

NEW ASIAN MIGRANTS IN AUCKLAND: ISSUES OF EMPLOYMENT AND STATUS

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The 1980s have seen, numerically, the largest-ever Asian immigration to New Zealand. Unlike during the 19th century, when discriminatory immigration legislation was enacted, the recent flows of Asian immigrants are being officially encouraged. Nevertheless, a major challenge for planners and members of the public in New Zealand's largest city during the 1990s will be adjusting to what promises to be a significant Asian dimension to economic and social change." (Population Monitoring Group, 1991)

Two important areas of migration analysis in recent years have been the assessment of settlement and adjustment of migrant groups (replacing the earlier assimilation literature), and the analysis of costs and benefits of migration to source and destination areas, particularly the latter. While attention to settlement and adjustment issues was predominant in the analysis of Asian refugee settlement in the early 1980s (e.g. Farmer, 1985; Hawley, 1986) and Australian and American studies more recently (e.g. Hugo, 1992; Smith et al. 1991), much of the academic and public focus on new Asian migration to New Zealand in the latter part of the decade has been on the economic and social costs and benefits of migration, and implications for immigration policy. This paper does not propose to undertake an assessment of immigration policy, but is rather a preliminary consideration of the impacts of "new Asian" migration occurring since 1986 in the Auckland region¹, both in terms of issues of migrant welfare and effects on destination. Being part of a larger study, the focus here is on determining some of the parameters of immigration at the regional level rather than on a macroeconomic overview at the national level.

The debate about the merits of immigration

The debate about the economic advantages of large-scale immigration into New Zealand has been mainly driven from two sources. The study by Poot, Nana and Philpott (1988) has been widely discussed and is only briefly summarised here. One important premise was that migrants do not necessarily compete with the unemployed for jobs since those who are well educated tend to have skills which are scarce and in high demand, and those who are unskilled often take low-status jobs which are hard to fill. Further, increased demand for goods and services should

stimulate the economy and promote job growth, especially in a period of recession. Over the long-term, increased economic output is likely to be associated with increases in productivity, especially with the influx of skilled immigrants who will encourage technological innovation and investment which will contribute to diversification. The models run by Poot et al. suggested that migration of about 15,000 immigrants per year would be beneficial to New Zealand. A second proponent of large-scale immigration has been the Business Roundtable and their report "Populate or Languish" (Kasper, 1990) supports the concept of immigration to the extent of 40,000 per year based on a system of the sale and balloting of settlement rights.

Comprehensive economic impact studies have not been carried out to assess the assertions of the proponents of large-scale immigration, although preliminary work by other economists do not fully support their position (Maani, 1991). An overriding problem is that the economic argument cannot fully developed outside of the social, cultural and political contexts.

There is not a consensus among Maori on the new migration of the late 1980s. Views range from that of Sir Graham Latimer that large-scale immigration is not a threat to Maori aspirations, to those of the Anglican Maori Church which called for a total halt to new migration until there is direct involvement of Maori in the formulation of immigration policy (PMG, 1991:54). The potential conflict between biculturalism and multiculturalism is one dimension of this opposition to immigration, but issues of economic opportunity and employment are also important:

"There should be a moratorium on all immigration until the minister [of immigration] can demonstrate by research and hard evidence what jobs, and how many, have been created for New Zealanders by his BIP and 'skilled' immigration policy. So far the only beneficiaries of the government's immigration policy are the migrants themselves and the entrepreneurs, including former politicians, who are making thousands of dollars facilitating their entry into New Zealand" (Walker, 1991).

Thus, on economic grounds alone, there is some skepticism about the benefits to New Zealand society, and particularly to the *tangata whenua*, of large-scale immigration from Asia.

"The Public", as represented by the media has mixed feelings about the merits of the current immigration policy. An analysis of the content of New Zealand print media coverage of immigration between 1987 and 1992 gives an insight into public perceptions of Asian immigration.

