

New Zealand expatriates who return:
Does citizenship engagement overseas make
a difference to their reintegration and benefit
New Zealand society? Summary findings

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Executive summary

This report presents broad findings about citizenship engagement amongst New Zealand expatriates who returned to live in New Zealand after at least three years living overseas. The research provides insights into the experiences of expatriates while living overseas and on their return home across three key domains of citizenship engagement: political, economic and civil society activities. It is based on a qualitative study with 42 participants interviewed in Auckland and Wellington in 2017. More detailed publications drawing upon interview narratives will follow later in 2018 and 2019 but summary findings include:

- 1. Voting** (usually but not exclusively in New Zealand) is the most common form of *political* engagement participants participated in, although many remained or became aware of politics (New Zealand, international or both) and engaged in less formal activities such as belonging to political groups or signing petitions.
 - Living overseas does not appear to inhibit voting activity on return to New Zealand and in some cases can facilitate non-electoral forms of political engagement.
 - Returnees who lived in English-speaking countries, women and members of the ethnic majority group tended to politically engage more while overseas and on return than others; this was also true of those aged 40 and over but to a lesser degree.
 - Non-electoral political reintegration is negatively affected by returnee perceptions of a constraining and conservative local political context.

- 2. Owning property** (whether in New Zealand or elsewhere) is the most common form of *economic* engagement, followed by making donations to charitable organisations.
 - Higher wages overseas frequently facilitated property ownership while overseas but not necessarily on return to New Zealand.
 - Returnees who lived in English-speaking countries, men and those aged 40 and over were most likely to own property while overseas and on return; ethnic majority members were more likely to own property overseas but ethnic minority members were more likely to do so on return.
 - Economic reintegration is often more challenging than expected, largely due to employment, housing and cost of living issues, and these tend to colour other aspects of reintegration into New Zealand life.

- 3. Being a member of a sports club** was the most common form of *civil society* engagement, followed by volunteering at a civil society organisation and being a governance board member.
 - There is no clear relationship between living overseas and civil society engagement while overseas or on return.
 - Returnees who lived in English-speaking countries and those aged 40 and over were most likely to participate in civil society engagement while overseas and on return; ethnic majority members and men were more likely to do so overseas and women and ethnic minority members more likely to engage on return.

- Civil society reintegration may be affected by difficulties in (re)establishing social networks, as well as institutional barriers.

4. Voting in New Zealand was the most common way of *staying connected to New Zealand*, followed by keeping up with New Zealand news, staying in contact with friends/family and visiting New Zealand followed by attending New Zealand-focused events while overseas.

- Participants most appreciated New Zealand's nature/landscape and New Zealanders' friendliness while overseas and on return but disliked the latter's lack of inclusivity, passivity and parochialism.
- Many of the participants found their sense of identity as a New Zealander was enhanced while overseas and their sense of pride in New Zealand was often maintained/strengthened on return.
- New Zealanders from ethnic minority backgrounds particularly (but not exclusively) indicated that their relationship with national identity was complicated by the experiences they had at home, as well as overseas.
- Citizenship engagement can both strengthen and weaken national, ethnic and other forms of identity and belonging amongst expatriates, both while overseas and upon their return home, depending on specific circumstances such as ethnicity, gender and age.

5. Overall, there is clear evidence that many New Zealanders bring significant benefits at the personal, community and society levels when they return to New Zealand.

BUT:

- There is also considerable untapped potential because many returnees feel politically and economically constrained and social isolated.
- It is not entirely clear what role citizenship engagement overseas plays in developing returnee skills and experiences because many of the kinds of political, economic and civil society engagement in which they participate are passive or short-term.
- It is difficult to say that returnee participants who had higher levels of engagement across all three areas of citizenship were more satisfied with their return or that they reintegrated more easily because those who engaged were often more critical or negative about New Zealand simply because they were actually interacting with its institutions and New Zealanders to a higher degree!
- But those who sought out ways to engage at least felt as if they had actively attempted to reintegrate and were bringing their communities important skills and experience (even if this was not always valued).

6. To support returnee connections and engagement, while also reducing reintegration costs, returnees need better information and to undertake active planning for return. But New Zealanders more generally, as well as employers, institutions and government, need to all play a role in welcoming and supporting those who love New Zealand enough to return home. Recommendations are found on page 32.

Introduction

It is estimated that from 600,000 to 1 million New Zealanders live overseas at one time (Statistics New Zealand 2012), proportionally one of the world's largest expatriate populations. Research about the 'brain drain' has discussed why New Zealanders leave or stay away (Baird 2012; Kea/Colmar Brunton 2013; 2015). Other research has focused on motivations for and/or experiences of return (e.g. Chaban, Holland & Williams 2009; Watkins 2012). But no study internationally has investigated the citizenship engagement of expatriates, both in relation to New Zealand and in regards to their host country. With growing numbers of New Zealanders returning home in recent years (Statistics New Zealand 2016), it is important to consider the needs and desires of this group of new arrivals, as well as what they offer New Zealand.

This study considers three types of *citizenship engagement*:

- *Political activities* e.g. voting; membership of a political party, union or political movement/group; online political activity; petition-signing; participation in protests.
- *Economic activities* e.g. owning property; paying tax; donations; financial support to family and friends.
- *Civil society activities* e.g. informal volunteering; belonging to a community/cultural group, sports club, social justice movement or religious-based organisation; contributions to iwi, hapū or whānau.

These types of citizenship engagement are considered across the *migration life course* (that is prior to leaving New Zealand, while overseas and on return), so as to assess:

- What types and level of citizenship engagement New Zealanders exhibit across the migration life course.
- What relationship (if any) exists between living abroad and citizen engagement, when compared to engagement before they left and after they returned to New Zealand and when taking into account *where* expatriates lived overseas.
- What expectations of return and what experiences of reintegration into New Zealand society are common to expatriates.
- Whether political, economic and civil society engagement overseas is translated into tangible benefits at the personal, community and societal levels when expatriates return to New Zealand.
- What types and level of political, economic and civil society engagement with New Zealand expatriates maintain/establish when they live overseas.
- Whether expatriate engagement politically, economically and socially with New Zealand facilitates their return and resettlement and, if so, how?
- Whether citizenship engagement influences national, ethnic and other forms of identity and belonging amongst expatriates, both while overseas and upon their return home.

The first three sections of this report address each type of citizenship engagement in turn, highlighting not only the range of activities participants were involved in across the migration

life course but also whether there is any relationship between living abroad and specific forms of engagement. This is assessed by comparing overseas experiences with those before the participant left New Zealand and after their return – did participants feel more or less restricted to participate in an overseas context than living at home in New Zealand?

It is important to first acknowledge, however, that in many cases, different stages of the life course may shape participants experiences; participants were often relatively young when they left New Zealand (the mean leaving age was 28 but some were much younger and many had been students immediately prior to going overseas), so they had not yet had the opportunity to participate in some types of activities (such as regular voting or board membership). As such, we might anticipate either greater levels, or different kinds, of engagement across the life course, particularly as participants began to work full-time, develop skills and education and have children.

Discussion later focuses on the idea of *reintegration*; this concept was not defined specifically in the research project – no participant was asked whether they felt they had ‘successful reintegrated’, for instance – but instead participants were asked about their expectations of return and whether or not their expectations were met. Scholars define ‘integration’ in a number of different ways but tend to agree that it is a multi-faceted process that spans different aspects of life, including economic, social and other activities (see Ager & Strang 2008; Chaban et al. 2011; Gmelch, 1980). As such, this report summarises some of the key political, economic and civil society expectations, providing overall a holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities New Zealand returnees face.

Most of the scholarly debate about integration is focused on new migrants, not citizens who have lived overseas and returned. Yet, notably, many of the participants described their return as being much harder than expected and noted that they felt like an ‘immigrant’ rather than someone returning ‘home’. This was the case even when length of time overseas was taken into account. While these findings are in line with previous research on ‘reverse culture shock’ (Chaban et al. 2011; Ghosh 2001), the focus participants placed on other New Zealanders and institutions highlights that reintegration is far from being a purely psychological adjustment. It is also a socio-political and economic process of adaptation. As such, policy implications are discussed at the end of the report following a final section that considers the national identity of participants and if and how citizenship engagement, particularly while overseas, had any impact on how New Zealanders feel and understand their country, as well as their sense of belonging on return.

1.1 Method and analysis

42 participants took part in a focused form of ‘life history’ interview to discuss their pre-migration, expatriate *and* post-migration experiences. This enabled an assessment of whether, for instance, leaving the country before voting, donation or volunteer habits are formed inhibited such behaviours on return or whether such habits were mediated by citizenship engagement while overseas. Such an approach to return migration reflects international research suggesting both that transnationalism (economic, social and political ties and connections across nation-states) cannot be understood in a static sense and that citizenship engagement develops over the life course (Burrell 2009; Kobayashi & Preston 2007).

both common English-speaking destinations (e.g. United Kingdom, Australia, United States, Ireland and Canada) and less common, non-English-speaking destinations (e.g. countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and Scandinavia) to examine what role geographical context plays in shaping citizenship engagement.

