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STATISTICAL BULLETIN

ON



INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES 2024



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Preface

This is the twenty-fifth bulletin of annual migration reports produced by the Statistics Department as the main reference for the volume of overseas visitors, cruise ship passengers, yacht passengers and resident's movement to and from the Kingdom of Tonga. This bulletin covers the period of January to December 2024, including tables providing a monthly breakdown of the data. Comparative data for previous years are also included in this bulletin. Most of the information contained in this bulletin was obtained from the Immigration Department database on international arrivals and departures.

The main purpose of collecting and compiling statistics on International Arrivals and Departures, or Migration Statistics, is to make migration data available for planners and decision-makers. Tonga has a high rate of Net Migration, with more people moving out of Tonga than arriving. Production of Migration Statistics and their components enables the Statistics Department to estimate the resident population and to produce Population Projections for the whole Kingdom.

This bulletin presents information relating to the number of arrivals and departures by sex, purpose of travel, reasons for absence, country of usual residence and country visited.

Special thanks are extended to the Immigration Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Customs Departments of the Ministry of Revenue Services, Airport Terminal Services and Port Authority for their assistance in providing administrative information relating to these statistics. I am also particularly grateful to Salote Latu and the Population and Social Statistics Division staff, who contributed to the compilation and production of this report.

Any suggestions that recipients of this bulletin wish to make for its future improvement will be welcomed by the Statistics Department.



Sione F Lolohea
Government Statistician



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1. MAIN FEATURES

1.1.General

- a. Net overseas migration is the net gain or loss of population through immigration to Tonga and emigration from Tonga.
- b. Individuals are considered residents when residing in Tonga for 12 months or more.
- c. For 2024, total international arrivals were 125,584 and total departures were 125,784, a net outflow of 200. This means more people were departing the Kingdom than arriving in 2024.

