Institute of Public Affairs

IPA RESEARCH NOTE

Analysis of regional migration flows 2023-2025

AUGUST 2026

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Key findings

Over the most recent three full financial years, net overseas migration to Australia totalled 1,272,315, which was equal to about 80 per cent of total population growth. An analysis of regional migration flows reveals:

- 86 per cent (1,088,959) of new overseas migrants settled in Australia's capital cities, with 55 per cent of the total settling in just two capital cities: Sydney (352,874) and Melbourne (349,476).
- Net domestic migration from Sydney and Melbourne to other parts of the country was negative, suggesting Sydneysiders and Melbournians have been leaving as record migrant numbers have arrived.
  - Over the three-year period, the net overseas-to-domestic arrival rate (NODAR) in Sydney was -0.32, meaning that for every 100 overseas arrivals in Sydney, roughly 32 residents moved away.
  - The NODAR for Melbourne was relatively modest -0.08, partly due to migration from Sydney.
  - The highest NODAR was recorded in South Australia-excluding-Adelaide (0.94) and the lowest was Hobart (-0.91), where, on a net basis, every overseas arrival almost equated to a domestic resident leaving.

Table 1: *Components of regional population change from 2023 financial year to 2025 financial year*

Region	Population change	Natural increase	Net domestic migration	Net overseas migration	Net overseas-to-domestic arrival rate
Greater Melbourne	407,170	86,580	-28,886	349,476	-0.08
Greater Sydney	325,943	86,157	-113,088	352,874	-0.32
Greater Perth	222,972	35,388	34,130	153,454	0.22
Greater Brisbane	211,757	39,939	41,236	130,582	0.32
Rest of Queensland	147,102	22,900	40,753	83,449	0.49
Rest of NSW	84,483	12,265	23,716	48,502	0.49
Greater Adelaide	69,717	9,934	-7,134	66,917	-0.11
Rest of Victoria	51,457	8,144	17,853	25,460	0.70
Rest of Western Australia	27,476	6,886	6,973	13,617	0.51
ACT	23,368	8,319	-4,042	19,091	-0.21
Greater Darwin	8,069	4,069	-5,092	9,092	-0.56
Rest of South Australia	7,979	-1,414	4,552	4,841	0.94
Rest of the NT	3,387	2,289	-1,798	2,896	-0.62
Greater Hobart	2,116	1,471	-6,828	7,473	-0.91
Rest of Tasmania	1,845	-302	-2,345	4,492	-0.52
Total FY 2023 to 2025	**1,594,933**	**322,618**	**-**	**1,272,315**	**-**

Source: IPA, ABS. Total also includes population changes in "Other Territories".

Analysis

Data analysed in this research note were derived from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Regional Population data series, with the reference period the financial year ending June 2025.[1]

Table 1 aggregates the components of population change for the financial years ending 2023 to 2025 and allocated each component to capital and non-capital regions. Table 2 aggregates the components of population change for the financial years ending 2023 to 2025 and allocated each component to Australia's 89 Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) regions. SA4 regions are geographical areas with interlocking boundaries that provide a standardised regional breakdown of Australia.[2] There are 88 SA4 regions across the nation plus the addition of 'Other Territories'. Together, they cover the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps.[3]

The NODAR divides domestic migration by overseas migration numbers to illustrate the relationship between overseas and domestic migration for the relevant region. For instance, Greater Sydney's NODAR of -0.32 (i.e., negative 0.32) suggests that, over the three years from the financial year ending 2023 to 2025 (inclusive), on a net basis, one former Sydneysider has left for every three new foreigners who moved in.

***Table 2**: Components of SA4 regional population change from 2023 financial year to 2025 financial year*

Region (SA4 Level)	Population change	Natural increase	Net domestic migration	Net overseas migration	Net overseas-to-domestic arrival rate
Melbourne - West	95,939	28,692	13,545	53,702	0.25
Melbourne - Inner	79,693	7,805	-17,305	89,193	-0.19
Melbourne - South East	74,977	19,065	-9,376	65,288	-0.14
Perth - South East	53,594	10,027	-1,469	45,036	-0.03
Perth - North West	52,189	10,465	2,613	39,111	0.07
Perth - South West	50,856	7,447	16,866	26,543	0.64
Gold Coast	46,796	7,080	4,065	35,651	0.11
Melbourne - North East	44,400	10,655	4,520	29,225	0.15
Logan - Beaudesert	42,557	10,016	19,406	13,135	1.48
Sydney - South West	41,154	11,419	7,170	22,565	0.32
Melbourne - North West	37,389	11,963	2,496	22,930	0.11
Sydney - Blacktown	36,506	11,981	3,178	21,347	0.15
Sydney - Parramatta	35,893	12,627	-26,377	49,643	-0.53
Ipswich	35,162	9,621	13,707	11,834	1.16
Sydney - Inner South West	33,690	9,948	-24,616	48,358	-0.51
Perth - North East	31,965	6,429	10,166	15,370	0.66
Brisbane Inner City	30,401	3,520	- 4,407	31,288	-0.14
Sunshine Coast	29,592	1,114	14,511	13,967	1.04
Brisbane - South	29,162	5,856	-7,099	30,405	-0.23
Sydney - City and Inner South	28,517	5,067	-24,281	47,731	-0.51
Melbourne - Inner South	26,216	2,432	-4,631	28,415	-0.16
Melbourne - Inner East	26,106	17	-8,606	34,695	-0.25
Moreton Bay - North	23,973	972	15,468	7,533	2.05
Adelaide - North	23,919	6,715	-65	17,269	-0.00
Sydney - Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury	23,780	2,998	9,664	11,118	0.87
Australian Capital Territory	23,368	8,319	-4,042	19,091	-0.21
Geelong	21,821	4,312	10,141	7,368	1.38
Sydney - North Sydney and Hornsby	21,043	3,390	-14,571	32,224	-0.45