As Figure 1 on the previous page illustrates through a 'word cloud' where the most common participant responses are presented in the largest font, most participants lived in the United Kingdom (UK), United States (US) and Australia. The Kea/Colmar Brunton Survey (2013; 2015) also shows these countries to be common destinations for New Zealanders. But in total this study's 42 participants have resided in over 70 countries for some period of time, with some people living overseas for multiple periods (sometimes returning to New Zealand to live in between).

Table 1: Sample characteristics (n=42)

Sex	Female	25
	Male	17
Ethnicity	Pākehā/NZ European	32
	Māori	5
	Pasifika	1
	Asian	4
Age (mean 47)	20s	1
	30s	12
	40s	18
	50s	1
	60s	8
	70s	2
Household income	Under \$50,000	3
	\$50,001 to \$100,000	12
	Over \$101,000	27
Time overseas (mean 11.4)	1-5 years	9
	6-10 years	18
	11-15 years	6
	16+ years	9
Time returned (mean 5.6)	1.5-3 years	16
	4-6 years	14
	7-10 years	9
	11+years	3

Table 1 indicates that the overall sample was over-represented by women, Pākehā/New Zealand European participants, those in their 30s and 40s and those living in relatively high income households. However, the sample here matches the Kea/Colmar Brunton survey (2013; 2015) population quite well, suggesting that such unevenness is not unusual in the expatriate/returnee group.

For instance, when Kea/Colmar Brunton (2015) surveyed 288 repatriated New Zealanders in 2015, 49% were women (42% were men and 9% refused to answer), suggesting that more women return home than men. However, it is also possible that women are more willing or available to respond to research surveys than men.

In addition, of Kea/Colmar Brunton's (2015) returned expatriate respondents, 65% were aged 31-55 years (compared to only 10% below age 30), 92% identified as Pākehā/New Zealand European and 67% were in professional, high level managerial or self-employed occupations. Although it is important to acknowledge that the method and recruitment of both the Kea/Colmar Brunton (2015) surveys may well favour these types of expatriates over others who are younger/older, from ethnic minority groups and in non-professional occupations, it is likely these groups are under-represented amongst those who leave New Zealand to live overseas.

In an attempt to encourage the participation of migrant ethnic minority group members, and given experiences of living overseas might be mediated by the ethnic/linguistic identities of participants, the study included New Zealanders by either birth *or* naturalisation. The final sample included three participants born overseas and, as Table 1 suggests, 11 who identified with a minority ethnic group (including Māori). Notably, 6 of the 14 (42%) participants who had lived in non-English-speaking countries were from an ethnic minority group, although only two had lived in a country associated with their ethnic heritage (both were of Asian descent and had lived in the country from which their family had migrated).

Table 1 also indicates the range of time periods that participants spent overseas and living in New Zealand since their return, with the sample being over-represented by those who had been away less than seven years and had returned for up to 10 years. This study purposely targeted those expatriates who had lived overseas at least three years so they had had time to settle and engage in political, economic and civil society activities in their host society; similarly, they had to have returned for at least one-and-a-half years because even when coming 'home' it can take some time to resettle in New Zealand.

Overall, the sample requires caution when analysing demographic variables such as gender and ethnicity and in some cases, categories have had to be combined to overcome some biases in the sample. For instance, members of majority ethnic group are compared against a combined minority ethnic group category because the numbers of participants from Māori, Chinese and other ethnic minority group was extremely small when calculated separately.

Political engagement

This section focuses on the forms of political activity in which participants engaged, including formal activities such as voting, membership of a political party or union, as well as more informal participation in social movements, political/environmental groups, protests, online political activities and petition-signing.

2.1 Voting was the most common form of political engagement across the migration life course

Voting was the dominate form of political participation across the life course. This was particularly in national general elections but some participants also regularly voted in local council elections within New Zealand when eligible. Overall, only two participants indicated they had either never voted or their responses on this topic were unclear. This high level of electoral participation is not entirely surprising since 79% of enrolled New Zealanders voted in the general election in 2017 (up slightly from the past two elections), including 61,375 votes cast overseas (Onenewsnow 2017). But it is also likely this research study attracted people who were relatively well-engaged politically, at least at this basic level of democratic participation.

Table 2: Political engagement across the migration life course (n: 42)

	Before left	Overseas	On return
Voted national – NZ	39	26	32
Voted local – NZ (incl tribal elections)	15	N/A	25
Voted in overseas elections	N/A	16	0
Member of political party	2	0	6
Member of union	5	5	3
Member of environmental group	2	6	1
Active student politics	4	0	0
Protests	12	3	6
Assist electoral politics	3	0	4
Petitions	1	4	11
Aware of NZ politics	11	13	1
Aware of international politics	1	14	2
Contact with local representatives	0	1	2
Regular political donations	0	2	1
Letters to editor/submissions etc	0	0	2
Politicised by location where lived	N/A	5	N/A
Politicised by/required to do political lobbying through job	0	9	4

16 participants in total did not vote in any kind of election while overseas. Although estimates of New Zealanders living overseas range from 600,000 to 1 million, only 61,375 votes were cast overseas in 2017. This suggests that this study's participants were not alone in failing to vote. Moreover, later discussion highlights that only 13 participants talked about how they regularly kept up with New Zealand political news or were otherwise aware of New Zealand politics while overseas; although this was slightly higher than the number who said the same before they left and much higher than those who returned, this means many of those who did vote were not doing so in a particularly informed, active way.

Some participants were also able to vote at one or both of these levels in the host country where they lived and 16 took up this opportunity when overseas (some were continuing to vote in overseas elections but this question was not routinely asked of participants so figures are not given). Living overseas also led 14 participants to develop a significant awareness of international politics. Small numbers of participants also assisted with electoral politics (for example scrutineering on election day or delivering pamphlets for electoral campaigns) when in New Zealand. Notably few had ever contacted their local elected representatives, particularly before they left New Zealand.

Other formal forms of political participation (belonging to a political party or union) were much less common, although the former was more popular on return. Interestingly, this was not just something that becomes more common with age since, of the six participants who belonged to a political party on their return, two were in their 20s, two in their 40s and two in their 60s. Only three in total had ever donated to a political party and two of these did so while living in the United States where political donations are more common than New Zealand.

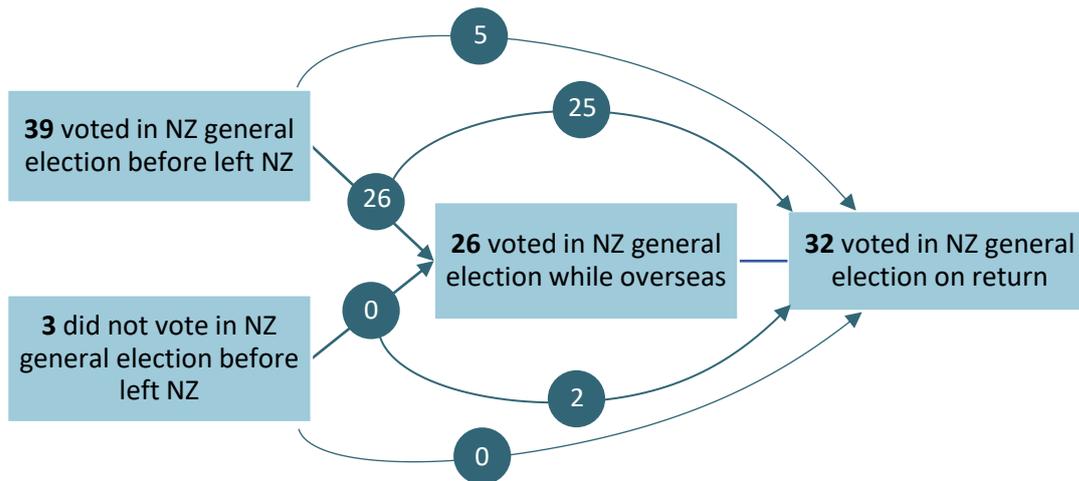
Engagement in informal forms of political participation was even lower. Although four participants were active in student politics before they left New Zealand, it is not surprising that few continued to be active overseas and on their return or named this as a form of engagement at all since few participants were still studying at this point. Similarly, protests around particular issues were limited in number and were not as frequent after participants left New Zealand or on their return. The signing of petitions did increase across the migration trajectory but, as many participants noted, this might have more to do with the development of the internet and, in particular, social media, than any shift in their forms of citizenship engagement across time. Only two participants noted that they wrote letters to the editor or submissions to air their political views and both did so only on their return.

