

Australia's Waves of Migration

The 1800s: First modern migrants

Most of the first modern migrants to Australia were involuntary arrivals: British convicts sent to the penal colony of New South Wales. Until the mid-1800s, the population was dominated by British and Irish people. But the discovery of gold near Orange, NSW, in 1851 triggered a gold rush that changed the face of Australia.

Between 1851 and 1860, more than 600,000 migrants arrived: most were from the UK but 10 per cent came from elsewhere in Europe and 7 per cent from China. The potato famine in Ireland in the late 1840s saw some 30,000 Irish migrants settle in Australia, and the push to develop Australia's outback led to a government decision to bring in 2000 cameleers mainly from India and Afghanistan.

The post-war migrant boom

In 1948, parliament legislated to create Australian citizenship - before that, all Australians were British subjects. But Australia still actively sought British migrants in preference to other nationalities, with ventures like the assisted passage scheme known as the "Ten Pound Pom" (the price of the ticket) kicking off in the late 1940s and running almost 25 years.



A national poll taken in 1943 found 40 per cent of Australians supported "unlimited immigration", driven in part by a critical labour shortage. The country's first-ever immigration minister Arthur Calwell promoted the idea that Australia needed to "populate or perish". Australia began accepting migrants from more than 30 European countries, including the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Spain and West Germany. But the largest national groups of arrivals after the Brits were the Italians and Greeks until the early 1970s.

1970s-today: Asylum seekers, skilled migrants

Humanitarian intakes saw the settlement of Lebanese and Cypriot people during the early 1970s; followed by a significant wave of Indochinese arrivals displaced by the Vietnamese and Cambodian conflicts. Over 2,000 Indochinese refugees landed in boats on Australian shores in the late 1970s, but the majority of the 80,000 Indochinese permanent migrants came by air after they were formally processed by Australian officials at refugee camps in Malaysia and Thailand.



In recent times Australia has thrown open its doors to migrants, with some 190,000 permanent new arrivals settling each year for the past five years. Temporary arrivals including international students and those on 457 work visas were around 400,000 in 2015-16. And the humanitarian intake has been about 11-14,000 a year since the mid-1980s.

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Questions

1. Who were the first modern migrants to Australia?

2. Cameleers from India and Afghanistan immigrated to Australia in the 1800s.

True / False

3. What was the catchphrase that Immigration minister Arthur Calwell create to encourage immigration in Australia?

4. List four European countries that people migrated to Australia from after WWII.

5. Prior to 1948 all Australians were British subjects.

True / False

6. Over 2,000 Indochinese refugees landed in boats on Australian shores in the late 1970s. How many arrived by plane?
