

# Migrants' Settlement Experiences and Outcomes

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## 7

## Migrants' Settlement Experiences and Outcomes

*How well are migrants and their families settling into their new life in New Zealand? Are they able to find suitable housing and necessary services? Are they satisfied with life in New Zealand and would they recommend it to others as a desirable migrant destination?*

### 7.1 Introduction

Settlement is a multidimensional process involving interrelated aspects of a migrant's life. The initial settlement experiences of migrants and their families involve a host of social and economic factors. International research on immigration has demonstrated that migrants' early settlement experiences contribute significantly to their subsequent economic and social outcomes. These studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between early settlement factors relating to the social and economic integration of migrants and their longer-term employment success<sup>54</sup> and general well-being.<sup>55</sup>

The ease with which migrants and their families settle into life in their new home is an important indicator of migrant well-being and adjustment. Migrants often arrive in New Zealand accompanied by, or to join, other family members. It is important to promote positive settlement outcomes not only for the principal applicant, but for other members of the principal applicant's family. The successful settlement of the whole migrant family is integral to New Zealand's ability to attract and retain the migrants needed to contribute to the country's growth and diversity.

#### Key findings

- Most migrants (87 percent) felt settled or very settled in New Zealand.
- Most migrants (84 percent) reported their spouse/partner to be settled or very settled.
- Most migrants (94 percent) reported their children to be settled or very settled.
- Most migrants (93 percent) reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with life in New Zealand.
- Almost a third of migrants (32 percent) had encouraged others to apply for residence in New Zealand.
- About half (48 percent) of migrants said they needed help settling, most commonly with getting a driver licence (23 percent), followed by understanding the tax system, looking for work, and legal matters.
- Almost three-quarters (73 percent) of migrants who had looked for a place to live had no difficulties finding suitable housing.
- One in 10 migrants had engaged in formal study since gaining residence.
- Migrants most liked New Zealand's climate and natural beauty.
- Migrants most disliked New Zealand's tax system and distance from home or family.

<sup>54</sup> B Birrell, L Hawthorne, and S Richardson. *Evaluation of the General Skilled Migration Categories*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2006, available from [http://www.pieronline.org/\\_Upload/Files/2006512103325\\_GSMReport.pdf](http://www.pieronline.org/_Upload/Files/2006512103325_GSMReport.pdf).

<sup>55</sup> J E Hayfron 'Immigrants in the labor market.' In *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, edited by D L Sam and J W Berry. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp 439-451, 2006.  
R Lev-Wiesel and R Kaufman. 'Personal characteristics, unemployment, and anxiety among highly educated immigrants' *International Migration* 42(3), pp 57-75, 2004.

This chapter looks at several settlement indicators, including housing tenure, problems finding suitable housing, participation in study and training, types of settlement assistance needed, family settlement, life satisfaction, and the aspects of New Zealand that migrants like and dislike.

## 7.2 Housing and living arrangements

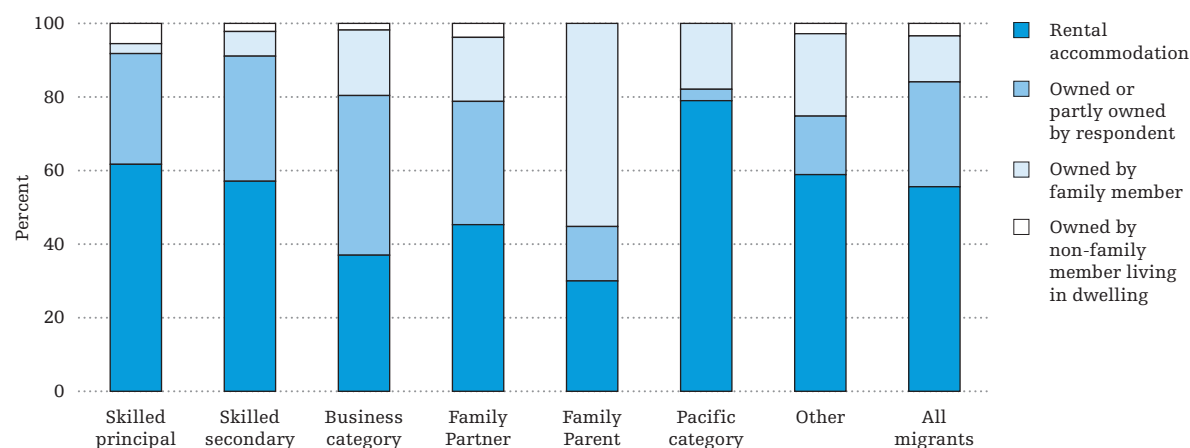
This section describes the living arrangements of migrants and their overall satisfaction with their accommodation. It also identifies difficulties migrants encountered when looking for suitable housing.

### 7.2.1 House ownership and type of dwelling

The distribution of house ownership is shown in Figure 7.1. Just over half of all migrants were living in rental accommodation and 29 percent owned or partly owned their accommodation.<sup>56</sup> Another 13 percent of migrants reported living in accommodation owned by another family member who was living in the same dwelling, and this was more often the case for migrants approved offshore than those approved onshore. Only 3 percent reported living in accommodation owned by a non-family member living in the same dwelling, and this was more likely the case for migrants approved onshore than offshore.

Home ownership varied across immigration approval categories. Business, Family Partner, and Skilled migrants were more likely than other migrants to own or partly own their accommodation. Pacific category migrants were more likely to be living in rental accommodation, and Family Parent migrants were more likely to be living in housing owned by another family member.<sup>57</sup>

Figure 7.1: Dwelling ownership of migrants by immigration approval category

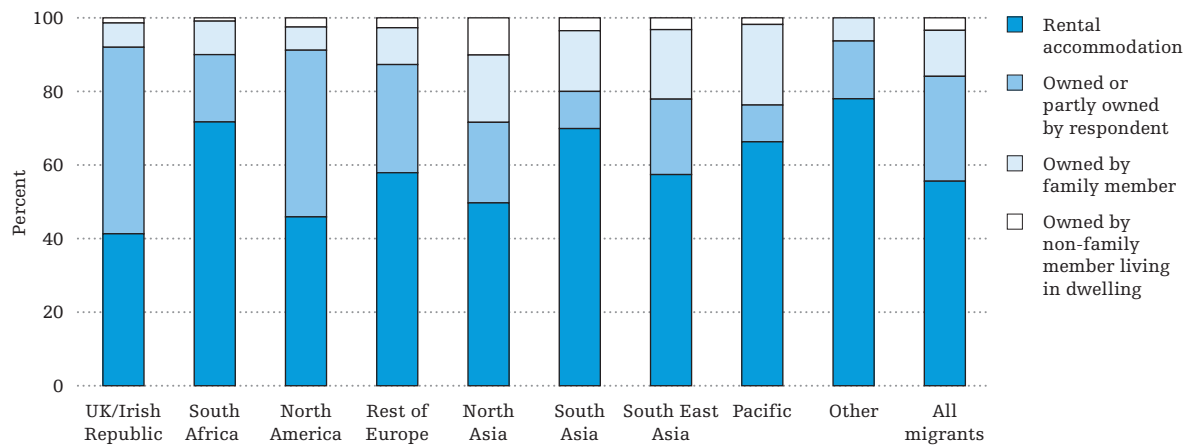


<sup>56</sup> Rental accommodation is defined as owned by a non-family member not living at the same dwelling.

