

A fair chance for all - Breaking the disadvantage cycle Submission

Question 1. What are the main aspects of disadvantage that should be investigated in this inquiry?

[Disclaimer – We (Asian Family Services (AFS)) wrote this submission from the perspective of an Asian and migrant to illustrate the disadvantage of Asians and migrant people who live in New Zealand. AFS is New Zealand's only service provider for people of Asian background who are affected by gambling harm and other mental health issues. Of importance, we will be addressing the persistent disadvantage of racism and social exclusion¹ of Asian and migrant communities in New Zealand.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic reached New Zealand, race discrimination was established as a wide-reaching issue. According to the Human Rights report, four in ten respondents (40%) said they experienced some form of discrimination before COVID. The incidence was higher (around five in ten) among the Tangata Whenua and Chinese, Asian², or Pacific ethnicity. Online negative comments were the most common type of discrimination experienced, followed by negative experiences on the street or in public. Ethnicity / race-based discrimination was the most prevalent reason given for the discrimination experienced pre-COVID-19ⁱ. Besides the Human Rights Commission, the New Zealand Police also reported an increase in complaints of racism, mainly impacting Chinese people, as fears around Covid-19 increased. Furthermore, Netsafe also reported a 200 per cent increase in online racism during the lockdown period.

The White New Zealand Policy in early 20th

New Zealand's immigration policy in the early 20th century was strongly influenced by racial ideology. The White New Zealand League was lobbying the government in the 1920s to "keep New Zealand white".

¹ Social exclusion involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole. Levitas R, Pantazis C, Fahmy E, Gordon D, Lloyd E, Patsios D. 2007. *The Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Social Exclusion*. Bristol: University of Bristol

² The continent of Asia comprises many different countries including China, India, Korea, Indonesia, Philippines and Japan etc. The different Asian countries have dissimilar cultures, traditions and religions. Consequently, migrants from the Asian countries also bring along with them their different cultures, traditions and religions to New Zealand.

"We cannot have them [as] members of our social institutions, nor can they have a place in our homes as friends or guests,"

When lobbying for Asian immigration to be curtailed, the league told the government and Asians living in New Zealand to be prevented from buying land and shops. The White New Zealand League reignited a long-standing, racist streak running through New Zealand history. The immigration restrictions have been the most persistent form of institutional discrimination towards Asians in Aotearoa, especially Chinese and Indian populations. The Chinese Immigration and residency being imposed during the 1920s rendered the poll tax and Act also served as the basis of restricting the number of Indian immigration to enter New Zealand. However, the legislation was not repealed until 1944, long after other countries had abandoned such measures.

A history of inequality and racism ranges from overt actions and hurtful discourse against Asians to systemic and institutionalised racism, along with the microaggressions that are so often normalised in everyday life. Such negative narratives can be seen in the media, and many researchers confirmed the racism experience that penetrated New Zealand society, from casual, systematic to institutional³ racism and social exclusion. An example of this narrative is that Asians were the scapegoats in New Zealand's housing crisis despite the matter being caused by housing deficit and provision not keeping up with demandⁱⁱ.

Many migrant professionals are facing daily discrimination based on their race. Migrant nurses in New Zealand face racism daily, and A Massey University study found that. Ethnic nurses are getting abused by patients in the hospital due to their looks. The migrant nurses shared their experience of being told by patients to either "go away" or want to be seen by "kiwi nurses" instead of Asians. The migrant nurses also felt that other colleagues were constantly scrutinising them despite being highly qualified and had years of practiceⁱⁱⁱ iv. The Figures from the Nursing Council show Asian nurses make up more than a fifth of the nursing workforce in New Zealand. More than 1108 of them came from the Philippines. This is followed by those from India with 923. Asian patients, on the other hand, also considered themselves to be less likely to be treated fairly by a health professional owing to their

³ Informed by the writings of Jones (2000) and Paradies (2005), we use 'institutional racism' to refer to an entrenched pattern of differential access to material resources and state power determined by ethnicity and culture, which advantages one population while disadvantaging another. 'Institutional racism' can be used interchangeably with terms such as 'structural and systemic discrimination' and 'state racism'.

ethnicity. In 10 years, Asian communities will outnumber Māori, and our Pakeha community is getting older. New Zealand is going to have an aging but much more culturally diverse workforce.

Unfortunately, discrimination is not only in the New Zealand society or workplace. It is also reflected in our public health sector. State Services Commission figures from 2020 that European staff are over-represented as Managers and Policy Analysts. Asian staff are highly represented as Contact Centre Workers and ICT Professionals and Technicians. Asian ethnicities are still under-represented in the top three tiers of Public Service management^v.

Some Asians also felt that they have been mistreated at work or refused a job because of their ethnicity. An AUT study in 2019 found a strong relationship between ethnicity, education, and unemployment spells. Compared to Europeans, every prioritised ethnicity has a higher likelihood of experiencing unemployment of any duration. Those reported as Asians are 69.7 per cent more likely to experience long-term unemployment relative to Europeans^{vi}.

Underemployment issues are equally prevalent among Asian migrants. A Discussion document commissioned by Wellington City Council found that 42 per cent of Asian migrants had a University degree. Still, only 25 per cent of the total employed earned more than \$50,000 per year. More than half earned less than \$20,000 per year, and only 17 per cent earned more than \$50,000, although 43 per cent had a university degree^{vii}. A study found that many Korean immigrants chose self-employment as a means of getting a job. They gave up seeking mainstream employment opportunities due to the language barrier and barrier of integrating into a new society^{viii}.

