

DEVELOPMENT
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Making Migration Work for the Pacific and Timor-Leste

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and should not be attributed to any organisation with which the authors might be affiliated.

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Contents

Figures.....	v
Tables	v
Abbreviations.....	vii
Executive summary	1
The demand for workers	1
New migration pathways.....	1
The challenges.....	2
Current and future opportunities.....	2
The potential role of the ADB in providing more and better information	2
1. Introduction	6
Focus and Scope.....	6
A comment on the source data on migration	7
Four different types of mobility.....	8
Evidence of the intent to migrate	10
APTC graduates want to migrate for work	11
High demand from five Pacific countries for permanent residence places in New Zealand	11
2. Migrant destinations in OECD countries	13
New Zealand and Pacific migration	13
Different destinations for each country grouping.....	13
Migration within the Pacific.....	14
Preferred destinations	15
3. Open and dedicated migration pathways	16
Freedom of Movement.....	17
Temporary seasonal work.....	17
Access to permanent residence based on a quota of places chosen by lottery	18
New Zealand	18
Australia’s proposed Pacific Engagement Visa.....	18
United States Green Card.....	18
Dedicated pathways to Australia and New Zealand for Pacific countries and Timor-Leste	19
Temporary skills-based pathways to work in Australia, New Zealand, the USA, or Canada	19
Temporary skilled work visas for Australia	19
Permanent migration to Australia, New Zealand, and Canada	21
Australia	21
New Zealand	22
Migration pathway for Fiji to Canada.....	22
4. Social Protection and worker welfare: improving migrant outcomes.....	22
Identifying key social issues	23
Worker welfare suffered under Covid-19.....	24
Counter evidence of worker satisfaction	25
Reactions from the governments of Samoa, Vanuatu, and Fiji.....	26
5. Need for a new framework and policies to improve migration outcomes.....	27
Access obstacles for Pacific countries & Timor-Leste.....	27
Limitations of existing bilateral agreements	28
Need for a new, more comprehensive approach by the governments involved	28
Lowering the cost of remittances	29
Addressing uneven access between and within sending countries	29
Addressing the narrow focus of the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) on low-skilled jobs.....	30

	More opportunities to access temporary skilled work pathways	31
6.	Linking people with current opportunities to work overseas	31
	Immediate past access to Australia and New Zealand’s high-income labour markets	31
	The temporary work visa pathways	32
	Different skill profiles of Pacific migrants for Australia and New Zealand	33
	New Zealand offers more current opportunities to Pacific migrants for jobs at lower skill levels.....	34
	New Zealand also offers a wider spread of job opportunities for permanent residents.....	34
	Gender balance in the migration pathways	35
7.	Future job opportunities regionally and further afield.....	36
	Assessing the demand for health care workers recruited directly from overseas	36
8.	Recommendations for the ADB on ways to improve migration outcomes.....	37
	Recommendation 1: Need to define the parameters for ADB involvement in improving Pacific migration outcomes.....	37
	Recommendation 2: ADB, with its regional focus, is well placed to set up a migration observatory	39
	Recommendation 3: ADB should develop four regionally common indicators of supply and demand.....	39
	Showing what a national skills pool looks like.....	40
	Working out supply and demand.....	40
	Identifying national skill shortages.....	40
	Showing the demand for occupations overseas.....	40
	Carrying out the analysis.....	41
	Recommendation 4: ADB analysis is needed to help migrants choose wisely	41
	Responding to the common inhibitors	41
	Responding to the less common inhibitors	42
	Providing important information about jobs and wages for a potential migrant	42
	Recommendation 5: How ADB can address worker over-recruitment between and within countries	42
	Recommendation 6: How ADB could address brain drain concerns.....	43
9.	Conclusion.....	44
	Attachments.....	45
	Attachment A: Additional information on the industries and occupations of Pacific migrants	45
	Australian industries employing Pacific migrants.....	45
	Attachment B: Short-term future demand for occupations based on New Zealand more open immigration system	47
	Attachment C: APTC’s failure to deliver on labour mobility	49
	Attachment D: Summary of assessments of demand for low or semi-skilled labour in Australia.....	50
	Attachment E: International policy responses to address skill shortages and to manage brain drain	51
	Attachment F: Employment outcomes for Pacific migrants based on the Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries (DIOC) 2015/16.....	54
	References	62

Figures

Figure 1: Ratio of total applications to slots for New Zealand’s permanent residence Pacific visas	12
Figure 2: New Zealand total Pacific visa applicants as percentage of the resident population	13
Figure 3: Australia and New Zealand temporary skill visas (greater than nine months) granted to Pacific & Timor-Leste migrants by skill level, 2016-17 to 2020-21, per cent for each destination country.....	33
Figure 4: Australia and New Zealand permanent skill migration visas granted to Pacific & Timor-Leste migrants by skill level, 2016-17 to 2020-21, per cent for each destination country.....	34
Figure 5: Industry employment profile of Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) workers, November 2019-April 2022, per cent.....	47

Tables

Table 1: Four country groups by type of mobility	8
Table 2: Basic labour mobility indicators for Pacific countries and Timor-Leste by four types of mobility.....	9
Table 3: Migration pathways to major destinations for Pacific developing countries and Timor-Leste	16
Table A1: Combined employment outcomes of emigrant men aged 25-64 years resident in OECD countries from high-mobility countries of Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, 2015-16, per cent.....	56
Table A2: Employment outcomes of Australian resident men aged 25-64 years, 2016 Census, per cent	57
Table A3: Combined employment outcomes of emigrant women aged 25-64 years resident in OECD countries from high-mobility countries of Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, 2015-16, per cent	57
Table A4: Employment outcomes of Australian resident women aged 25-64 years, 2016 Census, per cent.....	57
Table A5: Employment outcomes of emigrant men aged 25-64 years resident in OECD countries from high-mobility countries of Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, 2015-16, per cent.....	58
Table A6: Employment outcomes of emigrant women aged 25-64 years resident in OECD countries from high-mobility countries of Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, 2015-16, per cent.....	59
Table A7: Broad occupation groups of emigrant men and women from Fiji, aged 25-64 years, employed in OECD countries 2015-16, per cent	60
Table A8: Proportion of employed emigrant men and women aged 25 to 64 years from Fiji with tertiary education in occupations matched to their education level, 2015-16, per cent.....	61

Abbreviations

AEA	Approved Employers of Australia
APTC	Australia Pacific Training Coalition
FWO	Fair Work Ombudsman
GSP	Global Skill Partnerships
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
LSU	Labour Sending Unit
PAC	Pacific Access Category
PLF	Pacific Labour Facility
PLS	Pacific Labour Scheme
RSE	Recognised Employer Scheme
SQ	Samoa Quota
SAWP	Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program
SWP	Seasonal Work Programme
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TSS	Temporary Skill Shortage

Executive summary

The focus of this report, commissioned by the Asian Development Bank, is on how the citizens of fifteen Pacific countries and Timor-Leste can gain better access to the job-related migration opportunities. In short, there are major opportunities for workers and their families from the Pacific and Timor-Leste to work in the high-income regional labour markets of Australia and New Zealand. Middle skilled workers, with trade-based qualifications, are also much in demand. In addition, new pathways are emerging for migrants from the Pacific region and Timor-Leste to live and work as permanent residents in Australia and New Zealand.

However, governments in both the destination and sending countries need to provide not only better information on access to overseas jobs, they also need to collect, analyse, and make use of information from workers and employers on ways to improve the experiences of and rewards for current migrants.

These international labour mobility opportunities for some smaller Pacific countries have delivered over the last 15 years a ‘transformational impact’ in the form of major employment and income benefits (Howes et al 2022). However, for other larger Pacific countries and Timor-Leste, the impact has not been significant. The challenge for governments, donors and multilateral institutions seeking to promote economic and social development is to work out how to extend to these opportunities to the countries in the region with largest populations.

The demand for workers

On 28 September 2022, [the New Zealand government announced](#) that up to 19,000 short-term seasonal workers can be recruited for the year 2022/23. This is an increase of 3,000 on the previous season. Some 26,500 workers from the Pacific and Timor-Leste were working in Australia at the end of July 2022. This large number is due to workers who have not yet returned home from temporary seasonal work. It is also due to the special access provided to these workers to work in regional areas during the closure of its international borders. However, with the opening of these borders, Australian employers will be able to recruit workers from other countries and, if they are working holiday makers, at minimal extra cost to them.

Middle skilled workers, with trade-based qualifications, also are much in demand in Australia and New Zealand. In Australia’s mining sector, for example, employers estimate they will need 24,000 workers over the next five years, including 15,000 workers over the next two years. Australia’s construction industry also estimates the need for a further 40,000 workers in 2022 and 2023. Similar labour shortages exist in New Zealand, where in May 2022, over two-thirds of businesses claimed that skill shortages were holding them back from economic recovery.

New migration pathways

At the same time, new pathways are emerging to Australia and New Zealand for migrants from the Pacific and Timor-Leste to live and work. A major new pathway for migration from the Pacific and Timor-Leste is Australia’s new Pacific Engagement visa. Key details such as how the quota of 3,000 places per year will be allocated for each Pacific country

and Timor-Leste have yet to be announced. New Zealand is also introducing two new Pacific labour mobility programs in the meat and seafood processing sectors. Both programs are expected to commence in 2024, and the NZ government has indicated that other sectors may also be considered for Pacific programs in the future. The meat processing sector in New Zealand has welcomed the changes to immigration rules.

The challenges

However, despite the high demand and large potential supply of workers, gaining migrant access to these job vacancies is not a simple process. All destination countries have a migration regime which sets the rules for foreign worker entry for employment purposes. Where the migration flows for work are large, rules are used as screening devices to prove to the resident population that foreign workers are not taking jobs that could be taken by residents. These rules are particularly detailed and closely monitored for lower skill foreign workers working in rural and remote regions, where the potential for a domestic political backlash is strongest.

This report describes each of the major work-related migration pathways and outlines the obstacles that impede migrant access from the Pacific and Timor-Leste. The dedicated pathways for Pacific and Timor-Leste citizens involve a host of stakeholders in the two destination countries. These arrangements are very different to aid programs where the donor agency has all the power and often micro-manages the program to ensure that it avoids any controversy. The report also examines how governments can improve migrant outcomes through better social protection and worker welfare.

The case is presented for the destination and sending governments to reach new bilateral agreements. These agreements should be focused explicitly to improve migration outcomes, broadly defined. The agreements should also initiate twice yearly bilateral meetings of senior officials and employers to review the performance of the managed migration pathways and to assess the evidence of their impact on each of the parties involved.

Current and future opportunities

This report also highlights the ways that potential migrants can be linked to other opportunities to work overseas. Also outlined are the potential future job opportunities that exist regionally and elsewhere if the current barriers that exist can be addressed.

The potential role of the ADB in providing more and better information

This complex system often experiences instability due to the range of unplanned events that can suddenly erupt. For example, media reports about worker exploitation can cause either or both governments to respond in a reactive, piecemeal, and superficial way. Each migration pathway does need a better way of identifying and managing problems. One way to respond to do this is to have a real-time data gathering and reporting mechanism, based on regular feedback from workers and employers. This information can be used to identify problems in workplaces at an early stage to allow competent intermediaries to respond in a timely way. Preliminary work has been done in New Zealand and Australia on how best to collect this information.

However, much more needs to be done with seasonal workers and approved employers to implement at scale such a mechanism. Another source of system instability for the sending countries, such as Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa, is the lack of comprehensive information about what the benefits of migration are, who benefits and how is this changing over time. The World Bank and ANU's Pacific Labour Mobility Survey covers workers and their communities in three countries - Tonga, Kiribati and Vanuatu but other major sending countries such as Timor-Leste, Samoa and Solomon Islands are not included.

For the ADB, finding ways to engage with this contested terrain will not be easy. One major opportunity for the ADB, in its capacity as a key regional agency in the Pacific, is to fund ways to ensure information about migration is a genuine public good, accessible to all involved in the managed pathways. This requires providing reliable, current information on migration flows and outcomes, available from existing official sources but not analysed from a Pacific and Timor-Leste migrant perspective. This role has the huge potential to fill a major gap in the capacity of a range of actors to enable them to improve their performance and deliver better outcomes for all involved. What this role for the ADB might entail is spelt out in the following five recommendations. Below is a summary of the recommendations which are explained in more detail in Section 8 of this paper.

Recommendation 1: Need to define the parameters for ADB involvement in improving Pacific migration outcomes, where possible, for the worker and his or her household, the employer, the host and the sending communities, and the economies of the sending and destination countries.

The complexity of the migration process, involving the separate legal and administrative systems of sovereign governments in both the destination and sending countries requires caution in working out where and how to intervene. The ADB should be clear about why it is getting involved and how its involvement will do no harm. Examples of relevant design principles for the ADB should include the following:

1. The ADB aims to improve aspects of migration outcomes in the Pacific that do not include direct involvement with the sovereign rights of countries to determine the arrangements under which migrants gain entry for work.
2. As migration programs involving the Pacific often involve competition between sending countries, the ADB should adopt a regional perspective that does not favour any one country.
3. Information for individuals wanting to migrate and governments seeking to promote access to jobs for their citizens is a public, social, or collective good that requires adequate resourcing.
4. Resourcing information on migration as a public good available to every country whose citizens are eligible to migrate is problematic because no individual sending government will be prepared to take on the cost alone. Destination governments have sometimes conflicting concerns about both promoting but also controlling migrant inflows. As a result, they have failed to invest in a mechanism to provide sending governments easy access to information which they can use to better understand the impact of increasing migrant flows.

5. A regional facility providing reliable information for migration outcomes offers the ADB the opportunity to intervene in the migration process. This form of intervention is likely to have the greatest beneficial impact by providing more and better information to the key stakeholders without interfering in how they perform their roles in the complex system.

Recommendation 2: ADB, with its regional focus, is well placed to set up a migration observatory.

One area of potential ADB involvement which is not country specific but has a regional focus is the provision of information for Pacific countries on migration flows and outcomes. Sending countries need up-to-date and comprehensive information about how this complex system is working. Sending countries also need good information about their labour and skill losses due to overseas migration.

Recommendation 3: ADB should develop four regionally common indicators of supply and demand.

It is recommended that the ADB develop a set of simple indicators for each Pacific country based on a common definition regionally to monitor and produce a discussion paper on the domestic and overseas demand for and supply of skills. The ADB could also provide a dynamic skills profile of each Pacific country, based on the demand and supply of skilled occupations. These indicators could use measures derived from existing data sources such as the national census and administrative records. Also needed will be up-to-date tracer survey results for graduates with post-school qualifications from training providers, such as APTC, and the governments of Fiji and Samoa do now.

Recommendation 4: ADB analysis is needed to help migrants choose wisely.

Many prospective migrants from lower income countries may want to migrate but do not know whether they can afford to or not. Alternatively, potential migrants may have little reliable information on the benefits and so think migration is not worth incurring the financial and social costs involved. David McKenzie, a World Bank research economist, has spelt out in a policy research working paper the factors that can inhibit people in developing countries from migrating to high-income countries. He notes that this fear of migrating exists despite the significant income gains for migrating workers who have a range of skill levels using different migration pathways.

Information can be obtained from existing sources to address the common inhibitors affecting a potential migrant's decision. These can be compiled from destination country census data to show the employment and wage outcomes in the major destination countries of existing migrants from each Pacific country. This information can be used to produce guides to overseas employment for potential migrants for each Pacific country, as the ILO has done on a one-off basis in 2015 for iKiribati graduates.

Recommendation 5: How ADB can address worker over-recruitment within and between countries.

As noted in the report, the dedicated pathways for short-term seasonal work from the Pacific and Timor-Leste to Australia and New Zealand are demand driven. Employers

determine which countries and locations within a country their workers are recruited from. Employers engage workers from a small subset of countries where they perceive the conditions are most favourable. But from a development perspective, many countries in the region have missed out as a result. This applies especially to the larger countries in the region which need labour mobility the most, namely PNG, Timor-Leste, and Solomon Islands.

The destination countries could set country quotas for the Pacific temporary work schemes, but this risks greatly deterring employers from using these schemes at all. Instead of country quotas, efforts to increase hiring from the under-represented countries must be based on evidence. As Australia's Approved Employers Association has identified, this evidence needs to include information about the expectations and requirements of individual countries based on the structure of their economies, overall population and working age populations, and the skills and experience of their respective workforce.

An ADB-funded observatory could also analyse data for each of the major sending countries on the home locations of workers and identify areas for employers, supported by governments, to apply a pro-poor recruitment strategy. In the place of a top-down government directive that may have little effect, employers need to be persuaded of the longer benefits of such a strategy based on objective, robust evidence. This analysis and follow-up monitoring needs to be provided by an independent facility with the capacity to identify and analyse the available data from official sources, such as the administrative records of the labour sending units.

Recommendation 6: ADB could also provide information to address brain drain concerns.

It is vital that the sending countries in the Pacific and Timor-Leste do not see Australia and New Zealand's efforts to promote international labour mobility as causing harm to their workers, to their sending communities or to their economies. An ADB regional observatory needs to address issues related to the harmful effects of temporary migration for work. These concerns relate to the loss of employed workers from the public and private sectors to much better paid temporary low-skilled jobs overseas. More harmful to domestic economies is the emigration of skilled workers because their loss creates hard-to-fill skills gaps. These workers have competencies that have taken three to four years to acquire and have certified, and so cannot be replaced within a short time frame. This loss has been a major concern of hospitality employers in Fiji, Vanuatu, and Kiribati in relation to cooks and mechanics, for example.

An ADB-funded facility could report on the occupations of migrant workers from each sending country each quarter, using the official statistics provided by the two main destination countries. Governments and training providers could then use this information to assess whether the supply pipeline of trained workers is able to meet domestic skill shortages created by the loss of skilled workers.

1. Introduction

Focus and Scope

The purpose of this report, prepared at the request of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), is to outline the basic features of Pacific and Timor-Leste overseas labour mobility and migration. This involves identifying the main migration pathways and providing reliable information on migrant stocks and flows. The ADB also asked the author to identify potential future opportunities based on the expansion and growth of these pathways to high-income labour markets.

The report also assesses critically the obstacles for migrants that impede access to the opportunities identified. Also noted are the ways that the dedicated migration pathways for short- and long-term migration can be managed better by governments and employers. This refers to both how they operate identifying and resolving the inevitable problems that occur in complex sets of arrangements. It also refers to the responsibility of governments, employers, and the workers themselves and their communities to improve migrant outcomes and minimise any harmful effects such as the potential for brain drain.

