

Employment Experiences of Sri Lankan Migrants in New Zealand

Ngā Āhuatanga Mahi a ngā
Manene o Hiri Rānaka
kei Aotearoa

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T R U S T

success through diversity
Ahakoā whakaaro kē, ka puta a ihu

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1. Introduction

The 1998 EEO Trust Annual Diversity *Index* showed that of all ethnic groups in New Zealand, Sri Lankans have the highest rate of tertiary qualification. Fifty one per cent of Sri Lankan men and 35 per cent of Sri Lankan women have a tertiary qualification, compared with a national average of nine per cent of men and seven per cent of women.¹

The EEO Trust selected Sri Lankan migrants as the target group for a pilot study to investigate employment experiences among migrants.

These Sri Lankan migrants potentially represent a considerable resource for New Zealand employers. This study asks, “How well is this resource being accessed and received by employers?”

Suggestions and comments from respondents form the basis of recommendations for government, employers, recruitment consultants and migrant associations.

¹ This information was provided by the Department of Internal Affairs which is collating a report on different ethnic groups.

2. Executive summary

The survey results showed:

- about half the respondents had been in New Zealand between two to four years
- more than half were between 30-40 years old; those under 30 were less than 10 per cent of respondents
- more than 75 per cent of respondents were in professional jobs prior to migration
- most had between 11-20 years work experience before migrating
- more than 92 per cent reported they were fluent or very fluent in English
- more than 96 per cent had a tertiary qualification, mostly in engineering, science or accountancy
- those most likely to be employed were professionals in accountancy, commerce and management
- many unemployed migrants were in fields which have a demand for qualified professionals
- respondents were more likely to find their first job after being in New Zealand for three to 12 months
- many respondents reported difficulties getting overseas qualifications recognised by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), employers and recruitment consultants, even if the qualifications were gained in other developed countries
- only about 60 per cent of respondents remained in the profession they were qualified in, and more than half were employed in less senior positions
- over a third of the migrants found employment by applying for advertised jobs and another third through personal contacts; other means such as recruitment consultants or Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) were less successful
- migrants were almost equally divided between beliefs that diversity is and is not valued in New Zealand
- almost half the respondents (47 per cent) considered they had faced discrimination while trying to find employment in New Zealand and thereafter

- the three biggest barriers to employment of migrants in New Zealand were seen as: lack of New Zealand experience, New Zealand employers not understanding job applicants from other countries and difficulties with recognition of qualifications.

3. Survey data

3.1 Sources of data

The survey was conducted among Sri Lankan migrants in Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton and Palmerston North.

A pre-tested questionnaire was distributed to 430 people using the mailing list of the New Zealand Sri Lanka Foundation (a Sri Lankan organisation based in Auckland), personal contacts in cities outside Auckland and names obtained from the telephone directory at random. A copy of the full questionnaire is available on request from the EEO Trust.

3.2 Survey response

Ten of the 430 questionnaires were returned address unknown so the number of questionnaires sent was taken as 420. Of these, 114 were returned; a response rate of 27.1 per cent.

Number sent	420
Number returned	114
Response rate	27.1%

4. Biographical details of Sri Lankan migrants

The first part of the questionnaire collected biographical information on the migrant, his or her qualifications, the type of job prior to migration and the fluency of English.

4.1 Gender

Sixty per cent of respondents were male and 40 per cent female.

4.2 Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number	Per cent
Sri Lankan	108	94.7
Sri Lankan Tamil	5	4.4
Unknown	1	0.9
Total	114	100

Ninety-five per cent of respondents said their ethnicity was Sri Lankan, four per cent Sri Lankan Tamil and one per cent did not state ethnicity.

4.3 Country of origin

Ninety-nine per cent of respondents were originally from Sri Lanka and one per cent from Singapore.

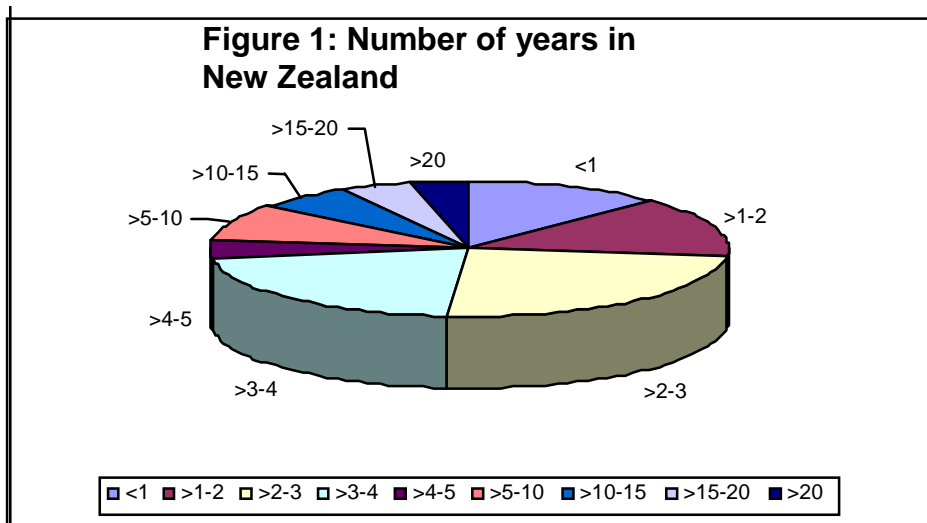
4.4 Number of years in New Zealand

The results of this question were grouped into ranges for ease of interpretation.

