

# International Travel and Migration: December 2013

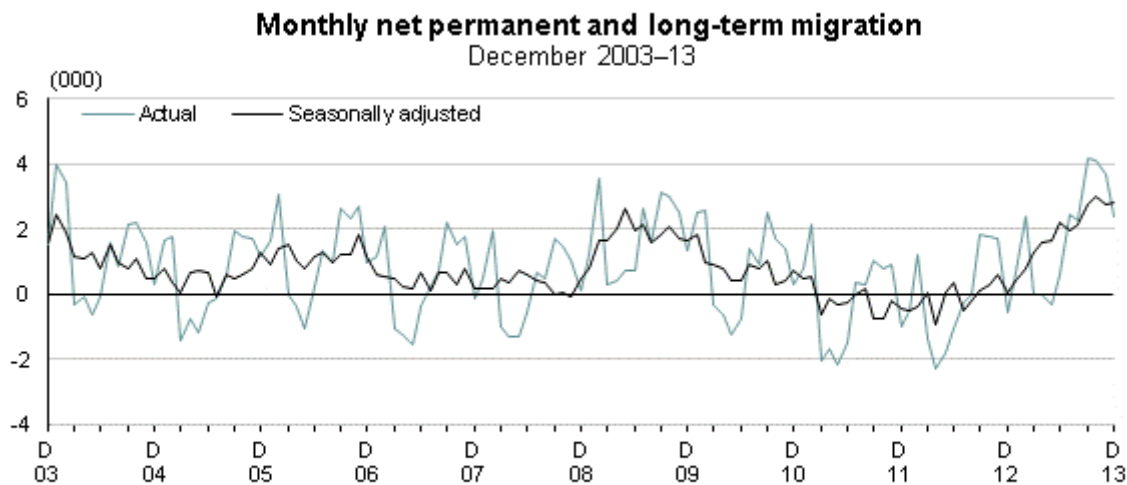
Embargoed until 10:45am – 30 January 2014

## Key facts

In December 2013 compared with December 2012:

- Visitor arrivals (381,900) were up 17,900. The biggest changes were in arrivals from:
  - Australia (up 7,400)
  - the United States (up 4,500)
  - China (down 2,200).
- Overseas trips by New Zealand residents (221,200) were up 4,400.

In December 2013, seasonally adjusted figures showed a net gain of 2,800 migrants.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Liz MacPherson  
Government Statistician

30 January 2014  
ISSN 1179-0407

## Commentary

- Ten million international passengers in 2013
- Highest-ever number of monthly visitor arrivals
- Annual visitor arrivals exceed 2.7 million
- Trips by New Zealand residents increase 2 percent in December
- Half of all trips were to Australia in the December 2013 year
- Inflow of 2,800 migrants in December
- Annual migrant arrivals up, departures down

## Ten million international passengers in 2013

New Zealand's annual international passenger numbers reached 10 million for the first time ever in the December 2013 year. The overall total of 10.047 million passengers consisted of 5.037 million arrivals and 5.009 million departures.

Arrivals and departures of overseas visitors accounted for 54 percent of all passengers. New Zealand-resident travellers accounted for 44 percent, with the remaining 2 percent being permanent and long-term migrants.

The milestone of 1 million annual passengers was reached in 1973, after the introduction of jet aircraft made it faster and easier to travel between New Zealand and other countries. Now, 1 million passengers can be recorded in just one month (January 2012 and December 2013).

Growth in international travel accelerated after the 2 million mark was reached in 1985. Five million passengers were recorded in 1996 – meaning passenger numbers have doubled over the 17 years to 2013. The 9 million passenger mark was reached in 2007.