A key issue addressed is the lack of reliable data to reveal the extent and type of existing migration flows and to identify potential problems. A common perception fostered by media reports is of widespread worker mistreatment by employers. Counter evidence is presented by noting the high rate of return seasonal workers returning for another year and the continuing evidence of high levels of worker satisfaction while overseas.

The report acknowledges the considerable complexity that arises when two or more sovereign countries are involved in the operation of a migration pathway. The high level of regulation and control imposed by the destination country reflects the underlying internal political tensions that exist over migration, especially involving low-skilled workers. Politicians and bureaucrats in the destination countries fear a popular backlash, especially in regional areas, if foreign workers are seen as taking the jobs that local jobseekers could do.

Adding to this complexity are both the positive and negative reactions in the sending countries to local workers leaving to work overseas, even if only on a temporary basis. Those households and communities that benefit from the additional income earned are supportive. But many other communities which have not been offered the chance to take up highly paid jobs are often not happy.

Households with migrants also raise concerns to their governments and civil society about the harm caused by repeated return migration. Construction and hospitality businesses losing workers to high-paid jobs overseas make their dissatisfaction known to their politicians. These and other tensions related to how the migration process is managed can create a volatile political setting in the sending country.

The focus of this paper is on ADB's 15 Pacific developing member countries and Timor-Leste, and the potential destination countries.¹ The term 'Pacific countries' refers to these ADB member countries. The scope of the paper is to describe and assess migration opportunities, based on legal, employment-based pathways. Specifically excluded are migration pathways that do not include an employment requirement for the principal applicant. The paper also identifies and focuses on the preferred destinations of migrants seeking employment from the Pacific and Timor-Leste. The preferred destinations are countries offering opportunities for employment in high-income jobs, which, in nearly all cases, refers to OECD countries and in particular, Australia and New Zealand.

A comment on the source data on migration

Data on the migration flows of Pacific developing countries and Timor-Leste are available from the official statistics on visa approvals published by the major destination countries. Data on migration stocks are available from OECD census statistics on residents by country of birth. UN statistics on migrant stocks are not reliable in some cases for Pacific countries and Timor-Leste when checked against other sources. Moreover, the UN data cannot be crosschecked due to the lack of information for each country on how they were sourced.

The statistics on visas approvals by country of citizenship, at least for Australia and New Zealand, often offer valuable information on the gender and age of the migrant as well as the occupation, industry, and location of their job if it is a skilled work visa. However, statistics from the sending countries are either not publicly available, or if they could be accessed, may be incomplete. This was the case for the seasonal worker records in the major sending countries of Vanuatu, Tonga, and Samoa. The governments of the sending countries need to analyse their own administrative data to focus attention on the impact of migration on those communities with migrants and those without.

This report makes use of attachments to provide a more readable narrative. These provide either more detailed data or an extended analysis of the issues covered in the main body of the report. These attachments will be of greater interest once the reader has a better picture of the migration system.

The report starts with the summary migration profiles of the fifteen countries. Part 2 presents evidence on the extent of the intent to migrate and the current and preferred major migrant destinations. Part 3 provides a summary of the main migration pathways to OECD countries. In Part 4, the report looks at worker welfare issues, and sending government reactions. Part 5 proposes a new framework and policies to improve migrant outcomes. Part 6 presents data on current opportunities for Pacific migrants, focusing primarily on New Zealand and Australia. Part 7 discusses future opportunities for migrants in particular sectors. This includes the potential and limitations on access for migrants to the jobs available in the health care sector in Australia and New Zealand. Part

¹ ADB's Pacific developing member countries are Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Niue, joined the ADB in 2019, has not been included due to the absence of data comparable to the other ADB member countries in the Pacific.

8 outlines a recommended strategy for the Asian Development Bank could adopt to improve migration pathways and limit the harmful impacts such as brain drain. Part 9 explains how a regional information and analysis-based facility could help governments managed migrant pathways in more effective ways. This information and analysis could help migrant households in economies under extreme stress from climate change to make informed decisions about whether to migrate or not, if so, to where and when and to how best to prepare.

Four different types of mobility

The sending countries that are the focus of this chapter can be grouped into four migration profiles: open access, high mobility, low mobility, and atolls/island with limited access to high-income labour markets (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Four country groups by type of mobility

Open access	High mobility
Marshall Islands Federated States of Micronesia Palau Cook Islands Niue	Fiji Samoa Tonga
Low mobility	Atolls and coral island with limited access
Papua New Guinea Solomon Islands Vanuatu Timor-Leste	Kiribati Tuvalu Nauru

Table 2: Basic labour mobility indicators for Pacific countries and Timor-Leste by four types of mobility

Type of access for each country	Emigrant stock in OECD countries 2015-16	Estimated resident population 2022	Emigrants /resident population %	Remittances/GDP 2021	GDP per head \$US 2021
Open labour market access					
Federated States of Micronesia	35,728	114,200	31.3	5.7	3,477
Marshall Islands	27,802	41,500	67.0	13.1	4,171
Palau	12,136	18,000	67.4	0.8	14,244
Cook Islands	21,282	17,000	125.2	n/a	n/a
Niue	4,089	2,000	204.5	n/a	n/a
High mobility					
Fiji	200,620	930,000	21.6	7.8	5,086
Samoa	90,533	222,400	40.7	25.3	4,068
Tonga	53,244	107,000	49.8	39.0	4,625
Low mobility					
Papua New Guinea	26,702	10,143,000	0.3	0.008	2,916
Solomon Is	3,360	724,000	0.5	1.8	2,337
Vanuatu	2,423	327,000	0.7	10.9	3,127
Timor-Leste	15,052	1,341,000	1.1	8.2	1,443
Climate affected atolls/island					
Kiribati	7,767	131,200	5.9	8.2	1,458
Tuvalu	1,581	11,300	14.0	0.0	5,291
Nauru	1,077	12,700	8.5	n/a	12,252

Source: Updated and expanded version of Table 1 in Curtin et al; 2022, 'It is Time for a New Regional Compact!', The Australian Economic Review, Vol 55, Issue 2, pages 281-289.² n/a = not available.

Table 1 above shows a large variation between groups of countries. These range from the highly mobile populations, driven by the pressures to migrate from small, densely populated countries and enable open access arrangements offered by the USA and New Zealand for five countries and other accessible migration pathways for Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga. However, other countries in the region have far more limited opportunities to migrate. These can be grouped into two groups: the densely populated atoll and micro

² Another data source is the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2020). International Migrant Stock 2020. (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2020). Although this dataset is based on population censuses, it is not possible to work out exactly how each individual country's' migrant stock is calculated. Some countries have migrant stocks are higher but consistent with the 2015-16 OECD census data. The 2020 migrant stock overseas for these countries are: Cook Islands (21,106), Niue (5,186), Fiji (233,856), Samoa (135,732), Solomon Islands (4,270) Tonga (74,550), Tuvalu (3,670) and Nauru (2,454). However, other countries have migrant stock numbers in 2020 that are below the 2015-16 OECD census counts. The countries reliant on USA census counts have much lower migrant stock numbers in 2020 than in 2015-16. This may be due to the reliance on the sample based American Community Survey. Kiribati (5103) is lower, and PNG (4,180) is very much lower than the OECD 2015-16 data. Countries with 2020 migrant stock counts that are much higher than expected compared with the OECD 2015-16 data are: Timor-Leste (39,588) and Vanuatu (7,246).

countries of Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru and countries with large resident populations but low emigration rates: Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Timor-Leste.³

Table 2 above shows that the five countries, with open access to high-income labour markets have high emigration rates. Two small Pacific countries, Niue, and Cook Islands, which have the status of joint citizenship with New Zealand, have very high emigration rates of 205 and 125 per cent respectively. These rates mean that more of the population lives outside their country of birth than their resident populations. Palau and Marshall Islands, with open labour market access to the USA through a compact of free association, have lower but still high emigration rates of 67 per cent respectively. The Federated States of Micronesia has a lower emigration rate of 31 per cent of its resident population.

Two of the group of high-mobility countries, Tonga, and Samoa, stand out as having among the highest small country (with populations under two million) emigration rates in the world (d'Aiglepierre et al, 2020, p 22 and Table A2). The large share of their population resident overseas has resulted in remittances making a major contribution to their small economies. According to World Bank data, the value of remittances for both Tonga and Samoa in 2021 accounted for two fifths of their gross domestic product (GDP) respectively.

The atoll countries of Tuvalu and Kiribati and the small, raised coral island country of Nauru lack arable land to provide food security and have little paid employment. Despite these push factors, their emigration rates, while significant, are not large compared with Tonga and Samoa. Despite Tuvalu's high emigration rate, its recorded remittance share of GDP in 2021 was zero. However, household income data show that in 2015-2016, 15 per cent of all Tuvaluan households had received on an annual basis cash remittances from overseas, totalling AUD810 (Tuvalu Central Statistics Division, 2018, p 420, Table 45). The 2012 Census recorded that one in five households (20.3 per cent) received remittances from overseas (Tuvalu Central Statistics Division, 2013, Table 128).

One major benefit of migration for sending countries is the way remittances can act as a buffer during an economic downturn. Comparing the 2021 remittance data as a share of GDP with the average for the five-year period to 2020 provides evidence that this may be the case, at least for some countries. Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu, Nauru, and Timor-Leste received an increase in remittances in 2021, to help support their extended families due to COVID border closures. However, for three countries, Marshall Islands, Kiribati and Tuvalu, remittances in 2021 declined as a share of GDP compared to the five-year average to 2020. This suggests that steady remittance inflows cannot be relied upon, as they are dependent on how well emigrants are faring in their destination countries.

Evidence of the intent to migrate

The high emigration rates for the small Pacific countries show that many have already migrated. Do others want to follow their compatriots? What of the Melanesian countries such as PNG with low emigration rates? Do these low rates reflect a lack of desire in the population in these countries to migrate overseas for work? Evidence from two sources

³ The emigration rate for Papua New Guinea has been adjusted to exclude those born in PNG who had expatriate parents.

shows the high current demand from the Pacific to live and work in Australia and New Zealand. The first source is information from two recent end-of-course surveys conducted by the Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) about the views of students about to graduate on whether they plan to migrate overseas for work. The second source of evidence from the Pacific demand for the opportunity to migrate overseas to live and work is the administrative data on applicant numbers for the Samoa Quota and Pacific Access Category (PAC) visas for permanent residence in New Zealand.

APTC graduates want to migrate for work

The first source of evidence on the demand for migration is from APTC graduates qualified to migrate to Australia or New Zealand. The 2018 and 2019 APTC end-of-course surveys provide data on 854 APTC students about to graduate with eligible qualifications. As many as 93 per cent said they 'intended to seek work overseas with the skills obtained in their course'. Women were only slightly less likely to say they wanted to migrate overseas for work (91 per cent compared with 94 per cent for men).⁴ This high level of intent to migrate was evident for APTC students from a range of Pacific countries: Fiji (95 per cent), Kiribati (87 per cent), PNG (92 per cent), Samoa (94 per cent), Solomon Islands (94 per cent) and Vanuatu (92 per cent). The lowest proportion of women students who wanted to migrate overseas for work was 75 per cent for Kiribati but other women's responses ranged between 88 per cent and 95 per cent for each of the other countries listed above.

High demand from five Pacific countries for permanent residence places in New Zealand

The second source of data on the demand to migrate is from the number of applicants each year for the Samoa Quota (1,100 places) and 650 PAC visas for permanent residence places. New Zealand Immigration publishes annual data on the number of successful and unsuccessful applicants.⁵ These data extend over 18 years for three of the eligible countries from 2002 to 2019 after which the visas have been suspended due to COVID.⁶ In 2019, before the onset of Covid, the ratio of total applicants to slots is 75 in Fiji, 58 in Kiribati, 38 in Samoa, 31 in Tonga and 16 in Tuvalu (Curtain, R and Howes, S, 2022).

Figure 1 below shows the ratio of applicants to available places for the Samoa Quota and PAC residence visas by specific country for 2019. Although there are fluctuations from year to year, the long-term trend of demand is upwards. This upward trend is especially pronounced for Kiribati, where the ratio of applicants to places has jumped from 5 in 2002 to 58 in 2019. For Tonga, the ratio has tripled, for Tuvalu it has gone up from 1 to 16, and for Samoa it has doubled.

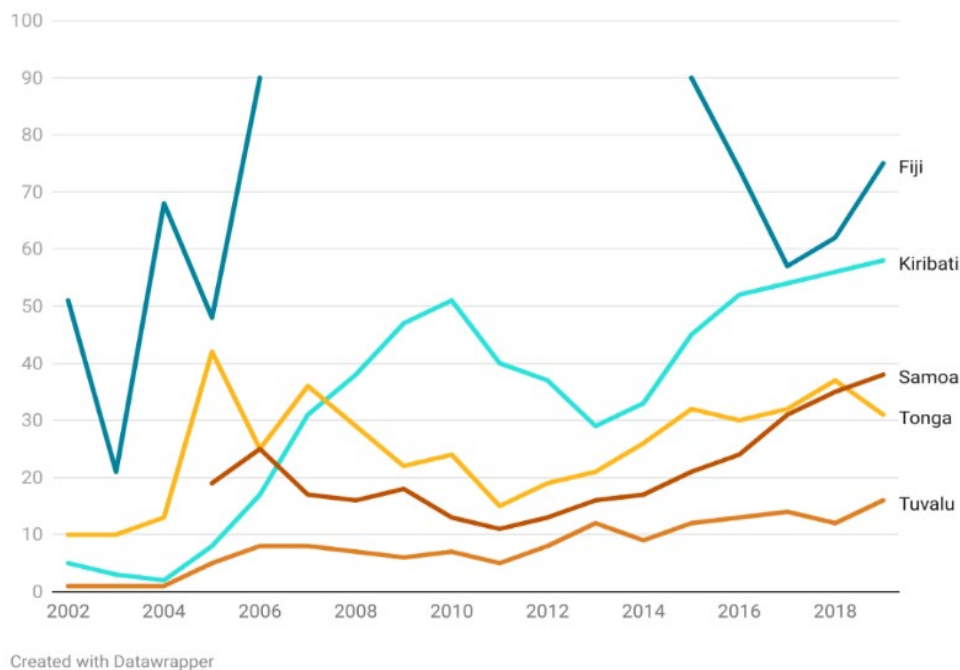
⁴ Data sourced from APTC end-of-course survey for Semester 2 of 2018 and Semester 1 of 2019

⁵ The data have been sourced from New Zealand Immigration: [The Ballot System: applicants decided by ballot](#), Table 1, 2 June 2022

⁶ In the case of Fiji, the data only cover 9 years from 2003 to 2006 and from 2015 to 2019, due to withdrawal of the PAC visa by the NZ government in response to the military take over of the government. In the case of the Samoa Quota, first year is 2005.

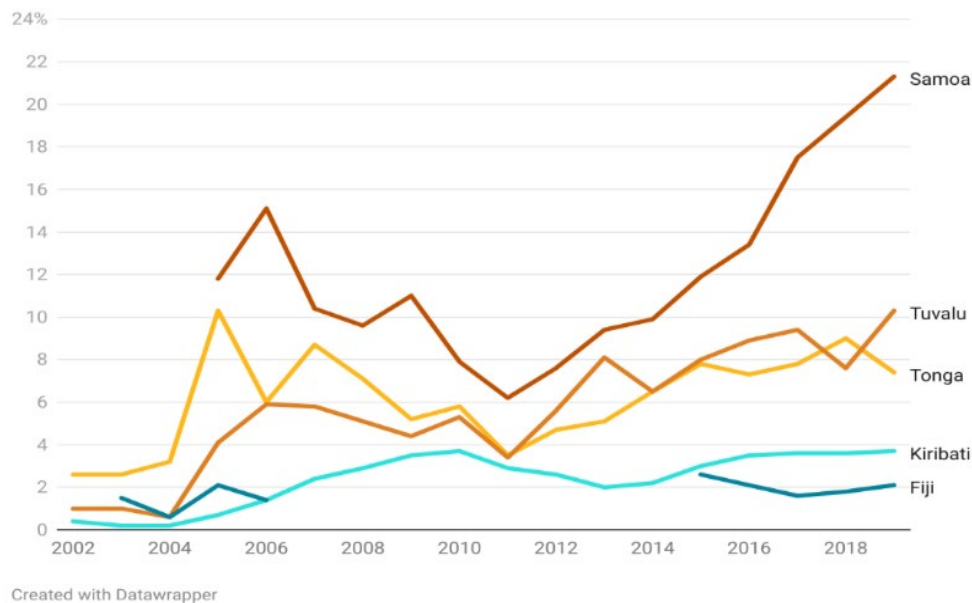
However, the number of applicants each year set against the total resident population of each country shows a different trend (see Figure 2 below). It is the demand from Samoa that stands out, with 42,061 applications in 2019 which is 21 per cent of the population. In a recent survey conducted by ANU, 54 per cent of Samoans said they were willing to permanently move to another country (Leach et al. 2022). Tuvalu’s number of applicants is high as well, equivalent to 10 per cent of its population. Tonga’s highest number of applications in 2018 is 8 per cent of the population. For Kiribati, with 4,328 applications, the demand only accounts for 4 per cent of the population. For Fiji, the 18,810 applications as a share of the population of over 900,000 means that the number of applicants is only equivalent to 2 per cent of its population.

Figure 1: Ratio of total applications to slots for New Zealand’s permanent residence Pacific visas



Source: Curtain, R and Howes, S, 2022, 'The Pacific Engagement Visa is going to be incredibly popular', *Devpolicy Blog*, 18 August, Development Policy Centre, ANU.

Figure 2: New Zealand total Pacific visa applicants as percentage of the resident population



Source: Curtin, R and Howes, S, 2022, 'The Pacific Engagement Visa is going to be incredibly popular', *Devpolicy Blog*, 18 August, Development Policy Centre, ANU.

