

MIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICY INDEX



Australia

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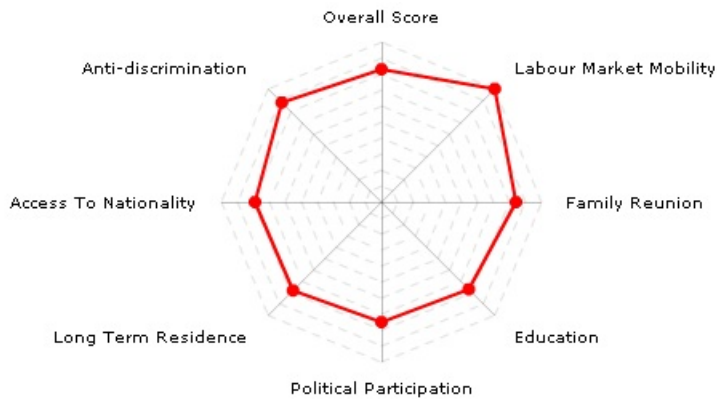
MIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICY INDEX



MPG
MIGRATION POLICY GROUP

MPG-led MIPEX assesment of Australia

The Migration Policy Group has led a MIPEX assessment of Australia. This page contains the same information as for all other MIPEX countries. The Australian data is available for 2010 only. The data was collected in September 2010 but also reflects the situation as of 31 May 2010, therefore the data is directly comparable with the 31 MIPEX III countries. The 31 MIPEX III country profiles do not include the Australian results, nor do the overall policy findings as these were published in March 2011.



Overview

This traditional settler country has become one of the most diverse in the world. Since the 1970s, the decades-long 'White Australia' policy was replaced by various immigration and multiculturalism policies. By 2008, an estimated one in four residents was born abroad, increasingly in South and East Asia. Large numbers of migrant workers have been welcomed over and above the number of family migrants, resettled refugees, and asylum seekers. Australia developed employer- and points-based discretionary systems for temporary and permanent skilled workers, one of the largest programmes for working holiday makers, and a small Pacific pilot for seasonal workers. It also attracts more international students than most immigration countries.

According to MIPEX, Australia sets slightly favourable conditions for temporary and permanent residents to participate in society. In 2010, the country's policies ranked 5th among 33 immigration countries, scored 68 out-of-100-points—four points below Canada (3rd) but six above the US (10th). Like Canada, Australia does better than most to encourage immigrants and their children to reunite as a family (5th), achieve their best in school (2nd), and become full citizens (3rd). It does as much to get newcomers into public life as several European countries and even more than Canada or most US states. On three areas, Australia performs average, behind several countries with whom it competes for migrant workers (e.g. Canada, Spain, Sweden, US) with more equal labour market access and general support (15th), equal rights for permanent residents (14th), and comprehensive anti-discrimination laws (12th).

Timeline - What's Changed

0	1 July 2007
Access to nationality	
Citizenship Act raises residence requirement from 2-to-4 years, with 3-year transition for existing permanent residents.	
0	1 October 2007
Access to nationality	
Test and guide introduced on know ledge of basic English and national	

Key Findings

- Similar to Canada, Australia ranks high on family reunion, education, and access to nationality
- Increasing targeted support for migrant workers
- Wide range of migrants become permanent residents under various conditions
- Other labour migration countries offer better labour market access, general support and rights to migrant

values, history, and symbols.

0 — 30 June 2008

Political Participation

Sydney City's Cultural Diversity Strategy 2008-2011 promises to create a Multicultural Advisory Panel.

0 — 15 March 2009

Access to nationality

Same-Sex Relationships Act eliminates discrimination between same-sex and opposite-sex de facto couples, and their children in Citizenship Act

0 — April 2009

Anti-Discrimination

Victoria Equal Opportunity Act strengthens Human Rights Commission's role helping public actors promote equality.

0 — 1 July 2009

Family reunion

Amendment eliminates discrimination between same-sex and opposite-sex de facto couples and their children for family reunion.

0 — October 2009

Access to nationality

Following high failure rates, citizenship test given more meaningful questions, simpler English, streamlined process, and preparatory courses.

