

s22

**Release under FOI Act**

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**From:** s22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au  
**Sent:** Friday, 19 September 2025 4:23 PM  
**To:** David Gruen <david.gruen@abs.gov.au>; s22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au; s22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au; Brenton Goldsworthy <brenton.goldsworthy@abs.gov.au>; Elizabeth Williamson <elizabeth.williamson@abs.gov.au>; Kylie Br <p [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>; Denise Carlton <Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au>; s22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au; Phillip Gould <p [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>; s22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au; D [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au; s22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au; wski liszewski@abs [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au; d.Waymouth@abs.gov.au>; s22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au; s22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>  
**Cc:** s22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au; s22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au  
**Subject:** FYI - Release of Decision for FOI 2025 26-10 - Documents relating to Minister's correspondence regarding ABS's Overseas Arrivals and Departures  
[SEC=OFFICIAL]

For Information | No Action Required | Alternative Contact: s22 [REDACTED]

Hi all

**Release of Decision for 'FOI 2025 26-10' - Documents relating to Minister's correspondence regarding Overseas Arrivals and Departures**

The ABS has released a decision on an FOI request for access to:

Request: [REDACTED]

*'Copies of correspondence with Minister Leigh or his representatives, created, sent, or received, between 1 May 2025 to 21 August 2025, in relation to the ABS's 'Overseas arrivals and departures, Australia's data series.'*

<b>FOI Reference:</b>	FOI 2025 26-10
<b>Received:</b>	21 August 2025
<b>Key Words:</b>	Overseas, arrivals, departures
<b>Applicant:</b>	An officer from the Institute of Public Affairs
<b>Documents Released:</b>	See attached document 'FOI_19 September 2025'
<b>Areas Covered:</b>	Overseas Migration and Migrant Statistics, Media and Social Media
<b>Charges Imposed:</b>	No
<b>Date Released to Applicant:</b>	19 September 2025
<b>Date Released to FOI Log:</b>	On or before 3 October 2025
<b>Notes:</b>	The applicant revised the initial request from correspondence with Treasurer / Assistant Treasurer to Minister Leigh and representatives.
<b>Decision-Maker</b>	Denise Carlton

Other FOIs being processed by the ABS:

s22		

Recently released FOIs:

s22		

Happy to chat about any/all of this.

Kind regards

s22

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s22

Director

Policy and Legislation | Legal & Policy Branch | Corporate Services Division

A u

P: s22 E: s22 @abs.gov.au E: s22

[abs.gov.au](http://abs.gov.au) | ABN: 26 331 428 522

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**From:** David Gruen  
S 8 7:33 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED];s22  
**Cc:** Brenton Goldsworthy ; Jenny Telford  
**Subject:** ia Release: 9 new facts on travel to and from Australia [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
Hi Jenny/s22  
These are great.  
David

**From:** ABS Media <[outreach+ABS.Media@strem.com.au](mailto:outreach+ABS.Media@strem.com.au)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 14, 2025 11:45 am  
**To:** David Gruen <[david.gruen@abs.gov.au](mailto:david.gruen@abs.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** Media Release: 9 new facts on travel to and from Australia

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.



## 9 new facts on travel to and from Australia

14/08/2025

### Overseas Arrivals and Departures – 2024-25 financial year

The ABS has released the annual analysis of overseas arrivals and departures data, with data for 2024-25 now available.

#### 1. Australia is the holiday place to be!

Whether it's to see our beautiful beaches or the rugged outback, 43 per cent of visitors were here for holiday travel.

#### 2. Aussies love a vacation

Around 3 out of 5 Australians who went overseas were travelling for a holiday, making it the most popular reason to head overseas.

#### 3. Kiwis love a sunburnt country

New Zealand is our top source country for visitors, with 17 per cent of visitors coming from across the Tasman Sea.

#### **4. Trips from India have doubled in the last 10 years**

There was a rise of 102 per cent in trips from India compared with the 2014-15 financial year. Visitors from India also stayed twice as long than in 2014-15, with the median duration of stay for these visits doubling to 61 days.

#### **5. Visitors from Japan know how to squeeze in a vacation**

The median stay of a visit from Japan was 6 days, half the overall median duration of all stays in Australia (12 days).

#### **6. Indonesia is our favourite place to go**

Indonesia was the destination for 14 per cent of Australian trips, making it the number one place for holidaying Australians.

#### **7. Japan steps up to our third holiday hotspot**

The number of trips to Japan has tripled compared with 2014-15. This made Japan the third most popular destination for Australian travel, overtaking the USA.

#### **8. The USA drops to our fourth most popular destination**

The USA was our third most popular destination in 2023-24 but is now ranked fourth. Travel to the USA is 25 per cent lower than 10 years ago, the only top 10 country to remain below 2014-15 volumes.

#### **9. China enters the top five destinations for Australians**

The top five destination countries for Australians are Indonesia, New Zealand, Japan, the USA, and China. This year, China has moved up two places to become our fifth most popular travel destination.

### **Media notes**

- Overseas arrivals and departures (OAD) data, including permanent and long-term movements should not be used as a measure of overseas migration. This data does not reflect the official ABS definition of migration and may lead to inaccurate interpretations. For instance, OAD permanent and long-term arrivals may be increasing while actual overseas migrant arrivals are decreasing for the same period.  
For accurate insights into overseas migration, please refer to the ABS's official overseas migration statistics:
  - [Overseas migration](#);
  - [National, state and territory population](#).
- Short-term trip has a duration of stay of less than 12 months.
- Median duration of stay refers to the number of days at which half of travellers had a longer stay and half had a shorter stay.
- When reporting ABS data, you must attribute the Australian Bureau of Statistics (or the ABS) as the source.
- For media requests and interviews, contact the ABS Media Team via [media@abs.gov.au](mailto:media@abs.gov.au) (9am-5pm Mon-Fri).
- Subscribe to our [media release notification service](#) to get notified of ABS media releases or publications upon their release.
- [Watch our data crash course](#), designed especially for journalists, to learn how to find, download and interpret our data.

The views expressed in this media release are solely those of the sender and do not necessarily reflect the views of Streem.

You are receiving this email because you were included on Australian Bureau of Statistics's media release. To unsubscribe and stop receiving emails from this organisation [click here](#).

s22

**From:** Denise Carlton  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 1 October 2025 3:22 PM  
**To:** David Gruen  
**Cc:** Jenny Telford ; Brenton Goldsworthy **S22** **S22**  
**Subject:** RE: OAD and net migration [OFFICIAL] [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
That's great – thanks David.

*Denise*

Denise Carlton (she/her)  
Program Manager Population Statistics | Australian Bureau of Statistics

(P) (02) 6252 5448 (M) **S22** (E) [denise.carlton@abs.gov.au](mailto:denise.carlton@abs.gov.au) (W) [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)  
Executive assistant **S22** [@abs.gov.au](mailto:@abs.gov.au)

*The ABS acknowledges the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and elders, past and present.*

**From:** David Gruen <[david.gruen@abs.gov.au](mailto:david.gruen@abs.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 1 October 2025 1:44 PM  
**To:** Denise Carlton <[Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au](mailto:Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** Jenny Telford <[Jenny.Telford@abs.gov.au](mailto:Jenny.Telford@abs.gov.au)>; Brenton Goldsworthy <[brenton.goldsworthy@abs.gov.au](mailto:brenton.goldsworthy@abs.gov.au)>; **S22** [@abs.gov.au](mailto:@abs.gov.au); **S22** [@abs.gov.au  
\*\*Subject:\*\* OAD and net migration \[OFFICIAL\] \[SEC=OFFICIAL\]](mailto:@abs.gov.au)

Thanks very much, Denise.

That answers all my questions, and I have a much better understanding of the topic. It will also be very useful for Estimates if it comes up.

No more questions from me!

Also, no need to update the Media Statement.