2.2 Living overseas does not appear to inhibit voting activity on return

To assess more systematically whether there is a relationship between living overseas and citizenship engagement, this report includes a series of figures that map out specific types of activities across the migration life course. Figure 2 indicates that – despite often-cited concerns that voting might be a habit that people lose if they do not regularly put it into practice – such a linear relationship does not always hold true. Of the 39 participants who voted before leaving New Zealand, only 26 did so overseas and all but one of these overseas-voters went on to vote in New Zealand on their return. In total, 16 participants did *not* vote overseas; only three had not voted before leaving, meaning the habit of voting was interrupted for some people. While a small number of participants talked of forgetting to vote, being ‘lazy’ or losing interest in New Zealand politics, others made clear this was an active choice not to vote in New Zealand while living overseas because they did feel it appropriate when they were not living in the country. As noted above, some were also able to vote in their host country, either at the local or national level or both depending on their legal status and place of residence. This was common in the UK and parts of Europe where you do not need to be a citizen to vote in local elections but was much less frequently mentioned by participants who have lived elsewhere.

Only 32 of the 42 participants voted after they returned to New Zealand and the returnee voters included two of the three who had never voted (either before leaving or overseas). Interview narratives suggest that it is not overseas experience but the local political context that impacts upon poorer voter turnout when New Zealanders return; a handful of people had not yet had an opportunity to vote on return (the research was conducted prior to the 2017 general election) but later discussion highlights that others believed the New Zealand political scene *discourages* their political participation.

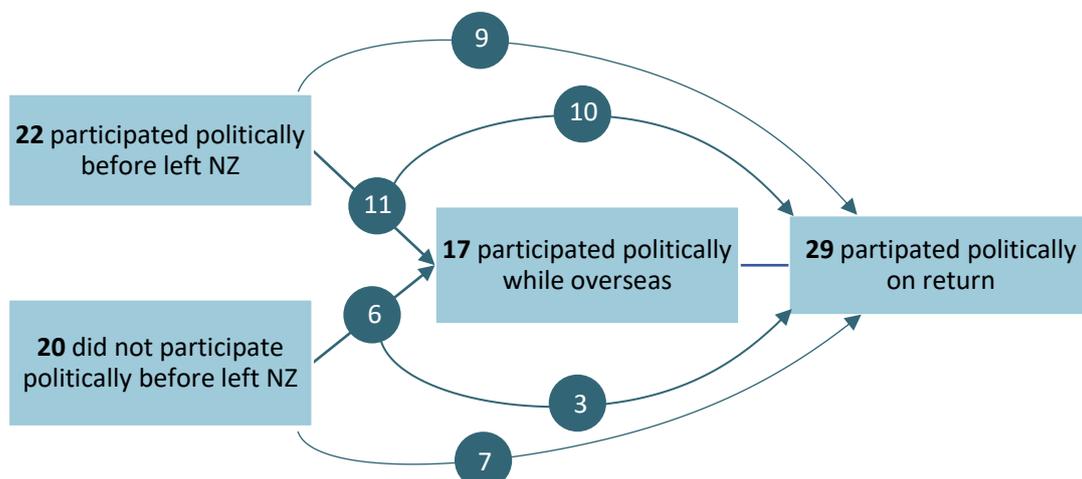
Figure 2: Voting activity across the migration life course



2.3 Living overseas can facilitate non-electoral forms of political engagement

Figure 3 focuses on political engagement more broadly, referring to all other forms of political participation other than voting (covered above) or a simple awareness of either New Zealand or international politics. The latter has been excluded since interview narratives suggest this was a largely a passive and superficial way of participating. The activities discussed here include formal activities, such as belonging to a political party or union as well as informal activities such as signing petitions or attending protests. Overall, the data suggest that more participants (29) were active upon their return than before they left (22). Eleven participants (seven of whom were female) were active politically, no matter where they were and participated both before they left and after they returned to New Zealand and while overseas. Notably, although the majority of participants had at some point lived in the UK (which is English-speaking and culturally similar to New Zealand, so we might expect participation to be easier there), two of these participants had lived in Germany and two in Japan, where language and cultural differences were evident. Clearly this is not *necessarily* a barrier to participation. For instance, one participant's exchange programme saw him work in non-profit organisations focused on migrant rights in both Germany and Finland.

Figure 3: Non-electoral political participation across the migration life course



But nine of those who participated in informal political activities (five of whom were female) before they left and after they returned were *not* active while overseas. Explanations offered included feeling that it was not their place to get involved because it was not their country or they did not know how to engage in the host society. In contrast, others noted how their job or the political climate discouraged them from engaging politically. A small number of participants worked for the New Zealand government when overseas and one as a journalist, making explicit political views inappropriate, while another participant spoke of how he learned not to speak of political issues when living in Colombia because the risk of retaliation from a volatile government was too high.

Perhaps more interesting are the six people who did *not* participate in informal politics before they left New Zealand but did so overseas, with half of them continuing to do on their return. They spoke of how living overseas gave them a greater awareness of international politics, motivating them to get involved. Sometimes this was because they saw greater injustices compared to New Zealand: one participant described how living in an international expatriate community in Qatar highlighted the power differentials between locals and expatriates within that community, politicising her regarding social justice issues. Several others (all of whom had lived in the US, South Africa or Singapore) were motivated to participate in informal political activities because they were electorally disenfranchised within their host country. Others were politicised by the specific community in which they lived while overseas. For instance, one participant spoke of how living in Whistler, a resort town in Canada which has a strong environmental and community development focus, made it difficult to not consider these issues as major concerns. Exchange programmes also encouraged some to get involved, with another female participant taking part in the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) programme which explicitly involved programme members in voluntary political and civic activities within local Japanese communities. Finally, several participants felt they were either politicised by, or were required to participate in political advocacy through, their work. This was more common amongst those living overseas (9) but four indicated the same on their return. Two of these participants had returned to academic positions where their work involved the establishment of networks, events and other activities that were clearly political in nature.

2.4 Returnees who lived in English-speaking countries, women and members of the ethnic majority group tended to politically engage more while overseas and on return than others; this was also true of those aged 40 and over but to a lesser degree

Table 3 indicates that those who lived in English-speaking countries were 7-10 percentage points more likely to vote in a New Zealand election (both while overseas and on their return) than those living in non-English-speaking countries. It is possible that because there is quite a large cohort of New Zealanders residing in English-speaking countries and because knowledge of and news about New Zealand is commonly found there, this creates an environment where it is easier to stay engaged with New Zealand politics or even just to remember to vote. Given the genealogical heritage of many New Zealanders entitles them to voting rights in these English-speaking countries, it is not surprising that participants living in

such countries were even more likely to vote in an overseas election than those living elsewhere.

Table 3: Political engagement both overseas and on return by country lived in and demographic variables, percentage

	Living overseas			On return	
	Vote in NZ election	Vote in overseas election	Other political activity*	Vote in NZ election	Other political activity
English-speaking countries (n28)**	71	42	57	82	78
Non-English-speaking countries (n14)***	64	28	21	71	50
Women (n25)	76	36	56	84	76
Men (n17)	41	41	52	82	58
Majority ethnic group (n32)^	66	41	81	91	69
Minority ethnic group (n10)+	50	33	70	50	50
Age > 40 (n13)	62	31	46	77	69
Age (40 and over) (n29)	62	41	55	83	62

* Excludes a simple interest in or awareness of politics.

** US, UK, Australia, Canada and Ireland.

***Includes countries in Asia, Scandinavia, Europe, Latin America, Africa and the Pacific. Note that for ease of comparison the country in which a participant lived the longest was used for this analysis but, in many cases, participants had lived in multiple countries while overseas and this may have affected their engagement.

^Includes those identifying as New Zealand European, Pākehā and 'Kiwi'. Note that three participants coded here said they had Māori ancestry but did not (yet) identify as Māori.

+Includes all other participants, including those identifying as Māori, Cook Island, Chinese and 'Eurasian' (as well as potentially other identities).

The relatively similar cultures and political systems found in English-speaking countries and New Zealand may also explain why those living in English-speaking countries were also more than twice as likely to participate in other, non-electoral political activities than those living in non-English-speaking countries where the culture and political context was often quite different; notably this gap narrowed but was still evident once participants returned to New Zealand, suggesting that living in a context that is not conducive to political participation may have long-lasting effects. The number of participants who lived in various non-English-speaking countries/regions was too small to analyse in depth but there were no notable differences except when it came to voting in New Zealand on return; this was more common amongst those who had lived in Asia than those who lived in other non-English-speaking

countries. Interview narratives suggest this may be linked to a greater valuing of democracy and the right to vote amongst these participants after living in Asian countries where these were not guaranteed to all citizens/residents.

