Mapping Social Cohesion

THE SCANLON FOUNDATION SURVEYS

2019

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE SCANLON FOUNDATION SURVEYS

This report presents the findings of the twelfth Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion national survey, conducted in July-August 2019. The report builds on the knowledge gained through the eleven earlier national surveys (2007, 2009-18), which provide the context for interpretation. In addition to the national surveys, local area and minority group surveys have been conducted by the Scanlon Foundation, in total twenty-one surveys with close to 50,000 respondents. **For the first time in Australian social research, these surveys enable annual tracking of public opinion on social cohesion, immigration and population issues.** The Foundation's social cohesion project also tracks the findings of Australian and international surveys.

The first five surveys were randomly generated samples of households with landline telephones. Since 2013, in recognition of the rapid increase in mobile phone usage, the survey has employed a dual-frame sample comprising both landline and mobile phone numbers. Furthermore, in addition to the interviewer administered telephone survey, in 2018 and 2019 the full questionnaire was also administered on the probability-based Life in Australia™ panel, on which the majority of participants self-complete the survey online.

To our knowledge this is the first major survey on social cohesion conducted simultaneously in interviewer administered and self-administered modes. While the Scanlon Foundation continues to explore a range of survey methodologies, it does so in the knowledge that there is no perfect method for conducting surveys, rather each methodology has advantages and disadvantages.

The 2019 telephone administered survey was conducted from 1 July to 6 August, the panel survey from 8 to 22 July. The survey has grown to comprise 90 questions (65 substantive and 25 demographic), including eighteen questions that are used for calculation of the Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion.

The comprehensive questionnaire enables a nuanced understanding of public opinion, in contrast with survey findings based on just one or a small number of questions which are typically commissioned for the media. The interviewer administered version of the 2019 survey was completed by 1,500 respondents, the Life in Australia™ panel by 2,033, a total of 3,533.

DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The Scanlon Foundation surveys have been conducted during a period of sustained population growth and increasing cultural and ethnic diversity.

Australia's population has increased by almost 5.6 million since 2006, from 19.9 million in 2006 to 23.4 million in 2016 and to **an estimated 25.5 million in March 2019.**

The estimate by the Australian Bureau of Statistics is on the basis that one person is born every 1 minute 46 seconds, one death occurs every 3 minutes and 19 seconds, one person arrives to live in Australia every 59 seconds, and one Australian resident leaves to live overseas every 1 minute and 24 seconds.

Population growth has been uneven across Australia. For the year to March 2019 growth was fastest in Victoria, where the population grew by 2.1% (2.2% in 2017-18), followed by Queensland at 1.8% (1.7%), and New South Wales 1.4% (1.4%). Growth was slower in Tasmania at 1.2% (1.1%), Western Australia 1.0% (0.8%), and South Australia 0.9% (0.7%).

In 2016 the overseas-born residents of Australia totalled 6.87 million, comprising 28% of the population, **the highest overseas-born proportion in OECD countries** with populations in excess of ten million. In addition, 21% of the Australia-born population have one or both parents born overseas, so that in 2016 half the population was either first or second generation.

A high proportion of the overseas-born in live in capital cities: 83% in 2016, compared to 61% of all Australia-born.

Australia's immigrants are **increasingly drawn from the Asian region**: in 2017-18, of permanent additions to the population 33,310 were born in India, 25,145 in China, and 13,654 in the United Kingdom.

Indicative of the growing diversity of the population, members of faith groups other than Christian increased from 1.1 million to over 2 million from 2006 to 2016. Over this period, those who identify as Muslim increased from 340,400 to 604,200, Buddhist from 418,800 to 563,700, and Hindu from 148,100 to 440,300.

Changes in Australian immigration policy since the early 1990s have provided enhanced opportunities for entry on long-stay visas. In recent years **the numbers entering on long-term visas**, primarily comprising overseas students, business visa holders, and working holiday makers, have **exceeded permanent entrants**, and the temporary resident population, excluding visitors, is more than 1.7 million.

THE NATIONAL MOOD

Much public discussion is focused on problems facing the country and deterioration in the quality of life. It is feared that Australia is heading into recession, democracy is failing, public trust in politicians is at an all-time low, the immigration intake is at an unstainable level, the growth in infrastructure is not keeping pace with the increased population, and the world is facing a human induced climate change catastrophe.

In contrast with this negative outlook, the annual Scanlon Foundation surveys find much evidence of stability (or complacency), although there is decline in some indicators.

THE SCANLON MONASH INDEX

One indication is provided by the Scanlon Monash Index (SMI), which aggregates response to 18 questions. It measures attitudes within the five domains which conceptualise social cohesion: belonging, worth, social justice, political participation, and acceptance/rejection.

Over the course of the twelve national surveys, the SMI registered the highest level of volatility in the period of the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments: between 2009 and 2010 the Index fell from 101.2 to 92.6. The SMI stabilised at close to that level in 2011 and 2012, before registering a further fall in 2013 to 88.5. It has been **close to the 2013 level in six of the last seven years.** It was at 89.7 in 2018, at 89.6 in 2019, although in 2019 **decline was registered in the domains of belonging and worth, which were both at the lowest levels recorded**.

RANKING OF ISSUES

Since 2011, the first question in the survey has been open-ended. It asks, before respondents understand the issues to be covered, 'What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?' The value of an open-ended question is that it leaves it to respondents to specify issues, rather than requiring selection from a pre-determined and limited list. An open-ended approach necessarily produces a broad range of responses.

There has been **a large measure of stability in responses. In each survey the economy has ranked as the most important issue.** In 2019, of the 15 issues nominated by at least 1% of respondents, 13 obtained a result that was either identical or within two percentage points of the result in 2018.

But **in 2019 there were two major changes** in the ranking. Concern over the **environment and climate change recorded the equal largest annual increase since the surveys began**, up from 10% in 2018 to 19%.

The second issue recording significant change is **quality of government and political leadership,** which was consistently prominent until 2018, specified by 12%-15% of respondents between 2011 and 2014 and 9%-11% between 2015-18. In 2019 it was specified by a lower 6%.

GLOBALISATION AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Australia's **openness to the world** was considered in a question first included in the 2018 survey and again in 2019. Respondents are asked if 'growing economic ties between Australia and other countries, sometimes referred to as globalisation', is good or bad for the country. In 2019, **71% indicated that it was good**, 22% that it was bad.

From a list of four countries, **China was seen as Australia's most important economic partner**, indicated by 58%, ahead of United States of America at 19% and the United Kingdom at 7%. **Respondents expected that over the next decade China's influence would increase relative to other countries, but only 28% agreed that China would 'do the right thing regarding Australia's economic interests.'**

SHORT TERM CHANGE: 2017-19

The survey questions on a range of social cohesion indicators have consistently obtained a high level of positive response. Thus, questions concerned with sense of belonging, identification with Australia, and life satisfaction, obtain positive response from more than 85% of respondents. **There has been little short-term change in the pattern of response**: the response to some questions show slight downward movement, others are stable, while some trend marginally upward.

When asked 'To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?', 92% in 2017 and 90% in 2019 responded to a 'great' or 'moderate' extent.

In response to a question on level of happiness over the last year, 86% in 2017 and 84% in 2019 indicated that they had been 'very happy' or 'happy.'

Asked if they are 'optimistic or pessimistic about Australia's future,' 60% in 2017 and 62% in 2019 indicated that they were 'very optimistic' or 'optimistic.'

DEMOCRACY

Within the western world there is a frequently articulated view that democracy is facing significant challenges and there is **questioning of public faith in democracy.** The discussion in Australia of dissatisfaction with political leadership typifies the mood in North America and Europe.

The 2019 Scanlon Foundation survey was conducted in July-August, following the May election which saw the return of the Coalition government. As noted, concern over the quality of government as the most important issue facing Australia was at the lowest level since the question was first asked in 2011. In 2017 it was nominated by 10%, in 2019 by 6%.

Trust in the federal government 'to do the right thing for the Australian people' has been at a low level since 2010, but the survey does not find further deterioration: it was at 28% in 2017, 30% in 2019.

The survey asks if 'the system of government we have in Australia works fine as it is, needs minor change, needs major change, or should be replaced.' The proportion who considered that Australian democracy 'works fine' or 'needs minor change' was 57% in 2017, 58% in 2019.

IMMIGRATION

Immigration was a major political issue in 2018. A number of polls, variously worded, found majority support for a reduction in the intake, in the range 45%-54% in probability-based polls, 54%-72% in non-probability-based. The message from Prime Minister Morrison and Minister for Home Affairs Dutton was that the government had listened to public concern and responded by cutting the permanent intake.

The Scanlon Foundation surveys track attitude toward immigration with a question employed in Australian surveys for over fifty years; respondents are asked for their view of **'the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present',** with three response options, 'too high,' 'about right' and 'too low.'

In common with other survey findings, the proportion of the view that the intake is 'too high' increased in the Scanlon Foundation survey, from 34% in 2016, to 37% in 2017, and to 43% in 2018, although it remained a minority viewpoint**.**

In 2019, the proportion indicating 'too high' fell marginally to 41%. Recent polling by the Lowy Institute and the Essential Report has also registered lower negativity towards immigration.

While opinion on the current intake has fluctuated, general questions on immigration policy continue to obtain a large measure of positive response.

In the 2017 survey, 63% agreed or strongly agreed that 'accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger', 68% in 2019.

Since 2015, Scanlon Foundation surveys have tested the extent of support for immigration restriction, advocated by minor right-wing and populist parties and some independent candidates. Respondents are asked if they agree that in selection of immigrants it should be possible to discriminate on the grounds of race, ethnicity or religion.

There has been a large measure of consistency in majority rejection of this form of discrimination: in 2017, 80% disagreed with discrimination based on race or ethnicity, 81% in 2019; in 2017, 74% disagreed with discrimination based on religion, 79% in 2019.

While majority opinion is positive with regard to the immigration program, Scanlon Foundation surveys conducted between 2010 and 2015 found that it **does not support unregulated entry by asylum seekers,** with a peak of 24% in support of eligibility for permanent residence for boat arrivals.

A question introduced in the 2018 survey asked, **'Are you personally concerned that Australia is too harsh in its treatment of asylum seekers and refugees?' Opinion is almost evenly divided**, with 47% indicating concern in 2018, the same proportion 'only slightly' or 'not at all' concerned. The result in 2019 is almost identical, with 48% concerned, 47% not.

INTEGRATION

The Scanlon Foundation surveys find a **consistently high level of endorsement of multiculturalism.**

Since 2013, the surveys have asked for response to the proposition that 'multiculturalism has been good for Australia.' Agreement has been consistent, in the range 83%-86%. In 2019 it is at 85%.

But for the majority, multiculturalism involves two-way change, so that there has been endorsement of both the proposition that 'we should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country' and 'people who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians.'

Majority opinion **does not support government funding for immigrant cultural maintenance**. In response to the proposition that 'ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions', the majority consistently disagrees. Over the last five surveys, disagreement has been in the range 53%-58%, agreement in the range 34%-41%, in 2019 at the top of the range at 41%.

A new question in the 2019 survey asked for response to the proposition that 'Too many immigrants are not adopting Australian values'; 57% of respondents agreed.

Irrespective of the exact question wording, whether it is concerned with behaviour 'more like Australians', adopting Australian values, or funding for cultural maintenance, **majority opinion supports integration** in similar proportions, in a context is which there is also agreement that Australians should learn about immigrant cultures.

UNDERLYING CONCERNS

When a survey is administered by a trained interviewer, the personal interaction with the interviewee risks biasing responses. This risk is termed **Social Desirability Bias** and refers to the potential to provide responses that the interviewee believes are more socially desirable than responses that reflect a more truthful or accurate opinion. This form of bias is of particular importance in response to questions that deal with socially sensitive or controversial issues, such as attitudes to minorities.

An online questionnaire completed in privacy on a computer, or an anonymous printed questionnaire returned by mail, **can provide conditions under which a respondent feels greater freedom to disclose honest opinions on sensitive topics**. For some types of questions, the self-completion survey consistently produces a higher proportion of negative responses.

But self-completion may also lead to exaggerated, less carefully considered responses; such surveys may not adequately register the degree of **uncertainty and doubt** that exists in public opinion. Furthermore, there are problems in translating an interviewer administered survey into online or print form.

Analysis of the results obtained by the two modes of administration of the Scanlon Foundation surveys finds that there is only minor difference in opinion on the size of the immigration intake ('too high', 41% telephone, 41% online), negative view of globalisation (22%, 22%), and in the level of agreement that multiculturalism has been good for Australia (85%, 80%).

The largest difference is obtained in response to questions that relate to the respondent's own life, attitudes to ethnic or religious groups, and questions that consider the impact of immigration on quality of life. These differences are discussed throughout the report, although the Executive Summary, which is primarily concerned with the broad pattern of change over time, necessarily presents findings from the interviewer administered surveys which provide continuity of data over twelve years.

The higher proportion of negative responses in self-completion surveys is, however, noted as a potentially important qualification to the reports based on interviewer surveying which has been the principal means of administration of the Scanlon Foundation surveys.

A finding that was discussed in the 2018 report is **the level of negative feeling towards Muslims.** In the interviewer administered survey, negative sentiment towards Muslims has been in the range 21%-25%, in the self-completion version a much higher 39%-41%.

Further insight is provided by questions on the impact of immigration, which have been included in both survey modes in 2018 and 2019.

Consistent in both modes, the highest level of concern, in order, is indicated for the 'overcrowding in cities', the 'impact on house prices', government failure to 'manage population growth', and the 'impact on the environment'.

In the interviewer administered survey, majority negative opinion is obtained only for the question on overcrowding; in the self-completion survey, however, majority negative views are indicated for all four top ranked issues: overcrowding (70% in 2019), house prices (60%), government failure to 'manage population growth' (57%), and environmental impact (58%).

These findings highlight the extent of concern and potential for majority opinion to oppose current immigration levels. The annual tracking of opinion by the Scanlon Foundation survey indicates that this has not yet occurred, but the potential is evident.

LONG TERM PERSPECTIVE: 2007-19

The Scanlon Foundation surveys were begun with the knowledge that historically, immigration has been central to Australia's economic and social development, a contribution that was unlikely to diminish in the foreseeable future. The surveys sought to provide evidence to address **the critical question of Australia's ability to sustain the migration and social cohesion success of the post-war decades. The 2017 survey was interpreted as indicating a trend which, if continued over time, had the potential to threaten the ability to maintain that success.**

Considered in terms of agreement or disagreement, positive or negative, **there is evidence of deterioration between 2007 and 2017**. Thus:

- In 2007 16% of respondents disagreed with the proposition that Australia is a land of economic opportunity where hard work is rewarded, in 2017 a higher 21%.

- In 2007, 11% expected that their lives in three or four years would be worse, 19% in 2017.

- Indicative of rejection, reported experience of discrimination 'because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion' more than doubled, from 9% in 2007 to 20% in 2017.

- Regarding sense of personal safety, when respondents were asked if they were worried about becoming a victim of crime in their local area, 25% were worried in 2009, 35% in 2017.

- Trust in the federal government to do the right thing for the Australian people was at 39% in 2007, 28% in 2017

There has been some further **deterioration in response to some questions between 2017 and 2019, although for the present positive views continue to prevail and in large proportion**. As noted, 90% indicate a sense of belonging in Australia, 84% that they are happy, 82% expect that their lives in three or four years will be improved or unchanged, 68% agree that immigrants from many different countries make Australia stronger, 62% are optimistic about Australia's future.

There may, however, be a potential weakness in interpretation based on aggregated data, in which two levels of response (for example, (a) 'strongly agree' or 'agree' and (b) 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree') are combined. The **risk is that shift at the strongly held level may be masked by such aggregation**.

Change in strongly held views is indicated in response to a number of questions:

- 'To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?' Response 'to a great extent,' 77% in 2007, 67% in 2017, 63% in 2019.

- 'To what extent do you take pride in the Australian way of life and culture?' Response 'to a great extent,' 58% in 2007, 54% in 2017, 50% in 2019.

- 'Taking all things into consideration, would you say that over the last year you have been …' Response 'very happy,' 34% in 2007, 26% in 2017, 23% in 2019.

- 'In three or four years, do you think that your life in Australia will be …' Response 'much improved,' 24% in 2007, 18% in 2017, 17% in 2019.

- 'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger,' Response 'strongly disagree,' 8% in 2007, 13% in 2017, 12% in 2019.

A negative trend is thus evident between 2007 and 2017, with further deterioration between 2017 and 2019, in the range 0-4 percentage points. This form of close analysis brings to attention potentially important shifts in opinion that will need to be considered in the analysis of further surveys.

POPULATION SEGMENTS

Analysis of population segments highlights the extent of variation in attitudes across the community. This analysis requires disaggregation of the sample, which increases the margin of possible error. For this reason, data for 2018 and 2019 is combined and the analysis uses the Life in Australia™ survey, which at 4,293 respondents provides a larger sample than the interviewer administered version of the survey at 3,000.

The objective of this comparative analysis is to provide insight into different population segments. Here **two segments with relatively high levels of negative response are considered.**

Among those who indicate that they are 'struggling to pay bills' or are 'poor', there is a relatively high level of personal dissatisfaction. For ten questions considered, negative response is 17% higher than the average for all respondents. For example, a very high 56% indicated that they were 'very unhappy' or 'unhappy' over the last year, compared to 20% of all respondents in the Life in Australia™ survey 2018-19; 54% (33% all respondents) were 'very pessimistic' or 'pessimistic' for Australia's future: 14% (9%) were 'very worried' or 'worried' that they would lose their job in the next year or so; 65% (40%) considered that Australia's system of government 'should be replaced' or 'needs major change': and 72% (57%) agreed that 'you can't be too careful in dealing with people,' as distinct from 'most people can be trusted.'

Large variation from the average response was also evident among those intending to vote for Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party, with personal dissatisfaction 15% higher for the questions considered than for all survey respondents. A significantly lower proportion than those who are 'struggling to pay bills' or are 'poor' indicated that they were very unhappy or unhappy over the last year (29%) and fewer indicated concern they would lose their jobs (9%), but a high 63% (33% all respondents) were very pessimistic or pessimistic for Australia's future, 73% (40%) considered that Australia's system of government should be replaced or needs major change, and 78% (57%) agreed that 'you can't be too careful in dealing with people.'

While there are similarities in the indicators of dissatisfaction in the two groups, there are **marked differences in attitudes to immigration, cultural diversity and globalisation.** Among those 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor', the difference from all respondents is an average of just 6% for ten questions considered. Thus, 51% (43% all respondents) consider that the immigration intake is too high, 31% (21%) strongly disagree or disagree that multiculturalism has been good for Australia, 40% (40%) are very negative or negative towards Muslims, and 34% (23%) consider that globalisation is very bad or bad for Australia.

In contrast, **the average difference among One Nation supporters for the ten questions is 33%;** a very high 83% (43% all respondents) consider the immigration intake is too high, 65% (21%) disagree with the view that multiculturalism has been good for Australia, 77% (40%) are negative towards Muslims, and 47% (23%) consider globalisation to be bad for Australia.

One Nation attempts to reshape the national agenda, with prominent attention to immigration, cultural diversity and globalisation. **It seeks to validate its political stance by claiming to represents national opinion,** a claim typical of populist parties. The analysis presented in this report establishes the issues that appeal to its supporters – and **the extent to which their distinctive attitudes diverge from the mainstream.**

A REFERENCE POINT

The importance of the Scanlon Foundation surveys is again highlighted in this discussion of the 2019 findings. **The surveys continue to provide a reference point to understand pattern and extent of change, of the views held within the mainstream and within minorities**. They make possible the testing of claims about public opinion, for example the extent and nature of support for multiculturalism. The surveys of the Scanlon Foundation and other organisations, based on probability samples, provide for understanding of Australia at a time of continuing population growth and international political uncertainty.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The 2019 Scanlon Foundation national survey, is the twelfth in the series, following the benchmark survey in 2007 and annual surveys since 2009. In addition to the interviewer administered telephone survey, in 2019 for the second time the full questionnaire was also administered on the Life in Australia™ online panel.

SAMPLE 1: RANDOM DIGITAL DIALLING (RDD)

The first five surveys, between 2007-12, sampled households with landline telephones. **Since 2013 the survey has employed a dual-frame sample methodology** involving two separate sample frames; one drawn from random digit dialling (RDD) landline telephone numbers and a second drawn from randomly generated mobile phone numbers to achieve the 1,500 CATI surveys. Used for the first time in 2013, this approach meant the Social Cohesion Survey was able to include the views of the growing number of adults who do not have a landline telephone, now estimated at 43% of households.

As in past years, the Scanlon Foundation national survey was administered by the Social Research Centre. The RDD respondents were selected using the 'next birthday' method for landlines, for the person (over the age of 18) answering for the mobile component. In addition to English, respondents had the option of completing the survey in one of the six most commonly spoken community languages: Vietnamese, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Italian, Greek and Arabic. A total of 17 interviews were conducted in a language other than English.

The sample blend used for the main survey of 1,500 interviews was 40% landline numbers and 60% mobile phone numbers. Overall, 510 (34%) interviews were obtained with members of the mobile phone-only population – enough to draw statistically meaningful inferences about this group.

SAMPLE 2: LIFE IN AUSTRALIA™ PANEL (LinA)

In 2019 the full Scanlon Foundation survey was also administered on the Life in Australia™ (LinA) online panel. This follows the experimental administration of seven of the survey questions on the LinA panel in 2017 and of the full questionnaire in 2018.

The LinA panel, Australia's first national probability-based online panel, was established by the Social Research Centre in 2016. It is the most methodologically rigorous online panel in Australia.

LinA members were randomly recruited via their landline or mobile phone and paid $20 to join the panel. Unlike most other research panels, LinA includes people both with and without internet access. Those without internet access or those who are not comfortable completing surveys over the internet are able to complete surveys by telephone. LinA panellists are offered an incentive of $10, paid by gift voucher, deposit into a PayPal account or charitable donation. The 2019 LinA sample was obtained with 89% of surveys completed online and 11% by telephone.

REPORTING OF FINDINGS BY SURVEY MODE

In this report, where the requirement is to understand **trend of opinion over time**, the results of the interviewer administered survey are presented; where the focus is on **current opinion**, the findings of both modes are considered; for **sub-group analysis**, the data is drawn from the aggregated results of the 2018 and 2019 LinA surveys, which at 4,293 respondents provide a larger sample than the interviewer administered version of the survey at 3,000.

The abbreviations used to designate the two survey modes are

- RRD (Random Digital Dialling)
- LinA (Life in Australia panel).

SAMPLE SIZE

The RDD version of the survey was completed by 1,500 respondents, the LinA version by 2,033.

Between 2007-18, a total of 19,504 respondents completed the telephone administered survey, providing scope to interpret trends in Australian opinion on an annual basis. This wealth of data also makes possible, as indicated in this report, the aggregation of findings over several years to increase the reliability of sub-group analysis.

The sample base of the telephone administered Scanlon Foundation national surveys is expected to yield a maximum sampling error of ±2.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20. For sub-groups analysis, the margin of sampling error is larger.

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The 2019 national survey employed the questionnaire structure common to the 2007-18 surveys, including the eighteen questions required for calculation of the Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion. Each year there has been minor variation in the survey instrument.

In 2018 one workshop was held in Melbourne and one in Sydney to provide enhanced understanding of potential future developments. The workshops provided a systematic basis for selection of new questions to enable tracking of attitudinal change over coming years.

As a result of the workshop discussions, twelve substantive questions were added to the survey: they were individual questions on economic ties between Australia and other countries, life satisfaction, government management of population growth, seven questions on the impact of immigration, and two questions on treatment of asylum seekers. New demographic questions have also been added, to provide for enhanced weighting.

Fourteen substantive questions were deleted in 2018. They covered support or opposition to specific legislative changes, a life satisfaction question, eight questions on institutional trust, and two questions on interaction with people from ethnic groups or cultures different from the respondent's own.

Only minor changes were made to the 2019 questionnaire, with four deletions and six additions. The main change was the addition of three questions on Australia's foreign relations.

QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTRATION

The 2019 RDD survey was administered from 1 July to 6 August. It comprised 90 questions (65 substantive and 25 demographic) and took on average 21.8 minutes by landline and 21.4 by mobile. **The overall co-operation rate** (interviews/ interviews + refusals) **was 29.8% - 27.1% landline, 31.6% mobile.**

The **LinA survey** was administered from **8-22 July 2019**; online completion took 13.2 minutes; the RDD component 16.6 minutes. Of those invited to complete the survey, 77.6% did so. **Full details of surveying are provided in the technical report** available for download on the Mapping Australia's Population internet site.[1]

WEIGHTING OF SURVEY RESULTS

Survey data are weighted to adjust for the chance of being sampled in the survey and to bring the achieved respondent profile into line with Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) demographic indicators.

Raking techniques (also known as Rim Weighting or Iterative Proportional Fitting) were used to weight the data. The population benchmarks included in the weighting solution are: geographic location, gender, age by education, country of birth, and telephone status.

A two-stage weighting procedure was utilised, in part to provide for the use of dual-frame sampling. This involved calculating:

- A design weight to adjust for the varying chances of selection of sample members; and

- A post-stratification weight used to align the data with known population parameters.

Where possible, target proportions were taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics December 2017 Estimated Resident Population counts. The following variables were weighted: state, gender, age by education (university degree, not), country of birth (Australia/ English-speaking country - Canada , Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States, non-English speaking country), and telephone status (landline only, dual-user, mobile only).

The LinA survey was weighted using the following variables in the regression model: gender, state/rest of state, age/education, country of birth, telephone status, internet usage and frequency, number of adults in the household, number of landlines in the household, number of mobile phones owned by the respondent, volunteer status.

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[1] The Mapping Australia's Population is located at http://www.monash.edu/mapping-population

MODE EFFECT

Different modes of surveying, whether interviewer administered or self-completed, can produce different results. Each mode has benefits and drawbacks, discussed in greater detail in the Appendix to this report. There is no mode of surveying that fully measures public opinion and all findings need to be critically evaluated – the means of measurement used to estimate public opinion always has an impact.

Since 2010, online completion has been the dominant mode of data collection in the Australian commercial and social research industry. A number of commercial providers have recruited people willing to complete surveys on the internet for a small payment. There is, however, an issue of sample reliability for online surveying. **Most online panels worldwide are established via non-probability sampling**; anyone who becomes aware of an invitation to join a panel can do so.

The Scanlon Foundation online survey is conducted on Australia's first national probability-based panel. A **probability-based panel, such as Life in Australia™**, ensures sample reliability. Compared to an interviewer administered survey it is lower in cost and faster to complete. Conceptually, it has the potential to obtain more truthful responses.

When a survey is administered by a trained interviewer, the personal interaction with the interviewee risks biasing responses. This risk is termed '**Social Desirability Bias'** and refers to the potential to provide responses that the interviewee believes are more socially desirable than responses that reflect a true opinion. This form of bias is of particular importance in response to questions that deal with socially sensitive or controversial issues, such as attitudes to minorities. The Pew Research Centre in the United States has commented:

> The social interaction inherent in a telephone or in-person interview may exert subtle pressures on respondents that affect how they answer questions. … Respondents may feel a need to present themselves in a more positive light to an interviewer, leading to an overstatement of socially desirable behaviours and attitudes and an understatement of opinions and behaviours they fear would elicit disapproval from another person.[2]

However, **the conversion of questions from spoken to written form is not without problems.** While self-completion surveys lessen the risk of Social Desirability Bias, to some extent they **risk over simplifying the complexity of public opinion through limited choice options**. This occurs where mid-point, 'don't know' and 'decline to answer' responses are not readily apparent to the respondent.

In response to a question by an interviewer, a respondent is typically asked if she or he agrees or disagrees. If the response is agreement, then a follow up question may elicit if she or he strongly agrees or just agrees. But if uncertainty is indicated, the respondent may be informed that they have the option of indicating that they 'neither agree nor disagree' or indicate that they 'don't know' or can decline to answer. If the survey is completed online, immediate disclosure of the full range of response options may lead to a higher proportion of 'neither agree nor disagree' or 'don't know' or 'decline; responses.

A strategy to overcome this potential problem is to initially show only the 'agree' and 'disagree' options on the computer screen, and only indicate other response options if the respondent tries to move to the next question without providing an answer. This form of programming, regarded as best practice and which has been adopted by the Social Research Centre for its panel, has the potential to **under-estimate the level of uncertainty.**

An example is provided in the 2018 telephone administered version of the Scanlon Foundation survey, in which 20% of respondents indicated that they were uncertain who they would vote for if an election was to be held, in the online version just 4% indicated this response, which was only shown when the respondents attempted to move to the next question without providing an answer.

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[2] Pew Research Centre, Mode effects as a source of error in political surveys, 31 March 2017, https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/2017/03/31/appendix-b-mode-effects-as-a-source-of-error-in-political-surveys/

POPULATION GROWTH

Australia experienced above average population growth over the last decade.

Whereas **annual population growth** averaged 1.4% between 1970-2010, between 2006-09 annual growth averaged above 1.7%, with a peak of 2.1% in 2008-09. Since then annual growth has been in the range 1.4%-1.8%, and at an estimated **1.6% in the year to March 2019.**

Population growth is uneven across Australia. For the year to March 2019, Victoria's population grew by 2.1% (2.2% in the year to June 2018), Queensland 1.8% (1.7%), New South Wales 1.4% (1.4%), Tasmania 1.2% (1.1%), Western Australia 1.0% (0.8%), South Australia 0.9% (0.7%).

In 2018, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane together accounted for 51% of Australia's population, 67% of population growth, and 72% of net overseas migration.[3]

At the 2016 census, Australia's resident population was 23,401,892, an increase of 3,546,605 (17.9%) from the 2006 census.   The preliminary estimated resident population at March 2019 was 25,287,400. Over the year to March 2019, Australia's resident population increased by 388,800.

There are two components of population growth: natural increase and net overseas migration (NOM), which represents the net gain of immigrants arriving less emigrants departing. Between 1975 and 2005 natural increase accounted for 58% of population growth. Since 2006, net overseas migration has been the major component. **NOM accounted for 64% of growth in the year to March 2019**.[4]

Within the permanent immigration program, the main categories are Skill, Family and Humanitarian. **Skill is the largest category, in recent years more than double the Family category.** The program outcome for 2018-19 was 104,902 Skill stream places and 47,784 Family. There were 16,250 persons granted Humanitarian visas in 2017-18, 18,762 in 2018-19. Of the Humanitarian visas, 91% were offshore.

In 2018-19 the permanent intake under the Skill and Family streams at 163,000 was the lowest in more than a decade. The planning level for 2019-20 is 160,00, with 108,682 (69.5%) of places in the Skill stream and 47,732 (30.5%) in the Family stream.

A point often misunderstood in discussion of the immigration intake is that **a substantial proportion of those who gain permanent residence are already resident in Australia.** In the program outcome for 2018-19, 59% of permanent places in the Skill stream and 44% in the Family stream were allocated to residents.

In recent years the numbers entering on long-term visas, primarily comprising overseas students, business visa holders, and working holiday makers, have exceeded permanent entrants, a marked change from the previous emphasis on permanent immigration. Consistent with international definitions, a person is regarded by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as a migrant if they have been, or are expected to be, resident in Australia for 12 months or more, regardless of their citizenship, type of visa, or legal status.

Of the 539,000 people who migrated to Australia in 2017-18, 315,000 arrived on a temporary visa, including just over 150,000 international students, just over 50,000 working holiday makers, and 32,000 workers on temporary skill visas.

On 30 June 2019, those with resident status included 553,139 students (in June 2018, 486,934), 142,828 business visa holders (147,339), 135,263 working holiday makers (134,909), and 205,616 on various bridging visa categories (176,216).

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[3] Nick Parr, 'Government's population plan is more about maximising "win-wins" than cutting numbers,' *The Conversation*, 2 April 2019
[4] Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Demographic Statistics, March Quarter 2019, Catalogue No.3101.0 (19 Sept. 2019)

New Zealand passport holders are an additional entrant category. New Zealand citizens are able to live in Australia indefinitely and to work and study, provided they have no criminal convictions or health problems. But since 2001 those entering on the basis of their citizenship do not gain access to a number of welfare and educational entitlements, including student loans. To gain full entitlement, New Zealand citizens need to apply for and be accepted for a permanent visa under the migration program, or for those arriving between 2001 and 2016 meet an income threshold of $53,900 per annum over a five-year period. On 30 June 2019 there were 678,656 New Zealand Special Category Visa (444) holders resident in Australia, an increase of 5,460 in the year since June 2018.

Temporary residents in Australia numbered in excess of 2 million on 30 June 2019, compared to less than 1.3 million in 2007. Temporary residents represent close to 10% of the total adult resident population.

As evidence of **dynamic population movement in contemporary Australia**, during the year to March 2019 534,700 migrated to Australia, while 285,100, including Australian citizens and other permanent residents, left the country, resulting in net migration of 249,700 (238,000 in the year to March 2018).

