

Professor Andrew Markus

mapping social cohesion

the scanlon foundation surveys summary report

Copies of the full report can be accessed and downloaded at
www.globalmovements.monash.edu.au

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Foreword

Mapping Social Cohesion is a report on the first round of a major longitudinal survey of social cohesion in Australia, funded by the Scanlon Foundation and directed by Professor Andrew Markus of Monash University.

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

Other parts of the Scanlon Foundation Research Project have already been completed, namely a book entitled *Social Cohesion in Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) and a forthcoming volume on international movements of people and social cohesion.

Australia is a highly successful nation of immigrants and the pace of intake of permanent settlers is set to increase in a high-employment economy, particularly in a mobile world in which many Australians are themselves leaving the country to work abroad. It is important, since the growth of immigrant numbers from a diverse range of countries is expected to continue, that potential and actual sources of tension be identified, both in the aggregate and at the local community level.

Consequently, the surveys reported by Professor Markus covered both the national and some selected local levels, since the individual community attitudes provide a special sense of how events are developing. It is especially through the micro perspective of local surveys that growing tensions, distractions or disaffection in communities can be observed, which is necessary for informing and fashioning applied policy.

The local surveys are complemented by the broader nationwide perspectives of the aggregate survey. However, in seeking to 'measure' social cohesion, it is clear that reference to its extent or height is not the equivalent of describing a tangible product such as the size, say, of a ship. Instead, the survey has adopted a wide-ranging approach enabling consideration of five key elements relating to attitudes, reported experience and behaviour.

On behalf of the Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements and the Australian Multicultural Foundation, we thank the Scanlon Foundation and its Chair, Mr Peter Scanlon, for the generous funding of the survey, and for the assistance provided to the project by Mr Bruce Smith.

We wish also to thank especially Professor Andrew Markus of Monash University for the great expertise, care and patience he has brought to the enormous amount of work entailed in developing the questionnaire, designing the local study surveys, creating the analytical framework and writing the report.

In addition, we wish to thank the several others mentioned in the acknowledgements, in particular Darren Pennay of The Social Research Centre, who played a part in bringing the survey to its satisfactory conclusion.

Understanding the meaning of social cohesion, and attempting as far as possible to map and measure it at the national and local levels, is of great importance for the future of both Australia's immigration program and its stability and prosperity. *Mapping Social Cohesion – The Scanlon Foundation Surveys* makes a signal contribution to this further understanding, and we have no doubt that the first and future parts of the Scanlon Social Cohesion Survey will receive wide attention. Their outcomes will also, we believe, give constructive indicators for policy intended to ensure the continued maintenance of social cohesion in Australia.

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

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Executive Director
Australian Multicultural Foundation

Executive summary

It is a widely held view that Australia is one of the most socially cohesive of nations, especially with respect to management of its diverse immigration program since the Second World War. Thus the Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, Laurie Ferguson, stated on 19 March 2008:

Australians can be proud of the high levels of social cohesion this country has enjoyed ... Australia has achieved extraordinary successes in building a cohesive, progressive and modern country.

But how is social cohesion to be understood? The Scanlon Foundation Surveys (2007) adopted a wide-ranging approach to enable consideration of five key elements relating to attitudes, reported experience and behaviour.

In keeping with international surveys, which indicate that Australia comes at or near the top in measurement of sense of belonging and worth, our surveys found that:

- The overwhelming majority of respondents – 96% – express a strong sense of belonging in Australia.
- 94% take pride in the Australian way of life.
- 89% indicate that 'taking all things into consideration', they are happy with their lives.
- 80% agree that 'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life'.

In contrast, with regard to specific social justice issues, current immigration and settlement policy and trust in public institutions, division of opinion is evident.

To interpret these results, our findings were considered in the context of earlier Australian surveys. This comparison indicates a large measure of consistency over the last 20 years, but increased support for a range of government programs and more positive response to some life satisfaction indicators. Thus:

- The high level of pride in being Australian is consistent with previous surveys.
- More Australians said they were happy with their financial situation than in the past (over 70%, up from 50–60% in previous surveys).
- There is majority support for current levels of immigrant intake, at a time when these levels were at a near-record high.
- There is increased support for government assistance to ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions, though this remains a minority viewpoint.
- A majority of Australians agree with the proposition that 'most people can be trusted' – a marked change from responses given in the past decade.

While these findings are in keeping with positive expectations, there is evidence to warn against complacency.

Social cohesion operates at the community level, the context in which individuals interact. In addition to the national survey, therefore, surveys were conducted in areas of high immigrant concentration, to explore the variation between national and local attitudes and reported experience. A degree of variation was found in levels of acceptance and trust, participation in civil life and interaction.

Six findings of particular significance were identified by the community-level surveys in areas of high immigrant concentration:

1. The level of disaffection, measured by response to a number of life satisfaction questions, is at a low level.
2. A minority (23.5%) of long-time Australians indicate closely correlated negative attitudes towards aspects of immigration and settlement policy.
3. Comparison across birthplace groups reveals marked attitudinal divergence in response to some questions, for example when immigration and settlement issues are raised.
4. The highest incidence of discrimination is reported by the overseas-born. Some 10% of non-English-speaking background (NESB) respondents reported discriminatory experiences occurring at least once per month – double the rate of the Australia-born.
5. NESB Australians are half as likely to participate in voluntary work as long-time Australians.
6. Political involvement varies among birthplace groups. NESB Australians are markedly less involved in the political process – this is true at both the national and local level.

The Scanlon Foundation Surveys (2007) provide findings to engage policy-makers and community leaders. The broad indicators point to a society that is succeeding in establishing and maintaining a high level of positive outcomes, fostering a sense of belonging, social justice and worth. There are indicators of concern with regard to participation and acceptance, with a significant level of misunderstanding between birthplace groups and experiences of discriminatory and hostile behaviour. But when benchmarked against subsequent research, the key finding may prove to be that the level of disaffection and threat to social cohesion is at historically low levels in contemporary Australia.

Challenges for policy include the need to foster increased participation in community life within areas of high immigrant concentration and to further understanding of the immigrant experience, of the difficulties of resettlement in unfamiliar environments and alien cultures, of the personal impact of discriminatory acts and of the contribution that immigrants have made and continue to make to Australian society.

Project objectives

In pursuit of its mission to support the creation of a larger cohesive Australian society, the Scanlon Foundation believes that Australia's future prosperity will depend on its ability to maintain social cohesion while significantly increasing the population through immigration intakes, involving greater cultural diversity than ever before.

One simple question that arises from this future scenario is: Can Australia repeat the immigration and social cohesion success story of the previous five decades?

In order to answer this question, an understanding of the current situation is needed. The Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements and the Australian Multicultural Foundation, with Scanlon Foundation funding, commissioned Professor Andrew Markus from Monash University to design and undertake a benchmark measure of social cohesion to provide an understanding of the current situation.

It is important that social cohesion was not measured in the abstract, but in the practical context of sustained and significant immigration intake.

Towards this end, the initial focus of the benchmark survey was to establish a national measure of social cohesion and to underpin this with a series of comparative surveys undertaken in areas of high immigrant concentration where, it is hypothesised, the potential for social tension is higher.

Scope and methodology

The benchmark survey sought to provide national and carefully targeted local measures of social cohesion in Australia.

The national survey comprised 2000 Australians aged 18 years and over, stratified by geographic location.

The local area surveys included Australia-born and ethnic and cultural groups most frequently singled out as targets of animosity (Middle Eastern and Asian groups) as follows:

- three local area surveys, each of 300 random interviews (150 Australia-born and 150 overseas-born), in the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Greater Dandenong (Victoria) and Fairfield (New South Wales) and the Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) of Stretton-Karawatha and Calamvale in Queensland
- two local area surveys, each of 300 interviews comprising a random component of 100 and a Middle Eastern background component of 200, in the LGAs of Hume (Victoria) and Auburn (New South Wales).

The design of the questionnaire was based on a review of international and Australian studies and included questions used in previous studies to enable identification of change over time. Interviews were conducted by telephone (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) between June and August 2007.

It is anticipated that these surveys will be repeated every two years, with the 2007 surveys providing the benchmark for measurement of trends in public opinion, reported experience and behaviour.