Number of years in New Zealand	Number of respondents	Per cent
Less than 1	14	12.3
>1 – 2	16	14.0
>2 – 3	28	24.6
>3 – 4	24	21.0
>4 – 5	5	4.4
>5 – 10	10	8.8
>10 – 15	7	6.1
>15 – 20	5	4.4
Over 20	4	3.5
Unknown	1	0.9

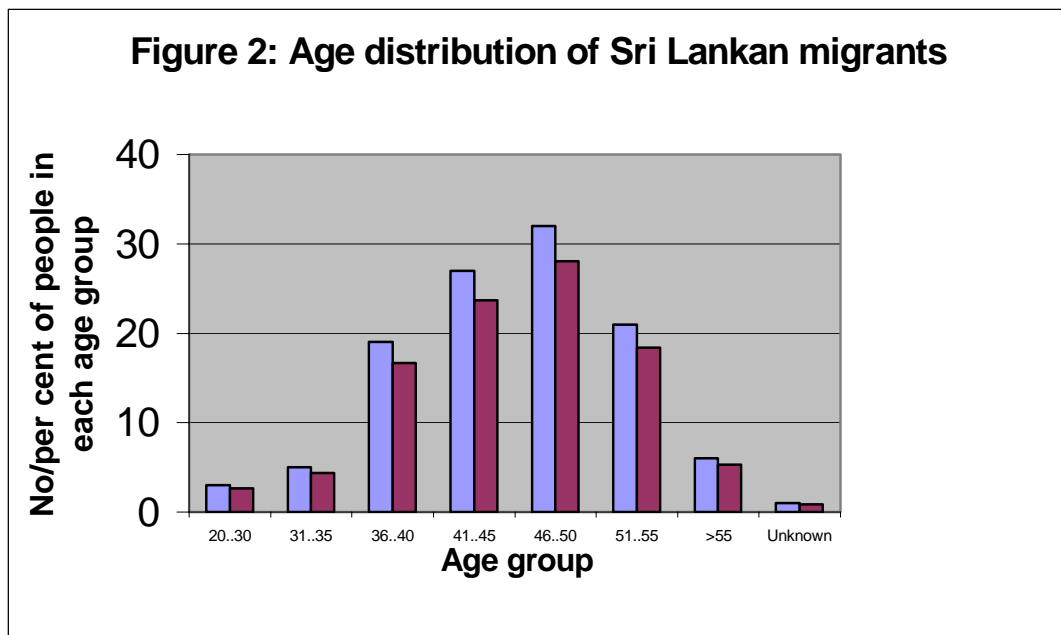
About half the respondents had been in New Zealand from two to four years, more than three quarters for less than five years, and only 14 per cent for over

10 years. See Figure 1. This reflects the influx of Sri Lankan migrants to New Zealand after the 1995 immigration policy review.



4.5 Age group

More than half the respondents were over 40 years old. The proportion of respondents aged 20-30 years was low at 2.6 per cent. See Figure 2.



4.6 Type of employment prior to migration

A large majority (75 per cent) of respondents said their jobs prior to migration to New Zealand were professional, while 15 per cent were in administrative positions. A further nine per cent were in technical jobs, while only one person was in a trade. Six respondents did not answer this question. This profile also reflects New Zealand's immigration policy.

Job type	Per cent
Professional	75.4
Technical	8.8
Administration	14.9
Trades	0.9
Unknown	5.3
Total	100

4.7 Work experience prior to migration

Work experience prior to migration for the 106 people who answered this question ranged from less than one year to 38 years. As the table below shows, the majority of the migrants are very experienced, with almost half having 11-20 years experience.

Years of experience	Per cent
<1	5.3
1-5	5.3
6-10	13.2
11-15	22.8
16-20	23.7
21-25	15.8
26-30	4.4
31-35	0.9
36-40	1.8
Unknown	7.0
Total	100

The most common length of work experience was 16-20 years, closely followed by 11-15 years.

