star economy' which purportedly prompted many New Zealanders to return home (Migration and the OZ bounceback, *Hawkes Bay Today*, October 2017). Referring to the mining boom of the late 2000s, Bloxham noted: 'we had this enormous boom in the mining sector then we had the single largest downturn we'd ever seen in the resources sector which was a drag on growth and [in] Australia now we've got the resources sector starting to stabilise' (ibid). This was framed as positive for New Zealand's economy as Bloxham explained that 'the big difference between Australia and New Zealand is that the public finances are in better order and NZ has been able to get back to a budget surplus' (ibid) as opposed to Australia's continued increase in its budget deficit. These economic changes align with shifts in trans-Tasman migration patterns, although (as outlined in Figure 1, data suggests that the increase in return was relatively modest – from 10,891 in 2013 to 16,739 in 2016 – and that it was outward flows that decreased much more substantially, from 43,551 in 2013 to 20,219 in 2016.

As this short overview suggests, the overwhelming emphasis in media reporting on trans-Tasman migration has highlighted the significance of economic factors as the key driving force of migration. Accounts of other factors, such as the influence of the Christchurch earthquakes as well as lifestyle or climate do emerge but they are often couched in relation to pre-existing ideas about Australia linked to aspirations for economic advancement. Such accounts, then, reinforce a view of trans-Tasman migration as resulting from Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand constituting a single labour market (Hugo 2004). While the accounts of participants in this research echo some of these same discourses, our analysis also points to other factors involved in generating migration and certainly a wider range of implications for New Zealand citizens in Australia.



5.0 Migration Aspirations and Experiences

In order to examine some of the driving forces and implications of trans-Tasman migration, we undertook semi-structured biographically-oriented interviews with New Zealand citizens who had migrated to Australia since 2008. The interviews focused on participants' background before coming to live in Australia, the main influences on their migration, current activities and future aspirations. Participants were recruited through paid social media advertising on Facebook and, in a small number of cases, judicious use of snowballing through known contacts.⁴ To be eligible, participants had to reside in the wider urban areas of Brisbane and Gold Coast, Perth or Sydney and had to have first migrated to Australia since 2008 and have lived in Australia for at least one year at the time of the interview. Our initial target sample was 60 (20 participants in each urban area) and at the conclusion of the research we had interviewed 61 participants. The demographic details of participants are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Demographic details of participants

	Brisbane/Gold Coast	Perth	Sydney	Total
Total	18	24	19	61
Gender				
<i>Female</i>	11	14	10	35
<i>Male</i>	7	10	9	26
Ethnicity				
<i>Pākehā/NZ European</i>	12	18	9	39
<i>Māori</i>	2	5	2	9
<i>Asian</i>	3	0	4	7
<i>Pacific</i>	1	0	4	5
<i>Other</i>	0	1	0	1
Birthplace				
<i>New Zealand</i>	11	23	15	49
<i>Other countries</i>	7	1	4	12
Age				
<i>18-29 years</i>	1	1	5	7
<i>30-39 years</i>	3	7	6	16
<i>40-49 years</i>	6	7	4	17
<i>50-59 years</i>	6	8	4	18
<i>60-69 years</i>	2	1	0	3

⁴ Advertisements were placed on Facebook utilising a range of demographic criteria to enable a mixed sample of respondents in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, birthplace and occupation. Interested participants completed a short survey prior to providing contact details – the survey recorded information on year of first arrival to live in Australia, gender, age, ethnicity and birthplace. In all three metropolitan areas we received substantially more volunteers to participate in the research; a total of 172 people volunteered for interviews (Brisbane/Gold Coast=60; Perth=55; Sydney=57). Participants were selected for interviews in order to maximise the diversity of the sample.



Building off our initial analysis of these interviews, the findings in this report point to six overarching themes. These broadscale themes, which are discussed in turn in this section, are 1) pathways to Australia; 2) transferability of skills; 3) social support and changing life circumstances; 4) family and children; 5) belonging, ethnicity and inclusion; and 6) future plans and intentions.

5.1 Pathways to Australia

Migration occurs for multiple reasons, taking shape around shifting economic circumstances, aspirations for career advancement and opportunities to travel, as well as in relation to different stages in life (Carling and Collins 2018). The biographies of participants in this research similarly highlighted a diverse range of situations that led to migration to Australia and that sustained their lives there. Often these “migration pathways” related to lives in New Zealand and changing circumstances, as well as to the earlier departure of family and friends that established opportunities for migration. While the detail of each pathway is quite individually specific we observed four broad overarching themes: perceptions of economic conditions associated with higher wages and lower cost of living; inequality and discrimination in New Zealand; the specific circumstances of mid to later life migration; and migration to Australia as associated with aspirations for professional career development.

