

Australian Government

Department of Home Affairs

Australia's Migration Trends 2019–20 Highlights

Australia's Migration Trends was prepared by:

Data Services Branch | Data Division
Department of Home Affairs

Comments about this publication can be emailed to

© Commonwealth of Australia 2020

All material presented in this publication is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia licence.

For the avoidance of doubt, this means this licence only applies to material as set out in this document.



The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website (accessible using the links provided) as is the full legal code for the CC BY 3.0 AU licence.

Use of the Coat of Arms

The terms under which the Coat of Arms can be used are detailed on the It's an Honour website.

Contact us

Enquiries about the licence and any use of this document are welcome at:

Communication and Engagement Branch
Department of Home Affairs

PO Box 25
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Table of Contents

Overview 2

Permanent migration 3
- The Migration Program outcome 3
- Skill stream visas 4
  - Employer Sponsored visas 4
  - Regional migration 5
  - State/Territory Nominated 5
  - Skilled Independent 5
  - Business Innovation and Investment visas 6
  - Global Talent (Independent) 6
  - Distinguished Talent 7
- Family stream visas 7
  - Partner visas 7
  - Parent visas 8
  - Other Family visas 8
- Child stream visas 8
- Special Eligibility visas 9
- Change of status—permanent visa places by last visa held where the applicant is in Australia 9
  - Students moving onto permanent residence whilst in Australia 9

Humanitarian Program 10

Temporary visa grants 11
- Visitor visa grants 11
- Special Category visa grants to New Zealand citizens 12
- Student visa grants 12
- Working Holiday Maker visa grants 13
- Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment) visa grants 14
  - Primary Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment) visa grants 14
- Post study work—Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485) grants 15

Visa non-compliance 16

Australian citizenship 16

Net overseas migration and population growth 17

Labour market outcomes 18
- The importance of migration in our labour market 18
- Outcomes of Australia's migrant population stock 21
- Outcomes for recently arrived Skill stream and Family stream migrants 22
  - The Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants 22
  - Employment outcomes of recent migrants 22

Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted Australia's migration programs. International travel restrictions implemented in Australia and around the world have limited arrivals of both permanent and temporary migrants to Australia, and have significantly impacted processing, with limited capacity to conduct health and English language checks. This has resulted in significant falls in the number of places delivered under Australia's planned migration programs and in the number of temporary visas granted in the 2019–20 financial year.

In the 2019–20 financial year, there were 153,537 permanent places delivered, and almost 6.5 million temporary visas granted (Table 1). By comparison with the previous financial year, the number of permanent places (including humanitarian visa grants) decreased 14.3 per cent on the 179,085 places delivered, and the number of temporary visas granted decreased by 26.5 per cent on the 8.8 million granted.

Table 1: Key statistics for 2019–20

Migration	Total
Permanent migrants	**153,537**
Migration Program outcome	140,366
Skill stream places	95,843
Family stream places	41,961
Special Eligibility stream places	81
Child stream places	2,481
Humanitarian Program visas granted	13,171
Temporary visas granted	**6,477,462**
Visitor visas granted	4,056,603
New Zealand citizen Special Category visas granted	1,396,835
Student visas granted	340,152
Crew and Transit visas granted	308,233
Temporary Resident (Other Employment) visas granted	162,108
Working Holiday Maker visas granted	149,249
Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment) visas granted	55,060
Other Temporary visas granted	9,222
Citizenship	**Conferrals**
Conferrals of Australian citizenship	**204,817**

Source data: Department of Home Affairs

Permanent migration

The Migration Program outcome

In 2019–20, the Migration Program outcome delivered 140,366 places—down 12.4 per cent on the 160,323 places in 2018–19. This was comprised of:

- 95,843 Skill stream places
- 41,961 Family stream places
- 81 Special Eligibility places
- 2481 Child stream places.

In 2019–20, the top three nationalities accounted for almost four-in-ten (39.2 per cent) of the places delivered under the Migration Program. These were nationals of:

1. India—25,698 places (18.3 per cent)
2. People's Republic of China—18,587 places (13.2 per cent)
3. United Kingdom—10,681 places (7.6 per cent).

In 2019–20, among the top 10 nationalities that received a place in the Migration Program, Nepalese nationals (5048 places) were the only nationality to record growth, and were up 23.2 per cent on the 4096 places in 2018–19.

Almost two-thirds (64.5 per cent) of migrants that obtained a place in 2019–20, were migrants already in Australia on a temporary visa, with the remaining 35.5 per cent of places going to new arrivals.

Of these former temporary visa holders, almost three-quarters (73.1 per cent) were granted a Skill stream visa—half of these (50.1 per cent) moved directly from a Temporary Work (Skilled Employment) visa.

The 2019–20, Migration Program delivered 28,319 fewer places (16.8 per cent) than a decade earlier, with 168,685 places in 2010–11. This was largely a result of the:

- Skill stream—down 17,882 places (15.7 per cent)
- Family stream—down 12,582 places (23.1 per cent), a result in part due to structural changes.

The top three nationalities that maintained strong growth over this period were:

1. India—up 3930 places (18.1 per cent) on the 21,768 places in 2010–11
2. Nepal—up 2987 places (144.9 per cent) on the 2061 places in 2010–11
3. Pakistan—up 2078 places (101.0 per cent) on the 2058 places in 2010–11.

Skill stream visas

In 2019–20, there were 95,843 Skill stream places delivered, 13,870 fewer than in 2018–19. This was comprised of:

- 29,261 Employer Sponsored places
- 23,372 Regional places
- 21,495 State/Territory Nominated places
- 12,986 Skilled Independent places
- 4420 Business Innovation and Investment places
- 4109 Global Talent (Independent) places
- 200 Distinguished Talent places.

Collectively, nationals of the top three countries accounted for more than four-in-ten (44.1 per cent) of all Skill stream places in 2019–20, namely:

1. India—22,170 places (23.1 per cent)
2. People's Republic of China—12,590 places (13.1 per cent)
3. United Kingdom—7459 places (7.8 per cent).

Despite the decrease in the number of places within the Skill stream in 2019–20, there was some growth among the main nationalities, namely:

- Nepal—up 1127 places (31.8 per cent); from 3539 places in 2018–19 to 4666 places in 2019–20
- Vietnam—up 379 places (17.3 per cent); from 2192 places in 2018–19 to 2571 places in 2019–20
- Iran—up 366 places (21.2 per cent); from 1727 places in 2018–19 to 2093 places in 2019–20.

The Skill stream comprised 68.3 per cent of the Migration Program outcome in 2019–20. This proportion has remained relatively constant for the past 14 years, since 2005–06—apart from a modest fall, to 64.0 per cent, in 2009–10, coinciding with the Global Financial Crisis.

The Skill stream is comprised of primary applicants (the main visa holder who satisfies the primary criteria for the grant of a visa) and their accompanying family unit (secondary applicants), such as spouses and children. In 2019–20, of the 95,843 Skill stream places delivered, less than half (45.8 per cent) went to Skill stream primary applicants, who comprised less than one-third (31.3 per cent) of the total Migration Program outcome.

Employer Sponsored visas

In 2019–20, there were 29,261 Employer Sponsored places delivered, a decrease of 30.4 per cent on the 42,012 places delivered in 2018–19. This decrease was largely a result of structural changes that have occurred since 1 July 2019, with the realignment of the Regional Migration Scheme visa (subclass 187) within the new Regional category.

Nationals of the top three countries accounted for 39.6 per cent of Employer Sponsored places in 2019–20, namely:

1. India—4718 places (16.1 per cent)
2. United Kingdom—4275 places (14.6 per cent)
3. Philippines—2583 places (8.8 per cent).

