

Internal Migration

Moving to New Zealand: Reasons and patterns of settlement

Where did migrants move from?

People moving to New Zealand include those arriving for the first time, and people born in New Zealand or elsewhere who are returning to this country.

An estimated 41,300 New Zealanders returned to live in New Zealand in the two years ended March 2007 quarter. This number represented 35 percent of all movers from overseas (119,600) during that period. Nearly 40 percent of these returning New Zealanders had previously lived in Australia, while nearly a third had been living in the UK.

Table 1

Movers to New Zealand by Country of Birth <i>By previous country of residence</i> March 2007 quarter			
Previous country of residence	Country of birth		All movers from overseas
	New Zealand	Overseas	
Percent			
Australia	38.8	7.9	18.6
Pacific	-	10.1	7.5
UK	32.2	27.1	28.9
Other Europe	7.5	5.8	6.4
Asia	6.4	28.8	21.1
North America	7.4	-	4.8
Other	-	17.0	12.8
All countries	100.0	100.0	100.0

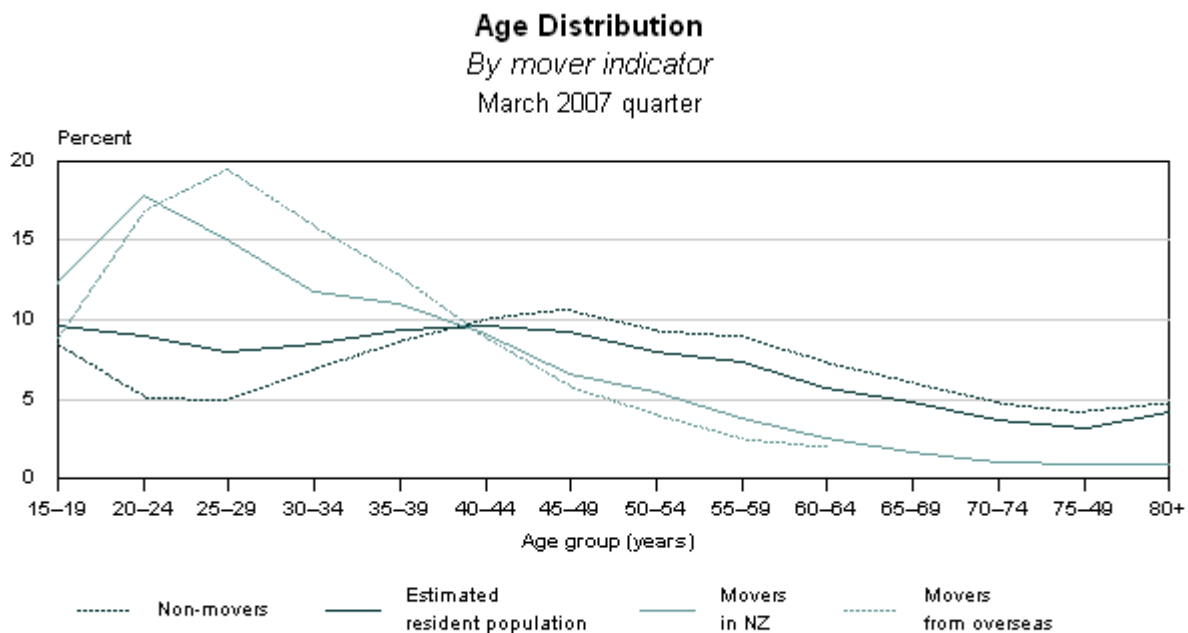
Symbol: - Figure not available due to low response for the category.

Of people born overseas (78,300 or 65 percent of all movers from overseas), the most frequent source was Asian countries (29 percent), followed by the UK (27 percent). Other countries comprised 17 percent, of which South Africa was the main source.

Who moved from overseas?

Movers within New Zealand and from overseas had a young age structure, while people who had not moved between the March 2005 and 2007 quarters had a slightly older age structure than the resident population. Movers from overseas had a slightly younger age structure than movers within New Zealand, reflecting the high proportion of Asian ethnicities coming to study in New Zealand secondary schools and tertiary education providers.

Figure 1



Note: Figures for movers to NZ aged 65 years and over are not available due to low responses for the categories.

