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THE SOUTHEAST ASIA-AUSTRALIA REGIONAL MIGRATION SYSTEM SOME INSIGHTS INTO THE “NEW EMIGRATION”

By Graeme J. Hugo, Janet Wall, and Margaret Young

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
I. Introduction	2
II. International Migration and Australia	4
III. International Migration and the ASEAN Region	5
IV. Migration from ASEAN to Australia	7
V. Migration from Australia to ASEAN	10
VI. Policy Implications	16
A. Return Migration.....	16
B. Diaspora Engagement Policies	18
C. An Australian Diaspora Policy?	20
VII. Conclusions	21
Appendices	22
Works Cited	27
About the Authors	30



Executive Summary¹

Migration flows between countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Australia are generally viewed as going in one direction: toward Australia. In practice, however, data on this migration system reveal a much more complex picture that includes Australian emigration, significant temporary movements in both directions, and close connections between the two regions even after migrants permanently return to their country of origin.

Australia has experienced significant inflows, particularly in the postwar period; almost half of its population of 23.2 million is either foreign born or has at least one immigrant parent. Unsurprisingly, therefore, it is usually regarded as a traditional destination country, drawing students and skilled workers from around the world and across the ten-member ASEAN region. Australia also sends a significant number of emigrants out from its shores. The last official estimates, back in 2003, put Australia's diaspora at approximately 750,000. Unpublished Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) data reveal that for every two people who moved permanently to Australia from the ASEAN region between 1991 and 2013, one person moved in the opposite direction.

To cast Australia as a destination country and ASEAN members as sending countries thus oversimplifies this regional migration system and fails to recognize the multidirectional movement taking place. Migration flows vary significantly across ASEAN countries, and over time. For example, while flows to Australia from Malaysia and Singapore have remained constant over time, Indochinese refugees dominated flows in the 1970s and 1980s. More recently, migration from the Philippines has increased. Recent trends in part reflect a shift in Australian immigration policy away from encouraging settlement toward drawing skilled (temporary) labor migration. Today most emigration from Australia to ASEAN destinations is to the fastest-growing economies, such as those of Singapore and Malaysia. Return migration to Vietnam is notable, while few are going back to Myanmar or the Philippines.

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Aside from permanent movements, DIBP data reveal significant levels of temporary mobility between Australia and the ASEAN region, in both directions. These include the movements of new settlers, visitors from Southeast Asia, Australian residents with roots in Southeast Asia, and former Australian residents from Southeast Asia who have permanently left Australia. Many ASEAN-born Australian settlers and residents make at least one overseas trip per year; more than half of those who once resided in Australia make at least two trips to Australia per year. The data also record nearly 600,000 nonresident ASEAN nationals traveling repeatedly to Australia, with 78 percent making at least one trip a year. These data on temporary mobility reveal the circular nature of migration flows between Australia and the ASEAN region, and indicate the strong ties that nonresidents, former residents, and current residents maintain simultaneously with both Australia and their country of origin.

Migration flows between Australia and the ASEAN region are mostly skilled. Most ASEAN residents migrate to Australia as students, or through skilled temporary worker programs. This is reflected in the educational profile of the ASEAN-born population in Australia, compared with the native born: 35 percent of the ASEAN-born population has a tertiary-level degree, compared with around 15 percent of the native-

¹ This report is one of the final works by Graeme Hugo, who passed away in January 2015. For more on his legacy to the field of migration, see Demetrios G. Papademetriou, "The Field of Migration Studies Loses a Giant: Graeme Hugo," January 2015, Migration Policy Institute, www.migrationpolicy.org/news/field-migration-studies-loses-giant-graeme-hugo.



born population. Migration flows in the opposite direction are similarly highly skilled. Of those who permanently move from Australia to the ASEAN region, most work as skilled professionals (38 percent), managers (21 percent), or technicians (13 percent). Given that many ASEAN countries are experiencing skilled labor shortages, policies to engage with diaspora members and encourage skills circulation are crucial.

Evidence on migration flows between Australia and the ASEAN region reveals that many ideas about return migration are outdated. Traditionally, return migration has been thought to primarily comprise retirees returning home after a career working abroad, or “failed” migrants who could not make a success of their time overseas. Data for returning Australian and ASEAN nationals contradict such beliefs. Most migrants returning to Australia are in their 20s, 30s, or early 40s, with return rates falling with the 40-to-44 age group and older cohorts. Most migrants returning from Australia to the ASEAN region, meanwhile, are of working age (the highest return rates are found among the 30-to-49 age group), and are often accompanied by their young children. There is clearly a window of opportunity for expatriates in their 30s and 40s to seriously consider returning to their country of origin.

Unlike many countries, Australia records the movements of individual migrants in and out of the country.

Meanwhile, considerable improvements in communications and the reduced cost of international travel mean that expatriates can significantly contribute to their country of origin without having to permanently return. This offers major opportunities for development in the ASEAN region—and improved economic links between Australia and Southeast Asia. A growing number of diaspora engagement policies encourage the temporary or even “virtual” return of expatriates, recognizing the valuable contributions they can make while settled overseas. Policymakers can seek to tap the potential of diasporas in a number of ways, such as by encouraging them to send remittances, providing them with investment opportunities in their homeland, encouraging diaspora trade with (and exports to) destination countries, and facilitating technology and information transfer back to the homeland.

The Australia-ASEAN migration system offers prime lessons for transatlantic sending nations. Unlike many countries, Australia records the movements of individual migrants in and out of the country, along with their motivations. Such data provide a remarkable opportunity to analyze migration patterns in this region. They show that international migration increasingly consists of temporary and repeat cycles of movement, and is far from a zero-sum game. Contemporary migrants maintain close ties with both sending and destination countries, potentially opening up new economic and development opportunities for both, regardless of where they choose to permanently settle. Rather than viewing emigration through the lens of “brain drain,” and focusing efforts solely on encouraging expatriates to permanently return home, policymakers in sending nations should instead try to better engage diaspora members—wherever they may be—to benefit from their accrued skills, experience, and networks.

I. Introduction

The overwhelming focus of migration data collection, research, and policy thinking has traditionally been on immigrants—how they adjust to their destination and the potential benefits of immigration both for them and their destination country (in what Ley and Kobayashi refer to as the “assimilation narrative”).²

² David Ley and Audrey Kobayashi, “Back to Hong Kong: Return Migration or Transnational Sojourn?” *Global Networks* 5 (2005): 112.



Few nations have collected information on emigration flows or expatriate population stocks, and research on emigrants has been limited. In this empirical vacuum, a popular “brain drain” perspective has prevailed. Emigration is framed in totally pejorative terms, as a loss of precious and expensively trained human capital.

Yet some migration researchers have long recognized that, in an appropriate policy context, countries of origin can benefit from emigration.³ However, it was not until the last decade that this thinking became a central part of the international narrative on migration and development.⁴ Before this shift, research on the potential dividends of emigration had largely focused on a “south-north” directional flow, and on policies being developed in low- and middle-income countries to engage their nationals living and working in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. Yet many countries that are today experiencing significant emigration do not fit this low/middle-income, “south-north” mold. This raises the important question of whether they, like long-standing traditional emigration nations, can develop policies to tap into the human capital, knowledge, and resources of their networks overseas?

This report seeks to shed some light on this and other questions by examining the recent experience of a country known traditionally as an immigrant-receiving nation: Australia. Australia’s relationship with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)⁵ region is usually regarded as a conduit for the south-north migration of students and skilled immigrants. However, the Australian-ASEAN migration system is much more complex, and in fact involves significant skilled emigration from Australia to Southeast Asia.

*Many countries that are today experiencing significant
emigration do not fit this low/middle-income,
“south-north” mold.*

The report begins with a brief discussion of the ASEAN and Australian contexts and of Australian international migration data. Such data are invaluable; they reveal patterns that may parallel what is happening in many transatlantic-country migration systems—but the lack of appropriate data in those contexts prevents such patterns from being identified and measured. The report then analyzes recent developments in the ASEAN-Australian migration system. Two points are emphasized: First, while ASEAN-Australian migration is universally perceived as a classic south-north flow, the data indicate that it is emphatically a system in which there are vigorous, complex movements of various types in both directions. Second, despite public perceptions that most migrants in the system travel to Australia to settle permanently, in fact, circulation and temporary movements are the norm. The report concludes with a discussion of the policy implications of these patterns for Australia and more generally for transatlantic countries.

3 Ronald Skeldon, *Migration and Development: A Global Interpretation* (London: Longman, 1997).

4 United Nations (UN), *International Migration and Development*, Report of the Secretary-General, United Nations Sixtieth Session, Globalization and Interdependence: International Migration and Development (New York: United Nations, 2005), www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/policy_and_research/un/60/A_60_205_en.pdf; World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects 2006: Economic Implications of Remittances and Migration* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2005/11/6413332/global-economic-prospects-2006-economic-implications-remittances-migration>.

5 The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is comprised of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.



II. International Migration and Australia

Around half of Australia's population is composed of migrants (both permanent and temporary) and their children (that is, individuals with at least one foreign-born parent). The 2011 census recorded that 26 percent of the population was born overseas, and around 19 percent was born in Australia to at least one immigrant parent.⁶ Postwar migration has significantly contributed to Australia's current population of 23.2 million; it is estimated that without it, the Australian population would be less than 13 million.⁷

Table 1. Arrivals to and Departures from Australia, 2012-13

Category	Arrivals	Departures
Short-Term Move	14,613,209	14,791,945
Long-Term Residence	523,527	277,698
Permanent Settlement	152,414	91,761
Total	15,289,150	15,161,404

Notes: Short-term movement includes Australian residents and citizens whose intended stay abroad is less than 12 months, and foreign visitors whose intended stay in Australia is less than 12 months. Long-term movement is defined as Australian residents and citizens whose intended length of stay abroad is 12 months or more, but who intend to return; and foreign visitors with temporary residence who intend to leave Australia but after a period of more than 12 months. Permanent movement includes Australian residents and citizens (including former settlers) who depart with the stated intention of residing abroad permanently; and foreigners who arrive with the stated intention of remaining permanently in Australia. Source: Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) data for 2012-13.

In the nearly 70 years since the end of World War II, Australia's population transformed from one of almost wholly Anglo-Celtic origins to one where more than half (57.3 percent in 2011) claim various other ancestries.⁸ Persons of Asian descent, for example, composed 9.9 percent of Australia's resident population in 2011, up from 0.4 percent in 1947.⁹

Postwar migration to Australia has in large part been shaped by shifts in government admissions policy. The substantial growth of communities from around the world followed the abolition of the White Australia policy in the early 1970s.¹⁰ In the first four postwar decades, Australian governments of all political stripes eschewed temporary migration and instead opted for a highly measured, selective program fostering permanent settlement. Family reunion, skilled, and humanitarian flows¹¹ were within carefully controlled quotas. Two major changes occurred in the mid-1990s. The first was the introduction of a number of temporary migration categories that allowed foreigners to work while in Australia. The second was a shift in focus toward skilled migration in both permanent and temporary intakes. Thus, there are now significant flows of temporary, highly skilled labor migrants to and from Australia.

