



Asians in New Zealand: Implications of a Changing Demography

# Outlook 7

EDITION

Asians in New Zealand:

Implications of a Changing Demography

Professor Richard Bedford, QSO, and Dr Elsie Ho, MNZM  
Population Studies Centre, University of Waikato, Hamilton

June 2008



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank Robert Didham, demographer Statistics New Zealand, Muriaroha Muntz, Research Assistant in the Population Studies Centre at the University of Waikato and Max Oulton, cartographer University of Waikato for their assistance in preparing this paper and Professor Paul Spoonley of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Massey University at Albany, Auckland for peer reviewing earlier versions of this report for us.

# INTRODUCTION

*It is important to recognise that even though today migrants from Asia represent almost all countries of the continent they do not (and are not likely to in the future) constitute an Asian community. Sharp inter-ethnic divisions among many of them, especially the Chinese and the Indian ethnic groups, make it extremely difficult even for individual ethnic groups to unite and develop a strong sense of community. Immigrants from Asia will never be in a position to threaten the paramountcy of the Pakeha and the primacy of their values, language, culture and way of life. As such, New Zealanders have little to fear from their presence in New Zealand, even in terms of their fast increasing numbers.*<sup>1</sup>

**DR RAJ VASIL AND DR HONG-KEE YOON**, long-established New Zealanders of Asian origin, writing in the mid-1990s for the then Asia 2000 Foundation and the Institute of Policy Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, might well have been replying to New Zealand First's Deputy Leader, Peter Brown, when he observed with reference to the 2008 projections of New Zealand's Asian population that "there is a real danger we will be inundated with people who have no intention of integrating into our society. The greater the number the greater the risk".<sup>2</sup>

Writing at the height of what New Zealand First termed an "Asian invasion" in 1996, Vasil and Yoon stressed that the single category Asian has very little meaning, even for second- and third-generation Chinese, Indians, Sri Lankans, Indonesians, Koreans, Pakistanis and so on. They went on to observe that few of these Asians attempt to step outside their specific ethnic groups to develop close social or other relationships with migrants from elsewhere in Asia. Much more common is for many of them to make special efforts to establish contact with the larger New Zealand society, especially the dominant group of Pakeha, and attempt to mix and mingle with them.<sup>3</sup>

We have commenced our discussion of Asians in New Zealand with an extended reference to Vasil and Yoon's study of *New Zealanders of Asian Origin* because the nervousness that Pakeha and Maori New Zealanders have about Asian migration needs to be tempered by the great diversity of peoples from Asia – "a far greater diversity based on race, religion, culture, language and ways and values of life than Europe".<sup>4</sup>

One of the important conclusions from Vasil and Yoon's contribution to Asia:NZ's publication series in the mid-1990s, was that it was very unwise to think that discussions can go very far with a single category of Asian – diversity within this population is much too great "for its peoples to be able to have a sense of belonging to an Asian collectivity and develop the consciousness of a shared destiny and a meaningful common identity as Asians".<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding this warning about the irrelevance of a label of Asian for peoples with cultural links to a vast region stretching from the Middle East to Japan that Europeans have labelled as Asia, it remains common practice in New Zealand to refer to the country's Asian population as an entity. This is certainly the case with regard to projections of the country's population, especially when the recent ethnic projections show that the Asian population will grow much more rapidly over the next 20 years than the European, Maori or Pacific ethnic components.<sup>6</sup>

In this paper we address three key issues:

- 1 Who were the peoples of Asia in New Zealand in 2006?
- 2 How did this population change over the previous 20 years (1986-2006)?
- 3 How might this population change in the 20 years from 2006 to 2026?

Three major sources of data have informed our discussion of the changing demography of Asians in New Zealand: the quinquennial Census of Population and Dwellings, the arrival and departure statistics produced regularly by Statistics New Zealand, and the recent projections of ethnic populations produced by Statistics New Zealand.

- 1 Raj Vasil and Hong-kee Yoon (1996) *New Zealanders of Asian Origin*. Wellington, Institute of Policy Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, pp. 11-12.
- 2 New Zealand Press Association (2008) Open-door policy on migrants 'a danger', *New Zealand Herald*. April 3, p. A5.
- 3 Vasil and Yoon (1996: 13).
- 4 Vasil and Yoon (1996: 5).
- 5 Vasil and Yoon (1996: 13).
- 6 Statistics New Zealand (2008) *National Ethnic Population Projections: 2006 (base) – 2026*. Wellington, Statistics New Zealand.

# NEW ZEALAND'S DIVERSE ASIAN PEOPLES, 2006

7 United Nations (2007) *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision*. New York, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, p.4.

8 It is important to appreciate that people can identify with more than one ethnic category when they complete the New Zealand Census question on ethnicity. This means that the ethnic categories shown in tables include people of mixed ethnic origins and can overlap. For example, the "Chinese" category includes all people who self-identified with a Chinese ethnicity and any other ethnicity, including those who may also have self-identified with an Indian ethnicity. The "Indian" category would also include those who identified with a Chinese ethnicity.

The New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings (2006) identifies two populations that can be termed Asian (Table 1). The smaller of these populations is the 248,364 people who were born in the 27 countries that comprise the vast geographical region that extends from Pakistan in the west to Japan in the east, home to 60 percent of the world's population of 6.515 billion in 2005.<sup>7</sup>

This is the region that Asia:NZ terms Asia – somewhat smaller than the region Statistics New Zealand terms Asia, which includes Afghanistan and the Central Asian republics. In this report all references to Asia are to Asia:NZ's region.

The larger population includes the 354,552 people who self-identified with an ethnic group that has its roots in Asia. Seventy percent of these Asians had been born in Asia. Just over 41 percent of them were Chinese, 29 percent were Indian and 30 percent were people of other Asian ethnicities (Table 1).<sup>8</sup>

Of the 248,364 people who had been born in Asia, just under 45 percent were Chinese and 18 percent were Indian, and the remaining 37 percent self-identified with other ethnic groups (including non-Asian groups).

**Table 1: New Zealand resident populations born in Asia and with Asian ethnicities, 2006**

Population	Chinese	Indian	Others*	Total Asian
Born in Asia	111,381	44,181	92,802	248,364
Percentage of total born in Asia	44.8	17.8	37.4	100.0
Asian ethnicities	147,567	104,583	105,708	354,552
Percentage of total Asian ethnicities	41.6	29.5	29.8	100.0
Percentage of group born in Asia	75.5	42.2	87.8	70.1

\*Note: Included here are people who are not Chinese, not Indian and whose ethnicity is not stated.

Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 2006

It is clear from Table 1 that the Asian population includes a significant number of people who had not been born in the countries we usually associate with Asia (106,188, or 30 percent of all Asians). In fact, a fifth of all Asians in the 2006 census (70,650) had been born in New Zealand (Table 2, overleaf).

The shares of Chinese and Indians who had been born in New Zealand were slightly higher than the share of people self-identifying with other Asian ethnicities. It is also clear from Table 1 that a minority (42 percent) of Indians resident in New Zealand in 2006 had been born in Asia.

Just over a third had been born in countries outside Asia and New Zealand – a much higher share than those found for the Chinese (2 percent) and the people with other Asian ethnicities (just under 6 percent) (Table 2, overleaf).

**Table 2: New Zealand resident population identifying with Asian ethnicities, 2006**

<b>Birthplace</b>	<b>Chinese</b>	<b>Indian</b>	<b>Others*</b>	<b>Total Asian</b>
<b>a) New Zealand</b>				
<i>Sub-total</i>	32,109	23,835	16,080	70,650
Percentage of total in ethnic group	21.8	22.8	15.2	19.9
<b>b) Asia</b>				
Northeast Asia	94,755	111	37,749	132,615
Southeast Asia	16,575	1,864	34,901	53,340
South Asia	51	42,206	10,156	52,413
<i>Sub-total</i>	111,381	44,181	82,806	238,368
Percentage of total in ethnic group	75.5	42.2	78.3	67.2
<b>c) Other countries</b>				
<i>Sub-total</i>	2,769	35,682	6,111	42,678
Percentage of total in ethnic group	1.9	34.1	5.8	12.0
Birthplace not stated	1,308	885	711	2,856
Percentage of total in ethnic group	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>147,567</b>	<b>104,583</b>	<b>105,708</b>	<b>354,552</b>

\*Note: Included here are people who are not Chinese, not Indian and whose ethnicity is not stated.

Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 2006

The numbers of Asians in New Zealand in 2006 who had been born in Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia are summarised in Table 2. Not surprisingly, the great majority (94,755, or 85 percent) of the 111,381 Chinese born in Asia were from countries in Northeast Asia, while an even greater majority (42,206, or 95 percent) of the 44,181 Indians born in Asia were from countries in South Asia.

In the case of the 82,806 people of other Asian ethnicities (Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, Thai, Pakistani, Bangladeshi etc), 45 percent were from Northeast Asia, 42 percent from Southeast Asia and 12 percent from South Asia. The ethnic mix across the major sub-regions was considerable, especially in Southeast Asia.

The 248,364 people who gave countries in Asia as their birthplaces included just under 10,000 people who were not of Asian ethnicities (Table 3, next page). All of the 27 countries in Asia were represented as birthplaces of the 2006 resident population, with the People's Republic of China (PRC) (78,117) and India (43,341), the two largest sources of people born in Asian countries, accounting for just under half of the total. Other Asian birthplace birthplaces with populations in excess of 10,000 residents in New Zealand included Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines and Malaysia (Table 3, next page).

Japan, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), Sri Lanka, Thailand and Cambodia followed with between 5,000 and 9,999, while very close behind came Viet Nam, Singapore and Indonesia, all with more than 4,000 residents.

**Table 3: New Zealand resident population born in Asia, 2006**

<b>Birthplace</b>	<b>Asian ethnicities</b>	<b>Others*</b>	<b>Total born in country</b>	<b>% Asian ethnicity</b>
<b>a) Northeast Asia</b>				
China (PRC)	77,298	819	78,117	99.0
Hong Kong SAR	6,876	807	7,683	89.5
Macau SAR	150	9	159	94.3
Mongolia	48	3	51	94.1
Taiwan	10,683	81	10,764	99.2
Korea (North)	12	3	15	80.0
Korea (South)	28,434	372	28,806	98.7
Japan	9,114	459	9,573	95.2
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>132,615</i>	<i>2,553</i>	<i>135,168</i>	<i>98.1</i>
Percentage of total Asia-born	55.6	25.5	54.4	
<b>b) Southeast Asia</b>				
Vietnam	4,746	129	4,875	97.4
Cambodia	5,688	168	5,856	97.1
Laos	864	30	894	96.6
Philippines	14,790	495	15,285	96.8
Thailand	5,817	342	6,159	94.4
Malaysia	13,587	960	14,547	93.4
Brunei Darussalam	210	72	282	74.5
Singapore	3,330	1,527	4,857	68.6
Indonesia	3,591	1,023	4,614	77.8
Timor Leste	18	9	27	66.7
Myanmar	699	144	843	82.9
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>53,340</i>	<i>4,899</i>	<i>58,239</i>	<i>91.6</i>
Percentage of total Asia-born	22.4	49.0	23.4	
<b>c) South Asia</b>				
Bangladesh	1,389	48	1,437	96.7
India	41,445	1,896	43,341	95.6
Bhutan	15	0	15	100.0
Nepal	549	30	579	94.8
Sri Lanka	6,993	264	7,257	96.4
Maldives	87	3	90	96.7
Pakistan	1,923	288	2,211	87.0
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>52,401</i>	<i>2,529</i>	<i>54,930</i>	<i>95.4</i>
Percentage of total Asia-born	22.0	25.3	22.1	
Asia not specified	12	15	27	44.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>238,368</b>	<b>9,996</b>	<b>248,364</b>	<b>96.0</b>

\*Note: Included here are people whose ethnicity is not Asian or is not specified.

Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 2006

## In common with most of the different ethnic groups in New Zealand, the Asian peoples resident in New Zealand can come from many different places.

The most common reference to Asian in the media is the population that identifies with particular Asian ethnic groups, rather than the population that was born in the 27 Asian countries. A common tendency is to assume that the Asian ethnic population is from Asia. Yet, as Tables 1-3 demonstrate, there are some marked differences in the shares of ethnic groups, such as the Chinese and the Indians, who were born in countries in Asia.

The tendency to conflate birthplace with ethnicity, and to assume that, for example, Chinese must come from China or Indians must come from India, is one that must be challenged for all ethnic groups. In common with most of the different ethnic groups in New Zealand, the Asian peoples resident in New Zealand can come from many different places.

Ward Friesen,<sup>9</sup> in his review of Auckland's Asian population, has challenged another common assumption: that people from Asia have concentrated in specific neighbourhoods in Auckland. Friesen examined the distribution of people born in India, China and Korea within the Auckland region, and demonstrated that there was a much wider spread of these three groups than is often assumed.

There are areas of concentration for people born in each of these countries, but analysis of their changing distributions within the region over the past 20 years shows a dispersal that is common to other ethnic groups in the population.

Another indicator of integration is the extent to which particular Asian peoples are becoming more mixed in terms of their ethnic affiliations.

In Table 4, overleaf, the different combinations of ethnicity for the Chinese, Indian and Filipino populations resident in New Zealand in 2006 are given.

These three populations, while not intended to be representative of all Asian ethnic groups, are the three dominant populations in contemporary Asian migration to New Zealand.

They are likely to remain very important in the flows into and out of New Zealand over the next 20 years. These three groups have also had rather different histories of migration to this country, which cannot be reviewed here, and these have impacted on their subsequent integration into New Zealand society.

9 Ward Friesen (2008) *Diverse Auckland. The Face of New Zealand in the 21st Century?* Wellington, Asia New Zealand Foundation Outlook Paper 06, pp. 6-8.

**Table 4: Ethnic combinations, Chinese, Indian and Filipino populations, 2006**

Ethnic combinations	Children (0-14 yrs)		Total (all ages)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Chinese only	18,816	72.9	130,572	88.5
Chinese European only	2,388	9.3	4,596	3.1
Chinese Maori only	225	0.9	1,005	0.7
Chinese Pacific only	546	2.1	1,914	1.3
Chinese Asian only	552	2.1	2,088	1.4
Chinese European Maori only	984	3.8	2,031	1.4
Chinese European Pacific only	510	2.0	1,119	0.8
Chinese European Asian only	6	0.0	12	0.0
Chinese Maori Pacific only	225	0.9	378	0.3
Chinese Maori Asian only	9	0.0	27	0.0
Chinese other combinations	1,533	5.9	3,825	2.6
<b>Total Chinese combinations</b>	<b>25,794</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>147,567</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Indian only	21,141	82.7	95,133	91.0
Indian European only	1,626	6.4	3,261	3.1
Indian Maori only	402	1.6	762	0.7
Indian Pacific only	585	2.3	1,257	1.2
Indian Asian only	138	0.5	462	0.4
Indian European Maori only	597	2.3	1,068	1.0
Indian European Pacific only	189	0.7	306	0.3
Indian European Asian only	54	0.2	108	0.1
Indian Maori Pacific only	114	0.4	168	0.2
Indian Maori Asian only	6	0.0	27	0.0
Indian other combinations	702	2.7	2,028	1.9
<b>Total Indian combinations</b>	<b>25,554</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>104,580</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Filipino only	2,937	66.9	14,538	85.8
Filipino European only	717	16.3	1,263	7.5
Filipino Maori only	51	1.2	66	0.4
Filipino Pacific only	45	1.0	60	0.4
Filipino Asian only	123	2.8	255	1.5
Filipino European Maori only	96	2.2	129	0.8
Filipino European Pacific only	21	0.5	21	0.1
Filipino European Asian only	33	0.8	45	0.3
Filipino Maori Pacific only	0	0.0	3	0.0
Filipino Maori Asian only	0	0.0	3	0.0
Filipino other combinations	366	8.3	552	3.3
<b>Total Filipino combinations</b>	<b>4,389</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>16,935</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 2006

The main ethnic combinations for the Chinese and Indians were with European and European Maori – the dominant ethnic groups in New Zealand – not with other Asian ethnic groups.

The great majority in the three groups identified with only one ethnicity – 88 percent of the Chinese, 91 percent of the Indians and 86 percent of Filipino only self-identified with these ethnic groups.

The shares of only Chinese, only Indian and only Filipino were smaller, however, for children aged 0-14 years – a third of the Filipino children were recorded as being of mixed ethnicity, while for Chinese the share was approaching 30 percent, and in the case of Indian children it was just under 18 percent.

The main ethnic combinations for the Chinese and Indians were with European and European Maori – the dominant ethnic groups in New Zealand – not with other Asian ethnic groups. In the case of the Filipino, European and other Asian ethnic groups were the dominant mixes.

The extent to which the Chinese, Indian and Filipino populations are becoming more mixed in terms of their ethnicities becomes much clearer when the New Zealand-born and the overseas-born components are examined separately (Table 5, overleaf). Just over 60 percent of the Filipino-born in New Zealand identified with more than one ethnicity, with almost as many in the Filipino-European category as in the sole-ethnicity Filipino category (Table 5, overleaf).

In the cases of the Chinese and Indians, the sole-ethnicity categories drop to 60 percent and 70 percent respectively for the New Zealand-born populations. In all cases of the overseas-born, at least 96 percent are in the only Chinese, only Indian and only Filipino categories (Table 5, overleaf).

**Table 5: Ethnic combinations, New Zealand-born and overseas-born Chinese, Indian and Filipino populations, 2006**

Ethnic combinations	NZ-born (all ages)		Overseas-born (all ages)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Chinese only	19,152	59.6	110,307	96.6
Chinese European only	3,825	11.9	735	0.6
Chinese Maori only	957	3.0	36	0.0
Chinese Pacific only	1,140	3.6	747	0.7
Chinese Asian only	576	1.8	1,500	1.3
Chinese European Maori only	1,965	6.1	51	0.0
Chinese European Pacific only	948	3.0	156	0.1
Chinese European Asian only	9	0.0	3	0.0
Chinese Maori Pacific only	363	1.1	12	0.0
Chinese Maori Asian only	27	0.1	0	0.0
Chinese other combinations	3,147	9.8	603	0.5
<b>Total Chinese combinations</b>	<b>32,109</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>114,150</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Indian only	16,641	69.8	77,742	97.3
Indian European only	2,517	10.6	726	0.9
Indian Maori only	735	3.1	12	0.0
Indian Pacific only	702	2.9	540	0.7
Indian Asian only	132	0.6	327	0.4
Indian European Maori only	1,029	4.3	27	0.0
Indian European Pacific only	264	1.1	42	0.1
Indian European Asian only	75	0.3	30	0.0
Indian Maori Pacific only	162	0.7	3	0.0
Indian Maori Asian only	27	0.1	0	0.0
Indian other combinations	1,554	6.5	417	0.5
<b>Total Indian combinations</b>	<b>23,838</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>79,866</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Filipino only	1,125	38.2	13,347	96.0
Filipino European only	1,026	34.8	228	1.6
Filipino Maori only	54	1.8	9	0.1
Filipino Pacific only	51	1.7	9	0.1
Filipino Asian only	96	3.3	156	1.1
Filipino European Maori only	117	4.0	12	0.1
Filipino European Pacific only	18	0.6	3	0.0
Filipino European Asian only	39	1.3	9	0.1
Filipino Maori Pacific only	3	0.1	0	0.0
Filipino Maori Asian only	3	0.1	0	0.0
Filipino other combinations	414	14.1	135	1.0
<b>Total Filipino combinations</b>	<b>2,946</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>13,908</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 2006

## Linguistic diversity amongst New Zealand's Asian peoples is considerable, especially amongst the Chinese who come from a range of Northeast and Southeast Asian countries.

The trends revealed in Tables 4 and 5, both for children in the three broad Asian ethnic categories of Chinese, Indian and Filipino, and for the New Zealand-born in these populations, indicate clearly that immigrant groups from particular parts of the world are not isolating themselves from the majority populations.

As Friesen demonstrated with regard to the spatial distribution of three of the main immigrant groups, there is clear evidence of a willingness of people from Asian countries to live together in mixed ethnic neighbourhoods.

The data in Tables 4 and 5 indicate that there is clear evidence of different groups coming together in social relationships and partnerships.

Looking ahead to 2026, when there will be a much larger share of New Zealand-born in the Asian populations and, by extension, a much higher share of Asian peoples in the mixed-ethnicities categories, it is difficult to see immigrants from Asia forming their own mini-societies to the detriment of social cohesion.

In addition to the trend towards higher degrees of ethnic mixing as the New Zealand-born component of the Asian population increases, there will be a trend towards higher levels of English and Maori language competency and this, in turn, will assist successful integration into New Zealand society.

In 2006, higher proportions of the Chinese and Indian ethnic populations spoke English than either a Chinese or an Indian language (Table 6, overleaf). Only very small proportions spoke Maori, but this share is growing as the mixed ethnic components of the population grow. Linguistic diversity amongst New Zealand's Asian peoples is considerable, especially amongst the Chinese who come from a range of Northeast and Southeast Asian countries (Table 6, overleaf).