Cheers

David

**From:** Denise Carlton <[Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au](mailto:Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 1 October 2025 1:25 PM  
**To:** David Gruen <[david.gruen@abs.gov.au](mailto:david.gruen@abs.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** Jenny Telford <[Jenny.Telford@abs.gov.au](mailto:Jenny.Telford@abs.gov.au)>; Brenton Goldsworthy <[brenton.goldsworthy@abs.gov.au](mailto:brenton.goldsworthy@abs.gov.au)> **S22** [@abs.gov.au>; Jenny Dobak <\[jenny.dobak@abs.gov.au\]\(mailto:jenny.dobak@abs.gov.au\)>  
\*\*Subject:\*\* RE: Updated Model Comparisons with the SMP and PEFO forecasts \[SEC=OFFICIAL\]](mailto:@abs.gov.au)

Hi David – responses to your questions are in blue. I've tried to keep things brief/ simple – very happy to grab **S22** (our OAD/NOM expert) and come and clarify anything if that would be helpful.  
Thanks,

*Denise*

Denise Carlton (she/her)  
Program Manager Population Statistics | Australian Bureau of Statistics

(P) (02) 6252 5448 (M) **S22** (E) [denise.carlton@abs.gov.au](mailto:denise.carlton@abs.gov.au) (W) [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)  
Executive assistant **S22** [@abs.gov.au](mailto:@abs.gov.au)

*The ABS acknowledges the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and elders, past and present.*

**From:** David Gruen <[david.gruen@abs.gov.au](mailto:david.gruen@abs.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 30 September 2025 4:49 PM  
**To:** Denise Carlton <[Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au](mailto:Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** Jenny Telford <[Jenny.Telford@abs.gov.au](mailto:Jenny.Telford@abs.gov.au)>; Brenton Goldsworthy <[brenton.goldsworthy@abs.gov.au](mailto:brenton.goldsworthy@abs.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** RE: Updated Model Comparisons with the SMP and PEFO forecasts [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Thanks, Denise. That is useful information about a complex issue.

I've got a few questions on the Estimates Brief on Overseas migration.

It says: 'The ABS has long advised against the practice of using Permanent and long-term arrivals as an indication of migration ...'

Are there statements before the 21 August Media Statement that I could point to in support of the claim that we have long advised against this practice?

The methodology/explanatory notes for Overseas Arrivals and Departures include the advice (or very similar) below (we've looked back as far as January 2014):

#### INTRODUCTION

1 This publication contains statistics on the travel movements of persons arriving in, and departing from, Australia.

2 Its main focus is to provide information and analysis of short-term movements (i.e. less than one year), in particular short-term visitor arrivals (STVA) and short-term resident departures (STRD). Statistics on permanent and long-term movements (i.e. one year or more) are also available, however, permanent and long-term movements in this publication are not an appropriate source for migration statistics. For information on Net Overseas Migration (NOM) refer to [Migration, Australia](#) (cat. no. 3412.0) and for quarterly NOM data [Australian Demographic Statistics](#) (cat. no. 3101.0).

3 These statistics are important as input to a broad range of other statistical collections, including:

- Australia's official population estimates, through quality estimates of NOM;
- the Australian Migration Planning Framework;
- key national economic and tourism indicators;
- forecasting NOM into the future;
- International Trade & Balance of Payments statistics;
- compiling the International Accounts and the Tourism Satellite Account;
- estimating National Income and Consumption; and
- creating benchmarks for the International Visitors Survey.

Since October 2020, the monthly OAD publication has also had this statement in a call-out box on the first page of the main release (to give it more visibility) which reads "This release presents statistics on all overseas arrivals and departures, which is not the same as overseas migration statistics. "

Due to similar reporting the past couple of quarters, we expanded this box to give a bit more information in the release on 14 August 2025 "This release presents statistics on all overseas arrivals and departures, which is not the same as overseas migration statistics. Overseas arrivals and departures (OAD) data, including permanent and long-term movements, should not be used as a measure of overseas migration. This data does not reflect the official ABS definition of migration and may lead to inaccurate interpretations. For instance, OAD permanent and long-term arrivals may be increasing while actual overseas migrant arrivals are decreasing for the same period."

The media statement was published on 21 August 2025.

s47E

Also from the Brief: '[net Permanent and long-term movements data] has differed from the corresponding NOM data by 42% on average for the past 12 quarter.' Does that mean it has sometimes been higher and sometimes lower? Yes, on a quarterly basis it sometimes dips below due to short term compositional fluctuations, but annualised NOM has always been lower than PLT (except when borders were closed/reopening during the pandemic) – the graphs below show both, the latter is graph 3 in attachment 5 of the brief.



'Every single day, Australia is now taking in 1544 new people' is based on net Permanent and long-term movements data over what period? Is it over the previous 12 months?

It's a radio quote but we've been able to replicate the number, the 1544 relates to PLT data for the 6 month period Jan to Jun 2025.

Can you please forward the emails we sent to the three media outlets on 21 August?

Two of the three (copied below) are in attachment 2 of the brief – I could source the third if needed from Comms but I understand they are all very similar.

Emails to identified outlets

2GB example

We read with interest [your recent article](#) about migration into Australia.

In particular: "Every single day, Australia is now taking in 1,544 new people. That's the equivalent of five fully-loaded Boeing 787 Dreamliners."

Our data experts have raised concerns about the you've information used, which we've highlighted below. Is it possible to update the online story with these changes?

Insights on migration into Australia is available from our [Overseas Migration](#) and [National, State and Territory Population](#) publications, which have data for up to the 2023-24 financial year and December 2024 respectively.

The [Overseas Arrivals and Departures](#) (OAD) publication presents statistics on all overseas arrivals and departures - which is not the same as overseas migration statistics.

Overseas arrivals and departures data, including permanent and long-term movements, should not be used as a measure of overseas migration. For instance, OAD permanent and long-term arrivals may be increasing while actual overseas migrant arrivals are decreasing for the same period.

Permanent and Long-term (PLT) movements are derived from traveller declarations and are not contingent on the traveller's residency status prior to travel. For example, a person living in Australia for 3 years on a temporary visa, can count as a long-term visitor arrival many times even though they only migrated here once. As such, OAD permanent and long-term arrivals may be increasing while actual overseas migrant arrivals are decreasing for the same period.

This is why it's inaccurate and misleading to use our OAD data as a measure of migration.

We appreciate your interest in our data, and please do reach out if you have any questions or want to clarify anything about the publication. We're here to help!

Warm regards,

ABS Media

**Email to MacroBusiness**

Hi [s47](#),

We read with interest [your recent article](#) about migration into Australia.

In particular: "Last week, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reported the strongest net permanent and long-term arrivals over the first six months of any year on record. In the first half of 2025, a record 279,460 net permanent and long-term arrivals landed in Australia, up 13,080 (5%) from the 266,380 net arrivals that landed last year and 108,890 (64%) higher than the same period in 2019, before the pandemic."

Our data experts have raised concerns about the you've information used, which we've highlighted below. Is it possible to update the online story with these changes?

Insights on migration into Australia is available from our [Overseas Migration](#) and [National, State and Territory Population](#) publications, which have data for up to the 2023-24 financial year and December 2024 respectively.

The [Overseas Arrivals and Departures](#) (OAD) publication presents statistics on all overseas arrivals and departures - which is not the same as overseas migration statistics.

Overseas arrivals and departures data, including permanent and long-term movements, should not be used as a measure of overseas migration. For instance, OAD permanent and long-term arrivals may be increasing while actual overseas migrant arrivals are decreasing for the same period.

Permanent and Long-term (PLT) movements are derived from traveller declarations and are not contingent on the traveller's residency status prior to travel. For example, a person living in Australia for 3 years on a temporary visa, can count as a long-term visitor arrival many times even though they only migrated here once. As such, OAD permanent and long-term arrivals may be increasing while actual overseas migrant arrivals are decreasing for the same period.

This is why it's inaccurate and misleading to use our OAD data as a measure of migration.

We appreciate your interest in our data, and please do reach out if you have any questions or want to clarify anything about the publication. We're here to help!

Warm regards,

**S22**

ABS Media

Can you point me to where the Centre for Population identifies OAD as a leading indicator for NOM?

