



# mapping social cohesion 2009

the scanlon foundation surveys  
summary report

Professor Andrew Markus

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Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements  
Building 6  
Clayton campus  
Monash University  
Victoria 3800

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# Foreword

*Mapping Social Cohesion 2009* is a report on the second round of an extremely important longitudinal survey of social cohesion in Australia, funded by the Scanlon Foundation, and directed by Professor Andrew Markus, of Monash University.

The project has been undertaken as a partnership between the Scanlon Foundation, the Australian Multicultural Foundation, and the Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements.

The special strengths of the Scanlon social cohesion survey are two-fold. First, Professor Markus and his colleagues cover both the national and some selected local levels of Australia's population. And second, the longitudinal nature of the survey enables comparisons over times that are changing.

Of major importance, therefore, in this second survey is the perspective which it brings of social cohesion in Australia following the sudden 2008 downward shift in the fortunes of the international economy of which Australia is a part. The first survey was conducted after an extended period of sustained, steady growth and high employment, while the second was administered at a time of increasing immigration and far greater economic uncertainty, which was marked by dramatic fears of deeply recessionary conditions.

The second survey provides further evidence on levels of social justice, a sense of belonging and worth.

The changed economic and social circumstances and expectations about future prospects at the time of the second survey are a background to the comparative results and make them of particular significance for all concerned with social cohesion in Australia.

In deference to the sensitivity of interpretations of survey results such as these, the study's release will be accompanied by community round table meetings in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne, and briefings of policy makers in various agencies and departments.

As in the first part of the survey, so in the second, Professor Markus has conducted the research with consummate care, and has written up the results with extremely high standards of scholarship and balance. Professor Markus was ably assisted by Mr Darren Pennay and the Social Research Centre, which is associated with Monash University, and by Mr Bruce Smith of the Scanlon Foundation.

We wish therefore, to thank Professor Andrew Markus and his colleagues for their highly professional work, and the Scanlon Foundation for its generous sponsorship of this crucial, continuing survey.

Professor John Nieuwenhuysen AM  
Director, Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements

Dr Hass Dellal OAM  
Executive Director, Australian Multicultural Foundation

# Executive summary

The second Scanlon Foundation social cohesion survey, conducted in June–July 2009, was completed by 3800 Australians aged 18 years and over. It comprised a national survey of 2000 respondents, stratified by geographic location, and six local surveys with a total of 1800 respondents.

Given the lack of systematic opinion polling in Australia, the 2009 Scanlon Foundation survey is the first public poll to provide detailed exploration of attitudes to immigration since late 2007.

The 2009 survey was conducted in a period of declining economic confidence, with predictions that Australia, along with all Western economies, would face the most severe challenges since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Despite the economic concerns, the Australian government maintained a large immigration program. During recessions in the 1980s and 1990s negative views of immigration had risen sharply; this experience raised the expectation that the 2009 survey would reveal a marked change in opinion since the optimistic times of 2007 when the first social cohesion survey was conducted.

**Contrary to such expectation, the most compelling finding is the lack of change between 2007 and 2009.**

The 2007 survey provided evidence of a society that maintained a high level of positive outcomes, fostering a sense of belonging, social justice and worth. This continues to hold true in 2009. With the two data sets now available, a nominal index of social cohesion has been developed. This index points to marginal increase since 2007 in indicators of rejection, and marginal decline in sense of belonging and worth. But there is also indication of increased participation in political life and a heightened confidence in the federal government and its pursuit of social justice and equity.

To consider responses to specific questions:

- The overwhelming majority of Australians – 95% (96% in 2007) – express a strong sense of belonging;
- 92% (94%) take great pride in the Australian way of life;
- 93% (95%) believe that maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important;
- 89% (89%) indicate that ‘taking all things into consideration’, they are happy with their lives;
- 72% (73%) express satisfaction with their present financial situation;

82% (81%) agree that Australia ‘is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life’.

The 2009 survey does not indicate a shift in attitudes to immigration. Detailed cross-tabulated analysis of two key questions bearing on immigration disclosed that of 42 variables considered, statistically significant change was observed for only three, or 7% of variables.

The Scanlon Foundation survey, in addition to its national focus, undertakes simultaneous local surveys. This approach is based on the understanding that social cohesion operates not in the abstract, the realm of the ‘nation’, but at the community level, where people of different backgrounds and cultures make their lives. For this reason, surveys are conducted in areas of high immigrant concentration where, it is hypothesised, the potential for social tension is higher.

There is much that is positive when findings in areas of high immigrant concentration are compared with findings at the national level. These positive findings relate to happiness over the last twelve months, financial satisfaction, future expectations, sense of belonging, and views of economic opportunity. But there are also marked differences when views on the level of immigration, sense of safety, and trust are considered.

The greatest variation in the pattern of response occurs when the views of long-time Australians (those born in Australia, with both parents born in Australia) are considered. Thus:

- 35% of long-time Australians in areas of high immigrant concentration agree that most people can be trusted, compared to 55% of the same group in the national survey;
- 28% feel safe walking alone at night, compared to 62% in the national survey.

Linked to sense of safety and fear of becoming a victim of crime, there is greater reported experience of discrimination in areas of high immigrant concentration.

Other findings indicate that one in ten Australians hold strongly negative views on issues related to immigration and cultural diversity, with a larger ambivalent group and higher negativity in some regions and amongst some birthplace groups.

These statistics point to local environments in which social cohesion is made more difficult to maintain. If sense of threat and lack of trust thwart the building of links between neighbours, there is the risk of escalating conflict should tensions arise. In such environments attitudes can develop which target and blame ethnic groups as the cause of socio-economic problems.

**The 2009 Scanlon Foundation survey has again underscored the major and ongoing achievements of Australian society – and the ongoing challenges to be faced to maintain social cohesion in the years ahead.**

## Project objectives

The Scanlon Foundation was established in June 2001 with a mission 'to support the creation of a larger cohesive Australian society'. The Foundation believes that Australia's future prosperity depends on the ability to maintain social cohesion while significantly increasing population through immigration intakes which will involve greater cultural diversity than ever before. In other words, not only has migration been historically critical to Australia's population growth, this dependence is unlikely to diminish. One simple but critical question arising from this future scenario is whether in the next five decades 'Australia can repeat the immigration and social cohesion success story of the past five decades'?

In order to answer 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 it within the context of the social impact of a prolonged period of sustained and significant immigration intake. 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 hypothesised, 'the potential for social tension is higher'.

The Foundation continues to create awareness and stimulate knowledge-based discussion about Australia's population growth and the relationship between immigration and social cohesion. Since the results of the benchmark survey were published, it has also initiated on-the-ground action programs designed to address factors which affect social cohesion in areas where the potential for tension is most evident.

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 work continues with the commissioning of the 2009 *Mapping Social Cohesion* surveys.

## Scope and methodology

The first Scanlon Foundation social cohesion survey in June–August 2007 was completed by 3500 Australians aged 18 years and over. It comprised a national survey of 2000 respondents, stratified by geographic location, and five local surveys with a total of 1500 respondents, two each in Melbourne and Sydney and one in Brisbane, conducted in areas of high immigrant concentration. Each of the five local surveys comprised a sample of 300 respondents, with a sample boost in two of the areas to provide data on the views and experiences of immigrants from Middle Eastern countries. A list-assisted Random Digit Dialling (RDD) sampling frame was used in the administration of the survey and respondents were selected using the ‘next birthday’ method.

The 2009 survey (conducted in June–July) adopted the same approach, with some minor modifications to improve data yield. The national survey with 2000 respondents was directly replicated. The local surveys in areas of high immigrant concentration were undertaken in four Local Government Areas in Melbourne and Sydney, with the Brisbane local survey being omitted. The four local surveys were stratified (as in 2007) to yield a 50:50 split of Australia-born: overseas born respondents, but without the additional Middle East sample boost. These surveys were undertaken in the Local Government Areas of Greater Dandenong and Hume in Melbourne, Fairfield and Bankstown in Sydney. These were the same areas surveyed in 2007, with the exception of the substitution of Bankstown for Auburn to yield a larger sample base.

Two additional local area surveys, each with 300 respondents, were undertaken in 2009 to explore attitudes in outer-urban regions characterised by a high proportion (greater than 85%) of Australia-born residents. The areas surveyed were Sunbury in Melbourne and Engadine and neighbouring suburbs in Sydney, and the sample was restricted to Australia-born respondents.

The design of the questionnaire was informed by a review of international and Australian research and included questions used in earlier studies to enable identification of change over time. Interviews were conducted by telephone (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) in June and July 2009. In addition to English, respondents had the option of completing the survey in one of eight community languages; a total of 27 of the national questionnaires and 140 (8%) of the local questionnaires were completed in a language other than English.

Following a review of the 2007 questionnaire, 12 substantive and two demographic questions were deleted as they had proved to be of minimal use for analysis. In the 2009 questionnaire, ten new questions were added to a module dealing with neighbourhood, together with five additional demographic questions. The sequence of the questions was not altered, with the new neighbourhood module added after the first five modules of the questionnaire. The 2009 questionnaire comprised 38 substantive and 24 demographic questions and took on average 16 minutes to administer.

### Weighting of survey results

In 2007, the survey results were weighted to bring them into line with ABS data on population distribution, then by age and sex – the standard procedure adopted in surveying. To make for greater precision, in 2009 a rim weighting procedure was used to provide for the incorporation of two further weighting variables – educational attainment and country of birth. Thus the weights applied to the samples were:

**National:** **state population** (NSW, VIC, QLD, SA, WA, TAS, NT, ACT); **sex** (male, female); **age** (18–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55 plus); **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).

**LGA:** **LGA population**, **sex** (male, female); **age** (18–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55 plus); **education** (university graduate, not university graduate); **country of birth** (Australia, overseas English-speaking, overseas non-English speaking).

These new weighting criteria were re-applied to the 2007 data to provide for direct comparability of results.

## The survey context

The first social cohesion survey in 2007 was undertaken in an environment of sustained economic growth, high employment and a steadily increasing immigration intake. For over a decade, Australia's economy had experienced strong growth, with a marked decline in unemployment which, by 2006, had reached the lowest levels since the early 1970s. Unemployment as a proportion of the labour force averaged 7.2% in the 1980s, 8.6% in the 1990s, and 6.6% during 2000–02. In January 2005 it stood at 5.1%, in July 2007 (the time of the survey) at 4.3%.

By the time of the 2009 survey there was a marked deterioration in the economic environment. Financial commentators portrayed the Global Financial Crisis as posing the most severe economic challenge for industrialised economies since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The Australian government, in alignment with the policies adopted by G20 countries, invested heavily in measures to support the economy on the basis of deficit financing, while the Reserve Bank cut the prime lending rate to the lowest level in 40 years. In a climate of economic uncertainty there were projections of a significant increase in unemployment and at the time of the 2009 survey, unemployment had risen from a low of 4.3% in 2007 to 5.9%. Contrary to dire predictions, this was a relatively low level (for example, in the United States unemployment at the time was 9.5%). Further, Australia was one of a handful of industrialised countries to avoid a recession, defined as two consecutive terms of negative economic growth.

### Immigration

Over the last ten years there has been significant change in the three components that determine net permanent annual immigration: permanent arrivals, conversion of temporary residency to permanent residency, and permanent departures. From June 1998 to June 2009 annual permanent arrivals almost doubled (from 84,200 to 158,000), while the number converting to permanent residency increased four-fold (from 15,100 to 66,600); permanent departures also increased substantially, from 35,200 to 81,100.

Growth has continued over the last two years, despite concerns over the economic outlook. Although the government signalled cuts to the intake in March 2009 (14% cut to the permanent skill intake for 2008–09) and a further cut in the May 2009 budget (6,900 places cut from the permanent skill intake for 2009–10), there was a small increase in the Family Program. Given that immigration was running at near-record levels in the months leading to the onset of the Global Financial Crisis, a very large program was maintained. Recent data indicates that the net change in permanent residents from immigration continued to increase in the 2008–09 financial year, to reach 143,600, up from 129,000 in 2007–08. (Figure 1, Table 1)

The main source countries contributing permanent additions to the population in the six months July–December 2008 were the United Kingdom (14.2%), New Zealand (11.7%), India (10.8%) and China (10.1%).

