

# Pacific ballot visas: an overview

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# Background

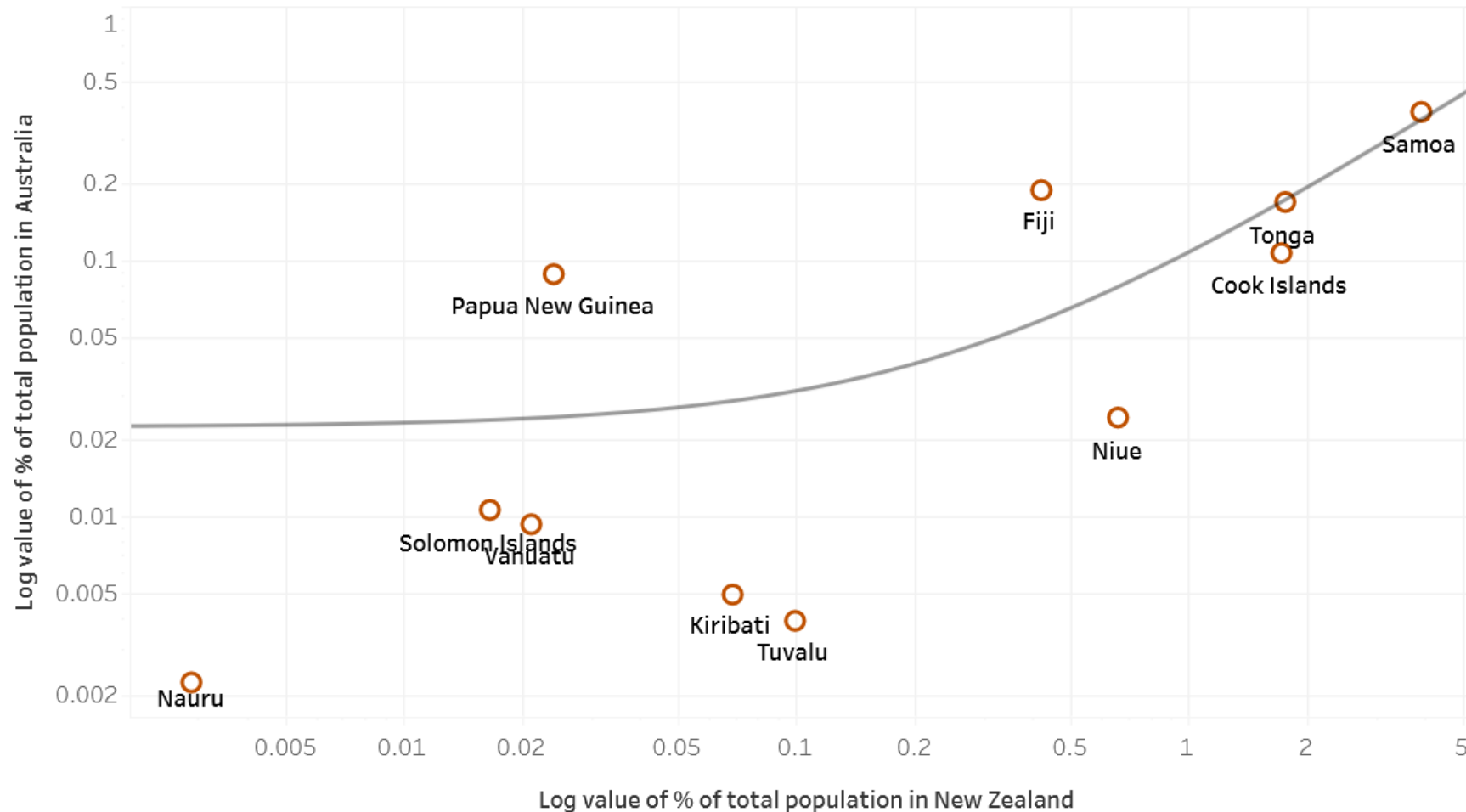
- New Zealand has the PAC (Pacific Access Category) and the SQ (Samoa Quota)
  - SQ was [introduced in 1970](#) (as part of the 1962 Treaty of Friendship)
  - PAC was [introduced in 2002](#) (replacing various temporary work programs)
- Australia now has the PEV (Pacific Engagement Visa) and the Tuvalu Falepili Visa (Tuvalu PEV)
  - PEV Introduced in 2024.
  - Tuvalu Falepili Visa in 2025
- All very similar
  - First round of selection via ballot
  - Second round of selection after 1-year job offer (except for Tuvalu PEV)
  - Both are PR visas

# Ballot v temporary visas

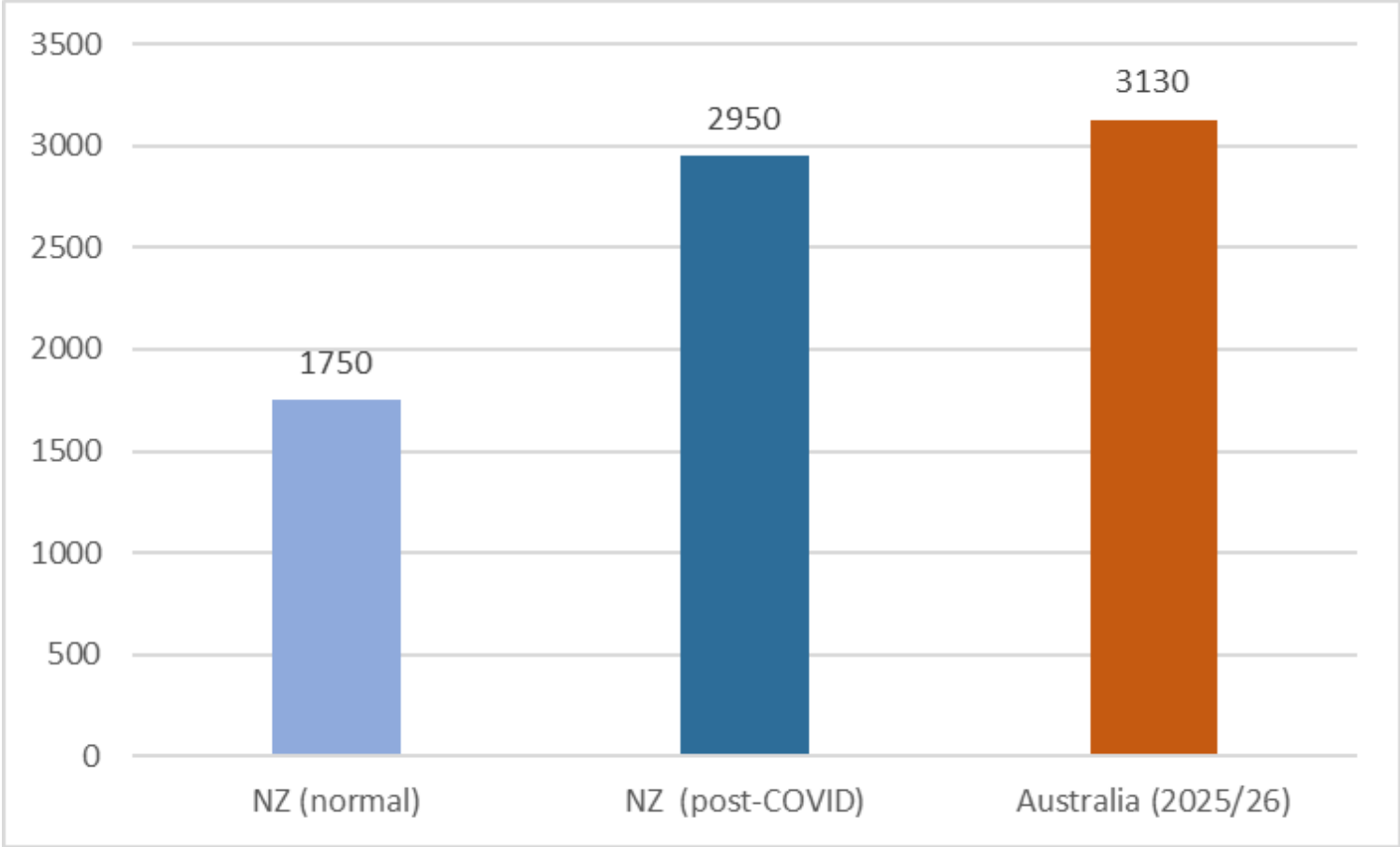
- Temporary visas (RSE and PALM) get all the attention, but ballot visas are better
  - Less prone to exploitation
  - Less controversial
- And more important
  - RSE/PALM combined numbers are below 50,000.
  - PAC/SQ/PEV combined numbers are just below 5,000.
  - Ballot numbers but not temporary visa numbers cumulate. While not all will stay, adult residents will have babies, and migration pathways will become easier.
  - SQ (alone) cumulative numbers are in excess of annual RSE/PALM total

