



Policy Notes

PPCEUMI Policy Brief 1: Pathways to Integration in Australia

1. Comparing Integration Policy

The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) provides a cross-national comparative measure of integration policies using 167 policy indicators across 8 domains to map the opportunities for migrants to participate in society. The most recent MIPEX survey is for 2014 with the next survey due in 2019.

In MIPEX 2014 Australia was ranked 8th and Germany 10th, with the most significant differences between the two countries recorded in:

- > Education (+29.6 to Australia)
- > Health (+23.9 to Australia)
- > Anti-discrimination (+16.1 to Australia)
- > Labour market mobility (+28.3 to Germany)

In Education, both countries were similar in access and language teaching policies, however, Australian policies were seen as more effective at targeting migrant needs, adapting general curricula to reflect diversity and to harnessing the new educational opportunities created by immigration, such as immigrant languages, cultures, diverse classrooms, and parental outreach for the benefit of all pupils.

In Health, Australia was seen as having better policies to assist immigrants in accessing their health entitlements and in making their health services responsive to migrant needs. Both countries were seen as similar in their anti-discrimination legislation, however, Australia was described as having stronger enforcement mechanisms and equality policies.

In the labour market, Germany was seen as having more effective policies that enabled migrants to improve their skills and qualifications and provided more targeted support to migrant workers.

Authors: Associate Professor Laurence Brown and Tanya Sim, The Australian National University.

This Policy Note is the part of the Jean Monnet Erasmus+ network: Policy, Politics, Culture: EU Migration and Integration (PPCEUMI).

<http://bit.ly/PPCEUMI>

Given the significant changes to migration policies in both countries since MIPEX 2014, it is likely that Australia's advantage on Education and Health will be downgraded due to new restrictions on migrant access to social services. The 2014 MIPEX was based on evaluations completed before the Australian budgets of 2014 and 2015 that made substantial cuts to cultural programmes, funding for multicultural community organisations, education, workplace language learning, and employment training.

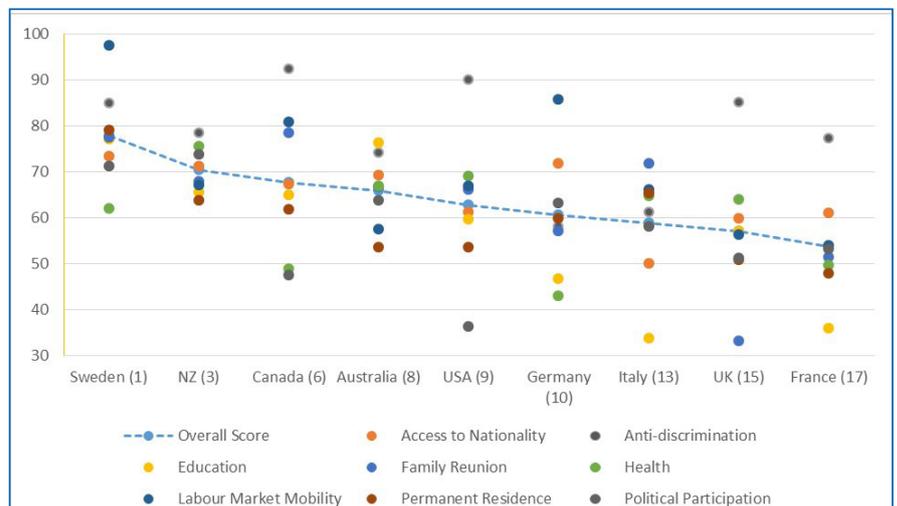


Figure 1: MIPEX 2014

2. Immigration and Social Cohesion in Australia

The Scanlon Foundation has completed 10 national surveys between 2007 and 2017 on public perceptions of social cohesion in Australia. Its findings have been very influential with Australian policymakers and show that:

- > There are consistently high levels of support for the proposition that ‘multiculturalism has been good for Australia’ (between 84% and 86% in 2013–15), although the figure decreased to 75% in the 2017 survey.
- > The majority of the respondents see integration as a two-way process of change – with 60% to 66% in 2016–17 agreeing with both propositions of ‘we should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in the country’ and that ‘people who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians’.
- > Only a quarter of the population supports permanent residence for asylum seekers arriving by boat to Australia, 31% support providing temporary residence, 9% support detaining and returning asylum seekers, and 33% support the turn-back of boats carrying asylum seekers.
- > Reported experiences of discrimination based on ‘skin colour, ethnic origin or religion’ has gone from 9% in 2007 to 20% in 2017.

Polls conducted by the Guardian in 2018 also indicate that Australian voters are evenly split on whether asylum seekers currently held in detention in Nauru should be allowed entry to Australia, with 40% supporting the idea and 39% opposing the idea.

