

Mapping Social Cohesion

The Scanlon Foundation surveys **2016**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the ninth Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion national survey, conducted in July-August 2016, in the weeks immediately after the federal election. The report builds on the knowledge gained through the eight earlier Scanlon Foundation national surveys (2007, 2009-2015) which provide, for the first time in Australian social research, a series of detailed surveys on social cohesion, immigration and population issues. Together with Scanlon Foundation local area and sub-group surveys, sixteen surveys with over 35,000 respondents have been conducted since 2007. The project also tracks the findings of other Australian and international surveys on immigration and cultural diversity.

A context for interpretation

The 2016 Scanlon Foundation survey was conducted at a time when a number of political commentators pointed to a significant shift in public opinion, understood in terms of a revolt against political elites. Within Europe and the United States the interpretation is supported by the British vote to leave the European Union, the increasing popularity of far-right parties campaigning on anti-immigration and nationalist platforms, and the success of Donald Trump in winning the Presidency.

In Australia, commentators point to instability in politics, election results which fail to return clear majorities, the loss of office of first term governments in Queensland and Victoria, and the number of minor parties that have won representation in the Australian Senate, including Pauline Hanson's One Nation.

One area in which opinion has apparently shifted is in attitudes towards Muslims. A survey finding in September 2016, obtained using an online panel, reported that almost half the population supported a ban on Muslim immigration; Peter Hartcher, Fairfax Political and International Affairs editor, asserted that 'support for the idea of a ban on Muslim immigrants ... has doubled since it was last polled a couple of years ago ... according to an Essential Media poll.'

The finding on the apparent level of support for a ban on Muslim immigration was, with few exceptions, taken at face value, accepted as 'reality'. The agenda setting status is indicated by the extent of media reporting and the response of political leaders, including Deputy Labor Leader Tanya Plibersek.

The 2016 Scanlon Foundation national survey provides a different perspective on the extent and nature of the shift in Australian public opinion.

Stable and highly cohesive

The Scanlon Foundation survey, which relies on probability-based methods for surveying the population and is more accurate than online panels, **finds more evidence of stability and social cohesion than of deterioration, although there are some negative indicators.**

With each additional Scanlon Foundation survey there is enhanced understanding of patterns of change in Australian opinion. The Scanlon Monash Index of Social Cohesion (SMI) aggregates the results for eighteen questions. While over the course of the surveys movement has been negative, **the Index has registered relatively minor change since 2010.**

Following the benchmark 2007 survey there was marginal positive movement in 2009, with the SMI reaching 101.2 index points. The next three surveys (2010-2012) averaged 93.6, the last four surveys (2013-2016) a lower 90. In 2016, the Index is at 89.3, down from 92.5 in 2015 but **close to the average of the last four years.**

Within four of the five domains covered by the Index – belonging, worth, social justice, and participation – there has been minimal change between 2015 and 2016, averaging close to one index point.

Indicative of a number of positive findings, 91% of respondents indicate **'sense of belonging in Australia'** to a 'great' or 'moderate' extent, while agreement with the proposition that 'in the modern world, maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important' has been constant at 91% over last six surveys; 89% indicate that they take 'pride in the Australian way of life and culture.'

Economic issues are consistently ranked first as the major problem facing Australia, but in 2016 by 28% of respondents, down from 33% in 2015. The proportion indicating that they are 'very worried' or 'worried' that they will lose their job 'in the next year or so' increased at a marginal level, from 12% in 2015 to 15% in 2016, but there has been little change in the proportion indicating dissatisfaction with their 'present financial situation', 25% in 2013, 24% in 2014, 24% in 2015, and 22% in 2016.

Immigration

The 2016 survey found **continuing low level of concern over issues of immigration**. Just 34% considered that the immigration intake was 'too high', the lowest recorded in the Scanlon Foundation surveys, and consistent with the findings of recent ANU, Lowy Institute and Roy Morgan polls.

When asked concerning the entry as permanent or long term residents of 'those who have close family living in Australia' and 'skilled workers', 84%-85% of respondents were 'very positive' or 'somewhat positive', higher than the proportions obtained in the 2010-2012 Scanlon Foundation surveys.

Refugees - the Humanitarian program

Scanlon Foundation surveys between 2010-2012 asked respondents for their view **on the Humanitarian program**, which was explained as resettling 'refugees who have been assessed overseas and found to be victims of persecution and in need of help.' A large majority, in the range 67%-75%, indicated that they supported the Humanitarian program. **The same question was asked in 2016 and obtained higher levels of positive response at 80%.**

Respondents in 2016 were also asked for their view on the size of the Humanitarian program, whether the 'current refugee intake is adequate, too few or too many.' Almost a quarter (23%) indicated too few, a further 39% 'adequate,' a total of 62%. A minority, close to one-third (30%), responded too many. Almost the same result was obtained in response to a question on **the 'government's plan to bring refugees from the Syrian conflict to Australia'; 58% indicated support, 34% opposition.**

This level of **support for the Humanitarian program does not, however, extend to support for asylum seekers arriving by boat.**

Scanlon Foundation surveys have found that when respondents are presented with a range of options on policy towards asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat, only a minority (close to 25%) consider that they should be eligible for permanent settlement. In 2015, 24% agreed with the option of permanent settlement, 31% temporary settlement only, while 33% supported the turning back of boats and 9% a policy of detaining and then deporting boat arrivals.

In 2016 the question was asked in a different form, without a range of options, and again found minority support. When asked: **'Do you approve of asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat?'**, 14% indicated 'strong approval', 18% 'approval', a total 32%, while **42% indicated 'strong disapproval', a further 20% disapproval, a total 61%.**

Multiculturalism

The Scanlon Foundation surveys have found consistent high level of agreement with the proposition that 'multiculturalism has been good for Australia': in the range 83%-86% in the 2013-2016 surveys, close to an identical result when allowance is made for margin of sampling error.

The Scanlon Foundation surveys also provide evidence on the meaning of multiculturalism in Australia. In Europe, multiculturalism is often seen as a policy of failure which entrenches division; in Australia, it is seen in positive terms, in majority opinion as a means of facilitating integration.

The 2016 Scanlon Foundation survey indicates that **majority opinion does not support a policy of assimilation, nor does it support government funding of cultural maintenance**. Hence only a minority (28%) agrees that 'it is best if all people forget their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds as soon as possible,' and a larger proportion but still a minority (37%) agrees with 'government assistance ... to ethnic minorities ... to maintain customs and traditions.'

For the majority, multiculturalism involves a two-way process of change, involving adaptation by Australia-born and immigrant. Thus 66% agree with the proposition that 'we should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country,' while 60% agree that 'people who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians.'

Muslim Australians

Six Scanlon Foundation surveys have asked questions on attitudes to Muslim Australians – and to Christians and Buddhists. There has been a large measure of consistency in response, with a **relatively high negative attitude towards Muslims**; close to 5% are ‘very negative’ or ‘negative’ towards Christians and Buddhists, four to five times that level (22%-25%) towards Muslims. **While the proportion is relatively high, there has been little change in this finding over the course of the surveys:** in 2011, 25% indicated they were negative, in 2016, 25%.

Why the difference in survey findings?

Why the apparent difference in the findings of the Scanlon Foundation and other surveys? The answer relates to the wording of survey questions and structure of questionnaires, the sampling procedure, the mode of survey administration, and the context that is provided for interpreting results.

The 2016 Scanlon Foundation survey comprised 66 questions, with twenty-five questions on immigration, asylum seekers and cultural diversity; the survey employs a probability-based random sample of the population, the questionnaire administered by an interviewer, and provides a context to interpret the results through its earlier findings. **This contrasts with the majority of other surveys that comprise less than ten questions on immigration, are based on non-probability samples, are self-administered, and present findings in isolation, without context for interpretation.**

The Australian media uncritically reports survey findings on social issues without a context for interpretation. This reporting is in marked contrast with reporting on the level of support for political parties and their leaders, always presented in the context of earlier surveys. Is the level of support going up or down, what has been the pattern over the last six months, how does confidence in this prime minister compare with a predecessor? **It is well understood that trend of opinion is the vital element in interpretation; without reference points there is no valid basis for interpretation.**

Yet survey findings on social issues are often reported without context. It seems that the prime objective is to generate headlines, controversy, and reader engagement. A telling example is the prominent coverage of the Essential Report finding on banning Muslim immigration, while a survey conducted by Roy Morgan Research and released one month later with a much lower level of negative sentiment, not 49%, but 33%, received almost no coverage in the print media.

Trust and democracy

While the main findings of the 2016 Scanlon Foundation survey point to stability, there is some indication of negative shift in opinion.

Since 2010, Scanlon Foundation surveys have registered continuing low level of trust in the federal parliament. In 2009, 48% of respondents indicated that the government in Canberra can be trusted ‘almost always’ or ‘most of the time’, just one year later a much lower 31%. **There was an expectation that following the electoral victory of the Coalition government in 2013 there would be significant increase in trust, on the pattern of the increase following the change of government in 2007. This expectation was not realised.** Level of trust ‘almost always’ and ‘most of the time’ was indicated by 30% in 2014, 29% in 2016. Consistent with this finding, an open-ended question at the beginning of the survey asks respondents to indicate ‘the most important problem’ facing Australia; quality of government and of politicians has been the second ranked issue, after the economy, in the five of the six surveys since 2011.

While the response to these questions has been consistent since 2010, a shift is evident when respondents are asked if ‘the system of government we have in Australia works fine as it is, needs minor change, needs major change, or should be replaced.’ The proportion opting for the end point responses has remained constant, with 15%-16% indicating ‘works fine as it is’ and 11% that it ‘should be replaced.’ But there has been significant shift in the middle ground, with **the proportion indicating ‘needs minor change’ declining from 48% in 2014 to 43% in 2015 and 40% in 2016, while ‘needs major change’ increased from 23% in 2014 to 27% in 2015 and 31% in 2016.**

New questions were included in the 2016 survey to further understanding of the extent of disengagement with the political system.

Taking the opportunity of the survey timing in the weeks following the 2016 election, respondents were asked ‘**how much interest did you have in the recent federal election campaign?**’; 14% of respondents indicated ‘none at all’ and 20% ‘not much’, a total of 34%. Analysis by age group and gender finds that **the highest proportion indicating ‘none at all’ was among men aged 18-24, at 23%, compared to 7% of women within this age group.**

The lack of trust in the political system may in part reflect the failure to address issues supported by a majority of electors. The 2016 Scanlon Foundation survey sought views on current environmental and social issues. It found majority support for legislative enactment on all four issues: 83% 'strongly support' or 'support' 'legislation for prescription marijuana to treat painful medical conditions; 80% support 'medically approved euthanasia for people suffering terminal illness'; 67% support 'marriage equality for same sex couples.' Climate change was considered with reference to 'legislation for reduced reliance on coal for electricity generation' and found support at 70%.

Increased negativity

The 2016 Scanlon Foundation survey finds consistent increase in 'strong negative' responses to a range of questions, including those related to cultural diversity. The increase, however, is marginal and those with strong negative views remain a small minority.

Those indicating that they 'strongly disagree' with a diverse immigration intake increased from 9% in 2015 to 11% in 2016; 'strong disagreement' with the proposition that 'we should do more to learn about the customs and heritage' of minorities increased from 8% to 10%; strong negative views of Muslims increased from 11% to 14%.

Associated with this pattern of response, there is some indication of heightened pessimism when the future is considered: expectation that life in Australia in three or four years will be worse increased from 15% in 2015 to 18% in 2016.

Possibly as a function of an increased disposition to discriminate on the part of a minority, or as indication of a shift in mood, the proportion of respondents indicating experience of discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnicity or religion increased from 15% in 2015 to 20% in 2016, the highest level recorded in the Scanlon Foundation surveys.

The survey also found heightened negative indicators in questions concerning the neighbourhood of respondents. In 2015, 78% of respondents agreed that their 'local area ... is a place where people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together', in 2016 a lower 74%. Agreement that 'people in your local area are willing to help their neighbours' fell from 85% to 81%. Concern 'about becoming a victim of crime in your local area' increased by the largest margin, from 26% to 36%.

Broad perspective

The Scanlon Foundation surveys provide time series data to evaluate the nature and extent of change in public opinion.

The key finding points more to stability than significant change in opinion. At the same time, however, there are emerging signs of increased pessimism, relatively high levels of negativity towards Muslims and an increase in the proportion of people experiencing discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnicity or religion.

One significant issue identified in the survey is the level of concern at the failure of the political system. Trust in politicians remains at a low level, support for major change in the political system is increasing, and views on environmental and social issues find a disconnect between majority opinion and the willingness of legislators to implement change.

Analysis of sub-groups favouring change in the system of government finds relatively high proportions among those who indicate that they are 'struggling to pay bills' or that their financial circumstances are 'poor'; aged between 35 and 54; with education at the trade or apprenticeship level, or those who did not complete their secondary schooling; and among those intending to vote Labor, a minor party or independent.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The 2016 Scanlon Foundation national survey is the ninth in the series, following the benchmark survey in 2007 and annual surveys since 2009.

The first five surveys sampled households with landline telephones, **since 2013 the survey has employed a dual-frame sample methodology comprising both randomly generated landline telephone numbers and randomly generated mobile phone numbers.** This meant that, in-line with contemporary best practice, the survey included the views of the currently estimated 29% of adults who live in households without a landline telephone connection on which to make and receive calls (the so-called mobile phone-only population). The sample blend used for the 2016 survey was 60% landline numbers and 40% mobile phone numbers. This blend yielded 256 interviews with the mobile phone-only population (17% of the sample).

The 2007-2012 surveys employed a national sample of 2,000 respondents; the 2014-2016 survey samples were 1,500. The larger sample in the early years of the surveys was designed to enable analysis of sub-groups. Given that the 2007-2015 national surveys provide a database reference of 14,280 respondents, the 1,500 sample is adequate for interpretation of current trends within sub-groups. This sample base is expected to yield a sampling errors of approximately plus or minus three percentage points.

There are three dimensions to the 2015-16 Scanlon Foundation social cohesion research program. The national survey, here reported; an online survey that was translated into 19 languages and completed by some 10,548 respondents; and some 50 focus groups, conducted in local areas surveyed in previous years. The findings of the second and third components were launched in August 2016.¹

The 2016 national survey employed the questionnaire structure common to the 2007-2015 surveys, including the eighteen questions required for calculation of the Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion. Each year there has been minor variation in the survey instrument.

The 2016 national survey included additional questions on the federal election and social and environmental issues. A number of questions on immigration, refugees and asylum seekers were changed and new questions on the Syrian refugee intake were added. Questions on institutional trust and the context in which discrimination was experienced were removed.

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

The 2016 national survey was administered from 12 July to 8 August. It comprised 66 questions (51 substantive and 15 demographic) and **took on average 18.7 minutes to complete** by landline and 18.6 by mobile. **The response rate for the national survey was 50%, compared to 54% in 2015.**

Full technical details of surveying procedure and the questionnaire is provided in the methodological report, available for download on the Mapping Australia's Population internet site.²

¹ Andrew Markus, *Australians Today: The Australia@2015 Scanlon Foundation Survey*, 2016

² The Mapping Australia's Population is located at <http://www.monash.edu/mapping-population>

WEIGHTING OF SURVEY RESULTS

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

Raking techniques (also known as Rim weighting or iterative Proportional Fitting) were used to weight the data. The population benchmarks included in the weighting solution are: geographic location, gender, age by education, country of birth and telephone status.

A two-stage weighting procedure was utilised, in part to provide for the use of dual-frame sampling. This involved calculating:

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

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

CONTEXT: AUSTRALIA IN 2016

Economic conditions and the labour market

By international standards, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) had a relatively minor impact in Australia. In 2008-09 the Rudd Labor government introduced a fiscal stimulus package of over \$50 billion to offset the potential domestic impact of a slowing world economy. As a result of government action and high demand for commodities, Australia experienced only two quarters of negative growth. The economy grew by 2.0% in 2009-10, 2.4% in 2010-11, 3.6% in 2011-12, 2.4%, in 2012-13, 2.5% in 2013-14, 2.3% in 2014-15, and 2.9% in 2015-16. In the June 2016 quarter the Australian economy grew by 0.5% in seasonally adjusted terms, compared to 0.2% in the June quarter of 2015.³ **With average Australian growth considered to be 3.25%, six of the last seven years have been below average.**

Unemployment in March 2008, before the GFC, stood at 4.1%. It peaked in June 2009 at 5.8%, considerably lower than had been anticipated; by June 2010 it had fallen to 5.2% and in January-June 2011 to 5.0%. Unemployment began to increase gradually in the second half of 2012, **In June 2014 seasonally adjusted unemployment reached 6.1% and was at the same level in June 2015, with a decline to 5.8% in June 2016.**⁴

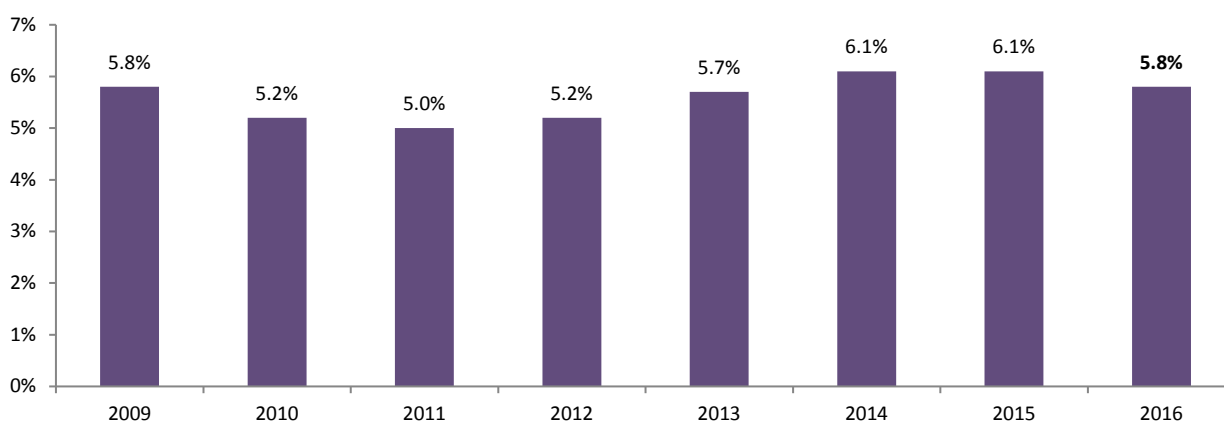
The Australian unemployment rate of 5.8% in June 2016 compared to an average of 8.6% in the 28 countries of the European Union, with a peak of 23.5% in Greece and 20.1% in Spain. Unemployment was 4.9% in the United States, 4.9% in the United Kingdom, 11.5% in Italy, 10.0% in France and 4.3% in Germany.⁵

Australian seasonally adjusted unemployment in June 2016 was lowest in New South Wales at 5.3% (5.8% June 2015), highest in South Australia at 7.0% (8.1%); the level in other states was 5.7% (6.0%) in Victoria, 5.8% (5.9%) in Western Australia, 6.4% (6.1%) in Queensland and 6.6% (6.5%) in Tasmania.

The seasonally adjusted labour force participation rate in June 2016 was 64.8%, the same level as in June 2015. At this time the labour force participation rate was 70.4% for males, 59.4% females, compared to 71.1% for males and 58.9% for females in June 2015.