Media coverage of immigration issues has been cyclic, with the level of attention fluctuating around specific events and themes. Following the Immigration Act 1987, the main topics of media attention related to the merits of the Business Immigration Policy (BIP), the idea of bilocality and "abandoned students", impacts on property values, the role of migration consultants, and by the early 1990s, an apparent reversal in which migrants were seen to be facing a depressed economic situation quite different from that which had been portrayed to them by the consultants. Throughout, a predominant issue has been the success or otherwise of the BIP, especially in terms of the degree to which new employment is being generated and the contribution to "productive" enterprise, especially export-orientated. At the same time, relatively little attention was paid to job competition from migrants.

In terms of regional interest, Asian migration was by far the most important, with Hong Kong and Taiwan receiving much more media coverage than other areas. In comparison to the 1970s and early 1980s, migration of Pacific Islanders received remarkably little attention in the New Zealand media in the late 1980s, despite the fact that it increased

substantially through the decade. The one exception was one in which both regions were represented: the influx of Fijians, mainly of Indian descent, into New Zealand after the Fijian coups of 1987.

What then, is the evidence on immigration, and the characteristics of recent immigrants, and is it possible to make some preliminary assessment of the impacts of this migration?

Recent evidence on immigration: origins and destinations

Overall migration trends have been summarised elsewhere (PMG, 1991). It is however, of interest to consider some aspects of immigration in more detail here. Table 1 identifies the main immigrant source areas from 1986 to 1992 in terms of the number of residence permits issued according to citizenship. Overall, the number of residence visas and permits has increased, with an exceptionally high level in 1989 resulting from an amnesty programme for overstayers, and the immigration resulting from the 1987 coups in Fiji. After the 1989 peak, most source areas have shown a decline in numbers of migrants, with Asia becoming as important as all other areas combined. Permits issued to Pacific Islanders had declined to a level similar to that of five years earlier, but this involved a relative decline from about 25 percent to 14 percent of all permits issued.

Table 1 Number of N.Z. residence visas and permits granted by country of citizenship 1986-92

Country of citizenship	March years						
	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Hong Kong	162	188	512	1016	2640	3319	5411
China, P.R.	118	175	256	686	692	1077	1452
Taiwan	12	25	95	1640	2555	1648	970
Malaysia	86	529	755	1824	2041	1919	1248
Total Asia	1686	2307	3449	8147	11,519	11,648	12,119
W. Samoa	1560	2096	1753	4082	1215	1830	1359
Tonga	200	685	371	2080	595	750	598
Fiji	127	605	1942	3984	2460	1669	958
Total Pacific	1919	3433	4098	10,227	4320	4318	2986
U.K. and N. Ireland	2966	4712	4272	4881	3396	3843	3163
Total Europe	3983	5995	5752	7015	4938	5619	4537
All Countries	8680	13,335	14,893	27,462	21,927	23,553	21,348

Source: unpublished immigration permit information (IMPI) statistics, New Zealand Immigration Service

The primary exceptions to the reversal in numbers of permits issued since 1989 were Hong Kong and China, with even Taiwan trending downwards. The relative share of Hong Kongese rose from less than two percent in the years before 1988, to 25 percent of all permits to March 1992. At 7 percent in 1992, migrants from the Peoples Republic of China surpassed all of the traditional Pacific Islands sources.

In the Australian context, Hugo (1992:125) points out that although there has always been a metropolitan bias to immigration, Sydney is increasingly becoming the focus of Asian settlement. Some information on the regional distribution of immigrants into New Zealand can be derived from the 1991 Census. The category "recent migrants" is based on individuals not born in New Zealand whose address five years ago was overseas. The source country therefore relates to the country of residence five years ago, which is not necessarily the country of birth. For some cases this fact is not significant, but for others such as those involving step migration this must be noted. Tables 2 and 3 show that there were 103,929 "recent migrants" recorded in the 1991 Census, with over half of these residing in Auckland. These recent migrants made up 6.1 percent of the usually resident population of the Auckland region (900,477).

