



# PERCEPTIONS OF ASIA: PACIFIC NEW ZEALANDERS' PERSPECTIVES

April 2026



Asia New Zealand  
Foundation

Te Whītau Tūhono |

**KIA ORA TĀLOFA  
LAVA  
MĀLŌ E LELEI KIA ORĀNA  
FAKAALOFA LAHI ATU  
BULA VINAKA HALO OLKETA  
NOA'IA KAM NA MAURI  
TALOFA WARMEST PACIFIC  
KOUTOU GREETINGS**



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## Comment from the Chief Executive

As I reflect on the more than 30 years since the Foundation was established, it is striking to see how much New Zealand has changed.

At that time, Pacific New Zealanders made up less than five percent of our population. Today that figure has almost doubled, with close to one in ten New Zealanders identifying as being of Pacific heritage. This growing community brings with it a rich mix of cultures, languages, skills, and traditions that are shaping contemporary New Zealand and influencing how we engage across the Pacific and Asia regions.

New Zealand's Pacific community is also young and growing, with a median age under 25 and a growth rate of 16 percent between 2018 and 2023. While enduring cultural affinities between Pacific and Asian communities are grounded in shared values such as respect, family, and collective responsibility, this report highlights that these connections also extend into Asia's contemporary pop culture from music and art to language and entertainment.

The findings make clear that Pacific New Zealanders see Asian countries as important development partners for the Pacific Islands, particularly in areas such as technology, education, investment, and climate action. At the same time, they are less likely than the general population to trust major powers to act responsibly in the world. Concerns are evident around external debt to China, intensifying US-China strategic competition, deep sea mining, fisheries management, and the expanding presence of defence and police forces in the region.

While Pacific New Zealanders recognise the value of their skills and experiences in strengthening New Zealand's Asia relationships, they are significantly less likely than their non-Pacific counterparts to have travelled to Asia or to have first hand experience of the region. This reinforces the importance of the Asia New Zealand Foundation's work: providing opportunities that get New Zealanders into Asia, to experience



it firsthand, and providing insights that help New Zealanders to better understand the region and the opportunities and challenges we face.

As we navigate an increasingly contested and unpredictable global order, it is vital that New Zealanders have the breadth of skills, perspectives, and cultural literacy needed to thrive in and across Asia. My thanks go to the report's authors and to everyone involved in this project. Through this research, we have a clearer picture of the dynamics between New Zealand, Asia and the Pacific, and can shape policies that support a more connected and resilient region.

### **Suzannah Jessep**

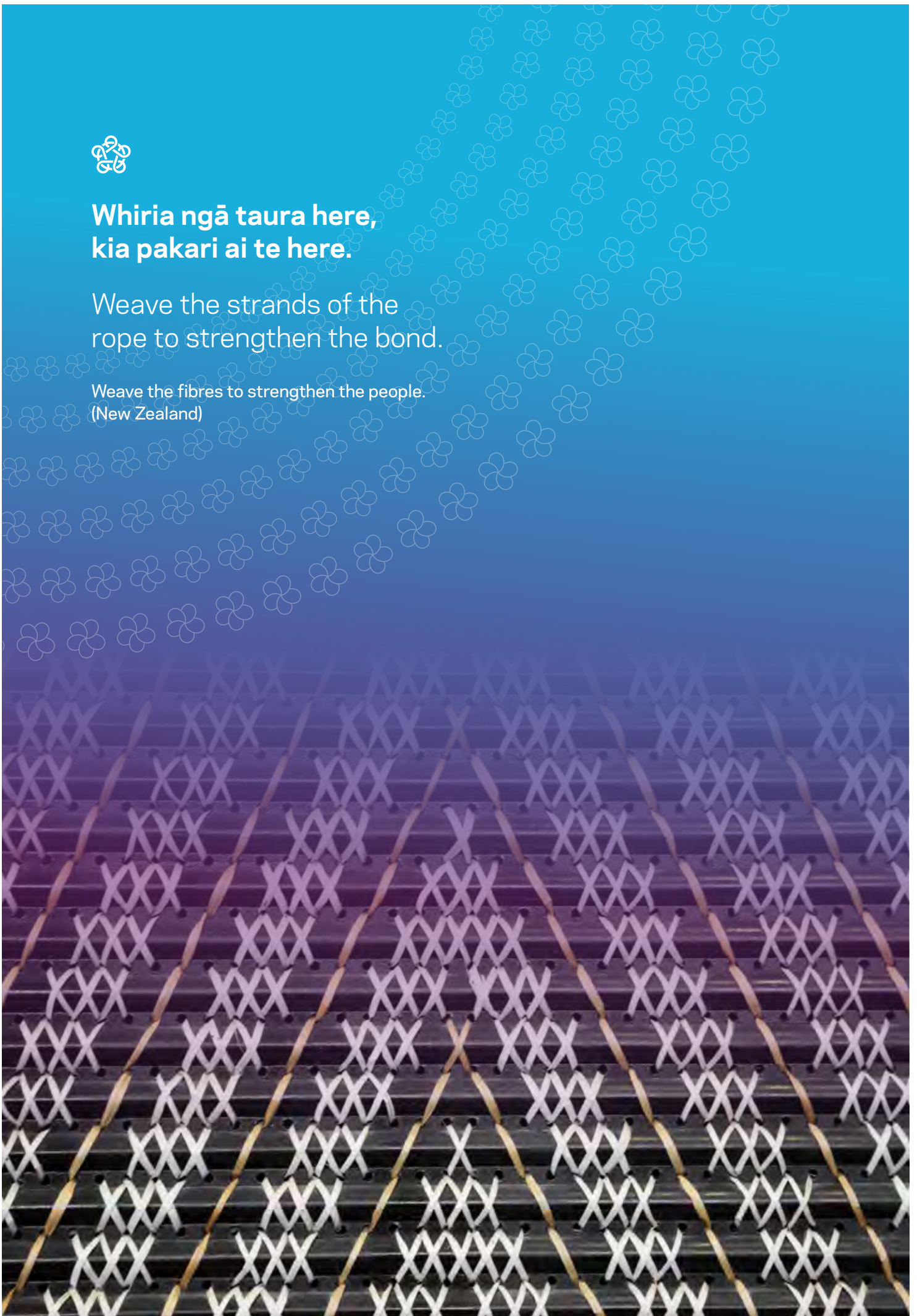
Chief Executive  
Asia New Zealand Foundation  
Te Whītau Tūhono



**Whiria ngā taura here,  
kia pakari ai te here.**

Weave the strands of the  
rope to strengthen the bond.

Weave the fibres to strengthen the people.  
(New Zealand)



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## Setting the scene

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### BACKGROUND

Ties between the Pacific and Asia are longstanding and multifaceted.

Pacific peoples have ancient connections to Asia through the prehistoric migration of Austronesian-speaking peoples, likely originating in Taiwan and moving through Southeast Asia, with eventual settlement across the islands of the Pacific Ocean. These deep historical linkages, combined with more recent patterns of migration, trade, and cultural exchange, create a dynamic and multilayered framework of connections that continue to shape the region today.

The Pacific population of Aotearoa New Zealand<sup>1</sup> is growing and diversifying, just as New Zealand's relationships across Asia are expanding and deepening. It is therefore timely to develop a more nuanced understanding of Pacific New Zealanders' connections to Asia, how they view Asia's role in the Pacific region, and their aspirations for strengthening New Zealand's engagement with both Asia and the Pacific.

Drawing from the Māori whakataukī whiria ngā taura here, kia pakari ai te here (weave the strands of the rope to strengthen the bond), this report brings together multiple strands of Pacific New Zealanders' insights from the annual *Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples* surveys (2021–2025), a supplementary mini-poll of over 300 New Zealanders of Pacific descent (conducted in January–February 2026), and four online talanoa/ focus groups<sup>2</sup> held in February 2026. The survey and mini-poll data draw from the broader Pacific New Zealand population, while the majority of talanoa participants are of Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islands and Fijian heritage reflecting their large populations in New Zealand.

The findings show that Pacific New Zealanders' perceptions of Asia are shaped strongly by lived experience and personal connection. Family ties, friendships, education, and media all play a central

role. This is reflected in high levels of interest in Asian cultures, languages, and media, and generally positive views of the region.

At the same time, Pacific New Zealanders hold balanced and nuanced views of Asia's growing role in the Pacific. Asia is widely seen as critical to the region's future – especially in areas such as technology, trade, and education – but this is accompanied by concerns around sovereignty, debt, environmental pressures, and geopolitical competition. There is a clear desire for more reciprocal partnerships and broader engagement with a range of Asian partners.

Finally, the report highlights the important role Pacific New Zealanders see for themselves in strengthening connections across New Zealand, Asia, and the Pacific. Drawing on their cultural knowledge, transnational ties, and experience navigating multiple worlds, many view themselves as natural “bridges” between regions. Equally, there is recognition of the need to deepen Asia-related knowledge and ensure that Pacific voices – both in New Zealand and in the Pacific Islands – are accurately represented.

This report offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and community leaders seeking to deepen New Zealand's engagement with Asia. For New Zealand, building resilient and enduring relationships with Asia will depend not only on government policy and economic strategy, but also on the strength of societal connections and the confidence of its people. Pacific New Zealanders – through their histories, identities, and networks – are an integral part of this story.

1 To ensure continuity with past surveys and Asia New Zealand Foundation reports, New Zealand will be used from this point on.

2 For the remainder of the report, focus groups will be referred to as talanoa due to its shared cultural affiliation with participants.

## PACIFIC PEOPLES IN NEW ZEALAND

As a country in the Pacific, New Zealand has had strong ties to the region both past and present – through Māori and their ancestral link to Indigenous Pacific peoples of the region, and in the present through family, education, business, climate change collaborations, historical and colonial ties, trade and research partnerships, and more.

In order to understand New Zealand's identity as a country, it is first and foremost important to acknowledge Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi. Many Pacific New Zealanders have established connections with tangata whenua as well as maintaining connections with Pacific homelands.

Furthermore, insights from Pacific New Zealanders can help New Zealand understand its place in the Pacific – the history, knowledge and value systems that are unique to the Pacific region – as well as to deepen New Zealand's connections with Asia and the Pacific.

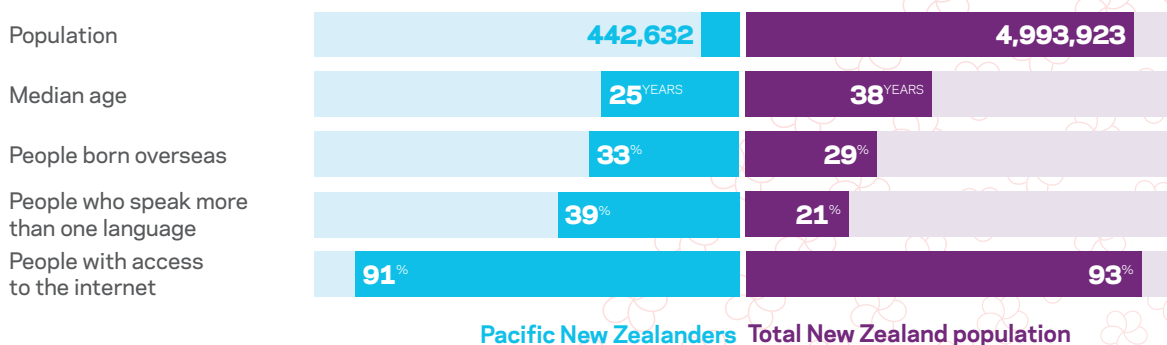
The Pacific diaspora in New Zealand makes up almost nine percent of the New Zealand population and is diverse in nature. These demographics differ from the total New Zealand population in ways that influence how Pacific New Zealanders view relations with Asia (see Figure 1 below). Pacific New Zealanders are a young, fast-growing population, with two thirds born in New Zealand, and one third born overseas. They are ethnically diverse, with at least 17 distinct Pacific ethnic groups accounted for in New Zealand, and an increasing number of Pacific New Zealanders with mixed Pacific and non-Pacific identities. The majority of the Pacific population live in the North Island, with most residing in Auckland (62 percent), Wellington (11 percent), Waikato (six percent), and Canterbury (five percent).

## CONTEXT FOR THE MINI POLL AND TALANOA

A mini-poll of 348 Pacific New Zealanders and four online talanoa were carried out between January and February 2026. The following events, activities, and media attention may have impacted or influenced responses from Pacific New Zealanders at this time.

**FIG. 1: PACIFIC PEOPLES IN NEW ZEALAND**

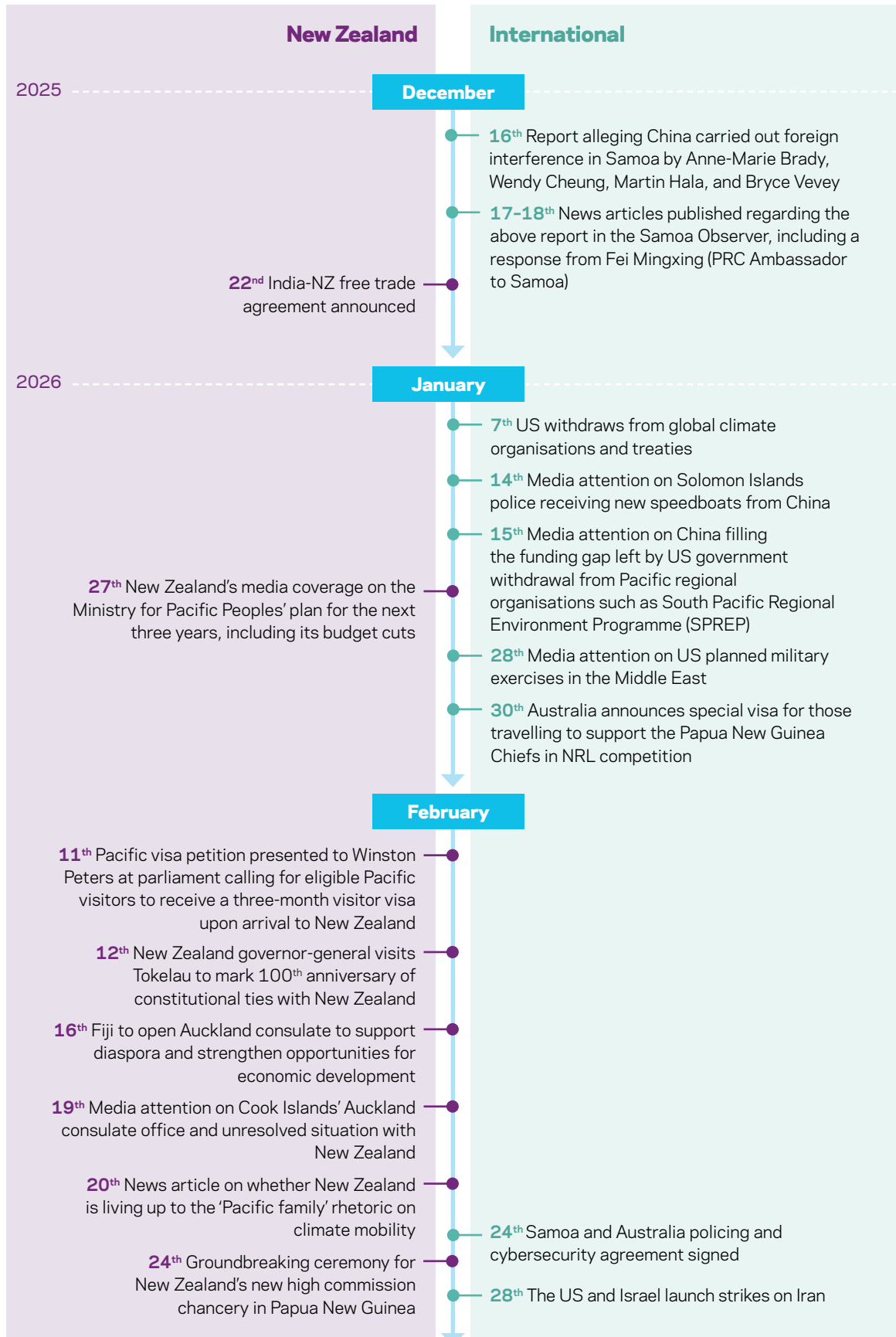
Census 2023 population data



Source: Census 2023, Statistics New Zealand.