The contrast between the younger age groups and the older age groups was reflected in the pivotal point at ages 40–44 years. People over 45 years were more likely to have reached a more settled stage in their lives: they may have school-aged children, have achieved a satisfactory level of work opportunities or work outcomes, and have already established homes. The younger age groups were more likely to be in the process of developing these experiences, skills, and assets prior to putting down roots.

People under 40 years of age who moved to New Zealand from overseas tended to be older than movers within New Zealand, reflecting international migration trends. A much smaller proportion of international arrivals were in the older age groups.

There were only slight differences in the age group distribution between returning New Zealanders and overseas-born. Most of returning New Zealanders were aged from 20–39 years (68 percent of those returning). This compared with 64 percent of the overseas-born moving to New Zealand aged from 20–39 years.

Table 2

Movers to New Zealand by Country of Birth				
<i>By employment status and occupation</i>				
March 2007 quarter				
Employment status	Occupation	Country of birth		All movers to New Zealand
		New Zealand	Overseas	
		Percent		
Working for pay or profit				
	Legislators/administrators/managers/professionals	28.5	23.7	25.5
	Technicians/associate professionals/clerks	13.2	10.7	11.6
	Service and sales workers/agriculture and fishery workers	9.5	7.1	8.0
	Trades workers/plant and machinery operators/labourers and elementary service workers	9.6	9.0	9.2
	All occupations	60.8	50.6	54.3
Not employed but seeking paid work		10.5	8.8	9.4
Not employed and not seeking paid work		28.7	40.6	36.3
Total stated		100.0	100.0	100.0

About half of overseas-born were employed at the time of their move to New Zealand in the two years ended March 2007 quarter. This proportion compared with 60 percent of returning New Zealanders. The occupations recorded for the overseas-born reflected the skills that were attracted through the immigration policies at the time. Interestingly, the distribution of occupations for returning New Zealanders and for the overseas-born were very similar, with a third of occupations in the professionals category (included in the legislators/administrators/professionals group which accounted for nearly half of those employed moving to New Zealand).

A larger proportion of overseas-born were not employed and not seeking paid work (41 percent). This group included overseas students (who generally cannot work as part of their visa requirements), and partners not seeking paid work.

Why did migrants move to New Zealand?

Qualitative information on reasons for moving to New Zealand was collected using an open-ended verbal question. The responses were an exact record of the reasons provided. A set of classifications was established to group the variety of responses received: social, education, employment, economic, housing, environment, political/cultural, and other.

Table 3

Main Reason for Moving to New Zealand <i>By country of birth</i> March 2007 quarter		
Main reason	Country of birth	
	New Zealand	Overseas
	Percent	
Social	35.1	32.4
Education	-	22.7
Employment	10.3	16.9
Economic	-	-
Housing	-	-
Environment	7.3	12.5
Political/cultural/other	41.3	15.1
Main reasons stated	100.0	100.0

Symbol: - Figure not available due to low response for the category.

Returning New Zealanders and the overseas-born were about equally likely to cite social reasons for moving to New Zealand (one-third of all reasons provided). Social reasons were most common among the overseas-born, while a large proportion of returning New Zealanders (41 percent) stated they were returning from work or travel overseas. Among the overseas-born, education and employment reasons were also important, followed by (but to a lesser extent) environment.

Table 4

Main Reason for Moving to New Zealand by Country of Previous Residence <i>For overseas born</i> March 2007 quarter			
Country of previous residence	Most common main reasons ranked		
	First	Second	Third
Australia	Social	Other	-
Pacific	Social	Employment	Education
UK	Environment	Social	Other
Other Europe	-	-	-
Asia	Education*	Social	Employment
North America	-	-	-
Other	Social	Employment	-

Symbol:

- Result not available due to low response for the category.

* Result should be used with caution due to high sample error for the category.

Among the overseas-born, those from Australia, the Pacific, and 'other' countries were more likely to cite social factors as their reason for moving to New Zealand, while those from the UK considered the environment more important than social factors. Education-related, rather than social-related motivators, were more important for movers from Asian countries.

Table 5

Main Reason for Moving to New Zealand by Age Group <i>For overseas born</i> March 2007 quarter			
Age group (years)	Most common main reasons ranked		
	First	Second	Third
Under 20	Social	-	-
20–29	Social	Education	Employment
30–39	Social	Employment	Environment
40–49	Education	Social	Environment
50+	Social	-	-

Symbol: - Result not available due to low response for the category.

