



Insights Report:

Success of the 2021 Resident Visa Programme

Date 25 August 2023

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Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to review the implementation and delivery of the 2021 Resident Visa programme, including factors that contributed to its success. The report also offers some recommendations for future programmes of a similar nature.

Executive Summary

2. INZ received 106,582 RV21 applications in total. The RV21 programme's key objective was to process 80% of applications by June 2023. This was achieved in early February 2023. As of 31 July 2023, 96.5% of RV21 applications had been decided.
3. The deadline for the 80% objective was initially set to be completed by 30 November. The completion date was later amended to June 2023, along with changes around how applications were to be prioritised for assessment. Customers were dissatisfied with these changes and resulted in a large number of customer correspondence; which may have been avoided if external communication was simpler and more transparent.
4. The average number of applications decided across all platforms per Full Time Equivalent per week, increased from 6.1 to 23.2 with the introduction of ADEPT.
5. INZ may not have achieved the key RV21 objective if it relied on other platforms, namely AMS, IGMS, and Plone. There were significant limitations of using these legacy platforms including an inability to handle peak application volumes and the reliance on manual effort. As such, the ADEPT platform was critical in delivering RV21.
6. To further assist meeting the key objective, INZ developed a streamlined approach for the RV21 programme. The streamlined approach included:
 - a. Reducing the number of risk triage rules from 41 to 33.
 - b. Accepting certain documents at face value.
 - c. Not requiring offshore police certificates and full medical certificates.
 - d. Reducing the number of questions in the quality control (QC) check question set from 60 to 22.
 - e. Conducting QCs on RV21 applications that met the 'Skilled' and 'Scarce' criteria only, thus reducing the QC rate below 100%.
7. The streamlined approach to risk management did not produce any significant gaps or unintended consequences, however not enough time has elapsed to gather sufficient data on adverse outcomes.
8. Visa decision quality was sustained, and quality scores were not negatively impacted by the RV21 specific streamlined approach.



9. Proportionately, fewer RV21 customers submitted formal complaints, and no significant differences between RV21 customers and customers of other visa products were found using Customer Experience Survey data.
10. There were, however, a number of issues that affected the delivery of RV21. Examples include:
 - a. The ADEPT platform was not fully developed and tested in time for RV21 processing.
 - b. Payment failure errors when submitting applications with more than six applicants.
 - c. RV21 customers being recorded as unlawful when they were in fact lawful, due to interim visas not generating.
 - d. Poor 'technical support' processes.
 - e. A lack of transparent communication about the limitations of ADEPT.
 - f. Staff finding it challenging with the amount of change occurring at all levels.
 - g. There was a significant cost to staff wellbeing throughout the delivery of the programme.
11. Further information of the above findings is detailed in Appendix I.

Recommendations

12. Delivery of the programme felt rushed by multiple individuals involved in the implementation of the programme. To ensure a more successful programme, more realistic timeliness windows should be agreed upon.
13. It was reported by programme leaders that the delivery of the RV21 programme may have been better in terms of control, oversight and consistency, if it was restricted to one visa processing office rather than spread over multiple sites. Future one-off programmes may benefit from concentrating visa processing to one office, if possible.
14. A large number of RV21 specific correspondence may have been avoided if communication to customers were more transparent. INZ should take a closer look at its communication methods used when there are changes made to announced programme objectives, including informing customers as to how their specific application would be affected.
15. Technology support for ADEPT related issues were reported as being difficult to manage, as the escalation process was not well defined. Suggested improvements for managing issues included developing better communication channels between processing staff and product owners.
16. It was reported that sufficient consultation with Technical Advisors regarding the quality control check process did not occur, which consequentially led to a decreased capability to manage quality at the visa processing office level, especially in ADEPT. It is therefore recommended that any future designs of the quality check process are developed in partnership with Technical Advisor teams.



Appendix I

Objectives and Milestones

17. The 2021 Resident Visa (RV21) was announced in September 2021 to provide a one-off pathway to residence for migrants, partly as a result of the effects of COVID-19 on normal migration patterns. The objectives of the policy were to:
- Provide certainty for employers that their existing migrant workforce would be able to remain in New Zealand permanently.
 - Enable migrants who were already in New Zealand for the purpose of work to remain permanently.
 - Attract health workers and other highly skilled critical workers by providing them a pathway to stay in New Zealand permanently.
18. Eligibility was primarily based on applicants meeting at least one of the following three criteria:
- Settled – lived in New Zealand holding an eligible visa for at least three years.
 - Skilled – in employment where they have been paid at least \$27.00 an hour.
 - Scarce – in employment where their role has been deemed by INZ as scarce.
19. The programme's key objective was to complete at least 80% of applications within 12 months of delivery, from December 1, 2021 to November 30, 2022¹.
20. RV21 was implemented in two phases, with Phase 1 split into two sub-phases: Phase 1 and Phase 1.5 (see Figure 1).

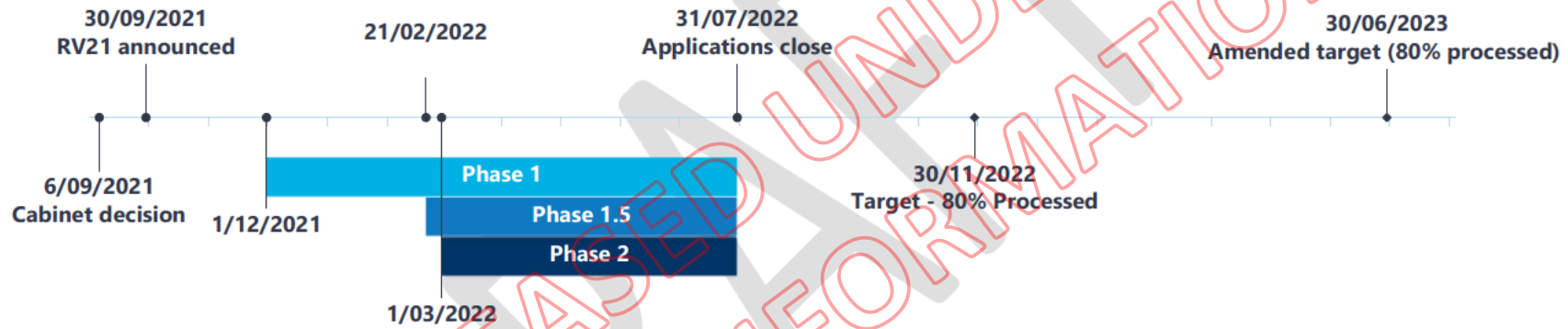
¹ This was later amended to 30 June 2023, as discussed in 'Programme Delivery' section



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Figure 1. The Phases of the RV21 Visa Category



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Phase 1

21. Applicants who had the following characteristics on 29 September 2021, were able to submit an RV21 from the opening date, 1 December 2021.
- g. An open application for residence under the Skilled Migrant Category (SMC).
 - h. An open application under the Residence from Work Category (RfW).
 - i. An open Expression of Interest (EOI) which included a dependent child aged 17 years or older.
22. Prioritising these customers aimed to ease the ongoing delays of the backlogged SMC and RfW queues, as well as allow working age dependents to enter the New Zealand workforce.

