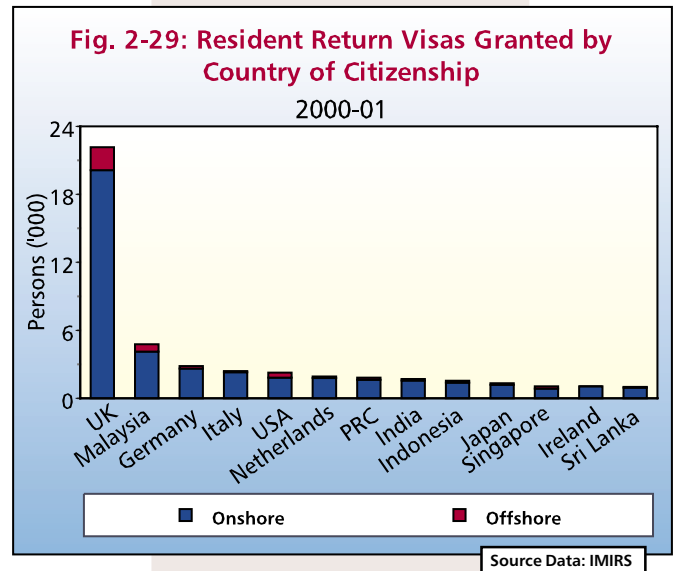
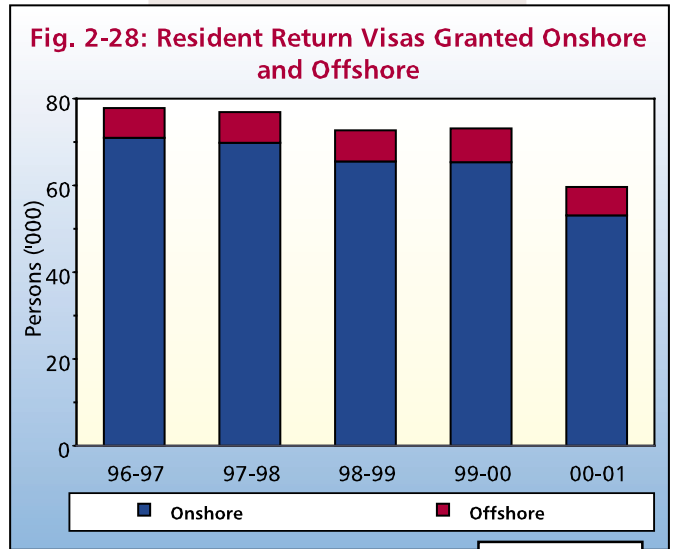


# Resident Return Visas

The purpose of Resident Return Visas (RRVs) is to facilitate the re-entry into Australia of non-citizen permanent residents; and ensure that only those people who have a genuine commitment to residing in Australia, or who are contributing to Australia's well-being, retain the right to return to Australia and remain permanently.

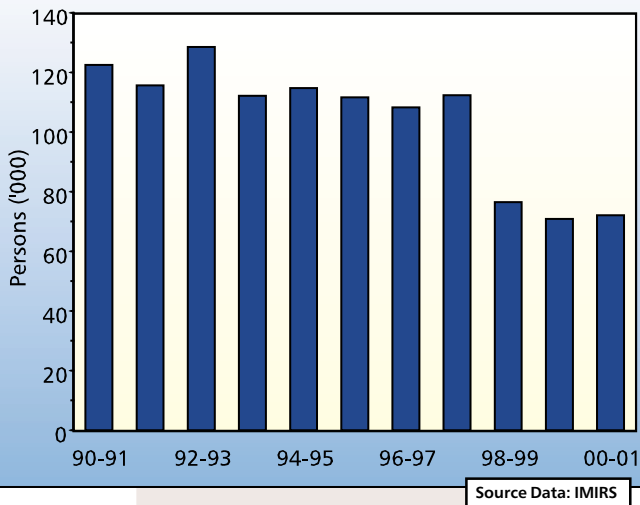
In 2000–01, 59,656 RRVs were granted to Australian permanent residents. The majority of applications (53,101 or 89 per cent) were granted to applicants in Australia, with the remaining 6,555 (11 per cent) were granted to applicants overseas. The number of RRVs granted during 2000–01 decreased by 13,473 over the total granted in 1999–2000 (73,129). This outcome is in line with the downward trend of previous years.

Fig 2-29 illustrates the distribution of Resident Return Visas granted in 2000–01 by country of citizenship. In 2000–01 around 37 per cent of all Resident Return visas were granted to citizens of the United Kingdom, followed by Malaysia (8 per cent), Germany (5 per cent) and Italy (4 per cent).



# Australian Citizenship

**Fig. 2-30: Conferrals of Australian Citizenship**



Acquiring Australian citizenship is an important way of showing your pride in being part of Australia's dynamic and diverse society. People born in Australia of Australian parents become Australian citizens by birth; those who migrate may acquire it, upon application, by meeting certain criteria.

## Applying for Australian Citizenship

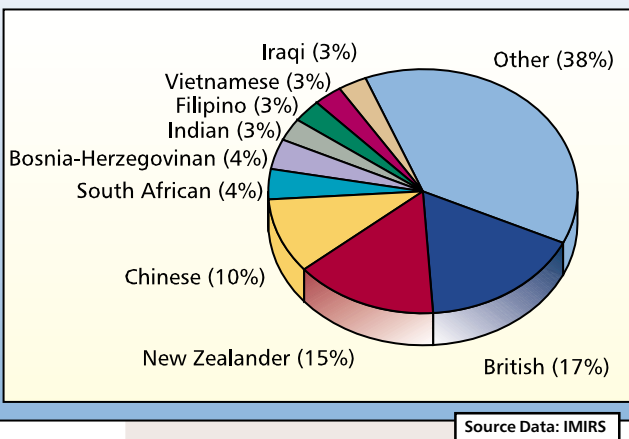
Generally, people can apply for Australian citizenship when they have been present in Australia as a permanent resident for a total of two years in the previous five years, including twelve months in the two years immediately before they apply. While there may be some exceptions, a person seeking citizenship must:

- be a permanent resident and at least 18 years old;
- understand the nature of the application;
- be of good character;
- have a basic knowledge of the English language;
- have an 'adequate knowledge' of the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship;
- intend to reside, or continue to reside, in Australia, or maintain a close and continuing association with Australia.

Children under 16 years of age may be included on a responsible parent's application.

**Fig. 2-31: Former Nationality/Citizenship of Persons Conferred Australian Citizenship**

2000-01



## Citizenship Responsibilities and Privileges

New Australian citizens have the same basic responsibilities and privileges as Australian-born.

New citizens:

- are entitled, under Australian law, to the same rights as all Australian citizens;
- must enrol on the electoral register and vote in State/Territory and Federal elections;
- may apply for appointment to public office, nominate to stand for election as a Member of Parliament (subject to section 44(i) of the Constitution), apply to enlist in the defence forces or for those government jobs for which citizenship is required;
- may apply for an Australian passport and may re-enter Australia without the need for a re-entry visa when they travel overseas;
- may be protected by Australian diplomatic arrangements while they are overseas and may register their children who are born overseas as Australian citizens; and
- should serve on a jury if called to do so and help defend Australia should the need arise.

Those choosing to become Australian citizens make a pledge to be loyal to Australia and its people, share in the belief of the democratic process, respect the rights and liberties of other Australians, and uphold and obey Australia's laws.

## **Conferrals of Australian Citizenship**

In 2000–01, there were 72,070 persons granted Australian citizenship. This was an increase of 1.7 per cent from 1999–2000 when 70,836 persons became citizens. Despite some fluctuations from year to year, there remains a downward trend in citizenship conferrals from a high in 1989–90 (130,312 conferrals). This decline in the number of people becoming Australian citizens is the result of a number of factors, but in particular is due to reductions in the immigration intake, which is the main feeder group for citizenship applications.

Of the 72,070 who became Australian citizens in 2000–01, 12,474 were formerly citizens of the United Kingdom. The next highest citizenship was New Zealander (11,007) followed by Chinese (6,890 conferrals).

## **Citizenship Rate of Overseas-born**

Information from the 1996 Census indicates that there is a wide range of take up of citizenship by people born in different overseas countries. The five countries with the highest take up rates are Laos (97.6 per cent), Lebanon (97.4 per cent), Greece (97.3 per cent), Hungary (96.6 per cent) and Latvia (96.5 per cent)

The countries with the lowest take up rates of Australian citizenship at the 1996 Census were Japan (25.3 per cent), New Zealand (35.1 per cent), Malaysia (56.9 per cent) and USA (57.3 per cent).

## **Australian Citizenship Council**

The Australian Citizenship Council was established with a two year mandate in August 1998 as an independent body to advise the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs on Australian citizenship matters referred to it by the Government.

The Council's report, 'Australian Citizenship for a New Century', was launched in February 2000. The report made recommendations on contemporary issues in Australian citizenship policy and law and how to promote community awareness of the significance of Australian citizenship for all Australians, particularly as a unifying force.

## **Government Response to the Australian Citizenship Council's Report - Australian Citizenship - A Common Bond**

The Government Response to the Report of the Australian Citizenship Council (ACC) was launched in May 2001 and endorsed most of the ACC's recommendations.

In particular, that a campaign be conducted to promote the acquisition of Australian Citizenship among eligible non-citizens during the Centenary of Federation year and to enhance the profile and significance of Australian citizenship among all Australians.

An Australian Citizenship promotion campaign was launched on 1 July 2001 comprising national advertising and public relations activity, culminating in the inaugural Australian Citizenship Day on 17 September.

In addition the Government also agreed to implement legislative changes to:

- Enhance current citizenship legislation in the interests of young Australians including the provision of individual certificates of Australian citizenship to children under 16 years of age;
- Strengthen aspects of the integrity of the Australian citizenship process; and
- Repeal section 17 the Australian Citizenship Act 1948 (the Act) which will mean that Australian citizens will no longer lose their Australian citizenship if they acquire another citizenship:

The decision to repeal section 17 of the Act followed widespread community consultation undertaken recently by the Government through the release of a discussion paper. Submissions to the Government strongly supported its repeal. The change will allow growing numbers of internationally mobile Australians to take advantage of opportunities overseas and to bring back to the Australian community their valuable expertise and knowledge. It will also bring Australia into line with the citizenship laws of many other comparable countries including the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, USA, France and Italy. A Bill to amend the Act to implement the changes outlined above was introduced into Parliament in August 2001. The changes will benefit those Australian citizens who acquire another citizenship after the new law is passed and comes into effect. Until that time, Australians will continue to lose their citizenship if they acquire another citizenship through a voluntary act.

Information about Australian citizenship is available on the Web at [www.citizenship.gov.au](http://www.citizenship.gov.au).