



Former Refugees, Recent Migrants and Ethnic Communities Employment Action Plan



Ministry for
**Ethnic
Communities**
Te Tari Mātāwaka



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

Minister's Foreword



I am excited to launch the Employment Action Plan for Former Refugees, Recent Migrants and Ethnic Communities (the Action Plan) which aims to improve employment outcomes for our ethnic communities.

Aotearoa New Zealand is a nation of over 213 ethnicities, who collectively speak over 160 languages and belong to a variety of faith communities. The benefits of diversity are inarguable. This Government values diversity and continues to take steps to be more inclusive so that Aotearoa New Zealand reflects the diversity of the people it serves.

Despite our growing diversity, former refugees, recent migrants and members from ethnic communities have voiced over many years the challenges they face when it comes to finding meaningful employment, progressing in their careers and feeling that they cannot bring their full identities to work. These issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Action Plan supports the Government's broader Employment Strategy, our post-COVID-19 economic recovery and resilience strategy, our diversity and inclusion in the Public Service objectives, the New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy and the New Zealand Migrant Settlement and Integration Strategy.

The Action Plan is a tangible step by this Government to lift employment outcomes for former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic communities, and to support a thriving and resilient economy as we navigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 22 initiatives in the Action Plan bring together current and planned programmes of work to help community members to develop their skills, get into work, and have fulfilling careers.

I would like to thank everyone who made valuable contributions during the public consultation on the draft Action Plan and on the proposed actions. I hope you see that your views, suggestions and concerns are reflected in this finalised Plan.

This Action Plan is just the first steps towards addressing the barriers to employment that many face. I look forward to the successful implementation of the Action Plan as a key step towards the realisation of the vision to improve employment outcomes for our ethnic communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Priyanca', with a horizontal line underneath and two dots below the line.

Ngā mihi nui,

Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan

Minister for Diversity, Inclusion and Ethnic Communities
Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment

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1.

Introduction



Investing in the Skills, Knowledge and Experience of Former Refugees, Recent Migrants, and Ethnic Communities is a Government Priority

Former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities help create jobs, raise productivity and wages, lift capital returns, stimulate international trade and investment, and boost innovation, enterprise, and growth.¹ They bring skills, knowledge, innovation, and networks to their host nations, a core engine for economic growth.² These cohorts also play a fundamental role in fostering international trade and investment. Since former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities have knowledge of the business environment in both sending and receiving countries, they can act as mediators between business people in both places, lowering transaction costs.³

In addition to financial inflows, former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic communities can play a significant role in transferring technologies and knowledge across borders. This two-way transfer contributes to more competitive and diversified economies in both places. They contribute to the local economy not only in filling up labour shortages, but as business owners and entrepreneurs.⁴

However, the potential of harnessing these skills, knowledge, and experience is not always optimised. Groups within these population groups continue to face systemic barriers to access and success in the labour market. This presents a huge opportunity cost for New Zealand.

The Former Refugees, Recent Migrants and Ethnic Communities Employment Action Plan (the Action Plan) specifically sets out actions to improve labour market outcomes for these cohorts. The Action Plan is one of seven population-focused plans that sit under the Government's Employment Strategy.

The Action Plan brings together current and planned programmes of work across government to support former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities. It outlines several actions that have been informed by extensive consultation with these communities, and it will include a framework to monitor all the actions.

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- 1 Host International, Refugee Work Rights Report, 2019.
 - 2 Bahar, D. & Dooley, M. No Refugees and Migrants Left Behind, 2019. See also Host international, Refugee Work Rights Report, 2019.
 - 3 Bahar, D. & Dooley, M. No Refugees and Migrants Left Behind, 2019.
 - 4 Bahar, D. & Dooley, M. No Refugees and Migrants Left Behind, 2019.

The Government's Employment Strategy

In August 2019, the Government launched its Employment Strategy. The Employment Strategy will:

- build a skilled workforce, by ensuring the education, immigration, and welfare systems meet business needs and engage in lifelong learning;
- support industries and regions to thrive, so that everyone gets a fair share of our prosperity;
- support workplaces to modernise, to create a landscape that supports productive and sustainable workplaces as we face a changing world of work; and
- respond to the changing nature of work in an equitable way, by partnering with businesses and workers to ensure that our labour market is inclusive and ensure that anyone who wants to participate in the labour market can access decent work.

The Strategy is supported by seven population-specific employment action plans. These action plans seek to ensure that those who consistently experience poor labour market outcomes have the support to develop their skills, achieve their potential and experience fulfilling careers. The other six action plans will also have a positive impact on former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities as many include actions that specifically support ethnic women, youth, and older workers. These action plans have been collaboratively developed and will be aligned with the Former Refugees, Recent Migrants and Ethnic Communities Employment Action Plan.

Former Refugees, Recent Migrants and Ethnic Communities and their contributions to Aotearoa New Zealand

Most New Zealanders, including employers, feel former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic communities, make a positive impact on New Zealand's economy and culture and want to prioritise immigrants who can fill job shortages and value an integration approach.⁵ In a recent survey, three quarters of New Zealanders indicated it's a good thing for any society to be made up of people from different races, religions and cultures, and two thirds said migrants make New Zealand more productive and innovative.⁶

Former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic communities make a significant contribution to New Zealand's economic outcomes, and there are a number of independent studies that highlight the contribution of these communities. For instance, a recent study by the Auckland Business Chamber revealed that 88% of respondent employers reported a level

5 New Zealand Red Cross, Migration Scoping Report: Identifying Current and Emerging Issues in Key Migrant Population Groups in New Zealand, 2021.

6 Ministry for Business Innovation and Employment, Community Perceptions of Migrants and Immigration, 2020.

of satisfaction with their migrant workforce as 'very good' or 'excellent,' and described them as 'keen to work, respectful, keen to learn, highly skilled and appreciative of their employment.'⁷

We also know the integration of former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic communities also contributes to other benefits to Aotearoa New Zealand. Global connectedness is vital for prosperity, and welcoming migrants can help New Zealand improve those connections.⁸ Equitable labour market outcome is a significant indicator of inclusion and legitimacy and helps create mutual understanding across cultures.⁹

Who the Action Plan is for

This Action Plan was developed for former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities, and supports work to address temporary migrant exploitation.

Despite the significant contribution of former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities to the New Zealand economy, we know they continue to face multiple



7 Auckland Business Chamber, New Kiwis Employers' Survey, 2021.

8 The New Zealand Initiative, The new New Zealanders: why migrants make good Kiwis, 2017.

9 Allen & Clarke, Refugee background women, their connections, sense of belonging, acceptance and inclusion in the Greater Wellington region, 2021.

barriers and challenges in the labour market. For instance, although ethnic communities are generally more likely to have formal qualifications when compared to the general New Zealand population, they continue to experience poor labour market outcomes, with considerable differences in labour force participation and income. Most recent migrants and former refugees often feel over-qualified and report difficulties in getting initial entry into the labour market.¹⁰ Those in employment report of discrimination in both internal and external recruitment processes which impact their career progression, while others face pay disparities, where they are paid significantly less compared to their counterparts from other ethnicities, despite being in the same position or having the skills, knowledge and experience to perform the role.¹¹

These barriers and challenges reduce opportunities and career progression for former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic communities, and, in the long term, affect the inclusive society we aspire to achieve as a country.

The Government also consulted on proposals to take serious action on temporary migrant worker exploitation. Migrant exploitation leads to negative outcomes for migrants, businesses, and our international reputation, and the proposals are aimed at preventing the occurrence of conditions that enable exploitation by protecting migrant workers and enabling them to leave exploitative employment, as well as ensuring better enforcement of immigration and employment law to deter and detect non-compliance.

