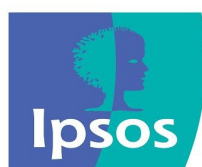


# THE IPSOS MACKAY REPORT



SBS IMMIGRATION NATION

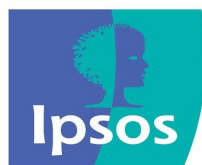


**Ipsos-Eureka**  
Social Research Institute

# THE IPSOS MACKAY REPORT



## SBS IMMIGRATION NATION THOUGHT LEADERSHIP RESEARCH SUMMARY REPORT



**Ipsos-Eureka**  
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## Introduction

In late 2010, Ipsos conducted a national attitudinal research project on behalf of SBS. This project explored and contrasted contemporary attitudes to immigration with perceptions of Australia's immigration history. It employed a mixed methodology including a nationwide online survey, in-depth interviews and affinity mini-groups and a comprehensive review of the last 25 years of *The Ipsos Mackay Report*, Australia's longest running social trends study.

This summary provides extracts from the research that relate to attitudes to refugees and asylum seekers. The full research report, **SBS Ipsos Immigration Nation Research**, can be found at [www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/corporate](http://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/corporate) under *Policies and Publications*.

## Methodology

The online survey was conducted with n=1375 members of the general public aged 18 and over. The sample was split into a main sample (n=1081) and a CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) boost (n=294).

The in-depth interviews and affinity groups specifically focused on participants from a CALD background. The depth interviews included participants from the following backgrounds: Chinese, Italian, Greek, Swedish, Lebanese and Iraqi; and the affinity groups were with migrants from the following backgrounds: Chinese, Vietnamese, Iranian, Indian, Sudanese and Chilean.

The review of *The Ipsos Mackay Report* was conducted with a particular focus on themes of immigration, immigrants, asylum seekers and multiculturalism. *The Ipsos Mackay Report* is based on a non-directive, qualitative methodology because the attitudes and values it explores do not lend themselves to the more formal, structured techniques of the statistical questionnaire-based survey.



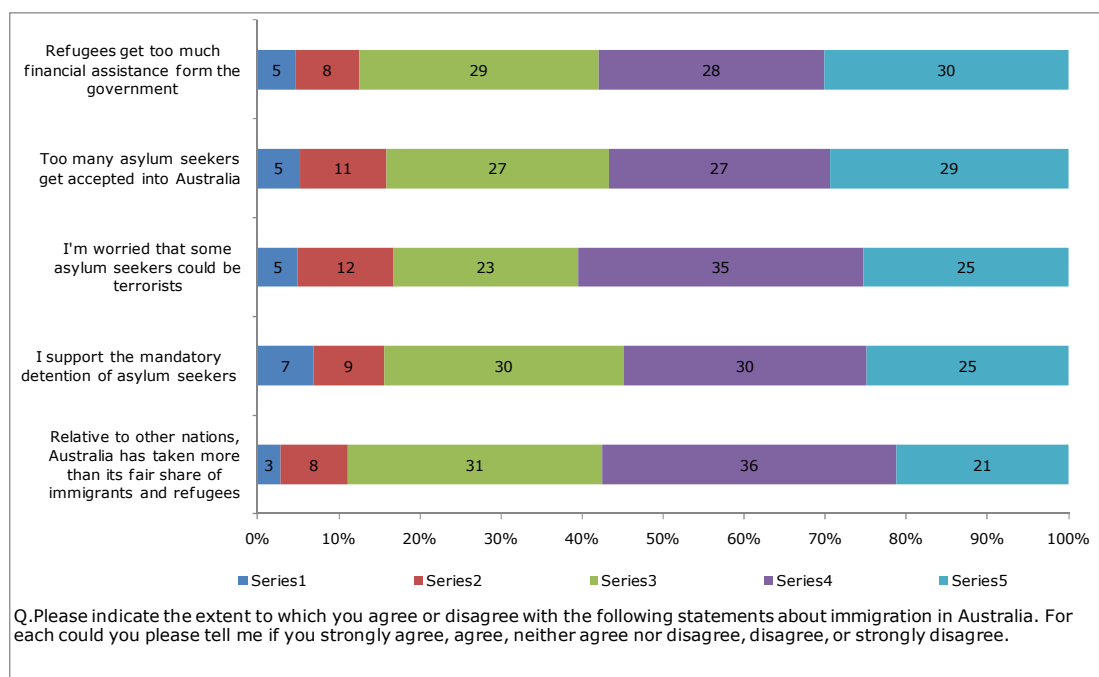
## Attitudes to Refugees and Asylum Seekers