What is social cohesion?

Social cohesion as a concept has a long tradition in academic enquiry, of fundamental importance in discussion of the role of consensus and conflict in society. From the mid-1990s, interest in the dynamics of social cohesion escalated amid concerns prompted by the impact of globalisation, economic change and fears fuelled by the 'war on terror'.

There is no agreed definition of social cohesion. Most current definitions dwell on intangibles, such as shared values, sense of belonging, attachment to the group, willingness to participate and to share outcomes. The common key elements are:

- **Shared vision:** Most researchers maintain that social cohesion requires universal values, mutual respect and common aspirations or identity shared by their members.
- **A property of a group or community:** Social cohesion tends to describe a well-functioning core group or community in which there are shared goals and responsibilities and a readiness to co-operate with the other members.
- **A process:** Social cohesion is generally viewed not simply as an outcome, but as a continuous and seemingly never-ending process of achieving social harmony.

Differences in definition concern identification of factors that operate to enhance (and erode) the process of communal harmony, and the relative weight to be attached to the operation of specific factors. The key spheres 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 co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit.
- **Socio-cultural:** levels of consensus and divergence (homogeneity and heterogeneity) on issues of local and national significance.

The present survey has adopted an eclectic, wide-ranging approach, influenced by the work of social scientists Jane Jenson and Paul Bernard, to incorporate five domains:

Belonging – shared values, identification with Australia, trust

Social justice and equity – evaluation of national policies

Participation – voluntary work, political and co-operative involvement

Acceptance (and rejection), legitimacy – experience of discrimination, attitudes towards minorities, newcomers

Worth – life satisfaction and happiness, future expectations

The survey context – economy and population

The 2007 surveys were undertaken in an environment of sustained economic growth, high employment and a steadily increasing immigration intake.

For over a decade Australia's economy has experienced strong growth, with a marked decline in unemployment which, by 2006, had reached the lowest levels since the early 1970s. Unemployment as a proportion of the labour force averaged 7.2% in the 1980s, 8.6% in the 1990s, 6.6% during 2000–02. In January 2005 it stood at 5.1%, in July 2007 at 4.3%.

Over these years there have been significant developments in the three areas that determine the annual net immigration outcome: permanent arrivals, conversion of temporary residency holders to permanent residency, and permanent departures.

From June 1998 to June 2007 annual permanent arrivals increased by 75% (from 84,200 to 140,100), while the number converting to permanent residency increased by 240% (from 15,100 to 51,800); permanent departures increased by just over 100% from 35,200 to 72,100. In terms of net change in the number of permanent residents from immigration, the annual total almost doubled over this period, from 64,100 to 119,800.

Ethnic diversity in the Australian population

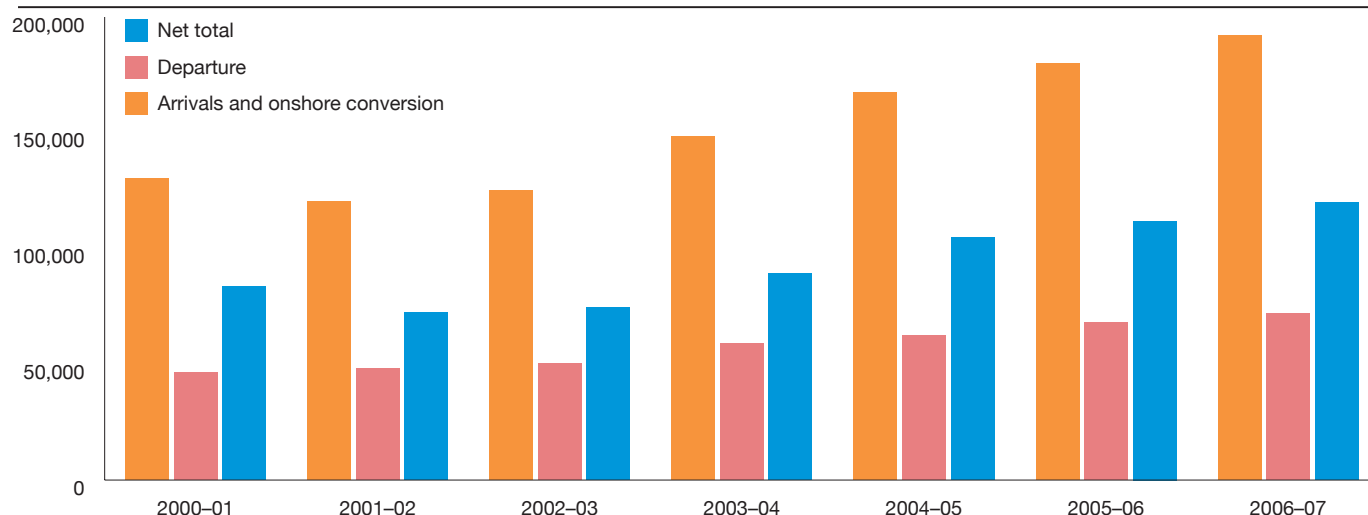
In 2006, 23.9% of the Australian population were born overseas. Of the capital cities, the largest proportion of overseas-born people resided in Sydney (34.5%), followed by Perth (33.7%), Melbourne (31.0%), Adelaide (25.1%), Brisbane (23.2%), and Hobart (12.8%).

The proportion of overseas-born in the mainland capitals is unevenly spread, with concentrations above 50% in some LGAs. In Melbourne, the largest concentrations of overseas-born are located in parts of the central, south-eastern and western regions of the city; in Sydney they are located in parts of the central and western regions.

The extent of diversity that characterises areas of high immigrant concentration is evident in the profile of one of the LGAs in which local surveys were undertaken for this study.

Greater Dandenong, in the south-east of Melbourne, has a population of 125,520, comprising some 150 national groups. The proportion born overseas has risen from 38% in 1991 to 56% in 2006, with an overseas-born concentration in the 80–100% range in parts of the LGA. Of the population, 82.2% have one or both parents born overseas; 19% of the overseas-born population arrived since January 2001; 61.5% of the residents speak a language other than English in their homes; 25.5% of the population (16,480 persons) speak English not well or not at all; and 10.4% of the population speak Vietnamese and 4.1% Khmer.

Immigration to Australia



Findings of the national survey

The logic of public opinion

A simplistic reading of survey results considers findings against the yardstick of a majority – whether 50% or more respondents endorse a specific proposition, and the extent of variation above or below the 50% mark. The approach adopted in this study is grounded on understanding the logic of public opinion, the types of questions that elicit near consensus (whether positive or negative) and those that divide opinion. Survey results are interpreted within three categories: (a) strong positive – above 70%; (b) polarised or divided opinion – in the range 30–70%; and (c) strong negative – below 30%.

STRONG POSITIVE

Questions of a general nature relating to national life and levels of personal satisfaction elicited the expected high levels of positive response.

In terms of **identifying with Australia:**

- the overwhelming majority of Australians (96%) express a strong sense of belonging
- 94% take great pride in the Australian way of life
- 94% believe maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important.

In terms of **life satisfaction issues:**

- 89% indicate that ‘taking all things into consideration’, they are happy with their life, while 85% expect their lives to be the same or improved in three to four years time
- 75% express satisfaction with their present financial situation (22% are dissatisfied).

