

The Economic and Social Outcomes of Children of Migrants in New Zealand

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Abstract

This paper uses General Social Survey data to investigate whether the social and economic outcomes of the children of migrants are different to children with both parents born in New Zealand, using logistic regression modelling.

The outcomes covered are employment, income, health, home ownership, having enough money to meet everyday needs, contact with family, experience of victimisation, poor health, major problems with housing or neighbourhood, dissatisfaction with the quality of local services, no voluntary work and overall life satisfaction. The controlling variables are age, sex, qualification, ethnicity and region.

Keywords - Migrants, children, outcomes

Introduction

In October 2009, the OECD¹ released a report called *Children of Immigrants in the Labour Markets of EU and OECD Countries*. One finding from that report was:

“One observes a clear difference between the non-European OECD countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) on the one hand and European OECD countries on the other hand. In the former, the children of migrants have education and labour market outcomes that tend to be at least on a par with those of children of natives. In the European OECD countries (with the exception of Switzerland), both education and labour market outcomes of the children of immigrants tend to be much less favourable.”

The research in the report, in the case of New Zealand at least, was mainly based on the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment. Other data was missing. For example, Figure 5

gave employment rates by gender of the children of natives and the children of immigrants aged 20–29 and not in education. The footnotes stated that “figures for the native born children of immigrants are not available for New Zealand.”

The report’s publication coincided with the first release of data from New Zealand’s first General Social Survey (NZ GSS) in 2008. The survey is a multidimensional, biennial household survey that provides information on a range of social and economic domains:

- paid work
- economic standard of living
- health
- knowledge and skills
- environment
- safety and security
- culture and identity
- housing
- leisure and recreation
- social connectedness
- human rights
- overall life satisfaction.

The survey collected information for the first time on the birthplace² of parents, which enables the

¹ The report was released by the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs.

² Birthplace means whether the parent was born overseas or in New Zealand. There is no information on where in the world the parent came from.

children of migrants to be identified, including those who are native born. Being able to combine subjective and objective measures of social and economic outcomes makes the NZ GSS 2008 a very rich data source.

The objective of this paper is to use NZ GSS data to investigate whether the social and economic outcomes of the children of migrants are different to those of children with both parents born in New Zealand. To be called a child of a migrant, a person must have one or both parents born overseas. Furthermore, the child has to have either been born in New Zealand or have come to New Zealand before they turned 14 years old.

Logistic regression is used to compare outcomes using children who had both parents born in New Zealand as the counterfactual. The outcomes used are employment, income, health, home ownership, having enough money to meet everyday needs, contact with family, experience of victimisation, and overall life satisfaction. The controlling variables are age, sex, qualification, ethnicity, and region.

The results of the analysis give a mixed report on the OECD finding that there is little difference between outcomes of the children of migrants and children of native born parents. In many of the economic outcomes there is little difference, but there is a negative outcome for some social outcomes, especially those associated with belonging/connectedness to New Zealand.

Discussion

The 2006 Census of Population and Dwellings showed that 23 percent of the usually resident population in New Zealand was born overseas – a relatively high proportion compared to the United States (11 percent in 2000) and Canada (18.4 percent in 2001) but lower than Australia (29.1 percent in 2006). Historically, in New Zealand most immigrants came from Britain and Europe, but recently more have come from Asia. New Zealand has also had a period of high immigration from islands in the Pacific. New Zealand immigration policy has concentrated on attracting migrants with high skills or business acumen, particularly in recent decades where a points system has operated. Only people who meet a certain threshold are admitted. Over time the threshold can change, as can the points for specific characteristics, partly in response to particular skill shortages in New Zealand.

Debate about the merits of immigration has been in the media here, with conflicting points of view presented. David Card in his paper *Is the new immigration really so bad* aimed to update US immigration literature in response to a changing

perception by economists on the benefits of migration, from a positive to a more negative picture. He identified two questions that are at the heart of the debate about migration in many countries:

- (1) Do immigrants harm the labour market opportunities of less skilled natives?
- (2) How do today's immigrants perform in the labour market, and are they successfully being 'assimilated'?

