



VisaHelperz
IMMIGRATION CONSULTANT

NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT RESIDENCE

The Complete Master Guide to Every PR Pathway

Skilled Migrant Category • Green List Tier 1 & 2 • Care & Transport Work to Residence • Partnership & Parent Category • Active Investor Plus • Business & Talent Pathways • Humanitarian Programs

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Immigration rules change frequently. This guide is an educational roadmap — always confirm current eligibility with the Visa Helperz Team before applying.

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1. The Seven Categories of New Zealand PR

New Zealand offers more than 20 residence pathways spread across skilled work, family, investment, talent, nationality-specific and humanitarian routes. Nearly **every one** of them falls under one of seven broad categories:

- **Skilled & Work Immigration** — the Skilled Migrant Category, Green List, and sector Work to Residence routes
- **Family Immigration** — Partnership, Parent, Dependent Child and family protection categories
- **Investment & Business Immigration** — Active Investor Plus, Business Investor, Entrepreneur and relocating-business routes
- **Talent & Religious Immigration** — accredited-employer talent, arts/culture/sports talent, and religious workers
- **Pacific Nationality Immigration** — the Samoan Quota and Pacific Access Category ballots
- **Australian Pathway** — for Australian citizens and permanent residents
- **Humanitarian Immigration** — refugee, protected-person and family-support programmes

2. Step-by-Step: The General PR Process

For almost every pathway, the journey follows the same six stages:

- 1 Find Your Pathway**
Identify which skilled, family, investment, talent or humanitarian category matches your profile.
- 2 Meet the Requirements**
Secure the job offer, relationship evidence, investment capital or work experience the pathway demands.
- 3 Apply for Your Resident Visa**
Submit the relevant application—some pathways require an Expression of Interest (EOI) first.
- 4 Receive Your Resident Visa**
Live in New Zealand indefinitely, though travel conditions usually expire after 2 years.
- 5 Maintain Your Status**
Satisfy ongoing visa conditions and start your two-year (or longer) clock toward permanent residence.
- 6 Apply for Your PRV**
Show commitment to New Zealand and apply for indefinite residence and travel rights.

3. Pathway 1 — Skilled Migrant Category (SMC)

SMC is New Zealand's main points-based residence pathway for skilled professionals. You need a skilled job with an accredited employer and at least 6 points from qualifications, registration, income and NZ work experience.

3.1 Who It's For

- Aged 55 or younger
- Has a skilled NZ job or job offer with an accredited employer
- Can reach the required 6 points
- Meets health, character and English requirements

3.2 How Points Are Earned

Source	What Counts
Occupational registration	Certain NZ registrations, depending on training level
Qualification	PhD > Master's > Honours/PG Diploma > Bachelor's/PG Certificate
Income	Jobs paying at least 1.5× the median wage can generate points
NZ skilled work experience	1 yr = 1pt · 2 yrs = 2pts · 3 yrs = 3pts (max 3)

3.3 Application Flow

- Get a skilled job offer from an accredited employer, then confirm your points
- Submit an Expression of Interest (EOI); if selected, receive an Invitation to Apply
- File your full Resident Visa application with passport, employment agreement, qualification & registration evidence, English results, police certificates and medical evidence

3.4 New SMC Pathways (From 24 August 2026)

Skilled Work Experience Pathway

- ANZSCO skill level 1–3 occupation
- Pay at least 1.1× the SMC wage threshold
- 3 years relevant experience + 2 further years of qualifying NZ skilled work

Trades & Technician Pathway

- Specified trades / technician occupations
- Qualification at Level 4 or comparable/higher
- Required work experience plus qualifying NZ employment

4. Pathway 2 — Green List Tier 1 & Tier 2

New Zealand's Green List names occupations the country considers in demand. Tier 1 occupations go straight to residence; Tier 2 occupations require a period of qualifying NZ employment first.

4.1 Green List Tier 1 — Straight to Residence

- Aged 55 or younger
- Occupation appears on the Green List Tier 1
- Accredited employer and qualifying job offer
- Meets the exact salary, qualification and registration requirements for that specific occupation

Important: a matching job title alone is not enough — your duties, qualification, registration, employer and salary must all satisfy that occupation's requirements. Unlike Tier 2, no 24-month NZ work period is required first.

4.2 Green List Tier 2 — Work to Residence

- Aged 55 or younger
- Qualifying Green List Tier 2 employment with an accredited employer
- Required wage, English, health and character requirements
- At least 24 months of qualifying NZ employment before applying for residence

Attractive if your occupation is on Tier 2 but you don't have enough SMC points — the test is simply whether your job qualifies and you complete the required employment period.

4.3 Typical Pathway

- 1 NZ Job Offer**
Secure a role on the Green List with an accredited employer.
- 2 Work Visa**
Enter New Zealand and begin qualifying employment (Tier 2 only).
- 3 Resident Visa**
Apply directly (Tier 1) or after 24 months of qualifying work (Tier 2).
- 4 PRV**
Apply for your Permanent Resident Visa roughly 2 years later.

5. Care Workforce & Transport Work to Residence

Dedicated Work to Residence pathways for approved care-sector and transport occupations, structured the same way as Green List Tier 2.

5.1 Care Workforce Work to Residence

- Aged 55 or younger
- Qualifying approved care-sector job
- Accredited employer and required wage
- At least 24 months qualifying employment

5.2 Transport Work to Residence

- Aged 55 or younger
- Eligible transport occupation
- At least 24 months qualifying NZ transport work

24 August 2026 wage-rule change: for Green List Tier 2, Care Workforce and Transport, the qualifying wage is generally locked in at the rate that applied when you started counting your qualifying work — not the often-higher rate at the time you apply for residence.

5.3 Why These Sector Routes Matter

Care and transport occupations often don't score enough SMC points on qualifications alone, but qualifying employment in an approved role can still lead directly to residence — making these among the most accessible pathways for experienced workers in high-need sectors.

6. Partnership & Parent Category

6.1 Partnership Category — Partner of a New Zealander

For genuine partners of an NZ citizen or resident — marriage, civil union or de facto relationships all qualify.

- Partner is an NZ citizen or resident
- Genuine, stable relationship — lived together for at least 12 months
- Dependent children up to age 24 can be included

Marriage alone is not enough. Immigration New Zealand checks for genuine cohabitation using evidence such as joint tenancy, shared bills, joint accounts, travel history, photos and statements from family or friends.

Special shortcut: if your partner is an NZ citizen and you lived together overseas for at least 5 years, INZ may grant a Permanent Resident Visa directly — skipping the standard Resident Visa stage.

6.2 Parent Category — Parent Resident Visa

For parents, grandparents and qualifying legal guardians of an NZ citizen or resident.

Your sponsoring child must:

- Be an NZ citizen or resident aged 18+
- Have held NZ citizenship/residence for at least 3 years
- Live in NZ and meet income/sponsorship requirements

Application stages:

- 1. Expression of Interest (EOI)
- 2. Selection → 3. Invitation to Apply
- 4. Full application → 5. Resident Visa

Two big differences from other pathways: an annual cap of **2,500** Parent Resident Visas applies, you cannot apply while you have dependent children, and Resident Visa → PRV normally takes **10 years** here, not the usual 2.

7. Active Investor Plus

New Zealand's major high-net-worth pathway grants a Resident Visa immediately upon a qualifying investment — no NZ job required.

Category	Investment & Holding Period	Accepted Investment Types
Growth	NZD \$5,000,000 for at least 3 years	Direct investments, managed funds, qualifying philanthropy within permitted limits
Balanced	NZD \$10,000,000 for at least 5 years	Direct investments, managed funds, listed equities, philanthropy

7.1 Why It Stands Out

Active Investor Plus is itself a Resident Visa — you don't need a job offer or points. Simply meet the investment threshold and hold it for the required period.

7.2 Path to PRV

Growth category investors can apply for their PRV after the 3-year holding period; Balanced category investors after 5 years — provided the investment and residence conditions are maintained.

7.3 Who It Suits

Applicants with substantial investable capital who want the fastest, most direct route to New Zealand residence without going through a skilled-work or family pathway.

8. Business & Entrepreneur Pathways

For applicants who want to buy, build or relocate a business rather than passively invest.

8.1 Business Investor Pathway

Route	Investment	Timeline
Standard	NZD \$1,000,000	Operate the business for 3 years
Fast-track	NZD \$2,000,000	Eligible after 12 months

- Maintain at least 5 equivalent employees and create 1 new NZ citizen/resident job
- Spend at least 184 days/year in New Zealand

8.2 Entrepreneur Resident Visa

- For applicants self-employed in NZ for 6+ months (in some cases) or 2 years on another visa
- Applying before 2 years requires an Entrepreneur Work Visa
- NZD \$500,000 capital investment and 3 new NZ jobs created
- Business must be trading profitably and compliant with NZ law

8.3 Employees of a Relocating Business

A specialised visa for a key employee of a business relocating to NZ with NZTE support. Only available where the employee is not eligible for another resident visa — the relocating business must actually establish and operate in New Zealand and provide genuine economic benefit.

9. Talent & Religious Worker Pathways

9.1 Talent (Accredited Employer) Resident Visa

- Largely legacy pathway for holders of a Talent (Accredited Employer) Work Visa
- Requires 24 months of qualifying employment, subject to an income threshold

SMC and Green List routes are generally more relevant for new applicants today.