Table 3 also shows that women were much more likely to vote in New Zealand and men a little more likely to vote in another location while living overseas. But both sexes reported very similar levels of voting in New Zealand on their return. In contrast, although there were similar levels of participation (52-56%) in other political activities amongst men and women while overseas, the latter were more likely (by 18 percentage points) to participate than men on return. All participants who did not participate at any time across their migration life course were male; some were in their 60s or 70s, thus growing up at a time when male breadwinners focused on their jobs not such activities, and most had lived in non-English speaking countries or had lived in multiple countries, making participation beyond voting more difficult to achieve.

Majority group members were more likely to vote in a New Zealand election both overseas and on return but notably minority group voting stayed steady at 50% across these two periods in the migration life course. 33% of the latter group also voted in overseas elections while away, only 8 percentage points behind the majority group members. These differences likely reflect poorer voter turnout amongst minority group New Zealanders more generally (Electoral Commission 2017), even if relative the steadiness is surprising. One Māori participant highlighted that it was important politically to stay enrolled and vote on the Māori role to ensure its longevity. Other ethnic minority group members may have had other rationale to vote but this was not articulated in any detail by participants.

When it comes to age, the differences are fewer with exactly the same proportion (62%) of the under 40 and 40 and over age group voting while overseas and only a 6-10 percentage point difference for voting in an overseas election and voting in New Zealand on return. It is possible the collapsing of age groups into these two categories hides more significant voting turnout rates, as found in New Zealand more generally, particularly amongst young adults (see Electoral Commission 2017). But differences in this study are also small (7-9 percentage points) when it comes to other, non-electoral political activities.

2.5 Non-electoral political reintegration is negatively affected by perceptions of the local political context

As noted earlier, reintegration is a complex concept that not only encompasses different aspects of life but is also shaped by expectations of return. Gmelch (1980) highlights that 'memories' of home are often nostalgic and not always reliable or shaped by differences in scale between the country they lived in overseas compared to home (or vice versa). Later analysis shows the many things they appreciated about New Zealand on their return. But this did not mean they had an easy time, as highlighted in the following discussion on political reintegration, including the perceived barriers faced by returning expatriates to politically engage on their return.

Earlier, Figures 3 and 4 demonstrated that many participants voted in New Zealand both before and on their return, even if they had not voted overseas, but there was a small drop

off in numbers who voted overall, while the number of participants engaging in other forms of political activity fell from 36 to 28. Varied experiences make it difficult to ascertain exactly why political engagement was weaker on return than prior to leaving New Zealand, but some participants spoke directly about feeling politically constrained. Eight of the 42 participants talked of issues such as the inherent conservatism and lack of political will for change in New Zealand, its anti-intellectualism and 'tall poppy syndrome' (where those who are successful are cut down for their success, discouraging innovation and change).

Both interpersonal and institutional factors were implicated; one participant spoke of how her brother told her off for bringing up political discussion in conversation, even around election time. The youngest participant was also surprised to find she was far less politically aware and engaged compared to young Americans and other expatriates she socialised and worked with in Japan. She felt that the New Zealand education system did not encourage a political sensibility, while accessing reliable political information was also an issue. Linked to this, another six participants discussed in some detail their disappointment with the New Zealand media, which they felt did not cover political issues in sufficient depth – particularly when compared to the overseas political coverage they had enjoyed while overseas. To a lesser degree, some participants felt that racism and/or anti-egalitarianism was increasing, making it more difficult to speak out on certain political issues.

It is important to acknowledge that a further two participants thought there was less government inertia/bureaucracy than elsewhere (notably both had lived in the UK), two thought there was less racism and three thought New Zealand was more egalitarian than when compared to countries overseas! Nonetheless, Watkins' (2012) research with returnees found similar complaints to those noted above, while the Kea/Colmar Brunton (2015) survey also found that returnees were more critical of New Zealand than expatriates still overseas. In particular, only 64% of returned expatriates agreed that 'Taking everything into account, NZ is one of the best places in the world to live' compared to 71% of expatriates living overseas.

Although participants who *had* engaged politically were not asked specifically as to how they had achieved that or what barriers they had overcome to do so, several explained that they:

- Adopted an assertiveness they associated with the host country they had lived in (the US, Australia and Germany were named), which included challenging sexism or racism when they encountered it and offering political viewpoints that often challenged friends or acquaintances to stimulate debate;
- Continued to engage with *international* media so they could overcome the limitations of the New Zealand media and get a broader view of political issues;
- Used their frustration with New Zealand politics as a motivator for change, getting involved in political activities to try and *change* the status quo.

The New Zealand political environment is thus not *necessarily* a complete barrier to political engagement amongst returnees but it can stop some people getting as involved as much as they want to be or were overseas. This appears to be a lost opportunity for New Zealand to benefit from their desire to contribute and their valuable life experiences.

Economic engagement

Participants were less likely to report economic engagement – owning property either in New Zealand or elsewhere; making donations; financial support to family and friends – than political or civil society engagement; this is possibly because many struggled to remember or identify economic activities but the Kea/Colmar Brunton surveys (2013; 2015) also report that New Zealand expatriates maintain few financial connections outside maintaining a New Zealand bank account. That is not to say the latter is insignificant – at least one participant, who lived in Japan where no interest accrues on bank accounts, sent savings home to provide a nest egg sufficient for a house deposit when she returned – and this study also focused on economic engagement outside of New Zealand. Indeed, some individuals also had quite complex financial arrangements, living in one country, being paid in another and owning property in two or three countries. A participant who worked in the oil industry found he had to create a limited liability company to work as a contractor rather than as an employee, again providing another layer of complexity to his tax and work arrangements while overseas.

3.1 Property ownership was the most common form of economic citizenship engagement across the migration life course

Table 4 indicates the eight different kinds of economic activities mentioned by participants in addition to paid employment (which is discussed in more detail later in regards to reintegration back into New Zealand society). The most common economic investment was owning property, either to live in themselves, rent or keep as a holiday home. It is notable

Table 4: Economic engagement across the migration life course (n: 42)

	Before left	Overseas	On return
Owned home	5	11 (all overseas)	17
Owned rental property/bach	2	12 (10 in NZ, 2 overseas)	3 (all in NZ)
Owned business	1 (in NZ)	1 (overseas)	1 (overseas)
Owned shares	2	3	3
Family trust	4	0	0
Donations to charities - regular	6	7	8
Donations to charities -irregular	6	7	5
Financial contributions to family	2	5	8
Paid off Student Loan	1	11	2

that the level of property ownership was highest when participants were living overseas. The Kea/Colmar Brunton (2015) survey found that, on average, expatriates earn more when living overseas than New Zealand residents (although the number of those earning over NZ\$100,000 was actually higher amongst returnees than expatriates). So it is not surprising that participant narratives suggest that higher salaries overseas enabled them to purchase property or a second property, particularly one in New Zealand so they had a place to return to, particularly on retirement. Note that while the figures below suggest more people owned property overseas than those who had returned, some people owned both a home overseas and

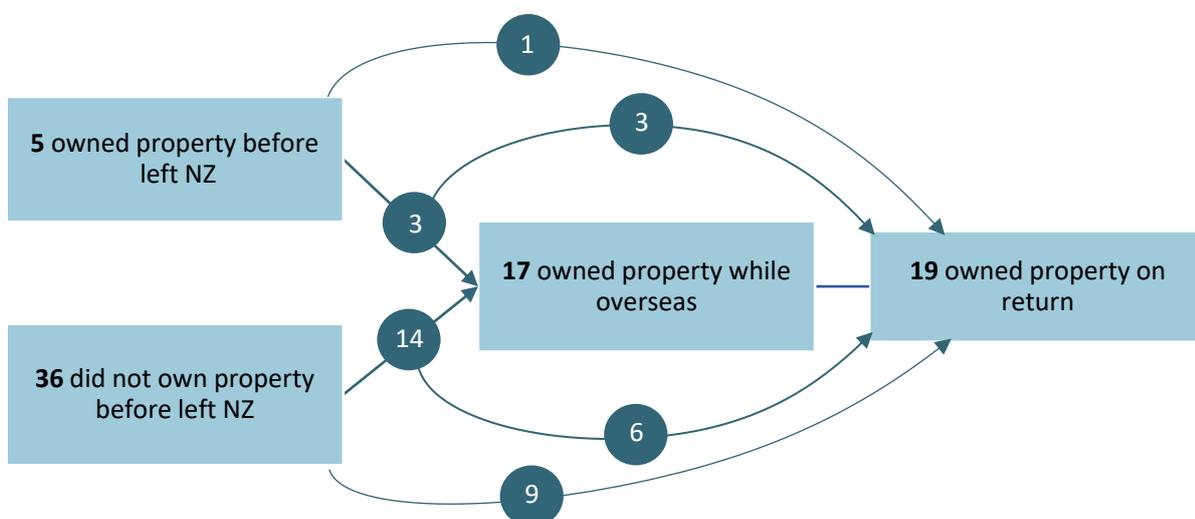
one in New Zealand so these figures do not necessarily add up to a greater number. Indeed, most people who had the economic privilege to own property while overseas were also able to do so on their return to New Zealand.