Phase 1.5

23. Phase 1.5 opened on 21 February 2022, allowing all other INZ customers who held an EOI on 29 September 2021.

Phase 2

24. Phase 2 opened to all other eligible applicants under the Settled, Skilled, or Scarce criteria.
25. On 31 July 2022, INZ closed the RV21 category and customers could no longer submit an RV21 application. 28,964 applications were lodged under Phases 1 and 1.5, and 77,618 were lodged under Phase 2, resulting in 106,582 RV21 applications in total.
26. As of 31 July 2023, 96.5% of applications have been processed.

Programme Delivery

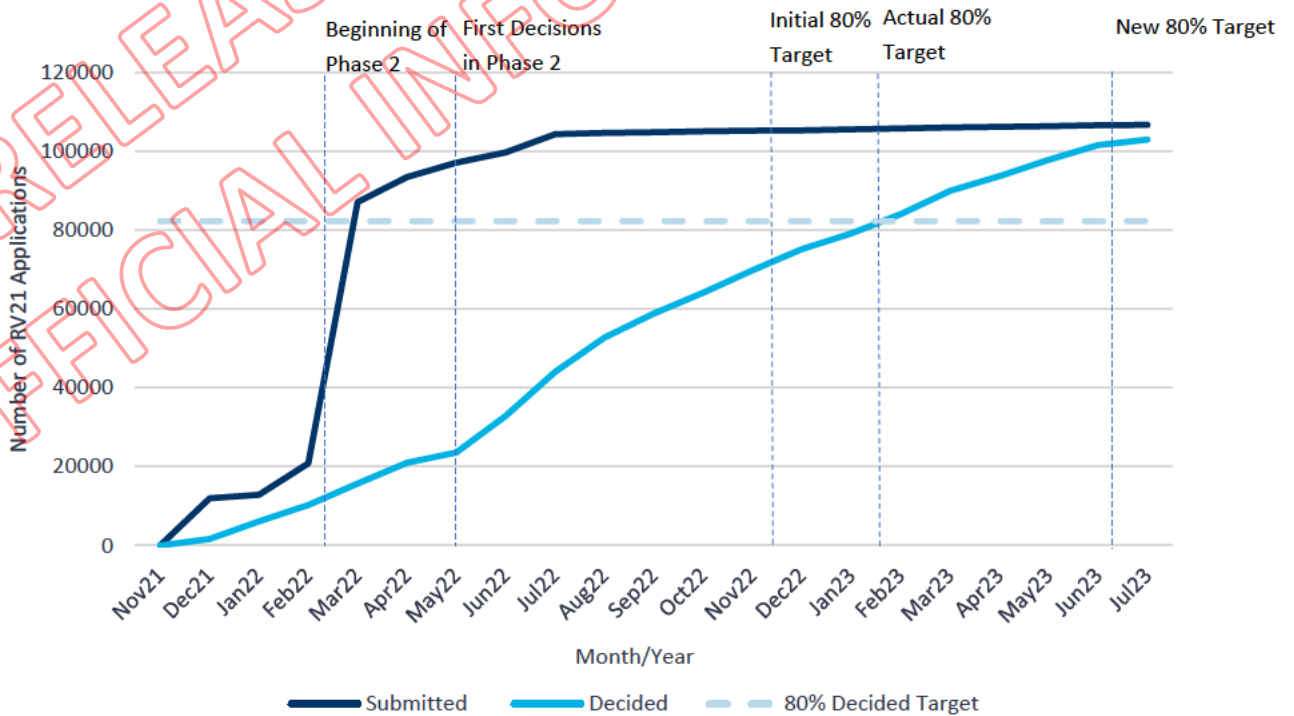
27. Before the announcement of the programme, senior leaders of the Manukau office were designated as Project Leads, with ownership of the delivery of RV21. The Manukau Project Leads reported that they embraced this decision (made in partnership with INZ Operational Policy team). They believed it was logical to design a programme that they would be responsible for and are subject matter experts on. Part of the programme design included developing a streamlined approach in order to meet the key objective.
28. Although the RV21 programme was led by Manukau, it was delivered over three processing offices: Manukau, Hamilton, and Christchurch. A large majority was processed by the Manukau processing office. In hindsight, it may have been better to restrict delivery to one processing office. Having one office responsible for the delivery of the programme would have ensured consistencies, with control and oversight of delivery being easier to maintain.
29. In June 2022, a decision was made to amend the key objective. As a result, INZ was to now complete 80% of RV21 applications by **30 June 2023**. Changes were also implemented around how applications were to be prioritised for assessment.
30. The Manukau processing office reported that a large number of customers were dissatisfied with both the above changes, as customers were unsure how the changes would affect processing of their application. Manukau reported a large influx of complaints, and thus additional work. It was



suggested that a large number of complaints may have been avoided if the changes had been communicated in a more transparent and easy to understand manner to RV21 customers.

31. People are INZ’s biggest asset so it would be remiss to not talk about the effect that working on RV21 had on the people tasked with leading, processing and ensuring policy and delivery targets were met.
32. It was reported that Practice Leads and Technical Advisors (TAs) carried the responsibility for delivering RV21. They tried to protect the immigration officers from the frustrations and stress of solving issues. It is not an overstatement to say that this was stressful and did result in individuals working long hours which significantly impacted the wellbeing of processing staff.
33. Whilst challenges such as RV21 are welcomed, it would not be fair to put any of our people (especially the TAs) through this experience again without making some wellbeing support, programme design changes and more assistance to problem resolution.
34. INZ reached the Key objective in early February 2023, having decided 82,190 RV21 applications. INZ completed 80% of RV21 applications approximately two months after the initial deadline of 30 November 2022, and just under 5 months of the amended deadline of 30 June 2023² (see Figure 2). The volume of decisions accelerated as applications began being processed on ADEPT, in Phase 2. Tracking weekly progress was important in achieving the key objective.

