

How Asian leaders can grow & flourish in the New Zealand Public Service.

Let's dial it up!



Whakatauki

Mā te whiritahi, ka whakatutuki ai ngā pūmanawa ā tāngata.
Weaving the realisation of potential, together.

We chose this Whakatauki because it reflects the essence of what our study has been about.

We set out to “*explore the enablers for Asian leaders to grow and flourish at a leadership level in the New Zealand public service, nurturing their cultural identity while maximising their leadership contribution*”.

This was about finding ways to make *more visible* the potential of Pan-Asian peoples, to enable them to *reach* their potential, and to enable them to *contribute*, individually and collectively, for the good of New Zealand.

There are many approaches that can be blended to support Pan-Asian peoples to grow and flourish. We have identified some. But none of them can happen through any one person’s efforts. We believe it is about people working together—with understanding, appreciation and respect—to support, lift, and learn from, one another.

It is the connection through “*we, together*” that will see more potential realised in our workplaces.

Contents

Introduction

- 02 Preface
- 04 Executive summary
- 08 Summary of recommendations

01.

The fellowship – our journey

- 11 The Fellowship – our journey
- 11 Our Fellowship proposal
- 11 How we planned to do it
- 12 What emerged as we progressed our study
- 13 Changes in the wider environment influenced our scope
- 14 A change of plans – but we were still informed by many voices

02.

Understanding and appreciating cultural norms and values

- 17 Understanding and appreciating cultural norms and values
- 19 East meets West cultural approaches
- 22 Yin and Yang and complementarity

03.

Facts and figures

- 25 Facts and Figures
- 26 What the data tells us
- 35 About pay gaps
- 36 What Pan-Asian Public Servants told us
- 38 More of what we heard

04.

Key themes and insights

- 43 What we heard, read and learnt
- 44 There’s a lot going on
- 45 Papa Pounamu and Public Service-wide diversity and inclusion
- 45 Developments further afield
- 51 More can be done – and the time is now!
- 52 Our key themes and insights

05.

Recommendations

- 69 Recommendations

06.

Appendices

- 73 A. Interviewees
- 81 B. References
- 88 C. Workshop feedback
- 96 Glossary



Preface

This Leadership Development Centre Fellowship was awarded to us to “explore the enablers for Asian leaders to grow and flourish at a leadership level in the New Zealand Public Service, nurturing their cultural identity while maximising their leadership contribution”.

We wish to begin by acknowledging the very many people we had the opportunity to hear, and learn, from as we undertook our study. We continue to feel privileged to have met so many people who gave us their time, and so openly shared their experiences and their wisdom.

Not only did we learn from each and every one of the people we met; beyond that, we were hugely inspired by the reach of conversations and the range of contributions. What we heard was very personal, enlightening, insightful, wise, affirmative, optimistic, disappointing, disturbing... any, and all, of these.

Our intent from the outset was to take a very practical approach, to “listen and learn” about the experiences, insights, challenges and opportunities from “the voices of people”. We focused on hearing about lived experiences—from leaders, emerging leaders and others at an earlier stage of their career. And, with a 360° view in mind, we explored with a lens around, above and below Pan-Asian leaders. We also heard the perspective of experts in the field, academics and private sector people of both Pan-Asian, and non Pan-Asian, ethnicity, from Aotearoa

New Zealand and abroad. We are grateful for the fabulous conversations, the expert advice, and the challenging, and differing, viewpoints. We complemented this practical approach with literature reviews and insights into practices more globally.

A great many of the perspectives and experiences reflected the same themes. But a number were polar opposites—which added to the richness of the landscape we were exploring.

We applied for this Fellowship when Aotearoa New Zealand was in a different place and time. We were awarded our Fellowship in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain in March 2019, and we began our study in 2020, just before the planet became paralysed by the global COVID-19 pandemic that we remain firmly in the grip of, still, in 2021. The Black Lives Matter movement also happened over this time.

While the pandemic impacted our study plans and timelines, these momentous events served, for some, to heighten their sensitivity to issues of discrimination and race in the workplace in Aotearoa New Zealand. This extended our thinking from looking at Pan-Asian people in leadership as purely a business imperative; we were alerted to the social and equity imperatives as well.

We have deliberately framed our key recommendations as practical, achievable, actions with a system focus.

We are absolutely aware this is just the start.

Through this, we want to create momentum in the system to build on these recommendations. And to begin to measure and understand, from listening to the voice of our Pan-Asian people, their reality and, over time, the difference that is being achieved.

There are countless initiatives in train, here in Aotearoa New Zealand and globally, that contribute to lifting ethnic representation in leadership.

More specifically, and to our Fellowship topic, the need for more Pan-Asians at the leadership level in Aotearoa New Zealand has been recognised—so there is no better time than now to put more of a spotlight on what should be done. *Let’s dial it up!*

Our thanks also go to the Leadership Development Centre at Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission for recognising the importance of this issue, and for the opportunity to undertake this study as Leadership Development Centre Fellows. We have enjoyed, and grown from, the experience.



吳恩慈

Denise Hing
Te Mana Ārai o Aotearoa
New Zealand Customs Service



黃國輝

Richard Foy
Te Tari Mātāwaka
Ministry for Ethnic Communities

Executive summary

The Public Service in Aotearoa New Zealand is becoming more ethnically diverse. As part of this growing diversity, the number of public servants identifying as Asian has increased each year for the last nine years. This is positive progress towards the aim of reflecting the communities the Public Service is here to serve.

Yet the representation of Asian staff – 12.5% at 30 June 2021 – still lags behind the 15.4% Asian representation in Aotearoa New Zealand’s working-age population.

And, notably, at the top leadership levels of the Public Service:

- Only 2.9% of Public Service leaders at Tiers 1-3 are Asian.
- Only 1 of 37 Public Sector Chief Executives is Asian¹.

Disparities within the Public Service workforce, including the under-representation of ethnic minorities in leadership roles, as well as continued gaps in ethnic pay, are recognised. The issue is how to enable – and *accelerate* – progress to a more representative leadership cohort, particularly in the knowledge that the Asian population in Aotearoa New Zealand is predicted to rise to 26% by 2043.

The Leadership Development Centre fellowship was awarded to us to contribute to the diversity and strength of the Public Service by “exploring the enablers for Asian public servants to grow and flourish at a leadership level in the New Zealand Public Service, nurturing their cultural identity while maximising their leadership contribution”.

A question, at the outset, was: “*What and who is ‘Asian’?*” We adopted, for our work, a “Pan-Asian” frame of reference to more explicitly embrace people from all of Asia and anyone who chose to identify as Pan-Asian.

Key to our exploration was an early recognition that reflecting the communities we serve, through proportionate *representation*, is not sufficient in itself. At a glance, a 12.5% representation in the Public Service, against a 15.4% representation in the

working-age population, may not look too bad as a reflection of the communities we serve. However, while recruitment of Pan-Asians is increasing, the data shows Pan-Asians are currently heavily grouped into particular occupational categories – for example, representing 27.6% of the ICT professionals and technicians workforce, and 18.9% of the contact centre workforce. And, while recent recruitment statistics are positive, it will take a very long time for this lift at the recruitment level to manifest itself in leadership statistics, based on the progression trends of past years.

Deliberate action is needed to accelerate the pace of progression.

Accelerating the pace of progression will, however, require a multi-faceted approach that includes engendering a greater sense of belonging, achieving greater participation, and creating opportunities for Pan-Asian public servants to grow – and make more visible – their leadership potential and contribution. And the issue will need to be addressed at multiple levels: system, leaders and individuals.

Our findings are significantly informed by the “voice of the people”. We listened to many Pan-Asian public servants, their stories, their aspirations, their lived experiences, their reality. We got their feedback on what it would look, sound and feel like if New Zealand Public Service Leaders demonstrated cultural competency. We took an intentionally practical, people-centred, approach

Our findings centre around five key themes.



Theme 1

We need to accelerate our capability to deliver to the communities we serve and to lead the workforce of the future

Greater diversity in numbers is happening. A focus on ensuring engagement, growth and a sense of belonging, inclusion and value is now critical to retention and to achieving a visible leadership pipeline.

Further, the workforce of the future is going to be significantly more diverse. This will require the capability to lead an increasingly diverse workforce that calls for significantly greater levels of cultural appreciation and an adaptation and extension of the leadership competencies we currently recognise for leadership success.

¹ There are now two Asian Chief Executives, Mervin Singham leading the Ministry for Ethnic Communities, and Karen Chang leading the Serious Fraud Office from April 2022.



Theme 2

Social inclusion is fundamental for ethnic leadership to have any chance of flourishing

We have taken a layperson’s interpretation of social inclusion – that is, that in a democratic society, there should be levels of trust and respect – manifesting in belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, and legitimacy – between, and across, members of the society who bring with them their unique identity, values and beliefs.

Not only is there a heightened consciousness, today, of bias, racism and discrimination; we heard this is the reality felt by some Pan-Asian public servants.

How do we move beyond unconscious bias, to conscious inclusion; beyond cultural awareness to cultural appreciation, as a core leadership competency?



Theme 3

Cultural norms and values are a huge factor

Cultural norms, values and behaviours feature strongly in the workplace for many Pan-Asian – and other ethnic - peoples.

The norms and values that are a feature of more collectivist cultures – as Pan-Asian (and Māori and Pasifika are) – are not, however, always completely understood, nor are they completely aligned with the more dominant individualistic euro-centric leadership style that is generally sought and valued today. Many Pan-Asian staff feel they have to change to fit “the system” – while at the same time, being encouraged by “the system” to bring their authentic self to work.



Theme 4

We need to address this at multiple levels, and “create the updraft”.

To achieve the change that’s needed, we need to address the issue at multiple levels: system, leaders and individuals.

Each of these levels is a critical enabler in “creating the updraft” – that is, a suite of specifically targeted interventions designed to help to lift out, and lift up, Pan-Asian public servants who have leadership aspiration and potential. This will start to create a more visible leadership pipeline, and where further development can then be integrated into existing mechanisms.

There are already development and leadership programmes specifically designed for a number of designated groups - including women, Māori and Pasifika, and the new Ethnic Communities Graduate Programme. There are, as yet, no such programmes for Pan-Asian public servants.

Without doubt, there is evidence that programmes specifically designed for cohorts of ethnic people bring significant additional value by enabling participants to enjoy a strong sense of “people like me” who can relate comfortably and safely, share, and learn together.



Theme 5

We need a Public Service that designs for difference - lays out a unified “Welcome Mat” and keeps it there

The cultural norms held by many Pan-Asians make the Public Service an inherently attractive career choice— but more could still be done to pitch public service as a meaningful long-term career.

A ‘Welcome Mat’ that is sensitive and authentic to Pan-Asian ways of working and being would help Pan-Asian public servants enter, and truly thrive in, the Public Service. This ‘welcome’ would extend beyond recruitment to the whole career life cycle, contributing to engagement, retention, development, growth and building leadership prospects. In essence, this is about designing for difference rather than “one size fits all”.

Measuring the impact of initiatives over the long-term will continue to be important, providing a gauge on the success of “designing for difference”.

Summary of recommendations

Our recommendations, summarised below, are deliberately framed as practical, achievable, mutually supportive actions with a system focus. We see them as complementing the myriad of other initiatives already in play across agencies and the system as a whole.

This is just the start, and designed for the short-term.

The overall programme can be developed and extended as momentum builds.



Recommendation 1

Leadership focus and tone at the top

Make more explicit, across the system:

- A leadership model that embraces a diverse workforce and diverse communities
- A leadership success profile that is updated and broadened to include acknowledgement and appreciation of different ways of leading and is specific about cultural appreciation and cultural competence as core success criteria that are demonstrated, observed and valued when assessing both leadership potential and performance
- Leadership expectations to actively “create the updraft”, to bring through different voices and tangibly support the wider settings, mindset and behaviours needed to help Pan-Asians – and other ethnic minorities – grow their leadership and flourish in the workplace



Recommendation 2

A focused development programme for high potential and emerging Pan-Asian leaders at Tiers 3-5

Design and deliver a programme for Pan-Asian public servants that draws from the research, learnings and successes of other programmes for ethnic public servants, including the recently launched Tū Mau Mana Moana and Rangatahi Māori Emerging Leaders Programmes, the Public Service Pacific Mentoring Programme and the Ethnic Communities Graduate Programme.

Design and develop the programme in time to be run, as a pilot, in the 2022/23 year



Recommendation 3

A Public Service that designs for difference – lays out a unified “welcome mat”, keeps it there throughout the career lifecycle, and measures its progress

Enhance the work environment by “designing for difference”, so that the New Zealand Public Service feels welcome to everyone, including Pan-Asians, and ensure this is sustained over time and over the whole career cycle, so individuals feel engaged and valued, and can develop to their full potential.

This includes:

- Taking a deliberate approach of “designing for difference” – pre-recruitment and entry (the ‘Welcome Mat’) and through the career lifecycle.
- Generating more data and metrics to enable more analytics, and building on the baseline set in Te Taunaki, the recent Public Service Census, to get a regular and real measure of the cumulative impact of initiatives across the system

Provide tangible support for the Pan-Asian Public Sector Network in its establishment, sponsorship and growth; and, vice versa, draw on the Pan-Asian Public Sector Network to contribute to new developments.

01.

The Fellowship – our journey



The Fellowship – our journey

We set out on this Fellowship to explore the theme of “How Asian leaders can grow and flourish in the New Zealand Public Service”.

At the outset, we had earnestly framed our study in terms of ethnic ‘Diversity and Inclusion’ as a means of strengthening the New Zealand Public Service:

“We will contribute to the diversity and strength of the New Zealand public service by exploring the enablers for Asian public servants to grow and flourish at a leadership level in the New Zealand public service, nurturing their cultural identity while maximising their leadership contribution.”

Our Fellowship proposal

There were strong drivers and widespread support for us to explore this theme. We heard from many people, including current Public Service Chief Executives, the recurring message that we need to represent the communities we serve. Their question and their challenge was – and is – *how can we do that better?*

Statistics New Zealand Census data and forward projections illustrate the challenge: 2018 Census data shows 15% of Aotearoa New Zealand’s population being of Pan-Asian ethnicity—and projections in 2021 predict that to rise to 26% of the population by 2043.

Our study posed the obvious question of how the composition of the New Zealand Public Service’s leadership would evolve alongside these significant demographic shifts in the ethnic makeup of our population—and, further, move beyond mere *representation* into greater *participation* of the ethnic Pan-Asian workforce, including opening up opportunities for individuals to truly flourish in their leadership contribution.

We chose to undertake our Fellowship jointly, firmly in the belief that we would both bring different value to, and get different value from, the study based on our unique world-views, ways of thinking, personal experience and skills.

How we planned to do it

Our plan was to engage practically across multiple fronts:

- Learning from the successes and the experiences of Pan-Asian leaders;
- Hearing from the aspiring and emerging Pan-Asian leaders who want to be part of the future New Zealand Public Service—their aspirations and their lived experiences;
- Capturing the perspectives of established agency leaders wanting and needing to diversify their workforces—both in Aotearoa New Zealand and abroad;
- Understanding the types of programmes that exist to foster Pan-Asian leadership both at home and abroad;
- Hearing from Pan-Asian leaders, and aspiring and emerging Pan-Asian leaders, abroad – including their perspectives of the programmes in place to foster their leadership.

We planned a combination of literature review and desktop research, as well as interviews and focus groups to listen and learn, and test out our thinking – all the while bringing our own personal perspectives and public service experience to shape our insights.

Importantly, we were committed to a human-centred and strengths-based approach relying on empathy, relationships and appreciative inquiry to understand people’s lived reality and to arrive at our conclusions.

What emerged as we progressed our study

An early question that was posed to us numerous times was *“What is Asian? Who are you including in this group?”*

The “Asian” ethnic group for Aotearoa New Zealand’s Census data includes: *South East Asian, Chinese, Indian, Sri Lankan, Japanese, Korean, Afghani, Bangladeshi, Nepalese, Pakistani, Tibetan, Eurasian, Bhutanese, Maldivian, Mongolian, and “Asian not further defined”*.

The United States Census Bureau defines an Asian person as *“having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.”*²

We determined ‘Asian’ as a demographic label needed to be clearer, so we considered ‘Pan-Asian’ to be more helpful, descriptive and inclusive—to cover people from all of Asia and anyone who chose to identify as Pan-Asian. We were conscious, at the same time, that not all experiences and perspectives in this Pan-Asian grouping would be the same or similar. But thinking about this helped to remind us continually that we were seeking to understand the real-world experiences of a wider Pan-Asian population, and not just ethnic Chinese, as we both are.

We were also reminded that being Pan-Asian in Aotearoa New Zealand is a distinctly different lived-experience than being Pākehā or Māori or Pasifika or African or American. And, that Pan-Asians who claim Aotearoa New Zealand as ‘home’ should have reasonable expectations, as Kiwi compatriots, of fairness, equity and opportunity.

We also formed the view that, as Pan-Asian public servants, we have obligations to the communities we come from, and serve, in representing them in the work—and the visible face—of the Public Service to *all* New Zealanders.

At the initial stage of our study, we did not give consideration to matters of ethnic identity, equity, workplace bias, discrimination or social cohesion. In fact, early on, when these matters arose, we recognised them as legitimate concerns raised out of the lived experiences of our interviewees and workshop participants – but we took the view they were outside of our scope. Rather, we leaned towards a focus on the positive benefits of lifting representation for Pan-Asian public servants.

Significantly, this shifted through the course of our work. This was especially so as a result of listening to more and more Pan-Asian public servants. We heard recurring themes that centred on ethnic identity, equity, bias and discrimination. As we had, at the outset, taken the view that we wanted to be heavily informed and influenced by lived experiences, we realised that these lived experiences were indeed the reality for many Pan-Asian people – so we listened and learnt from these.