4.8 Knowledge of languages and fluency of English

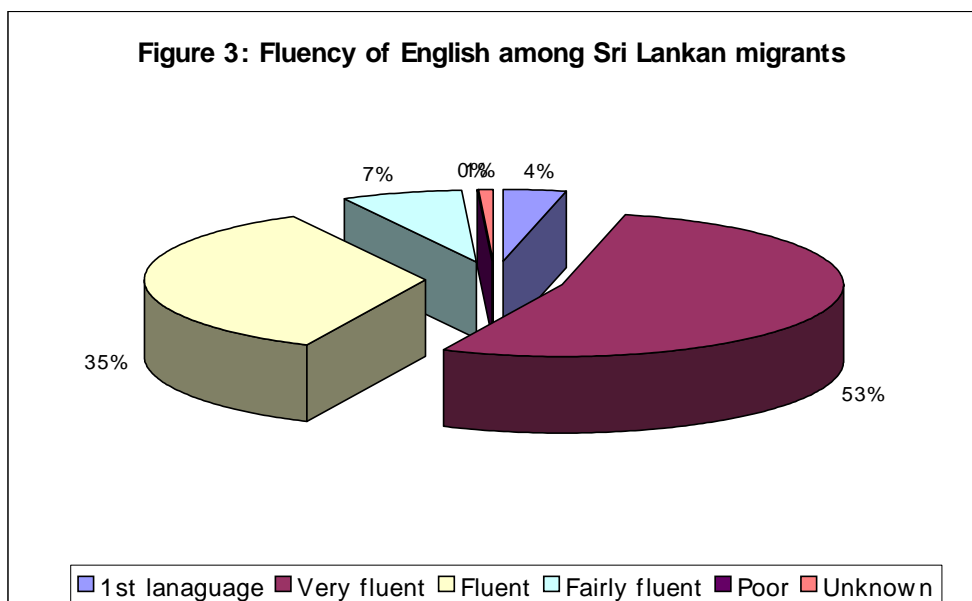
Sri Lankans speak either Sinhalese or Tamil (or both) and English. English is taught in schools from the first grade and is also often taught at pre-school. Three respondents said their first language was English; for the majority (90 per cent) their first language was Sinhalese. Five per cent spoke Tamil as their first

language while one person's first language was Malay. Two respondents did not answer this question.

Sixty-six per cent spoke two languages, 24 per cent spoke three, and six per cent spoke four languages. Five people did not respond to this question.

Fluency of English	Number	Per cent
First language	4	3.5
Very fluent	61	53.5
Fluent	40	35.1
Fairly fluent	8	7.0
Poor	0	0
Unknown	1	0.9
Total	114	100

Ninety-two per cent of respondents reported that using the English language is not a problem and that they are either fluent or very fluent. See Figure 3.



4.9 Qualification areas

More than 96 per cent of respondents have a tertiary qualification. The following table includes areas where more than one person is qualified.

Qualification area	Number	Per cent
Engineering	28	24.8
Science	19	16.8
Accountancy	11	9.7
Arts	9	8.0
Medicine	7	6.2
Commerce	4	3.5
Management	3	2.7
Computer Science	3	2.7
Economics	3	2.7
Agriculture	3	2.7
Architecture	2	1.8
Education	2	1.8
Home Economics	2	1.8
No tertiary qualification	4	3.5

These Sri Lankan migrants were most likely to be qualified in engineering (25 per cent) and science (17 per cent). Ten percent were accountants and six per cent doctors.

There were many qualified women in accountancy, engineering, medicine and science. Half of medical graduates were women, as were nearly one fifth of engineers and 44 per cent of science graduates. A list of the numbers qualified in each discipline is given in Appendix 1.

The data was analyzed to establish how many people from each discipline were employed currently. Disciplines from which there were less than two respondents were eliminated.

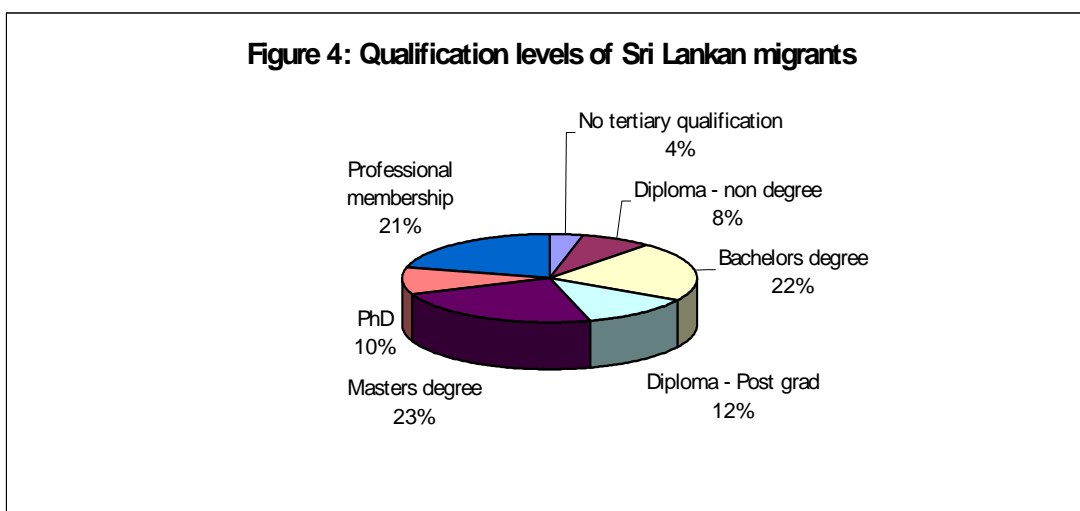
Discipline	Number responded	Number employed
Commerce	4	4
Management	3	3
Accountancy	11	10
Medicine	7	5
Engineering	28	19
Science	19	10
Arts	9	4
Computer Science	3	1
Agriculture	3	1
Economics	3	1

While the numbers in each category are quite small, it appears that those with commerce, management, accountancy and medical qualifications were more likely to be employed.

