

International Travel and Migration: February 2015

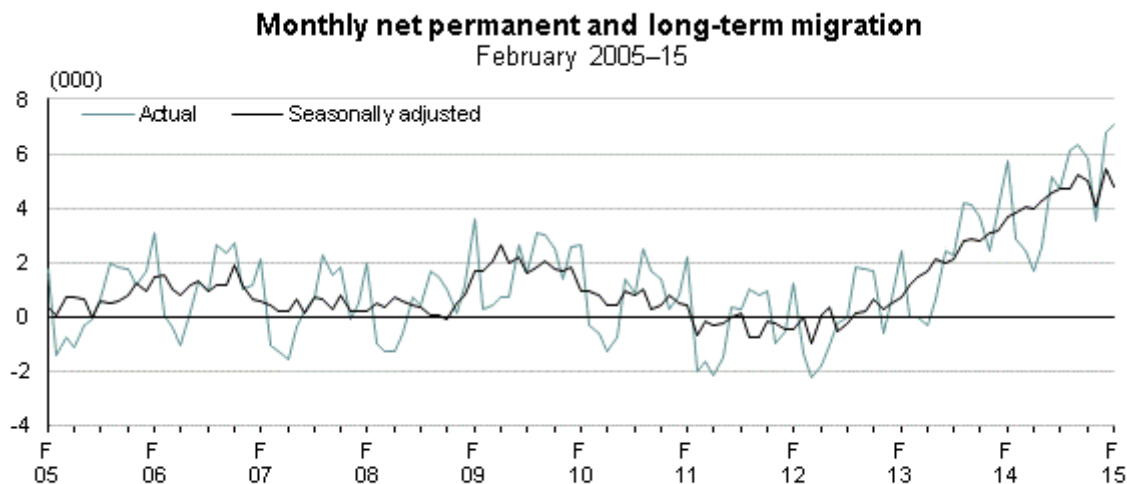
Embargoed until 10:45am – 20 March 2015

Key facts

In February 2015 compared with February 2014:

- Visitor arrivals (343,500) were up 42,300. The biggest changes were in arrivals from:
 - China (up 27,500)
 - the United States (up 5,000)
 - Taiwan (up 2,400).
- Overseas trips by New Zealand residents (123,900) were up 7,000. The biggest changes were in departures to:
 - Australia (up 2,700)
 - China (up 2,200).

In February 2015, seasonally adjusted figures showed a net gain of 4,800 migrants.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

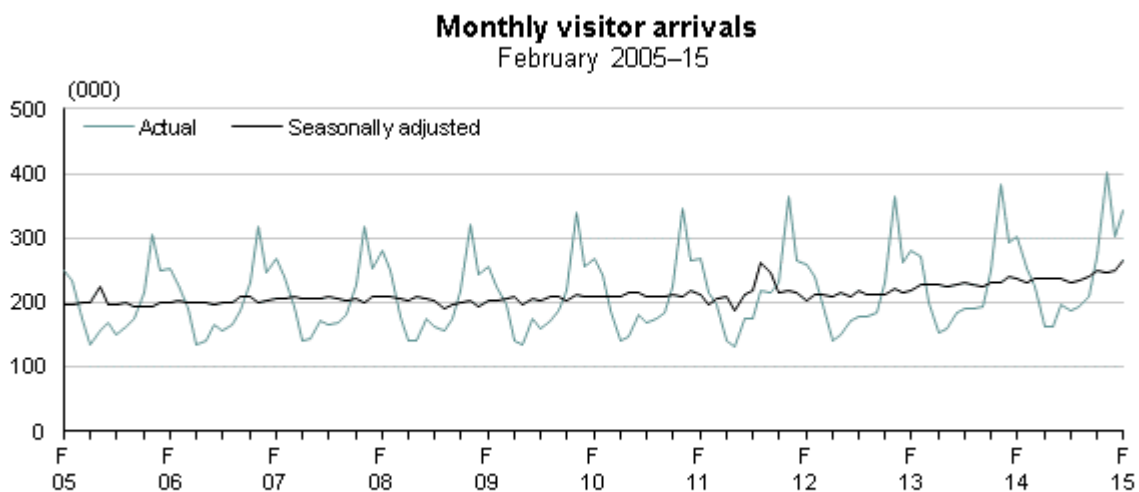
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Commentary

- Increase in February visitors driven by arrivals from China
- Annual visitor arrivals reaches record high
- New Zealand residents travel more to Australia and China in February
- Record number of annual trips abroad by New Zealand residents
- Net inflow of 4,800 migrants in February
- Annual net gain of migrants continues to break records

Increase in February visitors driven by arrivals from China

Overseas visitor arrivals to New Zealand numbered 343,500 in February 2015, the highest-ever February total. This was up 14 percent from February 2014 (301,200).