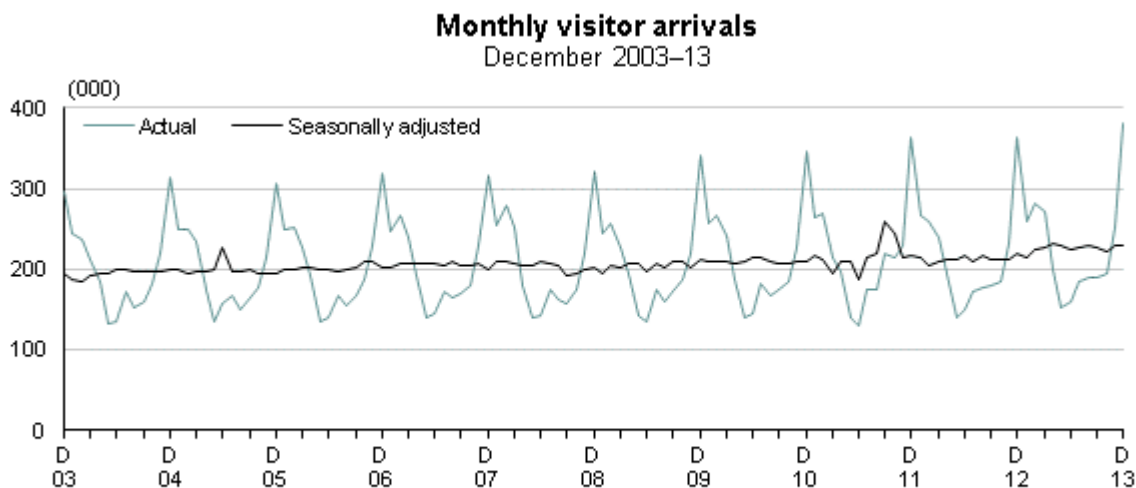


Source: Statistics New Zealand

## Highest-ever number of monthly visitor arrivals

Short-term overseas visitor arrivals to New Zealand numbered 381,900 in December 2013, the highest monthly total ever recorded. The latest figure easily surpasses the previous high of 364,200 in December 2011, and is up 5 percent from December 2012 (364,000).

December usually has the highest number of visitor arrivals during each year. This is due to higher visitor numbers over summer, as well as people arriving to visit friends and relatives for the Christmas/New Year period.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

### Visitor arrivals by country of residence

The biggest changes in visitors by country of residence between December 2012 and December 2013 were in arrivals from:

- Australia (up 7,400)
- the United States (up 4,500)
- Singapore (up 1,700)
- Germany (up 1,400)
- China (down 2,200).

There were more visitors from every Australian state, led by Western Australia (up 2,000), Queensland (up 1,600), Victoria (up 1,500), and New South Wales (up 1,000). The increase from the United States included 1,600 more visitors from California.

The decrease in visitor numbers from China followed the introduction of a new tourism law in China on 1 October 2013. The new law places restrictions on low-cost shopping tours, increasing the price of many tour packages. Many tours include only a short stay in New Zealand, in conjunction with a visit to Australia. As a result of the new law, significantly fewer visitors arrived from China for a three- or four-day stay in December 2013 (5,600), compared with December 2012 (9,700). In contrast, more visitors arrived from China for a stay of 11 days or longer (up from 4,500 in December 2012 to 6,700 in December 2013).

### Visitor arrivals by travel purpose

The biggest changes in visitors by travel purpose between December 2012 and December 2013 were in arrivals for:

- holidays (up 8,200)
- visiting friends and relatives (up 6,800).

The biggest increases in holiday arrivals were from Australia (up 3,400), the United States (up 2,900), and Singapore (up 1,500). There were fewer holidaymakers from China (down 1,600) and Japan (down 1,000).

The biggest increases to visit friends and relatives were from Australia (up 3,100) and the United States (up 1,000).

## Annual visitor arrivals exceed 2.7 million

There were 2.718 million visitor arrivals to New Zealand in the December 2013 year, the first time that annual visitor numbers have exceeded the 2.7 million mark. The latest total was 6 percent higher than in the December 2012 year (2.565 million).

