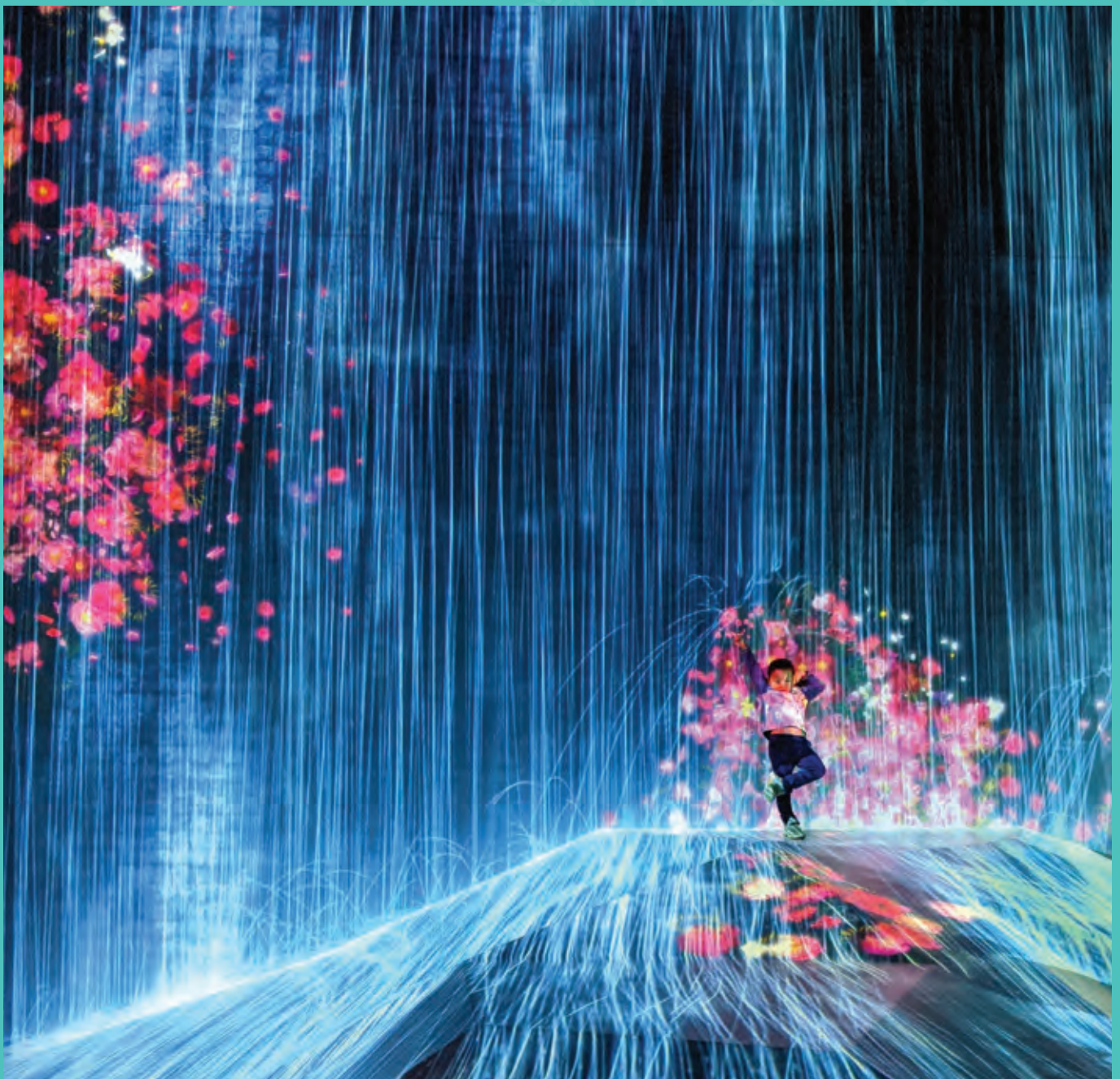


# New Zealanders' Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples

2020  
Annual Survey

 Asia New Zealand  
Foundation  
Te Whaitau Tūhono |



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## Comment from the Executive Director

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The latest New Zealanders' *Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples* survey makes for encouraging reading. More New Zealanders are of the view that developing political, social and economic ties with Asia is important for New Zealand's future (73 percent of respondents felt this way, up from 67 percent in 2019).

This finding is particularly significant when you consider that polling for this survey was carried out in October and November 2020, more than six months after New Zealand's borders had been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and many of our international travel plans curtailed. Rather than turning inward, this research shows New Zealanders are keen for their country to move forward with building and deepening key relationships in Asia.

COVID-19 has caused disruption to an extent that many of us had not previously experienced in our lifetimes. Against this backdrop, it is striking just how stable New Zealanders' views of Asia are over a range of measures. For instance, 79 percent of those surveyed felt that tourism from Asia would have positive impacts on Aotearoa over the next 10-20 years; and 69 percent saw the region's economic growth as positive for this country.

Those two figures are virtually unchanged from four years earlier, and positive views had increased across a range of other areas, including investment and immigration from Asia, and the impact of Asia's culture and traditions on New Zealand.

Additionally, New Zealanders are becoming more sophisticated in their knowledge of Asia and their interests. While food and travel remain the top Asia-related interests, music, art, and literature from Asia are also increasingly on the radar. We are encouraged to see New Zealanders finding ways to enjoy and learn about Asia from their homes and communities. And while they recalled hearing less about Asia in mainstream media in 2020, their access to digital sources and Asia-related film and TV entertainment is growing.

On the other hand, the report also has findings on the more challenging aspects of New Zealand's international engagement. China is seen to be significantly less friendly to New Zealand than in previous years; and for the first time, more New Zealanders see China as a threat than those who view it as a friend. Likewise, the United States has also seen a decline in its perceived level of friendliness.

At the same time, survey participants named China and the US, alongside countries such as India and Japan, as key relationships that New Zealand should put extra effort into. They cited the importance of trade, tourism, technology and innovation in the case of China; and trade, international power, security and defence in the case of the US.

New Zealanders also felt closer to many Asian nations than they did in previous years, with more people seeing South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, India and Viet Nam as friendly compared to 2019 or 2018.

This year, the *Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples* report also contains 16 in-depth interviews with New Zealanders who have shared their own experiences and connections to Asia, as well as some of the barriers they faced in their engagement. Māori participants highlighted the importance of cultural commonalities between Te Ao Māori and Asia and of their aspirations in relation to Asia — for themselves, their whānau, their wider community and for Aotearoa as a whole.

From all participants, we heard about the diverse ways in which New Zealanders engage with Asia: through travel and connections, through experiences in their communities and through their education and work. We also heard about some of the barriers they face; in particular, a sense that opportunities to learn about Asia were more limited in some communities and remote corners of New Zealand.

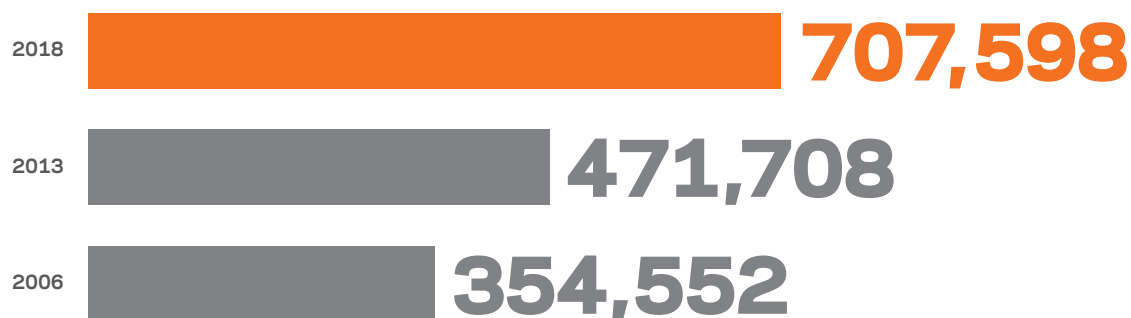
We know that personal connections and experiences are at the heart of building New Zealanders' knowledge, understanding and their confidence to engage with Asia. Face-to-face connections are also vital for relationship building in many Asian cultures. New Zealand will need to work hard to keep its connections with Asia alive — and this report shows a clear willingness from New Zealanders for their country to continue to invest in the region, and as borders re-open, to continue their learning journey once again with Asia.

**Simon J Draper**

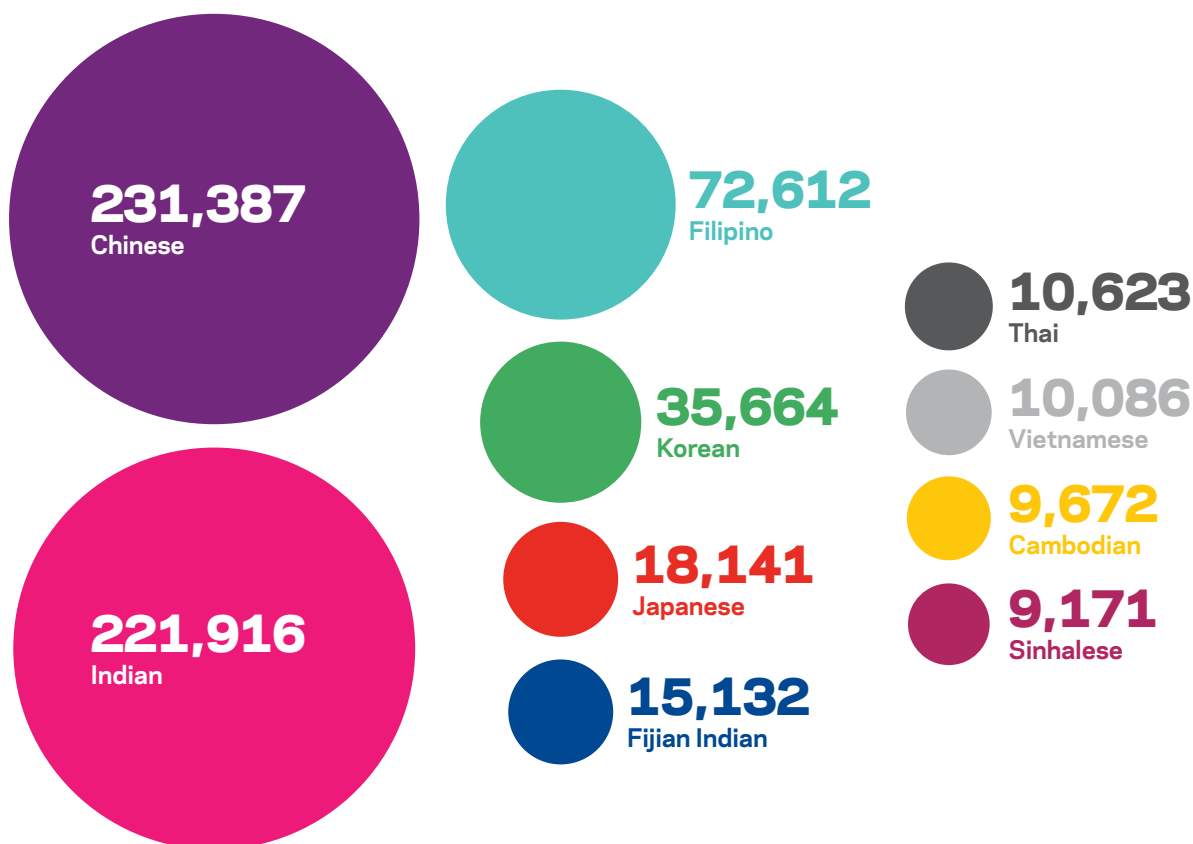
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Te Whītau Tūhono

**Figure 1**

## Census 2018: Asian New Zealanders



### Largest 10 Asian ethnic groups in 2018 Census



Source: Statistics New Zealand, Census 2018

Note: The total responses is higher than the count of Asian New Zealanders because people could identify with more than one Asian ethnicity.



# Our approach

The Asia New Zealand Foundation Te Whītau Tūhono has been surveying New Zealanders' perceptions of Asia for more than two decades. The annual survey supports an informed public conversation about New Zealanders' engagement with the countries and peoples of Asia, and it also guides the Foundation's own work: equipping New Zealanders to thrive in Asia.



This report presents the results of a survey of 2,001 New Zealanders aged 15 years and over conducted from 27 October to 6 November 2020. The results have been weighted so that they are representative of New Zealanders by age, gender, ethnicity and location.

This year's report also includes the results of 16 in-depth interviews with New Zealanders from a range of diverse backgrounds, covering their knowledge and experiences of Asia and Asian peoples as well as their aspirations for New Zealand's future engagement with Asia.

These stories help to give meaning and context to the numbers, highlighting how New Zealanders engage with Asia and Asian peoples in their everyday lives through friends, family, travel, employment, food, culture, media, and sport.

Each section of the report contains insights and observations drawn from these interviews in addition to the quantitative findings.

Since this research started over 20 years ago, New Zealand has experienced several demographic changes. One prominent feature of change has been New Zealand's growing ethnic diversity, with 707,598 New Zealanders identifying as being of Asian ethnicity in the 2018 Census (representing 15 percent of New Zealand's total population) compared to 354,552 in 2006 (see figure 1). There has also been a strong growth in our Māori and Pacific communities.

The largest Asian groups were New Zealanders of Chinese and Indian ethnicities, followed by Filipino (see figure 1). Over one in five people who identified as being of Asian ethnicity were born in New Zealand.

The research also shows how New Zealanders of Asian heritage are helping to grow other New Zealanders' knowledge and confidence in Asia — building a positive connection across communities in Aotearoa.

## Changes to the questionnaire

This year's survey includes a small number of minor changes to some survey questions, as well as a small number of new questions that help us to gain a greater understanding of New Zealanders' perceptions of Asia. They include:

- A question exploring interest in learning a new language;
- A question about New Zealanders' everyday connection to Asian cultures, places, and people;
- A question about the importance and consumption of Asia-related entertainment; and
- Questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the Asia region.

This year's qualitative component featured 16 in-depth semi-structured interviews with a demographically diverse group of New Zealanders with varying knowledge levels of Asia. Topics explored included:

- Personal stories of connection with Asia and Asian peoples;
- Perceptions of the importance of Asia to New Zealand's future;
- Barriers to connection and engagement with Asia;
- Media consumption habits; and
- The impact of COVID-19.

The qualitative section of the report also includes a more detailed exploration of the views and aspirations of Māori with respect to engagement in and knowledge of Asia. Six in-depth interviews with Māori participants were conducted by a Māori researcher. Interviews focused on Māori strengths and experiences in connecting and engaging with Asia, and aspirations for the future.

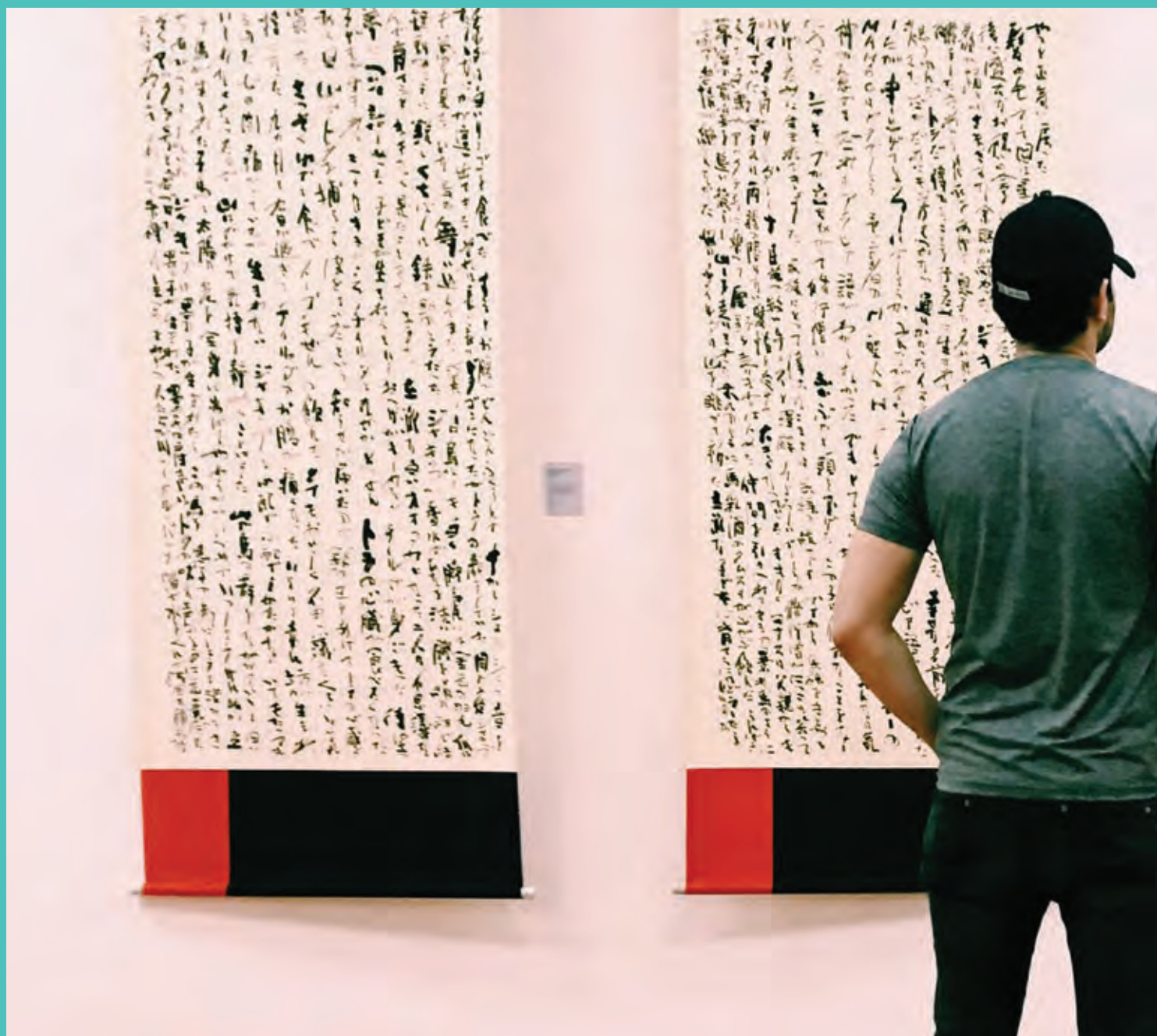
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## Context for the survey

New Zealanders' responses to the survey questions are inevitably influenced by events happening at the time the research is conducted. The following events were occurring around the time of the survey fieldwork (from 27 October to 6 November 2020) and may have impacted New Zealanders' perceptions:

- The COVID-19 pandemic, including coverage of New Zealand case numbers, "imported cases", discussion of "travel bubbles" and assessments about New Zealand's handling of the pandemic as compared to other locations in Asia (notably Viet Nam, South Korea, and Taiwan, but also the US, China and the UK).
- The New Zealand general election took place on 17 October 2020 just prior to the fieldwork.
- The United States presidential election took place on 3 November 2020, with widespread media coverage of issues related to Trump's presidency and the Black Lives Matter movement in the lead-up.
- Ongoing media coverage of protests in Hong Kong, human rights concerns in Xinjiang, political demonstrations in Thailand, and farmers protests in India.

