



# Mapping Social Cohesion

## The Scanlon Foundation surveys **2014**

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<http://monash.edu/mapping-population/>

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# Executive summary

## Key findings

**Australia remains a highly cohesive society.** The seven Scanlon Foundation surveys conducted since 2007 have found a consistent pattern of:

- Positive identification with Australia;
- Agreement that in Australia there is economic opportunity and reward for hard work;
- Satisfaction with financial circumstances.

The 2014 Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion (SMI) finds marginal upward movement in four of the five domains of social cohesion, the exception being the domain of social justice and equity.

At the time of the survey, June-July 2014, there was **some evidence of a lessening of concern over issues of immigration and cultural diversity.** Thus five questions used as indicators of intolerance show marginal improvement. In the ranking of problems facing Australia, the most significant change is the decline of the asylum issue. In response to an open-ended question, the issue ranked equal second in 2013, mentioned by 12% of respondents; in 2014, it was mentioned by less than 4%.

**In a surprising finding, the 2014 survey recorded the lowest level of concern over immigration across the seven Scanlon Foundation surveys.** Just 35% consider that the immigration intake is 'too high' while 58% agree that it is 'about right' or 'too low'. **This is possibly the highest current level of positive sentiment towards immigration in the western world.**

There is, however, also **confirmation of a range of negative findings noted in previous surveys.**

Within the SMI, the index of acceptance/rejection, after sharp downward movement in 2013, has stabilised, but remains the lowest ranked of the five domains.

Reported **experience of discrimination** remains close to the highest level recorded in the surveys: 19% in 2013, 18% in 2014.

Questions on attitude to Christian, Buddhist and Muslim faith groups find that, as in past surveys, **a very small proportion are negative towards Christian and Buddhist faiths (close to 5%), but a proportion almost five times higher (close to 25%) towards Muslims.**

There are also **concerns over the working of Australian democracy.** Trust in government remains well below the level recorded in 2007-2009.

While there is a high level of agreement (88%) that democracy, whatever its problems, is the best system of government, just 15% agree that the system 'works fine as it is'.

The 2014 survey further explored attitudes to multiculturalism and integration of immigrants, building on earlier surveys. The results indicate marked **differences across the population** – for example, between those of non-English speaking background and third generation Australians. Within the third generation, **opinion is divided on the extent of integration to be expected of immigrants**, and while there is broad acceptance of diversity there is clear indication that **a large proportion are undecided or lacking firm views** when issues of integration are considered.

## The 2014 surveys

This report presents the findings of the seventh Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion national survey. The report builds on the knowledge gained through the six earlier Scanlon Foundation national surveys (2007, 2009-2013) 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, thirteen surveys with some 24,000 respondents have been conducted since 2007. The project also tracks the findings of other Australian and international surveys on population and social cohesion.

**In 2014 two surveys were conducted. The national survey was conducted by telephone and employed a dual-frame sample methodology,** comprising both randomly generated (RDD) landline telephone numbers and randomly generated mobile phone numbers. In keeping with contemporary best practice, the survey included the views of the estimated 21% of adults who now live in households without a landline telephone connection. It was completed by 1,526 respondents.

In addition to the national survey, **an online survey of third generation Australians,** defined as those born in Australia with both parents born in Australia, was conducted. It was completed by 1,070 respondents.

A prime objective of the surveys is to further understanding of the social impact of Australia's increasingly diverse immigration program. In the 2014 national survey there were 15 questions concerned with immigration and cultural diversity, with scope to interpret findings in the context of a questionnaire comprising a total of 65 questions. The online survey included all questions in the national survey – together with a module of 17 questions that dealt with identity, views on integration of immigrants and extent of cross-cultural contacts.

## The Australian context

**Australia has experienced significant population growth in recent years.** Since 2001, Australia's population has increased by close to 4 million, from 19.4 million to an estimated 23.3 million at 31 December 2013. During 2012-13 the population increased by almost 400,000 persons, 40% from natural increase and 60% from net overseas migration. Annual population growth averaged 1.4% per annum from 1970 to 2010; in 2012-13 growth was an estimated 1.8%.

Although **the Global Financial Crisis had a relatively minor impact on the Australian economy**, at the time of the 2014 survey there was growing economic uncertainty and media attention on job losses, particularly in the manufacturing sector. Unemployment has increased from 5.2% of the workforce in June 2012, to 5.7% in June 2013, and 6.1% in June 2014. Respondents to the 2014 Scanlon Foundation survey ranked economic issues as the most important problem facing Australia.

## The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI)

What then is the state of social cohesion in 2014? The **Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion (SMI)** provides an overview in the five core domains of social cohesion: belonging, worth, social justice, participation, and acceptance and rejection.

**The 2014 SMI registered only minor change from the 2013 level:** up from 88.5 in 2013 to 89.5; this is the fourth year with movement under two index points since the Scanlon Foundation surveys began in 2007. Significant movement occurred in just two years, 2010 (down from 101.2 to 92.6) and 2013 (94.4 to 88.5). **The SMI remains more than ten index points below the 2007 benchmark.**

**The 2014 SMI registered higher scores in four of the five domains of social cohesion:** sense of worth (up 3.0), participation (2.8), acceptance/ rejection (2.1), and belonging (1.6). These movements were partly offset by the largest movement in the index, the fall in the domain of social justice and equity (down 4.3).

All five domains of social cohesion are below the 2007 benchmark level. **The low point, by a large margin, is in the domain of acceptance/rejection, which stood at 70.9 points in 2014, down by almost 30 index points since 2007.** The domain measures attitude to a diverse immigration intake and to government assistance to ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions, reported experience of discrimination and future expectations.

## Identification with Australia

The Scanlon Foundation surveys – and other polling over the last 30 years – have consistently found that **the vast majority of Australians have a high level of identification with their country**, the fundamental prerequisite for any cohesive society. Almost unanimously, Australians express a sense of belonging (92% in 2014 and in 2013, 95% in 2012), indicate pride in the Australian way of life (88%) and believe that its maintenance is important (91%). There has, however, been a marked shift in the proportion indicating that they have a sense of belonging to 'a great extent', down from 74% in 2012 to 66% in 2014.

**The online survey of third generation Australians provides further confirmation of very high levels of identification.** It found that just 3% indicate that they do not feel that they belong in Australia; less than 3% disagree with the statements that 'I identify with Australians' and 'I feel I am committed to Australia'; 4% disagree that 'I feel a bond with Australians'; 6% disagree that 'maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important'.

## Living standards

**The Global Financial crisis has had marginal impact on indicators of financial satisfaction in Australia.** In 2007, 73% of respondents indicated that they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their financial circumstances, in 2014, also 73%.

Nearly nine out of ten respondents (88%) in 2014 indicate that 'taking all things into consideration', they are happy with their lives. There has, however, been a negative shift in the proportion indicating the strongest level of agreement: in 2007, 34% indicated that they were 'very happy', in 2014 a statistically significantly lower 27%.

There continues to be majority endorsement of the view that **'Australia is a land of economic opportunity** where in the long run, hard work brings a better life'. In 2007, 81% of respondents agreed, in 2014, 79%. These views are consistent with international indicators, which rank Australia at or near the top of developed countries in terms of living standard, education, health, and quality of life.

There is, however, also consistency in concerns over inequality in Australia: 76% of respondents in 2014 (up from 73% in 2013) agree that **'the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large'**; opinion of whether 'people living on low incomes in Australia receive enough financial support from the government' is evenly divided - 45% disagree, 46% agree.

**Sense of pessimism about the future has increased.** 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?', there was a statistically significant increase in the proportion answering 'a little worse' or 'much worse', from 11% in 2007 to 19% in 2014. In 2013, 48% of respondents expected that their lives will be 'much improved or 'a little improved', in 2014 a lower 43%.

## Asylum seekers

In the ranking of problems facing Australia, **the most significant change is the decline of the asylum issue.** The issue was specified by 12% in 2013, by a much lower 4% in 2014.

With regard to asylum policy, there has been some lessening of strongly held views. But those supporting eligibility for permanent settlement for arrivals by boat, while at the highest level in the last five Scanlon Foundation surveys, remains a minority viewpoint, with agreement at just 24%. The survey results **highlight the gap that exists in the Australian community between Greens and advocacy groups and mainstream opinion.**

## Immigration

In 2014 there was an expectation, in the context of rising unemployment and other economic concerns, that an increased proportion would agree that the immigration intake is too high – yet the reverse has occurred. **Just 35% consider that the intake is 'too high'** (the lowest proportion of the seven Scanlon Foundation surveys), while 58% indicate that it is 'about right' or 'too low'. This compares with 2014 American and European surveys which have found disapproval of government handling of immigration in the range 60%-75%.

**A possible explanation for the low level of concern with immigration is the effectiveness of the government's measures to stop arrival of asylum seekers by boat.** This success has conveyed the message that the government has effective border control measures and can be trusted to manage immigration.

## Views of police and the legal system

An important factor in the social cohesion of communities is the level of trust in police and the legal system, with troubled communities often characterised by low levels of trust. A series of questions asked for the first time in 2014 found that **a large majority of Australians have a positive opinion of the police,** averaging at 83% for four questions. The proportion positive toward police is higher than towards the law courts, which averages 71%.

## Underlying problems

### Democracy

In contrast with attitudes to the police and the courts, there is **substantial dissatisfaction with the workings of the political system and low level of respect for politicians, political parties and parliament.** The 2013 Scanlon Foundation survey found that 53% of respondents indicated 'a lot of trust' in the police, but just 7% in federal parliament and 3% in political parties.

Scanlon Foundation surveys since 2009 have recorded a **decline in 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 2013 only 27%. It was expected that in 2014 there would be significant increase in trust, on the pattern of the increase in confidence in the new Labor government following its election in 2007. This expectation was not realised. While the level of trust has increased, it is by less than three percentage points.

The first question in the Scanlon Foundation survey asks: 'What is the most important problem facing Australia today?' In 2014, the **second most important problem** (after the economy) was quality of government and politicians.

A new question in the 2014 survey asked respondents if the present system of Australian government works well or is in need of change. **Just 15% indicated that it 'works fine as it is';** 48% considered that it needs minor change, 23% major change and 11% that it should be replaced.

### Experience of discrimination

The Scanlon Foundation survey asks: 'Have you experienced discrimination because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion?' A major change in the 2013 survey was the **marked increase in the reported experience of discrimination** (up from 12% in 2012 to 19%). This level was almost matched in the 2014 survey, which recorded 18%.

Of those who reported discrimination, 14% indicated that discrimination occurred 'about once a month in the last year', while 15% indicated that it occurred 'often – most weeks in the year', a combined 29%. Thus **almost three out of ten respondents who reported discrimination experienced it at least once a month; this proportion constitutes 5% of the total population,** with a higher proportion within sub-groups. In 2014, experience of discrimination was reported by 16% of those born in Australia, 11% of overseas-born of English-speaking background and 26% of non-English speaking background.

## Faith groups

Since 2010 the Scanlon Foundation surveys have asked respondents for their attitudes towards three faith groups, as a way of obtaining additional evidence on Australian openness to diversity, and also to provide further insight into attitudes towards large immigrant groups of non-Christian background. There has been a large measure of consistency in response across four surveys: 5% or fewer respondents indicated that they were 'very negative' or 'negative' towards Christians or Buddhists, but **a significantly higher proportion, close to 25%, towards Muslims.**

## Multiculturalism and integration

Both the 2013 and 2014 surveys indicate **strong level of support for multiculturalism when respondents are asked a general question:** in response to the proposition that 'multiculturalism has been good for Australia', 84% of respondents agreed in 2013, 85% in 2014.

But closer analysis of the 2014 survey indicates a marked difference in attitude between those who 'strongly agree' (37%) and 'agree' (48%) that 'multiculturalism has been good for Australia'. Just one-third of respondents who 'agree' that 'multiculturalism has been good' also agree with 'government assistance to ethnic minorities for maintenance of customs and traditions', and less than one quarter are positive towards Muslims. **Other survey findings highlight the diversity of attitudes, including differences between those born-overseas of non-English speaking background and third generation Australians.**

The 2013 survey found that the strongest positive association of multiculturalism was with its contribution to Australia's economic development and its encouragement of immigrants to become part of Australian society. In 2014 attitudes were further explored through an online survey of third generation Australians, who comprise almost half the Australian population.

The online survey finds broad agreement amongst the third generation that Australians should recognise the diversity of their society, that ethnic and cultural diversity makes society better able to tackle problems, and that multiculturalism has been good for Australia.

But **opinion is divided when issues of integration are considered.** In response to a strongly worded statement that 'it is best for Australia if people forget their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds as soon as possible', 38% of third generation Australians agree or tend to agree, 27% neither agree nor disagree, and 36% disagree or tend to disagree.

The findings indicate that while a large majority of the third generation agree that people of different backgrounds get on well, like getting to know people from other cultures and are positive concerning the value of multiculturalism, **the majority does not agree with entrenched cultural and ethnic difference.** There are a broad range of views on integration amongst the third generation, and one reading of survey results highlights **a large proportion that are undecided or lacking firm views - in other words, who remain to be convinced on issues of integration.**

Statistical analysis of factors that are predictors of support for diversity amongst third generation Australians finds that **openness to intercultural contact** and the perception that different ethnic groups get on well in one's local area are of major importance. **Positive examples of contact and the way they are portrayed are important in understanding the functioning of harmonious communities.**

## Directions

In conclusion, although the surveys provide evidence of Australia as a highly cohesive nation, and of a measure of stabilisation and some positive change in 2014, **the broad perspective** is that after eight years the Scanlon-Monash Index remains **more than ten index points below the 2007 benchmark.**

Indicative of the direction of change, while the vast majority of Australians have a high level of identification with their country, there has been a shift in the proportion indicating that they have a sense of belonging to a 'great extent' (77% in 2007, 66% in 2014); the proportion who indicate the strongest level of agreement that they have been happy over the last year (34% in 2007, 27% on 2014); and heightened sense of pessimism about the future (11% in 2007, 19% in 2014).

Concurrent with these changes is the decline in the level of trust in the federal government since 2009 and a low point in confidence, as evidenced by the finding that although the vast majority of Australians believe democracy to be the best form of government, just 15% agree that 'it works fine as it is'.

**The Scanlon Foundation surveys thus provide mixed results – and a mapping of social attitudes that serve to define the challenges facing contemporary Australia.**

## Project objectives

Since it was established in June 2001, the Scanlon Foundation has pursued a mission to support 'the advance of Australia as a welcoming, prosperous and cohesive nation'. The Foundation's social cohesion research program guides its Australia-wide grant-based investment in programs designed to promote diversity and social cohesion.

Historically immigration has been central to Australia's economic and social development, a contribution that is unlikely to diminish in the foreseeable future. One simple but critical question arising from this expectation is **whether, in future decades, Australia can sustain the migration and social cohesion successes which characterise immigration since the Second World War.**

In order to address this question, the Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements and the Australian Multicultural Foundation, with Scanlon Foundation funding, commissioned Professor Andrew Markus from Monash University to design and undertake a benchmark measure of social cohesion, with the aim of repeating the study every two years. The national benchmark survey was undertaken in June–July 2007 by the Melbourne-based Social Research Centre.

It is important to note that rather than look at social cohesion in the abstract, the benchmark survey was designed to examine cohesion within the context of the social impact of a prolonged period of sustained and significant immigration. Towards this end, the focus was to establish a national measure of social cohesion and to underpin it with a series of comparative surveys in areas of high immigrant concentration (also first conducted in 2007) where, it is predicted, the potential for social tension is higher.

The national survey, which provides data for the Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion, was replicated in 2009 and since then has been conducted annually.

The local area survey was replicated in 2009 and 2012. Federal government funding in 2013 made possible a fourth round of local surveys and contributed to a survey of new arrivals. The next round of local area surveys is scheduled for 2015.

In addition to the landmark Mapping Social Cohesion surveys, the Foundation continues to create awareness and **stimulate knowledge-based discussion about Australia's population growth and the relationship between immigration and social cohesion.** To further this end, the Foundation has supported the establishment and on-going development of the Mapping Australia's Population internet site, based at Monash University and under the direction of Professor Markus and Mr Bruce Smith. This site seeks to augment informed public discussion of immigration and population issues by making available the findings of the Scanlon Foundation surveys. To provide a context, it also provides an inventory of other relevant surveying undertaken in Australia, with regular updates of statistical data on immigration and population sourced from government publications.<sup>1</sup>

The Foundation continues to use the results of this research to initiate **on-the-ground action projects** designed to address factors which affect social cohesion and **in particular the transition of immigrants into Australian society.** Details of these projects are available at the Scanlon Foundation internet site. They include:

- *Supporting Parents–Developing Children* (City of Hume, Melbourne)
- *Growing Communities Together* (City of Bankstown, Sydney)
- *'The Huddle' Learning and Life Community Centre* (North Melbourne)
- *The National Community Hubs Project*<sup>2</sup>
- *CALD Communities Family Violence and Early Intervention* (Whittlesea, Melbourne)
- *"Mamas Plus" For Migrant Mothers and their Children* (Footscray, Melbourne)
- *Promoting Cultural Inclusivity and Tolerance through the Performing Arts* (Adelaide)
- *"Meet + Eat" Documentary Series* (National)
- *Strengthening Advocacy for Cultural Diversity in the Arts* (National)
- *Visible Mentoring Program Supporting Multicultural Communities through the Arts* (Victoria)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Mapping Australia's Population website is at <http://monash.edu/mapping-population/>

<sup>2</sup> See <http://scanlonfoundation.org.au/project/project-6/>

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.scanlonfoundation.org.au/projects>

## Scope and methodology

The 2014 Scanlon Foundation national survey is the seventh in the series, following earlier surveys in 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. 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 21% 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 2014 survey was 62.7% landline numbers and 37.3% mobile phone numbers. This blend yielded 231 interviews with the mobile phone-only population (145 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 over 11,000 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 plus or minus three percentage points.

Further, the saving in cost resulting from the smaller sample made possible the second experimental online survey conducted by the Scanlon Foundation social research program, using internet based surveying of the Australian born population who have both parents born in Australia.

Thus **two surveys were conducted in 2014:**

- **A national survey**, using a dual-frame sample methodology, with an achieved sample of 1,526.
- **An internet based survey** of Australian born with both parents born in Australia. The survey was completed by 1,070 respondents and was administered by Your Source (Colmar Brunton).

The 2014 surveys employed the questionnaire structure common to the 2007-2013 Scanlon Foundation surveys, with some variation in questions. **The 2014 national survey included additional questions on job security, the political system, experience of discrimination, and perceptions of the police and law courts.** The eighteen questions required for calculation of the Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion have been retained in all the national surveys.

The online survey replicated all questions in the Scanlon Foundation national survey and included a new module of seventeen questions on Australian identity, cultural diversity and integration, and contact across cultures.

The Social Research Centre administers the national survey. Interviews are conducted by telephone (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing), utilising a list-assisted Random Digit Dialling (RDD) sampling frame with landline respondents selected using the 'next birthday' method. 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 2014 national survey was administered from 10 June to 16 July. It comprised 65 questions (50 substantive and 15 demographic) and took on average 16.2 minutes to complete. The online survey was open from 17 June to 21 July and took on average 13.7 minutes to complete.

The response rate for the national survey was 53%, for the online survey 43%.

**Full technical details of surveying procedure and the questionnaires are provided in the methodological report for each survey, available for download on the Mapping Australia's Population internet site.<sup>4</sup>**

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<sup>4</sup> For location, see footnote 1, above.

## Weighting of survey results

Survey data is weighted to bring the achieved respondent profile into line with Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) demographic indicators.

Rim weighting developed by The Social Research Centre was used to weight the national and local surveys. 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).

Several weighting procedures were developed for the online survey. The weight used for reporting findings involves rim weighting for state, gender, age, and education, together with an adjustment for self-described financial status, using frequencies in the national survey. The procedure adopted most closely aligned the demographics of the Australia-born population with both parents born in Australia in both the national and online surveys.

## Mode effect

The use of interviewers in telephone surveying has the potential to lead to what is known as '**social desirability bias**' (SDB). SDB refers to the tendency of respondents to give answers they believe are more socially desirable than responses that reflect their true feelings. This form of bias is of particular importance in questions that deal with socially sensitive or controversial issues, such as perception of minorities or government programs which provide assistance to sub-groups.

An online questionnaire completed in privacy on a computer, or an anonymous printed questionnaire returned by mail, can provide conditions under which a respondent feels greater freedom to disclose opinions on sensitive topics. A 2010 report prepared for the American Association for Public Opinion Research noted that '... respondents may be more honest and accurate when reporting confidentially on a computer'. A prominent American researcher, Humphrey Taylor, observes that 'where there is a "socially desirable" answer, substantially more people in our online surveys give the "socially undesirable" response. We believe that this is because online respondents give more truthful responses'. Similarly, Roger Tourangeau and his co-authors of *The Science of Web Surveys* report that a review of research 'demonstrates that survey respondents consistently underreport a broad range of socially undesirable behaviours and overreport an equally broad range of socially desirable behaviours'.<sup>5</sup>

A second advantage of self-completion is conceptualised in terms of '**cognitive load**', referring in part to the scope to administer more complex questions in internet (or printed) surveys. This arises because respondents can control the pace at which they proceed through the questionnaire, with the opportunity to go back over questions, which can produce greater accuracy in response. Some research indicates that telephone based interviewing leads to a higher proportion of end point responses along a scale (for example, 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree'), or a higher proportion of agreement with the most recently mentioned response option (known as the 'recency'), compared to a higher proportion of mid-point responses in online questionnaires.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> American Association for Public Opinion Research, AAPOR Report on Online Panels, March 2010; Humphrey Taylor, 'The Case of Publishing (Some) Online Polls', *The Polling Report*, 15 January 2007; Roger Tourangeau, Frederick Conrad and Mick Couper, *The Science of Web Surveys*, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 133

<sup>6</sup> Tourangeau, pp. 8, 146, 147, 150

**Given these potential gains from online surveying, together with substantially lower cost and completion in less time, why is not all surveying conducted utilising internet technology?**

The answer is that it is not possible at present to establish that the survey is completed by a representative sample of the population. If all members of a population had computer access and their computer addresses were centrally listed, as in a telephone directory, then it would be possible to conduct internet random samples, but at present that is not the case. Currently internet surveying in Australia is limited to using samples drawn from nonprobability opt-in panels of survey volunteers maintained by commercial providers.

