

Family Migration

The Family Stream of Australia's Migration Program enables the reunion of immediate family members such as spouses, fiance(e)s, interdependent partners, dependent children, adopted children and certain other members of extended families such as parents, orphan relatives, carers, aged dependent relatives, and remaining relatives. Migrants in the Family Stream are accepted on the basis of their family relationship with their sponsor in Australia; there is no test for skills or language ability as there is for Skilled Stream migrants.

The number of Family visas was 56,700 in 1995–96 but subsequently fell to 31,310 in 1997–98. The number has subsequently risen to reach 40,794 in 2002–03. In 1995–96 Family visas represented 68.7 per cent of Migration Program outcomes but this has since fallen to 37.7 per cent in 2002–03. This shift reflects the emphasis in the Migration Program towards skilled migration.

In 2002–03, 14.5 per cent of Family Stream visas were granted to people born in the United Kingdom, 10.1 per cent to people born in the PRC, 6.6 per cent to people from Viet Nam and 5.8 per cent to people from the Philippines.

The planned level for the Family Stream in 2003–04 is 47,100 visas, (including a parent contingency reserve of 6,500), which represents 40.4 per cent to 44.2 per cent of the Migration Program, if the program is delivered at 116,500 places or 106,500 places respectively.

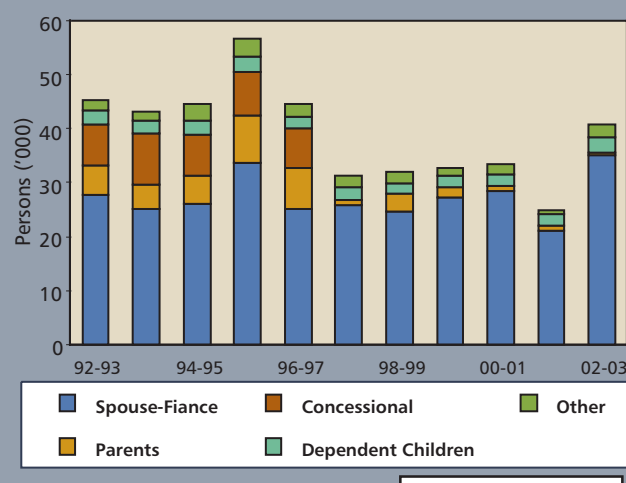
Partner

The Partner visa category includes spouse, prospective marriage (fiance(e)) and interdependency visa subclasses. In 2001–02 Partners accounted for 87.5 per cent (33,340 persons) of Family Stream visa grants; in 2002–03, they accounted for 86.0 per cent (35,076 persons). In 2002–03, the largest number of Partner visas were granted to people born in the United Kingdom (15.7 per cent), followed by the PRC (8.7 per cent), Viet Nam (6.6 per cent) and the Philippines (5.1 per cent).

New processing arrangements for Partner visas, introduced in Australia in 2000 and overseas in late 2001, have significantly reduced processing times. Processing times in Australian offices have been halved to 2.5 months, and the median processing time for Partner visa applications lodged overseas is now less than 4 months.

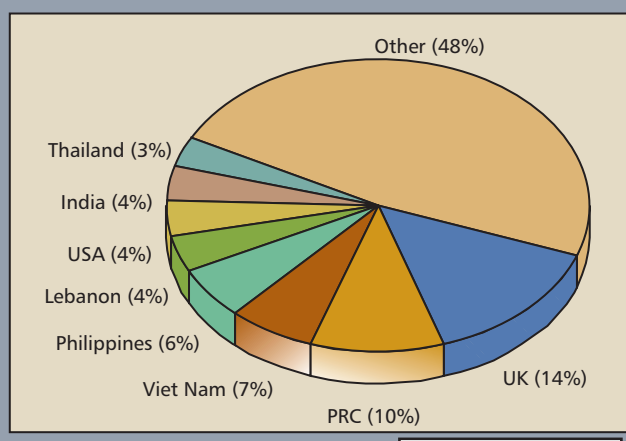
At the same time, the number of unfinalised applications in process in Australia has decreased by 40 per cent (from 8,041 cases in August 2001 to 4,780 cases in June 2003) and overseas by 35 per cent (from 13,528 cases in August 2001 to 8,800 cases in June 2003).

