

# Mentally Healthy Work Migrant Insights of workers in the retail sector

**Asian Family Services**

June 2023



**Asian Family Services**  
*Together enriching lives*

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## Executive Summary

This report sheds light on the unique challenges faced by Asian migrant retail workers in New Zealand. It discusses the lived experiences of these migrants, who often start their journey in New Zealand with limited understanding of local labour standards, employment protection legislation, and workers' rights due to differences in practices from their home countries. Consequently, they become vulnerable, especially when compared to their New Zealand-born counterparts or those who have spent more time in the country. The problem is exacerbated for those who face language barriers and are not equipped to seek information to better understand their rights.

Discrimination in job seeking is a common experience despite many migrants possessing qualifications ranging from postgraduate degrees to professional healthcare credentials. Moreover, their limited English proficiency often results in exploitation, particularly in small businesses owned by fellow Asians, where there's less likelihood of them being provided with information about employment rights.

However, it is noteworthy that as migrants spend more time in New Zealand and move on to larger corporations or businesses managed by New Zealanders, their awareness of rights and health and safety practices improves. The understanding and knowledge gained directly correlate with their length of stay in the country.

Mental health and psychosocial support are often overlooked in the retail industry, with migrant workers generally hesitant to seek counselling due to cultural stigmas and their inherent belief that managing emotions is their own responsibility. The report also mentions instances of internalised racism, where migrants were verbally abused by customers of the same cultural background.

The challenges and experiences discussed can be better understood in the light of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. It highlights how various cultural aspects, such as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and masculinity versus femininity, shape the work attitudes and behaviours of Asian migrants.

Lastly, the report acknowledges that its findings are mainly based on the experiences of Asian migrants, primarily Chinese, due to the reach of Asian Family Services and the time constraints faced. Therefore, it encourages future studies to consider a broader scope of ethnic migrant workers to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the migrant retail worker's experience in New Zealand.

## Introduction

This report contributes insights to the Mentally Healthy Work (MHW) programme for WorkSafe New Zealand Mahi Haumaru Aotearoa on health and safety challenges associated with mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. Specifically, this initiative seeks the best methods of disseminating information and encouraging engagement in sectors prone to significant psychosocial risks. The 2021 New Zealand Psychosocial Survey<sup>1</sup> revealed that retail workers were among those exposed to higher psychosocial risks.

AFS were commissioned to do the research, in order for WorkSafe to better understand psychosocial health and safety in the retail sector. Our particular focus is improving outcomes for migrant workers. This aligns with WorkSafe's interest to understand and engage with migrant workers in the New Zealand retail sector.

To aid this understanding, Asian Family Services (AFS), a trusted provider of mental health and wellbeing support services, has been commissioned by WorkSafe to facilitate focus groups with migrant workers. The purpose of these groups is to better understand their perceptions and management of health, safety, and psychosocial risks. Insights gleaned from these discussions will be used to understand a range of employment issues like insecure working conditions, discrimination, exploitation, and insufficient knowledge of employment rights, all of which can negatively affect health and employment outcomes.

These focus groups delved into topics such as participant understanding of health and safety, their ability to engage in health and safety discussions, and factors contributing to their workplace health and wellbeing.

Our objectives include recruiting migrants for focus groups, creating an interview guide based on the outlined topics, facilitating at least three focus groups with a minimum of seven participants each, and synthesising these discussions into a report of key findings.

Finally, in keeping with privacy protocols, all names used in this report are pseudonyms.

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<sup>1</sup> WorkSafe Mahi Haumaru Aotearoa. (2022). New Zealand Psychosocial Survey. Retrieved from <https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/research/new-zealand-psychosocial-survey/>

## Methodology

### Recruitment Process:

We scheduled three focus groups for the 12th of June 2023 at the Parnell Hotel & Conference Centre in Auckland, targeted specifically at migrant retail workers. We created an Eventbrite flyer (appendix one) advertising the focus groups, with a cap of 12 participants per group. This flyer was shared on various platforms, including Asian Family Services' Facebook page, Instagram, LinkedIn account, and on WeChat (appendix two) in a translated Chinese version. Owing to the overwhelming response, the spots filled up swiftly.