As our accounts of both published research and media reporting have already highlighted, economic differences between Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand are regularly positioned as having a significant influence on trans-Tasman migration. A substantial number of participants echoed similar sentiments, positioning their migration to Australia in relation to reports in media and from friends and family that wages were higher and the cost of living was lower in Australia. Higher wages were identified as a driver of migration to Australia by participants in a range of occupations and with differing levels of education. According to participants, the wages and salaries earned in Australia exceeded wages in New Zealand, sometimes by substantial margins. Higher earnings, for some participants, were reported to occur alongside lower costs of living, although this varied amongst participants.

Regardless, many people reported being able to “get ahead”, pay off mortgages and other debts in New Zealand, and have a better quality of life. Respondents in Brisbane/Gold Coast, in particular, noted the higher quality of life and the variety of leisure activities available locally. For example, from the 18 interviewees in Brisbane/Gold Coast, seven respondents noted that their perception of higher average salaries was a part of what brought them to Australia - including participants payroll, administration, transport and healthcare occupations, spanning men and women and people of different ethnicities. Out of the 24 interviews in Perth and surrounding area, roughly nine interviewees discussed higher wages in Australia - including those in the mining industry, hospitality and tourism, office administration and tradespeople. Finally of the 19 interviewees in Sydney, seven participants discussed relative incomes in Sydney compared to New Zealand, many of



which were for professional occupations such as finance, accountancy and human resources.

One way to view these accounts is to read them as an indication of the integrated trans-Tasman labour market (Hugo 2004) and the fluidity enabled by the TTTA. It is also important to note, however, that economic considerations were also regularly framed in terms of limited opportunity in Aotearoa New Zealand that spoke to the barriers that people face, not simply to enhance their economic status but in many cases to simply get by. A number of our participants spoke about how difficult life had been before migrating to Australia, paying rent or mortgages and basic costs left no money for saving or lifestyle pursuits, and for others gaining well-paid consistent work was a challenge (a point made in Paul Hamer's (2007) account of *Māori in Australia*). One participant described being stuck on the unemployment benefit in New Zealand and making the choice to travel with their sibling to Australia to get out of that situation. Some later-life migrants seemed to face discrimination, either not accepted for retraining or unable to gain employment after graduating, even in professional qualifications like nursing.

Several of the participants who were not born in New Zealand spoke about varying levels of exclusion and discrimination – not being fully accepted, being rejected from jobs in a discriminatory manner, or finding that moving to Aotearoa New Zealand led to recurring health issues due to the quality and cost of housing. Some Māori participants expressed the view that it was easier to be Māori in Australia because of racism in Aotearoa New Zealand (Hamer 2007). These issues of discrimination and inequality give shape to accounts of economically driven migration, highlighting that even when wages and costs of living are perceived to be higher, migration is also often situated in relation to difficulties at home.

We also observed other pathways to migration to Australia that related to life stage and occupation. Particularly notable was a sub-set of participants who migrated in their mid-later lives, from their fifties onwards. These respondents were sometimes partners of New Zealanders who migrated, those who decided to 'take a chance' or 'give it a go' before they felt they were too old to migrate, or others who had extenuating circumstances in their lives in Aotearoa New Zealand prompting a move across the Tasman. For example, some respondents reported joining their children and families in Australia while others moved to Australia with primary and/or secondary school-aged children.

Some participants reported undertaking migration to Australia as a result of a change of circumstances in New Zealand that led to social or economic difficulties. Two participants, for example, had run very successful businesses that became insolvent during economic downturns. Rather than 'starting again', both saw Australia as a fertile terrain for building a new life without the baggage associated with their earlier lives. Following the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes in Christchurch, five participants explained that their moves were prompted by the loss of housing or the effects of the quakes on personal and family life. These examples show how migration can be tied to changing circumstances, particularly in the context of trans-Tasman movement which remains relatively unrestricted, at least in terms of relocation and work. Participants were able to try out migration to a culturally



familiar destination without the same level of regulation or perceived risk associated with other places.

For another subset of participants who were largely in professional occupations, migration pathways to Australia were much more explicitly associated with career development. Many respondents in this category arrived in Australia with a specific profession (e.g. medical fields) and viewed relocation as an avenue to further advancement in their career track or continuing professional development. Participants expressed an aspiration to thrive and to continue working towards promotion or upward movement in their career track. For example, a number of nurses who were interviewed commented that the pay scale and the opportunity to advance to senior nursing positions was higher in Australia. This included those nurses wanting to gain qualifications in specialised areas, such as operating theatre, nursing supervision, paediatrics and so on. Others who started in truck driving in mining in Perth, found opportunities to develop skills in the mining sector such as IT services, logistics, planning and scaffolding.

Participants in Sydney spoke consistently about the wider range of career opportunities offered by working in a genuine global city that had significant international connections but was nonetheless similar to the places they were familiar with. Indeed, nine participants in this research came to Australia (primarily Sydney) after spending time working and living in other places internationally, including the UK, the US, Singapore, Canada, China, Hong Kong, India, and Japan. For these participants, Australia represented an opportunity to build on their skills and to engage with a greater range of opportunities than were perceived to exist in New Zealand's main cities.

