

International Travel and Migration: March 2015

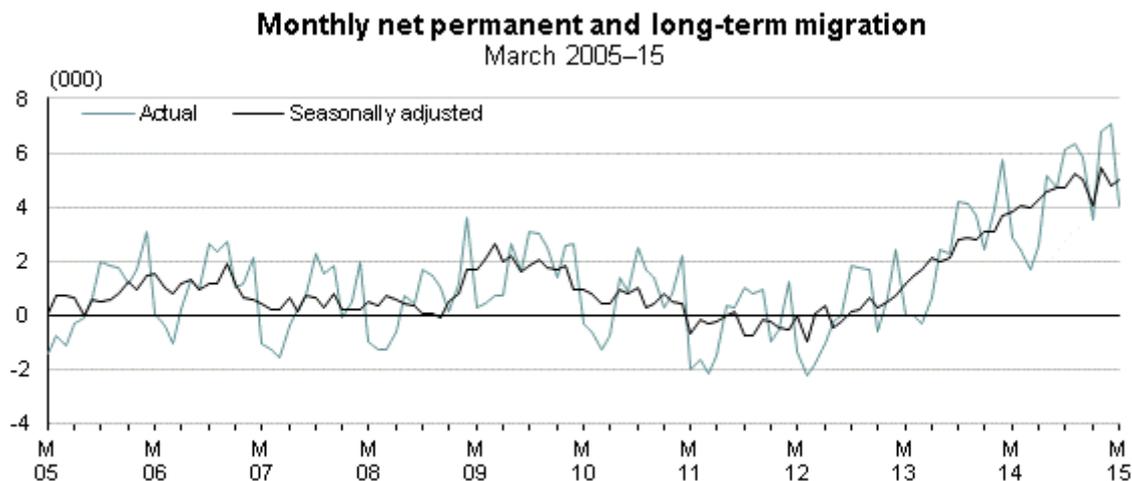
Embargoed until 10:45am – 23 April 2015

Key facts

In March 2015 compared with March 2014:

- Visitor arrivals (291,800) were up 38,200. The biggest changes were in arrivals from:
 - Australia (up 13,900)
 - China (up 7,700)
 - the United Kingdom (up 3,800).
- Overseas trips by New Zealand residents (168,200) were up 20,200. The biggest changes were in departures to:
 - Australia (up 6,600)
 - the United States (up 3,100)
 - China (up 2,200).

In March 2015, seasonally adjusted figures showed a net gain of 5,000 migrants.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

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ISSN 1179-0407
23 April 2015

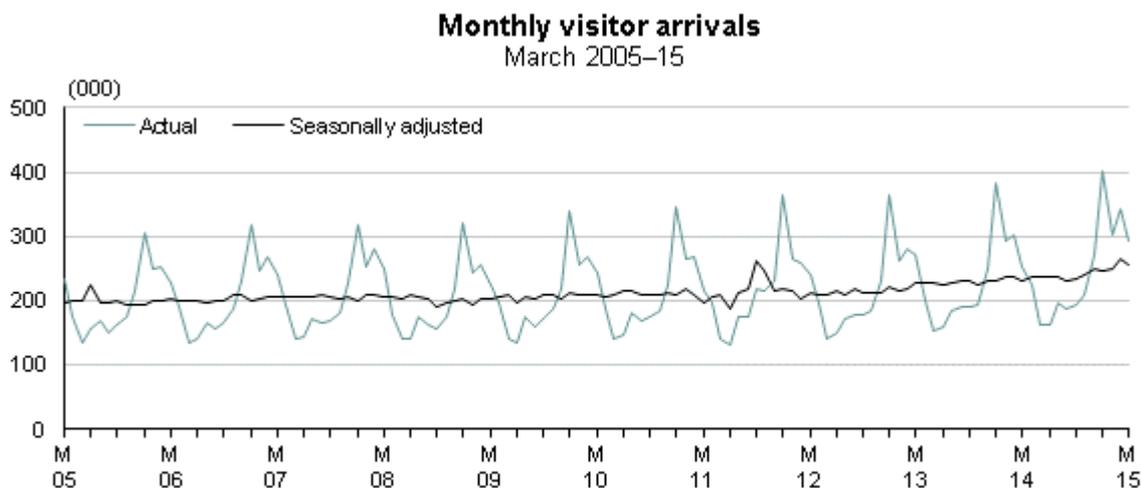
Commentary

- March visitor arrivals boosted by cricket and holiday periods
- Annual visitor arrivals up 7 percent
- New Zealand residents travel more in March
- Annual trips by New Zealand residents up 5 percent
- Net inflow of 5,000 migrants in March
- Annual net gain of over 56,000 migrants

March visitor arrivals boosted by cricket and holiday periods

Overseas visitor arrivals to New Zealand numbered 291,800 in March 2015, a record high for a March month. Visitor numbers were boosted by the Cricket World Cup, and the earlier timing of Easter and overseas school holidays compared with 2014. Although Good Friday fell on 3 April in 2015, travel generally increases several days before the start of holiday periods.