There are two references in this guide (see page 3 and page 6): [Fundamentals of migration in Australia: Migration concepts and measurements](#)

s47E

The 21 August Media Statement says: 'For example, this means a person who has been living in Australia for three years on a temporary visa, and travels overseas multiple times, can count as a long-term visitor arrival many times, even though they only migrated here once.'

In that example, I don't understand how they are counted many times as a net permanent or long-term arrival. [Because OAD statistics count border crossings not individuals, it's possible for someone who travels in and out of Australia more than once during the period they are living here to be counted as a long-term arrival more than once.](#) [s47E](#)

**s47E**

How are they treated each time they leave Australia?

Here is an example of an international student coming to Australia to complete a 3 year degree:

- When the student initially arrives, they state they will be here for 3 years. This will count as one LTVA.
- However, after 10 months they leave Australia for 2 months. As duration for a visitor departure is calculated from the arrival date, they classify as short-term, not counting as a long-term visitor departure (LTVD).
- When they return to continue study, they count as another LTVA stating they will be here for 2 years. They repeat this the following year as well.
- By the time they complete their degree and leave Australia, they have counted as 3 LTVA and 0 LTVDs
- NOM will count them as 1 migrant arrival and then 1 migrant departure after the 3 years.

The focus/purpose of OAD statistics is really to understand the volumes of visitors to Australia each month with a focus on short-term (tourism, business travel etc) while NOM measures migration according to UN definition (which is defined by duration of residence).

The Media Statement also says: 'Historically, net permanent and long-term movements from Overseas Arrivals and Departures have been consistently higher than actual Net Overseas Migration.'

This is referring to annualised data (and ignores the period of closed borders) – we could update to clarify.

Am I right that that it was consistently higher for many years, but was lower during COVID? That's what I conclude from the Chart in Attachment 3.

Yes - exactly

Am I right that we don't seasonally adjust NOM?

We don't – it's one component in an account (and I'm not sure a seasonally adjusted Australian population is a useful concept?).

Turned out to be lots of questions!

Thanks

David

**From:** Denise Carlton <[Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au](mailto:Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Monday, 29 September 2025 2:10 PM

**To:** David Gruen <[david.gruen@abs.gov.au](mailto:david.gruen@abs.gov.au)>

**Cc:** Jenny Telford <[Jenny.Telford@abs.gov.au](mailto:Jenny.Telford@abs.gov.au)>; Brenton Goldsworthy <[brenton.goldsworthy@abs.gov.au](mailto:brenton.goldsworthy@abs.gov.au)>

**Subject:** RE: Updated Model Comparisons with the SMP and PEFO forecasts [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi David,

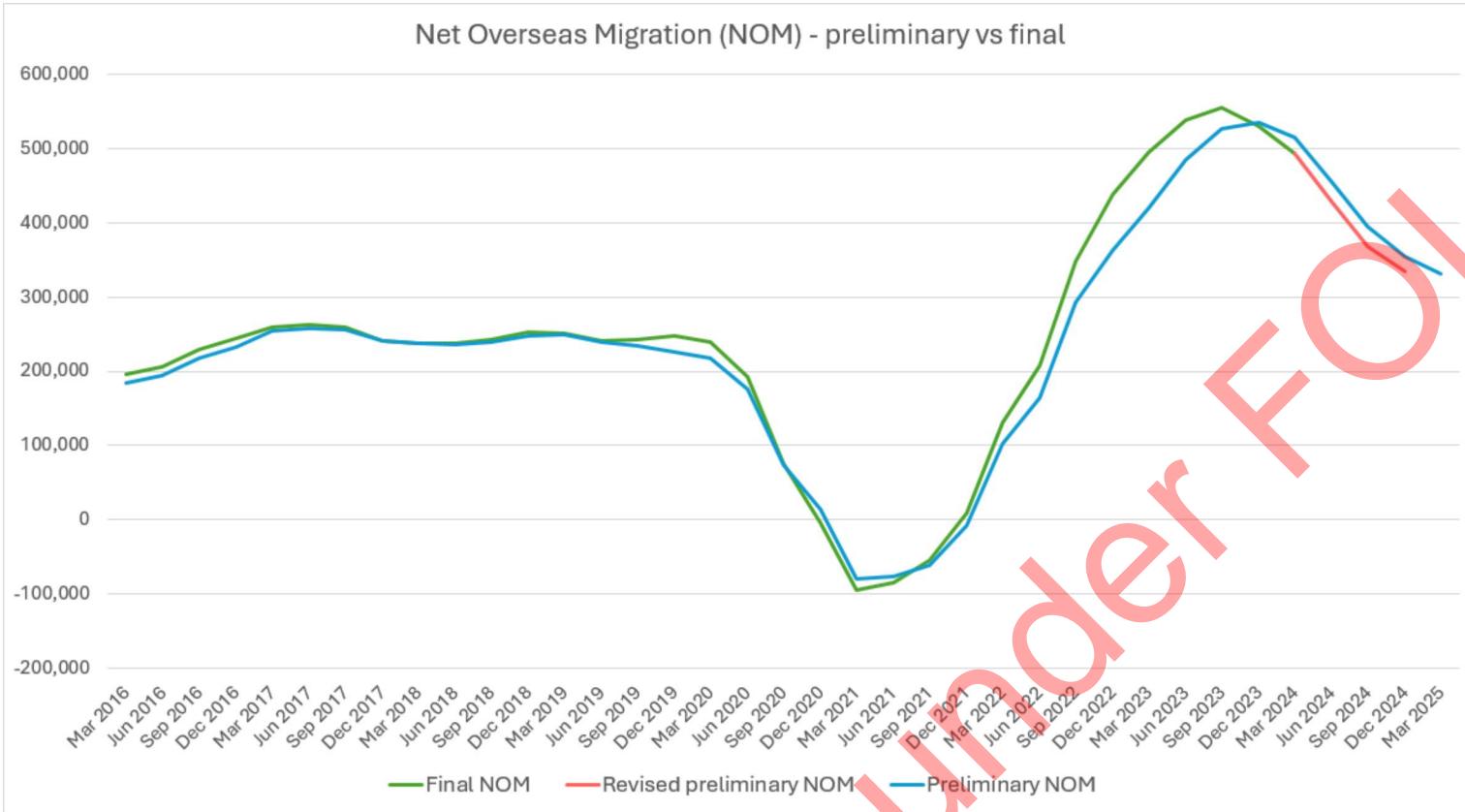
Thanks for this. I agree that changing visa behaviour post the pandemic is still a challenge for understanding where NOM will land when it 'normalises' (higher or similar to pre-pandemic levels, lower doesn't seem likely at this point).

While we've seen recent downward revisions to published (preliminary) NOM in the population estimates (as NOM is in a downward cycle our quarterly revisions have been downward since the September quarter 2023 peak - see first graph), the relationship between OAD PLT and NOM is more fractured than ever. By way of example, the 12 quarters of so in the lead up to the pandemic PLT was out on average by about 24% when compared with subsequent NOM, while for the 12 most recent quarters it was out on average by 42%. The PLT-based leading indicator (which makes a range of adjustments to raw net PLT and which is used in the benchmarks) has been higher than NOM since March 2024 qtr **s47E** [REDACTED] which is the pattern **s47** [REDACTED] is describing. This is why we advise against using PLT as a measure of migration or even as input to a leading indicator of migration. It's fit for purpose, in the absence of anything else, as an input to make a very incremental adjustment to a population of 25+ million for the production of population benchmarks, but not for decomposing the benchmark components to get a read on NOM, as it will be inaccurate (and looking at monthly benchmarks will exacerbate this noise further) - especially at the moment. The last benchmark did show an upward revision **s47** [REDACTED] **s47E** [REDACTED] but this quarter is projections based, not the NPLT as we did not have OAD for that quarter at the time the benchmarks were produced, so with NOM revisions being downwards it could yet come down. Recent quarters of actual NOM and revisions suggests that NOM is still coming down even if that downward trajectory is slowing. We believe that NOM is performing well and are not expecting the Census to reveal a different truth (**s47** [REDACTED] **s47F** [REDACTED]). **s47F** [REDACTED] observations reflect the limitations of the leading indicator (and using net PLT for analysis), not shortcomings with NOM itself.