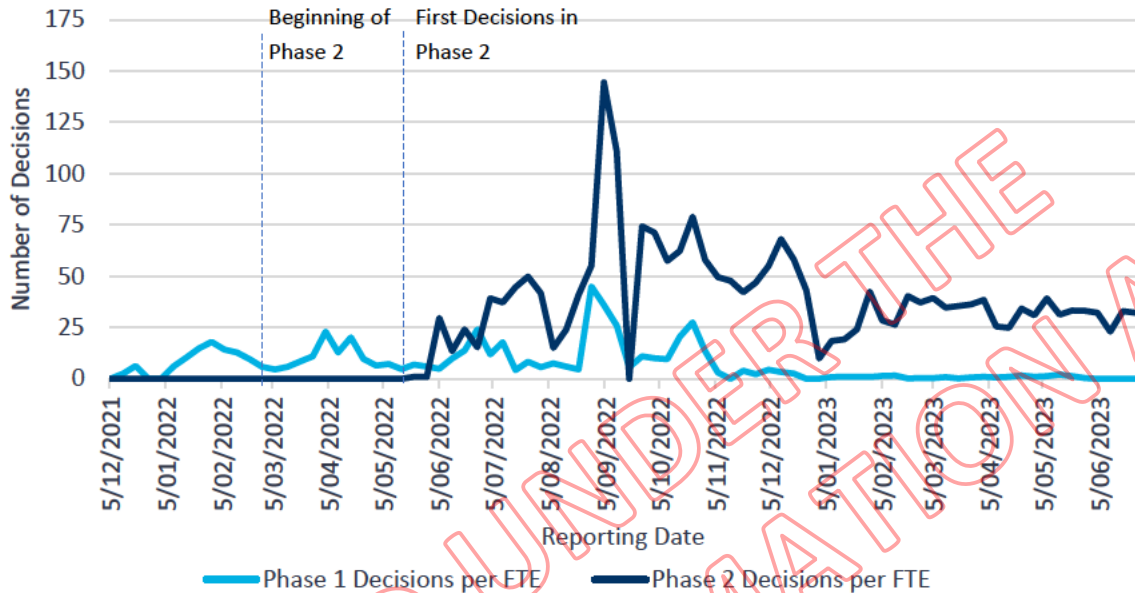
Figure 2. Number of RV21 Applications Submitted vs Decided by Month/Year as of 31 July 2023



² Numbers for October 2022 have been estimated as data was missing.



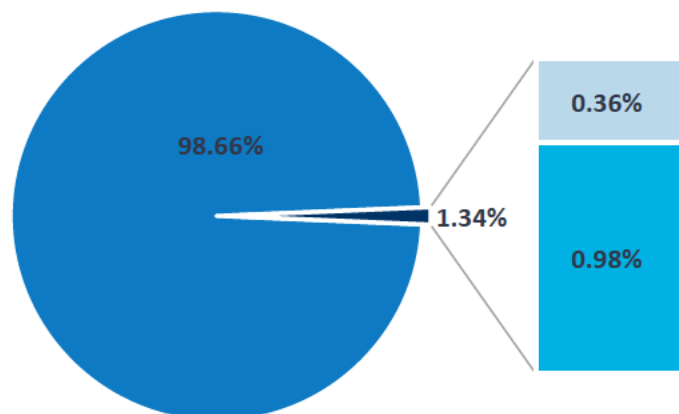
Figure 3. Number of Decisions per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) in Phase 1 vs Phase 2 by Reporting Date



35. Furthermore, the back end of ADEPT was still under development and INZ processing staff were still learning how to work in ADEPT, even after INZ began receiving applications under RV21 Phase 2. This led to a delay of about two months in starting the processing of visa applications in Phase 2 (see Figure 3).

36. As of 31 July 2023, 26.5% of all submitted applications had been decided in AMS, 70.0% were decided in ADEPT, and the remaining 3.5% were still in progress. The vast majority (98.7%) were approved, with a small number withdrawn or declined (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Percentage of Decision Outcomes (all Applicants) across completed RV21 applications.



■ Approved ■ Declined ■ Withdrawn



37. Taking into account only the quantitative evidence summarised above, the delivery of the RV21 programme was a success. However, if INZ is to present itself as a people-centric organisation, then any future programmes should consider the wellbeing of its staff during periods of transition, especially processing office staff.

Application Processing Systems

38. Historically, most Residence visa applications have been paper based. As a result of the COVID-19 related lockdowns, staff were not able to enter physical processing offices. This was a significant disruption to the processing of Residence applications. To mitigate this issue INZ decided to house RV21 processing on online platforms only, especially so to further guarantee meeting the key objective.
39. At the time of the announcement of RV21, INZ was already using AMS, and the Immigration Global Management System (IGMS) for online submissions, however it was mainly being used for submitting temporary visa applications. It was decided that RV21 Phase 1 applications would be received via IGMS. The Enhanced Immigration Online Platform, otherwise known as ADEPT, was still being built.
40. When the programme entered Phase 1 on 1 December 2021, INZ received a large initial influx of applications, which affected the performance of the IGMS platform. Subsequent performance testing indicated that IGMS would struggle with peak loads as observed in the opening phase of the programme. It was reported that processing during Phase 1 was straightforward as AMS was familiar, but also that the platform connected with 3rd party stakeholders such as the s 6(a) [redacted] and the Immigration Health System (IHS). To cope with peak loads, INZ made the decision to use the Plone platform. Plone was historically deployed at times of high demand and outages. It was also used to manage border exceptions during the COVID-19 border closure. Although Plone was largely able to handle the influx of applications, it did require significant manual processing, affecting all parts of the visa assessment process. Given the amount of effort required to lodge applications using Plone and the expected number of applications to be received in Phase 2, Plone was not marked as the platform to be used as a permanent solution if INZ was committed to achieving the Key objective.
41. Due to the issues identified during Phase 1, some changes were made for Phase 1.5. To alleviate the difficulties with peak loads, submitted applications were staggered. INZ accepted 1,500 applications per day, with a maximum of 200 per hour. This process was supported by regular monitoring. As a result, there were no additional disruptions reported during Phase 1.5. Given the expected application volumes for RV21 Phase 2 customers, AMS, IGMS, and Plone were not marked as the technology solution.
42. INZ decided that Phase 2 would be processed using the ADEPT platform. As ADEPT is a cloud-based software service, its capacity was scalable to accommodate much larger volumes of applications. However, the service was not built with RV21 in mind. ADEPT was developed to accommodate processing of approximately 1,000,000 applications across all categories per year, which equates to 4,000 per day. During Phase 2, it was estimated that INZ would receive around 120,000 RV21 applications within the first few days, well beyond 'normal' visa volumes. With the support of Microsoft, the INZ ADEPT Operations Team (AOT) implemented a solution, using an iteration



process with a front- and back-end throttling capability. This capability enabled applications to be submitted, but then held in a “virtual lobby”, until the back-end processing development was ready to begin visa assessments.