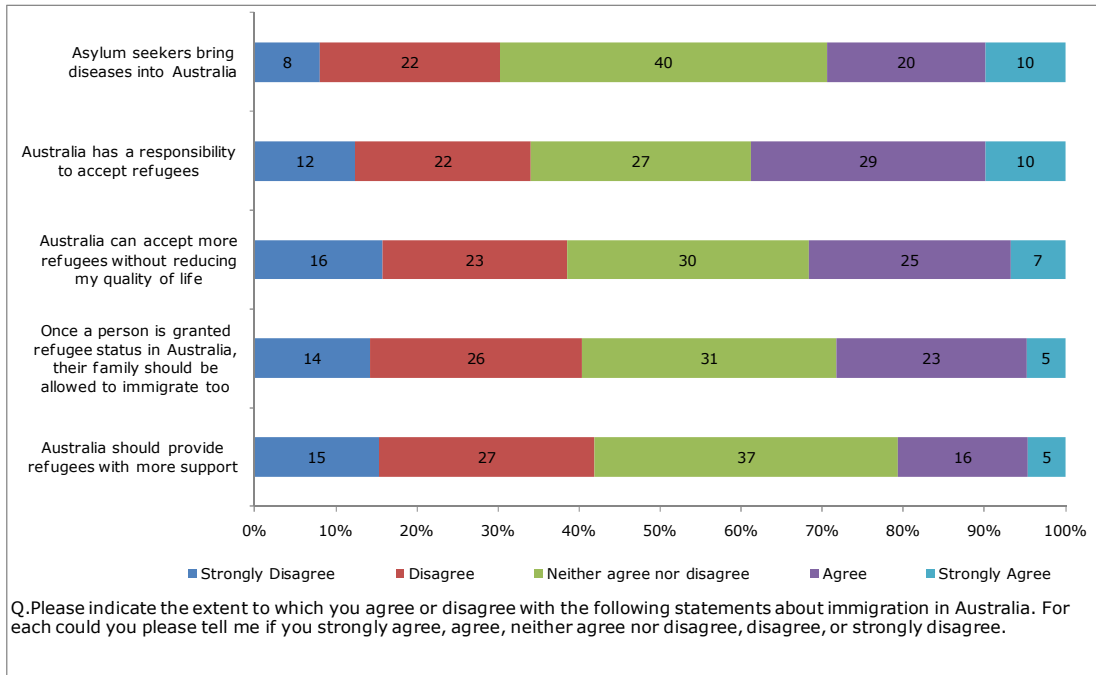
All stages of this research project showed that currently there is only moderate support for the idea that Australia should accept the current or increased numbers of asylum seekers (39% of respondents in the quantitative phase agreeing or strongly agreeing that Australia has a responsibility to accept refugees). Indeed, the Mackay review showed that over the past decade support for asylum seekers has declined as support for skilled migrants has increased.

In the quantitative phase of this research project participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of 41 statements about immigration in Australia.

