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Indian migrants resilient in face of work barriers

New Zealanders may have embraced Bollywood films, the Diwali Festival of Lights and Indian cuisine, but highly qualified migrants from India struggle to get work here, a new report says.

Recent migrants from India represent some of the most highly qualified of all the migrant groups in New Zealand, but they face discrimination from local employers resulting in less than half using their qualifications, according to a study, titled *Namasté New Zealand: Indian Employers and Employees in Auckland*, by Massey and Waikato Universities.

It is the latest in a series of studies on the five main migrant groups, by the Integration of Immigrants Programme. It explores the experiences of employees and employers in finding work and setting up businesses, as well as their reflections on relationships, leisure activities and social lives in their adopted country.

Lead author Massey University sociologist Professor Paul Spoonley says it is “disappointing” to see highly educated, fluent English speaking Indian migrants “struggling to gain employment or experiencing downward mobility in terms of employment and income.”

Indian migrants are now one of the largest migrant groups, second only to the British, with 104,600 people of Indian ethnicity living in New Zealand according to the latest 2006 census.

Researchers carried out in-depth interviews with 20 India-born employees and seven employers who had arrived in Auckland since 2000. The report found that, like their British and South African counterparts, Indian migrants “arrive in New Zealand as well-educated and highly skilled newcomers.” But unlike these other groups, “their employment outcomes are not as rosy.”

Just over 60 per cent of all participants – a mix of employers and employees – have bachelor’s degrees or higher qualifications, significantly greater than the 16 per cent of Auckland’s New Zealand-born population and higher than the 34 per cent and 22 per cent of recent British and Korean migrants respectively. But only 45 per cent of participants reported their current jobs made good use of their qualifications.

Many experienced considerable downward occupational mobility due to being overqualified, problems with credential recognition, no suitable job opportunities and a lack of business networks.



Three quarters of employees had experienced workplace discrimination, while a quarter of employers and 35 per cent of employees felt there was some discrimination against Indians in the media and 40 per cent of employees said they had been on the receiving end of bigotry on the streets.

“When I started in the real estate business someone who I knew wanted to sell a house. The Kiwi woman wrinkled her nose at me and said, ‘I wouldn’t want to list it with you.’ The participant attributed this comment to her ethnicity and found it “very insulting”.

But a desire to live in a country free from corruption with a less stressful lifestyle and to see their children grow up in a clean, green environment were factors that outweighed difficulties they faced in adapting to their new country, the report states.

Stories of those interviewed reflect “the widespread presence of discrimination and point towards a general unwillingness to employ immigrants who do not as readily blend into New Zealand’s dominant Pākehā/European culture,” the report says. However, “what is admirable is our participants’ persistence and resilience despite these barriers.”

Studies on Chinese and Korean migrants have been published in the past year, and two more – on the experiences of South African and British migrants – are about to be released.

Click [here](#) to read full report

http://newsettlers.massey.ac.nz/publications_pdfs/Namaste%20New%20Zealand.pdf?PHPSESSID=19539e246dab126eeb9c6ee05cfe1a56

Caption: Professor Paul Spoonley, and a performer at the popular Diwali Festival of Lights in Auckland (NZ2011 photo).

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