However, there were many unemployed migrants in fields where there is a demand for qualified people in New Zealand.

4.10 Qualification levels

Qualification areas were grouped into seven levels. As Figure 4 shows, a high proportion of those with qualifications have advanced degrees or diplomas.



Of the 110 respondents who had a tertiary qualification, nearly half (49 per cent) had obtained at least one degree from a country outside Sri Lanka. Seventeen people gained all their degrees outside Sri Lanka.

Forty per cent of bachelors degree holders, 10(37 per cent) masters degree holders and three with PhDs were unemployed. Of the three unemployed PhD holders, two had degrees in science and one in archaeology.

Qualification level	Number employed	Number not employed
No tertiary qualification	4	0
Diploma – non degree	7	2
Bachelors degree	15	10
Diploma – Post grad	6	8
Masters Degree	17	10
PhD	8	3
Professional Membership	21	3

At each level of qualification, there are people who have not managed to gain employment. Employment does not seem to be related to qualification level.

4.11 Average period of unemployment

Less than a third of respondents were currently unemployed, while 68 per cent were employed. The proportions of men and women employed were similar.

Employment status	Female number	Female per cent	Male number	Male per cent	Total number	Total per cent
Employed	32	71	46	67	78	68
Unemployed	13	29	23	33	36	32
Not answered	0	0	0	0	0	0

Employed respondents (78) were asked how long they had been unemployed before they found their first job. Only three people found employment immediately on arrival in New Zealand while three more found employment within one month of arrival. Most migrants were likely to find employment after being in New Zealand between three months and one year. However, four people found employment only after being unemployed for two years.

Number of unemployed months	Number of persons
None	3
Less than 1 month	3
1-3 months	11
3-6 months	10
6-12 months	12
12-18 months	4
18-24 months	4
Over 24 months	4

5. Recognition of overseas qualifications in New Zealand

Recognition of overseas qualifications has been a problem for a third of the 78 employed migrants, while 63 per cent had no problems. Two people did not answer this question.

Of those people who said they had problems getting their qualifications recognised, several had to undertake local courses. Doctors, teachers and lawyers were most likely to have to sit New Zealand exams.

Several accountants said although they had British qualifications (eg CIMA) they still had to sit New Zealand examinations, as New Zealand employers were not aware of their qualifications, as did many other holders university and postgraduate qualifications.

The respondents had qualifications from many countries other than Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan education system is comparable to the British one and standards of education are high. University education is in English.

Twenty-one people who gained their first degree in Sri Lanka had experienced problems in getting their qualifications recognised, as did 16 who gained their qualifications in other countries (such as the UK, USA, Australia, Canada, The Netherlands and Japan) and six people with degrees from both Sri Lanka and elsewhere. The source of the degree did not seem to influence whether the migrant could get their qualification recognised in New Zealand.

While the migrants' qualifications were recognised for purposes of migration, they subsequently faced problems in recognition from NZQA (seven people), employers (six people) and recruitment consultants.

Doctors, teachers, engineers, lawyers and accountants were among those who had faced problems having their qualifications recognised by NZQA. One engineer said his MEngSc was accredited by NZQA as an MSc, as there was no New Zealand equivalent.

Those who did not have a problem getting their qualifications recognised said this was because they migrated with an offer of employment, came to New Zealand 25 years ago or obtained qualifications from a New Zealand university.

5.1 Do qualified migrants remain in the same profession?

Of the 78 employed people who answered this question, 47 (60 per cent) were employed in the same profession prior to migration while 33 per cent were not. Sixty-six per cent of professionals remained in their profession while 29 per cent did not.

5.2 Do qualified migrants secure employment at the same seniority?

Generally, Sri Lankan migrants who answered the questionnaire were not working in jobs with similar seniority prior to migration. Over half (54 per cent) of presently employed migrants were in lower positions than prior to migration, while 35 per cent were in the same or higher positions. The figures were similar for professional migrants (56 per cent in lower positions and 34 per cent in similar or higher positions).

6. Employment of migrants in New Zealand

6.1 How do migrants find jobs in New Zealand?

Over a third of migrants (36 per cent) secured employment by answering newspaper advertisements. A similar proportion (32 per cent) found employment through personal contacts, while a further 12 per cent used recruitment consultants. Door to door canvassing secured jobs for only four people, as did WINZ. Voluntary work led to employment for two people. In the “other” category, two people found work via professional journals and one started their own business. Two employed people did not answer this question.

Source of securing employment	Number	Per cent
Newspaper advertisement	28	36
A contact	25	32
Recruitment consultant	9	12
Door to door canvassing	4	5
Voluntary work	2	3
WINZ	4	5
Other	4	5
Did not answer	2	3

6.2 Employment status

Employment type	Number
Permanent full time	57
Permanent part time	3
Temporary full time	4
Temporary part time	2
Casual	3
Part time	8
Unknown	1

As the table above shows, 77 per cent (60) of employed respondents were in permanent employment. Fifty-seven of those were working full time and three part time. Only 10 per cent (8) of those employed were in temporary employment. Three people were doing casual jobs. Eight people who were employed part time did not say whether they were in permanent or temporary employment. One person did not answer this question.