2. Migrant destinations in OECD countries

In broad terms, Pacific migrants aged 25 to 64 years are concentrated (92 per cent) in mainly three destination countries of the USA, New Zealand, and Australia, 34, 31 and 28 per cent respectively. Less important destinations are Canada (for Fiji), Britain and France.⁷

New Zealand and Pacific migration

New Zealand stands out as the only major Pacific destination country as having within its top 15 immigrant countries, the largest stock of immigrants from the Pacific. Based on the 2018 census results, Fiji ranks 7th in prominence (with a population of 62,300 born in Fiji), Samoa ranks 8th (55,500 born in Samoa) and Tonga ranks 11th (26,900 born in Tonga) (OECD 2021, Table B4, p 384). The Pacific-born populations are evenly distributed by gender. In terms of recent yearly inflows of migrants by nationality intending to stay for 12 months or more for the decade to 2019, the same Pacific countries rank in the top fifteen countries of origin. Their total migrant inflow over this period is 29,500 for Fiji, 25,500 for Samoa and 14,200 for Tonga (OECD 2021, Table B1, p 336).

Different destinations for each country grouping

Different destination countries are important for each of the four country groupings above. For the three northern Pacific countries with open access to the USA, the 2010-11

⁷ OECD, [Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries: DIOC](#). Reference years 2015/16.

OECD census data show that virtually all migrants from these countries were resident there.⁸ However, for Niue and Cook Islands, which are beneficiaries of open access to New Zealand as dual citizens, their diasporas are mainly distributed between New Zealand and Australia, due to the free movement to Australia for New Zealand citizens. In 2010-11, one in three Cook Islanders in OECD countries (32 per cent) resided in Australia compared to two in three resident in New Zealand (67 per cent). For the same period, one in seven of Niue's diaspora (14 per cent) resided in Australia and over four out of five (84 per cent) resided in New Zealand.

For the high mobility countries of Tonga and Samoa, the top three destination countries, accounting for 99 per cent of the major destinations are New Zealand, Australia, and the USA. Fiji, the third high mobility country, has a wider spread of OECD destination countries for its 25-64 years migrant stock: Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada, and Britain.⁹

For the low-mobility countries of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Timor-Leste, Australia is a major destination for all four countries. In the case of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste, Australia dominates as a destination country.¹⁰ However, Vanuatu has a wider spread of OECD destinations for its migrants: Australia (37 per cent), France (29 per cent), New Zealand (22 per cent) and Britain (6 per cent). Timor-Leste has a significant share of its migrant population in Britain (17 per cent).

The final group of countries of Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu, which are small and highly exposed to climate change, have four OECD destination countries in common but with different levels of prominence. New Zealand is the dominant destination for Tuvalu's migrant stock (89 per cent) with only 8 per cent in Australia. Nauru, on the other hand, has most of its migrant stock in Australia (72 per cent) followed by 22 per cent of its migrant stock aged 25-64 years in the USA. Kiribati has a wider spread of OECD destinations: USA, 43 per cent, New Zealand 36 per cent, Australia 15 per cent, and UK 5 per cent.

Migration within the Pacific

The stock of Pacific-born migrants residing and working in other Pacific developing countries is small in both absolute and relative terms. In 2019, estimates based on official sources, show that only 10,160 Pacific migrants are resident in the independent Melanesian countries (Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) (Burson et al 2021, Table 4, p 43). The independent Polynesian countries (Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu) accounted for 19,180 Pacific migrants who are residents. The

⁸ The OECD's 2010-11 [Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries \(DIOC\)](#) includes both country of birth and destination in one dataset, unlike the 2015-16 DIOC.

⁹ A reviewer has noted that emigration from Fiji spiked following the coups of 1987 while those from Tonga and Samoa into New Zealand predate the Fijian arrivals.

¹⁰ Korea is a destination for migrants from Timor-Leste through the temporary, non-seasonal Korea Employment Scheme, which allows single migrants to work for three years in the first instance, with an extension to four years and 11 months. However, 2010-11 DIOC does not include data from the Republic of Korea.

independent Micronesian countries of Kiribati, Marshall Islands, (Fed. States of Micronesia, Nauru and Palau) have the highest share of migrants born in the Pacific (19,180). The total size of the Pacific migrant stock in other Pacific developing countries is 47,640 migrants. However, this figure only represents one-in-ten (10.3 per cent) of Pacific-born migrants living in other countries.¹¹

Papua New Guinea, as a major resource economy, has been during its expansion phases the Pacific region's major importer of skilled workers, due to domestic skill shortages. But few of these migrant workers have been from the Pacific. The only available data on foreign work permit occupations, from 2014 and May 2015, shows that 17,346 work permits were granted in that year. However only 260 work permit holders were from a Pacific country, with Fijian citizens accounting for 82 per cent of the total from the Pacific. The other Pacific work permit holders were mainly from Solomon Islands (22) and Tonga (14). The total number of current foreign work permits in May 2015 was 41,096. Of these, 511 current permit holders are from the Pacific, four out of five of these permit holders are from Fiji. In 2019, there 620 Pacific-born migrants resident in the country (Burson et al 2021, Table 4, p 43).

Fiji is both a significant Pacific migration destination as well as a migrant sending country to other Pacific countries in the region. Data for 2019 show that 3,808 Pacific-born migrants were resident in Fiji and 2,740 Fijian-born migrants were resident in other Pacific countries (Burson et al. 2021, Table 5, p 44). The major Pacific source countries for migrants to Fiji are Tonga, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Samoa, and Vanuatu (Burson et al. 2021, Table 5, p 44).

Forms of migration from Fiji include Fijian soldiers taking part in UN peacekeeping forces, or as security personnel in the Middle East. Fijian as well as Samoan, and Tongan rugby players migrate to New Zealand, Australia, or Europe on a temporary or long-term basis (ILO 2019, p15). Fijians have also found employment in many other countries in the Pacific such as American Samoa, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, PNG, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu (Burson et al 2021, Table 5, p 44). Their jobs have included work as teachers, nurses, skilled trades people, and managers, as well as work in the tourism and hospitality industry (ILO 2019, p 20). Fijian teachers who must retire at age 55 have migrated to Kiribati and Tuvalu to work as initially volunteer teachers and then have been offered ongoing jobs.

Preferred destinations

From the same end-of-course APTC survey, discussed above, eligible APTC students about to graduate who intended to migrate were asked about their preferred destination. Nine out of ten (90 per cent) gave Australia as one of their preferred destinations, and two-thirds (68 per cent) gave Australia as their only preferred destination. In contrast, only one-in-five respondents (21 per cent) preferred New Zealand as one of their destinations and only 3 per cent listed New Zealand as their sole destination preference. Reference to a country in the Pacific as a preferred destination was only made by 5 per

¹¹ These data on the independent Pacific countries only have been sourced from Burson et al 2021, Table 4, p 43. The table also includes Pacific-born migrant stock data on New Caledonia, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna Islands.

cent of respondents. The USA as a preferred destination was mentioned by only 3 per cent, Canada by 2 per cent and Japan 1 per cent.

3. Open and dedicated migration pathways

A range of migration pathways open to Pacific and Timor-Leste migrants exist for the main destination countries. Some work-based pathways are open to all migrants who have the occupations and qualifications in demand. Other work-based pathways, such as seasonal work, are only open to most independent Pacific countries and Timor-Leste. Of the two quota-based visas for permanent residence selected by lottery, the NZ visas are limited to five eligible Pacific countries. Australia's proposed Pacific Engagement Visa, operating on the same principle, will have a wider reach into the Pacific and to Timor-Leste.

Table 3: Migration pathways to major destinations for Pacific developing countries and Timor-Leste

Type of agreement	Migration pathways to:			
	Australia	New Zealand	USA	Other pathways
Free movement for work and residence	(1) Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement allows those born in the Pacific who have become NZ citizens to migrate to Australia (2) Cook Islands & Niue have dual NZ citizenship		Compact of Free Association for three north Pacific countries	
Bilateral agreement for horticulture	Seasonal work visa	Seasonal work visa	H-2A visa covering seasonal work	
Bilateral agreements for access to permanent residence	Pacific engagement visa (proposed)	Samoa Quota and PAC visas	Green Card	Agreement Solomon Is govt & employer group in Saskatchewan Working Holiday Maker visa – for PNG at present – yet to be implemented
Bilateral agreements to provide workers for specific sectors	Temporary low, semi-skilled & middle skill work visa for Pacific & Timor-Leste	New programs for Pacific migrants in meat & seafood process work foreshadowed for 2024		Seafaring work on container ships for trained workers from Kiribati and Tuvalu Korea Employment Permit System for Timor-Leste.
Middle and high skill migration programs open to all countries	Temporary skill shortage work visas for eligible occupations	Temporary semi-skilled, middle skilled & high skilled work visas in eligible occupations	H-2B temporary non-agricultural workers visa	

Migration programs open to all countries	Permanence residence via a prior temporary skilled work visa in an eligible occupation or direct application for work in a designated occupation			
Student visas & graduate work visas	Australia & NZ both have post-secondary student visas and follow-on graduate or post-study work visas	F-1 (academic) M-1 (vocational) study visas	Study permit visas	

Table 3 above shows the range of pathways for Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada, and Korea. Pacific and Timor-Leste migrants utilise many of these pathways. However, in the case of the USA, while many Pacific countries are eligible to migrate, data on migration flows shows few, if any, migrants from the Pacific or Timor-Leste have made use of the available pathways, often due to the travel cost for the employer or the worker.

Freedom of movement

The freedom of movement between countries in the Pacific region applies to the citizens of Australia and New Zealand, to the citizens of Niue and Cook Islands and New Zealand through their dual citizenship status, and to citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) and the Republic of Palau who have open access to the USA. Other Pacific countries with access to a quota of 1,750 places each year for New Zealand permanent residence visas (Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, and Tuvalu) are also eligible for open entry and continuing residence in Australia. Based on OECD census data for 2010-11, this open access pathway had resulted in large diasporas in Australia from Samoa (19,088 residents) and Tonga (9,208 residents) with smaller numbers from Kiribati (503 residents) and Tuvalu (122 residents) (Arslan et al. 2014).

These arrangements allow the citizens of each country to enter, reside, study and work indefinitely, without any cap on the numbers who can migrate. However, New Zealand citizens arriving in Australia from 1994 are required to have a special category visa (SCV) (subclass 444) which is subject to health and character requirements. The SCV is classed as a temporary visa which means as temporary visa holders, they do not have the same rights and benefits as Australian citizens or permanent residents. However, from July 2023, the Australian government has agreed to provide a more direct pathway to Australian citizenship for Special Category Visa holders. New Zealand citizens are now able to apply directly for citizenship without first becoming permanent residents, provided they can meet a four-year residence and other eligibility requirements (Australian Government, 2023).

Temporary seasonal work

There are legal migration pathways to Australia and New Zealand that are only available to citizens from Pacific countries and Timor-Leste. For seasonal work in horticulture in Australia under the Seasonal Work Programme (SWP), nine Pacific countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu) and Timor-Leste are eligible. For New Zealand's Recognised Employer Scheme (RSE), the same nine countries are eligible, but Timor-Leste is not. The NZ government also operates the Fisheries Pilot Program (Sealord), which the Government of Kiribati's overseas employment unit also lists an employment option.

The H2A Temporary Agricultural Workers visa program allows employers to bring foreign nationals to the United States to fill agricultural jobs initially for 10 months or less, with possible one-year extensions, up to a maximum of three years (US Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2022). Seven eligible countries are from the Pacific (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu) and Timor-Leste (US Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2021).

However, as US employers are required to pay the worker's transport costs, four countries account for 99 per cent of the workers recruited (Mexico 93 per cent, South Africa 3 per cent, Jamaica 2 per cent and Guatemala 1 per cent) (Martin 2022). No eligible country from the Pacific or Timor-Leste was granted a H2A visa in each of the three fiscal years 2018-2020 (US Department of State, 2022b). Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP), however, is only eligible for citizens from Mexico or participating Caribbean countries.

Access to permanent residence based on a quota of places chosen by lottery

New Zealand

As already noted, New Zealand has provided long standing access to permanent residence places via the Samoa Quota (SQ) resident visa of 1,100 places a year and Pacific Access Category (PAC) quotas for Fiji and Tonga (250 places each), Kiribati and Tonga (75 places each). The primary applicant or partner must have a job offer that pays enough to support their accompanying family in New Zealand. The primary applicant must be aged between 18 and 45 years and be able to read, write and speak English (New Zealand Immigration, 2022a).

Australia's proposed Pacific Engagement Visa

The new Australian government proposed in its election platform to introduce a Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV) to allow up to 3,000 nationals, allocated by ballot, of Pacific countries and Timor-Leste to migrate permanently to Australia each year (Howes and Sharman 2022). Modelled on New Zealand's Samoa Quota (SQ) and Pacific Access Category (PAC) visas, the applicants, aged 18 to 45 will be eligible for a residence visa with their partners and dependents provided they have a job offer in Australia as well as some English. The enabling legislation for the PEV has been delayed in the Australian Senate where it is expected to be tabled for the Senate's September 2023 sitting (Howes 2023). The quotas for each country are still to be announced, pending the passing of the legislation.

United States Green Card

The United States Diversity Visa program (Green Card) is a permanent migration lottery that benefits the Pacific islands. This program was originally designed to help individuals from the countries that had the lowest representation in the United States. If less than 50,000 immigrants had arrived in a US State in the past five years, it is under-represented. During that time, the countries with a higher rate of immigration to the U.S. are ruled out of the Diversity Visa Program.

The program makes 50,000 permanent resident visas available annually to people from countries that are deemed as having low rates of immigration to the United States. Visa applicants are chosen from six geographic regions. This is to make sure that there is no more than 7 per cent or 3500 visas out of the total 50,000 that are granted to the winners of the same country. Current eligible countries from the Pacific are: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu (USA Green Card Online, n.d.).

Data on selected entrants for 2018 chosen at random show that the main beneficiaries from the Pacific were: Fiji 900, Tonga 129, Nauru 25, Papua New Guinea 23, Cook Islands 19, Kiribati 18, Vanuatu 17, Solomon Islands 10, and Samoa 10 (US Department of State, 2022c).

Dedicated pathways to Australia and New Zealand for Pacific countries and Timor-Leste

A dedicated pathway to Australia for Pacific countries and Timor-Leste is now based on a merger of the Seasonal Work Programme (SWP) and the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) to form the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme. The PLS has been focused on the demand for semi- and low-skilled jobs in regional areas. The greatest demand from regional employers was for meat process and agricultural workers. PLS data up to the end of April 2022, shows the number of worker arrivals since November 2019 at 6,331.

New Zealand has announced, as part of its changes to its employment related visas, new sector agreements (New Zealand Immigration, 2022b and 2022c). The sector agreements provide limited exemptions to the new median wage requirement for hiring migrant workers, to support sectors that have traditionally relied on lower-paid migrants. Two sector agreements for meat processing and seafood (onshore) with maximum visa durations of seven months will be replaced in 2024 with a Pacific program.

Working Holiday Maker visas for young people aged 18 to 30 (and up to 35 years for some countries) to work in Australia are based in bilateral agreements with 45 countries. These are based on reciprocal arrangements, which for many countries involve a cap on the number of visas approved each year. Applicants usually must have a tertiary qualification or at least have completed two years undergraduate study and evidence of savings (suggested to be about AUD5,000 for their stay, and the fare to leave Australia). According to Papua New Guinea's draft National Labour Mobility Policy, released just prior to the onset of COVID-19, the outlines of an agreement for young PNG citizens to take up a working holiday visas in Australia have been negotiated, awaiting final government to government approval.

Temporary skills-based pathways to work in Australia, New Zealand, the USA, or Canada

Temporary skilled work visas for Australia

Skills based migration pathways to live and work in Australia are open to any sending country, provided applicants offered jobs have an appropriate qualification in an eligible occupation on a skills shortage list. A defining feature of Australia's skill migration programs is a threshold based on a skilled occupation. This refers to a certified set of skills

based on an extended period of training, usually 3 to 4 years.¹² Another key feature of the Australian and New Zealand skilled work migration pathways is that migrants usually have to go through a two, three or more step process to attain permanent residence.¹³ Data for 2018-19 show that three out of four skilled migrants granted permanent residence were already resident in Australia on some type of temporary work visa (Coates and Rosenbach, 2022). These included visas for temporary skilled workers, students, graduates or working holiday makers. Only one in four skilled migrants were granted permanent residence directly from an offshore application. More details about the occupations by five skill levels of Pacific migrants to Australia are provided in Section 5 below.

Skilled and lower skilled work visas for New Zealand

New Zealand, unlike Australia, has had an Essential Skills work visa that included lower skilled occupations as well as medium and higher skilled occupations. However, visa holders in the lower skilled occupations were only able to be granted a visa for a limited time, on a one-year basis, which could be renewed if the job could not be filled locally. More details of the occupations of Pacific migrants by skill level to New Zealand are provided in Section 5 below.

However, New Zealand in 2019 announced major changes to the way employers recruit migrants for temporary work (OECD 2020, p 220). Due the delays caused by COVID, these will be introduced on 4 July 2022, with further changes in 2023. The new framework will replace six types of temporary work visas. The new approach to granting visas is based on three consecutive steps: an employer check, a job check, and a migrant check. Under the Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) program, all employers will need to be accredited before they can recruit foreign workers, with high-volume users of the system being required to demonstrate how they are attracting and retaining New Zealanders.

As part of these reforms, the national median wage or above (in 2023 NZD 29.66 an hour) will become the only criterion used to classify jobs into skilled and lower-skilled (subject to a labour market test). This replaces a complicated skills classification system that did not cover all occupations and caused delays in visa processing. Accredited Employer Work Visa holders can only support a work visa for a partner and visitor or student visas for dependent children if they earn at least NZD \$43,322.76 each year.

Lower skilled workers offered work in certain sectors, including construction and infrastructure, tourism and hospitality and the care workforce, will be exempt from the minimum salary requirement (as noted above). Other lower skilled workers will also be eligible for a work visa in designated occupations above minimum salary requirement. Lower skilled workers paid below the median wage can hold a work visa for two years, but they are then required to leave New Zealand for 12 months before they are eligible to get another work visa for two years. Lower-skill occupations paid below the median

¹² In some cases, workers able to prove they have acquired their skills on-the-job are accepted but evidence has to be provided for a longer period of five years or more.

¹³ The Australian government's Productivity Commission in 2016 noted that migrants moving from a temporary visa to a permanent visa are granted an average of 3.3 visas. This occurs as people renew their temporary visa or gain a different type of visa (cited by Henry Sherrell, n.d. '[Migration—permanent and temporary visa trends](#)', Parliamentary library, Parliament of Australia).

threshold include aged or disabled carer, nursing support worker, and personal care assistant. Other exempt occupations are in construction and the tourism & hospitality sectors. All lower-skilled employer assisted workers will have the ability to support partners and dependent children for the length of their visa, with partners granted a visitor visa and are subject to a labour market test should they seek paid employment.

