

# **MIGRANT EXPERIENCES IN THE TIME OF COVID**

**Survey Report 2020**



# CONTENTS

03

## Executive Summary

04

## Introduction

05

## Guiding Principles and Framework

06

## The Survey

- Sampling and Distribution
- Methodological Limitations and Ethical Considerations
- Analysis

07

## Demographic Insights

08

## Spotlight on Recent Migrants

- Female Newcomers on Temporary Work Visas Living with Families
- Anxious Workers and Job Seekers with Reduced Income

14

## Responses

- What organisations/initiatives in NZ are you aware of that provide COVID-related support to migrants?
- Where/from who do you usually get information about COVID-related support available to migrants?
- What challenges are you (and your family) experiencing due to COVID?
- What do you think hinders (or could hinder) migrants from seeking and receiving COVID-19 related support?
- What forms of support/initiatives do you think are needed by migrants to cope with COVID?
- What plans do you intend to pursue in the next 12 months?

21

## Conclusion

- The 4Rs
- Call for Empathy: Enabling and Transforming Empathy into Action
- Whole-of-Society Approach

26

## References and Appendix

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Amplifying voices of our marginalised communities enables diverse perspectives and experiences to be heard and therefore help shape our understanding of issues and solutions that are truly transformative and regenerative. COVID-19 offered a pressing opportunity for Belong Aotearoa to further look at the plight of newcomer communities and amplify their voices. A first phase of our wider research, this report covers the findings from a *“COVID-19 Impact on Migrant Communities in New Zealand Survey”* we undertook in September 2020. It focuses on the responses of 160 recent migrants, currently living in Auckland, sharing their lived experiences in the time of COVID.

The findings presented in this report highlight the vulnerability of recent migrants in Aotearoa New Zealand during a global crisis; and the systemic barriers to a positive settlement journey that existed pre-COVID yet to be fully addressed. Both creating a more complex environment to navigate during extraordinary times.

Based on our findings, migrant experiences during COVID are encapsulated by what we term as the ‘4Rs’, namely:

- **Risks to well-being;**
- **Re-rooting and re-routing of racism;**
- **Restricted access to COVID-related support and information;**
- **Reskilling, relocation, if not, re-migration.**

Suggestions for the type of support or initiatives needed by the respondents to manage the impact of COVID are wide-ranging, the main themes being financial and job support; information and communication support; psycho-social support; education and training support; and visa and legal support.

In response to what has been shared by our respondents, we conclude this report with an open invitation to have a conversation around and collaborate on developing a ‘whole-of-society’ approach for positive change and building a better future.

As a first step to this approach, Belong Aotearoa intends to bring survey findings to different spaces and share widely to stakeholders as a way of communicating community insights, raising awareness on lived experiences of migrants and calling for collective action for meaningful impact.

While this survey report only scratches the surface, it has identified a need to address the difficulties collectively shared for our collective wellbeing. As respondents gave their feedback on the survey, we are challenged not only to listen to their voices but to take action and work together to rebuild a thriving Aotearoa where empathy is embedded at the core.

# INTRODUCTION

In a year of unprecedented challenges and opportunities, we are revived by our communities, who in the face of many barriers, are able to show us the best of who we can be, and believe in the potential of an empathetic and inclusive Aotearoa, New Zealand. Whilst we are ever hopeful for the possibilities 2021 will bring, we cannot however ignore the issues COVID-19 has further exacerbated. That things need to change.

The severity and far-reaching effects of a global crisis has sparked this action research so that we can gauge how COVID-19 has impacted the communities we work with and for in Aotearoa New Zealand. Several questions requiring deep inquiry are asked in this report - have the barriers to belonging intensified? And if left unaddressed will this lead to further inequality, social isolation, discrimination and even exploitation – the critical challenges people from migrant and former refugee backgrounds face as they build their lives in New Zealand ([Belong Aotearoa, 2017](#); [Collins & Stringer, 2019](#); [MBIE, 2020](#); [Ward et al., 2018](#))? Through this research, we also highlight the opportunities presented by the pandemic to collectively address the prevalent challenges to belonging through a whole-of-society approach.

We acknowledge the importance of connecting to vulnerable communities and leaving no one behind at this critical time ([Belong Aotearoa & Migrant Action Trust, 2020](#)). This will be discussed more broadly in this report, which aims to present migrant experiences of and during COVID-19. While a work in progress, this report outlines the preliminary findings of the research undertaken, focusing on the scoping survey we completed in September 2020. Insights drawn from the survey are expected to build on ongoing conversations and existing research around the broader impact of COVID-19 amidst increasing diversity in New Zealand. Similarly, this report hopes to encourage and inform public consultations, especially taking into account the Auckland Plan 2050 ([Auckland Council, 2020](#)), where 'Belonging and Participation' are targeted as primary outcomes.

According to [Stats NZ 2018 Census](#), 27.4% of New Zealand's resident population were born overseas, with Auckland more increasingly diverse having 50.7% of its residents born outside of New Zealand. Among these are former refugees and temporary migrants who contribute to New Zealand's economy mainly as workers and students ([Spoonley, 2020](#)). By the end of October 2020, 7 months after the first COVID-19 lockdown, 264,534 people or approximately 6% of the country's population were living in New Zealand on non-resident visas ([MBIE, 2020](#)).

With the compounded effects of the pandemic, concerns have been raised around New Zealand's social cohesion so calls were made to strengthen the 'collective' to sustain and enhance social cohesion in New Zealand post COVID-19 ([Spoonley et al., 2020](#)). Belong Aotearoa joins this call to action while highlighting the need to recognise people from migrant and former refugee backgrounds as part of this collective, who can and will contribute to making Aotearoa a truly cohesive, resilient and thriving society during and post-pandemic (Kukutai, 2020).

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND FRAMEWORK

This research is underpinned by our five principles of practice, namely, Empowerment, Manaakitanga, Whanaungatanga, Courageous Disruption and Collaborative Impact. Guided by these principles, this research has been designed not only for data collection and information gathering from communities but more importantly for providing a platform for voicing experiences and drawing on evidence for transformative action and engagement in the context of a pandemic.

1	<b>EMPOWERMENT</b>	<b>Research as voice enabler</b>
2	<b>MANAAKITANGA</b>	<b>Research as platform to connect</b>
3	<b>WHANAUNGATANGA</b>	<b>Research as evidence for engagement</b>
4	<b>COURAGEOUS DISRUPTION</b>	<b>Research as a tool to question and disrupt systems</b>
5	<b>COLLABORATIVE IMPACT</b>	<b>Research as an instrument to forge and strengthen collaborations</b>

Table 1. Belong Aotearoa's 5 Principles of Practice and Alignment to Research

Designed as action research unfolding in a landscape that is rapidly and radically changing, the broader study aims to produce community-based knowledge that will inform policy and improve practice by being collaborative and agile. The research is shaped by what we call the A.C.T. (Analysing [Ruminating], Communicating, Transforming) Framework, a process of connecting with people, collecting information, counterchecking, communicating and collaborating with communities for positive change.