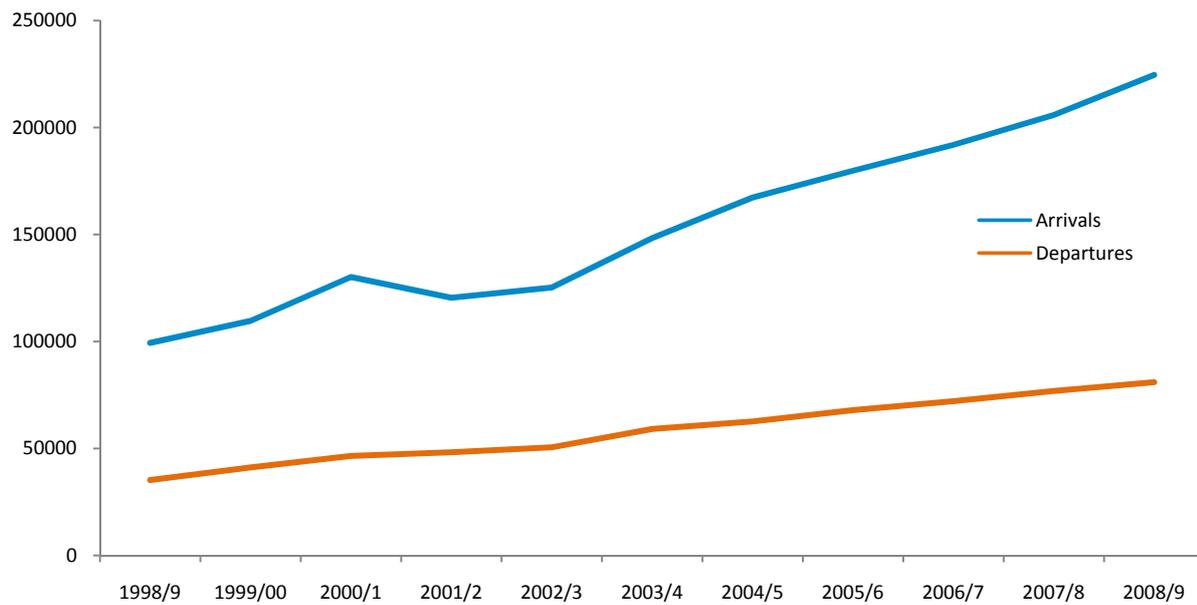
Statistics for permanent immigration only capture part of the magnitude of the current program. Since 1999–2000 the major element of net overseas immigration has been long-term (not permanent) population movement.

Business Long Stay visas were introduced in 1996 and cover both the primary applicant and his or her family. The number of visas in the subclass 457 category increased from 30,800 in 1997–98 to 111,000 in 2007–08. Other categories of long-stay arrivals include New Zealanders (of whom over 500,000 are resident in Australia), students and working holiday makers.<sup>1</sup>

With the various categories combined, the contribution of net overseas migration to the Estimated Resident Population was over 275,000 persons in the 12 months ended 31 March 2009. It is this larger figure that is often quoted in public discussion and has contributed to the perception of an immigration program that is running at record levels.

<sup>1</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.

**Figure 1: Permanent arrivals (including onshore conversion) and departures 1998-2009**



**Table 1: Net change in permanent residents from immigration, 1998–2009 (000s)**

	Permanent arrivals	Conversion onshore to permanent residence	Sub-total	Permanent departures	Net total
1998–99	84.2	15.1	99.3	35.2	64.1
1999–00	92.3	17.3	109.6	41.1	68.5
2000–01	107.4	22.7	130.1	46.5	83.6
2001–02	88.9	31.5	120.4	48.2	72.2
2002–03	93.9	31.3	125.2	50.5	74.7
2003–04	111.6	36.7	148.3	59.1	89.2
2004–05	123.4	43.9	167.3	62.6	104.7
2005–06	131.6	48.2	179.8	67.9	111.9
2006–07	140.1	51.8	191.9	72.1	119.8
2007–08	149.4	56.6	206.0	76.9	129.1
2008–09	158.0	66.6	224.6	81.0	143.6

Source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *Immigration Update*; preliminary data for 2008-09

## Ethnic diversity in the Australian population

At the 2006 census, 23.9% of the Australian population was born overseas. Of the capital cities, the largest proportion of overseas-born resided in Sydney (34.5%), followed by Perth (33.7%), Melbourne (31.0%), Adelaide (25.1%), Brisbane (23.2%) and Hobart (12.8%). The proportion of overseas-born in the mainland capitals is unevenly spread, with concentrations above 50% in some LGAs. 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. The extent of diversity that characterises areas of high immigrant concentration is evident in the profile of one of the LGAs in which local surveys were undertaken for this study.

**Greater Dandenong**, in the south-east of Melbourne, had a population of 125,520 at the time of the 2006 census, comprising some 150 national groups. The proportion born overseas has risen from 38% in 1991 to 56% in 2006, with an overseas-born concentration in the 80–100% range in parts of the LGA. 82% of the population have one or both parents born overseas; 19% of the overseas-born arrived between 2001 and 2006; 62% speak a language other than English in their homes; 26% (16,480 persons) speak English not well or not at all; and 10% speak Vietnamese and 4% Khmer.

# 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 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 tends to describe 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 present survey has adopted 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.

# Indexing the domains of social cohesion

A nominal index of social cohesion has been developed for this project, using the findings of the 2007 national survey to provide baseline data to facilitate measurement of change over time. 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.

**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.

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

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>2</sup> The purpose of the index is to heighten awareness of shifts in opinion which may call for closer attention and analysis.

The 2007 survey provided evidence of a society that was managing to establish a high level of positive outcomes, fostering a sense of belonging, social justice and worth. There were, however, indicators of concern with regard to participation and acceptance, misunderstanding between birthplace groups and varying experiences of discriminatory and hostile behaviour.

Comparison between the 2007 and 2009 survey findings reveals slight change, with variation under 6% within four of the five domains of social cohesion. Variation is at its peak in the indicator of social justice and equity (up 12%); there is also indication of heightened participation. Beside these heightened positive indicators, on the negative side there is indication of heightened rejection (6%), and lowered sense of belonging (4%) and sense of worth (3%).

**Table 2: Index of social cohesion**

	2007 Index	2009 Index	Change 2007-09	Direction of change
Acceptance (rejection)	100	94.4	- 5.6	Lower
Sense of worth	100	97.2	- 2.8	Lower
Sense of belonging	100	96.9	- 3.7	Lower
Social justice and equity	100	112.4	12.4	Higher
Participation (political)	100	105.3	5.3	Higher

<sup>2</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 for 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.

# The logic and consistency of public opinion

A simplistic reading of survey results considers findings against the yardstick of a majority – whether 50% or more respondents endorse a specific proposition, and the extent of variation above or below the 50% mark. The approach adopted in this study is grounded in an understanding of the logic of public opinion, the types of questions that elicit near consensus (whether positive or negative) and those that divide opinion. Survey results are interpreted within three categories:

- Strong positive – above 70%;
- Polarised or divided opinion – in the range 30–70%;
- Strong negative – below 30%.

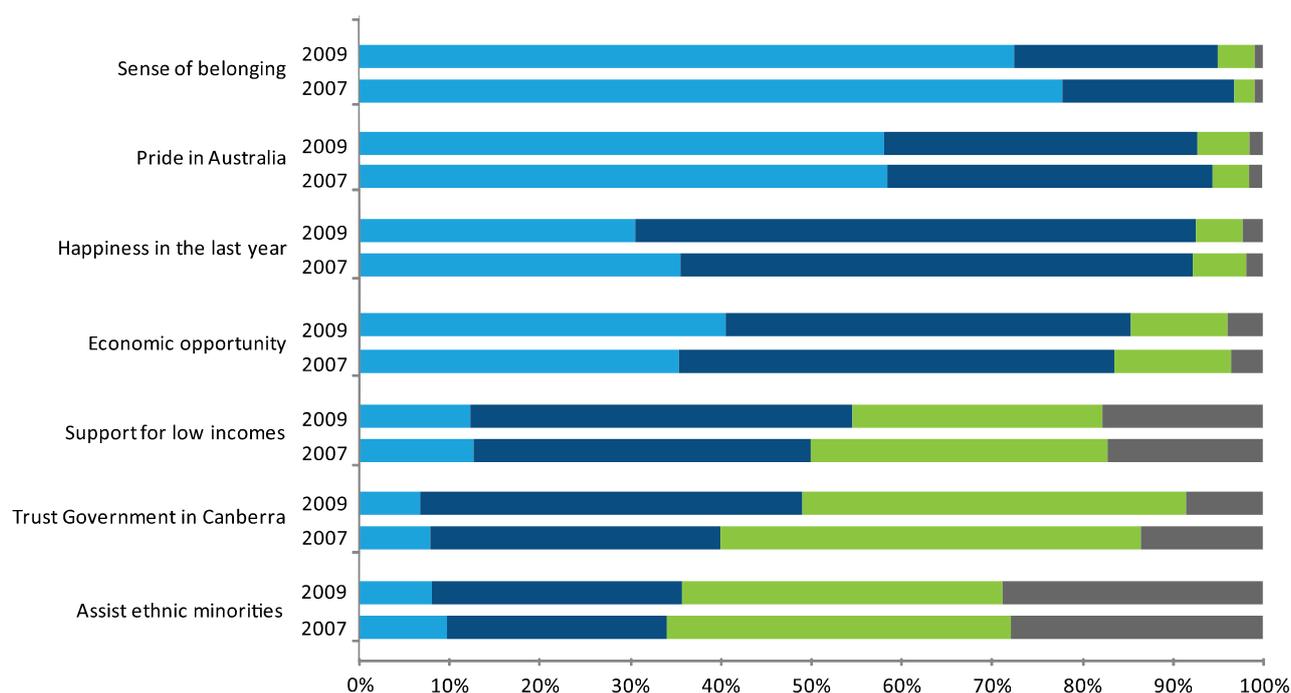
The greatest change between surveys is expected within the category of polarised or divided opinion. In the following overview, results from the 2009 survey are indicated alongside those from 2007.

## Strong positive

General questions relating to national life and levels of personal satisfaction elicited the high levels of positive response that are evident in Australian surveys over the last 20 years. In terms of **identification with Australia**: the overwhelming majority of Australians – 95% (96% in 2007) – express a strong sense of belonging, 92% (94%) take great pride in the Australian way of life, and 93% (95%) believe that maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important.

In terms of **life satisfaction issues**, 89% (89%) indicate that ‘taking all things into consideration’, they are happy with their life, while 82% (85%) expect their lives to be the same or improved in three to four years’ time; 72% (73%) express satisfaction with their present financial situation (24% indicated dissatisfaction in 2009 and 24% in 2007). In terms of **equality of opportunity**, 82% (81%) agree that Australia ‘is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life’. When **immigration is considered in terms of broad principle**, there is a high level of positive sentiment. Thus, in response to the proposition that ‘accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger’, 68% (67%) agree while 27% (26%) disagree.

**Figure 2: Patterns of response, selected questions**



Questions: •To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia? Great, moderate, slight, not at all; •To what extent do you take pride in the Australian way of life and culture? Great, moderate, slight, not at all; •Taking all things into consideration, would you say that over the last year you have been... Very happy, happy, not happy, very unhappy; • Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life. Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree; • People living on low incomes in Australia receive enough financial support from the government. Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree; • How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people? Almost always, most of the time, only some of the time, almost never; • Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions. Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree.

## Divided opinion

Questions dealing with politicised issues elicited divided responses, in the 30–70% range, mirroring the division evident in support for the major political parties, and may undergo significant shift over time, reflecting the changing political fortunes of political parties and the linked attitude to specific policies.

In 2009 there was a higher level of support than in 2007 for government policy and for outcomes in the realm of social justice. Thus, in relation to **specific social justice issues**: 57% (52%) agree that ‘Australia has an excellent government school system’, 33% (36%) disagree; in 2007 opinion was evenly divided (46%: 45%) on whether government financial support to those on low incomes is adequate, in 2009 the majority (50%: 41%) agreed that income support is adequate.

In relation to **confidence in government**, almost half of respondents (48%) have confidence that the federal government will ‘almost always’ or ‘most times’ do what is right for the Australian people, compared with four out of ten respondents (39%) in 2007.

With regard to current immigration policy: 45% (41%) consider that the current intake is ‘about right’, a further 10% (12%) consider it to be too low; a substantial minority 37% (36%) think the intake is too high.

## Strong negative

Questions related to policies that are seen to advantage minorities reveal the highest level of disagreement or opposition. This strongly negative response is inherent in the questions posed, for majority opinion rarely supports special benefits or advantages for minorities. Thus government assistance to ethnic minorities to **maintain their customs and traditions** is seen as of benefit to select minorities, not as of national benefit, as indicated by the finding that 33% (32%) support such assistance, but 60% (62%) oppose it. The majority also consider that the distribution of income in Australian society is inequitable. When presented with the proposition that ‘the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large’, 71% agree (down from 77% in 2007); only a small minority of 22% (18%) disagree.