6.3 Income levels

Income level (full time)	Number	Per cent
<\$20,000	2	3
\$21,000-\$30,000	10	16
\$31,000-\$40,000	17	28
\$41,000-\$50,000	6	10
>\$50,000	23	38
Unknown	3	5

Income levels were used only from people employed full time. As the table above shows, the highest number of employed persons were in the over \$50,000 bracket while 28 per cent were on \$31,000-\$40,000. Two people earned less than \$20,000.

The numbers used in this analysis (61) were small. However, the data appears to indicate that higher qualifications do not necessarily result in higher salaries. Further investigation of this issue is needed.

6.4 Job satisfaction and possibility of turnover among migrant employees

A majority (59 per cent) of the employed Sri Lankan migrants were happy to remain in their current jobs while 36 per cent were not and would be likely to change their jobs.

Among the people who said that they were happy to remain in their current job for the next three years, six would change jobs for a higher salary and three would not change their employment even for a higher salary. Some of the comments were:

- *They (my employers) are paying for my MBA, which is a lot of money, medical insurance for the whole family, superannuation and paid study leave.*
- *I will only leave my current job if I am paid \$100,000 in another job.*
- *Very interesting work and challenging position. Friendly staff and nobody is bossy. I am my own supervisor. Always busy but no stress.*

Two people were happy but not sure whether they would stay on.

Of the 28 people who were employed but said they would leave their current position within the next three years, 18 provided reasons as to why they would leave. Of these, half said they would do so because they were either under-employed or were employed in a field not relevant to their qualification levels.

Four people would leave as they were not paid well and five said the lack of promotional prospects would make them leave.

Some comments included:

- *Happy with current employment but salary is highly insufficient and inappropriate.*
- *The salary is below my earning capacity relevant to my qualifications.*
- *I feel that my knowledge, skills and experience are being under-utilized and underpaid.*

7. Unemployed migrants

7.1 How long does it take for a migrant to find employment?

Currently unemployed people (36) were asked to list the period they have been actively looking for a job.

Job search months	Number	Per cent
<6	7	19
6-11	6	17
12-17	6	17
18-23	2	16
24-29	6	17
30-35	2	6
36-41	2	6
42-47	0	0
>48	2	6
Unknown	3	8

Even though the respondents were highly qualified, some had been applying for jobs without success for two, three or even four years.

7.2 Applying for jobs and getting an interview

The number of jobs applied for (for which applicants are qualified) ranged from none to 200. Almost half the people (47 per cent) who answered this question had not been interviewed.

Number of interviews	Per cent of people
0	47.2
1	8.3
2	19.4
3	5.6
4	2.8
5	5.6
15	8.3
Unknown	8.3
Total	100

7.3 Increasing chances of getting a job

Currently unemployed respondents were asked whether they believed they need to improve anything to increase their chances of getting a job. Thirty-six people answered this question and provided 54 responses.

Improvements needed	Number of responses	Per cent of response
Knowledge of English	6	11
Upgrade qualifications	6	11
Undergo training	18	33
Upgrade computer knowledge	12	22
Other	12	22

Half the respondents (18) believed they needed to be trained in a different field. Twelve people said they needed to upgrade their computer knowledge. A similar number wanted to upgrade their qualifications, while a further six (two of them who were only fairly fluent in English) wanted to improve their knowledge of English.

Comments included:

- *There is no need to improve any of the above.*
- *Lower the age and change the pigments of the skin.*
- *Change the colour of the skin.*
- *Change name to an English name.*
- *Obviously all my qualifications and experience seem to be useless to New Zealand employers.*
- *Already registered with Sri Lankan, British and Hong Kong medical councils but can't apply without New Zealand examinations.*
- *I need to get commercial/job experience to get a job; to get the experience you need a job, to do a job you need experience.*

8. Valuing diversity in New Zealand

8.1 Is diversity valued?

All respondents were asked whether, in their opinion, diversity (ethnic/cultural) is valued in New Zealand. Respondents were fairly evenly divided about whether diversity is valued or not.

Diversity valued?	Per cent
Yes	42.1
No	43.9
Unknown	14.0
Total	100

Some positive comments were:

- *Ethnic diversity is valued by the open minded New Zealanders but there are others who do not care.*
- *New Zealanders like to know about our culture and they appreciate our history.*
- *Depending on the person. If they have traveled widely then they are sensitive.*
- *However, this must be qualified by saying that it is valued by most educated New Zealanders. In the work and social environment I live in, diversity is valued.*
- *In most instances yes more and more.*
- *However, it seems to be limited to small intimate groups.*
- *But not everybody.*
- *I think diversity is valued quite a lot when it comes to trying dishes. In talking to people I think they value extended family systems and family support that we have even after having come to a distant country. But I think that New Zealanders feel that their jobs and space are taken by immigrants and have passed open comments about it.*
- *However, diversity is tolerated reasonably well in New Zealand now. Ten years ago I was unhappy about being seen around with a brown skin. However, the situation has changed remarkably well now with so many government institutions actively promoting cultural diversity.*

Some negative responses were:

