

IMMIGRATION AND PUBLIC OPINION IN AUSTRALIA

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Recent opinion poll data on immigration policy confirm longstanding trends of majority opposition to the formal government position. But a breakdown of the attitudes of those with university education and those without reveals a much more supportive stance within the former group.

Since the beginning of organised mass migration to Australia after the Second World War, policy makers have been aware of public opinion as a possible constraint on their actions. Arthur Caldwell, the first Minister for Immigration, made a concerted effort to educate the public about the benefits of immigration as he and his Government saw them. Similar efforts have been continued by his successors. How successful have they been?

Over the four decades since the end of the war data have been collected from a plethora of polls and survey but sampling methods and questions varied. If we want a series of data stretching over a number of decades, a series where the same kinds of samples were asked the same kind of question about their attitude to the migrant intake, it is best to begin with 1961.

1961 TO 1996

Table 1 shows 14 similar polls conducted over a period of 35 years. The precise wording of the question has varied, but it has taken the general form of telling respondents the size of the immigration intake and asking them if this number is too many, about right, or too few.

The most recent poll, no. 14, was taken by AGB McNair in June 1996. Respondent were told the current size of the annual intake ('100,000')¹ and were asked 'Do you feel that the current level of immigration to Australia is too high, too low or about right?'

As with its cousins in polls 1 to 13, this question is not necessarily the most reliable and valid indicator of public attitudes to the intake. This is because it depends on respondents understanding the demographic significance of a particular number of immigrants. Is 100,000 a large number or a pitifully small one? Analysis of responses to other polls and surveys on demographic topics suggests that most respondents would not know.² This conclusion is supported by the fact that the levels of support and opposition recorded in Table 1 only roughly track the real changes in the intake. For example, the intake fell in the latter part of the Whitlam years (1974 to 1975), a point which could be reflected in rather lower levels of opposition in the 1977 poll, but the 1977 data still show a much higher level of opposition than polls in the mid 1960s. The intake also fell during the early years of the Hawke Government (1983-85), but there is no corresponding diminution in public disquiet.

Popular confusion about what the numbers mean suggests that the proportion of people saying that the current figures are 'about right' should be viewed with caution. Some may indeed support the status quo, but others may be expressing feelings which are not relevant to the question of numbers. For example, this group almost certainly contains a proportion of people who are confused by the question, do not wish to reveal their uncertainty and, because of

this, select a neutral and face-saving response.³ Nonetheless, respondents saying that the numbers are 'too many' are almost certainly expressing opposition to the policy of the day while the proportion saying that the numbers 'too few' are, equally clearly, enthusiasts for high migration. The main virtues of the question lie in the clear indications provided by these two extremes and in the fact that it has been asked often and over a long time span.

Table 1 shows that during the 1960s most Australians supported current immigration policy. This support is demonstrated both by the low proportions saying that the intake is 'too many' and the relatively high proportions (well over a third for most of the decade) saying it is 'too few', indicating not just that current numbers suit them but that they want more. In the early 1970s this situation was reversed and, by the early 1990s, active opponents amounted to nearly three quarters of respondents, and active supporters were fewer than ten per cent. The June 1996 AGB McNair poll shows some softening among the active opponents. The proportion saying the intake is 'too many' dropped by eight percentage points, from 73 to 65 per cent, but this softening in opposition was offset by a fall in the enthusiastic supporters. In June 1996 the proportion saying that the numbers are 'too few' was at its lowest recorded level, three per cent. Figure 1 charts the shifts in the proportions of respondents who are keen supporters and the critics.

The June 1996 poll confirms that the results of the late 1980s and early 1990s are not aberrations. Despite official efforts to promote immigration as good policy, public opinion now seems firmly settled in a pattern of widespread scepticism. But is this pattern uniformly distributed? The June 1996 poll did include

Table 1 Attitudes to the immigration intake: 1961 - 1996 (per cent)

year	too many	about right	too few	don't know	total
1 (1961)	16	37	43	4	100
2 (1964)	21	41	30	8	100
3 (1967)	18	36	36	10	100
4 (1968)	26	45	19	10	100
5 (1970)	38	45	12	5	100
6 (1971)	53	34	11	2	100
7 (1977)	43	40	14	2	100
8 (1981)	45	37	11	7	100
9 (1984 May)	59	28	5	8	100
10 (1984 June)	62	27	4	6	100
11 (1988)	68	22	8	2	100
12 (1990)	65	24	8	4	100
13 (1991)	73	16	9	2	100
14 (1996)	65	29	3	3	100