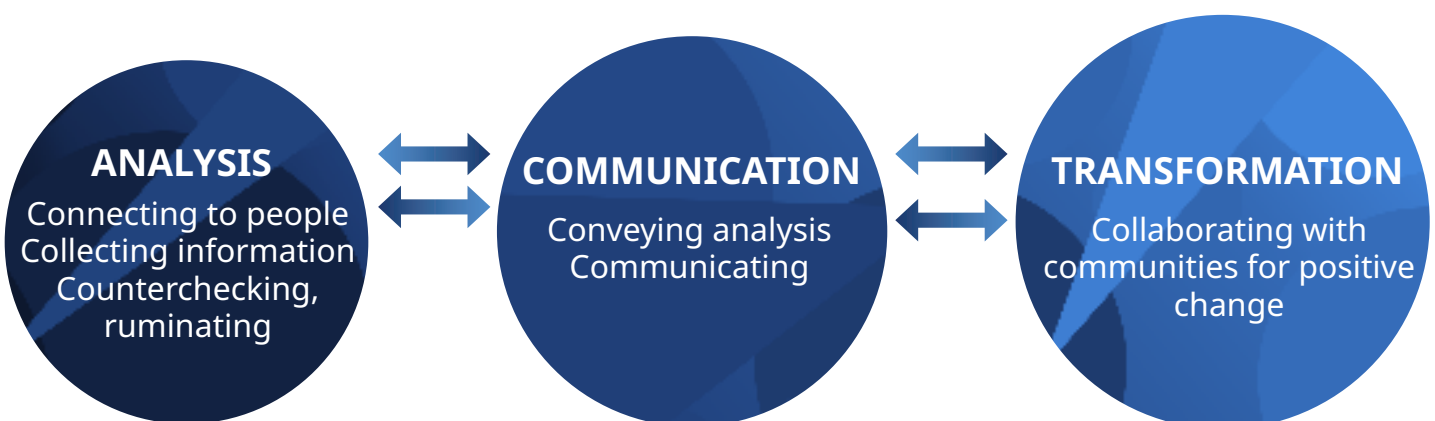


Diagram 1. A.C.T. Framework

As a multi-methods action research, it draws on descriptive data collected through an online survey, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Data collection has been scheduled at different phases, beginning with the online survey that was completed in September 2020. Interviews are completed, while focus groups are incorporated with ongoing programmes we deliver.

# THE SURVEY

## Sampling and Distribution

This report covers the findings from the survey, the first phase of our wider research. An anonymous online questionnaire was set up through Survey Monkey and launched publicly on the first week of September 2020. Within a day, the survey collected 80 responses, reflecting strong support from partners and the community. The survey closed on the 30th of September, allowing us to analyse 160 unique responses from people representing 36 countries, at least 5 of whom answered in a language other than English.

## Methodological Limitations and Ethical Considerations

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research. In order to be as inclusive as possible, no eligibility requirements were set for survey respondents. Instead, purposive open sampling through contacts-based survey distribution was strategically employed. However, this constrained us to reach out to only particular groups across our existing networks. For instance, 31% of the respondents said they got the survey through email sent by Belong and Belong-related contacts and organisations; 12.5% from friend or colleague; 8% from social media, mostly Facebook; and 3% from ethnic community platforms such as Korea Post and Asian Network community. As a result of these constraints, the small sample size and the demographic characteristics of our respondents cannot be taken as representative of the migrant and former refugee population of Auckland in particular and of New Zealand in general.

Methodological limitations aside, the online questionnaire contains a cover sheet that outlines general information (see Appendix 1) on voluntary participation, privacy, confidentiality and use of survey results. It likewise describes the objective of the survey and its focus on migrant communities. Across all stages of research, we have recognised the need for ethically grounded research, taking into consideration culturally and emotionally sensitive issues defining migrant experiences. In light of this, an honest enquiry was done on an ethics review for community research and a conversation with New Zealand Ethics Committee is also currently being explored for the next stages of research.

## Analysis

This report focuses on responses of 160 people born overseas, who are currently living in Auckland. Basic demographic data and open-ended responses were both analysed. Open-ended responses were analysed by theme and greater attention was given to data coming from Auckland-based newcomer communities including recent migrants.

Recent migrants are defined as those born overseas who have arrived and been living in New Zealand within the past five years. This focus does not, however, regard as insignificant the experiences of people from migrant and former refugee backgrounds living outside Auckland and those who have been here longer. This aspect will nevertheless be outside of the scope of this report and will be investigated in future research.



# DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS



## ANALYSED SAMPLE

**160**

(overseas born, Auckland-based respondents)

## YEAR OF ARRIVAL

2016-2020	51%
2011-2015	22%
2006-2010	11%
2001-2005	6%
1996-2000	5%
1986-1995	5%

**31%  
MALE**

**69%  
FEMALE**



## COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

74% come from different regions of Asia

## VISA

- ✓ 33% Work
- ✓ 25% Citizen
- ✓ 18% Permanent Resident
- ✓ 13% Resident
- ✓ 9% Student
- ✓ 2% Other

## AGE

11%	50-59
24%	40-49
46%	39-30
16%	20-29

## RELATIONSHIP STATUS

Married: 67%  
Single: 26%  
Divorced: 3%  
Separated: 1%  
Widowed: 2%  
Others: 2%

67% are married and 71% of those who said they're married are living with family members

21% are partners of primary visa holders, 82% of whom are female

# SPOTLIGHT ON RECENT MIGRANTS

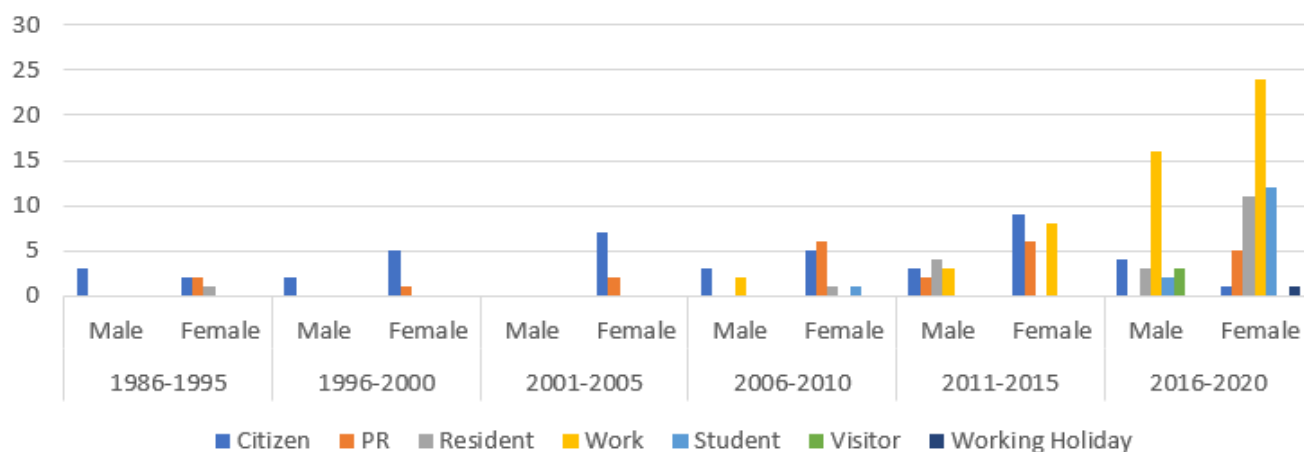
That New Zealand has long relied on migrant labour has been widely acknowledged (OAG, 2013; Wood, 2020). In a 2019 information release of [Stats NZ](#), it was reported that 224,000 more people came to New Zealand than departed over the past 4 years with this number equivalent to Wellington's population. Despite border closures due to COVID-19, a significant number of temporary migrants were also reported to remain in the country ([MBIE, 2020](#)). These reports both confirm that newcomer communities, including recent migrants, maintain a strong presence in New Zealand.