<sup>57</sup> Sponsors of parents must undertake to provide accommodation and financial support to their relatives for the first two years in New Zealand (if necessary).

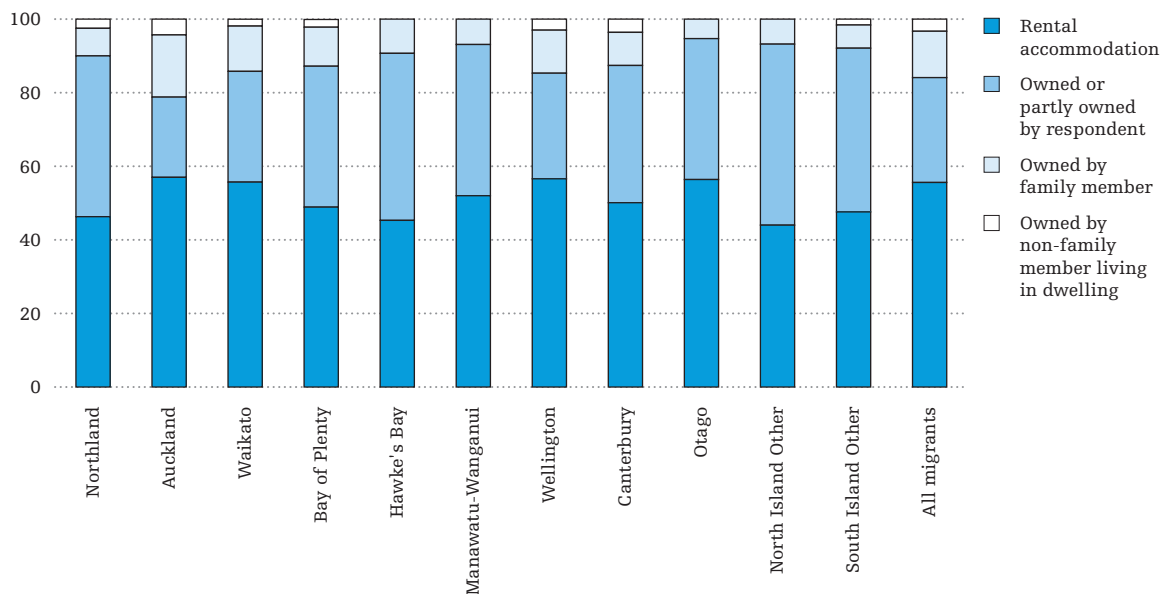
Home ownership also varied by both migrants' region of origin and their region of settlement (see Figures 7.2 and 7.3). Migrants from the UK/Irish Republic and North America (many of whom were Skilled migrants) were more likely to own or partly own their home six months after residence approval compared with migrants from other regions. Migrants from South Africa, the Pacific, and South Asia were more likely to live in rental accommodation. Migrants from the Asian regions (North, South, and South East Asia) and the Pacific were more likely than the other regional groups to live in a dwelling owned by a family member.

Figure 7.2: Dwelling ownership of migrants by region of origin



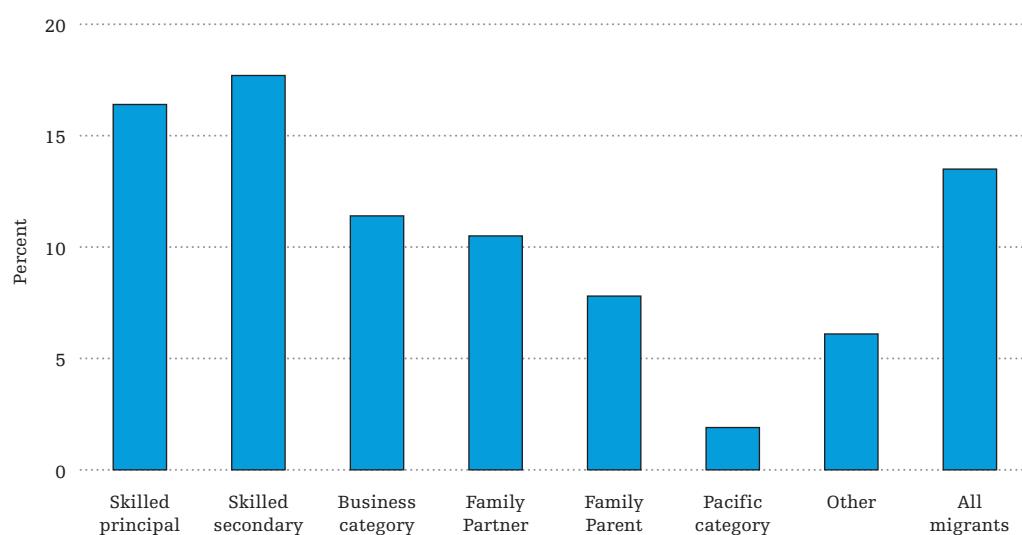
In terms of the regions in which migrants settled, migrants who lived in Auckland were the least likely to own or partially own housing compared with migrants in all but one other region (the exception being those migrants who settled in Wellington). (See Figure 7.3.)

Figure 7.3: Dwelling ownership of migrants by region of settlement



Although 29 percent of migrants owned or partly owned their accommodation, only 14 percent reported purchasing property in New Zealand in their first six months since gaining residence. This indicates that many migrants purchased property before gaining permanent residence. Skilled migrants (principal and secondary) were more likely to have purchased property in New Zealand (16 and 18 percent respectively) than were other migrants. Pacific category migrants were the least likely to have purchased property during their first six months of residence (2 percent). (See Figure 7.4.)

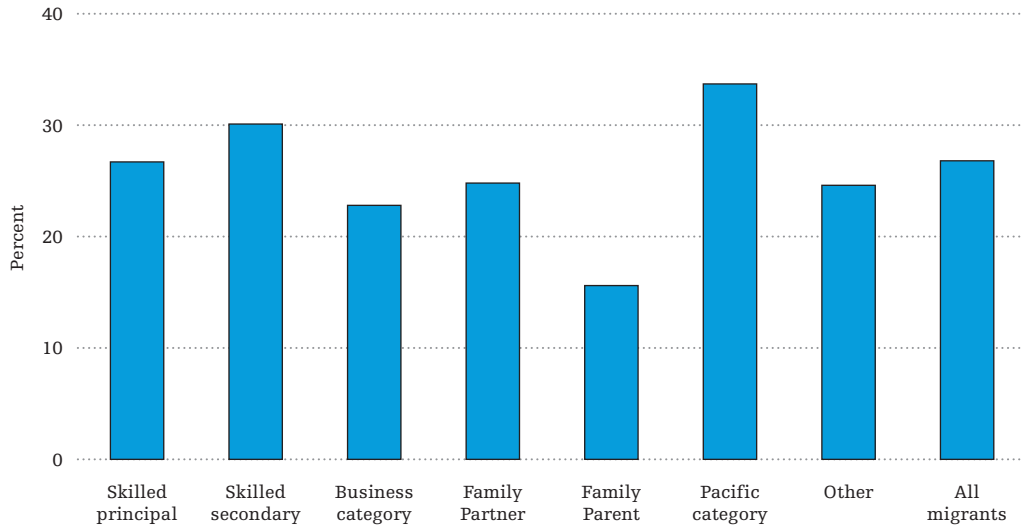
Figure 7.4: Purchased property in New Zealand by immigration approval category



