

**Ethnic Community  
Perceptions of  
New Zealand Police**

**A report prepared by**

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**for**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Overview

In 2005 the New Zealand Police commissioned this research project to explore the perceptions of police held by members of various ethnic communities and to provide information on the current crime and safety issues that ethnic communities face.

## Definition of Terms

The definition of ‘ethnicity’ used in this report is taken from *Ethnic Perspectives in Policy* (Office of Ethnic Affairs, 2002) and is also used in the *Police Ethnic Strategy Towards 2010* (New Zealand Police, 2004). The definition states that ethnicity is self-defined and includes elements of language, religion, customs, traditions and geographic, tribal or national identity.

The term ‘ethnic’ is used in relation to a group of people whose ethnic heritage distinguishes them from the majority of other people in New Zealand, including Māori and Pacific people. This definition includes people from well-established ethnic communities, recent migrants, refugees and those people born in New Zealand who identify with their ethnic heritage (Office of Ethnic Affairs, 2002).

‘Migrants’ are people who were born overseas and entered New Zealand with an immigration programme. Migrants come to New Zealand from a diverse range of countries. Currently people from the United Kingdom, the People’s Republic of China, India and South Africa make up the largest residence markets.

A ‘refugee’ is “any person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (UNHCR, 1951 and 1967 cited in NZIS, 2004).

New Zealand accepts refugees as Quota refugees (750 places annually for people in need designated by UNHCR), Convention refugees (former asylum seekers) and Family Reunion refugees (sponsored by family members already in New Zealand). In regard to refugee nationalities, the largest numbers resettled over the last few years include Afghani, Iraqi, Somali and Ethiopian.

## Methods and design

This research project involved exploring the perceptions of eight ethnic communities including Chinese, Indian, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Somali and Middle Eastern. Data for this qualitative project was collected through face to face interviews and focus group discussions conducted in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch. The interview guide used during data collection was developed in order to ascertain current crime and safety issues that ethnic communities face, as well as their perceptions of the police.

Overall, 108 people participated in 58 interviews and seven focus groups between August 2005 and February 2006. The participants came from a wide range of backgrounds including: migrants, refugees and international students; different ages, gender, religious and cultural backgrounds, length of residency in New Zealand, migration history and occupations. Research assistants from the participants’ own

communities were recruited to help engage participants in their own languages. Furthermore, the research design took into account the difficulties of gaining access to diverse communities, as well as the fact that some participants' migration and home country backgrounds may inhibit them from feeling comfortable to disclose information to police. The project is complex because it involves multiple communities, is multi-sited and multi-faceted and has given a "voice" to ethnic communities on their experiences of crimes, feelings of safety and perceptions of police.

## Major findings

In this exploratory study ethnic community perceptions of New Zealand Police have been analysed through various themes that emerged during data collection, including: contact with police, attitudes towards police staff, perception of police services, language barriers, home country experiences, cultural ideas and knowledge, and the impact of the media.

- Contact with police was one of the main participant selection criteria. This contact could be for either "crime" or "non-crime" related issues. The participants in this research had experienced contact with police over the last twelve months predominantly as victims of crime. Only a very small number of participants had made contact with police for non-crime related matters such as making a general enquiry or attending information seminars.
- Members of ethnic communities do not approach police for assistance for non-crime related incidents for a number of reasons. These include a lack of English proficiency, insufficient knowledge of policing systems and services.
- Language barriers act to reduce contact between ethnic communities and police and impacted on how people reported crime and accessed police services.
- When the participants spoke about their contact with police they spoke in terms of their attitude towards police staff and their perceptions of police services. Their attitudes and perceptions were both positive and negative. The majority of participants had a very limited knowledge about police services offered to ethnic communities such as: Asian and Ethnic Liaison Officers, the ethnic information page in multiple languages on the police website, and Police utilisation of Language Line.
- Home country experiences of policing were explored in this project. These experiences impact on perceptions of New Zealand Police because people compare police attitudes and services of home country police to the police in New Zealand.
- The knowledge that migrants and refugees hold about policing and judicial systems are based on their home country ideas and cultural underpinnings. Education about New Zealand policing systems and procedures are required. Participants pointed to differences which included: self-defence and the rights of the victim in regards to defending their property, family and self; ideas about justice and where, when and by whom justice is carried out; the severity of punishment for criminals; the procedures and possible outcomes surrounding domestic violence complaints; and migrant youth issues including parental rights and rights of the child.
- Media reports impact negatively on ethnic communities perceptions of police because they indicate to members of ethnic communities how police respond to crimes involving their community. Also, members of ethnic communities are concerned that police should resolve high profile cases quickly to negate any negative perceptions about their community that may arise in the wider community.

Crime and safety issues of major concern to the ethnic communities in this study were: burglary, racial harassment, juvenile issues (street kid violence/drinking/drugs) including car theft and vandalism, small business related crimes (shoplifting/not paying), and gambling. In general, most people felt safe in their city and neighbourhood streets during the day. However, at night they were worried about their safety because of concerns about burglary, strangers in the area, and dimly lit areas. In their homes people felt safe, especially if they had taken extra security precautions. Similarly, people thought their children were safe at school, apart from some participants who feared bullying.

The participants involved in this study say that an improvement in the relationship between ethnic communities and New Zealand Police is required. They acknowledge that the development of a fruitful and valuable relationship needs to be a two-way process where both parties work towards this goal. The feedback from ethnic communities about improving communication and information flows between police and themselves was that face-to-face contact was necessary as was information in their first language. Overall, most people thought a police career would be challenging, rewarding and most notably, it would enable people to help their ethnic communities.



# INTRODUCTION

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Over the last two decades ethnic communities in New Zealand have become increasingly diverse. In the 2001 census, some 356,000 New Zealand residents (10 percent of the total New Zealand population) identified themselves as belonging to an ethnic group different from the majority of people living in New Zealand, and who are either Europeans, Māori or Pacific peoples. The *Police Ethnic Strategy Towards 2010*, launched in February 2005, “acknowledges the complex nature of new communities settling in New Zealand and acknowledges that Police, like the general New Zealand population, need assistance in incorporating these groups into policing processes” (New Zealand Police, 2004: 4). The strategy recommends that, over the next five to six years Police focus on reducing ethnic communities fear of being targets of crime, and work towards increasing their confidence in police. It also recommends two policing outcomes for ethnic communities towards 2010:

1. Police have the capability and capacity to engage with ethnic communities;
2. Culturally appropriate strategies are implemented with ethnic communities that increase community safety, and prevent and reduce crime, road trauma and victimisation.

The successful delivery of these outcomes requires Police to have a better understanding of the diverse communities it serves. This research was contracted by the New Zealand Police to provide information on attitudes and perceptions that ethnic communities have about the New Zealand Police.

## Aims and scope of the research

The overall aim of this research is to provide information on the perceptions that various ethnic groups have of police, and current crime and safety issues that ethnic communities face.

We have consulted a range of ethnic communities originating from Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Asian participants have been drawn from Chinese, Indian, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese and Cambodian backgrounds. Within the African communities living in New Zealand, the Somali group was the main community consulted, while those whose origins are Middle Eastern were represented by people from Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is important to point out at the outset that there are considerable variations in the demographic characteristics of the different ethnic groups that we have consulted in this study. Within the Asian population in New Zealand it is the Chinese, Indian, Korean and Japanese who make up the four largest ethnic groups. Vietnamese and Cambodian groups represent the smaller refugee background communities who have been living in New Zealand for over 20 years. More recently, major source countries of New Zealand’s refugee population have been Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Because the changing composition of ethnic communities has significant implications for policy and services (Office of Ethnic Affairs, 2002), brief demographic profiles of the eight ethnic communities based on 2001 census data are presented in Appendix 1 to help provide a broad context and background for this research. The demographic analysis focuses on their geographic distribution, age and gender structures, language profiles, religious affiliations, educational qualifications, labour market outcomes, settlement history (migrants, refugees and those people born in New Zealand who identify with their ethnic heritage), and length of residence in New Zealand (established migrants and new settlers). Also, throughout the report census information will be used to provide a more in-depth description and discussion.

The next section contains a discussion of the methodology used for this project. This includes an outline of the methods used to recruit research participants and collect data, the role of research assistants, ethical considerations, data analysis and the advantages and limitations of this research.

The key findings from the community consultations carried out between August 2005 and February 2006 are presented in two sections. First, ethnic communities perceptions of the New Zealand Police are explored through their attitudes towards police staff and their perceptions of police performance. Factors influencing these perceptions are then identified; these factors include types of contacts, language barriers, home country backgrounds, varying cultural ideas and knowledge relating to policing systems and social norms, migration experiences, demographic and socio-economic differences, and media influence. Second, crime and safety issues experienced by members of different ethnic communities, and their awareness of the attempts made by the police to engage with ethnic communities, are examined. This inquiry provides insight into police-community relations and the perceptions that members of ethnic communities have towards a career in the police service. Future research that monitors changes in ethnic community perceptions of the police would assist Police to develop a more thorough understanding of those factors which influence attitudes toward the police.

## METHODS AND DESIGN

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This section discusses the process of designing and carrying out a research study involving eight different ethnic communities in four research sites. It addresses preparations for gaining access to ethnic communities, determining the data collection strategies, developing the interview guide, identifying anticipated ethical issues for research, and recruiting research assistants. It also describes the procedures for collecting data, the characteristics of research participants, the steps in analysing data across ethnic groups, and validating the accuracy of findings. Finally, the strengths and limitations of the study are discussed.

### Preparations for gaining access to ethnic communities

Extensive preparations were required in order to access the eight ethnic communities (i.e. Chinese, Indian, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Somali and Middle Eastern) in four research sites (Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch). In each city our first contact was made with the relevant Asian Liaison or Ethnic Liaison Officer of the New Zealand Police. Contact with these officers helped us to extend our networks and contacts within the ethnic communities and with key stakeholders. Following this, a snowball technique was used to contact various key stakeholders who could be of significant help in each site. The key stakeholders included Migrant Resource Centres, Citizen Advice Bureaux, City Councils, Office of Ethnic Affairs, RMS Refugee Resettlement, Refugee Resettlement Support, Refugees as Survivors and Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand.

The ethnic community representatives were prominent leaders and spokespeople of community organisations. They provided an overall picture of the crime and safety issues affecting their communities, and their perceptions of the relationships between their community and the New Zealand Police. These discussions helped to set the stage for the research. We were also able to begin to identify potential research assistants and community groups who were willing to help recruit participants.

There is a wide diversity of views within ethnic groups, therefore talking to people from both within communities and key stakeholders across the four cities has shed light on these complexities. During talks that were held with the various key stakeholders the following points were emphasised:

- Diversity within ethnic groups is extensive, for example: ethnic background, age, length of time in New Zealand, education.
- There is a need for New Zealand Police to understand community dynamics and splits within communities based along ethnic or political divides. For example, although there may be a police officer who belongs to a particular ethnic group, this does not necessarily mean others from that ethnic group would feel comfortable talking to the ‘ethnic’ officer. For instance, a woman may not tell a police officer from her ethnic group that she is experiencing domestic violence because the information may get back to others in the group.
- An emphasis was put on the need to reach “grassroots” people, or those with a low English proficiency and who were more culturally and linguistically distant from the mainstream society. The rationale being that these people would experience greater difficulties and yield very rich information about their experiences with New Zealand Police.
- Concerns about domestic violence were raised. Encouraging people to talk about this issue was considered very important.
- It was suggested that the views of dairy owners and fast food delivery drivers be sought. This was because of high profile crimes against people in these sectors, where the victims were often from ethnic communities.
- It was also suggested that women only groups could encourage women to speak more freely because they might be reluctant to speak openly in front of men.

The above points were taken into consideration when designing this research project. Some stakeholders queried why certain groups were not included in the research. For example, it was pointed out to us that there were a high concentration of people from Ethiopia who live in South Auckland, and significant numbers of Thai living in central Auckland. People from Eastern Europe were also said to experience many resettlement difficulties because of language barriers. However, due to the already complex nature of this research, we were not able to extend our project to involve these additional groups.

Additionally, participation in discussion seminars and meetings<sup>1</sup> helped the research team to build networks with people in the communities and gain insight into local community happenings. Presence at these meetings also helped to inform people in the ethnic communities about the research team, the project, and its aims.

Overall, contact with the larger ethnic groups (e.g. Chinese, Indian, Korean; see Figure 1 in Appendix 1) was straightforward because of the ease of identification of key members through the Asian and Ethnic Liaison Police Officers and the groups' willingness and enthusiasm about the project. Gaining access to small ethnic groups proved more difficult because there were fewer community organisations and potential contacts. In particular, people from the Cambodian and Vietnamese communities proved very difficult to reach, mainly because of reticence about being involved in a project for and about Police. Further, these groups have a small community base and low rates of participation in mainstream organisations. Similar problems were experienced when we tried to contact people from Middle Eastern refugee backgrounds. In order to overcome this problem, we expanded our key stakeholder networks to help us reach people from these communities. Auckland Refugees as Survivors (RAS) was a very useful contact because the agency employed community facilitators from ethnic communities to work in the community. In the end, we were able to reach people from all of the eight ethnic communities as planned. The response from the community members involved was very positive and they were pleased the Police had initiated the project.

## Data collection strategies

A qualitative inquiry approach was adopted for this study using face-to-face interviews and focus groups as the two primary data gathering techniques. The use of these techniques enabled the researchers to "look for the complexity of views [from research participants] rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories of ideas" (Creswell, 2003: 8). The philosophy underpinning the qualitative approach is based on the premise that an individual's beliefs are formed by their social and cultural environment. In other words, these beliefs cannot be viewed in isolation but must be considered within the context of everyday experiences and past experiences. The methods used in this research project, particularly face to face interviews using open-ended questions, gave the participants an opportunity to share their views and apply meaning that was important to them. Focus groups were also used to provide a dynamic environment where participants could interact and engage in conversations with one another on topics of interest, as the group interaction can provide insight into participants' opinions and experiences (Morgan, 1997). The use of focus groups also enabled a greater number of participants to be involved in the project. 'Naturally occurring' focus groups were preferred; these involved groups of people who already met on a regular basis, such as older persons' support groups, youth groups or church groups. Naturally occurring groups were used for two reasons. First, the participants would be relaxed with one another. Second, the meeting places would be familiar to the participants, contributing to a comfortable atmosphere in which to conduct the focus group discussions.

<sup>1</sup> Meetings and seminars attended in the course of the research included: New Zealand Diversity Forum *The Challenges of Cultural Diversity* at Te Papa, Wellington (August 23, 2005); Asian Advisory Group meeting organised by the Police at Manukau City, Auckland (September 20, 2005); Police recruitment seminar held in Melville, Hamilton (November 15, 2005); New Settlers Focus Group meetings held in Hamilton (November 23, 2005 and February 22, 2006); and Seminar on family violence by the UN Special Rapporteur on human trafficking, Sigma Huda, organised by the Centre for Asian Health Research and Evaluation (CAHRE) at the University of Auckland's School of Population Health (December 20, 2005).

The employment and training of research assistants from each of the relevant ethnic communities to interview participants and conduct focus groups in first languages was an integral aspect the research design. The researchers' experience in inter-cultural settings and their ability to be aware of, and responsive to, culturally appropriate wording and interview techniques was important to the success of data collection.

Consultation with stakeholders in the preparatory phase revealed the importance of talking to dairy owners and fast food delivery drivers. Consequently, over 20 dairies, bakeries and takeaway shops in Auckland, Hamilton and Wellington were visited. These businesses, which were owned by members of Chinese, Indian and Pakistani ethnic groups, were located in city centres or in shopping centres in city suburbs. The information obtained from talking to the small business owners and workers was used to supplement data from the individual interviews and focus groups.

## The interview guide

An interview guide (Appendix 2) was developed to cover the particular topics requested by the New Zealand Police Evaluation Unit and Māori-Pacific-Ethnic Services (MPES) about current crime and safety issues that ethnic communities face, as well as the perceptions that various ethnic groups have of police. Early in the process of developing the interview guide, a review of relevant survey literature was conducted (e.g. Babbie, 2001; Converse and Presser, 1986). Previous survey work carried out both in New Zealand and overseas measuring public attitudes towards the police, including their experiences and fear of victimisation, was also accessed. A selected list of public surveys relevant to this project is provided in Appendix 3.

Most of the survey questionnaires reviewed had been designed for telephone interviews with the general public. None of them had focused specifically on people from different minority ethnic communities. Closed questions were frequently used in these telephone surveys, and Likert-type response scales (e.g. "strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree") were often used. Such an approach was unsuitable for the purpose of this study, because the focus of the project was to gain an understanding and appreciation of the participants' views and experiences. In order to do this the researchers needed to engage with the participants. Moreover, there were considerable cross-cultural issues that needed to be considered when developing a survey questionnaire for use in multiple cultures (Harkness, van de Vijver and Mohler, 2003; van de Vijver and Leung, 1997). For example, findings from cross-cultural survey research suggests that identical response scale designs may not be suitable for all cultures and languages (Smith, 2003).