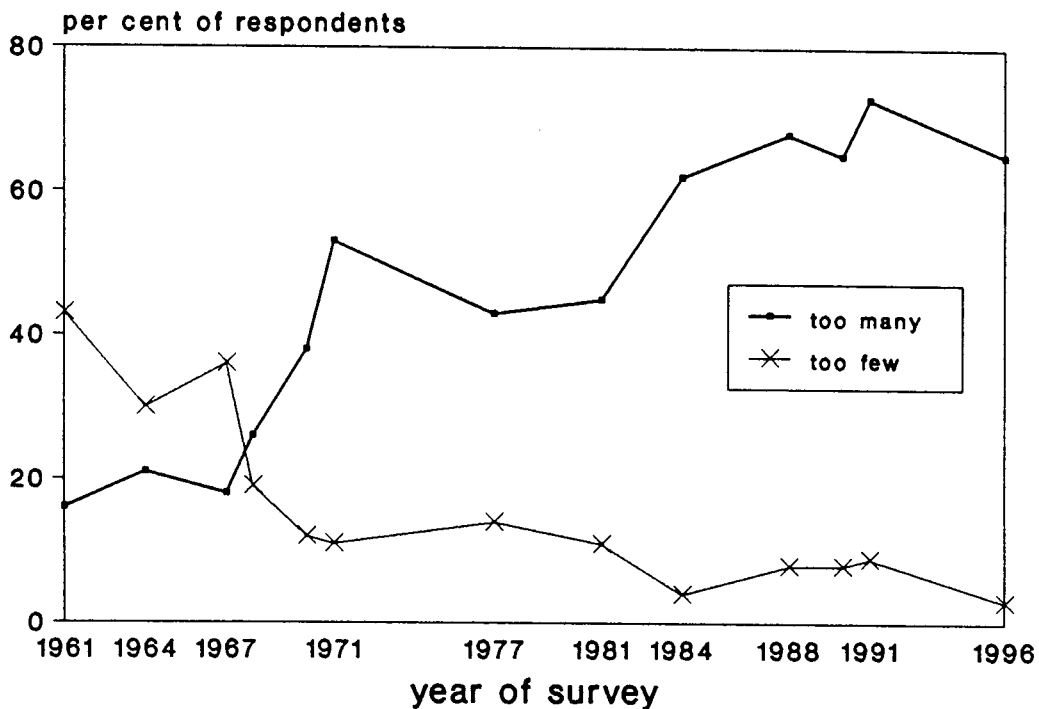
Source and notes: Sources for polls 1-8 and 10-11, Betts, 1988, p. 70. (The 1984 May poll, no. 9 in Table 1, was not included in Betts 1988 because of its similarity and proximity to 1984 June. Both were Morgan polls published together in the Morgan Gallup Poll No. 589 1984.) (The exact wording of the questions of polls numbered here as 1 to 8 and 10 to 11 is set out in Betts, 1988, pp. 58-9 in Table 4.3, polls numbered in that table as 1-5, 7, 10 and 12-14. Poll no. 9 followed the wording of poll no. 10.)

Poll no. 12, is an Irving Saulwick poll, *The Age*, 14 May 1990, p.5. The sample was 1000 voters interviewed nation-wide by telephone. The question was: 'Over the past four years Australia's intake of immigrants has averaged 120,000 a year. The target for this financial year is 140,000. Do you think Australia should take more than 140,000 immigrants this year, about 140,000 immigrants, fewer than 140,000 immigrants, or take no immigrants this year?' The 'fewer than 140,000' response (46%) and the 'take none' response (19%) have been combined to constitute the 'too many' response in Table 1. Poll no 13 is also a Saulwick poll published in *The Age*, 4 November 1991, p. 3. The sample was 1000 voters interviewed nation-wide by telephone. The question read: 'Over the past four years Australia's intake of immigrants has averaged 132,000 a year. The target for this financial year is 111,000. Do you think that Australia should take: more than 111,000 immigrants this year, about 111,000 immigrants, fewer than 111,000 immigrants, or take no immigrants this year?' Again the 'take fewer' (46%) and 'take none' (27%) have been combined for the 'too many' response.

