

International Travel and Migration: March 2016

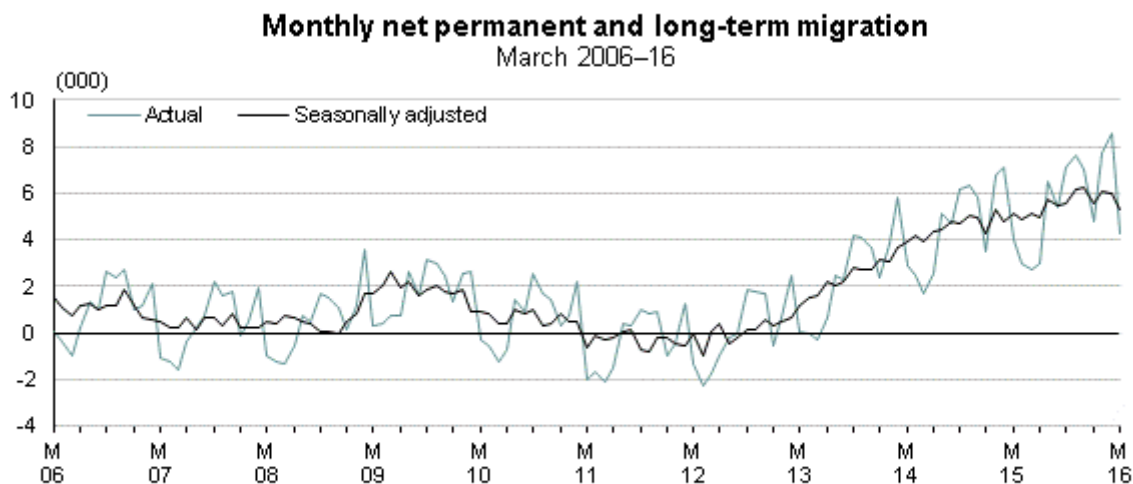
Embargoed until 10:45am – 21 April 2016

Key facts

In March 2016 compared with March 2015:

- Visitor arrivals (344,400) were up 52,600. The biggest changes were in arrivals from:
 - Australia (up 19,900)
 - China (up 9,600)
 - the United States (up 5,900)
 - the United Kingdom (up 2,500)
 - Argentina (up 2,000)
 - Hong Kong (up 1,700).
- Overseas trips by New Zealand residents (172,800) were up 4,700. The biggest changes were in departures to:
 - Fiji (up 3,200)
 - Australia (up 1,700)
 - the United States (down 1,800).

In March 2016, seasonally adjusted figures showed a net gain of 5,300 migrants.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

See the [commentary](#) and [tables](#) for more information, including annual results.

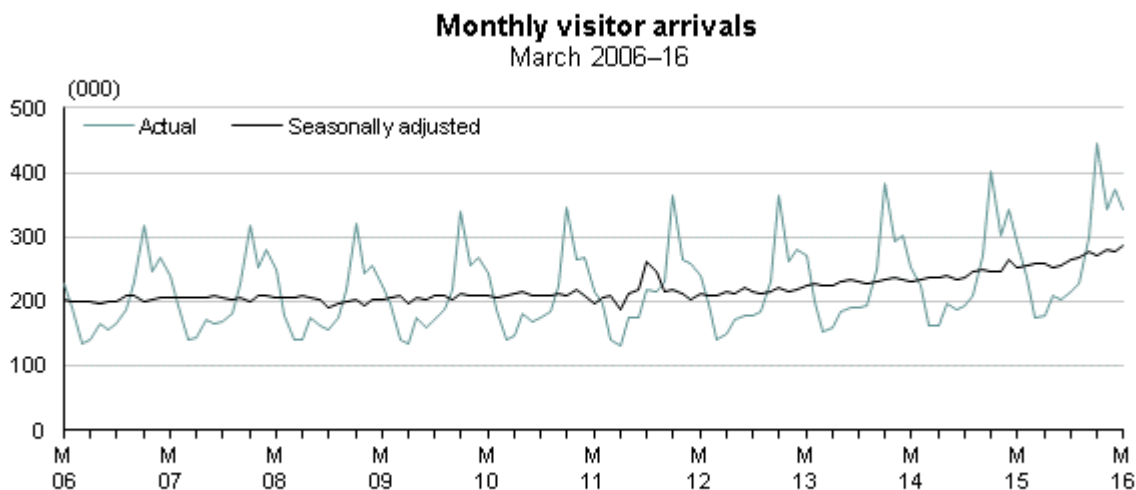
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Commentary

