

# PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN AUSTRALIA

Interdepartmental Committee on Pacific Education and  
Labour Mobility New Policy Measures

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Australian  
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# This talk

- 01 Overview of Pacific people in Australia

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- 02 New Zealand: it explains a lot

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- 03 Recent growth in Pacific ancestry

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- 04 Education, employment, and income

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- 05 Pacific migration and development

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- 06 Future research needs and opportunities

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- 07 Some low-hanging fruit for government

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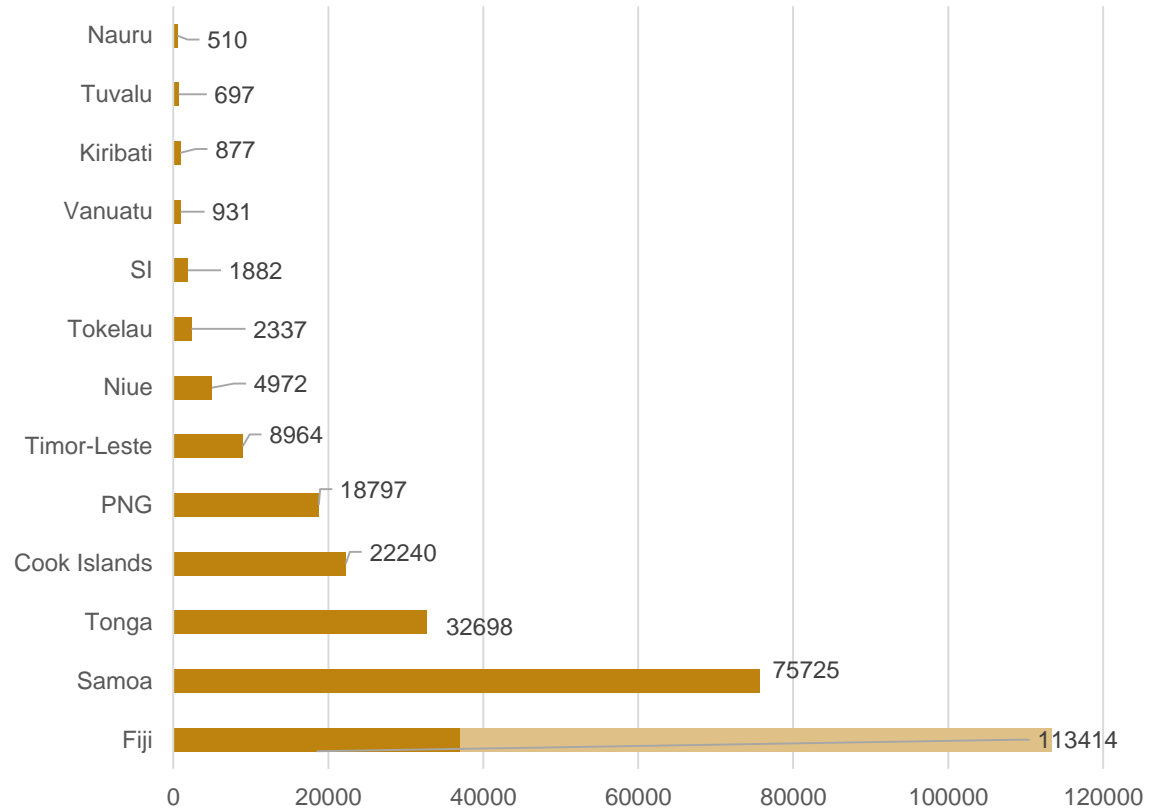

# 297,426 people

With Pacific Island heritage living in Australia

- 2016 Census (i.e., the most recent)
- Specifically, heritage from one of the independent Pacific island countries
- How this is calculated matters, e.g.,
  - Place of birth, including expats
  - Ancestry
  - Augmented ancestry, i.e., adjusting for Fijian Indians, the largest group

Most statistics to follow in this talk use a combination of the first two, including expats, as all numbers come from pre-existing work

## What explains these cross-country differences?



Note: For Fijians, those of indigenous Fijian and those of Indo-Fijian heritage are shown separately (in that order). These numbers include the children of Pacific migrants. Regional heritages (e.g. "Oceania") are included in the total but excluded here.

