New Zealanders’ perceptions of Asia and Asian peoples in 2011
Pathways to Metropolis in the 21st Century
Workshop, 25 October 2012

Dr Andrew Robertson
Group Account Director, Social Research Agency | Colmar Brunton
1. New Zealanders’ perceptions of Asia in 2011
Most New Zealanders appreciate that the Asian region is important to New Zealand.
The vast majority (90%) of New Zealanders believe it’s important that New Zealand develops cultural and economic ties with the peoples and countries of Asia.

90% important
- 50% very important (up from 44% in 2010)
- 40% quite important
Perceived importance of regions to New Zealand’s future (% 4 or 5 out of 5)

- Europe + UK: 69%
- North America: 59%
- South America: 31%
- Australia: 88%
- Asia: 83%
- Africa: 16%
- South Pacific: 51%

Colmar Brunton 2012
Perceived importance over the last 14 years

Percentage of New Zealanders who gave an importance rating of 4 or 5 (out of 5) for each region or country

- **Australia (only)** (n = 1,100)
  - 1997: 65%
  - 2011: 88%

- **Asia** (n = 1,098)
  - 1997: 54%
  - 2011: 86%

- **Europe, including UK** (n = 1,100)
  - 1997: 60%
  - 2011: 56%

- **North America** (n = 1,083)
  - 1997: 50%
  - 2011: 43%

- **South Pacific, excluding Australia** (n = 1,090)
  - 1997: 45%
  - 2011: 31%

- **South Pacific**
  - 1997: 43%
  - 2011: 16%

- **South America** (n = 1,083)
  - 1997: 48%
  - 2011: 17%

- **Africa** (n = 1,082)
  - 1997: 11%
  - 2011: 9%
In 2011 New Zealanders were also more positive about the potential benefits of a relationship with Asia.

% very/somewhat positive impact

- Exports from New Zealand to Asia: 89% (2010) vs. 93% (2011)
- Asian tourism in New Zealand: 91% (2010) vs. 93% (2011)
- The economic growth of the Asian region: 79% (2010) vs. 84% (2011)
- Free trade agreements between NZ and Asian countries: 78% (2010) vs. 82% (2011)
- Asia as a tourist destination for New Zealanders: 70% (2010) vs. 77% (2011)
- Imports from Asia to New Zealand: 63% (2010) vs. 68% (2011)
- Asian cultures and traditions: 57% (2010) vs. 62% (2011)
- Immigration from Asia to New Zealand: 49% (2010) vs. 55% (2011)
- The population growth of the Asian region: 43% (2010) vs. 51% (2011)

† Statistically significant increase at the 95% confidence level
Why were New Zealanders more positive in 2011 about a relationship between New Zealand and Asia?
New Zealanders more ‘inwardly focused’ in late 2010 and early 2011.

“I think that the recession played a major role in the importance people placed on the influence of other countries on New Zealand; times were hard and people felt that their own country was the worst off and didn’t really think of how other countries were impacted or how other countries impacted them.”

(Female, other ethnicity, 25-29 years old)

“2010 saw the biggest hit from the recession and I think Kiwis were too busy trying to sort out their problems and worried more about what the recession was doing to countries, such as Australia and European countries, to worry about Asia.”

(Female, Asian, 20-24 years old)
New Zealanders more ‘inwardly focused’ in late 2010 and early 2011.

“When times get tough we tend to concentrate on ourselves rather than other people and/or countries. When we had the Christchurch earthquake it really hit home, as we all knew someone who was affected by it. Then the Japan earthquake hit, with much more force and much more lives lost.”

(Female, Māori, 30-34 years old)

“The drop last year could possibly be attributed to the recession and the fact we had the mining tragedy – and the Christchurch earthquake to deal with.”

(Female, Māori, 40-49 years old)
New Zealanders felt more optimistic, relative to 2010 and the first half of 2011

“I think events like the Rugby World Cup give (some) Kiwis a sense of hope, perhaps help further define national identity (and thus security), and help develop a we-can-take-on-the-world type of thinking. Also there’s a sense of wanting to engage with other regions to show what we have here.”

(Male, NZ European, 40-49 years old)

“I also agree that this year we’ve been more optimistic because of the Rugby World Cup, especially when it comes to tourism.”

(Female, Māori, 25-29 years old)
“Do you think during the next 12 months the economy will be in a better state than at present, or in a worse state?”
There is a greater appreciation of the economic benefits of maintaining a relationship with Asia.

“I think New Zealanders are more positive this year than last year because the only economy that is still okay is the Asian economy. The Asian economy is currently benefiting New Zealand as seen in the number of contracts New Zealand firms have won in Asia.”

(Female, Asian, 60-69 years old)

“[New Zealanders] are more aware of who the big players are (ie, China and India) and how their economies affect us (eg, Fonterra being our biggest money earner and Asia being their biggest customer).”

(Female, Māori, 50-59 years old)
2. New Zealanders’ perceptions of Asian people in 2011
Compared to the same time in 2010, New Zealanders felt warmer toward people from Asia in 2011.
In September 2011 one fifth of New Zealanders believed we felt warmer toward people from Asia compared to 12 months ago. This is a substantial difference when compared to the 2010 survey.

**Question:** Compared to 12 months ago, do you think New Zealanders generally feel warmer towards people from Asia, or do they feel less warm, or about the same?
Most common reasons for saying New Zealanders feel warmer toward people from Asian countries

“Because day by day and week by week people have more contact, whether it’s through business, shopping malls, or social occasions, and there's a growing realisation that people are no different than anybody else, they may have difficulty with language - I can sort of think of circumstances where people have started off with a prejudice but when they get to meet or socialise at family gatherings those sort of issues melt away.”

(New Zealand European, male, aged 50-59)

“I think it’s just that people are more used to accepting people from different countries - different immigrants - and their different cultures. You've got to learn to accept them; you can't just live in your own little world. Different ones that I’ve met I’ve found to be very nice that I’ve come in contact with. I’ve been to Thailand five times and the people there are absolutely lovely.”

(New Zealand European, female, aged 70 plus)
“Because of the Japanese earthquake, because people know what everyone is going through. Because of the earthquake in Christchurch, where other nations, e.g. Japan came to help us.”

(New Zealand European, female, aged 18-19)

“There seems to be a lot of empathy for Japan and the Japanese Earthquake. And because of the students who died in the Christchurch Earthquake. There is more interest in China and less anxiety about Asia.”

(New Zealand European, female, aged 50-59)
“There is a major impact from the earthquake in Christchurch. There was a lot of support from Asian people. And the Rugby World Cup, there are many tourists from Japan and many Asian countries support the All Blacks.”

(Asian, male, aged 20-24)
Speculation about 2012
“Do you think during the next 12 months the economy will be in a better state than at present, or in a worse state?”

Source: One News Colmar Brunton Poll