- [Easter holidaymakers help drive record visitor arrivals for a March month](#)
- [Annual visitor arrivals now 3.26 million](#)
- [New record for New Zealand-resident departures in March](#)
- [Annual trips by New Zealand residents now 2.43 million](#)
- [Net gain of migrants falls in March](#)
- [Annual net gain of migrants breaks record for 20th month in a row](#)

Easter holidaymakers help drive record visitor arrivals for a March month

Visitor arrivals numbered 344,400 in March 2016, with an earlier Easter break helping produce a new March record. Easter was in March in 2016, compared with April in 2015. Visitor arrivals were up 52,600 (18 percent) from March 2015, driven by holiday arrivals.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Visitor arrivals by country of residence

The biggest changes in visitors by country of residence between March 2015 and 2016 were in arrivals from:

- Australia (up 19,900 to 133,300)
- China (up 9,600 to 40,400)
- the United States (up 5,900 to 32,800)
- the United Kingdom (up 2,500 to 25,000)
- Argentina (up 2,000 to 2,400)
- Hong Kong (up 1,700 to 5,200).

Earlier school holidays in Queensland and Victoria, scheduled to coincide with Easter, drove an 18 percent rise in arrivals from Australia in March 2016 compared with March 2015.

More visitor arrivals from Shanghai, Beijing, and Zhejiang contributed to the rise in visitor arrivals from China.

The increase in visitor arrivals from Argentina follows the introduction of direct flights between Buenos Aires and Auckland in December 2015.

Visitor arrivals by travel purpose

The biggest changes in visitors by travel purpose between March 2015 and 2016 were in arrivals for:

- holidays (up 38,300 to 183,600)
- visiting friends and relatives (up 15,100 to 101,400)
- business (down 2,300 to 26,100).

Visitors from Australia were the main contributor to the biggest changes in travel purpose. In particular, visitors from Australia dominated the rise in visits to friends and relatives, and a fall in business-related arrivals.

The increases in visitor arrivals from China and the United States were mainly due to arrivals for holidays.

Annual visitor arrivals now 3.26 million

Visitor arrivals to New Zealand numbered 3.26 million in the March 2016 year, again breaking the annual record. This was 10 percent higher than the March 2015 year (up 307,600).

The biggest changes in visitors by country of residence between the years ended March 2015 and 2016 were in arrivals from:

- Australia (up 91,600 to 1.36 million)
- China (up 82,300 to 377,800)
- the United States (up 26,800 to 253,800).

Just over half of the visitors that arrived in the March 2016 year were in New Zealand on holiday (1.65 million arrivals), with one-third of all holidaymakers coming from Australia.

Visiting friends and relatives (980,800) accounted for 30 percent of all visitor arrivals, while business visits (276,800) made up 9 percent of visitor arrivals.

