Samoan Labour Migration to Aotearoa New Zealand

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Individual Samoans decide to leave Samoa, temporarily or permanently, every day. Their reasons are many and varied: some leave in response to their families' demands or their villages' aspirations; others leave to escape their families' plans or the strictures of village life. While some leave to earn income to support spouses and families, others leave to avoid such restraints. Some leave in search of love, others depart because of unrequited love.

Studies of labour migration do not usually focus on individuals' motives for moving. While such studies are of interest, they are only relevant when opportunities to migrate are available. Most studies of labour migration focus on the macro level: on conditions that generate opportunities for migration and shape the volume, composition and directions of human movement.

This chapter examines the economic, technological, social and political factors that affect labour movement from Samoa to New Zealand.[24] It looks at what has driven these factors, the ways in which the factors interact and how individuals, families, churches and villages in Samoa have responded, in ways that reflect their interests, over the years.

Factors that impact migration

Countries that are sources of migrants tend to have different economic, technological, social and political conditions and factors from receiving countries. At times, the factors that lead source-country governments to encourage emigration will coincide with trends in receiving countries that lead their governments to encourage immigration, thus favouring movement between the countries. In such cases, migration will be regarded as desirable by both and promoted by both. At other times, the economic, technological, social and political factors in the source and receiving countries will not coincide, and in such cases obstacles will be placed in the way of migration. For example, new technology can result in quite pronounced shifts in the

[24] Other factors, such as demographic trends and the availability of information, exist, but in the limited space available we focus on these four which are widely acknowledged to be the most influential.

demand for certain skill sets in migrants and transform attitudes to migration in both the source and receiving countries.

The early period: 1950 to 1973

Economic factors

After World War II, the New Zealand economy boomed. Growth was driven by high prices for agricultural commodities in European countries where agricultural systems had been disrupted or destroyed by the war. At the same time, however, the war had highlighted the vulnerability of New Zealand's economy: it depended on industrial economies and open sea lanes for much of its imports. This realisation led to fundamental restructuring of the economy. With the aim of diversifying the economy and making it more resilient, post-war governments introduced import substitution policies, which required creating new manufacturing industries, producing everything from cars to transistor radios.

In the post-war era, as Western Samoa approached independence (gained in 1962), it too was facing new economic realities (Government of Western Samoa 1966; Pitt 1970). Improved public health had resulted in lower child mortality rates and, consequently, a rapidly growing population and projected increases in the costs of social provision (McArthur 1964, 1967). At the same time, the Samoan economy was dependent on perishable primary commodities for which there were competing producers abroad and a limited number of consumers. The country sought to increase agricultural production, but that alone could not generate the revenue necessary to sustain its growing population.

Technological factors

From the 1950s, successive New Zealand governments promoted and supported industrial growth. The local manufacturing sector, protected from competition by tariffs on imports, grew rapidly. New labour-intensive assembly-line manufacturers absorbed available urban labour and also sought to attract labour from rural areas in order to sustain their growth. But the industrial sector's rapid growth exhausted domestic labour, and it ran out of momentum.

Meanwhile, Samoan governments were employing a range of mechanical and biotechnical technologies to increase the range, quantity and quality of its primary commodities, but these technological advances could not change four fundamental realities: Samoa's distance from markets, its limited product range, competition from other producers (leading to low prices for its agricultural commodities) and logistical challenges.

Social factors

Industrialisation in New Zealand generated new, 'clean', well-paid employment opportunities in urban centres, which were protected by vigilant labour unions. Rural and urban populations started to leave traditional occupations for these new jobs, which created labour shortages in the primary sector and limited its growth.

At the same time, Samoans, who had encountered new technologies and material wealth during and after World War II, were beginning to aspire to opportunities beyond their villages. Following independence, the public sector grew, generating a range of new, comparatively well-paid wage and salary jobs in Apia, leading to urban expansion as rural Samoans moved to town to pursue these opportunities. Moreover, the growing availability of education, promoted by development programmes pursued by successive governments and supported by aid donors, offered newly educated Samoansoptions not just outside the village but also outside the country.

Political factors

Faced with the combined effects of the economic, technological and social factors, including pressure from interest groups – whose growth aspirations were thwarted by labour shortages – the political decisions taken by the New Zealand governments after 1950 were not surprising. A simple solution was to increase immigration, as it provided the labour required to sustain the prosperity to which New Zealanders were becoming accustomed. Government policy favoured recruiting labour from Europe and the Pacific.