**Table 6: Major Asian languages, and English and Maori, spoken by people identifying with Asian ethnicities, 2006 (percentages)**

Language	Chinese %	Indian %	Other Asian ethnicities %	Total Asian %
English	78.8	87.9	80.6	81.9
Maori	0.7	0.7	0.3	0.5
Chinese languages	69.7	0.2	3.0	29.7
Indian languages	0.1	65.0	5.0	20.7
Sinhala (Sri Lanka)	0.0	0.0	3.6	1.1
Pashto (Pakistan)	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.3
Persian	0.0	0.1	1.5	0.5
Korean	0.1	0.0	24.6	7.4
Japanese	0.7	0.1	8.8	2.9
Thai	0.2	0.0	4.9	1.5
Khmer	0.4	0.0	5.1	1.6
Vietnamese	0.4	0.0	3.5	1.2
Lao	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.4
Tagalog (Philippines)	0.1	0.0	11.2	3.4
Malay	2.4	0.9	1.9	1.7
Bahasa Indonesian	0.8	0.1	2.4	1.0
<b>Total in ethnic group</b>	<b>147,570</b>	<b>104,583</b>	<b>105,708</b>	<b>354,549</b>

*Note:* Included here are people who are not Chinese, not Indian and whose ethnicity is not stated.

*Source:* New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 2006

It has been shown in this section that on the basis of birthplace, ethnic group, ethnic mix and languages spoken, there is very considerable diversity amongst New Zealand's contemporary Asian population.

This is not a surprising finding – it simply repeats what Vasil and Yoon demonstrated in their analysis of *New Zealanders of Asian Origin* more than a decade ago. It is an important feature of the peoples of Asian origin to keep asserting, however, in the face of the sorts of generalisation that are made, often around national elections, about the extent to which Asian immigration is posing a threat to New Zealand society.

# NEW ZEALAND'S ASIAN POPULATION, 1986-2006

Between March 1986 and March 2006, New Zealand's resident population that had been born in countries in Asia increased almost sevenfold, from 32,685 to 248,364 (Table 7, below). The Chinese and Indian components of the Asia-born population increased even more – by more than 800 percent during the 20 years.

The population that identified with Asian ethnicities (including the New Zealand-born) increased by 550 percent, a useful point to keep in mind when reflecting on the projected doubling of the Asian population between 2006 and 2026. What is forecast by way of growth in the Asian ethnic populations over the next 20 years is much less dramatic in terms of percentage changes than the growth that occurred between 1986 and 2006.

**Table 7: New Zealand resident populations born in Asia and with Asian ethnicities, 1986-2006**

Population	Chinese	Indian	Others*	Total Asian
<b>a) Born in Asia</b>				
1986	11,145	4,692	16,798	32,635
2006	111,381	44,181	92,802	248,364
Percentage increase 1986-2006	899.4	841.6	452.5	661.0
<b>b) Asian ethnicities</b>				
1986	26,541	15,810	12,054	53,883
2006	147,567	104,583	105,708	354,552
Percentage increase 1986-2006	456.0	561.5	777.0	558.0

\*Note: Included here are people who are not Chinese, not Indian and whose ethnicity is not stated.

Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1986 and 2006

Between 1986 and 2006, the shares of people born in the three major sub-regions of Asia changed dramatically. At the time of the 1986 census, just under half of the 32,685 people born in Asia were from countries in Southeast Asia (Table 8, overleaf). The other half of the Asia-born was almost equally divided between Northeast (27 percent) and South (24 percent) Asia.

The largest single birthplace population was from India (6,570) followed by China (PRC) (4,944). Southeast Asian countries had provided the next four largest birthplace populations – two from countries with which New Zealand has had strong links through trade, education and military support for many years (Malaysia and Singapore), and two that were the major sources of refugees for New Zealand during the 1970s and early 1980s (Cambodia and Vietnam) (Table 8, overleaf).

Indonesia and the Philippines were also Southeast Asian birthplaces for more than 1,000 each in the resident population in 1986, while Japan, Hong Kong and Sri Lanka met this criterion in the other two sub-regions (Table 8, overleaf).

**Table 8: New Zealand resident population born in Asia, 1986-2006**

<b>Birthplace</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>% increase 1986-2006</b>
<b>a) Northeast Asia</b>			
China (PRC)	4,944	78,111	1,479.9
Hong Kong SAR	1,811	7,683	324.2
Macau SAR	36	159	341.7
Mongolia	0	51	0
Taiwan	165	10,764	6,423.6
Korea (North)	0	15	0
Korea (South)	390	28,806	7,286.2
Japan	1,446	9,573	562.0
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>8,792</i>	<i>135,162</i>	<i>1,437.3</i>
Percentage of total Asia-born	26.9	54.4	
<b>b) Southeast Asia</b>			
Vietnam	2,535	4,875	92.3
Cambodia	2,655	5,856	120.6
Laos	543	894	64.6
Philippines	1,263	15,285	1,110.2
Thailand	645	6,159	854.9
Malaysia	3,480	14,547	318.0
Brunei Darussalam	60	282	370.0
Singapore	2,349	4,857	106.8
Indonesia	1,884	4,614	144.9
Timor Leste	0	27	0
Myanmar	387	843	117.8
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>15,801</i>	<i>58,239</i>	<i>268.6</i>
Percentage of total Asia-born	48.3	23.4	
<b>c) South Asia</b>			
Bangladesh	63	1,437	2,181.0
India	6,570	43,341	559.7
Bhutan	3	15	400.0
Nepal	24	579	2,312.5
Sri Lanka	1,053	7,257	589.2
Maldives	9	90	900.0
Pakistan	288	2,211	667.7
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>8,010</i>	<i>54,930</i>	<i>585.8</i>
Percentage of total Asia-born	24.5	22.1	
Asia not specified	9	27	200.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,685</b>	<b>248,364</b>	<b>659.9</b>

Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1986 and 2006

## The largest percentage increases for Asia-born populations between the censuses in 1986 and 2006 were recorded for people from South Korea and Taiwan.

The 1986 Census of Population and Dwellings is a very useful marker for the end of an era in New Zealand's history of immigration – it took place just before the major policy changes introduced by the Labour Government in August 1986 that removed the longstanding discrimination against the entry of people from countries in Asia.<sup>10</sup>

The story about that historic shift in policy is well known and need not be repeated here; it is sufficient to note that the abolition of a traditional source-country preference (the United Kingdom and Europe) in policy, the extension of visa-waiver privileges to citizens of several countries in Asia from 1986, and the subsequent introduction of a points-based selection system for immigrants with skills, coupled with the launching of a “New Zealand in Asia” strategy in the early 1990s, have radically transformed both the structure of New Zealand's international migration system and the magnitude of flows into the country from different parts of the world.<sup>11</sup>

The largest percentage increases for Asia-born populations between the censuses in 1986 and 2006 were recorded for people from South Korea and Taiwan. During the 1990s, flows from these countries accelerated very rapidly, especially during the early years of the points system when there was no cap on numbers who met the points criteria entering the country.

The extension of visa-waiver privileges for short-term visitors from South Korea in 1994 had a major impact on flows of visitors as well as migrants staying for longer periods, as did the extension of similar privileges to citizens of Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the then British colony of Hong Kong. Citizens of Japan had already had visa-waiver status in New Zealand since the early 1970s.

Growth in the China (PRC) and India-born populations, while not as large in terms of percentage increases, was by far the most significant in terms of actual numbers of people in New Zealand. Between the censuses in 1986 and 2006, the number of people born in China (PRC) increased by 73,167 – more than the total increase in the Southeast Asia born (42,438) or the South Asia born (46,920). Indeed, the combined increase in the China (PRC) born and the India-born between 1986 and 2006 (109,938) accounted for 51 percent of the increase in all Asia-born people (215,679).

Because of the significance of these two flows, augmented by the flows of Chinese from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and other parts of Southeast Asia, plus the sizeable flows of people of Indian ethnic origins from Fiji and other parts of the world, as well as the rapidly growing numbers of children born in New Zealand who identify with these ethnic groups, the ethnic Chinese and Indian populations are examined separately the rest of the diverse ethnic populations that are labelled Asian.

The increases in these larger ethnic populations (larger than the birthplace ones) between 1986 and 2006 are shown in Table 7 (page 11); the total Chinese population in New Zealand increased by 456 percent between 1986 and 2006, compared with increases of 562 percent for the Indians and 770 percent for the other Asian ethnic groups.

10 See Hon. Kerry Burke (1986) *Review of Immigration Policy*, August 1986, Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives, G.42, Government Printer, Wellington.

11 Useful reviews of the policy changes in the late 1980s and early 1990s are contained in Andrew Trlin (1992) *Change and continuity: New Zealand immigration policy in the late 1980s*, in Andrew Trlin and Paul Spoonley (eds) *New Zealand and International Migration. A Digest and Bibliography, Number 2*. Palmerston North, Department of Sociology, Massey University, pp. 1-28, and Andrew Trlin (1997) *For the promotion of economic growth and prosperity: New Zealand's immigration policy, 1991-1995*, in Andrew Trlin and Paul Spoonley (eds) *New Zealand and International Migration. A Digest and Bibliography, Number 3*, Palmerston North, Department of Sociology, Massey University, pp. 1-27. See also Richard Bedford and Jacqueline Lidgard (1997) *Visa-waiver and the transformation of migration flows between New Zealand and countries in the Asia-Pacific region, 1980-1996*, in Lee Boon Thong (ed.) *Vanishing Borders: The New International Order of the 21st Century*, London, Ashgate International Publishers, pp. 91-110.

Arguably, the best way to represent changes in the demography of these three major components in New Zealand's Asian population is via the age-sex pyramid – a diagram that shows the numbers of people in each age group (in this case five year groups from 0-4 to 75+ years), separately for males and females.

In the diagrams that follow, the age structures of the three sub-populations (Chinese, Indian, other Asian) resident in New Zealand in 1986, 1996 and 2006 are shown first for all people in each of the relevant groups, then with reference to their overseas-born and their New Zealand-born components (Figures 1-3).