The latest visitor total was 15 percent higher than in March 2014 (253,600) and 8 percent higher than in March 2013 (270,700). Good Friday fell on 18 April 2014 and 29 March 2013, and school holidays in many countries are often timed to coincide with Easter.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Visitor arrivals by country of residence

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

- Australia (up 13,900)
- China (up 7,700)
- the United Kingdom (up 3,800)
- India (up 1,700)
- Japan (up 1,700).

Although visitor numbers from Australia and the United Kingdom were well up from March 2014, they were slightly below totals in March 2013. This was largely due to the timing of Easter and school holidays.

Arrivals from India were boosted by the Cricket World Cup held in New Zealand and Australia in February and March 2015. India played two matches in New Zealand during March. In addition, Australia and New Zealand offered joint visitor visas during the tournament, and some of those attending matches in Australia may have also taken the opportunity to visit New Zealand.

Visitor arrivals by travel purpose

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

- holidays (up 20,600)
- visiting friends and relatives (up 13,000).

Australia and China contributed the biggest increases in holiday arrivals (up 5,200 and 5,100, respectively). Australia also contributed the biggest increase in visits to friends and relatives (up 6,500).

Annual visitor arrivals up 7 percent

Visitor arrivals to New Zealand numbered 2.95 million in the March 2015 year, the highest-ever annual total. The latest figure was 7 percent higher than the March 2014 year (2.75 million).

The biggest annual increase in visitor arrivals was from China, up 55,800 from the March 2014 year. The next largest increases were from Australia (up 52,000), the United States (up 19,300), and Japan (up 10,000).

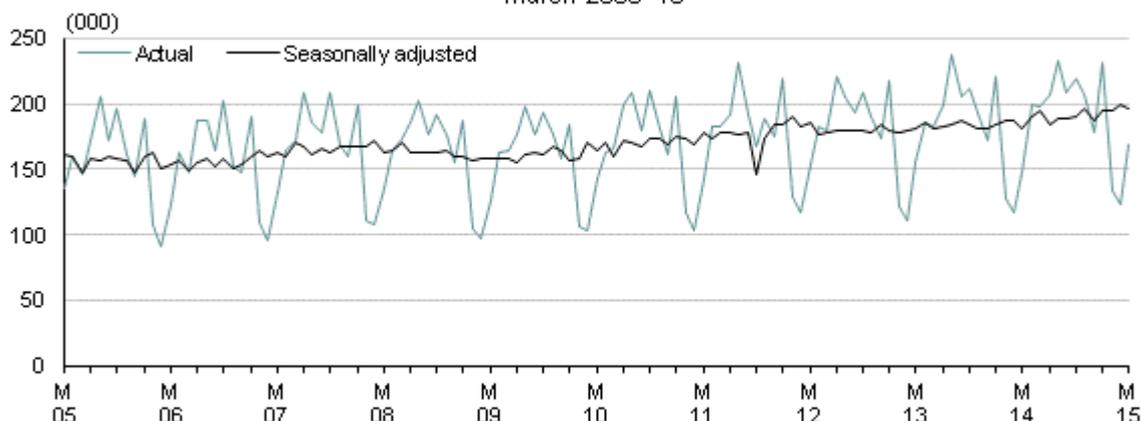
For more detailed data about visitor arrivals, see the Excel tables in the 'Downloads' box.

New Zealand residents travel more in March

New Zealand-resident travellers departed on 168,200 overseas trips in March 2015, up 14 percent from March 2014 (148,000). The latest figure was influenced by the earlier timing of Easter and school holidays this year, and trips to watch New Zealand play in the Cricket World Cup final in Melbourne. The March 2015 figure was up 8 percent compared with March 2013 (155,900), when Easter fell in late March.

Monthly overseas trips by New Zealand residents

March 2005–15



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 the most time) between March 2014 and March 2015 were in trips to:

- Australia (up 6,600)
- the United States (up 3,100)
- China (up 2,200)
- India (up 1,400).

Of the New Zealand residents travelling to China in March 2015, 45 percent were Chinese citizens. Similarly, Indian citizens accounted for 44 percent of those departing to India.

Annual trips by New Zealand residents up 5 percent

Trips by New Zealand residents in the March 2015 year (2.31 million) reached a record high, up 5 percent from the March 2014 year (2.20 million).

