

# International Travel and Migration: December 2015

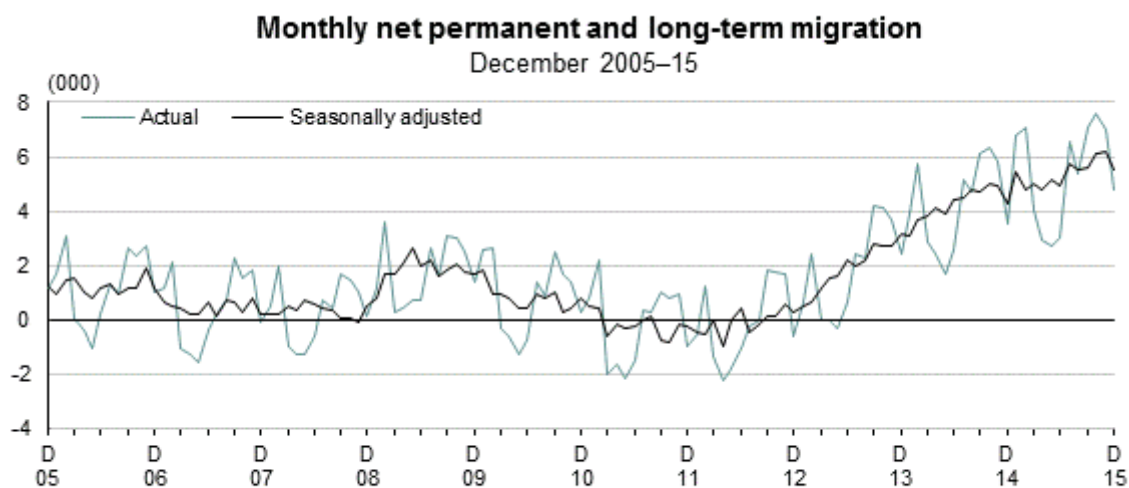
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## Key facts

In December 2015 compared with December 2014:

- Visitor arrivals (444,900) were up 42,400. The biggest changes were in arrivals from:
  - China (up 11,000)
  - Australia (up 9,200)
  - the United Kingdom (up 3,800)
  - the United States (up 3,200)
  - Korea (up 2,300)
  - Singapore (up 1,400)
- Overseas trips by New Zealand residents (245,800) were up 15,000. The biggest changes were in departures to:
  - the United Kingdom (up 2,500)
  - China (up 1,900)
  - the United States (up 1,400).

In December 2015, seasonally adjusted figures showed a net gain of 5,500 migrants.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

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

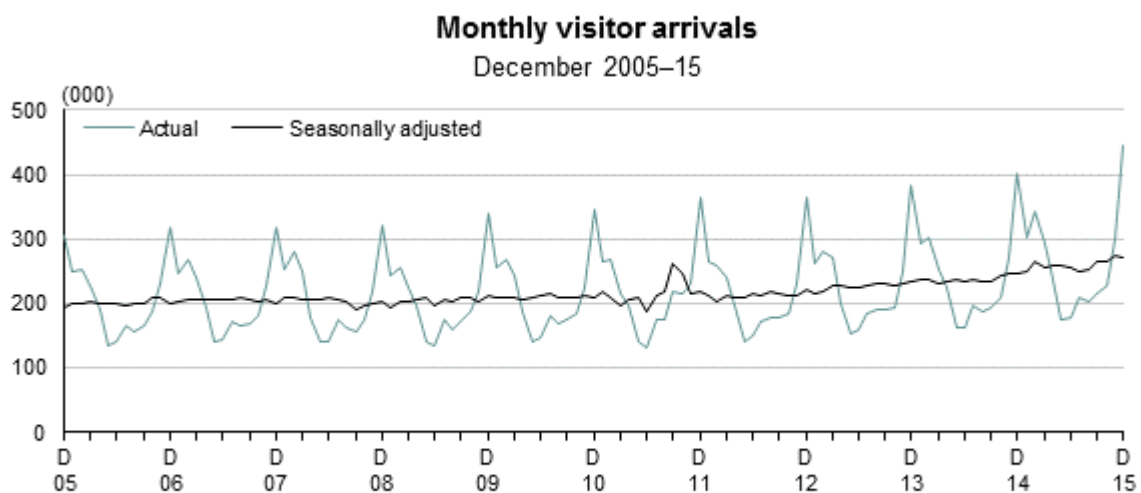
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## Commentary