During the same year, 400,900 people moved from one state to another. Queensland had the largest net gain of 23,300 from interstate migration; 107,470 people moved from another state or territory to Queensland and 84,200 moved interstate from Queensland. Other states to gain from interstate movement were Victoria (12,800) and Tasmania (2,300). New South Wales had a net loss of 22,000 people.[5]

Table 1: Components of population growth in Australia 2007-19

At 30 June	Natural increase '000	Net overseas migration '000	Growth on Previous year '000	Growth on Previous year %
2007	151.3	232.7	376.7	1.84
2008	154.4	277.3	421.6	2.02
2009	156.4	299.8	442.5	2.08
2010	162.5	196.1	340.1	1.57
2011	155.7	180.4	308.3	1.40
2012	158.9	231.9	393.4	1.76
2013	162.0	230.3	394.7	1.74
2014	157.0	187.8	347.6	1.50
2015	151.7	184.1	340.3	1.45
2016	154.4	206.3	374.9	1.57
2017	147.6	263.4	411.0	1.70
2018	142.6	236.8	379.5	1.54
2019 (March*)	139.1	249.7	388.8	1.56

*preliminary estimate

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics*, March quarter 2019, catalogue number 3101.0, Time Series Spreadsheets, Table 1 Population Change Summary (released 19 September 2019). Differences between growth on previous year and the sum of the components of population change are due to intercensal error (corrections derived from latest census data).

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[5] Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Demographic Statistics, March Quarter 2019, Catalogue No.3101.0 (19 Sept. 2019), Table 14

Figure 1: Components of annual population growth, 1999–2019
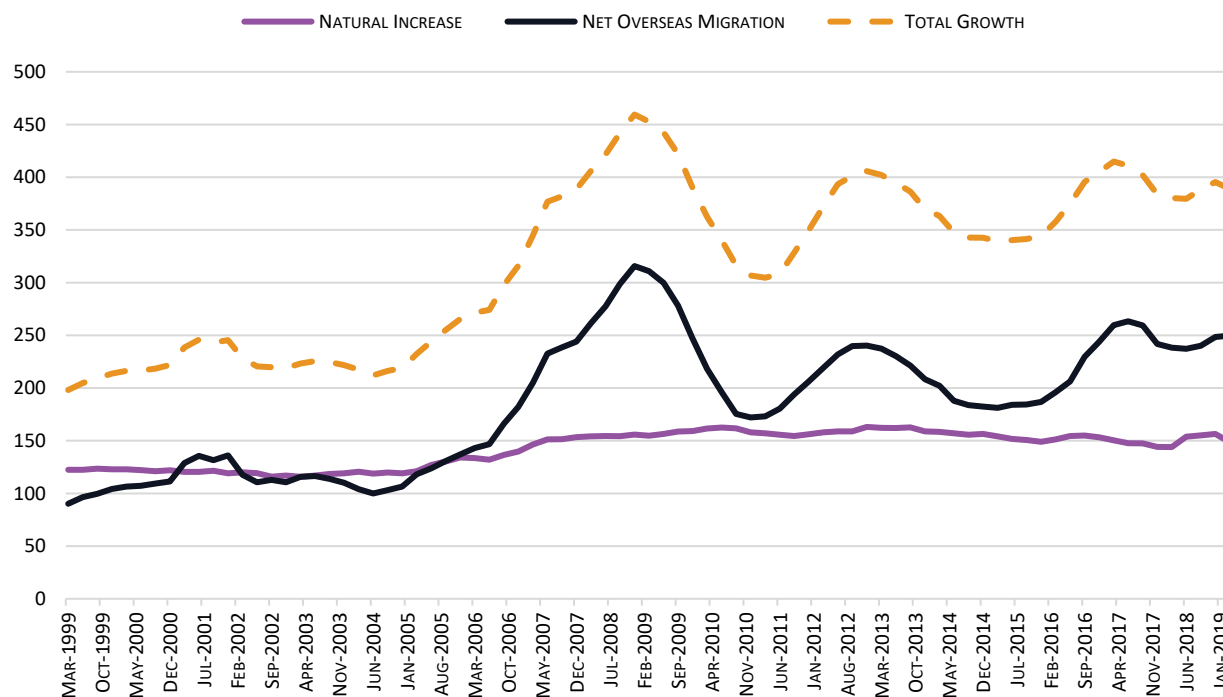
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics*, March quarter 2019, catalogue number 3101.0, Table 1 (released 19 September 2019)

Table 2: Australia, population growth by state, 2012-19 (percentage)

At 30 June	AUSTRALIA	VIC	NSW	QLD	WA	SA	TAS
2012	1.76	2.11	1.30	2.05	3.0	0.97	0.01
2013	1.74	2.15	1.37	1.84	2.53	0.89	0.10
2014	1.50	2.12	1.41	1.44	1.23	0.92	0.27
2015	1.45	2.16	1.44	1.23	0.92	0.81	0.29
2016	1.57	2.50	1.53	1.41	0.60	0.72	0.47
2017	1.70	2.40	1.75	1.70	0.71	0.65	0.95
2018	1.54	2.20	1.42	1.68	0.78	0.73	1.10
2019 (March*)	1.56	2.08	1.43	1.77	1.00	0.85	1.21

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics*, March quarter 2019, catalogue number 3101.0, Table 2 (released 19 September 2019)

Table 3: Permanent Migration Program by Family and Skill streams, 2012-13 to 2018-19

Year	FAMILY (excluding child)				SKILL			
	Onshore	Offshore	Total	% onshore	Onshore	Offshore	Total	% onshore
2012-13	20,708	44,681	65,389	32%	73,368	55,408	128,776	57%
2013-14	20,180	44,062	64,242	31%	75,221	53,523	128,744	58%
2014-15	20,446	40,494	60,940	34%	70,751	57,909	128,660	55%
2015-16	19,128	41,867	60,995	31%	74,126	52,631	126,774	58%
2016-17	22,975	38,057	61,032	38%	68,869	57,207	126,076	55%
2017-18	18,918	30,704	49,622	38%	55,853	51,251	107,104	52%
2018-19	20,958	26,826	47,784	44%	62,366	42,536	104,902	59%

Source: Data.gov.au, BP0024 Permanent additions to Australia's resident population, https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/permanent-additions-to-australia-s-resident-population. There are some inconsistencies in published and online statistics.

Figure 2: Permanent Migrant Programme by Family, Child and Humanitarian streams, 1997-98 to 2017-18
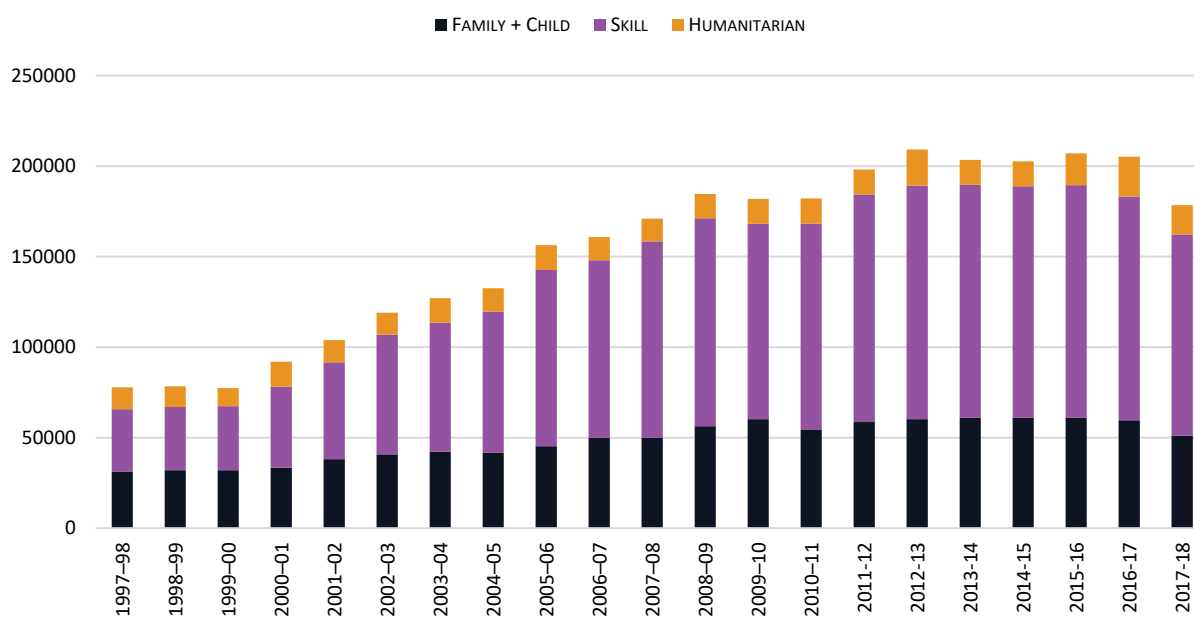
Source: Department of Home Affairs, Historical Migration Statistics, table 3.1 (released April 2019)

Table 4: Humanitarian Program visa grants 2006-07 to 2018-19

Year	Refugee	Special Humanitarian Program	Total Offshore	Onshore	Total	% Offshore
2006–07	5,924	5,157	11,081	1,707	12,788	87%
2007–08	5,951	4,721	10,672	1,932	12,604	85%
2008–09	6,446	4,471	10,917	2,495	13,412	81%
2009–10	5,988	3,234	9,222	4,535	13,757	67%
2010–11	5,998	2,973	8,971	4,828	13,799	65%
2011–12	6,004	714	6,718	7,041	13,759	49%
2012–13	12,012	503	12,515	7,504	20,019	63%
2013–14	6,501	4,515	11,016	2,752	13,768	80%
2014–15	6,002	5,007	11,009	2,747	13,756	80%
2015–16	8,284	7,268	15,552	2,003	17,555	89%
2016–17	9,653	10,604	20,257	1,711	21,968	92%
2017-18	7,909	6,916	14,825	1,425	16,250	91%
2018-19	9,451	7,661	17,112	1,650	18,762	91%

Source: Department of Home Affairs, Historical Migration Statistics, table 4.1 (released April 2019); Department of Home Affairs, Discussion Paper, Australia's Humanitarian Program 2019-20, p. 7; Department of Home Affairs, Australia's Offshore Humanitarian Program: 2018-19, p. 14; Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Onshore Humanitarian Program 2018-19

Table 5: Temporary entrants resident in Australia, main categories, 2012-19

At 30 June	Overseas students	Business temporary skilled	Working holiday makers	Bridging	Visitor	New Zealand citizens (special category 444 visa)
2012	307,045	162,273	136,593	113,863	202,228	646,093
2013	304,248	191,216	160,503	104,666	198,690	640,770
2014	339,761	195,083	151,201	94,625	200,731	649,085
2015	374,564	188,002	143,918	102,219	226,395	653,832
2016	401,423	170,585	137,376	119,368	262,445	660,182
2017	443,798	161,413	134,269	137,420	294,368	665,394
2018	486,934	147,339	134,909	176,216	304,140	673,198
2019	553,139	142,828	135,263	205,616	316,469	678,658

Source: Department of Home Affairs, Temporary entrants visa holders pivot table as at 30 June 2019, https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/temporary-entrants-visa-holders

COUNTRY OF BIRTH

Australia maintains a diverse immigration intake. In 2018-19 permanent additions to Australia's population included nationals of 1,000 or more from 29 countries.

Arrivals from India and China increased markedly over the decade to 2018; between 2007-08 and 2017-18, arrivals from India increased from 23,320 to 33,310; from China the increase was from 21,063 to 25,145. In contrast, arrivals from the United Kingdom decreased from 29,428 to 13,654.

Over the last thirty years, an increasing proportion of immigrants have been drawn from the Asian region. In 2017-18, of the top ten source countries, seven were in the Asian region, the exceptions being the United Kingdom, South Africa and the United States of America.

Of the estimated population in 2018, the leading overseas-born countries of birth were the United Kingdom (992,000), China (651,000), India (592,000), and New Zealand (568,000).

Table 6: Top 10 countries of birth of the overseas-born population, 2006, 2018 (estimate)

Country of birth	2006	2018	% (2018)
England	1,037,475	992,000	4.0
China	206,588	651,000	2.6
India	147,106	592,000	2.4
New Zealand	389,465	568,000	2.3
Philippines	120,540	278,000	1.1
Vietnam	159,850	256,000	1.0
South Africa	104,132	189,000	0.8
Italy	199,124	187,000	0.7
Malaysia	92,335	174,000	0.7
Scotland	130,206	135,000	0.5
Top 10 countries	2,586,821	4,022,000	16.1
All overseas-born	5,782,341	7,787,057	29.4
Australia-born	14,072,946	17,650,000	70.6

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census; ABS, 3412.0, Migration Australia, 2017-18

Table 7: Permanent additions to Australia's population by top ten countries country of birth, 2007-08; of citizenship, 2017-18

Country of birth	2007-08	2017-18	Difference
India	23,320	33,310	9,990
China	21,063	25,145	4,082
United Kingdom	29,428	13,654	-15,774
Philippines	6,956	10,610	3,654
Pakistan	1,737	6,235	4,498
Vietnam	2,921	5,124	2,203
South Africa	7,472	4,235	-3,237
Malaysia	5,001	3,205	-1,796
Nepal	900	3,067	2,167
United States of America	2,963	2,782	-181
Top 10 countries	103,772	107,367	3,595
All permanent additions	205,940	162,417	-43,523

Source: Department of Home Affairs, Historical Migration Statistics, tables 3.21 and 3.3 (released April 2019)

Figure 3: The permanent migration program outcome by stream and citizenship, 2006-18
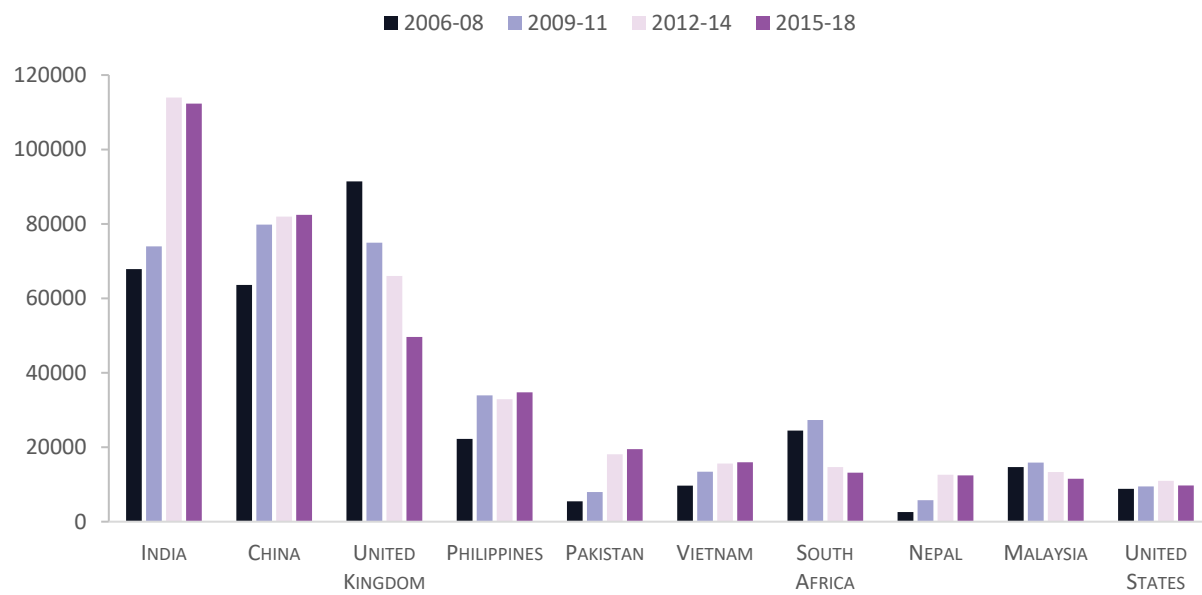
Legend: ■ 2006-08 ■ 2009-11 ■ 2012-14 ■ 2015-18

Source: Department of Home Affairs, Historical Migration Statistics, tables 3.21 and 3.3 (released April 2019)

ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

The 2016 Census indicates that 28% of the Australian population was born overseas, the highest proportion since the late nineteenth century. A further 21% of those born in Australia had at least one overseas-born parent.

There has been a gradual increase in the proportion overseas-born, from 23% in 2001 to 25% in 2006, and 27% in 2011. Between the 2006 and 2016 Census, the number born overseas has increased by 1,841,420 persons, from 5,031,630 to 6,873,050.

The 28% overseas-born ranks Australia first within the OECD among nations with populations over ten million. It compares with 20% overseas-born in Canada, 13% in Germany, 13% in the United States, 12% in the United Kingdom, and 12% in France. The average for the OECD is 12%.

A relatively high proportion of the overseas-born in Australia live in capital cities: 83% in 2016, compared to 61% of all Australia born and 67% of the total population. In 2016, the overseas-born comprised an estimated 37% of Sydney, 36% of the population of Perth, 34% of Melbourne, 26% of Adelaide, Brisbane, Darwin and ACT, and 14% of Hobart.

Within the capitals, the proportion of overseas-born is unevenly spread. In Sydney the highest concentrations are in the western region, in Melbourne in the west and south-east, and the extent of concentration has increased since 2006.

Sydney has higher concentrations of overseas born than Melbourne. In 2006, in 21% of Sydney Local Government Areas 40% or more of the population was overseas born, in Melbourne just half this proportion, 10%. By 2016, the proportion in Sydney had increased to 44%, in Melbourne to 17%.

At the lower level of aggregation of suburb, in 2016, 20% of Sydney's population and 10% of Melbourne's lived in a suburb in which at least half the population in overseas-born.

Birthplace statistics do not, however, indicate the full extent of religious, cultural and linguistic diversity in these regions, as country of birth does not capture the extent of diversity among the second generation, those born to immigrant parents. **A fuller insight is provided with reference to religious identification and languages spoken in the home.**

While the census provides the best indication of the **religions of the Australian population**, it is only a partial measure as religion is an optional question in the census, and a change in word-order of the census question meant that there was a break in the series (or lack of direct comparability) between 2016 and earlier censuses. **It is likely that the census undercounts adherents of many faith groups**, and this undercount increased in 2016.

As enumerated, the adherents of Christian faith groups remained largely constant at over 12 million between 2006 and 2016, while those indicating that they had no religion increased by 87% (from 3.7 million to 7 million), and **those of faith groups other than Christian increased by 84%, (from 1.1 million to 2 million).** The largest increases were among those of the Hindu faith, up 197% (from 148,100 to 440,300) and the Islamic faith, up 78% (from 340,400 to 604,200).

When considered at the Local Government Level, the enumerated main non-Christian faith groups increased between 2006 and 2016 in Canterbury-Bankstown (Sydney) from 66,590 to 99,686; in Greater Dandenong (Melbourne) from 31,110 to 49,082.

With regard to languages spoken in the home, in 2016, in the Sydney Local Government Area of Fairfield, which has a population of 198,800, 57% of the population is overseas-born, and only 10% have both parents born in Australia. In 74% of homes a language other than English is spoken and 27% identify with one of the three main non-Christian faith groups.

In the Melbourne Local Government Area of Greater Dandenong, of the population of 152,000, 62% were born overseas and just 12% have both parents born in Australia; 68% speak a language other than English in the home and 32% identify with a main non-Christian faith group.

Further detail on the extent of ethnic and religious diversity is provided in the 2017 Scanlon Foundation social cohesion report.

Table 8: Religious affiliation in Australia, 2006, 2016 at the Census

Religion	2006	2016	% increase/ decrease
CHRISTIAN			
Anglican	3,718,248	3,101,187	-16.6%
Roman Catholic	5,126,885	5,291,839	3.2%
Other	3,840,695	3,808,579	-0.8%
Total Christian	**12,685,828**	**12,201,605**	**-3.8%**
NON-CHRISTIAN			
Islam	340,392	604,244	77.5%
Buddhist	418,758	563,675	34.6%
Hinduism	148,125	440,303	197.3%
Judaism	88,831	91,023	2.5%
Other religions	109,026	221,593	103.2%
Total non-Christian	**1,105,124**	**2,027,844**	**83.5%**
No religion*	3,706,553	7,040,715	90.0%
Not stated	2,223,957	2,132,167	-4.1%

* In 2016 'no religion' was reclassified as 'Secular beliefs, other spiritual beliefs and no religious affiliation'.
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing, 2006 and 2016, TableBuilder

THE SCANLON–
MONASH INDEX (SMI)
OF SOCIAL COHESION

A nominal index of social cohesion, informed by the international literature on the subject, was developed using the 2007 national survey to provide its baseline data. The following questions were employed to construct the index for five domains of social cohesion:

Belonging: Indication of pride in the Australian way of life and culture; sense of belonging; importance of maintaining Australian way of life and culture.

Worth: Satisfaction with present financial situation and indication of happiness over the last year.

Social justice and equity: Views on the adequacy of financial support for people on low incomes; the gap between high and low incomes; Australia as a land of economic opportunity; trust in the Australian government.

Participation (political): Voted in an election; signed a petition; contacted a Member of Parliament; participated in a boycott; attended a protest.

Acceptance and rejection, legitimacy: The scale measures rejection, indicated by a negative view of immigration from many different countries; reported experience of discrimination in the last 12 months; disagreement with government support to ethnic minorities for maintenance of customs and traditions; feeling that life in three or four years will be worse.

After trialling several models, a procedure was adopted which draws attention to minor shifts in opinion and reported experience, rather than one which compresses or diminishes the impact of change by, for example, calculating the mean score for a set of responses.[6]

The purpose of the index is to heighten awareness of shifts in opinion which may call for closer attention and analysis.

The following discussion of the 2019 SMI is limited to the interviewer administered (RDD) survey, as the Index requires time series data to provide understanding of the trend of opinion. The Scanlon Foundation survey has been administered on the Life in Australian™ panel for only two years and does not yet provide the means to establish trend.

In 2019 the SMI is at 89.6, almost identical with 2018 (89.7), and close to the level of six of the last seven years, which averaged 89.2 index points.

The Index recorded the largest change between 2009 and 2010, when it fell sharply from 101.2 to 92.6. It stabilised at close to that level in 2011 and 2012, before registering a further fall in 2013 to 88.5. It has stabilised at close to that level, with the exception of 2015, when it rose by three Index points, to fall again in 2016.

The 2019 SMI registered higher scores in three of the five domains of social cohesion, and lower in two. The largest upward movement is 2.8 index points in the domain of acceptance/ rejection and 2.3 points in political participation. The largest downward change of 3.5 index points is in the domain of sense of worth and 3.1 in sense of belonging. The domain of social justice and equity saw a marginal increase of 0.7 Index points.

While it has increased since reaching a low point of 64.1 in 2017, the domain of acceptance/ rejection remains at the lowest point of the five domains, at 72.1 in 2019.

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[6] The nominal index scores the level of agreement (or disagreement in the index of rejection). The highest level of response (for example, 'strongly agree') is scored twice the value of the second level ('agree'). Responses within four of the five indexes are equalised; within the index of participation, activities requiring greater initiative (contacting a Member of Parliament, participating in a boycott, attending a protest) are accorded double the weight of the more passive activities of voting (compulsory in Australia) and signing a petition. See Andrew Markus and Jessica Arnup, *Mapping Social Cohesion 2009: The Scanlon Foundations Surveys Full Report* (2010), section 12

Table 9: The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) of Social Cohesion, 2007-19 (RDD)

DOMAIN	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Change 2018–19 (index points)
1. Sense of belonging	100	96.9	95.0	96.6	95.1	91.0	92.6	93.4	93.5	92.0	92.0	88.9	-3.1
2. Sense of worth	100	97.2	96.7	96.5	96.5	93.8	96.8	97.2	95.9	94.7	94.4	90.9	-3.5
3. Social justice and equity	100	112.4	91.9	94.4	95.1	98.0	93.7	90.6	91.7	87.5	92.4	93.1	0.7
4. Political participation	100	105.3	98.0	106.4	106.6	90.8	93.6	99.7	98.8	104.2	100.6	102.9	2.3
5. Acceptance (rejection)	100	94.4	81.5	75.3	78.6	68.8	70.9	81.6	66.6	64.1	69.3	72.1	2.8
AVERAGE	100	101.2	92.6	93.8	94.4	88.5	89.5	92.5	89.3	88.5	89.7	89.6	-0.1

Figure 4: The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) of Social Cohesion, average and selected domains, 2007-19 (RDD)
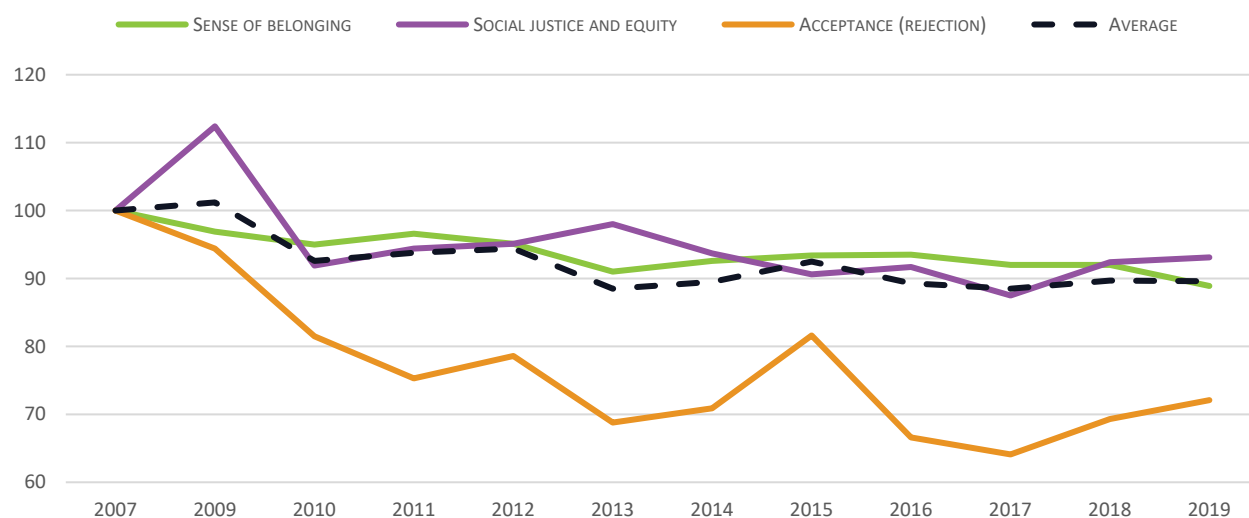
COMPONENTS OF THE SCANLON – MONASH INDEX

SMI 1: SENSE OF BELONGING

General questions relating to national life and levels of personal satisfaction continue to elicit the high levels of positive response that have been evident in Australian surveys over the last 20 years. While remaining at close to the high level of 90 index points, **in 2019, for the first time, the domain of belonging is at 88.9, the lowest level over the twelve Scanlon Foundation surveys.**

Sense of belonging ('great' and 'moderate'): 90% in 2019 and 2018, down from 94%-96% between 2007-12. The proportion indicating belonging 'to a great extent' has declined from a high point of 77% in 2007 and is at 63% in 2019.

Sense of pride in the Australian way of life and culture ('great' and 'moderate') indicated by 87% in 2019, down from 89% in 2015-18 and a high of 94% in 2007. Sense of pride 'to a great extent' dropped to 50% in 2019 from 55% in 2018.

Importance of maintaining the Australian way of life and culture ('strongly agree' and 'agree') was constant at 91% from 2010 to 2016, down from 93% in 2009 and 95% in 2007. **In 2017 it dropped to 87% and was at 88% in 2019**. There has been a marked shift in the balance between 'strong agreement' and 'agreement'; in 2019 'strong agreement' dropped from 58% in 2018 to 53%, the lowest recorded in the last 12 surveys. 9% disagreed that it was important to maintain the Australian way of life and culture, the highest proportion recorded, up from 3% in 2007.

Figure 5: Sense of pride and importance in maintaining the Australian way of life, 2007-19 (RDD)
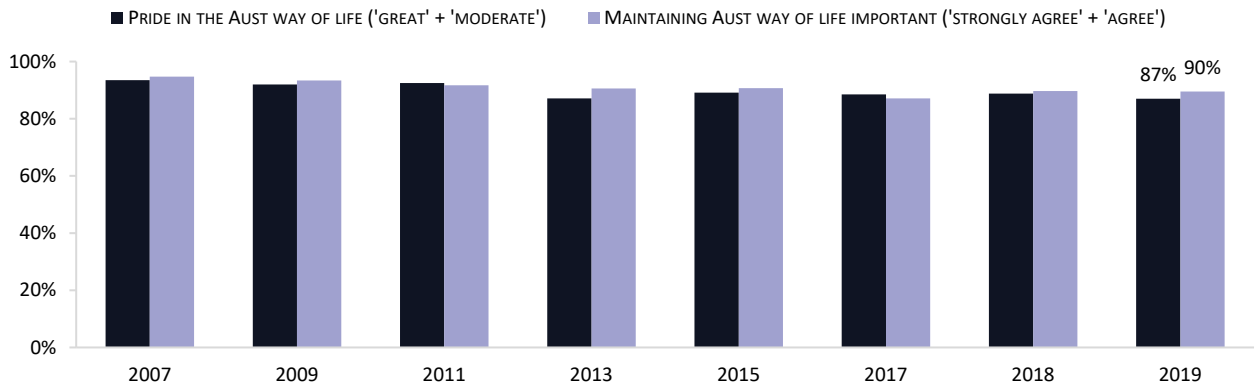
Figure 6: 'To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?', 2007-19 (RDD)
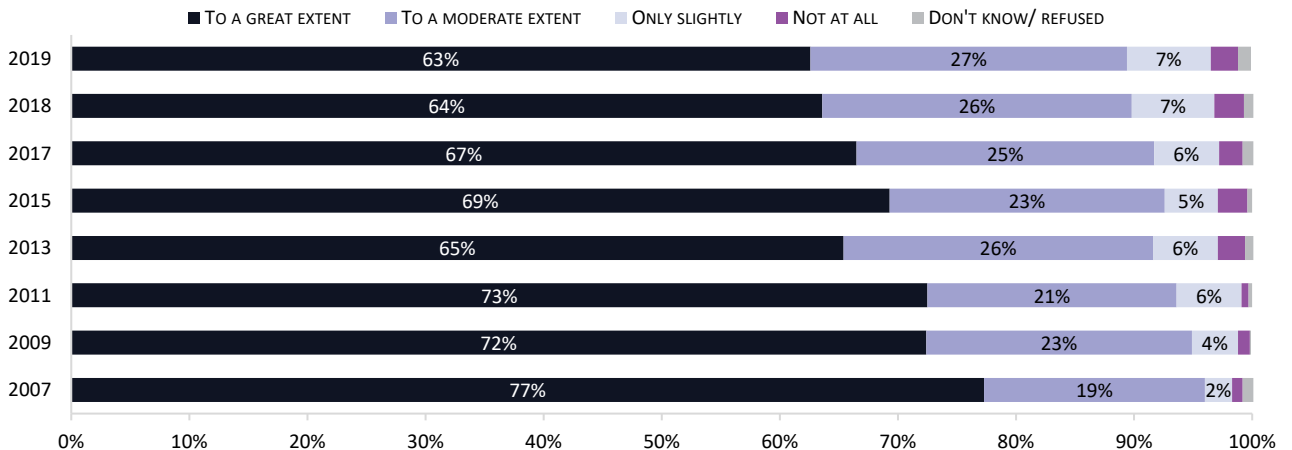
SMI 2: SENSE OF WORTH

There has been some change in indicators of worth. From 2007 to 2018, financial satisfaction was in the range 71%-74%, in 2019 it was 69%. Sense of happiness was in the range 85%-89%, in 2019 it was 84%.

Financial satisfaction ('very satisfied' and 'satisfied'): 69% in 2019, 72% in 2016-18, 71% in 2015, 73% in 2014, and 71% in 2013.

Happiness over the last year: ('very happy' and 'happy'), 84% in 2019, 85% in 2018, 86% in 2017, 85% in 2016, 89% in 2015, 88% in 2014, and 87% in 2013. There has been a decline in the proportion indicating the strongest level of 'happiness': in 2007, 34% indicated that they were 'very happy', in 2019 a statistically significantly lower 23%. Unhappiness ('unhappy' and 'very unhappy') was indicated by 10% in 2019, down from 11% in 2018 but marginally higher than the average of 8% over the course of the surveys.