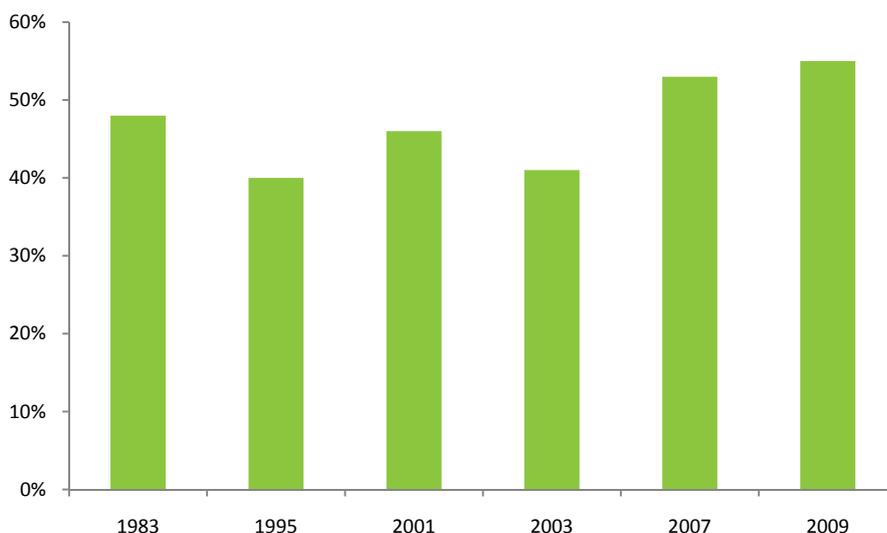
## Long-term trends

The key to interpreting survey findings is the context of results – without context it is as though we were asked to find our way around an unfamiliar city without a map. Findings of earlier Australian surveys provide a map for interpreting results, affording the means to locate long-term trends. Re-administration of the 2007 survey has enabled short-term trends to be understood at a level of precision rarely available in Australian social science research.

### Trust

The 2007 survey indicated an increased level of trust in fellow Australians. A question relating to trust has been posed in identical terms in five surveys, with respondents given the options that most people ‘can be trusted’, that one ‘can’t be too careful’, or that it is not possible to answer. For the first time, the 2007 survey indicated majority endorsement of the proposition that most can be trusted – a marked change since 2003. The 2009 survey replicated the 2007 finding. (Figure 3) Also evident in the 2009 survey was an increased level of trust in the Australian government.

**Figure 3: Most people can be trusted**



### Sense of pride

Consideration of sense of pride in being Australian indicates a level of consistency above 90%. (Figure 4)

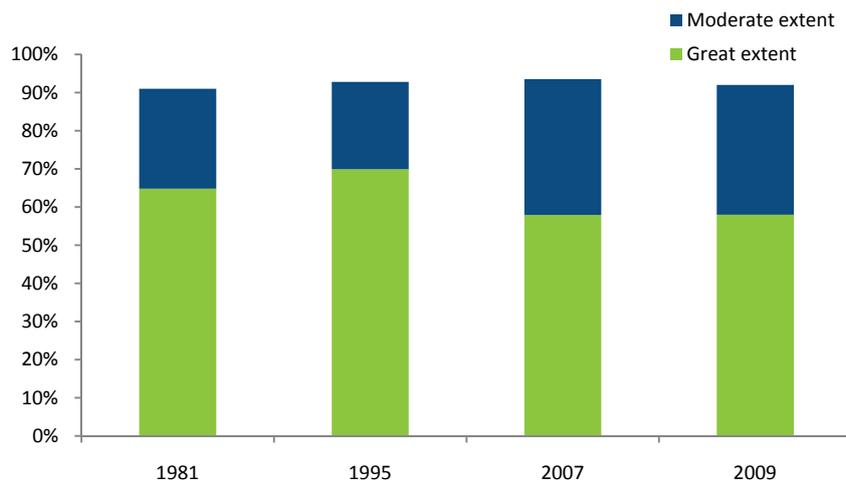
### Personal finances

Questions relating to financial satisfaction have been asked using different wording and scales of measurement. While allowance needs to be made for these differences, a large measure of consistency is indicated when the strongest level of financial satisfaction is considered ('very satisfied') between 1981 and 2007, with a marginal decline in 2009 (20% in 1981, 18% in 1995, 18% in 2007 and 15% in 2009). There has, however, been marked change in the second category, those indicating that they were 'satisfied', which registered 41% in 1981, 35% in 1995, a markedly higher 57% in 2007, a finding replicated in 2009. (Figure 5)

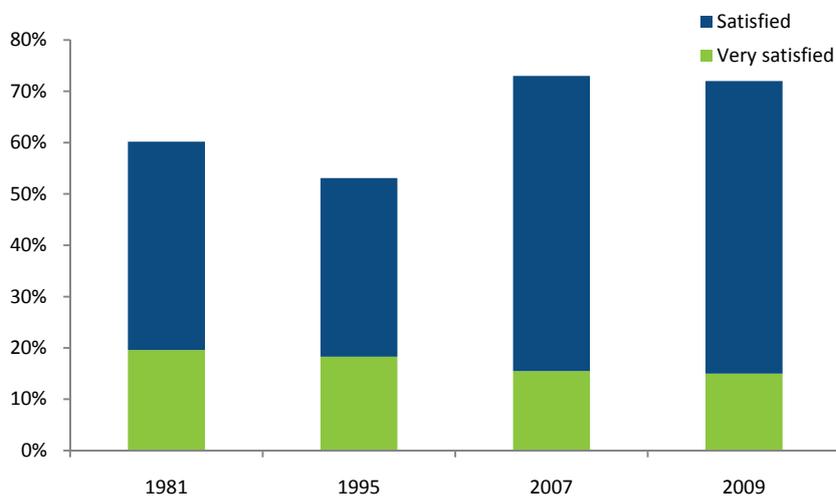
### Assistance to ethnic minorities

One of the most striking findings denoting shift in opinion relates to the issue of government support to ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions. While still a minority viewpoint at slightly over 30%, the 2007 survey indicated a doubling of support from findings recorded in 1995 and 2003. The 2009 survey again replicated the 2007 finding. (Figure 6)

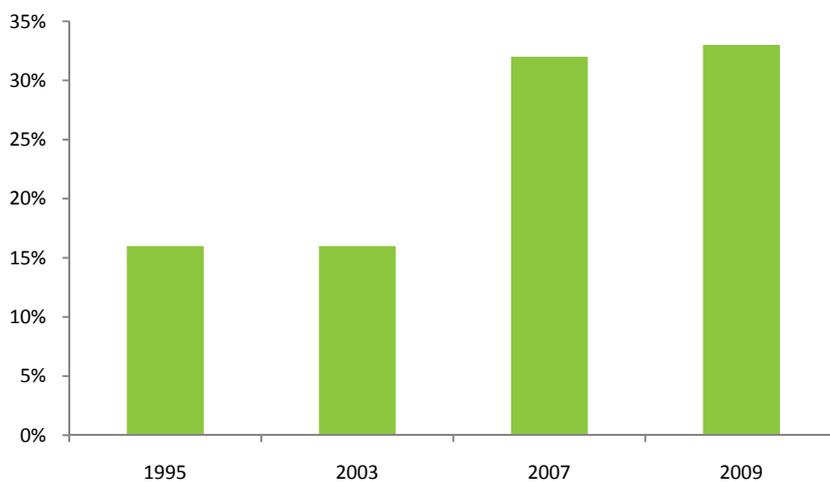
**Figure 4: Pride in Australian nationality, way of life and culture**



**Figure 5: Financial satisfaction**



**Figure 6: Agreement with the proposition that ethnic minorities in Australia should be given government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions**



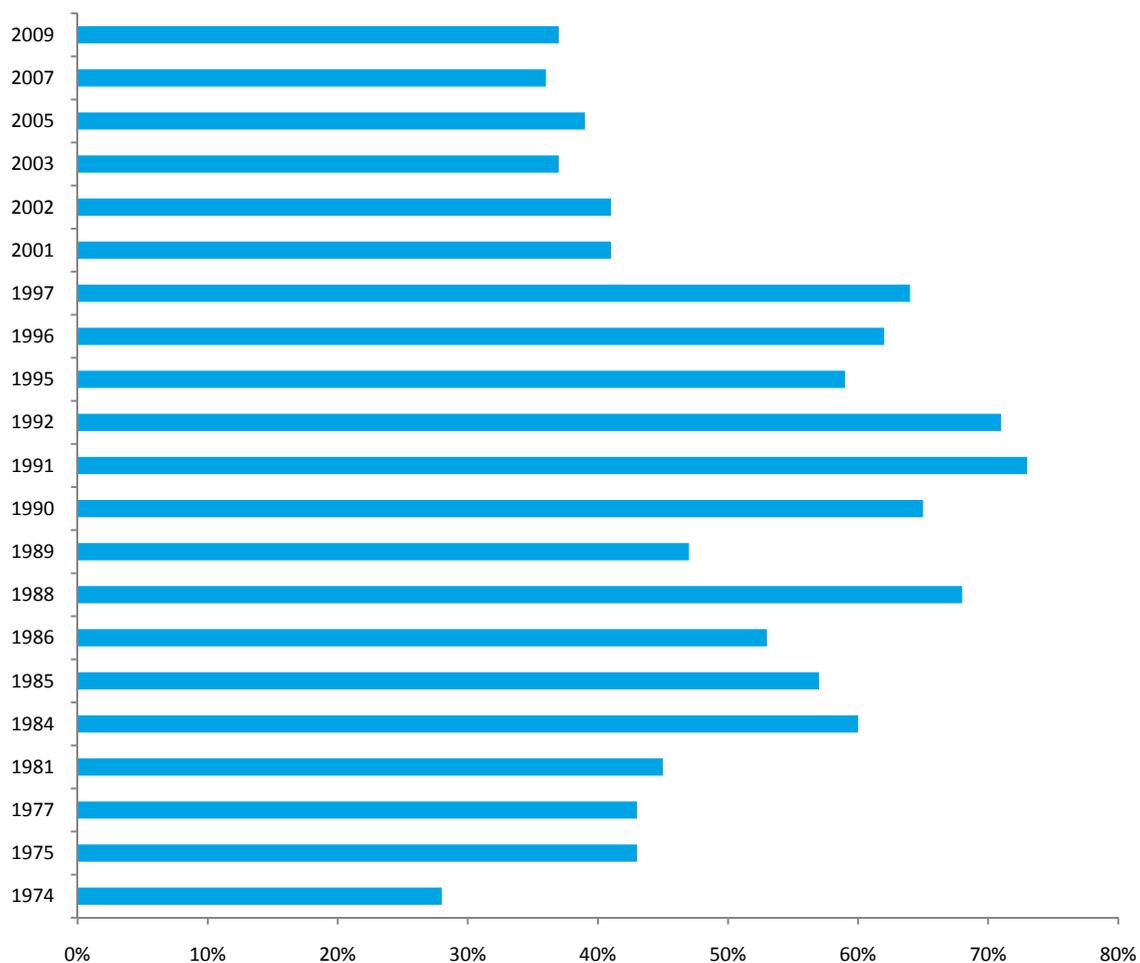
# Immigration

Questions related to the immigration intake have been a staple of polling for over 50 years and provide the basis for precise understanding of trends in public opinion. These questions produce the most volatile results, ranging across the 30–70% range which characterises politicised issues. Whereas in the mid-1990s a large majority (over 70% at its peak) considered that the intake was too high, surveys since 1998 indicate a significant and consistent shift in opinion, such that opposition to the intake has become the minority viewpoint and for eight years the level of those considering the intake to be about right or too low has been in the range 54–57%.