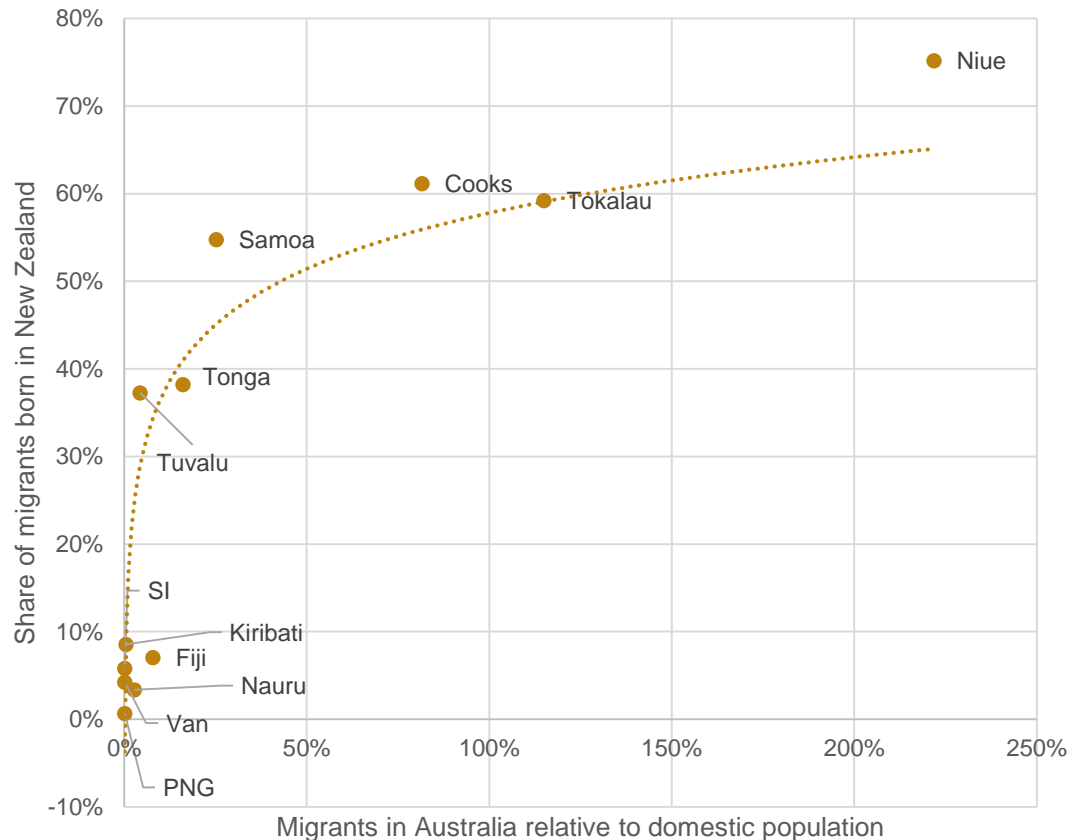


## New Zealand: why certain Pacific countries have more migrants in Australia

**Pacific migrants in Australia: NZ born in 2016**

	Number	Share born in NZ
Fijian	69863	7%
Samoan	49671	55%
Tongan	16815	38%
Cook Islander	14248	61%
Papua New Guinean	11155	1%
Timorese	4902	0%
Niuean	3594	75%
Tokelauan	1623	59%
Solomon Islander	1189	6%
I-Kiribati	585	9%
Tuvaluan	510	37%
Ni-Vanuatu	376	4%
Nauruan	296	3%

	Born in-country	NZ-born	Born elsewhere
2016 share	63%	30%	7%
2006-16 growth	3.8%	7.2%	2.9%