## EVENTS AROUND THE WORLD IN LATE 2025 AND EARLY 2026

Mini-poll survey fieldwork 22 January - 12 February 2026. Talanoa fieldwork 11 - 23 February 2026.





# PART 1: PERCEPTIONS OF ASIA



**Mou te kō, mou te 'ere.  
Kia pukuru o nga vaevae,  
kia mokora o kaki.**

Hold on to the spear, hold on to the rope. Anchor your legs like a breadfruit tree and keep your head flexible like a duck.

Hold on to your principles but be open to the views of other people.  
(Cook Islands / Kūki 'Āirani)

# Key findings

Pacific New Zealanders' **view Asia through personal connections and lived experiences**, such as family, friendships, education and travel.

**Respecting elders and valuing relationships** are seen as the most significant similarity between Pacific cultures and some Asian cultures.

Pacific New Zealanders are **more likely to be interested in cultural outputs from Asia** (such as languages, music, art, literature, television, movies and games) than non-Pacific New Zealanders.

There is a **correlation between Pacific New Zealanders' interests in Asia and their engagement with Asian media**, particularly in terms of their use of multiple media sources for information.

Pacific New Zealanders view **China and Southeast Asia** as friendlier towards New Zealand than non-Pacific New Zealanders.

## Pacific peoples' connections with Asia

### TOP OF MIND ASSOCIATIONS WITH "ASIA"

Personal connections shape Pacific New Zealanders' views of Asia.

When asked for their top of mind associations with Asia, talanoa participants described

Asia through personal experiences such as family, education, travel, and everyday cultural engagement. For many, Asia was not abstract but embedded in their lives, shaped by family ties, migration, and time spent in the region.

FIG. 2: PACIFIC NEW ZEALANDERS' TOP ASSOCIATIONS WITH "ASIA"

Talanoa question: What comes to mind when you think of Asia and why?



Source: Talanoa. Base: Pacific New Zealanders (2026) n= 23.

**“Growing up, my dad was obsessed with Chinese food. We would have Chinese food every week. I remember even for birthday parties we would ask what food we were going to have, and it would always be the same place with Chinese platters and all the different varieties.”**

Samoan, 60+ years, female, Canterbury

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## CONNECTIONS WITH ASIA

For an icebreaker and as a way to establish rapport, talanoa participants were asked to share their connections to the Pacific and Asia.

### Family

The most common responses relating to Asia connections revolved around people-to-people links through family and friends. Family connections encompassed genealogical links to Asia, for example to China through Samoa (many Samoans have Chinese heritage through longstanding migration ties).

**“My connection with Asia is that my grandfather, paternal grandfather, is a full Chinese from Canton, who settled in Samoa.”**

Samoan, 60+ years, female, Canterbury

**“I’m Samoan Chinese, so half and half. That’s my personal connection to [the] northern part of China.”**

Samoan/Chinese, 40-59 years, female, Canterbury

**“My only real connection to Asia is my cousin... who’s part Chinese... And my sister, she’s taught in Korea.”**

Samoan, 40-59 years, male, Canterbury

### Friendships

Some participants noted a connection to Asia through their friendships in educational, professional and social settings.

**“I grew up in Fiji, so I sort of grew up and went to school with Chinese... who first moved to Fiji, say, 100... almost 150 years ago.”**

Cook Islander/Fijian, 40-59 years, female, Canterbury

**“I also work for several communities in Asia, especially with the Indigenous peoples in Southern Thailand... Northern Thailand, and Southern Philippines, and in the Borneo Islands.”**

Pacific person, undisclosed age, gender, and location

### Education

Another common connecting factor was education, either in Asia through exchange programmes or learning about Asia in school, with three talanoa participants undertaking formal Asian language training.

**“I studied Chinese since high school... In 2012... I won the national prize for the National Chinese Speech Competition, and so I had to represent New Zealand at the Chinese Bridge Speech Competition in China, and that was sort of my first experience in China... Then I did the university version of that competition in my second year, and... got a scholarship to study in China for a semester, at Tsinghua University in Beijing.”**

Tongan, 25-39 years, non-binary, Auckland

**“I studied Japanese at high school for three years, so that’s probably my closest connection there, is just learning the language a bit.”**

Fijian, 40-59 years, female, Canterbury

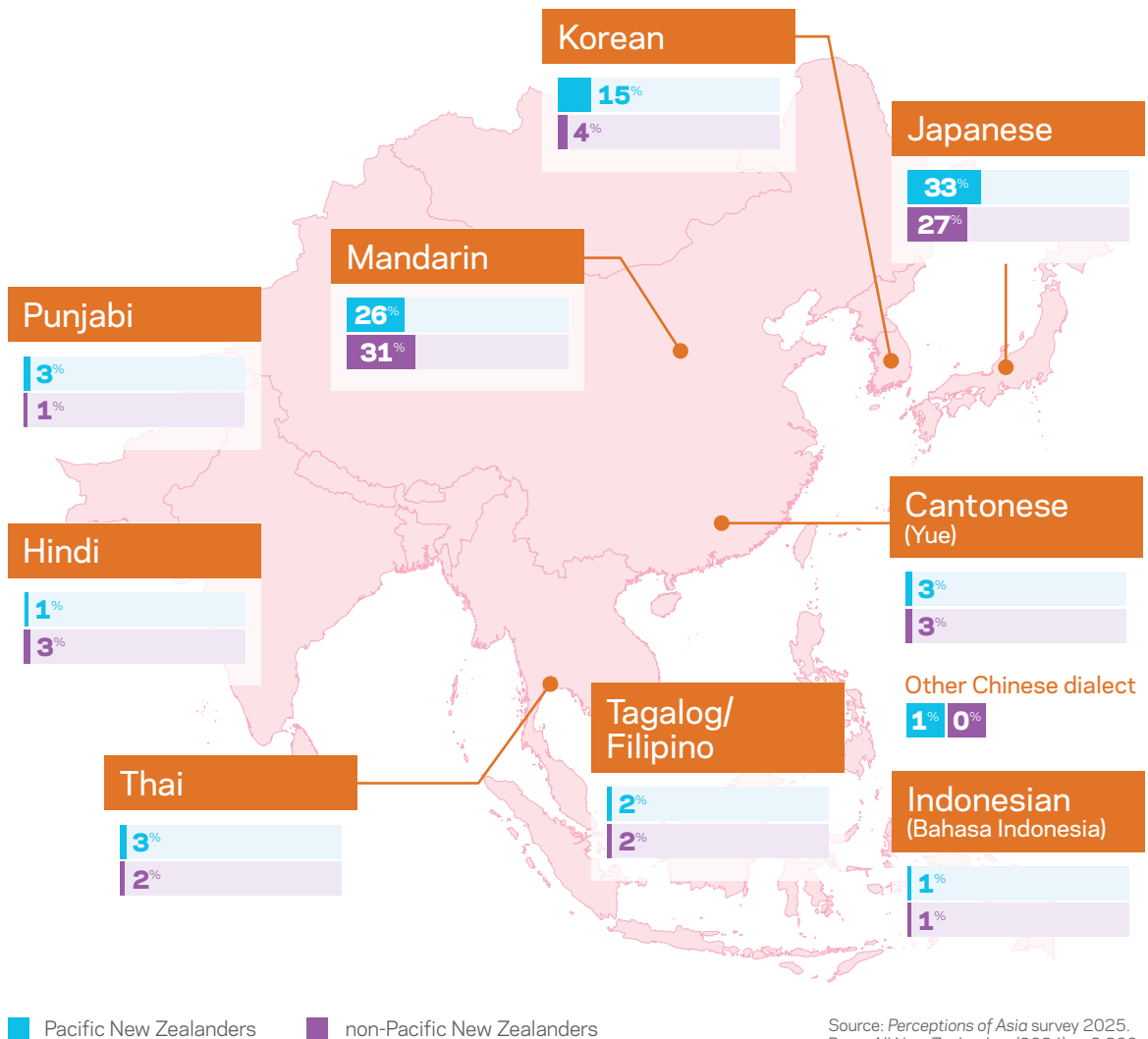
### Languages

Statistics from the 2025 *Perceptions of Asia* survey showed that Pacific New Zealanders were interested in learning a number of Asian languages,

with significantly higher percentages than non-Pacific New Zealanders when it came to Japanese and Korean.

**FIG. 3: INTEREST IN LEARNING AN ASIAN LANGUAGE**

*Perceptions of Asia* survey question: If you could learn an Asian language, which one would you most like to learn?



Source: *Perceptions of Asia* survey 2025. Base: All New Zealanders (2024) n= 2,300. Pacific New Zealanders n= 103.

## TRAVEL WAS ANOTHER IMPORTANT POINT OF CONNECTION FOR TALANOA PARTICIPANTS

The 2025 *Perceptions of Asia* survey showed that 53 percent of Pacific New Zealanders saw the availability of regular and affordable air travel between New Zealand and Asia as a way to grow New Zealand's relationship with Asia.

In 2024, 39 percent of Pacific New Zealanders had travelled to Asia compared to 58 percent of non-Pacific New Zealanders. These findings likely speak to the socio-economic realities of Pacific peoples in New Zealand, where factors such as a lower median income impact Pacific communities. It may also reflect Pacific New Zealanders prioritising travel to the Pacific region – to visit family, for example – over travel to countries in Asia.

*Perceptions of Asia* survey findings show that Pacific New Zealanders have high levels of engagement with and interest in Asian media and culture. These levels of engagement alongside people-to-people connections perhaps serve as ways to mitigate the lack of opportunities for Pacific New Zealanders to experience Asia firsthand.

## PACIFIC AND ASIAN CULTURES: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

A key question for consideration in the mini-poll and talanoa was whether Pacific peoples saw any similarities between Pacific and Asian cultures. Talanoa participants were asked a follow-up question about why they thought these connections existed (or not).

All participants saw an underlying similarity in values, especially in terms of customs or traditions, and family. This was seen in the talanoa, with values being mentioned as a similarity by participants in all four sessions.

The mini-poll results showed that the most significant similarity between Pacific and Asian cultures was **respecting elders and valuing relationships**, with almost half of the respondents answering that they perceived these as 'very similar'. This was a consistent finding across age, gender and region.

The talanoa also confirmed this, with 'respect for elders' being a noted similarity in two out of the four sessions.

**"But, just in terms of how close it is to the Pacific, when you look at the social relationships, how they respect the elders, the way they treat them, the food, there's a lot of similarities with the culture."**  
Samoan, 60+ years, female, Canterbury

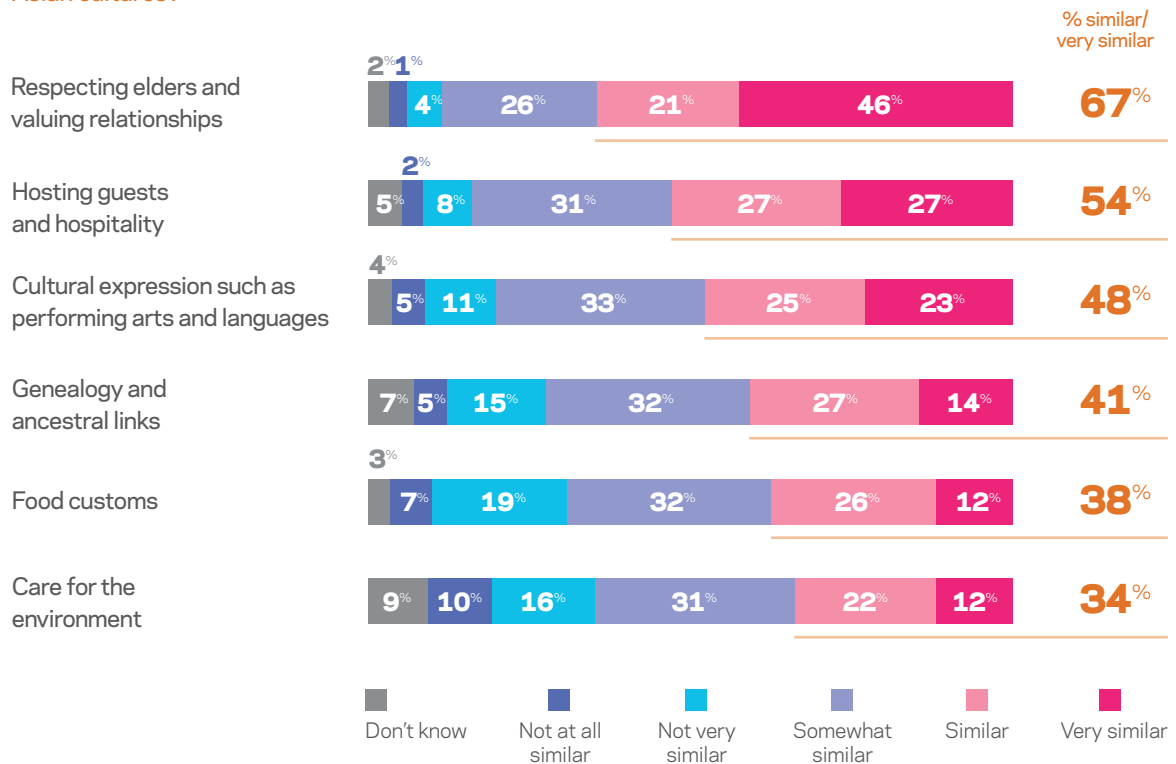
**"I'll say Japanese culture, because that's what I have experienced. Just the hierarchy in people who are older than us. I think there's a lot of respect even just in school... the way that the new kids would treat the older kids above them is with a lot more respect, which I think is quite similar to us. We respect our elders quite a lot."**  
Cook Islander, 25-39 years, female, Canterbury

Approximately half of mini-poll respondents saw **hosting guests and hospitality** and **cultural expression such as performing arts and languages**, as similar or very similar between Pacific and Asian cultures. This was followed by **genealogy and ancestral links** and **food customs** (41 percent and 38 percent respectively).