Overall, the emphasis on income levels and lifestyle should not be surprising given that there are significant differences in average wages in many occupations between the two countries, and, alongside lifestyle, income has been a recurrent theme in media accounts of trans-Tasman migration. The variation in migration rationales and pathways that emerge in relation to inequalities, mid-to-later life migrants or professionals and career development, however, highlight that income alone is not the only driving factor of trans-Tasman migration. Rather, this migration also occurs in relation to life stage and circumstances as well, a theme that we take up later in the report in relation to social support.

5.2 Transferability of skills

The second major theme addressed in this report is the ability for many respondents to transfer skills and education gained in the New Zealand context to Australia. For example, medical professionals such as doctors and nurses and also those in trade occupations (carpentry, plumbing) reported high rates of uptake from Australian employers for their skills. In addition, most respondents commented that New Zealanders were seen to be hard working and that the education/qualification/skills acquired in New Zealand were readily accepted and acknowledged in Australia. Many interviewees also linked the level of skill/qualification to the ease of obtaining a job in Australia. In other words, qualifications completed in New Zealand were recognised and translated into job opportunities in



Australia. This situation appeared to be the case across a wide range of professions. Those respondents from regional centres or small-town New Zealand bringing skills in factory work or as teachers found opportunities to use their skills in Australia as well.

One participant in Brisbane, for example, provided insight into the way in which similarities in payroll systems between Australia and New Zealand made relocation relatively straightforward, and even advantageous for people with New Zealand experience. Earlier in her life this participant had moved between several jobs before finding a position with a security company that she stayed in for 13 years. During her time with the organisation, she developed an interest in managing the payroll, which resulted in her acquiring transferable skills in organisational payroll management, including around protocols, software and other dimensions of this work. The interviewee's New Zealand company was able to shift her position in payroll to Australia, allowing her to match her skillset to her aspiration to work and live in Australia, and even when she moved jobs after being in Australia for a number of years the transferability of these skills made that process relatively smooth.

In another example, an interviewee who had originally migrated to New Zealand from India discussed his move through insurance firms to Australia. He and his family had settled into life in New Zealand but the respondent noted that he received phone calls from Australian consultants with job opportunities in Sydney. The participant eventually met with one of the consultants during a trip to Sydney and was offered a job. The participant's skillset - from his university degree in banking to other skills gained during employment in New Zealand - was an asset in facilitating his work transition to Australia. The respondent reported that both he and his wife (who also has a background in financial management) were able to secure employment in Australia. This participant commented that he never intentionally sought out opportunities to migrate to Australia, but that circumstances and opportunities found him. For this participant and the previous respondent from Brisbane, a transferable skillset proved invaluable in finding and settling into work as well as easing the transition of migrating from New Zealand to Australia.

In other cases, however, respondents' skills and education were not recognised due to differences in regulatory alignment. Some interview participants, for example, commented that they struggled with accreditation differences between Australia and New Zealand, which was reported by participants in the mining and building sectors. For example, three participants in Perth reported that they needed to gain certification in order to advance in pay grade and responsibility on the job. Two of those participants were in the mining sector, and the third worked for a power company. All three had to acquire skills-upgrade certificates (paid either by their organisations or personally) in order to gain employment. For another respondent in Perth who wanted to work as a teacher, she found that Western Australia did not recognise her New Zealand qualifications as a teacher.

The Australian and New Zealand labour markets share many similarities and educational qualifications and accreditation are often mutually recognised for workers in both countries. As the above examples highlight, these similarities play a significant role in the



process of trans-Tasman migration. Indeed, while free movement facilitated migration and higher incomes often served as a rationale for migration, the outcomes of migration for New Zealand citizens in Australia are likely to be closely tied to their ability to gain meaningful and well-paid work, for which labour market similarities provide an important platform. The ‘opportunity’ that is discussed by many participants in this research, and is a recurrent theme in media accounts, is reliant on the transferability of skills – the ability of migrants to have their skills recognised and to easily take up similar jobs in both countries.

5.3 Social support and changing life circumstances

One of the common themes in recent media coverage of trans-Tasman migration has been the erosion of the rights of New Zealand citizens in Australia, particularly the ineligibility of people who have arrived since 2001 for most social security.⁵ The majority of interview participants in this research expressed a view that they did not have any need for social support. This view appeared in many cases to reflect the fact that the majority of participants had moved to Australia either with jobs already arranged or for those who had not, they were able to secure employment relatively quickly because of the mutual recognition of skills and work experience noted above. As many participants viewed wages as better than in New Zealand, and living costs lower, the view held by many participants was that they had no need of any kind of social security support. Moreover, the majority of participants felt they had a support system and referred to the support they received from extended family, social networks or work colleagues. In a small number of cases, participants extended this view to assert that it was appropriate that New Zealanders were ineligible for social security because they were not Australian citizens. For example, one participant commented that the Australian government should require New Zealanders prove that sufficient bank funds are available should they require financial support before being able to work in Australia.