- Highest-ever monthly visitor arrivals
- Annual visitor arrivals continue to break records, reaching 3.13 million
- New Zealand resident departures to Australia and United States set new December record
- Annual New Zealand resident departures continue to grow
- Net gain in migration falls slightly in December 2015
- Annual net gain of migrants continues to break record

## Highest-ever monthly visitor arrivals

Overseas visitor arrivals to New Zealand numbered 444,900 in December 2015, the highest-ever in a month. They were up 42,400 (11 percent) from December 2014.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

## Visitor arrivals by country of residence

The biggest changes in visitors by country of residence between December 2014 and 2015 were in arrivals from:

- China (up 11,000 to 36,700)
- Australia (up 9,200 to 177,400)
- the United Kingdom (up 3,800 to 37,600).

Visitors arriving from China were the highest-ever for a December month, almost twice as high as December 2013, and up 43 percent from December 2014.

December 2015 had the highest-ever visitor arrivals from Australia. Most visitors came from New South Wales (58,900), Queensland (48,300), and Victoria (39,800).

## **Visitor arrivals by travel purpose**

The biggest changes in visitors by travel purpose between December 2014 and 2015 were in arrivals for:

- holidays (up 31,600 to 220,500)
- visiting friends and relatives (up 10,300 to 179,400).

More holiday arrivals from China (up 8,500) and Australia (up 6,600) were mainly responsible for the increase in holiday visitors. An increase in holidaymakers was also seen from the United States, Singapore, Japan, and Korea.

The change in visits to friends and relatives was driven by an increase in arrivals from the United Kingdom (up 2,500), Australia (up 2,500), and China (up 1,500).

## **Annual visitor arrivals continue to break records, reaching 3.13 million**

Visitor arrivals to New Zealand numbered 3.13 million in the December 2015 year, the highest-ever annual total. This was 10 percent higher than in the December 2014 year (up 274,500).

The biggest changes in visitors by country of residence between the years ended December 2014 and 2015 were in arrivals from:

- China (up 91,000 to 355,900)
- Australia (up 79,000 to 1.33 million)
- the United States (up 22,600 to 243,100).

Australia, China, the United States, and the United Kingdom (204,000) were New Zealand's biggest visitor sources, contributing 68 percent of all arrivals in the December 2015 year.

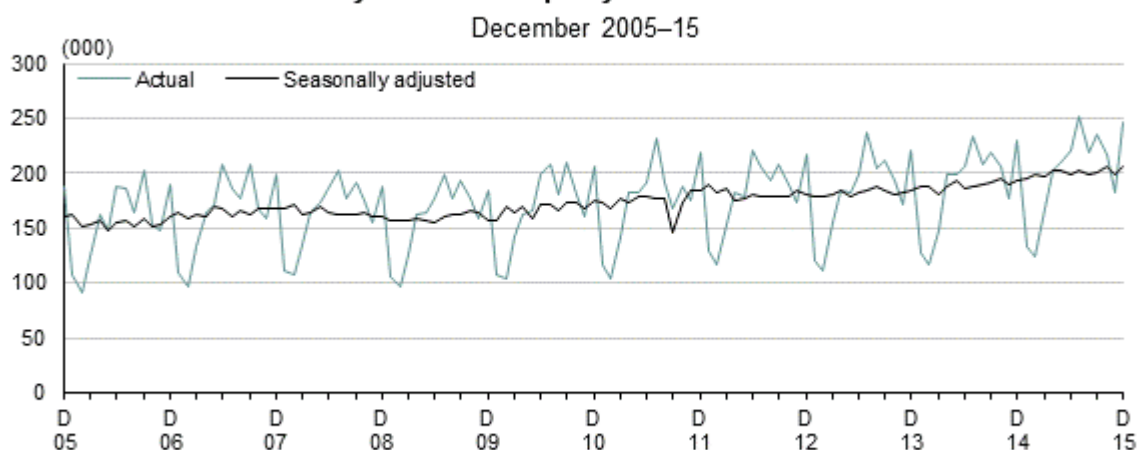
Holidays (1.56 million arrivals) were the most popular reason for visiting New Zealand in the December year. Visiting friends and relatives (951,400) was the second most common reason.