The project lead then followed up with the individuals who booked e-tickets on Eventbrite, providing additional information including an information sheet, consent form, and a request for basic demographic data. We also checked whether participants required an interpreter. To appreciate their participation, each participant received a \$100 Koha Prezzy Card. All focus groups were provided with refreshments, with lunch served to those attending the morning session and dinner to those in the third focus group. Despite some last-minute cancellations, we had a total of 28 participants (Appendix Three Participants Demographics).

### Procedure:

The project lead opened the session by introducing himself and giving a brief introduction to Asian Family Services. He expressed gratitude for the participants' participation and elaborated on the purpose of the session, emphasising that the initiative was commissioned by WorkSafe.

To create a safe and open environment, the facilitator emphasised the absence of right or wrong answers. Participants were reassured that their comments would be kept confidential and were urged not to share details outside of the group to maintain everyone's privacy.

Participants were also encouraged to respect each other's perspectives and feelings and were reassured they were not obliged to share anything they felt uncomfortable with. They were invited to speak freely about their work experiences and were reassured that their input was invaluable. A small token of appreciation or 'koha' was provided to underscore our appreciation of their contributions.

Before recording the discussions, the facilitator asked for the group's permission, explaining that the recording would serve as a reference to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the discussion's content. The facilitator clarified that while the discussions would inform a report for WorkSafe's use, it would include only overarching themes and emerging issues. The facilitator further reassured participants that their names and personal details would be omitted from the report, underscoring our commitment to their privacy and confidentiality.

After these preliminary discussions and having allowed for questions, participants introduced themselves and their roles without disclosing their company names. The facilitator then initiated the focus group discussion with the first question.

### Minor tweak

To cater for non-English-speaking participants, the team sent emails and made follow-up phone calls to assess the need for an interpreter. A few participants, who only spoke Mandarin, made this known to the facilitator upon their arrival at the focus group. To ensure their inclusion, the focus group was run in Mandarin. For the single Indian participant, it was decided to conduct a one-on-one interview in the

hotel's restaurant, with a co-facilitator's help. This made up a total of 11 participants for the first focus group.

For the second workshop, a Chinese interpreter was arranged, allowing the session to be conducted in English and then translated into Mandarin for the 9 participants. Unexpectedly, the third workshop was also conducted in Mandarin, an arrangement that was agreed upon by all 8 participants since they were all Mandarin speakers.

## Findings

### Introduction

The report employs a thematic analysis approach to examine the focus group discussions. By systematically organising and interpreting the data, the researcher identifies and reports on key themes that emerged from participants' responses. The focus group discussions were categorised into three main themes based on the information provided:

Theme 1 revolves around the Structural Layout of Work, encompassing aspects such as role clarity, job expectations, job security, solitary or remote work situations, job demands, workload, independence, and work schedules.

Theme 2 delves into Social Factors in the Workplace, including leadership styles, organisational culture, support mechanisms, recognition and rewards, opportunities for career advancement, the significance of civility and respect, work/life balance, and the nature of interpersonal relationships within the work setting.

Theme 3 addresses the Physical Work Environment, encompassing considerations like equipment use, hazardous tasks, and incidents requiring reporting, including potentially traumatic events.

The research team then analysed the data under each theme to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' work experiences. To avoid biases, the researchers allowed the themes to emerge naturally from the data, rather than imposing pre-existing frameworks. Through the application of thematic analysis to the focus group discussions, this report presents the findings in a way that effectively highlights the main areas of concern and interest among the participants, providing valuable insights into their work experiences and perceptions.

### Design of Work

#### Role Definition and Expectations

A majority of participants noted that the work they actually performed often went beyond what was delineated in their job descriptions. This was particularly noticeable in small<sup>2</sup> to medium-sized<sup>3</sup> enterprises. Certain large enterprises<sup>4</sup> could ensure a consistent and clear depiction of roles within their job descriptions. This common issue was underscored throughout the focus group discussions. Multinational corporations<sup>5</sup>, with their extensive resources and well-established systems, were cited as exceptions that generally provided well-defined roles and expectations.

One participant, Ming, described her experience in a department store where her salary was split evenly between the store and the brand she was representing. Although her initial job description restricted her duties to her brand, she frequently found herself tackling additional tasks due to staff shortages.

