

National Story

Job initiative helping more Pacific people

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By [Angela Gregory](#)

Pacific Island people are increasingly getting the opportunity to live in New Zealand without having to rely on relatives already here to jack them up with jobs which they often don't get or don't keep.

Research into Tongan and Fijian communities by Professor John Gibson, principal investigator of the Pacific–New Zealand Migration Study, has shown that employer visits to island countries are counting more in determining who gets to come here.

Professor Gibson said a survey had shown that the percentage of Tongan migrants who got job offers in New Zealand though a relative had halved since changes were made to the Pacific Island access category in late 2004.

Among the job-related changes was an initiative by the Immigration Service to help arrange employer visits to Pacific countries to recruit workers.

Before those changes 74 per cent of the Tongan migrants had received their initial job offer through a relative.

Since then, however, only 36 per cent of migrants did.

Instead 58 per cent received their job offer through an employer who had visited Tonga on a recruitment drive.

The changes also seemed to have had a positive effect in helping migrants obtain longer lasting jobs.

Before only 51 per cent of those surveyed were still in their first job about nine months later, and in most cases that was not the qualifying job from the residence application.

After the changes 89 per cent of migrants actually worked in the job they had been offered and 72 per cent were still in that job after nine months.

Professor Gibson has also looked at the effect of migration on the health of the children who came to New Zealand with their parents

Infants and toddlers tended to increase in size to come closer to the norms for healthy children.

But offsetting the improvements were increases in body mass for older children which could be a sign of a greater risk of future obesity.

Professor Gibson said the changes in children's health did not seem to be caused by the larger rise in family income.

Instead a change in diet was the more significant factor with the people here consuming more protein through meat and milk than the families who remained in Tonga.

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