Table 4 also shows that 11 participants were able to use their higher salaries overseas to pay off their government-backed Student Loan in New Zealand. The collection of data on superannuation was uneven so this is not included in Table 4 but several people talked about pensions, noting either they had cashed them in when leaving their host country or that they continued to accumulate in the host country. In a small number of cases at least, cashing in an overseas pension enabled a house purchase in New Zealand. Few people mentioned KiwiSaver, however, as a form of economic engagement with New Zealand. Other types of economic activities were infrequent but nonetheless meant that expatriates overseas did have some kind of economic ties to New Zealand and, in some cases – such as shares, trusts, property, donations (many of which were to New Zealand charities) and financial contributions to family – they were making a direct economic contribution to the New Zealand economy.

3.2 Higher wages earned living overseas frequently facilitated property ownership overseas but not necessarily on return to New Zealand

Given the dominance of home ownership as a form of economic citizen engagement and given current debate about housing affordability in New Zealand, it is useful to establish whether there was any relationship between living overseas and owning property (either a house, holiday home and/or rental property). Figure 5 shows that only five participants owned property before they left but three of them not only owned a property overseas but also on return (usually this was often the same property which had been rented out while they were gone). Another participant owned before leaving and on return but not while overseas because she discovered that property in the UK can only be bought by permanent residents or citizens.

Figure 4: Property ownership across the migration life course



More notably, of the 36 who did *not* own property before they left New Zealand, 14 were able to purchase while overseas but only six of this group bought property on their return. In at

least two cases, a purchase was planned but the participant was taking some time to decide when and where to buy. For the remainder who did not purchase on return, discussion often turned to the high cost of housing in New Zealand. For instance, a woman in her 40s who had returned with her husband and children after living in the US for many years was disappointed that not only had their plans to sell two houses in the US been quashed by the Global Financial Crisis (one house was forfeited to the bank and another sold lower than expected) but house prices in Auckland were much higher than they had anticipated while her husband had difficulties gaining sufficient work in his field. An inability to gain the permanent, full-time work favoured by mortgage lenders had also scuttled the home ownership plans of a single female participant.

However, another nine of the participants had not owned property before they left New Zealand but *were* able to purchase on their return, often citing higher wages overseas as enabling them to save a sufficient home deposit. Others had purchased a rental property or holiday home long before their return.

3.3 Returnees who have lived in English-speaking countries, men and those aged 40 and over were most likely to own property while overseas and on return; ethnic majority members were more likely to own property overseas but ethnic minority members were more likely to do so on return

Table 5 on the next page indicates that those who lived in English-speaking countries were much more likely to own property while overseas and on return than those living in non-English-speaking countries. This may be related to the fact that some of the participants in the latter category were relatively young and had held jobs such as English language teaching, which does not pay particularly well. However, it is notable that while the level of other forms of economic engagement was much closer (only 4 percentage points difference) while participants were overseas, the gap between them grew significantly on return. Once again, this suggests that where people live overseas shapes their return experiences.

Table 5 also highlights gender differences in home ownership, with men much more likely to own property both overseas and on return, although the percentage point gap between these two groups did fall from 28 to 17 due to men's ownership falling upon return to New Zealand. This may explain why other forms of economic activity were similar for women and men overseas but much more likely amongst men (a 39 percentage point difference) upon return. If not able to buy a house, it is possible men invested, donated or spent their money elsewhere.

It is interesting to note that while majority ethnic group participants were 14 percentage points more likely to own property overseas than minority ethnic group members, this trend was reversed on return with the latter 9 percentage points more likely than majority group participants to do so. There is a corresponding decline in other forms of economic engagement amongst minority group members, while in contrast majority group participants increased their level of other economic activities by 30 percentage points on return compared to overseas.

Table 5: Economic engagement overseas and on return by country lived in and demographic variables, percentage

	Living overseas		On return	
	Own property (either in NZ or overseas)	Other economic engagement with NZ*	Own property (either in NZ or overseas)	Other economic engagement with NZ
English-speaking countries (n28)**	46	61	54	54
Non-English-speaking countries (n14)***	29	57	29	29
Women (n25)	36	68	36	32
Men (n17)	64	65	53	71
Majority ethnic group (n32)^	47	23	41	53
Minority ethnic group (n10)+	33	50	50	33
Age under 40 (n13)	23	69	23	38
Age 40 and over (n29)	52	62	54	54

* Includes all other economic activities except simply maintaining a New Zealand bank account.

** US, UK, Australia, Canada and Ireland

***Includes countries in Asia, Scandinavia, Europe, Latin America, Africa and the Pacific.

^Includes those identifying as New Zealand European, Pākehā and 'Kiwi'.

+Includes all other participants, including those identifying as Māori, Cook Island, Chinese and 'Eurasian' (as well as potentially other identities).

Finally, it is not surprising that older participants were more than twice as likely to own property overseas and on return than younger participants, although it is concerning that those under age 40 had not been able to purchase property on return since virtually all of them were of a typical age to do so. In addition, although younger participants had higher levels of other forms of economic engagement while overseas, such activity diminished by a greater rate (31 versus 8 percentage points) than older participants upon return, even though the younger ones were not able to purchase property (which might have explained less other economic activity). As discussion above and below highlights, this may result from the difficulties many participants articulated regarding high living and housing costs which are aggravated by difficulties gaining employment.

3.4 Economic integration is often more challenging than expected – and colours other aspects of integration

For most people, economic reintegration meant finding a job that used their skills and was at an appropriate level and the experience of gaining employment tended to colour the rest of the reintegration process (see also Chaban et al. 2011). Twelve out of 42 participants discussed employment being harder to find than anticipated when asked about their expectations of return (this supports earlier findings from Lidgard 1994; 2001 but was not a common issue for

Watkins' 2012 participants). Other common complaints were about the cost of living or housing (by nine participants, particularly but not exclusively by participants living in Auckland) and the comparatively poor public transport found in New Zealand (six participants), which made getting to job interviews and potential jobs challenging. It is also important to note that eight participants found work easier to get/better than expected or compared to overseas, four thought costs were lower in New Zealand than expected and one thought public transport was better than overseas! Given discussion above, this suggests that *where* people lived overseas shaped their return experiences. Nonetheless, the returned expatriates who took part in both Watkins' (2012) qualitative study and the Kea/Colmar Brunton (2015) survey highlighted similar concerns (cost of living, housing, low wages) to those discussed here.

It is important to stress that most participants expected they would not earn as much or find the same kind of roles in New Zealand as overseas. Nonetheless, finding secure and appropriate work was still often much harder than anticipated. This was particularly because:

- Overseas work experience was often not valued by recruiters and employers, a finding also reported by Pocock & McIntosh (2010) and, to a lesser degree, Watkins (2012);
- 'Who you know' was often more than important than 'what you know' in finding work and returnees found it hard to break into local networks;
- Returnees were treated like locals not migrants so were unable to access migrant employment services.

Overall, positive economic integration appeared to be more common amongst those who had secured a job before return (six participants), returning to study (five) – which meant that participants were poorer than working overseas but they were saved from the challenges of finding work – or were returning to retire (four). In contrast, one woman who did not fit into any of these categories described having six jobs since returning six years before while others had had to take on contract work or any job until they were eventually able to get something that suited them. Others gave up careers that simply were not viable in New Zealand and had to rethink their work trajectories, causing delays in finding work or finding the level of employment they felt appropriate.

Civil society engagement

Civil society activities – such as informal volunteering; belonging to a community/cultural group, sports club, social justice movement or religious-based organisation; contributions to iwi, hapū or whanau – have been paid little attention in the research literature (Collins 2009; Levitt 2001). This section explores not only the types of civil society activities in which New Zealanders engage but also how this form of citizenship activity is the most negatively affected by having spent time overseas, although caution suggests this fact might also be related to the age of participants when overseas and on return.

4.1 Sports club membership and volunteering for a civic organisation were the most common forms of civil society engagement across the migration life course

Participants contributed to civil society in many ways across their life course and living overseas did *not* necessarily hinder this form of engagement. Some activities, such as being a member of or volunteer at a sports or cultural club, did decrease in frequency after participants left New Zealand but to a degree this might be expected given they were aging and less likely to have time to get involved once they had full-time jobs and, in many cases, young children. This might also explain why the number who said they were a member of a civic organisation stayed more or less the same before the left, while overseas and on return but the number who *volunteered* at the same kind of organisation decreased from 11 to 5 between leaving and return. Volunteering takes more time than simple membership.

