

Bridging Visas

Bridging visas allow certain non-citizens, who would otherwise be considered unlawful and would therefore be subject to detention, to remain lawfully in Australia while their substantive visa application is assessed. In 2004-05 245,950 bridging visas were granted, compared with 247,169 in 2003-04. The majority of these were Bridging Visa A (74.2%), followed by Bridging Visa E (20.9%).

In general, the non-citizens covered by bridging visas are those who:

- have made (or plan to make) an application in Australia for a visa which can be granted while they are in Australia, and the application has not been decided;
- are seeking review through an administrative review body (such as the Migration Review Tribunal, the Refugee Review Tribunal or the Administrative Appeal Tribunal) of a decision in relation to their substantive visa application or have made an application for review to the courts; or
- are making departure arrangements to leave Australia.

Bridging Visa Classes

The classes of bridging visas are:

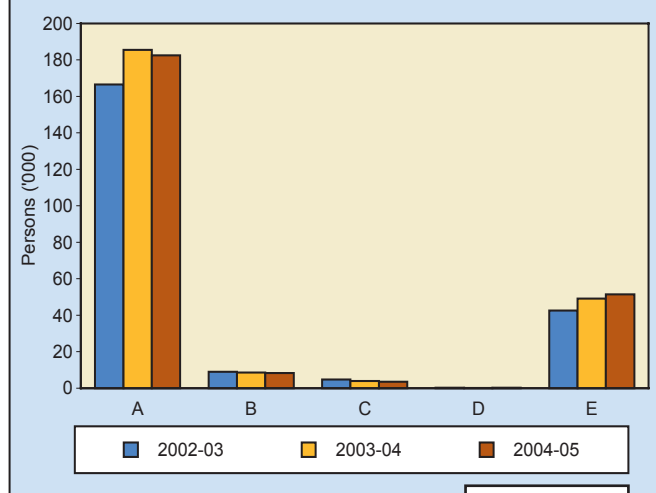
- **Bridging Visa A (BVA)**- available to non-citizens who apply for a visa within Australia and who hold another visa (other than a Bridging Visa or Criminal Justice Visa) at time of application. 182,427 were granted in 2004-05, compared to 185,432 in 2003-04.
- **Bridging Visa B (BVB)** - available to Bridging Visa A holders who have a substantial reason for wanting to travel outside Australia while their visa application is being considered. 8,315 were granted in 2004-05, compared to 8,575 in 2003-04.
- **Bridging Visa C (BVC)** - available to applicants who do not hold a visa when they apply for another visa while in Australia. 3,508 were granted in 2004-05.
- **Bridging Visa D (BVD)** Prospective Applicant - a short term bridging visa available to persons who want to make an application for a visa but are temporarily unable to do so; or, who do not want to apply for a visa but a compliance officer is not available to interview them. 192 were granted in 2004-05, compared to 114 in 2003-04.
- **Bridging Visa E (BVE)** - available to certain unlawful non-citizens who come to the attention of DIMIA and who may be applying for visas or making arrangements to depart Australia. 51,447 were granted in 2004-05, compared to 49,118 in 2003-04.
- **Bridging Visa F (BVF)** - under the provisions of this visa, unlawful non-citizens who are of interest in relation to a people trafficking matter may be able to remain in Australia for up to 30 days. The 30 day period allows time for the person to

reflect on whether they wish to further assist the AFP, State and Territory Police. It also allows the AFP, State or Territory Police to assess whether they wish to seek a Criminal Justice Stay Certificate (CJSC) for that person. The issue of a CJSC is a criterion for the grant of a Criminal Justice Stay Visa. DIMIA adopts a low threshold for referral to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) in cases where indicators of people trafficking are detected. Between 1 January 2004 to 30 June 2005, 126 matters with 159 identified suspected trafficked persons were referred to the AFP.

The new Removal Pending Bridging Visa (RPBV) came into effect on 11 May 2005 and the Migration Regulations were revised on 16 June 2005. This visa was introduced to enable the release, pending removal, of people in immigration detention who have been cooperating with efforts to remove them from Australia, but whose removal is not reasonably practicable at that time. A RPBV may be granted using the Minister's new non delegable, non compellable public interest power, under section 195A of the Migration Act 1958, to grant a visa to a person in immigration detention.