A number of respondents at all three study sites also reported needing access to the Australian healthcare system for themselves for a range of health conditions. They tended to be quite positive in their comments about wait times, quality of service and general engagement with the healthcare sector. Access to health care is provided to New Zealand citizens who have been in Australia for six months and intend to remain there for a further six months, or those that have applied for permanent residency; medically necessary treatment is also provided through the reciprocal health care agreement between New Zealand and Australia. Similarly, so long as they are employed, New Zealand citizens are also covered by Work Cover insurance that provides medical and income support benefits

⁵ See, for example: ‘These children are in limbo’, *The Guardian*, 28 Feb 2020: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/feb/29/these-children-are-in-limbo-the-new-zealanders-locked-out-of-australias-ndis>; ‘The New Zealanders left stranded in Australia’, *The Guardian*, 8 Nov 2019: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/nov/08/were-screwed-the-new-zealanders-left-stranded-in-australia>; ‘Don’t want as many Kiwi-Australians?’, *Radio New Zealand*, 23 Aug 2017: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/on-the-inside/337851/don-t-want-as-many-kiwi-australians-you-got-it>; ‘Anzac spirit soured by citizenship changes for Kiwis in Australia’, *Newsroom*, 28 Aug 2017: <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/2017/04/28/22388/anzac-spirit-soured-by-citizenship-changes-for-kiwis-in-australia>.



for accidents that occur at work. For example, two participants in Perth reported receiving support benefits during convalescence after work-related injuries.

While it was common for participants to feel settled and stable in their lives in Australia and as a result not in need of formal government support, in some cases changing circumstances led to challenges that were exacerbated by ineligibility for social security. These challenges occurred variously with children and health issues, for example extreme medical emergencies such as traffic/roadway accidents. One participant, for example, found their migration to Australia had initially led to a notable improvement in financial situation, had moved from renting and having no savings in New Zealand to owning a house in Australia and building retirement savings. That plan was interrupted following a workplace accident. The participant was initially supported by Work Cover (Australia's worker's compensation and injury management scheme) for two years. After Work Cover eligibility expired, however, the participant was still unable to return to work due to ongoing physical impacts of the accident and at the time of the interview had very little income and was running out of savings to pay the mortgage on a house that had lost value since it was purchased. Another participant faced significant financial and social difficulties when her children, who like her were not Australian citizens, developed ongoing health problems. One adult child had been in an accident that made going back to work difficult but was unable to gain ongoing social security support as a New Zealand citizen and has had to increasingly rely on their mother. The other child, who was younger when they moved to Australia, developed mental health and addiction problems through their teenage years and now in young adulthood has struggled to hold down work or progress in education.

These kinds of scenarios cannot be predicted in advance of migration but their impacts are exacerbated because of the precarious legal situation of New Zealand citizens in Australia. They surface when people find themselves in difficult situations, usually associated with health or relationships (see below), wherein they do not have a 'Plan B', need forms of government support but are not eligible for it and have no adequate pathway to Australian permanent residence and citizenship (either before or after difficulties emerge). These situations capture the dynamics of the current socio-legal status of New Zealand citizens in Australia, their indefinite status means that they are welcome and able to participate socially so long as they are healthy, are able to contribute economically and do not have a criminal record. When difficulties inevitably emerge for some people, the precarity of their situation and rights in Australia become apparent (Hamer 2018).

5.4 Family and children

Migration is often arranged around or has impacts on family, requires the maintenance of relationships transnationally, or can influence the extent to which people are settled in a particular place (Kraler et al. 2011). The participants in this research had a wide variety of family situations – there were single people with extended family in New Zealand or elsewhere, participants who had moved with family, moved as part of divorce or separation, and those who had established families in Australia.



Several participants had either moved with children to Australia or had started a family with another New Zealand citizen after migration. For these New Zealand-citizen parents of Australian-born children it was commonly expressed that their children were left in a precarious situation regarding citizenship. Most participants noted that children born in Australia to two New Zealand parents needed to remain ordinarily resident in Australia for the entirety of their first ten years in order to maintain future eligibility for citizenship. This made travel to New Zealand for extended stays difficult, particularly for those respondents needing to take care of ageing parents or extended family members. Additionally, the rights and status of Australian-born children to New Zealand citizens seemed unclear to many parents. Children were eligible for compulsory schooling and healthcare in a similar manner to their parents, but many parents were uncertain if their children had full access to tertiary education, or if they did whether they were eligible for domestic tuition fees or government education loans.⁶ As these uncertainties impinge upon future prospects of children in Australia they also had an impact on parents' plans in relation to applying for permanent residence or citizenship, or planning for future return to New Zealand (see below).