At the time of the 2016 Scanlon Foundation national survey there was continuing media discussion of economic uncertainty, focused on the decline in commodity prices, the deficit position of the Australian budget, the volatility in the share market, linked to concerns over slowing growth in China and its potential impact on the Australian economy.

Figure 1: Unemployment rate, seasonally adjusted, 2009-2016



³ABS, Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product, June Quarter 2016, Catalogue No. 5206.0, Table 3

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Australia, September 2016, Catalogue No. 6202.0, Table 1

⁵ OECD, Short-term Labor Market Statistics, <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=36324>

Population growth

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

Whereas **annual population growth** averaged 1.4% between 1970-2010, between 2006-2009 annual growth was at or above 1.6%, with a peak of 2.1% in 2008-09. Since then annual growth has been in the range 1.4%-1.7%, at **1.5% in 2013-14, 1.4% in 2014-15, and 1.4% in the year to 31 March 2016.**

Population growth is uneven across Australia. For the year to March 2016, Victoria's population grew by 1.9% (1.7% in the year to March 2015), New South Wales 1.4% (1.4%), Queensland 1.3% (1.3%), ACT 1.3% (1.3%), Western Australia 1.2% (1.4%), South Australia 0.6% (0.8%), Tasmania 0.4% (0.3%), and Northern Territory 0.4% (0.2%).

The preliminary estimated resident population of Australia at 31 March 2016 was 24,051,400 persons, an increase of 327,600 persons over the preceding twelve months. Since June 2001, when the estimated population was 19.4 million, there has been an increase of close to 4.7 million.

There are two components of population growth: natural increase and net overseas migration (NOM), which represents the net gain of immigrants arriving less emigrants departing. Between 1975 and 2005 natural increase accounted for 58% of population growth. Since 2006, net overseas migration has been the major component. **NOM accounted for 67% of growth in 2008, a lower 55% in the 12 months ended 31 March 2016.**⁶

In the twelve months ended June 2008, NOM was 277,300 persons; it fell to 180,400 in the year to 30 June 2011, a decline of 35% or 96,900 persons. **In the year ended 31 March 2016, NOM was an estimated 180,800, a marginal increase over the 177,200 for the year ended March 2015.**

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

On 31 December 2015 there were 328,130 students, 159,910 business (457) visa holders, 155,180 working holiday makers, and 634,560 New Zealand citizens resident in Australia. **Temporary entrants and New Zealand citizens totalled 1,986,420, an increase of 5.4% since 31 December 2014.**

Residents on long stay visas represent 7.9% of the estimated population and close to 10% of the workforce.

Within the permanent immigration program, the main categories are Skill, Family and Humanitarian. **Skill is the largest category, in recent years more than double the Family category.** The planning level for 2015-16 provides for 128,550 Skill stream places, 57,440 Family, and 13,750 Humanitarian (comprising a minimum of 11,000 places offshore and the balance of places for people onshore who have arrived in Australia lawfully).⁷

Table 1: Long-stay visa holders resident in Australia, main categories, and New Zealand citizens resident in Australia, 2009-2015

At 30 June (*31 December)	Overseas students	Business visa (subclass 457)	Working holiday makers	New Zealand citizens (subclass 444 visa)
2009	386,528	146,624	103,482	548,256
2010	382,660	127,648	99,388	566,815
2011	332,700	131,341	111,990	600,036
2012	307,060	162,270	136,590	646,090
2013*	257,780	169,070	178,980	625,370
2014*	303,170	167,910	160,940	623,440
2015*	328,130	159,910	155,180	634,560

Source: Department of Immigration and Border Control, Temporary entrants and New Zealand citizens in Australia as at 31 December 2015.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Demographic Statistics, March Quarter 2016, Catalogue No.3101.0 (22 Sept. 2016)

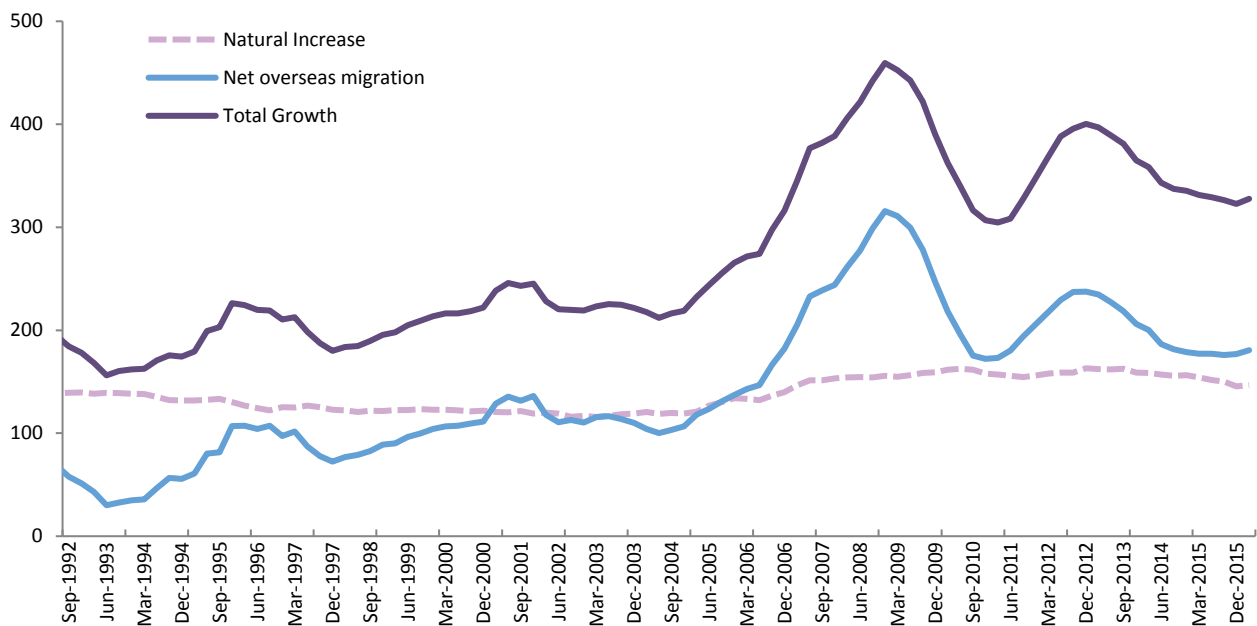
⁷ For further information, see Fact Sheet, Migration Program planning levels, Department of Immigration and Border Protection; also DIBP, Australia's Humanitarian Programme 2016-17. Discussion paper

Table 2: Population growth and components of growth, Australia 2007-2014

At 30 June	Natural Increase	Net Overseas Migration	Growth on previous year	Growth on previous year
	'000	'000	'000	%
2008	148.8	277.3	368.5	1.8
2009	156.3	299.9	442.5	2.1
2010	162.6	196.1	340.1	1.6
2011	155.7	180.4	308.3	1.4
2012	158.8	229.4	388.2	1.7
2013	162.0	227.1	389.1	1.7
2014	157.0	186.4	343.3	1.5
2015 (preliminary)	151.8	177.3	329.1	1.4

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics*, March quarter 2016, catalogue number 3101.0 (released 22 September 2016, Table 1. Differences between growth on previous year and the sum of the components of population change are due to intercensal error (corrections derived from latest census data).

Figure 2: Components of annual population growth, 1993–2016



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics*, March quarter 2016, catalogue number 3101.0 (released 22 September 2016).

Ethnic diversity

In 2015, an estimated 28% of the Australian population was born overseas, the highest proportion since the late nineteenth century. A further 20% of those born in Australia had at least one overseas-born parent.⁸

There has been a gradual increase in the proportion overseas-born, from 23% in 2001 to 27% in 2011, and 28% in 2015, an increase from 4.45 million in 2001 to 6.7 million in 2011.

The estimated 28% overseas-born ranks Australia first within the OECD among nations with populations over ten million. It compares with 20% overseas-born in Canada, 13% in Germany, 13% in the United States, 12% in the United Kingdom, and 12% in France. The average for the OECD is 12%.

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

The overseas-born are also unevenly distributed in the capital cities, with concentrations above 60% in some Local Government Areas.

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

In 2011, of the overseas-born, the leading countries of birth were the United Kingdom (20%), New Zealand (9%), China (6%), India (6%), Vietnam, Italy and the Philippines. (3%).

Over the last thirty years, an increasing proportion of immigrants have been drawn from the Asian region. In 2015-16, of the top ten source countries, seven are in the Asian region and only 24% of the total is from OECD countries. Settler arrivals from New Zealand, who are not included in the Migration Programme, numbered 23,365 in 2014-15, the third largest source country.

Table 3: Top 10 countries of birth of the overseas-born population, 2011 (census) and 2015 (estimate)

Country of birth	2011	% of overseas born	June 2015 (estimate)
United Kingdom	1,195,990	19.9	1,207,000
New Zealand	543,950	9.0	611,380
China	387,420	6.4	481,820
India	337,120	5.6	432,690
Philippines	193,030	3.2	236,400
Vietnam	207,620	3.4	230,170
Italy	201,680	3.4	198,230
South Africa	161,590	2.7	178,680
Malaysia	134,140	2.2	156,460
Germany	125,750	2.1	125,800
Elsewhere overseas	2,183,800	42.0	2,852,110
Total overseas-born	6,018,180	100	6,710,910

Source: ABS, Migration, Australia, 2014-15, cat. 3412 (30 March 2016); ABS.Stat Beta, ERP by Country of Birth

Table 4: Top 10 source countries, Migration Programme, 2012-2016

Country of birth	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
India	40,051	39,026	34,874	39,771
People's Republic of China	27,334	26,776	27,872	28,460
United Kingdom	21,711	23,220	21,078	18,758
Philippines	10,639	10,379	11,886	11,471
Pakistan	3,552	6,275	8,281	6,599
Vietnam	5,339	5,199	5,100	5,190
Nepal	4,107	4,364	4,130	5,060
Ireland	5,209	6,171	6,187	4,889
South Africa	5,476	4,908	4,284	4,251
Malaysia	5,151	4,207	3,977	4,145
Total OECD countries	50,365	51,114	48,010	44,151
Total (including Other)	190,000	190,000	189,097	186,258
New Zealand	41,230	27,274	23,365	N/A

Source: Department of Immigration and Border Protection, *Australia's Migration Trends 2013-14*, p. 25; DIBP, unpublished.

⁸ ABS, 'Overseas born Aussies highest in over a century', media release, 30 March 2016; ABS, Cultural Diversity in Australia, cat. no. 2071.0, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2071.0main+features902012-2013>. Almost 1.6 million Australians did not state either their birth place or the parents' birthplace; they are excluded from this calculation.

WHAT IS SOCIAL COHESION?

As a concept, social cohesion has a long tradition in academic enquiry. It is of fundamental importance when discussing the role of consensus and conflict in society. From the mid-1990s, interest in the dynamics of social cohesion grew amid concerns prompted by the impact of globalisation, economic change and fears fuelled by the 'war on terror.' There is, however, no agreed definition of social cohesion. Most current definitions dwell on intangibles, such as sense of belonging, attachment to the group, willingness to participate and to share outcomes.⁹ They do, however, include three common elements:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Belonging: Shared values, identification with Australia, trust.

Social justice and equity: Evaluation of national policies.

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

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

Worth: Life satisfaction and happiness, future expectations.

⁹ See Andrew Markus and Liudmila Kirpitchenko, 'Conceptualising social cohesion', in James Jupp and John Nieuwenhuysen (eds), *Social Cohesion in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 21-32.

THE SCANLON-MONASH INDEX (SMI) OF SOCIAL COHESION

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

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

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

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

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

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

After trialling several models, a procedure was adopted which draws attention to minor shifts in opinion and reported experience, rather than one which compresses or diminishes the impact of change by, for example, calculating the mean score for a set of responses.¹⁰ **The purpose of the index is to heighten awareness of shifts in opinion which may call for closer attention and analysis.**

In 2016 the SMI registered downward movement, a decrease of 3 points compared to 2015 and the third largest downward movement in the Index, after the fall of 8.6 points in 2010 and 5.9 points in 2013. While at a low point, the Index is close to the average of the last four years.

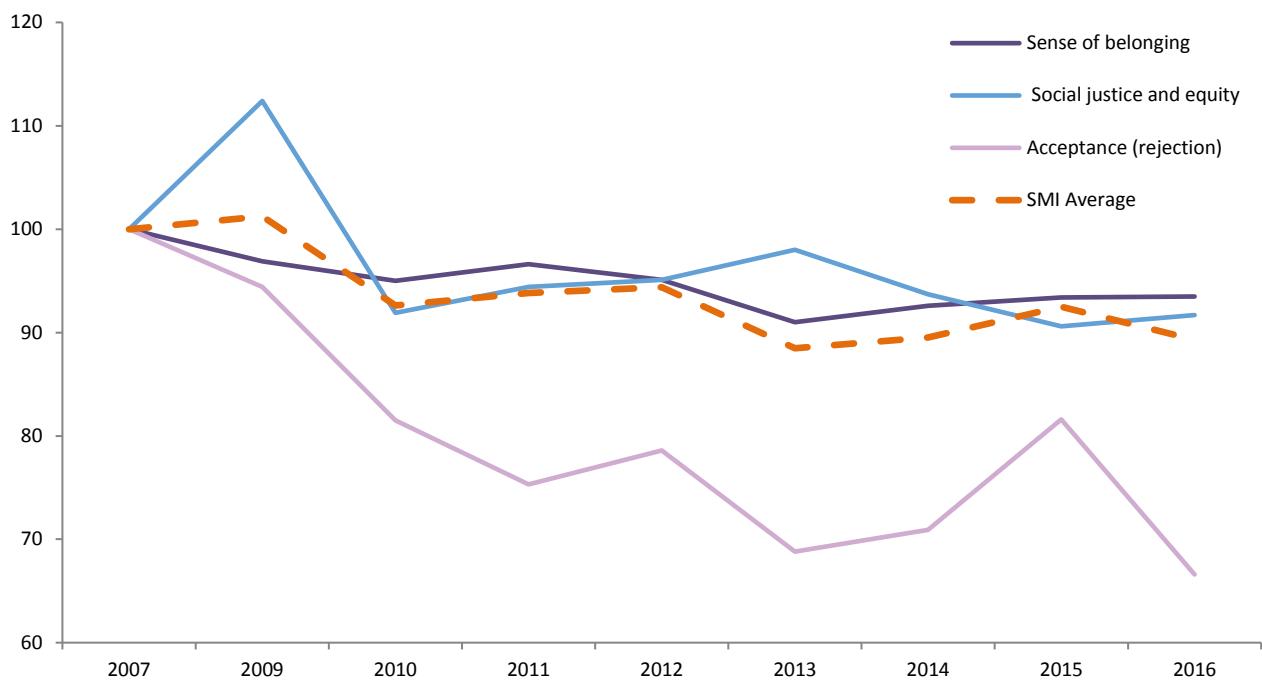
The 2016 SMI registered lower scores in three of the five domains of social cohesion. The largest downward movement is 15, in the domain of acceptance/rejection, to reach the lowest domain level in the Scanlon Foundation surveys. The domains of worth and political participation both declined by one point, while the domain of social justice and equity increased by one point.

¹⁰ The nominal index scores the level of agreement (or disagreement in the index of rejection). The highest level of response (for example, 'strongly agree') is scored twice the value of the second level ('agree'). Responses within four of the five indexes are equalised; within the index of participation, activities requiring greater initiative (contacting a Member of Parliament, participating in a boycott, attending a protest) are accorded double the weight of the more passive activities of voting (compulsory in Australia) and signing a petition. See Andrew Markus and Jessica Arnp, *Mapping Social Cohesion 2009: The Scanlon Foundations Surveys Full Report* (2010), section 12

Table 5: The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) of Social Cohesion, 2007-2016

Domain	2007 ¹¹	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change 2015-16 (percentage points)
1. Sense of belonging	100	96.9	95.0	96.6	95.1	91.0	92.6	93.4	93.5	0.1
2. Sense of worth	100	97.2	96.7	96.5	96.5	93.8	96.8	97.2	95.9	-1.3
3. Social justice and equity	100	112.4	91.9	94.4	95.1	98.0	93.7	90.6	91.7	1.1
4. Political participation	100	105.3	98.0	106.4	106.6	90.8	93.6	99.7	98.8	-0.9
5. Acceptance (rejection)	100	94.4	81.5	75.3	78.6	68.8	70.9	81.6	66.6	-15
Average	100	101.2	92.6	93.8	94.4	88.5	89.5	92.5	89.3	-3.2

Figure 3: The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) of Social Cohesion, average and selected domains, 2007-2016



¹¹ Benchmark measure. The Scanlon Foundation survey changed from bi-annual to annual frequency in 2010.

Components of the Scanlon-Monash Index

SMI 1: Sense of belonging

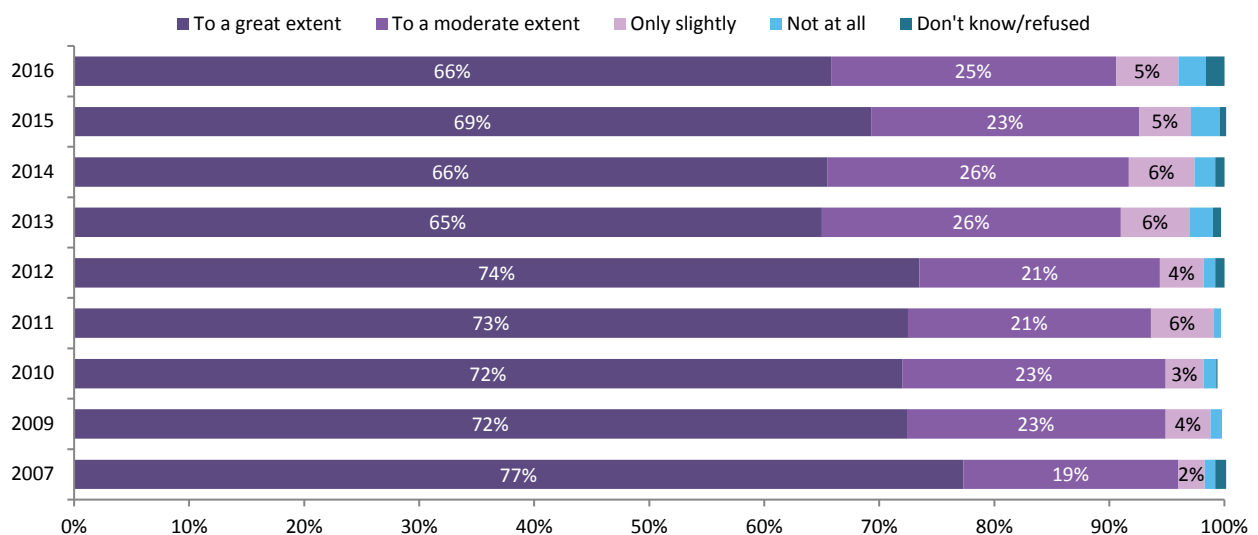
General questions relating to national life and levels of personal satisfaction continue to elicit the high levels of positive response that are evident in Australian surveys over the last 20 years. There has been marginal increase within the domain of belonging since it reached a low point in 2013.

Sense of belonging ('great' and 'moderate'): 91% in 2016, down from 94%-96% between 2007-2012. The proportion indicating 'to a great extent' declined from a high point of 77% in 2007 to 66% in 2016.