The conditions attached to a bridging visa may vary according to the substantive visa applied for, as well as the applicant's immigration status and personal circumstances at time of application.

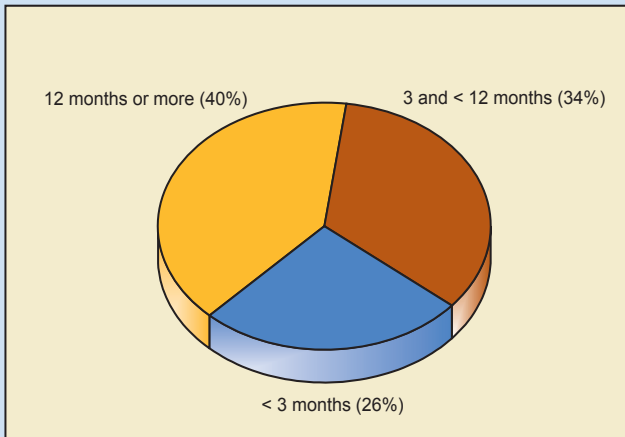
Fig. 5-28: Total Number of Bridging Visa Grants



Source Data: IMIRS

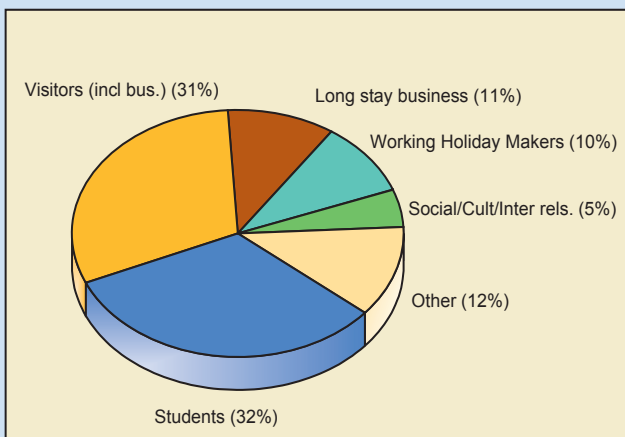
Stock of Temporary Entrants

Fig. 5-29: Stock of Temporary Entrants by Duration of Stay 30 June 2005



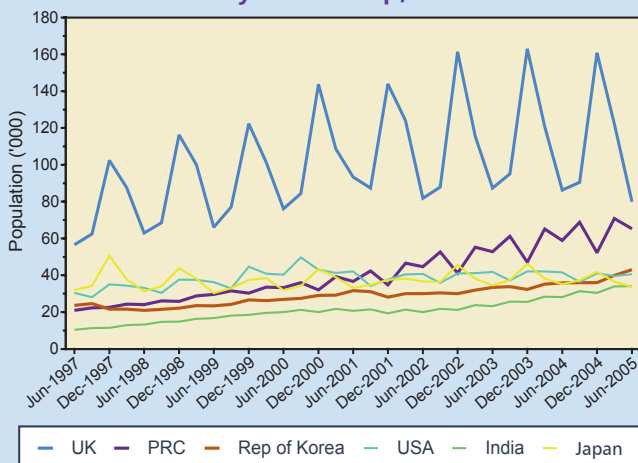
Source Data: Stock of Temporary Entrants, DIMIA

Fig. 5-30: Stock of Temporary Entrants by Entry Category 30 June 2005



Source Data: Stock of Temporary Entrants, DIMIA

Fig. 5-31: Stock of Temporary Entrants in Australia by Citizenship, 30 June 2005



Source Data: Stock of Temporary Entrants, DIMIA

An estimate of the temporary population in Australia at a particular point in time can be made by counting the stock of temporary entrants, that is, the number of temporary entrants physically present in Australia at a particular date.

At 30 June 2005, there were an estimated 599,629 people in Australia on temporary entry visas excluding New Zealand citizens. This estimate has increased by 1.7 per cent compared to the number at 30 June 2004. Of these people, 205,588 had been in Australia for less than three months; 236,576 had been here for between three and up to 12 months; and 157,465 had been here for more than twelve months. The median length of stay of the stock as at this date was just under 5 months. This includes temporary entrants who have recently arrived and have an actual stay of only a few days or weeks but intend to legally stay much longer.