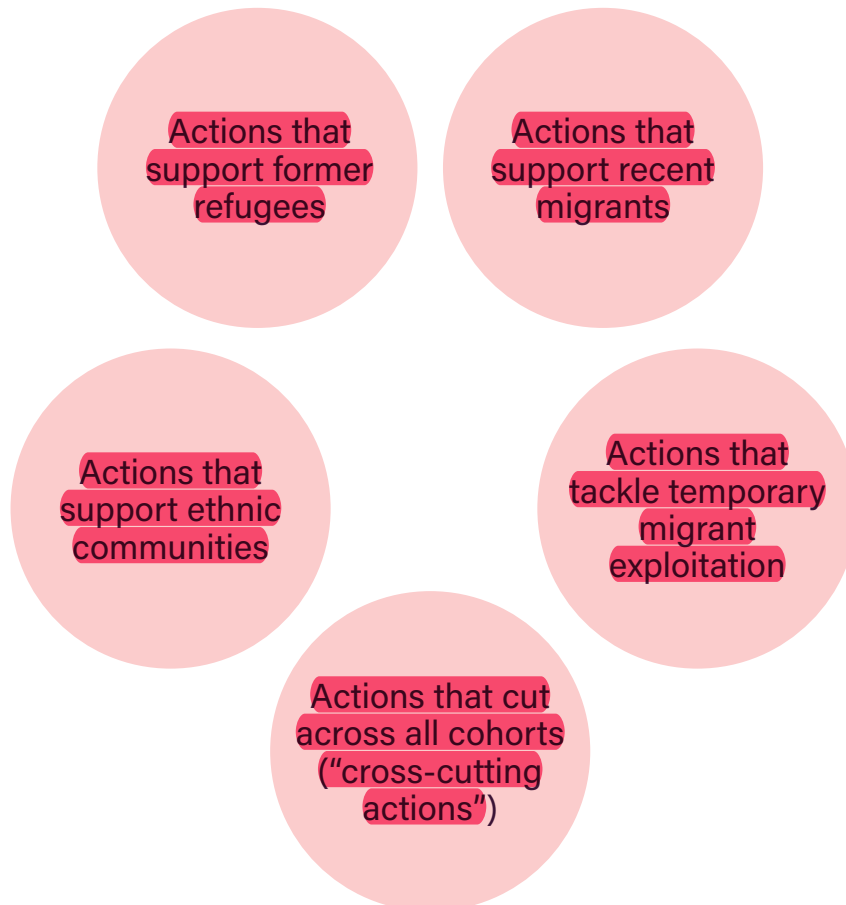
There is an opportunity for this Action Plan to reduce the barriers and challenges faced by former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities and lay the foundations for an inclusive society.

10 Ward, C. et alia, Meeting the needs and challenges of migrants and former refugees in the Nelson and Tasman regions, 2018

11 Malatest International, Drivers of migrant New Zealanders' experiences of racism, 2021.

How the Action Plan has been drafted

This Action Plan is made up of five sections, which group actions based on specific cohort(s). These sections are:



There are overlaps across the different cohorts, but for the purposes of the Action Plan, these distinct sections are used to group the various actions proposed.

The Action Plan recognises that policy work targeting these various cohorts is at different stages, with consultation and stakeholder engagement completed for refugees and recent migrants. Work on the migrant exploitation work programme is underway, and an emerging work programme for ethnic communities is being consulted on in this Employment Action Plan.

There are some actions that focus directly on placing people into employment (for example, the Pathways to Employment Programme, Work Connect, and the Ethnic Communities Graduate Programme), and most of the other actions focus on improving the employment system to make it easier for former refugees, ethnic communities and recent migrants to find meaningful employment. These system improvements will guarantee that structural, long-term changes are made to ensure that we can unlock the full potential of the labour market. The Government is committed to improving employment outcomes, as both, an employer in the public service, and as an implementor of the policies in this Action Plan.

The successful implementation of the actions requires the support and contribution of the private sector. Private-sector employers play an important part in promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace and providing employment opportunities for former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities. There is a specific action in this Plan that seeks to begin working with employers on diversity and inclusion, and the Action Plan is guided by objectives that signal its intention to partner and work with the private sector.

The Action Plan is guided by seven key objectives

This Action Plan is guided by seven key objectives that shape its direction and desired outcomes. The objectives focus on strengths and opportunities, and each action will support one or more objectives.

These objectives are long-term – the actions in this Action Plan will make a start towards achieving these initiatives, and the Action Plan will develop and change over time to ensure it continues to progress towards these objectives.

The seven objectives are:

Objective 1: Former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic communities thrive at every stage of their employment journey.

Objective 2: The skills and experiences of former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic communities are recognised, respected, and valued.

Objective 3: The benefits of diversity and inclusion are clear and well understood. Employers recognise and champion the benefits of a diverse workforce and take steps to be more inclusive.

Objective 4: Former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic communities have genuine and meaningful choices around their employment and can work in a way that suits them and their employer.

Objective 5: Government continuously seeks to eliminate labour market exploitation and improve employment outcomes for former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities through collaborative approaches to labour market policy and governance, including engaging with employers, and regulatory and sector bodies.

Objective 6: Interactions with government services are positive experiences and information on employment support is tailored to meet the needs of former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities. It is easy to understand what services are available and how to access them.

Objective 7: Government will communicate and work together with employers, regulatory and sector bodies to improve employment outcomes for former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities and to understand the long-term skill needs of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Summary of Actions

Cohort - Former Refugees

Action #	Action	Lead	Timeframes ¹²
Action 1	Information to support living and working in New Zealand	Multi-agency approach	Already underway ¹³
Action 2	English Language Provisions	TEC	Already underway
Action 3	Refugee Driver Training Programme	MBIE	Already underway
Action 4	Pathways to Employment	MSD	Already underway
Action 5	Refugee Pathways and Careers Initiative	MoE	Already underway
Action 6	Improving Refugee Employment Outcomes Project	MBIE	Already underway
Action 7	Research on the barriers faced by younger former refugee youth connecting to further education and training, focused on youth with less than 5 years in the New Zealand education system before age 18.	Multi-agency approach	Already underway

Cohort - Recent Migrants

Action #	Action	Lead	Timeframes ¹⁴
Action 8	Regional Skills matching and job assistance services	MBIE	Already underway
Action 9	Work Connect Programme	TEC	Already underway
Action 10	Welcoming Communities	MBIE	Already underway

¹² Q denotes Quarter. Please also note that for actions which are new, these are the indicative timeframes and may change.

¹³ Some actions are already underway when the first draft Action Plan was developed.

¹⁴ Q denotes Quarter. Please also note that for actions which are new, these are the indicative timeframes and may change.

Cohort – Ethnic Communities

Action #	Action	Lead	Timeframes ¹⁵
Action 11	Explore the possibility of working with volunteering organisations to promote volunteering and adequately-paid work experience to improve employment readiness as well as provide recognition for volunteers	MEC, MBIE, DIA, MSD	Scoping – Q1 2022 Design – Q3 2022 Implement – Q1 2023
Action 12	Provider support to graduates from ethnic communities to move into their first work opportunity within the public service	MEC	Already underway
Action 13	Research on the barriers faced by younger former refugee youth connecting to further education and training focused on youth with less than 5 years in the New Zealand education system before age 18. ¹⁶	Multi-agency approach	Scoping – Q4 2021 to Q2 2022
Action 14	Work with relevant government agencies to identify actions to reduce both the ethnic pay gap and pay gap for ethnic women, and support career progression	Multi-agency approach	Scoping – Q1 2022 Design – Q3 2022 Implement – Q1 2023
Action 15	Development of insights and research to support understanding of employment challenges for ethnic communities and to support further investment in employment initiatives	MEC	Scoping – Q1 2022 Design – Q2 2022 Implement – Q4 2022
Action 16	The Ministry for Ethnic Communities will continue to investigate and implement initiatives to support ethnic communities with employment-readiness and strengthen their employment networks	MEC	Already underway

¹⁵ Q denotes Quarter. Please also note that for actions which are new, these are the indicative timeframes and may change.

¹⁶ This is similar to Action 7 - it has been repeated in both sections to make it clear that this research will also support other youth from ethnic communities who have been in the New Zealand education system for less than 5 years.