Regional migration

The new Regional category commenced 1 July 2019, with 23,372 places delivered in 2019–20.

Collectively, nationals of the top three countries accounted for almost half (48.6 per cent) of Regional places, namely:

1. India—7585 places (32.5 per cent)
2. People's Republic of China—1925 places (8.2 per cent)
3. Philippines—1842 places (7.9 per cent).

Of these, 43.9 per cent (10,260 places) were primary applicants with the top three nominated occupations accounting for almost one-third (31.2 per cent) of Regional primary applicants, namely:

1. Accountants—1532 places (14.9 per cent)
2. Registered Nurses—897 places (8.7 per cent)
3. Cooks—772 places (7.5 per cent).

State/Territory Nominated

In 2019–20, there were 21,495 State/Territory Nominated places delivered, a decrease of 15.2 per cent on the 25,346 places delivered in 2018–19.

Nationals of the top three countries in 2019–20, accounted for more than half (53.2 per cent) of State/Territory Nominated places. These were nationals of:

1. India—6149 places (28.6 per cent)
2. People's Republic of China—3616 places (16.8 per cent)
3. Nepal—1679 places (7.8 per cent).

In 2019–20, despite the overall fall in State/Territory Nominated places, there was strong growth amongst nationals of the top 10 countries, namely:

- People's Republic of China—up 1005 places (38.5 per cent) on the 2611 places in 2018–19
- Nepal—up 557 places (49.6 per cent) on the 1122 places in 2018–19.

Skilled Independent

In 2019–20, there were 12,986 Skilled Independent places delivered, a decrease of 62.1 per cent on the 34,247 places delivered in 2018–19.

This was comprised of:

- 8207 Points tested places—down 20,101 places (71.0 per cent) on the 28,308 delivered in 2018–19
- 4779 New Zealand stream places—down 1157 places (19.5 per cent) on the 5936 delivered in 2018–19.

The size of the fall in Skilled Independent was largely a result of the reduction in planning levels for this category, a result of structural changes, which have placed greater emphasis in 2019–20, on supporting the new Regional Migration and Global Talent initiatives.

Nationals of the top three countries in 2019–20, accounted for more than two-thirds (68.5 per cent) of Skilled Independent places. These were nationals of:

1. New Zealand—4300 places (33.1 per cent)
2. India—3225 places (24.8 per cent)
3. People's Republic of China—1367 places (10.5 per cent).

Business Innovation and Investment visas

In 2019–20, there were 4420 Business Innovation and Investment Program (BIIP) visa places delivered. By stream, this was mainly (99.0 per cent) comprised of:

- 2475 Business Innovation places (a 56.0 per cent share of BIIP)
- 748 Significant Business History places (a 16.9 per cent share of BIIP)
- 638 Investor places (a 14.4 per cent share of BIIP)
- 433 Significant Investor places (a 9.8 per cent share of BIIP)
- 83 Business Skills places (a 1.9 per cent share of BIIP).

Collectively, the top three nationalities accounted for 78.3 per cent of all BIIP visa places in 2019–20. These were nationals of:

1. People's Republic of China—2872 places (65.0 per cent)
2. Vietnam—368 places (8.3 per cent)
3. Iran—223 places (5.0 per cent).

Chinese nationals continued to be the main recipients of BIIP visas, with significantly more than any other nationality, and in 2019–20, was mainly comprised of:

- 1668 Business Innovation stream places
- 553 Significant Business History stream places
- 299 Significant Investor stream places
- 286 Investor stream places
- 46 Business Skills places.

BIIP includes both provisional and permanent visas. In 2019–20, 81.2 per cent of BIIP places were for provisional visas.

Global Talent (Independent)

The Global Talent Program, introduced on 4 November 2019, offers a streamlined priority visa pathway for highly skilled and talented individuals in selected industries to work and live permanently in Australia.

In 2019–20, there were 4109 Global Talent (Independent) places delivered, of which 44.2 per cent (1817 places) were primary applicants.

Collectively, nationals of the top three countries accounted for more than one-third (36.5 per cent) of Global Talent (Independent) places, namely:

1. Bangladesh—568 places (13.8 per cent)
2. Iran—516 places (12.6 per cent)
3. United Kingdom—416 places (10.1 per cent).

Distinguished Talent

In 2019–20, there were 200 Distinguished Talent places delivered, a constant number that has been delivered since 2011–12. Of the places delivered in 2019–20, 47.0 per cent (94 places) went to primary applicants.

Half of the Distinguished Talent places in 2019–20, went to nationals of the following countries:

- United Kingdom—52 places
- Brazil—18 places
- Republic of Korea—15 places
- People's Republic of China—15 places.

Family stream visas

In 2019–20, the Family stream outcome delivered 41,961 places—down 11.2 per cent on the 47,247 places delivered in 2018–19. This was comprised of:

- 37,118 Partner places
- 4399 Parent places
- 444 Other Family places.

In 2019–20, nationals of the top three countries accounted for 28.6 per cent of Family stream places delivered. These were nationals of:

1. People's Republic of China—5630 places (13.4 per cent)
2. India—3226 places (7.7 per cent)
3. United Kingdom—3145 places (7.5 per cent).

Despite the fall in the number of Family stream places delivered in 2019–20, there was some modest growth among the main nationalities. These were nationals of:

- Afghanistan—up 248 places (12.4 per cent); from 1999 places in 2018–19 to 2247 places in 2019–20
- United Kingdom—up 107 places (3.5 per cent); from 3038 places in 2018–19 to 3145 places in 2019–20
- Philippines—up 87 places (3.8 per cent); from 2304 places in 2018–19 to 2391 places in 2019–20.

Partner visas

In 2019–20, there were 37,118 Partner places delivered—down 7.0 per cent on the 39,918 places delivered in 2018–19. This was comprised of:

- 35,536 Partner places
- 1582 Fiancé places.

Collectively, nationals of the top three countries accounted for almost one-quarter (24.3 per cent) of Partner places in 2019–20. These were nationals of:

1. People's Republic of China—3553 places (9.6 per cent)
2. United Kingdom—2788 places (7.5 per cent)
3. India—2684 places (7.2 per cent).

In 2019–20, among the main nationalities, modest growth occurred to nationals of the following countries:

- Afghanistan—up 264 places (13.5 per cent); from 1956 places in 2018–19 to 2220 places in 2019–20
- United Kingdom—up 129 places (4.9 per cent); from 2659 places in 2018–19 to 2788 places in 2019–20
- Philippines—up 104 places (4.7 per cent); from 2234 places in 2018–19 to 2338 places in 2019–20.

Parent visas

In 2019–20, there were 4399 Parent visa places delivered—down 35.4 per cent on the 6805 places delivered in 2018–19. This was comprised of:

- 3730 Contributory Parent places
- 669 non-contributory Parent places.

Nationals of the top three countries in 2019–20, accounted for almost two-thirds (65.5 per cent) of Parent places. These were nationals of:

1. People's Republic of China—1994 places (45.3 per cent)
2. India—528 places (12.0 per cent)
3. Vietnam—361 places (8.2 per cent).

Other Family visas

In 2019–20, there were 444 Other Family visa places delivered—down 15.3 per cent on the 524 places delivered in 2018–19. This was comprised of:

- 288 Carer places
- 115 Orphan Relative places
- 41 Remaining Relative and Aged Dependent Relative places.

In 2019–20, nationals of the top three countries accounted for 45.0 per cent of places delivered in this category. These were nationals of:

1. People's Republic of China—83 places (18.7 per cent)
2. Vietnam—83 places (18.7 per cent)
3. Ethiopia—34 places (7.7 per cent).