1.2.Total International Arrivals and Departures

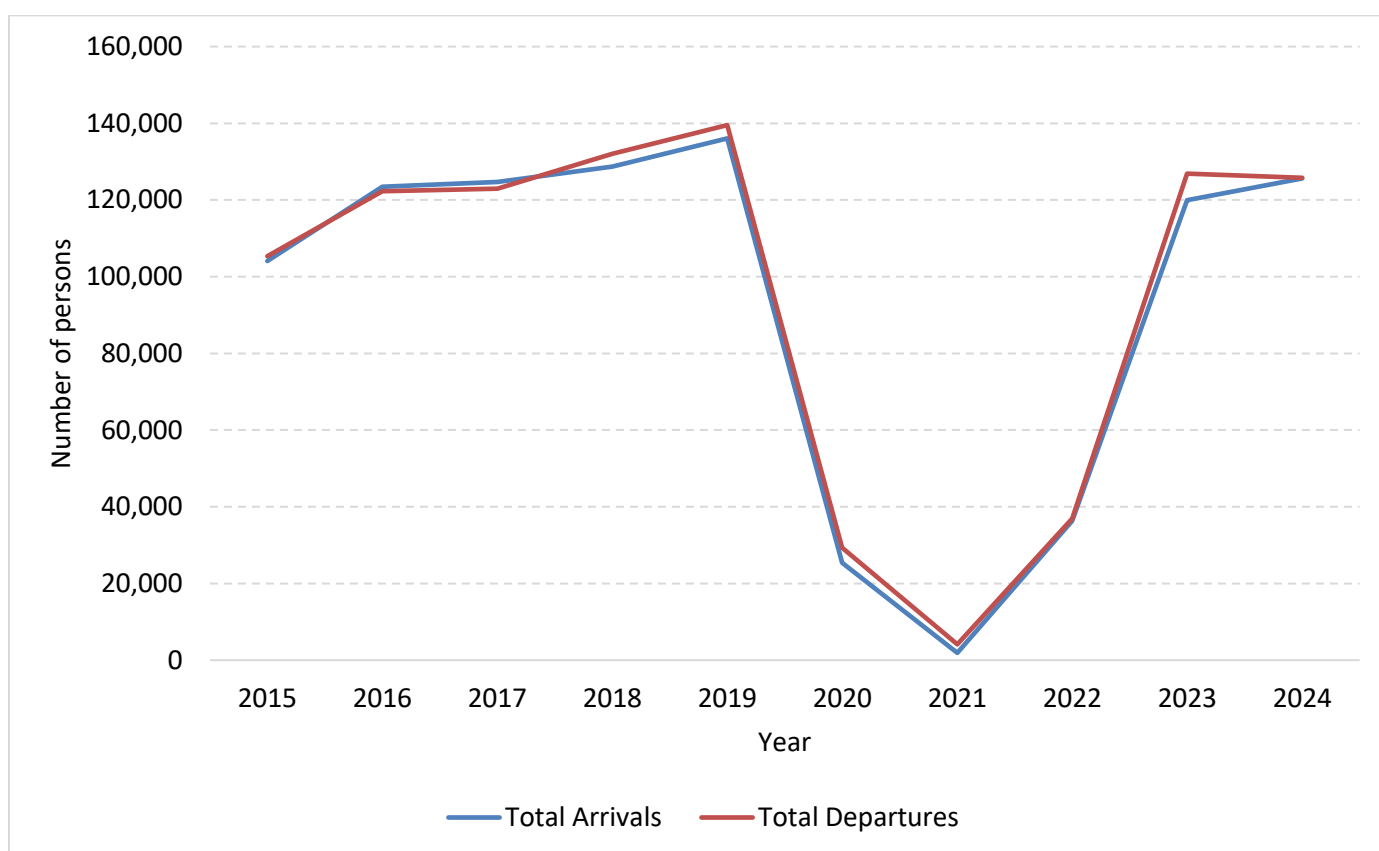


Fig. 1. Total International Arrivals & Departures 2015 - 2024

Figure 1: The above graph shows an upward trend from 2015 to 2016. However, negative net migration continues until 2017, with arrivals slightly exceeding departures. In 2018 and 2019, more people departed the Kingdom than arrived. A sharp decline followed from 2019 to 2021, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to travel restrictions and the complete closure of some international borders. Migration increased from 2021 to 2022 as borders reopened for both air and sea travellers. This trend continued into 2023 and 2024, with departures again exceeding arrivals.

1.3.Total international arrivals and departures by annual percentage change

Table 1.1: Total International Arrivals and Departures 2004 – 2024

Year	Total Arrivals	% Change	Total Departures	% Change
2004	66,639		70,206	
2005	76,286	14.5%	73,540	4.7%
2006	78,652	3.1%	82,268	11.9%
2007	75,587	-3.9%	83,416	1.4%
2008	91,128	20.6%	92,890	11.4%
2009	99,803	9.5%	99,360	7.0%
2010	89,506	-10.3%	90,607	-8.8%
2011	94,960	6.1%	95,607	5.5%
2012	82,400	-13.2%	83,805	-12.3%
2013	85,473	3.7%	85,134	1.6%
2014	92,374	8.1%	94,090	10.5%
2015	104,070	12.7%	105,379	12.0%
2016	123,462	18.6%	122,266	16.0%
2017	124,703	1.0%	122,970	0.6%
2018	128,734	3.2%	132,086	7.4%
2019	136,059	5.7%	139,527	5.6%
2020	25,382	-81.3%	29,306	-79.0%
2021	1,903	-92.5%	4,132	-85.9%
2022	36,314	1808.3%	36,880	792.5%
2023	119,916	230.2%	126,866	244.0%
2024	125,584	4.7%	125,784	-0.9%

Table 1.1 shows the total arrivals (persons arriving) in the Kingdom, with the highest point in 2019 at 136,059. The largest increase in arrivals occurred from 2021 to 2022, with an 1808% rise. This surge followed the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions and the reopening of borders. The following year, from 2022 to 2023, saw a 230% increase.

Similarly, total departures (persons leaving Tonga) peaked in 2019 at 139,527. The most significant decline in departures occurred from 2020 to 2021, with a 92.5% drop, reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migration. Departures began to rise again in 2022, following the reopening of borders, with an increase of 792.5%, followed by 244% in 2023. In 2024, departures saw a slight rise of 4.7% compared to 2023, with a minor decline of 0.9% from 2023 to 2024.

2. INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS

2.1. International Arrivals by Transport Mode 2015 - 2024

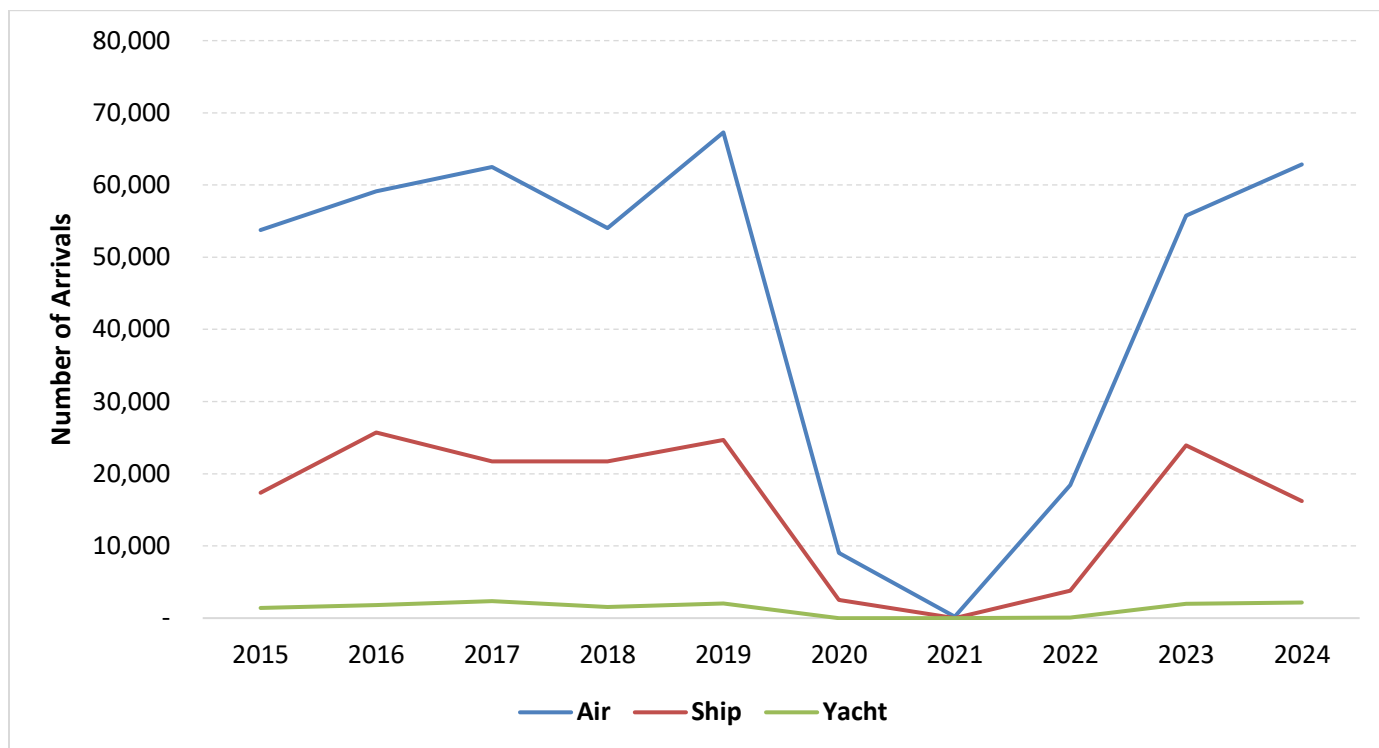


Fig. 2. International Arrivals by Transport Mode 2015 - 2024

Figure 2: The above graph shows the total international arrivals to the Kingdom by transport mode for the years 2015 to 2024. It clearly illustrates that international air arrivals dominated the total arrivals, followed by arrivals on cruise ships, with yachts seeing the least number of arrivals.

The steep rise from 2015 to 2019 is primarily due to the dramatic increase in air arrivals, as shown in the graph. Yacht arrivals increased from 1,426 in 2015 to 1,818 in 2016, then to 2,354 in 2017, before declining to 1,552 in 2018 and increasing again to 2,021 in 2019.

As observed, there was a steep decline in 2019 to 2021, affecting both air and sea arrivals, mainly due to COVID-19 restrictions. From 2022 to 2024, all modes of transport began to rise again as borders reopened, and the volume of arrivals returned to normal.