Cohort - Temporary Migrant Exploitation

Action #	Action	Lead	Timeframes ¹⁷
Action 17	Progressing work to implement Cabinet's approved legislative, operational and policy changes to address temporary migrant worker exploitation	MBIE	Design - Q4 2021 to Q1 2022 Implement - Q2 2022
Action 18	Implementation of actions in the Plan of Action against forced labour, human trafficking, and slavery	MBIE	Already underway

¹⁷ Q denotes Quarter. Please also note that for actions which are new, these are the indicative timeframes and may change.

Cohort – Cross-Cutting Actions

Action #	Action	Lead	Timeframes ¹⁸
Action 19	Improve employment data collection and reporting for ethnic communities, including intersectional data	Multi-agency approach	Scoping – Q4 2021 to Q1 2022 Design – Q2 2022 Implement – Q1 2023
Action 20	Support ethnic communities to access all-of-government services information about employment services, including building the capability of staff to be responsive to employment needs, and tailoring information and channels for ethnic communities	MSD and MEC	Scoping – Q4 2021 Design – Q1 2022 Implement – Q4 2022
Action 21	Work with the Ministry for Women, and Ministries of Education, Social Development and Business, Innovation and Employment to understand specific barriers, and to identify and tailor education and employment programmes for women who are disadvantaged in employment	Multi-agency approach	Scoping – Q1 2022 Design – Q3 2022 Implement – Q1 2023
Action 22	Work with MBIE and leads for other action plans to coordinate engagement with employers; demonstrate the benefits of inclusive and diverse recruitment for businesses; and develop tools and resources for discrimination free recruitment practices and addressing unconscious bias. This includes working with industry to increase employment opportunities for people from ethnic communities	Multi-agency approach	Scoping – Q1 2022 Design – Q3 2022 Implement – Q1 2023

¹⁸ Q denotes Quarter. Please also note that for actions which are new, these are the indicative timeframes and may change.

Engagement on the Action Plan

Since the initial development of the draft Action Plan in 2019, the landscape within which it was drafted has changed. This includes the COVID-19 pandemic and the release of recommendations from The Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019 (The RCOI).

After delays due to COVID-19, targeted engagement on the Action Plan was undertaken between 28 September 2021 and 31 October 2021 to seek feedback from communities on whether they think the actions planned will help to make a tangible impact on employment outcomes and support these groups into quality work.

During the consultation period we held 13 focus group sessions with stakeholders. Nine of these sessions were regional hui for stakeholders in Whangārei, Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Palmerston North, Wellington, Blenheim/Nelson, Christchurch and Dunedin/Southland. The remaining four sessions were national hui specifically held for women, youth, NGOs/service providers and former refugees. We also met separately with the Human Rights Commission (HRC) and the Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner, Chambers of Commerce, and the New Zealand Red Cross. Aside these meetings, we also received a range of survey responses and separate email submissions.

What we heard

The following are a summary of the feedback participants provided on the Action Plan:

- **Recognition of overseas qualifications: some participants shared that their** overseas qualifications were not easily recognised in New Zealand, and that employers preferred candidates having some level of New Zealand work experience. Registration and certification bodies can also be a barrier. This was one of the most common issues raised by participants during engagements.
- **Biases with employer recruitment:** Participants highlighted the importance of addressing biases with employers' recruitment process and the promotion of diverse recruitment and inclusive and non-discriminatory workplaces culture that will lead to confidence in employing ethnic communities and provide opportunities for leadership.
- **The role of the private sector:** participants noted that most of the actions in the Plan were government-led and suggested more the consideration of how government can work with the private sector to deliver the actions. They noted that unlocking diversity and inclusion in the private sector is an important key change to realising better employment outcome for our communities.
- **Skills matching and understanding the pipeline of skills in the regions:** a number of participants raised that job matching could be more easily facilitated if there was a way for employers to understand what skills are in their region.
- **Understanding New Zealand's long-term skills needs:** a number of participants noted that New Zealand needs to have a clearer indication of what its post-COVID-19 long-term skills needs are, so that they can attract key talent from overseas, and that this can also be signalled to migrants and partners.

- **COVID-19 and seasonal industries:** participants observed that industries dependent on seasonal workers were unable to find employees. Participants suggested support for former refugees and recent migrants to (re)train to meet skills shortages in regions with seasonal industries, e.g. in horticulture or aquaculture sectors.
- **Immigration settings and process:** there was the perception that the immigration system does not value the skills that migrants bring, mostly due to barriers they faced in gaining meaningful employment. There were suggestions for detailed pre-departure information to help with expectations of the New Zealand labour market and work culture.
- **Continued, but cautious, support for (paid) volunteering:** most participants were supportive of volunteering and other work experience as a stepping stone to employment but were firm that this had to be managed tightly to ensure that people were not being exploited for free labour.
- **More actions for recent migrants and ethnic youth:** participants highlighted that more actions were needed with a focus on recent migrants and youth.
- **Positive reframing of the opportunity:** some participants requested that the Action Plan acknowledge the successes and contributions of former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities in New Zealand and in employment. They also noted the importance of greater education on the benefits of diversity and inclusion.
- **Investments and improved communication of Government Services:** Participants emphasised the need for continuous investment to fund and grow awareness of employment support services among ethnic communities.
- **Implementation of the Action Plan:** while participants were generally positive about the Action Plan, some had questions on the delivery, implementation and monitoring of the actions.



- **From surviving to thriving:** One key change that participants want to see was the transitioning of former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities from surviving to **thriving** in employment. To achieve this, actions needed to focus on supporting people throughout their employment journey and assisting them with pathways to career progress.
- **Actions shaped by communities:** some participants suggested that the actions should be shaped by communities. Participants also suggested partnership between government and community organisations in the implementation of the Action Plan.

How the feedback from the engagement shaped the Action Plan

The feedback received from the consultation has been analysed and key findings and changes incorporated into the Action Plan where possible.

Generally, the Action Plan and proposed actions were well received during the consultation process with many participants indicating that it was encouraging to see that an Action Plan had been specifically developed for former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities.

We have added new actions, amended actions, and reviewed actions where possible. This includes the addition of new sub-actions to reflect feedback during the consultation. For example, we included a new action on *Welcoming Communities* under the recent migrant section and included the assessment of overseas qualifications and experience as a sub section under Action 1: Information to support living and working in New Zealand.

We have also strengthened the narrative of the Action Plan to include the contributions of former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities to Aotearoa New Zealand. Seven objectives have been added to make it clear that the Action Plan also aims to partner with employers, the private sector, other agencies and regulatory and sector bodies to improve employment outcomes.

Some new actions suggested through consultation, including mental health support for former refugees and more actions for recent migrants, were not incorporated at this stage due to upcoming and ongoing policy work and reviews. Officials have taken note of these and will consider them during the next phase of the Action Plan.

We did not incorporate suggested actions, where similar outcomes are contained in the other six Employment Action Plans, to avoid duplication of actions and ensure greater coordination across the other Action Plans. Some of these proposals were the inclusion of actions for population groups like ethnic youth, women, and older workers. Officials will work with relevant agencies and, where possible, partner to implement those actions to ensure it delivers better outcomes for these groups.

The proposed Actions are just the beginning

The Action Plan is currently in its first phase. As the first phase progresses, we will continue to build the evidence base to consider the development of new actions for the next phase of the Action Plan. We intend to begin this work around July 2023.

In the Summary of Actions above, all actions are intended to be implemented by **July 2023** – therefore, the second phase will focus on changes to existing actions or which new actions could be added.

Monitoring and evaluation of the Action Plan

The Action Plan as a whole will be monitored by the Ministry for Ethnic Communities. The progress of the Action Plan will be reported to the Employment Education and Training Ministers. Each agency will be responsible for the delivery, implementation, and monitoring of its assigned actions, as signalled in the Summary of Actions above.

The Action Plan is a living document that will respond to ongoing change. Regular monitoring of the individual actions and the whole plan will ensure that we are delivering on the expected outcomes outlined in this plan, as well as identifying opportunities for the government to do more to improve outcomes. Monitoring will also ensure that we identify changes in the labour market that we need to respond to and prevent the development of any new potential barriers.