These two questions are equally relevant to New Zealand. Because of the high proportion of immigrants in New Zealand, it is important for social cohesion that their education and labour market outcomes are similar to the native born population.

In the OECD and the European Union (EU), the integration of the children of migrants is now attracting much attention among policy makers. There has been a growing concern that the children of immigrants in many countries are experiencing difficulties accessing the labour market (OECD, 2009). This shifts the focus of interest from the general success of migrants to how well the next generation is faring.

Educational attainment is a major determinant of labour market outcomes. The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment, which assesses skills in mathematics, science, reading and cross-curricular activities at age 15 years, has a question on the birthplace of the student's parents. The results show that in the OECD countries which have selected their immigrants based on qualifications and labour market needs, such as New Zealand, Canada, and Australia, the average attainment level of the native children of immigrants (prior to controlling for the socio-economic background of their parents) is about the same as other natives or even slightly better (OECD, 2009).

Another factor that overseas research has highlighted is that the particular region of the world the parents of migrant children come from can uncover difficulties for some groups. An Australian analysis, for example, showed that the second generation as a group were doing as well as, or better than, their peers who are at least third generation (ie born in Australia) in terms of educational attainment and occupational status. However they also found considerable diversity of outcomes by origin. The second generation of some people of Southern European, Eastern European, and Asian origin are more likely to achieve better educational and occupation outcomes than those of other origins (DIMIA, 2002). Miles Corak, in analysing Canadian data, also found that Canada's socially mobile society proves particularly beneficial for the children of

migrants. However, he too found region of origin to have a big effect on the earnings of second generation Canadians. He looked at intergenerational gains in income and found that Asian daughters made the biggest gains, and that virtually no gains were made by sons whose parents originated in the Caribbean or South America (IRPP, 2008).

In contrast to the relatively positive outcome of that research, a report on the labour market integration of ethnic minorities in Flanders (Glorieux and Laurijssen, 2009) found that on average young people of migrant descent are less highly educated and have a more disadvantaged social background. As a consequence they enter the labour market with more difficulty than natives do and tend to have poorer working conditions in their first job.

Aydemir and Sweetman did a comparison of the first and second generation immigrant educational attainment and labour market outcomes between the United States and Canada. They found differences, mainly because of the different migration systems in the two countries. Canada has a higher proportion of migrants than the United States, but like New Zealand they select their migrants on a points system, and so Canadians who have at least one parent born overseas have on average more years of schooling than natives. In the United States, family reunification is the major source of immigration, and Mexico, and Central and South America are a much more important source of migrants (both legal and illegal) than they are in Canada. In the United States the children of migrants have fewer years of schooling on average than natives. Labour market outcomes depend more in both countries on whether the person arrived in the country as a young person (better outcomes) or as an older person (poorer outcomes) than the children of natives.

This has just been a sample of overseas research to illustrate common points that are associated with research into the outcomes of the children of migrants, namely the:

- selection process that the country operates to attract migrants has an impact
- importance of education on outcomes
- country where the migrants come from also has a big impact.

The data

The NZ GSS is a multidimensional, biennial household survey that provides information on a range of social and economic domains as outlined above.

One individual in the household aged 15 years and over answers the personal questionnaire. That

individual is randomly selected from within the eligible members of the household via a computer algorithm.

There were a total of 8,721 respondents in the survey, with a response rate of 83 percent.

The survey was in the field from April 2008 to March 2009, and first results were published on 29 October 2009. Interviews were conducted face-to-face by trained interviewers.

The GSS contains both objective and subjective measures of well-being, which enables research on the relationship between both types of measures. The breadth of the survey also enables research on the number of good or poor outcomes experienced by different population groups.

Income in the survey was collected in tick box bands and there was no earnings data, thus restricting analysis on these topics, which are often the main focus of articles comparing outcomes of migrants with the native born population. There is no earnings-related measure other than whether the person is employed.

