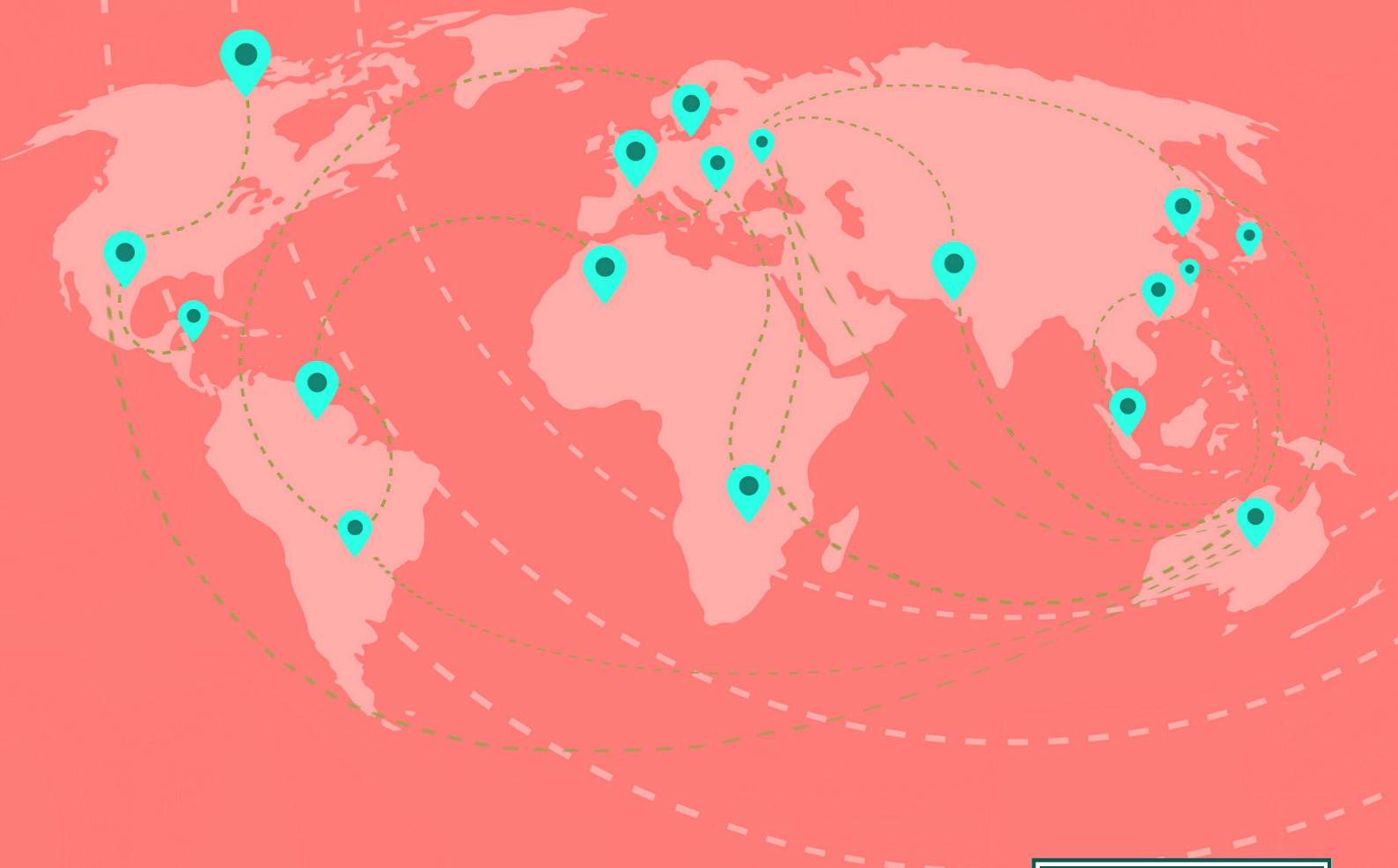


## Mapping migrants: Australians' wide-ranging experiences of immigration

Charles Jacobs





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# Mapping migrants: Australians' wide-ranging experiences of immigration