Table 6: Civil society engagement across the migration life course (n: 42)

	Before left	Overseas	On return
Member of sports club	16	10	9
Volunteer for sports club	5	3	3
Member of cultural group*	6	5	2
Volunteer** for cultural group	2	0	0
Member of civic organisation	2	4	3
Volunteer for civic organisation	11	6	5
Member of church	6	4	3
Volunteer for church	2	1	1
Member of environmental group	3	0	0
Volunteer for environmental group	2	1	3
Member of a network/professional association***	1	8	8
Member of board	9	5	8
Volunteer through school/children	4	3	8
Volunteer providing a social service	4	2	6
Fundraising for charity	4	5	1
Organised social events	0	3	3

*Cultural groups refer broadly to choirs, artistic performance groups, Māori cultural groups, bands etc. Māori contributions to marae etc have been categorised as 'volunteer for civic organisation' rather than 'volunteer for cultural group' because such volunteering often involves other aspects of paid work than those related to cultural performance.

**A volunteer' is distinguished from being a member because it can include a leadership role, as well as doing any kind of unpaid work, rather than just belonging to a group or organisation.

***Associations were mainly professional associations but networks ranged from formal networks to mothers' groups and social media networks etc.

On the other hand, membership of professionals associations or professional/social networks and volunteering through children (e.g. belonging to the Parent Teacher Association or helping out at the school fair) increased and board membership was reasonably steady. It is notable that activities such as fundraising for charities decreased across the migration life course while organising social events (for instance, amongst friendship networks) increased. This suggests a greater level of personal- rather than community-oriented activities. But, overall, many participants discussed how they had tried a number of ways to engage in their community and this becomes important when later considering their reintegration.

The small number of participants who engaged regularly in civil society across their life course tended to have a particular interest (church, choir, kapa haka or netball) that provided a common thread throughout their life, no matter where they were. But living overseas offered new opportunities (for example, to spend five weeks in Crete volunteering with a sea turtle conservation group or to become involved via diplomatic work in New Zealand aid programmes in the Pacific). Some participants also indicated that their return to New Zealand was partly driven by a desire to 'give back', including helping stranded whales through New Zealand's Project Jonah or contributing to marae-based activities. Few of the activities named above had any *direct* benefit to New Zealand while they lived overseas but the skills, experiences and motivations they brought back could be better harnessed to benefit New Zealand society upon their return.

4.2 There is no clear relationship between living overseas and civil society engagement while overseas or on return

Figure 5 demonstrates that there is also no linear relationship between civil society activities across the migration life course. While 37 participants had participated in some kind of civil society activity before they left and 28 of these did so while overseas, only 19 kept up such activities on their return. However, six who participated before they left did so on return, despite not having engaged in civil society activities while overseas. When looking at those who did not participate before they left, however, we can see that three of the four who engaged while overseas did go onto participate on their return.

Figure 5: Civil society participation across the migration life course



This suggests that overseas engagement had a positive effect on their participation, although again this finding could be mediated by the age of participants at these different stages of their migration journey. For example, we know that the most active age groups for volunteering in the general population are those between 30-39 and 40-49 for both males and females (Volunteering New Zealand 2013). While overseas engagement was generally beneficial, not only to the host society where the engagement takes place but also in encouraging participation on return, eight fewer participants engaged in civil society activities on their return compared to before they left New Zealand. There is clearly room for encouraging greater engagement across the migration life course.

4.3 Returnees who had lived in English-speaking countries and those aged 40 and over were most likely to participate in civil society engagement while overseas and on return; ethnic majority members and men were more likely to engage overseas and women and ethnic minority members to do so on return

Table 7 combines all forms and levels of civil society engagement to be able to give a sense of whether where participants lived matters in this area.

Table 7: Civil society engagement* both overseas and on return, by country lived and demographic variables, percentage

	Engaged while living overseas	Engaged on return
English-speaking countries (n28)**	75	71
Non-English-speaking countries (n14)***	50	57
Women (n25)	68	76
Men (n17)	93	57
Majority ethnic group (n32)^	75	63
Minority ethnic group (n10)+	50	70
Age under 40 (n13)	62	62
Age 40 and over (n29)	69	69

Those living in English-speaking countries were more likely to participate in civil society both while living overseas and on return, although notably this gap narrowed as it did with both economic and political engagement. This suggests that living in a non-English-speaking country does not have a permanent impact upon people's engagement; indeed, interview narratives suggest that an inability to join a tramping club or feel like you can contribute in a host country can often motivate a returnee to engage in civil society activities.

*Includes all civil society activities except helping immediate family.

**US, UK, Australia, Canada and Ireland

***Includes countries in Asia, Scandinavia, Europe, Latin America, Africa and the Pacific.

^Includes those identifying as New Zealand European, Pākehā and 'Kiwi'.

+Includes all other participants, including those identifying as Māori, Cook Island, Chinese and 'Eurasian' (as well as potentially other identities).

It is interesting that men were 25 percentage points more likely than women to engage in civil society activities while overseas, while women were 19 percentage points more likely to engage than men on return to New Zealand. There was no obvious reason for this in the interview narratives but discussion suggested that men may feel more comfortable using civil society activities as a strategy to meet people while overseas, while women tended to engage more when they felt connected to the organisation or activity.

The same phenomenon may explain why majority ethnic group participants were 25 percentage points more likely than their minority ethnic group counterparts to engage overseas, but minority group participants reported a higher level engagement on return (7 percentage points higher than the majority group but some 20 percentage points higher than their own engagement overseas). What is perhaps most surprising is the relatively small difference (7 percentage points) between the under 40 and 40 and over age groups both overseas and on return and that these figures were the same at both points in the migration life course.

4.4 Civil society reintegration may be affected by difficulties in (re)establishing social networks as well as institutional barriers

Some of the barriers to civil society engagement on return to New Zealand may be connected to a broader sense of social dislocation. Many participants articulated how nice it was to return to existing friends or make new ones in New Zealand without the need to explain themselves or their sense of humour and they enjoyed the less formal socialising common amongst New Zealanders. But 12 of the 42 participants indicated they felt it was very difficult to develop networks/make friends since their return. Two described New Zealanders as rude or cold, with no interest in engaging socially. Discussion indicated that this perception may have been linked to a discomfort with the growing ethnic diversity in Auckland and Wellington, although eight other participants noted that they appreciated the more multicultural feel of New Zealand since they left.

While the lack of overseas experience was prevalent when talking about the labour market, it is interesting that a small number of people also discussed how their 'overseas assertiveness' or ideas about how things might be done differently were often not appreciated in civil society activities (both formal and informal). This supports other findings that New Zealanders (including friends and family) are not particularly interested in hearing about overseas experiences (Watkins 2012). Three Auckland participants also linked their limited civil society engagement since their return to the spread out geography of the city which was enhanced by poor public transport, making it difficult to engage as they wished. Two other participants spoke of long work hours in New Zealand (often for less compensation than they were paid overseas) which inhibited their ability to engage in extracurricular or volunteer activities.

When considering the whole sample, those who engaged in civil society on their return tended to fall into one or more of the following categories:

- They had a genuine interest/contribution (e.g. church, choir or kapa haka) which they continued throughout their lives, no matter where they lived.
- They used civic engagement as a strategy both overseas and on their return to overcome poor networks/sense of isolation etc.
- They had made a personal commitment to putting the awareness or skills gained overseas to good use on return or to making the most of opportunities available in NZ that they did not have overseas.

These three ways of addressing civil society engagement might thus be useful tips for those who are newly returned to New Zealand and struggling to connect with other New Zealanders.

4.5 It remains unclear whether citizenship engagement with New Zealand and/or within the country of residence bring benefits at the personal, community and society levels when expatriates return to New Zealand

This key research question proved difficult to answer. This was partly because both the strength of citizenship engagement and benefits on return are hard to quantify and partly because it assumes a rather linear relationship between engagement overseas and benefits on return yet interview narratives suggest that the lives of many expatriates are more complex than that. For instance, while some participants engaged in high levels of political and/or civil society engagement when overseas and brought back fantastic skills and knowledge that benefit themselves, their communities and New Zealand society more broadly, many had trouble translating this into practice in New Zealand. As noted above, this is sometimes due to a lack of appreciation of their skills, knowledge and fresh ideas, but also because they have (yet) to find the same level of inspiration in the New Zealand context when compared to particularly politically- and civic-minded communities overseas.

On the other hand, others who did not have high levels of citizenship engagement while overseas *have* been inspired by their experiences of not being able to have a democratic right to vote or not having have the language/cultural abilities to participate fully in their host society. Further participants were motivated by the significant social injustices they saw elsewhere and have been active in trying to make the most of the democratic and relatively open society that New Zealand offers.