Poll no 14 is an AGB McNair poll conducted by telephone 14-16 June 1996. It drew on a nationwide sample of 2063 people aged 18 plus. It included people who were not enrolled to vote as well as those who were. In order to maintain comparability with polls 12 and 13, the data for no. 14 only refer to enrolled voters (n = 1937). The question was: 'I would now like to ask you some questions on immigration to Australia. This year about 100,000 migrants will immigrate to Australia. Do you feel that the current level of immigration to Australia is too high, too low or about right?' (Pattern for persons not enrolled to vote [n = 123]: too high 54%, about right 35% too low 3% don't know 8%.)

questions on a number of background demographic characteristics (for

Figure 1: Attitudes to the immigration intake, 1961-1991



Source: Table 1

example, sex, age, place of residence and voting intention). But the only two questions which generated much variation from the overall pattern were voting intention and whether the respondent lived in the city or the country. Table 2 shows that, while Coalition voters were more opposed to the current intake than supporters of other parties, immigration is hardly a vote-winner for the ALP: three fifths of Labor voters think the intake is too high.

REASONS FOR OPPOSITION TO IMMIGRATION

Unemployment

Coalition voters and people living in rural areas do, however, show stronger patterns of opposition than other groups. But these variations do not in themselves suggest reasons for

opposition. Fortunately the AGB McNair poll went on to put this question directly, asking those who said 'too high': 'What are your reasons for this?'

There has been intermittent public debate on the environmental problems associated with population growth, as well as some public discussion (and

Table 2: Attitudes to 'current level of immigration' ['about 100,000'] by voting intention and residence in city or country — per cent

Attitude:	Total	voting intention			residence	
		Coalition	ALP	other	city	country
too high	65	71	59	59	59	73
about right	30	25	33	35	34	23
too low	3	2	5	2	4	2
don't know	3	2	3	4	3	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	(2063)	(946)	(699)	(418)	(1409)	(654)

Source: AGB McNair poll, 14 June 1996 (national telephone sample, persons aged 18+)

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

disquiet) about the cultural maintenance aspects of multiculturalism. But few critics mentioned these factors. By far the most common response to this question was 'unemployment' (see Table 3).

In view of continual claims by political figures that immigration does not increase unemployment,⁴ claims which have drawn support from econometric studies, particularly, in recent years, those published by the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, this response is interesting. Clearly, many people do not know about, or do not believe, these findings. The growth in opposition in the late 1970s and 1980s coincides with higher levels of unemployment and individuals may work on their own everyday interpretations of social change, rather than on econometric research. But the growth in opposition also coincides with changes in the composition of the intake, particularly with the much-discussed increase in the Asia-born component.

The changing composition of the intake

Perhaps changes in the composition of the flow of immigrants are also influencing people's responses? Few respondents to the question set out in Table 3 say 'Too many Asians' and, as Table 4 shows, more than three quarters say they approve of a non-discriminatory selection process. However, it is possible that these questions are eliciting answers which some respondents believe to be socially appropriate, rather than answers which reflect their real feelings. The question shown in Table 4 was number 3 in the interview schedule. A later question, number 7, on whether the respondent felt that too many migrants were coming from a particular region or country met with agreement from slightly more than half the sample (see Table 5).

Table 3: Reasons given by those who said 'too high' in Table 2, June 1996 (per cent)

	Total sample
unemployment	74
social/region/community divisions/conflict	15
too many Asians	7
environmental strain	6
English skills	5
drugs/crime	3
other	26
Number of respondents	(1289)

Source: *ibid.*

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 because this was a multiple response question. Missing data ('don't know' and no response) have been excluded.

Table 4: Attitudes to a non-discriminatory selection policy, June 1996 (per cent)

strongly agree	30
agree	47
[net agree]	[77]
disagree	12
strongly disagree	4
[net disagree]	[16]
neither agree nor disagree	7
Total	100
N	(2063)

Source: *ibid.*

Note: The question was: 'Australia has had for more than 20 years an immigration policy that selects migrants on such things as their work skills and reunion with family, but not on a basis of their colour, religion or country. How strongly do you agree or disagree with this policy?'

When this subsection of the sample were asked 'Which region?', the overwhelming response was 'Asia'.

