

## destination analysis

## Diversity in NZ high schools

Secondary schools in New Zealand recorded a bumper year for international enrolments last year, and although growth is expected to slow in 2004 because of a deceleration in the Chinese market, schools hope that gains from other student markets will make up for any shortfall in numbers.

"[We have had] more [international] students this year than ever before," confirmed Robin Stewart from Colenso High School in Napier. "Numbers have increased every year for the last six years."

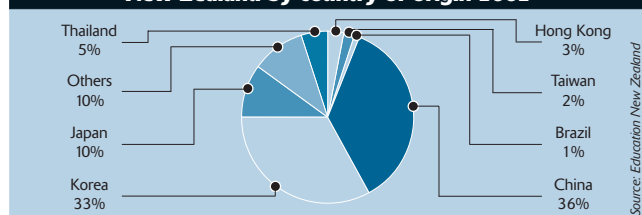
The number of international students studying at secondary schools in New Zealand overall reached 15,259 in 2002, up from 5,044 in 1999, according to figures from Education New Zealand.

A key factor in this growth has been the Chinese student market, which has increased its market share

While a dip in Chinese enrolments caused concern for many secondary schools in the country, Stuart Boag from Education New Zealand said that other education sectors reported similar trends in enrolment. "The China market has weakened in 2003 for a whole variety of factors. However, growth continues to occur, especially from some European countries. The overall effect is an increasing diversity in our classrooms."

Evidence that education in New Zealand has started to appeal to a wider variety of markets was borne out by Hannah, who said that at their school, falling Chinese applications were being "balanced by an increase from everywhere else". She continued, "European students are choosing New Zealand over other destinations – we are seen as a little exotic. [The movie] Lord of the Rings [that was filmed here] has raised the profile of New Zealand."

**International high school students in New Zealand by country of origin 2002**



from 12 per cent of the total market in 1999 to 36 per cent in 2002. However, some schools forecast a levelling off or even decrease in Chinese numbers for this year. "China has been the biggest market in the last four years," said Janis Hannah at Long Bay College in Auckland. "[However], applications for 2004 are lower than previous years due to several reasons. Safety is one of the biggest issues for parents of high school students, and publicity of incidents involving older students outside of school hours has made parents feel nervous."

A spate of recent international press reports about Chinese students turning to crime while studying in New Zealand has caused anxiety among parents and affected numbers from this market. "There is no doubt that the bad publicity – particularly in China – has had a negative effect [on international student numbers]," agreed Stewart. "Our present numbers haven't been affected but there are no new applicants from China next year."

The Sars outbreak in the first half of 2003 also had a negative effect on student enquiries and enrolments from China. "The Sars outbreak did not affect any of our returning Chinese students as they were already in New Zealand when the outbreak occurred," said Neroli Boardman at Gisborne Girls High School in Gisborne. "[However], it reduced the number of enquiries and delayed arrivals of enrolments to later in the year."

Owen Evans, from Cashmere High School in Christchurch, added, "[We will be targeting] Germany [in the future as] New Zealand is a very popular option [there] at present."

As well as appealing to a wider range of nationalities, secondary schools in New Zealand have increasingly been attracting younger age students – particularly from Korea and Thailand, but also from South America and Europe. New Zealand's popularity as a destination for younger students increased in 2002, when the National Code of Practice was introduced in March, providing clear guidelines on the welfare of international students to which all schools must adhere.

Many schools welcomed the code as a clear indication to international students and their parents of New Zealand's commitment to ensuring welfare and education standards. Stewart said, "The code has to be seen as a positive step and I am sure that if used properly it will have positive outcomes in terms of marketing. I have heard good comments from agents who have compared it with the situation in the USA and the UK."

In addition, New Zealand's Education Minister, Trevor Mallard, announced stricter regulations last year concerning young students studying in the country. Under-10 year olds now cannot enter New Zealand to enrol in a school without a parent or guardian with them, while under-13 year olds need to obtain special permission.