

# Majority believe we're a racist country

## NEEDS OF THE NATION

### EXCLUSIVE

NATASHA BITA

Young Australians are the keenest for an Indigenous treaty following the failure of the voice referendum last year, despite exclusive polling revealing three-quarters of Australians say the country is racist.

The nation remains divided over First Nations' recognition, with 39 per cent of Australians wanting the federal government to consider a treaty with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, 38 per cent opposing a treaty and 23 per cent undecided.

Support wanes with age: young Australians are twice as likely as older Australians to back an Indigenous treaty.

In the wake of the voice referendum, an exclusive Needs of the Nation poll for The Australian, by The Growth Distillery, reveals 72 per cent of respondents describe Australians as racist.

The poll of 1042 people shows 17 per cent of people think the word "racist" describes Australia a lot, and 55 per cent a little.

Only 24 per cent of people feel "racist" is not a word that describes Australia at all – double the proportion in a similar survey of 1203 people by Newpoll for The Australian's 50th anniversary in 2014, when 87 per cent of respondents felt that "racist" described Australians a lot or a little.

The 2024 polling shows that 57 per cent of 18 to 34-year-olds support a treaty, compared to 39 per cent of 35 to 49-year-olds and just 28 per cent of the over-50s.

Wealthier households are most likely to support a treaty.

The fresh polling mirrors the results of last year's referendum for constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders through an Indigenous voice to federal parliament, which was defeated after 60 per cent of Australians voted no.

But the younger generation's support for a treaty is heartening for Torres Strait Islander student Lachlan Bon, 25, who is investigating the voice referendum for his honours thesis at the University of Queensland.

He plans to complete a PhD and then lecture at university or contribute to politics.

"I see education as bringing knowledge and power to our people," Mr Bon said.

"But we also need to educate other Australians, not using emotional or fear-based appeals, but information that is accurate and appropriate so we can all move forward together."

Mr Bon blames the referendum's defeat on scare campaigns and poor communication.

"I saw a lot of fear and emotional appeals, predominantly from the No side," he said.

"There probably could have been clearer communication from the Yes camp. I feel a lot of people resonated with what the Yes camp was saying, but it was hard to convey one clear message."

Mr Bon, a Samseymerian man with family ties to the Bowen region of north Queensland, studied a Bachelor of Arts after being awarded a boarding school scholarship through the Australian In-



Indigenous students Lachlan Bon, 25, and Anjelika Wittkopp, 20, believe more needs to be done to help disadvantaged First Nations children

digenous Education Foundation. Fellow AIEF scholar Anjelika Wittkopp, 20, is studying a business degree at the Queensland University of Technology, with dreams of a career in human resources or real estate.

The Gangulu and Yiman woman, whose family hails from Rockhampton, worries that too many First Nations youngsters are "going backwards".

"We need to be getting kids off the street, and recognise that kids need stability in their lives," she said. "The youth crime rate is sad, but you can't really blame them when they haven't been given the foundation others have been given. I'd like to direct more of the focus from the city kids and into rural areas, and get people to actually see what true Indigenous struggles are."

The Needs of the Nation polling reveals division over whether people think governments are doing enough to help close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It found 46 per cent of respondents believe enough is being done, 38 per cent feel not enough is being done, and 16 per cent are unsure.

Young Australians are more likely to state not enough is being done to close the gap: 46 per cent of 18 to 34-year-olds, compared to 30 per cent of over-50s.

The data shows Australians are divided over the need for more action to close the gap, despite the latest Productivity Commission data revealing alarming disparities in health, education and societal outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

A First Nations boy born in 2022 is likely to die 8.8 years earlier than a non-Indigenous boy, with an 8.1-year life expectancy gap for girls. Only one in three Indigenous children are developmentally on track by the time they start school, compared to 56 per cent of their non-Indigenous classmates.

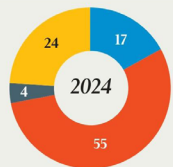
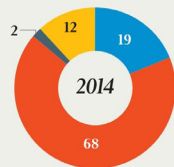
Barely two-thirds of Indigenous 20 to 24-year-olds hold a year 12 or equivalent qualification, compared to 91 per cent of non-Indigenous young Australians.

## WHAT AUSTRALIANS THINK ABOUT ...

### RACISM

Question: Words that describe Australians ... racist?