Public opinion polls make a strong distinction between the legitimacy of refugee resettlement programmes through UNHCR (75% support in the 2012 Scanlon survey) and maritime arrivals by asylum seekers who tended to be seen as illegal immigrants (by 69% of respondents in a 2010 Red Cross survey).

Between 2002 and 2008, under 5% of asylum applicants arrived as irregular migrants by sea. Between 2009 and 2014 this share increased to 43–68% of asylum applicants. Only for the period 2011–13 were irregular maritime arrivals the majority of applicants for refugee status in Australia. Although maritime arrivals have been the focus for public and policy debate, they are far more likely to be eligible for asylum (70% between 2001 and 2008) than those arriving by air (45%). Of the asylum seekers still held in Papua New Guinea and Nauru, 78–88% of them have been found to be refugees as of February 2018.

3. Economic Pathways to Integration

There are major challenges for refugees in entering the Australian labour market, reflected in the significant gap in income levels and their over-representation in self-employment. The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated the median income of employees in Australia during 2015–16 as \$47,692, whereas for those migrants who had entered on humanitarian visas their median income was \$34,000. In terms of self-employment, migrants on humanitarian visas had a higher median income (\$15,716) than that of the Australian population as a whole (\$10,960). Self-employment is often celebrated as a product of migrant initiative, but can also be a product of their marginalization in the labour market.

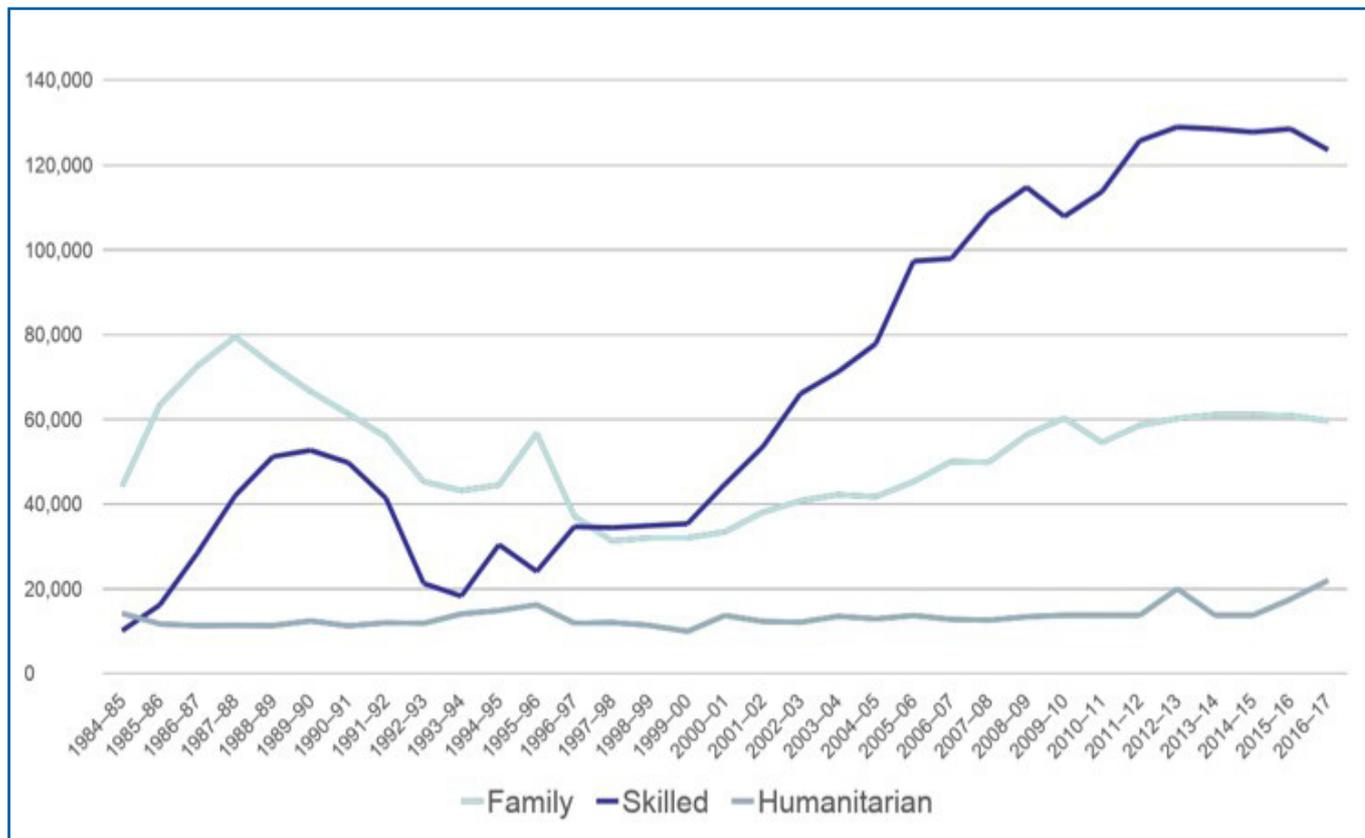


Figure 2: Changing Composition of Australia’s Migration Program – Visa grants 1984–2017