Agencies across government will also continue to work together to make sure the Action Plan takes a coordinated, cross-system approach that leverages off all available and relevant levers to make sure that the Action Plan is targeting clear gaps, avoiding duplication of services, and ensuring our former refugee, migrant and ethnic communities are empowered.

2.

Former Refugees



Who are Former Refugees

Refugee Quota Programme

Through New Zealand's Refugee Quota Programme¹⁹, quota refugees are resettled in the country. In September 2018, the Government agreed to increase the Refugee Quota to 1,500 annually from July 2020, however, this programme has been disrupted by COVID-19, with fewer refugees entering New Zealand due to border closures. In May 2021 the Government announced that 100 managed isolation and quarantine (MIQ) places would be reserved for 100 refugees every six weeks between July 2021 and March 2022. However, this limitation means that the quota of 1500 refugees per year will not be met in 2021/2022.

The New Zealand Government makes decisions every three years on New Zealand's Refugee Quota Programme including the international regions from which refugees will be resettled. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees refers refugees with priority protection needs to New Zealand to consider for resettlement under the Refugee Quota.

"Convention Refugees"

New Zealand is a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. As a signatory to these international Conventions and Covenants, New Zealand has an obligation to determine refugee and protected person status claims made by people in New Zealand. People who are determined to be a refugee or protected person are sometimes known as "Convention refugees". Around 150-250 people are determined to be Convention refugees each year.

What we know about the barriers and opportunities for former refugees

For many former refugees, their initial focus in settling in New Zealand is on rebuilding their new lives – moving into new communities and getting to know their local neighbourhood, learning English, setting up homes, enrolling with GPs, and enrolling and supporting their children into early childhood centres and education, and accessing medical and mental health treatment and supports.

¹⁹ Immigration New Zealand, "Our Strategies and Projects." See: <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategies-and-projects/> (access 23 February 2022)

Employment is critical for successful settlement and part of a former refugees' settlement journey. Employment contributes to self-sufficiency and independence and provides networks and opportunities for greater participation and contribution to the community. Employment also supports all other integration and settlement outcomes.

Gaining sustainable and meaningful employment is part of the former refugee settlement journey. Former refugees may face a number of challenges and barriers in gaining employment in New Zealand.

These challenges and barriers may include, at the outset, potential bias within the employment environment, understanding and navigating New Zealand's employment culture, context, and systems (including the process for recognition of skills and prior work experiences and accessing ongoing skills development and vocational training) and the requirement for English language skills to access employment. Some former refugees also have barriers in accessing employment due to trauma they have experienced.

The 2018 Dashboard shows that the proportion of former refugees in paid employment increased over time, with some variability from cohort to cohort; on average, approximately 26 percent are in paid employment after two years, 35 percent after three years, and 43 percent after five years.

Former refugees aged 51 to 64 are also considerably less likely to be employed than younger people. Only 15 percent were employed at three years after arrival compared with about a third of younger groups. A lack of sufficient English language skills is particularly significant for this population.

In addition, where former refugees are ready to connect to employment they continue to face barriers as employers may not recognise their prior work experience and skills while also requiring New Zealand work experience. There are also disparities in access to specific resettlement services between convention and quota refugees. Convention refugees do not have access to the same wrap-around support quota refugees receive and some may be in greater need of employment support. An INZ pilot of a Navigator role designed to support convention refugees was recently evaluated, and an update on this can be provided shortly.

The New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy (the NZRRS)²⁰ was agreed to by the New Zealand Government in 2012. It is a whole-of-government approach to delivering improved refugee settlement outcomes so that refugees achieve self-sufficiency, social integration, and independence.

The overarching outcome for the NZRRS is:

Refugees are participating fully and integrated socially and economically as soon as possible so that they are living independently, undertaking the same responsibilities and exercising the same rights as other New Zealanders and have a strong sense of belonging to their own community and to New Zealand.

This outcome is supported by the following five integration outcomes:

- *Self-sufficiency*: all working-age refugees are in paid work or are supported by a family member in paid work.
- *Participation*: refugees actively participate in New Zealand life and have a strong sense of belonging to New Zealand.
- *Health and wellbeing*: refugees and their families enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives.
- *Education*: refugees' English language skills enable them to participate in education and achieve qualifications and support them to participate in daily life.
- *Housing*: refugees live independently of government housing assistance in homes that are safe, secure, healthy and affordable.

Progress in improving the integration outcomes is measured annually against seven success indicators and one target (Education) approved by the Government. Baseline data has been established as a basis for assessing subsequent progress. A review and update of the NZRRS outcomes and indicators that monitor them have begun.

²⁰ Immigration New Zealand, "New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy: Success Indicators and Measures." See: <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/documents/refugees/nzrrs-dashboard.pdf> (accessed 23 February 2022)

Which groups we are working with

The NZRRS provides the framework for work programmes and approaches to be developed across agencies, settlement service providers and former refugee communities.

Under the NZRSS, the initial priority is to support working age former refugees into sustained and meaningful employment through the development of an integrated approach utilising and building on services and connections across government agencies. This approach covers:

- strategic engagement with employers to reduce barriers
- assessment and recognition of former refugees' skills and prior experience in relation to the New Zealand labour market
- continued skills development and learning when in employment, including numeracy, literacy, and skills development.

The second phase will focus on younger former refugees who have been in New Zealand's education system for less than 5 years before the age of 18 years. The focus for this group will be on continued education and training to build their skills for a future career.



Actions for former refugees

Action	Barriers addressed	Outcomes	Responsibility
<p>1. Information to support living and working in New Zealand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Off-shore orientation ▪ Reception programme at the Te Āhuru Mōwai o Aotearoa ▪ Orientation programme in the settlement locations ▪ Assessment of overseas qualifications and experience 	<p>Limited knowledge of the New Zealand labour market.</p> <p>Mental health concerns stemming from trauma, resettlement difficulties, isolation. Limited knowledge or awareness of available mental health services and supports.</p>	<p>Supports quota refugees to live and work in New Zealand.</p> <p>This action aligns with objectives 6 and 7 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>Multi agency approach, including: Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry for Social Development (MSD), Ministry of Health, NZ Police, Ministry for Housing and Urban Development, Kāinga Ora, NZQA, Ministry for Ethnic Communities (MEC)</p>
<p>2. English language provisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding Tertiary Education Providers to deliver English language courses within adult community education, literacy, and numeracy support and towards formal ESOL qualifications (Levels 1 &2) ▪ Refugee English Fund – for former refugees studying towards ESOL qualifications at levels 3 to 5. 	<p>Limited language skills for refugees.</p>	<p>Ongoing support for former refugees to develop English language skills to enable them to participate in education and daily life, and access employment opportunities.</p> <p>This action aligns with objectives 1 and 6 of the Action Plan.</p>	<p>Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)</p>

Action	Barriers addressed	Outcomes	Responsibility
3. Refugee Driver Training Programme – provides driving lessons and driver training to enable former refugees to obtain their Restricted Licence	Limited mobility for refugees.	Former refugees obtain their Restricted licence. This action aligns with objective 6 of the Action Plan.	MBIE
4. Pathways to Employment – prepares refugees for employment and connects them to job opportunities	Limited knowledge of the service provided to ethnic communities. Limited knowledge of the benefits to ethnic communities, and support to secure employment.	To support former refugee, plan their employment, education, training, and career goals. This action aligns with objectives 3 and 6 of the action plan.	MSD
5. Refugee Pathways and Careers Initiative – supports Year 10-13 students from refugee Backgrounds to prepare for further education/ Employment	Limited knowledge of the service provided to ethnic communities. Limited knowledge of the benefits to ethnic communities, and support to secure employment.	To support former refugees, plan their employment, education, training, and career goals. This action aligns with objectives 1, 4 and 6 of the Action Plan.	MoE