Figure 7: Happiness over the last 12 months and present financial satisfaction, 2007-19 (RDD)
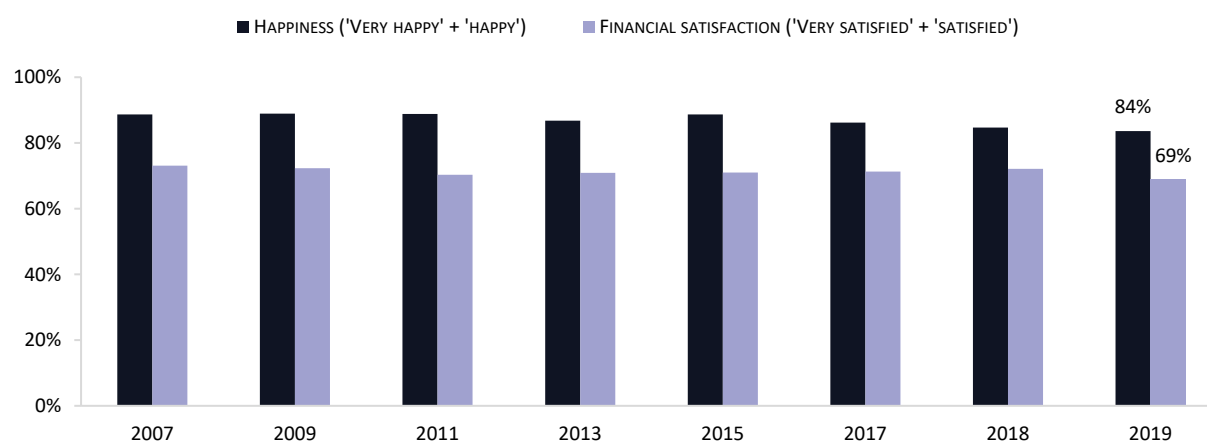
Figure 8: 'How satisfied are you with your present financial situation?', 2007-19 (RDD)
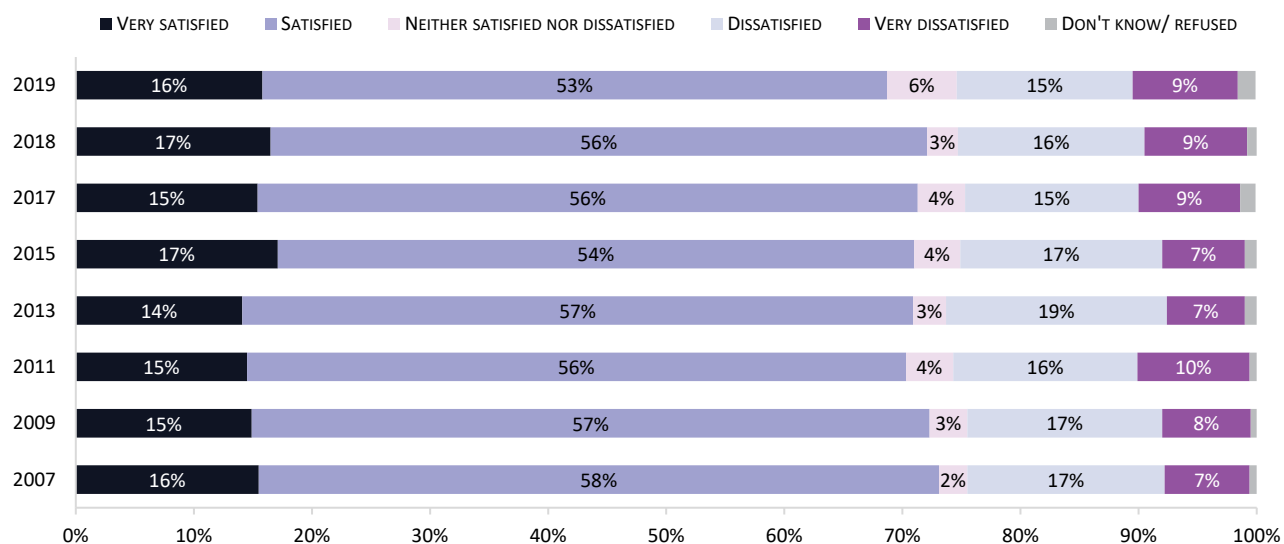
SMI 3: SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY

The domain of **social justice and equity registered a sharp fall between 2009 and 2010, from 112 to 92.** In 2011, 2012 and 2013 there was marginally positive movement in the domain, but the aggregated score remained significantly below the 2009 peak. In 2014 and 2015 the index recorded further decline (94, 91), and after a marginal increase in 2016 it reached its lowest point in 2017 with a score of 88. In 2018 it rose to 92 and in 2019, when some mixed results were recorded, it rose to 93.

In response to the proposition that '**Australia is a land of economic opportunity** where in the long run, hard work brings a better life', the level of 'strong agreement' has declined from a high of 40% in 2011 to 33% in 2017 and 34% in 2018. In 2019 it rose to 37%. The proportion indicating agreement ('strongly agree' or 'agree') has ranged from 80% to 82% across the surveys to 2013, with a decline to 78%-79% from 2014 to 2016 and a further decline to 74-75% between 2017 and 2018. In 2019 it is at its lowest point, at 73%. The level of disagreement ('strongly disagree' or 'disagree') was in the range 13%-16% to 2013, a higher 17% in 2014, 19% in 2015, 18% in 2016, and 21%-22% between 2017-19.

In response to the proposition that '**in Australia today, the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large**', the majority in agreement has fluctuated between 71% and 78%. In 2015-18 it was between 76%-78%, in 2019 it is at 74%.

In response to the proposition that '**people living on low incomes in Australia receive enough financial support** from the government', opinion has been close to evenly divided. In 2016, 45% agreed, 46% disagreed. **In 2018 and 2019, however, 37%-38% agreed, the lowest level recorded in the surveys, while 55%-56% disagreed.**

In 2007, the last year of the Howard government, 39% of respondents indicated **trust in government 'to do the right thing for the Australian people'** 'almost always' or 'most of the time.' In 2009, at a time of high support for the government of Prime Minister Rudd, trust in government rose sharply to 48%. **In 2010 there was a sharp fall to 31% in the level of trust in the federal government and the previous levels have not been regained. In the five years f**rom 2012 to 2017 trust was in the range 26%-30%, in 2018 it was at 30% and remained the same in 2019. Trust in government 'almost never' was indicated by 15% in 2019 (down from a high of 24% in 2012, 22% in 2014, and 18-19% between 2015-18).

Figure 9: 'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life', 2007-19 (RDD)
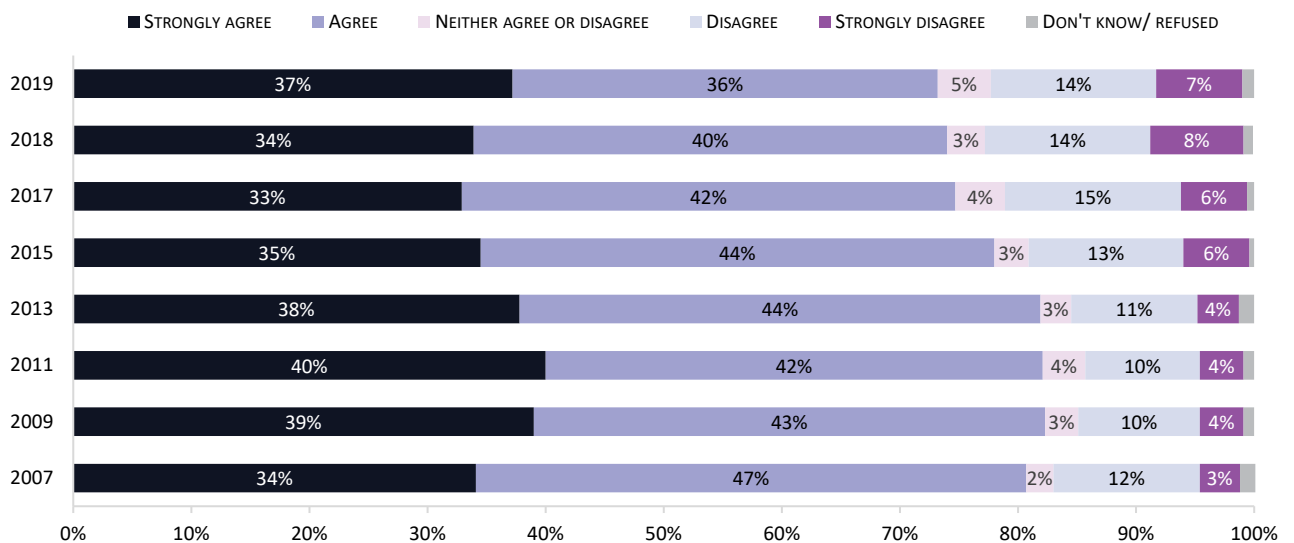
Figure 10: 'In Australia today, the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large', 2007-19 (RDD)

Legend: ■ STRONGLY AGREE ■ AGREE ■ NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE ■ DISAGREE ■ STRONGLY DISAGREE ■ DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED

Year	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
2019	43%	31%	2%	16%	4%	4%
2018	44%	33%	2%	15%	4%	2%
2017	42%	35%	4%	14%	3%	3%
2015	44%	33%	2%	14%	3%	4%
2013	34%	39%	3%	17%	4%	3%
2011	41%	36%	3%	14%	3%	3%
2009	36%	35%	2%	19%	3%	5%
2007	42%	35%	2%	16%	2%	3%
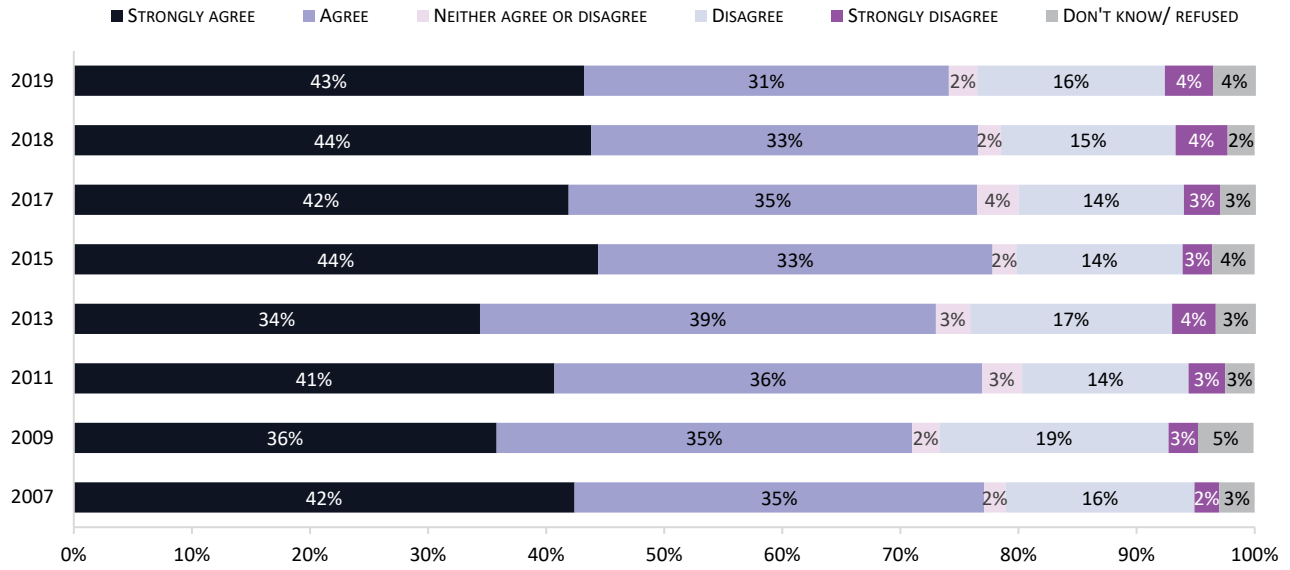
Figure 11: 'People living on low incomes in Australia receive enough financial support from the government', 2007-19 (RDD)

Legend: ■ STRONGLY AGREE ■ AGREE ■ NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE ■ DISAGREE ■ STRONGLY DISAGREE ■ DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED

Year	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
2019	10%	27%	3%	30%	26%	4%
2018	12%	26%	2%	30%	25%	6%
2017	9%	30%	4%	31%	22%	4%
2015	11%	33%	5%	26%	21%	5%
2013	9%	39%	5%	28%	14%	6%
2011	10%	36%	4%	29%	17%	4%
2009	11%	38%	3%	25%	16%	7%
2007	12%	34%	3%	30%	16%	6%
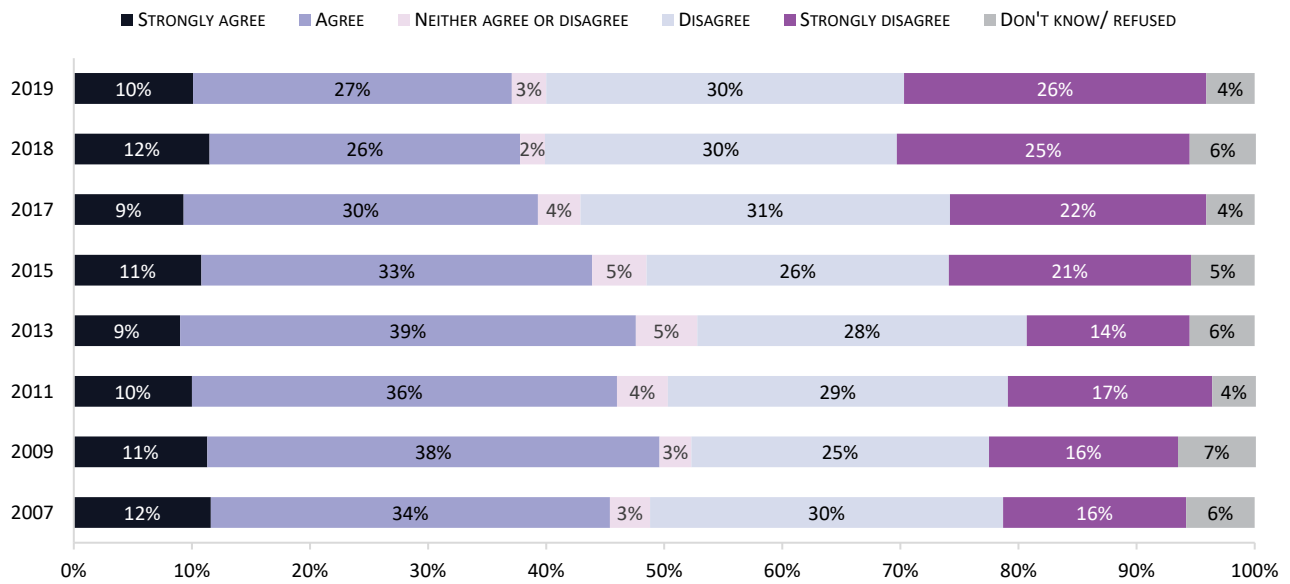
SMI 4: PARTICIPATION

In 2019, an election year, the Index showed increased political participation, with an Index score of 103, marginally higher than 101 the previous year.

The Index reached its highest point in 2011 and 2012 at 106-107and fell to its lowest in 2013 at 91.

Comparing the results for 2018 and 2019, the proportion indicating that they had voted in an election increased from 82% to 86%. In other respects, there was very little change, with marginal increase in participation: signed a petition, 52% in 2018, 53% in 2019; contacted a member of parliament, 23% and 24%; participated in a boycott of a product or company, 18% and 19%, the second highest proportion over the surveys; attended a protest, march or demonstration, marginally down from 11% to 10%. 8% responded 'none of the above', marginally below the long-term average of 9% with no political involvement.

Table 10: 'Which, if any, of the following have you done over the last three years or so?', 2007-19 (percentage, RDD)

Response	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Voted in an election	85	87	83	89	88	79	82	84	86	82	82	86*
Signed a petition	55	56	54	56	54	45	48	52	48	55	52	53
Written or spoken to a federal or state member of parliament	24	27	25	25	27	23	23	23	23	23	23	24
Joined a boycott of a product or company	12	14	14	18	15	13	13	15	16	20	18	19
Attended a protest, march or demonstration	13	13	9	11	14	10	10	12	11	13	11	10
None of the above	8	7	8	6	6	12	12	9	9	10	12	8
N (unweighted)	2,012	2,019	2,021	2,001	2,000	1,200	1,526	1,501	1,500	2,236	1,500	1,500

* Change between 2018 and 2019 statistically significant at p<.05

Figure 12: 'Which, if any, of the following have you done over the last three years or so?', 2014-19 (RDD)
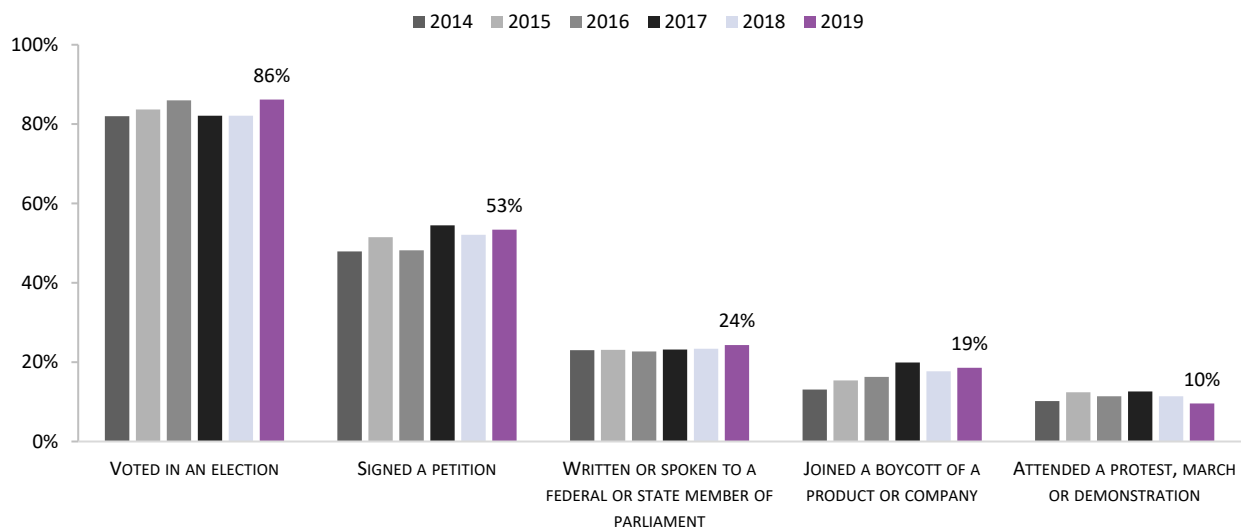
SMI 5: ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION

The Index of acceptance and rejection found strong downward movement between 2009-11, 2012-13, and 2015-16. In 2018 it was at 69 Index points, and **in 2019 it is at 72 and remains the lowest point for the five domains of social cohesion**.

Reported experience of discrimination based on 'skin colour, ethnic origin or religion' was at 19% in 2019 and 2018, close to the level of five of the last seven years, but significantly higher than the 9%-10% in 2007-09 and 12% in 2012. (Experience of discrimination is considered in more detail on pages 72-74.)

Sense of pessimism about the future, in response to a question on expectations for 'life in three or four years', **was at a high point in 2017,** at 19%, close to the level in 2012 and 2014. **In 2019 it is considerably lower at 14%.**

In response to the proposition that **'ethnic minorities should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions',** there has been a substantial increase in the level of agreement, from 32% in 2007 to a high of 41% in 2015. Between 2016-18 agreement declined, in the range 34%-37%, to again reach 41% in 2019. Disagreement was at 57%-58% in 2017-18, at a lower 53% in 2019.

The fourth question that contributes to the Index of acceptance and rejection considers immigration in terms of broad principle.

'Strong disagreement' with the proposition that **'accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger'** was at 8% in 2007, in the range 9%-11% from 2009-16, and a peak of 14% in 2017. It was at 12%-13% in 2018-19. The combined percentage of those who 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with the proposition is at 28% in 2019 down from 30% in 2017-18. Those in agreement ranged from 62% (2010, 2013) to a high of 68% in 2009 and 2014. It is at that level in 2019.

Table 11: 'In three or four years, do you think that your life in Australia will be…?', 2007-19 (percentage, RDD)

Response	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Much improved	24	21	18	18	16	19	16	19	17	18	20	17
A little improved	25	28	27	28	29	30	27	28	25	27	28	31
Sub-total improved	49	49	45	45	45	48	43	46	42	45	48	48
The same as now	35	33	37	33	32	31	33	36	36	31	35	34
A little worse	9	10	10	13	14	13	15	13	13	14	10	10
Much worse	2	2	3	5	4	4	4	2	5	5	5	4
Sub-total worse	11	12	13	17	19	17	19	15	18	19	14	14
N (unweighted)	2,012	2,019	2,021	2,001	2,000	1,200	1,526	1,501	1,500	2,236	1,500	1,500

*Change between 2018 and 2019 not statistically significant at p<.05

Figure 13: 'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions', 2007-19 (RDD)

Legend: ■ STRONGLY AGREE ■ AGREE ■ NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE ■ DISAGREE ■ STRONGLY DISAGREE ■ DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED

Year	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/ refused
2019	13%	28%	4%	27%	25%	3%
2018	9%	28%	2%	28%	29%	4%
2017	9%	25%	5%	31%	27%	3%
2015	9%	31%	4%	28%	25%	2%
2013	9%	28%	5%	31%	25%	3%
2011	7%	27%	6%	27%	31%	3%
2009	8%	26%	4%	33%	27%	4%
2007	9%	23%	3%	36%	26%	3%
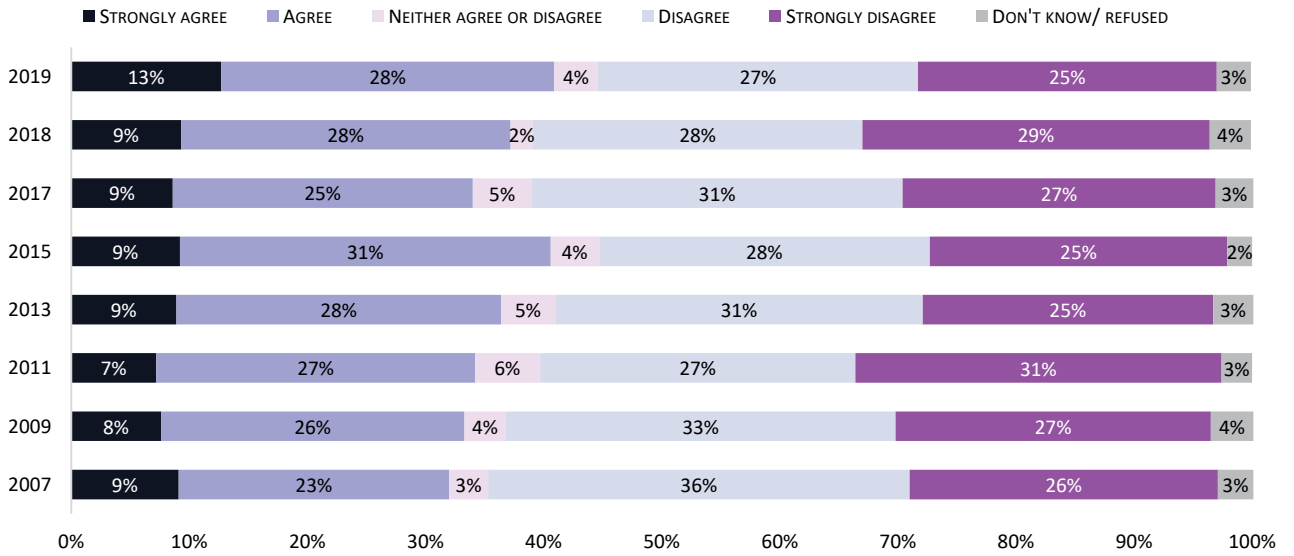
Figure 14: 'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger', 2014-19 (RDD)

Legend: ■ 2014 ■ 2015 ■ 2016 ■ 2017 ■ 2018 ■ 2019
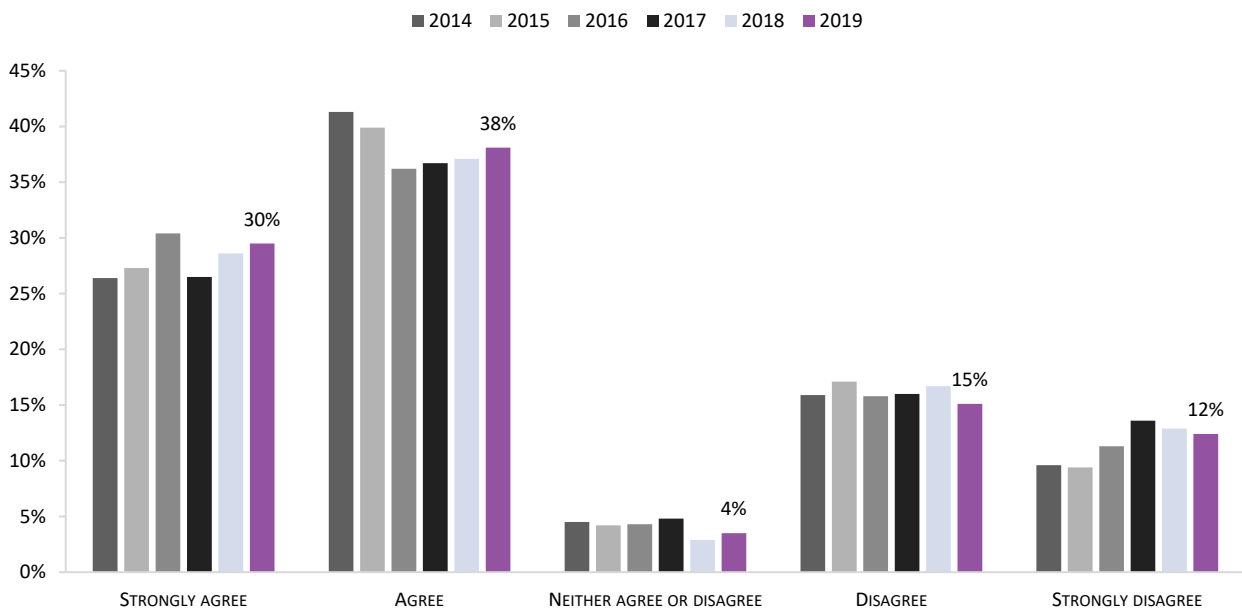
LIFE SATISFACTION

A number of the survey questions provide indication of life satisfaction.

Factor analysis identified nine questions which in statistical terms show a moderate level of coherence:[7]

- 'In general, are you optimistic or pessimistic about Australia's future?'

- 'How satisfied are you with your present financial situation?'

- 'Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life.'

- 'Would you say that living in your local area is becoming better or worse, or is it unchanged?'

- 'Taking all things into consideration, would you say that over the last year you have been … happy/ unhappy …?'

- 'In three or four years, do you think that your life in Australia will be … improved/ worse …?'

- 'To what extent do you take pride in the Australian way of life and culture?'

- 'And to what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?'

- 'How worried are you that you will lose your job in the next year or so?' (with reference to respondents with jobs)

The following analysis considers three issues: the extent of change in life satisfaction over the course of the Scanlon Foundation surveys; the level of dissatisfaction in 2018-19; and differences in dissatisfaction within sub-groups of the population.

Where long-run data is available, some questions show minor or no change; for example, in 2007, 24% of respondents indicated dissatisfaction with their financial position, in 2019 an identical 24%; indication of unhappiness was at 7% in 2007, 10% in 2019; expectation for worsening of life in three or four years was indicated by 11% of respondents in 2007, 14% in 2019.

A number of other questions find **an increased proportion of negative responses, but within narrow limits**; thus, disagreement with the proposition that Australia is a land of economic opportunity where hard work brings a better life was at 14%-16% in 2007-09, 21%-22% in 2018-19; no, or slight, sense of belonging in Australia was indicated by 3%-5% of respondents in 2007-09, 9%-10% in 2018-19.

With regard to current level of dissatisfaction, for a number of questions negative responses are in the range 10%-20%. When present financial situation and Australia's future are considered, negative responses are in the range 26%-38%.

10%-11% of respondents indicate that they are unhappy in the interviewer administered version (RDD) of the survey, but double that proportion, 19%-22% in the self-completion (LinA) version; insecurity of employment is indicated by 12% RDD, 16% LinA; indication that 'living in your local areas is becoming worse' is indicated by 16%-17% RDD, in the range 20%-22% LinA.

The highest level of dissatisfaction is obtained when Australia's future is considered (26%-27% RDD, 31%-36 LinA) and with regard to present financial situation (24%-25%, 36%-38%).

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[7] Cronbach's alpha (α) reliability of the scales is moderate, α=.694. Sampling adequacy was tested with the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) =0.74 and Bartlett's test of sphericity = .000

Table 12: Life satisfaction, selected questions, 2007-09, 2018-19 (percentage, RDD and LinA)

Survey question	Response	RDD				LinA	
		2007	2009	2018	2019	2018	2019
In general, are you optimistic or pessimistic about Australia's future?	Very pessimistic, Pessimistic	–	–	26	27	31	36
How satisfied are you with your present financial situation?	Very dissatisfied, Dissatisfied	24	24	25	24	38	36
Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life.	Strongly disagree, Disagree	16	14	22	21	29	29
Would you say that living in your local area is becoming better or worse, or is it unchanged?	Much worse, Worse	–	–	16	17	22	20
Taking all things into consideration would you say that over the last year you have been ...	Very unhappy, Unhappy	7	7	11	10	22	19
In three or four years, do you think that your life in Australia will be ...	Much worse, Little worse	11	12	14	14	14	15
To what extent do you take pride in the Australian way of life and culture?	Not at all, Slightly	5	7	10	12	13	15
And to what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?	Not at all, Slightly	3	5	10	9	9	10
How worried are you that you will lose your job in the next year or so? (respondents with jobs)	Very worried, Worried	–	–	12	12	16	16

Variation across the population was considered using eight variables analysed using the aggregated data from the 2018-19 self-completion survey (LinA): gender, state, region of residence, age, educational qualification, financial status, intended vote birthplace.

With regard to **indication of unhappiness** over the last year, the **highest levels were indicated by those whose self-ascribed financial status is 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor' (56%)** and those aged 18-24 (35%); the lowest levels were indicated by those whose self-declared financial status is 'prosperous' or 'very comfortable' (5%), and those over the age of 75 (5%), and aged 65-74 (9%).

Financial status is an important predictor of happiness, but **there has been little variation in the self-described financial status of respondents over the course of the Scanlon Foundation surveys**; for example, the proportion indicating that they are 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor' was 8% in 2010-11, 9% in 2018-19. There is little difference in the pattern of response in the self-completion (LinA) survey, with a marginally higher 12% in 2018-19 indicating that they are 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor'.

With regard to **optimism or pessimism about Australia's future,** high level of pessimism was indicated **by those 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor'** (54%), by those at the opposite ends of the political spectrum – **One Nation (63%)** and Greens voters (46%), residents of Queensland (41%), and those aged 18-24 (40%).

Table 13: Self-described financial status, 2010-19 (percentage, RDD and LinA)

Response	2010-11	2012-13	2014-15	2016-17	RDD 2018-19	LinA 2018-19
Prosperous/ very comfortable	15	13	15	14	15	12
Reasonably comfortable	52	55	52	51	49	47
Just getting along	25	24	24	26	25	28
Struggling to pay bills/ poor	8	7	8	8	9	12
Don't know/ decline	1	1	1	1	1	0
N (unweighted)	4.022	3,200	3,027	3,736	3,000	4,293

Table 14: 'Taking ALL things into consideration, would you say that over the last year YOU have been…' Response: 'Unhappy' and 'very unhappy', 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Gender	Female	Male					
	18	22					
State	Victoria	New South Wales	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	20	21	22	13	20		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	21	19					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	35	24	23	19	20	9	5
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	19	20	18	22	23		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	5	11	26	56			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	One Nation			
	25	12	29	29			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	22	17	16				

Table 15: 'In general, are you optimistic or pessimistic about Australia's future?' Response: 'pessimistic' and 'very pessimistic' 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Gender	Female	Male					
	34	33					
State	Victoria	New South Wales	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	32	34	23	27	41		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	32	35					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	40	31	36	32	36	33	23
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	30	32	33	38	35		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	23	29	36	54			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	One Nation			
	36	24	46	63			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	36	31	26				

RANKING OF ISSUES

The Scanlon Foundation survey seeks to determine the issues that are of greatest concern in the community.

Since 2011, the first question in the survey has been open-ended. It asks: 'What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?' The value of an open-ended question is that it leaves it to respondents to indicate issues, rather than requiring selection from a pre-determined and limited list. An open-ended approach necessarily produces a broad range of responses.

There were two major changes in the ranking of the 'most important problem' in 2019. Concern over **environmental issues** recorded the equal largest increase from one year to the next, up from 10% to 19% in the telephone administered survey and from 5% to 17% in the self-completion survey. Environment issues were prominent in 2011, with 11% indicating concern and 6% scepticism, but then declined in the ranking. The relatively large proportion who in past years mentioned the environment to indicate scepticism has declined to 1% or lower in the last seven surveys.

A second issue recording significant change is **quality of government and political leadership,** which was a consistently prominent issue until 2018, specified by 12%-15% of respondents between 2011 and 2014, and a lower 9%-11% between 2015-18. In 2019 the proportion fell to 6%, the lowest across the nine years of surveying, in both the telephone administered and self-administered version of the survey.

In the nine surveys between 2011 and 2019, **respondents have consistently given first rank to issues related to the economy, unemployment and poverty**. The importance of the issue increased from 26% in 2011 to a peak of 36% in 2012, with a marginal decline to 33%-34% between 2013-15. It dropped to 28% in 2016 and has been in the range 26%-28% between 2017 and 2019.

Concern over **immigration and population** growth has been in the range 3%-7% across the surveys, at 6% in 2019 in the telephone administered survey, a higher 10% in the self-completion version.

Between 2011 and 2014, concern over **defence, national security and the threat of terrorism** ranked low**,** indicated by less than 1% of respondents. In 2015, however, it increased to 10%, in the aftermath of the Lindt café siege and other terrorist incidents, including shootings in Paris, making it the second highest ranked issue of that year**.** In 2016, the issue was the third ranked issue at 9%, marginally lower at 7% in 2017, with a significant decline to 1%-2% in 2018 and 2019 in both the telephone administered and self-administered version of the survey.

