

Visitors from the Americas

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Overview

Short-term overseas visitor arrivals from the Americas accounted for 295,900 (12 percent) of the 2.459 million visitors to New Zealand in 2008. The United States was the leading source country within the Americas, accounting for 212,400 visitor arrivals, followed by Canada, with 53,300 visitors. Both have been key sources of visitors to New Zealand for many years.

The United States was New Zealand’s second-largest source of visitors (after Australia) between 1979 and 1995, and again in 1998 and 1999. Between 2000 and 2008, it was the third-largest source of visitors, after Australia and the United Kingdom. Canada was New Zealand’s fifth-largest source of visitors between 1979 and 1990, but after being surpassed by China, Korea and Germany it ranked eighth in 2008.

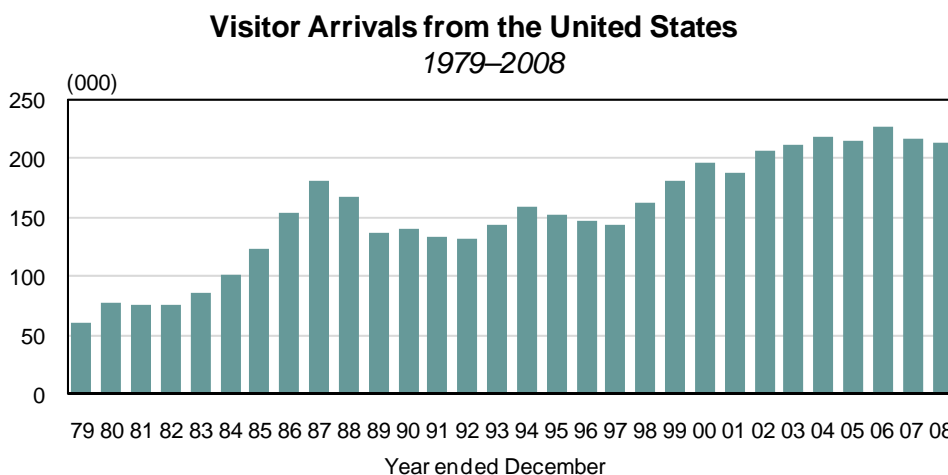
In 2008, 30,200 visitors arrived from other countries in the Americas, led by Brazil (11,400), Argentina (5,500) and Chile (4,800). Although these were not among the leading sources of visitors to New Zealand (ranked 26th, 36th and 38th, respectively), they have been contributing a growing share of visitor arrivals.

This article examines changes in visitor numbers over time, from both the established sources of the United States and Canada, and the emerging sources of Brazil, Argentina and Chile. Country data are based on the country of last or next permanent residence, defined as the country the person last lived in (for arrivals), or will next live in (for departures), for 12 months or more.

Visitor arrivals from the United States

Visitor arrivals from the United States increased rapidly from 76,300 in 1982 to 180,400 in 1987, helped by economic growth in the United States and the devaluation of the New Zealand dollar in mid-1984. The visitor arrival increases reversed after the worldwide sharemarket crash of late 1987, with a 24 percent decrease in arrivals from the United States over the following two years.

Figure 1

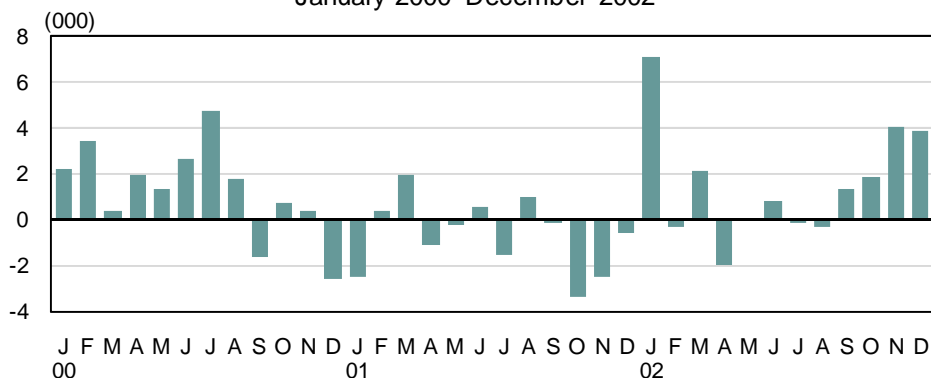


It was not until 1999 that the 1987 peak in visitor arrivals from the United States was surpassed – during a general period of growth from 1997 to 2006. Decreases were recorded in 2001 and 2005, with the 2001 decrease being partly attributable to the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States. October and November 2001 were particularly affected, down 20 percent and 13 percent, respectively, compared

with the same month of 2000. However, visitor arrivals from the United States had already been decreasing before September 2001, being down 4,900 (2 percent) in the 12 months to August 2001.