Charles Jacobs



POLICY Paper 13

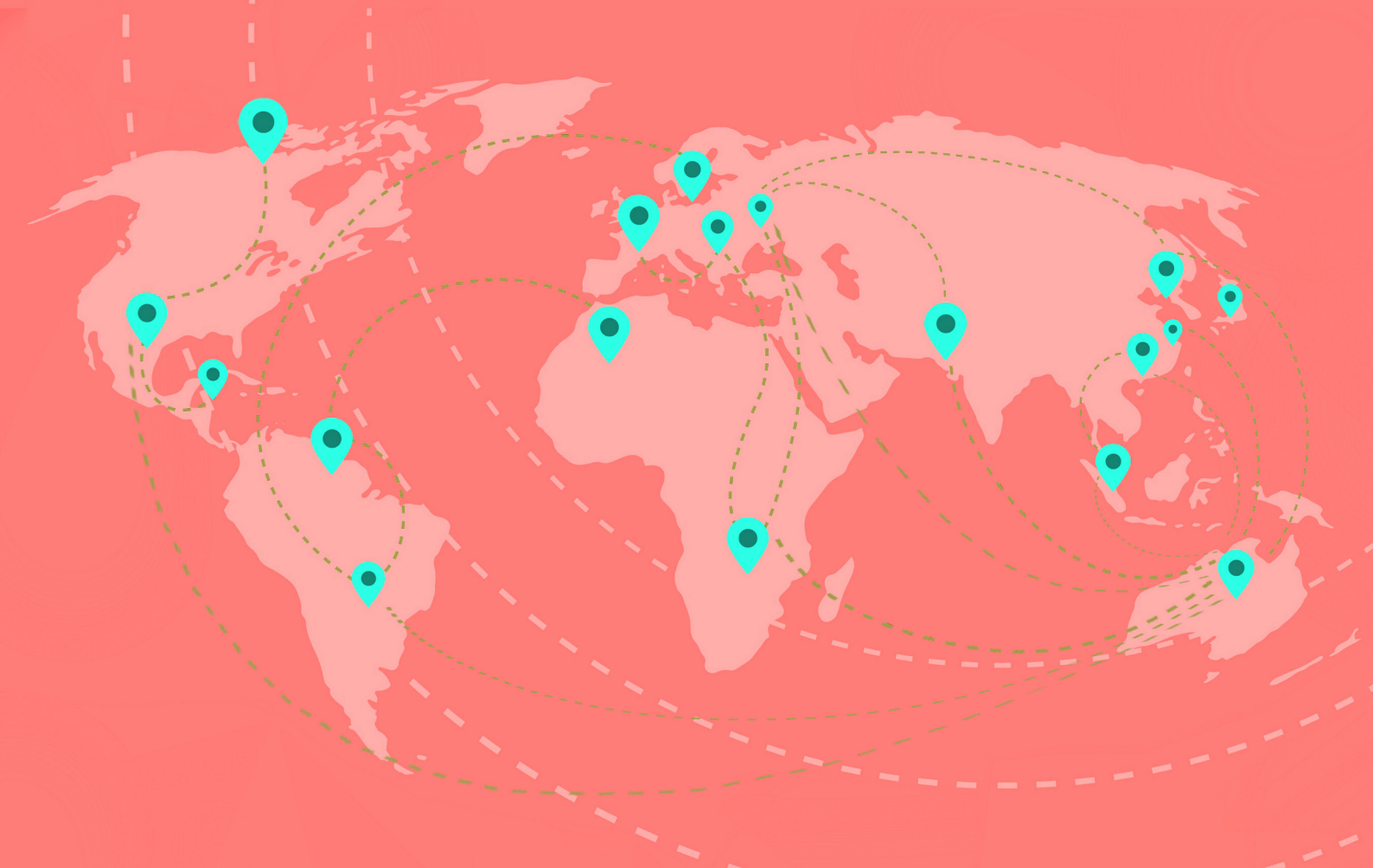
# Contents

Introduction: immigration — an increasingly contentious issue .....	1
Major Findings.....	2
Where do migrants live?.....	3
New waves of immigration have changed where migrants live.....	3
Where do ethnic groups settle?.....	4
English proficiency.....	5
Engagement in education and the economy .....	6
Employment.....	7
What type of work do migrants do? .....	7
Education .....	8
Migrants and the commute to work .....	9
Mode of travel to work.....	9
Conclusion.....	10

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## List of figures

Figure 1: Percentage of people in postcodes who are migrants by weekly HIND brackets.....	3
Figure 2: Raw number of Australian-born and overseas-born people by postcode HIND brackets .....	3
Figure 3: Migrants permanent additions 1945-46 to 2016-17 .....	3
Figure 4: Proportion of living migrants who arrived in Year Bracket .....	4
Figure 5: Proportion of migrants by stream 1984-85 to 2016-17 .....	4
Figure 6: Percentage of migrants from given region living in POAs below median HIND .....	4
Figure 7: Percentage of all migrants in POAs by region of birth .....	5
Figure 8: Proportion of all migrants within English proficiency classification group by HIND of POA.....	5
Figure 9: Proportion of ESL migrants in HIND bracket who speak English 'Very Well.....	5
Figure 10: Proportion of ESL migrants from given region who speak English 'Very well' by POA HIND bracket.....	6
Figure 11: Proportion of all Migrants who are fully engaged in Employment, Education or Training by POA HIND.....	6
Figure 12: Migrants from given region who are fully engaged in employment, education or training — Proportion who live in POAs above the median HIND .....	6
Figure 13: Proportion of all employed migrants by HIND bracket in which they live.....	7
Figure 14: Proportion of migrants within HIND bracket by employment status.....	7
Figure 15: Proportion of migrants within occupation by POA HIND in which they live.....	7
Figure 16: Proportion of migrants within HIND bracket who work in given occupation .....	8
Figure 17: Proportion of migrants within HIND bracket by highest level of Education.....	8
Figure 18: Proportion of commuters who travel given distance to work .....	9
Figure 19: Overall proportion of people who commute 30km or more to work .....	9
Figure 20: Proportion of commuters within income bracket who travel 30km or more to work .....	9
Figure 21: Proportion of commuters within HIND bracket who use given mode of transport .....	10



## Introduction: Immigration - an increasingly contentious issue

In recent decades the issue of immigration has come to the forefront of Australian political debate. While migration was once a well-supported strategy to build the country's population and grow the economy, public opinion has become increasingly more divided on the place migrants hold in Australian society. Soaring house prices, traffic congestion, and the impacts on social cohesion have all been raised as growing issues by critics of the nation's relatively liberal immigration policy. The contrary argument from supporters of an open immigration approach states that migrants bring a wide range of benefits to Australia, including increasing diversity, and contributing to economic growth.

In November 2018, polling commissioned by The Centre for Independent Studies revealed some notable similarities in how Australians view migrants, regardless of where the respondents live.\*

The research, ***Australian Attitudes to Immigration: Coming Apart or Common Ground?*** was based on polling by YouGov Galaxy that surveyed the opinions on immigration-related topics of 500 Australians who live in the top 10% of metropolitan postcodes by income and education, and 500 who live in the bottom 10%. In the lowest decile metropolitan postcodes, 57% believe the current levels of immigration are too high, just 23% believe they are about right and only 8% believe they are too low. However, in highest decile postcodes, just under half in total believe current immigration levels are either about right (36%) or too low (12%). Yet almost the same number in the most affluent suburbs believe current levels are too high (46%).

This paper seeks to follow on from the poll results and to make sense of what may cause us to view migrants differently. Utilising 2016 Census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the paper maps

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\* For full poll results see: Sammut, J; Wilkie, M; 'Australian Attitudes to Immigration: Coming Apart or Common Ground?', The Centre for Independent Studies, 2018.

the various levels of exposure Australians have to migrants. It points to some overwhelming divergences in how people in different socioeconomic areas experience migrants, and posits that these differences could go some way to explaining why perceptions are varied.