AGB McNair also asked a series of questions on support for different sections of the program: the humanitarian intake, family reunion, and people selected on the grounds of their work skills. Table 6 shows that the family reunion intake was the most unpopular, followed by the humanitarian intake. In contrast, the intake selected on the grounds of the work skills enjoyed a fair level of active support.

This pattern marks a change over the last decade and a half. In 1981, apart from business migrants (not included in the 1996 poll), it was refugees who were the most unpopular group, with family reunion next. Why has this shift occurred? Family reunion now dominates the migrant intake and many immigrants coming in under this stream are experiencing difficulties in the labour market and have high rates of welfare dependence. These outcomes may have influenced respondents, but it is also possible that concerns about the contribution of family reunion migrants to cultural diversity have played a part as well.

Multiculturalism

Since the mid 1970s an official policy of multiculturalism has blossomed in Australia. Access and equity aspects of this policy have received community support. However, when multiculturalism is presented as 'cultural maintenance', that is, as a strategy to institutionalise ethnic differences, the situation changes. A large national survey commissioned by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) in 1988 found that the majority of respondents, including both old Australians and first- and second-generation migrants, is opposed to multiculturalism in this sense of the term.⁵ A general pattern of opposition to the cultural-maintenance form of multiculturalism is also born out by a 1994 Irving Saulwick poll which found that 61 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that 'migrants should learn to live and behave like the majority of Australians do'.⁶

In 1988 the FitzGerald committee concluded that multiculturalism was so far out of favour with the

Table 5: Attitudes to the ethnic composition of the intake, June 1996 (per cent)

About right	35
Too many from regions	51
Don't know	14
Total	100
N	(2063)
Regions named by those who said 'too many...'	
Asia (includes all Asian countries)	88
Middle East (includes Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel etc.)	9
all	5
other	3
Europe	3
UK Ireland	2
New Zealand	1
Pacific (excluding New Zealand)	1
Africa including South Africa	<1
North America	<1
South America	<1
N	(1046)

Source: *ibid.*

Notes: The questions were 'Do you feel that the current balance of migrants from different countries and regions to Australia is about right or do you feel that we receive too many migrants from a particular region or country?' If 'too many': 'Which region(s) do you feel that we receive too many migrants from?' Because of multiple responses to the second question, percentages there do not add to 100.

Table 6: Attitudes to different sections of the program, June 1996 and November 1981 (per cent)

1996:	Humanitarian	Family reunion	Work skills
too high	41	61	25
about right	48	34	47
too few	7	2	25
don't know	4	3	3
Total	100	100	100
N	(2063)	(2063)	(2063)
1981: Attitudes to different sections of the program — 'Australia should accept...'			
Investors	Refugees	Family reunion	Skilled migrants
19	23	32	44

Sources: *ibid.* and an Irving Saulwick poll published in *The Age* 18/1/82 (multiple response question, total sample of 2000).

Note: The 1996 questions began with the proportions admitted in each category ('15%', '60%' and '25%' respectively) and then asked if this proportion for the category was too high, too few or about right. For the full wording of the 1981 question see Betts (1988: 75).

electorate that it was undermining support for immigration. (This conclusion was based on the submissions it had received and other, private research conducted by OMA.) The committee argued that the official emphasis on multiculturalism meant that immigration was perceived more as a set of favours and privileges for ethnic lobbyists than as a policy in the national interest.⁷

The theory that people dislike immigration because they see it as a response to special, ethnic, interest groups, groups nurtured by structural multiculturalism, cannot be directly tested here. The 1996 AGB McNair poll did ask a question about multiculturalism: 'Successive Australian governments have adopted a policy of multiculturalism. This involves encouraging migrants to become Australians without having to give up their own culture. Do you agree or disagree with this policy?' Most respondents (61 per cent) agreed, but the gentle emphasis on immigrants becoming Australians may have meant that many respondents did not perceive this question to be about institutionalised differences.

However, disquiet about multiculturalism may lie behind some of the opposition to family reunion and to the Asian intake. But the FitzGerald hypothesis has not been put to a direct test. The AGB McNair data only allow us to conclude that anxiety about unemployment, combined with some concern about the ethnic composition of the intake, are the main reasons for the opposition to immigration measured by this poll.