**"I think there's a lot of similarities in the Pacific and Asia, it's already been highlighted through the conversations, like language, food, the arts, you know, tattoos being imprinted on us, vice versa. That's where our shared connection is, whether we're faraway and... whether you're in Europe and you're here in New Zealand... you hear the song and you're like, I'm connected, you got the prints, I'm connected... but even if we practise certain rituals and things like that, the undertones and the meanings behind it, we're all connected in that space."**  
Samoan, 40-59 years, female, Canterbury

**FIG. 4: PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURAL SIMILARITIES**

Mini-poll question: To what extent do you see similarities between Pacific cultures and some Asian cultures?



Source: Mini-poll. Base: Pacific New Zealanders (2026) n=348.

Talanoa participants had mentioned food as a top of mind association between Pacific and Asian cultures, yet the food customs statistic from the mini-poll shows the different ways this question could be interpreted. While food in itself is an important association with Asia for Pacific New Zealanders, food customs between cultures inevitably vary and respondents appeared to make a distinction between customs and cuisine when answering these questions.

**“In Christchurch, we've had... quite an influx of, Filipinos coming here to rebuild our city, so there's a lot of new Filipino communities here, and just the similarities, of wanting to come here and... looking to do better for their families, but also a lot of them are working and sending money back to their families that are over there... and just the family and the faith and collectivism is really important for them as well. So, I really connect with them, because... they're like us. They're the same. They love food, they love karaoke, love entertaining and a fun time.”**

Samoan, 25-39 years, female, Canterbury

## ASIA INTERESTS

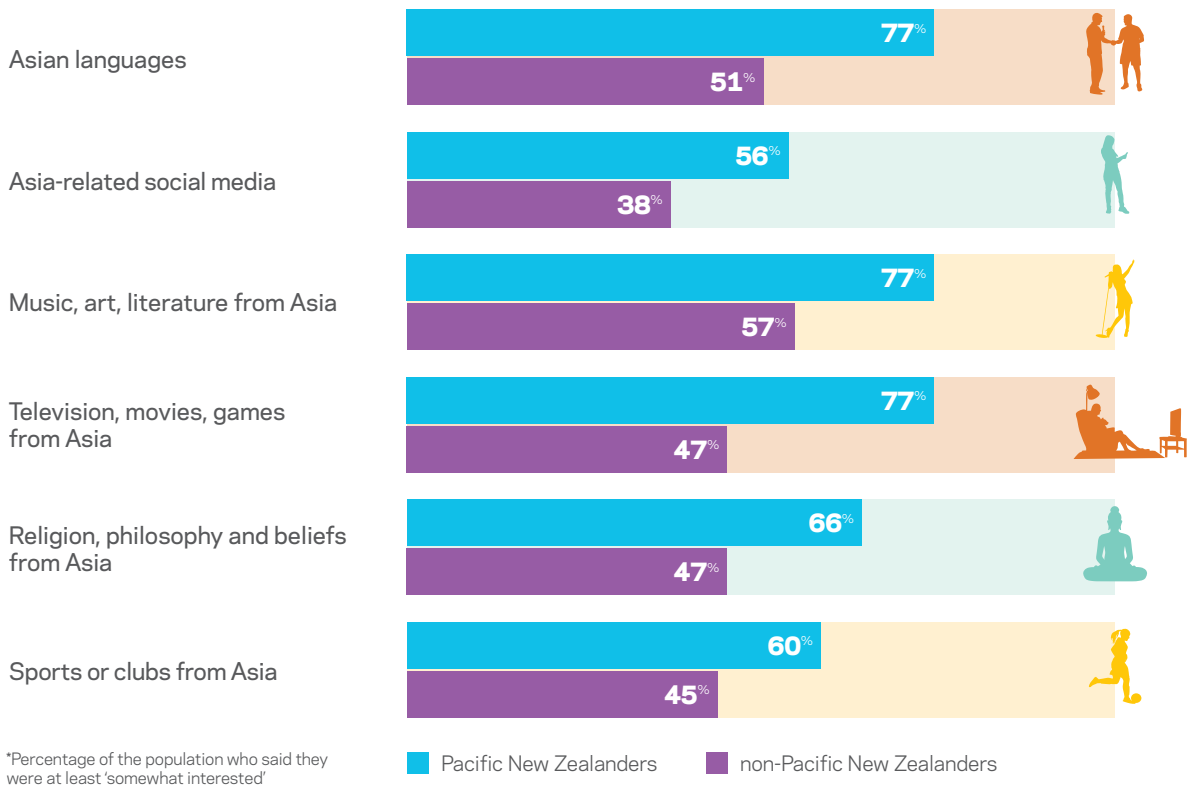
The 2025 *Perceptions of Asia* survey shows that Pacific New Zealanders are significantly more likely to be interested in cultural outputs from Asia than non-Pacific New Zealanders.

Pacific New Zealanders are especially interested in Asian entertainment as well as music, art and literature compared to non-Pacific New Zealanders.

These results are distinctive and highlight the importance of connection for Pacific peoples. Data from the 2024 *Perceptions of Asia* survey shows that Pacific New Zealanders were more likely to be interested in learning about Asia through a broader range of activities than non-Pacific New Zealanders – by attending festivals, exhibitions and community events, through formal learning, via Asia-related news and entertainment, as well as through sport.

**FIG. 5: PACIFIC PEOPLES AND INTERESTS IN ASIA**

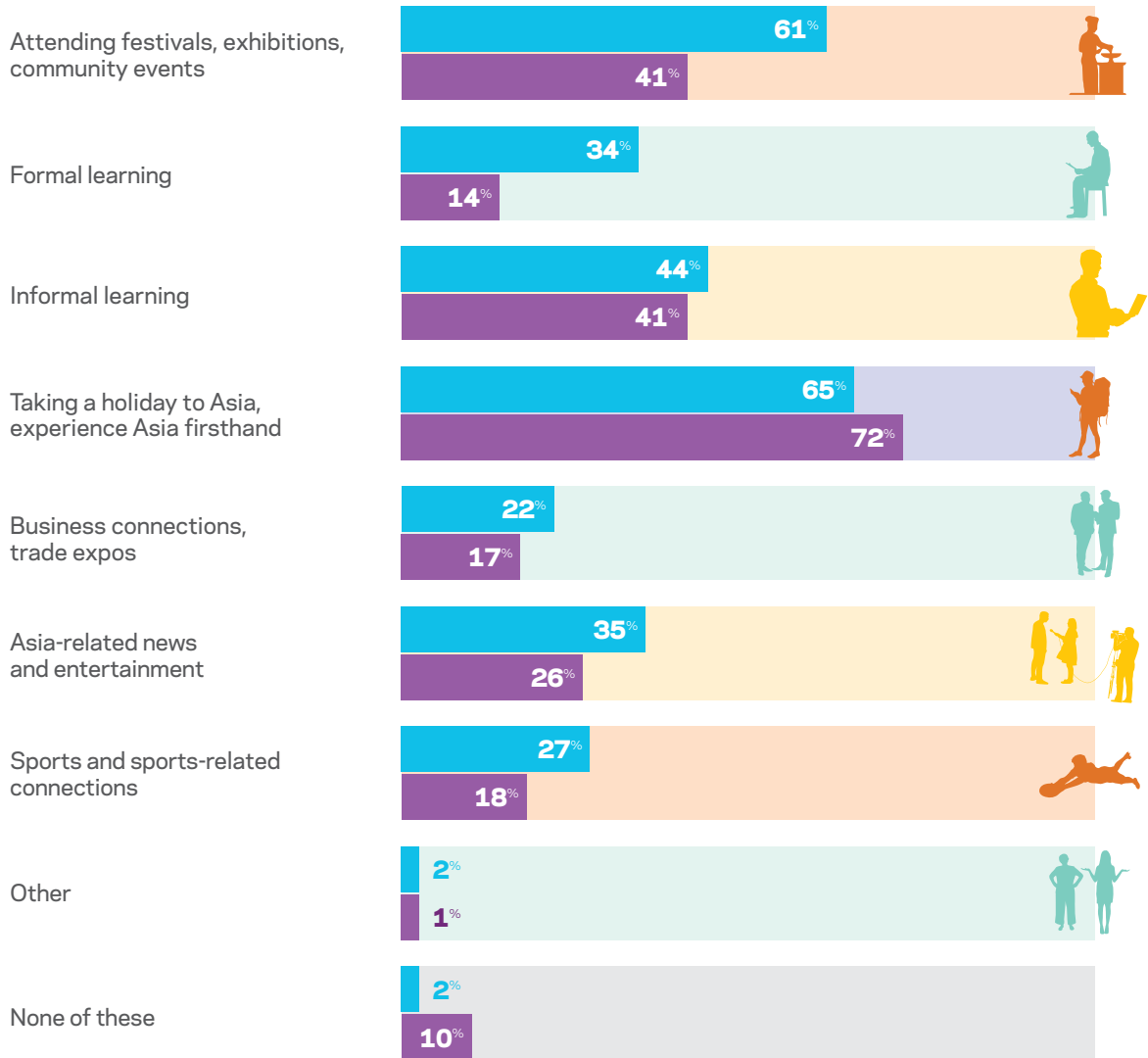
*Perceptions of Asia* survey question: How interested, or not, are you in the following Asia-related areas, in your day-to-day life?



Source: *Perceptions of Asia* survey 2025.  
 Base: All New Zealanders (2024) n= 2,300.  
 Pacific New Zealanders n= 103.

**FIG. 6: INTEREST IN LEARNING ABOUT ASIA**

*Perceptions of Asia* survey question: Through which of the following ways would you be interested in learning more about Asia?



\*Percentage of the population who said they were at least 'somewhat interested'

■ Pacific New Zealanders    ■ non-Pacific New Zealanders

Source: *Perceptions of Asia* survey 2024.  
 Base: All New Zealanders (2023) n= 2,300.  
 Pacific New Zealanders n= 103.

## Asian media and entertainment

Pacific New Zealanders draw on a range of different media and entertainment sources to learn about Asia.

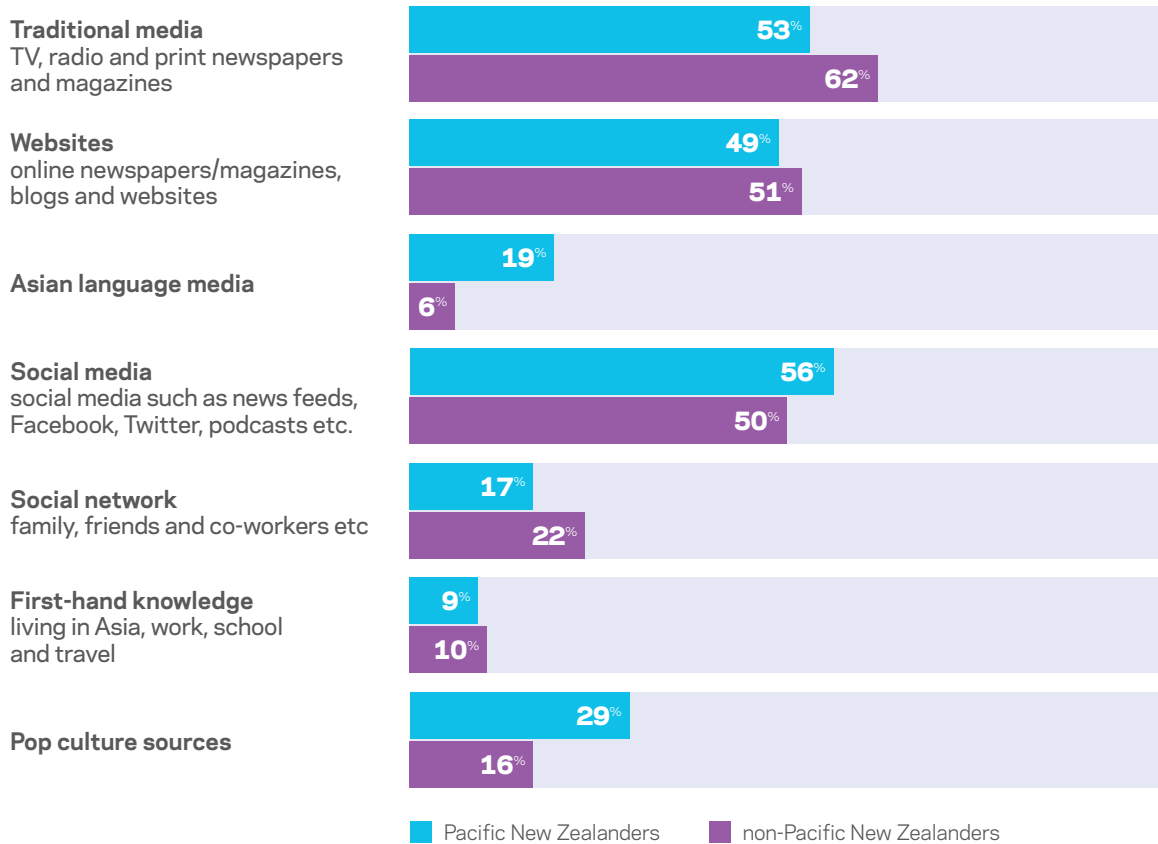
Pacific New Zealanders tend to use Asian-language media more than non-Pacific New Zealanders

(19 percent of Pacific New Zealanders compared to just six percent of non-Pacific), as well as social media channels (56 percent versus 50 percent) and pop culture sources (29 percent compared with 16 percent).

### FIG. 7: ASIA-RELATED MEDIA FINDINGS

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?

#### Media sources for information about Asia



Source: *Perceptions of Asia* survey 2025.  
Base: All New Zealanders (2024) n= 2,300.  
Pacific New Zealanders n= 80.



**“I would say technology. IT is one area that could help the Pacific a lot, and that’s the strength that Asia has. So, it’s an area that you know, ideally, they should be investing in, in terms of the Pacific for aid.”**

Samoan, 60+ years, female, Canterbury

### CONNECTING TO THE WORLD THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

The 2022 *Perceptions of Asia* survey also found that Pacific New Zealanders were more likely to feel connected to the world via social media platforms than non-Pacific New Zealanders.