### Major Findings

- A majority (54.85%) of migrants live in postcodes with a median Household Income (HIND) bracket above the Australian median.\*\*
- Newer wave migrants are significantly more likely to be skilled and to live in wealthy areas.
- 53% of English as a second language (ESL) migrants in above median HIND areas speak English very well. 44% of ESL migrants in below HIND areas speak English very well.
- 45% of working age migrants in suburbs below the median HIND are not in the labour force. 34% of those living in areas above the median are not seeking work.
- 24% of migrants living in postcodes below the median HIND have a Bachelor's degree or a higher qualification. 38.72% of those above the median have this level of qualification.
- Migrants in all income areas are more likely than the average Australian to commute to work via public transport, although a majority still drive.

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\*\* Note: all data quoted in this Policy Paper is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census Table Builder unless otherwise cited.

# Where do migrants live?

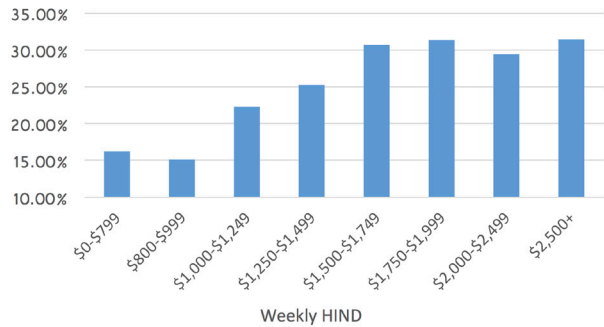
While Australia’s migrant intake is relatively high, the distribution of migrants across the nation is by no means even. The areas in which migrants live depends on a range of socioeconomic factors. Of the 6,131,921 migrants (people born overseas) listed on 2016 Census night, a majority (54.85%) live in postcodes that sit in a median weekly HIND bracket above the Australian median. Notably, the concentration of migrants grows significantly in higher income areas. Nearly a third (30.48%) of migrants live in postcodes with a median income above \$1,750 a week. By contrast, 24.94% of Australian-born people live in these postcodes. By the time you reach the top income bracket (\$2,500+), 31.45% of all people living in these suburbs are migrants (See Figure 1). This contrasts to just 16.24% in the lowest income bracket.

## New waves of immigration have changed where migrants live

Since federation, Australia has experienced several major waves of migration. Under the auspices of the Immigration Restriction Act 1901, otherwise known as the White Australia policy, migrant intake was primarily restricted to those from Western Europe. Following the Second World War a ‘populate or perish’ approach saw migrant intake from European countries — such as the United Kingdom, Greece and Italy — accelerated in order to strengthen the Australian population in the post-war era. During the 1970s and 80s, many refugees from South East Asian conflicts made their way to the country. In recent decades, Australia’s migrant intake has soared, increasing from 99,000 in 1995-96, to 220,000 in 2016-17 (Excludes Australian born people returning. See Figure 3). This period far outstrips our migrant intake at any stage in history, only rivalled by the 185,000 in 1949-50 and the 184,000 arrivals in 1969-70.

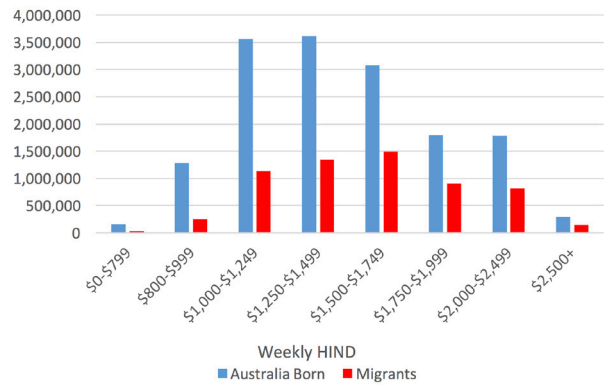
So where are these migrants living and what type of migrants are they? When migrants are broken down by year of arrival, there is a distinct trend. Migrants who arrived in Australia from the mid-1980s onwards are distinctly more likely to live in wealthy suburbs (See Figure 4). This is particularly applicable for migrants who arrived in Australia between 1996-2005, with 59.86% living in a postcode with a HIND above the Australian median. Migrants who arrived earlier are more likely to live in postcodes below the median HIND, with 55.71% of migrants who arrived in the post-Second World War boom period of 1946-55 living in suburbs below the median HIND.

**Figure 1: Percentage of people in postcodes who are migrants by weekly HIND brackets**



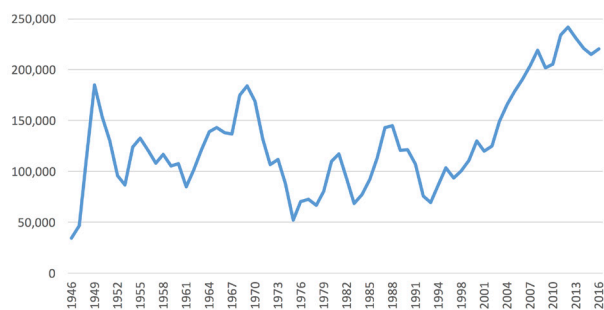
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

**Figure 2: Raw number of Australian-born and overseas-born people by postcode HIND brackets**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

**Figure 3: Migrants permanent additions 1945-46 to 2016-17 (excludes Australian born people returning)**



Source: Department of Home Affairs, Historic Migration Statistics 2018

One of the likely reasons for this divide is a significant change in Australia's immigration intake over the past 25 years. During the 1980s, the vast majority of migrants arrived under the family migration stream. However, during the early 1990s a new focus was placed on skilled migration, with the skilled stream overtaking the family alternative in 1997-98 (See Figure 5). Since then, skilled migrants have grown to more than two-thirds of all intake.