Furthermore, Asian New Zealanders are still underrepresented in Parliament. The next largest ethnic block in New Zealand are Asians beside Maori and Pakeha, at 15.1 per cent of New Zealand's population. Only 5 per cent of MPs are Asian and therefore almost 10 per cent below the proportion of the population^{ix}.

Many second generations of Asians are struggling with a sense of belonging in New Zealand. Anecdotal evidence from the second generation of Asians said they would still be seen as foreigners despite being born or growing up in New Zealand. They can never feel entirely comfortable because they were often treated or perceived as 'foreigners'. The coronavirus has re-intensified the racism connected to being a so-called foreigner, with people telling them to "go back to your own country".

Some second generation of Asians are ashamed to be Asian. An unwillingness to be identified as Asian by some in the second generation suggests discrimination against Asians does exist in New Zealand, more or less ^x.

However, despite the ongoing racism and social exclusion experienced by the Asian and migrant population, policymakers and the public sectors are still largely ignoring our population's needs. The ongoing issues have a persistent disadvantage for Asians and the migrant population, especially when accessing employment, health and social support services. Despite this, we have not seen any tangible national high-level policy that are in place to support and address the needs of the Asian population. Such examples are reflected in the key national strategies in mental health and wellbeing where Asian populations and migrants populations are often excluded in these policies

- He Ara Oranga: Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction
- Every Life Matters – He Tapu te Oranga o ia Tanagata. Suicide Prevention Strategy 2019 - 2029 and Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2019 – 2024 for Aotearoa New Zealand
- Kia Kaha, Kia Maia, Kia Ora Aotearoa: Psychosocial and Mental Wellbeing Plan

Systemic racism and social exclusion exist within New Zealand society in employment, accessing goods and services. It is ingrained in nearly every aspect of how people move through societies, and it disproportionately affects Asian people.

Question 2. Where should the Commission focus its research effort?

Asian Family Services recommends the Commission focuses on

1. high-level quantitative and qualitative research on the experiences and issues concerning Asians and migrants that will yield valuable insight into racism and social exclusion.
2. Stocktake to Statutory Crown Entities on the number of board members that represent the Asian population.
3. Undertake a funding analysis of good and services expenditure specifically for Asian and migrant populations (education, housing, healthcare) or its lack.

Question 3. Where should the government focus its effort on finding solutions?

Asian Family Services hopes the government focus its effort on

- Crown Ministers and officials within the public sector to develop high-level strategies or policies for the Asian and migrants population in addressing the disadvantage cycle
- Promote the development of knowledge and understanding in the host population to ensure the Statutory Crown Entities checks to have board members that are diverse and inclusive of Asian and migrants people
- Promote equality in access to goods and services and social interactions via education about the Human Rights Act and the Race Relations Act;
- To promote attitudes that contribute to the development of an inclusive, just and equitable multicultural New Zealand society rooted firmly in its bicultural heritage

Question 4. Is there anything else that you would like to see covered in this inquiry?

- None

About you

Please answer these questions to help us understand if we are getting the views from different communities of people.

1. **What is your age?** 45-54 years
2. **What is your ethnicity?** Asian
3. **Which region do you live in?** Auckland
4. **Subscribe for email updates?**

If yes, please write your email address here: ivan.yeo@asianfamilyservices.nz

ⁱ NZ Human Rights. (February 2021). Racism and Xenophobia Experiences in Aotearoa New Zealand during COVID-19: A Focus on Chinese and Asian Communities. New Zealand Human Rights Commission. Wellington. New Zealand

ⁱⁱ DW. (n.d.). *Asian communities become scapegoats in New Zealand's housing crisis*. <https://www.dw.com/en/asian-communities-become-scapegoats-in-new-zealands-housing-crisis/a-50446191>

ⁱⁱⁱ NZ Herald. (19 July 2018). Migrant nurses in New Zealand face racism daily, with experts saying 'it's time to talk'. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/migrant-nurses-in-new-zealand-face-racism-daily-with-experts-saying-its-time-to-talk/3KBGBPXMW7NDFUNXGCUA5YOS6M/>

^{iv} Newsroom. (12 April, 2021). Anti-Asian issues in NZ <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/podcast-the-detail/anti-asian-issues-in-nz>

^v Te kawa Mataaho, Public Service Commission. (2018). 2018 Public Service Workforce Data published <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/resources/2018-public-service-workforce-data-published/>

^{vi} Erwin, C., Dasgupta, K., & Pacheco, G. (2019). Characterising New Zealand's underutilised workforce: Evidence from the Household Labour Force Survey. Auckland.

^{vii} Schulze, H. & Dixon, H. (2014). "Brain waste" Underemployment of migrants in the Wellington region Discussion document. Wellington.

^{viii} Lee, J-S. (2008). Why do Asian Immigrants become entrepreneurs? The case of Korean self-employed immigrants in New Zealand. Auckland University of Technology.

^{ix} RNZ. (23 October 2020). Does the new Parliament look like us? <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/on-the-inside/428985/does-the-new-parliament-look-like-us>

^x Asian Media Centre. (31 March 2021) NZ's racism against Asians. <https://www.asiamediacentre.org.nz/opinion/nzs-racism-against-asians/>