

# How to improve attitudes towards Asian migrants



## RESEARCH

‘Intergroup perceptions and attitudes toward immigrants in a culturally plural society’

by Chan-Hoong Leong and Professor Colleen Ward (2011)

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## Background

New Zealand is becoming increasingly diverse, with different cultures and ethnicities living alongside one another. With 9% of the population identifying as Asian, China remains the highest Asian migrant group in New Zealand.

Chinese migrants, alongside other Asian migrants, continue to report experiencing more outward discrimination and difficulty finding housing and employment compared to other ethnic groups.

The Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research, part of Victoria University of Wellington, undertook a study to determine why discrimination toward Chinese migrants exists and what can be done about it.

## Main research findings

The more contact New Zealanders have with Chinese migrants, the more positive their attitudes are towards them.

Common interaction between the two groups primarily occurs at work, school, and in social environments.

Findings showed that Māori reported more negative attitudes towards Chinese migrants than Pākehā.

Māori feel threatened in two ways:

- They feel they are competing for the same limited resources with Chinese migrants in areas such as employment, pay, benefits, tax,
- They feel greater threat to their norms, culture, language, beliefs, and values than do Pākehā.

Māori also reported less direct contact with Chinese migrants and therefore perceived them as a greater threat.

## Relevance of findings to New Zealand

The findings suggest Pākehā and Māori have differing attitudes toward migrants.

Support for migrants by Māori continues to be influenced by Māori feeling they have unequal access to jobs, education, and housing, as well as recognition of their culture and values.

The feeling of threat which Māori experience affects their attitudes toward migrants.

For both Māori and Pākehā who may feel threatened by Chinese migrants, continuing to foster and facilitate opportunities to interact will increase understanding and acceptance for these groups.