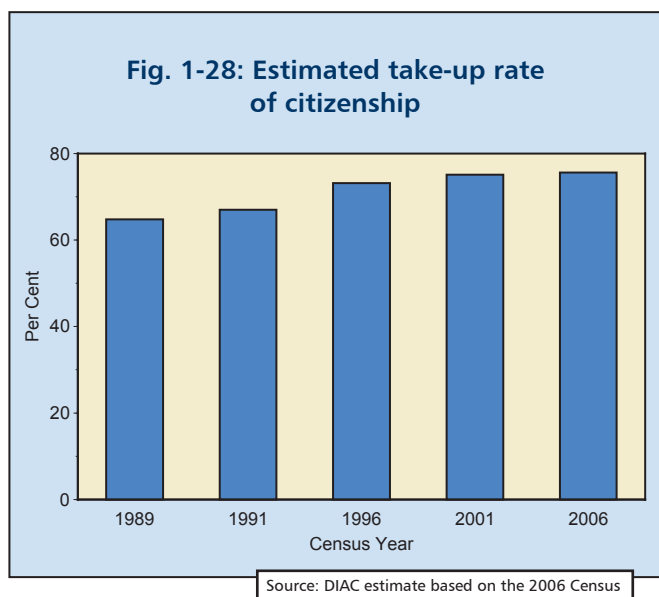
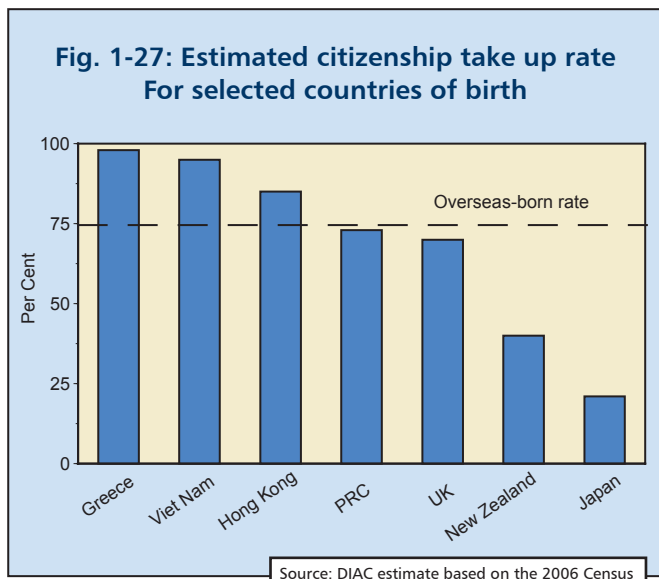


Profile of Australian citizenship



Australian citizenship

According to the 2006 Census Australia's proportion of overseas born has increased to 23.9 per cent. With current and future migration, diversity will continue to be a feature of the Australian population.

Australian citizenship encompasses shared civic values and acts as a strong unifying force in the Australian community. These shared civic values include loyalty to Australia and its people, a belief in the democratic process, respect for the rights and liberties of others and a commitment to uphold and obey Australia's laws. It is the commitment to these values that is one of the great strengths of the Australian community. Whether Australian by birth or by choice, Australian citizenship is the common bond which unites us all.

Becoming an Australian citizen is an important way of showing pride in being part of Australia's dynamic and diverse society. Australian citizenship allows full participation in the Australian community. Australia's approach to citizenship is inclusive and non-discriminatory.

The take-up of Australian citizenship by migrants is measured by the percentage of residentially eligible migrants from different countries who become Australian citizens. At the 2006 Census the estimated take-up rate for people born overseas was 75.6 per cent.

Information from the 2006 Census indicates that the take-up of Australian citizenship by migrants varies significantly. The five countries with the highest take-up rates are Greece (98.2 per cent), Hungary and Croatia (both 96.7 per cent), Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (96.6 per cent), Bosnia and Herzegovina (both 96.1 per cent) and Lebanon (96.0 per cent).