Pacific New Zealanders saw Instagram, Tik Tok, and YouTube as particularly valuable platforms for connecting to the world when compared to

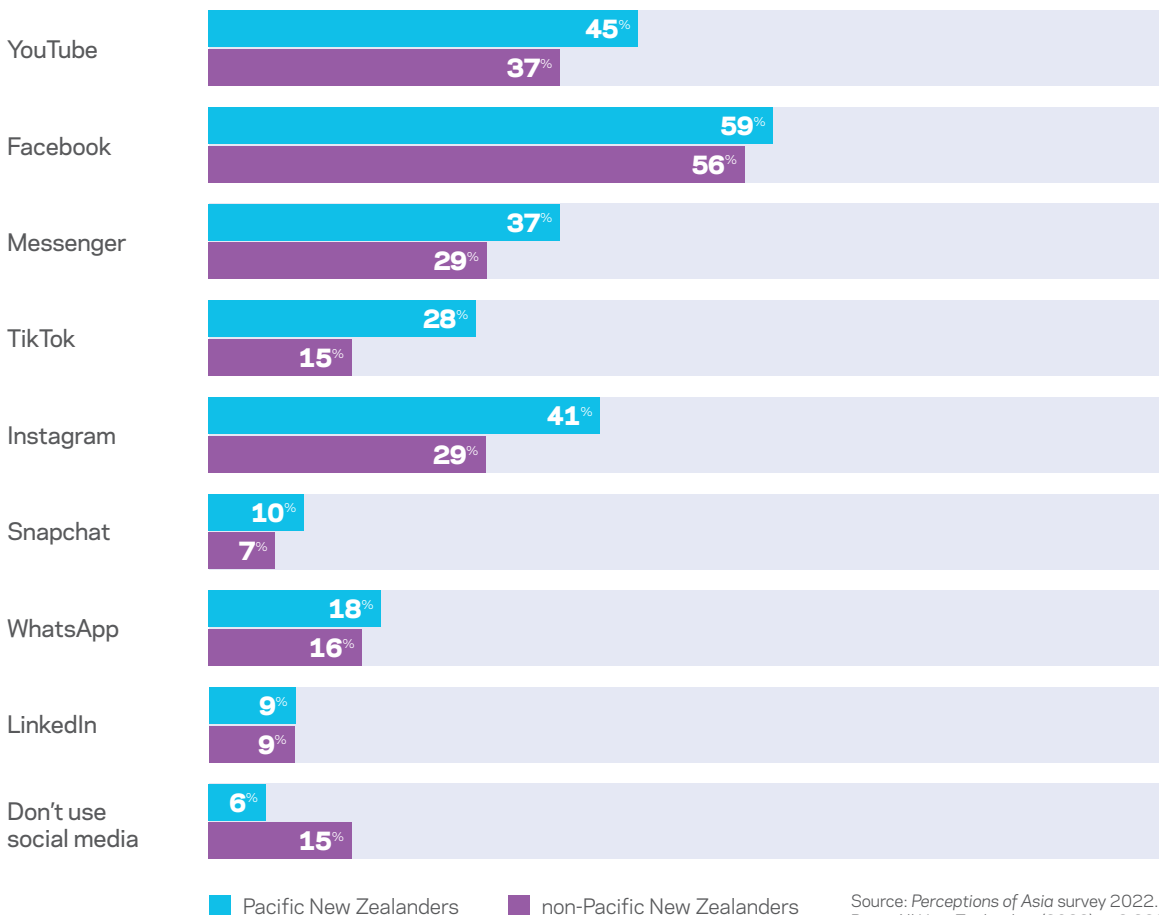
non-Pacific New Zealanders - notably all video and image-based mediums through which arts and entertainment can be easily communicated. The high usage of social media by Pacific New Zealanders is also reflective of diasporic communities utilising technology to remain connected with friends and family around the world.

The young median age and urban location of the Pacific population also helps explain *Perceptions of Asia* data around social media usage and Pacific New Zealanders' interest in Asian contemporary and popular culture.

**FIG. 8: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL CONNECTED TO THE WORLD**

*Perceptions of Asia* survey question: Which of the following social media platform(s) makes you feel the most connected to the world? You can select more than one.

#### Perceptions of Asia 2022



Source: *Perceptions of Asia* survey 2022. Base: All New Zealanders (2022) n= 2,323. Pacific New Zealanders (2022) n= 128.



**“Technology-wise, like, they always had the latest cool things, and it just drew my curiosity into them.”**

Samoan, 40-59 years, female,  
Canterbury

**“I really admire how that region blends strong traditions with modern life and advanced technology.”**

Samoan, 18-24 years, female,  
Marlborough

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## Friend and threat perceptions

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### GROWING FRIENDLINESS

Data from the 2025 *Perceptions of Asia* survey shows that Pacific New Zealanders see China and those in Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and Myanmar as increasingly friendly towards New Zealand.

These positive perceptions are largely driven by trade and economic ties, tourism, immigration and shared values. In the case of China, Pacific New Zealanders are more likely to select positive attributes of their people, geographical proximity and historical context as key drivers of friend perceptions than their non-Pacific counterparts, who tend to emphasise economic and trade ties.

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### PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

Insights from the talanoa deepen this picture, showing that for Pacific New Zealanders, connection to Asia is strongly shaped by personal relationships and lived experience.

Countries such as the Philippines, China, Japan, South Korea, Viet Nam and Indonesia were frequently mentioned, often linked to family ties, friendships, migration or lived experience. There is also a strong pull toward Southeast Asia as a region, reflecting growing community connections and patterns of immigration to New Zealand. This mirrors growing perceptions of Southeast Asia's friendliness towards New Zealand.

Pacific New Zealanders are also generally positive (but slightly less positive than non-Pacific New Zealanders) towards India, Japan and South Korea.

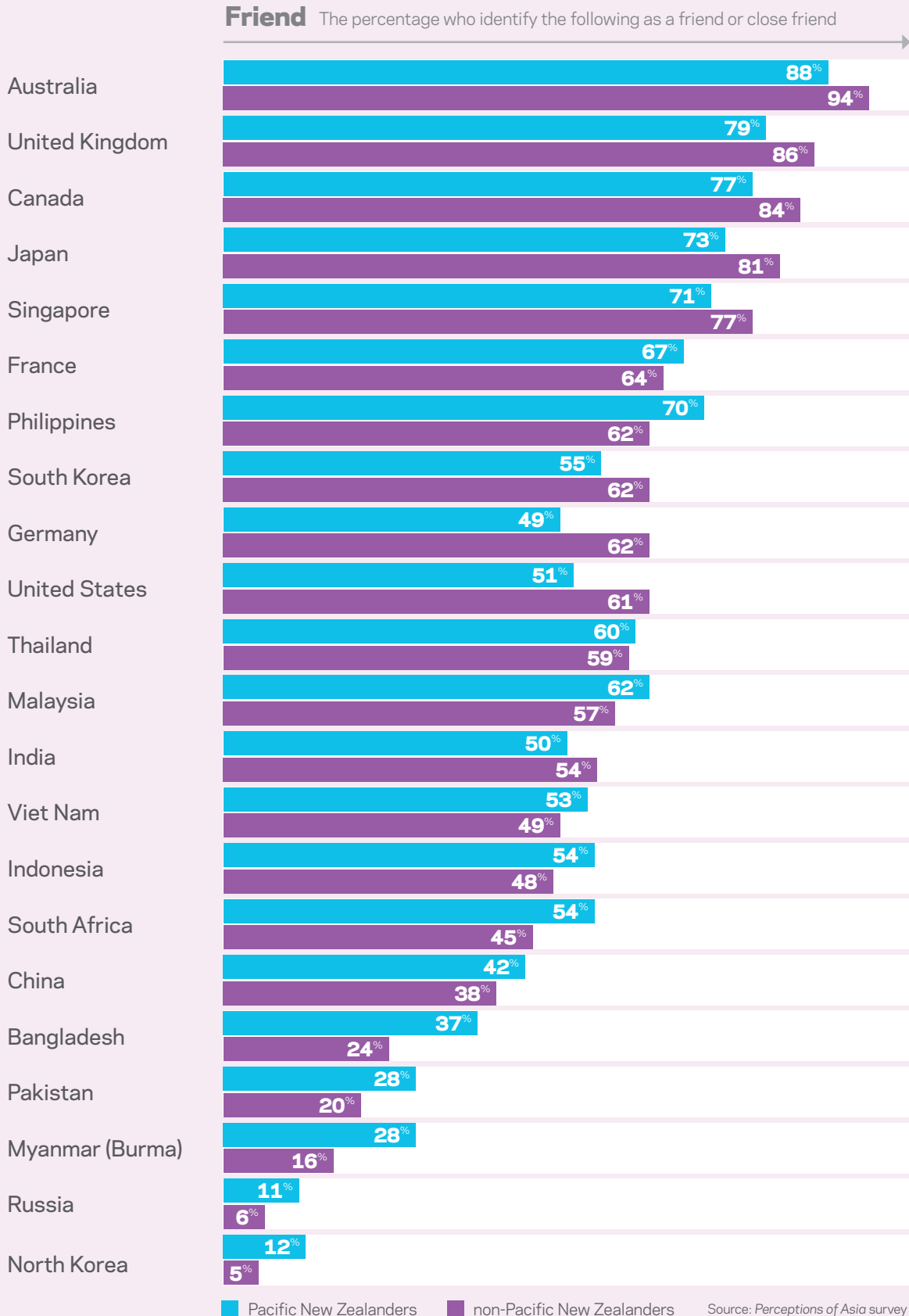
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**“The first is the Philippines. As a young adult, I travelled there as part of a church cultural exchange group and lived with a family in the south of Manila for two weeks. The second is Japan. As a young adult, I used to watch a lot of Japanese horror films and animation.”**

Samoan/Māori, 40–59 years, wahine, Wellington

**FIG. 9: FRIEND PERCEPTIONS**

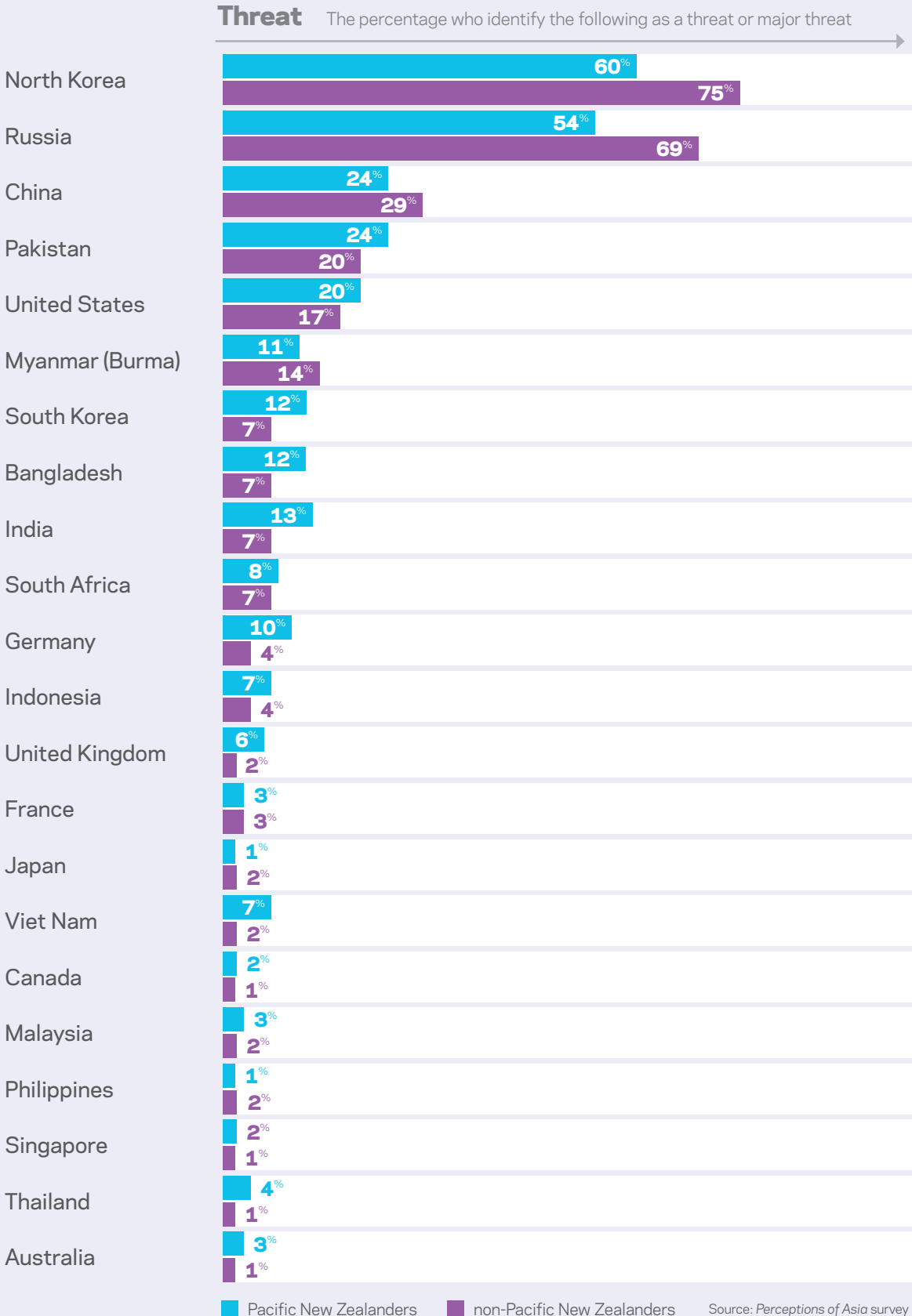
Perceptions of Asia survey question: A friendly country is one you view as safe and trustworthy. A threatening country is one you view with caution or suspicion. For each country below, do you view them as a friend or a threat?



Source: Perceptions of Asia survey 2025. Base: All New Zealanders (2024) n= 2,300. Pacific New Zealanders n= 103.

**FIG. 10: THREAT PERCEPTIONS**

Perceptions of Asia survey question: 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?



Source: Perceptions of Asia survey 2025. Base: All New Zealanders (2024) n= 2,300. Pacific New Zealanders n= 103.

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## NORTH KOREA AND CHINA

*Perceptions of Asia* data as well as discussions from the talanoa show that Pacific New Zealanders view North Korea and China as the most consistent threats among countries in Asia, alongside occasional mentions of countries like India, and Thailand.