43. Overall, the ADEPT system coped well with the incoming demand, allowing for more efficient processing. ADEPT was able to automatically identify and trigger requests for Medical Certificates, and NZ Police checks. It also allowed for a higher capacity of additional documentation to be uploaded, and visas could automatically be issued. The success of the implementation of ADEPT for the RV21 programme meant that productivity rates more than doubled. It can be concluded that the RV21 programme’s key objective may not have been achieved if INZ relied on AMS, IGMS, and Plone, and as such ADEPT was critical in the success of the RV21 programme.
44. ADEPT was not without its own issues. Although AOT reported that once issues were raised, they were fixed as quickly as possible either with a permanent fix or a workaround. This was made possible by the level of built-in flexibility and the team of technical and subject matter experts available for support. This however was in contrast to the user experience at the processing offices. Processing staff reported that there were major difficulties in resolving issues, especially during the beginning of Phase 2. This view did ease over time as workarounds were deployed. There was some consensus at the processing office level that the ADEPT related issues were due to a lack of design forethought. It was suggested that the ADEPT product owner be made more accessible, and more efficient project management to enable smoother running of the programme.
45. A number of specific issues are described in Table 1. This was expected as ADEPT was not fully developed, and so the system was not systematically tested. A lot of the critical errors were identified and fixed earlier in the year, when the Visitor Visa product transitioned onto ADEPT.

Table 1. *Summary of some ADEPT related issues*

Initial ADEPT issues during Submission	Initial ADEPT issues during Processing
Payment failure error message when trying to submit seven or more individuals on one application. This issue is still being monitored.	Training for ADEPT was insufficient, and commonly occurring issues had inadequate responses.
Some customers were incorrectly recorded as unlawfully in New Zealand and were not able to submit an application. Customers were unaware of this error until they contacted INZ. Clearer communication has since been implemented.	The ADEPT User Guide didn’t cater for all scenarios, including the differences between applications being ‘pushed’ to immigration officers vs applications being ‘pulled’ by immigration officers.
The application form had the National ID Number as a mandatory field, despite some nationalities not using national ID numbers. Customers had to enter ‘Nil’ to progress the application.	As ADEPT was a new technology solution, there was a steep learning curve alongside a steep cultural change due to the streamlined approach. This amount of change was difficult for some to deal with.
Because of the use of the ‘virtual lobby’, interim visas were not being automatically issued. A manual workaround was put in place to	The ‘Help’ infrastructure was not designed well enough, especially for those who were not tech savvy. Those staff who were tech savvy,



generate interim visas on a daily basis for any affected customers.	unofficially became 'experts', as it wasn't easy to get support. A lot of reliance was placed on them to raising tickets with the MBIE Service Desk.
Some customers who were eligible to be included in an RV21 application, were unable to submit an application due to eligibility screening questions. Given the low number of cases, a workaround was deployed directing these customers to a paper form.	There was a lack of transparent communication about the limitations of ADEPT and a perceived lack of ownership from ADEPT product owners of the staggering amount of issues. A better escalation process was suggested for future programmes.
The form requested for details of the parents of the customer, despite there being no field to enter such information. This was later fixed.	It was suggested that 'Super User' type access could have helped with trouble shooting.

Immigration Risk

46. To enable timely delivery of the RV21 programme it was agreed that any proposed risk management process would need to support the overall streamlined approach and enable efficient decision making. The Risk Monitoring Review Governance Group (RMRGG), in consultation with the Risk and Verification (R&V) network and the Risk Control Group (RCG), agreed to risk appetite thresholds that would support a streamlined approach. As a result, several adjustments were made to tolerance settings and risk controls.

Phases 1 & 1.5

47. The key risk areas identified in preparation for Phase 1 include: national security risk, non-genuine partnership claims, identity fraud, and character concerns. Of the 41 triage rules that would normally trigger on regular residence visa applications, 33 rules were excluded from triggering on RV21 applications, aligning with the key risk areas identified by the RMRGG. The same risk management approach was deployed for Phase 1.5, with the inclusion of an additional risk rule (RR1013) s 6(c)

For all phases, the approach to adverse information triggering within the system was maintained. It was also agreed that applicants would still require New Zealand Police Checks (NZPC) and specified applicants would also require National Security Checks (NSC). To support streamlined decision making it was agreed that certain documents could be accepted at face value and that offshore police and full medical certificates would not normally be required for assessment.

48. The RMRGG also recommended post-decision monitoring of outcomes to refine risk management at the application stage and to drive compliance with immigration standards. R&V completed risk monitoring activity on 5% of the approved RV21 Phase 1 and 1.5 cohort, where a partner was included, to better understand the risks and determine whether any changes to risk treatments for this category were required. The results of this monitoring activity concluded that the current risk treatment was appropriate and would continue to be used for Phase 2.



Phase 2

49. All risk rules, except one (RR0756), were retained for Phase 2. s 6(c) [redacted] A manual workaround was put in place to manage alerts and warnings on employers. Integration limitations between the two processing systems required the addition of another risk rule s 6(c) [redacted]

50. While monitoring post-decision outcomes, it was identified that the risk rule deployed during Phase 1.5, to address potential risks associated with open work visa holders (RR1013), failed to trigger for applications under Phase 2 due to a change in grounds code and internal miscommunication. This resulted in 1,051 applications not being screened by this rule. At the time the issue was identified, only 14 of the affected applications had been decided and all remaining 1,037 applications were re-triaged.

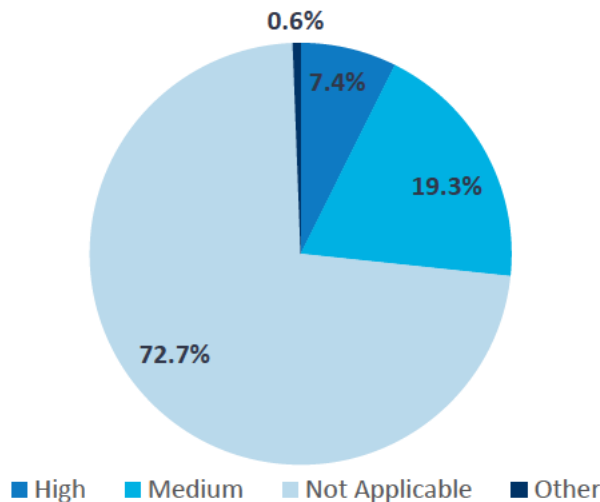
51. R&V selected a small sample size (68 applications) for analysis to determine the impact of the rule failure. The result of the analysis found approximately 10% of the sample size contained concerns around risk treatments, leading to the conclusion that the risk that non-genuine applications had been approved was low.

Decision Outcomes

52. Of the applications that have been completed, only 5% of applications required an NSC. Of those applications, 99% were approved, 0.2% were declined, and 0.8% were withdrawn.

53. The deployed risk rules triaged for all applicants within the same application. For all RV21 applications, approximately 73% were triaged as 'Not Applicable' as they did not trigger any of the deployed risk rules. 7% were triaged as 'High Risk', and 19% triaged as 'Medium Risk' (See Figure 5). Less than 1% of applications either had the risk triage fail or did not get allocated a risk level.