Fig. 2-10: Family Stream Outcomes by Visa



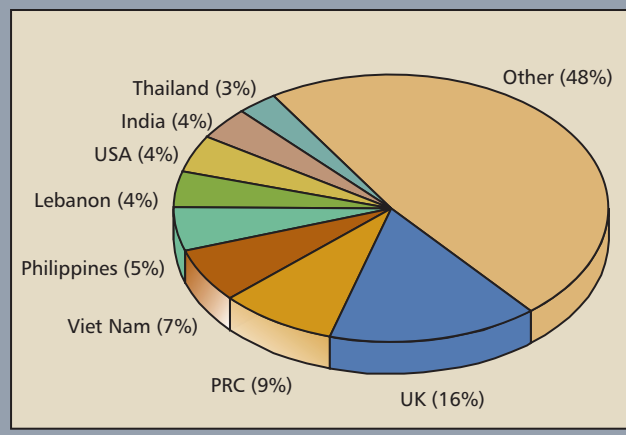
Source Data: MPMS and IMIRS

Fig. 2-11: Family Stream Outcomes by Country of Birth 2002-03



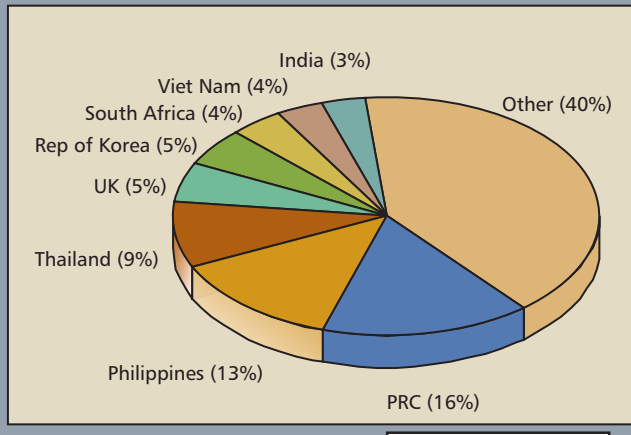
Source Data: MPMS and IMIRS

Fig. 2-12: Spouse and Fiance Outcomes by Country of Birth 2002-03



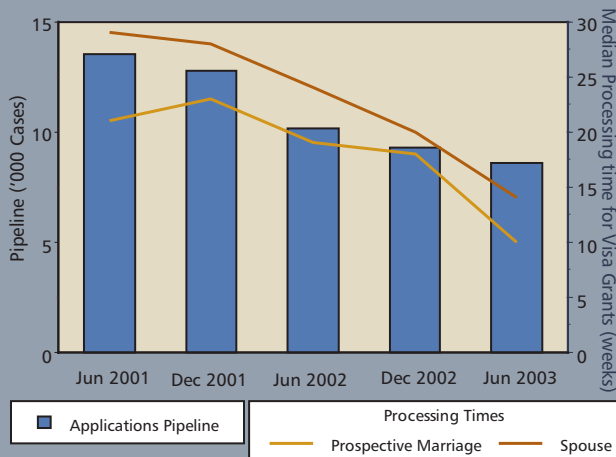
Source Data: MPMS and IMIRS

Fig. 2-13: Dependent Children Outcomes by Country of Birth 2002–03



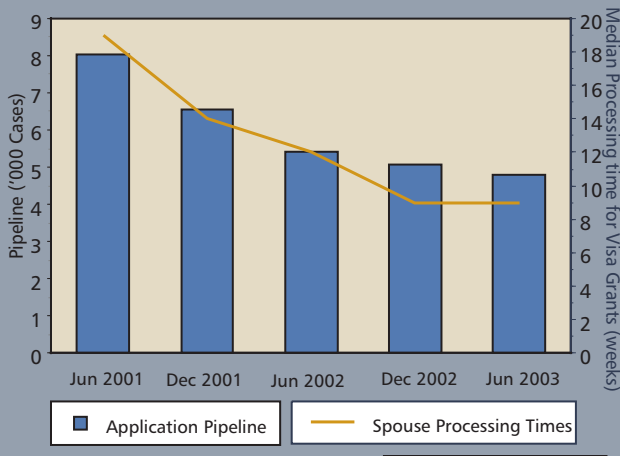
Source Data: MPMS and IMIRS

Fig. 2-14: Offshore Partner Visa Applications Pipeline and Processing Times



Source Data: MPMS and IMIRS

Fig. 2-15: Onshore Partner Visa Applications Pipeline and Processing Times



Source Data: MPMS and IMIRS

Fig. 2-14 shows the decline in the Partner visa application pipeline overseas and the reduction in median processing times. Fig. 2-15 shows a similar decline in the pipeline and processing times in Australia.

The refusal rate for overseas Partner visa applications is currently 21.0 per cent, compared with 12.6 per cent in 1999–00. The refusal rate for Partner visa applications in Australia has remained between 7 per cent and 10 per cent since introduction of the new arrangements and is currently 8.5 per cent.

Specialist Bona Fides Units (BFUs) were also established in all Australian offices at the beginning of 2002 to further enhance the integrity of Partner visa processing. The Units undertake more intensive checking in cases where possible fraud has been identified.