Several participants who were employed as cashiers at Asian supermarkets or grocery stores also reported being tasked with other duties during less busy periods. Beyond basic cash register training,

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<sup>2</sup> MYOB definition of Small businesses — less than 20 employees, <https://www.myob.com/nz/blog/what-sized-business-are-you-2/>

<sup>3</sup> MYOB definition of Medium businesses — more than 20 employees, less than 100, <https://www.myob.com/nz/blog/what-sized-business-are-you-2/>

<sup>4</sup> [1] MYOB definition of Large businesses — more than 100 employees <https://www.myob.com/nz/blog/what-sized-business-are-you-2/>

<sup>5</sup> Investopedia defined A multinational corporation (MNC) as a company with business operations in at least one country other than its home country. By some definitions, it also generates at least 25% of its revenue outside of its home country <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/multinationalcorporation.asp>

further training was not provided despite the expectation to perform additional duties. One elderly participant shared,

*“They never instructed me on how tasks should be completed, so I had to make assumptions or watch how others were doing it. When I made mistakes, I was often berated, but I was never given appropriate training.”*

### Role Clarity

Further to this, Ming, an employee of the department store, was expected to aid other counters during staff shortages – a responsibility never disclosed during her interview process. This lack of thorough training and orientation only compounded the challenge of navigating these unforeseen tasks. She found herself the target of criticism from her supervisor for not being more helpful, which heightened her unease.

### Job Demands

Following discussions about these issues with Ming's brand manager, a solution was eventually reached. Nonetheless, Ming continued to assist other counters on an occasional basis. She voiced her willingness to help out as an individual, but pointed out that meeting her brand's monthly targets while managing these additional tasks proved a difficult balancing act.

### Workload (& Pace)

Employees from small to medium-sized enterprises often felt under constant scrutiny. In addition to serving customers, they were also expected to maintain the store, restocking shelves, moving inventory, and performing cleaning duties. Lilian, who worked in a clothing store, recounted her experience of working long hours without opportunities to rest. She said,

*“I worked extensive hours at a clothing store. Once I completed one task, my boss would assign me another. I was unable to rest and often felt exhausted after work. I believe this was due to our culture. My boss transferred practices from our home country to New Zealand. I was left to manage the entire store by myself. Even though my boss was present, she typically spent her time on her phone or monitoring the cash register. However, she did award me a bonus at year-end.”*

### Job Security and Work Schedule

Casual staff often felt they weren't treated with the same level of respect, noting insufficient training, lack of investment from their employer, and a feeling of being edged out due to an inability to meet employer demands.

Several female participants reported working part-time to balance familial responsibilities and financial needs. This need for flexible work often led them to take on casual positions.

Ting, a casual employee at a multinational corporation, recounted her experiences of confirmed work dates suddenly being cancelled without any explanation. Although she was aware of the company's large casual staff pool, she noted the stark difference in treatment compared to full-time or part-time staff. She often felt undervalued due to the lack of training and respect accorded to her. She expressed,



*"I think the final straw was the constant cancellations, despite me giving my best during the hours I was allocated."*

### Remote or Isolated Work

A number of participants working in smaller businesses experienced working in remote or isolated settings. These situations were particularly concerning for female workers in industries with a majority male clientele, leading to potential safety issues. Racism, discrimination, and harassment were all more likely to occur in these isolated work settings.

Paul, who worked for a corporate entertainment company and assisted with installations, received comprehensive health and safety training and guidelines. Despite these precautions, he reported facing unexpected discrimination from customers due to his ethnicity. He noted a lack of psychosocial intervention from his manager following these incidents, which left him feeling unsupported.

### Social Factors at Work

#### Leadership and Support

The perception of leadership, according to many participants, hinges greatly on the specific leaders they encounter and the resources that are accessible for providing necessary training to supervisors or managers. This is particularly relevant when resources are limited. Additionally, understanding the relationship between your supervisor and their line manager is crucial. As one participant pointed out, if your supervisor is not favoured by their line manager, complaints tend to receive little attention or support. Conversely, if the supervisor is well liked, the treatment towards the entire team differs significantly. Frequent staff turnover within many organisations means there's never a steady leadership presence. The good ones are often poached by other companies.

One participant characterised an effective manager as a proficient communicator and understanding, arguing that such traits foster worker retention, loyalty, and trust.

#### Interpersonal Relationships

Support from colleagues can vary even within the same team, depending on individual personalities. Differing work ethics were often emphasised. One participant recounted being advised by colleagues to reduce their work effort, as it reflected poorly on the rest of the team. This participant was even told the entire team disliked her. Another participant made an effort to slow her work pace in response to similar advice but found it challenging because of her personal cultural and moral beliefs around hard work, she sought to take pride in her work.