Some migrant groups are much more concentrated in Auckland than others, with migrants of European ethnicity being less likely to settle in Auckland than Asian or Pacific Island migrants. The impact of these trends in terms of the

ethnicity of all "new" migrants to the region are interesting to consider (Figure 1). Despite the public perception, there are nearly as many recent migrants of European origin as of Chinese and Indian origins. In terms of country of origin (Figure 2) the importance of "other Asian" is apparent, and migrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan predominate in this group, although other significant countries of origin include Malaysia, Thailand, and Philippines.

Spatial concentrations are apparent within the Auckland region. For the "Other Asian" group, Figure 3 shows concentrations mainly in Central Auckland and the Eastern suburbs around Pakuranga-Howick. The degree of spatial segregation of this group does not appear to be as extreme as that of the Vietnamese in Sydney and Melbourne, but similar to that of other Asian groups in those cities (Hugo, 1992:127). Further work will compare the spatial concentrations of the main migrant groups through the use of indices of dissimilarity and similar measures and explore the socioeconomic implications of these distributions.

Economic characteristics of migrants

The preliminary data presented here only illustrate some of the approaches that may be useful in the analysis of the economic characteristics of migrant groups.

One potential source of data is the detailed records of the New Zealand Immigration Service. Trlin and Kang (1992) used the interview records of the Business Immigration Policy (BIP) to undertake a preliminary

Table 2. "Recent migrants" by country of residence 5 years ago and usual residence 1991

Source country	NZ	Auckland Region	% in Auck.	Nthn	Auckland Urban Area		
					Western	Central	Southern
Australia	12855	4968	38.6	1122	621	1902	1029
USA	3402	1287	37.8	309	99	582	246
Canada	1728	624	36.1	183	45	267	99
England	13239	5697	43.0	1770	927	1506	1158
Scotland	1425	498	34.9	117	78	150	93
Other UK	4758	1884	39.6	507	279	645	360
Netherlands	2046	804	39.3	150	165	198	204
Samoa	7398	5046	68.2	114	627	1770	2511
Fiji	9627	6663	69.2	444	867	3726	1515
Cook Islands	1377	1005	73.0	18	57	414	501
Tonga	3078	2589	84.1	153	150	1452	792
Other Pacific Islands	1632	942	57.7	60	183	420	243
China	3213	1560	48.6	117	156	996	258
India	2607	1290	49.5	57	87	615	378
Other Asian	26757	16158	60.4	2436	1530	7464	4533
Other	8019	3456	43.1	735	342	1419	780
Not specified	765	453	59.2	57	27	219	138
Total	103929	54930	52.9	8340	6246	23748	14838

