



# mapping social cohesion

the scanlon foundation surveys  
national report **2012**

Professor Andrew Markus



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[www.arts.monash.edu.au/mapping-population](http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/mapping-population)

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# Executive summary

This report presents the findings of the fifth Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion national survey conducted in June–July 2012. A separate report covers the 2012 local surveys. The reports build on the knowledge gained through the four earlier Scanlon Foundation national surveys conducted in 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011, which **provide, for the first time in Australian social research, a series of detailed surveys on social cohesion, immigration and population issues.** Each of the five national surveys was completed by 2000 respondents, a total of 10,000, with an additional 5,300 respondents to the 2007, 2009 and 2012 local surveys.

A prime objective of the surveys has been to further understanding of the social impact of Australia's increasingly diverse immigration program. In the 2012 survey there were sixteen questions concerned with immigration, together with additional questions on asylum issues and experience of discrimination, with scope to interpret findings in the context of a total of 68 questions.

**Over the last ten years Australia's population has increased by over three million**, or 15%, to an estimated 22,485,000 in December 2011. Whereas annual population growth averaged 1.4% per annum from 1970 to 2010, between 2006 and 2009 annual growth was at or above 1.6%, with a peak of 1.9% in 2008. The population grew by an estimated 1.4% in 2011.

Although **the Global Financial Crisis had a relatively minor impact on the Australian economy**, at the time of the 2012 survey there was growing economic uncertainty in media discussion, in the context of the European sovereign debt crisis and the decline in growth of the Chinese economy. In 2012, 36% of respondents in the Scanlon Foundation survey identified economic issues as the main problem facing Australia today (up from 26% in 2011).

This climate of growing economic uncertainty provides the context within which the 2012 survey was undertaken.

## The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI)

What then is the state of social cohesion in 2012? 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 2012 SMI registered little change. The broad pattern has indicated a sharp fall in 2010 (the last year of the Rudd government), with marginal upward movement in 2011 and 2012.

## 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 (95% in 2012), indicate pride in the Australian way of life (90%) and believe that its maintenance is important (91%). Less than 5% of respondents to the survey indicated that they had slight or no sense of belonging.

As to be expected, the Australian-born have the strongest sense of belonging, with 82% indicating belonging to a 'great extent', 16% to a 'moderate extent', compared to 56% of overseas-born of non-English speaking background indicating belonging to a 'great extent and 35% to a 'moderate extent'.

Consideration of the attitudes of recent arrivals provides **evidence of rapid integration.** Of those who arrived since 2000, 86% of English speaking background and 88% of non-English speaking background immigrants indicate a sense of belonging to a 'great' or 'moderate extent'.

## Living standards

The Global Financial crisis has had little impact in Australia on indication of financial satisfaction. In 2007, 74% of respondents indicated that they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their financial circumstances, 73% in 2010 and 72% in 2012. Nearly nine out of ten respondents (88%) in 2012 indicate that 'taking all things into consideration', they are happy with their lives.

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 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed', 82% in 2010 and 81% in 2012. These views are **consistent with international indicators, which rank Australia at or near the top of developed countries in terms of standard of living, education, health services and quality of life.**

There is, however, also consistency in measures of inequality in Australia. This concern is evident in the survey findings, with 74% of respondents in 2012 agreeing that **'the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large'**. Earlier surveys found a negative trend with regard to confidence in the future, experience of rejection, and levels of trust and community involvement. **In 2012, the trend was reversed in a number of indicators, or the direction of negative movement was lessened.**

**Pessimism when the future is considered:** 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 be worse?', the proportion answering 'a little worse' or 'much worse' increased from 10.9% in 2007 to 12.2% in 2009 to 12.7% in 2010 and to 17.3% in 2011. There was a further increase in 2012, to 18.5%, but at a lessened rate of increase.

## Experience of discrimination

In 2010 there was a marked increase in reported experience of discrimination and this high level was maintained in 2011; reported discrimination was 9% in 2007, 10% in 2009, 14% in 2010 and also 14% in 2011. In 2012, the proportion fell to 12%, still higher than 2007 and 2009, but **a reversal of the pattern of increase.**

**There is large variation in the experience of discrimination within sub-groups.** By far the highest proportion (31%) indicating discrimination is amongst respondents of the Islamic faith. Analysis by country of birth indicated highest experience of discrimination by respondents born in Africa and the Middle East (21%) and Asia (20%).

## Trust

**In 2009, 55% of respondents agreed that 'most people can be trusted'; this fell sharply to 45% in 2010 and was at 46% in 2011. The 2012 finding (52%) marks a return to the pattern of 2007-2009, where the majority indicated agreement that 'most people can be trusted'.**

All these measures point to a positive and stable state of social cohesion within the Australian community. However, they also mask some divergent findings amongst sub-groups of the population.

## Ranking of issues

**Change is most evident when political issues are considered.** An open-ended question, the first question in the survey, asks respondents 'What do you think is the **most important problem facing Australia today**'. The surveys conducted in 2010, 2011 and 2012 found consistency in the nomination of five key issues: the economy, quality of government and politicians, the environment, asylum and immigration.

**The economy has ranked first across the three surveys, specified by 22% of respondents in 2010, 26% in 2011 and 36% in 2012.**

The second ranked issue, **quality of government and politicians**, has been selected by 11%-13% across the three surveys. The issue of government is also considered in a question which asks: 'how often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people'. In 2012, only 26% of respondents indicated 'almost always' or 'most of the time', a 22 percentage point decline from a high of 48% in 2009.

The decline of trust in government parallels the fall in support for the governing Labor Party, registered in the Scanlon Foundation surveys as 51% in 2009, 37% in 2010, 31% in 2011 and 25% in June-July 2012.

Asylum issues rose in importance, to rank third in 2012, selected by 12% of respondents, a marked increase from 7% in 2011.

Two of the top issues declined in the ranking. Environmental issues, which ranked second in 2010 and 2011 (selected by 15% and 18%), were fourth in 2012 (11%). Immigration and population issues ranked fifth, selected by 7% of respondents in 2010 and 2011, 4% in 2012.

## Immigration

It has been **argued in the media that negativity towards immigration has increased**, in part because of the inability of government to stem the flow of asylum seekers. This view is not supported by the Scanlon Foundation survey. The 2012 survey found that **38% of respondents considered the immigration intake to be too high, while a combined 56% considered that it was about right (42%) or too low (14%).**

Over the last three Scanlon Foundation surveys, respondents were asked for their views on **the main categories of permanent and long-stay immigrants**, that is, those admitted under the Skill and Family Streams of the Migration Program, the Humanitarian Program and Overseas Students. **There has been consistently high level support for all categories.** The most positive attitude is towards immigrants admitted on the basis of skill. Attitudes towards the other three categories were, however, almost as favourable, with an increase in the proportion favourable to refugees admitted under the Humanitarian program. In 2012, 77% were positive to the skill category; 75% to the humanitarian (specified as refugees admitted after overseas assessment of their claims); 70% towards family; and 69% towards students (a consistent level across the three surveys).

## Asylum seekers

The positive attitude towards refugees selected overseas was, however, not matched when asylum seekers were considered. **In 2012, less than one in four respondents agreed that asylum seekers arriving by boat should be eligible for permanent settlement**, a finding which is consistent with other surveys conducted in Australia. In the 2012 Scanlon Foundation survey, 23% favoured eligibility for permanent residence for boat arrivals, while 26% considered that boats should be turned back and an additional 9% that those arriving by boat should be deported. The largest proportion, 38%, favoured 'temporary residence only'.

When respondents were asked for their assessment of the **government's handling of the asylum issue**, just 6% considered that the government was doing a 'good job', 26% an 'average job', and **66% a 'poor job' – up from 47% in 2010.**

## Nationality

The 2010, 2011 and 2012 surveys asked respondents if their feelings were positive, negative or neutral towards immigrants from 12 **specified national groups**. Again, there was a consistency of opinion across the three surveys. **Indicative of long-term change in Australian opinion, there is now a large measure of acceptance of groups once stigmatised.** In 2012 the level of negative feeling towards immigrants from Italy and Greece was less than 5%; it was 9% towards immigrants from Vietnam and China. **The highest level of negative feeling, at close to 23% (marginally lower than in 2010-11), is towards those from Iraq and Lebanon.** The 2012 survey included for the first time three African countries; 19% were negative towards immigrants from Sudan, 12% towards those from Ethiopia and the Congo, with relatively high (average 8%) 'don't know' and declined responses.

## Religion

Respondents were asked for their **attitudes towards three faith groups** – Christian, Buddhist and Muslim. In consistent findings across the 2010, 2011 and 2012 surveys, close to 3% of respondents were negative towards Christians, 5% negative towards Buddhist, and **close to 25% negative towards Muslims.**

Negative feelings towards Muslims were particularly evident amongst those over the age of 65 (>40%) and followers of a Protestant faith (>30%). There was marked variation by state, with 28% of residents in New South Wales and Queensland, and 27% in Western Australia, indicating negative views, compared with 16% of residents in Victoria.

While the level of negative feeling towards Muslims is much higher than for the other two faith groups considered, a large majority indicated either positive or neutral views: in 2012, 34% were positive and 40% neutral, a combined 74%.

## Ethnic minorities

**In a finding of particular relevance for government funding directed to ethnic communities, there is a sharp difference of opinion over provision of assistance 'to ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions'.** Considering the aggregated responses over the five Scanlon Foundation surveys, just 30% of the Australian-born and 25% of those of English speaking background agree with this form of government funding, compared to 52% of non-English speaking background. Amongst arrivals since 2000, 72% of Australians of non-English speaking background agree with assistance for maintenance of customs and traditions.

## Attitudes within sub-groups

The large sample of the Scanlon Foundation surveys, with a combined 10,000 respondents across the five national surveys, makes possible detailed analysis of **attitudes within sub-groups of the population**, to further understanding of the dynamics of Australian public opinion.

**Negative views of cultural, religious or ethnic diversity** are more likely to be found amongst those in difficult financial circumstances; without post-school educational qualifications; over the age of 65; resident outside of capital cities; residents of Queensland or Western Australia; and third-generation Australians.

Analysis using four of these predictors of negative views on cultural, religious and ethnic diversity (education, age, state of residence and location within the state) indicates that close to 48% of the respondents consider that the immigration intake is 'too high', 40% indicate that their attitude to Muslims is 'very negative' or 'somewhat negative' and 43% 'strongly disagree' with government assistance to ethnic minorities to maintain customs and traditions. While the proportions are relatively high, it is a notable finding that these views are **held by 40%-50% of respondents, not by a clear majority.**

## Political alignments

Consideration of values amongst supporters of the major political parties highlight the **attitudinal divisions in Australian society**, evident in consideration of issues such as inequality, government priorities, attitudes to minorities, and immigration and settlement policy.

The 2011 and 2012 Scanlon Foundation surveys reveal **entrenched division over policy towards asylum seekers, with Greens supporters further differentiated in 2012 from majority opinion.** In 2011, 13% Liberal, 29% Labor and 48% Greens supporters agreed that arrivals should be eligible for permanent residence. In 2012 the proportions for Liberal and Labor supporters were almost unchanged (12%, 29%), while support amongst Greens increased to 62%. In contrast, 45% of Liberal supporters in 2012 agreed that boats should be prevented from landing or arrivals should be detained and deported, compared to just 8% of Greens supporters and 21% Labor.

## Stability and change

**In broad terms, the 2012 national survey points to a large measure of stability in Australian society, although with many indicators below the level reached in 2007 and 2009, and without the degree of optimism for the future evident in 2009.**



## 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, over the next five decades, Australia can sustain the migration and social cohesion success story of the past five decades.**

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 benchmark survey was undertaken in June–July 2007 by the Melbourne-based research company The 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 undertaken in areas of high immigrant concentration where, it is predicted, the potential for social tension is higher.

The Foundation continues to provide significant funding towards on-going, independent, primary research which can continue the development of our knowledge about social cohesion. This made possible a replication of the 2007 survey in 2009. In 2010, however, following a review of previous findings, it was decided to change the frequency of surveys from a two-year cycle to annual national surveys, supplemented by local surveys every third year. This change now provides the opportunity for annual tracking of Australian public opinion at a time of heightened public discussion across a range of issues related to immigration and social cohesion and resulted in the 2011 and 2012 national and the 2012 local surveys.

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 and statistical data on immigration and population sourced from government publications.<sup>1</sup>

The Foundation continues to utilise the results of this research to initiate **on-the-ground action programs** designed to address factors which affect social cohesion in areas where the potential for tension is most evident. Details of projects, including ‘Supporting Parents–Developing Children’ (City of Hume), ‘Growing Communities Together’ (City of Bankstown) and ‘“The Huddle” North Melbourne Community Centre’ are available on the Scanlon Foundation internet site.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Mapping Australia’s Population website is <http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/mapping-population/>

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.scanlonfoundation.org.au/majorcommunitydevelopment.html>.

# Scope and methodology

The 2012 Scanlon Foundation national survey is the fifth in the series, following earlier surveys in 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011.

The five surveys have adopted a uniform methodology and all have been administered by Melbourne-based The Social Research Centre.

The surveys use a random sampling methodology, with the sample stratified geographically. A minimum of 200 interviews are undertaken in each Australian state or territory (1,600 interviews out of the overall total of 2,000). The remaining 400 interviews are allocated across the three states under-represented by the initial sample allocation (NSW, Victoria and Queensland) in proportion to the population of those states.

Interviews are conducted by telephone (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing), utilising a list-assisted Random Digit Dialling (RDD) sampling frame with respondents selected using the 'next birthday' method. In addition to English, respondents have the option of completing the survey in one of eight community languages.

A feature of the Scanlon Foundation surveys is the relatively large sample base of 2,000. The major polling agencies utilise smaller samples: for example, the Newspoll national surveys typically use a sample of 1,150-1,200 and the Nielsen poll a sample of 1,400. The annual Lowy Institute Poll of public opinion on foreign policy employs a sample of 1,000. These sample bases are expected to yield a maximum sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points. The larger Scanlon Foundation sample, while not significantly improving the maximum sample error at the aggregate level, makes possible more reliable analysis of sub-samples, for example age group, educational attainment or intended vote.

The design of the questionnaire is informed by ongoing review of Australian and international research. The survey includes questions used in contemporary and earlier surveys, to provide the basis to check reliability and to enhance understanding of shifts in opinion over time.

The content of the questionnaire was modified in the second and subsequent surveys in light of findings on the degree of consistency (hence predictability) of response. While questions required for calculation of the Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion were retained, a number of others were deleted to enable inclusion of new modules and individual questions.

The 2009 survey introduced a module, retained in subsequent surveys, exploring attitudes at the neighbourhood level. The 2010 survey included questions on future population targets, immigration selection criteria, national origins, asylum issues and government priorities.

The 2011 survey repeated most questions added in 2010 to provide further understanding of the extent of volatility of opinion on a range of population and asylum issues; in addition, new questions explored attitudes on the benefit to Australia of the presence of overseas students and arguments for and against immigration.

The 2012 survey included four new questions, concerning attitudes to immigration from African countries, impact of discrimination, perception of racial prejudice and trend of neighbourhood life.

Full details of changes to the questionnaire are provided in the Methodological Report (Appendix 2: Questionnaire revisions), available for download on the Mapping Australia's Population internet site.

The 2012 national questionnaire was administered from 12 June to 21 July. It comprised 68 questions (48 substantive and 20 demographic) and took on average 16 minutes to complete.

## Weighting of survey results

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

A rim weighting procedure developed by The Social Research Centre makes possible weighting of data for four variables: age, gender, educational attainment and country of birth, and, where necessary, to also adjust for disproportionate aspects of the sample design (i.e. disproportionate geographic distribution).

Where possible, target proportions were taken from 2011 ABS Census. The weights applied to the samples were:

**National:** state population (NSW, VIC, QLD, SA, WA, TAS, NT, ACT); **age** (18–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55 plus); **gender** (male, female); **education** (university graduate, not university graduate); **country of birth** (Australia, overseas English-speaking country [Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States], overseas non-English-speaking).

## Context: Australia and the developed world

There are a number of indicators which provide evidence of Australia's relative international standing in terms of per capita income, labour force participation and indexes of human development.<sup>3</sup> On a number of indicators Australia ranks at or near the top of developed or rich nations, a finding which receives prominent media attention at the time new findings are released.

In May 2012, newspapers featured the news that Australia was 'the happiest nation in OECD'.<sup>4</sup> This was the finding of the 'Better Life Index', compiled by the OECD to rate its 34 member countries in eleven categories, including housing, jobs, education, health, environment and work-life balance. With the categories given equal weight, Australia was ranked first in the cumulative score, followed closely by Norway and the United States.

Table 1: OECD, Better Life Index, selected countries and indicators, 2011

Country	Employment Rate	Long term unemployed	Health – self reported	Life satisfaction
Australia	72%	0.97%	85%	7.4
Sweden	73%	1.39%	79%	7.3
Norway	75%	0.34%	80%	7.6
Canada	72%	0.96%	88%	7.4
USA	70%	2.79%	90%	7.1
United Kingdom	70%	2.53%	76%	6.9
France	64%	3.74%	68%	7.0
Germany	71%	3.34%	65%	6.7
Italy	57%	4.08%	67%	6.1
Russian Federation	67%	2.23%	-	5.3

Source: OECD Better Life Index, <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/>

<sup>3</sup> For further discussion of Australia's ranking on international indicators, see Andrew Markus, 'Social cohesion/ social inclusion in Australia', in Fethi Mansouri and Michele Lobo, *Migration, Citizenship and Intercultural Relations*, Ashgate, Surrey, 2011. Pp.143-158

<sup>4</sup> *The Australian*, 22 May 2012

In August 2012, headlines announced that Melbourne had been ranked the world's 'most liveable city'. The report was based on the Economist Group's annual report on 'liveability' and cost of living in 140 cities. Melbourne was followed by Vienna and Vancouver. Adelaide ranked equal fifth, Sydney seventh, Perth ninth, and Brisbane twentieth.<sup>5</sup>

The Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Program ranks Australia second. It is a measure of life expectancy, education and standard of living which is concerned not only with economic outcomes but also improvements in human well-being.

Table 2: Human Development Index, 2011, adjusted for inequality (value), selected countries

Country	2010 adjusted	Rank 2010
Norway	0.890	1
Australia	0.856	2
Sweden	0.851	3
Netherlands	0.846	4
Ireland	0.843	6
Germany	0.842	7
Canada	0.829	12
France	0.804	16
United Kingdom	0.791	19
Italy	0.779	22
USA	0.771	23

Source: UN Human Development Index 2011, [http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR\\_2011\\_EN\\_Table3.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2011_EN_Table3.pdf)

Less publicity is accorded to the finding that when income distribution and poverty are considered, Australia drops to the mid-rank among rich countries. The pattern is for a number of European countries, particularly the Scandinavian, to rank at the top level, followed by other European countries, including France and Germany. Thus the United Nations Human Poverty Index, which aggregates a number of variables including the proportion of the population whose income is 50% below the median adjusted household disposable income, ranks Australia 13 of 19 rich countries.

There are fewer international indicators of public opinion, but there are some important sources, notably the World Values Survey, which has conducted five waves of international surveying over 30 years.

<sup>5</sup> Age, 14 August 2012

The fifth wave of surveying was conducted between 2005-2008 and involved 57 countries. On some, but not all indicators, Australia is ranked near the top.

In terms of pride in nationality, Australia is ranked close to Canada and at the top of developed nations, marginally ahead of the United States, and substantially ahead of the United Kingdom, Sweden, Italy, France and Germany.

Table 3: 'How proud are you to be [nationality]'. Response: 'very proud'. Selected countries, 2005-08

Country	'Very proud'
Canada	69.9%
Australia	69.3%
USA	65.3%
United Kingdom	54.0%
Norway	53.0%
Russian Federation	45.8%
Sweden	42.6%
Italy	42.0%
France	29.6%
Germany	21.8%

Source: World Values Survey

With regard to attitudes to immigration, there is substantial evidence to indicate that Australia and Canada rank as the developed nations most receptive to immigration. While comparing survey findings is an exercise beset with difficulty, there is broad consistency in a range of data sources.

In the fifth wave of the World Values Survey, respondents were presented with a list specifying characteristics of potential neighbours and were asked to 'sort out any that you would not like to have as neighbours'. The list included the category 'immigrant/foreign worker'. When responses from twelve countries were considered, only 5% of Canadian and 6% of Australian respondents were found to have selected 'immigrant/foreign worker', ranking the countries second and third. This compares with 33% of Russian and 43% of French respondents indicating a negative view.

A second source for cross-national comparison is a survey conducted for the International Social Survey Program in 2003, which included a question on attitude to the level of immigration. Of seventeen countries selected for analysis, Canada and Australia ranked at the top level, with over 60% of respondents in support of the existing immigration intake or its increase. The next level of support was below 50%, with the lowest recorded in the United Kingdom (22%) and Russia (18%).

A third international survey with relevance to immigration was conducted by the Ipsos global market research company in June 2011. It employed an online panel and was completed by 17,600 respondents in 23 European, North and South American, Asian, and Middle Eastern countries. Australia and Canada consistently ranked in the top five countries favourable to a range of immigration questions.