At the same time, the combined effects of the economic, technological and social factors in Samoa likewise led to unsurprising political decisions by Samoan governments.Emigration provided three benefits for the country: export of the most fecund members of the population and their fertility, reduction in pressure for growth in the local wage and salaried sector, and the

possibility of opening a new revenue stream — remittances — which would foster greater economic activity in Samoa.

In these circumstances, migration served the interests of both governments. An arrangement was formalised in 1962 through the Treaty of Friendship between the Government of New Zealand and the Government of Western Samoa (Government of New Zealand 1962), which led to setting an annual migrant quota of 1,100 Samoans and their families. These migrants, who were selected by ballot, had to be of good character, with pre-arranged approved employment in New Zealand. They could obtain citizenship and its associated rights after four years of permanent residence in New Zealand.

The migration chain[25]

To secure work in New Zealand, would-be Samoan emigrants had to identify 'contacts' in New Zealand who could serve as job and accommodation guarantors, cover the cost of transport and provide support until the new immigrants established a foothold in the country. These contacts became the crucial first 'link' in what would become a migration 'chain'.

The contacts included Samoan professionals and business people who had settled in New Zealand; Samoan relatives married to New Zealanders; New Zealanders who had worked in Samoa who could offer jobs to former workmates; New Zealander teachers who had taught in Samoa and had maintained contact with students and their families; and even tourists from New Zealand who had stayed with Samoan families and retained links with their hosts. However, there were limited numbers of such contacts in New Zealand and not all were willing, or able, to sponsor migrants. Access to such people was scarce.

Samoans who were able to use connections to enter New Zealand and establish themselves became the second 'link' in the migration 'chain', which would eventually reach virtually every village in Samoa in the 1960s and early 1970s (Pitt and Macpherson 1974).[26]

[25] Much of the information in this section is from a survey of almost 1,000 Samoans over 30 months, published in reports and summarised in Pitt D and Macpherson C (1974) *Emerging Pluralism: The Samoan Community in Urban New Zealand* and from ongoing participation by the authors in these processes since 1970.

[26] Similar chains were formed that linked families and villages in Sāmoa to American Sāmoa, the USA, Australia, Fiji and Tonga.

To become sponsors, these second 'links' had to be guarantors (of accommodation and employment) for prospective immigrants as part of those immigrants' visa application processes. To do this, many Samoan sponsors worked hard to establish reputations as reliable tenants and employees. Tenants sought to impress letting agents in the hope that the latter could help them find accommodation for the new arrivals they wished to sponsor,[27] and employees sought to impress their managers in the hope that good work records and relationships might gain them access to job opportunities for others.

Some Samoans remained in jobs they did not enjoy because they knew that new jobs in their places of employment were likely to become available and that their loyalty and performance could earn them the right to recruit Samoan relatives and friends to these jobs. Others transferred to companies that had high labour turnover[28] as they knew such companies would generate job opportunities for other migrants.

Some Samoan supervisors found themselves consulted by management on recruiting and managing Samoan workforces. These supervisors were required to pre-screen and train new Samoan employees and maintain workplace order. They had the power to discipline and dismiss problem employees and to reward reliable, compliant employees with work guarantees (*pepa faigaluega).*

These arrangements served the interests of employers, and they depended on Samoan supervisors more and more to recruit workers and manage their workforces.Trusted senior Samoan employees delivered them carefully selected and disciplined Samoan employees without the associated business costs of recruitment and training. As a consequence, a number of companies rapidly became major employees of Samoans, and some soon had almost exclusively Samoan workforces managed by Samoan supervisors.

Some companies became de facto guarantors of loans and mortgages for Samoan staff and assisted with their applications for residence and citizenship. Employers interviewed at the time spoke with some pride about

[27] This was essential because of widespread ethnic discrimination in the rental housing market during the early period.

[28] High turnover often resulted from 'white flight' (departure of white people from jobs). As Pacific people became concentrated in certain businesses, white (*pālagi*) employees found these workplaces less congenial and therefore departed.

the symbiotic nature of the relationship between them and their Samoan workforces (Pitt and Macpherson 1974).