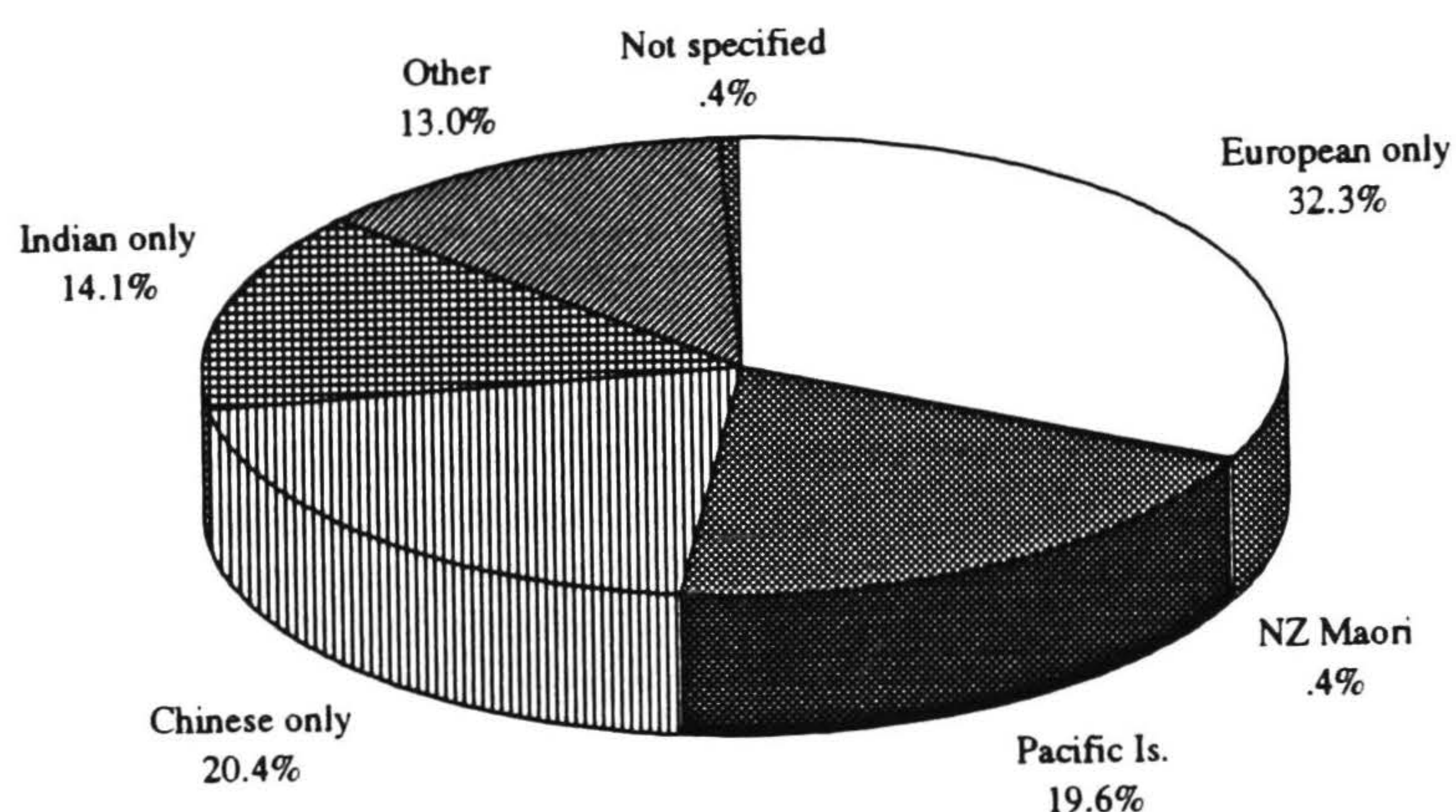
Source: unpublished immigration permit information (IMPI) statistics, New Zealand Immigration Service

Table 3. "Recent migrants" by ethnic group and usual residence 1991

Ethnic Group	New Zealand	Auckland Region	% in Auck.	Auckland Urban Area			
				Northern	West	Central	South
European Only	44646	17724	39.7	4812	2403	5856	3525
N.Z. Maori	681	213	31.3	33	45	63	66
Pacific Is. (excl. Maori)	14946	10740	71.9	405	1277	4587	4386
Chinese Only	16563	11184	67.5	1617	948	5238	3297
Indian Only	12066	7743	64.2	468	819	4275	1923
Other	14559	7119	48.9	963	783	3648	1584
Not Specified	471	204	43.3	45	24	78	54
Total	103932	54930	52.9	8340	6246	23748	14835