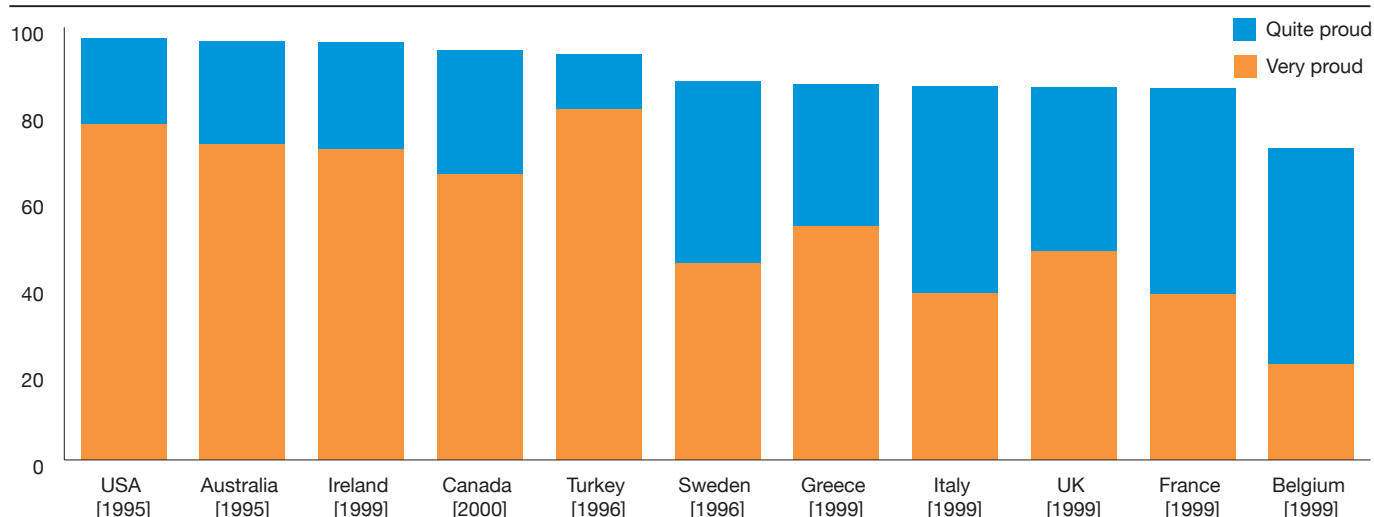
In terms of feeling included in relation to social justice and **equality of opportunity**, 80% agree that Australia ‘is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life’.

When **immigration is considered in terms of broad principle**, there is a high level of positive sentiment. Thus in response to the proposition that ‘accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger’, 69% agreed (25% disagreed).

Happy down under

A review of the World Values Surveys conducted in the period 1995–2000 indicated that, compared with other nationalities, Australians regularly come close to the top of the scale when measuring a sense of belonging, national identification, happiness and personal trust.

How proud are you to be ... [your nationality]?



Future expectations

When asked to consider their prospects in the future, 85% expected that their lives would be the same or improved in three or four years. But when they were asked about the lives of today's children's future, only 52% expected that the children's lives would be the same or improved – a substantial minority of 43% thought that their children's lives would be worse than their own.

When asked for their reasons, the most common references were to the cost of living and housing, extremes of wealth and poverty, the prospect of unemployment and poor working conditions, low moral standards and materialistic lifestyle, and environmental problems – pollution and climate change. There were very few references to the traditional fear of war.

DIVIDED OPINION

Questions dealing with politicised issues necessarily elicit divided responses, in the 30–70% range, mirroring the division evident in support for the major political parties. This division of opinion is reflected when specific political issues are polled. Thus, in relation to **specific social justice issues**:

- 52% agree that 'Australia has an excellent government school system' but 36% disagree
- opinion is evenly divided (46%, 45%) on whether government financial support to those on low incomes is adequate.

With regard to **current immigration policy**:

- 42% consider that the current intake is 'about right', a further 13% consider it to be too low; a substantial minority (35%) think the intake is too high
- 48% consider the balance of immigration from different countries to be 'about right'.

In relation to **confidence in public institutions**:

- only a minority (40%) have confidence that the federal government will 'almost always' or 'most times' do what is right for the Australian people
- similarly, only 42% express confidence in their local council.

When **personal level of trust** is considered, opinion is again divided, although there is greater level of trust in people than in government; 55% of respondents agree that 'most people can be trusted', while 41% think 'you can't be too careful in dealing with people'.

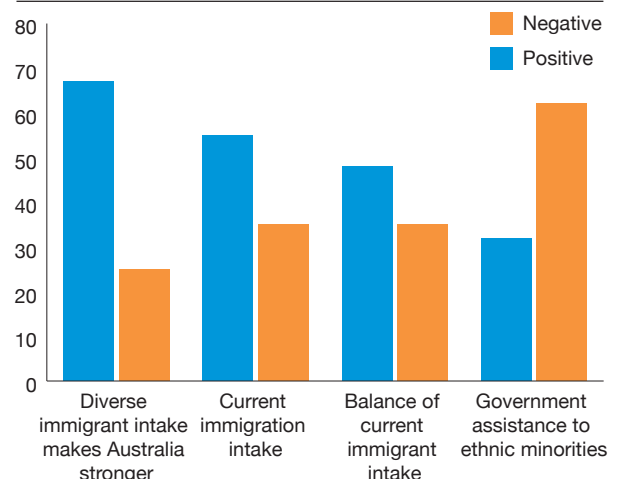
STRONG NEGATIVE

Questions related to policies that are seen to advantage minorities reveal the highest level of disagreement or opposition. This strongly negative response is inherent in the questions posed, for majority opinion rarely supports special benefits or advantages for minorities.

This is evident when **the social justice issue of income distribution** is raised – 77% agree with the proposition that 'the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large'; a small minority of 19% disagree.

Government assistance to ethnic minorities to **maintain their customs and traditions** is seen as of benefit to select minorities, not as of national benefit, as indicated by the finding that 32% support such assistance, but 62% oppose.

Attitudes towards immigration and settlement policy



The logic of public opinion leads to strongest positive responses to questions of a general nature; as questions become more specific, relating to policies adopted by government, greater division of opinion is evident. The lowest level of support typically relates to policies which are seen to advantage minorities, rather than produce national benefit.

Benchmarking the national mood

The key to interpretation of survey findings is the context of results – without context it is as if we were asked to find our way around an unfamiliar city without a map. Findings of earlier surveys provide a map for interpreting results, affording the means to locate trends.

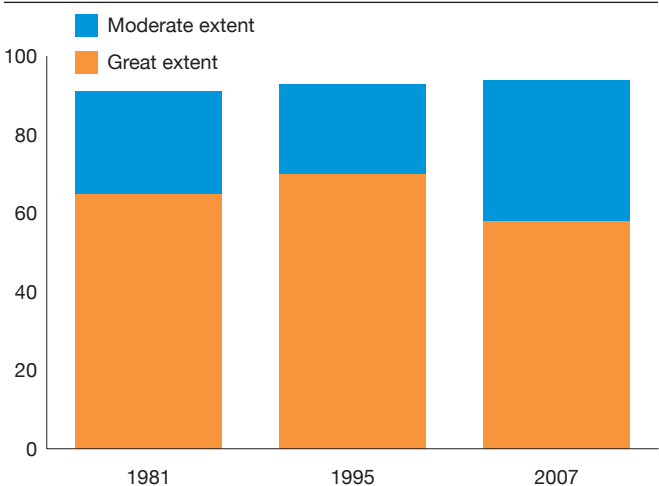
Consideration of the national survey in the context of earlier studies indicates that most of the 2007 findings are within the expected range. There is, however, increased support for some government programs and more positive attitudes are revealed by some life satisfaction indicators.

Change is most evident in response to the type of questions that typically indicate divided opinion. Thus there has been an increase in the level of support for the immigration program, more evidence of trust in institutions and fellow Australians, and a marked increase in support for government assistance to ethnic minorities for maintenance of customs and traditions. As is to be expected, given the improved employment and economic environment, satisfaction with personal finances has increased.

Sense of pride

Consideration of sense of pride in being Australian indicates a level of consistency above 90%, although there has been some decline in the category indicating the highest level of pride, i.e. ‘to a great extent’.

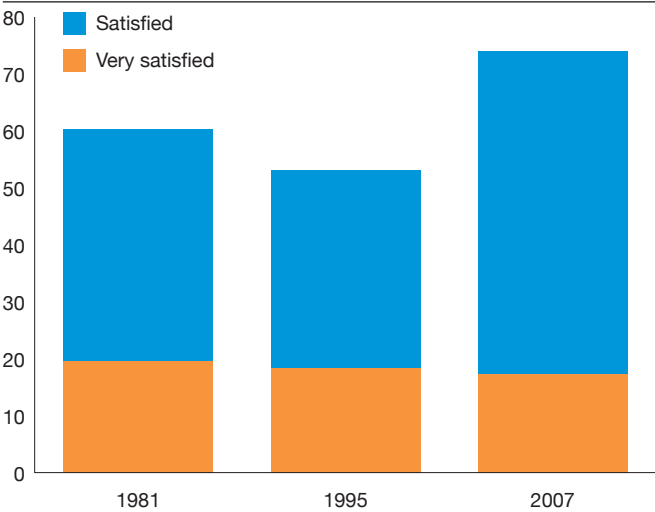
Pride in Australian nationality, way of life and culture



Personal finances

Questions relating to financial satisfaction have been asked using different wording and scales of measurement. While allowance needs to be made for these differences, a large measure of consistency is indicated when the strongest level (‘very satisfied’) of financial satisfaction is considered (19.6% in 1981, 18.3% in 1995 and 17.7% in 2007). There has, however, been marked change in the second category, those indicating that they were ‘satisfied’ – 40.6% in 1981, 34.8% in 1995 and 57% in 2007. This shift is consistent with Australia’s economic performance, with a significant increase in employment levels and financial security since 1995.