The point about greater numbers of applications for permanent residence etc is well made – and it's not just the volumes that impact the relationship between PLT and NOM. It's also affected by whether those applications were made on-shore or not, and how regularly/recently those applicants have crossed the border, as this affects the level of double-counting in the long-term component of the PLT. COVID restrictions created significant changes in the proportion of permanent visas granted to on-shore applicants and also impacted the travel patterns of these applicants.

Regarding the benchmarks, the good news is we are about to implement an improved method for the input NOM leading indicator which will reduce the revisions to benchmarks. It will not rely on PLT but use the NOM methodology – it's proven to be more accurate both pre and post COVID (but not during the full border closures quarters) and it's producing lower leading NOM estimates (in line with what's happening with NOM at the moment). That said, the level of decomposition of benchmarks to monthly component data will still be very noisy.

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The ABS acknowledges the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and elders, past and present.

**From:** David Gruen <[david.gruen@abs.gov.au](mailto:david.gruen@abs.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Monday, 29 September 2025 10:38 AM

**To:** Denise Carlton <[Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au](mailto:Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au)>

**Cc:** Jenny Telford <[Jenny.Telford@abs.gov.au](mailto:Jenny.Telford@abs.gov.au)>; Brenton Goldsworthy <[brenton.goldsworthy@abs.gov.au](mailto:brenton.goldsworthy@abs.gov.au)>

**Subject:** FW: Updated Model Comparisons with the SMP and PEFO forecasts [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi Denise

I was interested in this highlighted comment by **S47F** who is a sophisticated user of our data so understands the shortcomings with using the arrivals and departures data as a leading indicator of net migration.

What do you think of **S** observations?

(I received them via **S47F**, to whom they had been sent.)

Cheers

David

s47F

Cheers  
David

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**From:** David Gruen  
**Sent:** Friday, 22 August 2025 5:46 PM  
**To:** Lane Masterton ; Brenton Goldsworthy ; Phillip Gould  
**Subject:** RE: Running thread for social media coverage of ABS OAD/migration statement [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
Thanks, Lane

**From:** Lane Masterton <[Lane.Masterton@abs.gov.au](mailto:Lane.Masterton@abs.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Friday, 22 August 2025 5:42 PM  
**To:** Brenton Goldsworthy <[brenton.goldsworthy@abs.gov.au](mailto:brenton.goldsworthy@abs.gov.au)>; Phillip Gould <[philip.gould@abs.gov.au](mailto:philip.gould@abs.gov.au)>; David Gruen <[david.gruen@abs.gov.au](mailto:david.gruen@abs.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** FW: Running thread for social media coverage of ABS OAD/migration statement [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Latest update on this issue. We plan to monitor across the weekend and see if there is any further pick up on this angle. At this stage we are not suggested any further statements or responses but will reassess next week or if there is significant pickup in other mainstream media.

Lane

**Lane Masterton** (he/him)  
General Manager Corporate Services Division  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
P: (02) 6252 5040  
E: [lane.masterton@abs.gov.au](mailto:lane.masterton@abs.gov.au)

**From:** S22 <[S22@abs.gov.au](mailto:S22@abs.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Friday, 22 August 2025 4:54 PM  
**Cc:** [dailysocialreport@abs.gov.au](mailto:dailysocialreport@abs.gov.au)

**Subject:** Re: Running thread for social media coverage of ABS OAD/migration statement [SEC=OFFICIAL]

News.com.au have published an article which has been syndicated across the rest of the News Corp papers (e.g. The Daily Telegraph, Herald Sun, The Courier Mail, The Advertiser).

The article mentions the Ben Fordham 2GB quote, and the request for correction to MacroBusiness.

Date	Description/link	Screenshot	Profile
22/08 3:52pm	<a href="#">'1500 per day': ABS accuses media outlets of citing 'misleading' migration numbers   news.com.au — Australia's leading news site for latest headlines</a>	<p><b>'1500 per day': ABS accuses media outlets of citing 'misleading' migration numbers</b></p> <p>A war of words has erupted between the media outlets and the ABS, which has been accused of trying to "censor" the migration debate.</p> <p><b>Frank Chung</b>   @franks_chung 5 min read August 22, 2025 - 3:52PM  news.com.au</p> <p>Listen to this article 9 min</p>	

A war of words has erupted between the media outlets and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), which has been accused of trying to "censor" the migration debate.

The storm comes after the bureau corrected "misleading" reports that suggested the country was bringing in "1500 new people per day".

Data released by the ABS last Thursday showed net permanent and long-term arrivals (NPLT) in the six months to June 30 reached a record 279,460.

In the full financial year there were 457,560 arrivals, the second highest on record.

The Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) said the federal budget's FY25 forecast for net overseas migration (NOM) of 335,000 had been exceeded by 37 per cent, or 122,560 people.

**From:** S22 [redacted] [@abs.gov.au](mailto:@abs.gov.au)

**Sent:** Friday, August 22, 2025 10:48 AM

**Cc:** [dailysocialreport@abs.gov.au](mailto:dailysocialreport@abs.gov.au) <[dailysocialreport@abs.gov.au](mailto:dailysocialreport@abs.gov.au)>

**Subject:** Running thread for social media coverage of ABS OAD/migration statement [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi all,

Thought I'd keep everyone in the loop on recent coverage of our [media statement on OAD/migration](#) published yesterday.

Here's [the Ben Fordham 2GB clip](#) that spurred a lot of the initial media attention.

And here's [the MacroBusiness article](#) causing more of the recent social media coverage.

Feel free to add anyone to this chain - or let me know if you want me to include them in the next update.

I'll continue to update the thread as things happen throughout the day!

*(Screenshots taken around 10:30am, view counts likely to increase)*

Date	Description/link	Screenshot	Profile
------	------------------	------------	---------

Released under FOI Act

21/08  
7:14pm (21) Abul Rizvi on X: "It's good ABS has put out this media statement correcting the mass of media reports (eg Daily Mail; Ben Fordham) misrepresenting the relationship between net permanent and long term movements and net migration. <https://t.co/J33gclqaE8>" / X



It's good ABS has put out this media statement correcting the mass of media reports (eg Daily Mail; Ben Fordham) misrepresenting the relationship between net permanent and long term movements and net migration.



From abs.gov.au

7:14 PM · Aug 21, 2025 · 6,117 Views

22

121

266

22

↑

### Abul Rizvi

@RizviAbul Follows you

Population and immigration policy nut. Mad Collingwood supporter.

Education Canberra Joined September 2018

575 Following 9,109 Followers

Released under FOIA

21/08  
9:43pm (21) Cameron Kusher on X: "ABS publishing data on how to understand overseas arrivals and departures data. I feel like this may be a good reason for trying to speed up the release of population estimates data which are lagged by six months. It's too long to wait.  
<https://t.co/Y5LRE2oKz>" /X



**Cameron Kusher**  
@cmkusher

⋮



From abs.gov.au

9:43 PM · Aug 21, 2025 · 553 Views

1



5



**Cameron Kusher**

@cmkusher Follows you

Talking property and the economy, for more in depth takes good, bad or otherwise follow me at [ozpropertyinsights.substack.com](https://ozpropertyinsights.substack.com)

📍 Brisbane 🌐 [ozpropertyinsights.substack.com](https://ozpropertyinsights.substack.com) 📅 Joined August 2012

1,098 Following 9,158 Followers

22/08 8:16am (21) Tarric Brooker aka Avid Commentator AU on X: "ABS tries to censor migration debate" It appears that somebody within the government has strong-armed the ABS into going after media outlets for criticising the federal government for failing to control immigration." Wow.... <https://t.co/kla9aWkLEo> /X



**Tarric Brooker aka Avid Commentator** 🇦🇺 🇪🇺  
@AvidCommentator

'ABS tries to censor migration debate'

"It appears that somebody within the government has strong-armed the ABS into going after media outlets for criticising the federal government for failing to control immigration."

