

Measuring New Zealand's external migration: from precisely wrong to approximately correct

Kim Dunstan

Senior Demographer



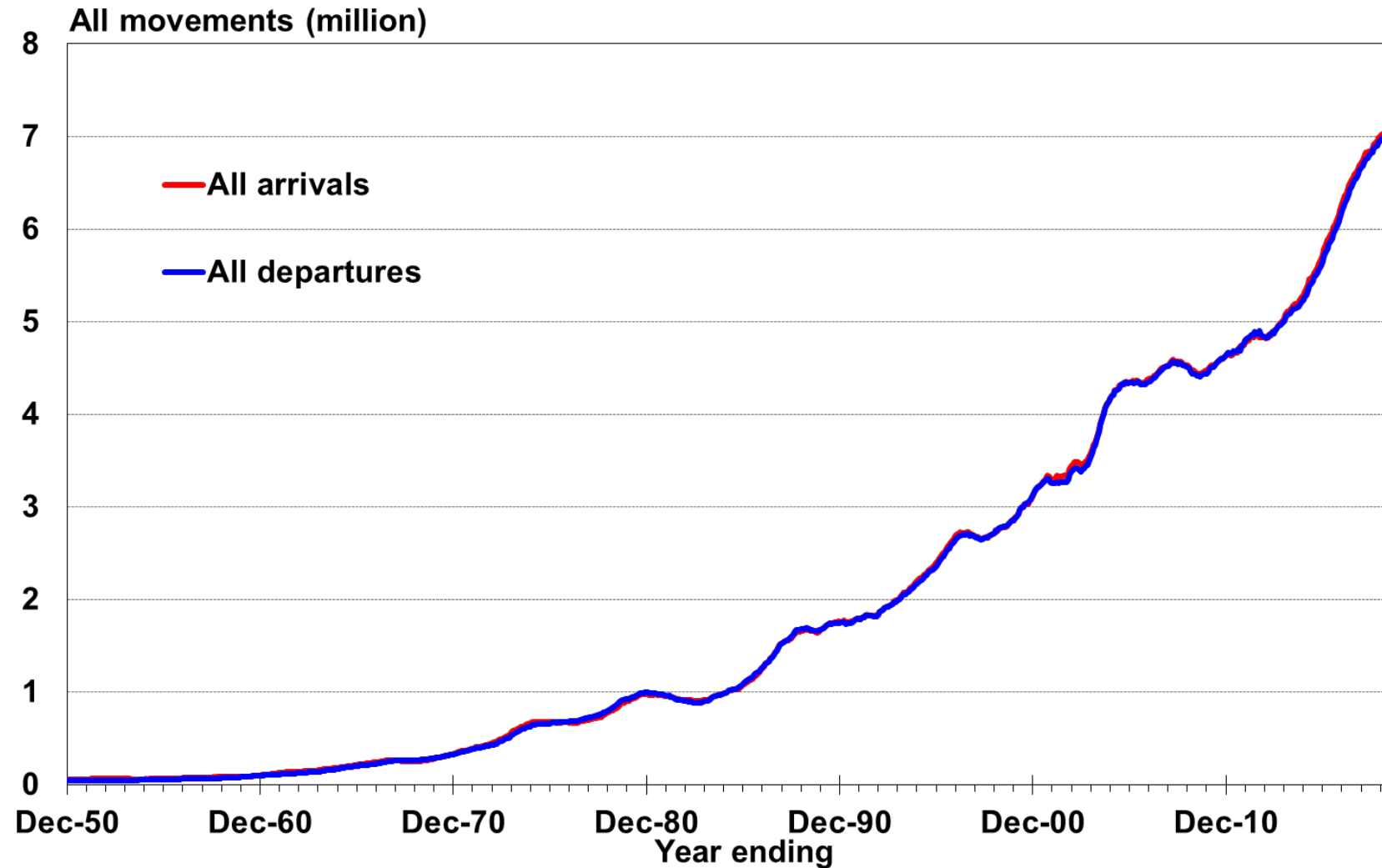
Counting migration across our international border

How hard can it be?

