

Oral Presentation Abstracts

Theme: Cultural Care and Public Health

Exploring the Meaning of “Asian” in Aotearoa and the Way Forward

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The category “Asian” in Aotearoa New Zealand is broad and complex. It encompasses diverse languages, histories, religions, and migration experiences - yet is often treated as a single homogenous group in the census. This raises important questions: What does it mean to be “Asian” in Aotearoa? How do we celebrate the richness of our communities while also recognising shared experiences of invisibility, marginalisation, and resilience?

According to the 2023 Census, Asians now comprise 17.3% of New Zealand’s population, making them the largest non-European ethnic group and a significant demographic milestone in the nation’s evolving diversity. In a country founded on Te Tiriti o Waitangi and shaped by increasing social diversity, Asian academics, community leaders, postgraduate students, and ethnic organisations are being called upon to build visibility, belonging, and leadership pathways. This requires moving beyond narrow definitions toward a collective understanding of the term “Asian” -embracing differences while fostering solidarity.

This conference offers a platform to reflect on these questions and envision the way forward. Together, we will explore how Asian peoples in Aotearoa can connect across cultures, collaborate across sectors, and create supportive structures that will empower future generations. We also acknowledge lessons from our Pacific colleagues, who have built strong cross-institutional networks to protect cultural integrity and advance equity. By coming together, we can begin shaping a future where Asian peoples of Aotearoa are visible, valued, and supported to thrive, contributing to a more just and inclusive society.