**Table 3: What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present?**

Year	Too high	About right/ too few
1996	62%	32%
1997	64%	28%
2001	41%	54%
2002	41%	54%
2003	37%	57%
2005	39%	56%
2007	36%	53%
2009	37%	55%

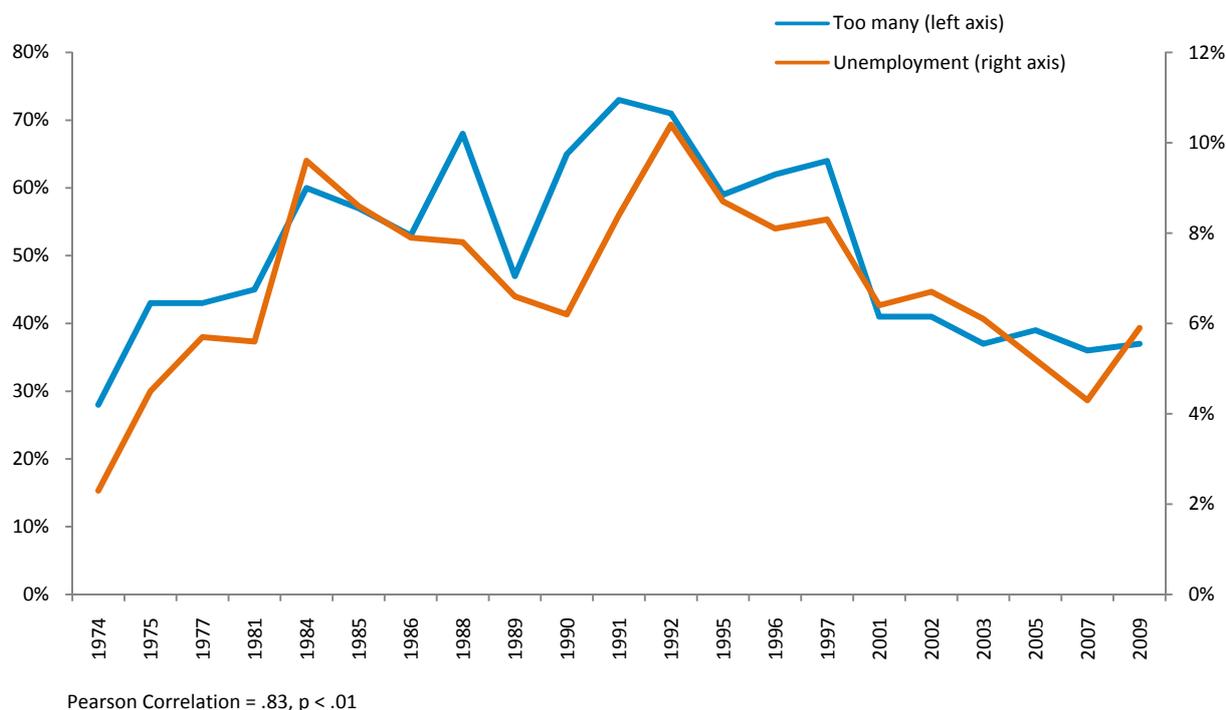
**Figure 7: Proportion of respondents indicating that the immigration intake is ‘too high’, 1974–2009**



Long-run survey findings indicate that attitudes to immigration are closely correlated with trends in unemployment; a secondary correlation is with the extent to which immigration issues are politicised, as indicated by the impact of the debate over the supposed 'Asianisation' of Australia in the mid-1980s, the public controversies of 1988–89 and the rise to national prominence of Pauline Hanson and her One Nation Party in the period 1996–98. These patterns are indicated by Figure 8.

In the context of the economic concerns of the past two years and the rise in unemployment, increased negative attitude to immigration was expected given the long-term pattern of public opinion. The 2009 data, however, does not indicate that this shift has occurred. Several factors may explain this finding. One possibility is that there is a perception that the immigration intake has been reduced. Media reports at the time of the May 2009 budget and earlier indicated that a cut to the intake had been made; indeed, there were some reports that the intake was to be 'slashed'.

**Figure 8: Correlation between unemployment and those of the view that the 'immigration intake is too high', 1974–2009**



**Table 4: To the best of your knowledge, immigration into Australia in the last 12 months has:**

Increased	50%
Decreased	8%
Remained unchanged	27%
Don't know	16%
N (unweighted)	2019

The 2009 survey included a question on perception of the intake. Only 8% of respondents to the national survey were of the view that immigration has decreased over the last 12 months, 27% considered that it remained unchanged and the largest proportion, 50%, that it had increased.

Given this finding, it seems that the interplay of five factors explains the continuing high level of support for immigration. **These all point to the limited impact of the economic downturn and the lack of connection in the outlook of respondents between economic issues and immigration.**

1. Belief in the value of immigration continues to be widely held across the community; thus when asked for their response to the proposition that ‘accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger’, 68% (67% in 2007) of respondents agreed while 27% (26%) disagreed.
2. Up to the time of the 2009 survey (June–July) the impact of the global economic crisis had been limited in Australia, a point highlighted by comparison with previous economic downturns; the level of unemployment increased by 1.6% between July 2007 and July 2009, to 5.9% of the workforce; this compares with an increase from 6.3% to 9.9% in the early 1990s and from 5.9% to 10.7% in the early 1980s.

**Table 5: Level of unemployment, 1981–83, 1990–93, 2007–09**

Period	Low	High	Change
Jan. 1981 – July 1983	5.9%	10.7%	+4.8%
Jan. 1990 – Sept. 1993	6.3%	9.9%	+3.6%
July 2007 – July 2009	4.3%	5.9%	+1.6%

Labour force data indicates that impact of the economic downturn has not been felt evenly across the population, with the loss of jobs almost wholly concentrated among the 15–24 age group. Comparison of the 2007 and 2009 surveys by age group, however, indicates only a marginal increase in negativity amongst this group, with the most marked increase amongst those aged above 64. (Table 6)

3. Respondents do not indicate a marked increase in concern for their economic circumstances; thus, when asked ‘how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your present financial situation’, in 2007, 73% indicated that they were satisfied, 24% that they were dissatisfied; the findings for 2009 were almost identical: 72% satisfied, 24% dissatisfied.
4. The 2009 survey indicates an increased level of confidence in the government and its policies, a confidence that is reflected in the attitude to immigration. Amongst the large proportion indicating that they would likely vote for Labour if an election was held on the day they were interviewed for the survey, only 34% considered that the immigration intake was too high, compared with 46% of those likely to vote Liberal, 61% National and 25% Green.
5. Immigration issues (unlike the issue of people arriving by boat to seek asylum) have not become politicised; there was almost no partisan debate over immigration in the 12 months preceding the 2009 survey.

**Table 6: What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present? Would you say it is... Response: ‘Too high’, cross-tabulated by age**

	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+	Total
2007–too high	35%	28%	35%	35%	40%	47%	44%	36%
2009 – too high	38%	29%	31%	37%	38%	55%	52%	37%
N 2007 / 2009 (unweighted)	216 / 166	385 / 264	387 / 389	362 / 415	301 / 418	211 / 351	121 / 140	1984 / 2003

# Community involvement

## Reported behaviour and experience

As well as listening to what survey respondents tell us about attitudes, we also need to consider what is reported with regard to social involvement and interaction. To what extent do people involve themselves in political life, to what extent in community activities through voluntary work? Research indicates that the extent to which individuals show trust and engage in co-operative activities – the level of ‘social capital’ – is directly related to the harmonious operation of their communities. Of particular interest is the concept of ‘bridging capital’ as developed by the American political scientist Robert Putnam, which is concerned with the linkages and networks established between members of socially heterogeneous groups. Also of importance is the extent of negative interaction, such as the experience of discrimination, which may hinder contact between members of different social groups and lead to alienation from the wider society.

## Trust

As already noted, the 2009 survey replicated the 2007 finding of a relatively high level of agreement with the proposition that ‘most people can be trusted’ – 55% in 2009, 53% in 2007. The significance of this finding for cohesion at the community level is lessened, however, by marked variation by economic status. As the work of Putnam indicates, the level of social capital is lower in socio-economically depressed communities, and in communities which are ethnically diverse, issues explored in the last part of this report.

The national survey indicated that of those in employment, 58% agree that ‘most people can be trusted’ while 37% agree that ‘you can’t be too careful in dealing with people’. For those who are unemployed, the proportions are almost the inverse: 38% agree that most can be trusted and 60% that you can’t be too careful. Of those who describe themselves as prosperous, 78% agree that most can be trusted, 66% of those self-described as ‘living very comfortably’, 58% of those ‘living reasonably comfortably’, and 44% of those ‘just getting along’.

## Active community participation

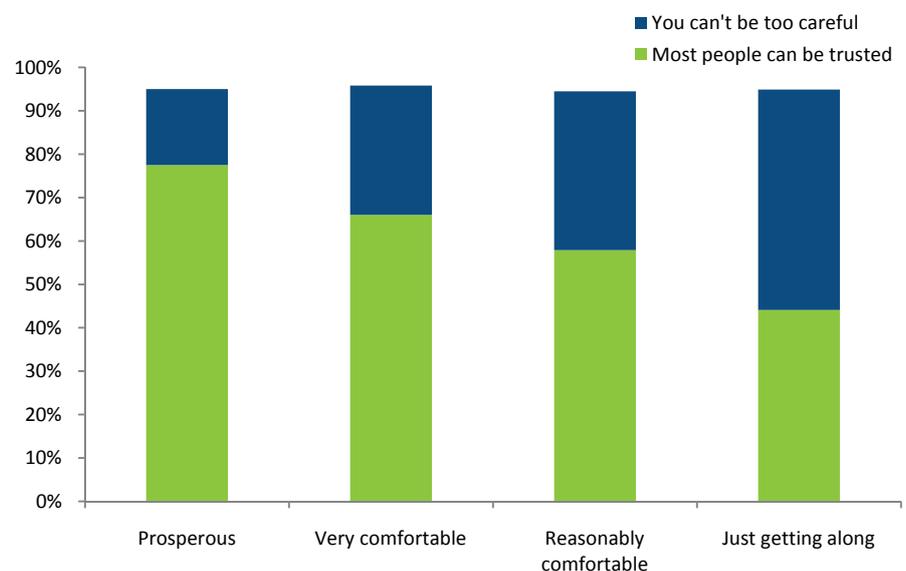
A substantial proportion of the population is actively involved in community life and politics. The 2009 survey provided a broad definition of voluntary work:

The next questions are about unpaid voluntary work. By this I mean 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. Have you done any unpaid voluntary work of this kind in the last 12 months?

Almost one in two respondents (48%) indicated that they had undertaken such voluntary work in the last 12 months: 25% of all respondents indicated involvement in voluntary work at least once per week, higher than the 17% in 2007 when the question on voluntary work was asked without a definition of the term.

With regard to **political participation**, there is a consistent indication of some increase in political involvement since 2007. Over the last three years, 87% of respondents (85% in 2007) had voted in an election and 56% (55%) had signed a petition. A much smaller (but increased) proportion was engaged in action requiring deliberate choice and initiative. Over the past three years, 27% (24%) had written or spoken to a member of parliament; 14% (12%) had participated in a boycott; 13% (13%) had attended a protest; 11% (9%) had attended a political meeting; and 6% (5%) had participated in a strike.

**Figure 9: Personal trust cross-tabulated with self-described socio-economic status**



## Future expectations

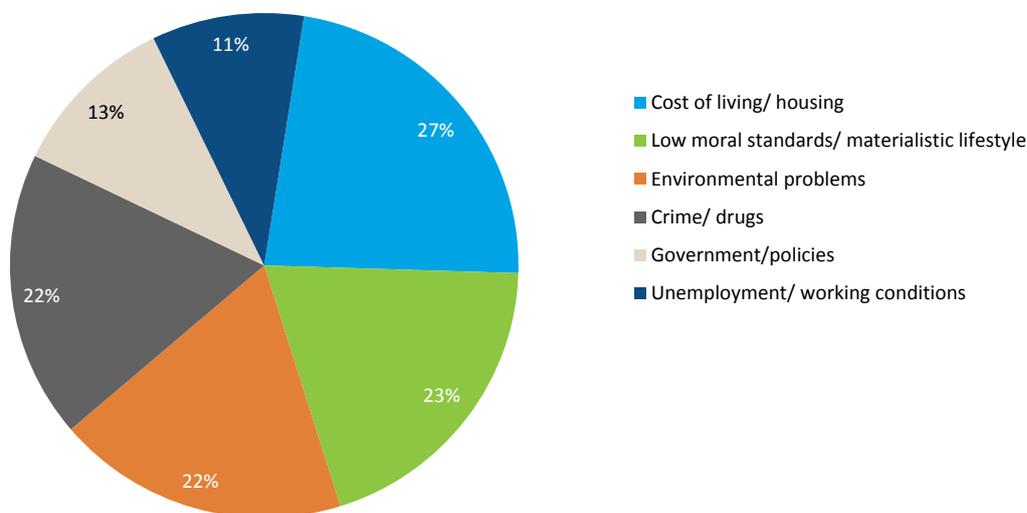
When asked to consider their future prospects, 82% (85% in 2007) expected that their lives would be the same or improved in three or four years, 12% (11%) that their lives would be a little worse or much worse. But when asked about the future of today's children, only 54% (52%) of respondents expected that the children's lives would remain the same as their own or would be improved – a substantial minority of 42% (43%) thought that their children's lives would be worse. When asked for their reasons, there was a broad range of response. The most common references were to cost of living and housing (27%), low moral standards and materialistic lifestyle (23%), environmental problems – pollution and climate change (22%), crime and drugs (22%), government issues (13%), the prospect of unemployment and poor working conditions (11%). (Figure 10) As in 2007, there were very few references to the traditional fear of war or to terrorism.