## Top right: Pacific islanders in Australia

- Notice the relative youth bulge
- Similar to most Pacific countries

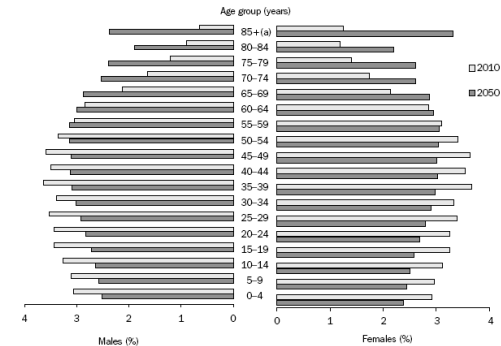
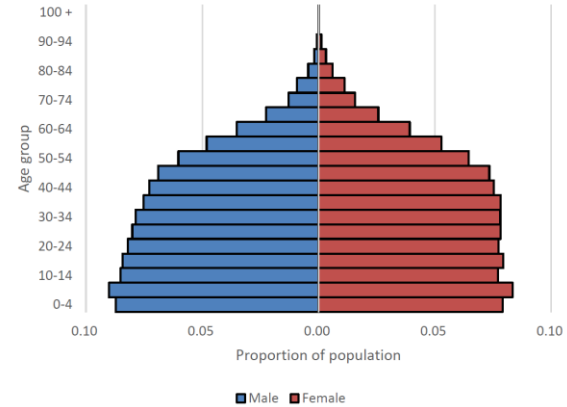
## Bottom right: All Australians

- Notice the how much we will age

## Bottom left: Year of arrival in Australia of Pacific born (not heritage) people in Australia

- Notice the slowdown in arrival (current cohort) from the 90s, and the level. This, or even the just under 300k expanded definition, are not particularly large numbers.

Year of Arrival in Australia (ranges)	Total
1900-1945	504
1946-1955	692
1956-1965	2,625
1966-1975	8,612
1976-1985	14,961
1986-1995	30,656
1996-2005	30,139
2006-2015	35,770
2016 to 9 August	2,099
<b>Total</b>	<b>126,058</b>



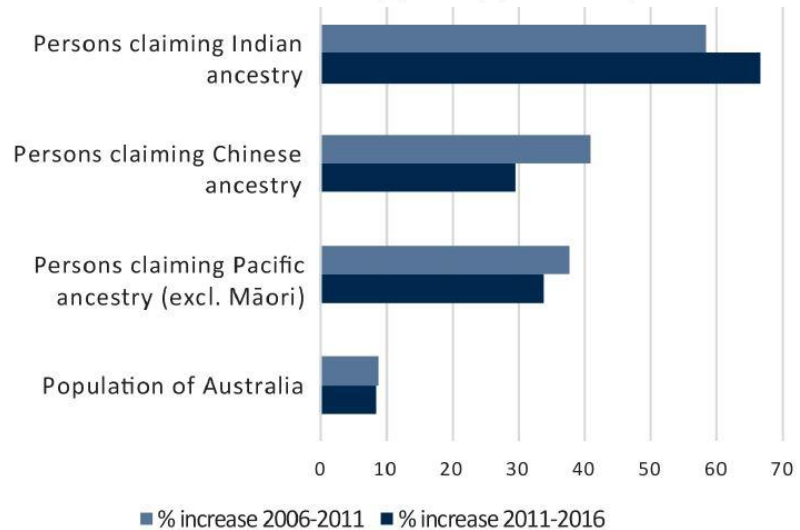
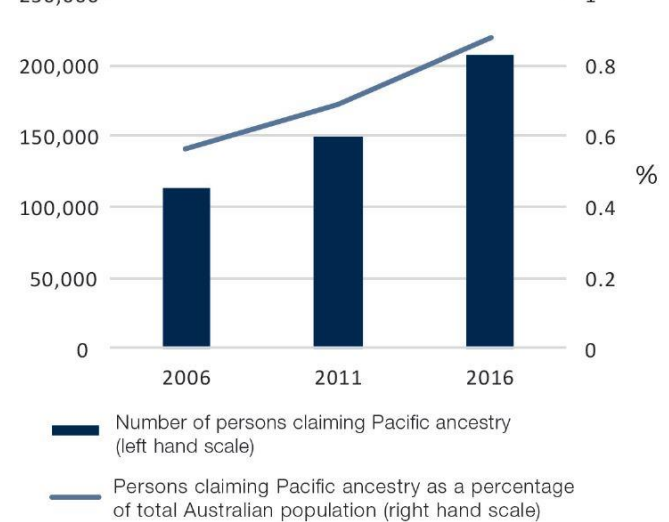
(a) The 85+ age group includes all ages 85 years and over and is not directly comparable to the other five-year age groups.

Source: Population Projections, Australia (3222.0).