A selection of the attitude statements that specifically relate to refugees and asylum seekers are below:

Figure 1 Attitudes to refugees and asylum seekers



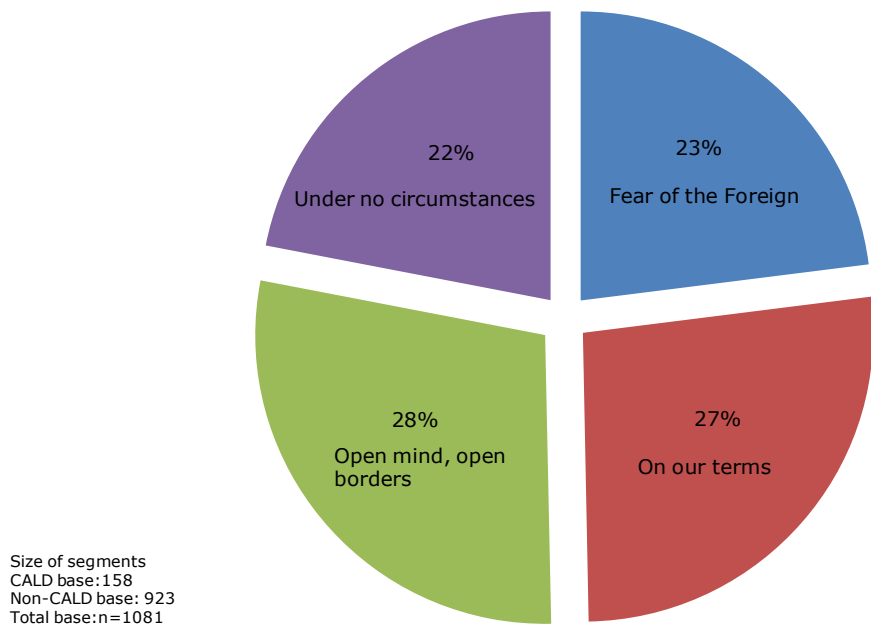


## Attitudinal segments

This research produced an attitudinal segmentation with two very clear groups of respondents: 'Under no circumstances' and 'Room for more'. 'Under no circumstances' was characterised by a high level of concern about cultural difference and strong opposition to immigration, while 'Room for more' was the most pro-immigration and multiculturalism. The 'On our terms' and 'Fear of foreign' segments were less clearly defined, with the first supportive of immigration within limits and the second suspicious of cultural difference but pro-immigration that benefits the economy. Interestingly, the top predictor of segment membership was response to the statement "Too many asylum seekers get accepted into Australia". It seems that a respondent's attitude to asylum seekers is indicative of their broader philosophy about immigration, ethnic difference and multiculturalism.

A brief profile of the four attitude segments is provided below.

Figure 2 Attitudinal segmentation



### Under No Circumstances

The 'Under no circumstances' (i.e. does not support immigration under any circumstances) segment was characterised by a strong opposition to immigration, including immigration that might benefit Australia's economy. Indeed, only two survey participants of the 236 in this segment supported increased immigration. This segment was also characterised by a high level of concern about cultural difference, with 91% of survey participants agreeing that 'immigrants should follow the conventions of Australian society' and 90% of survey participants agreeing that 'immigrants should know English before they are allowed to come to Australia'.

All survey participants were asked to indicate, in a completed open-ended fashion, what they thought was the most important issue facing Australia today. Forty-two percent of the 'Under no circumstances' segment responded with issues related to immigration or refugees.

A sample of uncoded answers from survey participants in the 'Under no circumstances' segment have been provided below:

*Too many black immigrants and refugees, overpopulation, no employment, housing and so on for aussies because of the above....*

*Terrorism. Boat people coming in here and being allowed to stay. Politicians get too much money and superannuation.*

*Far too many boat people arriving on our doorsteps, and there will be BIG problems down the tracks!!!!*

*Too much immigration and the immigrants bringing their problems here.*

*Too many Asians taking our jobs.*

## **Room for More**

The 'Room for more' (i.e. room for more immigrants) segment was the most pro-immigration and multiculturalism. Indeed, 79% of survey participants in this segment agreed that 'Australia should be a multicultural society', 72% agreed that 'Immigrants have enriched the Australian way of life' and 69% agreed 'Immigrants make for a more interesting society'. In addition, only 1% of survey participants disagreed that 'Too many asylum seekers get accepted into Australia'. It should, however, be noted that this segment seems to be aware of problems and debates associated with cultural differences, with 62% of segment members acknowledging that 'Racism is a problem in Australia'. It should also be noted that this segment was not as strong in its support of immigration/multiculturalism as the 'Under no circumstances' segment was in its opposition.