The motives of these 'second link' migrants for sponsoring other migrants varied; some did so at the request, or direction, of parents and relatives, others did so as favours for old friends. Some sponsored others because this conferred on them considerable prestige and respect. Others, who were supporting large families in Samoa as well as church and village activities, reasoned that if more of their relatives were able to work in New Zealand their personal economic obligations would be lower, as the cost would be distributed over more people, and that sponsoring others into employment in New Zealand could allow the sponsors to then turn their focus to their immediate family needs in the country.[29]

The remittances sent home by migrants meant that new income was flowing into villages in Samoa and enabling formerly poor families to accumulate wealth and prestige. Remittances were used to build European-style homes (*falepapalagi),* to invest in stores (*faleoloa)* and fishing boats (*va'afagota),* to buy equipment to transform agricultural practices and increase productivity, to buy freehold land (*fanua tau palagi)* on the edges of Apia (Macpherson 1988) and to pay for the education of children in the belief that the children might, in time, migrate abroad and support them.Families also used remittances to invest in social capital, such as contributions to the church and village projects, which enhanced family prestige in the village.

The second stream

The demand by Samoans to migrate exceeded the number of work visas supplied by New Zealand, and an illegal labour migration stream began to develop. If unsuccessful in securing work visas, some Samoans would travel to New Zealand on short-term visitor permits with the stated aim of visiting relatives and friends and would remain and work illegally after their permits expired. Some planned to work for short periods to achieve savings goals; others planned to remain indefinitely or until they were found and deported.

Demand for labour in New Zealand remained high, and some companies employed Samoans without carefully verifying their identities or right to

[29] This consideration became more significant as migrants formed new families in New Zealand and assumed associated financial responsibilities (e.g. larger rent, utility and food costs for larger households, school expenses, etc.).

work.[30] They were able to do so with impunity because when caught in violation they argued that the Samoan employees had provided false documentation. These companies generally employed illegal workers on the same terms as other employees as long as the illegal workers remained reliable and compliant, but the companies could exploit such employees in various subtle ways, such as by requiring them to perform unpopular tasks or to work long or unpopular hours. These employers could be certain that the staffs who were employed illegally would not complain.

Another set of employers, often Samoan nationals, deliberately engaged people who did not have the right to work. These employers were often intermediaries who recruited and supplied labour under contract for agricultural and horticultural work such as planting, pruning and harvesting in rural areas, where official oversight of work was limited.Initially, these recruiters sourced labour from Samoa but later began to engage unemployed Samoans who were already in New Zealand. These contractors made their income from paying workers a lower rate than that received from the employers and keeping portions of workers' wages as fees for securing them work, accommodation and transportation, which workers could not secure for themselves.

These contractors were useful to employers that needed large groups of people on a casual basis to do weather-dependent work at short notice, and that did not have the resources to locate, employ and manage this labour. Farmers and growers could make a single payment to contractors and legally absolve themselves of the costs of ensuring compliance with labour and tax laws and the challenges of managing unfamiliar workforces.

Some of the labour recruiters did this work as a service to their families, villages and church groups, and their practices were largely ethical, albeit illegal. Other recruiters only did this work as a service to themselves, and they exploited the workers for profit. The latter group could do this because they knew their 'employees' would not challenge wage deductions or question their working conditions because they had few, if any, alternatives. The dishonest contractors could, and did, summarily dismiss their employees to demonstrate their power in these relationships. Moreover, to avoid paying their employees they resorted to dishonest practices such as anonymous tipoffs to the Department of Labour just before payday, which would result in

[30] Industrial law placed responsibility for establishing the right to work on employers.

raids of workplaces. Seeding rumours of a planned raid would lead to illegal employees departing without their wages to avoid capture and deportation.

These dishonest recruiters generally did not remain in business for long, however, because word of their dealings soon spread within the community, and even Samoans desperate for work would not work for them. Sadly, they were often replaced by new recruiters with the same dishonest practices.[31]

Unlike legal migrants, Samoans who remained in New Zealand beyond their visa expiry and worked illegally were unable to access social services. They lived under constant threat of discovery and deportation and were unable to plan with any confidence.

In the period between 1956 and 1973, demand in New Zealand for Samoan labour remained strong and migration continued apace as early migrants established themselves and their families and founded migrant chains that grew rapidly (see Table 1). This situation ended as external factors changed both in Samoa and New Zealand.

Table 1: Number of Samoans in New Zealand, 1956-1976

Year	Total population	Inter-censal increase (%)	Samoan Born	Inter-censal increase (%)	Born elsewhere	Inter-censal increase (%)
1956	3740	211.2	2995	124.2	745	250.4
1961	6481	73.3	4450	48.6	2031	172.1
1966	8663	33.7	7447	67.3	1216	-40.1
1971	22198	156.2	12354	65.9	9844	709.5
1976	27876	25.6	19711	59.6	8165	-17.0

Source: Macpherson 1997

Transition: 1973 to 2003

Economic factors

Between 1973 and 2003, events and circumstances changed the pattern of Samoan labour migration to New Zealand. First, in 1973 the United Kingdom (UK) joined the European Economic Community (EEC), and New Zealand therefore lost access to a major market. Then in 1973 and 1974 the first global

[31] Some of these were people who had worked for other recruiters earlier.

oil shock hit. These events led to a dramatic downturn in New Zealand's economy, which resulted in a steep increase in domestic unemployment and lower demand for new migrant labour.