Nonetheless, reviewing the range of questions asked in previous public attitude surveys helped the research team to identify relevant discussion topics that could be used in this research. In particular, *The Annual Survey of Public Satisfaction with Police Services* (New Zealand Police, 2002) consisted of 16 questions designed to collect information on the types of contact and/or follow-up that respondents had experienced with police over the past 12 months, their level of trust and confidence in the police, their attitudes toward police staff, as well as their satisfaction with police services and with information on home and personal security provided by police. Additional topics examined in other public attitude surveys included: perceptions of safety and fear of crime (Beyer, 1993; Corporate Performance Group, 2003; Phoenix Police Department, 2003; Sarma and O'Dwyer, 2004); experiences of victimisation (Beyer, 1993); non-reporting of crime (Corporate Reference Group, 2003); and policing priorities (Corporate Reference Group, 2003; Sarma and O'Dwyer, 2004).

After reviewing previous survey questions, the interview guide was drafted. A semi-structured question design ensured consistency of information, but it was sufficiently open for participants to offer viewpoints they thought were important.

Feedback from key stakeholders, ethnic communities, the University of Waikato Ethics Committee and the project advisory group was then taken into consideration. The interview questions were pilot tested by research assistants from a variety of ethnic communities for clarity and cultural appropriateness (Krueger 1998). The final interview guide (Appendix 2) included a sequence of questions that, it was felt, would provide insight into participants' perceptions of the New Zealand Police:

- What are the major crime and safety issues facing ethnic groups?
- What are individual experiences of crime or victimisation?
- What are individual experiences of reporting crime?
- Is the individual comfortable approaching police? Either male or female?
- Is the community satisfied with their relationship with police?
- What is the level of knowledge and understanding that ethnic communities have of the services provided by police?
- What experiences have individuals had with their home country police?
- Do people from ethnic communities view the New Zealand Police as a positive career option?
- What are some practical solutions to the problems identified?
- What are the culturally appropriate means of communicating with ethnic communities?

## **Ethical considerations**

Ethical approval from the University of Waikato's Human Research Ethics Committee was obtained prior to conducting the interviews and focus groups. An information sheet for research participants (Appendix 4) was sent to all potential respondents describing the nature of the study and the rights of a research participant. Individuals who freely consented to participate in the study were contacted and an interview arranged.

An informed consent form (Appendix 5) for participants was developed and the form was signed before participants engaged in the research. This form acknowledged that participants' rights would be protected during all phases of the study. Elements of the informed consent included the following (Creswell 2003):

- the purpose of the study, so that individuals understood the nature of the research and its likely impact on them;
- the procedures of the study, so that individuals could reasonably expect what to anticipate in the research;
- the right to participate voluntarily and the right to withdraw at any time, so that an individual does not feel coerced into participation;
- the right to ask questions, and have their privacy respected;
- the right to decline to answer any particular question;
- the right to decline to the interview being audio-taped; and
- the benefits of the study that will accrue to the individual.

All data collected and processed in the course of the research was treated as strictly confidential. Unless permission was gained no names or information that could identify any individual participant or organisation was used in written reports. This was particularly pertinent for some people with refugee backgrounds who, because of their home country and refugee camp experiences, may have felt wary about giving any information to police. However, the information sheet explained that specific ethnic groups would be identified in the report where appropriate to enable distinctions between the needs and issues of the different ethnic groups.

## **The role of research assistants**

A total of 18 research assistants from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds were employed (Table 1). These research assistants were recruited through our existing networks and key stakeholders in the four cities. Persistence was required in order to locate research assistants who had very good communication skills and who could build trust, instil confidence and convey the importance of the research to potential participants, and who also had the time themselves to carry out the research.

We also recruited our research assistants based on their close connections within their communities and relevant tertiary education backgrounds. Their disciplines included social work, health, education, and journalism. Additionally, many of the research assistants had experiences of institutional environments, interpreting and translation positions, and community organisations. Their close community networks and connections, as well as knowledge about the social and historical contexts of their communities brought strength to their roles in this project.

Ensuring each ethnic community was represented in at least two cities formed the basis of the recruitment of research assistants. Census data helped to identify the choice of centre for each ethnic group. All ethnic groups were represented in Auckland because of its size and demographic diversity. In the other centres 3 to 5 ethnic groups were represented. As expected, recruitment was more difficult in the smaller ethnic communities because of a smaller pool of people. If recruitment was not progressing well a flexible approach allowed us to shift focus to another centre to locate research assistants. Further, some communities have lower incidences of tertiary qualifications (see Figures 12 and 13 in Appendix 1) and relevant experience, and therefore it took a longer period of time to recruit the right person. If community organisations were not able to suggest a suitable person we then tried to locate university graduate students from the relevant community. The age of the research assistants varied from people in their twenties right through to their fifties, and both male and female researchers were employed.

**Table 1 Ethnicity of research assistants**

Ethnicity	Auckland	Hamilton	Wellington	Christchurch	Total
Chinese	1	-	1	1	3
Indian <sup>1</sup>	-	1	1	-	2
Korean	1	1	-	1	3
Japanese	1	-	-	1	2
Vietnamese	1	-	1	-	2
Cambodian	1	-	-	-	1
Middle Eastern	2	-	-	1	3
Somali	1	1	-	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>18</b>

<sup>1</sup>The Indian research assistant in Hamilton interviewed participants in both Hamilton and Auckland.

One of the first tasks for the research assistants was to translate the research documents—the interview guide (Appendix 2), the information sheet to research participants (Appendix 4), and the consent form (Appendix 5)—into their own language. The documents were then reviewed by interpreters/translators who checked the documents for accuracy and ensured the correct use of phrases and vocabulary. The research assistants also helped to identify possible interview and focus group participants within their respective communities.

Before the first interview was conducted, extensive discussions were held with the research assistants to help them gain a comprehensive understanding of the interview schedule and ethical aspects of the research. Particular emphasis was placed on ensuring the consistency of use of the interview schedule for each research assistant across all of their interviews. We recognised that respect and sensitivity was required for this kind of cross-cultural research, and thus we were also concerned to obtain the research

assistants' opinions as to how the questions could be better understood in their community. We ensured research assistants were fully aware of the ethical aspects of the research through familiarisation with the information sheet and consent form that were provided to the participants. The selection criteria of participants were discussed as well as the appropriateness and ease of interviewing people from different age ranges and genders in their communities. The issues of gender and age were not of significance, but the research assistants emphasised how important it was that the participants were able to listen and speak in their own language.

The interview reports were written in English by the research assistants and forwarded to the research team. In some instances the research assistants had translated direct quotes from the interviews that have been used in the body of this report. On-going discussions with individual research assistants took place regarding their research reports to ensure the research team interpreted the reports correctly and the consistency of the use of the interview schedules. After all the interviews were completed, two group consultation meetings were held with the Auckland research assistants. This provided the research assistants with an opportunity to share their experiences. At the same time the research team validated any themes that were emerging in the analysis of data from the different ethnic groups.

## Data collection

A total of 58 in-depth individual interviews and seven focus groups were completed between August 2005 and February 2006. Research assistants from each ethnic community recruited the participants through their networks. Emphasis was placed on finding participants from a wide range of backgrounds including migrants, refugees, and international students; different ages, gender, religious and cultural backgrounds, length of residency in New Zealand, migration history and occupations. Additionally, participants who had personal contact with the New Zealand Police were preferred in order to explore their views of those experiences. The type of contact included both crime and non-crime related issues. Likewise, those who had a low English proficiency and were thus more likely to be culturally distant from mainstream society were preferred. In order to ensure a wide mix of participants, steps were also taken to ensure each ethnic group was represented in at least two centres. Census data on the geographic distribution of the eight ethnic groups in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch (see Figure 1 in Appendix 1) aid our choice of centres. Table 2 shows the number of interviews and focus groups that were completed for each ethnic group across the four cities.

Four of the focus groups were naturally occurring and this helped ease access into communities as well as being convenient for both the research participants and the research team. The remaining three groups were organised specifically for the research project. Research assistants arranged a Somali group and one of the international student group meetings. The Auckland international student group was arranged with the help of Auckland University International Centre staff.

Respondents from the Chinese, Korean and Iraqi communities agreed to have their interviews audio taped but those from other communities declined permission for their interviews to be similarly recorded. In addition, some Afghani and Somali participants gave verbal consent to sharing their views and opinions, but they were not willing to sign consent forms. As our Somali research assistant explained, this was due in part to the fact they were very wary of New Zealand Police. These participants felt that police misunderstood them and they were very reluctant to trust them. Research assistants and community advisors had warned us about this issue before interviewing commenced. Research assistants were therefore instructed to ensure that participants understood all of their rights, in particular that they did not have to answer every question and could withdraw their participation at any stage.

**Table 2: Completed interviews and focus groups**

Research methods/ Ethnic groups	Auckland	Hamilton	Wellington	Christchurch	Total
<b>Interviews</b>					

Chinese	3	-	6	2	11
Indian	2	3	3	-	8
Korean	4	2	-	5	11
Japanese	3	-	-	3	6
Vietnamese	-	-	4	-	4
Cambodian	5	-	-	2	7
Middle Eastern	5	-	-	2	7
Somali	-	4	-	-	4
<b>Total Interviews</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>58</b>

#### Focus groups

Chinese	1	-	-	-	1
Indian	1	-	-	-	1
Vietnamese	2	-	-	-	2
Somali	1	-	-	-	1
Mixed <sup>1</sup>	1	-	-	1	2
<b>Total Focus Groups</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>

<sup>1</sup>International students

## Characteristics of research participants

A total of 108 individuals participated in this research. The 58 in-depth interviews were made up of 61 individuals, because in three interviews both the wife and husband were interviewed together (Table 3). The seven focus groups comprised 47 individuals (Table 4).

Thirty-one males and thirty females participated in the in-depth interviews (Table 3). Most of the participants were aged between 25 and 64 years. In order to capture a diversity of settlement experiences we looked for participants who had lived in New Zealand for varying lengths of time. New migrants, or those who had lived in New Zealand for less than five years, were the biggest group (24). Twenty-one participants were established migrants who had been resident in New Zealand for over ten years. Two participants were second-generation migrants born in New Zealand (Table 3).

The seven focus groups included two groups of older/retired people (Chinese, Indian), one youth group (Vietnamese), one adult group (Vietnamese) one mixed age group (Somali) and two mixed ethnicity international student groups. Altogether 27 males and 20 females participated in the focus groups (Table 4). All of the groups were mixed genders apart from the Vietnamese adult group. The Vietnamese research assistant suggested that gendered groups were more appropriate with adults in order to encourage people to speak freely. However Vietnamese youths were deemed to be more open, thus the youth group consisted of both males and females (Table 4).

**Table 3 Profiles of individual interview participants**

	Chinese	Indian	Korean	Japanese	Cambodian	Vietnamese	Somali	M/E	Total
<b>Gender</b>									
Male	7	5	5	2	3	2	1	6	31
Female	5	3	6	4	4	2	3	3	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>61</b>

#### Age group

15-24	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	4
25-44	5	3	6	3	3	1	4	3	28
45-64	5	5	2	2	4	3	-	4	25
65+	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Unknown	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>61</b>

#### Years in NZ

0-5 yrs	3	3	6	3	1	-	1	7	24
6-10	3	-	3	1	2	1	2	2	14
11-19	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	-	10
20+	3	3	-	1	3	1	-	-	11
Born in NZ	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>61</b>

**Table 4 Profiles of focus group participants**

	Chinese	Indian	Vietnamese	Somali	Mixed <sup>1</sup>	Total
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	6	4	9	5	3	27
Female	1	4	2	5	8	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Age group</b>						
Youth	-	-	4	-	11	15
Adults	-	-	7	-	-	7
Retirees	7	8	-	-	-	15
Mixed	-	-	-	10	-	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>47</b>

<sup>1</sup> Participants in the two mixed groups comprised of 3 Chinese, 6 Japanese, 1 Filipino and 1 Malaysian.

## Data analysis and interpretation

The analysis of data has been an ongoing process involving interpreting and analysing the information supplied by the participants. Initially, interview reports prepared by research assistants were read by the research team to identify key dimensions of ethnic communities perceptions of the police, and other themes relevant to the research objectives. Ongoing dialogue between the research team, and between the researchers and research assistants, enabled the findings to be checked and rechecked for accuracy and validity of findings, and to allow for further comparison of similarities and differences across ethnic communities.

Two “member-checking” meetings (Creswell, 2003) were held with research assistants in Auckland—on February 21 and July 5, 2006. During the meetings the researchers took the specific descriptions or themes back to the research assistants to find out whether the research assistants felt they were accurate. This process helped validate the emerging themes in the research.

## Strengths and limitations of the study

This project is complex because it involves multiple communities, is multi-sited and multi-faceted. Specifically, the participants in this study came from eight different ethnic communities; they lived in four different locations, and both the communities and the individuals were diverse in backgrounds, including migration experiences, demographic profiles, personal experiences, values, needs and aspirations. In total 108 members from the eight specified ethnic communities participated, 58 males and 50 females. The actual number from each community who were involved ranged from 7 (Cambodian) to 22 (Chinese). It should be noted that this project was exploratory and was not intended to be a representative study. The topics that the participants have discussed in regard to their perceptions of police allow an overview of general issues. Further study is required to gain a more in-depth understanding of some of these topics.

The process of engaging ethnic communities in research of this kind requires a lot of time, patience, understanding and trust. Initially some communities kept a low profile and did not want to be involved in the research. The recruitment of suitable research assistants from their own communities helped to break down barriers and encourage their fellow ethnic members to participate. Yet in some smaller communities, finding suitable research assistants was not easy because of their small community base. On the other hand, other communities (e.g. Ethiopian, Thai and Eastern European) seemed keen to be involved but the research brief excluded them.

As already outlined there were some groups not represented in this study. For instance, some members of refugee communities, particularly those from the Middle East or parts of Africa and Asia, were reluctant to be involved with Police because of previous experiences in their home countries. Also, some people choose not to connect with ethnic communities for a variety of reasons. This project has not been able to involve individuals who were not aligned with their ethnic communities.

The vast majority of the individuals who participated were aged between 25 and 64 years; older people and youth were under-represented in this research. Given that past research in other countries has identified that young people are more likely to hold negative images of the police (Johnson, 1993), further research with this group is required. From our experience, young people seem reluctant to be interviewed individually on their attitudes toward the police; thus focus group discussions may be a preferred option. Further specialised research with older people is also required to ensure that their voices are heard.

In this project, steps have been taken to ensure that each participating ethnic group was represented in at least two sites. This strategy ensured a wider mix of research assistants and participants. However, in the analysis of data, no comparisons across cities were made because of the small numbers involved.

Because a lack of English proficiency is a key barrier many members of new communities face, this study has emphasised reaching “grassroots” people, or those with a low English proficiency. All of the participants involved in this study had personal experiences of contact with the New Zealand Police. As an exploratory study focusing exclusively on attitudes toward police by visible ethnic minorities, this project has been successful in giving these people a public voice. Overall, all of the people who participated felt that the project had given them an important opportunity to make their voices heard on some major issues that affect their everyday lives, such as experiences of crime, feelings of safety and general interactions with police and other members of the general public.

# PERCEPTIONS OF THE NEW ZEALAND POLICE

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Public attitudes toward the police have long been a topic of concern among police administrators and the community. More than any other public service agency, the police rely on the support of the community to effectively perform their roles as service providers and crime fighters (Johnson, 1993). Without the willingness of citizens to report crimes and provide vital information, the police would be incapable of doing their jobs on a day-to-day basis. From a community perspective, citizens need police protection and many believe that police and communities can work together to build safer and stronger communities (Pruegger, 2003).

Surveys are commonly used as a tool to measure general population attitudes towards police (see Appendix 3). However, the perceptions of people from minority ethnic communities are difficult to study because of the small number of people in these groups who show up in survey data. In this section of the report opinions about police are explored through the use of a qualitative study involving participants from eight ethnic communities in New Zealand. Drawing on their experiences of contact with police over the last twelve months, participant views of the New Zealand Police are explored through two dimensions: their perceptions of police services, and their attitudes towards police staff. Factors influencing these perceptions are also identified and discussed.

## Contact with police over the last 12 months

Contact with police was one of the main participant selection criteria. Of the 58 face to face interviews 50 people described direct contact with police. The remaining participants provided anecdotal evidence of fellow community members' experiences. The focus groups consisted of 47 individual participants. These discussions revealed that most of these people had had personal dealings with police. Generally, these contacts happened in the preceding twelve months but some participants shared experiences that went back further. All of the participants who had contact with police had been victims of crime. Burglary was by far the most common crime against the participants, and this included house burglary as well as burglary of small businesses such as dairies and bakeries. Racial harassment was also experienced by a majority of the participants and a large proportion of them had contacted police in regard to these experiences. The harassment included rubbish being thrown into gardens, verbal abuse and damage to property. International students in Auckland City also reported that they had been victims of crime such as bag snatching and fraud scams. To a lesser extent participants contacted the police because of car theft, minor property theft, and property damage. A small number of the participants' contacts with police included traffic incidents, either speeding tickets or car accidents.

So on one hand, as victims of crime the participants in this study had high rates of contact with police. On the other hand, very few participants had approached the police about non-crime related matters, such as making a general enquiry, or attending police information seminars. None of the participants said they had seen police take part in group or community activities that participants were involved with. In fact, nearly all of the participants were unaware of any police services that were specifically targeted towards their community or any other ethnic communities. Similarly, knowledge of the locality of community police stations or telephone numbers was limited.