According to leading migration expert, Professor Paul Spoonley, "skilled migrants make up 60 percent of total immigrants. With new arrivals come new business, new investment and new connections with key export markets" ([Moger, 2017](#)). The entry of migrants is also reported to support some of New Zealand's key economic and social agenda ([MBIE, 2020](#)). Despite this recognition, however, diverse barriers to migrant settlement and inclusion remain prevalent and persistent through the years. For instance, key findings from MBIE's 2012-2017 migrant survey indicated that 54% of recent migrants reported unfair treatment at least once or twice by virtue of their being 'migrants' – a proportion stated to not have significantly changed since 2015 ([MBIE, 2018](#)). A closer look at the experiences of recent migrants therefore become all the more crucial during and post-pandemic, when challenges to belonging and participation are intensified at a time of heightened uncertainty, making migrants much more vulnerable to exploitation ([MBIE, 2020](#)) and other challenges.

## Female Newcomers on Temporary Work Visas Living with Families

Though not representative, a majority of our survey respondents exhibit characteristics of two main groups. First are female newcomers on temporary visas living with families.

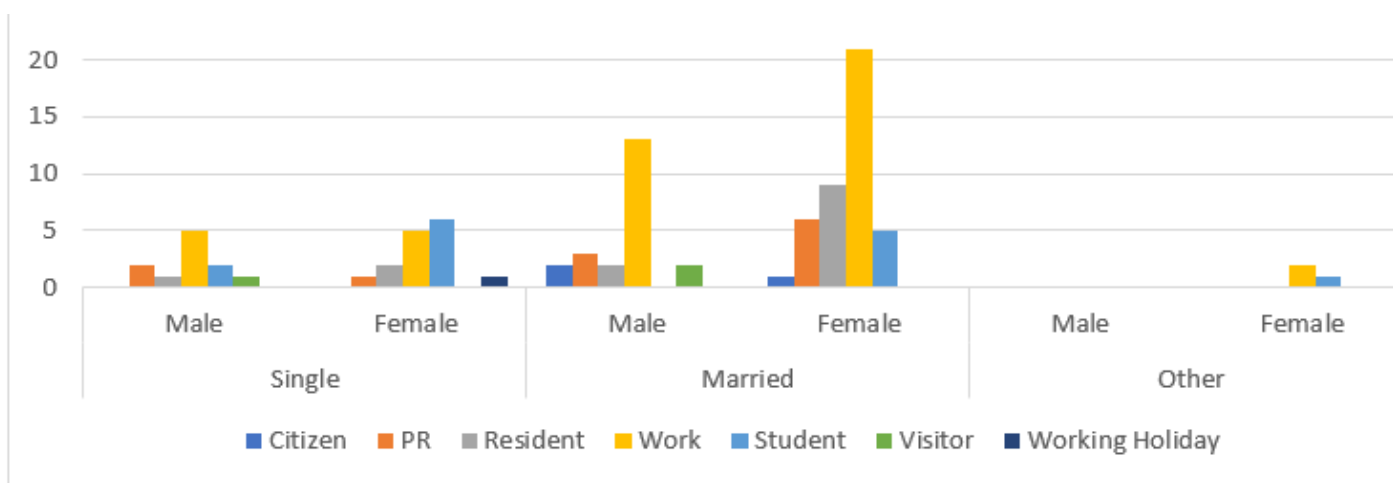
Arrival Year - Gender - Current Visa



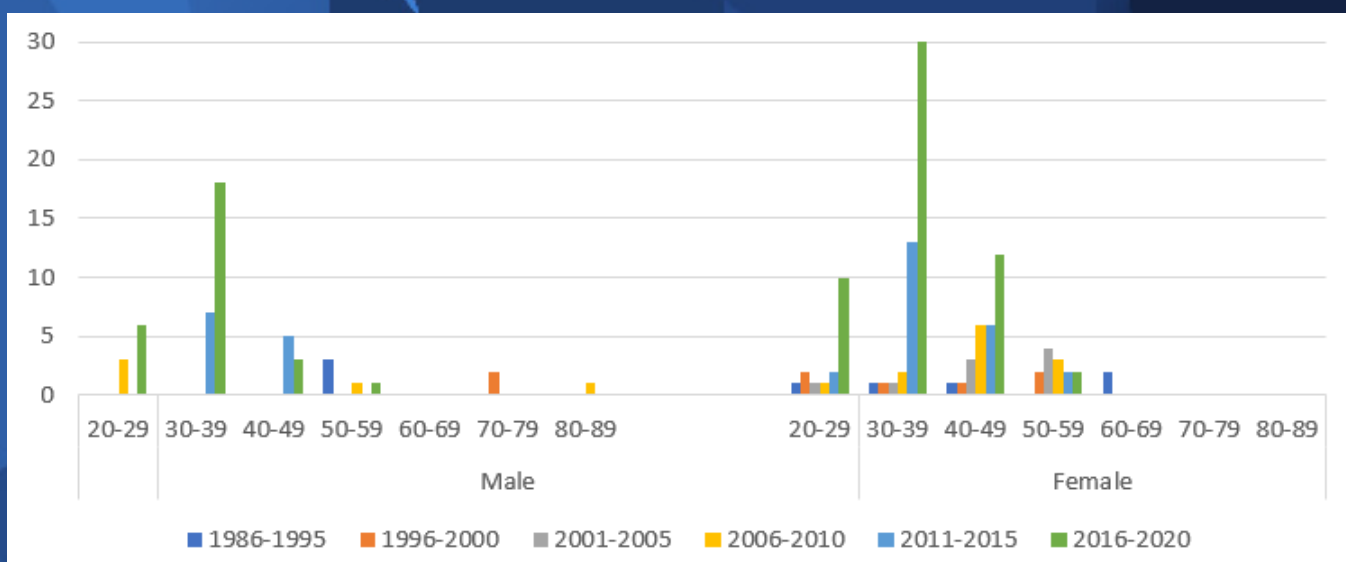


Basic demographic data suggests that a majority of recent migrant-respondents are female on temporary visas, married and living with their families. This challenges normative notion of 'migrant' as male labour. Data on migrants living with families also point out the importance of including 'partners' and 'children' in common reference to 'migrants'. Lastly, a spotlight on female workers is critical, supporting previous studies that suggest womens wellbeing more likely to be at risk ([Kanengoni et al., 2018](#)) particularly in the context of COVID-19.