Wow....



From macrobusiness.com.au

8:16 AM · Aug 22, 2025 · 7,493 Views

33

82

313

19



**Tarric Brooker aka Avid Commentator** 🇦🇺 🇪🇺

@AvidCommentator

Journalist & Analyst

Contributor for [@newscomauHQ](#)

Help support my content by subscribing at [Burnouteconomics.com](#)

My opinions are my own

Journalist Australia [burnouteconomics.com](#) Joined August 2018

443 Following 38.4K Followers

Released under FOIA

22/08  
8:37am

(21) Sam AUUA on X:  
"ABS contacted MacroBusiness attempting to censor migration debate by saying monthly immigration numbers can't be used to measure immigration numbers (?) Is this a directive from the top to try to silence the mass immigration debate? #ausbiz #auspol #abs  
<https://t.co/5yN1gWYAdX>  
<https://t.co/jMqeHWVfz>" /X

Sam   
@samstrades

ABS contacted MacroBusiness attempting to censor migration debate by saying monthly immigration numbers can't be used to measure immigration numbers (?)

Is this a directive from the top to try to silence the mass immigration debate? #ausbiz #auspol #abs  
[macrobusiness.com.au/2025/08/abs-tr...](https://macrobusiness.com.au/2025/08/abs-tr...)

After contacting various media outlets, I discovered a coordinated effort to undermine the use of monthly net permanent and long-term arrivals data as a leading indicator of migration.

Stephen Johnson at the Daily Mail received the same email from the ABS. Radio 2GB was also 'fact checked' for using this data.

Daniel Wild, Deputy Executive Director of the Institute of Public Affairs, responded as follows to the ABS' apparent attempt at censorship over migration numbers:

*"It seems highly unusual that the ABS would publish data and then complain when it is used to uncover what is going on in Australia."*

*"It appears the ABS has been sent out by the Treasurer to shut down debate about the federal government's failed, unpopular mass migration program."*

*"While 'net permanent and long-term arrivals' and 'net overseas migration' differ slightly, they remain closely related measures. They have been an accurate statistical guide which has uncovered Australia's unplanned migration crisis."*

*"It would be highly inappropriate for sections of the ABS to be running cover for the federal government to try and divert attention away from Australia's out-of-control migration system."*

*"The ABS needs to think very carefully about making itself a political target. The ABS can either stick to its role as an independent statistical agency, or it will blow its credibility by politicising itself."*

*"There is no place for such political interference from an organisation that must be seen at all times as strictly impartial."*

The reality is that for years, economists have used the monthly net permanent and long-term arrivals data as a leading indicator of migration.

⋮ ...

Sam   
@samstrades

Full time investor, data junkie. Worked in civil/criminal law for 12 years (Clayton Utz, NSW DCJ and ODPP) #AustraliaFirst

📍 Australia 🌐 [ozinvesting.substack.com](https://ozinvesting.substack.com) 📅 Joined January 2010

101 Following 7,120 Followers

		4	7	37	1	↑
22/08 8:59am	<p><a href="#">(21) Cameron Murray on X: "Interesting to see the ABS put out a statement about its immigration data. They suddenly seem very sensitive about the use of their data on overseas arrivals and departures. I worry that this indicates political capture, and I'll explain why. Here's the statement. As a</a> <a href="https://t.co/lzren70HI">https://t.co/lzren70HI</a>" / X</p> <p> <b>Cameron Murray</b>  @DrCameronMurray</p> <p>Interesting to see the ABS put out a statement about its immigration data. They suddenly seem very sensitive about the use of their data on overseas arrivals and departures. I worry that this indicates political capture, and I'll explain why. Here's the statement.</p> <p>Chief Economist at Fresh Economic Thinking. Corruption and property market specialist.</p> <p>Australia  fresheconomicthinking.com  Joined September 2011</p> <p>2,245 Following 20K Followers</p>					

Released under FOIA

**Overseas Arrivals and Departures versus Overseas Migration data**

Media Statement

 [Cite](#)  [Print](#)

Released 21/08/2025

Multiple media stories have been published this week using [Overseas Arrivals and Departures](#) (OAD) data to make commentary on migration numbers. This data does not reflect the [official ABS definition of migration](#) and may lead to inaccurate conclusions on migration.

Overseas Arrivals and Departures (OAD) data is a count of border crossings rather than migration. It is best used to understand patterns in traveller movements, such as tourism trends and seasonal travel.

Permanent and Long-term movements come from traveller declarations and are not contingent on the traveller's residency status prior to travel.

For example, this means a person who has been living in Australia for three years on a temporary visa, and travels overseas multiple times, can count as a long-term visitor arrival many times, even though they only migrated here once.

This is why OAD data should not be used to measure migration or population change, as it reflects self-declared traveller intentions rather than changes in residency status.

Accurate insights on migration into Australia are available from our [Overseas Migration](#) and [National, State and Territory Population](#) publications, which have data for up to the 2023-24 financial year and December 2024 respectively. Migration figures for this year have not been published yet, and the March quarter 2025 data will be published on 18 September.

Historically, net permanent and long-term movements from Overseas Arrivals and Departures have been consistently higher than actual Net Overseas Migrations.

As a background, this statement comes after various emails from the ABS media team to a number of outlets—2GB, IPA, MacroBusiness, and the Daily Mail—asking for changes to their reporting.

This is what those ABS emails said:

"Our data experts have raised concerns about the information you've used, which we've highlighted below. Is it possible to update the online story with these changes?"

Basically, those concerns are that the net overseas arrivals and departure data are being used as a leading indicator of future net migration and are showing a recent surge.

But did they chase up many others, who might be classified as of a different political leaning, who also use the data exactly this way?

Like, say Abul Rizvi

Released under FOI Act

Abul Rizvi

# Permanent and long-term movements continue at high levels

February 20, 2024



*While it is highly likely net migration is now past its peak and declining, the data to this stage suggests it may only be falling gradually.*

Permanent and long-term movements are the earliest approximation of net migration that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) publishes. The data for December shows net permanent and long-term movements for the six months to December 2023 was around 96,000 higher than in the six months to December 2022 (see Table 1).

Or the federal government's own Centre for Population, which explains how this data is an "early indication of future migration flows"?

Released under FOI Act

## Key measurements

Measurement	Definition	Primary uses	Publication
<b>Early indicators of migration flows</b>			
Visa lodgements	Count of all visa applications received (onshore and offshore).	Tracks the volume, composition and progress of visa lodgements.	Published quarterly by the Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) in the <a href="#">Migration Program Report</a> .
Visa grants	Count of all visa lodgements that are approved (onshore and offshore).	Early indicators of future migration flows.	
Migration Program planning level	Number of permanent visas available to be granted each year, as decided by the Government in consultation with stakeholders.	Determines the number and type of permanent visas available each year.	Announced annually by the Government in the Budget process.
Border crossings (arrivals and departures)	Number of times Australia's international border is crossed by visa holders, Australian citizens and permanent residents.	Early indicator of future migration flows.	Published monthly by the ABS in <a href="#">Overseas Arrivals and Departures</a> .
<b>Measurement of migration flows</b>			
Net overseas migration	Net gain or loss of population through immigration to Australia and emigration from Australia. It includes movements of Australian citizens, permanent visa holders and temporary visa holders.	Measures how much Australia's population has changed due to overseas migration.	Published annually by the ABS in <a href="#">Overseas Migration</a> and quarterly in <a href="#">National, state and territory population</a> .
<b>Measurement of visa holders</b>			
Stocks of visa holders	The number of temporary visa holders in Australia at a given point in time.  Information is also available on the number of permanent visa holders in Australia, along with country of birth for Australia's entire population at a given point in time.	Monitoring the number of international students in Australia, or skilled temporary workers in labour markets.  Provides opportunities for sophisticated analysis to help understand visa holders, including analysing demographic and economic characteristics.	Published quarterly by Home Affairs, on data.gov.au, under <a href="#">Temporary visa holders in Australia</a> .  Permanent visa holder stocks and actual Estimated Resident Population are published once every five years in the ABS' <a href="#">Census</a> .