Then in 1975 a new government was elected in New Zealand, one that embraced a neoliberal economic agenda and embarked on a policy of systematic deindustrialisation, which resulted in the loss of around 100,000 skilled and unskilled jobs in manufacturing and in government. This affected a significant segment of the Samoan labour force.

The economy took another hit in 1987 when a sharemarket crash toppled companies, further reducing demand for labour.Neoliberal policies were continued by the new government that came to power in 1990. The policies of successive governments resulted in a period of stagnation in GDP per capita that lasted from 1986 to 1994 as well as historically high inflation rates and unemployment rates, with a peak of 11.1 percent unemployment in 1992 (Government of New Zealand 2021).

The economic recession in New Zealand had a significant impact on Samoa's economy, which had become a mixed subsistence and cash (market) economy. Economic growth rates in Samoa, which were fuelled by remittance levels, began to fall as migrants in New Zealand lost their jobs and as the migrants' disposable incomes (and their ability to remit) declined. With the decline in remittance income, many Samoans reduced their expenditures. Consequently, some retail and service businesses saw a decline in sales and the Samoan agriculture sector suffered.

Technological factors

With job losses and price rises in New Zealand, consumer demand fell, leading to a decline in industrial production. Moreover, neoliberal policies led to local businesses facing competition from imports, which resulted in many companies automating processes or closing down, which in turn led to further losses of semi-skilled jobs.

Meanwhile in Samoa, diversification of primary production had become more dependent on new capital investment and on technology and inputs such as machinery, fencing, fertiliser and agricultural chemicals, which were needed to reach and maintain the levels of production required to produce surpluses for sale in domestic and overseas markets. The costs of these inputs were met in large part by remittances, so declines in remittances had a significant impact on the agricultural sector.

Social factors

In this period, circumstances changed dramatically as some New Zealanders who had become accustomed to high incomes found themselves unemployed while many Samoans and other Pacific Islanders remained employed in industries that New Zealanders had vacated a generation before. Resentment grew and conservative politicians capitalised on this sentiment for short-term electoral advantage.

Circumstances also changed in Samoa during this period. Dependence on remittances in both urban and rural areas had grown as new wealth altered lifestyle aspirations and consumption patterns. Accordingly, reticulated water and power, refrigeration, television and imported goods were increasingly considered reasonable expectations. These expectations could not be satisfied by increased local primary production, so many Samoans favoured migration policies that would lead to increases in remittances.[32]

Political factors

During this period, New Zealand governments came under increasing pressure to reduce, or better manage, migration, and to deport those who had overstayed visitors' visas. In 1974 the Labour government instituted a major review of immigration policy and embarked on a concerted and ruthless attempt to identify and deport Pacific Islander 'overstayers' (Anae 2012).[33] Despite these measures, in 1975 Labour lost power to the National Party, which had campaigned heavily against Pacific migration. The incoming government promptly reduced immigration inflows from 30,000 to 5,000 per year (Government of New Zealand nd).

By 1977, public opposition[34] in New Zealand to the deportation policy and growing public awareness of the economic significance of the employed overstayers led to changes in the policy for handling overstayers. As an interim solution, amnesty was offered to established and employed overstayers to apply for permanent residence, and 69 percent of those who registered were granted provisional permanent residence. However, a popular

[32] First-generation migrants tend to remit more than others, so ongoing migration is needed to keep remittances flowing (Ahlburg and Brown 1998).

[33] These included the 'Dawn Raids', which have been the subject of plays, film, song and academic analysis. See Government of New Zealand (nd).

[34] A significant element in this opposition was the visibility of well-educated and articulate New Zealand-born Sāmoans, who countered the ethnic stereotypes of the time.

belief arose that the government amnesties provided an incentive to overstay and that deportation of overstayers was a more effective disincentive to overstaying. The government therefore renewed the identification and deportation programme in the early 1980s and continued it until the mid-1980s (Bedford 1993). Politicians were aware, however, that immigration was not the public concern it had once been and that the existing policy was stifling growth, especially as New Zealanders[35] were departing for Australia, where the economy had fared better. It was clearly time for reform.