Thus in response to the proposition that 'immigration has generally had a positive impact on [the respondent's country]', Canada ranked 2 and Australia 5. In response to the proposition that 'Immigration is good for the economy of the [country]', Canada ranked 3 and Australia 5. A third question posed the proposition that 'Immigrants make [country] more interesting place to live'. Canada ranked 2 and Australia equal 3.<sup>6</sup>

These findings provide an international context for the evaluation of Australian survey findings, specifically the standard of living and income distribution indicators. They provide a substantive context for the survey findings on personal economic circumstances, life satisfaction, future expectations, and appraisal of income inequality.

The international attitudinal surveys provide a benchmark for the interpreting the relatively positive attitudes found in Scanlon Foundation and much other Australian public opinion research.

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the international attitudes to immigration, see Andrew Markus, 'Immigration and public opinion', pp. 116-120, in Jonathan Pincus and Graeme Hugo (eds), *A Greater Australia: Population, Policies and Governance*, CEDA, Melbourne, 2012

# Context: Australia in 2012

## Economic conditions and the labour market

The Global Financial Crisis 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 one quarter of negative growth. The economy grew by 1.4% in 2009, 2.5% in 2010, and 2.1% in 2011, with Westpac Economics estimating 3.5% for 2012.

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 5.3% and in January-May 2011 to 5.0%. In the first half of 2012, unemployment increased marginally and was in the range 5.1%-5.2%.

In June 2012 this level compared to 8.2% in the Euro area, where the unemployment peak was 24.1% in Spain. Unemployment was 8.2% in the United States, 8.0% in the United Kingdom, 10.1% in France and 5.5% in Germany.<sup>7</sup>

Australian unemployment in June 2011 was lowest in Western Australia at 4.2%, highest in Tasmania at 5.6%; the level in other states was 4.7% in Victoria, 5.1% in New South Wales, 5.2% in Queensland and 5.3% in South Australia.

The labour force participation rate in the first six months of 2012 was steady at 65.3%; marginally below the July 2011 rate of 65.6%. The labour force participation rate for males in June 2012 was 71.8%, for females, 59.0%; this was marginally below the level twelve months earlier, when it was 72.3% for males, 59.1% for females.

At the time of the 2012 Scanlon Foundation surveys there was growing media discussion of economic uncertainty, in the context of the European sovereign debt crisis and the decline in growth of the Chinese economy and its potential impact on the Australian mining industry.

## 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.

Revised estimates based on the 2011 Census indicate an Australian population of 22,485,000 persons at 31 December 2011, an increase of 302,600 persons over the preceding twelve months. Since June 2001, when the estimated population was 19.4 million, there has been an increase of over three million.

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 1.9% in 2008. The population grew by an estimated 1.6% in 2009, a much lower 1.2% in 2010, and 1.4% in 2011.

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 66% of growth in 2008-09, but a lower 53% in the 12 months ended 31 June 2011.

In 2008, NOM was an estimated 315,700 persons; in 2010 an estimated 168,800, a decline of 47% or 146,900 persons. In 2011 NOM was an estimated 184,000, an increase of 15,200.

The measure of immigration, net overseas migration, is often misunderstood in public discussion.<sup>8</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 and working holiday makers.

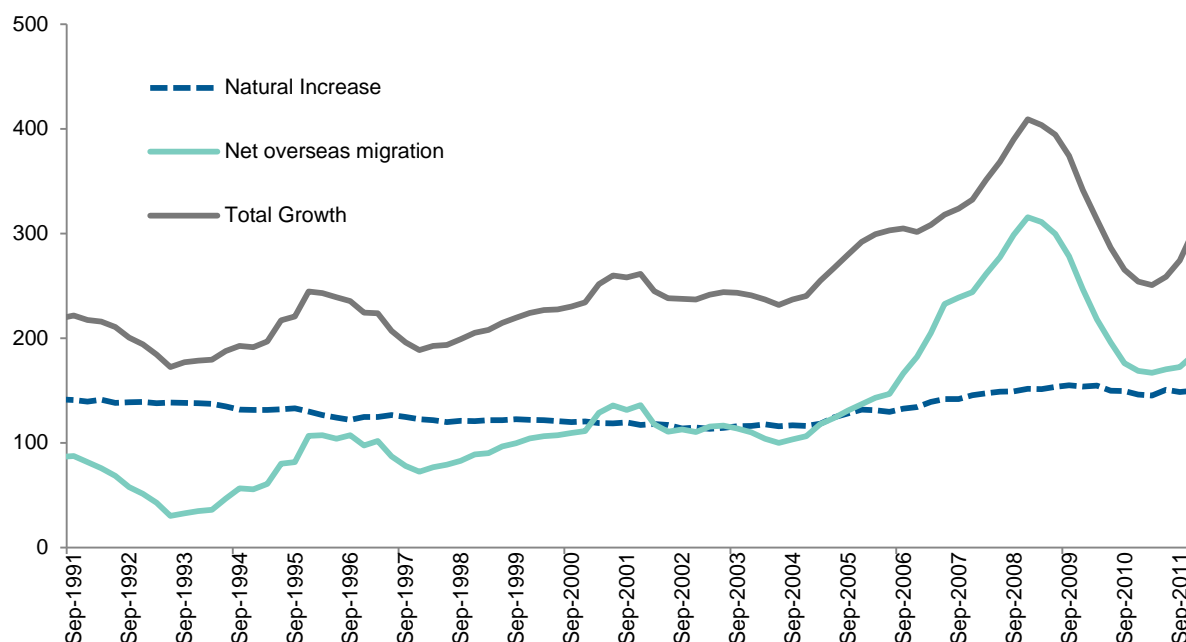
Within the permanent immigration program, Skill is the largest category, followed by Family and Humanitarian. The planning level for the three categories in 2012-13 provided for 129,250, 60,185 and 13,750 places respectively, with an increase in the Humanitarian category to 20,000 announced in August 2012.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=36324>

<sup>8</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>9</sup> For further information, see the Fact Sheets in the Statistical Trends section of the Mapping Australia's Population internet site.

Figure 1: Components of annual population growth, 1991–2011



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics*, December quarter 2011, catalogue number 3101.0 (released 20 June 2012).

Table 4: Population growth and components of growth, Australia 2005-2011

Year	Natural Increase	Net Overseas Migration	Growth on previous year	Growth on previous year
	'000	'000	'000	%
2005	132.0	137.0	291.9	1.4
2006	134.0	182.2	301.4	1.5
2007	145.5	244.1	332.5	1.6
2008	151.6	315.7	409.1	1.9
2009	153.7	246.9	341.5	1.6
2010 (estimate)	146.0	168.8	254.1	1.2
2011 (estimate)	149.7	184.0	302.6	1.4

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics*, December quarter 2011, catalogue number 3101.0 (released 20 June 2012), 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, an estimated 53% of the population were third-plus generation Australian, meaning that both their parents were born in Australia, 20% second generation, born in Australia with at least one overseas-born parent, and 26% first generation, born overseas. Thus, in total, 46% of the population comprised first or second generation Australians.<sup>10</sup>

There has been a gradual increase in the proportion overseas born, from 23% in 2001 to 24% in 2006, and 26% in 2011, an increase from 4.1 million in 2001 to 5.3 million in 2011.

The estimated 26% 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%), and Italy (3.5%).

Table 5: 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 2010-11, immigrants from New Zealand and the United Kingdom ranked first and third; of the remaining seven top countries of origin, five were Asian one was African.

Table 6: Settler arrivals by country of birth, July 2010-June 2011

Country of birth	Arrivals
New Zealand	25,772
China	14,611
United Kingdom	10,944
India	10,566
Philippines	5,048
South Africa	4,752
Vietnam	3,339
Sri Lanka	3,225

Source: DIAC, Fact Sheet 2, Key facts

<sup>10</sup> ABS, Cultural Diversity in Australia, cat. No. 2071.0, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2071.0main+features902012-2013>

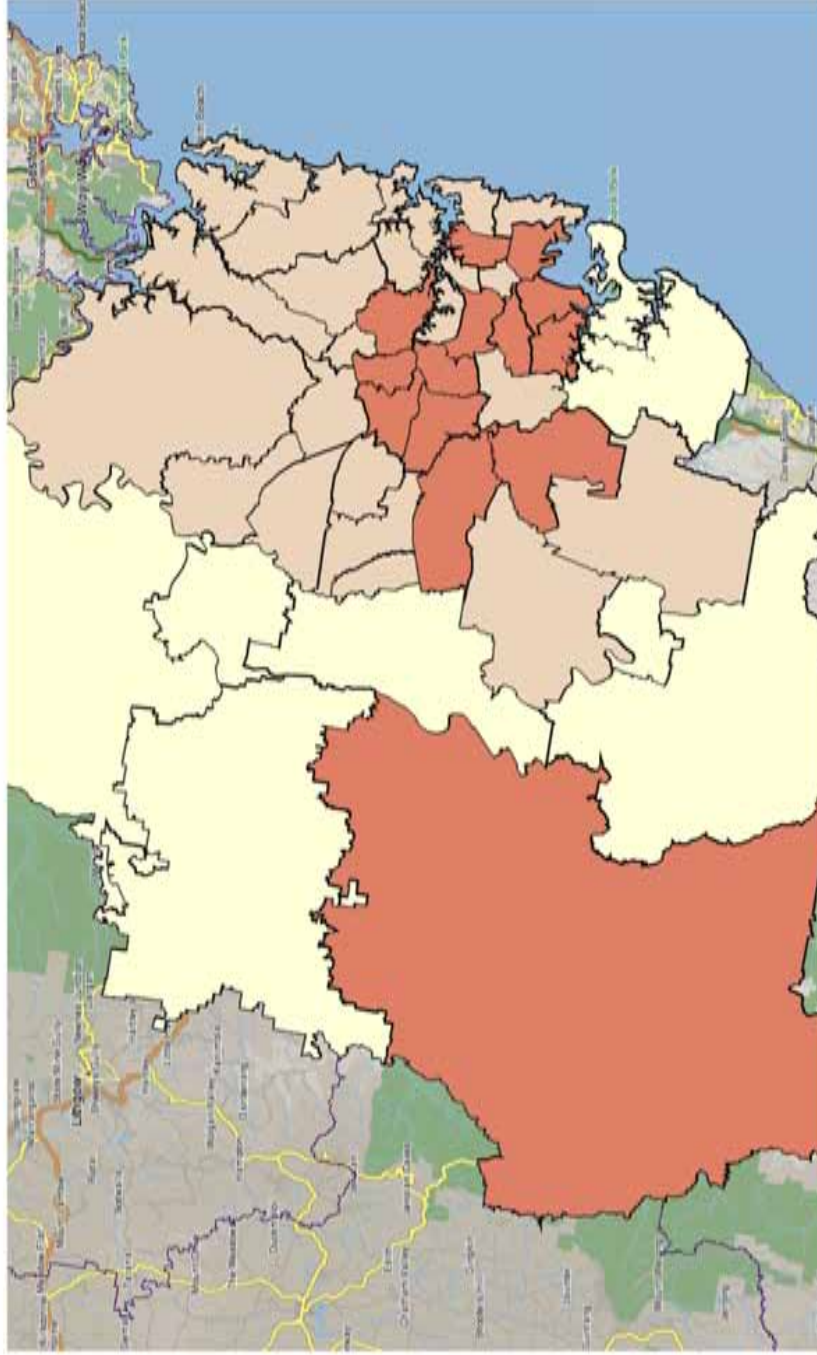


Figure 2: Overseas-born, Sydney, 2011



### PEOPLE BORN OVERSEAS, SYDNEY NSW 2011

Counting: Percentage of Total Population, Place of Usual Residence in SA3 Statistical Areas



This product uses a generalised version of ABS geographic boundaries. This removes some of the detail in the boundaries including very small islands and reduces the file size which enables the application to run more efficiently. More information on this is available in the TableBuilder Manual. The exact ASGS and ASGC boundaries are available from the ABS Statistical Geography Portal, [www.abs.gov.au/geography](http://www.abs.gov.au/geography)

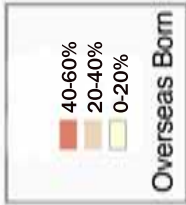
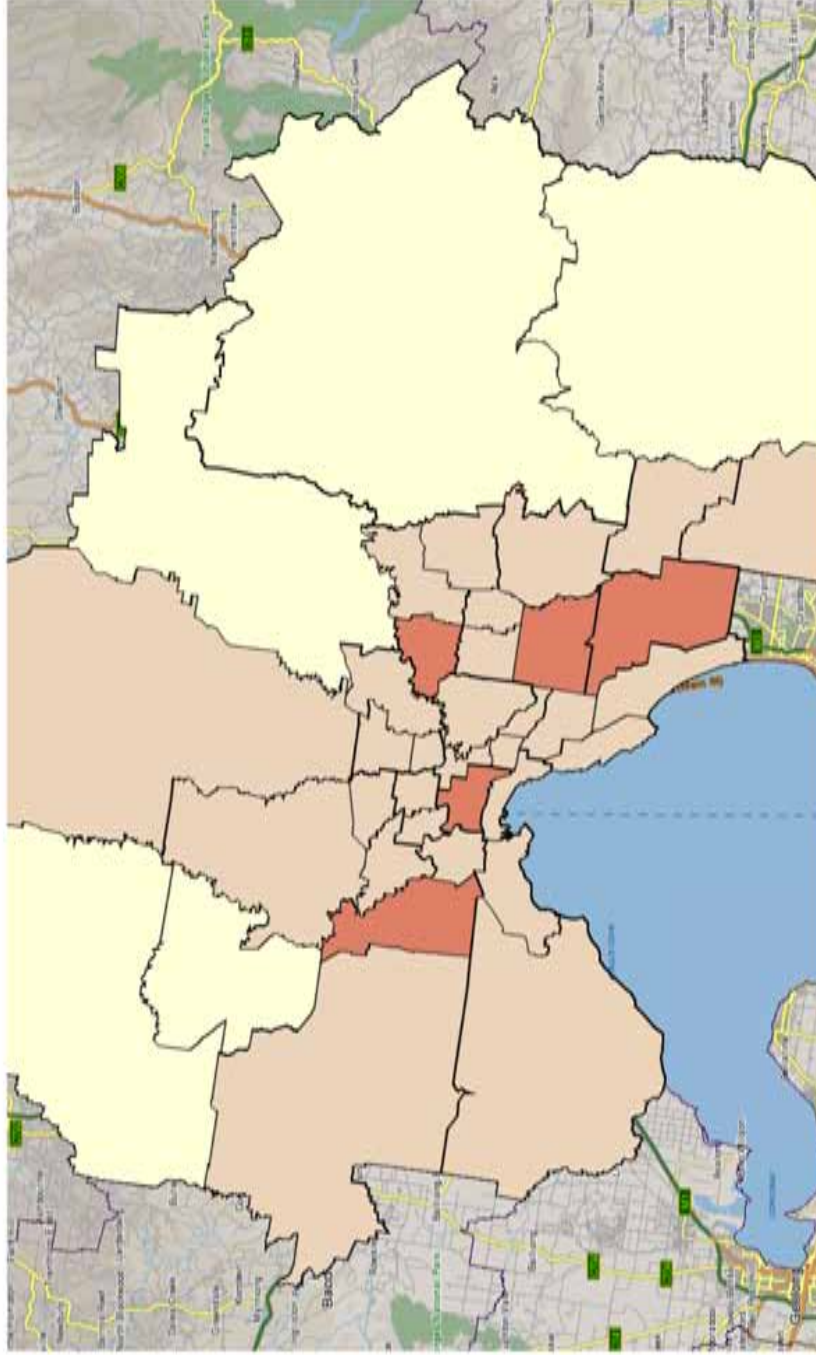
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Figure 3: Overseas-born, Melbourne, 2011



### PEOPLE BORN OVERSEAS, MELBOURNE VIC 2011

Counting: Percentage of Total Population, Place of Usual Residence in SA3 Statistical Areas



This product uses a generalised version of ABS geographic boundaries. This removes some of the detail in the boundaries including very small islands and reduces the file size which enables the application to run more efficiently. More information on this is available in the TableBuilder Manual. The exact ASGS and ASGC boundaries are available from the ABS Statistical Geography Portal, [www.abs.gov.au/geography](http://www.abs.gov.au/geography)

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# 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. 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.

# 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 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>11</sup> The purpose of the index is to heighten awareness of shifts in opinion which may call for closer attention and analysis.

The finding of the SMI is that between 2007 and 2009 – the last period of the Howard government and the first eighteen months of the Rudd government – there was a marginal increase in the composite or average score. Variation was at its peak in the domain of social justice and equity, which was up 12.4 points.

The 2010 SMI registered the sharpest movement over the five surveys, with **lower scores in all five domains of social cohesion**. The largest variation was in the domain of social justice and equity, which fell by 20.5 points (following upward movement in 2009), reflecting the disappointment over the perceived failure of the Rudd government to deliver significant change following the eleven years of the Howard government.

The SMI for 2011 and 2012 indicates stabilisation, but at close to the low point reached in 2010. In 2011 the average score increased by 1.22 points (from 92.62 to 93.84), and in 2012 by a lesser 0.54 points (to 94.38).

Considering individual domains of social cohesion, the only domain that is above the 2007 level is participation. The low point is within the domain of acceptance and rejection, which stood at 76.8 in 2012, a marginal increase following three consecutive falls in 2009, 2010 and 2011. There has been limited movement in the domains of belonging and worth over the last four surveys. The domain of social justice and equity registered sharp movement in 2009 and 2010, as noted, with marginal upward movement in 2011 and 2012.

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<sup>11</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 Arnup, *Mapping Social Cohesion 2009: The Scanlon Foundations Surveys Full Report* (2010), section 12

Table 7: The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) of Social Cohesion, 2007-2012

	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	Change 2011-12 (percentage points)
1. Sense of belonging	100	96.9	95.0	96.6	95.1	-1.5
2. Sense of worth	100	97.2	96.7	96.5	96.5	0
3. Social justice and equity	100	112.4	91.9	94.4	95.1	+0.7
4. Participation	100	105.3	98.0	106.4	106.6	+0.2
5. Acceptance (rejection)	100	94.4	81.5	75.3	78.6	+3.3
<b>Average</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>101.24</b>	<b>92.62</b>	<b>93.84</b>	<b>94.38</b>	<b>+0.54</b>

## 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.

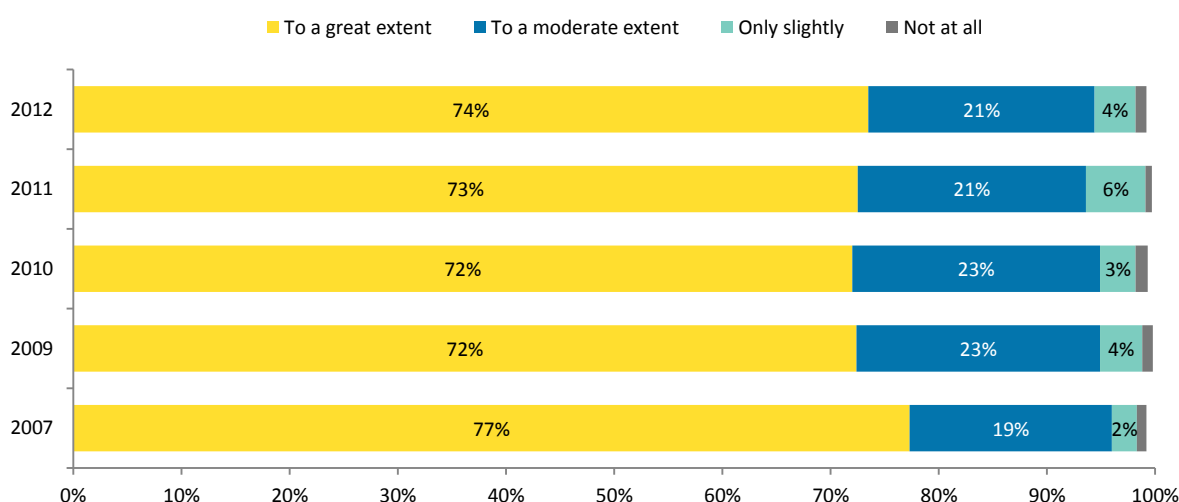
Within the domain of belonging, in 2012 the three questions in large measure replicated earlier Scanlon Foundation survey findings, with strongest variation with regard to the importance of maintaining the Australian way of life.

**Sense of belonging** ('great' and 'moderate'): 94% in 2012, 94% in 2011; 95% in 2010, 95% in 2009, 96% in 2007.

**Sense of pride** in the Australian way of life and culture ('great' and 'moderate'): 90% in 2012, 93% in 2011, 90% in 2010, 92% in 2009, 94% in 2007

**Importance of maintaining the Australian way of life and culture** ('strongly agree' and 'agree'): 91% in 2012, 92% in 2011, 91% in 2010, 93% in 2009, 95% in 2007. 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 55% in 2012, but an increase in the level of 'agreement' from 30% to 36% over this period.

Figure 4: 'To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?', 2007-2012



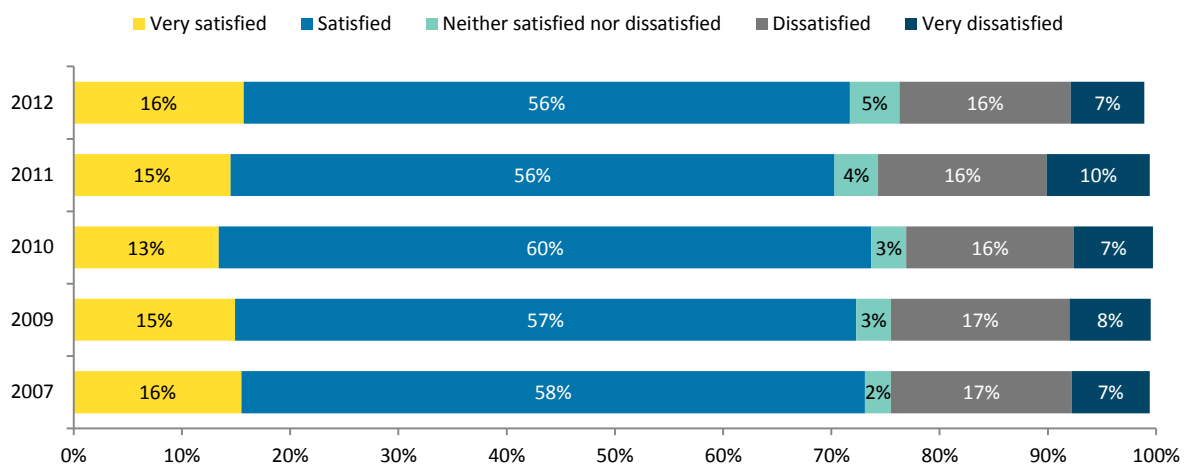
## SMI 2: Sense of worth

There has been little change in the indicators of worth. Financial satisfaction remains above 70%, while sense of happiness remains close to 90%.

**Financial satisfaction** ('very satisfied' and 'satisfied'): 72% in 2012, 70% in 2011, 74% in 2010, 72% in 2009, 73% in 2007.

**Happiness over the last year:** ('very happy' and 'happy'), 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 2012 a statistically significantly lower 28%.

Figure 5: 'How satisfied are you with your present financial situation?', 2007-2012

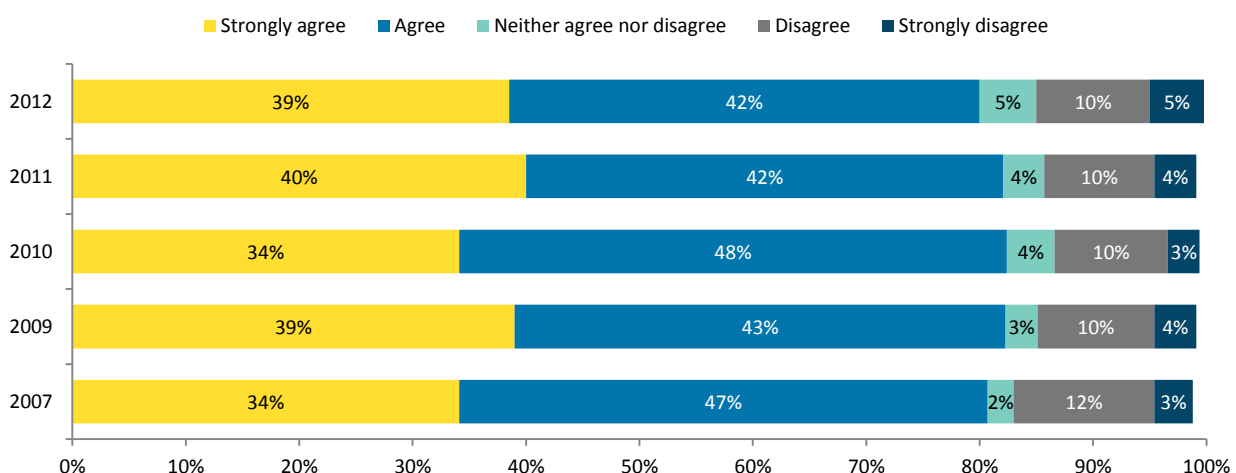


## SMI 3: Social justice and equity

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

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 was 39% in 2012. The proportion indicating agreement ('strongly agree' or 'agree') has been constant in the range 81%-82% across the five surveys, while level of disagreement ('strongly disagree' or 'disagree') has been in the range 13%-15%.

Figure 6: 'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life', 2007-2012



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 2012, agreement was at 74%, in the mid-range.

In response to the proposition that 'people living on low incomes in Australia receive enough financial support from the government', opinion is close to an even division: in 2010, 43% were in agreement, 46% in disagreement; in 2011, the proportions were 46%: 46%, in 2012 46%: 43%.

Figure 7: 'In Australia today, the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large,' 2007-2012

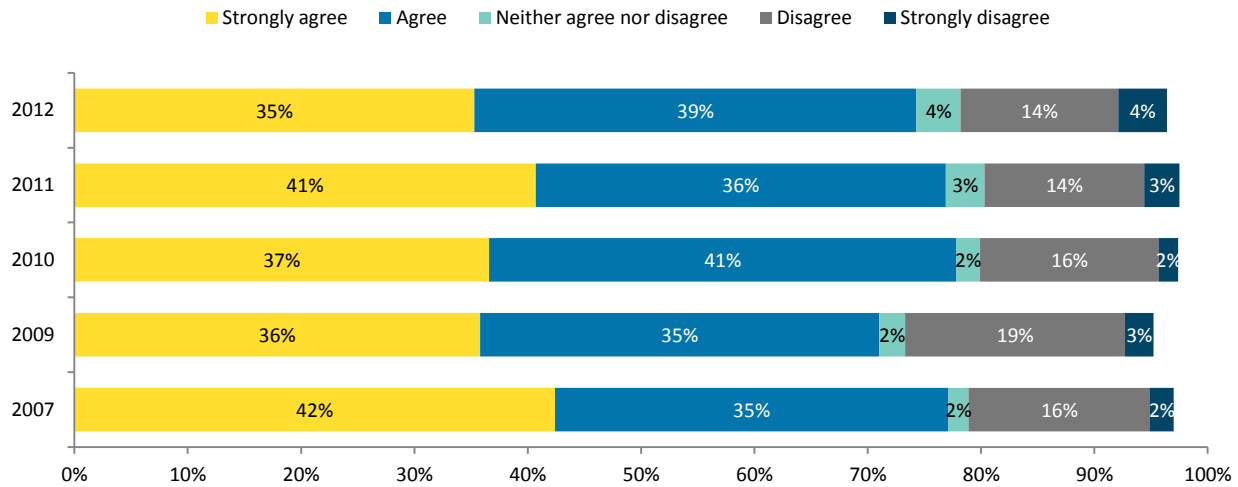
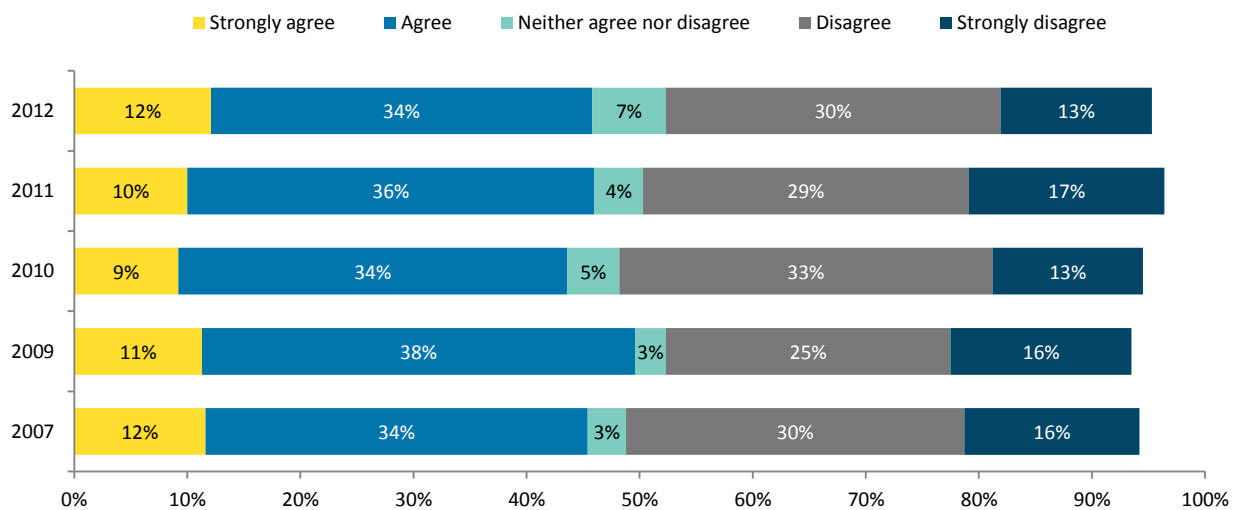


Figure 8: 'People living on low incomes in Australia receive enough financial support from the government,' 2007-2012



**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 it fell even more sharply to 31%, with the same low result in 2011, followed by a **further statistically significant fall to 26% in 2012.**

## SMI 4: Participation

The 2011 survey indicated a small but consistent upward trend in the domain of political participation. In part this reflected the election cycle, for over the previous 12 months a national and a number of state elections were held. There was, however, also a statistically significant increase in the proportion indicating that they had joined a boycott and marginal increase of respondents who indicated that they had signed a petition or attended a protest, march or demonstration.

The 2012 aggregated participation score was almost identical with 2011, with a statistically significant increase in indication of attendance in a protest, march or demonstration, marginal increase in contact with a member of parliament and marginal decline in other forms of participation.

Table 8: 'Which, if any, of the following have you done over the last three years or so?', 2007-2012

Response	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012
Voted in an election	85.1%	87.2%	83.4%	88.5%	88.3%*
Signed a petition	55.1%	55.7%	53.7%	56.0%	54.3%
Written or spoken to a federal or state member of parliament	23.5%	27.1%	25.1%	25.0%	27.3%
Joined a boycott of a product or company	12.4%	13.9%	13.5%	17.9%	14.5%
Attended a protest, march or demonstration	12.7%	12.8%	9.4%	11.3%	13.7%*
N (unweighted)	2,012	2,019	2,021	2,001	2,000

\*Change between 2010 and 2012 statistically significant at  $p < .05$

## SMI 5: Acceptance and rejection

**The major change in the measure of acceptance and rejection, which is focused on sense of rejection, was 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 10.9% in 2007, 12.2% in 2009 to 12.7% in 2010, 17.3% in 2011 and 18.5% in 2012. While still at the level of less than one in five respondents, there is a consistent pattern of increase, although the rate of increase was less in 2012 than 2011.

**Between 2009 and 2010 there was a sharp increase in the reported experience of discrimination on the basis of 'skin colour, ethnic origin or religion'— from 10% to 14%, an increase of four percentage points or 40%. The 2011 survey obtained the same, relatively high, proportion. In 2012 there was a decline to 12%, close to the mid-point for the five surveys.**



Table 9: 'In three or four years, do you think that your life in Australia will be...?', 2007-2012

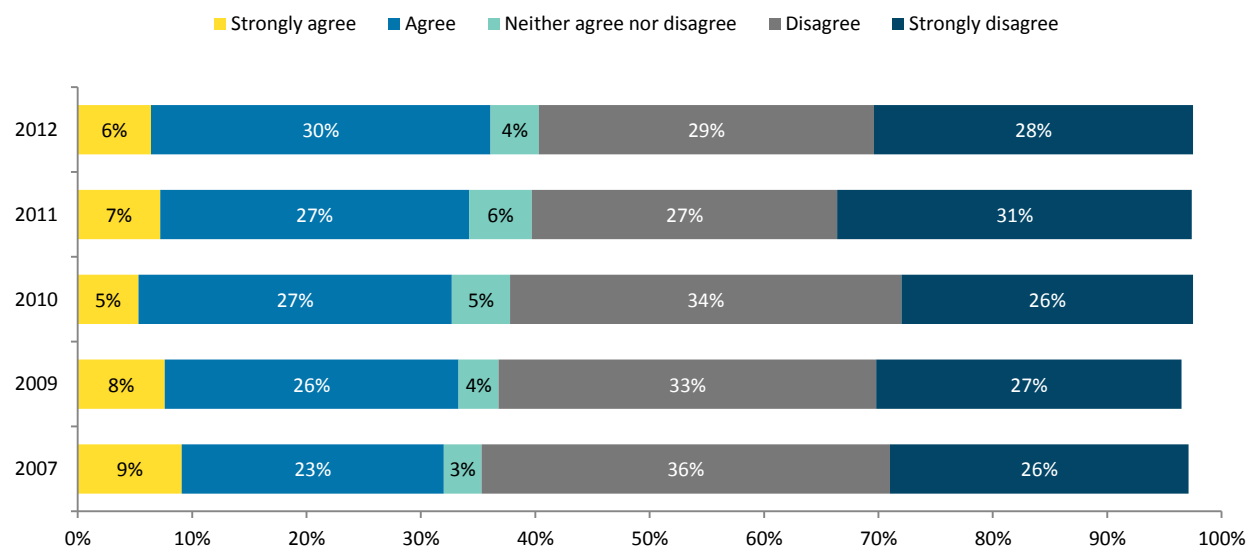
Response	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012
Much improved	24.3%	21.1%	18.2%	17.9%	16.3%
A little improved	25.1%	28.2%	26.5%	27.5%	28.7%
<i>(A little improved, much improved)</i>	<b>49.4%</b>	<b>49.3%</b>	<b>44.7%</b>	<b>45.4%</b>	<b>45.0%</b>
The same as now	35.1%	32.9%	37.4%	33.1%	32.1%*
A little worse	8.7%	10.2%	9.8%	12.8%	14.4%*
Much worse	2.2%	2.1%	2.9%	4.5%	4.2%
<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>
N (unweighted)	2,012	2,019	2,021	2,001	2,000

\*Change between 2010 and 2012 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 **marginal increase in the level of agreement**, from 32% in 2007 to 36% in 2012. While the level of strong agreement has declined from 9% to 6%, agreement has increased from 23% to 30%.

There was, however, a **statistically significant change in the distribution of negative responses**. Between 2007 and 2012 those who 'disagreed' fell from 36% to 29%, but those who indicated 'strong disagreement' increased marginally from 26% to 28%.

Figure 9: 'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions', 2007-2012



The fourth question that contributes to the index of acceptance and rejection considers immigration in terms of broad principle. As discussed below, there was a more positive attitude towards the current level of immigration registered by the 2011 and 2012 surveys, following an increase in negative opinion in 2010, but **the proposition that ‘accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger’ only registered marginal positive movement**: in 2012, 65% were in agreement, up from 62% in 2010 but below the 67% registered in 2007. Between 2011 and 2012 there was a statistically significant increase in the proportion indicating ‘strong agreement’, but decrease in the proportion indicating ‘agreement’.

Table 10: ‘Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger’, 2007-2012

Response	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012
Strongly agree	21.9%	24.7%	19.1%	24.2%	25.7%*
Agree	45.1%	43.2%	43.3%	40.1%	39.4%
<i>(Strongly agree and agree)</i>	<b>67.0%</b>	<b>62.9%</b>	<b>62.4%</b>	<b>64.3%</b>	<b>65.1%</b>
Neither agree nor disagree	3.3%	3.1%	5.9%	6.4%	5.5%
Disagree	18.1%	17.9%	18.6%	16.2%	15.3%
Strongly disagree	7.8%	8.9%	10.9%	10.6%	10.7%
<i>(Strongly disagree and disagree)</i>	<b>25.9%</b>	<b>26.8%</b>	<b>29.5%</b>	<b>26.8%</b>	<b>26.0%</b>
N (unweighted)	2,012	2,019	2,021	2,001	2,000

\*Change between 2010 and 2012 statistically significant at  $p < .05$

# Ranking of issues

The Scanlon Foundation survey seeks to determine if the extent of political and media discussion matches widely held community priorities, with particular interest in the significance accorded immigration and population issues.

The first question in the Scanlon Foundation survey is open-ended. In 2012, respondents were asked: ‘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 that are important to them, rather than requiring selection from a pre-determined and necessarily limited list.

In 2010, 2011 and 2012, respondents gave first rank to issues related to the economy, unemployment and poverty. Over the three surveys, the importance of the issue increased from 22% to 26% to a markedly higher 36%.

Between 2011 and 2012, the proportion of respondents who gave their first ranking to environmental issues declined from 18% to 11%, comprising 7% (11% in 2011) who indicated concern and 4% (6% in 2011) who indicated scepticism and over-reaction by government.

Issues related to the quality of government and political leadership ranked third, indicated by 11% of respondents in 2010 and a consistent 13% in 2011 and 2012.

Asylum seeker issues rose from close to 6% in 2010 and 2011 to 12% in 2012. Of this 12%, 8% of respondents indicated concern over the number of arrivals, while half this proportion, 4%, indicated sympathy towards asylum seekers and concern over their poor treatment by government.

In 2012, 4% of respondents gave first ranking to immigration and population issues, down from 7% in 2011. Nearly all of these respondents indicated that they were concerned by immigration and population growth, very few (0.5%) were concerned that immigration was too low.

Social issues, including childcare, family breakdown, lack of direction and drug use, were specified by 5% of respondents and five issues were specified by between 4% and 1% of respondents. As in 2010 and 2011, there was almost no reference to Indigenous issues.

Figure 10: Top five ‘most important problems facing Australia today’, 2010-2012

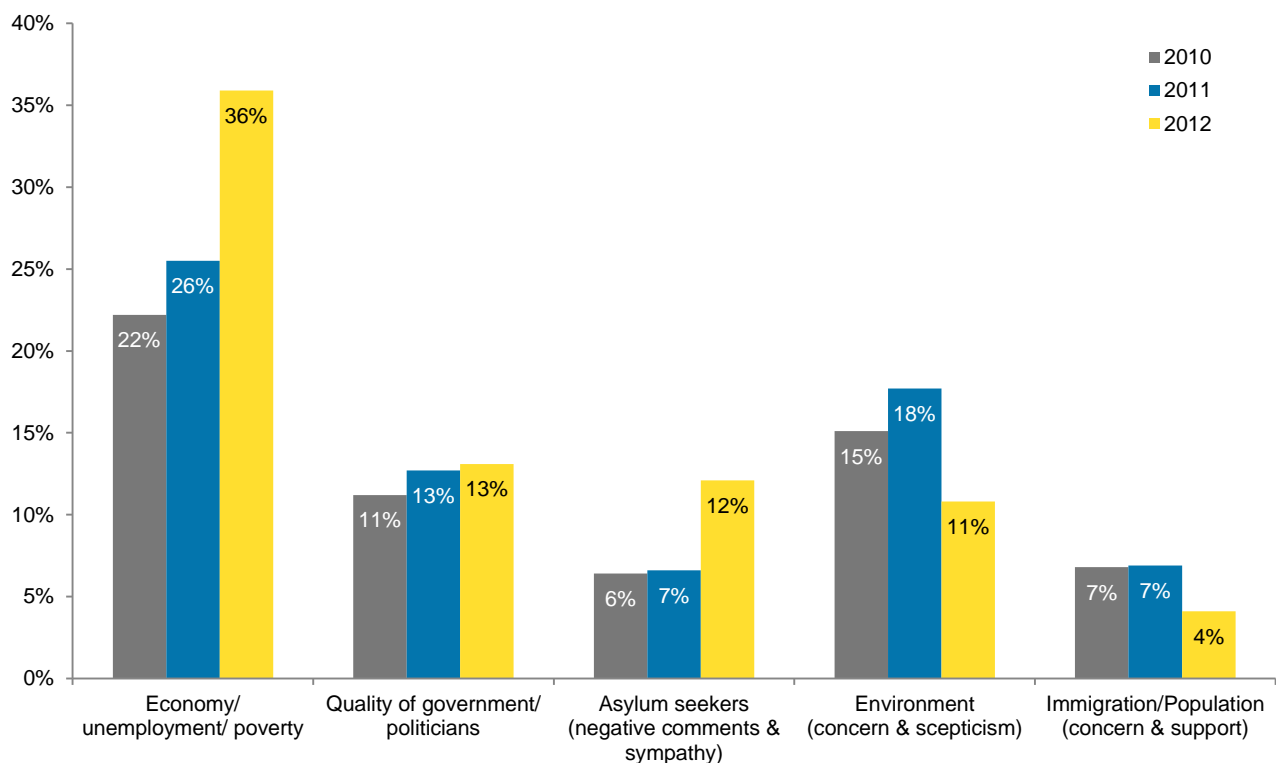


Table 11: 'What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?', 2010-2012

Rank in 2010	Issue	2010 First mention	2011 First mention		2012*	
1	Economy/ unemployment/ poverty	22.2%	25.5%		35.9%	
2	Environment – climate change/ water shortages (concern)	15.1%	11.4%	17.7%	6.8%	10.8%
	Environment – overreaction to climate change/ carbon tax (sceptical)		6.3%		4.0%	
3	Quality of government/ politicians	11.2%	12.7%		13.1%	
4	Immigration/ population growth (concern)	6.8%	5.2%	6.9%	3.6%	4.1%
	Immigration/population – too low/ need more people (supportive)		1.7%		0.5%	
5	Asylum seekers – too many/ refugees/ boat people/ illegal immigrants (negative comment)	6.4%	4.0%	6.6%	8.1%	12.1%
	Asylum seekers – poor treatment, sympathy towards refugees/ boat people/ illegal immigrants		2.6%		4.0%	
6	Social issues – (family, child care, drug use, family breakdown, lack of personal direction, etc)	6.4%	6.0%		4.6%	
7	Health/ medical/ hospitals	5.6%	4.2%		3.2%	
8	Housing shortage/ affordability/ interest rates	2.1%	3.1%		1.7%	
9	Crime/ law and order	3.8%	1.7%		1.3%	
10	Racism	1.1%	1.6%		1.4%	
11	Education/ schools	2.2%	1.4%		2.4%	
12	Indigenous issues	0.1%	0.8%		0.4%	
13	Industrial relations/ trade unions	n.a.	0.6%		0.2%	
14	Defence/ national security/ terrorism	n.a.	0.5%		0.6%	
15	Other/ nothing/ don't know	16.1%	10.8%		8.2%	
	Total	100%	100%		100%	
	N (unweighted)	2,021	2,001		2,000	

\*In 2010 and 2011, respondents could nominate up to two issues – this table records the issue first mentioned in those years; in 2012 there was the option to nominate only one issue.