Some participants noted instances where supervisors or managers seemed to show preference for Kiwi employees over migrant workers. One participant, Jack, observed colleagues being supported in situations where they faced similar issues but were not of South Asian descent. He added,

*"Communicating with my manager about a mental health issue or a problem that's affecting me usually doesn't result in any preventative measures being taken in the future."*

## Organisational Culture

Firms with more resources can afford to foster diversity within their workforce. This includes enabling employees from the same ethnic backgrounds to celebrate cultural events, such as Lunar New Year or Diwali, with shared meals, or even organising fully paid trips to attractions like Rainbow's End. These initiatives significantly enhance morale and foster a more unified work environment. However, it's important to note that this also largely depends on higher-level management. A positive change in the company's attitude was observed after it was acquired by a multimillion corporation.

## Recognition and Reward

Instances of recognition and reward are infrequent. Out of all participants, only one recounted a positive experience with an employer in a small business. This employer paid special attention to her needs, such as providing dinner when she worked late or arranging transportation during late hours. However, this level of support is not typical. Even though one participant worked for a large enterprise, she felt that she was rewarded appropriately only once. Another participant received a year-end bonus but suspected it was given out of fear that she might leave, as she handled a significant amount of the shop's work. A participant who now works part-time at a company appreciated the free parking space provided to her, a considerable benefit considering the high cost of parking in Auckland city. However, recognition can be as simple as a compliment. One participant, Jack, expressed feeling valued at work when his manager or colleagues appreciated his hard work. He commented,

"I'm not looking for constant praise, but when you give your best to be part of the team, it's nice to be recognised."

## Career Development

In the case of Asian migrants, career advancement opportunities appear to be scarce. Among the participants, none reported coming across any chances for career development or progress. An example is Jack, who acknowledged working in a small business with no potential for career growth. Despite this limitation, he expressed contentment, recognising it as an opportunity to learn something new and at least secure a job in New Zealand, even if it didn't align with his long-term career goals.

Surprisingly, what Jack found most valuable from his job experience were the social skills he acquired. He expressed gratitude for the interpersonal abilities he developed through his work, which proved to be highly beneficial in his personal life, particularly in making friends.

## Work/Life Balance

The topic of work/life balance was not a primary concern for many participants. A sense of gratitude for having a job and a steady income was a common sentiment among them, given the uncertain support they had upon arriving in New Zealand. For them, having work, regardless of the balance, was far more preferable than being unemployed.

## The work environment

### Incidents Requiring Notification/Traumatic Events

One participant, employed as a cashier in a sizeable home improvement store, described instances where she was the recipient of customer's verbal abuse. Despite occasional check-ins from the manager,

she felt a lack of substantial assistance during these episodes. Her suggestion was to allow for a brief respite following such incidents, perhaps a 10- to 15-minute break, to help regain her composure.

Compounding the issue, however, was her perceived duty to quell her emotions and maintain her work. She further noted the difficulty of stepping away even when given the chance, expressing the concern that her team would bear the brunt of her absence, having to take on additional responsibilities to ensure the work's continuation.

Discrimination and racism are unfortunately familiar experiences for many Asian retail workers. They often face abusive behaviour from customers, including instances of being yelled at or being asked to leave the country. Despite these insults causing emotional distress, many of these workers feel resigned to accept this abuse, viewing themselves as an emotional punching bag. When queried about managerial or supervisory intervention, they shared that their typical advice was to disengage from the contentious customer. However, the impact on their mental health and well-being often goes unchecked by their superiors.

### Equipment Shortfalls

For the majority of retail workers, their roles do not necessitate the use of specific equipment. However, for those whose roles do require equipment, it was reported that they were not always provided with the correct protective gear.

A case in point was shared by a young woman working in a vaping store. She was not provided with the necessary training for changing vaping filters, which led to multiple hand injuries. The lack of appropriate equipment for handling the filter, coupled with the fragile nature of its glass components, often resulted in cuts and embedded glass fragments. Furthermore, she was frequently left to manage the store alone, despite the client base being predominantly male. The hiring practices of the company were also called into question, with a seeming preference for female employees.