Sentiment in New Zealand changed again and by 1986 a Minister of Immigration was able to promote an immigration policy that would have been unimaginable a decade before — one that was designed to "enrich the multicultural fabric of New Zealand society through the selection of new settlers principally on the strength of their personal contribution to the future well-being of New Zealand" (Burke 1986).

A 1986 review of immigration policy led to the 1987 Immigration Act, which established a set of educational, business, professional, age and asset criteria, which became the basis of migrant selection, rather than national and ethic origins. The new Act defined four migration streams under which people could apply: skills; business; family; and humanitarian.

An amendment to the Act in 1991 set up a system that awarded points for employability, age, educational qualifications and available funds and set a 'pass mark', which was adjusted annually to meet set intake targets. In 1995, in response to concerns about migration from Asia, the Act was amended again to include a 'general skills' stream for applicants with degrees or with certified trade or vocational qualifications, an adjustable 'pass mark' and tighter English-language competence criteria.

In Samoa, political opinion in this period initially favoured continued emigration to New Zealand but ran up against growing public opposition in New Zealand. At one time, even the 1,100 quota guaranteed by the Treaty of Friendship was under threat, and there was little Samoa could do as the number of permits and visas issued was reduced and the conditions around their issue were tightened (Spoonley and Bedford 2012).

New Zealand's immigration laws after 1987 offered new opportunities for some would-be migrants in Samoa but reduced them for others. The new

[35] Including growing numbers of Samoans who had obtained permanent residence in New Zealand.

'family' category allowed for the reunification of families under certain conditions and therefore led to an increase in the number of people moving to join families in New Zealand.[36]Some of these family migrants found employment in the growing service sector in New Zealand. But the imposition of education and skill requirements, and increased competition from new source countries, restricted opportunities in New Zealand for unskilled people with limited education, who had previously constituted the majority of Samoan labour migrants. The same requirements opened opportunities to leave for skilled, highlyeducated Samoans with capital, however, and the addition of the 'general skills' category provided opportunities for Samoans with tertiary qualifications to leave. These circumstances led to a decline in the number of unskilled Samoan migrants entering New Zealand to work and an increase in the number of skilled migrants (Macpherson 1992). However, the skilled workers were the ones that Samoa needed to retain to ensure its own growth.

From 1991, economists and others in Samoa became concerned about excessive emigration as New Zealand's new skill-focused policy attracted skilled Samoans and began to stifle Samoa's economic growth (Shankman 1976).[37] These same concerns began to surface again in Samoan politics in 2020.

A new form of labour migration

As the skills composition of the labour flow changed, access by unskilled Samoansto employment abroad and remittances declined just as families and villages sought to renovate and build amenities such as school buildings and roads, and as congregations sought to build new churches and pastors' houses.

These entities found ways of effecting capital transfers that involved a different form of labour migration, however. They recognised that New Zealand's Samoan population was a source of capital, and to access this capital, villages and congregations arranged for groups (*malaga* or *asiasiga)* to visit New Zealand and perform cultural shows there. The expatriates abroad

[36] The situation of overstayers became increasingly difficult as families chose to offer limited accommodation to family members arriving under reunification provisions, and saw some overstayers, who had remained waiting for an economic upturn, finally leave.

[37] Economists and anthropologists were drawing attention to the inverse relationship between increasing migration and remittances and declining agricultural productivity in Sāmoa.

generally paid the airfares and expenses, provided accommodation for relatives in the group and hired performance venues. These shows raised large sums of money legally, quickly and with a minimal capital outlay.[38] They succeeded because of a highly competitive element within Samoan culture: individuals and families compete with one another to demonstrate their love and continuing commitment to their natal villages through giving gifts, which are announced to audiences during the performances and in *tusigaigoa* (roll calls) (Macpherson and Macpherson 2016). In these cultural performances, villages compete with traditional rivals, both to demonstrate their financial capacity and to enhance their sociopolitical prestige.

These shows were mixed blessings for the sponsors of these groups and the performers.On one hand, the sponsors (Samoan migrants living in New Zealand) found themselves facing large outlays for fares, expenses and gifts, but on the other hand they reasoned that these were one-off events that could enhance their sociopolitical standing and avoided the risk of housing and supporting unemployed relatives who contributed nothing.[39] The Samoan performers benefited from having a break from daily life and a chance to tour New Zealand and visit relatives. For some, this brief experience was enough, and they returned at the end of the *malaga,* for others the experience whetted their appetite for a new life, and they remained in New Zealand illegally.