# Trust and community involvement

In 2009, 48% of respondents indicated that the government in Canberra can be trusted ‘almost always’ or ‘most of the time’, 49% that government can be trusted ‘only some of the time’ or ‘almost never’. **In one of the strongest shifts recorded in the Scanlon Foundation surveys, in 2010 only 31% indicated trust and 67% lack of trust. Almost the same result was obtained in 2011. There was further decline in 2012, with 26% indicating trust and 72% lack of trust. Those indicating that government can be trusted ‘almost never’ have increased from 8% in 2009 to 15% in 2010, 20% in 2011 and 24% in 2012.**

Decline of trust is a common trend across the Western world as governments struggle to develop policies to deal with difficult economic circumstances, climate change and international conflict.

Thus in November 2011 the *New York Time*/ CBS News Poll reported that 83% of Americans disapprove of ‘the way Congress is handling its job’ – the highest proportion recorded in 34 years of polling. By July 2012 there had been marginal improvement, but disapproval at 79% was still close to the record level.<sup>12</sup>

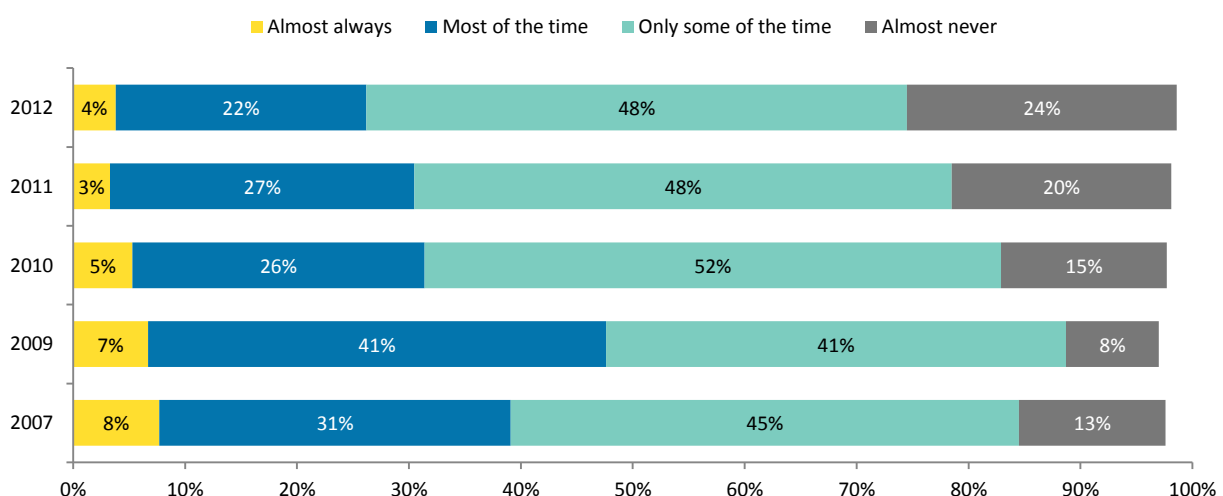
While issues of trust in Australia reflect global trends, Australia does not have the level of economic difficulties that characterise much of the developed world. Specific Australian negative factors include the tone of Australian politics and decline in support for the Labor government.

In response to the question ‘If there was a Federal election today, for which party would you probably vote?’, support for the Labor Party in the Scanlon Foundation surveys, conducted in June-July, has fallen from 51% of respondents who specified a political party in 2009, to 37% in 2010, 31% in 2011 and 25% in 2012.

Aggregating the 2011-2012 survey findings indicates that low levels of trust in the federal government are **particularly evident among those aged 35 and above**, with 30% of those aged 65 and above indicating that the federal government can be trusted ‘almost never’, compared to 6% indicating this response among those aged 18-24 and 18% aged 25-34.

The aggregated 2011-2012 results also indicate that **trust in government is low among those who described their financial status as ‘struggling to pay bills’ or ‘just getting along’**: 27% in both categories indicated that government can be trusted ‘almost never’, compared to 13% of those who described their financial status as ‘very comfortable’ and 14% of those described as ‘prosperous’.

Figure 11: ‘How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?’ 2007-2012



<sup>12</sup> New York Times/CBS News Poll, at <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/07/19/us/nytcbspoll-results.html?ref=politics>

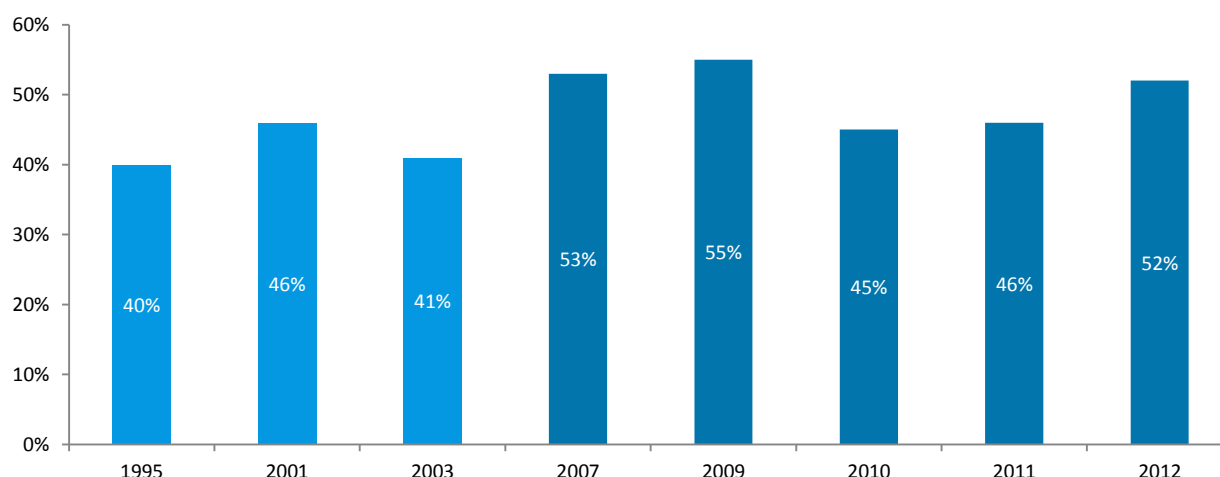
Table 12: 'How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?' By age, 2011- 2012

Response	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+
Almost always	6.0%	4.6%	2.0%	2.8%	2.4%	3.9%
Most of the time	36.2%	28.0%	25.7%	21.3%	23.5%	17.6%
Only some of the time	49.3%	47.8%	48.0%	51.9%	43.3%	47.7%
Almost never	5.8%	19.3%	22.6%	22.2%	30.1%	27.9%
N (unweighted)	161	298	640	875	900	1,117

The 2012 Scanlon Foundation survey recorded **increased personal trust**. This finding is based on a question posed in a number of Australian and international surveys, with respondents given the options that 'most people can be trusted', or one 'can't be too careful', or that it is not possible to answer.

The 2007 Scanlon benchmark survey found 53% in agreement that 'most people can be trusted' and 55% in 2009. These were high proportions when compared to three earlier surveys in 1995, 2001 and 2003. In 2010 and 2011 there was a sharp fall, to 45%–46%, with a return in 2012 to majority (52%) indication of trust.

Figure 12: 'Most people can be trusted', Scanlon Foundation Surveys 2007–2011, earlier surveys 1995-2003



The 2012 Scanlon Foundation survey registered **stabilisation in the level of community involvement, as indicated by voluntary work**.

Respondents were asked about involvement in 'unpaid voluntary work', which was 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 2009, 38% of respondents indicated that they performed such unpaid voluntary work at least once a month; in 2010 this proportion fell to 32% and was in the 31%-32% range in 2011 and 2012.**

# Immigration

## The press and opinion polls

Immigration is an issue that has the potential to become highly politicised. In May 2012 the Melbourne *Herald Sun* and the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* gave prominent coverage to a report of an AustraliaSCAN survey finding which was **presented as indicating that 'more than half of Australians want to ban immigration** because population growth is out of control'. The report was taken up by media commentators and distributed by Australian Associated Press, with the reported 'change in attitude' accepted as fact.<sup>13</sup> The following discussion highlights the problem of uncritical reading of survey findings.

Examination of the AustraliaSCAN findings provides many grounds that should have provided journalists with ground for serious caution. First, **the survey was not current**, but was conducted in the second half of 2011. Second, examination of the annual AustraliaSCAN polling indicates that if findings are interpreted using the approach of the *Herald Sun* and *Daily Telegraph*, then some very strange results are obtained. For example, in 2005 AustraliaSCAN found that 51% of Australians wanted to 'stop any further immigration', the same proportion as in 2011. In 2005 immigration issues, in whatever form, commanded little public attention, there were no concerns over asylum seekers, the country was not facing significant economic problems.<sup>14</sup>

Examination of data provided by Quantum Market Research, the survey company conducting AustraliaSCAN, revealed that their finding on immigration was obtained not by presenting respondents with a range of options, one of which was to end immigration, but **by asking for responses to a strongly worded leading statement**: 'Australia's population is high enough already and we should stop any further immigration no matter where from'.

An artificial or forced polarization of opinion can serve the purpose of detecting the trend of opinion (which is the objective of AustraliaSCAN), but it does not necessarily yield a reliable reading of opinion on a specific issue.

There is an additional issue concerning the reported AustraliaSCAN finding. Respondents were asked to indicate their opinion along a six point scale, with point 6 designated 'strongly agree' and point 1 'strongly

disagree. The 2011 negative finding on immigration is not the level of 'strong agreement' (6), nor even the next level of agreement, (6 and 5), but includes the close to mid-level response (4). Recalculating the results to identify those who 'clearly agree' (6,5), are in the middle (4,3) and 'clearly disagree' (2,1), results in a markedly different finding: just 35% in 'clear agreement', 37% at the mid-point, and 28% in 'clear disagreement'. The 'clear agreement' proportion is close to the Scanlon Foundation finding for the proportion who considers the intake to be 'too high'.

**In the context of billions of dollars invested in immigration, it is salutary to reflect that understanding of public attitudes has been in large part dependent on polls which devote at best a handful of questions to population issues.**

**The Scanlon Foundation surveys, for the first time, make publicly available detailed findings on a range of immigration issues.** In the 2012 survey there were sixteen questions concerning immigration, with scope to interpret findings in the context of a comprehensive questionnaire of sixty-eight questions.

## Immigration level – actual and perceived

There is considerable confusion in public discussion over the size of the immigration intake, a function of ignorance of the detail of policy, as well as statistics which are known to few. One particular source of confusion is the failure to distinguish permanent and temporary (long-term) entrants and failure to take into account the large number of Australian residents permanently departing.

A question on the level of immigration asked in the last four Scanlon Foundation surveys indicates **little correlation in public perception with actual changes in the immigration intake**. Thus, despite the sharp fall in net overseas migration between 2008 and 2010 (from 315,700 to 168,800), in 2010 only 4% of respondents perceived a decline in immigration. Since 2010 there has been an increase in net migration, but at a low level. **The strongest finding on the perception of immigration levels is the large measure of consistency in response, irrespective of the number of arrivals;** between 2009 and 2012, over 50% of respondents perceived an increase in the intake and less than 10% perceived a decrease.

<sup>13</sup> 'Most Aussies fear population boom is out of control', *Herald Sun*, 22 May 2011; 'The tide of public opinion is turning against immigration', *Daily Telegraph*, 22 May 2012; *Sydney Morning Herald*, SBS World News, 'Close borders, say half of Australians', 22 May 2012 (both AAP)

<sup>14</sup> Compare other polls in this period in Murray Goot and Ian Watson, 'Population, immigration and asylum seekers: patterns in Australian public opinion', Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library, May 2011, p. 23.

Table 13: 'To the best of your knowledge, in the last twelve months would you say that the level of immigration into Australia has increased, decreased or is unchanged?', 2009-2012

Response	2009	2010	2011	2012
Increased	49.7%	63.5%	52.8%	57.3%*
Decreased	7.6%	3.9%	8.5%	6.4%*
Unchanged	27.2%	22.5%	27.1%	24.4%
Refused	0.1%	0%	0.1%	0.1%
No opinion/ don't know	15.5%	10.1%	11.5%	11.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N (unweighted)	2,019	2,021	2,001	2,000

\*Change between 2010 and 2012 statistically significant at p<.05

## Attitudes towards the intake

Questions related to the immigration intake have been a staple of public opinion polling for over 50 years and provide the most reliable basis for precise understanding of trends in public opinion. The findings indicate volatility of opinion. Whereas in the early 1990s, a large majority (over 70% at its peak) considered that the intake was 'too high', surveys since 1998 have indicated a significant and consistent shift in opinion.

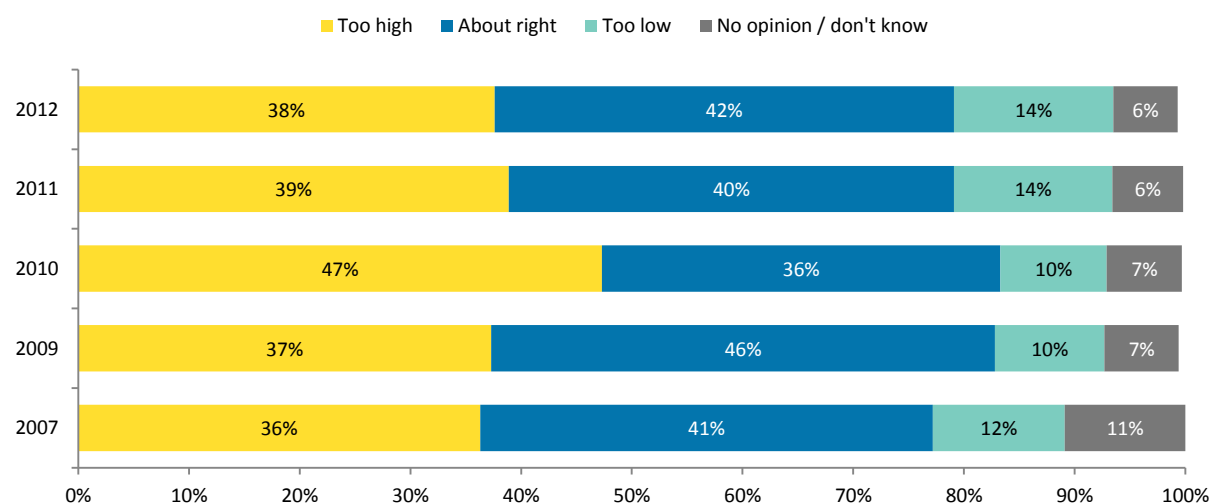
For eight years the proportion of those who considered the intake to be 'about right' or 'too low' was in the range 54–57%. **In 2010 the Scanlon Foundation survey found a marked rise in the proportion agreeing with the view that the intake was 'too high': up from 37% to 47%.** This finding is almost identical to the 46% average result from five polls conducted by survey agencies in the period March–July 2010.<sup>15</sup>

In 2011 and 2012, however, the distribution of opinion was in keeping with the findings of the 2007 and 2009 Scanlon Foundation surveys. **In 2011, the proportion who considered that the intake was 'too high' fell to 39%, while 55% considered that the intake was 'about right or 'too low'. In 2012 the proportions were an almost identical 38% and 56%.**

There are two key factors bearing on Australian attitudes to immigration: the state of the labour market, particularly the level of unemployment, and the political prominence of immigration issues.

In 2010 there was heightened public debate over immigration and the desirable future population target for Australia, in the context of increased unemployment during the previous year. In 2010 the proportion indicating that immigration was 'too high' increased. In 2011 and 2012 the attitude to immigration indicated stabilisation, in parallel with the state of the labour market. This finding is in keeping with the long-term pattern.

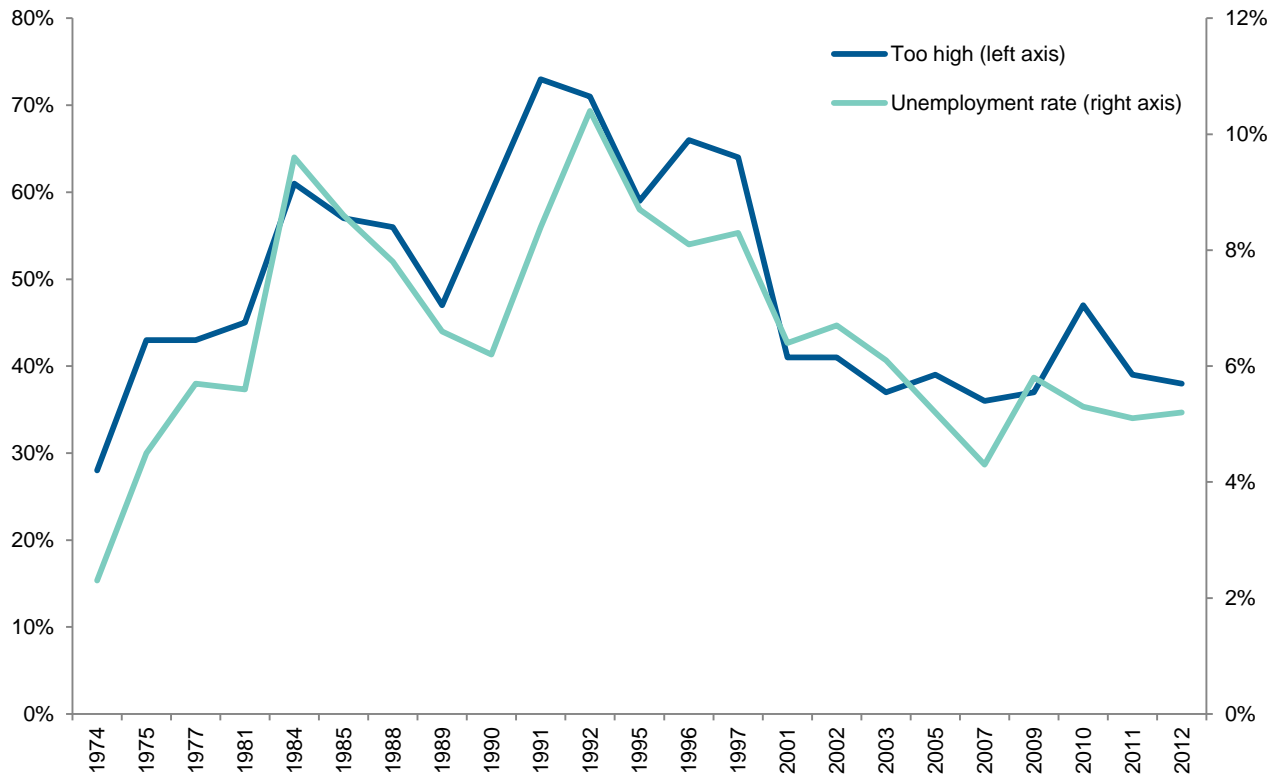
Figure 13: 'What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia?', 2007-2012



<sup>15</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



Figure 14: Correlation between unemployment and those of the view that the immigration intake is 'too high', 1974–2012



# Attitudes to immigrant visa categories and national groups

The 2010, 2011 and 2012 Scanlon Foundation surveys undertook detailed exploration of attitudes to immigrant categories and national groups, to provide a fuller understanding of the extent of change in opinion over recent decades.

Respondents were asked for their views on the main categories of permanent and long-stay immigrants, that is, those admitted under the Skill and Family Streams of the Migration Program and overseas student, as well as their views on refugees admitted after selection overseas.

**A large measure of consistency has been found across the three surveys. The most positive attitudes are towards immigrants admitted on the basis of skill. The views, however, towards the other three categories were almost as favourable, with a marked increase in the proportion positive towards refugees.**

In 2012, positive attitudes outnumber negative by a ratio close to 10:1 for skill and family, 8:1 for refugees and 6:1 for students.

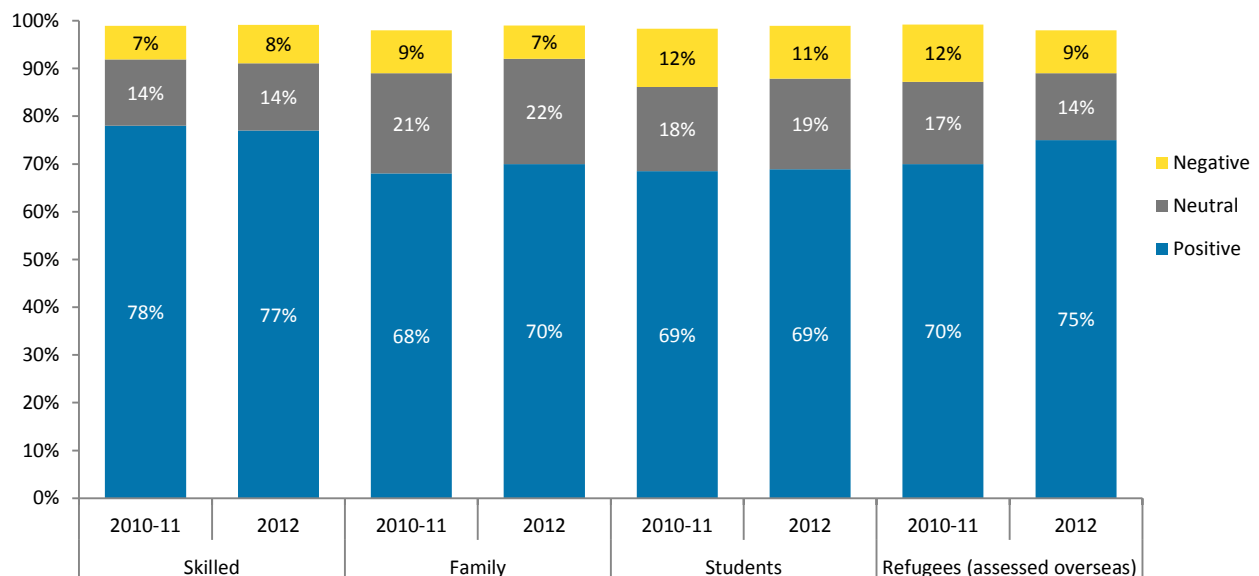
# Attitudes to immigrants from specific countries

In all countries of immigration there is a hierarchy of ethnic preference, which informs attitudes to newcomers, at times determining categories of admission and exclusion. For much of the twentieth century there was a large degree of consistency in the status hierarchy within Australian society, with immigrants from the United Kingdom and other English-speaking countries ranked at the top, northern Europeans next, followed by other Europeans.

That is where the ranking ended; non-European people were denied entry for permanent residence until a process of reform between 1966 and the late 1970s brought the White Australia policy to its end.

There has been little attention in Australian opinion polling to status hierarchies since the 1980s, and even in the 1970s and 1980s, polls asked imprecise and ambiguous questions on this issue.

Figure 15: 'Do you feel positive, negative or neutral about (category) coming to live in Australia as a permanent or long-term resident?', 2010-11 combined, 2012



The above categories were defined in the survey as: skilled workers (e.g. doctors or nurses, plumbers, etc.); those who have close family living in Australia (e.g. parents or children); refugees who have been assessed overseas and found to be victims of persecution and in need of help; and, young people who want to study in Australia.

The 2010 and 2011 Scanlon Foundation surveys asked respondents if their feelings were positive, negative or neutral towards immigrants from 12 national groups, using a computer-generated rotation designed to ensure that each respondent was asked for views on four nationalities, selected from the groupings of English-speaking, European, Asian and Middle East countries. In 2012, three African countries were added, and each respondent was asked for views on five nationalities.

When questioned with regard to feelings towards immigrants from specific Middle Eastern countries (identified in Australian public discussion as main centres of Muslim populations), negative sentiment in 2012 reached 23% for immigrants from Iraq (25% average in 2011-12), 22% (23%) for Lebanon, and a considerably lower 12% (13%) for Egypt.

**But even with regard to immigrants from Iraq, who in 2012 attracted the highest level of negative response, those with positive or neutral feelings, a combined 74% (74%), formed a large majority.**

With regard to immigrants from Africa, in 2012 some 14% indicated negative feelings, 35% were positive and 43% neutral, with relatively high (8%) 'don't know' and declined responses. The highest level of negative feeling was toward immigrants from Sudan, with 19% negative and a combined 76% positive or neutral.

In contrast, the level of negative sentiment towards immigrants from English-speaking countries (England, New Zealand and the United States) and European countries (Italy, Greece and Germany) averaged less than 5% (3%-4% in 2011-12). Negative sentiment towards immigrants from China was 9% (12%) and Vietnam 9% (8%), and a higher 14% (15%) towards India. This higher proportion may be the legacy of the heated public discussion at times during 2009 and 2010 which resulted from attacks on Indian students and the negative coverage of Australia in the Indian media.

It is notable that across the three surveys, more than 95% of respondents are positive or neutral towards immigrants from Italy and Greece, more than 88% towards Vietnamese and more than 87% towards Chinese.

**These findings point to a consistency of viewpoint and a substantial change in Australian attitudes in a relatively short period of time. Continental Europeans, who were the target of hostility in the 1950s and 1960s, and immigrants from Asia whose entry to Australia was much questioned in the 1980s, are now seen in a positive or neutral light by a large majority of Australians. While the highest level of negative feeling is towards immigrants from Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan and India, those with positive and neutral attitudes form a large majority.**

Figure 16: 'Would you say your feelings are positive, negative or neutral towards immigrants from ....?', 2010-11 combined, 2012

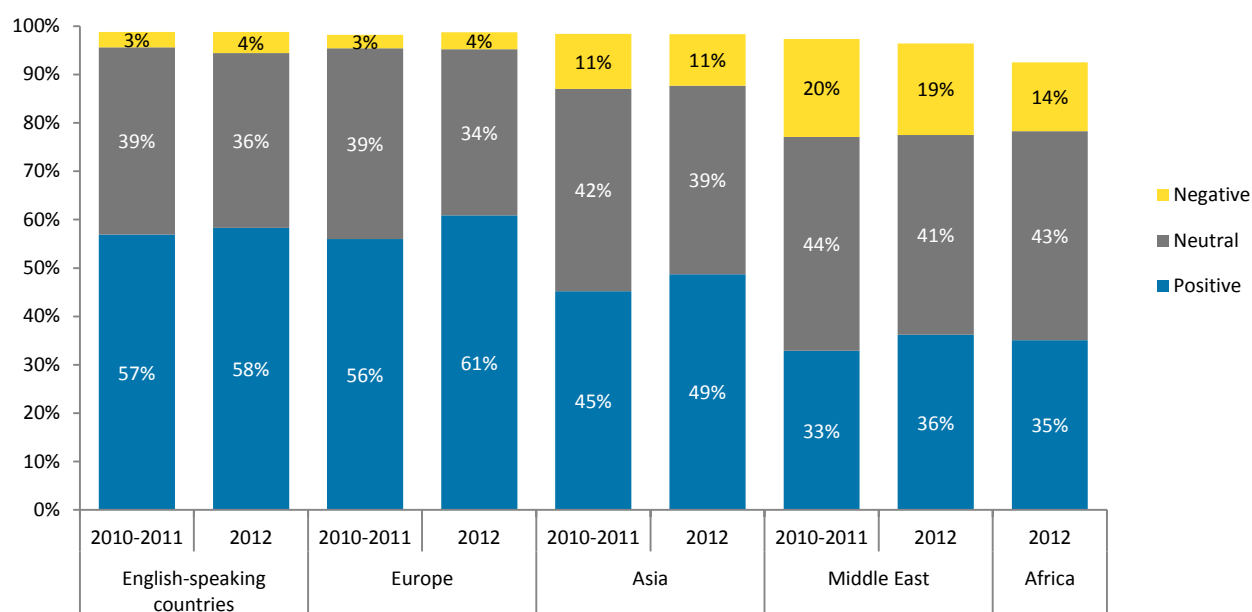


Table 14: 'Would you say your feelings are positive, negative or neutral towards immigrants from ....?', 2010-11 combined, 2012 (percentage)

	Very positive		Somewhat positive		Sub-total positive		Neutral		Somewhat negative		Very negative		Sub-total negative		Refused / don't know		Total		N (unweighted)		
	2010-2011	2012	2010-2011	2012	2010-2011	2012	2010-2011	2012	2010-2011	2012	2010-2011	2012	2010-2011	2012	2010-2011	2012	2010-2011	2012	2010-2011	2012	
<b>ENGLISH-SPEAKING</b>																					
England	27.9	30.2	32.3	33.1	60.2	63.3	36.4	32.2	1.4	3.5	0.5	0.8	1.9	4.2	1.5	0.3	100	1,398	667		
New Zealand	28.0	30.5	32.7	29.0	60.7	59.5	35.3	34.6	2.0	3.0	0.7	2.0	2.7	5.0	1.2	0.9	100	1,273	666		
USA	16.2	18.4	33.7	33.5	49.8	52.0	44.4	41.6	3.9	2.9	1.0	1.0	4.9	4.0	0.9	2.5	100	1,351	667		
<b>Average</b>					<b>56.9</b>	<b>58.3</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>36.1</b>					<b>3.2</b>	<b>4.4</b>							
<b>EUROPE</b>																					
Italy	28.4	27.2	29.2	35.6	57.6	62.8	39.1	32.6	1.9	3.6	0.7	0.6	2.6	4.2	0.7	0.4	100	1,369	667		
Greece	19.3	21.6	36.2	40.2	55.5	61.7	39.5	34.3	1.8	2.5	0.7	0.9	2.6	3.4	2.4	0.6	100	1,333	667		
Germany	22.2	22.1	32.6	36.0	54.8	58.1	39.6	36.0	2.2	1.6	0.9	1.4	3.1	3.0	2.5	2.8	100	1320	666		
<b>Average</b>					<b>56.0</b>	<b>60.9</b>	<b>39.4</b>	<b>34.3</b>					<b>2.8</b>	<b>3.5</b>							
<b>ASIA</b>																					
China	14.0	18.8	32.3	28.3	46.3	47.2	40.7	43.2	8.3	5.5	3.3	3.8	11.6	9.3	1.4	0.3	100	1,363	666		
Vietnam	17.1	13.1	30.4	38.9	47.5	52.0	43.2	36.1	5.3	5.8	2.4	3.1	7.7	8.9	1.7	3.1	100	1,320	667		
India	12.2	12.2	29.6	34.7	41.7	46.9	41.5	37.7	11.2	8.9	3.8	4.7	15.0	13.6	1.7	1.8	100	1,339	667		
<b>Average</b>					<b>45.2</b>	<b>48.7</b>	<b>41.8</b>	<b>39.0</b>					<b>11.4</b>	<b>10.6</b>							
<b>MIDDLE EAST</b>																					
Lebanon	9.4	8.9	22.4	30.6	31.9	39.5	41.7	37.3	15.0	13.2	8.3	8.6	23.3	21.8	3.2	1.4	100	1,384	652		
Egypt	13.3	10.5	25.8	27.1	39.1	37.6	44.7	44.3	7.5	8.2	5.0	3.5	12.5	11.7	3.7	6.4	100	1,299	657		
Iraq	8.0	11.4	19.6	20.0	27.6	31.4	46.1	42.4	14.4	12.4	10.3	10.8	24.7	23.3	1.6	3.0	100	1,339	691		
<b>Average</b>					<b>32.9</b>	<b>36.2</b>	<b>44.2</b>	<b>41.3</b>					<b>20.2</b>	<b>18.9</b>							
<b>AFRICA</b>																					
Congo		10.3		22.6		32.9		42.9		7.0		5.2		12.1		12.2	100			667	
Sudan		9.8		21.5		31.3		44.4		12.1		6.4		18.5		5.9	100			666	
Ethiopia		10.9		30.1		41.0		42.3		8.1		3.9		12.0		4.7	100			667	
<b>Average</b>						<b>35.1</b>		<b>43.2</b>						<b>14.2</b>							

Minor variation in some additions is the result of rounding error.

## Birthplace groups

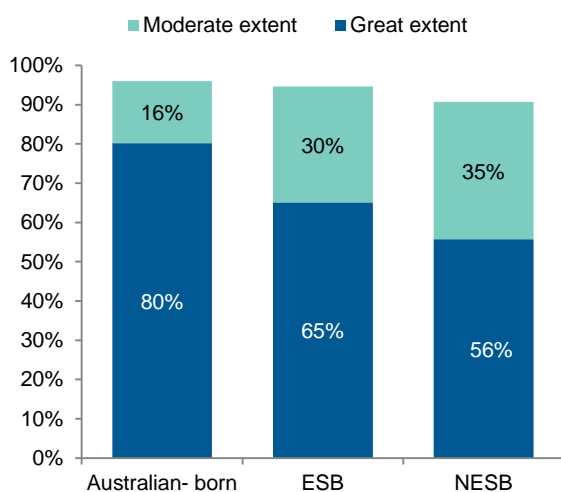
The combining of the samples obtained by the five Scanlon Foundation surveys makes possible the analysis of **attitudes within sub-groups** with a larger measure of reliability than is possible within the smaller samples of individual surveys. With regard to birthplace groups, there is a combined sample of 7,428 Australian-born respondents, 1,350 respondents of English-speaking background (ESB) and 1,243 of non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), a total in excess of 10,000.

Analysis of this combined sample supports earlier findings of a large measure of convergence with regard to sense of belonging and worth and appraisal of social justice issues. Across the five surveys, the greatest *divergence* between the three groups is in response to issues of participation and acceptance, including questions related to community involvement, experience of discrimination, and immigration and settlement policy.

## Belonging

The Australian-born indicated the strongest sense of belonging and pride in the Australian way of life and culture and see most importance in its maintenance. On all three indicators, ESB came next, followed by NESB. The very high level of identification of those of NESB is, however, a significant finding: thus 91% of the NESB group had a sense of belonging in Australia to a 'great' or 'moderate extent', 85% took pride in the Australian way of life and culture to a 'great' or 'moderate extent', and 91% 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that maintaining the Australian way of life and culture was important.

Figure 17: Sense of belonging, combined 2007-2012



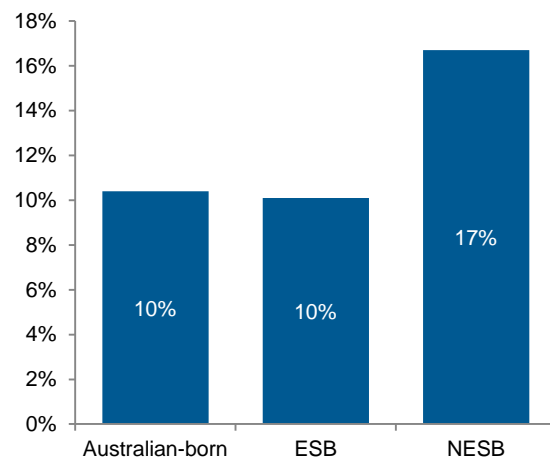
## Social justice and equity

In response to social justice and equity issues, a relatively large degree of consistency was recorded across the birthplace groups. Thus 10% of the Australian-born and 11% of ESB 'strongly agreed' that those on low incomes received enough financial support from the government, compared with 14% of NESB; the overall level of 'agreement' was almost identical, in the range 33% to 36%. When considering the proposition that 'Australia was a land of economic opportunity ...', 86% of ESB respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed', 83% of NESB, and 81% Australian-born.

## Acceptance and rejection

About 10% Australian-born and ESB respondents report having experienced discrimination over the last year because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion; the proportion of NESB respondents is a markedly higher 17%.

Figure 18: Experienced discrimination over the last 12 months, combined 2007-2012



## Participation and community involvement

The Australian-born indicated the highest level of participation and community involvement, followed by ESB, with NESB registering the lowest level on most indicators. Thus 35% of the Australian-born, 37% of ESB and 26% of NESB respondents were involved in **voluntary work** at least once a month over the previous year.

60% of the Australian-born, 55% of ESB and 37% of NESB respondents had **signed a petition** over the last three years; 28% of the Australian-born, 27% of ESB and 17% of NESB respondents **had contacted a member of parliament**.

## Immigration and settlement

**Attitudes to immigration issues provide evidence of marked attitudinal divergence.**

In response to the proposition that immigration from diverse sources had made Australia stronger, 21% Australian-born, 24% ESB and 32% NESB respondents were strongly in agreement.

49% Australian-born, 60% ESB and 61% NESB respondents considered that the immigration intake was 'about right' or 'too low'.

30% Australian-born, 25% ESB and 52% NESB respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that ethnic minorities should be given government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions.

Figure 19: 'Immigration from different countries makes Australia stronger', combined 2007-2012

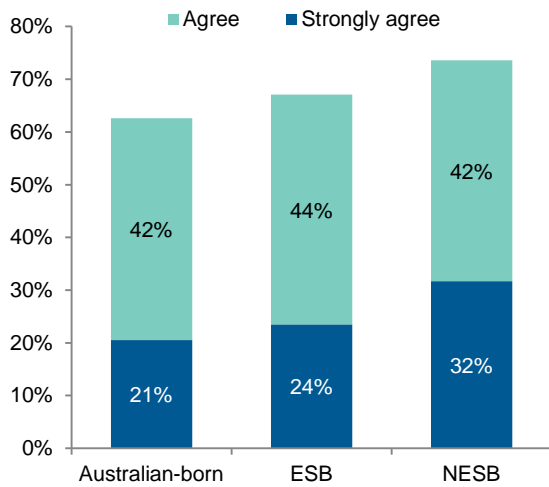
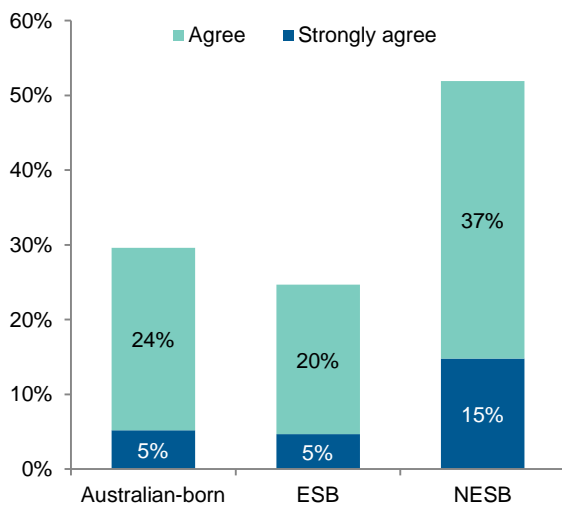


Figure 20: 'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions', combined 2007-2012



## Sense of worth, life satisfaction

Responses to sense of worth and life satisfaction questions reveal two patterns: first, as in other elements of the survey, the responses of the Australian-born and ESB are differentiated from NESB respondents; second, while Australian and ESB express higher levels of satisfaction with their lives at the strongest level ('very happy': 31% of Australian-born, 38% of ESB and 23.2% of NESB), the **NESB respondents have a stronger sense that their own lives will be much improved.**

Figure 21: Happiness over the last 12 months, combined 2007-2012

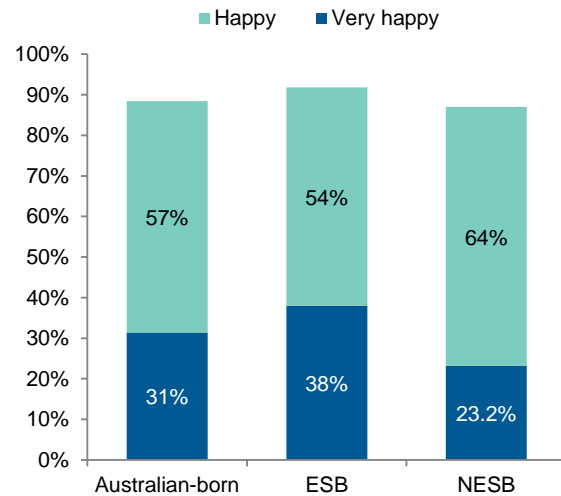
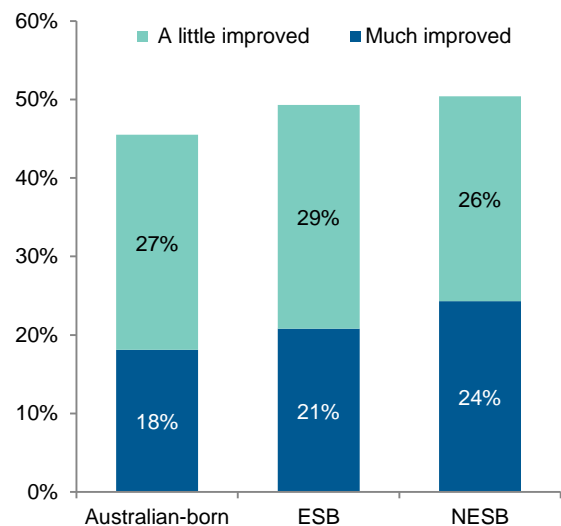


Figure 22: 'In three or four years, do you think that your life in Australia will be...', combined 2007-2012



## Immigrant cohorts

To provide understanding of change in attitude with length of residence in Australia, ESB and NESB respondents were divided into three categories (or cohorts): those arriving between 1970-1985, 1986-1999, and since 2000. The five combined samples provide 855 ESB and 808 NESB respondents, with a range from 182 to 408 respondents for the periods considered.