# Rapid growth in people reporting Pacific ancestry

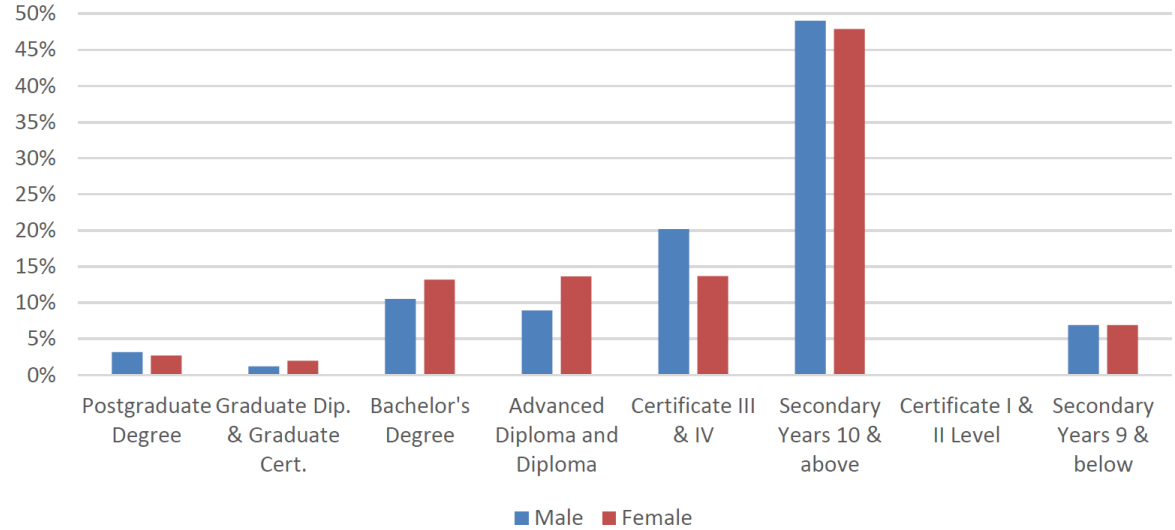
- Growing faster than total population
  - On par with Chinese ancestry
  - Note: growth, not levels
- NSW home to over 38%
  - W and SW Sydney have the highest concentration
- QLD home to 34 percent
  - Ipswich, Logan, Gold Coast areas
- Fastest growth is in Polynesians
  - including Fiji, per ABS definition
  - 90 percent vs 52 and 50 for Melanesia and Micronesia, both also with smaller bases
- Again, this is the NZ pathway story



# Education

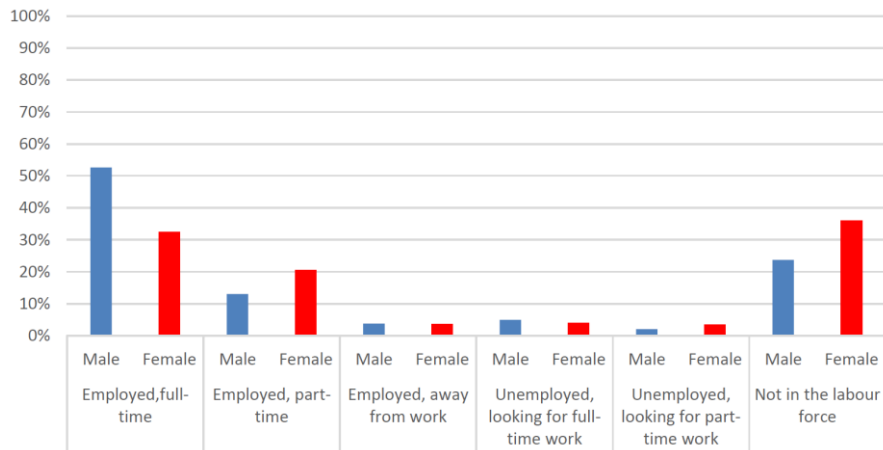
## Highest educational attainment level

- Pacific islanders in Australia
- 15+, by sex, in the 2016 Census
- Highest level for almost half is senior high school (note this includes expats here)
- For the overall resident population this number is just 37%
- For the immediate migrant population (including expats again), these numbers are different, i.e., more educated



Highest Educational Attainment Level	Male	Female
Postgraduate Degree	2,742	2,483
Graduate Diploma & Graduate Certificate	1,041	1,825
Bachelor's degree	9,133	12,155
Advanced Diploma and Diploma	7,774	12,559
Certificate III & IV	17,544	12,620
Secondary Years 10 & above	42,562	44,162
Certificate I & II Level	70	81
Secondary Years 9 & below	5,970	6,377
<b>Total</b>	<b>86,836</b>	<b>92,262</b>

