

Australian Government

Department of Immigration and Border Protection

Australia's Migration Trends 2014–15 at a glance

Australia's Migration Trends at a glance

Introduction

Australia's Migration Trends 2014–15 is an annual publication providing detailed information on policy and programme changes, as well as comprehensive statistical information. This at a glance document provides a brief overview of the publication's main findings.

The full version of Australia's Migration Trends can be accessed via the Department's website.

Major developments in 2014–15

During 2014–15, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Services worked closely to progressively transition into an integrated Department of Immigration and Border Protection, with effect from 1 July 2015. This included establishing the Australian Border Force, a single front-line operational border entity with statutory responsibilities to enforce our customs and immigration laws.

In December 2015, legislation was introduced that enabled Australian citizenship to be lost when a dual national engages in terrorism related conduct. The changes are set out in the *Australian Citizenship Amendment (Allegiance to Australia) Bill 2015*.

From 1 July 2015, changes to complying investment policy came into effect for the Significant Investor Visa and the Premium Investor Visa. These changes included investments in emerging enterprises and promoting local commercialisation of innovative research and development, such as funding venture capital companies. This marks a shift from the previous approach where investment was largely directed into government bonds.

In December 2015 a new Entrepreneur Visa was announced as part of the National Innovation and Science Agenda. The purpose of this visa is to attract innovative talent with financial backing from a third party. Alongside this are changes to facilitate permanent residence for high achieving foreign students in Australia with specified masters or doctorate-level qualifications. These changes are expected to be implemented in December 2016.

In December 2015, the *Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Act* and associated changes to the Migration Regulations 1994 came into force. This legislation is designed to strengthen the integrity of visa sponsorship laws by introducing penalties for asking for, receiving, offering to provide or providing a benefit in return for sponsorship. The legislation implements a recommendation of the 2014 Independent Review into Integrity in the Subclass 457 Programme.

In response to recommendations of this integrity review, an external review of the Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold (TSMIT) commenced in December 2015. The TSMIT Review will take into account a range of factors to determine a base level for TSMIT and will advise on appropriate concessions.

To manage the strong growth from China, the Department is implementing Visitor visa initiatives announced by the Government in June 2015, as part of the *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*. The measures will see a 10-year validity Visitor visa for Chinese nationals in place by the end of 2016. The visa will entitle applicants to visit Australia for up to a three month stay on each entry.

New visa measures to enhance tourism and business links between Australia and Indonesia, were announced in November 2015. In 2016, the Government will introduce an option that will allow for a three-year, multiple entry visa for Indonesian visitors to Australia (an extension on the current one-year visa) and expanding online lodgements to all Indonesian nationals by 2017, simplifying the process of applying for a visa for Indonesian tourists and business people.

In June 2015, the Government released the *Future directions streamlined visa processing* report and announced the introduction of a simplified international student visa framework intended to commence from July 2016. Changes to the framework will mean that there will be a reduction in the number of Student visa subclasses from eight to two; and the introduction of a simplified single immigration risk framework for all international students.

Australia's Population

Between June 1996 and June 2014, Australia's resident population grew 28.9 per cent, from 18.2 million to 23.5 million people. Over this period, Australia's overseas-born population grew by 55.7 per cent, from 4.2 million to 6.6 million, far exceeding the growth of Australian-born residents (20.8 per cent).

Growth in overseas-born residents is changing Australia's ethnic composition. In the past 18 years, the number of Chinese-born Australian residents has more than tripled, up from seventh position in June 1996 to third position behind New Zealand and the United Kingdom in June 2014. Similarly, the number of Indian-born residents grew more than four-fold, up from 11th position in June 1996 to fourth position in June 2014 (Table 1).

Table 1: Estimated residential population of our main migrant birthplaces, at 30 June 1996 and 2014

Country of birth	30 June 1996	30 June 2014
United Kingdom	1,164,390	1,221,260
New Zealand	312,240	616,960
People's Republic of China	118,640	447,370
India	80,480	397,180
Philippines	104,820	225,110
Other countries	2,459,690	3,692,870
Total	4,240,260	6,600,750

Source: Migration, Australia (3412.0), ABS

Australia's population is ageing but there are offsetting effects of continued migration. Since June 1996, Australia's median age has increased from 34.0 years to 37.3 years, with the Australia-born being the main contributors to our ageing population. Over this period, however, the median age of some migrant groups has decreased. For example, the median age of Indian-born residents decreased by seven years (40.6 years to 33.2 years), while for Chinese-born residents it decreased by four years (39.8 years to 35.5 years).

Other migrant groups though are ageing to varying degrees. For example, the Italian-born population decreased substantially between 1996 and 2014 and their median age increased by almost 11 years, up to 68.8 years. This demonstrates what can happen to an older, more established, migrant cohort when inflows of new migrants are low. In comparison the number of migrants born in the United Kingdom increased between 1996 and 2014, while their median age increased six years (48.8 years to 54.4 years). This suggests that the substantial numbers of mostly young migrants born in the United Kingdom coming to Australia each year was partially offsetting the effects of an ageing established migrant cohort.