The likelihood of migrants being skilled, and primarily living in wealthier areas could arguably influence views on their place in society. For those in wealthier postcodes, the increased likelihood of being exposed to more skilled migrants could help build the view that migrants make a more valuable contribution to our society. Data on education levels and occupations, to be discussed later in this paper, helps cement this view.

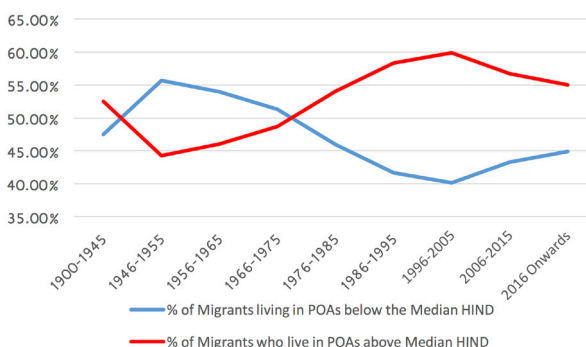
### Where do ethnic groups settle?

The distribution of migrants by region of birth varies significantly across postcode income brackets. While more migrants overall live in postcodes wealthier than the Australian median, migrants from different countries live in a wide range of places. Figure 6 looks at how many migrants from a given area live in postcodes whose HIND is below the Australian median. For example, of the 781,737 people from Southern and Central Asia living in Australia, 43.82% are located in suburbs below the median HIND.

Notably, of all migrant groups in Australia, only a majority of those from North Africa and the Middle East (54.34%) live in areas below the median HIND. In comparison, 55% of Australian born people live in postcodes below the median HIND. A majority of migrants from every other region live in wealthier postcodes. North-East Asians are particularly concentrated in wealthy areas, with 65.14% living in above median POAs.

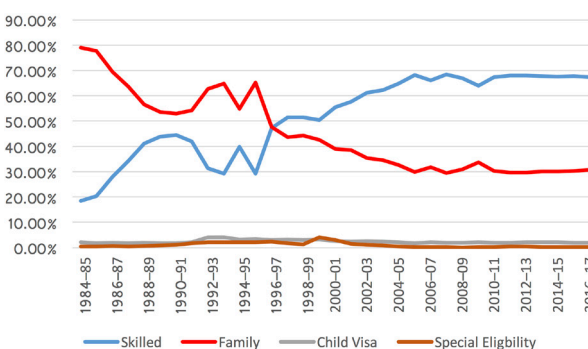
This data suggests that, in line with the overall trends, most migrants live in wealthier postcodes. However, those from North Africa and the Middle East primarily live in lower income postcodes. This means that Australians living in these areas are far more likely to come across this group of migrants than those in wealthy postcodes. Due to global geo-political factors and social differences, attitudes towards the North African and Middle Eastern community are typically more divisive in Australia. Indeed, migrants from this area are viewed significantly more negatively than any other group.<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Consequently, their higher concentration in low income areas may help explain the findings of recent CIS polling, which identified that 54% of residents in Australia's least affluent postcodes believe that cultural and religious backgrounds should be considered before migrants are granted residence.

**Figure 4: Proportion of living migrants who arrived in year bracket (weighted average)**



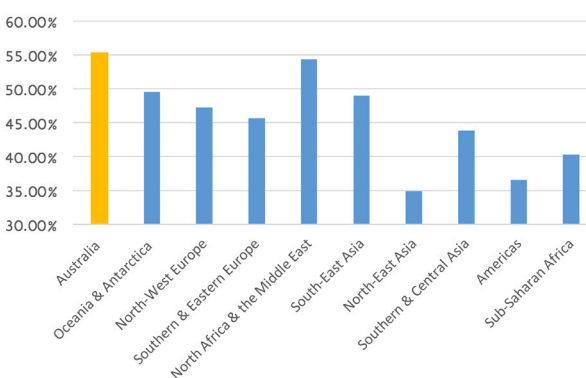
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

**Figure 5: Proportion of migrants by stream 1984-85 to 2016-17**



Source: Department of Home Affairs, Historical Migration Statistics 2018

**Figure 6: Percentage of migrants from given region living in POAs below median HIND**



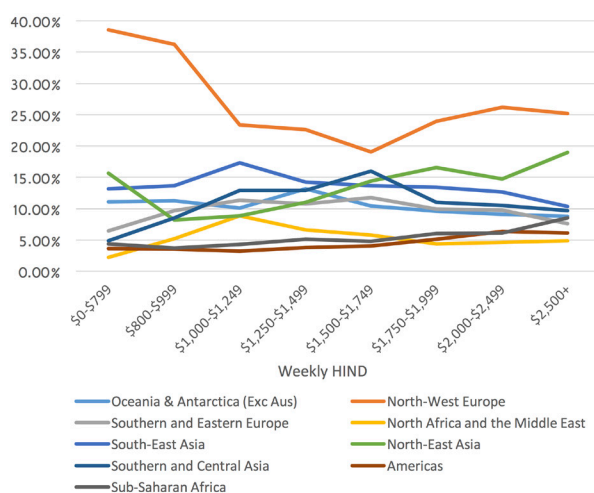
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Mapping Social Cohesion 2017: National Report, Scanlon Foundation. Page 56



While the proportion of migrants from each region are spread across our nation differently, there is one group that makes up a strong majority of migrants in every income bracket. Of all the migrants in each bracket, North-West Europeans are comfortably the largest group (See Figure 7). This is especially the case in lower income areas, with these people making up over a third of all migrants living in lower tiers. In wealthier areas, North-East Asians have a high presence, typically making up nearly a fifth of all migrants in these suburbs. Diversity grows significantly in the higher income brackets, with a more even spread of migrants by region of birth. This greater exposure to diversity in upper income postcodes may help explain the greater tolerance for cultural difference in Australia's migrant intake. In affluent suburbs, only 40% of respondents in the CIS/YouGov-Galaxy poll thought the cultural or religious background of migrants should be considered as part of Australia's immigration intake.