Financial satisfaction

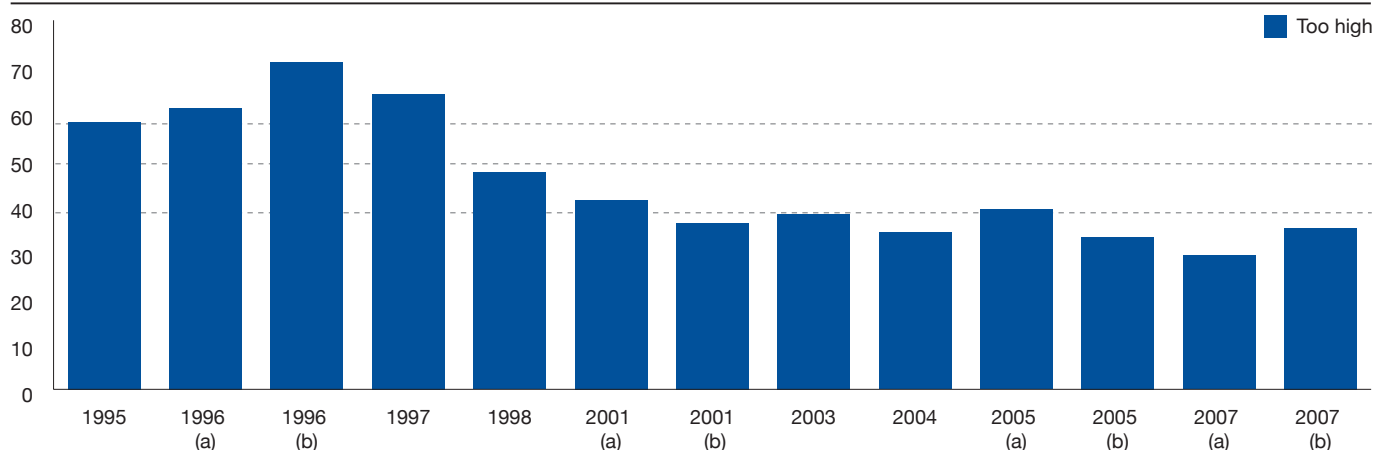


Immigration

Questions related to the immigration intake have been a staple of polling for over 50 years and provide the strongest indication of the trend of opinion. Whereas in the mid-1990s a large majority considered that the intake was too high, surveys since 1998 indicate a significant and consistent shift in opinion, such that opposition to the intake has become the minority viewpoint.

Immigration intake: Too high

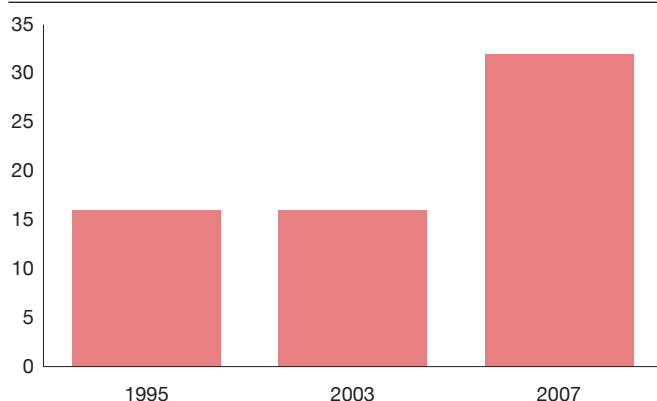
Note: More than one survey was undertaken in some years.



Assistance to ethnic minorities

One of the most striking findings denoting shift in opinion relates to the issue of government support to ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions. While still a minority viewpoint, the 2007 survey indicates a doubling of support from findings recorded in 1995 and 2003.

Government assistance to ethnic minorities to preserve their customs and traditions



Trust

While there is no indication of increased trust in politicians, change is evident with regard to trust in fellow Australians. A question relating to trust has been posed in identical terms in five surveys, with respondents given the options that most people 'can be trusted', that one 'can't be too careful', or that it is not possible to answer. For the first time, the 2007 survey indicated majority endorsement of the proposition that most can be trusted – a marked change since 2003.

Most people can be trusted



Reported behaviour and experience

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

Active participation in the community

A substantial proportion of the population is actively involved in community life and politics.

More than 30% of Australians undertake **voluntary work**, most of them on a regular basis – over 60% of this number, or almost 20% of the total population, has involvement at least once per week.

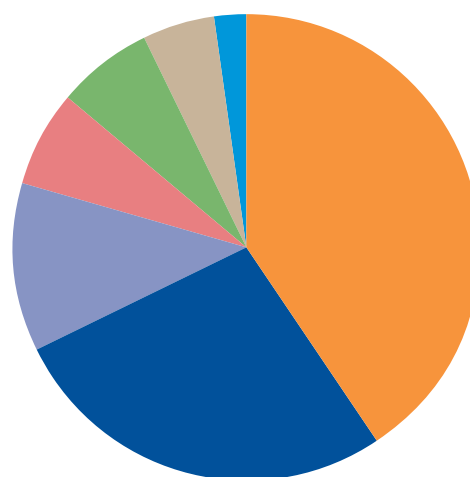
Some 38% of respondents reported that they **visited** on a regular basis (at least several times a month) **people of a different nationality or ethnicity** in their homes.

With regard to **political participation**, some 86.7% of respondents (or 94% who were citizens) had voted in an election over the previous three years; over the same interval 57.3% of the sample had signed a petition. A much smaller proportion was engaged in action calling for more active involvement. Over the past three years:

- 25% had written or spoken to a member of parliament
- 14.3% had participated in a boycott; a similar proportion had attended a protest
- 10.5% had attended a political meeting
- less than 5% had participated in a strike.

Political involvement

Participated in strike action	(4.6%)
Attended a political meeting	(10.5%)
Attended a protest	(14.0%)
Joined a boycott	(14.3%)
Written or spoken to MP	(25.0%)
Signed a petition	(57.3%)
Voted In election	(86.7%)



Note: Respondents could give multiple responses when indicating participation.

Experience of discrimination

Slightly more than one in four respondents (25.6%) report experience of discrimination over the course of their lives because of their national or ethnic background; a much lower proportion (7.7%) report discrimination on the basis of their religion. Almost one in 10 Australians (8.6%) report discrimination on grounds of national or ethnic background or religion over the last 12 months; 5.8% of respondents report experience of discrimination on an ongoing basis, at least once per month.

Variables of geography, gender, educational attainment, age and birthplace

Analysis of the distribution of opinion across a range of variables helps identify where and among whom social cohesion may be threatened. Statistical analysis at the national level considered differences in opinion with regard to the variables of region of residence, gender, level of education and qualification, age, birthplace of respondents and of their parents.

There is no uniform pattern of response across the full range of questions in the survey, but with regard to immigration and settlement issues the lowest level of support for government policy was found among:

- people with trade level qualifications
- people born in Australia to Australia-born parents
- people aged over 54 years.

Variation is illustrated by considering the level of agreement with the proposition that 'accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger'. In addition to the key variables identified, response to this question also indicates that men are more supportive than women, as are residents of capital cities, residents in South Australia and Victoria, and the overseas-born.