9.2 Talent (Arts, Culture & Sports) Resident Visa

- For people with genuine, recognised talent in arts, culture or sport
- Requires a Talent Work Visa, 24 months of active engagement, and support from an NZ organisation of national repute

9.3 Religious Worker Resident Visa

- For religious workers who complete 3 years on a Religious Worker Work Visa
- Must be with a registered charitable religious organisation, aged 55 or younger

9.4 Who These Pathways Suit

These routes are narrow by design — built for people with recognised achievement in a specific field, or those already established with a qualifying employer or organisation, rather than general skilled applicants.

10. Pacific Nationality & Australian Pathways

10.1 Samoan Quota Resident Visa

- An annual ballot exclusively for Samoan citizens aged 18–45
- Requires a qualifying job offer, sufficient income and English requirements

1,100 places (2026)

10.2 Pacific Access Category

- An annual ballot for citizens of Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga and Tuvalu, aged 18–45
- Requires a qualifying job offer or partner employment

Fiji 250 · Tonga 250 · Kiribati 75 · Tuvalu 75

10.3 Australian Resident Visa

- Australian citizens and Australian permanent residents typically receive an NZ resident visa on arrival
- Australian citizens can generally apply for a NZ PRV after 24 months of NZ residence

These pathways are nationality-specific — eligibility depends entirely on citizenship, not on skills, points or investment capital.

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11. Family, Humanitarian & Protection Pathways

11.1 Dependent Child Resident Visa

- For dependent children (24 or younger, single, financially dependent where required) of an NZ citizen/resident parent living in NZ
- Not a route for an independent adult child simply because a parent lives in NZ

11.2 Refugee Family Support Category

- Family reunification for relatives of refugees/protected persons already resident in NZ
- Registrations are selected under the category's tier system

600 places / year

11.3 Victims of Family Violence Resident Visa

- For people whose partnership with an NZ citizen/resident ended due to family violence
- Applicant can evidence the violence and cannot safely return home under the relevant criteria

11.4 Refugee / Protected-Person Residence

- Humanitarian residence for refugees, protected persons and people selected under NZ's resettlement programmes
- Dependent on refugee/protection status, not a general immigration option

1,450 quota places (Jul 2026–Jun 2027) · 50 via Community Sponsorship

12. Resident Visa → Permanent Resident Visa

Holding a Resident Visa for two years does not automatically hand you a PRV — you still need to actively meet the requirements below.

- 1 Hold Your Resident Visa for at Least 2 Years**
Or hold one that expired no more than 90 days ago.
- 2 Comply With Your Resident Visa Conditions**
No breaches of the terms attached to your visa.
- 3 Meet Good Character Requirements**
Standard character and health checks apply.
- 4 Demonstrate Commitment to New Zealand**
Using one of the five accepted methods below.

12.1 Five Ways to Demonstrate Commitment

- Spending sufficient time physically in New Zealand
- Being tax resident in New Zealand
- Holding a qualifying investment in New Zealand
- Owning or actively operating an NZ business
- Establishing a genuine base in New Zealand

12.2 Exceptions to the Standard 2-Year Timeline

Pathway	Typical Time Before PRV Eligibility
Most pathways (SMC, Green List, Partnership, etc.)	~2 years on Resident Visa
Parent Resident Visa	~10 years on Resident Visa
Active Investor Plus — Growth	3-year investment period
Active Investor Plus — Balanced	5-year investment period

13. Which Pathway Is Best For You?

Your Situation	Usually Strongest Options
Exact occupation on Green List Tier 1	Straight to Residence — no waiting period
Strong qualification / income profile	Skilled Migrant Category (SMC)
Experienced worker or tradesperson	New SMC pathways (from 24 Aug 2026)
Occupation on Green List Tier 2	Work to Residence (24-month route)
Care or transport-sector worker	Care Workforce / Transport Work to Residence
Genuine NZ citizen/resident partner	Partnership Category
Parent of an NZ citizen/resident	Parent Category
\$5m–\$10m investable capital	Active Investor Plus
Want to buy/operate an NZ business	Business Investor or Entrepreneur Visa
Citizen of Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati or Tuvalu	Samoaan Quota / Pacific Access Category

Because immigration programs and eligibility rules change frequently — and the Skilled Migrant Category itself changes on 24 August 2026 — always verify the latest requirements on the official Immigration New Zealand website, or speak with the Visa Helperz Team, before applying.

Ready to find your fastest route to New Zealand PR? Contact VisaHelperz Immigration Consultant for a personalized eligibility assessment.