By comparison, if one of the parents were an Australian citizen, there was no issue of the child/ren obtaining Australian citizenship. However, in a small number of cases, separation, divorce and family violence or other circumstances leading to family breakdown, children were often left in an uncertain situation from a legal perspective. During the research we either interviewed or were told about four cases where New Zealand women who had children with Australian men were left in challenging circumstances because of relationship breakdown. Particularly when these children were young it was difficult for mothers to work and yet they were also not eligible for social security because of their citizenship status. Compounding matters, return to New Zealand was not possible unless they left their children with the Australian fathers as required by international custody laws.⁷ Like those healthcare matters discussed above, family breakdown and violence can create particularly precarious situations that reveal the impact of gaps in the social security arrangements for New Zealand citizens in Australia.⁸ Similarly, if New Zealand men and women had children who lived with former partners/spouses in New Zealand, it was not a given that the child could move to Australia to be with the parent. These legal disputes continue to have consequences for families living on both sides of the Tasman.

⁶ 'Cost of study in Australia to triple for NZers', *Radio New Zealand*, 3 May 2017: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/329917/cost-of-study-in-australia-to-triple-for-nzers>

⁷ *Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction*: <https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/specialised-sections/child-abduction>; 'New Zealand woman stuck in Australia fighting custody battle', *Radio New Zealand*, 4 Dec 2018, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/377434/new-zealand-woman-stuck-in-australia-fighting-custody-battle>.

⁸ 'Child abduction cases: court may take risk of harm to mother into account', *Radio New Zealand*, 9 Mar 2020: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/411267/child-abduction-cases-court-may-take-risk-of-harm-to-mother-into-account>



5.5 Belonging, Ethnicity and Inclusion

The participants in this research were also asked about their feelings of belonging and inclusion in Australia. Media accounts often depict Australia as a place that shares considerable social, cultural and political commonalities with New Zealand and as such is presumed to be a place of easy settlement for New Zealanders. Our analysis of the pathways to migration seem to reflect this presumption, that Australia represents an obvious destination for people seeking work and lifestyle opportunities outside of New Zealand. Across our research, a significant number of participants commented on the similarities between Australia and New Zealand and the ease of adaptation to life, particularly those who had lived in other countries.

These social and cultural similarities between Australia and New Zealand are not necessarily experienced evenly by all people however. Indeed, research undertaken by Hamer (2014; 2018), Faleolo (2019), Shepherd and Ilailo (2016), and Harwood (2015) has demonstrated that Māori and Pacific peoples are more likely to be negatively stereotyped in Australian media and experience various kinds of disintegration in daily life. In this respect, the historical and contemporary embeddedness of social and cultural similarities in colonial relations mean that they are associated primarily with white settler identities and do not reflect either the Indigenous or multicultural realities of contemporary Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

In our research roughly two-thirds of the the overall 61 participants identified primarily as Pākehā (or New Zealand European). The general view from this group of respondents was that New Zealanders were just accepted in Australia. Participants commented on a range of low-level stereotyping distinguishing New Zealanders from Australians. For example, some reported that in workplace conversations, Australians commented on New Zealanders taking jobs. Other comments included jokes around sporting rivalry or Australians making fun of the New Zealand accent. Many participants did express a view that there was more racism in Australia. Rather than being something they experienced, however, Pākehā/NZ European participants were more likely to suggest that they had observed other people experiencing racism, including Māori and New Zealanders from non-European backgrounds as well as Indigenous and other people of colour in Australia.

While Māori participants also discussed similarities in culture and relative ease of social settlement in Australia they also identified a different set of experiences that draw attention to the critical connections between belonging, ethnicity and inclusion. Firstly, many Māori participants placed a significant emphasis on feelings of strong cultural connections to Aotearoa New Zealand (see also Hamer, 2007 and 2018). Often, participants expressed these connections in relation to land (whenua), cultural/ancestral home (marae) shared with others in their iwi (tribe), and their whānau (family). Despite the importance placed on these strong connections, and efforts to maintain those connections, almost all Māori participants in this research expressed an intention not to return to Aotearoa New Zealand. One participant in Perth, for example, explained that although he was connected



to his ancestral land in Aotearoa New Zealand, he did not feel that same connection to place in Australia. Another participant in Brisbane reported that many Māori have a yearning to return to Aotearoa New Zealand but feel unable to do so because of limited economic opportunities. This was a common theme that reveals some of the tensions that are particularly heightened for Māori, between social and economic advancement (Hamer 2007 and 2018; Kukutai and Pawar 2013).

