

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Australian Population Research
Institute <tapri.org.au>
*Immigration, population growth and voters: who, cares
and why?*
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Most non-graduates reject the progressive agenda

Half or more of Australian voters reject the progressive agenda of continual population growth and ever-growing diversity, the agenda embraced by Australia's cultural and political elites and by most graduates.

The TAPRI national survey of 2029 Australian voters was run in October/November 2018. The results show that 50% of voters want immigration to be reduced, 72% say Australia does not need more people, 63% want Australia's manufacturing industry protected by tariffs, 60% favour turning back all boats carrying asylum seekers, 56% think Australia is in danger of losing its culture and identity, and 47% support a partial ban on Muslim immigration.

There is a decisive split on all of these attitudes between graduates and non-graduates. A much greater share of non-graduates reject the progressive agenda than do graduates.

For example, 60% of non-graduates want lower immigration compared to 33% of graduates, 80% of non-graduates say Australia does not need more people compared to 59% of graduates, and 65% of non-graduates think Australia is in danger of losing its culture and identity compared to 41% of graduates.

These are remarkable findings. Graduates dominate Australia's media and educational institutions. Yet most non-graduates are not persuaded that continuing demographic growth and even more diversity are desirable. This finding mirrors similar survey results in the UK and the US.

The TAPRI survey enabled us to ask why this is the case. There are two contrasting theories in the literature. One is that this division reflects the increasing number of non-graduates who have been 'left behind' in an economic sense due to the loss of blue-collar manufacturing and other less skilled jobs.

The other theory, best captured in Eric Kaufmann's book *White Shift*, is that most dissenters feel threatened by the huge recent increases in migrants from non-western cultural backgrounds. They also resent the way in which the graduate class denigrates their concerns.

The TAPRI results affirm the cultural thesis. We found little support for the left behind thesis. Only a minority of respondents were suffering serious economic stress and those who were are not markedly more opposed to the progressive agenda than others. On the other hand there is a strong association between concern about cultural issues and voters' desire to see population and immigration growth reduced.

These links are strong among Australian-born non-graduate voters. However, they are also strong among voters born overseas in English-speaking-background countries or in Europe. Big majorities of these voters share Australian-born worries. Australia's culture is now their culture and they too fear that it is under threat. On the other hand most Asian-born voters do not share this worry.

Political implications

Many pre-election analysts have emphasised the potential loss of Coalition voters in blue-ribbon electorates. They argue that former Coalition voters who think that the Liberal party has failed to embrace the progressive agenda on asylum seekers and diversity will withdraw their support. The TAPRI survey confirms that there is a small number of Coalition voters who might be lost because of this factor. For example, 8% of Coalition voters do not support turning back the boats.

However, there are far more Labor voters who could be lost because they do not share the Labor party's progressive agenda. For example, 47 per cent of Labor voters think Australia is in danger of losing its culture and identity and 44 per cent want immigration levels reduced.

For such losses to occur, of course, there would need to be a campaign to mobilise these voters.

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