

School of Accountancy

**KIWI TALENT FLOW: A STUDY OF CHARTERED  
ACCOUNTANTS AND BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS  
OVERSEAS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

New Zealanders have always had a propensity to travel overseas. The globalisation of the world has seen an increase in the number of people who, having completed their education and gained some work experience, set off on their overseas experience. Concern has been expressed as to the potential “brain drain” that would result should these well-educated and talented citizens remain overseas permanently. This research considers the propensity to return of over 1,500 expatriate Kiwis working in the areas of accounting and finance. It examines their demographics, attitudes, values, motivations, factors of attraction to, and repulsion from, New Zealand and their concerns for change in New Zealand. It therefore provides insights into the nature and purpose of this significant group of professionals resident mainly in the United Kingdom and Australia. We find that less than half are likely to return to New Zealand. This is because of the lack of career and business opportunities despite the “pull” of family and relations in New Zealand.

Keywords: New Zealand emigration, brain drain, business professionals, propensity to return.

## Introduction

It has long been common practice that a young New Zealander, having completed his/her education, will seek adventures abroad on what is commonly called the "OE" (overseas experience). This penchant for travel is probably attributable to factors such as New Zealand's location so far from most of the world, the need to see "what else there is out there", family roots in the United Kingdom, and the adventurous Kiwi spirit (Jamieson 1996; Inkson and Myers 2003). Since at least the 1980s there has been concern that these people might choose to remain overseas thus depriving New Zealand of their skills, abilities and talents (e.g. NZ Financial Review 1987; Sceats 1987). This concern is highlighted by airport arrival and departure data which shows that more New Zealanders leave the country than return from overseas. For example, from 1998-2002, the mean outflow of New Zealanders departing for a minimum of one year was 28,000 more than the number returning after one or more years overseas (Statistics New Zealand 2002). Many of these people are highly educated with specific skills and abilities. The outflow of their economic talent has often been referred to as "the brain drain" a term used to describe a loss of vital human talent from developing countries to more developed economies.

According to Drucker (1992) "every organisation is in competition for its most essential resource: qualified, knowledgeable people" (p.100). Globalisation has moved this concept from a local to a national level so that countries as a whole compete for workers. A well-educated, versatile and skilled work force is essential to New Zealand's economic growth. However recruitment difficulties can inhibit growth and productivity particularly if those with advanced capabilities and entrepreneurial skills have migrated permanently to other parts of the world.

This paper, which explores the brain drain or loss of talented Kiwi accountants and business professionals, is particularly timely given the recent call, by the New Zealand Government, for expatriate Kiwis to return home. By means of an on-line survey of over 1,500 business professionals (mainly members of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of New Zealand) we seek to answer the following key research question:

*What is the propensity of expatriate Kiwi accountants and other business professionals to return to New Zealand?*

In answering this question we identify the profiles of highly-qualified expatriate New Zealand accountants and business professionals, their motivations for leaving New Zealand, their intentions as to future location and the factors that would motivate them to return. These motivators are grounded in individually held values. Identifying both motivational and value profiles of this sector of the work force provides insights into managing, retaining and recruiting human capital. The findings assist the strategic challenge of attracting potential employees from their overseas base and encouraging them to apply for vacant positions in New Zealand.

Research on the so called 'brain drain' has tended to focus on health workers and scientists. The outflow of talented accountants and other business professionals has been a neglected area and yet these people are well-educated, versatile and skilled -factors essential to New Zealand's economic growth. Accountants are particularly globally mobile because of the universality of the language of accounting and the reciprocity of the New Zealand accounting qualification. The introduction of international financial reporting standards will further enhance this mobility.

We therefore focus this study on New Zealand members of the New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants (NZICA) and other business professionals who are currently living overseas. There are approximately 28,000 members of the Institute pursuing a diverse range of careers including strategic management, financial and business analysis, banking, insurance, auditing and taxation. Twenty per cent of the total membership is located overseas which is some indication of the international portability of their qualification. This gave us the opportunity to examine behavioural and demographic factors of a significant group of highly skilled migrant business workers. It is useful to examine this group as there is a tendency for migration rates to be higher for highly educated people (Carrington and Detragiache 1999). As New Zealand seeks to build a knowledge economy, the flow of talent is becoming increasingly important. Economic growth may be slowed if a large number of highly educated people leave the country.

The paper proceeds with a discussion of relevant literature and various aspects of the brain drain issue. Then the research method is outlined followed by the research findings. The paper ends with a summary and conclusions.

## **Background Literature**

The globalisation of the labour market is an important factor in the increasing international movement of workers. As a result of this globalisation, it is reported that 24% of New Zealand university graduates leave for overseas (NZ Herald, 12 March, 2005 p.A1). New Zealand is not alone in the loss of talented people. Other countries such as Australia, Canada, France, India, Russia and Germany also have concerns about the loss of highly skilled and educated citizens. The primary attractors to other countries are higher wages and standards of living and the focus of some of the articles (for example, Sani, 2000; Creehan, 2001; Djalal, 2001) is on the economic effects of skilled migration. Such movement has the potential to severely inhibit economic growth through the loss of significant resources. Birrell, Dobson, Rapson and Smith (2001) note that New Zealand is losing more skilled residents than Australia but nevertheless Australia has shown a progressive annual increase in the number of residents leaving the country. They posit that, although the numbers of Australian residents drawn overseas has increased, most will be attracted to return by the Australian lifestyle and low cost of living. In acknowledging concern about the net loss of skilled Australian residents, Birrell et al. report that

Australia achieved a 'brain gain' in professional occupations including accountants and other business professionals. Comparable net losses elsewhere in the world mean that the current study will have international interest as well.