Secondly, some Māori participants also reported experiencing racism or negative stereotyping in their daily lives. While these comments were not necessarily targeted at participants themselves (no participants chose to discuss examples of racism directed at themselves), they reported that it was a relatively frequent occurrence to observe racism. For example, all Māori participants in Perth reported significant levels of racism levelled at Māori, Pacific and Indigenous peoples. At the same time, however, some Māori participants also described how their own experiences of racism were reduced in Australia in comparison to Aotearoa New Zealand. One participant, for example, noted that police officers displayed more racist behaviour in New Zealand than in Australia (Perth), a pattern he thought related to the significant number of police officers who were migrants from Ireland and the UK (in Perth) who might display less outwardly racist behaviour to Indigenous peoples and minoritised ethnic communities.

Other participants similarly commented that they had experienced more direct racism as Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand than in Australia, noting that it was difficult being the victims of racial abuse in one's own country. They reported that Australians did not necessarily distinguish between Māori or Pacific peoples and that they were 'racist against everyone' which generated a feeling of not being targeted directly. In contrast, two participants did note that they were looking to get Australian citizenship partly because they wanted protection from racialised criminal enforcement (Shepherd and Ilailo 2016) and deportation that had been a significant theme in Australian and New Zealand media in the years leading up to this research.

Experiences of racism were a significant theme noted by all Pacific participants. Every Pacific participant mentioned that they experienced a high level of racism in their daily lives in Australia. These experiences included both being the target of racist remarks and/or witnessing racially-motivated incidents. Despite this clear acknowledgment of racism, half of the participants expressed a sense of belonging and inclusion while the others expressed feelings of being a migrant or not knowing if they 'fit in' to Australian culture (see Faleolo 2019). For example, one participant in Sydney commented that she felt like she belonged and was included in society based on her significant period of residency in Australia. However, another participant reported not feeling like she belonged, because she wasn't yet an Australian citizen and that she felt ambivalent about being called a migrant. A third participant noted that he did not know if he belonged but, at the same time, he did not feel like a migrant. He attributed this to being an English speaker.

All five Pacific participants expressed strong attachment to Aotearoa New Zealand. Four Pacific participants were New Zealand-born and the fifth participant was Samoan-born. For



this group there were two clear themes which emerged. First, all participants would, if they could, either return to or stay in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, the salaries and wages for their professions were significantly higher in Australia, allowing for the purchase of property or the ability to improve their lifestyle such as travelling for holidays. One participant in Sydney explained that she and her partner were able to purchase a home within the two years of their arrival with the assistance of a first home buyer's grant. She and her partner have since built a home with a pool and although they must service a large mortgage they continue to enjoy their lifestyle and are able to go on holiday. Another participant explained that higher wages meant building towards financial security would be easier in Australia. Pacific people in this research made positive commentary about their social mobility in Australia while also highlighting the tension this generated in terms of attachment to place and the desire to return to families and communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Of the 61 participants in this study, twelve were born outside of Aotearoa New Zealand; including seven in Brisbane/Gold Coast, four in Sydney and one in Perth. Their experiences at a broader level demonstrate how connections across space and place can reflect transnational cultural connections, cross-cultural business and professional ties and the migrant experience disconnected from family networks (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004; Liu, 2018). Despite being overseas-born, most of the participants had a strong affiliation to Aotearoa New Zealand and described themselves as New Zealanders. This provided evidence of people having transnational belonging across Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and in many cases also in their countries of birth. Such belonging did, however, vary considerably for different participants. For some participants the connections to countries of birth reflected a sense of identification with different places, i.e. a cultural connection. For example, a Korean-born participant, an Indian-born participant and a Chinese-born participant expressed connections to Australia as a place of settlement and work, Aotearoa New Zealand as a place they lived for either an extended or shorter period and the countries of their births as providing the contexts for shaping their lived experiences, their cultural identities and connections back to family. For others, there was a perspective of Australia and their country of birth as providing work / professional / business connections. For example, an Indian-born participant still had active business ties to India, and one of the Chinese-born participants was active in trading businesses that worked through transnational Chinese ethnic networks.

Identity, belonging and inclusion were also explored in perspectives of who is able to claim legitimacy as a New Zealander in Australia. For example, a Korean doctor was fully accepted as a professional colleague in Australia but talked about the way in which he would never be seen as a New Zealander. Instead, he was seen as Asian by his colleagues and in daily life despite expressing limited attachment to Korea having not lived there since he was very young. Similarly, a Chinese-born New Zealander who felt like he belonged in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand (more so than in China) commented that most people see him as a migrant, not a local. A third participant who is an Indian-born New Zealander



noted that she was fully accepted by her professional colleagues as a peer but that outside of the workplace she was seen as an outsider, as a migrant.