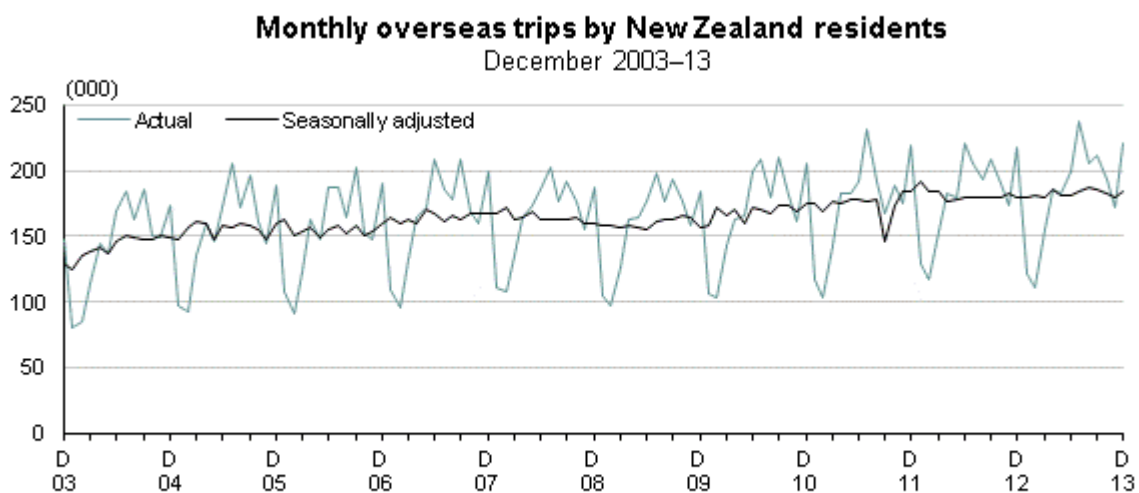
Compared with the December 2012 year, more people visited from Australia (up 62,200), China (up 31,900), and the United States (up 23,700).

Annual visitor arrivals from the United States (201,400) exceeded 200,000 for the first time since the February 2009 year. Visitor numbers from the United States peaked at 225,600 in the December 2006 year, but the global economic downturn contributed to a decline to 177,700 arrivals in the December 2012 year.

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

## Trips by New Zealand residents increase 2 percent in December

New Zealand residents departed on 221,200 overseas trips in December 2013, a record for a December month. The latest figure was up 2 percent from December 2012 (216,800).



## Overseas trips by country of main destination

A new departure card was introduced in July 2013, which improved the response rate to the 'country of main destination' question. As a result, the number of passengers in the 'not stated' category decreased by 18,100 (72 percent) in December 2013, compared with December 2012.

The improved response rate contributed much of the change in the figures for individual countries.

### Half of all trips were to Australia in the December 2013 year

Trips by New Zealand residents in the December 2013 year (2.193 million) were up 1 percent from the December 2012 year (2.169 million).

Around half of all trips by New Zealand residents were to Australia (1.018 million). The next most visited destinations were the United States (142,200), Fiji (112,300), and the United Kingdom (96,700).

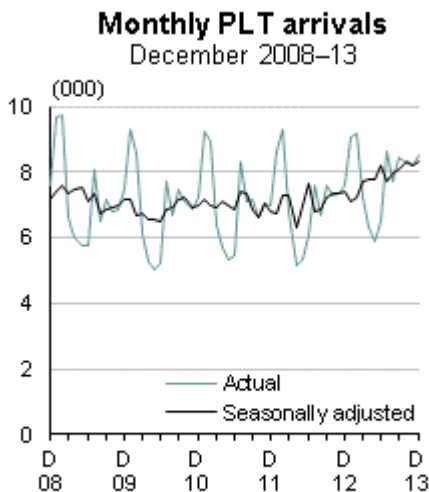
For more detailed data on overseas trips by New Zealand residents, see the Excel tables in the 'Downloads' box.

### Inflow of 2,800 migrants in December

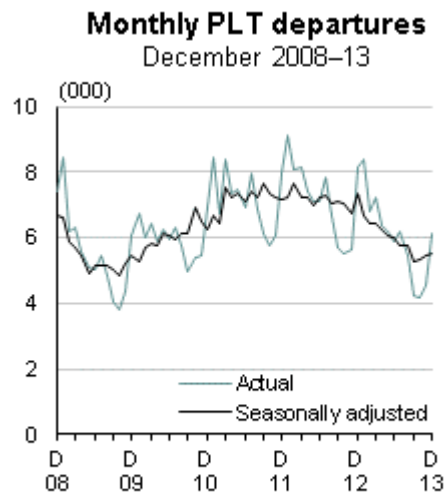
Seasonally adjusted permanent and long-term (PLT) migration figures showed a net gain (more arrivals than departures) of 2,800 migrants in December 2013. The monthly balance has been about this level since September 2013, after rising from near zero in December 2012.

The increase in net migration since December 2012 was due to fewer departures to Australia, as well as more arriving migrants. Non-New Zealand citizens contributed most of the increase in arrivals, although arrivals of New Zealand citizens also rose.