Agreement with the proposition that 'accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger'

Gender					
Male	Female				
73.9%	63.3%				
State					
South Australia	Victoria	New South Wales	Western Australia	Queensland	
77.3%	70.3%	67.3%	65.7%	65.5%	
Region					
Capital	Rest of state				
71.7%	62.4%				
Age					
18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–77
76.8%	75.3%	73.2%	66.8%	65.6%	57.0%
Level of completed education					
To Year 12	Trade or diploma	Bachelor degree or higher			
62.3%	66.2%	81.3%			
Birthplace					
Australia	Overseas – ESB	Overseas – NESB			
65.8%	71.0%	78.5%			

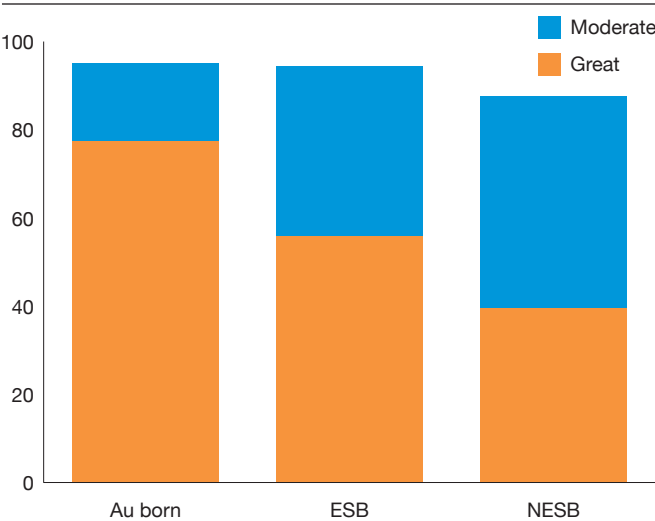
Birthplace groups in the national survey

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

Belonging

The Australia-born indicated the strongest sense of belonging, gave the greatest consideration to maintaining the Australian way of life and culture, and the greatest sense of pride; on all three indicators, the ESB came next, followed by NESB. The very high level of identification of those of NESB is, however, a significant finding: thus 93.2% of the NESB group had a sense of belonging in Australia to a great or moderate extent, 89.9% took pride in the Australian way of life and culture to a great or moderate extent, and 95.3% strongly agreed or agreed that maintaining the Australian way of life and culture was important.

Sense of belonging



Social justice and equity

In response to social justice and equity issues, a relatively large degree of consistency was recorded across the birthplace groups. Thus 11% of the Australia-born and 11.9% of ESB ‘strongly agreed’ that those on low incomes received enough financial support from the government, compared with 13.5% of the NESB; the overall level of ‘agreement’ was almost identical, in the range 31.9% to 34.7%. When considering the proposition that ‘Australia was a land of economic opportunity ...’ the strongest agreement was from the ESB (85%), followed by the Australia-born (79.9%) and the NESB (79.1%).

Acceptance and rejection

About two out of 10 Australia-born report having experienced discrimination over the course of their lives as a consequence of their national or ethnic background; the proportion for the ESB is three out of 10 (31.7%) and NESB almost five out of 10 (46.5%). The NESB report discrimination over the last 12 months at double the level for the Australia-born.

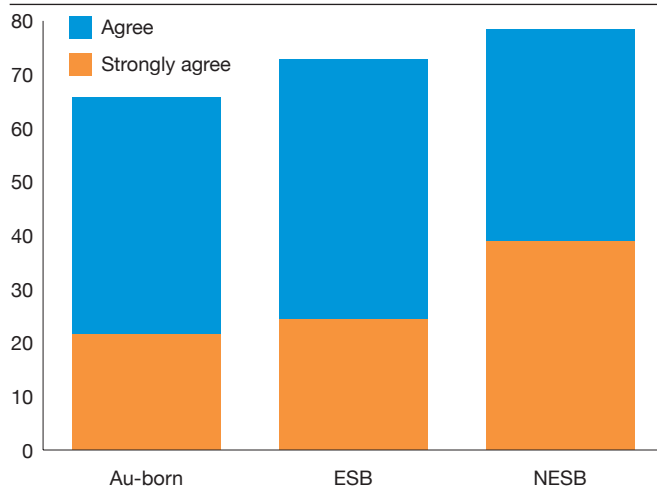
	Au-born (Yes)	ESB (Yes)	NESB (Yes)
Have you ever experienced discrimination because of your national or ethnic background?	20.1%	31.7%	46.5%
Have you experienced discrimination because of your national, ethnic or religious background in the last 12 months?	7.2%	8.4%	14.1%
Total N =	1427	261	297

Participation and community involvement

The Australia-born indicated the highest level of involvement, followed by the ESB, with the NESB registering the lowest level on most indicators. Thus:

- 32.9% of the Australia-born, 24.9% of the ESB and 19% of the NESB were involved in volunteer work
- 64% of the Australia-born, 50.2% of the ESB and 31.6% of the NESB had signed a petition over the last three years; 27.2% of the Australia-born, 26.4% of the ESB and 13.5% of the NESB had contacted a member of parliament.

Immigration from different countries makes Australia stronger

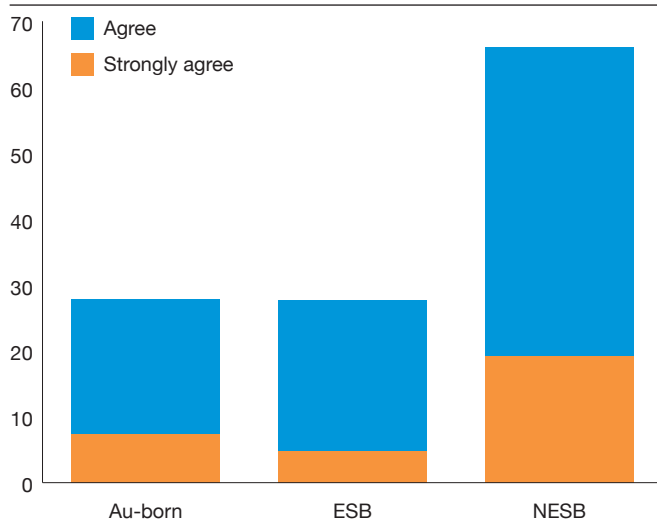


Immigration and settlement

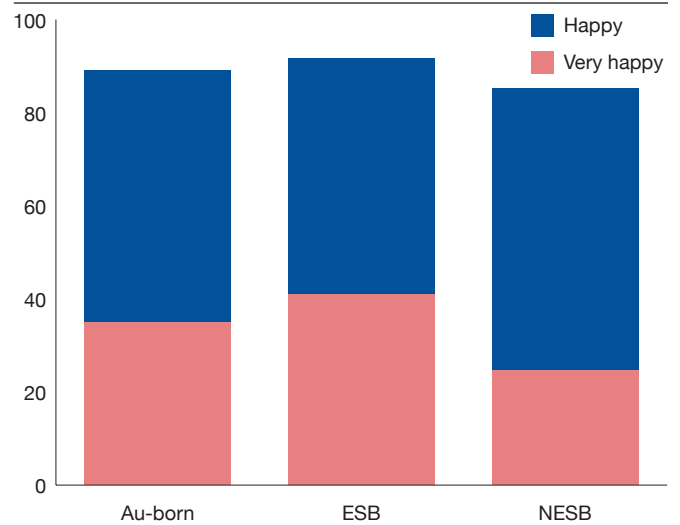
Attitudes to immigration issues also provide evidence of marked attitudinal divergence:

- In response to the question of whether immigration from different countries had made Australia stronger, 21.6% Australia-born, 23.3% ESB and 34.7% NESB were strongly in agreement.
- 10.5% Australia-born, 14.2% ESB and 20.2% NESB supported an increase in the immigration intake.
- In response to the question of government assistance to ethnic minorities for maintenance of customs and traditions, 27.8% Australia-born, 27.5% ESB and 56.1% NESB agreed.