# 1—





# Asia by the numbers



" Culturally my experience is that people [in New Zealand] have changed — things are different to what they used to be like. At university or at work I feel Kiwis have become more friendly and there is more of a mix of people, cultures and accents, and more acceptance of other countries and religions."



# Do we view Asia as an important part of our future?

This section asks New Zealanders to consider the importance of New Zealand developing ties with Asia, and how Asia might impact New Zealand's economy, cultural diversity, productivity, and future outlook.



## Key findings



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**Developing ties with Asia is seen as increasingly important for New Zealand's future.**

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**The more connected to Asia that New Zealanders feel, the more important they tend to think Asia is for New Zealand's future.**

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**Asia is considered the second-most important region to New Zealand's future.**

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**North Asia is rated the most important sub-region in Asia for New Zealand's future,** followed by Southeast Asia and South Asia.

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**Tourism and technological innovations from Asia remain the key areas that New Zealanders expect to benefit from over the next two decades.** Economic growth within Asia and investment from Asia to New Zealand are also expected to deliver benefits over time.

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**New Zealanders understand that environmental issues in Asia may have the potential to negatively impact New Zealand over time.**

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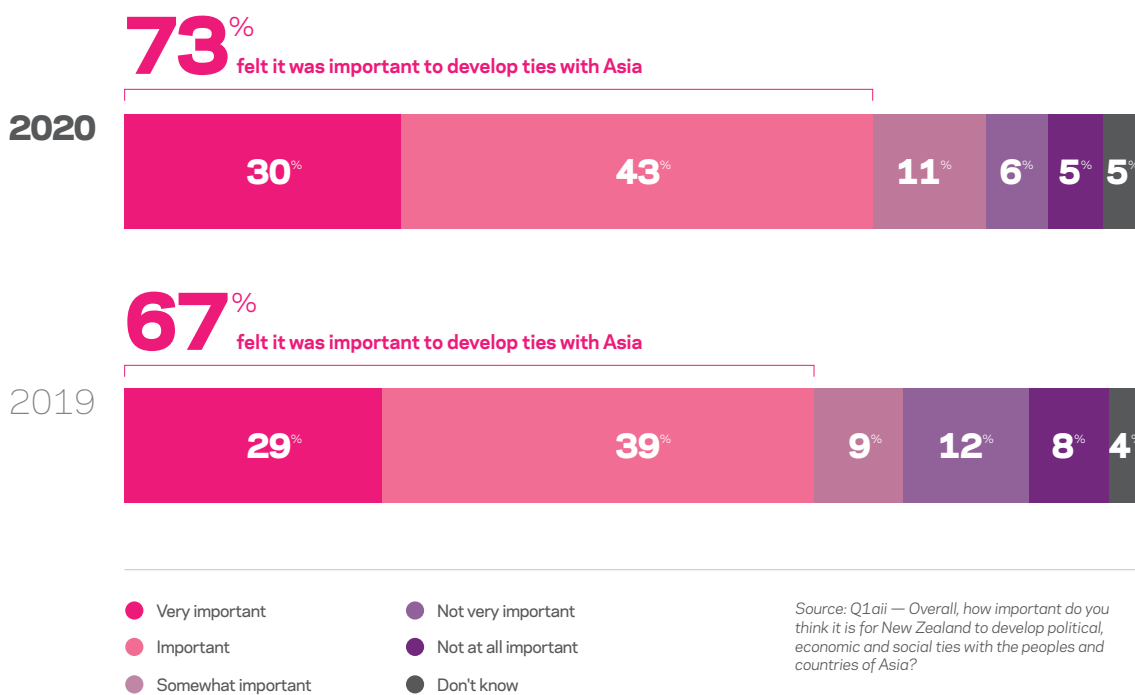
## New Zealanders see developing ties with Asia as important.

Three-quarters of New Zealanders (73 percent) believe that it is important to develop political, economic and social ties with Asia (see figure 2). This has increased from 67 percent in 2019.

Compared to 2019, young New Zealanders have seen the most significant lift in their support for developing ties with Asia: 74 percent of young people aged 15-17 believe that it is important to develop political, economic and social ties with Asia — up from 57 percent in 2019, a 17 percentage point increase.

Figure 2

How important do New Zealanders think it is to develop ties with Asia?



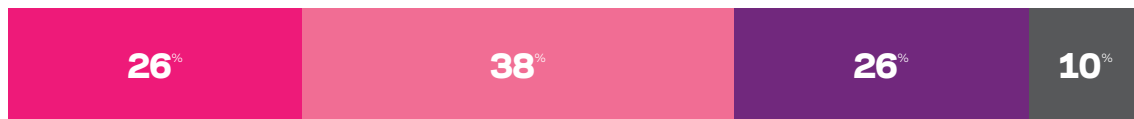
## Day-to-day connections with Asia.

Research tells us that the more New Zealanders feel connected to Asia, the more they tend to rate Asia as important. In 2020, respondents were asked how connected they felt in their day-to-day lives with Asian cultures, places or people over the past five years, on a scale of one to ten. While the majority of New Zealanders felt connected, one quarter (26 percent) of New Zealanders said they felt a strong connection, while another quarter (26 percent) said they felt a weak connection (see figure 3).

**Figure 3**

### Strength of connection with Asia

**Connection with Asian cultures, places, and people**



● Strong (8-10)

● Medium (5-7)

● Weak (1-4)

● Don't know / would rather not say

Source: Q31 — Looking back over the past five years, how connected have you felt, in your daily life, with Asian cultures, places or people who identify as Asian?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)

---

## **New Zealand is expected to benefit from its connection with Asia over the next two decades, particularly in the areas of tourism and technology.**

We asked New Zealanders for their views on a range of issues where Asia may impact New Zealand over the coming ten to 20 years.

### **Tourism from Asia to New Zealand**

New Zealanders continue to feel that having direct tourism linkages with Asia will be beneficial to New Zealand over the next two decades (see figure 4). Seventy-nine percent of New Zealanders view tourism flows from Asia to New Zealand as having a positive impact on the country's future — unchanged since 2019 (pre-COVID-19 pandemic).

### **Political and security issues in Asia**

While people-to-people ties are considered positive, New Zealanders are less confident about the impact of political and security issues in Asia on New Zealand in the coming years. Thirty-eight percent feel positive about how political and security issues in Asia may impact New Zealand, while 25 percent envisage a possible negative impact.

### **Investment, immigration, culture, and traditions**

In recent years, optimism has grown about how New Zealand will benefit from Asia, particularly in terms of investment, immigration, and learning about culture and traditions. Sixty-four percent believe investment from Asia will have a positive impact on New Zealand in the coming two decades, compared to 59 percent in 2017; while 45 percent feel immigration from Asia will have a positive impact on New Zealand. This is up from 40 percent in 2017.

The majority of New Zealanders (52 percent) feel New Zealand will benefit culturally from Asia over the next 10 to 20 years, up from 45 percent in 2017 (see figure 4).

Further, 78 percent of New Zealanders believe developments in technology and innovation in Asia will have a positive impact on New Zealand.

### **Impact of environmental issues in Asia remains a key concern for the future**

Environmental issues in Asia are an area of future concern for New Zealanders. Thirty-nine percent of New Zealanders believe environmental issues in Asia will negatively impact New Zealand over the coming two decades, while 30 percent think they could have a positive impact. These findings are largely unchanged from 2019.

New Zealanders under 30-years-old report slightly higher levels of concern about the potential negative impact of environmental issues in Asia, with 42 percent believing environmental issues will negatively impact New Zealand, up from 39 percent in 2019 (see figure 5). Fewer believe environmental issues will have a positive impact, as compared to 2019, with 26 percent anticipating a positive impact, down from 29 percent in 2019.

**Figure 4**

What impact will these sectors have on New Zealand in the next 10–20 years?

- Positive impact
- Negative impact



Source: Q2b — Thinking about the entire Asia region, and thinking about New Zealand in the next 10–20 years, what kind of impact do you think each of the following will have on New Zealand's future?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)

**Figure 5**

How do New Zealand's **under 30-year-olds** view these sectors?

- Positive impact
- Negative impact



Source: Q2b — Thinking about the entire Asia region, and thinking about New Zealand in the next 10–20 years, what kind of impact do you think each of the following will have on New Zealand's future?

Base: Under 30-year-olds (n=341)

## Asia is considered the second-most important region to New Zealand's future.

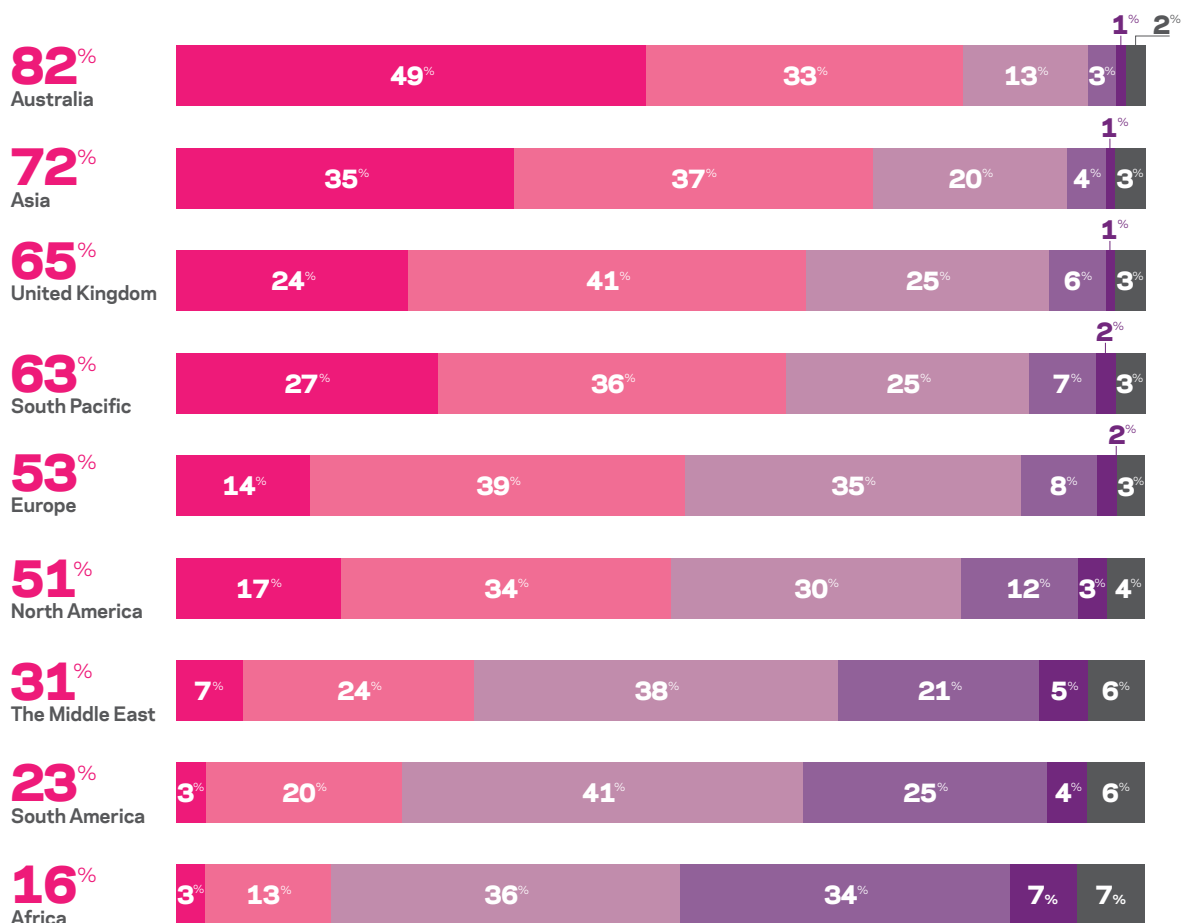
New Zealanders rank Asia as the second most important region to New Zealand's future, second only to Australia. This is unchanged from 2019 (see figure 6).

Seventy-two percent of New Zealanders believe Asia is important or very important to New Zealand's future, a figure that is also unchanged from 2019 (see figure 7).

Figure 6

How important are the different regions of the world to New Zealand's future?

Percentage of people who felt the region was important



Very important  
Important  
Somewhat important

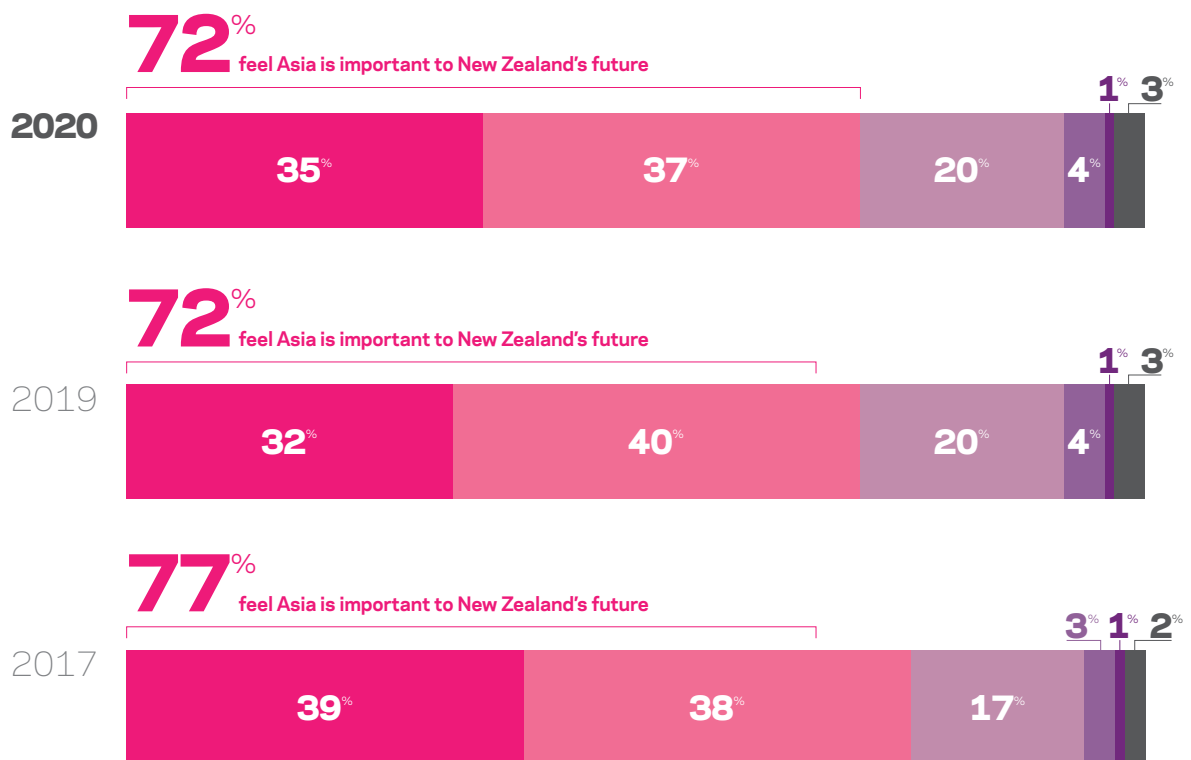
Not very important  
Not at all important  
Don't know

Source: Q1a — How important do you think each of the following regions are to New Zealand's future?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)

**Figure 7**

How important is the Asia region  
to New Zealand's future?



- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not at all important
- Don't know

Source: Q1a — How important do you think each of  
the following regions are to New Zealand's future?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)

## North Asia is considered the most important sub-region in Asia.

We asked New Zealanders to rate the sub-regions of Asia in terms of their perceived importance to New Zealand's future (see figure 8).

We examined three main sub-regions:

- North Asia (including countries such as China, Japan and South Korea);
- South Asia (including countries such as India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh); and
- Southeast Asia (including countries such as Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia).

71 percent of New Zealanders said North Asia was important to New Zealand's future, down from 74 percent in 2019.

42 percent see Southeast Asia to be important to New Zealand's future, up from 41 percent in 2019. And 37 percent rated South Asia to be important to New Zealand's future, up from 36 percent in 2019.