## Variables of geography, gender, education, age and birthplace

Analysis of the distribution of opinion across a range of variables helps identify where and among whom social cohesion may be threatened. Statistical analysis at the national level considered differences in opinion with regard to the variables of region of residence, gender, level of education and qualification, age, birthplace of respondents and of their parents. There is no uniform pattern of response across the full range of questions in the survey, but with regard to immigration and settlement issues, the lowest level of support for government policy was found among: people with no qualifications or trade-level qualifications and people aged over 65. Variation is illustrated by considering level of agreement with the current immigration intake and the proposition that 'accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger'. In addition to the key variables identified, response to these questions also indicates that there is a consistency of higher negative response amongst residents outside the capital cities, the Australia-born, and (and in response to the value of immigration from many different countries) residents of New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland.

Comparison of 2007 and 2009 results indicates very little change: of 42 variables considered for the two questions, statistically significant change was observed for only 3 variables, or 7%. (Tables 7 and 8)

**Figure 10: Reasons specified by those who consider that the lives of children will be worse than for today's generation; six most common categories of response**



Does not total to 100% as respondents could give multiple responses.

**Table 7: What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present? Response: 'Too high'**

Gender	Male	Female				
2007	33%	39%				
2009	35%	40%				
State	South Australia	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	Queensland	
2007	30%	30%	42%	35%	39%	
2009	33%	37%	38%	39%	41%	
Region	Capital	Rest of state				
2007	33%	43%				
2009	35%	42%				
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+
2007	35%	28%	35%	35%	40%	46%
2009	38%	29%	31%	37%	38%	53%
Level of completed education	To year 12	Trade/diploma	BA or higher			
2007	41%	36%	20%			
2009	<b>47%**</b>	<b>45%**</b>	22%			
Birthplace	Australia	Overseas-ESB	Overseas-NESB			
2007	40%	29%	27%			
2009	43%	29%	25%			

\*\*Significant change between 2007 and 2009 at  $p < .05$

**Table 8: Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger. Response: 'Strongly agree' and 'agree'**

Gender	Male	Female				
2007	73%	62%				
2009	69%	<b>67%**</b>				
State	South Australia	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	Queensland	
2007	75%	70%	64%	67%	65%	
2009	71%	76%	65%	59%	65%	
Region	Capital	Rest of state				
2007	70%	62%				
2009	71%	62%				
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+
2007	75%	71%	72%	66%	66%	57%
2009	71%	73%	73%	67%	67%	55%
Level of completed education	To year 12	Trade/diploma	BA or higher			
2007	63%	66%	83%			
2009	63%	61%	78%			
Birthplace	Australia	Overseas-ESB	Overseas-NESB			
2007	64%	69%	75%			
2009	64%	71%	78%			

\*\*Significant change between 2007 and 2009 at  $p < .05$

# Birthplace groups in the national survey

Analysis of the national sample was undertaken by three birthplace groups – those born in Australia, those born in English-speaking countries (ESB), and those born in non-English speaking countries (NESB).<sup>3</sup> There was a large measure of convergence with regard to sense of belonging and worth and appraisal of social justice issues, as discussed below. The greatest *divergence* is evident in response to issues of participation and acceptance, including questions related to community involvement, experience of discrimination, and immigration and settlement policy.

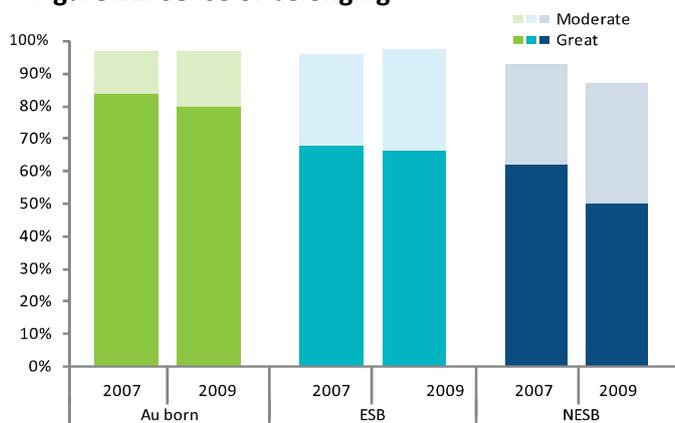
## Belonging

The Australia-born indicated the strongest sense of belonging, gave the greatest consideration to maintaining the Australian way of life and culture, and the greatest sense of pride; on all three indicators, the ESB came next, followed by NESB.

While all indicators are slightly lower in 2009 for the NESB, the very high level of identification is a significant finding: thus 88% of the NESB group (93% in 2007) had a sense of belonging in Australia to a great or moderate extent, 87% (89%) took pride in the Australian way of life and culture to a great or moderate extent, and 91% (94%) strongly agreed or agreed that maintaining the Australian way of life and culture was important.

Although at the aggregated level ('great' + 'moderate') response levels were similar in 2007 and 2009, there was a decline at the strongest level; thus among Australia-born, those indicating a 'great' sense of belonging declined from 84% to 80%, among NESB respondents from 62% to 50%. (Figure 11)

**Figure 11: Sense of belonging**



<sup>3</sup> The term 'non-English speaking background' (NESB) is employed in this analysis as it is the most sensible and accurate term available, even though it is no longer preferred terminology in Australia. Terms in recent favour, which include CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) and MESC/ non-MESC (Main English Speaking Country/ non-Main English Speaking Country), are problematic. CALD, used exclusively to apply to non-English speaking peoples, falsely implies that the English-speaking immigrants, who come from many lands, are not culturally diverse (that cultural diversity is somehow an attribute of the non-English speaking). MESC/ non-MESC is simply more confusing than ESB/ NESB, without conferring any substantial terminological advantage.

## 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 for the three groups in 2007, between 45–47% agreed that those on low incomes received enough financial support from the government; in 2009, the same proportion – 46% – of the Australia-born and ESB agreed, but a significantly higher 64% of the NESB. When considering the proposition that 'Australia is a land of economic opportunity ...' the strongest agreement was from the ESB at 89% (86%), followed by 83% (80%) of the NESB and 82% (80%) of the Australia-born.

## Acceptance and rejection

About two out of ten Australia-born report having experienced discrimination over the course of their lives as a consequence of their skin colour or ethnic origin; the proportion for the ESB is three out of ten (31%, 32% in 2007) and NESB almost five out of ten (48%, 43%). The NESB report discrimination over the last 12 months at more than double the level for the Australia-born (18%, compared to 8%), close to the relative proportions in 2007.

## Participation and community involvement

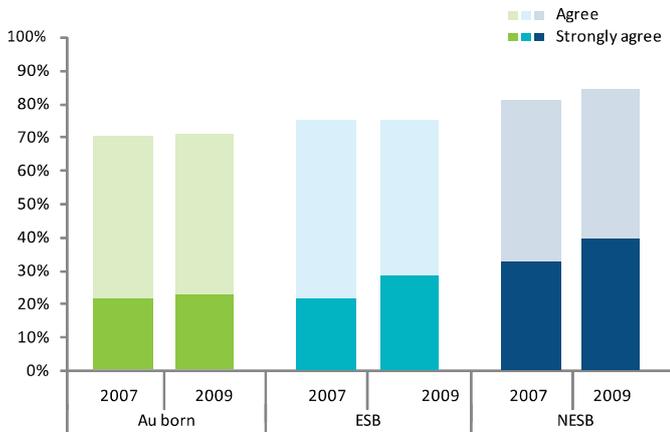
The ESB indicated the highest level of involvement, followed by the Australia-born, with the NESB registering the lowest level on most indicators. Thus 56% of the ESB, 49% of the Australia-born and 40% of the NESB indicated that they had undertaken voluntary work in the last twelve months; 61% (63% in 2007) of the Australia-born, 63% (47%) of the ESB and 34% (32%) of the NESB had signed a petition over the last three years; 30% (27%) of the Australia-born, 27% (27%) of the ESB and 18% (12%) of the NESB had contacted a member of parliament.

## Immigration and settlement

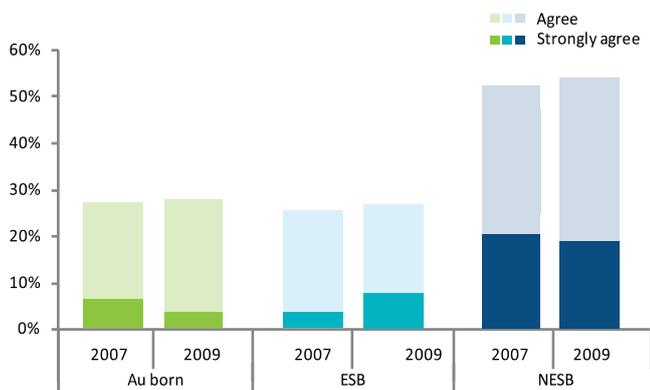
Attitudes to immigration issues provide evidence of marked attitudinal divergence: the NESB are more likely by large measure to agree with the benefit of immigration from a range of different countries and with government assistance to ethnic minorities; when considering the current immigration intake, in 2009 the level of support among ESB and NESB increased, the level among the Australia-born was constant.

- In response to the question of whether immigration from different countries had made Australia stronger, 21% (20%) Australia-born, 28% (20%) ESB and 37% (31%) NESB were strongly in agreement. (Figure 12)
- In response to the question of government assistance to ethnic minorities for maintenance of customs and traditions, 28% (27%) Australia-born, 27% (25%) ESB and 53% (53%) NESB agreed. (Figure 13)
- 51% (50%) Australia-born, 66% (57%) ESB and 65% (60%) NESB considered the immigration intake to be 'about right' or 'too low'.

**Figure 12: Immigrants from many different countries make Australia stronger**



**Figure 13: Funding to ethnic groups**

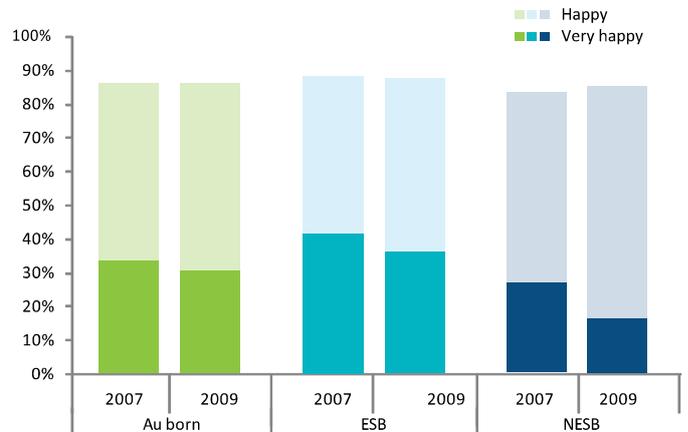


## Sense of worth, life satisfaction

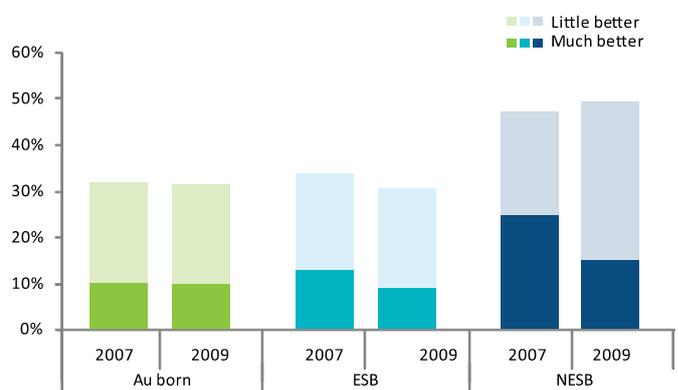
Responses to sense of worth and life satisfaction questions reveal two patterns. First, as in other elements of the survey, the responses of the Australia-born and ESB are differentiated from the NESB. Second, while Australia-born and ESB express higher levels of satisfaction with their lives at the strongest level, the NESB have a stronger sense that their own lives and the lives of today's children will improve. (Figure 15)

There is little change between 2007 and 2009 when two levels of agreement are aggregated; but at the highest level, there has been a decline in the level of positive sentiment, particularly among NESB respondents. Thus, in 2007, 27% of NESB respondents indicated that they were 'very happy', 17% in 2009. (Figure 14)

**Figure 14: Happiness over the last 12 months**



**Figure 15: Lives of today's children will be**



## Local surveys

Social cohesion operates not in the abstract, the realm of the ‘nation’, but at the community level, where people of different backgrounds and cultures make their lives. This understanding informed the decision to undertake surveys in areas of high immigrant concentration, where, it is hypothesised, the potential for social tension is higher. Surveys typically focus on attitudes at the national level, or are local case studies. The Scanlon Foundation Social Cohesion surveys are distinctive in their objective to provide the means to interpret local data in the context of a simultaneous national survey.

In 2009, surveys were undertaken in two outer urban regions in which a high proportion (above 85%) of the population is Australia-born, and in four areas of high immigrant concentration. In terms of the discussion on the logic of public opinion (see page 11, above), the primary focus of the following discussion is not on the proportion of respondents agreeing or disagreeing with specific questions and propositions, but the extent of variation in the patterns of response at the national and local levels.