Also in the postwar period, many Australians left Australia and settled overseas: today the Australian

6 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), "2011 Census," www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/data?opendocument&navpos=200.

7 This estimation is based on ABS data, and data from Wilfred David Borrie, *The European Peopling of Australasia: A Demographic History, 1788-1988* (Canberra: ANU Printing Service, 1994).

8 ABS, "2011 Census."

9 Charles A. Price, *Australians All: Who On Earth Are We?* (Deakin, ACT: Charles Price, 2000).

10 The origins of the White Australia policy lie in attempts to restrict non-European—particularly Asian—immigration to the Australian colonies from the 1850s, and culminated in the federal government's *Immigration Restriction Act of 1901*. This act introduced a dictation test for non-European migrants, who would sit this exam in a language chosen by the immigration officer—who could thus ensure failure and subsequent deportation. This dictation test was abolished in 1958; the final vestiges of the policy were lifted in the early 1970s. See James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

11 New Zealanders are allowed more or less free access under the Trans-Tasman agreement; see Gordon Carmichael, ed., *Trans-Tasman Migration: Trends, Causes and Consequences* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1993). All other migrants must meet tight entry requirements and are subject to a quota.



diaspora numbers approximately 750,000.¹² A significant number of these overseas nationals intend to eventually return to Australia. As previously noted, such return migration involves not only retirees, as might be expected, but many of prime working age. While returning nationals are slightly older than those departing, they are still overwhelmingly in the peak working years (see Appendix, Figure A-1).¹³ This indicates a clear pattern: young Australian skilled professionals are leaving the country to spend several years working in major global cities and expanding their skills, experience, and professional networks before returning home.

III. International Migration and the ASEAN Region

The ASEAN region is one of the most dynamic in the world. The economies of the ASEAN 5¹⁴ have grown by more than 5 percent per year over the past decade; their share of the global economy increased from 2.9 percent in 1990 to 3.8 percent in 2013.¹⁵ As both a cause and consequence of this substantial, rapid growth, Southeast Asia has one of the fastest-growing international migrant populations of any world region.¹⁶ The ASEAN region is home to 4.1 percent of the world's immigrants and sends out 8.6 percent of its emigrants.¹⁷

There is tremendous diversity in the cultural, economic, and demographic conditions of ASEAN countries (see Appendix, Table A-1 and Figure A-2). This region contains the “Asian Tigers”—middle-income nations experiencing early fertility declines and labor shortages—Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. It also encompasses nations such as Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam, where incomes are low—but rapidly growing—and there is a surplus of labor.

Today the Australian diaspora numbers approximately 750,000.

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- 12 The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) estimated the overseas population at 759,849 in 2002-03—this is the most recent figure for the Australian diaspora. Australian Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee, *They still call Australia home: Inquiry into Australian expatriates* (Canberra: Senate Printing Unit, 2005), 18, www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/2004-07/expats03/report/index.
- 13 Graeme Hugo, “Returning Youthful Nationals to Australia: Brain Gain or Brain Circulation?” in *Return Migration of the Next Generations: 21st Century Transnational Mobility*, eds. Dennis Conway and Robert B. Potter (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 185–219.
- 14 These economic data are for the five major ASEAN nations of Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam.
- 15 ASEAN is home to 8.6 percent of the global population. See United Nations, “World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision,” accessed February 2015, <http://esa.un.org/wpp/>.
- 16 United Nations, *International Migration Report 2013* (New York: United Nations, 2013), www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/migration/migration-report-2013.shtml.
- 17 Graeme Hugo, “The Changing Dynamics of ASEAN International Migration,” *Malaysian Journal of Economic Studies* 51 no.1 (2014).

**Box 1. Australia's International Migration Data System**

Australian data on international migration have two unique advantages: (1) Australia is an island (with advanced technological surveillance), allowing almost all inflows and outflows to be recorded; and (2) unlike most countries, Australia collects data on both immigration and emigration.

Australia's international migration data system includes comprehensive information on both stocks and flows. The quinquennial population census includes a suite of immigrant-related questions on birthplace, parents' birthplace(s), ancestry, language(s) spoken at home, English-language ability, citizenship, and religion. Like most other countries, however, Australia's census thus far lacks a question that identifies and differentiates between temporary and permanent migrants. Research on this topic must rely on data on the *flows* of migrants into and out of the country. As of July 1998 a Personal Identifier (PID) number is assigned to every individual moving to and from the country. This makes it possible to trace the movement history of individuals into and out of Australia. All persons entering and leaving Australia are asked questions on their country and date of birth, gender, occupation, citizenship, country of origin/destination, intended/actual length of residence in Australia (or, if leaving, abroad), and reasons for moving. The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection divides movement into three categories according to the length of time individuals intend to stay in or out of Australia:

- *Short-term movements.* Australian residents and citizens whose intended stay abroad is less than 12 months, and foreign visitors whose intended stay in Australia is less than 12 months.
- *Long-term movements.* Australian residents and citizens whose intended length of stay abroad is 12 months or more, but who intend to return; and foreign visitors with temporary residence who intend to leave Australia after a period of more than 12 months.
- *Permanent movements.* Australian residents and citizens (including former settlers) who depart with the stated intention of residing abroad permanently, and foreigners who arrive with the stated intention of remaining permanently in Australia.

Of course, people may change their minds. For example, one study of people who left Australia "permanently" in 1998-99 found some 24 percent had returned to Australia by mid-2003. Nevertheless, the Australian data still provide a good indication of the levels of permanent and temporary migration to and from the country. This report uses data on all Southeast Asia-born individuals arriving to, and departing from, Australia over the 1998-2006 period. These data indicate *all* the moves each of these individuals made. Hence this report is able to estimate the extent to which Australians move to Southeast Asian countries and the extent to which Southeast Asian emigrants to Australia return to their homeland or move to other countries.

Sources: Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) data; David Osborne, "Analysing Traveller Movement Patterns: Stated Intentions and Subsequent Behaviour," *People and Place* 12, no. 4 (2004): 38-41.

Table 2 lists the number of people born in ASEAN countries who are living outside their country of birth, and the numbers of foreign born in those countries in 2010 and 2013. The total number of emigrants is twice the number of immigrants. There is a clear contrast between countries that receive large numbers of immigrants (Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand) and those that are significant sources of emigrants (Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam). The table indicates that whether a country sends or receives more migrants aligns closely with its average income level.

**Table 2. Emigration and Immigration Trends from ASEAN Countries, 2010 and 2013**

	Emigrants				Immigrants				GNP Per Capita 2012 (US \$)
	Growth				Growth				
	2010	2013	Number	% Change Yearly	2010	2013	Number	% Change Yearly	
Brunei Darussalam	45,176	45,672	496	0.4	179,761	206,173	26,412	4.7	49,370
Cambodia	959,079	1,115,567	156,488	5.2	81,977	75,566	-6,411	-2.7	2,360
Indonesia	2,819,995	2,981,061	161,066	1.9	286,829	295,433	8,604	1.0	4,810
Laos	1,182,475	1,293,447	110,972	3.0	21,479	21,801	322	0.5	2,730
Malaysia	1,357,060	1,454,891	97,831	2.3	2,357,603	2,469,173	111,570	1.6	16,530
Myanmar	2,411,385	2,683,800	272,415	3.6	100,714	103,117	2,403	0.8	n.a.
Philippines	5,172,826	5,491,607	318,781	2.0	204,896	213,150	8,254	1.3	4,400
Singapore	295,054	310,631	15,577	1.7	2,164,794	2,323,252	158,458	2.4	61,100
Thailand	799,329	852,649	53,320	2.2	3,224,131	3,721,735	497,604	4.9	9,430
Vietnam	2,476,901	2,593,942	117,041	1.6	61,756	68,290	6,534	3.4	3,340
Total	17,519,280	18,823,267	1,303,987	2.4	8,683,940	9,497,690	813,750	3.0	

Note: n.a. = Not applicable

Source: United Nations, "International Migrant Stock: By Destination and Origin," United Nations database, 2010 and 2013, www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimatesorigin.shtml.

Malaysia and Thailand both receive and send significant numbers of emigrants (though immigration dominates). It is striking, too, that in each of the destination countries in the ASEAN region, there was a rapid increase in immigrants between 2010 and 2013. Even among the sending nations, most experienced an increase in immigration over this period. This is largely a function of the shortage of skills in Southeast Asia's rapidly growing economies. Not only the Asian Tigers of Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand demand skilled workers. In countries such as Indonesia, the rapid growth of the economy has outpaced the nation's ability to train workers with needed skills in various industrial sectors, in part due to mismatches between the education and training system and the skill needs of the economy. Moreover competitive salaries and appealing conditions for expatriates make even the region's slower-growing economies attractive to skilled professionals. Accordingly, ASEAN is increasingly a global region of immigration as well as emigration in relation to countries in the global "north." This is now demonstrated with respect to Australia.

IV. Migration from ASEAN to Australia

As of 2013, 3.7 percent of the Australian population (some 852,420 people) identified a birthplace in Southeast Asia.¹⁸ Southeast Asians are now among the fastest-growing populations in Australia—growing at a rate of 4.6 percent per year between 2006 and 2013, three times as fast as the total Australian population. The composition of Southeast Asian immigrant inflows has changed over the years: Indochinese refugees¹⁹ were dominant in the 1970s and 1980s, Filipinos have increased in more recent times, and flows from Malaysia and Singapore have remained fairly consistent.

18 ABS, "Estimated Resident Population by Country of Birth, 1992 – 2014," accessed October 22, 2015, http://stat.abs.gov.au/In-dex.aspx?DataSetCode=ERP_COB.