Overall, while we might assume that those who were more engaged across all three areas of citizenship were more satisfied with their return, actually those who engaged were often more critical or negative about New Zealand because they were actually interacting with its institutions and New Zealanders to a higher degree! Personality is also a huge factor that this research cannot take into account. However, it is clear that having realistic expectations based on some level of research, planning and willingness to make an effort were key factors shaping the more positive reintegration experiences.

National identity and belonging

In addition to examining forms of political, economic and civil society engagement, this study asked questions about national identity and belonging. In particular, it was interested in whether living overseas strengthened or weakened a New Zealand identity, whether this sense of national identity was mediated by citizenship engagement while overseas and how national identity changes (or not) when New Zealanders return home.

5.1 Voting was the most common way of staying connected with New Zealand while overseas (although family/friends likely supersede this)

Figure 6 indicates that voting in New Zealand was the most common way that New Zealanders said they engaged with *New Zealand* while overseas, with 22 participants naming this activity. 14 participants stayed in touch by reading New Zealand news, suggesting that keeping up with politics was a dominate focus of the participants' interaction, although several people mentioned their engagement was infrequent and often limited to only scanning headlines. Some explicitly indicated they had little interest/awareness in New Zealand politics while they were overseas and several still voted, suggesting that the sense of duty to vote was well-ingrained if somewhat passive. Nonetheless, political forms of citizenship engagement were clearly important for staying connected with New Zealand.

Figure 6: Ways in which participants engaged with New Zealand while overseas



We might have expected that contact with friends and family would be a more common way of staying connected than voting; these were certainly dominant connections that participants maintained (13 said they stayed connected this way, particularly since the development of the internet and especially via social media) and it is highly probable that many took their continued contact with

friends and family for granted and did not mention it. Visits to New Zealand (13) and, less commonly, hosting visits from New Zealanders (5) were also common forms of social interaction with New Zealand and New Zealanders that were discussed. The depth and breadth of such social engagement was, for most people, much greater and more meaningful than for politics, even though voting and reading New Zealand news was mentioned by a greater number of participants.

Thirteen participants actively sought New Zealand connections in their host country by attending New Zealand-focused events (such as Waitangi Day or ANZAC celebrations or

watching the All Blacks play rugby) and participating in networks of New Zealanders. Eleven joined either a formal network made up of New Zealanders or networked informally with other New Zealanders while overseas. Eight actively joined New Zealand-focused organisations while living overseas, including Kiwi Expatriate Association (KEA), New Zealand associations or clubs in London, Singapore and New York, Māori cultural groups in London and Singapore and a church with a significant Māori congregation in Australia. A far smaller number either used New Zealand symbols (e.g. New Zealand flag, art or food) within their homes to maintain a connection to their home country or actively tried to educate members of their host country about New Zealand.

Only a minority named economic connections with New Zealand, with the Student Loan (9) and property (5) being most common. A small number of participants worked for the New Zealand government or a business that had a strong New Zealand-focus (for example, importing New Zealand products into their host country), so maintained connections in a formal way. Only six participants made donations to either New Zealand charities or family in New Zealand while living overseas.

Overall, the data suggest that New Zealanders connections with their home country are multiple, diverse and inter-connected; for instance, a participant might join a New Zealand-focused organisation because other members of their New Zealand network already belonged or they made an economic contribution to New Zealand through social connections, such as family. Often, however, the level of engagement was low and relatively passive, particularly when it came to political and economic activities.

5.2 Living overseas often enhances a sense of New Zealand identity with expatriates appreciating New Zealand's nature/landscape and New Zealander's egalitarianism and friendliness most when overseas

When it comes to national identity, some of the participants actually felt more like a New Zealander or came to see themselves as a New Zealander while living overseas, a trend other research has identified (Humpage 2017). Sixteen of the 42 participants said they had not really thought about or had no strong New Zealand identity before travelling overseas for the first time (which was often prior to their moving overseas to live). Six of the 16 spoke specifically about how they did not relate to many New Zealand symbols or mythologies (for instance the strong focus on rugby and the ANZAC tradition, which they saw as gendered and racialised) or how they thought New Zealand rather small and parochial so were always looking outward to 'real' cities and countries.

Figure 7: Positive qualities of New Zealanders



Figure 8: Positive qualities of New Zealand



Overall, however, participants generally reported positive feelings towards New Zealand and noted that living outside of New Zealand emphasised or helped them appreciate what it means to be a New Zealander. Figure 7 highlights the positive qualities of New Zealanders they appreciated or missed while overseas, while Figure 8 indicates the positive qualities they appreciated or missed about New Zealand *as a country*. Note that the reference to Māori culture and identity was made both by Pākehā/New Zealand Europeans who came to appreciate Māori culture more (and often used it as a way of identifying New Zealand as distinct from other countries) or by Māori individuals who felt their Māori identity was valued more or they came to value it more while living overseas.

5.3 Returnees appreciated New Zealand’s nature/landscape and New Zealanders’ friendliness the most on their return but disliked the latter’s lack of inclusivity, passivity and parochialism

Figure 9 highlights that nature/landscape was the most commonly named factor when participants talked about what they specifically appreciated on their *return*. This category included reference to beaches, the bush, large backyards and the ability to easily get involved in lots of outdoor pursuits. Many of the same values that were important while they were away were similar but, as noted earlier, two people mentioned that they appreciated the greater cultural diversity they found in New Zealand on their return, while one found New Zealand less brand conscious than other countries! These findings are largely in line with Kea/Colmar Brunton (2015) survey results

Figure 9: New Zealand qualities appreciated on return



which indicate that natural beauty, easy access to various outdoor pursuits, the can-do/innovative attitudes of New Zealanders, sporting achievements and the laid back New Zealand lifestyle were the five most popular reasons (named by 80% of respondents) that expatriates were proud of New Zealand, although at least two thirds of the sample also agreed that culture, equality, cultural diversity/multiculturalism, safety and progressive/liberal thinking were also sources of pride about New Zealand.

Figure 10: New Zealand qualities disliked on return

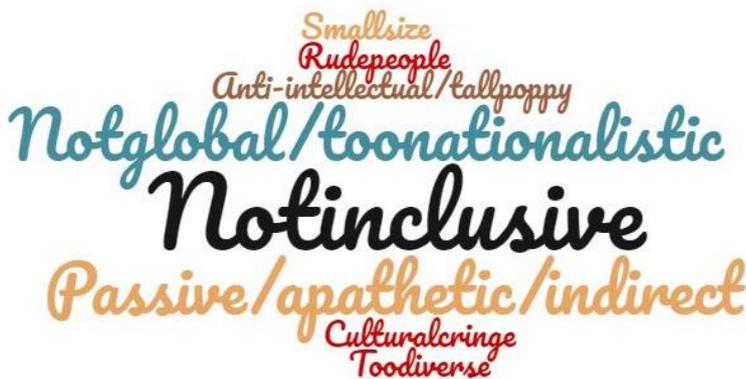


Figure 10 considers what participants said they disliked about New Zealand or New Zealanders when they returned. It is not surprising, given the high level of appreciation for egalitarianism above and earlier discussion about perceptions that egalitarianism decreasing, that some felt that New Zealand was not as inclusive as it used to be or they would like it to be.

This category included references to

racism, class distinctions and also a lack of inclusion of those who returned from overseas. Other factors related to the attitudes or behaviours of New Zealanders who were described as rude, anti-intellectual, suffering from tall poppy syndrome or cultural cringe when comparing New Zealand to overseas, passive, indirect and apathetic towards change or political issues. Other comments focused more on the country itself: New Zealand's small size, its increased diversity and especially its lack of a global outlook, which some saw as being too 'nationalistic'.

Only three participants highlighted that they were far more critical or cynical about nationalistic stereotypes or images since their return to New Zealand because they felt they now felt they were untrue. However, others noted that they already did not identify with some aspects of New Zealand culture – such as rugby or the ANZAC tradition – before they left New Zealand. New Zealanders currently living in London who took part in another study similarly struggled to identify with the same national signifiers (Humpage 2017).

5.4 National identity is mediated by ethnic identity in complex ways for ethnic minority group participants

Identity is neither static nor monolithic but is instead a dynamic, complex and inter-related process (Yuval-Davis 2011). There were various examples offered where national identity not only intersected with other identities, such as gender or ethnicity, but can also shift across the migration life course. Discussion with participants who were of Chinese, Pasifika or Māori descent suggests that national identity was often – but not always – a more complicated complex identity for them than for most Pākehā/New Zealand European participants. Previous research suggests that because the New Zealand national culture is often conflated with a

British or European culture from which many New Zealand Europeans are descended, this culture is taken for granted because it has been normalised as the 'mainstream' way of thinking and doing (Bell 2004; 2009).