**Figure 7: Percentage of all migrants in POAs by region of birth (weighted average)**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

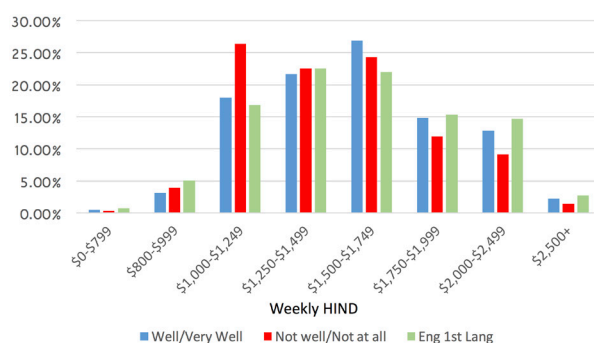
## English proficiency

CIS/YouGov-Galaxy polling revealed there was strong support across both affluent and less affluent postcodes for migrants to be proficient in English before they are granted permanent residence. In the top decile of suburbs, 80% of those polled were in favour of such an approach, while 86% of those in bottom decile of suburbs agreed. These results make it important to look at the English proficiency of migrants in different socioeconomic areas of Australia.

Just under a third (30.47%) of migrants in Australia speak English as a first language. Of those who speak English as a second language (ESL Migrants), 2016 Census data reveals some clear divisions in English proficiency based on where they live. A majority (56.79%) of all ESL migrants in Australia who speak English 'Well/Very Well' live in suburbs with a HIND above the Australian median. Nearly a third of those who speak English 'Well/Very Well' (29.89%) live in postcodes with a median HIND above \$1,750 (See Figure 8). By contrast, 53.16% of all ESL migrants whose English proficiency is rated 'Not well/Not at all' live in postcodes below the median HIND.

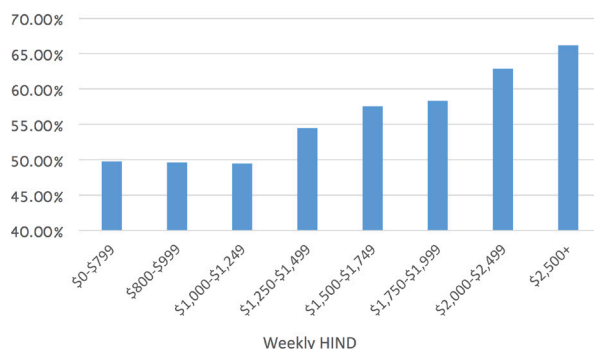
While the majority of all ESL migrants who are proficient at English live in wealthier areas, it is also important to assess the average proficiency of those within each income bracket. The data shows a clear division on this front, with the proportion of ESL migrants who speak English 'very well' in wealthier areas significantly outstripping those in lower income suburbs (See Figure 9). In suburbs with a median HIND above \$2,500 an average of 66.17% of all ESL migrants living in these areas speak English very well. However, an average of less than half of all ESL migrants living in the bottom three brackets speak English very well.

**Figure 8: Proportion of all migrants within English proficiency classification group by HIND of POA**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

**Figure 9: Proportion of ESL migrants in HIND bracket who speak English 'very well' (weighted average)**

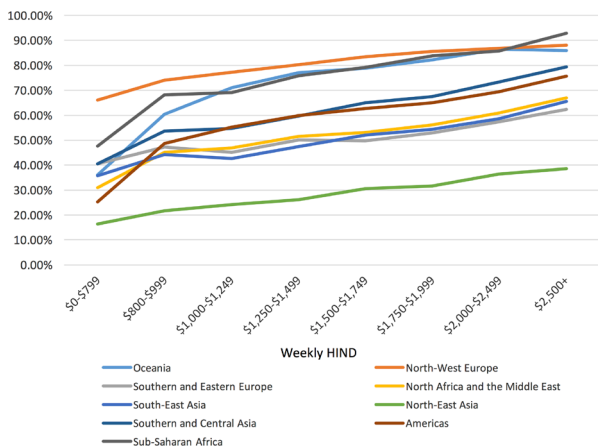


Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

An interesting fact to note is that this trend is applicable across ESL migrants from all ethnic groups. No matter what region an ESL migrant comes from, they are increasingly more likely to speak English very well as they move up the income brackets (See Figure 10). In the top income bracket, the majority of ESL migrants from all but one group (North-East Asians) are highly proficient at speaking English. By contrast, in the bottom bracket less than 50% of ESL migrants from every group (except North-West Europeans) speak English very well.

The data suggests that there may be clear implications for how people view migrants as a result of their proficiency in English. People in wealthier areas are distinctly more likely to be exposed to ESL migrants who are highly proficient in English, no matter where the migrant was born. By contrast, people living in lower income postcodes are significantly more likely to interact with ESL migrants whose English skills are underdeveloped. CIS polling revealed that both affluent and less affluent areas are largely in favour of ensuring migrants are proficient in English. In wealthy areas these expectations are largely met; however, in lower ranked areas they are

**Figure 10: Proportion of ESL migrants from given region who speak English 'very well' by POA HIND bracket (weighted average)**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

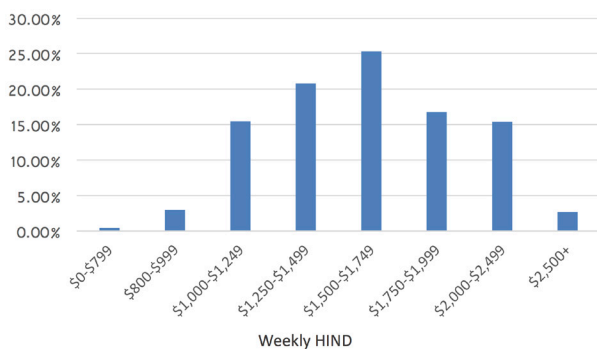
not. This could cause a divergence in the acceptance of migrants, with higher income suburbs likely to assess migrants as fitting into society more easily due to their better English skills.