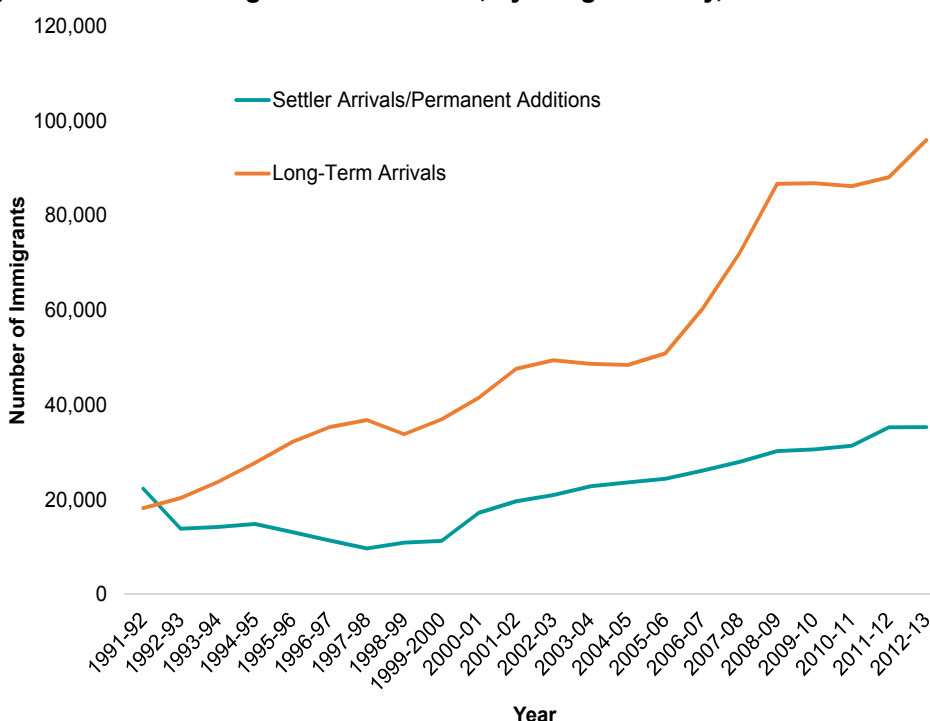
19 The French colony Indochina comprised modern-day Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

**Table 3. Growth of ASEAN Immigrant Population in Australia, by Country of Origin, 2006-13**

Country of Origin	2006	2013	% Annual Growth
Brunei	2,650	3,210	2.8
Cambodia	28,360	33,850	2.6
Indonesia	60,550	79,650	4.0
Laos	10,680	11,480	1.0
Malaysia	105,720	148,760	5.0
Myanmar	14,330	27,410	9.7
Philippines	141,930	210,760	5.8
Singapore	45,830	64,290	5.0
Thailand	34,090	57,550	7.8
Vietnam	178,030	215,460	2.8
Total	622,170	852,420	4.6

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2006 and 2013 data, "Estimated resident population by country of birth, 1992 – 2014," accessed October 22, 2015, http://stat.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ERP_COB.

The number of Southeast Asian immigrants who are permanently settling in Australia is growing (see Figure 1), and reached a record 35,337 people in 2012-13 (see Appendix, Figure A-2). Some 46 percent entered Australia under the skilled migration program, with much variation across countries of origin (Malaysia at 74.2 percent, compared with Cambodia at 6 percent). Around 41 percent entered Australia based on family ties; while 6 percent came on humanitarian visas.²⁰

Figure 1. ASEAN Immigrants to Australia, by Length of Stay, 1991-2013

Note: Data for settler arrivals/permanent additions incorporate data on settler arrivals between 1991-92 and 1999-2000, and permanent additions between 2000-01 and 2012-13.

Source: DIBP, unpublished data provided to the authors.

²⁰ Hugo, "The Changing Dynamics of ASEAN International Migration."

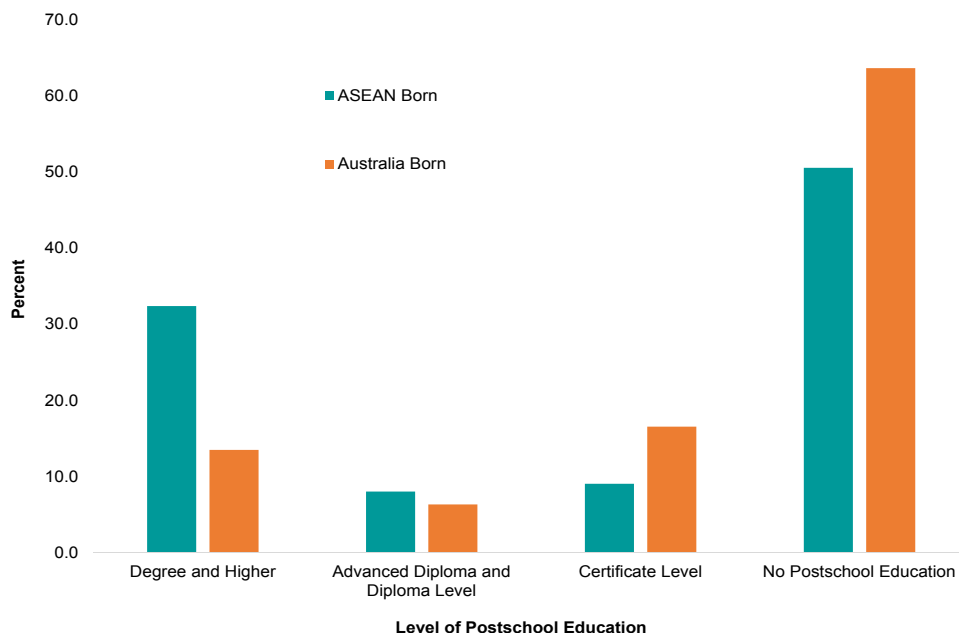


Until the mid-1990s Australia's immigration policy focused almost entirely on encouraging permanent settlement over temporary labor migration. This changed dramatically with the introduction in 1996 of a skilled temporary worker visa (subclass 457),²¹ as well as student and working holiday visas. This has seen a paradigmatic shift in ASEAN migration to Australia. Before examining this migration, however, it is important to note that ASEAN migration to Australia is increasingly a two-stage process—migrants enter the country on a temporary basis before applying for permanent residence. In fact, over the past decade the proportion of ASEAN migrants who shifted from temporary to permanent status “onshore” increased from around 25 percent in 2001-02 to 37 percent in 2012-13. It reached a peak in 2010-11, when 42.9 percent of those who gained permanent residence had previously arrived on a temporary basis.

The number of long-term arrivals (that is, those who enter Australia as temporary residents but intending to stay for more than one year) from Southeast Asia has quadrupled over the past two decades, with a marked upswing around 2006 at the height of the mining boom. Numbers of ASEAN arrivals leveled off during the global financial crisis but resumed a growth trend in recent years. The two main groups are students and skilled temporary workers (457s); the numbers of students increased from 28,488 in 2001 to 66,697 in 2011, and skilled temporary workers from 4,189 in 2001 to 23,006 in 2009.²²

Typical ASEAN immigrants tend to be more educated than their Australian peers. Figure 2 shows that 50.1 percent of the ASEAN-born population ages 15 and over in Australia has a postschool qualification in 2011, compared with 45.7 percent of the total Australian population. The difference is most dramatic among those with a university degree or higher: 35 percent of those born in an ASEAN nation have tertiary-level degrees, compared with 15 percent of the total Australian adult population. This points to a very high level of educational selectivity in permanent migration from the ASEAN region to Australia, and is of considerable relevance given the skilled labor shortages that several ASEAN countries are experiencing.

Figure 2. Level of Postschool Qualification of Native-Born and ASEAN-Born Populations in Australia, 2011



Source: ABS, 2011 Census.

21 Employers can apply to bring in highly skilled workers in particular occupational categories (with a minimum salary level) for a period of up to four years. See Siew-Ean Khoo, Peter McDonald, and Graeme J. Hugo, “Skilled Temporary Migration from Asia-Pacific Countries to Australia,” *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 18, no. 2 (2009): 255–81.

22 Parliament of Australia, “Skilled migration: temporary and permanent flows to Australia,” last updated December 6 2012, www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/2012-2013/SkilledMigration#_Toc342559478.

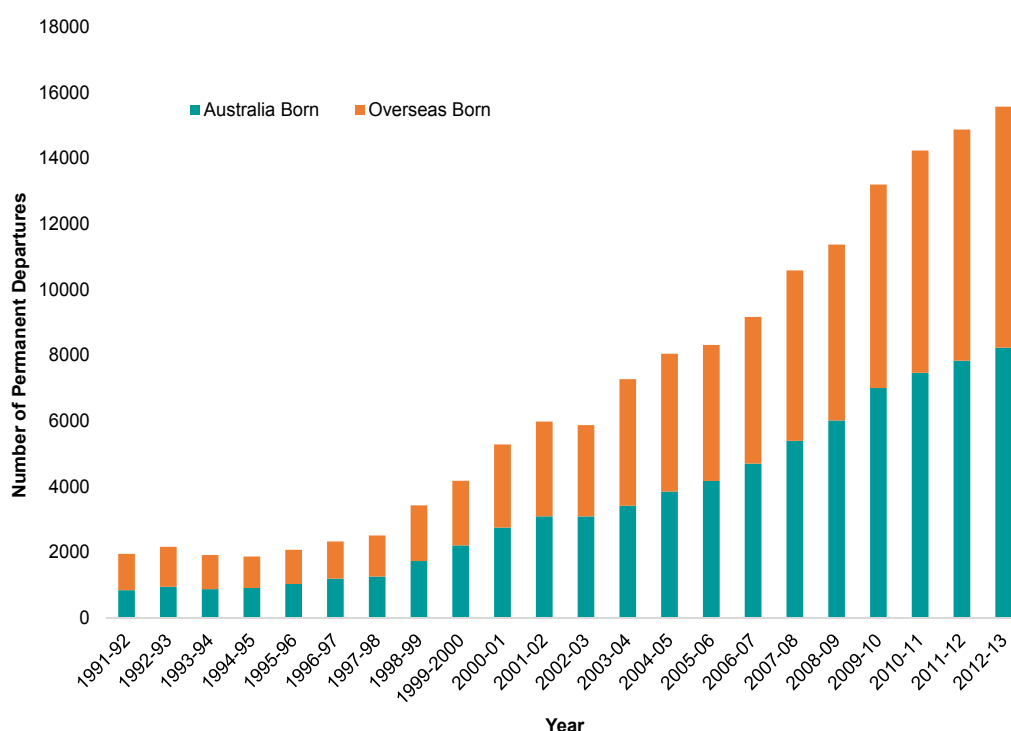


V. Migration from Australia to ASEAN

A key way that emigrants benefit origin countries is by returning—with higher skills and more resources in tow. They bring not only the human capital with which they emigrated, but also the enhanced skills, experience, and contacts that they accumulated while abroad. The extent to which return migration occurs, however, remains largely unknown: few countries collect data on emigration, and immigration data rarely identify return migrants as a separate category. Australia is one of the few countries whose system of collecting migration data enables return migration to be measured (see Box 1).²³

One migrant moves permanently from Australia to Southeast Asia for every two who move in the opposite direction (see Table 4). Between 1991 and 2013 there were 152,171 Australian residents who left Australia to live permanently in Southeast Asia, compared with the 467,371 Southeast Asia-born persons who moved to permanently live in Australia.²⁴ Moreover, those permanently relocating from Australia to Southeast Asia—a significant portion of whom are returning migrants—has increased substantially in recent years (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Permanent Departures from Australia to ASEAN Countries, by Birthplace, 1991-92 to 2012-13



Source: DIBP, unpublished data provided to the authors.