Although social reasons dominated among all age groups, education-related factors were most important for the 40- to 49-year-olds born overseas who moved to New Zealand between the March 2005 and 2007 quarters. People in this age group may already have gained considerable work experience and may want to seek new opportunities and advancements in career development, and better education opportunities for their children. Environment-related factors were also important for those in the 30–39 and 40–49 age groups.

Where did migrants settle?

Among New Zealanders who returned to live in New Zealand between the March 2005 and 2007 quarters, three-quarters settled in the North Island. This is similar to the total New Zealand population living in the North Island. Similarly, one-third of returning New Zealanders chose to live in the Auckland region, which is home to the same proportion of the total New Zealand population living there. The neighbouring Waikato region also attracts a significant proportion of returning New Zealanders, as do Wellington and Canterbury. The four regions accounted for 70 percent of returning New Zealanders.

Table 6

Movers to New Zealand by Country of Birth <i>By region of current residence</i> March 2007 quarter				
Region	Country of birth			
	New Zealand	Overseas	New Zealand	Overseas
	(000)		Percent	
Auckland	14.1	44.1	34.4	56.7
Waikato ⁽¹⁾	3.0	5.1	7.4	6.6
Wellington	5.9	6.9	14.4	8.8
Remaining North Island ⁽²⁾	7.7	7.1	18.6	9.1
Canterbury	5.9	9.7	14.4	12.4
Remaining South Island ⁽³⁾	4.4	5.0	10.8	6.5
Region stated	41.1	77.9	100.0	100.0

(1) Figures should be used with caution due to high sample errors.

(2) Northland, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki and Manawatu-Wanganui regions combined.

(3) Tasman, Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast, Otago and Southland regions combined.

The settlement pattern for those born overseas differed from that of returning New Zealanders; more than half of the overseas-born settled in the Auckland region. Eighty-two percent settled in the North Island regions. Overseas-born migrants tended to settle in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch cities, so that only 15 percent of overseas-born migrants were outside Auckland, Waikato, Wellington and Canterbury regions.

Table 6

Mean Age of Movers to New Zealand by Current Residence <i>For selected regions</i> March 2007 quarter	
Region	Mean age
Auckland	32.1
Waikato	32.3
Wellington	32.1
Canterbury	38.5
New Zealand	33.6

By region (Auckland, Waikato, Wellington and Canterbury), there were differences in the age group pattern of the population who had moved from overseas. The North Island centres (Auckland, Waikato and Wellington) attracted tertiary students and young workers, resulting in a mean age of about 32 years, which was lower than the New Zealand mean age of all people who moved from overseas (34 years) during the two-year period. In contrast, Canterbury region also attracted the older age range of settlers, resulting in a much higher mean age (39 years) of settlers from overseas.

Where did migrants move after arriving in New Zealand?

People who move to a new country often do not settle into a permanent location immediately, but tend to be as mobile as the local population. People who had moved permanently to New Zealand from overseas between 2005 and 2007 may no longer live at their first New Zealand usual residence. In this short period, more than one-third (36 percent) of movers to New Zealand had moved within the country.

Table 7

Movers to New Zealand <i>By region of current residence</i> March 2005–2007 quarters			
Region	Not moved since arrival	Moved within/to region	Movers to New Zealand
	(000)		
Auckland	39.0	18.5	57.5
Waikato	6.0	-	8.2
Wellington	5.4	6.7	12.1
Remaining North Island ⁽¹⁾	9.7	5.0	14.6
Canterbury	7.2	7.7	14.9
Remaining South Island ⁽²⁾	6.9	-	9.5
Region stated	74.1	42.6	116.7

(1) Northland, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki and Manawatu-Wanganui regions combined.

(2) Tasman, Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast, Otago and Southland regions combined.

Symbol: - Figure not available due to low response for the category.

Note: Figures are based on respondents who specified both first and current residence in New Zealand.