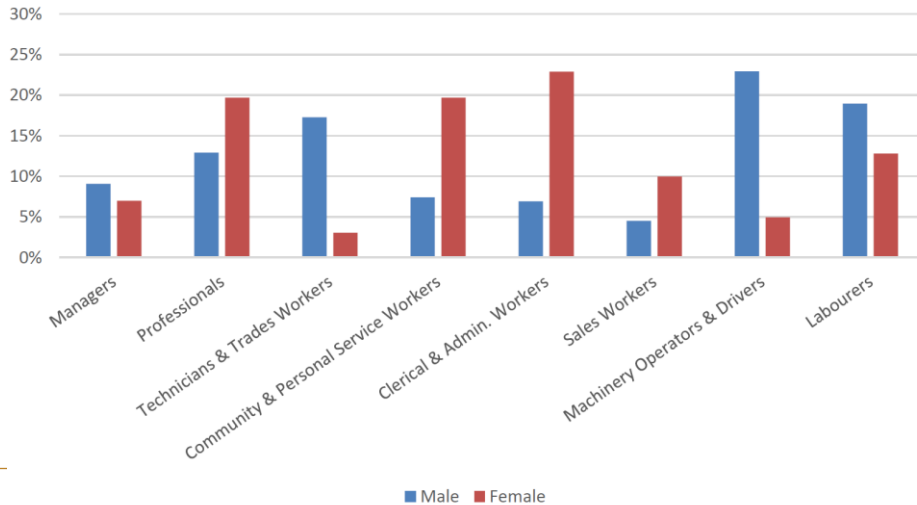




## Employment status

Higher participation rate than overall resident population

Unsurprising, migrants are a highly selected group



## Occupation

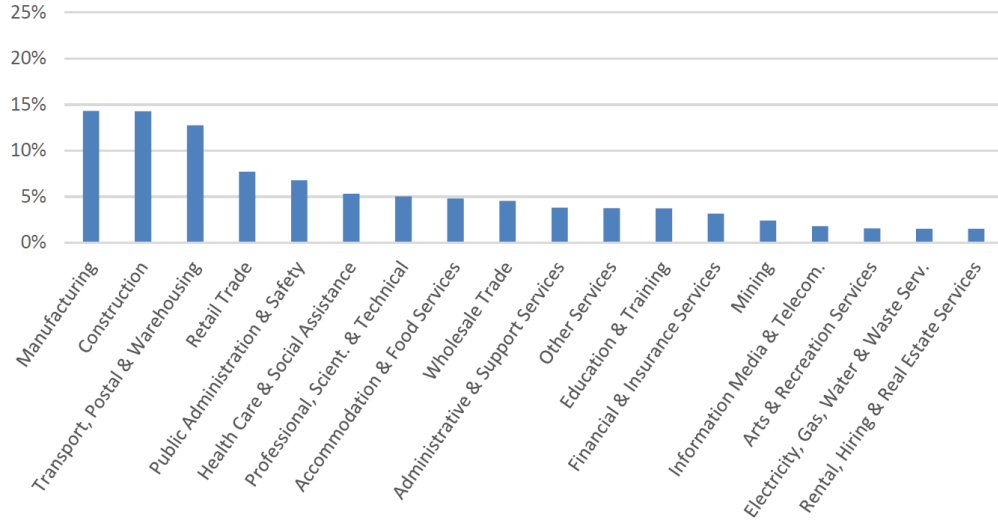
Note that the occupations and sectors (see next slide) tend to be those quite heavily exposed to the pandemic