**Figure 8**

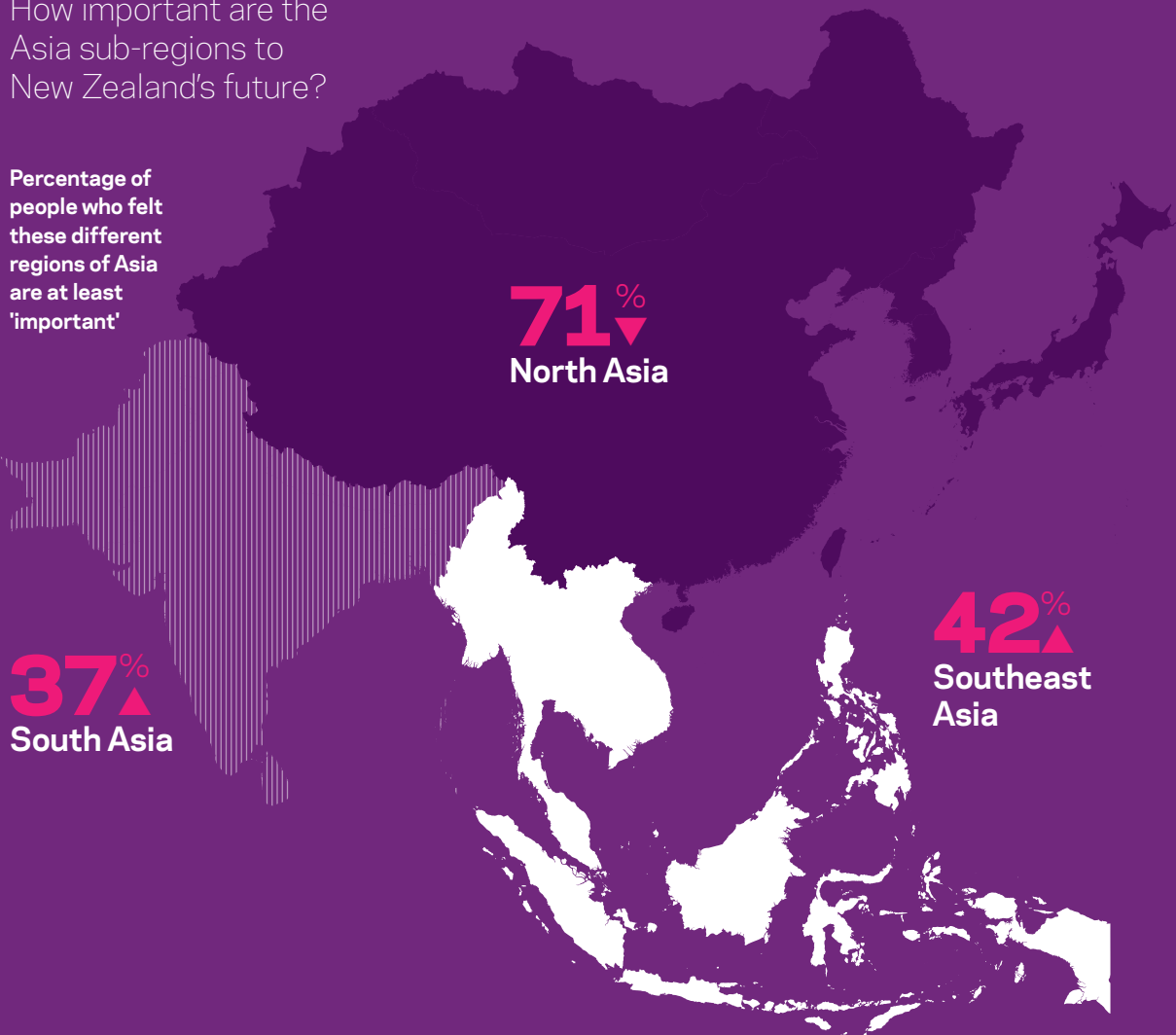
How important are the Asia sub-regions to New Zealand's future?

Percentage of people who felt these different regions of Asia are at least 'important'

**37%**  
South Asia

**71%**  
North Asia

**42%**  
Southeast Asia





# What do we know about Asia?

This section examines New Zealanders' knowledge of Asia. As with previous years, we find a clear link between knowledge of Asia and New Zealanders' views on the importance of Asia.



## Key findings



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**China is the country New Zealanders most closely associate with “Asia.”**

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**Half of New Zealanders (50 percent) believe themselves to have ‘at least a fair amount’ of knowledge about Asia.**

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**New Zealanders with a greater knowledge of Asia are more inclined to believe Asia will play an important role in New Zealand’s future.**

## "China" and "food" are the words we associate most with Asia.

We asked New Zealanders to tell us the first word they thought of when they heard or saw the word 'Asia' (see figure 9). For the second year running, the single most common response (33 percent) was 'China'. Other words frequently mentioned included 'food' and other countries in Asia such as 'Japan', 'India', and 'Thailand'.

Figure 9

What words do we associate with Asia?



## How New Zealanders rate their knowledge of Asia.

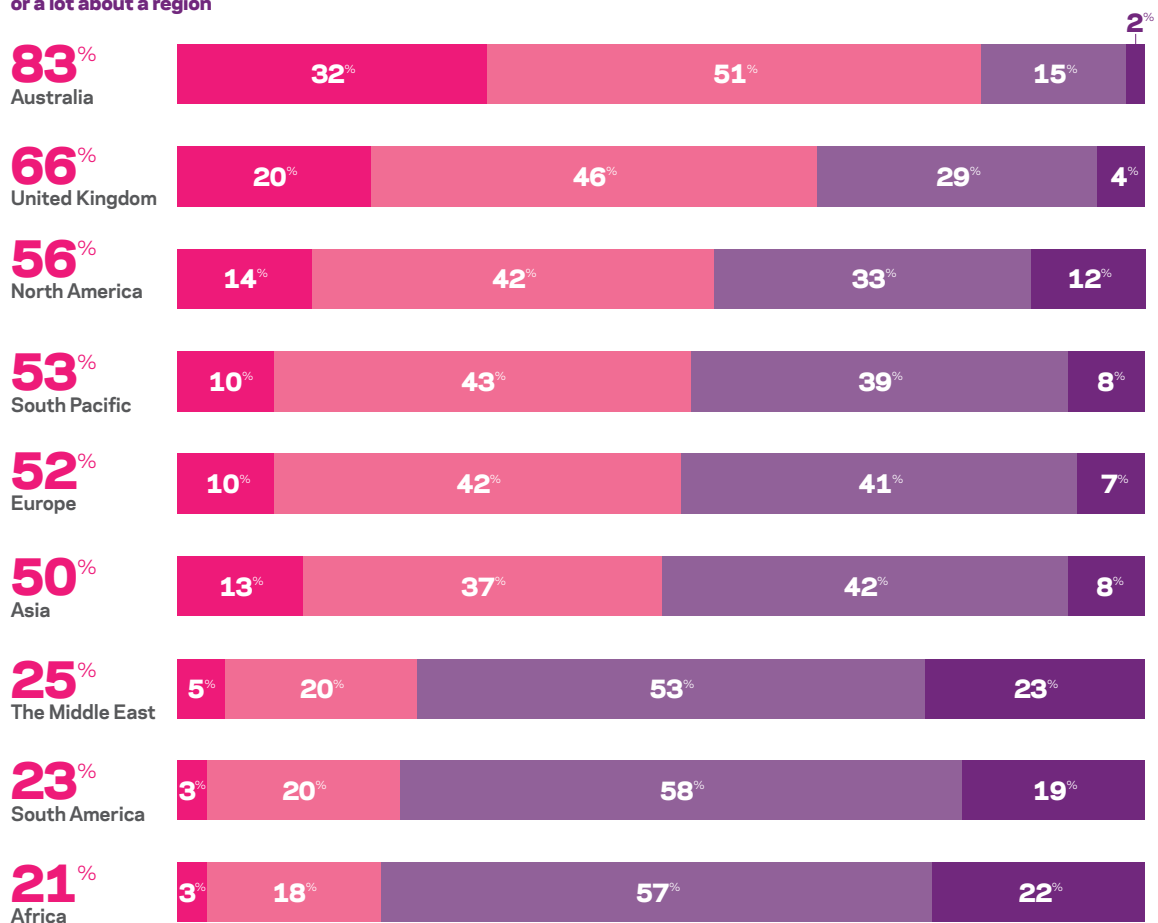
Half of those surveyed (50 percent) felt that they had 'a fair amount' or 'a lot' of knowledge about Asia (see figure 10) — a figure largely unchanged since 2019 (51 percent) but notably higher than previous

years. In 2017, 43 percent of New Zealanders rated themselves as knowledgeable about Asia, while in 2014 only 36 percent of New Zealanders considered themselves knowledgeable about Asia (see figure 11).

**Figure 10**

How much do New Zealanders know about the different regions and countries of the world?

Percentage of people who  
feel they know a fair amount  
or a lot about a region



● A lot  
● A fair amount

● A little  
● Almost nothing

Source: Q1b — How much do you feel you know about the following regions?

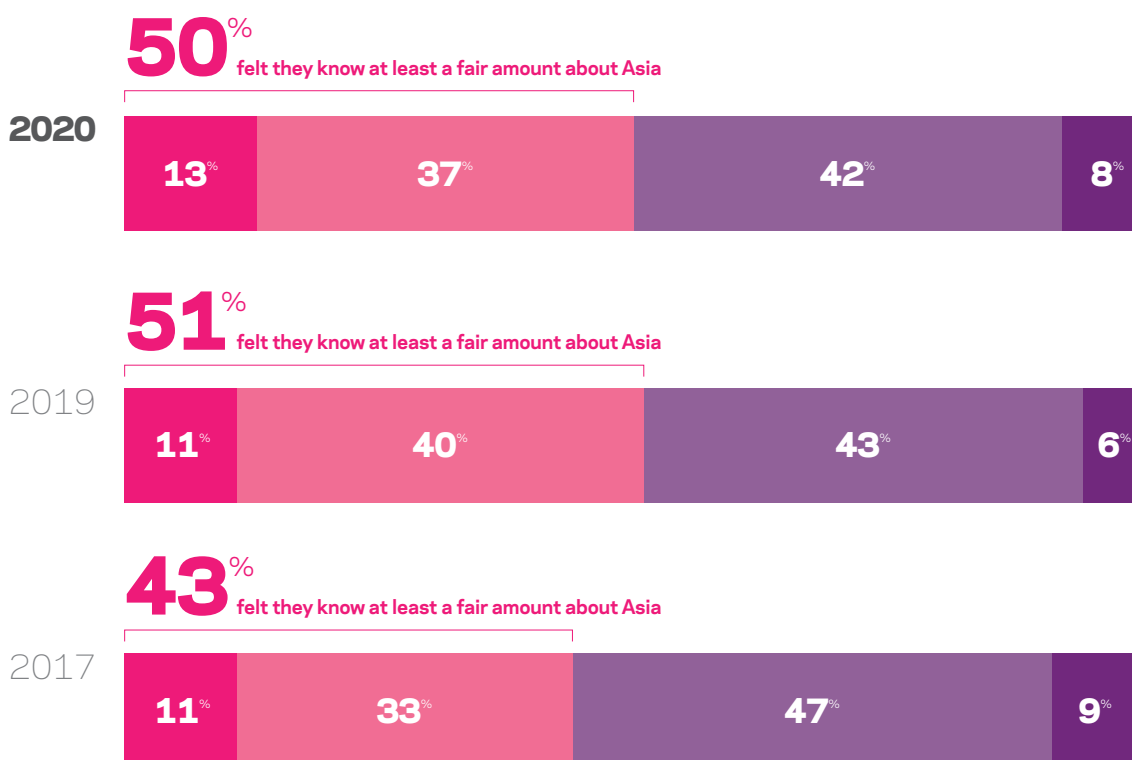
Base: All New Zealanders excluding those who don't know

New Zealanders' knowledge of Asia is roughly equal to their knowledge of the South Pacific (53 percent) and Europe (52 percent) but is twice as high as their knowledge of the Middle East (25 percent), South America (23 percent), and Africa (21 percent).

Self-assessed knowledge of Asia does, however, remain lower than that of Australia (83 percent), the United Kingdom (66 percent), and North America (56 percent).

**Figure 11**

How much more do New Zealanders know about Asia?



● A lot  
● A fair amount

● A little  
● Almost nothing

Source: Q1b — How much do you feel you know about the following regions?

Base: All New Zealanders excluding those who don't know

## New Zealanders know the most about North Asia.

When asked about their knowledge of Asia's sub-regions, 43 percent of New Zealanders said they know either 'a fair amount' or 'a lot' about North Asia (see figure 12). North Asia is also the sub-region New Zealanders rate as most important to New Zealand's future (refer figure 8).

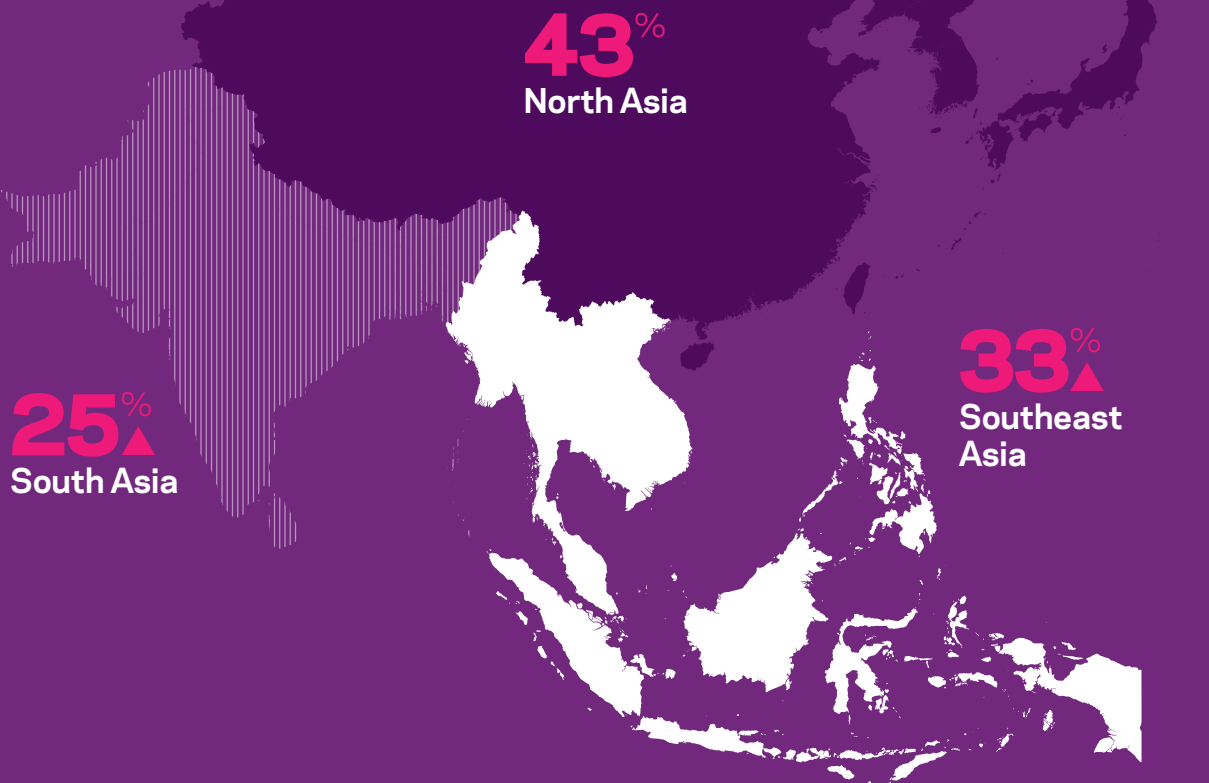
Self-assessed knowledge of Southeast Asia — the region rated second most important by New Zealanders (figure 12) — has increased slightly. Thirty-three percent now say they know at least a fair amount about Southeast Asia, up from 30 percent in 2019.

Knowledge of South Asia is also building; a quarter (25 percent) of New Zealanders say they know at least a fair amount about South Asia, up from 22 percent in 2019.

**Figure 12**

How much do we know about Asia's sub-regions?

Percentage of people who know at least 'a fair amount' about the following sub-regions of Asia



## Can New Zealanders identify Asian countries on a map?

As with previous surveys, a general knowledge test was included in order to compare self-assessed knowledge of Asia with actual knowledge. For the 2020 survey, respondents were shown a map of Asia with letters assigned to various locations and countries.

We asked New Zealanders to name the five countries pinpointed on the map. They were: South Korea, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Pakistan and Thailand.

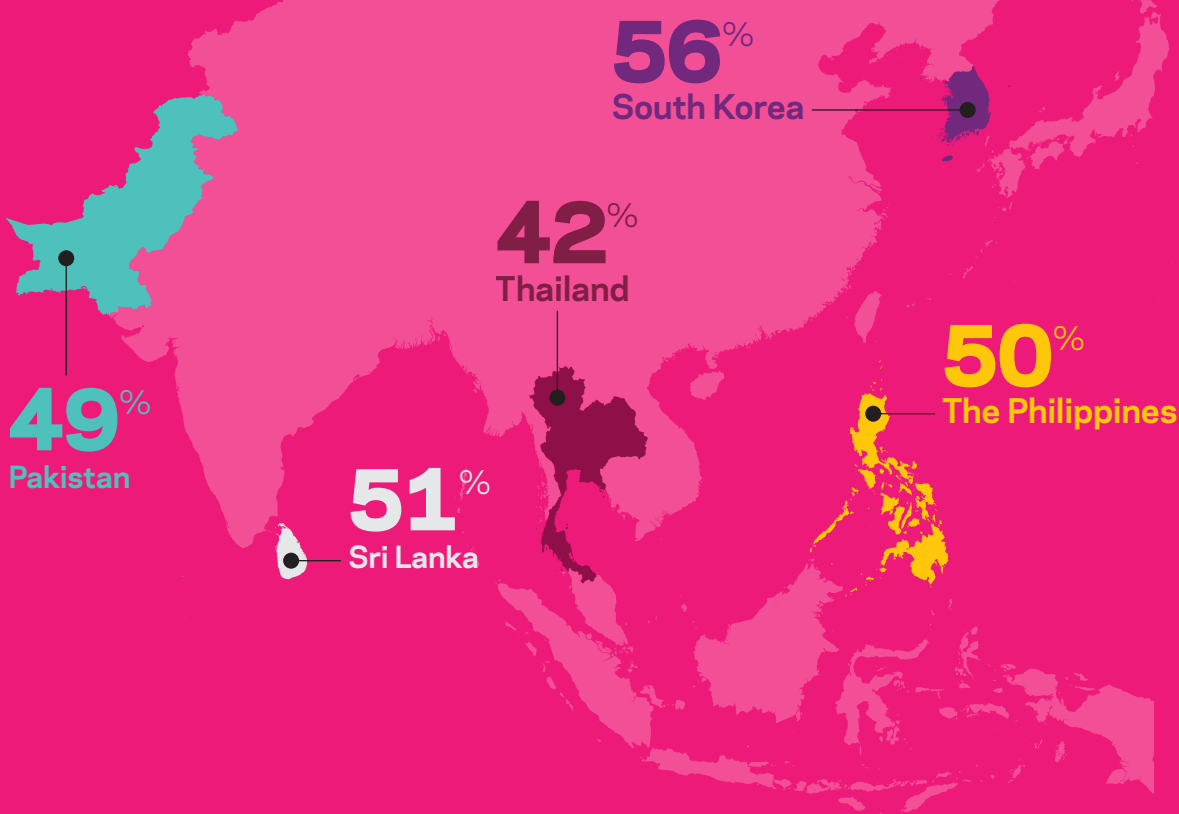
Percentage of people who correctly identified each location:

- South Korea 56 percent
- Sri Lanka 51 percent
- Philippines 50 percent
- Pakistan 49 percent
- Thailand 42 percent.