Some differences between the communities in terms of contact with police were evident. The Cambodian communities and the Vietnamese community in Wellington expressed very positive views of police in terms of their duty to make people feel safe and protected. However, the participants from the Somali communities were unhappy about their contact with police because they felt police did not understand Somali people or culture, and did not help or protect them from racial abuse or intimidation.

Age was an important factor when it came to the variety of views expressed by some ethnic communities. Both Somali and Vietnamese youth were extremely wary of contact with police. Both groups had experienced intimidation by other groups of youth in the suburbs they lived in. However, they did not see any point in contacting police because they believed that police would not protect them. Police were perceived to be racist by Somali youth. Both groups also described cultural misunderstandings and language difficulties as barriers to contacting police. Further, these participants felt that if they approached police their situation would become worse, either because they themselves would get into trouble with police or the gangs of other youths might retaliate. Similarly, it was pointed out that Middle Eastern youths' perceptions of New Zealand Police were negative in comparison to older people, and those with families, who felt happy with police because they defended them and made them feel safe. Retirees from the Chinese community in North Auckland were generally happy with the contact they had with police because of the face-to-face meetings police had held in order to stop victimisation of elderly Chinese by Pakeha youths in their suburb.

There were few gender differences in the responses of participants in this study. However, some Middle Eastern women, particularly those who wear burqa (a veil that covers the face), preferred contact with female police officers. This was especially if they were required to remove their headscarf during police investigations or questioning. As a result, some Muslim women who feared they would have to confront a male police officer may delay reporting directly to police, and instead wait until a male relative arrived home or came to their aid.

Participants also reported few differences in their perceptions of male and female police officers. They thought all police officers would carry out their duties in the same way regardless of gender. A very small number of the participants expressed opinions echoing gender stereotypes, such as male officers would be physically stronger and female officers would be kinder and caring.

In general, victimisation is strongly related to the contact participants had with police. Participants in this study were unlikely to approach police for advice, to ask them for directions or to obtain information. The lack of confidence they exhibit when expressing themselves in English limits their contact with the police.

## **The language barrier**

The language capability of members of different ethnic groups varies considerably. In the 2001 census, a majority of people in the Indian and Middle Eastern ethnic groups reported that they could speak English (87-90%). In the case of the Somali, Cambodian, Vietnamese and Korean groups, large proportions said they spoke no English (24-26%; see Figure 5 in Appendix 1). Despite differences in the levels of English proficiency across ethnic groups, participants from all ethnic groups described how the language barrier reduced their contact with police. Many pointed out that a lack of English proficiency could marginalise individuals from mainstream society, particularly for those who had limited connections with their own ethnic community.

Some Cambodian and Vietnamese participants expressed concerns about the education and literacy levels of their communities. They pointed out that many people cannot read or write in their own language, therefore English is very difficult, if not impossible, to learn. Older people were considered particularly vulnerable.

Vietnamese and Somali youth who felt police misunderstood them considered this situation was compounded by language barriers. Both groups were afraid that involvement with the police would cause them more trouble, thus they were unlikely to approach police for help.

Although people from the Indian community generally experienced fewer language difficulties than the other groups, participants emphasised that some members of the Indian community did not speak English

well, and again older people were viewed as particularly vulnerable and isolated. Some new migrants also experienced difficulties because of their lack of English language.

### ***Impact of the language barrier on reporting crime***

The language barrier impacts on how people report crime. For instance, if victims cannot speak English well they usually rely on people from within their communities to report crime for them. This means delays in the reporting of incidents, compounding the tension and stress felt by victims. Further, relying on particular members of communities to interpret for victims adds to the responsibilities and time impositions these individuals experience, as well as privacy issues for the victims.

A Korean participant stated that the language barrier caused them embarrassment because they had to rely on their child to explain the matter to police. This situation puts pressure on children and young adults who, because they can speak English and also understand New Zealand culture a lot better than their parents do, are required to report crimes on behalf of adults.

Members of the Japanese community were likely to call on other members of their community to help report a crime rather than directly calling the police. Many research participants demonstrated a feeling of distance from police because of a lack of confidence about having direct contact. Language and cultural barriers were frequently cited reasons.

### ***Impact of the language barrier on accessing services***

Language barriers limit people from accessing police services or approaching police for advice or more general help, and therefore overall contact between ethnic communities and New Zealand Police is low. Below are some examples.

- When reporting a crime, expressing and explaining oneself in English is very difficult. In addition, if the police officers involved show impatience or intolerance towards their language difficulties, victims' confidence is further diminished.
- Calling 111 in emergency situations is a stressful experience and this is magnified for people whose first language is not English. Telephone conversations are inherently difficult compared to face-to-face conversations because of the lack of ability to "read" body language.
- When victims report crimes either over the telephone or make statements to responding police officers, the stress involved can mean that it becomes even more difficult for these people to express themselves clearly in English. This can lead to feelings of frustration. As a result, some participants indicated that they were unlikely to report a crime unless it was of a very serious nature.

## **Dimensions of ethnic communities views of the New Zealand Police**

Because reporting crime is the most common form of contact people from ethnic communities have with police, this is how their perceptions of New Zealand Police develop. As the participants talked about their experiences we discerned two dimensions that were pivotal in forming viewpoints about New Zealand Police. These dimensions were: the attitudes ethnic communities held towards police staff, and their perceptions of police services.

## **Attitudes towards police staff**

### *Positive images*

Both positive and negative comments were made in regard to attitudes about police staff. Positive experiences were characterised by personal and caring contact by the police officer towards victims. For example, some elderly Chinese residents living in Auckland reported being targeted by teenagers who were both physically and verbally abusive. The elderly Chinese tried to access help by writing letters to government and community leaders. Eventually the police became directly involved and talked with the elderly Chinese themselves. These participants were very grateful for the direct contact and saw first-hand how the police could improve their situation. They were particularly impressed that high-level police officers took an interest in their case and had sat down with them to discuss their grievances and concerns. Other participants also mentioned direct caring and comforting police work and had used words such as “kind”, “friendly”, “helpful” and “approachable”. Similarly, officers who displayed patience with language made a difference to people feeling positive about their experiences.

People from refugee backgrounds emphasised the corruption-free system and how police worked in accordance with New Zealand laws and regulations. They used the words “humane” and “police protect people” to describe their attitudes towards the New Zealand Police. Some older Indian residents who participated in a focus group felt New Zealand Police treated people fairly, as did some participants from the Japanese community.

### *Negative images*

Negative attitudes surfaced because of perceptions of police bias, stereotypical preconceptions and prejudices; and a perceived lack of fair treatment in comparison with other New Zealanders. Some of the words the respondents used to describe their negative experiences with police included: “unapproachable”, “don’t understand us”, “don’t protect us”, “powerful and intimidating”, “help the offender not the victim”, “do not help migrants”, “migrants are not treated as Kiwis”, and “victim made to feel like a criminal”.

The perception that police were more likely to judge a migrant as “in the wrong” was prevalent within many communities including Chinese, Middle Eastern, Indian and Korean. Often victims who reported crimes felt they were “interrogated” or “blamed” and it was somehow their fault they had experienced the crime. For instance, a Korean man who was a victim of burglary said he was told not to keep cash at home, which was something he did not do, and some Chinese participants were told they were “stupid” for not having insurance. A number of Chinese, Korean and Indian participants also referred to the fact that police often asked the victim whether they had insurance. They felt this showed the police did not care about the personal items the victim had lost. Indian people remarked that many of their most prized possessions were those that had been handed down through generations, so insurance could never cover their loss. This “lack of sensitivity” added to negative perceptions of police.

Members of the Auckland Vietnamese focus group discussed three separate burglaries that people from their community had experienced, as well as an incident of vandalism at their Temple. In particular, the participants discussed the lack of response from police, including their failure to arrive at the scene or telephone the persons who had made the emergency 111 calls. As a result, a victim of a subsequent burglary decided to call his “New Zealand Pakeha” neighbour to help report the burglary and the police responded right away. The participants viewed this incident in terms of racial prejudice.

Participants also described their experiences with police when, they believed, an officer failed to listen to their side of the story. A Middle Eastern man talked about an incident where he was involved in a car accident, and the other party, a Pakeha New Zealander, admitted he was at fault. When the police arrived the man spoke to the police and the Middle Eastern man was then blamed for the accident. The participants who had been in similar types of situations felt their inability to express themselves proficiently in English was partly to blame. While the participants understood the difficulties police had

with the language barrier, they nevertheless thought it was unfair to be treated differently because of these difficulties.

Overall, participants from ethnic communities reported both negative and positive attitudes towards police staff. In general, they wanted police to show more interest and concern in their matters and more understanding of ethnic communities.

## **Perceptions of police services**

Through exploring the experiences of the participants we were able to discern their knowledge of the key services carried out by police. The participants knew that police: protect citizens; apprehend criminals; enforce road rules; attend domestic violence incidents; patrol streets and attend to racial harassment complaints. However, they were dissatisfied with some aspects of police services and their main concerns included: slow response times; low rates of solving crime; lack of follow-up; lack of visible police presence; not enough staff; too much emphasis on traffic; and a lack of communication with the community.

Slow response time concerned people because they felt criminals had a greater chance of getting away with crimes. An Iraqi man said he would not bother reporting a crime if it was not serious because the police would not come immediately and by the time they arrived it would be too late.

Members of the Chinese and Korean communities felt they might not report crimes because police would not solve the problem, for instance, by apprehending criminals or returning stolen goods. Many participants spoke about police asking them whether they were covered by insurance. In these cases they felt police were abdicating their responsibility to catch criminals and they did not care about solving the crime. However, perceptions about inefficient Police service was not the only reason people did not report crimes. For instance, Vietnamese youths said they were reluctant to report crime because of a fear of revenge by the criminals and people from the Middle East and Somalia were afraid to involve police in situations, such as vandalism or harassment in their neighbourhoods, because they feared retaliation by the offenders.

Some participants who had reported crimes, said they did not know what had happened to their case, for instance after a burglary, because there was a lack of follow-up. A Somali woman who had experienced very serious racial harassment both in her neighbourhood and on her property criticised the police as she was never advised about the outcome of the situation or whether anyone had been brought to justice.

Many participants complained that they found it very difficult to obtain statements from police in relation to complaints they had made. Specifically, Housing New Zealand requests police statements before they will investigate any problems their tenants have with neighbours. This frustrated participants who felt that their complaint or statement had not been taken seriously and therefore not recorded.

Overwhelmingly, the respondents thought priority was given to traffic policing rather than solving crime. Participants felt police spent a lot of time issuing speeding tickets in order to earn extra revenue. A small number of participants worked as taxi drivers and they believed they were stopped frequently or targeted by police. Many participants wanted police to concentrate on the following: apprehending criminals, particularly burglars; making racial abuse offenders accountable for their actions; controlling drunken youths and 'boy racers'. They were concerned because they did not see many police on city streets or patrolling their neighbourhoods, and they believed an increased presence would make them feel safer.

In general, the majority of participants portrayed limited knowledge of police activities and services that specifically target ethnic communities. These services include Asian and Ethnic Liaison Officers and the

police website ethnic information page. Language Line<sup>2</sup> is also available when New Zealand Police are contacted. Some participants demonstrated that they knew a little about these services, for instance how to contact community constables, while other participants did not know whether or not to report racial harassment, or where to report it. In addition, some participants from the Indian community were concerned they did not know how to report small crimes, such as shoplifting.

Overall, results from this study show the research participants, despite differences in their ethnicity, gender and age, share perceptions of police services. Although they are aware of the key services the police carry out, their understanding of police priorities appears to be different from what they perceive these priorities should be. In general, participants would like to see the police concentrating on solving crimes; acting promptly; following up on matters; providing a visible presence; and consultation with ethnic community groups. A common view expressed by participants was that penalties for criminals were not harsh enough, and harsher penalties would help to prevent crime. There was no evidence to suggest that participants were aware that sentencing and punishment are not the responsibility of New Zealand Police.

## **Factors influencing perceptions of New Zealand Police**

It has been pointed out that language barriers limit participants' contact with police. When participants do actually make contact to report a crime, the way they are treated by the police, or perceive they are being treated by the police, impacts on their views of the police and subsequent evaluation of their experiences. Participants who reported that police showed patience with their inability to speak English well, tended to feel positive about their experience whereas those who reported that police were impatient with them tended to be more negative. Other than the language issue, the research also highlighted other factors influencing the viewpoints of ethnic communities and these include: experiences with police in home countries; varying cultural ideas and knowledge relating to policing systems and wider social norms; media influence; migration experiences; and demographic and socio-economic differences. These issues are discussed below.

### **Experiences with police in home countries**

Explorations of the participants' experiences with police in home countries revealed considerable differences across ethnic groups. In the following, their experiences are broadly grouped under three categories to show how these experiences might impact on their perceptions of the New Zealand Police.

#### ***Positive experiences***

Research participants from Hong Kong and Taiwan (ethnic Chinese), Japan and Korea had mostly positive experiences to tell about their home country's police systems and interactions with police officers. For example,

- The participants judged the police work in their countries as: fast; effective; well structured; community orientated; and the officers themselves as easy to approach.
- Punishment of criminals in these countries was seen to be harsh and they believed severe penalties were necessary in order to prevent crime.

<sup>2</sup> Language line is an interpreting service that is free to clients who call or visit participating government agencies including New Zealand Police. Language Line is available Monday to Friday from 9.00am to 6.00pm and offers 38 different languages. For more information see Office of Ethnic Affairs website [www.ethnicaffairs.govt.nz](http://www.ethnicaffairs.govt.nz).

- Language and cultural differences did not exist; therefore they felt no barriers in approaching and interacting with police.

Due to their high satisfaction with the police systems in their home countries, the participants from these countries often viewed the New Zealand Police as too slow, inefficient, and lenient on criminals. In other words, the positive perceptions of home country policing have negatively impacted on their perceptions of New Zealand Police.

### *Mixed experiences*

The participants from China and India responded with some ambivalence about their experiences with police in their home countries.

- On one hand, a high level of corruption and the possibility of mistreatment of suspects led to a feeling of mistrust towards police. Consequently, they would only approach police in the event of serious crime and preferred to deal with small crimes themselves.
- On the other hand, harsh penalties for crime and a perception of a high efficiency of solving crime were noted as very positive aspects of policing in the home countries.

Therefore, when people from India and China compared home country police to the New Zealand Police they thought New Zealand Police were friendlier, and worked according to human rights standards. However, a perceived low efficiency to solve crime, leniency on criminals and slow response time were criticisms levelled towards New Zealand Police. In other words, the ambivalence about police in the home country has transferred to perceptions of New Zealand Police.

### *Negative experiences*

Home country police were not considered very reliable according to participants from Cambodia, Vietnam, Somalia and the Middle East.

- Participants viewed their home country police as having high levels of corruption, bribery, mistreatment and intimidation and would only report very serious crimes to the police.
- They did not feel safe when police were around and they thought contact with police could make matters worse, for instance because of bribery of the victim, or persecution.

For some people the fear of police or people in uniform does not disappear through migration and can continue to pervade perceptions of police in New Zealand. Participants from Iraq, Somalia and the young people from Vietnam were more likely than the other participants to say they were afraid of contact with the New Zealand Police because they might experience more problems or get into trouble for no reason, and they found police to be powerful and intimidating. One Iraqi man said there is “*fear planted into our hearts from any authority and especially the police [Iraqi Police], the tool of the oppressor*”. He had a friend who was driving and noticed a police car behind him. He panicked and drove around the city until his car ran out of petrol. It transpired that the police were not actually following him but this incident happened in New Zealand and indicates the magnitude of a person’s fear, as a result of past experiences.

Participants from the Middle East, Cambodia and Vietnam described New Zealand Police as humane, working in accordance with the law, approachable, trustworthy, helpful and friendly. In particular, Vietnamese people in Wellington, Afghani’s from Auckland, and Cambodians were reasonably positive about police attitudes and behaviour. They felt safer in New Zealand than they did in their home countries and appreciated the New Zealand Police were there to protect people. In other words, although people who held mostly negative views about their home country police still carried a general fear of police in New Zealand, they believed New Zealand Police were more trustworthy and tried to keep all people safe.

The barrier of bribery and corruption in many of the home countries under study does not necessarily mean the participants see their home country police as less efficient or less reliable than New Zealand Police. In fact, the harsher penalties in these countries is seen as an effective deterrent to crime, and this point is one of the major criticisms voiced by many participants in this study about the New Zealand justice system. Some participants have transferred the absolute fear they held of the police in their home countries, to their feelings about police in New Zealand. Added to this is a sense of frustration and discrimination that many of the migrants and refugees feel, and a lack of knowledge about systems and procedures compounds this situation.

## **Knowledge variation and cultural ideas**

Often, when new migrants and refugees arrive in New Zealand they are confronted with a very different lifestyle and cultural values than previously experienced. Therefore, knowledge about policing and judicial systems and how people interact is different. Migrants and refugees do not know the New Zealand system when they arrive, but more than likely, they do know that their experiences at home do not apply here. Some issues have been brought up by the participants in this study that serve to illustrate the difficulties of resettlement for migrants when learning how to adjust to life in New Zealand. These issues affect ethnic community perceptions of both the police and justice system in New Zealand, and helps explain the reactions and interactions that are experienced by both the participants and by New Zealand Police. Five main topics are identified for discussion below. They are: self defence; ideas about justice; “soft” punishment for criminals; domestic violence; and youth issues.