The questions on birthplace of parents were fed into a derivation which has the following categories:

- raised by parents/people who were born overseas
- raised by a combination of New Zealand born and overseas parents/people
- raised by parents/people who were born in New Zealand
- raised by multiple parents/institution, birthplace unknown.

This analysis uses only the first three categories. People raised by parents who were born in New Zealand will sometimes be referred to as 'native born'.

To be called a child of a migrant, the person must have been born in New Zealand or have come to New Zealand before they turned 15 years, as well as having one or both parents born overseas.

Because of the emphasis on outcomes, the working age population (people aged between 15 and 64 years) has been used for this analysis.

Descriptive statistics

People with both parents born in New Zealand made up two thirds of the working age population (67 percent), with those having one parent born overseas making up the next biggest group (20 percent) followed by people with both parents born overseas (13 percent). Numerically the weighted sizes of the three groups are:

One New Zealand born parent and one overseas born parent 439,500

Both parents born overseas 303,100

Both parents born in New Zealand 1,504,100

As stated earlier, overseas research has emphasised the importance of education to good future outcomes. Table 1 shows that around one fifth of people with either one or both parents born in New Zealand had no qualification, compared to 17 percent of those with both parents born overseas. At the high end of the education scale, people with both parents born overseas out-scored those with one or both parents born in New Zealand. Twenty percent of people with both parents born overseas had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 17 percent for those with one parent born in New Zealand and 16 percent for the children with both parents born in New Zealand.

All of the children are adults, that is aged 15 years and over, so this means that they are not children in the strict sense. The median age of people with one or both parents born overseas is 36 years, and for people with both parents born in New Zealand it is 39 years. People with both parents born overseas are more likely to have a greater proportion who are young than the other two groups. Thirty-two percent of people with both parents born overseas are aged between 15 and 24 years, compared with 26 percent for those with one parent born overseas and 22 percent of the native population.

Overseas research shows that the part of the world the migrant parents come from is important in determining outcomes. Unfortunately the GSS does not have any information relating to the parents' place of birth. A reasonable proxy that can be used is ethnicity. Figure 1 shows that the European ethnic group makes up the majority of all three groups. However, people with both parents born overseas have greater proportions of Pacific and Asian ethnic groups, whereas Māori is the second biggest group for people with one parent born overseas and for people with both parents born in New Zealand. There are some quite big differences in outcomes for the different ethnic groups – for example around a quarter of Europeans and Asians do not own their own home, but for Pacific peoples and Māori, around half do not own their home. Forty-one percent of Pacific Peoples are not employed, compared to 19 percent of Europeans, and 32 percent of Asian and Māori people.

This data also allows us to examine whether people have more than one of the 11 outcomes used in the model. Multiple incidences of poor outcomes are known to put more stress on people than having

just one or two such outcomes. Figure 2 shows that native born people are more likely to have none or one poor outcome (26 percent) than either of the other two groups (both around 19 percent). One third of people with just one parent born overseas had four or more poor outcomes, compared with around one quarter of those with both parents either born overseas or born in New Zealand.

Appendix 1 contains a table of all the social and economic outcomes by the three categories – one parent born overseas, both parents born overseas, and both parents born in New Zealand.

Analysis

This part of the paper uses logistic regression to test the hypothesis that people who have one or more parents born overseas have different social and economic outcomes to the population with both parents born in New Zealand. Dummy binary variables were created for 11 dependent variables using a framework developed for measuring overall well-being:

Outcome area	Variable
Human capital	Poor or very poor health
Economic resources	Unemployed Low household income Do not own home
Social relationships	Not enough family contact Don't do voluntary work
Culture	Feel that do not belong here
Crime and neighbourhood	Major problems with house or neighbourhood Victim of a crime
Environment	Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with quality of local services
Overall life satisfaction	Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with life

People who had not answered the outcome variable questions (not specified or refused) are included with those who did not have the poor outcome. A three-category variable was used to represent generations, with the model comparing each of the overseas parent categories to the population with both parents born in New Zealand. The output gives the estimate and odds ratio for the particular outcome, after controlling for age, sex, ethnicity, region and qualification.