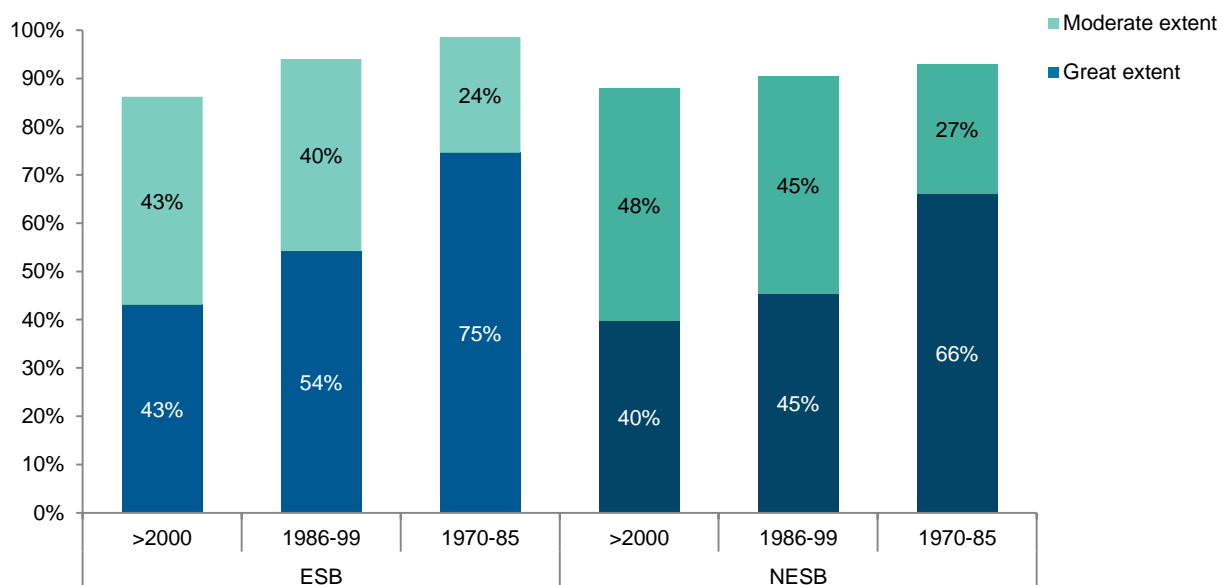
**The results demonstrate the strength of satisfaction with life in Australia and of the forces working to integrate immigrants into national life and a shared value system.**

Among arrivals since 2000, 43% of ESB respondents indicate a **sense of belonging** to a 'great extent', 43% to a 'moderate extent', a total of 86%. Amongst NESB respondents, sense of belonging is indicated almost to the same extent: 40% to a 'great extent', 48% to a 'moderate extent', a total of 88%.

Those indicating a sense of belonging to a 'great extent' increase with length of residence; for ESB respondents, 54% of those arriving 1986-1999, 75% of those arriving 1970-1985; for NESB, the respective proportions are 45% and 66%.

Those indicating sense of belonging 'only slightly' or 'not at all' for arrivals in the years 1970-85 total 1% of ESB, 6% of NESB.

Figure 23: Sense of belonging by respondent's year of arrival, combined results of 2007-2012 surveys

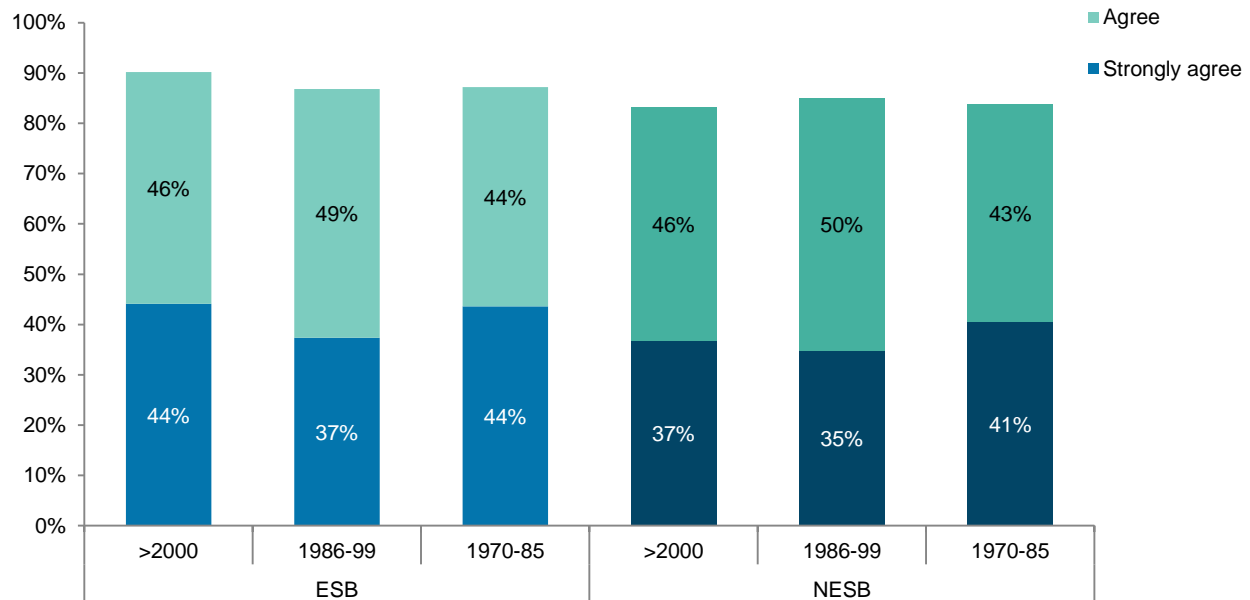


Those who disagree with the proposition that it is important to **'maintain the Australian way of life and culture'** total 4% amongst ESB arrivals since 2000, 7% and 6% for arrivals in 1986-99 and 1970-85; for NESB arrivals, the proportions are 4%, 5% and 5% for the respective periods.

Some 90% of ESB arrivals since 2000 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the proposition that 'Australia is a **land of economic opportunity** where in the long run, hard work brings a better life', 86% of arrivals in 1986-99, 88% of arrivals in 1970-85.

The respective proportions for NESB arrivals in the three periods are only marginally lower: 83%, 85% and 84%. There was thus little differentiation in response to this question by time of arrival. The proportion who 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' amongst ESB arrivals was 9%, 10% and 10% for the three periods; for NESB, a marginally higher 13%, 11% and 14%.

Figure 24: 'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life', by respondent's year of arrival, combined results of 2007-2012 surveys



**Both ESB and NESB respondents are more supportive of the current immigration intake than the Australian-born, although the extent of difference decreases with length of residence.** For arrivals in the three periods, 21%, 29% and 34% of ESB respondents consider that the immigration intake is too high. For NESB respondents, the proportions are 24%, 26% and 30%.

Marked difference between ESB and NESB respondents is, however, evident in **reported experience of discrimination** and view of government support to ethnic minorities for maintenance of customs and traditions.

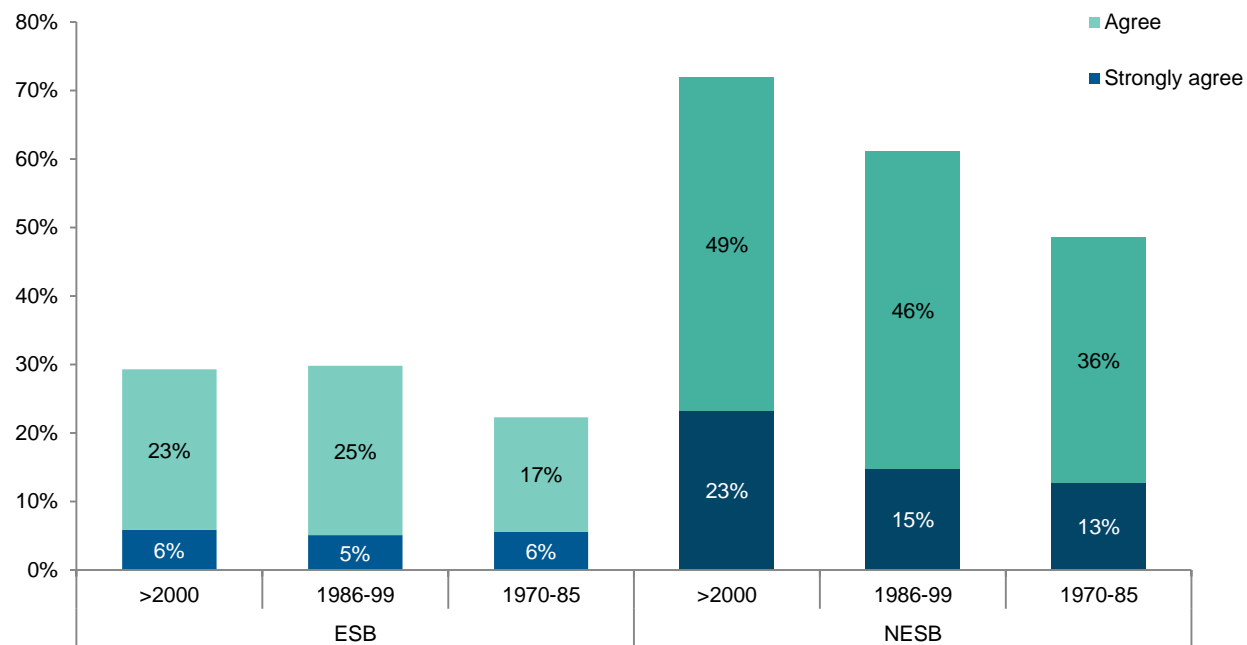
For the three periods, 12%, 17% and 10% of ESB respondents indicated experience of discrimination over the last twelve months on the basis of 'skin colour, ethnic origin or religion'. **The proportions for NESB respondents are consistently higher:** 21%, 23% and 14%. For both ESB and NESB respondents, the highest reported experience of discrimination was for those who arrived in Australia between 1986-99, not the most recent arrivals.

Difference of opinion is most evident in response to the proposition that government should provide assistance to ethnic minorities for the **maintenance of customs and traditions**. Amongst ESB respondents who arrived since 2000, 6% 'strongly agree' and 23% 'agree', a total of 29% in agreement. This proportion is in marked contrast with the 23% of NESB respondents who 'strongly agree' and 49% who 'agree', a total of 72%.

**Amongst recent NESB arrivals there is strong identification with the Australian way of life, but also strong support of government assistance for cultural maintenance.** While the level of support decreases with length of residence, it remains much higher amongst NESB respondents. Of arrivals between 1986-99, government assistance is supported by 30% ESB and 61% NESB respondents; of arrivals between 1970-1985, the relative proportions are 23% and at 49%.



Figure 25: 'Ethnic minorities should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions', by respondent's year of arrival, combined results of 2007-2012 surveys



# Asylum seekers

Since late 2009 there has been a polarised and emotional debate over government policy towards asylum seekers. This debate has been fuelled by the increasing arrivals by boat since 2008, with arrivals in 2012 at a record level. In 2010 6,850 arrived, in 2011 4,733 and in the first seven months of 2012, 7,120.<sup>16</sup>

There has been on-going front page newspaper coverage of the asylum issue, advocacy by the Liberal Opposition of more stringent policy to halt arrivals, and a toughening of government approach, leading to the appointment of an Expert Panel to advise on policy options in June 2012 and subsequent legislation to reactivate offshore processing.

As a consequence of the prominence of the issue, a number of news agencies commissioned opinion polls. A main focus for polls was perception of government policy and a **consistent finding was the high level of support for policy to limit arrivals**. When polls asked 'Which party is best to handle the asylum issue?', the Liberal Party has been consistently preferred.<sup>17</sup>

A number of polls indicated that those who hold strong negative views towards continuing boat arrivals outnumber strong positive by at least two to one, with a third segment of the population, close to 20%, indicating uncertainty in some surveys.

A United Nations Refugee Agency survey conducted in Australia in April-May 2012 asked with regard to boat arrivals 'whether the way they arrive makes you more or less sympathetic towards them'; 32% responded 'much less sympathetic', only 8% 'much more sympathetic'.<sup>18</sup>

In July 2012 Essential Research asked: 'Do you think the Federal Labor Government is too tough or too soft on asylum seekers or is it taking the right approach?' 12% answered 'too tough', 11% 'right approach', while 60% indicated 'too soft'.

In August 2012 the Nielsen Poll asked 'Do you support or oppose the decision to resume offshore processing of asylum seekers in Papua New Guinea and Nauru?' 67% indicated support, 27% opposition. A similarly worded Essential Research survey conducted at the same time found 67% indicating approval and a smaller 18% disapproval.<sup>19</sup>

The Scanlon Foundation surveys conducted in 2010, 2011 and 2012 considered attitudes to asylum seekers and refugees using five questions.

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**. Respondents were asked, in an open-ended question, 'Of all the people who come to Australia each year hoping to settle permanently, what percentage are asylum seekers who come by boat?' Less than one in four respondents (23%) answered in the correct range.

This finding is consistent with the lack of knowledge of the size of the country's immigration program, and the results of other surveying. In June 2010 Essential Research found that only one-third of respondents were aware that the total number of asylum seekers who reach Australia by boat made up a very small proportion (under 5%) of immigrants who arrive in Australia each year.<sup>20</sup>

A second finding, consistent across the three Scanlon surveys, is that the most common view of asylum seekers is 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**. A further 7% in 2012 indicated that the asylum seekers were escaping poverty, 11% that they were queue jumpers, 4% that they were wealthy and could afford the boat fare.

A substantial proportion gave responses indicating that asylum seekers were in fear for their lives, persecuted, or desperate, a total of 39% in 2012, a substantially higher 58% in 2011, and a lower 46% in 2012.

The Scanlon Foundation survey establishes that Australians draw a sharp distinction between refugees assessed overseas and admitted for resettlement under the Humanitarian Program – and those arriving by boat, classified as Irregular Maritime Arrivals by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

<sup>16</sup> Australian Government, Report of the Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers, August 2012, p.7

<sup>17</sup> See Inventory of Australian Public Opinion Surveys, Mapping Australia's Population internet site, <http://arts.monash.edu.au/mapping-population/inventory-of-surveys.php>

<sup>18</sup> UNHCR Survey of Attitudes Toward Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Briefing Note, 15 June 2012

<sup>19</sup> Essential Research, Essential Report, 9 July 2012, 29 August 2012; Nielsen, National Report, 26 August 2012

<sup>20</sup> Essential Research, Essential Report, 7 June 2012

Table 15: 'What do you think is the main reason asylum seekers try to reach Australia by boat?' (multiple response question), 2010-2012

Response	2010	2011	2012
Are in fear for their lives	9.2%	13.9%	8.9%*
Are facing persecution	15.4%	19.1%	18.0%
Desperation/ desperate	14.3%	24.5%	19.2%*
<i>Sub-total</i>	<b>38.9%</b>	<b>57.5%</b>	<b>46.1%*</b>
For a better life	54.2%	47.6%	45.8%*
Are living in poverty	7.5%	9.0%	7.1%
<i>Sub-total</i>	<b>61.7%</b>	<b>56.6%</b>	<b>52.9%*</b>
Are queue jumpers	9.7%	11.1%	11.4%
Are wealthy and can afford it	1.5%	4.8%	4.3%
Government too slack/ easy to get into Australia	8.0%	1.8%	3.8%*
<i>Sub-total</i>	<b>19.2%</b>	<b>17.7%</b>	<b>19.5%*</b>
Other/ refused/ don't know	12.2%	11.4%	6.5%*
N (unweighted)	2021	2001	2000

\*Change between 2010 and 2012 statistically significant at p<.05.  
Note: Tables do not add to 100% as respondents could specify more than one reason.

Table 16: 'Do you feel positive, negative or neutral about refugees who have been assessed overseas and found to be victims of persecution and in need of help coming to live in Australia as a permanent or long-term resident?', 2010-2012

Response	2010	2011	2012
Very positive	31.4%	38.4%	38.9%*
Somewhat positive	35.1%	34.5%	36.3%
<i>Sub-total positive</i>	<b>66.5%</b>	<b>72.9%</b>	<b>75.2%*</b>
Neutral	17.2%	15.9%	13.7%*
Somewhat negative	7.9%	4.8%	5.0%*
Very negative	5.8%	4.6%	4.0%
<i>Sub-total negative</i>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>9.0%*</b>
Refused/ don't know	2.7%	1.8%	2.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%
N (unweighted)	2,021	2,001	2,000

\*Change between 2010 and 2012 statistically significant at p<.05

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 73% to 75%). The positive view of refugee resettlement contrast with preferred policy towards boat arrivals.

The Scanlon Foundation survey presents respondents with four options and asks which comes closest to their view concerning 'policy for dealing with asylum seekers trying to reach Australia by boat'. The four options are:

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.

There has been only marginal change in views across the three surveys. Thus in 2010, 27% of respondents favoured turning back boats, 23% in 2011 and 26% in 2012. Close to 10% favour detention and deportation and just under 40% the option of temporary residence. **The proportion favouring permanent residence has increased marginally since 2010, but was favoured by less than one-in-four respondents (23%) in 2012**, a finding close to the 27% opposed to offshore processing obtained by the August 2012 Nielsen Poll.<sup>21</sup>

Respondents were also asked for their view on **'how the government is handling the asylum seeker issue?'** The three surveys between 2010 and 2012 indicate a consistent negative trend. Thus, those who considered that the government was doing a good job declined from 11% to 6%, while those who rated its performance as average declined from 38% to 26%. Those rating its performance as 'very poor' increased from 25% to 45%. **The ratio of good to poor changed from approximately 1:4 in 2010 to 1:8 in 2011 to more than 1:10 in 2012.**

<sup>21</sup> Nielsen, National Report, 26 August 2012

Figure 26: '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?', 2010-2012

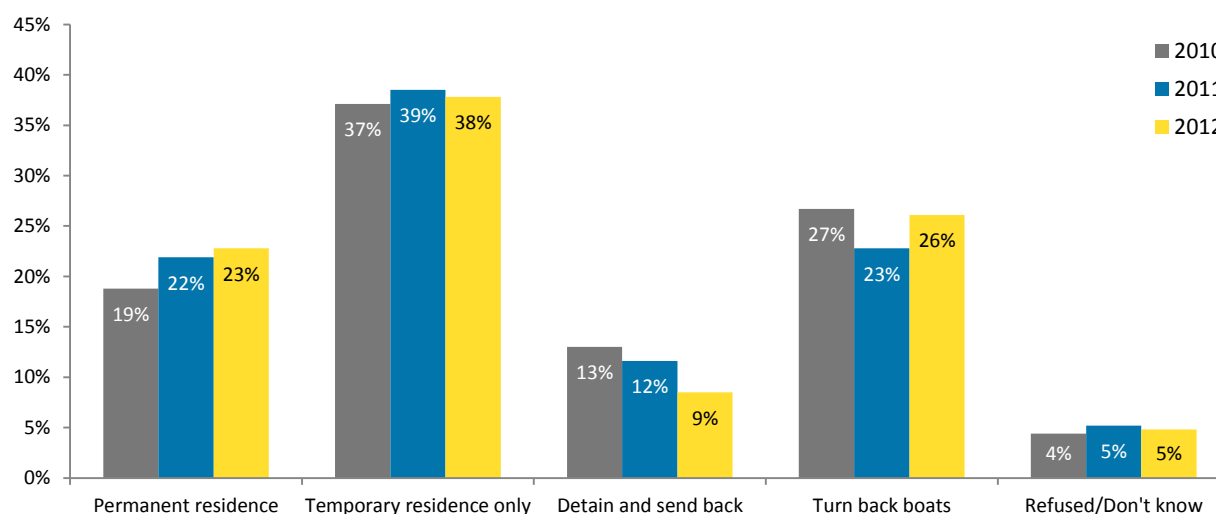


Table 17: 'What do you think of how the government is handling the asylum seeker issue? Overall do you think they are doing a good job, an average job or a poor job? How well is government doing?' 2010-2012

Response	2010	2011	2012
Very good	1.8%	2.1%	1.2%
Good	9.4%	5.2%	5.1%*
<i>Sub-total</i>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>7.3%</b>	<b>6.3%*</b>
Average	37.5%	33.8%	25.5%*
Poor	21.3%	19.4%	20.8%
Very poor	25.4%	36.1%	45.0%*
<i>Sub-total</i>	<b>46.7%</b>	<b>55.5%</b>	<b>65.8%*</b>
Refused/ Don't know	4.6%	3.4%	2.5%*
Total	100%	100%	100%
N (unweighted)	2,021	2,001	2,000

\*Change between 2010 and 2012 statistically significant at  $p < .05$

The general finding from this set of questions, and polling by a number of agencies over the last ten years, is that **the arrival of boats is met with a high level of negativity**. This is in marked contrast with the positive attitudes towards the admission of refugees who have been assessed overseas and found to be in need of protection.