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

## **New Zealand resident departures to Australia and United States set new December record**

New Zealand-resident travellers departed on 245,800 overseas trips in December 2015, up 6 percent from December 2014. Departures to Australia (106,100) and the United States (15,300) were the highest-ever for a December month. Together they made up 49 percent of all resident departures.

## Monthly overseas trips by New Zealand residents



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 December 2014 and 2015 were in trips to:

- the United Kingdom (up 2,500 to 12,100)
- China (up 1,900 to 12,200)
- the United States (up 1,400 to 15,300).

Visiting friends and relatives was the reason for 54 percent of the overseas trips by New Zealand residents in December 2015, while 35 percent were for holidays, and 6 percent for business trips.

### Annual New Zealand resident departures continue to grow

New Zealand residents departed on 2.41 million overseas trips in the December 2015 year, the highest-ever annual total. This was up 135,300 (6 percent) from the December 2014 year.

The biggest changes in New Zealand resident departures by country of main destination between the years ended December 2014 and 2015 were in departures for:

- Australia (up 45,700 to 1.14 million)
- Fiji (up 15,900 to 146,000)
- the United States (up 12,200 to 177,000)
- the United Kingdom (up 10,700 to 112,100).

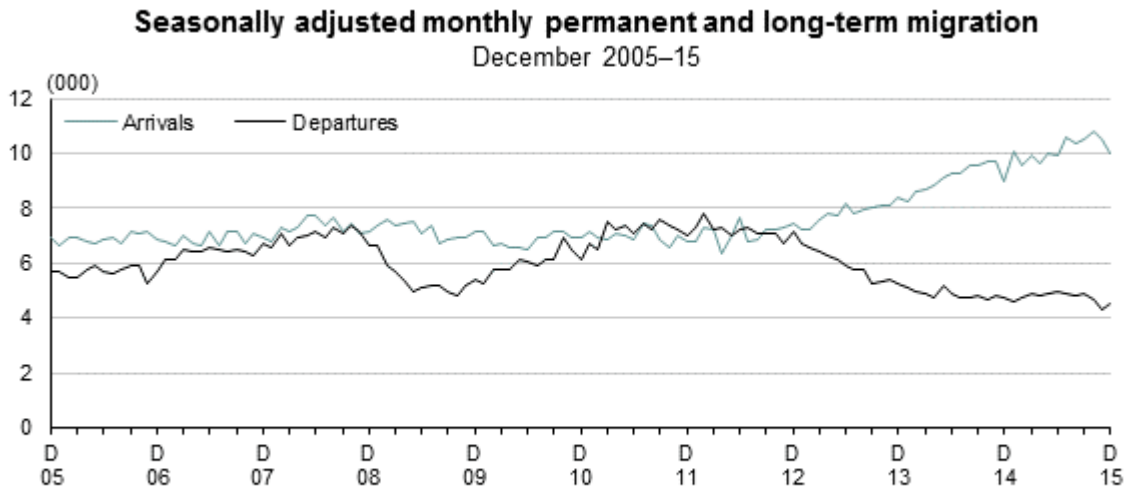
The number of annual trips to Australia was the highest-ever, accounting for 47 percent of all trips by New Zealand residents in the December 2015 year.