# PEV critical for increasing the Pacific diaspora in Australia, especially for under-represented countries.

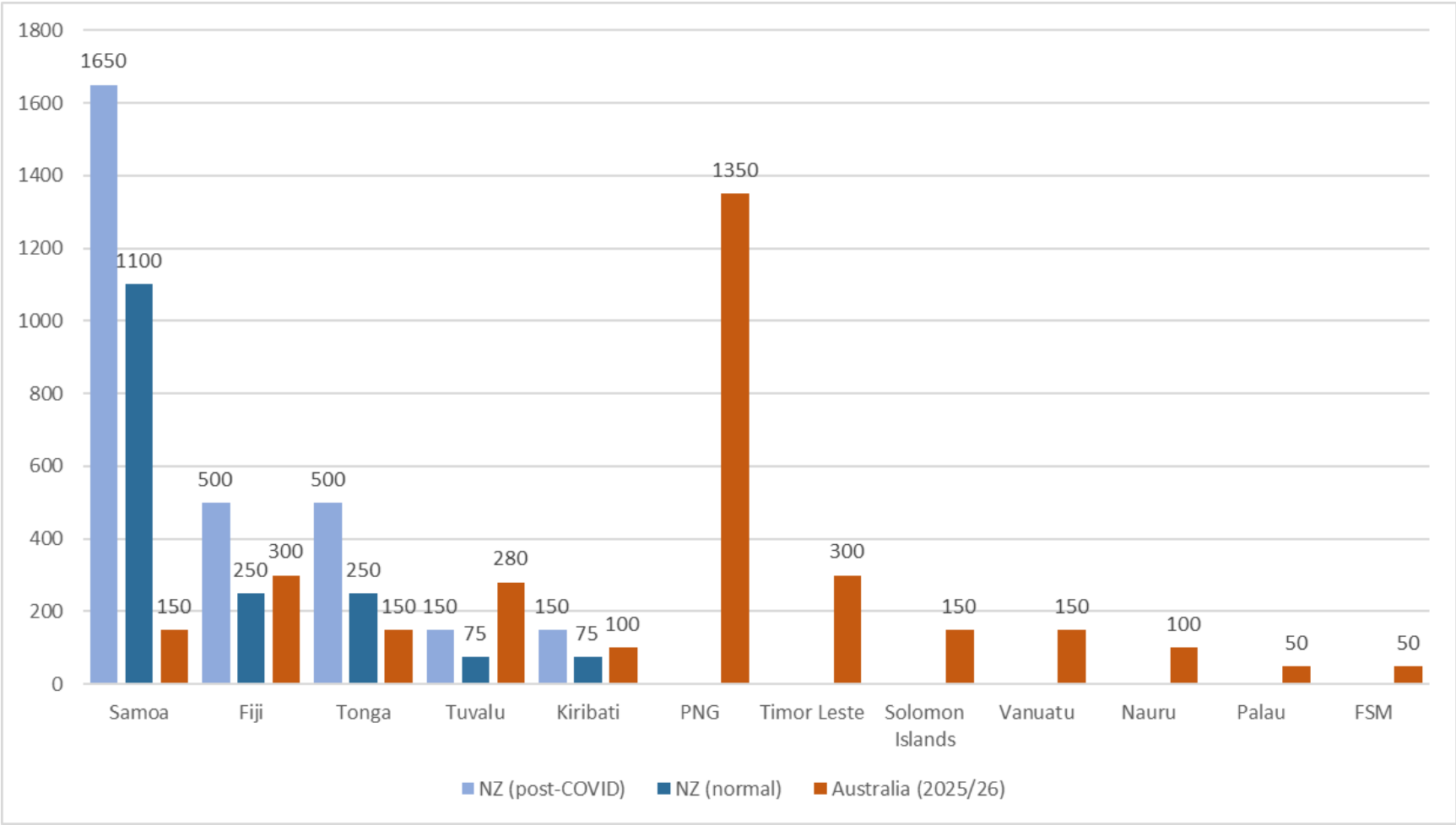
**Figure 3: Country of heritage population shares in New Zealand (2018) and Australia (2021)**



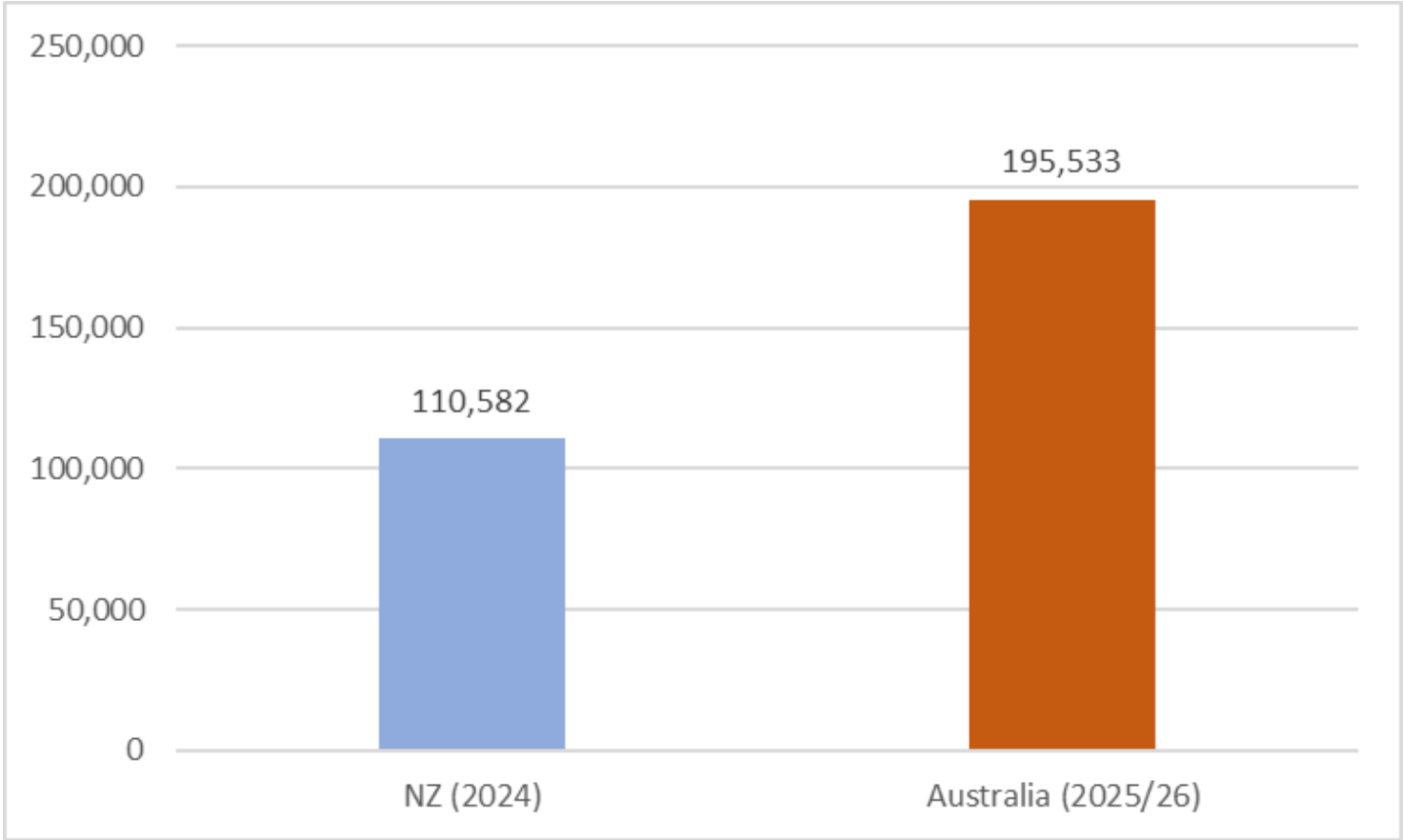
# Total number of ballot visas on offer annually