Listening through hui and conversations with Pan-Asian public servants were sometimes saddening, often humbling, and *always* inspiring. We were inspired by the willingness to serve and what is reflective of the cultural norm, to “work hard and do a good job”. Beyond that, though, was a strong sense of optimism for the possibility and hope that they would be accorded the same opportunities for recognition, professional development and career progression as others. At no point did we encounter a “*poor me*” sentiment. The commentary and outlook was overwhelmingly positive. We were inspired to bring their voices, experiences and stories into the open through this Fellowship.

We also found that ready answers aren’t all out there!

We started from an innocent premise that we would uncover many success stories from other jurisdictions and systems that had successfully solved the challenge of enabling ethnic, if not Pan-Asian, leaders to grow into, and flourish in, leadership roles. We intended to focus on developments particularly in Canada and the United Kingdom, where we understood there to be a range of positive, progressive initiatives in train. And we thought that achieving positive progress in Aotearoa New Zealand would entail learning about these, and replicating them with some local tailoring and adaptation. *Copy. Paste. Done.* But not quite so!

We also had an underlying hypothesis that there were already many Pan-Asian leaders in the Public Service. We simply needed to find them, activate the right interventions, introduce the right incentives (and maybe remove a few pesky barriers), to unleash a tsunami of latent Pan-Asian leadership—and enable them to *‘live their best lives’* as public servants!

Changes in the wider environment influenced our scope

Aotearoa New Zealand in 2020 and 2021 became a very different place and time than it was back in 2019 when we applied for our Fellowship and in 2020 when we commenced our study.

The global sweep of the Black Lives Matter movement, the findings of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Christchurch masjidain terrorist attack, escalating anti-Asian sentiment stirred by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the disproportionate risk to the health of our Māori and Pasifika communities due to COVID-related illnesses collectively made us acutely aware of the social problems posed by ethnic exclusion, racial inequity and systemic bias.

These events and social shifts led us to widen our perspective and also look inwardly and introspectively to reexamine fundamental notions of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’—and what it means to be seen and to be heard, to have a voice, to feel safe and to be included.

² *Before the Census, a Question—Who Counts as Asian American?* | Time 12 March 2020

A change of plans – but we were still informed by many voices

We initially sought to speak with notable experts and leaders in this field, domestic and international, as well as fully understanding that we really needed to speak with—and more importantly, listen to—the voices of the Pan-Asian kaimahi who this Fellowship is intended to serve.

The global pandemic delayed, and ultimately halted, our plans for international engagement in person, notwithstanding the agreement from the Leadership Development Centre to roll over the Fellowship for a year to enable the international dimension to occur. We nonetheless were able to connect online and enjoyed a number of really excellent interviews and discussions with people offshore—experts in the field, public and private sector leaders, and Asian public servants.

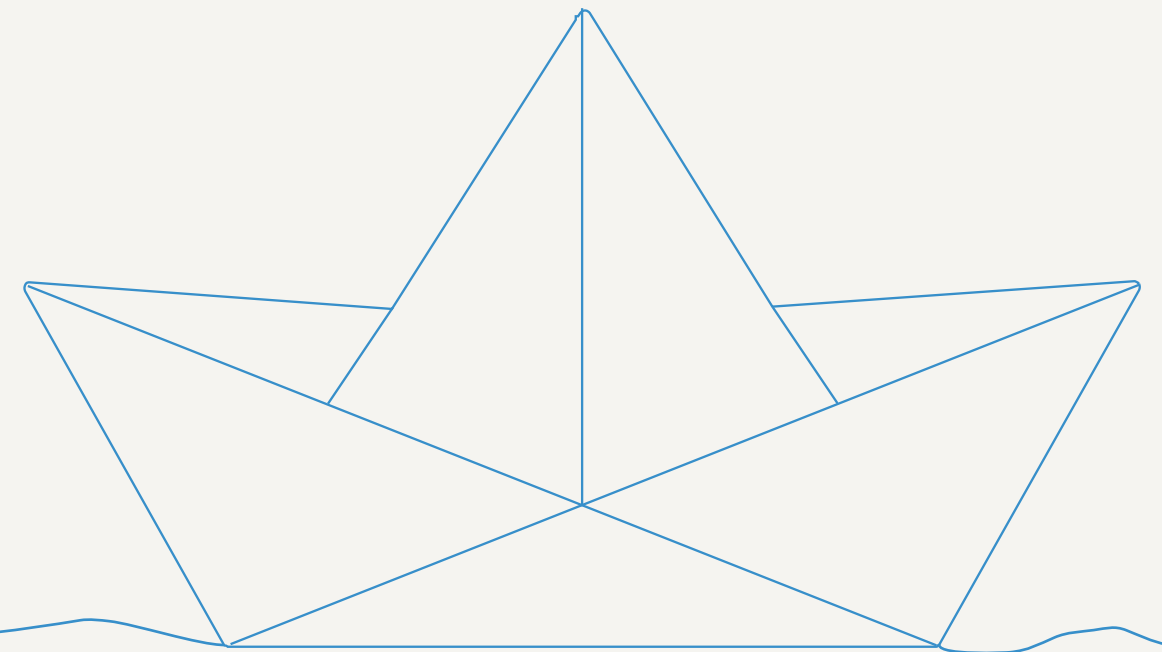
We were fortunate to be able to include kanohi ki te kanohi engagements with Pan-Asian kaimahi around Aotearoa New Zealand before, and after, COVID Alert Level restrictions came into play. Unfortunately we were unable to do the same workshopping with Pan-Asian public servants in Canada and the United Kingdom, as we'd planned.

Many of the Pan-Asian people we engaged with did not, at this time, fit the classical role of 'leader', but that did not deter the majority from wanting to progress their career into a managerial or leadership role. It also did not prevent them from contemplating and articulating very clear views, and expectations, of good leadership role-models that would bring the best out of themselves, or that they would aspire to become in their own personal journeys.

We feel gratified that we were able to create safe spaces and platforms for Pan-Asian people to share their stories and experiences – honestly, authentically, boldly and without fear of ridicule, or feeling their views and feelings might be dismissed or rejected. There is an ongoing need for these safe spaces to exist, and for those conversations to continue beyond our mahi.

While we speak of in this report of the views and perspectives of Pan-Asian public servants, we are completely aware that these will not represent the views and perspectives of all. Rather, they are generalisations and conclusions that we have deduced from what we heard and learnt. We regard them as "informed generalisations", based on interviews, and some 200 participants over eight workshops that we held in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington and Ōtautahi Christchurch.

We were extremely fortunate to have the time of over 70 public and private sector chief executives and senior executives, aspiring leaders, academics, experts in the field and community representatives from both Aotearoa New Zealand and further afield.



02.

Understanding and appreciating cultural norms and values



Understanding and appreciating cultural norms and values

We are socially-constructed beings.

Our social-construction is strongly influenced and conditioned by our cultural background, norms and values. These set the scene for the way we live our lives, and the way we see the world: our familial structures and relationships; the cultural customs, systems of belief, and values that hold true for us; icons in the home, sights (eg literature, images, television, cinema) and sounds (eg language, mythology, music) and smells (eg foods, feasts, delicacies, spices, fragrances) that we grew up with; the social and community events, festivals, celebrations and rituals (eg sport, recreation, New Year, births, weddings, funerals) that we've participated in throughout childhood and adolescence—and that may still be meaningful to us in our adulthood today.

To quote the often-used phrase, “we are a product of our upbringing” - and our ethnicity influences personal identity and group social relations.

Further, the changing nature of society means that both within, and across, ethnic categories, there is still greater diversity.

In his article “The Construction of Ethnicity and ‘Belonging’ in New Zealand”³ Paul Callister noted:

“Within large ethnic categories there is further diversity. Take for example, Chinese. Some Chinese have been in New Zealand for multiple generations, others, over the course of an extensive Chinese diaspora, have migrated here from a variety of countries, including Malaysia and Botswana. Chinese speak a variety of languages and follow a variety of religions. They may also identify with ‘hybrid’ categories such as Chinese-Maori. A growing proportion of New Zealanders, especially young people born in New Zealand, report dual, multiple and hybrid ethnic identities.”

In the same article, Paul Callister also noted:

“... Firstly, there is increasing recognition that ethnicity is a fluid category (ethnic mobility being one aspect) and new identities are always emerging. Secondly, ethnicity is also multi-dimensional – identity is not only expressed, but also perceived and observed. Thirdly, certain groups, such as indigenous peoples, and Roma in Europe, present particular challenges for conceptualizing ethnicity. While skin colour and other visible differences might be seen as cosmetic, they do affect several outcomes, including the experience of discrimination...”

Our reach, in this study, takes a broad *Pan Asian* umbrella and, importantly includes anyone who identifies as Pan-Asian.

3 “The Construction of Ethnicity and ‘Belonging’ in New Zealand”, Paul Callister; No 10 (2011) Journal of New Zealand Studies

Asian norms and values

We had many Asian norms and values instilled in us by our parents, grandparents and families, and we have adopted many from our wider cultural communities and social circles in which we were raised. Growing up as an immigrant or a descendant of immigrants—especially for Pan-Asians who are visibly ethnic (look foreign or present as ‘others’) in public life—fundamentally shapes who and how we are in the world, as it has shaped our relationship with Aotearoa New Zealand and our fellow New Zealanders. This is our unique whakapapa as Asian tauiwi of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our distance from those childhood, adolescent and adult influences may differ depending upon how recently, or long ago, our parents or ancestors settled here in Aotearoa New Zealand, but Pan-Asian immigrant cultures are strong, they persist and are passed on across generations. As ‘assimilated’ as some of us may have become to ‘Kiwi culture’, especially for second and later generation Pan-Asians, our Asian heritages and cultural influences are undeniably at play for us in our daily lives.

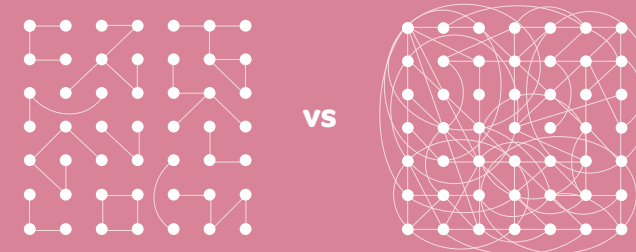
As socially-constructed beings, our Asian-inspired notions and conceptions of leadership - and followership) - can be vastly different from those held by non-Asians. Indeed, our way of being in the world is heavily influenced by the cultural norms, values and beliefs that we hold – for example, in terms of how we see our relationship to authority, to each other in civil society as citizens, and to government itself. Our Asian-influenced roles and positions in these relationships are an important expression of how we view power, hold power, influence power and share power with others in our society and within other social constructs—such as the New Zealand Public Service.

How we may wish to lead—to serve as leaders, to demonstrate leadership—and to be led, will often reflect the role-models, behavioural norms, world-views and values from our Asian traditions.

These may differ from the Western Anglo-centric archetypes of ‘leadership’ that dominate the Westminster-styled democracy, machinery of government and public service that we have adopted from New Zealand’s colonial history with Great Britain. What can result is the classic *‘East meets West’* difference, if not clash – or, at least, a lack of appreciation - of cultures.

East meets West cultural approaches

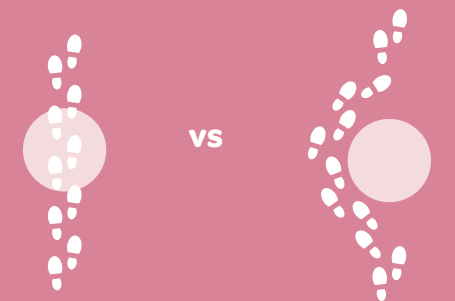
Asian cultures are generally relational cultures



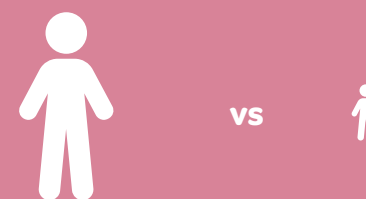
Feelings may not be expressed as directly



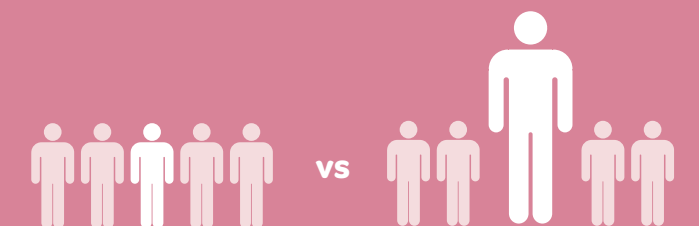
Dealing with conflict may take a different approach



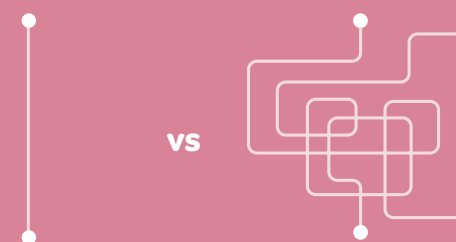
Individualism vs Collectivism impact in the workplace



The boss is viewed differently



Traits of Individualistic Cultures



Work styles may take different approaches



Many of the norms that we associate with Pan-Asian peoples are founded on the central values—both religious and secular—of those cultures. For example, in the Taoist tradition, the *Three Treasures (Sanbao)*, the essential virtues of our individual humaneness that contribute to collective socio-political harmony are *Compassion, Frugality and Humility*.

The first virtue of *Compassion* is to show deep love and kindness for others, and from which one's own personal courage arises and is strengthened by social safety. The second virtue of *Frugality*, or simplicity, is to be sparing, to show restraint and act in moderation, and from which abundance of spirit and generosity to others springs. The third virtue of *Humility*, or modesty, is to not place oneself above others in the world, or to assert authority over others, and from which one's moral authority to lead springs forth.

The Taoist *Three Treasures* are strikingly similar virtues and values that can be found in the Buddhist, Hindu, Jainist and Sikh belief systems, which with Taoism and Confucianism, have greatly influenced East and South Asian cultures and traditions. Naturally, these cultural traditions, values and practices have shaped the world-views and mindsets of many Pan-Asians within their diasporas.

Such distinctive Pan-Asian cultural values, instilled within a Pan-Asian workforce, manifest themselves in a mindset and world-view that can be at odds, and often struggles, with the Anglo-Western dominant culture of our public service workplaces. Just as the New Zealand Public Service has begun to understand and acknowledge the discordant perspectives of Te Ao Māori and Tikanga Māori with the Crown's Westminster-styled practices, so too should we begin to understand the same discordance that is lived, experienced and felt by many Pan-Asian public servants.

Dominant Asian behavioural traits instilled through Asian cultural traditions and values—namely personal humility, deference to authority, compliance and collectivism – “we and us” ahead of “I and me” – are commonly expressed as ‘issues’ for individuals that inhibit and limit the ability to perform or progress in an Anglo-Western context.

These cultural tendencies for Pan-Asians are in contrast to the virtues that are typically praised and celebrated as signs of an individual's ability to lead and succeed in our workplaces.

Are these cultural norms and traits ‘issues’ to be resolved and unlearned for Pan Asians?

To what extent are these cultural norms and traits seen as qualities?

The virtues of individual identity, personal presence and boldness, and the ability to command and control a room, are the Western-dominant associations with strong and capable leadership. As a result, Pan-Asians are often encouraged to proactively speak up, to be more assertive, to be more confident, to take on conflict more directly, to be bolder in self-promotion. This well-intended “encouragement”, at the same time as the workforce in general is encouraged to “be our authentic selves” and to “bring our whole selves to work” can create an internal challenge for many individuals.

The archetypal Asian qualities of humility, deference and collectivism together with higher education attainment, strong work ethic and socioeconomic mobility underpin the concept of the Asian ‘*Model Minority*’ in some Anglo-Western societies. The ‘*Model*’ label is meant to bring with it positive connotations of minority Asians that suggest they represent a successful and compliant ethnic group for others to aspire to, or emulate - “*work hard, do a good job, be loyal, don’t make a fuss*”.

The ‘*Model Minority*’ tag is, however, nowadays considered to have negative and patronising undertones for those ethnic minorities it's applied to—especially Pan Asians—where the archetypal socio-ethnic attributes have become unhelpful stereotypes.

Differing Asian and Anglo-Western world-views can escalate into more troubling experiences for Asian kaimahi; cultural differences can be experienced as discriminatory bias and even blatant racism in the workplace. Pan-Asian public servants can experience a working environment where it is apparent that they not only ‘*think different*’, but they very obviously ‘*look different*’. In those moments, foreignness—or ‘otherness’—is expressed and felt in its rawest form.

