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## **Lack of confidence means Kiwis risk missing opportunities in Asia**

An Asia New Zealand Foundation survey has found many New Zealanders lack confidence in engaging with Asia, despite recognising the importance Asia has to New Zealand.

The Foundation's *New Zealanders' Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples* annual survey finds eight out of ten New Zealanders say that Asia is important to New Zealand in economic and social terms, yet two-thirds of us say that we know little or nothing about Asia.

Simon Draper, Executive Director of the Asia New Zealand Foundation says that knowledge and understanding of Asia are key to making the most of the growing opportunities for New Zealanders in the region. Without it, New Zealanders risk missing out.

"Success with Asia is built on relationships, not just transactions," says Draper. "Without this understanding – and the confidence to give it a go – we risk missing out on opportunities not only in business development and trade but also in education, career development and travel. These opportunities can be life-changing."

Around a third of New Zealanders say they know a fair amount or a lot of Asia – less than for Australia, Europe, the South Pacific and North America. For some (a quarter), there is a 'conscious lack of knowledge'. This group said they had a fair amount, or a lot, to do with Asian cultures or peoples. But they also felt they knew little or nothing about Asia.

"We don't back ourselves in our knowledge of Asia," says Draper. "The Foundation suspects this is because the more someone may learn about Asia, the more they realise they don't know enough. Asia is a large and very diverse region."

Meanwhile, another four in ten New Zealanders say they have limited knowledge of Asia and limited involvement with Asian cultures.

"So collectively we have work to do in addressing this confidence deficit, as it affects our ability to develop relationships and engage well in the region."

Those who say they know at least a fair amount about Asia are also more likely to report more positive feelings about Asia and Asian peoples.

Along with the high recognition of the importance of Asia, the survey found strong demand to learn languages. The research found that eight in ten New Zealanders said that school children should learn a language other than English.

Just over half (53%) of those who think children should learn another language said it should be Chinese. Japanese was mentioned by around a fifth.

"There are so many opportunities for young leaders, entrepreneurs and travellers to succeed in Asia," says Draper. "There are two things New Zealanders can do – the first one is to have the

confidence to try – you may know more than you think you do. It's not hard to travel and work in many Asian countries without knowing the language, so don't let this put you off giving it a go.

“The second is to get involved and actively learn. The Asia New Zealand Foundation was established to help New Zealanders do this, and we have a wide range of programmes to develop confidence amongst New Zealand leaders in the arts, education, media, business and academic sectors.”

### **About the survey**

- The Asia New Zealand Foundation has been researching New Zealanders' attitudes towards Asia and its peoples on an annual basis since 1997. This has allowed us to chart the changing perceptions of Asia and Asian peoples in New Zealand.
- The Asia New Zealand Foundation's job is to equip New Zealanders to thrive in Asia. Research tells us an understanding of Asia is necessary to succeed in Asia. Also, the more confident New Zealanders feel about Asia, the more likely they are to thrive in Asia. This is the motivation for these reports – to measure that understanding and confidence.
- This report presents the results of a survey of the general public in New Zealand, conducted during late July and August 2016. The survey interviewed a random sample of 1,000 New Zealanders aged 15 years and over. The results have been weighted so they are representative of New Zealanders by key demographics such as age, gender, household size, ethnicity, and location.

### **About the Asia New Zealand Foundation**

The Asia New Zealand Foundation is New Zealand's leading non-government authority on Asia. It is a non-partisan, non-profit organisation, established in 1994 to build New Zealanders' knowledge and understanding of Asia.

The Foundation works in partnership with influential individuals and organisations in New Zealand and Asia to provide high-level forums, cultural events, international collaborations, school programmes and professional development opportunities. Its activities cover more than 20 countries in Asia and are delivered through seven programmes.

[www.asianz.org.nz](http://www.asianz.org.nz)

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