



Talking past each other

How Australians are divided on immigration and what it means



Talking past each other

How Australians are divided on immigration and what it means



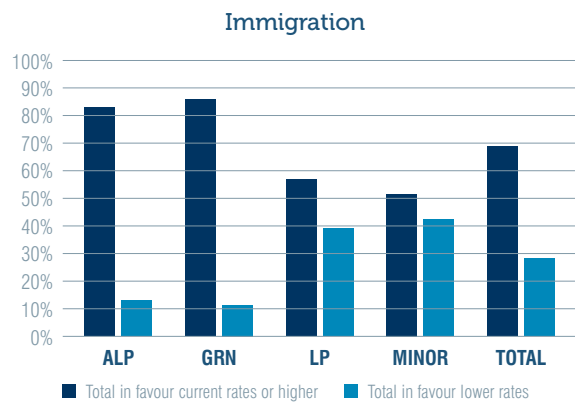
The Australian Institute for Progress has undertaken a national research project to gauge Australians' attitudes to immigration. The purpose of this research is to inform policy making on what has frequently been a contentious issue throughout our nation's history, and to explore conflicting concepts of immigration and citizenship. The report shows a deep divide in the Australian community in relation to the role of our migration program and a concern in some sections around the cultural impact of Islamic migration. The Australian Institute of Progress does not endorse those concerns, but nor do we dismiss them. We simply make the point that they are widespread and deep rooted in the community, and they must be addressed in order for Australia to move to a more harmonious and productive discussion about migration.

The Australian Institute for Progress exists to advance the discussion, development and implementation of public policy for Australia's future, from its base in Brisbane. It is politically unaligned, and funded through membership, donations and consultancies.

The findings

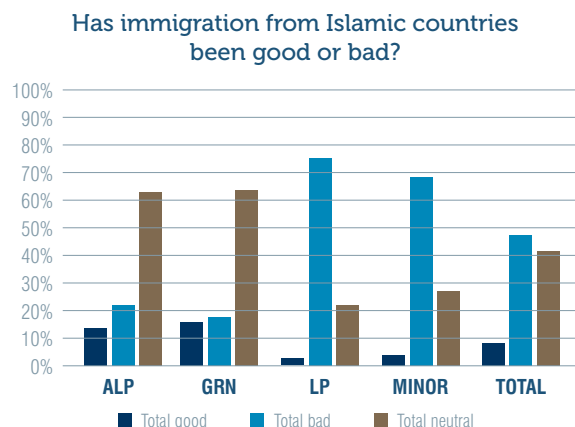
Australians support high rates of immigration.

Most voters support current or even higher levels of immigration. The group least enthusiastic about immigration is those Australians most likely to vote for minor, non-Greens parties like Palmer United, Katter, Christian Democrats and Family First.



Not from all areas

But not all immigration is equal. While voters support the abstract concept of immigration, this is a different matter when certain types of immigration are explored. Without prompting, many respondents mention concerns about immigration from Islamic countries. When asked directly there is a sharp divide.



This is an issue that the nation needs to face and understand. Given the next election is likely to be fought between a Labor/Greens de facto alliance on one side and the Coalition on the other, the end result is likely to be decided by the preferences of minor party voters. Attitudes to Islamic immigration could be a deciding factor. This puts the major parties, mainstream Australia, and the Islamic immigrants themselves in a difficult position. Opposition is very real, and very strong.

► Why are Australians easy about general immigration and uneasy about Islamic immigration?

CAMPERS VERSUS TEAM AUSTRALIA

There is a major split in the community between those who think that diversity is a good in itself, and that being present in Australia is enough to qualify someone as a citizen, and those who believe that all citizens should sign up to core values, and only those who do can qualify as citizens.

HUMANITARIANS AND UTILITARIANS

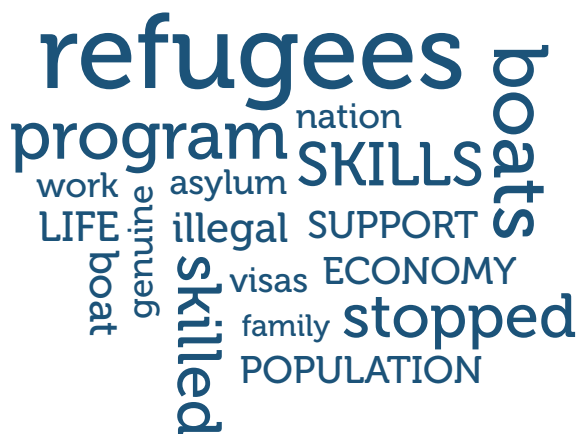
The campers and team Australia classifications overlap with another two classifications: humanitarians and utilitarians.

Humanitarian	Utilitarians
<p>Most likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support unauthorised boat arrivals Support increased refugee intake Want to accept all applicants Accept cultural diversity See diversity as a good in itself 	<p>Most likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not support unauthorised boat arrivals Support increased economic migrant intake Only want selected applicants Insist on adherence to a core set of values See diversity as good only as it improves what we already have

But we all have different reasons for supporting immigration. For some it is the need to take more refugees, for others it is the perceived need for a larger economic unit in Australia.

Some Australians refuse to discuss immigration policy beyond issues of unconventional arrivals, and only a few are aware of the large numbers of new migrants.

The list below is in order of frequency from Leximancer after having removed words that mean nothing.



So, on one side, if migrants strengthen an already existing economy and way of life, they are welcome. On the other side, migrants are valuable for themselves, and are welcome irrespective of what they bring.



► Why is Islamic immigration seen as different?

There is a widespread concern that Islamic culture is not only different to our culture, but incompatible with it, and that immigrants who are Islamic or from Islamic countries are different to other migrants and won't integrate.

Concerns cut across the binary divides of campers and team Australia; and humanitarians and utilitarians. While campers and humanitarians are less likely to have concern, they still show substantial concern. When campers have concerns it is because they suspect the newcomers might not only have a team identity, but be exclusive about it. For team Australia the issue is not that they are tribal, but that they belong to an opposed team.

Views on arguments for and against Islamic immigration

		CAMPERS	TEAM AUSTRALIA	HUMANITARIANS	UTILITARIANS
Arguments in favour of Islamic Immigration	Government beat-up	•	•	•	•
	Will integrate over time	✓	✗	✓	✗
	Religion none of our business	✓	✗	✓	✗
	Islam a religion of peace	✓	•	✓	•
	Western aggression causes the problems	✓	✗	✓	✗
Arguments against Islamic Immigration	Islam is so different it amounts to a culture war	✗	✓	✗	✓
	Treatment of women	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Treatment of LGBTI	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Will not assimilate	✗	✓	✗	✓
	Their religion is antipathetic to our values	✗	✓	✗	✓
Countries they come from have incompatible cultures	✗	✓	✗	✓	

✓ Strongly agree ✓ Agree • Neutral ✗ Disagree ✗ Strongly Disagree

► Where to from here?

It is obvious that there is a real perception problem of immigrants from Islamic countries. What is not so obvious is whether it reflects reality, and what should be done about it. There are strongly held views across the community that Islamic immigration is different.

The results of our research are that we think the questions that need to be answered are:

- Do immigrants from Islamic countries have a radically different view of citizenship?
- Do immigrants from Islamic countries want to integrate with mainstream culture?
- How important is Islam as a factor in the identity of immigrants from Islamic countries?



The Australian Institute for Progress exists to advance the discussion, development and implementation of public policy for Australia's future, from its base in Queensland.

www.aip.asn.au

The future does not look after itself.