In 2015, **social issues** (family breakdown, child care, drug use, lack of personal direction) were ranked second, specified by 11% of respondents. Since that year the issue has been specified by 6%-8% of respondents in the telephone administered version of the survey, 9%-10% in the self-administered version.

The decline of concern over the issue of asylum seekers, a major finding of the 2014 survey, remains in evidence. Sympathy for the plight of asylum seekers and contrasting negative comment concerning asylum seekers was indicated by a combined 12% of respondents in 2012 and 13% in 2013. In 2014, following the election of the Coalition government and the implementation of policies to end boat arrivals, the issue dropped sharply to 3% and has been at 2% between 2017-19. Both modes of surveying provide consistent results.

As in earlier surveys, there was almost no reference to Indigenous issues, mentioned by 0.3% of respondents, or women's issues/gender equality mentioned by 0.5% of respondents. Concern over racism in Australian society declined from 4% in 2016 to 2% or lower over both modes of administration of the last two surveys.

Figure 15: 'What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?', top 5 issues in 2019 and trend 2012-19 (RDD)
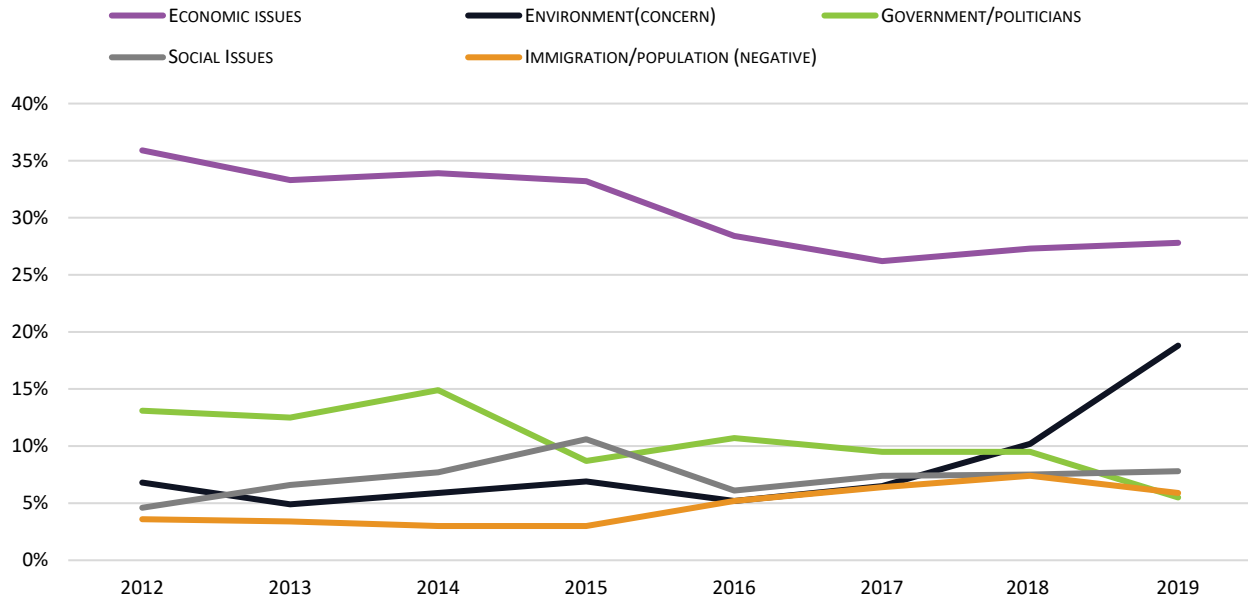

Figure 16: 'What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?', selected 'most important problem', 2012-19 (RDD)
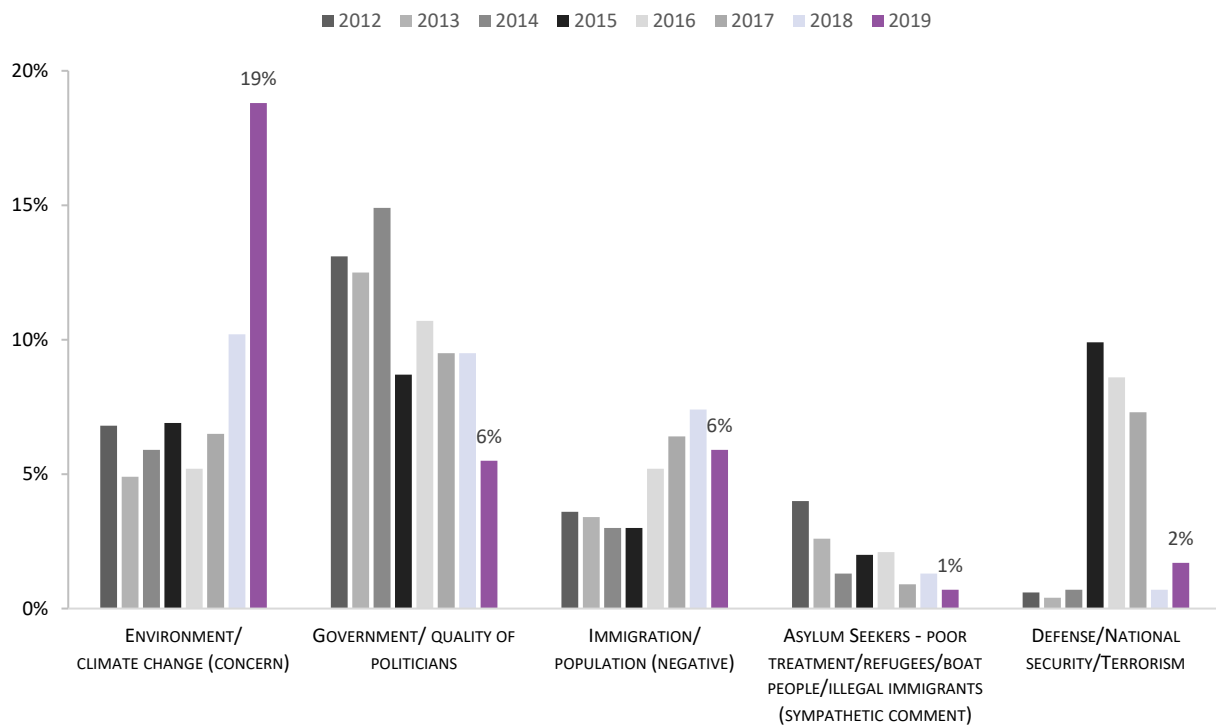
Table 16: 'What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?', 2011-19 (percentage, RDD and LinA)

Issue	RDD									LinA	
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2018	2019
Economy/ unemployment/ poverty	26	36	33	34	33	28	26	27	28	29	29
Environment – climate change/ water shortages (concern)	11	4	5	6	7	5	6	10	19*	5	17*
Social issues – (family breakdown, child care, drug use, lack of personal direction)	6	5	7	8	11	6	7	8	8	9	10
Immigration/ population growth (concern)	5	4	3	3	3	5	6	7	6	7	10*
Quality of government/ politicians	13	13	13	15	9	11	10	10	6*	9	6
Health/ medical/ hospitals	4	3	4	5	2	5	3	4	5	3	4
Housing shortage/ affordability/ interest rates	3	2	2	2	4	2	6	4	4	5	4
Crime/ law and order	2	1	2	2	2	3	4	3	2	4	2
Education/ schools	1	2	3	4	2	4	4	2	2	1	1
Defence/ national security/ terrorism	1	1	0	1	10	9	7	1	2	1	2
Asylum seekers – too many/ refugees/ boat people/ illegal immigrants (negative comment)	4	8	10	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	1
Asylum seekers – poor treatment, sympathy towards refugees/ boat people/ illegal immigrants	3	4	3	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	0
Immigration/population – too low/ need more people (supportive)	2	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
Racism	2	1	1	1	2	4	2	1	1	2	2
Environment – overreaction to climate change/ carbon tax (sceptical)	6	7	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Women's issues (e.g. equal pay/opportunity, violence, etc.)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Indigenous issues	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
Industrial relations/ trade unions	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other/ nothing/ don't know/ decline	11	8	12	16	10	12	14	18	15	24	12
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N (unweighted)	2,001	2,000	1,200	1,526	1,501	1,500	2,236	1,500	1,500	2,260	2,033

*Change between 2018 and 2019 statistically significant at p<.05

ENVIRONMENT

Analysis of those indicating concern for the environment as the most important problem facing Australia was undertaken by six demographic and one attitudinal variable. The demographic variables analysed were gender, state of residence, region (capital city or rest of state), age, highest level of educational attainment, self-described financial status; the attitudinal variable is political alignment, indicated by response to the question 'If there was a Federal election held today, for which party would you probably vote?'

Given the significant shift in attitudes between 2018 and 2019, the analysis was restricted to 2019. Consistent with other sections of this report, sub-group analysis employs the LinA sample. The analysis is provided with the proviso that as the sample is restricted to one year there is a substantial margin of error for sub-groups, so discussion is directed to broad findings.

The broad findings indicate a large measure of agreement across a number of the variables, notably gender, region, and the three largest states, with several outliers.

The outliers for relatively high proportions concerned over environmental issues are Greens voters (54%); those aged 18-24 (43%); those whose self-described financial status is 'prosperous' or 'very comfortable' (27%); and those with Bachelor's degree of higher (24%).

The outliers for relatively low proportions concerned over environmental issues are One Nation (3%) and Liberal/ National (7%) voters, with highest level of completed education up to Year 11 (7%) or Trade/ Apprenticeship (10%), over the age of 75 (8%), residents of Western Australia (8%), and South Australia (12%).

Table 17: 'What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?' Response: Environment – climate change/ water shortages (concern), 2019 (percentage, LinA)

Gender	Female	Male					
	19	15					
State	Victoria	New South Wales	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia		
	20	18	16	12	8		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	17	18					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	43	18	12	14	16	14	8
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	24	16	10	23	7		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	27	16	15	15			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	One Nation			
	21	7	54	3			

GLOBALISATION AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Australia's **openness to the world** was considered in a question first included in the 2018 survey and asked again in 2019. Respondents are asked if 'growing economic ties between Australia and other countries, sometimes referred to as globalisation', is good or bad for the country. In both 2018 and 2019, **71% indicated that it was good**, 22%-23% that it was bad. In the self-completion version of the survey, a marginally higher 75%-76% indicated that globalisation was good for the country.[8]

Sub-group analysis of the aggregated results of the 2018 and 2019 LinA surveys, consistent with the approach adopted in this report, was undertaken using eight variables: gender, state, region, age, education, financial situation, intended vote and birthplace. The finding is of only minor variation across the subgroups, with the exception of **One Nation voters (47%) and those whose financial status is indicated to be 'struggling to pay bills' and 'poor' (34%).**

Table 18: 'Are growing economic ties between Australia and other countries, sometimes referred to as globalisation, good or bad for Australia', 2018, 2019 (percentage, RDD and LinA)

Response	RDD		LinA	
	2018	2019	2018	2019
Very good	21	20	15	12
Fairly good	51	51	60	62
Sub-total good	71	71	76	75
Fairly bad	14	13	18	18
Very bad	9	9	4	4
Sub-total bad	23	22	23	22
Don't know/ decline	5	8	1	3
Total	100	100	100	100

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[8] The marginal difference in proportions between the two surveying modes is in large part explained by the lower proportion indicating 'don't know' or decline to answer in LinA, a function of differences in survey administration, an issue discussed in the methodological section (pp. 86-93) in this report.

Table 19: 'Growing economic ties between Australia and other countries, sometimes referred to as globalisation … 'Fairly bad', 'very bad', 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Gender	Female	Male					
	21	24					
State	Victoria	New South Wales	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	22	21	22	29	23		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	21	25					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	16	17	25	25	29	22	19
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	17	28	26	18	26		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	18	19	27	34			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	One Nation			
	20	19	19	47			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	25	20	18				

Additional questions considered perception of Australia's most important economic partner today and ten years into the future, and confidence in major powers to treat Australia fairly.

From a list of four countries, **China was seen as 'Australia's most important economic partner' today**, indicated by 58% of respondents in the telephone administered (RDD) survey, ahead of United States of America at 19%, the United Kingdom 7% and Japan at 4%. In the self-completion (LinA) survey, a higher proportion (66%) indicated China, with similar proportions in both surveys for the other nations.

When asked 'which country will have the most influence in the Pacific region' **'ten years from now', the expectation was of increasing Chinese influence,** indicated by 67% in the RDD survey, 76% in LinA. A small minority, 13%-15%, considered that the United States would be the most influential in the Pacific, just 4%-6% India and 4% Japan.

When asked 'How much confidence do you have in the government [of countries specified] to do the right thing regarding Australia's economic interest?', 50%-52% indicated 'a lot of confidence' or 'some confidence' in the Japanese government, 40%-42% the government of the United States, and a substantially lower 24%-28% in the government of China.

Table 20: 'Which country do you think is Australia's most important economic partner?' and 'Which country do you think will have the most influence in the Pacific region in ten years from now?' 2019 (percentage, RDD and LinA)

	Australia's most important economic partner		Country with the most influence in the pacific region ten years from now	
	RDD	LinA	RDD	LinA
China	58	66	67	76
United States	19	20	15	13
Japan	4	5	4	4
UK	7	6	NA	NA
India	NA	NA	6	4
Other/ don't know/ decline	11	4	8	3
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 21: 'How much confidence do you have in the Chinese/ United States/ Japanese government to do the right thing regarding Australia's economic interest?' 2019 (percentage, RDD and LinA)

Response	Chinese Government		United States Government		Japanese Government	
	RDD	LinA	RDD	LinA	RDD	LinA
A lot of confidence	3	2	5	5	6	5
Some confidence	25	22	35	37	44	47
Sub-total confident	**28**	**24**	**40**	**42**	**50**	**52**
Not much confidence	35	44	34	37	27	36
No confidence at all	34	32	23	21	15	11
Sub-total not confident	**70**	**76**	**57**	**57**	**42**	**47**
Don't know/ decline	2	0	3	0	8	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

DEMOCRACY

COLLAPSE IN TRUST?

Trust in political institutions is a perennial topic for discussion, said by some commentators to be at a dangerously low level.

The high-profile Kenneth Hayne, former Justice of the High Court of Australia and Royal Commissioner into the banking, superannuation and financial services industry, received extensive media coverage in August 2019 for his observation that 'Trust in all sorts of institutions, governmental and private, has been damaged or destroyed.' He argued that the recent establishment of a number of royal commissions indicated government failure, as in a properly functioning democracy there would be no need for so many commissions. Politics had become overly combative, fostering division, 'reasoned debates about issues of policy are now rare.'[9]

Evidence of failure, in part based on survey research, was provided in the 2018 report 'Trust and Democracy in Australia' published by the Museum of Australian Democracy and conducted by academics at the Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis at the University of Canberra.

The report's alarming finding, featured on its cover, was that satisfaction with democracy had plummeted. According to the survey conducted by the authors, 'fewer than 41 per cent of Australian citizens are currently satisfied with the way democracy works in Australia, down from 86 per cent in 2007. Public satisfaction has fallen particularly sharply since 2013 when 72 per cent of Australian citizens were satisfied.' **Satisfaction with democracy was said to be 'in freefall.'**[10]

The report also quoted the 2017 findings of the leading American survey organisation, the Pew Research Centre, which it was claimed found that 'the only countries lower than Australia' at 41% were France (34%), Italy (31%), Spain (25%) and Greece (21%).

The Museum of Australian Democracy publication was regarded as authoritative in a 2019 discussion paper by the Australian Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, as part of an inquiry into nationhood, national identity and democracy.

Citing the Museum report, the discussion paper stated that 'There is a wealth of evidence showing a worrying decline in the level of public trust. In 2007, 86 per cent of Australians were satisfied with how democracy works in Australia. That figure is now 41 per cent.'

There are several problems with the Museum of Democracy paper. First, the source of the references to earlier survey findings – trust at 86% in 2007 and 71% in 2013 – was not indicated. In particular, did these earlier surveys use exactly the same methodology and questionnaire as the 2018 survey that obtained the finding of 41%? With regard to the assertion that trust in Australia is only higher than in four specified European countries, it was a misrepresentation of the Pew survey.

The Pew finding was obtained from the organisation's Global Attitudes Survey, published in October 2017. The survey asked 'How satisfied are you with the way democracy is working in [your] country? For twelve European and North American countries, the average satisfaction was at 48%, for Australia satisfaction was at 58% (not 41%), hence ten percentage points above the average, ranked below four countries but above eight.[11]

As discussed in the Mode Effect sections of this report (see pages 9, 86-93), **different survey methodologies and different question wording can produce significantly different results. There is, however, value in considering findings for surveys which are repeated over time with consistent methodology and question wording.**

One example is the **Australia Election Study**, a survey of voters conducted after each federal election by researchers at the Australian National University; it provides insight into long term stability and change in the Australian electorate. The last available findings at the time of writing of this report were for 2016. In that year satisfaction with democracy was at 60%, down from a very high 86% in 2007 which was obtained after the election that brought to power the Rudd Labor government. In response to the statement that 'people in government can be trusted', agreement was at 26% in 2016, down from 43% in 2007.[12] **This is strong evidence of substantial decline,** although there have been volatile shifts in opinion over the course of the Australian Election Study.

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[9] Michael Roddan, 'Hayne takes swipe at MPs 'language of war', *The Australian*, 8 Aug. 2019; Paddy Manning, 'Democratic decay', The Monthly Today, 8 Aug, 2019, pp. 9, 21

[10] Gary Stoker, Mark Evans, Max Halupka, Trust and Democracy in Australia: Democratic Decline and Renewal, Museum of Australian Democracy, Report 1, December 2018

[11] Pew Research Centre, Global Attitudes and Trends, 'Globally, broad support for representative and direct democracy,' 16 Oct. 2017, p. 13

[12] Sarah Cameron and Ian McAllister, Trends in Australian Political Opinion. Results from the Australian Election Study 1987-2016, 2016, pp. 74-5

Other time series surveys, however, do not indicate dramatic shift, particularly not since 2013.

The **Edelman Trust Barometer**, currently in its nineteenth year, surveys 27 countries, including Australia. One component of the survey asks respondents to rank trust in government on a nine-point scale, from 'do not trust at all' to 'trust a great deal.' **Its findings do not indicate collapse in trust.** The annual results since 2012 were calculated as 33, 32, 38, 37, 45, 37, 35, 42, with the **2019 rating the second highest over the eight years**, well above average of 36.7.

The **Gallup World Poll** includes a question on confidence in the national government. The Australian result between 2012 and 2018 was 0.42, 0.46, 0.46, 0.48, 0.45, 0.45, and 0.47.[13]

The **Essential Report** has also tested institutional trust in Australia over time. In a question posed annually it asks: 'How much trust do you have in the following institutions and organisations?' With regard to the federal parliament, between 2012 and 2019 'a lot of trust' or 'some trust' was indicated in the range 22%-35%, **again without a pattern of substantial decline** – the findings by year were 22%, 34%, 25%, 32%, 26%, 30%, 28%, with a **relatively high 35% in 2019**. Trust in political parties was lowest of the fifteen institutions listed, but did not find deterioration. Between 2012-19 results were in the range 12%-22%, with the highest level of trust obtained in 2019; the proportions by year were 12%, 12%, 13%, 16%, 14%, 17%, and 22% in 2019.[14]

The **Lowy Institute** annual poll has included a question on democracy since 2012. It asks respondents to indicate which of three statements about democracy comes closest to 'their own personal view.' In 2012, 60% of Australians indicated agreement with the statement that 'democracy is preferable to any other kind of government,' 20% that 'in some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable', and 15% that 'for someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have. This initial finding was interpreted as evidence of ambivalence about democracy and occasioned considerable public discussion, without attention to the potential impact of the wording 'in some circumstances.' However, **over the succeeding five years of surveying there was very little change – no evidence of deteriorating faith in democracy.**

In 2017, after which the methodology of the survey was changed, 60% of respondents considered democracy to be preferable to any other kind of government, identical with the finding in 2012.[15] The 2018 and 2019 findings, which involved a transition to the Life in Australia™ panel, continued to obtain similar results (as shown with the dotted line in the graph below): democracy was considered preferable by 62% in 2018, 65% in 2019. A new question in 2019 asked: 'On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in Australia?' **70% indicated that they were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied.'**

Figure 17: Selected Australian public opinion polls on democracy and trust in government, 2012-19
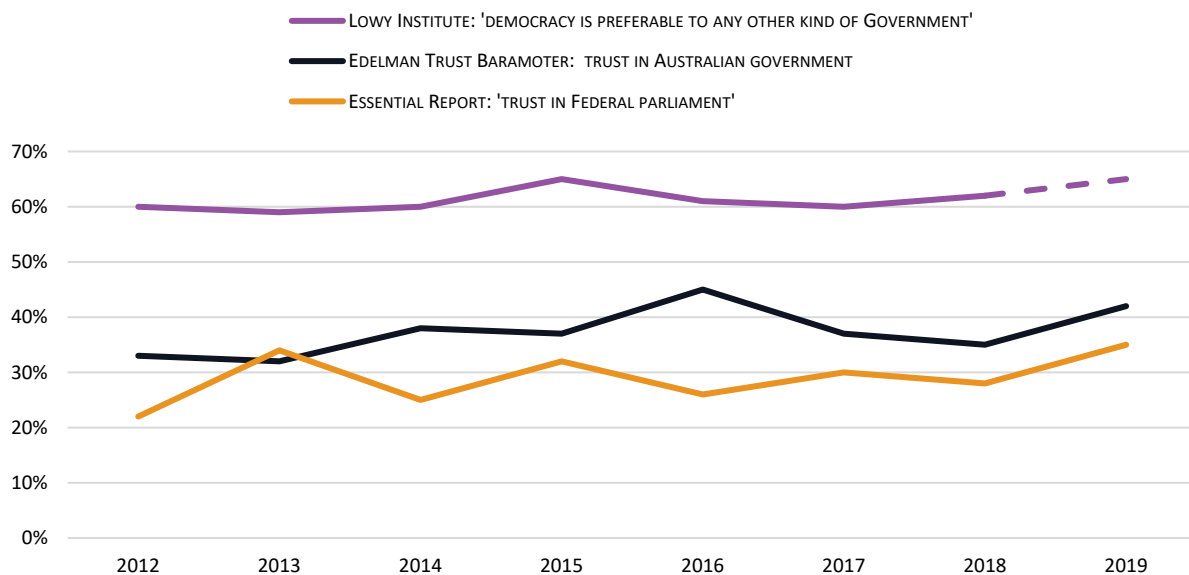
[13] Referenced in the World Happiness Report 2019, chapter 2, online data, Excel spreadsheet column L
[14] Essential Report, 24 Jan. 2017, 13 March 2019
[15] Natasha Kassam, Lowy Institute Poll 2019, p. 35

TRACKING AUSTRALIAN ATTITUDES

The Scanlon Foundation surveys provide annual tracking of trust in the Australian government since 2007. Over the course of the twelve surveys **the greatest change in trust occurred between 2009-10**, the period of the Rudd and Gillard governments. Since 2010 the survey has recorded **a large measure of consistency, albeit at a low level of trust in government.**

Since 2007 the Scanlon Foundation surveys have asked: **'How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?'** Respondents are presented with four options: 'almost always', 'most of the time', 'only some of the time', and 'almost never.' The highest proportion indicating the first or second response, 'almost always' or 'most of the time', was at 39% in 2007, the last year of the Howard government, and rose to 48% in 2009; this was followed by **a sharp fall to 31% in 2010**, in the context of a loss of confidence in the Rudd Labor government. **A low point of 26% was reached in 2012, representing a decline of 22 percentage points since 2009, followed by stabilisation in 2013.**

There was an expectation that in 2014, following the election of the new Abbott government there would be significant increase in level of trust, on the pattern of the increase in confidence in the early period of the Rudd government. This expectation was not realised. **While the level of trust increased, it was only by three percentage points, to 30% in 2014, and has remained at or close to that level (29%-30%) between 2015-19.**

The 2018 survey was conducted from July-August, a period of heightened political instability, with frequent criticism in sections of the media of the performance of Prime Minister Turnbull, who was voted out of office by the parliamentary Liberal Party in August.

In contrast with media assessments of the Turnbull government, the 2018 Scanlon Foundation survey did not register a decline in level of confidence. Trust in government (at 30%) was at the level of the previous four years. Additional indication that level of trust in the last period of the Turnbull government is provided by a re-analysis of Newspoll surveys, which pointed to a marginal increase in level of support, [16] and internal Liberal Party polling conducted in August which indicated that the Coalition was leading 52%-48% in 40 marginal seats. [17]

In 2019, trust is again at 30%, with a marginally higher 36% indicated in the Life in Australia™ survey.

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[16] 'Turnbull axed as gap closed on Labor', *The Australian*, 28 August 2018
[17] ABC, Q & A, 8 November 2018, transcript

Figure 18: 'How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?' Response: 'Almost always' or 'most of the time', 2007-19 (RDD and LinA)
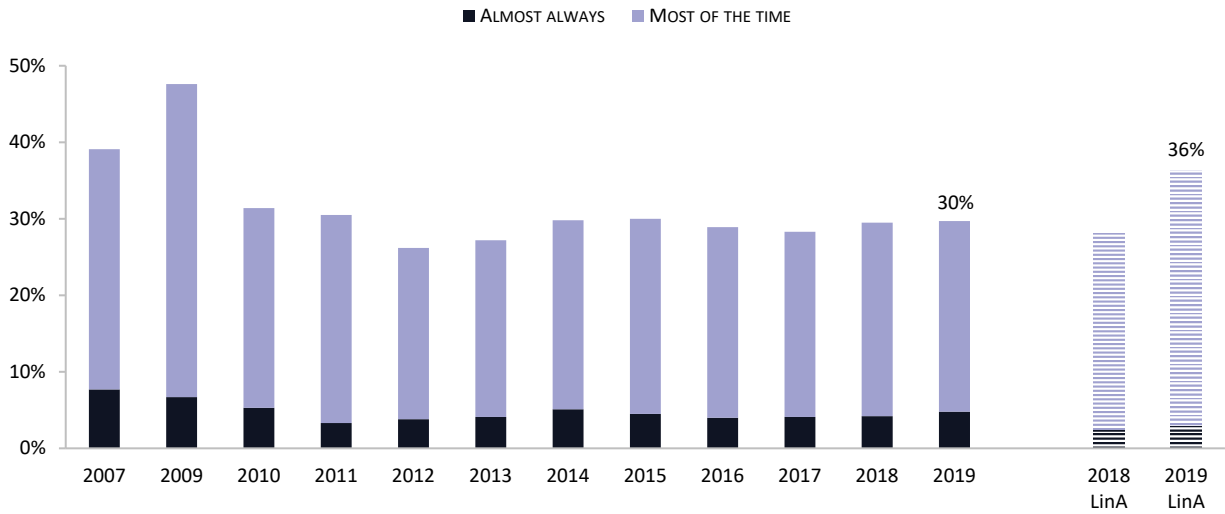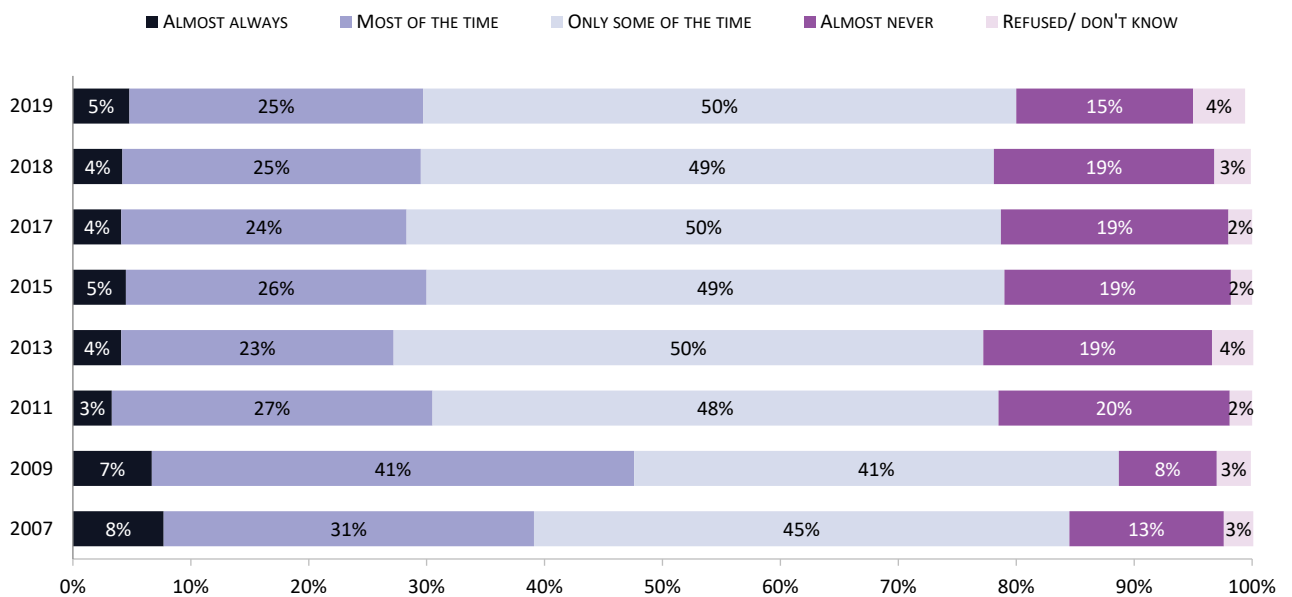

Figure 19: 'How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?', 2007-19 (RDD)

Analysis of sub-groups was undertaken using the combined data from the 2018-19 Life in Australia™ surveys, aggregated to increase reliability, an approach adopted in other sections of this report. The finding is of relatively high level of trust among those who described their current financial circumstances as 'prosperous' or 'very comfortable' (48%), and those who have a university degree (37%).

As in previous survey findings, a notable variation is found by political alignment, indicating that a key predictor of trust in government is a person's support or opposition to the party in power: thus 49% of those intending to vote Liberal/ National indicate trust, compared to 22% Labor, 21% Greens, and a very low 9% One Nation.

A significant finding, consistent with earlier Scanlon Foundation surveys, is that in only two of the thirty-two cells – financial circumstances described as 'prosperous' or 'very comfortable' and intending to vote Liberal/ National – is the level of trust close to 50%.

Table 22: 'How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?' Response: 'Almost always', 'most of the time', 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Gender	Female	Male					
	31	33					
State	Victoria	New South Wales	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	32	32	40	28	26		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	33	30					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	30	29	33	33	30	31	41
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	37	31	32	30	26		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	48	36	26	15			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	One Nation			
	22	49	21	9			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	30	29	38				

RANKING 'THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM'

As discussed earlier in this report, the first question in the survey is open-ended and asks: 'What is the most important problem facing Australia today?'

In 2019, concern over quality of government and politicians is much lower, the lowest level across the ten surveys since 2010. It is indicated by 6% of respondents (the same proportion in both modes of survey administration); this finding is in contrast with the average of 14% for 2012-14 and 10% for the years 2015-18.

Table 23: 'What is the most important problem facing Australia today?' Response: 'quality of government and politicians', 2010-19 (percentage and rank, RDD)

Survey year	%	Rank
2010	11	3
2011	13	3
2012	13	2
2013	13	= 2
2014	15	2
2015	9	4
2016	11	2
2017	10	2
2018	10	3
2019	6	5

NEED FOR CHANGE?

The Scanlon Foundation survey asks **respondents if 'the system of government we have in Australia works fine as it is, needs minor change, needs major change, or should be replaced.'** This question was first asked in 2014.

The proportion opting for the end-point responses has remained **largely constant over the six years the question was included in RDD survey,** with 14%-16% indicating 'works fine as it is' and 10%-11% 'should be replaced.' In the middle ground, those indicating 'needs minor change' has been in the range 40%-48% (42% in 2019), 'needs major change' in the range 23%-31% (28% in 2019). There was only minor variation in the pattern of response in the LinA survey.

In 2019, a combined 38% of respondents indicated 'needs major change' or 'should be replaced', the same proportion in LinA.

Analysis of sub-groups using the combined data from the 2018-19 LinA surveys in support of major change or replacement finds the highest proportion includes respondents who indicated that they are 'struggling to pay bills' or are 'just getting along' (65%) and whose education is only to Year 11 (50%). Analysed by intended vote, the highest proportion is among those intending to vote for One Nation (73%).

The lowest proportion favouring major change is among those whose self-described financial circumstance is 'prosperous' or 'living very comfortably' (23%) or are intending to vote Liberal/ National (24%).

The extent of support for a non-democratic system was tested by a question that asked if '**having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections'** would be a good or bad way of governing Australia? The question was asked in four surveys (2014, 2017-19) and obtains largely consistent response. **Less than 10% view such a system as 'very good'** (7% in 2019), an average of 17% 'fairly good' over the four surveys (16% in 2019). In the current survey 71% viewed such a system as 'very bad' or 'fairly bad'. The same pattern of response was obtained in the self-administered version of the survey, with 76% viewing such a system as 'very bad' or 'fairly bad'.

