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## Australia's most recent immigrants

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### Abstract

This paper summarises some of the key findings of an Australian Census Analytic Program (ACAP) Report which focused on immigrants enumerated at the 2001 Census who had arrived in Australia since the 1996 Census. It compares the economic, social and demographic characteristics of the newcomers and compares them to three other groups:

- The Australian-born population.
- The Long Standing migrant population who have been resident in Australia for five years or more.
- Recent Arrivals at the 1996 Australian Census, i.e. those enumerated in 1996 who arrived between 1991 and 1996.

The study establishes that recent immigrants differ substantially from all three of these comparators. The major differences discussed relate to where they have settled in Australia, their labour market performance, their economic situation and their housing, their ability to speak English as well as an array of other economic, social and demographic characteristics. It is argued that while differences have been observed between recent and long standing migrants in earlier Australian censuses, such as that in 1996, the newcomers are more different in 2001 than in earlier enumerations. This is a function of three elements. Firstly, there were significant changes in the way in which immigrants were selected between 1996 and 2001 which have placed greater emphasis on economic/labour force criteria and on elements such as English language compliance. Secondly, the 1996-2001 period differed significantly from the 1991-96 period in a number of ways such as the lower level of national unemployment which prevailed. Thirdly, and most importantly, the post-1996 period saw a sea change in Australian immigration with the introduction of a range of visa categories which allowed people to enter Australia to work on a temporary basis. The recent immigrants at the 2001 Census, therefore, include not only traditional immigrants who arrived in Australia with the intention to settle permanently but also substantial numbers of people with temporary resident status and who are not visitors. It is strongly suggested that the Australian census should differentiate between Australians as to whether they are citizens, permanent residents, temporary residents and visitors.

Full papers from ACAP can be found on the ABS website. [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au) (search for ACAP).

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