Action	Barriers addressed	Outcomes	Responsibility
<p>6. The Refugee Employment Project</p> <p>Pre-employment</p> <p>Development of integrated services to support skills assessment in the context of the New Zealand labour market</p> <p>Connecting to Employment</p> <p>Ongoing careers advice, English language learning in the workplace; preemployment training; mentoring programmes; matching skills to employment opportunities</p> <p>In employment</p> <p>Services to support continued training and development once in employment, including numeracy and literacy and continued learning of English language in work training</p> <p>Strategic engagement with employers</p> <p>To reduce barriers to employment, support former refugees into meaningful and sustained employment and support ongoing training and skills development</p>	<p>Limited access to career pathway planning after initial settlement period support ceases</p> <p>Limited English and literacy skills</p> <p>Limited knowledge of New Zealand education and training systems</p> <p>Ease key barriers to obtaining employment, including through working strategically with employers.</p> <p>Limited understanding of refugee employee population and employment needs amongst employers.</p>	<p>To support former refugees to prepare for and connect to sustainable meaningful employment that is relevant to their skills and aspirations.</p> <p>This action aligns with objectives 1, 3 and 6 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>MBIE lead with MSD, TEC, MoE, NZ Qualifications Authority and MEC support</p>

Action	Barriers addressed	Outcomes	Responsibility
<p>7. Refugee Forum 2019 Pledge work - to support former refugee youth who have less than 5 years in the New Zealand education system before the age of 18 years</p> <p>Research on the barriers faced for younger Refugee Youth in connecting to further education and training</p>	<p>Limited use of secondary school networks and development opportunities.</p> <p>Limited knowledge of training options available</p>	<p>Support former refugee youth into further education and/or training to build their skills for future career pathway.</p> <p>This action aligns with objectives 1, 5, 6 and 7 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>Multi agency approach .</p>

Further work items may be developed after the scheduled refresh of the NZRRSS is completed.

Who we are working with

MBIE works in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development and with other agencies to deliver support to former refugees.

Key stakeholders include former refugee communities, non-governmental organisations, settlement service providers, and funding government agencies such as the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, and the Ministry for Ethnic Communities.

3.

Recent migrants



Who are recent migrants

Recent migrants are those who have been living in New Zealand for five years or less.

The New Zealand Migrant Settlement and Integration Strategy (the NZMSIS) is the Government's cross-agency approach to settle and integrate recent migrants in New Zealand. Work to support the NZMSIS focuses on recent migrants living in New Zealand on a permanent or long-term basis.

As of 31 May 2021, there were 275,800 recent migrants in New Zealand. Recent migrants on Resident visas constitute 32 percent of this number. Seventy-five percent of recent migrants on Resident visas are from the working-age population (i.e. aged 15 years or over). The top five nationalities of recent migrants are: India, the Philippines, South Africa, China, and the United Kingdom.

Immigration policy settings drive migrant employment. The employment rate of recent migrants shows an upward trend over time and, in general, is similar to the New Zealand-born population. In the year ended June 2018, 69 percent of recent migrants were in employment, which is similar to the New Zealand-born population (68 percent). The estimated number of recent migrants in employment is 163,000 (out of 237,000 in the working-age recent migrant population).

Recent migrants that may experience challenges in accessing employment are Pacific migrants (this group is included in the Pacific Peoples action plan) and secondary applicants (these are the partner and/or dependent children included in a principal applicant's residence application).

Secondary applicants are more likely to be female, which contributes to their lower employment rate and higher unemployment rate than male recent migrants.

What we know about barriers for recent migrants

In the 2019 Migrant Survey, 85 per cent of recent migrants were working for a wage or salary and 7 per cent of recent migrants were unemployed.²¹A majority of recent migrants said their current role in their main job matched their skills and qualification.²²The key reasons recent migrants believed their role did not match their skills and qualification were because they could not get a job in the area of their skills / qualifications (35 per cent) or because they were overqualified for their current role (28 per cent).

Compared to the overall population of recent migrants, those who are less likely to be working for a wage or salary include those aged over 50 years and visa holders of skilled secondary applicants, family partners, or family parents.

21 MBIE Settling in New Zealand: Migrant Survey Trends from 2015 to 2019.

22 MBIE Settling in New Zealand: Migrant Survey Trends from 2015 to 2019.

In addition, migrants and skilled secondary migrants are more likely to report difficulty finding work including challenges related to the lack of New Zealand work experience.²³

According to the migrant consultations undertaken in 2018, employment was identified as an area where migrants have experienced the most challenges while settling in New Zealand. These challenges include pursuing employment opportunities, understanding and adjusting to the New Zealand workplace. Partners of both resident visa and work visa holders were much more likely to have found employment challenges.²⁴

The key barriers identified by employers for employing migrants include workplace culture and communication, highlighting the importance of ongoing education and support for migrants and employers in this area.²⁵

Recent migrants also experience challenges in the workforce due to exploitation. Recent migrants tend to experience exploitation in the forms of threatening behaviour from employers such as employers holding back or threatening to hold back entitlements like holiday pay or sick leave and employers asking migrants to pay money to get or keep their job.²⁶

What works for recent migrants

The NZMSIS identifies five measurable outcome areas that are key for successful settlement: employment, education and training, English language, inclusion, and health and wellbeing. Each area has a high-level outcome statement that contributes to the Overarching Outcome: *Migrants make NZ their home, participate fully and contribute to all aspects of NZ life.*

While MBIE leads the implementation of the NZMSIS, a number of Government agencies collaborate on the development of an annual cross-government workplan of settlement services and projects that support each of the NZMSIS' five outcome areas. The actions/ services outlined in the 'work underway' section below support the NZMSIS employment outcome and contribute to the high-level outcome statement for Employment: Working-age migrants have work that matches their skills and NZ-ready qualifications.

A review and update of the NZMSIS measurable outcomes are beginning in the second half of 2021.

23 MBIE, *Migrants Survey*, 2016.

24 MBIE, National Migrant Consultations, 2018.

25 Auckland Chamber of Commerce, *New Kiwis Employers' Survey*, April 2018.

26 MBIE Settling in New Zealand: Migrant Survey Trends from 2015 to 2019.

Internationally and nationally, recent migrant settlement is recognised as a two-way process.²⁷

Increasing employers' awareness of the settlement process and the benefits of employing migrants positively influences migrants' employment outcomes and work experiences. Assisting employers to leverage and retain the skills and talents of migrants, once employed, is also important. MBIE undertakes an annual National Survey of Employers.²⁸ The Survey asks questions about the hiring of recent migrant staff and employer attitudes towards the economic benefits that migrants bring. Knowing and understanding the difficulties experienced by employers helps to target two-way settlement services and resources, and ultimately helps them to retain migrant staff.

Actions for recent migrants

The following actions support the NZMSIS Employment outcome.²⁹

Action	Barriers Addressed	Objectives / indicators	Responsibility
8. Regional Skills matching and job assistance services: Six service providers (in seven regions) provide face-to-face and/or online assistance to migrants, along with advice and support for employers registered in the databases.	Limited connections to regional job opportunities. Limited understanding and access to migrant skills and labour pool for regional employers	Job-seeking migrants and secondary applicants are matched with businesses that need their skills. This action aligns with objectives 4, 6 and 7 of the Action Plan	MBIE

27 For example, OECD, *Settling In 2018: Indicators of Immigrant Integration*, 2018 and MBIE, *National Survey of Employers 2017/18*, February 2019.

28 MBIE, *National Survey of Employers 2017/18*, February 2019.

29 It should be noted that there are a number of settlement services that support one NZMSIS outcome but contribute to other outcomes. For example, the Ministry of Education funds a Bilingual Support Workers programme in schools that supports the NZMSIS Education outcome for migrant children; but it can also lead to employment outcomes for the bilingual support workers involved.