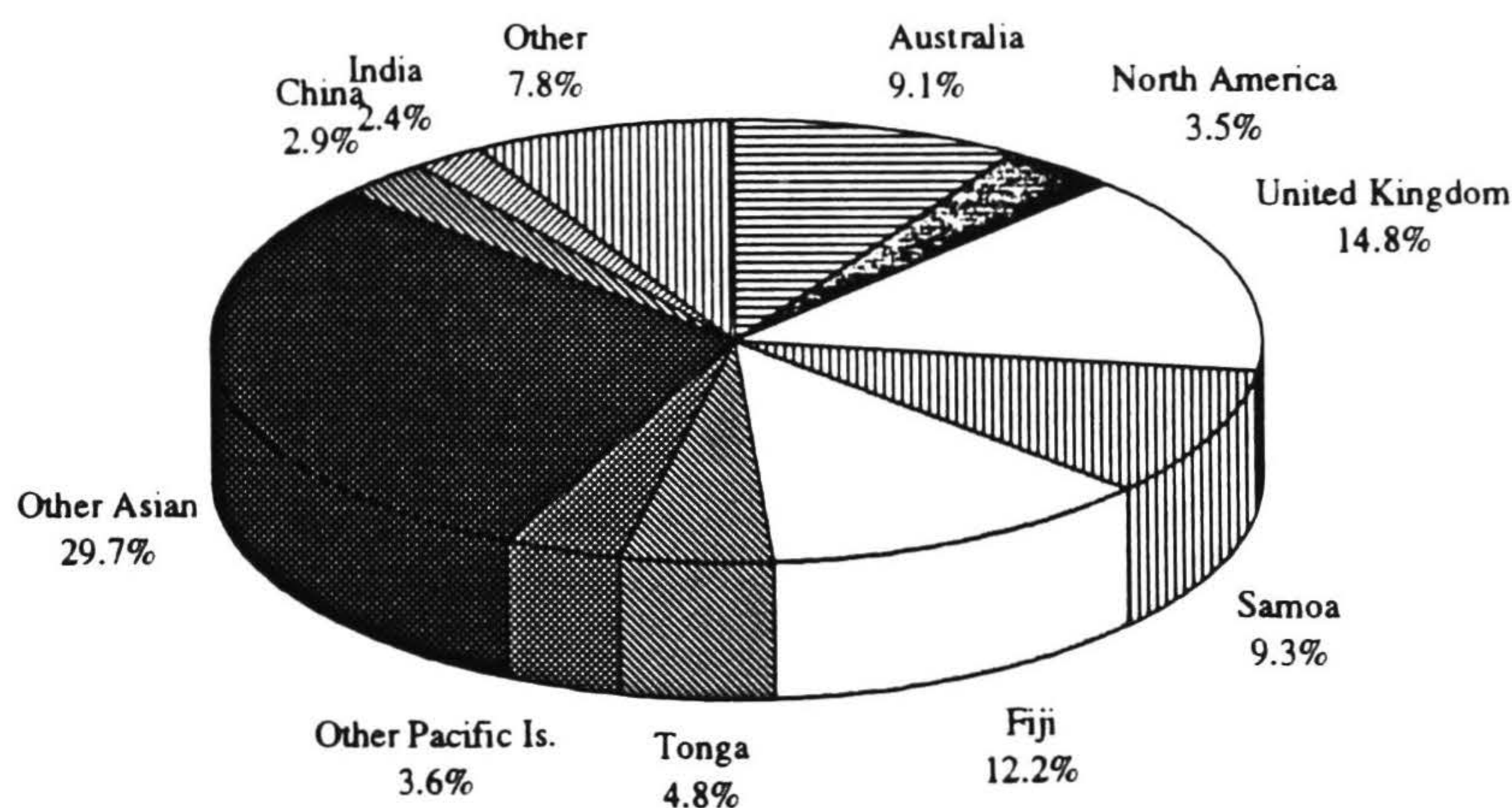
Source: Department of Statistics, 1991 Census via Supermap 2

Figure 1. Ethnic origin of "recent migrants" to Auckland from overseas 1986-1991



Source: Department of Statistics, 1991 Census via Supermap 2

Figure 2. Country/area of origin of "recent migrants" to Auckland from overseas 1986-1991



Source: Department of Statistics, 1991 Census via Supermap 2

assessment of this policy by considering the characteristics of a sample of Hong Kong and Taiwanese applicants approved between 1986 and 1988. These migrants were typically males aged about 40, usually well-educated, married, and coming to New Zealand with about two children. They identify four general investment motivation types among these applicants: 1) 'the haven seekers' mainly leaving Hong Kong before 1997, 2) 'the resource seekers', 3) 'the market seekers' (both 2) and 3) tend to be serving the interests of overseas economic concerns), and 4) 'the opportune service providers' who have identified an occupational niche in New Zealand (Trlin & Kang 1992:62-63). The three main sectors in which investments were made were 1) wholesale, retail, hotel etc., 2) manufacturing, and 3) business and financial services (ibid:58).