**It is not possible to establish that the panel members, no matter the size of panel, are representative of a population;** thus a specific personality type (for example, those with more negative social views) may be attracted to join a panel, either by opting in or accepting an invitation to participate; further, the younger and more educated are likely to be over-represented, while those with lower levels of education and lacking computer skills will be under-represented.<sup>7</sup>

Detailed demographic information may be collected from those who join a panel and this information can be used to weight the survey results, so that in demographic terms the respondent profile matches the population, but it is much more difficult or impossible to scientifically weight attitudinal attributes.

In 2008 the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) established a task force to 'review the current empirical findings related to opt-in panels utilized for data collection'. Its report, released in March 2010, stated:

Computer administration yields more reports of socially undesirable attitudes and behaviours than oral interviewing, but no evidence that directly demonstrates that the computer reports are more accurate.<sup>8</sup>

The AAPOR task force also concluded that 'researchers should avoid nonprobability online panels when one of the research objectives is to accurately estimate population values'.<sup>9</sup>

A more recent study, *The Science of Web Surveys* (2013), authored by Roger Tourangeau, Frederick Conrad and Mick Couper and published by Oxford University Press, reached a similar conclusion, although one that was not as strongly worded:

If the goal of the survey is to generalize to a known population start with a probability sample ...Probability samples seem to represent the population from which they were drawn more closely than self-selected samples do.<sup>10</sup>

In the view of the authors, further research is required to establish the reason for differences in results by mode of administration.

Probability samples used in telephone surveying ensure that all members of a population (aged 18 or over) have an equal chance of being contacted to participate in a survey. A problem which arises in contemporary surveying is the low proportion (at times less than 20%) of respondents who accept the invitation to participate and hence bring into question the representative character of the sample.

In the Scanlon Foundation surveys, the participation rate has been consistently high. As part of the measures taken to maximise response, after the sample is drawn, letters explaining objectives of the survey are sent to potential respondents on Monash University letterhead. Potential respondents are also informed that the survey is being conducted by university researchers, not market researchers, with oversight by the University Ethics Committee. As noted above, in the 2014 Scanlon Foundation survey the response rate was 53%.

Although the limitations of internet surveying are known, the Scanlon Foundation surveys have begun to **experiment with parallel online surveys, conducted at the same time as the telephone survey, because of known advantages over interviewer administered questionnaires.**

**The experimental survey of Australia-born with both parents born in Australia which was conducted as part of the 2014 Scanlon Foundation survey is discussed in this report. This survey was conducted to provide evidence to consider the potential biasing of results by telephone surveying and to further the understanding of this segment of the Australian population.**

<sup>7</sup> AAPOR, pp. 129, 132

<sup>8</sup> AAPOR, p. 34

<sup>9</sup> AAPOR, p. 4

<sup>10</sup> Tourangeau, p. 168

# Context: Australia in 2014

## Economic conditions and the labour market

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, 2.2% in 2010-11, 3.6% in 2011-12, 2.6%, in 2012-13, and 2.9 in 2013-14.<sup>11</sup>

**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 in July rose to a reported 12-year high of 6.4%.<sup>12</sup>**

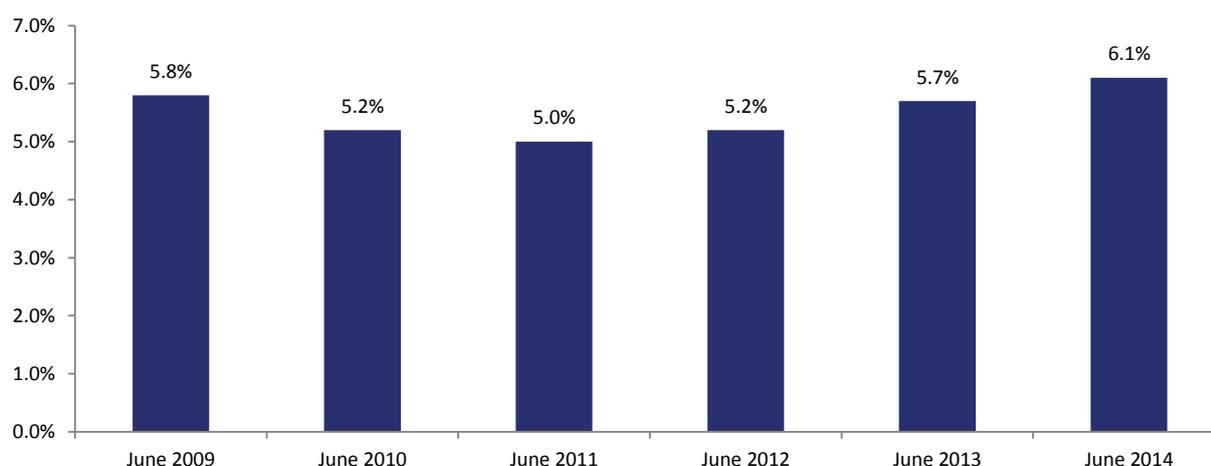
The Australian unemployment rate of 6.1% in June 2014 compared to an average of 10.3% in the 28 countries of the European Union, with a peak of 27.3% in Greece and 24.7% in Spain. Unemployment was 6.2% in the United States, 6.7% in the United Kingdom, 12.5% in Italy, 10.2% in France and 5.0% in Germany.<sup>13</sup>

Australian seasonally adjusted unemployment in June 2014 was lowest in Western Australia at 5.0%, highest in Tasmania at 7.2%; the level in other states was 5.7% in New South Wales, 6.6% in Victoria, 6.3% in Queensland and 7.3% in South Australia.

The labour force participation rate in June 2014 was 64.8%, the same level as in August 2012. The labour force participation rate for males in June 2014 was 71.0% for females 58.7%; this was little changed from the level in August 2013, when it was 71.3% for males and 58.5% for females.

**At the time of the 2014 Scanlon Foundation surveys there was growing media discussion of economic uncertainty,** focused on the ending of the mining boom, the problems of the manufacturing industry, the continuing European sovereign debt crisis and uneven data concerning the Chinese economy and its potential impact on the Australian economy.

Figure 1: Unemployment rate, seasonally adjusted



<sup>11</sup>ABS, Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product, June 2014, Catalogue No. 5206.0

<sup>12</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Australia, Catalogue No. 6202.0; *The Australian*, 7 August 2014

<sup>13</sup> OECD, Short-term Labor Market Statistics, <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=36324>

## 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 2.2% in 2008. The population grew by an estimated 1.8% in 2009, a much lower 1.4% in 2010, 1.6% in 2011, 1.8% in 2012, and 1.8% in 2013.

Population growth is uneven across Australia. For the twelve months ended 31 December 2013, Western Australia's population grew by 2.9%, Victoria 1.9%, Queensland 1.7%, Northern Territory 1.7%, ACT 1.6%, New South Wales 1.5%, South Australia 0.9%, and Tasmania 0.3%.

**Revised estimates based on the 2011 Census indicate an Australian population of 23,319,400 persons at 31 December 2013, an increase of 396,200 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 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 60% in the 12 months ended 31 December 2013.

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 2012-13 NOM was an estimated 242,800.**

The measure of immigration, net overseas migration, is often misunderstood in public discussion.<sup>14</sup> Since 2006, NOM has included all who maintain residency for 12 months in a 16-month period, irrespective of resident status. It thus includes both permanent and temporary (long-term) arrivals, and in recent years temporary arrivals have outnumbered the permanent.

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 has increased over the last five years, with the exception of overseas students; **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 30 June 2013 there were 1.67 million temporary residents in Australia.** This number includes 640,770 New Zealand citizens and represents 7.2% of the estimated resident population.

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 2013-14 provided for 128,550 Skill entrants, 60,885 Family, and 13,750 Humanitarian, a decrease of 6,250 Humanitarian places from 2012-13 and a return to the level of 2010-2012.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 1: Long-stay visa holders resident in Australia, main categories, and New Zealand citizens resident in Australia**

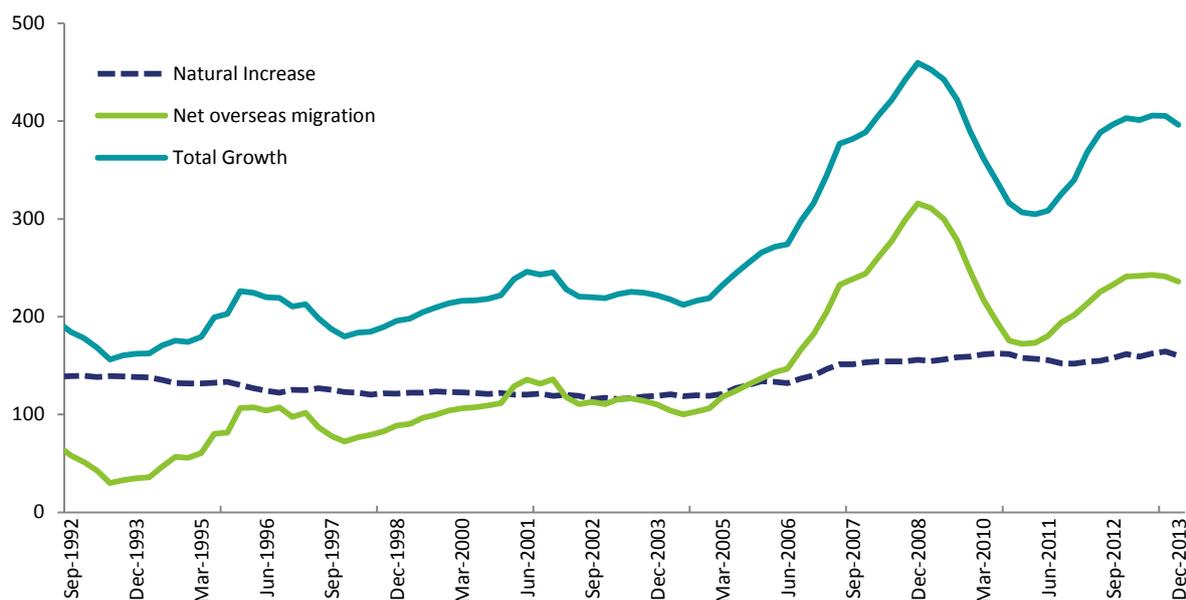
| At 30 June | Overseas students | Business (sub-class 457) visa | Working holiday makers | New Zealand citizens |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 2009       | 386,528           | 146,624                       | 103,482                | 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       | 304,250           | 191,220                       | 160,500                | 640,770              |

**Source:** Department of Immigration and Border Control, Temporary entrants in Australia (stock data) statistics, internet sites; see also Mapping Australia's Population, Statistical Trends

<sup>14</sup> For discussion of change in Australia's immigration policy, see Andrew Markus, James Jupp and Peter McDonald, *Australia's Immigration Revolution*, Allen & Unwin, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> For further information, see the Fact Sheets and tables in the Statistical Trends section of the Mapping Australia's Population internet site.

**Figure 2: Components of annual population growth, 1991–2013**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics*, December quarter 2013, catalogue number 3101.0 (released 19 June 2014).

**Table 2: Population growth and components of growth, Australia 2006-2013**

| At 30 June      | Natural Increase | Net Overseas Migration | Growth on previous year | Growth on previous year |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|                 | '000             | '000                   | '000                    | %                       |
| 2007            | 141.7            | 232.9                  | 318.1                   | 1.54                    |
| 2008            | 154.4            | 277.3                  | 421.6                   | 2.02                    |
| 2009            | 156.3            | 299.9                  | 442.5                   | 2.08                    |
| 2010            | 162.6            | 196.1                  | 340.1                   | 1.57                    |
| 2011            | 155.7            | 180.4                  | 308.3                   | 1.40                    |
| 2012 (estimate) | 158.8            | 229.4                  | 388.2                   | 1.74                    |
| 2013 (estimate) | 162.7            | 242.8                  | 405.5                   | 1.78                    |

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics*, December quarter 2013, catalogue number 3101.0 (released 19 June 2014), 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).

## Ethnic diversity

In 2011, almost half the population were third-plus generation Australian, meaning that both they and their parents were born in Australia; 20% second generation, born in Australia with at least one overseas-born parent; and 27% first generation, born overseas. Thus, in total, 47% of the population comprised first or second generation Australians.<sup>16</sup>

There has been a gradual increase in the proportion overseas-born, from 23% in 2001 to 24% in 2006, and 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 amongst 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 a much lower 14% of Hobart.

The overseas-born are also unevenly distributed in the capital cities, with concentrations above 50% in some Local Government Areas. In Melbourne, the largest concentrations of overseas-born are located in the central, south-eastern and western regions of the city; in Sydney they are located in the central and western regions.

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 with a large proportion indicating that they speak a language other than English in the home include, in Sydney, Cabramatta (88%), Canley Vale (84%), and Lakemba (84%); in Melbourne, Campbellfield (81%), Springvale (79%), and 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%).

**Table 3: Top 10 countries of birth of the overseas-born population, 2011**

| 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).

Over the last thirty years, an increasing proportion of immigrants have been drawn from the Asian region. Thus, between 2007 and the 2011 the leading country of birth for immigrants was India (13%), followed by the United Kingdom (12%). Among settler arrivals in 2012-13, immigrants from New Zealand and United Kingdom ranked first and fourth; of the remaining seven top countries of origin, six were Asian, one was African.

**Table 4: Migrant arrivals by country of birth, 2012-2013**

| Country of birth | Arrivals |
|------------------|----------|
| New Zealand      | 27,015   |
| India            | 18,395   |
| China*           | 18,041   |
| United Kingdom   | 11,720   |
| Philippines      | 6,704    |
| South Africa     | 4,585    |
| Malaysia         | 3,762    |
| Vietnam          | 3,709    |
| Sri Lanka        | 3,670    |

**Source:** Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Settler Arrival Data.

\*China excludes SARs and Hong Kong.

<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> 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.

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<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> **The purpose of the index is to heighten awareness of shifts in opinion which may call for closer attention and analysis.**

The finding for 2014 is that the SMI **registered only minor change (an increase of 1 point since 2013) and is at the second lowest level recorded.** Between 2009-10 the index fell by 8.6 points, it then stabilised in 2011 and 2012 with marginal upward movement – and fell by 5.9 points between 2012-13.

The 2014 SMI registered **higher scores in four of the five domains of social cohesion.** The largest upward movement is 3.0 points in sense of worth and 2.8 in participation. **The domain of acceptance/rejection,** after a fall of 9.8 points between 2012-13, rose by 2.1 points in 2014, but **remains by a large margin at the lowest level of the five domains.**

**The largest movement in the 2014 index is within the domain of social justice and equity, which has fallen by 4.3 points.**

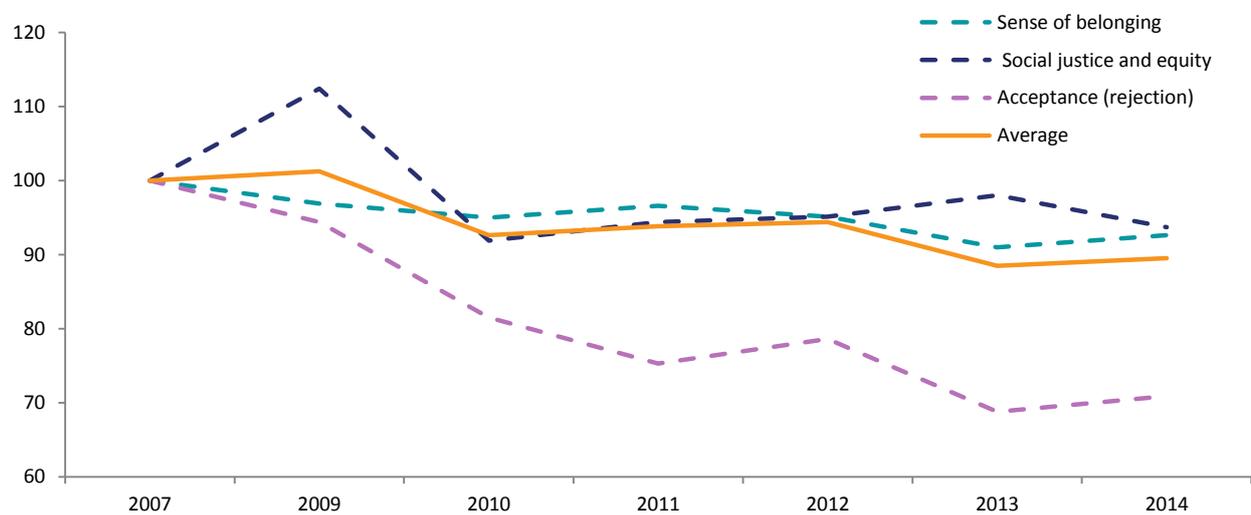
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<sup>18</sup> The nominal index scores the level of agreement (or disagreement in the index of rejection). The highest level of response (for example, 'strongly agree') is scored twice the value of the second level ('agree'). Responses within four 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 5: The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) of Social Cohesion, 2007-2014**

| Domain                       | 2007 <sup>19</sup> | 2009   | 2010  | 2011  | 2012  | 2013  | 2014  | Change 2013-14 (percentage points) |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Sense of belonging        | 100                | 96.9   | 95.0  | 96.6  | 95.1  | 91.0  | 92.6  | 1.6                                |
| 2. Sense of worth            | 100                | 97.2   | 96.7  | 96.5  | 96.5  | 93.8  | 96.8  | 3.0                                |
| 3. Social justice and equity | 100                | 112.4  | 91.9  | 94.4  | 95.1  | 98.0  | 93.7  | -4.3                               |
| 4. Participation             | 100                | 105.3  | 98.0  | 106.4 | 106.6 | 90.8  | 93.6  | 2.8                                |
| 5. Acceptance (rejection)    | 100                | 94.4   | 81.5  | 75.3  | 78.6  | 68.8  | 70.9  | 2.1                                |
| Average                      | 100                | 101.24 | 92.62 | 93.84 | 94.38 | 88.48 | 89.52 | 1.0                                |

**Figure 3: The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) of Social Cohesion, 2007-2014**



## 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 a small increase within the domain of belonging in 2013.

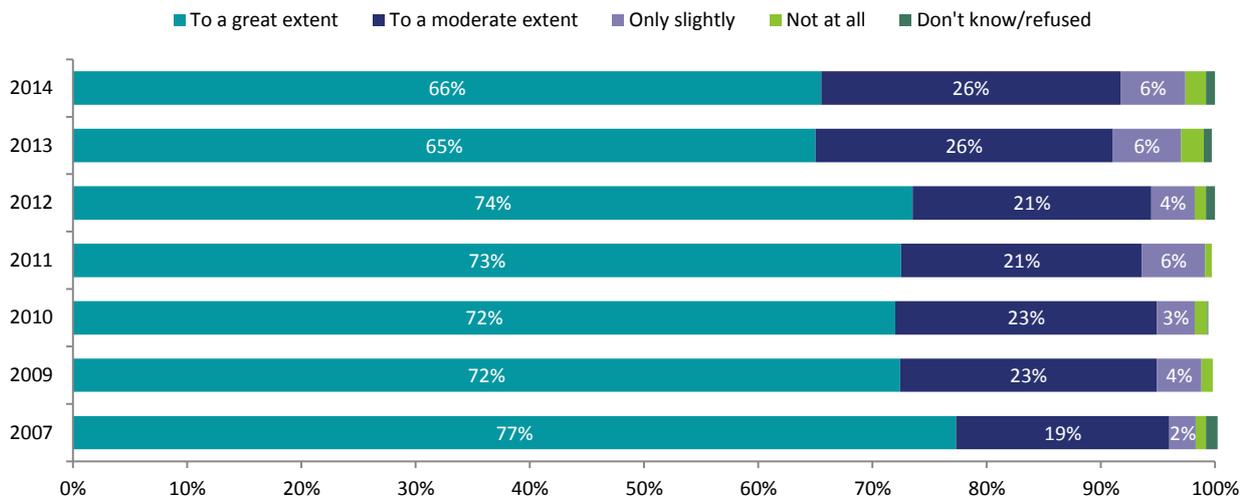
**Sense of belonging** ('great' and 'moderate'): 92% in 2014 and 2013, 95% in 2012, 94% in 2011; 95% in 2010, 95% in 2009, 96% in 2007. There was almost no change in the proportions indicating sense of belonging 'to a great extent' and 'to a moderate extent'.

**Sense of pride** in the Australian way of life and culture ('great' and 'moderate'): 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, while agreement 'to a moderate extent' fell from 36% to 33%.

**Importance of maintaining the Australian way of life and culture** ('strongly agree' and 'agree'): 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 an increase in the level of 'agreement' from 30% to 34% over this period.

<sup>19</sup> 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?', 2007-2014**



### SMI 2: Sense of worth

There has been little change in the indicators of worth. Financial satisfaction is at 73%, while sense of happiness remains close to 90%.