Sense of pride in the Australian way of life and culture ('great' and 'moderate'): 89% in 2016 and 2015, 88% in 2014, down from 93% in 2011 and 94% in 2007. Sense of pride 'to a great extent' increased from 51% in 2013 to 56% in 2016.

Importance of maintaining the Australian way of life and culture ('strongly agree' and 'agree') was constant at 91% from 2010 to 2016, down from 93% in 2009 and 95% in 2007. There has been a marked shift in the balance between 'strong agreement' and 'agreement', with a decrease in 'strong agreement' from 65% in 2007 to 55% in 2012-13; in 2016 'strong agreement' was at 60%.

Figure 4: 'To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?', 2007-2016



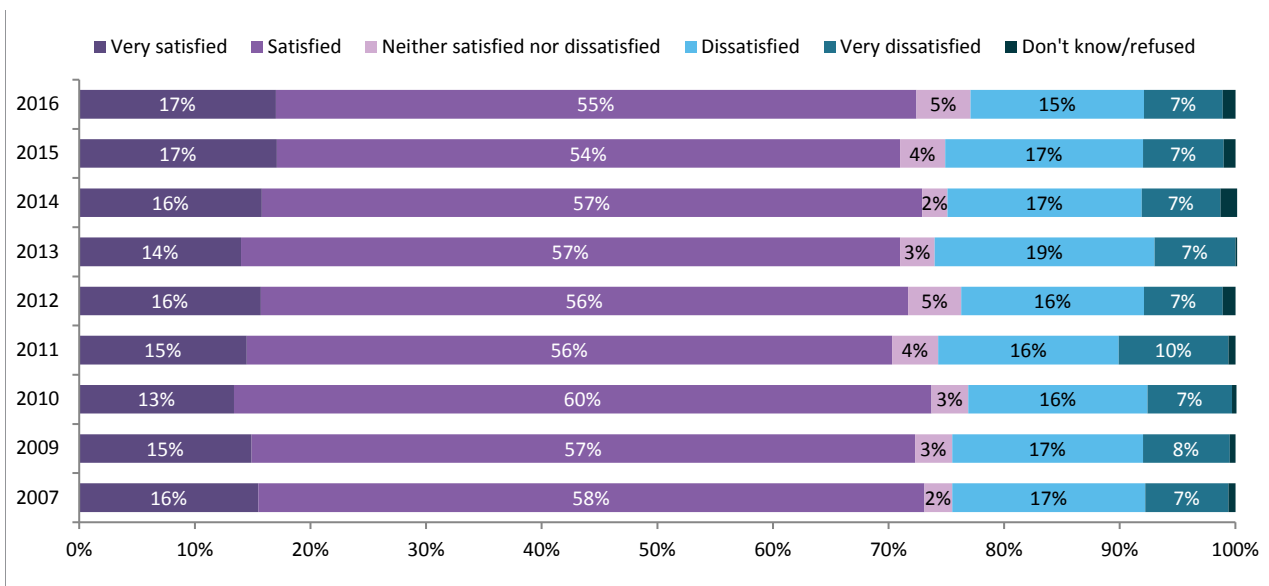
SMI 2: Sense of worth

There has been little change in the indicators of worth. Since 2007, financial satisfaction has been in the range 71%-74%, while sense of happiness has been in the range 85%-89% (the low of 85% was recorded in 2016).

Financial satisfaction ('very satisfied' and 'satisfied'): 72% in 2016, 71% in 2015, 73% in 2014, 71% in 2013, 72% in 2012, 71% in 2011, 73% in 2010, 72% in 2009, 74% in 2007.

Happiness over the last year: ('very happy' and 'happy'), 85% in 2016, down from 89% in 2015, 88% in 2014, 87% in 2013, 88% in 2012, 89% in 2011, 88% in 2010, 89% in 2009, 89% in 2007. There has been a **negative shift in the proportion indicating the strongest level of 'happiness': in 2007, 34% indicated that they were 'very happy', in 2016 a statistically significantly lower 27%.**

Figure 5: 'How satisfied are you with your present financial situation?', 2007-2016



SMI 3: Social justice and equity

The most significant change between the 2009 and 2010 surveys was the decline in the domain of social justice and equity. In 2011, 2012 and 2013 there was marginally positive movement in the domain, but the aggregated score remained significantly below the 2009 peak. In both 2014 and 2015 the index recorded further decline but in the last year, has increased marginally to 92% in 2016.

In response to the proposition that **'Australia is a land of economic opportunity** where in the long run, hard work brings a better life', the level of 'strong agreement' fell from 39% in 2009 to 34% in 2010, rose to 40% in 2011, and remained close to that level in 2012. **In 2014 it dropped to a low of 35% and is marginally higher at 36% in 2016.** The proportion indicating agreement ('strongly agree' or 'agree') has ranged from 80% to 82% across the surveys to 2013, with a decline to 78%-79% from 2014 to 2016. **The level of disagreement ('strongly disagree' or 'disagree') has been in the range 13%-16% to 2013, a higher 17% in 2014, 19% in 2015 and 18% in 2016.**

In response to the proposition that **'in Australia today, the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large'**, the proportion in agreement has fluctuated between 71% and 78%. In 2015-16 it was between 77%-78%, the top end of the range.

In response to the proposition that **'people living on low incomes in Australia receive enough financial support** from the government', opinion has been close to evenly division over the nine surveys. In 2016, 45% were in agreement, 46% in disagreement.

In 2007, the last year of the Howard government, 39% of respondents indicated trust in government 'to do the right thing for the Australian people' 'almost always' or 'most of the time.' In 2009, at a time of high support for the government of Prime Minister Rudd, trust in government rose sharply to 48%.

In 2010 there was a sharp fall to 31% in the level of trust in the federal government. There was further decline to 26% in 2012. **From 2013 to 2016 trust was in the range 27%-30%.**

Figure 6: 'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life', 2007-2016

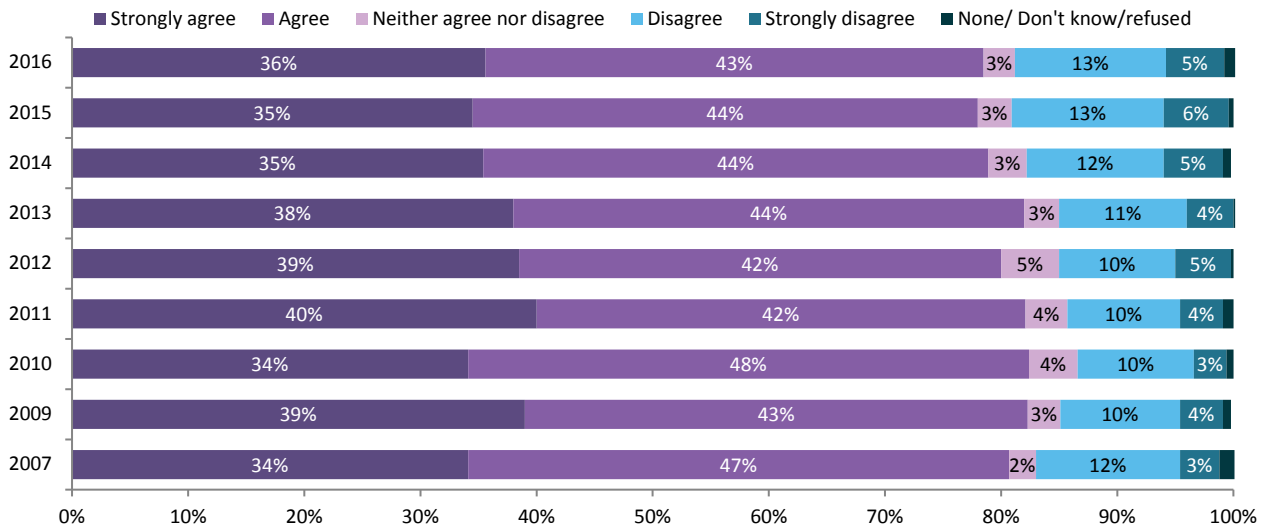


Figure 7: 'In Australia today, the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large', 2007-2016

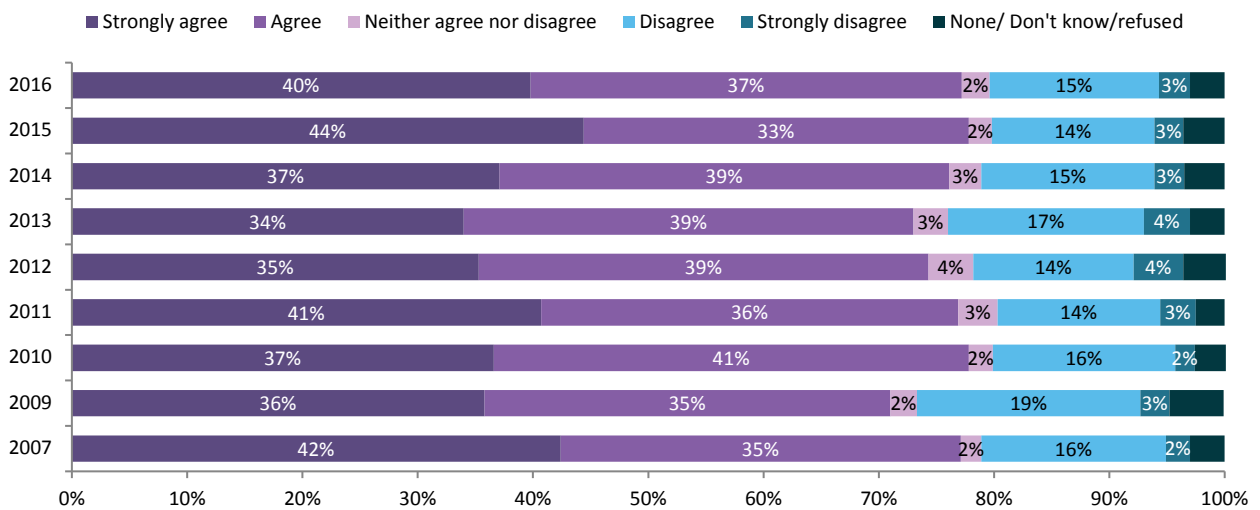
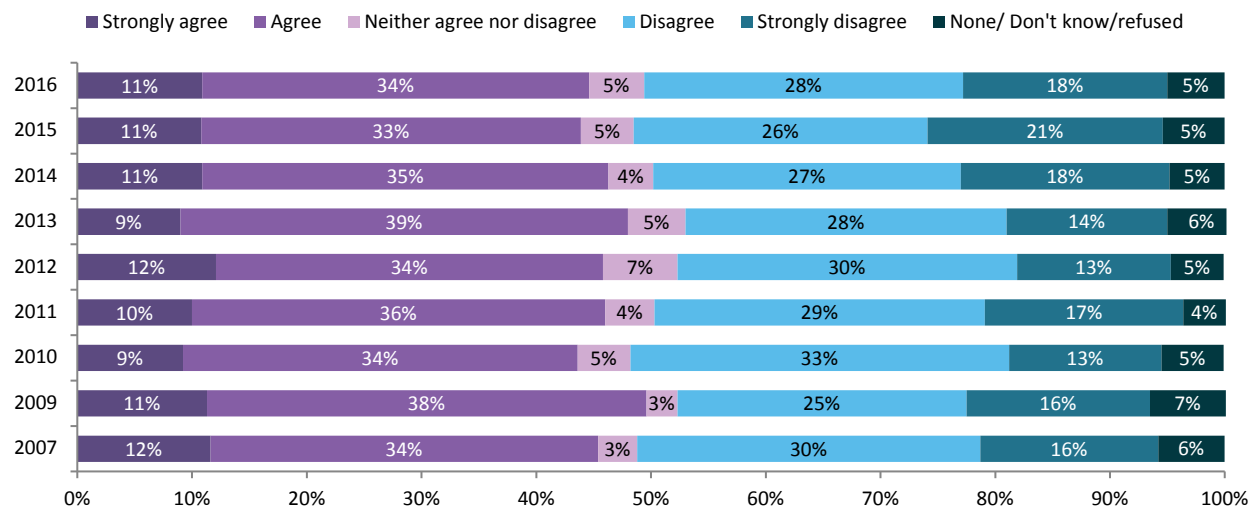


Figure 8: 'People living on low incomes in Australia receive enough financial support from the government', 2007-2016



SMI 4: Participation

In 2015 the SMI indicated increased political participation, with the Index at 100, up from 91 in 2013. **Change between 2015 and 2016 was not statistically significant, with the Index at 99.** The Index reached its highest level in 2011 and 2012 (106 and 107).

Comparing the results for 2011 and 2016, the proportion indicating that they had voted in an election was down from 89% to 86%; having signed a petition down from 56% to 48%; contact with a member of parliament down from 25% to 23%; participation in a boycott of a product or company fell, from 18% in 2011 to 16% in 2016. Attendance at a protest, march or demonstration remained constant at 11%.

Table 6: 'Which, if any, of the following have you done over the last three years or so?', 2007-2016 (percentage)

Response	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Voted in an election	85.1	87.2	83.4	88.5	88.3	78.7	82.0	83.7	86.0
Signed a petition	55.1	55.7	53.7	56.0	54.3	44.9	47.9	51.5	48.2
Written or spoken to a federal or state member of parliament	23.5	27.1	25.1	25.0	27.3	23.4	23.0	23.1	22.7
Joined a boycott of a product or company	12.4	13.9	13.5	17.9	14.5	12.6	13.1	15.4	16.3
Attended a protest, march or demonstration	12.7	12.8	9.4	11.3	13.7	10.2	10.2	12.4	11.4
N (unweighted)	2,012	2,019	2,021	2,001	2,000	1,200	1,526	1,501	1,500

Change between 2015 and 2016 not statistically significant at $p < .05$

SMI 5: Acceptance and rejection

In 2016 the index of acceptance and rejection showed strong downward movement, from 82 points in 2015 to 67, a fall of 15 points.

Reported experience of discrimination on the basis of ‘skin colour, ethnic origin or religion’ was at 20% in 2016, a significant increase from 15% in 2015.

Sense of pessimism about the future, which had increased between 2007 and 2014 (from 11% to 19%), declined to 15% in 2015 and rose again to 18% in 2016. In response to the question: ‘In three or four years, do you think that your life in Australia will be improved, remain the same or worse?’, the proportion answering ‘much improved’ or ‘a little improved’ decreased from 48% in 2013 to 42% in 2016 - the lowest proportion in the nine surveys.

In response to the proposition that ‘ethnic minorities should be given Australian **government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions**’, there was a **gradual increase in the level of agreement**, from 32% in 2007 to a high of 41% in 2015. This fell to 37% in 2016.

Between 2007 and 2016 those who ‘disagree’ with government assistance to ethnic minorities fell from 36% to 26%, while the proportion indicating ‘strong disagreement’ has fluctuated, with a high point in 2011 at 31% and responses in the range 25%-28% in other years. In 2016 it increased to 29%.

The fourth question that contributes to the index of acceptance and rejection considers immigration in terms of broad principle.

‘Strong disagreement’ with the proposition that ‘**accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger**’ was at 8% in 2007, in the range 9%-11% since 2010. Those in agreement with the proposition registered a statistically significant increase from 62% in 2013 to 67%-68% from 2014 to 2016.

Table 7: ‘In three or four years, do you think that your life in Australia will be...?’, 2007-2016 (percentage)

Response	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
‘Much improved’	24.3	21.1	18.2	17.9	16.3	18.6	16.4	18.5	17.1
‘A little improved’	25.1	28.2	26.5	27.5	28.7	29.5	26.7	27.6	24.6
<i>(‘A little improved’, ‘much improved’)</i>	49.4	49.3	44.7	45.4	45.0	48.1	43.1	46.1	41.7
‘The same as now’	35.1	32.9	37.4	33.1	32.1	31.0	32.6	35.5	36.2
‘A little worse’	8.7	10.2	9.8	12.8	14.4	12.9	14.6	13.1	12.9
‘Much worse’	2.2	2.1	2.9	4.5	4.2	4.1	4.3	2.3	4.7*
<i>(‘A little worse’, ‘much worse’)</i>	10.9	12.2	12.7	17.3	18.5	17.1	18.9	15.4	17.6
N (unweighted)	2,012	2,019	2,021	2,001	2,000	1,200	1,526	1,501	1,500

*Change between 2015 and 2016 statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Figure 9: 'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions', 2007-2016

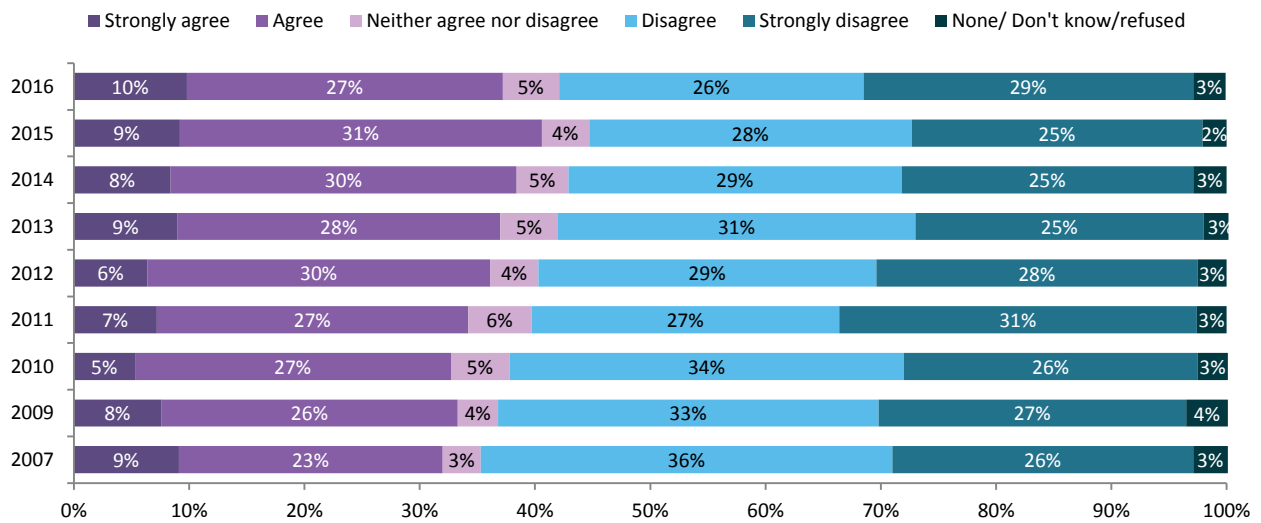


Table 8: 'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger', 2007-2016 (percentage)

Response	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
'Strongly agree'	21.9	24.7	19.1	24.2	25.7	22.0	26.4	27.3	30.4
'Agree'	45.1	43.2	43.3	40.1	39.4	40.1	41.3	39.9	36.2
Sub-total: agree	67.0	67.8	62.4	64.3	65.1	62.1	67.7	67.2	66.5
'Neither agree nor disagree'	3.3	3.1	5.9	6.4	5.5	6.1	4.5	4.2	4.3
'Disagree'	18.1	17.9	18.6	16.2	15.3	18.1	15.9	17.1	15.8
'Strongly disagree'	7.8	8.9	10.9	10.6	10.7	10.6	9.6	9.4	11.3
Sub-total: disagree	25.9	26.8	29.5	26.8	26.0	28.7	25.6	26.5	27.1
N (unweighted)	2,012	2,019	2,021	2,001	2,000	1,200	1,526	1,501	1,500

Change between 2015 and 2016 not statistically significant at $p < .05$

RANKING OF ISSUES

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

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

In the seven surveys between 2010 and 2016, **respondents have consistently given first rank to issues related to the economy, unemployment and poverty.** The importance of the issue increased from 22% in 2010 to 26% in 2011 and to 36% in 2012, with a marginal decline to 33%-34% in the three surveys 2013-15. In 2016, it dropped further to 28%.

