

Survey sounds warning on social cohesion

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Discrimination is rising and trust in social institutions is declining, according to the 2013 Mapping Social Cohesion Report - Australia's largest survey of social cohesion, immigration and population issues.

Professor Andrew Markus of Monash University's School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies has written the reports for the last six years. The research program is funded by the Scanlon Foundation, with additional funding in 2013 from the Australian government.

The national [report](#), the sixth since the first survey was taken in 2007, tracks attitudes on key indicators of [social cohesion](#): sense of belonging, worth, social justice and equity, participation, and acceptance/ rejection.

For the first time, there were local surveys outside Sydney and Melbourne and an online survey of recent arrivals. Supplementary reports providing detailed analysis of these additional surveys are planned for release in April 2014.

"This year's findings reflect a deteriorating rather than improving situation," Professor Markus said.

"We have seen a marked increase in the reported experience of discrimination, with the highest rates amongst recent arrivals of non-English speaking background; a continuing decline of trust in people and government and concern about the quality of politicians; an increasing concern about the economy; and a hardening of attitudes towards asylum

seekers arriving by boat."

The number of respondents reporting they had experienced discrimination rose to 19 per cent, the highest since the surveys began.

Only 27 per cent agreed the government in Canberra could be trusted 'almost always' or 'always', down from 48 per cent in 2009. When respondents were asked to indicate 'confidence or trust' in nine institutions, the federal parliament ranked second last and political parties last, while hospitals headed the list.

For the first time the [survey](#) looked at multiculturalism and its effects; 84 per cent agreed it has been good for Australia, 72 per cent said it benefits Australia's economic development, and 67 per cent indicated it encourages immigrants to become part of Australian society.

"Multiculturalism has established itself as a strong and supported 'brand', one that resonates with the Australian people," Professor Markus said.

On a positive note, four out of five respondents agreed there was economic opportunity and reward for hard work in Australia, and 71 per cent were satisfied with their financial situation.

"Taking all aspects of the report into account, Australia remains highly cohesive and continues to satisfy the newly arrived," Professor Markus said.

"However it is important to note that it highlights major issues warranting [government](#) and community attention, especially those relating to issues of personal and institutional trust, experience of [discrimination](#) and the perception of immigrants that the Australians they encounter are not friendly or caring."

More information: The 2013 National Mapping Social Cohesion Report and a five minute video providing an overview of the findings are available at the Monash Faculty of Arts [website](#).

Provided by Monash University

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