2.2.Total Arrivals by Transport Mode and Month, 2024

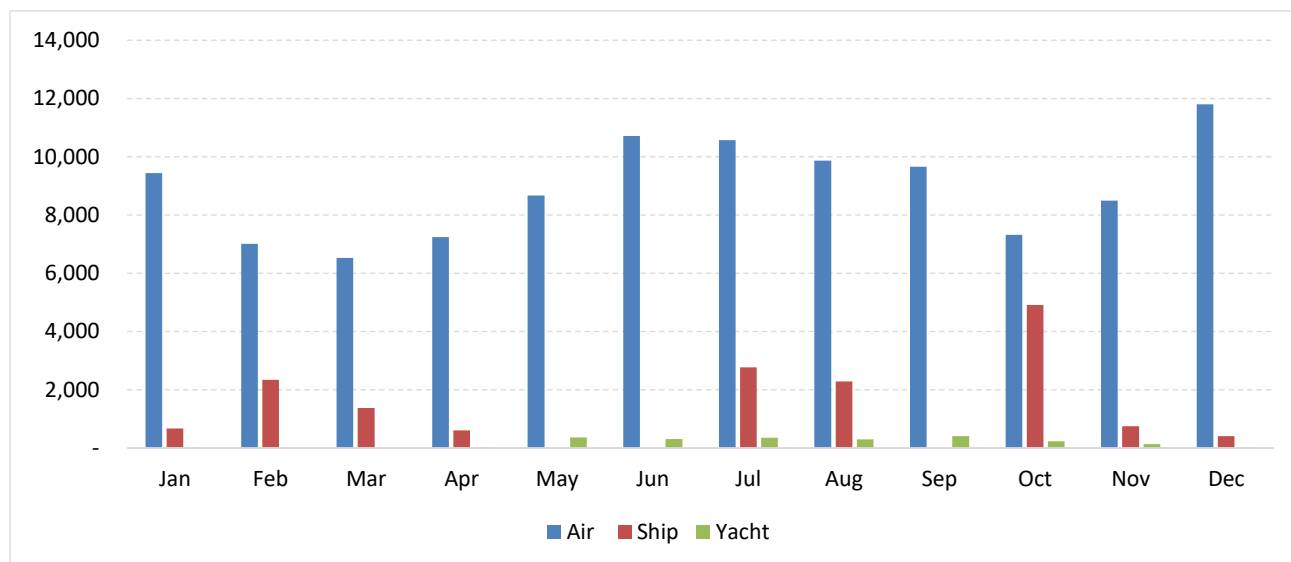


Fig. 3. Monthly Arrivals by Transport Mode 2024

Figure 3: The above graph illustrates the monthly arrivals by transportation mode in 2024. As shown, air arrivals are the highest across all months. There were no cruise ships arrivals in the months of May, June and September, and no yacht arrivals in February and March.

2.3.Total air arrivals by passenger type and month, 2024



Fig. 4. Total Air Arrivals by Passenger Type and Month 2024

Figure 4: The highest number of returning residents arrived in Tonga in January 2024. As for visitors, the highest number of air arrivals occurred in December.

2.4. Total Air Visitors by Country of Usual Residence 2024

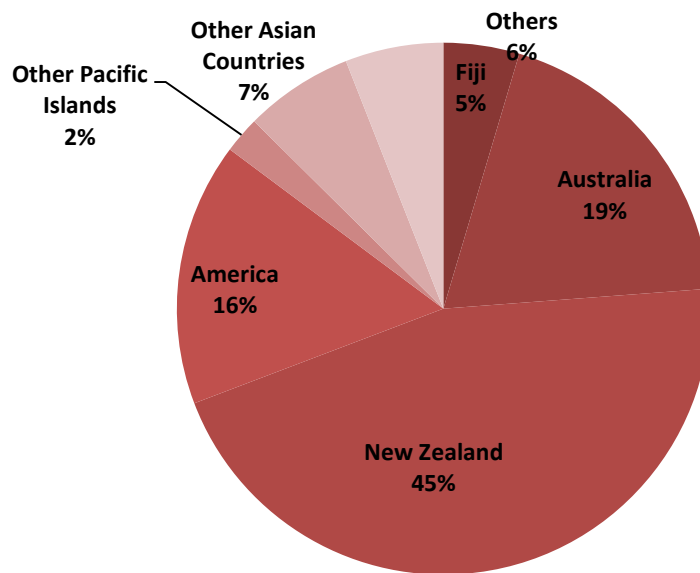


Fig. 5. Air Visitors by Country of Usual Residence for the year 2024

Figure 5: New Zealand remains the leading country of usual residence for visitor arrivals, accounting for 45.4% (28,558) of total visitors. This was followed by Australia with 19.2% (12,046) and the United States at 16.0% (10,064)