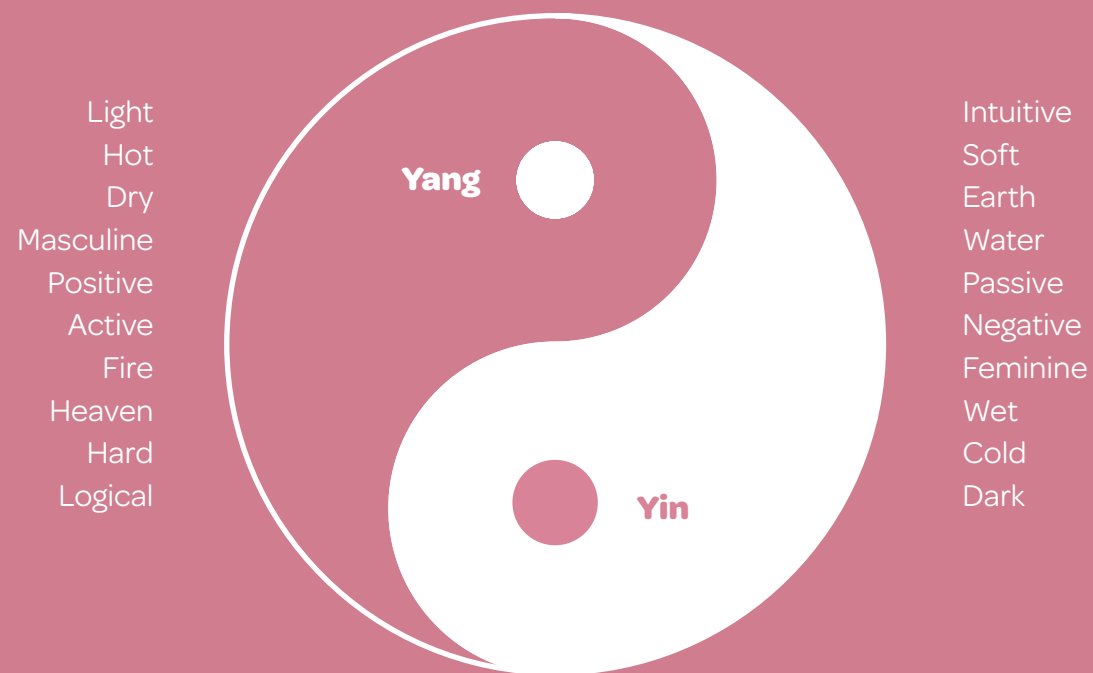
In the workplace, where everyone is encouraged to be authentic, and where authenticity is to be valued, the assumed need to become something that one may not be—in order to succeed or perform to a culturally-incompatible standard—can come at a great cost to personal wellbeing. If one's innate ‘*authenticity*’ is perceived to limit future career options and progression, then becoming ‘*inauthentic*’ may appear to be the only viable option available to succeed. And if taken, these feigned ‘*faux*’ behaviours rob our workplaces of much needed opportunities to grow from real diversity.



Yin and Yang and complementarity

From Taoist philosophy comes the concept of *Yin and Yang*, which is expressed symbolically through the circular *Taijitu* symbol that has dark and light figures in intimate embrace. Some misinterpret this to mean a collision of opposing forces—instead it represents the inherent dualism or polarity present in Taoist philosophy, and that rather than opposing, the *Yin* forces are complementary to the *Yang* forces, and through their complementarity, a greater and richer whole is created.

Yin and Yang Dualism of Complementary Virtues



Understanding - and acknowledging - this archetypal Asian idea of *Yin and Yang*—with its embracing of *complementing* rather than *opposing* virtues—is a powerful way of valuing and honouring Asian ideals in our predominantly Western context. It at once acknowledges that there is no shadow without light, no decisiveness without deliberation, no leading without following, and that these forces are never in opposition, but exist in a synergistic and greater complementary whole. This is a helpful metaphor for how Asian (Eastern) and Anglo-centric (Western) world-views can meet in harmony, rather than colliding in conflict.

The *Yin and Yang* metaphor for reconciling the differences between Eastern and Western world-views is particularly useful as it is fundamentally an *integrative* rather than *assimilative* approach. Balance and a greater whole is achieved by valuing and uniting cultural differences across Asian and Anglo-Western perspectives, rather than assimilating Pan-Asians into a Western-dominant culture, as has often been the case when Pan-Asians have been encouraged to adopt new (Western) behaviours.

Adopting an integrative approach to inter-cultural understanding and harmony—and achieving the Taoist ideal balance of *Yin and Yang*—begins from a place where cultural differences are valued by everyone. This goes beyond mere cultural *awareness* to that of greater inter-cultural curiosity and cultural *appreciation*. It requires a reframing of Asian-centred cultural norms: no longer viewed as negative ‘issues’ that limit the contribution in the workplace - and thus need to be ‘fixed’ - but instead seeing them as offering strengths that contribute positively to performance, leadership and delivery, and are thus worthy of nurturing and appreciation.

In the desired *Yin and Yang* state of culturally-competent and culturally-appreciative leadership, the *Yang* qualities of presence, courage, boldness, authority and power are complemented by the *Yin* qualities of humility, vulnerability, quiet, deference and compassion. This integrative world-view of leadership embraces our full humanity and diversity of thought, to arrive at a more inclusive style of performance and leadership.

While our focus is on Pan-Asian leaders, we believe the very same principles apply to other groups, notably Māori and Pasifika, where collectivist cultures bring a different set of qualities, competencies, norms and values to the fore.

Reflecting this through an extension of how leadership success is viewed will not only resonate with, and inspire, an increasingly superdiverse workforce at all levels; it is also critical to ensure that the increasingly more diverse public service workforce is retained and developed to create a pipeline that will ultimately deliver greater representation at leadership levels.

03.

Facts and figures



Facts and figures

The New Zealand Public Service Workforce 2021: a snapshot

The New Zealand Public Service Workforce data for the year to June 2021⁴ reflects increasing ethnic diversity in the Public Service.

There was a further increase in the representation of Asian staff (12.5%), following increases in each of the last 9 years, although this still lags behind Asian representation in the Aotearoa New Zealand working-age population (15.4%). The relatively large increase in the Public Service workforce over the past year has contributed to this increase in Asian representation. New recruits tend to be more ethnically diverse than the existing workforce, and the share of Asian staff recruited into Public Service departments in the year ending 30 June 2021 (14.9%) was more than for the existing workforce.

The increase in Asian staff is particularly pronounced in Auckland where they comprised 24.9% of Auckland Public Service employees in 2021

Although Europeans still made up the highest proportion of the workforce (66.1%) in 2021, this has decreased steadily over the past 20 years. Both Māori (16.4%) and Pacific (10.2%) representation in the Public Service workforce increased over the past year, and continue at high levels compared to the overall Aotearoa New Zealand working-age population (14.5% and 6.8% respectively in the year to June 2021).

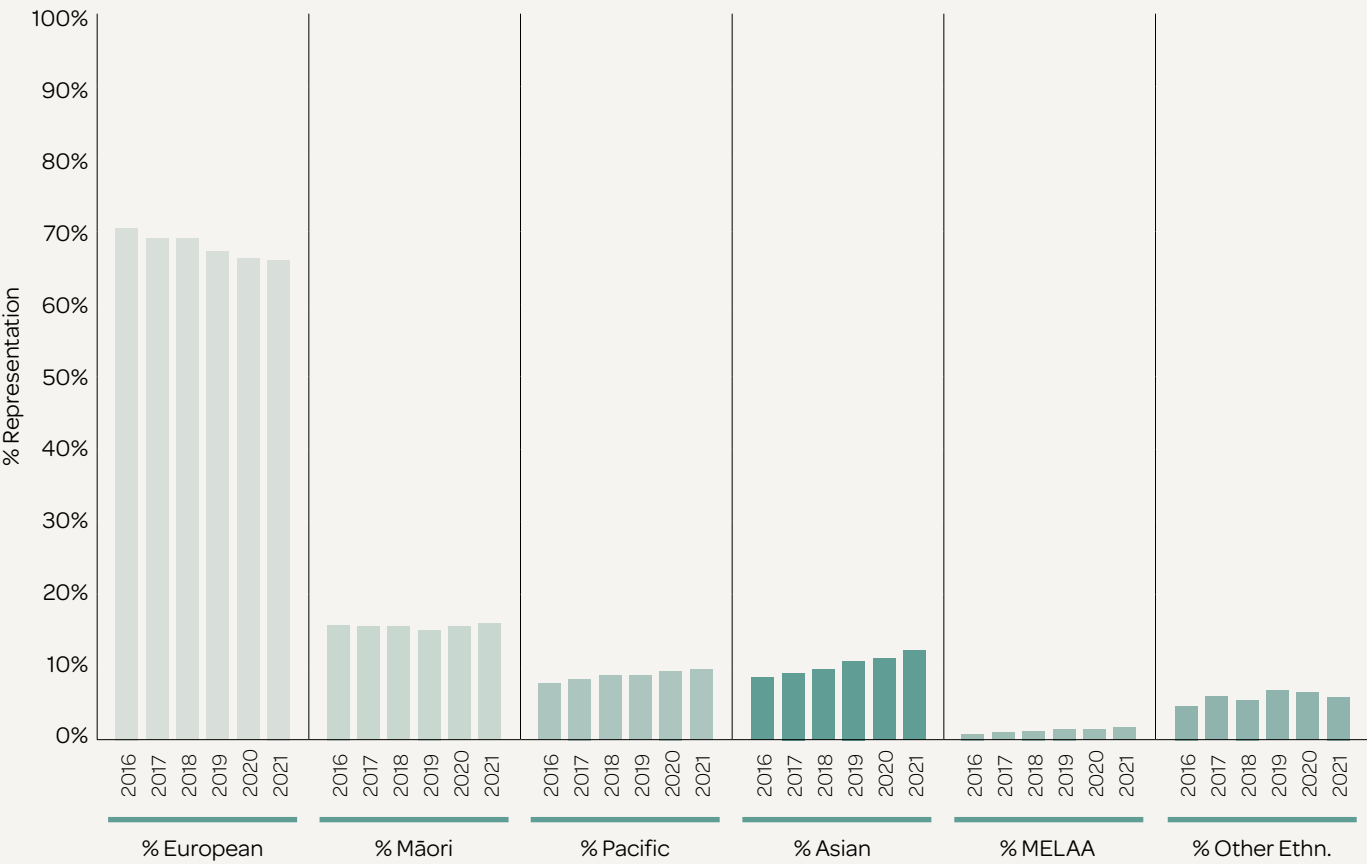
Representation of Middle Eastern, Latin American and African (MELAA) employees in the Public Service (1.8%), has been increasing steadily over the past five years, and is slightly higher than that in the Aotearoa New Zealand working-age population (1.3%).

⁴ Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission - Ethnicity in the Public Service: <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/our-work/workforce-data/diversity-and-inclusion/ethnicity-in-the-public-service/>

What the data tells us

Trends in the ethnic composition of the Public Service workforce

More Asian public servants year-on-year – but still lagging behind Asian representation in the working-age population



Note: Results with small counts have been suppressed. MELAA stands for Middle Eastern, Latin American and African
Source: Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission - Workforce data

Ethnic diversity summary and population comparisons

One of the 37 Tier 1 Public Service leaders was Asian. 2.9% of the Tier 1-3 Public Service leaders were Asian at 30 June 2021

PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERS					
89.2%	16.2%	2.7%	2.7%	0.0%	
European	Māori	Pacific	Asian	MELAA	
TIER 2					
80.5%	15.0%	5.5%	3.2%	0.0%	
European	Māori	Pacific	Asian	MELAA	
TIER 3					
79.8%	13.2%	4.1%	3.0%	0.9%	
European	Māori	Pacific	Asian	MELAA	
TIER 1-3					
80.1%	13.5%	4.3%	2.9%	0.8%	
European	Māori	Pacific	Asian	MELAA	
ALL OF PUBLIC SERVICE					
66.1%	16.4%	10.2%	12.5%	1.8%	
European	Māori	Pacific	Asian	MELAA	
NZ WORKING AGE (HLFS JUN 21 YEAR)					
69.3%	14.5%	6.8%	15.4%	1.3%	
European	Māori	Pacific	Asian	MELAA	
NZ LABOUR FORCE (HLFS JUN 21 YEAR)					
69.5%	14.1%	6.4%	16.4%	1.4%	
European	Māori	Pacific	Asian	MELAA	
NZ POPULATION (CENSUS 2018)					
70.2%	16.5%	8.1%	15.1%	1.5%	
European	Māori	Pacific	Asian	MELAA	

Source: Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission - Workforce data
Stats NZ - Household Labour Force Survey | Stats NZ - Population Census 2018

Public Service Leaders Group and Career Board Cohorts⁵ - by ethnicity

Asians are under-represented – and decreasing – in the Public Service Leaders Group and Career Boards at 30 June 2021 / Changes are reflected as percentage points against the previous quarter

NZ POPULATION

15.1% Asian	70.2% European	16.5% Māori	8.1% Pasifika	N/A Disclosed
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PUBLIC SERVICE WORKFORCE (HRC 2020 DATA)

11.6% Asian	66.3% European	15.9% Māori	9.7% Pasifika	94.3% Disclosed
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PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERS GROUP (Change expressed as percentage points)

2.2% ↓0.5% Asian	89.6% ↑0.2% European	13.2% ↑0.5% Māori	4.1% NC Pasifika	83.7% ↑1.1% Disclosed
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CAREER BOARD FULL COHORT ONLY

3.3% ↓0.6% Asian	74.9% ↑1.1% European	14.4% ↓0.3% Māori	6.7% ↓7.2% Pasifika	84% ↓1.5% Disclosed
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ACTIVE CAREER BOARD FULL COHORT ONLY

2.5% ↓0.7% Asian	66.0% ↓0.3% European	18.9% ↑0.9% Māori	13.2% ↑0.3% Pasifika	93.8% ↑1% Disclosed
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SENIOR LEADERS IN THE TOP 3 TIERS (HRC 2020 DATA)

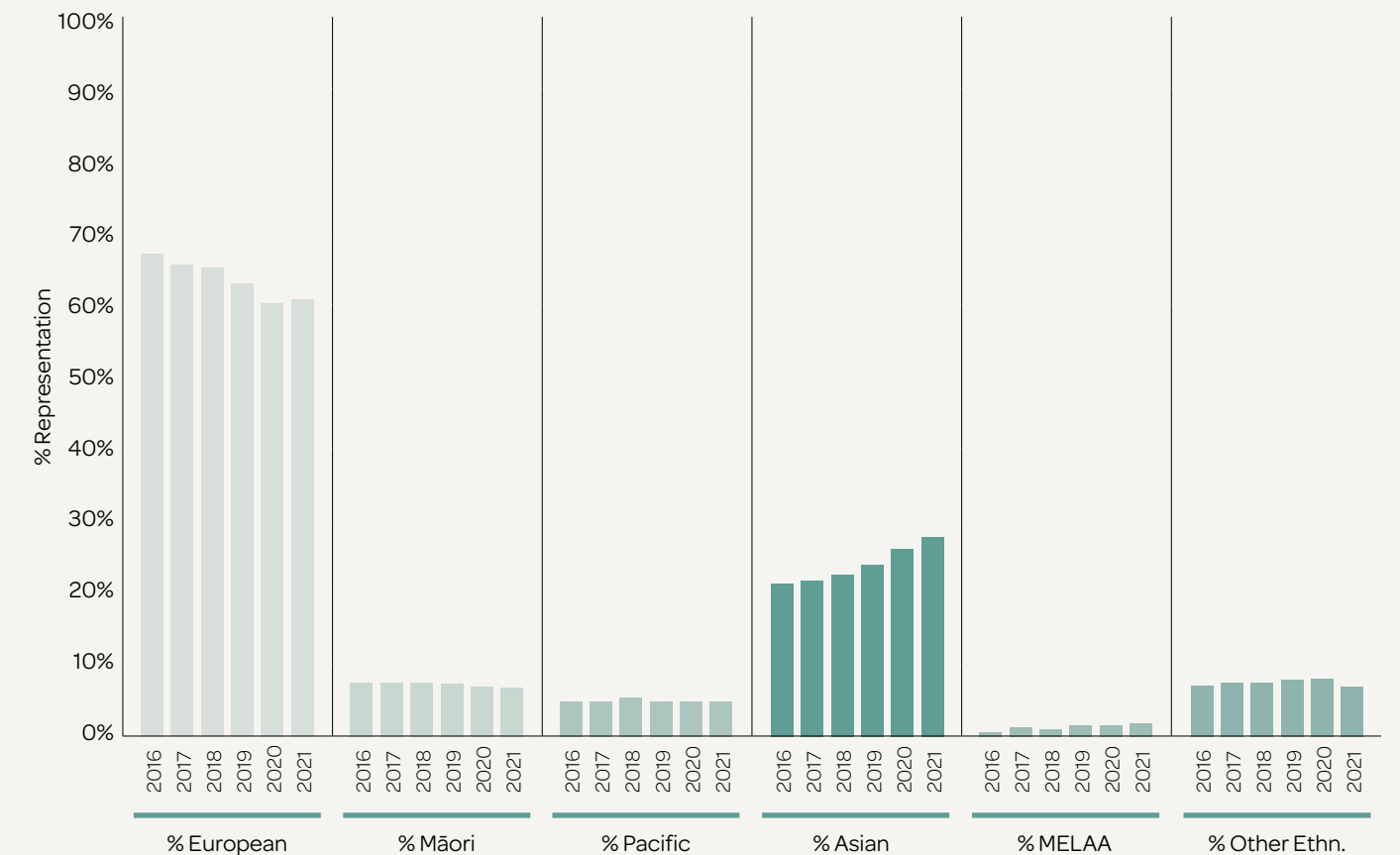
1.9% Asian	81% European	12.4% Māori	3.4% Pasifika	90.9% Disclosed
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⁵ The Public Service Leaders Group is a cohort of around 1100 senior leaders across the Public Service – defined by role. Career Boards are a group of around 340 senior leaders – people specifically looking for development opportunities across the Public Service.