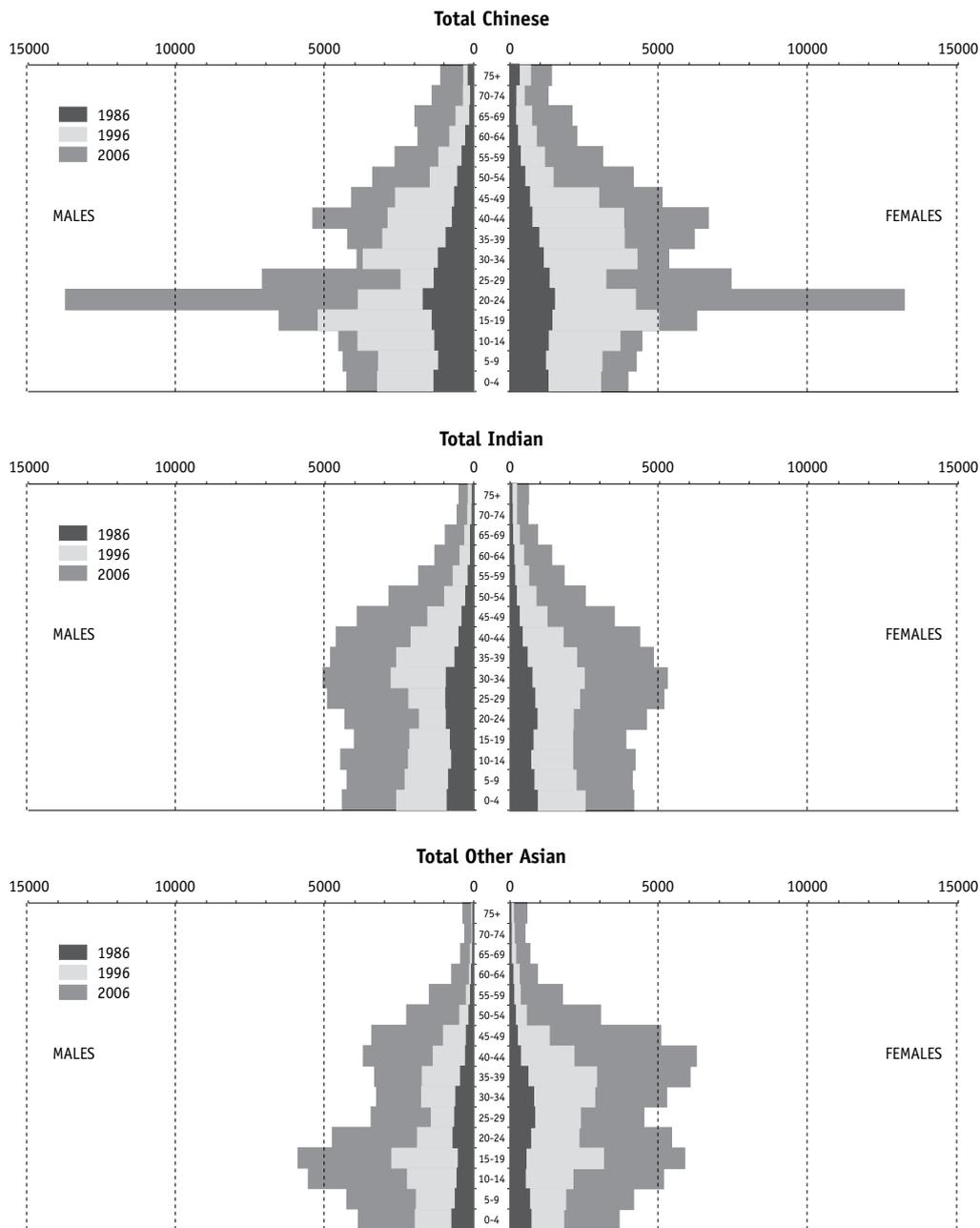
It is important to note that the numerical scales for the diagrams showing the total and overseas-born populations are different from the numerical scale used for the New Zealand-born. The former allow for up to 15,000 people per age group on each side of the pyramid, while the latter allows for 5,000 people per age group.

This difference is necessary to allow for effective representation of the much smaller numbers of New Zealand-born in each of the age groups. It is readily apparent from Figure 1, overleaf, that the three components of the Asian population evolved quite different age structures, and therefore potentials for future growth, between 1986 and 2006.

Three immediate differences stand out in these diagrams. The first is the much more extensive growth in the tertiary education age groups in the Chinese population, especially between 1996 and 2006, but also clearly present in the 15- to 19-year age group for Chinese in New Zealand in the 1996 age-sex structure, reflecting a combination of international student flows as well as the immigration of families with children in their teenage years.

There is a similar, but much less pronounced bulge in these age groups in the other Asian population, which begins to develop a distinctive female bias in its age structure at all ages above 20 years (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Age-sex composition of the Chinese, Indian and Other Asian ethnic populations, 1986, 1996 and 2006



Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1986, 1996 and 2006

The gender bias in the other Asian population in favour of females was evident in the 1986 census population, became much more obvious by 1996, and was very significant by 2006. The gender disparities are shown in terms of the ratio of women to men by broad age group in Table 9 (page 16). It is clear from this table that the sex ratios for the other Asian population are much lower (in terms of males per woman), especially from age 20 onwards, than they are for the Chinese and Indian populations. Ratios above 1.0 mean there are more men than women in the age group; ratios under 1.0 mean women exceed the number of men.

- 12 The gender dimensions to recent immigration from countries in Asia are examined by Juthika Badkhar et al (2007) Gender, mobility and migration into New Zealand: a case study of Asian migration, *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 32, pp. 126-154.
- 13 Chinese migration to New Zealand in the early 1990s has been reviewed by Elsie Ho and Ruth Farmer (1994) The Hong Kong Chinese in Auckland. In Ronald Skeldon (ed.) *Reluctant Exiles? Migration from Hong Kong and the New Overseas Chinese*. New York, M.E. Sharpe, pp. 215-232. The astronaut family phenomenon is examined in greater detail in Tim Beal and Farib Sos (1999) *Astronauts from Hong Kong. Taiwanese Immigration to Australia and New Zealand*. Wellington, Asia Pacific Research Institute, and in Elsie Ho (2003) The Hong Kong Chinese in New Zealand: reluctant exiles or roaming transnationals? In Manying Ip (ed.) *Unfolding History, Evolving Identity: Chinese in New Zealand*. Auckland, Auckland University Press, pp. 165-184.

**Table 9: Sex ratios (male / female) by age group, Chinese, Indian and Other Asian ethnic populations, 1986, 1996 and 2006**

<b>Ethnic group and age</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>a) Chinese</b>			
0-19 years	1.02	1.06	1.05
20-34 years	1.08	0.87	0.96
35-49 years	0.97	0.82	0.77
50-64 years	1.10	1.01	0.84
65 years and over	0.60	0.73	0.95
<b>All ages</b>	<b>1.01</b>	<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.92</b>
<b>b) Indian</b>			
0-19 years	1.03	1.03	1.06
20-34 years	1.13	0.98	0.96
35-49 years	1.19	1.19	1.06
50-64 years	1.13	1.09	1.06
65 years and over	0.98	0.87	0.96
<b>All ages</b>	<b>1.09</b>	<b>1.05</b>	<b>1.02</b>
<b>c) Other Asian</b>			
0-19 years	1.00	1.00	1.05
20-34 years	0.83	0.68	0.76
35-49 years	0.80	0.65	0.60
50-64 years	0.81	0.74	0.79
65 years and over	0.70	0.58	0.66
<b>All ages</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>0.81</b>

Source: *New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1986, 1996 and 2006*

Gender imbalances in New Zealand's population aged 20-49 years have been the subject of considerable media comment in recent years, especially with reference to the issue of missing men. In the Asian populations, there is clear evidence of missing men in the Other Asian component, and a significant share of the female surplus over the age of 25 years can be accounted for by intermarriages of Southeast Asian women, especially Filipino and Thai, with New Zealand men of European, Maori and Pacific ethnicities.<sup>12</sup>

New Zealand's Indian population is quite different again from the Chinese, with its pronounced dominance of young people, and the Other Asian population with its missing men (Figure 1, page 15). A much more balanced age-sex distribution is found for the Indians in all censuses, with a tendency for both males and females in a wide age range (25-49 years) to have been augmented significantly by immigration, especially between 1996 and 2006.

This population structure conforms much more closely with New Zealand's total population, and reflects a more gradual expansion of migration of young adults and families, rather than flows strongly influenced by movement for tertiary education, or by the astronaut family strategy<sup>13</sup> that is partly responsible for the surplus of females in the Chinese population at ages between 30 and 49 years (Figure 1, page 15).

The age compositions of the New Zealand-born components of the three populations reflect the long-established immigration of Chinese and Indians to New Zealand on the one hand, and the much more recent immigration of other Asian ethnic groups on the other hand.

As would be expected, these differences in age structure between the three broad ethnic components of the Asian population are even more apparent when the New Zealand-born are removed and only the overseas-born are left in the pyramids (Figure 2, overleaf). What is obvious is the absence of any growth in the very young overseas-born population aged 0-4 years in the Chinese and other Asian populations (Figure 2, overleaf).

This situation applies also to the age groups 5-14 for the Chinese population in 2006, reflecting the very heavy concentration of immigration amongst young adults (20-29 years) without children, and older adults (35-49 years) with older children. Only the Indian ethnic population had a modest increase in the very young child age group, with more substantial increases in the numbers aged 5-9 years and 10-14 years (Figure 2, overleaf).

The age compositions of the New Zealand-born components of the three populations reflect the long-established immigration of Chinese and Indians to New Zealand on the one hand, and the much more recent immigration of other Asian ethnic groups on the other hand (Figure 3, page 19).

New Zealand's Chinese population dates back to the mid-19th century, especially the gold rushes that occurred in the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>14</sup> There was also some Indian migration in the late 19th century, especially of Sikhs who became involved in dairy farming.<sup>15</sup>

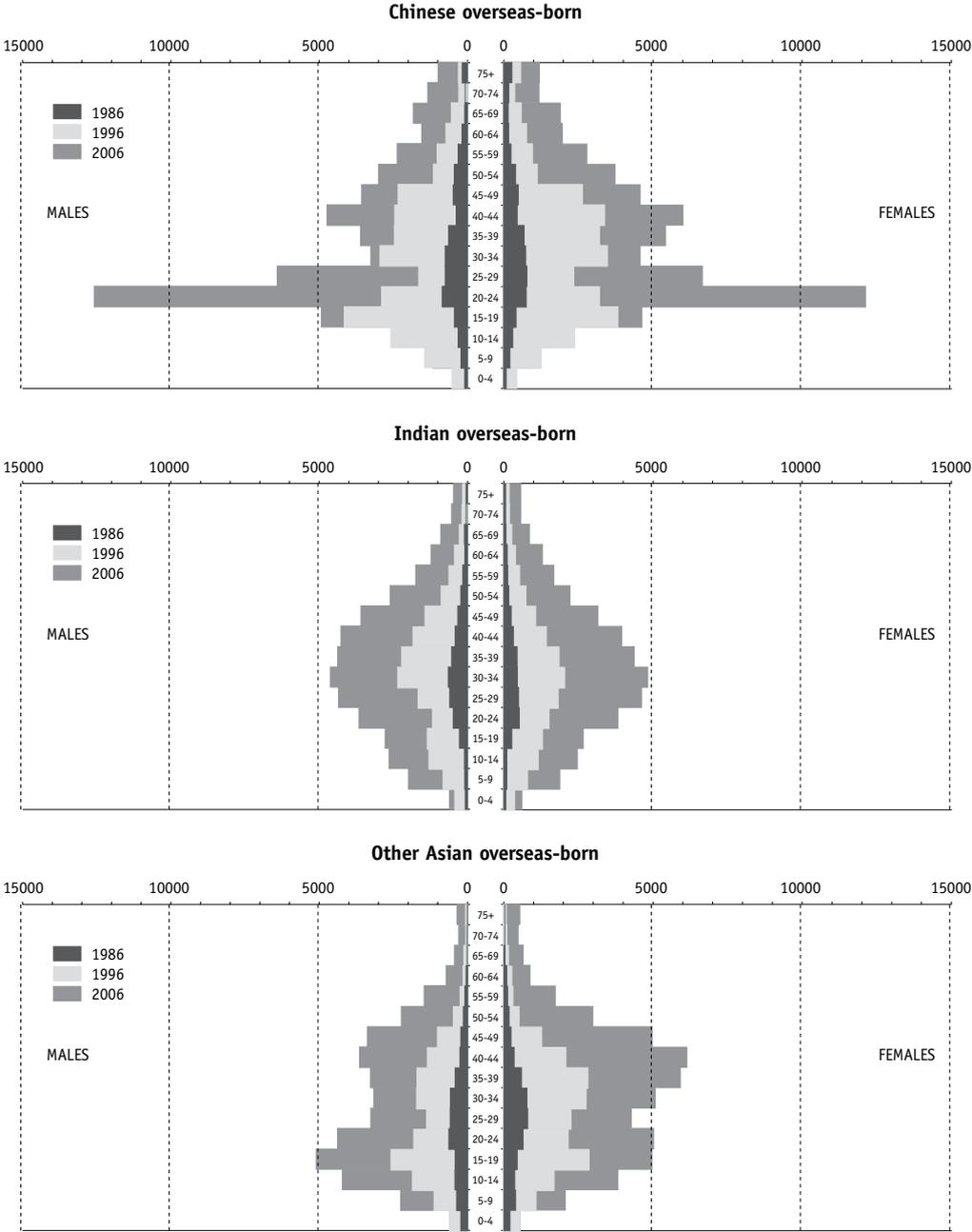
The age structures of the New Zealand-born in these two populations reflect this long-established settlement – there are Chinese and Indians aged over 75 years in the 1986 populations but numbers are very small (fewer than 30 males and 30 females in the case of the Indians) and difficult to represent in the diagrams.

The impact of very constrained immigration of people from countries in Asia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century is reflected in the very limited expansion in numbers of New Zealand-born at progressively younger ages in these two populations in the 1986 census by comparison with rapid growth in numbers aged below 15 years, especially after the immigration policy changes in 1986.

14 A very useful short history of immigration policy, as it relates to the Chinese, has been written by Malcolm McKinnon (1996) *Immigrants and Citizens: New Zealanders and Asian Immigration in Historical Context*. Wellington, Institute of Policy Studies, Victoria University of Wellington.

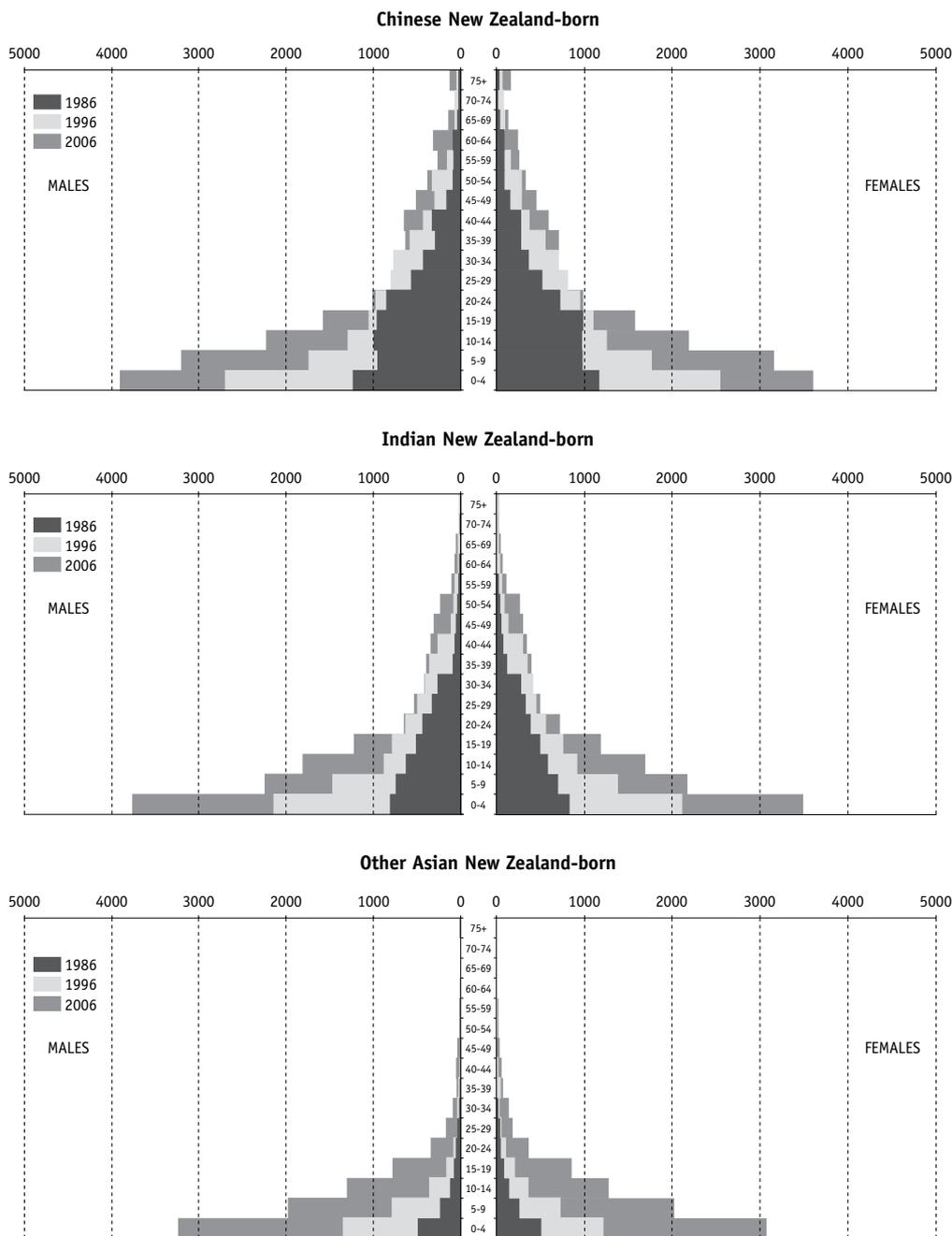
15 See Jacqueline Leckie (1995) *South Asians: old and new migrations*, in Stuart Greif (ed.) *Immigration and National Identity in New Zealand: One People, Two Peoples, Many Peoples?* Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, pp. 133-160.

**Figure 2: Age-sex composition of the overseas-born Chinese, Indian and Other Asian ethnic populations, 1986, 1996 and 2006**



Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1986, 1996 and 2006

**Figure 3: Age-sex composition of the New Zealand-born Chinese, Indian and Other Asian ethnic populations, 1986, 1996 and 2006**



Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1986, 1996 and 2006

New Zealand-born Asians are no different from their locally-born peers in wishing to have some overseas experience, perhaps in different locations but still outside New Zealand, at this time of their lives.

16 Robert Didham (2004) *Fertility of New Zealand Women by Ethnicity. Based on the 1996 Census of Population and Dwellings.* Wellington, Statistics New Zealand.

17 Didham (2004: 9).

The major increase in numbers of children aged 0-4 years between 1986 and 1996, and especially between 1996 and 2006, is not evidence of high fertility amongst the peoples from Asia in New Zealand. It is simply a reflection of the expansion in numbers of men and women in the reproductive age groups in the population as a result of the extensive immigration during these decades.

Fertility in many of Asia's peoples has declined very rapidly, especially during the 1990s. Small families, rather than large ones, are the norm amongst these populations. This has persisted following migration to New Zealand, according to Robert Didham in his extensive study of the fertility of New Zealand women in different ethnic groups.<sup>16</sup>

On the basis of responses to a question on the number of children born alive to women in the 1996 Census of Population and Dwellings, Didham observed that: "Overall Asian and European women have much lower fertility than Maori or Pacific women, but the gap is showing signs of converging".<sup>17</sup> We return to the issue of fertility in different ethnic populations in New Zealand in the next section of this paper.

An interesting feature of the pyramids for the New Zealand-born Chinese and Indian populations is the absence of any evidence of growth in numbers aged between 20 and 34 years in the 2006 census over the numbers in these age groups at the time of the 1996 census (Figure 3, page 19).

The fact that numbers of men and women in most of the age groups between 20 and 34 years are no greater than the numbers present in 1996 indicates that there has been out-migration of young adult New Zealand-born Chinese and Indians in much the same way as these age groups are strongly affected by international migration in the Pakeha and Maori populations.

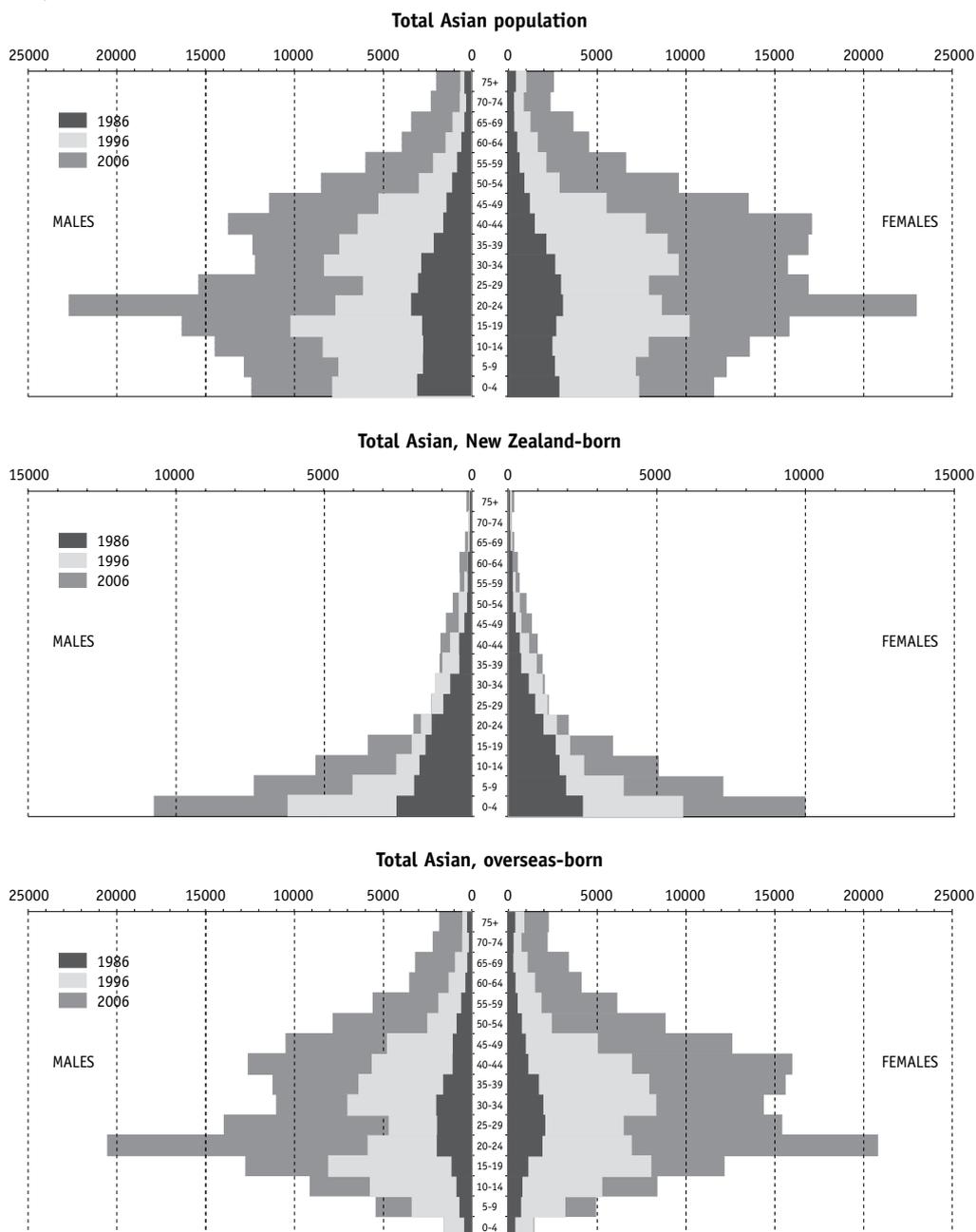
New Zealand-born Asians are no different from their locally-born peers in wishing to have some overseas experience, perhaps in different locations but still outside New Zealand, at this time of their lives. This trend is not so evident in the pyramid for the Other Asian component, largely because of the very rapid expansion in numbers in this population during the 1990s and early 2000s, especially amongst the large Korean and Filipino component (Table 8, page 12).