### ***Self-defence***

Participants from a number of ethnic groups brought up the issue of self-defence. Again, home country experiences influenced the way in which people thought in terms of protecting themselves and their families. Many participants knew that in New Zealand they must not attack or use violence against an intruder. However, the reasons for this were not clear to them because in their home countries they felt it was their duty to protect their property, their families and themselves. A man from Iraq explained:

*We believe that the home of a person is his own domain and should be protected. No stranger is allowed to trespass. In the camp [Mangere Refugee Reception Centre] the police briefed us by advising us that when there is a burglar do not resist him but leave the house. This is against our practices; we have to defend our homes. The delay of the police to respond to calls for help would force us to face the intruder and defend ourselves. Since the penalty for theft is not harsh, the intruder is not afraid to commit it and the result is certain to be confrontation and casualties.*

One Korean man encapsulated the concern of all participants when he asked:

*Why can't we protect our family? Don't just tell us that we must not attack a burglar, tell us why!*

### ***Ideas about justice***

In many of the interviews with Chinese people it was apparent that the participants felt they required answers, and the issue dealt with at the scene by police. They felt the police did not punish the criminal “on the spot” (for instance, as might happen in China or India etc.). In New Zealand this is the domain of the courts rather than the police. However, the frustration felt by these participants highlighted the need for more comprehensive information on both police and judicial systems to be made available to them.

### ***“Soft” punishments for criminals***

Often participants referred to their home countries as having very harsh punishment for criminals. Thus, the New Zealand justice system was viewed as being “soft” on criminals and hence the probability that criminals would re-offend was viewed as being high.

### *Domestic violence*

Domestic violence proved to be a very important issue, but one that is very difficult for many people to talk about and discuss openly. Both men and women from a variety of ethnic groups talked about this topic, with their foremost concern being a lack of knowledge about procedural systems in New Zealand. For instance, women were aware they could call emergency services if they felt threatened; however, they reported they were not aware of the full consequences after having done so. Both men and women said the act of calling the police for assistance was not intended to break up their family; rather they were just looking for help at that time. There was also a concern that men from migrant communities were negatively stereotyped and police automatically pinpointed them as the offender and took them away. Furthermore, language barriers severely impeded victims during a time when they needed to give very specific information to police. Participants felt that interpreters were absolutely necessary to ensure that communication was accurate and that both women and men understood exactly what would happen to them. This issue is very complex, bound by cultural ideas and values, gender related points of view, and differing expectations of what will happen once authorities are contacted. This research did not focus on this topic but it has been obvious this is an issue that affects people from all of the ethnic communities. Further research is required to understand the dynamics and cultural underpinnings affecting how people deal with this situation in New Zealand.

### *Migrant Youth*

Parents in both the Cambodian and Vietnamese communities talked about a sense of losing control of their children. Children brought up in New Zealand experience a very different life from that of their parents at a similar age. For instance, 18 year olds are able to move away from their parents, they are able to move in with partners; drink; drive; and sometimes these aspects can lead to young adults getting into trouble. The way parents were able to discipline their children in their home countries is not acceptable in New Zealand and so parents feel they have lost control of bringing up their children, especially their teenagers. Children and youth are aware of child protection laws in New Zealand and so threaten parents that they will call the police if parents try to discipline them. Parents do not know what to do in these situations and if police are called they cannot explain their feelings to them. Again this issue was not explored in depth during this research. However, it is worth noting that it causes a considerable amount of stress for parents and a lack of knowledge about how to deal with this pervaded the way this issue was discussed during interviews.

### *Specific cultural ideas*

Other than the five main topics discussed above, some specific cultural ideas were revealed through this study:

- The Chinese and Korean participants revealed that they do not like to get in contact with police at all. In their cultures, if contact with institutions such as police and hospitals is successfully avoided, life has been good.
- Indian people said there was a social stigma attached to having police involvement. They said many Indian people would feel reticent about approaching police because of feelings of shame or worrying about what other people think.
- Women from the Middle East said some Muslim women would prefer contact with female officers only. This is particularly true of those who wear burqa. Some talked about the publicised case involving two Muslim women who did not want to remove their burqa before a judge in court. The Muslim women in this study said this matter is quite easily resolved by having a female judge, as Muslim women are comfortable removing the burqa in front of other women.

- Many communities, including Vietnamese, Indian, Somali and Middle Eastern talked about showing respect to people in authority by not looking them directly in the eye. This cultural practice is the exact opposite to how New Zealanders interact with authority. Some participants reported this causing them problems during interactions with police officers.
- A cultural value of Iraqi males is that they are the “man of the house” and as such, they should have everything under control. Therefore, Iraqi men may tend to minimise problems to police instead of saying what is really going on. This cultural belief can result in people not reporting crime or disturbances.
- Middle Eastern and Asian groups said that if offered something they would first say no in politeness and wait to be offered again. Therefore, if offered victim support or other services, they may at first decline out of politeness.
- People from the Indian community mentioned they don't say “thank you” all the time as is often the practice in New Zealand. Instead, the meaning of the word is non-verbally included in being friendly and attentive towards another person.
- Cambodian participants said it was important not to touch monks or the heads of older people, and touching the opposite sex was not common. When entering a house it is polite to remove shoes.

This discussion about cultural knowledge and specific cultural practices is by no means exhaustive. However, it is hoped that outlining the differences in knowledge and understandings of members of ethnic communities and cultural specificities will aid New Zealand Police in gaining a wider understanding of ‘why people do the things they do’. A core foundation of this report is the recognition of the wide diversity of people both between and within ethnic communities. For instance, women experience different issues from men, young people live different lives from their parents, established migrants’ views can be quite different from new migrants, refugees’ backgrounds are asymmetrically different from business and general skills migrants, and the internal dynamics of ethnic groups are not always straight-forward due to political and ethnic differences. Therefore, care must be taken not to stereotype individuals.

Moreover, people from migrant and refugee communities require knowledge, not only about *how* the police and judicial systems work in New Zealand, but *why* they work the way they do. Cultural ideas necessarily move with the people who migrate to or seek refuge in New Zealand. These ideas are not static or rigidly set, they can change. However, changing these ideas needs to be aided by explanation and rationale. For instance, many people talked about the fact that New Zealand Police reflect and uphold human rights; however, they were still not convinced this was the best way when it came to protection of oneself, one’s property, or punishing criminals. Their view is that New Zealand is “too soft” on criminals, and that the right of victims to protect themselves is negated. These ideas will not just change by simply telling new migrants “you can’t do that”. Rationale and underlying principles need to be explicated, although this will not necessarily make it easier for people to accept these ideas. However, communication, dialogue and a sharing of ideas between New Zealand Police and ethnic communities will help these communities to feel accepted, valued and listened too. It will also assist New Zealand Police to understand the backgrounds and cultural mores that people who migrate to New Zealand bring with them.

## **The impacts of the media on ethnic communities' perceptions**

Stories about different ethnic groups appear in the media depending on local, national and international contexts at the time. Over the last couple of years, racist attacks, prejudices against Muslims, violence and domestic violence, gambling and driving issues have been topical news stories involving different ethnic groups living in New Zealand. See Appendix 6 for selected newspaper article references.

The way information is reported in the media can influence ethnic community perceptions of police. Only a very small number of participants mentioned media discussion about cases brought against police officers and how this can cause damage to New Zealand Police's image and loss of public confidence. But, reports in the media about racist attacks on Chinese, Vietnamese and Somali people, along with how police responded to these attacks, do influence how people from Asian and African ethnic groups view the police. They were concerned about specific media reporting on their own community because of the way it impacted on wider perceptions of their community.

While some media stories attempt to portray rounded views and provide a ground for mutual understanding, others focus on how some New Zealanders view people from the various ethnic groups and often these news articles encourage stereotyping. For instance, Chinese participants described how they felt their whole community had been tarnished through articles depicting murders and kidnappings carried out by Chinese people. In high profile cases involving members of ethnic communities, these communities have high expectations that police will solve the crime quickly to negate any negative media or wider community stereotyping as a result of the case. They also expect police feedback in relation to how investigations are progressing.

## **Migration experiences**

In order to contextualise the perceptions of ethnic communities towards New Zealand Police it is important to understand the background of the participants. The migration experiences of the different ethnic groups within New Zealand vary. Some people arrived as skilled migrants and business investors, while others arrived under family reunification schemes or on humanitarian grounds as refugees. As shown above, home country experiences are important in shaping people's perceptions. Similarly, migration histories influence individuals' perception of their everyday life and the social interactions that take place on a day to day basis.

People who come from refugee backgrounds have often faced traumatic experiences of war, an uprooted home life, and negative experiences with institutions and individuals in authority such as soldiers and police. For instance, the participants from Vietnam and Cambodia came to New Zealand as refugees in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Although their experiences of war were some time ago, negative perceptions of figures of authority in their homeland persist. The same can be said for those participants who came from Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia, although their experiences are more recent. Refugees from Somalia have been arriving in New Zealand since the early 1990s. Significant numbers of people from Iraq and Afghanistan have arrived since the late 1990s.

Migrants from the other ethnic groups in this study including, Chinese, Indian, Korean and Japanese, were more likely to have arrived in New Zealand as migrants through the general skills, business and family categories. In recent years there have also been large numbers of international students arriving, and some of them may choose to gain permanent residency after their studies. Across ethnic groups, Chinese and Indian have much longer and more diverse settlement histories, and thus have smaller proportions of their populations in New Zealand who were born overseas (see Figure 2 in Appendix 1).

## Demographic differences

A demographic overview of the eight ethnic groups is provided in Appendix 1, based on the 2001 census. Other than variations in geographic distribution, migration patterns, language abilities and educational qualifications, which have been mentioned in the earlier part of this report, the demographic analysis also highlights differences in age-sex structure, religion, and socio-economic experiences among these groups.

Incorporating these diverse groups into policing processes requires a better understanding of their demographics. For example, most of the ethnic groups under study have a youthful age structure, especially the Somali, Korean and Cambodian populations (Figure 4 in Appendix 1). In 2001, 90 percent of the Somali population in New Zealand were under 45 years of age—in particular, it had a much higher percentage of children under 15 years of age (43%) than any other group. Mentoring young people is a difficult challenge for some newly arrived groups that have a youthful age structure but limited community-based networks in New Zealand (Guerin & Guerin, 2006).

The diverse religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the different ethnic groups can also impact on their perception of, and interactions with, the police. In terms of religious affiliations, 99 percent of the Somali residents in New Zealand in 2001 were Muslims. For other Africans, however, Christianity is the most common religion; and only one in ten said they were Muslims. Forty-five percent of the Middle Eastern peoples said they were Muslims and just over one-third were Christians. Within the Asian ethnic groups, Hinduism is the most common religion among the Indians (56%) and Christianity the most common religion for the Koreans (74%). Over 70 percent of Cambodians and half of Vietnamese resident in New Zealand in 2001 said their religion was Buddhism. However, a majority of Japanese residents said they had no religion (60%). Half of the Chinese resident in New Zealand in 2001 also said they had no religion (Figures 6-11 in Appendix 1).

Non-participation and unemployment rates<sup>3</sup> are high in the new ethnic communities (Figures 17-18 in Appendix 1). Across the eight ethnic groups under study, non-participation rates and unemployment rates are highest among the Somali—70 percent of Somali women and 37 percent of Somali men aged 25-54 years were not in the labour force in 2001. The Korean, Vietnamese and Cambodian groups also have high non-participation rates and the Middle Eastern group have high unemployment rates (Figures 17-18 in Appendix 1). Not being in the paid workforce can limit the opportunity for migrants to improve their English language skills, or to learn other western cultural norms that can aid in their participation in the activities of their new society.

Finally, it is important to stress that diversity *within* ethnic groups is extensive. While this demographic overview focuses on broad differences across different ethnic communities, service providers and government agencies, including the New Zealand Police, need to be aware of the internal dynamics of the various communities when interacting with individual members.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 1 for definitions

## CRIME AND SAFETY ISSUES

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In this section four other themes explored in this study are identified and discussed. They include: crime and safety issues experienced by members of ethnic communities; feelings of safety; attitudes towards a career in the police service, and suggestions for improving the relations between ethnic communities and the police. Whereas participants' perceptions of crime and how safe they feel in their neighbourhoods may indirectly affect their attitudes towards the police, their views of the police organisation and its staff can affect their attitudes towards a career in the police service (Stone and Tuffin, 2000). This research indicates there is a need for New Zealand Police to develop a better understanding of the attitudes and needs of the ethnic communities.

The eight ethnic communities included in this study all expressed similar concerns with regard to the crime and safety issues they felt most concerned about. The following list reflects the frequency as to which these issues were mentioned during discussions. These comprised:

- Burglary
- Racial harassment
- Juvenile issues (street kid violence/drinking/drugs)
- Car theft/vandalism
- Small business related crimes (shoplifting, not paying)
- Gambling

### Burglary

Burglary stood out as the most serious problem people felt they faced regardless of which ethnic community they came from. Participants had experienced burglaries, some two or three times, and these experiences raised their level of fear and they felt insecure about staying in their own homes. Some participants recounted harrowing experiences, such as a Vietnamese family awakening to burglars in their house, and a Chinese couple being attacked by an intruder in their garage.

Members of some communities believed burglars targeted them. For example, it is customary for Indian people to wear considerable amounts of gold and because of this, people from the Indian community believed they were targets for thieves. Compounding this situation, older Indian people felt vulnerable because they thought they were perceived as "soft targets" and therefore easy to rob. Similarly, participants in the Korean and Chinese communities believed the wider community saw them as "wealthy Asians" and this made them a more likely target for burglars.

### Racial harassment

Participants from all the communities mentioned facing racial abuse and harassment of some form during their everyday public lives. Their experiences ranged from name calling, to rubbish being thrown onto properties, to physical intimidation and bullying.

Some people had experienced racial harassment at a much more severe level than those from other communities. For instance, those participants who wear clothes or religious symbols that stand out as being different from the "New Zealand way of dress" talked about being harassed. A man from the Sikh community in Auckland described being called "Bin Laden" by drunken passengers in his cab. Although he could smile about the ignorance behind this type of statement, he also explained that this was a very sensitive issue that could serve to inflame emotion in some people who felt victimised. The terrorist attacks in America and Great Britain have impacted on the lives of people from Middle Eastern countries

living in Western countries including New Zealand. Desecration of Mosques in New Zealand was widely reported in the media but other more subtle forms of discrimination impact on everyday lives. For one participant, taking photographs of a public place resulted in a complaint being made by a member of the public and a subsequent visit by the police. He felt he was discriminated against because of his looks, and suggested that this would not have happened had he been blonde and spoke more fluent English. Afghani men in Christchurch expressed concern about their wives and daughters walking on city streets because of people saying inappropriate things to them. A sense of vulnerability impacted on any degree of safety these Muslim women felt while out on their city and neighbourhood streets.

This same sense of vulnerability also pervaded the way people from Asian backgrounds talked about their sense of safety. In comparison to the other ethnic groups, the participants from the Chinese community had the greatest concern for their children while at school, and these concerns centred on bullying and racial harassment. While the Japanese participants in Christchurch did not emphasise their experiences of racial harassment, all of them, including our research assistant, had been yelled at from cars and had known the feeling of being ignored in their everyday social interactions while speaking English. The members of two focus groups in Auckland, one of Vietnamese youth and the other a Somali group, discussed the threat from young people from other ethnic groups. They felt very intimidated and believed these threats were racially motivated. As a result, they felt unsafe travelling to school, or indeed anytime on the streets in their neighbourhood. International students spoke about the racial harassment they had experienced on the streets. They seemed to accept it as something they must put up with; but they also stated they did not know what to do about it or whether they should report it, especially when they could not produce evidence.

## **Juvenile issues including car theft and vandalism**

Juvenile problems and street kid violence were issues brought up by many communities. People felt unsafe because of wider community juvenile problems related to: drunkenness, drug taking, car theft and boy racing on the street. They also blamed young people for the vandalism of cars and other property. Some members of the older Chinese community in Auckland had experienced verbal and physical abuse perpetrated by young people. Some incidents they put down to youthful hi-jinks. Other more serious incidents they blamed on racial tension and they felt very threatened while this problem persisted in their neighbourhood.

## **Small business related crimes**

Small businesses including dairies, restaurants, takeaway bars and taxi companies tend to have a significant proportion of migrants owning, running or working in them. Participants in this study whose place of work was in these types of business had experienced people not paying their bills, shoplifting, break-ins, name calling, and physical abuse. Often the infringements on their feelings of safety were in their eyes “not serious enough to warrant calling the police”, yet they felt they should be able to report to someone but lacked the knowledge about where, how or to whom. A safety issue concerning dairy owners was the fact that many live on site with their family and they were concerned about their family’s safety because their home/business may be targeted for burglary.

## **Gambling**

An issue of concern mentioned by people in the Vietnamese community was gambling. Gambling is not a crime in New Zealand but it can have detrimental effects on individuals and families. In this study it was talked about in terms of when gamblers try to cover gambling debts. So, there were concerns that gambling can break up gamblers’ families but also, there is a perception that gambling increases crime.

Gambling was also mentioned by a very small number of participants in other Asian communities but it was not seen as serious. However, the Problem Gambling Foundation has pointed out that gambling is an issue for many ethnic groups from Asian backgrounds (Tse, Wong, Kwok and Li, 2004).