These examples of not being included in conceptions of New Zealand identity also extended to social networks amongst New Zealanders – while Pākehā New Zealanders, and Māori and Pacific people – spoke about socialising amongst New Zealanders this was not a common pattern for overseas-born New Zealanders. Instead, most described being in Australia either with a partner and their own nuclear family, or just with a partner. There were no wider family or friendship connections to Aotearoa New Zealand apart from one Indian-born New Zealander who owned property near Auckland. For these New Zealanders, returning to Aotearoa New Zealand to maintain personal connections was not generally considered a high priority.

Migration is always characterised by encounters with difference and friction associated with adapting to new places and people, and being accepted within communities and societies. Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia have a lot of commonalities that have emerged through similar timings of British colonisation, its detrimental impacts on Indigenous peoples and shifting approaches to immigration that have led to a growing multicultural social fabric. What this section highlights is that these commonalities also privilege some New Zealand migrants over others and in particular we have observed that people who identify as Pākehā or New Zealand European experience a smoother adaptation to Australia in social terms and experience less discrimination and racism in day to day life. Whiteness reduces the friction associated with migration (Higgins 2018; Lundstrom 2014).

By contrast, Māori, Pacific and overseas-born participants reported encountering or observing racism more often while also noting that they experienced racism in Aotearoa New Zealand, sometimes in even more significant ways. There are also tensions in relation to belonging – for Māori participants expressed in relation to social and cultural connections to land, place and community in Aotearoa New Zealand, and varying levels of transnational belonging for Pacific and overseas-born participants. Rather than a uniform experience, these findings reiterate the segmentation that characterises trans-Tasman migration and the need for more in-depth research into the experiences of specific communities.

5.6 Future plans and intentions

Since the 1960s migration from New Zealand to Australia has continued cyclically with net losses from New Zealand in most years and only small gains when there are economic downturns in Australia (Poot, 2010). The New Zealand-born population in Australia (rather than citizens, for which statistics are not readily available) has grown as a result, and in 2016 numbered 518,466, an increase of 7.3% from 2011, constituting 2.2 % of the total Australian population. While migration to Australia can often occur as part of travel, as an initially short-term response to personal circumstances, or in order to enhance career prospects it can nonetheless involve long-term settlement for individuals and families, as well as the establishment of new family connections in Australia. For others, return or



onward migration can occur when opportunities reduce in Australia, or when family pressures or life-course progression draw people back to Aotearoa New Zealand. Participants in this research provided a wide range of responses in terms of their future plans and their sense of belonging in Australia.

Interview participants in all three cities/regions expressed general satisfaction with their current situations. Of the 61 interview participants across the three study sites, 27 respondents commented that they would reside in Australia for at least the next 5-10 years, many others remained uncertain at the time of the interviews.⁹ The expressions of satisfaction came from participants reporting that they had learned a lot about themselves, such as adapting to new circumstances, resilience and finding out they were much 'stronger' due to surviving through financial and/or personal hardships after migration to Australia. Interviewees also expressed a sense of inclusion in their local communities, as many were involved in volunteering, sports clubs or other activities, which served to connect them (and their families) into local networks. Interestingly, a third reported feeling like migrants and a third reported that they did not feel like migrants.

Those who felt like migrants were much more likely to be Māori, Asian or Pacific and often commented on discriminatory treatment (in both Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand) as contributing towards these feelings; Pākehā participants who saw themselves as migrants were more likely to attribute this to status, being 'long-term visitors' in Australia. A third of all participants identified strongly as being New Zealanders which included aspirations for dual citizenship with Australia (where possible), or the connections to New Zealand either through family and friends networks or to the land as being strong. Nearly all participants expressed strong feelings of satisfaction when discussing the significant salary and wage benefit of being in Australia. These mostly positive expressions of satisfaction by the participants meant that although there were nearly equal numbers of those feeling like migrants or non-migrants, future plans and intentions manifested in participants' strong desire to remain in Australia for the foreseeable future.

Unsurprisingly, then, when expressing their thoughts on future plans or intentions, a substantial number of participants were very clear on their aspirations to settle permanently in Australia. This observation was noted in all of the three interview sites. One element of settling in Australia was the question of applying for Australian citizenship. Taking up Australian citizenship has become more difficult for New Zealand citizens over the past two decades (Bedford, et al., 2003; Birrell & Rapson, 2001; MacMillan, 2014 and 2017; Morey 2020). Most respondents said that either they or their children would prefer to have Australian citizenship and would look towards pathways to obtaining citizenship.

⁹ This research was completed two months before the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic and subsequent responses and impacts emerged in early 2020. Since then, there has been a substantial increase in the net migration of New Zealand citizens to 6,568 between March and May 2020.



These pathways varied based on the respondent and their length of stay to date in Australia, including their current visa status. The most common reasons for obtaining citizenship were on the grounds of financial and personal safety and security - pensions, social welfare benefits, tertiary fees, fear of deportation, etc. For some participants, then, citizenship represented an additional form of security. Participants spoke about having a “safeguard”, “stability” or “insurance” in case their circumstances changed unexpectedly or saw citizenship as a means of preparing their children for future life in Australia, particularly those children who were born in or had been primarily raised in Australia and knew little of New Zealand.