When the Asian ethnic population is represented in terms of age-sex structures for its New Zealand-born, the overseas-born and the total components, the very rapid expansion in numbers in the reproductive age groups, especially between 1996 and 2006, becomes very clear (Figure 4).

Particularly noticeable is more rapid expansion in the female population aged 25-49 years amongst overseas-born – clearly there in 1996, but even more exaggerated in 2006. Assuming that many of these women are in relationships with non-Asian men, and have children who are recorded as being of mixed ethnicity, it is not difficult to account for both the progressive expansion in numbers towards the base of the pyramid for the New Zealand-born Asians and the significant proportions of mixed ethnicity in the populations of New Zealand-born Filipinos, Chinese and Indians.

It will be recalled that more than 60 percent of the New Zealand-born identifying as Filipino were of mixed ethnicity, along with 40 percent of Chinese and 30 percent of Indians (Table 5, page 8).

**Figure 4: Age-sex composition of total Asian ethnic population and its New Zealand-born and overseas-born components, 1986, 1996 and 2006**



Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1986, 1996 and 2006

There are marked variations in both the experience and legacy of migration to and from New Zealand between the various populations grouped under the broad label of Asian ethnicity.

The demographic development of New Zealand's Asian population over the 20 years since the removal in 1986 of restrictions on immigration of peoples from non-traditional source areas has obviously been mainly influenced by international migration.

There are marked variations in both the experience and legacy of migration to and from New Zealand between the various populations grouped under the broad label of Asian ethnicity.

The examples of the Chinese and Indian populations illustrate some of this variability; there is much more at the level of the individual ethnic groups, including the groups within the Chinese and Indian populations.

This variability needs to be kept in mind when examining projections of New Zealand's Asian population out to 2026 in the next section of this paper – there are no projections for particular Asian ethnic groups, only for the total population termed Asian. As with other omnibus ethnic categories, such as the Pacific peoples, the sum is the result of many diverse parts.

# NEW ZEALAND'S ASIAN POPULATION, 2006-2026

The *National Ethnic Population Projections: 2006 (base) – 2026*, released on 2 April 2008, contain 11 series of projections for four ethnic categories: Maori, Pacific, Asian and European or Other. All of the projections of the Asian ethnic population work from a base population of 404,000, the estimated number for Asians at 30 June 2006. This is higher than the census population of 354,552 in March 2006, and takes into consideration an undercount of people in the census, some people who were overseas in March who have returned, and the natural increase (balance of births over deaths) in the population between March and June 2006.

By 2026 the Asian population is projected to increase to between 603,000 and 990,000, depending on the combination of assumptions about fertility, mortality, net migration and inter-ethnic mobility (movement between the Asian and non-Asian ethnic groups). The projection variant that Statistics New Zealand considers is the most suitable for assessing future population changes is the mid-range series 6, which assumes medium fertility, mortality, net migration and inter-ethnic mobility.

This is the projection that will be examined here; it generates an Asian population of 788,000 by 2026 – an increase of 95 percent on the estimate for June 2006 (Table 10).

**Table 10: Projected population change, major ethnic groups, 2006-2026 (series 6 – medium fertility, mortality, migration and inter-ethnic mobility)**

Ethnic group	Population (000s)		Increase (000s)	Increase
	2006	2026	2006-26	%
European/Other	3,213	3,439	216	6.7
Maori	624	818	193	30.9
Asian	404	788	384	95.0
Pacific	302	482	181	59.9

Source: Statistics New Zealand (2008) *National Ethnic Population Projections: 2006 (Base) – 2026*, Wellington, Table 1p

The increase in the Asian population is significantly higher than the increases projected for the other ethnic components, even though the European or Other population was eight times larger than the Asian one in 2006 (Table 10). The Pacific population is estimated to increase by around 60 percent, the Maori population by 31 percent, and the European or Other population by just under 7 percent, compared with the 95 percent increase in the Asian population.

The respective contributions of natural increase (balance of births over deaths) and net migration gains or losses (balance of arrivals over departures) to the overall growth in the ethnic populations are summarised in Table 11 (overleaf). There are marked differences between the groups in these, with the Asian ethnic population being the only one to have a substantial net migration gain over the 20 years. The European or Other and Maori populations depend much more on natural increases than net migration, with both forecast to experience losses through net migration to 2026.

The overall net gain to the Pacific population through net migration during the 20 years is assumed to be 11,000 – only 6 percent of the total increase in this population – while the net gain of 243,000 from the migration of Asian peoples contributes 63 percent of the total growth in this population.

- 18 New Zealand Press Association (2008) *Open door policy on migrants "a danger"*, *New Zealand Herald*, April 3, p. A5.
- 19 Statistics New Zealand (2005) *National Ethnic Population Projections: 2001 (base) – 2021 Update*. Wellington, Statistics New Zealand, p. 4.
- 20 Statistics New Zealand (2003) *National Ethnic Population Projections: 2001 (base) – 2021*. Wellington, Statistics New Zealand.

**Table 11: Projected components of growth, major ethnic groups, 2002-2026**

Ethnic group	Natural increase	Net migration	Inter-ethnic mobility	Population change
				Population (000s)
European or Other	279	-63	0	216
Maori	299	-65	-40	193
Asian	161	243	-20	384
Pacific	184	11	-15	180

Source: Statistics New Zealand (2008) *National Ethnic Population Projections: 2006 (Base) – 2026*, Wellington, Table 1p

The medium migration assumptions for the Asian population forecast a net gain of 13,000 for the year ended June 2007, then 12,000 per annum through to 2026. While the 13,000 for the year ended June 2007 is very close to the actual net gain of permanent and long-term migrants from Asian countries, based on arrival and departure data, it could be considered to be quite a conservative net migration assumption.

This is despite the fact that a net gain of 60,000 people of Asian ethnicities over a five-year period attracted quite a lot of adverse comment from some quarters when the projections were released in early April 2008.<sup>18</sup>

It is worth recalling that in April 2005, when Statistics New Zealand released its revised ethnic projections for the period June 2001 to June 2021, the assumed average net migration gain for the Asian population from 2009 was 14,000 per annum (or 70,000 for a five-year period) – higher than the current assumption.<sup>19</sup>

The 2005 projections updated an earlier version in June 2003 when Asian net migration was assumed to start declining from 12,000 in 2007 to as low as 5,000 in 2021.<sup>20</sup> Migration levels fluctuate considerably year by year, and it is very difficult to build this variability into population projections.

This problem is illustrated clearly in Table 12, which shows the annual net migration gains of citizens of countries in the three Asian sub-regions and for the region at a whole, for the 10 years between 1 April 1998 and 31 March 2008.

**Table 12: Permanent and long-term net migration gains of citizens of countries in Asia, 1 April 1998-31 March 2008**

21 Statistics New Zealand (2008: 25).

Year ended 31 March 2008	Northeast Asia	Southeast Asia	South Asia	Total
1999	7,258	1,441	2,280	10,979
2000	7,896	1,339	2,844	12,079
2001	10,702	2,406	3,819	16,927
2002	19,402	3,109	7,070	29,581
2003	22,680	4,404	8,031	35,115
2004	10,979	2,535	5,415	18,929
2005	2,857	1,885	3,010	7,752
2006	3,125	2,539	2,747	8,411
2007	4,398	5,274	3,246	12,918
2008	3,820	5,883	5,176	14,879
1999-2003	67,938	12,699	24,044	104,681
2004-2008	25,179	18,116	19,594	62,889
1999-2008	93,117	30,815	43,638	167,570
Annual average 99-03	13,588	2,540	4,809	20,936
Annual average 04-08	5,036	3,623	3,919	12,578
Annual average 99-08	9,312	3,082	4,364	16,757

Source: Statistics New Zealand, various years, unpublished tables for Migration Research Group, University of Waikato

Over the decade between April 1999 and March 2008, the total net gain to New Zealand through the permanent and long-term (PLT) migration of people who were citizens of countries in Asia was 167,570 – an annual average of 16,757. The annual figures fluctuated between 7,752 in the year ended March 2005 and 35,115 in the year ended March 2003.

The reasons for the marked fluctuations in annual net gains need not concern us here; more relevant is the fact that the assumed average annual net migration gain of 12,000 people with Asian ethnicities over the next 20 years in the medium variant projection has been exceeded in the net migration figures for citizens of Asian countries in all but three of the past 10 years. The 12,000 average annual net gain is, in fact, close to the actual average for the five years 1 April 2003-31 March 2008 (12,578) – a period when there were two years of very low net gains from Asia (Table 12)<sup>21</sup>.

Statistics New Zealand does have a high migration assumption for Asian net migration of 18,000 per annum – above the 10-year average for the past decade and below the annual average for the five years 1 April 1998-31 March 2003 – the period when there were exceptionally high net gains associated with movements of international students.

If this high net migration assumption is used in the projections instead of the medium one of 12,000 annual net migration gain, along with the medium fertility, mortality and inter-ethnic mobility assumptions, the Asian ethnic population increases to 934,000 by 2026 – 18 percent more than the 788,000 when the medium net migration assumption is used.

22 Robert Didham (2004) *Fertility of New Zealand Women by Ethnicity Based on the New Zealand 1996 Census of Population and Dwellings*, Statistics New Zealand, Wellington. Didham shows in this report that Asian women who had Asian males as their partners had, on average, 1.74 children, while those with Maori women as partners had 2.61 children, and those with Pacific women as partners had 2.72 children. These and other figures for average number of children are age adjusted to ensure comparability across populations with different age structures.