### Gender - Status - Current Visa

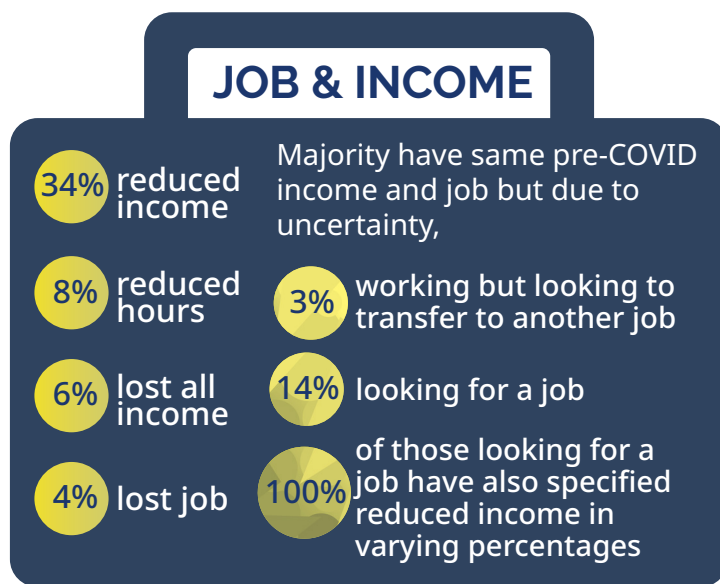


### Arrival Year - Gender - Age



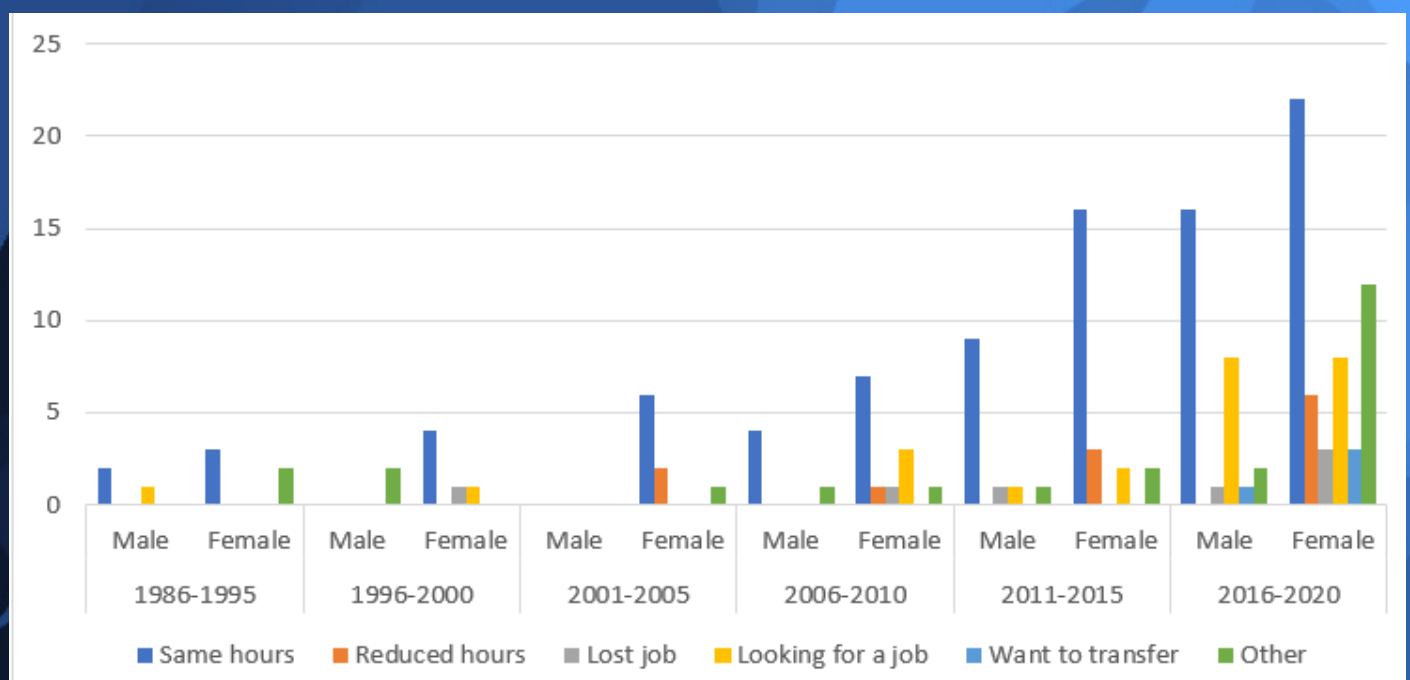
## Anxious Workers and Job Seekers with Reduced Income

The second group comprises anxious workers and job seekers with reduced income. While not conclusive, survey findings offered insights into potential impact of COVID-19 on recent migrants employment and income. Almost 50% of recent migrant-respondents reported that there was no change in their employment status and they remain employed full-time or part-time as in pre-COVID. This apparent low numbers for job loss and unchanged full-time/part-time employment status may be explained by the wage subsidy scheme still in place at the time of the survey. The scheme has also benefited temporary work visa holders regardless of gender.

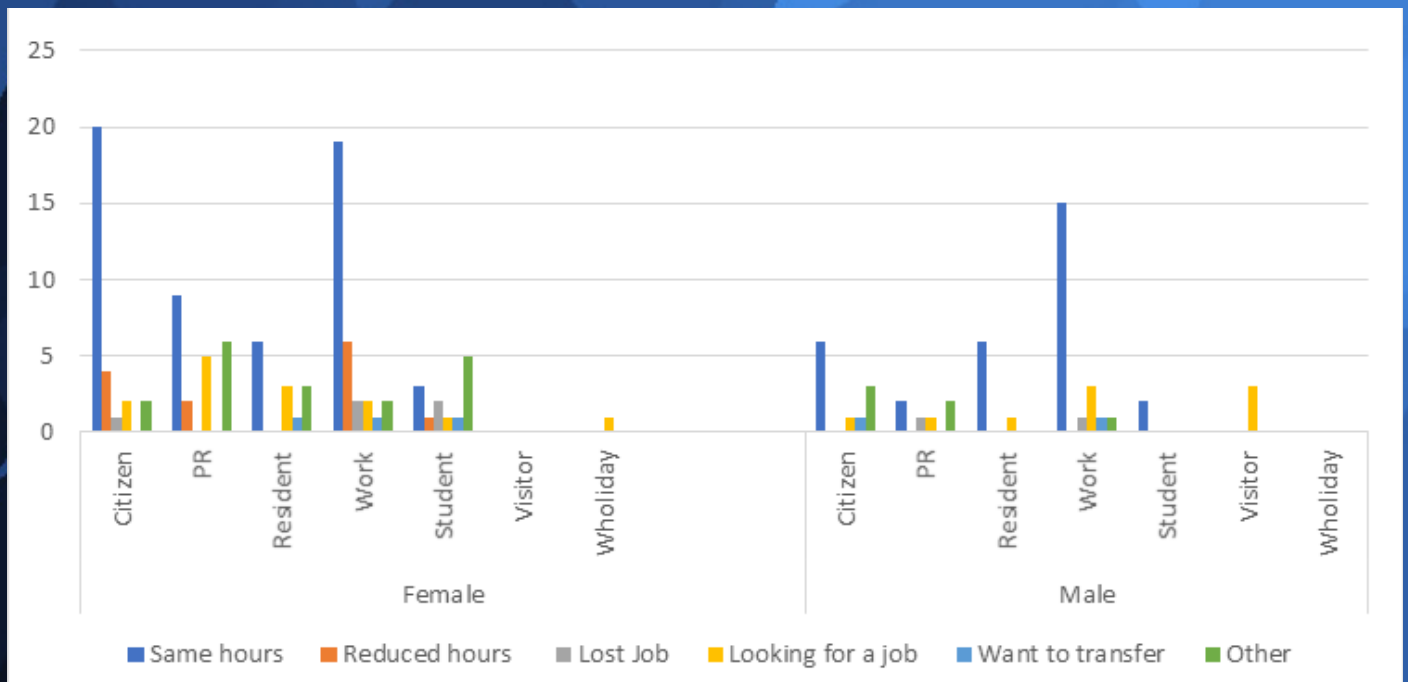


<sup>1</sup> Respondents specified the names of their industries/sectors working in (or worked in pre-COVID – for those who lost their jobs)