This is a far cry from the stereotype of “south-north” unidirectional migration; the data reveal temporary, circular migration as well as “permanent” flows in both directions.

²³ Graeme J. Hugo, *The Economic Implications of Emigration from Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994); Graeme J. Hugo, Dianne Rudd, and Kevin Harris, *Emigration from Australia: Economic Implications*, Second Report on an ARC SPIRT Grant, CEDA Information Paper no. 77 (Melbourne: Committee for Economic Development of Australia, 2001), www.southern-cross-group.org/archives/Skills%20Shortage%20and%20Brain%20Drain/CEDA_Report_Emigration_from_Australia_Part_1_June_2001.pdf.

²⁴ Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) data provided to the authors.

**Table 4. Australian Permanent Migration to and from Southeast Asia, 1991-2013**

Permanent Settlers from Southeast Asia	467,371
Permanent Departures to Southeast Asia	152,171
Net Migration	315,200
Australia-Born Departures	77,988
ASEAN-Born Departures	44,214
Other Birthplace	29,469

Source: Authors' estimates, based on unpublished DIBP data.

Table 4 disaggregates the permanent migration from Australia to Southeast Asia into a number of categories. Around 30 percent are persons born in Southeast Asia who are returning home. Additionally, a significant proportion of those born in Australia are children of Southeast Asian parents, who are categorized in the data as “Australia-born departures” when they return home with their parents.

Meanwhile, Australian expatriates are also migrating to the ASEAN region, motivated by rapid economic growth in several countries and a lack of skilled technical, management, and administrative professionals. The share of permanent departures from Australia to Southeast Asia increased from 3.5 percent in 1993-94 to 11.8 percent in 2012-13. Australian expatriate communities in Southeast Asian cities are growing, as is Australian involvement in high-skilled labor markets in the region.²⁵ This increase in Australia-born emigration to Southeast Asia is evident in Figure 4 below, which compares the destinations of emigrants in 1980-90 with those emigrating between 1993-94 and 2013-14.

Table 4 also shows nearly 30,000 emigrants from Australia who were born in countries other than Australia or Southeast Asia. This points to an increasingly significant factor in global migration—whereby selected groups move away from their birthplace to another country, then subsequently move to a third country. Many of these “third-country” migrants moving between Australia and Southeast Asia were born in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, or China.²⁶

Australian expatriates are also migrating to the ASEAN region, motivated by rapid economic growth in several countries.

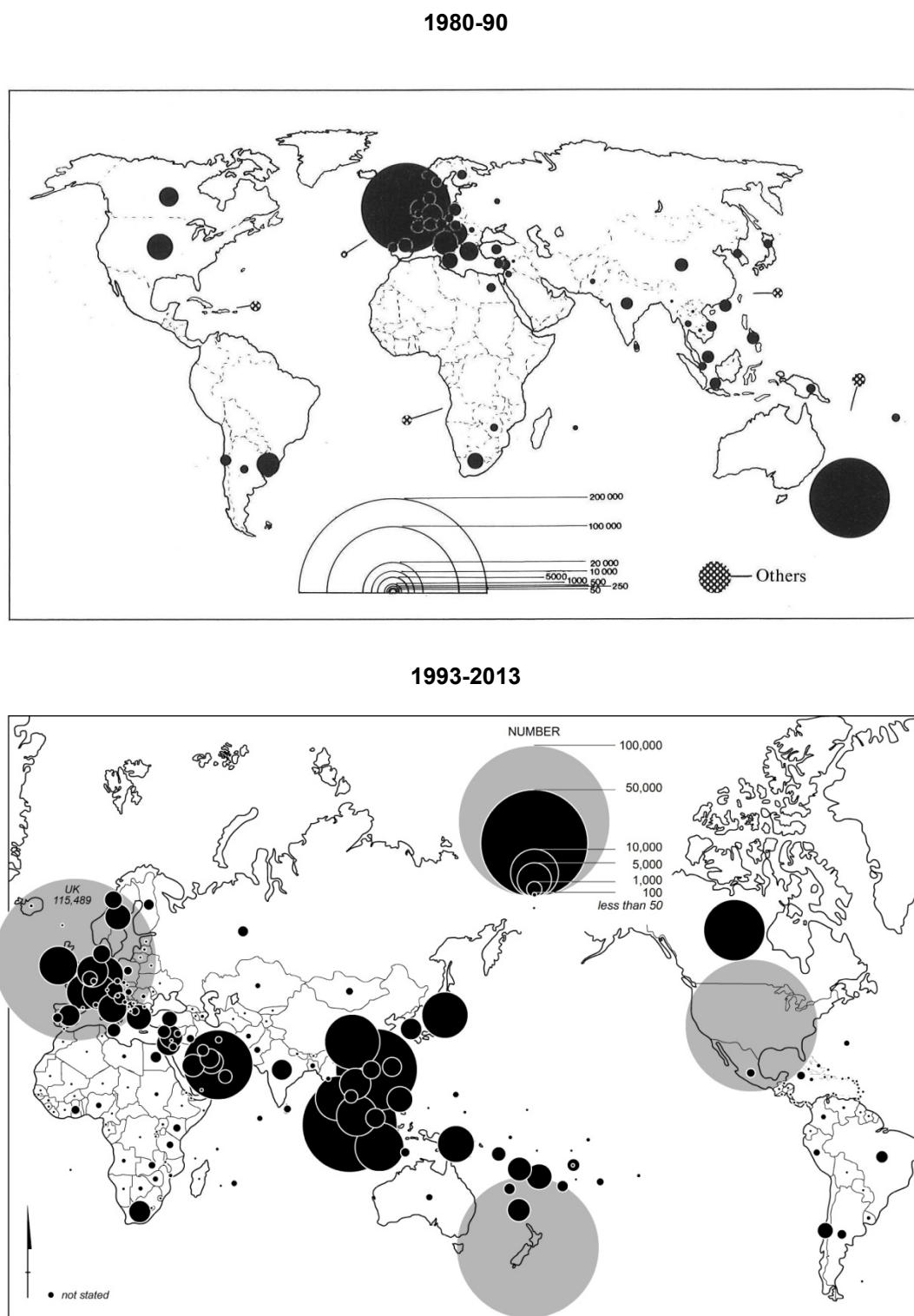
There are notable differences in the levels of migration to and from various ASEAN countries. The fastest-growing economies (Singapore and Malaysia) attract the greatest number of Australian expatriates, while there is significant return migration from Australia to Vietnam and Indonesia. Levels of immigration from Australia to the Philippines and Myanmar remain extremely low.²⁷

²⁵ The Australian expatriate presence in Southeast Asia is substantial but is typically not captured in standard data collections such as censuses.

²⁶ Unpublished DIBP data provided to the authors.

²⁷ Ibid.

Figure 4. Permanent Departures of Australia-Born Persons, by Country of Intended Residence, 1980-90 and 1993-2013



Source: DIBP, unpublished data; Graeme J. Hugo, *The Economic Implications of Emigration from Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994), 52.



Emigration from Australia to Southeast Asia is therefore composed of two major flows: return migrants and their families, and a skilled expatriate population—of Australian and third-country nationals—working in technical, professional, and management jobs. The flow from Australia to ASEAN countries, like the permanent flow in the other direction, is highly skilled (see Table 5).

Table 5. Arrivals to and Departures from Australia of the ASEAN Born, by Occupation, 2010-11 to 2012-13

Occupation—Major Group	Settler Arrival	Resident Permanent Departure	Settler Arrival	Resident Permanent Departure
	Number	Number	%	%
Managers	3,319	1,793	14.8	20.9
Professionals	10,558	3,240	47.1	37.9
Technicians and Trade Workers	2,710	1,066	12.1	12.5
Community and Personal Service Workers	1,360	558	6.1	6.5
Clerical and Administrative Workers	1,564	578	7.0	6.8
Sales Workers	1,187	416	5.3	4.9
Machinery Operators and Drivers	380	252	1.7	2.9
Laborers	1,323	656	5.9	7.7
Total	22,401	8,559	100.0	100.0

Source: DIBP, unpublished data provided to the authors.

Though research on return migration has tended to focus on elderly, first-generation retirees returning home after working overseas,²⁸ the data show that many returnees to Southeast Asia from Australia are economically active adults in their 30s and 40s, with children (see Appendix, Figure A-3).

Many Southeast Asian expatriates in Australia do not choose to permanently return home, but nevertheless maintain strong ties with their homeland by frequently visiting and maintaining economic links with institutions and individuals. It is useful, therefore, to examine the temporary mobility patterns of Southeast Asians living in Australia.²⁹ Table 6 documents temporary moves into and out of Australia by those born in Southeast Asia, distinguished by their resident status.

Many Southeast Asian expatriates in Australia do not choose to permanently return home, but nevertheless maintain strong ties with their homeland.

28 Dennis Conway and Robert B. Potter, "Return of the Next Generations: Transnational Migration and Development in the 21st Century," in *Return Migration of the Next Generations: 21st Century Transnational Mobility*, eds. Dennis Conway and Robert B. Potter (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 1–18.

29 This uses DIBP's data set on mobility patterns based on Personal Identifier (PID) numbers (see Box 1), which enables us to construct the migration history of ASEAN-born individuals over the 1998 to 2006 period.

**Table 6. Number of Temporary Trips into and out of Australia by ASEAN-Born Persons, by Resident Status, 1998-2006**

Resident Status	Share of Individuals Making Temporary Trips into and out of Australia (%)				Number of Movers
	1-4 Overseas Trips	5-9 Overseas Trips	10+ Overseas Trips	Total	
New Settlers (during 1998-2006 period)	60	23	17	100	105,294
Visitors from Southeast Asia, 1998-2006	22	31	46	100	563,255
Australian Residents (from Southeast Asia) Who Settled Before 1998	12	28	60	100	291,868
Australian Residents (from Southeast Asia) Who Settled Before 1998 and Permanently Left Australia in 1998-2006	21	28	51	100	6,279

Source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), unpublished data provided to the authors.

The border movement statistics detailed in Table 6 reveal significant (temporary) movement of Southeast Asians between their homeland and Australia, involving people settled in both Southeast Asia and Australia. Virtually all those living in Australia made at least one temporary move out of Australia since their first entry, and 40 percent made more than five trips. This figure rises for permanent Australian residents born in Southeast Asia, 88 percent of whom made more than five overseas trips between 1998 and 2006. In turn, many of those who permanently return to Southeast Asia maintain strong ties with Australia; half of this group entered Australia temporarily on ten or more occasions, and another 28 percent entered between five and ten times. These data also reveal that many nonresident Southeast Asian nationals make repeated trips to Australia: 78 percent of recorded visitors from this region made more than five trips in this period (see Appendix, Figure A-4). Table 7 lists the reasons for travel given by Southeast Asians arriving as either long- or short-term visitors to Australia. While two-thirds of short-term visitors³⁰ were visiting family or on holiday, almost all long-term arrivals and one-third of short-term arrivals were visiting to work or study.