Action	Barriers Addressed	Objectives / indicators	Responsibility
<p>9. Work Connect Programme: Provides skilled migrants with career management competencies to understand and promote their unique set of skills, experience, and qualifications in a New Zealand context.</p>	<p>Limited awareness of New Zealand employment context or opportunities. Limited access to New Zealand employment networks</p>	<p>Programme participants are equipped to find, secure and remain in employment. This action aligns with objectives 2, 6 and 7 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>TEC</p>
<p>10. Welcoming Communities Program: brings together local government councils and communities to make towns welcoming for everyone (all outcomes, but specifically the Economic Development, Business and Employment outcome).</p>	<p>Communities not as welcoming and inclusive of newcomers as they could be. Lack of awareness about benefits of diversity or economic opportunities that newcomers can offer.</p>	<p>Increased community capability to welcome newcomers and recognise the economic and social benefits of diversity. Higher levels of social inclusion. Communities, including businesses, thrive on diversity and are culturally vibrant and invigorated. This action aligns with objectives 1, 2 and 3 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>MBIE</p>

Further planned actions

Further work will be planned after the scheduled refresh of the overall NZMSIS strategy in the second half of 2021. The proposed cross-cutting actions in this Action Plan will also support improving outcomes for recent migrants.

Who we are working with

A NZMSIS Interagency Reference Group collaborates on the provision of advice to Senior Officials and Ministers on settlement-related policy, annual work plans, service purchase, and delivery. Membership of the Group comprises approximately fifteen Government agencies. The agencies that are responsible for current work supporting the NZMSIS Employment outcomes include MBIE, MSD, and TEC. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment leads this work and works with an interagency reference group (outlined above) to deliver support for this population.



4. Ethnic Communities



Who are ethnic communities

According to the 2018 Census, ethnic communities make up 20% of people in New Zealand.

When the Office of Ethnic Communities (OEC) was established, Cabinet agreed that its mandated communities include new migrants, refugees, long-term settlers, and those born in New Zealand who identify their ethnicity as Asian, Continental European, and Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African (MELAA). Temporary migrants are also included under this definition. The Ministry for Ethnic Communities, which supersedes the former Office of Ethnic Communities, has the same mandated communities.

What we know about barriers for ethnic communities

Ethnic Communities are not a homogenous group. They are made up of over 200 different ethnic groups, and a mix of people who have recently arrived in New Zealand including international students and workers, people who have been living here most of their lives, and families who have been living here for several generations. It also includes a proportion of refugees and recent migrants, discussed in the previous two sections above.

The diversity within ethnic communities in New Zealand creates challenges for collecting and monitoring data for this group. The best source of data is the Census, and administrative data on subgroups within the community – however, the collection of both ethnicity data and data on ethnic communities is not comprehensive, which means that it is difficult to measure the outcomes of employment policies on ethnic communities.

Understanding and identifying the challenges, barriers, and opportunities to get into work, is complex because subgroups of ethnic communities have different experiences, which may also relate to their gender, cultural and religious practices, and expectations about employment.

While there are data gaps, there is rich qualitative information from ethnic communities about the barriers and support they require, and a need to respond to the issues raised by these communities. Over time, the common challenges and barriers that have been consistently raised with government by ethnic communities include:

Skills and experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited English language skills o Lack of relevant skills and education ▪ Non-transferable or not easily recognised overseas qualifications and experience ▪ Confidence and employment readiness ▪ Limited knowledge of New Zealand labour market and pathways to employment, and understanding of their rights as employees
Discrimination and cultural differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workplace and community discrimination, stigma, and stereotyping ▪ Employer unconscious bias and fear of the unknown ▪ Employers' views that they need New Zealand qualifications and work experience ▪ Family/ cultural/ religious expectations which impact on employment (e.g. gender separation) ▪ Lack of employer understanding of the benefits of diversity
Financial or social capital barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal and family resources (clothes, transport, etc.) ▪ Limited social, community, and employment networks ▪ Less understanding of New Zealand systems (such as safe and reliable transport) ▪ Lack of culturally appropriate services to support people into work.

Research from the then Office of Ethnic Affairs in 2013 on migrant women entrepreneurship noted that many ethnic women face the prospect of being discriminated against on the basis of factors such as appearance and juggle further challenges, such as the demands of their young and growing families, infants and aging dependants, who are themselves often facing the demands and challenges of settling in a new country.

In June and July 2019, the then Minister for Ethnic Communities hosted a series of dialogues with Muslim communities, including Imams and male leaders, and women and youth. We heard very clearly that Muslims, especially women who wear the hijab or burqa, face additional barriers entering and progressing in the labour market, particularly in the private sector. There was a strong feeling that employers have a limited understanding of Muslim employees' needs. Other ethnic groups, such as the Sikh community report similar experiences in the labour market around their wearing of turbans.



In April and May 2021, the then Office for Ethnic Communities undertook engagement on the priorities for the new Ministry for Ethnic Communities. Reducing the barriers to employment for Ethnic Communities was a strong theme that was raised by the community. Responses discussed the importance of gaining more equitable employment and trade opportunities, and many held a strong desire for overseas qualifications to be recognised more easily in Aotearoa New Zealand. The ability for employers and society to support ethnic communities to enter and flourish in workplaces was also cited as a key desire, including correct name pronunciation, education on the value of migrant workers, and finding opportunities for migrant workers.³⁰

Applications for the Ethnic Communities Graduate Programme (the Programme) illustrate the enormous talent and experience within ethnic communities. The number of applications also highlight the high demand for opportunities within the public service. For the first two intakes of the Programme (which began this year), 449 applications were received for an estimated 40 placements. While 152 applications were not progressed because they did not meet other assessment/eligibility criteria though their background, qualifications and experience more closely match the criteria sought, 136 applicants

³⁰ Ministry for Ethnic Communities (2021): Engagement on the Ministry for Ethnic Communities, p. 17. Accessible at: [Engagement-on-the-Ministry-for-Ethnic-Communities-1-7-21.pdf](#) (ethniccommunities.govt.nz)

were assessed as suitable but were not considered because there were not enough placements.³¹

Getting an initial opportunity through paid work experience like the graduate programme, volunteering, or employment can make the difference for individuals to prove their capability and overcome some of the challenges and barriers above.

Based on the Public Sector Workforce data from 2020, there has been a steady increase in representation of employees from Asian and Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African (MELAA) backgrounds. Māori, Pacific, and Asian employees are overrepresented in the occupation groups that receive low pay. There was no data for the MELAA group. This indicates that there is still more to do to address the ethnic pay gap in the public sector for government as an employer. Asian public sector employees also tended to have a younger age profile than Pākehā employees, which highlights this growing diversity. While diversity is increasing amongst younger employees, career progression and development are crucial for this diversity to flow through to the senior leadership level.

Which groups we are focusing on

During the first phase of the Action Plan, we are prioritising work with:

- People from a range of ethnicities who experience multiple barriers to employment (such as English as a second language, lack of New Zealand work experience or qualifications, limited knowledge of the New Zealand labour market, transport, stable housing, childcare, or funding for work clothes or essential equipment (e.g. work boots), literacy and numeracy challenges, trauma, discrimination based on ethnicity or religion, or disability) and those who may also be socially isolated
- People who are transitioning from education into employment and have finished tertiary study in the last eighteen months
- People who are looking to progress in their careers and are experiencing barriers, such as lack of networks, discrimination based on ethnicity or religion, English as a second language, access to mentors and leadership development opportunities, and understanding of pathways for career progression.

³¹ An unsuccessful candidate is someone who was not selected for an interview for Intake 1, or consideration for Intake 2 when they applied.