## Arrival Year - Gender - Job Status



## Current Visa - Gender - Job Status

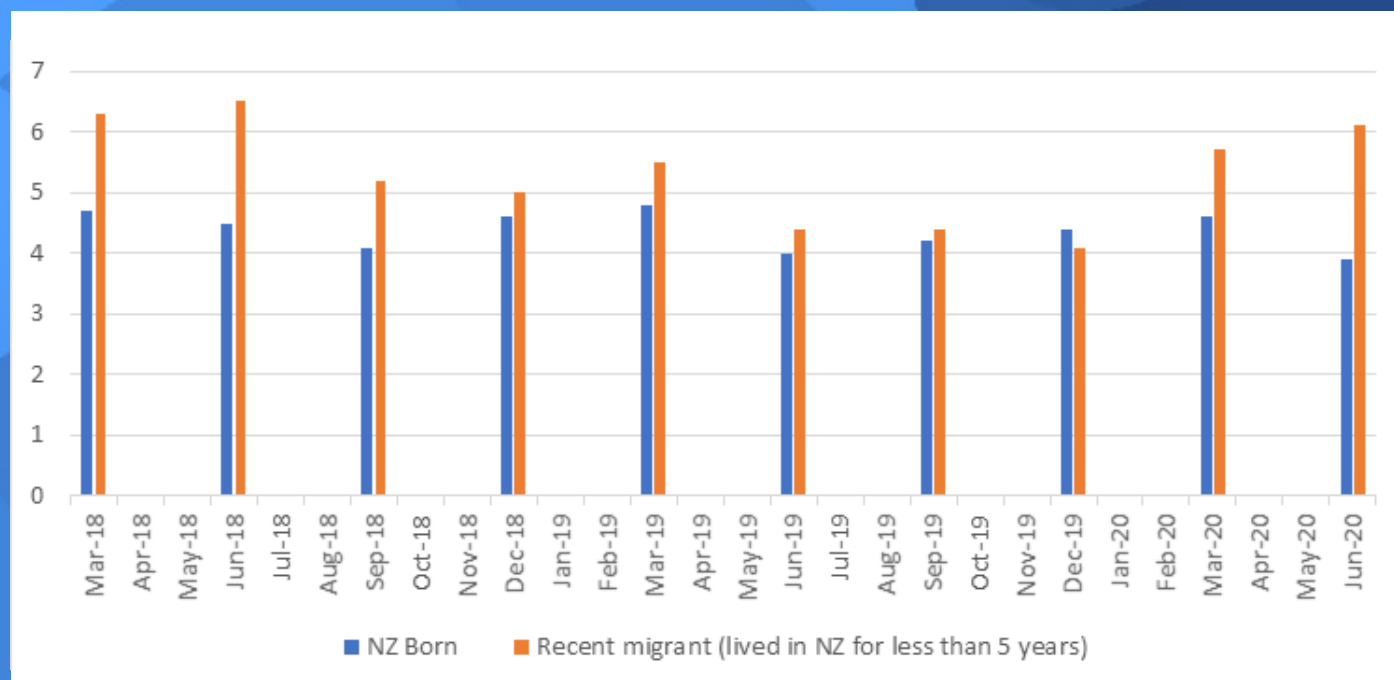


On the other hand, 4% reported they lost their job and 8% are on reduced work hours due to COVID-19. Respondents who lost their jobs were working in different sectors such as in service, construction and engineering. As the graph above shows, job loss is also more likely for recent than long-term migrants. 100% of those on reduced work hours are female migrants working in education (specifically early childhood education), travel retail, legal and automotive. This insight is supportive of studies that suggest women to be more likely to have lost their jobs due to the pandemic ([Humpage & Neuwelt-Kearns, 2020](#)).

Despite seemingly low numbers for those who lost jobs, current job seekers, a majority of whom are temporary work visa holders, require close attention. Among recent migrant-respondents, 18% stated they are currently looking for a job mainly in IT, customer service and public sector and 25% indicated not belonging to any industry/sector pre-COVID. This is insightful of potential changes around migrants' attitude and behaviours towards employment post-COVID-19, with potentially non-working migrants pre-COVID-19 tending to find work or previously working migrants tending to look for an extra job or transfer to a different job due to heightened uncertainty.

We also requested data from Stats New Zealand to further understand the early impact of COVID-19 on migrant employment. Data show that there is a much higher rate of unemployment for recent migrants (6.1% by June 2020) compared to those born in New Zealand.

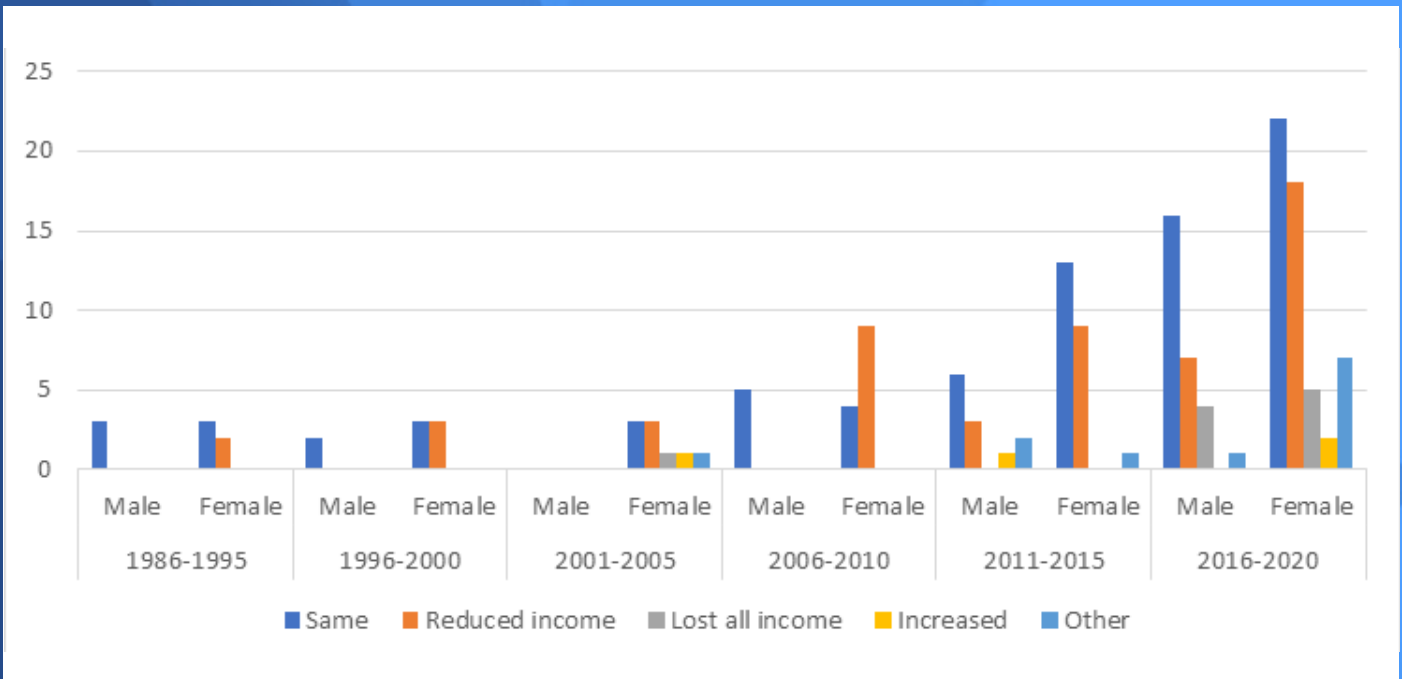
**Unemployment by Migrant Status**  
(Source: Stats NZ - Data Received 2020 Oct 8)