Many of those who permanently return to Southeast Asia maintain strong ties with Australia; half of this group entered Australia temporarily on ten or more occasions.

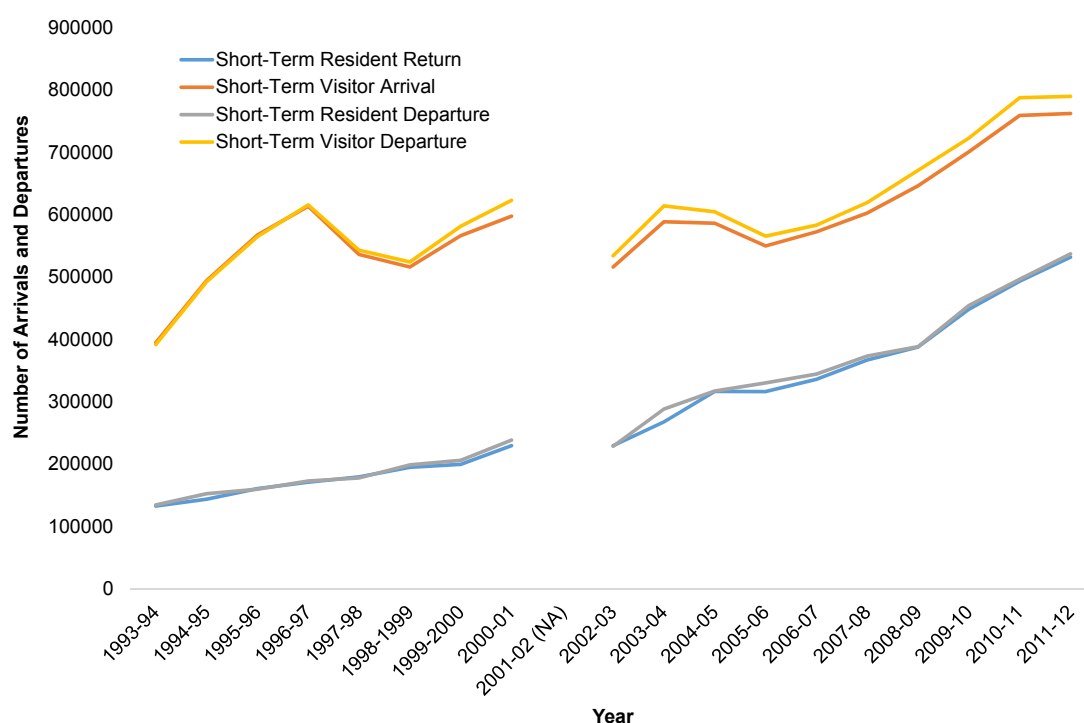
³⁰ Short-term visitors stay less than one year away from home.

**Table 7. Long- and Short-Term Visitors to Australia from ASEAN Countries, by Reason for Travel, 2012-13**

Reason for Travel	Total Long-Term Visitors	Total Short-Term Visitors	Long-Term Visitor (%)	Short-Term Visitor (%)
Other	6,493	40,710	8.4	4.3
Exhibition	85	2,149	0.1	0.2
Convention/Conference	1,691	25,329	2.2	2.7
Business	2,362	125,062	3.1	13.4
Visiting Friends/Relatives	1,803	192,309	2.3	20.5
Holiday	1,699	439,604	2.2	46.9
Employment	16,669	34,113	21.5	3.6
Education	46,597	77,154	60.2	8.2
Total (not including not stated)	77,399	936,430	100.0	100.0

Source: DIBP, unpublished data provided to the authors.

Figure 5 shows a significant increase both in Southeast Asians visiting Australia and in Australians visiting Southeast Asia, although the former is substantially greater than the latter. The developmental significance and potential of this temporary movement in both directions needs to be investigated in some depth.

Figure 5. ASEAN-Born Persons Short-Term Arrivals and Departures to and from Australia, 1993-94 to 2011-12

Source: DIAC, unpublished data provided to the authors.

These complex temporary and permanent movements have established active links, not only within the ASEAN region but with other countries, especially in the OECD. Aside from mitigating “brain drain,” these links also offer enormous potential for facilitating trade, finance, investment, knowledge exchange, tourism,



and other forms of interaction that can benefit development in both Southeast Asia and OECD countries.

VI. Policy Implications

This report has examined population flows between the ASEAN region and Australia in some depth to demonstrate that they involve a diverse range of movements in both directions. Such complex migration patterns are poorly captured by traditional demographic tools, which are still firmly locked into the traditional paradigm of migration for permanent settlement. Hence the 2013 United Nations (UN) census data on Australians overseas (see Appendix, Figure A-5) identifies 487,512 Australian diaspora members, or nearly 300,000 fewer than the 2003 estimate of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).³¹ Such data clearly understate Australian movement into the region. A more realistic picture is presented by data from a nontraditional source: the number of hits on the Australian Football League (AFL) website. The league is only followed in significant numbers by Australians, so most overseas hits are those of Australian expatriates. These data suggest a much greater Australian presence in Southeast Asia than suggested by the UN census data (compare Figures A-5 and A-6 in the Appendix).

Motivated by fears of brain drain, the major policy response to emigration has been to encourage return migration of highly skilled expatriates, so the origin country can benefit from their skills and experience (including that acquired abroad) and their international contacts. The Chinese analogy of emigrants as turtles—that head out to sea, but return once they establish a family—formed the basis for China’s return migration initiatives in the 1980s and 1990s, and those of other East Asian nations.³² These policies were the basis, for example, of the highly successful South Korean electronics industry. Return migration remains an important component of any comprehensive emigration policy and is discussed in some detail in the next section.

Motivated by fears of brain drain, the major policy response to emigration has been to encourage return migration of highly skilled expatriates.

A. Return Migration

The substantial literature on return migration extends back many decades.³³ Australia’s detailed data provide important insights into the contemporary nature and potential role of such migration for transatlantic emigration countries. First, the data demonstrate the true scale and significance of return migration: for example, Price estimated in the mid-1970s that 25 percent of postwar “settlers” in Australia had migrated again, most of them returning to their homeland.³⁴ Second, the data discredit any depictions of return migrants as either retirees or those who somehow failed to succeed at destination and were compelled to return home (neither of which offer major development dividends to homeland nations).

31 Australian Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee, *They still call Australia home*, 18.

32 Xiang Biao, “Towards Sustainable ‘Brain Circulation’: What India and China Can Learn from Each Other” (paper presented at the International Conference on Population and Development in Asia: Critical Issues for a Sustainable Future, Phuket, Thailand, March 20-22, 2006); Clay G. Wescott, “Promoting knowledge exchange through diasporas,” prepared for the G-20 Workshop on Demographic Challenges and Migration, Sydney, August 27-28, 2005, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=792384>.

33 See, for example, Russell King, ed., *Return Migration and Regional Economic Problems* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Russell King, “Generalizations from the History of Return Migration,” in *Return Migration: Journey of Hope or Despair?* ed. Bimal Ghosh (Geneva: International Organization for Migration and United Nations, 2000), 7–55.

34 Charles A. Price, “Australian Immigration: 1947-73,” *International Migration Review* 9 (1975): 304–18.



Contemporary return migration, instead, is normal, with a counterflow of returnees comprising an important part of most migrations; and also involving significant temporary and “virtual” return that offers considerable scope for innovative policy interaction.

Policymakers worldwide are realizing their potential to influence whether or not their overseas nationals return home. The number of countries with specific policies to encourage return migration increased by 51 percent between 2005 and 2011 (see Appendix, Table A-2).

Surveys of Australians overseas indicate that most intend to return to Australia (see Table 8),³⁵ while many others are undecided. The chances of their return may increase if they are presented with specific opportunities and channels of return.

Table 8. Surveys of Australian Expatriates Regarding Intentions to Return to Australia, 2002, 2006, 2007

	Australian Emigration Study 2002	One Million More Survey 2006	U.S. Expatriates Study 2007
Intend to Return (%)	50.7	63.5	35.7
Do Not Intend to Return (%)	17.2	10.9	30.8
Undecided (%)	32.1	25.6	33.5
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number Surveyed	2,072	8,744	1,581

Sources: For the 2002 survey, see Graeme J. Hugo, Dianne Rudd, and Kevin Harris, *Australia's Diaspora: Its Size, Nature and Policy Implications*, CEDA Information Paper no. 80 (Melbourne: Committee for the Economic Development of Australia, 2003), 50, www.ceda.com.au/research-and-policy/research/2009/11/infopapers/ip_80; for the 2006 survey, see Kelly L. Parker findings from One Million More Survey cited in Dennis Conway and Robert B. Potter, eds. *Return Migration of the Next Generations: 21st Century Transnational Mobility* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), Table 10.6; for the 2007 survey, see Kelly L. Parker, “Engaging Emigrants: A study of the Australian diaspora in the United States of America” (PhD dissertation, University of Adelaide, 2010): 156.

Australia’s precious young talent is being lured by an expanding array of economic and professional opportunities offered by the rapidly developing nations of Asia. Many move in what might be termed a “rite of passage.” Yet there is a window of opportunity for policymakers seeking to encourage return, when emigrants form partnerships and begin families. A significant proportion of survey respondents expressed the desire that their children grow up among their extended family. Schooling within the Australian system and a broader engagement with Australian society and way of life were other important considerations. Though career factors remain important, many expatriates seem ready to seriously consider returning when they reach middle age—particularly in families where both partners are natives of the origin country. In many occupations, employees may be able to maintain strong links with companies even after their departure.

There are clear advantages to bringing emigrants back when they are in their 30s and 40s. They have decades of productive life ahead, and are returning with much more than they left. Not only have they acquired additional training and experience but—perhaps more important in a connected world—they

³⁵ The highest rate was recorded in the large One Million More Survey (which was global in its coverage) and the least in the U.S.-based survey. It is interesting to note that in the 2002 Australian Emigration Study (also global in its coverage) respondents in the United States and Canada were the least likely to return (44.8 percent) of all those interviewed.



are returning with a portfolio of links, contacts, and relationships that they can continue to use in their homeland.