Figure 5. Percentage of Triage Risk Levels (all Applicants) across completed RV21 applications as of 26 July





54. Of the risk rules that triggered for Phase 1, RR0604 triggered with the highest frequency. s 6(c) [REDACTED]. In Phase 2, RR1013 triggered with the highest frequency. s 6(c) [REDACTED]. This was likely due to a large amount of RV21 applicants' employment not having ever been assessed by INZ, relevant for the Skilled and Scarce criteria. The risk rule with the second highest frequency of triggering during Phase 2 was RR1009, which was designed to surface AMS alerts and warnings in the ADEPT platform.

55. Of the applications that were triaged as 'High Risk', 0.46% were declined and 1.2% were withdrawn. Of the applications that were triaged as 'Medium Risk', 0.34% were declined and 0.3% were withdrawn. Of the applications where a triage risk was not applicable, 0.35% were declined and 0.7% were withdrawn (see Table 5).

Table 2. Risk Level of RV21 Applicants as of 26 July 2023

Risk Level	Decision			Total
	Approved	Declined	Withdrawn	
High	14,938 (98.35%)	68 (0.45%)	183 (1.2%)	15,189 (100%)
Medium	39,595 (98.36%)	136 (0.34%)	118 (0.3%)	39,849 (100%)
Not Applicable	148,330 (98.90%)	523 (0.35%)	1,124 (0.75%)	149,977 (100%)
Other	633 (50.93%)	7 (0.56%)	603 (48.51%)	1,243 (100%)
Total	203,496 (98.66%)	734 (0.36%)	2,028 (0.98%)	206,258 (100%)

56. While the applications that triaged as 'Not Applicable' had a higher percentage of decline and withdrawal decisions than those that triaged medium risk, it is likely that these applications did not meet immigration instructions, such as for Character or Health, and thus have not been analysed in this report.

57. The intended streamlined approach to the RV21 category is clearly reflected in the interventions and outcomes. In summary, 73% of all applications did not automatically trigger any risk flags and only 0.36% of all applications processed (by 26 July 2023) have resulted in a decline decision.

58. Risk monitoring activity completed between phases did not reveal any significant gaps and supported the continuation of the proposed risk management approach for Phase 2.

59. Quality assurance was completed on 152 or 0.07% of the completed RV21 applications, post-decision. These checks resulted in a Risk specific score of 92.1% and did not identify any concerns with the risk mitigation of the completed RV21 visas. While the overall score for risk mitigation was 4% lower compared to that of regular residence visas, it is not a significant difference to be of concern (see *Visa Decision Quality* section below).



60. It is also worthy to note processing office staffs' views on management of risk. The view was mixed.
61. Some processing office staff agreed that the design of the RV21 category mitigated immigration risk appropriately. It was mentioned that the category was designed to only include applicants who met certain criteria and immigration instructions were simple and easy to assess. It was agreed that both instructions and processes were clear, and R&V were available to provide advice for applications that were identified as High risk.
62. There was however, a small amount of scepticism regarding the propensity for risk, but this eased over time as processing staff became accustomed to the streamlined approach. This resulted in a change of culture of application processing, as decision makers were "less defensive" and more open to approving applications with a lesser degree of checks undertaken.
63. Some processing staff noted that there were differences in the practical handling of risk between applications assessed on AMS vs ADEPT. ADEPT enabled automation of some tasks and this meant that occasionally, applications with risk would ultimately be approved. A minority continued to feel uncomfortable with the fact that more risk-laden cases were being approved.
64. Despite the residual concerns, there is no evidence to suggest that risk was handled inappropriately throughout the implementation and delivery of the RV21 programme.
65. It is not yet possible to fully assess the actual impacts of the applied risk management approach for RV21 until sufficient time has lapsed to gather data on adverse outcomes. Such outcomes would usually first become visible during Permanent Residence Visa processing when assessing whether the Residence Visa holder is eligible for Permanent Residence based on the commitment demonstrated while holding a Residence Visa.

Visa Decision Quality

66. Alongside the organisational RV21 objective of completing all applications within 12 months, INZ was also committed to maintaining high visa decision quality for RV21.
67. Visa decision quality is measured by INZ at two points: pre-decision and post-decision. The quality model aims to ensure that quality performance is sustained or improved over time.

Quality Control

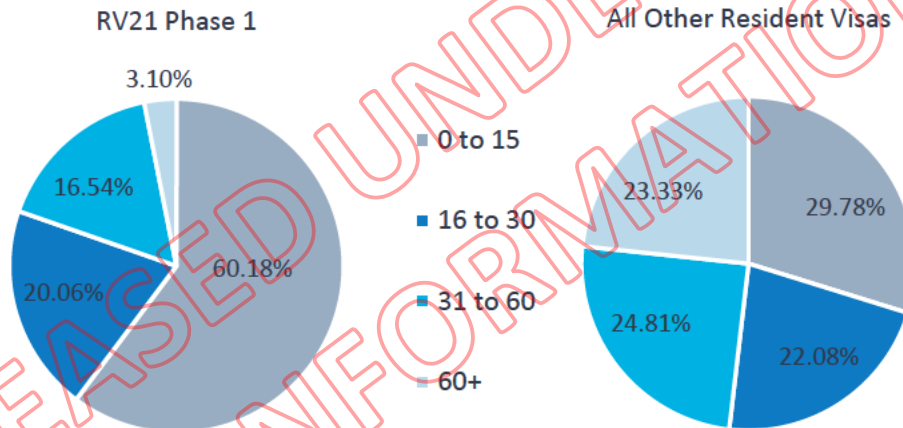
68. The quality control (QC) check is completed pre-decision i.e. before a visa assessment is completed. The purpose of the QC check is to confirm that the necessary decision-making processes were followed, and if not, are completed before a final decision on the application is made.
69. Because the RV21 programme was a one-off visa category ultimately aiming to automate some decisions, it was decided that the QC component of the visa assessment procedure would be simplified as much as possible (streamlined) while still meeting INZ's quality standards. The streamlined approach included reducing the number of questions in the question set, and decreasing the QC rate below 100%.



70. A QC check is normally completed by answering a question set, made up of approximately 60 questions³. Reduction of the QC question set started from Phase 1, which reduced 60 questions into 22 questions. This was anticipated to progress RV21 visa applications in line with the streamlined approach.

71. Figure 6 illustrates timeliness of QC checks for RV21 Phase 1 applications vs all other Resident applications decided over the same period.

Figure 6. *Timeliness of QC Checks for RV21 Phase 1 Applications vs All Other Resident Visa Applications in Minutes*



72. Approximately half of Other Resident QC checks were completed in 30 minutes or less. In comparison, QC checks for RV21 which were completed in 30 minutes or less explained 75% of all RV21 QCs. Nearly half of RV21 QCs were conducted in 10 minutes or less.

73. This indicates that the reduced question set had a measured effect in streamlining the RV21 application process.

74. The reduced question set was also seen as a positive improvement by processing staff as it was perceived to be easier, and IOs felt more productive in being able to make more decisions. Other IOs indicated that the streamlined approach may have been a bit extreme. Generally, the reduced question set was received well.

75. The other change to the QC process was to reduce the QC rate below 100%. Generally, *all* residence class visa applications require a QC check before being completed. This is outlined in the [Quality Control Sampling Table](#) in the Global Process Manual. A QC check is usually completed

³ The total of 60 questions includes parent and child questions.



using the QC Tool, which sits on an online platform independent to AMS, ADEPT, IGMS, and Plone altogether. QCs for RV21 Phase 1 were completed on this QC Tool.

76. QCs for RV21 Phase 2 were completed within ADEPT. This was the first time QC checks were being conducted on the ADEPT platform. As such, there were critical technical issues that prevented conducting QC checks in an efficient manner. One such issue led to a backlog of 2,000 QCs and often taking longer to complete a QC check than to complete the manual assessment activity. Therefore, in June 2022, INZ decided that those RV21 applications that fell under the 'Settled' criteria would not undergo a QC check. This decision allowed INZ to focus 100% of its QC efforts on the RV21 subtypes that presented more risk (Skilled, Scarce).
77. This does not mean that Settled application had no oversight. The Risk and Assurance team reviewed a sample of 'Settled' RV21 applications post-decision each quarter as a discrete exercise. To date, no issues have been found. This further indicates that the decision to drop QC checks for 'Settled' RV21 applications did not have an adverse impact on visa decision quality. This decision was also well-received by TAs and the instructions were clear for them to quickly change the QC process.
78. For Phase 2 specifically, some TAs felt that quality control was difficult to manage in ADEPT as they were less able to truly control quality effectively, which led to some cases having to be reassessed, including after a decision had been made. This may have been an unintended consequence of either the truncated question set not being able to capture a critical error, or not identifying potential issues for 'Settled' applications.
79. It was suggested that any future designs of the QC process should consult TAs, as they do the large majority of the quality control tasks, and understand the subtleties of QC related issues the best.
80. Although the attempts to streamline the QC process were successful, contributing to achieving the Key objective, it is important to evaluate whether visa decision quality was sustained or adversely impacted. This can be observed from Quality Assurance data.

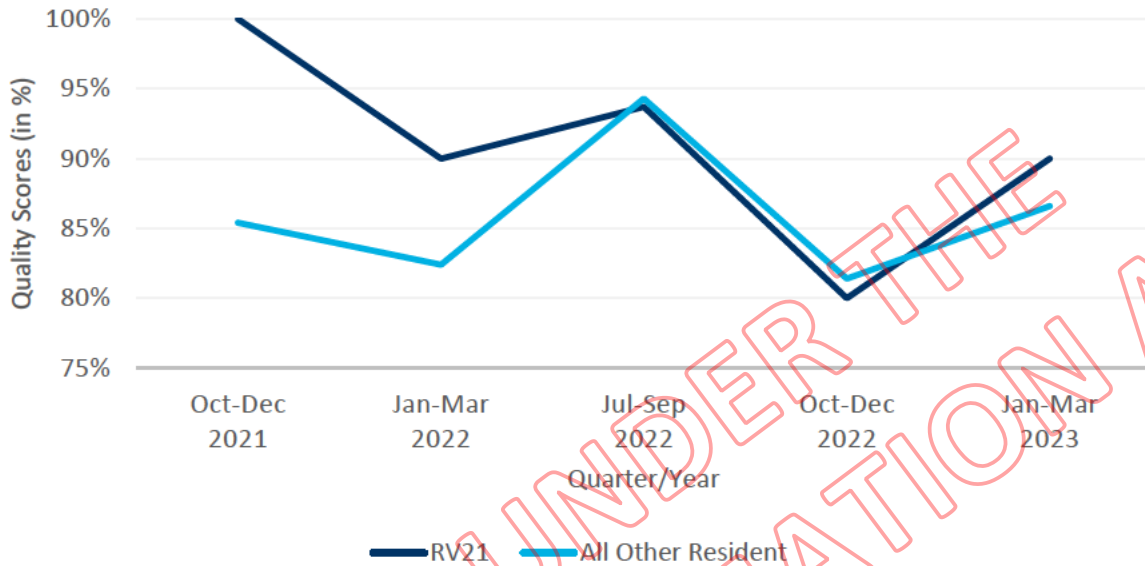
Quality Assurance

81. Quality Assurance (QA) is performed post-decision on a sample of decided visa decisions. The scores are aggregated into two scores: one for Residence applications and one for Temporary decisions. Analysing quality of RV21 quality over time, allows to observe whether visa decision quality was sustained from the implementation of the programme onwards.
82. Between the Dec 21 – Jun 23 period, 152 RV21 quality assurance assessments were conducted, analysed over five quarters. Figure 7 illustrates the overall RV21 quality scores compared to the aggregate Residence score excluding RV21⁴.

⁴ Data for the Apr-Jun 2022 quarter is missing as a business decision was made not to quality assess this particular quarter. Instead [qualitative analysis was conducted on a sample of 'Settled' RV21 applications](#). No issues were found for all 30 applications.



Figure 7. Quality Scores of RV21 vs Other Resident Visas by Quarter/Year



83. Over the Phase 1 period, RV21 visa decision quality was significantly higher than the aggregate Residence score. Quality scores then matched the aggregate Residence score trend from the Jul-Sep 22 quarter onwards; where a majority of the applications were assessed on ADEPT, in Phase 2.

84. The trend shows that visa decision quality for RV21 was not only maintained throughout each quarter but actually performed better over Phase 1 of the programme (Dec 21-Mar 22).

85. Additionally, it may also indicate that visa applications decided in Phase 2 were of less quality than those decided in Phase 1. This may be attributable to the ADEPT “teething issues” rather than the RV21 programme. While this is a good result, further analysis can be conducted to identify any potential patterns of errors.

86. The overall score is comprised of four domains: Instructions, Risk, Processes and Rationale. Figure 8 illustrates comparisons with all other Residence applications across the four domains over the five above-named quarters. Generally, a score above 90% is indicative of a good score.

87. Adherence to Residence instructions was good. Following operational processes (Processes) and documenting the reasons for a decision (Rationale) were generally poor, however the RV21 sampled scored better than the other Residence applications. No RV21 specific patterns were identified.

88. The RV21 Risk domain was the only domain that achieved a lower score than the other Resident applications (albeit still both above 90% so still regarded as a good score). Only 14 applications of the 152 had one or more risk related errors. Seven of the 14 were related to insufficient mitigation of employer risks, relevant for scarce and skilled RV21 visa subtypes. Most were regarding the



immigration officer not providing sufficient reasons for how they had mitigated an identified risk. This risk error was observed in Phase 2 as well as Phase 1 of the programme.

Figure 8. Quality Scores of RV21 vs Other Resident Visas by Domain



89. Overall, visa decision quality was upheld for RV21 decisions despite the significant changes to visa assessment processes, and the RV21 programme can be deemed a success for this objective as quality was not adversely impacted.