**Figure 13**

How much do we know about Asia?

Percentage of New Zealanders who correctly identified these countries in Asia



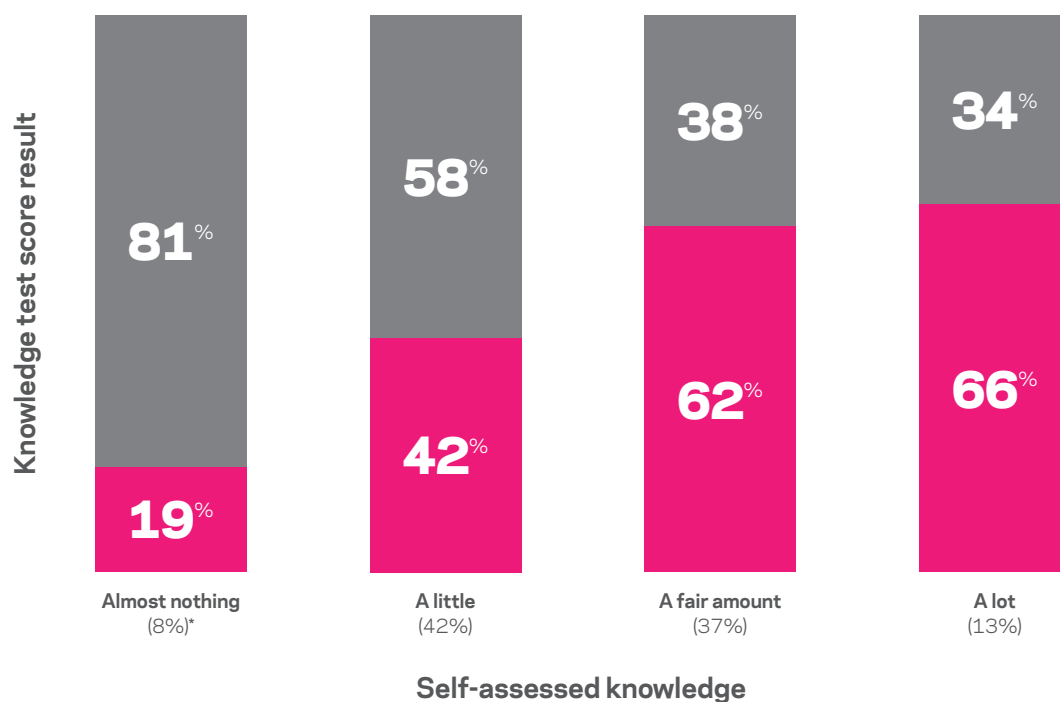
## Self-assessed knowledge is a reasonable measure for actual knowledge.

New Zealanders who self-identify as knowing 'a lot' about Asia correctly identified the countries in the general knowledge test 66 percent of the time on average (see figure 13). Those who self-identify as knowing 'a fair amount' about Asia were not far behind, achieving a 62 percent success rate. Those who said they know 'almost nothing' about Asia correctly identified fewer than half of the locations (42 percent).

These results suggest that individual self-assessment of knowledge does broadly indicate actual personal knowledge.

**Figure 14**

What is the relationship  
between self-assessed knowledge  
and results of the knowledge test?



● Incorrect  
● Correct

Source: Q1d — Here is a map of Asia. Which letter on the map indicates <COUNTRY>?

\* % in brackets represents percentage of total sample who have this level of self-assessed knowledge.

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)

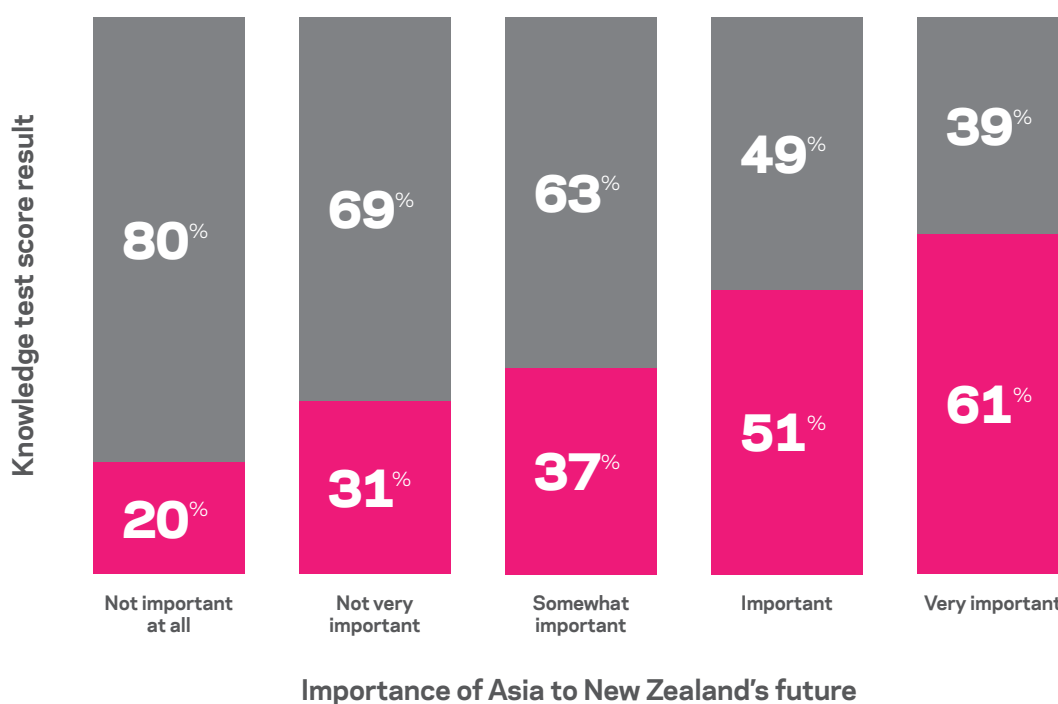
## The more New Zealanders know about Asia, the more they consider it important.

There continues to be a relatively strong correlation between an individual's knowledge of Asia and how important they consider Asia to be to New Zealand's future.

Sixty-one percent of New Zealanders who consider Asia to be 'very important' to New Zealand's future correctly identified the locations in the general knowledge test (see figure 13). Conversely, only 20 percent of those who rated Asia as 'not important at all' to New Zealand's future had correctly identified the locations listed.

Figure 15

What is the relationship between the knowledge test and how New Zealanders rate the importance of Asia?



● Incorrect  
● Correct

Source: Q1ci — Here is a map of Asia.  
Which letter on the map indicates <COUNTRY>?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)

" Connecting with other places like Asia can help New Zealanders to open up and be more accepting of other cultures, in New Zealand and in the world."

Female, 36, Māori, Wellington



# How do New Zealanders perceive the Asia region?

This section looks at how New Zealanders perceive Asian countries relative to others; how closely they follow international relations; and what they think about developments such as China's Belt and Road Initiative and trade agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.



## Key findings



**New Zealanders feel warmer to many Asian nations than they did in 2019.** The perceived friendliness of countries such as South Korea, Viet Nam, Thailand and the Philippines is up from previous years.

**New Zealanders are increasingly polarised about New Zealand's relationship with large countries such as China and the United States.**

**New Zealanders believe extra effort could be put in to managing our relationships with a number of countries in Asia,** including China, India and Japan.

**Forty-five percent of New Zealanders have heard of China's Belt and Road Initiative.** But sentiment towards the Initiative is increasingly divided.

**Thirty-nine percent of New Zealanders are aware of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership trade deal and are broadly supportive of New Zealand signing it.**

---

## **New Zealand's friendships with most Asian nations are flourishing.**

New Zealanders continue to see Japan as the friendliest nation in Asia, with 71 percent rating Japan as a 'friend' (up one percentage point from 2019).

Five of the top 10 countries rated friendliest towards New Zealand came from Asia and most of these have seen significant growth in their perceived friendliness towards New Zealand over the past several years, including:

- South Korea: 51 percent consider South Korea to be friendly towards New Zealand, up from 47 percent in 2019.
- Thailand: 47 percent consider Thailand to be friendly towards New Zealand, up from 41 percent in 2019.
- India: 46 percent consider India to be friendly towards New Zealand, up from 42 percent in 2019.
- Philippines: 46 percent consider the Philippines to be friendly towards New Zealand, up from 40 percent in 2019.
- Viet Nam: 41 percent consider Viet Nam to be friendly towards New Zealand, up from 32 percent in 2019.

---

## **China rated less friendly towards New Zealand in 2020.**

Despite notable increases in the perceived friendliness of Asian nations towards New Zealand between 2019 and 2020, there is one country that is bucking this trend: China.

New Zealanders perceived China to be significantly less friendly in 2020 than in previous years. In the 2020 survey, one third (31 percent) of New Zealanders perceive China to be friendly towards New Zealand, down nine percent from 2019 when 40 percent of New Zealanders rated China as friendly. Thirty-six percent of New Zealanders perceive China to be threatening, an increase of 14 percentage points in one year, up from 22 percent in 2019 (see figures 16 and 17).

---

## **North Korea considered the most threatening.**

The threat perceptions of North Korea and Russia have also strengthened between 2019 and 2020. North Korea is the country perceived to be most threatening for New Zealand, with 64 percent of New Zealanders believing North Korea to be threatening (up from 60 percent in 2019) and of these, 23 percent seeing it as a major threat. Forty-two percent of New Zealanders consider Russia to pose a threat, up from 34 percent in 2019.

---

## **Greater polarisation on the United States.**

Between 2019 and 2020, the United States has also seen a decline in its perceived friendliness towards New Zealand, with half (50 percent) of New Zealanders rating the US as friendly, down from 57 percent in 2019. In terms of threat perceptions, 20 percent of New Zealanders consider the US to be a threatening country, up eight percent from 2019 (see figure 16).

---

## **Australia remains New Zealand's closest friend.**

More so than ever before, Australia is considered to be New Zealand's closest friend, with 87 percent of New Zealanders perceiving Australia to be friendly towards New Zealand (up four percentage points from 2019). Other countries rated as close friends of New Zealand include the United Kingdom and Canada (both at 81 percent).

Figure 16

Which countries are viewed as friendly towards New Zealand?

Percentage of New Zealanders who identify each country as a friend

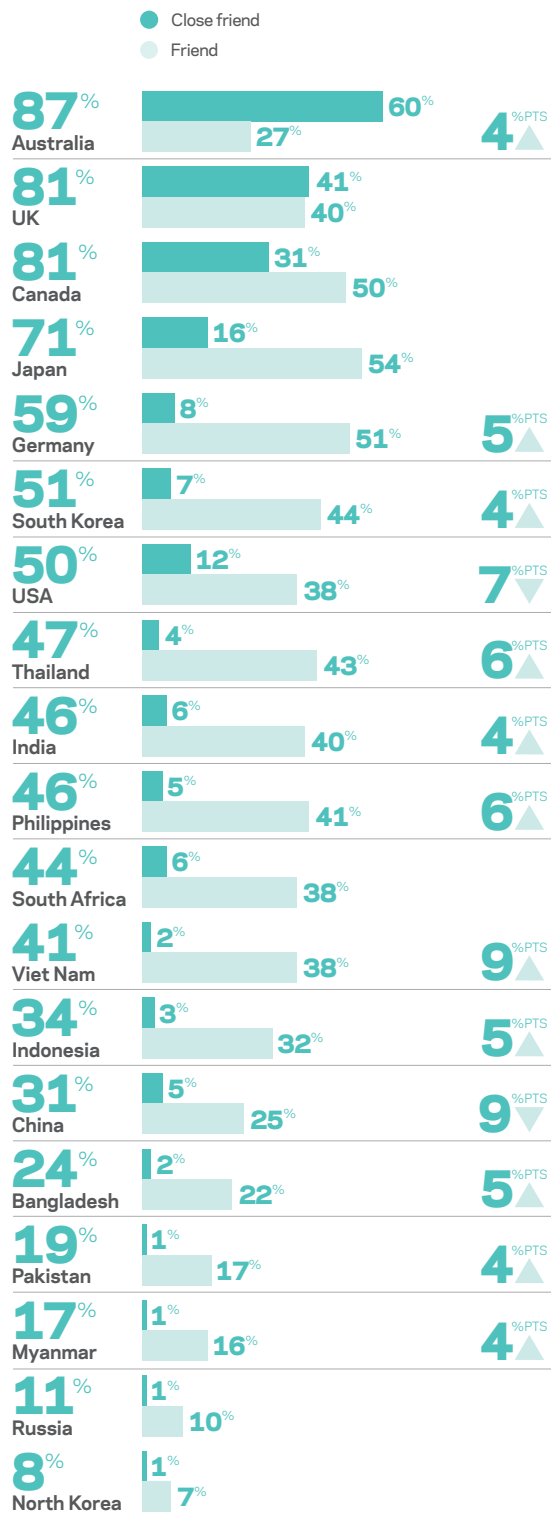


Figure 17

Which countries are viewed as threats to New Zealand?

Percentage of New Zealanders who identify each country as a threat



Source: Q3e — A friendly country is one you view as safe and trustworthy. A threatening country is one you view with caution or suspicion. For each country below, do you view them as a friend or a threat to New Zealand?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)

## New Zealanders want to build relationships in the interest of trade and tourism.

In 2020, New Zealanders were asked which country they felt New Zealand should put extra effort into developing a stronger relationship with and why. In priority order, the countries selected were Australia, China, the United States, India, Japan, the United Kingdom and Canada.

While pursuing trade was the top priority for New Zealanders across all nations (except for Canada where it is number three), New Zealanders provided a range of reasons why extra effort was needed including increasing tourism flows, opportunities for technological innovation, connecting with countries of global influence and working with countries whose values we share (see figure 18).

**Figure 18**

Which country should New Zealand develop its relationship with?

**14%**  
Australia



Top three reasons why relationships should be developed further.

**79%**  
Trade  
**75%**  
Similar values/culture  
**73%**  
Tourism

**13%**  
China



**92%**  
Trade  
**75%**  
Tourism  
**73%**  
Technology/innovation

**8%**  
USA



**77%**  
Trade  
**71%**  
World power  
**66%**  
Security/Defence

**6%**  
India



**89%**  
Trade  
**64%**  
Technology/innovation  
**59%**  
Population size/influence

**5%**  
Japan



**86%**  
Trade  
**84%**  
Technology/innovation  
**81%**  
Tourism

**5%**  
UK



**86%**  
Trade  
**65%**  
Similar values/culture  
**62%**  
Tourism

**4%**  
Canada



**82%**  
Similar values/culture  
**81%**  
Kindness/ethics  
**65%**  
Trade

Source: Q3f — If New Zealand were to put in extra effort to develop its relationship with one country in the world, what country should it be and why?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)

## **Fewer New Zealanders have heard of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade deal in 2020 than in 2019.**

Thirty-nine percent of New Zealanders said they were familiar with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) free trade agreement in 2020, compared to 43 percent in 2019.

Sixteen percent say they know 'a little bit' about the agreement and three percent say they know 'a lot.'

New Zealanders of Asian ethnicity have a higher awareness of RCEP than other New Zealanders: 49 percent say they have heard about it, compared to 37 percent of non-Asian respondents.

Sixty percent of New Zealanders who are aware of RCEP are supportive of New Zealand signing the agreement (see figure 19).

## **Awareness of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is high, but perceptions of the Initiative are mixed.**

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is China's global infrastructure development strategy. New Zealanders' awareness of the BRI has reached the highest level to date (45 percent), up from 35 percent in 2017. Knowledge levels are also slowly deepening, with the number of New Zealanders saying they know 'a fair amount' about the BRI increasing from 4 percent to 7 percent over the same period.

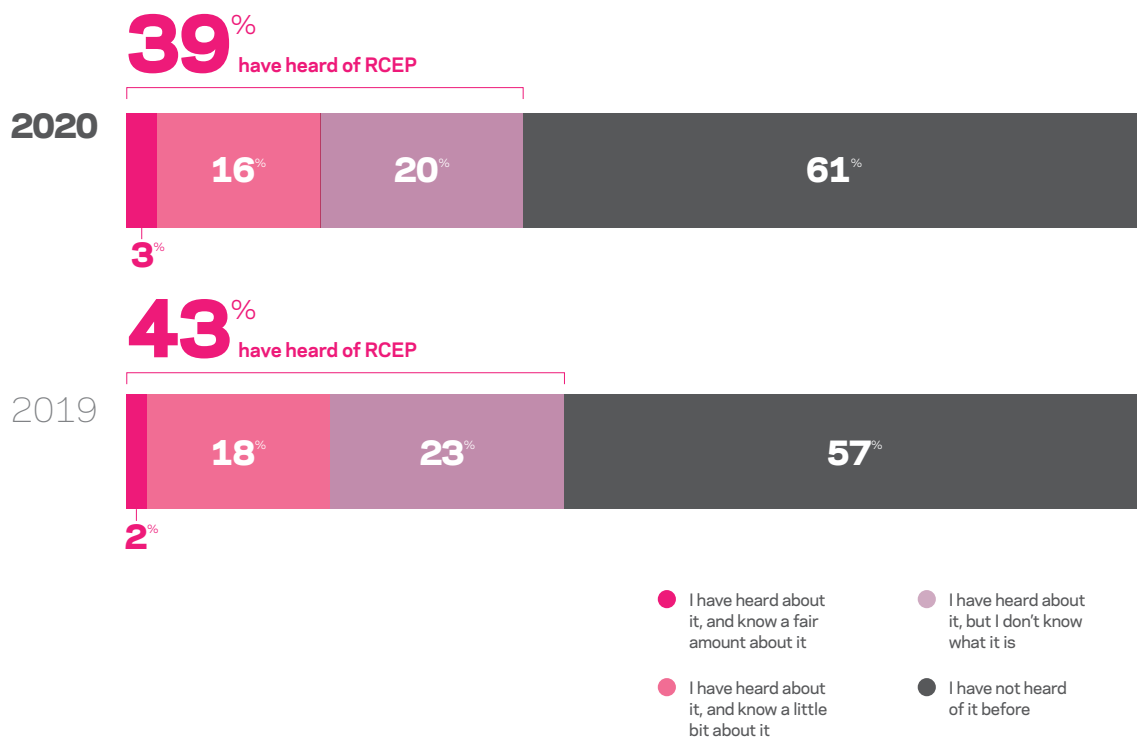
New Zealanders with at least some knowledge of the BRI were asked about their perceptions of the Initiative. Thirty-three percent of New Zealanders said they held a positive view, down from 41 percent in 2019. The percentage of those who held a negative view of the BRI increased from 25 percent in 2019 to 32 percent in 2020. The remaining one third of respondents held a neutral view.