B. *Diaspora Engagement Policies*

Meanwhile, expatriates can make significant contributions to the development of their homeland without having to physically relocate. China's policy on Chinese overseas shifted considerably in the early 2000s,³⁶ away from encouraging return migration and toward encouraging the temporary or "virtual" return of its diaspora.³⁷ Temporary return is increasingly facilitated by faster and cheaper air travel, and may involve dual citizenship and holding professional and academic positions in both countries.³⁸ Meanwhile, rapid developments in electronic communications are also facilitating "virtual" return, opening up a new range of possibilities for nationals to work in and engage with their homeland without physically returning.

More than half of the world's nations now have explicit policies to better engage their diasporas; many encourage temporary and virtual return strategies as well as permanent return migration.³⁹ A recent joint study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) summarized the amazing diversity of such initiatives.⁴⁰ It is notable that the overwhelming majority of examples are drawn from low- and middle-income nations.

Australian policy has the potential to engage not only native-born emigrants but also those born in Southeast Asia who are returning to their homelands after a sojourn in Australia.

A major imperative of Australian foreign and economic policy is to enhance links with the fast-growing ASEAN region. A recent Australian government report argues that Australia's deeper engagement with this region is fundamental to the nation's future prosperity, sustainability, and security, and necessary to "broaden the flow of ideas and acquire new knowledge and capabilities."⁴¹ However, the report makes scant reference to the role of population movement and migration—despite the fact that such movement is hard-wiring Australia into the economic and social structure of the region.

Australian policy has the potential to engage not only native-born emigrants but also those born in Southeast Asia who are returning to their homelands after a sojourn in Australia. The latter group is overlooked, perhaps because of assumptions that return home denotes a rejection of life in Australia. However, the evidence presented here indicates that returnees often maintain active and strong links to Australia, including through return visits. For highly skilled individuals—both Australian and Southeast Asian—international mobility is the new norm. Many migrants identify with both Australia and an ASEAN nation. Residing in one does not preclude a substantial engagement with the other; and the challenge for

36 Westcott, "Promoting Exchanges through Diasporas."

37 Temporary return implies circulation or temporary movement between the destination country and the homeland.

38 For example, one study of China-born academics in Australia indicated that all maintained strong relationships with universities in China through joint positions and frequent visits to China. See Graeme J. Hugo, "The Indian and Chinese Academic Diaspora in Australia: A Comparison," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 19, no. 1 (2010): 97–116.

39 United Nations, *World Population Policies 2011* (New York: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2013), www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/policy/world-population-policies-2011.shtml.

40 Dovelyn Rannveig Agunias and Kathleen Newland, *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries* (Washington, DC and Geneva: Migration Policy Institute and International Organization for Migration, 2012), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/developing-road-map-engaging-diasporas-development-handbook-policymakers-and-practitioners.

41 Australian Government, "Australia in the Asian Century" (white paper, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, 2012), www.asiaeducation.edu.au/verve/_resources/australia-in-the-asian-century-white-paper.pdf.



emigration nations is to facilitate that engagement and maximize its advantages.

Diaspora links have always been an important asset of international migration. Such links have been given new salience by modern forms of communication and the increased speed and low cost of international travel. Whereas an Italian migrant to Australia in the 1950s and 1960s communicated by letter and was able to return home only once in a decade,⁴² migrants of today are in frequent, intimate, and detailed contact with their homeland. This was illustrated in a 2006 survey of 9,529 Australians abroad. Almost 90 percent of respondents had at least weekly e-mail contact with Australia, and 75 percent by telephone (see Appendix, Table A-3). They received Australian news at the same time as their families and colleagues in Australia. This reinforces their identification with their homeland. A high proportion of Australians living in foreign nations still call Australia home (see Appendix, Table A-4).

The evidence, then, is that the Australian diaspora enjoys strong identification, channels of intensive communication, and corridors of movement with the homeland. The challenge to the Australian government is to initiate policies that (1) facilitate and enhance diaspora members' engagement with Australia, and include them in the wider Australian economy and society; and (2) encourage them to invest their knowledge and resources in ways that contribute to Australia's social and economic development.

What concrete actions can governments take to encourage the temporary and virtual return that might boost economic growth in the homeland? Policymakers should be cognizant that there is no simple "silver-bullet" solution or strategy. Any set of initiatives needs to be suited to the specific migration situation, utilizing cultural understandings and building on existing channels and institutions. There are also major advantages to developing a cooperative approach that involves both the destination and origin country.

Low- and middle-income countries have initiated a plethora of policies and programs to harness the potential of diaspora contributions to homeland development, even from abroad.⁴³ Such contributions can be categorized in four groups:

- **Remittances.** In 2013 the flow of money from expatriates worldwide was estimated at US \$542 billion⁴⁴—of which around 75 percent went from high-income to low- and middle-income countries. While it is unlikely that such levels will be achieved in transatlantic emigration nations, remittances can nevertheless be an important source of foreign exchange in these economies, especially considering that diaspora members are often high-earning professionals. Australia demonstrates that even for a receiving nation—from which considerable remittances flow overseas⁴⁵—incoming remittances can still be significant. In 2012 overall incoming remittances were US \$1.620 billion (around 0.1 percent of gross national income, GNI); US \$55 million of this total came from Southeast Asia.
- **Investment opportunities.** The diaspora can be a major source of foreign direct investment (FDI), and policymakers have developed two types of initiatives to encourage this trend. The first provides expatriates with opportunities to invest personally in projects or activities in their homeland. The second recognizes that diaspora members often rise to significant leadership positions within organizations and companies in destination countries, and can then direct investment from these organizations to their homeland. Such attraction, and channeling, of investment can be done purely through providing appropriate information, but may also involve special institutions, channels, and incentives such as tax concessions.

42 Charles A. Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1963).

43 Agunias and Newland, *Road Map for Engaging Diasporas*.

44 World Bank, "Migration and Remittances: Recent Developments and Outlook" (Migration and Development Brief 22, World Bank, Washington, DC, April 11, 2014), <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1288990760745/MigrationandDevelopmentBrief22.pdf>.

45 In 2012, outgoing remittances from Australia totaled US \$15.049 billion, with an outflow to Southeast Asia of US \$2.306 billion.



- **Increased trade.** The diaspora can help facilitate trade, especially exports to the destination country from the homeland. A number of studies demonstrate that an increase in international migration between nations helps increase trade activity between them.⁴⁶ The diaspora can provide footholds for homeland-based companies to establish themselves in—and penetrate—international markets,⁴⁷ and help expand the international activities of particular industry sectors in their homeland. Examples include the mining and wine industries in Australia. Australia has become a world leader in developing best practices in both of these industries. Accordingly, skilled professionals in these two areas are highly sought after by companies from other parts of the world, and there is a significant exodus from Australia of talented young people from both sectors. Once established in their destination jobs, however, these expatriates tend to access Australian-based suppliers of technology, equipment, and software, enabling Australian support and service suppliers in both industries to achieve a position of global leadership despite Australia’s small size.
- **Technology and information transfer.** Origin countries can also encourage flows of diaspora expertise, knowledge, and experience back to the homeland. This may involve endowing expatriates with formal positions in their homeland,⁴⁸ arranging conferences and visits, pairing diaspora members with homeland-based counterparts, and facilitating flows of information and technology transfer.

C. An Australian Diaspora Policy?

As a high-income, but peripheral, player in the global economy, it is not surprising that Australia is seeing many of its well-educated youth leave for global cities. The increasing scale of this exodus was significant enough to warrant an Australian Senate “Inquiry into Australian Expatriates” in 2003.⁴⁹ This inquiry examined the extent of the Australian diaspora, the variety of factors driving more Australians to live overseas, the needs and concerns of overseas Australians, measures taken by comparable countries to respond to the needs of expatriates, and ways in which Australia could better utilize expatriates to promote Australia’s economic, social, and cultural interests.

*As a high-income, but peripheral, player in the global economy,
it is not surprising that Australia is seeing many of its well-
educated youth leave for global cities.*

The Senate Committee released its report in March 2005, which made 16 recommendations.⁵⁰ It called

46 David M. Gould, “Immigrant Links to the Home Country: Empirical Implications for US Bilateral Trade Flows,” *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 76, no. 2 (1994): 302–16; David Law, Murat Genç, and John Bryant, “Trade, Diaspora and Migration to New Zealand,” (NZIER Working Paper 2009/4, paper prepared for the NZIER 50th Anniversary Research Award), http://nzae.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Trade_Diaspora_and_Migration_to_New_Zealand_v5.pdf; Steve Bakalis and Therese A. Joiner “The Role of Ethnic Networks in Export Activities: The Case of Australia,” *Journal of International Business and Entrepreneurship Development* 3, no. 1/2 (2006): 85–108.

47 One of the earliest examples of this was the significant role of the Korean American community in providing the initial point of penetration for South Korean automobile and electronics companies to enter the important U.S. market.

48 For example, several Chinese universities have created such positions for high-quality Chinese academics based in other—especially Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)—nations. See Jean-Baptiste Meyer, “Network Approach versus Brain Drain: Lessons from the Diaspora,” *International Migration* 39, no. 5, Special Issue 2 (2001): 91–110; Jean-Baptiste Meyer and Mercy Brown, “Scientific Diaspora: A New Approach to the Brain Drain” (Discussion Paper no. 41, World Conference on Science, UNESCO-ICSU, Hungary, June 26–July 1, 1999).

49 Parliament of Australia, “Inquiry into Australian Expatriates,” accessed January 2, 2015, www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/2004-07/expats03/index.

50 Australian Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee, *They still call Australia home*.



for the establishment of a policy unit on expatriates within DFAT— revising the consular role of missions to better engage diaspora members—and measures to improve provision of information to expatriates. It also called for better statistical data on expatriates, including improving the registration of overseas Australians in missions. The report also recommended amending the *Citizenship Act* in several ways, including enabling children of former Australian citizens to apply for Australian citizenship, and allowing some expatriates to remain on electoral enrollment.⁵¹ It also recommended encouraging nonprofits to pursue philanthropic contributions from expatriate Australians. Notably, this report made no specific reference to the potential role of return migration.

VII. Conclusions

All nations experience immigration and emigration, but the balance between—and composition of— inflows and outflows vary over time. As mobility increases worldwide, however, all nations are seeing a rise in the numbers of their nationals who reside or spend significant periods of time in other countries. Even if these nationals were not counted in the most recent population census, they must be considered an integral part of the national population. It should be a high priority to better engage with nationals abroad and increase their inclusion not only in the domestic economy but within the society with which they continue to identify. This is especially the case for those nations experiencing an increase in the emigration of their “best and brightest” young citizens.

Using the example of migration between the ASEAN region and Australia, this report has demonstrated the increasing dominance of nonpermanent movement in international migration. The established paradigm of migration as a one-off shift of permanent residence between countries is increasingly outdated and should not be the basis for developing national policy. In this new age of mobility, circulation is dominant and emigration does not signal the permanent loss of the knowledge and resources of those who leave. Countries of origin can create systems for enhancing the inclusion of diaspora groups in national, economic, social, and political life. Not all expatriates will take advantage of these opportunities, but the evidence so far is that many will. Importantly, this is an area of human behavior in which policy can make a difference.