2.5. Visitors Arrivals by Purpose of Visit 2024

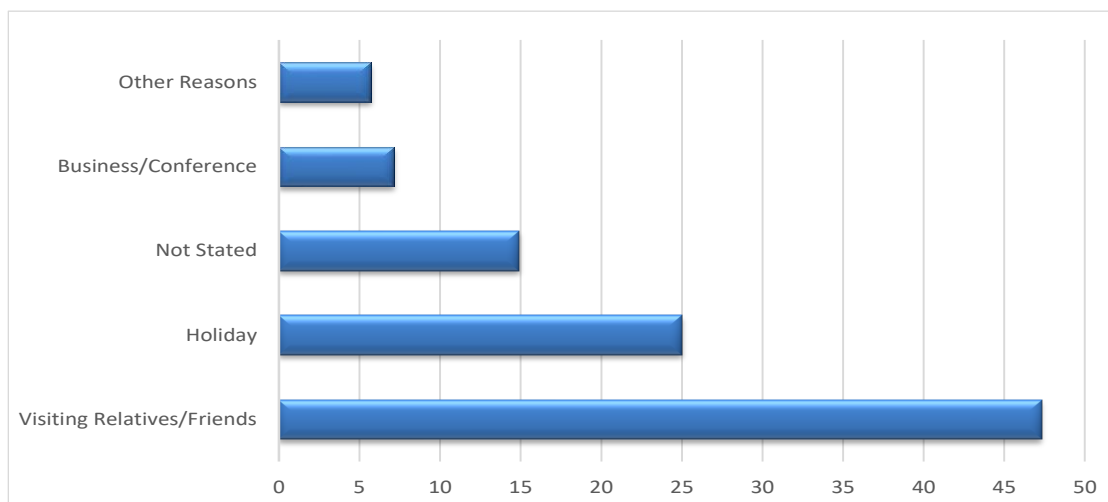


Fig. 6. Air visitors by purpose of visit, 2024

Figure 6: The majority of visitors to the Kingdom arrived to visit relatives and friends, accounting for 47.3% (29,730) of total arrivals. This was followed by 25.0% (15,691) who came for a holiday, while 14.9% (9,375) did not state the purpose of their visit.

2.6. International Air Arrivals by Age Group 2024

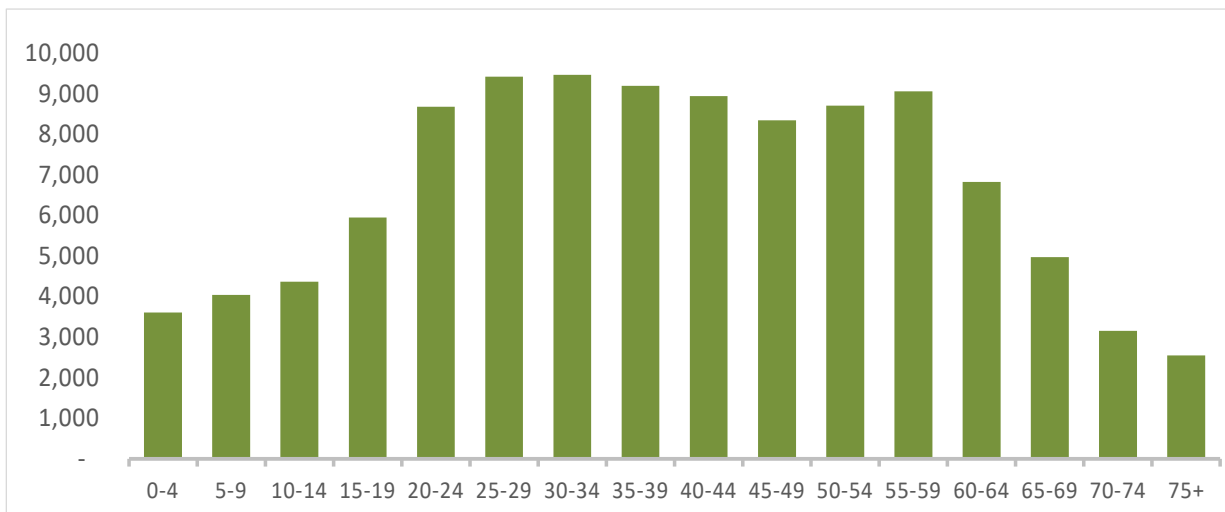


Fig. 7. Air arrivals by age group, 2024

Figure 7: The majority of air arrivals were in the 30–34 age group (9,471), followed by those aged 25–29 (9,423) and 35–39 (9,197).

3. INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURES

3.1. Air Departures by Sex and Month 2024

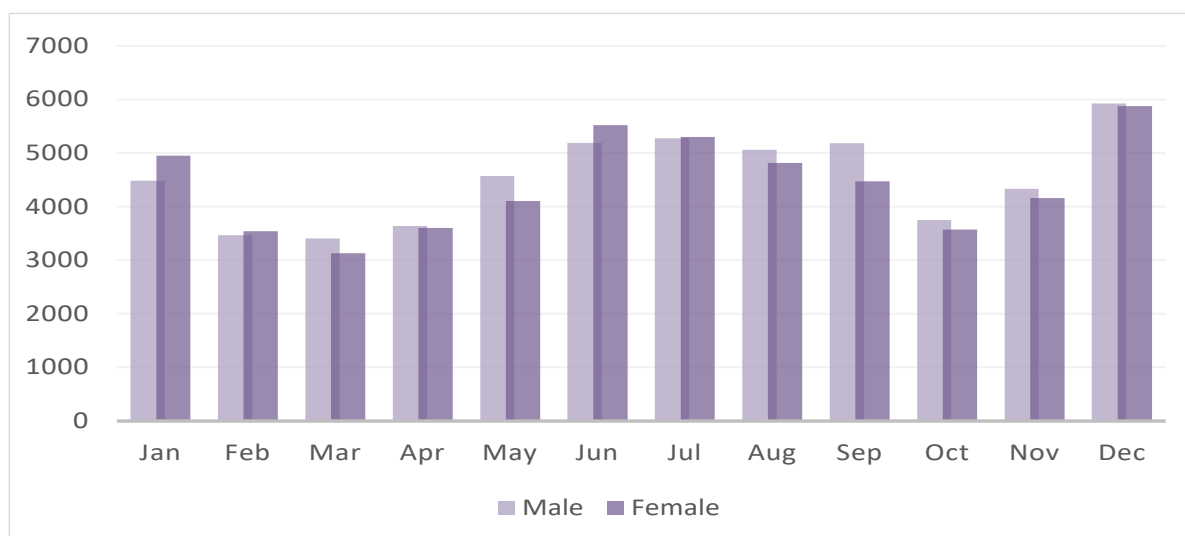


Fig. 8. Total departures by sex and month, 2024

Figure 8: The figure above shows that the lowest number of male departures occurred in March (3,404), followed by February (3,468). The highest number of departures was recorded in December, with 5,924 males and 5,878 females leaving the Kingdom.

3.2. Air Departures by Country of Usual Residence, 2024

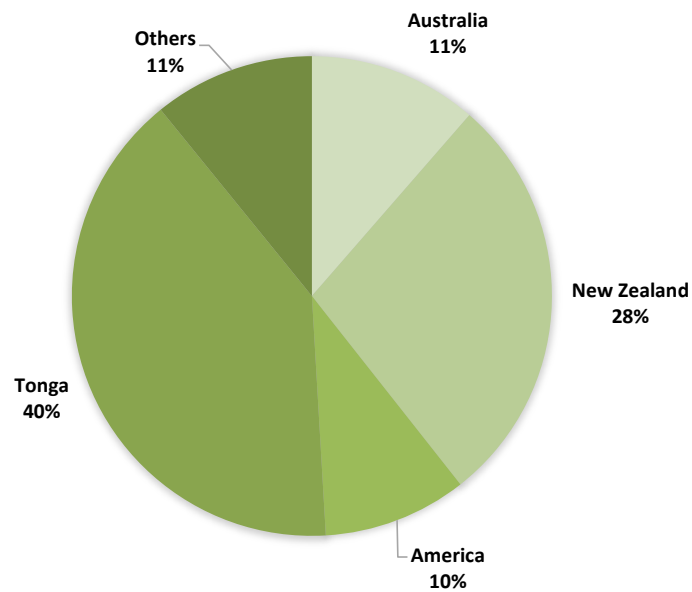


Fig. 9. Air departures by country of usual residence, 2024

Figure 9: The figure shows that most departures in 2024 were Tongan residents, accounting for 43,347 (40.1%) of total departures. This was followed by New Zealand residents at 30,209 (28.0%) and Australian residents at 12,316 (11.4%).

4. EXPLANATORY NOTES

4.1.PURPOSE

This bulletin aims to give an overview of total international arrivals and departures and their main social and economic characteristics.

Statistics on Overseas Arrivals and Departures are related to the number of movements of travellers rather than the number of travellers (i.e. the multiple movements of individual persons during a given reference period are all counted).

4.2.COVERAGE

This bulletin covers all international arrivals and departures from the Kingdom of Tonga, including yachts and those through Lupepau’u Airport and all outer islands, during 2024. Final totals of arrivals and departures are based on the reconciliation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration electronic data, Customs Wharf Register and Air Terminal Services Manifest.