The quality of government and political leadership was the second ranked issue of 2016 indicated by 11% of respondents, up from 9% in 2015. It has been a consistently prominent issue, specified by more than 12% of respondents between 2011 and 2014.

Between 2011 and 2014 concern over defence, national security and the threat of terrorism ranked low, noted by less than 1% of respondents. In 2015, however, it increased to 10%, making it the second highest ranked issue of that year. **In 2016, defence, national security and the threat of terrorism was the third ranked issue at 9%.**

In 2016, social issues (family breakdown, child care, drug use, lack of personal direction) were ranked fifth, down from 11% in 2015 (the highest in the seven surveys) to 6%.

Another notable change was the issue of racism which increased from under 2% between 2010 and 2015 to 4% in 2016.

The decline of the asylum issue, a major finding in 2014, was also evident in 2015 and 2016. The issue was specified by 7% of respondents in 2011 and jumped to 12% in 2012 and 2013. In 2014 it dropped sharply to 4%. In 2015 it was specified by 5% and in 2016 by 4%. This was broken down evenly by 2% of respondents indicating sympathetic concern over the asylum issue (poor treatment) and 2% indicating a negative attitude at the number of arrivals.

The issue of immigration and population was given first rank by 7% of respondents in 2011, a lower 3%-4% between 2012 and 2015. In 2016 there was an increase to 6%, with 5% indicating concern at the high level of immigration and 1% concern at the low level.

Environmental issues have declined from a peak of 18% in 2011 to 5% in 2016. Nearly all who mentioned environmental issues in 2016 referred to concern over climate change. The relatively large proportion who in past years mentioned the environment because they were concerned with government over-reaction has declined from a peak of 6% in 2011 to 0.5% in 2014 and 2015 and 0.1% in 2016.

As in earlier surveys, there was almost no reference to Indigenous issues, mentioned by 0.6% of respondents, or women's issues/gender equality mentioned by 0.2% of respondents.

Figure 10: 'What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?', top five issues, 2010-2016

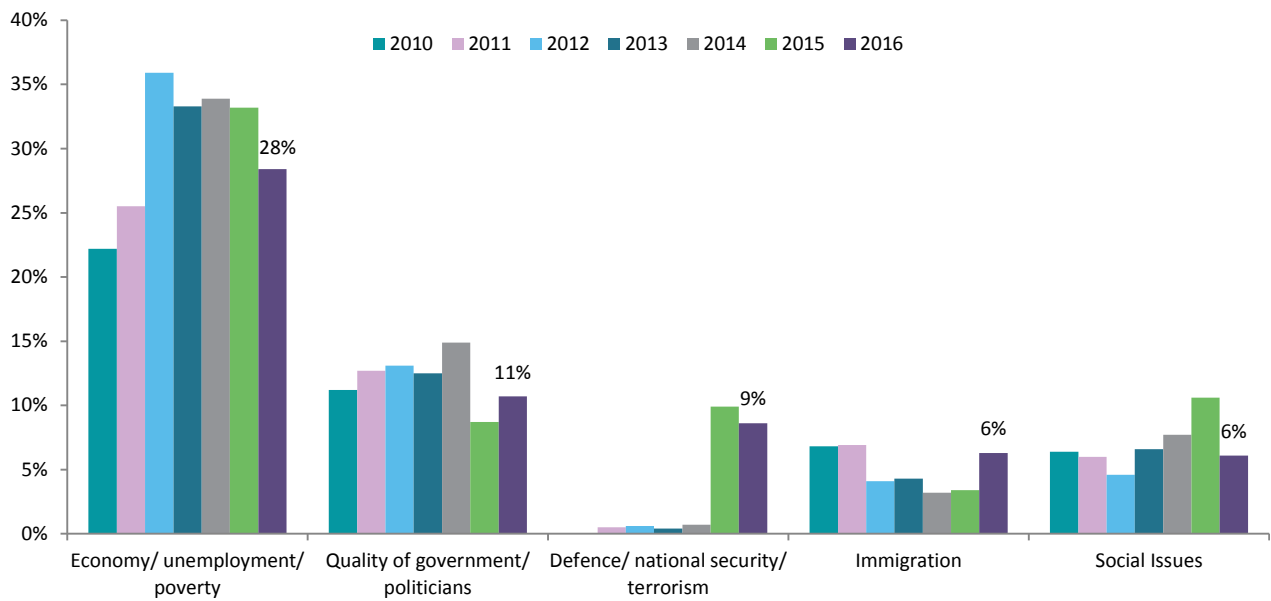


Figure 11: Selected issues - asylum seekers, immigration, and defence/national security, 2011-2016

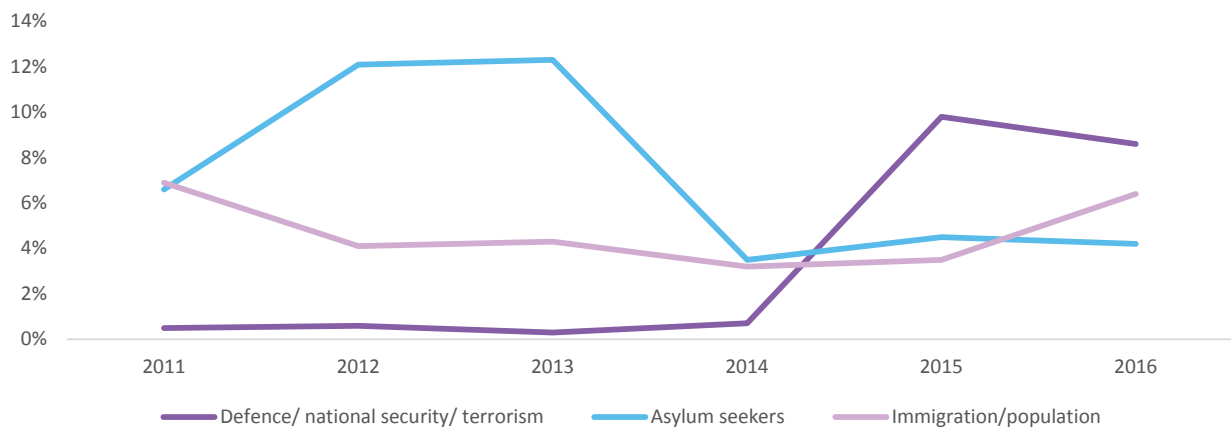


Table 9: 'What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?', 2012-2016 (percentage)

2016 Rank	Issue	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
1	Economy/ unemployment/ poverty	35.9	33.2	33.9	33.2	28.4*	
2	Quality of government/ politicians	13.1	12.5	14.9	8.7	10.7	
3	Defence/ national security/ terrorism	0.6	0.4	0.7	9.9	8.6	
4	Immigration/ population growth (concern)	3.6	3.4	3.0	3.0	5.2*	6.3
	Immigration/population – too low/ need more people (supportive)	0.5	0.9	0.2	0.4	1.1	
5	Social issues – (family breakdown, child care, drug use, lack of personal direction)	4.6	6.6	7.7	10.6	6.1*	
6	Environment – climate change/ water shortages (concern)	6.8	4.9	5.9	6.9	5.2	5.3
	Environment – overreaction to climate change/ carbon tax (sceptical)	4.0	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.1	
7	Health/ medical/ hospitals	3.2	4.3	4.9	1.9	4.9*	
8	Asylum seekers – too many/ refugees/ boat people/ illegal immigrants (negative comment)	8.1	9.8	2.2	2.5	2.1	4.2
	Asylum seekers – poor treatment, sympathy towards refugees/ boat people/ illegal immigrants	4.0	2.6	1.3	2.0	2.1	
9	Racism	1.4	1.1	0.7	1.5	4.1*	
10	Education/ schools	2.4	3.0	3.6	2.2	3.9*	
11	Crime/ law and order	1.3	2.1	1.8	1.7	2.6	
12	Housing shortage/ affordability/ interest rates	1.7	1.9	2	3.7	2.1*	
13	Indigenous issues	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.7	0.6	
14	Women's issues (e.g. equal pay/opportunity, violence, etc)	0	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.2	
15	Industrial relations/ trade unions	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.1	
	Other/ nothing/ don't know	8.3	12.2	15.7	9.8	11.9	
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	
	N (unweighted)	2,000	1,200	1,526	1,501	1,500	

*Change between 2015 and 2016 statistically significant at p<.05

Gender

Analysis by gender indicates a **large degree of congruence in most rankings** (variance of less than 1.5%) except for economic issues ranked as the most important issue facing Australia today by 32% of men and 25% of women.

Quality of government and politicians was ranked first by 12% of men and 9% of women.

The other variances were in the issues of health/medical/hospitals indicated by 3% of men and 7% of women and education/schools, 2% men 5% females.

Political alignment

Analysis by voting intention finds little change over the last year. The economy, unemployment and poverty issues are ranked highest by Liberal/National (34%), Labor (27%), and minor party or independent voters (26%). It is ranked second, below environment, by Greens voters (18%).

Liberal-National and Labor voters agree on four of the top five issues, but with some difference in order. National security is ranked second by Coalition voters, third by Labor; quality of government is ranked third by Coalition, second by Labor.

Labor and Coalition voters differ in their fourth ranked issue: immigration/population is ranked fourth by Coalition voters, but it is not a top five issue for Labor voters for whom health and medical issues are in the top five, but not for any other grouping.

Greens voters are differentiated from the Coalition and Labor. For Greens voters, environmental issues are ranked first, not ranked by others; they are also the only voters who rank poor treatment of asylum seekers in the top five, ranking it third.

Those who support a minor party or independent specify a similar range of issues as the Coalition, the only difference being the fifth ranking of social issues.

Table 10: Most important issue facing Australia by intended vote, 2016 (percentage)

Liberal/ National		Labor		Greens		Independent/ minor party	
Issue	%	Issue	%	Issue	%	Issue	%
Economy	33.9	Economy	27.4	Environment	23.7	Economy	25.7
Defence/ national security/ terrorism	11.8	Quality of government	12.2	Economy	17.5	Defence/ national security/ terrorism	14.3
Quality of government	11.1	Defence/ national security/ terrorism	9.0	Asylum- poor treatment	15.5	Quality of government	12.1
Immigration/ population - too high	6.9	Health/medical/ hospitals	7.3	Quality of government	12.4	Immigration/ population - too high	10.0
Education/ schools	4.4	Education/ schools	5.9	Social Issues	10.3	Social Issues	9.3
N (unweighted)	521	364		118		167	

EXPERIENCE OF DISCRIMINATION

A significant finding of the 2016 survey is the increase in the reported experience of discrimination, which rose from 15% in 2015 to 20% in 2016 – the highest proportion recorded over the nine Scanlon Foundation surveys.

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

Reported experience of discrimination increased from 9% in 2007 to a peak of 19% in 2013; this level dropped over the next two surveys, but rose again in 2016.

Figure 12: ‘Have you experienced discrimination in the last twelve months because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion?’ Response: ‘yes’, 2007-2016



Reported experience of discrimination in 2016 shows minor variance by gender, reported by 21% of men and 19% of women. By age group the highest level in 2016 (32%) is reported by those aged 18-24.

Figure 13: Reported experience of discrimination by age, 2007-12, 2013-16 (percentage)

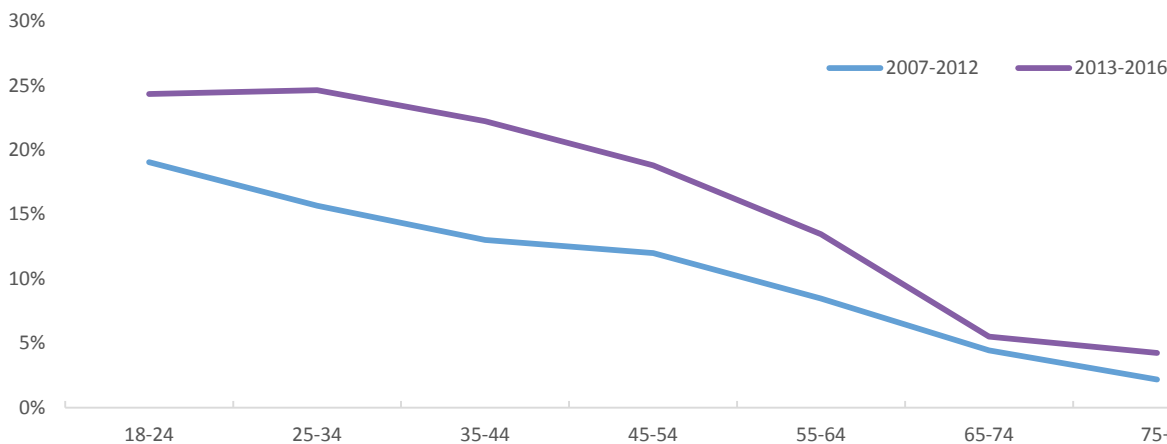


Table 11: ‘Have you experienced discrimination in the last twelve months because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion?’ Response: ‘yes’ by age, 2016 and 2013-2015 surveys (percentage)

Response	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
‘Yes’ – 2016 survey (%)	32.1	26.7	26.1	19.2	14.8	4.7	4.3
N (unweighted)	110	133	190	242	355	254	216
‘Yes’ – 2013-2015 combined (%)	21.2	23.9	20.9	18.7	13.0	5.8	4.0
N (unweighted)	290	463	567	833	934	609	517

Continuing the pattern of previous surveys, in 2016 those of a non-English speaking background reported the highest experience of discrimination, 27%, compared to 17% of those born in Australia and 19% of those born overseas in English speaking countries.

This pattern of differentiation is also evident when responses are analysed by religion of respondent. The aggregated data for the nine national surveys (2007-2016; 12,557 respondents) indicates that reported experience of discrimination ranges from 8% Anglican and 13% Roman Catholic to 26% Hindu and 31% Muslim.

Analysis by birthplace for the aggregated surveys (for birthplace groups with at least 100 respondents) ranges from 8% United Kingdom, 9% Germany, 12% Australia, 12% Italy, 17% New Zealand, 21% South Africa, 25% China, and 27% India.

The findings of the Scanlon Foundation's Australia@2015 survey, which included more than 5,000 overseas-born respondents, including those born in countries not represented in sufficient numbers for analysis in national surveys, indicate high levels of reported discrimination for a number of national groups. While reported discrimination for a number of European countries was in the range 11%-15%, reported discrimination was at 39% among those born in India, 39% China, 55% South Korea, 67% Kenya, 75% Zimbabwe, and 77% South Sudan.¹²

The 2016 survey included a follow-on question on the frequency and form of discrimination. **Of those who reported discrimination in 2016**, the largest proportion, 53% indicated that it occurred infrequently, 'just once or twice in the last year', while 17% indicated experience 'about once a month', and **14% indicated that it occurred 'often – most weeks in the year'**, a combined 31% (up from 29% in 2014 and 2015).

Table 13: Frequency of reported experience of discrimination in the last year, 2014-16 (percentage)

Frequency in last 12 months	2014	2015	2016
Often - most weeks	15.4	18.4	14.2
About once a month	13.9	10.1	16.8
Three to six times	22.1	20.7	15.8
Just once or twice	46.8	50.7	52.5
Refused/don't know	1.8	0	0.7
Total	100	100	100

The 2016 survey also asked those who reported experiences of discrimination to indicate the form of discrimination from a list of 6 options. The most frequent was being made to feel that they did not belong (56% of those who experienced discrimination); 55% indicated verbal abuse; 17% were not offered work or were not treated fairly at work; **10% had their property damaged; and 8% were physically attacked.**

Table 14: 'What form did the discrimination take?' Percentages of those who reported experiences of discrimination, 2015 and 2016, multiple response, (percentage)

Form of discrimination	2015	2016
I was made to feel like I did not belong	53.5	55.6
I was verbally abused	61.3	55.2
I was not offered a job	19.8	16.9
I was not promoted or treated fairly at work	27.2	16.8
My property was damaged	14.3	10.1
I was physically attacked	6.5	8.2
None of these	9.7	7.4
N (unweighted)	178	226

Table 12: Reported experience of discrimination by birthplace, 2013-16 (percentage)

Birthplace	2013	2014	2015	2016
Australia	16.2	15.5	12.3	17.1
English-speaking background	16.2	11.4	8.8	18.8
Non-English speaking background	29.3	25.6	21.1	26.8

¹² Andrew Markus, Australians Today: The Australia@2015 Scanlon Foundation National Survey, 2016, p. 62

The 2016 survey found indication of worsening relations in local areas.

- 81% of respondents indicated that people were 'willing to help neighbours', down from 85% in 2015; this is the lowest proportion in the last six surveys;
- 74% agreed that in the local area 'people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together', 78% in 2015.

When level of personal safety was considered, there was a higher level of concern; 64% were not worried about becoming a victim of crime (down from 73% in 2015) and 64% indicated that they felt safe walking alone at night (down from 68%).

The most notable change in 2016 is that 36% of respondents indicated concern at becoming a victim of crime (up from 26% in 2015), the highest proportion recorded in the last six surveys.

Table 15: Selected questions concerning neighbourhood, 2010-2016 (percentage)

Question and response - POSITIVE	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
[1] 'People in your local area are willing to help their neighbours.' Response: 'Strongly agree', 'agree'	82.6	84.4	84.4	84.0	83.7	84.5	81.2
[2] 'Your local area... is a place where people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together.' Response: 'Strongly agree', 'agree'	75.1	73.7	71.6	75.8	78.5	78.0	74.2
[3] 'How safe do you feel walking alone at night in your local area?' Response: 'Very safe', 'safe'	65.0	64.7	64.9	64.6	67.9	68.0	64.4
[4] '...how worried are you about becoming a victim of crime in your local area.' Response: 'Not very worried', 'not at all worried'	73.1	68.7	73.3	n/a	69.6	72.8	64.0*

Question and response - NEGATIVE	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
[1] 'People in your local area are willing to help their neighbours.' Response: 'Strongly disagree', 'disagree'	12.8	12.1	11.0	12.2	11.9	12.0	14.2
[2] 'Your local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together.' Response: 'Strongly disagree', 'disagree'	6.9	9.2	8.9	11.4	10.1	9.1	10.5
[3] 'How safe do you feel walking alone at night in your local area?' Response: 'Very unsafe', 'a bit unsafe'	29.9	29.6	28.0	29.5	26.4	26.1	28.3
[4] '...how worried are you about becoming a victim of crime in your local area.' Response: 'Very worried', 'fairly worried'	26.3	30.9	26.2	n/a	29.8	26.3	35.6*

*Change between 2015 and 2016 statistically significant at p<.05

TRUST AND VOLUNTARY WORK

A question posed in a number of Australian and international surveys asks respondents ‘Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?’

The Scanlon Foundation national surveys have found that opinion is close to evenly divided, with results in the range 45%-55% across the nine surveys. In 2016 personal trust was close to the mid-point in the range (49%).

The highest level agreement that ‘most people can be trusted’ was among those intending to vote Greens, 76% (up from 69% in 2015), with a Bachelor degree or higher, 69% (67%), those whose financial status was self-described as ‘prosperous’ or ‘very comfortable’, 63% (63%), and of English speaking background, 58% (58%).