Child stream visas

In 2019–20, there were 2481 Child visa places delivered—down 23.6 per cent on the 3248 places delivered in 2018–19. This was comprised of:

- 2400 Child visas places
- 81 Adoption visas places.

Collectively, nationals of the top three countries accounted for 40.5 per cent of places in this category in 2019–20. These were nationals of:

1. People's Republic of China—362 places (14.6 per cent)
2. Philippines—347 places (14.0 per cent)
3. India—297 places (12.0 per cent).

Special Eligibility visas

In 2019–20, there were 81 Special Eligibility places delivered—down 29.6 per cent on the 115 places delivered in 2018–19.

More than half (56.8 per cent) of places delivered in 2019–20, were to nationals of the following countries:

- Papua New Guinea—18 places (22.2 per cent)
- New Zealand—8 places (9.9 per cent)
- India—5 places (6.2 per cent)
- Indonesia—5 places (6.2 per cent)
- People's Republic of China—5 places (6.2 per cent)
- Zambia—5 places (6.2 per cent).

Change of status—permanent visa places by last visa held where the applicant is in Australia

In 2019–20, there were 90,499 permanent places delivered to applicants in Australia on temporary visas, an increase of 7.4 per cent on the 84,260 places delivered in 2018–19.

Almost three-quarters (74.5 per cent) were to former holders of:

- Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment) visa—34,427 places (38.0 per cent)
- Student visa—16,588 places (18.3 per cent)
- Student Graduate visas (subclass 476 and subclass 485)—16,424 places (18.1 per cent).

Growth was strong among former visa holders of:

- Special Category visa—up 4120 places (947.1 per cent) on the 435 places in 2018–19
- Student Graduate visas—up 2709 places (19.8 per cent) on the 13,715 places in 2018–19
- Student visa—up 1856 places (12.6 per cent) on the 14,732 places in 2018–19.

Of note was the growth in permanent places to former visa holders of a Special Category visa. This occurred within the Skilled Independent (New Zealand) stream visa, with 4119 places delivered. This visa can provide, for those who are eligible, a fast tracked pathway to Australian Citizenship after one year.

Students moving onto permanent residence whilst in Australia

In 2019–20, the number of permanent places obtained by former international students in Australia who transitioned directly from a Student visa was 16,588 places, an increase of 12.6 per cent on 2018–19.

Despite the number of Student visa grants increasing in recent years, the overall trend in former international Students directly transitioning to a permanent visa has been downward since 2012–13, when it peaked at 30,170 places.

Collectively, nationals of the top three countries accounted for more than one-third (36.2 per cent) of these places in 2019–20. These were nationals of:

1. People's Republic of China—2705 places (16.3 per cent)
2. India—2189 places (13.2 per cent)
3. Vietnam—1109 places (6.7 per cent).

Growth among the main nationalities in 2019–20, was largely due to nationals of:

- Bangladesh—up 374 places (139.6 per cent); from 268 places in 2018–19 to 642 places in 2019–20
- Nepal—up 308 places (43.6 per cent); from 707 places in 2018–19 to 1015 places in 2019–20
- Iran—up 281 places (119.6 per cent); from 235 places in 2018–19 to 516 places in 2019–20.

Of these 16,588 former international students:

- 9992 places were within the Skill stream, comprised of:
  - 3742 Regional places
  - 3096 State/Territory Nominated places
  - 1313 Global Talent (Independent) places
  - 990 Skilled Independent places
  - 618 Employer Sponsored places
  - 191 Business Innovation and Investment Program places
  - 42 Distinguished Talent places.
- 6587 places were within the Family stream, comprised of:
  - 6575 Partner places
  - 12 Other Family places.
- 9 places were within Special Eligibility.

Humanitarian Program

In 2019–20, there were 13,171 visas granted under the Humanitarian Program. This included 11,521 visas granted under the offshore (resettlement) component of the program to people affected by humanitarian crises around the world, and 1650 visas granted under the onshore (protection) component of the program.

The number of visas granted in 2019–20, under the offshore resettlement component of the program represented 87.5 per cent of all places. This was comprised of:

- 6422 Refugee visas granted (55.7 per cent)
- 5099 Special Humanitarian visas granted (44.3 per cent).

Nationals of the top three countries in 2019–20, accounted for more than two-thirds (68.5 per cent) of visas granted through the offshore resettlement component. These were nationals of:

1. Iraq—5785 grants (50.2 per cent)
2. Democratic Republic of Congo—1165 grants (10.1 per cent)
3. Syria—947 grants (8.2 per cent).

In addition to the 1650 Permanent Protection visas granted under the onshore component in 2019–20, there were:

- 1661 Safe Haven Enterprise visas granted—a five-year temporary visa
- 218 Temporary Protection visas granted—a three-year temporary visa.

Temporary visa grants

In 2019–20, there were 6,477,462 temporary visas granted, a decrease of 26.5 per cent on the 8,818,837 visas granted the previous year. Of these, almost 4.1 million (62.6 per cent) were Visitor visa grants, and almost 1.4 million (21.6 per cent) were Special Category visa grants to New Zealand citizens.

Visitor visa grants

In 2019–20, there were 4,056,603 Visitor visas granted, a decrease of 28.7 per cent on the 5,686,318 visas granted in 2018–19. By visa type, this was comprised of:

- 3,713,992 tourist visa grants
- 342,611 business visitor visa grants.

Collectively, nationals of the top three countries accounted for more than one-third (36.5 per cent) of people granted a Visitor visa in 2019–20, namely:

1. People's Republic of China—544,817 grants (13.4 per cent)
2. United Kingdom—479,662 grants (11.8 per cent)
3. United States of America—455,029 grants (11.2 per cent).

Almost half (48.8 per cent) of the fall in Visitor visa grants (decrease of 1,629,715 grants) was notably against nationals of the following countries in 2019–20:

- People's Republic of China—down 393,319 grants (41.9 per cent) on the 938,136 grants in 2018–19
- United States of America—down 166,925 grants (26.8 per cent) on the 621,954 grants in 2018–19
- Malaysia—down 123,950 grants (36.7 per cent) on the 337,481 grants in 2018–19
- United Kingdom—down 111,509 grants (18.9 per cent) on the 591,171 grants in 2018–19.

Tourist visas and business visitor visas can be analysed by visa sub-type to identify where growth is occurring within these visa types.

In 2019–20, Visitor visas granted for the purpose of:

- tourism, decreased 28.3 per cent on the 5,181,536 granted in 2018–19, a result of:
  - Tourist—down 1,364,302 grants (27.6 per cent), to 3,577,487 grants
  - Approved Destination Status (ADS)—down 92,819 grants (46.4 per cent), to 107,219 grants
  - Sponsored Family—down 7224 grants (20.7 per cent), to 27,709 grants
  - Frequent Traveller—down 3199 grants (67.0 per cent), to 1577 grants.
- business, decreased 32.1 per cent on the 504,782 granted in 2018–19, a result of:
  - Business Visitor (excludes Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC))—down 119,179 grants (29.7 per cent), to 282,518 grants
  - APEC Business Visitor—down 42,992 grants (41.7 per cent), to 60,093 grants.

Despite Visitor visa grants falling significantly in 2019–20, the number granted over the last 10 years was up 14.6 per cent (516,098 grants) on the 3,540,505 granted in 2010–11. By visa type and sub-type, this growth was a result of:

- tourist visas—up 615,969 grants (19.9 per cent) on the 3,098,023 granted in 2010–11, with:
  - Tourist—up 605,099 grants (20.4 per cent) on the 2,972,388 grants
  - Sponsored Family—up 12,264 grants (79.4 per cent) on the 15,445 grants
  - Frequent Traveller—introduced in 2016–17, since then there have been 16,691 grants
  - offset by—Approved Destination Status (ADS)—down 2971 grants (2.7 per cent) on the 110,190 grants.
- business visitor visas—down 99,871 grants (22.6 per cent) on the 442,482 granted in 2010–11, with:
  - APEC Business Visitor—up 25,268 grants (72.6 per cent) on the 34,825 grants.
  - offset by—Business Visitor (excludes APEC)—down 125,139 grants (30.7 per cent) on the 407,657 grants.