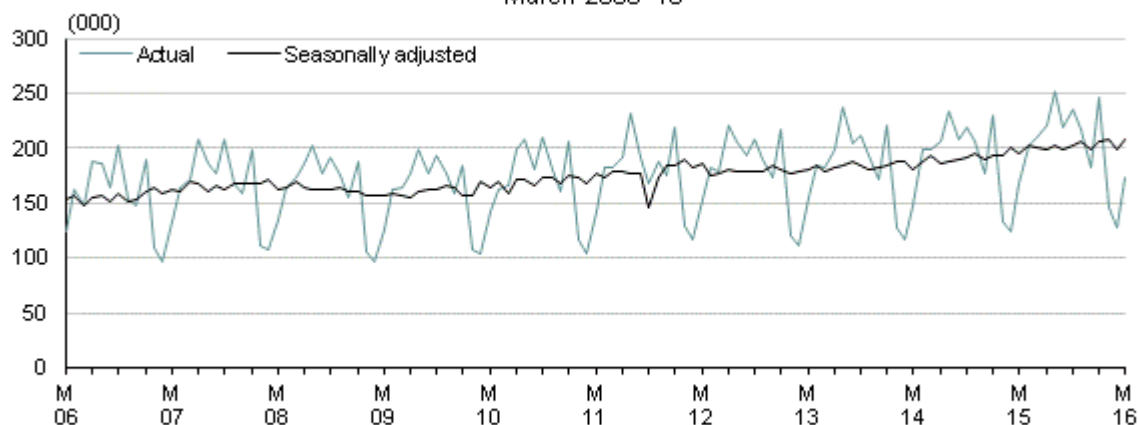
For more detailed data about visitor arrivals, see the Excel tables in the 'Downloads' box.

New record for New Zealand-resident departures in March

New Zealand-resident travellers departed on 172,800 overseas trips in March 2016, up 3 percent from March 2015. The earlier timing of Easter in 2016 compared with 2015 helped set a new record for a March month.

Monthly overseas trips by New Zealand residents

March 2006–16



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Overseas trips by country of main destination

The biggest changes in overseas trips by country of main destination (where the person will spend most time) between March 2015 and 2016 were in trips to:

- Fiji (up 3,200 to 9,700)
- Australia (up 1,700 to 91,600)
- the United States (down 1,800 to 8,700).

The increase in trips to Fiji was mostly holiday travel (up 2,500). Trips to Australia saw a small rise, with more visits to friends and family, partly offset by decreases in holiday and business travel.

Annual trips by New Zealand residents now 2.43 million

New Zealand residents departed on 2.43 million overseas trips in the March 2016 year. This was up 122,000 (5 percent) from the March 2015 year, setting a new record high.

The biggest changes in New Zealand-resident departures by country of main destination between the years ended March 2015 and 2016 were in departures for:

- Australia (up 36,900 to 1.14 million)
- Fiji (up 18,600 to 151,500).

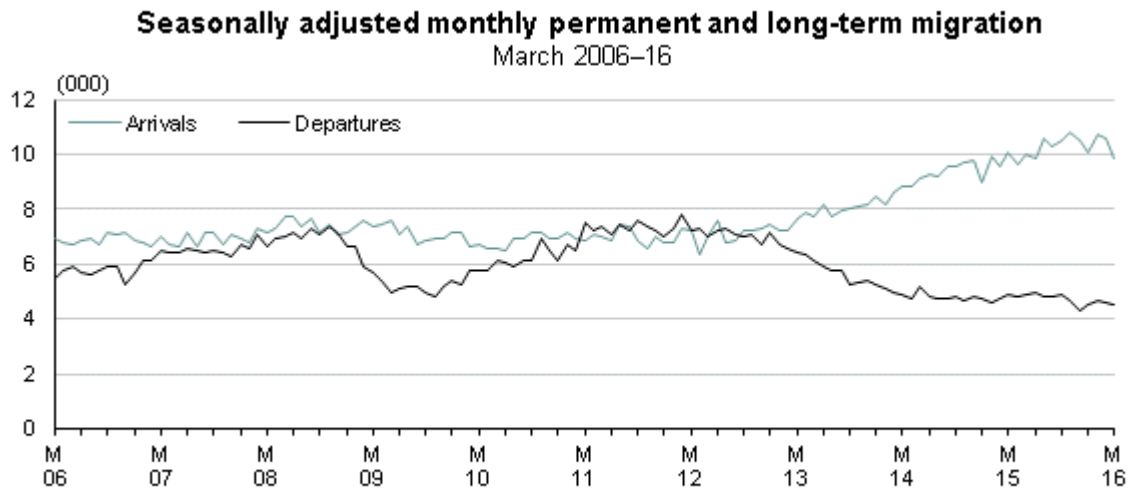
New Zealand residents travelling to Australia most often stayed for four days, while travellers heading to Fiji most commonly stayed twice as long.