A context for appraisal of attitudes to the political system is provided by a question that asks 'how interested are you in politics?' In 2019, close to 15% indicated that they are 'not at all interested', while a quarter or more (25% RDD, 31% LinA) are 'a little interested,' a combined total in the range 40%-45%. **The level of disinterest needs to be considered when interpreting questions on attitudes to the political system. Negative assessment of democracy may reflect not only failure of the system, but also personal disinterest.** In the 2019 LinA survey, 83% of those very interested in politics considered that having a strong leader in a non-democratic system was 'very bad' or 'fairly bad' way of governing, a lower 60% of those 'not at all interested' in politics; the 'very bad' option was indicated by 63% of those very interested in politics, just 24% of those not at all interested.

Figure 20: 'Would you say the system of government we have in Australia works fine as it is, needs minor change, needs major change, or should be replaced?', 2014-19 (RDD and LinA)
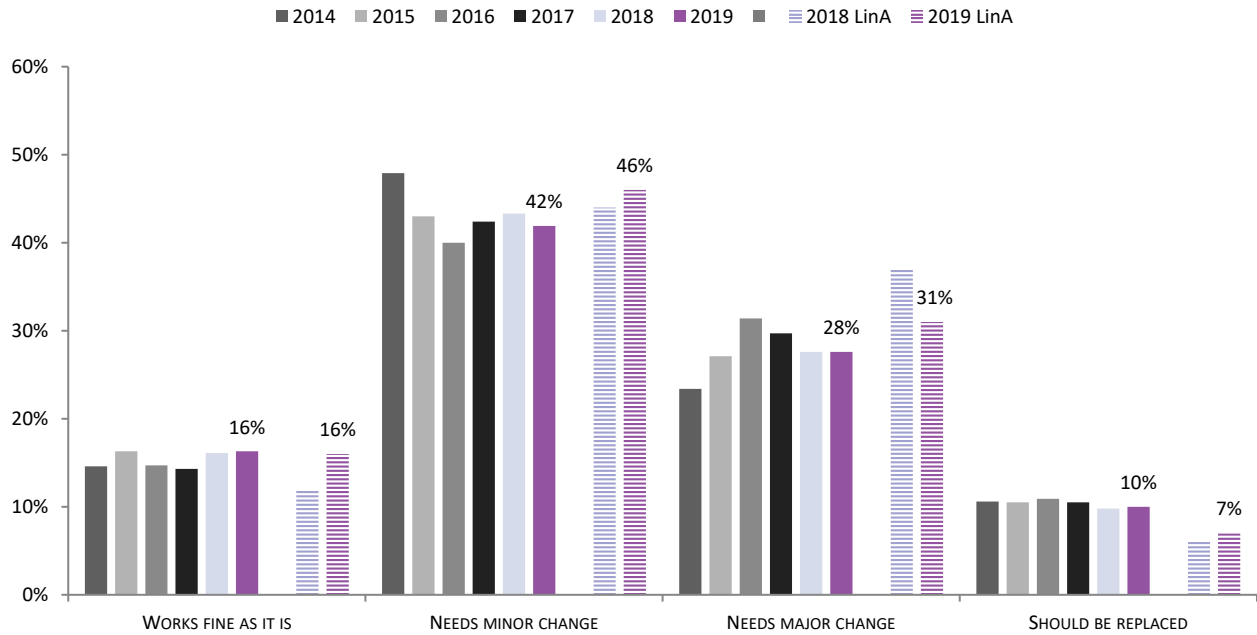

Figure 21: 'Is having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections a good or bad way of governing Australia?' cross-tabulated with 'How interested are you in politics?' 2018 and 2019 combined, LinA
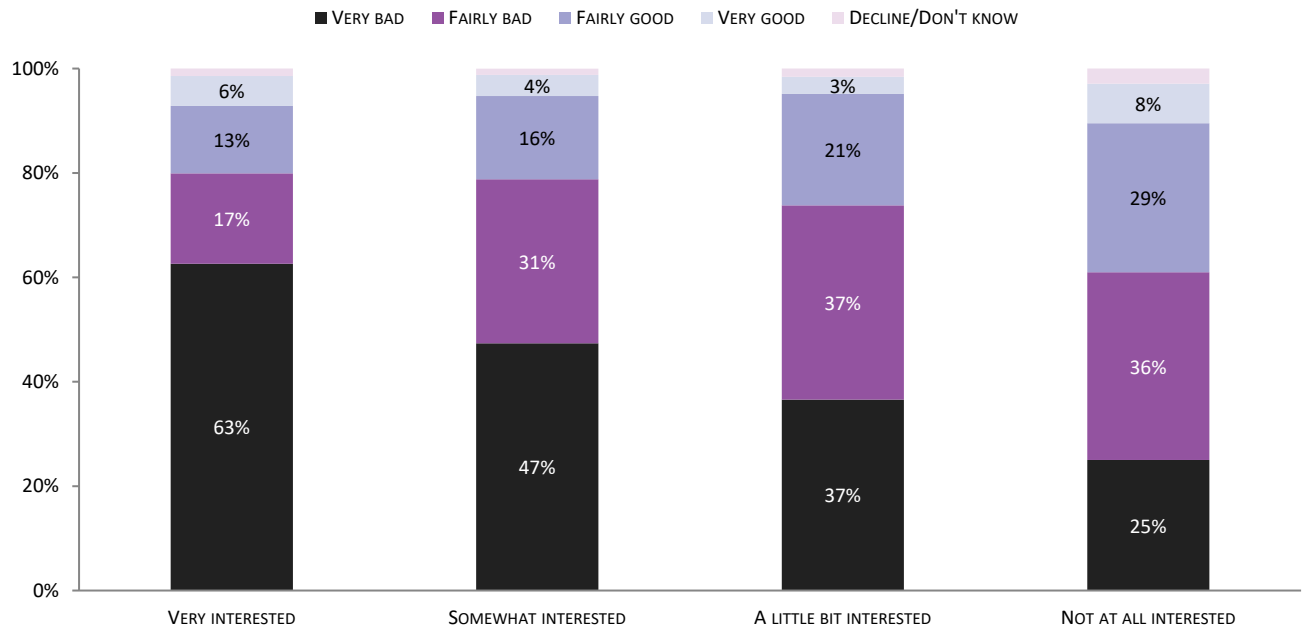
Table 24: 'Would you say the system of government we have in Australia works fine as it is, needs minor change, needs major change, or should be replaced?' Response: 'Needs major change' or 'should be replaced', 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Gender	Female	Male					
	41	39					

State	Victoria	New South Wales	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	37	41	34	41	48		

Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	38	44					

Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	38	44	48	42	42	36	26

Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	34	41	42	38	50		

Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	23	38	41	65			

Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	One Nation			
	44	24	52	73			

Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	41	48	34				

IMMIGRATION

The Scanlon Foundation survey provides the only probability based annual tracking of opinion on immigration employing consistent questionnaire structure and question wording to measure the trend of public opinion.

In the years 2007-09, the survey found that a majority considered the immigration intake to be 'about right' or 'too low,' in the range 53%–55%.

In 2010 there was heightened political debate over immigration and the desirable future population of Australia, in the context of increased unemployment and economic uncertainty. In that year the Scanlon Foundation survey obtained **the largest single year increase** in agreement that the intake was 'too high', up from 37% in 2009 to 47%.

This increased negativity towards immigration was, however, temporary. Between 2011 and 2013 the proportion in agreement that the intake was 'too high' was in the range 38%-42%, between 2014 and 2016 a lower 34%-35%.

In 2017 there was a minor increase in 'too high' response, up three percentage points from 34% to 37%, while 56% considered that it was 'about right' or 'too low.'

In 2018 the negative proportion increased a further six percentage points to 43%, the second highest level since 2007.

With a recorded increase of nine percentage points in the 'too high' response between 2016-18, the Scanlon Foundation survey was consistent with the finding polls that recorded an increase in concern at the level of immigration. But **it differed in finding that this remained a minority perspective**, with the majority view in 2018 (52%) that the intake was 'about right' or 'too low.'

The 2019 Scanlon Foundation survey finds that concern at the level of immigration has lessened marginally, but not at a level of statistical significance: agreement that the intake is 'too high' has declined from 43% to 41%, while the proportion agreeing that the intake is 'about right' or 'too low' is at 53%, up from 52%.

If attention is narrowed to those who are Australian citizens (and have voting rights) there is little difference in the result.

Across the twelve Scanlon Foundation surveys, 40% of citizens have considered the intake to be 'too high'; for the last six years the proportions are 36%, 36%, 34%, 38%, 45% and 42%.

Lessened concern in 2019 has been found in three other surveys which provide for tracking of attitudes over time.

The **Lowy Institute Poll** conducted in March 2019 employs a similarly worded but not identical question to the Scanlon Foundation. It found that those of the view that the intake was 'too high' was at 47%, down from 54% in 2018. [18]

The Scanlon Foundation survey conducted in July 2019 on the **Life in Australia™ panel** obtained 41% of the view that the intake is 'too high', down from 44% in 2018.

In a question with a different focus, **Essential Report** asks its respondents 'Do you think the levels of immigration into Australia over **the past ten years** has been... too high or too low?' While a majority consider that the intake has been too high, the proportion in agreement at 56% in January 2019 is down from 64% in April 2018. In another question, Essential Report asked respondents to specify 'the most important issue for the Federal Government … over the next 12 months' and provided for indication of three issues. In February 2019, 24% selected 'limit the amount of immigration', in October 2019 a lower 19%. [19]

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[18] Natasha Kassam, Lowy Institute Poll 2019, p. 17
[19] Essential Report, 5 Oct. 2016, 24 April 2018, 15 Jan. 2019, 16 Oct. 2019

Figure 22: 'What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia?', 2007-19, RDD
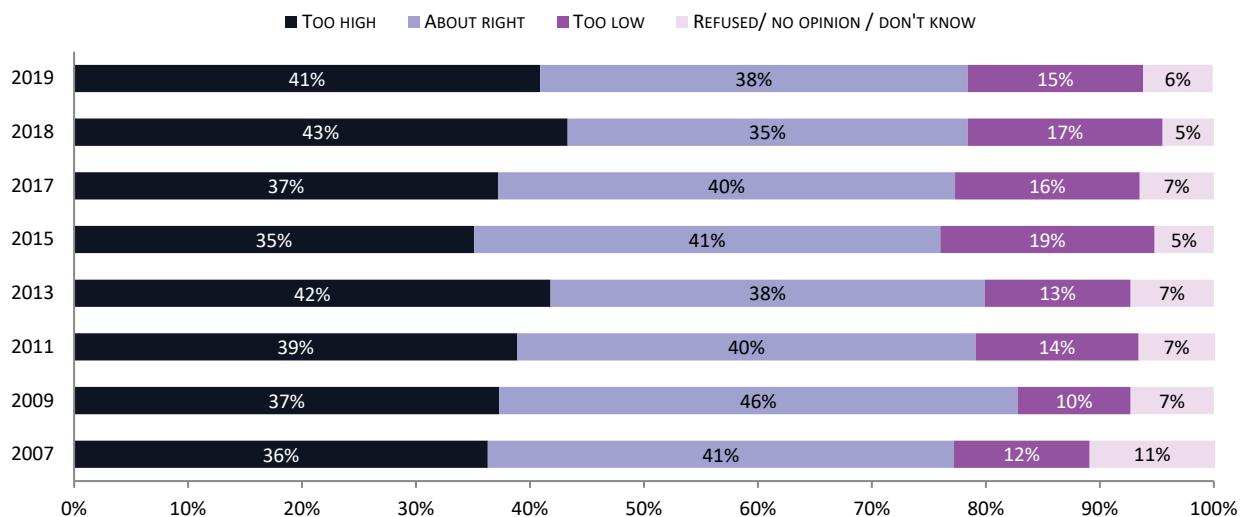

Legend: ■ Too high ■ About right ■ Too low ■ Refused/ no opinion / don't know

Year	Too high	About right	Too low	Refused/no opinion/don't know
2019	41%	38%	15%	6%
2018	43%	35%	17%	5%
2017	37%	40%	16%	7%
2015	35%	41%	19%	5%
2013	42%	38%	13%	7%
2011	39%	40%	14%	7%
2009	37%	46%	10%	7%
2007	36%	41%	12%	11%

**Table 25: 'What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present? Would you say it is…',
2007-19 (percentage, RDD)**

Survey year	Too high	About right	Too low	About right + too low	No opinion/ Don't know
2007	36	41	12	53	11
2009	37	46	10	55	7
2010	47	36	10	46	7
2011	39	40	14	55	7
2012	38	42	14	56	7
2013	42	38	13	51	7
2014	35	42	17	58	8
2015	35	41	19	60	5
2016	34	40	19	59	7
2017	37	40	16	56	7
2018	43	35	17	52	5
2019	41	38	15	53	6

*Change between 2018 and 2019 not statistically significant at p<.05

**Table 26: 'What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present? Would you say it is…',
2018-19 (percentage, LinA)**

Survey year	Too high	About right	Too low	About right + too low	No opinion/ Don't know
2018	44	40	15	55	2
2019	41	45	13	58	1

EXPLAINING SHIFTS IN OPINION

In past years the interpretation presented in the Scanlon Foundation survey reports has been that **two key factors determine shift in opinion in Australia on attitudes to the immigration intake: the condition of the labour market, particularly the level of unemployment, and the political prominence of immigration issues.**

Over the long term, there has been a strong correlation between changes in the level of unemployment and shifts in attitude to immigration, a Pearson correlation of 0.88 (p<0.0001).

From 1989 to 1992 unemployment in Australia increased from 6% to 11%; in that context, the negative view of immigration recorded in a number of polls exceeded 70%. As labour market conditions improved, concern at the level of immigration decreased.

In recent years, as the level of unemployment has been below 6%, concern that the immigration intake was too high was close to a historical low for Australia, in the range 34%-37% from 2014 to 2017.

The increase in negative sentiment towards immigration in 2017 and 2018 did not appear to be linked to economic concerns. The level of unemployment has been trending downwards.

The Scanlon Foundation surveys have not found a significant increase in the level of economic concern between 2015 and 2019. Economic issues are ranked first as the major problem facing Australia, but the proportion of respondents specifying this has declined since 2014, from 34% to 28%.

The 2014-19 surveys asked respondents 'how worried are you that you will lose your job in the next year or so.' Of respondents aged 18-64 and in employment, 20% in 2014 indicated that they were 'very worried' or 'worried', 17% in 2015, 23% in 2016, a much lower 10% in 2017, 12% in 2018 and 13% in 2019.

The proportion aged 18-64 indicating that they were 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with their 'present financial situation' changed little over the last five years: 26% in 2015, 23% in 2016, 24% in 2017, 26% in 2018, and 25% in 2019.

While there is no evidence that links current shifts in attitude to economic insecurity, there is evidence that links to **the second explanatory factor, the political context.** The proportion of the view that immigration is 'too high' markedly increased in 2010, to a lesser extent in 2013 and 2018; 2010 and 2013 were years in which federal elections were held; 2018 was a year of political instability, with increased attention to size of the immigration intake and population growth.

Although 2019 was an election year, immigration was not a major issue in the campaigns of the major parties. Prime Minister Morrison set the tone in November 2018 in what was described as **a 'dramatic shift in rhetoric'**, with his statement that while 'population growth has played a key role in our economic success … I know Australians in our biggest cities are concerned about population …'

> The roads are clogged, the buses and trains are full. The schools are taking no more enrolments. I hear what you are saying. **I hear you loud and clear.**'[20]

In the Morrison government's 'Plan for Australia's future population' released in March 2019, two months before the election, **the permanent migration cap was cut by 15%** from the level in 2016-17 to 160,000 and new regional visa places were introduced.[21] This policy was not challenged by the Labor Opposition and immigration 'disappeared from the campaign.'[22]

[20] Bevan Shields, '"Enough, enough, enough": Scott Morrison says he will cut Australia's migration intake', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 Nov. 2018
[21] Prime Minister of Australia, 'A Plan for Australia's Future Population,' Media release, 20 March 2019
[22] Bo Seo, 'Why immigration has disappeared from the election campaign,' *Australian Financial Review*, 16 May 2019

Figure 23: Time series, trend of unemployment and view that immigration is 'too high', 1974-2019

A third explanatory factor is the impact of immigration on quality of life in major cities, although this is a factor that is not simply quantifiable in terms of increased population size and its impact. It needs to be considered in the context of the character of individual cities and the politics of immigration in specific regions.

New questions first included in 2018 and repeated in the 2019 Scanlon Foundation survey provide insight into issues of greatest concern.

Consistent with the argument that the shift in attitudes that has occurred is not primarily driven by economic fears, in 2019 only a minority of close to one-third (27% RDD, 35% LinA) indicate concern that 'immigrants take jobs away,' and fewer (19% RDD, 23% LinA) disagree with the proposition that 'immigrants are good for the economy.' Similar proportions were obtained in the earlier 2018 survey.

But the two years of surveying on the self-completion LinA panel, which as discussed lessens the risk of Social Desirability Bias masking true opinions, does indicate a high the level of concern over the impact of immigration.

In both the RDD and LinA versions of the Scanlon Foundation survey, the highest level of concern is for the 'overcrowding in cities', the perceived 'impact of immigration on house prices', government failure to 'manage population growth', and 'impact on the environment.'

In the interviewer administered survey, majority negative opinion is obtained only for overcrowding; in the LinA survey, majority negative views are indicated for all four top ranked issues: overcrowding (65%, 2018; 70%, 2019); house prices (60%, 60%); government failure to manage population growth (59%, 57%); and environmental impact (50%, 58%)

Among the substantial minority of survey respondents who indicate that the current immigration intake is 'too high,' the level of negative sentiment is close to 20 percentage points higher, in 2019 in the range 72%-90% (RDD, LinA) regarding the impact of overcrowding and 64%-80% regarding house prices.

On the other hand, among those who consider the intake to be 'about right' or 'too low', the levels of concern are markedly lower: thus 39%-56% are concerned by the impact of overcrowding, 35%-46% by the impact on house prices, and just 13%-17% over impact on jobs.

These findings highlight the extent of concern and potential for majority opinion to oppose current immigration levels. The annual tracking of opinion by the Scanlon Foundation survey indicates that this has not yet occurred, but the potential is evident.

Table 27: Concerns about immigration, selected questions, (i) all respondents, (ii) those who consider the immigration intake 'too high', (iii) those who consider the immigration intake 'about right' or 'too low', 2018 and 2019 (percentage, RDD)

Question and response: RDD	All respondents		Respondents who consider the intake to be 'too high'		Respondents who consider the intake is 'about right' or 'too low'	
	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
Concern at 'impact of immigration on overcrowding of Australian cities' – 'a great deal', 'somewhat'	54	52	73	72	40	39
Concern at 'impact of immigration on house prices' – 'a great deal', 'somewhat'	49	46	65	64	36	35
Government management of population growth – 'very badly', 'fairly badly'	48	44	66	59	36	35
Concern at 'impact of immigration on the environment' – 'a great deal', 'somewhat'	38	44	51	58	29	36
'Immigrants take jobs away' – 'strongly agree', 'agree'	31	27	50	47	15	13
'Immigrants are generally good for the Australian economy' – 'strongly disagree', 'disagree'	14	19	27	37	4	6
'Immigrants improve Australian society by bringing new ideas and cultures' – 'strongly disagree', 'disagree'	14	14	25	28	4	3
N (unweighted)	1,500	1,500	638	596	792	831

Table 28: Concerns about immigration, selected questions, (i) all respondents, (ii) those who consider the immigration intake 'too high', (iii) those who consider the immigration intake 'about right' or 'too low', 2018 and 2019 (percentage, LinA)

Question and response: LinA	All respondents		Respondents who consider the intake to be 'too high'		Respondents who consider the intake is 'about right' or 'too low'	
	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
Concern at 'impact of immigration on overcrowding of Australian cities' – 'a great deal', 'somewhat'	65	70	88	90	47	56
Concern at 'impact of immigration on house prices' – 'a great deal', 'somewhat'	60	60	80	80	45	46
Government management of population growth – 'very badly', 'fairly badly'	59	57	75	74	46	45
Concern at 'impact of immigration on the environment' – 'a great deal', 'somewhat'	50	58	69	76	36	46
'Immigrants take jobs away' – 'strongly agree', 'agree'	34	35	58	61	14	17
'Immigrants are generally good for the Australian economy' – 'strongly disagree', 'disagree'	25	23	47	47	8	6
'Immigrants improve Australian society by bringing new ideas and cultures' – 'strongly disagree', 'disagree'	23	20	45	41	6	6
N (unweighted)	2,260	2,033	967	779	1,266	1,233

AGE AND EDUCATION

Further analysis of the aggregated 2018 and 2019 Life in Australia™ samples was undertaken to provide insight into the attitudes of highly educated young Australians, aged 18-34, a cohort that can be expected to have a major influence on the direction of Australian society in coming decades. The 2016 Census indicated that close to 40% of young adults now have a university level qualification, compared to 15% of those over the age of 65.

The main concerns of 18-34 year-old respondents who have obtained a university degree are similar to the full sample, with the highest levels indicated for house prices, overcrowding, the environment, and government management of population growth.

However, among highly educated young adults there is **a very low level of agreement with a range of negative propositions concerning immigration;** thus, disagreement with the propositions that immigrants do not improve Australia by bringing new ideas and cultures is at 9%, that immigrants are good for the economy at 10%, that a diverse immigration intake does not make Australia stronger at 11%, and agreement that the immigration intake is too high also at 11%.

There is a marked contrast in the attitudes of those aged 65 or above whose highest educational qualification is at the trade or apprenticeship level. **On three issues there is less than 10% difference between the two age and educational groups**: concern over the impact of immigration on house prices and the environment and negative view of government management of population growth. But there are **marked contrasts in response to six of the propositions**, notably the level of immigration (11%, 66%), the value of a diverse immigration intake (11%, 54%), and the impact of immigrants on overcrowding (50%, 82%).

Table 29: Attitudes towards immigration, two age groups and highest educational attainment compared, 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Question and response	18-34 BA or higher	65+ School, trade, or apprenticeship	Difference
Concern at 'impact of immigration on house prices' – 'a great deal', 'somewhat'	60	65	6
Concern at 'impact of immigration on the environment' – 'a great deal', 'somewhat'	47	54	7
Government management of population growth – 'very badly', 'fairly badly'	44	54	9
'Immigrants improve Australian society by bringing new ideas and cultures' – 'strongly disagree', 'disagree'	9	27	18
'Immigrants are generally good for the Australian economy' – 'strongly disagree', 'disagree'	10	28	18
'Immigrants take jobs away' – 'strongly agree', 'agree'	18	43	25
Concern at 'impact of immigration on overcrowding of Australian cities' – 'a great deal', 'somewhat'	50	82	32
'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes stronger' – 'strongly disagree', 'disagree'	11	54	44
Number of immigrants at present – 'too high'	11	66	55
N (unweighted)	359	538	

TOWARDS A NUANCED UNDERSTANDING

There are two additional issues to be considered if discussion of attitudes towards immigration is to move beyond a narrow focus on the size of the intake: **the relative importance of the issue, and the perceived value of immigration to the nation. Do Australians still embrace the notion that their country is an immigrant nation, one in which immigration will continue to play an important role**, or is there readiness to bring the program to an end, a rejection of the idea that immigration is good for the country?

If it was the case, as has been suggested by more than one media commentator and politician, that the population is angry and demand that immigration be radically curtailed, then immigration would rank first – or very highly – when survey respondents are asked to rank issues of importance for the country. This has been the finding of some European surveys.[23]

Since 2011 the Scanlon Foundation surveys have asked respondents, in an open-ended question, to indicate 'the most important problem facing Australia today**.' In 2018, just 7% of respondents in both survey modes indicated that immigration was the most important problem, in 2019 6% (RDD) and 10% (LinA).** While the proportion has increased since 2015 in the interviewer administered survey, which provides time series data, the increase has been by just 4%.

There is further evidence of the relative importance of the immigration. In April 2018, at a time of growing concern at the level of immigration, the Essential Report specified six 'main problems facing Australia', one of which was 'excessive levels of immigration.' In the ranking, which combined respondents' first, second and third choices, immigration came fifth. The rank order was: 'housing affordability pushing people to the fringes of major cities' (66%); lack of government investment in infrastructure like roads and public transport' (62%); lack of employment opportunities driving people to the cities' (62%); 'poor planning that means people live too far from where they work' (45%); 'excessive levels of immigration' (37%); and 'lack of regulations for property developers' (29%).

Table 30: What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?', 2013-19 (percentage, RDD and LinA)

Issue	RDD							LinA	
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2018	2019
Immigration/ population growth (concern)	3	3	3	5	6	7	6	7	10

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[23] In Britain, the Ipsos Mori Issues Index found that between 2014-16 immigration was the 'most important issue' facing the country, indicated by a peak of 56% of respondents. In July 2019, immigration had fallen to the ninth ranked issue, specified by 14%. In the European Union, the Eurobarometer in 2015 found that immigration was the equal top ranked issue (together with unemployment), indicated by 36% of respondents averaged across the EU28 countries, and above 50% in Germany (76%), Malta (65%), Denmark (60%), Austria (56%), Netherlands (56%), and Sweden (53%). In 2019 it was the fifth ranked issue, indicated by 17%. In terms of issues facing the EU as a whole, immigration was by a large margin the top ranked issue in 2015 and remained top ranked in 2019, although the proportion selecting immigration fell from 58% to 34%. Standard Eurobarometer 84, Autumn 2015, Public Opinion in the European Union, T31 (QA3a); Annex Spring 2019, Standard Eurobarometer.

THE POLITICS OF IMMIGRATION

The previous discussion considered shifts in attitude across the total population. To provide further insight into the political significance of immigration analysis is narrowed to different segments of the population.

In their campaigning, political parties focus not on all voters, but on the voters who are most likely to switch their support to – or from – their party in marginal electorates.

There is a different salience of immigration for the respective political parties. The current party of government, the Liberal-National Coalition, is positioned as the party more closely aligned to the business sector, which in large measure is a supporter of current immigration levels. [24] But Liberal-National voters also indicate a relatively high level of concern at the current immigration intake – in the interviewer administered version of the survey (RDD), in 2018 **56% of Coalition supporters indicated that the current intake is 'too high', compared to 36% Labor and 13% Greens ; in 2019, the relative proportions were 52%, 32%, and 12%**. There is a similar pattern of response in the online version of the survey (LinA), within two percentage points for the major parties in 2019.

Aggregated analysis of the 2018 and 2019 LinA samples finds relatively high levels in agreement with the view that the immigration intake is too high among One Nation voters (83%), those with education up to Year 11 level (70%), and aged 65-74 (64%) and 75+ (56%).

Relatively low levels of agreement are among Greens voters (12%), those aged 18-24 (18%), with a university degree (27%), and of non-English speaking background (33%).

The politics of immigration are simplest to navigate for the Greens and One Nation – on the one hand, among Greens supporters there is little demand for a cut in immigration, on the other for One Nation it is a major demand and it serves to define the party. Opinion is more divided among Labor and Coalition voters.

Table 31: 'What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia?', Response: 'Too high' by intended vote, 2018 and 2019 (percentage, RDD and LinA)

Intended vote	2018		2019	
	RDD	LinA	RDD	LinA
Greens	13	10	12	14
Labor	36	43	32	33
Liberal/National	56	54	52	54
One Nation	91	82	97	83

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[24] See for example, James Pearson, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 'Immigration a resounding positive for business and communities', 27 February 2018; Paul Karp, 'Industry brands Australia's 10% migration intake drop disappointing', *The Guardian*, 13 July 2018

Table 32: 'What do you think of the number of immigrants accepted into Australia?', Response: 'Too high', 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Gender	Female	Male					
	43	43					

State	Victoria	New South Wales	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	41	45	44	45	42		

Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	40	49					

Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	18	24	43	51	51	64	56

Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	27	40	51	34	70		

Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	35	42	43	51			

Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	One Nation			
	38	54	12	83			

Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	48	34	33				

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT: CANADIAN OPINION

As discussed in earlier Scanlon Foundation reports, there is substantial evidence to indicate that Australia and Canada rank as the countries most receptive to immigration.

The **2018 Gallup World Poll** asked native-born residents if their country was a good place for immigrants to live. Canada ranked first, Australia equal fourth. Among immigrants, Australia/New Zealand obtained the highest ranking. The 2016 Gallup Migrant Acceptance Index for 138 countries ranked Canada fourth, Australia seventh as the most accepting. The average world score was 5.34, for Canada 8.14 and for Australia 7.98. [25]

The **Pew Research Centre's Global Attitudes Survey** reported findings on immigration for 18 countries. Canada ranked first for the level of agreement (68%) with the proposition that 'Immigrants today make our country stronger because of their work and talents', Australia (64%) ranked second, close to the United Kingdom and Sweden. Lowest agreement was at 18% in Russia, 12% Italy, 10% Greece, and 5% Hungary. [26]

In Canada, during the 2019 election it had been anticipated that immigration would emerge as a major issue, but as in Australia it did not eventuate. The Peoples Party, whose policy calls for a large cut in the immigration and refugee intakes and elimination of funding to promote multiculturalism attracted less than 2% of the vote.

The **Focus Canada survey conducted by the Environics Institute** provides a long-term perspective on Canadian attitudes. The survey has been conducted since 1976 by the Environics Institute, and in 2019 was administered by telephone to a random sample of 2,000. [27]

The consistent finding over the last twenty years is that a majority of Canadians reject the proposition that their country is taking too many immigrants.

In the survey conducted in October 2019, 63% disagreed with the proposition that 'overall, there is too much immigration in Canada,' 34% agreed.

In response to the proposition that 'overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy,' 80% agreed, equal with the highest level recorded over the past 25 years.

The Focus Canada survey includes a question on '**the most important problem** facing Canada today,' with respondents able to choose from a list of 28 issues. In 2019**, immigration ranked eighth, indicated by just 2%.** The major finding, as in Australia, is the **heightened concern over the environment and climate change**, nominated as the most important by 24% of respondents, up from 10% in 2018.

Analysis of population segments obtains results similar to Australia. Positive views of immigration are most common among younger Canadians, those with a university education, with higher income, and women. Negative views are most evident in some provinces, among Canadians aged 60 and over, those who did not complete high school, and with lower income. The largest divergence is by political alignment; among major parties, lower support is obtained among supporters of the Conservative Party.

However, Canadians are **divided on the question of whether 'there are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values**,' described by the Environics Institute as 'the most contentious aspect of immigration in Canada.' In 2019, 50% agreed, 43% disagreed, although the proportion in agreement has declined over the last ten years from 72% in 1993.

Table 33: 'Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada', 2015-19 (percentage)

Response	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Strongly agree, agree	38	37	35	35	34
Strongly disagree, disagree	57	58	62	60	63

Source: Environics Institute, Focus Canada, 2015-2019

[25] Gallup Blog, 'Worldwide, 54% see communities as good for migrants', 8 Oct. 2019; 'Revisiting the most – and least accepting countries for migrants,' 18 Dec. 2018; 'Migrants, native-born see areas as good for migrants,' 15 Oct. 2019
[26] Pew Research Centre, 'Around the world, more say immigrants are a strength than a burden,' 14 March 2019
[27] Environics Institute for Survey Research, Focus Canada 2019 (and earlier), Canadian public opinion about immigration

BACK TO WHITE AUSTRALIA?

DISCRIMINATION IN SELECTION POLICY

In four survey years, 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2019, the Scanlon Foundation survey tested the extent of support for immigration restriction. Respondents were asked:

'Do you agree or disagree that when a family or individual applies to migrate to Australia that it should be possible for them to be rejected simply on the basis of…

[a] Their race or ethnicity?

[b] Their religion?'

Across the four years there has been a large measure of consistency in the rejection of discrimination by 70% or more of respondents.

For both modes of surveying, strong support for discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity is indicated by a small minority, in the range 5%-8%.

Strong support for discrimination on the basis of religion is at a marginally higher level, in the range 8%-11% for both modes of surveying.

With 'strongly agree' or 'agree' responses combined, support for discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity is in the range 15%-23%; on the basis of religion 17%-20% in the interviewer administered version (RDD), a higher 29% in the self-completion version (LinA).

Table 34: 'Do you agree or disagree that when a family or individual applies to migrate to Australia, that it should be possible for them to be rejected simply on the basis of their race or ethnicity?' 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2019 RDD, 2018 and 2019 LinA (percentage)

Response	RDD				LinA	
	2015	2017	2018	2019	2018	2019
Strongly agree	7	8	7	5*	8	8
Agree	12	8	8	10	13	15
Sub-total agree	19	16	15	15	22	23
Neither agree nor disagree	1	2	1	1	0	0
Disagree	36	32	32	32	43	41
Strongly disagree	41	48	49	49	35	36
Sub-total disagree	77	80	81	81	78	77

*Change between 2018 and 2019 statistically significant at p<.05

Table 35: 'Do you agree or disagree that when a family or individual applies to migrate to Australia, that it should be possible for them to be rejected simply on the basis of their religion?' 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2019 RDD, 2018 and 2019 LinA (percentage)

Response	RDD				LinA	
	2015	2017	2018	2019	2018	2019
Strongly agree	9	9	8	8	11	11
Agree	12	11	9	10	17	18
Sub-total agree	20	20	18	17	29	29
Neither agree nor disagree	2	3	2	1	0	0
Disagree	38	33	35	30	39	40
Strongly disagree	39	41	43	49*	32	30
Sub-total disagree	76	74	78	79	71	70

*Change between 2018 and 2019 statistically significant at p<.05

SUPPORT FOR DISCRIMINATION

Analysis by intended vote finds that by a large margin the highest proportion in favour of discrimination in selection policy are supporters of One Nation.