The analysis raises some issues with the OECD conclusion that the children of migrants in New Zealand have similar outcomes to the general population. The outcomes for people with both parents born overseas, compared to those with both parents born here, are mixed. The former group are

more likely than the latter group to own their own home and less likely to have low household income. They are also less likely to have been a victim of a crime. By contrast, they are slightly more likely to be unemployed and to have poor or very poor health. However, the strongest poor outcome for people with both parents born overseas is that they have four times the odds of feeling that they do not belong to New Zealand compared to the native population. This shows that despite having relatively good economic outcomes, people can struggle to feel they are part of New Zealand society.

Overall, people with one parent born overseas had more statistically significant poor outcomes than people with both parents born overseas. This can be partly explained by the fact that the two groups are made up of very different people as explained in the cross sectional analysis above. For example people with both parents born overseas are more highly qualified than those with one parent born overseas and the children with one parent born overseas are more likely to be Asian or Pacific, whereas those with one parent born overseas have a greater Māori population. Forty-seven percent of those with both parents born overseas live in the Auckland region, whereas only 30 percent of people with one parent born overseas live there.

People with one parent born overseas are more likely to say they did not have enough family contact than those with both parents born here, but surprisingly the same effect is not felt by those with both parents born overseas. Being away from family and friends is one of the hard things that migrants have to cope with.

People with one parent born overseas were less likely than the native population to do voluntary work, and were more likely to be a victim of a crime. They were also more likely to have major problems with their housing or neighbourhood, and to be dissatisfied with the quality of local services in their area.

As stated earlier, overseas research (DIMIA, 2002 and IRPP, 2008) has shown that even when there is little difference between children with one or both parents born overseas and the native population at the total level, there are differences when the source country of the people is taken into account. There is no information on the country of birth of the parents in the GSS so the ethnicity of the child is used as a proxy. The analysis above could not be replicated for ethnic groups because of the small numbers in some of the groups (for example there were very small numbers of Asian people with both parents born in New Zealand). Instead it focuses on comparing the outcomes between ethnic groups, when one or both parents were born overseas.

A dummy variable that combined the outcome and the birthplace of parent's information was created and this is the dependent variable in the model, with ethnicity as the explanatory variable. For example for the employment outcome, the dummy variable takes two values – one or both parents born overseas and employed, and one or both parents born overseas and not employed. The employed were modelled separately from the unemployed. This allows questions like “Are Asian people with one or both parents born overseas likely to have different employment outcomes to other ethnic groups who have one or both parents born overseas?”

The model shows that for the economic outcomes, the European ethnic group with one or more parents born overseas had consistently better outcomes than either Pacific or Asian people with the same type of parents. Europeans were less likely to be unemployed or to have low household income than the other ethnic groups. On these measures, there was no statistical difference between Asian and Pacific Peoples. Home ownership was the only economic variable where both European and Asian people had better outcomes than other ethnic groups where one or both parent was born overseas.

There was just one of the social variables, satisfaction with the level of family contact, that showed any significant difference between people who had one or both parents born overseas, and again it was the European group who were more satisfied with this type of contact than other ethnic groups.

Conclusion

The report has presented a mixed report card that only partly confirms the OECD conclusion that the children of migrants in countries like New Zealand had similar or better outcomes than the children of natives. It has shown that the biggest negative outcomes for the children of migrants were associated with not having a sense of belonging/connectedness to New Zealand.

The outcomes for people with both parents born overseas are slightly better than those of people with one parent born in New Zealand. People in the former group are less likely to have low household income and more likely to own their own home than the children of natives, whereas those with one parent born overseas are more likely to have multiple poor outcomes.

Of the economic outcomes modelled, it was home ownership that had the strongest differences between the three groups. There were weaker links to unemployment and low household income for children with one parent born overseas.

The three economic outcome measures used in this study (not employed, not owning own home, and low household income) are not exhaustive however, and other data sources will be needed to explore the issue of earnings differences which are the focus of most overseas research in this area.