The concept of a brain drain or the loss of valuable skills from the country of initial residence was originally focused on the movement of scientists, engineers and medical staff to highly paid, challenging jobs overseas. More recent studies (e.g. Carrington and Detragiache 1999; Mathews and Zander 2000) have focused on the outflow of all economically productive individuals. Much of the research has had a psychological frame concentrating on behavioural aspects of migration – what motivates people to migrate. Motivation literally means “that which makes people move”. Carr, Inkson and Thorn (2004) identify a number of motivating factors including economic, political, cultural, lifestyle, career and family. They acknowledge the complex nature of the motivations by developing a synthesised model in the form of a two-way motivational matrix. Others (e.g. Chang and Deng 1992; Clarke 1999; Rosenblatt and Scheaffer 2001) have focused on specific motivational factors such as the opportunity to develop an interesting and stimulating career or the lack of political freedom.

Another strand of the migration literature deals with human resource aspects such as the management of multi-cultural organisations, how organisations adapt to employees from other cultures, interaction and interdependence between cultures and nations as globalisation increases (Forster, 1992; Redding, 1994). Although a number of our respondents identified the opportunity to interact with other cultures as a motivator for their overseas experience our focus is not on the human resource aspects of this interaction but rather the attitudes and values of the migrants and the likelihood of their return to New Zealand.

Other relevant research has a career focus. These studies focus on the assignment of expatriates by multinational companies (e.g. Thomas, 2002). Our research is different as we focus on a potentially more significant group – skilled migrants who become expatriates independently of any employer. The research on migrant careers acknowledges brain drain as a significant component of international migration and global restructuring (Cheng and Yang, 1998). As well as the attraction of higher wages and standards of living (Creehan, 2001) the career development literature identifies motivators for migration such as expatriate assignments, entrepreneurial opportunities, challenging work in one's career area, and familiar networks as motivators for migration (Inkson and Myers, 2003). Return migration provides an essential contribution to the national economy through expertise and skills learned overseas. Inkson and Myers (2003) posit that many Kiwi expatriates intend to return bringing with them career benefits (Cohen and Mallon, 2001) and 'career capital' (Inkson and Arthur, 2002; Arthur, Inkson and Pringle, 1999).

This research is career focused in that it considers the importance of career opportunities for migrant New Zealand business professionals. It also has a psychological bent as it examines the active choices made by the survey respondents as to whether to stay overseas or return to New Zealand. Choices like these are dependent on individual differences in values, motives and intentions.

An important group of expatriate New Zealanders who received their training and professional experience in New Zealand have, for a number of reasons, transferred their economic worth to another country. We seek to add to the literature by conducting a case study which examines the attitudes, motivations and propensity to return of these New Zealand migrants. While the simple solution to attracting health workers and teachers back to New Zealand may be the provision of better conditions of employment and higher salaries the solution in the case of accountants and other business professionals is more complex. The nature of their occupation provides opportunities for migration as their professions are often global in nature with strong network support to ease the transition from one culture to another. Migration provides an opportunity for more challenging work in one's career area, special expatriate holiday and salary allowances, and often an entrepreneurial setting (Inkson and Myers, 2003). Their return to New Zealand is often not limited by lower salary scales but rather by challenging and senior business positions together with acknowledgment of the career capital they have developed (Arthur, Inkson and Pringle, 1999; Cohen and Mallon, 2001). However, our research identifies that the disparity between incomes and career opportunities can be offset, to some extent, by the New Zealand environment and lifestyle and the need to be with families.

## **Method**

In late 2003, we placed a questionnaire on a purposely-prepared website. The questionnaire was designed to be completed on the Internet by professionals originating from, and educated in, New Zealand and living overseas at the time of the study. The aim was to obtain feedback on various aspects of their overseas sojourn. Questions related to demographic information (age, sex and qualifications), occupation, length of time spent overseas, intentions with regard to returning to New Zealand and the motivation behind those intentions. A range of 32 expatriate, alumni and professional associations in New Zealand were asked to draw the website to the attention of their overseas members. One of those associations, NZICA, has close links with its United Kingdom and Australian counterparts and both those overseas bodies have Institute representatives overseas to support the New Zealand members. In addition, membership of the Institute is a necessary component of the Chartered Accountant and Accounting Technician qualifications. It was not surprising therefore that a significant number of the 2,201 usable responses (69%) were from financial consultants, accountants, financial analysts and managers. This paper analyses the responses of this group. The total group has been split into 8 sub-groups as follows:

1. Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/General Manager/Company Director (148 participants);
2. Divisional Manager/Manager/Partner/Vice President (446 participants);
3. Chief Financial Officer/Chief Accountant/Financial Controller/Finance Director (222 participants);
4. Divisional Accountant/Treasurer/Finance Manager (355 participants);
5. Business Information Technology (including Business Analyst) (59 participants);
6. Financial Analyst/Investment Advisor (79 participants);
7. Consultant/Specialist (Tax, Banking, Foreign Exchange) (172 participants);
8. Self-employed (39 participants).

