Australia's Migration Trends 2012–13 at a glance

Introduction

Australia is very much a migrant country. An extensive indigenous history has been followed by the arrival of people from all corners of the globe for over two centuries now. These population flows have resulted in a derivative, and yet incredibly unique national identity that continues to evolve. Beyond issues of national identity, migration remains as a key policy area that has numerous and far reaching impacts for society, the labour market, and the economy more generally. Migration policy also plays a significant role in reuniting families and allowing Australia to meet its international humanitarian obligations.

Australia's Migration Trends 2012–13 is an annual publication providing a detailed collection of information and statistics about the department's initiatives and activities. This document provides a brief overview of the publication's main findings.

The full version of *Australia's Migration Trends* can be accessed via www.immi.gov.au.

Changes in migration

- The online skilled migration selection register, SkillSelect was introduced in July 2012. SkillSelect allows Australia to invite the best and brightest migrants by facilitating their ranking and selection on the basis of their qualifications, work experience and language abilities.
- The Business Skills Programme was replaced by the Business Innovation and Investment Programme in July 2012. This new programme has reduced the number of visa subclasses from 13 to three, and operates as a niche category within Australia's Skilled Migration Programme. Part of this rethink has involved the introduction of the Significant Investor visa, which was made available in November 2012. This subclass features reduced visa requirements and targets potential candidates that are willing to invest at least $5 million into the Australian economy.
- The department's visa simplification project is an initiative designed to reduce the number of visas, simplify the visa application process, and improve programme integrity. So far, there has been a reduction in the number of visas on offer within the Skilled visa, Temporary Work visa, and Visitor visa programmes.
- The department has implemented or addressed 38 of the 41 recommendations from the Strategic Review of the Student Visa Programme. This includes the introduction of streamlined visa processing, where eligible students, regardless of their country of origin, are assessed as though they are lower risk and have reduced evidentiary requirements.
- In August 2012, the government at the time announced that Australia's Humanitarian Programme would be increased to 20 000 places in 2012–13. This followed the release of the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Asylum seekers. Among the report's recommendations were:
    - applying a 'no advantage' principle to ensure that no benefit is gained through circumventing regular migration arrangements
    - advancing co-operation on asylum issues with Indonesia and Malaysia
    - improving regional processing capacity by re-establishing facilities in Nauru and Papua New Guinea.
- On 18 September 2013, the newly elected coalition government implemented the military-led Operation Sovereign Borders. This was in response to the sustained increase in the flow of illegal boat arrivals to Australia. The Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) is specifically involved with the offshore detention and returns portion of the operation.

Australia's Population

Migration continues to be the major component of population growth in Australia. Between June 1996 and June 2013, Australia's overseas-born population grew by 51.2 per cent to 6.4 million people.

Table 1: Main birthplaces of our migrants

Country of birth	Estimated resident population at 30 June 2013
United Kingdom	1 222 570
New Zealand	608 820
People's Republic of China	427 590
India	369 680
Vietnam	215 460
Other countries	3 567 270
Total	6 411 390

Source: ABS Migration, Australia (3412.0)

The substantial growth in overseas-born residents is changing Australia's ethnic composition. In the past 17 years the number of China-born Australian residents has more than tripled to 427 590 people. This rate of growth was surpassed by India-born residents, which increased more than fourfold to 369 680 people over the same period.

Since September 2005 net overseas migration (NOM) has exceeded natural increase. For the year ending March 2013, preliminary NOM accounted for 60.0 per cent of total population growth, or 238 300 people.

The Migration Programme

The Migration Programme is the main pathway to permanent residence in Australia. It has two main categories—the Family Stream which enables the migration of immediate family members and the Skill Stream, which targets migrants who have the skills, proven entrepreneurial ability or outstanding capabilities that will contribute to the Australian economy.

In 2012–13, the Migration Programme delivered 190 000 places. Of these, 128 973 places went to Skill Stream migrants, and 60 185 places went to Family Stream applicants. The remaining 842 places were for Special Eligibility. The Skill Stream has been the main provider of new migrants to Australia since 1997–98, delivering 67.9 per cent of total Migration Programme places in 2012-13.

India, the People's Republic of China and the United Kingdom were the top three source countries of new migrants for the second year running. Together, they comprised 46.9 per cent of total Migration Programme places in 2012–13. Of note is the significant rise in the number of places taken by those born in India, increasing from 21 768 places in 2010–11 to 40 051 places in 2012–13.

Table 2: Main source countries of Australia's Migration Programme

Citizenship	Migration Programme visa places 2012–13
India	40 051
People's Republic of China	27 334
United Kingdom	21 711
Philippines	10 639
South Africa	5 476
Other countries	84 789
Total	190 000

Source data: Migration Reporting, DIBP

The planning level for the 2013–14 Migration Programme has remained at 190 000 places, with a small amount of variation in the component streams.

New Zealanders in Australia

In 2012–13, 2599 New Zealand citizens were granted a permanent visa through Australia's Migration Programme.

However, a more common migration pathway for New Zealanders wishing to settle in Australia is the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement. Under this arrangement, citizens of New Zealand can enter and leave Australia freely and live in Australia indefinitely.

In 2012-13, 41 230 New Zealand citizens came to Australia under the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement, a decrease of 7.0 per cent on the previous year. Despite this reduction, New Zealand remained the largest source of new migrants to Australia in 2012–13.