### 7.2.2 Problems finding suitable housing

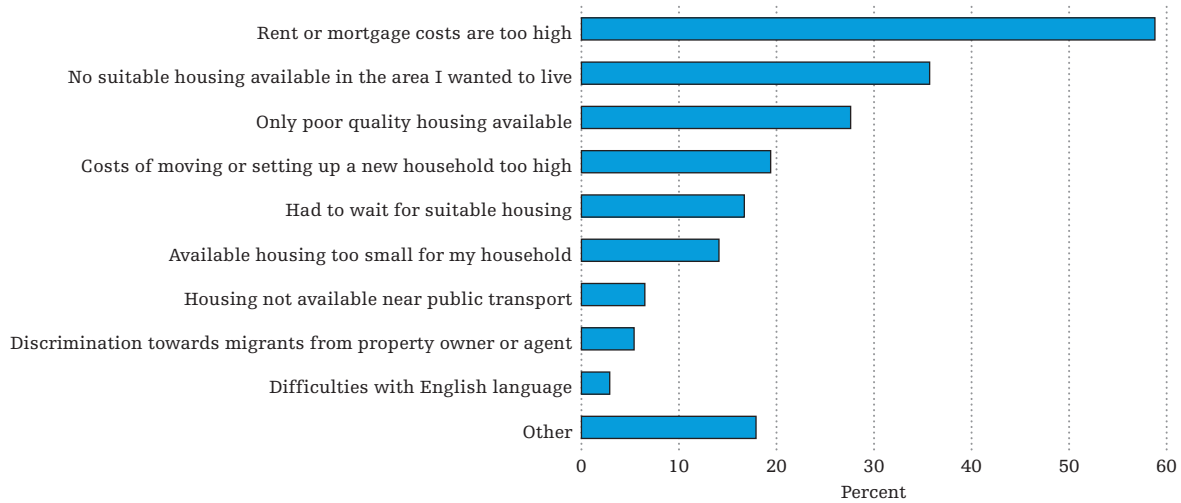
Of the 71 percent of migrants who had looked for a place to live in New Zealand, almost three-quarters reported having no difficulties finding suitable housing. Just over a quarter reported having one or more difficulties while looking for suitable housing. Family Parent, Business, and Family Partner migrants were less likely to report having problems finding housing than other groups. (See Figure 7.5.)

Figure 7.5: Problems finding suitable housing by immigration approval category



The main difficulty finding suitable housing was the high costs of rent or mortgage, with over half (59 percent) of those who had problems finding housing giving this reason. Other significant problems migrants reported included the unsuitability of housing in the desired area (36 percent) and the poor quality of housing (28 percent). (See Figure 7.6.)

Figure 7.6: Problems migrants encountered finding suitable housing



Note: Respondents could give multiple responses, so percentages may not add to 100.

Family, Pacific category, and Other migrants were more likely than Skilled or Business migrants to report that the costs of rent or mortgage and moving to set up a household were too high. Skilled migrants (principal and secondary) were more likely than Family Parent, Pacific category, and Other migrants to report that only poor quality housing was available.

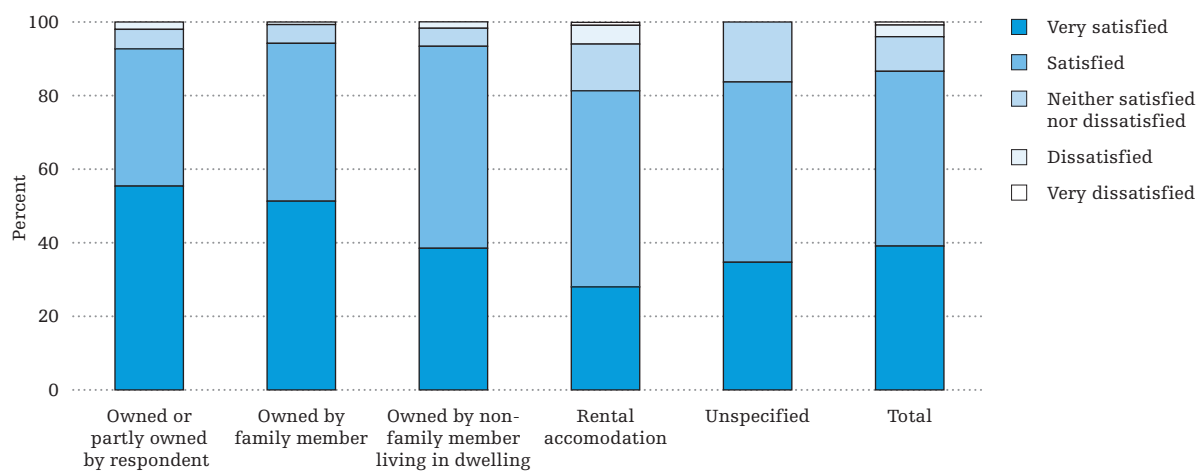
Most migrants feel settled in  
New Zealand.



### 7.2.3 Satisfaction with housing

Most migrants (87 percent) were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of their accommodation, while only 4 percent reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (see Figure 7.7). Migrants living in a dwelling that was self-owned or partly owned and migrants living in housing owned by a family member (that is, living in the same dwelling) were more likely to report being satisfied or very satisfied with their housing situation than migrants who were living in rental accommodation.<sup>58</sup>

Figure 7.7: Migrant satisfaction with housing by ownership type



## 7.3 Participation in study or training

All respondents were asked about their participation in any formal and/or informal study and training since taking up permanent residence in New Zealand. Migrants who spoke English as a second language were also asked about any study or training they had done while in New Zealand to help them improve their English.

### 7.3.1 Study towards formal qualifications

Around 1 in 10 migrants had engaged in formal study or training in New Zealand.<sup>59</sup> The main reasons given for undertaking study were to upgrade qualifications to work in a chosen profession (43 percent) and to get a better job (37 percent). Others studied to get a job (20 percent) or to change career (16 percent).

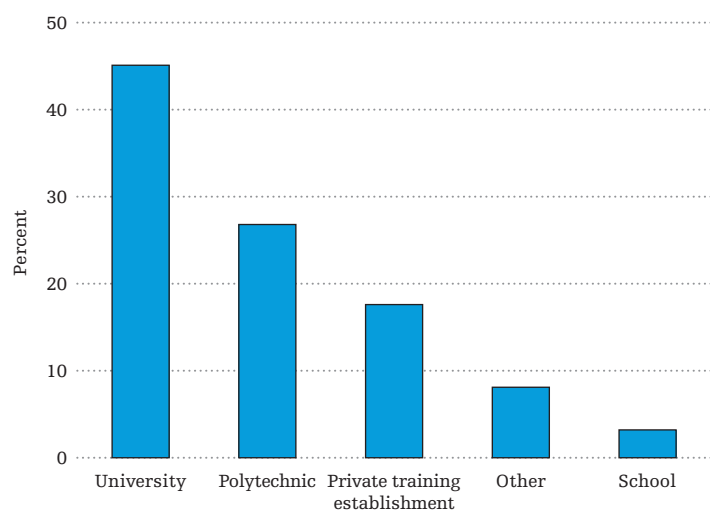
Of migrants enrolled in formal study, the largest proportion was studying toward a university qualification (45 percent), with a further 27 percent studying at a polytechnic and 18 percent at a private training establishment (see Figure 7.8). As expected, Family Parent migrants were the least likely to have enrolled in formal study or training. Business and Other category migrants had the largest proportion of members who were still enrolled at school. This is due to the children of Business migrants, and the Other category which consists primarily of migrants approved through the Family Sibling and Family Adult Child immigration approval categories.