From the end of November 2023, Accredited Employer Work Visa holders earning at least the median wage will have their visa length extended from three to five years. Work visa holders in the care sector who are earning at least level 3 pay rate will be eligible to extend their visa from two to three years (New Zealand Immigration 2022d).

Sector agreements are also being introduced as part of these reforms to allow employers to employ lower-skill migrants in designated industries. These agreements require employers to commit to reduce their reliance on their migrant workforce over time. The following sectors with a high reliance on migrant workers have been identified for initial negotiations with employers: aged residential care, red meat processing, dairy, forestry, road freight, transport, and tourism and hospitality.

In July 2020, New Zealand also announced NZD 50M in new funding to address migrant exploitation. The changes, being implemented in 2021, include a new dedicated reporting line for migrant workers and a new visa to ensure they can leave exploitative workplaces.

Permanent migration to Australia, New Zealand, and Canada

Australia

The total number of places for Australia's permanent migration program in 2020-2021 was 160,052. However, the Australian government has announced that this will be increased to 195,000 places in 2021-2022 (Minister for Immigration 2022). Within this total, 142,400 places will be allocated to the Skill stream; 52,500 places will be allocated to the Family stream; and 100 places will be available for the Special Eligibility stream.

Official statistics on Australia's permanent migration program outcomes for three years to June 2020 show that Pacific countries and Timor-Leste only accounted for 0.7 per cent of the places granted. The permanent migration program has two main streams: the Skill stream designed to fill skill shortages in the labour market and the Family stream which consists of Partner category visas for Australian citizens and permanent residents. In relation to the Skill Stream for primary applicants, 0.2 per cent or 350 skilled workers from the Pacific or Timor-Leste were granted permanent residence over this period. Three out of ten primary applicants (29 per cent) were women although this share varied greatly between countries. Kiribati stands out with 5 out of 6 women being granted permanent residence, probably due to the Australian nursing qualification under the Kiribati Australia Nursing Initiative (KANI) (Global Skills Partnership, n.d.). Of the skilled workers, 233 came from Fiji, 74 from Papua New Guinea, 9 from Solomon Islands, 7 each from Timor-Leste and Vanuatu and 6 each from Kiribati and Tonga.

The main occupation groups of these permanent migrants were: Automotive and Engineering Trades Workers (62), Health Professionals (53), Business, Human Resource and Marketing Professionals (36) Design, Engineering, Science and Transport Professionals (33) and Engineering, ICT and Science Technicians (22). It is important to note that four out of five (80 per cent) primary applicants for permanent residence in the

Skill Stream applied onshore. This means that they were already resident and working in Australia on a temporary work visa. This proportion of primary applicants who applied for permanent residence in the Skill Stream while already residing in Australia was higher than the share of all primary applicants in the Skill Stream (69 per cent).

New Zealand

The number of primary applicants from the Pacific and Timor-Leste granted permanent residence for New Zealand in the business/skilled stream in the three years to 2019-2020 was 825, a figure more than double the equivalent number for Australia for the same period. One in five primary applicants (22 per cent) were women. This figure excludes the 2,487 primary applicants granted permanent residence through the Samoa Quota and Pacific Access Category visa which is in the humanitarian stream. Nine out of ten permanent residence visas in the business/skilled stream went to Fijian citizens (750 in number), followed by Tonga (36), Samoa, (21), and Kiribati (9). It is important to note that all permanent residence visas in the business/skilled stream were granted to applicants who were already in New Zealand, most of whom would have been on a temporary work visa.

Migration pathway for Fiji to Canada

The OECD DIOC census data for 2010-11 shows that 24,888 residents were born in Fiji, by far the main Pacific country to have residents in Canada. These census data are confirmed by Canadian government statistics which show that between 1980 and June 2011, 20,111 Fijian citizens were admitted as permanent residents (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2022a). However, 11 years later to June 2022, the total number of Fijian citizens admitted as permanent residents had only increased to 21,929. The peak years of Fijian settlement in Canada were 1990 to 1994, years of major constitutional change and political turmoil in Fiji.

Canadian statistics for over 40 years from 1980 show that few other citizens of Pacific countries have become permanent residents. These number of permanent residents by Pacific country are Tonga (149), Solomon Islands (103), Papua New Guinea (89), Nauru (19) and Kiribati (15) (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2022b).

In general, yearly visitor flows between the Pacific and Canada are low. The number of non-resident visitor visas granted to enter Canada in the 12 months to March 2020 from 11 Pacific countries and Timor-Leste was 2,985 in total (Statistics Canada 2022). The migration of skilled trades from Oceania or other in the period 2010-14, the most recent period available, only accounted for 1.5 per cent of all skilled trades visas granted (Statistics Canada 2019).

4. Social Protection and worker welfare: improving migrant outcomes

Unlike an aid program, making migration work for the Pacific and Timor-Leste requires policies and actions on the ground by both the sending and receiving countries to make migration work. These policies and actions to make migration work must also include other key stakeholders such as employers and workers, and their representative bodies, as well as the sending and receiving communities (Curtain 2021b). The focus of this section is to identify major policies and actions that a sending country can undertake

either unilaterally or working together with the destination country to improve migrant outcomes.

Achieving these migrant outcomes requires that they have five key features, outlined below. A bilateral agreement between the destination and sending governments should underpin the implementation of these key features. Also needed are regular meetings of government officials and employers to assess performance, based on a monitoring and evaluation strategy.

First, destination governments should ensure that employers are placing the migrant worker in a job matched to their skills or they are providing training to enable them to acquire these skills while learning on the job. Second, approved employers need to ensure that a worker's selection and recruitment is carried out without any payment by the worker to an intermediary. Third, sending governments need to have liaison officers in the destination country who can check to make sure that workers are paid at least the same wage and enjoy the same working conditions as resident workers. Fourth, sending governments also should place their in-country liaison officers in areas where their citizens are working so they respond to workers' concerns as quickly as possible (Curtain 2021b). Finally, sending governments as well as the workers' communities need to help return migrants to make good use of their acquired skills and to be able to invest their savings productively in their home economies.

Identifying key social issues

A 2021-22 rapid assessment of social issues faced by migrant workers and their families from the Pacific by Matt Withers is based on information from staff from labour sending units (LSUs) in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu and Timor-Leste and a recruitment agent from Vanuatu (Withers, 2022). The findings of the study revealed that family separation was the major concern of all LSUs participating in the study (Withers 2022). The study found that extramarital affairs and relationship breakdowns were frequent but are likely to be under-reported. The extended family separations due to COVID and the longer time away under the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) have increased the magnitude of these social issues. There is widespread concern in the LSUs about the welfare of children separated from one or both parents. Misunderstandings between workers and their families concerning finances and communication contribute to distrust and relationship breakdown. LSUs face significant capacity limitations in providing support to family members. Cultural differences between the sending countries and Australia can contribute to relationship breakdown. However, the Withers Report found there are fewer social issues associated with seasonal work in New Zealand.

The report, drawing on the consultations with LSU staff, made five main recommendations: (1) provide support for temporary family accompaniment within the PLS, (2) limit repeat migration under the PLS, (3) involve families comprehensively in pre-departure briefings and trainings, (4) expand or establish family welfare support services during migration, and (5) strengthen, monitor, and evaluate social issues in both the Australian and New Zealand Pacific migration programs.

Worker welfare suffered under Covid-19

Covid-19 and the closure of international borders increased the incidence and visibility of the welfare problems migrant workers from the Pacific experienced in both Australia and New Zealand. In Australia, government and community agencies assisted with more than 700 SWP wellbeing cases, including critical incidents, pregnancies, worker redeployments, worker disengagement and repatriations, as well as linking SWP workers to community support such as local churches and health services (Bailey and Bedford, 2022, p 9). A major problem in Australia has been many workers leaving their approved employer to seek work elsewhere, without the protections that SWP employment provided. Up to 1,181 SWP workers left their SWP employer over the 12 months to end June 2021, up from 225 workers the previous 12 months (Howes 2022). Howes notes that many workers are absconding to claim asylum for the benefits that this provides. An application for asylum confers immediately a bridging visa, which usually has an unrestricted right to work as well as access to public health insurance. As an application for asylum in Australia can take up to three years before a claim is assessed, the holder of a bridging visa has work rights for this extended period.¹⁴

A key concern of sending governments is to ensure that their workers are protected from harm and can respond quickly in an appropriate way if they do think they are being mistreated. An Australian Senate Select Committee on Job Security hearings on wages and working conditions under the SWP were held in February and March 2022. The hearings included evidence from four SWP workers (two from Vanuatu and two from Samoa) who alleged they had been exploited under the program, based on claiming poor accommodation, excessive deductions, and a lack of support after a COVID-19 diagnosis (Sharman and Howes 2022). The claims were disputed by employers and were not substantiated by other, more systematic evidence, discussed below (Sharman and Howes 2022). As noted above, in response to this publicity, the new government of Samoa announced a temporary halt on departing flights of seasonal workers to review its involvement in the programs. The government of Vanuatu also set up their own inquiry at the same time to assess the costs and benefits of labour mobility more broadly.

The Australian Senate hearings also revealed that over the life of the SWP, 17 agreements with approved employers (AEs) have been cancelled because of audits, stopping them from participating in the program. This is about one-in-ten approved employers, based on 2020 data. Other evidence of compliance comes from the federal government's agency, the Fair Work Ombudsman, which is responsible for monitoring compliance with Australian employment conditions. In the financial year to end June 2022, officers of this agency audited 41 SWP Approved Employers and issued six Compliance Notices to recover \$78,303 for 528 workers, an average of \$148 per worker.

For the same period, the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) completed audits of nine Approved Employers involving 206 PLS workers, resulting in six Compliance Notices being issued to recover \$18,178 for 30 workers, an average of \$606 per worker (FWO 2022). These compliance checks show that some employers underpaid workers, although

¹⁴ The applications from citizens of Pacific countries and Timor-Leste are nearly always rejected because the claimant is from a country that offers no grounds for being granted asylum.

it is not clear over what duration this underpayment occurred. A FWO media release (5 July 2023) reports that a labour hire company was fined for underpaying 87 workers from Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands an average of \$574 between December 2018 and May 2020. The underpayments referred to deductions for accommodation and transport costs that exceeded the maximum lawfully allowable and underpayment of entitlements under the Horticulture Award (FWO 2023).

For SWP workers, the average amount of underpayment as the proportion of the worker's income depends on the length of time worked in terms of hours per week and the number of weeks. We can assume that workers worked from 1 December to the end of May (24 weeks over a 26-week period). The wages earned can be calculated based on a lower and higher estimate of the hours worked. The approved employer was required to pay workers a minimum of 30 hours per week averaged over eight weeks. The median number of hours worked (48 hours) is based in the response of SWP workers when asked how hours they worked in the last seven days by the Pacific Labour Mobility Survey in the period December 2022-March 2023 (Edward, Dornan, and Doan 2023). The hourly casual pay rate in the period December 2019 to May 2020 was \$24.80. So, the estimated pay earned by a SWP worker for this period could range from a low of \$17,856 based on 30 hours worked per week for 24 weeks. The high of \$28,570 is based on 48 hours a week for 24 weeks. These estimates show that the average underpayment of \$574 only amounted to between 3.2 and 2.0 per cent of the estimated income earned.

In New Zealand's RSE scheme, under these pressures from international border closures, bad practices by labour contractors were also evident. This included workers living in overcrowded, substandard accommodation and being charged excessive wage deductions for transport or for work-related clothing (Bedford and Bedford 2022). The main organisation representing growers, Horticulture New Zealand, has responded by noting that employers not only have to exercise a duty of care for worker safety and wellbeing. Employers are also responsible for 'creating an enduring work environment, a strong culture where employees feel valued and welcome, can learn, upskill and thrive in our industry' (Horticulture New Zealand, 2022).

Counter evidence of worker satisfaction

It has been noted that a striking feature of the media reporting of the Australian Senate Inquiry was the narrow focus on the claims of a few individual workers, even though many of these were contested by their employers (Sharman and Howes 2022). Sharman and Howes criticised the inquiry for failing to make any use of data that are more representative of SWP workers. For example, a World Bank survey of SWP and RSE seasonal workers in June to September 2020 found high levels of worker satisfaction, with 95 per cent of workers saying they wanted to return next season (World Bank 2021a, Doan and Petrou 2022a). Evidence presented to the inquiry from the Australian government noted that before COVID, three out of four SWP workers (74 per cent) return in any one year to work in Australia the next year. Indeed, the large numbers of workers participating in Pacific labour mobility programs in 2022 in both Australia and New Zealand show the continuing level of worker interest in accessing overseas jobs (Howes, Curtain, and Sharman 2022).

Despite the initial effects of COVID, including falling earnings, the World bank survey results showed that workers remained positive about their experience in Australia and

New Zealand. When asked how satisfied they were with the schemes on a scale of 1, 'not satisfied at all', to 10, 'extremely satisfied', the average score was 8.0 among PLS workers, 7.8 among Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) workers, and 8.2 among RSE workers. The authors of the survey discussion paper note that this high level of satisfaction was similar to findings from an earlier World Bank survey of SWP workers, with no clear pattern of changes over time (World Bank 2021a, Table 9, p 57; Doan and Petrou 2022b).

A group of 21 employers in the RSE scheme in 2022 used the Ethical VOICE online platform to conduct a wide-ranging anonymous survey of 1,404 migrant workers from 12 countries (Ethical Voice 2022). Questions included: 'do you feel safe in your accommodation?', 'do you have a copy of your contract?', and 'is the job you are doing the one signed up for?' (Preece 2022, p10). The survey found that most workers were very happy with their RSE jobs. However, the survey did identify issues that employers needed to respond to.

It is important that one-off surveys of SWP workers and employers be carried out on an annual basis. The RSE scheme employer survey funded by the New Zealand government has been conducted each year since 2014. The survey, however, should be extended to a random sample of workers in each workplace to enable workers to provide direct feedback, independently of their employer.

Reactions from the governments of Samoa, Vanuatu, and Fiji

Sending governments encouraging more Pacific migrants to live and work in Australia and New Zealand can have a downside if there is a domestic backlash with calls for these governments to take some action. This citizen backlash can be generated by media stories of worker exploitation or complaints from local employers about their losing their trained staff to overseas employers.

In response to these pressures, the governments of four major seasonal worker sending countries, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu set up official inquiries in early 2022. The initial review of seasonal work programs by the Samoan government set up in February 2022 focused on the alleged mistreatment of workers in Australia. But since then, [the review was broadened](#) to focus on how workers are selected, worker misbehaviour and absconding, the economic cost of the loss of public and private sector workers to overseas work and the social costs incurred such as family separation and breakups. On 23 September 2022, [it was reported](#) that the Samoan Cabinet had rejected the review's discussion paper as unsatisfactory and had created a Cabinet sub-committee to find solutions to the concerns outlined in the report. One welfare-related response ([22 September 2022](#)) from the Government of Samoa's Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour has been to hire two additional liaison officers to assist workers in New Zealand and Australia, instead of the one liaison officer in each country. The media discussion paper states that the additional liaison officers are to help resolve many issues faced by workers who have complained about the lack of assistance, especially in Australia.

A similar review was set up by the government of Vanuatu. Faced with a call to manage 'our growing brain drain crisis' by a former senior public servant and [complaints by employers](#) of labour shortages, and seasonal worker misbehaviour, the government of Vanuatu is currently reviewing its arrangements for participating in the seasonal work programs. According to the [Vanuatu Commissioner of Labour](#), the government wants to

reach a new memorandum of understanding with Australia to address a range of issues including the prevention of brain drain, building skill sets, and improving the community impact.

Concerns from employers about the impact on the local economy of workers leaving for overseas jobs extends to Fiji as well, producing a government response. Media reports on [14 June](#) and [18 June 2022](#) cite a complaint by the President of the Suva Retailers Association that the employers 'train the staff who are long-term workers, and all of a sudden they give resignation notices to go for a better job in Australia'. The Fiji Minister for Employment has also noted that 'skilled employees are not giving advanced notice when they are leaving for Australia under the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme'. He announced his intention to set up a steering committee to 'ensure that local employers are not disadvantaged, and [their] concerns are addressed accordingly'.

5. Need for a new framework and policies to improve migration outcomes

Access obstacles for Pacific countries and Timor-Leste

How can sending countries work to improve the migration pathways that they are supporting? Three main labour mobility pathways to Australia and New Zealand have access problems for most Pacific countries and Timor-Leste. These are: the uneven distribution of opportunities for seasonal workers; the narrow focus of the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) on lower-skilled jobs, and the lack of access to employers or their intermediaries for trades-qualified, middle-skilled APTC graduates. These issues could all be addressed in negotiations for a new, comprehensive bilateral agreement.

These access problems stem at least in part from the common assumption of host and origin governments that these pathways function like an aid program. The government officials at both ends of the pathway often fail to acknowledge the complexity of the migration arrangements they are dealing with. These arrangements or pathways are based on two different sets of legal requirements and involve a range of stakeholders in each of the two countries.

Denying this complexity, government officials from the host countries have applied a highly standardised approach, as if was an aid program. This applied especially to Australia and the arrangements for the SWP. This has involved the destination country imposing a common template of requirements, designed with minimal consultation, with the insistence it must be adhered to closely to produce the pre-specified outputs. The officials in the sending country have also assumed that the pathway is an aid program that they can change to deliver outputs for beneficiaries the sending government has identified. The result is that in Australia's case, the officials of both the destination and origin countries have failed to appreciate the key role of employers have in making the pathway work. Governments are reliant on employers to offer the jobs.

New Zealand's RSE, however, was primarily designed to help employers with major seasonal labour shortages, with the government supporting their lead role in the scheme (Curtain et al 2018). The major issue for RSE employers has always been the government-imposed cap on the number of workers they can source from the Pacific in any one year.

The benefit of the cap for the economy has been to encourage growers to increase the productivity of their businesses, not allowing them to become too dependent on low-wage labour from the Pacific.¹⁵

Another complication is that employers and workers must comply with the host government's migration regulations which impose requirements which vary greatly by skill level. For a demand-driven migration system, such as those of Australia and New Zealand, there is a trade-off between the openness of the pathway and the skill levels of the jobs to be filled: the lower the skill, the more closed the pathway. In the case of low-skilled work (i.e., where workers can learn the skills required on-the-job in a matter of weeks or through a short training course), governments impose a highly regulated pathway, which restricts both employers and workers rights (Ruhs 2013). This is done to reassure especially domestic labour markets that these overseas workers are not taking low-skilled jobs that could be performed by local jobseekers. Indeed, the additional requirements imposed on employers of low-skilled workers from overseas such as providing accommodation, welfare support and guaranteed periods of work act as a strong financial incentive to employ locally sourced workers.