Trends in the ethnic composition of the Public Service workforce

Asian staff are represented most highly as *ICT professionals and technicians* 27.6%; and well represented as *contact centre workers* 18.9%

ICT Professions and Technicians



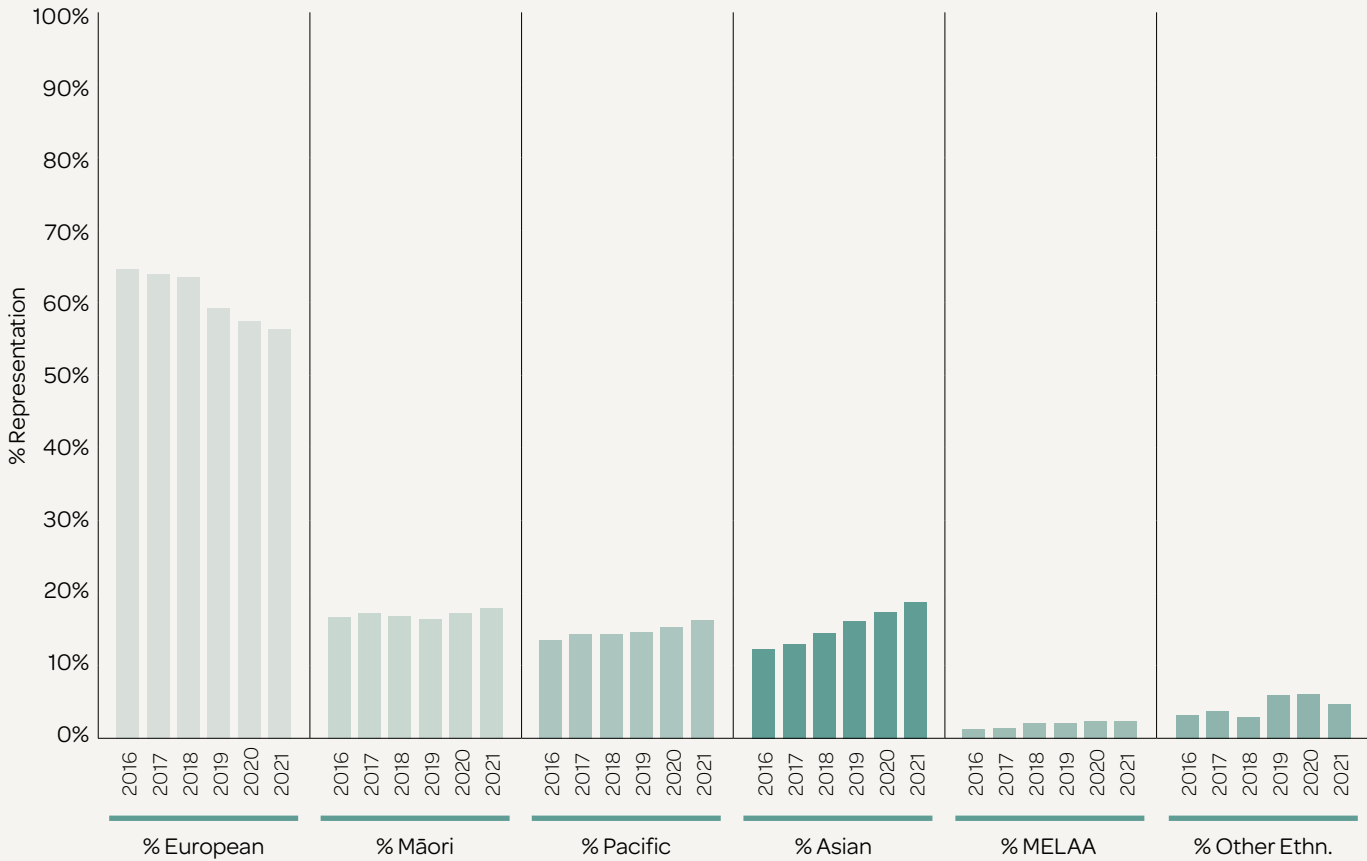
Note: Results with small counts have been suppressed. MELAA stands for Middle Eastern, Latin American and African

Source: Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission - Workforce data

Trends in the ethnic composition of the Public Service workforce

Asian staff are represented most highly as *ICT professionals and technicians* 27.6%; and well represented as contact centre workers 18.9%

Contact Centre Workers



Note: Results with small counts have been suppressed. MELAA stands for Middle Eastern, Latin American and African
Source: Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission - Workforce data

Diversity table by occupation

Occuption Group	Haedcount	% Female	Average Age	% European	% Maori	% Pacific	% Asian	% MELAA	Gender Pay Gap
Managers	7.192	55.8%	48.7	77.4%	15.8%	6.5%	5.5%	1.0%	8.2%
Policy Analyst	3.673	58.8%	38.6	77.3%	9.8%	5.2%	9.0%	1.4%	9.5%
Information Professionals	8.571	60.8%	43.1	70.0%	15.1%	6.0%	12.3%	2.0%	5.1%
Social, Health and Education Workers	11.634	74.0%	44.5	61.8%	23.4%	14.6%	11.4%	2.0%	-2.1%
ICT Professionals and Technicians	2.377	34.0%	43.3	60.0%	6.6%	4.8%	27.6%	1.8%	7.6%
Legal, HR and Finance Professionals	3.178	66.6%	42.5	68.6%	12.3%	6.7%	14.2%	1.4%	5.9%
Other Professionals not elsewhere included	3.335	48.9%	43.7	70.4%	9.1%	1.9%	6.4%	1.8%	-2.6%
Inspectors and Regulatory Officers	11.715	47.9%	44.8	61.1%	17.3%	15.3%	15.0%	2.0%	2.9%
Contact Centre Workers	4.963	73.9%	41.2	56.5%	17.8%	16.5%	18.9%	2.4%	4.1%
Clerical and Adminastrative Workers	5.727	82.3%	43.6	65.1%	16.3%	9.0%	12.5%	2.1%	7.4%
Other Occupations	488	47.5%	46.7	69.9%	13.4%	5.0%	8.7%	1.3%	10.3%
Total Public Service	62.853	61.8%	44.0	66.1%	16.4%	10.2%	12.5%	1.8%	8.6%

Source: Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission - Workforce data

From Te Taunaki, the Public Service Census 2021 – what Asians said...

about why we work in the Public Service

Percentage who agree or strongly agree



Source: Te Taunaki | Public Service Census 2021

From Te Taunaki, the Public Service Census 2021 – what Asians said...

about inclusion

Percentage who agree or strongly agree

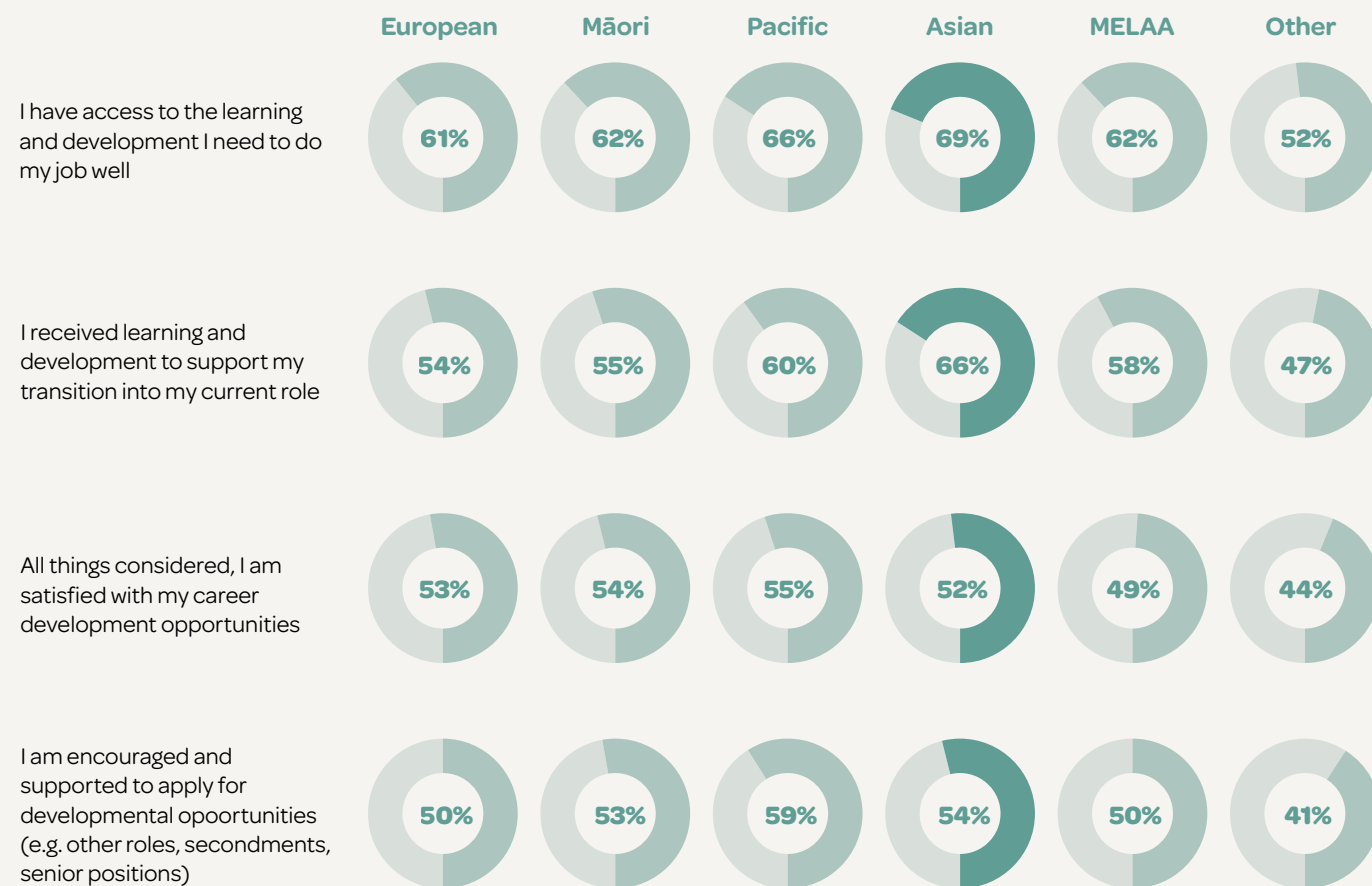


Source: Te Taunaki | Public Service Census 2021

From Te Taunaki, the Public Service Census 2021 – what Asians said...

about skills and development

Percentage who agree or strongly agree



Source: Te Taunaki | Public Service Census 2021

About pay gaps

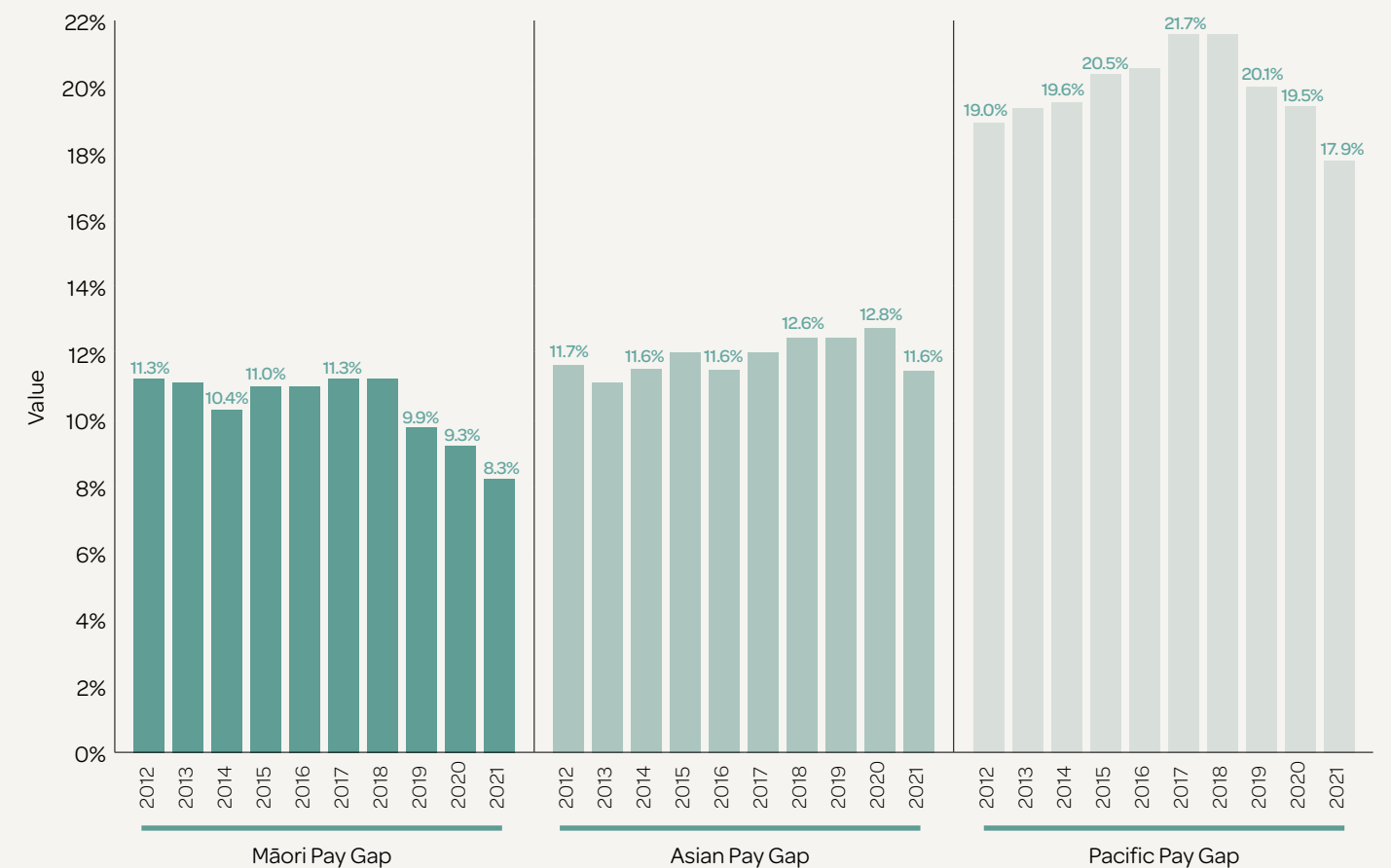
Ethnic pay gaps

The Maori pay gap (the difference between average pay for Māori and non-Māori employees) has fallen from 9.3% in 2020 to 8.3% in 2021. The Pacific pay gap has fallen from 19.5% to 17.9%. The Asian pay gap has also fallen, from 12.8% in 2020 to 11.6% in 2021.

Like the gender pay gap, ethnic pay gaps can relate to occupational segregation or the occupation profile of a particular ethnic group. Māori, Pacific and Asian public servants are over-represented in lower-paid occupation groups.

The Asian pay gap is 11.6% / at 30 June 2021

Trend in Public Service ethnic pay gaps



Source: Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission - Workforce data

What Pan-Asian Public Servants told us

Workshop participants marked their individual responses on a continuum

Pan-Asian Servants want to lead!

I want to be a leader in the New Zealand Public Service



Support to bring out the best in individuals is variable

I feel I have the support to bring out the very best in me



Cultural values, knowledge and understanding aren't highly valued

My cultural values, knowledge and understanding are valued in my organisation



Pan Asian Public Servants believe bringing their whole self to their mahi will make them a better leader

I believe my cultural values, knowledge and understanding will help me be a better leader



Some haven't, others have, experienced barriers in their career

I've experienced barriers in my career



It's not just about working hard and excelling!

Job performance is the most important part of getting to leadership ranks



Seeing Pan-Asians in leadership is important and inspirational

"If I can't see it, how can I be it?"



More of what we heard

Quotes from Pan-Asians

The ambition, goodwill and sense of personal responsibility is there!	But context and culture can make it hard	Maybe we haven't progressed as far as we think?	Visibility of representation matters
"They see me as Asian... Asian doing technical stuff. But my ambition is management and leadership."	"There's a difference in the way leadership is viewed—the Eurocentric Western leadership perspective is the prevailing dominant paradigm."	"I was told 'I can't picture you as a leader...you're too small'."	"If I can't see it, how can I be it?... definitely!"
"Sometimes we create the barrier ourselves, convince ourselves we shouldn't step up... don't need to do it in a brash way, but still need to lead."	"Confidence is a massive thing. I don't like the limelight."	"There's a boxed view about certain cultures. The first question I got was 'do you travel on elephants?'"	"A big enabler is 'People Like Us' - when you look up and around."
"It's important for future generations."	"How to have a voice in a deferential culture?"	"I inevitably bring my own background but how much is valued? I'm obviously the outsider."	"Visibility is incredibly important...Public Service is what we do, so not just pushing ourselves forward, but for the people, the system."
"There's unconscious bias –yes! But it's not just others about us, it's ourselves as well".	"Have to conform to Western leadership style...only in the last couple of years is this changing."	"I've worked here for two years and my manager doesn't know where I come from."	
"Internalised marginalisation, internalised societal judgements makes it bad! You get 'I'm not like that therefore I won't try'. You need to flip it, find how to value it."	"It's a confidence thing... cultures that feature humility and respect are barriers. It's changing now, younger ones are more confident, more attuned to those settings."	"Personal attacks - managers just say 'it's part of the job; you have to be resilient'."	

The ambition, goodwill and sense of personal responsibility is there!	But context and culture can make it hard	Maybe we haven't progressed as far as we think?	Visibility of representation matters
"Your own cultural understanding and background and beliefs help you understand and accept and acknowledge others, so helps with leadership."	"Power networks are too difficult for Asians to break into...unless you're very strong and ambitious. Breaking into power networks requires you to adopt the cultures and paradigms of the people who have the power otherwise they don't recognise you and then, even when you do, you're still different."	"I was called a North Korean spy by my manager, in front of my whole team, and noone said anything."	
	"It's hard to boast about yourself...I find myself quite schizophrenic."		
	"Hate it but you have to play the game."		
	"There's conscious bias in leaders—we work for clones."		
	"I got a list of potential mentors but there was no one there I could identify with."		
	"Question...should the interventions be to fit the mould to be successful OR can we get the system more adaptive and accommodating of leadership styles and norms?"		

