



MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until 12.01am Thursday 16 October 2025

Australian communities remain united despite rising pressures: social cohesion holds steady in 2025

Australia's social cohesion continues to be strained after another year of global economic and social unrest though local communities help to weather the storm, according to the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute's 2025 Mapping Social Cohesion Report, released today.

Now in its 19th year, the *Mapping Social Cohesion* series provides the most comprehensive, ongoing profile of social cohesion in Australia.

The 2025 survey, commissioned by the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute and conducted by the Australian National University and the Social Research Centre, captured the views of more than 8,000 Australians, including responses collected in multiple languages to strengthen representation of Australia's cultural diversity.

Despite ongoing cost-of-living pressures and global uncertainty, the *Scanlon Index of Social Cohesion* was steady in 2025 for the third year in a row.

"Australian communities have shown remarkable resilience," said Dr James O'Donnell of the Australian National University, one of the authors of the report.

"Local connections - whether through neighbourhoods, workplaces or community groups - are the glue holding our society together. Even in the face of uncertainty, most Australians continue to report happiness and a strong sense of community."

"More than 80% of Australians agree that their neighbours help each other and get on well together from different backgrounds, while 54% are actively involved in social, community and civic groups. And when people have a strong sense of cohesion in their local areas, their trust, belonging and acceptance of our differences and diversity has been much more resilient through these challenging times."

While overall cohesion remains stable, the report reveals ongoing strains in belonging, trust and identity, particularly among younger Australians and those facing financial hardship.

Only 46% of Australians say they feel a *great sense of belonging* in Australia - down from 63% in 2020 but steady since 2023. Fewer than one-in-three Millennials and Gen Zs have a great sense of belonging, a finding that is related to higher levels of social isolation.

Trust in the Federal Government to do the right thing “almost always” or “most of the time” has improved slightly, up to 37% from 33% in 2024, but remains divided along political lines.

Financial pressures also remain high, with 40% of Australians describing themselves as “just getting along,” “struggling” or “poor.” Economic disadvantage continues to be the strongest predictor of low cohesion, with those experiencing hardship reporting lower wellbeing, trust and connection to their neighbours.

Attitudes towards immigration and diversity remain broadly positive, though the balance has shifted amid social and economic pressures.

- 51% of Australians believe immigration levels are “too high,” similar to last year (49%) but higher than 2023 (33%) and levels recorded over the last 15 years.
- Despite this, 83% agree that multiculturalism has been good for Australia, and 67% agree that diversity makes the country stronger (down from 78% in 2023).

The findings also reveal growing concern about prejudice and discrimination:

- 35% of Australians express negative views towards Muslims, similar to 2024 (34%) and up from 27% in 2023, with increased negativity also towards Jewish, Hindu and Sikh communities.
- 40% of people born in Africa or Asia report experiencing discrimination on the basis of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion in the past year.
- 67% of Australians believe racism is a fairly or very big problem.

“Social connections across the multicultural divide is one of Australia’s great strengths,” Dr O’Donnell said.

“But we can’t take multiculturalism or social cohesion for granted. The results show that social inclusion and belonging - particularly for younger people and those doing it tough financially – and the difficult experiences faced by migrant and cultural groups require ongoing attention from governments, workplaces and communities alike.”

Anthea Hancocks, CEO of the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, said the report offers an important snapshot of how Australians are feeling in uncertain times.

“Social cohesion is not static - it changes as our circumstances do,” Ms Hancocks said.

“This year’s findings show that while Australians continue to draw strength from their communities, many are feeling the strain of affordability and global uncertainty. Supporting belonging and confidence in the future remains vital to our national wellbeing.”

The 2025 report marks the start of a new biennial publication model, providing a concise national snapshot of key findings, with extended analysis and datasets to be released progressively through the Institute’s *Social Cohesion Insights* and Compass tools.

The *Mapping Social Cohesion 2025* report will be publicly available on the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute website at www.scanloninstitute.org.au from **10:00am AEDT, Thursday 16 October 2025**.

To request an **advance copy of the report** or arrange an interview with **lead author Dr James O'Donnell**, please contact Sally Tyrell at Blackbird PR via sally@blackbirdpr.com.au or 0431 206 523.

– ENDS –

Media contact: Sally Tyrell via email sally@blackbirdpr.com.au or 0431 206 523