GROUP DIFFERENCES ON IMMIGRATION

Education

Previous research has found a strong association between education and attitudes to immigration, with university-

educated people being very much more favourably disposed towards it than people who are not university-educated.⁸ This pattern is also true of attitudes to multiculturalism,⁹ and to a number of questions concerning the virtues of globalism as opposed to a focus on the national interest.¹⁰ This cluster of attitudes can be partly explained by the enthusiasm of university-educated people for cosmopolitanism and internationalist humanitarian values. The hypothesis here is that highly-educated people tend to avoid taking up positions which can be seen as nationalistic or parochial and prefer to support a universalistic approach to political problems. The intelligentsia see support for immigration as a reflection of progressive or enlightened attitudes on a particularism/nationalism versus universalism/internationalism dimension.

University-educated people may hold universalistic values sincerely, but cosmopolitan internationalism can also function as a status barrier between themselves and working-class Australian nationalists. These symbolic functions may give support for immigration an especial attraction for this group, many of whom are first-generation university-educated and particularly anxious to distinguish themselves from their own working- or lower-middle-class origins.¹¹

University-educated people are also more likely to work in professions providing the symbolic-analytic services described by Robert Reich in *The Work of Nations*. This means that, unlike workers in manufacturing or workers providing services on a person-to-person basis, they can be more likely to see themselves as cosmopolitan participants in a global labour market.¹² The internationalism of people working as investment bankers, software developers, research scientists, design engineers,

systems analysts and so on may in fact bring material as well as less tangible rewards. Indeed, Reich argues that many American symbolic analysts see themselves as world citizens without any strong attachments to any national community, and thus have no material or moral reason to protect the interests of their nominal compatriots.¹³ However, Clive Bean's research suggests that Australians in symbolic-analyst occupations may feel rather more threatened by global competition than their American counterparts.¹⁴ It is possible that, in Australia, the less tangible, status-oriented attractions of internationalism have more influence on the intelligentsia than its potential material benefits.

Opinion polls taken during the 1970s and 1980s on attitudes to immigration show that university-educated people were then much less hostile to the intake of the day than non-university-educated people. For example, the Morgan poll conducted in June 1984 (poll no. 10 in Table 1) found that while 62 per cent of the total sample thought the intake was 'too many', this proportion fell to 31 per cent among respondents whose occupation was recorded as 'professional' (and who therefore would have had a university education). In contrast, opposition stood at 72 per cent for those with primary education only.¹⁵ (Recent research in the United States reaches a similar conclusion: opposition to immigration is strongest among less-well educated people who harbour 'isolationist' attitudes.)¹⁶

Unfortunately, due to problems with the data on education, we cannot see whether this pattern still holds in the AGB McNair poll. But data from the March 1996 Australian Election Study can be drawn on to fill the gap. This survey, a self-administered, mailed questionnaire, elicited responses from 1,797 persons randomly selected from the electoral rolls.

The Australian Election Study included a number of questions on immigration as well as questions on the respondents' highest educational qualification, birthplace, and birthplace of parents. For example, people were asked to complete the statement 'The number of migrants allowed into Australia at the present time....' with one of the following phrases: 'gone much too far; gone too far; about right; not gone far enough; not gone nearly far enough'. As Table 7 shows, the distribution of responses for the total sample is similar to that of the June 1996 AGB McNair poll.

As might be expected, university-educated people were much more likely

Table 7: Australian Election Study — attitudes to immigration by highest post-school qualification (percentages)

Number of migrants allowed in has—	Total	Highest post-school qualification			
		none	trade and non-trade other	undergrad. diploma or associate diploma	bachelor's degree or post graduate
gone much too far	33	38	41	19	18
gone too far	30	30	32	33	23
about right	31	25	23	37	50
not gone far enough or nearly far enough	6	6	4	10	9
Total	100	100	100	100	100
N	(1685)	(693)	(516)	(139)	(337)

Source: Roger Jones, Ian McAllister, David Gow, Australian Election Study, 1996 [computer file], Canberra, Social Science Data Archives, The Australian National University, 1996

Note: Totals may not add to 100 because of rounding. Missing values (n = 112) are excluded. The responses 'not gone far enough' and 'not gone nearly far enough' have been combined because of the small numbers involved. There is no figure for 'no opinion' or 'don't know': the written response categories did not offer this as an option.

to respond to the survey than people with no post school qualification (they make up 19 per cent of the sample but only around eight per cent of the population).¹⁷ This skew in the response rate should be taken into account in interpreting the pattern for the sample as a whole. But it does not invalidate the comparison between the respondents arranged in sub-groups by qualification and Table 7 also shows that people with a university education were much less likely to say that the numbers had gone too far or gone much too far than people with a trade (or other non-tertiary) qualification (41 per cent compared to 73 per cent). This differentiation of responses by level and type of qualification is strong. It may help explain the differences by place of residence and voting intention shown in the AGB McNair poll in Table 3. Its influence on the data in the Australian Electoral Study will be analysed further here.