<sup>58</sup> This category specifically refers to people living in a dwelling owned by a non-family member not living at the same address. Rental accommodation makes up most of this category.

<sup>59</sup> Formal study or training was defined as any study of at least three months of full-time (or equivalent) enrolment for a qualification such as a university degree, diploma, or a vocational or trade qualification.



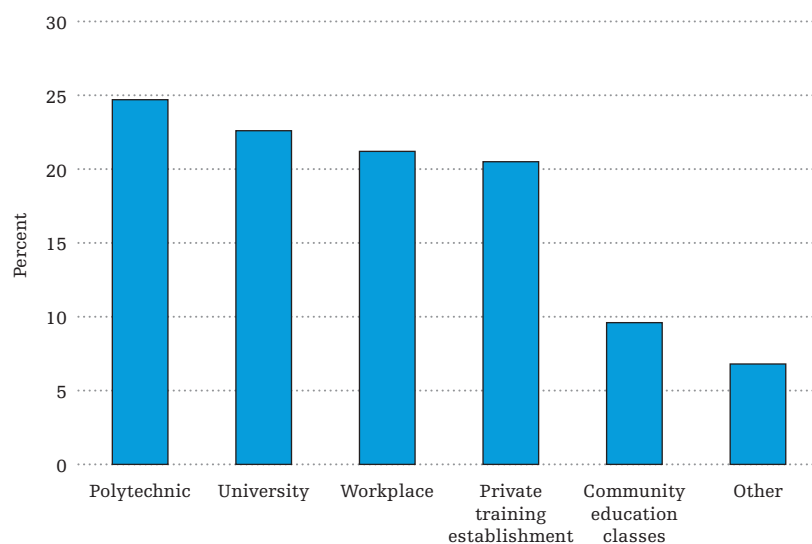
Figure 7.8: Places of formal study for migrants



### 7.3.2 Other study or training to improve employment prospects

Migrants were asked about any other study or training they had completed over the previous six months to improve their employment opportunities. Twenty percent reported having undertaken some form of study or training and, of these, a quarter had enrolled for a course at a polytechnic and 23 percent had taken courses at university. A further 21 percent had taken study or training courses at their place of work or at a private training establishment, and 10 percent had enrolled in community education classes. (See Figure 7.9.)

Figure 7.9: Places of other training or study for migrants



### 7.3.3 English language study and training

Forty-nine percent of migrants who rated their English proficiency as moderate or poor said they had participated in some study or training to help them improve their English since gaining residence. The main reason migrants wanted to participate in English language training was to learn everyday 'survival' English (39 percent of those who participated in training).

Pacific category migrants were the least likely to have studied English since their residence approval, although, like other migrants who had not participated in training, many had wanted to do some study. (See Figure 7.10.)

**Figure 7.10: English language training since residence approval for moderate or poor English speakers by immigration approval category**

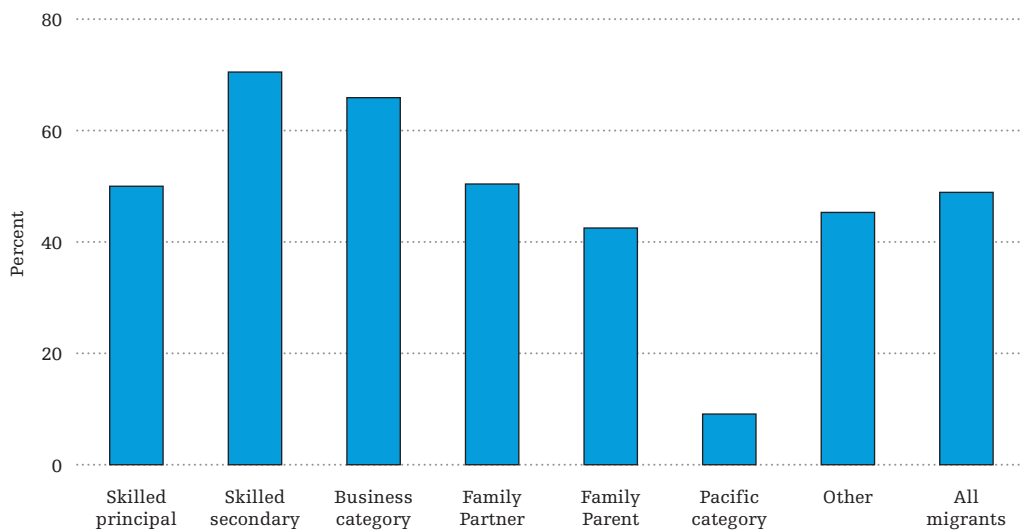
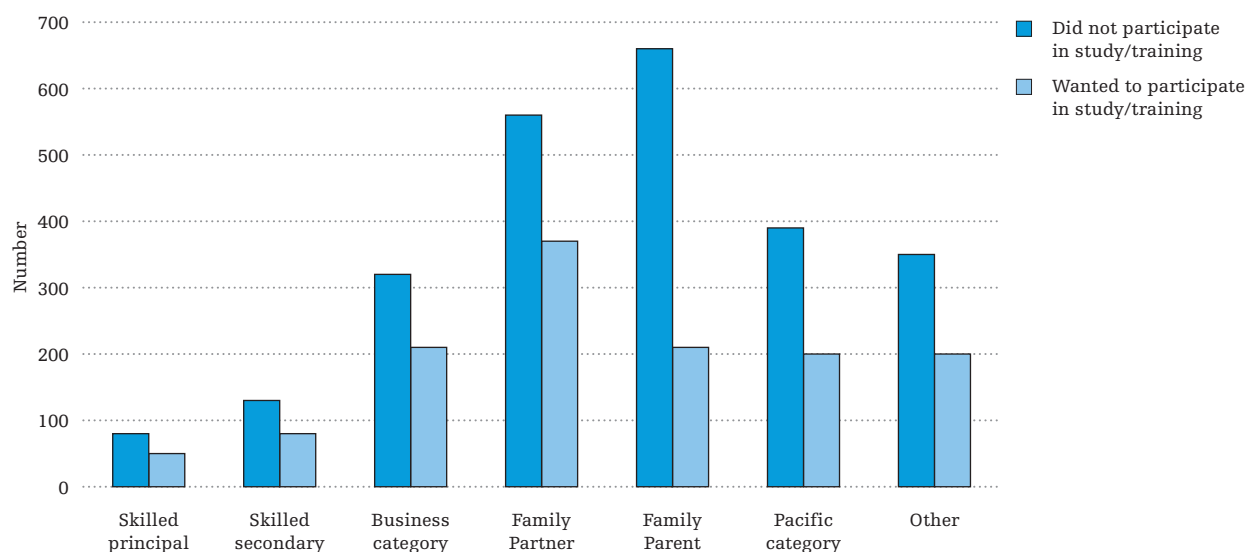


Figure 7.11 shows that of the migrants who spoke moderate or poor English and had not participated in English language training, many had wanted to participate in such training. The main reason given for not participating (for those who wanted to) was the difficulty finding the time to study (62 percent).

Figure 7.11: Non-participation in English language training for moderate or poor English speakers



## 7.4 Settlement

Migrants' responses when asked about how settled they felt in New Zealand were largely positive. Most migrants reported feeling settled or very settled in New Zealand (87 percent), while only 2 percent reported feeling unsettled or very unsettled.