The 2006 Census data indicates that more than half of the permanent residents residentially eligible to acquire Australian citizenship but who had not, were from just two countries – the UK and New Zealand. Other nationalities with sizeable numbers of residentially eligible non-citizens are Italy, Malaysia, India and PRC.

Promotion of Australian citizenship

The objectives of the Australian citizenship promotion campaign are to promote the acquisition of Australian citizenship among eligible non-citizens, to enhance the profile and significance of Australian citizenship in the community among existing Australian citizens, and to emphasise that becoming a citizen demonstrates a commitment to Australia and enables full participation in the community.

A new advertising initiative for the ongoing promotion campaign was launched on Australian Citizenship Day, 17 September 2006. The new initiative, which appeared on television, in print and on the internet, states that “becoming an Australian citizen is much more than a ceremony. It’s an opportunity to fully embrace the Australian way of life and enjoy everything this country has to offer.”

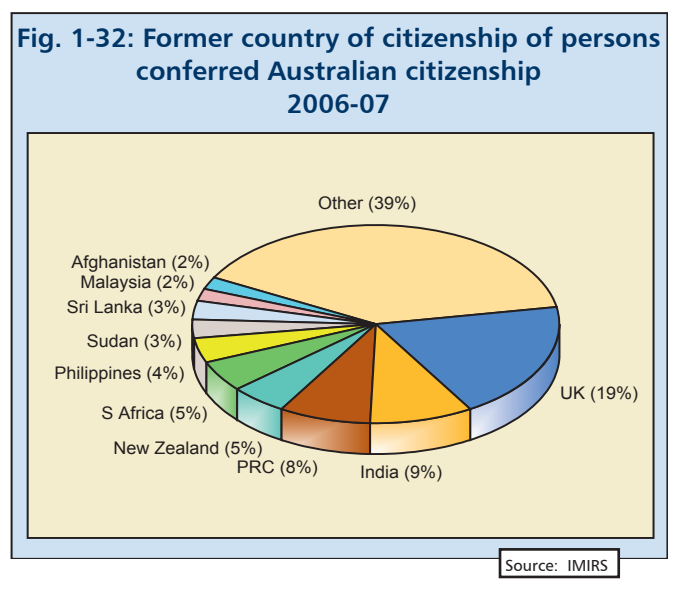
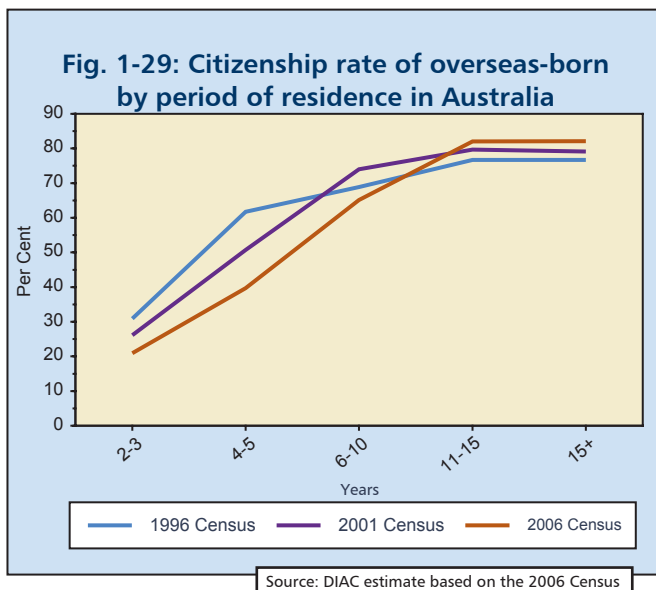
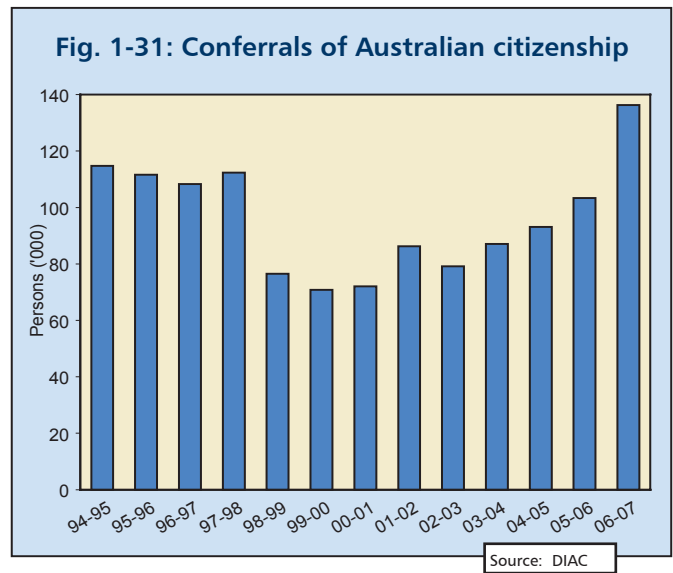
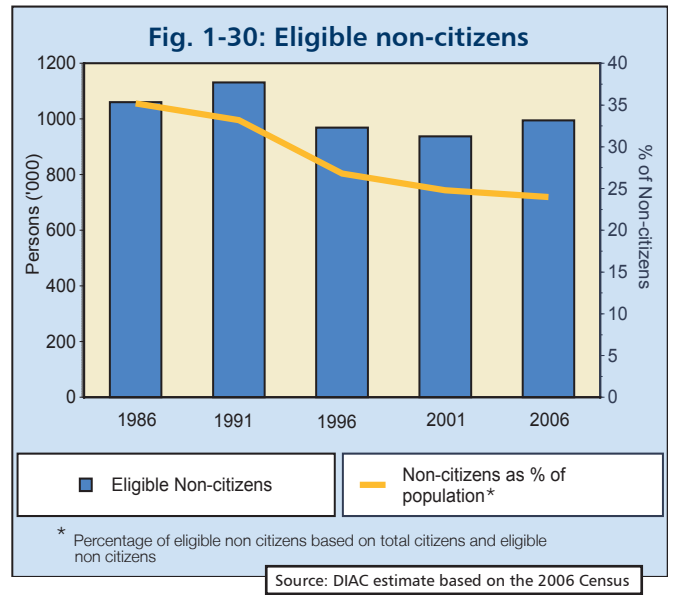
This advertising campaign was superseded on 17 September 2007 by a public information campaign introducing the new citizenship test.