A dilemma

Between the mid-1970s and early 1990s, all Samoans who were in New Zealand faced rising costs and the risk of unemployment, but there were different consequences for the legal and illegal residents. Legal residents had access to various forms of social provision, and although their disposable incomes and their ability to remit fell in this period, they were able to survive. But those who were in New Zealand illegally did not have government support, and their situation became critical very quickly. A number of these people, who feared deportation, which carried with it a timed prohibition on return, took what they had and returned to Samoa where they would at least

[38] These sums were determined by the size of villages' migrant populations and the timing of the visits, but some parties departed with as much as $NZ 350,000 after visits of two weeks.

[39] However, married people who were not from the same village noted that they had to factor in the possibility that they would be required to contribute to group visits coming from both of the partners' congregations and villages, thus doubling the expense.

have accommodation and employment, even if only in village-level agriculture. Others reached out to relatives in Australia and the United States (US), hoping to find help to enter those labour markets. Still others, who were, for various reasons, reluctant to leave New Zealand, decided to wait it out, in the hope that the employment situation would improve. Their plans depended on finding a friend or relative,[40] usually a legal resident, who was willing and able to accommodate and support them in the interim. Some of these joined an exploited, insecure workforce[41] without any realistic hope of having their families join them.

Legally resident Samoans in New Zealand then found themselves in a dilemma. Even those who remained employed often had much-reduced hours and were struggling to cover their basic expenses. They were not in a financial position to help others, but they faced requests for shelter and assistance from illegally resident relatives and friends who were not eligible for social benefits and could not help cover costs. These requests rested on a cultural expectation of support for kin, which was backed, in some cases, by requests from parents in Samoa. The homes of residents were usually small, with three or four bedrooms and a single bathroom (Macpherson 1997). Those in rental houses, with limits on the numbers of permitted occupants, faced the risk of losing their homes if they were caught exceeding the limits. So, even with the best will in the world, there were obvious constraints on the numbers of people they could house. In the event of overstayers needing medical care and hospitalisation, the full costs fell on hosts, because the overstayers were ineligible for any government support.[42]

These legal residents found it increasingly difficult borrow from mainstream lenders to supplement their reduced incomes and were forced to take measures such as borrow from loan sharks, take in paying boarders and send adolescent children to work to supplement household income. A decision to withdraw an adolescent child from school meant sacrificing their child's educational opportunities — one of the reasons that they had migrated — to support a person who had migrated illegally knowing the risks.

[40] In some cases, these people sought to marry New Zealand nationals, but with no work and few assets, they were, for most people, not an attractive proposition.

[41] This has continued as the case of Crown v Matamata 2023 demonstrated. The prosecution of this case may act as a disincentive to the organisers of this workforce.

[42] In some cases these debts forced hosts to sell homes and vehicles to meet the costs, which health providers sought to recover, and damaged their hard won credit ratings.

Another consideration that made residents reluctant to take in illegal residents was the fact that families who were found to have sheltered overstayers became ineligible as sponsors of visa applications, which would prevent them from sponsoring close kin in future. This factor became increasingly important after changes to the immigration law in 1991 permitted applications for family reunification.

When making decisions about whether or not to support an overstayer, legal residents tended to consider the closeness of the relative and their record of contributions to the family, church and village. Overstayers who had met obligations to family, church and village while they were in work were generally more likely to find support from legal residents that those who had not. This rationale could be justified in Samoan culture and was understood and accepted.

This process left a group of unemployed overstayers who could find neither accommodation nor employment and who were forced to return to Samoa. Their return fare was usually, and often reluctantly, paid by those who were culturally obliged to support them. Overstayers who did not wish to return and made unreasonable claims on family or abused their hosts' hospitality found themselves reported surreptitiously to immigration authorities, which then deported them and also met the cost of their repatriation. This removed the 'problem'.

New realities: 2003 to 2023

Economic factors

In the early 2000s, with the New Zealand manufacturing sector facing increasing challenges from low-cost producers abroad and with demand declining for some of New Zealand's primary products, attempts were made to add value to traditional products such as dairy, meat and wool, to create new crops and products for export markets, and to diversify the tourism industry. This led to the expansion of the horticulture, viticulture, fisheries and service sectors, all of which required labour.

In Samoa during this period, the economy remained dependent on development assistance and on remittances, which represented 18.2 percent of GDP between 2002 and 2011; 21.6 percent in 2014/2015 and 29.9 percent in 2020/2021 (Government of Samoa 2012, 2016, 2020).