These perceptions are frequently linked to media influence, political narratives, or unfamiliarity, rather than personal experience. At the same time, some participants expressed little to no concern, suggesting that overall threat perceptions are mixed, less fixed, and likely influenced by awareness and exposure.

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## NORTH KOREA

**“I would also say North Korea. As a young person growing up in Aotearoa, I would probably have said China as well. I think that was partly due to ignorance and not fully understanding things at the time.”**

Samoan/Māori, 40-59 years, wahine, Wellington

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## INDIA

**“For me, it would be India. That’s mainly based on what I’ve seen in the media and online.”**

Samoan, 25-39 years, female, Canterbury

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## CHINA

**“The country I feel more cautious towards is China. I don’t want to generalise, but I think my impressions are influenced by what I see on TV. Another reason is technology. I feel that China is very advanced, which makes me cautious about information and how it is collected and used.”**

Samoan, 40-59 years, female, Canterbury

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## THAILAND

**“Thailand comes to mind a little bit, probably because I’ve watched too much TV that shows stories about human trafficking and organ trafficking.”**

Cook Islander, 25-39 years, female, Canterbury



## **PART 2:** **PERCEPTIONS OF ASIA IN THE PACIFIC**



**Pikipiki katea kae  
vaevae melenga.**

The hulls of canoes come together to share what provisions they have out at sea.

When people genuinely share in times of great need.  
(Tonga)

# Key findings

While **Asia** is seen as **important for the future** of Pacific Island countries, Pacific New Zealanders also viewed the **Pacific region** as being of **great significance to Asia and New Zealand**.

**Two-thirds** of Pacific New Zealanders believe that **technology and innovation in Asia** will have a **positive impact** on the Pacific region over the next 20 years.

**Over 80 percent** of Pacific New Zealanders are at least **fairly concerned** with Pacific nations' **debt repayments to China** and great power interests in **deep sea mining in the Pacific**.

Pacific New Zealanders understand why **China dominates the Asia narrative in the Pacific** given its significant presence in the region, but have aspirations for an increased focus on other Asian partners and more balanced reporting in the media.

Pacific New Zealanders want to see **more collaboration with Asian countries** and **increased scholarship opportunities**, as well as **knowledge sharing** on issues such as climate change and language retention.

## The importance of Asia and the Pacific

### ASIA IS CONSIDERED IMPORTANT TO THE FUTURE OF PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

Pacific New Zealanders view Asia as being important for the future of Pacific Island countries, with 88 percent of mini-poll respondents rating the region as at least ‘somewhat important’.

These trends align with talanoa findings. Factors driving perceptions of importance include:

- Aid and development
- Technological advancement
- Educational opportunities
- Growing Asian population in the Pacific
- Business, trade and investment
- Colonial legacy
- Cultural connections
- Geographical location
- People-to-people connections
- Geopolitical issues

“I think China is actually going to be the future of the Pacific, because it’s so close as well... it’s just as far away as what the United States is, but close in terms of what it does represent on not just the social scale, the aid scale, the scholarship students are going back to the islands and becoming that dominant workforce in the islands itself. It’s gonna tie it so much closer to Asia.”

Samoaan, 60+ years, female, Canterbury

“It’s much easier and cheaper to go to Asia and get [goods] than to come to New Zealand and buy it and send it back home. With all honesty, I think the future of the Pacific is with Asia.”

Cook Islander/Fijian, 40-59 years, Female, Canterbury

**FIG. 11: WHY PACIFIC NEW ZEALANDERS VIEW ASIA AS IMPORTANT TO THE PACIFIC**

Talanoa question: How important do you think the Pacific is to Asia and New Zealand? Why/why not?



Source: Talanoa. Base: Pacific New Zealanders (2026) n= 23.

Importantly, and, despite most talanoa participants highlighting the importance of Asia to the future of the Pacific, there were often sentiments of caution about the impact of these links for Pacific Island countries and their sovereignty. This was a recurring theme in response to various questions throughout each talanoa.

**“I do understand that it is really important in terms of the future for our Pacific region... for me... it is quite worrying about that, some will eventually lose autonomy of just managing their own infrastructure and, like, politics and all that.”**

Samoan/Chinese, 40–59 years, female, Canterbury

**“Is it a good thing or bad thing for the long term of the Pacific? Guess we won’t know until it’s too late.”**

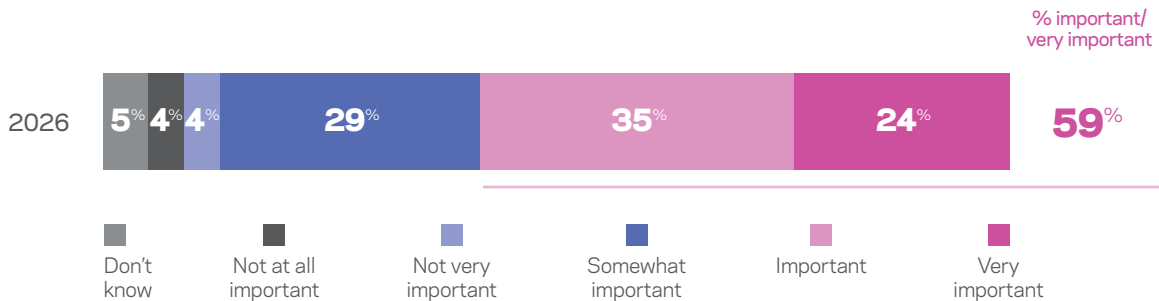
Samoan, 25–39 years, male, Canterbury

**“Sometimes, we can get aid from Korea or China in Fiji, but it’s the strings that are attached to it, just like any sort of development aid that comes from anywhere.”**

Fijian, 40–59 years, female, Canterbury

**FIG. 12: PACIFIC NEW ZEALANDERS’ VIEWS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ASIA TO THE PACIFIC REGION**

Mini-poll question: How important do you think Asia is to the future of Pacific Island countries?



Source: Mini-poll. Base: Pacific New Zealanders (2026) n=348.

## THE PACIFIC IS CONSIDERED IMPORTANT TO THE FUTURE OF ASIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Talanoa participants also viewed the Pacific region as being of great importance to Asia and New Zealand.

The Pacific region's geopolitical significance was noted most frequently by participants. Discussion on geopolitical interests included comments relating to Asian, New Zealand and other powers seeking access to United Nations (UN) votes, to expand their political influence, to maintain colonial links, and the role of the Pacific in regional security.

**"I think we hold some geographic importance to all countries, particularly Asia, especially when it comes to military zones and that sort of thing... that's why, and particularly why the Pacific is important to Asia, largely."**

Fijian, 40–59 years, female, Canterbury

**"Asian presence in the Pacific particularly keeps Australia and New Zealand on their toes, especially with the USA having close ties to Australia and New Zealand, big brother watches."**

Samoan/Māori, 40–59 years, female, Wellington

**"The importance of, you know, however small we are, we still add up in terms of votes, so having allies when it comes to those decisions, I think."**

Samoan, 40–59 years, male, Canterbury

**"We [the Pacific region] are very important because they want policies that will favour them, they need our support... that's also part of the dynamic of soft power policy."**

Tongan, 25–39 years, non-binary, Auckland

Talanoa participants identified the importance of identity, with historical, familial and cultural links binding the Pacific with Asia and also the Pacific with New Zealand. Other important factors included access to resources, sports, and the movement of people to fill in workforce shortages.

**"I guess, [our] location in the world and our resources that we have in our seas, in our oceans, mining, fisheries... I think we're incredibly important to China, and I think that's why they come after us. In a simple way to put it."**

Samoan, 25–39 years, female, Canterbury

**"In my view, it's a two-way traffic... my grandparents came here, and they could work only in the factories... They [Cook Islands and the Pacific] provided labourers to New Zealand."**

Cook Islander/Fijian, 40–59 years, female, Canterbury

**"Pacific [peoples] are beneficial to other countries because of our healthy men out there and, you know, fit, so sports seems to be the most obvious and visible one that other countries, or especially New Zealand has benefited from Pacific."**

Samoan/Chinese, 40–59 years, female, Canterbury

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## IMPACTS ON THE FUTURE OF PACIFIC COUNTRIES OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Pacific New Zealanders were asked how they saw seven areas impacting Pacific Island countries over the next two decades.

**Technology and innovation in Asia** topped the list with 61 percent of Pacific New Zealanders believing that it will have a positive/very positive impact on the Pacific region.

**Investment from Asia** was viewed by half of Pacific New Zealanders as having a positive/very positive impact on Pacific Island countries. In addition, 48 percent of Pacific New Zealanders anticipated that **economic growth in the Asia region** would flow on to benefit the Pacific region.

Almost 40 percent of Pacific New Zealanders perceived **migration between Asia and the Pacific Islands** as having a positive impact. However, twenty percent of Pacific New Zealanders saw migration movements between Asia and the Pacific as having a negative/very negative impact.

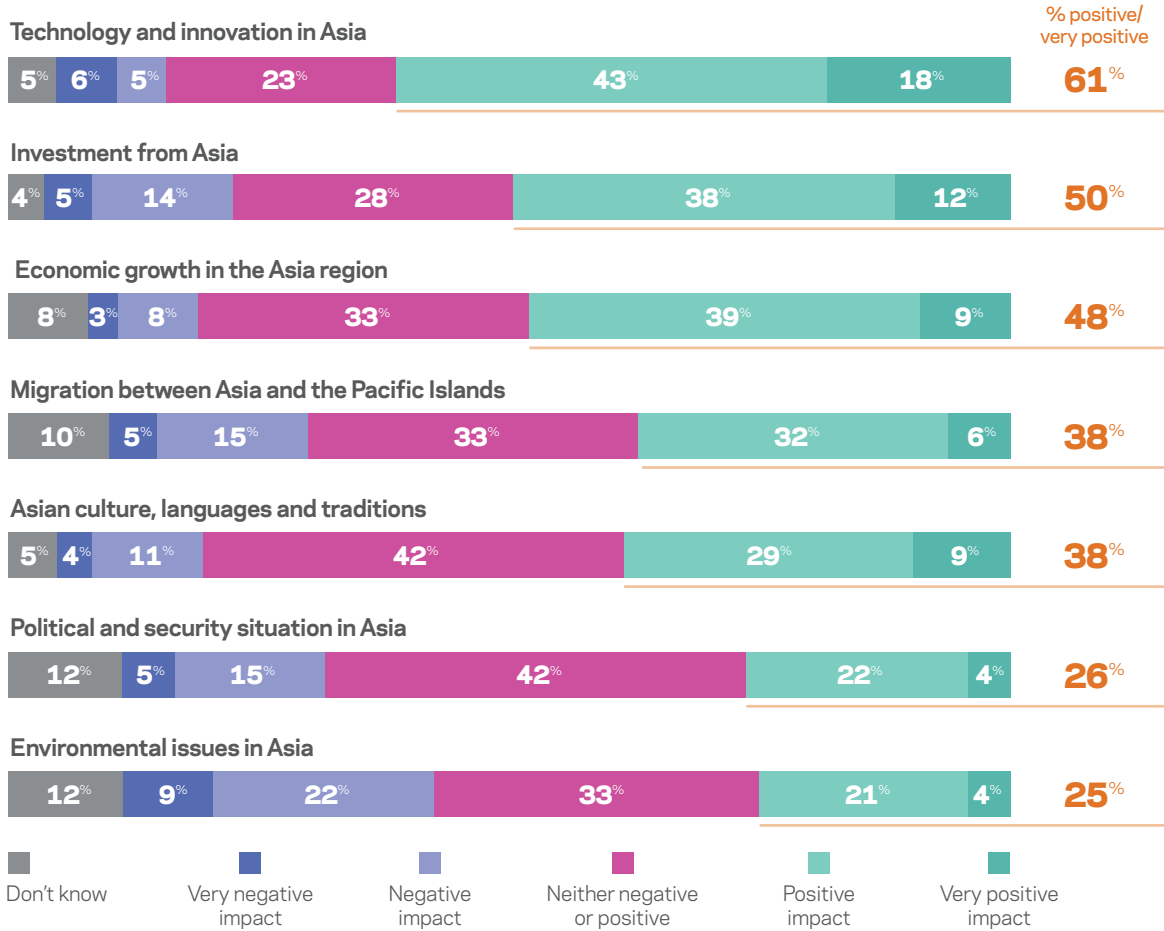
Thirty-eight percent of Pacific New Zealanders thought **Asian cultures, languages and traditions** had a positive impact on Pacific Island countries, 42 percent were neutral as to their impact, while only 15 percent saw a negative/very negative impact.

Pacific New Zealanders had more ambiguous perceptions of the **political and security situation in Asia** and its impact on Pacific Island countries. Forty-two percent of Pacific New Zealanders expressed neither a negative nor positive impact, while 20 percent perceived a negative/very negative impact.

An area of concern for Pacific New Zealanders was the impact that **environmental issues in Asia** would have on Pacific Island countries. One third of Pacific New Zealanders (33 percent) saw this activity as having neither a negative nor a positive impact on the Pacific region. This was the only activity out of the seven where Pacific New Zealanders anticipated a higher negative/very negative impact (31 percent) compared to positive/very positive impact (25 percent).

**FIG. 13: HOW WILL THE FOLLOWING IMPACT THE FUTURE OF PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES?**

Mini-poll question: What kind of impact do you think the following will have on the future of Pacific Island countries, over the next 10 - 20 years?



Source: Mini-poll. Base: Pacific New Zealanders (2026) n=348.

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## Levels of concern with contemporary developments in the Pacific

When asked about recent developments in the Pacific region, mini-poll respondents were most concerned with **Pacific nations' debt repayments to China** and **great power interests in deep sea mining in the Pacific**, with 85 percent saying they are at least fairly concerned by both contemporary developments. Of the two developments, more Pacific New Zealanders expressed 'extreme concern' about **Pacific nations' debt repayments** (34 percent compared to 30 percent for deep sea mining).

This aligns with the talanoa discussions where debt to China was raised more often by participants compared to deep sea mining and other contemporary developments in the region.

**China's increasing police presence in the Solomon Islands** and elsewhere, and **expanding US military presence in Palau** (between Micronesia and the Philippines) and elsewhere were also of concern, followed by announcements of the **US-Fiji defence agreement in November 2024**. Less than half of respondents were concerned by the **Australia-Papua New Guinea defence agreement announced in October 2025**.

While talanoa participants did not explicitly mention any of these specific developments or agreements, they did raise concerns with the increasing securitisation of the Pacific.