More of what we heard

From interviewees who are not Pan-Asian

Yes – but what and how?	There are allies and ideas in the system	And there are known challenges in the system	Targets and quotas get a mixed reaction
“There’s a real will across CEs to have diversity up and through, a real will and intent...the question is how...we need to provide deliberate and targeted assistance.”	“Need to encourage/give confidence and exposure to go with the ability and competence. It’s not about advantaging them, it’s about not disadvantaging them. Create the channel for them to demonstrate their skills. We need to front foot this because there’s a culturally biased reticence to talk about themselves and we have an unconscious bias that’s ‘like for like.’”	“We are poorly equipped to lead diverse workforces. We need the capacity of leaders to lead diverse teams. Unconscious bias is seen to be the answer...but it’s at the low end!”	“I never thought I’d hear myself say this but I wonder if we need to move to quotas for a while.”
“What would good look like? The leadership table would look different, the leadership table would behave differently.”	“It’s about ensuring people aren’t disadvantaged, that we don’t miss out on talent.”	“There are power networks and dominant cultures—we need to enable voices to be heard.”	“The system’s not doing enough...targets would be useful. Nothing will change otherwise.”
“Need to accelerate it otherwise it is going to take too long...we’re not short of talent... it’s about recognition, giving opportunity, a chance, a shot, then supporting them in the environment.”	“Just because people aren’t saying something, doesn’t mean they are not doing something. Sometimes its soft influence. Soft influence capability of Asian peoples is absolutely massive.”	“There are unconscious bias hotspots right through the system—from recruitment to development to promotion... This embeds the stereotypes.”	“Quotas are a blunt tool. A risk, as they’re not sustainable if it’s not hearts and minds”.

Yes – but what and how?	There are allies and ideas in the system	And there are known challenges in the system	Targets and quotas get a mixed reaction
“How can leaders learn to be better? Help educate us.”	“Create the radar –who do we know and who don’t we know?”	“More sophisticated leadership is required to yield the benefits of diversity.”	“There’s a risk of ‘diversity hires’ and this impacts on the individual. We need to develop all, regardless of group, so we need a systemic deliberate and respectful approach to seek them out.”
“We want diversity of thought. There’s a willingness. But there’s a blindspot on how to achieve it.”	“There are active techniques I use...”who do I never hear from?”... some people will get on with things, no fuss, may not push their ego –so you need to actively engage and pull out the talent; it’s a different mould.”	“We have so much talent, saying it just takes time for it to rise up is a lousy excuse. The truth and reality is personal and institutional bias.”	
“It’s about beliefs that dictate the behaviour, so it has to be about changing the beliefs that underpin the behaviour.”	“I need all my staff to get visibility and airtime – especially those who don’t blow their own trumpet.”	“We just do knowledge dissemination at present, we’re not creating behaviours and skill.”	
	“Reach in, create the opportunity for spotlight, you still require them to prove themselves.”		

04.

Key themes and insights



04

Key themes and insights

What we heard, read and learnt

There is plenty of reporting on the need for greater Asian representation at leadership levels, here in Aotearoa New Zealand and globally.

This need is brought into even sharper focus in Aotearoa New Zealand by recent population projections from Statistics New Zealand: *“While all ethnic group populations are expected to grow in number, the broad Asian ethnic group is expected to see the fastest growth to 26% of the population⁶ by 2043, up from 16% in 2018”*.

This raises not only the challenges of representing the communities we serve, at all levels, and delivering to those communities. It also raises the challenge of both attracting and leading a significantly more diverse workforce. Cultural norms, values and behaviours are a factor. Many Pan-Asian staff not only relate to, but *are*, the Asian stereotype and value set, and are proud of it.

To understand the lived experiences of our kaimahi, we did a lot of listening and learning about the experiences, insights, challenges and opportunities from “the voice of the people”. We also drew from the literature and received many other inputs. Many, many people were very generous with their time and sharing their thoughts and their expert knowledge.

Overall, we were heartened to learn of the enthusiasm amongst Pan-Asian people in the Public Service to contribute, and the strength of their leadership aims and aspirations.

We also learnt of a great willingness amongst more senior and experienced Pan-Asian public servants to “give back” – feeling an obligation, and offering to help build workforce capability as role models, mentors, and guides. This is a very rich resource that has not been formally sought as a collective offering, nor widely or actively tapped into other than through one-to-one arrangements. Our workshops suggest there would be a lot of demand for this.

We heard about positive career experiences and supportive managers in the workplace. We also heard about less positive experiences. For some people, their reality includes experience of bias, discrimination and racism. This flows through to their perception, if not their reality, of leadership development opportunity and leadership prospects. So, concerns about race and equity are live.

We became clear that the often-heard “we need to reflect the communities we serve” - the principle that the group comprising all public service employees should reflect the makeup of society - needs to go a lot further - further in the sense of going beyond just reflecting a number. Greater diversity in numbers is happening. A focus on ensuring engagement, growth and a sense of belonging, inclusion and value is now critical to retention and to achieving a visible leadership pipeline.

Some of the contributions from our workshop attendees you will find in the Appendix.

Note the comments from workshop attendees are presented as given. The quotes through this report from our interviews and workshops are reflected verbatim, and unattributed. Quotes from published material are referenced.

⁶ And higher in Auckland. Earlier projections were that Asian peoples would constitute 35% of Auckland’s total population by 2038.

There's a lot going on

There is no doubt there's a huge amount going on to address leadership, inclusion, diversity - and, increasingly, race and equity - issues in both the public sector and the private sector.

In the New Zealand Public Service, leadership strategy and leadership development are a focal point for all agencies, as well as at a "whole of Public Service level" through Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission. Progress is being made on getting greater alignment of work programmes across the system.

Over the past year, key areas of focus have included:

- lifting leadership capability across the Public Service
- strengthening the focus, underpinned by targets, on ensuring diverse leaders – Māori and Pasifika - are profiled and have cross-agency development opportunities through four Career Boards: Policy, Operations, Corporate and Auckland

- improving the visibility of public service needs and shifts through, for example, improving data collection.

The focus on diversity and inclusion has been strengthened through specific reference in the new Public Service Act 2020. This Act 2020 includes provisions for chief executives and boards to promote diversity and inclusiveness – in relation to the Public Service as a reflection of the make-up of society; and in employment policies and practices, fostering workplaces that are inclusive of all groups.

Data shows that the workforce has become more ethnically diverse, with new recruits reflecting more ethnic diversity than the existing public service workforce.

Notwithstanding this progress, there remains an under-representation of Māori, Pacific peoples, ethnic minorities, Rainbow and disabled people in Public Service leadership roles, as well as continued gender and ethnic pay gaps.

Diversity and inclusion

It is important that New Zealand's Public Service reflects and understands the society it serves.

The Act affirms this principle because:

- a diverse workforce will have the experience and expertise to better contribute to the design and delivery of policies, services and other initiatives meant to improve the lives of all New Zealanders
- New Zealanders will have greater trust and confidence in a Public Service that they can see reflects the communities it serves
- inclusive workplaces are fair for employees and reflect the statutory obligation of the Public Service to be a good employer – we should be a good employer and model inclusion as an aspect of fair and equitable employment practices and give all an equal opportunity to demonstrate merit for employment or promotion
- it prepares the Public Service to be ready for a more diverse future for New Zealand.

Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2021 - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission

Papa Pounamu and Public Service-wide diversity and inclusion

In the New Zealand Public Service, Papa Pounamu is the Chief Executive governance group for the Public Service-wide diversity and inclusion work programme.

Last year, Chief Executives agreed to make five priorities mandatory within their agencies:

- 1. Te āheinga ā-ahurea | Cultural competence**
Reflecting the significance of the Crown-Māori Relationship and building our cultural competence, and confidence, across the broadest range of cultures is integral to ensuring inclusion.
- 2. Te Urupare i te Mariu | Addressing Bias**
Addressing bias is a critical factor in ensuring everyone in the Public Service has fair opportunity in recruitment, career progression and development opportunities.
- 3. Hautūtanga Ngākau Tuwhera | Inclusive Leadership**
How we lead across the Public Service matters. Diversity and Inclusion capability across the system depends on strong, inclusive leadership.
- 4. Te whakawhanaungatanga | Building relationships**
Inclusion and belonging is dependent upon having a diverse range of supportive relationships in our workplaces. We intentionally draw upon those relationships to create positive change.
- 5. Ngā tūhononga e kōkiritia ana e ngā kaimahi | Employee-led networks**
Having a space and mandate to connect with others with shared lived experiences supports people to bring their whole selves to work. Employee-led networks provide richness to workplaces and contribute valuable subject matter expertise.

Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission reports that, in the 2020/2021 year, all agencies took action to improve their maturity in relation to diversity and inclusion⁷ Some also took steps to align this work with commitments to build capability for Maori Crown relationships, to build positive and safe workplaces, and to address public service pay gaps. And positive steps were also taken to enhance cultural competence and support employee-led networks.

Developments further afield

Further afield – beyond the core public service in Aotearoa New Zealand, into the private sector, in academia, and in other jurisdictions – there are many positive and progressive initiatives driving towards the same outcomes around leadership, representation, inclusion, diversity, race and equity.

Some examples – just a snapshot – that we explored, and were briefed on, include:

- **Mana Āki - building intercultural competence in the public sector**
Mana Āki is a programme that aims to build intercultural competence in the Public Sector, recognising the needs of an increasingly diverse Aotearoa New Zealand. Led by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment in 2019, the programme was developed with New Zealand Police, the Department of Internal Affairs, Human Rights Commission and Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission. It was subsequently selected by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as one of ten highly innovative projects to be profiled in an OECD sponsored forum in Paris.

⁷ *Te Kawa Mataaho - Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2021 (publicservice.govt.nz)*

The programme was developed with the wider public service in mind and has been made available as an intercultural competency learning solution across the Public Service.

There are also other programmes that are made available across agencies, such as *Intercultural Capability* training by the Ministry for Ethnic Communities, and *Yavu: Foundations of Pacific Engagement* by the Ministry for Pacific Peoples.

➤ **Auckland University of Technology - Navigating Two Worlds: Pacific contribution to leadership within the New Zealand rugby system**

New Zealand Rugby and Auckland Rugby recognised the need to cultivate Pasifika leadership and partnered with AUT's Sport Performance Research Institute New Zealand to develop the *Navigating Two Worlds* action research project. It was recognised that within rugby there is a dominant Western-based culture and view of leadership, yet with a greater appreciation of Pasifika culture, new leadership ways and practices could be developed and strengthened.

The multi-year project aimed to discover how cultural understanding can be enhanced to develop leadership within the New Zealand rugby system, and to work through and improve participants' rugby career pathways. This will facilitate a smoother pathway for Pacific Island members of the New Zealand rugby community, therefore allowing greater access and leadership contribution throughout rugby in New Zealand.

Research led to action which included creating a greater awareness and appreciation of Pasifika values and the cultural approach to leadership, leading to new ways of doing things; exploring Pacific leadership, and introducing mentoring training and individual mentoring programmes.

➤ **Auckland District Health Board**

All eligible Māori and Pacific job candidates are automatically fast-tracked to a shortlist if they meet minimum requirements.

The objective is to increase workforce diversity, and deliver better patient experiences and outcomes.

The policy has resulted in more Māori and Pacific candidates being interviewed and hired.

➤ **The Superdiversity Institute**

The Superdiversity Institute for Law, Policy and Business is a multidisciplinary centre specialising in analysing the law, policy and business implications of New Zealand's superdiversity. The Institute's vision is to enable Government, business and non-government organisations (NGOs) to maximise the benefits of the 'diversity dividend' arising from New Zealand's transition to a superdiverse society.

The Institute undertakes research and analysis, and supports and advises Government, business and NGOs as they transition to a superdiverse strategic context. It also delivers practical training eg cultural capability including Māori, Pasifika and Asian competence; unconscious bias training, reviewing policies that involve, or should involve, diverse staff, and drafting policies.

One of the Institute's offerings is the CQ (*Cultural Intelligence*) *Tick Programme*. The CQ *Tick* is a read-out – for staff and customers – of an organisation's cultural competence, its cultural intelligence and capability, essentially its ability to work with people from all backgrounds who are not like them. The CQ *Tick* measures the level of cultural intelligence and capability so that gaps and strengths can be identified and addressed, and provides recommendations for building on.

And, in other jurisdictions, while the context may differ from our public sector context here in Aotearoa New Zealand, some of the initiatives include:

In Australia

➤ **Centre for Asian-Australian Leadership**

Australian National University Centre for Asian-Australian Leadership is the first of its kind in Australia, dedicated to understanding and advocating for the benefits of cultural diversity. Its research, training and outreach guide business, government and the community to properly reflect and enhance ethnic diversity across all levels of leadership.

➤ **Expanding the definition of what leadership looks, sounds and feels like**

A "*Quietly Powerful*" movement which explores how an individual's quiet nature can be their hidden leadership strength – in an uncertain, changing, global and inter-connected world, the concept that the 'alpha' or 'hero' leadership style alone is outdated and inadequate

Quietly Powerful expands the definition of what good leadership looks, sounds and feels like and empowers quieter professionals and those outside "majority" groups to fulfil their leadership potential.

In Canada

➤ **Employment Equity legislation**

Employment equity, as defined in federal Canadian law by the Employment Equity Act, requires federal jurisdiction employers to engage in proactive employment practices to increase the representation of four designated groups: women, people with disabilities, Aboriginal peoples, and members of visible minorities.⁸

Agencies reflect this by statements such as: *Candidates from under-represented employment equity groups will be considered ahead of others in the selection process... Please declare in your application if you identify with one or more of these groups, to ensure your application is prioritised.*

➤ **High level mentorship**

This includes mentoring, including by Deputy Ministers, of executives to support their career journey in the public service. Regular group meetings may include other senior executives to listen, learn and share their perspectives to enrich the discussions.

➤ **Mentorship Plus**

The Mentorship Plus initiative aims to support employees in under-represented designated employment equity groups or equity-seeking groups who aspire to develop their careers, including reaching leadership roles or executive positions. The objective is to increase equality – and more importantly equity – in career development opportunities for all public servants.

The Canada School of Public Service chairs the Mentorship Plus Interdepartmental Working Group for Small Departments and Agencies with 31 participating organisations. There is a centralised database of mentors and sponsors, and participants are matched.

⁸ Visible minority refers to whether a person is a visible minority or not, as defined by the Employment Equity Act. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour". The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.

In the United Kingdom➤ **Race Champions**

There are senior level Race Champions at Permanent Secretary level and in every ministry there is a Race Champion at Director-General or Director level.

➤ **Employee networks and Race to the Top cross-government network**

There are employee networks in departments and a cross-government network of Grade 6/7 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME⁹) civil servants. This network aims to provide a stronger collective voice, help individuals to thrive and progress, create and support a more diverse senior civil service, and address under-representation at senior levels. It collaborates with departmental race networks and other cross-government race networks.

➤ **Cross Government Shadowing Scheme**

This scheme gives BAME Grade 6/7s the opportunity to flexibly shadow a senior colleague in their own department or gain insight into senior leadership elsewhere. Participants shadow a colleague from the senior civil service for two to three days over a period of months, allowing close hand observation of senior leadership in action, with opportunities to discuss leadership approach, the complexities of senior roles and key success factors for leadership at the next level. Hundreds of shadowing opportunities are arranged each year.

➤ **The gender/ethnicity intersect**

Women in leadership sessions – to explore the gender/ethnicity intersect with senior women leaders within the Civil Service and beyond. The focus is on sharing experience in navigating barriers to help ensure BAME Grade 6/7 women realise their full career potential.

➤ **BAME men role models**

To improve the representation levels of ethnic minority men across the Civil Service, particularly at more senior grades. Conferences enable colleagues to hear about the leadership journey of senior BAME men in the Civil Service, helping to challenge and change perceptions that BAME men cannot thrive in government.

➤ **Home Office recruitment practices**

Continually evolving practices include using inclusive job descriptions, anonymised recruitment and diverse shortlists to eliminate potential bias in the recruitment process. Language used in vacancies is checked prior to advertising to ensure the approach is as inclusive as possible and the candidate pool is maximised.

The Home Office seeks to widen its search to include more diverse groups of talent by working with staff networks to understand barriers to participation, working to demystify the selection process for all candidates and providing feedback to all shortlisted candidates.

To support diversity within recruitment, the Home Office has some 760 Black, Asian and minority ethnic Independent Panel Members who sit on recruitment panels for the Office's talent pipeline middle management grades as well as for senior civil service candidates, offering personal insight into the senior level recruitment process to support their own development and progression.

➤ **Home Office talent pipeline**

Enhanced talent development offers for BAME just below the senior civil service grade with specific interventions to individuals as well as their line manager.

Executive group coaching for BAME, integrated into core development programme, has been piloted.

➤ **Future Leaders Scheme and Senior Leaders Scheme**

Cross-government talent programmes for high potential senior managers to help accelerate their development. These include an additional element, integrated into the core programme, exclusively for minority ethnic participants

In the United States of America➤ **Stanford University Graduate School of Business – Asian American Executive Programme**

The Stanford Asian American Executive Programme provides training for Asian American executives to develop leadership skills for career advancement. The programme aims to build a strong community based on shared experiences, and participants develop a personal action plan to transform classroom learning into their personal and professional lives. Since its inception, the programme has attracted around 500 participants.

The programme is designed in conjunction with Asian American senior executives, and classwork and group exercises are complemented with networking opportunities with Asian American senior executives.

The curriculum includes learning how to develop personal strategies in areas that may be culturally challenging or do not come so naturally for many Asians – eg building power and influence, recognising Asian and Western cultural biases and competencies; getting comfortable with power; understanding power dynamics; communication and persuasive skills.

➤ **Ascend Leadership Foundation**

The Ascend Leadership Foundation is the largest Pan-Asian business professional membership organisation in North America. Its mission is to advocate, enable and assist Pan-Asians in North America to become the leaders of today and tomorrow. It aims to drive workplace and societal impact by developing and elevating all Asian and Pacific Islander business leaders and empowering them to become catalysts for change. It offers career lifecycle and cross-industry leadership programmes and networks that foster community and engagement for Pan-Asian business professionals at all levels, students, corporate partners, and the community at large.