Assistance to ethnic communities



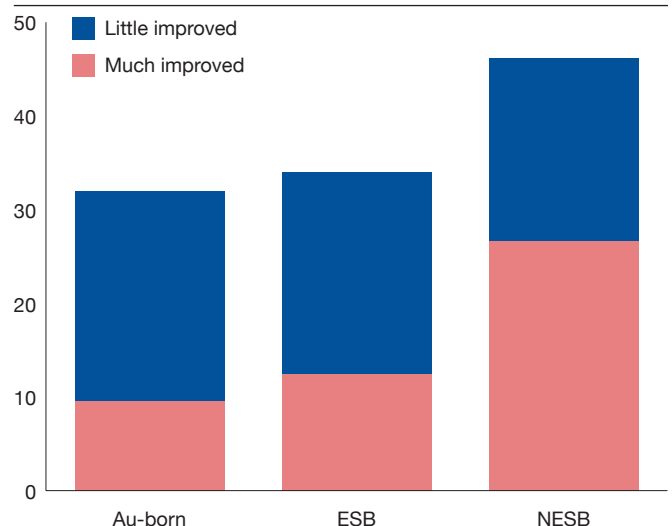
Happiness over the last 12 months



Sense of worth, life satisfaction

Responses to sense of worth and life satisfaction questions reveal two patterns: first, as in other elements of the survey, the responses of the Australia-born and ESB are differentiated from the NESB; second, while Australian and ESB express higher levels of satisfaction with their lives at the strongest level (very happy: 35.1% of Australia-born, 42.7% of ESB and 26.2% of NESB), the NESB have a stronger sense that their own lives and the lives of today's children will improve.

Lives of today's children will be...



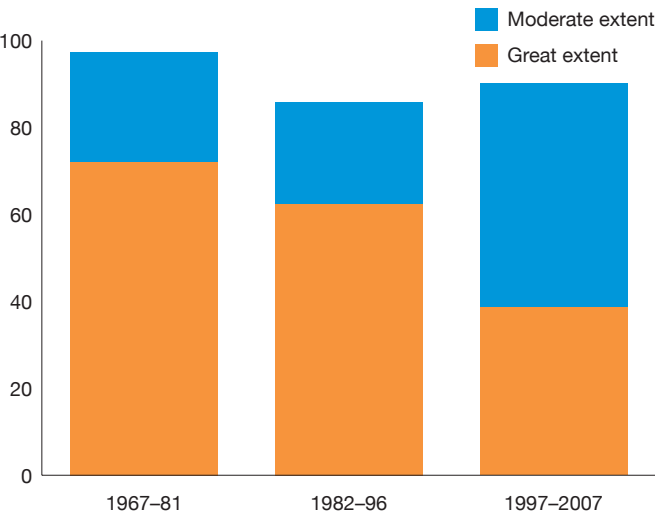
Immigrant cohorts

To provide understanding of change in attitude with length of residence in Australia, overseas-born respondents were divided into three categories (or cohorts): those arriving in 1967–81, 1982–96 and 1997–2007. The results demonstrate the strength in Australia of the forces working to integrate immigrants into national life and a shared value system.

While almost all respondents (90% +) indicate a sense of belonging to Australia to either a ‘moderate extent’ or ‘great extent’, those indicating a sense of belonging to a ‘great extent’ increased with time of residence:

- 38.6% for those who arrived 1997–2007
- 62.4% for 1982–96 arrivals
- 72.1% for 1967–81 arrivals.

Sense of belonging by time of arrival



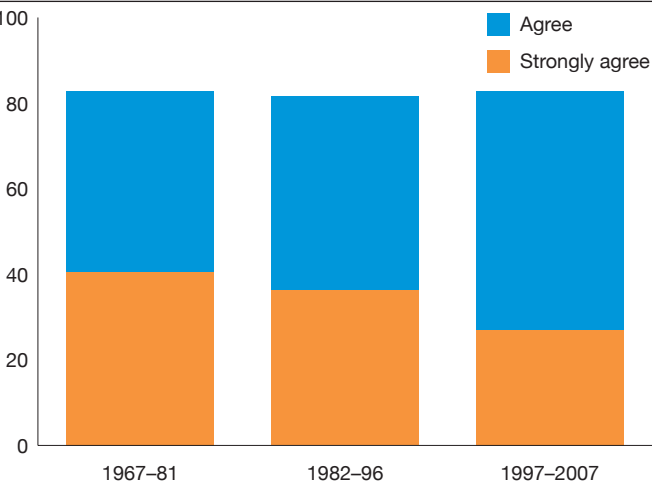
The **level of involvement in community life**, as indicated by voluntary work, increased over time of residence from 10.5% to 22.3% to 29.3%.

Around 82% of the overseas-born agreed with the proposition that ‘Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life’, but the proportion who ‘strongly agree’ increased with length of residence from 27.0% to 36.0% to 40.7%.

The proportion expressing **happiness** with their lives over the last 12 months was similar across the three cohorts (in the range 89.5% to 90.2%).

The most recently arrived, while presumably facing the greatest challenges and difficulties in their present lives and hence with the most improvement to make, were most **optimistic for the future** – 79.6% expected that their lives would be better in three or four years, compared with 65.6% for 1982–96 arrivals and 40.6% for 1967–81 arrivals.

View: land of economic opportunity by time of arrival



The general pattern is one in which increased length of residence leads to closer identification with dominant Australian attitudes. Thus when government assistance to ethnic minorities for maintenance of customs and traditions was considered, 60.8% of 1997–2007 arrivals were in agreement, 49.4% of 1982–96 arrivals, 28.7% of 1967–81 arrivals – compared with 27.8% of the Australia-born.

	Au-Born	Overseas-Born		
Year of arrival		1967–81	1982–96	1997–2007
Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions – strongly agree and agree	27.8%	28.7%	49.4%	60.8%
Total N =	1427	133	130	156

Local surveys – regions of high immigrant concentration

Social cohesion operates not in the abstract, the realm of the 'nation', but at the community level, where people of different backgrounds and cultures make their lives. This understanding informed the decision to undertake surveys in areas of high immigrant concentration, where, it is hypothesised, the potential for social tension is higher. The data gathered by the national survey provided the means for interpreting developments at the community level through measurement of the extent of commonality and divergence across a range of indicators.

The local surveys undertaken for this project provide data to analyse the attitudes of four sub-groups:

- **Long-time Australians**, those born in Australia, with both parents born in Australia
- **NESB Australians**, whose first language is other than English
- two NESB sub-groups – **an Asian sub-group** comprising those whose first language is Cantonese, Mandarin or Vietnamese, and a **Middle East sub-group**, comprising first-generation Australians whose birthplace or descent is from the countries of the Middle East and the majority of whose main languages are Arabic and Turkish.

Long-time Australians

When the long-time Australians are compared at the national and local levels there is a close similarity of attitudes and reported behaviour. Thus, level of happiness over the last year (very happy and happy) is 89.5% at the national level and 89.9% at the local; with regard to present financial situation (very satisfied and satisfied), the finding is 76.2% at the national, 74.2% at the local.

There are, however, some areas of marked difference. At the local level there are lower levels of trust, lower levels of support for government assistance to ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions, and heightened experience of discrimination. There is also an increased number who hold the view that the current immigration intake is too high – although a clear majority (59%) endorse the general proposal that 'accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger'.

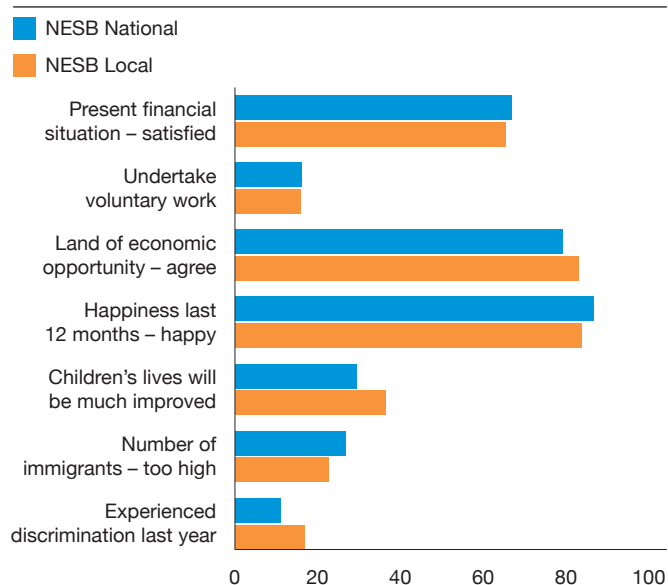
Question	National Long-time Australians	Local Long-time Australians
Most people can be trusted	55.6%	45.8%
Government assistance to ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions – agree	26.2%	20.5%
Experienced discrimination last year	7.8%	10.1%
Number of immigrants – too high	38.8%	51.3%
Total N =	1062	307

NESB Australians, first language other than English

As with the Australia-born, there is a similarity between the national and local NESB responses, except that at the national level for most questions a higher proportion opt for the strongest, rather than second, level of agreement.