Figure 2

Monthly Change in Visitor Arrivals from the United States
Compared with same month of previous year
 January 2000–December 2002



The post-September 2001 decreases were closely followed by a 7,000 (38 percent) increase in visitor arrivals from the United States in January 2002 (compared with January 2001). This was the highest monthly increase recorded between 1978 and 2008, and was mainly due to a jump in the number of cruise ship passengers.

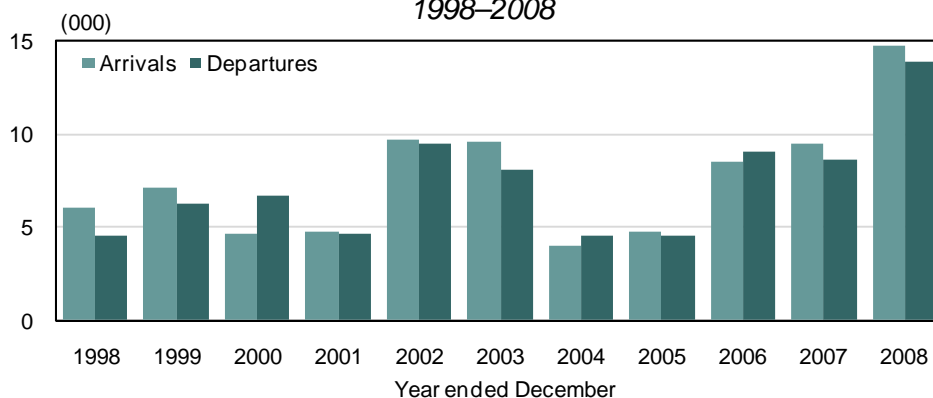
A record 225,600 visitors arrived from the United States in 2006, with numbers then decreasing to 216,000 in 2007 and 212,400 in 2008 – the lowest since 2003 – as economic conditions in the United States weakened. The 2008 figure accounted for 9 percent of all visitor arrivals to New Zealand, well down from the 21 percent that the United States contributed during its 1987 peak.

Cruise passengers from the United States

Despite fewer visitor arrivals from the United States in 2008, the 14,800 arrivals on cruise ships easily surpassed the previous high of 9,700 passengers in 2002.

Figure 3

Cruise Visitors from the United States
 1998–2008



The majority of people who arrive on a cruise ship depart New Zealand by air. Similarly, most people who depart on a cruise ship arrive by air. Visitors from the

United States departing on cruise ships showed a similar pattern to arrivals, with the 13,900 departures exceeding the previous high of 9,500 in 2002.

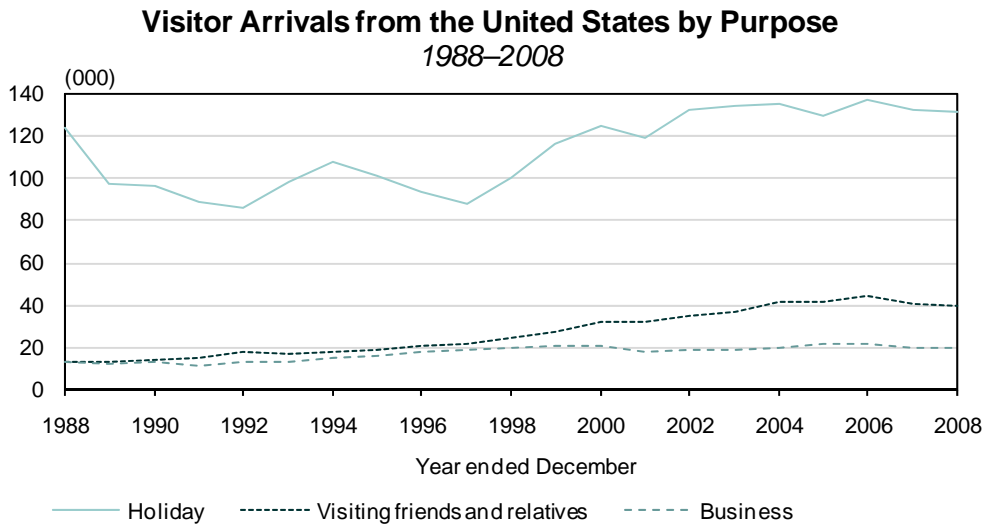
The United States accounted for 40 percent of all visitors arriving or departing New Zealand on a cruise ship in 2008, down from 67 percent in 2000.