Temporary entrants include tourists, students, working holiday makers (WHM), business people and executives, and entrants for social, cultural, international relations and other purposes. They also include people holding bridging visas who have applied for a permanent visa eg. asylum seekers who have applied for Protection visas.

While the individuals are constantly turning over and there are seasonal fluctuations in the number and type of temporary entrants in Australia at any given time, the number of temporary entrants to Australia has increased consistently over the last five years. As is evident from the graphs, seasonal fluctuations are most prevalent for individuals arriving in Australia on student and visitor visas. Student numbers increase in the March and September quarters each year reflecting the attendance requirements of the academic year. Visitor numbers are highest during the Australian summer, and are lowest in the middle of the year.

Of those here temporarily at 30 June 2005, the largest group were citizens of the United Kingdom* (79,870 persons), followed by the PRC (65,324 persons), Republic of Korea (43,020 persons), the USA (40,552 persons), and India (34,055 persons). Compared with June 2004, the stock of citizens from the United Kingdom and the United States has decreased while the stock of citizens from PRC, Rep of Korea and India has increased. The stock of PRC citizens has increased by 10.9 per cent, Republic of Korea by 19.8% and India by 21.2% in the last year.

The median age of the total stock of temporary entrants was 27 years at 30 June 2005.

The stock of temporary entrants comprised 192,775 students, 169,005 visitors (excluding business visitors), 48,914 bridging visa holders, 62,700 long stay business entrants, 57,703 working holiday makers, 29,449 who entered for social, cultural or international relations purposes, 13,415 business visitors, and 22,277 who came for other purposes.

Stock of Visitors

The number of visitors in Australia fluctuates throughout the year depending on the season. At 30 June, the stock of visitors in Australia is at the lowest point for the year. 175,485 visitors (excluding business visitors) were in Australia at 30 June 2005. This was 1.9 per cent lower than the previous year, which was 0.4 per cent lower than the number in Australia at 30 June 2003.

Individuals on visitor visas (excluding business visitors) do not stay in Australia for as long as other temporary entrants, with the median length of current stay at 30 June 2005 being 25 days.

The number of visitors present in Australia at 30 June 2005 represented 4.9 per cent of all visitor visas issued in 2003–04. The median age of visitors is a little higher than for other visa categories, at 41 years for June 2005.

Fig. 5-32 shows the stock of visitors (excluding business visitors) in the five largest countries of citizenship from June 1997 to June 2005. Of the current top citizenship groups, citizens from the United Kingdom have the strongest seasonal trend.

Stock of Business Visitors

Business visitors comprised just under 18 per cent of all temporary business entrants in Australia at 30 June 2005. The median age of short stay temporary business residents was higher than for long-term business entrants at 39 years.

Fig. 5-33 shows the number of business visitors by country of citizenship in Australia at quarterly intervals since June 1997. At 30 June 2005 there were a total of 13,415 business visitors, down slightly compared with the previous year. Of the major countries, the United Kingdom, PRC and India were the only citizenship groups to have increased since the previous year.

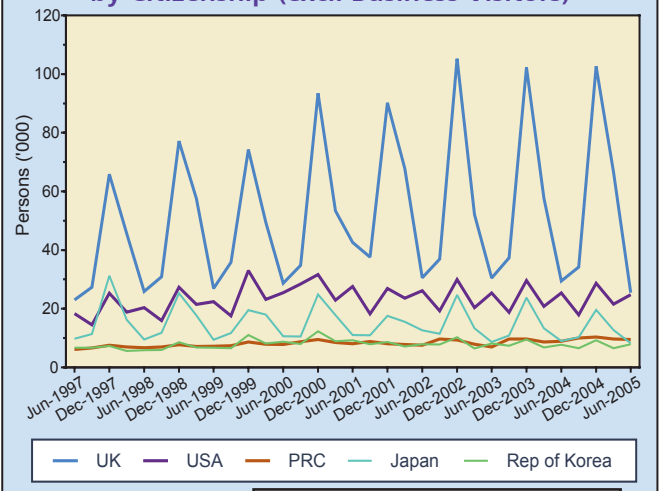
Although 298,839 Business Visitor visas were granted in 2003–04, the number in Australia at any time that year was low. This is consistent with the purpose of the Business Visitor visa, which is typically for pursuing business interests over a few days or weeks. The median duration of stay of business visitors in Australia at 30 June was 12 days.