Limitations of existing bilateral agreements

The existing bilateral agreements have many limitations for both the destination and sending countries. They are focused on one program (e.g., seasonal work, or Pacific Labour Scheme) and are based on a common, inflexible template used for all the sending countries. The current agreements lack a focus on performance. Poor performance stems from existing arrangements in Australia for seasonal workers due to their top-down, reactive controls (Curtain and Howes 2020). These controls carry a draconian penalty, especially for labour hire firms, based as they are on the threat of legal action and loss of business to enforce compliance. The sending countries have for their part have often failed to put enough resources into their labour sending units to ensure that record keeping about workers or monitoring is adequate. Nor have they ensured that they have adequate numbers of liaison officers in the destination countries to support the workers from their countries.

Need for a new, more comprehensive approach by the governments involved

Australia and New Zealand as destination countries need to initiate new agreements with the sending countries, preferably jointly although probably separately. These agreements need to hold each party to account for poor performance and provide incentives for performance improvements. The agreements also should acknowledge and address the problems identified with the existing programs. Instead of reactive responses to media reporting of workers' concerns and cases of exploitation, more systematic and current information on employer and worker concerns is required. This information should not only be able to show how widespread worker exploitation is. More importantly, the information available in real time can and should be used to provide an early warning system of potential problems at workplace level, allowing the key parties in each location to resolve a problem before it escalates.

¹⁵ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this comment about the RSE.

The proposed bilateral agreements should have a broad framework which encompasses a range of issues of interest and concern to the parties to the agreement. These issues include collecting, analysing, and reporting publicly evidence on the costs and benefits for both sending and receiving country. Sending governments should show what support they are providing to ensure that workers' savings are directed towards productive investment opportunities. The effect of short- and medium-term temporary migration on separated families also needs to be addressed within a broad bilateral negotiated framework. National and international NGOs concerns have often raised concerns about the prevalence of extramarital affairs, relationship breakdowns, emotional distress, parenting problems, and child welfare issues (CARE 2021).

Lowering the cost of remittances

Other desired migration outcomes should also be reported on. In particular, the agreement should cover ways to reduce the cost of remittances, and better access to cheaper ways of remitting income. A recent assessment of Pacific remittance costs concluded that they remain worryingly and persistently high at close to 10.1 per cent of the transfer (Pinczewski and Capal 2022). This compares with a global average of 6.04 per cent, and the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of 3 per cent. This is despite a reduction in costs over the last decade due to the introduction of new digital services. The main obstacle to lowering costs is the failure of banks and others providing international currency exchange to be transparent about their costs. This involves showing both their up-front fee and any 'hidden fees' based on markup in the retail exchange rate they use (Behavioural Insights Team 2018).

The Reserve Banks of Australia and New Zealand are developing a regional electronic 'know your customer' facility to allow digital verification (Pinczewski and Capal 2022). However, common regional standards still need to be developed, for example, on how a customer verifies their identity, to enable this facility to make it easier and cheaper to send money across borders. Other changes are also needed to ensure that the regulatory financial structure promotes competition to allow the new digital services to have greater impact (see Collins 2022 and Reserve Bank of New Zealand 2022).

Addressing uneven access between and within sending countries

It is a key feature of the design of seasonal work programs that employers have a choice of which countries they can recruit from. This is to allow employers to recruit from another country if there is too much of an over-reliance on one or two countries. This is to avoid problems in how the process is managed by a country and how well their workers are performing at work and behaving outside of work hours.

It is up to individual employers to decide on which countries they want to recruit workers from, based on push and pull factors involving the efficiency and responsiveness of the sending countries. However, a collective response by employers may be required when there is evidence of over-recruitment of workers from countries with smaller populations. The Approved Employers of Australia (AEA) in its response (12 July 2022) to the Australian government's proposed reforms of the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme (PALM) notes that the countries with a significant proportion of their workforce employed in Australia and New Zealand, such as Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu, are reporting challenges with finding enough workers in their home countries as their

tourism industry recovers, and 'brain drain' as their most experienced workers are working overseas. The AEA proposes that the Australian Government and employers 'need to better develop strategies and engagement with individual Pacific countries' and 'avoid grouping all Pacific countries together ('the Pacific') as the circumstances and expectations of each country are very different'.

The AEA submission highlights the major differences in the populations of sending countries and their share of workers sent abroad.

For countries with larger populations in the Pacific, and Timor-Leste, the proportion of their workforce in Australia and/or New Zealand is much lower (generally under 2 per cent). The Solomon Islands, Fiji, Timor-Leste, and Papua New Guinea all have larger total populations but relatively low utilisation of the Australia and New Zealand workforce programs. In consultation with individual Pacific countries, there is a significant opportunity to expand Australia's PALM scheme in those countries with larger populations, more specifically PNG, Timor-Leste, and Fiji.

The AEA has recommended to the Australian government that the continued expansion of the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme needs to consider three key issues:

- The overall effect of the scheme on specific countries,
- The expectations and requirements of individual countries in terms of the structure of their economies, overall population and working age populations, and the skills and experience of their respective workforce, and
- The cumulative effect of the workforce scheme on individuals, families, communities, and economies.

The New Zealand RSE scheme is limited in the number of workers that be employed each year (the cap in 2022 is 19,000). A recent review has recommended that if employers want to recruit more workers with an increase in the cap, they should have to recruit from under-represented countries (Nunns, Bedford and Bedford 2020).

Uneven access within and between countries are key issues that the proposed new bilateral agreements need to address. However, the ADB could play a central regional role in compiling and analysing existing data from official sources to help sending countries manage over-recruitment within countries. Another key issue of concern to sending countries, discussed in the next section, is how to broaden the skill focus of jobs offered to Pacific countries and Timor-Leste via a dedicated migration pathway to Australia.

Addressing the narrow focus of the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) on low-skilled jobs

As noted above, the PLS has a very high concentration of workers in meat processing and agricultural work, due to strong employer demand, both before and during COVID border closures. However, this narrow focus on low skilled jobs is also due to the decision of the Australian government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to focus on Skill level 4 and 5 jobs to the exclusion of Skill level 3 trade-based jobs. This is despite the Handbook for the PLS stating the Skill level 3 jobs are within the scope of the program. When informed of the broader scope of skills available under the PLS, employers in large

meat processing plants expressed an interest in recruiting workers with trade qualifications for maintenance work.

More opportunities to access temporary skilled work pathways

The issue of linking middle-skilled workers, such as trades-qualified Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) graduates to available jobs overseas, requires two policy initiatives. One is an immediate connection with Australian and New Zealand employers offering jobs. The second is a mechanism to identify and supply middle-level skills that meet both domestic and overseas labour market needs. This linking requires a focus on occupations that are in demand in both sending and receiving countries such as commercial cooks or are mainly needed in the destination country such as aged care workers. The connection with employers is crucial in the short term to meet immediate demand. It is also needed in the long term where employers in the Pacific accept responsibility for fostering a supply of workers that they will guarantee jobs for.

The failure of the APTC to deliver on its mandate to connect its graduates to overseas jobs is discussed in detail in Attachment C. Also discussed in more detail are the two proposed mechanisms outlined above.

6. Linking people with current opportunities to work overseas

Pacific countries and Timor-Leste wanting to find jobs offshore for their citizens are keen to identify how to prepare their citizens to meet the requirements of employers in the major labour markets in the region. Australia and New Zealand are the two main high-income labour markets open to Pacific countries through skilled migration pathways and for lower skilled workers through the Seasonal Workers Programme (SWP) and the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS). Canada also offers pathways for skilled migrants from the Pacific, notably from Fiji, and for a small number of semi-skilled migrants through an agreement with one Canadian province. Samoans and Tongans have informal pathways to live in the USA based on family ties and other ties such as through church missionaries. Timor-Leste, in addition to access to work in Australia through the highly regulated pathways of the SWP and PLS, has a work migration pathway to Korea for lower skilled workers through the Korea Employment Permit System. Timor-Leste also did have an informal pathway over a 20-year period to work in the Britain before Brexit, notably in Northern Ireland.¹⁶ The focus of the following discussion is on linking Pacific countries and Timor-Leste with available migration pathways and how best to gain access.

Immediate past access to Australia and New Zealand's high-income labour markets

There are three broad types of formal labour mobility pathways to high-income labour markets. The first is for a migrant to meet the requirements of a skilled migration pathway. This involves a migrant in an eligible occupation on a skills shortage list accepting a job offer from an employer. In most cases, the initial step is to obtain a temporary work visa for up to four years, followed by gaining employer sponsorship for

¹⁶ This pathway was made possible by access to Portuguese passports for Timorese born before Timor-Leste Independence in May 2002.

permanent residence. Usually, the worker and family incur the travel and settlement costs.

The second pathway is via a more regulated pathway for lower skilled, temporary work, varying from up to nine months for seasonal work in horticulture or up to three years in other lower skilled jobs in regional areas. The third pathway is direct to permanent residence based on a special pathway, with minimal requirements including being of good character, obtaining a job and able to speak English. The following discussion draws on official statistics from Australia and New Zealand on visas granted by country of citizenship to reveal how each of these three types of pathways operate.

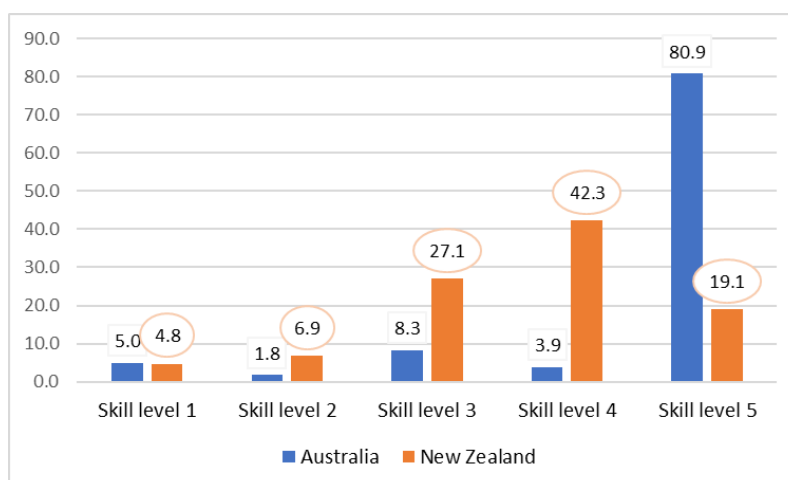
The simplest, current guide for governments, training providers and potential migrants to the occupations in demand in Australia and New Zealand is to look at the occupations of migrants who were granted work visas for in the recent past. The best short-term future demand for occupations of two to three years ahead is the immediate past profile of employer demand for specific occupations, available from the immigration statistics and New Zealand and Australia. Longer term demand for specific occupations can be identified when a large-scale investment is in place, such as the rebuilding of New Zealand's major city Christchurch. This demand is backed by government support to provide specific incentives for workers to locate there. However, these longer indications of occupation demand for migrant workers, backed by a long-term government commitment are not common occurrences.

The temporary work visa pathways

The two main skills-based pathways to Australia and New Zealand are compared by skill level in Figure 3 below. The New Zealand pathway over the five-year period granted 10,977 temporary work visas compared with 5,289 visas granted for the Australian pathway. Skill level 1 refers to managers and professionals, Skill level 2 covers technicians. Skill level 3 applies to craft or trades-based workers. Skill level 4 covers semi-skilled workers and Skill level 5 refers to low-skill workers.

These results show that New Zealand offers many more opportunities for Pacific migrants than Australia does. A key reason for this is that Australia's skill threshold, which applies to occupations at Skill Level 3 and above, means that there are fewer job opportunities for lower skilled workers. This barrier to greater Pacific migration has been addressed in part by the new migration pathway introduced in 2018 called Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) for migrants in Skill Levels 4 and 5 occupations. However, the PLS is limited to jobs in regional areas, outside the major urban centres.

Figure 3: Australia and New Zealand temporary skill visas (greater than nine months) granted to Pacific and Timor-Leste migrants by skill level, 2016-17 to 2020-21, per cent for each destination country



Sources: Australian Department of Home Affairs bp00141-temporary-resident-skilled-visas-granted-at-2021-12-31-v100 (accessed 17 March 2022) and New Zealand immigration statistics, Migration Data Explorer, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (accessed 17 March 2022). The ANZSCO Skill Levels range from 1 for professional occupations to 5 for low skill occupations. Workers on seasonal work visas have not been included.

Different skill profiles of Pacific migrants for Australia and New Zealand

Figure 3 above shows that few migrants from the Pacific and Timor-Leste in occupations in the highest two skill levels have gained a temporary skill work visa over a five-year period to end of financial year 2020-21. In marked contrast, the overwhelming share of permanent skilled migrants to Australia over this period were in low-skill occupations at Skill level 5. As already noted, this high share of Pacific and Timor-Leste migrants in low-skill jobs in Australia is due to the operation of the PLS, now subsumed into the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme. The PLS has focused on the demand for semi and low-skilled jobs in regional areas. The greatest demand from regional employers was for meat process and agricultural workers.

Excluding the PLS occupations so that the focus is on the Temporary Skill Shortage occupations granted visas to migrants from the Pacific and Timor-Leste over this period, nearly half of the occupations are in Skill level 1. The largest occupation group at the highest skill level is medical doctor (45 in total), followed by general accountant (21), petroleum engineer (17), and mining engineer (excluding petroleum) (14). Also, important to note that only 7 registered nurses (aged care) are also listed. For Skill level 3 occupations, the three most important are: general motor mechanic (43), general fitter (26), and diesel motor mechanic (25). The small number of Skill level 4 occupations is mostly accounted for by religious assistant (9) and beauty therapist (4). The main occupations at Skill level 2 are earth science technician (22), followed by mechanical engineering technician (9) chef (9) and electrical engineering technician (7). Another key finding to note is the small numbers of skilled work migrants from the Pacific and Timor-Leste.

Attachment A provides more information from the visa approval data on the industries in Australia that employed Pacific migrants and the types of occupations of the jobs in demand through the Pacific Labour Scheme.

New Zealand offers more current opportunities to Pacific migrants for jobs at lower skill levels

Figure 3 above, on the other hand, shows that New Zealand has a more even spread of middle skilled, semi-skilled and low skilled jobs for migrants from the Pacific and Timor-Leste, the largest share of occupations being at Skill level 4 (42 per cent). Within this skill level, the largest occupations are factory process workers (29 per cent), road and rail drivers (20 per cent), farm, forestry, and garden workers (19 per cent) and carers and aides (15 per cent). For Skill level 3, the most important occupations are the automotive and engineering trades (32 per cent), construction trades (31 per cent) and electrotechnology and telecommunications trades workers (19 per cent).

New Zealand also offers a wider spread of job opportunities for permanent residents

Over the same period, the number of visas granted for permanent resident from skilled migrants to Australia from the Pacific and Timor-Leste was only one tenth the number of temporary work visas (547 visas). As noted above, employers prefer to first offer a job via a temporary skill visa. Of those skilled workers from the Pacific and Timor-Leste granted permanent residency, four out of five (79 per cent) applied for that visa from within Australia. New Zealand for the same period 2016-17 to 2020-21, the number of permanent resident visas granted at 1,356 to skilled migrants was more than twice the number for Australia.

Figure 4: Australia and New Zealand permanent skill migration visas granted to Pacific and Timor-Leste migrants by skill level, 2016-17 to 2020-21, per cent for each destination country

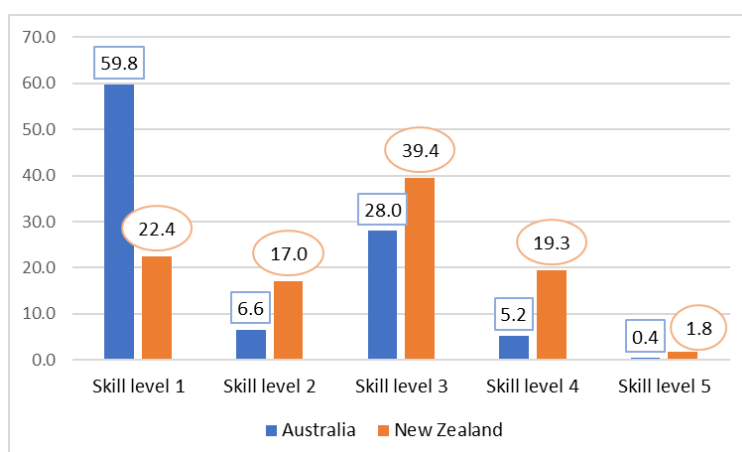


Figure 4 compares for the five-year period to end June 2021 the skills profile of Pacific and Timor-Leste migrants granted permanent residency in Australia and New Zealand based on their occupation. For Australia, Figure 4 shows a reverse skill profile of the temporary skill work visas in Figure 2, with the preference for high skill occupations, notably health professionals, design, engineering, science and transport professionals,

and business, human resource, and marketing professionals. The middle-skill occupations of automotive and engineering trades are also important.

For New Zealand, the middle-skill occupations are the largest group, notably the electrotechnology and telecommunications trades, automotive and engineering trades, and the construction trades. The next most important group of occupations is Skill level 1, notably education professionals, design, engineering, science and transport professionals, health professionals, and business, human resource, and marketing professionals. The third important occupation group is Skill level 4 which consists mainly of road and rail drivers (62 per cent) and machine and mobile plant operators (21 per cent). Carers and aides only account for 6 per cent) of the occupations at this skill level.

Attachment B provides more detail about the short-term future demand for occupations based on New Zealand's more open immigration system.

Gender balance in the migration pathways

The gender difference for Australia's temporary skill shortage (TSS) work visa pathway is most noticeable by skill level. Only 23 per cent of TSS visas granted over a five-year period to end June 2021 went to women. However, at the highest Skill Level 1, 39 per cent of visas were granted to women. The main occupations at this skill level held by women are medical doctor, general accountant, petroleum engineer, early childhood teacher and aged care registered nurse. At Skill level 2, only 16 per cent of the occupations were held by women, notably youth worker, cafe or restaurant manager and chef. At the other end of the skill profile at Skill level 4, 87 per cent of women were recorded in the occupations of religious assistant, beauty therapist, childcare worker, and accounts clerk. The gender difference was greatest at Skill level 3 in the trades-based occupations where the only two occupations held by women were pastrycook and cook.