New Zealanders of Asian ethnicity are slightly more positive about the BRI compared to other New Zealanders, with 40 percent viewing the Initiative positively compared to a 30 percent average across other New Zealanders — but their positive sentiment is deteriorating, from 54 percent in 2019 to 40 percent in 2020 (see figure 20).

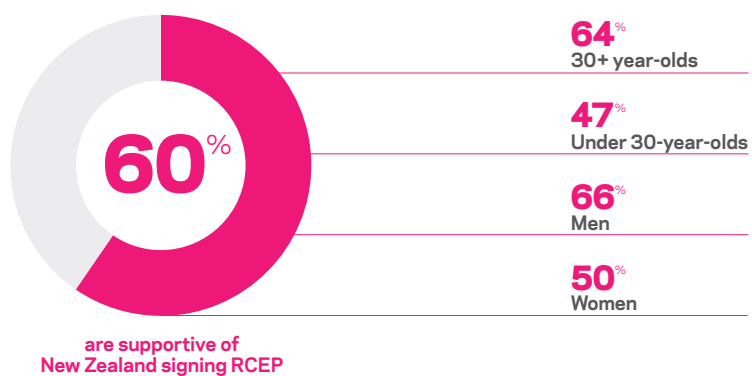
**Figure 19**

What do New Zealanders  
know about RCEP?

**Knowledge of RCEP free trade initiative**



**Who is supportive of signing?**



Source: Q23i — Are you supportive of New Zealand signing the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Free Trade Agreement (RCEP)?

Base: All New Zealanders aware of RCEP (n=390)  
Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)

**Figure 20**

## How do New Zealanders view the Belt and Road Initiative?

### Knowledge of Belt and Road Initiative

**45%** have heard of the BRI



### Sentiment towards Belt and Road Initiative

Provided a **positive** answer



Provided a **neutral** answer (or said 'don't know')



Provided a **negative** answer



- I have heard about it, and know a fair amount about it
- I have heard about it, and know a little bit about it
- I have heard about it, but I don't know what it is
- I have not heard of it before

Source: Q5aa — Which of these best describes your knowledge of the Belt and Road Initiative, also known as the One Belt One Road Initiative or the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road? / Q5ab — Do you hold a positive, neutral or negative view of the Belt and Road Initiative?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001) | Sentiment is those who have heard of Belt and Road and know at least a little bit (n=604)



# How does the media influence our perceptions of Asia?

This section looks at the media sources and headlines shaping New Zealanders' perceptions and knowledge of Asia.



## Key findings



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**Fewer New Zealanders recall having consumed Asia-related news in 2020 than in 2019.**

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**Traditional media (TV, radio, print newspapers and magazines) continues to be an important, though declining, source of Asia-related news.**

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**Usage of websites and social media for sourcing Asia-related news is increasing. This is particularly so among under 30-year-olds.**

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**Fifty-four percent of New Zealanders consider New Zealand media reporting on Asia to be balanced.**

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**Close to one third of New Zealanders (29 percent) consume Asia-related entertainment on a monthly basis.**

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## Fewer New Zealanders recall consuming Asia related news in 2020.

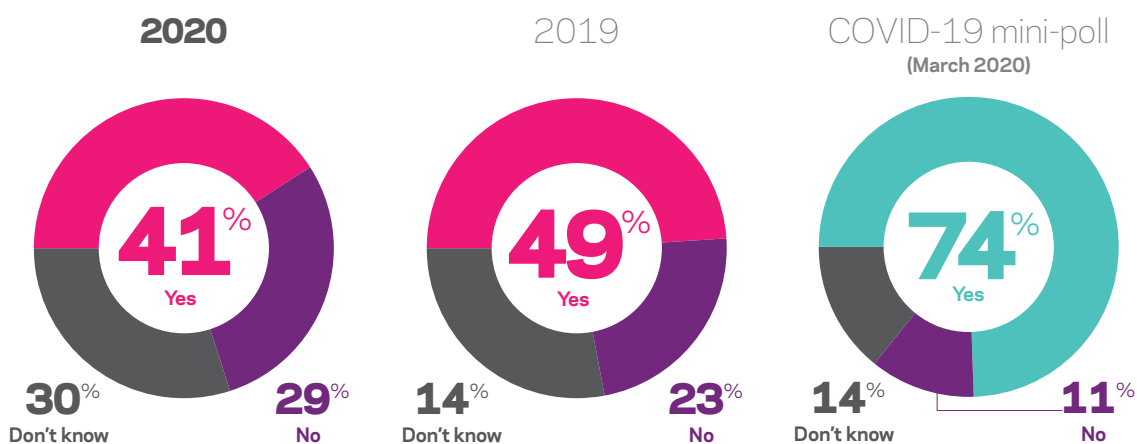
In 2019, 49 percent of New Zealanders recalled having seen, read or heard anything Asia-related in the news and media over the three months prior to the survey. One year on, in 2020, 41 percent of New Zealanders recall having engaged with Asia-related media.

There was, however, a notable spike in awareness of Asia-related news coverage in March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic was gaining considerable media attention and New Zealand's alert system for nationwide lockdowns was introduced. At this time, 74 percent of New Zealanders recalled Asia-related news (see figure 21).

**Figure 21**

How much information about Asia are New Zealanders receiving?

**Have you seen, heard, or read anything about Asia-related events, issues or people in the last three months?**



Source: Q26a  
Base: All New Zealanders —  
2019 (n=2,002),  
COVID mini poll (n=1,005),  
2020 (n=2,001)

## Traditional media is still popular, but digital media is on the rise.

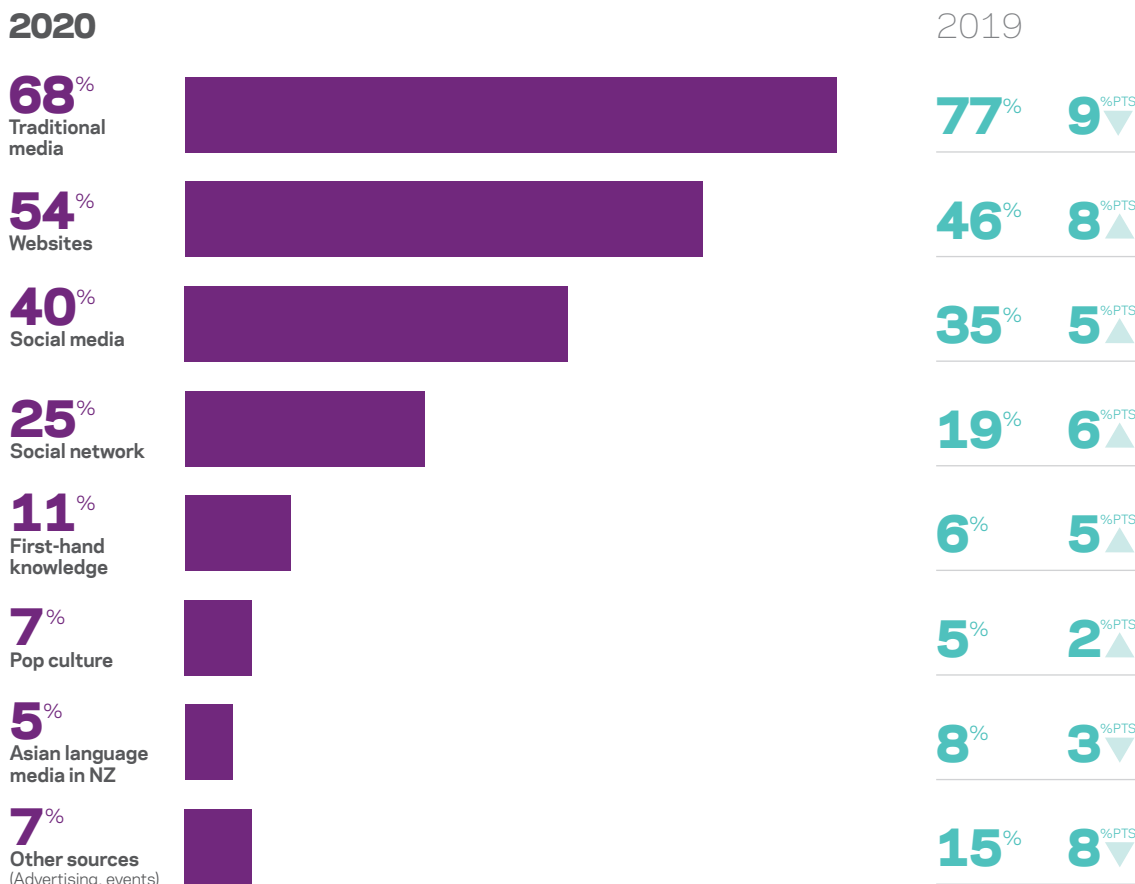
Traditional media continues to be the most common source of Asia-related news for New Zealanders, although from 2019 there has been a notable upward trend towards the use of digital and social media.

For those who had seen, heard or read about Asia-related events over the past three months, traditional media was ranked as the most common source (68 percent). Websites were second at 54 percent, and social media was third at 40 percent (see figure 22).

While the majority of New Zealanders are receiving Asia-related information through traditional media, under 30-year-olds are most commonly relying on social media (54 percent) as their main Asia-related news information source.

**Figure 22**

Where have New Zealanders received most of their Asia-related news and information?



Source: Q26b — From what news or media sources have you received most of your information about Asia-related events, issues or people in the last three months?

Base: New Zealanders seen/heard Asia-related information past 3 months (n=816)

## New Zealanders are by-and-large comfortable with the amount of coverage Asia gets in New Zealand media.

Roughly half (48 percent) of New Zealanders who have seen or heard Asia-related news in New Zealand media are of the view that Asia receives about the right amount of coverage. One third (35 percent) believe Asia receives too little coverage, while only four percent believe that Asia receives too much attention in New Zealand media (see figure 23).

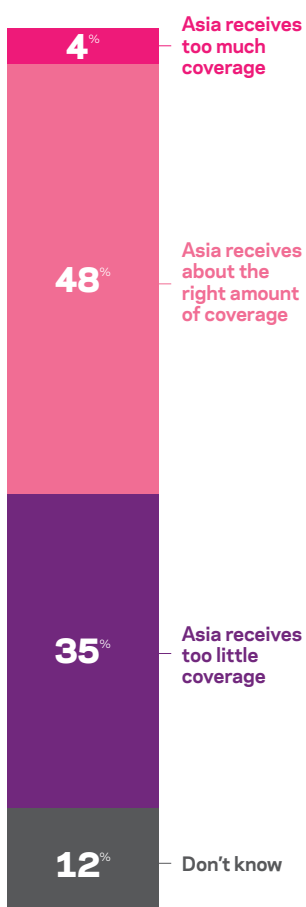
## Reporting is considered balanced on Asia.

New Zealanders perceive that the sentiment of Asia-related news to be fair and balanced in New Zealand media. Fifty-four percent say that the media in New Zealand gets reporting on Asia 'about right', while 20 percent believe that coverage tends to be too negative (see figure 23).

Figure 23

### Asia coverage in New Zealand media

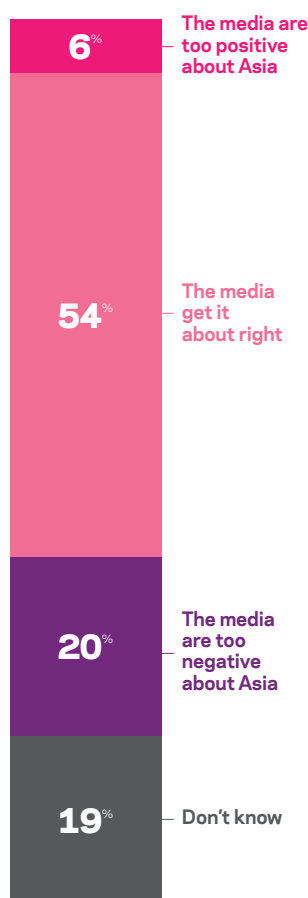
#### Coverage of Asia in NZ media



Source: Q36 — Does Asia receive too much or too little coverage in New Zealand media?

Base: All who have seen something about Asia in the news in the last three months (n=816)

#### Sentiment of Asia coverage in NZ media



Source: Q37 — Which of the following best describes your view of how the New Zealand media portrays Asia?

Base: All who have seen something about Asia in the news in the last three months (n=816)

## Two thirds of New Zealanders consume Asia-related entertainment.\*

Close to two thirds (59 percent) of New Zealanders watch, play, or listen to Asia-related entertainment on an annual basis, with a third (29 percent) doing so at least monthly (see figure 24).

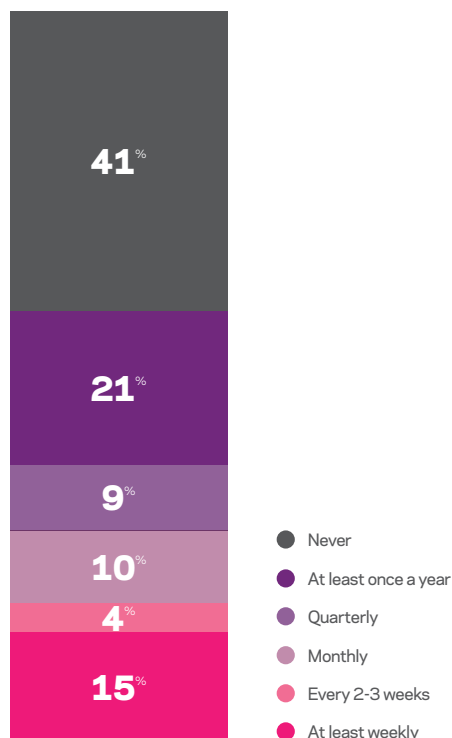
While New Zealanders of all backgrounds consume Asia-related entertainment, New Zealanders of Asian ethnicity are more likely to consume Asia-related entertainment, with 31 percent stating they are weekly consumers.

\*Asia-related entertainment' can include content about Asia or Asian peoples; content set in or produced in Asia; or content produced by people self-identifying as being of Asian ethnicity. Content may come in a variety of forms (e.g. film, television, streaming services, music gaming, and social media etc).

Figure 24

### Asia entertainment

#### Frequency of consuming Asia-related entertainment



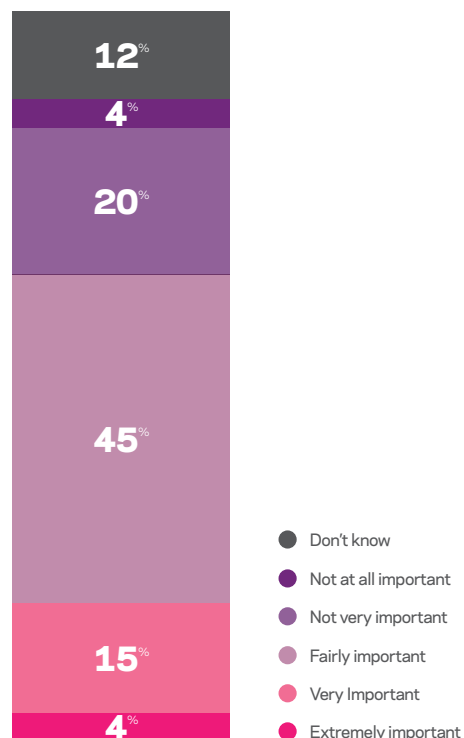
Source: Q38 — How often do you watch, play, or listen to Asia-related entertainment?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)

## Most New Zealanders think Asia-related arts and entertainment are important for growing their understanding and knowledge of Asia.

Sixty-four percent of New Zealanders think that Asia-related arts and entertainment are at least 'fairly important' for growing New Zealanders' understanding and knowledge of Asia, with around one fifth of New Zealanders saying it is a 'very' or 'extremely' important tool for building New Zealanders' knowledge of Asia. Conversely, around one quarter of New Zealanders (24 percent) say that Asia-related arts and entertainment is not important for growing understanding and knowledge of Asia.

#### Importance of Asia-related arts and entertainment



Source: Q39 — How important do you think Asia-related arts and entertainment is for growing New Zealanders understanding and knowledge of Asia?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)



# What skills do we need to be Asia savvy?

This section examines the ways New Zealanders are connecting with Asia, and the impact that these connections are having on New Zealanders' knowledge and understanding of Asia.



## Key findings



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**Although COVID-19 has prevented international travel for much of the 2019-2020 period, over half of all adult New Zealanders have travelled to Asia and 15 percent have lived in Asia.**

---

**New Zealanders' interests in Asia are deepening beyond food and travel.**

Other interests such as music, art and literature, as well as languages are on the rise.

---

**One in five respondents speak an Asian language.**

Chinese and Japanese continue to be the most widely spoken.

---

**One quarter of New Zealanders would like to learn an Asian language if it were available and free.**

---

**Having confidence to engage with people from Asian cultures continues to be seen as an important skill for New Zealand's future workforce.**

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**New Zealanders see themselves as accepting of diversity,** but recognise that more can be done to help improve understanding of and connection to Asia.

## Over half of all adult New Zealanders have travelled to Asia and 15 percent have lived in Asia.

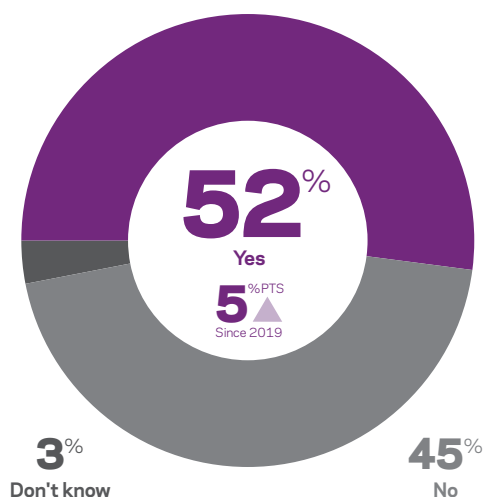
Just over half (52 percent) of New Zealanders have travelled to Asia (up from 47 percent in 2019). Although the COVID-19 pandemic closed borders for much of 2020, it also resulted in many New Zealanders returning home, including from locations in Asia. Fifteen percent of New Zealanders have lived in Asia for six months or more at some point in their lives.

