



MIGRATION NATION

Any day now, our population will hit five million, so is it time for a comprehensive long-term policy to address our ageing workforce, skilled-migrant shortages and rural flight? **by JOANNE BLACK & SALLY BLUNDELL**

When Joy Yallop first started teaching at Auckland's Avondale College and asked her students where they were from, some of the replies bamboozled her.

"Niue, Miss."

"Niue? What's that?"

"That's where I was born, Miss."

Yallop, 32, an Englishwoman with an English father and a Filipino mother, had never been to New Zealand before she was recruited by the college to help ease our severe nationwide shortage of

maths teachers.

An excellent teacher, Yallop was excited and enthusiastic about her move to this country – so much so that she's become something of a poster girl for Immigration New Zealand.

But when she walked into her first classes in 2017, the geography of the South Pacific was as foreign as her new neighbourhood.

"Some of the places where my students were from I hadn't realised were even countries!"

Like her students, she set about learning. "I teach them maths; they teach me their culture. I'm growing as well." Soon, she could greet her students in their own

languages and, having arrived in New Zealand knowing no one, she understands first-hand the immigrant experience.

Yallop and her husband, James – who works in public health – arrived during the biggest period of net migration in New Zealand's history. As the country continues

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to face both skilled and unskilled labour shortages, it is migrants like this couple who ensure there is a teacher in front of every class and enough doctors or nurses on every ward.

Yet it's fair to say there is still a level of ambivalence about this country's rapid growth in immigration.

Any day now, New Zealand will reach the milestone of five million people. Not only will this fifth million be New Zealand's fastest, but it will be the first time that the main driver has been net migration – the number of arrivals minus departures. Previously, the main

Maths mates: Joy Yallop, left, and Farhanah Jeewa both came to New Zealand to teach maths at Auckland's Avondale College.

SUSAN ELIAS; GETTY IMAGES

contributor to New Zealand's growing population was natural increase – the number of births less the number of deaths.

Having achieved the first million in 1908, New Zealand took another 44 years to get to two million in 1952, another 21 years to reach three million in 1973, then 30 more years to get to four million in 2003.

Before 1995, there was no country in which those aged over 65 outnumbered children under 15 years. Now there are 34 developed countries.

Reaching five million will have taken a brisk 17 years, Statistics New Zealand demographer Kim Dunstan says.

Between 2014 and 2018, the period in which Yallop and her husband arrived, New Zealand had the largest net migration in its history, peaking at 63,900 in the year to July 2016. This has dropped recently. Provisional estimates for the year ending November 2019 show a net migration of 41,500. Odds are that the five millionth New Zealander will be a tertiary student from India, a skilled migrant from the Philippines, Europe or the UK, or a young Kiwi returning from Australia.

Compared with the global population, now rocketing towards 9.8 billion by 2050, New Zealand's coming population milestone is a small one. We have slightly more people than Ireland, just less than Finland and about a quarter that of Egypt's capital, Cairo.

PROCREATION, NOT MIGRATION

Even though the Covid-19 pandemic has upended global travel patterns and its long-term consequences are difficult to forecast, it seems likely that it will take a lot longer for New Zealand to add its sixth million in population than it did to add its fifth. Thanks to a declining overall birth rate, increasing rates of deaths and growing competition globally for skilled migrants, New Zealand's population is expected to slow its recent rate of growth.

The combination of low fertility and increased longevity is resulting in a rapidly ageing population in many countries. Before 1995, there was no country in which those

aged over 65 outnumbered children under 15 years. Now, 34 developed countries are in that situation, and many are offering incentives to boost the number of babies being born. By mid-century, this demographic could nearly triple as China (whose population growth is half that of India), Germany, Russia and South Korea are shunted into this demographic cohort.

About 20 countries, particularly more developed ones including Greece, Hungary, Japan, Poland, Italy and Spain, are experiencing population decline and rapid ageing, in what Yale University this year called "uncharted demographic territory".