## Feelings of safety

Learning about how members from ethnic communities felt within the wider community in terms of crime and safety issues helped to assess issues relevant to specific communities. We asked people how safe they felt in their city and neighbourhood, in their homes, and when their children were at school.

- Cities - generally, people felt safe in the city during the day. However, insecurity or a feeling of being unsafe pervaded most people's view of the cities during the night. Drunk people and dimly lit areas were the most frequently mentioned contributing factors. People in Christchurch mentioned they saw many young people using drugs on the street and boy racers driving unsafely which made them feel vulnerable.
- Neighbourhoods – during the day people felt safe in their neighbourhoods, but at night they were more likely to be concerned about burglary. Significant feelings of being unsafe were noted in the young people of the Vietnamese community, and Somali youth who felt very unsafe in Mt Roskill. The prominence of drug use on the streets and intimidation by other youths were viewed as the main contributing factors.
- Home – overall, people felt safe in their homes. In particular, many have taken security measures themselves, such as security systems, guard dogs, and locking doors day and night. Those who did feel unsafe had experienced burglary in the past, or were concerned about it happening to them.
- School – generally people felt their children were safe at school. In particular, the Korean people involved in this study seemed very confident about the safety of their children. On the other hand, the Chinese community seemed the most concerned about bullying and racial harassment.

## Attitudes towards a career with the police

Most people thought the police would be a good career option because it would be a challenging job, it is well paid, respectable, and it can provide extra skills. Most importantly, being a police officer would give people a chance to work for and help their ethnic community.

- Korean participants saw the New Zealand Police as a relatively stress free and safe job. This is because they perceived a high crime rate in Korea was due to gang activity and the use of guns. Therefore, they thought New Zealand was safer than Korea.
- Some participants from Asian backgrounds, particularly Chinese and Cambodian thought they did not have the required physical attributes and they were too small to become police officers.
- Some participants from Asian backgrounds thought the job was quite dangerous.
- Participants from the Indian community pointed out they needed more information about pay scales, job prospects and opportunities because they thought the status of the job was not as high as some other professions.
- Participants from Middle Eastern backgrounds would also need to be shown that a career with the Police is a good career, for instance a description of the work, and salary scales. They lack

knowledge about police work in New Zealand and only have comparisons to make with police in their home country.

Overall, most people thought the New Zealand Police would be a good career option because, if they could pass the entry tests and overcome the language difficulties, they could assist their communities. Very few people spoke openly about the possibility of facing racism within the police, although Somali youth in this study did not see the police as a good career option. This is because these participants said they had experienced racist attitudes from police and language and cultural misunderstandings. This suggests that concerns about the organisational culture of Police may prevent people from ethnic communities viewing New Zealand Police as a possible career path.

Generally, all of the communities required more information about recruitment in New Zealand as many of their perceptions about a career in the police are based on their past experiences with New Zealand Police and their home country experiences. In particular, orientation and information sessions designed specifically for ethnic communities, and extra support and encouragement would help young people to consider the police as a possible career option. Most importantly, a relationship with police that is built on good two-way communication would help people from ethnic communities to build trust and confidence in police and see a police career as a realistic option.

## **Strategies suggested by respondents to improve relationships between ethnic communities and the police**

Improving the relationship between ethnic communities and police is very important to both these parties. The existence of the *Police Ethnic Strategy Towards 2010* and the instigation of this research project, which aims to tell the story of how members of ethnic communities feel about New Zealand Police, show a commitment by Police management to improve their relationship with ethnic communities. During data collection for this project, people from the ethnic communities who were interviewed, either as participants or key stakeholders, together with those working as research assistants, told us why they were willing to be involved in this project. Central to their participation was the signal sent from police to members of ethnic communities – in essence – that the Police want to hear their stories. They saw this as a significant and positive first step in building a relationship. Building relationships is a two-way process and needs to be centred on trust and confidence. This type of environment is needed in order for people from ethnic communities to feel confident about approaching police and reporting crime. Without this trust, confidence will not grow and ethnic communities will continue to feel distant from New Zealand Police. Below are some suggestions.

- The most significant point raised repeatedly is that all communities require face-to-face contact and involvement with police to build trust and confidence.
  - Get involved with communities on the grassroots level through regular face-to-face meetings, organise information seminars where community feedback and grievances can be heard.
  - Consult community leaders and advisors about training on cultural sensitivity.
  - Learn about community dynamics – collaborate with Non-Government Organisations (NGO) that work with ethnic communities, understand community dynamics, and have extensive networks and links into communities.
  - Increase social and cultural exchange by attending festivals, sports events and mixing with people.
- Printed information in first languages is an important avenue of communication, especially for groups that have their own community newspapers such as Korean, Chinese, and Japanese. Print media such as pamphlets, guides, and information sheets need to be distributed at places frequented by members of ethnic groups such as supermarkets, takeaways, restaurants, and places of worship.

- Face-to-face information seminars with interpreters or first language radio broadcasts are especially appropriate for communities who have lower education and literacy levels such as the Cambodian and Vietnamese communities. Small communities like these tend to keep a low profile therefore networking by the police is required.
- Places of worship are good places to reach some communities of people. However, levels of appropriateness must be gauged through contact with religious and community leaders because these are places people attend for religious purposes, rather than for information gathering.



## CONCLUSION

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The growing diversity of the New Zealand population was highlighted in *Ethnic Perspectives in Policy* (Office of Ethnic Affairs, 2002) where the need to make ethnic people more “visible” in the policy process was outlined. The *Police Ethnic Strategy Towards 2010* recognises the changing demographics in New Zealand and the need to respond to these changes by incorporating the diverse population groups into policing processes. The strategy also draws attention to the potential challenges Police face in providing effective services to all communities.

One of the main challenges is to engage with and understand the minority ethnic communities, particularly the “grassroots” people who are linguistically and culturally distant from the mainstream society. Although national surveys on public satisfaction with police services are conducted annually, information at the ethnic community level is not available. Similarly, studies of ‘perceptions’ including: *Perceptions of Public Safety in the Auckland CBD* (Casey and Crothers, 2005) and the Manukau City Council’s *Citizen’s Perception Survey* (Longdill and Associates, 2004) utilised telephone survey methods and therefore lacked the ability to engage with people from ethnic communities who do not speak adequate English. This qualitative project has bridged that gap by reaching out to “grassroots” people from eight ethnic communities, and interviewing them in their first languages.

The findings from this study have shown that the experiences that people from ethnic communities have with police staff is a key factor in shaping their perception of the New Zealand Police. Because of their lack of English language proficiency, the most common reason for contact that participants have with the police is to report crime. Other non-crime related contacts between ethnic communities and New Zealand Police, such as making a general enquiry, or attending an information seminar by the police, are overall quite low. Accounts of both positive and negative experiences with the police were provided, although negative experiences appeared to be more memorable. In general, ethnic people’s negative perceptions of police staff and services are affected by their negative personal experiences with the police as victims of crime. Language barriers, and different understandings about policing and judicial systems based on home country experiences and cultural underpinnings, are key factors influencing ethnic communities negative perceptions of police. Positive perceptions of Police were characterised by personal and caring contact by police officers to the participants who were victims of crime.

Overall, ethnic communities welcomed this New Zealand Police initiated research project and were eager to have their voices heard. They also looked forward to ongoing communication with the New Zealand Police and further improvement of their relationships. In this regard, this project extends and complements the findings from *Ethnic Diversity: A Needs Analysis* (New Zealand Police, 2003), which highlights the desires of both Police and ethnic communities wanting to know each other better and to build relationships of trust and confidence. All of the ethnic communities involved in this project agreed face-to-face contact was pivotal to building relationships. As an exploratory study, this research establishes a “baseline” for future studies to monitor changes in ethnic community perceptions of the New Zealand Police over time. Many of the issues discussed in this research require further research. In particular, reporting patterns, experiences of victimisation, domestic violence incidents and attitudes towards a career with Police.



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## Appendix 1: Demographic profiles of the Asian, African and Middle Eastern ethnic groups

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The demographic data on the Asian, African and Middle Eastern ethnic groups<sup>4</sup> presented in this Appendix were all derived from the 2001 Census of Population and Dwellings. Figures 1 to 19 give the data on geographic distribution, birthplace, length of residence in New Zealand, age, gender, language, religion, education and labour market outcomes of the Chinese, Indian, Korean, Japanese, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Somali and Middle Eastern ethnic groups. Definitions of terminology used in this Appendix are provided below.

**Auckland** includes North Shore City, Waitakere City, Auckland City and Manukau City.

**Wellington** includes Porirua City, Upper Hutt City, Lower Hutt City and Wellington City.

**New migrants** are people who stated in the census that they were born overseas and had been resident in New Zealand for less than five years.

**Non-participation rate** is the proportion of the population aged 25-54 years who, at the time of the census, were not in the workforce.

**Full-time employment rate** is the proportion of people aged 25-54 years who were employed full-time at the time of the census, out of all people who are in the labour force.

**Unemployment rate** is the proportion of people aged 25-54 years who were without a paid job and were looking for work, out of all people who are in the labour force.

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<sup>4</sup> Individuals have been able to self-identify with more than one ethnic group in New Zealand's censuses since 1981. Where a person reported more than one ethnic group, they have been counted in each applicable group.