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Visitor arrivals by country of residence

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

- China (up 27,500)
- the United States (up 5,000)
- Taiwan (up 2,400)
- Australia (up 1,700)
- Hong Kong (up 1,300)
- India (up 1,200).

Visitor arrivals from Asia were boosted by the change in timing of Chinese New Year, a popular time for travel. This year the holiday fell in February, compared with January last year. Arrivals from China numbered 56,000 in February 2015, up 96 percent from February 2014, and arrivals from Hong Kong were up 49 percent to 4,100. Arrivals from Taiwan (up 100 percent to 4,800) were helped both by new flights from Taipei to Christchurch via Sydney, and the change in timing of the Chinese New Year.

When January and February were combined and compared with the same period last year, visitor arrivals from China were up 39 percent.

Monthly visitor arrivals from the United States reached an all-time high in February (up 16 percent to 36,700).

Visitor arrivals by travel purpose

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

- holidays (up 37,900)
- visiting friends and relatives (up 2,600)
- education (up 1,200).

The change in timing of Chinese New Year caused the number of holiday arrivals from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong to increase in February 2015, compared with February 2014. China contributed the biggest increases in arrivals for holidays (up 24,400) and visits to friends and relatives (up 1,400).

The United States contributed the second biggest increase in holiday arrivals (up 3,700).

Annual visitor arrivals reaches record high

Visitor arrivals to New Zealand numbered 2.91 million in the February 2015 year, the highest-ever annual total. The latest figure was 5 percent higher than in the February 2014 year (2.77 million).

The biggest annual increase in visitor arrivals was from China, up 50,600 from the February 2014 year. The next largest increases were from Australia (up 22,700) and the United States (up 21,200).

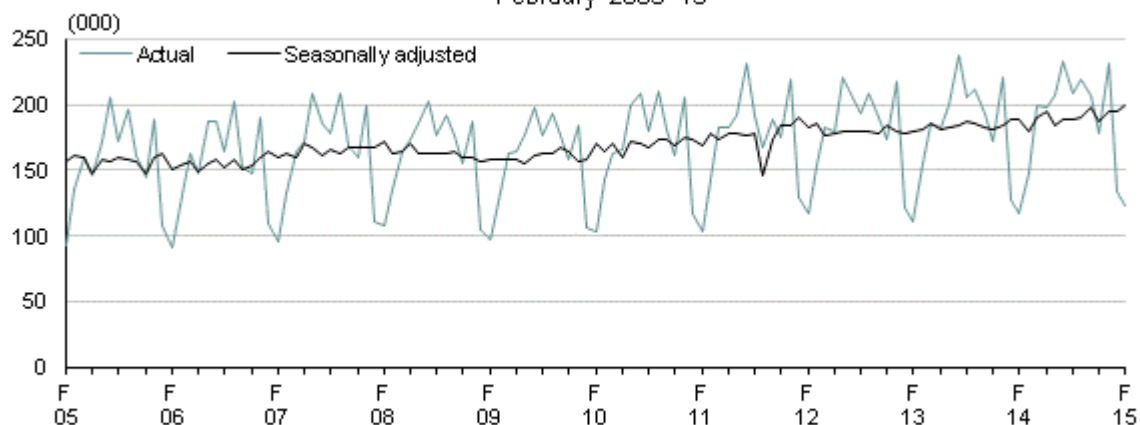
For more detailed data about visitor arrivals, see the Excel tables in the 'Downloads' box.

New Zealand residents travel more to Australia and China in February

New Zealand-resident travellers departed on 123,900 overseas trips in February 2015, up 6 percent from February 2014 (116,900).

Monthly overseas trips by New Zealand residents

February 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 February 2014 and February 2015 were in trips to:

- Australia (up 2,700)
- China (up 2,200).

The increase in trips by New Zealand residents to China in February can also be attributed to the change in timing of Chinese New Year. There were 2,000 more New Zealand residents with Chinese citizenship who travelled to China.

Record number of annual trips abroad by New Zealand residents

Trips by New Zealand residents in the February 2015 year (2.29 million) reached a record high, up 4 percent from the February 2014 year (2.21 million).

Around half of all trips by New Zealand residents in the February 2015 year were to Australia (1.1 million). The next most-visited destinations were the United States (167,100), Fiji (132,100), the United Kingdom (101,700), China (78,000), and the Cook Islands (76,800).