The intention is to compare and contrast the responses for each of these groups.

### **Characteristics of Participants**

The majority (77%) of the business professionals who responded to the survey were members of the New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants (NZICA). Of the 28,000 members of NZICA, 33% are women. This is reflected in the demographics of the survey participants: 68.5% were male and 31.5% were female. Most of the females were employed at the mid-range level of authority, that is, as divisional accountants or financial analysts. Significantly, 85% of those employed at the top level were male. The ages of all participants ranged from 20 years to over 60 years. The largest group (49%) was aged between 30 and 39 years and 22.8% were between 40 and 49 years. The highest concentration was 30-34 years old working in three groups: Business Information Technology (IT); Financial Analyst/Investment Advisor; Consultant/Specialist. Of those employed as CEO/General Manager/Company Director, 63.6% were over 40 years of age as were 64% of those self-employed.

In terms of ethnicity the majority of participants (86%) identified as New Zealand European and the United Kingdom and Australia were the most common countries of residence.

Hugo (2004) notes that one in ten New Zealand citizens lives in Australia and according to Glass and Choy (2001) half of all the people leaving New Zealand in the 20 year period 1981-2001 went to Australia with the United Kingdom accounting for another 20% (Glass and Choy 2001). Our study identified that currently there are more CEO/General Managers and more self-employed working in Australia than in the United Kingdom but in all other groups there are greater numbers working in the United Kingdom than in Australia. The UK is a popular choice possibly because more New Zealand residents have rights to live and work in the United Kingdom than in the United States or other developed countries. Myers and Inkson (2003) cite the colonial history of New Zealand, OE traditions, similarities of culture and language as other attractors. More than 50% of the Business IT and Financial Analyst groups are working in the United Kingdom which is seen as the hub of the new 'knowledge economy' (Birchell et al. 2001). There has been a net outflow from New Zealand to Australia almost every year since



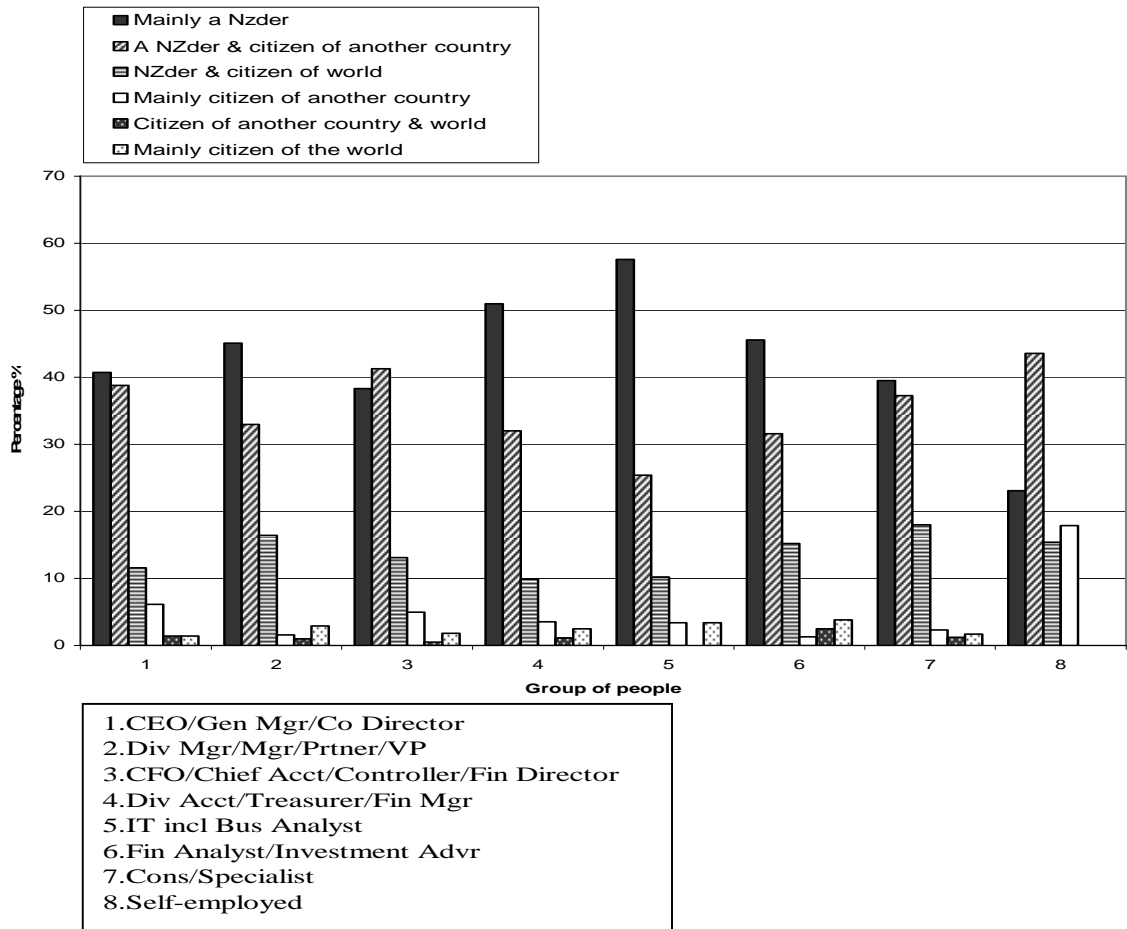
the late 1960s. This is probably a consequence of the common labour market with Australia (Glass and Choy 2001). For many, New Zealand and Australia constitute a single labour market.