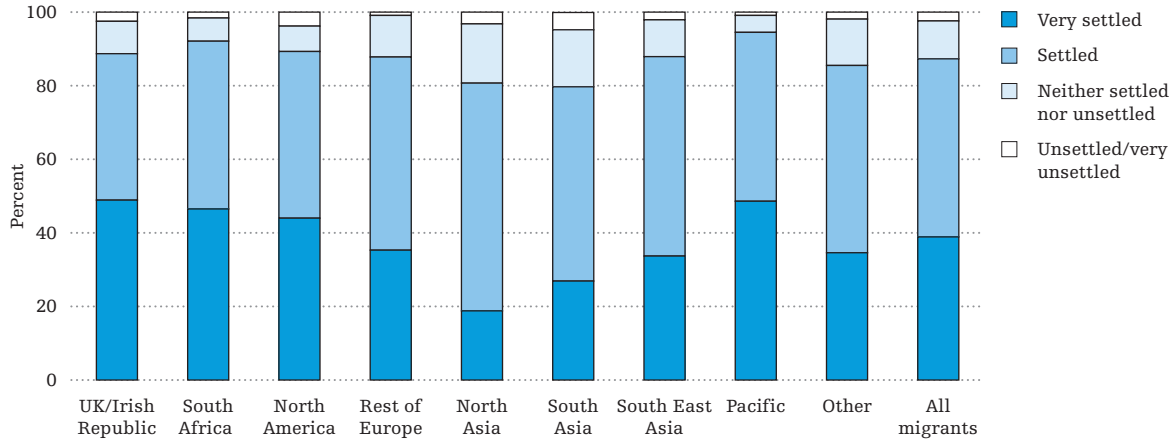
Migrants who had an overseas-born spouse or partner in New Zealand were also asked to report on their partner's settlement and that of their children (if any). Most migrants (84 percent) reported that their overseas spouse or partner felt settled or very settled in New Zealand and only 6 percent reported them to be unsettled or very unsettled. Migrants' rating of their children's settlement in New Zealand was extremely positive, with 94 percent reporting that their children were settled or very settled and only 1 percent reporting them to be unsettled or very unsettled.

Further analysis indicated a relationship between the time spent in New Zealand and migrants' rating of their settlement. Migrants who had spent two or more years in New Zealand before gaining residence were more likely to report being settled or very settled than those who had never visited New Zealand. Furthermore, those who spent the most time in New Zealand before residence were less likely to report being unsettled or very unsettled than those who had never visited New Zealand.

### 7.4.1 Migrants' settlement in New Zealand by region of origin

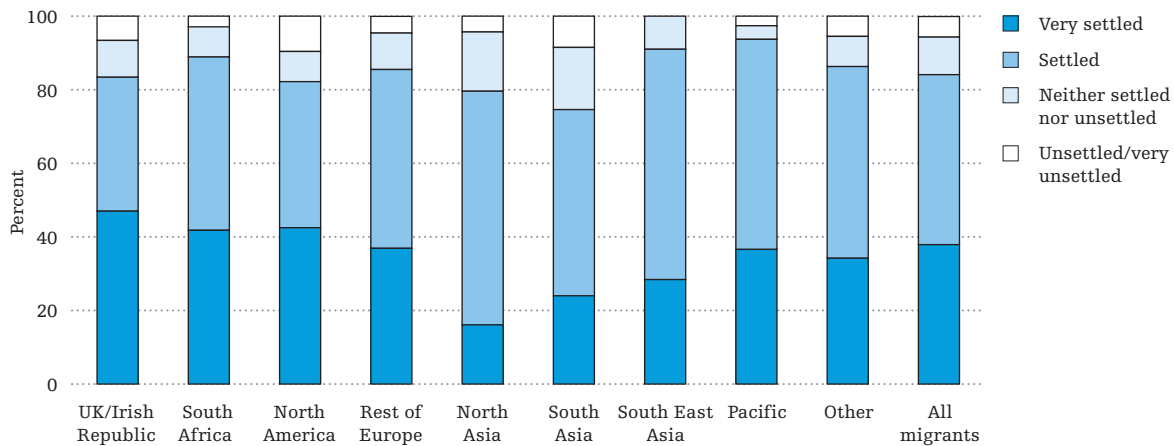
Migrants' feelings of settlement varied depending on their region of origin. North Asian migrants were less likely to report feeling very settled than migrants from all other regions, followed by migrants from other parts of Asia (South Asia and South East Asia) and the Rest of Europe. Migrants from the Pacific, the UK/Irish Republic, South Africa, and North America were more likely to report feeling very settled in New Zealand than other groups. (See Figure 7.12.)

Figure 7.12: Migrants' rating of settlement in New Zealand by region of origin



The migrant settlement ratings for their overseas-born spouse or partner and their children followed a similar trend, based on their region of origin (see Figure 7.13). Partners of North and South Asian migrants were less likely than most other groups to be described as being very settled. Similarly, although the settlement ratings for the children of migrants were very high overall, parents from North Asia were less likely to report their children to be very settled than most other groups, with the exception of those from South Asia and North America.

Figure 7.13: Migrants' rating of settlement of their spouse/partner by region of origin



The differences in settlement ratings by region may reflect ethnic and cultural differences in adapting to life in New Zealand, as well as previous social and employment experiences migrants had on arrival. The differences may also be partly attributable to variations in the way migrants from different cultures responded to the survey.

### 7.4.2 Migrants' perceptions of their children's settlement at school and satisfaction with school

Migrants who had children attending school in New Zealand were asked to rate how settled they felt their children were at school and how satisfied they were with their children's schooling.

Almost all (94 percent) migrant parents reported their children to be settled or very settled at school in New Zealand, while only 2 percent of parents reported that their children felt unsettled or very unsettled. Similarly, parents' satisfaction ratings were high, with 91 percent of parents reporting that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their child's school and only 2 percent reporting dissatisfaction.

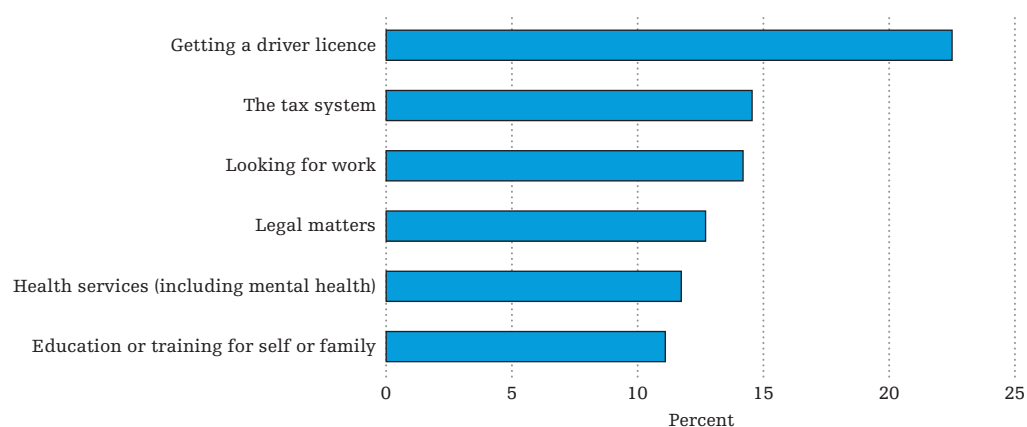
While only a small proportion of migrants felt their children were not yet settled at school, those from South Asia, South East Asia, and the Pacific felt their children were significantly more settled at school than those from North Asia and the UK/Irish Republic.