Initiatives include scholarships, academic and innovation programme sponsorship.

Research includes measuring and analysing the progress of Pan-Asians and other minorities in leadership roles and identifying the factors that contribute to the leadership gap. This research contributes to shaping programmes and thought leadership on issues pertinent to Pan-Asians and on broader diversity and inclusion work.

9 More recently, it has been announced that Ministers will drop the term Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) across government.

Research publications have included:

- Model Minority Myth and The Double-Edged Sword¹⁰
- Race, Gender and the Double Glass Ceiling¹¹

The Foundation also supports initiatives such as:

- *Ascend Executive Network* – bringing together senior Pan-Asian executives focused on increasing diversity in the C-suite and on corporate boards
- *Aspiring Directors Institute* – to prepare and position Pan-Asian executives for the boardroom, including mentor match ups, networking and access to Board search opportunities
- *Elevate* - a leadership programme for early career professionals, offering advice on skills and behaviours for success
- *Executive Insight for Women Series* - a programme led by Pan-Asian female executives to share how they overcame career challenges, their stories and insights through mini lectures, interactive discussions, and role-play exercises
- *Ascend Cafe* - an online mentoring program for students and professionals

➤ Asian American Government Executives Network

The Asian American Government Executives Network seeks to promote, expand and support Asian American and Pacific Islander leadership in Government, contributing to a more diverse representation of leaders in the federal workforce.

To help develop future executive leaders, it holds leadership workshops, development programmes, and one-on-one mentoring and coaching sessions. The Senior Executive Service development programme, for example, includes executive development courses, coaching in mock interviews, individual mentoring, and career counselling.

➤ Stanford University Graduate School of Business

There are also many courses that address, more generally, the underlying system issues that contribute to a lack of representation at leadership levels. The Stanford University Graduate School of Business *Leverage Diversity and Inclusion for Organizational Excellence* course is but one. The course, and readings, point, for example, to:

- The need for empathy to underpin a human-centred design approach; learning from the people most impacted by the problem – deeply understanding needs before coming to solutions; prototyping solutions
- Developing and deploying tools and techniques to recognise our own, and others', bias
- The need to watch for stereotypes which lead people to “cover” or downplay aspects of their social identity
- The need to consider an approach that is “Diverse by design”
- The risk that holistic policy or interventions can have differential, sometimes negative, effects on under-represented groups

- The risk of “cultural fit” leading to a lack of diversity
- The opportunity to hire through networks to increase diversity
- The “false promise of meritocracy”, the idealistic belief that merit, being ability and effort, results in success
- Cautioning against “open box” performance evaluation systems that enable bias to creep in
- The caution that individuals or, often, minority groups who repeatedly get lower value tasks or assignments results in undervalued work that is harder to track, contributions are invisible and are therefore not acknowledged
- Similarly, individuals or groups who repeatedly pick up tasks or deliver contributions that are out of scope may not be acknowledged or rewarded.

We recognise there are many good practices in play, and there are moves to get greater alignment of work programmes across the system, facilitate more sharing, and collect and analyse more data.

The scan we have taken suggests that a continued focus on very key interventions at system, agency and individual levels is needed, in parallel, to get greater traction.

More can be done – and the time is now!

While many positive steps are being taken, there’s an acknowledgement, too, that more can be done.

Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission makes specific reference to efforts to increase Māori, Pacific and ethnic diversity, **particularly improving the representation of Asian and ethnic communities, and wanting to see ethnic composition shift at all levels and specifically at leadership levels**¹².

New Zealand now has a Minister for Diversity, Inclusion and Ethnic Communities.

For Pan-Asian public servants, the time is now!

Where we can do more

There has been some good progress, but there remains more for us to do as we know that disparities remain within our Public Service.

Diversity in our workforce is improving, but this is happening at a slower rate than we would like. We want the whole of the Public Service, as well as each agency, to reflect all the communities across all diversity dimensions, including representation for Māori, Pacific, ethnic, gender, Disability and Rainbow.

We’ve been focused on gender and now we’re concentrating efforts to increase Māori, Pacific and ethnic diversity and particularly want to improve the representation of Asian and ethnic communities

¹⁰ This paper addressed the popular American narrative of Asian Americans being perceived as the “model minority” and how this stereotype masks the bias that Asian Americans face in the workplace, in schools and in the communities in which they reside.

¹¹ This analysis of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission National Workforce Data in 2018 examined the senior leadership pipeline in companies in all industries by race and gender, comparing representation in executive leadership. It reviewed the corporate diversity pipeline data across racial groups with a focus on Asians. Findings, from a racial and a gender perspective, were that more needed to be done to address the underlying causes that were limiting advancement for Pan Asians, Blacks and Latin Americans into executive levels, with Asian and Black women continuing to be the least likely of all cohorts to be executives.

¹² *Papa Pounamu – te kokenga o te kanorau me te whakauru puta noa i te Ratonga Tūmatanui / Papa Pounamu – diversity and inclusion progress across the Public Service / Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission*

Continued from previous page.....

We want to see our ethnic composition shift at all levels and specifically at leadership levels.

This needs to happen across the system and it's important that our workforces that are focused on, or contribute to, counter-terrorism efforts also reflect the New Zealand population and communities that we are here to serve. To achieve the shifts we want, we need better and more regular data collection on our existing workforce and on our recruitment and progression.

Most of our people reported that they felt included and valued at work – however we want this to be the experience for all our people. We also know that inclusion scores were, on average, lower for disabled people and our Rainbow communities. We can improve the inclusivity of our workplaces by further progressing the work that's already been started through Papa Pounamu – for example broadening our cultural competence learning so we can grow our knowledge of Pacific, ethnic, Rainbow and Disability communities.

We can also do more to improve the uptake of training for bias and inclusive leadership and to then embed that learning through day-to-day behaviours and system changes. We want a clearer picture on what we're doing and the impact it's having – to achieve that, we'll need to improve the way we evaluate, collect and report this information.

*Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2021 - Te Kawa
Mataaho Public Service Commission*

Our key themes and insights

Through our study, we had the great fortune to talk with many people, each and every one of whom gave us valuable input and food for thought, from a wide range of perspectives.

We have, realistically, touched only on a small number of the issues for, and the ways in which they are felt by, Pan-Asian people. Similarly we have, realistically, only gained a snapshot of the kinds of positive developments that are in train.

We believe, nevertheless, that the range of issues and insights we have had the opportunity to hear and learn about gives us solid foundations for recommending practical steps forward.

Our views consolidate into five key themes.

Theme 1

We need to accelerate our capability to deliver to the communities we serve and to lead the workforce of the future

We heard repeated commitments about needing to “reflect the communities we serve”. We commend this commitment. We need to do that – and we need to go beyond that. Making a difference through merely “reflecting the communities we serve” runs the risk of success being judged through recruitment profiles and employment statistics – both important steps, but not enough. Numbers are important - but they need to be accompanied by visibility and voice.

We need to go beyond just a statistical reflection of the communities we serve on two counts.

Firstly, as public servants, we need to **reflect and deliver to the communities we serve, genuinely understanding and valuing their diversity and difference.** This brings a strong outward-facing lens

and reflects our core business imperative, as public servants - it's our job to deliver services that meet the needs of our community. And we need to accelerate our capability to deliver, given the fast-growing Pan-Asian demographic in Aotearoa New Zealand, not to mention trade partnerships where 61.4% of New Zealand's exports by value were delivered to Asian countries in 2021¹³.

Secondly, the workforce of the future is going to be significantly more diverse. We're going to need the **capability to lead an increasingly diverse workforce** that calls for significantly greater levels of cultural appreciation and an adaptation and extension of the leadership competencies we currently recognise for leadership success.

Given population projections, we need to accelerate our capabilities on both these fronts before it's too late.

Theme 2

Social inclusion is fundamental for ethnic leadership to have any chance of flourishing

The demographics, according to population projections, will see Pan-Asians comprise 26% of our population by 2043, and 31% in Tamaki Makaurau Auckland by 2038. With this kind of outlook, the social inclusion and social cohesion agenda becomes increasingly prominent.

There are many definitions of social inclusion and social cohesion. For our purposes, we adopt a layperson's interpretation; simply, that, in a democratic society, there should be levels of trust and respect – manifesting in belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, and legitimacy – between, and across, members of the society who bring with them their unique identity, values and beliefs.

Public Service Chief Executives have been charged with developing greater connection between diversity and inclusion and social inclusion. Over the last couple of years, there has been heightened consciousness of bias, racism and discrimination as part of the experience staff have in the workplace. We heard this from many Pan-Asian public servants - a reflection of their reality.

There are lots of opportunities to be harnessed – and there remain barriers to be addressed.

On social cohesion

Societies only function well when they exhibit a level of cohesiveness that allows them to work for the mutual benefit of all their diverse members, despite differing world views, identities, and values. Societal well-being therefore depends on maintaining social cohesion.

Social cohesion should be supported because it is essential to our collective well-being and that of individuals, groups, and communities.

The OECD defines a cohesive society as one that works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalization, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility (OECD, 2012).

*Sustaining-Aotearoa-New-Zealand-as-a-cohesive-society
(informedfutures.org)*

¹³ World's Top Exports: *New Zealand's Top Trading Partners 2021 (worldstopexports.com)*

On social cohesion

Ethnic community identities are fluid, diverse, multi-dimensional, and need to be understood in relation to social class, ethnicity, culture and gender.

Ethnic communities face barriers due to the colonial or Eurocentric ideals that undermine the work that reflects cultural diversity. These lead to issues that impact upon life and wellbeing - in particular racism and stereotyping. They have adverse impacts on a person's wellbeing and life.

*Capturing the Diversity Dividend of Aotearoa New Zealand
– Literature Review: Diversity, Belonging and Inclusion in
Aotearoa New Zealand: a review of consultation and community
engagement (2021)*

On “jokes” and microaggressions

“And there are also microaggressions that might sound ‘micro’ to the person saying them, but to the person that’s receiving them, it ain’t micro at all”.

*Simon Tse
Chief Executive
Crown Commercial Service
UK Cabinet Office Race Champion*

While some Pan-Asian staff report fantastic examples of active support and encouragement by their leaders, others experience comments or “jokes” and microaggressions¹⁴ in the workplace that challenge how well we believe we are doing on the inclusion front.

Creating an environment of belonging, inclusion and recognition is fundamental for ethnic leadership to have any chance of flourishing.

We need to **move beyond unconscious bias, to conscious inclusion; beyond cultural awareness to cultural appreciation**, as a core leadership competency.

Theme 3

Cultural norms and values are a huge factor

We are socially-constructed beings, a product of our upbringing –so cultural norms, values and behaviours feature strongly in the workplace for many Pan-Asian peoples.

This is no different to many other ethnic groups and, in this regard, we refer particularly to our Māori and Pasifika colleagues with all three groups being heavily oriented to a collectivist culture.

But despite the often quoted “bring your authentic self to work”, the cultural norms and values that are a feature of more collectivist cultures are not always completely understood, nor are they completely aligned with the more dominant individualistic euro-centric leadership style that is generally sought and valued today.

Understanding and appreciating any and all cultural norms and values

Pacific peoples bring special skills to public sector roles.

Strong interpersonal skills and a collective mindset that can help build a better working culture

Building and maintaining relationships are a central way of being for Pacific peoples. In many Pacific cultures, we have the concept of the vā. This is the “space in-between” that builds and links things, people, and worlds and is built and maintained through reciprocity of respect, kindness, and service. Every time I pass in front of someone, I slightly lower my head and shoulders and excuse myself as I walk past. When I talk to someone who is seated, I find the nearest chair and ensure we are speaking at equal eye level so as to not show I am above the person. If I give feedback or express critique, it is through respectful and kind language so as not to diminish the person's mana. The vā helps centre my relationships. When the vā weakens, I strengthen it through humility and hold myself accountable where I admit my shortcomings.

These values are what keep connections with families and communities close and alive. This is how Pacific peoples build strong relationships with others and how they can influence a better work environment.

Cultural intelligence and competence to connect different worlds

Pacific peoples occupy and walk in many worlds and contexts. For example, Pālagi people (Europeans) tend to speak up and write formal complaints if they're upset with a service. Pacific peoples are more likely to persevere if something isn't up to standard as they accept that the system can only do so much. Demanding more may take away from others. This is where there is misalignment of cultural perspectives and expectations. Pacific professionals in the public service can mediate, reconcile, and speak the language of the two worlds to translate what the other needs and come from a connected perspective when delivering for the community.

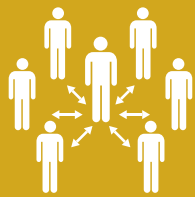
*Romeo Tevaga
Valuing Pacific to Build a Stronger Aotearoa Public Service
Institute of Public Administration New Zealand (ipan.org.nz)*

¹⁴ Microaggressions are incidents in which someone accidentally (or purposely) makes an offensive statement or asks an insensitive question. Microaggressions are defined as verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group.
Harvard Business Review 2020: When and How to Respond to Microaggressions.

In collectivist cultures, the group is prioritised over the needs of the individual, social harmony and long-term relationships are key, and loyalty and support to the group is encouraged.

In individualistic cultures, the rights of the individual tend to take a higher precedence, the individual takes centre stage, and there is greater emphasis on independence, standing out and being unique.

Traits of Collectivistic Culture



Social rules focus on promoting selflessness



Working as a group



Doing what's best for society



Families and communities have a central role

Traits of Individualistic Cultures



Self-Sufficiency



Uniqueness



Independence



Autonomy

There are no rights or wrongs, so how much does this matter?

It matters a lot! These differences play out in approach, attitude and behaviours in the workplace – and, critically, how those approaches, attitudes and behaviours are viewed from a performance, potential and leadership perspective.

In individualistic cultures, people are considered “good” if they are strong, self-reliant, assertive, and independent. This contrasts with collectivist cultures where characteristics like being self-sacrificing, dependable, generous, and helpful to others are of greater importance¹⁵ – but, from the lens of an individualistic culture, may be perceived as too soft and not leaderful strengths.

Generally, today's leadership paradigm is modelled on an individualistic approach. So, to be able to progress, there's a feeling of pressure to conform to the prevailing norm and expectation. Many Pan-Asian staff relate to their cultural stereotype and value set, and feel they have to change to fit the system. This challenges their authenticity and sense of self – while, at the same time, they are encouraged by “the system” to bring their authentic selves to work.

This was a prevailing theme and one which engendered a lot of discussion.

Pan-Asian staff unquestionably want to make a meaningful contribution, and a leadership contribution, to the New Zealand Public Service. The desire and ambition is there. But in many cases they know they are holding themselves back, their natural strengths don't completely accord with the competency set that's demanded of leaders, or “the system” is not working to support their ambition.

Biases impede career progress

In the workplace, Asians are often confronted by long-standing biases and invisible barriers that impede their career progress through organisations. Although they tend to be more highly educated and have the highest median income than any other racial group, Asians face significant discrimination while getting hired, are the least likely to be promoted, and had the highest rate of unemployment during the pandemic.

Asians are often stereotyped as the model minority—successful, hard-working, self-effacing—and “when you add in different cultural values such as modesty and a respect for authority, this can create a stereotype that Asian Americans aren't a good fit for leadership positions,” Gupta says.

They are often employees, but seldom CEOs. In the U.S. Asian-Americans make up 12% of the workforce, yet fewer than 19% become managers and less than 14% are executives, shows a Silicon Valley diversity report.

How to Support your Asian Employees | Monster.ca

Whose job is it to change – the individual or the system?

There are very strong schools of thought on this.

There are experts who believe individuals – Pan-Asian staff in this case – need to, and can, adapt to what the system calls for. That is the reality of today's world.

¹⁵ [Individualistic Cultures and Behavior \(verywellmind.com\)](#)

This might involve upskilling, extending comfort levels, or reframing for themselves the way they think about what is called for. For example, if “self-promotion” feels awkward, it can be more positively framed as “how do I let people know what I’m capable of so that I can be of more service”.

There are, however, other experts who do not at all subscribe to that, believing that getting individuals to change is forcing them to mimic, or fake, existing behaviours in the system that need to change. This, they advocate, merely keeps the system comfortable, reinforces system behaviours, makes Asians the problem, and encourages behaviour that isn’t authentic. Rather, it is argued, the focus should be on disrupting the underpinning internal belief systems held by those driving the “selection out”; this is the moral imperative.

Our view is, realistically, we need both.

We need to be equipped and able to adapt and upskill to what the system today demands because, in practice and across a number of dimensions, there is a mismatch. Not a weakness, not an issue, but a lack of alignment.

The Stanford Asian American Executive Programme identifies traits that don’t come so naturally or are not so embedded in Pan-Asians in the workplace and the business environment, and seeks to equip, motivate and encourage participants to understand their impact, and execute them in the real world. These traits are often driven out of a cultural context and upbringing, and include: influence and power, executive presence, decision-making in ambiguity, conflict and uncomfortable conversations.

The programme advisers take the view that developing Pan-Asian peoples to adopt and adapt to real world competency requirements can be achieved without, importantly, seeking to change their intrinsic values and sense of self.

“Working hard and being smart is not enough; you are still your authentic self – you are still Asian, plus you can demonstrate those other behaviours at the same time”.

But, for sustainable results in the workplan, they advise there must be active leadership and support from the top, two-way awareness and understanding, and practices – heads and hearts – that act to drive and support ongoing development outside of the classroom.

And, at the same time, work needs to continue to shift belief systems in the workplace. This is a longer term challenge.

A fish is swimming along one day when another fish comes up and says “Hey, how’s the water?” The first fish stares back blankly at the second fish and then says “What’s water?”