We have commented at some length on the net migration assumptions contained in the recent national ethnic projections, because they are so different from the assumptions for the other major ethnic groups (Table 11, page 24) and there is a real possibility that they will be misunderstood. When the average annual net gain used in the projections is set alongside the experience of PLT net migration of Asian citizens over the decade April 1998-March 2008, it is clear that a 12,000 average annual net gain is reasonably conservative – it is not an indication of an open door immigration policy. It is clear from Table 12, (page 25) that net migration gains from south and southeast Asia are rising again, but the gains from northeast Asia remain at much lower levels than in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Migration from Asia remains relatively volatile, thus making it very difficult to project the size of a future Asian population in New Zealand.

The other key demographic processes that drive natural increase in a population – fertility (births) and mortality (deaths) – are not characterised by the volatility that affects migration. The assumptions about fertility and mortality for the four major ethnic populations are summarised in Table 13.

**Table 13: Measures of fertility and mortality, major ethnic groups, 2006-2026 (medium projection variant)**

Measure	European or Other	Maori	Asian	Pacific
<b>a) Total fertility rate</b>				
2005-2007	1.92	2.78	1.52	2.95
2026	1.75	2.50	1.55	2.60
<b>b) Total paternity rate</b>				
2005-2007	0.14	0.97	0.20	1.05
2026	0.14	0.95	0.22	1.05
<b>c) Male life expectancy</b>				
2007	79.4	70.4	84.0	72.8
2026	82.6	76.5	85.4	78.4
<b>d) Female life expectancy</b>				
2007	83.2	75.2	87.2	77.2
2026	86.2	80.6	87.6	82.3

Source: Statistics New Zealand (2008) *National Ethnic Population Projections: 2006 (Base) – 2026*, Wellington, Table 1p

There are two fertility rates – one relating to women (the total fertility rate [TFR]) and one relating to men (the total paternity rate [TPR]). The TFR for women is the average number of children a woman can expect to have during her life if she experiences the age-specific fertility rates of the specified period, and the TPR is the average number of live births that a man would have with women in a different ethnic group during his life if he experienced the age-specific paternity rates of the specified period.

TFRs of 1.55 children per woman in the Asian ethnic population (2005-2007) and 1.55 (2026) are the lowest for the four ethnic groups. It can be noted that such TFR estimates are well below the level (TFR 2.1) that is required to ensure the long-term replacement of a population through natural increase.

The TFR for Asian women rises slightly over the projection period to 1.55 children per woman, and this is a reflection of the increasing incidence of mixed ethnic relationships and the associated higher fertility that might accompany Asian/Maori, Asian/Pacific or Asian/European partnerships. This tendency is discussed in Statistics New Zealand's report on the fertility of New Zealand women in different ethnic groups as this was recorded in the 1996 Census of Population and Dwellings.<sup>22</sup>

## A combination of low fertility and low mortality results in much lower numbers of births and deaths for the Asian population over the next 20 years.

The TPR is a measure that has only recently been introduced to New Zealand's population projections, and it is there to recognise the rising incidence of mixed ethnic births where the father's children will not be counted in his ethnic population if the mother is from a different major ethnic group.

Thus, children born to Maori or European women whose fathers are from an Asian ethnic group will be included in the calculation of the TFR for the mother's ethnic group. However, these children may also claim their Asian ethnicity, and thus be counted as part of the Asian ethnic population as well. TPR levels are quite small, especially for the Asian and the European or Other populations, but like the TFR for Asian women it is assumed the TPR for Asian men will rise slightly over the projection period (Table 13, page 26).

It should be noted that the TFR of 1.51 children per woman identifying with an Asian ethnicity disguises quite considerable diversity in fertility patterns within the populations grouped under the Asian label. In his study of fertility amongst Asian women using the 1996 census data, Didham found that Lao (2.79), Khmer (2.63), Vietnamese (2.47), Pakistani (2.24) and Indian (2.15) women tended to have higher average numbers of children than women from other south and Southeast Asian ethnic groups, while amongst women from Northeast Asia, the Japanese had by far the lowest average number of children at 1.01 compared with 1.83 for Chinese and 1.54 for Korean women.<sup>23</sup>

He also observed that amongst large ethnic groups, such as Indian, there was diversity depending on where the Indians came from. Fiji Indian women born in Fiji had, on average, 2.43 children compared with 2.07 children for Indian women born elsewhere overseas (mainly India) and 1.89 children for Indian women born in New Zealand.<sup>24</sup> Lower fertility amongst the New Zealand-born women in the different Asian ethnicities, by comparison with their overseas-born peers, was the general pattern found in the analysis of the 1996 census data. There is no reason to assume this will not have continued.

The estimates for life expectancy at birth, a common demographic indicator of the health of a population and by definition the extent to which people are at risk of dying, indicates that men and women of Asian ethnicities can expect to live longer on average than members of any of the other ethnic groups (Table 13, page 26). Life expectancy is a measure of the average longevity of the population as a whole, and does not necessarily reflect the longevity of a particular individual.<sup>25</sup> Women generally have a longer life expectancy at birth than men (the chances of men dying at every age from birth are higher than for women in all populations), and in the case of women of Asian ethnicities, a life expectancy at birth of 87.2 years is 10 years higher than for a Pacific woman and 12 years higher than for a Maori woman (Table 13, page 26).

A combination of low fertility and low mortality results in much lower numbers of births and deaths for the Asian population over the next 20 years, by comparison with the Maori population that it comes close to equalling in size by 2026, and the smaller Pacific population (Table 14, overleaf).

The much lower fertility amongst the Asian population, by comparison with the Maori and Pacific populations, is reflected in the low natural increase. The other component of change in three of the ethnic populations is movements of members of these populations into other ethnic groups, or inter-ethnic mobility.<sup>26</sup> This is projected to be greatest amongst Maori, and slightly higher amongst the Asian ethnic population than the Pacific one, but lower than inter-ethnic mobility amongst Maori (Table 14, overleaf). The Asian population is estimated to experience a net loss of 20,000 to other ethnic groups during the 20 years to 2026.

23 Didham (2004: 35).

24 Didham (2004: 34).

25 Statistics New Zealand (2008: 28).

26 Statistics New Zealand (2008: 28) points out that inter-ethnic mobility occurs when people change their ethnic self-identification over time. For example, the ethnicity of babies and young children is usually identified by their parents. In a later census, when these children are old enough to complete the forms themselves, they will decide which ethnicity to identify with, and this may differ from that chosen by their parents.

**Table 14: Births, deaths, natural increase and inter-ethnic mobility, major ethnic groups, 2006-2026**

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Births (000s)</b>	<b>Deaths (000s)</b>	<b>Natural increase (000s)</b>	<b>Inter-ethnic mobility (000s)</b>
European or Other	808	529	279	0
Maori	366	67	299	-40
Asian	188	27	161	-20
Pacific	213	25	184	-15

*Source: Statistics New Zealand (2008) National Ethnic Population Projections: 2006 (base) – 2026, Wellington, Table 1p*

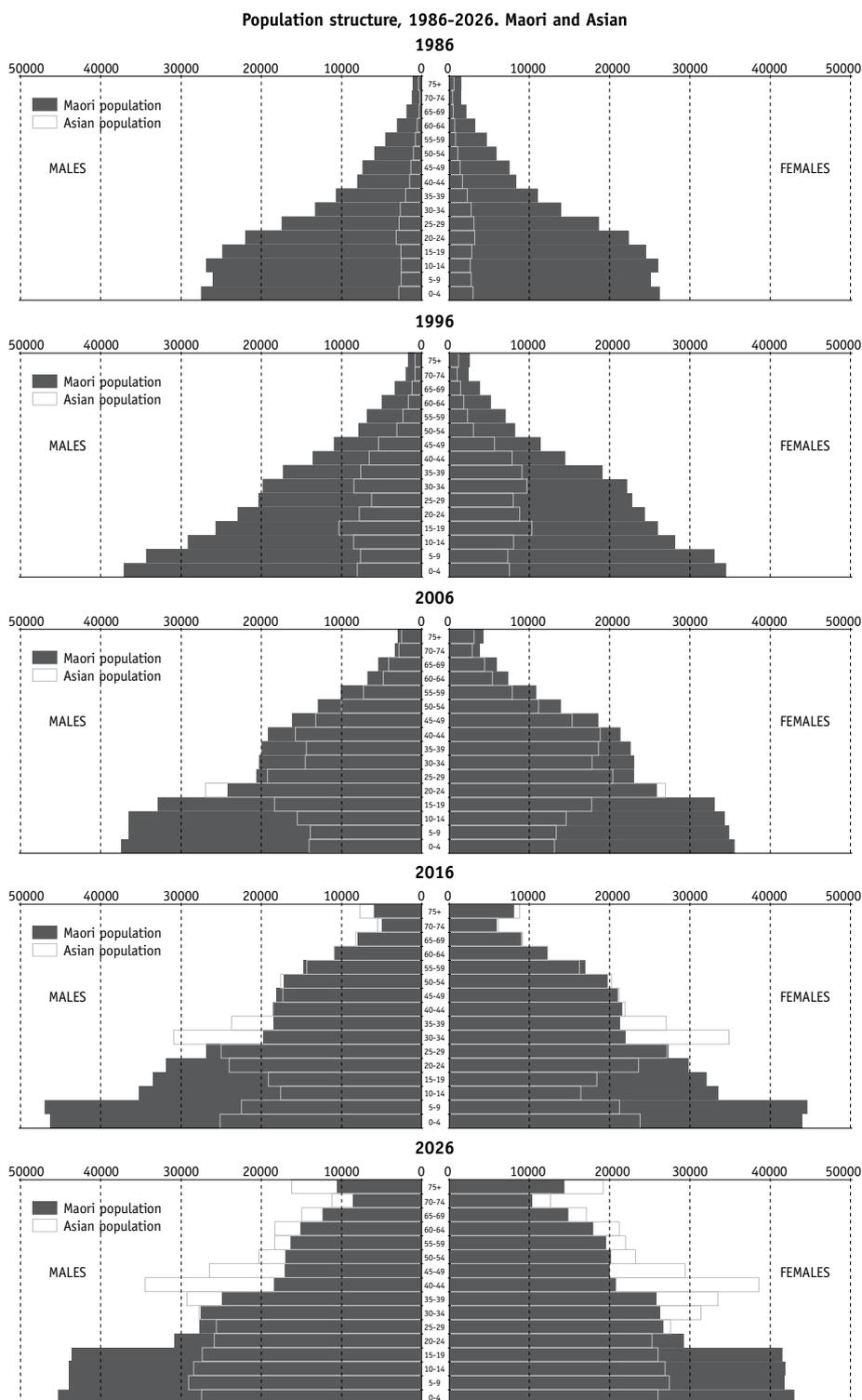
Having briefly examined the processes that affect growth in the numbers of people with Asian ethnicities in New Zealand, it is appropriate to conclude this examination of the recent ethnic projections for the Asian population with a reference to changes in age-sex structure.

