

Chinese leading race to NZ

Country now the biggest source of settlers, international students and visitors

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China has overtaken the United Kingdom for the first time to become the largest source country for total permanent migrants to New Zealand.

The annual Migration Trends and Outlook report shows that Chinese nationals made up 15 per cent of the 38,961 people who were approved a resident visa in the 2012/13 year, ahead of the UK and India, both on 13 per cent.

China was where more than one in four international students came from and also had the "largest absolute increase" in visitor arrivals, up 47,000 or 29 per cent, to move up from third to top spot.

New Zealand enjoyed a 7900 net migration gain, reversing a loss of 3200 in the previous year – which was the first such loss since 2000/01.

The report was predicting that permanent and long-term net migration will exceed 30,000 from the middle of this year as the economy continues to grow.

Nearly one in five skilled migrants now come from India, ahead of the UK on 15 per cent, mainly due to an increase in international students becoming permanent residents.

Immigration expert Paul Spoonley said the trend of "three Asian countries consistently being among the top four" largest migrant source countries, and with the UK "dropping back", meant New Zealand's population makeup could "change more rapidly than anticipated".

Nearly 36 per cent of permanent migrants were from three Asian nations, which were China (5794), India (5128) and the Philippines (3051).

Henry Chung, an associate professor in marketing, said with China becoming the top migrant source country, schools should be teaching Mandarin and businesses employing Mandarin-speaking staff.

Immigration Minister Michael



Yu Chen Wei, who gained citizenship in 2006, wants to help other Chinese move here.

Picture / Richard Robinson.

Migration trends 2012-13

Net migration

A gain of 7900, reversing a net loss of 3200 in 2011/12.

Permanent migrants

Down 4% to 38,961. China largest source country for first time ahead of UK. India largest source of skilled migrants (19%) followed by UK (15%).

Temporary workers

Up 5% to 144,978. Also a 2% increase in people admitted under

essential skills policy, the first since start of global economic slowdown.

International students

Down 7% to 64,232. Likely factors were high NZ dollar, increased international competition, Christchurch earthquakes. China largest source country (27%), followed by India (13%) and South Korea (8%). One in five students gained permanent residence.

Family-sponsored migrants China largest source country in both uncapped (42%) and capped (17%)

family streams, which enable NZ citizens and permanent residents to sponsor close family members for residence. 11,291 approved in uncapped stream, 4401 in capped. International/Inumanitarian About two-fifths of approvals from Pacific countries, 1300 in Samoan Quota Scheme and Pacific Access Category. Largest source countries for quota refugees were Burma (28%), Bhutan (18%), Iraq (17%). Visitors: Arrivals unchanged at 1.25 million (excluding Australians). Top three countries China, US and UK.

Woodhouse said the fact that more people moved here than left for overseas showed "our policies are working".

But New Zealand First leader and immigration spokesman Winston Peters said family-sponsored migrants, a category which China also topped, was bringing in migrants who

were "older rather than younger". "We're concerned with migrants gaining access to full New Zealand superannuation after just 10 years, many having contributed little if not anything to the tax base."

Chinese immigrant Yu Chen Wei, 26, who came from Beijing as an international student and gained citi-

zenship in 2006, is now working for an immigration adviser with a dream to help other Chinese nationals move here.

"There are many Chinese who dream of either moving here or to remain here permanently, and I want to be in a position where I can help them."