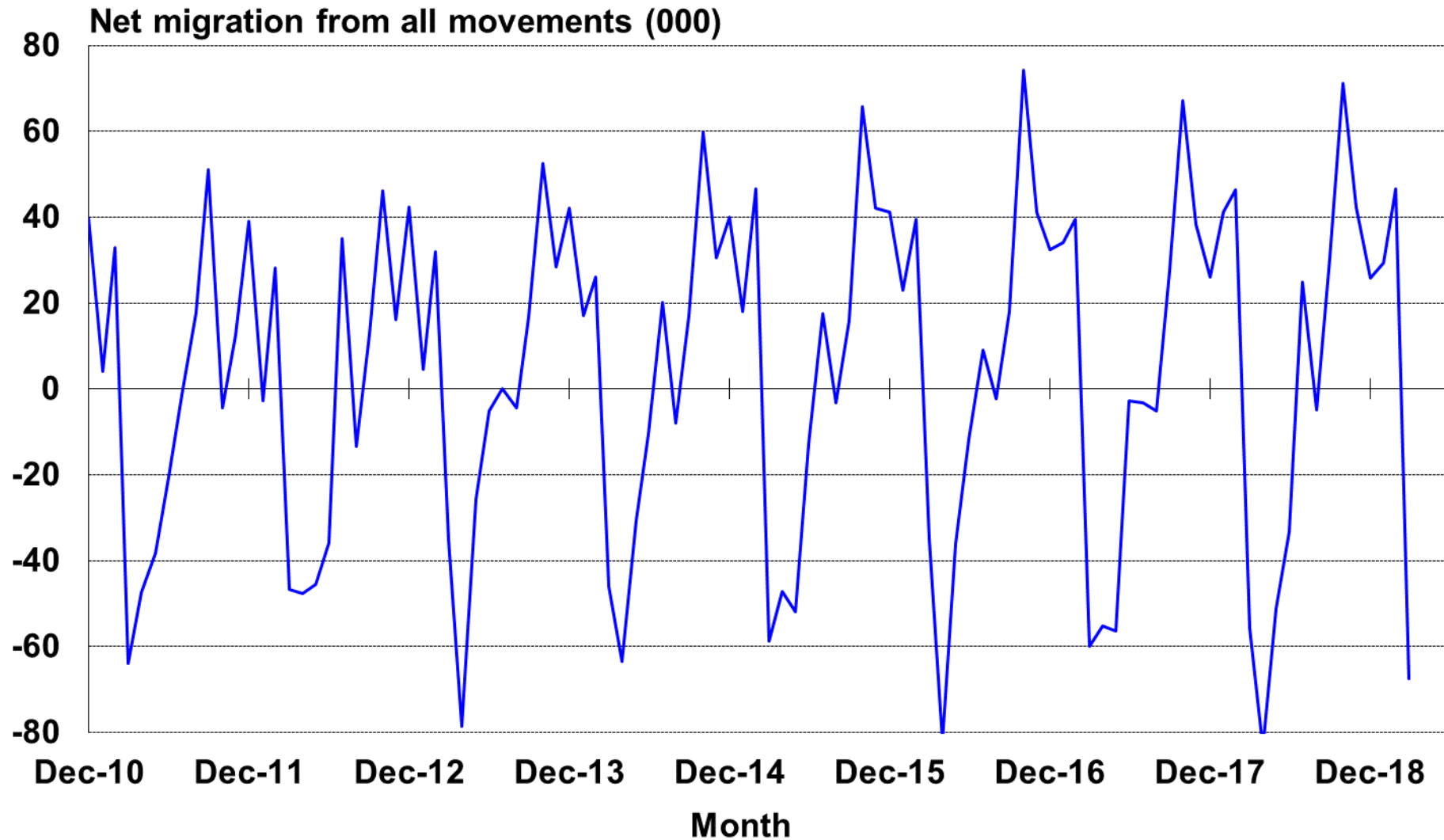


Total border movements

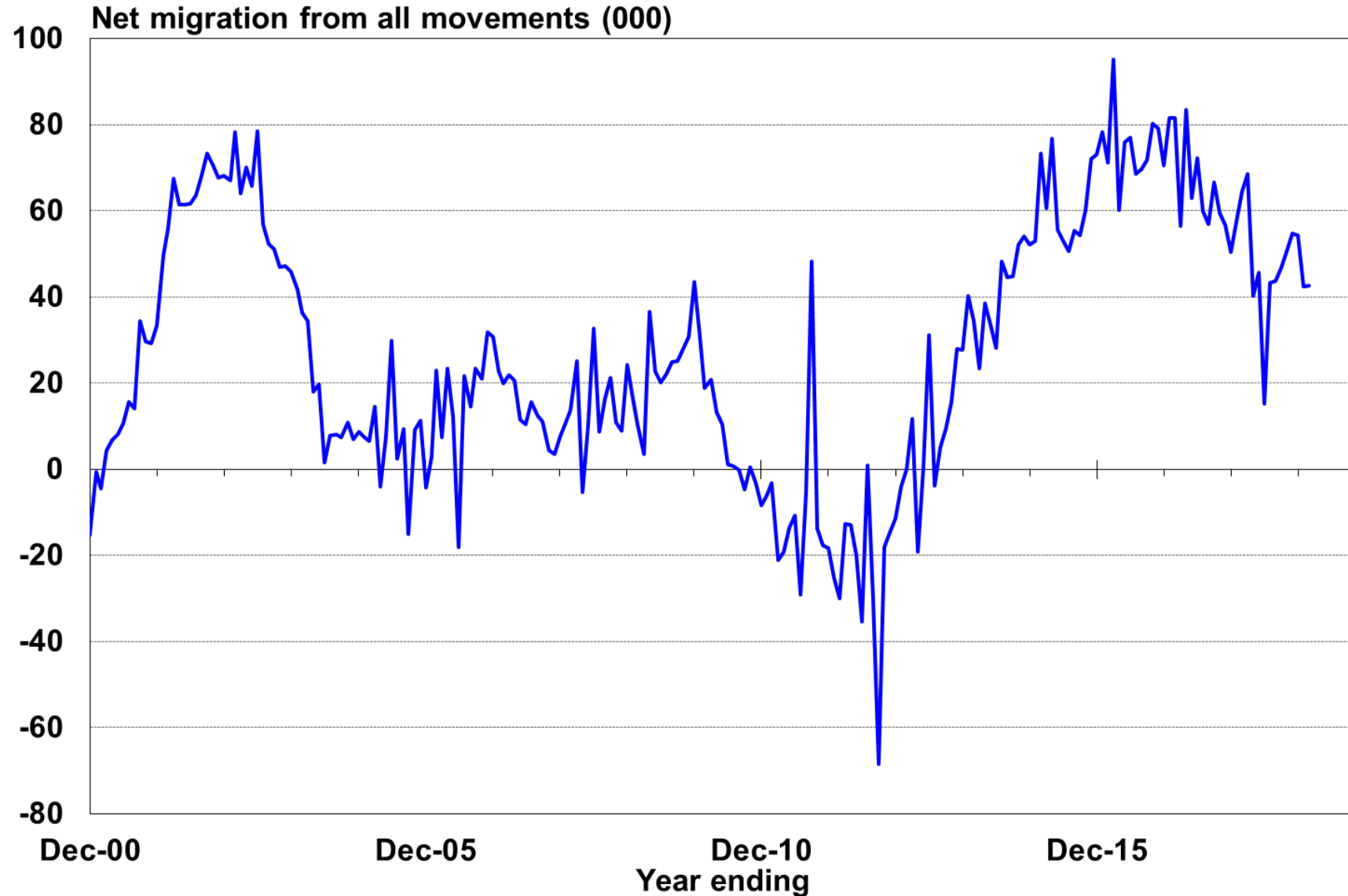
Gross Flows



Monthly net migration from total border movements



Annual net migration from total border movements



Key needs

Overseas visitors – inbound tourism (~55% of total movements)

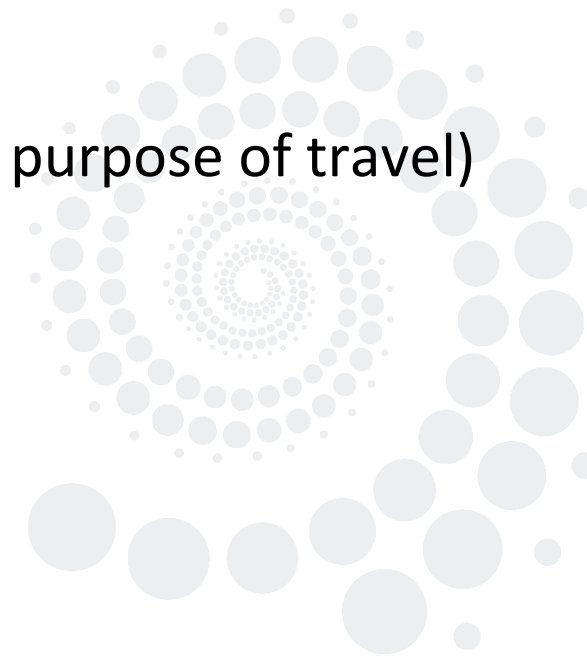
- Overall numbers
- Attributes (eg country of origin, nationality, age-sex, duration of stay, purpose of travel)

NZ-resident travellers – outbound tourism (~43%)

- Overall numbers
- Attributes (eg country of destination, age-sex, duration of absence, purpose of travel)

Migrants – long-term movements (~2%)

- Arrivals, departures, and net gains/losses
- Subnational (NZ area) breakdown
- Attributes (eg age, sex, country of birth/citizenship)



Two key questions for classifying border-crossings

2a Answer this section if you live in New Zealand. Otherwise go to 2b.