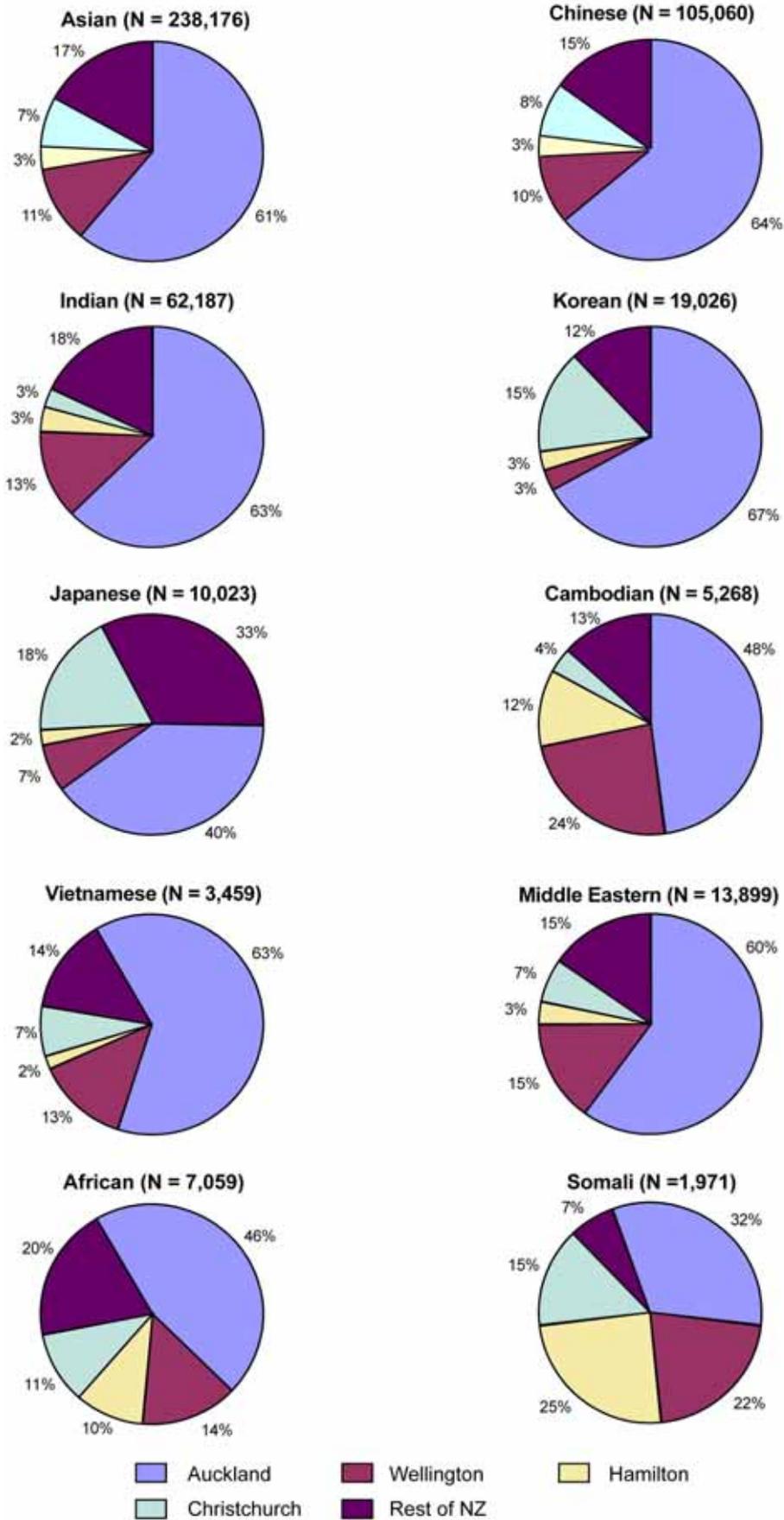


Figure 1: Geographical distribution of selected ethnic groups

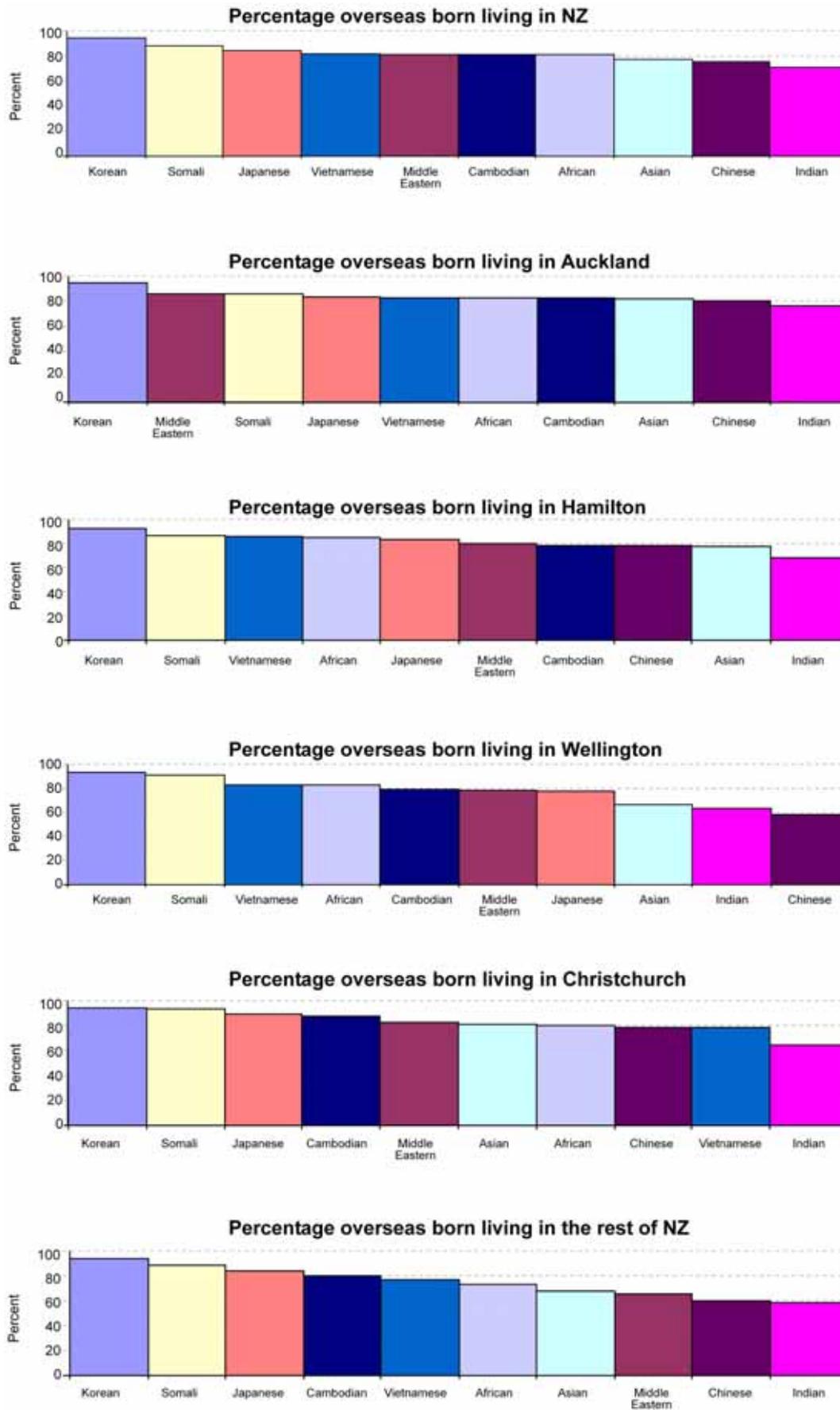


Figure 2: Percentage of overseas born in selected ethnic groups

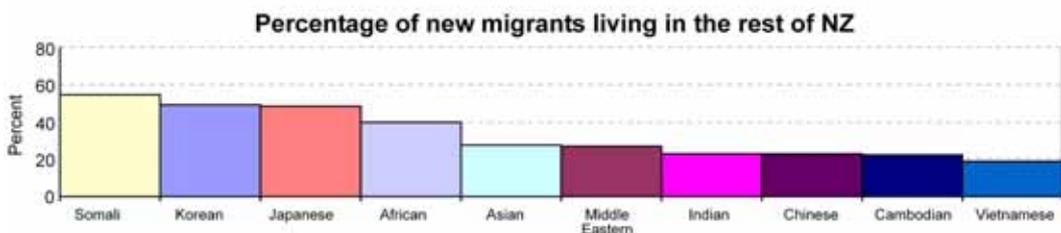
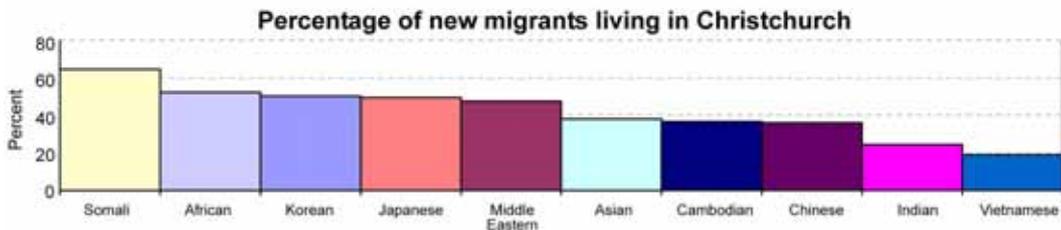
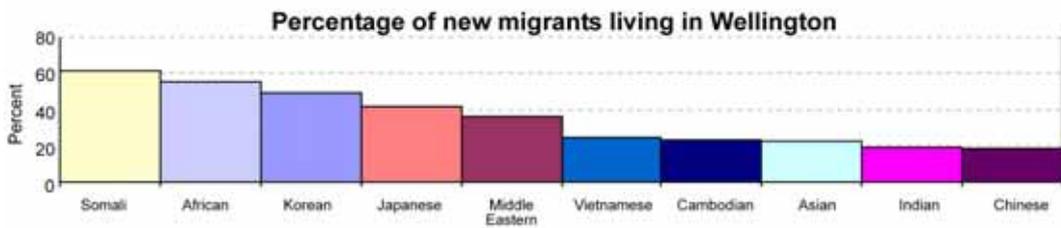
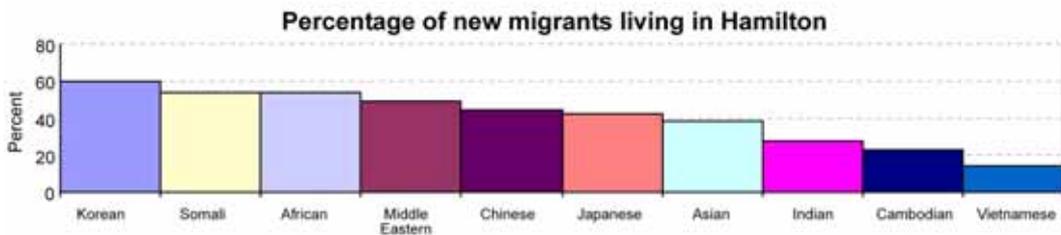
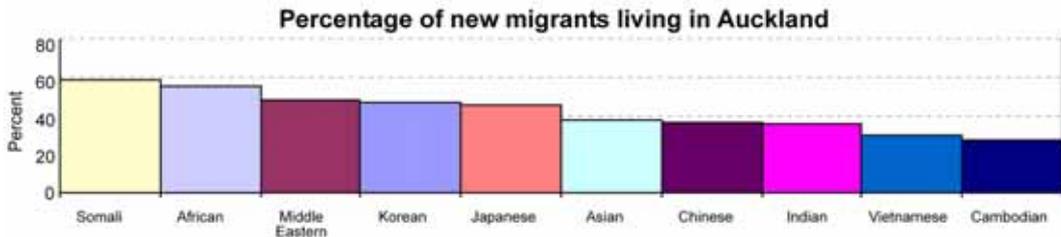
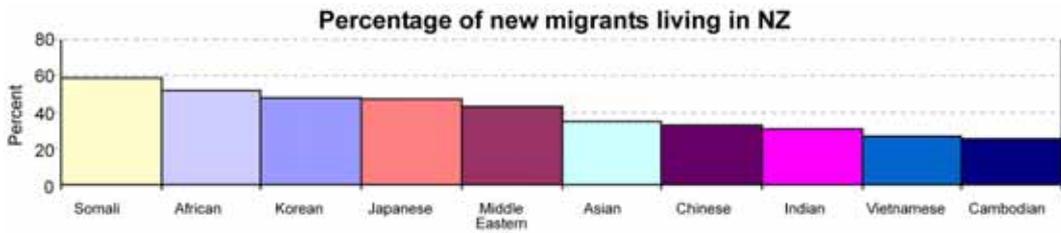


Figure 3: Percentage of new migrants in selected ethnic groups

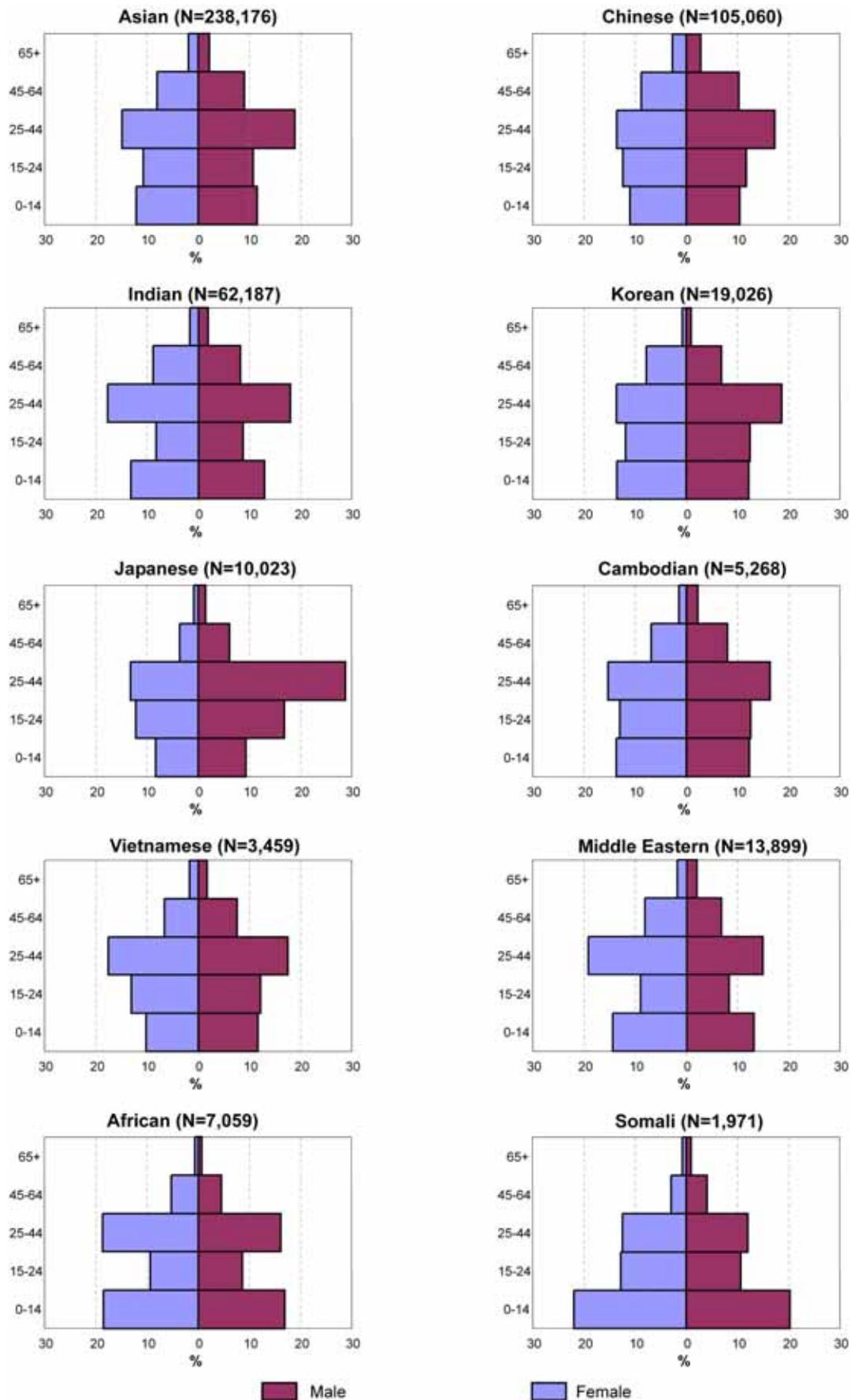


Figure 4: Age structure of selected ethnic groups

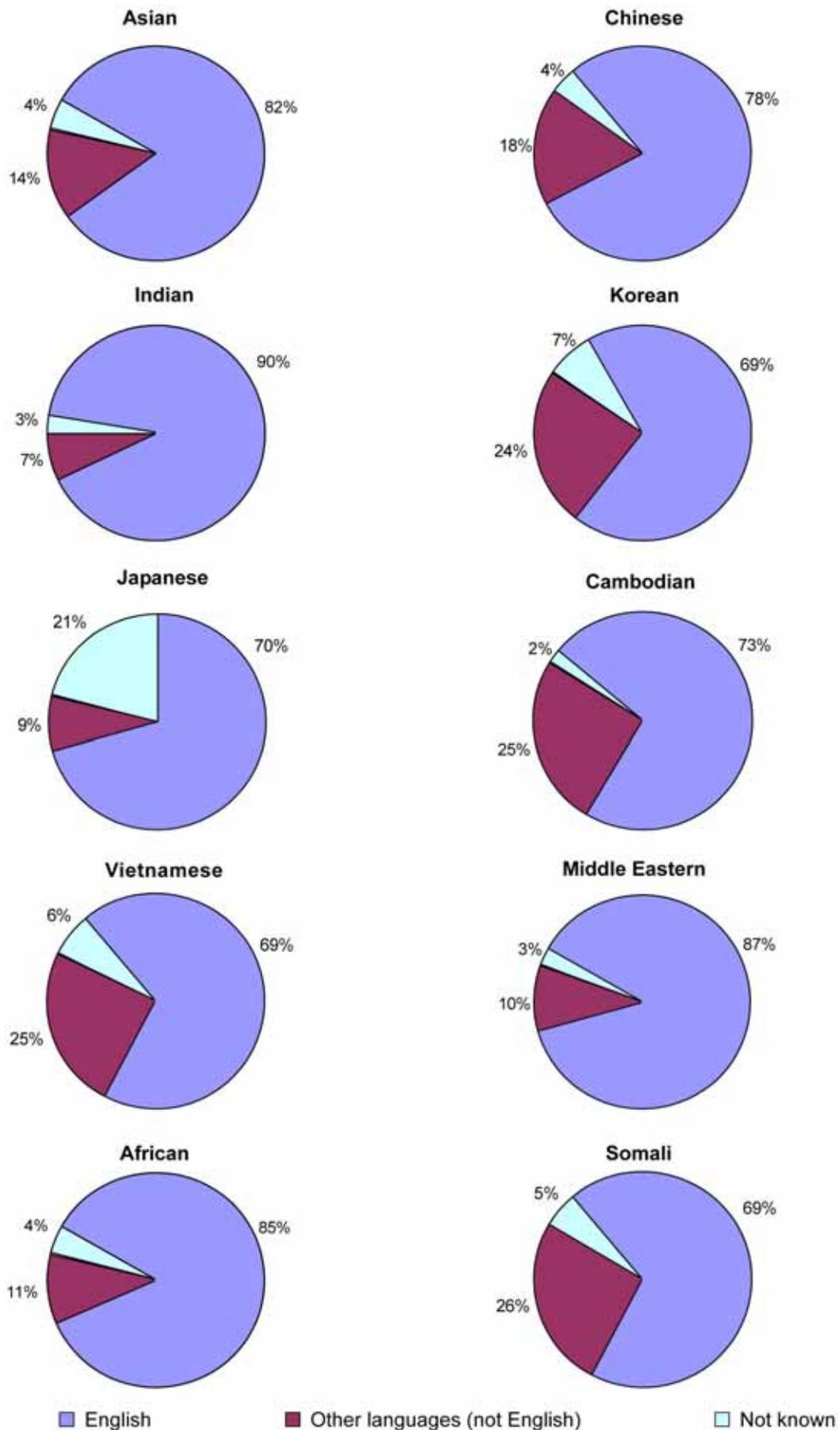


Figure 5: Language capability of people aged 5 years and over in selected ethnic groups

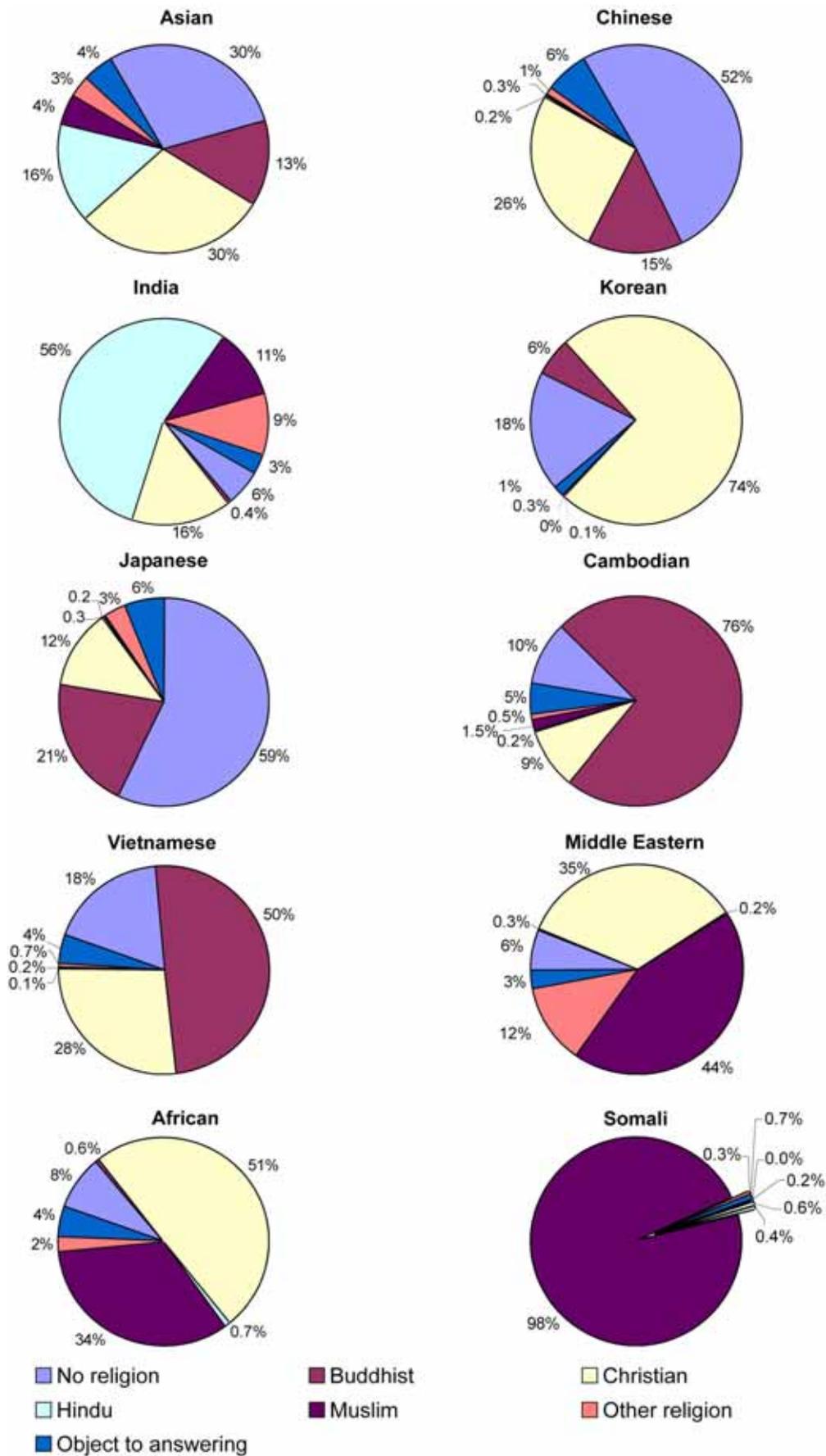
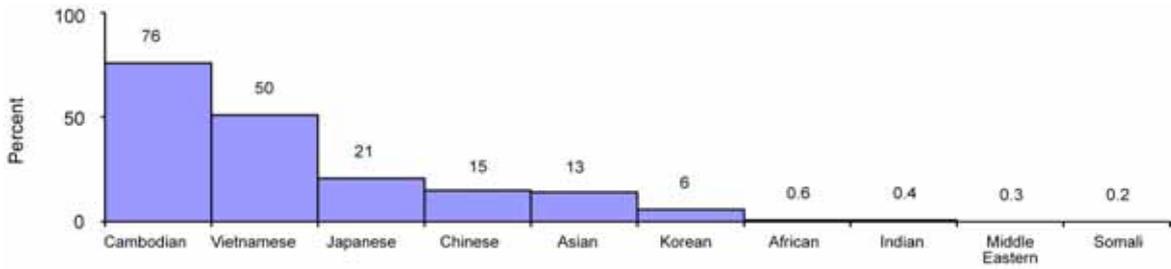
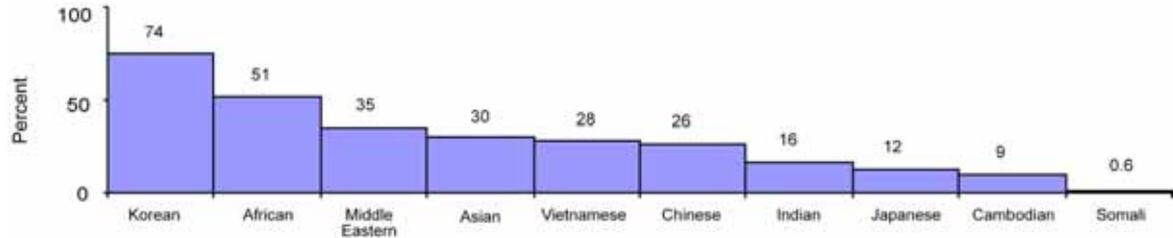