In other parts of Europe, a falling fertility rate and increasing outward migration are also seeing populations drop. The Baltic republics have lost a third of their people. Bulgaria has lost 20% of its population since 1989. In Croatia, membership of the European Union has helped a fifth of the population leave and it is at its lowest population for 60 years. The EU last year appointed a commissioner for demography who fears some states will become unsustainable as the vibrant cities of Europe attract the young and talented.

However worried as people are by a falling population, in many countries it seems they would prefer procreation ahead of immigration to boost their populations. If anything, they want to reduce the migration they already have, says former professor of demography at Massey and Waikato universities Natalie Jackson. "That is the staggering thing. I think it's because migrants are no longer coming from countries 'like us' and

If anything, they want to reduce the migration they already have, says Jackson. "That is the staggering thing."

people believe they're going to be overwhelmed politically. But nearly all the growth in the world population is going to come from developing countries and [developed] countries will be competing for these migrants."

As election time approaches, this is not a popular message. Last year, Minister of Regional Economic Development Shane Jones signalled a New Zealand First policy plan that will involve "campaigning unstintingly" on a population policy. More ▶

'Here, people take care of other people'

A recent migrant from the UK has found a welcoming and caring community in New Zealand.

Not until she was a month away from leaving Birmingham did Farhanah Jeewa, 33, tell her family – her British-born father, Indian-born mother, four brothers and a sister – that she was migrating alone to the other side of the world.

Her Muslim parents had always stressed the value of education and Jeewa had completed a law degree, then, struggling to find the right job in law, had gone back to university to convert her law degree to a maths degree before also completing a teaching degree.

But as a teacher in the UK, she would go to school early in the morning, teach all day, come home in the evening to do marking, and during weekends do more marking.

"I knew there was a better lifestyle out there somewhere. I saw brochures of teachers being happy and thought, 'There has to be something else'."

She began to look up places she could go and applied to several countries. The agency that always responded was Oasis Education, which deals with vacancies in New Zealand. The replies from consultant Martin Strang, along with a face-to-face meeting with the then-principal of the school she chose, Auckland's Avondale College, encouraged her, "because New Zealand was not a place I could just visit overnight, and I always needed reassurance".

Quietly spoken, intelligent and



1. Farhanah Jeewa. 2. Her four brothers at her sister's wedding. 3. Her sister-in-law's wedding. 4. With her sister-in-law and cousin in New York. 5. Her nieces at Christmas.

compassionate, Jeewa arrived in Auckland on January 1, 2018, knowing no one. There, she has found the better lifestyle she hoped for. When the Christchurch mosques were attacked, many people asked if she was okay. "We have incidents like this in the UK and no one checks up on us [Muslims]. No one asks if you're okay. Here, there was a community feel and I felt like I was being taken care of so much more than I would have been at home. At the same time [as the shootings in Christchurch], three mosques at home were broken into, with their windows smashed. They didn't get in the news. My family didn't feel any kind of support. It's just something that, over there, you have to deal with. Here, people take care of other people."

She talks to her grandmother in Britain twice a day and thinks her family are now accepting that she is happier in New

Zealand, and they want the best for her.

Recently, she put down a deposit on a new-build townhouse. It has two bedrooms – one for her and one for the child

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or children that she would one day like to foster.

She will stay in Auckland for now, she says, because once she started teaching at Avondale, she made friends easily, "and they became family".

The teaching has been more rewarding,

too, with values she thinks were often missing in her previous school. She was surprised to find on her first day that "the kids were sitting at their desks, with their pens out". They were ready to learn. In her Birmingham school, persuading the class to sit down was by itself a considerable effort. She has been supported by parents when she has called them about disciplinary matters. Kids themselves have apologised for incidents. By contrast, she says that, in Britain, parents she encountered would be more likely to blame the teacher.

Being able to concentrate on teaching is having its rewards. One of her pupils last year came top in the world in AS [Cambridge] maths – scoring an extraordinary 100% on both the statistics paper and the algebra paper. The student was delighted. So was Jeewa.

"It was a proud teacher moment."

SUSAN ELIAS/JEWA FAMILY COLLECTION