With regard to the most important issue facing Australia, 33% of survey participants in the 'Room for more' segment reported at least one problem related to 'Environment'. This was followed by 'Housing/Cost of living/Personal finance', which was mentioned by 21% of respondents. Issues relating to immigration or refugees were mentioned by 19% of survey participants in this segment.

A sample of uncoded answers from survey participants in the 'Room for more' segment have been provided below:

*Some people being racist.*

*Climate change, racial hostility, poverty/disparity of wealth, lack of political leadership, the nature of foreign investment.*

*Racism, xenophobia, drug and alcohol abuse, apathetic voters, the greedy nature of society, and so on and so on.*

*I think we are starting to forgot what makes this country so beautiful which is having so many beautiful cultures. We seem to becoming unaccepting of other people.*

*Covert racism, there is a lack of tolerance for different cultures and lack of leadership promoting a view of respect for all differences. Environmental concerns, we need to protect this planet for future generations.*

*Environment, racism, refugees not being allowed in.*



## Fear of Foreign

The 'Fear of foreign' (i.e. scared/suspicious of cultural differences) and 'On our terms' (i.e. supportive of immigration, within reason) segments were less clearly defined. The former segment was pro-immigration that benefits Australia's economy (83% agree or strongly agree) but very worried about the effects of cultural differences. Ninety-two percent of survey participants in this segment indicated they were worried about violence between ethnic groups in Australia. In addition, 76% of survey participants agreed with each of the following statements: 'I worry about the effect immigration will have on the Australian environment' and 'I worry that migrant communities are changing the Australian way of life'. Not surprisingly, this segment was also pro-integration, with 92% of survey participants agreeing that new immigrants should try harder to integrate with people outside their ethnic group.

When asked about the most important issue facing Australia, close to half (44%) of survey participants in the 'Fear of the Foreign' segment reported at least one problem related to 'immigration/refugees'. This was followed by 'housing/cost' of living/personal finances', which was mentioned by 26% of survey participants in the 'Fear of the Foreign' segment.

A sample of un-coded answers from survey participants in the 'Fear of the foreign' segment has been provided below:

*Migration not enough jobs governments that don't care about the people migrant that won't assimilate.*

*Immigration without assimilation and understanding of Australian values. There is a moral responsibility to assist refugees; however, once they get here we do nothing for them. No counselling for those traumatised by violence, no assistance in understanding Australian culture and values. As a result of no assimilation assistance and education they end up alienated, marginalised and develop an intolerance of the very freedoms available to them.*

*Immigration and non English speaking people bringing disease. The price of electricity*

*Assimilation of new people coming to live in Australia.*

## On Our Terms

Finally, the 'On our terms' segment was less worried about cultural differences than the 'Fear of the Foreign' segment, but very supportive of appropriate procedures. For example, while 79% of survey participants in this segment agree that immigrants have enriched the Australian way of life, 76% of survey participants support the mandatory detention of asylum seekers. In addition, 84% of survey participants in this segment agreed that it is possible for immigrants to be proud of their heritage but still loyal to Australia, while 86% of survey participants thought there should be strict limits placed on the number of people coming into Australia. That being said, only 33% strongly agreed that too many asylum seekers get accepted into Australia, a level of agreement that was second only to the 'Room for more' segment. Like the 'Fear of the Foreign' segment, the 'On our terms' segment was pro-immigration that benefits Australia's economy (74% agreed or strongly agreed) and skilled migration (66% agreed or strongly agreed).

Thirty-one percent of survey participants in the 'On our Terms' segment reported that the most important issue facing Australians was related to 'immigration/refugees'. This was followed by environmental issues, which was mentioned by 25% of respondents.