### 7.4.3 Settlement assistance needed

Nearly half (48 percent) of all migrants said they had needed help, advice, or information on aspects of life in New Zealand. Family Parent migrants were less likely than all other categories to need help (25 percent), followed by Pacific category migrants (38 percent).

The most common area where help was needed was with getting a driver licence (23 percent). This was followed by help understanding the tax system (15 percent), looking for work (14 percent), and legal matters (13 percent). Other areas included the need for information on health services (12 percent) and education or training for self or family (11 percent). (See Figure 7.14.)

Figure 7.14: Main types of help, advice, or assistance migrants needed



Note: Respondents could give multiple responses, so percentages may not add to 100.

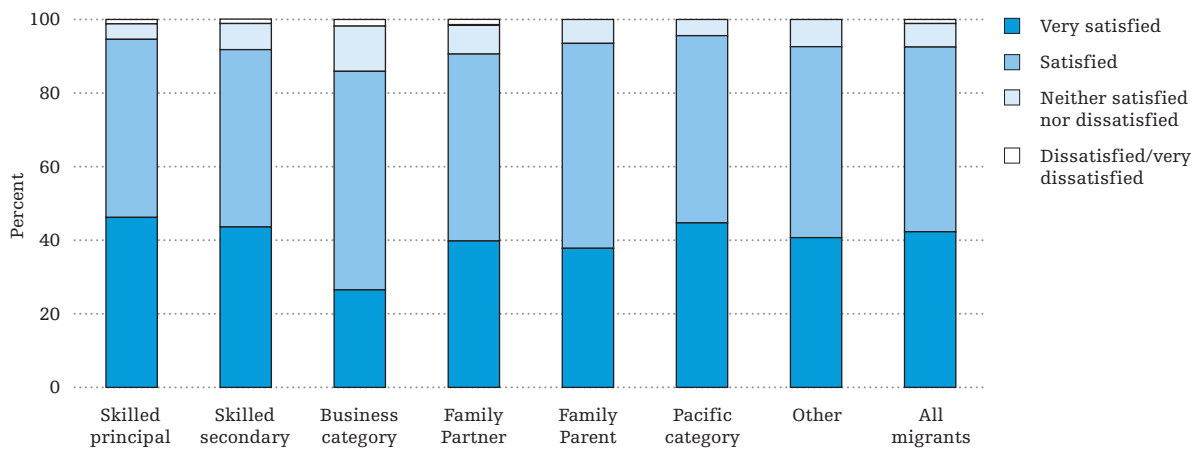
Skilled principal migrants were more likely to need help with the tax system than all but one of the other groups of migrants (the exception being Business migrants). Skilled principal migrants also needed more information about the recognition of their qualifications than all other categories of migrants, whereas Skilled secondary migrants were the most likely to require help with education and training. Business and Family Parent migrants were the least likely to report needing help looking for work.

### 7.4.4 Satisfaction with life in New Zealand

Migrants from all approval categories expressed a high degree of satisfaction with life in New Zealand. Overall, 93 percent of migrants reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with life in New Zealand, while only 1 percent reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

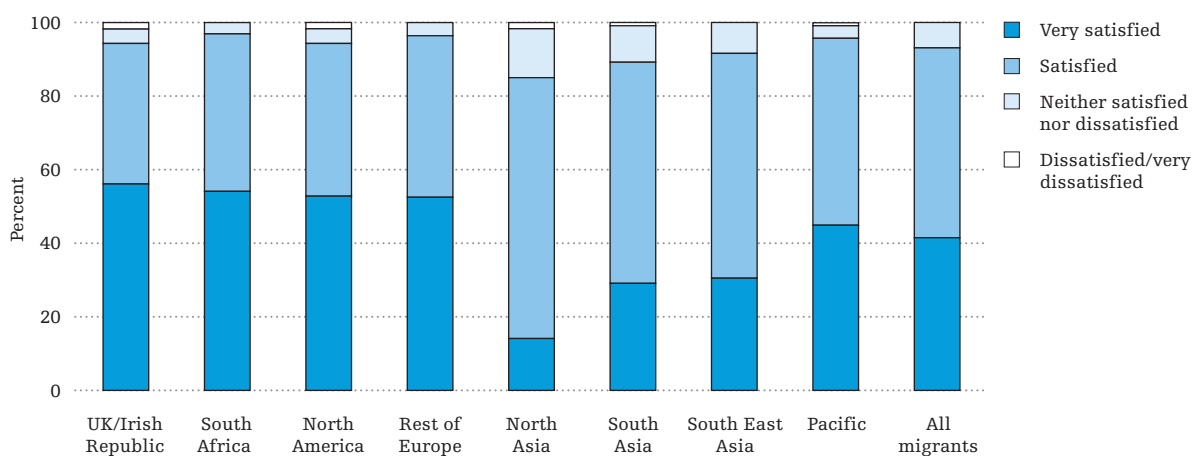
Although migrants from all immigration approval categories reported high levels of satisfaction with life in New Zealand, Business migrants were less likely to report being very satisfied with life in New Zealand than all other migrant categories. (See Figure 7.15.)

Figure 7.15: Migrant satisfaction with life in New Zealand by immigration approval category



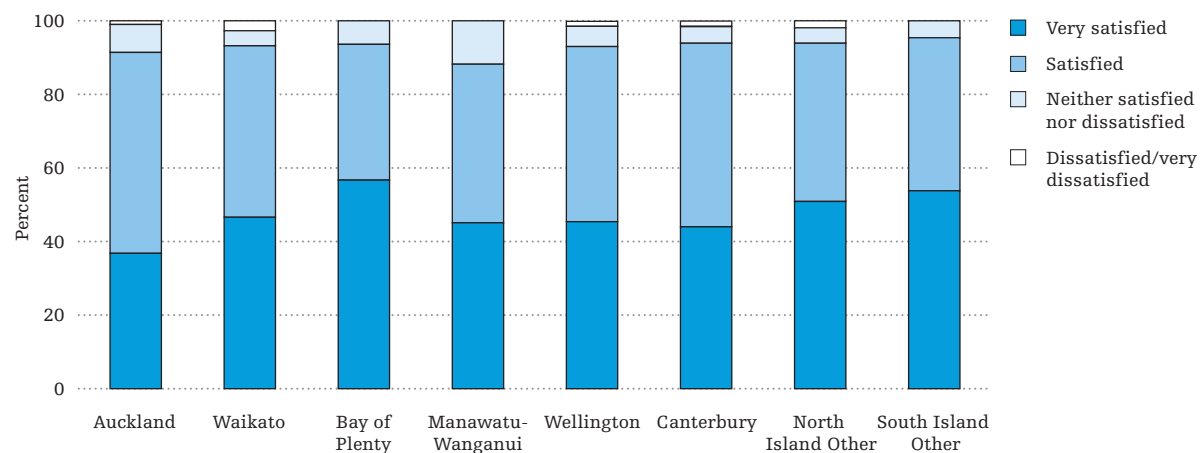
The level of satisfaction with life in New Zealand varied by migrants' region of origin. Migrants from the UK/Irish Republic, South Africa, North America, and the Rest of Europe were more likely to report feeling very satisfied with life in New Zealand than those from Asia (North Asia, South Asia, and South East Asia), but did not differ significantly from migrants from the Pacific or Other regions. (See Figure 7.16.)