### Potentially Hazardous Tasks

Another cashier working at an Asian grocery store expressed her discomfort about being tasked with checking customer's bags, leading to elevated stress levels. She shared an incident where she was forced to pursue a customer who refused to have a grocery-filled bag checked. This confrontation resulted in her being yelled at and threatened. Despite conveying this incident to her employer, she was admonished and once again instructed to continue with bag checks before customers exited the store. She expressed her anxiety around this task, particularly when dealing with individuals who were physically taller and stronger. She questioned whether this responsibility was within her remit, believing it to be more appropriate for security personnel, and felt she should retain the right to decline it.

Additionally, tasks involving physical risk, such as heavy lifting or reaching high areas, were noted to be commonplace. For many small to medium-sized enterprises, adequate safety training or instructions were found to be lacking. There was a minor improvement when the business owner was of Pakeha/European descent, with verbal instructions typically given, but further safety precautions were not commonly observed.

## Discussion:

Numerous migrant workers, upon their initial arrival in New Zealand, are only able to rely on their prior experiences from their countries of origin, which often have dissimilar labour standards, including less stringent employment protection legislation. This results in a lack of understanding about fair treatment of workers, which encompasses pay, working conditions, and basic protections and rights. Consequently, they are unaware of their rights and the employment protection laws in place. This lack of awareness makes them more susceptible when compared to those either born in New Zealand or who have lived there longer.

Moreover, a considerable number of migrant workers face discrimination during their job search, regardless of their qualifications, which can range from having a postgraduate degree to being a health professional. As a result, securing a stable job, a steady income, and gaining opportunities take precedence over all else. Especially for those with limited English proficiency, all other factors become secondary. Language barriers further exacerbate this situation as many will not actively seek out information to better comprehend their rights.

Asian small business owners are more likely to hire Asians who speak the same language, but are less likely to provide information about employment rights. In contrast, Pakeha/European small business owners usually provide at least the minimum information regarding employment rights. The information typically provided includes details about minimum pay, lieu time, holiday pay, breaks, and basic health and safety knowledge. Numerous participants shared that they only became aware of their rights and health and safety practices after transitioning to either a larger company or a business run by Pakeha/Europeans. The participants seemed to agree that their knowledge often directly correlates with the length of their stay in New Zealand.

A significant proportion of the participants revealed that they were initially employed in enterprises operated by Asians. Reflecting upon this after gaining an awareness of their rights and moving into either larger corporations or businesses managed by Kiwis, many felt they had been exploited in their prior roles. They acknowledged that smaller businesses often suffer from a lack of resources due to financial constraints. However, they concurred that even if the retail business is small but managed by Pakeha/Europeans, their fundamental rights are usually ensured. These rights include regular breaks and proper time in lieu or holiday pay.

Many participants mentioned that with limited English proficiency and a lack of understanding about New Zealand, it's often difficult for new migrants to find suitable jobs. Thus, they feel grateful when opportunities are offered. They also mentioned that their circumstances often change, either due to further studies or when permanent residency is granted. It is only then that they consider pursuing other paths or seeking permanent solutions. Some participants, despite having permanent residency upon arrival, agreed that securing their first job is challenging, particularly with limited English proficiency.

A number of participants recounted their experiences of racial discrimination when interacting with customers. They have been asked to refer the customer to a "Kiwi" or have been bluntly told, "I don't want an Asian." Some customers even feign not understanding what they're saying or speak too quickly to try and confuse them.

Sexual harassment is also a common experience among female retail workers, which can range from being asked out for dinner, being asked for personal contact details, to being given a customer's number unsolicited. Many retail workers dismiss these incidents and prefer not to make a fuss.

In terms of internalised racism, one participant described instances where she faced abusive behaviour from customers of the same cultural background, especially when assisting customers who spoke the same language. She recalled instances where the store manager had asked her to translate for customers who could not communicate in English. However, once the customers realised she could converse in their native language, they would often verbally abuse her. This pattern repeated until the manager eventually instructed her not to assist these customers or to pretend she could not speak their language to avoid such confrontations.

When discussing psychosocial support, there was a consensus that such support is often provided by multimillion corporation. However, there was a shared sentiment that many businesses do not have a comprehensive understanding of how to cultivate a supportive work environment.

During the focus group discussions, the participants reached a consensus that mental health and wellbeing are often overlooked or not openly discussed, even during meetings or when addressing health and safety matters in some of the larger retail stores. This lack of attention raised concerns among some participants, especially when facing harassment or abuse from customers. They questioned how mental health and wellbeing support could benefit them in such challenging situations.

