



Mapping Social Cohesion

The Scanlon Foundation surveys **2015**

Professor Andrew Markus



Copies of this report can be accessed and downloaded at
<http://monash.edu/mapping-population/>

ISBN: 978-0-9874195-9-0
Published 2015

This work is copyright. Apart for any use permitted under the
Copyright Act 1968, no part of it may be reproduced by any process
without written permission from the publisher. Requests and inquiries
concerning reproduction rights should be directed to the publisher:

ACJC, Faculty of Arts
Monash University
Building H, Level 8, Caulfield campus
900 Dandenong Road
Caulfield East
Victoria 3145
Australia

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	5
WEIGHTING OF SURVEY RESULTS	6
CONTEXT: AUSTRALIA IN 2015.....	7
WHAT IS SOCIAL COHESION?	12
THE SCANLON-MONASH INDEX (SMI) OF SOCIAL COHESION	13
RANKING OF ISSUES	20
EXPERIENCE OF DISCRIMINATION	23
TRUST AND VOLUNTARY WORK.....	26
DEMOCRACY	28
IMMIGRATION.....	34
ASYLUM SEEKERS	38
MULTICULTURALISM.....	41
GENERATIONS	44
AUSTRALIA'S STATES.....	51
CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE BALANCE OF AUSTRALIAN OPINION	58
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	64
CREDITS	64

Executive summary

This report presents the findings of the eighth Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion national survey, conducted in June-July 2015. The report builds on the knowledge gained through the seven earlier Scanlon Foundation national surveys (2007, 2009-2014) which provide, **for the first time in Australian social research, a series of detailed surveys on social cohesion, immigration and population issues.** Together with Scanlon Foundation local area and sub-group surveys, fifteen surveys with over 25,000 respondents have been conducted since 2007. The project also tracks the findings of other Australian and international surveys on population and social cohesion issues.

Key findings

- The Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion (SMI) has moved in the strongest positive direction since the Index was established in 2007, although it is still at a relatively low level.
- The Scanlon Foundation survey asks respondents for their view of 'the most important issue facing Australia today'; change has occurred in the ranking of national security and social issues, which are now both second ranked (the economy remains first).
- Concern over immigration remains at the lowest level recorded by the Scanlon Foundation surveys; attitudes towards asylum seekers arriving by boat are also little changed since 2014.
- The high level of support for the proposition that 'multiculturalism has been good for Australia' has been maintained.
- There are significant differences in attitudes of young adults, the middle-aged and older Australians, evident in response to questions on national identity and cultural diversity.
- Significant difference is also evident across Australia's regions. There is lower support outside capital cities for immigration, resettlement opportunities for asylum seekers and cultural maintenance. Difference in attitude is also evident in comparison of Australia's major cities.

Stable and highly cohesive

The Scanlon Foundation surveys, together with a number of international indicators, find that **Australia remains a stable and highly cohesive society.** International indicators which rank Australia at or near the top of developed countries in terms of living standard, education, health, and quality of life, include the OECD Better Life Index, the United Nations Human Development Index, and the *Economist* Global Liveability Ranking. The 2011-12 wave of the World Values Survey indicated that 70% of Australians were 'very proud' of their nationality, compared with 56% of Americans, 40% of Swedes, 29% of Russians, 24% of Germans, and 21% of Dutch.

The 2015 Scanlon Foundation survey found **that 93% of respondents have a 'sense of belonging in Australia' either to a 'great extent' or 'some extent'.** While sense of belonging 'to a great extent' declined from 73% in 2011 to 65%-66% in 2013 and 2014, in 2015 it is at 69%; 91% of respondents agree with the proposition that 'in the modern world, maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important', and 89% indicate that they take 'pride in the Australian way of life and culture'.

The 2015 survey does not find significant increase in economic concerns. Economic issues are ranked first as the major problem facing Australia, but the proportion of respondents specifying the economy has not increased over the last four surveys. The proportion indicating that they are 'very worried' or 'worried' that they will lose their job 'in the next year or so' declined marginally from 14% in 2014 to 12% in 2015. There has been little change in the proportion indicating dissatisfaction with their 'present financial situation', 25% in 2013, 24% in 2014, and 24% in 2015.

Immigration

The 2014 survey found **relatively low concern over issues of immigration and cultural diversity.** Just 35% considered that the immigration intake was 'too high', the lowest recorded in the Scanlon Foundation surveys.

In 2015 an additional question considered opinion on 'the entry of skilled workers on short-term visas'. The balance of opinion reflects views on the current immigration intake: 54% considered that the entry of such workers was good for Australia, 39% disagreed.

Asylum seekers

Views on policy towards asylum seekers also remained unchanged in 2015:

- 24% were of the view that asylum seekers arriving by boat should be eligible for permanent settlement (24% in 2014);
- 31% that they should only be allowed to apply for temporary residence (30%);
- 9% that they should be 'kept in detention until they can be sent back' (10%)
- 33% that 'their boats should be turned back' (31%).

On the basis of earlier findings, it is likely that negative opinion reflects views on mode of arrival, not on providing opportunities for refugee resettlement. Scanlon Foundation surveys between 2010-2012 asked respondents for their view on the Humanitarian program, which was explained as resettling 'refugees who have been assessed overseas and found to be victims of persecution and in need of help'. A large majority, in the range 67%-75%, indicated that they supported the Humanitarian program.

Multiculturalism

The Scanlon Foundation surveys have found a **consistently high level of agreement with the proposition that 'multiculturalism has been good for Australia'**: 84% in 2013, 85% in 2014 and 86% in 2015.

The 2015 survey provides further evidence on the meaning of multiculturalism in Australia. In Europe, multiculturalism is often seen as a policy of failure, with cultural difference entrenched in immigrant communities which are removed from the main currents of national life. In Australia, multiculturalism is seen as a success in facilitating integration.

Bivariate analysis finds that close to two-thirds of respondents are in support of both Australians and immigrants adapting to a changing Australian society, or of the view that Australians should 'do more to learn about the customs and heritage of ethnic and cultural groups in this country'. A minority, close to one in four respondents, consider that it is up to immigrants to accommodate themselves to life in Australia.

An increasing proportion also indicates acceptance of government assistance to ethnic groups to maintain their cultures and traditions. While such policy divides opinion and is supported by a minority, support has increased from 32% in 2007, 36% in 2012, to 41% in 2015.

Trust and democracy

When asked about levels of personal trust, those agreeing that 'most people can be trusted' have been in the range 45% to 55% across the Scanlon Foundation surveys; in 2015 personal trust was at the midpoint of the range, at 50%, the same level as in 2014.

There is considerable variance in the level of trust in institutions, consistent with the findings of the 2013 survey. But **lowest levels of trust are indicated in the federal parliament, trade unions and political parties.**

Scanlon Foundation surveys **since 2009** have recorded a **decline of trust in the federal parliament**. In 2009, 48% of respondents indicated that the government in Canberra can be trusted 'almost always' or 'most of the time', in 2015 a much lower 30%. There was an expectation that following the electoral victory of the Coalition government in 2013 there would be significant increase in trust, on the pattern of the increase following the change of government in 2007. This expectation was not realised.

While in 2015 a lower proportion of respondents indicated that the quality of government is 'the most important problem' facing Australia, **just 16% consider that the system of government 'works fine as it is'**, 43% that it 'needs minor change', 27% 'major change', and 11% that it should be replaced.

So what, if anything, has changed in 2015?

The Scanlon-Monash Index

An overview of change is provided by the Scanlon-Monash Index, which finds that in 2015 the level of social cohesion has moved in a positive direction. **The 2015 Index is at 92.5, up from 89.5 in 2014, although the Index is at the third lowest point in the eight surveys (2007-2014).** The three point increase between 2014 and 2015 represents the **largest positive movement in the Index**, whose major movement has been negative, down by 8.6 points in 2010 and 5.9 points in 2013.

Within the five specific domains of social cohesion covered by the Index – belonging, worth, social justice, participation, and acceptance/rejection – **largest change is in acceptance/rejection (up 10.7 points)**, indicating lowered experience of discrimination, heightened acceptance of immigration and cultural diversity, and more positive future expectations, **and in the domain of participation, up by 6.1 points.**

When respondents were asked if they had experienced discrimination 'because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion', the proportion reporting discrimination peaked at 19% in 2013; in 2015 it was lower at 15%, but markedly above the 9% recorded in 2007. It is important to note that a national survey provides an average for the whole population, its finding does not necessarily reflect the experience of sub-groups or minorities. In 2015 two additional approaches are being taken to supplement the national survey: the holding of 50 focus groups discussions and an online survey available in English and 19 community languages. The findings of this research are planned for release in May 2016.

The 2015 Index registered decline in one of the five domains of social cohesion, social justice and equity, which has fallen from 98.0 in 2013, to 93.7 in 2014, and to 90.6 in 2015. The decline reflects heightened concern over lack of support for those on low incomes, the gap between rich and poor, lessened economic opportunity, and low trust in government.

Ranking of issues

The first question in the Scanlon Foundation survey is open-ended and asks respondents for their view 'of the most important problem facing Australia today'.

Issues concerned with **the economy**, including employment and poverty, have consistently and by a large margin ranked as the most important, mentioned by 26% of respondents in 2011, 33% in 2013, and 33% in 2015.

While the top ranking of the economy is constant, there has been considerable change in second ranked issues.

In 2015, the most significant change in ranking was in the proportion of respondents who specified **national security and terrorism**, which **increased from less than one per cent in 2014 to 10% in 2015**. The importance attached to this issue has been registered in other surveys, including a poll conducted by the Scanlon Foundation in October 2014, the March 2015 ANU Poll, and the August 2015 Essential Report.

Significant increase was also registered in reference to **social issues**, including childcare, family breakdown and drug use, nominated by 5% in 2012, 8% in 2014, and 11% in 2015. A related issue, housing affordability, also recorded increase.

On the other hand, the proportion of respondents nominating **quality of government** as 'the most important problem', declined from 15% in 2014 to 9% in 2015.

The issue of **asylum seekers** arriving by boat increased in importance between 2010-13, nominated by 6% in 2010, 12% in 2012 and in 2013; in 2014 it fell to 4% and has remained close to that level in 2015. The poor treatment of asylum seekers was indicated as 'the most important problem' by 4% in 2012, 1% in 2014 and 2% in 2015.

Generations

Analysis was undertaken across three age groups: young adults (20-29), middle-aged (40-49) and older Australians (60-69).

In response to a number of questions there was little variation; for example, in response to the proposition that in Australia, 'in the long run, hard work brings a better life', 80% of older respondents, 81% of middle-aged and 79% of young adults, 'agree' or 'strongly agree'; similarly, there was little difference in level of trust in the federal government and in political parties.

On questions of national identity, there was marked difference between young adults and the other age groups at the level of 'strong agreement'. Thus 67% of older Australians and 64% of middle-aged 'strongly agree' with the 'importance of maintaining the Australian way of life', a much lower 39% of young adults.

Young adults are consistently more accepting of immigration and cultural diversity; 65% of respondents in their '20s agreed with the provision of government assistance to ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions, compared to 34% middle-aged and 31% of older respondents. A relatively high proportion of young adults support the current immigration level and the entry of skilled workers on short-term visas, and close to twice as many, although still a minority (38%), agree that asylum seekers arriving by boat should have a pathway to permanent residence.

Australia's states

There is a consistent pattern of **lower support outside capital cities for immigration, resettlement in Australia of asylum seekers arriving by boat, and for cultural diversity**. The extent of difference is, however, not of such magnitude that minorities are transformed into majorities.

The combined data from the eight Scanlon Foundation national surveys establishes that a higher proportion of residents outside the capitals agree that the immigration intake is 'too high', 44% compared to 36%; 35% outside the capitals favour the policy of turning back the boats of asylum seekers, compared to 25%; and a lower proportion are positive in their attitude toward those of the Muslim faith, 26% compared to 32%.

Intra-state analysis finds that Victoria records the largest divergence between its capital and other regions, and Western Australians outside Perth and South Australians outside Adelaide indicate relatively low levels of positive response to questions on immigration and cultural diversity.

Comparison of the five mainland capitals and Canberra finds three groupings: the **highest level of positive response is in Melbourne and Canberra, the lowest in Brisbane and Perth**. Thus 48% in Melbourne and Canberra 'strongly agree' that multiculturalism has been good for Australia, 39%-42% in Adelaide and Sydney, 35%-37% in Brisbane and Perth.

Cultural diversity and the balance of Australian opinion

An issue which from time to time engages public debate centres on a negatively framed question: **'is Australia a racist country?'** The attempt to provide a balanced understanding of Australian opinion, using the eleven questions in the 2015 Scanlon Foundation survey on immigration and cultural diversity, finds five thematic groupings.

[1] The lowest level of negative response is to questions concerning **local areas and multiculturalism**. For questions on neighbourhood the strongly negative is just 2%-3%, the strongly positive is in the range 17%-24%. The largest proportion, in the middle, tends to the positive. In response to a question on the benefit of multiculturalism for Australia, the strongly negative is 4%, strongly positive is 43%, with the middle again favouring the positive by a large margin.

[2] Questions on **discrimination in immigration policy** on the basis of race, ethnicity or religion finds 7%-9% strongly in support, 39%-41% strongly opposed, with the largest proportion in the middle in opposition to discrimination.

[3] Attitudes towards those of the **Muslim faith** finds more evenly divided opinion. Almost the same proportion are strongly negative (11%) as strongly positive (10%); the highest proportion (47%) indicate that they are 'neither positive nor negative'.

[4] General statements, which may be interpreted as a **rejection of cultural diversity** find relatively high levels in agreement, close to one in four respondents. Thus when presented with the proposition that immigrants 'should change their behaviour to be more like Australians', 27% strongly agree; a similar proportion, 25%, strongly oppose government assistance to ethnic minorities for cultural maintenance.

[5] The highest proportion favouring the strong negative is in response to policy on **asylum seekers**: 41% indicate agreement that boats should be turned back or arrivals should be detained and deported. On this question there is evidence of a shift over the last five years from the middle to the strong negative.

Another approach, which averages the eleven questions, finds that the strongly negative is close to 10%, the strongly positive close to 24%, and the middle close to 65%. The strongly positive thus outnumber the strongly negative by a substantial proportion, a ratio of 2.5 to 1.

The analysis demonstrates that there is no simple or definitive determination of the balance of Australian opinion: answers are dependent on specific questions and approach to analysis.

Australian opinion is distinctive in the majority support of immigration and multiculturalism – in contrast with Europe. When asked concerning their experience of cultural diversity in their neighbourhoods, less than 5% indicate strong negative opinion. **The small minority of less than 10% that strongly supports racial or religious discrimination in immigrant selection indicates the extent of attitudinal change since the ending of the White Australia policy in the 1970s.**

Scope and methodology

The 2015 Scanlon Foundation national survey is the eighth in the series, following earlier surveys in 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. The first five national surveys adopted a uniform methodology and all were administered by Melbourne-based Social Research Centre.

Several changes were made in the conduct of the 2013 survey. For the first time, the national survey used a dual-frame sample methodology comprising both randomly generated (RDD) landline telephone numbers and randomly generated mobile phone numbers. This meant that, in-line with contemporary best practice, the survey included the views of the currently estimated 29% of adults who live in households without a landline telephone connection on which to make and receive calls (the so-called mobile phone-only population). The sample blend used for the 2015 survey was 60% landline numbers and 40% mobile phone numbers. This blend yielded 224 interviews with the mobile phone-only population (14.9% of the sample) – enough to draw inferences about this group.

Previous surveys employed a sample of 2,000 respondents; in 2014, the national sample was 1,500. The larger sample in past years was designed to enable analysis of sub-groups. Given that the earlier national surveys provide a database reference of 12,780 respondents, the 1,500 sample is adequate for interpretation of current trends within sub-groups. This sample base is expected to yield a maximum sampling error of approximately plus or minus three percentage points.

There are three dimensions to the 2015 Scanlon Foundation social cohesion research program. The national survey, here reported; an online survey that has been translated into 19 languages; and some 50 focus groups, conducted in local areas surveyed in previous years. It is planned to report the findings of the second and third components in May 2016.

The 2015 surveys employed the questionnaire structure common to the 2007-2014 Scanlon Foundation surveys, with some variation in questions. **The 2015 national survey included additional questions on immigration policy, cultural diversity, trust in institutions, forms of discrimination experienced, and religious identification**, while questions about interest in politics, attitudes towards political systems and democracy, and level of contact with police and the law courts were removed. The eighteen questions required for calculation of the Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion have been retained in all the national surveys.

The Social Research Centre administers the national survey. Interviews are conducted by telephone (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing). Landline respondents are selected using the 'next birthday' method, for the mobile component the person answering. In addition to English, respondents have the option of completing the survey in one of the six most commonly spoken community languages: Vietnamese, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Italian, Arabic and Lebanese.

The 2015 national survey was administered from 16 June to 14 July. It comprised 65 questions (50 substantive and 15 demographic) and **took on average 16.2 minutes to complete**, 16.4 by landline and 16.0 by mobile. **The response rate for the national survey was 54%, compared to 53% in 2014.**

Full technical details of surveying procedure and the questionnaire is provided in the methodological report, available for download on the Mapping Australia's Population internet site.¹

¹ Mapping Australia's Population, <http://monash.edu/mapping-population/>

Weighting of survey results

Survey data is weighted to bring the achieved respondent profile into line with Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) demographic indicators, to adjust for the chance of being sampled in the survey.

Rim weighting developed by The Social Research Centre was used to weight the survey. This procedure makes possible weighting of data by the following variables: geographic location, gender, age by education, country of birth and telephone status.

A two-stage weighting procedure was utilised. This involved calculating:

- A design weight to adjust for the varying chances of selection of sample members; and
- A post-stratification weight used to align the data with known population parameters.

Where possible, target proportions were taken from the 2011 ABS Census. The following variables were weighted: state, gender, age (18–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55 plus) by education (university degree, no university degree), country of birth (Australia; overseas English-speaking country [Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States]; overseas non-English speaking country).

Context: Australia in 2015

Economic conditions and the labour market

By international standards, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) had a relatively minor impact in Australia. In 2008-09 the Rudd Labor government introduced a fiscal stimulus package of over \$50 billion to offset the potential domestic impact of a slowing world economy. As a result of government action and continued high level of demand for commodities, particularly from China, Australia experienced only two quarters of negative growth. The economy grew by 2.0% in 2009-10, 2.3% in 2010-11, 3.7% in 2011-12, 2.5%, in 2012-13, 2.5% in 2013-14, and 2.4% in 2014-15. In the June 2015 quarter growth in the Australian economy slowed to 0.2% in seasonally adjusted terms.² **With average Australian growth considered to be 3.25%, four of the last five years have been below average.**

Unemployment in March 2008, before the GFC, stood at 4.1%. It peaked in June 2009 at 5.8%, considerably lower than had been anticipated; by June 2010 it had fallen to 5.2% and in January-June 2011 to 5.0%. In the first half of 2012, unemployment was in the range 5.1%-5.2%. Unemployment began to increase gradually in the second half of 2012: in October it was 5.3%, in March 2013 5.5% and in June 2013 5.7%. **In June 2014 the seasonally adjusted unemployment reached 6.1% and was at the same level in June 2015.**³

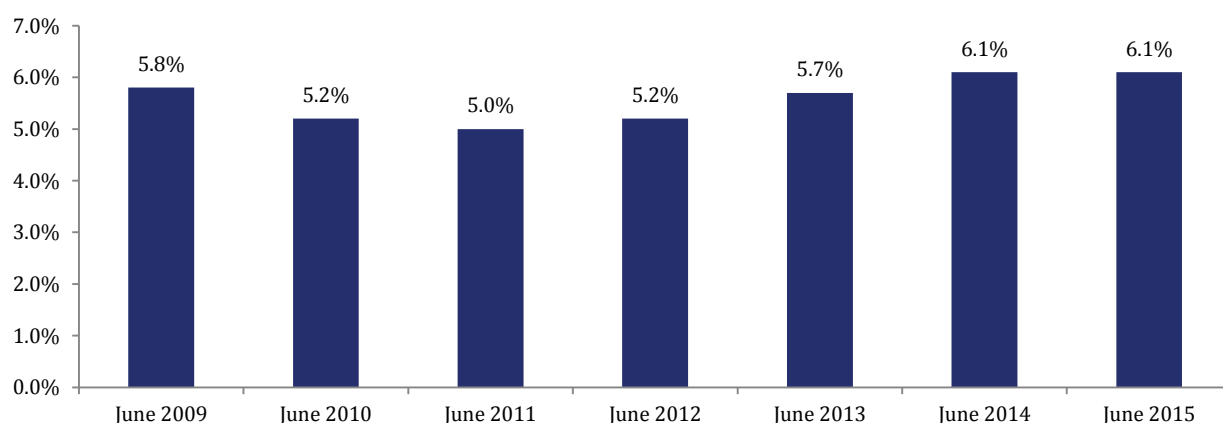
The Australian unemployment rate of 6.1% in June 2015 compared to an average of 9.6% in the 28 countries of the European Union, with a peak of 25% in Greece and 22.4% in Spain. Unemployment was 5.3% in the United States, 5.6% in the United Kingdom, 12.5% in Italy, 10.3% in France and 4.7% in Germany.⁴

Australian seasonally adjusted unemployment in June 2015 was lowest in New South Wales at 5.8%, highest in South Australia at 8.1%; the level in other states was 5.9% in Western Australia, 6.0% in Victoria, 6.1% in Queensland and 6.5% in Tasmania.

The seasonally adjusted labour force participation rate in June 2015 was 64.8%, the same level as in June 2014. The labour force participation rate for males in June 2015 was 71.1%, for females 58.9%; this was little changed from the level in August 2014, when it was 70.9% for males and 58.5% for females.

At the time of the 2015 Scanlon Foundation surveys there was media discussion of economic uncertainty, focused on the ending of the mining boom, the deficit position of the Australian budget, the continuing European sovereign debt crisis, and the decline and volatility in the share market, linked to concerns over slowing growth in China and its potential impact on the Australian economy. Discussion within the trade union movement and the media has also focused on the potential impact on the Australian labour market of the China Free Trade Agreement and the potential exploitation of workers on long-stay visas.⁵

Figure 1: Unemployment rate, seasonally adjusted, 2009-2015



²ABS, Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product, June 2015, Catalogue No. 5206.0, Table 3

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Australia, August 2015, Catalogue No. 6202.0, Table 1

⁴ OECD, Short-term Labor Market Statistics, <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=36324>

⁵ See ABC News, Fact Check, Does the China Free Trade Agreement threaten Australian jobs?, updated 13 August 2015; Adele Ferguson, 'It's time to corner worker exploitation', *The Age*, 26 September 2015

Population growth

Australia experienced above average population growth in the years 2007-2009. The rate of growth declined after reaching a peak in 2008, with the decline reversed in 2011.

Whereas **annual population growth** averaged 1.4% between 1970–2010, between 2006-2009 annual growth was at or above 1.6%, with a peak of 2.1% in 2008-09. The population grew by an estimated 1.6% in 2009-10, a much lower 1.4% in 2010-11. After increased growth of 1.7% in 2011-12 and 2012-13, **there was a decline to 1.5% in 2013-14, and to 1.4% in the year ended 31 March 2015.**

Population growth is uneven across Australia. For the twelve months ended 31 March 2015, Victoria's population grew by 1.7%, Western Australia 1.4%, New South Wales 1.4%, Queensland 1.3%, ACT 1.3%, South Australia 0.8%, Tasmania 0.3%, and Northern Territory 0.2%.