# Annual allocations of visas by country

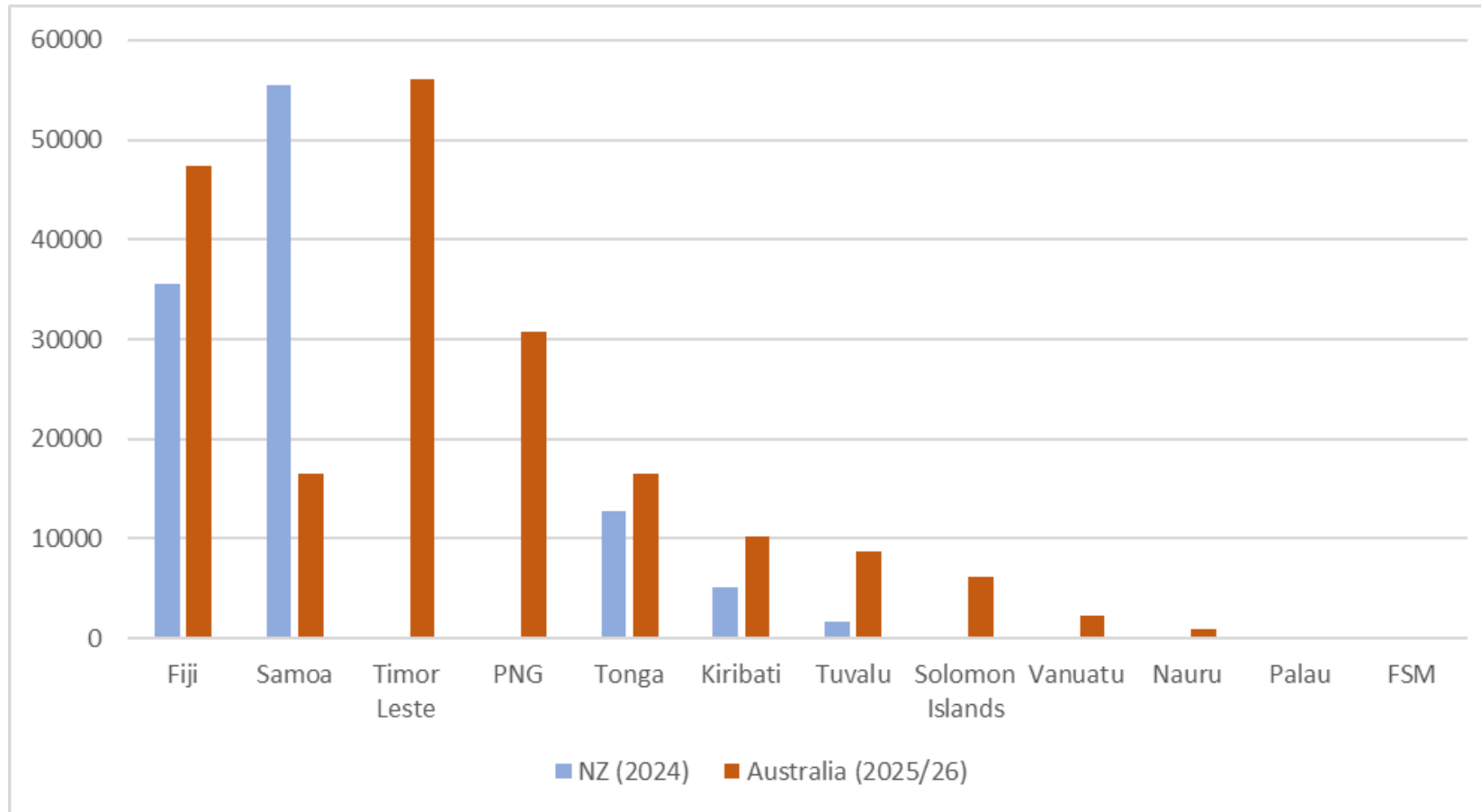


# Total ballot registrations



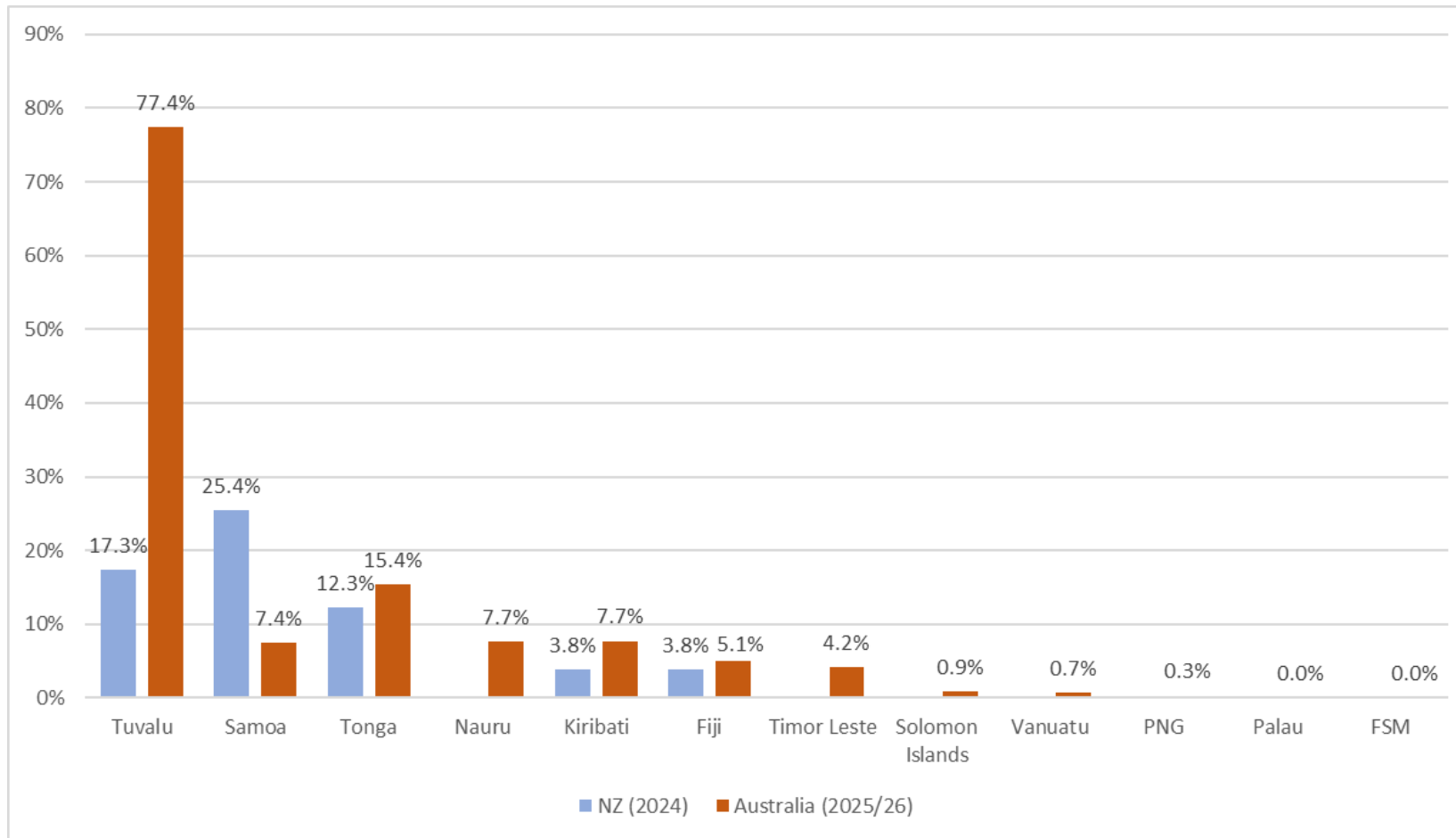
Note: Some double counting

# Registrations by country



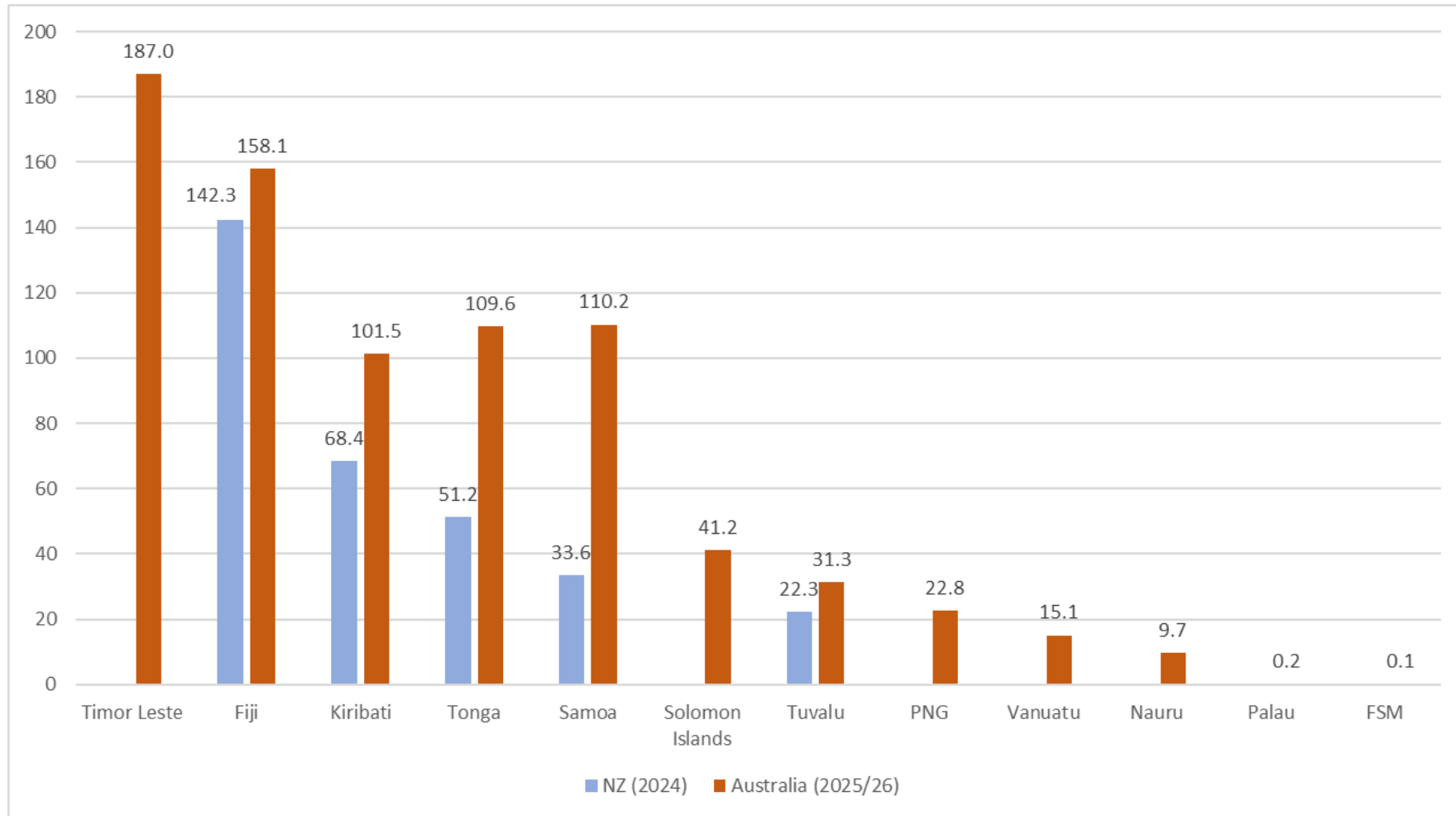