### Outer urban

The outer urban areas surveyed were Engadine and adjacent suburbs (Heathcote, Waterfall, Woronora, all referred to as Engadine in the following discussion), located more than 30km south-south-west of the Sydney CBD (50 minutes by car), part of the Sutherland Shire and bordering the Heathcote and Royal National Parks; and Sunbury, located more than 40 km north-west of the Melbourne CBD, (45 minutes by car), part of the Hume LGA.

These areas are characterised by the high proportion of Australia-born residents, amongst the highest in Sydney and Melbourne, and the relatively high proportion of immigrants from English-speaking countries. Thus, while in Sydney 35% of the population is overseas-born and in Melbourne 31%, and 21% speak a language other than English in their homes, in the two areas surveyed, 14–15% is born overseas and only 9–10% speak a language other than English. In Sunbury the average individual weekly income is \$50 above the national average, in Engadine it is \$115 above the average. In the Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-Economic Index which measures the level of well-being in each region, Sunbury is ranked at the eighth decile (or the third-most advantaged level) while Engadine is ranked at the tenth decile (the most advantaged). Among survey respondents, Engadine had a marginally older population (18% retired compared to 13% in Sunbury), a very low proportion unemployed (3% compared to 6%), and indications of marginally greater prosperity; for example, 33% of Engadine respondents owned their own homes, compared to 28% in Sunbury.

The survey explored the attitudes of the Australia-born residents of Sunbury and Engadine, in the context of attitudes of the Australia-born in the national survey. It was of particular interest to provide an insight into attitudes in these largely Australia-born residential regions, located in the hinterland of major immigrant concentrations in the western suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne, two of which – Bankstown and the south-east region of the Hume LGA – were also surveyed.

When survey results for the Australia-born in the national survey and the Australia-born in the outer urban areas are compared, on most questions Engadine respondents indicated above average positive responses, Sunbury below average, but the difference for most questions was within five percentage points.

Thus, when asked concerning their level of happiness over the last 12 months, 88% of respondents in Sunbury and 92% in Engadine indicated that they were happy compared with 89% at the national level. When asked for their response to the proposition that immigrants from many different countries made Australia stronger, 62% of Sunbury residents and 67% in Engadine agreed, compared with 64% nationally.

The greatest variation occurred when issues of participation and trust were considered for Sunbury, with results up to 13 percentage points below the national average; and sense of safety for Engadine, with results up to 16 percentage points above average. There are also some indications of heightened negativity in Sunbury when immigration issues are considered, an element that is not found in Engadine. Issues related to sense of worth and belonging produced the least variation, as indicated in the following summary table which groups responses within five categories. (For full details, see Table 10.)

**Table 9: Summary indicators, national and outer urban suburbs**

	National (Au-born)	Sunbury (Au-born)	Engadine (Au-born)
Sense of worth/belonging	81%	78%	84%
Participation and trust	50%	41%	53%
Acceptance and rejection: immigration issues	58%	53%	61%
Acceptance and rejection: neighbours	66%	64%	73%
Acceptance and rejection: sense of safety	69%	68%	83%
Average	68%	63%	74%
N (unweighted)	1510	297	297

**Table 10: Selected questions, national and outer urban suburbs**

	All respondents National	Au-born National	Au-born Sunbury	Au-born Engadine
Level of happiness over the last 12 months: very happy and happy	89%	89%	88%	92%
Satisfaction with present financial situation: very satisfied and satisfied	72%	73%	67%	72%
What has been the impact of immigration in your local area? Very positive and positive	47%	45%	37%	48%
Local area: people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together: strongly agree and agree	70%	71%	73%	78%
Immigrants from many different countries make Australia stronger: strongly agree and agree	68%	64%	62%	67%
Current immigration intake is about right or too low	55%	51%	43%	54%
Local area: people willing to help their neighbours: strongly agree and agree	80%	81%	73%	78%
How worried are you about becoming a victim of crime in your local area? Not worried, not at all worried	75%	76%	76%	87%
Safe walking alone at night: very safe and fairly safe	61%	62%	59%	78%
Most people can be trusted	55%	54%	45%	53%
Trust local council to do what is right for the people in the area: almost always, most of the time	44%	45%	34%	55%
Do you agree or disagree that you can influence local council decisions affecting your local area? Strongly agree and agree	51%	54%	41%	57%
N (unweighted)	2019	1510	297	297

Green shading indicates difference >7 percentage points below the reference group

## Regions of high immigrant concentration

The regions of high immigrant concentration surveyed were within the LGAs of Fairfield and Bankstown in Sydney and Greater Dandenong and Hume in Melbourne.

**Fairfield LGA** 30+ km west of the CBD (45 minutes by car), surveying conducted mostly in the north-eastern part of the LGA, including the suburbs of Smithfield, Fairfield, Cabramatta, Canley Vale, Prairiewood, Wakeley, Edensor Park

**Bankstown LGA** 20+ km (40 minutes by car) south-west of the CBD, surveying concentrated in the suburbs of Greenacre, Chullora, Mt Lewis, Bankstown

**South-east Hume LGA** 20+ km north of CBD (30 minutes by car), surveying concentrated in Merri Ward, encompassing the suburbs of Broadmeadows, Dallas, Jacana, Coolaroo, Meadow Heights, Campbellfield

**Greater Dandenong LGA** 30+ km south-east of the CBD (30 minutes by car), surveying concentrated in the suburbs of Dandenong, Noble Park, Keysborough, Springvale.

These areas are characterised by the high proportion of overseas-born residents, amongst the highest in Sydney and Melbourne, and the relatively high proportion of immigrants from non-English-speaking countries. Thus in the areas of Hume and Bankstown surveyed, at the 2006 census close to 40% of the residents were born overseas, in Greater Dandenong and Fairfield close to 60%. In the south-east corner of Hume and in Greater Dandenong, over 60% of residents speak a language other than English in their homes, in Bankstown and Fairfield over 70%. When respondents were asked 'what proportion of all the people in your local area are of the same national or ethnic group as you', under 20% indicated 'all' or 'more than half', compared with 86% in Sunbury and 92% in Engadine.

In all four regions the average weekly individual income is well below the national average of \$466: in 2006 it was \$248 in south-east Hume, \$317 in Bankstown, \$319 in Fairfield and \$342 in Greater Dandenong. Consistent with these income levels, the Socio-Economic Index places south-east Hume in the bottom decile (the highest level of relative socio-economic disadvantage), Greater Dandenong and Bankstown in the third and Fairfield in the fourth.

The survey in each of the four localities reached the target of 300 respondents, designed to yield a 50:50 ratio of Australia-born and overseas-born respondents. This methodology yielded sufficient respondents to analyse the findings for three birth-place groups at both the local and national levels:

- Long-time Australians (those born in Australia, with both parents born in Australia);
- Australia-born;
- NESB Australians (those born in a country whose main language is other than English).

**Table 11: Economic and demographic characteristics, areas of immigrant concentration, 2006**

	Median weekly income - individual	Socio-economic index- decile	Median age	Proportion born overseas	Language other than English spoken at home
Australia	\$466		37	22%	21%
SE Hume*	\$248	1	33	42%	67%
Greater Dandenong	\$342	3	36	60%	61%
Bankstown*	\$317	3	32	45%	76%
Fairfield	\$319	4	34	58%	72%

\*Data relates to areas surveyed

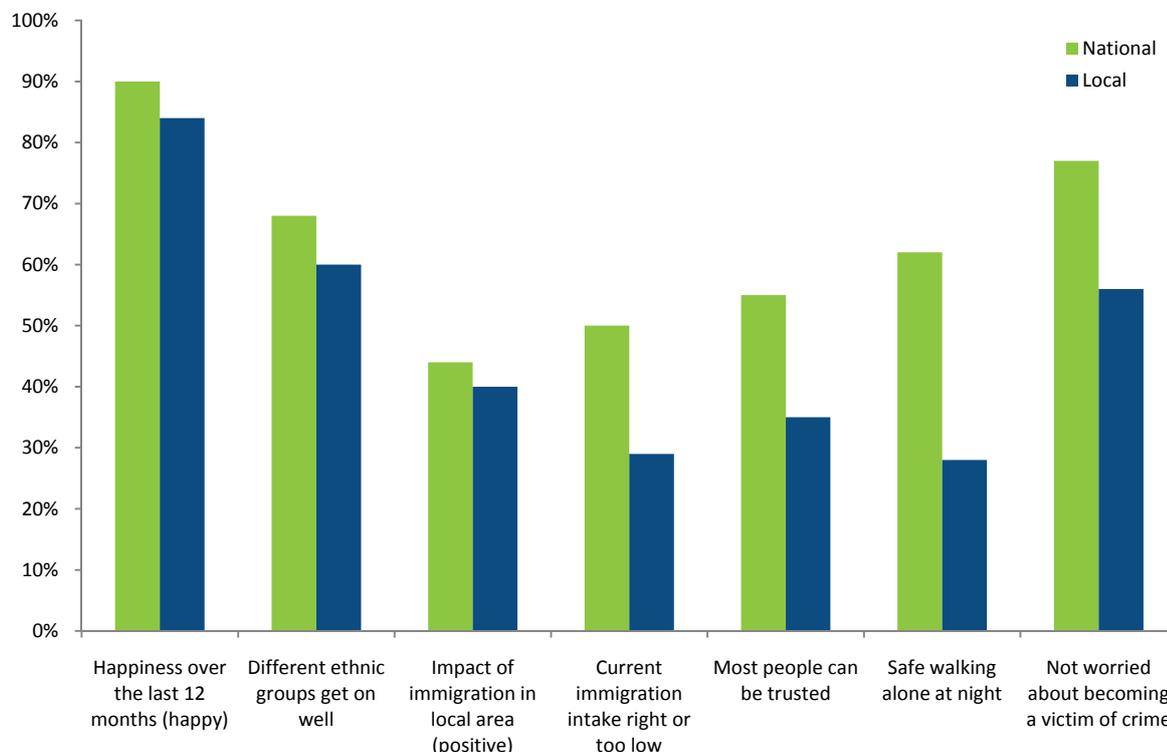
The findings for these regions of immigrant concentration indicate much larger variation from the national findings for the long-time Australian and Australia-born respondents, lower variation for NESB respondents.

There are four key findings from the comparison of attitudes of long-time Australian respondents at the national and local levels:

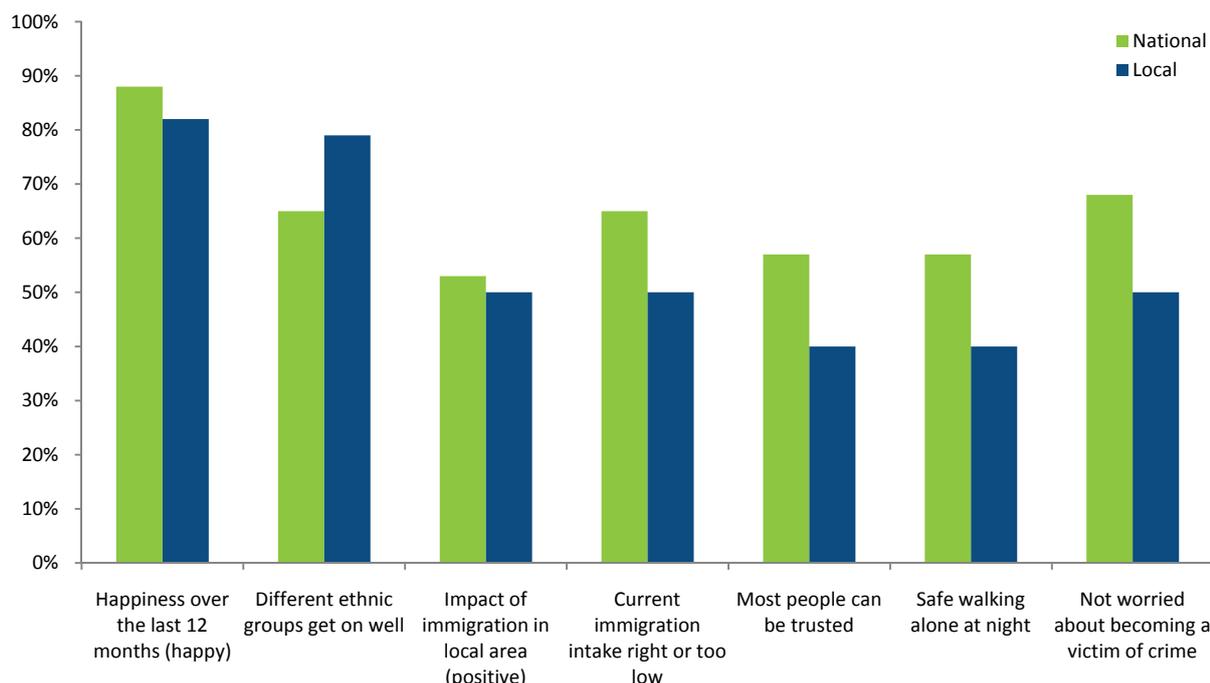
1. The indicators of sense of worth and belonging are only marginally different – thus 90% at the national level and 84% at the local indicate that they have been ‘happy’ or ‘very happy’ over the last 12 months.
2. Questions related to the impact of immigration show only minor variation. When asked about the impact of immigration in their locality, 40% of long-time Australian respondents in the areas of immigrant concentration indicate that the impact is positive, 44% in the national survey. When asked if people from different national and ethnic communities get on well together, 60% in the local survey and 68% in the national are in agreement.