Visitor arrivals from the United States by purpose of travel

In 2008, 131,200 visitors arrived from the United States mainly for a holiday. This was only 6 percent above the 123,400 holiday arrivals from the United States in 1988 (the purpose classification changed in October 1987, so no comparison will be made with earlier data). In contrast, the 39,800 arrivals to visit friends and relatives in 2008 were almost triple the 13,800 in 1988. This was reflected in this purpose accounting for 19 percent of all visitors from the United States in 2008, compared with just 8 percent in 1988. The proportion travelling for holiday purposes decreased over the same period, from 74 percent to 62 percent.

Business travellers from the United States numbered 19,800 in 2008, well above the 13,400 in 1988 but similar to levels experienced since 1996.

Figure 4

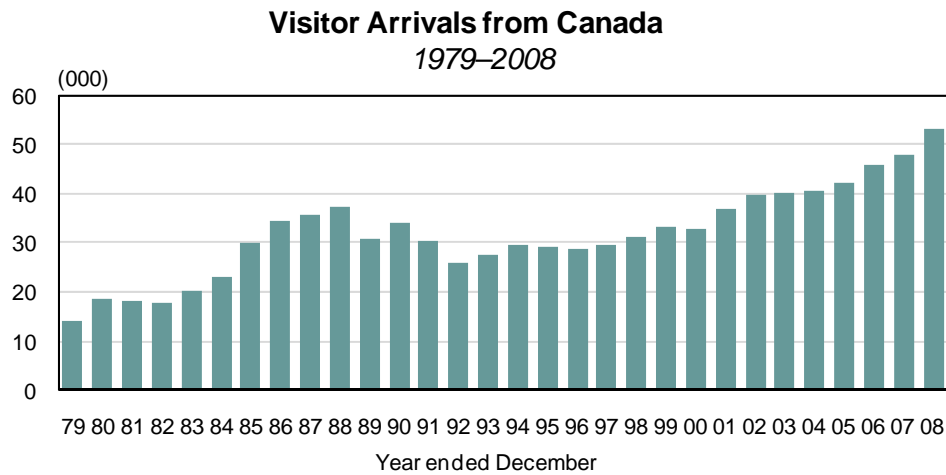


Despite almost continuous growth between 1988 and 2006, the numbers arriving to visit friends and relatives provided much of the decrease in visitor arrivals from the United States between 2006 and 2008. Compared with 2006, arrivals to visit friends and relatives were down 4,400 (10 percent) in 2008. Over the same period, holiday arrivals decreased 5,900 (4 percent), and business arrivals decreased 1,500 (7 percent).

Visitor arrivals from Canada

Visitor arrivals from Canada have generally followed similar patterns of growth and decline as visitor arrivals from the United States. Visitors from Canada increased rapidly from 18,000 in 1982 to 37,100 in 1988, before decreasing to 25,800 in 1992. Increases were recorded for most years between 1992 and 2008, with the 1988 peak being surpassed in 2002. Unlike visitor arrivals from the United States, the number of visitors from Canada increased in 2007 and 2008, partly attributable to the introduction of Auckland–Vancouver flights, as well as increased cruise ship passengers from Canada.