The most extensive source of data on the economic characteristics of immigrants on a regional basis is the census, but it is not possible to differentiate migrants according to their basis of entry (BIP, family reunification etc.). Nevertheless, the 1991 Census provides data which can be used to construct a typology of migrants according to economic characteristics. While awaiting specially-commissioned data runs, only a beginning is made here with data available in the Department of Statistics Supermap2. Evidence on employment status of recent male migrants aged 15 and over and resident in the Auckland region is shown in Table 4 for a selected group of source countries. A difficulty with these data are that it is not possible to determine the characteristics of those who are not in the labour force, with some presumably being students, but others may not be participating for other reasons. The high level of labour force participation on the part of those from India and Fiji appears to be partly a function of the age structure of immigrants, with high proportions aged 25 to 34 in comparison to other

immigrants. The "other Asia" group has higher proportions in self employment and as employers than other groups do, but still these make up only about 10 percent of all migrants in this group, suggesting that the "entrepreneurs" sought by changes in immigration policy are a relatively small fraction of all adult male migrants from these countries. Levels of unemployment are lower among recent Asian male migrants than among those from the Pacific Islands, and this may be indicative of the higher educational and skill levels in the former. However, this is an issue which must be pursued with more extensive data since there may be varying attitudes among recent migrant groups in answering the employment questions in the census.