For more detailed data on overseas trips by New Zealand residents, see the Excel tables in the 'Downloads' box.

Net gain of migrants falls in March

Seasonally adjusted permanent and long-term (PLT) migration figures showed a net gain (more arrivals than departures) of 5,300 migrants in March 2016. The seasonally adjusted net gain in migrants was down from 6,000 in February.

March 2016 had a seasonally adjusted net gain of 100 migrants from Australia. This was the 12th month in a row with a seasonally adjusted net gain of migrants from Australia.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Annual net gain of migrants breaks record for 20th month in a row

Unadjusted figures showed a record net gain of 67,600 migrants in the March 2016 year. This is the 20th month in a row that the annual net gain in migrants has broken the previous record of 42,500 in the year ended May 2003.

The record annual gain in migrants was driven by an increase in migrant arrivals. Migrant arrivals were 124,100 in the March 2016 year, up 10,300 (9 percent) from the March 2015 year. New Zealand citizens returning to live in New Zealand accounted for one-quarter of all migrant arrivals. In comparison, migrant departures (56,400) were down 1,100 (2 percent).

PLT migration by country of residence

The increase in migrant arrivals between the two March years was led by:

- Australia (up 2,100 to 25,800)
- China (up 1,700 to 11,700)
- the Philippines (up 1,300 to 5,500)
- South Africa (up 1,000 to 2,800).

The increase in arrivals from Australia was for both New Zealand citizens and non-New Zealand citizens. There was a fall in migrant departures to Australia (down 2,100), as fewer New Zealand citizens chose to migrate. This led to a net gain of 1,900 migrants from Australia in the year ended March 2016, the highest annual net gain of migrants from Australia for about 25

years (since the August 1991 year). It was the sixth consecutive month to show an annual net gain.

New Zealand also recorded net gains of migrants from most other countries in the March 2016 year, led by:

- India (12,300)
- China (9,600)
- the Philippines (5,200).

India provided the largest net gain in migrants for New Zealand in the year ended March 2016. This was primarily because of student arrivals from India outnumbering New Zealand residents moving to India. The arrival of migrants from India on student visas has increased significantly in the last few years. Just 3,400 migrants arrived from India on student visas in the March 2013 year, compared with 9,800 in the March 2016 year.

While students often only stay in New Zealand for one to five years of study, we consider them migrants, because we define a migrant as a person arriving in New Zealand and intending to make it their country of residence for 12 months or more (ie permanently or long-term).

PLT migrant arrivals by visa type

The biggest changes in migrant arrivals by visa type between the March 2015 and 2016 years were:

- work visas (up 4,200 to 38,600)
- student visas (up 2,200 to 27,700)
- New Zealand and Australian citizens (up 2,000 to 36,400).

People arriving on work visas mostly came from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Australia. The most common occupations of migrants arriving on work visas in the March 2016 year (for those who specified their occupation on the arrival card) were hospitality and food trade workers; engineering professionals; bricklayers, carpenters, and joiners; and school teachers. Arrivals on work visas include working holidaymakers.

Most students arriving in New Zealand were from India, China, and the Philippines – together accounting for nearly two-thirds of student visa arrivals.