The sample as a whole was, by virtue of its genesis in professional groups, very highly qualified. More than 59% held a post-graduate qualification and a further 36% had a bachelor's degree. The Chartered Accountant (CA) qualification requires completion of a four year degree programme. In a number of academic institutions in New Zealand the fourth year of the degree is structured as a post-graduate qualification. This accounts for 45.7% of the sample having this qualification. The most highly qualified group appears to be the Consultant/Specialist group in which 2.4% have a doctorate and 24.1% have a masters degree. This investment in education, combined with overseas experience, led more than 71% to estimate that their qualifications, skills and experience were exceptionally or highly valuable in New Zealand. If the majority of emigrants returned to New Zealand after a period working overseas it is likely that their value to New Zealand would be greater than if they had remained in New Zealand. More than 28% of the CEO/General Manager/Director group and more than 20% of both the Divisional Manager etc. group and the Consultant/Specialist group considered that their attributes were exceptionally valuable in New Zealand. There is no doubt that this represents a considerable outflow of talent from New Zealand. These highly educated people are also highly skilled which increases their potential to increase national productivity.

A number of participants (more than 43%) have been on their current OE for between one to five years and a further 25% have been overseas for a six to ten year period. Over 36% had had a previous OE of more than a year. Interestingly, 36% of the self-employed group have been on their current OE for 11-15 years and 30% have been there even longer. Hugo, Rudd and Harris (2003) posit that the longer the period overseas and the older the emigrant, the more likely it is that they will not return to their home country. However, despite 25.1% of the participants having been on their current OE for more than 11 years, participants identified strongly with their home country, New Zealand, with 44.4% considering themselves "mainly a New Zealander". Others considered themselves both a New Zealander and a citizen of another country (34.9%) or a New Zealander and a citizen of the world (13.8%) (see Figure 1). Of all the groups, the Business IT people identified most strongly as New Zealanders only and the Self-employed identified most strongly as being New Zealanders as well as citizens of another country. The younger participants (Divisional Accountant and Business IT groups) were the most loyal. As a whole, more than 90% of the participants identified as a New Zealander. This strong sense of national identity may influence the likelihood of their return to New Zealand in the future or at least provide a basis for establishing a New Zealand diaspora.