What we heard from a Pan-Asian female senior executive

“What is the causation of the challenges?
It’s multi-faceted.

We have to educate for inclusion.

We have to take the pressure off the individual.

People don’t realise the challenges so we have to open up the dialogue because it can be daunting and exhausting.

I was at an event with a male attorney colleague who reported to me. He was assumed to be the boss, whereas I was assumed to be a law intern.”

We should note that not everyone sees this as a population-based or cultural issue. Some people we heard from – including Pan-Asians – contend that leadership is about individual competence and “Asian-ness” is neither an advantage nor a disadvantage.

“Noone want to be the “diversity hire”

“I don’t think about my Asian-ness from a work and career point of view. I did at school though.”

“It would feel odd if I was approached as a mentor because of my Asian ethnicity because it’s not a factor for me”

There is, however, a lot of evidence that other ethnic and minority groups – particularly Māori and Pasifika – experience the same challenges in walking in, and navigating, two worlds.

We can draw a lot from the initiatives led by other groups – and we believe other groups can benefit from the initiatives we recommend – to help our people be the best they can be, and the Public Service be the best it can be.

We give special thanks to

Daniel Quan-Watson, Wes Hom, Buck Gee, Megumi Miki, Matt Farry and Debbie Seguin, together with our interviewees and the attendees at our workshops for prompting a lot of thinking for us on this theme. All generously shared their time and their viewpoints and, in many cases, their personal stories.

Theme 4

We need to address this at multiple levels, and “create the updraft”

The challenge is multi-faceted.

We need to address the issue at multiple levels: system, leaders and individuals.

- **System** because sustained change has to be about shifting the conditions that are holding the problem in place.
- **Leaders** because the commitment, drive, expectations, support and tone at the top are what will make the difference.
- **Individuals** because they are, and want to be, part of the solution.

By *creating the updraft*, we mean there need to be interventions that help to lift out, and lift up, Pan-Asian public servants who have leadership aspiration and potential.

What are the levers, for example, to identify talent, look for the silent spots and reach in, shine a light on talent, open doors where there’s a natural reluctance to push the doors open – all the while ensuring this is about fairly unleashing and fostering talent, rather than unfairly creating advantage.

Staff themselves see mentoring and sponsorship programmes as big opportunities to build their leadership. And visible representation of role models that staff can relate to that is, Pan-Asian peoples in leadership roles will make a big difference.

“You can’t be what you can’t see.”

“If I can’t see it, how can I be it?”

This is absolutely real for many Pan-Asians, who want to see people like themselves in leadership, to realise that it’s indeed possible for them too, to show others that Pan-Asian leadership is possible, and to see that notions of leaders and leadership are changing.

On diversity in representation rather than in voice

We know organisations get collectively myopic. Because people are assimilated into an organisational culture, new people are quickly moulded into the ‘fit’ of the organisation, lose their voice, and echo the organisation’s way of thinking. This is how we lose our diversity even if we have diversity in representation rather than in voice.

*Matthew Syed
Rebel Ideas*

Refining our notions of leadership

Our notions of leadership are evolving, and who we see as leaders is also evolving.

Those who lead from the back, know they are learners, and practice servant leadership will increasingly be the leaders we look to.

We need greater diversity in positional leaders too – you can’t be what you can’t see. While diversity and inclusion initiatives are well meaning, real change to some of the lowest paid groups (such as Pacific women) who are typically not in management roles are yet to significantly move.

Importantly, we need leaders who can stand in the gap and hold spaces for others, and can question the assumptions and values that underpin the system itself – in this way we can start to deal with intractable issues such as systemic racism.

*Rose Jamieson
Leadership Development Centre Fellow
Leaders as Learners: Leadership for Dynamic and
Complex Environments*

While we talk about creating the leadership pipeline, it’s about much more than the leadership pipeline. There are multiple hotspots through the employee life-cycle that potentially need to be addressed – including, at the outset, the attractiveness of the Public Service as a welcoming and attractive employer of choice for Pan-Asian peoples, through to recruitment strategies, assessment processes, shortlisting, interviewing and selection, and mobility through the management and leadership pipeline. The Auckland demographic adds a further dimension to the challenge.

One size doesn’t fit all – do we deliberately design for difference?

How does “the system” adaptively design policy and processes in a people-centric way to take greater account of differing norms and values?

As an example, does the much-used STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) interview technique bring out the best in all individuals? For those from cultures where selling yourself is awkward because it’s not the done thing, and where the group’s achievement rather than the individual’s is paramount, questions and techniques aimed at putting the spotlight on an individual’s unique contribution and results are unlikely to draw out the best response from the interviewee, nor the best answer for the interviewer. Similar questions can be asked in relation to assessment centres, role plays, psychometric tests and performance review processes.

We liken the shift to the symbolism of crossing the bridge, connecting two worlds and encouraging greater two-way foot traffic, as told by the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti in relation to the transformation of the Māori Crown relationship.

On crossing the bridge

Te Arawhiti means the bridge and symbolises the bridge between Māori and the Crown, between the past and the future, from grievance to partnership.

On a personal level, for me Te Arawhiti recalls the late Ngāti Hine Kaumātua Reverend Charlie Shortland, who would describe the Māori world and Pākehā world as opposite banks of a river.

He said the Treaty of Waitangi was the ‘bridge’ that connected those two worlds.

Māori, he said, continually travel across the bridge into the Pākehā world. But the foot traffic is one way.

Public Sector leaders have a responsibility to lead the transformation of the Māori Crown relationship.

Building capacity to cross the bridge into Te Ao Māori is the first step of the journey.

No matter how you decide to start your journey across the bridge – whether it’s using more te reo, or just being brave enough to ask for help – our job, my job, will be at times to show you the way, walk alongside you, and to make you feel comfortable until you realise that our world - Te Ao Māori – can be your world too.

*Hon Kelvin Davis
Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti
Public Sector Leaders’ Summit
July 2019*

A suite of specifically targeted interventions to “create the updraft” will accelerate change. Without a deliberate and centrally driven focus, it is questionable whether the aim of representing the communities we serve, including proportionate representation at the leadership level, will be achieved.

Building a leadership pipeline, we believe should be targeted at high potential and emerging leaders at Tiers 3-5, with a view to integrating their development into existing mechanisms such as the Public Sector Leadership Group, supported through the Career Board or equivalent new process. A cohort programme would include strengthening identified competencies as well as mentoring, coaching, sponsorship and shadowing opportunities for learning, development, visibility and exposure.

We believe the programme needs to target this level because at Tiers 1-3 the visible pipeline is too small. Nor can it start at the entry level where there is increasingly great evidence of diverse recruitment, as that will likely take too long for a leadership pipeline to emerge.

Of particular note is the fact that there are specifically designed development and leadership programmes for a number of designated groups – including women, Māori and Pasifika, and the new Ethnic Communities Graduate Programme. But, notwithstanding the stated need to lift Asian representation at the leadership levels, there are as yet no such programmes for Pan-Asian people.

Already, from one Tū Mau Mana Moana participant

So far, the course has been really amazing. It's weird having a Pasifika-focused course but it really is different to the traditional leadership courses that my agency runs. Not saying it's better or worse.... just different. **Really caters to the cultural aspects around why we do the things we do and how that is a good thing for our people.** As you say too, we have a lot of Asian staff and will have more in the future. **Why wouldn't we develop that cultural literacy where we can make an environment where they can thrive? I'm going to go out on a limb and say that the normal one style fits all model of leadership that we run actually doesn't fit all.**

The course has given me a chance to do a lot of self-reflection too which is uncovering things for me that I didn't know were there.

I like the varied leadership approach. **One type of leadership assumes one type of follower.... obviously that isn't the case so the more diverse our leadership capability, the more able we will be to meet the needs of our future staff.**

We had Marcus Akuhata-Brown come speak to us (Deputy Chief Executive, Ministry of Justice) and one of the things he said that stuck with me was *"great minds don't think alike"*. Pretty plain and simple but it really resonated with me.

I got some feedback from a past cohort course I spoke at a few years ago. **One of the people on the course recently told me that everyone on the (largely Maori and PI) course remembered me because I looked like them and I was the only one amongst the other speakers that did. Pretty powerful stuff and also a bit of responsibility too. Especially when you hear comments like "if I can't see it, then how can I be it".**

Very recent newly launched programmes include:

► Tū Mau Mana Moana Programme

Over the next three years, New Zealand and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment will accelerate the leadership journey of public service leaders in Aotearoa from diverse Pāsifika backgrounds.

The Tū Mau Mana Moana Programme is taking over 40 Pacific leaders on a journey designed to deepen Pacific aspirations, personal growth, professional excellence, cultural strength and collective mobilisation.

The programme is retreat-based, involving seven three-day live-in retreats over a 15 month period. In addition, New Zealand and Pacific leaders who are relevant change-makers and knowledge holders are an integral part of the programme, and speakers are hosted for for talanoa to share their insights and wisdom.

► Rangatahi Māori Emerging Leaders Programme

This is a development programme for 30 rangatahi Māori across the Public Service who are wanting to grow and develop their capacity and capabilities to lead and serve within the public service and their communities.

The programme supports the development of Māori early in their career – ie having started in the Public Service within the last five years – to develop the skills and confidence to move into leadership and governance roles.

The year-long programme provides support through a series of wānanga around New Zealand, assisted by a co-mentoring relationship with a Public Service Chief Executive or a Deputy Chief Executive.

It includes, over the year, quarterly three-day development wānanga, regular monthly mentoring meetings **with the mentor, projects and networking.**

► Public Service Pacific Mentoring Programme

This programme aims to grow the talent pipeline for Pacific Peoples, increasing representation at all leadership levels of the Public Service.

Over nine months, the programme matches senior Pacific leaders in the Public Service with mid-level Pacific public servants to help empower and maximise skills and potential. It is a "blended" programme, consisting of one-on-one mentoring, facilitated virtual workshops with mentees and mentors, and reflective journaling for mentees.

Significantly, the programme is based on four culturally aligned principles:

- **Reciprocity** – ensuring both the mentor and mentee are contributing and taking away something from the programme, and both groups are committed to achieving the overall vision.
- **Service** – understanding mentoring is an act of service beyond purely the mentee/mentor relationship, and there is an attitude of service to the community and wider connections.
- **Collectivism** – building the programme in way that takes the group of mentors and mentees

into account and allows opportunities for everyone to come together and learn from each other, rather than limiting interactions to being solely one on one between mentee and mentor.

- **Family** – acknowledging each member of this programme comes with significant connections to their aiga, village and workplace. They are not in isolation and by taking part in this programme they will contribute to outcomes that have positive implications for both themselves and their families.

There is without doubt evidence that programmes, specifically designed for cohorts of ethnic people, bring significant additional value by enabling participants to enjoy a strong sense of "people like me" who can relate comfortably and safely, share, and learn together. The programmes that also wrap in participants' managers create even more added value and wider influence.

There is a huge opportunity, in relation to both general approach, orientation and the kind of curriculum that can be drawn from these, and similar, programmes and tailored for Pan-Asian leadership development.

The leadership "tone at the top" will be critical to drive and support the agreed suite of interventions.

We heard from Pan-Asian public servants who sought leaders that could acknowledge diversity and inclusion beyond cultural festive events and food, important as they are – *'to go beyond Dining, Dress and Dance'*.

They expressed a craving for leadership that can value and integrate distinctive cultural perspectives and approaches – offered by Pan-Asians and others – because of the unique cultural norms that have shaped their world-views, their workplace styles and ways of thinking.

They look for leaders that acknowledge, value and celebrate the power of diversity as a strength of its workforce, rather than seeing it as a matter of compliance.

We need to extend our current model of leadership from an Anglo-Western dominant conception of leadership to an integrative model that explicitly acknowledges—and demonstrates—a wider concept of leadership.

This isn't merely about making space or listening. The integration and complementarity of different ways of leading and serving should be included as critical elements of an updated leadership success

profile so that they can be understood, demonstrated, observed and assessed for both leadership potential and performance.

This will improve our ability to lead the more significantly more diverse workforce of the future as well as generate opportunities for more minority groups to flourish.

What we heard

On what it would look, sound and feel like when our Public Service leaders demonstrate cultural competency

"Leaders understand the diversity of Pan Asian communities, from ethnic background to stage of settlement, etc."

"My cultural background and heritage are valued. I can fully bring it to work. I feel confidence, sense of belonging. Multiple identities are ok and valued."

"Being an ally...focus on raising cultural awareness for team, not protecting 'feelings of the majority'...call out racist language/behaviours/microaggressions...hire team members that are also culturally competent."

"NZ public service leaders truly believe and value and appreciate the values from Pan Asians and have capability to articulate what contributions made by Pan Asians to wider NZ society."

"Start with awareness then demonstrate that to staff. Bring out the best value from people by demonstrating they are valued. It could look like: support, mentorship, programs, structured progression pathways."

"Recognition and dialogue that goes beyond Dining, Dress and Dance."

"Acknowledge Asian culture that could be less 'assertive' than the dominant culture."

"Acknowledge their privilege. Willing to endorse activities at work that may not necessarily be 'productive' but empowering cultural aspects of staff's identity. Not focussing on one fixed euro-centric performance measure."

"Culturally competent leaders will show interest in various cultures...learn from their staff who are from difference backgrounds...can think from their staff's point of view (What if I were in their place, how would I feel?)...walk the talk, not just talk."

"Not subscribing to 'colour-blindness'."

"Part of the function of leadership is to set the precedent. If racist jokes are not ok for our minority ethnic groups like Māori and Pasifika, then it shouldn't be ok for Asians too."

"Cultural differences can be acknowledged, understood and appreciated. Confidence in that opportunities will be given based on Competence."

"The whole 'This isn't us' reaction to Chch...recognition it was 'us' because of casual racism."

"We need changes to the current leaders and environment so that the environment adapts and accepts Asians where we are working hard and be prepared to progress."

Theme 5

We need a Public Service that designs for difference - lays out a unified "Welcome Mat" and keeps it there

Pan Asian public servants told us they want to be warmly welcomed into the Public Service fairly and in unity with other minority groups that are being 'welcomed' in to participate. We refer to a 'Welcome Mat' placed at the door to the Public Service as a metaphor for how we deliberately invite, embrace and support minority group kaimahi into the wider Public Service.

Has a 'Welcome Mat' been laid out for Pan Asians?

The New Zealand Public Service has seen successful programmes and initiatives attract and then retain minorities through a combination of promotional marketing, internships, employee-led networks and longer-term career support. We believe the same techniques—with culturally-appreciative adaptation—will also be successful for Pan-Asian peoples looking to build their career in the Public Service.

The 'Welcome Mat' metaphor breaks down if it ends up creating marginalised silos in our increasingly diverse workforce, especially if multiple, disparate 'Welcome Mats' are placed at the 'Front Door' to the Public Service. Or, as it appears, that a successive queue of 'Welcome Mats' are laid out, and it's a matter of your particular minority group awaiting your turn ie Women...then Māori...then Pasifika...then Rainbow...then people with disabilities...then Pan-Asian...then...

This is made even more complex as we consider intersectional diversity, such as Rainbow Asians, or Asian Women—who gets to be welcomed first? What if you are at the intersection of multiple marginal groups? Do you have to choose, or join multiple 'Welcome Mats'?

The concept of the 'Welcome Mat' is also a very useful idea if it demonstrates to Pan-Asians outside the Public Service that intentions and support for diversity are real and not merely symbolic, and there is sustained follow-through for people. We heard that the Public Service needs to keep strengthening its reputation as an attractive and inclusive employer of choice for Pan-Asians—not just during recruitment—but further in supporting career progression onwards into senior specialist, managerial and leadership roles.

The 'Welcome Mat' needs to be culturally-relevant to be meaningful. Many Pan-Asians highlighted the need for the Public Service to embrace their unique cultural capital, perspectives and insights in the workplace, and for them to be afforded equal opportunities to grow into more senior roles—all the while preserving their cultural identity. Ascending into managerial or leadership positions should not be at the expense of one's Asian cultural identity and values. You ought not need to become somehow 'less Asian', to become more 'managerial' or a 'leader', we were told.

The cultural norms held by many Pan-Asians make Public Service an inherently attractive career choice—as it is for other strongly collectivist communities, especially Pasifika and Māori—but more could still be done in pitching public service as a meaningful long-term career, alongside traditional occupations 'like doctors, lawyers, accountants'. We heard from Pan-Asian public servants that they're looking for strong support structures from entering the front-door and then onwards into pathways of progression, either as specialists or into leadership positions. They've seen similar programmes in operation for Māori and Pasifika and are eager for parity, but tuned to their cultural needs.

To help Pan-Asian public servants enter and truly thrive in the Public Service we need to orient the 'Welcome Mat' in a way that is culturally-sensitive and authentic to their ways of working and being—not just applying a 'cookie-cutter' approach based on other successful programmes but appreciating and valuing difference.

What we heard

On what kind of ‘Welcome Mat’ would attract Pan Asians and keep them in the NZ Public Service and why

“When inclusion is for everyone (intersectionality) and doesn’t feel like dominant culture giving something away, but rather a dismantling of the dominant culture.”

“It was interesting all the people on the panel when I was interviewed for public service jobs were all white, therefore—did they understand what I brought to the table, re:skill sets?”

“Public Sector reputation as an inclusive employer that doesn’t tolerate discrimination.”

“Acknowledgement of systemic bias/unconscious bias/racism and what the sector is doing re:that.”

“Leaders and society understand the importance of diversity—so there is no ‘backlash’ or perception of being ‘favoured’.”

“Non Asians being allies and power sharing; promoting the value of Asian knowledge.”

“Strong support system in promoting staff from various backgrounds and good/transparent communication.”