For the New Zealand Essential Skills visa over the same period, only 16 per cent of the work visas granted went to women. As with the pattern above, women were better represented at Skill levels 1 (31 per cent) and Skill level 2 (36 per cent). At Skill level 3 in the trades-based occupations only 5 per cent of the occupations were held by women. At Skill levels 4 and 5, which accounted for the occupations of three out of five Essential skills work visas, the women's share is 19 and 16 per cent respectively.

The main occupations of women at Skill level 1 are: early childhood, primary, secondary, and special needs schoolteachers, aged-care registered nurses, as well as general and management accountants. At Skill level 2, the main female occupations are chef, massage therapist, managers of various types, office, retail, cafe restaurant. At Skill level 3, the leading occupations held by women are cook, hairdresser, hotel service manager and baker. At Skill level 4, the most important female occupations are care focused: personal care assistant, aged or disabled carer and nursing support worker. These three occupations account for 70 per cent of all Skill level 4 occupations held by women. At Skill level 5, the main female occupations are commercial housekeeper and hospitality workers not elsewhere classified, accounting for 44 per cent of the female held occupations at this skill level. Other important occupations are meat process worker, dairy cattle farm worker, and seafood process worker, together accounting for 31 per of the occupations held by women at this skill level.

For the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS), the gender balance varies greatly by industry sector. Using arrivals data for the period November 2019 to end April 2022 (N=6,331), gender balance by main sector of employment is as follows. In meat processing, the sector where two-thirds of the workers are employed, only one in ten workers are women. However, in fruit and vegetable processing, half of the PLS jobs (52 per cent) are held by women, in fruit and tree nut growing, and mushroom and vegetable growing, women have 30 per cent of the jobs. In residential care services, women's share of the jobs is 75 per cent.

7. Future job opportunities regionally and further afield

Forecasts of the demand for skills are fraught, due to the range of uncertainties that shape future demand. Most recently, the COVID pandemic has redefined basic care skills as essential, when previously they were treated by immigration authorities as low skilled and hence not considered a priority (ILO 2020). Any occupation classification system, such as the ILO's ISCO-08 or Australia and New Zealand's ANZSCO which is used to forecast the demand for occupations is based on underlying skill sets which in many cases will be out of date. These systems only capture skill sets that have been standardised and codified. The limitations of the occupation classification used by New Zealand (and Australia) is a key reason for New Zealand Immigration's recent change to the use of national median income as the only criterion to classify jobs into skilled and lower-skilled jobs. As part of these reforms, the national median income (in 2022 NZD 27.76 per hour) will become the only criterion to classify jobs into skilled and lower-skilled (subject to a labour market test). This, according to the NZ government, replaces a complicated skills classification system that did not cover all occupations and caused delays in visa processing.

These limitations also apply to training based on standardised qualifications, which are aimed at broad occupational labour markets. Many of these qualifications may be inappropriate to provide skills for new technologies which may require new skill sets that are very different and may be best learnt on the job. New industries such as renewal energy generation also require new skill sets to constitute green jobs, but public training programs may be lagging.

One attempt to get around the limitations of forecasting based on occupations is to apply a skills lens which is independent of the occupations the skills are connected to. This is the basis of the new Australian Skills Classification system, developed by the Australian National Skills Commission. This new approach seeks to identify underlying skills required in a range of occupations to identify common and transferable skills, skills gaps, and new training options (National Skills Commission, 2022).

Assessing the demand for health care workers recruited directly from overseas

A separate report describes two case studies of the demand for health care workers.¹⁷ The first case study focuses on semi-skilled aged care workers or personal care assistants in the residential aged care sector. Specific attention is given to the obstacles to recruiting

¹⁷ The report is available from the author.

these workers directly from overseas and from the Pacific in particular. The second case study assesses the demand for medical practitioners and midwifery and nursing professionals recruited from overseas, based on recent visa approvals data.

The first case study notes the reluctance of residential aged care providers in regional areas to recruit aged care workers through the PLS. The case study suggests that cost may be a major factor, as regional resident aged care facilities are often financially precarious. Other government mandated changes to improve the standard of aged care are likely to extend this financial vulnerability to aged care facilities in the major cities as well (Malcolm 2022). Understanding the political economy of the funding of residential aged care provision is one essential element in assessing the demand for semi-skilled workers, who are recruited directly from overseas.

The other case study shows the barriers that health professionals who have received their training overseas face in gaining recognition for their qualifications in Australia or New Zealand. The low number of Registered Nurses from the Pacific reflects the qualification barrier that registered nurses from the Pacific and Timor-Leste face, as their diploma qualification is not recognised by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) which requires a three-year, degree-level qualification. Also the Australian Registered Nurse accreditation process has a high English language requirement which so favours Registered Nurses with a minimum Bachelor of Nursing qualification from Canada, Hong Kong, Ireland, South Africa, UK or the United States.

8. Recommendations for the ADB on ways to improve migration outcomes

Rec 1	Need for the ADB Pacific Department to develop a set of principles for its involvement in Pacific migration
Rec 2	ADB, with its regional focus, is well placed to set up a migration observatory
Rec 3	ADB should develop four regionally common indicators of supply and demand
Rec 4	ADB analysis is needed to help migrants choose wisely
Rec 5	How ADB can address worker over-recruitment within and between countries
Rec 6	ADB could provide information to all sending countries to address brain drain concerns

Recommendation 1: Need to define the parameters for ADB involvement in improving Pacific migration outcomes

The complexity of the migration process, involving the legal systems of sovereign governments in both the destination and sending countries requires caution. The ADB should be clear about why it is getting involved and how its involvement will do no harm. It is recommended that the ADB Pacific Department should develop a set of principles to define the parameters for its involvement in ways to improve labour mobility and work-

related migration in the Pacific. These design principles should start with an acknowledgement that the ADB, as a regional multilateral agency, is limited in how it can intervene in the migration process in the Pacific to improve outcomes.

The first limitation is the lack of a mandate to engage with the destination countries in relation to their requirements and arrangements. The same applies to the sending countries' because their requirements and arrangements have been set by the destination countries, via either bilateral agreements or the legal conditions for work-related migrant entry and residence.

The areas that fall outside these external limits are related to information to improve potential migrants' capacity to decide whether to migrate, when and how best to do this. Another area refers to assessments of the development and social impact of migration by sending country, especially for short- and medium-term temporary migration.

Finding a way for a multilateral agency to offer support for labour mobility in the Pacific is difficult because of the complex nature of migration pathways. The fact that many aspects of these pathways are determined by the migration regime of the destination country limits the support that could be offered to the sending country. The World Bank has provided support to Tonga and is investigating for Papua New Guinea how to lift their capacity to perform better as a sending country. In Tonga, World Bank support covers 'reforms to improve the recruitment and training of Tongan workers taking part in regional labour mobility programs; [and] helping improve access to international employment opportunities' (World Bank 2021b).

The following design principles are offered as examples for the ADB to consider:

1. The ADB aims to improve aspects of migration outcomes that do not include direct involvement with the sovereign rights of countries to determine the arrangements under which migrants gain entry for work.
2. As migration programs involving the Pacific often involve competition between sending countries, the ADB should adopt a regional perspective that does not favour any one country.
3. Information for individuals wanting to migrate and governments seeking to promote access to jobs is a public, social, or collective good that requires adequate resourcing.
4. Resourcing information on migration as a public good available to every country eligible to migrate is problematic because no individual sending government will be prepared to take on the cost alone. Destination governments, with their ambivalent focus on both promoting but also controlling migrant inflows, have also failed to invest in a regional facility to provide sending governments easy access to useful information to promote migrant outcomes.
5. A regional facility providing reliable information for migration outcomes offers the ADB with the opportunity to intervene in the migration process. This form of intervention is likely to have the greatest beneficial impact. It will also

generate minimal negative reaction from the existing complex network of sovereign governments, employers, labour unions and international and national civic organisations.

Recommendation 2: ADB, with its regional focus, is well placed to set up a migration observatory

One area of potential ADB involvement which is not country specific but has a regional focus is the provision of information for Pacific governments on migration flows and outcomes. Sending countries need up-to-date and comprehensive information about how this complex system is working. Sending countries also need to good information about their labour and skill losses due to overseas migration.

Australia and New Zealand have previously made relevant commitments in the side agreement to PACER Plus called the Arrangement on Labour Mobility. These commitments included agreeing to strengthen the collection and harmonisation of labour market statistics in sending countries to improve labour market planning and to respond to the export of skilled labour. Also included in the agreement is a recognition of 'the importance of further enhancing technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and other tertiary education programs that build the labour supply capacity to respond to domestic and regional labour market demand'.

However, on the first issue, there has been no action taken to strengthen and harmonise labour market statistics in sending countries. Certainly, no regional body exists in the Pacific to act as an observatory or clearinghouse for migration related statistics. PACER Plus Ministers have only recently (12 July 2021) set up a PACER Plus Implementation Unit in Apia, Samoa. But the unit has only one staff member responsible for promoting labour mobility (PACER Plus 2021). However, it has commissioned several studies of labour mobility arrangements.

In relation to the second issue, the APTC has worked to strengthen national TVET providers, but this has largely focused training staff and strengthening their capacity to manage their institutions. Their support has not focused on building the labour supply capacity to respond to domestic and regional labour market demand. Considerable scope exists, therefore, for multilateral support for these two valuable ways to address the impact of existing and potential future growth in migration flows in the region.

Recommendation 3: ADB should develop four regionally common indicators of supply and demand

It is recommended that the ADB develop a set of simple indicators for each Pacific country based on a common definition regionally for use by Pacific countries. These indicators will address the basic need for comprehensive data on each country's skills profile and up-to-date information on the occupations of recent Pacific migrants from each country (Curtain 2018).

The ADB facility, in response to a sending government request, could also provide a dynamic skills profile of each Pacific country, based on the demand and supply of skilled occupations. These indicators could use measures derived from existing data sources such as the national census and administrative records. Also needed would be tracer

survey results for graduates with post-school qualifications by training providers, as APTC, and the governments of Fiji and Samoa do now.

Showing what a national skills pool looks like

The first indicator identifies a country's national skills pool or skills profile. A good measure for this indicator is the proportion of workers with a post-secondary qualification in each skills-based occupation. The data for this measure can be taken from the national censuses, as nearly all Pacific countries and Timor-Leste code their census data on occupations using ILO's International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08). The degree of detail collected in the census on post-school qualifications varies from country to country. So, a more standard approach across the region is needed for the relevant census question on post-school qualifications. This will allow a matrix to be developed showing each level of post-school qualification by the four-digit occupation title.

Working out supply and demand

The second indicator for the national skills pool should show the balance between domestic skills supply and employment demand for specific qualifications. The most relevant measure is the employment rate, wage level and skills match of graduates' jobs with their qualification, reported for each post-secondary qualification. This information can be gathered through training provider or national graduate tracer surveys.

Identifying national skill shortages

The third, and most important, indicator of the national skills pool is to gauge the extent of national skill shortages. One measure is information on the occupations of foreign workers granted a work or employment permit to work in the country. This information needs to be coded from work permit applications, using ISCO. Another data source from a national census is information on the occupations and qualifications of foreign citizens, if available. A third measure of national skill shortages is the occupations listed in job advertisements in the print and radio media, then coded using ISCO. These measures need to be compared with each other to identify and further verify specific skills shortages. This information should be analysed by the Ministry responsible for employment.

Showing the demand for occupations overseas

A fourth indicator is the demand in Australia and New Zealand for migrants in eligible occupations in demand requiring post-school qualifications. Detailed data is available at regular intervals from Australian and New Zealand immigration authorities on the occupations of those granted temporary and permanent skilled work visas by nationality. In the case of migrants gaining access to New Zealand under the Pacific Category visa and Samoan Quota, a special request will need to be made to New Zealand authorities to collect information on the visa applicant's current employment status and detailed occupation when they apply for their visa if selected in the ballot. The New Zealand government should then report on this to the migrant's home government, using four-digit ISCO occupation categories. In this way, the governments of Samoa, Fiji, Tonga,

Kiribati and Tuvalu will know which jobs have vacancies as a result of the adult migrant's departure to take up permanent residence in New Zealand.

Carrying out the analysis

Accessing this information may be difficult for people not familiar with spreadsheets and how to use pivot tables. Background information is also needed to ensure that the analyst is aware of what issues to consider when interpreting the visa data. For these reasons, a central clearinghouse facility is needed, supported by analysts who have a good understanding of how the complex Australian and New Zealand migration systems work. This analysis could also play a central role in helping the sending and destination countries manage the risk of brain drain.

A good example of a recent report using this analysis is Fiji's first Migration Profile, entitled 'Migration in the Republic of Fiji: A Country Profile 2020' (IOM 2020).¹⁸ This report was prepared under the guidance of a Technical Working Group, co-chaired by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Immigration. Technical support was provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The IOM has been involved in producing 95 national and regional Migration Profiles to 2021. However, only two other migration profiles relate to the countries covered by this discussion paper: Timor-Leste 2019 and the Federated States of Micronesia 2015.

Recommendation 4: ADB analysis is needed to help migrants choose wisely

Many prospective migrants from lower income countries may want to migrate abroad but do not know whether they can afford to or not. Alternatively, potential migrants may have little reliable information on the benefits and so think migration is not worth incurring the financial and social costs involved. This may be despite the lack of human security they may be experiencing now. This dilemma is more likely to apply to residents of countries under extreme pressure from climate change such as Kiribati, Tuvalu, and Nauru (Curtain and Dornan 2019).

David McKenzie, a World Bank research economist, has spelt out in a policy research working paper the factors that can inhibit people in developing countries from migrating to high-income countries. This is despite, he notes, the significant income gains for migrating workers with a wide variety of skill levels using different migration pathways. The paper, entitled 'Fears and tears: should more people be moving within and from developing countries, and what stops this movement?' outlines three common inhibitors and identifies two that are often not considered (McKenzie 2022).

Responding to the common inhibitors

The usual inhibitors are not being able to afford the costs of moving, despite wanting to migrate; or the identified costs of moving are judged to be so large that they are seen as exceeding the known benefits. In addition, explicit policy barriers may directly limit migration options. Research to identify the costs involved and how these are changing by

¹⁸ The report covers migration trends and characteristics provides data and analysis of migration trends in Fiji; the impacts of migration on key socioeconomic and development indicators; the instruments of the governance of migration in Fiji; and recommendations for policymakers.

year can provide prospective migrants with more accurate information than relying on limited information sources. This will help prospective migrants assess the level of savings they will need, and the extent of diaspora support they can expect if they decide to migrate. Research can also highlight the explicit policy barriers or hidden barriers that are limiting migration options for migrants from the Pacific.

Responding to the less common inhibitors

However, two other factors that McKenzie identifies are more difficult to research. These are the fears associated with the uncertainties that migration entails and a person's attachment to place. The size of the diaspora in the preferred destination country may make a difference, enabling the prospective migrant to get feedback from different members of the diaspora. This information, confirmed by several sources, may play a key role allaying these fears. It may help the potential migrant to reduce the uncertainties associated with setting up a household in a new country and obtain feedback about the limitations of where they are now living for them and their children.

Providing important information about jobs and wages for a potential migrant

A key factor in helping those interested in migrating is to have specific information about the type of job and wage level they could get. This needs to be based on how migrants from their own country have fared, considering their education level, gender, and age. Because it is census data, it is possible for even migrants from a small Pacific country to focus in on employment outcomes for specific detailed subgroups such as for women, aged 25-64 years, for three broad education levels and comparing outcomes in two main destination countries such as Australia and New Zealand.

Attachment F provides an example of an analysis using OECD census data on migrants by country of birth to show the different employment outcomes migrants with three broad education levels that migrants from specific Pacific countries have achieved in highly competitive OECD labour markets. The point of the example is to show how this information could be used as part of an awareness campaign for prospective migrants about their chances of finding gainful employment. This advance information is especially needed for Pacific and Timor-Leste applicants applying for the new Pacific Engagement Visa. This visa, like its New Zealand counterpart, is unlikely to specify an education requirement for the primary applicant. Nor will the potential migrant know whether a job they can get will be a good or bad one in terms of its income and security.

The ILO has produced [My Guide to Overseas Employment for iKiribati graduates](#) (2015) which could serve as a model guide for use by graduates with post-school qualifications in other Pacific countries and Timor-Leste. The guide covers seven topics: researching whether overseas work is right for you, getting the skills and experience to get an overseas job, finding an overseas job, meeting immigration requirements, preparing to go abroad, a step-by-step process to follow to get a visa and key websites and contacts.

Recommendation 5: How ADB can address worker over-recruitment between and within countries

As noted in the report, the dedicated pathways for short-term seasonal work from the Pacific and Timor-Leste to Australia and New Zealand are demand driven. Employers

determine which countries and locations within a country their workers are recruited from. Employers engage workers from a small subset of countries where they perceive the conditions are most favourable. But from a development perspective, many countries in the region have missed out as a result. This applies especially to the larger countries in the region which need labour mobility the most, namely PNG, Timor-Leste, and Solomon Islands (Howes, Curtain and Sharman 2022).

The destination countries could set country quotas for the Pacific temporary work schemes, but this risks greatly deterring employers from using these schemes at all. Instead of country quotas, efforts to increase hiring from the under-represented countries must be based on evidence. As Approved Employers of Australia has identified, this evidence needs to include information about the expectations and requirements of individual countries based on the structure of their economies, overall population and working age populations, and the skills and experience of their respective workforce. Also needed is an analysis of the costs and benefits of recruiting workers from an underrepresented country, including the cost of transport and other costs involved in getting workers to the destination workplace.

An ADB-funded observatory could also analyse data for each of the major sending countries on the home locations of workers and identify areas for employers, supported by governments, to apply a pro-poor recruitment strategy. In the place of a top-down government directive that may have little effect, employers need to be persuaded of the longer benefits of such a strategy based on objective, broad-based and robust evidence. This analysis and follow-up monitoring needs to be provided by an independent facility with the capacity to identify and analyse the available data from official sources, such as the records of the labour sending units.

Recommendation 6: How ADB could address brain drain concerns

Much has been written about brain drain because of high levels of emigration from small countries. Attachment E provides a summary of current international programs developed to address this issue. These include Global Skill Partnerships, and EU-driven Skills Mobility Partnerships. The attachment also discusses limitations of many of these efforts by destination governments. These include Australia in the case of the APTC with its requirement to ensure that it ensure there is a net skills gain to match the loss of its graduates to overseas employment.