0 — 16 February 2011

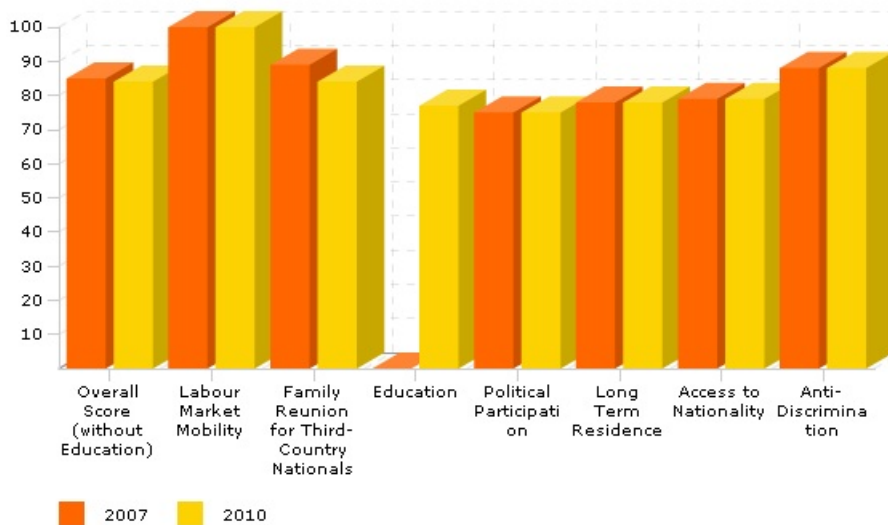
Political Participation and Anti-Discrimination

New multiculturalism policy: 'The People of Australia' and National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy

workers and permanent residents

- More political participation opportunities than in Canada or US
- Voting rights weak compared to most countries
- Multicultural policies help newcomers enter civic and political life
- Uneven state and federal laws create gaps on discrimination
- Most favourable mechanisms to enforce anti-discrimination law
- Permanent residents and descendants have favourable eligibility for citizenship

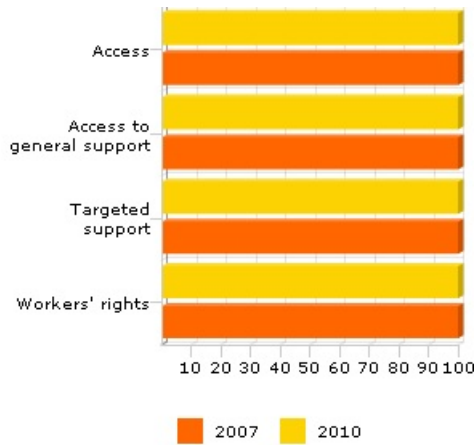
Score Changes



Areas of Integration

Labour Market Mobility

Targeted support is improving in established immigration countries like Australia (see also Canada, Northern Europe, and recently Portugal and Spain). Public servants are to be trained on migrants' needs and diversity (e.g. Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society). The Settlement Grants Program and Adult Migrant English Program provide needs-based courses for vulnerable groups. Workers who want their overseas qualifications recognised can access some information, top-up courses, and subsidies to cover procedural costs (ASDOT). Still, there is no central authority to guarantee equal and fair procedures (instead, see Trade Recognitions Australia, VETASSESS and AEI-NOOSR, OQUs).