Samoa's economic development plans between 2002 and 2020 led to the tertiary sector contributing a greater percentage of GDP, but the importance of the manufacturing industry (secondary sector) declined (see Table 2).

Table 2. Composition of GDP, by sector, 2002-2020

Year	Primary sector % of GDP	Secondary sector % of GDP	Tertiary sector % of GDP
2002	10	24	66
2012	10	22	68
2020	10	14.4	75.5

Source: Government of Samoa 2012, 2016, 2020

Technological factors

In response to increasing international competition and labour shortages, New Zealand companies invested heavily in new technologies to increase productivity, and they placed an emphasis on labour-saving devices. In addition, they outsourced some processing activities to low-wage economies abroad.

In Samoa, the opportunities for new technologies were limited. Moreover, the low cost of labour and the need to generate domestic employment opportunities for Samoans made labour-saving technologies politically irrelevant. At the same time, however, steadily increasing levels of education in Samoa ensured that the workforce was increasingly productive.

Social factors

New Zealanders' concerns about immigration between 2003 and 2023 focused mainly on the increasing numbers of Asian immigrants and their wealth, ownership of property and the competition they fostered in business. New Zealanders were less concerned about Samoan immigrants, given the high rates of intermarriage between New Zealanders and Samoans, increasing levels of daily social interaction, the steady growth of the Samoan middle class and the prominence of high-profile Samoans in fields ranging from music to athletics (Mallon 2012), arts (Pereira 2012), politics (Whimp 2012), law and public service.

In Samoa, attitudes to New Zealand had also changed as rising standards of living, improved health care and education offered Samoans more training and employment opportunities at home. Moreover, as Samoan enclaves became established in America, Australia and Europe, these destinations

became more accessible to would-be migrants. With improved internet access in Samoa during this period, communication with relatives abroad became easier, and Samoans were able to compare possibilities in alternative destinations to New Zealand. Today, although New Zealand remains an attractive destination for Samoans wanting to work abroad or migrate, it is not necessarily the preferred destination.

Political factors

By the mid 2000s, there was a clear need for a major review of immigration policy. A discussion document (Department of Labour 2006) identified the following challenges facing New Zealand: greater flows of people around the world; increased competition for skills, talent and labour; and an increasingly diverse population (requiring a sharper focus on settlement and integration).

The discussion document noted that the number of permanent migrants in New Zealand had grown from 8,500 in 1985 to 49,500 in 2005, that the number of temporary migrants had grown from 21,000 to over 100,000, and that between 1991 and 2005 domestic unemployment had declined from 10.3 percent to 3.8 percent. The document also noted that the challenge for New Zealand, with 20 percent of its population born elsewhere, was retaining mobile labour in a highly competitive global market. Moreover, global trends had combined to generate a shortage of both skilled and unskilled labour, which was felt acutely in New Zealand.

The policy changes that resulted from the discussion document focused on administrative, procedural and settlement provisions designed to attract and retain labour. For Samoans, these changes were significant because they resulted in an increase in the number of people allowed into New Zealand under the Samoan quota visa scheme, with the number rising from 1,100 to 1,650 per year (Government of Samoa 1 August 2023).

A 2018 study of residence approvals in New Zealand between 2012 and 2017 (Immigration New Zealand 2018) found three notable trends: partner and skilled/business visas declined over the period; dependent child visas increased; and international and humanitarian visas, which include Samoan quota visas, remained stable (see Table 3). These numbers may fall further in future as all of the partners, parents, siblings, adult children and dependent children are reunited with their New Zealand families and as alternative destinations become more attractive to Samoan skilled migrants and business people.

Table 3: Samoan residence approvals by visa sub-stream, 2012-2017

Visa type	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Total
Dependent child	480	620	650	765	931	**3446**
Partner	452	436	380	370	335	**1973**
Parent, sibling, adult child	43	12	40	20	15	**130**
Skilled / Business	81	76	23	44	25	**249**
International / Humanitarian	994	1011	1161	961	1167	**5294**
Total	**2,050**	**2,155**	**2,254**	**2,156**	**2,477**	**11,092**

Source: Immigration New Zealand 2018

New labour migration schemes introduced in this period to attract workers include the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) visa, the Partnership work visa, the Essential Skills work visa and business visas. Of these, the most significant is the RSE visa, which allows Samoan workers to stay in New Zealand for up to seven months (in any eleven-month period) to carry out seasonal work in horticulture and viticulture (Fatupaito et al. 2021). As Table 4 shows, the number of RSE visas granted to Samoans increased steadily between 2011 and 2021, with the exception of 2019/20, when visa numbers dropped as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 4: Number of Samoan RSE visas issued, by financial year (2011-2021)

2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
1137	1169	1238	1454	1690	1878	2315	2409	775	3334

Source: Immigration New Zealand 2023a.