Thus at the national level a higher proportion say they are 'very happy' (23.5%, compared with 18.1%) and expect that their lives will be better in three or four years (35: 30%), although at the local level there is a stronger sense of expected improvement in the lives of children. At the local level there is stronger endorsement of the view that Australia is a land of economic opportunity and less concern at the level of immigration (22.1%: 26.1%). The largest divergence is in heightened reporting of discrimination at the local level (16.4%: 10.7%) and the lowered level of political participation.

NESB: selected questions



Divergence across birthplace groups

Comparison across birthplace groups reveals a large measure of divergence on many indicators. The major divergences are in the levels of participation and acceptance, indicating lower levels of social capital in areas of high immigrant concentration.

Involvement in voluntary work

The national survey found that 33.8% of the long-time Australians were involved in voluntary work, compared to 29.1% of the same group at the local level. Within the NESB group at the national and local levels around half this proportion engaged in voluntary work; the proportion is lowest among the first generation of Middle East background, at 12.4%.

Political involvement

NESB Australians are markedly less involved in the political process – this is true at both the national and local level. Of the sub-groups surveyed, those of Chinese and Vietnamese background report the lowest levels of participation.

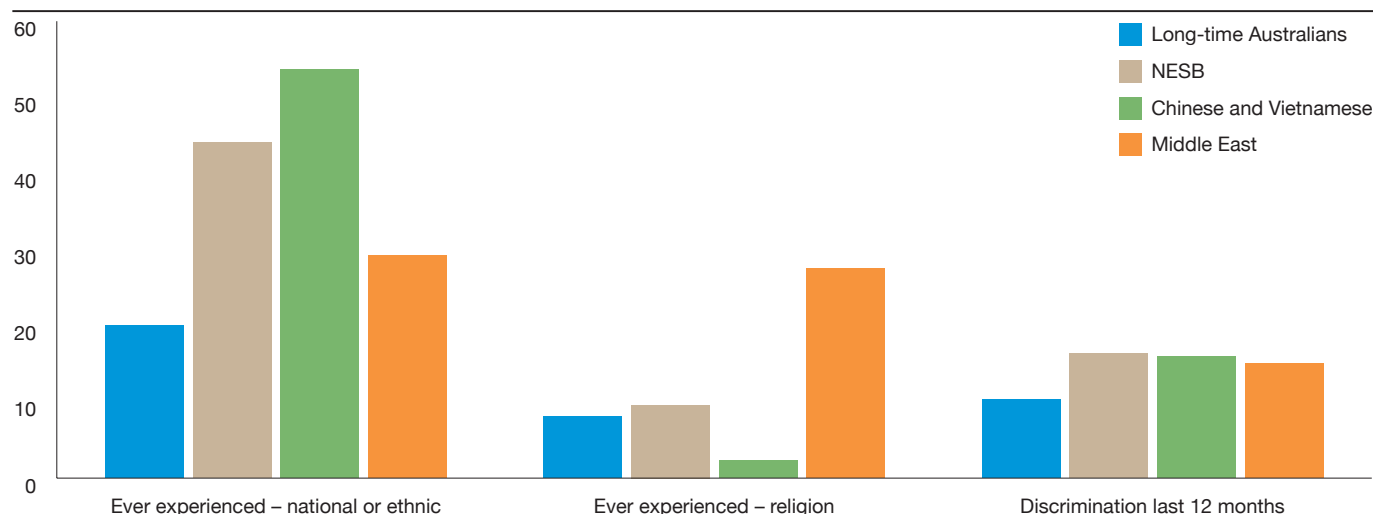
Experience of discrimination

There is heightened reporting of discrimination by all birthplace groups at the local level.

Of the long-time Australians, 20% reported experience of discrimination over the course of their lives on the basis of nationality or ethnicity, compared to the highest response rate of 53.7% for those whose first language is Mandarin, Cantonese or Vietnamese.

Of respondents of Middle East background, 27.5% reported experience of discrimination on the basis of religion, compared to less than 10% for other groups, including a very low proportion (2.3%) among those whose first language is Mandarin, Cantonese or Vietnamese. Some 10% of long-time Australians reported experience of discrimination over the last 12 months, compared with over 15% of those of NESB.

Experience of discrimination



	Local Long-time Australians	Local NESB – (first language other than English)	Local First language Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese	Local Middle East background – overseas-born
Number of immigrants – too high	51.3%	22.1%	8.6%	27.4%
Immigrants from different countries make Australia stronger – strongly agree	17.5%	34.2%	36.0%	36.1%
Government assistance to ethnic minorities to maintain customs and traditions – agree	20.5%	70.1%	82.3%	65.1%
Total N =	308	408	175	299

Views of immigration and settlement policy

There are marked differences with regard to immigration and settlement issues at the local level. Among the NESB groups there is a much smaller proportion of the view that the immigration intake is too high, particularly among the Chinese and Vietnamese. The NESB groups give stronger endorsement to the value of immigration from diverse sources. On the issue of government assistance to immigrant groups to maintain their customs and traditions, 20.5% of long-time Australians agree, less than one-third of the proportion among the NESB, with a peak of support at 82.3% among the Chinese and Vietnamese sub-group.

Minorities

The last component of the analysis of local survey findings considers three minorities: those opposed to aspects of immigration and settlement policy, those who register the highest level of negative response on life satisfaction and sense of belonging indicators, and the socially engaged.

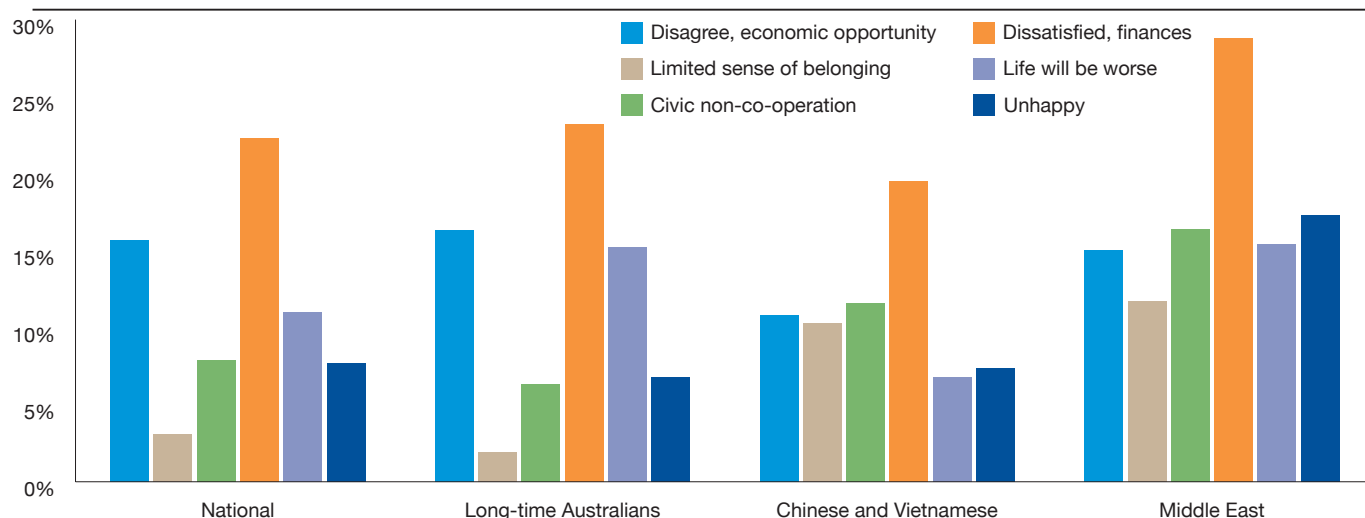
Negative views of immigration and settlement policy

As discussed, there is heightened opposition to the level of immigration intake among long-time Australians in regions of high immigrant concentration, as well as greater negativity when related questions are posed.