- *Not in the workplace. Accent and idiom has to be learnt.*
- *Not many government or semi-government [organizations] recognize ethnic diversity in the workplace. Maybe it is due to their lack of knowledge about other countries.*

- *Yes and no, because educated and church going people definitely value the diversity, but I think the majority do not, as the politicians have not educated the public of the advantages and the benefits which the country receives through migrants.*
- *Many people think that the new immigration policy is a mistake.*
- *New Zealand has to go a very long way to understanding the values of cultural and ethnic diversity and the importance of educated people to this country.*
- *Most employers do not know what skills, experience and qualifications are possessed by immigrants. Therefore mature awareness among employers about these matters would be useful.*
- *New Zealanders are like frogs in the well. They have very little experience about outside world and they do not value other people's experience or qualifications.*
- *Diversity and ethnic/cultural value is only a dream and an ideal is being articulated but not practiced. Majority should first strive to find means and ways to integrate the minorities to their society.*
- *I feel that there is discrimination for immigrants from the Indian region and all dark skinned people.*
- *It is only on paper.*
- *I think New Zealand is better than most countries but I think New Zealanders still feel threatened by migrants.*

8.3 Discrimination in New Zealand workplaces

Respondents who were currently employed were also asked if they had experienced discrimination in a New Zealand workplace, and almost a third reported that they had (32 per cent). Both men and women reported being discriminated against.

Four people said they had faced discrimination at educational establishments. Teachers commented on not even being called for interviews, even after their qualifications were assessed by NZQA, and after completing teacher training in New Zealand. One teacher had been told by a school principal that the board of trustees and parents were against the appointment of migrant teachers.

Some respondents identified the nature of the discrimination, as follows:

- 16 respondents considered they were discriminated against because of their race, colour, accent or having ethnic names
- three people felt they were discriminated against salary-wise
- two people felt they were overlooked for promotion.

Their comments included:

- *A few members of my current staff refused my appointment simply because I was not a Kiwi and "black".*

- *I have realized that my secondary school students*
- *discriminate against me sometimes for my non-New Zealand English accent. Fortunately, this does not happen at the staff or administrative level.*
- *Not accepting different ethnic clothing in the workplace.*
- *Hostility from staff in lower ranking jobs simply because they feel a foreigner should not be above them.*
- *Subtle, but based on colour and origin.*
- *Recognition and preference is given to Europeans.*
- *A less experienced person recruited for a similar job on a higher salary.*

8.2 General experiences of employment discrimination

All respondents were asked whether they had faced discrimination during their search for employment or thereafter. Fifty-four of them (47 per cent) reported they had encountered discrimination while job hunting and 52 (46 per cent) said they had not. Eight people (seven per cent) did not answer the question.

Respondents who had experienced discrimination during their job search were asked to describe their experiences. Their responses were grouped into types of discrimination, as follows:

- 11 people said they were discriminated against by recruitment consultants
- 10 people said they were discriminated against because they were from another ethnic group and a “kiwi” was preferred even though the migrant was more qualified and experienced for the job
- seven people considered they were discriminated against due to their skin colour, accent or for having an ethnic name
- two people said that although their qualifications were recognized by the NZQA, some employers did not recognize them
- 10 people said they were discriminated for other reasons
- 15 people said they considered they were discriminated against but did not give reasons.

Even those who said they personally did not face discrimination acknowledged that it exists. Their comments included:

- *Although there is some bias among employers towards local qualifications and experience*
- *No discrimination if you prove to be able to do the job but salary-wise you are placed at a lower scale as your chances are less of getting another job*
- *In my experience, discrimination exists when there is a choice of people who are equally qualified.*

8.4 Sources of discrimination

All respondents were asked whether they faced discrimination from any particular group during their search for employment or thereafter. Discrimination from employers and recruitment consultants were by far the most common

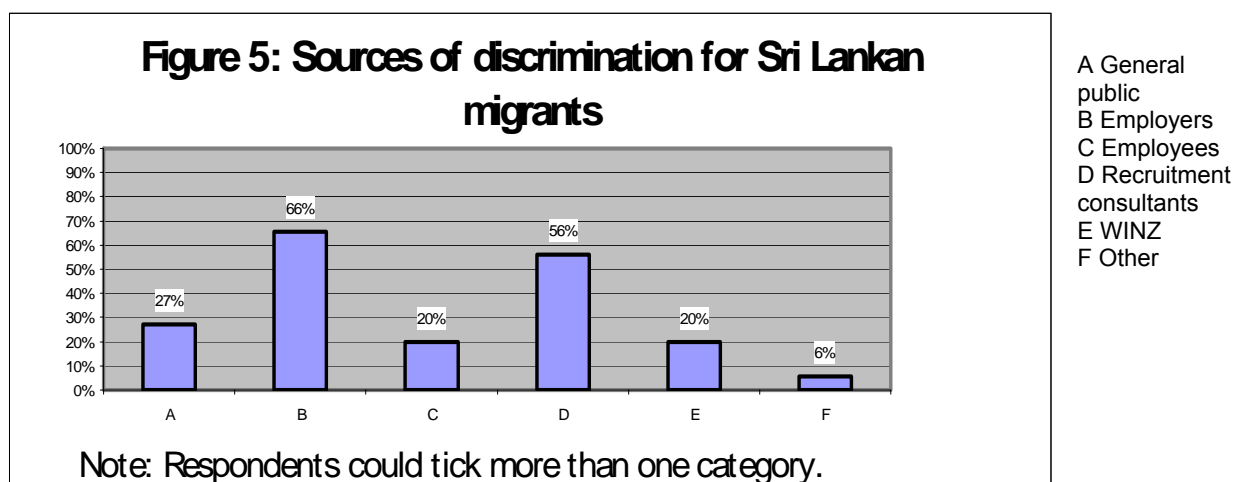
source of discrimination against the migrants. Discrimination from employers was cited by 34 people and from recruitment consultants by 29 people.