## Engagement in education and the economy

A key measure of a successful immigration program is the integration of migrants into society through education and employment. As a result of Australia's increased focus on skilled migration (See Figure 5), many new migrants have a greater chance of achieving this. However, not all migrants are able to fully engage in employment, education or training. The spread of those who are engaged and not engaged is not even across our society. Of all migrants in Australia who are 'fully engaged' in employment, education or training, 60.23% live in postcodes above the median Australian HIND. Meanwhile a majority

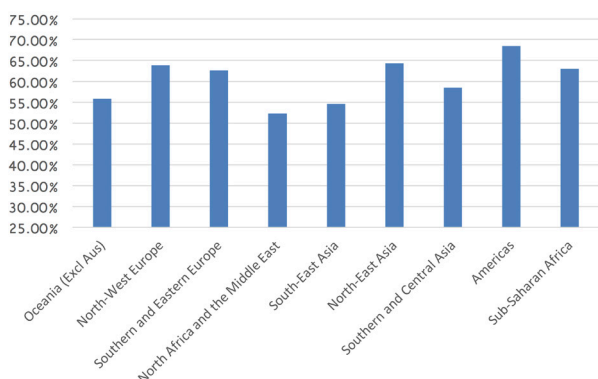
(52.35%) of those who are 'not engaged' live in postcodes below the median income. This trend is consistent across all ethnic groups. A comfortable majority of all 'fully engaged' people from each group live in postcodes above the median HIND (See Figure 12). Of the population of migrants within the HIND brackets themselves, an average of 40.28% of people living in postcodes below the HIND are fully engaged. This is in contrast to an average of 53.23% of those living in suburbs above the HIND who are fully engaged.

**Figure 11: Proportion of all migrants who are fully engaged in employment, education or training by POA HIND (aged 15+)**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

**Figure 12: Migrants from given region who are fully engaged in employment, education or training — proportion who live in POAs above the median HIND (aged 15+)**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

## Employment

The trends remain the same when looking specifically at employment. Of all working age migrants who are employed in Australia, 60% live in postcodes above the median HIND (See Figure 13). Interestingly, 51% of those who are not employed but still in the labour force (either seeking work or engaged in education or training), also live in suburbs above the median. An analysis of overall workforce participation data paints the picture more clearly, with a majority (52.16%) of all working age migrants not in the labour force (not seeking work nor engaged in education or training) living in areas below the median HIND.

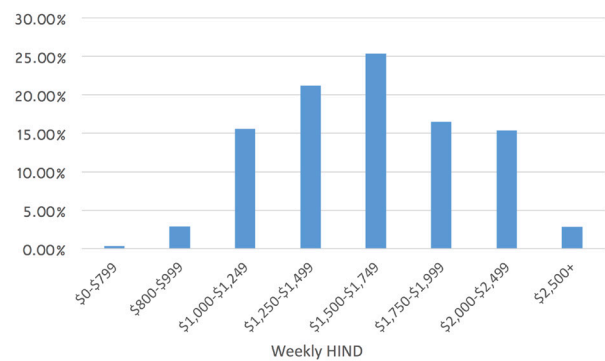
It is clear that a majority of all working migrants live in wealthier areas. However, the most telling finding is revealed when assessing intra-bracket characteristics. As a proportion of migrants living within a particular bracket, the working age immigrant population in lower tiers is profoundly more likely to not be engaged in the economy (See Figure 14). Nearly two-thirds (64.50%) of migrants in the \$0-\$799 HIND bracket are not in the labour force. In the \$800-\$999 bracket, 56.21% of migrants are not working, nor looking for work. An average of just 42.70% of working age migrants in postcodes below the median Australian HIND bracket are employed. By contrast, an average of 63.20% of migrants living in suburbs above the median are employed. In the top two brackets, approximately two thirds of all working age migrants respectively are employed.

These findings highlight one of the major reasons migrants may be viewed differently by people across Australia. Participation in the workforce is seen as a foundation of our society. Critics of migrants often argue that many are unemployed or do not participate in the labour force, putting strain on our social security system and increasing the cost to the tax payer. From the data it is clear why people in lower income postcodes might hold these views: they are far more likely to interact with migrants who are not in the labour force. Conversely, Australians in wealthier postcodes are distinctly more likely to come into contact with employed migrants, and thus may form the opinion that migrants are contributing to society.

## What type of work do migrants do?

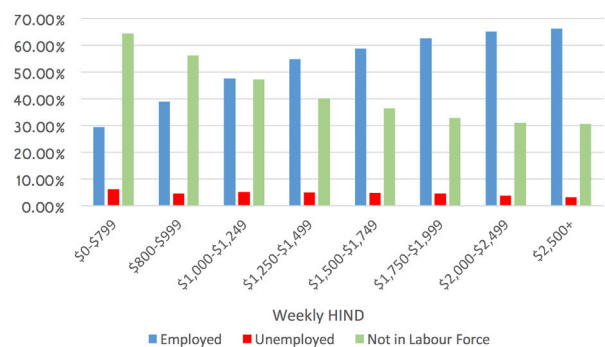
Migrants work in a wide range of occupations. However, there are some clear differences in the type of work migrants typically do, depending on where they live. Of the 809,015 migrants who work as professionals, 69.22% of them live in areas above the median HIND (See Figure 15). Similarly, 67.39% of all migrants who are managers live in wealthier postcodes. Indeed, in every occupation group except labourers (45.94%), and machinery operators/drivers (48.89%), the majority of migrants live in more affluent suburbs.