Note: Some double counting;  
sorted by combined applications.

# Registrations by country, as % share of population

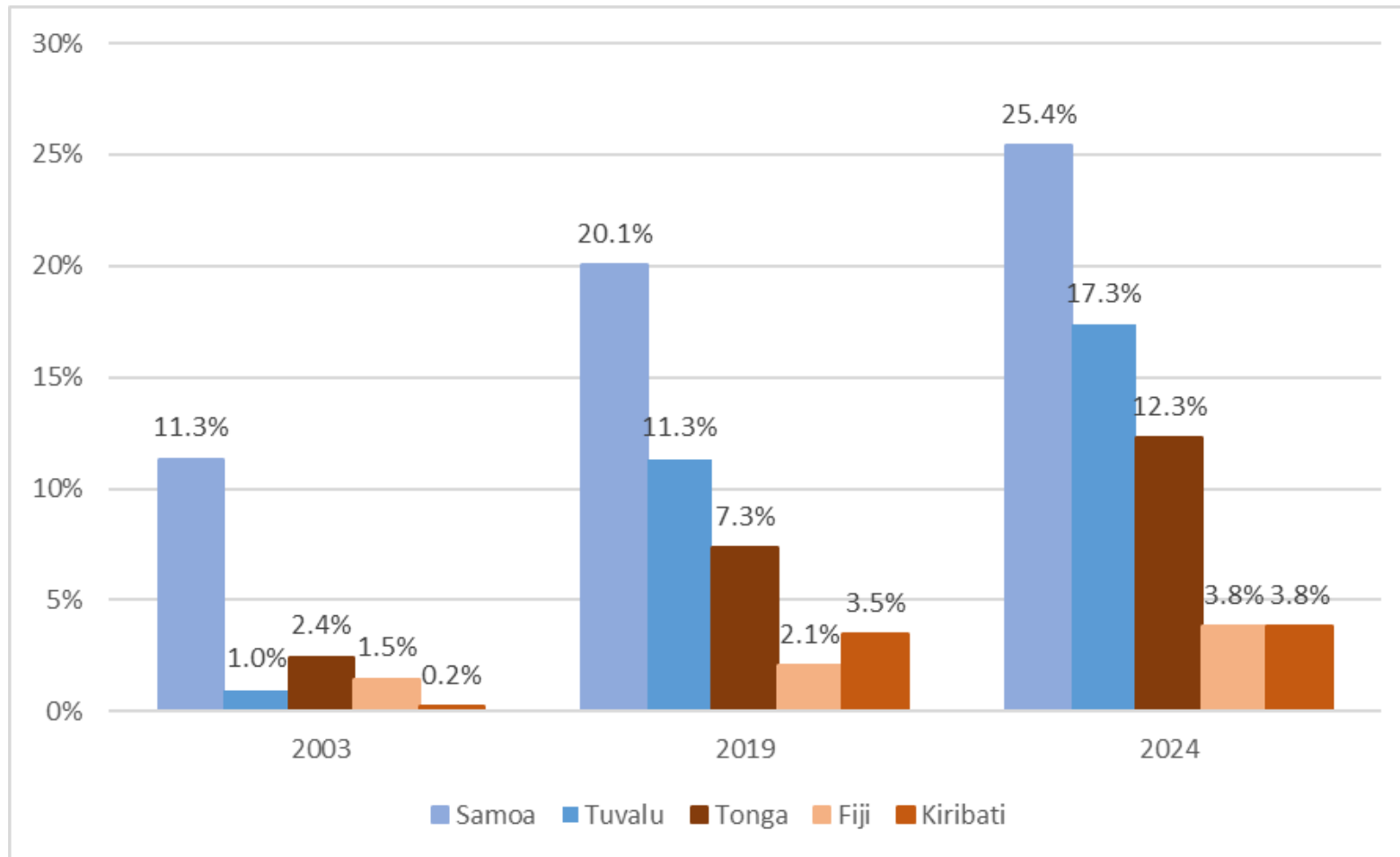


Note: Some double counting

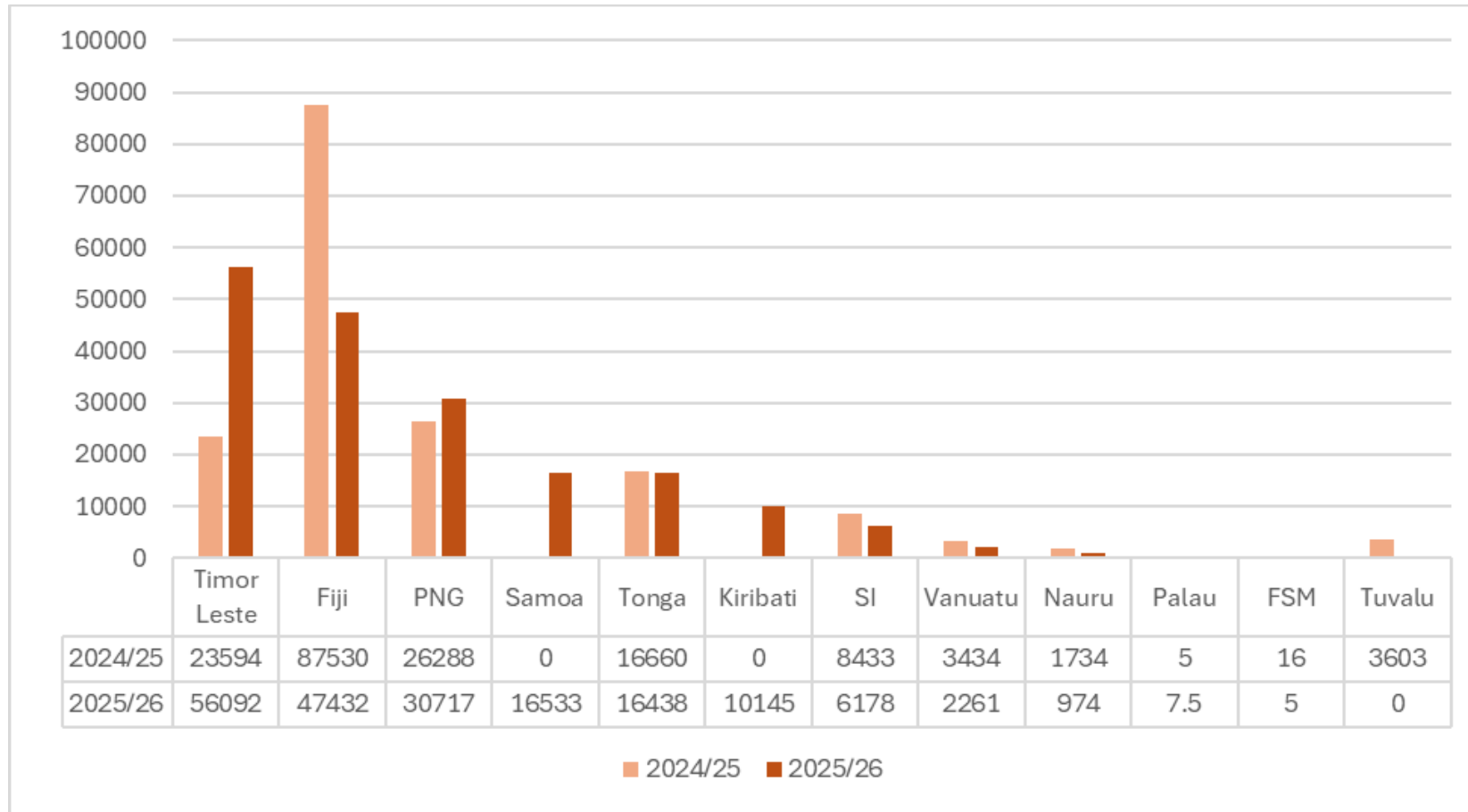
# Registrations per visa allocated, by country



# Growth in demand (registrations as % population): NZ ballot visas



# Growth in demand: Australian ballot visa registrations

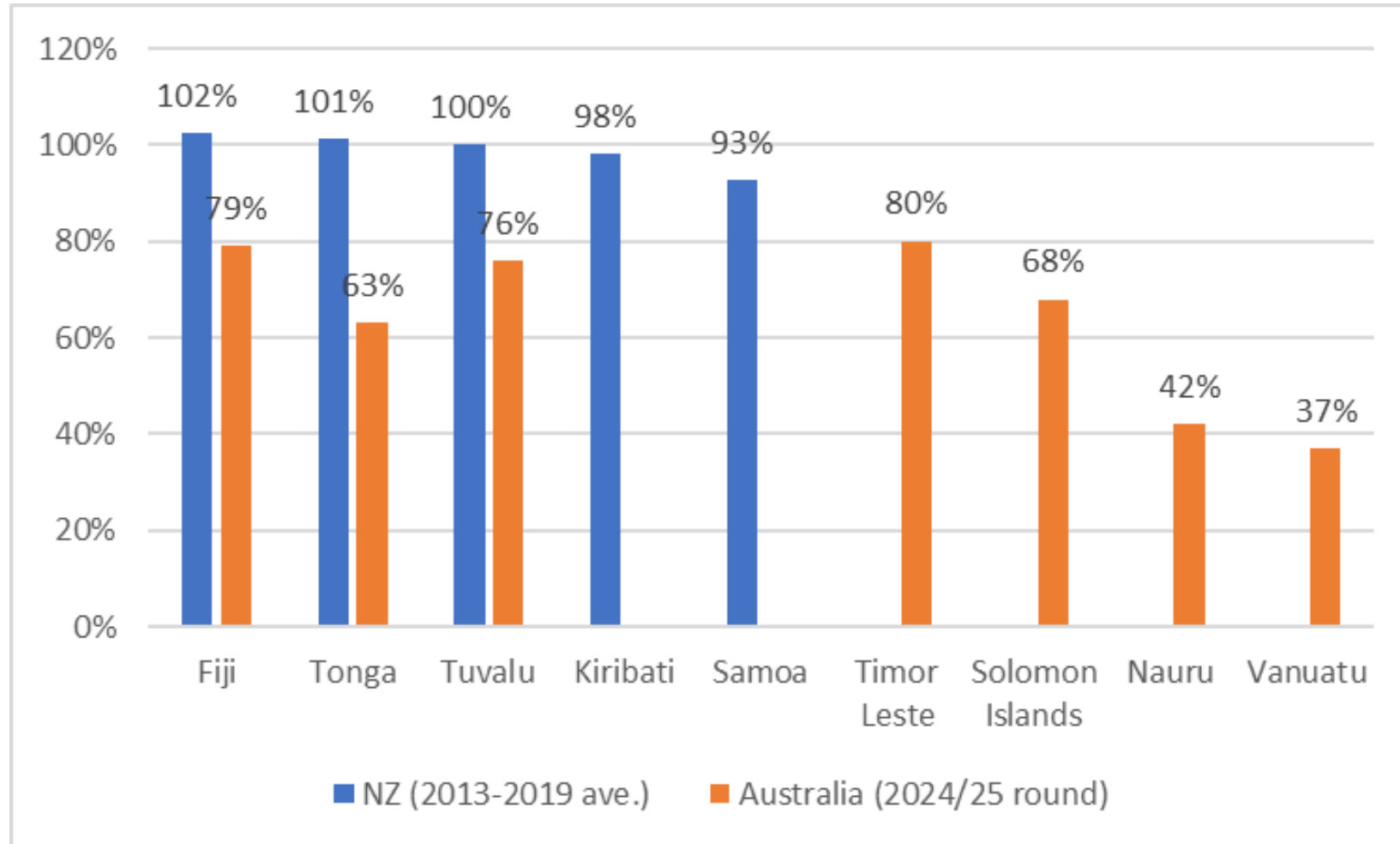


Note: Some double counting; sorted by combined applications. 14% aggregate growth.