A sample of uncoded answers from survey participants in the 'On our terms' segment have been provided below:

*The increasing immigration problem as they are draining our economy they receive more govt funding and care than those that have spent their entire lives here paying taxes. No other country does this for immigrants so why the hell are we?*

*I think the boatpeople are an enormous problem. We have enough homeless people already and should have priority. Government should listen more to what the general population think. The war in Afghanistan is a big burden to our country and the loss of young Australians.*

*boat people - refugees should come through correct process govt spending - too much waste medical system - more money to be spent govt views on global warming and carbon tax - this is just a normal cycle.*

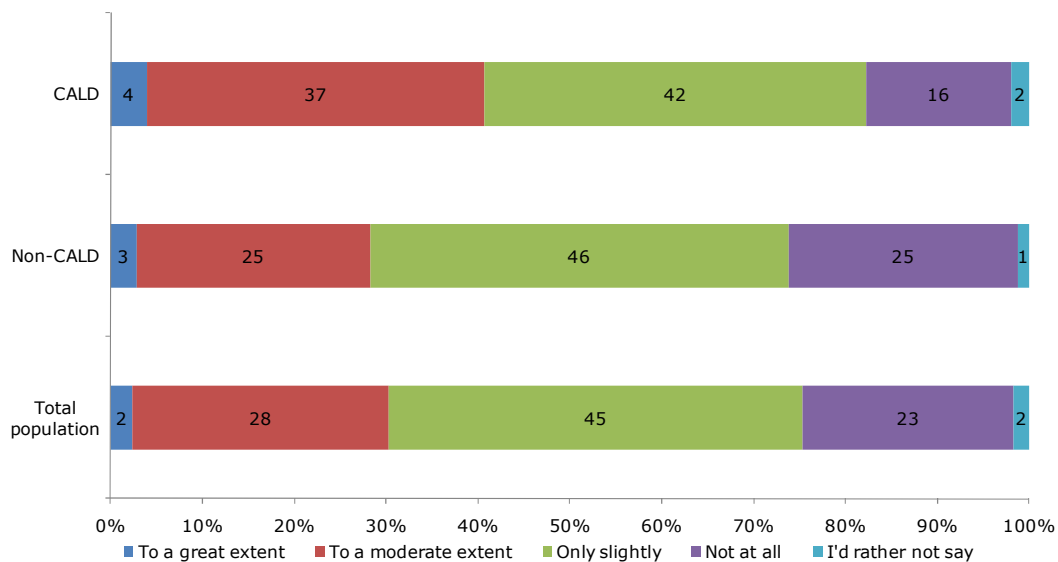
*Surge of boat people, overcrowding in prisons, not enough nurses and doctors to support hospital growth, global warming.*

## Trust in Media Reports on Immigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they trusted the information they receive on immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers in the media. The results for CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) respondents, non-CALD respondents, and a sample of the total population (including 15% CALD) are shown below. CALD respondents were significantly less likely than non-CALD respondents to indicate that they trusted media reports 'To a moderate extent' (25% and 37%, respectively). Non-CALD respondents were also significantly more likely than CALD respondents to indicate that that they trusted media reports 'Not at all' (25% and 16%, respectively).

Overall, almost half of respondents in the 'total population' sample indicated that they trusted media reports on immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers 'Only slightly'.

Figure 3 Trust of the media by CALD status



Q. To what extent do you trust the information you receive on immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers in the media?

CALD base: 452

Non-CALD base: 923

Total base: n=1081 (including 15% CALD)

## Change in Attitudes over Past Thirty Years

In his 1995 report on multiculturalism, Hugh Mackay attributed anxious and outright negative attitudes to migrants as, in part, a consequence of a very human response to rapid social change. To quote from that report:

*All change is disturbing; change which involves the probability of a re-shaping of the very character of our society is profoundly disturbing. Even those Australians who are inclined to be tolerant of ethnic groups, and to express 'enlightened' views about our migration policy, comment that 'the status quo' has definitely and irrevocably been upset. The more general view is that, not only has the status quo been upset, but that Australians have suffered a series of 'culture shocks' since World War II and that the extent and pattern of migration carries the very real danger of the destruction, by 'takeover', of the Australian culture itself.*

Reviewing three decades of Mackay reports shows that the same concerns about the impact of immigration on Australian society arise with startling regularity. This is despite the fact that our worst fears about what migrants might do when they come here are rarely realised. As Hugh Mackay wrote in his 1995 report, 'quite clearly, Australians are always inclined to resist and resent migrants – especially when they come from non-traditional countries of origin'.