**Figure 13: Proportion of all employed migrants by HIND bracket in which they live (Aged 15+)**



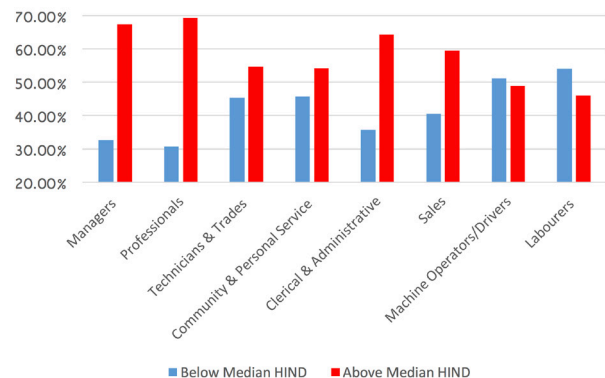
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

**Figure 14: Proportion of migrants within HIND bracket by employment status (aged 15+)**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

**Figure 15: Proportion of migrants within occupation by POA HIND in which they live (aged 15+)**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

When assessed at an intra-bracket level, the trends are re-affirmed. Figure 16 looks at what proportion of working migrants in each HIND bracket are employed in a particular occupation. Given the dominance of professional services in Australia's economy, it is unsurprising to see that in all income brackets, the

largest occupation is professionals. However, what is clear is that as wealth goes up, the proportion of migrants working as professionals soars. By the top HIND bracket, 37.12% of all migrants work in this occupation. The proportion of migrants working labouring jobs is generally higher in lower brackets, with an average of 15.90% of all workers in postcodes below the median HIND working in the occupation. This plummets to just 2.87% of migrants in the top bracket, with an average of 7.29% of all workers living in suburbs above the median HIND working as labourers.

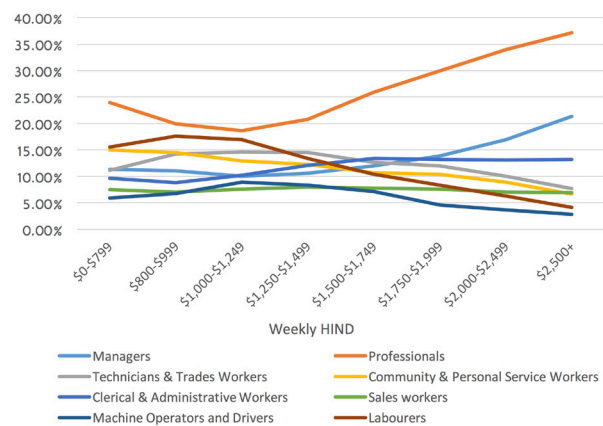
The occupations of migrants are an important influence on how they may be perceived. In higher income suburbs, half of all migrants are either professionals or managers. Meanwhile, in lower ranked areas there is a wider spread of occupations, with jobs such as labouring and trades work more common. As a result, when reflecting on the perceived value of migrants to Australia, people may be influenced by the various stereotypes and levels of prestige associated with certain occupations.

### Education

A specific look at education statistics reveals that the divide continues between migrants in higher and lower income areas (See Figure 17). In the highest income bracket, more than half (50.67%) of all migrants aged 15 and over have a bachelor degree or higher. By contrast, in the lowest bracket this figure drops to 22.58%. A quarter (24.09%) of migrants living in postcodes below the median HIND have a bachelor degree or higher. This rises to 38.72% for those living in suburbs above the median. The proportion of migrants who have a maximum education level of secondary school (Year 10 and above) is nearly double in lower income brackets than in higher ones.

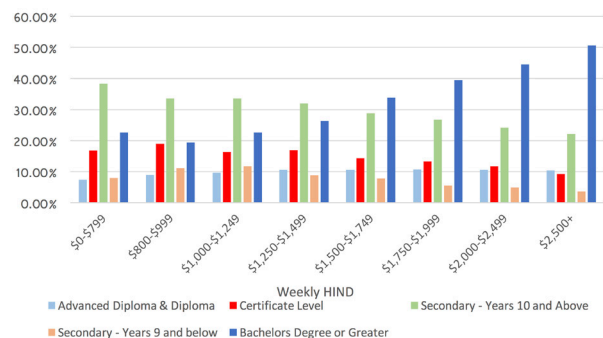
To place this data in a national context, 22% of all Australians aged 15 and over have at least a bachelor degree. Interestingly, when broken down by income brackets migrants in all areas outstrip the Australian average. Only 15.30% of all Australians living in postcodes below the median HIND have a bachelor degree or higher. A third (29.56%) of those in above-median suburbs have a bachelor degree or higher.

**Figure 16: Proportion of migrants within HIND bracket who work in given occupation (aged 15+)**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

**Figure 17: Proportion of migrants within HIND bracket by highest level of education (aged 15+)**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

## Migrants and the commute to work

Traffic congestion, public transport usage and the overall impact of immigration on the daily commute has been the focus of much debate. The 3.08 million migrants travelling to work on Census day made up nearly a third (30.19%) of all working commuters. Nearly half travelled less than 10 kilometres to work, while 12.77% travelled more than 30 kilometres (See Figure 18). A slightly higher figure (14.97%) of all Australians travelled more than 30 kilometres, however the small differences in all three brackets suggest that migrants aren't overly different to the average Australian when it comes to distance travelled to work.

However, a look at migrants' commutes from an income bracket perspective begins to reveal some differences (See Figure 19). A majority of all commuting migrants (60.32%) live in postcodes above the median HIND. Of all migrants who commute more than 30 kilometres to work, a majority (54.84%) live in wealthier postcodes. By contrast, 43.20% of all Australians who travel this distance live in wealthier postcodes.

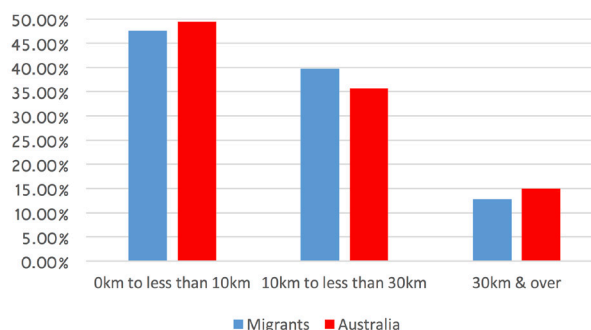
When broken down at an intra-bracket level, a clear trend emerges (See Figure 20). In lower income areas, migrants are significantly less likely to travel long distances, in comparison with the average of all people in these postcodes. Nearly a fifth (19%) of commuting migrants in the lowest income bracket travel over 30 kilometres to work. Nearly a third (29.20%) of all Australian commuters in this bracket travelled the longer distance.