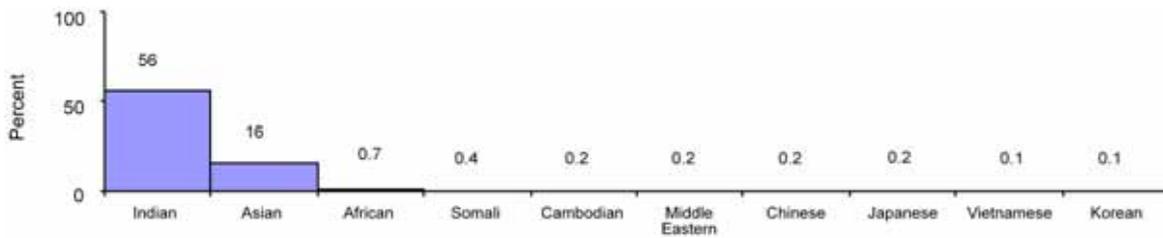
Figure 6: Religious affiliation of people aged 5 years and over in selected ethnic groups



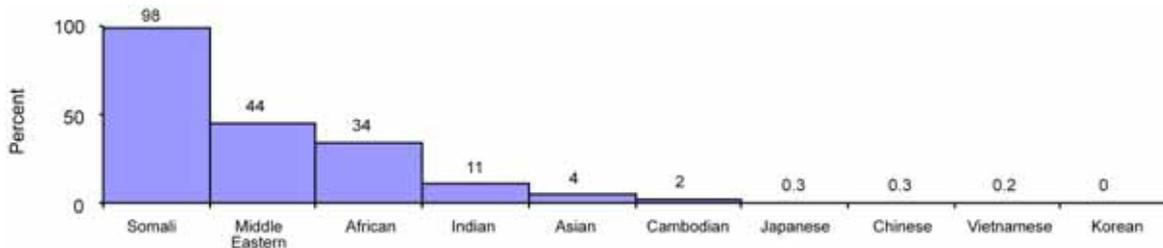
**Figure 7: Percentage of Buddhist in selected ethnic groups**



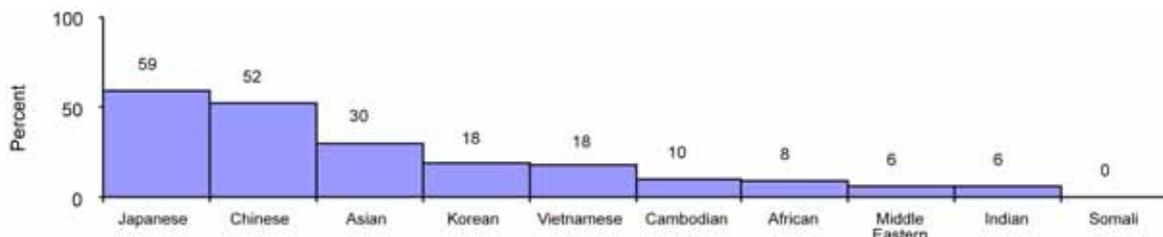
**Figure 8: Percentage of Christians in selected ethnic groups**



**Figure 9: Percentage of Hindu in selected ethnic groups**



**Figure 10: Percentage of Muslims in selected ethnic groups**



**Figure 11: Percentage of people with no religion in selected ethnic groups**

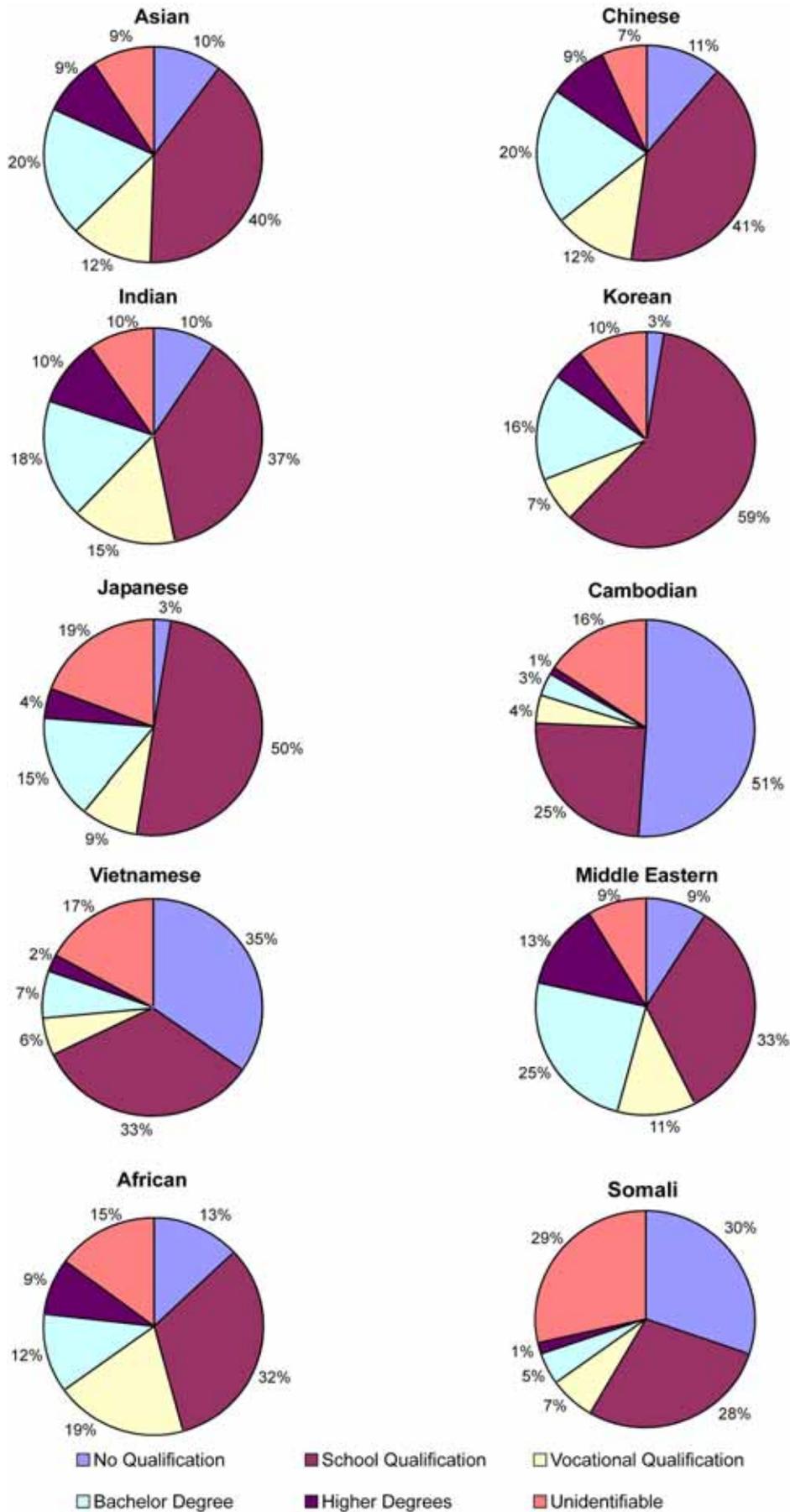


Figure 12: Highest Qualifications for people aged 25-54 years in selected ethnic groups

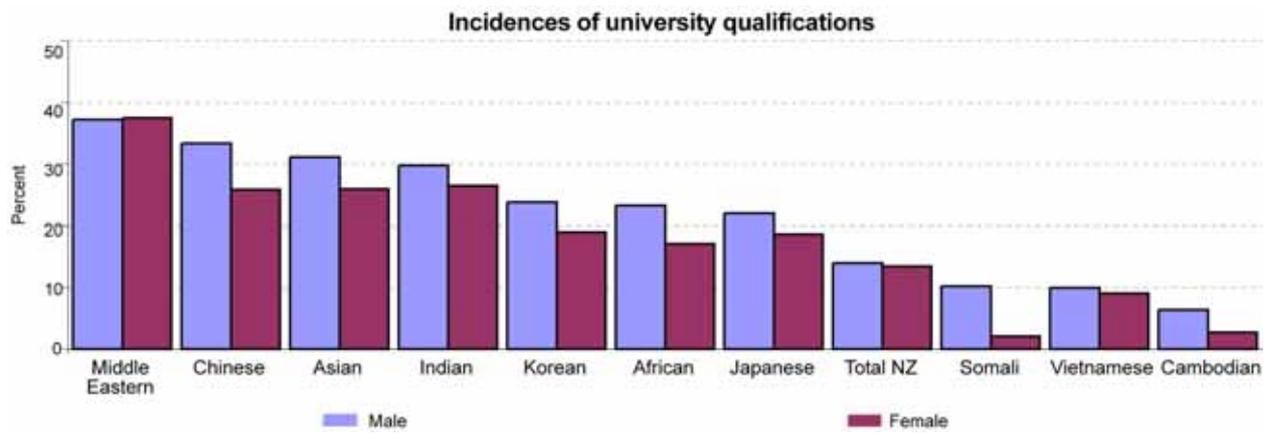


Figure 13: Incidence of university qualifications by gender for people aged 25-54 years in selected ethnic groups

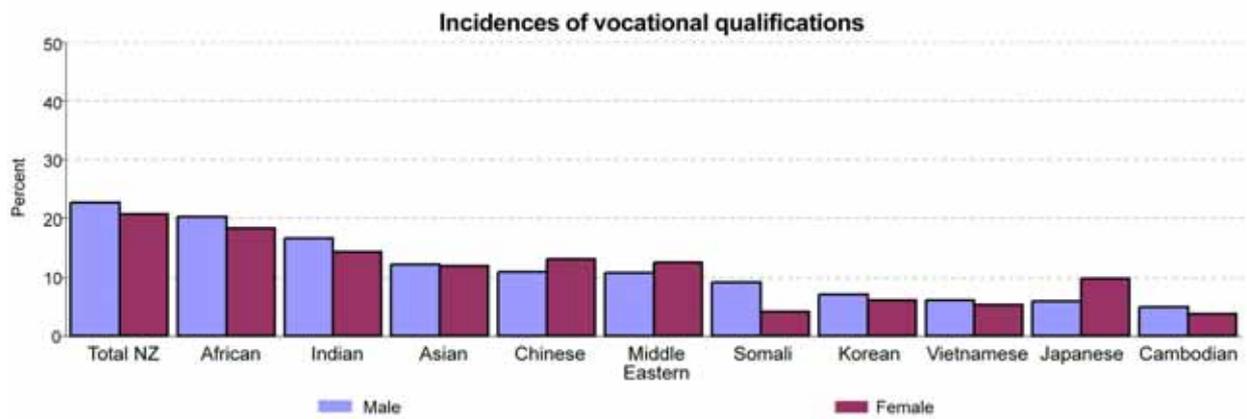


Figure 14: Incidence of vocational qualifications by gender for people aged 25-54 years in selected ethnic groups

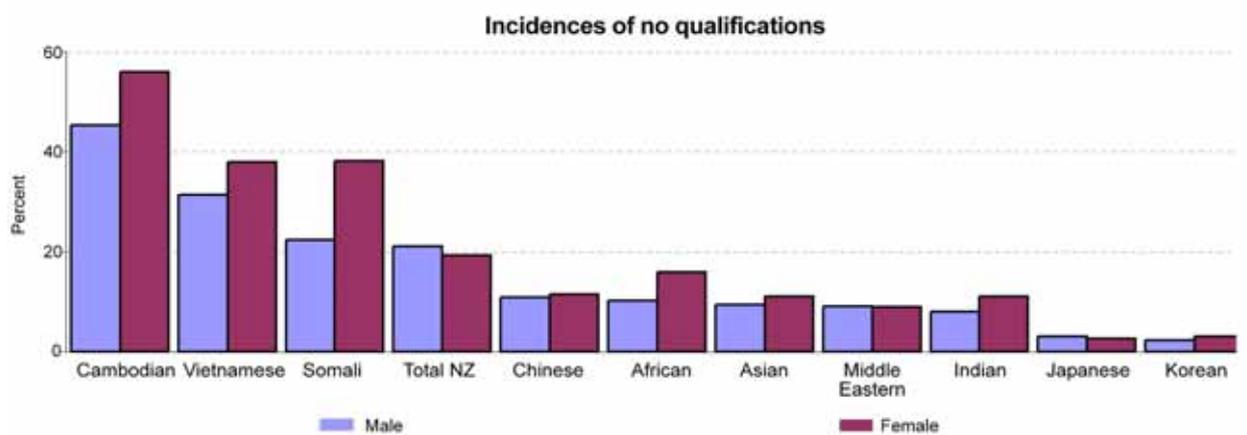


Figure 15: Incidence of no qualifications by gender for people aged 25-54 years in selected ethnic groups

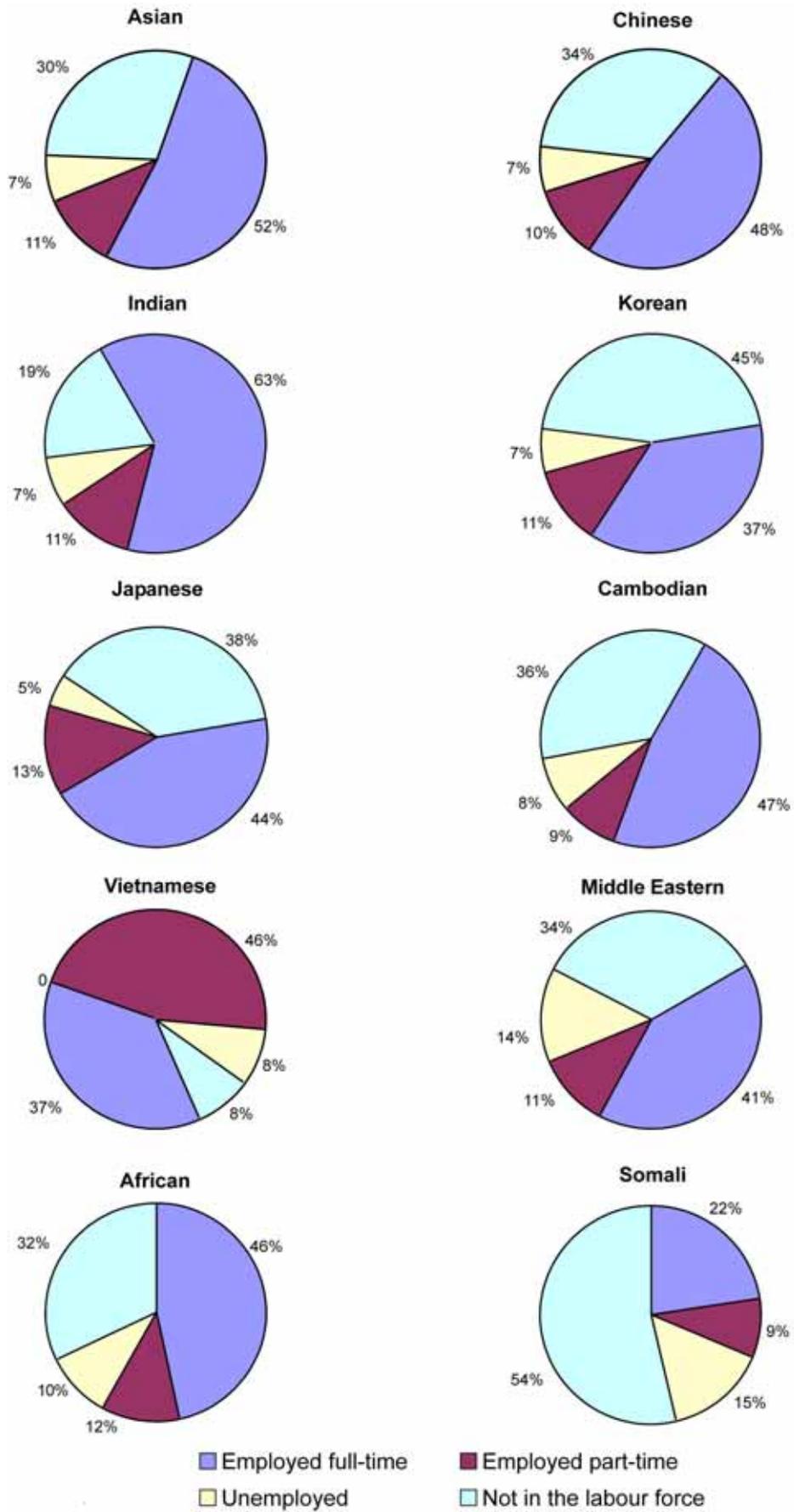
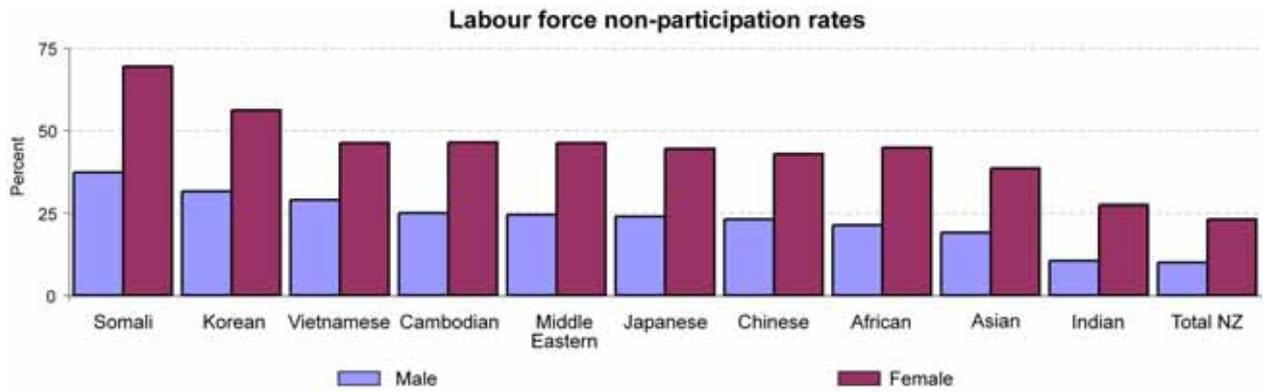
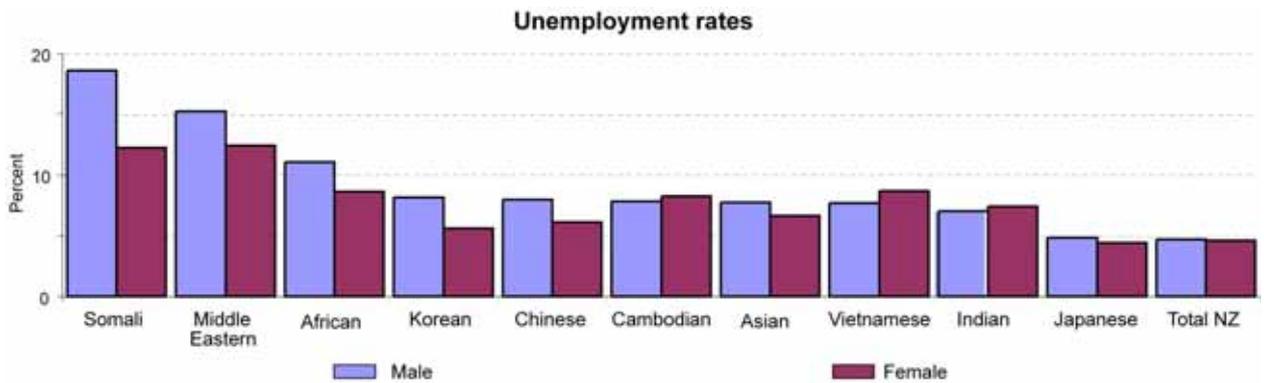


