



INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

REGIONAL FACT SHEET

Oceania

Migration accounts for one quarter of population growth in Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Ocean island countries, with the number of migrants in the Oceania region increasing from 4.8 million to 5 million over the period 1990–2005. Always a major receiving country for immigrants, Australia now has a migrant community which constitutes a fifth of the total population—the highest proportion of any country with a total population of 20 million or greater.

Virtually all gains from permanent migration to Australia in recent years come from developing countries, and half of this increase is accounted for by Asians. In New Zealand, incoming migration increases from developing countries more than counterbalance the losses associated with the high level of emigration of New Zealand citizens. *See Table 1.*

Table 1: Estimated numbers of migrants to Australia and New Zealand

Receiving country	Average annual number of migrants (thousands)			Average annual number of migrants from developing countries (thousands)			Percentage from developing countries		
	1990–1994	1995–1999	2000–2004	1990–1994	1995–1999	2000–2004	1990–1994	1995–1999	2000–2004
Immigrants									
Australia ^a	64	54	49	52	43	49	81	80	99
New Zealand	7	13	15	10	21	26	>100	>100	>100

Source: Calculated from the Population Division of the United Nations Secretariat, *International Migration Flows to and from Selected Countries: 2005 Revision (POP/DB/MIG/FL/Rev.2005)*, database in digital form.

^a Data for the most recent period referring to 2000–2003.

According to the Australian Government, 6.4 million migrants have arrived in the country since 1945. In the period mid-2004 to mid-2005, 26 per cent of new arrivals were from East Asian countries, 20 per cent from Europe and 17 per cent from other countries in Oceania.

Family reunification has been a cornerstone of migrant admissions in Australia, accounting for 37 per cent of immigrants during 1990–2002. The share of migration for family reunification has been lower, and continues to decline, in New Zealand during this same period.

There is a policy preference in the two countries for admission of skilled immigrants. In Australia, applicants for permanent residence are selected on the basis of a point system that assigns higher scores to persons with degrees or diplomas acceptable in Australia and at least three years of work experience. The Government increased the ceiling for immigration in 2002, allocating a large part of that increase to the skills category. In New Zealand, in 2003 the Government amended its selection criteria for skilled immigrants to better match its needs and took measures to facilitate the transition of skilled migrant workers from temporary to permanent status.

Australia is among the countries with large populations of foreign students in higher education, and the number of foreign students increased markedly between 1990 and 2002. Australia's rise as a major destination for foreign students stems from the Government's decision in the late 1980s to deregulate the educational sector, assist higher education institutions in establishing and marketing courses for overseas students, and easing visa restrictions for paying foreign students. Admission procedures for foreign students were simplified further by Australian authorities in 2002.

Australia and New Zealand have programmes to allow young citizens of selected countries to travel and work within the host country for periods that can last for one or two years. They are most likely to find temporary jobs in low-skilled occupations.

Concerns in Australia about border security were among the pressures leading in 2006 to a proposed law on "designated unauthorized arrivals". The bill, under which asylum-seekers who arrive on mainland Australia by boat would be sent offshore while their claims are processed, was passed in the Lower House of Parliament but withdrawn after debate in the Upper House, amid criticism from human rights activists, among others. □

Produced by the UN Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs