

# Government acts to 'help spread the benefits of migration across the country'

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With Auckland house prices surging higher as immigration runs at record levels and some parts of regional New Zealand struggle, the Government has announced a series of immigration rule changes designed to encourage more new arrivals to skip Auckland and head to the regions.

In a speech to the National Party Conference at the SkyCity Convention Centre in Auckland on Sunday, Prime Minister John Key unveiled a package of immigration measures the National Party says are aimed at improving the spread of workers, skills and investment across New Zealand.

New measures kicking in from 1 November include:

Boosting the bonus points for skilled migrants applying for residence with a job offer outside Auckland from 10 to 30 points;

Doubling the points for entrepreneurs planning to set up businesses in the regions under the Entrepreneur Work Visa from 20 to 40 points. And;

Streamlining the labour market test to provide employers with more certainty, earlier in the visa application process.

Additionally from mid-2016 the Government says "a pathway to residence" will be provided for a limited number of long-term migrants on temporary work visas in the South Island. This will be targeted at about 600 workers in low skilled jobs.

Key also said the Government will consider a new global impact visa.

"This would be targeted at young, highly-talented and successful technology entrepreneurs and start-up teams, who want to be based in New Zealand, employ talented Kiwis and reach across the globe. There's been quite a bit of interest in this idea and we're going to look at it carefully over the next few months," said Key.

"Taken together, the changes I've announced today will contribute to a better balance in our immigration settings."

Migrants who gain residency under the new points system will reportedly be required to live in the regions for at least a year, up from the current requirement of three months.

The [latest figures from Statistics New Zealand](#) show population growth from migration hit an all-time high of 58,259 in the year to June with the lion's share settling in Auckland.

In a statement Immigration Minister Michael Woodhouse said thousands of people from all over the world are moving to New Zealand because it is a good place to live, work and raise a family.

"Those people make a significant contribution to New Zealand's economic growth by providing skills, labour and capital we need, along with valuable cultural and business links. New Zealanders will always be first in line for jobs and that won't change," Woodhouse said.

"Currently, many new migrants settle in Auckland, which faces infrastructure challenges as it transforms into a truly international city. At the same time, business owners in other parts of New Zealand often struggle to find enough skilled workers to meet their demands."

"While there are already incentives to encourage migrants to move to areas outside of Auckland, we can do a better job of matching the needs of regions with available migrants and investors," said Woodhouse.

Key said of around 10,000 skilled migrants who get residence each year almost half settle Auckland.

"We want to balance that out a bit, by attracting more people into other parts of the country to help grow local economies. Currently, skilled migrants with a job offer get 10 extra points if that job is outside Auckland, and those points count towards the 100 they require," said Key.

Those arriving on an Entrepreneur Work Visa currently get 20 extra points if they set up a business outside Auckland, which counts towards the 120 they require.

"From 1 November, we will double that to 40 extra points. Immigration New Zealand expects to approve up to 200 people next year under this visa. With the changes we're making, we expect to see most of these entrepreneurs setting up or growing businesses outside Auckland and creating new jobs across the country," said Key.

"The third change I'm announcing will help employers find out faster whether New Zealanders are available to fill a particular vacancy, before they lodge a visa application with Immigration New Zealand. From 1 November, they'll be able to contact Work and Income directly to check availability. This is a small measure, but it's been really appreciated by employers in Queenstown and we're extending it across the country," Key added.

He said the changes would "help spread the benefits of migration across the country," especially to regions "crying out" for workers, skills and investment.

"We need to be more connected with the world, because that's where our opportunities come from. This is just one small part of that approach. We'll also continue to press on with free trade agreements, build stronger investment links, and embrace the openness and connectedness that characterises successful countries in the 21st Century," said Key.