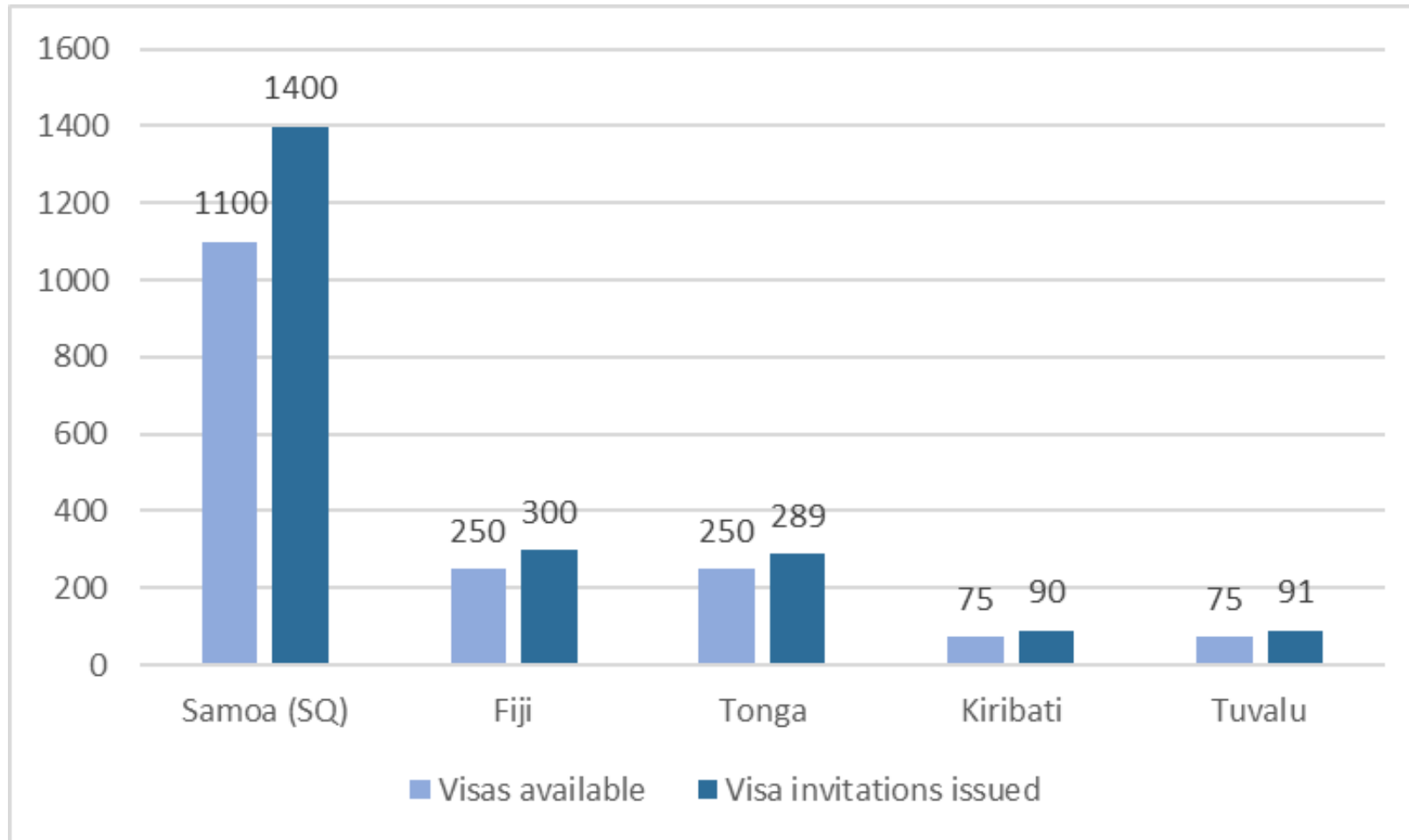
# Success rates: actual visas issued

- For NZ from 2012/13 to 2019/20, the average success rate is 96% (PAC is 101% and SQ 93%).
- For Australia for the 2024/25 round, the success rate is 59% (as of December 2025).
- Why is NZ success rate higher?
  - Australian 2024/25 visa application process still underway
  - PAC/SQ visas better established and known: first time was always going to be the most difficult for PEV
  - Larger diasporas in NZ
  - NZ visas generally going to countries with a tradition of migration.
  - NZ hands out more invitations than visas available.
- We would expect the PEV success rate to grow.

# Country-specific success rates



# NZ ballot visas: available vs issued (2013-19 average)



# Issues to research

- Who applies for a visa, and why?
- Who gets a visa, and how?
- What are the difficulties encountered post-ballot, and how can they be reduced?
- What is the experience of those who migrate under the ballot visas?



## Pacific Engagement Visa 2024-2025 PNG Profile

State of the Pacific  
14 – 16 April 2026  
Australian National University

Caption: Natasha and her family meeting Norah and her family who are one of the first PNG PEV migrant families to move to Australia.



- ✓ Ministers **welcomed Australia's new Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV) initiative** for Pacific island countries and the opening of the inaugural PEV ballot on 3 June 2024.
- ✓ Ministers noted the **importance of expanding opportunities for Papua New Guineans to enter the Australian labour market.**

*30th Papua New Guinea-Australia Ministerial Forum  
Joint communique, June 2024, Port Moresby*

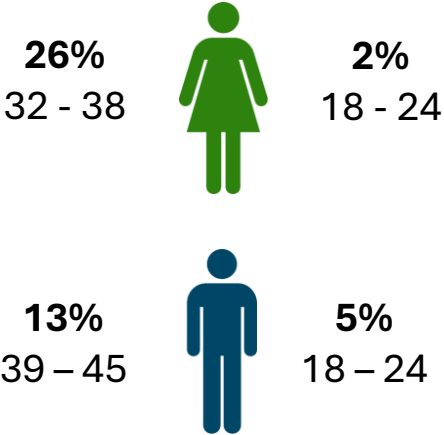


- ✓ Ministers also welcomed PNG's continued participation in the second year of the Pacific Engagement Visa scheme and noted **PNG again received the highest visa allocation** of participating countries.
- ✓ Ministers agreed that officials should **work together to help PNG streamline its processes** and **address systemic barriers** to ensure the **program meets the mobility aspirations** of PNG citizens and **builds the PNG diaspora in Australia.**

*31st Australia-Papua New Guinea Ministerial Forum  
Joint communiqué, October 2025, Canberra*

# Demographics

## Age by gender



## Responses by gender

60%  
Female



## By province of residence

84%  
National Capital District,  
Port Moresby



## Gender by relationship status

### Married

Female: 23%  
Male: 19%



### Single\*

Female: 20%  
Male: 17%

## By province of origin\*



20%: East Sepik province



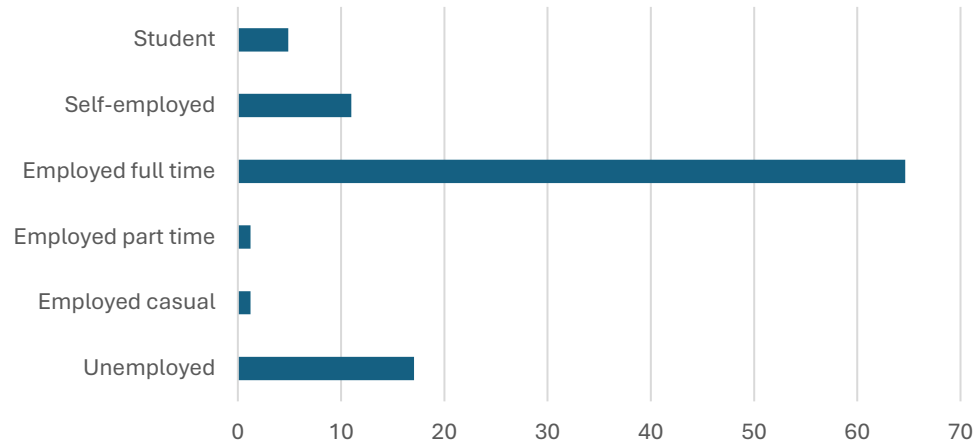
20%: Central province



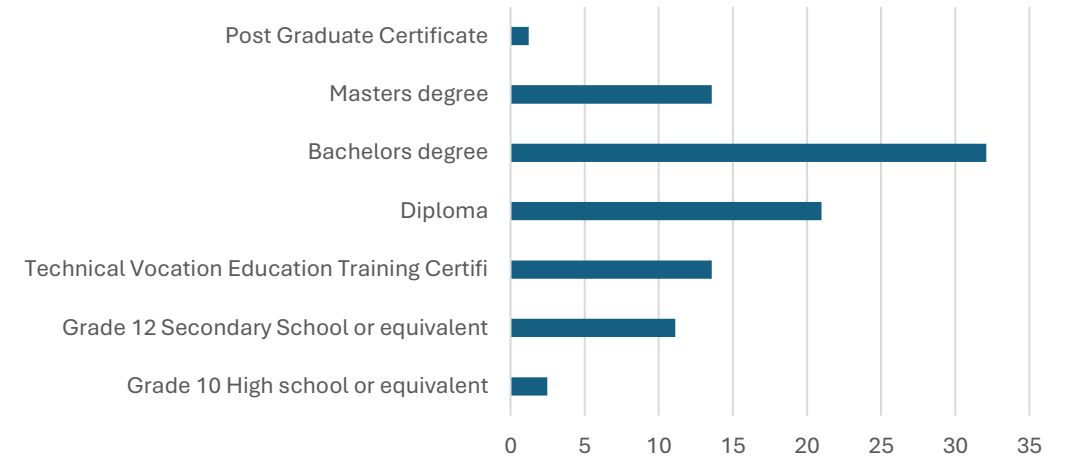
7%: Southern Highlands province

# Employment/Education background

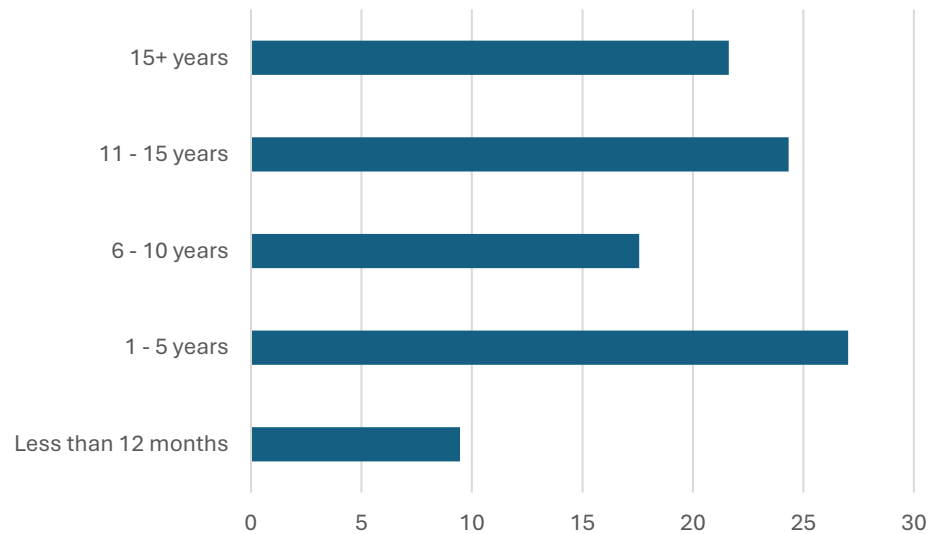
## By employment status pre visa application