Birthplace and origin

Birthplace is a variable that has probably received more attention in Australian immigration debates than education. It is often assumed that, while the Australian-born may be reluctant, migrants them-

selves must be in favour of more immigration.¹⁸ FitzGerald's argument that immigration is seen by many Australians as a favour for ethnic lobbyists assumes that politicians believe that migrants want more immigration (though the committee itself had doubts about whether most migrants' feelings were being well-represented by their lobbyists).¹⁹

Are migrants unlike the majority of Australians on this question? Do they want more immigration? A 1977 Age poll showed immigrants from non-English-speaking-background (NESB) countries to be rather more supportive of immigration than English-speaking-background (ESB) migrants or the Australian-born, a pattern which was confirmed in the June 1984 Morgan poll. This found that, while 65 per cent of Australian-born respondents said the numbers were 'too many', the figures for the overseas-born were: United Kingdom, 60 per cent; other Europe, 50 per cent; and Asia or elsewhere, 44 per cent.²⁰

Table 8 shows that overseas born respondents are still rather less likely to say that numbers have gone too far than the Australian-born but, except for the group born in NESB countries, the difference is not great. Even among NESB migrants, 44 per cent think the numbers have gone too far and only 17 per cent want an increase.

In the Australian Election Study just on 21 per cent of respondents (378 out of 1,797) can be identified as born overseas. But the survey's structure allows us to identify the second generation as well as the first. Table 9 shows attitudes to immigration by origin. It groups respondents into three categories: Australian-born voters with both

Table 8: Attitudes to immigration by birthplace, March 1996 (per cent)

Number of migrants allowed in has—	Total	Birthplace		
		Australia	ESB country	NESB country
gone much too far	34	37	27	18
gone too far	29	29	34	26
about right	30	28	33	39
not gone far enough or nearly far enough	7	5	6	17
Total	100	100	100	100
N	(1696)	(1318)	(180)	(196)

Source: *ibid*

Note: Totals may not add to 100 because of rounding. Missing values (n = 101) are excluded. Two people coded as birth place 'other' are not included in columns 3 or 4, but are included in column 1.

Table 9: Attitudes to immigration by origin, March 1996 (per cent)

Number of migrants allowed in has—	Total	Australian-born, both parents Australian-born	Australian-born, one or both parents overseas-born	Overseas-born, both parents overseas-born
gone much too far	34	40	28	22
gone too far	30	29	32	31
about right	30	27	32	37
not gone far enough or nearly far enough	6	4	9	11
Total	100	100	100	100
N	(1643)	(980)	(310)	(353)

Source: *ibid.*

Note: Totals may not add to 100 because of rounding. Missing values (n = 154) are excluded (these include 13 people who are overseas-born with one or both parents Australian-born).

parents Australian-born; Australian-born voters with one or both parents overseas-born; and overseas-born voters with both parents overseas-born. While opposition to current numbers is highest in the first category, it is nearly as high in the second and stands at 53 per cent in the third.

Origin and education

The data so far indicate that support for immigration, while not particularly strong, is concentrated among first-generation migrants born in NESB countries and among people with a university

education. What happens if the variables of education and origin are combined? This analysis cannot be done by ESB/NESB country-of-origin because the numbers involved are too small, but it can be carried out with the broader variable on origin used in Table 9. Table 10 sets out this analysis. It shows that, while support for immigration is low amongst most subgroups, including those groups of migrant origin who do not have a university education, it is strongest among university-educated people, especially those of migrant origin. The gap between university and non-university

Table 10: Australian Election Study — attitudes to immigration by origin and highest qualification

	Total ^a	Australian-born, Aust.-born parents			Aust.-born, one or both parents overseas-born			overseas-born, overseas-born parents		
		total ^b	uni-ed	other	total ^c	uni-ed	other	total ^d	uni-ed	other
gone much too far	34	40	23	44	27	14	30	22	14	25
gone too far	30	29	24	30	32	19	35	31	24	33
about right	30	27	47	23	33	54	27	37	51	32
not gone far enough, or nearly far enough	6	4	6	4	9	13	7	11	11	11
total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	(1,643)	(939)	(176)	(763)	(293)	(63)	(230)	(340)	(79)	(261)

Source: *ibid.*

Notes: ^a Excludes missing data (n = 154).