Australia Day 2007 saw the largest number of people become Australian citizens for the year, when 12 500 people from 111 countries became Australian citizens at 280 ceremonies around the nation.

Special citizenship ceremonies were also held during the year to celebrate Australian Citizenship Day, on 17 September, and Refugee Week, in June 2007.

Changes to citizenship law

During 2006-07 work progressed on two major changes to citizenship legislation – the new *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* and the proposed introduction of a citizenship test.



The Australian Citizenship Bill 2006 was passed on 1 March 2007 and received Royal Assent on 15 March 2007. On 7 June 2007 a commencement date of 1 July 2007 was proclaimed for the new *Australian Citizenship Act 2007*, replacing the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*.

Significant changes to the legislation include:

- amendments to the residence requirement for Australian citizenship
- removal of the age limit for citizenship by descent and resumption
- prohibiting the approval of citizenship where a person is a threat to national security
- strengthening the provisions for revocation of citizenship.

On 12 September 2007, the Australian Parliament passed the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Citizenship Testing) Bill 2007, following an extensive public consultation process.

The Bill amends the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* by requiring most permanent residents to successfully complete a citizenship test before applying for Australian citizenship. The test, which commenced in October 2007, requires people to demonstrate they have a basic knowledge of the English language, an adequate knowledge of Australia and the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship, and an understanding of the nature of their citizenship application.

Record numbers of new citizens

In 2006-07, a total of 169 123 people were approved to become Australian citizens by grant, descent and resumption. This is the highest number since Australian citizenship was introduced in 1949.

A record number of 136 256 new citizens from more than 190 countries acquired citizenship by grant in 2006-07, a 31.8 per cent increase on 2005-06.

Further details can be found at www.citizenship.gov.au.