

What makes skilled migrants choose New Zealand?



RESEARCH

‘International migration decision-making and destination selection among skilled migrants’

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Background

There are many factors that influence a person’s decision to migrate to a new country. In a country like New Zealand, which has many skilled migrants, it is important to better understand what drives people to choose New Zealand over other countries with similar economic opportunities.

This research is focused on skilled migrants who have decided to leave first world countries to live and work in New Zealand. This type of migration is much rarer than people leaving less developed countries for developed ones.

The Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research, part of Victoria University of Wellington, conducted interviews with 26 recently arrived migrants to New Zealand from the UK, Ireland, India, and South Africa.

Main research findings

When reflecting on what drove these migrants to choose New Zealand as their destination, several key factors arose including decisions influenced by personal and social contexts.

The desire for adventure and novelty were often personal drivers for wanting to migrate.

Family was a major influence on people. Support received from extended family influenced decisions about whether to migrate to New Zealand. This was particularly the case for the Indian migrants who come from a more collectivistic culture.

Because migrants were coming from developed countries, more often than not they were migrating for reasons related to quality of life rather than improved career development opportunities. A better work/life balance and lifestyle was very attractive.

The perception that New Zealanders were welcoming to migrants also helped make choosing New Zealand appealing. Furthermore, logistics like the availability of visas and the clarity of the Immigration New Zealand website also helped migrants choose New Zealand.

Relevance of findings to New Zealand

This study showed how certain aspects of New Zealand are very appealing to skilled migrants who have choices in the countries where they decide to resettle. Firstly, the pace of life and work/life balance was very appealing. The environment, scenery, and access to nature was also frequently mentioned. Finally, the ease of the administrative process and the perception of being welcomed all contributed to migrants choosing New Zealand.

This indicates that the decision-making process of migrants can be influenced. Marketing strategies and policy can influence this process by tapping into these different factors.

Furthermore, practitioners and social service professionals working with migrant families can help facilitate the retention of migrant families by having a deeper understanding of what drives migration and the lengthy decision-making process that it entails for many families.