Customer Experience

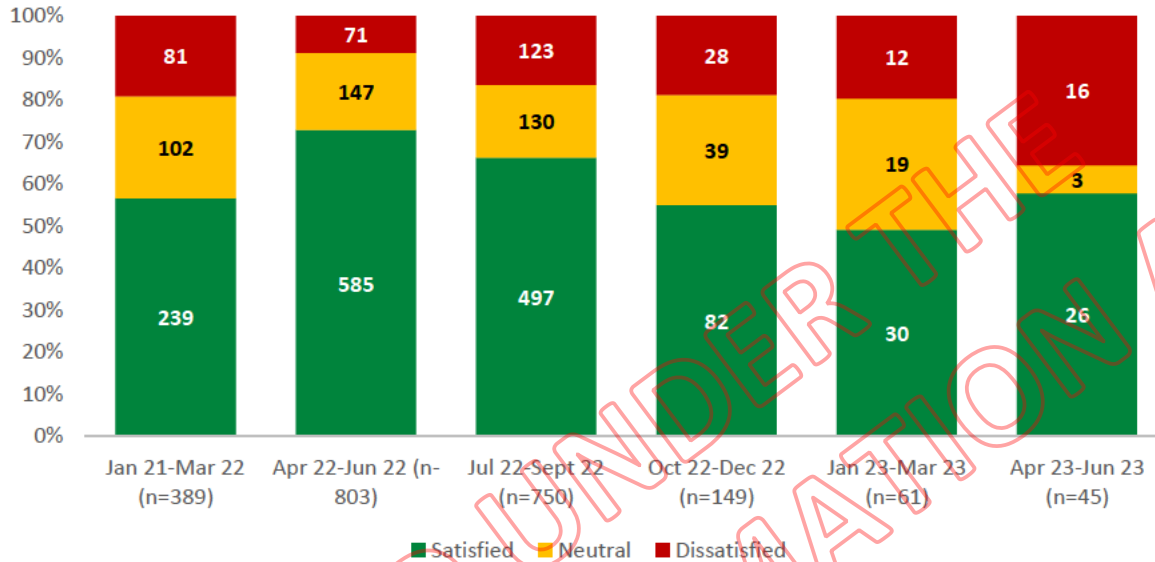
Customer Experience Survey

90. The CXS measures visa applicants' experience with the entire INZ application process. It's conducted monthly and INZ reports are updated quarterly⁵.

⁵ Data is collected and analysed by the Migration Evidence and Insights Team within DDI.



Figure 9. Monthly graph of Customer Satisfaction with the INZ Application Process from Dec 2021 to May 2023.



91. Figure 9 illustrates satisfaction with the overall INZ application process between December 2021 and May 2023 on a quarterly basis.

92. The Jan 21-Mar 22 quarter generally represents Phase 1 applications. 55% of applicants were either satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience of their RV21 application.

93. The quarter with the highest proportion of satisfied RV21 customers (73%) was in the Apr 22-Jun 22 quarter. This quarter coincides with the introduction of Phase 2. Therefore, processing applications on ADEPT initially saw an increase in the proportion of customers who were satisfied with the processing of their RV21 application.

94. From October 2022 onwards, because of the lower number of RV21 applications relative to earlier quarters, the results become less reliable, as the margin of error is higher. Even though the percentage of satisfied customers from October 2022 onwards (55%, 50%, and 58% across the three quarters) is lower than the previous three quarters, it would not be acceptable to conclude that customer satisfaction decreased over time, as the sample is not representative.

95. Overall satisfaction is only aspect of the CXS. Figure 10 compares customer experience of RV21 applicants and all other visa products along several key measures including: ease of applying, transparency around timeliness, confidence in knowing the status of the application, and the actual time it took to process the application. Data prior to July 2022 was not available at the time of analysis however selecting from July 2022 onwards means that Phase 2 had already been introduced for some time.

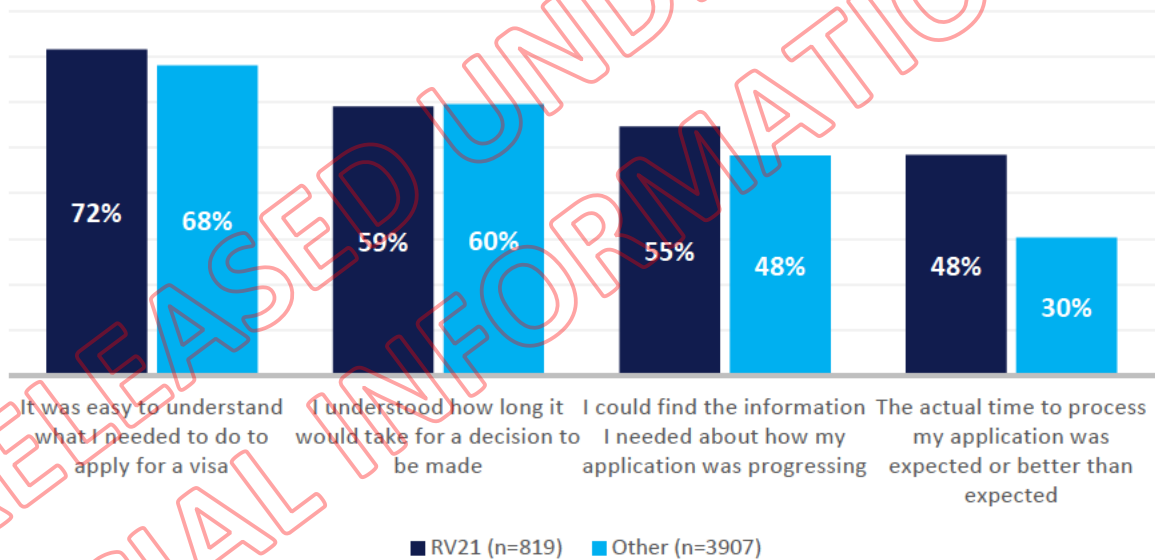
96. There doesn't appear to be any significant differences that sets the RV21 programme apart from the general customer experience across the four dimensions, apart from the measure relating to application processing times. 48% of the sampled RV21 applicants rated the actual application



processing time as expected or better than expected, compared to only 30% of all other visa applicants.

97. As RV21 Phase 2 applications were decided in ADEPT, and most other visa types are assessed on other platforms, ADEPT may be a contributing factor in the increase across some of these dimensions. Although this is a positive result when conducting comparative analysis, it may be of concern that less than 1 in 2 customers feel that the time taken to process applications are less than expected. The Migration Evidence and Insights Team has independently found that timeliness is a key explanatory factor of overall customer satisfaction.