In Figures 5 and 6, the numbers of Asians in the different age groups in the censuses of 1986 and 1996, the base population for the projections in 2006, and the projected populations for 2016 and 2026, are located within the population pyramids for Maori and the total New Zealand population for the same years.

This method of comparing the changing structures of the different populations puts many of the changes outlined in this paper into perspective with regard to the development of the Maori population on the one hand, and the New Zealand total population on the other hand.

It has already been noted that by 2026 there will be almost as many people in the Asian ethnic population as there will in the Maori population (Table 10, page 23). The structures of the two populations will be rather different though, reflecting the fact that natural increase and net out-migration are driving the growth of the Maori population, while net in-migration and a much lower natural increase explain the changing shape of the Asian population pyramid (Figure 5). By 2006, the Asian population in the 20- to 24-year age group exceeded the number of Maori in that age group, largely as a result of the entry of thousands of international students. Numbers of Maori exceeded numbers of Asians in all other age groups in 2006.

Figure 5: Age-sex structures, Asian ethnic population and the Maori population, 1986-2026



Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1986, 1996 and 2006

Asians still comprise less than 20 percent of men and women in all but one age group, 45-49 years, where the share reaches 23 percent.

By 2026, according to the medium projection variant for the Asian ethnic population, numbers of Asians will exceed numbers of Maori at all ages above 30-34 as a result of the legacy of ongoing immigration, while Maori will be more numerous at all younger age groups due to their much higher natural increase (Figure 5, page 29).

A concern that the Asian population will swamp the Maori population as a result of immigration is one that has been raised at different times over the past 20 years, and to the extent that numbers in different age groups reflect swamping, a trend over the next 20 years is for the very diverse Asian ethnic groups collectively and gradually exceed numbers of Maori at age groups above 30.

It is important to recall when reflecting on these figures, though, that the Asian ethnic population includes a very wide range of different ethnic groups, and both populations are becoming increasingly mixed in terms of their ethnicities over time, and that an increasing number of people belong in both Maori and Asian populations.

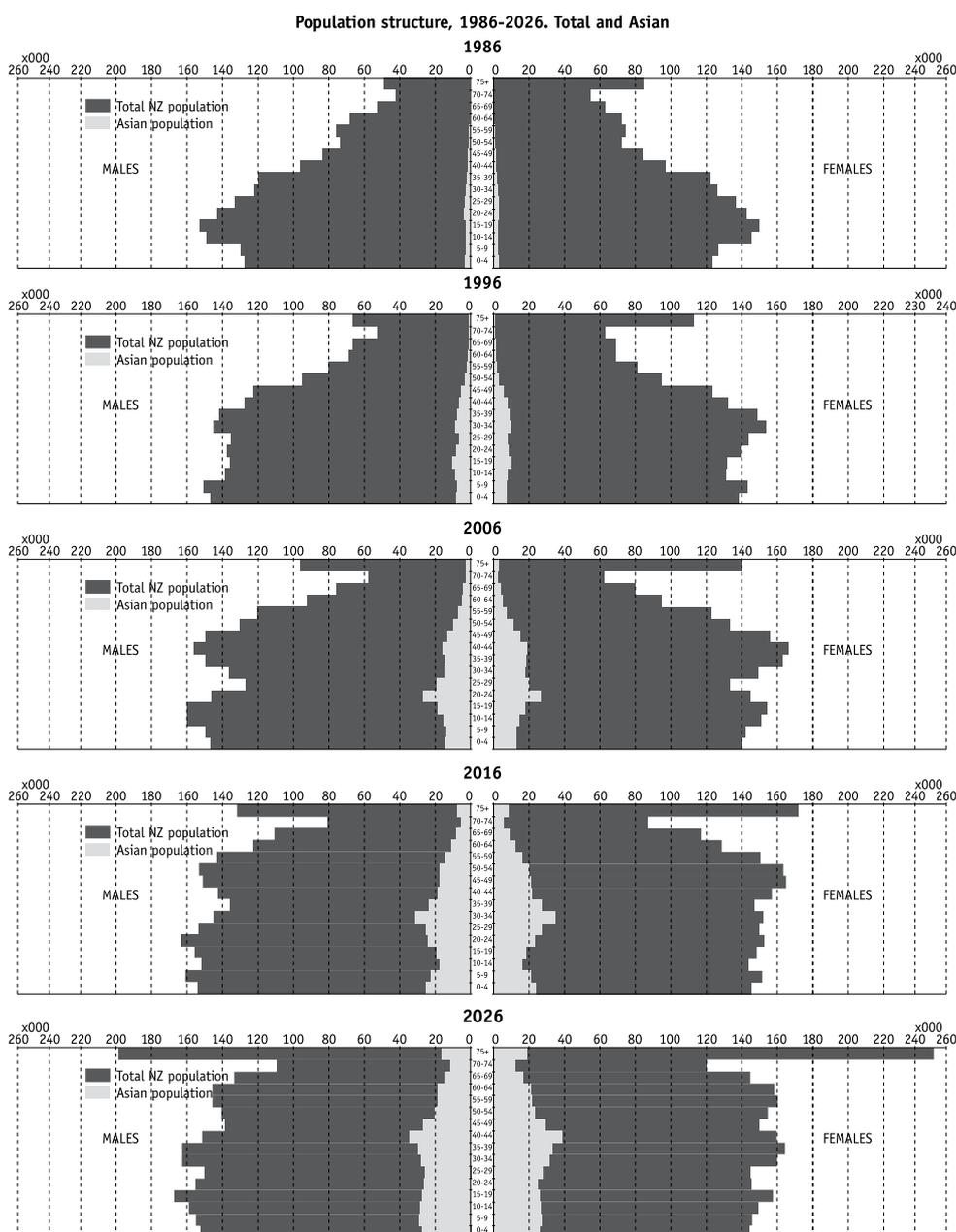
In other words, these are not discrete populations, but are already overlapping in significant ways.

When the Asian population structure is located inside the age-sex pyramid for the total New Zealand population, a different picture emerges. In the population pyramid for 1986, the Asian population is almost invisible as a distinctive component of the total – mirroring the attitudes of many New Zealanders to peoples of Asian ethnicity living in the country at the time.

By 2006 the Asian ethnic component had assumed a prominence in Figure 6 overleaf that it had in the Maori population pyramid in 1986 (Figure 5, page 29) – it was clearly evident as a small but identifiable component of the total. By 2026 its significance has increased significantly, but Asians still comprise less than 20 percent of men and women in all but one age group, 45-49 years, where the share reaches 23 percent.

**Figure 6: Age-sex structures, Asian ethnic population and total New Zealand population, 1986-2026**

27 Te Puni Kokiri (2007) *NgaKaihanga Hou. For Maori Future Makers.* Wellington, Te Puni Kokiri.



Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1986, 1996 and 2006

Over the 40 years covered in Figure 6, the Asian share of the population has increased from 1.7 percent of the New Zealand total in 1986 to 9.7 percent in 2006, and could grow to 16 percent in 2026 if the assumptions underpinning the medium variant of the projections prove to be reasonably accurate. Vasil and Yoon's conclusion in 1996 that "immigrants from Asia will never be in a position to threaten the paramountcy of the Pakeha and the primacy of their values, language, culture and way of life"<sup>27</sup> remains the case based on contemporary trends.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Since the mid-1980s, New Zealand's population has been more profoundly influenced by immigration from Asia than at any time since the gold rushes in Central Otago in the 1870s.

The influx of mainly Chinese men in the 19<sup>th</sup> century generated a very strong backlash against immigration that resulted in legislation which discriminated against Asian migrants from anywhere for more than a century. The much more diverse influx of people from countries in Asia since the immigration policy changes in 1986 has generated considerable anxiety amongst some sectors of the community, especially in the mid-1990s and when immigration becomes an issue at the time of national elections. However, the context within which contemporary Asian immigration to New Zealand and to many other countries is occurring is very different in 2006 from that which existed more than 100 years ago.

For the past 20 years, successive New Zealand governments, as well as the business community and the education sector, have been seeking to position New Zealand as an active participant in the development of economies and societies in Asian countries. A critical component of this positioning has been opening up the country to immigration of talent, capital and visitors from Asia, as well as generating markets for New Zealand's commodities in the region that has 60 percent of the world's population. The signing of the free-trade agreement with China in 2008, the first such bilateral agreement to be achieved by a Western country, is a clear sign of the importance New Zealand government and business interests place on strengthening relationships with countries in the Asian region.

In the context of this intensive effort to become an active participant in Asian economic growth, it is inevitable that people-flows from countries in Asia to New Zealand will continue to grow. The great majority will be visitors, attracted to an uncrowded country with world-renowned recreation facilities and environmental attractions. The number of people wishing to reside in New Zealand long-term will also increase, as it has over the past 20 years, but immigration controls will continue to regulate flows from all countries and keep these at manageable levels.

Inevitably the Asian population will grow to exceed the Maori population – there are fewer than one million Maori in the world's population, and at least 70 percent of them are already living in New Zealand. There are more than 4.3 billion Asians if one counts the very sizeable diaspora of the Indians and the Chinese, as well as the populations living in Asian countries, and a very small share of these people lives in New Zealand. The pool of Asian people who will provide labour for the workforces in most countries of the world over the next 50 years is enormous, and the competition for skilled labour from Asian countries is already very intense.

New Zealand's population will continue to become more Asian beyond 2026. That is inevitable given the demography of the European population in particular. The Asianisation of New Zealand's population will have its distinctive dimensions that are already becoming evident in the statistics on the ethnic identities of those living in New Zealand.

As the New Zealand-born Asian population increases both in size and share of the total in this country, larger shares of the Asian population will be of mixed ethnicities and counted in more than one population. New Zealand will retain its unique Maori heritage, and this will be asserted much more powerfully in economic as well as cultural and social terms as Maori engage Asia in making their futures in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

# ASIA NEW ZEALAND FOUNDATION

The Asia New Zealand Foundation (Asia:NZ) was established in 1994 as a non-profit, apolitical organisation dedicated to building New Zealand's links with Asia. Through its activities in education, business, media, culture, research and policy, Asia:NZ aims to build and sustain New Zealander's knowledge and understanding of Asia.

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*Outlook* editor: Dr Andrew Butcher

**ISSN** 1177-0031

Published by the Asia New Zealand Foundation  
June 2008



ABN AMRO House  
Level 7  
36 Customhouse Quay  
PO Box 10 144  
Wellington, 6143 New Zealand  
Telephone: 64 4 471 2320  
Facsimile: 64 4 471 2330  
Email: [research@asianz.org.nz](mailto:research@asianz.org.nz)

[www.asianz.org.nz](http://www.asianz.org.nz)



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