^b Excludes missing data on highest qualification (n = 41)

^c Excludes missing data on highest qualification (n = 17)

^d Excludes missing data on highest qualification (n = 13)

educated people, however, is widest among the Australian-born of Australian-born parents. Here 47 per cent of graduates think immigration has gone too far, or much too far, compared to 74 per cent of non-graduates. (The total for 'gone too far' and 'gone much too far' was highest of all — 78 per cent — for people in the category with trade or other non-tertiary qualifications.)

BELIEFS ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF IMMIGRATION

Table 11 sets out responses to four questions inviting agreement or disagreement with statements on the effects of immigration: 'immigrants increase the crime rate'; 'immigrants are generally good for Australia's economy'; 'immigrants take jobs away from people who are born in Australia'; and 'immigrants make Australia more open to new ideas and cultures'. This table shows the totals for the sample as a whole and by education. It confirms the finding that university-educated people are less opposed to immigration than others. Where the statement is negative ('increase the crime rate' and 'take jobs') the university-educated are more likely to disagree than the rest of the sample, and where it is positive ('good for the economy' and 'make

Table 11: Australian Election Study — attitudes to impact of immigration by highest post-school qualification (percentages)

	Total	Highest post-school qualification			
		none	trade and non-trade other	undergrad. diploma or associate diploma	bachelor's degree or post graduate
Immigrants increase the crime rate^a					
strongly agree	21	25	26	11	8
agree	30	31	33	26	22
neither agree nor disagree	26	24	23	34	30
disagree	16	13	13	19	27
strongly disagree	6	4	4	9	13
total	100	100	100	100	100
Immigrants are generally good for Australia's economy^b					
strongly agree	8	6	8	6	11
agree	41	37	37	54	50
neither agree nor disagree	30	33	30	21	26
disagree	14	15	17	14	11
strongly disagree	5	6	8	4	2
total	100	100	100	100	100
Immigrants take jobs away from people born in Australia^c					
strongly agree	14	18	15	8	6
agree	26	28	30	16	18
neither agree nor disagree	27	26	27	29	29
disagree	23	18	21	36	33
strongly disagree	7	6	5	11	13
total	100	100	100	100	100
Immigrants make Australia more open to new ideas and cultures^d					
strongly agree	26	22	22	31	41
agree	51	51	52	57	49
neither agree nor disagree	13	16	17	6	6
disagree	5	5	5	3	2
strongly disagree	3	3	2	3	2
total	100	100	100	100	100
N	(1797)	(706)	(524)	(140)	(343)

Notes: ^a Totals may not add to 100 because of rounding and because missing values are not shown (n = 32).

^b See ^a (n = 43).

^c See ^a (n = 39).

^d See ^a (n = 37).

Australia more open') they are more likely to agree.

Attitudes to 'good for the economy' and 'take jobs' form an interesting pair. Nearly half (49 per cent) say immigration is good for the economy while three

fifths (60 per cent) say immigrants take jobs away from Australian-born people. This suggests that respondents are making a distinction between economic growth and job creation. This is a distinction which, if scholars such as Rifkin who write about jobless economic growth are to be believed, is an increasingly plausible one.²¹ It is possible to have a 'healthy' economy doing well on measures such as growth in GDP, low inflation and lower interest rates and still retain high unemployment. The AGB McNair poll (Table 3) showed considerable anxiety about unemployment. This impression is confirmed by attitudes to 'immigrants take jobs' from the Australian Election Study, but nonetheless nearly half of respondents agree that immigrants are generally good for the economy. Perhaps too much should not be read into this. It is true that the media provide far more coverage of economic matters than they do of demography. But it is likely that, if respondents are confused about the meaning of demographic data, they are also confused about what it means to say that such and such a process is 'generally good for Australia's economy'.