The established paradigm of migration as a one-off shift of permanent residence between countries is increasingly outdated and should not be the basis for developing national policy.

A growing body of experience and evidence points to best practices,⁵² but there are no fail-safe recipes for success. There is, however, scope for innovation. Policymakers would do well to recognize and build upon the comparative advantage of diaspora members, many of whom continue to identify strongly with their homeland and would welcome further opportunities to connect.

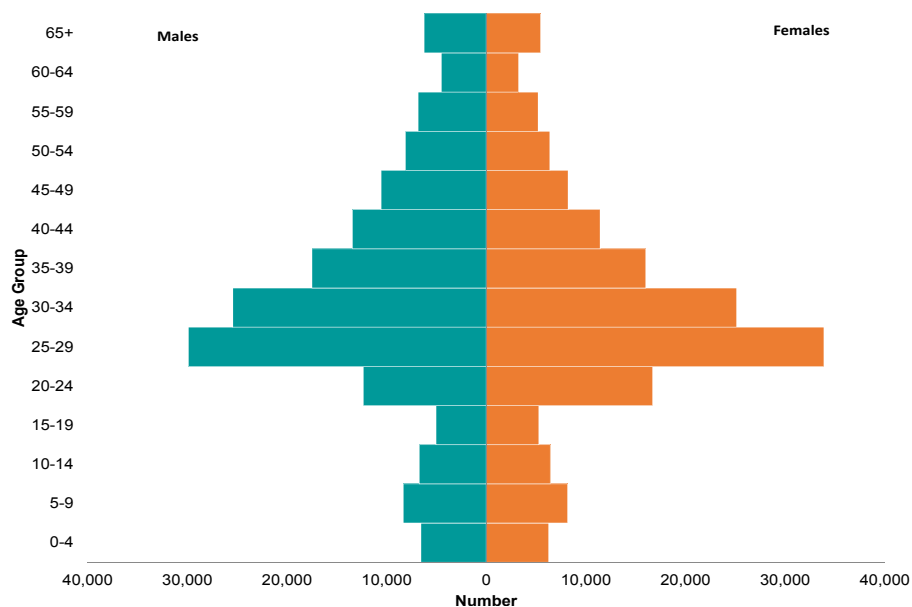
51 The Committee recommended that overseas Australians be eligible to register as an “Eligible Overseas Elector” if they left Australia or had returned to visit Australia within the past three years. See Australian Senate Legal and Constitutional Refer- ences Committee, *They still call Australia home*, 127.

52 See, for example, Agunias and Newland, *Road Map for Engaging Diasporas*.



Appendices

Figure A-1. Arrivals in Australia of Australian Residents Absent for More than a Year, by Age and Sex, 2004-05 to 2006-07



Source: Graeme J. Hugo, "Returning Youthful Nationals to Australia: Brain Gain or Brain Circulation?" in *Return Migration of the Next Generations: 21st Century Transnational Mobility*, eds. Dennis Conway and Robert B. Potter (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 195.

Table A-1. ASEAN Indicators, by Nation, 2010-13

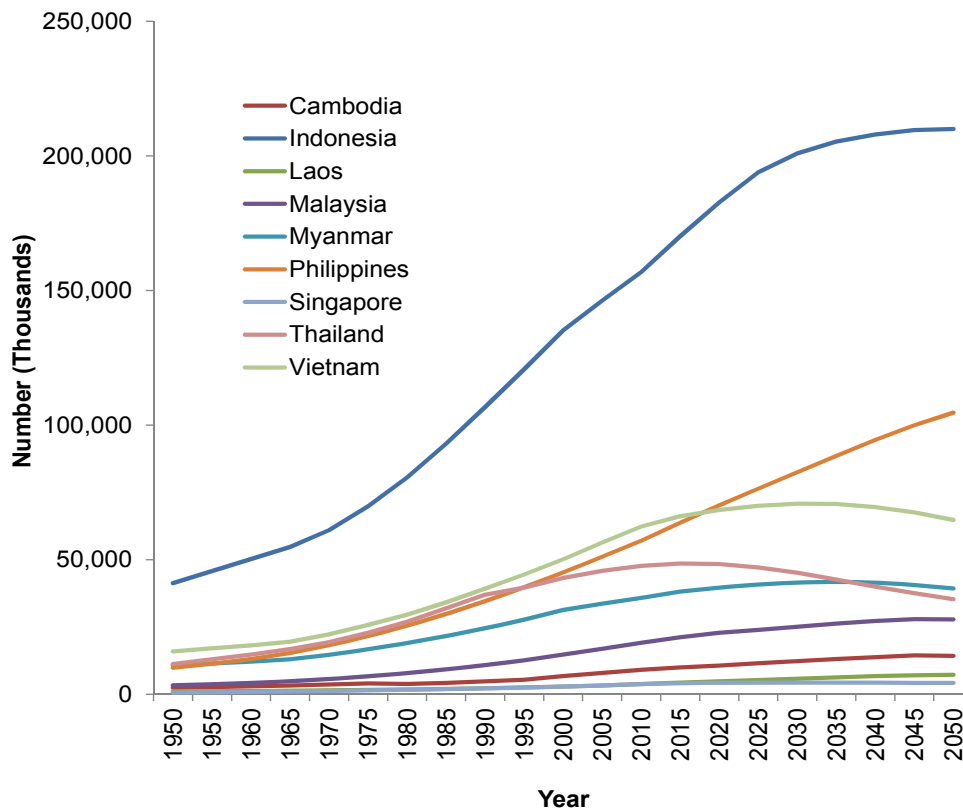
	Population ('000)	GNI PPP per Capita 2012\$	TFR 2013	IMR 2013	Human Development Index 2012	Percent Employed in Agriculture 2010	Percent Urban 2013	GNP Growth 2013
Brunei	418	49,370	1.6	7.0	0.855		72	-1.2
Cambodia	15,135	2,360	2.8	45.0	0.543	54.2	20	7.0
Indonesia	249,866	4,810	2.6	32.0	0.629	38.3	50	5.8
Laos	6,770	2,730	3.2	68.0	0.543	72.2	27	8.2
Malaysia	29,717	16,530	2.1	7.0	0.769	13.3	64	4.7
Myanmar	53,259		2.0	52.0	0.498		31	7.5
Philippines	98,394	4,400	3.0	22.0	0.654	33.2	63	7.2
Singapore	5,412	61,100	1.3	1.8	0.895		100	4.1
Thailand	67,011	9,430	1.6	11.0	0.960	38.2	46	2.9
Vietnam	91,680	3,340	2.1	16.0	0.617	49.5	32	5.4

Notes: GNI = gross national income; GNP = gross national product; IMR = infant mortality rate; PPP = purchasing power parity; TFR = total fertility rate.

Sources: Population Reference Bureau, "World Population Data Sheet: Population and Development Indicators for Asia and the Pacific," 2013, www.prb.org/pdf13/2013-population-data-sheet_eng.pdf; United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2013—The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World* (New York: UNDP, 2013), <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2013-report>; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), "2013 ESCAP Population Data Sheet," 2013, www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/SDD-PUB_Datasheet-2013.pdf; Asian Development Bank (ADB), "Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific," 2013, www.adb.org/statistics; International Monetary Fund (IMF), "World Economic Outlook Database," April 2014, www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2014/01/weodata/index.aspx.

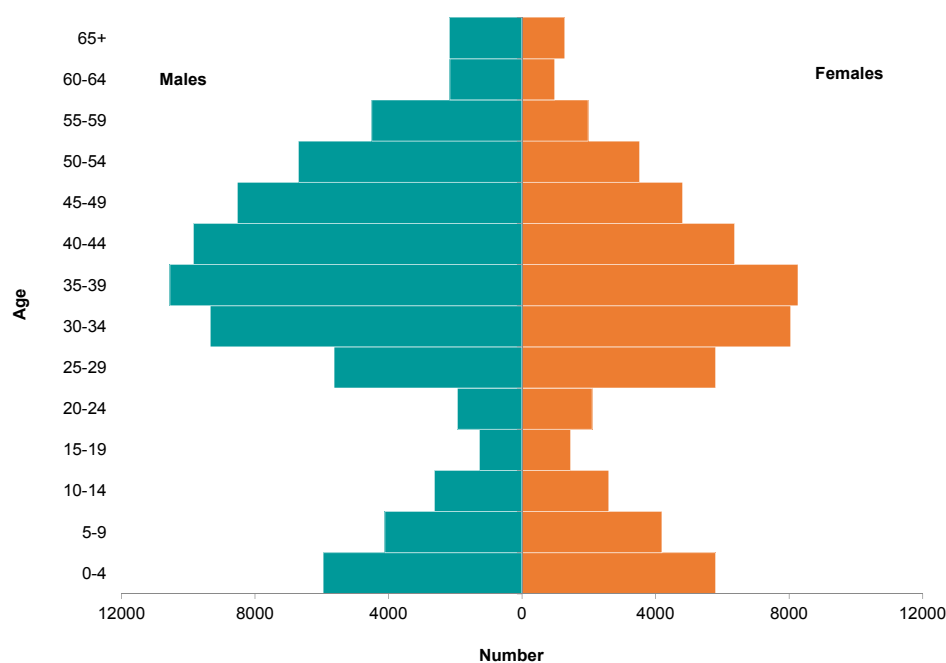


Figure A-2. Changes in Sizes of Working-Age Populations, Select ASEAN Nations, 1950-2050



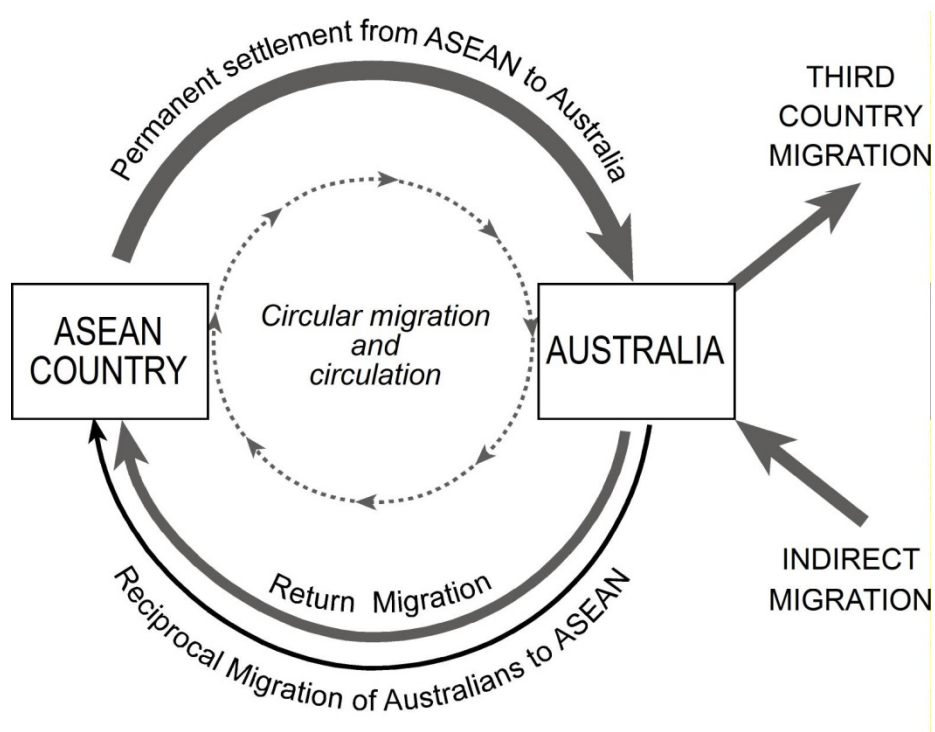
Source: United Nations, "World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision," <http://esa.un.org/wpp/>.