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

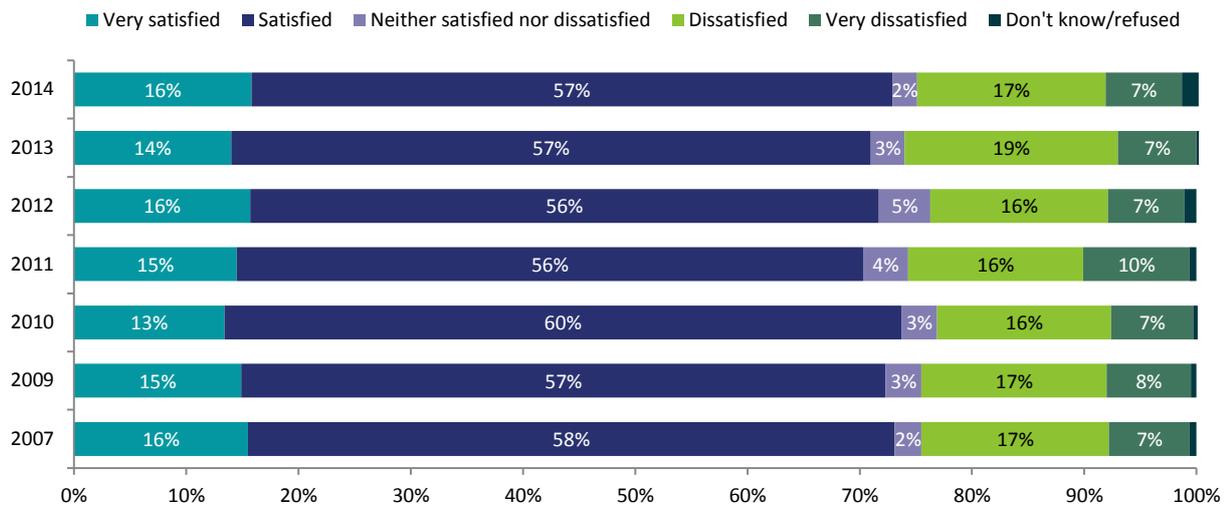
**Happiness over the last year:** ('very happy' and 'happy'), 88% in 2014, 87% in 2013, 88% in 2012, 89% in 2011, 88% in 2010, 89% in 2009, 89% in 2007. There has been a **negative shift in the proportion indicating the strongest level of agreement: in 2007, 34% indicated that they were 'very happy', in 2014 a statistically significantly lower 27%.**

### SMI 3: Social justice and equity

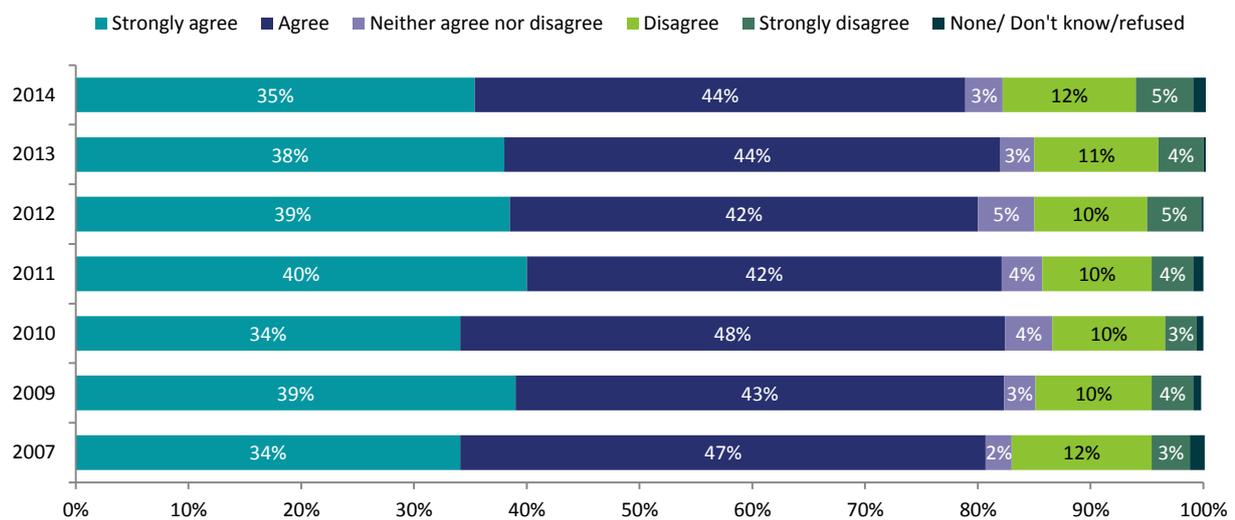
The most significant change between the 2009 and 2010 surveys was the decline in the domain of social justice and equity. **In 2011, 2012 and 2013 there was marginally positive movement in the domain, but the aggregated score remained significantly below the 2009 peak and was lower than 2007. In 2014 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%.** The proportion indicating agreement ('strongly agree' or 'agree') has ranged from 80% to 82% across the surveys to 2013, with a marginally lower 79% in 2014, while **level of disagreement ('strongly disagree' or 'disagree') has been in the range 13%-16% to 2013, a higher 17% in 2014.**

**Figure 5: 'How satisfied are you with your present financial situation?', 2007-2014**



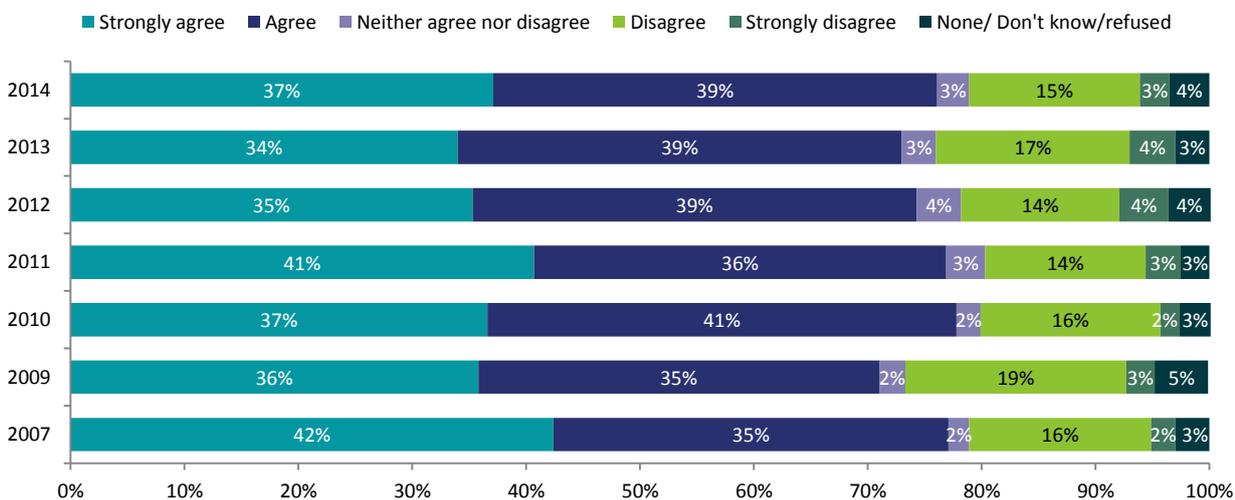
**Figure 6: 'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life', 2007-2014**



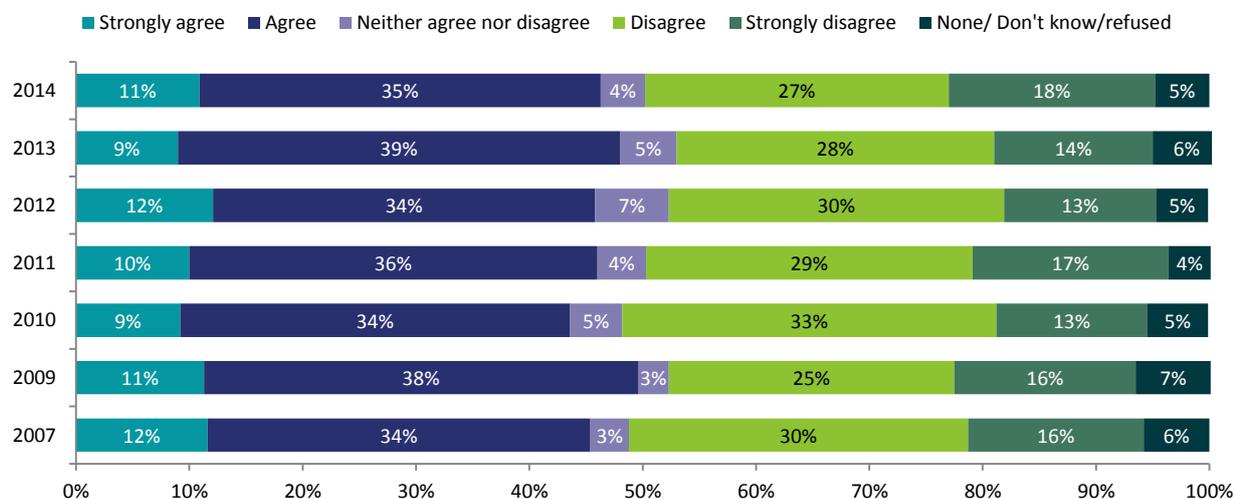
In response to the proposition that ‘in Australia today, the **gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes** is too large’, the proportion in agreement has fluctuated between 71% and 78%. In 2014, agreement was at 76%.

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 2014, 46% were in agreement, 45% in disagreement.

**Figure 7: ‘In Australia today, the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large,’ 2007-2014**



**Figure 8: ‘People living on low incomes in Australia receive enough financial support from the government,’ 2007-2014**



**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 even more 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 marginally higher at 30%.**

## SMI 4: Participation

There was no statistically significant change between the 2013 and 2014 surveys in level of political participation, but significant decline since 2012.

Comparing 2012 and 2014, the proportion indicating that they had voted in an election was down from 88% to 82%; having signed a petition, down from 54% to 48%; contact with a member of parliament, down from 27% to 23%; attendance at a protest, march or demonstration, down from 14% to 10%. Those indicating 'none of the above' for the five forms of political participation increased from 6% to 12%.

**The 2014 political participation index was the second lowest recorded, down from 106.6 in 2012 to 93.6 in 2014.**

## SMI 5: Acceptance and rejection

**The major change in the measure of acceptance and rejection, which is focused on sense of rejection, is the high level of reported experience of discrimination on the basis of 'skin colour, ethnic origin or religion'– 18%, the second highest recorded in the Scanlon Foundation surveys. It was 19% in 2013, up from 9% in 2007.**

**Sense of pessimism about the future, which had increased between 2007 and 2012 (from 11% to 19%), showed only marginal change in 2013 and 2014; but the proportion expecting their lives to be improved has declined since 2013.** 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.

**Table 6: 'Which, if any, of the following have you done over the last three years or so?', 2007-2014 (percentage)**

| Response   | 2007  | 2009  | 2010  | 2011  | 2012  | 2013  | 2014  |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Voted in an election   | 85.1  | 87.2  | 83.4  | 88.5  | 88.3* | 78.7  | 82.0* |
| Signed a petition  | 55.1  | 55.7  | 53.7  | 56.0  | 54.3* | 44.9  | 47.9* |
| 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* |
| Joined a boycott of a product or company                     | 12.4  | 13.9  | 13.5  | 17.9  | 14.5  | 12.6  | 13.1  |
| Attended a protest, march or demonstration                   | 12.7  | 12.8  | 9.4   | 11.3  | 13.7* | 10.2  | 10.2* |
| N (unweighted)   | 2,012 | 2,019 | 2,021 | 2,001 | 2,000 | 1,200 | 1,526 |

\*Change between 2012 and 2014 statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

**Table 7: 'In three or four years, do you think that your life in Australia will be...?', 2007-2014 (percentage)**

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

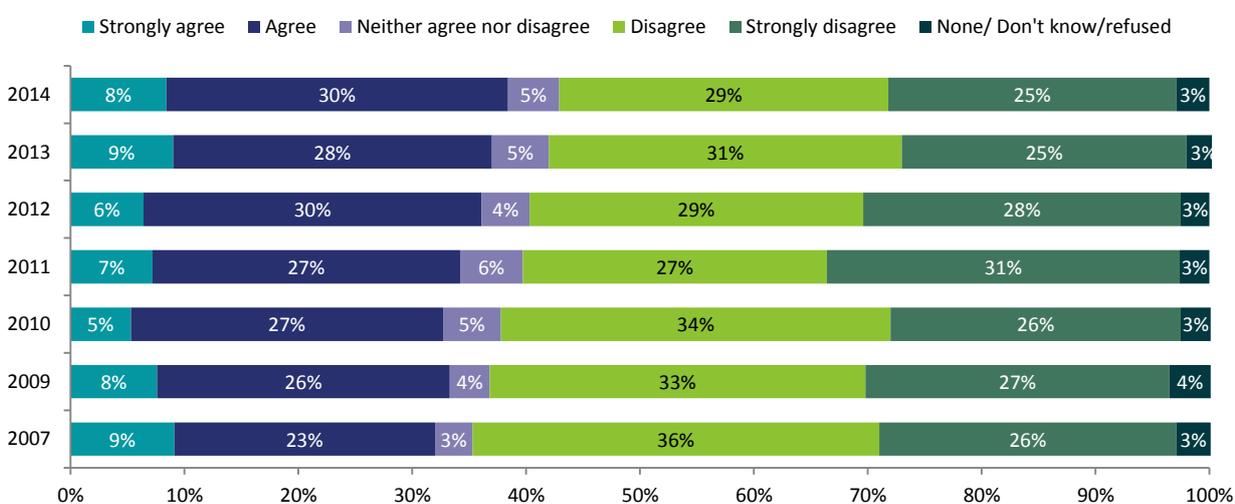
\*Change between 2013 and 2014 statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

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 38% in 2014.

Between 2007 and 2014 those who ‘disagreed’ fell from 36% to 29%, 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. **The proposition that ‘accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger’ registered a statistically significant increase, from 62% in 2013 to 68% in 2014.**

**Figure 9: ‘Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions’, 2007-2014**



**Table 8: ‘Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger’, 2007-2014 (percentage)**

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

\* Change between 2013 and 2014 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 five surveys 2010-14, respondents have consistently given first rank to issues related to the economy, unemployment and poverty. Over the five surveys, the importance of the issue increased from 22% in 2010 to 26% in 2011 to 36% in 2012, with a marginal decline to 33% in 2013. In 2014 it is almost identical, at 34%.

In 2014 the most significant change is the decline of the asylum issue. The issue was specified by 7% of respondents in 2011, 12% in 2012 and 2013. In 2014 it dropped sharply to 4%. Of this proportion, 2.2% of respondents indicated concern over the number of arrivals (down from 9.8% in 2013), while 1.3% indicated sympathy towards asylum seekers and concern over their poor treatment by government (down from 2.6%).

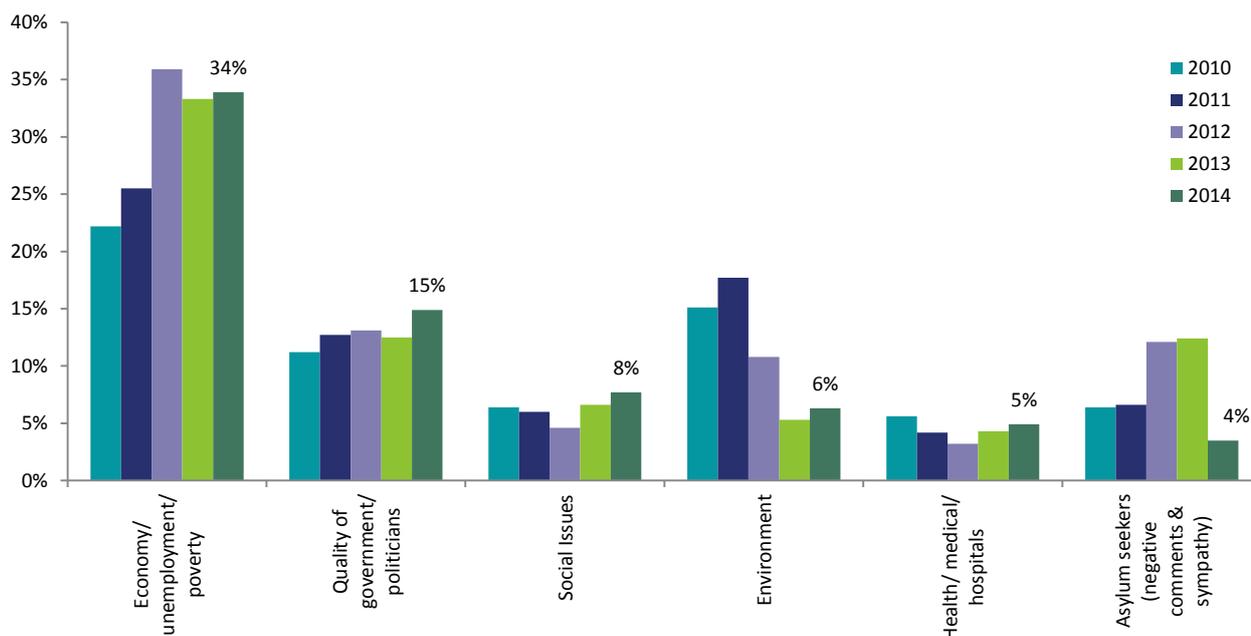
In 2014, the second ranked issue was quality of government and political leadership, indicated by 15% of respondents. This issue has been a consistent but increasing concern, ranked first by 11% of respondents in 2010, 13% between 2011-13.

Environmental issues have steadily declined in importance, from 18% in 2011, to 11% in 2012 and 5% in 2013. In 2014 there was a marginal increase to 6%. With comments disaggregated, nearly all who mentioned environmental issues in 2014 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 0.4% in 2013 and 2014.

Social issues, including childcare, family breakdown, lack of direction and drug use, were specified by 8% of respondents. As in earlier surveys, there was almost no reference to Indigenous issues.

In 2014, 3% 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 (0.2%) indicated concern that immigration was too low.

Figure 10: ‘What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?’, 2010-2014



**Table 9: 'What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?', 2010-2014 (percentage)**

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

\*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.

\*\*Change between 2013 and 2014 statistically significant at p<.05

# Experience of discrimination

A major change in the 2013 survey was the marked increase in the reported experience of discrimination (up from 9% in 2007 to 19% in 2013). This level was almost matched in the 2014 survey, which recorded 18%, and at the level of statistical significance is no different.

A question posed in the seven 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?’

The 2010 and 2011 surveys found relatively high levels of reported discrimination, with a decline in 2012. The 2013-14 surveys found the highest level recorded across the six surveys (18%-19%).

In part this marked increase reflects the more accurate dual-frame sampling methodology adopted in 2013-14. But with results recalculated to match the 2012 sample frame, the 2013 result (17%) was still the highest across the six surveys. The 18% result in 2014 was obtained with the same sampling methodology as the 2013 survey.

Combination of the data for the five surveys 2007-2012 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 in the 2014 survey, there is above average reported experience of discrimination by those aged 18-24 (20%, relatively low compared to the 2013 survey), 25-34 (22%) and 35-44 (27%, relatively high), close to average for those aged 45-54 (18%), and 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’, 2007-2014

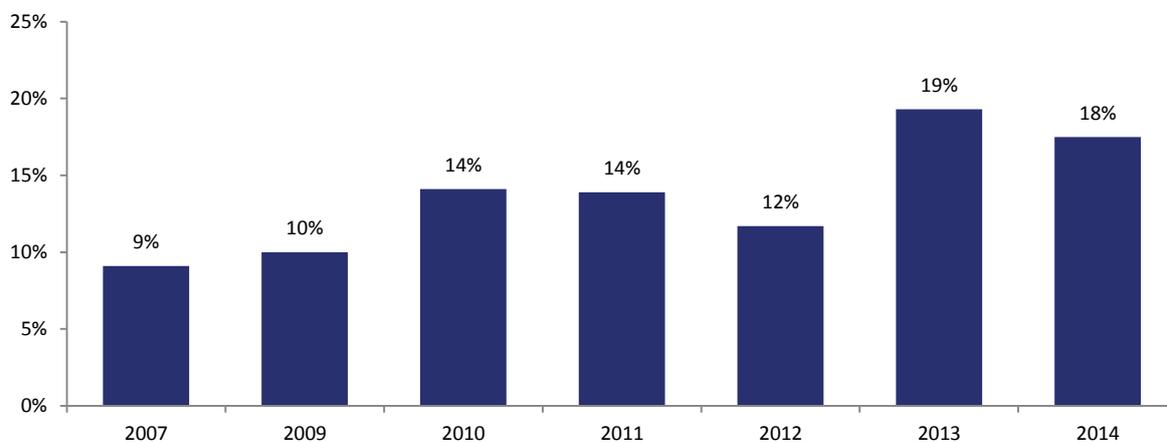
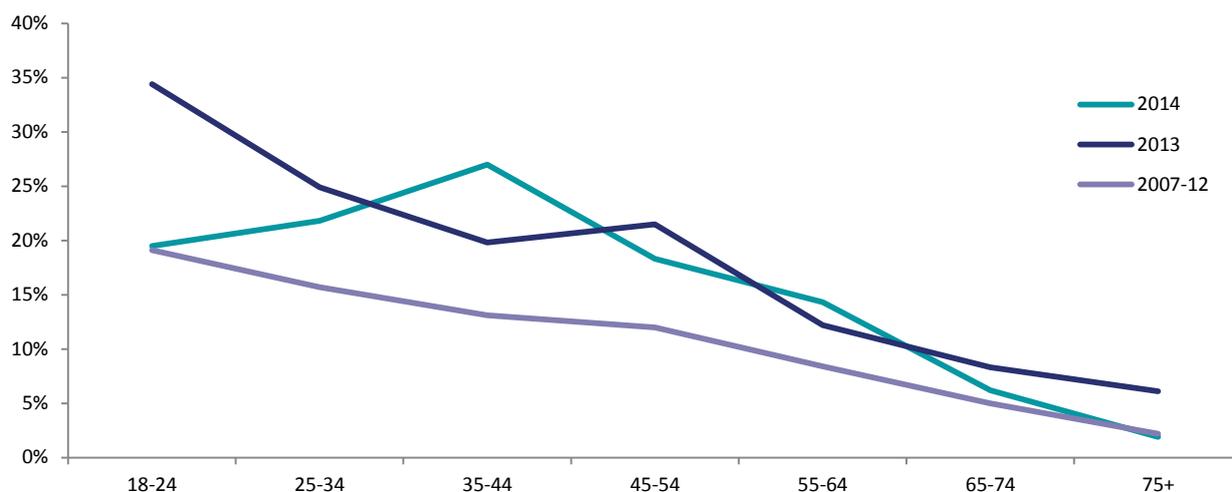


Table 10: ‘Have you experienced discrimination in the last twelve months because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion?’ Response: ‘yes’ by age, 2014 (percentage)

| Response       | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65-74 | 75+ |
|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| ‘Yes’          | 19.5  | 21.8  | 27.0  | 18.3  | 14.3  | 6.2   | 1.9 |
| N (unweighted) | 109   | 200   | 206   | 304   | 301   | 249   | 151 |

**Figure 12: Reported experience of discrimination by age, 2007-12, 2013, 2014**



As in past surveys, those of non-English speaking background reported the highest experience of discrimination, 26% compared to 16% of those born in Australia. The proportion of both overseas-born groupings was lower than the 2013 level, but the Australia-born were close to the level reported in 2013.

**Table 11: Reported experience of discrimination by birthplace, 2013-14 (percentage)**

| Birthplace                      | 2013 | 2014 |
|---------------------------------|------|------|
| Australia                       | 16.2 | 15.5 |
| English-speaking background     | 16.2 | 11.4 |
| Non-English speaking background | 29.3 | 25.6 |

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 (9,473 respondents), indicates that reported experience of discrimination ranges from 8% Anglican and 12% Roman Catholic to 24% Hindu and 27% Islam.

Analysis by birthplace is available for all Scanlon Foundation national surveys (2007-2014, 12,779 respondents). For birthplace groups with at least 100 respondents, those indicating experience of discrimination ranges from 7% German, 8% United Kingdom, 12% Australia, 12% Italy, 17% New Zealand, 26% China, and 28% India.

The 2014 survey included new questions on frequency and location of experience of discrimination.

Of those who reported discrimination, the largest proportion, 47%, indicated that it occurred infrequently, ‘just once or twice in the last year’, while 22% indicated experience ‘three to six times in the last year’.

In contrast, 14% indicated that discrimination occurred ‘about once a month in the last year’, while 15% indicated that it occurred ‘often – most weeks in the year’, a combined 29%. Thus for almost three out of ten respondents who reported discrimination it was experienced at least once a month; this proportion constitutes 5% of the total population. Five possible locations were specified to those who indicated experience of discrimination. Respondents could nominate more than one location.

The largest proportion (58%) indicated experience in their neighbourhood. This was followed by experience in shopping centres and place of work, specified by close to four out of ten respondents (43%, 40%). Discrimination on public transport was noted by 29% of respondents. Nearly one in eight (12%) indicated experience of discrimination at a sporting event.

**Table 12: Experience of discrimination by location. Respondents who indicated that they had experienced discrimination (percentage)**

| Location         | %    |
|------------------|------|
| Neighbourhood    | 58.0 |
| Shopping centre  | 42.8 |
| Work             | 39.6 |
| Public transport | 29.4 |
| Sporting event   | 12.2 |

**Although neighbourhood was the most often reported location of discrimination, the survey did not indicate any deterioration of relations in local areas. Comparison of the national surveys conducted between 2010-2014 indicates a large measure of consistency:**

- 84% of respondents indicated that people were 'willing to help neighbours' (the same result as in 2013);
- 79% agreed that in the local area 'people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together', a significantly higher proportion than in 2012 and 2013 (72%, 76%). One in ten respondents disagreed, close to the level of the past three years.

**When level of personal safety was considered, there was a higher level of concern, but one consistent with past surveys:** 68% indicated that they felt safe walking alone at night (65% in 2013) and 70% were not worried about becoming a victim of crime. On the other hand, 26% felt unsafe walking alone at night and 30% of respondents were concerned about becoming a victim of crime.

**Table 13: Selected questions concerning neighbourhoods by year of national survey, 2010-2014 (percentage)**

| Question and response - POSITIVE  | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| [1] 'People in your local area are willing to help their neighbours.'<br>Response: 'Strongly agree', 'agree'.   | 82.6 | 84.4 | 84.4 | 84.0 | 83.7 |
| [2] 'Your local area... is a place where people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together.'<br>Response: 'Strongly agree', 'agree'. | 75.1 | 73.7 | 71.6 | 75.8 | 78.5 |
| [3] 'How safe do you feel walking alone at night in your local area?'<br>Response: 'Very safe', 'safe'.   | 65.0 | 64.7 | 64.9 | 64.6 | 67.9 |
| [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 |

| Question and response - NEGATIVE   | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| [1] 'People in your local area are willing to help their neighbours.'<br>Response: 'Strongly disagree', 'disagree'.  | 12.8 | 12.1 | 11.0 | 12.2 | 11.9 |
| [2] 'Your local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together.'<br>Response: 'Strongly disagree', 'disagree'. | 6.9  | 9.2  | 8.9  | 11.4 | 10.1 |
| [3] 'How safe do you feel walking alone at night in your local area?'<br>Response: 'Very unsafe', 'a bit unsafe'.  | 29.9 | 29.6 | 28.0 | 29.5 | 26.4 |
| [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 |

## Trust and voluntary work

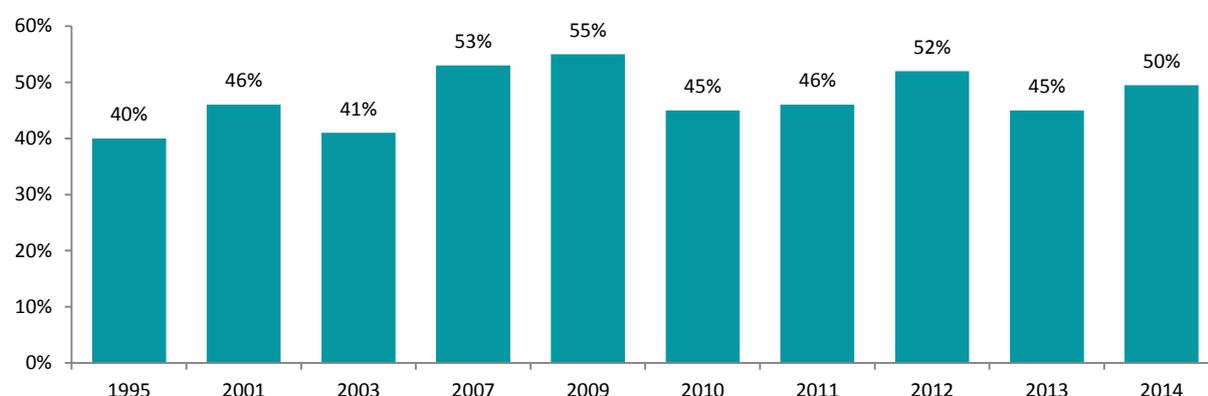
A question posed in a number of Australian and international surveys asks respondents if ‘most people can be trusted’, or whether one ‘can’t be too careful in dealing with people’ (or that it is not possible to answer).

**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 2014 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, 68%, with a Bachelor degree or higher, 63%, those whose financial status was self-described as ‘prosperous’ or ‘very comfortable’, 62%, and residents of South Australia, 59%.

The lowest level of agreement was indicated by those intending to vote independent or a minor party, 32%, those whose financial status was self-described as ‘struggling to pay bills’ or ‘poor’, 37%, with education up to Year 11, 38%, ‘just getting along’, 39%, and aged 18-24, 37%.

**Figure 13: Agree that ‘most people can be trusted’, Scanlon Foundation surveys 2007-2014, earlier surveys 1995-2003**



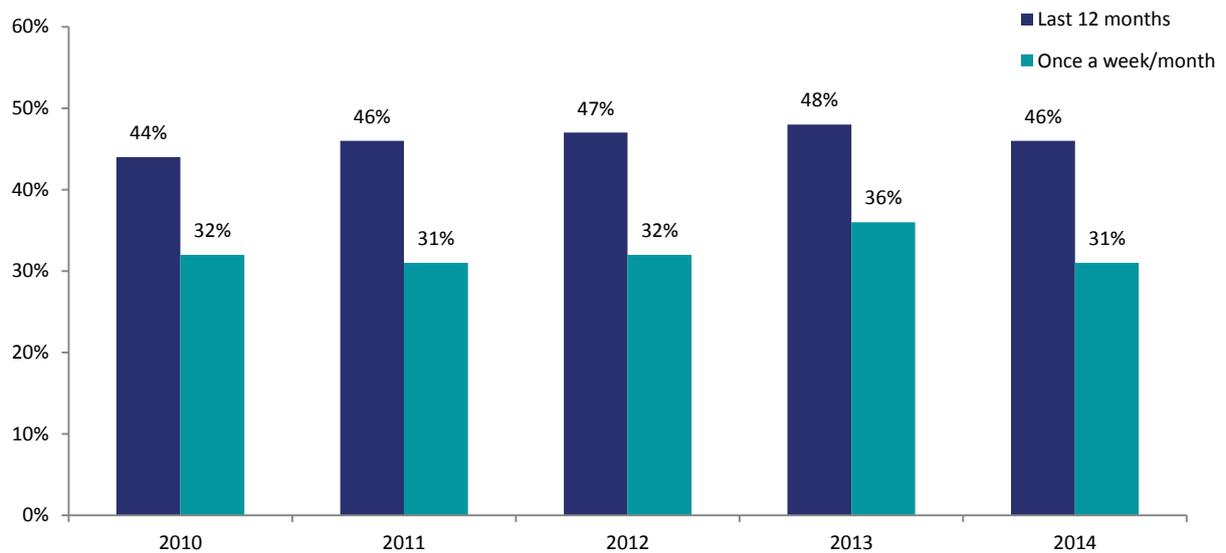
**Table 14: Agree that ‘most people can be trusted’ (percentage)**

|                                    |                               |                                |                       |                                |               |      |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|------|
| <b>Gender</b>                      | Female                        | Male                           |                       |                                |               |      |
|                                    | 47.9                          | 51.1                           |                       |                                |               |      |
| <b>State</b>                       | Victoria                      | NSW                            | Western Australia     | South Australia                | Queensland    |      |
|                                    | 47.0                          | 53.9                           | 46.4                  | 59.3                           | 43.6          |      |
| <b>Region</b>                      | Capital                       | Rest of state                  |                       |                                |               |      |
|                                    | 50.4                          | 47.4                           |                       |                                |               |      |
| <b>Age</b>                         | 18–24                         | 25–34                          | 35–44                 | 45–54                          | 55–64         | 65+  |
|                                    | 37.4                          | 47.4                           | 51.8                  | 54.4                           | 54.5          | 50.5 |
| <b>Highest completed education</b> | BA or higher                  | Diploma/ Technical Certificate | Trade/ Apprenticeship | Year 12                        | Up to Year 11 |      |
|                                    | 62.6                          | 54.5                           | 53.2                  | 43.7                           | 37.6          |      |
| <b>Financial situation</b>         | Prosperous / very comfortable | Reasonably comfortable         | Just getting along    | Struggling to pay bills / poor |               |      |
|                                    | 62.2                          | 52.6                           | 39.4                  | 37.0                           |               |      |
| <b>Intended vote</b>               | Labor                         | Liberal/ National              | Greens                | Independent/ minor party       |               |      |
|                                    | 51.6                          | 54.3                           | 68.0                  | 31.8                           |               |      |
| <b>Birthplace</b>                  | Australia                     | Overseas-ESB                   | Overseas-NESB         |                                |               |      |
|                                    | 51.3                          | 53.7                           | 43.4                  |                                |               |      |

**In contrast with the fluctuation in level of personal trust, participation in voluntary work has shown only minor variation over the last five 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%; and in 2014, 46%. A follow-up question asks respondents for frequency of participation in voluntary work: this indicator finds a marginal decline in 2014. 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, and 31% in 2014.

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



# Democracy

In 2014, concern with the state of Australian democracy has been a topic of media discussion, at times enlivened by reports of survey findings. An August 2014 ABC Lateline program focused on 'new research ... revealing a sharp drop in satisfaction with the political system', with attention to the findings of surveys by the Lowy Institute and the Australian National University.<sup>20</sup>

A 2014 Lowy Poll press release dated 4 June 2014 was headlined 'Poll Confirms Australian's Ambivalence About Democracy'. On the Lateline program the author of the Lowy report, Alex Oliver, commented that 'we were shocked, surprised... that there's something wrong with the way the political system is working', based on the interpretation of findings that indicated that 'only 60% of Australians... believe that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government'. This interpretation was drawn from a question which presented respondents with three statements concerning democracy: 'democracy is preferable to any other kind of government' (selected by 60% of respondents), 'in some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable' (24%), and 'for someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have' (13%). The Lowy Poll also found that '18-29 year olds are more dismissive of democracy than their elders'.<sup>21</sup>

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, at the same level as Canada and Germany. Only 43% believed that it made a difference whichever party was in power, the lowest level recorded, and only 56% considered that their vote made a difference, compared to 70% in 1996. Contrary to the view that young people lacked confidence in institutions, the ANU Poll reported that 'overall, younger people have the same level of confidence in institutions compared to the rest of the population'.<sup>22</sup>

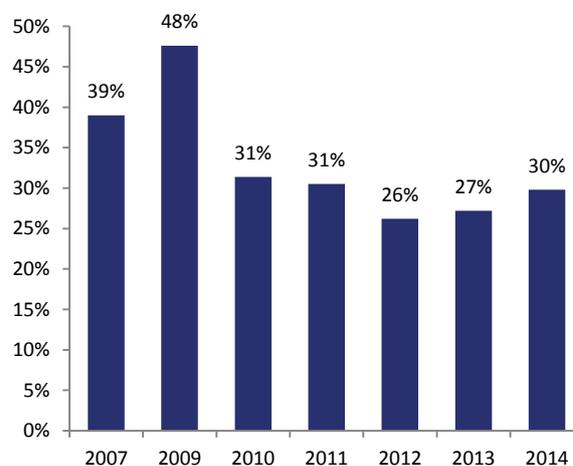
Using a different set of questions, the Scanlon Foundation has for a number of years sought to enhance the evidence base available for interpreting Australian opinion on government.

# 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', rose from 39% 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 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 there would be significant upward movement, in the first year of the Abbott government, on the pattern of the increase in confidence in the early period of the Rudd government. This expectation has not, however, been realised. While the level of trust has increased, it is by less than three percentage points.

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'

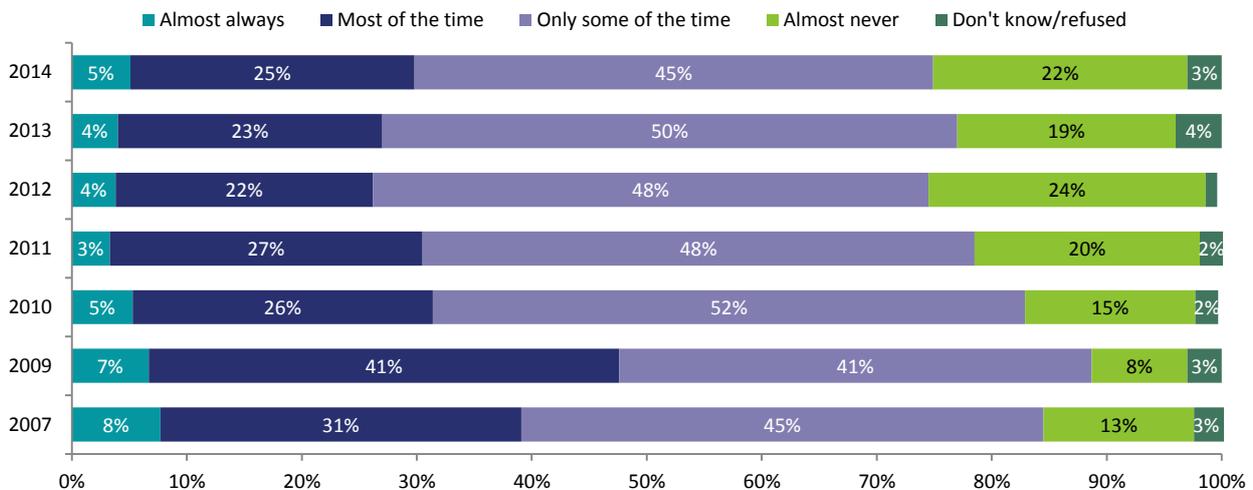


<sup>20</sup> Lateline, 11 August 2014, transcript at <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2014/s4065314.htm>

<sup>21</sup> The Lowy Poll may be accessed at the internet site of the Lowy Institute for International Policy

<sup>22</sup> ANU-SRC Poll: Changing views of governance, August 2014, at [http://politicsir.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/ANU\\_SRC\\_Poll\\_Governance.pdf](http://politicsir.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/ANU_SRC_Poll_Governance.pdf)

**Figure 16: 'How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?', 2007-2014**



Analysis by age group finds a relatively high level of trust amongst those aged 18-24 and 65 and over, with the lowest level amongst those aged 35-54. 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 52% of those intending to vote Liberal/ National indicate trust, compared to 16% Labor and 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 2014 was indicated by women (25%), residents of Queensland (24%), and those who are 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor' (11%), and 'just getting along' financially (25%).

A significant finding is that for only two of the thirty sub-groups – intending to vote Liberal/ National and financial situation self-described as 'prosperous' or 'very comfortable' – 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 purely in terms of political alignment, identification or lack of identification with the party in government. Indeed, even amongst Liberal or National voters the level of trust is indicated by a bare majority (52%).**

A further concern is indication of **a decline in participation in political life**: in 2009, 87% indicated that they had voted in an election over the last three years, in 2014 a lower 82%; in 2009, 56% indicated that they had signed a petition over the last three years, in 2014, 48%. Contact with a member of parliament was down from 27% to 23%.

**Table 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’ and ‘most of the time’, 2014, 2010-2013 in brackets (percentage)**

| Gender                      | Female                        | Male                           |                       |                                |               |             |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
|                             | 25.4 (27.6)                   | 34.3 (30.4)                    |                       |                                |               |             |
| State                       | Victoria                      | NSW                            | Western Australia     | South Australia                | Queensland    |             |
|                             | 30.4 (31.1)                   | 28.7 (28.2)                    | 38.5 (29.7)           | 34.2 (29.5)                    | 23.9 (26.3)   |             |
| Region                      | Capital                       | Rest of state                  |                       |                                |               |             |
|                             | 30.8 (30.8)                   | 27.6 (25.7)                    |                       |                                |               |             |
| Age                         | 18–24                         | 25–34                          | 35–44                 | 45–54                          | 55–64         | 65+         |
|                             | 35.9 (42.1)                   | 32.4 (30.9)                    | 24.8 (29.9)           | 22.1 (25.5)                    | 29.6 (26.1)   | 36.1 (23.2) |
| Highest completed education | BA or higher                  | Diploma/ Technical Certificate | Trade/ Apprenticeship | Year 12                        | Up to Year 11 |             |
|                             | 27.5 (39.3)                   | 31.7 (28.3)                    | 34.8 (27.4)           | 29.9 (31.6)                    | 28.5 (20.6)   |             |
| Financial situation         | Prosperous / very comfortable | Reasonably comfortable         | Just getting along    | Struggling to pay bills / poor |               |             |
|                             | 41.7 (37.0)                   | 31.5 (31.8)                    | 25.2 (24.2)           | 11.1 (20.3)                    |               |             |
| Intended vote               | Labor                         | Liberal/ National              | Greens                |                                |               |             |
|                             | 16.2 (48.5)                   | 51.6 (18.7)                    | 8.7 (27.3)            |                                |               |             |
| Birthplace                  | Australia                     | Overseas-ESB                   | Overseas-NESB         |                                |               |             |
|                             | 27.7 (28.2)                   | 25.4 (27.0)                    | 37.7 (33.4)           |                                |               |             |

## 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 2014, **the second most important issue (after the economy) related to quality of government and politicians, nominated by 15% of respondents, the highest proportion in the five surveys.**

**Table 16: ‘What is the most important problem facing Australia today?’ Response: ‘quality of government and politicians’**

|      | %    | Rank    |
|------|------|---------|
| 2010 | 11.2 | 3       |
| 2011 | 12.7 | 3       |
| 2012 | 13.1 | 2       |
| 2013 | 12.5 | equal 2 |
| 2014 | 14.9 | 2       |

## A crisis of democracy?

The 2014 Scanlon Foundation survey asked six additional questions on politics and democracy. After an initial question on level of interest in politics, respondents were asked questions concerning three different political systems:

‘I am now going to specify three types of political systems. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing Australia’. (Order of questions rotated.)

1. Democracy, in which the members of parliament are chosen in an election.
2. Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections.
3. Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country.

This was followed by a question on the working of the Australian government and a statement probing acceptance of democracy as ‘still the best form of government’.

4. 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?
5. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Democracy may have its problems, but it is still the best form of government.

**One difficulty to be faced in interpreting survey findings concerns the standard against which results are measured. For example, can it be expected that in a society like Australia, in the normal course of events, close to 100% of the population will be concerned about politics and have reasoned views on the best form of government?** Unfortunately surveys rarely provide answers to such basic issues necessary for interpretation of findings. The contextual question asked in the 2014 survey found that 15% of respondents indicated that they were ‘not interested’ in politics and a further 11% ‘not at all interested’, a total of 26%, a finding that will provide a benchmark for further surveying. The highest proportion indicating lack of interest were in the younger age groups (18-24, 38%, 25-34, 35%), the overseas-born (33%), those without education beyond Year 12 (28%), and those who are ‘struggling to pay bills’ or ‘poor’ (35%). Lack of interest in politics has some impact on response to specific questions; for example, when presented with the statement that ‘democracy is the best form of government’, a relatively low 68% of those who were ‘not at all interested’ in politics indicated agreement, compared to 91% of all others.

**When asked to consider systems of government other than democratic, a substantial minority indicated approval.** Thus 49% agreed with a system in which ‘experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country’, and almost one in four respondents (26%) agreed that it was good to have a system of government in which a ‘strong leader ...does not have to bother with parliament and elections’.

**Table 17: Systems other than democratic (percentage)**

| Political system   | Total |
|--|-------|
| ‘Strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections’.<br>Response: ‘very good’, ‘fairly good’                             | 26.0  |
| ‘Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country’.<br>Response: ‘very good’, ‘fairly good’ | 49.0  |

**Respondents were also asked for their views on democracy – and provided strong endorsement.** Just 9% of respondents considered that ‘a democracy, in which leaders are chosen by election’, is bad. The same proportion, 9%, disagreed with the statement that ‘democracy may have its problems, but it is still the best form of government’. **This finding is consistent with the understanding that a substantial proportion of the population lacks firm or reasoned views on political systems and may not be aware that they are indicating agreement to contradictory propositions.**

**Table 18: Democratic government (percentage)**

| Political system  | Total |
|---|-------|
| 'A democracy, in which leaders are chosen in an election'. Response: 'fairly bad', 'very bad'                             | 8.8   |
| 'Democracy may have its problems, but it is still the best form of government'. Response: 'disagree', 'strongly disagree' | 8.9   |

Survey findings do, however, support the view that there is substantial dissatisfaction with the working of the current political system, although not democracy itself – and there is a low level of respect for politicians, political parties and parliament.

## 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.<sup>23</sup>

The 2013 Scanlon Foundation national survey asked respondents to rank nine institutions or organisations. The highest level of trust was in hospitals, police, public schools, and employers, followed by the legal system and television news. 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.

**Table 19: '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 (percentage)**

|                    | 'A lot of trust' | 'Some trust' | 'A Lot' + 'some' |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Hospitals          | 53               | 35           | 88               |
| Police             | 53               | 34           | 87               |
| Public schools     | 42               | 42           | 84               |
| Employers          | 23               | 53           | 76               |
| Legal system       | 23               | 44           | 67               |
| TV news            | 11               | 50           | 61               |
| Trade unions       | 9                | 40           | 49               |
| Federal parliament | 7                | 39           | 46               |
| Political parties  | 3                | 36           | 39               |

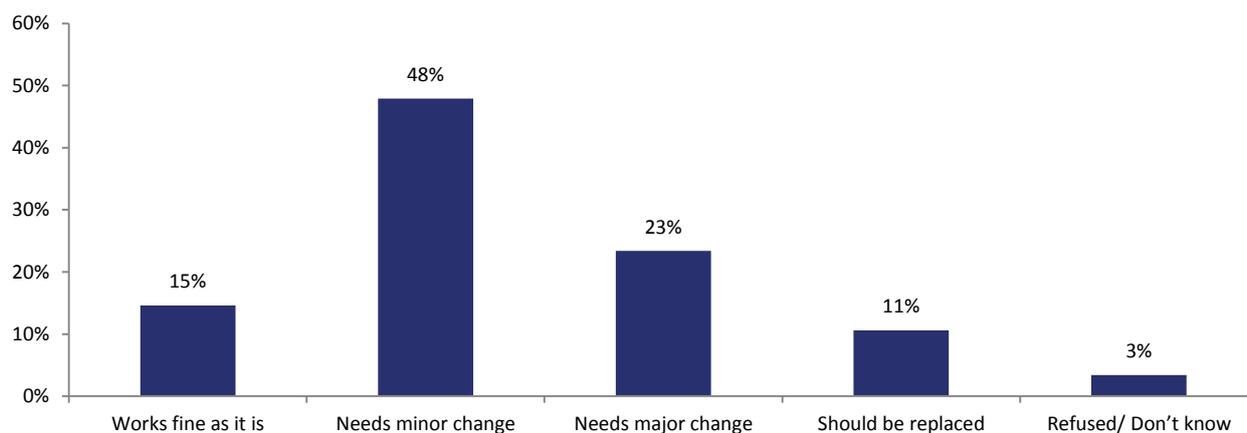
The ANU Poll conducted in June-July 2014 obtained a similar result to 2013 Scanlon Foundation survey, although using different wording. Of the nine institutions specified, Federal parliament was ranked last, with just 5.3% indicating 'a great deal of confidence'.

## 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. Just 15% indicated that it 'works fine as it is'; 48% considered that it needed minor change, 23% major change, and 11% that it should be replaced – close to the 9% who disagreed with the view that democracy, despite its faults, 'is still the best form of government'. Whether the proportion considering the need for change is relatively high or low cannot be established as this question was not asked in earlier Australian surveys, but there is more evidence of a decline of confidence than of stability or increase.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Rodney Tiffen and Ross Gittins, *How Australia Compares*, Cambridge, 2004, p. 244

**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?'**



Analysis of sub-groups favouring major change or replacement of the system of government finds the highest proportion amongst those whom the system has failed: respondents indicating that they are 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor' (58%), 'just getting along' (43%), and without education beyond Year 11 (44%).

There is also a relatively high proportion amongst Greens voters (48%) and residents of Queensland (41%). There is little variation by age, with the exception of slightly lower levels of concern amongst those aged 65 or over. The lowest proportion is amongst Liberal and National voters, but even amongst the supporters of the government one in five respondents agree that there is need for major change or replacement of the system.

**Table 20: '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' (percentage)**

| Gender                      | Female                       | Male                           |                       |                               |               |      |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|------|
|                             | 30.1                         | 37.9                           |                       |                               |               |      |
| State                       | Victoria                     | NSW                            | Western Australia     | South Australia               | Queensland    |      |
|                             | 34.7                         | 32.9                           | 25.9                  | 30.1                          | 41.4          |      |
| Region                      | Capital                      | Rest of state                  |                       |                               |               |      |
|                             | 33.2                         | 36.1                           |                       |                               |               |      |
| Age                         | 18–24                        | 25–34                          | 35–44                 | 45–54                         | 55–64         | 65+  |
|                             | 36.1                         | 34.7                           | 36.1                  | 36.4                          | 33.5          | 29.0 |
| Highest completed education | BA or higher                 | Diploma/ Technical Certificate | Trade/ Apprenticeship | Year 12                       | Up to Year 11 |      |
|                             | 27.2                         | 34.0                           | 22.0                  | 32.8                          | 44.4          |      |
| Financial situation         | Prosperous/ very comfortable | Reasonably comfortable         | Just getting along    | Struggling to pay bills/ poor |               |      |
|                             | 27.4                         | 28.5                           | 42.5                  | 58.2                          |               |      |
| Intended vote               | Labor                        | Liberal/ National              | Greens                |                               |               |      |
|                             | 36.4                         | 20.4                           | 47.6                  |                               |               |      |
| Birthplace                  | Australia                    | Overseas-ESB                   | Overseas-NESB         |                               |               |      |
|                             | 31.2                         | 38.0                           | 34.9                  |                               |               |      |

## Overview

**It is a mistake to evaluate current survey findings against an assumption that in past decades there was close to unanimous support for Australian political institutions.** A wealth of survey data indicates substantial negative opinion. The Australian Election Study, which surveys opinion following a federal election, recorded that in 2013 only 72% were satisfied with democracy. This may be seen as low enough, but in 1979 it was a much lower 56%.<sup>24</sup>

The World Values Surveys conducted in the 1990s found that **31% of Australians indicated confidence in their parliament**, compared to 53% in the Netherlands, 48% in France, 44% in the United Kingdom, and 37% in Canada.<sup>25</sup> In the fifth wave of the World Values Survey, conducted in Australia in 2005, the Australian level of confidence in parliament, at 33%, was little changed from 1995. Just 14% indicated confidence in political parties.

In September 2014 the Essential Report asked respondents to indicate if specific descriptors (such as 'have a vision for the future', 'have good policies', 'extreme') are applicable to the Labor and Liberal parties. Fourteen descriptors were presented and **the top ranked was 'will promise to do anything to win votes'**, applied by 69% of respondents to the Liberal Party and 62% to Labor. This question has been asked in seven surveys since July 2009 and the 'will promise to do anything' proposition has **consistently ranked at or near the top.**<sup>26</sup>

The low standing of politicians is not unique to Australia. In the United States, for example, levels of trust and confidence move between low and very low.

In September 2014 the *New York Times*/ CBS Poll asked respondents for their 'feelings about the way things are going in Washington'. It found that 2% indicated that they were 'enthusiastic', 19% 'satisfied but not enthusiastic', a combined 21%. The largest proportion, 49%, were 'dissatisfied but not angry', while 28% were 'angry'. When asked 'do you think most members of Congress have done a good enough job to deserve re-election?', 5% agreed while 87% indicated that it was 'time for new people'. This question has been asked since 1992 and the highest proportion agreeing that politicians 'deserve re-election' was never a majority, just 24%.<sup>27</sup>

Politicians face difficult problems, not least the challenge of winning an election on the basis of realistic promises, or managing an electoral system which makes it difficult to secure stable parliamentary majorities. The added problems attendant on the Global Financial Crisis have seen a sharp fall in confidence in countries most affected. Thus between 2008 and 2013, 'confidence in the national government' fell from 58% to 18% in Spain, from 38% to 14% in Greece, and from 36% to 15% in Italy.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike a number of western democracies, Australia has not experienced economic dislocation and double figure unemployment. Yet **long-run data indicates that the present is very low in terms of political trust and confidence.** Perspective is provided by questions on democracy and government in the Australian Election Study. They include:

- In general, do you feel that the people in government are too often interested in looking after themselves, or do you feel that they can be trusted to do the right thing nearly all the time?
- On the whole, are you satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in Australia?

In the period 1996-2010 those who opted for the negative view of people in government ('look after themselves') were consistently in the majority, with an average of 61%. The average for dissatisfaction with democracy was 23%. For both questions, **the 2013 post-election surveys recorded relatively high negative responses**, 66% and 28% respectively.<sup>29</sup>

This examination of national and international survey data provides a context for balanced interpretation of the 2014 Scanlon Foundation (and other) survey findings. A significant minority have little interest in politics and many have unformed views, so that surveys find support for a range of contradictory propositions. There is, however, **no widespread disillusionment with democracy**, indicated by the 88% agreement that despite its problems, democracy is the best form of government. It is not unusual to find lack of respect for politicians and political parties, **but at present there is a relatively high level of concern, with only 15% of the view 'that the system works fine as is'** and in an open-ended question, without options being suggested to respondents, **quality of government and politicians comes to mind as the second ranked problem facing Australia.**

<sup>24</sup> Ian McAllister and Sarah M. Cameron, *Trends in Australian Political Opinion: Results from the Australian Election Study, 1987-2013*, ANU, 2014, p. 101

<sup>25</sup> Tiffen and Gittins, p. 244

<sup>26</sup> Essential Report, 23 September 2014

<sup>27</sup> *The New York Times* CBS News Poll, 12-15 September 2014, questions 13, 20

<sup>28</sup> Gallup Global World survey, 30 October 2013

<sup>29</sup> McAllister and Cameron, pp. 101, 103

## Police and law courts

**An important factor in the social cohesion of communities is the level of trust in police and the legal system, with troubled communities often characterised by low levels of trust.** Data from the sixth wave of the World Values Survey, conducted between 2010-2014, finds that in several eastern European countries a high proportion of the population distrust the police: thus in Russia, 32% indicate confidence, 64% lack of confidence, in the Ukraine, 32% and 68%. Similar findings are evident in other regions characterised by widespread poverty and civil disorder, with majorities in Lebanon (54%), Mexico (72%) and Pakistan (77%) indicating 'not very much' or no confidence in the police.

This contrasts with only 16% in Australia indicating lack of confidence in the police, 17% in New Zealand, 17% in Germany, 18% in Canada, 27% in the United Kingdom, and 30% in the United States.<sup>30</sup>

**Australian research consistently indicates high levels of trust in the police.** The 2013 Scanlon Foundation survey found that 87% of respondents indicated 'a lot of trust' or 'some trust' in the police, ranking the police second of nine institutions specified; 67% indicated trust in the legal system, which was ranked fifth.

The August 2014 ANU Poll also recorded high level of trust: 79% indicated 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in the police, with the police force ranked second of nine institutions considered. As in the Scanlon Foundation survey, there was a lower level of trust in the 'courts and legal system', with confidence indicated by 50% of respondents.

The World Values Survey conducted in Australia in 2012 found that 83% of respondents indicated confidence in the police, 58% in 'the courts'.

**While there is difference in question wording across the surveys, which can impact on response frequencies, there is nonetheless a large measure of consistency, with 79%, 83% and 87% indicating trust in police and 50%, 58%, and 67% indicating trust in the courts and legal system.**

The ANU Poll also found increased public confidence in major institutions since 2001, with the exception of the federal parliament. The largest increase since 2001, at the level of a 'great deal' of confidence, was in the police, with an increase of 18 percentage points, compared to an increase of 9 percentage points for the courts and legal system.

**Table 21: 'How much confidence do you have in the police?' Selected countries, 2011-13 (percentage)**

|                                | Lebanon | Mexico | Pakistan | Russia | Ukraine |
|--------------------------------|---------|--------|----------|--------|---------|
| 'A great deal', 'quite a lot'  | 42.0    | 28.4   | 20.6     | 31.7   | 31.6    |
| 'Not very much', 'none at all' | 54.4    | 71.5   | 77.4     | 64.2   | 68.3    |
| 'Don't know', 'refused'        | 3.6     | 0      | 2.0      | 3.8    | 0       |
| Total                          | 100     | 100    | 100      | 100    | 100     |
| Year of survey                 | 2013    | 2012   | 2012     | 2011   | 2011    |

Source: World Values Survey 2011-2013

<sup>30</sup> World Values Survey, Waves 5 and 6: Australia 2012, New Zealand 2011, Germany 2013, Canada 2005, United Kingdom 2005, United States 2011.

The 2014 Scanlon Foundation national survey further explored attitudes to police and the law courts in Australia.

First, respondents were asked: 'Have you had reason to be in contact with police in your local area in the last 12 months?' This was followed by four questions on police; two on the law courts.

Respondents were asked if they strongly agree or disagree (on a five point scale) that police:

- Treat people fairly and equally.
- Perform their job professionally.
- Are honest.

A fifth question asked: 'how comfortable are you speaking with police?'

With regard to the law courts, respondents were asked if they agree or disagree with the statements that:

- I trust the law courts in Australia.
- Australian law courts treat people with respect.

**These questions yielded two key findings:**

**[1] Consistent with the earlier surveys, a large majority have a positive opinion of the police.**

**[2] Attitudes are more positive towards the police than the law courts;** the average positive for the four questions on the police was 83%, for the two questions on the law courts 71%; average negatives were 11% for police, 18% for the law courts.

For specific questions:

- 93% of respondents indicated that they are comfortable talking with police, 6% are not;
- 85% agree that police performed their jobs professionally (10% disagree);
- 78% agree that police are honest (11% disagree);
- 78% agree that police treat people fairly and equally (16% disagree).

Responses for statements concerning police were disaggregated by two categories: those who indicated that they had contact with police in the last 12 months (32% of respondents) and those who had no contact (68%). **Amongst those who indicated contact, only a small proportion, close to an additional 5% of respondents, was more negative in their views.** Thus 79% of those with no contact with police agree that police 'treat people fairly and equally', 75% of those with contact; 79% of those with no contact agree that police 'are honest', 76% of those with contact.

When attitudes to the law courts were considered, there was a marginally higher negative response. This was particularly evident when respondents were asked if they trusted the law courts: 66% agreed that they did, 24% did not; 76% of respondents agreed that the law courts treat people with respect, 13% did not.

Sub-group analysis was undertaken of respondents who indicated that they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the proposition that police 'treat people fairly and equally', 78% of the sample. The level of trust ranged from 64% to 87% across the 30 sub-groups considered.

Relatively low levels of trust were indicated by those whose self-described financial status is 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor', 64%; Greens voters, 64%; aged 18-24, 70%; and overseas-born in a non-English speaking country, 70%.

Relatively high levels of trust were indicated by Liberal/National voters, 87%; aged 65 or above, 84%; overseas-born in an English speaking country, 83%; resident of Western Australia, 83%, and South Australia, 82%; and those whose self-described financial status is 'reasonably comfortable', 82%.

**Table 22: 'Police treat people fairly and equally'. Response: 'strongly agree', 'agree' (percentage)**

|                                    |                                     |                                       |                              |                                      |                      |            |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                      | <b>Female</b>                       | <b>Male</b>                           |                              |                                      |                      |            |
|                                    | 75.2                                | 79.7                                  |                              |                                      |                      |            |
| <b>State</b>                       | <b>Victoria</b>                     | <b>NSW</b>                            | <b>Western Australia</b>     | <b>South Australia</b>               | <b>Queensland</b>    |            |
|                                    | 74.9                                | 76.7                                  | 82.6                         | 82.1                                 | 76.2                 |            |
| <b>Region</b>                      | <b>Capital</b>                      | <b>Rest of state</b>                  |                              |                                      |                      |            |
|                                    | 76.1                                | 80.5                                  |                              |                                      |                      |            |
| <b>Age</b>                         | <b>18–24</b>                        | <b>25–34</b>                          | <b>35–44</b>                 | <b>45–54</b>                         | <b>55–64</b>         | <b>65+</b> |
|                                    | 69.8                                | 75.5                                  | 74.5                         | 78.9                                 | 80.8                 | 84.3       |
| <b>Highest completed education</b> | <b>BA or higher</b>                 | <b>Diploma/ Technical Certificate</b> | <b>Trade/ Apprenticeship</b> | <b>Year 12</b>                       | <b>Up to Year 11</b> |            |
|                                    | 76.3                                | 77.0                                  | 77.1                         | 77.1                                 | 79.9                 |            |
| <b>Financial situation</b>         | <b>Prosperous/ very comfortable</b> | <b>Reasonably comfortable</b>         | <b>Just getting along</b>    | <b>Struggling to pay bills/ poor</b> |                      |            |
|                                    | 73.9                                | 82.0                                  | 74.9                         | 63.8                                 |                      |            |
| <b>Intended vote</b>               | <b>Labor</b>                        | <b>Liberal/ National</b>              | <b>Greens</b>                |                                      |                      |            |
|                                    | 72.5                                | 87.4                                  | 64.4                         |                                      |                      |            |
| <b>Birthplace</b>                  | <b>Australia</b>                    | <b>Overseas-ESB</b>                   | <b>Overseas-NESB</b>         |                                      |                      |            |
|                                    | 79.6                                | 82.7                                  | 70.3                         |                                      |                      |            |

# 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, for the first time, make publicly available annual detailed findings on a range of immigration issues.** In the 2014 survey there were thirteen 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 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 public debate over immigration and the desirable future population for 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.<sup>31</sup>

In 2011 and 2012, the pattern of opinion returned to that of earlier years. 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 economic concerns have been heightened, with rising unemployment and highly publicised announcements of the closure of major manufacturing plants, including the car manufacturers Ford, General Motors (Holden) and Toyota. **There was, thus, an expectation that an increased proportion would agree that the immigration intake was too high, yet the reverse occurred. Just 35% agree that the intake is 'too high', while 58% consider that it is 'about right' or 'too low'.** As indicated by Figure 19, the level of unemployment and negative views on immigration moved in different directions.

This finding is consistent with two additional surveys. The 2014 Lowy Institute Poll, conducted in February, found that 37% of respondents considered the intake to be 'too high', 61% 'about right' or 'too low'. Newspann 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,<sup>32</sup> a result which may have been influenced by question wording, which directed respondents to the difference between official and unofficial arrivals.

**A possible explanation for the low level of concern with immigration in 2014 is the effectiveness of the government's measures to stop asylum seeker arrivals. This 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 has now ended.**

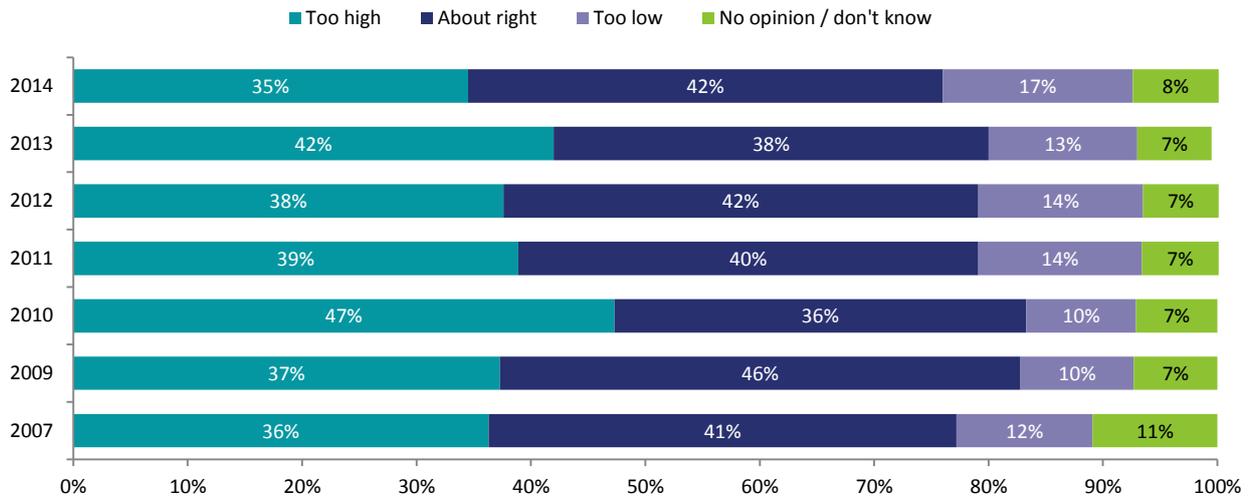
**In contrast with Australia, international polling indicates majority negative views on immigration.** A June 2014 survey found that disapproval of government handling of immigration in twelve European countries averaged 60%. The highest levels were 77% in Spain, 75% in Greece, 73% in the United Kingdom, and 64% in Italy and France. In the United States, 71% disapproved.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *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.

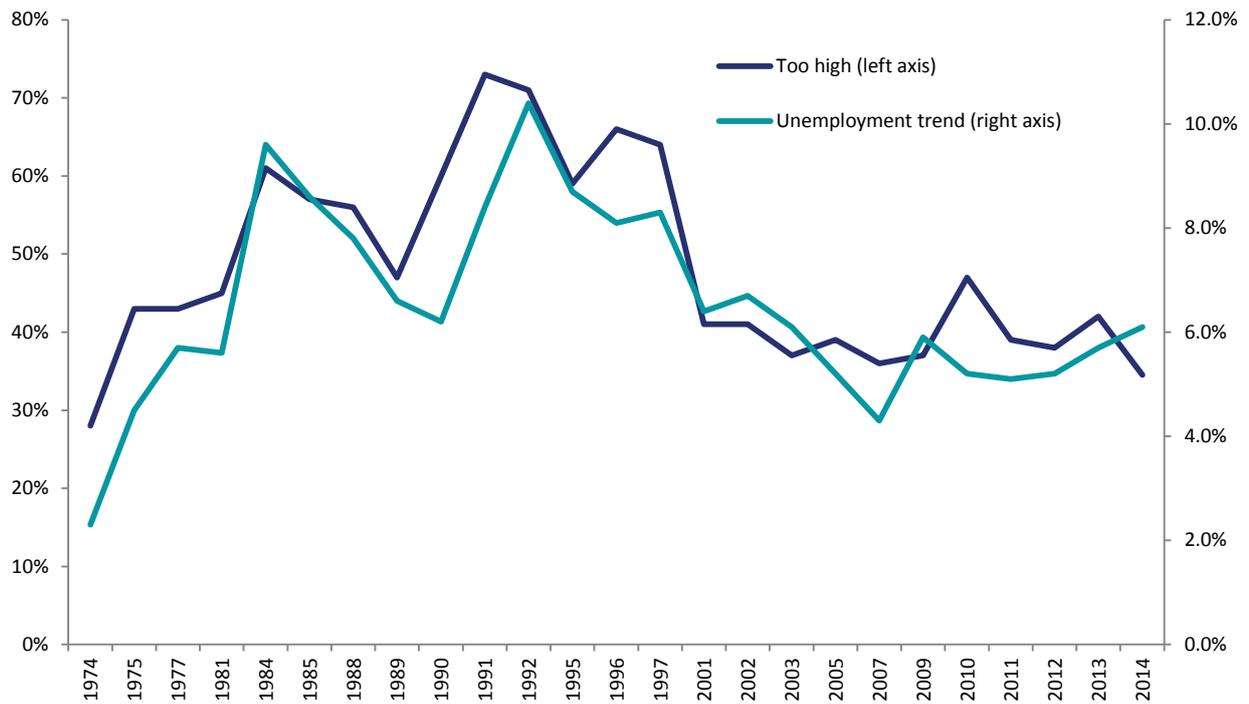
<sup>32</sup> 2014 Lowy Institute Poll, p. 28; *The Australian*, 16 July 2014

<sup>33</sup> Transatlantic Trends 2014: Mobility, Migration and Integration, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, p. 6

**Figure 18: 'What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia?', 2007-2014**



**Figure 19: Correlation between unemployment and those of the view that the immigration intake is 'too high', 1974-2014**



# 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.<sup>34</sup>

There has been on-going front-page newspaper coverage of the issue, with ever more stringent policies to halt arrivals being adopted by first the Labor government and then the Liberal /National government. In the first six months of 2014 there was coverage of claims that boats had been turned back, allegations of mistreatment of asylum seekers by Australian naval personnel, and of conditions in offshore detention centres. In January 2014 there were reports of a hunger strike and self-harm by asylum-seekers on Christmas Island, in February of two days of serious disturbances on Manus Island, with news emerging of extensive property damage, the death of one detainee and many serious injuries.

In September 2014 Scott Morrison, the Minister for Immigration and Border Control, announced that over the previous last nine months just one boat had reached Australia, while twelve had been turned back at sea and 45 were stopped prior to departure.<sup>35</sup>

The prominence of the issue prompted a number of news agencies to commission opinion polls, with a **consistent finding of support for government policies**. A number of polls indicated that those with strong negative views towards boat arrivals outnumbered strong positive by more than two to one.

When polls asked for the best party to handle the asylum issue, the Liberal Party was consistently preferred by a large margin until August 2013, when Prime Minister Rudd announced a change of policy which denied permanent residence to any asylum seeker reaching Australia by boat. In the period March-June 2014, the average of three polls indicated 39% support for Liberal/ National policies, 20% Labor, a total of 59% for offshore processing, while Greens policies opposed to mandatory detention were endorsed by close to 15%.<sup>36</sup> In February 2014 The Lowy Institute Poll found 71% in agreement (28% disagreed) with the proposition that 'the government should turn back boats when it is safe to do so'.<sup>37</sup>

In July 2014 the Essential Report asked 'Do you think the Federal Liberal/ National Government is too tough or too soft on asylum seekers or is it taking the right approach?' 27% responded 'too tough', 54% 'taking the right approach' or 'too soft', and 18% 'don't know'. In 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.<sup>38</sup>

The Scanlon Foundation surveys conducted between 2010-2014 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] In a question across the five surveys, respondents were asked for their view concerning 'policy for dealing with asylum seekers trying to reach Australia by boat' from the following four options:

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.

<sup>34</sup> See Table D1, Irregular maritime arrivals, 1975-76 to 2012-13, Mapping Australia's Population, <http://monash.edu/mapping-population/>

<sup>35</sup> 'Cost, chaos and tragedy now under control', *Daily Telegraph*, 18 September 2014

<sup>36</sup> Essential Report, 11 February 2014, 3 June 2014; *The Australian* (Newspoll), 7 March 2014

<sup>37</sup> 2014 Lowy Institute Poll, p. 23

<sup>38</sup> Essential Report, 8 July 2014; 7 October 2014

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 of 24% supported permanent residency, 31% turn back (a differential of 7 percentage points); 10% favoured detention and deportation (13% in 2013) and 30% temporary residence only. **The 2014 finding represents the largest proportion across the five surveys agreeing with eligibility for permanent settlement, but it remains a small minority, no more than one-in-four respondents.**

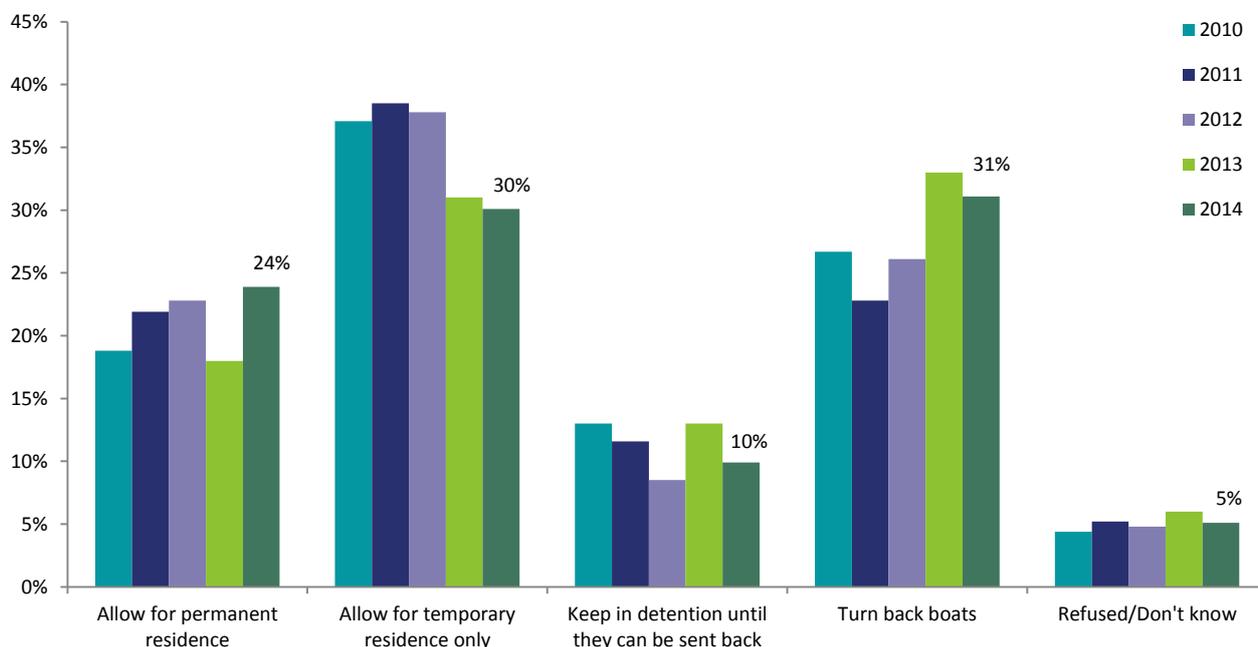
Analysis of attitudes in 2014 was undertaken using eight variables: gender, state, region of residence, age, educational qualification, financial situation, intended vote and birthplace. The result points to a high level of consistency across the variables.

**Support for turning back of boats was above 40% in six sub-groups:** those with education up to Year 11 (46%); trade or apprenticeship qualifications (43%); intending to vote Liberal/National (41%); resident outside capital cities (41%); aged 35-44 (41%); and those whose financial status is self-described as 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor' (41%).

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%); with Bachelor or higher educational qualifications (33%); aged 18-24 (33%); and intending to vote Labor (32%).

**These results highlight the gulf in the Australian community between Greens and 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?', 2010-2014**



**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' (percentage)**

| Gender                       | Male                         | Female                         |                       |                               |                  |      |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|------|
|                              | 33.7                         | 28.6                           |                       |                               |                  |      |
| State                        | Victoria                     | NSW                            | Western Australia     | South Australia               | Queensland       |      |
|                              | 27.7                         | 32.2                           | 24.2                  | 35.1                          | 37.6             |      |
| Region                       | Capital                      | Rest of state                  |                       |                               |                  |      |
|                              | 27.1                         | 40.5                           |                       |                               |                  |      |
| Age                          | 18–24                        | 25–34                          | 35–44                 | 45–54                         | 55–64            | 65+  |
|                              | 16.9                         | 25.9                           | 40.7                  | 34.4                          | 29.1             | 36.4 |
| Level of completed education | BA or higher                 | Diploma/ Technical Certificate | Trade/ Apprenticeship | Year 12                       | Year 11 or below |      |
|                              | 17.9                         | 27.7                           | 42.7                  | 27.1                          | 45.8             |      |
| Financial situation          | Prosperous/ very comfortable | Reasonably comfortable         | Just getting along    | Struggling to pay bills/ poor |                  |      |
|                              | 19.7                         | 30.5                           | 35.8                  | 41.2                          |                  |      |
| Intended vote                | Greens                       | Labor                          | Liberal/ National     |                               |                  |      |
|                              | 8.7                          | 23.9                           | 40.5                  |                               |                  |      |
| Birthplace                   | Australia                    | Overseas-ESB                   | Overseas-NESB         |                               |                  |      |
|                              | 33.0                         | 32.2                           | 26.3                  |                               |                  |      |

**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' (percentage)**

| Gender                       | Male                         | Female                         |                       |                               |                  |      |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|------|
|                              | 22.7                         | 25.0                           |                       |                               |                  |      |
| State                        | Victoria                     | NSW                            | Western Australia     | South Australia               | Queensland       |      |
|                              | 24.3                         | 28.8                           | 22.4                  | 22.5                          | 16.8             |      |
| Region                       | Capital                      | Rest of state                  |                       |                               |                  |      |
|                              | 25.2                         | 20.8                           |                       |                               |                  |      |
| Age                          | 18–24                        | 25–34                          | 35–44                 | 45–54                         | 55–64            | 65+  |
|                              | 32.9                         | 27.0                           | 18.5                  | 24.0                          | 22.9             | 20.4 |
| Level of completed education | BA or higher                 | Diploma/ Technical Certificate | Trade/ Apprenticeship | Year 12                       | Year 11 or below |      |
|                              | 33.1                         | 25.8                           | 11.8                  | 27.1                          | 14.7             |      |
| Financial situation          | Prosperous/ very comfortable | Reasonably comfortable         | Just getting along    | Struggling to pay bills/ poor |                  |      |
|                              | 31.0                         | 22.7                           | 20.8                  | 27.2                          |                  |      |
| Intended vote                | Greens                       | Labor                          | Liberal/ National     |                               |                  |      |
|                              | 63.5                         | 31.5                           | 13.9                  |                               |                  |      |
| Birthplace                   | Australia                    | Overseas-ESB                   | Overseas-NESB         |                               |                  |      |
|                              | 24.6                         | 28.2                           | 20.6                  |                               |                  |      |

# Multiculturalism and divided values

The 2013 Scanlon Foundation survey asked, for the first time, six questions on multiculturalism. First, it asked for response to the proposition that ‘multiculturalism has been good for Australia’. Later in the survey, respondents were asked 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 findings indicated strong levels of support for multiculturalism. Thus 84% of respondents agreed that ‘multiculturalism has been good for Australia’, a higher level than obtained by earlier surveys in 1997 and 2005 surveys. 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%).

In 2014 an almost identical result was obtained in response to the general proposition that ‘multiculturalism has been good for Australia’, with 85% in agreement. There was a statistically significant increase in the proportion that expressed ‘strong agreement’, up from 32% to 37%.

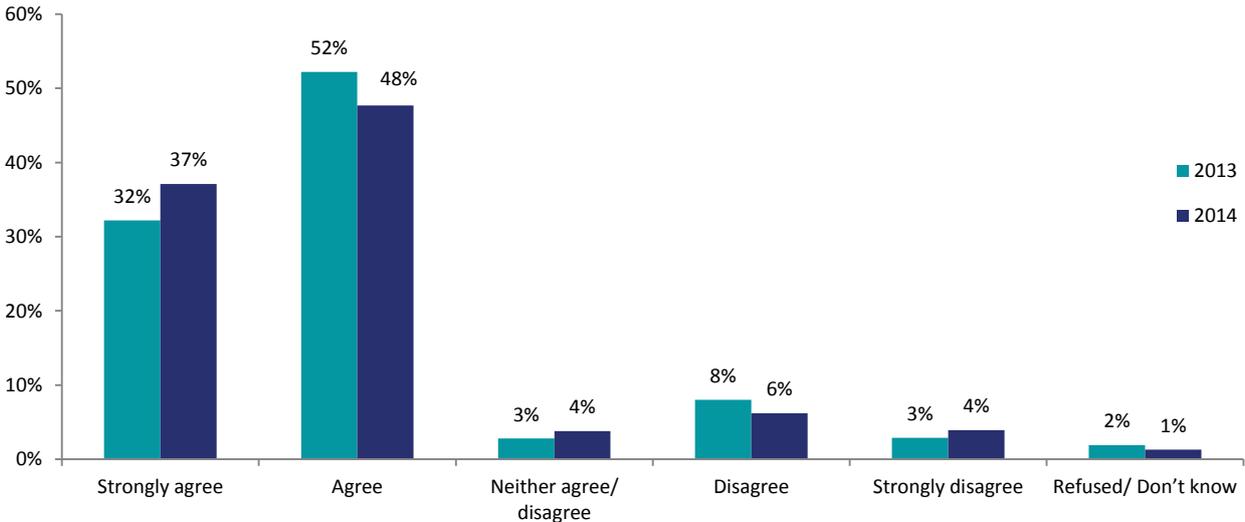
Those indicating ‘strong agreement’ were analysed by the eight demographic variables considered in this report. The highest proportion indicating ‘strong agreement’ were:

- Intending to vote Greens (62%);
- Bachelor or higher level of education (55%);
- Born overseas in a non-English speaking country (50%);
- Aged 25-34 (50%);
- Financial situation self-described as ‘prosperous’ or ‘very comfortable’ (47%).

The lowest proportion indicating ‘strong agreement’ were:

- Highest level of completed education was Year 11 or lower (22%) and trade or apprenticeship (28%);
- Aged 65 or over (26%);
- Born overseas in an English speaking country (27%);
- Resident outside a capital city (29%).

Figure 21: ‘Multiculturalism has been good for Australia’



**Table 25: ‘Multiculturalism has been good for Australia’ Response: ‘Strongly Agree’ (percentage)**

|                                     |                                     |                                       |                              |                                      |                         |            |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                       | <b>Male</b>                         | <b>Female</b>                         |                              |                                      |                         |            |
|                                     | 38.8                                | 35.4                                  |                              |                                      |                         |            |
| <b>State</b>                        | <b>Victoria</b>                     | <b>NSW</b>                            | <b>Western Australia</b>     | <b>South Australia</b>               | <b>Queensland</b>       |            |
|                                     | 43.2                                | 33.9                                  | 39.8                         | 34.2                                 | 34.2                    |            |
| <b>Region</b>                       | <b>Capital</b>                      | <b>Rest of state</b>                  |                              |                                      |                         |            |
|                                     | 40.7                                | 28.7                                  |                              |                                      |                         |            |
| <b>Age</b>                          | <b>18–24</b>                        | <b>25–34</b>                          | <b>35–44</b>                 | <b>45–54</b>                         | <b>55–64</b>            | <b>65+</b> |
|                                     | 39.8                                | 50.0                                  | 39.6                         | 32.3                                 | 36.2                    | 25.7       |
| <b>Level of completed education</b> | <b>BA or higher</b>                 | <b>Diploma/ Technical Certificate</b> | <b>Trade/ Apprenticeship</b> | <b>Year 12</b>                       | <b>Year 11 or below</b> |            |
|                                     | 55.1                                | 39.3                                  | 28.2                         | 37.2                                 | 22.2                    |            |
| <b>Financial situation</b>          | <b>Prosperous/ very comfortable</b> | <b>Reasonably comfortable</b>         | <b>Just getting along</b>    | <b>Struggling to pay bills/ poor</b> |                         |            |
|                                     | 47.4                                | 36.4                                  | 34.3                         | 31.1                                 |                         |            |
| <b>Intended vote</b>                | <b>Greens</b>                       | <b>Labor</b>                          | <b>Liberal/ National</b>     |                                      |                         |            |
|                                     | 61.9                                | 43.8                                  | 32.5                         |                                      |                         |            |
| <b>Birthplace</b>                   | <b>Australia</b>                    | <b>Overseas-ESB</b>                   | <b>Overseas-NESB</b>         |                                      |                         |            |
|                                     | 33.9                                | 26.7                                  | 50.3                         |                                      |                         |            |

To explore the meaning attached to multiculturalism, cross-tabulated analysis of seven questions relating to immigration and cultural diversity was undertaken by three levels of response to the proposition that multiculturalism has been good for Australia. Those who indicate:

1. **‘Strong agreement’**, 37% of respondents (n=588);
2. **‘Agreement’**, 48% of respondents (n=712);
3. **Combined ‘strong disagreement’ or ‘disagreement’**, 10% of respondents (n=153).

**The three categories are termed strongly positive, positive and negative in the following discussion.** The seven questions considered were:

1. What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present?
2. Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger.
3. Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions?
4. Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards Buddhists?
5. Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards Muslims?
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?
7. Your local area, that is within 15 or 20 minutes walking distance from where you live, is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together.

**Table 26: Response to selected questions by view of multiculturalism**

| Question  | Response                             | Strongly positive | Positive | Negative |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|----------|
| 1. Immigration intake   | 'About right', 'too low'             | 76.0              | 53.6     | 32.1     |
| 2. 'Immigration from many different countries makes Australia stronger' | 'Strongly agree', 'agree'            | 88.9              | 64.2     | 25.3     |
| 3. Assist ethnic minorities   | 'Strongly agree', 'agree'            | 54.6              | 32.6     | 15.6     |
| 4. Attitude towards Buddhists   | 'Very positive', 'somewhat positive' | 58.3              | 43.2     | 38.3     |
| 5. Attitude towards Muslims   | 'Very positive', 'somewhat positive' | 40.8              | 23.0     | 11.8     |
| 6. Policy towards boat arrivals   | Eligible for permanent settlement    | 40.0              | 17.3     | 3.9      |
| 7. 'People get on well together'  | 'Strongly agree', 'agree'            | 85.3              | 76.9     | 66.4     |
| AVERAGE   |                                      | 63.4              | 44.4     | 27.6     |

This correlation of attitudes indicates that:

**[1] Attitude towards multiculturalism is not held in isolation, but is consistent with a broad view of immigration and cultural diversity.**

**[2] Of those who 'strongly agree' that 'multiculturalism has been good for Australia, three quarters or more also agree that people of different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together in their local areas; agree that 'accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger'; and consider that the current immigration intake is about right or is too low. With regard to the other four questions there is, however, a lower level of positive response – thus 58% are positive towards Buddhists (38% neutral, 2% negative), and 55% agree with government funding to ethnic minorities for cultural maintenance. Only a minority, albeit a large minority, is positive towards Muslims (41% positive, 40% neutral, 18% negative), and 40% agree that asylum seekers arriving by boat should be eligible for permanent settlement in Australia.**

**[3] When the largest respondent category is examined, those positive (but not strongly positive) towards multiculturalism, there is a marked difference: positive responses are lower by an average of almost 20 percentage points.** The one exception is the proportion that agrees that people of different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together in their local areas, just lower by 8 percentage points. There is majority agreement with regard to the two questions on immigration, but only one third agree with provision of funding to ethnic minorities, less than a quarter are positive towards Muslims and 17% agree that asylum seekers arriving by boat should be eligible for permanent settlement.

**[4] Amongst the small minority of respondents (10% of the total) who are negative towards multiculturalism, there is majority agreement only with the proposition that people of different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together in their local areas (66% agree, 5% neutral, 16% disagree, and 11% indicate that there are insufficient immigrants in their local areas to have an impact).**

With regard to other questions, the level of positive response averaged just 21%: a large minority (38%) are positive towards Buddhists, but only 12% positive towards Muslims (35% neutral, 48% negative). Just 32% agree that the immigration intake is about right or too low, 25% agree that immigration from many different countries makes Australia stronger, 16% agree with provision of government funding to ethnic minorities, and only 4% agree that those arriving by boat should be eligible for permanent settlement.

**The strongest finding of this analysis is the large gap in the attitudes of those who are strongly positive (37% of the sample) and positive (48%) in their view of multiculturalism, indicated by the average level of agreement for the seven questions considered: 63% and 44%. The attitudes of those who are negative towards multiculturalism (10% of the sample) are characterised by lack of positive sentiment towards current immigration policy and cultural diversity. The one proposition that finds majority agreement across the three groups is that in their local area people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together.**

## Third generation Australians

Following the 2013 online survey of recent arrivals, an online survey of third generation Australians was conducted as part of the 2014 social cohesion research program.

It considered the attitudes of respondents born in Australia with both parents born in Australia, referred to in the following discussion as third generation Australians for brevity, although many are fourth, fifth or later generations. Third generation Australians comprise 47.4% (7.83 million) of the Australian population aged 18 or over; of these, 94% indicated that they were of Australian or Anglo-Celtic ancestry.<sup>39</sup>

Consistent with findings of the national survey, there are very high levels of identification with Australia amongst the third-generation. Just 3% indicate that they do not feel that they belong in Australia; less than 3% disagree with the statements that 'I identify with Australians' and 'I feel I am committed to Australia'; 4% disagree that 'I feel a bond with Australians'; 6% disagree that 'maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important'.

## Creating a context for comparing attitudes to immigration and cultural diversity

To contextualise the views of third generation Australians on issues of immigration and cultural diversity, the 2014 national survey was used to compare the responses of four groups: third generation Australian; second generation Australian (here defined as born in Australia with one parent born overseas); overseas-born from English speaking countries (ESB); overseas-born from non-English speaking countries (NESB).

### Multiculturalism

The level of agreement with the proposition that multiculturalism has been 'good for Australia' is close to even across the four groups. With 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses aggregated, agreement ranges from 82% of third generation Australians to 90% of those of non-English speaking background. There is greater differentiation by specific level of agreement: thus third generation Australians are much less likely to indicate 'strong agreement' than those of non-English speaking background, (31%, 50%).

**Table 27: 'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia' (percentage)**

| Response                  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Gen Au | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Gen Au | ESB         | NESB        | Total       |
|---------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 'Strongly agree'          | 30.8                   | 43.3                   | 26.7        | 50.3        | 37.2        |
| 'Agree'                   | 51.4                   | 43.9                   | 57.3        | 40.1        | 47.6        |
| <i>Sub-total agree</i>    | <b>82.2</b>            | <b>87.2</b>            | <b>84.0</b> | <b>90.4</b> | <b>84.8</b> |
| 'Neither agree/disagree'  | 4.8                    | 2.1                    | 3.3         | 2.7         | 3.8         |
| 'Disagree'                | 6.2                    | 6.9                    | 7.3         | 5.1         | 6.2         |
| 'Strongly disagree'       | 5.5                    | 2.5                    | 4.0         | 1.1         | 4.0         |
| <i>Sub-total disagree</i> | <b>11.7</b>            | <b>11.4</b>            | <b>11.3</b> | <b>6.2</b>  | <b>10.2</b> |
| Refused/Don't know        | 1.3                    | 1.3                    | 1.3         | 0.8         | 1.3         |
| Total                     | 100                    | 100                    | 100         | 100         | 100         |

<sup>39</sup> Calculated on the basis of 'first ancestry', excludes those who did not state an ancestry (2% of the third generation aged 18 or above); 2011 census analysis using the Australian Bureau of Statistics TableBuilder Pro.

Three additional questions from the national survey were also considered:

- Attitude to the current level of immigration;
- The benefit to Australia of immigration from ‘many different countries’; and
- Views on government assistance to ethnic minorities ‘to maintain customs and traditions’.

**Amongst third generation Australians there is lower level of agreement that the current immigration intake is ‘about right’ or ‘too low’, but it is a proposition that receives majority support across the four groups.**

When considering the value of immigration from ‘many different countries’, favourable response is close to 64% amongst third generation Australians and those born overseas in English-speaking countries, but at a higher level amongst second generation Australians (71%) and those of non-English speaking background (78%).

## The online survey

The online survey of third generation Australians was conducted at the same time as the Scanlon Foundation national telephone survey. It was completed by 1,070 respondents and thus provides a large sample to further understanding of the views of the third generation. The survey replicated all questions in the Scanlon Foundation national survey and included a new module of seventeen questions on sense of Australian identity, cultural diversity and integration, and contact across cultures. **Because of the large number of questions common to the telephone administered national survey and the online survey, there is the basis for exploring the impact of mode of survey administration** (i.e., telephone versus online), an issue discussed earlier in the methodological section of this report.

**Table 28: Selected questions, immigration and ethnic minorities (percentage)**

| Question  | Response                  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Gen Au | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Gen Au | ESB  | NESB |
|---|---------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------|------|
| 1. Immigration intake   | ‘About right’, ‘too low’  | 54.2                   | 64.3                   | 63.3 | 61.6 |
| 2. ‘Immigration from many different countries makes Australia stronger’ | ‘Strongly agree’, ‘agree’ | 63.6                   | 71.2                   | 64.0 | 77.7 |
| 3. Assist ethnic minorities   | ‘Strongly agree’, ‘agree’ | 26.3                   | 40.3                   | 33.3 | 66.2 |

When considering government assistance to ethnic minorities ‘to maintain customs and traditions’, agreement is in the range 26%-40% amongst third generation Australians, second generation Australians and those of English-speaking background, but at a considerably higher level (66%) amongst those of non-English speaking background.

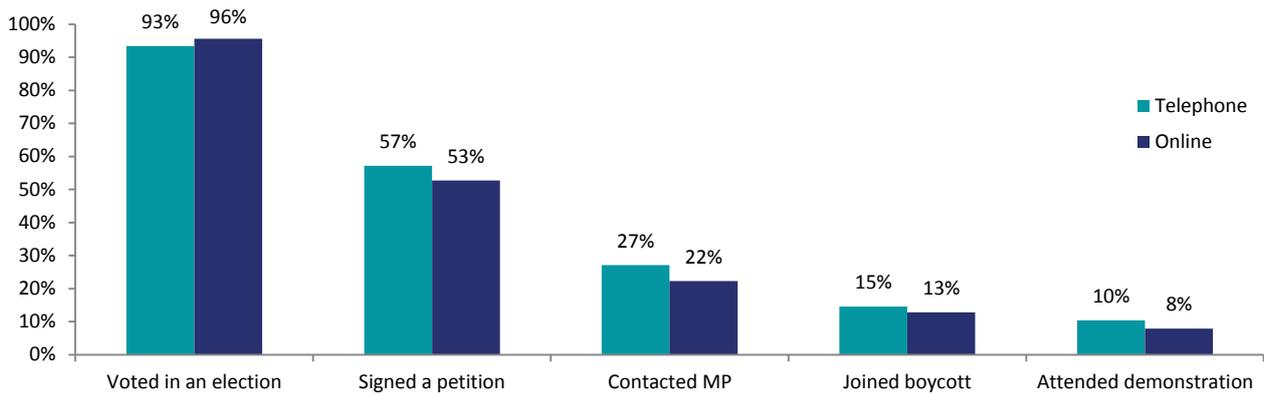
**The views of third generation Australians thus show only minor difference when compared to overseas-born of English-speaking background, but compared to second generation Australians and those of non-English speaking background there is a lower level of agreement when the benefit of immigration from many different countries is considered and markedly lower agreement on the issue of assistance to ethnic minorities to maintain their traditions and customs.**

## Understanding the mode effect

The responses of third generation Australians to 53 questions common to both the online and telephone administered surveys were compared: there were 1,070 third generation Australian respondents to the online survey and 801 (of the total sample of 1,500) to the telephone survey, thus robust samples for analysis.

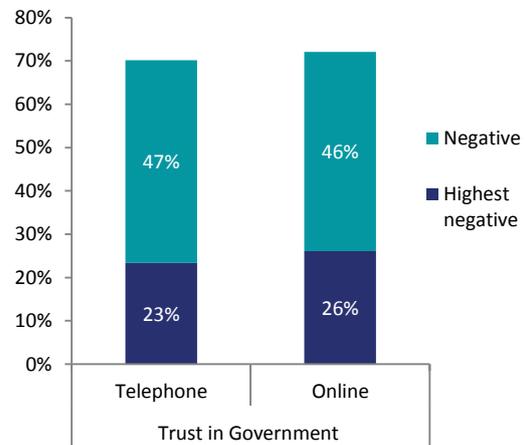
**For the majority of questions variance was below four percentage points, which is close to the margin of error (±3%) for samples of this size.** Thus with regard to political participation, 93% of third generation Australian respondents to the telephone survey indicated that they had voted in an election over the last three years, compared to 96% in the online survey; the proportions indicating that they had signed a petition were 57% and 53%; joining a boycott was indicated by 15% and 13%.

**Figure 22: Political participation, third generation Australian**

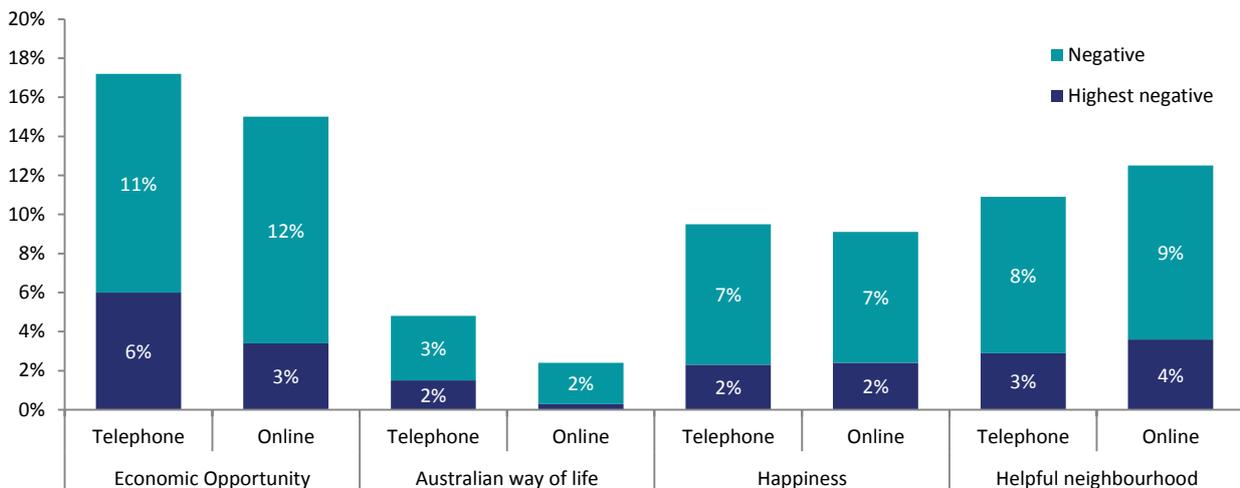


Variation was within four percentage points when those indicating negative response were considered in response to questions on trust in government (70%, 72%), economic opportunity in Australia (17%, 15%), maintenance of the Australian way of life and culture (5%, 2%), indication of unhappiness with life (10%, 9%), and willingness of neighbours to help each other (11%, 13%).

**Figure 23: Level of trust in politics: ‘How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?’ Third generation Australian**



**Figure 24: Negative sentiment: economic opportunity, Australian way of life, happiness and helpful neighbourhood. Third generation Australian**



Questions: Economic Opportunity: ‘Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life’.  
 Australian Way of Life: ‘Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? In the modern world, maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important’.  
 Happiness: ‘Taking all things into consideration, would you say that over the last year you have been ...’ (response: ‘Unhappy’ and ‘very unhappy’).  
 Helpful neighbourhood: ‘People in my local area are willing to help their neighbours’.

**Substantial variance was, however, evident when respondents were asked about the extent of their involvement in voluntary work** (at least once a month, 36% telephone, 24% online); **level of personal trust** ('can't be too careful', 45%, 64%); **and pride in the Australian way of life and culture** ('only slightly', 'not at all', 8%, 16%).

**This pattern of variation is consistent with the social desirability hypothesis: that is, respondents to an interviewer will tend to give answers they believe are more socially desirable than their true feelings**, hence a higher proportion indicate that they volunteer, a lower proportion indicate lack of trust and lack of pride in the Australian way of life.

What of questions concerning immigration and cultural diversity – a central concern of the Scanlon Foundation surveys? Again, the online survey reveals more negative or less 'socially desirable' responses, but **of nine questions common to the surveys, little or minor variation in negative response was found for seven questions, marked difference in response for two.**

Three questions found **almost no significant difference** in level of negative response:

- People from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well ('strongly disagree', 'disagree', telephone 10%; online, 11%);
- Benefit to Australia of immigrants from many different countries (29%; 30%);
- Provision of government assistance to ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions (66%, 68%).

Four questions found **minor difference**, close to five percentage points:

- Level of current immigration intake ('too high', telephone 39%; online, 46%);
- Policy towards asylum seekers arriving by boat ('turn back boats', telephone 35%; online, 40%);
- Attitude towards Christians ('very negative', 'somewhat negative', 6%, 9%);
- Attitude towards Buddhists ('very negative', 'somewhat negative', 5%, 10%).

Two questions found **substantial difference**, ten percentage points or higher:

- Multiculturalism has been good for Australia ('strongly disagree', 'disagree', telephone 12%; online, 22%);
- Attitude towards Muslims, ('very negative', 'somewhat negative', telephone 28%, online 44%).

**Overall, therefore, while there are differences, the key finding is the large measure of similarity in response. This provides confidence to further explore attitudes to immigration and cultural diversity amongst third generation Australians utilising the wider set of questions available in the online version of the questionnaire, as follows.**

## The online survey – patterns of negative sentiment

As noted, the online survey included an additional module comprising 17 questions. Seven of these questions, which presented statements on integration and cultural diversity, are considered:

1. We should recognise that cultural and ethnic diversity is an important feature of Australian society.
2. A society that has a variety of ethnic and cultural groups is better able to tackle new problems as they occur.
3. We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country.
4. It is best for Australia if all people forget their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds as soon as possible.
5. A society that has a variety of ethnic or cultural groups has more problems than societies with one or two basic cultural groups.
6. People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians.
7. I like meeting and getting to know people from other cultures.

The aggregated results for these questions, together with seven questions on immigration and cultural diversity in other sections of the survey, were analysed to determine pattern of negative response. Responses were found to be clustered in three groupings.

First, when questions were asked in specific terms with regard to immigrants who have settled in Australia, there was a very low level of negative sentiment (at or below 11%), with one significant exception, the attitude to Muslims (44% negative):

- I like meeting and getting to know people from other cultures, 4% 'strongly disagree', 'disagree';
- We should recognise that cultural and ethnic diversity is an important feature of Australian society, 5% 'strongly disagree', 'disagree';
- We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country, 9% 'strongly disagree', 'disagree';
- A society that has a variety of ethnic and cultural groups is better able to tackle new problems, 10% 'strongly disagree', 'disagree';
- Attitude towards Buddhists, 10% negative;
- My local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well, 11% 'strongly disagree', 'disagree'.

Second, a substantial minority, in the range 20%-35%, provides a negative response when questions concerning immigration, cultural diversity and multiculturalism were asked in general or abstract terms:

- Multiculturalism has been good for Australia, 22% 'strongly disagree', 'disagree';
- It is best for Australia if all people forget their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds as soon as possible, 23% 'strongly agree', 'agree';
- Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger, 30% 'strongly disagree', 'disagree';
- A society that has a variety of ethnic and cultural groups has more problems than societies with one or two basic cultural groups, 35% 'strongly agree', 'agree'.

Third, a higher proportion, in the range 38%-46%, respond negatively when presented with policy options, the aspiration that immigrants should change their behaviour to be more like Australians, and when asked concerning their attitude to Muslims

- People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians, 38% 'strongly agree', 'agree';
- Policy for dealing with asylum seekers, 40% 'turn back the boats' (a much lower 19% are negative towards the entry for 'permanent or long-term residence' of refugees who have been assessed overseas);
- Attitudes towards Muslims, 44% negative;
- Number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present, 46% 'too high'.

## Mid-range responses

As noted in the methodological discussion, **research into online surveying has found that there are a higher proportion of mid-range responses in online surveys**, while in telephone administered surveys there is a tendency for a higher proportion to favour responses at the end of a range, whether positive or negative. This pattern may indicate more measured answers in online surveys which provide opportunity to re-read a question and to visualise the full range of response options, or absence of pressure to indicate a clear preference. The broader range of response options available in internet surveying (a seven or ten point scale, as compared to a four or five point scale) also encourages what may be more accurate indication of views.

The different pattern of response is evident even with the five point scale used to determine attitudes to multiculturalism, one of the questions that were found to result in a higher proportion of negative responses in the online survey. With regard to the mid-point response ('neither agree nor disagree'), this was indicated by 5% in the telephone survey and 27% online.

Table 29: 'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia', third generation Australian (percentage)

| Survey mode | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree/ disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------|----------------|-------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Telephone   | 30.8           | 51.4  | 4.8                     | 6.2      | 5.5               |
| Online      | 12.9           | 37.3  | 26.8                    | 12.5     | 9.2               |

The immigration and cultural diversity module in the online survey utilised a seven point scale, with three mid-point response options ('somewhat agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'somewhat disagree').

For the seven questions from the immigration and cultural diversity module considered above, the distribution of responses were 45% positive or negative, 23% mid-point, and 32% in the 'somewhat agree' or 'somewhat disagree' category.

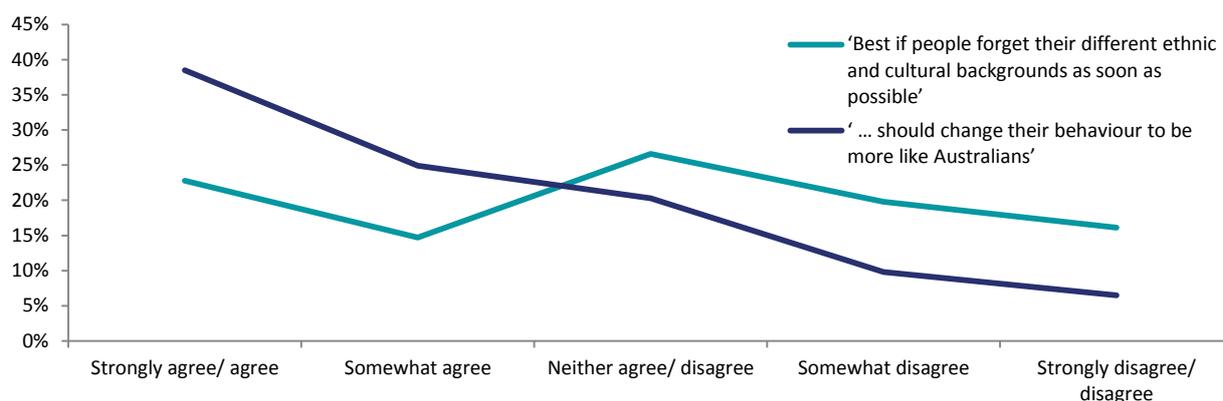
The issue that most divides respondents is the strongly worded proposition that it is 'best for Australia if all people **forget their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds as soon as possible**'. For this question, the most favoured response (27%) is at the mid-point.

The more general proposition that 'people who come to Australia should change their behaviour **to be more like Australians**' finds a higher proportion indicating 'strong agreement' or 'agreement' (39%, compared to 23%) and a higher proportion (25%, 15%) indicating 'somewhat agreement', but **it is notable that 55% of respondents are in the range 'somewhat agree', 'neither agree/ disagree' and 'somewhat disagree'**.

**Table 30: Attitudes towards integration of immigrants, third generation Australian (percentage)**

| Question  | Strongly agree/ agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree/ disagree | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree/ disagree |
|---|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 'Best if people forget their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds as soon as possible' | 22.8                  | 14.7           | 26.6                    | 19.8              | 16.1                        |
| '... should change their behaviour to be more like Australians'                             | 38.5                  | 24.9           | 20.3                    | 9.8               | 6.5                         |

**Figure 25: Attitudes towards integration of immigrants, third generation Australian**



## Conclusion

Present knowledge on the reliability of online surveying does not provide for a definitive answer on levels of accuracy. Data from the 2014 Scanlon Foundation surveys does, however, indicate a large measure of commonality across the telephone and online surveys. It brings into focus the problem of social desirability bias and range of response options, which in interviewer administered surveys can lead to an underestimation of the proportion of negative and mid-range views on sensitive issues.