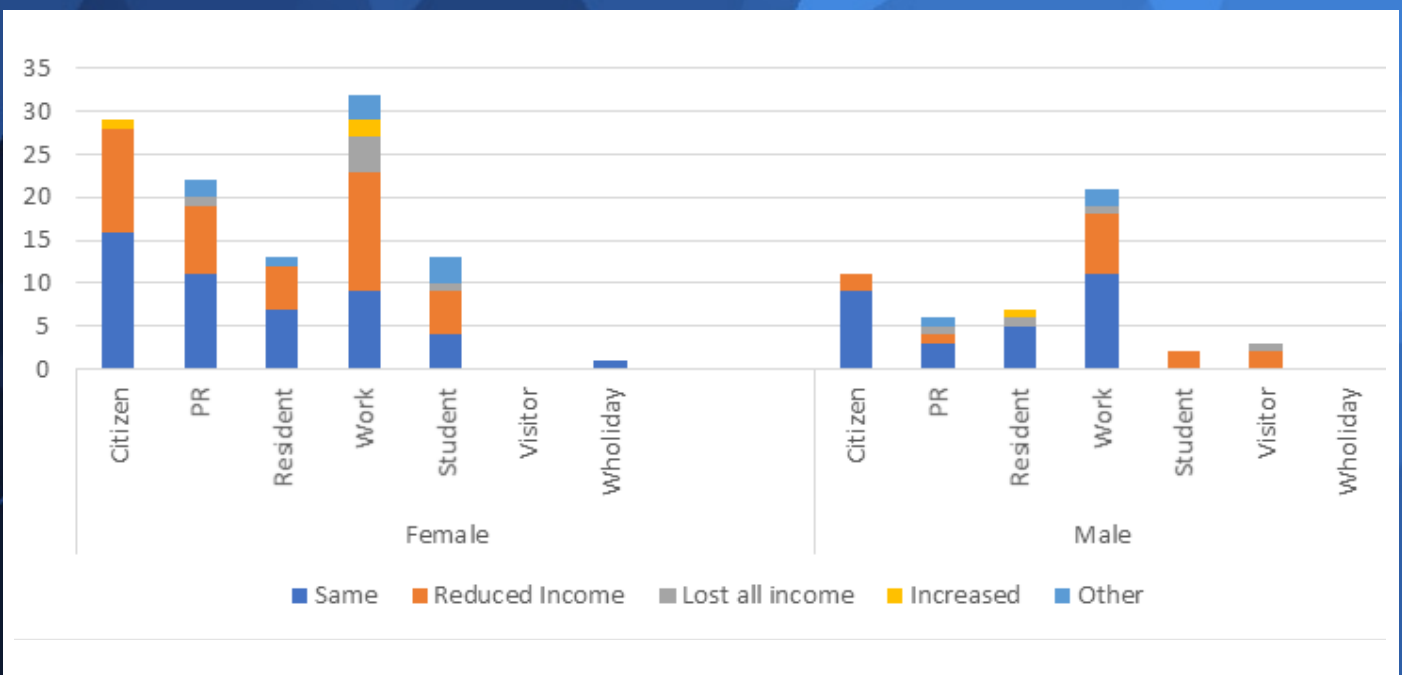
In addition to employment, the data also offered insights into the early impact of COVID-19 on recent migrants' income. Across all respondents, there has been income decrease and loss regardless of gender. Specifically for recent migrant-respondents, 33% reported that they experienced decrease in income in varying degrees (majority by 10-25%) while 10% said they lost their income.

Those with reduced income are working in diverse sectors, mainly in automotive, construction, engineering, education, hospitality, and tourism. Those who said have lost all their income are in customer service, construction, and manufacturing. On the other hand, those who indicated that their incomes increased are mostly females with jobs mainly related to mental health and counselling and finance.

## Arrival Year - Gender - Income



## Current Visa - Gender - Income



Some observations on employment-income were also noted. For instance, 28% of those who said their employment status remains the same indicated reduced income in varying levels. This suggests that the Wage Subsidy Scheme was not able to guarantee income stability during the pandemic. In addition, of those looking for a job, 35% experienced income decrease while 29% said they lost all their income. Income obviously remains a critical driver for actual and intended job movements.

# RESPONSES

The following presents the responses to the open-ended questions in the survey, primarily scoping what challenges recent migrants experienced due to COVID and what barriers they thought hindered them from accessing appropriate support that impact their wellbeing and sense of belonging in New Zealand. Awareness of respondents on COVID-related initiatives, as well as their plans within the next year were also gauged through the following questions:

**What organisations/initiatives in NZ are you aware of that provide COVID-related support to migrants?**

**36%**  
of the respondents  
expressed not  
being aware of any  
organisation or  
initiative that provides  
COVID-related support  
to migrants.

*"none that I'm aware of"*

*"I don't know any organisation"*

Responses  
included:

*"unaware of any"*

*"do not know the detail[s], but still need to pay right?"*

For those who  
were able  
to identify  
organisations/  
initiatives, the  
following were  
mentioned:

Non-Profit

ActivAsian, Akal Foundation, Age Concern Auckland, ARCC, Asian Family Services, Belong Aotearoa, English Language Partners, Good Heart Foundation NZ, RASNZ, NZ Red Cross

Ethnic  
Community

Aotearoa Latin American Community

Government/  
Public

Career NZ, Embassies/Consulates, Auckland Council, Immigration, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development

Private

Communicare Royal Oak Health Care NZ



# RESPONSES

Where/from who do you usually get information about COVID-related support available to migrants?

Most respondents mentioned social media – particularly Facebook community groups, local community sites and WeChat as their main sources of information regarding COVID-related support for migrants.

Some respondents also suggested the role of personal contacts in receiving relevant information.

*"My friends only"*

*"From my playgroup"*

*"My English teacher"*

*"Facebook group I think. Not much"*

However, 21% of the respondents said that they don't know where to get information on COVID-related support.

*"No support"*

*"Not sure"*

*"I do not get information for migrant regarding COVID"*

Information sources mentioned fall into the following categories:

## Government / Public

Citizens Advice Bureau, INZ, IRD, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development

## Mainstream Media

TV, newspaper, News Radio, NZ Herald, Stuff

## Ethnic Community

Chinese media, Korea Post

## Non-Profit

Belong Aotearoa

## Online and Social Media Platforms

Email, Facebook

# RESPONSES

What challenges are you (and your family) experiencing due to COVID?

**27.5%**

of respondents said that COVID-19 negatively impacted their jobs, making them anxious not only about their own income but also their company's financial stability and their family's overall wellbeing.

- Many expressed worry about not meeting their financial obligations for their families back in their countries of origin. 9% described their situation as fraught with anxiety, stress, loneliness, isolation, despair, and hopelessness.
- They also mentioned health risks, especially for front liners and even for their families in their home countries. Other recurring themes included visa concerns and physical immobility, through which respondents highlighted their visa status and transnational and family connections impacted by COVID-19.

## Financial Difficulties

*"Unable to find a permanent role and our clock is ticking. We only got 3 years and it's my 8th month since I got my post study. I still can't find a permanent role"*

*"Difficult to land a job due to competition with New Zealander"*

*"Uncertainty of employer's financial position in the next 6 months"*

*"The weekly rental and bills are challenging to meet since I have been made redundant"*

*"Increased risk. Finances due to relatives needing support"*

## Physical Immobility

*"Lack of social connections. Unable to get out of the house as much as previously"*

*"Travel restrictions"*

*"No freedom"*

*"Changing my visa from visitor to work visa. For two years visitor visa we are only allowed to study for 3 months and not allowed to work and the health service too expensive"*

## Psycho-Social Wellbeing

*"Isolation, loneliness, anxiety due to financial status"*

*"Separation from family and friends has been very difficult, we're a very social family we used to hold family gatherings at our house a lot being alone at home has been a bit difficult"*

*"...Isolation - less off-line communication, loss of the sense of belonging"*

*"Isolation, anxiety"*

*"Lack of routine, and an increase in uncertainty and anxiety particularly with planning things for the next months or for the rest of the year, this year has been quite unpredictable which can have some impact in your mental health and wellbeing"*

## Health Risks

*"A sense of fear about getting infected despite protection with face mask"*

*"As essential workers, we are in the front line on the essential services for the population"*

## Visa Concerns

*"I'm stuck outside the country and can't make it now because of visa"*

*"Visa requirements, requirement documents take longer"*

# RESPONSES

What do you think hinders (or could hinder) migrants from seeking and receiving COVID-19 related support?

**The main barriers to accessing COVID-19 related support reported were:**

- lack of information and language barrier (54%).
- Other barriers mentioned include immigration status and visa conditions; ethnic background resulting in racism; and shame.