PLT migration by New Zealand region

All regions had a net gain of international migrants in the March 2016 year, led by Auckland (31,200) and Canterbury (7,100). The next-biggest net gains of migrants were in Wellington (2,800), Waikato (2,600), and Bay of Plenty (2,300).

The Auckland region saw 52,400 migrant arrivals in the March 2016 year, up 10 percent from the previous year. Of the migrants arriving in Auckland in the March 2016 year:

- 16,500 arrived on work visas – the biggest source country being the United Kingdom
- 12,900 arrived on student visas – about one-third of students were from India
- 10,000 were New Zealand citizens returning – 44 percent were returning from Australia
- 8,600 arrived on resident visas – the biggest source country being China.

Just over half of all arrivals who stated an address on their arrival card indicated they would reside in Auckland. Of those who stated an address on their departure card, 42 percent were migrating from the Auckland region. In comparison, the Auckland region is home to 34 percent of New Zealand's population (at 30 June 2015).

For more detailed data about permanent and long-term migration, see the Excel tables in the 'Downloads' box.

Definitions

About the international travel and migration statistics

International travel and migration statistics count passengers arriving into and departing from New Zealand. Passengers are split into one of three passenger types: overseas visitors, New Zealand-resident travellers, and permanent and long-term migrants.

Arrivals and departures of overseas visitors and New Zealand-resident travellers are key indicators of tourism and travel. Permanent and long-term migration is a component of New Zealand's population change, along with births and deaths. Migration affects the composition of the population as well as population size.

More definitions

Citizenship: determined from the country that issued the passport the person uses when arriving or departing. A person may hold passports from more than one country.

Country of main destination: the country where a New Zealand-resident traveller will spend the most time while overseas. Departure cards do not ask travellers which other countries they intend to visit on the same trip.

Country of residence: the country where the person last lived or will next live for 12 months or more.

Migrant: see [Permanent and long-term arrivals and departures](#).

New Zealand region: the area in New Zealand containing the residential or contact address stated on a passenger's arrival or departure card. Regional council areas are approximated by grouping territorial authority (city and district council) areas. Where a territorial authority area is split across regional council areas, it is fully included in the region that most of its population lives in.

New Zealand-resident travellers: people who live in New Zealand and are travelling overseas for less than 12 months.

Overseas visitors: people who live overseas and are visiting New Zealand for less than 12 months.

Passenger type: each passenger is classed as an overseas visitor, a New Zealand-resident traveller, or a permanent and long-term migrant. Passenger type is not related to legal permanent residence in a country or the visa type a person holds. It is based on the time spent in and out of New Zealand. This is primarily determined from responses on the arrival and departure cards to questions about how long the person is in or away from New Zealand, and where they are living for 12 months or more.

Permanent and long-term arrivals (migrant arrivals): people from overseas arriving to live in New Zealand for 12 months or more (including permanently), and New Zealanders returning after an absence of 12 months or more overseas.

Permanent and long-term departures (migrant departures): New Zealanders departing for an absence of 12 months or more (including permanently), and migrants leaving after a stay of 12 months or more in New Zealand.

Travel purpose: the main purpose for the visit to New Zealand or trip overseas. Categories are holiday, visiting friends and relatives, business, conferences and conventions, education, and other.

Visa type: the type of immigration visa held or granted on arrival in New Zealand. People may change their visa type later while still in New Zealand.

Related links

Next release

International Travel and Migration: April 2016 will be released on 20 May 2016.

[Subscribe to information releases](#), including this one, by completing the online subscription form. You can also subscribe to receive International Visitor Arrivals to New Zealand, and our weekly provisional international travel statistics.

[The release calendar](#) lists all information releases by date of release.

Past releases

[International Travel and Migration](#) has links to past releases.

Related information

Information about international travel

[International Visitor Arrivals to New Zealand](#) contains detailed tables about the number and characteristics of visitor arrivals. It is released two working days after each International Travel and Migration information release.