4.3.SOURCE OF DATA

Data is extracted from the arrival and departure cards of the Immigration Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Customs vessel and yacht logbook. The Statistics Department reconciles the figures from the Air Terminal Services Manifest and Ports Authority Manifest to produce final published data.

4.4.DATA LIMITATIONS

Passengers on yachts and ships do not complete arrival and departure cards, therefore we are unable to provide details on Age, Sex and Purpose of visit.

Due to the limitation and incomplete data, we cannot determine whether arrivals and departures are of a long term or short-term duration.

(Note: This problem was caused by incomplete arrival and departure card)

5. GLOSSARY

- A Visitor is a person other than a Tongan citizen, permit holder and exempted person, who usually stays at least 24 hours in the kingdom, or who stays overnight in accommodation within Tonga. This refers to passengers arriving by air and yacht only.
- Cruise Ship Passengers are defined as those who arrive and depart in the same vessel, which is a cruise trip, and use that vessel's accommodation during their stay in Tonga. They are also known as "Excursionist"
- A Returning Resident is a person who has the Kingdom of Tonga as their permanent address for more than six months of the year and returns to Tonga after a trip overseas. Tongan residence is self-defined as reported by travelers when completing the Passenger Arrival Card.
- Main reason for journey. On arrival in Tonga, all overseas visitors and Tongan residents are asked to state their purpose of journey. Statistics are published using the following categories: Holiday, Business, Visiting friends and /or relatives, Conference and Others.
- Mode of Transport. Only air, yacht and cruise ships passengers are included. Passenger/crew on cargo, navy or special vessels are excluded.

Table 2: Total Air Arrivals by Age Group and Month 2024

Age Group	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
0-4	416	233	185	254	285	394	347	280	239	279	225	469	3,606
5-9	642	339	178	267	244	385	432	226	227	250	227	622	4,039
10-14	799	379	169	281	237	397	508	176	258	222	233	710	4,369
15-19	855	557	260	328	361	615	802	298	457	243	369	804	5,949
20-24	736	556	539	526	787	913	813	704	759	537	820	991	8,681
25-29	720	503	601	644	781	861	915	937	935	635	785	1,106	9,423
30-34	760	590	529	607	769	821	896	1,055	1,020	677	704	1,043	9,471
35-39	727	577	606	608	721	778	870	1,001	947	717	714	931	9,197
40-44	713	544	560	639	743	800	871	919	927	641	734	859	8,950
45-49	629	536	547	607	720	767	842	846	791	627	650	786	8,348
50-54	627	589	637	594	702	883	832	903	799	647	699	801	8,713
55-59	612	541	617	616	798	999	836	875	800	633	776	959	9,062
60-64	491	394	408	490	603	770	616	693	622	476	559	703	6,825
65-69	326	310	334	357	406	580	468	488	443	338	433	488	4,971
70-74	212	188	194	223	277	424	305	273	248	223	299	288	3,154
75+	169	170	169	196	237	324	223	197	182	172	267	242	2,548
Total	9,434	7,006	6,533	7,237	8,671	10,711	10,576	9,871	9,654	7,317	8,494	11,802	107,306
% Distribution	8.8	6.5	6.1	6.7	8.1	10.0	9.9	9.2	9.0	6.8	7.9	11.0	100.0
SEX													
Male	4,484	3,468	3,404	3,636	4,568	5,192	5,277	5,058	5,184	3,749	4,333	5,924	54,277
Female	4,950	3,538	3,129	3,601	4,103	5,519	5,299	4,813	4,470	3,568	4,161	5,878	53,029
Total	9,434	7,006	6,533	7,237	8,671	10,711	10,576	9,871	9,654	7,317	8,494	11,802	107,306
PASSENGERS TYPE													
Returning Residents	5,672	3,766	3,013	3,355	3,632	3,434	3,123	3,192	3,724	2,857	4,239	4,431	44,438
Visitors	3,762	3,240	3,520	3,882	5,039	7,277	7,453	6,679	5,930	4,460	4,255	7,371	62,868
Total	9,434	7,006	6,533	7,237	8,671	10,711	10,576	9,871	9,654	7,317	8,494	11,802	107,306