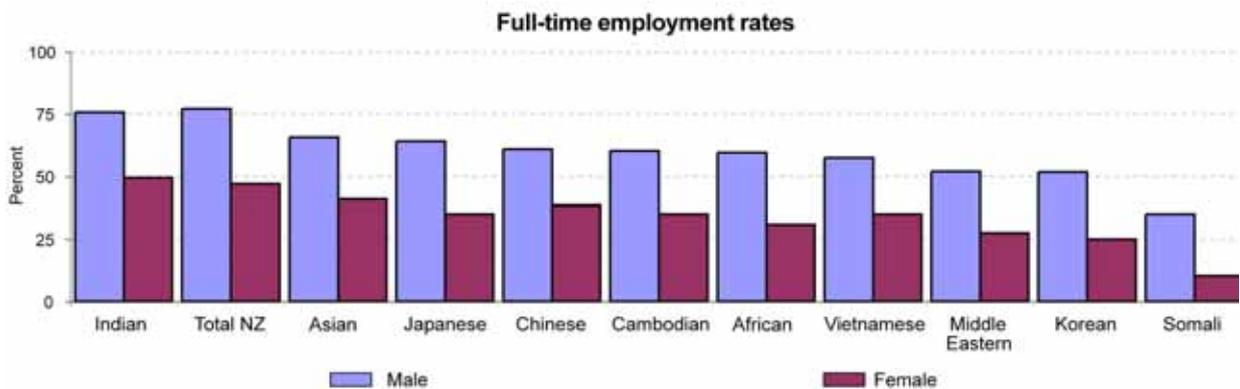
Figure 16: Work status of people aged 25-54 years in selected ethnic groups



**Figure 17: Labour force non participation rate by gender for people aged 25-54 years in selected ethnic groups**



**Figure 18: Unemployment rate by gender for people aged 25-54 years in selected ethnic groups**



**Figure 19: Full-time employment rate by gender for people aged 25-54 years in selected ethnic groups**

## Appendix 2: Interview schedule

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### 1. Introduction

- Self introduction
- Explain purpose of interview
- Explain benefits to participants – maintain & strengthen relationships and improve interaction etc.
- Outline topics that will be discussed
- Explain purpose of tape recording
- Assure confidentiality and have the participant(s) sign the consent form(s)

### 2. Background information (for focus group participants, a short questionnaire will be used to collect background information)

- Gender
- City: Auckland / Hamilton / Wellington / Christchurch
- Suburb
- Ethnicity
- Length of time in NZ
- Length of time in (city)
- Age group: 15-24; 25-44; 45-64; 65+
- Occupation
- If the participant represents an organisation,
  - what ethnic group(s) does your organisation serve?
  - what are the main services your organisation provides to ethnic communities?
  - what is your position and responsibility in this organisation?
  -

### 3 Concerns regarding crime and safety issues facing your community

- What are the major crime and safety issues facing your community in your city?

*Summarise the concerns (e.g. road crashes, drugs, vandalism, burglary, robbery, street kids violence, organised crime, racial abuse/ harassment).*

*Explore whether **each** issue of concern raised has become more serious than it was (a) one year ago? (b) five years ago. For example,*

- In general, is there more (burglary) in (city) now than it was:
  - (a) one year ago?
  - (b) five years ago?
- Overall, how safe do you feel:
  - when you are walking on the street in central city during day time? during night time?
  - in your neighbourhood during day time? during night time?
  - when you are at home (anytime)?
  - when your children are at school?

### 4. Your experiences with the New Zealand Police

- Have you been a victim of crime in the last 12 months? If yes, what happened?
- Have your family been a victim of crime in the last 12 months? If yes, who was the victim and what happened?

- Have you reported any crime against yourself / family to police? If no, why? If yes, who and where did you report to and what happened?
- What other experiences do you have with the police?
- Would you approach police to ask for help in the street? If not, why not? Would you be more likely to approach a male or a female officer?
- Are you, and people from your community, satisfied with your relationship with the police? Why, why not?
- Are there any issues of concern regarding accessing police services? Please explain.
- Do you, and people from your community, view the New Zealand Police as a positive career option? Why, why not?
- What issues do you think are the priority of the police at the moment?
- What do you think **should** be the priority of the police?

**5. Your experiences with police in your home country**

- What were your experiences with police in your home country?
- Would you approach police to ask for help in the street in your home country?
- Would you report crime against you in your home country? Why, why not?
- Would you join the police in your home country? Why, why not?
- In what ways are your perceptions of the New Zealand Police different from the perceptions you had with police in your home country?

**6. Recommendations for improving police and community relations in your city**

- Are you aware of any services / programmes that the police have developed to engage with ethnic communities? with your community?
- What barriers do you think exist for police to successfully work with ethnic communities? with your community?
- What do you think could be done to overcome the barriers identified?
- What specific examples / suggestions can you give:
  - to improve safety for your community?
  - to report crime?
  - to reduce racial tension and harassment in your city?
  - to improve the relationship between police and your community?

**7. Recommendations for culturally appropriate means of communicating with your community**

- What are the different possible means of communicating with and obtaining feedback from your community? (find out the specifics of what work and what don't)
  - by print media?

- television?
- radio?
- internet?
- community group forums?
- ethnic place of worship?
- others (please specify)?
  
- Which of the above are the most effective means of communicating with:
  - new migrants
  - women
  - young people
  - older people
  - other groups (please specify) in your community?
  
- Are there any non-verbal communication issues in your own culture that would invite misunderstanding with the New Zealand Police?
  
- What other suggestions do you have in regard to helping your community to increase their confidence in police?

**8. Would you be willing to be contacted by the police in the future?**

**Thank participants for their time and participation in the interview/focus group.**



## **Appendix 3: Surveys on public attitudes toward the police**

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- Addison Police Department (2005). *Community Satisfaction Survey 2005*. Retrieved June 2006, from <http://addisonadvantage.org/Police/pdf/survey.pdf>
- Beyer, L. (1993). Attitude Survey 1986. In *Community Policing: Lessons from Victoria*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. Retrieved July 2005, from <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/lcj/community/appendn.pdf>
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- Laird, B., Wihongi, H. and Robertson, N. (2003). *Survey of Residents' Satisfaction with Police Services in the Waikato District*. Commissioned report for the New Zealand Police. Hamilton: Department of Psychology, University of Waikato.
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- New Zealand Police (2002). *Annual Survey of Public Satisfaction with Police Service*. Retrieved July 2005, from <http://www.police.govt.nz/service/evaluation/satisfaction-report-2002-public.pdf>
- Phoenix Police Department (2003). *2003 Resident Attitude Study*. Retrieved July 2005, from [http://phoenix.gov/POLICE/ppdpla1\\_res\\_attitude03.pdf](http://phoenix.gov/POLICE/ppdpla1_res_attitude03.pdf)
- Sarma, K. and O'Dwyer, K. (2004). *The Garda Public Attitudes Survey 2004*. Garda Research Unit Research Report No. 1/04, Templemore. Retrieved July 2005, from [http://www.csu.nisra.gov.uk/newsroom/news\\_details.asp?id=27](http://www.csu.nisra.gov.uk/newsroom/news_details.asp?id=27)



## Appendix 4: Information sheet for research participants

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

### *Research on “Ethnic Communities Perception of the New Zealand Police”*

#### INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

We would like to invite you to take part in this important research.

#### ***Background***

This project is funded by the New Zealand Police and will be carried out by Dr Elsie Ho (Project Leader), Ms Jenine Cooper (Project Co-ordinator) and research staff from the Migration Research Group of the University of Waikato. Over the last decade ethnic communities in New Zealand are becoming increasingly diverse. The *Police Ethnic Strategy Towards 2010*, launched in February 2005, acknowledges the complex nature of new communities settling in New Zealand and recommends that Police, in the next five to six years, focus on reducing ethnic communities fear of being targets of crime, and increasing their confidence in Police. This research is a first step towards achieving these goals.

#### ***Objectives***

- i. To provide information on the current crime and safety issues that ethnic communities face, and the perceptions that various ethnic groups have of Police;
- ii. To identify barriers for Police to work successfully with ethnic communities; and
- iii. To recommend culturally appropriate ways of communicating with ethnic communities and monitoring their perceptions of the Police.

#### ***Methods***

We will use interviews, focus groups and case studies to explore the complex issues, concerns and perceptions of ethnic communities. Participants will be recruited from eight ethnic communities (Chinese, Indian, Korean, Japanese, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Somali, Middle Eastern) in four main metropolitan centres (Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch).

#### ***Your involvement***

Your name has been provided to us as a potential participant of this research. Individual interviews will be carried out face-to-face or over the telephone, each lasting for about 30-45 minutes. If you are involved in a focus group, each focus group will have 5-10 participants and will last for about 2 hours. If you require an interview schedule, it will be sent to you prior to the interview. All interviews will take place at times and in places mutually convenient to those being interviewed and where privacy can be guaranteed.

With your permission, the interview may be audio-taped to aid in putting together the information. If you preferred, you will be sent a copy of the interview notes after the interview,

and you will have the opportunity to make corrections, or request the erasure of any materials you do not wish to be used.

### ***Participants' rights***

All participants will have the right to:

- decline to participate;
- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study within two weeks of interview;
- decline to the interview being audio-taped;
- ask for the tape recorder to be turn off at any time;
- ask for the erasure of any materials they do not wish to be used in any reports of this study; and
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation.

### ***Confidentiality***

Your answers will be treated completely confidentially. Unless your permission is obtained, your name or any other identifying characteristics of you and your organisation will not be disclosed in any of the written reports produced in the course of the research. However, the names of ethnic groups will be used where appropriate in the report to make distinctions between the issues and needs of different groups. Data will be destroyed five years after the completion of the research.

### ***The results***

A report summarising the findings from the interviews and focus groups will be prepared for the New Zealand Police at the end of the project.

### ***Anticipated benefits of the research***

This research will assist Police to develop programmes, initiatives and strategies to improve their interaction and communication with ethnic communities, as well as culturally appropriate ways of monitoring the attitudes and perceptions of ethnic communities about the Police.

If you have any queries about this study, please feel free to contact us.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Yours sincerely

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## Appendix 5: Consent form

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### CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this research project, “Ethnic Communities Perceptions of the New Zealand Police”. The purpose of the research is to find out current crime and safety issues that ethnic communities in Auckland, Christchurch, Hamilton and Wellington face; the perceptions that various ethnic groups have of Police; and to identify culturally appropriate ways of monitoring the attitudes and perceptions of ethnic communities about Police over time. A report summarising the findings of the study will be prepared for the New Zealand Police at the end of the project.

I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and that I have the rights to withdraw from the study at any time, and to decline to answer any individual questions in the study.

I understand that my participation in this study is confidential. Without my prior consent, no material which could identify me or my organisation will be used in any reports on this study. However, the names of ethnic groups will be used in the report.

I understand the information shared within the focus group should be kept confidential.

I consent to my interview being audio-taped

YES / NO

**“I agree to participate in this interview and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form.”**

Signature:

Date:



## Appendix 6: Newspaper article references

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### Crime and Safety

- Harold, J. 2004. "Asians Feel at Risk", *Eastern Courier*, 29 October 2004.  
Kiong, E. 2005. "Crime Big Worry for Ethnic Groups" *New Zealand Herald*, 25 August 2005.

### Racial Harassment

- Bremner, A. 2005. "Migrants Face Harassment", *East and Bays Courier*, 30 September 2005.  
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Lynch, H. 2005. "Race Attack on Family", *North Shore Times*, 1 October 2005.  
Murdoch, H. 2005. "Attack Points to Racial Problems", *The Press*, 1 July 2005.  
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Palmer, R. 2005. "Asians Find NZ Racism Widespread", *Dominion Post*, 15 September 2005, Edition 2, p.8.  
Tunnah, H. 2004. "Race-Hate Victims Urged to Call Police", *New Zealand Herald*, 5 November 2004.

### Dairy Owners

- Davis, J. 2005. "Dairy Owner Calls for Protection", *The Press*, 25 October 2005, p.3.  
New Zealand Herald, 2005. "Indian Call to Stop Violence", *New Zealand Herald*, 18 July 2005.

### Asian Driving –Stereotypes

- New Zealand Herald, 2005. "Campaign Aims to Dispel Bad Asian Drivers Myth", *New Zealand Herald*, 12 December 2005.

### Muslim Experiences of Prejudice

- Dominion Post. 2005. "Muslims' Veils to Come Off in Court", *Dominion Post*, Edition 2, p.3.  
Hume, T. 2005. "Plight of a Muslim in the West", *Sunday Star Times*, 17 July 2005, Edition A, p.6.  
New Zealand Herald. 2005. "Community Describes Mosque Vandalism as 'Cowardly'", *New Zealand Herald*, 11 July, 2005.  
Patterson, A. 2005. "Lifting the Veil on Misconceptions about Islam", *Central Leader*, 29 July 2005.  
Ponniah, R. 2005. "Strangers Struggling To Feel At Home In An Alien Land", *New Zealand Herald*, 3 October 2005, A11.

## **Somali Youth**

- Aikman, T. 2006. "Police Deny Slow Response to Street Fight", *Waikato Times*, 6 March 2006, p.1.
- Aikman, T. 2006. "Somali Youths: Don't Blame us for Fighting Back", *Waikato Times*, 7 March 2006, p.1.
- Dewes, H. 2004. "Skinheads Linked to Second Race Attack", *Dominion Post*, 30 June 2004, Edition 2, p.5.
- Waikato Times. 2006. "Leaders Seek to Cool 'Kids Growing up'", *Waikato Times*, 11 March 2006.
- Waikato Times. 2006. "Race Clashes Must Be Nipped In Bud", *Waikato Times*, 11 March 2006, Edition 2, p.12.

## **Domestic Violence**

- New Zealand Herald. 2005. "It's Not Only a Domestic", *New Zealand Herald*, 22 October 2005.
- Thomas, K. 2004. "'Clash of Cultures' Behind Domestic Abuse", *The Press*, 28 October 2004, Edition 2, p.2.

## **Gambling**

- Bennetts, J. 2006. "Asian Gamblers Offered Help", *The Press*, Edition 2, p.6.