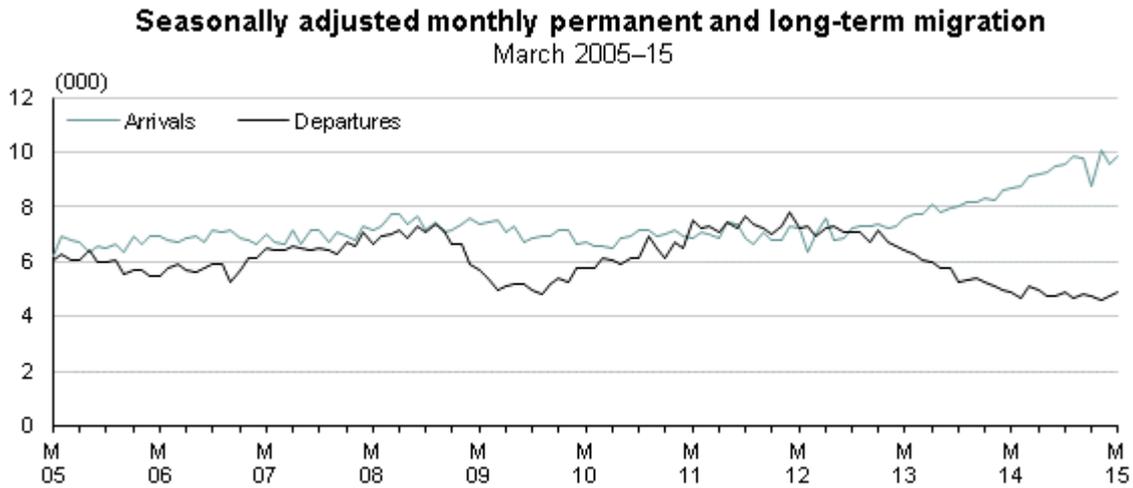
Around half of all trips by New Zealand residents in the March 2015 year were to Australia (1.10 million). The next most-visited destinations were the United States (170,200), Fiji (132,800), the United Kingdom (102,800), China (80,200), and the Cook Islands (76,900).

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

Net inflow of 5,000 migrants in March

Seasonally adjusted permanent and long-term (PLT) migration figures showed a net gain (more arrivals than departures) of 5,000 migrants in March 2015. This is consistent with the average net gain since August 2014 (4,900). This apparent levelling of the net migration series comes after two years of increasing net gains, following net losses averaging 300 per month between March 2011 and August 2012.

The main contributors to the increased net gain of migrants since 2012 were fewer New Zealand citizens departing to Australia, and more non-New Zealand citizen arrivals. New Zealand citizen departures to Australia have shown little change in the last 12 months, while non-New Zealand citizen arrivals have shown little change in the last 6 months.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Annual net gain of over 56,000 migrants

Unadjusted figures showed a net gain of 56,300 migrants in the March 2015 year, well above the net gains of 31,900 in the March 2014 year and 2,500 in the March 2013 year.

The increased net gain of migrants in the March 2015 year was driven by both more arrivals and fewer departures. Migrant arrivals reached a new high of 113,800, up 16 percent from the March 2014 year. Migrant departures numbered 57,500, down 13 percent.

PLT migration by country of residence

The increase in migrant arrivals between the March 2014 and March 2015 years was led by India (up 6,000), Australia (up 2,500), China (up 1,400), the Philippines (up 1,300), and France (up 1,100). The increase in arrivals from Australia included 1,800 more New Zealand citizens, and 700 more non-New Zealand citizens.

The fall in migrant departures was primarily due to fewer departures of New Zealand citizens to Australia (down 7,700). Departures of New Zealand citizens to Australia have more than halved in the last two years from 46,600 in the March 2013 year to 22,600 in the March 2015 year.

The net loss of 2,300 people to Australia in the March 2015 year was well down from the net losses of 12,900 in the March 2014 year and 35,500 in the March 2013 year. The latest figure is the smallest net loss to Australia since the March 1992 year (also 2,300).

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

- India (12,100)
- China (7,700)
- the United Kingdom (4,900)
- the Philippines (4,000).

PLT migrant arrivals by visa type

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

- student visas (up 8,700)
- work visas (up 3,600)
- New Zealand and Australian citizens (up 2,300).

Most of the increase in migrants arriving on student visas was from India (up 5,500), China (up 1,000), and the Philippines (up 500). Student arrivals accounted for about three-quarters of all migrants from India, and half of all migrants from China.

Increases in work visa arrivals were led by France (up 1,000) and the Philippines (up 600). The United Kingdom remains the biggest source of migrants on work visas. Arrivals on work visas include working holidaymakers.

PLT migration by New Zealand region

All regions had a net gain of international migrants in the March 2015 year, led by Auckland (26,000), Canterbury (6,300), and Waikato (2,200).

Just over half of all migrants who stated an address on their arrival card were moving to the Auckland region (51 percent). 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 2014).

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: this is the country where the person last lived or will next live for 12 months or more.

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: 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: New Zealanders departing for an absence of 12 months or more (including permanently), and people from overseas who are departing 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 2015 will be released on 21 May 2015.

[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

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- [Accuracy of the data](#)
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- [Timing of published data](#)
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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. Additional detail such as country of residence and travel purpose is captured from these cards and added 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

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Tables

The following tables are available in Excel format from the 'Downloads' box. 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 2015 will be released on 21 May 2015.