Actions for ethnic communities

Action	Barriers Addressed	Objectives / indicators	Responsibility
<p>11. Explore the possibility of working with volunteering organisations to promote volunteering and adequately-paid work experience to improve employment readiness as well as provide recognition for volunteers.</p> <p>As part of this Action, we will work to ensure that volunteer or paid work does not result in or exacerbate labour exploitation.</p>	<p>Limited social, community, and employment networks</p> <p>Limited work experience in New Zealand</p> <p>Limited knowledge of the New Zealand labour market requirements</p>	<p>Increased volunteering and paid work experience by ethnic communities</p> <p>Increased community connection and social inclusion</p> <p>Increased skills and work readiness</p> <p>Increased evidence base</p> <p>This action aligns with objectives 1,2, and 7 of the Action Plan.</p>	<p>MEC, MBIE, DIA, MSD</p>

Action	Barriers Addressed	Objectives / indicators	Responsibility
<p>12. Provide support to graduates from ethnic communities to move into their first work opportunity: This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 18 months paid Graduate employment within the public service. ▪ Exploring the possibility of expanding the graduate programme to the private sector through an ethnic communities' private sector graduate programme, a 12-weeks paid summer internship and a 6-month paid internship programme 	<p>Limited knowledge of New Zealand labour market and pathways to employment</p> <p>Limited social, community, and employment networks</p>	<p>Public and private sector paid graduate and internship opportunities.</p> <p>Improved confidence and employment readiness</p> <p>Increased diversity and inclusion and cultural competency across the public sector</p> <p>This action aligns with objectives 2,3 and 4 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>MEC</p>
<p>13. Former refugee youth³² who have less than 5 years in the New Zealand education system before the age of 18 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research on the barriers faced by younger refugee youth in connecting to further education and training 	<p>Limited use of secondary school networks and development opportunities</p> <p>Limited knowledge of training options available</p>	<p>Support former refugee youth into further education and/or training to build their skills for future career pathways</p> <p>This action aligns with objectives 1, 5, 6 and 7 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>Multi-agency approach – MBIE, MSD, TEC, MoE, NZQA</p>

32 This action is also included as action 7 in the former refugee section.

Action	Barriers Addressed	Objectives / indicators	Responsibility
<p>14. Work with relevant government agencies to identify actions to reduce both the ethnic pay gap and pay gap for ethnic women, and support career progression</p>	<p>Limited career progression and opportunities for senior leadership Women and ethnic public service employees are likely to be paid less compared to others in their roles</p>	<p>Measurable reduction in the ethnic pay gap and pay gap for ethnic women in the public sector This action aligns with objectives 1, 2, 5 and 7 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>Multi-agency approach, including Public Service Commission and Ministry for Women</p>
<p>15. Development of insights and research to support understanding of employment challenges for ethnic communities and to support further investment in employment initiatives</p>	<p>Limited detailed data on ethnic communities and specific issues in employment - in particular, current data gaps relate to underutilisation and underemployment, experiences of specific cohorts such as women, youth, and disabled people, the impact of prolonged COVID-19 on ethnic communities' employment and businesses, and understanding what policies and programmes work for ethnic communities in a New Zealand context</p>	<p>Improved understanding of the barriers to employment for ethnic communities Improved data on ethnic communities' employment and outcomes Support for ethnic community researchers Improved investment in policies and programmes with the highest impact for communities. This action aligns with objectives 1, 3 and 6 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>MEC lead</p>

Action	Barriers Addressed	Objectives / indicators	Responsibility
<p>16. The Ministry for Ethnic Communities will continue to investigate and implement initiatives to support ethnic communities with employment readiness and strengthen their employment networks. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Using the Ethnic Communities Development Fund to support community-led employment initiatives; ▪ Partnering with community organisations to organise regional job fairs and forums to help people connect with prospective employers; and ▪ Utilising cultural competency training to support employers to help with employees' work readiness. 	<p>Limited knowledge of New Zealand labour market, workplace culture and pathways to employment</p> <p>Limited social, community, and employment networks</p>	<p>Improved confidence and employment readiness</p> <p>Creation of tailored supports and networks for ethnic communities to engage with potential employers</p> <p>Support for employers to understand and appreciate the cultural values and experiences of employees from ethnic communities</p> <p>This action aligns with objectives 1,2 3 and 6 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>MEC lead</p>

Further planned actions

Further actions for the next phase will be developed by the Ministry for Ethnic Communities, MSD, MBIE, and other relevant agencies and in partnership with ethnic communities. For example, one area of potential action to explore is in relation to supporting ethnic communities with qualifications and overseas qualifications.

Who our key stakeholders are

The Ministry will work with MSD, MBIE, and Education agencies to deliver the actions to improve employment outcomes for ethnic communities.

The Ministry for Ethnic Communities will work alongside ethnic community organisations across New Zealand with whom we have established connections. This includes peak body associations, cultural groups, local councils, advocacy organisations, regional multicultural associations, service providers and charitable trusts.

5. Migrant Worker Exploitation



Who are temporary migrant workers

The term 'temporary migrant worker' refers to migrants without residence status living in New Zealand. This may include migrants in New Zealand as working holiday makers, international students studying and working in New Zealand, Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) workers, essential skills, and skilled migrant visa holders. 'Temporary migrant worker in an employment context' encompasses migrants without a permanent right to remain in New Zealand and includes international students.

What we know about the barriers for temporary migrant workers

Approximately 214,000 temporary migrant workers are currently in New Zealand (from Migration Data Explorer for the year ending 30 April 2021). This number includes those holding work visas (around 187,500) and international students (around 52,000; approximately half of whom have visas with work rights). Workers from India, the Philippines, and China currently form the largest groups of temporary migrant workers by country of origin. The number of temporary migrant workers at risk of exploitation, or who are being exploited, is difficult to determine due to the hidden nature of exploitation.

Migrant worker exploitation has serious, negative outcomes for migrant workers, the labour force more generally, businesses, and New Zealand as a whole.

Migrants Exploited – migrant workers can suffer physical, psychological, and financial harm. For example, some workers experience controlling and coercive behaviours from their employers, such as surveillance while working, control of their accommodation and movement, intimidation, and threats related to their immigration status. This harm extends to their families both within New Zealand and in their home country and compounds the financial losses suffered.

Businesses and employers – good businesses and employers are undercut by exploitative employers. This may make some businesses unsustainable.

New Zealand citizens and residents – Exploitation undermines work and working conditions for all New Zealanders and is associated with crimes that affect the wider community, such as fraud and money laundering. Exploitation also puts pressure on New Zealand’s tax and healthcare systems.

New Zealand’s international reputation – Migrant exploitation damages our international reputation as a non-corrupt, safe place to work and live. It can damage our ability to attract and retain the migrant workers New Zealand wants and needs.

Independent research commissioned by MBIE identified several kinds of exploitation that temporary migrant workers may be subject to. Key types of exploitation identified in the research include the under-payment or non-payment of wages; non-compliance by employers with employment agreements and other documentation (such as by inflating job descriptions and wages for immigration purposes); the non-payment of Pay as You Earn (PAYE) taxes; denial of entitlement to annual holidays; and the non-payment of holiday pay.

Several of the migrant workers participating in the independent research had been required to pay their employer to work for them, in return for the promise of employment that would qualify them for essential skills or residence visas. The research found that exploitation appeared to occur most frequently with employer-assisted temporary work visas and student visas, including both essential skills and post-study work visas. This was prior to the November 2018 changes which replaced the employer-assisted post-study work visa with a post-study open work visa.

Migrants on employer-assisted temporary work visas can be vulnerable due to their dependency on their employer to maintain their visa status.

For those on student visas, exploitation can begin in their home country where they are encouraged to come to New Zealand with promises of jobs leading to permanent residence. In practice, many then find it difficult to obtain a job and become vulnerable to exploitation. This may be exacerbated by debts they have incurred to travel to and study in New Zealand.

We are working with all temporary migrant workers

The review's changes are focused on reducing the exploitation of *temporary migrant workers*. This includes those on work visas and student visas with work rights. International students as a subset of temporary migrant workers are a particularly vulnerable section of the workforce working in New Zealand on a temporary basis.

Temporary migrant workers often work in industries or sectors where employers have had higher rates of non-compliance with minimum employment standards. Some of these sectors include retail, hospitality, and horticulture. Migrant workers are more reluctant to report their exploitation for a number of reasons, including fear of losing their visa if they come forward if their visa is connected to an employer or they are in breach of their visa conditions.

While the review focuses on temporary migrant workers, changes made to address this exploitation are expected to have a positive outcome for all workers, businesses, and employers in New Zealand.

The Government recently announced a set of changes that will support its objectives for the labour market and the immigration system to:

- Ensure that migrants are only recruited for genuine shortages, and employers across New Zealand can access the skills and labour they need.
- Increase expectations on employers to employ and train more New Zealanders.
- Reduce exploitation of temporary migrants and misuse of the immigration system.
- Create better connections between the immigration, education/skills and welfare systems
- Make the labour and immigration system easier to navigate.