Special Category visa grants to New Zealand citizens

In 2019–20, there were 1,396,835 Special Category visas granted to New Zealand citizens—down 26.1 per cent on the 1,889,988 granted in 2018–19. Since 2010–11, grants to New Zealand citizens on this visa have fallen by 12.1 per cent on the 1,589,422 grants in 2010–11.

Student visa grants

In 2019–20, there were 340,152 Student visas granted, a decrease of 16.2 per cent (65,590 grants) on the 405,742 visas granted in 2018–19. By reporting category, this was comprised of:

- 174,814 Higher Education grants
- 98,165 Vocational Education and Training grants
- 33,568 Independent ELICOS grants[1]
- 12,492 Non-Award grants
- 10,311 Postgraduate Research grants
- 7172 Schools grants
- 3630 Foreign Affairs of Defence grants.

There were decreases recorded across all reporting categories in 2019–20, when compared to the previous year. Most of these falls were large, with the exceptions being:

- Vocational Education and Training—down 2740 grants (2.7 per cent) on the 100,905 grants in 2018–19
- Postgraduate Research—down 928 grants (8.3 per cent) on the 11,239 grants in 2018–19.

Nationals of the top three countries accounted for 43.5 per cent of Student visas granted in 2019–20. These were nationals of:

1. People's Republic of China—67,841 grants (19.9 per cent)
2. India—55,560 grants (16.3 per cent)
3. Nepal—24,445 grants (7.2 per cent).

[1] ELICOS—English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students.

More than half (53.7 per cent) of the fall in Student visa grants (decrease of 65,590 grants) was notably against nationals of the following countries in 2019–20:

- People's Republic of China—down 16,978 grants (20.0 per cent)
- India—down 10,889 grants (16.4 per cent)
- Nepal—down 7354 grants (23.1 per cent).

During the 10 years from 2010–11, the annual number of Student visas granted grew 35.8 per cent. The main categories with high growth were:

- Higher Education—up 62,249 grants (55.3 per cent) on the 112,565 grants in 2010–11
- Vocational Education and Training—up 30,759 grants (45.6 per cent) on the 67,406 grants in 2010–11
- Independent ELICOS—up 4507 grants (15.5 per cent) on the 29,061 grants in 2010–11.

Working Holiday Maker visa grants

In 2019–20, there were 149,249 Working Holiday Maker visas granted, a decrease of 28.6 per cent on the 209,036 visas granted in 2018–19. This was the seventh consecutive decrease since the program peaked in 2012–13 with 258,248 visas granted.

This was comprised of:

- 122,673 Working Holiday visa grants:
  - 92,282 First Working Holiday visa grants
  - 28,316 Second Working Holiday visa grants.
  - 2075 Third Working Holiday visa grants.
- 26,576 Work and Holiday visa grants:
  - 19,845 First Work and Holiday visa grants
  - 6128 Second Work and Holiday visa grants
  - 603 Third Work and Holiday visa grants.

Collectively, nationals of the top three countries accounted for 37.8 per cent of all Working Holiday Maker visa grants in 2019–20. These were nationals of:

1. United Kingdom—24,754 grants (16.6 per cent)
2. France—17,665 grants (11.8 per cent)
3. Germany—13,934 grants (9.3 per cent).

In 2019–20, there were 43,673 fewer Working Holiday Maker visas granted than a decade earlier, in 2010–11, when 192,922 visas were granted. This was comprised of:

- Working Holiday—down 62,807 grants (33.9 per cent) on the 185,480 granted; a combination of:
  - First visa—down 70,698 grants (43.4 per cent) on the 162,980 granted
  - Second visa—up 5816 grants (25.8 per cent) on the 22,500 granted
  - Third visa—with 2075 visas granted since their introduction in 2019–20.
- Work and Holiday—up 19,134 grants (257.1 per cent) on the 7442 granted; a combination of:
  - First visa—up 12,403 grants (166.7 per cent) on the 7442 granted
  - Second visa—with 15,677 visas granted in the four years since their introduction in 2016–17.
  - Third visa—with 603 visas granted since their introduction in 2019–20.

Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment) visa grants

In 2019–20, there were 55,060 Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment) visas granted, a decrease of 32.8 per cent on the 81,975 visas granted in 2018–19. This was comprised of:

- 28,414 visa grants to primary applicants
  - 14,142 granted to applicants outside Australia
  - 14,272 granted to applicants in Australia.
- 26,646 visa grants to secondary applicants
  - 17,038 granted to applicants outside Australia
  - 9608 granted to applicants in Australia.

In 2019–20, there were 35,068 fewer Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment) visas granted than a decade earlier, in 2010–11, when 90,128 visas were granted.[2] This was comprised of:

- primary applicants—down 19,663 grants (40.9 per cent) on the 48,077 granted; a combination of:
  - visas granted outside Australia—down 14,119 grants (50.0 per cent) on the 28,261 granted
  - visas granted in Australia—down 5544 grants (28.0 per cent) on the 19,816 granted.
- secondary applicants—down 15,405 grants (36.6 per cent) on the 42,051 granted; a combination of:
  - visas granted outside Australia—down 11,945 grants (41.2 per cent) on the 28,983 granted
  - visas granted in Australia—down 3460 grants (26.5 per cent) on the 13,068 granted.

Primary Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment) visa grants

In 2019–20, there were 28,414 visas granted to primary applicants, a decrease of 31.1 per cent on the 41,221 grants in 2018–19.

Collectively, nationals of the top three countries accounted for almost half (47.9 per cent) of these primary visa grants in 2019–20, namely:

1. India—6334 grants (22.3 per cent)
2. United Kingdom—4990 grants (17.6 per cent)
3. Philippines—2300 grants (8.1 per cent).

The top three sponsor industries accounted for almost half (47.3 per cent) of primary Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment) visas granted in 2019–20. These were:

1. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services—4925 grants (17.3 per cent)
2. Other Services—4416 grants (15.5 per cent)
3. Health Care and Social Assistance—4093 grants (14.4 per cent).

Primary visa grants fell substantially across most sponsor industries in 2019–20, the exceptions being:

- Mining—up 89 grants (10.2 per cent) on the 872 grants in 2018–19
- Health Care and Social Assistance—down 98 grants (2.3 per cent) on the 4191 grants in 2018–19.

[2] These figures excludes the defunct Subclass 457 Independent Executives visa (17 grants in 2010–11), and may thus differ from other published data.

In 2019–20, the top three nominated occupations accounted for 14.2 per cent of primary Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment) visa applications granted. These were:

1. Software Engineer—1487 grants (5.2 per cent)
2. ICT Business Analyst—1286 grants (4.5 per cent)[3]
3. Resident Medical Officer—1268 grants (4.5 per cent).

Overall, more than three-quarters (77.2 per cent) of primary Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment) visas granted in 2019–20, were granted to applicants who had previously held a visa—21,934 grants.

Collectively, the top three categories, where a visa was previously held, accounted for 58.6 per cent of primary visa grants in 2019–20, namely:

1. Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment)—7595 grants (26.7 per cent)
2. Visitor—5628 grants (19.8 per cent)
3. Working Holiday Maker—3427 grants (12.1 per cent).