The preliminary estimated resident population of Australia at 31 March 2015 was 23,714,300 persons, an increase of 316,000 persons over the preceding twelve months. Since June 2001, when the estimated population was 19.4 million, there has been an increase of close to 4.3 million.

There are two components of population growth: natural increase and net overseas migration (NOM), which represents the net gain of immigrants arriving less emigrants departing. Between 1975 and 2005 natural increase accounted for 58% of population growth. Since 2006, net overseas migration has been the major component. **NOM accounted for 67% of growth in 2008, a lower 55% in the 12 months ended 31 March 2015.**⁶ In 2008, NOM was 315,700 persons; it fell to 172,000 in 2010, a decline of 46% or 143,700 persons, then increased over the next two years. **In the year ended 31 March 2015, NOM was an estimated 173,100.**

The **major categories of temporary admissions** are overseas students, business visa holders (primarily visa subclass 457) and working holiday makers. The number of residents within these categories increased between 2009-2013, with the exception of overseas students, whose number declined from 386,528 to 257,780; **the decline in the number of overseas students is in large part explained by the marked decrease of Indian students**, from 91,920 in June 2009 to 30,403 in June 2013.

On 31 December 2014 there were 1.86 million temporary entrants and New Zealand citizens in Australia. This compares with 1.82 million on 31 December 2013, an increase of 2.3 per cent. Residents on long stay visas represent 7.9% of the estimated population and close to 10% of the workforce.

Within the permanent immigration program, the main categories are Skill, Family and Humanitarian. **Skill is the largest category, in recent years more than double the Family category.** The planning level for 2015-16 provides for 128,550 Skill stream places, 57,440 Family, and 13,750 Humanitarian.⁷

The **success of immigrants in gaining employment** is tracked by the Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants (CSAM). The June 2015 report, covering the years 2013-2014, indicates that six-months after arrival almost 90% of Skill Stream Primary Applicants reported that they had jobs, compared with 63% of spouses of Skill Stream Primary Applicants, and 58% of Family Stream immigrants. After eighteen months in Australia, reported employment was at 93% for Skill Stream Primary Applicants, 68% for spouses of Skill Stream Applicants, and 63% for Family Stream immigrants. (See Table 3)

While almost all Skill Stream Primary Applicants reported that they were in employment, a substantial minority were not in the occupations that had enabled them to gain permanent residence in Australia. At both six months and eighteen months after arrival, one quarter were in employment classified not highly skilled, including semi/ low skilled jobs.⁸

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Demographic Statistics, March Quarter 2015, Catalogue No.3101.0 (24 Sept. 2015)

⁷ For further information, see Fact Sheet, Migration Program planning levels, Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

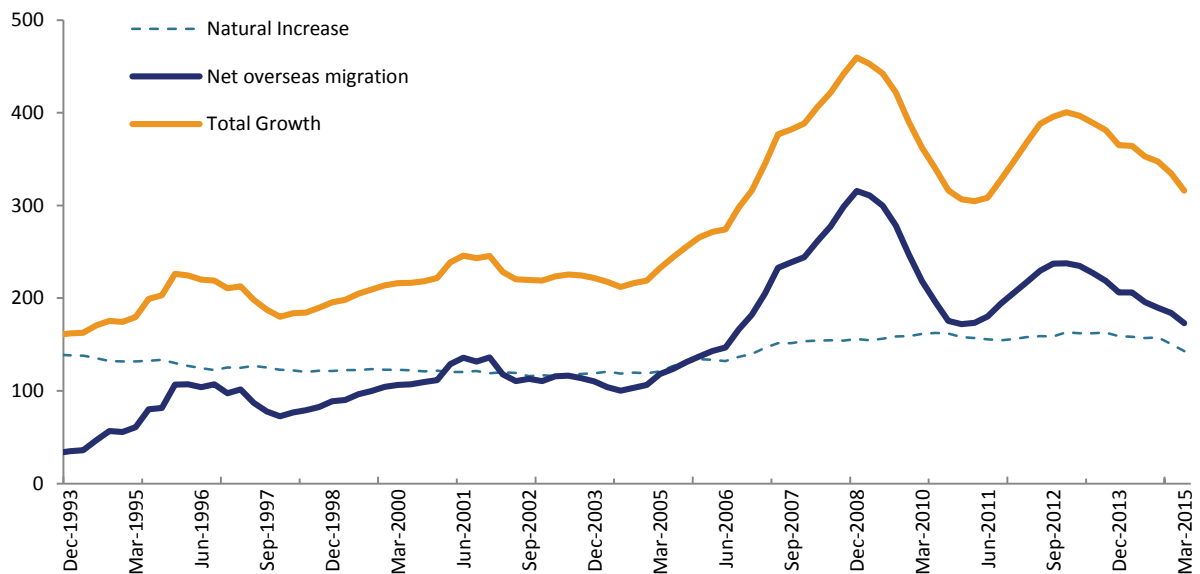
⁸ Department of Immigration and Border Control, Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants. Cohort 1 Report (Change in Outcomes) June 2015, Commonwealth of Australia, 2015, p.12

Table 1: Population growth and components of growth, Australia 2007-2014

At 30 June	Natural Increase	Net Overseas Migration	Growth on previous year	Growth on previous year
	'000	'000	'000	%
2008	148.8	277.3	368.5	1.8
2009	156.3	299.9	442.5	2.1
2010	162.6	196.1	340.1	1.6
2011	155.7	180.4	308.3	1.4
2012 (estimate)	158.8	229.4	388.2	1.7
2013 (estimate)	162.0	227.1	389.1	1.7
2014 (estimate)	157.0	195.8	352.8	1.5

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics*, March quarter 2015, catalogue number 3101.0 (released 24 September 2015, Table 1. Differences between growth on previous year and the sum of the components of population change are due to intercensal error (corrections derived from latest census data).

Figure 2: Components of annual population growth, 1993–2015



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics*, March quarter 2015, catalogue number 3101.0 (released 24 September 2015).

Table 2: Long-stay visa holders resident in Australia, main categories, and New Zealand citizens resident in Australia, 2009-2014

At 30 June (*31 December)	Overseas students	Business visa (subclass 457)	Working holiday makers	New Zealand citizens (subclass 444 visa)
2009	386,528	146,624	103,482	548,256
2010	382,660	127,648	99,388	566,815
2011	332,700	131,341	111,990	600,036
2012	307,060	162,270	136,590	646,090
2013*	257,780	169,070	178,980	625,370
2014*	303,170	167,910	160,940	623,440

Source: Department of Immigration and Border Control, Temporary entrants and New Zealand citizens in Australia as at 31 December 2014; see also Mapping Australia's Population, Statistical Trend

Table 3: Employment outcomes by visa stream (six and eighteen months after arrival or visa grant), 2013-2014

	All surveyed migrants	Skill Stream – Primary Applicant	Skill Stream – Migrating Unit Spouse	Family Stream – Partner Migrant	General population
Sample size	9,950	5,237	2,880	1,833	
After six months					
Employed	70.6	89.9	63.4	58.0	61.0
After eighteen months					
Employed	74.8	93.2	68.4	62.7	60.6

Source: Department of Immigration and Border Control, Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants. Cohort 1 Report (Change in Outcomes) June 2015, Commonwealth of Australia, 2015, Table 1.

Ethnic diversity

In 2011, 27% of the Australian population was born overseas and 20% born in Australia with at least one overseas-born parent, a total of 47%.⁹

There has been a gradual increase in the proportion overseas-born, from 23% in 2001 to 27% in 2011, an increase from 4.1 million in 2001 to 5.3 million in 2011.

The estimated 27% overseas-born ranks Australia first within the OECD among nations with populations over ten million. It compares with 20% overseas-born in Canada, 13% in Germany, 13% in the United States, 11% in the United Kingdom, and 12% in France. The average for the OECD is 12%.

A relatively high proportion of the overseas-born in Australia live in capital cities: 82% in 2011, compared to 66% of all people. In 2011, the overseas-born comprised an estimated 37% of the population of Perth, 36% of Sydney, 33% of Melbourne, 26% of Adelaide and Brisbane, and 14% of Hobart.

The overseas-born are also unevenly distributed in the capital cities, with concentrations above 50% in some Local Government Areas.

Data on language usage provides a fuller understanding of the extent of diversity than country of birth, as it captures the diversity among both first and second generation Australians. **In some suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne, where over 60% of the population is overseas-born, over 75% speak a language other than English in the home.** These suburbs include, in Sydney, Cabramatta (88%), Canley Vale (84%), Lakemba (84%); in Melbourne, Campbellfield (81%), Springvale (79%), Dallas (73%).

In 2011, of the overseas-born, the leading countries of birth were the United Kingdom (20.8%), New Zealand (9.1%), China (6.0%), India (5.6%), Vietnam and Italy (3.5%).

Over the last thirty years, an increasing proportion of immigrants have been drawn from the Asian region. In 2013-14 the leading country of birth for immigrants was India (21%), followed by China (14%) and the United Kingdom (12%). Of the top ten source countries, seven are in the Asian region and only 27% of the total is from OECD countries. Settler arrivals from New Zealand, who are not included in the Migration Programme, numbered 27,274, a marked decline from 41,230 in 2012-13.

Table 4: Top 10 countries of birth of the overseas-born population, 2011 (census)

Country of birth	Persons	%
United Kingdom	1,101,100	20.8
New Zealand	483,400	9.1
China	319,000	6.0
India	295,400	5.6
Italy	185,400	3.5
Vietnam	185,000	3.5
Philippines	171,200	3.2
South Africa	145,700	2.8
Malaysia	116,200	2.2
Germany	108,000	2.0
Elsewhere overseas	2,183,800	41.2
Total overseas-born	5,294,200	100

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Cultural Diversity In Australia, catalogue number 2071.0 (21 June 2012).

Table 5: Top 10 source countries, Migration Programme, 2012-2014

Country of birth	2012-13	2013-14
India	40,051	39,026
People's Republic of China	27,334	26,776
United Kingdom	21,711	23,220
Philippines	10,639	10,379
Pakistan	3,552	6,275
Ireland	5,209	6,171
Vietnam	5,339	5,199
South Africa	5,476	4,908
Nepal	4,107	4,364
Malaysia	5,151	4,207
Total OECD countries	50,365	51,114
Total (including Other)	190,000	190,000
New Zealand settlers	41,230	27,274

Source: Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Australia's Migration Trends 2013-14, page 25, Table 2.2

⁹ ABS, Cultural Diversity in Australia, cat. no. 2071.0, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2071.0main+features902012-2013>. Almost 1.6 million Australians did not state either their birth place or the parents' birthplace; they are excluded from this calculation.

What is social cohesion?

As a concept, social cohesion has a long tradition in academic enquiry. It is of fundamental importance when discussing the role of consensus and conflict in society. From the mid-1990s, interest in the dynamics of social cohesion grew amid concerns prompted by the impact of globalisation, economic change and fears fuelled by the 'war on terror'. There is, however, no agreed definition of social cohesion. Most current definitions dwell on intangibles, such as sense of belonging, attachment to the group, willingness to participate and to share outcomes.¹⁰ They do, however, include three common elements:

Shared vision: Most researchers maintain that social cohesion requires universal values, mutual respect and common aspirations or identity shared by their members.

A property of a group or community: Social cohesion describes a well-functioning core group or community in which there are shared goals and responsibilities and a readiness to co-operate with the other members.

A process: Social cohesion is generally viewed not simply as an outcome, but as a continuous and seemingly never-ending process of achieving social harmony.

Differences in definition concern the factors that enhance (and erode) the process of communal harmony, and the relative weight attached to the operation of specific factors. The key factors are:

Economic: Levels of unemployment and poverty, income distribution, population mobility, health, life satisfaction and sense of security, and government responsiveness to issues of poverty and disadvantage.

Political: Levels of political participation and social involvement, including the extent of voluntarism, the development of social capital, understood in terms of networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and co-operation for mutual benefit.

Socio-cultural: Levels of consensus and divergence (homogeneity and heterogeneity) on issues of local and national significance.

The Scanlon Foundation surveys adopt an eclectic, wide-ranging approach, influenced by the work of social scientists Jane Jenson and Paul Bernard, to incorporate five domains:

Belonging: Shared values, identification with Australia, trust.

Social justice and equity: Evaluation of national policies.

Participation: Voluntary work, political and co-operative involvement.

Acceptance and rejection, legitimacy: Experience of discrimination, attitudes towards minorities and newcomers.

Worth: Life satisfaction and happiness, future expectations.

¹⁰ See Andrew Markus and Liudmila Kirpitchenko, 'Conceptualising social cohesion', in James Jupp and John Nieuwenhuysen (eds), *Social Cohesion in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 21-32.

The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) of Social Cohesion

A nominal index of social cohesion has been developed using the findings of the 2007 national survey to provide baseline data. The following questions, validated by factor analysis, were employed to construct the index for the five domains of social cohesion:

Belonging: Indication of pride in the Australian way of life and culture; sense of belonging; importance of maintaining Australian way of life and culture.

Worth: Satisfaction with present financial situation and indication of happiness over the last year.

Social justice and equity: Views on the adequacy of financial support for people on low incomes; the gap between high and low incomes; Australia as a land of economic opportunity; trust in the Australian government.

Participation (political): Voted in an election; signed a petition; contacted a Member of Parliament; participated in a boycott; attended a protest.

Acceptance and rejection, legitimacy: The scale measures rejection, indicated by a negative view of immigration from many different countries; reported experience of discrimination in the last 12 months; disagreement with government support to ethnic minorities for maintenance of customs and traditions; feeling that life in three or four years will be worse.

After trialling several models, a procedure was adopted which draws attention to minor shifts in opinion and reported experience, rather than one which compresses or diminishes the impact of change by, for example, calculating the mean score for a set of responses.¹¹ **The purpose of the index is to heighten awareness of shifts in opinion which may call for closer attention and analysis.**

In 2015 the SMI has registered upward movement, an increase of 3 points compared to 2014, although the Index is at the third lowest point in the eight surveys (2007-2014). This is the largest upward movement recorded in the SMI, which on two occasions registered sharp downward movement (2010, 8.6 points; 2013, 5.9 points) and in four other years marginal upward movement, at an average of one point.

The 2015 SMI registered **higher scores in four of the five domains of social cohesion**. The largest upward movement is 10.7 in the domain of acceptance/rejection, matching the level in 2010. The domain that measures political participation increased by 6.1 points, while there was marginal upward movement in the domains of belonging and worth.

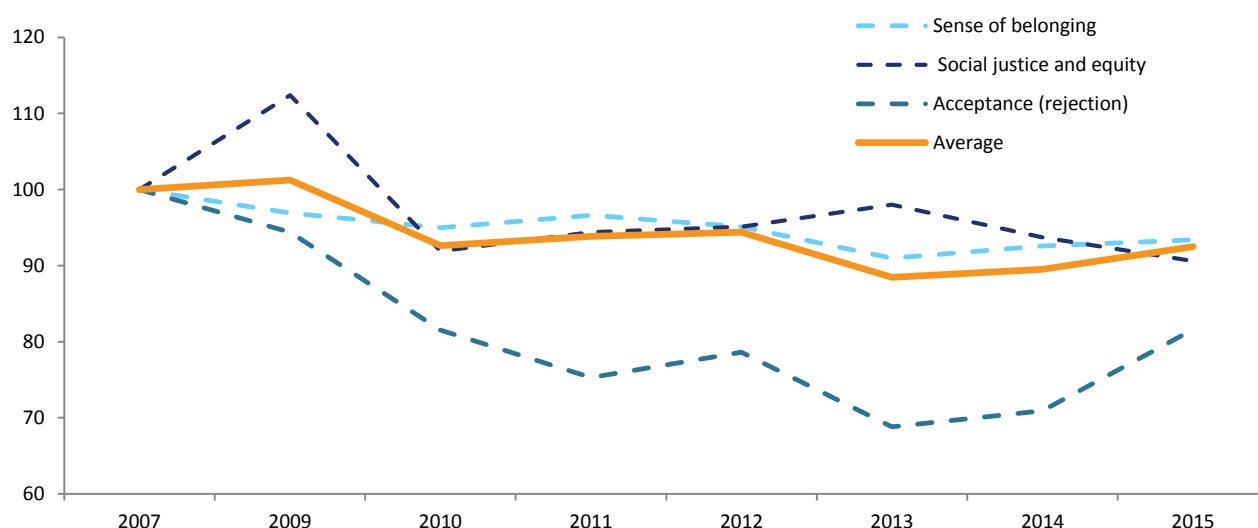
The one domain to record negative movement was that of social justice and equity which declined in 2015 by 3.1 points, following a decline of 4.3 points in 2014.

¹¹ The nominal index scores the level of agreement (or disagreement in the index of rejection). The highest level of response (for example, 'strongly agree') is scored twice the value of the second level ('agree'). Responses within four of the five indexes are equalised; within the index of participation, activities requiring greater initiative (contacting a Member of Parliament, participating in a boycott, attending a protest) are accorded double the weight of the more passive activities of voting (compulsory in Australia) and signing a petition. See Andrew Markus and Jessica Arup, *Mapping Social Cohesion 2009: The Scanlon Foundations Surveys Full Report* (2010), section 12

Table 6: The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) of Social Cohesion, 2007-2015

Domain	2007 ¹²	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Change 2014–15 (percentage points)
1. Sense of belonging	100	96.9	95.0	96.6	95.1	91.0	92.6	93.4	0.8
2. Sense of worth	100	97.2	96.7	96.5	96.5	93.8	96.8	97.2	0.4
3. Social justice and equity	100	112.4	91.9	94.4	95.1	98.0	93.7	90.6	-3.1
4. Participation	100	105.3	98.0	106.4	106.6	90.8	93.6	99.7	6.1
5. Acceptance (rejection)	100	94.4	81.5	75.3	78.6	68.8	70.9	81.6	10.7
Average	100	101.24	92.62	93.84	94.38	88.48	89.52	92.5	2.98

Figure 3: The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) of Social Cohesion, average and selected domains, 2007-2015



Components of the Scanlon-Monash Index

SMI 1: Sense of belonging

General questions relating to national life and levels of personal satisfaction continue to elicit the high levels of positive response that are evident in Australian surveys over the last 20 years. There has been marginal increase within the domain of belonging since it reached a low point in 2013.

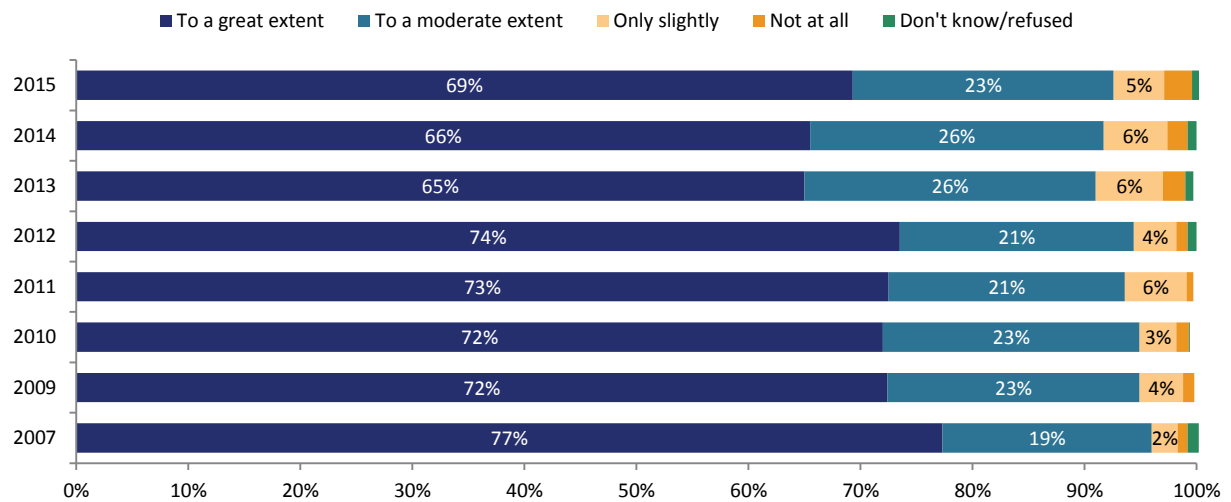
Sense of belonging ('great' and 'moderate'): 93% in 2015, 92% in 2014 and 2013, in the range 94%-96% between 2007-2012. The proportion indicating 'to a great extent' declined from 77% in 2007 to 65% in 2013, increasing to 69% in 2015.

Sense of pride in the Australian way of life and culture ('great' and 'moderate'): 89% in 2015, 88% in 2014, 87% in 2013, 90% in 2012. 93% in 2011, 90% in 2010, 92% in 2009, 94% in 2007. Level of agreement 'to a great extent' increased from 51% in 2013 to 55% in 2014 and 2015.

Importance of maintaining the Australian way of life and culture ('strongly agree' and 'agree'): 91% in 2015, 91% in 2014, 2013 and 2012, 92% in 2011, 91% in 2010, 93% in 2009, 95% in 2007. In response to this question there has been a marked shift in the balance between 'strong agreement' and 'agreement', with a decline in 'strong agreement' from 65% in 2007 to 57% in 2014 and 55% in 2015, and an increase in the level of 'agreement' from 30% to 36% over this period.

¹² Benchmark measure. The Scanlon Foundation survey changed from bi-annual to annual frequency in 2010.

Figure 4: 'To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?', 2007-2015



SMI 2: Sense of worth

There has been little change in the indicators of worth. Since 2009, financial satisfaction has been in the range 71%-73%, while sense of happiness has been in the range 87%-89%.

Financial satisfaction ('very satisfied' and 'satisfied'): 71% in 2015, 73% in 2014, 71% in 2013, 72% in 2012, 71% in 2011, 73% in 2010, 72% in 2009, 74% in 2007.

Happiness over the last year: ('very happy' and 'happy'), 89% in 2015, 88% in 2014, 87% in 2013, 88% in 2012, 89% in 2011, 88% in 2010, 89% in 2009, 89% in 2007. There has been a negative shift in the proportion indicating the strongest level of 'happiness': in 2007, 34% indicated that they were 'very happy', in 2015 a statistically significantly lower 28%.

SMI 3: Social justice and equity

The most significant change between the 2009 and 2010 surveys was the decline in the domain of social justice and equity. In 2011, 2012 and 2013 there was marginally positive movement in the domain, but the aggregated score remained significantly below the 2009 peak and was lower than in 2007. In both 2014 and 2015 the index recorded further decline.

In response to the proposition that 'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life', the level of 'strong agreement' fell from 39% in 2009 to 34% in 2010, rose to 40% in 2011, and remained close to that level in 2012 and 2013. In 2014 it dropped to 35% and is marginally under that level in 2015. The proportion indicating agreement ('strongly agree' or 'agree') has ranged from 80% to 82% across the surveys to 2013, with a statistically significant decline to 79% in 2014 and 78% in 2015. The level of disagreement ('strongly disagree' or 'disagree') has been in the range 13%-16% to 2013, a higher 17% in 2014 and 19% in 2015.

Figure 5: 'How satisfied are you with your present financial situation?', 2007-2015

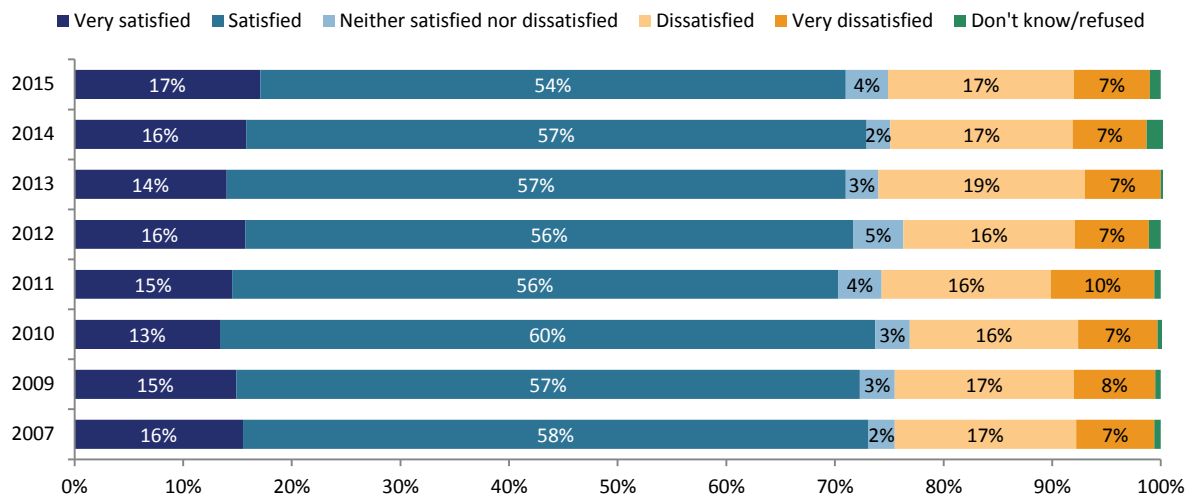
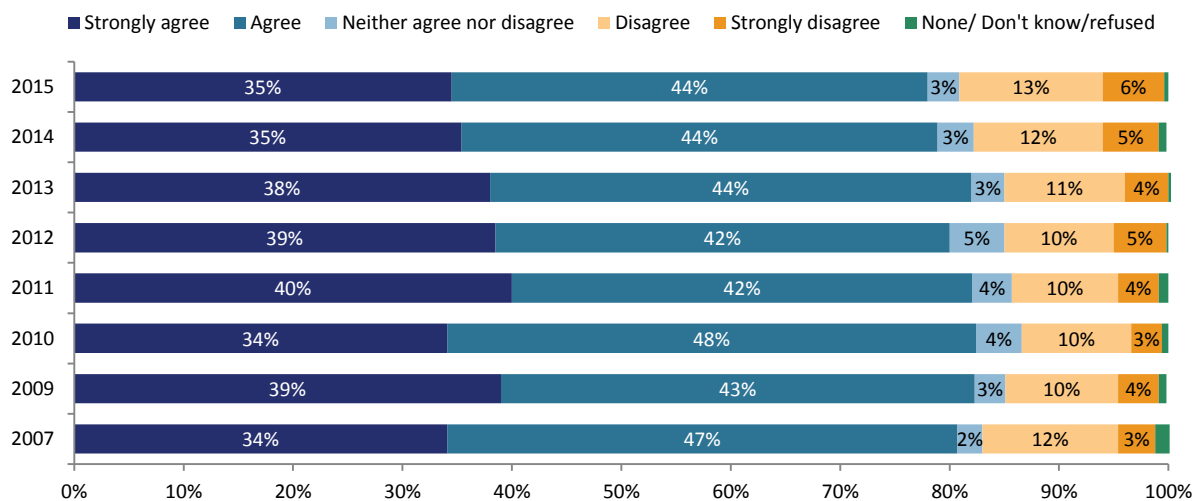


Figure 6: 'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life', 2007-2015



In response to the proposition that ‘in Australia today, the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large’, the proportion in agreement has fluctuated between 71% and 78%. In 2015, agreement was at 78%, the top end of the range, with ‘strong agreement’ at the highest level recorded.

In response to the proposition that ‘people living on low incomes in Australia receive enough financial support from the government’, opinion has been close to an even division over the seven surveys. In 2015, 44% were in agreement, 46% in disagreement.

In 2010 there was a sharp fall in the level of trust in the federal government ‘to do the right thing for the Australian people’. In 2007, the last year of the Howard government, 39% of respondents indicated trust in government ‘almost always’ or ‘most of the time’.

In 2009, at a time of high support for the government of Prime Minister Rudd, trust in government rose sharply to 48%.

In 2010, trust fell sharply to 31%, with the same low result in 2011. There was further decline to 26% in 2012. In 2013 trust was at 27%, in 2014 and 2015 marginally higher at 30%.

Figure 7: ‘In Australia today, the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large,’ 2007-2015

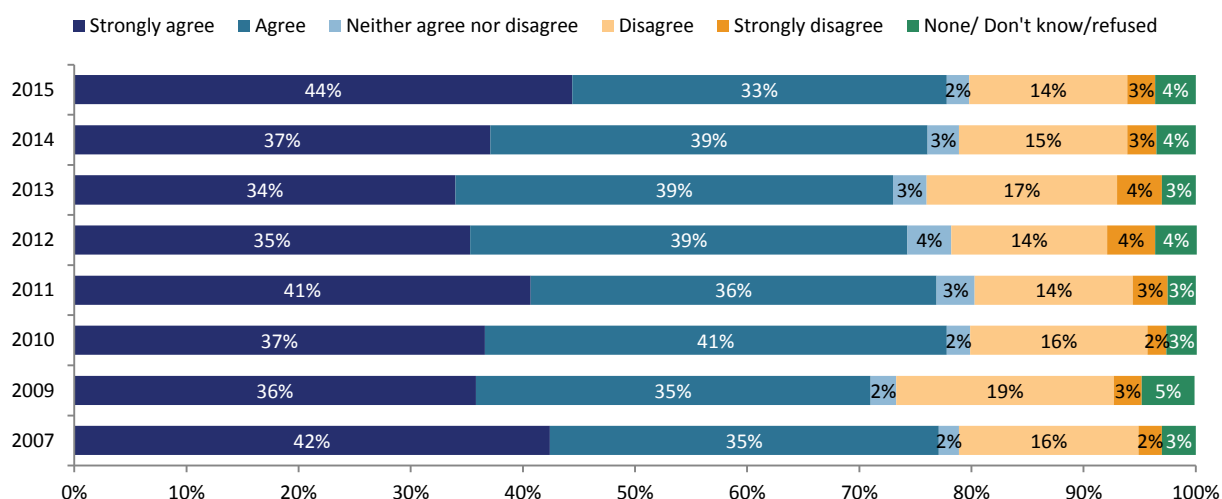
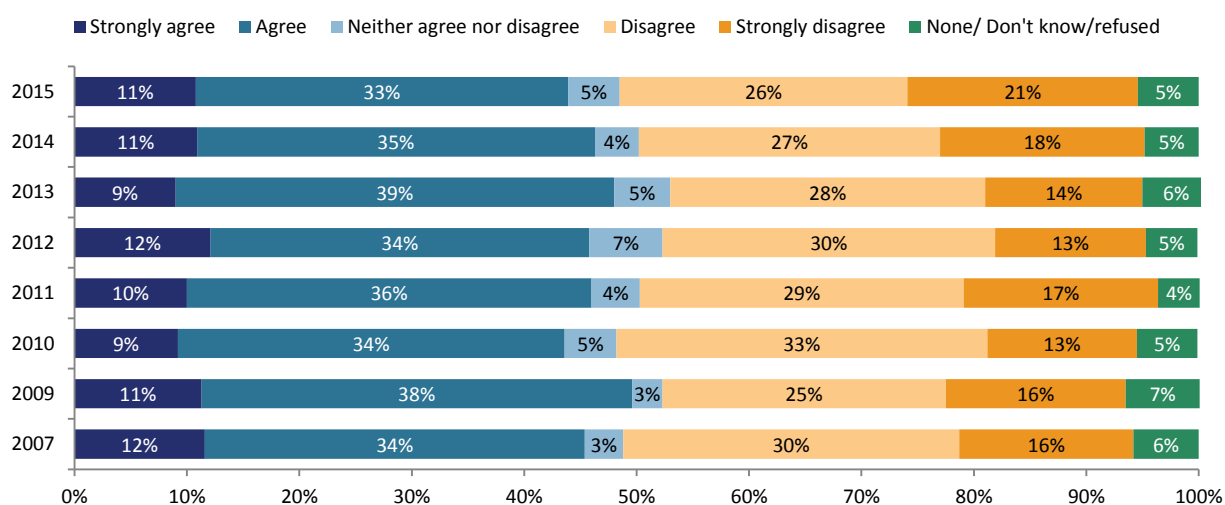


Figure 8: ‘People living on low incomes in Australia receive enough financial support from the government’, 2007-2015



SMI 4: Participation

In 2015 there was increased indication of political participation, although it remained below the high level reached in 2011 and 2012.

Comparing the results for 2012 and 2015, the proportion indicating that they had voted in an election was down from 88% to 84%; having signed a petition, down from 54% to 52%; contact with a member of parliament, down from 27% to 23%; attendance at a protest, march or demonstration, down from 14% to 12%. Those indicating that they had participated in a boycott or a product or company were marginally above the 2012 level. The proportion responding 'none of the above' for the five forms of political participation increased from 6% in 2012 to 12% in 2014, with a decline to 9% in 2015.

The 2015 political participation index score was fifth across the eight surveys, down from the peak of 106.6 in 2012 to 99.7.

SMI 5: Acceptance and rejection

In 2015 the index of acceptance and rejection showed strong upward movement, following marked decline since 2007.

Reported experience of discrimination on the basis of 'skin colour, ethnic origin or religion' was at 15%, a statistically significant decline since the high point of 19% in 2013.

Sense of pessimism about the future, which had increased between 2007 and 2012 (from 11% to 19%), showed statistically significant decline to 15% in 2015.

In response to the question: 'In three or four years, do you think that your life in Australia will be improved, remain the same or worse?', the proportion answering 'much improved' or 'a little improved' decreased from 48% in 2013 to 43% in 2014, with a marginal increase to 46% in 2015.

Table 7: 'Which, if any, of the following have you done over the last three years or so?', 2007-2015 (percentage)

Response	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Voted in an election	85.1	87.2	83.4	88.5	88.3	78.7	82.0	83.7*
Signed a petition	55.1	55.7	53.7	56.0	54.3	44.9	47.9	51.5*
Written or spoken to a federal or state member of parliament	23.5	27.1	25.1	25.0	27.3	23.4	23.0	23.1
Joined a boycott of a product or company	12.4	13.9	13.5	17.9	14.5	12.6	13.1	15.4
Attended a protest, march or demonstration	12.7	12.8	9.4	11.3	13.7	10.2	10.2	12.4
N (unweighted)	2,012	2,019	2,021	2,001	2,000	1,200	1,526	1,501

*Change between 2013 and 2015 statistically significant at $p < .05$. Change between 2014 and 2015 not statistically significant at $p < .05$

Table 8: 'In three or four years, do you think that your life in Australia will be...?', 2007-2015 (percentage)

Response	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
'Much improved'	24.3	21.1	18.2	17.9	16.3	18.6	16.4	18.5
'A little improved'	25.1	28.2	26.5	27.5	28.7	29.5	26.7	27.6
<i>('A little improved', 'much improved')</i>	49.4	49.3	44.7	45.4	45.0	48.1	43.1	46.1
'The same as now'	35.1	32.9	37.4	33.1	32.1	31.0	32.6	35.5
'A little worse'	8.7	10.2	9.8	12.8	14.4	12.9	14.6	13.1
'Much worse'	2.2	2.1	2.9	4.5	4.2	4.1	4.3	2.3*
<i>('A little worse', 'much worse')</i>	10.9	12.2	12.7	17.3	18.5	17.1	18.9	15.4*
N (unweighted)	2,012	2,019	2,021	2,001	2,000	1,200	1,526	1,501

*Change between 2014 and 2015 statistically significant at $p < .05$.

In response to the proposition that ‘ethnic minorities should be given Australian **government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions**’, there has been a gradual increase in the level of agreement, from 32% in 2007 to 41% in 2015. This represents a statistically significant increase since the first four years (2007-2011) of the survey.

Between 2007 and 2015 those who ‘disagree’ fell from 36% to 28%, while the proportion indicating ‘strong disagreement’ has fluctuated, with a high point in 2011 and 2012, 31% and 28% respectively, and responses in the range 25%-27% in other years.

The fourth question that contributes to the index of acceptance and rejection considers immigration in terms of broad principle. As discussed below, there has been a decrease in negative views of the current level of immigration in 2014 and 2015. **The proposition in agreement with the view that ‘accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger’ registered a statistically significant increase, from 62% in 2013 to 67% in 2015.**

Figure 9: ‘Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions’, 2007-2015

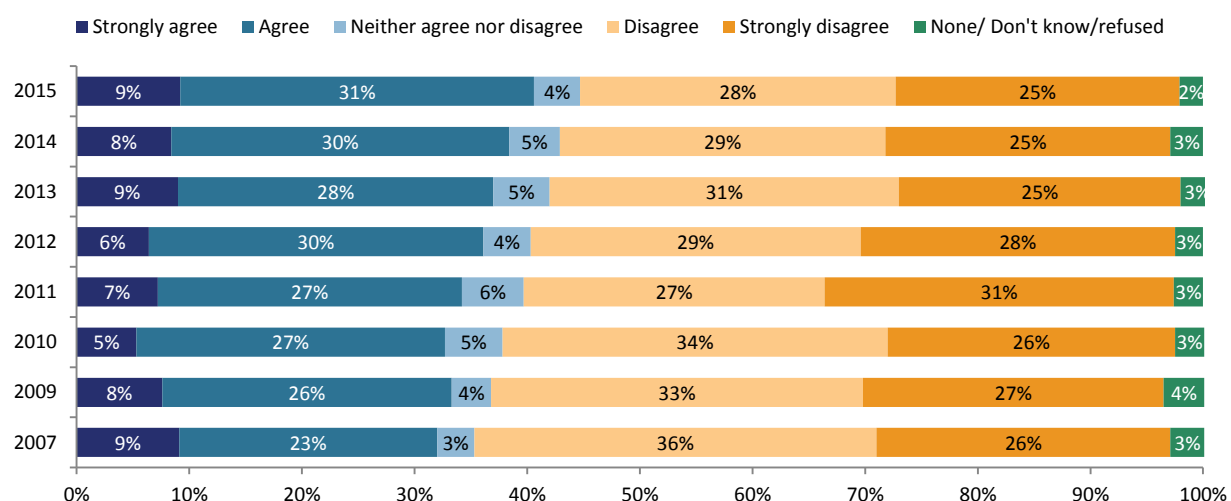


Table 9: ‘Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger’, 2007-2015 (percentage)

Response	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
‘Strongly agree’	21.9	24.7	19.1	24.2	25.7	22.0	26.4	27.3*
‘Agree’	45.1	43.2	43.3	40.1	39.4	40.1	41.3	39.9
<i>(‘Strongly agree’, ‘agree’)</i>	67.0	62.9	62.4	64.3	65.1	62.1	67.7	67.2*
‘Neither agree nor disagree’	3.3	3.1	5.9	6.4	5.5	6.1	4.5	4.2
‘Disagree’	18.1	17.9	18.6	16.2	15.3	18.1	15.9	17.1
‘Strongly disagree’	7.8	8.9	10.9	10.6	10.7	10.6	9.6	9.4
<i>(‘Strongly disagree’, ‘disagree’)</i>	25.9	26.8	29.5	26.8	26.0	28.7	25.6	26.5
N (unweighted)	2,012	2,019	2,021	2,001	2,000	1,200	1,526	1,501

*Change between 2013 and 2015 statistically significant at p<.05. Change between 2014 and 2015 not statistically significant at p<.05

Ranking of issues

The Scanlon Foundation survey seeks to determine the issues that are of greatest concern in the community.

The first question in the Scanlon Foundation survey is open-ended. It asks: ‘What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?’ The value of an open-ended question is that it leaves it to respondents to stipulate issues, rather than requiring selection from a pre-determined and limited list. An open-ended approach necessarily produces a broad range of responses.

In the six surveys 2010-15, respondents have consistently given first rank to issues related to the economy, unemployment and poverty. The importance of the issue increased from 22% in 2010 to 26% in 2011 and to 36% in 2012, with a marginal decline to 33%-34% in the three surveys 2013-15.

In 2015 the most significant change is the increase of concern over defence, national security and the threat of terrorism. In 2013 and 2014 the issue was noted by less than 1% of respondents, in 2015 by 10%, close to the second ranked issue.

The second change was the sharp decline in concern over the quality of government and political leadership, indicated by 9% of respondents in 2015, down from 15% in 2014. This has been a consistently prominent issue, specified by more than 12% of respondents between 2011 and 2014.

Social issues, including childcare, family breakdown, lack of direction and drug use, also increased in importance, specified by 11% of respondents. This issue has increased from 5% in 2012 and 8% in 2014.

The decline of the significance of the asylum issue, a major finding in 2014, was also evident in 2015. The issue was specified by 7% of respondents in 2011, 12% in 2012 and 2013. In 2014 it dropped sharply to 4%, in 2015 it was specified by 5%. Of this proportion, 2.5% of respondents indicated concern over the number of arrivals, while 2.0% indicated sympathy towards asylum seekers and concern over their poor treatment by government. In 2012, before the reintroduction of offshore processing, a larger 4% had indicated concern over poor treatment.

Environmental issues have declined in importance, from 18% in 2011 to 11% in 2012 and 5% in 2013. In 2014 there was a marginal increase to 6% and in 2015 to 7%. Nearly all who mentioned environmental issues in 2015 referred to the problem of climate change. The relatively large proportion who in past years mentioned the environment because they were concerned with government over-reaction has declined from a peak of 6% in 2011 to 0.5% in 2014 and 2015.

In 2015, 3.4% of respondents gave first ranking to immigration and population issues, down from 7% in 2011. Most of these respondents (3%) indicated that they were concerned by immigration and population growth, very few (0.4%) indicated concern that immigration was too low. As in earlier surveys, there was almost no reference to Indigenous issues, mentioned by 0.6% of respondents.

Figure 10: ‘What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?’, 2010-2015

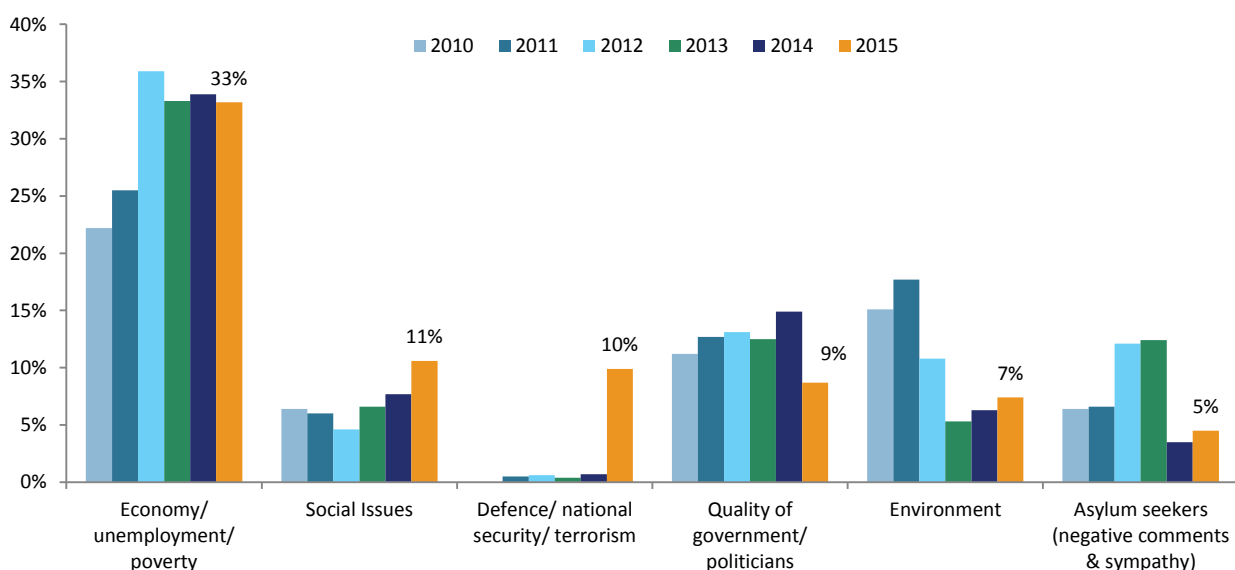


Table 10: 'What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?', 2010-2015 (percentage)

2015 Rank	Issue	2010**	2011**	2012	2013	2014	2015	
1	Economy/ unemployment/ poverty	22.2	25.5	35.9	33.2	33.9	33.2	
2	Social issues – (family, child care, drug use, family breakdown, lack of personal direction, etc)	6.4	6.0	4.6	6.6	7.7	10.6*	
3	Defence/ national security/ terrorism	n.a.	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.7	9.9*	
4	Quality of government/ politicians	11.2	12.7	13.1	12.5	14.9	8.7*	
5	Environment – climate change/ water shortages (concern)	15.1	11.4	6.8	4.9	5.9	6.9	7.4
	Environment – overreaction to climate change/ carbon tax (sceptical)		6.3	4.0	0.4	0.4	0.5	
6	Asylum seekers – too many/ refugees/ boat people/ illegal immigrants (negative comment)	6.4	4.0	8.1	9.8	2.2	2.5	4.5
	Asylum seekers – poor treatment, sympathy towards refugees/ boat people/ illegal immigrants		2.6	4.0	2.6	1.3	2.0	
7	Housing shortage/ affordability/ interest rates	2.1	3.1	1.7	1.9	2.0	3.7*	
8	Immigration/ population growth (concern)	6.8	5.2	3.6	3.4	3.0	3.0	3.4
	Immigration/population – too low/ need more people (supportive)		1.7	0.5	0.9	0.2	0.4	
9	Education/ schools	2.2	1.4	2.4	3.0	3.6	2.2	
10	Health/ medical/ hospitals	5.6	4.2	3.2	4.3	4.9	1.9*	
11	Crime/ law and order	3.8	1.7	1.3	2.1	1.8	1.7	
12	Racism	1.1	1.6	1.4	1.1	0.7	1.5	
13	Indigenous issues	0.1	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.6	
14	Industrial relations/ trade unions	n.a.	0.6	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.2	
	Other/ nothing/ don't know	16.1	10.8	8.2	12.4	16	10.5	
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100	100	
	N (unweighted)	2,021	2,001	2,000	1,200	1,526	1,501	

*Change between 2014 and 2015 statistically significant at p<.05

**In 2010 and 2011, respondents could specify up to two issues – this table records the issue first mentioned in those years; since 2011 only one issue can be specified.

Gender

Analysis by gender indicates a large degree of congruence in rankings. Thus 10% of women and 9% of men specify national security issues as the most important problem facing Australia, 8% of women and 9% of men indicate issues of governance and quality of politicians, and both give first rank to economic issues, although specified by a lower proportion of women, 29% to 38%.

The major difference by gender is in the proportion specifying social issues, 13% of women and 8% of men. A higher proportion of men indicate **concern at the level of immigration and population growth,** 5% compared to 1%.

Political alignment

Those who indicate that they intend to vote Liberal or National indicate the same ranking of top four issues: the economy, national security, social issues, and quality of government. The equal fifth issue for those intending to vote Liberal is concern over the number of asylum seekers; for those intending to vote National, it is the high level of immigration.

Labor voters specify the same top four issues as Liberal-National voters, but in a different order. National security is ranked second by Coalition voters, fourth by Labor; quality of government is ranked fourth by Coalition, second by Labor.

Labor voters also differ in their fifth ranked issue, environment and climate change, which is not a top five issue for Coalition voters.

Greens voters are sharply differentiated from the Coalition and Labor. For Greens voters, environmental issues are ranked first. While they also include the economy, quality of government and social issues in the top five, they are the only voters who rank poor treatment of asylum seekers in the top five, ranking it fourth.

Those who indicate that they do not know who they would support if an election was now held specify a similar range of issues as the major parties, most closely aligned with the priorities of Labor voters.

Table 11: Most important issue facing Australia by intended vote, 2015 (percentage)

Liberal		National		Labor		Greens		Don't know	
Issue	%	Issue	%	Issue	%	Issue	%	Issue	%
Economy	39.0	Economy	27.6	Economy	35.1	Environment	29.2	Economy	28.6
Security	13.9	Security	17.2	Quality of government	11.0	Economy	18.1	Social issues	15.0
Social issues	12.1	Social issues	10.3	Social issues	9.3	Quality of government	13.9	Quality of government	8.2
Quality of government	7.1	Quality of government	10.3	Security	8.1	Asylum- poor treatment	6.9	Security	6.8
Asylum – too many	4.7	Immigration	10.3	Environment	5.8	Social Issues	5.6	Environment	4.5
N=488 (unweighted)		24		353		161		200	

Experience of discrimination

A significant finding of the 2015 survey is the decrease in the reported experience of discrimination.

A question posed in the eight Scanlon Foundation surveys asked respondents if they had experienced discrimination over the previous twelve months; the 2007 survey question was worded ‘Have you experienced discrimination because of your national, ethnic or religious background in the last twelve months?’ In 2009 and subsequently, there was a minor change of wording to specify discrimination ‘because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion?’

Experience of discrimination increased from 9% in 2007 to 14% in 2010-11, to a peak of 19% in 2013. This level was almost matched in the 2014 survey, which recorded 18%. In 2015 experience of discrimination was reported by 14.5% of respondents, a statistically significant decline since 2013.

Combination of the data for the eight surveys 2007-2015 to enhance accuracy of sub-group analysis establishes that experience of discrimination is uneven across the population. The key differentiating variables are age, gender, ethnicity, religion and region of residence. **Thus those in the younger age groups, men, those of non-English speaking background, of non-Christian faith, and those resident in urban centres, particularly areas of immigrant concentration, report the highest rates of discrimination.**

When the variable of age is considered across the three most recent surveys (2013-15), the highest level of reported experience of discrimination is in the age group 25-34 (24%), followed by 18-24 and 35-44 (both 21%) and 45-54 (19%). It is below average for those aged 55 and above.

Figure 11: ‘Have you experienced discrimination in the last twelve months because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion?’ Response: ‘yes’, 2007-2015

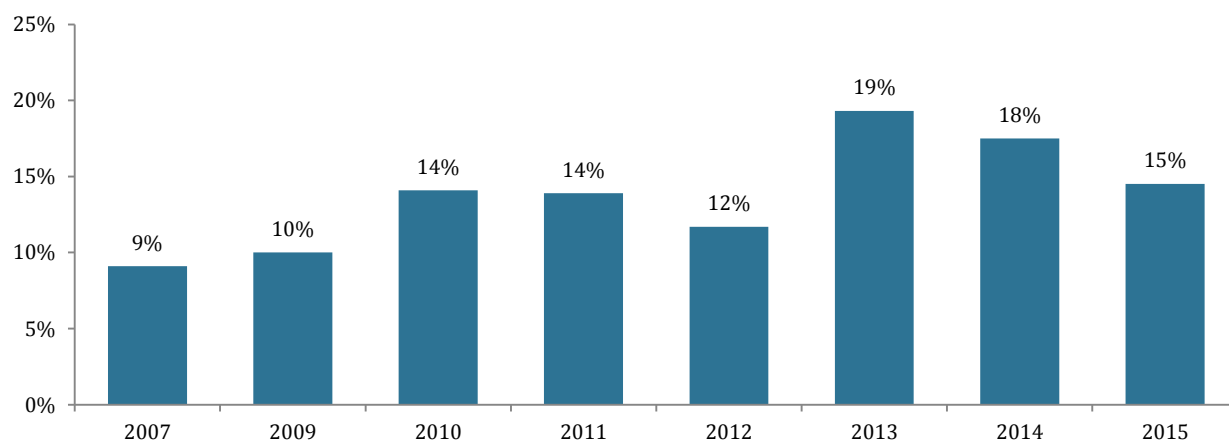
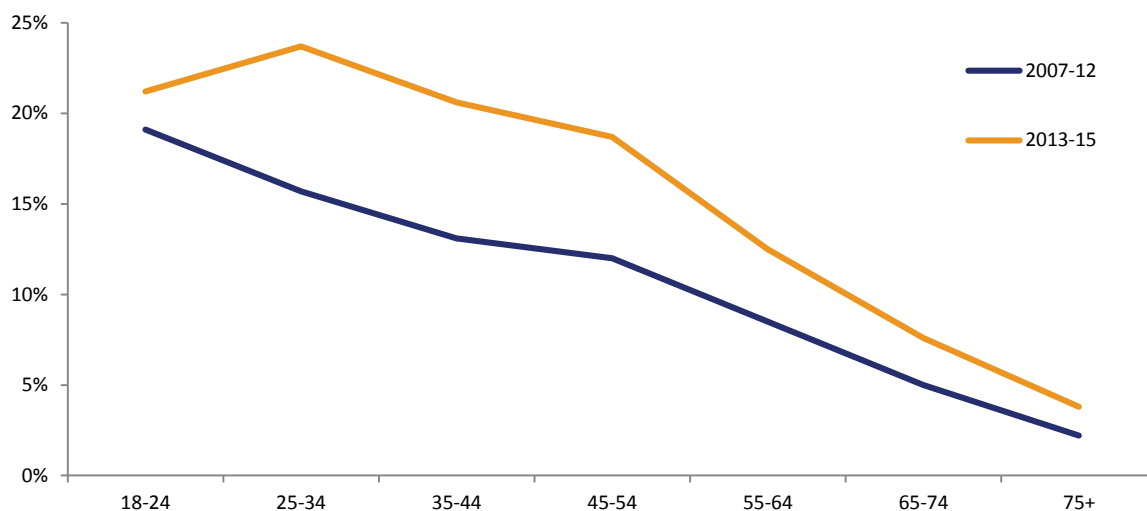


Table 12: ‘Have you experienced discrimination in the last twelve months because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion?’ Response: ‘yes’ by age, 2013-15 (percentage)

Response	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
‘Yes’	21.2	23.7	20.6	18.7	12.5	7.6	3.8
N (unweighted)	290	469	575	842	839	721	478

Figure 12: Reported experience of discrimination by age, 2007-12, 2013-15 (percentage)



As in past surveys, in 2015 those of non-English speaking background reported the highest experience of discrimination, 21%, compared to 12% of those born in Australia and 9% of those born overseas in English speaking countries. The proportion of the Australia and overseas-born groupings reporting experience of discrimination shows a consistent decline between 2014 and 2015, with the 2015 level for all three at close to four-fifths of the 2014 level.

Table 13: Reported experience of discrimination by birthplace, 2013-15 (percentage)

Birthplace	2013	2014	2015
Australia	16.2	15.5	12.3
English-speaking background	16.2	11.4	8.8
Non-English speaking background	29.3	25.6	21.1

This pattern of differentiation is evident when responses are analysed by religion of respondent. The aggregated data for the surveys conducted in 2009-12 and 2014-15 (11,057 respondents), indicates that reported experience of discrimination ranges from 8% Anglican and 12% Roman Catholic to 26% Hindu and 26% Muslim.

Analysis by birthplace is available for all Scanlon Foundation national surveys (2007-2015, 14,280 respondents). For birthplace groups with at least 100 respondents, those indicating experience of discrimination ranges from 8% United Kingdom, 9% Germany, 12% Australia, 12% Italy, 14% South Africa, 17% New Zealand, 25% China, and 28% India.

In 2015, the largest proportion (53%) indicated experience of discrimination at their place of work and on the street, then when shopping (47%). Discrimination at a social gathering was reported by 34% of respondents, on public transport by 20%, at a sporting event by 17%, at an educational institution by 16%, and in a government office by 14%.

Table 14: Reported experience of discrimination by location. Respondents who indicated that they had experienced discrimination, 2015 (percentage)

Location	2015 (%)
At place of work	53.0
On the street	52.7
When shopping	46.7
At a social gathering	34.0
On public transport	20.3
At a sporting event	16.9
At an educational institution	16.1
In a government office	13.9
N (unweighted)	178

The 2014-15 surveys included questions on frequency and form of discrimination. Of those who reported discrimination in 2015, the largest proportion, 51% (47% in 2014) indicated that it occurred infrequently, 'just once or twice in the last year', while 21% (22%) indicated experience 'three to six times in the last year'.

In contrast, 10% (14%) indicated that discrimination occurred 'about once a month in the last year', while 19% (15%) indicated that it occurred 'often – most weeks in the year', a combined 29% (29%). **Thus for almost three out of ten respondents who reported discrimination in both 2014 and 2015, it was experienced at least once a month; this proportion constitutes close to 5% of the total population.**

The most common form of discrimination was **verbal abuse, experienced by 61% of those who reported discrimination**; 54% indicated that they were made to feel like they did not belong; 27% that they were not treated fairly at work; 20% that they were not offered a job. **Property damage was reported by 15% and physical violence by 7%.**

Eight possible locations were specified to those who indicated experience of discrimination. Respondents could nominate more than one location.

Although nearly half of respondents who reported experience of discrimination specified that it occurred on the street or when shopping, the survey did not find any deterioration of relations in local areas. Comparison of the national surveys conducted between 2010-2015 indicates a large measure of consistency:

- 85% of respondents indicated that people were 'willing to help neighbours' (84% in 2014);
- 78% agreed that in the local area 'people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together', a significantly higher proportion than in 2012 (72%) and at the level of 2014. 9% of respondents disagreed, close to the level of the previous four surveys.

When level of personal safety was considered, there was a marginally lower level of concern; 73% were not worried about becoming a victim of crime (70% in 2014) and 68% indicated that they felt safe walking alone at night (68%). On the other hand, 26% (26%) felt unsafe walking alone at night and 26% (30%) were concerned about becoming a victim of crime.

Table 15: Selected questions concerning neighbourhood, 2010-2015 (percentage)

Question and response - POSITIVE	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
[1] 'People in your local area are willing to help their neighbours.' Response: 'Strongly agree', 'agree'.	82.6	84.4	84.4	84.0	83.7	84.5
[2] 'Your local area... is a place where people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together.' Response: 'Strongly agree', 'agree'.	75.1	73.7	71.6	75.8	78.5	78.0
[3] 'How safe do you feel walking alone at night in your local area?' Response: 'Very safe', 'safe'.	65.0	64.7	64.9	64.6	67.9	68.0
[4] '...how worried are you about becoming a victim of crime in your local area'. Response: 'Not very worried', 'not at all worried'	73.1	68.7	73.3	n/a	69.6	72.8

Question and response - NEGATIVE	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
[1] 'People in your local area are willing to help their neighbours.' Response: 'Strongly disagree', 'disagree'.	12.8	12.1	11.0	12.2	11.9	12.0
[2] 'Your local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together.' Response: 'Strongly disagree', 'disagree'.	6.9	9.2	8.9	11.4	10.1	9.1
[3] 'How safe do you feel walking alone at night in your local area?' Response: 'Very unsafe', 'a bit unsafe'.	29.9	29.6	28.0	29.5	26.4	26.1
[4] '...how worried are you about becoming a victim of crime in your local area'. Response: 'Very worried', 'fairly worried'.	26.3	30.9	26.2	n/a	29.8	26.3

Trust and voluntary work

A question posed in a number of Australian and international surveys asks respondents if ‘most people can be trusted’, or whether one ‘can’t be too careful in dealing with people’ (or that it is not possible to answer).

The Scanlon Foundation national surveys have found that opinion is close to evenly divided, with results in the range 45%-55% across the seven surveys. In 2015 personal trust is at the mid-point in the range (50%).

The highest level agreeing that ‘most people can be trusted’ was indicated by those intending to vote Greens, 69% (68% in 2014), with a Bachelor degree or higher, 67% (63%), those whose financial status was self-described as ‘prosperous’ or ‘very comfortable’, 63% (62%), and of English speaking background, 58% (54%).

The lowest level of agreement was indicated by those whose financial status was self-described as ‘struggling to pay bills’ or ‘poor’, 22% (37%), with education up to Year 11, 34% (38%), with Trade or Apprentice qualifications 41% (53%), aged 25-34, 42% (47%), with self-described financial status ‘just getting along’, 43% (39%), and those intending to vote independent or a minor party, 43% (32%).

Figure 13: ‘Strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ that ‘most people can be trusted’, Scanlon Foundation surveys 2007-2015, earlier surveys 1995-2003

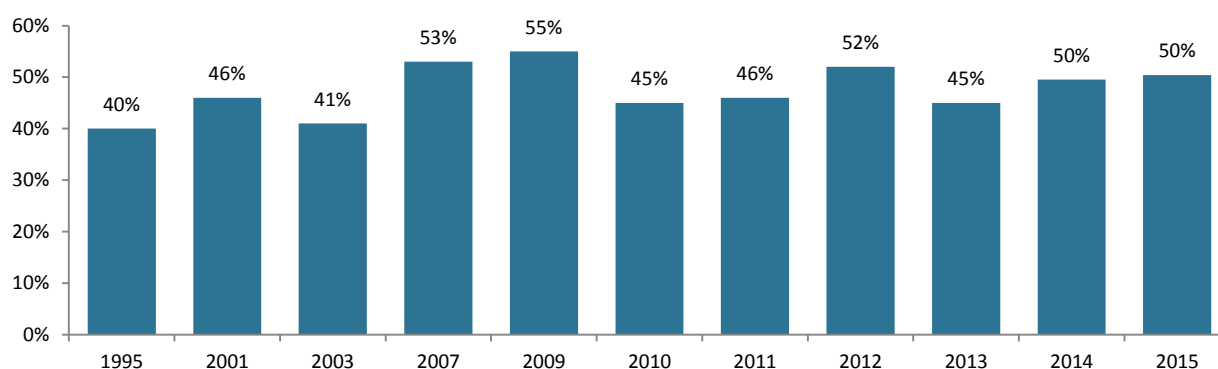


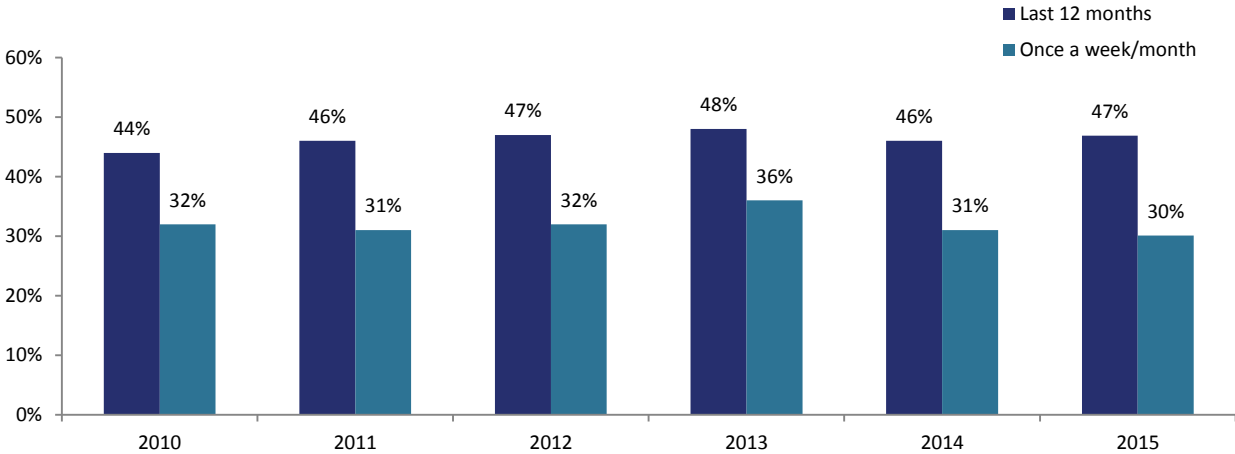
Table 16: ‘Strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ that ‘most people can be trusted’, 2015 (percentage)

Gender	Female	Male					
	48.1	52.8					
State	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	48.9	50.7	48.5	48.2	51.2		
Region	Capital	Rest of state					
	50.7	49.8					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+
	49.5	42.1	50.8	55.3	54.7	54.3	44.7
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprentice	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	66.6	49.0	40.7	56.5	33.6		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	62.7	54.5	43.3	22.1			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Independent/ minor party			
	45.3	54.8	68.5	43.3			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	48.6	57.9	51.7				

In contrast with the fluctuation in level of personal trust, participation in voluntary work has shown only minor variation over the last six Scanlon Foundation surveys. The survey asks respondents about their involvement in 'unpaid voluntary work', which is defined as 'any unpaid help you give to the community in which you live, or to an organisation or group to which you belong. It could be to a school, a sporting club, the elderly, a religious group or people who have recently arrived to settle in Australia.'

In 2011, 46% of respondents indicated participation in voluntary work over the last 12 months; in 2012, 47%; in 2013, 48%; in 2014, 46%, and in 2015, 47%. A follow-up question asks respondents for frequency of participation in voluntary work: this indicator finds a marginal decline in 2014 and 2015 from the high point recorded in 2013. Participation 'at least once a week' or 'at least once a month' was indicated by 31% of respondents in 2011, 32% in 2012 and 36% in 2013, 31% in 2014 and 30% in 2015.

Figure 14: 'Have you done any unpaid voluntary work in the last 12 months?' and 'How often do you participate in this sort of voluntary activity?' Response 'at least once a week' or 'at least once a month', 2010-2015



Democracy

In 2015, concern with the state of Australian democracy remains a major focus of public discussion. A 2015 issue of the quarterly journal *Meanjin* was devoted to the question ‘Is there a crisis in Australian democracy?’ In August 2015 a National Reform Summit was sponsored by *The Australian*, *The Australian Financial Review* and KPMG, with the aim ‘of building a consensus for reform and **break the political deadlock that has increasingly frustrated policy change**’. Paul Kelly, the Editor-at-large of *The Australian*, wrote in September of ‘an eight year fiasco under Labor and Coalition governments’ and of ‘the demise of economic reform since 2003-04’. Nicolas Reece has commented on alienation from the political process, with less than 2% of Australian voters taking up membership of political parties, compared to some 5% in most democracies.¹³

Survey findings have featured in the discussion. The 2014 Lowy Poll highlighted ‘Australian’s Ambivalence About Democracy’. Alex Oliver, author of the Lowy report, commented on ABC Lateline that ‘we were shocked, surprised... that there’s something wrong with the way the political system is working’, based on interpretation of findings that indicated that ‘only 60% of Australians.... believe that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government’. In 2015, the Lowy Poll found preference for democracy to be higher, at 65%.¹⁴

An ANU-SRC Poll released in August 2014 focused on views of government. A key finding was that ‘satisfaction with democracy remains at a low level in comparison to the 2000s’, although it was relatively high by international standards.¹⁵

The 2014 Scanlon Foundation national report argued that it was a mistake to evaluate current survey findings against an assumption that in past decades there was close to unanimous positive evaluation of the workings of democracy.¹⁶ **Australian survey data consistently indicates low levels of trust and respect for politicians and political institutions.**

It is in this context that the Scanlon Foundation surveys provide an annual indicator of the trend of opinion on Australian democracy.

Trust in government

Since 2007 the Scanlon Foundation surveys have included a question on trust in government. Respondents are asked: ‘How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?’ and are presented with four response options: ‘almost always’, ‘most of the time’, ‘only some of the time’, and ‘almost never’. The highest proportion indicating the first or second response, ‘almost always’ or ‘most of the time’, was at 39% in 2007, the last year of the Howard government, and rose to 48% in 2009; this was followed by a sharp fall to 31% in 2010, in the context of a loss of confidence in the Rudd Labor government. A low point of 26% was reached in 2012, representing a decline of 21 percentage points since 2009, followed by stabilisation in 2013.

There was an expectation that in 2014, following the election of the Abbott government, there would be significant increase in level of trust, on the pattern of the increase in confidence in the early period of the Rudd government. This expectation was not realised. While the level of trust has increased, it is only by three percentage points in 2014, with no further increase in 2015.

¹³ *The Australian*, 26 August 2015; 23 September 2015 (Paul Kelly); *The Age*, 10 August 2015 (Nicholas Reece)

¹⁴ Lowy Institute Press Release, 4 June 2014, Lowy Institute Polls at <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/>; ABC Lateline, 11 August 2014, transcript

¹⁵ ANU Poll at <http://politicsir.cass.anu.edu.au/research/projects/electoral-surveys/anupoll>

¹⁶ See also Andrew Markus, ‘Trust in the Australian political system’, *Papers on Parliament*, no. 62, 2014; Stuart Macintyre, ‘Is there a crisis in Australian democracy?’, *Meanjin*, vol. 74, no. 3, 2015

Figure 15: 'How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?' Response: 'Almost always' or 'most of the time', 2007-2015

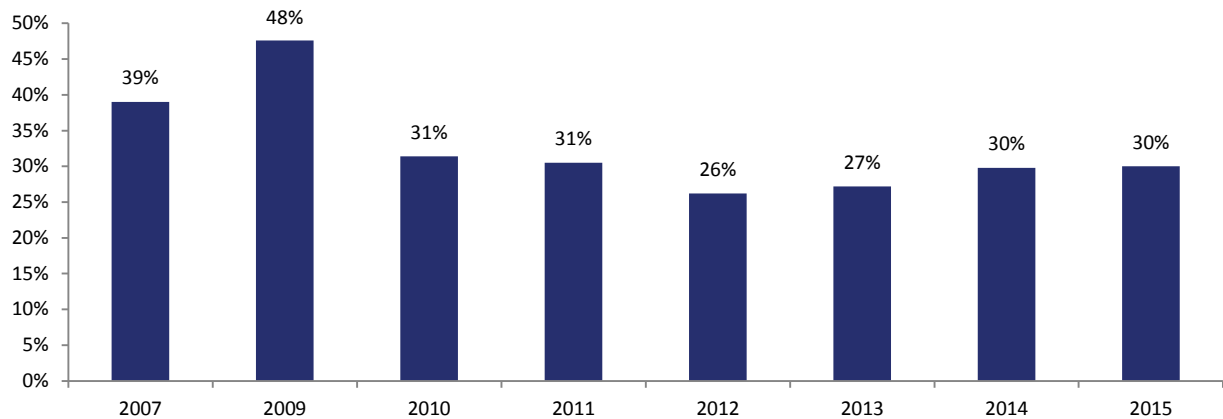
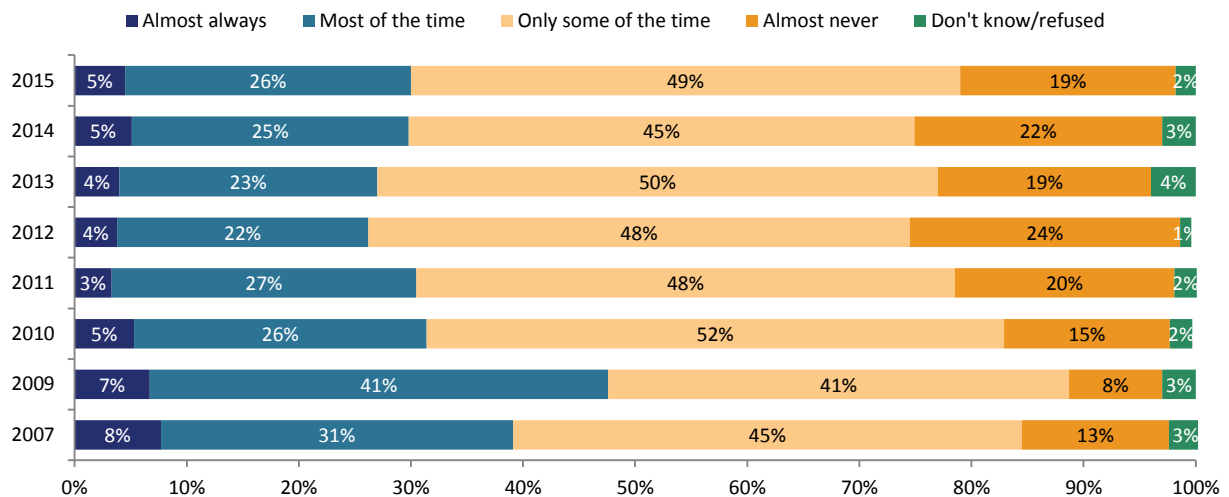


Figure 16: 'How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?', 2007-2015



Analysis by age group finds a relatively high level of trust among those aged 18-24 and 65 and over. Analysis by seven additional variables finds the largest variation by political alignment, indicating that a **key predictor of trust in government is a person's support or opposition to the party in power**: thus 50% (52% in 2014) of those intending to vote Liberal/ National indicate trust, compared to 17% (16%) Labor and 11% (9%) Greens, a reversal of the pattern of response in the last years of the Labor government, when trust was indicated by 49% of Labor voters, 27% Greens and 19% Liberal/ National.

A relatively low level of trust in 2015 was indicated by those whose self-reported financial situation was struggling to pay bills or poor (12%), those intending to vote for a party other than Liberal or National (11%-17%), those aged 25-34 (22%), and residents of Victoria (23%).

A significant finding is that for only two of the thirty two sub-groups – intending to vote Liberal/ National and of English-speaking background – is level of trust above 40%; and for only an additional four is it in the range 35%-39%.

Clearly there is a malaise that is not to be explained solely in terms of political alignment, the identification or lack of identification with the party in government. Indeed, even among Liberal or National voters the level of trust is indicated by just 50%.

Table 17: 'How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?' Response: 'Almost always' and 'most of the time', 2015

Gender	Female	Male					
	31.1	28.8					
State	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	22.9	29.1	36.0	27.3	37.8		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	30.7	28.8					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+
	34.5	21.9	28.9	28.0	26.8	38.3	39.1
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	27.0	32.8	25.9	31.7	28.2		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	36.4	33.4	24.7	11.6			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Independent/ minor party			
	17.0	50.0	11.2	13.6			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	29.6	40.7	26.1				

Ranking problems

As discussed earlier in this report, the first question in the survey is open-ended and asks: ‘What is the most important problem facing Australia today?’ In 2015, the **fourth most important issue related to quality of government and politicians, nominated by 9% of respondents, a significant decline from 15% in 2014.** The survey was, however, completed before a public controversy developed in late-July 2015 concerning the entitlements of members of parliament, the resignation of the Speaker, Bronwyn Bishop in August, and the vote to replace Prime Minister Abbott by members of the Liberal Party in September.

Table 18: ‘What is the most important problem facing Australia today?’ Response: ‘quality of government and politicians’, 2010-2015 (percentage and rank)

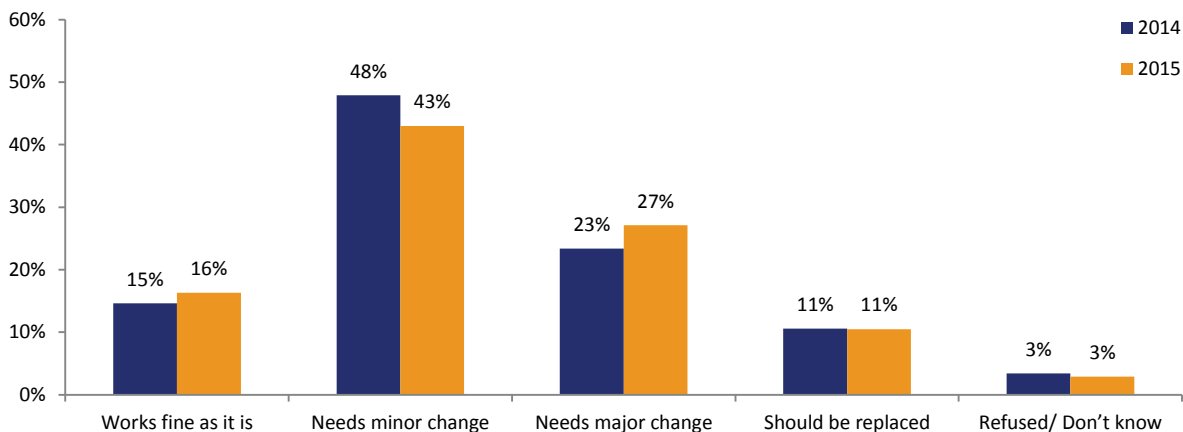
	%	Rank
2010	11.2	3
2011	12.7	3
2012	13.1	2
2013	12.5	equal 2
2014	14.9	2
2015	8.7	4

Need for change?

A new question in the 2014 Scanlon Foundation survey asked respondents if the present system of Australian government works well or is in need of change. Repeated in 2015, the question found a large measure of consistency.

Just 16% (15% in 2014) indicated that the system ‘works fine as it is’; 43% (48%) considered that it needed minor change, a higher 27% (23%) indicated major change, and 11% (11%) that it should be replaced.

Figure 17: ‘Would you say the system of government we have in Australia works fine as it is, needs minor change, needs major change, or should be replaced?’, 2014-2015



Analysis of sub-groups favouring major change or replacement of the system of government finds the highest proportion among those whom the system has failed: respondents indicating that they are intending to vote for an Independent or minor party, 58% (49%), 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor', 56% (58% in 2014), 'just getting along', 46% (43%), without education beyond Year 11, 44% (44%). Disenchantment with government is also relatively high among those living outside the capital cities, 44% (36%), those aged 55-64, 46% (34%), intending to vote Greens, 45% (48%), and Labor, 44% (36%).

The lowest proportion is among Liberal and National voters (26%) and those whose self-described financial situation is prosperous or very comfortable (26%), but even among the supporters of the government, one in four respondents agree that there is need for major change or replacement of the system.

Table 19: 'Would you say the system of government we have in Australia works fine as it is, needs minor change, needs major change, or should be replaced?' Response: 'Needs major change', 'should be replaced', 2015 (percentage)

Gender	Female	Male					
	37.0	38.3					
State	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	35.0	40.5	30.5	42.7	38.9		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	34.3	43.9					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	34.1	39.4	36.5	35.0	46.3	33.3	36.8
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	33.8	35.4	42.1	38.8	43.6		
Financial situation	Prosperous / very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	25.7	33.8	46.3	55.8			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Independent/ minor party			
	43.9	26.1	44.8	57.6			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	39.2	30.7	35.8				

Institutional trust

The level of institutional trust has been explored in a number of surveys, with a **large measure of consistency over several decades in the low ranking of the institutions of Australian democracy.**¹⁷

The 2013 Scanlon Foundation national survey asked respondents to rank seven institutions or organisations. The highest level of trust was in hospitals and police, employers and the legal system. Trade unions, federal parliament and political parties were the lowest ranked. Indication of 'a lot of trust' ranged from 53% in hospitals and police, to 9% in trade unions, 7% in federal parliament, and 3% in political parties.

This question, with some change in the institutions specified, was repeated in 2015. There was little difference in the rankings and proportions indicating trust. **As in 2013, less than 10% of respondents in 2015 indicated 'a lot of trust' in the federal parliament and trade unions, with just 2% in political parties.**

In both surveys there was considerable difference in the level of trust in employers (72%-76%) and trade unions (41%-49%). The largest fall between 2013 and 2015 (8 percentage points) was in trust in trade unions.

Overview

There is considerable variance in the level of trust in institutions, consistent with the findings of the 2013 survey. But **lowest levels of trust are indicated in the federal parliament, trade unions and political parties.**

Scanlon Foundation surveys **since 2009** have recorded a **decline of trust in the federal parliament.** In 2009, 48% of respondents indicated that the government in Canberra can be trusted 'almost always' or 'most of the time', in 2015 a much lower 30%. There was an expectation that following the electoral victory of the Coalition government in 2013 there would be significant increase in trust, on the pattern of the increase in confidence following the change of government in 2007. This expectation was not realised. While the level of trust has increased, it is by three percentage points.

While in 2015 fewer respondents indicated that the quality of government is 'the most important problem' facing Australia, **just 16% consider that the system of government 'works fine as it is'**, 43% that it 'needs minor change', 27% 'major change', and 11% that it should be replaced.

Table 20: 'I'm going to read out a list of Australian institutions and organisations. For each one tell me how much confidence or trust you have in them in Australia.' 2013, 2015 (percentage)

	2013			2015		
	'A lot of trust'	'Some trust'	'A Lot' + 'some'	'A lot of trust'	'Some trust'	'A Lot' + 'some'
Hospitals	53.0	35.0	88.1	57.5	34.5	92.0
Doctors				55.2	35.6	90.8
The police	52.9	34.0	86.9	54.2	34.4	88.6
Charitable organisations				22.0	52.3	74.3
Legal system/ The law courts	23.2	44.2	67.4	28.9	43.9	72.8
Employers	23.1	52.6	75.7	17.8	54.3	72.1
Federal parliament	6.7	39.3	46.0	6.3	42.6	48.9
Trade unions	8.7	39.8	48.5	7.7	33.3	41.0
Political parties	2.9	35.8	38.7	2.1	35.6	37.7

¹⁷ See, for example, Rodney Tiffen and Ross Gittins, *How Australia Compares*, Cambridge, 2004, p. 244

Immigration

Questions related to the immigration intake have been a staple of public opinion polling for over 50 years. But this polling is not systematic, nor is it taken at regular intervals. **The Scanlon Foundation surveys provide for the first time publicly available annual findings on a range of immigration issues.** In the 2015 survey there were nineteen questions on immigration and cultural diversity, in the context of a comprehensive questionnaire of 65 questions.

The Scanlon Foundation surveys provide important findings on perceptions of the level of immigration, providing evidence that attitudes are not based on an accurate understanding of immigration levels.

In public discussion of immigration there is considerable misunderstanding, a function of ignorance of the detail of policy, as well as of statistics which are difficult to interpret by casual users. A question on the level of immigration asked in four Scanlon Foundation surveys (2009-2012) indicates **little correlation in public perception and actual changes in the intake.** Thus, despite the sharp fall in net overseas migration between 2008 and 2010 (from 315,700 to 172,000), in 2010 only 4% of respondents perceived a decline.

Analysis of attitudes to immigration over the last 25 years indicates that it is an issue on which there is considerable volatility of opinion. Whereas in the early 1990s, a large majority (over 70% at its peak) considered the intake to be 'too high', most surveys between 2001 and 2009 indicated that opposition to the level of intake was a minority viewpoint.

Two key factors seem to inform Australian attitudes to immigration: the political prominence of immigration issues and the level of unemployment. For the years 2001-2009, in the context of a growing economy, most surveys found that the proportion who considered the intake to be 'about right' or 'too low' was in the range 54%–57%.

In 2010 there was heightened political debate over immigration and the desirable future population of Australia, in the context of increased unemployment. In 2010 the Scanlon Foundation survey found increased agreement that the intake was 'too high': up from 37% in 2009 to 47%. This finding is almost identical to the 46% average result from five polls conducted by survey agencies in the period March–July 2010.¹⁸

In 2011 and 2012, the pattern of opinion returned to the pre-2010 level. In 2011-12, the proportion who considered that the intake was 'too high' fell to 38%-39%. In 2013 the negative views increased marginally, to 42%.

In 2014 and 2015, economic concerns have been heightened in public discussion, with rising unemployment, the end of the mining boom, federal government deficit and slowing economic growth in China.

There was, thus, an expectation that an increased proportion would agree that the immigration intake was too high, yet the reverse has occurred. In both 2014 and 2015, just 35% of respondents agreed that immigration was 'too high', while in 2014, 58%, and in 2015, 60%, considered that the intake was 'about right' or 'too low'. As indicated by Figure 19, in 2014 the trend of unemployment and negative views on immigration moved in opposite directions; there was no reversal of this pattern in 2015.

The few recent polls that have been conducted on immigration support the pattern indicated by Scanlon Foundation surveys. The 2014 Lowy Institute Poll found that 37% of respondents considered the intake to be 'too high', 61% 'about right' or 'too low'. Newspan for *The Australian*, conducted in July 2014, asked: 'Do you think the number of immigrants coming to Australia through official channels and allowed into Australia should be increased, decreased, or stay the same as now?' A very low 27% indicated that the intake should be decreased, 70% that it should stay the same or be increased,¹⁹ a result which may have been influenced by question wording, which directed respondents to the difference between official and unofficial arrivals.

There are four factors, acting in conjunction, which may explain the high level of acceptance of current immigration.

[1] The increase in the level of unemployment has not been of a magnitude to have significant impact on public opinion. From 1989 to 1992 unemployment increased from 6% to 11%; the current increase has been of a lower magnitude, from 4% to 6%.

¹⁸ Age (Nielsen), 31 July 2010; Roy Morgan Research Finding No. 4536; Essential Report 5 July 2010; Age (Nielsen), 19 April 2010; Roy Morgan Research Finding No. 4482.

¹⁹ 2014 Lowy Institute Poll, p. 28; *The Australian*, 16 July 2014

The Scanlon Foundation surveys have not found a significant increase in the level of economic concern between 2014 and 2015. Economic issues are ranked first as the major problem facing Australia, but the proportion of respondents specifying the economy has not increased over the last four surveys. The proportion indicating that they are 'very worried' or 'worried' that they will lose their job 'in the next year or so' declined marginally, from 14% in 2014 to 12% in 2015. There has been very little change in the proportion indicating dissatisfaction with their 'present financial situation', 25% in 2013, 24% in 2014 and the same 24% in 2015.

On the other hand, questions on social justice issues find heightened negative sentiment. 'Strong agreement' that the gap in incomes in Australia was 'too large' increased from 34% in 2013 to 37% in 2014 and 44% in 2015. Those who 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' with the proposition that in Australia 'hard work brings a better life' increased from 14% in 2013 to 17% in 2014 and 19% in 2015.

The Westpac Melbourne Institute Index of Consumer Sentiment also reports some mixed results. The long-run average for the Index of Consumer Sentiment is 101.6; in June 2014 it was relatively low (negative), at 93.2; in June-July 2015 it was in the range 92.2-95.3.²⁰

The Melbourne Institute Unemployment Expectations Index registered a relatively high level of concern in 2015, but was also stable: the long-run average for the Index is 129.6, in June 2014 it was 156.5, with a marginal decline to 152.8 in June 2015 and 150.8 in July 2015.

[2] The level of immigration has not been a subject of political controversy in the first half of 2015.

[3] Strong economic growth in the years preceding the Global Financial Crisis may have fostered **heightened acceptance of immigration as in Australia's best interests**, and the changed outlook continues to influence public opinion in 2014-15.

[4] Support for current immigration may also be a function of perceived effectiveness and approval of government asylum seeker policy. The perceived success has conveyed the message that the **government has re-established border control and can be trusted to manage immigration**. It may also reflect the incorrect understanding that a significant number of immigrants were arriving by boat – and this immigrant flow has now ended.

²⁰ Westpac-Melbourne Institute Survey of Consumer Sentiment, <https://melbourneinstitute.com/miaesr/publications/indicators/csi.html>

Figure 18: 'What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia?', 2007-2015

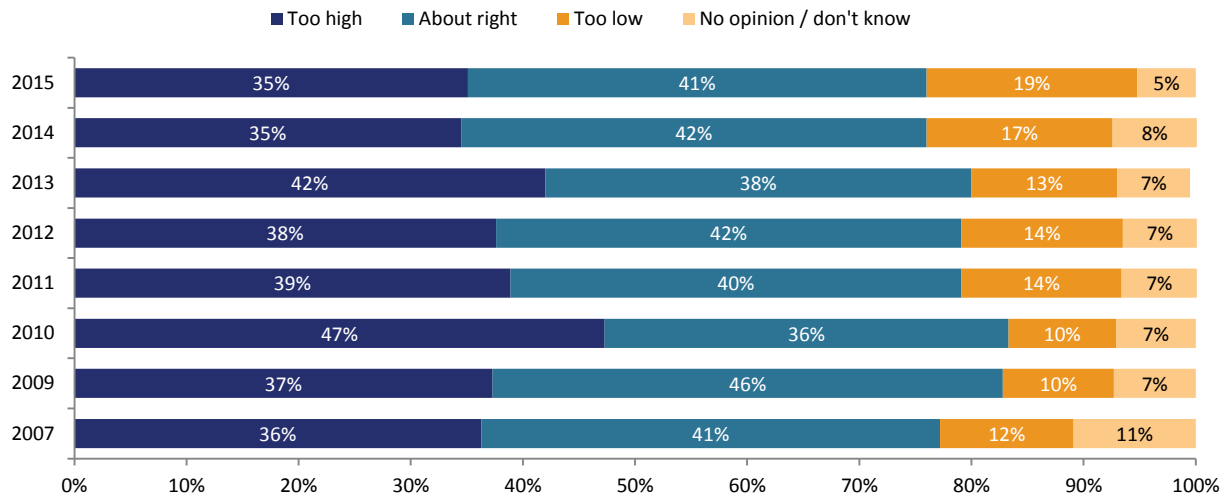
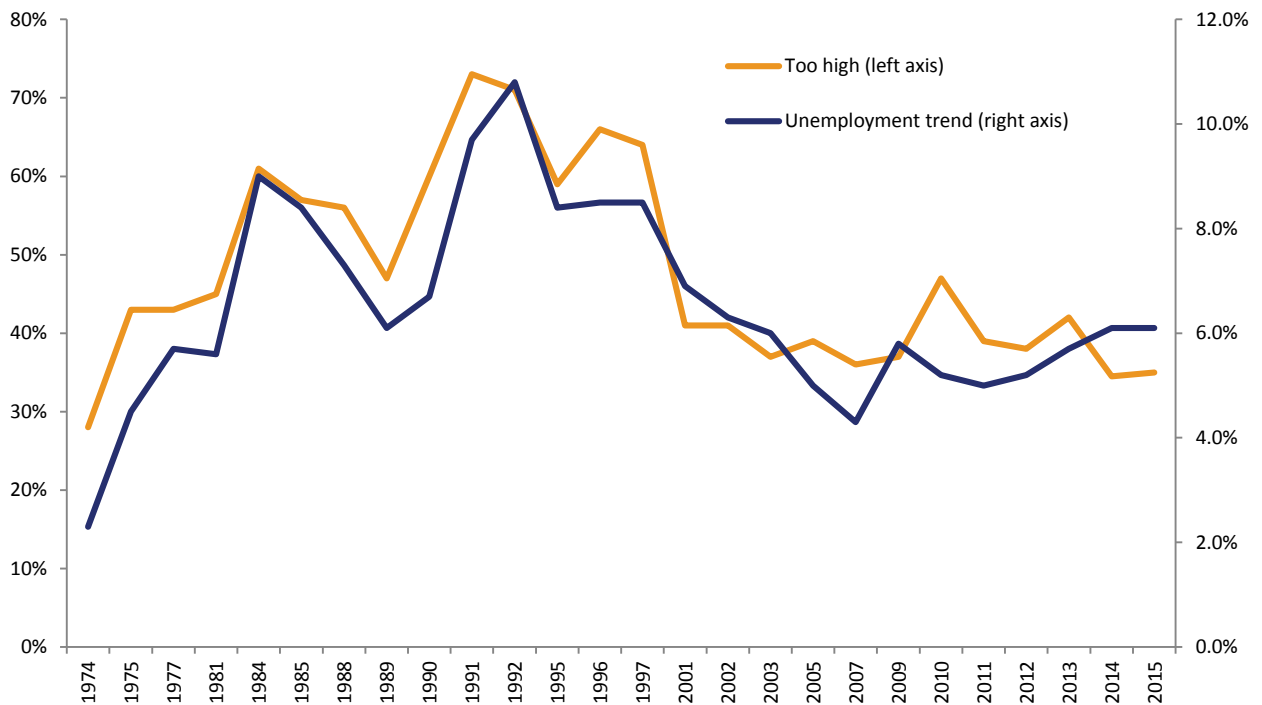


Figure 19: Time series, trend of unemployment and view that the immigration intake is 'too high', 1974–2015



In contrast with Australia, international polling indicates majority negative views on immigration. The 2014 Transatlantic Trends survey found that disapproval of government handling of immigration in twelve European countries averaged 60%. The highest levels were 77% in Spain, 75% in Greece, 73% in the United Kingdom, and 64% in Italy and France. In the United States, 71% disapproved.²¹

A number of polls in the United Kingdom mirror the level of negative sentiment towards immigration in continental Europe, in an environment which has seen the emergence and electoral successes of minor parties campaigning on immigration and race.

The YouGov Issues poll in July 2014 found that immigration and asylum was the number one issue of concern in England, indicated by 54% of respondents. This ranking was replicated by a second survey in June 2015. The 2013 British Social Attitudes Survey found that 77% of respondents favoured a reduction of immigration, with 56% wanting to see it reduced ‘a lot’ and 21% ‘a little’. In September 2015 a *Daily Mail* survey asked ‘How many Syrian refugees should the UK accept?’ 29% of respondents indicated ‘none’, another 28% indicated 3,000 or less, a total of 57%; 20% did not know, leaving 23% responding 10,000 or more.²²

Skilled workers on short-term visas

There has been considerable discussion in Australia concerning the entry of temporary workers on 457 visas and the potential impact on the labour market of the China Free Trade Agreement. The 2015 Scanlon Foundation survey, which was conducted before the launch of an emotive trade union advertising campaign,²³ asked for response to the proposition that ‘Accepting the entry of skilled workers on short-term visas is good for Australia’. **While respondents indicated marginally lower support than for the current immigration intake, the pattern of response was similar, with majority support for the entry of skilled workers.**

Table 21: Current immigration intake and the entry of skilled workers on short-term visas, 2015 (percentage)

	Current immigration intake	Entry of skilled workers on short-term visas
Positive	59.7	53.8
Negative	35.1	39.0
Refused / don't know	5.2	4.8

Discrimination on the basis of religion, race or ethnicity

The 2015 Scanlon Foundation survey sought views on discrimination in immigrant selection policy on the basis of religion, race or ethnicity. Respondents were asked:

1. ‘When a family or individual applies to migrate to Australia, do you agree or disagree that it should be possible for them to be rejected on the basis of their race or ethnicity?’ (C3a)
2. ‘When a family or individual applies to migrate to Australia, do you agree or disagree that it should be possible for them to be rejected on the basis of their religion?’ (C3b)

The pattern of response to the two questions was similar. **Between 7%-9% indicated ‘strong agreement’ and 12% agreement, a total in the range 19%-20%.** In contrast, over 75% disagreed with such discrimination, including 39%-41% who ‘strongly disagree’. A relatively low proportion, less than 4%, provided a neutral or don’t know response, or declined to answer.

Table 22: Discrimination in immigrant selection policy on the basis of religion, race or ethnicity, 2015 (percentage)

	Reject on the basis of religion	Reject on the basis of race or ethnicity
Strongly agree	8.9	7.0
Agree	11.5	11.7
Neither agree/ disagree	2.1	1.4
Disagree	37.5	35.9
Strongly disagree	38.6	41.4
Refused / don't know	1.4	2.5

²¹ Transatlantic Trends 2014: Mobility, Migration and Integration, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, p. 6

²² Scott Blinder, UK Public Opinion toward Immigration, 20 August 2015, The Migration Observatory; *Daily Mail*, 25 September 2015

²³ Elizabeth Colman, ‘China Free Trade Agreement: union launches emotive ad campaign’, *The Australian*, 27 July 2015

Asylum seekers

Since late 2009 there has been a polarised and emotional debate in Australia over government policy towards asylum seekers arriving by boat. This debate has been fuelled by the increase in arrivals by boat. In 2009-2010, 5,327 arrived; in 2010-2011, 4,730; in 2011-12, 7,983; and in 2012-13, 25,173; 1 July-31 December 2013, 7,474; 1 January-31 August 2014, less than 100.²⁴

There has been on-going newspaper coverage of Australia's Sovereign Borders policy and the treatment of asylum seekers in offshore processing centres on Manus Island and in Nauru.

The prominence of the issue prompted a number of news agencies and survey companies to commission opinion polls, with a **consistent finding of support for government policy**. Polls indicated that while there was support in principle for the right of asylum, those with strong negative views towards boat arrivals outnumbered strong positive by more than two to one.

A 2010 Red Cross survey found that 83% of respondents agreed that people fleeing persecution should be able to seek protection in another country and 86% of respondents agreed that they would seek to escape to a safe country if they lived in a conflict zone. But the Red Cross also found that 69% considered that asylum seekers who arrived by boat were acting illegally.²⁵

On three occasions between January and July 2014 Essential Report (see 8 July) asked 'Do you think that the Federal Liberal/National government is too tough or too soft on asylum seekers ...?' A minority, in the range 22%-27%, indicated that the approach was 'too tough'.

On 7 October 2014 Essential Report found that 'turning back asylum seeker boats' was the most popular of twelve federal government decisions, with 61% approval, 30% disapproval.

In September 2015 Essential Report asked for views on the best party to handle specific issues; on treatment of asylum seekers, 31% favoured Liberal and 19% Labor; the one major party opposed to offshore processing, the Greens, were favoured by 19%; 31% of respondents indicated that they did not know.

On two occasions Essential Report asked 'how important is the asylum seeker issue in deciding which party you will vote for in the Federal election; in August 2015, 7% indicated that it was 'the most important issue', almost unchanged since June 2013, when the finding was 6%.

The six Scanlon Foundation surveys conducted between 2010-2015 have explored attitudes to asylum seekers and refugees through a series of questions.

[1] The 2011 survey found that **a large majority of Australians have little understanding of the number of asylum seekers who reach the country by boat**.

[2] A second finding, consistent across the 2010-12 Scanlon Foundation surveys, was that the most common view of asylum seekers arriving by boat was that they are **illegal immigrants**.

Respondents were asked, in an open-ended question to which they could give more than one answer, what they thought was 'the main reason asylum seekers attempt to reach Australia by boat'. **The most common response, by a large margin, was that those arriving by boat were coming 'for a better life' – 54% in 2010, 48% in 2011 and 46% in 2012.**

[3] The Scanlon Foundation surveys established that Australians draw a sharp distinction between refugees assessed overseas and admitted for resettlement under the Humanitarian Program – and those arriving by boat.

Thus, in the context of adverse political and media discussion of boat arrivals, **the refugee resettlement program recorded increased support between 2010 and 2012 (from 67% to 75%)**.

[4] A question in the six surveys between 2010-2015 asked: 'which of the following four statements comes closest to your view about the best policy for dealing with asylum seekers trying to reach Australia by boat'. Four policy options were specified:

1. They should be allowed to apply for permanent residence.
2. They should be allowed to apply for temporary residence only.
3. They should be kept in detention until they can be sent back.
4. Their boats should be turned back.

²⁴ See Table D1, Irregular maritime arrivals, 1975-76 to 2012-13, Mapping Australia's Population, <http://monash.edu/mapping-population/>; Janet Phillips, Boat arrivals in Australia: a quick guide to the statistics, Parliament of Australia, 23 January 2014; 'Australia confirms 15 boats carrying 429 asylum seekers have been turned back', *The Guardian*, 28 January 2015

²⁵ 'Most Australians sympathetic towards refugees', 21 June 2010, Red Cross press statement, <http://www.redcross.org.au/most-australians-sympathetic-towards-refugees-finds-red-cross-survey.aspx>; copy of survey findings, personal communication from Red Cross media

Focusing on the two extreme positions, in 2010 19% favoured eligibility for permanent residence and 27% favoured turning back of boats, a differential of 8 percentage points.

In 2011 and 2012 there was almost equal support for the two extremes: in 2011, 22% (permanent) and 23% (turn back), a difference of one percentage point; in 2012, 23% (permanent) and 26% (turn back), a difference of 3 percentage points.

A more polarised result and the strongest negative to date was obtained in 2013: 18% (permanent) and 33% (turn back), a difference of 15 percentage points. In 2013, less than one-in-five respondents favoured eligibility for permanent residence.

In 2014, a statistically significant increase supported permanent residency, 24%, while 31% turn back (a differential of 7 percentage points).

In 2015, despite adverse coverage of mandatory detention in sections of the media, the 2014 result was close to replicated: 24% supported permanent residence, a marginally higher 33% the turning back of boats (a differential of 9 percentage points).

The 2014 and 2015 findings represent the largest proportion across the six surveys agreeing with eligibility for permanent settlement, but those agreeing remain a small minority of one-in-four respondents.

Analysis of attitudes in 2014 and 2015 was undertaken using eight variables: gender, state, region of residence, age, educational qualification, financial situation, intended vote and birthplace. The result points to a high level of consistency across the variables.

Support for turning back of boats was above 40% in six sub-groups: those intending to vote Liberal/National (51%, 41% in 2014); those whose financial status is self-described as 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor' (45%, 41%); trade or apprenticeship qualifications (44%, 43%); over the age of 65 (43%, 36%); with education up to Year 11 (42%, 46% in 2014);

On the other hand, **in only four sub-groups is there support above 30% for allowing those arriving by boat to be eligible for permanent settlement:** those intending to vote Greens (64%, 64%); aged 18-24 (39%, 33%) or 25-34 (34%, 27%); with Bachelor or higher educational qualifications (36%, 33%). In 2014, eligibility for permanent settlement was supported by 32% of those intending to vote Labor, in 2015 a lower 26%.

These results highlight the gulf in the Australian community between Greens, advocacy groups and mainstream opinion.

Figure 20: 'Which of the following four statements comes closest to your view about the best policy for dealing with asylum seekers trying to reach Australia by boat?', 2010-2015

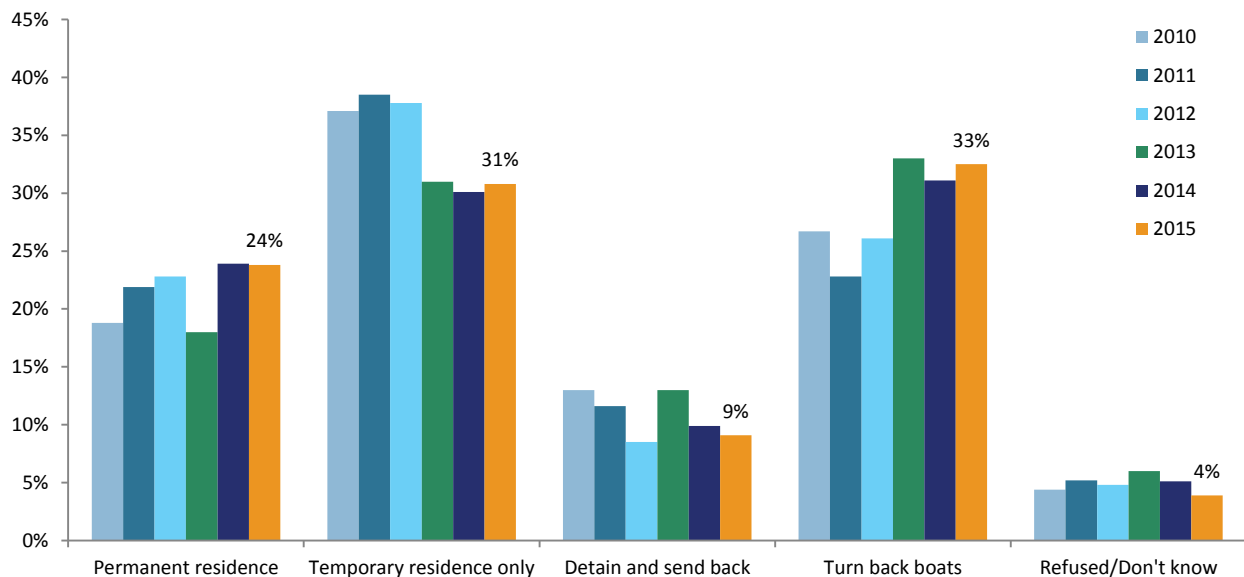


Table 23: 'Which of the following four statements comes closest to your view about the best policy for dealing with asylum seekers trying to reach Australia by boat?' Response: 'Their boats should be turned back' 2015, (percentage)

Gender	Female	Male					
	31.1	34.0					
State	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	30.4	29.0	35.2	39.1	38.0		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	30.2	36.8					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+
	15.0	29.8	30.1	35.2	39.0	43.8	42.2
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	19.7	36.1	43.5	26.2	42.3		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	31.1	30.7	32.9	45.1			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Independent/ minor party			
	22.3	50.9	9.0	29.5			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	35.0	36.9	24.4				

Table 24: 'Which of the following four statements comes closest to your view about the best policy for dealing with asylum seekers trying to reach Australia by boat?' Response: 'They should be allowed to apply for permanent residence', 2015 (percentage)

Gender	Female	Male					
	24.7	22.9					
State	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	28.3	24.7	19.1	25.5	19.2		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	25.0	21.7					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+
	38.6	34.1	18.4	20.7	19.7	14.8	14.7
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	35.9	18.7	17.6	28.0	17.2		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	27.6	24.6	20.8	22.1			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Independent/ minor party			
	25.8	10.9	63.9	24.6			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	21.2	25.0	29.5				

Multiculturalism

The Scanlon Foundation surveys have found a consistently high level of endorsement of multiculturalism.

The 2013, 2014 and 2015 Scanlon Foundation surveys asked for response to the proposition that ‘multiculturalism has been good for Australia’. Agreement has been consistent, in the range 84%-86%, while the proportion indicating ‘strong agreement’ has shown statistically significant increase, from 32% in 2013 to 43% in 2015. However, the meaning of multiculturalism in the Australian context is open to interpretation.

Table 25: ‘Multiculturalism has been good for Australia’, 2013-2015 (percentage)

	2013	2014	2015
Strongly agree	32.2	37.1	43.3*
Agree	52.2	47.7	42.4*
Sub-total: agree	84.4	84.8	85.7

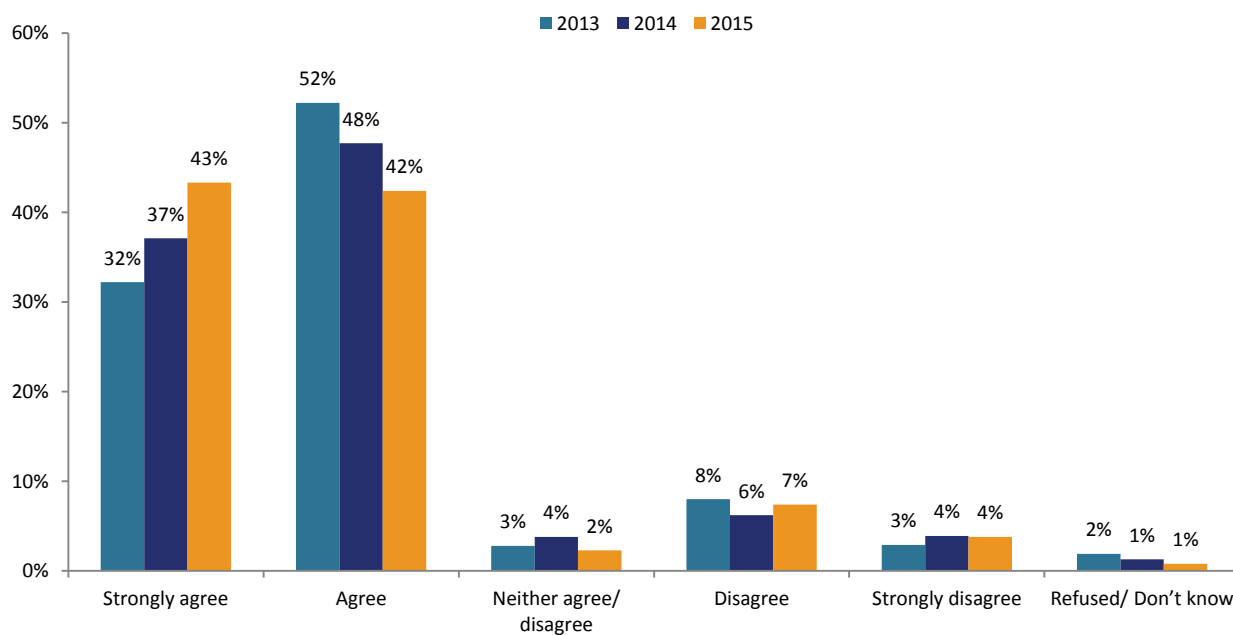
* Change between 2014 and 2015 statistically significant at $p < .05$.

The 2013 survey asked respondents to indicate level of agreement with five statements concerning multiculturalism, presented in both positive and negative terms:

- Benefits/ does not benefit the economic development of Australia.
- Encourages/ discourages immigrants to become part of Australian society.
- Strengthens/ weakens the Australian way of life.
- Gives immigrants the same/ more opportunities than the Australian born.
- Reduces/ increases the problems immigrants face in Australia.

The strongest positive association of multiculturalism was with its contribution to economic development (75% agree) and its encouragement of immigrants to become part of Australian society (71%).

Figure 21: ‘Multiculturalism has been good for Australia’, 2013-2015



Two new questions asked in different sections of the 2015 survey presented juxtaposed views on the extent to which Australians and immigrants should change their behaviour in the context of immigration. The two propositions were worded:

1. 'We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country.' (C4_2)
2. 'People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians.' (F2_5)

The two propositions elicited a similar pattern of response: 25%-27% were in strong agreement, 38%-43% agreement, a combined 65%-68%.

Table 26: Response to cultural diversity, selected questions, 2015 (percentage)

	Learn more about customs	Be more like Australians
Strongly agree	25.0	26.8
Agree	43.3	38.1
Sub-total: agree	68.3	64.9

The connection between answers to the two propositions are open to a range of interpretations: if 'people who come to Australia' change their behaviour then there may be less or no need for Australian residents to learn about their customs and heritage; or if Australian residents learn about the different cultural groups there may be less need for immigrants to 'change their behaviour to be more like Australians'.

On the other hand, the propositions may be seen as compatible and complementary: both Australian residents and immigrants may learn about each other, and both change their behaviour.

To further understanding of the connection between responses, analysis was undertaken of the pattern of bivariate correlation. This analysis indicates that:

- The largest proportion, 39%, see multiculturalism as a two-way process in which Australians and immigrants both play an active role in changing their behaviour (agree that 'we should do more to learn about customs and heritage' of immigrants and agree that immigrants should 'change their behaviour to be more like Australians');²⁶
- 23% consider that it should be Australians who change their behaviour, not immigrants (agree that 'we should do more to learn about customs and heritage' of immigrants and disagree that immigrants should 'change their behaviour to be more like Australians');
- 23% consider that it is up to immigrants to adapt to life in Australia, without change on the part of Australians (disagree that 'we should do more to learn about customs and heritage' of immigrants and agree that immigrants should 'change their behaviour to be more like Australians');
- 3% consider that neither Australians nor immigrants should change (disagree that 'we should do more to learn about customs and heritage' of immigrants and disagree that immigrants should 'change their behaviour to be more like Australians')

The 2015 survey thus provides further evidence of the meaning of multiculturalism in the Australian context. In Australia, multiculturalism is seen by close to 85% of respondents as a positive contributor to economic development and a success in facilitating integration. Bivariate analysis finds close to two-thirds of respondents in support of both Australian residents and immigrants adapting to a changing Australian society, or of Australians 'do[ing] more to learn about the customs and heritage of ethnic and cultural groups in this country'. A minority, close to one in four of respondents, consider that it is up to immigrants to accommodate themselves to life in Australia, without change on the part of Australians.

²⁶ This result is obtained by the following calculation: those who agree that 'people who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians' and also agree that 'we should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups' (590 respondents) as a percentage of all respondents (1501).

Table 27: ‘We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups’ correlated with ‘People who come to Australia should change their behaviour’. Response options by proportion of respondents, 2015 (percentage)

Response option	Percentage
One-way change: Australians learn customs and traditions	22.9
Two-way change: Australians learn, immigrants learn	39.3
One-way change: immigrants adapt to be more like Australians	23.0
Status quo: neither Australian nor immigrants change	3.0
Neither agree or disagree/ Don't know/ Refused	11.8

Generations

Analysis of opinion was undertaken across three age groups, those aged 20-29, 40-49 and 60-69. There was statistically significant variation in response to some two-thirds of 30 questions analysed, particularly in regard to prioritisation of problems facing Australia, national identity and acceptance of cultural diversity.²⁷

Social justice

There is relatively minor variation on social justice issues, with some indication that young adults are less concerned at the level of inequality than those aged 60-69. Thus in response to the proposition that government provides sufficient financial support to those on low income, the highest level of agreement, at 51%, is among young adults, compared to 42% middle-aged and 37% of those in their 60s. In response to the proposition that in Australia the gap in incomes is too large, 53% of the older respondents 'strongly agree', 42% of young adults and 41% middle-aged.

In response, however, to the proposition that 'in the long run hard work in Australia brings a better life', respondents in their 60s are most positive; 40% of older respondents 'strongly agree', compared to 33% of young adults and 37% of middle-aged. With 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses aggregated, there is little difference between young adults (79%), middle-aged (81%) and older respondents (81%).

Figure 22: 'People living on low incomes receive enough financial support from the government', 2015

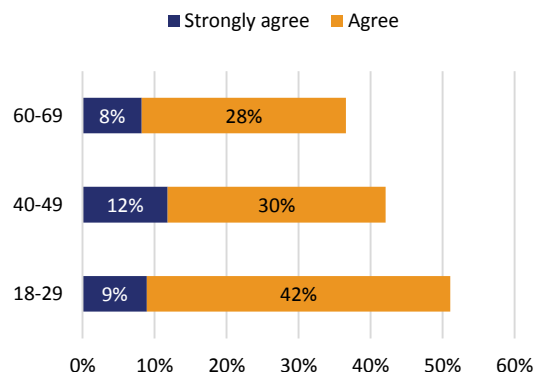


Figure 23: 'In Australia today, the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes, is too large', 2015

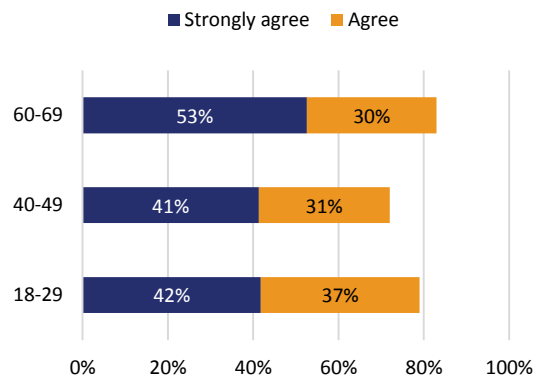
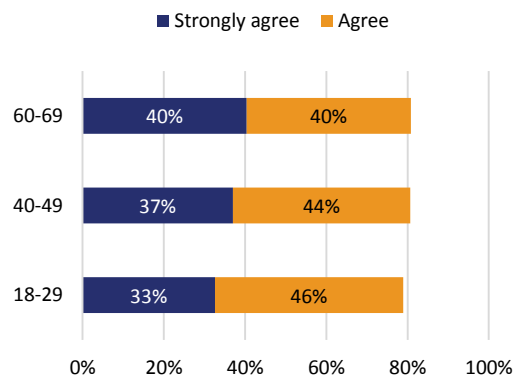


Figure 24: 'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life', 2015



²⁷ The number of respondents for these age groups are 154 for 20-39; 244 for 40-49; and 310 for 60-69.

Trust

There is only minor variance when questions related to political and institutional trust are considered.

Across the three age groups, a majority of close to 70% (68%, 68%, 70%) of respondents indicate that they trust the federal government 'almost never' or 'only some of the time' 'to do the right thing for the Australian people'. An average of 2% of respondents indicates 'a lot of trust' in political parties, while 'some trust' is indicated by 40%, 37%, and 38%.

When presented with reform options for Australia's system of government, support for 'major change' or 'replacement' of the system is indicated by 42% of older respondents, a marginally lower 38% of young adults, and a substantially lower 32% of middle-aged.

Trust in trade unions, employers and the law courts are highest amongst young adults.

- 58% of young adults indicate trust in trade unions, 37%-39% of the older age groups.
- 78% of young adults indicate trust in employers, almost the same level as older respondents, and above the 71% indicated by middle-aged.
- 80% of young adults indicate trust in the law courts, 73% and 68% among middle-aged and older respondents.

The one difference to this pattern relates to trust in police, with young adults indicating a lower level, 83%, compared to 90% and 89% for middle-aged and older respondents.

Figure 25: 'Trust government in Canberra to do the right thing for the Australian people', 2015

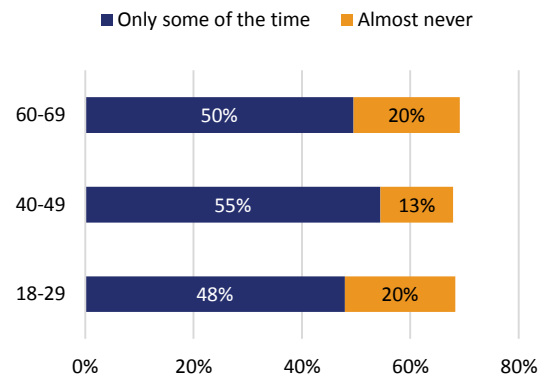


Figure 26: Trust in political parties, 2015

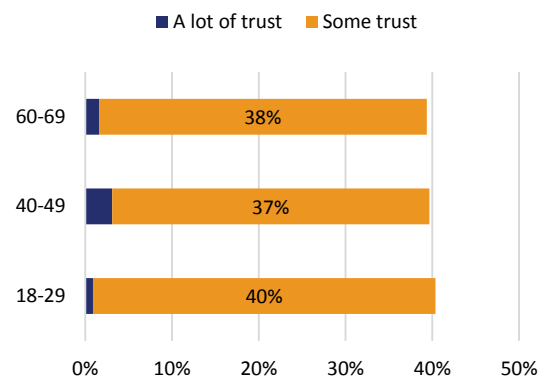
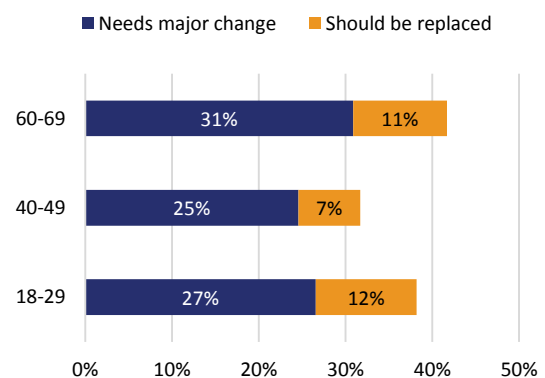


Figure 27: 'Would you say that the system of government we have in Canberra ...', 2015



Life satisfaction

Research on life satisfaction conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies has found a sharp decline in satisfaction from the age of 15 to the early 20s, more gradual decline from the early 20s to the mid-30s, and stability at a relatively low level from the mid-30s to the early 50s.²⁸

The Scanlon Foundation survey finds that for the three age groups considered, the lowest proportion indicating that they are 'very happy' are aged 40-49, although when the two levels of positive response are aggregated there is almost no difference.

The highest proportion indicating that they expect their lives to improve is among young adults, possibly an indication of current difficulties rather than a more optimistic outlook. When asked if they expected their lives to be 'much improved' or 'improved' in three or four years, 71% of young adults answered in the positive, compared to 50% of the middle-aged and 25% of respondents in their '60s.

When asked to consider present level of financial satisfaction, the lowest proportion indicating that they were 'very satisfied' were young adults; with 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied' aggregated, the highest proportion were among middle-aged.

Figure 28: 'Taking all things into consideration, would you say that over the last year you have been ...', 2015

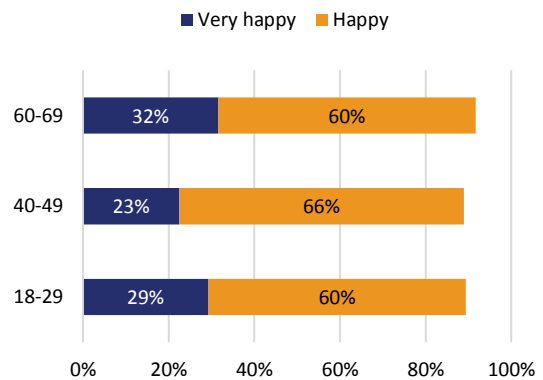


Figure 29: 'In three or four years do you think that your life in Australia will be ...', 2015

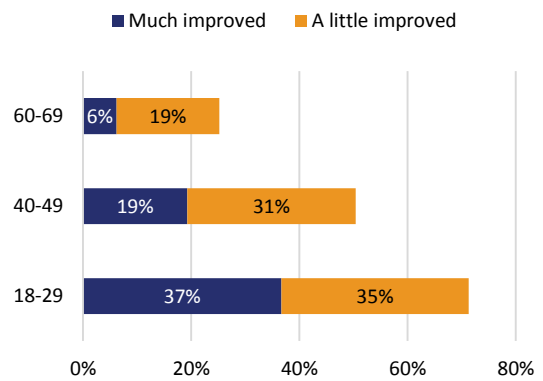
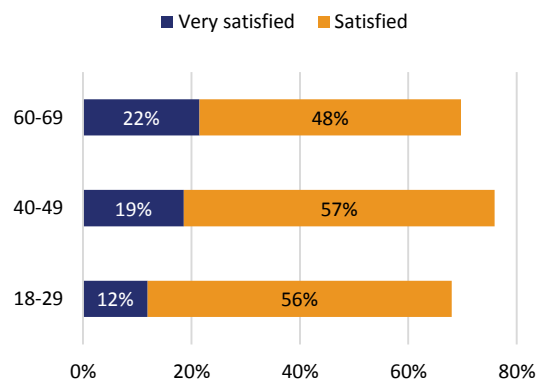


Figure 30: 'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your present financial situation', 2015



²⁸ Qu L., & de Vaus, D. (2015). *Life satisfaction across life course transitions* (Australian Family Trends No. 8) Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

The most important problem facing Australia

There is only minor difference in the ranking of the major problem facing Australia by those aged in their '40s and '60s, with economic issues, national security and social issues the major concerns. **Young adults, however, rank environmental issues third and are the only age group to include poor treatment of asylum in the top five.**

With regard to proportions, a relatively high proportion (11%) of young adults give priority to social and environmental issues, a relatively high proportion (34%) select the economy among the middle-aged, while national security is selected by a relatively high proportion (13%) among older respondents.

Table 28: 'The most important problem facing Australia today ...', 2015

Rank	18-29	%	40-49	%	60-69	%
1	Economy	25.0	Economy	34.1	Economy	29.5
2	Social issues	14.0	National security	10.2	Social issues	13.5
3	Environment/ climate change	11.3	Social issues	9.4	National security	13.0
4	Government/ quality of politicians	5.5	Government/ quality of politicians	8.2	Government/ quality of politicians	13.0
5	Poor treatment of asylum seekers / National security	5.2/ 5.2	Environment/ climate change	5.9	Environment/ climate change	7.8

National identification

The highest level of national identification is indicated by those aged in their '40s and '60s. Thus 64% of middle-aged and older respondents indicated that they took 'pride in the Australian way of life' to a 'great extent', compared to 35% of young adults. A similar pattern is evident in the level of 'strong agreement' in response to the statement that 'In the modern world, maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important': 39% of young adults indicate 'strong agreement', 64% and 67% of those aged 40-49 and 60-69.

A higher proportion of young adults indicate sense of belonging at the highest level ('great extent'), but still considerably below that indicated by middle-aged and older respondents: 51%, compared to 73% and 79%.

Figure 31: 'To what extent do you take pride in the Australian way of life and culture?', 2015

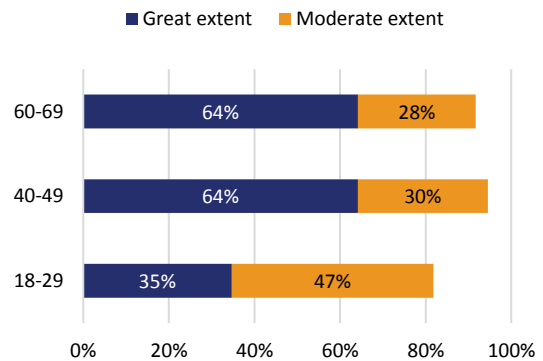


Figure 32: 'In the modern world, maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important', 2015

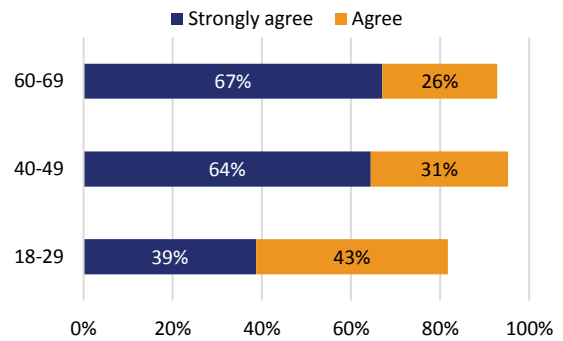
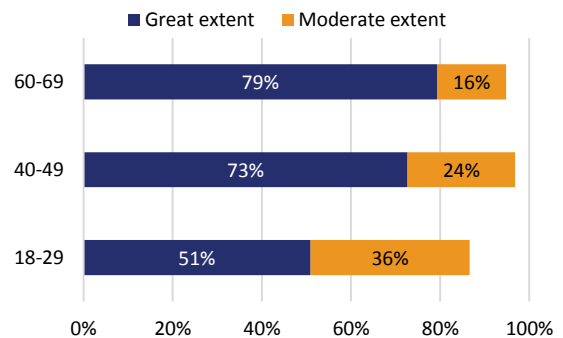


Figure 33: 'To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?', 2015



Immigration and cultural diversity

Young adults are consistently more accepting of immigration and cultural diversity than middle-aged and older respondents.

- 65% of respondents in their '20s agreed with the provision of government assistance to ethnic minorities to maintain customs and traditions, compared to 34% of middle-aged and 31% of the older respondents.
- In response to the proposition that immigrants should 'change their behaviour to be more like Australians', 17% of older respondents 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree', 23% of middle-aged, and a much higher 43% of young adults.
- Close to 60% of young adults 'strongly disagree' with discrimination in immigrant selection on the basis of race, ethnicity or religion, compared to 38%-39% of middle-aged and 30%-35% of older respondents.
- In response to the proposition that 'we should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different cultural groups in this country', 85% of young adults agree (41% 'strongly agree'), compared to 67% middle-aged (20%) and 59% of older respondents (16%).

A relatively high proportion of young adults also support current immigration, the entry of skilled workers on short-term visas, and the value of the immigrant intake from 'many different countries'.

While close to twice as many young adults indicated that their preferred policy towards asylum seekers arriving by boat is to provide them with a pathway to permanent residence, this was only favoured by little over one-third in the age group (38%, 20%, 19%). Both young adults and middle-aged respondents were more favourable than older respondents to those of the Muslim faith, although the proportion favourable was again in the minority, 29%-31%, compared to 23%.

Figure 34: Government should assist ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions, 2015

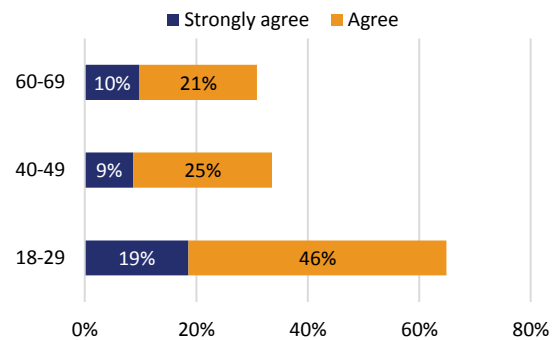


Figure 35: 'We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different cultural groups in this country', 2015

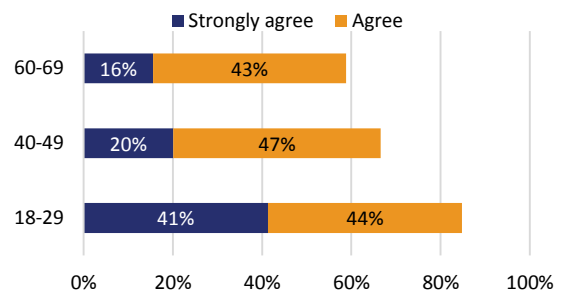


Figure 36: Number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present, 2015

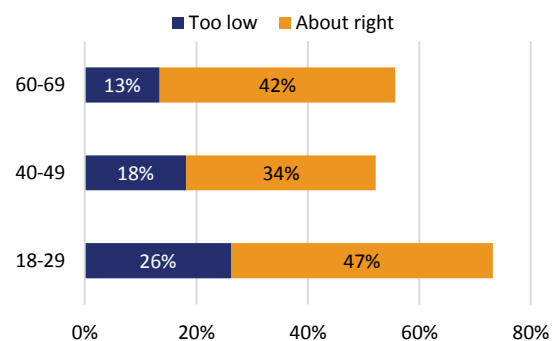


Table 29: Immigration and cultural diversity, selected questions, 2015

Question	Response	18-29	40-49	60-69
'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia'	'Strongly agree' or 'agree' (Strongly agree)	90.8 (57.5)	87.4 (46.5)	86.4 (41.1)
'When a family or individual applies to migrate to Australia, do you agree or disagree that it should be possible for them to be rejected on the basis of their race or ethnicity'	'Strongly disagree' or 'disagree' (Strongly disagree)	87.1 (59.9)	78.8 (38.6)	70.6 (34.5)
'When a family or individual applies to migrate to Australia, do you agree or disagree that it should be possible for them to be rejected on the basis of their religion'	'Strongly disagree' or 'disagree' (Strongly disagree)	85.3 (59.1)	74.5 (37.6)	69.6 (30.4)
'We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different cultural groups in this country'	'Strongly agree' or 'agree' (Strongly agree)	84.8 (41.3)	66.6 (20.1)	58.8 (15.6)
'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger'	'Strongly agree' or 'agree' (Strongly agree)	76.9 (31.6)	67.3 (25.2)	64.8 (25.9)
'What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present?'	'About right' or 'too low' (Too low)	73.2 (26.2)	52.2 (18.2)	55.7 (13.4)
'Ethnic minorities should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions'	'Strongly agree' or 'agree' (Strongly agree)	64.9 (18.6)	33.6 (8.7)	30.9 (9.8)
'Entry of skilled workers on short-term visas is good for Australia'	'Strongly agree' or 'agree' (Strongly agree)	67.0 (13.5)	54.0 (13.8)	44.4 (11.9)
'People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians'	'Strongly disagree' or 'disagree' (Strongly disagree)	43.0 (12.2)	23.3 (5.1)	17.4 (3.6)
'Which of the following four statements comes closest to your view about the best policy for dealing with asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat?'	'They should be allowed to apply for permanent residence'	37.8	20.0	18.6
'Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards Muslims'	'Very positive' or 'somewhat positive' (Very positive)	29.4 (15.9)	31.0 (11.8)	22.7 (6.7)

Overview

Analysis was undertaken across three age groups: young adults (20-29), middle-aged (40-49) and older Australians (60-69).

In response to a number of questions there was little variation; for example, response to the proposition that in Australia, 'in the long run, hard work brings a better life', 80% of older respondents, 81% of middle-aged and 79% of young adults 'agree' or 'strongly agree'; similarly, there was little difference in level of trust in the federal government and in political parties.

On questions of national identity, at the level of 'strong agreement' there was marked difference between young adults and the other age groups.

Thus 67% of older Australians and 64% of middle-aged 'strongly agree' with the 'importance of maintaining the Australian way of life', a much lower 39% of young adults.

Young adults are also consistently more accepting of immigration and cultural diversity; 65% of respondents in their '20s agreed with the provision of government assistance to ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions, compared to 34% middle-aged and 31% of older respondents. A relatively high proportion of young adults support the current immigration level and the entry of skilled workers on short-term visas, and close to twice as many, although still a minority (38%), agree that asylum seekers arriving by boat should have a pathway to permanent residence.

Australia's states

Australia's states have different histories, including different historical settlement patterns and different immigration impact in recent decades. They are also characterised by differences in state and local government policies, including different approaches to the integration of immigrants and differences in public discussion of issues of cultural diversity. This section considers the extent to which attitudes differ between [a] capital cities and the rest of the states, and differences [b] between and [c] within states.

Attitudes are examined by reference to the following eight questions related to national identity, immigration and asylum policy, and cultural diversity.

NATIONAL IDENTITY

1. 'To what extent do you take pride in the Australian way of life and culture?' (C7)
2. 'To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?' (C8)

IMMIGRATION

3. 'What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present?' (C1)

ASYLUM POLICY

4. 'Which of the following four statements comes closest to your view about the best policy for dealing with asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat?' (CN5)

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

5. 'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger.' (C2a)
6. 'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia.' (C2_3)
7. 'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions.' (C2b)
8. 'Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards Muslims?' (CN7_3)

To increase reliability, the analysis employs the full Scanlon Foundation data file, obtained through the eight national surveys conducted between 2007 and 2015. The data file comprises a total of 14,280 respondents, with 2,781 respondents in New South Wales, 2,521 in Victoria, 2,223 in Queensland, 1,715 in Western Australia, 1,568 in South Australia, and 1,111 in the Australian Capital Territory. Five of the questions – pride, belonging, size and diversity of immigration intake, and assistance to ethnic groups – were included in all eight national surveys; the question on asylum policy was asked in six surveys (2010-15), attitude to Muslims in five surveys (2010-12, 2014-15), and the question on multiculturalism was asked in three surveys (2013-15).

Capital city – rest of state

There is a consistent pattern of lower support outside capital cities for immigration, resettlement rights of asylum seekers arriving by boat, and cultural diversity.

Thus of respondents in capital cities, 25% favour the policy of turning back of asylum seekers arriving by boat, compared to 35% of residents in other state regions; the relative proportions favouring government assistance to ethnic minorities are 39% (capital) and 27% (other); 'strong agreement' that multiculturalism is good for Australia is at 42% and 29%; strong agreement with the value of a diverse immigration intake is at 27% and 18%.

Residents outside the capital cities are less positive in their attitudes towards Muslims (26%, 32%) and in greater proportion (44%, 36%) regard the immigration intake as 'too high'. Variance is greatest at the level of strongest response ('strongly agree', 'very positive'), also evident when respondents are asked concerning their sense of belonging and pride in Australia. **While there is a consistent pattern of differentiation, the extent of difference is not such that minority positions in the capitals become majorities in other regions.** Thus among 'rest of state' respondents, only a minority (44%) consider that the immigration intake is 'too high', a majority (60%) agrees with the value of a diverse immigration intake, a large majority (82%) indicates a positive valuation of multiculturalism, while aggregated positive responses in questions related to sense of pride and belonging finds little difference between the very high levels (above 90%) of agreement.

Table 30: Selected questions, Australia, capital city and rest of state, 2007-2015 (percentage)

	Capital	Rest of state	Variance – rest of state as % of capital
Pride			
Great extent	54.8	59.0	107.7
Moderate extent	35.3	32.5	92.1
Sub-total	90.1	91.5	101.6
Belonging			
Great extent	69.1	76.4	110.6
Moderate extent	24.0	19.2	80.0
Sub-total	93.2	95.5	102.5
Immigration intake			
Too high	35.7	44.4	124.4
Asylum policy			
Apply for permanent residence	23.2	18.3	78.9
Turn back boats	24.7	34.6	140.1
Immigrants – many countries			
Strongly agree	26.8	18.1	67.5
Agree	41.5	42.1	101.4
Sub-total	68.3	60.2	88.1
Multiculturalism			
Strongly agree	41.7	29.4	70.5
Agree	44.8	52.3	116.7
Sub-total	86.5	81.7	94.5
Assist ethnic minorities			
Strongly agree	9.1	4.6	50.5
Agree	30.0	22.7	75.7
Sub-total	39.1	27.3	69.8
Attitude towards Muslims			
Very positive	11.2	7.9	70.5
Somewhat positive	22.0	18.0	81.8
Sub-total	32.2	25.9	80.4
N (unweighted)	9,679	4,597	

Variance within states

Intra-state analysis was undertaken for Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland, and Western Australia. Two key points emerged from the analysis.

First, while 'rest of state' responses in Victoria were similar, or more positive towards immigration and cultural diversity than those in the other states examined, due to the higher level of positive response in Melbourne than in the other four capitals, **Victoria records the largest divergence between its capital and other regions.** The average for responses concerning the current immigration intake and the strongest level response for the six questions with a 5 point response scale finds that in Victoria the average difference is 10.4 percentage points between the capital and the 'rest of state'. This compares with 5.8 percentage points in New South Wales; 4.8 percentage points in South Australia; 4.7 percentage points in Queensland; and 4.7 percentage points in Western Australia.

Thus, 48% of Melbourne residents 'strongly agree' that 'multiculturalism has been good for Australia', but a considerably lower 31% of other Victorians; in response to the proposition that immigration 'from many different countries makes Australia stronger', the relative proportions in 'strong agreement' are 31% and 21%.

The second significant finding relates to the **low level of strong positive sentiment on questions of immigration, asylum policy and cultural diversity amongst 'rest of state' respondents in Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland.**

- 14% of Western Australians outside the capital, 15% in Queensland, and 18% in South Australia consider that asylum seekers arriving by boat should be able to apply for permanent residence.
- 4% of 'rest of state' South Australians, 6% of Western Australians, and 7% of Queenslanders are 'very positive' in their attitudes towards Muslims .
- 22% of 'rest of state' Western Australians, 23% of South Australians, and 26% of Queenslanders 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with government assistance to ethnic minorities for cultural maintenance.

Table 31: Selected questions, Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland, Western Australia, capital city and rest of state, 2007-2015 (percentage)

	Victoria		NSW		South Australia		Queensland		Western Australia	
	Melbourne	Rest of state	Sydney	Rest of state	Adelaide	Rest of state	Brisbane	Rest of state	Perth	Rest of state
Pride										
Great extent	50.0	61.8	55.6	56.6	58.3	60.5	57.9	61.5	57.6	57.9
Moderate extent	38.5	29.5	33.8	33.4	34.3	35.0	33.9	31.4	33.6	34.1
Sub-total	88.6	91.2	89.4	89.9	92.6	95.5	91.8	92.8	91.2	92.0
Belonging										
Great extent	65.5	78.5	67.5	76.4	74.2	79.4	71.9	75.0	73.7	75.0
Moderate extent	26.5	16.3	25.0	19.7	20.0	17.6	22.0	20.7	21.7	18.4
Sub-total	92.0	94.9	92.5	96.2	94.2	97.0	93.9	95.7	95.3	93.4
Immigration intake										
Too high	35.0	45.4	35.9	41.4	32.1	46.4	38.4	47.4	39.6	44.3
Asylum policy										
Apply permanent residence	28.3	21.8	23.1	20.3	25.5	17.7	15.5	15.0	18.6	14.2
Turn back boats	21.0	26.4	24.6	34.0	23.6	39.2	29.3	38.6	30.5	40.3
Immigrants – many countries										
Strongly agree	30.9	20.6	26.2	18.9	22.6	16.9	24.2	17.2	23.4	12.6
Agree	40.0	44.3	43.5	42.5	44.5	45.7	38.1	40.6	40.8	40.4
Sub-total	70.9	64.8	69.7	61.4	67.1	62.5	62.2	57.8	64.2	53.0
Multiculturalism										
Strongly agree	48.1	31.2	41.7	30.9	38.6	19.7	34.7	29.0	37.2	26.7
Agree	39.8	53.5	44.0	53.4	50.4	57.6	50.0	49.9	48.0	52.5
Sub-total	87.9	84.7	85.6	84.3	89.0	77.3	84.7	78.9	85.2	79.2
Assist ethnic minorities										
Strongly agree	12.3	6.3	8.3	4.2	8.2	2.6	8.1	4.4	6.2	4.0
Agree	35.2	27.1	29.8	23.1	28.8	15.9	23.2	21.7	26.9	18.1
Sub-total	47.5	33.3	38.1	27.3	37.0	22.6	31.3	26.1	33.1	22.1
Attitude towards Muslims										
Very positive	13.3	8.7	11.9	9.2	10.0	4.2	7.8	6.8	9.3	6.0
Somewhat positive	25.6	21.1	21.0	17.1	21.6	21.2	20.7	16.7	18.2	16.3
Sub-total	38.9	29.8	32.9	26.3	31.6	25.5	28.5	23.5	27.5	22.3
N (unweighted)	1,911	610	1,764	1,017	1,177	391	1,069	1,154	1,306	409

Table 32: Selected questions, Canberra and mainland capitals, 2007-2015 (percentage)

	Canberra	Melbourne	Adelaide	Sydney	Brisbane	Perth
Pride						
Great extent	57.1	50.0	58.3	55.6	57.9	57.6
Moderate extent	35.1	38.5	34.3	33.8	33.9	33.6
Sub-total	92.2	88.6	92.6	89.4	91.8	91.2
Belonging						
Great extent	75.3	65.5	74.2	67.5	71.9	73.7
Moderate extent	20.3	26.5	20.0	25.0	22.0	21.7
Sub-total	95.7	92.0	94.2	92.5	93.9	95.3
Immigration intake						
Too high	24.0	35.0	32.1	35.9	38.4	39.6
Asylum policy						
Apply permanent residence	30.8	28.3	25.5	23.1	15.5	18.6
Turn back boats	17.2	21.0	23.6	24.6	29.3	30.5
Immigrants – many countries						
Strongly agree	32.6	30.9	22.6	26.2	24.2	23.4
Agree	42.9	40.0	44.5	43.5	38.1	40.8
Sub-total agree	75.5	70.9	67.1	69.7	62.2	64.2
Multiculturalism						
Strongly agree	47.9	48.1	38.6	41.7	34.7	37.2
Agree	40.8	39.8	50.4	44.0	50.0	48.0
Sub-total	88.7	87.9	89.0	85.6	84.7	85.2
Assist ethnic minorities						
Strongly agree	7.4	12.3	8.2	8.3	8.1	6.2
Agree	30.7	35.2	28.8	29.8	23.2	26.9
Sub-total	38.1	47.5	37.0	38.1	31.3	33.1
Disagree	32.9	25.4	33.7	29.6	33.4	32.1
Strongly disagree	21.2	18.7	21.1	24.3	28.8	28.0
Sub-total disagree	54.1	44.1	54.9	53.9	62.1	60.1
Attitude towards Muslims						
Very positive	12.8	13.3	10.0	11.9	7.8	9.3
Somewhat positive	24.2	25.6	21.6	21.0	20.7	18.2
Sub-total positive	36.9	38.9	31.6	32.9	28.5	27.5
Somewhat negative	9.4	9.2	13.7	13.2	10.7	12.1
Very negative	6.7	6.8	13.5	14.1	14.4	14.7
Sub-total negative	16.1	16.0	27.2	27.3	25.1	26.8
N (unweighted)	1,111	1,911	1,177	1,764	1,069	1,306

Capital cities

Comparative analysis was undertaken for the five mainland state capitals and Canberra.

National identity questions find only minor difference, with the exception of lower positive response for Melbourne and Sydney at the strongest level: for sense of belonging, 66% and 68% indicate to a 'great extent', compared with the average for the other capitals and Canberra of 74%.

With regard to immigration and cultural diversity, the average was calculated for the 'strongest positive' response for the four questions with a five point response scale, and for those favouring eligibility for resettlement of asylum seekers arriving by boat. The average score finds **three groupings of cities: [a] Melbourne and Canberra, average 26%-27%; [b] Adelaide and Sydney, 21%-22%; [c] Brisbane and Perth, 18%-19%.**

Thus in Melbourne and Canberra, 28%-31% support eligibility for resettlement for asylum seekers arriving by boat, 23%-26% in Adelaide and Sydney, and 16%-19% in Brisbane and Perth; 48% in Melbourne and Canberra 'strongly agree' that multiculturalism has been good for Australia, 39%-42% in Adelaide and Sydney, 35%-37% in Brisbane and Perth.

Closer analysis considered pattern of negative response and found that with regard to attitudes towards Muslims there was little difference between Adelaide, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth, with 25%-27% indicating 'strong negative' or 'negative' response, compared with a substantially lower 16% in Melbourne and Canberra.

Disagreement with government assistance to ethnic minorities was significantly lower in Melbourne, with 44% of respondents indicating 'strong disagreement' or 'disagreement. This compares with Canberra, Adelaide and Sydney in the range 54%-55%, and 60%-61% Brisbane and Perth.

Overview

There is a consistent pattern of **lower support outside capital cities** for immigration, resettlement in Australia of asylum seekers arriving by boat, and for cultural diversity. The extent of difference is, however, not of such magnitude that minorities are transformed into majority, or vice versa.

A higher proportion of residents outside the capitals agree that the immigration intake is 'too high', 44% compared to 36%; 35% outside the capitals favour the policy of turning back the boats of asylum seekers, compared to 25%; residents outside the capitals are less positive in their attitudes toward those of the Muslim faith, 26% compared to 32%.

Intra-state analysis finds that Victoria records the largest divergence between its capital and other regions, and Western Australians outside Perth, South Australians outside Adelaide, and Queenslanders outside Brisbane indicate relatively low levels of positive response to questions on immigration and cultural diversity.

Comparison of the five mainland capitals and Canberra finds three groupings: the highest level of positive response in Melbourne and Canberra, the lowest in Brisbane and Perth, and in between, respondents in Adelaide and Sydney. Thus 48% in Melbourne and Canberra 'strongly agree' that multiculturalism has been good for Australia, 39%-42% in Adelaide and Sydney, 35%-37% in Brisbane and Perth.

Cultural diversity and the balance of Australian opinion

An issue which from time to time engages public debate in Australia centres on the question ‘**is Australia a racist country?**’ Discussion at the level of generality of the ‘Australian people’ and ‘the Australian nation’ is largely meaningless. All populations are made up of diverse personality types, ranging, for example, from the tolerant to the intolerant – from those who celebrate cultural diversity to those who are comfortable only with what they perceive to be Australian culture.

While attention has focused on racism, on the negative, it has failed to provide a **balanced understanding of Australian opinion**. The following analysis seeks to establish the relative proportions not only of the strongly negative but also of the strongly positive, and those who are in the middle, not committed to a firm position. **There are, however, no simple answers: result depends on the form of question used for analysis.**

The broad range of questions in the Scanlon Foundation surveys provide a number of perspectives for determining the balance of opinion in Australian society. The eleven questions in the survey on immigration and cultural diversity, most of them propositions calling for a response, are used in the following analysis. Each of the survey items considered provided five response options, ranging from strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, to disagree and strongly disagree. The eleven items are:

1. ‘Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger.’ (C2a)
2. ‘Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions.’ (C2c)
3. ‘When a family or individual applies to migrate to Australia, do you agree or disagree that it should be possible for them to be rejected on the basis of their race or ethnicity?’ (C3a)
4. ‘When a family or individual applies to migrate to Australia, do you agree or disagree that it should be possible for them to be rejected on the basis of their religion?’ (C3b)

5. ‘Multiculturalism has been good for Australia.’ (C4a)
6. ‘We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country.’ (C4b)
7. ‘Is your personal attitude positive, negative, or neutral towards Buddhists?’ (CN7a)
8. ‘Is your personal attitude positive, negative, or neutral towards Muslims?’ (CN7b)
9. ‘My local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together.’ (F2b)
10. ‘The mix of different national or ethnic backgrounds improves life in my local area.’ (F2c)
11. ‘People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians.’ (F2d)

The first part of the analysis involves calculating the average for the eleven items. The average was calculated for the extreme points (strongly agree and strongly disagree) and the middle, those indicating a second level response (agree, disagree) or a neutral response (neither agree nor disagree). **On the basis of the average score, the strongly positive proportion of the population is indicated to be close to 24%, the strongly negative close to 10%, and the middle close to 65%.** Results are presented in the following table:

Table 33: Selected questions, average and median score, 2015 (percentage)

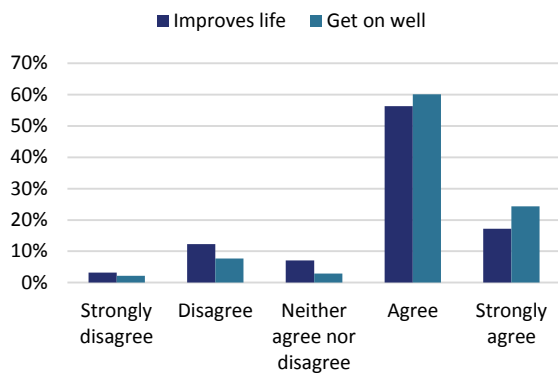
	Strong negative	Middle	Strong positive
Average	9.8	64.1	24.0
Median	8.0	65.5	24.4

This finding indicates that those who are strongly positive outnumber the strongly negative by a substantial proportion – a ratio of 2.5: 1. There is considerable variation across the eleven questions, particularly in the proportion indicating a strong opinion: the proportion of strongly negative responses ranges from 2% to 27%; the strongly positive ranges from 6% to 43%; and within the middle a narrower range, from 49% to 76%. **Analysing responses by question finds five thematic areas.**

Neighbourhood

The lowest level of negative response is to questions concerning neighbourhoods. Only 2% strongly disagree with the proposition that people of different background get on well together and 3% strongly disagree that the mix of different backgrounds improves life in their local area. Strong agreement is in the range 17%-24%, while the middle ground exceeds 70% and tends to the positive, with 56%-60% in agreement that diversity improves life in the local area and that people get on well together.

Figure 37: Diversity in neighbourhoods, 2015 (percentage)



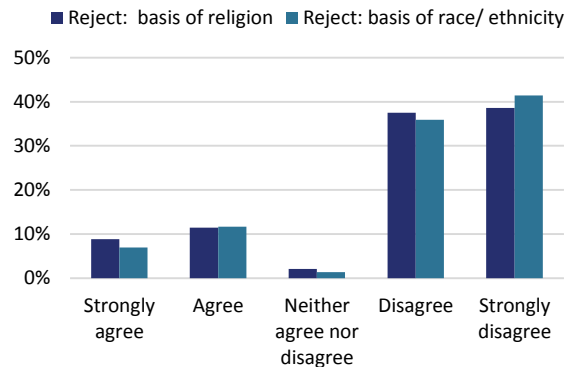
Multiculturalism

When presented with the proposition that multiculturalism has been good for Australia, there is again a **very low proportion indicating strong disagreement – just 4%**, compared to 43% of respondents who strongly agree. The middle group again tends to the positive: 42% indicate that they ‘agree’, compared to 7% who indicate that they ‘disagree’.

Immigrant selection

Less than 10% ‘strongly agree’ that it should be possible in immigrant selection to reject applicants solely on the ground of race, ethnicity or religion; close to 40% ‘strongly disagree’, while of the middle group, 36%-38% disagree with such discrimination, 11%-12% agree. There is a similar pattern in response to the proposition that ‘immigration from many different countries makes Australia stronger’.

Figure 38: Discrimination in immigrant selection policy, 2015 (percentage)



Religion

When asked for their personal attitudes towards two non-Christian faith groups, Buddhists and Muslims, **a small proportion indicate strong negative views, 2% and 11% respectively, similar to the level of strong negative response to questions on neighbourhood, multiculturalism and immigrant selection. But unlike the response to these questions, only a small proportion provide a strong positive response, 22% and 10% respectively.** A further distinctive feature of the response pattern is the high proportion indicating that they are neither positive nor negative, 45%-47%. It may be that this large proportion indicating neither positive nor negative opinion indicates that in a political charged environment, respondents are reluctant to indicate their true feelings. The impact of ‘social desirability bias’ in shaping responses to such a question was analysed in the 2014 Scanlon Foundation social cohesion report; the indication provided by an online survey conducted by the Scanlon Foundation in 2014 supports the interpretation that when asked by an interviewer, as distinct from self-completed online response, a significant number of respondents do not disclose their true opinion. In 2014 it was found that among third generation Australians, in the interviewer administered version of the survey, 14% were strongly negative towards Muslims, in the self-administered online survey a higher 23%.

This may in part explain the atypically high neutral response to the interviewer administered survey, but it is not the whole answer. The same question asked concerning attitudes towards Buddhist and Christian faiths also finds a high neutral response, in the range 41%-45%. The consistently high neutral response may reflect the views of a segment of the population that is unwilling to comment on questions of religion.

Table 34: Immigration, asylum policy and cultural diversity, selected questions, 2015 (percentage)

	Strong negative	Negative	Neither	Positive	Strong positive
Best policy for dealing with asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat	41.5		30.8		23.8
Immigration intake is 'too high'	35.1		40.9		18.8
'People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians' (agreement with proposition)	26.8	38.1	6.7	20.8	6.0
'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions'	25.2	28.0	4.1	31.4	9.2
Personal attitude towards Muslims	11.3	11.0	47.1	18.0	10.3
<i>Personal attitude towards Buddhists</i>	2.0	2.7	44.6	26.8	21.7
<i>Personal attitude towards Christians</i>	1.3	2.9	41.2	22.3	31.4
'We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country'	8.0	19.2	3.0	43.3	25.0
'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger'	9.4	17.1	4.2	39.9	27.3
Reject immigrants on the basis of religion	8.9	11.5	2.1	37.5	38.6
Reject immigrants on the basis of race or ethnicity	7.0	11.7	1.4	35.9	41.4
'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia'	3.8	7.4	2.3	42.4	43.3
'The mix of different national or ethnic backgrounds improves life in my local area' (excludes 'not enough immigrants in my area')	3.2	12.3	7.1	56.3	17.2
'My local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together' (excludes 'not enough immigrants in my area')	2.2	7.7	2.9	60.1	24.4

Integration

A significantly higher proportion of strong negative response is obtained when issues related to the integration of immigrant groups are raised in general terms. In response to the proposition that government should provide assistance to minorities for cultural maintenance, 25% indicate strong disagreement; in response to the proposition that immigrants should adapt their behaviour to be 'more like Australians', 27% are in 'strong agreement. The middle ground is either evenly divided or in larger proportion favours integration.

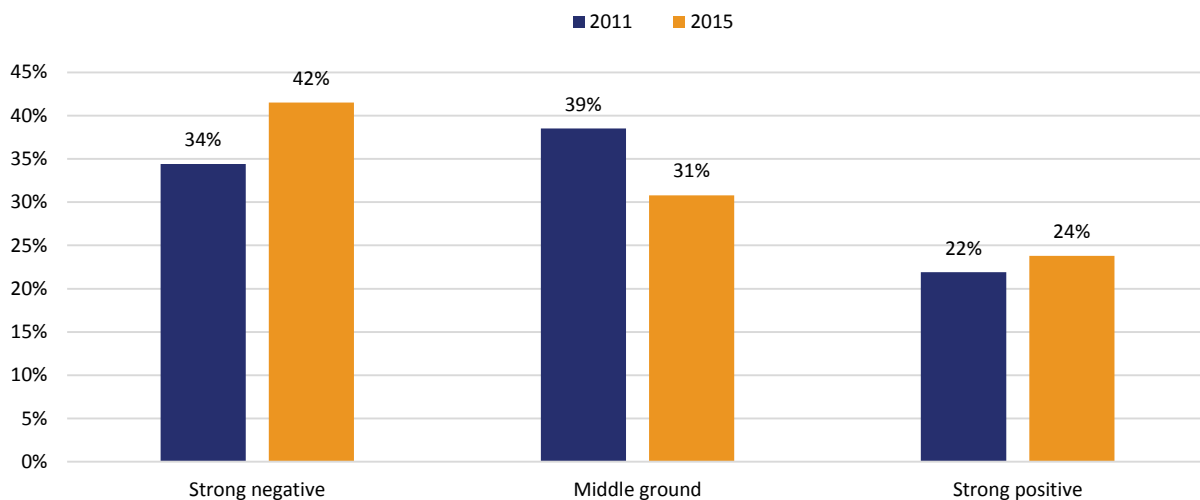
Beyond this indication of the balance of opinion, evidence from the Scanlon Foundation surveys establishes the way in which the distribution of opinion is changed in the context of polarised debate in politics and in the media.

Asylum

The question on asylum for boat arrivals asks for response to four policy options, as discussed earlier in this report. For the two options indicating a **strong negative position** (turn back boats, deport after arrival), the response is **42%**; a relatively low 24% indicate strong positive (eligible for permanent settlement), while a similarly low proportion, 31%, indicate agreement with a middle position, temporary protection only.

There is evidence of a shift from the middle to a strong negative position over the last five years. In 2011, 39% of respondents favoured the granting of temporary protection, in 2015 a lower 31%; in 2011, 34% favoured the option of turning back of boats or detention and deportation, in 2015 42%.

Figure 39: Best policy for dealing with asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat, 2011, 2015



The balance of opinion: overview

The attempt to provide a balanced understanding of Australian opinion, using the eleven questions in the 2015 Scanlon Foundation survey on immigration and cultural diversity, finds five thematic groupings.

[1] The lowest level of negative response is to questions concerning **local areas and multiculturalism**. For questions on neighbourhood the strongly negative is just 2%-3%, the strongly positive is in the range 17%-24%. The largest proportion, in the middle, tends to the positive. In response to the question on multiculturalism, the strongly negative is 4%, strongly positive is 43%, with the middle again favouring the positive by a large margin.

[2] Questions on **discrimination in immigration policy** on the basis of race, ethnicity or religion finds 7%-9% strongly in support, 39%-41% strongly opposed, with the largest proportion in the middle in opposition to discrimination.

[3] Attitudes towards those of the **Muslim faith** finds more evenly divided opinion. Almost the same proportion are strongly negative (11%) as strongly positive (10%); the highest proportion (47%) indicate that they are 'neither positive nor negative'.

[4] General statements, which may be interpreted as a **rejection of cultural diversity** find relatively high levels in agreement, close to one in four respondents. Thus when presented with the proposition that immigrants 'should change their behaviour to be more like Australians', 27% strongly agree; a similar proportion, 25%, strongly oppose government assistance to ethnic minorities for cultural maintenance.

[5] The highest proportion favouring the strong negative is in response to policy on **asylum seekers**: 42% indicate agreement that boats should be turned back or arrivals should be detained and deported. On this question there is evidence of a shift over the last five years from the middle to the strong negative.

Another approach, which averages the eleven questions, finds that the strongly negative is close to 10%, the strongly positive close to 24%, and the middle close to 65%. The strongly positive thus outnumber the strongly negative by a substantial proportion, a ratio of 2.5 to 1.

The analysis demonstrates that there is no simple or definitive determination of the balance of Australian opinion: answers are dependent on specific questions and approach to analysis.

Australian opinion is distinctive in the majority support for immigration and multiculturalism – in contrast with Europe. When asked concerning their experience of cultural diversity in their neighbourhoods, less than 5% indicate strong negative opinion. **The small minority of less than 10% that strongly supports racial or religious discrimination in immigrant selection indicates the extent of attitudinal change since the ending of the White Australia policy in the 1970s.**

Intolerance of cultural diversity

Intolerance of cultural diversity is found within all segments of society, although it is in higher proportion in some. This is illustrated by analysing responses to two questions, one relating to views of diverse immigration intake (C2a), the second to discrimination in immigration selection on the basis of religion (C3b). The 2015 survey finds little difference in the level of strong negative response to diverse immigrant intake (9.4%) and discrimination on the basis of religion (8.9%), an average of 9.2%.

As with all questions, there is scope for differing interpretation of response. A strong negative response to these questions may indicate opposition to all aspects of immigration. Nevertheless, the pattern of response here analysed provides a broad indicator of attitudes towards cultural diversity.²⁹

Averaging the strong negative response for the two questions for thirty two demographic and attitudinal variables finds that **the highest negative** is among those whose level of completed education is **trade or apprenticeship** (19.4%); **over the age of 75** (15.8%); self-described financial status is **struggling to pay bills or poor** (15.1%); and **residents of Queensland** (15.0%).

The lowest proportion of strong negative response is among those aged 18-24 (average for the two questions, 3.3%); intending to vote Greens (3.9%); of non-English speaking background (4.9%); highest completed education Year 12, a relatively young group (5.1%); and with a B.A. or higher level qualification (5.4%).

Table 35: ‘Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger’, response ‘strongly disagree’ (first line); ‘When a family or individual applies to migrate to Australia, do you agree or disagree that it should be possible for them to be rejected on the basis of their religion’, response ‘strongly agree’ (second line), 2015 (percentage)

Gender	Female	Male					
	8.3	10.5					
	8.1	9.6					
State	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	9.0	5.8	8.0	11.0	15.8		
	8.5	6.9	6.7	9.3	14.1		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	8.3	11.4					
	8.0	10.5					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+
	5.4	8.3	8.2	11.3	10.3	10.9	13.3
	1.4	4.4	11.7	9.4	8.9	12.5	18.3
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	4.7	9.0	21.1	6.3	14.3		
	6.1	10.7	17.6	3.9	10.6		
Financial situation	Prosperous / very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	8.9	9.6	7.4	17.7			
	8.0	9.7	6.9	12.5			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Independent/ minor party			
	8.2	12.6	3.5	11.7			
	5.0	12.2	4.2	10.2			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	11.8	8.0	3.7				
	10.0	9.3	6.0				

²⁹ For example, of respondents with trade or apprentice level qualifications, 23% indicate that they are very negative towards Muslims, a much lower 2% towards Christians; the average level of strong negative response to the proposition that ‘we should do more to learn about the customs and heritage’ of immigrants is 8%, more than double (17%) among those with trade or apprenticeship qualifications.

Acknowledgements

This project has been made possible with the financial support and vision of the Scanlon Foundation. The author is particularly grateful to Mr Peter Scanlon, Chairman, and Ms Anthea Hancocks, Chief Executive Officer of the Scanlon Foundation, for the support provided. The support of Mr Tony Fry, past Chief Executive Officer of the Scanlon Foundation, is also gratefully acknowledged.

In the initial planning and implementation of this project during 2006-07, Professor John Nieuwenhuysen, then of Monash University, and Dr Hass Dellal, Executive Director, Australian Multicultural Foundation, played key roles.

Mr Bruce Smith, independent consultant and Fellow of the Australian Market and Social Research Society, has been involved in the project from its inception and has provided sound advice and support at all stages of the project implementation, data analysis and interpretation.

Mr Bruce Smith, Professor John Nieuwenhuysen and Adjunct Professor Darren Pennay provided comment on the draft of this report.

Ms Tanya Munz formatted this publication, Dr Margaret Taft assisted with research.

Survey administration for the national survey was undertaken by The Social Research Centre. Adjunct Professor Darren Pennay (Managing Director) and Mr David Blackmore provided expert advice, including advice on questionnaire design and aspects of data analysis, and developed and applied the survey weighting.

Monash University provides the research environment that sustains this project.

Credits

Professor Andrew Markus is the Pratt Foundation Research Professor in the School of Historical, International and Philosophical Studies, Monash University, and a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. He has published extensively in the field of Australian indigenous and immigration history. His publications include *Australia's Immigration Revolution* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney 2009), co-authored with James Jupp and Peter McDonald; *Race: John Howard and the Remaking of Australia* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001) and *Building a New Community: Immigration and the Victorian Economy* (editor, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001).

The Scanlon Foundation is a member of Philanthropy Australia, the national membership organisation for grant-making trusts and foundations. Established in June 2001, the Foundation's mission to support 'the advance of Australia as a welcoming, prosperous and cohesive nation' has led to the support of a number of social cohesion research projects, including this eighth survey of social cohesion in Australia.

The Australian Multicultural Foundation was established in 1989 as a legacy of Australia's Bicentenary, to promote an awareness among the people of Australia of the diversity of cultures, and the contributions made by those from different backgrounds to the development of Australia's social, cultural and economic wellbeing, by adopting issues of national significance and initiating projects in any worthwhile field or activity to the benefit of the community.