How long have you been away from New Zealand? years months days

Which country did you spend most time in while overseas?

What was the MAIN reason for your trip? business education other

Which country will you mostly live in for the next 12 months? New Zealand other


2b Answer this section if you DO NOT live in New Zealand.

How long do you intend to stay in New Zealand? Permanently or years months days
 or

If you are not staying permanently what is your MAIN reason for coming to New Zealand?
 visiting friends/relatives business holiday/vacation
 conference/convention education other

In which country did you last live for 12 months or more?

State, province or prefecture Zip or postal code

Please turn over for more questions and to sign 

7 How long will you be away from New Zealand?
 years months days or permanently

8 Which country will you spend the most time in while overseas?

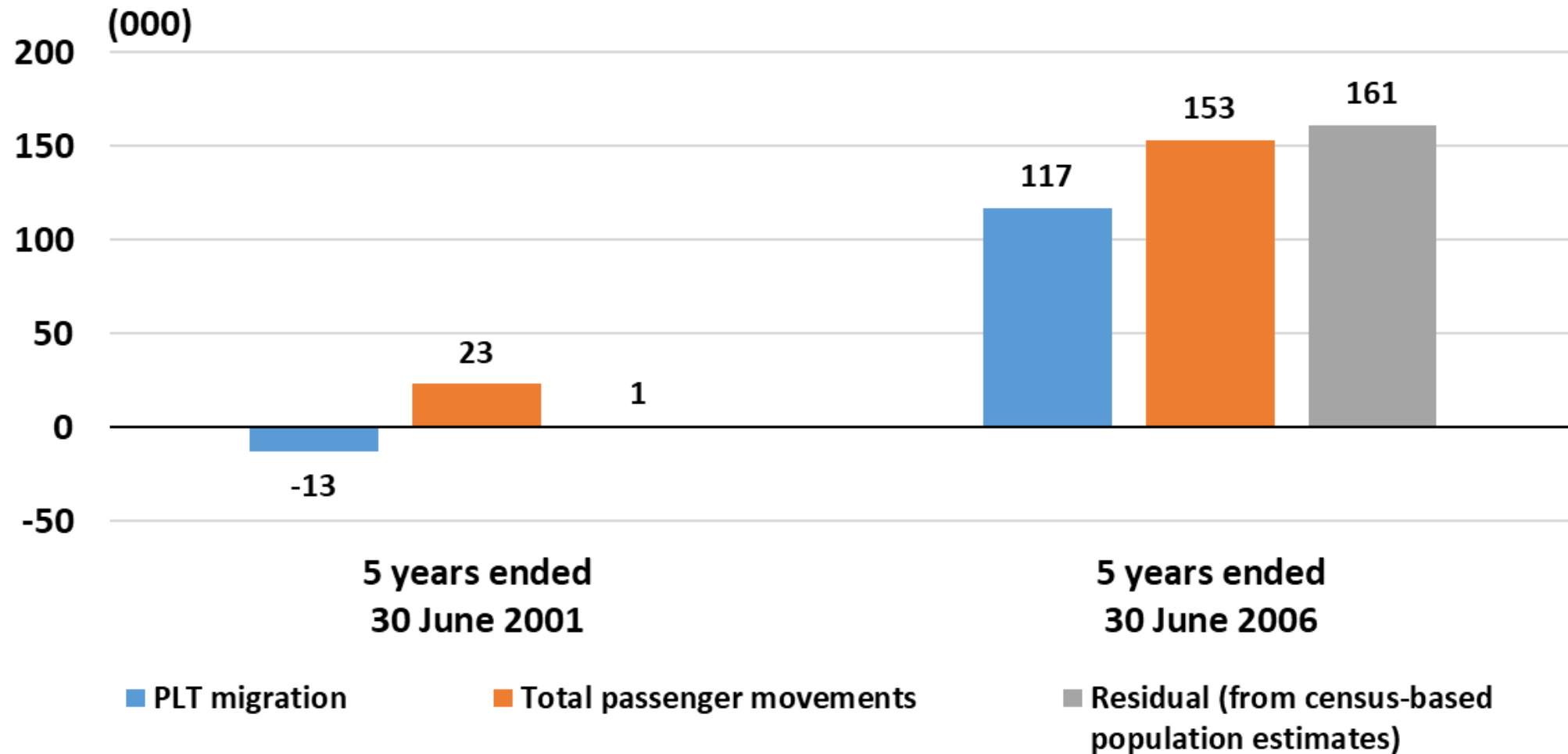
9 What is the main purpose of your trip?
 visiting friends / relatives business
 holiday / vacation conference / convention
 education other

10 What is your occupation?

11 What country were you born in?

12 Please give your residential or contact address in New Zealand.

NZ net migration measures



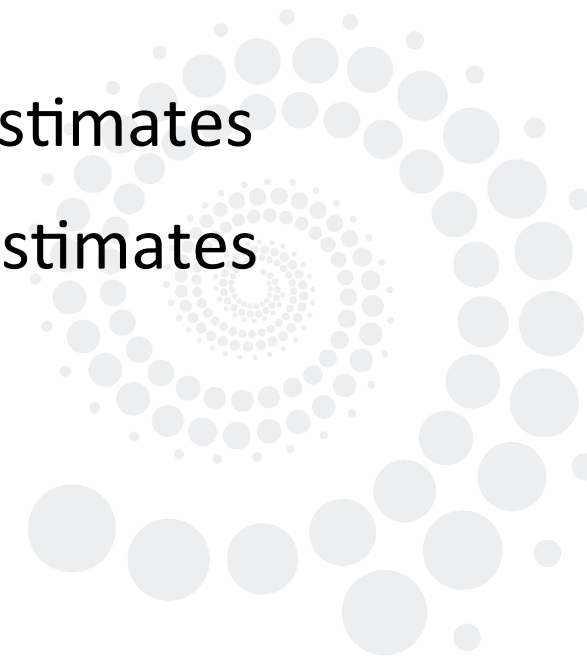
Conditions conducive to outcomes measure