**Lack of information and language barrier**

*"Language barrier is the biggest. Not enough personal assistance"*

*"Migrants don't know what support is available. Nobody tells them exactly what opportunities they have or how exactly they get it. They refer them from place to place without giving the exact answer. If they are referred to online websites still they cannot understand the way they get support..."*

*"Too much information on the internet but don't know where to get real support"*

*"Lack of knowledge [on] the help they could get"*

**Visa conditions and status**

*"The type of visa we have. Migrants who have permanent residency are able to access most of the benefits. However, migrants on other types of visas are very restricted"*

*"Migrants who are not residents not having any kind of support or consideration"*

*"Fear of deportation... visa decline..."*

*"Maybe all the restrictions around who can qualify or not, e.g. working holiday, immigrants, tourist or student visa holders usually cannot access available support"*

*"Lack of confidence to ask for support..."*

**Shame**

*"The shame to reach out for help in the first place..."*

*"Fear of being judged..."*

*"Their notion of seeking help..."*

*"Embarrassment"*

*"Dignity"*

*"If they are embarrassed to seek help"*

**Ethnicity and racism**

*"Racism – i.e. being accused of spreading COVID in the first place, using resources that are for 'Kiwis' only"*

*"That we are not from this country"*

*"They felt they are not listened [to]"*

*"Discrimination"*

*"Ethnicity"*

*"The belief that migrants could be viewed negatively for taking support that certain sectors of society should rightfully belong to New Zealanders. Often, this rhetoric is accompanied by: go back to where you came from"*

# RESPONSES

Respondents were also asked what they think hinders or could hinder them from participating in COVID-19 related initiatives. 44% pointed out the lack of knowledge and information about relevant initiatives.

**Confusion and miscommunication regarding which services are being provided and made available to migrants are likewise recurring themes and were reported widely.**

*"Not understanding available initiatives/ messages because they're in English"*

*"Limited access to Centers and initiatives by the concerned government agencies"*

*"The confusing info, and miscommunication caused by the provider service – e.g. WINZ declines the wage support application automatically without giving a reason or contacting the applicant. Everything is done online without a personal communication. Calling whatever service means being confused with answering machines or referred from place to another"*

**Fear was also widely reported especially in relation to visa conditions:**

*"Fear of stricter rules from INZ. Not enough communication from INZ"*

*"Maybe fear of having problems with Immigration NZ later"*

*"Maybe some people are afraid of seeking for help because their visa condition"*

*"Migrants are not easy to step out from fear that could be excluded or couldn't understand properly"*

**Respondents described how these barriers are interlinked, negatively impacting mental and social wellbeing:**

*"Social and/or psychological barriers. Many people might think that nobody would help due to their status..."*

*"Mental pressure"*

*"Social displacement"*



# RESPONSES

What forms of support/initiatives do you think are needed by migrants to cope with COVID?

Suggestions made by respondents were wide-ranging. The main themes identified were:

## Financial and Job support

*"Immediate financial support those who directly suffered from COVID. Help to get a job for the unemployed/ job loser"*

*"Wage increase for frontline workers...500 a week is not enough if u pay mortgage"*

*"Definitely food parcels, job seeking/ employment initiatives" employment initiatives, budgeting, etc"*

## Information and Communication Support

*"I think migrants need a more systematic organization that provide avenues/linkages to all kinds of available support for migrants (not necessarily material or monetary) that is accessible in one website"*

*"Information in other languages, both online and on the news"*

*"Prompt COVID-related messages that are translated after press conferences from the Prime Minister or Dr Ashley Bloomfield (or MoH)"*

## Psycho-social Support

*"1:1 Counselling in their native languages. Help line"*

*"Psychological counseling for those depressed migrants that lost their jobs and have financial pressure"*

*"Pastoral care to help migrant to resettle their life"*

*"Arts initiatives"*

## Education and Training Support

*"Provide free courses to learn new things to try various options (It exists but not enough space or various subject for migrants)"*

*"Free upskilling courses"*

## Visa and Legal Support

*"Maybe government could grant residency visa to migrant workers which are vital to the industry and economy of [New Zealand]. Like Civil and Construction works (machine operator) to boost build back the economy"*

*"Change of conditions for people on temporary visas"*

*"Updated knowledge about visa status how it affect their work and living in NZ"*

# RESPONSES

What plans do you intend to pursue in the next 12 months?

Short-term plans of recent migrants revolve around upskilling/reskilling/studying, representing 65% of the responses.

- Common responses also include changing visa conditions or obtaining residency visa; keeping/looking for a job; saving up; and leaving New Zealand to return to their country of origin or to re-migrate to another country. These tendencies and early plans suggest anxiety towards the future, especially in relation to a job, income and family planning.

- For instance, one responded said,

*"I wanted to study again but have not recovered from the previous expenses. And since there [is no] security, I want to make use of my time to save and move back to my home country or migrate to another country"*

## Capacity Building Plans

*"If I can't find a job in the next month or so I will have to start considering reskilling or study something else that has more demand in the job market"*

*"Reskilling. I studied here to upskill but acquired education doesn't seem to make an impact"*

*"Probably reskilling to cope with a new normal and help keep the economy moving"*

*"Upskilling using online resources"*

*"Upskilling my profession"*

## Visa-related Plans

*"Changing my visa and get a part-time job and continue my studies"*

*"Unaffected due to COVID-19 but heightened concern over job security and my visa situation. Next 12 months will focus solely on applying for my residency visa"*

*"Focus on my career and apply for work-to-residency visa in about a year"*

## (Re) Migration and Relocation Plans

*"Learn a new language (Portuguese) to be able to move more easily in other countries if I decide to. Learn new skills. Move back to New Caledonia or to France if the borders don't open in the next 6 months"*

*"Planning a Plan B if NZ does not work out. Canada is much more migrant friendly"*

*"Migration if I find an employer to support my visa despite covid impacts"*

*"Leave NZ and move home to UK"*



# CONCLUSION

## THE 4RS

The findings presented in this report highlight the vulnerability of recent migrants and the pre-existing systemic barriers and inequities left unaddressed pre-COVID-19, creating a more complex landscape to navigate. Based on our findings, migrant experiences during COVID-19 are summarised by what we term as the '4Rs', which is not a 'still-shot' but a live, ongoing experience:



**RISKS TO WELL-BEING**



**RE-ROOTING AND RE-ROUTING OF RACISM**



**RESTRICTED ACCESS TO COVID-RELATED SUPPORT AND INFORMATION**



**RESKILLING, RELOCATION, IF NOT, RE-MIGRATION**

# CONCLUSION

## THE 4RS

### RISKS TO WELL-BEING

The effects of COVID on individual and collective well-being cannot be understated, especially among migrant communities. As shared by our respondents, the effects of COVID-19 are complex and far-reaching.



*"My wife lost her job due to COVID 2. My daughter is unsure about her university education. 3. Limited visits to and by our friends. 4. Very hard to find a job relevant to my education and work experience. 5. Not allowed to come back to the country if I go to visit my parents. 6. Stress and anxieties increased because life is becoming hard"*

*"Mental health challenges – e.g. anxiousness around uncertainties, changed plans, reduced income for other family members"*

### RE-ROOTING AND RE-ROUTING OF RACISM

Our research supports what has been widely reported regarding the spike in micro-aggressions towards migrants and racially motivated attacks especially involving ethnic minorities from Asian backgrounds due to COVID-19 ([Chan-Green, 2020](#); [Zhu, 2020](#)).

Racism, which was the primary driver of the Christchurch terrorist attacks has been re-rooted a year later in a time of extreme uncertainty. Likewise, despite decreased face-to-face interactions due to physical social distancing, racism has been re-routed virtually, magnifying deep-seated intolerance and divisiveness that counters social cohesion.