During 2002–03, 920 cases were finalised, following BFU activity. Of these 27 per cent were refused as the parties were not in a genuine relationship (compared with an overall refusal rate in Australia of 8.5 per cent); 68 per cent were granted after establishing the bona fides of the relationship; 5 per cent of applications were withdrawn.

Child

The Child category includes Dependent Children, Orphan Relatives and Adopted Children. A total of 2,162 visas were granted in this category in 2001–02 (5.7 per cent of grants in the Family Stream) and 2,681 visas were granted in 2002–03 (6.6 per cent of grants in the Family Stream). In 2002–03, the largest number of visas in the Child category were granted to people born in the PRC (16.0 per cent), followed by the Philippines (13.2 per cent), Thailand (8.8 per cent) and the United Kingdom (5.3 per cent).

Parents

Since 1999–00, the Government has limited the number of parent places available to 500 each program year. This follows research indicating that migrants in the parent category pose a relatively high ongoing cost to the Australian community.

In 2002–03, 500 parent visas were granted. There were also 13 designated parent visas granted, a now-closed category introduced in November 1999 to allow for parents affected by the Senate's disallowance of a new parent category in March 1999. This compares with 559 parent visas granted in 2001–02, comprising 508 parent visas and 51 designated parent visas.

In 2002–03, the largest number of Parent visas were granted to people born in the PRC (32.2 per cent), followed by the United Kingdom (14.8 per cent), South Africa (6.8 per cent) and India (5.7 per cent).

At 30 June 2003 some 23,210 persons remained in the Parent pipeline with some 16,400 (71 per cent) in the queue. Around 17,140 persons had submitted their applications offshore while around 6,070 applications were onshore. This compares with 16,382 and 5,535 respectively at the end of 2001–02.

Legislation to introduce a new contributory parent migration category was passed by Parliament in March 2003.

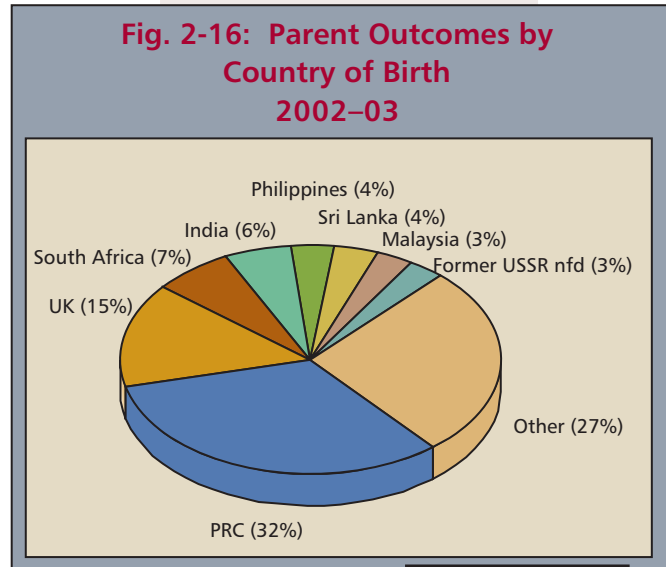
A total of 7,000 parent places will be available in 2003–04, including 1,500 in the parent visa category and 5,500 in the contributory parent visa category. Any unused places will be made available in the following year.

The contributory parent category was introduced to provide a means for fairer sharing of the costs associated with parent migration between the Australian taxpayer and parent migrants and their sponsors. Applicants make a higher contribution to their future health and welfare costs than applicants in the parent category by paying a substantial second visa application charge (\$25,000 per adult) and a ten-year Assurance of Support bond (\$10,000 for the main applicant and \$4,000 for adult secondary applicants). The category took effect on 27 June 2003 for applicants residing outside Australia, and on 1 July 2003 for applicants residing in Australia. Parents migrating under the contributory category are estimated to make a net contribution of some \$127 million over four years to Consolidated Revenue. This is to partly offset the cost that these older migrants are estimated to impose on Australia's health system.

All applications for Parent visas from persons residing overseas are processed at the Perth Offshore Parents Centre, resulting in significant efficiency gains, due to specialisation and economies of scale.

Priority processing

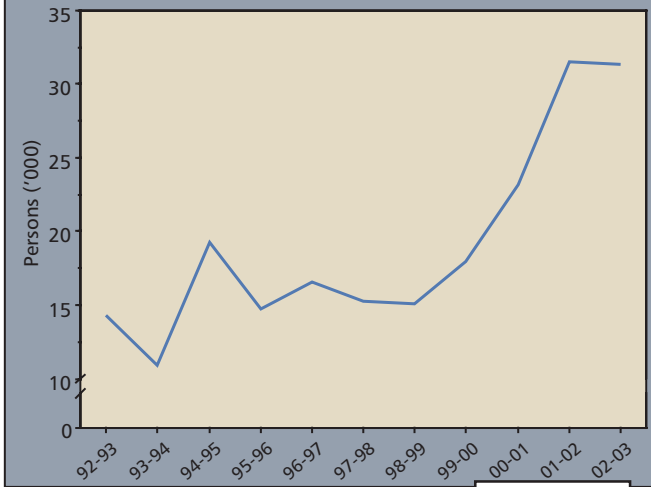
The Minister has given a Direction under section 499 of the Migration Act on the order of priority for processing Family Stream visa applications. Higher priority is given to immediate family members, such as dependent children (including children for adoption and orphan relatives), spouses, fiance(e)s and interdependent partners of sponsors in Australia. Lower priority is accorded to parents and other family members.