Visitation rates get higher with age, meaning that 15 to 17-year-olds are the least likely to have visited Asia before (27 percent), compared to those aged 60 and above who are the most likely to have travelled to Asia (59 percent).

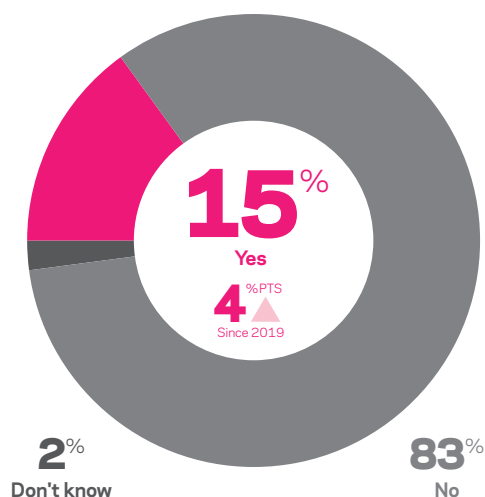
Figure 25

Have you visited or lived in Asia before?

Have you ever **visited** North, South, or Southeast Asia on holiday before?



Have you ever **lived in** North, South, or Southeast Asia for six months or more?



Source: Q18ai — Have you ever visited North, South or Southeast Asia on holiday before? You must have left the airport terminal. Q18aii — Have you ever lived in North, South or Southeast Asia for six months or more?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)

## Singapore remains the top travel destination in Asia for New Zealanders.

Singapore continues to be the most-visited Asian location for New Zealanders. Sixty-three percent of **those who have travelled to Asia** have visited Singapore. Other top destinations for New Zealanders travelling to Asia include Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and China. These are all unchanged from 2019.

The top locations where New Zealanders have lived for six months or more are similar to those that are the most visited: Singapore, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

Figure 26

Which locations have people travelled to if they have visited Asia?

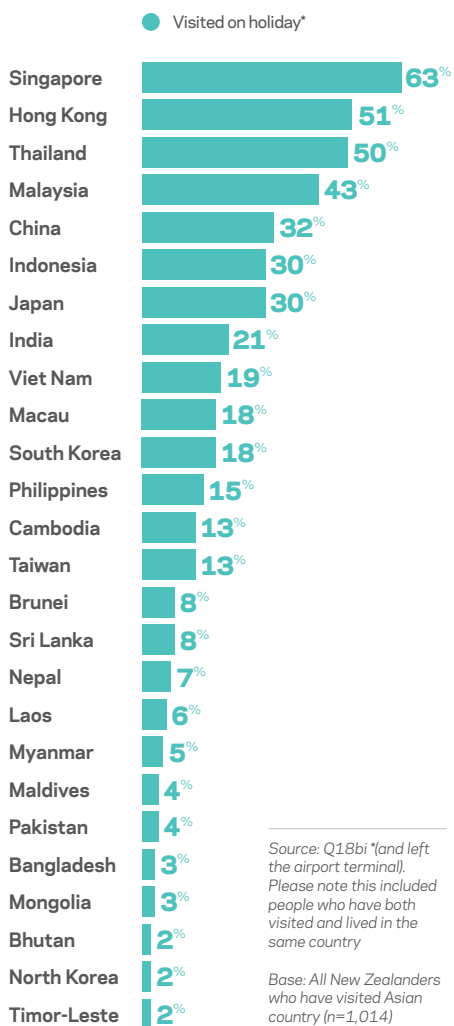
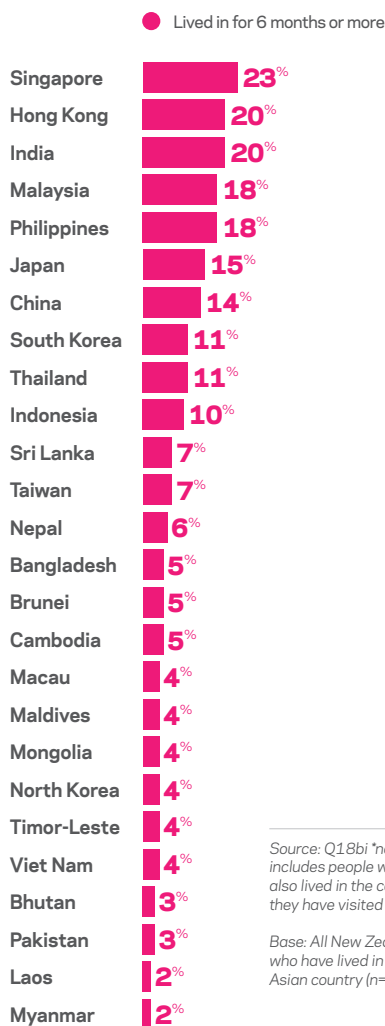


Figure 27

Which locations have people lived in?



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## **Travelling or working in Asia cultivates deeper knowledge.**

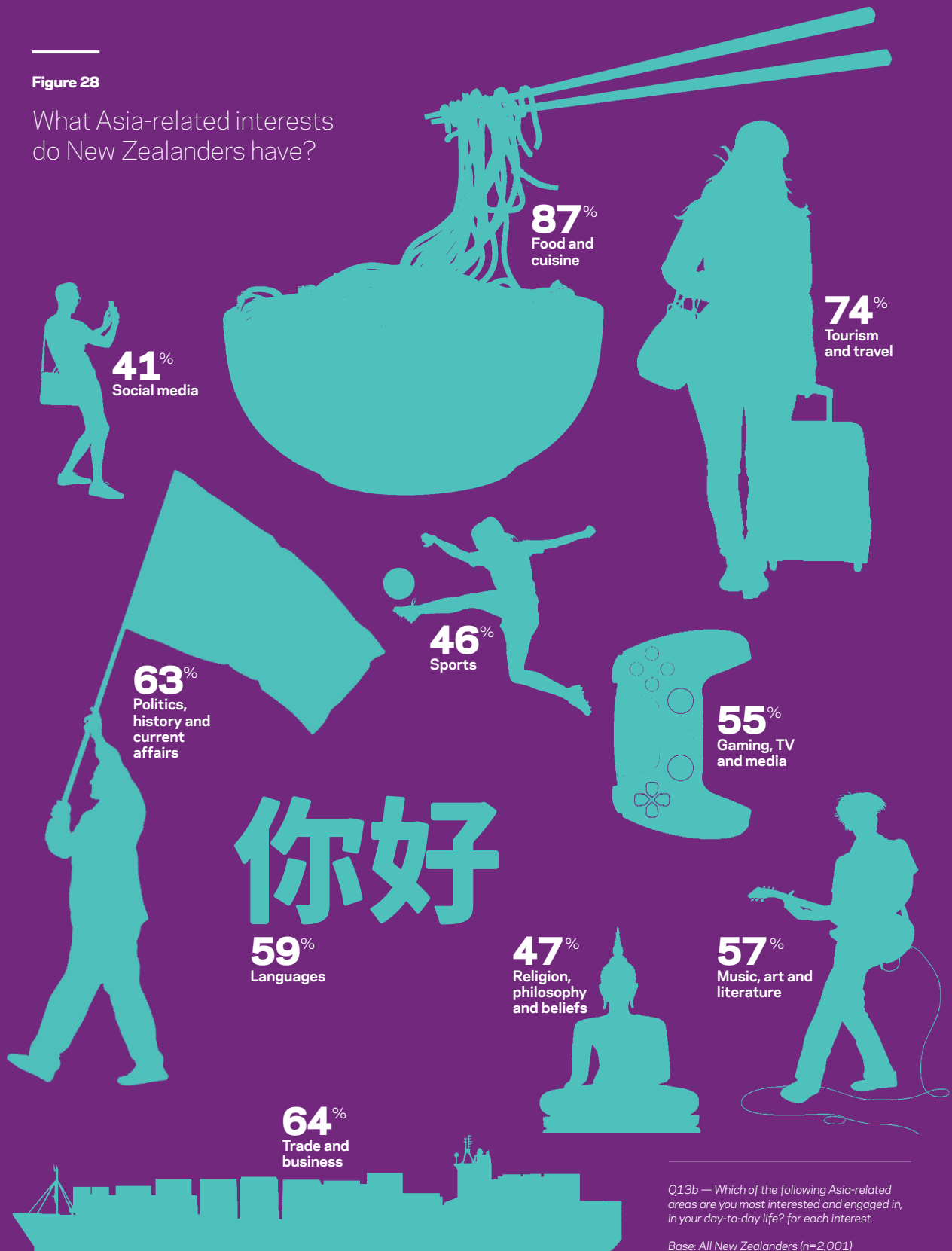
New Zealanders who have travelled to or lived in Asia feel more knowledgeable about the region. Sixty-eight percent of New Zealanders who have travelled to or lived in Asia rate themselves as having a 'high level' of knowledge about Asia, compared to 30 percent of New Zealanders who have not visited Asia before.

" I first saw Japan when transiting as a kid and was excited by the bullet trains, the food, the arcade machines. Then our school had a visiting team from Japan and I still remember their school song. They would stay with students' families at the weekend. Coming from a school that was predominantly Pākehā it was a really great thing. And for me food is a big one! When people share food together it's a window on a culture for an hour and a half."

Male, 29, Pākehā, New Plymouth

**Figure 28**

What Asia-related interests do New Zealanders have?



---

**Interest in music, art and literature from Asia is growing, but food and travel remain the most popular interests.**

New Zealanders are developing a sophisticated set of Asia-related interests including music, art, literature, languages, politics, history and current affairs.

Interest in music, art and literature from Asia has seen the greatest increase between 2019 and 2020, with 57 percent of respondents being 'at least somewhat interested' compared to 48 percent in 2019. This growth of interest in Asia-related cultural interests is being driven by access to social media and the rise of Asian pop culture such as K-pop among other trends.

As in 2019, food remains the top Asia-related interest for New Zealanders, with 87 percent reporting that they enjoy Asian food. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, New Zealanders also remain actively interested in travel and tourism to Asia, with 74 percent of respondents listing it as an interest (down from 76 percent in 2019).

“ There are differences in business cultures between Asia and New Zealand. New Zealand must understand the long-term implications of dealing with countries which are highly business savvy; highly competitive and thinking long term not just short term.”

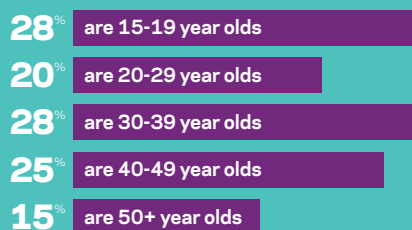
Male, 29, Pākehā, New Plymouth

Figure 29

Asian language proficiency  
amongst respondents

**1 in 5**

can speak an  
Asian language



Source: Q22h —  
Do you speak any  
of the following  
Asian languages?

Base: All New  
Zealanders  
(n=2,001)

Top languages  
spoken



---

## **One in five respondents can speak an Asian language fluently.**

Twenty-one percent of respondents reported being able to hold a conversation in at least one Asian language — up from 16 percent in 2019. (The significant change between 2019 and 2020 is possibly linked to New Zealanders returning from overseas due to the COVID-19 pandemic). Those aged under 40 tend to have the greatest language ability, with 24 percent of under 40-year-olds being able to speak at least one Asian language, compared to 18 percent of those aged 40 and above. The most spoken languages reported in this year's survey were Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese), Japanese, Filipino, Korean, and dialects from Indonesia.

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## **Speaking an Asian language serves as a gateway to unlocking greater Asia knowledge.**

Speaking an Asian language, like travelling to or living in Asia, provides an important means of building greater Asia knowledge. This holds across all demographics in New Zealand. For example, 73 percent of New Zealanders who speak an Asian language but do not identify as having Asian ethnicity rate themselves as possessing higher levels of knowledge on Asia. Only 39 percent of New Zealanders not identifying as having Asian ethnicity and who do not speak an Asian language rate themselves as having high Asia-knowledge.

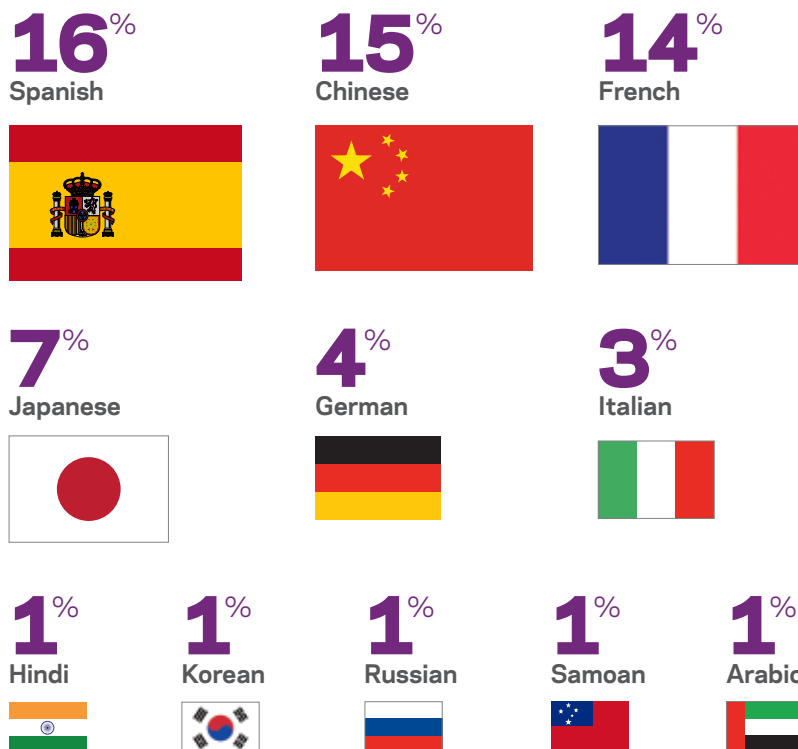
## New Zealanders interested in learning Asian languages.

In 2020, we asked New Zealanders which language they would be most interested to learn, if it were available and free of charge (and excluding New Zealand's official languages: Te Reo Māori, English, and New Zealand Sign Language). In response, one quarter of New Zealanders (25 percent) indicated that they would be interested in learning an Asian language, with 15 percent signalling a preference to learn Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese) and 7 percent interested in Japanese. Twenty-three percent of New Zealanders indicated that even if it were available and free, they would not want to learn a new language.

Figure 30

What languages do New Zealanders want to learn?\*

\*excluding New Zealand's official languages



**25%**  
New Zealanders  
want to learn an  
Asian language

Source: Q30 — Excluding New Zealand's official languages (English, Te Reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language) what language would you most like to learn, assuming it was available and free?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)

## Being Asia-savvy continues to be seen as important for New Zealand's future workforce.

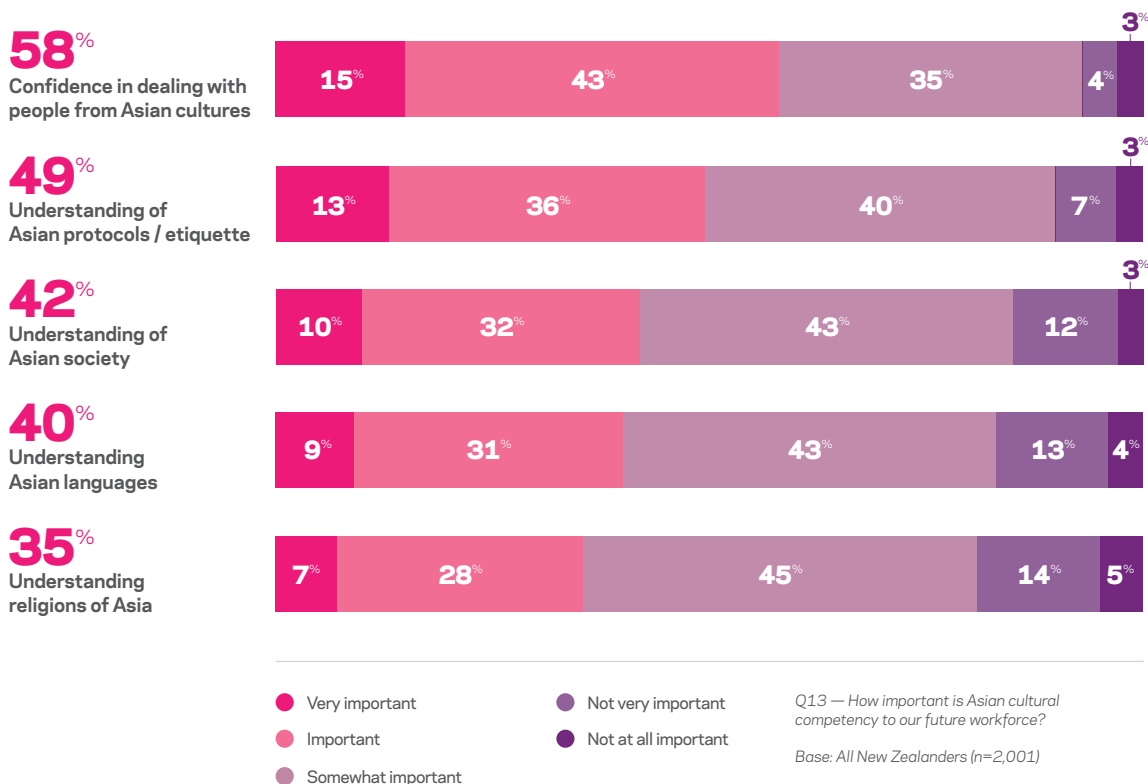
Confidence in engaging with people from Asian cultures and understanding Asian cultural norms including protocols and etiquette continue to be rated as the top two Asia-related skills for New Zealand's future workforce.

Forty-one percent of New Zealanders also consider understanding Asian languages and society as 'important' or 'very important' workforce skills. Understanding the religions of Asia is rated slightly less important, with 35 percent of New Zealanders rating it as an important or very important skill-set for the future.

**Figure 31**

How important is Asian cultural competency to our future workforce?

Percentage of people who felt that the following Asia-related skills are important to our future workforce



## New Zealanders see themselves as accepting of diversity. New Zealanders have a range of views on whether enough is being done to build understanding of Asia.