Stock of Students

The stock of students in Australia is highest in the March quarter and lowest in the December quarter, consistent with the requirements for the academic year. Numbers are a little lower for the June quarter but pick up slightly for the September quarter of each year. At 30 June 2005 the stock of 192,775 students in Australia had increased by 7.6 per cent compared with the number at 30 June 2004. The median duration of stay at 30 June 2005 of this stock was just under 5 months. The median age of students was 23 years.

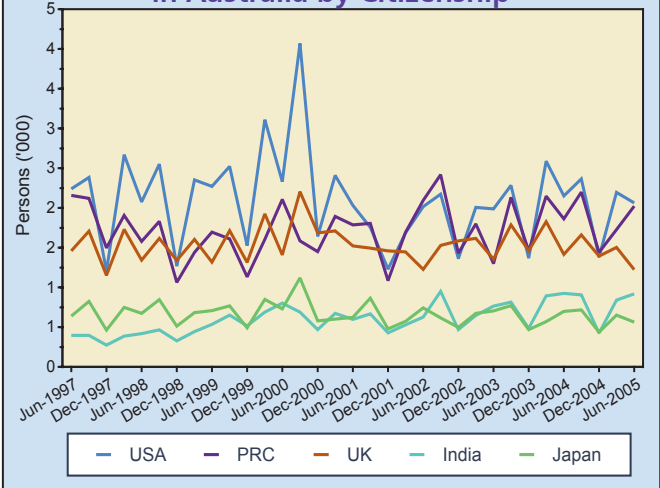
Fig. 5-34 shows the changes in numbers of the top citizenship groups for the last eight years. The data suggest that students

Fig. 5-32: Stock of Visitors in Australia by Citizenship (excl. Business Visitors)



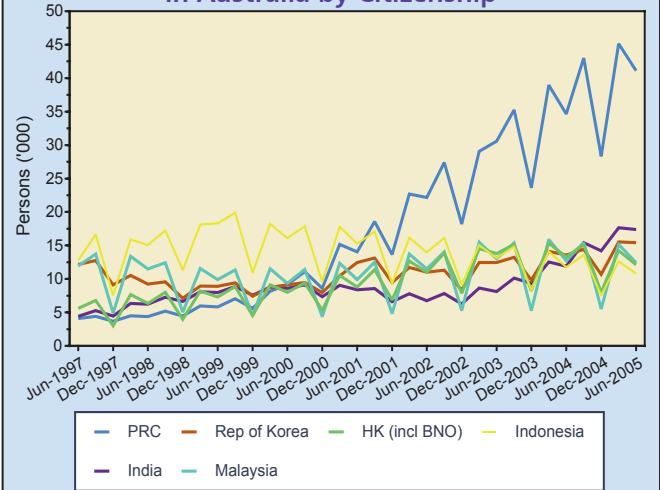
Source Data: Stock of Temporary Entrants, DIMIA

Fig. 5-33: Stock of Temporary Business Visitors in Australia by Citizenship



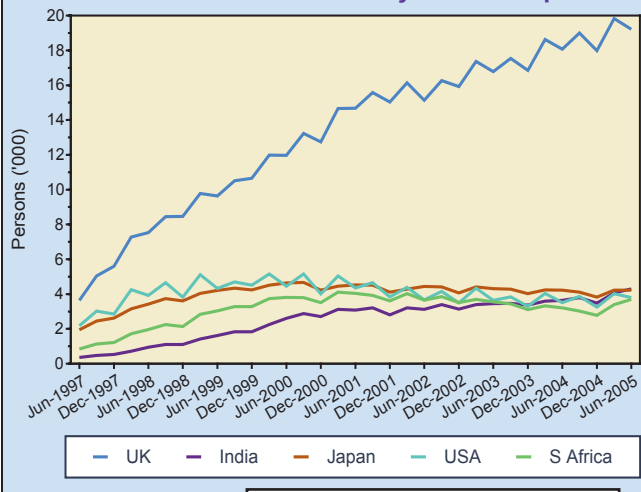
Source Data: Stock of Temporary Entrants, DIMIA