**Figure 1**

Current sense of national identity

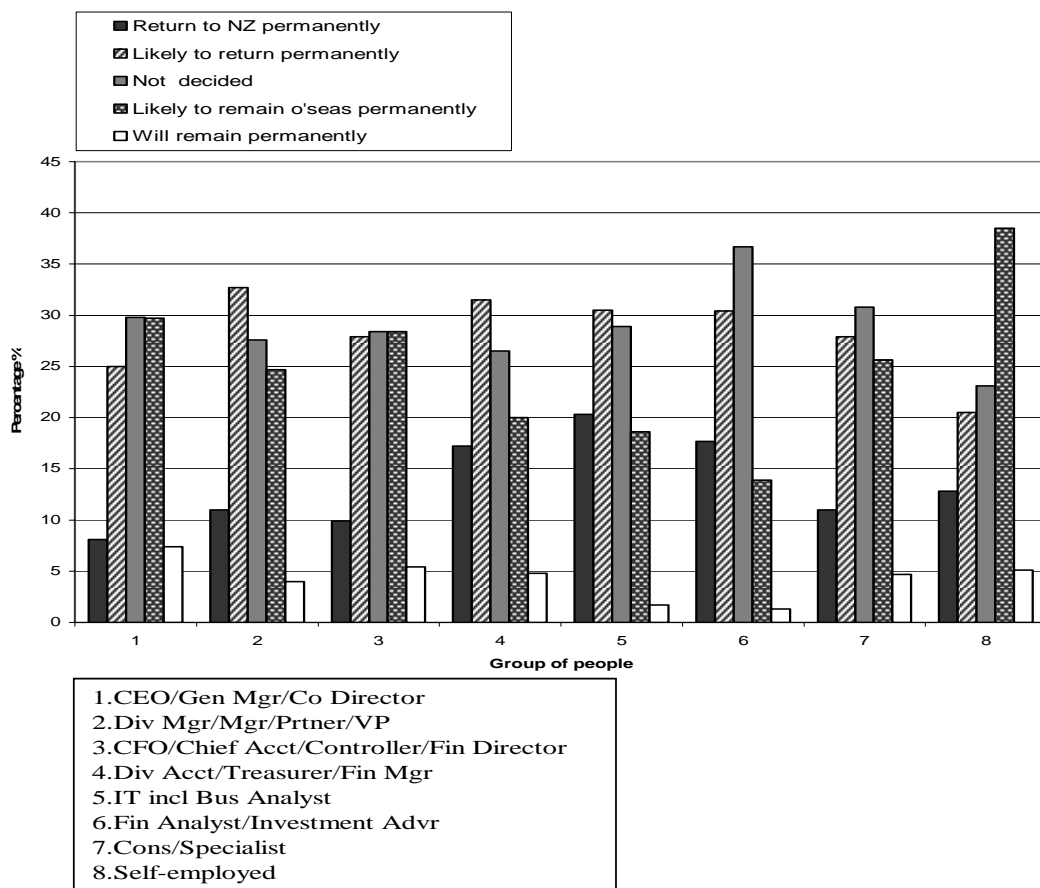


## Return to New Zealand

### Participants' future plans

If we link the above findings to the future plans of the participants we find that, except for the Financial Analyst group, more than 20% of all other groups will or are likely to remain overseas – notably 37% of the CEO etc. group and 43.6% of the Self-employed (see Figure 2). On the other hand, on average, at least 44.7% of the other groups will return or are likely to return to New Zealand (more than 50% of the Business IT group). Overall, 42.7% of the participants intend to return or are likely to return to New Zealand. This provides some optimism that business expertise, financial, economic and IT knowledge may eventually flow back to New Zealand.

**Figure 2**  
Participants' future plans



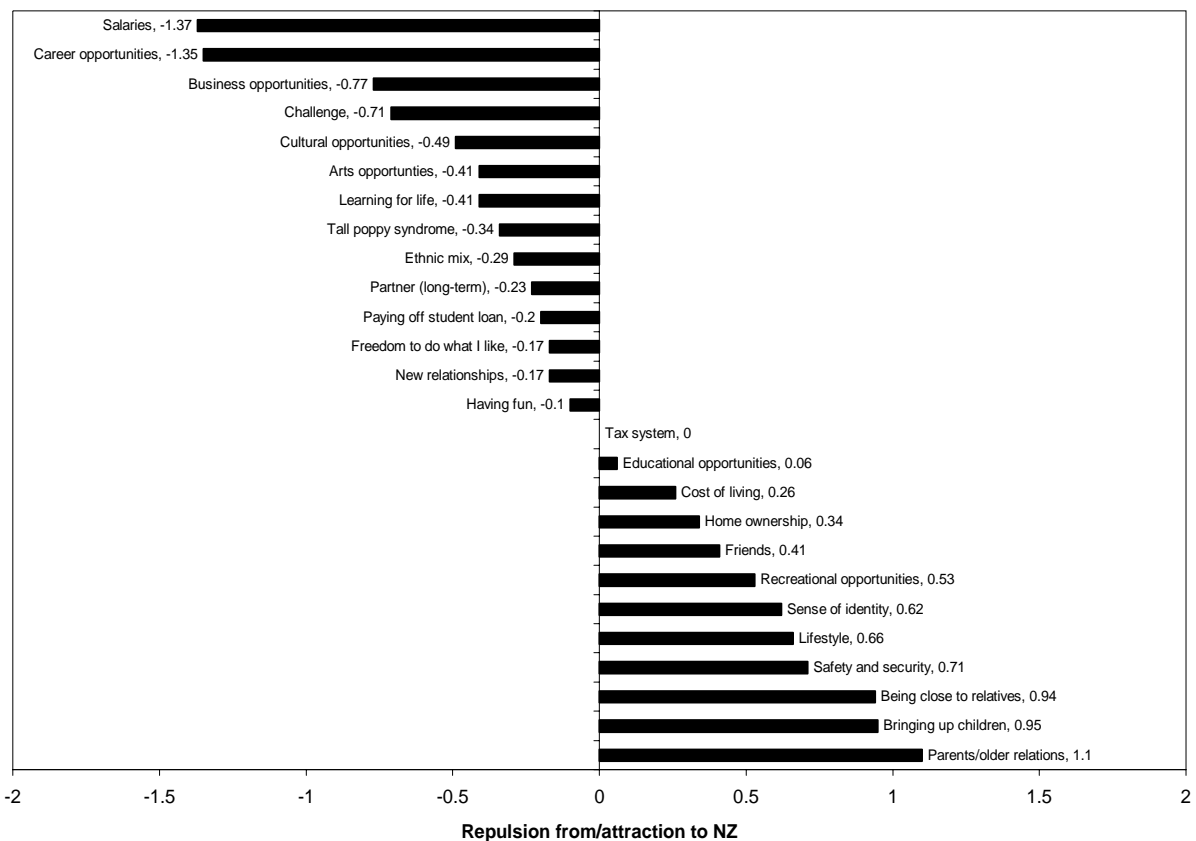
### Attraction to/Repulsion from New Zealand

In order to identify factors which may attract expatriates either to return to New Zealand or to remain overseas, we listed 26 items, derived from our analysis of the literature on migration,

that might be expected to have an influence: for example “bringing up children”, “safety and security”, “cultural opportunities” and “salaries”. Participants were asked to rate each item on a five-point scale,<sup>1</sup> recalibrated in Figure 3 so that +2 means the factor provided a strong attraction to return to New Zealand, and -2 means it provided a strong attraction to remain overseas. The figures enabled us to construct an “Attraction to New Zealand” score for each factor, ranging from a possible +2 if everyone in the sample had said the factor drew them strongly back to New Zealand, to -2 if everyone had said the factor drew them strongly to remain overseas. The results are shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