For social outcomes, the model showed some differences between the children of migrants and the children of natives in most of the outcomes measured, but the relationships were statistically weak. There was one exception to this and that was the measure that encompassed whether the person felt they belonged to New Zealand. People with both parents born overseas were much more likely to feel that they didn't belong in New Zealand than the other two groups.

The report confirmed that education qualification is an important predictor of good outcomes, and that the children of migrants, especially those with both parents born overseas, have better qualifications than people with both parents born in New Zealand.

Children of migrants who are in the European ethnic group have the most favourable outcomes, but it is difficult to be clear about the extent of disadvantage of the other two ethnic groups examined (Asian and Pacific peoples) because almost all relationships were not statistically significant for these two groups. The exception was home ownership; it was the only economic variable where both European and Asian people were more likely to own their own home than other ethnic groups where one or both parents were born overseas.

The longitudinal Survey of Migrants in New Zealand could provide data for future work on this topic, though it misses the counterfactual of the non-migrants. The second NZGSS, which is in the field at the moment, could also show whether there have been any changes in outcomes over the last two years (which cover the recession).

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Appendix 1

Social and Economic Outcomes by Parents Birthplace

	One parent born overseas	Both parents born overseas	Both parents born in New Zealand
		Percent	
Labour force status			
Employed	76.5	71.9	80.6
Unemployed	4.6	4.8	3.2
Not in the labour force	18.9	23.2	16.2
Unemployment rate	5.7	6.3	3.8
Household income			
Loss	0.2	0.0	0.1
Zero income	0.0	0.5	0.2
\$1–\$5,000	0.2	0.1	0.2
\$5,001–\$10,000	0.2	0.4	0.5
\$10,001–\$15,000	1.7	1.4	1.8
\$15,001–\$20,000	2.5	1.4	2.3
\$20,001–\$25,000	2.8	3.1	1.9
\$25,001–\$30,000	3.0	1.7	2.3
\$30,001–\$35,000	2.8	2.0	3.1
\$35,001–\$40,000	3.6	2.4	2.4
\$40,001–\$45,000	3.7	4.0	4.3
\$45,001–\$50,000	2.7	2.8	2.9
\$50,001–\$70,000	18.7	17.6	17.2
\$70,001–\$100,000	21.6	21.4	21.8
\$100,001–\$150,000	22.3	24.5	22.9
\$150,001 or more	14.0	16.7	16.2
Tenure			
Dwelling owned	52.7	60.2	52.1
Dwelling rented	34.0	26.6	29.9
Dwelling in family trust	13.3	13.2	17.9
Family contact			
Too much contact	2.4	2.1	2.3
About right amount	66.6	72.1	72.6
Not enough contact	31.0	25.8	25.1
Crime victimisation			
Victim of a crime	24.0	19.0	22.9
Not a victim of a crime	76.0	81.0	77.1
Housing and neighbourhood			
Major problems with housing or neighbourhood	60.2	56.3	52.6

No major problems with housing or neighbourhood	39.8	43.7	47.4
Self-rated health			
Excellent	19.9	26.2	27.4
Very good	42.5	37.4	38.1
Good	26.9	23.8	23.7
Fair	8.7	10.5	8.6
Poor	2.0	2.2	2.2
Overall life satisfaction			
Very satisfied	30.9	29.9	31.9
Satisfied	54.1	51.9	53.3
No feeling either way	7.9	11.3	7.6
Dissatisfied	5.9	6.0	5.8
Very dissatisfied	1.2	0.9	1.4
Feel belong in New Zealand			
Yes	96.8	93.0	97.9
No	3.2	7.0	2.1
Voluntary work in last four weeks			
Yes	34.0	30.7	31.9
No	66.0	69.3	68.1
Feelings about quality of local services such as water supply, rubbish collection and roads			
Very satisfied	7.5	9.6	9.1
Satisfied	50.1	54.6	53.5
No feeling either way	17.3	17.6	16.8
Dissatisfied	17.3	13.2	14.4
Very dissatisfied	5.8	3.3	3.3
No access to council	2.0	1.7	2.9
Region			
Auckland	29.3	46.9	26.2
Wellington	12.5	13.6	10.5
Northland	14.7	8.4	11.4
Rest of North Island	21.8	14.3	24.2
Canterbury	11.3	9.5	14.5
Rest of South Island	10.3	7.3	13.1
Sex			
Male	51.04	50.01	48.48
Female	48.96	49.99	51.52
Age			
15–19 years	15.8	18.4	11.1
20–24 years	10.2	13.8	10.7
25–29 years	10.4	10.3	8.9
30–34 years	9.6	6.5	9.7
35–39 years	11.2	8.3	10.5