“Public service as a desirable ‘Asian’ career (like doctors, lawyers, accountants).”

“Similar to Pasifika/Māori Grad programme for Asian youth/new to government.”

“Internships for Pan Asians at government agencies.”

“Mentoring programmes led by Asian leaders.”

“Mentoring programme tailored for leadership development of Pan Asians.”

“Good support and initiatives to help Pan Asian employees to not just enter the organisation but also shows them the pathways to succeed and excel.”

“Career pathways, Asian-focus and Asian values. Entry, mid, senior.”

On how it would feel to be welcomed and embraced as a Pan Asian public servant

“Understanding cultural norms and engaging Pan Asian employees in more meaningful career development discussions.”

“Sensitivity and open to other ways of thinking and doing things.”

“Acceptance, not tolerance.”

“Not feeling like a hindrance.”

“Being managed differently based on their understanding of our culture.”

We recommend taking a *unifying* approach to creating the ‘Welcome Mat’ for Pan-Asians when facing the reality of scarce resources across the system. By unifying the ‘Welcome Mat’ concept for multiple and intersectional minority groups, we can help avoid the queuing problem, and help to amass capability without diffusing skills and attention to what is a common need for minorities. From the common platform, or framework, of a unified ‘Welcome Mat’ will need to be built the culturally-relevant and tuned elements for Pan Asians.

The ‘Welcome Mat’ for Pan-Asians will have similarities for how we’ve welcomed other marginal groups, such as Māori and Pasifika. We recommend designing a unified ‘Welcome Mat’ for public servants from the elements that have already been proven to be successful for others, and combining new ideas that come from weaving together the collaboration of minds and experiences of the creators of those other onboarding programmes. Specifically, synthesising a ‘Welcome Mat’ which brings together the very best exemplars of career promotion into the public service, including: career ‘marketing’, graduate internships, mentoring (by senior public servants), coaching, employee-led networking, and specialist/leadership development support.

From the unified ‘Welcome Mat’ as the central core of resources, tools and approaches, for bringing on and supporting new public servants from under-represented communities, we then recommend adding on new elements with a distinctive Pan-Asian flavour, such as reflecting the cultural values and needs of Pan-Asians, meeting their preferred communication and engagement styles, finding Asian-friendly role-models to serve as mentors, and the like.

Many initiatives, agency and centrally-run, are in place for minority groups. Often these are positively driven through employee-led networks. Networks are a real positive, and staff are enthusiastic about the opportunity to have a collective voice, make a difference through employee-led initiatives, gain leadership development, get support and enjoy the camaraderie.

The fledgling Pan-Asian Public Sector Network is but one of these, complemented by Pan-Asian or multi-ethnic networks within agencies and sectors. It is newly sponsored at executive level by the Chief Executive of the Ministry for Ethnic Communities. This is a positive step forward.

Achieving an environment that is welcoming, safe and supportive for all, throughout the career lifecycle, not just at recruitment, is critical for engagement, retention, development, growth and building leadership prospects. In this regard, Te Taunaki, the recent Public Service Census included a section on inclusion, an excellent start to creating a baseline of data, noting that there isn’t an abundance of data currently. Improved data and metrics will help monitor progress and identify priorities for more attention.

A real measure of the cumulative impact of initiatives across the system, and a sense of how well the system is doing, would be to run a regular census, in more detail than the recent inclusion questions, for ethnic public servants – this would be a true reflection of progress, importantly from “the voice of the people”, and a check-in on how we are doing on “designing for difference”.

05.

Recommendations



Recommendations

We have kept our recommendations at a small number and deliberately framed them as practical, achievable, mutually supportive actions with a system focus.

We are absolutely aware this is just the start. What struck us in our work on this Fellowship, and reinforced time-and-time again by those we spoke with both in New Zealand and from other jurisdictions, is that the *time is now*. There has likely been no greater demand - and need - for progress in diversifying the workforce, hearing more voices and extending what leadership looks and feels like in our Public Service – whether for Pan-Asian, Māori, Pasifika, or any other ethnic minority group. This includes understanding the reality for those peoples and, with more data over time, seeing the difference that is achieved.

The overall programme can be developed and extended as this momentum builds.

These recommendations are intended to be complementary to the myriad of other initiatives already in play across agencies and the system as a whole, and to act as a further nudge towards the outcome of seeing more Pan-Asians represented and flourishing in leadership roles, while holding to their cultural identity.

We recommend an initial focus at three levels that, collectively, will make a difference in the shorter-term:

1. Leadership focus and tone at the top
2. A focused development programme for high potential and emerging Pan-Asian leaders at Tiers 3-5
3. A Public Service that *designs for difference* - lays out a unified “welcome mat”, keeps it there throughout the career lifecycle, and measures its progress

Leadership focus and tone at the top

Our recommendation is to make more explicit, across the system:

- A leadership model that embraces a diverse workforce and diverse communities
- A leadership success profile that is updated and broadened to include acknowledgement and appreciation of different ways of leading and is specific about cultural appreciation and cultural competence as core success criteria that are demonstrated, observed and valued when assessing both leadership potential and performance
- Leadership expectations to actively “create the updraft”, to bring through different voices and tangibly support the wider settings, mindset and behaviours needed to help Pan-Asians – and other ethnic minorities - grow their leadership and flourish in the workplace

A focused development programme for high potential and emerging Pan-Asian leaders at Tiers 3-5

Our recommendation is to design and deliver a programme for Pan-Asian public servants that draws from the research, learnings and successes of other programmes for ethnic public servants, including the recently launched Tū Mau Mana Moana and Rangatahi Māori Emerging Leaders Programmes, the Public Service Pacific Mentoring Programme and the Ethnic Communities Graduate Programme.

We recommend designing and developing the programme in time to be run, as a pilot, in the 2022/23 year.

The programme should include:

- Focusing on the growth and progression of high potential and emerging leaders at Tiers 3-5, to move towards Tiers 2 and 3 over time
- Building on the value evidenced by cohort-based programmes, such as strengthening identified competencies as well as mentoring, coaching, sponsorship, shadowing and networking opportunities, and involving participants' managers to ensure their learning is also extended
- Drawing from good-practice design elements of past and present programmes for ethnic public servants, while tailoring for Pan-Asians, and keeping a continuous improvement approach to inform future programmes
- Drawing on the willingness of senior and experienced Pan-Asian public servants to "give back" by involving them in the design and delivery of the programme

A Public Service that *designs for difference* - lays out a unified "welcome mat", keeps it there throughout the career lifecycle, and measures its progress

Our recommendation is to enhance the work environment by "designing for difference", so that the New Zealand Public Service feels welcome to everyone, including Pan-Asians, and ensure this is sustained over time and over the whole career cycle, so individuals feel engaged and valued, and can develop to their full potential.

This includes:

- Taking a deliberate approach of "designing for difference" – pre-recruitment and entry (the 'Welcome Mat') and through the career lifecycle. Adopting an approach more generally which sees a core of approaches, resources, tools and processes that then incorporate elements distinctively tailored to reflect the cultural values and needs of minority groups – in this case, Pan-Asian. This could cover, for example, communication and engagement styles, meeting protocols, finding Asian-friendly role models to serve as mentors, selection processes.
- Generating more data and metrics to enable more analytics, and building on the baseline set in Te Taunaki, the recent Public Service Census, to get a regular and real measure of the cumulative impact of initiatives across the system

We recommend tangible support for the Pan-Asian Public Sector Network in its establishment, sponsorship and growth; and, vice versa, drawing on the Pan-Asian Public Sector Network to contribute to new developments.



06.

Appendices



A. Interviewees

People we talked with

We acknowledge, with thanks, the generosity of the following people who shared with us their time, experience, insights and expertise.

New Zealand – Government agencies - Chief Executives

Name	Role	Organisation
Andrew Coster	Commissioner of Police	New Zealand Police
Naomi Ferguson	Chief Executive	Inland Revenue
Paul James	Chief Executive	Department of Internal Affairs
Laulu Mac Leauanae	Chief Executive	Ministry for Pacific Peoples
Peter Mersi	Chief Executive	Ministry of Transport
Mervin Singham	Chief Executive	Ministry for Ethnic Communities (formerly Executive Director, Royal Commission of Inquiry: Abuse in Care)
Christine Stevenson	Chief Executive	New Zealand Customs Service
Carolyn Tremain	Chief Executive	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
Kevin Tso	Chief Executive	Victim Support New Zealand

New Zealand Government agencies – Executives

Name	Role	Organisation
Joanna Arnold	Services Manager	Ministry for Ethnic Communities (formerly Project Manager, Ethnic Communities Graduate Programme, Office of Ethnic Communities)
Heather Baggott	Deputy Commissioner, Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion	Public Service Commission
Anita Balakrishnan	Director Ministerial Advice, Monitoring and Operations	Department of Internal Affairs
Craig Chitty	Group Manager	New Zealand Customs Service
Pam Dunn	New Zealand High Commissioner to Malaysia	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Dale Farrar	Deputy Commissioner, Workforce, Employment Relations and Equity	Public Service Commission
Clare Fearnley	New Zealand Ambassador to China	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Dr Fleur François	Manager	Ministry for Primary Industries (formerly Director, Measurement Standards Laboratory, Callaghan Institute)
Meng Foon	Race Relations Commissioner	Human Rights Commission
Zoe Griffiths	Regional Public Service Commissioner and Deputy Secretary	Ministry of Education
Wally Haumaha QSM, ONZM	Deputy Commissioner, Iwi and Communities	New Zealand Police (formerly Deputy Commissioner, Maori, Pacific and Ethnic Services)
Malcolm Luey	Director Policy, Digital	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
John McArthur	Strategic Adviser	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

New Zealand Government agencies – Executives

Name	Role	Organisation
John McKinnon CNZM QSO	Former New Zealand Ambassador to China; Chair New Zealand China Council; Senior Fellow, Centre for Strategic Studies, Victoria University	(formerly Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade)
Rakesh Naidoo	Superintendent, National Partnerships Manager, Maori and Ethnic Affairs	New Zealand Police
Tim Ng	Deputy Secretary, Chief Economic Adviser	The Treasury
Bill Perry	Deputy Comptroller Operations	New Zealand Customs Service
Wen Chin Powles	Formerly Counsellor, New Zealand Embassy, Beijing	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Michael Quinn	Head Auckland Policy Office	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
Andrew Robinson	New Zealand Consul General, Shanghai	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Dr Sripriya Somasekhar	Manager, Diversity and Inclusion	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
Leilani Tamu	Manager, Pacific Policy Team	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

Experts in the field

Name	Role	Organisation
Berlinda Chin	Chief Advisor	Ministry for Ethnic Communities (formerly Manager Community Engagement, Royal Commission of Inquiry: Abuse in Care)
Annabel Coxon	Diversity and Inclusion Programme Advisor	New Zealand Trade and Enterprise
Matthew Farry	Managing Director	South Pacific Institute for Courageous Conversation
Martine Hartley-Parsons	Manager Diversity and Inclusion	Public Service Commission
Kay Howard	Leadership and Talent	Public Service Commission
Sarah McLeod	Director, Organisational Development and Recruitment	Auckland District Health Board
Mahina Melbourne	Director, Office of Racial Equality	Ministry of Education
Guled Mire	Fulbright Scholar, MPA Candidate at Cornell University (formerly Senior Advisor)	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
Emma Murphy	Head of Capability	Auckland Council
Mark Reading	Senior Advisor, Leadership and Talent	Public Service Commission
Marilyn Rimmer	Contractor: Workforce of the Future	Public Service Commission
Nick Ritchie	Strategic Advisor, Chief Executive Succession Planning	Public Service Commission
Desigin Thulkanam	Senior Advisor, Leadership Diversity and Inclusion	Public Service Commission
Tofilau Iris Webster	Programme Director Leadership Diversity	Public Service Commission
Suki Xiao	Associate Certified Coach	AsYou.org

Private Sector, community and academia

Name	Role	Organisation
Suri Bartlett	Co-Managing Director	Tenzing
Gaye Bryham ONZM	Head of Department, Sport Leadership and Management; Deputy Head of School, Sport Leadership and Management	Auckland University of Technology, Sports Performance Research Institute New Zealand
Leo Donnelly ONZM	Principal Advisor	Superdiversity Centre for Law, Policy and Business
Simon Draper	Executive Director	Asia New Zealand Foundation
Professor Lesley Ferkins	Professor of Sport Leadership and Governance; Director AUT Sports Performance Research Institute	Auckland University of Technology, Sports Performance Research Institute New Zealand
Professor Jarrod Haar (PhD)	Professor of Human Resource Management, Department of Management Deputy Director, New Zealand Work Research Institute	Auckland University of Technology
Bev Tso Hong	Senior Associate, Institute for Government and Policy Studies	Victoria University of Wellington
Richard Leung	National President	New Zealand Chinese Association Inc
Marina Matthews	Chief Executive	Chief Executive, Superdiversity Institute; Chief Executive, New Zealand Asian Leaders
Dr Guillermo Merelo	Associate Director HR (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion)	University of Auckland (formerly Head of Research and Innovation, Diversity Works New Zealand)
Cassandra Patel	Senior Designer	ThinkPlace
Maretha Smit	Chief Executive	Diversity Works New Zealand
Kennie Tsui	Chief Executive	New Zealand Geothermal Association

International

Name	Role	Organisation
United Kingdom		
Bernadette Thompson OBE	Associate Director of Inclusion (formerly Network Co-chair, Race to the Top 6/7 Network, UK Civil Service)	Barts Health NHS Trust
United States of America		
Buck Gee	Advisor, Asian American Executive Program	Stanford Graduate School of Business
Wesley Hom	Advisor, Asian American Executive Program	Stanford Graduate School of Business
Debbie Seguin	Assistant Commissioner, Office of International Affairs	United States Customs and Border Protection
Canada		
Deputy Minister Daniel Quan-Watson	Deputy Minister, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs	Government of Canada
Ginny Sutcliffe	Chief of Staff to the President, Canada School of Public Service	Canada School of Public Service/ École de la fonction publique du Canada
John Gorrie	Director General, Canada School of Public Service	Canada School of Public Service/ École de la fonction publique du Canada
Zac Skeith	Adviser to the President, Canada School of Public Service	Canada School of Public Service/ École de la fonction publique du Canada

International

Name	Role	Organisation
Australia		
Jieh-Yung Lo	Founding Director, ANU Centre for Asian-Australian Leadership	Australia National University
Megumi Miki	Author and Founder of Quietly Powerful	Quietly Powerful
James Watson	Commander, Australian Border Force (formerly Regional Director, Pacific / Attaché to New Zealand)	Department of Home Affairs Australia
Sung Lee	Director, Asia Practice; Member, PwC Australia's Asia Advisory	Price Waterhouse Coopers

Attendees at workshops arranged through the Pan-Asian Public Sector Network

Workshops	Attendees	
Wellington (2)	70 plus others online	
Auckland (4)	75 plus others online	
Christchurch (2)	42	

One-on-one interviews		
Safia Afrin	Programme Coordinator Diversity and Inclusion	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Kenneth Koo	Team Lead Small and Medium Enterprises	Inland Revenue
Charles Kin Keung Ip	Inspector (formerly Police Operations Manager: Auckland Regional Isolation and Quarantine Command Centre)	New Zealand Police
Jocelyn Xian	Customer Compliance Specialist	Inland Revenue

NOTE: Some interviewees were in a different role, at the time of interview, than they are now. Where this is the case, the role they were formerly in, at time of interview, is also indicated.

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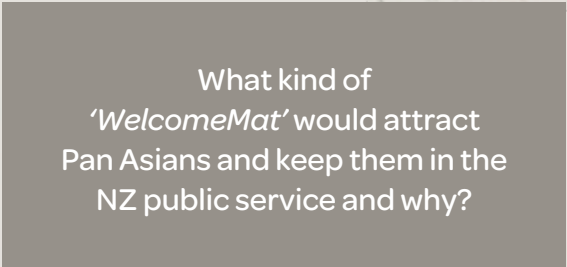
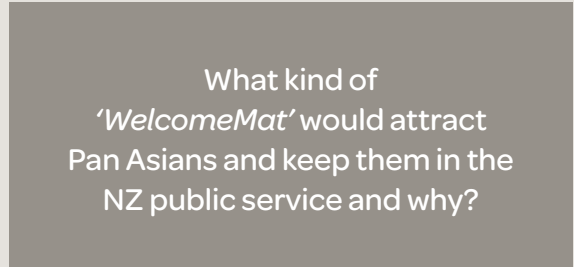
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What would meaningful Pan Asian representation at senior leadership and managerial levels look and feel like to you?

What would meaningful Pan Asian representation at senior leadership and managerial levels look and feel like to you?

[illegible]

What does 'Updraft' need to look like, to be meaningful and helpful to Pan Asians and why?

Glossary

Aotearoa: Māori name for New Zealand.

Kaimahi: Worker, employee, staff.

Kanohi ki te kanohi: Meet face to face or in-person.

Kaupapa: Topic, policy, plan, purpose, matter for discussion.

Mahi: Work, job, employment, trade, activity or exercise.

Masjīdain: Arabic term for two masjid. Masjid is the Arabic term for a mosque, the Muslim place of worship.

Ōtautahi: Māori name for Christchurch.

Rangatahi: Young people, the younger generation

Tāmaki Makaurau: Māori name for Auckland.

Tauīwi: Alien, foreigner, outsider, non-Māori, person coming from afar.

Te Ao Māori: The Māori world view that acknowledges the interconnectedness and interrelationship of all living and non-living things.

Te reo: the Maori language, indigenous to Aotearoa New Zealand.

Te Whanganui-a-Tara: Māori name for Wellington.

Wānanga: Forum, workshop, course, institute, educational seminar.

Whakapapa: Genealogy, ancestral lineage, descent.