**"Particularly with the amount of debt... that a lot of governments are already indebted to China, or other countries, or Taiwan... I don't see much changing anytime soon, that's just my perspective."**

Samoan, 25-39 years, female, Canterbury

**"Tonga has a very big debt to China as a result, and that's been a high contention... A highly contentious topic."**

Tongan, 25-39 years, non-binary, Auckland

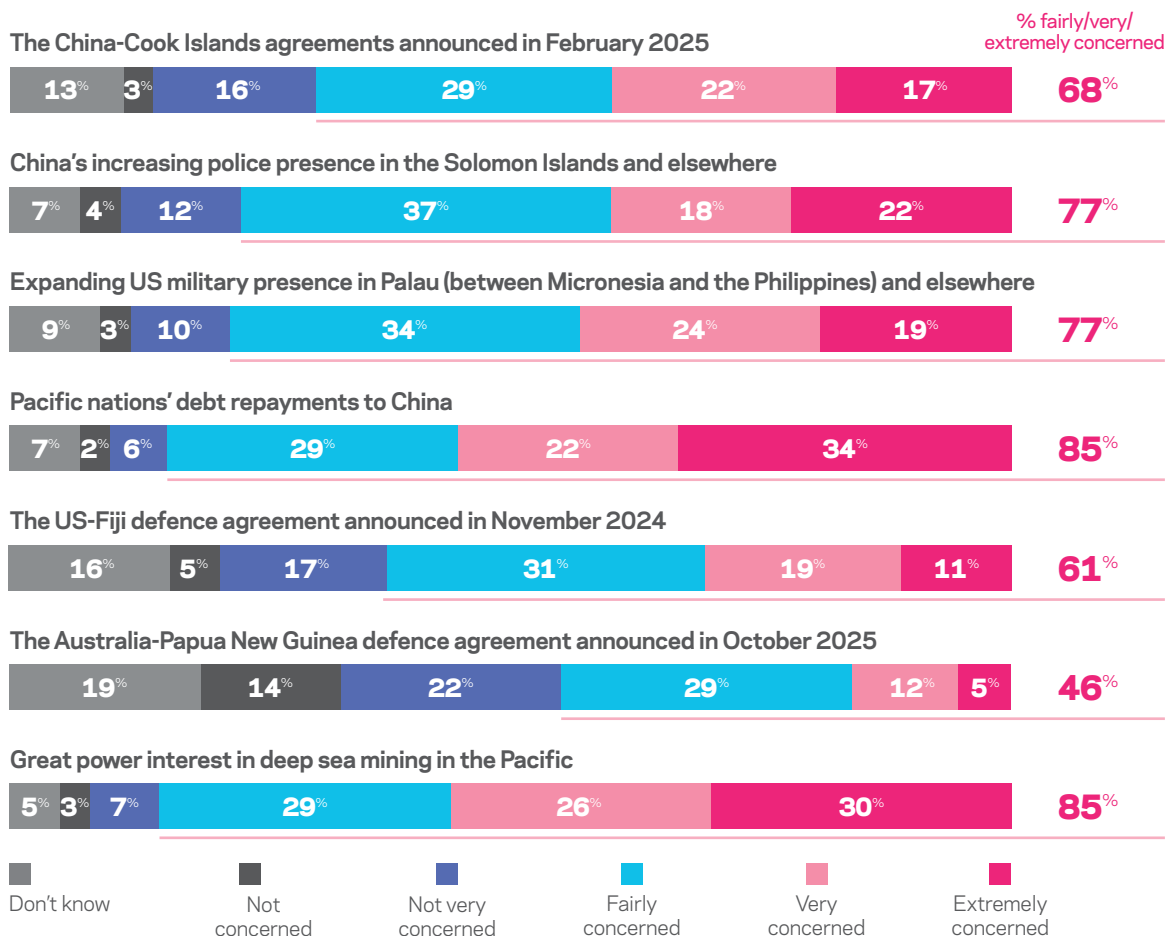
Interestingly, respondents based outside of Auckland were more concerned with the **China-Cook Islands agreements announced in February 2025** (73 percent compared to 65 percent of respondents based in Auckland). Similar levels of concern were expressed by Auckland-based and non-Auckland-based respondents on all other contemporary issues.

**Female respondents** had a higher percentage rate of 'don't know' on all contemporary developments compared to male respondents. When they did make a selection, female participants were more concerned compared to male participants about the **China-Cook Islands agreements announced in February**

**2025** (71 percent compared to 64 percent), **Pacific nations' debt repayments to China** (87 percent compared to 83 percent), and the **Australia-Papua New Guinea defence agreement announced in October 2025** (48 percent compared to 43 percent).

Male participants were more concerned than female Pacific New Zealanders about the **expanding US military presence in Palau and elsewhere** (83 percent compared to 72 percent) and **great power interests in deep sea mining in the Pacific** (88 percent compared to 82 percent).

**FIG. 14: CONCERNS ABOUT RECENT ASIA DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PACIFIC REGION**  
Mini-poll question: How concerned or not are you when it comes to the following developments?



Source: Mini-poll. Base: Pacific New Zealanders (2026) n=348.

## PERCEPTIONS OF CHINA DOMINATING THE ASIA NARRATIVE IN THE PACIFIC

During the talanoa, participants were asked to comment on their perceptions of China dominating the Asia narrative in the Pacific.

The most common response referred to China being a balancing act for Pacific nations. Other participants spoke about the varied approaches they perceived China and New Zealand taking in their engagement with the Pacific.

**“You can tell that they [Pacific nations] don’t want to take sides as well, they want to have a balance, like, they can share with everyone, but it’s like, mate, it’s not going to work like that.”**

Samoan, 40-59 years, female, Canterbury

For other talanoa participants, they felt it made sense given China’s significant presence in the Pacific region. Participants also spoke directly about the media attention that China receives, as well as the importance of having balanced reporting in the media and other outlets.

**“China has a lot to offer. So, I guess that’s why their influence is so big, and why there’s so much attention there.”**

Samoan, 25-39 years, Female, Canterbury

**“I believe it is fair China has got such attention however there are other countries in Asia that are also contributing to the world’s growth. However, I understand media only reports what it needs to, so it is important that we continue to educate ourselves independently and not rely solely on mainstream media outlets.”**

Cook Islander/Niuean, 25-39 years, Female, Auckland

In response to this talanoa question, one participant felt fatigued by the varying expectations on Pacific peoples and communities to respond to the dominating narrative on China’s influence in the region.

**“Listening to all of it. It feels very culturally fatiguing. The whole expectation to be better. To take everybody else’s issues and concerns into consideration is quite overwhelming... I can’t take someone else’s issues on when you’re trying to figure out how to manage your own people, navigate your own system, and now expectation is put on us to be like... Pacific for Pacific, Samoa for Samoa. It’s just like, what do you want from us?”**

Samoan, 40-59 years, female, Canterbury

Talanoa participants also acknowledged other Asian countries in the Pacific that should receive more recognition. A range of partners in Asia, alongside China, provide opportunities for the Pacific region; however, they do not attract the same level of attention. One participant noted that having more countries engaged in the region created further options for Pacific Island countries to balance their partnerships.

**“I’m thinking about Japan and France as well. They’ll have keen, invested interests in the Pacific region, to really support our little nations. But you just can’t deny the power that China has in the region.”**

Samoan, 40-59 years, female, Canterbury

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## Areas for increased cooperation between Asia and Pacific Island countries

Overall, mini-poll respondents considered **trade and economic ties, including tourism**, to be top of the list for increased cooperation between Asia and Pacific Island countries.

Demographic differences were prevalent in the mini-poll results. **Climate change and environmental issues** rated as the lowest on the list of areas for increased cooperation for male respondents (48 percent), whereas it was the most important for female participants (72 percent). **Infrastructure development**

was rated the lowest for female respondents (53 percent), compared to male respondents who saw it as the second highest priority (70 percent).

Talanoa participants were also invited to share their perspectives on areas for increased cooperation between Asia and the Pacific. They highlighted the same mini-poll categories, as well as areas such as technology, sport, dance, entertainment and Indigenous collaborations.

**“Maybe in tourism, I know in Japan, Hawaii is quite popular. It would be cool to see other Japanese people enjoying other islands and even our island people are travelling out to Asian countries now, but I’d love to see it more.”**

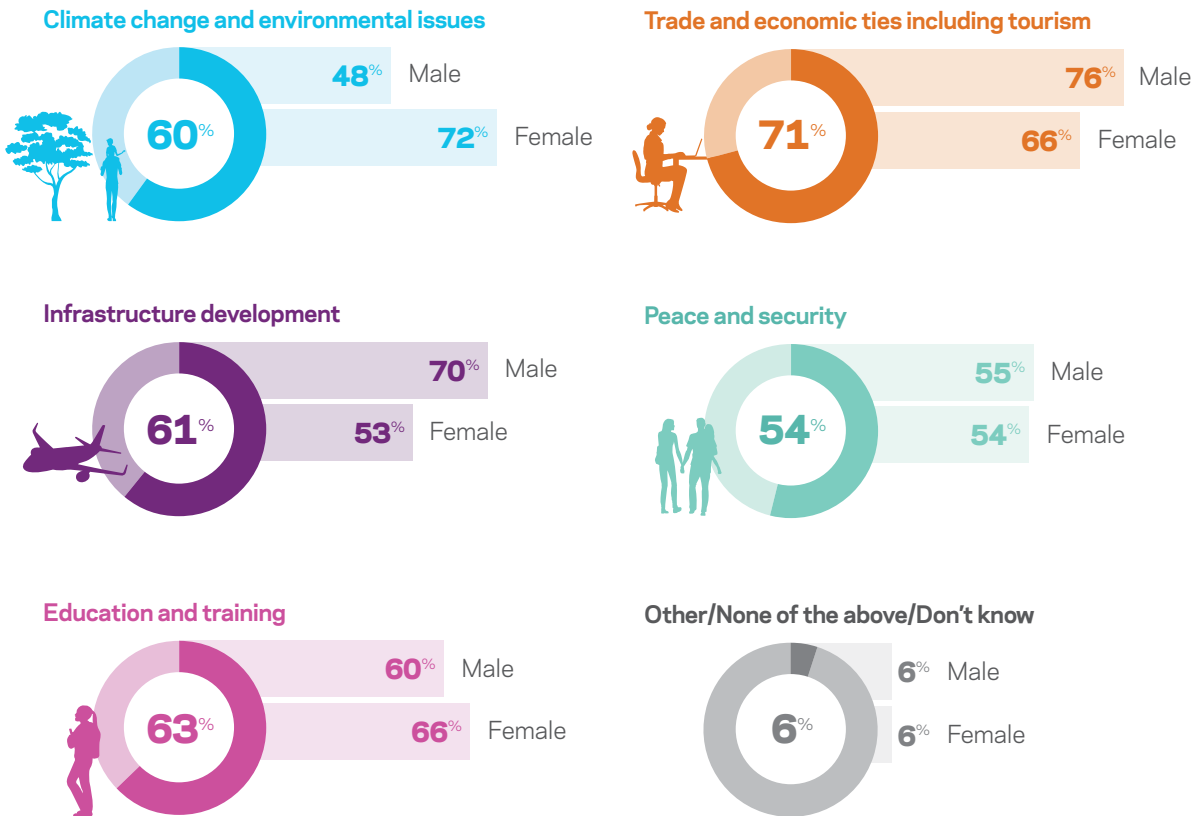
Cook Islander, 25–39 years, female, Canterbury

**“Construction as they can use those skills learnt to be self-sufficient rather than rely on overseas labour.”**

Samoaan, 25–39 years, male, Canterbury

**FIG. 15: AREAS FOR INCREASED COOPERATION BETWEEN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

Mini-poll question: In which area, if any, would you most like to see increased cooperation between countries in Asia and Pacific Island countries?



Source: Mini-poll. Base: Pacific New Zealanders (2026) n=348.

**“I’d like to see Pacific concerns become Asia’s concerns, and Asia’s concerns become the Pacific’s. There’s still a gap, for example, with climate change, where in places like Indonesia and Southeast Asia the focus is often on protecting forests, but not the sea. We need to share our perspectives, so others understand that these issues matter to us too. That way, we don’t feel alone, and instead build stronger solidarity and connections, not just between governments, but between people.”**

Pacific person, undisclosed age, gender, and location

## ASPIRATIONS FOR PACIFIC PEOPLES AND ASIA

Building on the question around areas for increased cooperation between countries in Asia and the Pacific, talanoa participants were also asked to share their aspirations for Pacific peoples and Asia.

The most common responses included increased opportunities for Pacific peoples in employment, education, and sports. The opportunity to collaborate with Asian countries was in itself an aspiration.

Participants also commented on the interconnectedness of pressing issues and common challenges faced by those in Asia and the Pacific, such as climate change and language retention. Knowledge sharing about these issues and ensuring visibility of current opportunities were seen as equally important.

### FIG. 16: FUTURE ASPIRATIONS FOR THE PACIFIC AND ASIA

Talanoa question: Going forward, what would you like to see in terms of Pacific peoples and Asia?



Source: Talanoa. Base: Pacific New Zealanders (2026) n= 23.



# **PART 3:** **DEEPENING RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS NEW ZEALAND, ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**



**Holona kuku mahali yona  
royau aka paeke.**

In the forest, kuku and mehali  
trees live side by side.

Just as different varieties of trees grow side  
by side in the forest, different people can work  
together harmoniously.

Papua (Sentani)

# Key findings

Pacific New Zealanders **strongly support New Zealand, Australia, China and Japan** taking a leading role in the Pacific.

Despite the Pacific region's increased engagement with Asian partners, the **most trusted powers continue to be its traditional powers** (namely Australia, New Zealand and the United States), although trust levels remain below that of the non-Pacific population.

Pacific New Zealanders rate the **importance of Asia-related skills for New Zealand's future workforce more highly** than non-Pacific New Zealanders, particularly when it comes to understanding Asian languages, religions and societies.

Pacific New Zealanders see their **skills and experiences** navigating diverse cultural situations as being **valuable assets for strengthening New Zealand's** relationships with Asia and the Pacific.

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## Trust in major powers

According to *Perceptions of Asia* data (2021–2025), Pacific New Zealanders are less likely to be trusting of several major powers to act responsibly in the world compared to non-Pacific New Zealanders.

Despite the Pacific's increased engagement with contemporary Asian powers in the region, the most trusted powers tended to be countries with colonial and historical legacies with the Pacific (although this has declined in some areas). Pacific New Zealanders were also more likely to indicate neutral trust in powers compared to non-Pacific New Zealanders.

**New Zealand** was perceived by Pacific New Zealanders as the **most trusted power to act responsibly in the world** according to the 2025 *Perceptions of Asia* data.

Despite New Zealanders' trust in **Australia** increasing each year, Pacific New Zealanders' trust in Australia decreased in 2025 (74 percent of non-Pacific New Zealanders expressed high trust compared to 60 percent of Pacific New Zealanders, down from 67 percent in the previous survey).