**What is the significance of the asylum issue for social cohesion?** The answer would seem to be that it has direct negative impact, for it is **an issue that fuels disillusionment with government and heightens division within the population**.

Rights of asylum engages people, it sparks passionate debate. In the years of the Howard government there was harsh criticism of policies seen as grossly unjust. Over the last three years, as first the Rudd and then the Gillard government attempted a range of reforms, without achieving a desirable outcome, the level of criticism increased. People of differing political persuasions are close to unanimous in the view that the government is incapable of dealing effectively with this issue of fundamental importance for the nation. Thus in 2012, just 5% (9% in 2011) of those who are most favourable to asylum seekers think that the government is doing a good or very good job in its handling of asylum and an even smaller 2% (4%) of those who are most negative.

The asylum issue has contributed to widespread disillusionment with government. It is in the news daily as boat arrivals receive prominent media coverage, often on the front pages of newspapers. The issue is further magnified as Opposition leader Tony Abbott and Scott Morrison, the Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, focus on government failures and their party's solution to stop the boats, while Greens spokespersons and prominent advocates for asylum seekers criticise what they depict as ever increasing immoral government policies.

The statistical technique of factor analysis establishes a link between views on asylum policy and immigration. **Views on asylum correlate with views on immigration, as well as a range of other issues, including national identity and cultural diversity**. This is illustrated by comparing the outlook of those who would prevent asylum seekers from landing with those who would permit them to apply for permanent residence, with the results for three surveys (2010-12) combined to provide greater reliability.

When compared with those who favour the option of permanent settlement, those who would prevent landing have a stronger connection to what they see as the 'Australian way of life', are four times more likely to think that immigration is too high, five times more likely to hold negative views of Muslims and to not agree that a diverse immigration intake is of benefit to Australia, and six times more likely to disagree with government assistance to ethnic minorities.

The asylum issue thus has the effect of heightening polarisation within the community. Contrary to generalisations about the attitude of 'the Australian people', **there is fundamental attitudinal division within the Australian population**, with differentiation evident when national identity, attitudes to minorities and cultural pluralism are considered. **Divisions over asylum directly link to and exacerbate these divisions.**

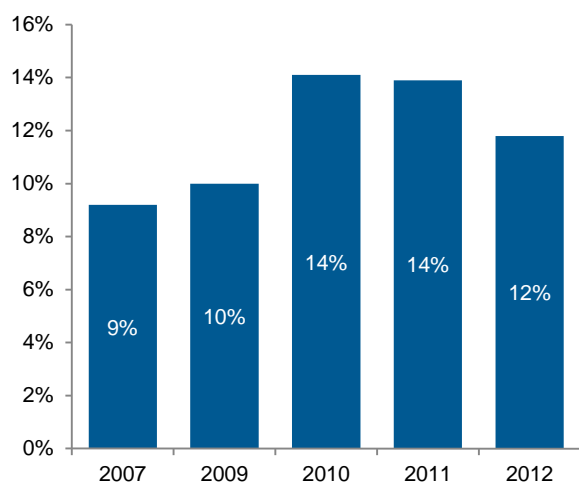
Table 18: Ten selected questions by views on the best policy for dealing with asylum seekers who reach Australia by boat, combined 2010-2012

Questions and responses	Permanent residence	Temporary residence only	Detain and send back	Turn back boats	Total
Sense of belonging – 'great extent'	70.9%	72.0%	73.6%	75.2%	72.7%
Pride in 'Australian way of life' – 'great extent'	47.9%	56.9%	60.1%	63.0%	56.8%
Important to maintain 'Australian way of life' – 'strongly agree'	39.9%	57.0%	65.2%	69.8%	57.0%
Perception of immigration over the last 12 months – 'increased'	40.0%	55.8%	63.2%	75.2%	57.9%
Immigration intake – 'too high'	15.7%	34.0%	53.8%	68.6%	41.3%
Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger – 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree'	7.1%	20.7%	41.4%	49.6%	27.4%
Assist ethnic minorities to maintain customs and traditions – 'strongly disagree'	9.3%	19.6%	37.3%	54.2%	28.1%
Attitude to Muslims – 'very negative' and 'somewhat negative'	8.5%	18.8%	32.7%	42.8%	24.2%
Government handling of the asylum seeker issue – 'very poor'	28.7%	23.6%	37.0%	61.0%	35.5%
N (unweighted)	1,404	2,228	632	1,449	6,022

## Experience of discrimination

A question posed in the five 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?’ Survey findings indicated increased reporting of discrimination in 2010 and 2011. **In 2012, reported experience of discrimination fell by two percentage points, but the level remained above that recorded in 2009 and 2007.**

Figure 27: ‘Have you experienced discrimination in the last twelve months because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion?’ Response: ‘yes’, 2007-2012



A closer analysis of the experience of discrimination was undertaken utilising the combined total of respondents across the five surveys (numbering in excess of 10,000), to enable, as has been noted, consideration of sub-groups with a high level of reliability.

The findings indicate that men (14%) are more likely than women (11%) to indicate experience of discrimination. There is also a clear pattern of lower reporting of discrimination with increasing age, with **the highest proportion reported by respondents aged 18-24**. This may be a reflection of the nature and extent of contacts for the different age groups, with young adults the most likely to intermix with a broad range of people and most likely to find themselves in situations of potential conflict in public places.

Table 19: Reported experience of discrimination by age, combined 2007-2012

Age	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75/+
Reported experience	19.1%	15.7%	13.1%	12.0%	8.4%	5.0%	2.2%
N (unweighted)	569	1,078	1,853	2,163	2,036	1,461	866

Analysis by location indicates higher reporting in capital cities than other regions of states (12%, 10%). **Within capitals, the highest proportion of reported discrimination is in Sydney, the lowest proportion in Adelaide (15%, 9%).**

**The largest variation in the experience of discrimination is by religion and country of birth.** By far the highest proportion (31%) indicating discrimination is amongst respondents of the Islamic faith; the sub-sample (64) is small, but the finding is consistent with the 2012 neighbourhood surveys, whose findings are available in a companion report.<sup>22</sup>

Above average experience of discrimination (18%) was also reported by those who indicated that they were Christian, but gave no further identification of religious identification, Hindu (15%) and Buddhist. Those of Protestant faith indicated the lowest proportions.

Analysis by country of birth indicated highest experience of discrimination by respondents born in Africa (21%) and Asia (20%), at twice the level reported by Australian-born (10%). The New Zealand-born were in the mid-position (15%), while respondents born in the United Kingdom, Ireland and Europe were at the lowest level (8%, 7%).

Table 20: Reported experience of discrimination by capital cities, combined 2007-2012

City	Sydney	Perth	Brisbane	Melbourne	Adelaide
Reported experience	15.1%	12.6%	12.4%	11.6%	8.5%
N (unweighted)	1,175	855	689	1,189	763

Table 21: Reported experience of discrimination by religion, combined 2009-2012

Religion	Islam	Christian	Hinduism	Buddhist	No religion	Roman Catholic	Anglican	Presbyterian	Uniting Church
Reported experience	31.3%	17.7%	15.3%	13.8%	12.0%	11.2%	7.8%	6.7%	5.6%
N (unweighted)	64	962	62	115	1,729	1,988	1,747	248	355

Table 22: Reported experience of discrimination by region and country of birth, combined 2007-2012

Country/ region	Africa and Middle East	Asia	New Zealand	Australia	United Kingdom, Ireland	Europe
Reported experience	20.9%	20.1%	15.1%	10.4%	7.6%	7.0%
N (unweighted)	182	1,174	229	6,904	693	696

<sup>22</sup> See *The Scanlon Foundation Surveys 2012: Neighbourhoods Report- Areas of Immigrant Concentration*, <http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/mapping-population/public-opinion.php>

In 2012, the 12% of respondents who indicated that they had experienced discrimination were asked, in an open ended question, **‘how did that discrimination affect you?’** Nearly half (44%) of these respondents answered in general terms, to indicate that the experience ‘made me feel bad’, 16% that it had no effect on them, 8% that it had a negative impact in the workplace, and 4% that it undermined their sense of safety and 4% that they lost trust in Australia.

Table 23: Impact of the experience of discrimination, most common responses, 2012

Response	Proportion of those who indicated discriminatory experience in the last twelve months
‘Made me feel bad’	44.2%
‘Did not affect me’	16.0%
Impact on employment – for example, did not get an interview for a job, did not get a job, lost employment	7.6%
‘Lost trust in Australia/ in life in Australia’ – for example, made me feel like leaving Australia	4.0%
‘Made me feel unsafe in public places’ – for example, on the streets at night, being alone	3.7%
N (unweighted)	231



## Perceptions of racial prejudice

A question posed for the first time in the 2010 Scanlon Foundation survey asked respondents if, in their view, ‘the level of racial prejudice in Australia now is more, less or about the same as it was five years ago?’ When the question was repeated in 2011 and 2012 there was little change in the results. Close to 40% of respondents indicated that they considered that the level of racial prejudice was ‘about the same’, close to 40% that the level had increased, and 15% that it was less.

Table 24: ‘Do you think the level of racial prejudice in Australia now is more, less or about the same as it was five years ago?’, 2010-2012

Response	2010	2011	2012
Much more now	15.7%	16.5%	13.7%
More now	24.7%	27.2%	25.0%
<i>(Much more and more)</i>	<b>40.4%</b>	<b>43.7%</b>	<b>38.7%</b>
About the same	39.9%	37.7%	42.8%*
Less	13.6%	12.4%	10.4%
Much less	1.8%	2.0%	4.9%*
<i>(Much less and less)</i>	<b>15.4%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>15.3%</b>
Refused/ Don't know	4.3%	4.1%	3.1%
N (unweighted)	2,021	2,001	2,000

\*Change between 2011 and 2012 statistically significant at  $p < .05$

Statistically significant change between 2011 and 2012 was in the higher proportion of respondents who considered that the level was ‘about the same’, and in the marginal increase in respondents who considered that the level was much less (up from 2% to 5%)

When responses are considered by country of birth across the three surveys (2010, 2011, 2012), **the highest proportion who consider that the level of racial prejudice has increased is amongst those of English speaking background, the highest proportion (27%) agreeing that it has decreased amongst respondents from Asian countries.**

In 2012, the 39% of respondents who considered that there was more racial prejudice in Australia than five years ago were asked in an open ended question why they considered that the level had increased. **The most common response was that it was the result of too much diversity in Australian society.** Close to 40% gave an explanation in terms of government policy or the economy, 22% in terms of factors related to the behaviour of immigrants, refugees and Muslims, 16% with reference to the Australian media and 7% with reference to characteristics of the Australian people.

Table 25: ‘Do you think the level of racial prejudice in Australia now is more, less or about the same as it was five years ago?’. By country and region of birth, 2010-2012

Response	Australia	New Zealand	UK & Ireland	Europe	Asia	Total
Much more now	16.4%	9.7%	15.8%	13.5%	11.0%	15.3%
More now	26.6%	35.8%	27.5%	18.3%	22.5%	25.6%
<i>(Much more and more)</i>	<b>43.0%</b>	<b>45.5%</b>	<b>43.3%</b>	<b>31.8%</b>	<b>33.5%</b>	<b>40.9%</b>
About the same	40.6%	45.5%	42.5%	45.5%	34.1%	40.1%
Less	11.5%	6.0%	7.2%	8.2%	20.3%	12.1%
Much less	2.2%	0.7%	1.0%	4.5%	6.8%	2.9%
<i>(Much less and less)</i>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>27.1%</b>	<b>15.0%</b>
Refused/ Don't know	2.7%	1.5%	5.8%	10.0%	5.3%	3.8%
N (unweighted)	4,453	142	567	260	458	6,022

Table 26: 'Why do you think there is more racial prejudice?' Minimum of 20 responses, 2012

Response	Sub-sample (indicated that racial prejudice had increased)	All respondents
<b>Government policy, economy</b>		
Too much diversity in Australian society (general comment, too many people from certain racial/ religious/ ethnic groups)	22.2%	8.6%
Too much immigration (general comment)	9.2%	3.6%
Government favours minorities/ racial/ religious/ immigrant/ Aboriginal groups (e.g., provides too much assistance)	4.7%	1.8%
Economic reasons (too much competition/ unemployment/ not enough jobs)	3.2%	1.2%
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>39.3%</b>	<b>15.2%</b>
<b>Immigrants, refugees</b>		
Action/ behaviour of certain immigrant groups	8.4%	3.2%
Too many refugees ('boat people', asylum seekers)	5.4%	2.1%
September 11/ wars/ terrorism	3.1%	1.2%
Action/ behaviour of Muslims	2.7%	1.1%
Action/ behaviour of refugees ('boat people', asylum seekers)	2.6%	1.0%
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>22.2%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>
<b>Media</b>		
Media – negative coverage of immigration/ racial/ religious groups	11.4%	4.4%
Media – negative coverage of refugees, asylum seekers, 'boat people'	4.8%	1.9%
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>16.2%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>
<b>Australian people</b>		
Lack of education/ ignorance	4.0%	1.5%
Lack of tolerance/ compassion/ understanding	2.9%	1.1%
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>6.9%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>
Other	9.5%	3.6%
Refused/ don't know	5.9%	2.3%
Total	100%	38.7%
N (unweighted)	750	2,000

## 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>23</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.**

As noted earlier in this report, respondents were asked for their **attitude to immigrants from fifteen specified countries**. The highest level of negative sentiment was towards immigrants from Iraq and Lebanon. In 2012, 11% of respondents indicated that they were ‘very negative’ and 12% ‘negative’ towards immigrants from Iraq.

The Scanlon Foundation surveys also 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 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 (less than 3%) aggregated ‘refused’ and ‘don’t know’ response level.

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 11%-12% ‘somewhat negative’**.

A number of demographic variables show marked variation in the ‘very negative’ and ‘somewhat negative’ responses towards Muslims, particularly age, state of residence, faith group and education. In the above analysis, combined 2010-2012 data (a sample of 6,022) is used for greater reliability:

- **Age:** 18-24, 10%; 25-34, 19%; 35-44, 18%; 45-54, 27%; 55-64, 29%; 65-74, 39%; 75 or above, 40%.
- **State:** New South Wales and Queensland, 28%; Western Australia, 27%; South Australia, 26%; Victoria, 16%.
- **Birthplace:** Europe, 28%; United Kingdom and Ireland, 27%; Australia, 24%, Asia, 23%.
- **Faith:** Presbyterian, 38%; Lutheran, 31%; Anglican, 30%; Christian, 28%; Buddhist, 24%; Uniting Church, 23%; Roman Catholic, 23%; No religion, 19%.
- **Highest completed education:** up to year 12, 27%; Trade or diploma, 23%, Bachelor’s level or higher, 17%.

Table 27: ‘Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards ....?’, 2010-11 combined, 2012

Religion	Very positive		Somewhat positive		Neutral		Somewhat negative		Very negative		Refused/ don't know		Total
	2010-11	2012	2010-11	2012	2010-11	2012	2010-11	2012	2010-11	2012	2010-11	2012	
Christians	35.0%	36.1%	24.7%	23.4%	35.8%	36.2%	2.5%	2.4%	1.3%	1.2%	0.8%	0.8%	100%
Buddhists	23.2%	23.0%	30.5%	32.0%	39.9%	36.8%	2.4%	3.0%	1.8%	2.0%	2.3%	3.2%	100%
Muslims	9.6%	10.9%	21.2%	23.5%	42.4%	40.0%	12.0%	11.1%	12.4%	12.9%	2.4%	1.6%	100%

<sup>23</sup> E. Thalhammer et al., *Attitudes toward Minority Groups in the European Union*, European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, Vienna 2001

A general question posed across the five Scanlon Foundation surveys asked respondents if ‘accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger’. In 2012, 11% indicated ‘strong disagreement’ and 15% ‘disagreement’.

Thus, in response to these three questions, 23% to 26% of respondents gave a negative response, with half of these selecting the strongest negative.

These findings can be placed within the context of questions which arguably provide indication of rejection of diversity. There are nine questions, each of which provided two negative response options. The highest strong negative, at 28%, has been obtained in response to a question on provision of government assistance to ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions. This finding may, however, reflect the view of the majority in response to a question which concerns funding to minorities, so the question may have less to do with rejection of cultural diversity than issues of equity.

A high negative response was also obtained on asylum policy, with 26% of respondents in support of the policy of turning back boats. But again, 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. Such an interpretation is supported by the low level of opposition to the Humanitarian Program, which finds 4% ‘strongly negative’ and 5% ‘somewhat negative’, a total of 9%.

A total of 25% of respondents strongly disagree or disagree with the value of ‘immigration from many different countries’, but a notably low percentage, 2%, are ‘strongly negative’ (and a total 9% negative) when they are asked to consider the impact of immigration and cultural diversity in their neighbourhoods.

Table 28: ‘Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger’, 2007-2012

Response	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012
Strongly agree	21.9%	24.7%	19.1%	24.2%	25.7%*
Agree	45.1%	43.2%	43.3%	40.1%	39.4%
<i>Sub-total agree</i>	<b>67.0%</b>	<b>67.9%</b>	<b>62.4%</b>	<b>64.3%</b>	<b>65.1%</b>
Neither agree or disagree	3.3%	3.1%	5.9%	6.4%	5.5%
Disagree	18.1%	17.9%	18.6%	16.2%	15.3%
Strongly disagree	7.8%	8.9%	10.9%	10.6%	10.7%
<i>Sub-total disagree</i>	<b>25.9%</b>	<b>26.8%</b>	<b>29.4%</b>	<b>26.8%</b>	<b>26.0%</b>
Refused	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
None of the above/ don't know	3.6%	1.9%	2.0%	2.4%	3.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N (unweighted)	2,012	2,019	2,021	2,001	2001

\*Change between 2011 and 2012 statistically significant at p<.05

Table 29: Negative responses by selected question, 2012

Question and response	Strongest negative	Strong negative	Total
'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions' – strongly disagree/ disagree	27.9%	29.3%	57.2%
Asylum seeker policy – turn back boats/ keep in detention until they can be sent back	26.1%	8.5%	34.6%
Attitude towards Muslims – very negative/ negative	12.9%	11.1%	24.0%
Feelings towards immigrants from Iraq – very negative/ somewhat negative	10.8%	12.4%	23.2%
Immigration from many different countries makes Australia stronger – strongly disagree/ disagree	10.7%	15.3%	26.0%
Attitude towards immigrants from Sudan – very negative/ somewhat negative	6.3%	12.0%	18.3%
Impact of immigration on daily life in your local area – very negative/ somewhat negative*	2.3%	6.5%	8.8%
Local area is a place where people of different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together – strongly disagree/ disagree*	1.8%	7.1%	8.9%
Feelings toward refugees who have been assessed overseas– very negative/ somewhat negative	4.0%	5.0%	9.0%

\*Excludes those who responded that they live in an area with insufficient immigrants to have an impact

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 probably reach close to 25% of the population; on a heavily politicised issue such as asylum policy, strong negative sentiment can reach 35%.**

As discussed in the following section, there is uneven distribution of attitudes, with **heightened levels of intolerance within some segments of the population and some geographic regions.**

Further insight into intolerance is provided by the 2012 Scanlon Foundation neighbourhood surveys, whose findings are presented in the companion *Mapping Social Cohesion 2012: Neighbourhoods Report*.

# Predictors of opposition to immigration, intolerance of diversity

There are consistent findings on predictors of negative and positive attitudes to immigration and cultural diversity in the Scanlon Foundation surveys, consistent with national and international research.<sup>24</sup>

People **most likely to be negative** include those without post-school qualifications; in self-described difficult financial circumstances; over the age of 65; resident outside capital cities; resident of Queensland or Western Australia; and third-plus generation Australians.

People **most likely to be positive** include those with Bachelor’s level or higher educational qualifications; in self-described ‘prosperous’ or ‘very comfortable’ financial circumstances; under the age of 45; resident in a capital city; resident of South Australia or Victoria; and overseas born.

These findings are illustrated by the following tables, which draw on the aggregated data from the five Scanlon Foundation surveys.

Table 30 presents responses to a range of questions, after selecting respondents using four criteria: state of residence; resident in capital city or other region of the state; age; and educational qualification.

With regard to issues related to identification with the ‘Australian way of life’ and immigration, there is an average difference of 25 percentage points, with a variance of over 50%. On issues concerned with cultural maintenance and minorities, the difference is over 30 percentage points, with variance considerably above 100%.

