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OVERSEAS MIGRATION AND METROPOLITAN POPULATION GROWTH

■ Bob Birrell

In the previous issue of *People and Place* we published estimates of the share of the overseas-born population aged 15 plus of the total population aged 15 plus in each of Australia's major cities. These estimates were drawn from the ABS Labour Force Survey as of January 1981, 1986 and 1992. The pattern showed modest increases during the 1980s, but these were based on levels which were already high by the standards of most Canadian and USA cities. The most striking change occurred between 1986 and 1992 when the overseas-born share of the total population aged fifteen plus in Sydney increased from 31.5 per cent to 35.7 per cent.

This outcome reflected a combination of two major factors. First, Sydney has been attracting a disproportionate share of migrants coming from countries which have increased their share of the overall migrant intake during the 1980s. As Table 1 shows, between 1986 and 1992 Sydney attracted more than twice

as many migrants (aged 15 plus) as Melbourne, its nearest competitor. Overall 78.3 per cent of Sydney's total growth in this age group during these years was due to overseas migration. A second factor is that Sydney has been losing some of its Australian-born population, primarily through net outward migration within Australia. The outcome of this dispersion is also registered in Table 1. The estimates for the growth in the Australian-born population aged 15 plus in Sydney over the years 1986 to 1992 are well short of what would have been expected if Sydney had retained its share of the overall growth of the Australian-born population.

The main source of the net growth in the overseas-born population resident in Sydney, as would be expected, is from migrants who arrived during the 1986 to 1992 period. But, as Table 2 shows, there is also evidence of a net internal movement to Sydney of overseas-born people who had arrived in Australia between 1971 and 1986. The dominance of recent overseas migrant arrivals in Sydney's growth is consistent

Table 1: Population (aged 15+): growth between Jan. 1986 and Jan. 1992 attributable to growth in the overseas-born population by major city

	City growth 1986-1992 (000s)		Share of city growth due to overseas-born %
	Overseas-born	Total	
Sydney	206.0	263.1	78.3
Melbourne	100.5	208	48.3
Brisbane	55.5	157.4	35.3
Adelaide	-5.8	66.2	
Perth	65.1	161.6	40.3

Source: ABS, The Labour Force (unpublished)

with earlier analyses showing that Sydney's growth in both numbers and households during the 1980s was largely a product of overseas migration.¹

Initial data from the 1991 Census counts support this finding. Though breakdowns of the population aged fifteen plus are not yet available, the Census figures show that Sydney's total population grew from 3,364,858 in 1986 to 3,538,448 in 1991. The overseas-born component grew from 912,578 to 1,070,627 over the same period. The increase of 158,049 in the overseas-born number represents 91 per cent of the total increase in the city's population during the five-year period. The Census results also confirm Sydney's role as the dominant settlement point for international migrants. Though 21 per cent of Australia's population resided in Sydney as of mid-1991, Sydney attracted 31 per cent of the total net growth in the overseas-born population resident in Australia during the period 1986 to 1991.

Though the 1991 Census broadly confirms the Labour Force Survey results it implies that the estimate for

Sydney's growth between January 1986 and January 1992 is too high. The Survey's estimate, even after taking account of the longer, six year period involved, is considerably higher than would be expected from the Census figures. However, past experience indicates that the Census count understates the growth in Sydney's resident population due to absences (as in Northern holiday locations).

Sydney is attracting a large share of recently arrived migrants in part because of its role as a focal point for international trade and commerce in Australia. But its attraction as a settlement zone also reflects the changing pattern of origin of Australia's migrants. Since the early 1980s this pattern has moved significantly toward Asian, Middle Eastern and other Third World sources, with a parallel decline in the proportion of arrivals from Britain and Southern Europe. Many of these Third World origin migrants are drawn to Sydney

Table 2: Estimates of overseas-born persons aged 15+ resident in Sydney, Jan.1986 & Jan.1992

Time of arrival	1986 (000s)	1992 (000s)
Before 1961	253.0	210.7
1961-1965	97.6	95.7
1966-1970	138.3	132.3
1971-1975	113.8	128.1
1976-1980	114.0	111.7
1981-1985	125.9	130.1
1986-Jan. 1992		240.1
Total	842.6	1048.7

Source: ABS, The Labour Force (unpublished)

because that is where the largest communities of these migrants already resident in Australia are located. Given the importance of family and community ties and the provision of ethnic specific services in new migrants' settlement decisions, the presence of these communities in Sydney is a crucial continuing factor in the city's appeal.

According to the 1991 Census counts, approximately half of all people resident in Australia and born in China, Hong Kong, and the Philippines were living in Sydney, and 72.6 per cent of

those born in the Lebanon. Sydney also contained disproportionate shares of Indochinese and of most other migrants from Third World countries. On the other hand, Sydney's share of the British-born population by 1991 was relatively low (18.9 per cent).

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