Source Data: MPMS and IMIRS

Onshore Residence Outcomes

Fig. 2-17: Onshore Residence Outcomes

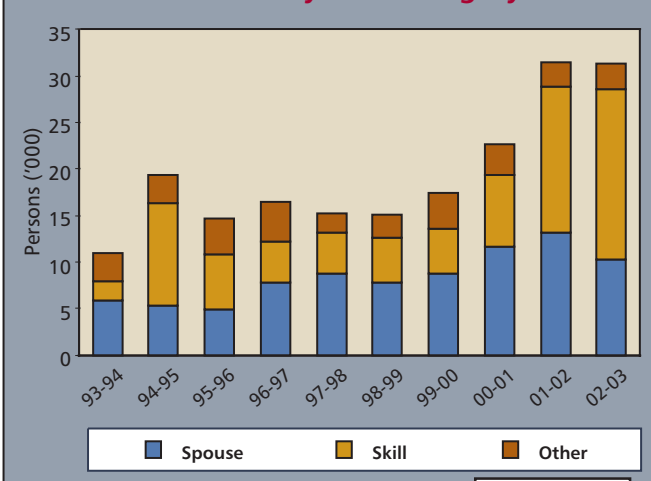


Source Data: IMIRS

While most people apply for migration at an Australian mission overseas and enter on a permanent visa, there are circumstances where people already in Australia on a temporary visa are able to apply to remain permanently, have their applications processed onshore and be granted a permanent visa. People granted residence on a skill, family or special residence basis after arrival in Australia are included in the Migration Program. Permanent visas may be granted onshore to applicants for most Family Stream categories, except fiancé(e)s, and to some Skill Stream categories, including the Employer Nomination Scheme, the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme, the Business Skills category and the '1 November 1993' categories. From 1 July 2001, overseas students completing their courses in Australia also can apply onshore for permanent residence in the Skill Stream.

In 2002-03, the Migration Program included 31,330 persons granted residence after applying for a permanent visa in Australia, representing 29 per cent of the grants under the Migration Program.

Fig. 2-18: Onshore Residence Outcomes by Visa Category

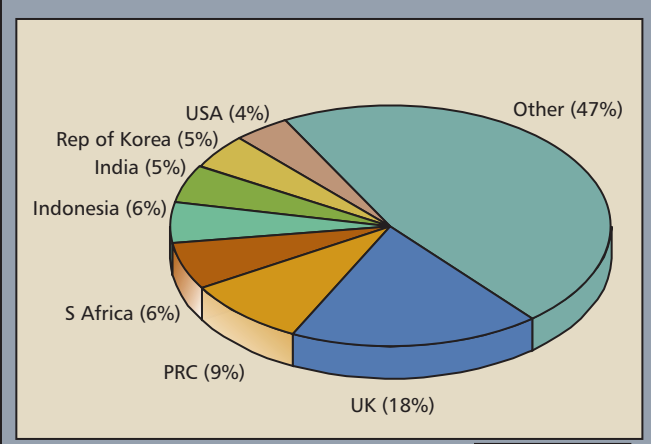


Source Data: IMIRS

In 2002-03 some 8,890 visas were granted in Australia to successful overseas students in the general skilled categories under provisions introduced on 1 July 2001. This is an increase of 41.7 per cent over the outcome for 2001-02. In addition, there has been a 3.0 per cent increase in total Employer Nomination Scheme, Labour Agreements and Business Skills grants onshore (included in the Skill Stream in Fig. 2-18) since 2001-02. This increase reflects the rise in the number of skilled workers and business people coming to Australia on temporary visas who later apply for permanent visas, sponsored by their employer or on the basis of having operated a successful business in Australia. The Temporary Entry Chapter has more details about these temporary visas.

In 2002-03, the main countries of birth for people granted onshore residence visas were the United Kingdom (18.4 per cent), the PRC (9.1 per cent), South Africa (6.3 per cent), Indonesia (5.6 per cent) and India (5.1 per cent).

Fig. 2-19: Onshore Residence Outcomes by Country of Birth 2002-03



Source Data: IMIRS