What gives?

This is exactly how everyone interprets the data. Why the sudden batch of emails and complaints?

Craziest of all is that the ABS itself, in a media statement in 2021, notes that overseas arrivals and departures data can be used as an early indication of net migration.

# ABS statement on arrivals and departures data

Media Statement

 [Cite](#)  [Print](#)

Released 30/06/2021

The ABS publishes data on arrivals and departures to and from Australia, in the monthly [Overseas Arrivals and Departures publication](#), the next of which will be published on 13 July 2021.

The ABS introduced a range of COVID-19 related products from mid-March 2020 as the pandemic escalated, including the monthly Provisional Overseas Travel Statistics publication. This was in addition to the regular monthly publication Overseas Arrivals and Departures.

At the time these new COVID-19 related products were announced, the ABS made it clear they would be subject to periodic review. In April 2021 the Australian Statistician, Dr David Gruen, [announced the ABS was making changes](#) to its statistical work program to appropriately measure the Australian economy and society from 1 July 2021. These decisions were made by the ABS - they were not the result of a direction by government.

This included ending the Provisional Overseas Travel Statistics publication. From August 2021, additional information will be included in Overseas Arrivals and Departures to give an early indication on the total numbers of people coming into and leaving the country.

The last thing I want is our statistical agency to get political. I want them to be boring.

Chasing up selected media outlets for reporting the data in exactly the way everyone does seems like poor form.

8:59 AM · Aug 22, 2025 · 5,597 Views

9

27

84

15

↑

Released under FOI Act

22/08  
9:52am

[\(21\) Craig Kelly: AU Foundation for Economic Education on X: "Incredible: ABS Trying to Censor the Media on Migration" Leith van Onselen at MacroBusiness has revealed that he and other media outlets have been pressured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics \(ABS\) to remain silent about Labor's migration rates. <https://t.co/cvT065Gbq> <https://t.co/dEggDFmOr>](#) /X



**Craig Kelly: 🇦🇺 Foundation for Economic Education** [Subscribe](#) ...

Incredible: ABS Trying to Censor the Media on Migration

Leith van Onselen at MacroBusiness has revealed that he and other media outlets have been pressured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to remain silent about Labor's migration rates.

[macrobusiness.com.au/2025/08/abs-tr...](http://macrobusiness.com.au/2025/08/abs-tr...)

The issue is that the ABS only reports 'net overseas migration' once a year, with the 2024/2025 financial year migration numbers not scheduled for release until December 13, conveniently buried in the pre-Christmas rush.

This means the public won't know the official net migration figures—or how inaccurate the budget paper forecasts are—until nearly six months after the financial year ends.

This delay is unacceptable.

Business investment decisions rely heavily on the migration numbers published in the budget papers. If those numbers are wildly inaccurate, as they have been in every Jim Chalmers budget to date, this is highly sensitive market information that must be disclosed to the public in real time.

However, the ABS does report data for 'net permanent and long-term arrivals' on a quarterly basis. The June quarter data, published last week, showed a significant increase in net permanent and long-term arrivals.

While 'net migration' and 'net permanent and long-term arrivals' are not identical, historical data shows a very close correlation.

This surge in the June quarter data is a clear indicator that Prime Minister Albanese misled the public before the election, falsely claiming he was substantially cutting migration numbers when, in fact, he was not.

**Craig Kelly: 🇦🇺 Foundation for Economic Education**

@craigkellyAFEE

Former member of the Australian Parliament, banned from Facebook for truth telling. Conservative - Libertarian - Nationalist. Estranged from the Liberal Party

Joined November 2010

4,529 Following 174.5K Followers

- Now, the ABS is attempting to censor discussion of Albanese's pre-election lies.
- This is yet another example of a Canberra-based bureaucracy being infiltrated and politicized.
- Blanket censorship already exists within government institutions, including the ABC, the RBA, the Productivity Commission, and the Productivity Summit, stifling discussion on how mass immigration policies have harmed productivity and driven up rents and housing prices.
- In this unprecedented move, the ABS is now trying to silence the few media outlets willing to address these issues.
- This is a deeply disturbing sign of Australia's descent into authoritarianism, where the government's statistical agency has been weaponized. This is precisely what George Orwell warned of in 1984 with the Ministry of Truth.
- Let's be clear: this rotten and corrupt Albanese government is using the migration program to import hundreds of thousands of Labor voters, to gerrymander the electorate so they can retain power indefinitely.
- The unintended consequences of this corrupt policy is causing extreme hardship and a decline in living standards more most Australians (including recent migrants).
- Albanese is betting that we can win more votes from massive surge in migration numbers, than he will lose from the Australians harmed by his policy - that requires censorship and suppression on the debate.
- So like a corrupt authoritarian regime, the Albanese government is now attempting to use its bureaucracies silence all discussion of migration numbers.

Released under FOI Act

MACROBUSINESS

## ABS tries to censor migration debate



Leith van Onselen

Friday 22 August 2025

On Wednesday evening, I received an email from an Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) media officer suggesting that I have misled the public by quoting the ABS' monthly net permanent and long-term arrivals data.

It appears that somebody within the government has strong-armed the ABS into going after media outlets for criticising the federal government for failing to control immigration.

Sadly, the ABS, like most other public institutions in Australia, appears to have become politicised, although I hope I am wrong.

There appears to be blanket censorship within federal agencies on migration, given that the RBA, the Productivity Commission, the Productivity Summit, and everyone else in government refuse to acknowledge that the 'Big Australia' mass immigration policy has been destructive for productivity and living standards.

9:52 AM · Aug 22, 2025 · 985 Views

1

25

73

1

↑

Released under FOI Act

22/08 10:08am (21) Drew Pavlou AUUSUA  
tw on X: "This is crazy. The Australian Bureau of Statistics wrote to a number of Australian media outlets trying to get them to change their reporting on the number of migrants entering Australia." / X

**Drew Pavlou**     ...

This is crazy. The Australian Bureau of Statistics wrote to a number of Australian media outlets trying to get them to change their reporting on the number of migrants entering Australia.

**Cameron Murray**  @DrCameronMurray · 1h

Interesting to see the ABS put out a statement about its immigration data.

They suddenly seem very sensitive about the use of their data on overseas arrivals and departures.

...

[Show more](#)

**high levels**

February 20, 2024     

While it is highly likely net migration is now past its peak and declining, the data to this stage suggests it may only be falling gradually.

Permanent and long-term movements are the earliest approximation of net migration that the Australian Bureau

The ABS publishes data on arrivals and departures to and from Australia, in the monthly [Overseas Arrivals and Departures publication](#), the next of which will be published on 13 July 2021.

The ABS introduced a range of COVID-19 related products from mid-March 2020 as the pandemic escalated, including the monthly Provisional Overseas Travel Statistics publication. This was in addition to the regular monthly publication Overseas Arrivals and Departures.

At the time these new COVID-19 related products were announced, the ABS made it clear they would be subject to periodic review. In April 2021 the Australian Statistician, Dr David Gruen, announced the ABS was making changes to its statistical work program to accommodate changes in the Australian economy and society from 1 July 2021. These

10:08 AM · Aug 22, 2025 · 1,085 Views

   4  

Keep it tabular,

s22

Communication Officer, Media and Social Media

Strategic Engagement and Performance Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

P: 1300 175 070 E: [media@abs.gov.au](mailto:media@abs.gov.au) W: [abs.gov.au](http://abs.gov.au)



**Drew Pavlou**     ...

Western civilisation enjoyer. Based anti-communist liberalism. Survived CCP kidnap plot. FREE TIBET.

📍 Brisbane, Australia [link.me/drewpavlou](https://link.me/drewpavlou) Joined May 2019

5,453 Following 172.7K Followers

The [ABS Privacy Policy](#) outlines how the ABS handles any personal information that you provide to us.

*We acknowledge and pay respect to the past, present and emerging Elders and Traditional Custodians of Country, and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*

Released under FOI Act

s22



---

**From:** Lane Masterton <Lane.Masterton@abs.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Friday, 22 August 2025 9:12 AM  
**To:** David Gruen <david.gruen@abs.gov.au>; Brenton Goldsworthy <brenton.goldsworthy@abs.gov.au>; Phillip Gould <phillip.gould@abs.gov.au>  
**Subject:** FW: Urgent: Negative article related to directing journalists to overseas migration data [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

EB,

Bringing this to your attention. It follows an issue yesterday relating to media outlets making commentary on Overseas Arrivals and Departures e.g. *Australia is now taking in 1544 new people per day*. The media team worked with demography to craft a response (below) which was sent to a number of journalists.

*A number of media stories regarding articles as commentary on migration into Australia have been using [Overseas Arrivals and Departures](#) (OAD) data.*

*Overseas Arrivals and Departures (OAD) data is best used to understand patterns in traveller movements, such as tourism trends, seasonal travel fluctuations, and the flow of temporary visa holders like international students or working holiday makers.*

*OAD data should not be used to measure migration or population change, as it reflects declared travel intentions rather than changes in residency status.*

Accurate insights on migration into Australia are available from our [Overseas Migration](#) and [National, State and Territory Population](#) publications, which have data for up to the 2023-24 financial year and December 2024 respectively. No migration figures have been published for 2025 yet.

Permanent and Long-term (PLT) movements come from traveller declarations and are not contingent on the traveller's residency status prior to travel.

For example, a person living in Australia for three years on a temporary visa can count as a long-term visitor arrival many times even though they only migrated here once.

As such, Overseas Arrivals and Departures permanent and long-term arrivals ~~may be increasing~~ while actual overseas migrant arrivals are decreasing for the same period.

This is why it's inaccurate to use Overseas Arrivals and Departures data as a measure of migration.

Lane

**Lane Masterton** (he/him)  
General Manager Corporate Services Division  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
**P:** (02) 6252 5040  
**E:** [lane.masterton@abs.gov.au](mailto:lane.masterton@abs.gov.au)

---

**From:** David Waymouth <[David.Waymouth@abs.gov.au](mailto:David.Waymouth@abs.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Friday, 22 August 2025 8:40 AM  
**To:** Lane Masterton <[Lane.Masterton@abs.gov.au](mailto:Lane.Masterton@abs.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** FW: Urgent: Negative article related to directing journalists to overseas migration data [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

For info – we'll monitor throughout the day.

Note – Macrobusiness is a paywall site, article attached.

dw

---

**From:** David Waymouth  
**Sent:** Friday, 22 August 2025 8:38 AM  
**To:** Jenny Telford <[Jenny.Telford@abs.gov.au](mailto:Jenny.Telford@abs.gov.au)> s22 [REDACTED] @abs.gov.au, s22 [REDACTED] @abs.gov.au  
**Cc:** media <[media@abs.gov.au](mailto:media@abs.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent: Negative article related to directing journalists to overseas migration data [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

I agree – I was just typing a similar reply.

Jenny, can you raise with Brenton, I'll do the same with Lane.

dw

---

**From:** Jenny Telford <[jenny.telford@abs.gov.au](mailto:jenny.telford@abs.gov.au)>

**Se**

**To:** s22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au> s22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>; David Waymouth <[David.Waymouth@abs.gov.au](mailto:David.Waymouth@abs.gov.au)>

**Cc:** media <[media@abs.gov.au](mailto:media@abs.gov.au)>

**Subject:** RE: Urgent: Negative article related to directing journalists to overseas migration data [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Thanks s22

Do you see a need to make any changes/additions to the statement we published yesterday? My inclination is to leave as is and just monitor for any ongoing commentary on this today – but very open to alternative views if anyone thinks differently.

Kind Regards,

**Jenny Telford**

*General Manager, Census and Population Division*

**Australian Bureau of Statistics**

(P) (02) 6252 6473 (M) s22 [REDACTED]

(E) [jenny.telford@abs.gov.au](mailto:jenny.telford@abs.gov.au) (W) [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)

---

**From:** s22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>

**Se** 5/5/ AM

**To:** s22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>; David Waymouth <[David.Waymouth@abs.gov.au](mailto:David.Waymouth@abs.gov.au)>; Jenny Telford <[jenny.telford@abs.gov.au](mailto:jenny.telford@abs.gov.au)>

**Cc:** media <[media@abs.gov.au](mailto:media@abs.gov.au)>

**Subject:** Urgent: Negative article related to directing journalists to overseas migration data [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

**Importance:** High

Morning,

I want to bring to your attention an article published today by the <https://www.macrobusiness.com.au/2025/08/abs-tries-to-censor-migration-debate/>

The statement that [Overseas Arrivals and Departures, Australia, June 2025 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

Quotes from the article:

“The email, presented below with the officer’s name removed, claimed that it is “*inaccurate and misleading to use*” the monthly net permanent and long-term arrivals data as a “*measure of migration*”.”

“It appears that somebody within the government has strong-armed the ABS into going after media outlets for criticising the federal government for failing to control immigration.”

*We had prepared this response and had started to send up the line for clear to a journalist who voiced this concern:*

The ABS is committed to supporting data users in identifying the most appropriate statistics for their needs. As part of this support, we contact journalists to bring attention to datasets that offer closer alignment and accuracy with the topic being covered. This assistance is provided independently and without political direction.

Due to the complexity of this topic, we have published a statement to our website for journalists to reference regarding [Overseas Arrivals and Departures versus Overseas Migration data](#).

Regarding your question on the future of this data, the ABS will continue to publish these datasets as outlined in [our forward plan](#).

s22

A/g Director, Media and Social Media

Strategic Engagement and Performance Branch

**Australian Bureau of Statistics**

**P: 1300 175 070**

Office hours: Limited availability on Thursday afternoons

## Overseas migration

### Key issue

Several media commentators have been citing Permanent and long-term movements from Overseas Arrivals and Departures data as an indication that migration levels are increasing. This is against ABS advice, with the most recent migration data released in September subsequently showing migration levels continuing to decline.

### Talking points

- The ABS has long advised against the practice of using Permanent and long-term arrivals as an indication of migration levels as it is likely to give inaccurate results. Net Overseas Migration (NOM) is the official measure of the impact of migration on the Australian population.
- Following media reporting using net Permanent and long-term movements for June 2025 (released on 14 August 2025) to indicate migration was increasing, the ABS released a media statement (see Attachment 1) providing more detail on why the use of net Permanent and long-term movements could yield inaccurate results. The ABS also directly contacted three media outlets that had reported the June 2025 data in this way.
- As a result of this guidance, several media outlets accused the ABS of censoring the debate on behalf of the government. The ABS emphatically rejects any suggestion that its actions have been influenced by the government. Independence is critical to the ABS. The ABS would not respond to a request by Government to help censure the migration debate, nor has it been asked to (see attached FOI request).
- Subsequent release on 18 September 2025 of official NOM data for the March quarter 2025 showed that annual migration has decreased for the 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive quarter (contrary to earlier incorrect media reporting).

## Facts and figures

- Annual NOM for the year ending March 2025 was 315,900. This compares with 493,800 people in the previous 12 months.
- In the March quarter 2025, NOM added 110,100 people to the population, lower than for the March quarters of 2024 (128,700) and 2023 (165,500).
- Contrary to reports that NOM levels are twice that of pre-pandemic levels, NOM for the year ending March for 2025 (315,900) was 33% higher than for 2018 (238,000) and 26% higher than for 2019 (250,700).
- While net Permanent and long-term movements data is available several months earlier than NOM, it has differed from the corresponding NOM data by 42% on average for the past 12 quarters.
- The claim that "every single day, Australia is now taking in 1544 new people" is based on net Permanent and long-term movements data and is not reflected by the most recent NOM estimates (866 people per day for the year to March 2025).
- For the first 3 quarters of the 2024-25 financial year, NOM was 260,600, suggesting annual NOM will not exceed Treasury's budget forecast for the year (335,000). In contrast, net Permanent and long-term movements for the first 3 quarters of 2024-25 was 366,100.