CONCLUSION

Since the early 1980s, opposition to immigration has remained high in Australia. In 1996, nearly two thirds of Australians think that the intake is too high. One sub-group, however, continues to stand apart from this trend: people with a university education, especially those university-educated people who have a migrant background themselves.

Concerns about the environmental effects of population growth have received some attention in the last few years, but these concerns are not an important cause of this pattern of opinion. Rather, it seems that many Australians

are worried about job competition and about increasing levels of cultural diversity. However, many university-educated Australians, are relatively immune to these worries. Few among them actively want immigration to be increased, but the proportion saying the numbers are too high is lower among them than among less privileged groups. But the association between education and worries about immigration is not linear. The most worried group are not those with no post-school training at all. Rather it is the group with trade and other non-tertiary qualifications which shows the most concern.

For some of the Australian-born intelligentsia, reluctance to criticise immigration may be part of the values separating persons of their social status from the broader population. For some well-educated immigrants, this reluctance may be reinforced by tangible commitments to places and peoples overseas. For a few members of both groups, status symbols and emotional commitments may be reinforced by a belief that they have the appropriate skills to profit from a global labour market; a national focus does not suit either their values or their material interests.

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References

- ¹ The planned intake for the financial year 1995 to 1996 was 96,000; net total migration for the calendar year of 1995 was 105,800.
- ² See K. Betts, *Ideology and Immigration: Australia 1976 to 1987*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1988, pp. 56-65.
- ³ *ibid.*, p. 60
- ⁴ See, for example, Philip Ruddock in L. Taylor, 'Minister wants migrants to live outside big cities', *The Australian*, 21 March 1996, p. 3.
- ⁵ See the 1988 OMA survey analysed in K. Betts, 'Australia's distorted immigration policy', in D. J. O'Hearn, D. Goodman C. Wallace Crabb (Ed), *Multicultural Australia: The Challenge of Change*, Scribe, Newham

- (Victoria), 1991, p. 166. See also the 1994 Irving Saulwick poll, data supplied by OMA, *People and Place*, vol 4, no. 1, p. 66.
- ⁶ *ibid.*
- ⁷ See S. FitzGerald (chair), *Immigration: A Commitment to Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1988, pp. 13, 30-31, 58-9, 64, 65.
- ⁸ See Betts, 1988, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-78.
- ⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 80-81. See also Saulwick, in *People and Place*, *op. cit.* Only 39 per cent of university educated respondents in 1994 endorsed the statement 'Migrants should learn to live and behave like the majority of Australians do' compared to 70 per cent of people without university education.
- ¹⁰ See C. Bean, 'Determinants of attitudes towards questions of border maintenance in Australia', *People and Place*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1995, pp. 32-40; and M. Wilson, 'Australian motorists' attitudes — to their cars, the environment, public transport, and to the maintenance of an Australian automobile industry', *People and Place*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1995, pp. 28-31.
- ¹¹ This argument is developed in Betts, 1988, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-84, 97-98, 99-119, 142-147, 163-169.
- ¹² These three broad occupational categories are described in R. B. Reich, *The Work of Nations: A Blueprint for the Future*, Simon and Schuster, London, 1991, pp. 174-180.
- ¹³ *ibid.*, pp. 309-310
- ¹⁴ See Bean, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
- ¹⁵ See Table 5.10 in Betts, 1988, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
- ¹⁶ T. J. Espenshade and K. Hempstead, 'Contemporary American attitudes toward U.S. immigration', *International Migration Review*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1996, p. 556
- ¹⁷ The researchers sent out 3000 questionnaires, achieving a response rate of 59.9 per cent. Of the respondents, 19.1 per cent had a bachelors degree or post-graduate qualification, 39.3 per cent had no post-school qualification and 4.6 failed to answer the question. In contrast, in the 1991 Census, 7.7 per cent of the population aged 15+ had degrees, 61.1 per cent had no post-school qualification, and 12.5 per cent either failed to answer the question or gave an inadequate response. (While the populations drawn on are a little different, age 15+ versus 18+, and all Australian residents versus voters, these figures do show a strong over-representation of university-educated people in the Australian Election study sample.)
- ¹⁸ See Betts, 1988, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-126, 135-140, 149-154.
- ¹⁹ See FitzGerald, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
- ²⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 74, 77.
- ²¹ J. Rifkin, *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1996