Figure 10. Customer Experience of Measures of Satisfaction by Selected Dimensions between July 2022 and June 2023



98. There is an argument that INZ would have expected higher rates of customer satisfaction throughout the programme’s lifecycle, given the priority and effort applied to the RV21 programme relative to other INZ products, and INZ’s recent strategic refocus on customers. For example, the difference in satisfaction for the dimension relating to the ease of understanding what was needed to be done to apply for a visa, might have been expected to be higher, given how simple the visa criteria was. This measure may have been related to ADEPT user interface bugs where the status would incorrectly show “Waiting on you (the applicant)” when the application had already been submitted, with no further actions required from the applicant. No formal objectives around any customer satisfaction measures were set however.

99. The CXS is only one channel for customer insights. The Complaints and Feedback channel is another medium for analysis of customer satisfaction.



Complaints and Feedback

- 100. The Central Feedback Team (CFT) is the central point of entry for all feedback to INZ, including complaints, compliments, and suggestions. All feedback is managed through the Complaints and Feedback System (CFS); a set of processes and tools including a cloud platform of the same name.
- 101. Between 31 December 2021 and 30 June 2023, CFT received 612 complaints relating to RV21. Which approximately equates to one complaint for every 174 RV21 applications. In contrast, The CFT received one complaint for every 80 applications⁶ over the same period.
- 102. Proportionate to the respective application volumes, the CFT received less than half the number of RV21 complaints than what is normally received. It follows that complaint volumes for RV21 were indeed lower. This evidence from the CFT channel suggests that RV21 customers had a better INZ experience than customers of other product types.
- 103. Not all complaints are explored, because CFT do not investigate issues that relate to the decision-making aspect of an INZ. For example the extent of weight put on one or more factors, or that the decision was not fair. Out of the 612 RV21 related complaints, 296 (48%) were accepted for further investigation by INZ.
- 104. Figure 11 illustrates the total number of complaints received for each month since the RV21 programme commenced, distinguishing between those complaints which were accepted and not accepted.

Figure 11. Monthly Number of Accepted and Not Accepted RV21 Complaints from Dec 2021 to Jun 2023.

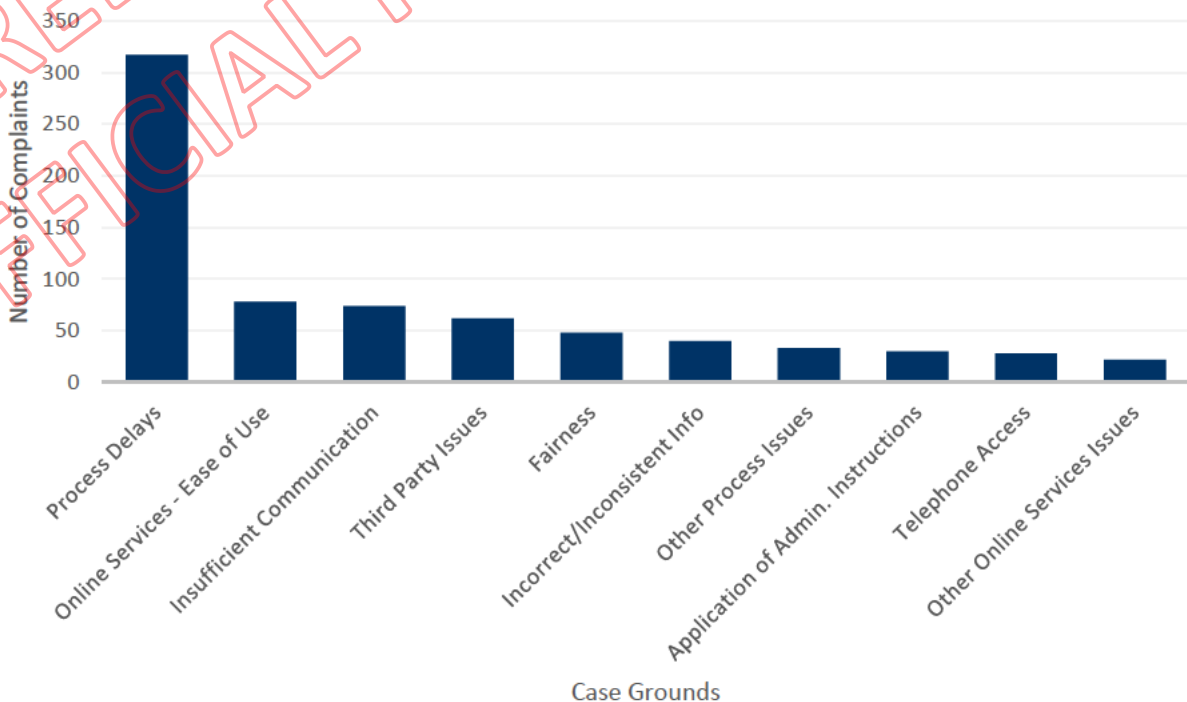


⁶ Application types include all visitor, student, work, permanent residence and residence types, while excluding RV2021



105. Increases are noted in both the accepted and non-accepted complaints cohorts, although the increase in non-accepted complaints appear much higher. There appears to be a stark increase in the number of incoming complaints from August 2022 onwards.
106. August 2022 coincides with two key milestones: the Phase 2 application submission window closing (31 July 2022), and the New Zealand border fully reopening (1 August 2022).
107. It may be that customers are more likely to use CFS when they are unable to contact INZ through the appropriate channel. As the border reopened in August 2022, INZ would have received a spike in the number of incoming calls to the Immigration Contact Centre (ICC), and therefore the increased wait times may have ‘forced’ RV21 customers to enquire on their application via the CFT channel instead. A large majority of the complaints that were not accepted for investigation would have been these “rerouted” queries and concerns, which explains the increase in non-investigated complaints.
108. However, August 2022 also marks an increase in investigated complaints. Analysing complaints at the ‘case ground’ level provides an understanding of why RV21 customers were complaining.
109. The CFT notes every issue (i.e. case ground) of the complaint, including for the complaints which are not investigated. Usually, complaints will contain multiple grounds. Figure 12 shows the top 10 highest number of grounds for RV21 complaints regardless of whether the complaint was accepted or not accepted.

Figure 12. Number of Complaints by Top 10 RV21 Case Grounds





110. Process delays are overwhelmingly the issue that most RV21 customers complained about, with half of all complaints containing some dissatisfaction with the time taken to process an application. This is not an extraordinary finding, as delays are the most common case ground overall.
111. Additional reports from processing offices indicated that the extension of the timeliness objective from December 2022 to June 2023 as well as the decision to prioritise some applicant skills over others led to decreases in customer satisfaction.
112. Taking into both sources of data from the CXS and CFT, it appears that customer satisfaction with the RV21 product was more positive than negative.

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<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Responsible</i>	<i>Description of change</i>
1.0	11 Aug 23	Divesh Prakash	Initial Draft
1.1	15 Aug 23	Divesh Prakash	Second Draft
2.0	25 Aug 23	Divesh Prakash	Final Draft
3.0	29 Aug 23	Divesh Prakash	Final

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