The APTC has been limited by its primary focus of being a training provider. APTC has shown over an extended period of more than a decade that it does not have the capacity or interest in engaging directly with employers to place its graduates. Where these employers are in Australia and New Zealand, APTC has failed to provide to its trade-based graduates wanting to migrate for work information about migrant entry requirements and contact with employers wanting to recruit workers from overseas. Is there scope for an approach based on delivering results in terms of matching supply to demand?

For most trained nurses wanting to work as a registered nurse in Australia or New Zealand, this involves a two-step migration pathway. First, the nurse gains entry to a preferred destination country to work, via a visa with work and study rights such as a working holiday maker visa or as a partner of a skilled worker. The next step, having worked to save up to pay for the course fee, they then are able to undertake a full-time

bridging course. This is usually called a graduate certificate in nursing or an entry program for the international qualified registered nurse which includes gaining relevant work experience. However, the entry requirements for that bridging course include having a bachelor's degree in nursing. This excludes many registered nurses from the Pacific who are likely to have only a diploma in nursing. Even if their qualification is classified as a degree, the institution they received from in the Pacific is not likely to be accredited internationally.

9. Conclusion

This report has noted the often repeated claim that managing migration flows from poorer to richer countries is a complex business. This includes not only both destination and sending governments, but also the key involvement of employers, labour unions, recruitment agents and international and national non-government agencies. These actors, however, are often operating with minimal or incomplete information about how the complex system functions.

More, better, and up-to-date information is needed to provide feedback loops to improve performance and outcomes. Only with this information can the actors help to make complex system work more effectively instead of continually reacting to unforeseen 'bad news' events. A regional clearinghouse is needed to work with governments to access and analyse available migration data. Also, sending countries need support to analyse their own administrative datasets related to the operation of managed migration pathways they are involved with.

This complex system often experiences instability due to the range of unplanned events that can suddenly erupt. For example, media reports about worker exploitation can cause either or both governments to respond in a reactive, piecemeal, and superficial way. What is needed is a real-time data gathering and reporting system, based on regular feedback from workers and employers. This can help those managing the system to identify problem areas at an early stage and respond in a systematic way. Preliminary work has been done in New Zealand and Australia on how to collect this information but much more needs to be done with seasonal workers to put real-time feedback loops in place.

Another source of system instability for the major sending countries, such as Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa, is the lack of comprehensive information about what the benefits of migration are, who benefits and how is this changing over time. Information on benefits is needed that focuses not only on the migrant household and the employer in the destination country offering a job. Information is also needed on the benefits to the communities and economic sectors within both the countries of origin and destination country. To some extent, this information will be provided by the Pacific Labour Mobility Survey, conducted by the World Bank and Devpolicy ANU. This survey is assessing the benefits and impact of workers in the SWP, RSE and the PLS. The net benefits in terms of income gains, welfare and other social outcomes are being measured by comparing migrants with a control group of non-migrants, their households and communities in Tonga, Kiribati, and Vanuatu (Doan, Dornan, Edwards and Nguyen 2022). However, other major sending countries such as Timor-Leste, Samoa and Solomon Islands also need to be included in the survey.

An independent, well-designed survey of migrants and non-migrants, like earlier surveys by the World Bank and Devpolicy, is essential to get an accurate picture of net benefits. However, more detailed, and current information is also needed by the agencies managing each migration pathway, based on administrative data, and migrant worker and employer feedback. Data collection and analysis of feedback from employers and workers is needed for each workplace. Labour sending units and in-country liaison officers should be involved in actively encouraging workers to provide the requested information. A decentralised system of workplace monitoring should be in place so that worker complaints or employer concerns can be picked up and addressed by liaison officers, government relationship managers, or worker and employer association intermediaries.

This report has highlighted the challenges these managed migration pathways face, drawing attention to the unresolved problems that have emerged over time. Two of the migration pathways - seasonal work and temporary skilled work in both destination countries - are well established but are currently showing signs of some instability. The number of jobs taken up by Pacific migrants has grown strongly over the last decade and more. But this expansion in numbers in seasonal workers has also brought problems, due in part to the lack of investment by both the host countries and the major sending countries in their capacity to support workers living and working overseas.

Workers stuck in Australia, unable to return home during international border closures, resulted in large numbers of workers absconding from work with their approved employers (Howes 2022). This has resulted in the major sending countries of Vanuatu, Tonga, Samoa, and Timor-Leste gaining damaged reputations in the eyes of both workers and employers, especially in Australia. The failure of the APTC to support its trades-qualified graduates to connect with Australian or New Zealand employers has also been noted as a major challenge.

For the ADB, finding ways to engage with this contested terrain will not be easy. But as this report has argued, the need for reliable, current information, often available from existing sources, has the huge potential to fill a major gap in the capacity of a range of actors to improve their performance and deliver better outcomes for all involved.

Attachments

Attachment A: Additional information on the industries and occupations of Pacific migrants

Australian industries employing Pacific migrants

The two main sources of migrants from the Pacific and Timor-Leste for recent TSS migrants are: Fiji (324) and PNG (196), followed by Tonga (18) and Timor-Leste (9), Samoa (6) and Kiribati and Vanuatu each with 5 TSS migrants. The just over two-thirds of the migrants from Fiji are spread over four industry sectors: other services, professional, scientific, and technical services, retail trade and health care and social assistance. On the other hand, a similar proportion of TSS migrants from PNG are concentrated in two sectors only: other services and mining. Further analysis by location suggests that occupations in the other services sector in the state of Western Australia are likely to be linked to mining: earth science technician (13) and diesel motor

mechanics (11), mining and mechanical engineers (2) and a mechanical engineering technician.

Using TSS visa approval data only, the largest industry sector is 'Other Services' with 147 recent Pacific and Timor-Leste migrants, which is just over a quarter of all recent Pacific migrants approved for TSS visa.¹⁹ The main occupations of recent Pacific migrants working in this sector are: earth science technician, minister of religion, diesel motor mechanic, motor mechanic, and petroleum engineer.

Other important industry sectors for TSS migrants from the Pacific are mining (71), professional, scientific, and technical services (66), health care and social assistance (63) and retail trade (51). The main occupations for the mining sector are: General Fitter (15) Mining Engineer (excluding Petroleum) (12), Petroleum Engineer (7) and geotechnical engineer (5). For professional, scientific, and technical services, general accountant (17) and external auditor (9) are the main occupations. For health care and social assistance, the important occupations are medical practitioners, including specialists (39), and registered nurses (10). The main occupations in retail trade are general motor mechanic (30) and panelbeater (8).

The demand for workers on the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS)

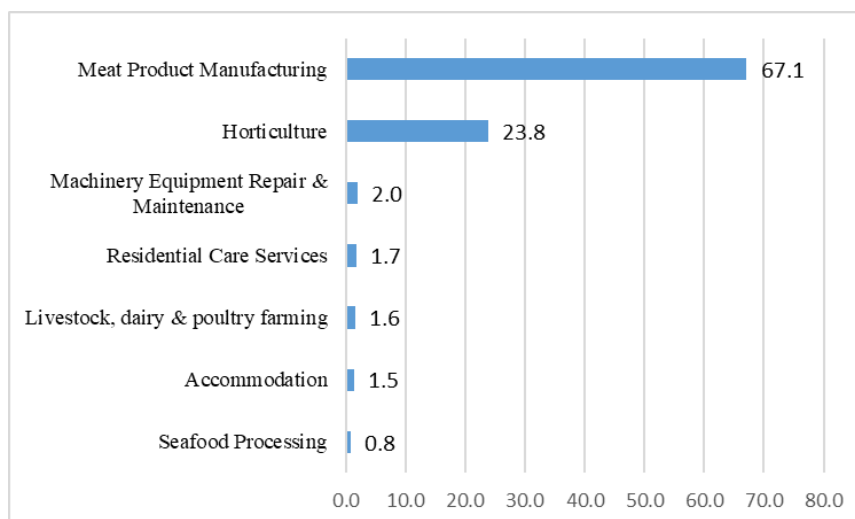
The former Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS), now subsumed into the PALM Scheme, has grown rapidly under COVID-19 forced border closures because an exception was made to allow approved employers to recruit PLS workers. PLS data up to the end of April 2022, shows the number of worker arrivals since November 2019 at 6,331. Figure 5 below shows the main industry sectors PLS workers have been employed in. The industry profile shows that nine out of ten PLS workers are concentrated in two sectors: meat processing (67 per cent) and horticulture (24 per cent). The low representation of PLS workers in other sectors provides an accurate picture of the nature of employer demand in the absence of alternative sources of workers. Working holiday maker visa holders could not enter the country and many of those in the country returned home because they were not eligible for government wage support.

In other sectors where demand was expected to be high have recruited only small numbers of workers. This applies particularly to residential care services with only 109 workers recruited. This is despite a focussed effort by the Pacific Labour Facility which managed the PLS to promote the scheme to regional aged care providers. Accommodation is another sector with only 92 workers recruited. The low number working in accommodation, however, may be due to state border closures, although these closures were reversed in early 2022. The high demand for meat process workers recruited through the PLS suggests that large meat processing producers focused on lucrative domestic and export markets have the resources to cover the additional costs of recruiting workers directly from overseas via a tightly managed pathway. Similarly favourable market conditions for horticulture crops such as tree nuts and some expensive

¹⁹ This sector is defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as covering personal services; religious, civic, professional and other interest group services; and selected repair and maintenance activities. The latter refers to mainly repairing and/or maintaining equipment and machinery.

fruits such as blueberries may also help explain the demand for longer term workers in horticulture.

Figure 5: Industry employment profile of Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) workers, November 2019- April 2022, per cent



Attachment B: Short-term future demand for occupations based on New Zealand more open immigration system

New Zealand, as noted in Section 6, offers Pacific citizens many more jobs than Australia has done over the five years to end June 2021. Fiji dominates the non-seasonal work visa streams, accounting for three out of four work visas (75 per cent) granted by New Zealand to citizens of Pacific countries in the five years to end June 2021.

Fiji’s large share of the work visas holds for occupations that require an extended period of tertiary or trade-based training (Skill levels 1 to 3). The proportion of Fiji citizens granted NZ work visas for occupations at the highest skill level (Skill level 1) over five years is 80 per cent. Tonga and Samoa are in second and third place with 9 and 6 per cent respectively. Fiji has an even higher share of occupations at Skill levels 2 and 3 - 88 and 86 per cent respectively. Samoa and Tonga come next in importance at these two skill levels.

For semi-skilled work at Skill level 4, the proportion held by Fijian citizens falls to somewhat to 72 per cent and Samoa increases its share to 17 per cent, followed by Tonga at 9 per cent. However, it is in the low-skill occupations at Skill level 5 that the Fijian share falls to 56 per cent, with Samoa increasing its share to 23 per cent and Tonga 19 per cent. How Pacific citizens access these jobs is difficult to determine. In a demand-led system, employers clearly want to be sure that the migrant work has not only the right skills needed to do the work but also has the work attitudes that are expected in a New Zealand work setting. The immigration statistics discussion paper whether the application for the visa was made offshore (i.e., outside New Zealand) or onshore (from within New Zealand). The statistics for all seven countries show that 68 per cent of temporary work visas were applied for onshore, from within New Zealand. This proportion varies by skill level with Skill levels 3 and 5 having a notably lower proportion applying onshore at 66 and 61 per cent respectively.

It is not clear what the process is. In the case of lower skill occupations, many of these onshore applications are renewals at the end of the one-year visas. This visa renewal is required because employers to fill lower-skill occupations at Skill level 4 and 5 are required to conduct a labour market test at the end of each twelve-month period. However, at the higher skill levels, employers may require workers to come first on tourist visas so that they assess their skills in a NZ workplace setting. This appears to be the case for registered nurse (aged care) (all 15 applied onshore), general accountant (21 out of 27 applied onshore), Minister of Religion (54 out of 57), dairy cattle farmer (138 out of 156).

However, where qualifications and past relevant experience can be verified offshore, as with teachers, the balance changes to 63 onshore applications out of 126. Offshore applications were important for electrical line mechanics (87 out of 102) but less so for general electricians (72 out of 2100, or general plumbers (48 out of 132). Electronic equipment trades workers were almost split evenly (21 out of 45 offshore). But the opposite was the case for motor mechanics (162 applied onshore out of 210), metal fabricators (78 onshore out of 114), and sheetmetal trades workers (21 onshore out of 30).

New Zealand's immigration's statistics do not provide any information on the industry of the employer offering the job for the migrant, unlike Australia. The only information that gives some idea of whether the job is in NZ's major city Auckland, in other cities or in regional areas. Auckland has the largest demand for recent Pacific migrant workers (54 per cent of all temporary work visas granted). Auckland, with its large construction and hospitality sectors, accounts for two thirds (67 per cent) of all Skill level 3 jobs and three out of five (62 per cent) of Skill level 2 jobs.

The main Skill level 3 occupation held by Pacific migrants in Auckland is carpenter, and carpenter and joiner, combined totalling 426 jobs. Next in importance are diesel motor mechanic, general motor mechanic, air-conditioning and refrigeration mechanic, general plumber, general electrician, and panelbeater. The main Skill level 2 occupation for Pacific migrants in Auckland is chef, numbering 228. The main Skill level 4 occupation is truck driver, numbering 1,215 jobs. Next in importance are the three caring occupations at this skill level: personal care assistant, aged or disability carer and nursing support worker, which together totalled 210.

The next largest concentration of Pacific temporary work migrants is in the Canterbury region, with Christchurch its main city. In contrast to Auckland where nearly half (45 per cent) of the recent Pacific migrant jobs were in Skill level 3 occupations, and only 5 per cent were in Skill level 5 occupations, Canterbury has a very different skill profile for the jobs of its recent Pacific migrant workers. The largest concentration of occupations, 35 per cent, is at Skill level 5, with Skill level 3 jobs at only 20 per cent of the total jobs held by recent Pacific migrants. The two most important Skill level 5 occupations are dairy cattle farm worker (240 jobs) and meat process worker (177). At Skill level 4, the most important occupations aged or disabled carer (135), personal care assistant (117) and nursing support worker (33).

Attachment C: APTC's failure to deliver on labour mobility

The failure of the APTC to achieve its labour mobility objective reflects flaws in its original design. The APTC was designed primarily as an aid program to deliver skills training to Australian competency standards. The labour mobility objective was tacked on, without any understanding of how Australia's demand-led temporary skilled work pathway worked. The design was based on transplanting an Australia skills training college to the Pacific, located in five country campuses (Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands). The design was not based on the key design features of a Global Skills Mobility Partnership which, as noted above, these typically include five components: formal state cooperation, multi-stakeholder involvement, relevant training, skills recognition, and access to migration pathways.

First, APTC was not based on a bilateral agreement between the origin and destination countries. Second, the APTC design or implementation did not involve Australian employers directly or indirectly. Third, APTC's profile of skills training has not been changed over time to reflect the employment outcomes of specific qualifications in Pacific or international labour markets. Fourth, APTC failed to provide information on migration requirements to its eligible graduates. Finally, the APTC did not provide its eligible graduates seeking overseas employment with information about or connect them to potential Australian or New Zealand employers to enable them to use the most common temporary skilled work migration pathway for both countries.

The design for the APTC did not include an initial bilateral labour mobility agreement between Australia and each Pacific country. The design was initially for a skills training provider to operate as an enclave, delivering skills training to Australian quality standards using highly paid Australian instructors.

The APTC does not have a labour market focus or capacity to manage the risk of brain drain or to see whether their graduates were reducing local skill shortages. Despite conducting yearly graduate tracer surveys, APTC has never analysed or presented results publicly on employment outcomes by qualification for its graduates not still with their same employer.

APTC Stage 3 was designed to address the lack of focus on preparing graduates who want to migrate by implementing an APTC labour mobility track to prepare students for overseas work, including training in financial management, health, wellbeing and international expectations.²⁰ However, APTC, on its website, as at 25 August 2022, still does not have a separate employer facing page, offering specific information for employers in Australia, New Zealand or in the Pacific on how to employ its graduates.

APTC Stage 3 design incorporated the principle of net skills gain for the Pacific, a major concern for Pacific employers and governments given APTC's labour mobility objective. However, the APTC webpage on labour mobility does not say how this principle is being implemented. The NZ Prime Minister has noted from her visit to the Pacific Islands Forum, July 2022, that Pacific leaders had raised the issue of skills shortage with her

²⁰ See the APTC [Labour Mobility](#) webpage.

particularly in this period of COVID-19 recovery. Ms Ardern said in response that the Australia and New Zealand Governments 'should be more careful on how they run those schemes, so it doesn't lead to skill loss' (Rabonu 2020).

APTC Stage 3 was designed to move APTC away from its enclave origins as a stand-alone Australian skills trainer to form partnerships with stakeholders in the Pacific through coalition building, as its new name indicated. But the focus of these partnerships has been predominantly on technical training providers in the Pacific but not to any extent with employers in Australia, New Zealand, or the Pacific.

As its webpage indicates, the APTC relies on the Pacific Labour Facility through the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) to identify employer demand in Australia. However, for APTC graduates this restricts their contact with employers only to regional areas and to semi and low-skilled work. This focus excludes at least half of the APTC graduates who have trade-based qualifications that have been topped up to meet Australian competency standards. APTC continues to operate only as training provider. It is failed to act as an intermediary for its eligible trade-based graduates directly with Australian employers outside the PLS' narrow regional and skill focus.

Attachment D: Summary of assessments of demand for low or semi-skilled labour in Australia

The Pacific Labour Facility (PLF), funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers Consulting (Australia) (PwC) in 2020 to identify industries and regions forecast to have high demand for low or semi-skilled labour. Unfortunately, the full discussion paper has not been released. A recommendation of the discussion paper highlights opportunities in the construction and health care and social assistance sectors, especially for personal welfare services and childcare services. However, the discussion paper then notes that the PLF should consider some risks for these industries, which are not mentioned in the report's executive summary, and should manage them accordingly. The discussion paper recommends that the PLF engage with these sectors to confirm whether the occupations in shortage prior to the pandemic are likely to return to be in-demand and what (if any) are the challenges to recruiting for these occupations as the basis for future planning to hire Pacific workers.