Note: Financial years 2019/20 and 2020/21 were disrupted by Covid-19 restrictions on movement.

Other visa streams, which were ostensibly created to allow family reunification and to meet international humanitarian needs, in practice also contributed to the New Zealand labour market during this period because holders of such visas were able to work, and they did.

In Samoa, political attitudes to emigration changed over the period between 2003 and 2023. Strategic development statements in this period focused more on developing a resilient stable domestic economy and strategies to generate internal growth and prosperity, than on fostering labour mobility.

Family influence on migration

While economic, technological, social and political factors influence migration trends, families and villages in Samoa influence who actually gets to migrate. This is largely because most visa applicants cannot afford the fees and other pre-departure costs, such as health clearances and police character checks, and they turn to their families for help.[43] The families in Samoa and abroad that cover these costs select the candidates that offer the best return on their 'investment'.

The considerations have not changed much in the past 70 years. Families select the candidates who are most likely to contribute to families' sociopolitical and financial objectives and enhance families' interestsand who have good records of service (*tautua)* to family, church and village.

Families may also consider issues of social equity and the need to share opportunities between the various branches of the families or between the families in a village, to avoid division and tension, which could weaken families and villages and the social solidarity on which their collective power and prestige depends.

Another element that families consider is in which of the available labour markets the return on their investment is likely to be greatest over time. This involves comparing relative wage levels in the various labour markets (including New Zealand, Australia and the United States) and the performance of those who have already worked in those labour markets.[44]

Those who are in a position to petition for reunification and to provide employment and housing for candidates seeking residence visas have considerable power in decision-making, as do team leaders and supervisors of RSE teams, who influence the selection of the teams. In the latter case, the team leaders seek to provide disciplined and compliant workforces. Although the health, strength and fitness of the candidates are important, so too are factors such as self-discipline and training and a willingness to accept authority, work in a team and protect the team's reputation.As one leader explained, the 'character' requirements of the scheme — a clean police record

[43]For example, the fee for a RSE visa in 2023 was NZ$325 (Immigration NZ, 2023b).

[44] One gatekeeper said that sending a young man to the mines in Australia had been a waste because his wages were squandered in drinking and gambling. His young relatives in Australia could not stop him because they lacked the authority, and the young man had died in an accident . She pointed out that a well-supported trainee nurse in New Zealand remained a more reliable remitter, despite earning lower wages.

and letter from a *pulenu'u* (village mayor) — were different from what he was looking for in people for his team, which were religious faith, honesty, humility, respectfulness and a willingness to learn and to work for the team.

The future

Economic, technological and political factors[45] in external labour markets are changing in ways that may lead to a reduction in demand in New Zealand for workers from Samoa in future. For example, the application of artificial intelligence in crop management and the mechanisation of harvesting could in time make some physical tasks in the horticulture and viticulture sectors redundant. Likewise, the increasing requirement of formal certification in industries in which on-the-job training was once considered adequate may raise selection standards in ways that favour migrants from competing labour providers such as India and the Philippines where certification is routine. In these circumstances, labour demand in New Zealand may favour skilled and professional Samoans and further strip Samoa's economy of the very people in whose training the country has invested for its development.

In 2021, the Government of Samoa outlined a long-term development strategy, "Samoa 2040", which aims to increase local employment and government revenues (Government of Samoa 2021). The "Samoa 2040" strategy focuses on four areas of opportunity: tourism, agriculture and fishing, the development of a digital economy and labour mobility. The latter area of focus is important because despite attempts to strengthen the domestic economy, the country increasingly depends on remittances (Government of Samoa 2008; Government of Samoa 2020). Given that remittances per person typically fall over time (Ahlburg and Brown 1998; Connell and Brown 2005), ongoing labour mobility is required to continually replenish the prime remitting group. Unless technology or geopolitics[46] can generate new revenue sources for Samoa, labour migration is likely to remain an important element in the country's future development.

[45] The growing electoral significance of the Samoan-descent population in New Zealand politics is evident in politicians' attempts in the 2023 elections to attract Samoan votes with promises of increased visa quotas, amnesties for qualified overstayers and increased support for community initiatives in health and education.

[46] For example, provision of military facilities for a major power.

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