Factors causing repulsion from/attraction to New Zealand  
(In increasing order of attraction to New Zealand)



Ranges from -2 (maximum repulsion from New Zealand) to +2 (maximum attraction to New Zealand)

These results are generally what would be expected in a brain drain analysis drawn from a country without political tensions. Family, security, lifestyle, identity, social and recreational factors attract expatriates back to New Zealand. On the other hand, cultural experiences,

<sup>1</sup> The 5 points on the scale were as follows:  
Draws me strongly towards NZ, draws me to NZ but not strongly, draws me equally towards NZ and overseas or is irrelevant, draws me towards remaining overseas but not strongly, draws me strongly towards remaining overseas.

salaries, career and business opportunities with their associated challenges, keep them overseas. These findings are consistent with Glass and Choy (2001) who posit that continuing differences in salary levels motivate the departure of highly-skilled workers whose knowledge and experience is sought by other countries. The 2005 survey of average salaries of New Zealand members of NZICA identifies some interesting comparisons, for example, Chief Financial Officers/GM Finance overseas earn on average the New Zealand equivalent of \$347,983 compared to \$198,554 in New Zealand; Systems Accounting Managers earn \$190,089 compared to \$108,658; and Internal Audit Managers earn \$236,189 compared to \$136,081.

Only 7.1% of the participants had a student loan. This factor had some impact as a repulsion factor for all groups except CEOs who probably completed their education before the student loan scheme was implemented. Only 2% of the CEO group was aged 20-29 years. Student loan was the strongest repulsion factor for the Self-employed group. In a few cases the amount of the loan was substantially over \$50,000.

In terms of “push” and “pull” factors for individual groups, the strength of the repulsion factor for career, salary and tall poppy was highest for the CEO group. Tall poppy syndrome is based on the perception that New Zealand fails to properly acknowledge and reward high achievement. The CEO group rated sense of identity as a strong attractor to New Zealand (after the attraction of being close to parents and relatives). Sense of identity was the highest attractor for the self-employed group. Those who have committed to setting up their own businesses overseas may have done so because they no longer have family ties in New Zealand. In addition, their entrepreneurial characteristics indicate that they have invested time and energy into establishing business and social networks thus reducing the “pull factors” related to friends and recreational opportunities. The high attraction of New Zealand for the CEO and the Self-employed groups in terms of sense of identity correlates with the high proportion of participants who identified as a New Zealander and may indicate an attraction to being “a big fish in a small pond”.

New Zealand has been identified as a good place to bring up children. This factor was rated as the highest attraction for the Divisional Accountant, Business IT, and Financial Analyst groups. These are the groups with the largest percentage of participants in the 30-34 age group.

### **Changes needed in New Zealand**

In order to make the prospect of returning to New Zealand more attractive, consideration may need to be given to changes that expatriates thought should be made. Participants were asked to identify three changes that would make it more attractive for them to return to New Zealand. Their comments have been classified into 18 areas as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

## Perceptions about changes needed in New Zealand

Change factor	Group								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Business/Career opportunities	70.2	67.0	56.8	50.0	47.8	63.0	66.2	47.4	60.1
Financial (pay/cost of living)	24.6	36.8	34.7	35.9	39.1	25.9	31.0	21.1	33.8
Tax	28.1	25.5	31.6	20.0	30.4	18.5	25.4	21.1	24.9
Economy stronger	14.0	23.1	15.8	18.2	21.7	14.8	18.3	31.6	19.4
Miscellaneous:weather, transport	15.8	11.8	16.8	20.6	17.4	3.7	23.9	31.6	16.8
Lifestyle*	7.0	9.9	20.0	12.9	26.1	33.3	22.5	15.8	14.8
Safety/Security	12.3	17.5	14.7	13.5	13.0	37.0	7.0	31.6	14.2
Bicultural concerns	17.5	9.4	13.7	9.4	21.7	14.8	5.6	10.5	11.0
Government change	15.8	12.3	10.5	6.5	13.0	7.4	15.5	21.1	11.3
Family responsibilities	10.5	11.8	7.4	10.0	0.0	33.3	9.9	15.8	11.0
Attitudes: parochial, tall poppy	8.8	8.5	10.5	6.5	8.7	7.4	9.9	5.3	8.3
International mobility	5.3	9.4	3.2	10.6	17.4	14.8	7.0	0.0	8.5
Home ownership	5.3	7.5	8.4	12.9	0.0	7.4	4.2	0.0	8.0
Cultural integration	8.8	6.1	7.4	4.7	13.0	7.4	7.0	15.8	6.8
Partner**	1.8	3.3	5.3	6.5	4.3	3.7	1.4	5.3	4.2
Education system	1.8	2.4	6.3	3.5	0.0	3.7	2.8	0.0	3.1
Student loans	0.0	0.9	1.1	3.5	4.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5
Cultural separation	1.8	0.9	0.0	1.8	4.3	0.0	1.4	0.0	1.2