**The results of the online survey of third generation Australians – almost half the Australian population – does not challenge the broad understanding of Australian opinion on issues related to immigration and cultural diversity provided by the Scanlon Foundation telephone surveys.**

Taking the online survey findings **at face value, the proportion negative towards immigrants settled in Australia constitute a small minority, in the range 4%-11%, with the significant exception of the high proportion (44%) who indicate negative attitude towards Muslims.** A large minority hold negative views towards current immigration, but at a level consistent with Scanlon Foundation surveys.

**A potentially significant finding is the relatively high proportion of third generation Australians** in the online survey (27%) who 'neither agree nor disagree' with the proposition what 'multiculturalism has been good for Australia' – in other words, **who remain to be convinced.** Opinion on whether it is 'best for Australia if all people forget their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds as soon as possible' divides third generation Australians in the online survey.

# The third generation and diversity

This section was written by Associate Professor Kate Reynolds (Australian National University), Dr Luisa Batalha (ANU), and Dr Emina Subasic (University of Newcastle).

Since the publication of Robert Putnam’s book *Bowling Alone* (2000), diverse communities have been portrayed as suffering from distrust and ‘hunkering-down’, where there is withdrawal from community life, lack of will for inter-ethnic contact (preferring contact with one’s own ethnic group), and negative contact experiences both amongst the ethnic majority and ethnic minorities. Does this characterisation fit the Australian experience? What are the experiences and attitudes of third generation Australians, especially amongst those living in diverse communities? Much of the Australian immigration story has been viewed from the perspective of immigrants. The Scanlon Foundation online survey can be used to further our understanding of the experiences and attitudes of established, third generation Australians living with ethnic, cultural and religious diversity.

To examine these questions the online survey of third generation Australians has been divided by community diversity. On the basis of the 2011 census, the sample was divided into the third most diverse postcodes and the third least diverse postcodes.

Factors such as education, age and political party preference were compared between high diversity and low diversity postcodes. Those in high diversity communities were more likely to have a tertiary education (46% in high diversity and 30% in low diversity). People in low diversity areas also tended to be older, whereas those in high diversity postcodes tended to be younger. Those in high diversity areas were less likely to vote for the National party (0.5% in high diversity and 4% in low diversity) and more likely to vote for the Greens (15% in high diversity and 11% in low diversity).

**Table 31: Percentage of respondents by education level, age and current political preference, by level of diversity in area of residence**

| Education level            | High diversity | Low diversity |
|----------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Year 12 or lower           | 31.1           | 37.4          |
| Trade or TAFE              | 23.1           | 32.8          |
| Tertiary education         | 45.8           | 29.8          |
| Age level                  |                |               |
| 18-34                      | 53.5           | 46.5          |
| 34-54                      | 49.6           | 50.4          |
| 55 +                       | 42.8           | 51.4          |
| Political party preference |                |               |
| National                   | 0.5            | 4.0           |
| Liberal                    | 42.0           | 37.9          |
| Labor                      | 42.5           | 47.3          |
| Greens                     | 15.1           | 10.7          |

Amongst third generation Australians, how are these different types of communities faring with respect to trust, outlook and tolerance?

## Neighbourhood diversity and trust

The Scanlon Foundation online survey contains a number of questions that can be used to assess respondents' levels of trust ('Generally speaking do you think most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful') and outlook ('In three or four years do you think your life in Australia will be much improved/worse'). Comparing third generation Australians in high and low diversity areas finds that 22% of respondents in low diversity areas agreed with the statement 'people can be trusted' whereas 32% agreed with this statement in high diversity areas. Although respondents, in general, are more distrusting than trusting in others, trust tends to be higher in high diversity areas.

**Table 32: Levels of trust and life outlook by level of diversity in area of residence (percentage)**

| Trust  | High diversity | Low diversity |
|--|----------------|---------------|
| 'People can be trusted'                              | 31.6           | 22.0          |
| 'Can't be too careful'                               | 58.0           | 63.8          |
| In three or four years my life in Australia will be: |                |               |
| 'Much improved'                                      | 5.6            | 4.3           |
| 'A little improved'                                  | 26.5           | 18.7          |
| 'The same as now'                                    | 37.3           | 40.0          |
| 'A little worse'                                     | 17.8           | 20.3          |
| 'Much worse'   | 6.3            | 11.8          |

With respect to whether respondents believe their life in Australia in the future will be much improved or much worse, those in high diversity communities have more positive expectations for the future. Taking the combination of response options 'much improved' and 'little improved', 32% of respondents in high diversity communities reported an expectation that life would improve. In the low diversity communities the proportion was 23%. In low diversity communities 32% of respondents indicated that they anticipated that life would be worse (a combination of response options 'a little worse' and 'much worse'). In high diversity communities the proportion was 24%. The Scanlon Foundation sample shows that although most people indicate that 'you can't be too careful' and that the future outlook is for 'the same' or things to be 'a little worse', the same general patterns characterise people who live in high and low diversity areas.

## Neighbourhood diversity and tolerance

To assess (in)tolerance amongst third generation Australians a measure of 'Support for Diversity' was formed by averaging a number of interrelated questions in the 2014 Scanlon Foundation online survey. Propositions such as 'We should recognise that cultural and ethnic diversity is an important feature of Australian society', 'A society that has a variety of ethnic and cultural groups has more problems than societies with one or two basic cultural groups' were averaged (and reversed if needed) to form a scale where a higher score reflects a belief that diversity is good for Australia. This measure was used as one indicator of (in)tolerance. Similar questions have been used in previous Scanlon Foundation surveys. (In the 2013 report the proposition 'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger' was used to assess (in)tolerance).

A low percentage of third-generation respondents in both high (8%) and low (14%) diversity communities disagreed with the scale that assessed whether 'diversity was good for Australia'. Similarly, the lack of time spent with people from other cultures (or contact) does not differ greatly between those living in high (6%) and low (10%) diversity areas. In response to the proposition 'I like meeting and getting to know people from other cultures', only 4% disagreed in high diversity communities and 5% disagreed in low diversity communities.

**Table 33: Levels of disagreement with various (in)tolerance indicators by level of diversity in area of residence. Response: 'strongly disagree', 'disagree' (percentage)**

|  | High diversity | Low diversity |
|--|----------------|---------------|
| 'My local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together' | 12.0           | 14.6          |
| 'I like meeting and getting to know people from other cultures'  | 3.5            | 4.9           |
| 'I often spend time with people from other cultures'   | 5.9            | 9.5           |
| Diversity is good for Australia (scale)  | 8.3            | 13.5          |

Looking at the statement concerning quality of contact in the respondent's local area ('My local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together'), only 12% of respondents in high diversity areas and 15% in low diversity communities disagree or strongly disagree. This means that a large majority of third-generation Australians indicate that in their local area people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together.

**Such responses indicate that levels of (in)tolerance and people's perceptions of inter-ethnic contact are generally positive. Furthermore this positivity is reported by third-generation Australians in both high and low diversity communities.** It does not seem to be community diversity that is explaining responses. In order to explain (in)tolerance amongst third-generation Australians the findings suggest that it is necessary to look beyond the diversity of the community.

## Explaining (in)tolerance among third generation Australians

Using regression (statistical) analysis it is possible to examine a number of factors that may explain a particular variable of interest. Regression analysis was used to **explore the factors that were the strongest predictors of support for diversity amongst third-generation Australians.**

Included in the model were the demographic diversity of the community, age, gender, education level, socio-economic (dis)advantage (SEIFA score), self-reported financial circumstances (prosperous/struggling), and political voting behaviour (likely vote if an election were held).

It is also important to explore intergroup contact experiences through examining the quantity and quality of inter-ethnic contact for third-generation Australians. Also included in the model were measures of the contact experience including: **quantity of contact** (number of friends from different cultural backgrounds), **quality of contact** ('My local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together'), and **openness to intercultural contact** ('I like meeting and getting to know people from other cultures'). The degree to which being Australian was considered an important part of people's self-definition and identity was also assessed ('I identify as an Australian').

When all these factors are taken into account in explaining (in)tolerance amongst third generation Australians, **openness to intercultural contact (.38) and party preference (.23) emerged as the strongest predictors, followed by identification as an Australian (-.11), quality of contact experiences (.10), and gender (-.10)**<sup>40</sup>. A higher score indicates stronger predictive value.

**These results show that when many factors are considered it is openness to intercultural contact that is most important in explaining (in)tolerance.** Those with greater contact quality in their local area are also more likely to express greater tolerance. Party preference indicates that Greens and Labor voters are more likely to express tolerance of ethno-cultural diversity. On the other hand, those who identify more strongly as being Australian tend to be less tolerant of diversity. Men are less tolerant of diversity than women.

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<sup>40</sup> The numerical values represent standardised beta coefficients. The coefficients range from -1 to +1.)

**Table 34: Standardised beta coefficients for various predictors of (in)tolerance using the high-low diversity sample**

| Predictors  | (In)tolerance Attitudes to cultural diversity |
|---|---|
| 'I like meeting and getting to know people from other cultures'   | .38***  |
| Political voting behaviour (last election)  | .23***  |
| Identification with Australia   | -.11*   |
| 'My local area is a place where people from different national and ethnic backgrounds get on well together' | .10*  |
| Gender  | -.10*   |
| Number of friends from other cultures   | -.09  |
| Education   | .08   |
| Finances  | .05   |
| SEIFA score   | -0.4  |
| Ethnic diversity in local area  | .02   |
| Age   | .01   |

Note: Coefficients highlighted with asterisks denote statistical significance at levels between 95%–99% of confidence. Gender was coded with the value 1 for man and 2 for woman.

Interestingly when a whole range of factors are considered including (dis)advantage, the demographic diversity of the community does not predict (in)tolerance. It was not the case that simply living in a high or low diverse postcode predicted people's attitudes to diversity. In a similar vein, it is not one's own personal contact experience that predicts (in)tolerance such that those that have more inter-ethnic friends are more supportive of a diverse Australia. **Instead, one's openness to others and the perception that different ethnic groups get on well on a daily basis in one's local area are more important in predicting tolerance.** When people feel or observe that those in the community have ongoing positive interactions across ethnic lines, a community 'tolerant' norm may be created that, by extension, leads to a positive outlook on ethnic diversity.

## Summary

**These results from the Scanlon Foundation online survey indicate that the experiences and attitudes of third generation Australians, especially those living in diverse communities, is in the main a positive one. Levels of trust, future outlook and attitudes to diversity or (in)tolerance are all as high if not higher for those residing in ethnically diverse compared to less diverse communities.**

More systematic analysis of a range of predictors of (in)tolerance highlighted that over and above living in a diverse community, and one's actual contact experiences and friendship groups, variables such as political voting behaviour and gender were significant explanatory factors. Similarly, identification as Australian, openness to contact and a belief that different ethnic groups in one's local area get on well were also significant predictors.

**These results suggest that positive examples of contact and the way they come to be portrayed as defining who 'we' are as a local community and how 'we' interact with each other, are important parts of explaining tolerance.**

## Extent of intolerance

An issue which from time to time engages public debate in Australia centres on the question ‘**is Australia a racist nation?**’ 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.

Research undertaken in 2000 by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia indicated that the proportion of the intolerant within the countries of the European Union ranges from a low of 4% of the population to a high of 27%.<sup>41</sup>

The intolerant are characterised by unease when in the presence of members of minority groups, their belief that multiculturalism does not enrich Australia, their demand that immigrants should assimilate to what they see as the Australian way of life (or go back to their countries of origin), and their opposition to policies designed to promote harmony, including understanding of other cultures.

**The broad range of questions in the Scanlon Foundation surveys provides a number of perspectives for determining the level of intolerance or racism in Australian society. The result obtained depends, in the first instance, on the question asked, in the second, on the interpretation of the results obtained.**

The Scanlon Foundation survey considered **attitudes towards faith groups** as a way of obtaining additional evidence on Australian openness to diversity, and also to provide further insight into attitudes towards large immigrant groups of non-Christian background.

The 2014 (and earlier 2010-12) surveys asked respondents for their attitude to members of the Christian, Buddhist and Muslim faiths. The question engaged respondents, indicated by the very low proportion (1%-3%) ‘refused’ and ‘don’t know’ responses.

Across the three surveys, 5% or fewer respondents indicated that they were ‘very negative’ or ‘negative’ towards Christians or Buddhists, but a significantly higher 12%-13% were ‘very negative’ towards Muslims and a further 12%-14% ‘somewhat negative’, **a combined 24%-25%.**

A number of demographic variables show marked variation in the ‘very negative’ and ‘somewhat negative’ responses towards Muslims, particularly age, state of residence, education and intended vote. Given the minor variation by year of survey, combined 2010-12 and 2014 data (a sample of 7,548) is used for greater reliability: a

- **Highest negative:** aged 65+ (40%); education to Year 11 (32%), Trade/ Apprenticeship (31%); intending to vote Liberal/National (30%), Independent/other (30%)
- **Lowest negative:** aged 18-24 (10%), 25-34 (19%), 35-44 (19%); intending to vote Greens (15%); education, Bachelor or higher degree (17%); resident of Victoria (17%).

**Table 35: ‘Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards...?’, 2010-12 combined, 2014 (percentage)**

| Religion   | Very positive |      | Somewhat positive |      | Neutral |      | Somewhat negative |      | Very negative |      | Refused/ Don’t know |      | Total |
|------------|---------------|------|-------------------|------|---------|------|-------------------|------|---------------|------|---------------------|------|-------|
|            | 2010-12       | 2014 | 2010-12           | 2014 | 2010-12 | 2014 | 2010-12           | 2014 | 2010-12       | 2014 | 2010-12             | 2014 |       |
| Christians | 35.3          | 32.2 | 24.3              | 24.2 | 35.9    | 37.0 | 2.5               | 3.2  | 1.2           | 2.1  | 0.8                 | 1.3  | 100   |
| Buddhists  | 23.1          | 19.8 | 31.0              | 28.2 | 38.9    | 43.7 | 2.6               | 2.1  | 1.9           | 2.7  | 2.5                 | 3.4  | 100   |
| Muslims    | 10.1          | 9.8  | 22.0              | 17.9 | 41.6    | 44.0 | 11.7              | 13.5 | 12.6          | 11.7 | 2.1                 | 3.1  | 100   |

<sup>41</sup> E. Thalhammer et al., *Attitudes toward Minority Groups in the European Union*, European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, Vienna 2001.

**Table 36: 'Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards Muslims.?' Response 'very negative' or 'somewhat negative', 2010-12, 2014 combined (percentage)**

|                                     |                                     |                                       |                              |                                      |                         |            |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                       | <b>Female</b>                       | <b>Male</b>                           |                              |                                      |                         |            |
|                                     | 22.8                                | 26.1                                  |                              |                                      |                         |            |
| <b>State</b>                        | <b>Victoria</b>                     | <b>NSW</b>                            | <b>Western Australia</b>     | <b>South Australia</b>               | <b>Queensland</b>       |            |
|                                     | 16.5                                | 27.7                                  | 27.2                         | 26.6                                 | 27.5                    |            |
| <b>Region</b>                       | <b>Capital</b>                      | <b>Rest of state</b>                  |                              |                                      |                         |            |
|                                     | 23.6                                | 26.1                                  |                              |                                      |                         |            |
| <b>Age</b>                          | <b>18–24</b>                        | <b>25–34</b>                          | <b>35–44</b>                 | <b>45–54</b>                         | <b>55–64</b>            | <b>65+</b> |
|                                     | 9.8                                 | 18.7                                  | 18.7                         | 26.8                                 | 28.6                    | 40.4       |
| <b>Level of completed education</b> | <b>BA or higher</b>                 | <b>Diploma/ Technical Certificate</b> | <b>Trade/ Apprenticeship</b> | <b>Year 12</b>                       | <b>Year 11 or below</b> |            |
|                                     | 16.6                                | 22.3                                  | 30.6                         | 21.7                                 | 32.3                    |            |
| <b>Financial situation</b>          | <b>Prosperous/ very comfortable</b> | <b>Reasonably comfortable</b>         | <b>Just getting along</b>    | <b>Struggling to pay bills/ poor</b> |                         |            |
|                                     | 22.4                                | 23.7                                  | 27.3                         | 24.6                                 |                         |            |
| <b>Intended vote</b>                | <b>Labor</b>                        | <b>Liberal/ National</b>              | <b>Greens</b>                | <b>Independent/ Other</b>            |                         |            |
|                                     | 21.5                                | 30.3                                  | 15.3                         | 29.9                                 |                         |            |
| <b>Birthplace</b>                   | <b>Australia</b>                    | <b>Overseas-ESB</b>                   | <b>Overseas-NESB</b>         |                                      |                         |            |
|                                     | 24.2                                | 27.7                                  | 25.1                         |                                      |                         |            |

There are five additional questions relevant for understanding levels of intolerance in the 2014 survey, each of which provided two negative response options. **For all five questions, the aggregated level of negative response is marginally lower in 2014 than in 2013** (see Tables 37 and 38).

**The highest strong negative, at 31%, was in response to a question on policy towards asylum seekers reaching Australia by boat.** But caution needs to be taken in interpreting this result, which may in part reflect concern over border control and a polarisation of opinion which does not reflect underlying attitudes towards cultural diversity. Such an interpretation is supported by the low level of opposition which was obtained in earlier surveys when respondents were asked for their view on the Humanitarian Program, which elicited a largely positive result, with negative views expressed by just 10% of respondents.

**A large strongly negative response, at 25%, was obtained in response to a question on provision of government assistance to ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions.** This finding in part reflects the view of the majority in response to funding of minorities, so in part reflects equity concerns, although negative response to this question is correlated with rejection of cultural diversity.

A general question posed across the seven Scanlon Foundation surveys asked respondents if 'accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger'. In 2014, 10% indicated 'strong disagreement' and 16% 'disagreement'.

**When respondents were asked whether 'people of different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together' in their local area, 2% 'strongly disagreed' and 8% 'disagreed', a total of 10%.**

**Table 37: 'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger', national survey, 2007-2014 (percentage)**

| Response                  | 2007        | 2009        | 2010        | 2011        | 2012        | 2013        | 2014        |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 'Strongly disagree'       | 7.8         | 8.9         | 10.9        | 10.6        | 10.7        | 10.6        | 9.6         |
| 'Disagree'                | 18.1        | 17.9        | 18.6        | 16.2        | 15.3        | 18.1        | 15.9        |
| <i>Sub-total disagree</i> | <b>25.9</b> | <b>26.8</b> | <b>29.5</b> | <b>26.8</b> | <b>26.0</b> | <b>28.7</b> | <b>25.6</b> |
| N (unweighted)            | 2,012       | 2,019       | 2,021       | 2,001       | 2,001       | 1,200       | 1,526       |

\*The full range of responses to this question, see Table 8, above.

**Table 38: Negative responses by selected question, national survey, 2012-2014 (percentage)**

| Question and response   | Strongest negative |      |      | Negative |      |      | Total |      |      |
|---|--------------------|------|------|----------|------|------|-------|------|------|
|   | 2012               | 2013 | 2014 | 2012     | 2013 | 2014 | 2012  | 2013 | 2014 |
| 'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions'. Response: 'strongly disagree', 'disagree' | 27.9               | 24.6 | 25.3 | 29.3     | 31.1 | 28.9 | 57.2  | 55.7 | 54.2 |
| Asylum seeker policy. Response: 'turn back boats', 'keep in detention until they can be sent back'  | 26.1               | 33.0 | 31.1 | 8.5      | 12.5 | 9.9  | 34.6  | 45.5 | 41.0 |
| 'Immigration from many different countries makes Australia stronger'. Response: 'strongly disagree', 'disagree'   | 10.7               | 10.6 | 9.6  | 15.3     | 18.1 | 15.9 | 26.0  | 28.7 | 25.6 |
| 'Local area is a place where people of different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together'. Response: 'strongly disagree', 'disagree'*                     | 2.1                | 3.0  | 1.7  | 8.2      | 9.4  | 8.4  | 10.3  | 12.4 | 10.1 |

\*Excludes those who responded that they live in an area with insufficient immigrants to have an impact. There is no statistically significant variation in the level of negative response between 2013 and 2014. There is statistically significant positive change at p<0.5 in response to two questions (immigrants from many different countries, asylum policy – eligibility for permanent settlement).

While there can be no definitive measure of the level of intolerance in Australian society, on the basis of Scanlon Foundation polling and a number of additional surveys conducted over the last 30 years, there is support for the conclusion that **the core level of intolerance in Australia is close to 10% of the population. Using a broader definition** (incorporating both the strongest negative and next negative response), **levels of intolerance and rejection of cultural diversity are probably in the range 25% to 30% of the population. On a heavily politicised issue such as asylum policy, strong negative sentiment alone can reach close to 30%.**

These proportions are an average for the Australian population. **Within specific regions and within segments of the population, there are higher levels of intolerance**, an issue discussed at length in the 2012 Scanlon Foundation national and neighbourhood social cohesion reports.

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Associate Professor Kate Reynolds and Dr Luisa Batalha both of the Australian National University and Dr Emina Subasic of the University of Newcastle, designed the additional module of seventeen questions in the online survey and wrote the section 'Third generation Australians and diversity' in this report.

Monash University provided the research environment that sustained the 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).

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**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 seventh 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.