Figure 7.16: Migrant satisfaction with life in New Zealand by region of origin



Levels of satisfaction also tended to vary depending on migrants' region of settlement. Although migrants living in all regions reported high levels of satisfaction, migrants living in the Auckland region were less likely to report feeling very satisfied with life in New Zealand than those living in all other regions. (See Figure 7.17.)

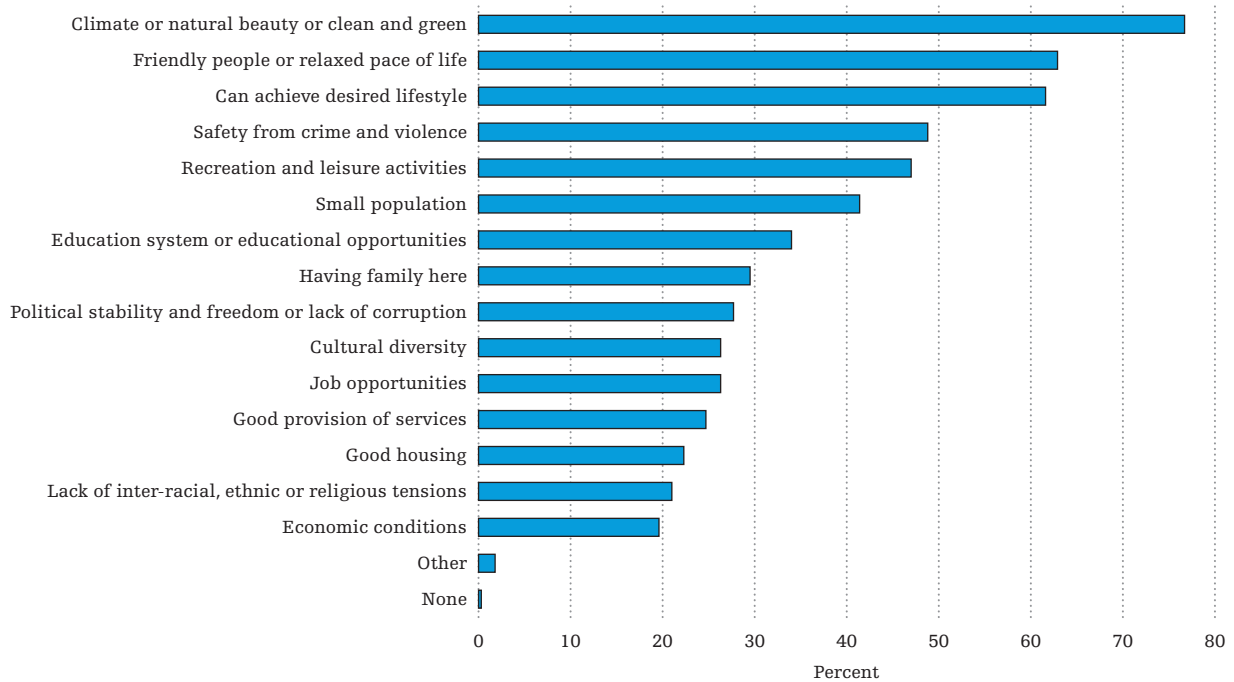
Figure 7.17: Migrant satisfaction with life in New Zealand by region of settlement



#### 7.4.5 Aspects liked and disliked most about New Zealand

Overall, the aspect that migrants liked most about New Zealand was its climate and natural beauty (77 percent), followed by its friendly people and its relaxed pace of life (63 percent) and the ability to achieve one's desired lifestyle (62 percent) (see Figure 7.18). While these top three aspects were preferred by Skilled (principal and secondary) and Family (Parent and Partner) migrants above all other categories, other migrants' preferences varied depending on their immigration approval category and their region of origin.

Figure 7.18: Things migrants liked most about New Zealand



Note: Respondents could give multiple responses, so percentages may not add to 100.

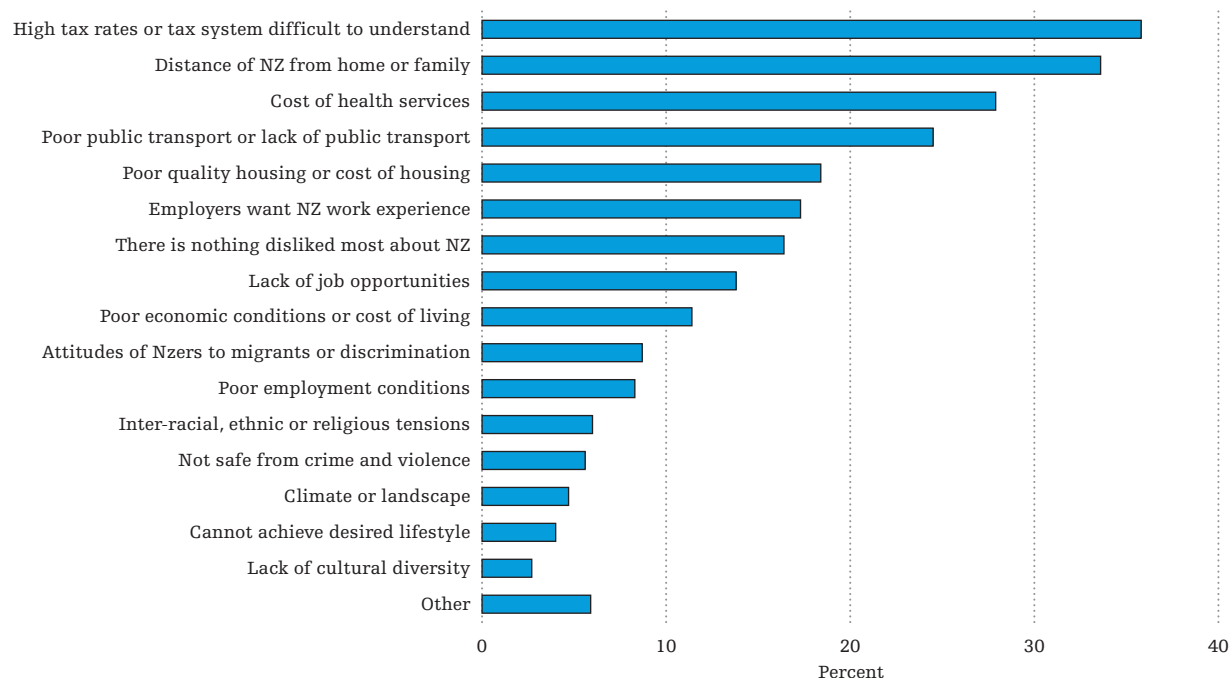
Skilled migrants were also more likely than all other migrants to prefer New Zealand because of the opportunities it offered them in achieving their desired lifestyle, for its recreation and leisure activities, for safety from crime and violence, and for its small population. Pacific migrants preferred New Zealand for its job opportunities, the educational system or educational opportunities, and its economic conditions more than other migrant categories did. Not surprisingly, having family in New Zealand was the aspect Family Parent migrants favoured more than other migrant categories.

The aspects migrants liked and disliked most about New Zealand also varied according to their region of origin. Migrants from the UK/Irish Republic were more likely to prefer New Zealand for its climate and natural beauty, its lifestyle, and its friendly people, than migrants from other regions. Migrants from the Pacific regions preferred New Zealand for its education system, educational and job opportunities, and because they had family already living in the country. Migrants from South Africa preferred New Zealand mainly for its safety from crime.