1	CEO/General Mgr/Co Director
2	Divisional Mgr/Mgr/Partner/VP
3	CFO/Chief Acct/Controller/Fin Director
4	Div Acct/Treasurer/Fin Mgr
5	IT (including Bus Analyst)
6	Fin Analyst/Investment Advisor
7	Consultant/Specialist
8	Self-employed

\*Lifestyle comments included more annual leave, access to higher culture such as theatre, better sporting opportunities, a better social scene

\*\*Partner referred to availability of jobs for partners, and reduced immigration regulations

The dominant change requested by participants related to business and career opportunities. In all of the eight groups, business and career opportunities were by far the most sought after change. Overall, 60.1% of the participants identified this change. As expected, this was particularly important for those in the most senior positions. Two other important changes were also economic: financial (pay and cost of living) and tax incentives. This provides support for the notion that migrants stay overseas because of economic incentives. Only a few participants cited changes to the student loan scheme. This is probably because many of them would have received most of their education before the student loan scheme and higher fees were implemented.

These factors may indicate that there is a need to ensure that New Zealand is a better place to work in order to attract migrants to return and to retain existing residents. These highly skilled people expect attractive incomes as compensation for their qualifications and experience. This provides them with more choices particularly with respect to the use of leisure time.

### **Most important aspects of life**

We have considered the “push” and “pull” factors for expatriate business professionals. Generally we found that New Zealand is more attractive to those with a family or lifestyle orientation but that those seeking career success or money stay away. In order to provide additional insights to these findings and to the propensity to return to New Zealand, we asked participants to rank six factors that reflected what they most valued: friendship, influence, achievement, lifestyle, money, family.<sup>2</sup> Overall we found that family was by far the most important factor in their lives (76% rated this as 1 or 2 on a scale of 6). Lifestyle and friendship were the next most important factors followed by achievement. Only 3.7% of participants ranked money as most important and influence was ranked least important by 74% of the participants. This low ranking of money is interesting when salaries are a high attractor to overseas employment.

It is possible that life values influence migrants’ decisions as to whether to return to New Zealand or stay overseas. We compared the life value responses to the future intention responses. Results are shown in Table 2. Ranks on the values were reversed so that the higher the scores the more highly that value was ranked by participants.

**Table 2**

Motivation scores of likely “returners” to New Zealand, undecided, and overseas “stayers”

Motive	NZ returners	Undecided	Overseas stayers
Family	5.19	4.94	5.01
Lifestyle	4.21	4.09	4.13
Friendship	4.01	3.83	3.61
Achievement	3.15	3.42	3.51
Money	3.06	3.20	3.17
Influence	1.38	1.52	1.57

As expected from the previous findings, family is the most important value for all participants. This is followed by lifestyle and friendship. Achievement is more important than money and influence is strongly the least important value. Those likely to return to New Zealand rate family more highly than overseas stayers. Achievement and money are more important for those likely to remain overseas than for the returners. The undecided group rate the importance factors in much the same way as those who are likely to remain overseas. If this is an indication that the

<sup>2</sup> We used a 6 point Likert scale ranging from ‘most important’ to ‘least important’.

undecided may be more inclined to remain overseas than to return to New Zealand then this paints a gloomy picture of an increasingly permanent outflow of talent.

### What being overseas is about

Carrington and Detragiache (1999) called for more research to identify the reasons for migration. We obtained further insights into migration issues by asking the sample group to rank nine items in response to the question “For me as a person, being overseas is about...?” Table 3 records the responses.

**Table 3**  
What being overseas is about

Motivator	Importance									Mean* rating
	Most				Least					
	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	6 %	7 %	8 %	9 %	
Boosting earning power	26.1	22.2	16.6	11.3	8.4	5.7	5.4	3.1	1.2	3.15
Having a good time	28.7	14.7	10.5	9.3	9.6	6.3	5.9	6.6	8.4	3.82
Pursuit of excellence	15.6	12.2	12.1	10.7	11.2	13.7	10.2	8.1	6.2	4.49
Working hard	4.6	12.8	15.1	13.7	13	12.4	11.2	9.9	7.3	4.93
Learning to solve problems	4.2	10.8	12.3	15.4	14.6	14.6	12.9	9.7	5.5	5.02
Fulfilling leadership potential	10.5	9.1	10	11.4	12.3	12.8	13.9	12.5	7.5	5.08
Being upwardly mobile	5.7	7.1	9.1	9.5	12.1	10.7	11.5	15.7	18.6	5.84
Becoming a winner	3.1	5.8	7.4	9.7	9.2	12	14.5	18.7	19.6	6.22
Being an ambassador for NZ	1.5	5.3	6.9	9.1	9.5	11.8	14.6	15.6	25.7	6.45

\* The lower the number, the greater is its level of importance

Once again money is the strongest motivation for being overseas. This is closely followed by the more frivolous factor of having a good time, perhaps indicating that one supports the other, and that accountants/financial sector employees actually enjoy life. Work-related motives (working hard, problem solving, leadership) are also relatively important but being upwardly mobile, becoming a winner, or an ambassador for New Zealand are considerably less important.