[Provisional international travel statistics](#) provide the latest weekly and four-weekly figures for visitor arrivals and New Zealand-resident traveller departures, including figures for 10 major source and destination countries. These are released weekly, usually at 2pm on a Friday.

[International travel and migration articles](#) are occasional publications that provide analyses of selected topics.

Statistics NZ's [Tourism](#) web page lists tourism-related data sources, such as the Accommodation Survey and the Tourism Satellite Account.

[Tourism research and data](#) from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment includes results from the International Visitor Survey, Domestic Travel Survey, and tourism forecasts.

[Tourism New Zealand](#) provides guides to New Zealand's key tourism markets, which include the outlook for future months.

[Cruise New Zealand data](#) has figures on cruise ship visits and cruise passengers. This includes passengers considered to be 'in transit' by the Immigration Act 2009, who are not included in international travel and migration statistics.

Information about international migration

[International travel and migration articles](#) are occasional publications that provide analyses of selected topics.

Statistics NZ's [Migration](#) web page lists migration-related data sources, such as the Longitudinal Immigration Survey.

[Labour and Immigration Research Centre](#), part of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, publishes research reports and information about the immigration research programme.

[Immigration New Zealand statistics](#) include application and approval numbers for the main immigration visa types.

Data quality

General information

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General information

Data source

International travel and migration statistics are based on electronic arrival and departure records for each international passenger, supplied to Statistics NZ by the New Zealand Customs Service. These electronic records include flight and passport details, such as date of travel, date of birth, sex, and country of citizenship.

The New Zealand Customs Service also supplies Statistics NZ with arrival and departure cards completed by passengers. Statistics NZ captures additional detail such as country of residence and travel purpose from these cards, and adds it to the information from electronic records.

Immigration New Zealand owns the arrival and departure cards, which are used to administer numerous New Zealand laws in addition to producing statistics. Statistics NZ only captures information from the cards for statistical purposes, and passes the cards to Immigration New Zealand after it has captured the data.

See the [arrival card](#) (PDF, 84kb). See the [departure card](#). These are for reference only.

Accuracy of the data

Data collection

Statistics NZ scans every arrival and departure card, and uses image recognition technology to automatically recognise and code responses. Processing staff then manually capture any required information not captured automatically – as automated software cannot clearly recognise every response.

The imaging system automatically determines all of the information required for around 9 in every 10 cards, meaning about 1 million records are completed manually each year.

Some response fields are required from every card. These include passport number and birth date, which are used to match each card with the corresponding electronic record containing flight and passport details. Some fields are only required for certain passenger types, or for a sample of passengers.

Changes in recorded passenger intentions

Statistics NZ processes all arrivals and departures and allocates them to one of three passenger types: overseas visitors, New Zealand-resident travellers, and permanent and long-term migrants.

A person may change their intentions after their arrival or departure, which may mean the recorded passenger type becomes incorrect. Statistics NZ does not revise published statistics for such changes, but advises that the published figures remain a good indicator of trends in permanent and long-term migration.

The [Alternative methods for measuring permanent and long-term migration](#) article has more detail about the effect of intention changes.

Sampling

Some fields are only collected for a sample of passengers. Data from the sample is used to estimate the characteristics of the full population. This still provides a good picture of the characteristics of travellers, while greatly decreasing the time and cost of capturing the data.

All figures for permanent and long-term migrants are actual counts (not derived from a sample). Arrival and departure totals for overseas visitors and New Zealand-resident travellers are also actual counts. More detailed data for overseas visitors and New Zealand-resident travellers, such as figures by country or travel purpose, are derived from a sample.

The sample ratios currently used are:

- overseas visitor arrivals: 1 in 16
- overseas visitor departures: 1 in 26
- New Zealand-resident traveller arrivals: 1 in 26
- New Zealand-resident traveller departures: 1 in 20.