## Background

- The three media outlets which were sent statistical clarification emails on 21 August were: 2GB, The Daily Mail, and MacroBusiness (article by the Institute of Public Affairs).
- Centre for Population website identifies OAD data as one of several potential leading indicators for NOM, but this is only one of several sources they consider and they do not use unadjusted OAD data in their forecasts for the same reasons outlined by ABS.
- The difference between NOM and Permanent and long-term movements is summarised in attachment 3.

## Attachment 1 ABS Media Statement

### Overseas Arrivals and Departures versus Overseas Migration data

#### Released

21/08/2025

Multiple media stories have been published this week using [Overseas Arrivals and Departures](#) (OAD) data to make commentary on migration numbers. This data does not reflect the [official ABS definition of migration](#) and may lead to inaccurate conclusions on migration.

Overseas Arrivals and Departures (OAD) data is a count of border crossings rather than migration. It is best used to understand patterns in traveller movements, such as tourism trends and seasonal travel.

Permanent and Long-term movements come from traveller declarations and are not contingent on the traveller's residency status prior to travel.

For example, this means a person who has been living in Australia for three years on a temporary visa, and travels overseas multiple times, can count as a long-term visitor arrival many times, even though they only migrated here once.

This is why OAD data should not be used to measure migration or population change, as it reflects self-declared traveller intentions rather than changes in residency status.

Accurate insights on migration into Australia are available from our [Overseas Migration](#) and [National, State and Territory Population](#) publications, which have data for up to the 2023-24 financial year and December 2024 respectively. Migration figures for this year have not been published yet, and the March quarter 2025 data will be published on 18 September.

Historically, net permanent and long-term movements from Overseas Arrivals and Departures have been consistently higher than actual Net Overseas Migration.

Thursday, 12 June

s47F (External) 12/06 3:43 pm

s47F Hi s22 I'm hoping you'd be able to help me get a contact responsible for overseas arrivals and departures? I believe it is included in tomorrow's media release.

it just references overseas arrivals and departures so I'm guessing it is migration and possibly tourism. Sorry it's so broad

12/06 3:52 pm

Ok thanks s47F I have reached out to the area that I think might be able to help you out. I will let you know once I receive confirmation from them but this might now be tomorrow morning is that ok or do you require a reply tonight?

s47F (External) 12/06 3:54 pm

s47F Thank you so much for your help. It's for one of our advisors - s47F I think she was hoping to speak to them prior to the media release tomorrow if that's possible

s47F

no worries

12/06 3:59 pm

Ok a few people you can contact

s22  
Denise Carlton | s22  
s22

Released under FOIA Act

s22

**From:** s47F (A. Leigh, MP) <s47F@aph.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 21 August 2025 3:10 PM  
**To:** s22  
**Cc:** Leigh DLO; OFFICIAL) ABS - Parliamentary; media; Beidar Cho  
**Subject:** RE: FOR AWARENESS: ABS media statement on Overseas Arrivals and Departures versus Overseas Migration data [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Thank you s22

Our office has received a media enquiry related to this from s47F from *Daily Mail*. We have directed s47F to contact the ABS this afternoon who is seeking comment.

Kind Regards,

s47F

| Media Adviser

**Office of The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP**  
**Assistant Minister for Productivity, Competition, Charities & Treasury**  
**Federal Member for Fenner**

**Phone:** s47F

**Email:** s47F @aph.gov.au

**Electorate Office:** Corner of Efkaridis St & Gungahlin Pl W, Gungahlin ACT 2912



 We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the ACT, the Ngunnawal people. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

**From:** s22 @abs.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 21 August 2025 3:00 PM  
**To:** s47F (A. Leigh, MP) s47F@aph.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Leigh DLO <leighdlo@treasury.gov.au>; OFFICIAL) ABS -s22 @abs.gov.au>; media <media@abs.gov.au>; Beidar Cho <Beidar.Cho@abs.gov.au>

**Subject:** FOR AWARENESS:: ABS media statement on Overseas Arrivals and Departures versus Overseas Migration data [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Good afternoon,

For your awareness, we've been responding to media enquiries and coverage relating to overseas migration data today, including from 2GB, the *Daily Mail*, and ABC's *Media Watch*.

We have published [a statement to our website](#) for journalists to reference.

Home Affairs and Treasury have also been informed of the statement and may use it to support their own media responses.

If you have any questions regarding this data, please contact Beidar Cho, Program Manager, Demography (cced into this email).

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you need anything further.

s22

A/g Director, Media and Social Media

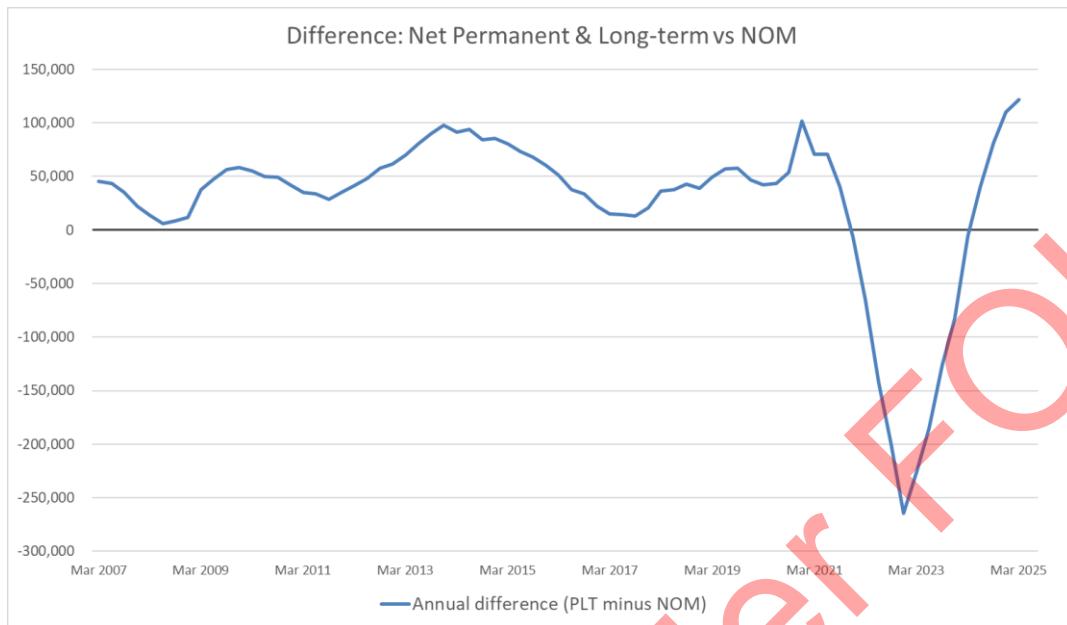
Strategic Engagement and Performance Branch

**Australian Bureau of Statistics**

**P: 1300 175 070**

Office hours: Limited availability on Thursday afternoons

## Attachment 3 Difference between Permanent and long-term movements in Overseas Arrivals and Departures, and Net Overseas Migration (NOM)



### Definitions

- Permanent and long-term movements data counts the number of border crossings rather than the number of travellers (i.e. multiple movements of an individual traveller are counted separately), with long-term arrivals being based on self-declared intentions on the Incoming Passenger Card. It does not account for whether a traveller has already been counted as having migrated to Australia.
- NOM measures actual changes in residency status, consistent with the UN standard - people must be in or out of Australia for at least 12 months within a 16-month period. It accounts for subsequent travel patterns, actual duration of stay, and whether a traveller has already migrated to Australia. The graph above shows the difference between annual Permanent and long-term movements and NOM since 2007.
- While the ABS updates NOM each quarter, because of seasonal patterns, ABS recommends using annual growth to understand population change.