- A LOT
- A LITTLE
- UNSURE
- NOT AT ALL



### CLOSING THE GAP

	Total	Gender		Age			Geographic area			Household income	
%		Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50+	Metro	Regional	Remote	Under \$100k	\$100k+
Enough	46	48	44	40	35	55	44	53	39	40	18
Not enough	38	38	39	46	45	30	41	28	61	47	48
Unsure	16	14	18	14	20	15	15	18	0	13	2

Question: Do you think governments are currently doing enough to help close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians?  
Total sample base n = 1042; total n = 1043; 1 missing; effective sample size = 947 (90%)

### INDIGENOUS TREATY

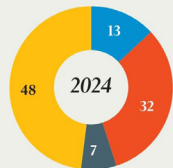
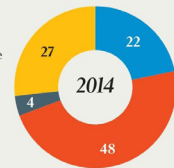
	Total	Gender		Age			Geographic area			Household income	
%		Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50+	Metro	Regional	Remote	Under \$100k	\$100k+
Yes	39	38	40	57	39	28	41	32	81	45	18
No	38	41	36	22	31	53	36	47	19	35	48
Unsure	23	21	24	21	30	19	23	22	0	20	2

Question: Australians recently voted against a change in the Constitution for an Indigenous voice to parliament. Do you think the federal government should now consider a treaty with Indigenous Australians?  
Total sample base n = 1042; total n = 1043; 1 missing; effective sample size = 963 (93%)

### IMMIGRATION

Question: In your opinion, should the number of legal immigrants to Australia be increased, stay the same, or decreased?

- INCREASED
- STAY THE SAME AS NOW
- NONE/DON'T KNOW (2014)/ UNSURE (2024)
- DECREASED



	Total	Gender		Age			Geographic area			Household income	
%		Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50+	Metro	Regional	Remote	Under \$100k	\$100k+
Increased	13	14	11	21	12	8	14	11	0	16	18
Stay the same as now	32	32	32	41	39	23	35	23	27	37	48
Decreased	48	48	48	28	42	64	45	57	73	41	25
Unsure	7	5	8	10	8	4	6	8	0	6	2

Total sample base n = 1042; total n = 1043; 1 missing; effective sample size = 972 (93%)



Source: The Growth Distillery

## Half of us are calling for fewer migrants

### EXCLUSIVE

NATASHA BITA

Public support for immigration has nearly halved over the past decade, with half of Australians demanding fewer migrants.

The Australian's Needs of the Nation poll reveals only 13 per cent of people surveyed support an increase in the number of legal immigrants.

Ten years ago, public support for higher immigration was 22 per cent, based on a comparable Newpoll survey for The Australian's 50th anniversary in 2014. The 2024 survey of 1042 people, by The Growth Distillery, shows one in three Australians want immigration levels to remain as they are, while half seek a cut to the migrant intake.

Demand for lower levels has doubled in the past decade. In 2014, when Newpoll asked the same question of 1203 people, barely a quarter of Australians wanted fewer migrants.

Young Australians are the most supportive of immigration, with one in five wanting to welcome more migrants, and 41 per cent happy with the status quo. Among the over-50s, support for higher immigration has plunged from 20 per cent in 2014 to just 8 per cent this year.

Two-thirds of the over-50s want a cut to Australia's immigration intake, compared to 26 per cent in 2014. Support for higher immigration is higher in households earning more than \$100,000 a year, compared to poorer households. Men are more likely than women to support higher immigration.

Australia's total intake of legal migrants has soared 37 per cent over the past decade, due mostly to rising numbers of skilled migrants on work visas, and temporary visas for international students. The number of family visas has fallen 13 per cent, from 60,185 in 2013-14 to 52,500 in 2022-23, based on the latest Home Affairs Department data.

The skilled visa intake jumped 10 per cent to 142,344, while student visa numbers surged 61 per cent to 491,056 in 2022-23.

The number of humanitarian visas, granted to refugees, has fallen 10 per cent over the past decade, from 20,019 in 2012-13 to 17,875 in 2022-23.

The Albanese government angered universities in May by announcing legislation to cap the number of students enrolled in each institution, and requiring universities build more purpose-built accommodation.

Growing community levels of immigration coincides with an accommodation crunch, as permanent settlers compete with existing residents to buy or rent a home in the tightest housing market on record.

The Australian revealed in April the biggest universities have failed to provide 80 per cent of their foreign students with guaranteed housing, despite pocketing \$9bn a year in fees. Universities have built enough dorm rooms to accommodate only 40,000 students nationally – a fraction of the 205,000 international students they have enrolled to study this year.