The lowest level of agreement was among those whose financial status was self-described as ‘struggling to pay bills’ or ‘poor’, 21% (22%) or ‘just getting along’, 34% (43%), with education up to Year 11, 36% (34%).

Figure 14: ‘Most people can be trusted’, Scanlon Foundation surveys 2007-2016

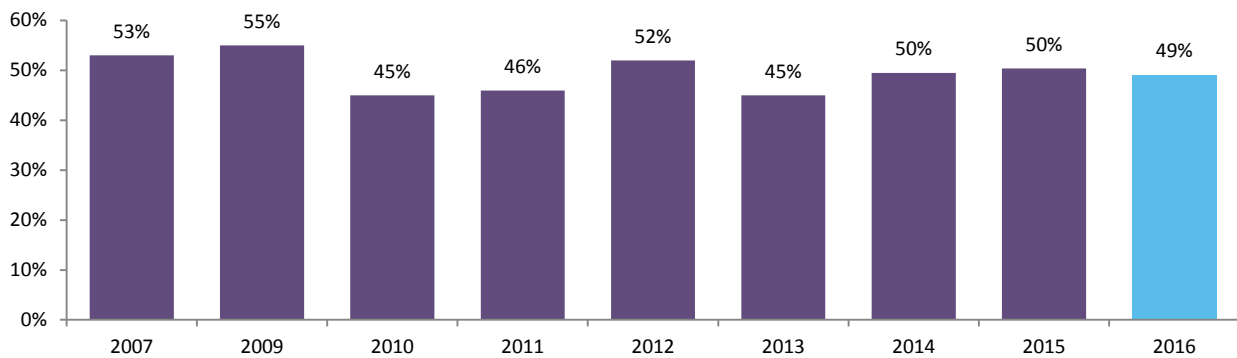


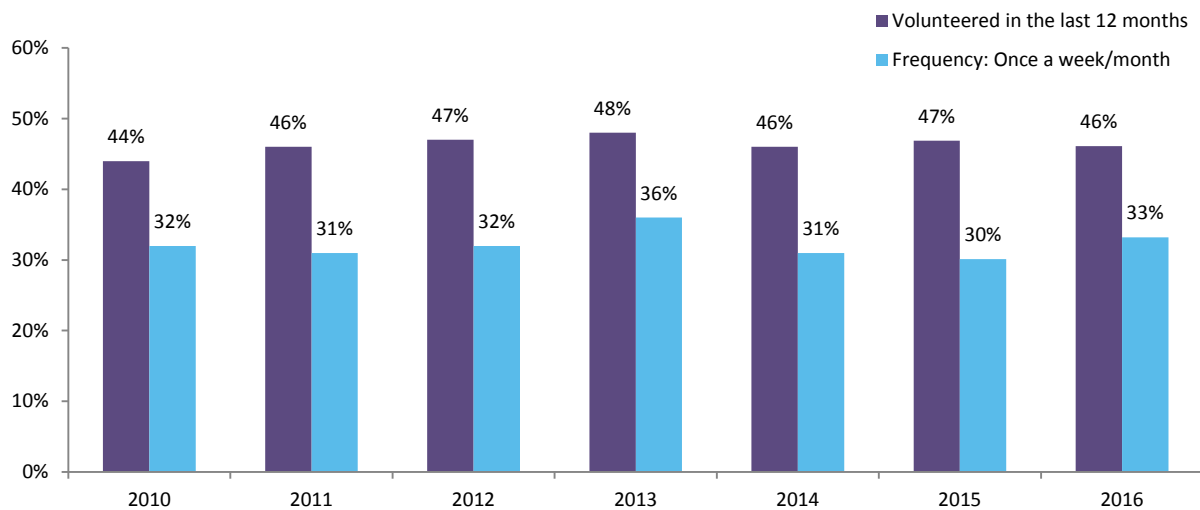
Table 16: ‘Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?’ Response: ‘Can be trusted’, 2016 (percentage)

Gender	Female	Male					
	44.9	53.5					
State	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	49.1	48.0	44.0	55.7	50.3		
Region	Capital	Rest of state					
	50.6	46.4					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+
	49.1	50.7	50.7	43.0	49.4	52.9	49.9
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	68.5	48.0	46.9	43.6	36.2		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	62.8	57.9	33.9	20.6			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Independent/ minor party			
	45.2	51.9	75.6	48.4			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	48.6	57.9	51.7				

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

In 2016, 46% of respondents indicated participation in voluntary work over the last 12 months. A follow-up question asks respondents for frequency of participation in voluntary work. In 2016, 33% indicated participation 'at least once a week' or 'at least once a month', the average for the nine Scanlon Foundation surveys, and a marginal increase from 30% in 2015.

Figure 15: 'Have you done any unpaid voluntary work in the last 12 months?' and 'How often do you participate in this sort of voluntary activity?' Response: 'at least once a week' or 'at least once a month', 2010-2016



DEMOCRACY

In 2016, concern with the state of Australian democracy remains a major focus of public discussion.

A 2015 issue of the quarterly journal *Meanjin* was devoted to the question 'Is there a crisis in Australian democracy?' In August 2015 a National Reform Summit was sponsored by *The Australian*, *The Australian Financial Review* and KPMG, with the aim 'of building a consensus for reform and **break the political deadlock that has increasingly frustrated policy change.**' Paul Kelly, the Editor-at-large of *The Australian*, wrote in September 2015 of 'an eight year fiasco under Labor and Coalition governments' and of 'the demise of economic reform since 2003-04.'

A 2016 Australian Institute publication, *The State of Australian Democracy*, featured the finding that 'a rising number of the Australian adult population are not enrolled, not casting a vote or voting informally.' In the aftermath of the 2016 federal election Tim Colebatch, former economics editor of the *Age*, reported that for the House of Representatives close to 23% voted for a party other than the Coalition or Labor, compared to just 2% in 1951. Mark Triffitt, Politics lecturer at the University of Melbourne, observed that the election result 'highlighted that **the dam wall of public dissatisfaction with the major parties and their disconnected way of "doing" democracy is near-to-bursting.**'¹³

Survey findings have featured in the discussion. The 2014 Lowy Poll highlighted 'Australian's Ambivalence About Democracy.' Alex Oliver, author of the Lowy report, commented on ABC Lateline that 'we were shocked, surprised... that there's something wrong with the way the political system is working', based on interpretation of findings that indicated that 'only 60% of Australians.... believe that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.' In 2015, the Lowy Poll found preference for democracy over 'any other kind of to government' to be higher, at 65%, in 2016 lower again at 61%.¹⁴

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

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

The Scanlon Foundation surveys provide an annual indicator of the trend of opinion on Australian democracy. New questions were included in the 2016 survey to further understanding of the extent of disengagement with the political system.

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

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

There was an expectation that in 2014, following the election of the Abbott government, there would be significant increase in level of trust, on the pattern of the increase in confidence in the early period of the Rudd government. This expectation was not realised. While the level of trust increased, it was only by three percentage points to 30% in 2014 and has remained at or close to that level (29%-30%) in 2015 and 2016.

¹³ Tim Colebatch, 'The upside of the falling big-party vote', *Inside Story*, 11 July 2016; Mark Triffitt, 'Australia needs to lead again on democratic innovation', *The Conversation*, 26 August 2016

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

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

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

Figure 16: 'How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?' Response: 'Almost always' or 'most of the time', 2007-2016

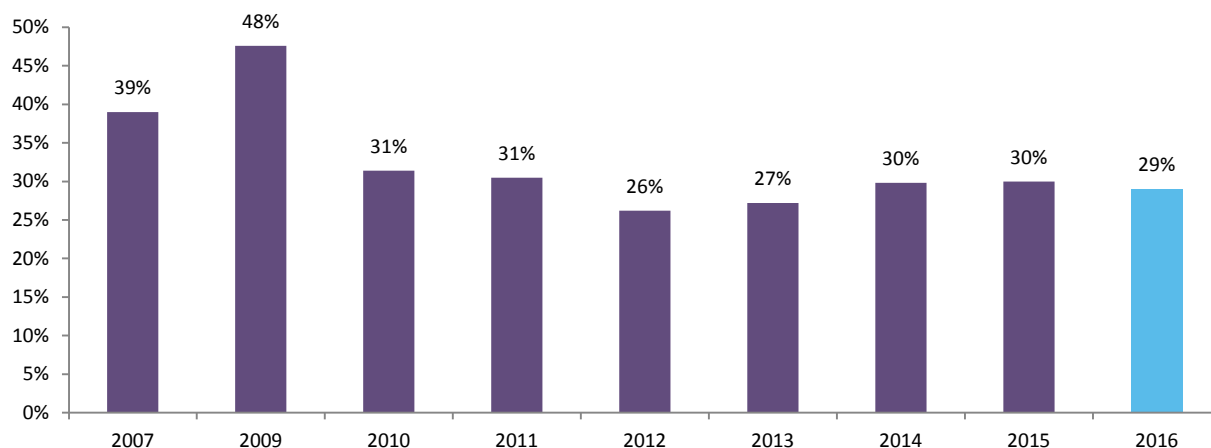
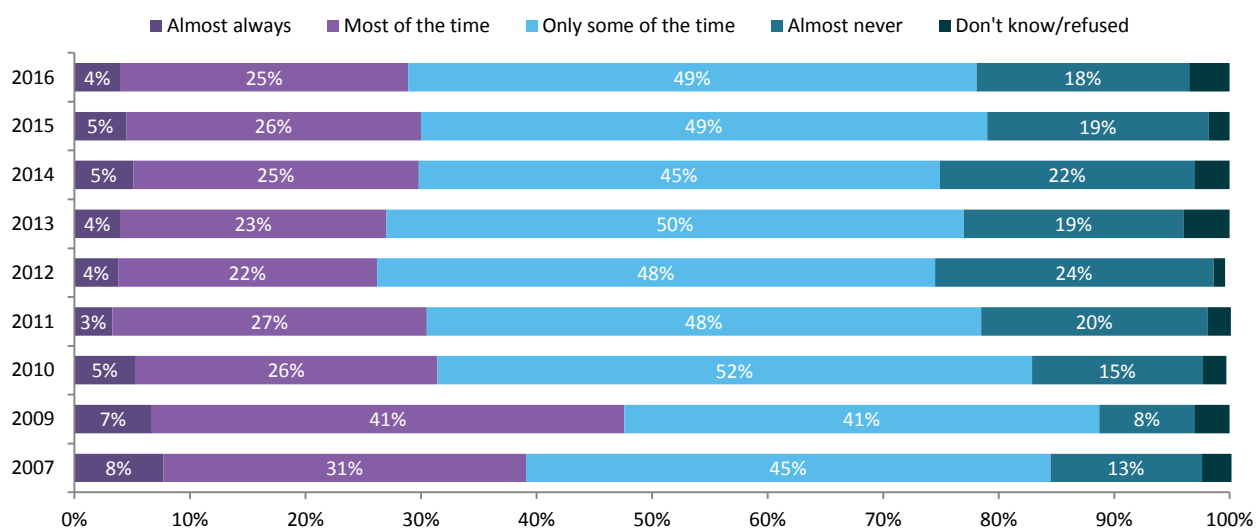


Figure 17: 'How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?', 2007-2016



Analysis by age finds a relatively high level of trust among those aged 18-24 and 75 and over. Higher trust was also indicated by those whose described their current financial circumstances as 'prosperous' or 'living very comfortably' (43%). Trust was also higher among those who have come from a non-English speaking country (37%).

As in previous survey findings, a notable variation is found by political alignment, indicating that a key predictor of trust in government is a person's support or opposition to the party in power: thus 40% of those intending to vote Liberal/ National indicate trust, compared to 23% Labor, 15% Greens and 13% minor party or independent.

A low level of trust in government was also indicated by those whose self-reported financial situation was 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor', 16%.

A significant finding is that for only one of the thirty-two sub-groups – financial circumstances described as 'prosperous' or 'living very comfortably' – is level of trust above 40%; and for only an additional five is it in the range 35%-40%.

This evidence points to a malaise that is not to be explained solely in terms of political alignment, the identification or lack of identification with the party in government: even among Liberal or National voters the level of trust is only indicated by close to 40%.

Table 17: 'How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?' Response: 'Almost always', 'most of the time', 2016

Gender	Female	Male					
	28.2	29.7					
State	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	31.8	27.2	28.5	29.7	28.7		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	30.9	25.4					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	37.3	27.5	26.3	25.8	21.7	30.2	38.1
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	35.6	25.5	27.4	33.3	24.0		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	43.0	30.6	21.4	16.3			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Independent/ minor party			
	22.7	39.9	15.1	13.2			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	26.6	29.1	36.7				

Ranking problems

As discussed earlier in this report, the first question in the survey is open-ended and asks: ‘What is the most important problem facing Australia today?’ In 2016 **quality of government and politicians remains the second ranked issue of concern, specified by 11% of respondents, but below the average of the previous six years (12.2%).**

Table 18: ‘What is the most important problem facing Australia today?’ Response: ‘quality of government and politicians’, 2010-2016 (percentage and rank)

	%	Rank
2010	11.2	3
2011	12.7	3
2012	13.1	2
2013	12.5	equal 2
2014	14.9	2
2015	8.7	4
2016	10.7	2

Need for change?

A new question in the 2014 Scanlon Foundation survey asked respondents if ‘the system of government we have in Australia works fine as it is, needs minor change, needs major change, or should be replaced.’

The proportion opting for the end point responses has remained constant, with 15%-16% indicating ‘works fine as it is’ and 11% ‘should be replaced.’ But **there has been significant shift in the middle ground**, with the proportion indicating ‘needs minor change’ declining from 48% in 2014 to 43% in 2015 and 40% in 2016, while ‘needs major change’ increased from 23% in 2014 to 27% in 2015 and 31% in 2016.

Analysis of sub-groups favouring major change or replacement of the system of government finds the highest proportion among those whom the system has failed: respondents indicating that they are ‘struggling to pay bills’ or that their financial circumstances are ‘poor’ 71%. There are relatively high proportions also among those intending to vote for a minor party or independent (56%) or Labor (50%); those aged between 45-54 (49%) or 35-44 (48%); and those whose highest level of education is Year 11 (56%) or trade/apprenticeship (48%).

The lowest proportion favouring major change is among those whose self-described financial circumstance is ‘prosperous’ or ‘living very comfortably’ 28%; those from a non-English speaking background, 28%; aged over 75, 30%; and those with a university degree 31%.

Figure 18: ‘Would you say the system of government we have in Australia works fine as it is, needs minor change, needs major change, or should be replaced?’, 2014-2016

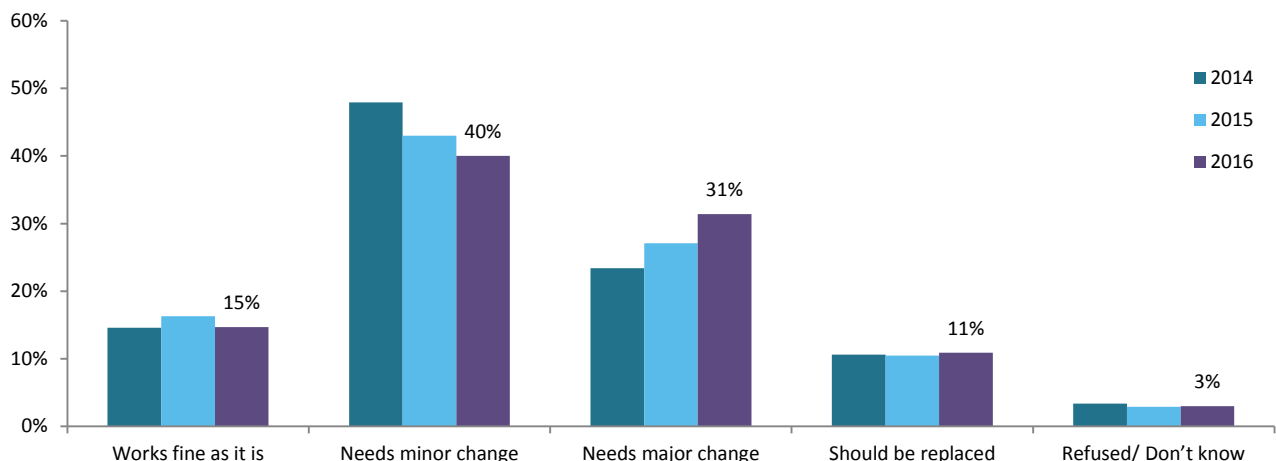


Table 19: 'Would you say the system of government we have in Australia works fine as it is, needs minor change, needs major change, or should be replaced?' Response: 'Needs major change' or 'should be replaced', 2016 (percentage)

Gender	Female	Male					
		42.4	42.0				
State	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	38.4	45.6	43.4	38.5	43.2		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	40.0	46.3					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	36.3	43.1	48.3	48.5	41.9	41.0	30.0
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	30.6	45.3	47.9	41.4	53.4		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	28.0	38.8	47.4	70.6			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Independent/ minor party			
	50.1	36.9	44.5	56.1			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	47.3	45.0	28.3				

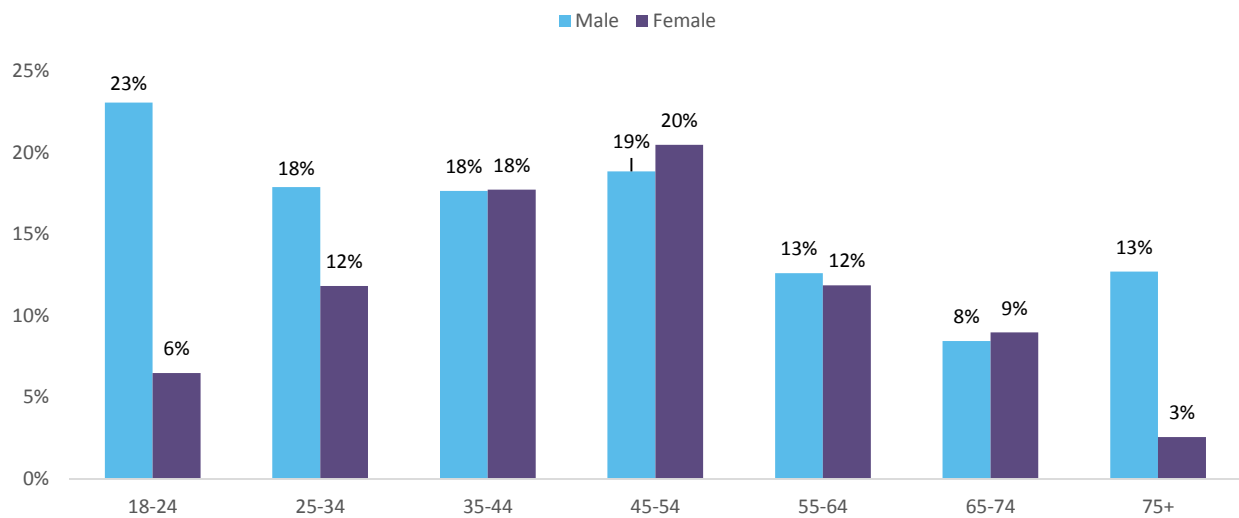
New questions were included in the 2016 survey to further understanding of the extent of disengagement with the political system.