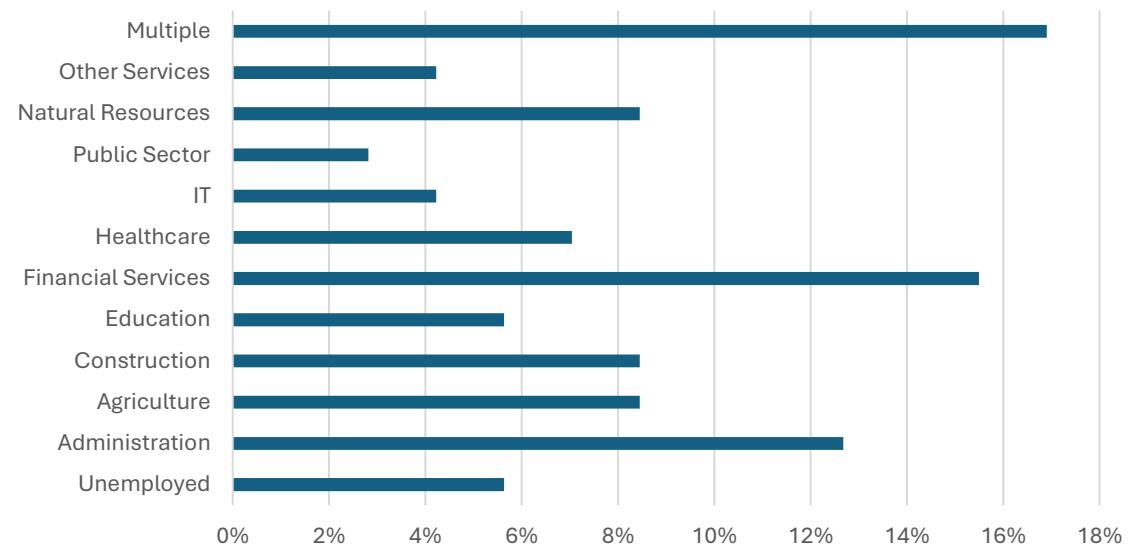
## By level of education %



## By years of work experience



## By employment sector



# Ties or experience with Australia



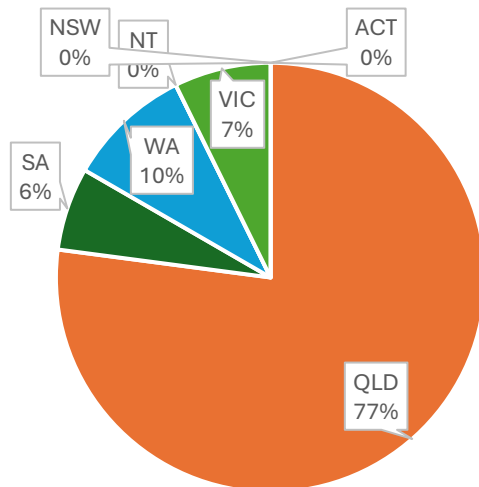
- ✓ 78% have family
- ✓ 71% have travelled

## Motivation for applying for the PEV

Majority of responses:

- ✓ Better education opportunities for the children
- ✓ Better employment opportunities
- ✓ Better standard of living

## Preferred state/territory of residence



## General responses for choosing QLD

- ✓ Closer to PNG
- ✓ Weather is similar to PNG
- ✓ Have family living there already to support them settle in Australia

# PNG PEV cohort

- ✓ **Majority are skilled and have ties to Australia**
- ✓ Majority of PEV winners are women 32+ years of whom have families either with a partner or as single parents
- ✓ Majority of PEV winners reside in the National Capital District who are already working full time. A small percentage are unemployed.
- ✓ Most have completed Year 12 with around 50% having a minimum bachelor's degree.



More constraints on the Australian side

# Employers

- ✓ Gaining skilled PNG citizens for your organisation
- ✓ They are familiar with living in Australia and how to get around
- ✓ QLD based job positions would attract higher PNG work applications where they have established ties to assist with the transition
- ✓ Partner with employers who are open to recruiting PNG citizens or have experience doing business with PNG.
- ✓ **Tap into the Australia/PNG Business Council network to pitch a PEV employer sign up.**



Designated jobs portal

# Policy makers

- ✓ Skills matching will be critical to maintain high job retention.
- ✓ **Physical PEV Support Service office in PNG**
- ✓ It's not an employer sponsored scheme and risks building a negative reputation among employers if PEV winners do not remain in their jobs shortly after commencing.
- ✓ Stronger in-Australia support systems for migrant families particularly single parents.
- ✓ **Set 90% success target for PNG = 1,215 visa grants per ballot round**



PEV Support Service

# What about brain drain?





## The new frontier: permanent migration of Papua New Guineans to Australia

Natasha Turia 

Pages 930-937 | Published online: 03 Dec 2025

 Cite this article  <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2025.2589347>



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### ABSTRACT

A new emigration trend among Papua New Guineans (PNG) has emerged following the introduction of Australia's Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV) in June 2024. Annually, the PEV will welcome up to 1,350 new PNG migrants who are

Link: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10357718.2025.2589347>

- ✓ Population of 10.1 million with an average annual population growth of 2.5% (2024 PNG Census)
- ✓ More than 90,000 young people enter formal education each year (National, 2025)
- ✓ Only around 30,000 of PNG heritage represent the PNG diaspora in Australia (2024 Census)
- ✓ Even after 10 years of participating in the PEV (10,000+ new migrants) it still would not represent even 1% of PNG's total population.
- ✓ Need to think **skills gains plus**
- ✓ What is more important is "...how countries make use of flowing talent rather than where...the exchanges take place" (Mahroum 2021:220).

# Tenkiu tumas

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# THE 2025 Kiribati Pacific engagement visa:

## HOW'S it GOING?

Akka Rimon

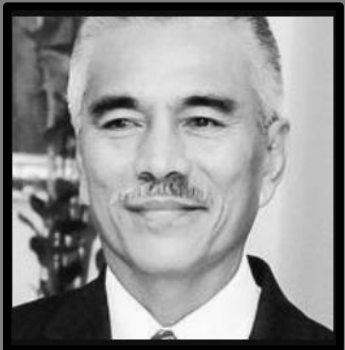
State of the Pacific Conference, 14 April 2026

Australian National University





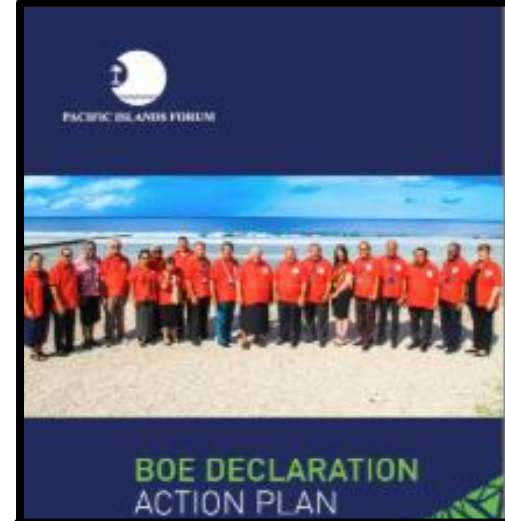
- **Beretitenti Ieremia Tabai**
  - **1979-1991:** “Te Toronibwai, Self Sufficiency and Self-Determination”



- **Beretitenti Anote Tong**
  - **2003-2016:** “Migration with Dignity”



- **Beretitenti Taneti Maamau**
  - **2016- to date:** Kiribati Vision20 “Building Resilience and Leaving no one Behind”