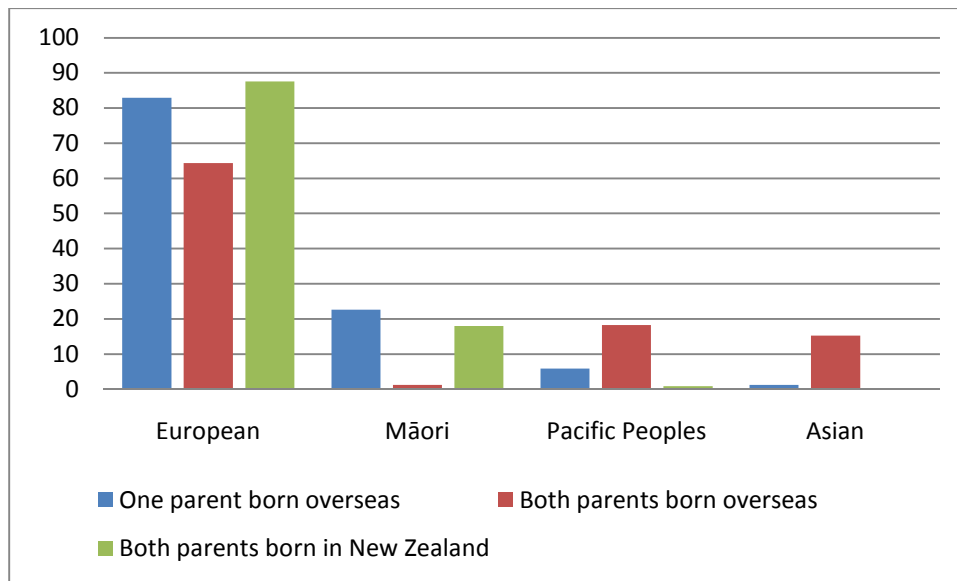
40–44 years	10.6	12.6	10.2
45–49 years	8.6	10.0	11.3
50–54 years	8.5	8.3	11.0
55–59 years	7.3	7.5	8.9
60–64 years	7.8	4.3	7.8
Ethnic group			
European	82.9	64.3	87.6
Māori	22.6	1.3	18.0
Pacific peoples	5.9	18.2	0.9
Asian	1.2	15.2	0.2
MELAA	1.0	1.7	0.0
Other	2.5	2.8	2.5

Table 1: Highest educational qualification by birthplace of parents, 2008

	One parent born overseas	Both parents born overseas	Both parents born in New Zealand
No qualification	22.2	16.6	19.8
Level 1 certificate	14.3	15.0	16.1
Level 2 certificate	11.8	11.4	11.9
Level 3 certificate	10.7	13.5	10.0
Level 4 certificate	11.9	7.8	13.0
Level 5 diploma	5.7	6.4	6.1
Level 6 diploma	5.8	7.5	6.7
Bachelor degree & level 7 qualification	10.8	12.9	10.0
Postgraduate & honours degrees	4.1	4.3	4.2
Masters degree	2.1	2.6	2.0
Doctorate	0.4	0.1	0.3
Overseas secondary school qualification	0.1	2.1	0.1