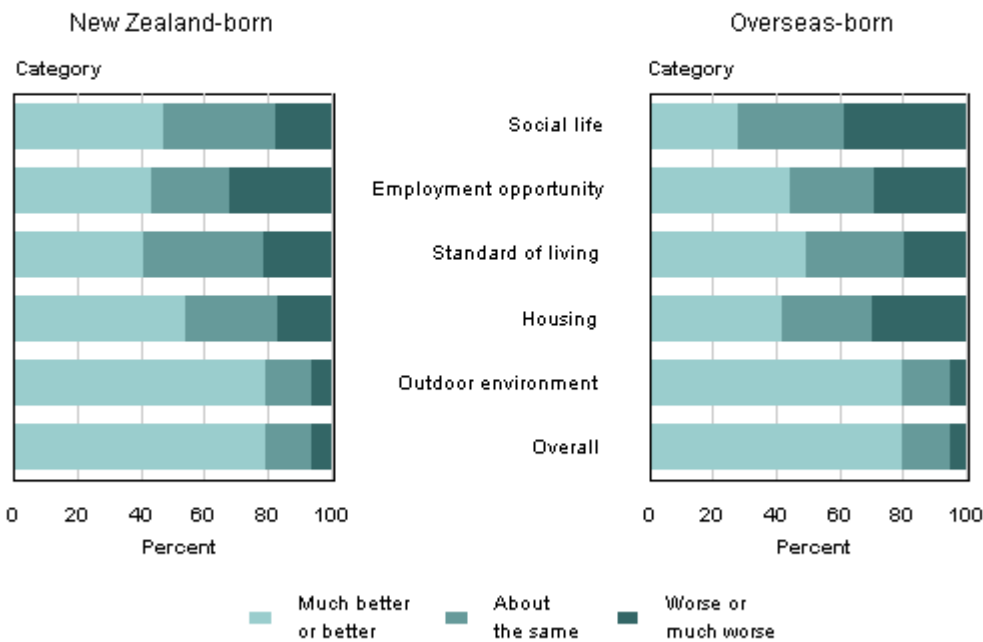
Two-thirds of the movers from overseas who initially settled in the Auckland region were still living at the same address, and the remaining one-third had now settled at a different residence. About 3,000 had moved from other regions to Auckland (mainly from Waikato). Almost all movers from overseas who first settled in Auckland (92 percent) remained living in the Auckland region, higher than recorded percentages for the Wellington and Canterbury regions (87 and 88 percent, respectively).

How did migrants rate their move to New Zealand?

Finally, how successful did the new settlers rate their move to New Zealand? This was measured by their ratings of social life, employment, standard of living, housing, and outdoor environment of the current situation in New Zealand compared with those in their previous country of residence. A rating for the overall level of satisfaction on how well things had worked out since arriving in New Zealand was included.

Figure 2

Rating of Outcome of Move to New Zealand
By country/region of birth and rating categories
 March 2007 quarter



Note: Respondents who were not seeking employment or not interested in employment opportunities did not provide a rating of employment opportunity.

As one might expect, given existing social networks are disrupted by migration, social life had the highest ratings of being worse or much worse (nearly 40 percent). Housing also had a less favourable rating with about 30 percent saying it was worse or much worse in their current situation.

Ratings of employment, outdoor environment and overall were similar for both returning New Zealanders and the overseas-born. Employment opportunity and standard of living had slightly better ratings among the overseas-born. Housing was rated more favourably among returning New Zealanders, but previous experience or expectations of these conditions would affect their ratings. Also, knowledge and networks could enable returning New Zealanders to secure better housing which landlords might be reluctant to let to new immigrants.

Both outdoor environment and overall ratings were very favourable for both population groups; 80 percent rated their experience of migration or return migration to New Zealand as having better or much better outcomes.

Information sources

The data used comes from the [Survey of Dynamics and Motivations for Migration in New Zealand: March 2007 quarter](#).

Technical notes

More details about the Survey of Dynamics and Motivations for Migration in New Zealand can be found in the links below.

[More information](#).

[Technical notes](#).

The document attached provides a three-level definition of the classification of reasons for moving from and to location, not moving location, moving to New Zealand and planning to move location.

The downloadable files are in Adobe Acrobat format. If you do not have the Adobe Acrobat Reader, you may download the [reader](#) to view or print the contents of this file.

[Classification of reasons for moving and not moving \(PDF, 39KB\)](#)

Glossary

Please refer to [Glossary](#).

Further information

This page is part of a web-based analytical report by Statistics New Zealand.

The report includes more than 10 topics. To see the other topics, go to the [Internal Migration](#) webpage.