The Government's objective for temporary visas is to ensure that first priority should go to New Zealand workers and that temporary workers are only recruited when there are genuine shortages. This requires a system that checks whether a New Zealander is available for an individual job. There will therefore continue to be a link between the employer and job recruited for, and the foreign worker being recruited. However, the recently announced changes will put more emphasis on ensuring that only compliant employers are able to be accredited to recruit migrant workers.

The Government is also in the process of preparing legislation to implement the changes in the Temporary Migrant Worker package and expects to introduce this legislation in 2022. The changes that have already been introduced, such as the new visa and reporting tools, have enabled migrants experiencing workplace exploitation to more easily report exploitative situations, as well as leave those situations and remain lawfully in New Zealand.

On 27 October 2021, the Education and Workforce Select Committee opened a further inquiry into migrant exploitation and is seeking public submissions. Among other things, this inquiry will likely include looking into the scale of migrant exploitation in New Zealand, the impact of exploitation on migrants and their families, and what more could be to address migrant exploitation. The submissions will close on 3 February 2022.

Actions to address temporary migrant exploitation

Action	Barriers addressed	Outcomes	Responsibility
<p>17. Progressing work to implement Cabinet's approved legislative, operational, and policy changes to address temporary migrant worker exploitation, which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introducing the Migrant Worker Protection Bill in 2022 ▪ Changes to the employer-assisted temporary work visa system ▪ Establishing a new 0800 phone number for reporting exploitation (operational as of 1 July 2021) ▪ Creating a new visa to enable migrant workers to leave situations of exploitation (operational as of 1 July 2021) 	<p>Migrant workers may not know how to report exploitation or find reporting exploitation to be difficult</p> <p>Potential reluctance from migrant workers to report exploitation out of fear of adverse consequences</p> <p>Gaps in immigration and employment systems might enable employers to exploit migrant workers</p>	<p>The changes aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prevent the occurrence of workplace conditions that might enable temporary migrant worker exploitation. ▪ Protect temporary migrant workers in New Zealand and enable them to leave exploitative employment. ▪ Enforce immigration and employment law to deter employer noncompliance through a fit-for-purpose offence and penalty regime. <p>This action aligns with objectives 1, 2 and 5 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>MBIE, International Labour Policy team (lead for Review)</p>

Action	Barriers addressed	Outcomes	Responsibility
<p>18. Implementation of the actions in the Plan of Action against forced labour, human trafficking, and slavery. The Plan of Action has a reference group made up of a wide range of key stakeholders who meet every 6 months to support the effective development, delivery, and implementation of the plan</p>	<p>Coordinating government response to issues of forced labour, people trafficking, and slavery</p>	<p>The Plan of Action aims to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New Zealand implements measures to meet its international commitments and prevent the conditions that enable forced labour, people trafficking, and slavery. ▪ New Zealand works to proactively identify victims and supports them to safety and recovery by putting their needs at the heart of our responses ▪ The enforcement tools available to disrupt exploitation and hold people to account, particularly through prosecution, are effectively used. ▪ Updates on key achievements will be published annually. <p>This action aligns with objectives 1 and 5 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>MBIE lead</p>

Who our key stakeholders are

A consultation group comprising of representatives from the migrant, business, union, and international student sectors was established to support the Review through providing advice along with an independent view.

6. Cross cutting actions



What are cross cutting actions

There are a number of common challenges experienced across the target groups within the Action Plan and other action plans under the Strategy (for example, older workers or disabled people).

As a result, we have developed some actions that, if improved at a system-wide level, should maximise employment outcomes for former refugees, recent migrants, ethnic communities, and migrants who experience or are at risk of exploitation.

Many of these challenges will also be common for the other population groups which have a specific Employment Action Plan. These cross-cutting actions will involve employers and the private sector in order to fully unlock the employment potential of our communities.

As these are system-wide initiatives, the lead agencies will work across government and sectors. During the first phase of the Action Plan, agencies will further scope out the initiatives that may fall within each of these actions. Where possible, opportunities to align any initiatives or programmes with those of other Employment Action Plans will be explored to ensure a connected all-of-government approach to addressing employment barriers.

As part of this next phase, we will undertake further analysis of the diversity of sectors in the labour market. This analysis will help government identify potential sectors that it could partner with to achieve greater diversity in its workforce, for example through training or apprenticeships.

Cross-cutting actions

Action	Barriers Addressed	Outcomes	Responsibility
<p>19. Improve employment data collection and reporting for ethnic communities, including intersectional data, particularly across government</p>	<p>Limited and decentralised collection of data on ethnicity and ethnic communities, especially disaggregated data</p> <p>Limited evidence base for policy interventions</p> <p>Data is collected for other purposes and people do not always disclose their ethnicity (e.g. for a benefit)</p> <p>Where there is data available, it is often only available at high-level ethnic groupings only, due to privacy considerations, which may mask issues for specific subgroups</p>	<p>Common data standards in place across agencies</p> <p>Increased collection of ethnicity data, and data on ethnic communities by agencies</p> <p>Improved data for decision making and policy interventions</p> <p>Improved understanding of barriers specific to, e.g. sectors, subgroups, age groups, regions etc.</p> <p>This action aligns with objectives 1, 5 and 7 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>Multi-agency approach</p>

Action	Barriers Addressed	Outcomes	Responsibility
<p>20. Supporting ethnic communities to access all-of-government employment services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinating and supporting access to all-of-government employment information and channels to meet the needs of ethnic communities ▪ Including building capability of MSD staff to be responsive to the employment needs of ethnic communities 	<p>Lack of knowledge or understanding of services that are available</p> <p>Unconscious bias from government employees</p> <p>Language barriers</p> <p>Limited knowledge of how to support ethnic communities living in New Zealand</p> <p>Limited resources tailored to the needs of specific communities</p>	<p>Improved understanding of, and confidence to navigate, the employment services available</p> <p>Greater uptake in services by target groups</p> <p>Improved employment outcomes for former refugees, recent migrants, and ethnic communities</p> <p>Increased information available in different languages and channels from sources that ethnic communities trust</p> <p>This action aligns with objectives 1, 6, and 7 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>MSD, MEC</p>

Action	Barriers Addressed	Outcomes	Responsibility
<p>21. Work with the Ministry for Women, and Ministries of Education, Social Development and Business, Innovation and Employment to understand specific barriers, and to identify and tailor education and employment programmes for women who are disadvantaged in employment</p>	<p>We expect that women in these target groups experience intersectional challenges in accessing and engaging with employment, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited knowledge of New Zealand labour market and pathways to employment, and understanding of their rights as employees Limited social, community, and employment networks Potentially limited financial or personal resources to work (e.g. transport) or inflexible work if childcaring 	<p>Increased uptake of universal services (including childcare) by ethnic women</p> <p>Improved employment outcomes for women, including increase in the number of women from target groups in quality employment</p> <p>Government services and programmes are more responsive to the employment needs of ethnic women</p> <p>This action aligns with objectives 1 and 6 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>Multi-agency approach</p>

Action	Barriers Addressed	Outcomes	Responsibility
<p>22. Work with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and leads for other action plans to coordinate engagement with employers; demonstrate benefits of inclusive and diverse recruitment for businesses; and develop tools and resources for discrimination-free recruitment practices and addressing unconscious bias.</p> <p>This includes working with industry to increase employment opportunities for people from ethnic communities</p>	<p>Lack of awareness and understanding of the talent pool available within ethnic communities</p> <p>Non-transferable or not easily recognised overseas qualifications and experience</p> <p>Employers have unconscious bias and views that they need New Zealand qualifications and work experience</p>	<p>Improved understanding of the value of diversity and inclusion</p> <p>Removal of barriers in recruitment</p> <p>Increase in the number of people from target groups in quality employment</p> <p>Reduced incidences of discrimination in the workplace</p> <p>This action aligns with objectives 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7 of the Action Plan</p>	<p>Multi-agency approach</p>





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Ministry for
**Ethnic
Communities**
Te Tari Mātāwaka