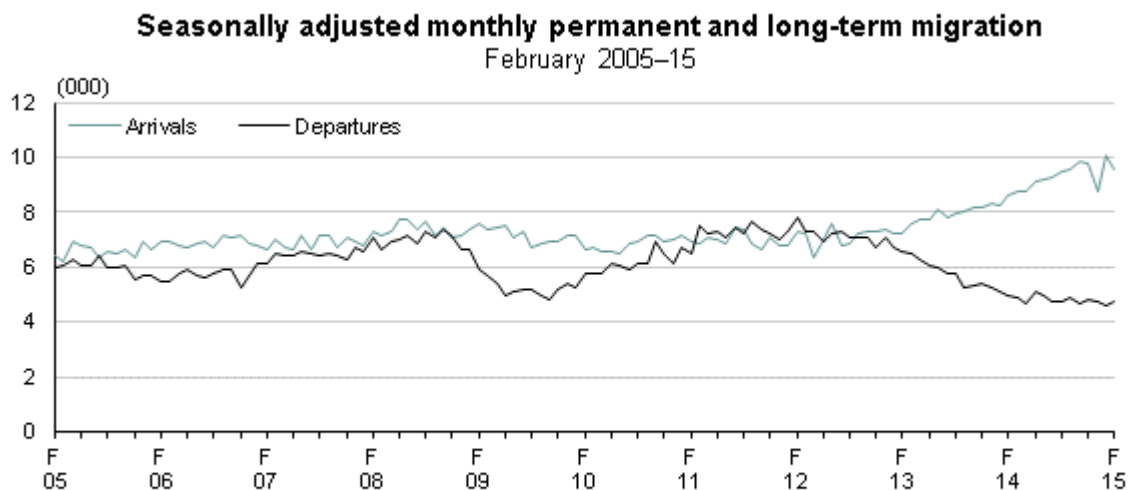
For more detailed data on overseas trips by New Zealand residents, see the Excel tables in the 'Downloads' box.

Net inflow of 4,800 migrants in February

Seasonally adjusted permanent and long-term (PLT) migration figures showed a net gain (more arrivals than departures) of 4,800 migrants in February 2015. Migration has averaged a net gain of 4,900 for the last 6 months, breaking the previous record net gain of 4,700 in February 2003.

The net gain in February 2015 was higher than the gain in February 2014 (3,700) due to more arrivals of non-New Zealand citizens, as well as fewer departures of New Zealand citizens.

The seasonally adjusted net loss of 300 migrants to Australia in February 2015 was smaller than the loss of 600 in February 2014. The highest-ever net loss to Australia (4,300) was in February 2001, just before an immigration policy change that restricted access to welfare benefits for New Zealand citizens arriving after that date.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Annual net gain of migrants continues to break records

Unadjusted figures showed a net gain of 55,100 migrants in the February 2015 year, a significant increase on the net gain of 29,000 in the February 2014 year. This was the seventh month in a row that the annual record for a net gain of migrants has been broken, all surpassing the previous high in the May 2003 year (42,500).

The increased net gain of migrants in the February 2015 year was driven by both more arrivals and fewer departures. Migrant arrivals reached a new high of 112,600, up 16 percent from the February 2014 year. Migrant departures numbered 57,500, down 15 percent. This is the lowest migrant departures have been since the November 2003 year (56,700).

PLT migration by country of residence

The increase in migrant arrivals between the February 2014 and February 2015 years was led by India (up 5,900), Australia (up 2,900), China (up 1,300), the Philippines (up 1,200), and France (up 1,100). The increase in arrivals from Australia included 2,200 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 9,000). Departures of New Zealand citizens to Australia have more than halved in the last two years from 47,400 in the February 2013 year to 22,800 in the February 2015 year.

The net loss of 2,600 people to Australia in the February 2015 year was well down from the net losses of 15,000 in the February 2014 year and 36,700 in the February 2013 year. The latest figure is the smallest net loss to Australia since the March 1992 year (2,300).

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

- India (11,800)
- China (7,500)
- the United Kingdom (5,100)
- the Philippines (3,800).

PLT migrant arrivals by visa type

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

- student visas (up 8,500)
- work visas (up 3,300)
- New Zealand and Australian citizens (up 2,500).

Most of the increase in migrants arriving on student visas was from India (up 5,400), China (up 1,000), and the Philippines (up 500). Migrants arriving from India have been New Zealand's biggest source of PLT arrivals on student visas since the January 2008 year. Before then, China was the biggest source of PLT migrants on student visas.

Increases in work visa arrivals were led by France (up 1,000) and the Philippines (up 500). Arrivals on work visas include working holidaymakers.

PLT migration by New Zealand region

Nearly all regions had a net gain of migrants in the February 2015 year, led by Auckland (25,300), Canterbury (6,100), and Waikato (2,100). The increased net gain of migrants in Auckland was because of more arrivals (up 7,600) and fewer departures (down 4,000) when compared with the February 2014 year. The increased net gain in Canterbury was because of more arrivals (up 1,100), and the increased net gain in Waikato was driven by fewer departures (down 1,300) and more arrivals (up 900).

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: March 2015 will be released on 23 April 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 our upcoming 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.

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](#)
- [Confidentiality](#)
- [More 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. 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: March 2015 will be released on 23 April 2015.