A notable finding, however, is that **even within the group predicted to be more negative in their attitudes, only 48% considered the immigration intake to be too high**. In a number of western countries the results for questions on immigration amongst groups predicted to be negative are held by the majority. For example, the UK Citizenship Surveys conducted in 2009-2010 found that 80% of respondents born in the UK favoured reduction of immigration, with 60% selecting the option ‘reduce a lot’ and 20% ‘reduce a little’.<sup>25</sup>

Table 30: Selected questions by demographic characteristic of respondent, combined 2007-2012

Questions and responses	[A] Resident in Queensland or Western Australia, not in capital city, aged 55+, no BA or higher university level qualification	[B] Resident in Victoria or South Australia, in capital city, aged 18-34, BA or higher university level qualification	Difference between groups [A] and [B] (percentage points)
Pride in ‘Australian way of life’ – ‘great extent’	66.6%	44.1%	22.5%
Important to maintain ‘Australian way of life’ – ‘strongly agree’	69.7%	42.6%	27.1%
Immigration intake – ‘too high’	47.5%	20.6%	26.9%
Immigration from many different countries makes Australia stronger – ‘strongly agree’	14.8%	37.1%	22.3%
Assist ethnic minorities to maintain customs and traditions – ‘strongly disagree’	43.2%	9.6%	33.6%
Attitude towards Muslims – ‘very negative’, ‘somewhat negative’	39.9%	7.7%	32.2%
N (unweighted)	410	142	

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Scott Blinder, UK Public Opinion toward Migration: Determinants of Attitudes, June 2011, Migration Observatory <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk>

<sup>25</sup> Scott Blinder, UK Public Opinion toward Migration: Overall Attitudes and Level of Concern, February 2012, Migration Observatory, p.3

Table 31: 'What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present?' Response: 'too high'. Combined results for the 2007-2012 surveys.

Gender	Male	Female				
2007-2012	37%	42%				
State	South Australia	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	Queensland	
2007-2012	34%	39%	39%	41%	44%	
Region	Capital	Rest of state				
2007-2012	36%	46%				
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+
2007-2012	37%	36%	38%	38%	41%	47%
Level of completed education	BA or higher	Trade /diploma	Up to and including year 12			
2007-2012	22%	40%	47%			
Financial situation	Prosperous / very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills / poor		
2007-2011	30%	38%	47%	52%		
Birthplace	Overseas-NESB	Overseas-ESB	Australia			
2007-2012	29%	31%	44%			

Table 32: 'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger.' Response: 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree', 2007-2012. Combined results for the 2007-2012 surveys.

Gender	Male	Female				
2007-2012	26%	28%				
State	South Australia	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	Queensland	
2007-2012	23%	23%	26%	33%	33%	
Region	Capital	Rest of state				
2007-2012	24%	33%				
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+
2007-2012	20%	22%	24%	28%	30%	36%
Level of completed education	BA or higher	Trade /diploma	Up to and including year 12			
2007-2012	14%	27%	33%			
Financial situation	Prosperous / very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills / poor		
2007-2011	20%	27%	30%	32%		
Birthplace	Overseas-NESB	Overseas-ESB	Australia			
2007-2012	18%	27%	30%			

## Attitudes by political identification

The Scanlon Foundation survey asked those respondents who were Australian citizens: 'If there was a Federal election held today, for which party would you probably vote?'

There were sufficient respondents to analyse three groups – those who indicate that they would 'probably vote' Liberal/ National (unweighted n=780), more than 90% of whom indicated support for the Liberal Party and who will be referred to as Liberal in the following discussion, those who would 'probably vote' Labor (465) and 'probably vote' Greens (161). A large number of respondents indicated either 'don't know' (289), declined to answer (52), or support for 'independents' or another political party (163); thus a total of 504 respondents or 25.2% of the total did not indicate support for a major party.

With the 'don't know' and 'declined' responses excluded, the party political support closely matched the results of *Age/Nielsen* and *Newspoll* surveys conducted during the time of the Scanlon Foundation survey, with the qualification that the indicated level of Labor support was marginally lower and Liberal support was higher.

**It is important to analyse attitudes held by supporters of specific political parties as it is a factor of major significance in the electoral positioning of the parties and impacts on the determination of government policy.** This information is often known to the parties from their own market research, but is not generally made public.

Table 33: Intended vote, June-July 2012

Party	Scanlon Foundation 12 June – 21 July 2012	Age/Nielsen Poll 28-30 June 2012	Newspoll for the Australian 6-8 July
Labor Party	25%	28%	31%
Liberal/ National	53%	48%	48%
Greens	12%	12%	11%
Independents and Other	10%	11%	10%
Total*	100%	100%	100%
N (unweighted)	1,569	1,400	1,150

\*Excludes 'refused' and 'don't know'

In response to the open-ended question '**what do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?**', **the economy has been consistently ranked the most important across the 2010-2012 Scanlon Foundation surveys.** The proportion selecting the economy has increased across these surveys, selected by 26% of respondents in 2011 and 36% in 2012.

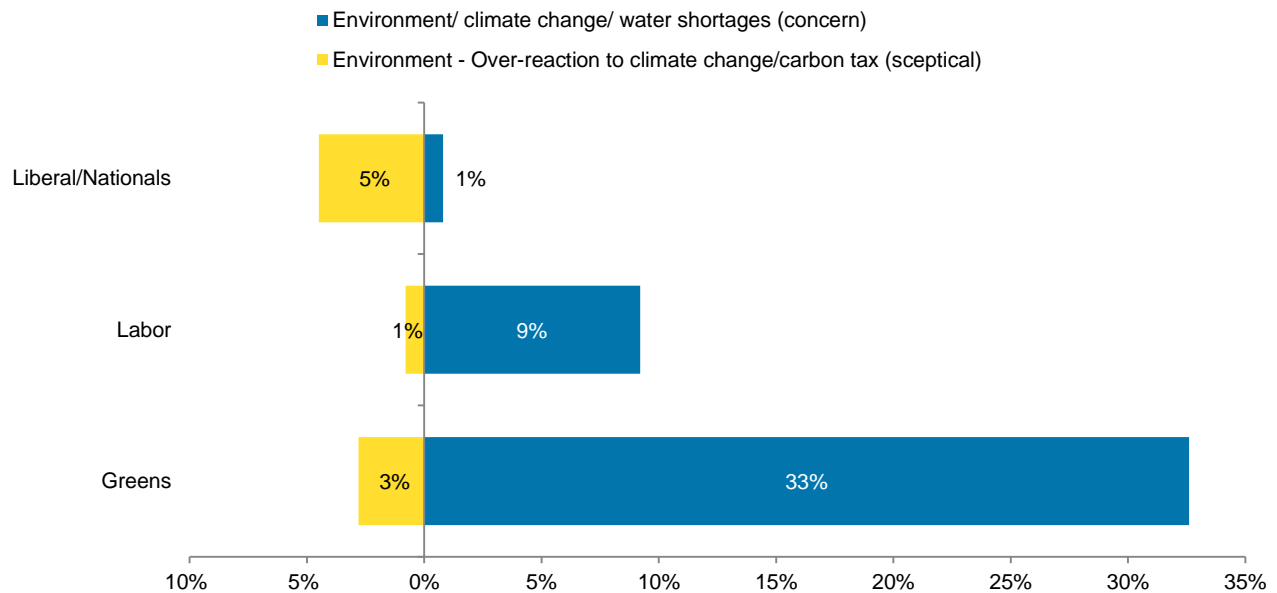
**Economic issues** are selected as 'most important' by a higher proportion of Labor and Liberal supporters than Greens. In 2011, the economy was indicated by 24% Liberal supporters, 26% Labor and 18% Greens; in 2012, by 39% Liberal, 34% Labor, and 25% Greens.

While the economy has risen in importance, **environment issues** have declined, indicated as the top ranked issue by 18% in 2011 and 11% in 2012. Given that the Greens are primarily defined by their concern for environmental issues, it is expected that Greens supporters will express most concern over the impact of climate change, and this expectation is met.

In 2012, 33% of Greens supporters first mentioned climate change, water shortage or the environment, compared to 9% Labor and just 1% Liberal. In contrast, 5% of Liberal supporters first mentioned over-reaction to climate change and negative view of the carbon tax, compared to 1% Labor supporters and 3% Greens.



Figure 28: 'What do you think are the most important problems facing Australia today?' Environment/climate change/ water shortages, 2012



**Several questions in the survey probed attitudes to social justice issues. These questions reveal considerably greater division between Liberal and Labor than Labor and Greens.**

There is almost no difference between Labor and Greens in their level of 'strong agreement' with the proposition that the gap between those with high and low incomes is too large, the view of 44% Labor supporters, 42% Greens, 28% Liberal.

Greens supporters are marginally more likely to disagree that there is enough financial support for those on low incomes than Labor and substantially more than Liberal – 53% Greens, 46% Labor, 36% Liberal.

For the three social justice questions (see Table 35) the average difference between Labor and Greens is 4 percentage points, a greater 13 percentage point difference between Labour and Liberal.

A series of questions explored **identification with Australia.**

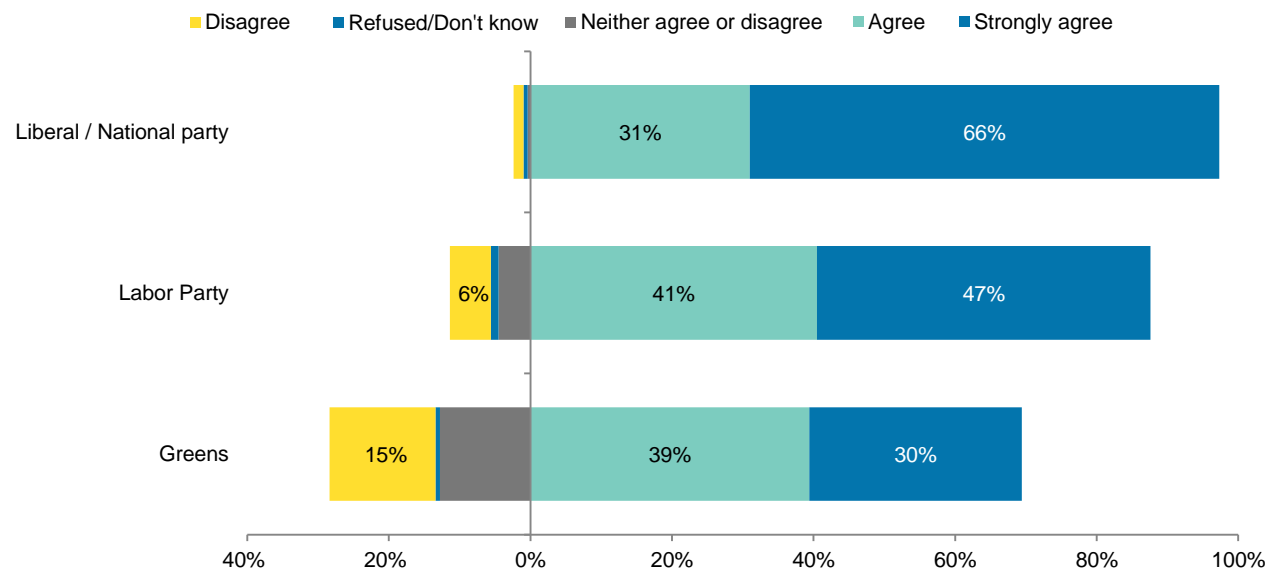
The smallest variation is in consideration of sense of belonging. Close to four out of five (78%) Liberal and Labor supporters indicated sense of belonging to a 'great extent', a lower 65% of Greens supporters.

In response to two questions related to the 'Australian way of life' there was a more marked differentiation. For each question **the strongest level of identification is amongst Liberal supporters, the lowest amongst Greens, with Labour in the middle.**

In response to the question 'To what extent do you take pride in the Australian way of life and culture?', 63% of Liberal supporters indicated 'to a great extent', 52% Labor and 45% Greens.

In response to the proposition that 'in the modern world, maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important', 66% of Liberal supporters were in 'strong agreement', 47% Labor and a substantially lower 30% Greens.

Figure 29: 'Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? In the modern world, maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important', 2012



**Questions on immigration also produced marked differentiation in opinion.** 45% of Liberal supporters considered the immigration intake to be 'too high' (but a larger proportion, 49%, considered the intake to be 'about right' or 'too low'). This compared with a markedly lower 29% Labor and 13% Greens who considered the intake to be 'too high'.

**Policy to be adopted towards asylum seekers arriving by boat produced an even sharper polarisation.** While almost the same proportion (45%) of Liberal supporters who considered the immigration intake to be 'too high' favoured the turning back of boats or deportation of arrivals, a lower 21% of Labor supporters and just 8% of Greens favoured such a policy.

Trend of opinion between the 2010-2012 surveys on asylum issues indicates very little change amongst Liberal supporters. Amongst Labor supporters, the proportion agreeing that asylum seekers should be prevented from landing, or detained and deported, has fallen from 35% to 21%, but support for temporary protection visas has correspondingly increased, from 34% to 46%. There has been no substantial change in the proportion favouring eligibility for permanent residence, which has been consistently below 30%.

On the asylum issue, the most marked change has been amongst Greens supporters, with those favouring eligibility for permanent residence increasing from 35% to 48% to 62%.

There is the opportunity to cross-check these results through reference to media surveying. Although there are no common questions on asylum used by different agencies, there is comparability between the level of support for permanent residence obtained in the Scanlon Foundation surveys and the indicated opposition to offshore processing in a number of polls, with questions for comparison chosen on the rationale that those opposed to offshore processing favour an onshore solution.

The Scanlon Foundation survey found support for permanent residence in June-July in the proportions 12%, 29% and 62% amongst Liberal, Labor and Greens supporters. In August 2012, the Nielsen agency found opposition to offshore processing in the proportions 16%, 33% and 53% for the three parties. An Essential Research survey, also in August 2012, which considered attitudes to the government's Expert Panel recommendations for offshore processing, obtained opposition in the proportions 16%, 22% and 56% for the three parties.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Nielsen, National Report, 26 August 2012; Essential Research, Essential Report, 20 August 2012

Table 34: 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?, 2010-2012

	Eligible for permanent residence			Eligible for temporary protection visas only			Prevent boats landing, or land but detain and deport		
	Liberal	Labor	Greens	Liberal	Labor	Greens	Liberal	Labor	Greens
2010	9.5%	26.3%	35.0%	35.2%	34.1%	43.2%	52.1%	34.6%	20.2%
2011	12.6%	29.0%	48.3%	38.8%	41.4%	29.3%	45.1%	27.2%	15.6%
2012	12.2%	28.9%	62.4%	37.2%	45.5%	29.3%	44.8%	20.8%	7.7%

Fourthly, **three questions on cultural diversity yield the sharpest differentiation between party supporters, with Labor supporters closer to Liberal than to Greens.** The average difference between Liberal and Labor is 11%, between Labor and Greens of 27%.

In response to the proposition that ‘accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger’, 19% of Liberal supporters ‘strongly agree’, compared to 30% Labor and 63% Greens.

In response to the proposition that Government should assist ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions, 29% of Liberal supporters ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’, 42% Labor, 63% Greens.

Almost identical proportions view the impact of immigration in their local area to be ‘very positive’ or ‘positive’: 32% Liberal, 40% Labor, and 59% Greens.

Figure 30: ‘Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions’, 2012

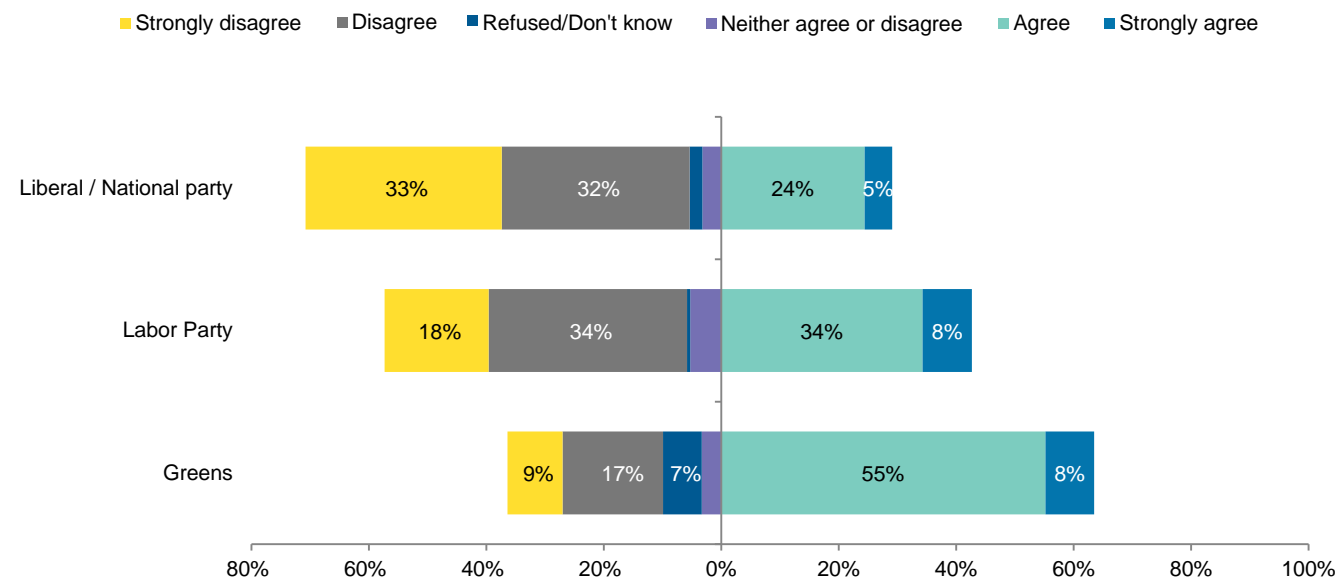


Table 35: Ten selected questions by intended vote, 2012

Response	Liberal	Labor	Greens	Difference Liberal–Labor (% points)	Difference Labor–Greens (% points)
<b>SOCIAL JUSTICE</b>					
'People living on low incomes in Australia receive enough financial support from the government'- 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'	35.6%	46.3%	52.5%	10.7%	6.2%
Gap in incomes is too large – 'strongly agree'	28.4%	43.5%	42.2%	15.1%	1.3%
'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run hard work brings a better life' – 'strongly agree'	47.8%	35.1%	31.5%	12.7%	3.6%
<b>AUSTRALIAN IDENTIFICATION</b>					
Sense of belonging – to a 'great extent'	78.4%	78.2%	64.6%	0.2%	13.6%
Pride in 'Australian way of life' – to a 'great extent'	62.7%	51.5%	45.3%	11.2%	6.2%
'...Maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important' – 'strongly agree'	66.3%	47.1%	30.0%	19.2%	17.1%
<b>IMMIGRATION</b>					
Immigration intake 'too high'	45.3%	28.5%	12.7%	16.8%	15.8%
'Turn back' asylum seeker boats or detain and deport arrivals	44.9%	20.8%	7.7%	24.1%	13.1%
<b>CULTURAL DIVERSITY</b>					
'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger' – 'strongly agree'	19.3%	30.3%	63.0%	11.0%	32.7%
Impact of immigration in my local area – 'very positive' or 'positive'	32.1%	40.1%	59.2%	8.0%	19.1%
Assist ethnic minorities to maintain customs and traditions – 'strongly agree' and 'agree'	29.1%	42.7%	63.5%	13.6%	20.8%
N (unweighted)	780	465	161		

\*Impact of immigration on local area, excludes respondents who indicated that there were 'not enough immigrants in my neighbourhood to have any impact' (13.9% Liberal, 14.5% Labor, 6.6% Greens)

This analysis of attitudes by intended vote indicates that a **substantial segment of Liberal supporters are less supportive of the current immigration intake than Labor and Greens. Liberal supporters also indicate less support for policy which has the effect of increasing ethnic diversity within the Australian population.** This segment is characterised by stronger identification with what they understand to be the 'Australian way of life' and relatively low level of support for government policy which is perceived to maintain cultural distinctiveness.

**In some respects Greens supporters appear to be in a contradictory position.** The 2010 Scanlon Foundation survey asked respondents for their views on a projected Australian population of 36 million by 2050. In almost identical proportions, Greens (59%) and Liberal (60%) supporters indicated that they considered 36 million to be too high, compared with a lower proportion (41%) of Labor supporters.

The 2011 Scanlon Foundation survey found Greens supporters most likely to 'strongly agree' with the proposition **'our natural environment cannot cope with a larger population'**: 27% of Greens supporters and 20% of Liberal supporters indicated 'strong agreement', compared to 17% Labor.

But, as has been noted, there is a **different pattern of response when the current level of immigration and asylum policy are considered** – with strongest support amongst Greens for the current immigration intake and eligibility for permanent residence for asylum seekers arriving by boat. The contradiction is apparently resolved in favour of universal values, which strive to treat all people equally, in preference over environmental concerns.

With regard to **Labor supporters**, the 2012 survey indicates that **there is no uniform positioning relative to the values of Liberal or Greens supporters.**

**Labor supporters are closest to Greens on social justice issues;** on the importance of maintaining the Australian way of life and current immigration policy, they are close to a mid-point between Liberal and Greens; while **on issues of cultural diversity, they are closer to Liberal supporters than Greens.**

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Monash University provided the research environment that sustained the project.

## Credits

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

**The Scanlon Foundation** is a member of Philanthropy Australia, the national membership organisation for grant-making trusts and foundations. Established in June 2001, the Foundation's mission is 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 fifth 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.