# I-KIRIBATI LABOUR MIGRATION & MOVEMENT BEFORE THE PEV

1

1900s:  
The Banaba &  
Nauru Phosphate  
Industries

4

1970s:  
The Seafaring  
Industry

2

1930s-40s:  
The Phoenix Islands  
Settlement Scheme

3

1950s-60s:  
The Phoenix-  
Solomon  
Relocation

6

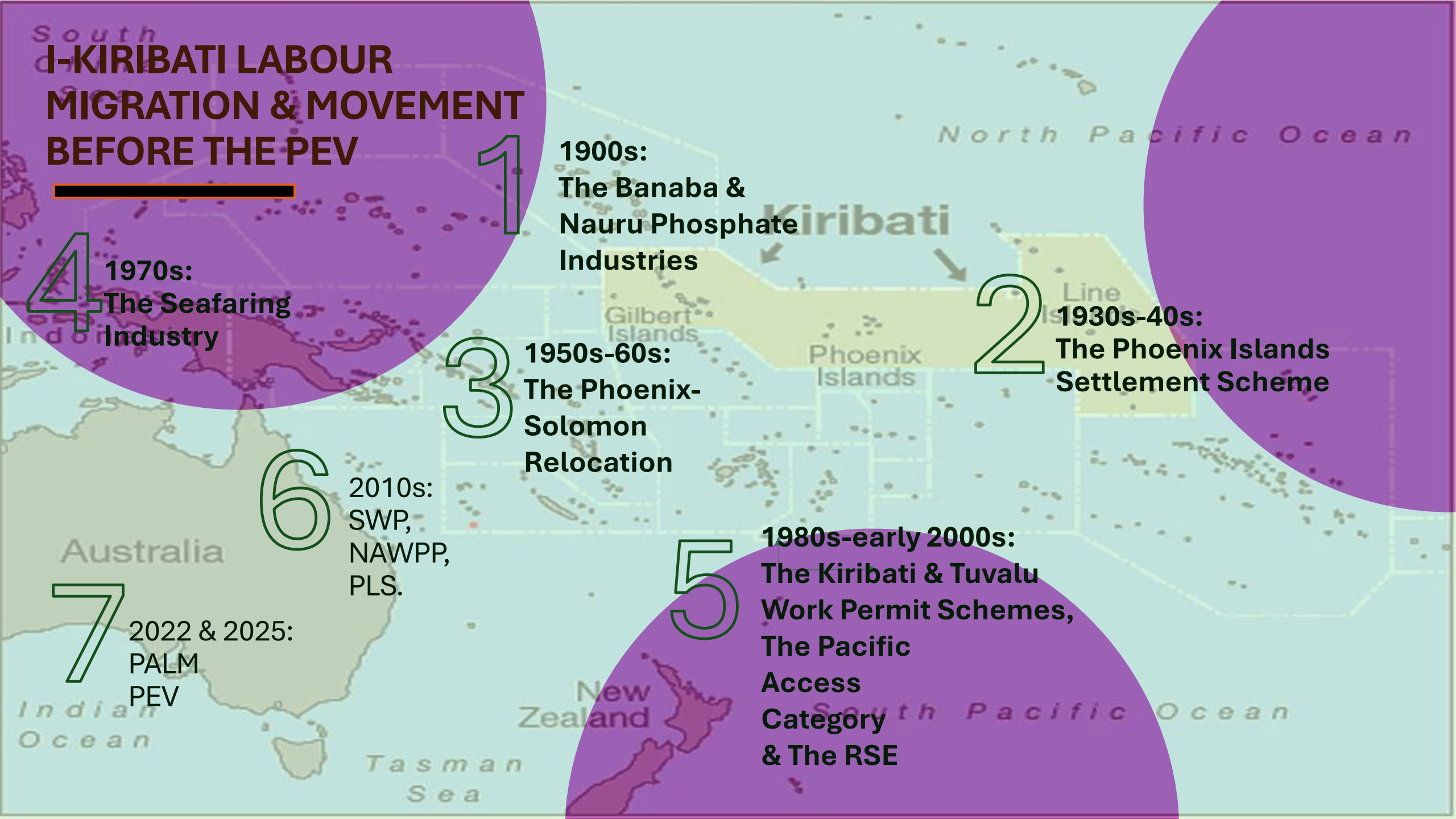
2010s:  
SWP,  
NAWPP,  
PLS.

5

1980s-early 2000s:  
The Kiribati & Tuvalu  
Work Permit Schemes,  
The Pacific  
Access  
Category  
& The RSE

7

2022 & 2025:  
PALM  
PEV



# Progress

## PEV DEMAND VS OUTCOMES



10,000  
Registrants



100 Quota



At least 29  
Ballot  
Winners

# Job Offers and Industries



10

STILL  
AWAITING  
JOB OFFERS



19

SECURED JOB  
OFFERS

- 7 PALM WORKERS
- (visa approved)



Agriculture



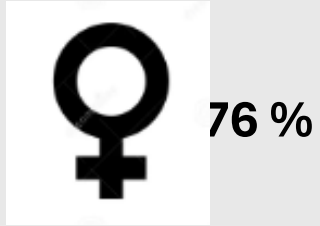
Aged Care



Consulting

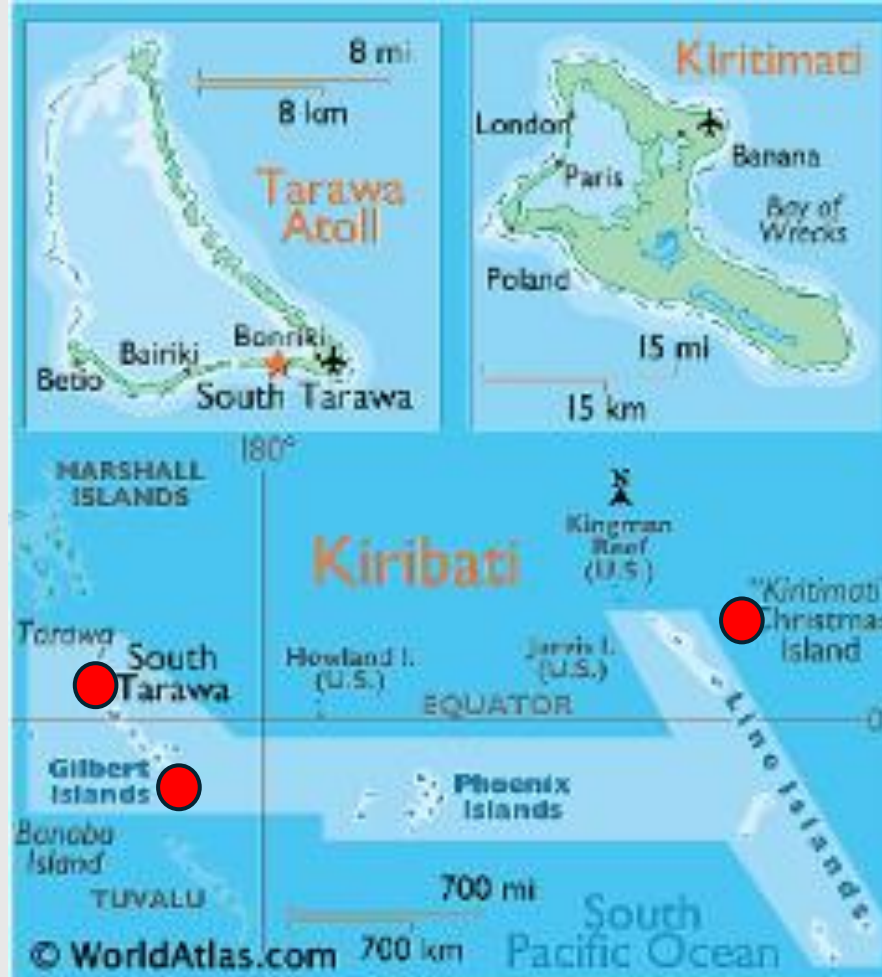
# Demographics (Anecdotal In-country)

## Gender Composition

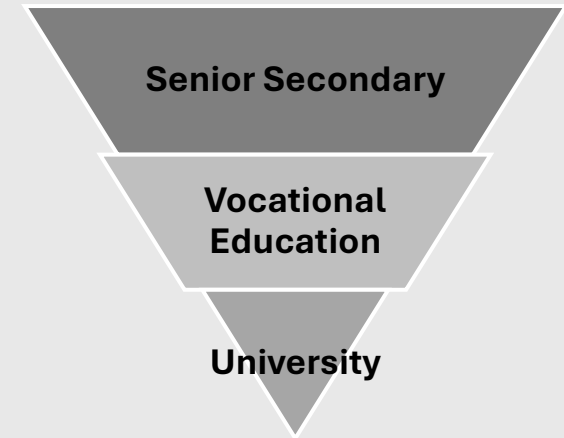


- Majority of applicants: South Tarawa
- Very few from the Outer Islands

## Geographical Composition



## Educational Background\*



# Challenges



- **Digital hurdles**
- **Information gap**
- **Migration costs**

# PEV- As CLIMATE ADAPTATION?

- **”I consider migration as a critical option for climate adaptation because of over population, the rising of sea level and the most critical was land and water pollution.”**
- **“I believed that it [migration] is the best option to move to a new place since we were being affected by climate change.”**
- **"Eang, kamaekakiiia kain kiribati I Australia ke te migration bon teuana te anga ae rang ibuobuoki ao man kona n taobaraea ke n kauarerekea te kanganga are ena riki man bibitakin kanoan boong.”**





# KAM RABWA!

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