In 2019–20, of the 28,414 visas granted to primary applicants, 14,272 were granted to a person already in Australia. By last visa held, the top three categories accounted for more than three-quarters (78.5 per cent) of primary Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment) visas granted in Australia in 2019–20. These were:

1. Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment)—6573 grants (46.1 per cent)
2. Working Holiday Maker—3040 grants (21.3 per cent)
3. Student—1590 grants (11.1 per cent).

Post study work—Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485) grants

In 2019–20, there were 63,016 Temporary Graduate visas granted.[4] This was a decrease of 1.5 per cent on the 63,994 granted the previous year.

Collectively, nationals of the top three countries accounted for 61.5 per cent of Temporary Graduate visa grants in 2019–20, namely:

1. India—19,662 grants (31.2 per cent)
2. People's Republic of China—10,065 grants (16.0 per cent)
3. Nepal—9048 grants (14.4 per cent).

Growth in Temporary Graduate visa grants in 2019–20, was mainly due to nationals of:

- Nepal—up 1515 grants (20.1 per cent) on the 7533 grants in 2018–19
- Sri Lanka—up 300 grants (17.0 per cent) on the 1766 grants in 2018–19.

Of the 63,016 visas granted in 2019–20, 54,021 were in the Post-Study Work stream and 8982 were in the Graduate Work stream. There has been strong growth in the Post-Study work stream since 2015–16, whereas the Graduate Work stream has been trending down.

[3] ICT—Information and Communication Technology.
[4] A temporary visa (only available to recently graduated international students) that includes work rights.

Visa non-compliance

In 2019–20, there were 59,237 visa cancellations, an increase of 8.4 per cent on the 54,656 visa cancellations in 2018–19.[5] More than two-thirds (68.3 per cent) of visa cancellations in 2019–20, were either Student visas (38.3 per cent) or temporary resident visas (30.0 per cent).

Non-citizens who do not hold a valid visa and do not make arrangements to depart Australia are subject to removal. There were 10,501 departures (returns and removals) from Australia in 2019–20—down significantly on the 12,977 departures in 2018–19.[6] The majority of assisted or managed departures were for those that arrived on a Visitor visa (42.4 per cent) or those that arrived on a Student visa (24.4 per cent).

Australian citizenship

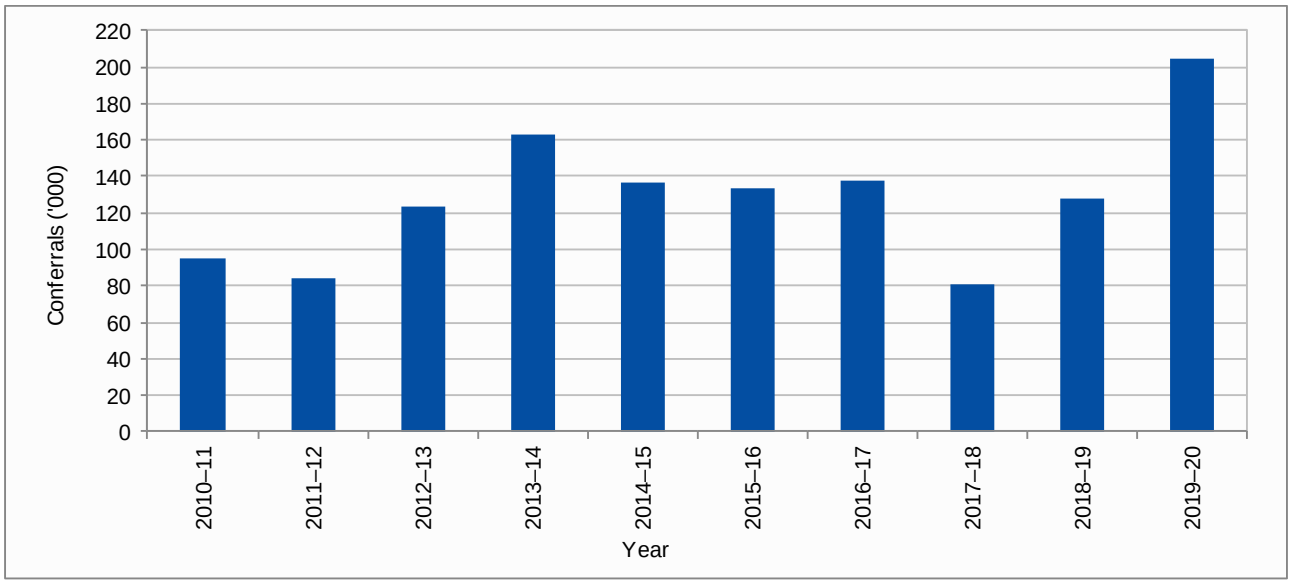
In 2019–20, there were 204,817 people conferred Australian citizenship, an increase of 60.4 per cent on the 127,674 conferrals in 2018–19.

Collectively, the top three countries of former citizenship accounted for 38.1 per cent of all conferrals in 2019–20. These were:

1. India—38,209 conferrals (18.7 per cent)
2. United Kingdom—25,018 conferrals (12.2 per cent)[7]
3. People's Republic of China—14,764 conferrals (7.2 per cent).[8]

Strengthened identity and integrity measures have contributed to the variability in conferrals across program years (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Conferrals of Australian citizenship, 2010–11 to 2019–20



Source data: Department of Home Affairs

[5] A large proportion of visa cancellations are voluntary, with non-citizens requesting cancellation of their temporary visa. For example, when a person holding a Temporary Work visa has departed Australia at the end of their contract and no longer requires their visa or is seeking to access their superannuation entitlements accrued while working in Australia.

[6] Figures may differ from those previously published due to revisions undertaken at the commencement of the program year.

[7] Includes Isle of Man.

[8] Excludes Special Administrative Regions.

Net overseas migration and population growth

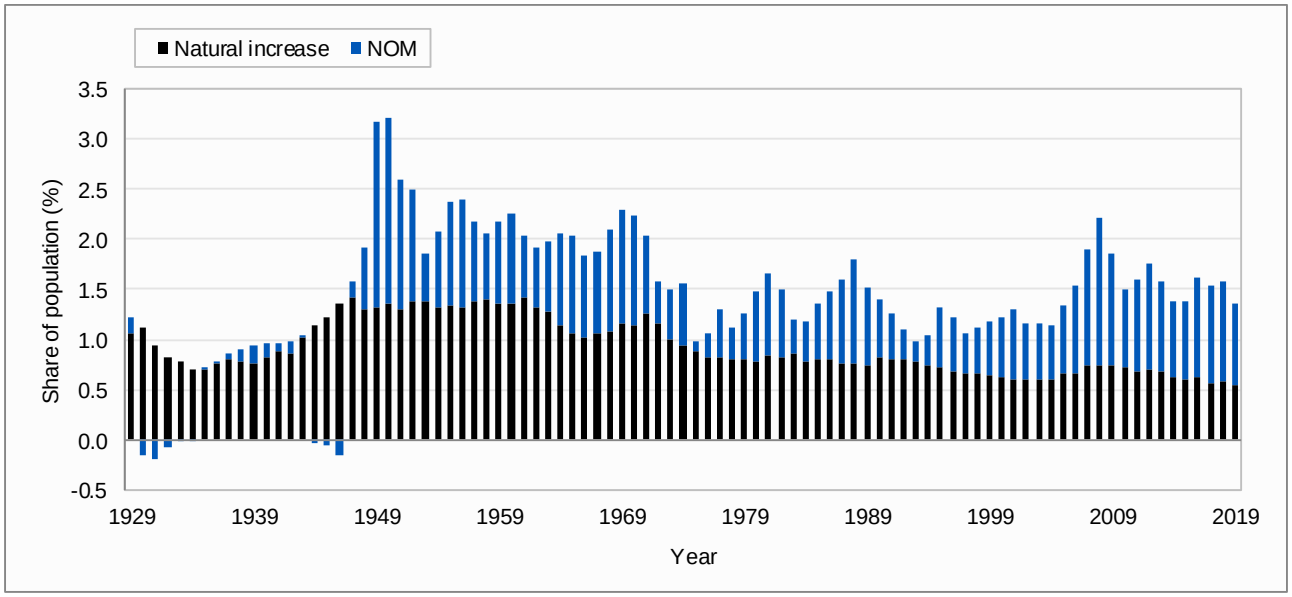
Population growth in Australia is driven by two components: natural increase and net overseas migration (NOM). Natural increase measures the excess of births over deaths. NOM is a measure of the net gain or loss of population through migration into and from Australia.[9] The main determinants of changes in NOM are the annual number of arrivals and departures of migrants on temporary visas, and Australia's planned permanent migration programs (Migration Program and Humanitarian Program).