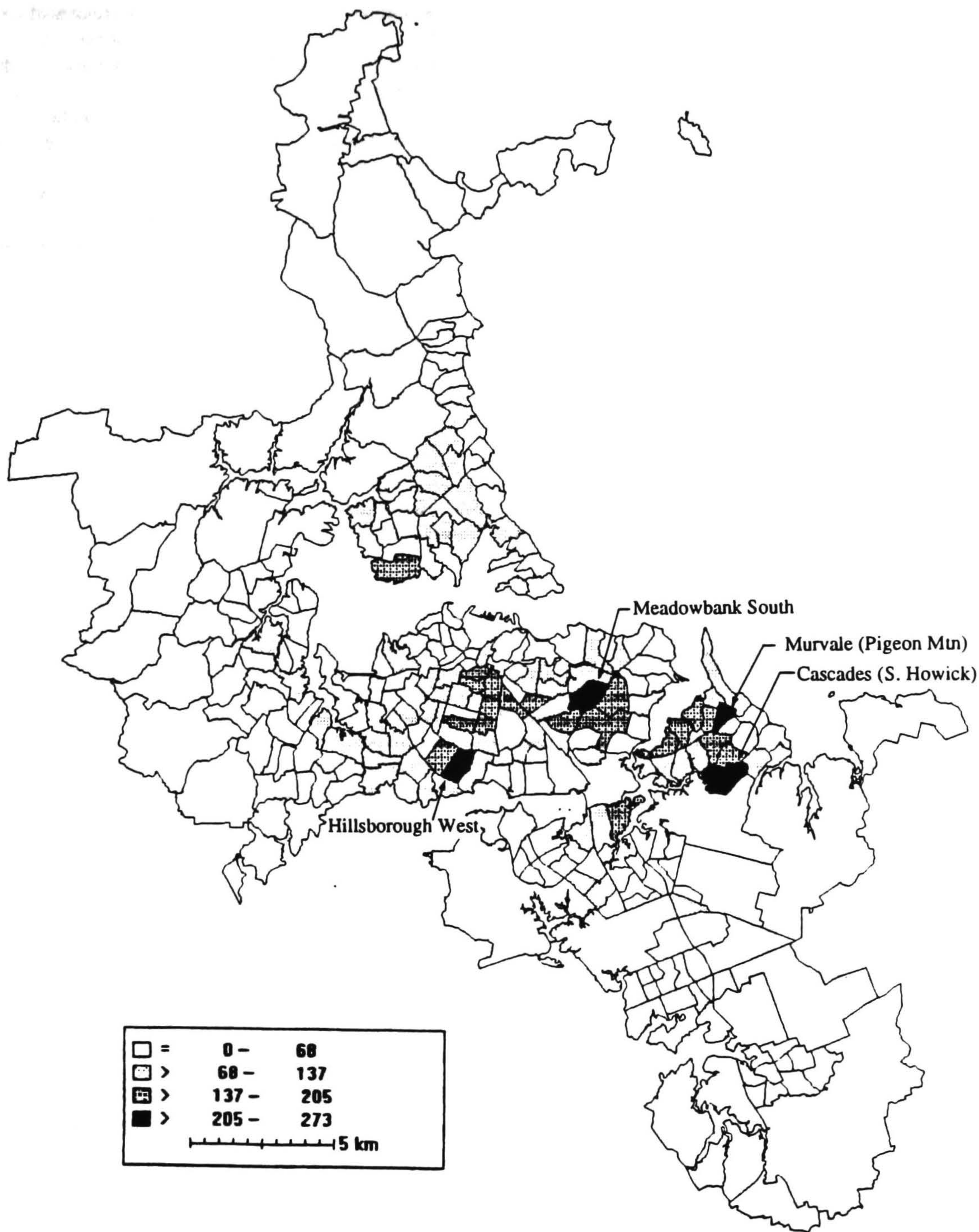
Another source of data on employment derives from arrival records of longterm and permanent immigrants. These are especially useful in monitoring immigration between censuses. For example, Table 5 presents the occupations recorded on arrival cards from longterm and permanent immigrants from Hong Kong who entered New Zealand since the 1991 Census (April 1991 to September 1992). These data also illustrate some of the problems of data collection and interpretation in relation to immigration. Less than one-third of Hong Kong immigrants specified an occupation, which perhaps accurately reflects the dependency structure of this migration, but this is difficult to determine without data on age and gender. Of the specified occupations, 58 percent described themselves as "corporate managers" which is also hard to interpret since this may be a catchall category to cover everything from small retailers to multinational corporation executives. With a further quarter being professionals or associate professionals and few labourers or semi-skilled, the immigration policy objective of attracting skilled immigrants seems to have had some success.

Table 4. Selected "Recent migrant" groups: employment status males 15+ in Auckland region 1991

Source Country	Wages/ Salary	Self Employed	Employer	Unpaid Family Business	Unem-ployed	Labour	Non N.S. Force	n=
China	47.2	4.8	2.8	.4	4.4	39.5	1.6	744
India	56.2	5.1	1.4	.9	8.3	27.6	1.8	651
Other Asia	40.3	7.3	3.2	1.0	7.0	40.6	.5	5,922
Samoa	33.4	.7	.5	.2	15.6	48.5	1.0	1,806
Fiji	54.2	6.8	2.5	1.2	9.0	25.4	1.2	2,526
Tonga	37.9	1.2	.9	.3	15.3	43.1	1.2	981
Other Pacific	43.3	3.5	1.8	.9	12.4	35.4	.9	339
All Migrants	50.4	6.8	2.7	.7	8.7	30.0	.8	20,973

Source: Department of Statistics, 1991 Census via Supermap 2

Figure 3. Number of "Other Asians" by areal unit in the Auckland region, 1991



Source: Department of Statistics, 1991 Census via Supermap 2

Table 5. Main occupations of longterm and permanent immigrants from Hong Kong, April 1991-September 1992