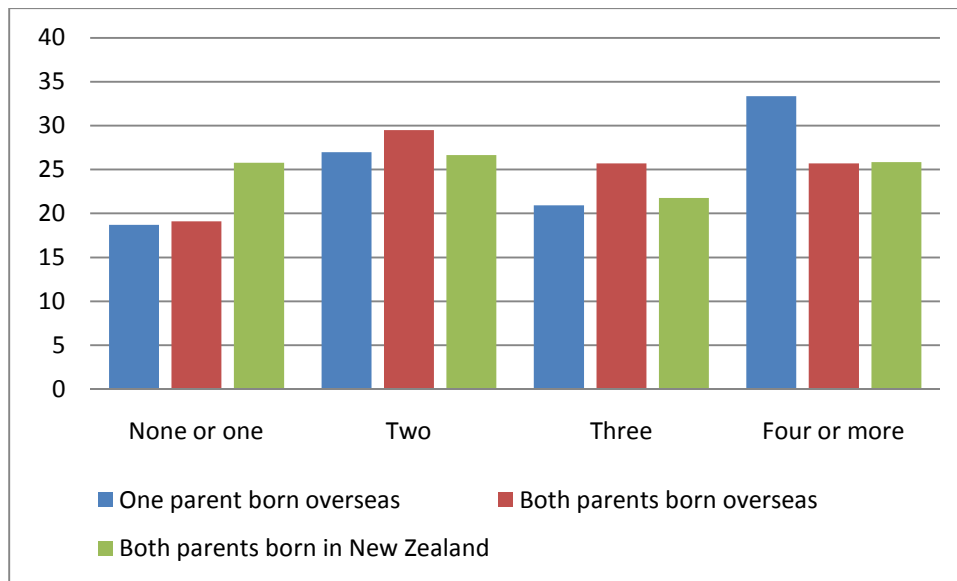
Source: NZ GSS, 2008

Figure 1: Selected ethnic groups by birthplace of parents, 2008



Source: NZ GSS, 2008

Figure 2: Number of poor outcomes by birthplace of parents, 2008



Source: NZ GSS, 2008

Note: the outcomes covered in the graph were: not employed, low household income, not owning own home, not enough money to meet everyday needs, not enough family contact, victim of a crime, major house or neighbourhood problems, poor or very poor health, don't do voluntary work, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the quality of local services, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with overall life satisfaction.

Table 2: Results of the Modelling of Outcomes of the Children of Migrants

Outcome measure	Estimate	Wald Chi sq	Odds ratio estimate	Whether statistically significant
Poor or very poor health				
One parent born overseas	-0.972	1.4568	0.995	
Both parents born overseas	0.1889	4.0865	1.324	*
Unemployed				
One parent born overseas	0.00725	0.0136	1.177	
Both parents born overseas	0.1481	3.9716	1.354	*
Do not own home				
One parent born overseas	0.1869	10.3504	1.042	**
Both parents born overseas	-0.3325	19.984	0.62	***
Low household income				
One parent born overseas	0.1369	4.3495	1.069	*
Both parents born overseas	-0.2074	6.0851	0.757	*
Not enough family contact				
One parent born overseas	0.1629	8.7523	1.332	**
Both parents born overseas	-0.0392	0.3341	1.088	
Don't do voluntary work				
One parent born overseas	-0.1128	4.4629	0.9	*
Both parents born overseas	0.12	3.4229	1.136	
Feel that do not belong here				
One parent born overseas	-0.194	2.0933	1.517	
Both parents born overseas	0.8045	38.1224	4.116	***
Major problems with house or neighbourhood				
One parent born overseas	0.1575	9.5271	1.319	**
Both parents born overseas	-0.0382	0.3997	1.084	
Victim of a crime				
One parent born overseas	0.1107	3.4305	1.062	*
Both parents born overseas	-0.1617	4.7237	0.808	*
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the quality of local services				
One parent born overseas	0.2013	4.0756	1.285	*
Both parents born overseas	-0.1516	1.3531	0.903	
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with overall life satisfaction				
One parent born overseas	0.0167	0.0294	1.014	
Both parents born overseas	-0.0195	0.0271	0.978	

***p<0.001, **p<0.010, *p<0.050