As noted, there is a higher level of support for discrimination on the basis of religion. Analysis of attitudes to religious discrimination by the two modes of survey administration finds support for discrimination among Greens voters in the range 8%-10%, Labor 15%-23%, Liberal/National 25%-38%, and One Nation 53%-61%. Close to one-third of One Nation supporters indicate 'strong agreement' with discrimination.

Analysis of support for discrimination was undertaken by eight additional variables: gender, state of residence, region (capital city or rest of state), age, highest level of educational attainment, self-described financial situation, citizenship, religion, and country of birth. Since attitudes on discrimination are largely constant, the 2018 and 2019 LinA surveys were combined to provide greater reliability for this sub-group analysis.

The highest level of agreement (above 30%) with discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity is among those aged 65 or above (33%-35%) and with highest level of education up to Year 11 (35%). Agreement is also at a high level among residents of Western Australia (30%).

Agreement above 35% with discrimination on the basis of religion is indicated by those with highest level of educational up to Year 11 (41%), aged 65-74 (38%), among residents of Western Australia (37%), of the Anglican faith (35%), and those who are poor or struggling to pay bills (35%).

Table 36: 'Do you agree or disagree that when a family or individual applies to migrate to Australia, that it should be possible for them to be rejected simply on the basis of their religion?' 2015, 2017-19 combined (percentage, RDD)

Response - RDD	Greens	Labor	Liberal/ National	One Nation
Strongly agree	4	5	12	36
Agree	4	10	13	17
Sub-total	8	15	25	53
N (unweighted)	585	1,657	2,151	183

Table 37: 'Do you agree or disagree that when a family or individual applies to migrate to Australia, that it should be possible for them to be rejected simply on the basis of their religion?' 2018 and 2019 combined, (percentage, LinA)

Response - LinA	Greens	Labor	Liberal/ National	One Nation
Strongly agree	3	9	16	31
Agree	7	14	22	30
Sub-total	10	23	38	61
N (unweighted)	543	1,123	1,518	202

Table 38: 'Do you agree or disagree that when a family or individual applies to migrate to Australia, that it should be possible for them to be rejected simply on the basis of their race or ethnicity or religion?' by selected demographics 2018-19 (percentage. LinA)

		REJECT ON BASIS OF RACE OR ETHNICITY 'Strongly agree' + 'agree'	REJECT ON BASIS OF RELIGION 'Strongly agree' + 'agree'
GENDER	Male	25	32
	Female	20	26
STATE	VIC	19	25
	NSW	22	30
	WA	30	37
	SA	21	24
	QLD	22	30
REGION	Capital city	21	28
	Rest of state	25	32
AGE	18-24	17	22
	25-34	15	21
	35-44	17	28
	45-54	24	33
	55-64	23	32
	65-74	35	38
	75+	33	31
EDUCATION	BA or higher	14	21
	Diploma/Technical Certificate	21	30
	Trade/Apprenticeship	26	34
	Year 12	19	25
	Up to Year 11	35	41
FINANCIAL SITUATION	Prosperous/very comfortable	18	26
	Reasonably comfortable	24	31
	Just getting along	18	24
	Struggling to pay bills/poor	28	35
CITIZENSHIP	Australian	23	30
	Other	14	19
RELIGION	Catholic	27	31
	Anglican	29	35
	Other Christian	21	30
	Other religions	23	20
	No religion	17	27
BACKGROUND	Born in Australia	24	30
	(3rd Gen Australian)	25	31
	Overseas-ESB	14	23
	Overseas- NESB	21	28

A DIVERSE IMMIGRATION INTAKE

Further insight into levels of support for discrimination in immigration policy is provided by other questions in the Scanlon Foundation surveys.

In response to the proposition that 'accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger', there has been a consistent level of agreement, in the range 62%-68% across the interviewer administered surveys (RDD). Over the last four surveys agreement has been in the range 63%-68%. There is a similar level of agreement (63%-67%) in the two self-administered surveys (LinA).

Less than one-third of respondents have disagreed in the RDD survey, with a marginally higher 32%-36% in the LinA survey. 'Strong disagreement' is at 11%-12% in the 2019 surveys, with only minor variation (under four percentage points) since 2010.

Table 39: 'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger', 2007-19 (percentage, RDD)

Response	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Strongly agree	22	25	19	24	26	22	26	27	30	26	29	30
Agree	45	43	43	40	39	40	41	40	36	37	37	38
Sub-total agree	67	68	62	64	65	62	68	67	67	63	66	68
Neither agree nor disagree	3	3	6	6	6	6	5	4	4	5	3	4
Disagree	18	18	19	16	15	18	16	17	16	16	17	15
Strongly disagree	8	9	11	11	11	11	10	9	11	13	13	12
Sub-total disagree	26	27	30	27	26	29	26	27	27	30	30	28
N (unweighted)	2,012	2,019	2,021	2,001	2,000	1,200	1,526	1,501	1,500	2,236	1,500	1,500

*Change between 2018 and 2019 not statistically significant at p<.05

Table 40: 'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger', 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Response	2018	2019
Strongly agree	17	17
Agree	46	50
Sub-total agree	63	67
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0
Disagree	24	22
Strongly disagree	13	11
Sub-total disagree	36	32
N (unweighted)	2,260	2,033

*Change between 2018 and 2019 not statistically significant at p<.05

NATIONALITY

The Scanlon Foundation survey also tested attitudes towards specific national groups.

Between 2010 and 2013 the telephone administered Scanlon Foundation surveys asked respondents if their feelings were positive, negative or neutral towards specific national groups – and obtained a large measure of consistency across the four surveys. Ten nationalities were specified, selected to include English-speaking, European, Asian, Middle Eastern, African and Pacific countries.

Indicating high levels of acceptance, the level of negative sentiment towards immigrants from English speaking and European countries was close to 3%, towards immigrants from the Pacific Islands at 5%, and 12%-14% towards specified Asian countries (China, India). The highest negative sentiment at 16% was towards a specified African country (Ethiopia), and Middle Eastern countries – 22%-24% towards Iraq and 23%-27% towards Lebanon.

A relatively high proportion of respondents indicated that they were neutral towards the least favoured groups, in the range 28%-45% in 2013, with the highest proportion indicating a neutral response towards Lebanon 38%, Pacific Islands 38%, Iraq 43%, and Ethiopia 45%.

These findings indicate that, as in all countries, in Australia there continues to be a hierarchy of ethnic preference which informs attitudes towards immigrants, with negative views held by a minority. The pattern of neutral response, however, may be taken to indicate that survey respondents are reluctant to disclose their true level of unease or opposition to immigrants from a number of countries.

The potential impact of the interview administration of the surveys between 2010-13 – what is termed Social Desirability Bias discussed in the methodology section of this report – can be explored through consideration of attitudes to faith groups, with questions asked in the interviewer and self-administered versions of the survey.

Figure 24: 'Would you say your feelings are positive, negative or neutral towards immigrants from ….?', 2010-13 (RDD)
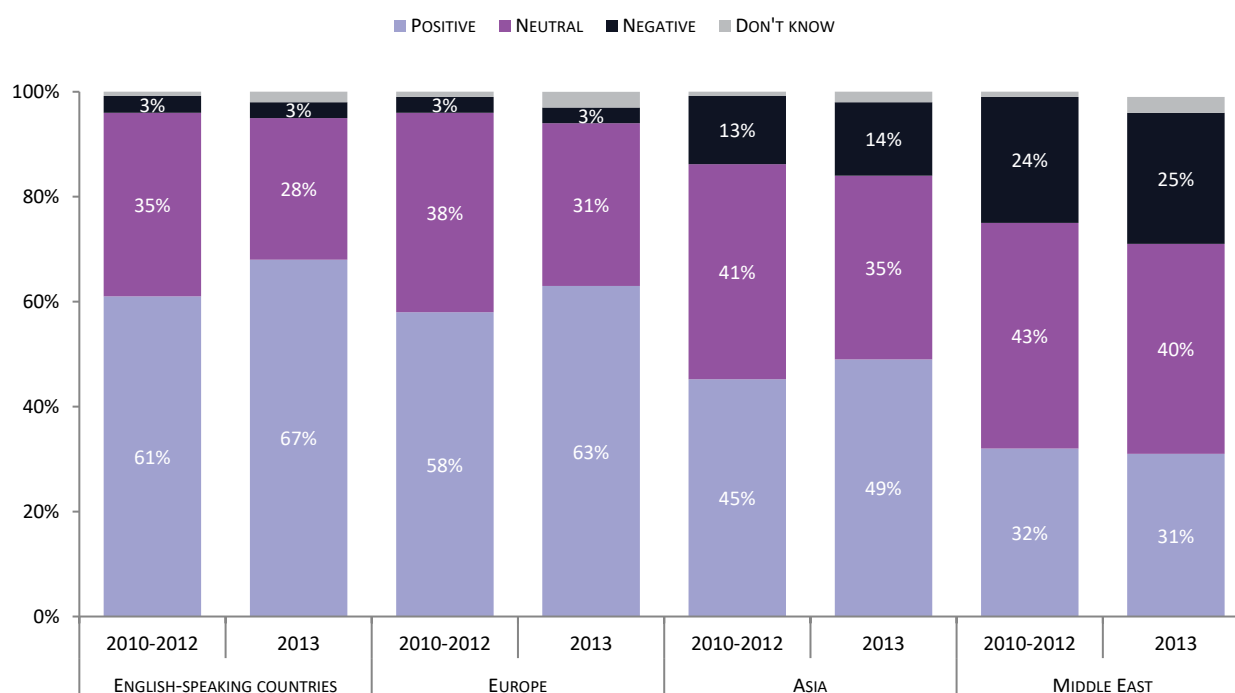
FAITH GROUPS AND MUSLIM IMMIGRATION

Nine Scanlon Foundation surveys (2010-12, 2014-19) have asked questions on attitudes to three faith groups, Christian, Buddhist, and Muslim. In 2019, those of the Hindu faith were also included. These surveys provide a comprehensive time series on attitudes to specific faith groups.

Over the course of the nine interviewer administered (RDD) Scanlon Foundation surveys, negative opinion towards Christians and Buddhists has been in the range 4%-6%. Negative attitude towards Muslims has been significantly higher, in the range 21%-25% (11% - 14% very negative), at an average of 24%.

In 2017 the question relating to faith groups was included in a general Life in Australia™ (LinA) survey, and as discussed, the full questionnaire was administered on LinA in 2018 and 2019. The results for the two survey modes find minor difference when attitudes to Christians and Buddhists are compared, although in 2019 the difference in attitudes towards Christians is at 10%. Negative attitude to Buddhists is in the range 3%-4% RDD, 6%-7% LinA. Negative attitude towards Christians is 4%-6% RDD, 12%-14% LinA. Negative attitudes towards Hindus is also at a relatively low level, respectively 6% and 10% by the two survey modes.

A much higher proportion indicate negative sentiment towards Muslims, and there is also greater variation by mode, over 15 percentage points – 21%-25% (RDD), 39%-41% (LinA).

This finding may indicate that while there is a strong measure of reliability in the finding of the interviewer administered survey with reference to immigration from Asian countries, on the assumption that respondents recognise that the highest proportion of Buddhists and Hindus are from Asia, the same reliability is not obtained in the interviewer administered question on attitudes to Muslims.

The level of negative sentiment towards those of the Muslim faith and by extension to immigrants from Muslim countries, remains a factor of significance in contemporary Australian society. In 2019, attitudes towards Muslims indicated by the interviewer administered survey are the most positive since 2012, but the three years of self-administered surveys indicates entrenched rather than shifting opinion.

Negative sentiment towards Muslims possibly explains the higher level of support for discrimination in immigrant selection policy on the basis of religion than race or ethnicity.

It is, however, a notable finding that across the two modes of surveying, and with different questions posed, **support for discrimination on the model of the historic White Australia Policy fails to gain support from more than 30% of respondents. Within sub-groups of the population, discrimination finds majority support only among One Nation supporters.**

Figure 25: 'Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards Muslims?', 2010-19 (RRD and LinA)
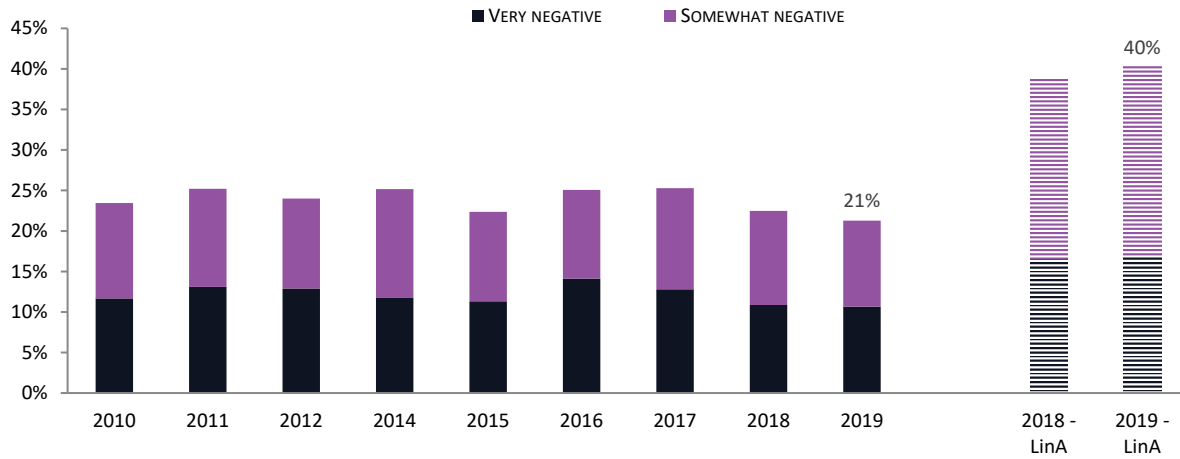

Table 41: 'Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards Muslims?', 2010-19 (percentage, RDD)

Response	2010	2011	2012	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Very positive	9	10	11	10	10	10	9	10	12
Somewhat positive	23	20	24	18	18	20	19	17	22*
Sub-total positive	**32**	**30**	**35**	**28**	**28**	**30**	**28**	**27**	**33***
Neutral	42	43	40	44	47	42	44	48	44
Somewhat negative	12	12	11	13	11	11	12	12	11
Very negative	12	13	13	12	11	14	13	11	11
Sub-total negative	**24**	**25**	**24**	**25**	**22**	**25**	**25**	**23**	**21**
Don't know/ decline	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2
N (unweighted)	2,021	2,001	2,000	1,526	1,501	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500

*Change between 2018 and 2019 statistically significant at p<.05

Table 42: 'Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards …?', Response: 'Very negative' and 'somewhat negative' 2017-19 (percentage, RDD and LinA)

Religious group	RDD			LinA		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Christians	6	5	4	12	12	14
Buddhists	4	3	4	6	7	6
Hindus	n/a	n/a	6	n/a	n/a	10
Muslims	25	23	21	41	39	40

*Change between 2018 and 2019 not statistically significant at p<.05

THE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

The Scanlon Foundation surveys establish that Australians draw a sharp distinction between refugees assessed overseas and admitted for resettlement under the Humanitarian Program – and those arriving by boat.

Scanlon Foundation surveys between 2010-12 asked respondents for their view of the Humanitarian program, which was explained **as resettling 'refugees who have been assessed overseas and found to be victims of persecution and in need of help.'** A large majority, in the range 67%-75%, indicated that they supported the Humanitarian program. The same question was asked in 2016 and obtained a higher level of **positive response at 80%.**

Respondents in 2016 were also asked for their perception of the size of the Humanitarian program, whether the 'current refugee intake is adequate, too few or too many'. Without necessarily knowing the size of the intake, 23% indicated that it was too few, a further 39% adequate, a total of 62%; **a minority, close to one-third (30%), indicated that it was 'too many' or 'much too many.'** Just 8% of respondents indicated that they did not know or declined to answer. Almost the same result was obtained in response to a question on the **'government's plan to bring refugees from the Syrian conflict to Australia'; 58% indicated support, 34% opposition.**

When asked 'if some of these refugees from the Syrian conflict came to live in your community, do you think they would be welcomed, or not?', **66% of respondents indicated 'very welcome' (11%) or 'welcome' (55%).** Just 4% indicated 'not welcome at all', a further 15% 'not welcome', a total of 19%.

A final question asked: 'would you prefer equal consideration be given to all religious and ethnic groups, or should priority be given to Christians?' **Over two in three respondents (69%) indicated preference for equal consideration**, while 26% indicated preference of Christians or did not approve of any Syrian refugees. This proportion is close to those indicating that they are negative towards those of the Muslim faith in interviewer administered surveys.

Table 43: 'Do you think that the current refugee intake is adequate, too few or too many?', 2016 (percentage, RDD)

Response	%
Much too few	6
Too few	17
Adequate	39
Too many	18
Much too many	12
Don't know/ decline	8
Total	100

Table 44: 'In the context of the government's plan to bring refuges from the Syrian conflict to Australia, would you prefer equal consideration be given to all religious and ethnic groups, or should priority be given to Christians?', 2016 (percentage, RDD)

Response	%
Preference for equal consideration to all religious and ethnic groups	69
Preference for Christians	24
Do not approve of any Syrian refugee intake	2
No opinion	3
Don't know/ decline	3
Total	100

ASYLUM SEEKERS, 2010-16

Attitudes to asylum seekers have been explored in the Scanlon Foundation surveys since 2010.

[1] The 2011 survey found that **a large majority of Australians have little understanding of the number of asylum seekers who reach the country by boat**.

[2] A second finding, consistent across the 2010-12 Scanlon Foundation surveys, was that the most common view of asylum seekers arriving by boat was that they are **illegal immigrants**.

Respondents were asked, in an open-ended question to which they could give more than one answer, what they thought was 'the main reason asylum seekers attempt to reach Australia by boat.' **The most common response, by a large margin, was that those arriving by boat were coming 'for a better life' – 54% in 2010, 48% in 2011 and 46% in 2012.**

[3] A question in the six surveys between 2010 and 2015 asked: 'which of the following four statements comes closest to your view about the best policy for dealing with asylum seekers trying to reach Australia by boat.' Four policy options were specified:

1. 'They should be allowed to apply for permanent residence.'

2. 'They should be allowed to apply for temporary residence only.'

3. 'They should be kept in detention until they can be sent back.'

4. 'Their boats should be turned back.'

Findings over the six surveys indicate that:

- **A higher proportion favour turning back of boats than eligibility for permanent residence**: in 2011 and 2012 there was almost no difference in support for the two positions (2011, 22% permanent, 23% turn back); in the context of increased boat arrivals during 2012-13 the proportion favouring eligibility for permanent residence fell to 18%, turn back increased to 33%.

- **Between 2014 and 2015 there was an increase in support for eligibility for permanent residence, but only from 18% to 24%,** while support for turn back remained higher at 31%-32%.

- Despite the government's success in preventing boat arrivals, and the adverse coverage of mandatory detention in sections of the media, **there was little evidence of widespread concern**. The first question in the survey asks respondents to indicate **the 'most important problem facing Australia today?' In 2016 poor treatment of asylum seekers was specified by just 2% of respondents, between 2017-19 by 1%.**

In 2016 the question on attitudes towards asylum seekers was asked in a different form, without a range of options. Respondents were asked: 'Do you approve of asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat?' **This form of question found a higher level of approval, although still a minority at 32%.**

Consideration of the distribution of responses found commonality in the middle ground: 18% indicate 'somewhat approve', 20% 'somewhat disapprove.' But there was a marked difference in the end point responses: 14% 'strongly approve', some three times this proportion, 42%, 'strongly disapprove.'

Table 45: 'Do you approve of asylum seekers who try to reach Australian by boat?' 2016 (percentage, RDD)

Response	%
Strongly approve	14
Somewhat approve	18
Sub-total approve	32
Neither approve nor disapprove	4
Somewhat disapprove	20
Strongly disapprove	42
Sub-total disapprove	61
Don't know/ decline	2
Total	100

Figure 26: 'Which of the following four statements comes closest to your view about the best policy for dealing with asylum seekers trying to reach Australia by boat?', 2010-15 (RDD)
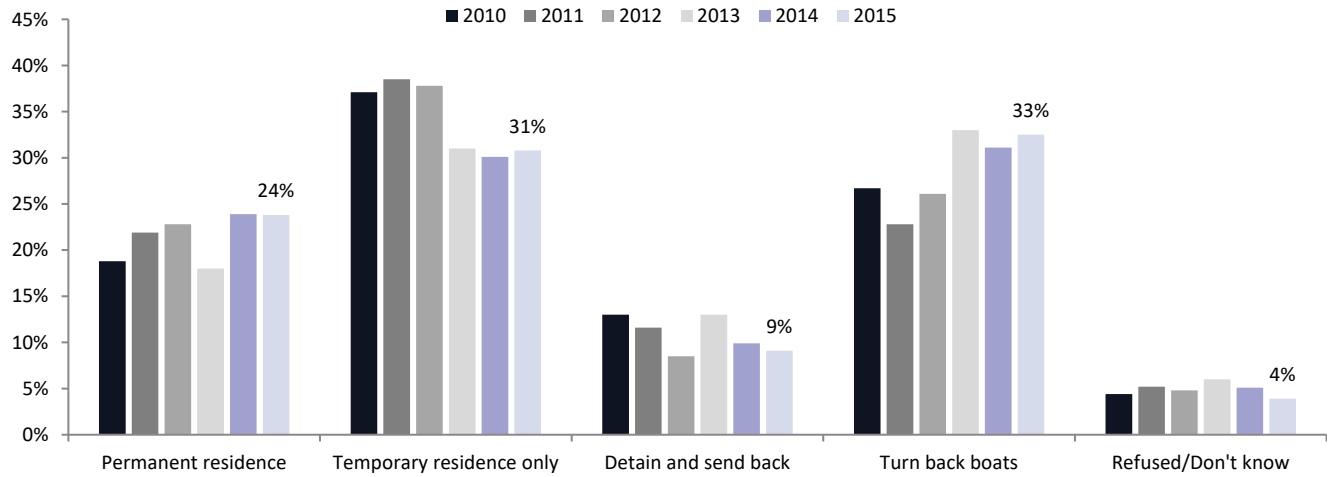
GOVERNMENT POLICY, 2018-19

In the 2018 and 2019 surveys, a new question asked respondents 'are you personally concerned that Australia is too harsh in its treatment of asylum seekers and refugees?' This question was asked in the context of effective measures to halt boat arrivals and policy which denies opportunity of settlement in Australia for those sent to Nauru and Manus Island for offshore processing.

Opinion is almost evenly divided, with marginally higher proportion indicating that they were not concerned in the self-completion version of the survey. In the 2019 interviewer administered survey, 48% indicated that they were 'a great deal' or 'somewhat' concerned, 47% 'only slightly' or 'not at all concerned'.

Analysis of attitudes was undertaken using nine variables: gender, state, region of residence, age, educational qualification, financial status, intended vote birthplace, and religion. The result points to **a large measure of consistency across the variables.**

In only three of the 37 cells is there substantial majority concern (above 60%) that Australia is too harsh in its treatment of asylum seekers: among those intending to vote Greens (87%), aged 18-24 (70%), and intending to vote Labor (61%).

Analysis of those responding 'not at all' or 'only slightly' concerned finds five cells above 60%: One Nation voters (84%), Liberal/National voters (70%), those with education up to Year 11 (66%), with Trade/Apprenticeship qualifications (64%), residents of Western Australia (63%), and Anglicans (61%).

Table 46: Are you personally concerned that Australia is too harsh in its treatment of asylum seekers and refugees? Would you say it concerns you …?' 2018-19 (percentage, RDD and LinA)

Response	RDD		LinA	
	2018	2019	2018	2019
A great deal	24	24	22	22
Somewhat	23	25	25	27
Sub-total concerned	**47**	**48**	**47**	**49**
Neither concerned nor unconcerned	1	1	0	0
Only slightly	18	20	21	21
Not at all	29	27	32	29
Sub-total not concerned	**47**	**47**	**53**	**50**

*Change between 2018 and 2019 not statistically significant at p<.05

Table 47: Are you personally concerned that Australia is too harsh in its treatment of asylum seekers and refugees? Would you say it concerns you …?' Response 'a great deal', 'somewhat', 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Gender	Female	Male					
	52	43					
State	Victoria	New South Wales	Queensland	Western Australia	South Australia		
	55	48	44	37	48		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	50	44					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	70	56	43	41	39	43	48
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	58	47	36	56	32		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	50	47	46	52			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	One Nation			
	61	30	87	16			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	46	54	50				
Religion	Catholic	Anglican	Other Christian	Other religion	No religion		
	46	39	45	50	54		

Table 48: Are you personally concerned that Australia is too harsh in its treatment of asylum seekers and refugees? Would you say it concerns you …?' Response 'not at all', 'only slightly', 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Gender	Female	Male					
	47	56					
State	Victoria	New South Wales	Queensland	Western Australia	South Australia		
	44	52	55	63	52		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	49	56					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	30	44	57	59	61	55	51
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	41	52	64	43	66		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	49	52	53	48			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	One Nation			
	39	70	14	84			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	53	47	49				
Religion	Catholic	Anglican	Other Christian	Other religion	No religion		
	54	61	55	50	45		

MULTICULTURALISM

The Scanlon Foundation surveys find a consistently high level of endorsement of multiculturalism.

Since 2013, the Scanlon Foundation surveys asked for response to the proposition that **'multiculturalism has been good for Australia.' Agreement has been consistent, in the range 83%-86%,** with an increase in the proportion indicating 'strong agreement,' from 32% in 2013 to 41%-44% in 2015-19. In 2019, agreement is at 85%, disagreement at 11%.

A high level of agreement with the value of multiculturalism is also obtained **in the self-completion (LinA) survey: in 2019, 80% indicated agreement**, **19% disagreement**, although the balance between 'strong agreement' and 'agreement' is different, with strong agreement indicated by 25%, agreement by 55%.

It is unusual to find such a high level of positive response to any question that deals with a government policy that has been a subject of controversy; for example, in 2019 just 45% of respondents indicated that they had a positive view of government management of population growth, 41% agree with government assistance to ethnic minorities 'to maintain their customs and traditions.'

This latter finding brings into question the understanding of the term multiculturalism, an issue discussed later in this section.

The aggregated data for the 2018-19 LinA surveys find strongest agreement with the value of multiculturalism among Greens supporters (96%); those aged 18-34 (91%, 87%); with a university level education (88%); of non-English speaking background (88%); and whose self-described financial status is 'prosperous' or 'very comfortable' (88%).

There are few sub-groups in which there are high levels of disagreement. By a large margin the highest proportion is among One Nation voters (65%), with smaller proportions among those aged 65-74 (36%), with education to Year 11 (36%), and whose financial status is 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor' (31%).

Table 49: 'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia', 2013-19 RDD (percentage, RDD)

Response	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Strongly agree	32	37	43	41	41	44	41
Agree	52	48	42	42	44	42	44
Sub-total agree	84	85	86	83	85	85	85
Neither agree nor disagree	3	4	2	3	2	2	4*
Disagree	8	6	7	7	7	6	5
Strongly disagree	3	4	4	5	5	6	6
Sub-total disagree	11	10	11	12	12	12	11
N (unweighted)	1,200	1,526	1,501	1,500	2,236	1,500	1,500

*Change between 2018 and 2019 statistically significant at $p < .05$

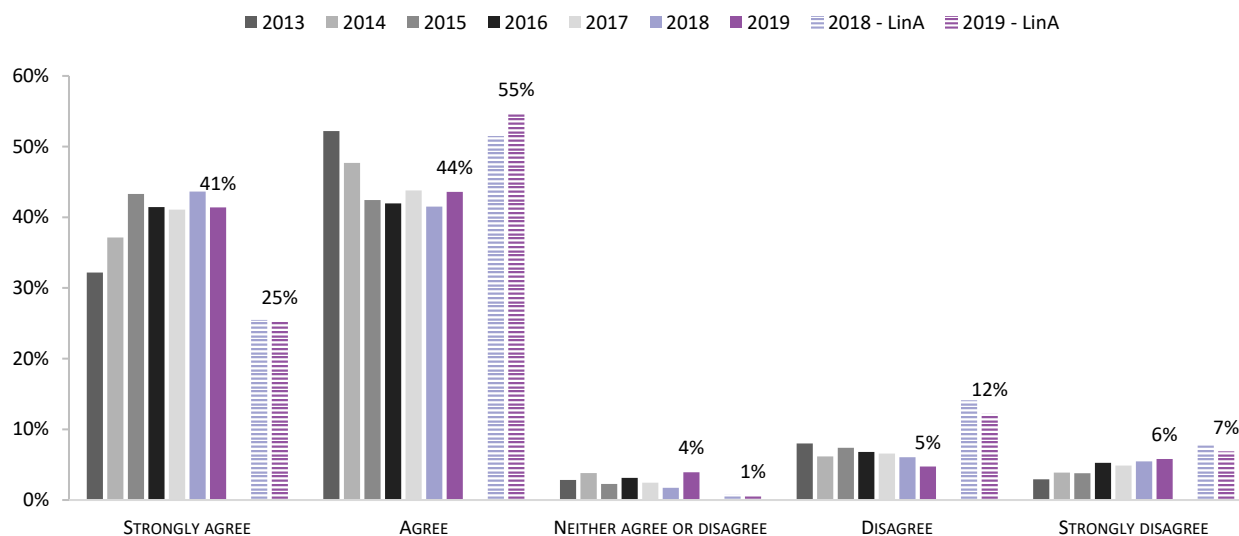**Table 50: 'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia', 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)**

Response	2018	2019
Strongly agree	26	25
Agree	52	55
Sub-total agree	77	80
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1
Disagree	14	12
Strongly disagree	8	7
Sub-total disagree	22	19
N (unweighted)	2,260	2,033

*Change between 2018 and 2019 not statistically significant at p<.05

Figure 27: 'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia', 2013-19 (RDD and LinA)

Table 51: 'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia', Response: 'strongly agree' or 'agree' ('strongly agree' in brackets), 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Gender	Female	Male					
	80 (25)	76 (25)					
State	**Victoria**	**New South Wales**	**Western Australia**	**South Australia**	**Queensland**		
	82 (30)	79 (26)	75 (19)	77 (18)	72 (23)		
Region	**Capital city**	**Rest of state**					
	81 (27)	73 (21)					
Age	**18–24**	**25–34**	**35–44**	**45–54**	**55–64**	**65-74**	**75+**
	91 (34)	87 (37)	78 (23)	76 (19)	74 (20)	63 (20)	77 (22)
Highest completed education	**BA or higher**	**Diploma/ Technical Certificate**	**Trade/ Apprenticeship**	**Year 12**	**Up to Year 11**		
	88 (37)	76 (20)	74 (20)	86 (33)	61 (13)		
Financial situation	**Prosperous/ very comfortable**	**Reasonably comfortable**	**Just getting along**	**Struggling to pay bills/ Poor**			
	88 (38)	78 (24)	79 (22)	67 (23)			
Intended vote	**Labor**	**Liberal/ National**	**Greens**	**One Nation**			
	84 (31)	75 (17)	96 (50)	35 (3)			
Birthplace	**Australia**	**ESB**	**NESB**				
	74 (22)	82 (27)	88 (34)				

Table 52: 'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia', Response: 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Gender	Female	Male					
	18	23					
State	**Victoria**	**New South Wales**	**Western Australia**	**South Australia**	**Queensland**		
	17	20	25	20	27		
Region	**Capital city**	**Rest of state**					
	18	26					
Age	**18–24**	**25–34**	**35–44**	**45–54**	**55–64**	**65-74**	**75+**
	9	13	21	23	26	36	17
Highest completed education	**BA or higher**	**Diploma/ Technical Certificate**	**Trade/ Apprenticeship**	**Year 12**	**Up to Year 11**		
	11	23	26	14	36		
Financial situation	**Prosperous/ very comfortable**	**Reasonably comfortable**	**Just getting along**	**Struggling to pay bills/ Poor**			
	12	21	20	31			
Intended vote	**Labor**	**Liberal/ National**	**Greens**	**One Nation**			
	15	24	4	65			
Birthplace	**Australia**	**ESB**	**NESB**				
	24	17	12				

TWO-WAY CHANGE

The 2019 Scanlon Foundation survey, in keeping with earlier findings, indicates that **for the majority, multiculturalism involves a two-way change, requiring adaptation by Australians as well as immigrants.**

The 2015-18 surveys presented respondents with two propositions, that 'we should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country,' and 'people who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians.' Across the four years of surveying, close to two out of three respondents (in the range 60%-66%) indicated agreement with both propositions.

Hence, whilst the majority support the notion that Australians 'should do more to learn' about ethnic customs and cultures, the surveys also consistently indicate agreement with the view that immigrants 'should change their behaviour to be more like Australians.'

A new question in the 2019 survey asked for response to the proposition that 'Too many immigrants are not adopting Australian values.' In the interviewer administered (RDD) version of the survey, 57% of respondents indicated agreement, in the self-completion version (LinA) a higher 67%.

Majority opinion in Australia does not support government funding of cultural maintenance. In response to the proposition that 'ethnic minorities in Australia should [not] be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions,' the majority consistently agrees. Over the last five RDD surveys, agreement has been in the range 53%-58%, disagreement in the range 34%-41%, in 2019, 53% agree, 41% disagree; in the LinA survey (2018-19), the relative proportions are 69% agree, 30% disagree.

Irrespective of the exact question wording, whether it is concerned with behaviour 'more like Australians', adopting Australian values, or opposition to funding for cultural maintenance, majority opinion supports integration and in similar proportions.
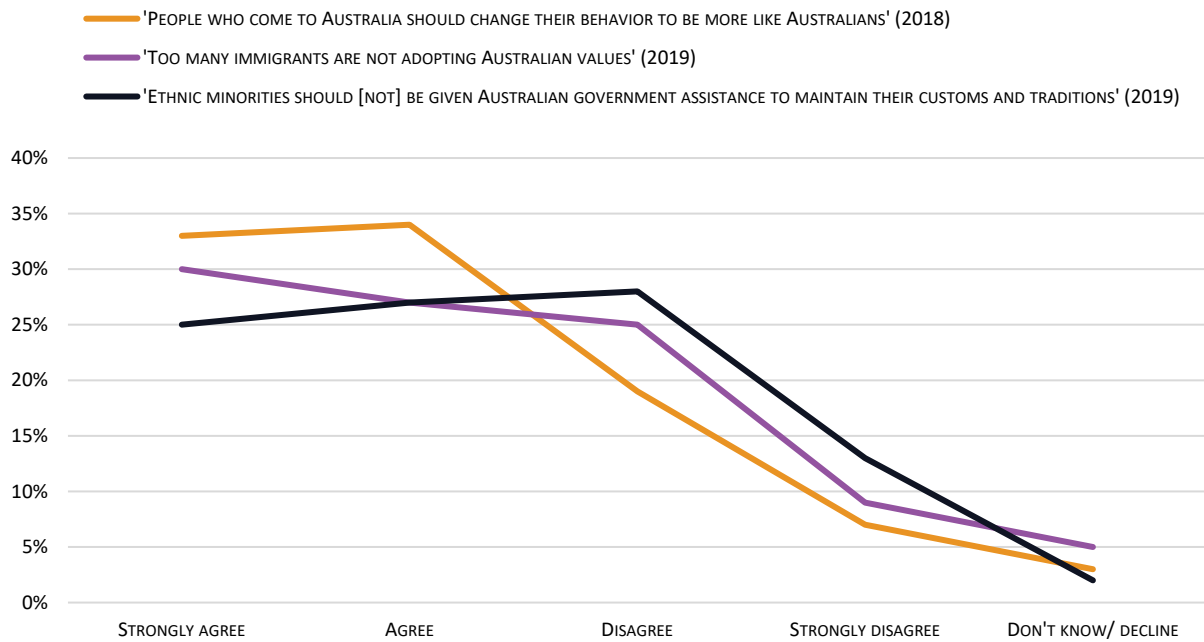
Table 53: 'We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups' and 'People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians.' 2015-18 (percentage, RDD)

Response	'We should do more to learn about customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups'				'People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians'		
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2015	2016	2018
Strongly agree	25	28	22	23	27	29	33
Agree	43	38	38	42	38	30	35
Sub-total agree	**68**	**66**	**60**	**65**	**65**	**60**	**67**
Neither agree/ disagree	3	4	5	3	7	6	5
Disagree	19	18	21	20	21	23	19
Strongly disagree	8	10	12	12	6	10	7
Sub-total disagree	**27**	**28**	**33**	**32**	**27**	**32**	**26**
Don't know/ decline	1	2	2	1	2	2	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 54: Views on immigrant integration, selected questions, 2019 (percentage, RDD)

Response	'Too many immigrants are not adopting Australian values'		'Ethnic minorities should [not] be given government assistance to maintain customs and traditions'	
	RDD	LinA	RDD	LinA
Strongly agree	30	32	25	29
Agree	27	35	27	40
Sub-total agree	**57**	**67**	**53**	**69**
Neither agree/ disagree	4	1	4	0
Disagree	25	26	28	26
Strongly disagree	9	5	13	4
Sub-total disagree	**34**	**31**	**41**	**30**
Don't know/ decline	5	1	3	1

Figure 28: Views on immigrant integration, selected questions, 2018-19 (RDD)

— 'PEOPLE WHO COME TO AUSTRALIA SHOULD CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOR TO BE MORE LIKE AUSTRALIANS' (2018)

— 'TOO MANY IMMIGRANTS ARE NOT ADOPTING AUSTRALIAN VALUES' (2019)

— 'ETHNIC MINORITIES SHOULD [NOT] BE GIVEN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO MAINTAIN THEIR CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS' (2019)

EXPERIENCE OF DISCRIMINATION

A question posed in the Scanlon Foundation surveys asks respondents if they have experienced discrimination over the previous twelve months; the 2007 survey question was worded 'Have you experienced discrimination because of your national, ethnic or religious background in the last twelve months?' In 2009 there was a minor change of wording to specify discrimination 'because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion', and this form of wording has been used in all subsequent surveys.

Reported experience of discrimination increased from 9% in 2007 to a peak of 19% in 2013; this level dropped over the next two surveys, but rose again in 2016 and 2017. It is at 19% in 2018 and 2019. **The average for the first six surveys (2007-13) was 13%, for the last six surveys (2014-19) a much higher 18%.**

Only minor difference is indicated in the self-completion (LinA) survey: an identical 19% in 2018, a marginally lower 16% in 2019.

Analysis by age group finds that the reported experience of discrimination for the surveys 2014-19 has been highest among those aged 18-24, with the proportion declining by age.

Figure 29: 'Have you experienced discrimination in the last twelve months because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion?' Response: 'yes', 2007-19 (RDD and LinA)

Figure 30: Reported experience of discrimination by age, 2007-13 and 2014-19 (percentage, RDD)
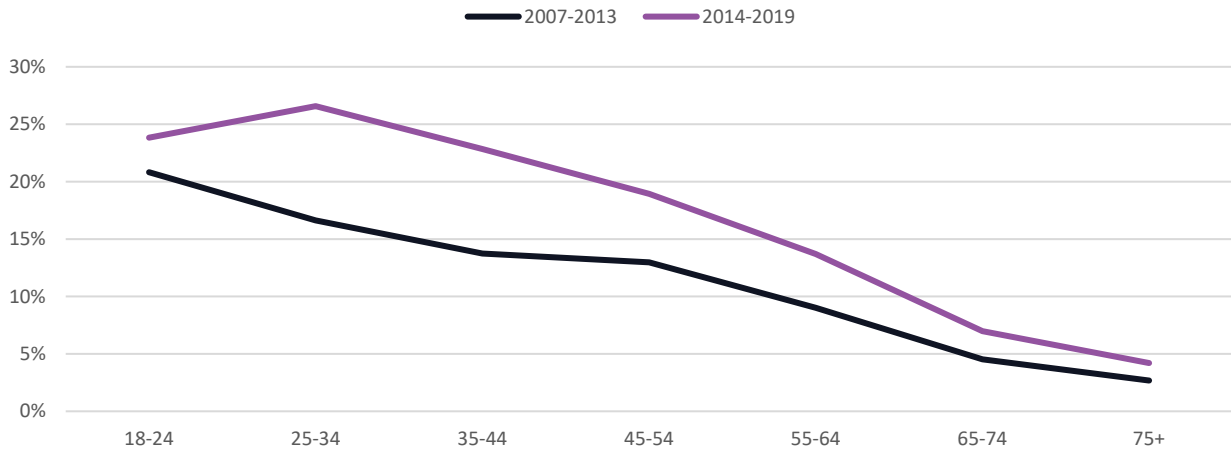
Table 55: 'Have you experienced discrimination in the last twelve months because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion?' Response: 'yes' by age, 2019 (percentage, RDD)

Experienced discrimination	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
'Yes'	31	30	19	20	11	7	3
N (unweighted)	95	135	158	231	348	304	214

Consistent with the pattern of previous surveys, in 2019 those of a non-English speaking background reported the highest experience of discrimination, 29%, compared to 17% of those born in Australia and 11% of those born overseas in English speaking countries.

The average for the seven surveys conducted between 2013-19 finds reported experience of discrimination for Australia-born at 15.7%, an almost identical 15.6% for those of English-speaking background, and a much higher 27.6% for those of non-English speaking background.

The aggregated data for the 2018 and 2019 LinA surveys was used to analyse the pattern of reported experience of discrimination by gender, state, region, age, highest educational attainment, self-reported financial situation, and intended vote.

Experience of discrimination was relatively high among those whose self-described financial status is 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor' (28%), more than double the proportion among those who indicated that they were 'prosperous' or 'very comfortable' (11%). It is also above average among those whose highest completed education is the Bachelor degree or higher (25%), which may correlate with relatively high levels indicated in younger age groups.

Analysis of the aggregated data for 2018 and 2019 (LinA) by religious identification indicates that **a relatively high proportion of those of Muslim and Hindu faith experience discrimination**, but this finding is based on a sample too small to be statistically reliable. However, analysis of combined data for the years 2013-19 (RDD and LinA) confirms this pattern: 42% of Muslims reported discrimination, 38% Hindu, 24% Buddhist, and 15% or less of the major Christian faith groups.

Table 56: Reported experience of discrimination by birthplace, 2013-19 (percentage, RDD)

Birthplace	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Average
Australia	16	16	12	17	15	17	17	15.7
English-speaking background	16	11	11	19	21	20	11	15.6
Non-English-speaking background	28	29	22	26	34	25	29	27.6

Table 57: Reported experience of discrimination, 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Gender	**Female**	**Male**					
	16	20					
State	**Victoria**	**New South Wales**	**Western Australia**	**South Australia**	**Queensland**		
	20	17	22	11	18		
Region	**Capital**	**Rest of state**					
	20	12					
Age	**18–24**	**25–34**	**35–44**	**45–54**	**55–64**	**65-74**	**75+**
	23	26	23	19	14	4	3
Highest completed education	**BA or higher**	**Diploma/ Technical Certificate**	**Trade/ Apprenticeship**	**Year 12**	**Up to Year 11**		
	25	19	11	18	10		
Financial situation	**Prosperous/ very comfortable**	**Reasonably comfortable**	**Just getting along**	**Struggling to pay bills/ Poor**			
	11	15	20	28			
Intended vote	**Labor**	**Liberal/ National**	**Greens**	**One Nation**			
	14	13	15	22			

TRUST

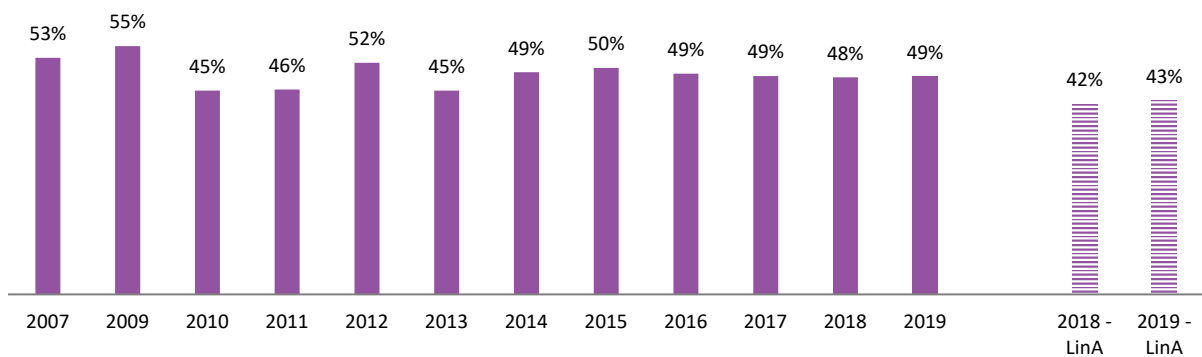A question posed in a number of Australian and international surveys asks respondents, 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?'

The Scanlon Foundation national surveys have found that opinion is close to evenly divided, with results in the range 45%-55% across the eleven surveys. In 2019 personal trust was at 49% close to the mid-point in the range (48%), within one percentage points of the previous five years.

Trust is lower by 6% in the LinA survey, with 42%-43% indicating that 'most people can be trusted,' 56%-57% that you 'can't be too careful'.

Exploring the combined data for the 2018 and 2019 LinA survey finds that the highest-level agreement that 'most people can be trusted' is among those intending to vote Greens (61%), those who indicate that their financial situation is 'prosperous' or 'very comfortable' (58%) and those with a Bachelor degree or higher (57%).

The lowest level of agreement is among those intending to vote for One Nation (23%), whose highest level of education is up to Year 11 (26%), and whose self-described financial situation is 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor' (28%).

Figure 31: 'Most people can be trusted', Scanlon Foundation surveys 2007-19 (RDD and LinA)

Table 58: 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?' Response: 'Can be trusted', 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Gender	Female	Male					
	41	45					
State	Victoria	New South Wales	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	42	47	41	42	40		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	45	39					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	41	47	40	44	40	41	46
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	57	36	43	47	26		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	58	45	39	28			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	One Nation			
	43	42	61	23			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	41	43	47				

VOLUNTARY WORK

Participation in voluntary work has shown minor variation over the Scanlon Foundation surveys. The survey asks respondents about their involvement in 'unpaid voluntary work,' which is defined as 'any unpaid help you give to the community in which you live, or to an organisation or group to which you belong. It could be to a school, a sporting club, the elderly, a religious group or people who have recently arrived to settle in Australia.'
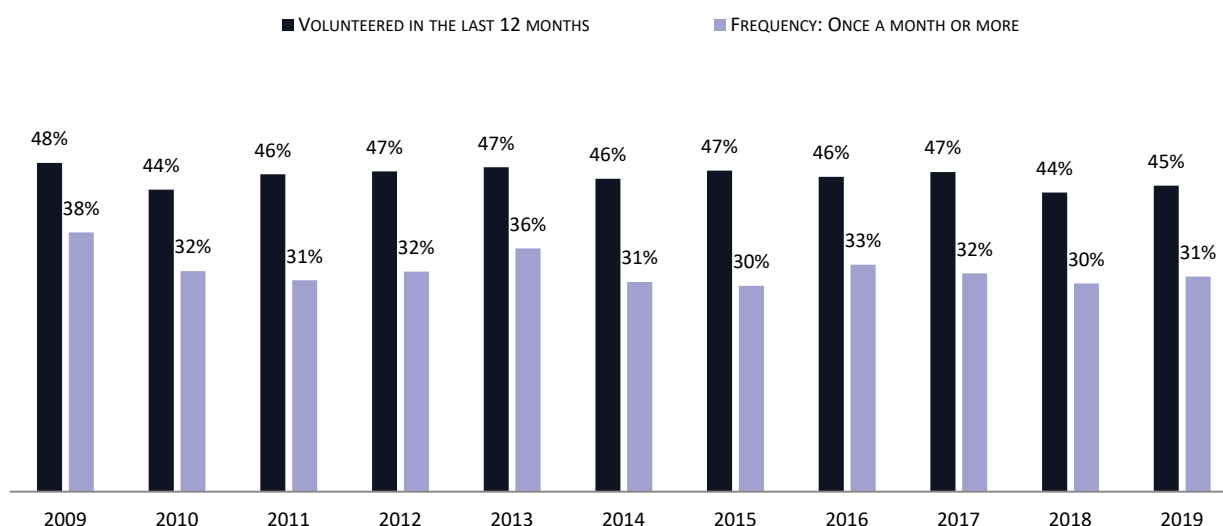
In 2019, 45% of respondents indicated participation in voluntary work over the last 12 months, which is close to the average (46%) for the interviewer administered (RDD) surveys.

A follow-on question asks respondents for frequency of participation in voluntary work. In 2019, 31% of all respondents indicated participation 'at least once a week' or 'at least once a month,' one percentage point higher than in 2018 and close to the average (32%) for surveys since 2009.

Of the sub-group who indicate that they volunteer, 70% do so 'at least once a week' or 'at least once a month.' the same level as the long-term average for the surveys.

Indication of volunteer work is in the category of questions susceptible to Social Desirability Bias, with a **significantly lower** (over ten percentage points) reporting of participation in volunteer work **in the self-completion (LinA) survey.** In 2018, 34% of LinA respondents indicated that they had done unpaid volunteer work in the last 12 months, in 2019 an almost identical 33%. Of those who indicated that they volunteered, 61% in 2018 and 57% in 2019 did so 'at least once a week' or 'at least once a month.'

Figure 32: 'Have you done any unpaid voluntary work in the last 12 months?' and 'How often do you participate in this sort of voluntary activity?' Response: 'at least once a week' or 'at least once a month', 2009-19 (RDD)

■ VOLUNTEERED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS   ■ FREQUENCY: ONCE A MONTH OR MORE

Year	Volunteered in the last 12 months	Frequency: once a month or more
2009	48%	38%
2010	44%	32%
2011	46%	31%
2012	47%	32%
2013	47%	36%
2014	46%	31%
2015	47%	30%
2016	46%	33%
2017	47%	32%
2018	44%	30%
2019	45%	31%

NEIGHBOURHOOD

The 2018 and 2019 surveys have found no statistically significant change in several indicators of relations in local areas.

In 2019, 80% of respondents indicated agreement that people were **'willing to help their neighbours'**, 81% in 2018. This finding is marginally lower than the proportion indicated from 2011 to 2015, when it was in the range 84%-85%.

In 2019, 76% agreed that in the local area '**people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together'**, 74% in 2018, within two percentage points of seven of the previous nine surveys.

Sense of safety walking alone at night has been relatively constant across the surveys; 'very safe' or 'safe' was indicated in the range 64%-68%, at the mid-point (66%) in 2019.

CRIME

Concern over becoming a victim of crime in the local area, has, however, increased over the course of the surveys.

In 2019, **33% indicated that they were worried about becoming a victim of crime**, the same proportion as in 2018, but **significantly higher than the 26% recorded in 2010, 2012 and 2015.**

67% indicated that they were 'not very worried' or 'not at all worried' about becoming a victim of crime, the same proportion as in 2018, but a lower proportion than 73% in 2010, 2012 and 2015.

Crime has become a significant political issue in Victoria. The *Herald Sun* described Victoria as 'a state of fear' and Liberal politicians have blamed the extent of crime on failure of the Andrews Labor government. In 2018 Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull commented on the 'growing gang violence and lawlessness' and Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton claimed that people in Melbourne are 'scared to go out to restaurants.' In the 2018 Victorian election the Liberal Party campaigned, albeit unsuccessfully, on the 'law and order crisis,' promising a tough stance if elected.[28]

Evidence of heightened concern in Victoria is provided by the Ipsos monthly issues survey, based on a 1000 national sample. In response to a question which asks respondents to indicate their top three concerns, crime has been a top issue for Victorians between September 2016 and the most recent survey in September 2019. Concern was at its peak in March 2018 at close to 55%, down to 40% in September 2019, compared to 24% in the rest of Australia.[29]

The Scanlon Foundation survey has also obtained indication of state level difference; it has found that **of the three eastern states Victorians have consistently indicated the highest proportion worried about crime and feeling unsafe walking alone at night.**

In 2019, 40% of Victorian respondents indicated concern at becoming a victim of crime, eleven percentage points higher than New South Wales (29%) and six percentage points higher than Queensland (34%). While Queensland remains below Victoria, it recorded a significant increase between 2018 and 2019.

In response to sense of safety when walking alone at night, 33% of Victorian respondents indicated that they felt 'very unsafe' or 'a bit unsafe', 26% New South Wales respondents and 27% Queensland. Victoria was unchanged, but both New South Wales and Queensland recorded increased concern since the 2018 survey.

Comparison of the results obtained by the telephone (RDD) and self-administered (LinA) surveys finds almost no difference when respondents are asked about their concern about becoming a victim of crime – the relative proportions in 2019 for Victoria are 40% RDD, 39% LinA, New South Wales 29% and 28%, Queensland 34% and 36%.

The combined data for the 2018 and 2019 LinA surveys finds that the highest level of concern is indicated by those 'struggling to pay bills' or 'poor' (50%), One Nation voters (48%), with education to Year 11 level (45%), aged 65-74 (43%), of non-English speaking background (42%), and residents of Western Australia (41%) and Victoria (40%). Lowest level of concern is indicated by those whose financial situation is 'prosperous' or 'very comfortable' (19%) and Greens voters (21%).

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[28] Calla Wahlquist, 'Is Melbourne in the grip of African crime gangs? The facts behind the lurid headlines', *The Guardian*, 3 Jan 2018; News.com.au, 4 Jan, 2018, 24 July 2018
[29] Karen Gelb, 'Why are we so worried about crime when rates are actually falling,' *The Age*, 13, 16 Sept. 2019

Table 59: Selected questions concerning neighbourhood, 2010-19 (percentage, RDD)

Question and response - POSITIVE	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
[1] 'People in your local area are willing to help their neighbours.' Response: 'Strongly agree', 'agree'	83	84	84	84	84	85	81	83	81	80
[2] 'Your local area... is a place where people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together.' Response: 'Strongly agree', 'agree'	75	74	72	76	79	78	74	76	74	76
[3] 'How safe do you feel walking alone at night in your local area?' Response: 'Very safe', 'safe'	65	65	65	65	68	68	64	66	67	66
[4] '...how worried are you about becoming a victim of crime in your local area.' Response: 'Not very worried', 'not at all worried'	73	69	73	n/a	70	73	64	64	67	67

Question and response - NEGATIVE	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
[1] 'People in your local area are willing to help their neighbours.' Response: 'Strongly disagree', 'disagree'	13	12	11	12	12	12	14	13	15	16
[2] 'Your local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic groups get on well together.' Response: 'Strongly disagree', 'disagree'	7	9	9	11	10	9	11	12	12	10
[3] 'How safe do you feel walking alone at night in your local area?' Response: 'Very unsafe', 'a bit unsafe'	30	30	28	30	26	26	28	29	27	28
[4] '...how worried are you about becoming a victim of crime in your local area.' Response: 'Very worried', 'fairly worried'	26	31	26	n/a	30	26	36	35	33	33

*Change between 2018 and 2019 not statistically significant at $p<.05$

Table 60: Thinking about all types of crime in general, how worried are you about becoming a victim of crime in your local area?' Response: 'very worried' or 'fairly worried', 2018-19 (percentage, LinA)

Gender	Female	Male					
	37	30					
State	Victoria	New South Wales	Western Australia	South Australia	Queensland		
	40	29	41	32	31		
Region	Capital city	Rest of state					
	35	31					
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65-74	75+
	34	32	35	31	34	43	28
Highest completed education	BA or higher	Diploma/ Technical Certificate	Trade/ Apprenticeship	Year 12	Up to Year 11		
	29	34	24	33	45		
Financial situation	Prosperous/ very comfortable	Reasonably comfortable	Just getting along	Struggling to pay bills/ Poor			
	19	31	38	50			
Intended vote	Labor	Liberal/ National	Greens	One Nation			
	34	33	21	48			
Birthplace	Australia	ESB	NESB				
	32	29	42				

Figure 33: 'Thinking about all types of crime in general, how worried are you about becoming a victim of crime in your local area?' Response: 'very worried' and 'fairly worried', Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, 2014-19, RDD
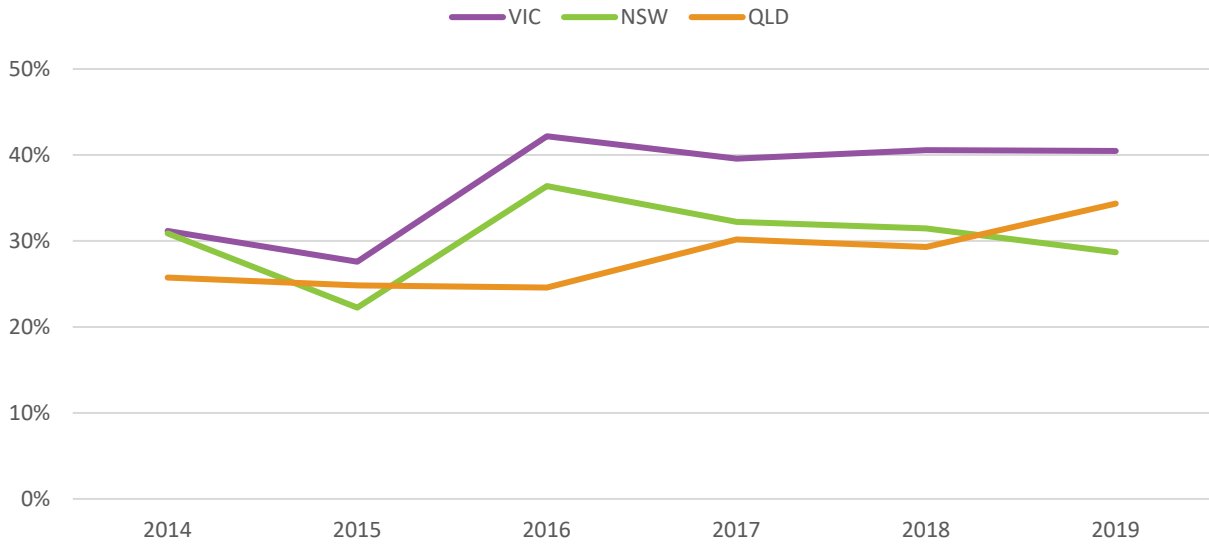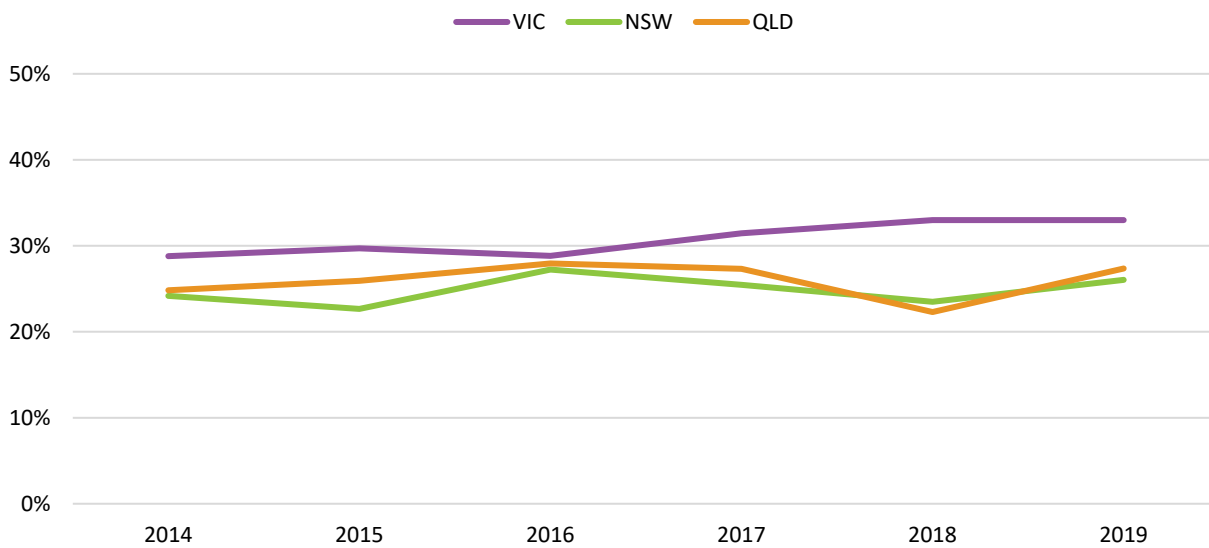

Figure 34: 'How safe do you feel walking alone at night in your local area?' Response: 'Very unsafe' and 'a bit unsafe', Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, 2014-19, RDD

BALANCE OF AUSTRALIAN OPINION

Previous sections of this report focussed on specific aspects of social cohesion. This final section is concerned with the broad perspective, to establish the balance of opinion on a range of issues related to immigration and cultural diversity. The objective is to determine the relative proportions with strongly held views – whether positive or negative – and the proportion in the middle ground, with views tending negative, tending positive, or who do not have a view on the issue considered.

There is, however, no simple or definitive basis to determine the balance: answers are dependent on the specific questions considered.

In addition to establishing the balance of opinion, the analysis tracks change over five surveys, 2015-19, to determine if the balance has changed; for example, is opinion tending in a more negative or positive direction? The analysis also seeks to establish the extent to which proportions are consistent across the two survey modes.

The range of questions in the Scanlon Foundation surveys provide scope to consider a number of perspectives. The following analysis considers eight questions that dealt with immigration and cultural diversity in the 2015-19 surveys, most of them requiring response to a statement. Only questions with a five-point response scale (from strongly agree/positive to strongly disagree/ negative) are included.

The eight questions are:

1. 'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions.'

2. 'Is your personal attitude positive, negative, or neutral towards Muslims?'

3. 'Is your personal attitude positive, negative, or neutral towards Buddhists?'

4. 'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger.'

5. 'Do you agree or disagree that it should be possible to reject [applicants to migrate to Australia] simply on the basis of their religion?'

6. 'Do you agree or disagree that it should be possible to reject [applicants to migrate to Australia] simply on the basis of their race or ethnicity?'

7. 'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia.'

8. 'My local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together.'

These questions were also included in the 2018 and 2019 LinA surveys, which provide important insight into variability of public opinion. As was discussed in the Mode Effect section of this report, it is known that self-completion surveys obtain higher proportions indicating 'socially undesirable attitudes', but this does not necessarily mean that such indications of public opinion are more accurate. Each methodology has advantages and disadvantages.

STRONG NEGATIVE

The proportion holding strong negative views for seven of the eight questions in the interviewer administered survey are in the range 1%-14%. The pattern of response finds three groupings.

[A] The lowest level of negative response is to questions concerning local areas, multiculturalism and those of the Buddhist faith. Across the 2015-19 surveys, the **strongly negative has been in the range 1%-6%** (see Table 61, responses coded green).

[B] Questions on discrimination in immigrant selection based on race or ethnicity, or religion, the value of a diverse immigration intake, and attitudes to those of the Muslim faith, finds **strong negative sentiment in the range 5%-14%** (Table 61, responses coded yellow).

[C] A general statement that may be interpreted as a rejection of cultural diversity and in favour of integration finds relatively high levels of strong agreement, **in the range 25%-29**% across the 2015-19 surveys. Thus, when presented with the proposition that 'ethnic minorities should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions', in 2019 25% indicated that they 'strongly agree' (Table 61, responses coded orange).

With regard to strong negative opinion, there is only minor variation by mode of survey administration – with one exception. In 2019, 6% in the interviewer administered version (RDD) and 7% in the panel version (LinA) strongly disagree that multiculturalism has been good for Australia; the relative proportions in response to the proposition that people of different backgrounds get on well together in 'my local area' are 2% and 3%; strong agreement with discrimination in selection policy based on race or ethnicity is 5% and 8%, based on religion 8% and 11%. **The exception is personal attitude to Muslims, with 'very negative' at 11% and 17%** (Table 62).

STRONG POSITIVE

There are higher levels of strong positive than strong negative responses.

For six of the eight questions strong negative responses by either mode do not reach 15% in the five surveys, but strong positive responses in the RDD survey for six questions exceed 20% – and 40% for three questions.

[A] The highest level of strong positive response is indicated in valuation of multiculturalism and rejection of discrimination in immigrant selection based on race or ethnicity, or religion. For these three questions the **strong positive** response across the 2015-19 RDD surveys is in the **range 39%-49%** (Table 61, responses coded green).

[B] The second level of strong positive response is obtained in response to the statement that immigrants from many different countries make Australian stronger, and questions concerning people of different ethnic backgrounds in the respondent's local area, and the positive attitude to those of the Buddhists faith. For these three questions, strong positive response is in the **range 21%-30%** across the 2015-19 RDD surveys (Table 61, responses coded yellow). One notable variation is the high proportion providing a neutral response to questions on attitude to faith groups.

[C] The lowest level of strong positive response (indicating strong agreement) is obtained in response to the proposition favourable to government assistance to ethnic minorities for cultural maintenance and in the attitude to those of the Muslim faith. For these two questions, strong positive response is in the **range 9%-13%** across the 2015-19 RDD surveys (Table 61, responses coded orange).

The Life in Australia™ (LinA) survey finds a statistically significant difference in the level of strong positive response, in the 2019 survey an average twelve percentage points lower than in the RDD survey for the eight questions considered.

For example, strong support for a non-discriminatory immigration policy (indicated by strong disagreement with discrimination) is thirteen percentage points lower with reference to race or ethnicity (49% RDD, 36% LinA) and nineteen percentage points lower with reference to religion (49% RDD, 30% LinA). Strong positive attitude to multiculturalism is lower by sixteen percentage points (41% RDD, 25% LinA). (Table 62)

A possible explanation for these differences is in terms of Social Desirability Bias; in conversation with an interviewer, respondents may overstate positive values.

But an important finding is that the proportion of the population with strong negative views is constant irrespective of survey mode, indicating that most with strong negative views are not reticent to indicate them to an interviewer.

While there are significant differences by mode of surveying in the level of strong positive response, as indicated by Figure 35, **the balance of opinion remains in large measure consistent.**

Thus, with strong positive and positive responses combined, agreement that multiculturalism has been good for Australia is at 85% RDD, 80% LinA. Disagreement with discrimination based on race or ethnicity in immigration selection is at 81% RDD, 77% LinA; on the basis of religion it is 79% RDD, 70% LinA.