Taking the opportunity of the survey timing in the weeks following the 2016 Federal election, respondents were asked 'how much interest did you have in the recent federal election campaign?': 14% of respondents indicated 'none at all' and 20% 'not much', a total of 34% indicating disengagement. Analysis by age group and gender finds that the highest proportion indicating 'none at all' was among men aged 18-24, at 23%, compared to 7% of women within this age group.

Table 20: 'How much interest did you have in the recent federal election campaign?', 2016 (percentage)

	%
A good deal	39.9
Some	25.1
Not much	19.9
None at all	14.5
Don't know	0.6
Total	100

Figure 19: 'How much interest did you have in the recent federal election campaign?' Response: 'none at all', by age and sex, 2016 (percentage)



The lack of trust in the political system may in part reflect the failure to address issues supported by a majority of electors. The 2016 Scanlon Foundation surveys sought views on one environmental and three social issues that have commanded public attention over the last two years. It found majority support for legislative enactment on all four issues: 83% 'strongly support' or 'support' 'legislation for prescription marijuana to treat painful medical conditions; 80% support 'medically approved euthanasia for people suffering terminal illness'; 67% support 'marriage equality for same sex couples.' Climate change was considered with reference to 'legislation for reduced reliance on coal for electricity generation' and found support at 70%.

Level of opposition to marriage equality for same sex couples was analysed by eight variables. The finding is that age is a key determinant, with low level of opposition among those aged 25-34 (16%), close to three times that level among those aged 75 or above (47%). Low level of opposition is also found among Greens voters (9%), relatively high levels amongst those who highest completed education is trade/apprenticeship (34%), of non-English speaking background (34%), and intending to vote for a minor party or independent (40%). There is a significant difference between the level of opposition indicated by men (31%) and women (21%).

Table 21: ‘Do you support or oppose legislation for...’, 2016 (percentages)

	Strongly support	Support	Sub-total support	Neither support nor oppose	Oppose	Strongly oppose	Sub-total oppose	Refused/ Don't know	Total
Prescription of marijuana to treat painful medical conditions	42.8	40.2	83.0	3.8	6.7	3.5	10.2	3.1	100
Medically approved euthanasia for people suffering terminal illness	45.3	34.6	79.9	3.2	6.9	6.0	12.9	3.9	100
Reduced reliance on coal for electricity generation	37.8	32.6	70.4	4.6	11.5	5.7	17.2	7.9	100
Marriage equality for same sex couples	39.7	26.8	66.5	4.9	12.1	14.0	26.1	2.5	100

Table 22: ‘Do you support or oppose legislation for marriage equality for same sex couples?’ Response: ‘strongly oppose’ or ‘oppose’, 2016 (percentages)

Gender	Female	Male					
	21.1	31.3					
State	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	21.8	28.1	28.8	31.0	24.6		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	26.7	24.9					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+
	17.4	15.5	27.9	21.1	31.8	33.5	46.5
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	20.9	27.2	33.5	32.0	29.5		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	29.5	21.8	29.0	32.1			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Independent/ minor party			
	18.7	29.5	9.0	40.3			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	23.6	20.3	33.8				

IMMIGRATION

Questions related to the immigration intake have been a staple of public opinion polling for over 50 years. But this polling has not been systematic, nor taken at regular intervals. **The Scanlon Foundation surveys provide for the first time publicly available annual findings on a range of immigration issues.** In the 2016 survey there were twenty-five questions on immigration, asylum seekers and cultural diversity, in the context of a comprehensive questionnaire of 66 questions.

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

In public discussion of immigration there is considerable misunderstanding, a function of ignorance of the detail of policy, as well as statistics and terminology that are difficult to interpret. A question on the level of immigration asked in four Scanlon Foundation surveys (2009-2012) indicates **little correlation in public perception and actual changes in the intake.** Thus, despite the sharp fall in net overseas migration between 2008 and 2010 (from 277,300 to 196,100), in 2010 only 4% of respondents perceived a decline.

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

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

In 2010 there was heightened political debate over immigration and the desirable future population of Australia, in the context of increased unemployment. In 2010 the Scanlon Foundation survey found increased agreement that the intake was 'too high': up from 37% in 2009 to 47%. This finding is almost identical to the 46% average result from five polls conducted by survey agencies in the period March–July 2010.¹⁷

This increased negativity towards immigration was a temporary development. Between 2011 and 2013 the proportion in agreement that the intake was too high was in the range 39%-42%, between 2014 and 2016 a lower 34%-35%. **In 2016 a substantial majority, 59%, considered that the intake was 'about right' or 'too low.'**

Additional questions in 2016 asked respondents for their view of the intake of 'skilled workers' and 'those who have close family living in Australia (i.e partners or children of Australian residents)'; **85% of respondents 'strongly approved' or 'approved' of both categories.** This was substantially higher than in 2012, when the question was previously included in the survey; at that time 77% approved of skilled workers and 70% of family reunion.

A number of recent polls which included questions on immigration support the pattern indicated by Scanlon Foundation surveys. The 2014 Lowy Institute Poll found that 37% of respondents considered the intake to be 'too high', 61% 'about right' or 'too low.' The 2016 Lowy Institute Poll, administered in February-March, tested response to the proposition that 'overall, there is too much immigration to Australia': 40% of respondents agreed, 57% disagreed.¹⁸

Newspoll for *The Australian*, conducted in July 2014, asked: 'Do you think the number of immigrants coming to Australia through official channels and allowed into Australia should be increased, decreased, or stay the same as now?' A very low 27% indicated that the intake should be decreased, 70% that it should stay the same or be increased.¹⁹

The April 2015 ANUpoll asked, 'Do you think the number of immigrants to Australia nowadays should be increased, remain the same as it is, or reduced?' Just 28% favoured reduction, 67% an increase or the current level, a result similar to Newspoll.²⁰

In October 2015 Roy Morgan Research informed respondents that 'over the last year about 180,000 immigrants came to Australia ... to live permanently' and asked if the number 'should be increased, or reduced, or remain about the same?' 26% indicated that the intake should be reduced, 69% that it should remain the same or be increased. When the same question was asked in October 2016 the proportion favouring reduction had increased, but only to 34%, while a clear majority, 61%, supported the current level or an increase.²¹

¹⁷ *Age* (Nielsen), 31 July 2010; Roy Morgan Research Finding No. 4536; Essential Report 5 July 2010; *Age* (Nielsen), 19 April 2010; Roy Morgan Research Finding No. 4482.

¹⁸ 2014 Lowy Institute Poll, p. 28; 2016 Lowy Institute Poll, p. 27

¹⁹ *The Australian*, 16 July 2014

²⁰ ANUpoll, April 2015, p. 18

²¹ Roy Morgan Research, finding no. 6507 (20 October 2015), 7025 (26 October 2016)

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

[1] The increase in the level of unemployment has not been of a magnitude to have significant impact on public opinion on the immigration intake. From 1989 to 1992 unemployment increased from 6% to 11%; the current increase has been of a lower magnitude, from 4% to 6%, with a marginal fall in unemployment between June 2015 and June 2016.

The Scanlon Foundation surveys have not found a significant increase in the level of economic concern between 2015 and 2016. Economic issues are ranked first as the major problem facing Australia, but the proportion of respondents specifying the economy has not increased over the last four surveys and it declined over the last twelve months. The proportion indicating that they are 'very worried' or 'worried' that they will lose their job 'in the next year or so' increased from 12% in 2015 to 15% in 2016, but the proportion indicating dissatisfaction with their 'present financial situation' declined from 24% in 2015 to 22% in 2016. Agreement with the proposition that 'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run hard work brings a better life' remains at a high 79%, unchanged from 2015.

[2] The level of immigration was not a major subject of political controversy during the 2016 election campaign, although it received increased attention after the completion of the survey (in July-August), with the return of Pauline Hanson to the federal parliament.

[3] Strong economic growth in the years preceding the Global Financial Crisis may have fostered heightened acceptance of immigration as in Australia's best interests, and the changed outlook continues to influence public opinion in 2016.

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

Figure 20: 'What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia?', 2007-2016

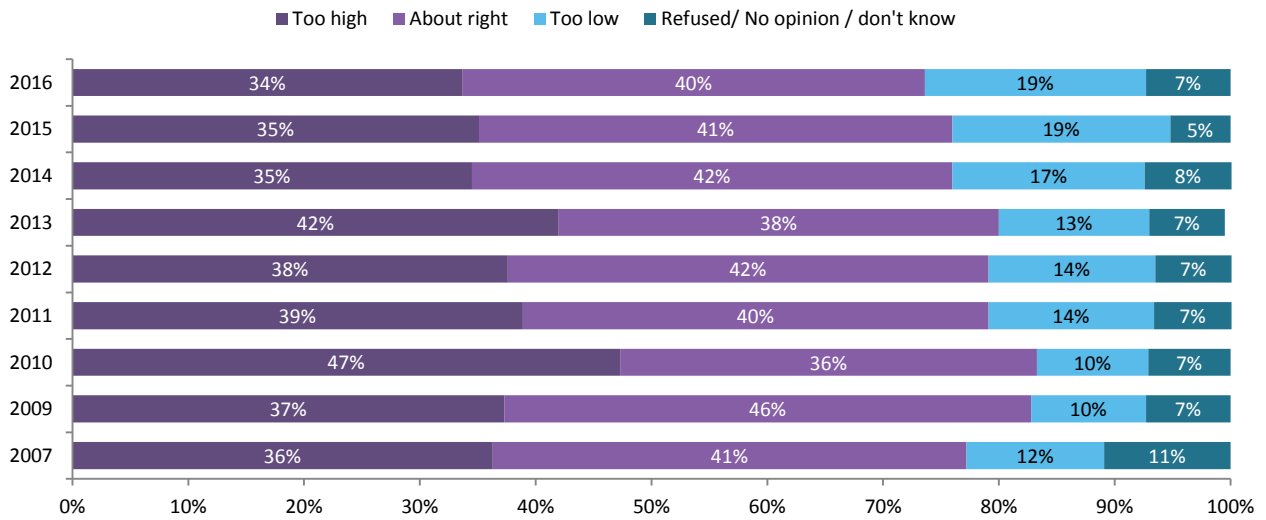


Figure 21: Time series, trend of unemployment and view that the immigration intake is 'too high', 1974–2016



Australia in international context

There is substantial evidence that indicates that Australia and Canada rank as the countries most receptive to immigration.

A major survey conducted between 2012 and 2014 in 142 countries by Gallup World Poll provides scope for comparison across regions. The aggregated results indicate that support for immigration at current or higher levels is at 69% in the Oceania region (Australia and New Zealand), 57% in Northern America (Canada and the United States of America), and at 38% in Europe. Analysis by country indicated support at 70% in Australia, 67% in Canada, and 29% in the United Kingdom.²²

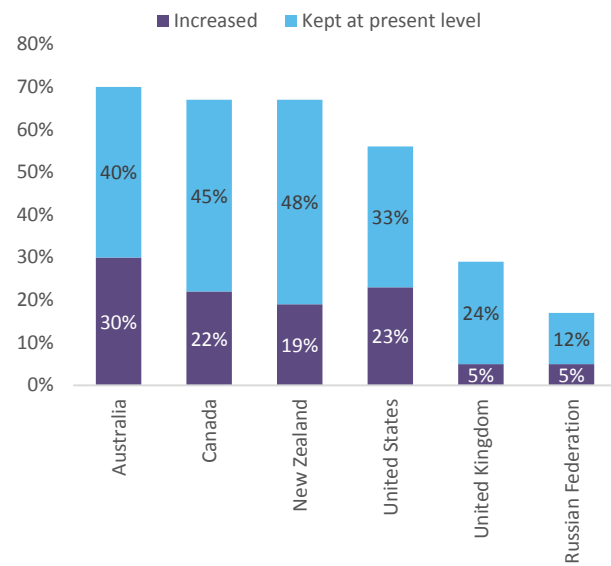
Recent European surveys have found support for immigration at similar or lower levels to the Gallup World Poll. The 2014 Eurobarometer survey, conducted in November 2014, found that 35% of the European population was positive towards immigration from outside the EU, 57% were negative. The highest levels of negative response were in Italy and Greece at 75%.²³

The 2014 Transatlantic Trends survey found that disapproval of government handling of immigration in twelve European countries averaged 60%. The highest levels were 77% in Spain, 75% in Greece, 73% in the United Kingdom, and 64% in Italy and France.²⁴

Survey findings in Canada are in marked contrast to results obtained in Europe.

The Focus Canada survey conducted annually by the Environics Institute has found that a majority of Canadians reject the proposition that the country is taking too many immigrants. The 2015 survey, which was conducted in June and achieved a sample of 2000, found that 57% of respondents disagreed with the proposition that ‘overall, there is too much immigration in Canada,’ 38% agreed. These proportions have been little changed over the last four years. In 2016, 82% of respondents agreed that ‘overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy’ (14% disagreed), while only a minority of 30% agreed that immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians’ (67% disagreed).²⁵

Figure 22: In your view should immigration in this country be kept as its present level, increased or decreased?, 2012-2014



Source: IOM, How the World Views Migration

²² International Organization for Migration 2015, *How the World Views Migration*, <http://publications.iom.int/books/how-world-views-migration>

²³ Eurobarometer 82, 2014, Public Opinion in the European Union, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb82/eb82_en.htm

²⁴ Transatlantic Trends 2014: Mobility, Migration and Integration, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, p. 6

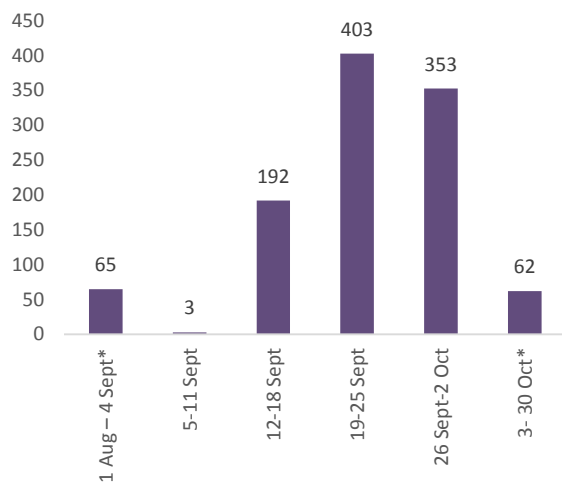
²⁵ The Environics Institute 2015, Focus Canada, ‘Canadian public opinion about immigration and multiculturalism’, <http://www.environicsinstitute.org/>

ATTITUDES TO MUSLIM IMMIGRATION

Attitudes to Muslims have been a focus of recent controversy. In July 2016 the television presenter Sonja Kruger created a media storm with her comment that she would like to see the immigration of Muslims to Australia ‘stopped now ... because I would like to feel safe.’ More sustained attention to the issue stems from the campaign of the One Nation party and the maiden Senate speech of its leader, Pauline Hanson, in which she stated that **‘we are in danger of being swamped by Muslims, who bear a culture and ideology that is incompatible with our own.’** In Hanson’s alarmist view, ‘if we do not make changes now, there will be no hope in the future. Have no doubt that we will be living under sharia law and treated as second-class citizens with second-class rights.’

The extent of media attention to Muslim immigration is indicated by the Factiva database, which indexes newspaper coverage, online media and transcripts of television and radio programs. The database indicates the spike in media coverage at the time of Senator Hanson’s speech (14 September) and further increase in the context of survey findings over the following two weeks.

Figure 23: Factiva database for Australia – term ‘Muslim immigration’, average items per week, August-October 2016



* Average per week for August and October

On 21 September Essential Report released a survey conducted between 27 July-1 August that found 49% support for a ban on Muslim immigration. Newspaper headlines indicate the tenor of media coverage: ‘Half of Australians want to ban Muslim immigration: poll’; ‘Every second person: the poll on Muslim immigration’; ‘Silent majority need a voice: Hanson’; ‘Pauline Hanson says 49% support for ban on Muslim immigration is too low’; ‘WA Senator [Scott Ludlam] lashes out at claims half of Australia wants ‘ban on Muslims’’; ‘Australians are shocking, disappointing and frightening.’

A second survey finding, released on 27 September, found a high level of concern at the prospect of the marriage of a close relative to a Muslim. The *Sydney Morning Herald* headlined: ‘National snapshot finds 60 per cent of Australians would be concerned if a relative married a Muslim.’

Senior journalists and politicians took the survey findings at face value. Labor deputy leader Tanya Plibersek saw the survey as proof that ‘we’re not doing a good enough job as national leaders to bring harmony and cohesion to our community.’ Greens Senator Scott Ludlam commented that the finding was ‘sobering.’

The survey findings were seen as evidence of a shift in public opinion. Peter Hartcher, Political and International Editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, wrote in a three part feature for Fairfax press that ‘support for the idea of a ban on Muslim immigration ... has doubled since it was last polled a couple of years ago and now has the approval of 49 per cent, according to an Essential Media poll.’ (*The Age*, 25 October)

Contrary to this uncritical acceptance of survey findings, it is not at all evident that the surveys are a reliable reading of public opinion. Media commentary lacks attention to sample size and mode of surveying; question wording, response options, survey instrument; and context for interpreting results.

The Essential Report finding was obtained by use of an online panel of respondents who complete surveys out of interest and for reward. Surveys employing online panels are relatively cheap and quick to run and they have a proven record on some issues. But major organisations seeking the highest level of reliability continue to employ random population sampling, including the Scanlon Foundation, the Australian Bureau of Statistics General Social Survey, the United States highly regarded Pew Research organisation, and the New York Times/ CBS Poll.

An extensive review of online survey methodologies by the American Association for Public Opinion Research found that computer administration employed in **panel surveys yields more reports of socially undesirable attitudes and behaviours than oral interviewing, but no evidence that directly demonstrates that the computer reports are more accurate.**²⁶

To test the impact of different methodologies, in 2014 the Scanlon Foundation administered the same questionnaire to both a random sample of the population and an online panel; on the issue of attitudes to those of the Muslim faith, it found that 44% of Australia born panel respondents indicated that they were 'very negative' or 'negative', a much lower 28% of the interviewer administered random sample.

There is a second and at least as important issue with the Essential finding.

Surveys do not simply identify a rock solid public opinion, they explore with the potential to distort through questions asked. Essential chose not to present respondents with a range of options on Muslim immigration, rather a yes/ no choice: 'Would you support or oppose a ban on Muslim immigration to Australia?' Results were placed in two categories, one of 49% and one of 40%.

The product was easy to understand copy for the media, but arguably also a gross simplification. **Public opinion on social issues defies binary categorisation**, it is more accurately understood in terms of a continuum, with a middle ground on many issues that comprises more than half the sample.