Fig. 5-34: Stock of Students in Australia by Citizenship



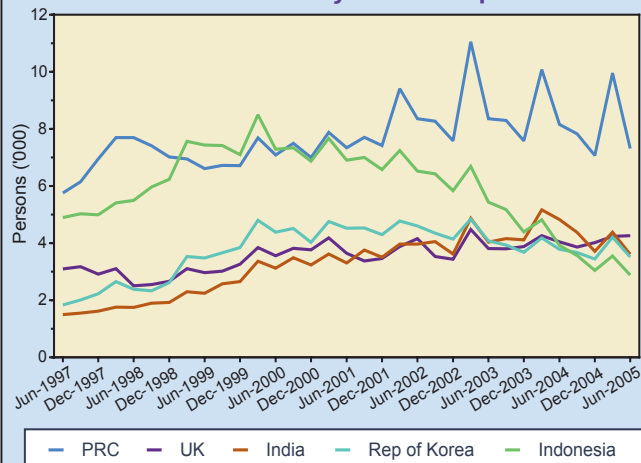
Source Data: Stock of Temporary Entrants, DIMIA

Fig. 5-35: Stock of Temporary Business (Long Stay) Residents in Australia by Citizenship



Source Data: Stock of Temporary Entrants, DIMIA

Fig. 5-36: Stock of Bridging Visas in Australia by Citizenship



Source Data: Stock of Temporary Entrants, DIMIA

from neighbouring countries are more likely to return home for holidays at the end of the school year than other overseas students. Of particular note is the continued significant growth in the number of students from the PRC. The stock of PRC students more than tripled between June 1998 and June 2001, and increased by 58 per cent between June 2001 and June 2002 (from 14,037 to 22,184 persons). Between June 2002 and June 2004, the increase was 12,458 (56 per cent) and the increase from June 2004 to June 2005 was 6,438.(18.6%) DIMIA has facilitated this growth by enhancing and streamlining visa requirements. The Government implemented recommendations from the 2001 review, commencing from 1 December 2003. These changes introduced more flexibility to the evidentiary requirements for higher risk student visa applicants, while ensuring that key integrity measures are maintained.

Stock of Working Holiday Makers

The stock of working holiday makers has increased from 51,969 at June 2004 to 57,703 at June 2005. Citizens from the United Kingdom continue as the largest source for visa group, but citizens from the Republic of Korea are a rapidly increasing component, from 12% at June 2004 to 20% at June 2005. The median age of the stock of working holiday makers at June 2005 was 24 years, and their median duration of stay was around 4 months.

Stock of Temporary Business (Long Stay) Residents

There were a total of 62,700 long stay business entrants at 30 June 2005, 8 per cent higher than at the same time last year. This visa is for specialist workers in Australia for up to 4 years, but many on this visa travel in and out of Australia. As with many visas, this visa can be issued onshore. The median duration of long stay business entrants at June 2005 was a little under 6 months.

Fig. 5-35 shows the top five citizenship groups of those currently visaed as long stay business entrants in Australia since June 2001. The stock of United Kingdom citizens continues to dominate long stay business entrants at 31 per cent of this group. In 2001-02, the stock of Japanese citizens overtook that of the United States by a clear margin for the first time. The median age of the Long Stay Business visa group at June 2005 was 31 years.

Stock of Entrants on Bridging Visas

The stock of entrants in Australia on Bridging visas at 30 June 2005 was 48,914, down by 12 per cent compared to June 2004. The median age of Bridging visa holders was 34 years.

Fig. 5-36 highlights the stock of bridging visa holders by country of citizenship in Australia. Citizens from the PRC and the United Kingdom, followed by, India, Republic of Korea and Indonesia, hold larger numbers of Bridging visas than entrants from other countries.