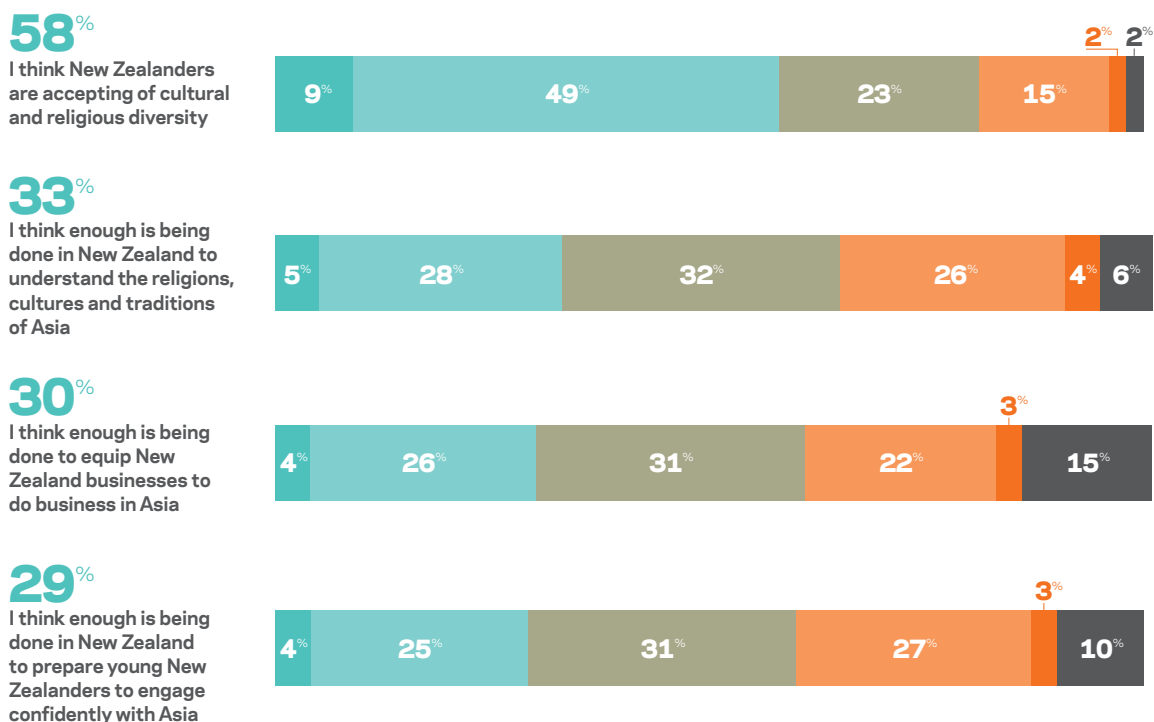
Fifty-eight percent of New Zealanders feel that the nation is accepting of cultural and religious diversity. Just over a third of New Zealanders (33 percent) agree that enough is being done to lift New Zealanders' understanding of the religions, cultures and traditions of Asia, while another third (30 percent) disagree that enough is being done.

New Zealanders have similarly mixed views on whether enough is being done to equip businesses to do business in Asia and whether enough is being done to prepare young New Zealanders to engage confidently with Asia.

Figure 32

### Acceptance of diversity and views on building understanding of Asia

Percentage of people who at least 'agree' with the following statements



● Strongly agree  
● Agree  
● Neither agree or disagree  
● Disagree  
● Strongly disagree  
● Don't know

Source: Q32 — From what you already know, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)



# How has COVID-19 impacted our relationship with Asia?

This section explores New Zealanders' perceptions of the impacts of COVID-19 on New Zealand and its relationship with Asia, and sentiments around border management and mobility.



## Key findings



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**The vast majority of New Zealanders expect COVID-19 to have a long-lasting impact on New Zealand.** Some consider it to have had an impact on their perception of Asia.

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**One in three New Zealanders believe New Zealand should open its borders to places in Asia that have managed COVID-19 effectively.**

## New Zealanders think COVID-19 will have a long-lasting impact on New Zealand.

Most New Zealanders (81 percent) are of the view that COVID-19 will impact New Zealand beyond the next two years. Younger New Zealanders are generally more optimistic about the length of COVID-19 impact. Seventy-two percent of under 30-year-olds agree that the impact will be long-lasting, compared to 85 percent of those aged 30 and above.

## COVID-19 has not negatively impacted perceptions of Asia.

When asked whether COVID-19 had negatively impacted their perceptions of Asia, 41 percent said that it had not, while 30 percent felt neutral. Twenty-five percent agreed that it had negatively impacted their view of Asia. New Zealanders with greater experience and knowledge of Asia (i.e. through travelling or living in Asia) were more likely to disagree that COVID-19 has had a negative impact on their perceptions of Asia than those with low Asia-connectivity and knowledge.

When borders do reopen, just over one quarter (26 percent) of New Zealanders said they would prioritise visiting Asia.

Figure 33

### New Zealanders' perceptions of the impacts of COVID-19

Percentage of people who at least 'agree' with the following statements

**81%**

COVID-19 will have a long-lasting impact (more than two years) on New Zealand



**26%**

Asia is one of the first regions I want to visit once COVID-19 is over



**25%**

COVID-19 has negatively impacted my view of Asia



Source: Q26cii — How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about COVID-19, also known as coronavirus?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)

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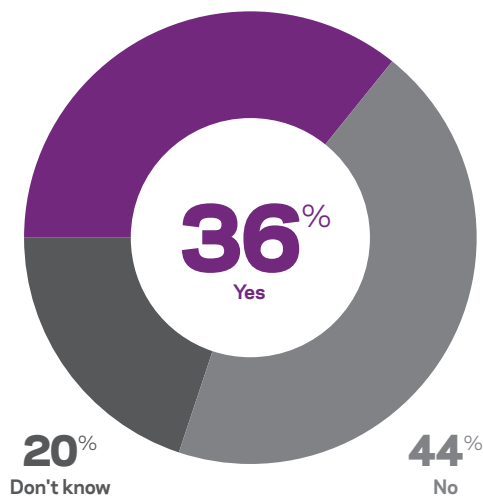
## Many New Zealanders believe borders should open to Asian locations that have managed COVID-19 effectively.

Thirty-six percent of New Zealanders said that they would like to see New Zealand open its borders to places in Asia that had effectively managed the COVID-19 outbreak. Forty-four percent wanted borders to remain closed for the time being, with the remaining 20 percent undecided.

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**Figure 34**

Should we open our borders to destinations in Asia that are successfully managing COVID-19?



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Source: Q35 — Should New Zealand open its borders to destinations in Asia that are successfully managing COVID-19?

Base: All New Zealanders (n=2,001)

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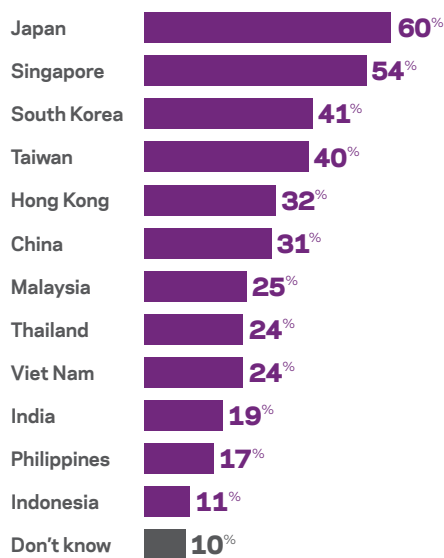
## If we were to open borders, Japan and Singapore are priority destinations.

Japan and Singapore are two locations in Asia that New Zealanders would like to see prioritised, if borders were to be opened. Sixty percent of respondents said that Japan should be prioritised, and 54 percent said Singapore should be a priority. Other locations listed as a priority include: South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China.

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**Figure 35**

Locations New Zealanders think  
we should prioritise opening  
our borders to.



# 2—





# Asia by the people



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## Introduction: New Zealanders share their stories and connections to Asia.

Since 1997, the Asia New Zealand Foundation has conducted the *Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples Survey*. The survey is unique in New Zealand as a longitudinal research project geared to tracking and understanding how New Zealanders perceive and engage with Asia and people of Asian ethnicities across social, cultural, political and economic life.

One of the most important and consistent findings from the survey is the positive correlation between knowledge and attitudes. The more knowledge New Zealanders have of Asia — through living in or travelling to Asia, as well as through friendships, family, cultural activities or work — the more likely they are to view Asia as highly important to New Zealand's future.

In this year's survey, we have gone 'beyond the numbers' by shining a light on how personal experiences shape New Zealanders' perceptions of Asia. In the following pages, we share the results of 16 in-depth interviews conducted by a research team. They explore New Zealanders' connections to and experience with Asia, as well as some of the barriers to learning and doing more.

The first section of this part of the report explores narratives, insights and aspirations of six Māori respondents. The second section incorporates interviews with other New Zealanders, from a range of ethnicities and backgrounds.

Together, both sets of respondents highlight how key experiences at a young age piqued their fascination with Asia. They also noted the importance of mobility (e.g. travel and tourism), and engaging with Asia through institutional contexts (work, study, community groups), and connecting through everyday life (friendships, as well as food, culture, and sport) for expanding their Asia interest.

The final section focuses on the things that 'get in the way' of engagement with Asia, and their views on how we move beyond challenges to broaden and deepen knowledge of Asia. These insights are valuable in helping explain why a desire to learn and engage with Asia is not universal; but also demonstrate how positive attitudes to learning don't always translate to building knowledge and understanding.

We would like to thank all those people who contributed their time and unique stories to this study, providing a window into their world, life journey and perspectives. We have also, where useful, included other insights from our participants throughout the body of the report to support our quantitative findings. Though individual names are not included for privacy reasons, the Foundation hopes participants will see their stories and comments reflected here, bringing to life the richness of their experiences and helping other New Zealanders to thrive in Asia.



# Narratives, insights, and aspirations of Māori in Asia



## Introduction.

In 2020 our qualitative research included a focus on Māori perspectives and worldviews towards Asia and Asian peoples. Long-form research interviews with six Māori participants were conducted by a Māori researcher kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face). Our researcher aimed to conduct Kaupapa Māori research in line with the principle that it is “for Māori, with Māori and by Māori” (see Cram 2009<sup>1</sup>).

With a strengths-based focus on highlighting Māori aspirations and discourse on Asia, the interviews took a hands-on and open approach, encouraging casual kōrero (discussion) and including visual and written components.

In presenting interview findings with Māori participants, we include a number of these in the form of ‘case studies’, to retain the overall narrative of the participants and to ensure they retain agency over the stories and experiences they have shared.

Our qualitative research builds on research released by the Foundation in 2019 conducted by partner, Ihi Research, titled *Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples from a Te Ao Māori Perspective*. That report illuminated a number of thematic connections between Māori and people of Asian ethnicities — including similar cultural traditions, protocols and outlooks, and a shared feeling of optimism about the opportunities that exist for deeper cooperation in areas such as business, tourism and cultural exchange. The results of this 2020 qualitative research confirm, update, and extend these findings.

The perspectives shared also reinforce the stories captured by Mihi Satele and Tania Te Whenua (Tūhoe, Whakatōhea) in their Asia New Zealand Foundation online study entitled *The Key to Māori success in Asia*. Satele and Te Whenua interviewed Māori business representatives, leaders, performers, sportspeople, artists and others achieving success across Asia and with Asia; and identified a strong cultural synergy in areas of family, the importance of interpersonal relationships and manaakitanga.

The interviews for this 2020 *Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples* report focused on the following three interrelated themes:

- Experiences and the power of connection
- Cultural commonalities
- Māori aspirations with Asia.

## Experiences and connections of Māori.

Participants put forward their perspectives on a range of connections between Māori and Asia — through business, education, sports, arts culture, as well as through travel and food. Common across the interviews was the perception that Te Ao Māori and Asian cultures shared many fundamental similarities.

‘Culture’ was understood as a powerful gateway for Māori interest into Asia. Māori respondents felt a sense of cultural connection with aspects of Asia, underpinned by similar cultural values including mahinga kai/food customs; manaakitanga/ hosting guests; the place of kaumātua/elders; and whanaungatanga/valuing relationships. Having cultural familiarity fed a desire to travel and experience parts of Asia first-hand, but also fostered an interest in learning more about Asian cultures in Aotearoa.

Māori participants said that they generally felt confident in Asia, and because of the feeling of cultural familiarity, felt more able to thrive in Asia.

The two case studies that follow demonstrate this well. They capture the perspectives of two wāhine Māori who have seen their connections with Asia thrive and flourish through building personal relationships and being open and accepting towards cultural differences.

1. Cram, F. (2009). Maintaining indigenous voices. In D. Mertens & P. Ginsberg (Eds.), *SAGE Handbook of Social Science Research Ethics*. SAGE: California. Pp 308-322

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### Case study 1: Whānau connections and business potential — a Māori tea entrepreneur on her engagement with Asia.

One participant we spoke to from Ngāti Awa shared her passion for the tea industry and the prospect of forging business connections with Asia. When tracing her whakapapa (genealogy), she found that her Koro (grandfather) was stationed in Japan during the Second World War. Discovering his old photographs led to a desire for the young entrepreneur to visit the sites that her Koro had documented.

After experiencing a traditional matcha tea ceremony at the Japanese Embassy in Wellington, her interest continued to grow.

“It was amazing watching the tea ceremony, it opened me up to a whole ritual process that I didn’t consider before”.

Through her whānau (family) connection to Asia, and following her passion for tea-making, she aimed to start her own business selling tea with a particular focus on Asian (Japanese and Thai) varieties and infusing these with Māori and other New Zealand blends.

She said that tea provided a means to share her knowledge about Asia with other New Zealanders, as well as build cross-cultural business and entrepreneurial skills.

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### Case study 2: Modern Māori globe trotter.

Another participant was a young Māori professional living in Wellington. As a teenager, she participated in a student exchange programme to Japan and experienced life alongside a local homestay family in rural Japan.

“I was struck by the ways that their cultural practices are intertwined with their daily lives. It’s just so different to here [New Zealand].”

She had a goal of visiting 30 countries before she turned 30. Although the COVID-19 pandemic had put a halt to her plans in the short term, she was still determined, and planned to visit more countries in Asia once borders reopened. Like other Māori respondents we talked to, she exemplified a desire for adventure and learning, with Asia being an important destination for new and interesting experiences, and cultural learnings.

“The new globalised world we live in, we have to take advantage of that and experience everything we can. As long as you go into things with an open mind and good company, you’re going to have a good time.”

Being Māori and living in Aotearoa, she valued diversity and integration of cultural knowledge and activities.

“Being able to go to festivals and events for Matariki [Māori new year] and Waitangi, and then having the same for things like Chinese New Year and Diwali here in Wellington... That’s what I love.”

## Cultural commonalities: Te Ao Māori and Asia.

There was broad recognition among Māori participants regarding the cultural commonalities between Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) and Asia — such as living in communally organised societies, sharing indigenous perspectives, and enduring the impacts of colonisation.

The centrality of food was another major theme across the interviews, with some participants mentioning similarities in avoiding waste, respect for the environment, and a focus on food sustainability. Food was also integral to building and maintaining a sense of community. As one participant remarked:

“Food is a big thing across Asia, and [they have] a lot of food sources that aren’t as common as here. There are religious meanings behind the food they eat. Like here [in Aotearoa], there is a ritual part of it — it’s more about the importance of sharing. For pōwhiri, when we eat together it connects us to one another.”

Male, 61, Māori, Wellington

One participant we interviewed was a young university student who identified as Māori and Vietnamese. She spoke to us about navigating a multicultural landscape full of shared customs - being both Māori and Vietnamese living in New Zealand, while studying Japanese and history at Victoria University of Wellington:

“There’s the thing about family - in Māori and Vietnamese culture, family comes first, work and lifestyle comes second. Everything is centred around family and extended family and their safety; looking out for one another. In my family, we always go to our grandfather first if there are any problems. Consulting elders is a part of what whānau means. I think that’s what connects the two cultures, it makes it easy for us to understand one another.”

Female, 18, Māori, Vietnamese, Wellington

The central importance of family, and the respected place of elders in Māori culture and in Asian cultures resonated strongly with other Māori participants in the research. According to another participant:

“There’s whānau in Māori, like your extended family. In Japan they have the term “kazoku” to talk about different generations from grandparents, parents and children. The family unit is so important.”

Female, 36, Māori, Wellington

Broadly, Māori participants noted key commonalities between Māori and Asian cultures relating to shared tikanga (customs) and whakapono (beliefs). These included the value placed upon time-honoured knowledge and science passed down the generations:

“Western societies are only now starting to realise the value of traditional medicines in health, we are starting to adopt more of that now. It makes a lot of sense and it works for people.”

Male, 61, Māori, Wellington

Discussions on cultural commonalities demonstrated the interest to learn more about Asia, including those in smaller and more communal societies, and not just in large urban areas.

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## The aspirations of Māori in Asia.

Māori participants spoke of their intentions to build new connections with Asia, and saw Asia as playing an important role in their futures. This included the prospect of living in Asia. These goals and future aspirations could be categorised into four different levels: **personal, family and whānau, community and national**.

Regarding **personal aspirations**, participants spoke of their desire for achieving fluency in Asian languages such as Vietnamese and Japanese, and how teaching English overseas offered a means to live and work in Asia. Other Māori participants noted how digital and social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook served to increase their Asia knowledge alongside documentaries about individual areas of interest (such as fashion, travel, gaming, cuisine, and music).

For **family and whānau aspirations**, Māori participants described several goals, including travelling to Asia to visit relations and whānau outside of New Zealand. While international travel was not possible due to closed borders, online communications had become particularly important in helping maintain family networks and wellbeing.

For **community aspirations**, Māori participants spoke of a desire for ensuring New Zealanders of Asian ethnicity felt accepted and included in New Zealand society. They wanted to see an increasing level of knowledge about Asia and Asian peoples among Māori communities.

In terms of **national aspirations**, Māori participants had wide-ranging views on how New Zealand should connect and build linkages with Asia. Participants spoke of the need to work collaboratively to address transnational issues such as climate change. The importance of Asia — from an economic perspective — for New Zealand's future was also raised, alongside the need to explore new pathways for more people-to-people connections between New Zealand and Asia.

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## Conclusion.

A strong desire among Māori participants to learn more and connect more with Asia was a distinct theme across conversations. The roles of cultural and of personal links to Asia were central to these aspirations; often framed in relational terms in which social, economic, and cultural outreach had to “flow both ways” to foster understanding, build knowledge, and create value together.

“ Food is at  
the centre of  
everything,  
especially the idea  
of providing for  
your family.”

Female, 18, Māori, Asian, Wellington



# The power of personal experience and connections across ages and stages



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## Introduction.