Figures derived from a sample may contain sample error (a difference from the actual figure). Small numbers are more likely to contain a large sample error as a percentage of the actual figure, and should be used with caution.

Seasonally adjusted and trend series

The purpose of seasonally adjusting a time series is to measure and remove the varying seasonal components in the series (for example, there are more visitor arrivals during the New Zealand summer, due to the warmer weather and longer daylight hours). This makes the data for adjacent periods more comparable.

The seasonal adjustment process for international travel and migration statistics uses Statistics NZ's standard seasonal adjustment package, X-13ARIMA-SEATS, with enhancements that allow Statistics NZ to specify and adjust additional calendar effects. These include the number and type of trading days in the month (as more people generally arrive and depart on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday), and holiday periods, which have important effects on travel but can occur in different months each year (eg Easter can be in March or April).

Both monthly and quarterly seasonally adjusted series are available. The quarterly series are adjusted independently of the adjustments made to the monthly series. Hence, quarterly figures may not equal the sum of monthly seasonally adjusted figures.

Seasonally adjusted and trend data back to January 1996 is subject to revision each period. The size of these revisions is expected to be minimal, with the largest revisions occurring in the periods immediately before the current month or quarter. Data before January 1996 is not revised. This cut-off is used because of the change to a four-term school year in 1996, which resulted in changes to the seasonal patterns of the New Zealand-resident traveller series.

Interpreting the data

Passenger counts

The statistics in this release relate to the number of passenger movements to and from New Zealand, rather than to the number of people – that is, the multiple movements of individual people during a given reference period are each counted separately. For example, a New Zealand resident making five business trips overseas within a year would be counted as five arrivals and five departures.

Timing of published data

Final international travel and migration statistics: released approximately three weeks after the end of the reference month. This delay is longer for December and January data due to the peak travel period coinciding with the Christmas and New Year holidays.

New Zealand and overseas port data: becomes available two working days after the international travel and migration release.

Provisional international travel statistics: normally released at 2pm every Friday on the [Provisional international travel statistics](#) web page. These show the latest weekly and four-weekly figures for visitor arrivals and New Zealand-resident traveller departures, including figures for 10 major source and destination countries. No further data is available until the monthly release of final statistics.

Confidentiality

Statistics NZ releases statistics derived from arriving and departing passenger records. It does not release the records of individual passengers.

More information

[International travel and migration](#) in DataInfo+ has more information. [DataInfo+](#) is the main source of information about our statistical activities and data.

Statistics in this release have been produced in accordance with the [Official Statistics System principles and protocols for producers of Tier 1 statistics](#) for quality. They conform to the Statistics NZ Methodological Standard for Reporting of Data Quality.

Liability

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Timing

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Tables

See the following Excel tables in the 'Downloads' box on this page. If you have problems viewing the files, see [opening files and PDFs](#).

1. International travel and migration, by direction and passenger type, actual counts
2. International travel and migration, by direction and passenger type, seasonally adjusted and trend series
3. Overseas visitor arrivals, by country of last permanent residence
4. Overseas visitor arrivals, by travel purpose and country of last permanent residence
5. New Zealand-resident traveller departures, by country of main destination
6. Permanent and long-term arrivals, by country of last permanent residence
7. Permanent and long-term departures, by country of next permanent residence
8. Net permanent and long-term migration, by country of last/next permanent residence
9. Permanent and long-term migration, by citizenship, actual counts
10. Permanent and long-term migration, by citizenship, seasonally adjusted series
11. Permanent and long-term migration, by New Zealand region
12. Permanent and long-term arrivals, by visa type and country of last permanent residence

Access more data on Infoshare

Infoshare allows you to organise data in the way that best meets your needs. You can view the resulting tables onscreen or download them.

Use Infoshare

For this release, select the following categories from the Infoshare homepage:

Subject category: **Tourism**

Group: **International Travel and Migration**

Next release

International Travel and Migration: April 2016 will be released on 20 May 2016.