Figure A-3. Composition of Permanent Departures from Australia to ASEAN, by Age and Sex, 1993-94 to 2011-12



Source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), unpublished data provided to the authors.

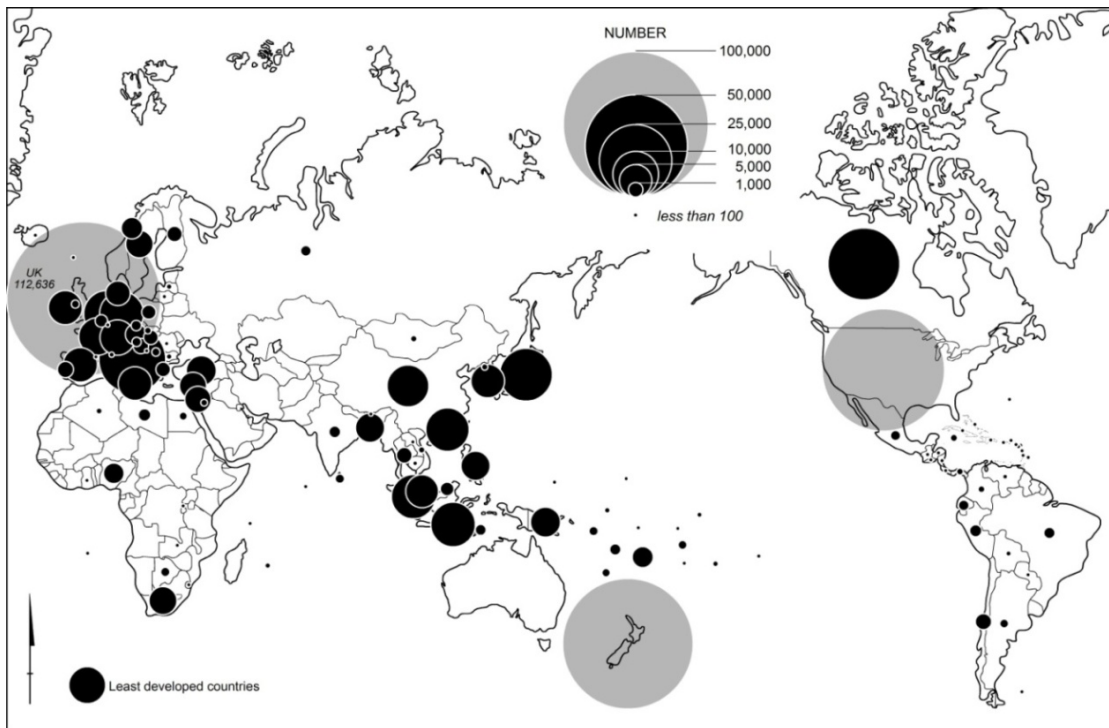
Figure A-4. Model of the ASEAN-Australia Migration System



Source: Analysis of Australian border movement statistics from Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP).

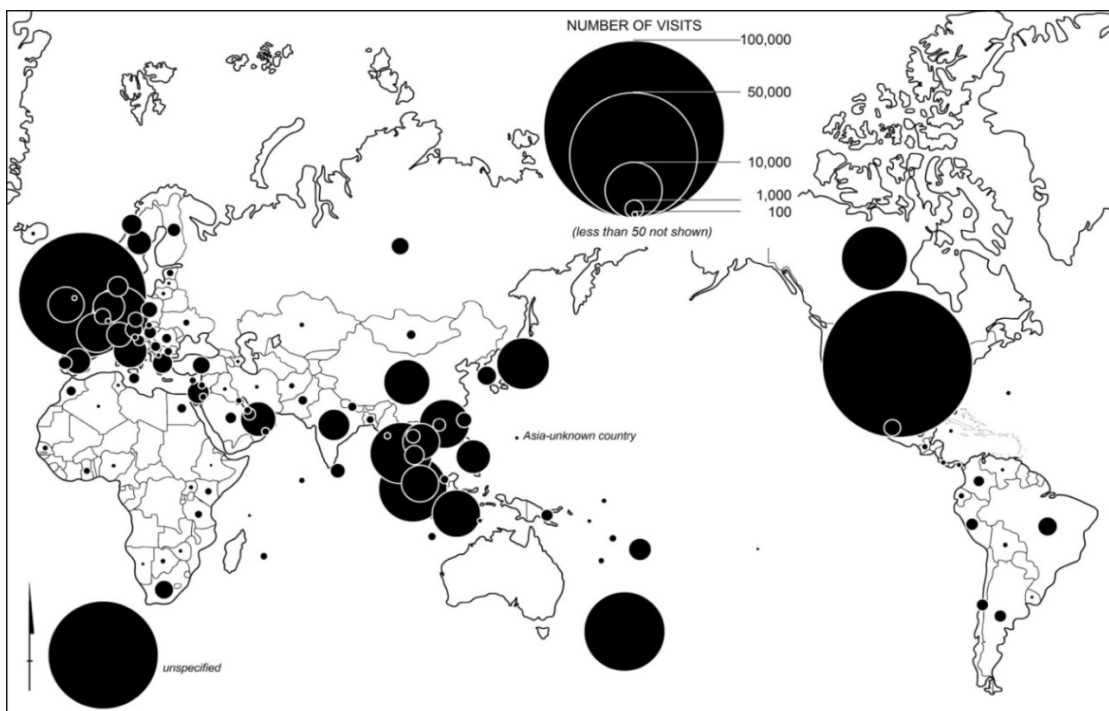


Figure A-5. Australians Overseas in 2013



Note: Refers to total migrant stock at mid-year by origin and by major area, region, country, or area of destination, 2013.
Source: United Nations, "Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin," United Nations database, 2013b.

Figure A-6. Number of Visits to Australian Football League Website in First Half of 2013



Note: The website received a total of 298,629 visits during the period reviewed.
Source: Australian Football League; data are as of May 24, 2013.

**Table A-2. Governments with Policies that Encourage the Return of Overseas Citizens, 1976-2011**

	Countries with Policies that Encourage Return of Overseas Citizens		
	Yes	No	Total
1976	18	63	81
1996	59	78	137
2005	72	69	141
2011	109	65	174

Note: Covers all Member States and non-Member States of the United Nations (196 countries at time of writing).

Source: United Nations, *World Population Policies 2011* (New York: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, United Nations, 2013), www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/policy/world-population-policies-2011.shtml.

Table A-3. Frequency of Contact with Australia by Australians Living Overseas, 2006

Frequency of Contact	Telephone		Email	
	Business	Personal	Business	Personal
At least once a day	3.5	6.2	8.9	29.8
Every 2-3 days	3.4	19.3	4.8	28.8
Weekly	5.6	45.9	7.5	27.9
Monthly	12.5	21.9	15.5	10.8
Every 6 months	15.0	4.6	14.5	1.9
Once per year	9.2	1.1	7.6	0.4
Never	50.9	1.0	41.3	0.5

Source: Kelly L. Parker, One Million More Survey findings cited in Dennis Conway and Robert B. Potter, eds. *Return Migration of the Next Generations: 21st Century Transnational Mobility* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009).

Table A-4. Share of Australian Expatriates Who Still Call Australia Home, 2002, 2006, 2007

	Australian Emigration Study 2002	One Million More Survey 2006	U.S. Expatriates Study 2007
Yes	79.3	62.8	80.4
No	16.7	3.9	6.8
Undecided	4.0	4.2	12.8
I have more than one home	—	29.1	—

Source: Graeme J. Hugo, Dianne Rudd, and Kevin Harris. "Australia's Diaspora: It's Size, Nature and Policy Implications" (CEDA Information Paper no. 80, Committee for the Economic Development of Australia, Melbourne, 2003), 46; Parker, One Million More Survey findings in Conway and Potter, eds. *Return Migration of the Next Generations*; Kelly L. Parker, "Engaging Emigrants: A study of the Australian diaspora in the United States of America," (PhD dissertation, University of Adelaide, 2010): 156.



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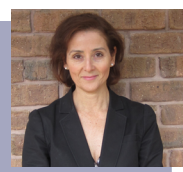
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Graeme Hugo, 1946-2015, was University Professorial Research Fellow, Professor of the Department of Geography, Environment, and Population, and Director of the Australian Population and Migration Research Centre at the University of Adelaide. His research interests were in population issues in Australia and Southeast Asia, especially migration.

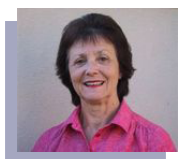
Prof. Hugo was the author of more than 400 books, articles in scholarly journals, and book chapters, as well as a large number of conference papers and reports. In 2002 he secured an ARC Federation Fellowship over five years for his research project, “The New Paradigm of International Migration to and from Australia: Dimensions, Causes, and Implications.” Recent research focused on migration and development, environment and migration, and migration policy.

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Margaret Young (BSc) is a Computer Analyst in the Department of Geography, Environment, and Population at the University of Adelaide. Her main work with Professor Graeme Hugo was providing analysis for all his Australian Research Council grants, research projects, and publications. This work involved the management and extensive analysis of numerous large and valuable datasets, including the Australian Movements Database, Australian Census, Indonesian Census, and Australian and international migration statistics. Also work with computer mapping, online surveys, population projections, and accessing international databases. Her expertise includes adapting to the rapid change in software applications and developments in computer technology.



The Migration Policy Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. MPI provides analysis, development, and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national, and international levels. It aims to meet the rising demand for pragmatic and thoughtful responses to the challenges and opportunities that large-scale migration, whether voluntary or forced, presents to communities and institutions in an increasingly integrated world.

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