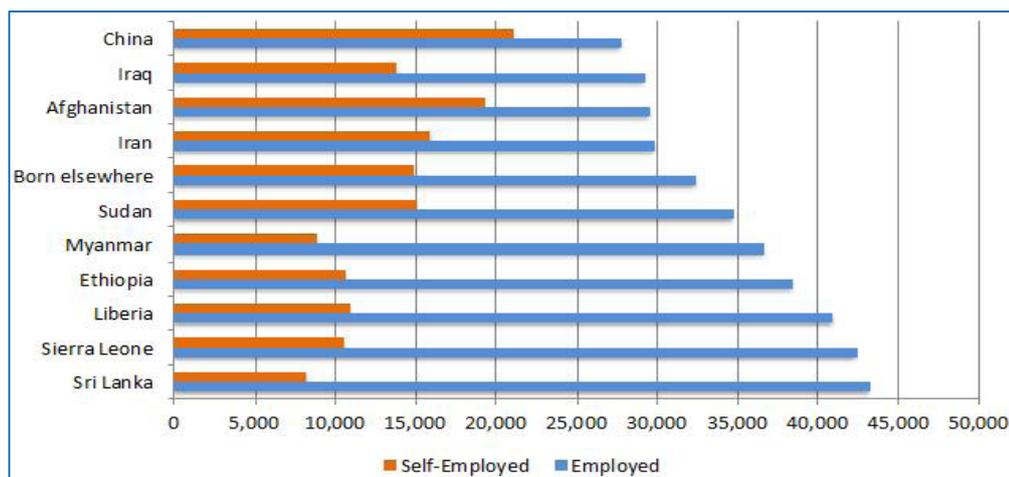


Figure 3: Median personal income of migrants on humanitarian visas, by selected country of birth, 2014

In response to concerns about the concentrated settlement of refugees in Sydney and Melbourne, the Department of Immigration from 2003 adopted a policy of dispersal: ‘where appropriate, unlinked refugees arriving in Australia will be directed to parts of regional Australia in order to address the demand for less skilled labour in regional economies and to assist humanitarian entrants to achieve early employment’.

However, the majority of refugees are still resettled in the cities, though there are some early successful settlement experiments in regional townships in NSW (Mingoola) and Victoria (Nhill).

Dispersal made significant contributions to some regional economies through supplying workers for low-skilled employment in agriculture and rural industries. Afghani and Iraqi refugees were employed in abattoirs, poultry plants and in fruit picking in rural NSW and Victoria.

However, other groups reported increased experiences of discrimination, disruption of social networks and difficulties obtaining employment suitable for higher-level skills or professional qualifications.

4. Australia’s Changing Migration Mix

Over the past 25 years, Australia has taken in an average of 13,778 refugees per year. While these numbers have remained relatively stable, other forms of permanent immigration (skilled and family visas) have tripled during the same period from 65,000 to 180,000 per year.

In 2017 it was estimated that there were 2,071,514 migrants in Australia on temporary visas, equivalent to 8% of the country’s population. More than half (55%) of these temporary visa holders came from just four countries: New Zealand, the UK, China and India. While some of these temporary visas such as student visas provide pathways to permanent settlement, there are nearly 19,000 asylum seekers in Australia on temporary bridging visas who face significant restrictions on employment, education and access to social services.

Since 2012, the population of migrants holding temporary visas in Australia has increased by 23%, while those in the country on bridging visas as they apply to move between visa pathways has increased during the same period by 43%.



Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Policy, Politics, Culture: EU Migration and Integration network (PPCEUMI)

PPCEUMI is concerned with the analysis of policy and governance reforms based on explorations of existing EU approaches and the experiences of third countries such as the USA, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. It provides a comprehensive avenue to improve the EU and its member states’ implementation of best practice. Policy- and solution-oriented, PPCEUMI focuses on the immediate period of pre- and point-of-arrival of migrants, as well as the longer term process of integration.

PPCEUMI welcomes interested academic members wishing to participate in network activities or publications. For further information, visit <http://bit.ly/PPCEUMI> or email europe@anu.edu.au



CONTACT US

**The Australian National University
Centre for European Studies (ANUCES)**

1 Liversidge Street, Building #67C
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

Professor Jacqueline Lo, ANUCES Executive Director
T +61 2 6125 9896
E europa@anu.edu.au
W <http://ces.anu.edu.au>

CRICOS Provider #00120C