Groups	Per cent of people (Number)
Employers	65.5 (34)
Recruitment consultants	56.4 (29)
General public	27(14)
Employees	20 (10)
Work & Income New Zealand	20 (10)
Other	5.5 (3)

Note: People ticked more than one category.

Sixty-six per cent of respondents considered they faced discrimination from employers during their search for employment, and 56 per cent from recruitment consultants. Twenty per cent of respondents felt WINZ staff had discriminated against them. The “other” responses all related to discrimination in educational institutions.

See Figure 5 below.



Some reported experiences in relation to employers included:

- *By the rejection letters I have received, I can understand that New Zealand employers are not in a position to understand about other ethnic groups or have knowledge to appreciate their work experience.*
- *When employers see our names which are too long for them to read they think of us as outsiders and they reject us.*
- *Our qualifications and experience were recognised by the Government of New Zealand when immigration status was awarded based on the point system. However, ... the private sector, does not recognise the qualifications.*

- *Uncertainty among employers regarding the ability of an immigrant to perform in the New Zealand work environment.*
- *They insist on New Zealand experience even if we have worked in more complex jobs/workplaces.*
- *I think some employers/employment agents' reluctance to try out new migrants not because of the migrants different ethnic background but due to their non-familiarity and lack of confidence in new migrants.*
- *Being "qualified" also has been seen as a "threat" to some employers.*
- *Some employers think that anyone with a non-New Zealand accent is from hell. They do not want to recognize non-New Zealand qualifications, experience. Anything from New Zealand is considered to be better in comparison to the best from overseas.*

Some comments about recruitment consultants included:

- *One employment agency told me, "We don't take people like you".*
- *Certain recruitment agents appear to be discriminating against immigrants. It is expressed in terms of "not having any New Zealand experience".*
- *When I phone job agents, the moment they note our accent, they always try to discourage us asking absurd questions such as New Zealand experience, New Zealand qualifications etc.*
- *Going through recruitment consultants was not that pleasant as you are not given an opportunity to face an interview even. Most of the time you are told that the position requires New Zealand experience or the vacancy is already filled.*
- *Several job agents indicated that companies don't want to hear about Indian job seekers because of their accent. Sri Lankans are also categorised as Indians and our applications are also treated in the same manner.*

Comments about WINZ related to the organisation's inability to cater to the needs of professional migrants. Many commented on the attitude of WINZ personnel and said their strategies were geared more towards unskilled and unqualified people.

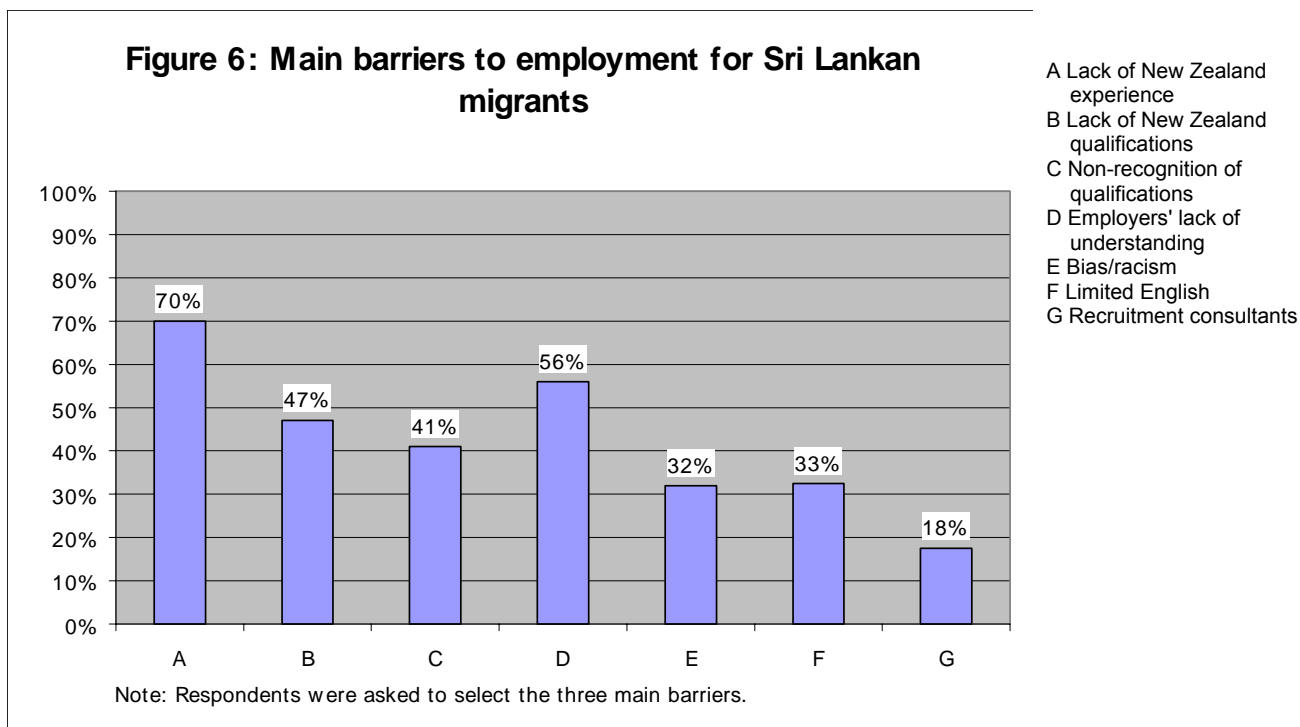
People who spoke about WINZ clearly felt strongly about what had happened to them. Two comments given are as follows:

- *WINZ is useless. They fail to recognize our needs. They fail to recognize our needs. For them whether you are an engineer, doctor or a laborer is immaterial.*
- *WINZ is not geared to cater to migrants especially qualified migrants. They should seriously change their thinking and policy to cater to the migrants who have come here during the past five years. Their strategies gear more towards the unskilled and unqualified people on a benefit. None of the qualified migrants who come here want to exploit the benefit but WINZ ... is yet to realise that.*

9. Employment barriers

9.1 Barriers that prevent migrants from finding employment in New Zealand

Respondents were asked to select the three main barriers to migrants finding employment. Of the 339 responses, the most frequently mentioned barrier was a lack of New Zealand experience (80 people) followed by employers not understanding applicants from different countries (64 people). Fifty-four people believed that a lack of New Zealand qualifications was a barrier to finding employment.



Limited knowledge of English was also seen to be a barrier by 37 people in spite of the fact that over 90 per cent of respondents reported fluency in English. Twenty people said they felt that recruitment consultants were a barrier to the employment of migrants.

9.2 Overcoming barriers

Survey respondents were asked for suggestions to make it easier for migrants to find employment in New Zealand.

Of the 212 responses, the two most frequently mentioned were educating employers (70 people) and educating recruitment consultants (67 people).

Thirty-three people felt that WINZ staff should be educated – more than three times the number than had experienced discrimination from this source.

Suggestions	Per cent of respondents (Number)
Educating employers	61 (70)
Educating recruitment consultants	59 (67)
Educating WINZ	29 (33)
Educating general public	20 (23)
Other	17 (9)

Note: Respondents could tick more than one category.

Respondents were asked to comment further if they wished, and their responses were grouped as follows.

The main suggestion (from 10 people) was that New Zealand employers should be educated about the skills, qualifications and experiences of migrants.

A similar number suggested that migrants should have some form of training in communication skills and the New Zealand way of life, which would make it easy for them to find gainful employment.

Five people suggested government policy should change to allow only people who could be gainfully employed in New Zealand into the country.

Four people thought the services of WINZ should improve to cater to a different category of unemployed – skilled and highly qualified immigrants.

Two people suggested that a short period of voluntary work in the field in which the migrant is experienced and qualified would help them find employment.

Educating recruitment consultants, upgrading computer skills, improving the services of NZQA, and successful migrants setting up businesses where new migrants could be employed were among other suggestions.

There was no apparent difference between the answers from males and females.

10. Recommendations

Survey respondents provided a number of suggestions on how the barriers to their full participation in employment in this country could be reduced. Their suggestions are relevant to the following:

Government

Recommendations to:

- improve the capacity and skill of WINZ to work with qualified migrants
- review current policies in terms of assisting migrants integrate into New Zealand society to ensure they meet the needs of skilled migrants seeking employment
- upskill NZQA to provide a more up to date client service and faster processing of applications for the recognition of overseas qualifications.

Employers and recruitment consultants

Recommendations to:

- educate themselves about the available talent pool, using the resources of the EEO Trust to assist them
- gain understanding of the cost of not accessing this talent
- become skilled in valuing and appropriately managing diversity in the workplace
- develop the skills to detect discriminatory practices in their workplaces and the skills to eliminate them
- seek guidance and feedback from their immigrant employees on what is working well and what is not working well.

Migrant associations

Recommendations to:

- play a more prominent role in organising training programmes, such as improving English language, computer skills and communication skills
- provide more active advice on assisting new migrants to understand and integrate into New Zealand society
- link successful migrants with new ones to provide employment opportunities, or assist with finding a job.

Appendix i: List of qualification areas

Accountancy
Agriculture
Archaeology
Architecture
Arts
Business Administration
Commerce
Computer Science
Draughtsman
Early Childhood Education
Economics
Education
Engineering
Food Science
Home Economics
Law
Library science
Management
Marketing
Mathematics
Medicine
Nursing
Quantity Surveying
Science
Theology
Travel