3. There is, however, a marked difference when the on-going immigration program is considered: only 29% of long-time Australian respondents are of the view that the current intake is ‘about right’ or ‘too low’, compared with 50% at the national level.
4. Responses to a number of questions indicate that the level of social capital and sense of security is markedly lower for long-time Australians in these regions of immigrant concentration. Thus only 35% agree that most people can be trusted, 20 percentage points lower than respondents at the national level. Belief in capacity to influence local council decisions is 14 percentage points lower (40%, 54%). Agreement with the proposition that people are willing to help their neighbours is down 19 percentage points (63%, 82%). Concern with becoming a victim of crime and with safety on the streets at night produces the sharpest differentiation – 28% of local respondents feel safe walking alone at night, 34 percentage points lower than at the national level (and 50% lower than the level of respondents in Engadine).

**Figure 16: Selected questions, long-time Australian respondents, national and areas of immigrant concentration**



**Figure 17: Selected questions, NESB respondents, national and areas of immigrant concentration**



Results for two other groups at the local level, Australia-born and NESB, indicate similar patterns of response. The main difference is that these groups are more positive than long-time Australians about the current immigration intake and the value of immigration from a range of different countries, although level of agreement is lower than the national. Thus 65% of NESB respondents at the national level support the current intake or its increase, compared to 50% of NESB respondents at the local level. A notable finding is that while the long-time Australians indicate a marginally lower level of agreement with the proposition that people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together (68% national, 60% local), there is almost no difference among the Australia-born, and among NESB respondents there is a higher proportion at the local level who agree with the proposition (79% local, 65% national). There is also a pattern whereby NESB respondents indicate a heightened level of trust in local authorities. (Table 12)

The key divergence, as with the long-time Australian respondents, occurs when trust in people and issues concerned with crime and personal safety are raised. For the three groups, the level of trust in people is in the range of 35–40% at the local level, 54–57% at the national; sense of safety when walking alone at night is in the range 28–40% at the local level, 57–62% at the national.

The lack of sense of safety is primarily a function of socio-economic disadvantage (not of immigrant concentration). Comparison with the Melbourne LGA of Frankston illustrates this point.

There are suburbs within the Frankston LGA which are ranked in the lower deciles of the Socio-Economic Index, but a marginally above average proportion of residents born in Australia (72%) and a markedly high proportion (86%) who speak only English in the home. Yet sense of safety is on a par with the areas of immigrant concentration surveyed. To take Victorian examples, Community Indicators Victoria data on sense of safety when walking alone at night places Frankston, Hume and Dandenong LGAs all in the bottom 20%. Research tables prepared by Professor Tony Vinson and his associates show that for a number of suburbs in the three areas, court convictions, domestic violence and prison admissions are in the top 20%.

These statistics point to an environment in which social cohesion is made more difficult to attain. VicHealth, sponsor of the Community Indicators Victoria project, explains the significance of its research in the following terms: ‘Neighbourhoods which are perceived as safe, foster community participation, encourage physical activity, community connectedness and add to the health and well-being of local residents and visitors.’ The reverse applies to neighbourhoods perceived to be unsafe, the immediate significance of the 2009 findings for the areas of immigrant concentration. If sense of threat and lack of trust thwart the building of links between people there is the risk of escalating conflict should incidents of tension arise, replicating the pattern witnessed in many societies whereby ethnic groups become the scapegoats for socio-economic difficulties experienced by local residents.

**Table 12: Selected questions, long-time Australian, Australia-born and non English-speaking background respondents, national and areas of immigrant concentration**

	All resp. National	LT Au National	LT Au Local	Au-born National	Au-born Local	NESB National	NESB Local
Level of happiness over the last 12 months: very happy and happy	89%	90%	84%	89%	83%	88%	82%
Satisfaction: present financial: very satisfied and satisfied	72%	74%	67%	73%	66%	64%	72%
What has been the impact of immigration in your local area? Very positive and positive	47%	44%	40%	45%	48%	53%	50%
Local area: people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together: strongly agree and agree	70%	68%	60%	71%	69%	65%	79%
Immigrants from many different countries make Australia stronger: strongly agree and agree	68%	63%	53%	64%	63%	78%	67%
Trust local council to do what is right for the people in the area: almost always, most of the time	44%	46%	36%	45%	39%	42%	47%
Do you agree or disagree that you can influence local council decisions affecting your local area? Strongly agree and agree	51%	54%	40%	54%	43%	44%	47%
Current immigration intake is about right or too low	55%	50%	29%	51%	41%	65%	50%
Local area: people willing to help their neighbours: strongly agree and agree	80%	82%	63%	81%	64%	74%	67%
Most people can be trusted	55%	55%	35%	54%	35%	57%	40%
How worried are you about becoming a victim of crime in your local area? Not worried, not at all worried	75%	77%	56%	76%	53%	68%	50%
Safe walking alone at night: very safe & fairly safe	61%	62%	28%	62%	35%	57%	40%
N (unweighted)	2019	1107	292	1510	601	247	532

Light green shading indicates difference >10 percentage points from the reference group; dark green indicates difference >20 percentage points from the reference group

Key:

- LT Au - Long-time Australian (born in Australia, with both parents born in Australia)
- Au - Australia-born
- NESB - Non-English speaking background, overseas born

## Discrimination

The national survey indicates that slightly more than one in four respondents (26% in 2009, 27% in 2007) report having experienced discrimination over the course of their lives because of their 'skin colour or ethnic origin' (2009), worded 'national or ethnic background' in the 2007 survey. The proportion reporting discrimination on the basis of religion is much lower, 7% in 2009, 8% in 2007.

One in ten respondents to the national survey (9% in 2007) report discrimination on grounds of national or ethnic background or religion over the last 12 months; 4% (7%) report discrimination on an ongoing basis, at least once per month.

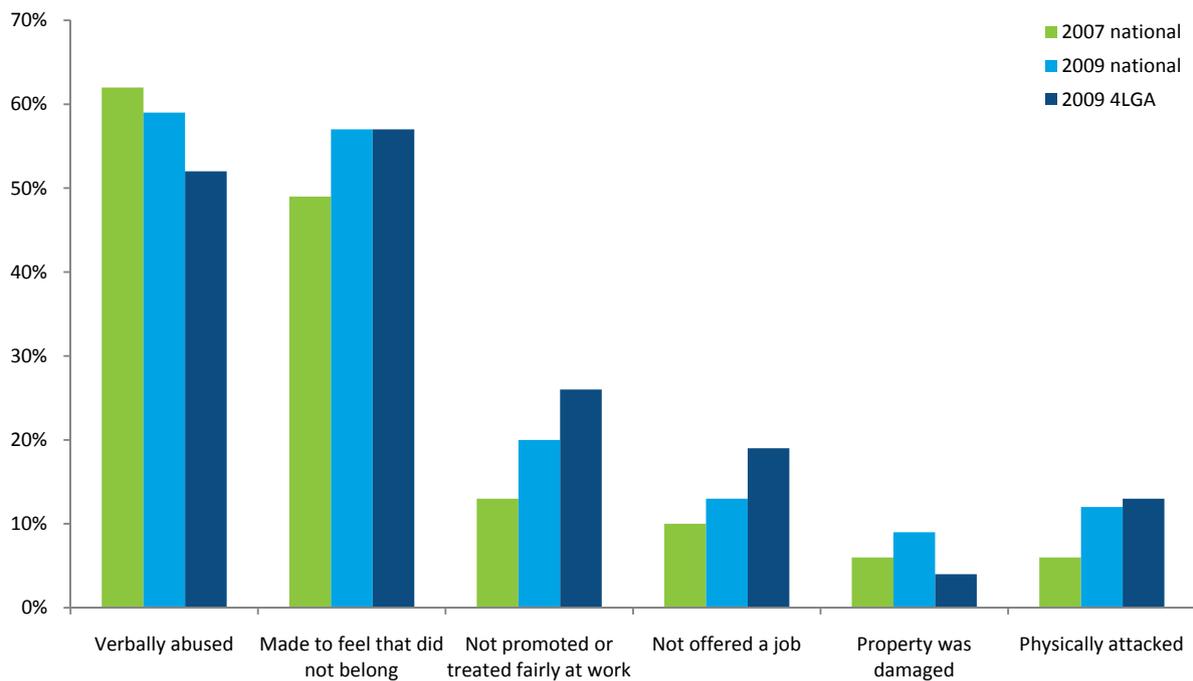
The reported experience of discrimination is higher in regions of immigrant concentration. In 2009, a number of indicators were 50% higher in these regions: 39% (26% national) reported discrimination over the course of their lives on the basis of 'skin colour or ethnic origin', 12% (7% national) on the basis of religion; 15% (10% national) reported incidents of discrimination over the last 12 months, 6% (4% national) at least once per month.

Findings were considered for specific birthplace, region and language groups: Australia, China and Vietnam, India and Sri Lanka, the Middle East, ESB and NESB. The highest level of discrimination on the basis of 'skin colour or ethnic origin' was reported by those born in China or Vietnam, and in the NESB category. By a large margin, the highest level of discrimination on the basis of religion was reported by those born in the Middle East. Reported experience of discrimination over the last year was highest for those born in India or Sri Lanka (twice the national average), while those reporting the highest number of incidents (at least one per month) were those born in India or Sri Lanka.

**Table 13: Incidence of reported discrimination, national and areas of immigrant concentration**

	National Total	Sunbury & Engadine (Au-born)	4LGA (Gr. Dandenong, Hume, Bankstown, Fairfield)					
			4LGA Total	Au-born	NESB	China & Vietnam	Middle East	India & Sri Lanka
Ever – ethnicity	26%	23%	39%	32%	47%	48%	35%	44%
Ever – religion	7%	7%	12%	12%	12%	4%	24%	12%
Last 12 months	10%	10%	15%	13%	17%	19%	17%	20%
At least once per month	4%	3%	6%	6%	7%	8%	7%	12%
N (unweighted)	2019	594	1210	601	532	122	147	49

**Figure 18: What form did the discrimination take? National (2007, 2009) and areas of immigrant concentration, 2009**



*Respondents are those who experienced discrimination in the last 12 months. Respondents had the option of specifying more than one form of discrimination.*

The 2009 surveys at the national level and in areas of immigrant concentration indicated that incidents of discrimination were most likely to occur on the street, followed by place of work and when being served in a shop. There was lower reporting of discriminatory incidents in schools than in 2007.

There was a large measure of consistency in the reporting of forms of discrimination in 2007 and 2009. Verbal abuse was most common, almost at the same level in 2009 as actions which made respondents feel that they did not belong. Forms of workplace discrimination were next reported, with the most serious forms of discriminatory acts – involving property damage and physical assault – the least common. Comparison of the two national surveys indicates an increase in the proportion of reported property damage and physical attack, with physical assault at twice the level reported in 2007. (Figure 18)

## Intolerance of diversity

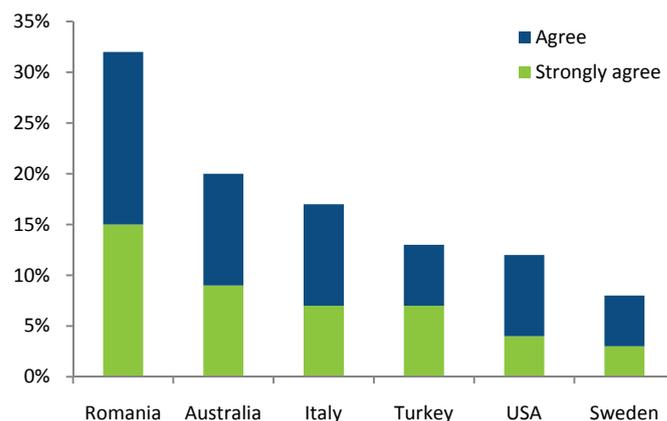
Intolerance of diversity is found in all national groups. Research undertaken by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia indicates that the proportion of the intolerant within the countries of the European Union ranges from a low of 4% of the population to a high of 27%. The intolerant are characterised by unease when in the presence of members of minority ethnic groups, their belief that minority cultures do not enrich society, their support for policies to encourage the emigration of minorities, their demand that those who remain assimilate to the dominant culture, and their opposition to anti-racist government policies. Intolerant attitudes are more widely held by people living in Mediterranean and eastern European countries and are at the lowest levels in Scandinavian countries.