In keeping with the logic of public opinion, the general nature of the question relating to the value of immigration from different countries elicits the lowest level of negative response. Those who give a negative response to this type of question may be seen as those most opposed to a large and diverse immigration program.

	National Long-time Australians	Local Long-time Australians	Local NESB – overseas-born (first language other than English)
Immigrants from different countries make Australia stronger – disagree	28.3%	35.2 %	15.0%
Number of immigrants – too high	38.8%	51.3%	22.1%
Government funding to ethnic minorities for maintenance of customs and traditions – disagree	66.5%	71.3%	21.8%
Total N =	1062	308	408

Life satisfaction indicators



Further consideration of these Australia-born respondents indicates that a high proportion of those with a negative assessment of Australia's diverse immigration program also hold negative views of other immigration and settlement issues.

Of long-time Australians 23.5% have correlated negative attitudes to current immigration and settlement policy. Thus 23.5% (18% in the national survey) consider that the current immigration intake level is too high *and* disagree with the value of a diverse immigration program *and* disagree with government assistance to ethnic minorities for maintenance of customs and traditions. This sub-group also indicates lower levels of trust and greater pessimism about their future prospects. *But negativity does not dominate the outlook of this sub-group.* In views of Australia as a land of economic opportunity, personal finances, sense of belonging, sense of pride, and participation in voluntary work, there is minor variation in attitude and reported behaviour. There is thus indication of a significant minority opposed to immigration policy, but not of widespread alienation. This issue is further explored in the coming paragraphs.

Life satisfaction and belonging

To establish the level of disaffection, the extent of clustering of responses to six life satisfaction and sense of belonging indicators was considered. It was hypothesised that these indicators would most clearly identify respondents who were disaffected with their lives and alienated from Australian society.

The five selected questions concerned levels of happiness, expectations for the future, financial satisfaction, sense of belonging, and view of economic opportunity. The sixth response is a composite score for civic non-co-operation, replicating three questions employed in World Values Surveys. Responses were analysed at the local level for three sub-groups – the long-time Australians, those of Chinese and Vietnamese background, those of Middle East background – and for all respondents at the national level.

It was found that the highest clustering was at the level of 15% of respondents (for one of the four groups analysed). Tallying negative responses for each of the six indicators above 15% yields the following result:

- five indicators among Middle East background respondents
- three indicators among long-time Australians
- two indicators among respondents to the national survey
- one indicator among the Chinese and Vietnamese.

Four conclusions are drawn from this result:

- the proportion of negative responses is very low
- dissatisfaction with personal finances produces the highest level of negative response
- the strongest negative clustering is among the Middle East background sub-group
- sense of belonging yields the lowest level of negative response across the groups analysed

Modern societies are characterised by diversity of opinion and disaffection. When benchmarked against subsequent research, the key finding of the 2007 surveys may prove to be that the level of disaffection and threat to social cohesion is at historically low levels in contemporary Australia.

The socially engaged

Two indicators were used to identify the socially engaged: those who report (a) engagement in voluntary work and (b) frequent mixing with people of ethnicity or nationality different from their own. For purposes of analysis, a statistically significant sub-sample was obtained for the Australia-born with one or both parents born in Australia

The volunteers

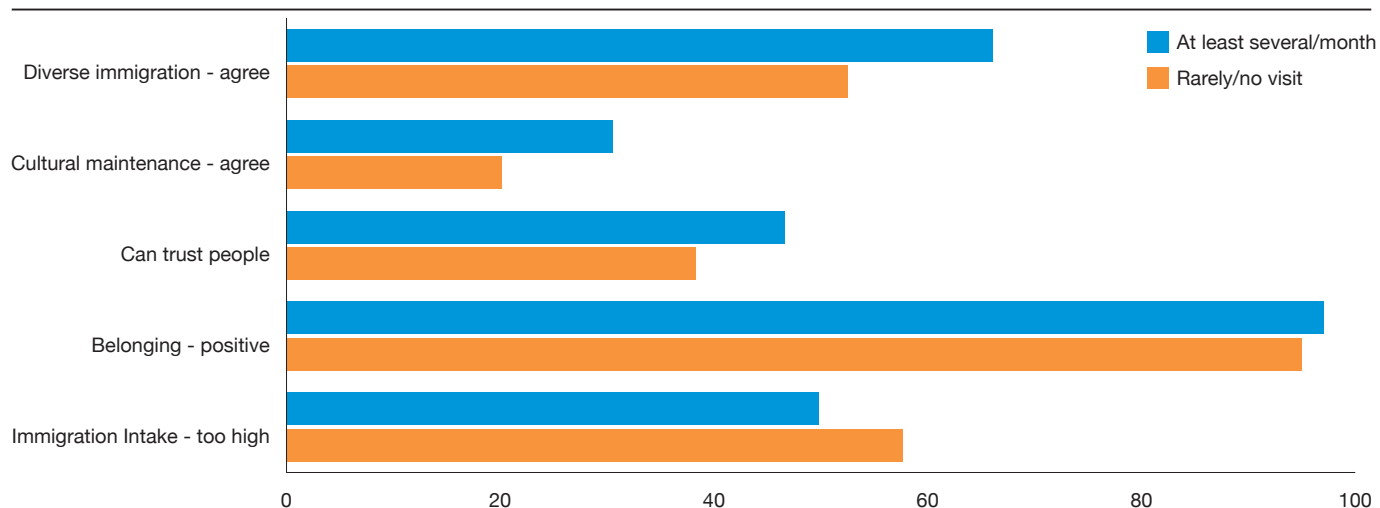
Of the Australia-born, 26.3% engage in voluntary work at least once per month. When this sub-group is compared with the Australia-born who do not currently engage in voluntary work, it is indicated that they are more likely to think that people can be trusted (53%: 43%) and are less likely to view the immigration intake as too high (44%: 55%), but when other questions related to immigration and settlement policy and sense of belonging are considered there is only minor variation.

Crossing cultures

Of the Australia-born, 45.1% report frequent visits (several per month) to the homes of people of ethnicity or nationality different from their own; 25.6% report rarely or never visiting people of other ethnicity or nationality. When the attitudes of the two groups are compared, it is indicated that those who report frequent visits are more likely to support government assistance to ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions (31%: 20%), to see more benefit in immigration from a range of countries (66%: 53%), to be less likely to view the immigration intake as being too high (50%: 58%), and to indicate greater level of trust in people (47%: 38%).

There is thus a consistent pattern denoting a more positive outlook to fellow Australians, including the overseas-born. This analysis provides a measure of the significance of social engagement – forms of personal contact that may be seen to promote greater empathy and understanding. The findings are in the expected positive direction, *but the extent of attitudinal difference* between the long-time Australians who engage in voluntary work and those who do not, between those who mix with people of different cultures and those who do not, *may be seen as relatively small* – of the order of an extra 10% of long-time Australians favourable to a specific policy, rather than a major shift in outlook.

Correlation of attitudes: Australia-born who often/rarely visit people of different ethnicity/nationality



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The Ecumenical Migration Centre undertook trial testing of the questionnaire. Mr Darren Pennay and Dr Nikki Honey of The Social Research Centre assisted in the final stages of questionnaire design and were in charge of administration of the surveys. Ms Kate Latimer and Ms Heather Kelly gave editorial advice and Mr Phil Campbell designed the publication..

Monash University provided the research environment that sustained the project.

- Andrew Markus
Monash University

Credits

Andrew Markus is the Pratt Foundation research professor in the School of Historical Studies, Monash University, and a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. He has published extensively in the field of Australian indigenous and immigration history. His publications include *Race: John Howard and the Remaking of Australia* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001); *Building a New Community. Immigration and the Victorian Economy* (editor, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001); and *Australian Race Relations 1788–1993* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994).

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

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

Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements

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

Glossary

ESB – person of English-speaking background

First generation (immigrant) – Australian who was born overseas

LGA – Local Government Area

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

NESB – person of non-English-speaking background

SLA - Statistical Local Area

World Values Survey – the most comprehensive international investigation of political and social attitudes, involving (to the present) four waves of surveys, the first conducted in the years 1981-1984.