The seasonally adjusted net loss of 1,100 migrants to Australia in December 2013 was up slightly from a recent low of 800 in September 2013. Before then, the monthly net loss to Australia had fallen steadily since December 2012 (3,200).



Source: Statistics New Zealand



Source: Statistics New Zealand

### Annual migrant arrivals up, departures down

Unadjusted figures showed that 94,000 migrants arrived in the December 2013 year. This was up 10 percent from the December 2012 year (85,300), and the highest since the October 2003 year (94,900). Migrant departures numbered 71,500, down 17 percent from the previous year (86,400). This resulted in a net gain of 22,500 migrants in the December 2013 year, compared

with a net loss of 1,200 in the December 2012 year. The latest net gain is the highest since the January 2010 year (22,600).

Net migration can vary significantly from year to year. The highest net inflow ever recorded was 42,500 in the May 2003 year. The highest net outflow was 43,600 in the July 1979 year. Over the last 20 years (December 1994–2013 years), New Zealand's annual net inflow of migrants has averaged 11,700.

The net loss of 19,600 people to Australia in the December 2013 year was well down from the loss of 38,800 in the December 2012 year. The latest year's loss resulted from 39,200 departures to Australia (down from 53,700 in the December 2012 year), partly offset by 19,500 arrivals (up from 14,900). In both directions, most migrants were New Zealand citizens.

There were net gains of migrants from most other countries in the December 2013 year, led by:

- the United Kingdom (5,800)
- China (5,700)
- India (5,400)
- the Philippines (2,300)
- Germany (2,300).

Seven of New Zealand's 16 regions had net gains of migrants, led by Auckland (10,900) and Canterbury (4,500). Net migration was higher in all regions than in the December 2012 year.

Statistics NZ has started a series of articles on international migration for New Zealand regions, the first of which are now available:

- [International migration to and from Northland region: 1996–2013](#)
- [International migration to and from Southland region: 1996–2013](#).

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), measuring changes in the characteristics 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-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.

## Related links

### Upcoming releases

*International Travel and Migration: January 2014* will be released on 27 February 2014.

[Subscribe to information releases](#), including this one, by completing the online subscription form.

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 3pm 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

- [Data source](#)
- [Accuracy of the data](#)
- [Interpreting the data](#)
- [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.

Arrival and departure cards are owned by Immigration New Zealand, and are used to administer numerous New Zealand laws in addition to the production of statistics. Statistics NZ captures information from the cards only for statistical purposes, and passes the cards to Immigration New Zealand after data capture is complete.

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 not every response can be clearly recognised by automated software.

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

All arrivals and departures are processed so they can be allocated 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 to adjust for such 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-12-ARIMA, with enhancements that allow the specification and adjustment of 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 3pm 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.

### 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.

**Crown copyright©**



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence. You are free to copy, distribute, and adapt the work, as long as you attribute the work to Statistics NZ and abide by the other licence terms. Please note you may not use any departmental or governmental emblem, logo, or coat of arms in any way that infringes any provision of the Flags, Emblems, and Names Protection Act 1981. Use the wording 'Statistics New Zealand' in your attribution, not the Statistics NZ logo.

## Contacts

**For media enquiries contact:**

Nicholas Thomson  
Christchurch 03 964 8700  
**Email:** [info@stats.govt.nz](mailto:info@stats.govt.nz)

**For technical information contact:**

Nicholas Thomson or Rosalia Rohwer  
Christchurch 03 964 8700  
**Email:** [info@stats.govt.nz](mailto:info@stats.govt.nz)

**For general enquiries contact our Information Centre:**

Phone: 0508 525 525 (toll-free in New Zealand)  
+64 4 931 4600 (outside New Zealand)  
**Email:** [info@stats.govt.nz](mailto:info@stats.govt.nz)

**Subscription service:**

[Subscribe to information releases](#), including this one, by completing the online subscription form.

**Correction notifications:**

[Subscribe to receive an email](#) if a correction notice is published for International Travel and Migration.

[Unsubscribe to correction notifications](#) for International Travel and Migration.

[Subscribe to all](#) to receive an email if a correction notice is published for any of our information releases.

[Unsubscribe to all](#) if you change your mind.

## 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. Short-term overseas visitor arrivals, by country of last permanent residence
4. Short-term overseas visitor arrivals, by travel purpose and country of last permanent residence
5. Short-term 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

## 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**