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

## Net gain in migration falls slightly in December 2015

Seasonally adjusted permanent and long-term (PLT) migration figures showed a net gain (more arrivals than departures) of 5,500 migrants in December 2015, slightly lower than the all-time high of 6,200 in November 2015.

December 2015 had a seasonally adjusted net gain of 200 migrants from Australia, the ninth month in a row to show a net gain. Before April 2015, the last net gain in migrants from Australia had been over 20 years ago (in June 1991).



Source: Statistics New Zealand

## Annual net gain of migrants continues to break record

Unadjusted figures showed a record net gain of 64,900 migrants in the December 2015 year. The annual gain in migrants has set new records for the last 17 months. Before the August 2014 year (43,500), the highest annual net gain in migrants was 42,500 in the May 2003 year.

Both more arrivals and fewer departures drove the increased net gain of migrants in the December 2015 year. Migrant arrivals (121,900) continued to reach a new high, up 12 percent from the December 2014 year. Migrant departures (57,000) were down 2 percent.

### PLT migration by country of residence

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

- India (up 3,200 to 14,500)
- Australia (up 2,000 to 25,300)
- China (up 1,500 to 11,000)
- the Philippines (up 1,500 to 5,400).

The increase in arrivals from Australia was for both New Zealand citizens and non-New Zealand citizens.

The fall in migrant departures was due to fewer New Zealand citizens leaving for Australia. Departures of New Zealand citizens to Australia fell by 2,600 (11 percent) in the December 2015 year (to 21,100).

Annual net gains from Australia continued to increase with 800 migrants in the December 2015 year. This was the highest net gain since the October 1991 year and the third month in a row to show an annual net gain of migrants from Australia.

New Zealand recorded net gains of migrants from most other countries in the December 2015 year, led by:

- India (13,300)
- China (8,900)
- the Philippines (5,100)
- the United Kingdom (3,600).

### **PLT migrant arrivals by visa type**

The biggest changes in migrant arrivals by visa type between the December 2014 and 2015 years were:

- student visas (up 5,000 to 27,900)
- work visas (up 4,500 to 37,800)
- New Zealand and Australian citizens (up 1,800 to 35,700).

Most of the student arrivals were from India (10,800), an increase of 28 percent from the December 2014 year. China (5,300), and the Philippines (2,100) were the next largest sources of student arrivals.

The biggest sources of migrants arriving on work visas in the December 2015 year were the United Kingdom, France, Australia, and Germany. Arrivals on work visas increased 14 percent from the December 2014 year. Arrivals on work visas include working holidaymakers.

Another 14,100 migrants arrived on residence visas. Most migrants gain New Zealand residence after, rather than before, arrival. Many arrive on temporary visas (eg work, student) and transfer to a residence visa after spending time in New Zealand.

### **PLT migration by New Zealand region**

All regions had a net gain of international migrants in the December 2015 year, led by Auckland (30,000), and Canterbury (6,800). The next-biggest net gains of migrants were in Waikato (2,600), Wellington (2,400), and Bay of Plenty (2,100).

The net gain in migration for the Auckland region was 7,000 higher in 2015 than 2014. The increase was driven by migrant arrivals into Auckland rising by 14 percent, coupled with a slight fall (3 percent) in departures compared with the December 2014 year. 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: January 2016* will be released on 25 February 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

While all care and diligence has been used in processing, analysing, and extracting data and information in this publication, Statistics NZ gives no warranty it is error-free and will not be liable for any loss or damage suffered by the use directly, or indirectly, of the information in this publication.

## Timing

Our information releases are delivered electronically by third parties. Delivery may be delayed by circumstances outside our control. Statistics NZ does not accept responsibility for any such delay.

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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: January 2016* will be released on 25 February 2016.