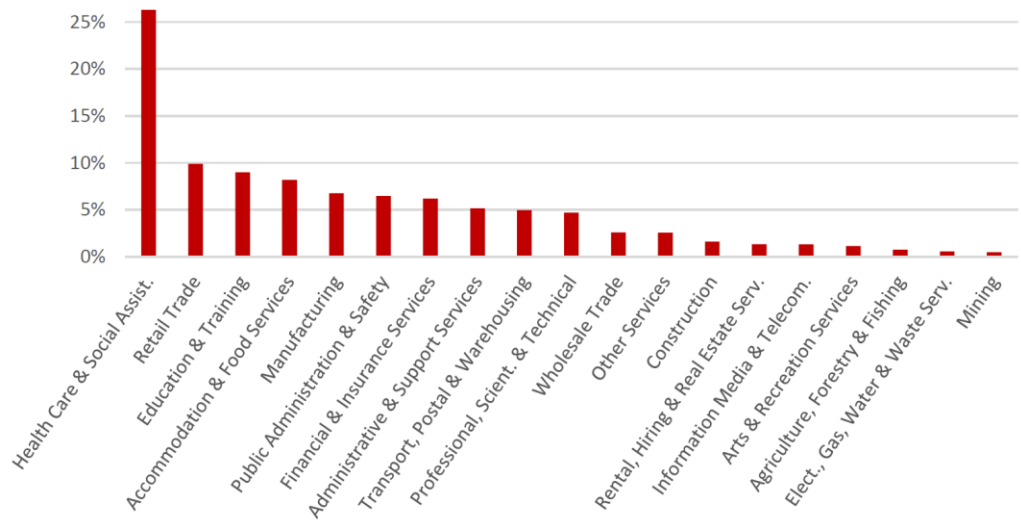


# Industry of employment

Men, 15+

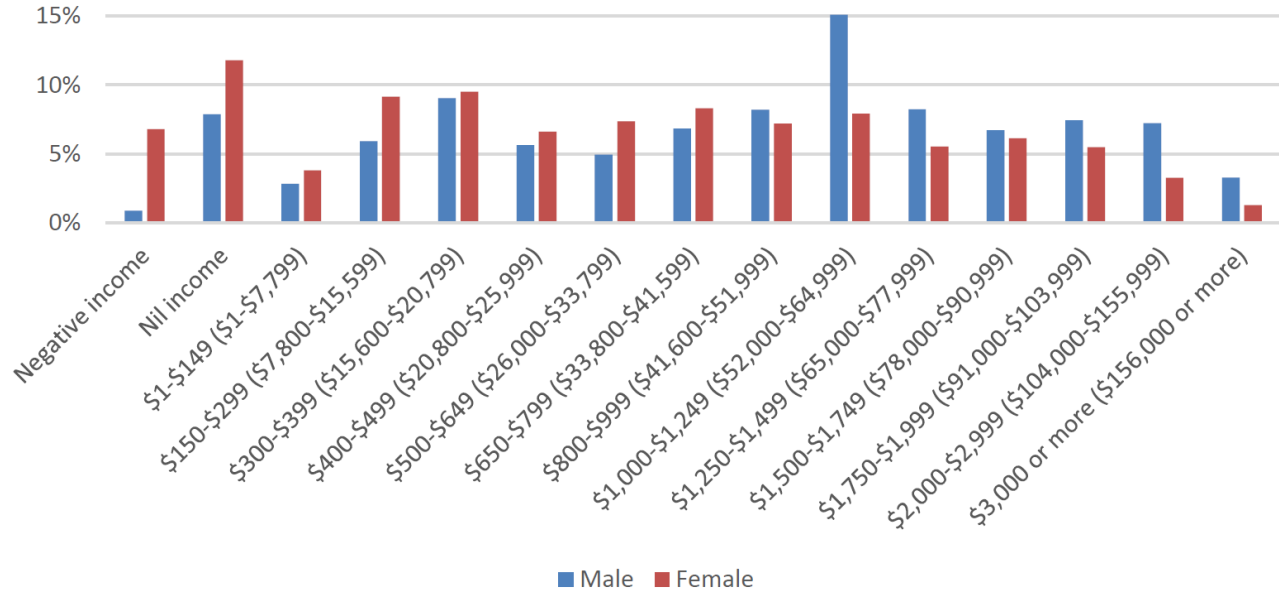


Women, 15+



# Income

- The median income before any deductions was \$800—999 per week, or \$41—51—999 per year
- The same figure for all Australians in 2016 was \$662



# Pacific migration and development: next steps for policy

Remittances remain the most important mechanism, and there is no evidence of any remittance decay over time or during the pandemic

- Remain incredibly important, e.g., 43 percent of GDP for Tonga in 2019
- Pacific remittances did not decline as predicted in the 1990s, rather they continue to boom
- Remittances also held up during the pandemic, in the Pacific and elsewhere