**Japan** was seen by New Zealanders (including the Pacific diaspora) as the **most trusted Asian power**.

Pacific New Zealanders' trust in the **United Kingdom** has remained steady over the years (49 percent in 2025), but remains significantly lower than trust levels expressed by non-Pacific New Zealanders (64 percent).

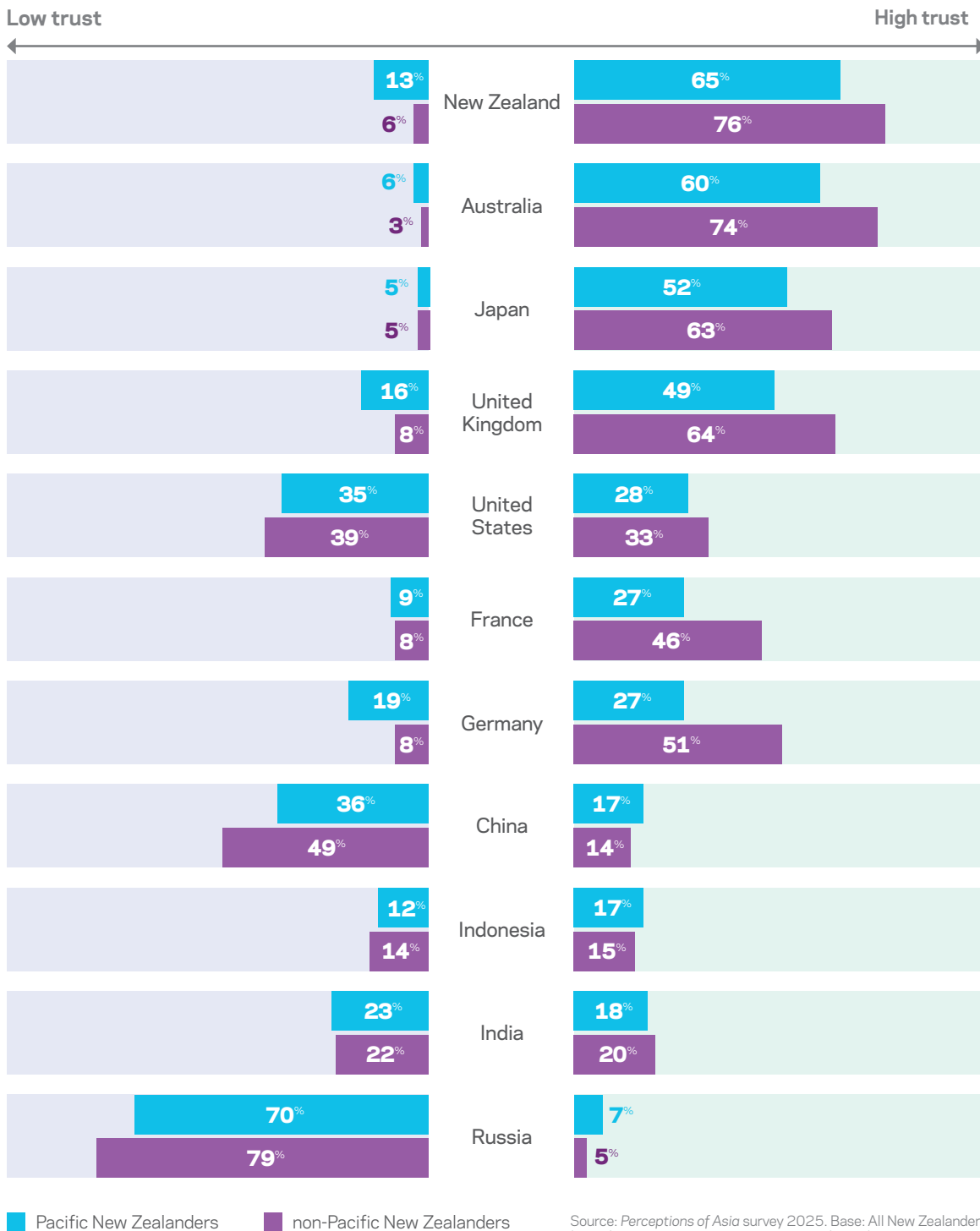
Pacific New Zealanders show higher levels of trust in **China** (and lower levels of low trust) than non-Pacific New Zealanders (17 percent versus 14 percent high trust respectively). Pacific New Zealanders are also less trusting of the **United States** than non-Pacific New Zealanders (28 percent compared with 33 percent high trust among non-Pacific New Zealanders).

Comparing the United States and China directly, Pacific New Zealanders have similar levels of low trust in both great powers (35 percent and 36 percent respectively), but greater levels of high trust in the United States than China (28 percent high trust in the United States versus 17 percent in China).

Trust in **Indonesia** and **India** was broadly similar for Pacific New Zealanders and the non-Pacific population.

**FIG. 17: LEVELS OF TRUST IN WORLD POWERS**

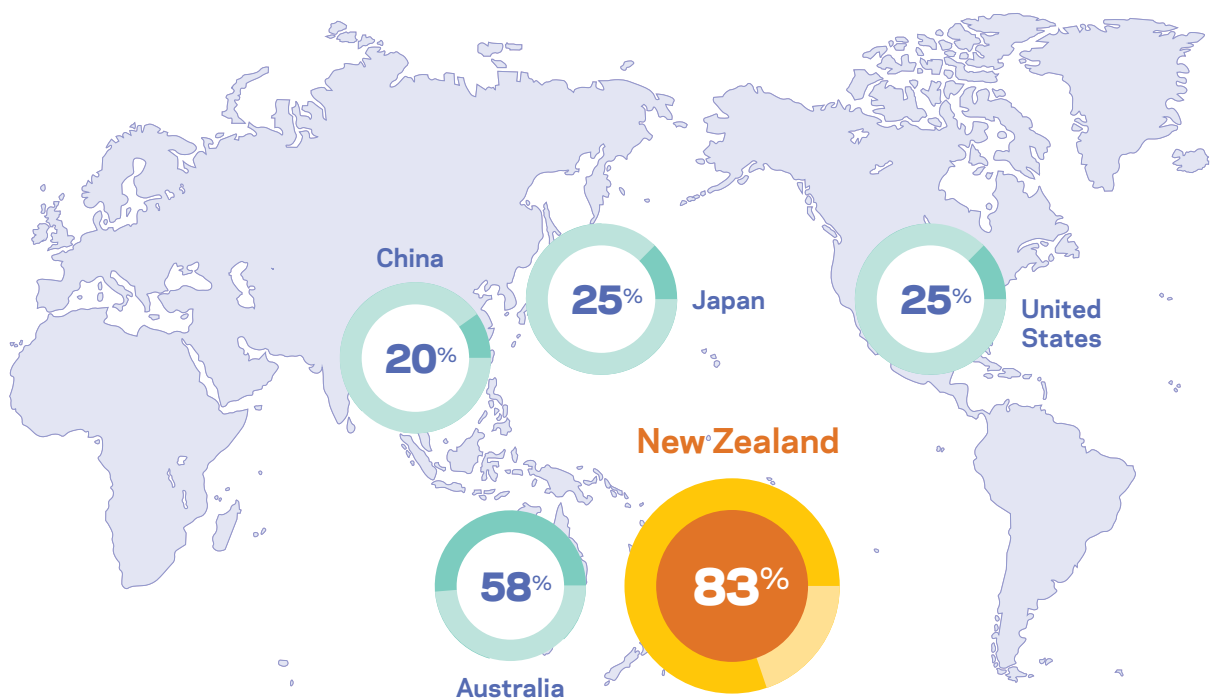
Perceptions of Asia survey question: How much trust do you have in the following major powers to act responsibly in the world?



## Countries in the Pacific - who should play a bigger role?

**FIG. 18: WHICH COUNTRIES SHOULD PLAY A BIGGER ROLE IN THE PACIFIC?**

Mini-poll question: Which of the following, if any, would you most like to see play a bigger role in the Pacific?



Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.  
\*\*Caution: low base number of respondents - results are indicative only.

Source: Mini-poll. Base: Pacific New Zealanders (2026) n=348.

When asked which country they would like to see play a bigger role in the Pacific, New Zealand was the top pick with 83 percent selecting it as their preferred partner, well ahead of Australia at 58 percent. Support for other powers is much lower, with around a quarter favouring a greater role for the United States and Japan (both 25 percent) and 20 percent for China.

Younger respondents (aged 18 - 34 years) show the strongest support for New Zealand, while older respondents (55 years and over) are more supportive of traditional partners such as Australia, the United

States, and Japan. Women are slightly more likely than men to favour a larger role for New Zealand and Auckland residents show somewhat stronger support for New Zealand leadership.

During the talanoa, participants expressed that New Zealand and Australia are seen as the region's key players, valued for proximity and aid, while China and Japan are recognised for their economic power and investment. Other countries, including India, the Philippines and South Korea, are seen as emerging partners.

### ASIA-RELATED SKILLS FOR THE WORKFORCE

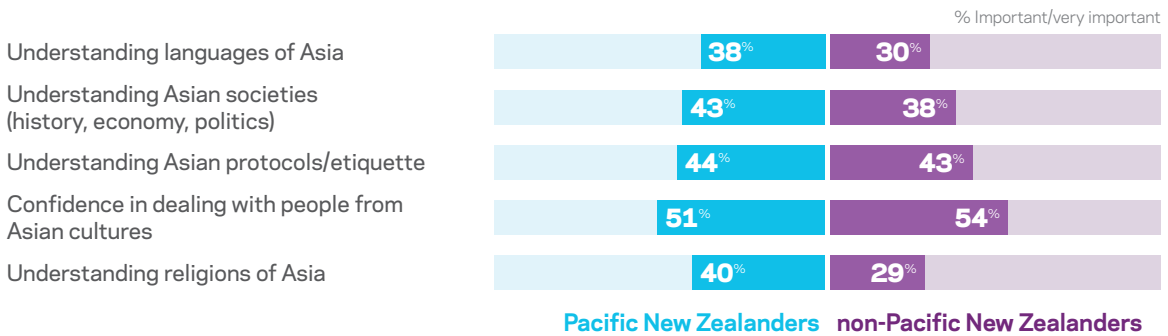
Based on the 2025 *Perceptions of Asia* survey, Pacific New Zealanders rated the importance of Asia-related skills for the New Zealand future workforce more highly than non-Pacific New Zealanders, particularly in understanding Asian languages, religions, and societies.

Levels are similar for understanding protocols and etiquette, while Pacific New Zealanders view having confidence in dealing with people from Asian cultures as slightly less important.

The 2026 talanoa underscored that while factual knowledge of Asia is important, confidence, cultural understanding and reciprocal relationships are viewed as essential skills for Pacific New Zealanders in a globally connected workforce.

**FIG. 19: IMPORTANCE OF ASIA-RELATED SKILLS FOR NEW ZEALAND'S FUTURE WORKFORCE**

*Perceptions of Asia* survey question: How important are the following Asia-related skills for our future workforce and the career path of New Zealanders?



Source: *Perceptions of Asia* survey 2025.  
 Base: All New Zealanders (2024) n= 2,300.  
 Pacific New Zealanders n= 103.

**“I think we can play a role as a bridge, by creating more opportunities for our people to engage with Asia, and for Asia to engage with us. Even small exchanges can be valuable, and there’s something for everyone to learn.”**

Cook Islander, 25–39 years, female, Canterbury

## The role of Pacific New Zealanders in deepening relationships across New Zealand, Asia and the Pacific

Talanoa participants were asked about the role of the Pacific diaspora in New Zealand in strengthening relations between New Zealand and Asia, as well as between the Pacific and Asia.

Most participants affirmed that Pacific New Zealanders had a role to play. The most common response was having lived experience, shared values, and skills to navigate diverse worlds. This included the ability to act as liaisons or bridges regarding resources, opportunities, and building rapport, as well as understanding complex cultural nuances and mixed identities given the increasingly diverse nature of Pacific New Zealanders. In addition, given the close ties that the Pacific diaspora maintains with families in the Pacific region, Pacific New Zealanders can be important links to help understand how key developments are affecting Pacific communities in the Pacific and abroad.

**“I think the first thing is for us to understand that we’re just not participants in this relationship between, New Zealand, the Pacific, and Asia. I think that we have got skills and capability to really support our nations back home.”**

Samoan, 60+ years, female, Canterbury

**“We’ve walked in these two sorts of worlds. In all of our upbringings, we would play a key conduit in terms of understanding both sides and can see both sides, and sort of slip and slide in between seamlessly.”**

Samoan, 40–59 years, male, Canterbury

Talanoa participants also articulated the need for Pacific New Zealanders to become more educated about different Asian cultures as well as issues impacting the Asian region. More research about issues relating to the Pacific by Pacific researchers were also seen to deepen these relationships. This includes using Pacific ways of knowing and practice.

**“Just having more of our knowledge down, secured somewhere... we hear a lot from other people talking about us. It’ll be nice to hear a specific perspective from us. I mean, we may know a few Pasifika researchers out there, but not many, so I think if we can elevate our knowledge somewhere, somehow, that would be quite nice as well.”**

Samoan, 40–59 years, female, Canterbury

**“I think on the education side, it’s just collaborating with research, but then those in government, I guess, connections.”**

Samoan, 25–39 years, male, Otago

Despite the important role that Pacific New Zealanders can play in strengthening bonds, talanoa participants also noted that there is a careful balance to strike to ensure that the views of Pacific peoples in the region are represented accurately by the Pacific diaspora. A small number of talanoa participants felt that Pacific New Zealanders had no role to play if they did not live in the Pacific.

**“We don’t want to be seen as speaking for the people that actually live in Samoa, because that’s what we get a lot in terms of politics in Samoa. They’re like... ‘you guys that live outside have no say in what’s going on here, you don’t see’, but yeah, balancing that.”**

Samoan, 40–59 years, male, Canterbury

## NEW ZEALANDERS OF ASIAN HERITAGE AND THEIR ROLE IN DEEPENING RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS NEW ZEALAND, ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

There are layers of diversity, lived experiences, and cultural ties for Pacific New Zealanders.

As part of the 2024 *Perceptions of Asia* survey, New Zealanders of Asian heritage were asked two questions: how they felt their Asian heritage had impacted their careers, and whether they thought they had skills and expertise to help New Zealand succeed in Asia. Pacific New Zealanders of Asian heritage made up 3.6 percent of responses.

