

Report finds social cohesion stable despite changing landscape

October 26 2012



The 2012 'Mapping Social Cohesion Report' - Australia's largest survey of social cohesion, immigration and population issues, authored by Monash University's Professor Andrew Markus and produced by the Scanlon Foundation, was released today.

With a data bank of more than 15,000 participant responses, collected over five surveys beginning in 2007, the report tracks attitudes on key indicators of [social cohesion](#).

Issues covered include maintaining the Australian way of life, trust in fellow [Australians](#) and government, discrimination and views on immigration and asylum policy.

In 2012, the report shows that at a broad level, social cohesion remains stable, despite a growing population, increased diversity and recent [economic uncertainty](#).

Life in areas of high immigrant concentration is also explored this year through a series of four [local area](#) surveys in Melbourne and Sydney.

Professor Andrew Markus of Monash University's School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies has authored the reports for the last five years.

"Over the last ten years, Australia's population has increased by 15 per cent or close to three million. However, both Australian born and overseas born Australians continue to have a strong sense of belonging and pride in the Australian way of life," Professor Markus said.

"The [Global Financial Crisis](#) has, to date, had little impact on Australians' satisfaction with their financial circumstances, and 81 per cent of people see Australia as a land of economic opportunity."

The 2012 report indicates positive shifts in public attitude, particularly around discrimination and sense of trust in fellow Australians. Since 2007, reported levels of discrimination had been increasing, however in 2012, there was a slight drop.

Trust in government to do the right thing for the Australian people "almost always" or "most of the time" has almost halved - from 48 per cent in 2009 to just 26 per cent in 2012.

Attitudes toward immigration remain largely unchanged since 2011, with 56 per cent of people of the opinion that the current immigrant intake is "about right", or "too low".

"There is strong support, in the range of 77 per cent, for people who arrive under the skill and family streams of the immigration program, refugees admitted after overseas processing of their claims, and overseas students," Professor Markus said.

"In contrast, less than one in four respondents thought asylum seekers arriving by boat should be eligible for permanent settlement."

Such support differs widely depending on political affiliation. For example, 62 per cent of respondents who indicated that they would probably vote Greens support eligibility for permanent settlement, but support declines dramatically among Labor (29 per cent) and Liberal (12 per cent) supporters.

In 2012, attitudes in four of Australia's high immigrant, low income Local Government Areas were also surveyed. Some 2000 interviews were conducted in Fairfield and Bankstown in Sydney, and Hume and Greater Dandenong in Victoria.

Provided by Monash University

Citation: Report finds social cohesion stable despite changing landscape (2012, October 26) retrieved 4 May 2024 from

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