Interestingly, many participants highlighted that, within Asian communities, mental health is viewed as a deeply personal matter and not something they feel comfortable disclosing to colleagues. This discomfort is often rooted in the fear that it might be perceived as a weakness in their character. The participants attributed this reluctance to the lack of public health messaging and awareness about mental health issues in their countries of origin, leading to limited knowledge and understanding of seeking emotional support.

The stigma surrounding mental health further contributes to Asians being hesitant to seek emotional assistance. Instead, they tend to believe that managing their emotions is their individual responsibility, and they are expected to cope with challenges on their own. This dual barrier of stigma and a sense of personal responsibility presents significant hurdles for Asians in accessing mental health support and resources.

## Reflection:

The author suggests that it's crucial to highlight the hurdles faced by Asian migrants. To clarify these issues, we'll initially explore Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory as a framework for understanding.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, developed by Geert Hofstede, serves as a valuable framework for understanding cross-cultural communication. The model encompasses six key dimensions of culture that allow for comparisons between different societies. In our study, we focus on three of these dimensions, which are the most significant in the context of our research.

**Power Distance Index (PDI):** This dimension measures the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. In cultures with high power distance, such as many Asian countries, hierarchy is well established, and people accept their place in the system. As a result, many Asian migrants, when first working in a retail business, acknowledge that they unconsciously apply such an approach. Newer migrants will never challenge their employer or manager and believe that they should do as they're told. In contrast, in low power distance cultures, people strive for equality. Therefore, those working for Pakeha/Europeans feel they are treated with a higher level of respect and fairness.

**Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV):** This dimension measures the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. In individualistic societies, individual ties are loose, and everyone is expected to look after themselves or their immediate family. In collectivist societies, people are integrated into strong, cohesive groups, often extended families who continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Due to this aspect, Asian retail workers believe the group's harmony supersedes their individual needs, and they are least likely to ask for help or support when needed. Many believe that they must adapt to accommodate the team environment when they are unhappy instead of voicing their concerns and seeking support from management.

**Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS):** This dimension refers to how a society distributes roles between genders and how it handles traditional masculine and feminine values.

People from countries with high masculinity scores, such as Japan, Korea and China, are an example. In these societies, work roles are distinctly divided by gender, with men generally expected to be assertive, competitive, and focused on material success. Women, on the other hand, are expected to be more modest, tender, and concerned with their quality of life. Society is competitive and ambitious, and success is often measured by rank and status. As such, females from Asian countries working in retail stores do not tend to speak out when they are treated poorly. They often try their best to find solutions to cope with challenges on their own and only speak out when it has moved beyond their coping skills. Despite this, they are often not taken seriously.

In contrast, a country like Sweden is representative of a society with low masculinity or high femininity scores. In these societies, gender roles overlap, and both men and women are expected to be modest, tender, and concerned with their quality of life. Swedish society values consensus and equality, and the quality of life is a sign of success. Work-life balance, social support systems, and equal opportunities are more emphasised in these societies. Many who come from New Zealand do not focus on the quality of life or are aware of the different structures of the society. The lack of awareness often results in them not being aware of their rights or able to demand respect. Assertiveness is not commonly taught in Asian countries, and it can be seen as selfish and rude.

## Limitations:

The representation of the migrants in this study is predominantly Asian. The project leader believes this was because the Asian Family Services are largely known by Asians. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, further recruitment was not possible. Consideration to extend the reach to more diverse ethnic migrant workers is suggested if sufficient time is provided. Also, migrants are less likely to be connected with agencies or are aware of the interest of government sectors in seeking their retail experiences. For some, this could also become questionable when they are less likely to trust the government.

**As for demographic information, a complete breakdown can be found in Appendix Three. A summary is provided here.**

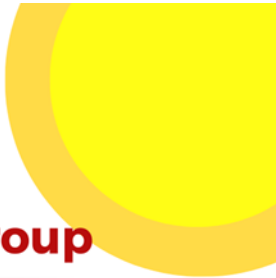

The majority of the participants in the study were of Chinese origin, comprising 23 individuals, while there was one participant each from Indian and Thai backgrounds, and 3 others, including Malaysian Chinese and people from Taiwan. The age range of the participants was predominantly between 30 to 49 years, with 17 females and 11 males.

Regarding their duration of stay in New Zealand, one participant had been in the country for less than a year, two for approximately 2 years, one for 4 years, seven for a period of 5 to 9 years, and some for over 10 years.