As expected, the main aspects migrants liked about New Zealand closely corresponded to the reasons they reported for choosing New Zealand as their desired destination. (See chapter 3). While New Zealand's natural amenities and the lifestyle it offers were most favoured by migrants, its economic conditions were the least favoured. Migrants reported that the two aspects they disliked most about New Zealand were the high tax rates or difficulties understanding the tax system (36 percent) and the distance of New Zealand from home or family (34 percent); this was followed by the cost of health services (28 percent). (See Figure 7.19.)



Figure 7.19: Things migrants disliked most about New Zealand



Note: Respondents could give multiple responses, so percentages may not add to 100.

While migrant groups (except Family Parent migrants) reported taxation issues to be a main aspect they disliked about New Zealand, other aspects that migrants disliked varied by immigration approval category and region of origin. Skilled (principal and secondary) and Family Partner migrants were more likely than other migrants to report the distance of New Zealand from their home and family and the cost of health services as the aspects they disliked most about New Zealand.

Another aspect that was disliked more by Skilled (principal and secondary) migrants than other migrant categories was the quality or cost of housing. Business migrants were more likely than all other migrants to report not feeling safe from crime or violence. Pacific category (40 percent) and Family Parent (35 percent) migrants were more likely than all other migrants to report that there was nothing they disliked about New Zealand.

In terms of the aspects about New Zealand that were disliked by migrants based on their regions of origin, those from the UK/Irish Republic, the Rest of Europe, and North America were more likely to report that the distance of New Zealand from home and family was the aspect they disliked the most about living in New Zealand. This is not surprising, considering the relative geographic distance of these regions from New Zealand.

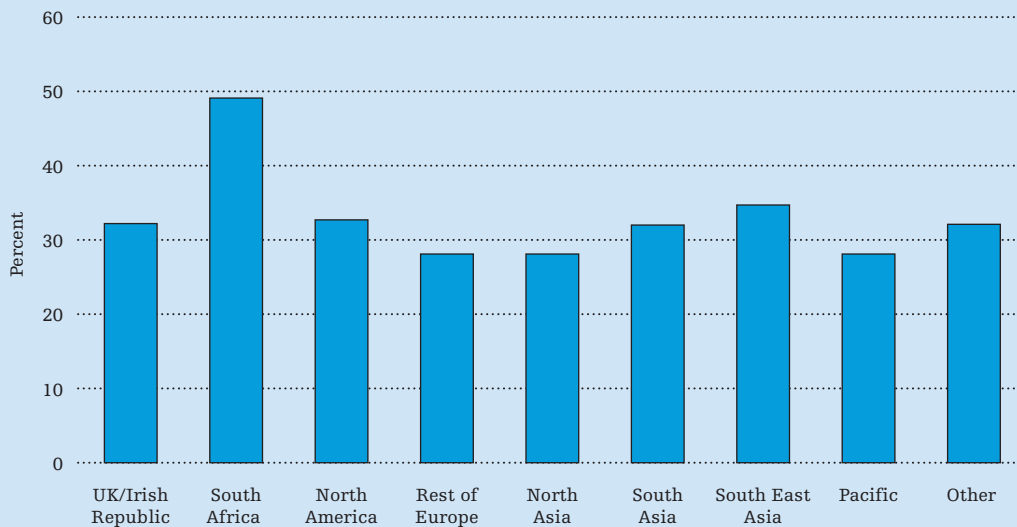
Overall, migrants from all parts of Asia reported New Zealand's high tax rates as the aspect they disliked more than those from other migrant regions (reported by 46, 51, and 58 percent for North Asian, South Asian, and South East Asian migrants, respectively). Migrants from North Asia disliked the lack of job opportunities in New Zealand, and those from South Asia disliked employers' need for migrants to have previous New Zealand work experience. Pacific migrants were the most likely to report that there was nothing they disliked about New Zealand.

### Feature box 7.1 *One in three migrants encourage others to migrate*

Migrants' high level of satisfaction with New Zealand as their new home is reflected by the number of migrants who have already recommended and encouraged others to apply for residence.

Almost one in three migrants (32 percent) had encouraged others to apply for permanent residence in New Zealand during their first six months of residence. This proportion was similar for migrants from most regions, with almost half (49 percent) of migrants from South Africa encouraging others to migrate to New Zealand. (See Figure 7.20.)

Figure 7.20: Migrants who encouraged others to apply for residence by region of origin



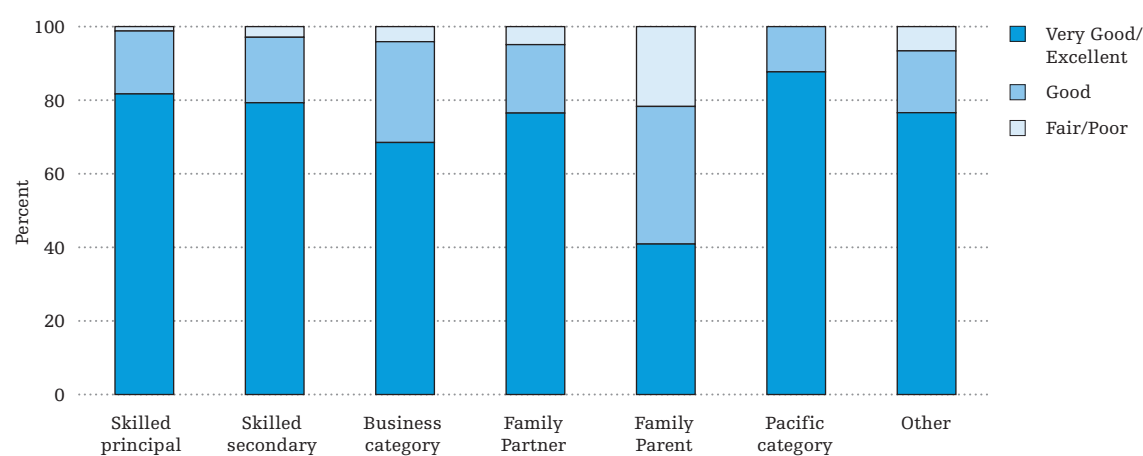
While around a third of migrants living in most New Zealand regions had encouraged others to apply for residence, those who had settled in Canterbury were less likely to recommend New Zealand than those living in Auckland or other parts of the South Island.

## 7.5 Health

Migrants to New Zealand must meet health requirements to gain entry into New Zealand.<sup>60</sup> As expected, most migrants reported being in good to excellent health, with 41 percent reporting excellent health, followed by those reporting very good (35 percent) or good (19 percent) health.

Pacific category migrants were more likely to report being in excellent or very good health (88 percent) than other migrant groups, whereas Family Parent migrants were the least likely to report this level of health (41 percent), followed by Business migrants (69 percent). All other categories reported similar levels of health. (See Figure 7.21.)

Figure 7.21: Health ratings of migrants by immigration approval category



<sup>60</sup> Everyone intending a stay in New Zealand for longer than 12 months must undergo medical screening to ensure they have an Acceptable Standard of Health for immigration purposes. In August 2005, a new Medical and Chest X-ray Certificate was issued to support the new health screening framework. The new requirements included additional compulsory blood tests for applicants aged 15 years and over to include HIV, Hepatitis B, full blood count, serum creatinine, and liver function; assessment for critical developmental delay, particularly in children; and assessment for impaired cognitive performance, with compulsory screening for applicants aged 70 and over. Since November 2005, all people entering New Zealand for longer than 12 months must complete a medical certificate using the new Medical and Chest X-ray Certificate.