### Mode of travel to work

Of the 3.2 million working migrants, 18.59% commuted via public transport on Census day. Nearly two thirds (63.74%) used a private vehicle, while 11.93% worked from home or did not go to work. Migrants use public transport significantly more than the average Australian, with just 11.50% of all workers using it to travel to work. More than two thirds (68.40%) of all workers drive to their place of employment, and 4.7% worked from home or did not go to work.

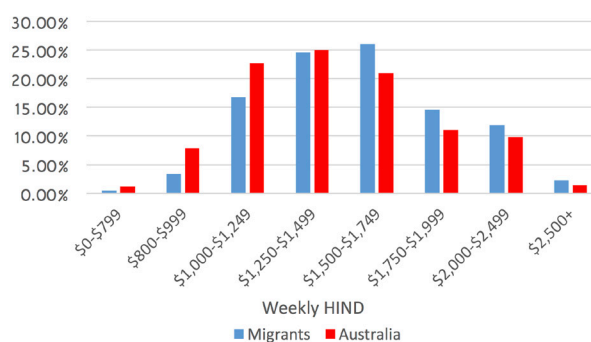
Of the 600,000 migrants who take public transport to work, 72% live in areas above the median HIND. Similarly, 71.36% of all Australians using public transport live in wealthier postcodes. Of those migrants who drive, 56.39% live in higher ranked areas. Only 48.48% of all Australians living in suburbs above the median take a vehicle to work.

Figure 18: Proportion of commuters who travel given distance to work



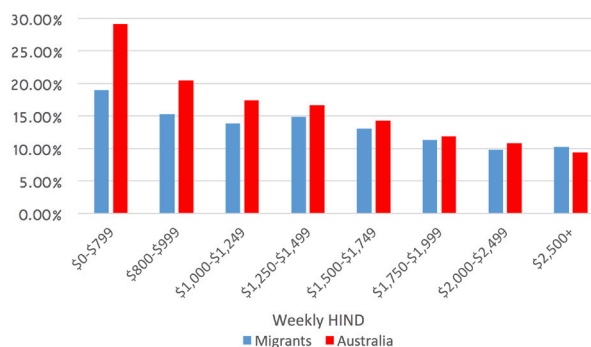
Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

Figure 19: Overall proportion of people who commute 30km or more to work



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

Figure 20: Proportion of commuters within income bracket who travel 30km or more to work

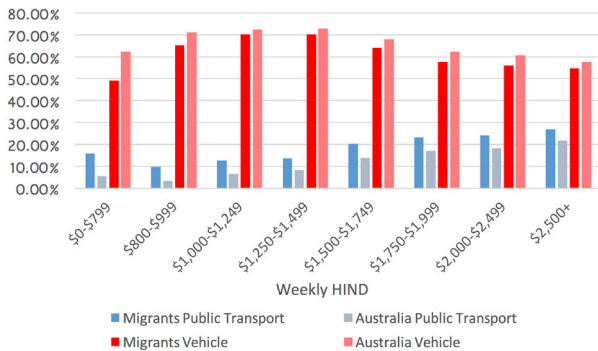


Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

An analysis at the intra-bracket level suggests that, of all commuting migrants in each group, driving is by far the most popular option (See Figure 21). However, the use of public transport increases notably in wealthier postcodes while the proportion of those who drive to work drops to just over half. Migrants in every bracket are more likely than the average Australian to take public transport. Those migrants living in postcodes below the median HIND are more than twice as likely (12.98%) to use public transport than the typical person living in these postcodes (5.91%).

The data gives some interesting insights into the impact migrants may have on our transport infrastructure. Of all migrants who commute to work, 60% live in wealthier suburbs. The majority of driving migrants live in these areas, as do a strong majority of those taking public transport. Across all income brackets there is a greater likelihood you will see a migrant using public transport. While proportionally there are more migrants on public transport in lower income areas, the gross figure sees the overwhelming majority of migrants commuting from above median postcodes. With migrants making up nearly a third of all commuters, it appears that public transport may be disproportionately bearing the load.

**Figure 21: Proportion of commuters within HIND bracket who use given mode of transport**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Table Builder

## Conclusion

While CIS/YouGov-Galaxy polling found that opinions were not as split as one may expect, they did point to some clear differences in opinion on issues such as cultural diversity and overall immigration levels. These views are likely shaped by the widely varied experiences Australians have with migrants.

A majority of those migrating to Australia settle in wealthier suburbs, are typically well educated, speak English proficiently (ESL migrants), and are heavily engaged in key pillars of our society — such as employment and ongoing education. They typically fit the bill of what is generally desired from Australia’s strongly skills-focused immigration program, and are likely judged by many Australians around them as positive contributors to the growth of the nation. They are ethnically diverse, and make up a third of the entire population in above median HIND areas

— meaning that migrants are very much a part of everyday life in these suburbs.

In contrast, a smaller percentage of migrants live in postcodes below the median HIND. These migrants are typically less ethnically diverse, with most coming from North-West Europe. Notably, however, a majority of immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East live in these suburbs. Migrants in lower income suburbs are typically less well educated, are significantly less likely to be engaged in the economy, and are statistically more likely to be weak English speakers. The preponderance of these features is likely to influence opinions on the value of migrants to Australia. The view people in lower ranked suburbs have of migrants is distinctly more likely to be shaped by factors we rate poorly in society.



## About the Author



### Charles Jacobs

Charles Jacobs is a Policy Analyst at the CIS. His research on the Commonwealth Indigenous Procurement Policy has seen him consulted by the NSW State Government, Vietnamese Government and Canadian Defence Force on the development of their own minority set-aside policies. He has also written opinion pieces and been interviewed for a range of media including the Australian Financial Review, ABC, The Australian, National Indigenous Radio Service and ABC Radio National.



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