Figure 5

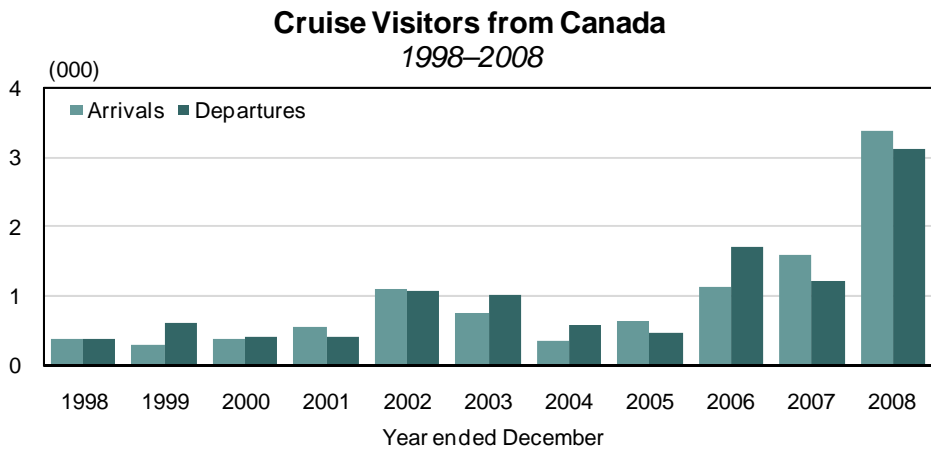


Canada contributed 4 percent of all visitor arrivals to New Zealand in 1988. This had decreased to 2 percent by 1992, where it remained in 2008.

Cruise passengers from Canada

Like the United States, 2008 saw significant growth in cruise passengers from Canada. Cruise arrivals of Canadian visitors numbered 3,400, well above the previous high of 1,600 in 2007. Cruise departures of Canadian visitors numbered 3,100 in 2008, compared with the previous high of 1,700 in 2006. Canada accounted for 9 percent of all cruise passengers in 2008, up from 4 percent in 2005.

Figure 6



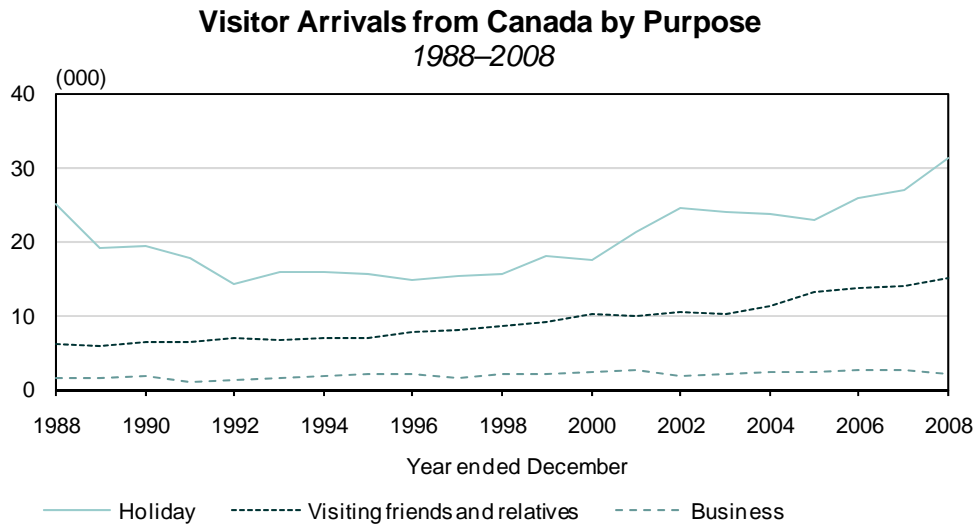
Visitor arrivals from Canada by purpose of travel

Visitor arrivals from Canada for holiday purposes decreased 43 percent between 1988 and 1992, from 24,900 to 14,100. The 1988 figure was only exceeded in 2006 when holiday arrivals from Canada reached 25,900. In 2008, these had increased further, to reach 31,300. People arriving from Canada to visit friends and relatives generally increased throughout the 1988–2008 period, from 6,200 to 15,100.

In the most recent years, between 2005 and 2008, it was holiday travellers who contributed most of the growth in visitor arrivals from Canada. Holiday visitors from Canada increased 8,500 (37 percent) over this period, compared with a 1,900 (15

percent) increase in arrivals to visit friends and relatives and a small decrease in business arrivals.