Since 2005, NOM has continued to account for more than half the increase in Australia's population each year (Figure 2). In 2019, the ABS estimate of preliminary NOM was down 16.5 per cent on 2018, to 210,700 people, and accounted for 60.2 per cent of the increase in the population in 2019. In the decade to December 2019, NOM accounted for 58.9 per cent of the 3.7 million increase in the population to 25.5 million people. Consequently, the share of Australia's overseas-born population rose from 26.4 per cent (June 2009) to 29.7 per cent (June 2019).[10]

As shown in Figure 2, NOM's share of population, reached its peak in the first few years that followed the end of World War II, and in 1949 was 1.9 per cent. By 1975, the share of population had fallen to 0.1 per cent. NOM peaked for the year ending December 2008 at 315,700 people, a population share of 1.5 per cent, by comparison, NOM's share of population for 2019 was 0.8 per cent.

An analysis of NOM over the 10 year period for the year ending December 2010, to the year ending December 2019, identified that NOM was largely affected by rapid increases in international student numbers (since 2012) and more recently Visitors (since 2016).

Figure 2: Components of Australia's population growth as a share of population, 1929 to 2019



Source data: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016, Historical population and ABS, 2019, National, state and territory population.

[9] NOM is based on an international traveller's duration of stay (this includes Australian citizens, permanent residents and long-term visitors). Specifically, those international travellers who have been in Australia for at least 12 months out of the past 16 months. The requirement for migrants counted under NOM to have resided in (or been absent from) Australia for a certain length of time, enables NOM to form part of annual estimates of population—officially measured as the 'estimated resident population' by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

[10] Latest data available at time of this report is, as at June 2019: ABS, Migration, Australia.

Labour market outcomes

The importance of migration in our labour market

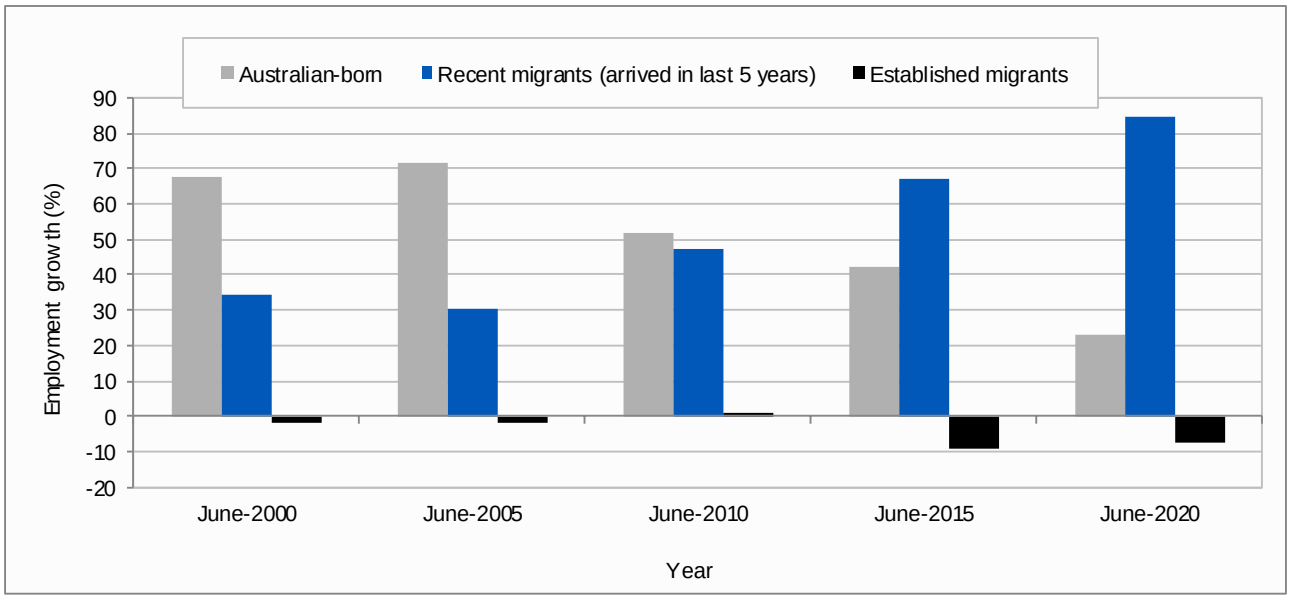
Migration is an important component of workforce growth, with new migrants the main contributors to employment growth in the Australian workforce. Over the past two decades, migration has increasingly underpinned employment growth.

In the five years leading up to June 2000, new migrants (those who arrived in the preceding five years) accounted for a low of just 34.4 per cent of total growth in jobs, whereas Australian-born accounted for 67.4 per cent and established migrants -1.8 per cent (that is, their exiting of the workforce pulled employment growth down). Since then the impact of newly arriving migrants on growth in jobs has increased.

At June 2020, Australia's workforce stood at 12.4 million, which was 5.3 per cent more than five years earlier in June 2015. New migrants accounted for 84.7 per cent of these additional jobs, whereas Australian-born accounted for 22.9 per cent and the established migrant cohort's contribution detracted 7.6 per cent (through exiting the workforce) (Figure 3).

Between June 2019 and June 2020, employment fell by 505,200, and in terms of absolute numbers, Australian-born were disproportionately affected by this decline (despite their unemployment rate increasing by less than that for migrants—see Section: *Outcomes of Australia's migrant population stock*, below). Australian-born accounted for 65.0 per cent of this decrease in employment, whereas new migrants accounted for 24.5 per cent and established migrants 10.5 per cent (not depicted in Figure 3).