The Humanitarian Programme

Australia's Humanitarian Programme has both an offshore resettlement component and onshore protection component. The former being for people outside of Australia who are in need of humanitarian assistance, and the latter being for people who have already arrived and require their asylum claims to be assessed while they remain onshore.

In 2012–13 a total of 20 019 visas were issued under the programme. This represents a substantial increase on the 13 749 visas that were granted in 2011–12. Of these, 12 515 (62.5 per cent) were granted under the offshore resettlement component, while 7504 (37.5 per cent) were granted as part of the onshore protection portion of the programme.

The onshore component of the programme comprises people seeking protection who were either illegal maritime arrivals (IMAs), or people who arrived by air (non-IMAs).

A total of 18 119 requests by people who arrived by sea were screened into a refugee status determination process in 2012–13, reflecting significant growth in illegal maritime arrivals. The top citizenships were, as in previous years, Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Stateless persons, Sri Lanka and Iraq.

Temporary entry

Depending on the purpose and duration of their visit, people can come to Australia on either a Visitor visa or a temporary resident visa. Visitor visas are mostly used by people visiting Australia for holidays, tourism, recreation, or to see family and friends. Temporary resident visas are designed for specific purposes such as study, working holidays or other specialist activities that are of benefit to Australia.

Table 3: Visitor and temporary resident visas issued

Category	Grants 2012–13
Visitors[1]	3 728 879
Working Holiday Makers	258 248
Students	259 278
Temporary Work (Skilled)[2]	126 350
Temporary Graduate	35 223
Other temporary visas[3]	45 944
Total	4 453 922

Source data: Visa Reporting, DIBP

1. Visitor visas are reported as offshore grants only and exclude a small number where the client is onshore.

2. Excludes subclass 457 Independent Executive—numbers are rounded to the nearest 10.

3. Excludes Bridging visas.

The Working Holiday Maker (WHM) Programme is a cultural exchange programme, which enhances people-to-people links and furthers Australia's social, cultural and international relations with arrangement countries. Both subclasses that constitute the programme continued to grow strongly. For instance, there were 249 231 Working Holiday (subclass 417) visas granted in 2012–13. This represented an increase of 16.1 per cent on the previous year and is the highest number on record.

In 2012–13, 259 278 visas were granted to international students. This represents a slight increase on the previous year, though notably, is still lower than the peak year of 2008–09 when 319 632 visas were granted. The decrease in Student visa numbers in 2009–10, and again in 2010–11, was preceded by 11 consecutive years of growth in the programme.

Grants of the Temporary Work (Skilled) (subclass 457) visa – formerly known as the Temporary Business (Long Stay) (subclass 457) visa – increased 1.0 per cent in 2012–13, from 125 070 to 126 350 places. Despite this small increase, several of the top 10 countries experienced a substantial fall, including South Africa, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom. The fall among nationals from the United Kingdom meant that for the first time they were not the top source country, supplanted by India with 27 210 grants.

Labour market outcomes for migrants

Migrants in Australia have very similar levels of unemployment to the Australian-born population. Their unemployment rate was 5.9 per cent at June 2013, which is only slightly higher than the figure of 5.7 per cent for people born in Australia. However, migrants have a higher participation rate which has the effect of lifting the overall labour force participation rate for Australia. This is largely due to the younger and more educated profile of recent migrants.

According to the department's Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants, recently arrived skilled migrants have strong employment outcomes. One year after entering Australia (or after being granted a visa if already in Australia on a temporary visa), skilled migrants had an unemployment rate of just 2 per cent.

In addition, the participation rate for skilled migrants over the survey period was 96 per cent – far higher than the national rate of 67 per cent. These migrants are also more likely to be in a skilled occupation and have a higher full-time income than the typical Australian. This is to be expected given that they are often recruited into highly skilled positions.

Multiculturalism in Australia

The People of Australia multicultural policy celebrates and values the benefits of cultural diversity for all Australians in the broader context of national unity, community harmony and maintenance of the country's democratic values. Part of this policy involves the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy that was launched in August 2012. This initiative seeks to promote an understanding of racism within the Australian community, and facilitate ways for it to be prevented and reduced.

In November 2011, an independent panel undertook an inquiry into the responsiveness of Australian Government services to Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse population. In March 2013, all 20 recommendations delivered by the panel were supported under a strengthened Multicultural Access and Equity Policy.

The independent, non-partisan Australian Multicultural Council continues to provide advice to government. This includes partnering in the development and implementation of the National Anti-Racism Strategy, and acting as an independent review and oversight body for the whole-of-government Agency Multicultural Plans.

Throughout 2013, the council conducted a series of community consultations across Australia to begin developing an evidence base for the development of a policy statement on social cohesion.

Settlement services

In 2012–13, 15 827 people were assisted under the Humanitarian Settlement Services Programme, an increase of 9.1 per cent on the previous year. Services are tailored and packaged to meet the needs of each client.

The Australian Government provides eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants with free English language tuition through the Adult Migrant English Programme. These services were provided to 59 754 clients in 2012–13.

In 2012–13, Translating and Interpreting Services National provided over one million telephone interpreting services, and 72 512 on-site interpreting services.

Citizenship

The promotion of Australian citizenship and the rights and responsibilities it entails is an ongoing priority of the Australian Government. In 2012–13, 123 438 people were conferred as Australian citizens, which represents an increase of 46.6 per cent on the previous year.

The United Kingdom remained the largest provider of new citizens to Australia with 20 478 conferrals. They are followed closely by India with 19 217 conferrals.