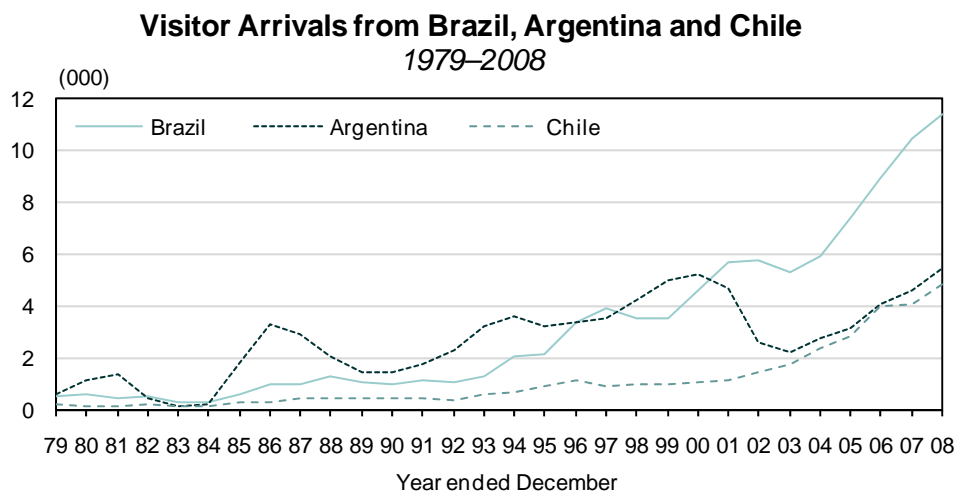
Figure 7



Visitor arrivals from Brazil, Argentina and Chile

Visitor arrivals from the Americas excluding the United States and Canada doubled between 2003 and 2008, from 15,200 to 30,200. The leading contributor to this increase was Brazil (from 5,300 to 11,400), followed by Argentina (from 2,300 to 5,500), and Chile (from 1,800 to 4,800).

Figure 8



Whereas visitor arrivals from Brazil and Chile were much higher in 2008 than had been seen previously, visitor arrivals from Argentina were just above the peak of 5,300 recorded in 2000. Visitor arrivals from Argentina more than halved between 2000 and 2003, due to a severe economic crisis in that country. Economic problems – most notably a period of hyperinflation – may have also contributed to a decrease in arrivals from Argentina between 1986 and 1990.

Visitors from the Americas

Visitor arrivals from Brazil, Argentina and Chile by purpose of travel

A holiday was the main purpose of travel for half of all visitors from Brazil in 2008. The next most common purposes of travel were education (2,100 or 19 percent), and visiting friends and relatives (1,500 or 13 percent). All three purposes contributed to the growth in visitor arrivals from Brazil between 2003 and 2008.

For both Argentina and Chile, a holiday was the most common purpose of travel to New Zealand, followed by visiting friends and relatives. Holiday visitors have contributed most of the growth in visitors from Chile, but the number of holiday visitors from Argentina has fluctuated. The 3,300 holiday arrivals from Argentina in 2008 were slightly below numbers in 1999 and 2000 (each 3,700).

Visitors from Brazil, Argentina and Chile

By selected travel purpose

Travel purpose	Year ended December								
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Brazil									
Holiday	2,933	3,299	3,270	2,858	3,452	3,926	5,040	5,901	5,727
Visiting friends and relatives	444	525	427	672	718	804	805	1,219	1,507
Education	638	1,228	1,195	844	937	1,174	1,660	2,085	2,120
Total all purposes	4,632	5,664	5,735	5,325	5,949	7,365	8,901	10,446	11,413
Argentina									
Holiday	3,723	3,148	1,671	1,293	1,624	1,927	2,437	2,849	3,346
Visiting friends and relatives	413	393	346	334	401	501	541	416	699
Total all purposes	5,271	4,680	2,603	2,252	2,756	3,161	4,053	4,600	5,479
Chile									
Holiday	485	461	597	855	1,060	1,437	1,451	1,917	1,922
Visiting friends and relatives	205	213	195	232	419	331	415	483	710
Total all purposes	1,078	1,123	1,438	1,765	2,359	2,872	4,015	4,062	4,839

Note: Data are derived from a sample of travellers, and hence may include sample error.

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www.rbnz.govt.nz/statistics/exandint/b1/

Economic indicators for the United States of America

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: www.bls.gov

Visitor arrivals and departures

Statistics New Zealand's international travel and migration dataset.