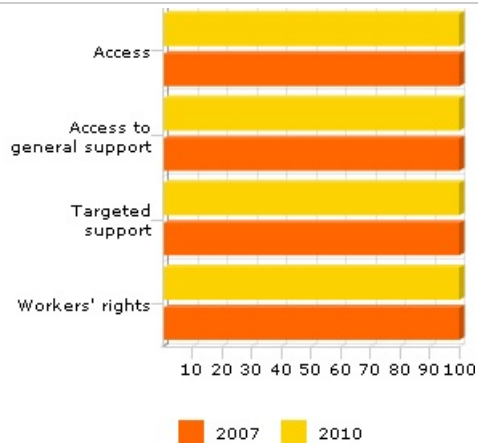


All migrant workers who choose Australia do not have equal access, general support, and rights as they would in other leading labour migration countries like Canada, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and US. Policies are only slightly favourable for labour market mobility in Australia, no better than the average MIPLEX country. Most temporary and permanent residents can work in most sectors under the same conditions as Australians. They also receive some targeted support (see box). The Australian economy is not tapping into immigrants' full potential because policies delay newcomers from fully investing in the right jobs and skills. Many newcomers have limited rights and access to general support like Job Services Australia and student loans or grants. Skilled migrants who arrive with jobs and recognised qualifications are often overlooked by labour market programmes. Some temporary migrants cannot freely change jobs or sectors (unlike in 6 MIPLEX countries). Temporary workers cannot use some social security benefits, while many permanent residents must wait two years (unlike in half the MIPLEX countries, including most labour migration countries). Those exempt are refugees, humanitarian entrants, people in severe financial hardship beyond their control.

Family Reunion

Long waiting times and high visa application charges keep some families apart

Families who meet all the legal conditions may still confront excessive processing times in Australia, Austria, Canada, and the US. The Australian system maintains quotas and complex family visa categories that can delay family reunion. According to service standards, processing times should range for partners from 5-12 months and for children from 3-14 months. Parents and other family members are queued, with limited places available each year. Unless adult migrants can pay the equivalent of around 30,000 euros, they may never be reunited with their elderly parents, who face processing times of 15-to-20 years. Immigrants in nearly all MIPLEX countries benefit from lower fees and legal procedural time limits of 9 months.

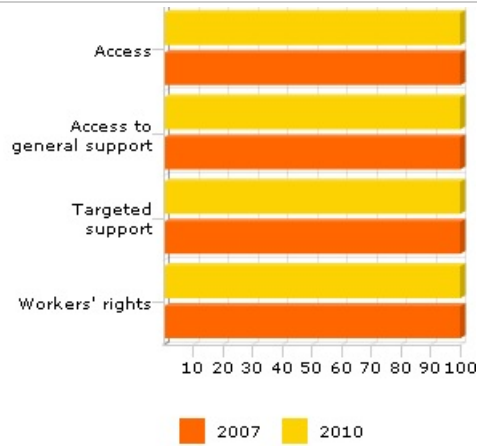


Immigrant families face fewer obstacles to reunite and participate in society in the leading labour migration countries like Australia, Canada, Portugal, and Spain. With few exceptions, temporary and permanent migrants who meet an 'average' set of conditions can reunite with their full family who then enjoy equal and slightly secure rights. Favourable eligibility provisions reflect the many ways immigrants and Australians live together, including de facto couples since 2009. Applicants must cover the basic sponsorship requirements on accommodation and financial support, various procedural costs, and a few additional grounds for some visa holders. The major weakness is the backlog (see box). Once reunited, families and sponsors have the same rights, including to autonomous residence (see also Canada).

Education

Areas for improvement

Compared to other countries, Australia could improve on several MIPEX policy indicators. Newcomer pupils could receive better assessments of their prior learning and school placements through centres of expertise (e.g. France, Luxembourg). They and their parents could benefit from required short inductions about Australian schools. (Belgium, Canada, Finland, Sweden). Positive actions could encourage people from diverse backgrounds to study and enter teaching (Nordics, Germany, Netherlands, UK). States could invest more in innovative early English acquisition in pre-school (Nordics, North America, Belgium, Netherlands). Civics and Citizenship could also become its own subject (Spain, Sweden, UK).

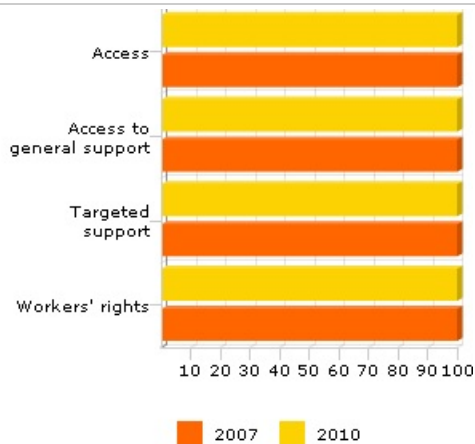


Migrant and Australian children have a slightly favourable learning environment for integration and diversity on all four MIPEX dimensions. Coherent policies in most Australian states rank 2nd internationally in MIPEX, after Sweden and alongside Canada. All children have the implicit right to attend most levels of education. Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) benefit from information, translation, and interpretation services upon arrival, as well as continuing support, quality English courses, and targeted teaching assistance and resources. Since the government wants people to learn more foreign languages, children can choose to learn about Asian languages and cultures during the school day (NALSSP) and about 69 others through over 1000 after-school or weekend "community language schools" (see also Belgium, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland). All students learn to appreciate cultural diversity because Civics and Citizenship is supported across the curriculum, assessed, and compared across states.

Political Participation

Multicultural policies

Multicultural Advisory Councils are immigrant-led and government-funded at all levels and perhaps soon in Sydney. Still MIPEX finds that these structures are slightly unfavourable for meaningful political participation, because participants are not representative, elected, or empowered institutionally. The Australian Multicultural Advisory Council may become more strong and independent, according to the new 'People of Australia' policy responding to several of their recommendations. Stronger bodies exist in FI, NO, DE (local and regional), and BE (Flanders). Almost all states and major cities provide multiculturalism information and funds (e.g. Diversity and Social Cohesion Program). Ethnic communities' councils are federated in a national umbrella (FECCA).

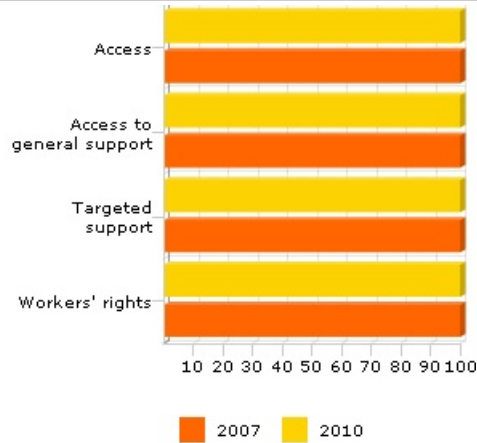


The limited opportunities for newcomers to participate politically in Australia are better than in Canada but similar to immigration countries in Western Europe and several US states leading on integration. Ordinary residents, who have full political liberties as in most immigration countries, have produced hundreds of newspapers and broadcasts in different languages. The right to vote is unfavourably restricted. Federal, state and territory elections are not open to non-naturalised residents, except Commonwealth citizens ('British subjects) who enrolled before 1983/4. South Australia gives the vote to residents in local elections. Victoria and Tasmania only do so for property-owners. 17 MIPEX countries grant more equal voting rights. Immigrant organisations are funded and consulted through favourable implementation policies and slightly weak advisory councils in Australia and most European immigration countries. The difference in Australia (and Canada) is the discourse and methodology behind

Long Term Residence

Social rights only slightly favourable for integration

Permanent residents enjoy many of the same rights as Australians. However they do not have equal access to most social security benefits, as in only US and Cyprus. Most in need of support must wait two years for most benefits and ten years for disability and age pensions. They also face the same problems as temporary residents when getting their qualifications recognised.

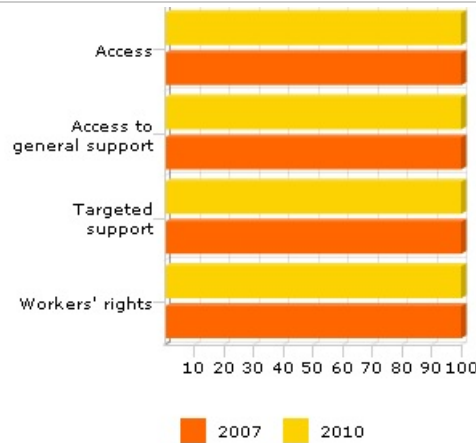


As in Canada, Australia grants permanent residence to a wide range of migrants under various conditions. Its eligibility provisions are some of the most favourable, especially compared to the 5-year-wait in most European countries. Permanent residents arrive in Australia with secure and near-equal rights if they qualify under the points-system, similar to Canada's. The rather demanding conditions include market-based English tests (IELTS and OET), some of the highest visa costs (like Canada, US) and possible time delays (like Canada, UK, US, unlike 20 MIPEX countries). Most temporary residents, including former international students, have a longer but simpler path after two years. A permanent resident's status is secure, renewable, flexible, and protected for many long-settled residents and minors. Still, they enjoy weaker rights than in nearly all MIPEX countries like Canada and UK (see box).

Access to Nationality

Current test 'slightly favourable' for avoiding exclusion

Since 2007, Australia's brand-new test has become more professional than most new tests in European immigration countries. MIPEX finds that applicants receive slightly better support to succeed. The elderly, minors, and physically or mentally disabled are exempt. All others can pass a standard- or assisted test, or a 20-hour course (see also UK and Norway). All three are free, flexible, and professional. In 2009, government interpreted high failure rates as indicators that the test failed its purpose to promote citizenship. The process was streamlined. The English became simpler and basic. The questions became more meaningful for citizenship. Now applicants can not only study through free guides, but also free courses. Whether or not the English is as basic and simple as in Canada and the US is still debated. Unlike Australia, 6 other MIPEX countries also exempt immigrants who already studied the language and civics in the country.



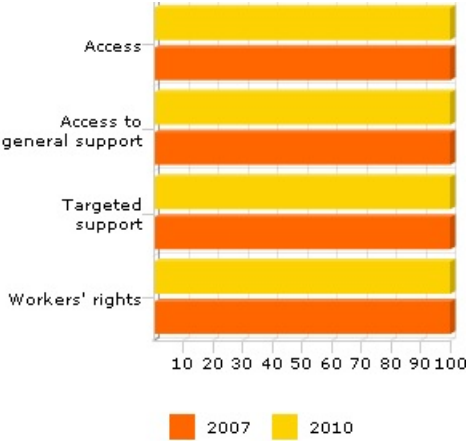
Nearly all permanent residents can quickly become citizens and fully participate in Australia, whose citizenship policies ranked 3rd among Portugal, Sweden, and Canada. Australia embraced dual nationality in 2002, following reform trends in other immigration countries (now 19 MIPEX countries). Reforming countries are also adopting many of its core beliefs on citizenship: some birthright citizenship (16): short residence requirement (8), and ceremonies (8). The eligibility provisions are favourable for a country of immigration (see also Canada, US, Germany, Ireland, Portugal). Since 1986, only a child born to a permanent resident is Australian at birth. All others become Australian automatically at age 10. Permanent residents and citizens' spouses can naturalise after 4 years (previously 2). They are encouraged through ceremonies (since 1949) and more favourable conditions and procedures than in most countries, where citizenship policy is an area of weakness for integration (see box). Once naturalised, all Australians are

equally secure in their citizenship. Only dual nationals who committed fraud to be naturalised can lose it.

Anti-discrimination

Comprehensive definitions needed

Victims of religious discrimination are not protected in New South Wales and South Australia and at federal level (unlike nearly all MIPEX countries). Residents in other states and territories are protected from racial, religious, ethnic and nationality discrimination in most areas of their lives. Still, they are left exposed to discrimination in some areas of housing (unlike nearly all MIPEX countries) and social protection and advantages (unlike 25). Victims of multiple/intersectional discrimination have no clear rules for bringing forward their case (see Canada, US, UK).



Australian residents only enjoy slightly favourable protections from discrimination that fall behind EU law and innovative standards in leading countries like Canada, Sweden, UK, and US. The definitions, concepts, and fields of application are uneven in state and federal laws, in the absence of a National Human Rights Act (see box). Where discrimination is outlawed, victims enjoy some of the best mechanisms to enforce the law (see also Netherlands, Sweden, US). They include short procedures, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, legal aid, interpreters, class actions, and wide sanctions. Their major weakness is that most claimants still carry the burden of proof to prove discrimination (as in Canada but unlike 29 MIPEX countries, including UK and US). Australia's new national anti-racism partnership and strategy may improve its slightly favourable equality policies. Beyond the Australian Human Rights Commission, it lacks equality duties in public contracts (unlike Canada, US, Sweden, UK), national legal advice services for victims (unlike 21), and specialised government units for information and dialogue on discrimination (unlike 13).

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