In this section we draw on other participants' individual stories and reflections on their connection to Asia and Asian peoples over time.

The stories in this section showcase examples of what makes a positive personal difference towards connecting people with Asia. The stories also serve as research findings in themselves, reinforcing and extending the notion that firsthand experiences such as travel to Asia, cultural exchange, and friendships build knowledge and understanding. This in turn supports wider positive engagement with Asia.

Participants in the research came from a variety of backgrounds, representing different demographic segments of New Zealand society. For example, we found there was a sense among younger participants that they were growing up in a more diverse society, in which having friends and family members from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds was the norm. For some, this demographic shift has strengthened perceptions that New Zealand is becoming a more accepting and inclusive society.

We heard, however, a view that if you lived outside the major cities, you might have fewer opportunities to engage with people of different ethnicities and cultures, and lower access to events such as Diwali and lunar New Year celebrations. Such opportunities to personally connect and learn were considered to be important means for improving social cohesion, fostering mutual understanding, and mitigating notions of 'otherness' between communities.

In this section, we explore key commonalities emerging from our interviews with 10 New Zealand respondents. Common themes include:

- **Experiences as a young person** — participants recalled the first time they engaged with Asia through family activities such as travel, and how these experiences had introduced them to new foods/tastes, cultural experiences, ideas and outlooks that piqued their interest to learn and know more about Asia.
- **Connection to people** — living in diverse communities was seen to provide opportunities for cultural learning and friendship across ethnic groups and different cultures.
- **Education and work experiences** — participants noted how their social and work interactions with colleagues helped them make connections and deepen their knowledge of Asia.
- **Everyday life** — many participants connected with Asia through day-to-day activities such as food, music, design, spiritual practices, physical exercise, film and gaming.

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## Learning and connection over a lifetime:

One Pākehā participant recounted a range of connections and engagement that she had experienced with Asia over the course of her life:

“It started when I was at school and there was a book about a little girl set in Asia [Japan]. I was fascinated by it: she had a kimono and umbrella and I was interested from an early age.

When I was at intermediate school there was David Carradine as Grasshopper in *Kung Fu*, and I saw ‘Emma Peel’ in *The Avengers* doing karate. I got out a book on martial arts and used to play with my brother.

Then at high school a teacher who’d been in Viet Nam in the 70’s got me interested, telling me about politics, Maoism and socialism. I studied more at university. Later I got into yoga, meditation, karate, even volunteering at the Dojo. Karate appealed as exercise, social fun, learning philosophy and was a big part of my life for over 10 years.

In my twenties I travelled, including to Asia. When I was back in New Zealand working and raising my daughter, I had a lot of boarders. I had students and workers from Japan, China, Thailand, and I hosted a Japanese student. Now I have lots of Japanese items around my home but have yet to visit there. The culture would come to my house: their friends, the language was always interesting; the food! I’m still in contact with some of them. It just opens up your world.

Female, 62, Pākehā, Taranaki

The interviews highlighted how moments of connection with Asia, early in a person’s life, often planted a seed of motivation for further learning and discovery over time. Experiencing a variety of cultural practices or travelling to different countries helped cultivate this interest. Everyday experiences at an early age — reading storybooks or hosting visitors from Asia — could also resonate over time.

“I grew up in Europe and getting off the plane in Thailand I just felt WOW! Seeing people I’d never seen before, pollution, tangled wires, traffic, noise, it felt so different.

When I was 13, we lived in Australia and we had a person from China come and homestay with us and I learned about her culture and life. Back then I thought ‘how different!’ but at university there were many international students from different parts of Asia and I was more mature and really got to know them and we learned from each other. My best friend was from China and I was fascinated by the thousands of years of history, the dynamism and different world view.

Working in finance I also had colleagues in New Zealand with Asian heritage and dealt with senior clients in Asia. It taught me about business etiquette to be aware of, honour; codes of respect that are different to ours. Today I do yoga; love Thai and Chinese cuisine, I’ve watched Filipino melodramas... and I love Bollywood to the extent I even picked up a little Hindi language.”

Female, 28, Pākehā, Tauranga

“In the 1950s and 60s, growing up in Grey Lynn, Auckland it was working class then and had lots of people of Indian and Chinese heritage, many who ran businesses. It felt like a natural thing in Auckland to be involved with different peoples. I travelled and worked in the food trade and I dealt with countries around the world. Travel and meeting people through business broadened my mind. You realise the huge capabilities in Asia, the talent there; smart, clever people.”

Male, 69, Pākehā, Nelson

Travel at an early age was also viewed as formative by some participants.

“I first saw Japan when transiting as a kid and was excited by the bullet trains, the food, the arcade machines. Then our school had a visiting team from Japan and I still remember their school song. They would stay with students’ families at the weekend and a few months after we had hosted one of the team, a package arrived from his parents. Coming from a school that was predominantly Pākehā it was a really great thing. And for me food is a big one! When people share food together it’s a window on a culture for an hour and a half.”

Male, 29, Pākehā, New Plymouth

Exposure to cultural differences in food, art or music over time provided a foundation for lifelong exploration to enjoy and engage more with Asia. The impact of these experiences could play out across generations, with parents shaping their children’s experiences and vice versa:

“The first time I ate sushi I was at intermediate school. I went to a friend’s house and from then on, I got to love sushi — despite her prank to ‘try some green tomato sauce’, which was wasabi! In my first year of university I actually studied Japanese. I became interested in anime and manga, as well as the food... I continued to love to learn about other cultures as I got older. One time we were watching YouTube and my daughter became obsessed with K-pop. It was Dynamite by BTS that started it — I then got into it — and now I exchange songs with my sister, who is 15. My partner got into Baby metal — a Japanese heavy metal band.”

Female, 30, Pākehā, Nelson

New Zealand is also a place where migrants from all over the world settle and make their home. As well as bringing their own culture and heritage, they experience Asia in New Zealand in many interesting and different ways:

“I went to Japan from Malaysia with my parents and it was my first experience of the differences. Then age 13 we had a family trip to China where my Mandarin was helpful, but my accent was different and the food was different. It opened my eyes! So coming to New Zealand and going to high school and university I was already aware [of those cultural differences]. It’s about people: colleagues from work, friends I run with, tell you about their loves and cultural traditions. It has helped me really get to know other cultures in Asia. My Filipino friend took me to the ‘Pinoy Caravan’ and they made me feel really welcome, and like Asian communities generally they really care about family.”

Male, 28, Asian, Auckland



# New Zealand and Asia: Barriers to connection



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## Introduction.

In this section we explore the factors that limit New Zealanders' connection with Asia. In some instances, it is a result of barriers that New Zealanders face that makes connection very difficult. In other cases, New Zealanders' low knowledge levels on Asia mean they are not motivated to learn or grow their connections to and understanding of Asia.

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## Lack of opportunities to learn and connect.

Participants reflected on the importance of having opportunities to experience first-hand Asian cultures, including different lifestyles, habits, customs and outlooks. These opportunities offered positive formative experiences for young New Zealanders and were viewed as important pathways and necessary stepping-stones for fostering further Asia engagement throughout their adult lives. It was also noted that these opportunities needed to be more than 'one-off engagements' and instead incorporated into daily life and work.

Some participants felt that this natural, everyday opportunity for contact and engagement was easier in larger urban centres such as Auckland and Wellington. According to one participant:

“It’s really cool to see a lot more shops and events and things in Wellington with an Asia focus. Even just on Cuba Street, there’s so many options for food, clothes and many other things Asia-related. It’s awesome to see ‘Asia’ is becoming more accessible to us, and it’s only growing every day.”

Female, 35, Māori, Wellington

Others said that their location in New Zealand limited their opportunities for connection and engagement. One participant from a medium-sized North Island city observed that:

“In the regions we don’t have a lot of events as far as I know. We did have an international day but that’s the only thing I have seen in three or more years”

Male, 29, Pākehā, New Plymouth

For those more distant from urban centres, travel, food and the consumption of cultural content like movies, gaming, and television were seen as important platforms for connection. For some participants, however, the cost of accessing these mediums raised a barrier to engagement, particularly when it came to travel:

“Money may stop people from connecting more. Without it you don’t have access to a laptop or stable internet. You can’t eat out. You can’t go travelling.”

Male, 28, Asian, Auckland

Some participants highlighted how demographic changes mean younger generations will be more exposed to diversity organically, by virtue of an increasingly multicultural society with a diverse cultural landscape:

“For my generation and younger it may happen naturally, such as seeing four boys in a mainstream K-pop band; anime; fashion like in Harajuku.”

Female, 28, Pākehā, Tauranga

One of the barriers identified as preventing greater connection and engagement with Asia was a basic lack of motivation to do so. Participants were of the view that low interest in learning about Asia and low knowledge levels might stem from a lack of personal connection to Asia and a scarcity of opportunities for learning about Asia:

“Some people don’t have an interest — they want to stay in their bubble and not be adventurous or to try new things. It comes down to time, money and accessibility to learn more.”

Female, 30, Pākehā, Nelson

It was notable, however, that Māori respondents without a strong personal connection to Asia expressed a definite desire to learn more about the diverse cultures, lifestyles, and histories of Asia. This suggests that the inherent connection and familiarity between Māori and Asian cultures might give Māori a greater sense of ease when confronting new opportunities to learn about Asia.

“New Zealand’s high school curriculum doesn’t have anything much to do with Asian countries. There are language classes: Japanese, as well as English and French.”

Male, 28, Asian, Auckland

## Overcoming barriers.

“There is the need for education — in this world we can't be disconnected to Asia or live without it. In Auckland we see festivals but what about Hamilton or Taupo, or Invercargill?”

Male, 28, Asian, Auckland

Participants identified many everyday ways to engage and connect with Asian cultures and peoples. However, the benefit gained from speaking Asian languages and understanding cultural practices was considered real advantage. Language and cultural knowledge were felt to be important enablers for developing a deeper understanding and connection to Asia.

Other participants felt that greater attention towards acknowledging cultural diversity in the New Zealand education system and private sector was required. Many pointed to the need for the education system to 'plant the seed' of lifelong cultural learning and to give young people a clearer and positive picture about the diversity of modern New Zealand society, and of New Zealand's connection to the Asia-Pacific.

“Start when they are young. Invite families to have a cultural day, not just at Lunar New Year, and get that awareness in young people's heads that there are different peoples and cultures — that opens your eyes that the whole world doesn't revolve around New Zealand.”

Female, 28, Pākehā, Tauranga

Participants felt New Zealanders had a collective responsibility to foster opportunities for engagement with and learning about Asia. Central and local government, the education system, media, private sector and community organisations each had a role to play. Some highlighted the importance of ensuring regional centres and smaller towns were included in efforts to grow New Zealand's 'Asia capability.' Without the opportunities to learn and connect with Asia, there was a clear sense that disengagement and disinterest could set in and worsen over time.

“It's just about finding that one thing about Asia that interests you. For me, that was tea and discovering a lot about my family history [in Asia] as a result.”

Female, 36, Māori, Wellington



# Background, methodology, and sample profiles

The Asia New Zealand Foundation was established in 1994 with the objective of increasing New Zealanders' understanding of, and strengthening their relationships with, the people and countries of Asia.



Since 1997, The Asia New Zealand Foundation has undertaken regular research to measure New Zealanders' perceptions of Asia. This is the only longitudinal research undertaken by the Foundation that is focused on understanding New Zealanders' views of both the barriers to and benefits of a relationship with Asia.

The research helps to inform the Foundation's policy direction, including identifying priorities for how the Foundation might work to foster stronger relationships with Asia and for better preparing New Zealanders to engage confidently in Asia.

The research has evolved over time, and includes questions covering:

- The perceived importance of Asia over time
- Views about the benefits to New Zealand of a relationship with Asia
- Perceptions of Asian peoples and cultures
- Perceived knowledge of Asia
- Perceptions of friendliness and threat
- Media perceptions and consumption
- Personal interactions with people of Asian ethnicity and cultures
- Asia-related interests, including travel, food, languages and arts
- Specific events taking place in or related to Asia (e.g. APEC, Olympic Games).

Where possible, we have endeavoured to keep the questions largely unchanged year-on-year to allow for a full range of comparisons between surveys.

Results are rounded to the nearest 1 percent, meaning some totals (in each of the graphs) are just above or just below 100 percent.

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## Quantitative methodology

Two thousand and one online surveys were completed with New Zealanders aged 15 years and over from 27 October – 6 November 2020. A survey of 2,001 people has a maximum margin of error of +/- 2.2 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

### Data collection method

As with 2019, respondents completed a 15-minute online self-completion survey. Before 2017, surveys were completed via telephone interviewing. The online survey approach allows for a slightly longer questionnaire and an expansion of the overall sample size. A larger sample enables more detailed demographic analysis, including the identification of patterns by, amongst other variables, age groups and ethnicity.

### Sampling and weighting

Respondents were drawn from Colmar Brunton's online research panel — which contains more than 100,000 New Zealanders, recruited from both offline and online sources (including through their random telephone surveys, social media, advertising and the Flybuys loyalty programme). Their panel meets or exceeds all of the 28 global best practice standards outlined by ESOMAR for panel development and management.

From the panel Colmar Brunton drew a sample which was representative by age, gender, location and household size. Final survey weighting ensured overall results represent the adult population on age, gender, and ethnicity. The weighted and unweighted sample profiles can be found in Appendix A.

## Other notes

- Within the body of this report, subgroups analyses are included to add clarity to the results. Sub-analyses include cross-tabulations with demographic variables, such as gender, age, ethnicity and region. Reported differences are statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level, unless otherwise specified.
- The project also included qualitative research which, in part, further explore some of the results of the quantitative survey. The qualitative research consisted of 16 long-form interviews. Details of the qualitative research are outlined below.
- Throughout this report 'New Zealanders' refers to all those aged 15 and above, living in permanent private residences in New Zealand, including those who were born in New Zealand and those who were born elsewhere.

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## Qualitative methodology

Interviews were conducted with 16 New Zealanders, using a mixture of both face-to-face and Zoom. The sample was composed to ensure coverage of a range of ages, genders and geographic spread of participants, as well as a range of pre-existing knowledge levels about Asia. Appendix B provides additional information on the sample composition.

A semi-structured interview guide was used in the research with key questions on perceptions of Asia, personal connection, Asia and the media, and Asia confidence as an initial guide. Discussion with participants then progressed with a natural flow, allowing room for back and forth exploration and sharing of experiences, personal stories, and new themes.

Because this research included a focus on Māori perspective and worldview, a Māori researcher conducted *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face-to-face) interviews with six Māori participants utilising a *Kaupapa Māori* approach informed by Cram (2009). Interviews took a strength-based focus on highlighting Māori aspirations and discourse.

## Appendix A: Survey sample profiles

### Gender and age

Gender	Unweighted percent (n=2,001)	Weighted percent (n=2,001)
Male	49	49
Female	51	51
Gender diverse	<1	1

Age	Unweighted percent (n=2,001)	Weighted percent (n=2,001)
15-17 years	4	5
18-34 years	26	30
35-49 years	27	23
50-59 years	16	16
60-69 years	13	13
70+	13	13

### Ethnic identification

	Unweighted percent (n=2,001)	Weighted percent (n=2,001)
New Zealand European	59	65
New Zealand Māori	20	14
Pacific People	11	8
Asian New Zealander	19	15
- Chinese	7	6
- Indian	9	7
- Other Asian ethnicity	2	2
Other	1	2

### Born in New Zealand

	Unweighted percent (n=2,001)	Weighted percent (n=2,001)
Yes	68	69
No	31	29
Prefer not to answer	1	2

### Region

	Unweighted percent (n=2,001)	Weighted percent (n=2,001)
Northland	4	4
Auckland	33	33
Waikato	9	10
Bay of Plenty	7	6
Gisborne	1	1
Hawke's Bay	3	4
Taranaki	2	2
Manawatu-Wanganui	5	5
Wellington	11	11
Tasman	1	1
Nelson	1	1
Marlborough	1	1
West Coast	1	1
Canterbury	14	13
Otago	4	5
Southland	2	2

## Appendix B: Qualitative sample profiles

### Location

	Unweighted percent (n=2,001)	Weighted percent (n=2,001)
Big city	50	50
Provincial city or large town	26	26
Small town	16	15
Rural area or farm	8	8

### Household composition i.e. Live with ...

	Unweighted percent (n=2,001)	Weighted percent (n=2,001)
Myself	12	12
Husband, wife or partner	63	60
Mother and/or father	10	12
Son(s) and/or daughter(s)	26	23
- Preschooler (0-4 years)	8	7
- School (5-13 years)	13	11
- High school (13-18 years)	8	8
- Other (18 years and over)	7	6
Brother(s) and/or sister(s)	5	6
Flatmates	6	7
Someone else	4	3
Prefer not to answer	2	2

### Highest education level

	Unweighted percent (n=2,001)	Weighted percent (n=2,001)
Primary/Intermediate school	2	2
Secondary school	27	28
Vocational or trade qualification	23	23
University degree	33	32
Postgraduate degree	13	12
Prefer not to answer	3	3

### Gender

Female	8
Male	8

### Age

18-29 years	6
30-39 years	6
40-49 years	0
50+ years	4

### Ethnic identification

New Zealand European	6
New Zealand Māori	6
Asian	2
Pasifika	1
Italian	1

### Knowledge of Asia

Low - moderate	8
Moderate - high	8

### Region

Wellington	6
Taranaki	3
Nelson	3
Auckland	2
Tauranga	2

### Personal business experience with Asia

None	4
A little	9
A fair amount	3

" The new globalised world we live in, we have to take advantage of that and experience everything we can. As long as you go into things with an open mind and good company, you're going to have a good time."

Female, Māori, Wellington



# About the Asia New Zealand Foundation Te Whītau Tūhono

The Asia New Zealand Foundation Te Whītau Tūhono is New Zealand's leading non-partisan, non-profit authority on Asia.

We were set up in 1994 to build New Zealanders' knowledge and understanding of Asia. We rely on a mix of public, philanthropic and corporate funding.

The Foundation works in partnership with influential individuals and organisations in New Zealand and Asia to provide high-level forums, cultural events, international collaborations, school programmes and professional development opportunities.

Our activities cover more than 20 countries in Asia and are delivered through programmes with a focus on arts, leadership, entrepreneurship, sports, business, media, education, research and informal diplomacy (Track II). We have three offices: in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

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