Long term period

Industries and sectors as a priority to fulfill labour shortages

- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
 - Outdoor Vegetable Growing
- Mining
 - Black Coal Mining
- Construction
 - Multi-Unit Apartment and Townhouse Construction
 - House Construction
- Healthcare and Social Assistance
 - Personal Welfare Services
 - Child Care Services
 - Aged Care Residential Services
- Other Services
 - Motor Vehicle Body, Paint and Interior Repair
 - Motor Vehicle Engine and Parts Repair and Maintenance

Industries to monitor

- Transport, Postal and Warehousing
- Administrative Support Services
- Accommodation and Food Services

The PLF has published two detailed industry assessments of job demand in Australia, one on aquaculture and related seafood processing, March 2021 and the other on food product manufacturing, May 2021. The size of employment in the aquaculture sector and seafood processing is small (5,300 and 2,100 respectively in May 2019). Employment growth in aquaculture over five years is projected to be stable, but slightly lower at 5,200 full time jobs. Employment in the seafood processing sector is projected to remain the same at 2,100 full time jobs (PLF 2021a, Table 2, p 13).

The assessment of job growth in Australia's food product manufacturing also is not favourable. While the overall Australian economy over the five years to 2025 is expected to create 991,600 new jobs, an increase of 7.6 per cent, with 17 of the 19 industries showing net job gains, manufacturing is one of the sectors that is expected to experience net job losses, due mainly to automation. However, the discussion paper notes that the demand for jobs in meat and meat processing is expected to grow but by only 1.4 per cent, from 57,200 jobs in November 2020 to 58,000 jobs in November 2025 (PLF 2021b, Table 2, p 20). The situation for personal care jobs in aged and disability care is discussed in detail in the relevant section below.

Attachment E: International policy responses to address skill shortages and to manage brain drain

Much has been written about the dangers of brain drain and less so about the benefits of brain gain, but few programs or concepts have been developed to address the issue. One such concept is [Global Skill Partnerships](#) (GSP), initially proposed by Michael Clemens and developed by a team at the Centre for Global Development (CGD) in Washington (Global Skill Partnerships, 2022). Other related concepts are Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMPs), separately promoted by the European Commission and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). SMPs usually include the following five components: (1) formalised state cooperation based on a bilateral agreement, (2) multi-stakeholder

involvement, including employers, (3) skills training, (4) skills recognition, and (5) access to a migration pathway (IOM 2020).

These initiatives are based on a 2018 European Commission guidance to its member countries to enhance legal migration pathways to Europe through partnerships with third countries to lessen the appeal of illegal, uncontrolled migration flows (European Commission, 2018). In April 2022, the EU concluded a new Pact on Migration and Asylum with an action plan. This plan includes simplifying procedures for low and medium skilled workers, labour mobility pilots involving origin and destination countries, and funding to improve how migration processes are managed, and to maximise migration's development impact (European Union, 2022). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) in September 2021 has joined with other UN bodies to promote the Global Skills Partnership on Migration (GSPM) (ILO 2021).

The aim of the original GSP model is to make skilled migration more beneficial to both destination and origin countries as well as to migrants. A GSP is based on an up-front bilateral agreement involving employers and/or governments in a destination country and professional training centres in an origin country. These parties agree on a practical and equitable way for the benefits of migrants' employment in the destination country to finance training at the origin for both migrants and non-migrants. Managing the risk of brain drain is a key objective of the concept as well as contributing to the skills development of the countries of origin. The GSP concept is described further in the box below.

The country of destination agrees to provide technology and finance to train potential migrants with targeted skills in the country of origin, prior to migration, and gives migrants precisely the skills they need to integrate and contribute best upon arrival. The country of origin agrees to provide that training and gets support for the training of non-migrants too – increasing rather than draining human capital.

The defining feature of the Global Skill Partnership is what we call the “dual track” model. Basically, at the start, or during the training, the trainees can pick which track they want to go down: a “home” track for non-migrants, and an “away” track for migrants. Those who choose to stay are plugged back into the local labour market, with increased skills and earning potential. Those who choose to move also have increased skills and earning potential, and the ability to migrate legally and safely. They could also be provided with additional training in soft skills, for example in different languages or other facets of integration.

Source: [A Global Skill Partnership is a bilateral labour migration agreement between equal partners.](#)

The CGD nominates three examples of Global Skill Partnerships: between Belgium and Morocco in ICT, between Germany and Kosovo in construction, and between Australia and the Pacific Islands in various vocational skills. The aim of the Belgium Morocco pilot program between March 2019 and April 2021, with €1.5 million funding, was to train Moroccan citizens in ICT skills in both ‘home’ and ‘away’ tracks as proposed by the CGD (CGD 2021a). Of 9,677 program applicants, 120 were selected. The seven-month intensive training course included not only ICT modules, but also soft skills, English classes, and information on work and life in Belgium. Trainees were connected with companies in both Morocco and Belgium. More than half were employed in Morocco through work contracts, self-employment, or pre-recruitment internships. Others

continued with more specialised training or were seeking employment in Belgium or Morocco (CGD, 2021a).

The key lessons from the pilot, as noted on the CGD website, were that coordinating operational and strategic outcomes was difficult, and that managing the partnership network was extremely time-consuming and labour-intensive. The assessment of the pilot also noted that while the flexibility of the GSP model is its biggest strength, it is difficult to translate into practice. In terms of employment outcomes, despite evidence of skill shortages, placing trainees in work was difficult due to language issues, the ICT training not appropriate for the available jobs, and the difficulties created by global pandemic. However, despite these difficulties, the EU has funded follow-on pilot programs with a larger network of countries including Germany, Egypt, and Tunisia and a broader range of skills training related to hospitality and tourism sectors as well as ICT.

The second example of a GSP model in practice is the German government's program Youth, Employment and Skills in Kosovo (CGD 2021b). The program was originally based on a three-year certificate training course for construction workers at a private training school on Kosovo. It was expected that half the trainees would find work in Kosovo after receiving a two-year "expert certificate," and the other half would complete their training in Germany as part of an apprenticeship. However, the gap between Kosovar and German qualification standards was too wide to bridge during the project period (2017-2021). German employers were not prepared to lower their training standards. Also, the demand for skilled workers in the construction industry in Kosovo was lacking as the industry hired mainly unskilled workers who would learn on-the-job. Visa requirements meant that Kosovar trainees had to meet a minimum earning level, which German employers were unwilling to pay. Language differences were not addressed in the training provided. As with the Belgium ICT pilot, entire process of managing these difficulties was very time-consuming.²¹

The assessment by the European Migration Network and OECD published in February 2022 reports on the experiences of implementing over 20 Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMPs) and similar schemes in the EU and globally (European Migration Network, 2022, pp 8-10). The joint EU and OECD assessment criticises the pilots for being small-scale, fragmented, and generally costly. This is attributed to the laboriously negotiated design and implementation which is seen as difficult to scale up. The assessment identifies the need for the pilots to have two key elements: the use or development of appropriate legal migration channels and the ability to meet employer needs. Also important for the success of a pilot are the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials and sustainable sources of funding.

The third example of a GSP offered by CGD is the Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) which was previously known as the Australia Pacific Technical College (CGD, 2021c). Unlike the low-cost pilot programs outlined above, the APTC has been a well-funded Australian aid program, operating for fifteen years to the present. The case study

²¹ The CGD analysis of the lessons learned from the German Kosovo program noted that 'It takes time to build trust, set expectations, and ensure that all members of the partnership are on the same page. Additionally, the legal and regulatory process can move slowly. A staff member on the program noted that 'in a way, we need 10-15 years of lead time to set up all the preconditions before a migration channel is effectively operational'.

of APTC prepared by an independent expert is quite limited in its understanding of how APTC has operated and incorrect in a few important respects.²² The APTC was set up from its beginning with the key objective of providing ‘top-up’ training (over 22 weeks) for workers with trade-based qualifications to enable them to meet the requirements of Australia’s skills migration pathways. A major objective of the APTC has been to enable recognition of foreign credentials by setting up an expensive system to upgrade workers skills to the standard of the destination country. However, the APTC has over its life failed to connect its trades-qualified graduates to a skills-based pathway to Australia, with less than three per cent doing so in 2019.

To make better contact with Australian employers, the APTC has recently collaborated with the government funded Pacific Labour Facility (PLF), which has dedicated staff to identify employer demand in Australia. This facility, charged with running the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS), has focused on the demand in regional areas for semi and lower skilled workers in meat processing and agriculture, as noted above. The narrow skills focus of the PLF has meant that jobs for middle skilled, trades qualified workers, have been overlooked, despite vacancies existing in meat processing plants for trades qualified workers. Also, some APTC graduates who are trade qualified workers such as carpenters and mechanics have been employed under the PLS as meat process or agricultural workers.

Attachment F: Employment outcomes for Pacific migrants based on the Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries (DIOC) 2015/16

The database on immigrants in 35 OECD (DIOC) and 100 non-OECD destination countries (DIOC-E), has been compiled for census data from 2000/01 to 2015/16 by the OECD and the World Bank for non-OECD countries. Information on migrants covers country of birth, age and gender, duration of stay, labour market outcomes, educational attainment, and fields of study. Labour market outcomes cover employment status of employed, unemployed and inactive, occupations, sectors of activity, and skill level where available. The DIOC data are available in four separate excel files covering a specific theme: age and nationality, duration of stay, employment status and occupation. It is possible to use simple pivot tables to generate a variety of cross-tabulations to produce valuable profiles of migrants from small countries.

Section 5.2 on migrant destinations reported the 2015/16 using aggregated regional data on country of origin for specific OECD destination countries. However, 2010/11 DIOC provided more detailed data by country of birth, a range of migrant characteristics and specific destination countries. Analysis of these 2010/11 data has made it possible to find

²² In the interests of full disclosure, I acknowledge that I have had an extensive involvement in analysing the performance of the APTC, initially as a public policy consultant and more recently as an academic researcher. I was the labour market and mobility analyst for the 2014 Independent Evaluation of APTC and was responsible for analysing graduate tracer survey results on employment and migration outcomes. I was part of a team of two that developed the Concept Note for the design of APTC Stage 3 and took part as a leading member of the design team for Stage 3, which included the concept of the domestic and migration pathways. I have also with Professor Stephen Howes, analysed the nine years (2011-2019) of APTC graduate tracer survey results, focusing on employment outcomes. Between September 2021 and January 2022, I was a member of a government working group to work out ways to increase Pacific access to Australia’s Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS) Visa. This included a focus on the role of the APTC in connecting its graduates to the TSS pathway. The discussion paper of the working group’s recommendations, written by myself and Stephen Howes, can be found [here](#).

out the proportion of migrants by country of birth employed in Australia and New Zealand, by broad age group, gender, and broad education level (Curtain 2016, pp 11-16).

The following analysis provides valuable for information for potential migrants interested in applying for the places in the open access pathways Australia is about to offer through the Pacific Engagement Visa and New Zealand through the Samoa Quota and Pacific Access Category Residence visas. The analysis shows that the migrant's chances of employment will vary significantly by their education level. This is shown below by using the 2015-16 census data on employment outcomes for the three high-mobility countries of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga for all OECD destination countries combined.

Male migrants from these three countries aged 25-64 years with medium education (completed secondary or a post-secondary, non-tertiary qualification) and high education (degree or higher) levels were most likely to be employed (83 and 87 per cent respectively) (see Table A1, Attachment F). The low education (primary or secondary schooling) group of male migrants in this age group had an employment rate of 70 per cent. For women in the same age group from these three high-mobility countries, the high education group, with 81 per cent employed, fared much better in terms of employment outcomes than the medium and low education groups (65 and 48 per cent respectively). The clear conclusion is that low education migrants, especially women will have greater difficulty finding employment.

This information on differences on employment outcomes by broad age group and education levels is also available for each of the three countries (see Table A5, Attachment F). Fiji has the highest employment rate for men in the prime working age group for the high education group (89 per cent) compared with Samoa (81 per cent) and Tonga (80 per cent). For the men in the medium education group, Fiji's employment rate is also the highest (86 per cent) compared with Samoa (83 per cent) and Tonga (69 per cent). For women in the same age group, the high education group from Fiji fares the best (82 per cent employed), compared with Samoa (74 per cent) and Tonga (78 per cent) (see Table A6, Attachment F). These results show not only that education level affect employment outcomes. They show as well that the quality of the education received by migrants also makes a difference in their chances of finding employment.

Employment outcome is a highly generalised measure of labour market outcomes. The types of occupations migrants are employed in is also another important outcome measure that could influence a prospective migrant's decision to migrate or not. Table A7 shows the broad occupation distribution in OECD countries 2015-16 for Fiji's men and women migrants aged 25-64 years. The largest three occupation groups for Fijian men are technicians and associate professionals (19 per cent), trades qualified workers (16 per cent) and professionals (16 per cent). For Fijian women migrants, jobs in services or sales account for 24 per cent of the jobs held, followed by the professional occupations (22 per cent) and clerical support (17 per cent).

Another measure available in the 2015/16 DIOC is the migrant's education occupation match. In other words, to what extent do qualified migrants have to take jobs requiring a lower education level. The following Table 4 reports the proportion of employed emigrant men and women aged 25 to 64 years from Fiji with tertiary education in occupations matched or not matched to their education level.

A comparison needs to be made with the proportions of Australian resident men and women in the same age group with tertiary education who are overqualified for their occupations. These data show that 23.3 per cent Australian men and 33.5 per cent of Australian women respectively are overqualified for their jobs. Fijian men with tertiary qualifications are more likely to be overqualified by 13 percentage points and Fijian women have a lower disadvantaged difference of 8.4 percentage points.

Table 4: Proportion of employed migrant men and women aged 25 to 64 years from Fiji in OECD countries with tertiary education in occupations matched to their education level, per cent, 2015-16.

Education occupation match	Men	Women
Overqualified for occupation	36.3	41.9
Education level matches occupation	63.7	58.1
Total	100	100
N	12,950	14,214

To obtain this level of detail for Australia and New Zealand separately, data from the Australian 2021 census and New Zealand 2018 census are needed. This data could be made available in four Excel files listing the above variables for all Pacific migrants by country of birth. Some changes to the country of birth variable for Papua New Guinea will need to be made. Those born in PNG of expatriate parents in the colonial and immediate post-colonial era will need to be excluded.

Table A1: Combined employment outcomes of emigrant men aged 25-64 years resident in OECD countries from high-mobility countries of Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, 2015-16, per cent

Education level	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	Unknown	Total	N
Low	69.8	6.7	23.3	0.2	100	25,014
Medium	82.5	4.6	12.7	0.2	100	61,999
High	87.2	3.5	9.2	0.1	100	32,195
Total	81.1	4.7	14.0	0.2	100	119,208

Table A2: Employment outcomes of Australian resident men aged 25-64 years, 2016 Census, per cent

Education level	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	Unknown	Total	N
Low	64.2	6.7	28.5	0.6	100	607,207
Medium	83.6	4.4	11.7	0.3	100	1,825,223
High	88.8	2.9	8.1	0.1	100	1,205,181
Total	82.1	4.3	13.3	0.3	100	3,637,611

Table A3: Combined employment outcomes of emigrant women aged 25-64 years resident in OECD countries from high-mobility countries of Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, 2015-16, per cent

Education level	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	Unknown	Total	N
Low	48.2	5.1	46.5	0.2	100	24,904
Medium	65.2	5.7	28.9	0.2	100	61,572
High	80.8	3.9	15.3	0.1	100	39,710
Total	66.8	5.0	28.1	0.2	100	126,186

Table A4: Employment outcomes of Australian resident women aged 25-64 years, 2016 Census, per cent

Education level	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	Unknown	Total	N
Low	51.9	4.4	43.2	0.5	100	662,393
Medium	71.1	4.1	24.4	0.3	100	1,337,045
High	83.2	2.4	14.3	0.1	100	1,705,890
Total	73.3	3.4	23.1	0.2	100	3,705,328

Table A5: Employment outcomes of emigrant men aged 25-64 years resident in OECD countries from high-mobility countries of Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, 2015-16, per cent

Education level	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	Unknown	Total	N
Fiji						
Low	70.3	3.2	26.3	0.2	100.0	9,255
Medium	86.2	4.2	9.4	0.2	100.0	35,532
High	89.0	3.6	7.3	0.1	100.0	25,117
Samoa						
Low	73.2	6.7	19.9	0.3	100.0	9,479
Medium	83.3	4.7	11.6	0.4	100.0	15,812
High	81.4	3.0	15.4	0.3	100.0	4,276
Tonga						
Low	63.9	12.0	23.9	0.2	100.0	6,280
Medium	68.7	5.7	25.4	0.3	100.0	10,655
High	80.0	3.1	16.7	0.1	100.0	2,802

Table A6: Employment outcomes of emigrant women aged 25-64 years resident in OECD countries from high-mobility countries of Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, 2015-16, per cent

Education level	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	Unknown	Total	N
Fiji						
Low	51.6	1.6	46.6	0.3	100.0	10,694
Medium	72.4	4.8	22.6	0.2	100.0	35,279
High	82.2	3.4	14.3	0.1	100.0	30,418
Samoa						
Low	46.9	6.5	46.4	0.2	100.0	8,363
Medium	56.0	6.2	37.5	0.3	100.0	16,826
High	74.1	7.0	18.8	0.1	100.0	4,849
Tonga						
Low	44.0	9.4	46.5	0.2	100.0	5,847
Medium	54.9	8.1	36.8	0.2	100.0	9,467
High	78.1	3.8	17.9	0.2	100.0	4,443

Table A7: Broad occupation groups of emigrant men and women from Fiji, aged 25-64 years, employed in OECD countries 2015-16, per cent

Occupations	Men	Women
Armed Forces	0.9	0.7
Managers	11.8	6.8
Professionals	16.2	21.7
Technicians and Associate Professionals	18.8	10.0
Clerical support	4.1	16.5
Service Sales	9.5	23.5
Skilled ag workers	3.1	4.4
Trades	16.3	3.5
Plant and machine operators	13.4	7.8
Elementary occupations	5.8	5.1
Total	100.0	100.0
N	29,783	29,062

Table A8: Proportion of employed emigrant men and women aged 25 to 64 years from Fiji with tertiary education in occupations matched to their education level, 2015-16, per cent.

Education occupation match	Men	Women
Overqualified for occupation	36.3	41.9
Education level matches occupation	63.7	58.1
Total	100	100
N	12,950	14,214

The proportions of Australian resident men and women in the same age group with tertiary education who are overqualified for their occupations are 23.3 and 33.5 per cent respectively.

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