Figure 3: Contribution of migration to employment growth, June 2000 to June 2020



Source data: ABS, July 2020, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, LM7 cube

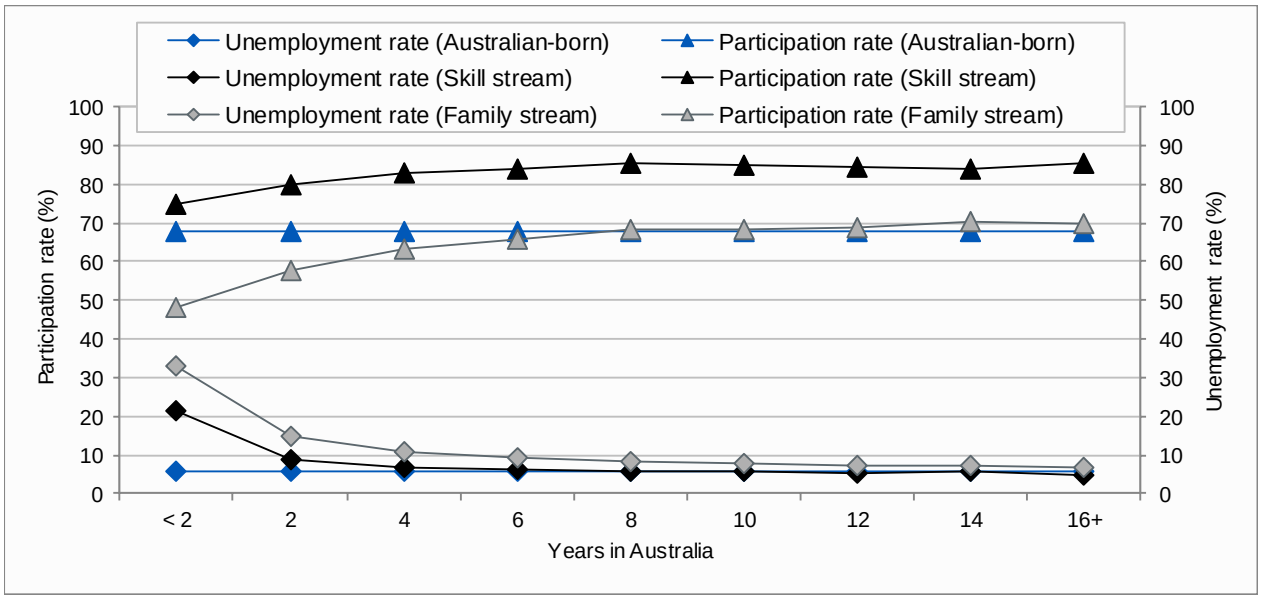
One of the main reasons new migrants make a strong contribution to workforce growth is their overall numbers entering the workforce. In absolute terms, the effect of ageing on the Australian-born population means that in the decade to June 2020, the net increase of recent migrants in the workforce was 12 times that of the Australia-born population—four-fold more than in the preceding decade to June 2010.

In addition, new migrants have high rates of employment, which further adds to the impact they have on workforce growth. This is despite the offsetting factor, that it takes some time for new migrants to settle into the Australian labour market, and for their participation rate and unemployment rate to improve.

These changes are more pronounced for migrants selected on the basis of their skills and qualifications (Skill stream migrants as opposed to Family stream migrants) (Figure 4). Based on labour market outcomes at the time of the 2016 Census (of primary and secondary visa holders combined):

- the most recent of arrivals (those who arrived between 2015 and August 2016) had potentially not yet adjusted to the labour market, and had a high unemployment rate:
  - 21.3 per cent for Skill stream migrants
  - 32.8 per cent for Family stream migrants.
- unemployment rates and participation rates improve rapidly in the first few years of living in Australia, and then more slowly, with improvements in:
  - unemployment rate of:
    - 14.5 percentage points for Skill stream migrants in the first 4 years, and a further 1.2 percentage points over the following 10 years
    - 22.1 percentage points for Family stream migrants in the first 4 years, and a further 3.6 percentage points in the following 10 years.
  - participation rate of:
    - 8.4 percentage points for Skill stream migrants in the first 4 years, and a further 0.9 percentage points over the following 10 years
    - 15.0 percentage points for Family stream migrants in the first 4 years, and a further 7.3 percentage points in the following 10 years.

Figure 4: Unemployment and participation rates at the time of the 2016 Census, by time in Australia



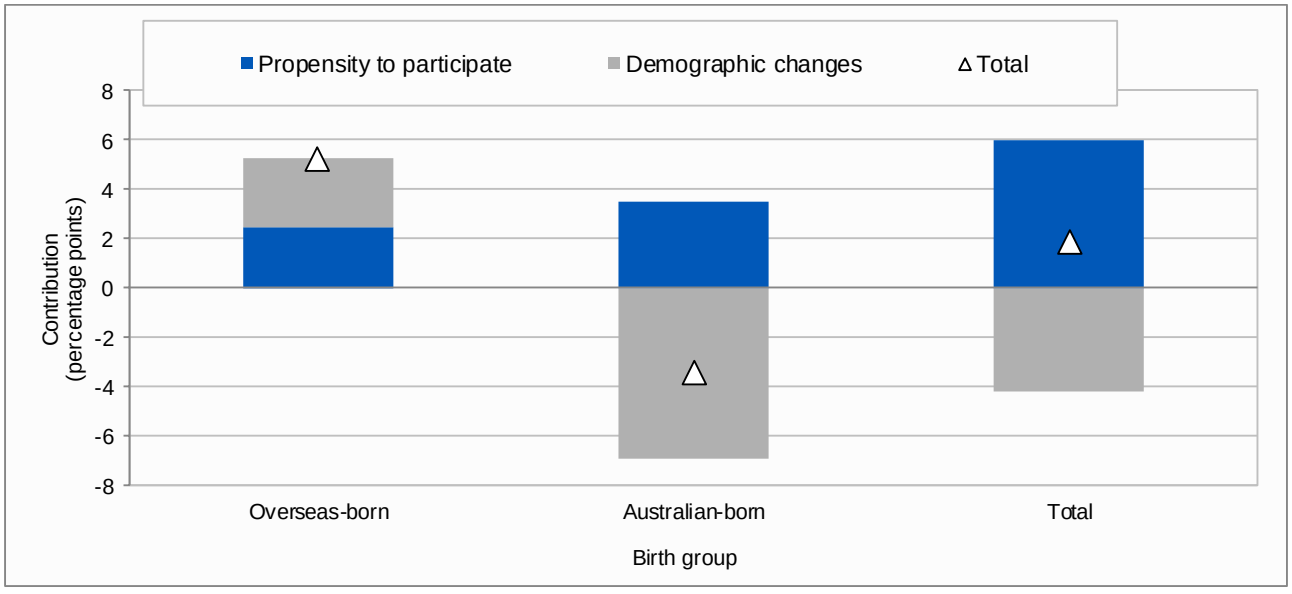
Source data: ABS, Australian Census and Migrants Integrated Dataset, 2016

The influence of migration on the demographic composition of Australia is what underpins its impact on the Australian labour market, with changes in this demographic composition largely reflected by the ageing of the population. For example, between 2000–01 and 2019–20, the annual average labour force participation rate for Australia increased by 1.8 percentage points as a result of a combination of the following (Figure 5):

- Migrants **added** 5.2 points—2.7 points added due to the effects of young migrants entering the workforce, and 2.5 points added due to an increase in propensity to work, comprised of:
  - Females added 3.1 points—1.4 points due to a decrease in average age, and 1.8 points due to an overall increase in propensity to work
  - Males added 2.1 points—1.4 points due to a decrease in average age, and 0.7 points due to an overall increase in propensity to work.
- Australia-born **deducted** 3.4 points—6.9 points deducted due to the effects of an ageing population, and 3.5 points added due to an increase in propensity to work, comprised of:
  - Females deducted 0.4 points—3.4 points deducted due to an increase in average age, and 3.0 points added due to an increase in propensity to work
  - Males deducted 3.0 points—3.5 points deducted due to an increase in average age, and 0.5 points added due to an overall increase in propensity to work.

It can therefore be seen that, overall, migration bolstered Australia's labour force participation rate through new migrants attaining rates well in excess of the resident population.

Figure 5: Contributions to change in the labour force participation rate, between 2000–01 and 2019–20



Source data: ABS, July 2020, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, LM5 cube

Outcomes of Australia's migrant population stock

The COVID-19 pandemic during 2020 has had a significant impact on Australia's labour market outcomes. At 30 June 2020, the migrant unemployment rate in Australia was 7.7 per cent (based on three-month averages). This was 1.2 percentage points higher than the Australian-born rate of 6.5 per cent. By comparison, at 30 June 2019, the unemployment rate for migrants in Australia was 5.4 per cent (2.3 points lower than the previous year) and the Australian-born 5.0 per cent (1.5 points lower than the previous year). Not since 2002 have unemployment rates been this high in Australia, and from mid-2012 (after the Global Financial Crisis) the unemployment rates of migrants and Australian-born have been in close alignment (Figure 6).

