

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Zealanders look increasingly to Asia - report

New Zealanders are continuing to become increasingly aware that Asia is a region that is becoming more significant to this country than any other region including Europe and the United States, says a new Asia New Zealand Foundation survey.

The 2008 Perceptions of Asia report shows that three quarters (75 percent) of New Zealanders see the Asia region as 'important' to New Zealand's future, up from 71 percent in 2007. The Asia region is rated as 'more important' than Europe (67 percent rated this region as 'important') and North America (55 percent rated this region as 'important').

Only the South Pacific region (including Australia) is rated as 'more important' to New Zealand's future than Asia (86 percent of New Zealanders rate the South Pacific region as 'important' to New Zealand's future).

Respondents were also asked to think about New Zealand in the next 10 to 20 years, and to indicate how much of a positive or negative impact various factors will have on New Zealand. Overall New Zealanders:

- see Asia as an important export market (91 percent of New Zealanders see a positive future impact),
- think that Asia's economic growth will have a positive impact on New Zealand (80 percent of New Zealanders see a positive impact),
- see the benefits of free trade agreements between New Zealand and Asian countries (73 percent of New Zealanders see a positive impact),
- see future benefits from Asian tourism to New Zealand, with 89 percent indicating that Asian tourism will have a positive impact, and
- see benefits of tourism to Asia with 78 percent indicating this will have a positive impact on New Zealand's future.

The Asia New Zealand Foundation report also shows that more New Zealanders have an increasing amount of personal involvement with Asian people in 2008 than they did in 2007 (58 percent compared to 48 percent).



Other trends show that a large proportion of New Zealanders agree that Asian immigrants bring valuable cultural diversity to New Zealand (82 percent in 2008; up from 76 percent in 2007) and 6 in 10 New Zealanders agree that Asian employees improve workplace productivity – an increase of 10 percent since 2007.

The foundation's research director, Dr Andrew Butcher, says the results are encouraging because it was increasingly evident that New Zealanders are appreciative of the positive aspects that migrants from Asian countries add to this country. "This survey clearly shows that more and more New Zealanders are interacting with their Asian neighbours, colleagues and classmates."

"While New Zealanders appreciate and value the many positive aspects of New Zealand's diverse populations, each year more New Zealanders are seeing Asia as important to New Zealand's future. And Asia is no more important to New Zealand than in these difficult economic times, where even though many Asian economies are suffering, they are not bearing the brunt of the recession as much as many Western countries," Dr Butcher said.

He said it was also interesting but not surprising that when New Zealanders thought about Asia, they initially thought about China. "Last year was a significant year for New Zealand-China relations and it is clear that the Free Trade Agreement and the Olympics played a very positive role in deepening New Zealanders' understanding of China and Chinese people in New Zealand."

Dr Butcher said extensive media coverage of other issues such as the Sichuan earthquake, the Olympic torch relay and food safety problems including the San Lu melamine issue meant that China was rarely out of the news.

"And China is just one part of the picture of how the region is shaping the rest of the world geopolitically and economically and it is heartening that New Zealanders are becoming increasingly aware of the shift in wealth and power to the Asian region. This awareness is important if New Zealand is going to be able to position itself to benefit from this change."

The Perceptions of Asia report was prepared by Colmar Brunton from surveys carried out nationwide in September and October 2008. For a copy of the report, go to [://www.asianz.org.nz/our-work/knowledge-research/research-reports/social-research/perceptions-study](http://www.asianz.org.nz/our-work/knowledge-research/research-reports/social-research/perceptions-study)

For further information, contact:

Dr Andrew Butcher
04 470 8705
021 0270 8462
@asianz.org.nz