In terms of education, the participants held diverse qualifications, ranging from certificates obtained in New Zealand or overseas, to master's degrees achieved in New Zealand and abroad.

Employment-wise, there were 14 full-time, 5 part-time, and 9 casual staff among the participants. The annual income distribution revealed that many earned less than \$25,000 per year, with only one participant earning over \$100,000. Additionally, a significant number of them were permanent residents.

The retail businesses they worked in varied and included clothing, electronics, furniture, groceries, home improvement, liquor stores, vaping, and other unspecified sectors.



## **Asian Retail Workers: Join Our Confidential Focus Group**

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Asian Family Services is working with Worksafe New Zealand to invite Asian/Ethnic migrant workers in the retail sector to attend a focus group

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**Date: 12 June 2023 (Monday)**

- 10 am - 12 pm (lunch provided)
- 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm
- 4:30pm to 6:30 pm (dinner provided)

**Venue: The Parnell Hotel and Conference Centre**

**To thank you for your time, we will provide a \$100 prezzy card for your time.**

**We can provide interpreter services as well.**





## Appendices Two: Chinese language information on WeChat

你在新西兰零售业工作么？这个有偿访谈活动诚邀你的参与！

亚裔家庭服务中心AFS 2023-05-29 16:30 Posted on 新西兰

收录于合集

##亚裔家庭服务中心 216 #新西兰亚裔健康 9 #亚裔心理健康 17



Scan to Follow

### 新西兰亚裔家庭服务中心

亚裔家庭服务中心 (Asian Family Services, 简称AFS) 是为所有生活/工作/学习在新西兰的亚裔人士提供专业面对面和电话心理咨询和社会工作服务的非营利组织, 服务专业免费保密。

我们提供8个语种的服务, 包括英语、普通话、粤语、韩语、日语、越南语、泰语、印地语。如果您有心理困扰及社工帮助的需要, 请拨打AFS亚裔求助热线 ☎ 0800 862 342 (热线服务时间: 周一至周五, 早上9点-晚上8点)。

亚裔家庭服务中心与Work Safe New Zealand合作, 寻找亚裔零售行业从业人员, 倾听大家关于工作健康与安全方面的声音。

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**To thank you for your time, we will provide a \$100 prezy card for your time.**

**We can provide interpreter services as well.**

你在零售行业工作么？不论是食品销售、服装店, 或者其他提供面对面零售工作的行业。这个小组访谈活动希望得到你的参与！

6月12日, 亚裔家庭服务中心将在奥克兰举办三场小组访谈, 以听取大家关于工作健康与安全方面的声音。所有访谈者的个人信息将被严格保密。

为感谢大家的参与, 所有成功报名并且参与访谈的人员将获得\$100 prezy卡。

访谈日期: 6月13日星期一

访谈地点: 奥克兰 Parnell Hotel and Conference Centre

## Appendix Three: Participants Demographic

Row Labels	Count of Which ethnic group do you belong to?
Chinese	23
Indian	1
Other (please specify)	3
Thai	1
Grand Total	28

Row Labels	Count of Age:
19 – 29	4
30 – 49	17
50 – 64	3
65 or older	4
Grand Total	28

Row Labels	Count of What is your gender?
Female	17
Male	11
Grand Total	28

Row Labels	Count of Years since arrival in New Zealand
10-19 years	10
2 year	2
20 years or more	7
4 year	1
5-9 years	7
Less than 1 year	1
Grand Total	28

Row Labels	Count of What is your highest qualification?
NZ Certificate	3
NZ Diploma	5
NZ Master's degree	2
NZ Postgraduate	2
NZ Undergraduate	4
Overseas Certificate	2
Overseas Diploma	3
Overseas Master's degree	1
Overseas Other qualification	2
Overseas Postgraduate	3
Overseas Undergraduate	1
Grand Total	28

Row Labels	Count of Your occupation?
Casual staff	9
Full-time employee	14
Part-time employee	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>28</b>

Row Labels	Count of Your marital status?
Civil union	1
Married	18
Single	9
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>28</b>

Row Labels	Count of Annual Income Range:
Under \$25,000	10
\$25,000 to \$50,000	6
\$50,000 to \$75,000	4
\$75,000 to \$100,000	2
Over \$100,000	1
Prefer not to say	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>28</b>

Row Labels	Count of What is your immigration status in New Zealand?
Citizen	10
Permanent resident	18
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>28</b>

Row Labels	Count of Who lives with you at your usual address
I live alone	3
My flatmate(s)	1
My parent(s)	4
My spouse/partner, e.g. husband	19
Other, e.g. mother-in-law, step-child	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>28</b>

Row Labels	Count of what type of retail business are you working for?
Clothing store	2
Electronic store	1
Furniture store	1
Grocery store	4
Home Improvement store	2
Other, specific	18
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>28</b>

## Appendix Four: Focus Group Questions

The interview questions were slightly changed due to cultural differences and to make the questions more relatable to people from different cultures.