Half of Pacific New Zealanders surveyed felt that their Asian heritage had a negative

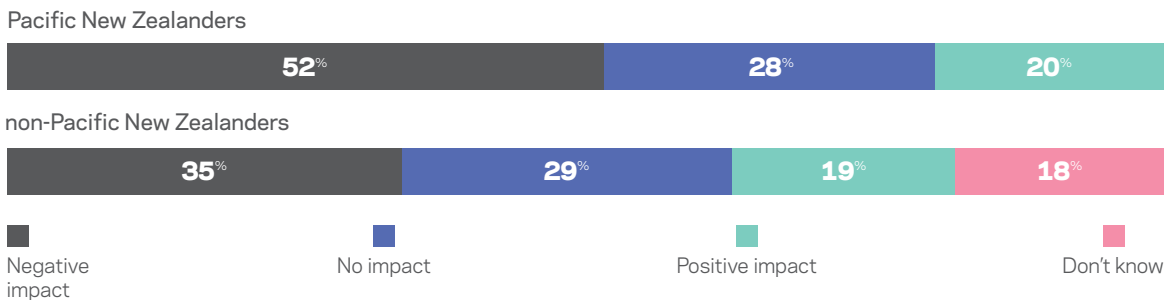
impact on obtaining jobs or career progression, compared to 35 percent of non-Pacific New Zealanders of Asian heritage.

Two thirds of non-Pacific New Zealanders (65 percent) felt their skills and expertise from being of Asian heritage could help New Zealand in Asia, compared to 43 percent of Pacific New Zealanders of Asian heritage. In contrast, one third of Pacific New Zealanders (33 percent) felt that their Asian heritage could not help New Zealand succeed in Asia, compared to just 15 percent of non-Pacific New Zealanders.

As we look to the future, the deepening of New Zealand’s relationship with Asia and the Pacific will be determined by the ability of New Zealanders to engage effectively in cross-cultural settings.

### FIG. 20: IMPACT OF ASIAN HERITAGE ON EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER PROGRESSION

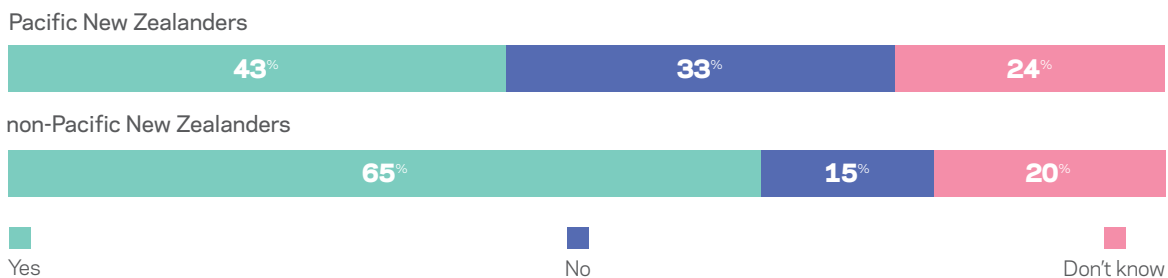
*Perceptions of Asia* survey question: Do you feel your Asian heritage has impacted whether you get jobs or are promoted in your career (including into more senior roles, onto boards and into management positions)?



Source: *Perceptions of Asia* survey 2024. Base: All New Zealanders (2023) n= 2,300. Pacific New Zealanders n= 13.

### FIG. 21: SKILLS AND EXPERTISE TO HELP NEW ZEALAND SUCCEED IN ASIA

*Perceptions of Asia* survey question: Do you feel you have skills and expertise from being of Asian heritage that could help New Zealand succeed in Asia?

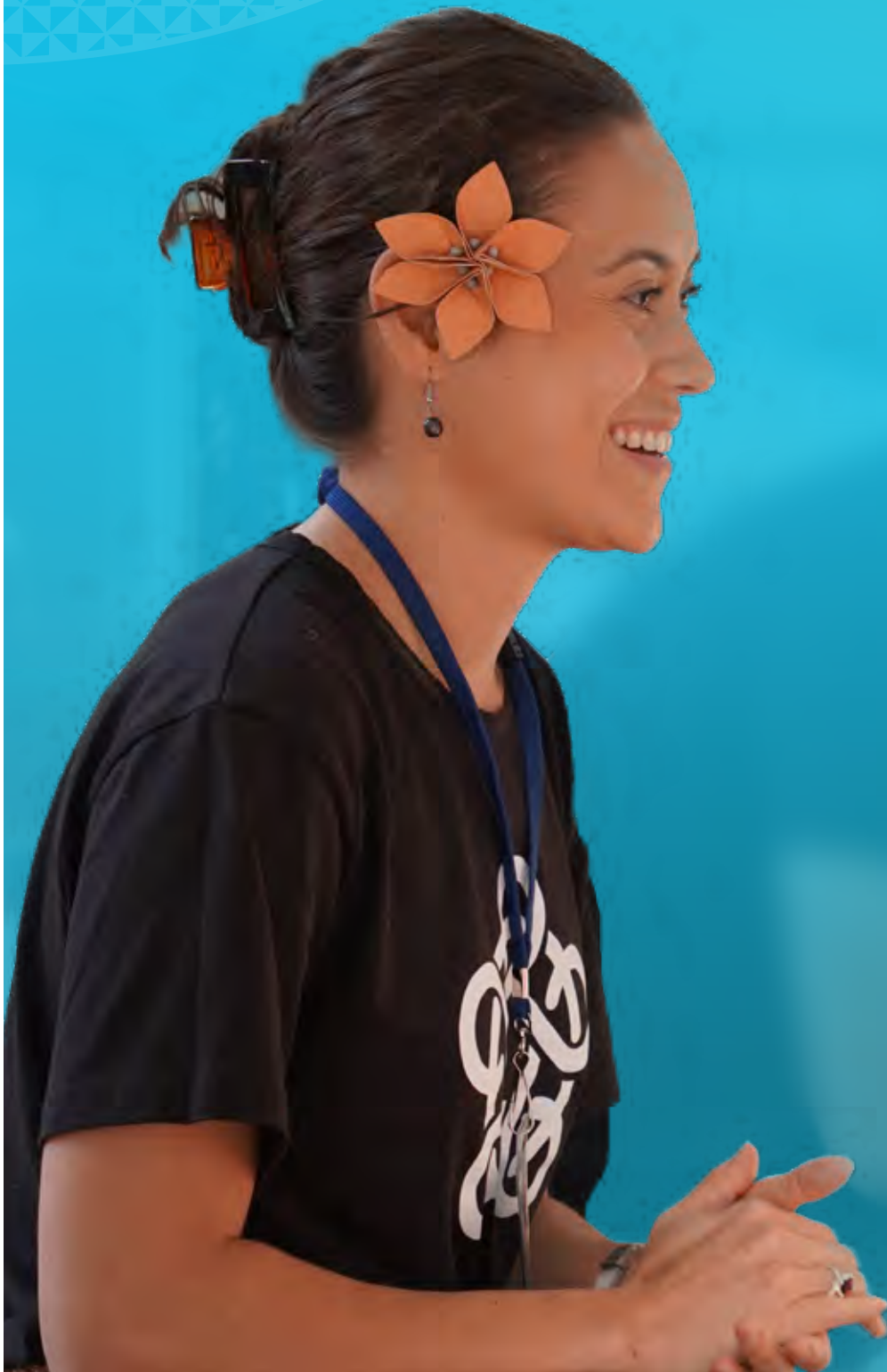


Source: *Perceptions of Asia* survey 2024. Base: All New Zealanders (2023) n= 2,300. Pacific New Zealanders n= 13.



**“The sea is our pathway to each other and to everyone else, the sea is our endless saga, the sea is our most powerful metaphor, the ocean is in us.”**

Epeli Hau'ofa



# OUR APPROACH

This section provides the background context of the survey, the methodology used and details on the sample profiles.

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## Background, methodology and sample profiles

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### METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out by the authors between late December 2025 – March 2026. A mixed methods approach was used to facilitate this research using three data sources. The report presents the results from: *Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples* surveys (2021 – 2025), a supplementary mini-poll, and four online talanoa. The sample profile details for all three methods are included.

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### PERCEPTIONS OF ASIA SURVEYS (2021 - 2025)

On average, most Pacific respondents in the *Perceptions of Asia* surveys were in the 20–24 and 25–29 age brackets, with the 2025 survey boasting a strong showing for the 40–49 years age group. Most survey respondents were female (with numbers significantly higher than non-Pacific New Zealanders) and based in Auckland (numbers were also significantly higher than non-Pacific New Zealanders). The sample profile for the supplementary mini-poll aligns with these figures.

This profile is reflective of Pacific peoples' demographics in New Zealand, with a median age of 25 years and the majority of Pacific communities living in urban centres such as Auckland, where around 62 percent of the Pacific population reside.

### Supplementary mini-poll

A tailored mini-poll of 348 Pacific New Zealanders was conducted by Research New Zealand, based in Wellington, between 22<sup>nd</sup> January and 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026 to provide more targeted insight into Pacific New Zealanders' perspectives on Asia.

Respondents were aged between 18 and 55+ years, all living in New Zealand, with a large majority from Auckland.

Mini-poll questions mirror those explored in the talanoa, allowing for comparison of insights across both methods.

### Talanoa

To complement the *Perceptions of Asia* survey data and mini-poll results, four online talanoa were conducted on Zoom between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2026 to provide deeper qualitative insight into Pacific New Zealanders' views. Each talanoa participant received a small koha to reciprocate their time and contribution to the research. An additional comments form was distributed to registered talanoa participants in case they had further insights to provide.

Open-ended questions from the talanoa were then coded into themes using Nvivo software and these codes were linked to the key themes from the mini-poll. Each online talanoa ran between 1 and 1.5 hours and some participants chose not to disclose their ethnicity/ethnicities, age, gender, and city/region. All personal information was treated confidentially to protect privacy and to encourage open discussion.

To help balance the Auckland-heavy mini-poll sample, a greater proportion of talanoa participants came from the Canterbury region to ensure a broader range of perspectives.

The findings from the talanoa reflect participants' perspectives and are not representative of all Pacific New Zealanders. Rather they illustrate some of the experiences, beliefs and motivations shaping responses.

## SAMPLE PROFILES

### Perceptions of Asia survey (2021-2025) - Pacific New Zealanders' statistics

	2025	2024	2022	2021
<b>Sample Size</b>	n=103	n=80	n=128 (unweighted) n=149 (weighted)	n=170 (unweighted) n=184 (weighted)
<b>Age</b>				
	18-19 (4%)	18-19 (14%)	15-17 (5%)	15-17 (8%)
	20-24 (17%)	20-24 (35%)	18-19 (3%)	18-19% (2%)
	25-29 (11%)	25-29 (2%)	20-24 (5%)	20-24 (6%)
	30-34 (6%)	30-34 (8%)	25-29 (17%)	25-29 (13%)
	35-39 (11%)	35-39 (5%)	30-34 (13%)	30-34 (9%)
	40-49 (23%)	40-49 (16%)	35-39 (8%)	35-39 (14%)
	50-59 (16%)	50-59 (13%)	40-44 (10%)	40-44 (7%)
	60-69 (8%)	60-69 (3%)	45-49 (11%)	45-49 (10%)
	70+ (4%)	70+ (4%)	50-54 (14%)	50-54 (10%)
			55-59 (6%)	55-59 (7%)
			60-64 (6%)	60-64 (5%)
			65-69 (1%)	65-69 (4%)
			70+ (2%)	70+ (6%)
<b>Gender</b>				
	Male (35%)	Male (39%)	Male (48)	Male (32%)
	Female (65%)	Female (61%)	Female (52%)	Female (68%)
<b>Region</b>				
	Northland (3%)	Northland (3%)	Auckland (61%)	Auckland (55%)
	Auckland (58%)	Auckland (63%)	Waikato (7%)	Waikato (8%)
	Waikato (7%)	Waikato (6%)	Bay of Plenty (3%)	Bay of Plenty (4%)
	Bay of Plenty (3%)	Bay of Plenty (6%)	Gisborne (1%)	Gisborne (1%)
	Hawke's Bay (2%)	Hawke's Bay (2%)	Hawke's Bay (2%)	Hawke's Bay (1%)
	Manawatu-Wanganui (1%)	Manawatu-Wanganui (2%)	Manawatu-Wanganui (1%)	Manawatu-Wanganui (3%)
	Wellington (15%)	Wellington (11%)	Wellington (12%)	Wellington (16%)
	Canterbury (3%)	West Coast (1%)	Marlborough (1%)	Nelson (1%)
	Otago (4%)	Canterbury (4%)	West Coast (1%)	Canterbury (5%)
	Southland (1%)	Otago (1%)	Canterbury (6%)	Otago (2%)
		Southland (2%)	Otago (3%)	

## Mini-poll

Sample Weight	Unweighted base (348)	Weighted base (348)
<b>Age</b>		
	18-34 (191)	18-34 (163)
	35-54 (130)	35-54 (114)
	55+ (27**)	55+ (72**)
<b>Gender</b>		
	Male (90)	Male (173)
	Female (256)	Female (173)
	Prefer not to say (2**)	Prefer not to say (2**)
<b>Region</b>		
	Auckland (255)	Auckland (249)
	Rest of NZ (93)	Rest of NZ (99)

\*\*Caution: low base number of respondents - results are indicative only

## Online talanoa

Talanoa Session	No. of Participants	Characteristics
Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> February, 6:30pm	5	Varied experience and knowledge of Asia 2 Samoan males, aged 40–59 years, Canterbury location 1 Tongan female, aged 25–39, Auckland location 1 Tongan non-binary person, aged 25–39, Auckland location 1 Samoan female, aged 25–39 years, Canterbury location
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> February, 2pm	5	Varied experience and knowledge of Asia 2 Samoan females, aged 60+ years, Canterbury location 1 Cook Islander/Fijian female, aged 40–59 years, Canterbury location 1 Samoan/Māori wahine, aged 40–59 years, Wellington location** 1 Samoan female, aged 40–59 years, Canterbury location
Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> February, 2pm	3	Varied experience and knowledge of Asia 1 Samoan female, aged 40–59 years, Canterbury location 1 Samoan female, aged 25–39 years, Canterbury location** 1 Samoan male, aged 25–39 years, Otago location**
Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> February, 5pm	7	Varied experience and knowledge of Asia 1 Samoan female, aged 60+ years, Canterbury location** 1 Samoan/Chinese female, aged 40–59 years, Canterbury location 1 Pacific person, undisclosed age, gender and location** 1 Fijian female, aged 40–59 years, Canterbury location 1 Cook Islander female, aged 25–39 years, Canterbury location** 1 Samoan male, aged 25–39 years, Canterbury location** 1 Fijian/Māori male, aged 18–24 years, Canterbury location
Additional Comments Form*	3	1 Cook Islander/Niuean female, aged 25–39 years, Auckland location 1 Samoan female, aged 40–59 years, Wellington location 1 Samoan female, aged 18–24 years, Marlborough location

\*excludes those who took part in a talanoa session

\*\*talanoa participants who also completed the additional comments form

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