The impact of question wording is illustrated by polling on asylum seekers. Nine surveys between 2001 and 2010 using various methodologies asked respondents if they favoured or opposed the turning back of boats.²⁷ The average for the surveys was 67% in support. In contrast, the 2010 Scanlon Foundation survey tested opinion **by offering four policy options, ranging from eligibility for permanent settlement to turning back of boats, which in this context was supported by a minority of just 27%.**

The finding on the level of concern at marriage of a close relative with a Muslim person was obtained by what seems to have been a self-completion survey and a sample of only 300. The results were of a preliminary nature and no analysis of the data was published, with initial reports apparently based on a press release.²⁸

A further issue is that the finding on attitude to marriage was obtained through a question which employed an uneven response frame. Typically in surveying respondents are presented with balanced options: for example, two positive, one mid-point, and two negative. The survey question used to determine attitudes to marriage provided five response options: 'very concerned', 'concerned', 'moderately concerned', 'slightly concerned', and 'not concerned' – that is, four negative, one positive. The four negative options were simply added to indicate concern. Questions with uneven response options are sometimes used by researchers, but then the responses are weighted, not simply added so that 'slightly concerned' is accorded the same significance as 'very concerned'.²⁹

A third issue concerns **the context for interpreting the results.**

²⁶ AAPOR Report on Online Panels, June 2010, p. 34,

https://www.aapor.org/AAPOR_Main/media/MainSiteFiles/AAPOROnlinePanelsTFReportFinalRevised1.pdf

²⁷ Murray Goot and Ian Watson, 'Population, immigration and asylum seekers', May 2011, Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library, p. 36

²⁸ 'Marry a Muslim?', 27 September 2016, UNSW Newsroom, <http://newsroom.unsw.edu.au/news/social-affairs/marry-muslim-six-out-ten-australians-concerned>

²⁹ See, for example, Linda Skitka, et al., 'Confrontational and Preventative Policy Responses to Terrorism', *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 2006, 28 (4), p. 378. Responses were weighted: 1 for 'not at all', 2 'slightly', 3 'moderately', 4 'much', and 5 'very much'

The Australian media typically reports surveys of social issues without attention to context for interpretation. This reporting is in marked contrast with the regular media sponsored surveying of the level of support for political parties and their leaders, which is always presented in the context of earlier surveys. Is the level of support going up or down, what has been the shift over the last six months, how does the level of confidence in this prime minister compare with a predecessor? **It is well understood that trend of opinion is the vital element in interpretation, without reference points there is no valid basis for interpretation.**

It is also important to establish the pattern of response to types of questions. Some questions typically elicit a high level of positive response, some a low level; for example, in Australia sense of belonging questions yield high levels, questions on trust in political institutions yield low, as discussed earlier in this report.

Questions with regard to national or ethnic groups typically find a hierarchy of acceptance, so it is not surprising that in the current political environment the strongest negative views are towards persons of the Muslim faith. This is consistent with patterns since the late 1940s and do not indicate cause for alarm.

A 2013 VicHealth survey explored the status hierarchy by asking respondents if their attitude to a range of racial, ethnic or faith groups was 'very cold', 'cold', 'neither cold nor warm', 'warm', or 'very warm': 2% of respondents indicated that they were 'cold' or 'very cold' towards people who are 'Mediterranean European'; 4% Jewish; 6% Asian; 11% African; 14% Middle Eastern; and 22% Muslim.³⁰

Between 1984 and 1988, when there was considerable negative public discussion of Asian immigration, ten surveys asked if the number of Asian immigrants was too high. The average for the ten surveys was 58% in agreement that the intake was too high, with a peak of 77% obtained by Newspoll in 1988.³¹

There is survey evidence on opinion towards Muslims over time. Attitudes to marriage with a Muslim (and other groups) were explored in surveys conducted between 2001 and 2008. Using the same questionable methodology as the 2016 survey, almost the same result was obtained; with the four negative responses added, 57% of respondents indicated concern in the Sydney Statistical Region, 54% in New South Wales, and 49% across Australia.³²

An Essential survey in February 2011 asked if 'the Australian government [should] exclude Muslims from our migrant intake?' and obtained agreement at 25%, 55% disagreement and a high 20% 'don't know.' This was a different result to the 49% negative in 2016, although obtained by a differently worded question.

But a similar change was not obtained by the probability-based random sample employed by Roy Morgan Research, which asked respondents in 2010, 2015 and 2016 if they 'support or oppose Muslim immigration.' **Morgan found a much lower level of opposition than Essential**, and only minor change over the three surveys: level of opposition was at 35% in 2010, 28% in 2015 and 33% in 2016.

Table 23: 'Please say whether you support or oppose Muslim immigration', 2010, 2015, 2106 (percentage)

	July 2010	Oct. 2015	Oct. 2016
Support	54	65	58
Oppose	35	28	33
Can't say	11	7	9
Total	100	100	100

Source: Roy Morgan Research, finding 7025

Scanlon Foundation surveys provide the most comprehensive time series data on attitudes to persons of the Muslim faith. As noted earlier in this report, they employ random samples of the population, administered by telephone (landline and mobile), and a consistent methodology.

The Scanlon Foundation surveys find a **relatively high level of negative opinion towards Muslims**, similar to the findings of VicHealth. Over the course of six surveys between 2010 and 2016 negative opinion has been **in the range 22%-25%** (11% - 14% very negative), at an average of 24.2%. This compares to 4%-5% negative opinion towards Christians (average 4.2%) and Buddhists (average 4.6%). However, **in an important finding of relevance to contemporary commentary, while concern over national security and the threat of terrorism has significantly increased, there has been no statistically significant shift in negative opinion towards Muslims over the course of the six surveys.** The proportion indicating negative opinion has been 24%, 25%, 24%, 25%, 22%, 25% ('strongly negative' 12%, 13%, 13%, 12%, 11%, 14%).

³⁰ VicHealth, Findings from the 2013 survey of Victorians' attitudes to race and cultural diversity, 2014, p. 22

³¹ Murray Goot, Migrant numbers, Asian immigration and multiculturalism: trends in the polls, 1943-1998, National Multicultural Advisory Council, Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century, Statistical Appendix, April 1999

³² Andrew Markus, 'Attitudes to immigration and cultural diversity in Australia', *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 50, 2014, pp. 13-14. See also the Challenging Racism Project internet site, Western Sydney University.

The 2016 Scanlon Foundation survey included a second question that provided an indication of attitude towards Muslims – and level of support for an immigration policy that discriminates on the basis of race or religion. It asked if, in the context of the government’s intake from the Syrian conflict, ‘equal consideration [should] be given to all religious and ethnic groups, or should priority be given to Christians.’ It found that 24% approved preference for Christians and a further 2% did not approve of any intake from Syria, but 69% indicated that ‘there should be equal consideration to all religious and ethnic groups.’

Figure 24: ‘Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards Muslims?’, Scanlon Foundation surveys 2010-2016

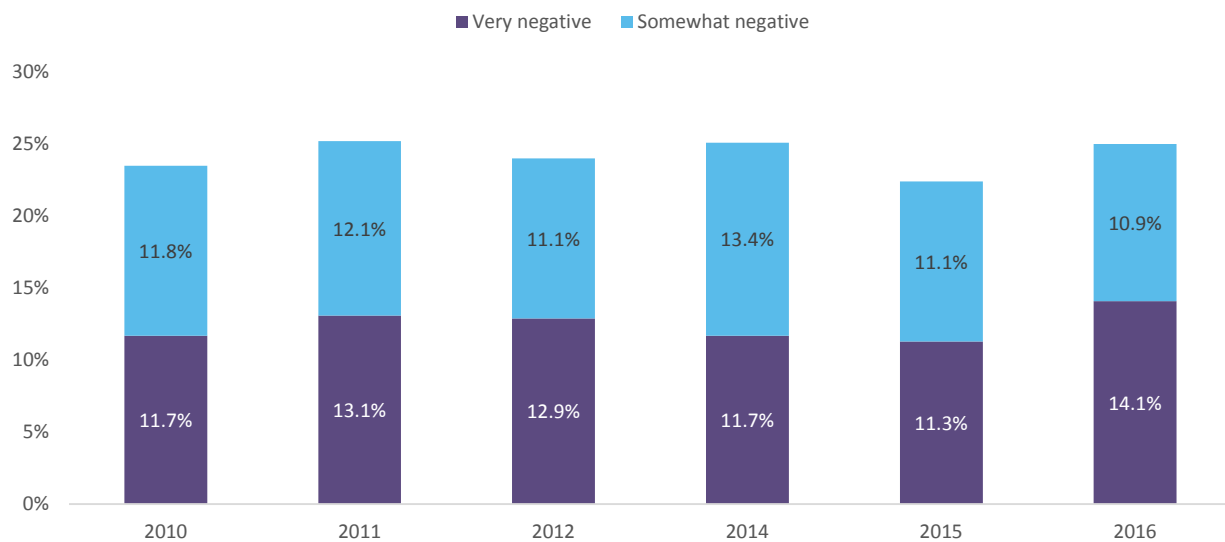


Table 24: ‘Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards Muslims?’, Scanlon Foundation surveys 2010-2016

	2010	2011	2012	2014	2015	2016
Very negative	11.7	13.1	12.9	11.7	11.3	14.1
Somewhat negative	11.8	12.1	11.1	13.4	11.1	10.9
Total negative	23.5	25.2	24.0	25.1	22.4	25.0

Change between 2015 and 2016 not statistically significant at $p < .05$

ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

Since late 2009 there has been a polarised and emotional debate in Australia over government policy towards asylum seekers arriving by boat. This debate was fuelled by the increase in arrivals. In 2007-2008, 25 arrived; in 2008-09, 985; in 2010-2011, 4,730; in 2011-12, 7,983; and in 2012-13, 25,173.³³ Over the period of the Labor government (2007-13), close to 50,000 asylum seekers arrived by boat and an estimated 1,200 drowned at sea attempting to make the crossing to Australian territory.

Following the electoral victory of the Liberal/ National coalition in 2013, a policy of offshore processing, introduced in the last period of the Labor government, was maintained and boats were turned back at sea under the Operation Sovereign Borders policy. As a consequence, boats stopped arriving. In October 2016, the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection announced that 800 days had passed without the landing of a boat carrying asylum seekers.³⁴

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

A 2010 Red Cross survey found that 83% of respondents agreed that people fleeing persecution should be able to seek protection in another country and 86% of respondents agreed that they would seek to escape to a safe country if they lived in a conflict zone. **But the Red Cross also found that 69% considered that asylum seekers who arrived by boat were acting illegally.**³⁵

On three occasions between January and July 2014 Essential Report (see 8 July) asked 'Do you think that the Federal Liberal/National government is too tough or too soft on asylum seekers ...?' A minority, in the range 22%-27%, indicated that the approach was 'too tough.' On 7 October 2014 Essential Report found that 'turning back asylum seeker boats' was the most popular of twelve federal government decisions, with 61% approval, 30% disapproval.

The Scanlon Foundation surveys since 2010 have explored attitudes to asylum seekers and refugees through a series of questions.

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

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

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

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

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

³³ See Table D1, Irregular maritime arrivals, 1975-76 to 2012-13, Mapping Australia's Population, <http://monash.edu/mapping-population/>; Janet Phillips, Boat arrivals in Australia: a quick guide to the statistics, Parliament of Australia, 23 January 2014; 'Australia confirms 15 boats carrying 429 asylum seekers have been turned back', *The Guardian*, 28 January 2015

³⁴ Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, 'More than 800 days of no illegal boat arrivals to Australia' Media releases, 10 October 2016

³⁵ 'Most Australians sympathetic towards refugees', 21 June 2010, Red Cross press statement, <http://www.redcross.org.au/most-australians-sympathetic-towards-refugees-finds-red-cross-survey.aspx>; copy of survey findings, personal communication from Red Cross media

Findings over the six surveys 2010-15 indicate that:

- Since 2011, a **higher proportion favour turning back of boats than eligibility for permanent residence**: in 2011 and 2012 there was almost no difference in support for the two positions (2011, 22% permanent, 23% turn back); in the context of increased boat arrivals during 2012-2013 the proportion favouring eligibility for permanent residence fell to 18%, turn back increased to 33%.
- **Between 2014 and 2015 there was an increase in support for eligibility for permanent residence, but only from 18% to 24%**, while support for turn back remained high at 31%-32%.
- Despite the government’s success in preventing boat arrivals, and the adverse coverage of mandatory detention in sections of the media, **there is little evidence of softening of attitudes**. The first question in the survey asks respondents to indicate **the ‘most important problem facing Australia today?’ In 2016 poor treatment of asylum seekers was specified by just 2% of respondents**.

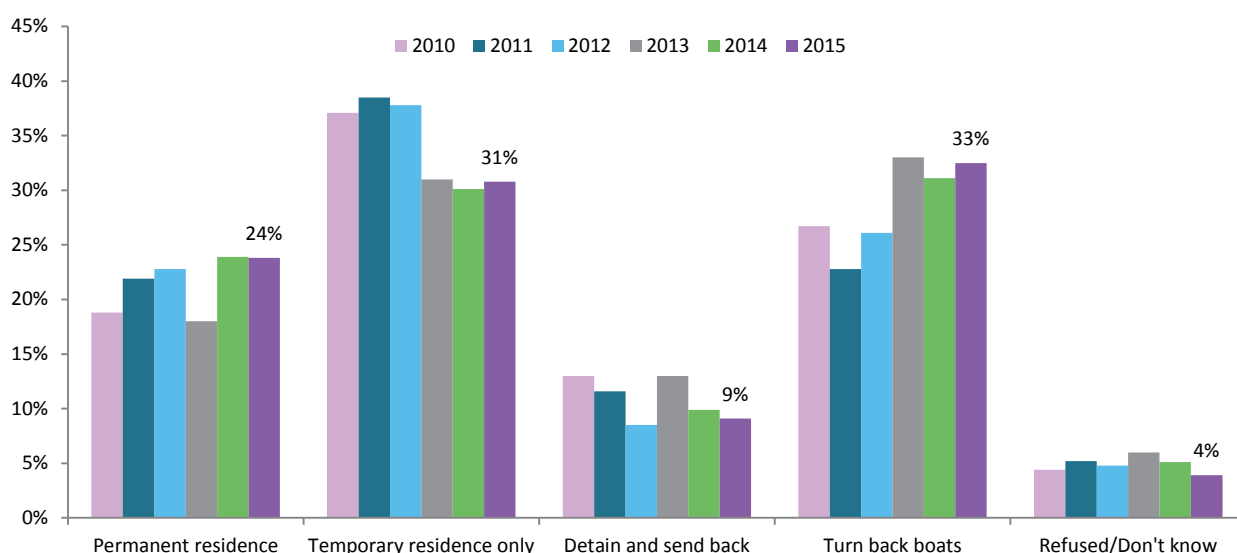
In 2016 the question on attitude to asylum seekers was asked in a different form, without a range of options. Respondents were asked: ‘Do you approve of asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat?’ **This form of question found a higher level of approval, although still a minority at 32%.**

Consideration of the distribution of responses finds commonality in the middle ground: 18% indicate ‘somewhat approve’, 20% ‘somewhat disapprove.’ But there is a marked difference in the end point responses: 14% ‘strongly approve’, some three times this proportion, 42%, ‘strongly disapprove.’

Table 25: ‘Do you approve of asylum seekers who try to reach Australian by boat?’ 2016 (percentage)

	%
Strongly approve	13.7
Somewhat approve	18.4
Sub-total approve	32.1
Neither approve nor disapprove	4.3
Somewhat disapprove	19.6
Strongly disapprove	41.6
Sub-total disapprove	61.2
Don't know/ Refused	2.4
Total	100

Figure 25: ‘Which of the following four statements comes closest to your view about the best policy for dealing with asylum seekers trying to reach Australia by boat?’, 2010-2015



Analysis of attitudes was undertaken using eight variables: gender, state, region of residence, age, educational qualification, financial status, intended vote and birthplace. The result points to a large measure of consistency across the variables.

In only two of the 32 sub-groups is there majority approval ('strongly approve' or 'somewhat approve') of asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat: among those intending to vote Greens (79%) and those aged 18-24 (54%); in a further four categories approval is in the range 40%-49%: residents of Victoria (47%), those with a Bachelor or higher qualification (47%), those intending to vote Labour (44%) and those whose self-described financial status is 'prosperous' or 'very comfortable' (42%).

Analysis narrowed to those who 'strongly approve' of asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat finds a majority in only one sub-group, intending to vote Greens (55%), support in the range 20%-29% is found in only three additional sub-groups: aged 18-24 (27%), self-described financial status 'prosperous' or 'very comfortable' (24%), and Bachelor level or higher qualification (22%). In contrast, 'strong approval' is below 10% in nine sub-groups, with the lowest proportion among those with trade/ apprentice qualifications (2%) and intending to vote Liberal or National (3%).

Table 26: 'Do you approve or disapprove of asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat.' Response: 'strongly approve' or 'somewhat approve', 2016 (percentage)

Gender	Female	Male					
	34.6	29.5					
State	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	46.8	24.4	21.7	39.0	28.5		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	34.8	27					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	53.8	38.7	29.4	26.3	30.4	18.1	17.1
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	46.9	32.6	22.9	33.0	17.6		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	42.0	34.9	25.7	18.3			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Independent/ minor party			
	44.0	19.7	78.6	19.0			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	31.6	31.3	33.8				

Table 27: 'Do you approve or disapprove of asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat.' Response: 'strongly approve' 2016, (percentage)

Gender	Female	Male					
	15.6	11.6					
State	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	16.7	13.1	6.2	18.5	12.8		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	15.2	10.9					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	27.3	14.7	11.9	13.6	9.1	6.1	7.7
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	22.4	14.4	2.1	14.0	7.4		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	24.0	13.4	10.3	6.5			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Independent/ minor party			
	19.2	3.3	54.7	7.1			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	14.5	11.8	13.1				

Humanitarian Program

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

Scanlon Foundation surveys between 2010-2012 asked respondents for their view on the Humanitarian program, which was explained as **resettling ‘refugees who have been assessed overseas and found to be victims of persecution and in need of help.’** A large majority, in the range 67%-75%, indicated that they supported the Humanitarian program. The same question was asked in 2016 and obtained a higher level of **positive response at 80%.**

Respondents in 2016 were also asked for their view on the size of the Humanitarian program, whether the ‘current refugee intake is adequate, too few or too many’; 23% indicated that it was too few, a further 39% adequate, a total of 62%; **a minority, close to one-third (30%), indicated that it was ‘too many’ or ‘much too many.’** Almost the same result was obtained in response to a question on the **‘government’s plan to bring refugees from the Syrian conflict to Australia’; 58% indicated support, 34% opposition.**

When asked ‘if some of these refugees from the Syrian conflict came to live in your community, do you think they would be welcomed, or not?’, **66% of respondents indicated ‘very welcome’ (11%) or ‘welcome’ (55%).** Just 4% indicated ‘not welcome at all’, a further 15% ‘not welcome’, a total of 19%.

A final question asked: ‘would you prefer equal consideration be given to all religious and ethnic groups, or should priority be given to Christians?’ **Over two in three respondents (69%) indicated preference for equal consideration,** while 26% indicated preference of Christians or did not approve of any Syrian refugees. This proportion is close to those indicating that they are negative towards those of the Muslim faith.

Table 28: ‘Do you think that the current refugee intake is adequate, too few or too many?’, 2016 (percentage)

	%
Much too few	6.4
Too few	16.6
Adequate	38.7
Too many	18.1
Much too many	12.3
Don't know/ Refused	7.8
Total	100

Table 29: ‘In the context of the government’s plan to bring refugees from the Syrian conflict to Australia, Would you prefer equal consideration be given to all religious and ethnic groups, or should priority be given to Christians?’, 2016 (percentage)

	%
Preference for equal consideration to all religious and ethnic groups	68.5
Preference for Christians	24.2
Do not approve of any Syrian refugee intake	1.6
No opinion	2.6
Don't know/ Refused	3.1
Total	100

MULTICULTURALISM

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

Since 2013, the Scanlon Foundation surveys asked for response to the proposition that **‘multiculturalism has been good for Australia.’ Agreement has been consistent, in the range 83%-86%**, with an increase in the proportion indicating ‘strong agreement,’ from 32% in 2013 to 41%-43% in 2015-16.