The priority now is permanent pathways and growing the diaspora

- Australia's focus should be on increasing the number of high-migration countries
  - Countries with bigger diaspora are more stable and have better economic prospects
  - Low migration countries (overseas population less than 10 percent of domestic) are Kiribati (4%), TL (3%), Vanuatu (0.9%), SI (0.3%), and PNG (0.2%).
- Move away from a reliance on New Zealand and a focus on temporary migrants to:
  1. Support the Pacific to access existing temporary and permanent pathways: (a) open up WHM scheme, (b) place APTC graduates under TSS visas, and (c) improve the PLS to not require returns home and facilitate permanent pathways
  2. Create a Pacific window in Australia's permanent migration scheme, emulating the Pacific quota and focusing on low-migration Pacific countries



# Some outstanding research questions

On Australia-Pacific migration and labour market integration

- **Intergeneration mobility:** how do people of Pacific ancestry fare over time in Australia relative to other immigrant groups?
- **How do migration-development linkages change** over the life cycle, and over generations? (i.e., permanent migrants)
- **Duration of connection** to home, and duration of connection within the diaspora: how persistent are they? Does it matter? At the individual level, how do remittances change over time?
- **How do the temporary schemes affect development** back home, local labour markets in Australia, the productivity of Australian firms, and longer-term mobility linkages?



# Research opportunities and recommendations

Some low-hanging fruit for government to encourage more high-quality research on the Pacific migration

- Build serious program and policy impact evaluation research into implementation of policy initiatives (education, pilots, skills) with the research community
  - DIAC used to be good at and open to this, with serious academic researchers. Need to rebuild this capacity and culture
  - Central agencies should require this of line agencies, and line agencies should require this of their contractors and other implementers
- Where embedding at the design stage is not possible, use all available data for careful ex-post policy evaluation and analysis
  - Put DFAT, DESE, and DHA administrative data into the various data linkage projects underway and encourage serious external researchers to use it
  - Ensure researchers have easy access, i.e., incentives matter, a lot
  - Like MADIP, BLADE, LEED, away from line agencies and implementing firms
  - Staff exchanges and secondments, e.g., with TTPI and SRW, have proven successful if not central to recent developments in APS data for research
- Reform Pacific labour mobility (i.e., temporary migration) data governance
  - SWP information sits with DESE, with no information on workers
  - PLS information sits with the private contractor, outside government
  - DHA has little involvement but immigration records need kept, centralised, linked



# Selected references and further reading

## 1. Pacific island communities in Australia

<https://devpolicy.org/pacific-islander-communities-and-employment-in-australia-20200902-1/>

<https://devpolicy.org/2016-census-reveal-about-pacific-islands-communities-in-australia-20170928/>

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/430961606712129708/pdf/Pacific-Labor-Mobility-Migration-and-Remittances-in-Times-of-COVID-19-Interim-Report.pdf>

- *Stay tuned for two forthcoming blogs*

## 2. Permanent pathways, New Zealand, and the diaspora

<https://devpolicy.org/the-nz-pathway-how-and-why-samoans-migrate-to-australia-part-two-20210201-2/>

<https://devpolicy.org/the-nz-pathway-how-and-why-samoans-migrate-to-australia-part-one-20210201-1/>

<https://devpolicy.org/time-for-a-permanent-australian-step-up-in-pacific-labour-mobility-20191212/>

<https://devpolicy.org/pacific-backpackers-why-not-20190117/>

## 3. Recent developments in remittances

<https://devpolicy.org/the-pacific-remittances-boom-its-for-real-20201105/>

<https://devpolicy.org/pacific-remittances-covid-19-20201116/>

## 4. Development Policy Centre submissions with policy suggestions on these issues

[Submission to DFAT's Pacific Labour Mobility Consultation](#)

[Pacific Labour Mobility in 2050: Australia's role: Submission to the DFAT consultation on the Pacific Islands Forum 2050 Strategy](#)

[Submission to the Select Committee on Temporary Migration](#)

[Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade](#)

[Submission to the review of Australia's new international development policy](#)

## 5. Australian Government best practices data for policy research

[The ATO Longitudinal Information Files \(Alife\)](#)

[Multi-agency Data Integration Project \(MADIP\)](#)

[Linked Employer-Employee Database \(LEED\)](#)

See also [ACLID \(only 5 percent though\)](#), and [BLADE \(all firms this century\)](#)



# THANK YOU

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