In some other cases, participants expressed ambivalence about remaining in Australia and others sought pathways to repatriate to New Zealand either in the near or distant future. Those participants across all three study sites who expressed a desire to return to New Zealand were far fewer than those wishing to stay in Australia, which aligns with the ongoing growth in the New Zealand population in Australia. Some of the reasons for returning to New Zealand included being closer to family. For example, a participant in Perth noted that when she and her partner start a family, if possible, they would like to raise children in New Zealand. This was due to her family connections and support in New Zealand as well as her desire to send children to a school system with which she is familiar. Another participant in Perth reported that her skills in teaching in special education would be highly-valued in New Zealand, although she also acknowledged the difference in pay would be significant. A participant in Brisbane who is a nurse expressed a desire to move back to New Zealand as she wanted to be closer to family while another participant reported he would consider moving back to New Zealand for retirement. The desire to move back to New Zealand, therefore, was not a result of experiencing poor pay packages, lack of career opportunities or minimal lifestyle or leisure possibilities. It was rather the thought of either raising a family or retiring in a familiar environment surrounded by family and friend networks.

6.0 Conclusion

Migration to Australia is often framed as a relatively easy, economically advantageous opportunity for New Zealand citizens, and the consistent flows over the Tasman Sea have led some researchers to view the two countries as an integrated labour market. Our research reinforces some of these themes, demonstrating the relative ease within which New Zealand citizens move to Australia, and the perception that economic factors are often the driver of this migration. However, the research also reveals a variety of different circumstances that can generate migration, including experiences of inequality, exclusion and life crisis, as well as documenting some of the difficulties that New Zealand citizens can face in Australia, particularly when migration and life do not go to plan.

Across all three study sites participants noted that the salaries and wages they earned were significantly higher in Australia as compared to New Zealand. The ‘wage gap’, as referred



to in the media, appeared to be common across both professional (such as medical fields) and trade occupations. Another perceived advantage of the increased wages translated to the possibility of enjoying more material comfort and financial stability and security, particularly in purchasing a home (or paying off a property in New Zealand), and generally a higher standard of living due to lower costs of living.

While most participants were aware of higher wages and salaries prior to arrival, many respondents were less knowledgeable about their legal status in Australia. The positive perception of higher wages was often tempered with the realities of engaging with government systems and support. Within the context of trans-Tasman migration there is a complexity of citizenship which is layered and often not exposed until families engage with state-funded social support systems which are inaccessible to due citizenship status. This complexity of citizenship becomes more apparent and tangled in cases of child custody issues, family breakdown and domestic violence. Some families were in mixed-citizenship status (usually father Australian citizen and mother New Zealander; or children born in Australia to New Zealand citizen parents) which added to confusion around citizenship status for children and their ability to access tertiary education schemes. Many of these issues were dependent upon a migrant's status at the time of entry into Australia.

An important observation in this study relates to attitudes that participants had to their lives and status in Australia. This can be subdivided into three smaller observations. Firstly, most interview participants were relaxed about their visa/immigration status and generally about the day-to-day planning of their lives. Many respondents were satisfied with living in Australia for an indefinite period of time on their current visa status with no future security – they explicitly claimed that they did not need extra support. Secondly, this relaxed attitude could be a reflection of a lack of urgency in responding to visa status as there is no particular policy which impinges on their status. It was apparent that because the type of residency status most participants held and because there was no imminent threat of deportation or other impact on livelihood, participants felt no urgency in informing themselves about immigration law or applying for residency or citizenship. Some respondents wanted to apply for permanent residency, if possible and not too expensive, while others rejected the notion of obtaining Australian citizenship.

Thirdly, the research has drawn attention to the variability of migration experiences of New Zealanders in Australia, particularly in relation to age and ethnicity. Mid to later life migrants, chose to move to Australia for job opportunities, family re-unification, family separation or just to 'give it a go' before it was too late. For some, a failing business in New Zealand was seen as an opportunity to press the 'restart' button in Australia. Others felt professional development and career advancement were only possible through migration to Australia. Respondents often reported that the sheer size and scope of possibilities made a trans-Tasman jump a good thing.

There were also marked differences around the belonging and inclusion that emerged when comparing interviews with New Zealanders of different ethnicities. Many overseas-born and non-white New Zealand citizens commented on the levels of racism they



experienced either directly or indirectly in Australia, as well as discrimination in Aotearoa New Zealand that had led to migration in the first place. Some participants commented on their acceptance as colleagues within the workplace but reported more negative experiences in wider daily life. These themes, which we intend to take up in subsequent publications from this research, demonstrate some of the different and unequal experiences that lie behind the very large and seemingly smooth mobility of New Zealand citizens to Australia.



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