- Awareness of intentions limitations
- Growing volume of border crossings
- Changing nature of migration (temporary visas)
- Linking variables
- IT capacity
- Statistical expertise
- Proposed removal of the departure card

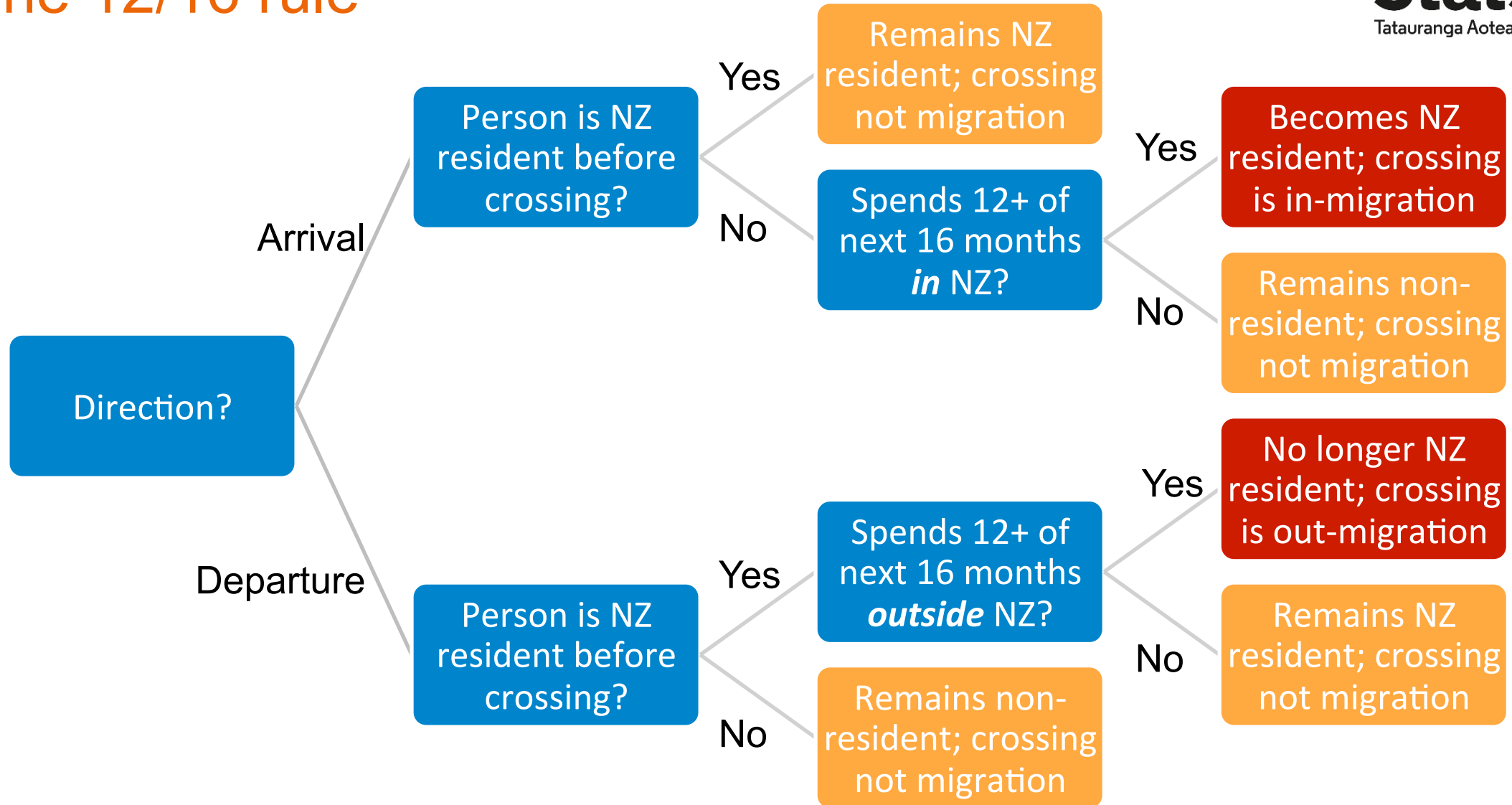


Outcomes-based migration measure

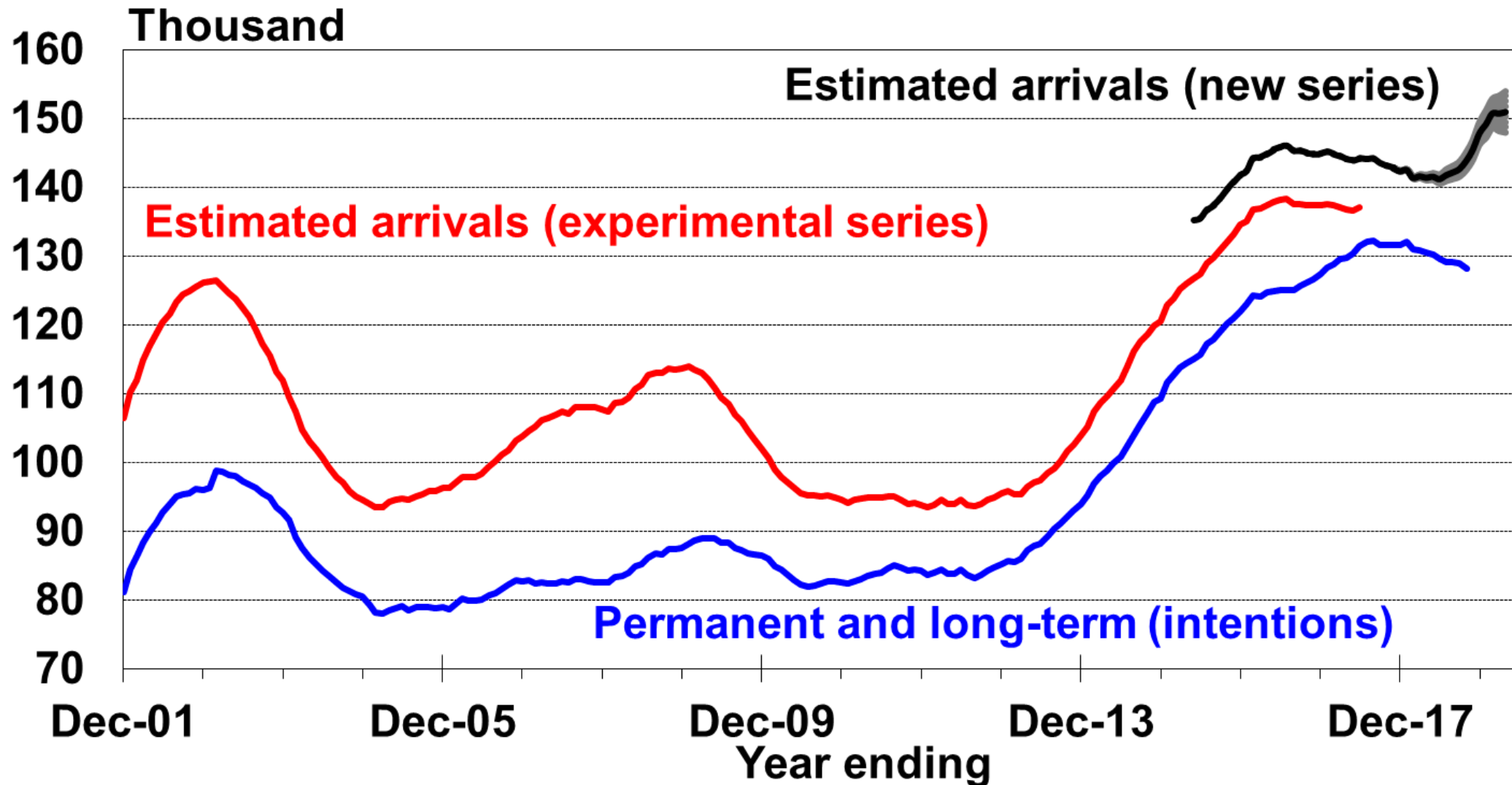
- Using 12/16-month rule, every border crossing classified depending on:
 - Resident status
 - Time spent in NZ over subsequent 16 month period
- Requires linking of arrivals and departures
- Migration estimates first published May 2017
- By definition, takes 17 months to publish **final** migration estimates
- In 2018 we developed a model for **provisional** migration estimates
 - Produces very timely migration estimates, 1-2 months lag
 - But revised monthly until final