RACIST NATION?

An issue which from time to time engages public debate in Australia concerns the extent of racism in the country, posed in terms of **'Is Australia a racist nation?'**

This issue can be considered from a number of different perspectives, including legal, institutional, and social.

In legal terms, is racial discrimination established in law? Are there legal safeguards and protections afforded to racial groups?

In institutional terms, do government and non-government organisations discriminate in their treatment of clients on a racial basis?

With reference to the tone of public discussion, to what extent is there licence to demean racial groups in the mainstream electronic and print media? What licence to demean is afforded by social media platforms?

The Scanlon Foundation surveys are of relevance to a fourth dimension, attitudes within the community.

All populations comprise people with diverse personalities and views ranging, for example, from the tolerant to the intolerant – from those who celebrate cultural diversity to those who are comfortable only with what they perceive to be Australian culture.

As discussed in this report, the Scanlon Foundation survey findings establish that in contemporary Australia **racist values are held by a small minority** – arguably most clearly indicated by 'strong agreement' with discrimination in immigrant selection policy based on race, ethnicity or religion. **Across the two survey modes, 'strong agreement' with such discrimination is indicated by 5%-11% of the population.**

Table 61: Immigration and cultural diversity, selected questions, 2015-19 (percentage, RDD)

Question and response	Survey	Strong negative	Negative	Neither	Positive	Strong positive
'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions' ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree')	2019	25	27	4	28	13
	2018	29	28	2	28	9
	2017	27	32	5	25	9
	2016	29	26	5	27	10
	2015	25	28	4	31	9
Personal attitude towards Muslims ('very negative' to 'very positive')	2019	11	11	44	22	12
	2018	11	12	48	17	10
	2017	13	12	44	19	9
	2016	14	11	42	20	10
	2015	11	11	47	18	10
Personal attitude towards Buddhists ('very negative' to 'very positive')	2019	1	3	43	25	25
	2018	1	2	50	24	21
	2017	2	2	44	26	22
	2016	3	3	43	27	22
	2015	2	3	45	27	22
'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger' ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree')	2019	12	15	3	38	29
	2018	13	17	3	37	29
	2017	14	16	5	37	27
	2016	11	16	4	36	30
	2015	9	17	4	40	27
'Do you agree or disagree that it should be possible for them to be rejected on the basis of their race or ethnicity? ('strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'	2019	5	10	1	32	49
	2018	7	8	1	32	49
	2017	7	8	2	32	48
	2015	7	12	1	36	41
Do you agree or disagree that it should be possible for them to be rejected on the basis of...their religion? ('strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree')	2019	8	10	1	30	49
	2018	8	9	2	35	43
	2017	9	11	3	33	41
	2015	9	12	2	38	39
'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia' ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree')	2019	6	5	4	44	41
	2018	6	6	2	42	44
	2017	5	7	3	44	41
	2016	5	7	3	42	41
	2015	4	7	2	42	43
'My local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together' (excludes 'not enough immigrants in my area') ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree')	2019	2	8	2	50	26
	2018	4	8	3	49	25
	2017	3	9	3	51	25
	2016	3	8	5	51	24
	2015	2	7	3	55	23

**Table 62: Immigration and cultural diversity, selected questions, 2018, 2019 RDD and LinA (percentage)**

Question and response	Survey	Strong negative	Negative	Neither	Positive	Strong positive
'Ethnic minorities in Australia should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions' ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree')	2019 LinA	29	40	0	26	4
	2018 LinA	30	39	1	25	5
	2019 RDD	25	27	4	28	13
	2018 RDD	29	28	2	28	9
Personal attitude towards Muslims ('very negative' to 'very positive')	2019 LinA	17	24	41	13	5
	2018 LinA	17	22	44	12	5
	2019 RDD	11	11	44	22	12
	2018 RDD	11	12	48	17	10
Personal attitude towards Buddhists ('very negative' to 'very positive')	2019 LinA	2	3	42	33	19
	2018 LinA	2	5	46	28	19
	2019 RDD	1	3	43	25	25
	2018 RDD	1	2	49	24	21
'Accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger' ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree')	2019 LinA	11	21	0	50	17
	2018 LinA	13	24	0	46	17
	2019 RDD	12	15	3	38	29
	2018 RDD	13	17	3	37	29
'Do you agree or disagree that it should be possible for them to be rejected on the basis of their race or ethnicity?' ('strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree')	2019 LinA	8	15	0	41	36
	2018 LinA	8	13	0	42	35
	2019 RDD	5	10	1	32	49
	2018 RDD	7	8	1	32	49
Do you agree or disagree that it should be possible for them to be rejected on the basis of...their religion? ('strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree')	2019 LinA	11	18	0	40	30
	2018 LinA	11	17	0	39	32
	2019 RDD	8	10	1	30	49
	2018 RDD	8	9	1	35	43
'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia' ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree')	2019 LinA	7	12	1	55	25
	2018 LinA	8	14	1	52	25
	2019 RDD	6	5	4	44	41
	2018 RDD	6	6	2	42	44
'My local area is a place where people from different national or ethnic backgrounds get on well together' (excludes 'not enough immigrants in my area') ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree')	2019 LinA	3	15	0	66	13
	2018 LinA	4	18	0	65	11
	2019 RDD	2	8	2	50	26
	2018 RDD	4	8	2	49	25

Orange: High strong negative/ low strong positive
Yellow: Mid-range strong negative/mid-range strong positive
Green: Low strong negative/high strong positive

Figure 35: Immigration and cultural diversity, selected questions, strong negative and strong positive highlighted, 2019 RDD and 2019 LinA (percentage) (excludes 'Don't know' and 'decline to answer')
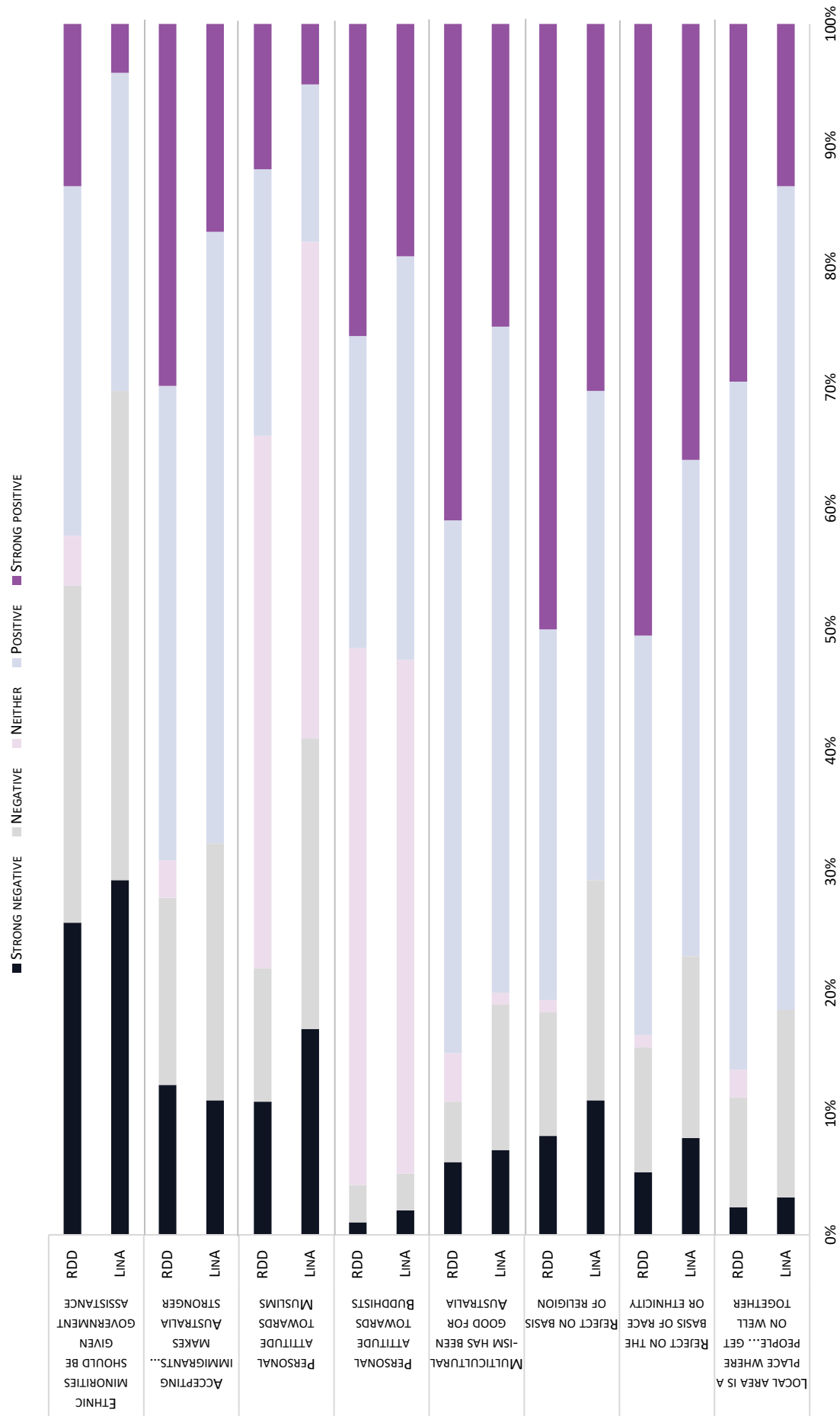
APPENDIX:
SURVEY METHODOLOGY

POLLING AND DEMOCRACY

One of the pioneers of public opinion research in the 1930s, George Gallup, articulated the view that knowing what public think is a fundamental element of a democracy.

There was a need, as he expressed in the title of his 1940 book, to take **the 'pulse of democracy'**, to provide in depth understanding of the public mood.[30] He wrote:

> If government is supposed to be based on the will of the people, then somebody ought to go out and find out what the will is.

Gallup believed that public opinion surveys were the best defence against political movements which claimed without evidence to speak for majority opinion. Polls were needed, in Gallup's view, to provide understanding of opinion on a broad range of issues: 'the practical value of the polls lies in the fact that they indicate the main trends of sentiment on issues about which elections often tell us nothing.'[31]

POLLING PRIOR TO GALLUP

In the early decades of the twentieth century, numerous newspapers and magazines in the United States conducted what were termed **'straw polls'** to provide indication of public opinion.

The *Literary Digest,* an influential American weekly publication which by 1927 reached a circulation of more than one million, won prominence with its use of such polls. In 1916 it initiated a procedure of mailing postcards to its subscribers, requesting indication of intended vote by return mail. It managed to correctly predict the outcome of presidential elections between 1920 and 1932.

During the 1936 election campaign, postcards were sent to ten million households, eliciting 2.4 million responses. Despite the huge number, the 'straw poll' spectacularly failed. Its prediction favouring Alfred Landon over President Franklin Roosevelt was incorrect by a margin of nearly 20%, with Landon gaining the equal lowest electoral college numbers in history. Such was the discrediting of the *Literary Digest* that it ceased publication within two years of the election.

The problem, little understood at the time, was the unrepresentative character of the sample. The postcards had been sent to subscribers of the *Literary Digest* and to registered owners of cars and telephones, that is, to relatively well-off segments of the population during the Great Depression, with lower income groups excluded.

In contrast, George Gallup, using a much smaller but representative sample correctly predicted Roosevelt's victory. Gallup commented that **'no mere accumulation of ballots could hope to eliminate the error that sprang from a biased sample.'**

SCIENTIFIC POLLING

Following its success in 1936, the organisation established by Gallup, the American Institute of Public Opinion, successfully predicted election results over more than a decade. In a 1948 presentation, Gallup stated that his institute had produced 392 election forecasts with an average error of 3.9 percent. The average error of forecasts made after November 1944 was even smaller, just 2.9 percent.

Americans came to trust what became known as Gallup Polls. But in 1948 Gallup incorrectly forecast that Thomas Dewey would defeat the incumbent President Harry Truman, a result described by *Time* magazine as the biggest polling blunder since the 1936 election. The editor of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* summed up the public mood: 'We won't pay … attention any more to ''scientific'' predictions,' a refrain repeated many times since.

It is in the context of elections that the accuracy of polls is most open to scrutiny in the media. In contrast, surveys on social and political issues are often featured without consideration of reliability. Such polls pass without question because there is no perceived yardstick against which to measure accuracy, unlike an election prediction. Failure to predict the result of the 2016 Brexit referendum, the 2016 American presidential election, and the 2019 Australian election, were recent events which fuelled disenchantment with polling.

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[30] Gallup, George, and Saul F. Rae. *The Pulse of Democracy: The Public Opinion Poll and How it Works.* New York: Simon & Shuster, 1940

[31] Gallup International, *Polling Around the World 70*, p86, http://www.gallup-international.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Gallup_English_Book_2017.pdf

In the context of the 2019 Australian federal election, 16 published polls predicted a Labor win with a two-party margin of 51%-49% or 52%-48%. The actual result was almost the reverse of the predicted, 48.5% for Labor, 51.5% for the Coalition.

On election night, the ABC's resident political expert Antony Green commented on the 'spectacular failure of opinion polling', political scientist Dr Andy Marks observed that 'mainstream polling has become … worthless', while Greens leader Richard Di Natale considered that the 'era of opinion polls … is over'.

FALSE EXPECTATIONS OF ACCURACY

In part these judgements reflect a false expectation of accuracy created by misuse of findings. Polls are used to create headlines and controversy, to sell newspapers, illustrated by the regular polling of the popularity of the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition. Front page reporting has been based on **minute shifts in polls,** of the order of one percentage point, which **are meaningless** – polls are not claimed to be accurate to a percentage point.

MARGIN OF ERROR

Polls are estimates of public opinion; **at best with a large representative sample their margin of error is close to +/- 2.5%** at a confidence interval of 95%, which means that 19 times out of 20 the indicated result will be within that margin. Hence if the poll indicates a result of 51%, the actual result is expected to be in the range 48.5% - 53.5%.

In the USA – the country with the largest investment in polling – a database of political polling from 1998 to 2014 indicates that the best electoral polls miss the actual result by an average of 4.3 percentage points.[32] In America in 2018, the best interviewer administered polls had an average error of 4 percentage points, online polls an average error of 5.3 percentage points.[33]

If a poll picks the winner there is little attention to the detail of the predicted result. For example, there was little criticism after the 2018 Victorian election when the polls predicted a Labor victory, but did not consistently point to the landslide that eventuated. At the 1936 American presidential election which launched George Gallup to national prominence, the focus was on his predicted Roosevelt victory, not the detail that his prediction was out by a margin of almost 7%.

Recognition of the margin of error demonstrates that the problem with polling is less to do with inaccuracy, more to do with unwarranted expectation of precision. In the context of the 2019 Australian election, the problem was the way in which results were reported. For a number of polls, the possibility of a Coalition victory was within the margin of error. Given the number of undecided voters and the minimal investment in polling of electorates and states, analysis needed to acknowledge that on the basis of the available evidence the result was too close to predict. This was the finding of at least one privately commissioned polling agency.[34]

FIT FOR PURPOSE

A key concept in appraising polls is 'fitness for purpose': the degree of accuracy required.

John Utting, the former Labor Party pollster, commented after the Australian election that the 'quality of the samples isn't as rigorous as it should be.'[35] For polling on elections, accuracy needs to be at the maximum level. For surveying of community attitudes on social and political issues there is a high demand for exactitude, but accuracy to one or two percentage points is less critical.

ELECTION SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

There are **distinctive challenges in predicting election outcomes**, which **require significant financial investment** to achieve a high level of reliability. These difficulties were discussed in the aftermath of the 2019 Australian election by Jim Reed in the *Research News* journal of the Australian Market and Social Research Society.[36] They include:

- The risk of relying on national level polling, when the outcome of an election is determined at the electorate level. In the 2019 Australian election Labor won 56% of the two-party preferred vote in Tasmania, 53% in Victoria, 48% in New South Wales, and 41.5% in Queensland. Optimum polling requires funding to conduct representative state samples and tracking of opinion in a few critical electorates.

- Attention to the order of candidates on the ballot papers of specific electorates. In closely fought electorates, candidate order may impact on the result.

- The need to track early voters. In 2019 more than 3 million (20% of voters) lodged a pre-poll vote.

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[32] Nate Silver, 'How FiveThirtyEight calculates pollster ratings', 25 Sept. 2014, FiveThirtyEight

[33] Nate Cohn, 'No one picks up the phone, but which online polls are the answer?', *New York Times*, 2 July 2019

[34] Rob Harris, 'Labor failed to head warnings that election was on knife edge, says secret report,' *The Age*, 11 Nov. 2019

[35] John Utting, '"False narrative" from polling may have ended Malcolm Turnbull,' ABC News, 23 May 2019

[36] Jim Reed, 'Margin for error: 2019 election polling,' *Research News*, Aug.-Oct. 2019, pp. 14-18

- Tracking of undecided respondents and those uninterested in the election who may not vote or vote informal. This is more of an issue in countries where voting is not compulsory, but even in Australia the informal vote in 2019 was 5.5% (7% in NSW); in addition, 8% of those on the electoral rolls (1.3 million people) did not vote.

- Timing of polls. Over the course of a campaign, many voters change their minds and it is difficult to accurately track shifts in the days before an election.

OBTAINING A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

The fundamental challenge, applicable not just to election polls but to all polling, is to obtain a representative sample. George Gallup observed that **'the most important requirement of any sample is that it be as representative as possible of the entire group or ''universe'' from which it is taken.**'

In the early decades of scientific polling, interviewers randomly selected addresses and visited people's homes to conduct face-to-face interviews, or left a printed questionnaire to be filled and collected. Occasionally questionnaires were mailed with a request to return the completed survey by mail.

TELEPHONE BASED SURVEYING

In the second phase of scientific polling, from the 1970s onwards, an increasing number of surveys were administered by interviewers over telephone.

However, a new challenge emerged as people became less willing to complete surveys when contacted by phone, even to answer a call from an unknown number. In the United States the Pew Research Centre found that **response rates fell** from 36% in 1997 to 6% in 2018. Contrary to expectation, research has found no significant biasing of the sample by the declining response rate; the major problem was cost, as many more calls needed to be made for each completed survey.

Yet another problem is increasing reliance on mobile phones. In Australia today 43% of adults do not have a landline and the proportion increases yearly. It is possible to conduct surveys on mobile phones, either administered by an interviewer or self-administered on a smart phone, but there is no comprehensive national directory available to survey agencies that links mobile numbers to location. This greatly increases the cost of obtaining a representative sample where location is an important consideration.

INTERNET SURVEYS

While the older forms of surveying have become less viable and more expensive, the internet has provided a new option and brings a number of potential benefits.

Since 2010, online completion has been the dominant mode of data collection in the Australian commercial and social research industry. A number of commercial providers have recruited people willing to complete surveys on the internet for a small payment. It is estimated that in 2016 there were 50 'research panels' operating in Australia, including the Your Source panel with over 100,000 members, and the Online Research Unit, with 350,000 members, claimed to be the largest in the country.

Panels have some advantages over interviewer administered surveys, as discussed below, but they also have disadvantages. **Each mode of survey administration has benefits, but also drawbacks.**

One key challenge for online surveying is sample representativeness. If all members of a population had computer access and their computer addresses were centrally listed, as in a telephone directory, then it would be possible to conduct random samples on the internet. But there is no comprehensive listing of computer users and not all members of the population have access to a computer or are willing to complete an online survey. This deficiency of surveys conducted solely online is referred to as **coverage error.**

Most online panels worldwide are **established via non-probability sampling;** anyone who becomes aware of an invitation to join a panel can do so. It is assumed (but necessarily cannot be established) that of all people who become aware of such an invitation, for example through an online advertisement, less than 1% join. There is no way to calculate margin of error for a panel that is not based on a representative sample of the population. Pennay and his co-authors, in a study of Australian panels, observed that 'although a completion rate can be calculated for within-panel surveys, this rate does not account for the 'response rate' when the panel was established.'[37]

Those who decide to join a non-probability online panel are not likely to be representative of a country's population, nor of a specific demographic segment of the population. Level of education, computer literacy and English language competence, age and social class, and region of residence, are all factors that influence participation in online panels.

Part of the attraction is the opportunity to have views recorded, so those with strong views may be disproportionately attracted to non-probability online panels. Panel members usually also receive money for joining the panel, and for each survey they complete, so a financial consideration may influence panel membership. Those who have not completed their secondary education but choose to join an online panel are unlikely to be representative of all of those who did not complete their secondary schooling; the member of an immigrant group who elects to join a panel may not be representative of that group of immigrants.

The policy of ABC News in the United States is to avoid reporting of surveys that do not meet their standards for reliability. These are specified as:

> non-probability, self-selected or so-called 'convenience' samples, including internet opt-in, e-mail, 'blast fax,' call-in, street intercept and non-probability mail-in samples.[38]

In contrast, in the Australian media there is little understanding of the unreliability of non-probability samples. Self-selected, opt-in polling, such as the Australian Broadcasting Service's Vote Compass and Australia Talks, are used to generate interest and promote discussion within media audiences, seemingly on the assumption, in ways similar to the *Literary Digest* fiasco, that a very large sample will represent the views of 'Australians', not specific audiences.

Evaluation of results obtained by North American and European panels have found that non-probability samples completed via online panels are less accurate, on average, than probability samples when measured against known results; non-probability surveys produce results that are more variable from each other than probability surveys; and weighting (discussed below) of online non-probability panels sometimes improves the accuracy of findings, but sometimes reduces their accuracy.[39]

In 2015 the Australian Social Research Centre conducted an Online Panels Benchmarking Study. In the study the same questionnaire was administered using three probability generated samples administered by telephone and five non-probability panels. The findings supported those of the overseas studies with regard to better accuracy and consistency of probability generated samples, and the impact of weighting.

ADVANTAGES

In terms of cost, face-to-face interviewing is the most expensive mode of administration, **online surveying less expensive**. Online surveys also have the advantage that they are **quicker to administer**, with scope to complete a survey in a matter of days compared to telephone administration which may take more than a month, depending on sample size and the number of interviewers. There are also potential benefits in truthfulness of response.

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[37] D.W. Pennay et al., 'The Online Panels Benchmarking Study: A Total Survey Error comparison of findings from probability based surveys and nonprobability online panel surveys in Australia', CSRM & SRC Methods Paper, 2/2018, Centre for Social Research and Methods, Australian National University, p. 32

[38] Gary Langer, Langer Research Associates, ABC News' Polling Methodology and Standards, 23 July 2015

[39] Pennay et al.

SOCIAL DESIRABILITY BIAS

When a survey is administered by a trained interviewer, the **personal interaction with the interviewee risks biasing responses**. This risk is termed 'Social Desirability Bias' and refers to the potential to provide responses that the interviewee believes is more socially desirable than responses that reflect a true opinion. This form of bias is of particular importance in response to questions that deal with socially sensitive or controversial issues, such as attitudes to minorities. The Pew Research Centre in the United States has commented:

> The social interaction inherent in a telephone or in-person interview may exert subtle pressures on respondents that affect how they answer questions. … Respondents may feel a need to present themselves in a more positive light to an interviewer, leading to an overstatement of socially desirable behaviours and attitudes and an understatement of opinions and behaviours they fear would elicit disapproval from another person.[40]

A prominent American researcher, Humphrey Taylor, observes that 'where there is a 'socially desirable' answer, substantially more people in our online surveys give the "socially undesirable" response. We believe that this is because online respondents give more truthful responses.' Similarly, Roger Tourangeau and his co-authors of *The Science of Web Surveys* report that a review of research 'demonstrates that survey respondents consistently underreport a broad range of socially undesirable behaviours and over report an equally broad range of socially desirable behaviours.'

An online questionnaire completed in privacy on a computer, or an anonymous printed questionnaire returned by mail, can provide conditions under which a respondent feels greater freedom to disclose honest opinions on sensitive topics. But it may also lead to exaggerated responses.

A 2010 report prepared for the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) concluded that:

> Computer administration yields more reports of socially undesirable attitudes and behaviours than oral interviewing, but no evidence that directly demonstrates that the computer reports are more accurate.

WEIGHTING OF THE ACHIEVED SAMPLE

Panel providers are able to **adjust results obtained through a procedure known as weighting, to lessen the non-representative character of their sample**. The adjustment may be both demographic (for example, to correctly align the proportion of men and women, or the level of education of respondents) and attitudinal, to correct for known skewing of a panel.

An issue with weighting of surveys conducted for the Australian media is that details of the approach may be regarded by the panel owner as a commercial asset and not revealed. In the United States there is more of a requirement for transparency.

In the context of the 2019 election, there was a suspicion that some surveying companies were weighting or adjusting their results so as to produce results similar to that of their competitors, a behaviour described as 'herding'. Professor Brian Schmidt, Nobel Prize winner and Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University, argued that it was mathematically impossible for the polls to be consistently wrong by very similar margins. Schmidt stated that the odds of 16 polls 'coming in with the same, small spread of answers is greater than 100,000 to 1. In other words, the polls have been manipulated, probably unintentionally, to give the same answers to each other.'[41]

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[40] Pew Research Centre, Mode effects as a source of error in political surveys, 31 March 2017,
https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/2017/03/31/appendix-b-mode-effects-as-a-source-of-error-in-political-surveys/
[41] *Guardian,* 20 May 2019; *Canberra Times*, 20 May 2019

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN AND MODE OF ADMINISTRATION

There are a number of additional factors that can impact on the accuracy of polls. These factors include **question wording, question order, the number and ordering of response options**, and additional factors to those already discussed with regard to mode of administration. The Pew Research Centre has commented:

> The choice of words and phrases in a question is critical in expressing the meaning and intent of the question to the respondent and ensuring that all respondents interpret the question the same way. Even small wording differences can substantially affect the answers people provide. [42]

Research indicates that in online and other forms of self-completion polls, a respondent is more likely to select the best 'first' response they see – known as 'primacy' effect. [43] On the other hand, in response to an interviewer, a higher proportion of respondents select the best 'last' mentioned response option, known as a 'recency' effect.

The conversion of questions from spoken to written form leads to the provision of visual cues that can play a significant role in determining response. A key problem, discussed below, arises from the placement (or non-placement) of mid-point and 'don't know' response options.

MODE EFFECT IN THE SCANLON FOUNDATION SURVEYS

The Scanlon Foundation sets the benchmark for quality social cohesion surveying in Australia.

In addition to telephone surveying, the Scanlon Foundation has experimented with online surveys which have provided insight into the strengths and limitations of the online methodology. In 2018 and 2019 the Scanlon Foundation survey was administered both by telephone (RDD) and on the Social Research Centre's Life in Australia ™ (LinA) panel, in **recognition that with both advantages and disadvantages considered, the future of quality national surveying will require administration via the internet on a probability-based panel**.

The Scanlon Foundation's investment in the two modes of administration serves the purpose of enabling a phased transition, providing a basis to assess the impact of mode of administration.

This transition is not, however, without problems, as the different modes of surveying can produce differing results. Analysis of mode effect supports seven key findings, consistent with the research literature.

[1] At the macro level, LinA yields a higher proportion of negative responses. This is indicated by the calculation of the Scanlon Monash Index, which aggregates 18 questions: the 2019 SMI obtained from the RDD administered survey is 89.6, LinA a lower 83.7.

[2] There is inconsistency in the variation by mode, but it is not random. There is a logic to the variation.

[3] For some types of questions, there is only minor difference in the relative proportions indicating a positive and negative response.

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[42] Pew Research Centre Methods papers, Questionnaire design
[43] R. Tourangeau et al., *The Science of Web Surveys,* Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 8, 146, 147, 150

This holds true for a number of questions selected from the 2019 survey that relate to government policy, also questions on national identity. For example,

- 'The number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present is … too high': 41% RDD, 41% LinA

- 'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia', strongly agree or agree, 85% RDD, 80% LinA

- 'Thinking about the growing economic ties between Australia and other countries, sometimes referred to as globalization, do you think this is …. fairly bad, very bad ….?', 22% RDD, 22% LinA

- 'Are you personally concerned that Australia is too harsh in its treatment of asylum seekers and refugees? Would you say it concerns you … only slightly, not at all…?' 47% RDD, 50% LinA

- 'To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia? To a great extent, to a moderate extent …' 90% RDD, 90% LinA

[4] In the social cohesion survey the largest difference by mode is obtained for questions that relate to [a] the respondent's own life; [b] attitudes to specific ethnic or religious groups; [c] the impact of immigration. These types of variation conform to the characteristics of Social Desirability Bias. For example,

- 'Taking ALL things into consideration, would you say that over the last year you have been … very unhappy, unhappy …' 10% RDD, 19% LinA

- 'How satisfied are you with your present financial situation? … Very dissatisfied, dissatisfied …' 24% RDD, 36% LinA

- 'Is your personal attitude … towards Muslims … very negative, somewhat negative?' 21% RDD, 40% LinA

- 'To what extent do the following concern you … The impact of immigration on overcrowding in Australian cities? … A great deal or somewhat', 52% RDD, 70% LinA

[5] The pattern of variation is consistent over time, as indicated where data is available for three waves of LinA surveying. For example,

'Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards Christians/ Buddhist/ Muslims.' Response very negative or somewhat negative. (LinA)

	2017	**2018**	**2019**
Christians	12	12	14
Buddhists	5	5	3
Muslims	41	39	40

The consistency obtained on LinA is at a different level to the consistency obtained by interviewer administered surveying:

'Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards Christians/ Buddhist/ Muslims.' Response very negative or somewhat negative. (RDD)

	2017	**2018**	**2019**
Christians	6	5	4
Buddhists	4	3	4
Muslims	25	23	21

[6] When a range of response options are analysed, indication of **strong negative opinion** (for example, the fifth response option on a scale that indicates rejection of cultural diversity and acceptance of discrimination) **is largely consistent, irrespective of mode.**

But in the indication of **strong positive opinion, the response on LinA is lower,** possibly explained by Social Desirability Bias that leads to an inflation of strong positive opinion in interviewer administered (RDD) surveys.

It seems that most with strong negative views feel no need to hide their views in conversation with an interviewer, while there is a desire to accentuate strong positive values. An example of the pattern here discussed is provided by response to the following question:

- 'When a family or individual applies to migrate … Do you agree or disagree that it should be possible for them to be rejected on the basis of…their religion?' Strongly agree 8% RDD, 11% LinA; Strongly disagree 49% RDD, 30% LinA

[7] There is no mode of surveying that fully measures public opinion and all findings need to be critically evaluated – the means of measurement used to estimate public opinion always has an impact. For this reason, results obtained by RDD and LinA are both presented in this report, to provide understanding of divergence across the two modes of surveying.

While self-completion surveys lessen the risk of Social Desirability Bias, to some extent they **risk over simplifying the complexity of public opinion through limited choice options**. This occurs where mid-point, 'don't know' and 'decline to answer' responses are not readily apparent to the respondent.

In response to a question by an interviewer, a respondent is typically asked if she or he agrees or disagrees. If the response is agreement, then a follow up question may elicit level of agreement, strong or just agree. But if uncertainty is indicated, the respondent may be informed that they have the option of indicating that they 'neither agree nor disagree' or indicate that they 'don't know' or can decline to answer. If the survey is completed online, immediate disclosure of the full range of response options may lead to a higher proportion of 'neither agree nor disagree', 'don't know' or 'decline' responses.

A strategy to overcome this potential problem is to initially only show the 'agree' and 'disagree' options on the computer screen, and only indicate other response options if the respondent tries to move to the next question without providing an answer. This form of programming, regarded as best practice and which has been adopted by the Social Research Centre for its panel, has the potential to under-estimate the level of uncertainty.

An example is provided in the 2018 telephone administered version of the Scanlon Foundation survey, in which 20% of respondents indicated that they were uncertain who they would vote for if an election was to be held, in the online version just 4% indicated this response, which was only shown when the respondents attempted to move to the next screen without providing an answer. In 2019, in the aftermath of the election, the result was 12% RDD, 2% LinA.

A further example is provided by the Scanlon Foundation's online Australia@2015 survey, which asked respondents if they had been happy or unhappy over the last year. When respondents were shown the mid-point response, 'neither happy nor unhappy' 19% selected it. In the 2019 LinA survey, without the mid-point response being initially shown, just 1% chose it.

Given the heightened difficulty of surveying by telephone and the Scanlon Foundation's planned transition to LinA, it is essential to understand the impact of mode to enable LinA data to be aligned with time series data obtained by earlier interviewer administered surveys.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS

Professor Andrew Markus is the Pratt Foundation Research Professor in the School of Historical, International and Philosophical Studies, Monash University, and a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. He has authored the annual Scanlon Foundation social cohesion reports since the project's establishment in 2007 and has published extensively in the field of Australian indigenous and immigration history. His publications include *Australia's Immigration Revolution* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney 2009), co-authored with James Jupp and Peter McDonald; *Race: John Howard and the Remaking of Australia* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001) and *Building a New Community: Immigration and the Victorian Economy* (editor, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001).

The Scanlon Foundation Research Institute exists as a bridge between academic insight and public thought, to support the advancement of Australia as a welcoming, prosperous and cohesive nation. The body is an initiative of the Scanlon Foundation and furthers its belief that Australia's future prosperity, underpinned by continued population growth, will depend on our ability to maintain, foster and support social cohesion in our communities amidst ever-growing cultural diversity.

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.