At the other end of the spectrum are the actively tolerant, who make up from 7% to 33% of the populations of EU member countries. They welcome the presence of minorities, believe that minorities enrich society, oppose policies of assimilation and give strong support to anti-racist initiatives.

International surveys in the years 2003–07 in which Australia participated indicate that in Australia there is a relatively high level of support for immigration and a high proportion of Australians welcome the economic benefits of immigration and the new ideas and cultures that immigrants bring. (Figure 20)

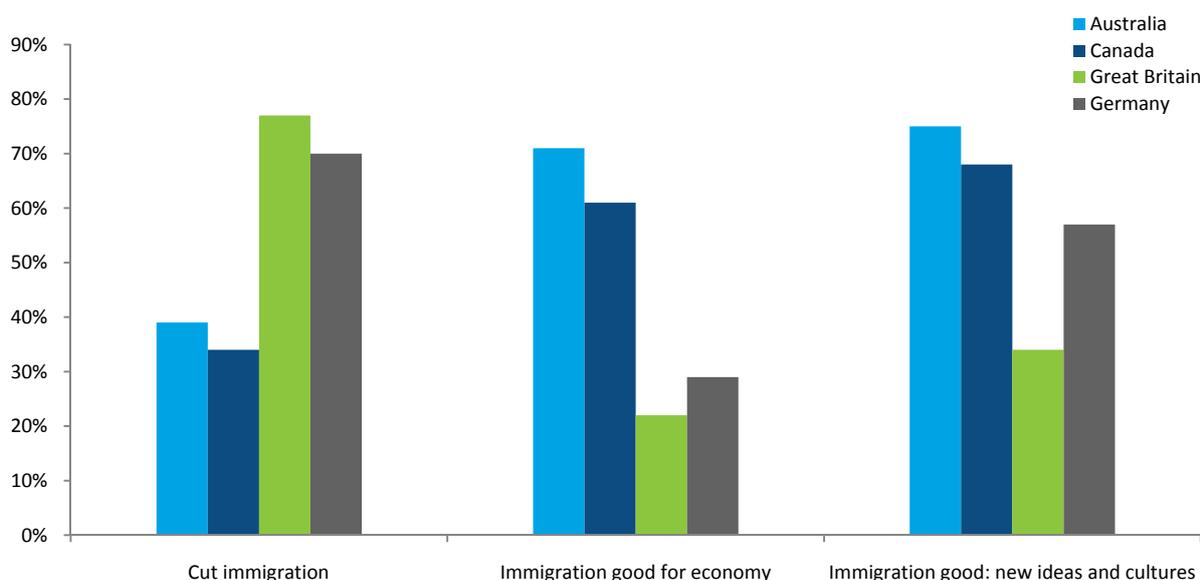
But close to 10% of the Australian population may be termed intolerant (and a similar proportion actively tolerant). Thus a recent international survey found that 9% of Australian respondents strongly agreed with the proposition that ‘ethnic diversity erodes a country’s security’ and a further 11% agreed, a relatively high proportion; in the United States 4% strongly agreed and in Sweden 3%.

**Figure 19: Ethnic diversity erodes a country’s security, national surveys, 2004–07,**



Source: WWS 2004–07; responses were ranked on a 10-point scale, ranging from ‘ethnic diversity erodes a country’s security’ at one end to ‘ethnic diversity enriches my life’ at the other. Levels 1–2 are interpreted as indicating ‘strong agreement’, levels 2–4 as indicating ‘agreement’.

**Figure 20: Attitudes to immigration intake and perception of the value of immigration, national surveys, 2003**



Source: ISSP 2003

**Table 14: Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger, national and local, 2009**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Total disagree	N (unweighted)
National – total respondents	9%	18%	27%	2019
National – long-time Australian	12%	20%	32%	1107
Local (4 LGA) – long-time Australian	17%	23%	40%	292
Local (4 LGA) – Australia-born	12%	19%	31%	601
Local (4 LGA) – NESB	9%	13%	22%	532
Local (Sunbury and Engadine) – Australia-born	11%	17%	28%	594

The level of intolerance indicated by the 2009 social cohesion survey is first considered in responses to one proposition and one question:

- ‘Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger.’
- ‘In general, what has been the impact of immigration on daily life in your local area?’

There is a consistency of response across the 2007 and 2009 surveys in views on the value of ‘immigration from many different countries’. Those indicating strong disagreement comprised 8% of respondents in 2007, 9% in 2009; a further 18% indicated disagreement in 2007, the same proportion in 2009. (Table 14)

The particular value of the social cohesion survey, as has been noted, lies in the scope to explore the significance of ethnicity and community. The highest level of strong disagreement with the value of immigration ‘from many different countries’, at 17% of respondents, is among long-time Australians resident in regions of immigrant concentration; the lowest level, at 9%, is among NESB respondents in the same regions.

The same pattern is even clearer when strong disagreement and disagreement are aggregated.

In response to a question concerning the impact of immigration on daily life in the local area, again the highest level of negative response is among the long-time Australian residents in regions of immigrant concentration, the lowest level is among Australia-born residents in the outer urban areas, where there is relatively little direct contact with immigrants. (Table 15)

A consistent finding of surveys conducted in Australia over the last 30 years (depending on the type of question asked) is that levels of intolerance and rejection of cultural diversity can reach 40–45% of respondents. The core of the intolerant, numbering close to 10%, hold strongly negative views on issues related to a diverse immigration intake and multiculturalism. The intolerant make up a higher proportion of the population in some geographic regions and among specific birthplace groups.

**Table 15: In general, what has been the impact of immigration on daily life in your local area? National and local, 2009**

	Very negative	Negative	Total negative	N (unweighted)
National – total respondents	2%	6%	8%	2019
National – long-time Australian	2%	6%	8%	1107
Local (4 LGAs) – long-time Australian	9%	25%	31%	292
Local (4 LGAs) – Australia-born	6%	20%	26%	601
Local (4 LGAs) – NESB	3%	14%	17%	532
Local (Sunbury and Engadine) – Australia-born	1%	3%	4%	594

To provide further indication of the range of attitudes by regions of residence and birthplace, responses to three questions were correlated, to identify those who [i] consider the current immigration level to be too high and [ii] disagree with the proposition that ‘accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger’ and [iii] disagree with the proposition that ‘ethnic minorities in Australia should be given government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions’. At the national level, 17% of respondents considered the immigration intake to be too high and disagreed with the two propositions (compared to 18% in 2007). Among the Australia-born the proportion is around 21%, in marked contrast with NESB respondents around 8%. The highest level of correlation is among the Australia-born in regions of immigrant concentration, with the peak of 35% among long-time Australians.

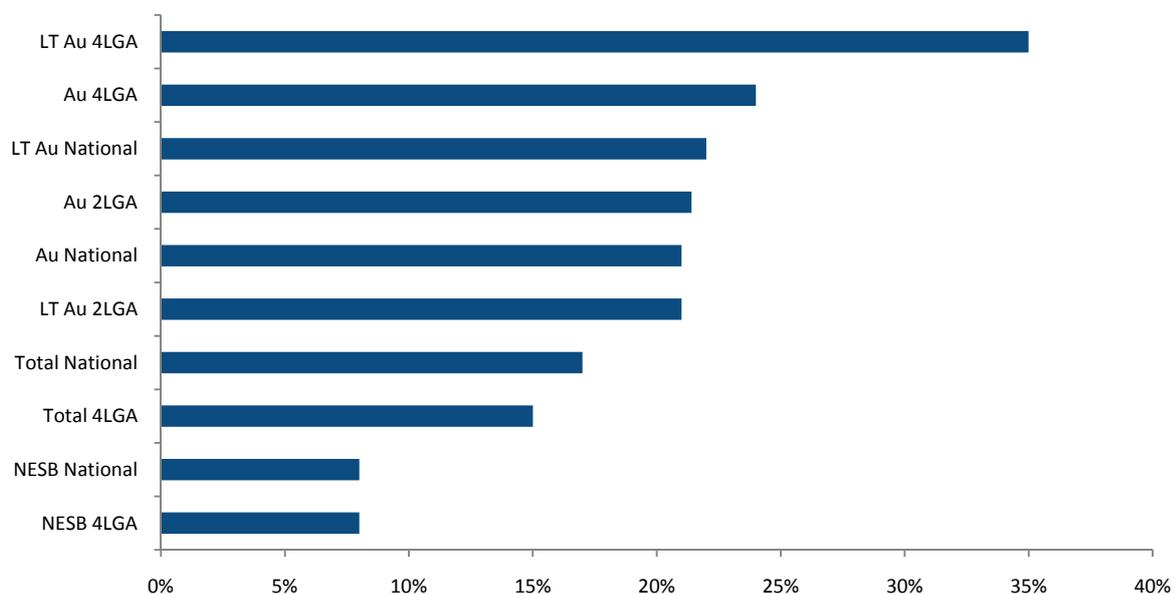
**Table 16: Three correlated immigration questions, cross-tabulated by birthplace, national and local**

National Total	4LGA Total	National LT Au	4LGA LT Au	2LGA LT Au	National Au	4LGA Au	2LGA Au	National NESB	4LGA NESB
17%	15%	22%	35%	21%	21%	24%	21%	8%	8%
N= 2019	1210	1107	292	444	1510	601	594	247	532

**Table 17: Three correlated immigration questions, cross-tabulated by birthplace, in rank order**

4LGA LT Au	4LGA Au	National LT Au	2LGA Au	National Au	2LGA LT Au	National Total	4LGA Total	National NESB	4LGA NESB
35%	24%	22%	21%	21%	21%	17%	15%	8%	8%

**Figure 21: Three correlated immigration questions, cross-tabulated by birthplace, in rank order**



## Ongoing challenges

This concluding discussion brings together findings related to areas of high immigrant concentration.

As has been noted, there is much that is positive, with similarity of response at the national and local levels. Thus, questions relating to happiness over the last twelve months, financial satisfaction, and future expectations, all result in difference of less than 10 percentage points. This level of difference is possibly as low as it can be when comparison is made between a national sample and relatively disadvantaged socio-economic regions.

Additional data reinforces these positive findings. For specific birthplace groups sense of belonging is in the range 88–97% at the national level, 89–95% in areas of high immigrant concentration. In response to the proposition that Australia is a land of economic opportunity where hard work brings a better life, there is a similarly high level of agreement. This proposition yields results in the range 81–83% at the national level, 81–89% at the local, with the strongest level of agreement amongst NESB respondents.

**Table 18: Sense of belonging and view of Australia as a land of economic opportunity, national and local, 2009**

	All resp. National	LT Au National	LT Au Local	Au-born National	Au-born Local	NESB National	NESB Local
Sense of belonging: great and moderate extent	95%	97%	95%	97%	95%	88%	89%
Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life: strongly agree and agree	82%	81%	81%	82%	81%	83%	89%

A key question asked respondents if people of different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together in their neighbourhoods: this question yielded agreement in the range 60–70% for most birthplace groups.

The consistency of indicators of belonging, sense of worth and life satisfaction brings into sharp relief the marked difference in response when views on the level of immigration, sense of safety and trust, are considered in areas of high immigrant concentration. Marked variation is also evident in these areas in reported experience of discrimination – some 50% higher in regions of immigrant concentration – and in the findings of other researchers, notably the work of Professor Tony Vinson on social inclusion and the Community Indicators Victoria and the Victorian Perception of Justice surveys.

**The challenge for the federal and state governments, local authorities and community organisations, is to devise and co-ordinate strategies to improve safety and trust in these areas. These are urgent social cohesion issues, with greater potential to make a difference to daily life than initiatives designed to impact on the entrenched outlook of small minorities intolerant of cultural diversity.**



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

**The Scanlon Foundation** is a member of Philanthropy Australia, the national membership organisation for grant-making trusts and foundations. Established in June 2001, the Foundation's mission, 'to support the creation of a larger cohesive Australian society', has led to the support of a number of social cohesion research projects, including this second 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.

**Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements.** Monash University is committed to research that embraces themes and problems relevant to the regions in which they take place, and particularly those countries in which Monash has campuses and centres. The Institute for the Study of Global Movements plays a key role in research initiatives, including cross-disciplinary projects and research-based conferences, linking the international world of scholarship of which the University is a part.

# Glossary

**ESB** – person of English-speaking background

**LGA** – Local Government Area

**Long-time Australian** – a term used in the SBS *Living in Diversity* report, defined in this report as those respondents who are born in Australia to Australia-born parents. This does not necessarily mean that they are of Anglo-Celtic backgrounds. This term is only used with the reference to the local surveys in this report.

**NESB** – person of non-English-speaking background.