Overstayers

Who are Overstayers?

Overstayers are those non-citizens who do not depart by the expiry date of their visa and remain in the Australian community illegally. They are people who arrive in Australia with valid temporary visas, mainly as tourists but also as working holiday-makers, students and temporary residents.

Profile of Overstayers

The number of visa overstayers in the Australian community at 30 June 2005 was estimated to be around 47,800. This is a significant decrease on the estimate of just under 51,000 at 30 June 2004, and around 59,800 as at 30 June 2003.

In part, the sustained fall in the estimate over recent years has arisen because of improvements in data quality following the initiation of an overstayer project in August 2002. This project has looked at a variety of methods to validate data that has been collected by the Department since 1981.

The reduction in the estimate is also consistent with a high level of adherence to conditions of entry to Australia, which is a product of effective screening arrangements overseas, and significant levels of onshore compliance activity by the Department.

Many people who are recorded as overstayers are simply extending a short stay in Australia by a few days or weeks, and leave of their own accord within a short period.

At 30 June 2005, visitor visa holders comprised the greatest number of overstayers (around 40,630), followed by student visa overstayers (around 2,860), temporary resident overstayers (around 2,220), with other visa categories constituting around 2,090 overstayers.

Nationality of Overstayers

At 30 June 2005, the largest number of overstayers were from the United States of America (approximately 4,940), the United Kingdom (approximately 4,075) the People's Republic of China (approximately 3,760), Indonesia (approximately 2,675) and the Republic of Korea (approximately 2,620).

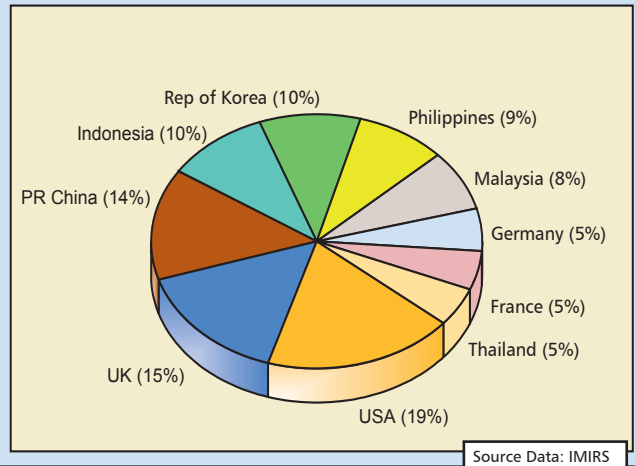
This ranking reflects, to a certain extent, the fact that many of these countries are also the source of the biggest number of visitors. While visitors from countries such as the USA and UK are the highest overstayers in absolute terms, as a percentage of the number of visitor and temporary visas issued to persons from those countries, they are a low overstay risk.

Age and Sex of Overstayers

As at 30 June 2005, approximately 60 per cent of recorded overstayers were male and 40 per cent were female.

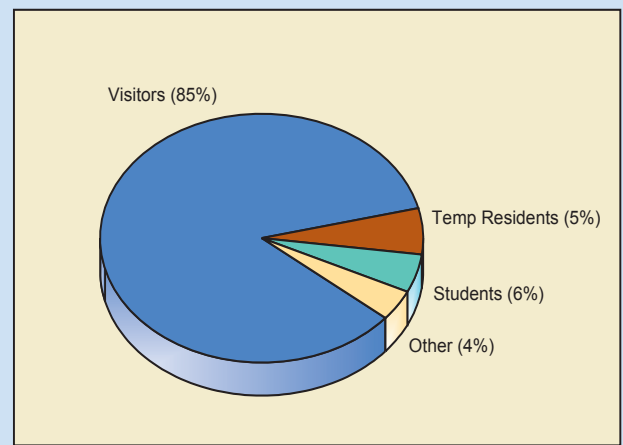
The largest age-group of overstayers is 41-50 years of age, followed by 31-40 years of age.

Fig. 5-37: Composition of Overstayers by Citizenship at 30 June 2005



Source Data: IMIRS

Fig. 5-38: Overstayers at 30 June 2005 by Visa Category



Source Data: IMIRS