

# Most back immigration

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AUSTRALIANS remained positive about immigration during the global financial crisis, but discrimination and safety fears were heightened in areas of high immigration, a survey has found.

One in 10 Australians held strongly negative views about immigration, while 37 per cent of the 3800 people questioned for a social cohesion survey by the philanthropic Scanlon Foundation thought Australia's immigration intake was too high. The results defy historical trends of rising concern about immigration in bleak economic times.

The author of the survey report, Monash University's Professor Andrew Markus, said Australia's milder downturn and the lack of politicisation of the immigration issue were the main reasons for the result.

"There has been no party campaigning on a reduction of immigration and you haven't had a Pauline Hanson figure who has been trying to blame [immigrant groups] for all of our problems," he said.

But the survey painted a less rosy picture of perceptions of safety, levels of trust and discrimination in the areas of high immigration surveyed, such as Dandenong and Broadmeadows.

Half of those from non-English-speaking backgrounds in high immigration areas feared becoming a victim of crime against 32 per cent nationally.

Only 28 per cent of third-generation Australians, and 40 per cent with non-English-speaking backgrounds, in these areas felt safe walking alone at night compared with 62 per cent and 43 per cent nationally.

Professor Markus said the results showed governments needed to work on social cohesion in high-immigrant areas as the Indian student issue had shown what can happen when the issues were ignored.

"No one should pretend immigration doesn't create tension. It does and that's what we find reflected," he said. "You are better off dealing with these issues in good times rather than in bad times ..."

The highest incidence of reports of discrimination in the past year came from Indians and Sri Lankans at 20 per cent.

The survey polled 2000 people nationally and another 1800 in six local government areas of high immigration.