Table 3: Air Visitors by Country of Residence and Purpose of Visit 2024

Country of Residence	Purpose of Visit						
	Total	% Distribution	Holiday/Vacation	Business/Conference	Visiting Relative/Friends	Other Reasons	Not Stated
Australia	12,046	19.2	3,303	930	5,408	542	1,863
New Zealand	28,558	45.5	5,423	1,131	17,137	1,086	3,781
Fiji	2,905	4.6	384	740	728	580	473
American Samon	115	0.2	6	13	72	16	8
Western Samoa	412	0.7	44	71	170	82	45
Other Pacific Islands	870	1.4	69	342	144	115	200
Japan	669	1.1	259	122	130	48	110
China	2,106	3.3	858	222	492	227	307
India	118	0.2	26	33	11	30	18
Korea	180	0.3	91	15	22	38	14
Other Asian Countries	1,080	1.7	367	188	90	140	295
UK	747	1.2	342	74	111	56	164
Germany	462	0.7	319	17	33	10	83
France	267	0.4	102	38	40	26	61
Italy	181	0.3	79	7	5	61	29
Other European Countries	1,355	2.2	837	71	62	62	323
All African Countries	164	0.3	44	27	4	16	73
United States of America	10,064	16	2,891	357	5,001	411	1,404
Canada	292	0.5	146	25	46	20	55
Other American Countries	277	0.4	101	71	24	12	69
Total	62,868	100	15,691	4,494	29,730	3,578	9,375
Precent Distribution	100		25	7.1	47.3	5.7	14.9

Table 4: AIR DEPARTURES by Age Group and Passenger's Type for the year 2024.

Age Group	Departing Residents	Percent Distribution	Visitors	Percent Distribution	Total	Percent Distribution
0 - 4	1,304	3	2,301	3.6	3,605	3.3
5 - 9	1,635	3.8	2,581	4	4,216	3.9
10 - 14	1,725	4	2,842	4.4	4,567	4.2
15 - 19	2,920	6.7	3,388	5.2	6,308	5.8
20 - 24	5,135	11.8	3,869	6	9,004	8.3
25 - 29	4,550	10.5	4,803	7.4	9,353	8.7
30 - 34	4,205	9.7	5,201	8	9,406	8.7
35 - 39	3,622	8.4	5,435	8.4	9,057	8.4
40 - 44	3,496	8.1	5,420	8.4	8,916	8.3
45 - 49	2,956	6.8	5,360	8.3	8,316	7.7
50 - 54	3,094	7.1	5,572	8.6	8,666	8
55 - 59	3,141	7.2	5,914	9.1	9,055	8.4
60 - 64	2,182	5	4,614	7.1	6,796	6.3
65 - 69	1,486	3.4	3,471	5.4	4,957	4.6
70 - 74	990	2.3	2,173	3.4	3,163	2.9
75+	907	2.1	1,744	2.7	2,651	2.5
All Ages	43,348	99.9	64,688	100	108,036	100
YACHT	0	0	1,626		1,626	0
CRUISE SHIP	0	0	16,122		16,122	0
Total	43,348	100	82,436	100	125,784	100

Table 5: Total Departures by Residence and Sex for the year 2024.

Country of Usual Residence	Male	Percent	Female	Percent	Total	Percent
	No.	Distribution	No.	Distribution	No.	Distribution
Australia	5,984	10.9	6,332	11.9	12,316	11.4
New Zealand	14,764	27.0	15,445	29.0	30,209	28.0
Fiji	1,654	3.0	1,132	2.1	2,786	2.6
American Samon	71	0.1	65	0.1	136	0.1
Western Samoa	218	0.4	180	0.3	398	0.4
Tonga	22,157	40.5	21,190	39.8	43,347	40.1
Other Pacific Islands	524	1.0	333	0.6	857	0.8
Japan	438	0.8	253	0.5	691	0.6
China	1,085	2.0	745	1.4	1,830	1.7
India	96	0.2	23	0.0	119	0.1
Korea	92	0.2	80	0.2	172	0.2
Other Asian Countries	590	1.1	405	0.8	995	0.9
UK	449	0.8	313	0.6	762	0.7
Germany	255	0.5	205	0.4	460	0.4
France	173	0.3	99	0.2	272	0.3
Italy	134	0.2	61	0.1	195	0.2
Other European Countries	745	1.4	624	1.2	1,369	1.3
All African Countries	85	0.2	49	0.1	134	0.1
United States of America	4,936	9.0	5,505	10.3	10,441	9.7
Canada	140	0.3	147	0.3	287	0.3
Other American Countries	158	0.3	102	0.2	260	0.2
Total	54,748	100	53,288	100	108,036	100

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