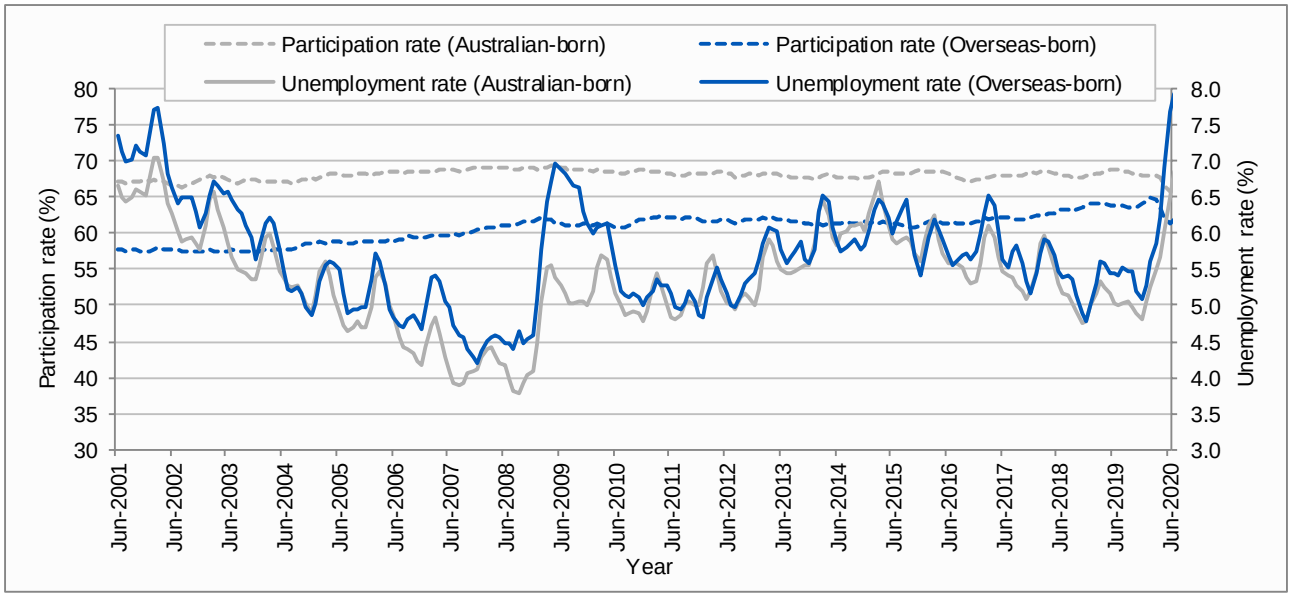
Figure 6 also shows that the labour force participation rate of Australia's migrants is consistently lower than that of the Australian-born (but converging) with a gap of 4.2 percentage points at June 2020 (61.4 per cent compared to 65.6 per cent). This difference is largely attributed to the impact of age on labour force participation, with the median age of Australia's migrant population at June 2019, being 9.4 years older than that of the Australian-born (43.3 years compared to 33.9 years, respectively).[11]

While this gap in labour force participation is substantial, new migrants are, on average, younger than the Australian population and arriving through either the Skill stream or temporary work visas—both of these visas types have very high rates for participation in the labour force. These have had the combined effect of:

- increasing labour force participation among migrants
- reducing the proportion of migrants of retirement age, relative to that of the Australian-born population of retirement age.

For example, in 2009, 17.9 per cent of Australia's migrants were aged 65 years and over, compared with just 11.7 per cent of the Australian-born, a difference of 6.2 percentage points. By 2019, these proportions had converged to 19.9 per cent and 14.2 per cent respectively, a difference of 5.7 percentage points.[12]

Figure 6: Unemployment and participations rates by birth group, June 2001 to June 2020



Source data: ABS, July 2020, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, LM7 cube (three-month averages)

[11] ABS, April 2020, Migration, Australia.
[12] ABS, April 2020, Migration, Australia, ABS STAT.

Outcomes for recently arrived Skill stream and Family stream migrants

The Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants

The Department of Home Affairs' Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants (CSAM) examines labour market and other settlement outcomes of recently arrived Skill stream and Family stream migrants of Australia's permanent Migration Program.

The analysis in this section is limited to primary applicants from the CSAM, who settled in Australia between January and July 2017, and is based on an introductory survey at their six-month settlement period (conducted in November 2017) and follow-up survey at their 18-month settlement period (conducted in November 2018). It focuses on employment levels, earnings and the skill level at which the migrant is employed.

Employment outcomes of recent migrants

Skill stream migrants

Between the six-month and 18-month stages of settlement, Skilled Migrants (that is, primary applicant migrants of the Skill stream) demonstrated improved employment outcomes. These improvements are well above any change in the labour market outcomes of the Australian general population over this same 12-month period.[13] These employment outcomes included:

- employment to population ratio—up 5.4 percentage points; from 88.9 per cent to 94.3 per cent (compared to an increase of 0.4 points for the general population to 62.3 per cent)
- unemployment rate—down 4.5 percentage points; from 7.0 per cent to 2.5 per cent (compared to a fall of 0.4 points for the general population to 5.0 per cent)
- labour force participation rate—up 1.1 percentage points; from 95.6 per cent to 96.7 per cent (compared to an increase of 0.1 points for the general population to 65.6 per cent)
- median annual full-time earnings—up $9,000; from $69,000 to $78,000 (compared to an increase of $1,700 for the general population—being $76,300)[14]
- highly skilled employment to population ratio—up 3.5 percentage points; from 64.3 per cent to 67.8 per cent.[15]

[13] Employment Outcome figures for Australian civilian population aged 15 years and over sourced from ABS, Labour Force, Australia, November 2019 release (data presented is for November 2017 and November 2018 for comparison with the CSAM survey of migrants at their six-month and 18-month stages of settlement). Earnings figures for Australian employees sourced from ABS, Employee Earnings and Hours, May 2018 (data presented is for May 2016 for 'At six months' and May 2018 for 'At 18 months').

[14] Increase over 12 months of $1,700 in median annual income for the general population obtained from a $3,400 increase over a two-year period (May 2016 to May 2018)—the closest dates to the survey for which data is available.

[15] In this report a migrant's level of employment is defined based on their working in occupations defined in the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO), namely:

- highly skilled employment if ANZSCO skill level 1 or 2, which requires an Associate Degree, Advanced Diploma or Diploma level qualification, or higher
- semi-skilled employment if ANZSCO skill level 3 or 4, which requires Certificate III or IV level qualification
- low skilled employment if ANZSCO skill level 5, which requires Certificate I or II level qualification, or lower.

Family stream (Partner visa) migrants

Partner Migrants (primary applicants from the Partner visa category of the Family stream) also reported improved employment outcomes between the two surveys. This included:

- employment to population ratio—up 3.9 percentage points, from 65.8 per cent to 69.6 per cent (7.3 points above that for the general population of 62.3 per cent)
- unemployment rate—down 5.7 percentage points, from 14.8 per cent to 9.1 per cent (4.1 points above that for the general population of 5.0 per cent)
- median annual full-time earnings—up $3,000; from $52,000 to $55,000.

Despite these improvements, their employment outcomes remained below that of the general population, in particular, in terms of their unemployment rate (9.1 per cent compared to 5.0 per cent) and median annual full-time earnings ($55,000 compared to $76,300).