Table 30: ‘Multiculturalism has been good for Australia’, 2013-2016 (percentage)

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Strongly agree	32.2	37.1	43.3	41.4
Agree	52.2	47.7	42.4	42.0
Sub-total: agree	84.4	84.8	85.7	83.4

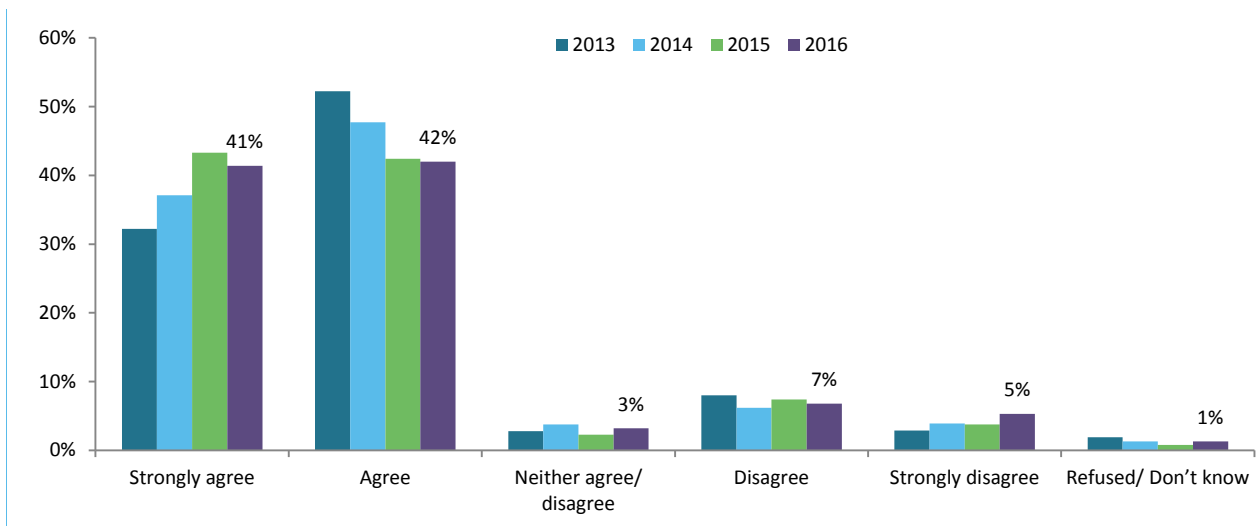
The Scanlon Foundation surveys also sought to establish the meaning of multiculturalism in Australia.

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

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

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

Figure 26: ‘Multiculturalism has been good for Australia’, 2013-2016



The 2016 Scanlon Foundation survey indicates, in keeping with earlier findings, that **majority opinion does not support a policy of assimilation, nor does it support government funding of cultural maintenance.**

Hence only 28% of respondents agree that ‘it is best if all people forget their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds as soon as possible,’ and 37% agree with ‘government assistance ... to ethnic minorities ... to maintain customs and traditions.’

Table 31: The assimilationist position: ‘It is best for Australia if all people forget their ethnic and cultural backgrounds as soon as possible,’ 2016 (percentage)

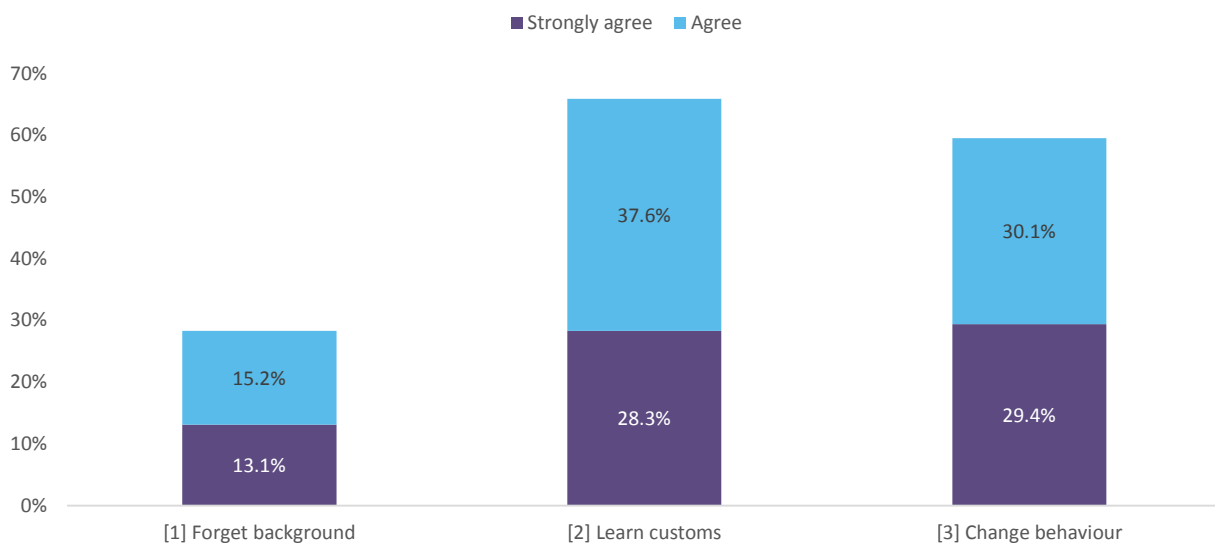
	%
Strongly agree	13.1
Agree	15.2
Sub-total: agree	28.3
Neither agree/ disagree	2.5
Disagree	38.2
Strongly disagree	28.8
Sub-total: disagree	67.0
Don't know/ Refused	2.4
Total	100

For the majority, multiculturalism involves a two-way process of change, involving adaptation by Australia-born and immigrant. Thus 66% agree with the proposition that ‘we should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country,’ while 60% agree that ‘people who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians.’

Table 32: Two-way change: ‘We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups’ and ‘People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians,’ 2016 (percentage)

	We should do more to learn about customs %	People who come to Australia should change their behaviour %
Strongly agree	28.3	29.4
Agree	37.6	30.1
Sub-total: agree	65.9	59.5
Neither agree/ disagree	3.9	6.1
Disagree	17.8	22.6
Strongly disagree	10.4	9.5
Sub-total: disagree	28.2	32.1
Don't know/ Refused	2.0	2.2
Total	100	100

Figure 27: [1] ‘It is best for Australia if all people forget their ethnic and cultural backgrounds as soon as possible’ [2] ‘We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups’ [3] ‘People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians,’ 2016 (percentage)



CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE BALANCE OF AUSTRALIAN OPINION

All populations are made up of people with diverse personalities and views ranging, for example, from the tolerant to the intolerant – from those who celebrate cultural diversity to those who are comfortable only with what they perceive to be Australian culture.

The following analysis seeks to provide a **balanced understanding of Australian opinion**: the relative proportions of the strongly negative, strongly positive, and those in the middle, not committed to a firm position. **There are, however, no simple answers as the results are nuanced.**

The broad range of questions in the Scanlon Foundation surveys provide a number of perspectives for determining the balance of opinion in Australian society. The following analysis considers nine questions which dealt with immigration and cultural diversity, most of them propositions asking for a response. Only questions common to the 2015 and 2016 surveys and with a five point response scale (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree) are included. The nine questions are:

1. 'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger.'
2. 'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions.'
3. 'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia.'
4. 'We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country.'
5. 'Is your personal attitude positive, negative, or neutral towards Buddhists?'
6. 'Is your personal attitude positive, negative, or neutral towards Muslims?'
7. 'My local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together.'

8. 'The mix of different national or ethnic backgrounds improves life in my local area.'
9. 'People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians.' (reverse scored)

The first part of the analysis involves calculating the average and median for the nine questions. The average was calculated for the extreme points ('strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree') and the middle, those indicating a second level response ('agree', 'disagree') or a neutral response ('neither agree nor disagree'). Results are presented in the following table:

Table 33: Nine selected questions, average and median score, 2015 and 2016 (percentage)

	Strong negative		Middle		Strong positive	
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016
Average	10.2	12.0	67.2	63.6	20.5	21.9
Median	8.0	10.4	56.4	56.8	21.7	22.3

The 2016 average score is indicated to be 22% strongly positive, 10%-12% strongly negative, and 57%-64% in the middle ground, although care needs to be taken in interpreting these scores as there is considerable variation across the nine questions, a finding discussed below.

At the aggregated level, those who are strongly positive outnumber the strongly negative by a ratio close to 2.1. The average for the strongly negative has, however, increased by close to two percentage points between 2015 and 2016.

Thematic groupings

The nine questions on immigration and cultural diversity common to the 2015 and 2016 Scanlon Foundation surveys, and three additional questions from the 2016 survey, yields five thematic groupings.

[1] **The lowest level of negative response** is to questions concerning **local areas and multiculturalism**. For questions on neighbourhood the strongly negative is just 3%-4%, the strongly positive is in the range 19%-26%. The largest proportion, in the middle, tends to the positive. In response to the question on multiculturalism, the strongly negative is 5%, strongly positive is 41%, and those with less firmly held views again tending to be more positive than negative.

[2] Questions on a **diverse immigration intake, the Humanitarian program, and integration of immigrants**, finds 6%-13% strongly negative, 28%-46% strongly positive, with the largest proportion in the middle and tending to the positive.

[3] Attitudes towards those of the **Muslim faith** finds more evenly divided opinion: the highest proportion (42%) indicate that they are 'neither positive nor negative'; 31% opt for a second level response, either positive (20%) or negative (11%); and 24% a first level response, strongly negative (14%) outnumbering the strongly positive (10%).

[4] General statements, which may be interpreted as a **rejection of cultural diversity** find relatively high levels in agreement, over one in four respondents. Thus when presented with the proposition that immigrants 'should change their behaviour to be more like Australians', 29% 'strongly agree'; the same proportion (29%) strongly oppose government assistance to ethnic minorities for cultural maintenance.

[5] The highest proportion favouring the strong negative is in response to policy on **asylum seekers**: 42% indicate a strong negative response when asked if they approve or disapprove of asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat. This is the same proportion as those indicating in 2015 that they favoured turning back of boats or detention and deportation of boat arrival.

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

Australian opinion is distinctive in the majority support for immigration and multiculturalism – in contrast with Europe. **The small minority, in the range 11%-13% who are strongly opposed to a diverse immigration intake and strongly support a policy of assimilation indicates the extent of attitudinal change since the ending of the White Australia policy in the 1970s.**

Table 34: Immigration, asylum policy and cultural diversity, selected questions, 2016, 2015 in brackets (percentage)

	Strong negative	Negative	Neither	Positive	Strong positive
'Do you approve or disapprove of asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat?'	41.6	19.6	4.3	18.4	13.7
'People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians' (reverse scored)	29.4 (26.8)	30.1 (38.1)	6.1 (6.7)	22.6 (20.8)	9.5 (6.0)
'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions'	28.7 (25.2)	26.4 (28.0)	4.9 (4.1)	27.3 (31.4)	9.8 (9.2)
Personal attitude towards Muslims	14.1 (11.3)	10.9 (11.0)	41.7 (47.1)	19.9 (18.0)	10.4 (10.3)
Personal attitude towards Buddhists	2.5 (2.0)	2.5 (2.7)	43.4 (44.6)	26.8 (26.8)	22.3 (21.7)
'It is best for Australia if people forget their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds as soon as possible' (reverse scored)*	13.1	15.2	2.5	38.2	28.8
'We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country'	10.4 (8.0)	17.8 (19.2)	3.9 (3.0)	37.6 (43.3)	28.3 (25.0)
'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger'	11.3 (9.4)	15.8 (17.1)	4.3 (4.2)	36.1 (39.9)	30.4 (27.3)
'Do you approve or disapprove of [the entry of] refugees who have been assessed overseas and found to be victims of persecution and need of help'	5.9	7.5	3.7	34.1	45.6
'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia'	5.3 (3.8)	6.8 (7.4)	3.1 (2.3)	42.0 (42.4)	41.4 (43.3)
'The mix of different national or ethnic backgrounds improves life in my local area' (excludes 'not enough immigrants in my area')	3.5 (3.2)	15.7 (12.3)	10.9 (7.1)	47.1 (56.3)	18.6 (17.2)
'My local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together' (excludes 'not enough immigrants in my area')	2.8 (2.2)	8.7 (7.7)	5.0 (2.9)	55.4 (60.1)	26.0 (24.4)

*Question not included in the 2015 survey

Acceptance/ rejection of immigration and cultural diversity

Acceptance or rejection of immigration and cultural diversity is found to varying degrees across all segments of society. To explore levels of acceptance, all questions related to immigration and cultural diversity in the 2016 survey were analysed by Factor Analysis. On the basis of this analysis nine were selected to form the Acceptance / Rejection Scale, with item loading in the range .526 to .763, indicating a moderate to strong correlation or level of commonality; the nine items yield a scale with high reliability (Cronbach's alpha .850). A total of 1,112 respondents are analysed in the following, after excluding respondents who did not answer all nine questions.³⁶ Unlike the previous discussion of nine questions common to the 2015 and 2016 surveys, this analysis restricted to the 2016 survey includes questions on asylum seekers, refugees, and the current immigration program.

Survey items were weighted, as indicated in Table 35; a score of 1 indicated rejection of immigration and cultural diversity, a score of 3 indicated a mid-point response (neither agree nor disagree), and a score of 5 indicated acceptance. With nine survey items, the minimum score for the scale is 9, the maximum is 45.

12.9% of respondents obtained very low scores, in the range 9-14; 21.4% obtained very high scores, in the range 39-45. These proportions correspond to the 'strong negative' and 'strong positive' proportions indicated at the outset of this section of the report.

Table 35: Acceptance/ rejection of immigration and cultural diversity scale, 2016

Items	Loading
'Do you think that Australia's current refugee intake is adequate, too few or too many?' (Much too many/too many, weight = 1, Mid-point, weight = 3, Much too few/too few, weight = 5)	.763
'What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present? Would you say it is ...' (Too high = 1, Mid-point=3, Too low= 5)	.758
'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger' (Strongly disagree/disagree = 1, Mid-point=3, Strongly agree/agree = 5)	.704
'Do you support or oppose the government's plan to bring refugees from the Syrian conflict to Australia?' (Strongly oppose/oppose = 1, Mid-point=3, Strongly support/support = 5)	.704
'Do you approve or disapprove of - Asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat?' (Strongly disapprove/disapprove = 1, Mid-point=3, Strongly approve/approve = 5)	.666
'We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country' (Strongly disagree/disagree = 1, Mid-point=3, Strongly agree/agree = 5)	.614
'People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians' (Strongly agree/agree = 1, Mid-point=3, Strongly disagree/disagree = 5)	.585
'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia' (Strongly disagree/disagree = 1, Mid-point=3, Strongly agree/agree = 5)	.562
'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions' (Strongly disagree/disagree = 1, Mid-point=3, Strongly agree/agree = 5)	.526

³⁶ The Acceptance/Rejection scale was developed by Ms Eveline Nieuwveld

Nine demographic characteristics – age, education, financial status (self-described), employment status, religion, state of residence, gender, region (city/ rest of state), country of birth (Australia/other) – were used in a regression model to explain levels of acceptance and rejection. **The model indicated that the strongest predictor of acceptance of immigration and cultural diversity was age, followed by level of completed education and financial status.** Based on these demographic characteristics the model is able to explain 30.7% of the variance (that is, predict the score on the Acceptance / Rejection Scale of close to one out of three respondents). A second model which included the attitudinal variable of intended vote found that intended vote ranked as the second strongest predictor, after age.

Variance is considered by analysis of very low and very high scores on the Acceptance / Rejection Scale.

The largest proportion of very low scores (indicating rejection of immigration and cultural diversity) were obtained by those over the age of 65 (22%), those whose highest level of education is up to Year 11 (22%) and those intending to vote for a minor party or independent (26%).

Rejection of immigration and cultural diversity was at a very low level amongst those aged 18-44 (7%-8%), with a Bachelor or higher level qualification (4%), those who indicated that their financial status was ‘prosperous’ or ‘very comfortable’ (4%), and of non-English speaking background (3%). No respondent intending to vote Greens obtained a very low score.

The largest proportion of very high scores (indicating positive response to all nine survey items) was obtained by those intending to vote Greens (67%), those aged 18-24 (46%), and those whose highest level of education was a university degree (36%).

Figure 28: Proportion of explained variance on the Acceptance /Rejection Scale, demographic model

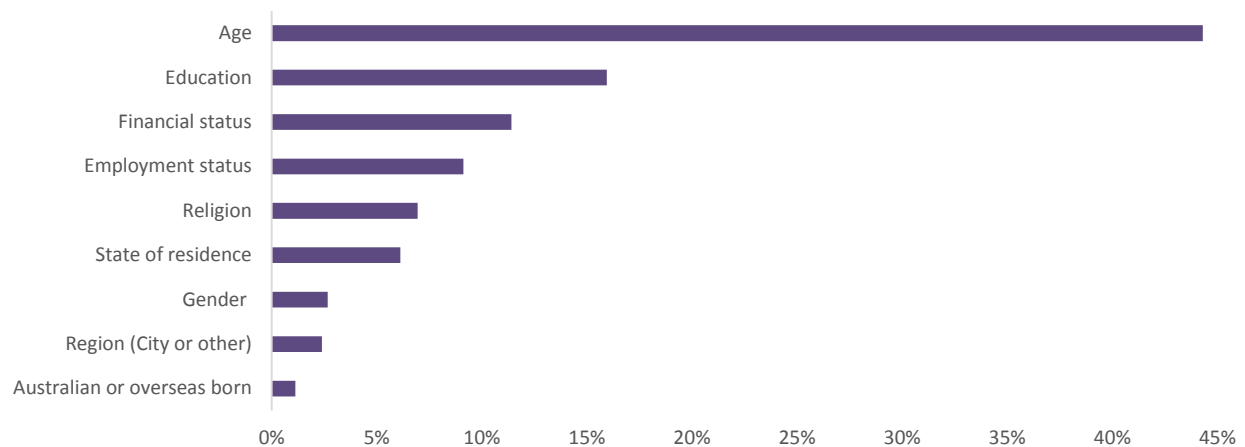


Table 36: Acceptance/ rejection of immigration and cultural diversity scale, proportion of very low scores (9-14)

Gender	Female	Male					
	12.9	12.7					
State	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	9.0	16.1	15.1	10.5	14.5		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	10.4	17.2					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	6.7	6.7	7.7	17.4	15.6	22.3	22.5
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	4.0	14.8	17.3	9.8	22.3		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	4.2	13.4	17.6	12.5			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Independent/ minor party			
	12.1	14.8	0	26.3			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	16.7	9.0	2.8				

Table 37: Acceptance/ rejection of immigration and cultural diversity scale, proportion of very high scores (39-45)

Gender	Female	Male					
	26.3	16.7					
State	Victoria	NSW	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	31.0	18.7	12.8	25.6	15.9		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	24.8	15.3					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	46.1	24.4	17.5	16.3	15.0	10.8	7.9
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	35.7	22.6	6.6	24.6	6.5		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	28.1	22.5	19.2	6.3			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	Independent/ minor party			
	31.0	10.9	66.7	6.3			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	20.9	17.0	24.4				

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Ms Tanya Munz assisted with research and data analysis and formatted this publication.

Statistical analysis and the development of the Acceptance/Rejection Scale was undertaken by Ms Eveline Nieuwveld.

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Monash University provides the research environment that sustains this project.

Credits

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

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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.