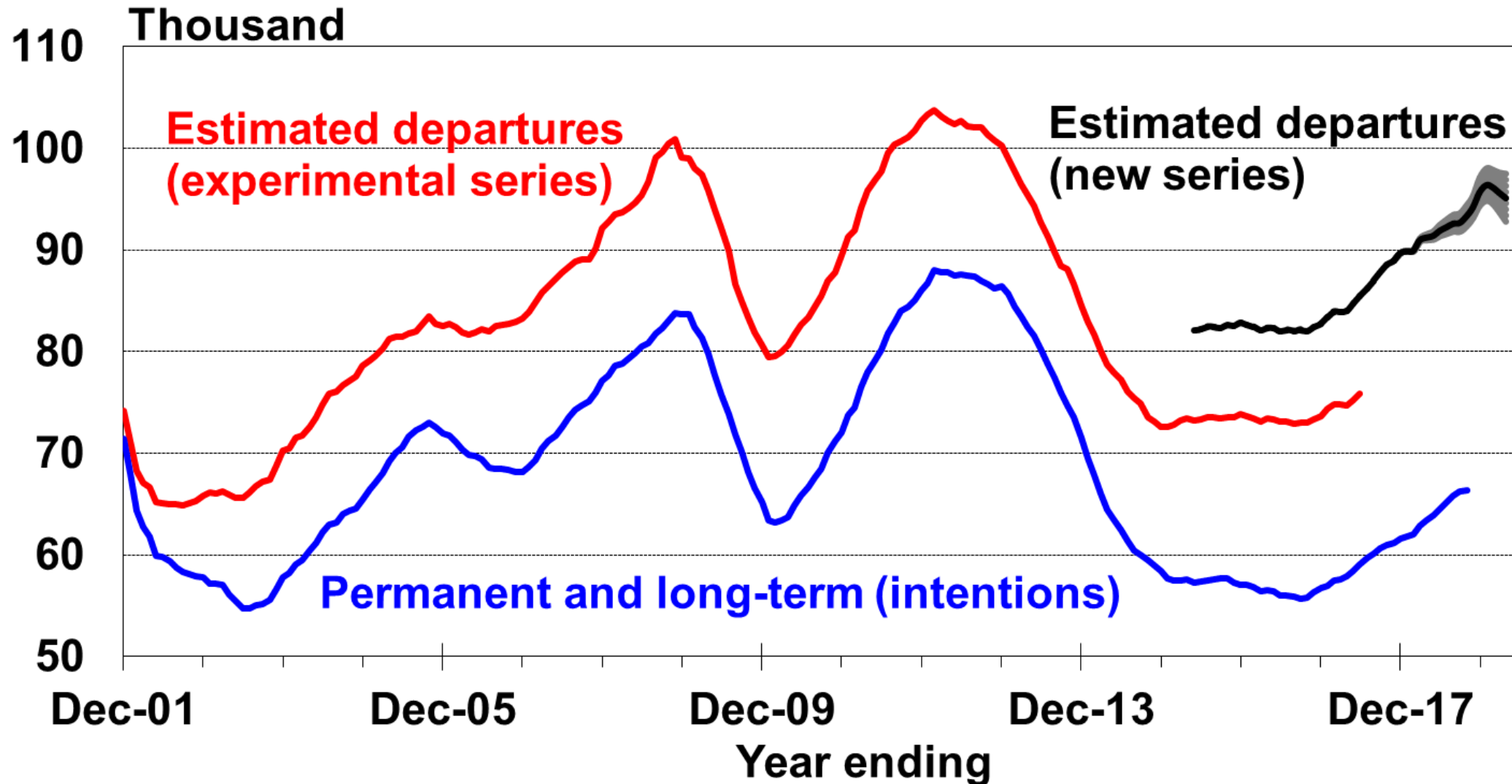
The 12/16 rule



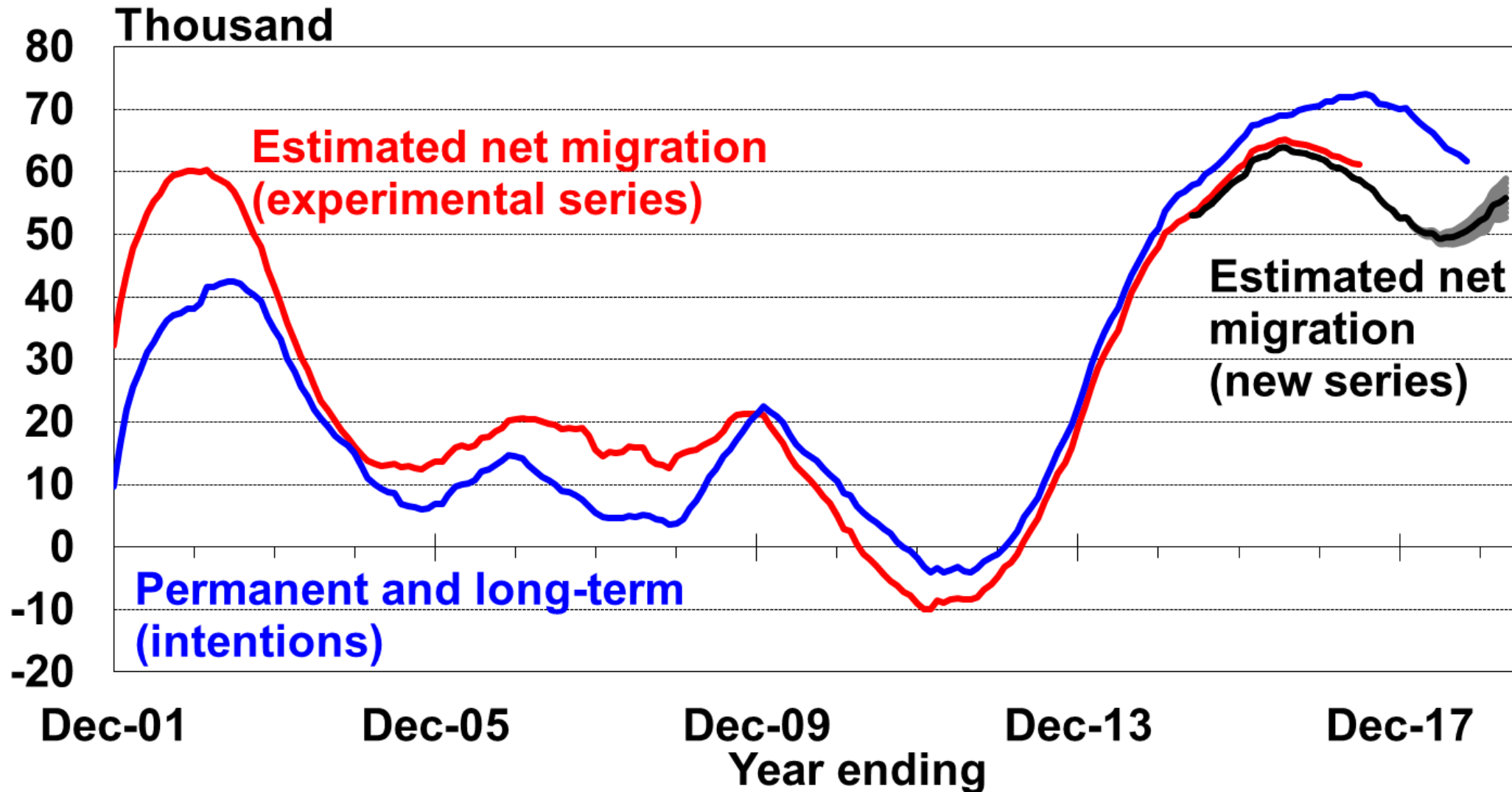
Migrant arrivals – rolling year ended



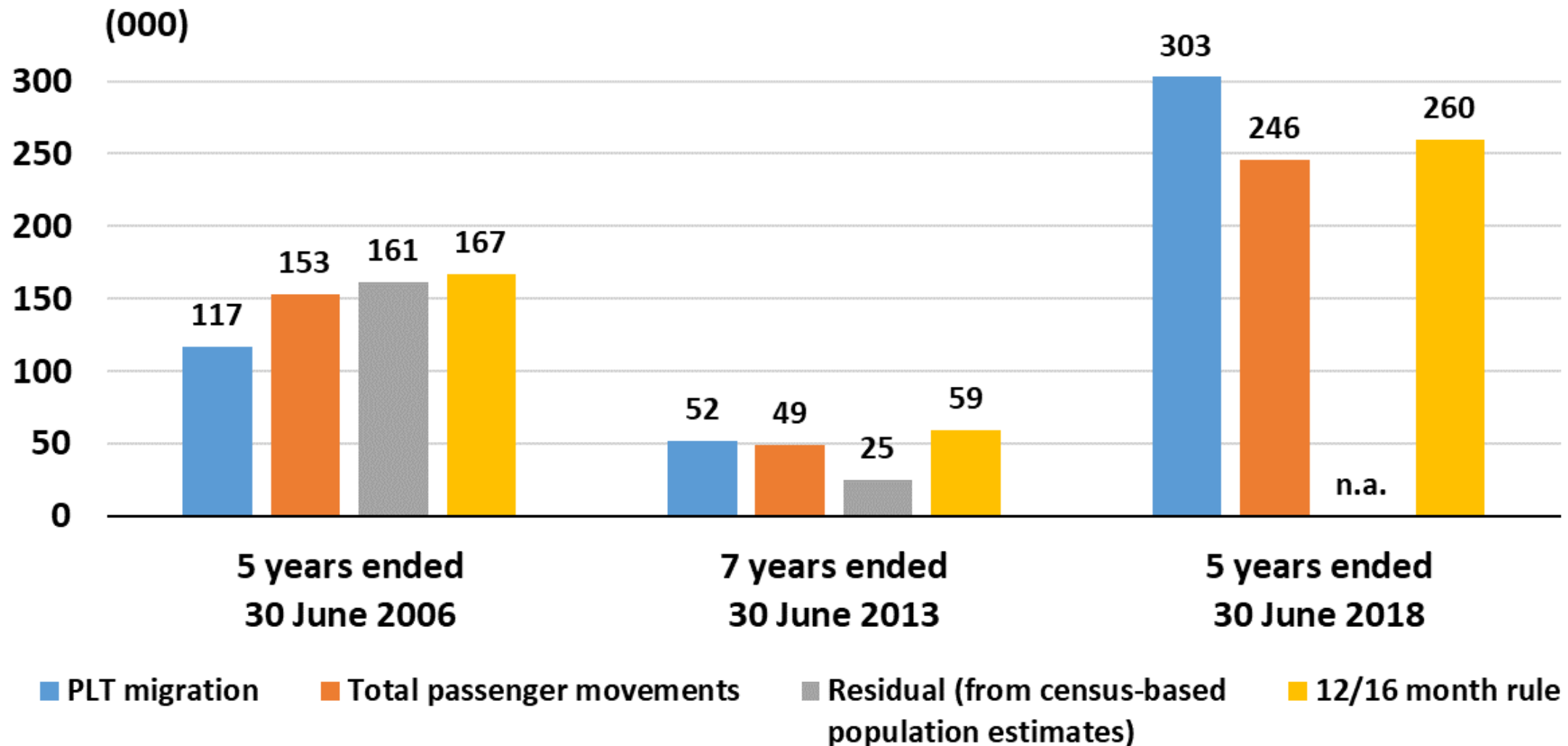
Migrant departures – rolling year ended



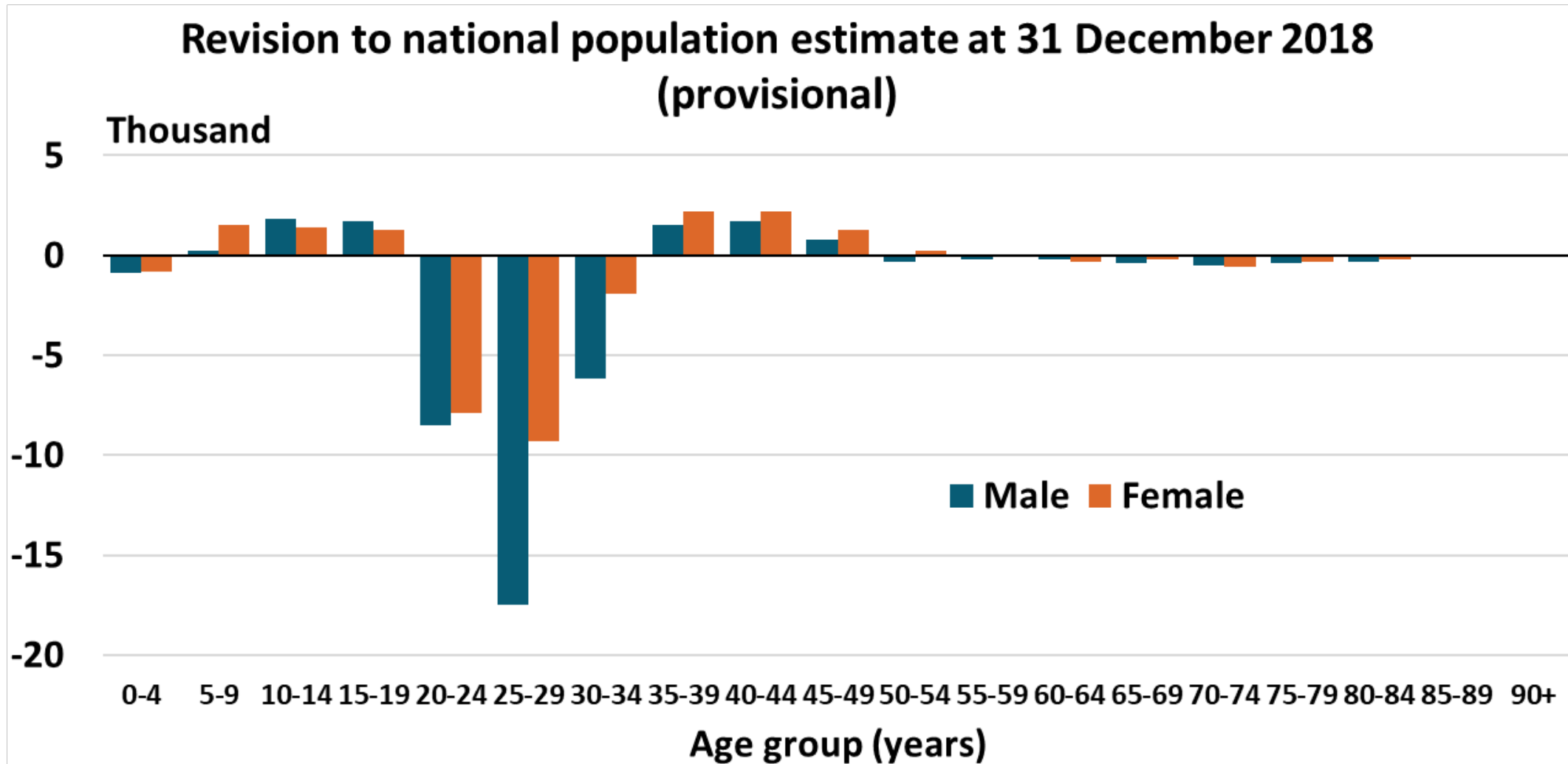
Net migration – rolling year ended



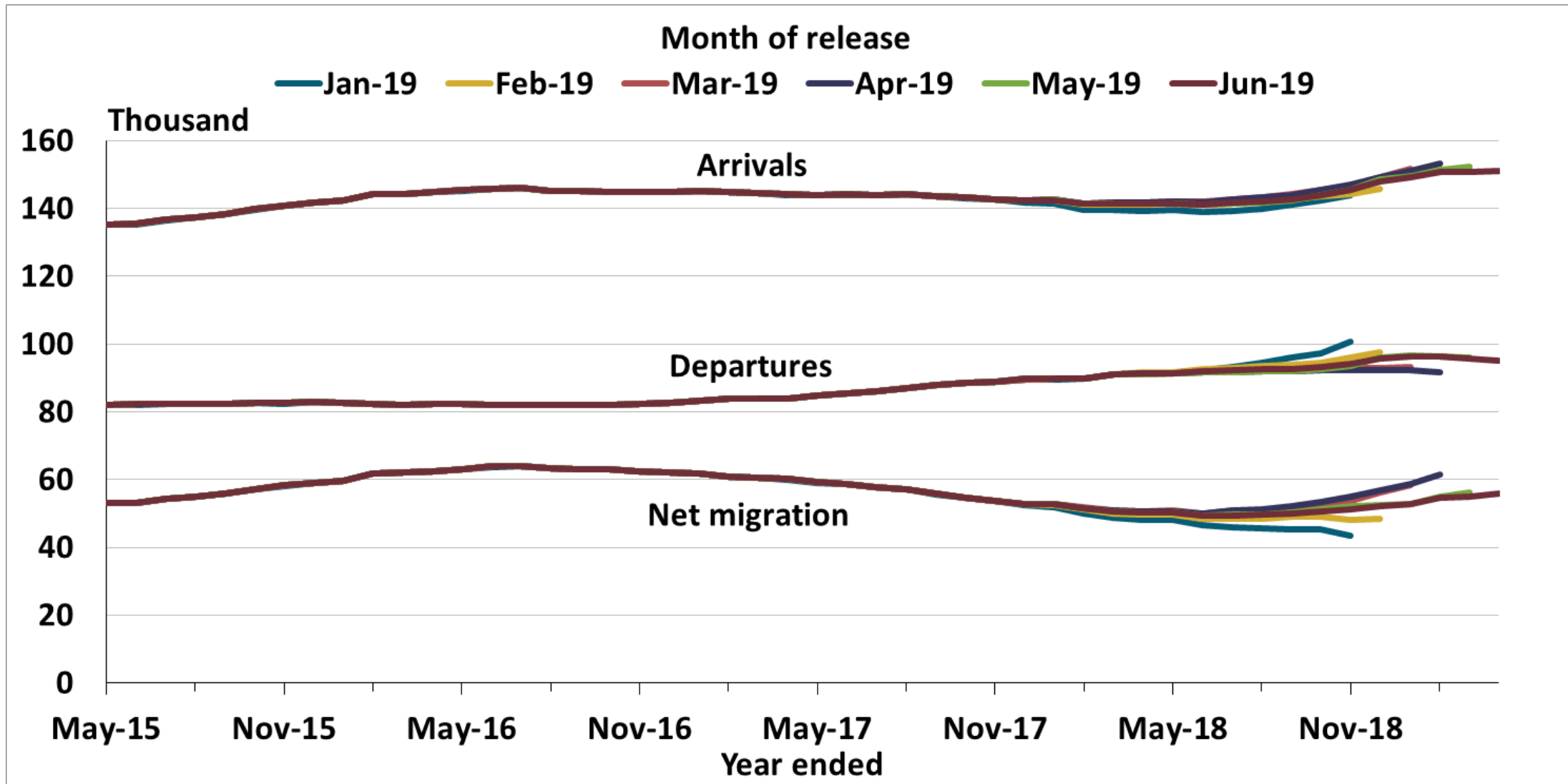
NZ net migration measures