Since September 2005, net overseas migration (NOM) has exceeded the natural increase component of population growth. For the year ending December 2014, preliminary NOM accounted for 55.8 per cent of total population growth, or 184,100 people.

Migration Programme

Australia's Migration Programme incorporates economic and family migration, and is the main pathway to permanent residence. The only other way for migrants to obtain permanent residence is to be accepted into Australia on humanitarian grounds.

The Migration Programme comprises three streams, the:

1. Skill stream—allows for the migration of people with skills and abilities that contribute to the economy
2. Family stream—allows for the permanent entry of people with close family ties in Australia
3. Special Eligibility—allows for the resettlement of former Australian residents or to resolve the status of people who have been allowed to remain in Australia as long-term temporary residents for humanitarian reasons.

For the 2014–15 financial year, 189,097 visas were granted under the Migration Programme. This comprised 127,774 visas (67.6 per cent) granted through the Skill stream, 61,085 visas (32.3 per cent) granted through the Family stream and the remaining 238 visas (0.1 per cent) granted under Special Eligibility.

The top three nationalities in 2014–15 granted a visa under the Migration Programme were: India (34,874), China (27,872) and the United Kingdom (21,078). Compared with the previous year, the number of visa grants to nationals of India and the United Kingdom fell 10.6 per cent and 9.2 per cent respectively, whereas grants to Chinese nationals grew 4.1 per cent.

Humanitarian Programme

Australia's 2014–15 Humanitarian Programme granted 13,756 visas, comprised of 11,009 under the offshore resettlement component and 2747 under the onshore protection component. Those granted onshore visas entered Australia either as Illegal Maritime Arrivals (IMAs) or unauthorised air arrivals or legally on valid visas (non-IMAs).

Offshore humanitarian visas granted represented 80.0 per cent of all places in the programme and comprised:

- 6002 Refugee visas (54.5 per cent)
- 5007 Special Humanitarian visas (45.5 per cent).

Of the Refugee visas granted, 1009 (16.8 per cent) were Woman at Risk visas. More than 15,600 vulnerable women and their dependants have been resettled under this visa category since it was introduced in 1989.

The top 10 countries of birth for people granted offshore visas in 2014–15, in descending order, were Iraq, Syria, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Bhutan, Iran, Somalia and Ethiopia.

Temporary entry

Visitors to Australia in 2014–15, were at their highest level, with more than 4.3 million visas granted. The People's Republic of China was the top nationality, with 658,430 visas granted to applicants outside Australia. This was followed by the United Kingdom and the United States of America with 556,094 and 425,922 visas granted respectively.

Modest growth in Student visa grants was recorded in 2014–15, up 2.6 per cent on the previous year, to reach 299,540 grants. This was the second highest level on record. Chinese nationals were the main recipients of Student visas with 65,737 visas granted, an increase of 9.0 per cent on the previous year. This was followed by nationals from India with 29,573 visas granted (down 13.4 per cent) and the Republic of Korea with 13,229 visas granted (up 2.7 per cent).

The Working Holiday Maker Programme in 2014–15 had 31 reciprocal working holiday arrangements in effect, comprised of 19 Working Holiday visa (subclass 417) and 12 Work and Holiday visa (subclass 462) arrangements.

For 2014–15, 226,812 Working Holiday visas were granted, a decrease of 5.3 per cent on the 239,592 granted the previous year. Grants of second Working Holiday visas fell for the first time since their inception in 2005–06; dropping from 45,950 in 2013–14 to 41,339 grants in 2014–15.

Demand for the Temporary Work (Skilled) visa (subclass 457) decreased slightly from 98,571 in 2013–14 to 96,084 in 2014–15. For the third year in a row, India was the top nationality, followed by the United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China, with 25,244, 14,729 and 6653 grants respectively.

Australian Citizenship

The promotion of Australian citizenship and the rights and responsibilities it entails is an ongoing priority of the Australian Government. In 2014–15, 136,572 people were conferred Australian citizenship, down 16.2 per cent on last year's record 163,017 conferrals. The highest number for the second consecutive year was from India (24,236), followed by the United Kingdom (20,583) and the Philippines (8996).

Labour market outcomes

During 2014–15, Australia's migrants had an average unemployment rate of 6.0 per cent, slightly lower than the 6.2 per cent figure for those born in Australia. As Australia's migrant population is older on average than its non-migrant population, with a greater proportion aged 65 and over, their labour-force participation rate is substantially lower—61.5 per cent compared to 67.9 per cent. However, the increasing share of skilled migrants coming through the Migration Programme means this gap is narrowing, down from 9.8 percentage points in 2002–03.

According to the Department's Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants, recently arrived skilled migrants have strong employment outcomes. Eighteen months after entering Australia (or after being granted a visa if already in Australia on a temporary visa), skilled Primary Applicant migrants had an unemployment rate of just 2.8 per cent.