In contrast, some participants from ethnic minority backgrounds experienced a form of hyper-New Zealandness in an effort to 'fit in', highlighting how if you look or act 'different' than the mainstream, national identity becomes more important whether at home or overseas. For instance, a participant who described herself as 'Eurasian' and was born in Singapore before coming to live in New Zealand with her New Zealand father and Singaporean mother as a young child, talked of how she had strongly associated with a New Zealand national identity before she left and took a New Zealand flag and other souvenirs with her to remind her of home. A male of Chinese descent also spoke explicitly of hiding his Chinese identity in a New Zealand context to diminish his difference from other New Zealanders. He felt more 'Chinese' when living in Germany because there were few Asian peoples where he lived and he was thus visibly different from the host society population.

However, most participants from ethnic minority group backgrounds noted that they did not have a strong sense of national identity until they left New Zealand. A participant with Cook Island and Pākehā/New Zealand European heritage talked about how her Cook Island identity was reinforced in a New Zealand context more than her New Zealand identity, because she was involved with her Cook Island family and regularly celebrated Cook Island cultural events with them. She also did not identify with the stereotypes of a New Zealand national identity (for example, rugby, ANZAC tradition, Waitangi Day events) so it was not until she went to live overseas that she was seen as and began to identify more strongly as a New Zealander. Similarly, a male participant of Chinese descent who lived in China for a decade found his New Zealandness became more evident when living there, even if he felt he 'belonged' in China in many ways.

Two Māori participants (one lived in Australia, the other in the UK) also noted how they were inherently aware they were Māori in New Zealand, not least because of racism and the institutional framework of biculturalism that situates indigeneity as an important identity politically (this was also something mentioned by the New Zealanders studied in London – see Humpage, 2017). They said they were able to socialise and network mainly with other Māori New Zealanders while overseas without feeling the same cultural pressures and without facing the same – often negative – discourses about Māori. Yet another Māori female who lived in Australia noted how one of her reasons for returning home was that she felt she was missing her 'Māori identity' while overseas, while another Māori female who lived in Canada felt her Māori identity strengthen when she engaged with First Nations events that she was drawn to as an indigenous person. Like others, she reported that being Māori was seen as more positive overseas than it is in New Zealand. Another Māori participant commented that she felt more confident being Māori on her return because she had felt valued overseas.

5.5 National identity is not always straightforward for ethnic majority participants

It is important to acknowledge that national identity was not always taken for granted or simple for Pākehā/New Zealand European participants. A woman in her 60s spoke of how she felt 'different' when in New Zealand because she had English parents, shaping her socialisation in ways that became particularly noticeable when she attended a New Zealand boarding school with mostly New Zealand children. However, some found the overseas experience shifted how they were perceived by others. For instance, another woman in her 60s spoke of how at home she purposely used the term 'Kiwi' or 'Pākehā' to describe herself in New Zealand because she felt it more appropriate than 'European' given she was born and bred in New Zealand. However, when living in Sweden she found people assumed she was European (at least until she spoke!) because she was white and looked similar to many Europeans (or at least how they are stereotypically perceived). In contrast, a Pākehā/New Zealand European male said that Australians tended to associate New Zealanders with being of Māori or Pasifika descent, so did not easily identify him as a New Zealander.

Three people who identified as Pākehā/New Zealand European said they had Māori ancestry; two of them had begun to explore this latter identity since their return, changing the way they thought about what it meant to be a New Zealander, but they felt uncomfortable claiming a Māori identity as yet. Another participant said she explicitly explored her UK/Danish roots while overseas, so her New Zealand national identity became less important during that stage of her migration life course, while a further participant explored similar family origins on her return, again complicating a 'simple' New Zealand identity.

Others found it more difficult to avoid being identified as a New Zealander and get away from the stereotypes associated with it. A Pākehā/New Zealand European male found his difference highlighted when he moved to the UK as a child. His accent made him stand out as a New Zealander and led to British assumptions that he would be good at rugby. A Pākehā/New Zealand European female also reported that being lumped in with Australians while living in London as an adult made her national identity as a New Zealander stronger! A male who lived in Switzerland realised the cultural similarities between New Zealanders, Australians and South Africans by meeting other expatriates while overseas but also felt this experience strengthened his identity as a New Zealander. Several women also explicitly said they did not identify with certain aspects of New Zealand culture, in particular rugby.

For some of these women, concern with gender and/or women's issues was an important thread linking their political and civil society activities across the life course. These included supporting women's arts projects, a gender-focused book club, a women's learning circle within a workplace and a Women in Sciences programme at a university. For other participants, the environment was a critical issue and being 'green' was an important identity that drove their political, civil society and sometimes economic commitments (for instance, through donations to environmental causes) across the migration life course. It is also interesting that two Pākehā/New Zealand European participants said that they identified more with their home city (Auckland and Dunedin) rather than a national identity, particularly before they left New Zealand.

In summary, the experience of living overseas often (but not always) had the most significant impact of the three stages of the migration life course upon national identity. But it is difficult to separate out national identity from other identities, particular ethnicity, and the way in which these intersect depended on the particular location and individualised experience of each participant.

Recommendations

This research has provided important insights into the experiences of expatriates while living overseas and on their return home across political, economic and civil society forms of citizenship engagement. It has highlighted that while the majority of New Zealanders may vote (usually in New Zealand) while overseas, they also maintain other important social and (to a lesser degree) economic ties with New Zealand. Moreover, they are engaging with their host societies and building capacity and skills by getting involved in formal and informal political and civil society activities, as well as buying houses, donating to important causes and otherwise making an economic contribution. Rather than a 'brain drain', the overseas experience often facilitates new levels of national and political awareness and new forms of engagement that inform New Zealanders' experiences of New Zealand on return.

However the social, political and economic resources returnees have developed through international experiences of citizenship engagement are often not being fully utilised upon their return to New Zealand. While this is not entirely surprising, since Gmelch (1980) has noted that return migrants rarely have an impact on innovation or change their home country, participants felt there was something specific to the socio-cultural and political climate in New Zealand that hindered their ability to reintegrate and contribute. Participants felt that employers, politicians, civil society organisations and friends/family often did not value overseas experiences and, worse, are often resistance to change. New Zealanders – and indeed, the participants themselves – are thus often missing out on the full benefit of their motivations to engage politically, economically and in civil society, as well as the skills and experiences they gained while overseas, when they return to New Zealand.

Expatriates considering a return to New Zealand, policy makers and others should consider the recommendations made in Table 8 on the following page. Suggestions highlight how we might improve the integration of returning New Zealanders with the top heading in each segment indicating who is responsible for each area of citizenship engagement. It is clear that having realistic expectations based on some level of research, planning and willingness to make an effort are key factors shaping the more positive reintegration experiences of individuals (see Watkins 2012 for further tips to returnees specifically). But it is also important to consider the role of New Zealand institutions and organisations, employers and the government itself in overcoming some of the reintegration challenges that returning New Zealanders face. While returning 'home' (particularly after a number of years) will never be easy, we owe it to New Zealanders who have returned to ensure they feel welcomed as valued members of society.

Table 8: How can we improve the experience of returning to New Zealand from overseas?

Political			
Returnees	New Zealanders	Political parties	Government
Challenge the political status quo	Be open to difference/ideas from overseas	Develop forums for real political debate	
Demand substantial, investigative political news in NZ and engage in this kind of international news		Promote existing digital platforms allowing citizens all over the world to assess what party best matches their views	
		Regulate media to improve standards of political journalism	
		Develop an explicit ethnic relations policies encouraging openness to change/diversity	
Economic			
Returnees	Employers	Recruiters	Government
Better planning (work, savings) for return	Treat returnees as a resource rather than fear or disparage overseas work experience	Avoid making assumptions about overseas work experience and employers' views about its value	Improve access to information about the real cost of living/housing, the job market etc for those returning home/migrants
Do a trial return before committing	Assign mentors to returned expatriate employees to ensure they adapt quickly		Allow expatriates to access some existing migrant services and/or develop specific services for expatriates
Return mid-career not late-career so easier to rejoin labour market			Better regulate housing costs/consumer prices/wages/work hours
Consider the return as an opportunity to change career (or retire/study)			Promote tax or other incentives to ease economic costs of return
Civil society			
Returnees	New Zealanders	Civil society organisations	Government
Make an effort to try new things to meet new people	Avoid assuming a returnee does not need help because they are 'home'!	Promote volunteering/civil society engagement as a way for returnees to reconnect	Promote volunteering/civil society as a lifelong commitment that enables all citizens to integrate within a community
Don't just hang out with other returnees			
National identity and belonging			
Returnees	New Zealanders		Government
Stay in contact with friends/networks while overseas	Be open to diverse ways of being a 'New Zealander' – it's not just about rugby and ANZACs		Promote avenues for returnees to connect with each other
Regularly articulate how travel overseas has made you appreciate New Zealand	Go overseas to broaden your own mind, develop self-reliance and appreciate what is great about New Zealand		Promote ways of being a 'New Zealander' that go beyond stereotypes

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