Impact on population estimates of using new migration estimates

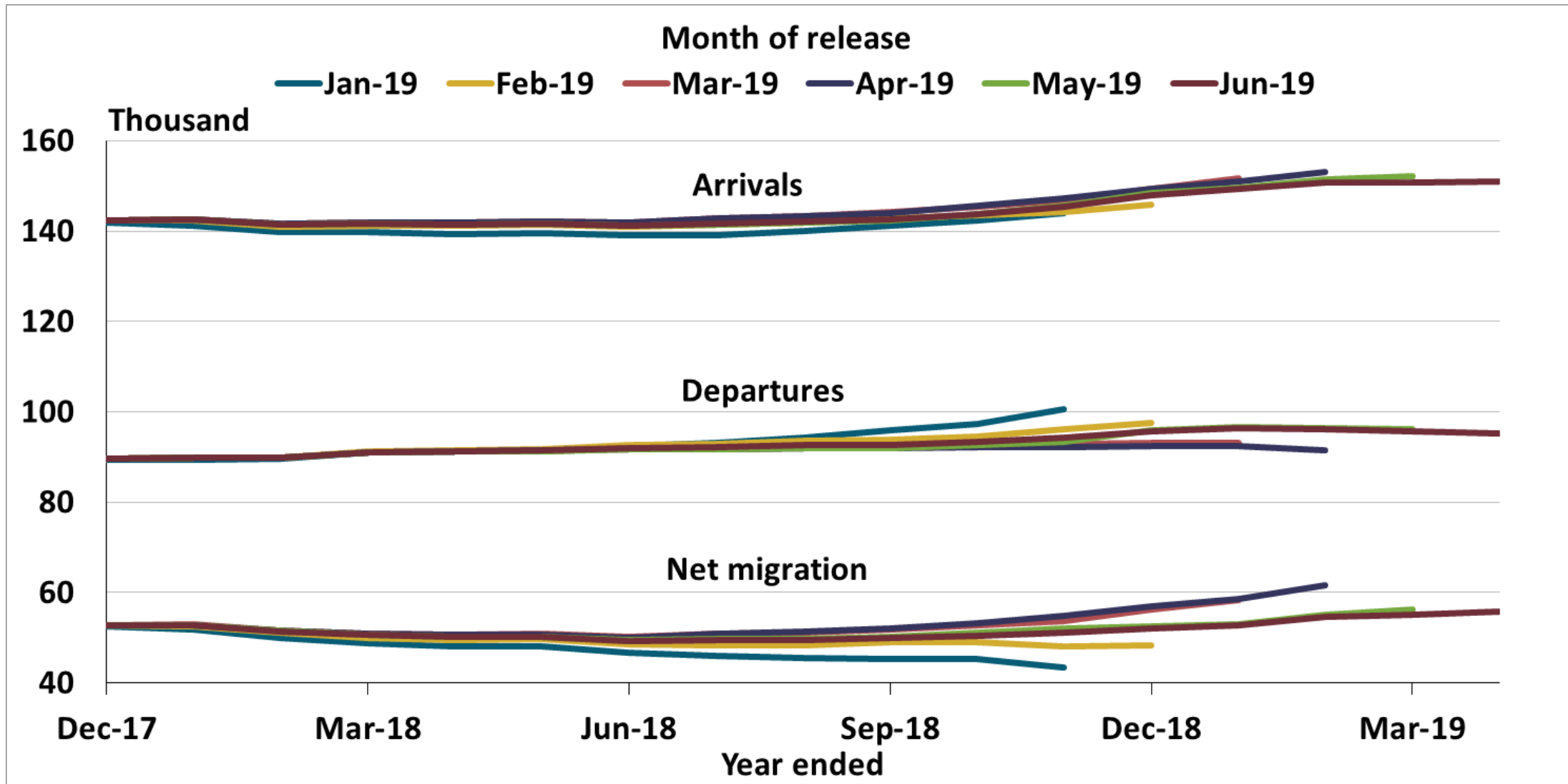


Revisions to provisional migration estimates



Revisions to provisional migration estimates

– focus on latest months



Summary...

- Better to be approximately correct than precisely wrong
 - Very precise intentions figures belied their inaccuracy
- Outcomes is a better measure of migration than intentions
 - Conceptually
 - Supported by historical population data
- Provisional estimates have some uncertainty
 - Initial estimates very timely, 1-2 months lag
 - Subject to revision, especially net migration
 - By definition, takes 17 months to publish final migration estimates



... Summary

- Customers can choose when to use estimates
 - Timeliness v precision (uncertainty)
- Model is performing well
 - Model will evolve
 - But no guarantee that provisional estimates will get more stable

More information

- www.stats.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/current-projects/migration-data-transformation-project/
- Kim.Dunstan@stats.govt.nz