# CONCLUSION

## THE 4RS

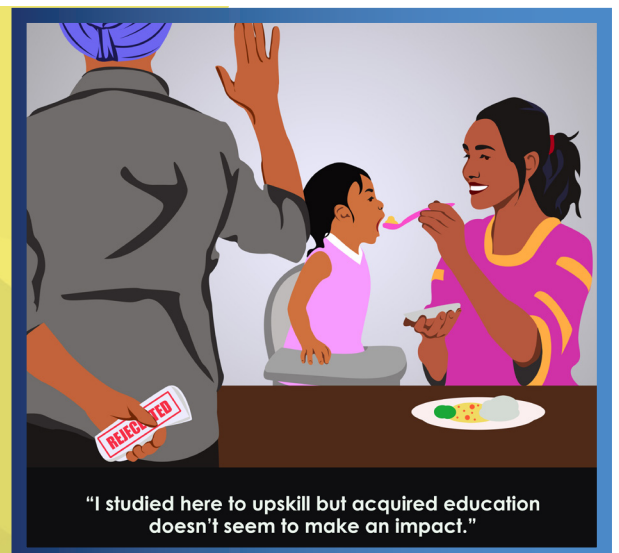
### **R**ESTRICTED ACCESS TO COVID-RELATED SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

The March 2020 address of the Prime Minister recognised the urgency of “channelling correct information and avoiding misinformation.” Unfortunately, there remains great concern around accessing timely and translated COVID-19 updates as shared by our respondents. There is much confusion around information and support access and delivery. Support is even more restricted for non-resident migrants, including international students.



### **R**ESKILLING, RELOCATION, IF NOT, RE-MIGRATION

As a result of the above challenges, our research identified migrant aspirations around reskilling and gaining new skills to enhance the chances of keeping their jobs and preventing potential job loss. Some respondents expressed wanting to leave New Zealand and re-migrating to another country.



# CONCLUSION

## ENABLING AND TRANSFORMING EMPATHY INTO ACTION

### CALL FOR EMPATHY

- We use the metaphor of the 'heavy rainfall' impact to account for what the respondents confirmed as the multiple, interlinked and simultaneous risks and hazards caused by the pandemic across all systems - health, economy, governance, culture and environment - in extreme uncertainty. These risks, however, are not unknown but are in fact widely reported, and this research is about amplifying the voices behind these risks as well as highlighting their recurring call for empathy:

*"A Sense of community and care"*

*"For Immigration to be more compassionate"*

*"Outreaches, checking on people if they are okay or need help"*

*"Need someone to lead us and can understand our problems and put it in front of government"*

*"We are committed to this country. It is time for NZ to show its commitment towards us"*

- Enabling empathy begins with conversations. Focused conversations on the findings of this survey and of similar studies will harness deeper understanding of issues confronting migrants and community. Surely, the conversation will be filled with tension but it could turn real empathy in to action.

# CONCLUSION

## WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY-APPROACH

In response to what has been shared by our respondents, we conclude with an open invitation to have a conversation around and collaborate on developing a 'whole-of-society' approach to address our current challenges and build a better future.

A whole-of-society approach recognises the interdependency of systems and shifts away from an 'umbrella approach' – a mitigation strategy that seeks temporary, short-term and differential solutions, leading to differential results (e.g., some umbrellas are sturdy, others are weak – some are more protected than others). While it is impossible to fully equalise and even out the impact of COVID-19 across diverse communities, it is possible to discuss ways to recognise diversity without being divisive and to change systems while harnessing interlocked experiences and collective impact.

**We see a whole-of-society approach as:**



As a first step to this approach, we are sharing the findings widely to spark positive actions around our collective wellbeing. While this survey report only scratches the surface, it has confirmed the need to act upon the difficulties collectively shared. The need for strengthened collaborations in a context of a rapidly changing and convoluted ecosystem is critical and so we are challenged not only to listen but to respond (see Appendix 2 for respondents' feedback) by convening, co-designing innovative solutions to COVID-19 challenges and together, rebuilding a thriving Aotearoa New Zealand where empathy is embedded at the core.



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## Appendix 1: Survey Cover Sheet – General Information

Founded in 2003, Belong Aotearoa (formerly known as Auckland Regional Migrant Services) has in over 15 years supported thousands of newcomers, migrants and refugees who have settled in Auckland. Its vision is an inclusive, connected New Zealand where newcomer communities are able to enjoy and contribute towards our collective wellbeing and prosperity. Committed to its vision, Belong Aotearoa is currently conducting research to gauge the impact of COVID-19 on migrant communities in New Zealand. Results of this research will be used towards developing and encouraging ways by which migrant communities can be supported and participate as partners in recovery and growth during and post-pandemic.

We are reaching out to invite you to take part in this research by answering this online questionnaire. For your further information:

### \*PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw consent at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data you have previously supplied

### \*PRIVACY

The Privacy Act 1993 outlines the collection and disclosure of personal information to which Belong Aotearoa is subject to. Belong Aotearoa cares about your privacy and confidentiality and will assure your private information is secure. More information about our Privacy Policy can be found on the Belong Aotearoa's website.

### \*CONFIDENTIALITY

We would like to reassure you that all information you will provide will be strictly anonymous and no responses will be attributed to individuals, unless you expressly state that you wish us to do so.

### \*RESEARCH RESULTS

The results will be used solely for the purpose of this research to be presented in reports, publications, related documents as well as in relevant meetings that may be publicly accessible. All results will also be utilised for developing/encouraging initiatives and/or future research and may be made available to governmental and non-governmental institutions.

### \*CONFIRMATION

By answering this questionnaire, you are confirming that you understand the above and that you agree to take part in this research. If there are items you are not comfortable answering, please type N/A.

### \*PRIZE DRAW

By completing this questionnaire on or before September 30th, you will be entered into a grocery voucher prize draw. 10 participants will be selected to receive \$50 voucher each. You will be contacted by email should you be selected.

Your views and opinions are invaluable so we hope you can spare a few minutes to complete this questionnaire (THE QUESTIONS ARE IN ENGLISH BUT YOU MAY ANSWER IN YOUR PREFERRED LANGUAGE). Should you have questions/concerns, please send an email to [sarah@belong.org](mailto:sarah@belong.org). More information about Belong Aotearoa may also be found in our website.

Thank you very much for your cooperation, time and participation.

Ngā Mihi Nui

Belong Aotearoa

NOTE: PLEASE FEEL FREE TO RESPOND IN YOUR PREFERRED LANGUAGE

## Appendix 2: Selected Survey Feedback

- "Good initiate to gather the insights from migrants"
- "Got me a good opportunity to think about the time of COVID from the perspective of migrants"
- "Hope you will take proper action"
- "Useful"
- "Very useful and appropriate for Ensuring future course of proactive steps for elimination of COVID"
- "Well organised, helpful to find issues of migrants regarding the pandemic in the context of NZ"

# **MIGRANT EXPERIENCES IN THE TIME OF COVID**

## **Survey Report 2020**

This report could not have been possible without the contribution and support of many. Thank you to our funder Office of Ethnic Communities, to Clarence Lomiwes who provided the graphic images displayed in the '4 R's' and our researcher Sarah Lipura, for leading this piece of work that helps to amplify the voices of our migrant communities.

Last but not least, we want to thank all our respondents, our community. Our community is at the core of our work, and we deeply appreciate all our respondents for sharing with us their lived experiences during the time of COVID. Thank you for your contribution and for your ongoing involvement as this report develops into action to address the challenges highlighted.

**If you'd like to find out more about this report contact us on:**

- [communications@belong.org.nz](mailto:communications@belong.org.nz)