One worrying trend in the last ten years has been the gradual but obvious demise in sympathy for asylum seekers. While support for skilled migrants has risen (spurred in part by a recognition of our ageing population, relatively low birth rate and skills shortages in some sectors), suspicion of 'boat people' has risen (especially since September 11). While in the 1980s and early 1990s it was common for people to support the need to accept legitimate refugees, yet they were opposed to immigrants who would come here to take 'Aussie jobs'. Now with concern about unemployment low, Australians are more likely to say we need skilled migrants and not queue jumpers who will be reliant on welfare from the government.

However, the review of the past thirty years is not all bleak reading. Resistance to particular ethnic groups clearly and quickly breaks down over time, often within a generation or two. Yesterday's immigrant troublemaker and ethnic ghetto becomes tomorrow's model, well-assimilated citizen living in a gastro-tourist destination. Australians are not blind to how past migrants have enriched our society and made it stronger, more prosperous and more interesting, bringing the best of the world to our shores. The worry is always that this enviable pattern won't continue into the future. And yet the overwhelming belief among Australians from all kinds of background is that the next generation is the great hope and that young generations are more comfortable with difference and more adaptable to change.

## Overall Conclusions

The quantitative phase of this research project produced an attitudinal segmentation that roughly divided the respondent group of 1000 plus into four equally sized groups. This may seem to invite the conclusion that the Australian population is divided on questions of immigration, multiculturalism and asylum seekers. Certainly there are clear differences between these four segments and yet the qualitative phase has shown that on some questions there is remarkable unanimity of opinion.

We can say there is general support for the *idea* that Australia should remain multicultural and that migrants have added to our society in positive ways (particularly in terms of food and greater cultural and society diversity). Support, especially in the 'On our terms' segment, for immigration that enhances economic prosperity remains relatively strong. Australians appear to hold firm beliefs that, by international standards, we are a nation that has been generous to migrants. To a significant degree, the qualitative component shows migrants themselves agree with this assessment. All aspects of the research reflect the emphasis placed by Australians, regardless of migrant background, on assimilation as crucial to ensuring our multicultural society is highly functional and harmonious. In this respect learning the English language is seen as key.

However, in at least three of the four segments anxieties and concerns about the impact of immigration on our society now and into the future were significant and numerous. In relation to current or increased levels of immigration, there was reservation (in the 'On our terms'), fear (in 'Fear of the foreign') and outright opposition ('Under no circumstances'). The qualitative research shows that the drivers of opposition are relatively predictable and reflect concerns about our cultural identity, social cohesion, economic prosperity and (more recently) environmental sustainability.

In terms of the role of the media, all phases of the research showed reasonably low levels of trust in the information gleaned by media about immigration, asylum seekers and migrants in general (with some differences between CALD and non-CALD respondents). Respondents in the qualitative phase in particular criticised media bias and the lack of 'different faces' on television screens.

A review of three decades of *The Ipsos Mackay Report* shows that in Australian's attitudes about migrants consistent themes emerge. We accept the fact of multiculturalism (some of us grudgingly) and yet we are constantly striving and struggling to adapt to its challenges and its opportunities. As Donald Horne argued in his famous book in *The Lucky Country* (1964), we have always been an immigrant country working hard to craft an overarching identity:

*Australia has managed to be an immigrant country for most of its history without even thinking about it. ... The old belief that Australia swallows its migrants whole and does not change as a result of their digestion no longer seems true. It is true that children of most migrants cease to be Europeans but in the process somewhere Australians are also ceasing to be 'Australians'. It is normal liberal though to wish to see old national minority cultures preserved, though integrated, but what now seems to be the Australian way, in which both old and new grope towards something different, has a great deal to be said for it.*

The complete **SBS Ipsos Immigration Nation Research** report is available under *Policies and Publications* at [www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/corporate](http://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/corporate).





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