- How long have you been working at your job?
- What frustrates you?
- What makes you happy at work?
- Share with me your understanding of health and safety and how you came to learn about them.
- Have you ever had any incidents at work, and was any support provided subsequently?
- How easy is it to talk to your boss or manager about any issues or problems, or concerns?
- Do you think your workplace provides a supportive environment?
- Do you feel you are part of the team?
- Do you feel you need to be careful about what you say or do in front of your manager?
- Does your boss ever yell at you?
- Have you ever felt so upset that you needed to leave work?
- Has any career development or training opportunity been provided?
- Are you asked to do more than your original role or job?
- Have you experienced any discrimination at work, and how was it dealt with?

## Asian Family Services

Asian Family Services is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) committed to providing mental health and gambling harm support services to individuals of Asian background living in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Our gambling harm initiatives are funded by Te Whatu Ora and the NZ Government gambling levy, while our Asian Helpline caters to clients in need of immediate mental health assistance. Our services offered are face-to-face by qualified counsellors, psychologists, social workers, and public health practitioners who speak various Asian languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Hindi, Korean, Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese, and English. In compliance with the Ministry of Health and Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act, our staff maintain registration with relevant professional organisations.

For over two decades, AFS has been a trusted provider of services to the Asian community, gaining recognition for its robust public health programme. In 2017, we launched the Asha service, designed to assist South Asians affected by harmful gambling and to increase awareness of this issue within the community.

### Asian Helpline

Asian Helpline provides nationwide free and confidential services from Monday to Friday between 9am-8pm. Our Helpline is available in eight languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai, Japanese, Hindi and English.

### Asian Wellbeing Services

Established in 2016, AFS' Asian Wellbeing Services (AWS) offers bespoke psychological interventions and psychoeducation workshops for non-gambling concerns. By collaborating with General Practice clinics and schools, AWS provides on-site support, effectively reducing barriers for Asians accessing psychological services. Asian Wellbeing Services encompass Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in addition to other services.

### Incredible Year Parenting Programme

Helping parents build positive relationships with their children and develop strategies to manage problem behaviour. It is for parents of children aged 3-8 years.

### Bereaved by Suicide Services

Bereaved by Suicide Services – a free service that supports individuals and family who have lost someone to suicide, providing therapeutic response to help the community honour their grief and find hope for their adjusted future.

### Digi Language

AFS is piloting Digi Language Support (DLS) Services, a self-service booking system for telehealth language support in primary and community care.

### Wellness Services at Apollo Medical Centre

This service, available through general practice, features new primary care roles – Health Improvement Practitioner (HIP) and Health Coach – offering customised advice and support. They promote self-management and link clients to other required services, collaborating with local NGO support workers. A GP or nurse can refer distressed clients to the HIP for immediate same-location support. Personalised support plans are created, with follow-ups as needed. The services aim to increase access and equity, offer choice for holistic concerns, decrease wait times, and improve population health and equity outcomes.

## Acknowledgements

WorkSafe Mahi Haumarū Aotearoa's collaboration with Asian Family Services for this project has been instrumental in ensuring the support and engagement of the Asian migrant community. By commissioning Asian Family Services, WorkSafe has taken a proactive step towards addressing the unique challenges faced by Asian migrants in the retail sector, particularly concerning mental health and wellbeing. This partnership has allowed for a deeper understanding of the cultural nuances and barriers that impact Asian workers, leading to valuable insights and recommendations that can foster a safer and more supportive work environment for this demographic.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to the focus group participants for their generous contribution of time and willingness to share their personal experiences. Their valuable insights and openness have enriched this study, enabling us to gain a deeper understanding of the issues and challenges faced by individuals in the retail sector. We are sincerely appreciative of the trust they placed in us, which has been pivotal in shaping the findings and recommendations of this research.

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