### Summary And Conclusion

The findings for each of the eight groups in respect of demographic factors, their perception of the value their skills would have in New Zealand, the time spent on this current OE and the factors that attract or repulse them from New Zealand are summarised in Table 4. The attraction and repulsion factors are drawn from Figure 3.



**Table 4**  
Summary of findings

Group	Age >40yrs	Residence		Post Grad Qual.	Skills Value Exception- al & High	Time on Current OE >5yrs	“Push” and “Pull” factors	
		Aus.	UK				Attract	Repulse
CEO/GM/Co Director	64%	37%	28%	56%	83%	67%	1. Parents 2. Relatives	1. Salary 2. Career
Div Mgr/Partner/VP	37%	29%	31%	58%	73%	58%	1. Parents 2. Relatives	1. Career 2. Salary
CFO/Chief Acct/Fin. Director	42%	30%	32%	65%	72%	60%	1. Parents 2. Children	1. Career 2. Salary
Div Acct/Treas./Fin Manager	23%	32%	49%	60%	68%	34%	1. Children 2. Parents	1. Career 2. Salary
Business IT (incl. Bus Analyst)	14%	27%	59%	55%	66%	31%	1. Children 2. Parents	1. Salary 2. Career
Fin Analyst/Inv. Adv	24%	22%	53%	51%	68%	33%	1. Children 2. Safe 3. Identity	1. Salary 2. Career
Consultant/Specialist	30%	24%	43%	59%	66%	47%	1. Parents 2. Children	1. Salary 2. Career
Self-employed	64%	39%	15%	67%	66%	82%	1. Identity 2. Children	1. Loan 2. Salary
ALL	35%	30%	38%	59%	71%	50%		

The participants are all highly qualified with nearly 60% overall holding a post-graduate qualification. Most are resident in Australia or the United Kingdom with over half of the Business IT group being based in the United Kingdom. As a whole, most of the participants are aged between 30 and 34 years with more than 70% being aged 30-49 years. The CEO group and the Self-employed are older than the other groups – 64% of each group are more than 40 years old. Most of the Self-employed group (82%) and the CEO group (67%) have been overseas for more than five years. There is no doubt that the accountants and business professionals sample represents a considerable loss of talent for New Zealand – 70% consider that their skills are exceptionally or highly valuable for the country. They could be attracted back to New Zealand by parents, relatives and their perception that it is a good place to bring up children but salary and career opportunities keep them overseas. The dominance of work-related reasons for emigration is an indication that the globalisation of labour markets is a driver in the increasing movement of workers between countries.

Generally, being overseas is about boosting earning power and having a good time. It is not about being an ambassador for New Zealand, becoming a winner or being upwardly mobile.

Participants rate family, lifestyle and friendship as their most important life values. These are followed by achievement and then money. Money appears to be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for blocking talent backflow. Notably, those who are likely to remain overseas place a higher value on achievement than those likely to return to New Zealand. It is possible that the socially or lifestyle-oriented migrants will return to New Zealand but that the country will be deprived of the high achievers with the skills, experience and motivation to contribute to a growing economy. Those who are undecided about their future plans rank their life values much the same as those who are likely to remain overseas. Should this group decide to remain overseas, the number who indicated they were likely to remain overseas would increase by 29%, making a total of 57%. This represents a considerable loss of talent for New Zealand particularly as many of these are in the highly skilled CEO/General Manager/Company Director group and the entrepreneurial Self-employed. These people identify working hard, problem solving and leadership as important motivators for being overseas.

Overall, 43% of our respondents intend to return or are likely to return to New Zealand. Their overseas experience will have enhanced their independence, confidence, interpersonal and cross-cultural skills as well as their on-the-job expertise. Return migration will play a large part in developing specialist and technical business skills in the New Zealand labour market. Returnees expect to gain jobs at a higher level than previously held in New Zealand as a result of the career capital they have built up overseas. In order to attract these people back, New Zealand needs to have greater business and career opportunities and to recognise advanced skill and experience in monetary terms. In addition New Zealand needs strategies such as the building of career paths and promotion prospects in order to retain existing employees. Lifestyle alone is not a sufficient attractor to stay or to return. An essential component of lifestyle is salary. Returning accountants and business professionals expect to be able to retain their overseas standard of living and status and New Zealand salaries are often insufficient to complement the lifestyle/family package. They expect to be able to have satisfying work that extends their potential even though the local business environment may be more restricted.

Migration from New Zealand is a complex issue. Career decisions are influenced by a combination of factors – career, economic, political, culture and lifestyle. This study has identified some of the concerns, values and motivating factors for a significant group of highly educated, experienced and skilled accountants and business professionals. The portability of the Chartered Accountant qualification indicates that there is a propensity for New Zealand citizens with particular skills to emigrate. As more than 90% have identified as New Zealanders they could provide a strong foundation for the development of a New Zealand diaspora of

skilled expatriates. This would reduce some of the negative effects of the brain drain by the contribution of their knowledge and expertise towards the development of the knowledge economy in New Zealand. New Zealand can benefit from the experience gained from emigrants working overseas but there is a need to encourage them to return by the availability of appropriate, well-paid work. On the other hand, there is also a need to develop initiatives to keep talented workers in New Zealand.

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2005

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