NZSCO GROUP (MAJOR & submajor)	Number	Percent of specified
Managers etc.		
12 corporate managers	769	58.1
Professionals		
21 engineers...	33	2.5
22 health professionals	38	2.9
23 teachers	81	6.1
24 other professionals	62	4.7
Associate Professionals		
31 associate engineers	23	1.7
32 associate health profs	33	2.5
33 other associate profs	63	4.8
Clerical		
41 office clerks	103	7.8
42 customer service clerks	16	1.2
Semi-skilled		
51-83 various semi-skilled	98	7.4
Labourers etc.		
91 labourers	3	.2
Totals specified	1323	99.9

Source: Department of Statistics, INFOS Series EM121

Summary and conclusions

Immigration has always been a potentially contentious issue, but the contention has varied according to the nature and intensity of immigration, both real or perceived. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the main focus of attention has been on "new Asian" migration, especially in relation to the economic characteristics of the migrants. This focus is justified in the sense that levels of migration from Asia have surpassed the levels from traditional source areas in Europe and the Pacific Islands, so that in recent years about half of all new immigrants originated in Asia. On the other hand, we have seen that other new migrant sources are still important, but receive relatively little public attention.

Auckland has received more than half of all new immigrants, with concentrations of certain national groups from the Pacific and Asia being even greater. Within the Auckland region certain areas have been favoured residentially, with the example used in this paper of "other Asians" showing a preference for parts of Central and South Auckland. The degree to which these residential choices have been influenced by occupational and business factors has not yet been established. Preliminary evidence of attracting skilled immigrants has had some success, although the degree to which entrepreneurs have been attracted is less clear from census and Immigration Service data.

Future Research

Some of the issues to be pursued in relation to employment and status of new Asian migrants have been identified. First, this group should not be considered in isolation from other significant migrant groups, in particular those of European and Pacific Island origins. In terms of migrant welfare and adaptation, it is especially relevant to consider the changing opportunities and economic outcomes of each group, and the implications of these for the host society made up of indigenous Maori and a variety of migrant groups from various periods. Another issue is the cyclic nature of migration flows and the sustainability of current levels of immigration. Are the expectations of migrants being met in terms of economic and other benefits? Will family reunification become an increasingly important aspect of migration from Asia, as it has been in some periods for European and Pacific Island groups?

Both structural and behavioural approaches have some role in future research. At the structural level, one issue is the degree to which different migrant groups are being channelled into particular occupations and industries as a result of varying market conditions through space and time. A more behavioural approach might look at the way immigrants respond to market conditions, and adopt adaptive strategies which may even influence market conditions at a local level.

One area in which more intensive research is needed at both secondary and primary levels is in the identification of the economic sectors in which migrants are the most active, and an analysis of their roles within these sectors. In relation to East and Southeast Asian migrants, the restaurant and fastfood sector is important. Whether recent employment growth in this sector can be attributed to the participation of recent migrants is not clear, but the proliferation of "ethnic Asian" restaurants and fastfood outlets in Auckland in the past five years suggests that this might be a factor. Other sectors of likely interest include wholesaling and certain specialised professional services. For migrants of Indian ethnicity, participation in retailing, especially as greengrocers and dairy owners, has been sustained over a considerable period, but may have intensified in recent years. The relationship of these entrepreneurial activities and participation in the wage labour force by individuals and families suggests a further direction in which primary research might head. Do the adaptive strategies of some migrant groups involve a more complex "mix" of formal wage labour, employment, informal economic activities, family employment etc. than is seen in the rest of the labour force? Are there identifiable patterns according to ethnicity of intergenerational "progression" involving movement from semi-skilled to professional occupations or from wage labour to self-employment?

Notes

Walker, R., 1991, "Korero", *Listener and TV Times*, July 15, p.32.

- ¹ The term "new Asian" is used in this paper to refer to migration since 1986. That year is significant because immigration policy was being reviewed in that year leading up to the Immigration Act of 1987, and it is convenient because the 1986 Census can be used as a benchmark.

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