Region (SA4 Level)	Population change	Natural increase	Net domestic migration	Net overseas migration	Net overseas-to-domestic arrival rate
Perth - Inner	20,882	718	-3,095	23,259	-0.13
Sydney - Outer South West	19,141	7,672	2,743	8,726	0.31
Wide Bay	18,951	-2,199	15,887	5,263	3.02
Adelaide - Central and Hills	18,716	639	-3,130	21,207	-0.15
Sydney - Inner West	17,645	3,922	-13,032	26,755	-0.49
Hunter Valley excl Newcastle	16,226	3,749	9,219	3,258	2.83
Sydney - Eastern Suburbs	16,162	3,537	-17,363	29,988	-0.58
Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	15,502	1,757	4,623	9,122	0.51
Melbourne - Outer East	15,425	4,880	-8,241	18,786	-0.44
Adelaide - South	14,676	1,253	-960	14,383	-0.07
Sydney - Outer West and Blue Mountains	13,962	6,474	-442	7,930	-0.06
Mandurah	13,486	302	9,049	4,135	2.19
Brisbane - North	13,470	2,687	891	9,892	0.09
Sydney - Ryde	13,236	2,240	-7,079	18,075	-0.39
Moreton Bay - South	12,952	4,824	788	7,340	0.11
Brisbane - East	12,808	1,444	4,289	7,075	0.61
Bunbury	12,541	1,511	6,487	4,543	1.43
Adelaide - West	12,406	1,327	-2,979	14,058	-0.21
Illawarra	12,303	2,513	1,534	8,256	0.19
Brisbane - West	11,272	999	-1,807	12,080	-0.15
Cairns	11,211	2,088	408	8,715	0.05
Central Queensland	10,330	3,251	3,441	3,638	0.95
Latrobe - Gippsland	9,890	443	6,132	3,315	1.85
Townsville	9,317	3,204	1,025	5,088	0.20
Toowoomba	8,723	2,029	1,989	4,705	0.42
Sydney - Northern Beaches	8,705	2,011	-7,868	14,562	-0.54
Sydney - Sutherland	8,519	2,263	-263	6,519	-0.04
Ballarat	8,486	1,003	4,887	2,596	1.88
Darwin	8,069	4,069	-5,092	9,092	-0.56
Central Coast	7,990	608	49	7,333	0.01
Mackay - Isaac - Whitsunday	7,889	2,853	1,101	3,935	0.28
Capital Region	7,489	1,298	2,206	3,985	0.55
Mid North Coast	7,281	-2,565	7,582	2,264	3.35
Mornington Peninsula	7,025	1,071	-1,288	7,242	-0.18
Western Australia - Wheat Belt	6,780	605	3,346	2,829	1.18
Richmond - Tweed	6,073	-104	1,301	4,876	0.27
Bendigo	5,022	837	1,887	2,298	0.82
South Australia - South East	4,976	-1,052	2,985	3,043	0.98
Hume	4,768	364	1,835	2,569	0.71
Western Australia - Outback (North)	4,692	3,129	-1,687	3,250	-0.52
Murray	4,667	437	2,492	1,738	1.43
Coffs Harbour - Grafton	4,195	-222	1,950	2,467	0.79
Western Australia - Outback (South)	3,463	1,641	-1,173	2,995	-0.39
Northern Territory - Outback	3,387	2,289	-1,798	2,896	-0.62
Darling Downs - Maranoa	3,331	971	1,046	1,314	0.80

Region (SA4 Level)	Population change	Natural increase	Net domestic migration	Net overseas migration	Net overseas-to-domestic arrival rate
New England and North West	2,947	1,552	-1,698	3,093	-0.55
Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	2,903	-862	1,414	2,351	0.60
Barossa - Yorke - Mid North	2,708	-877	2,755	830	3.32
Central West	2,502	1,282	-1,231	2,451	-0.50
Hobart	2,116	1,471	-6,828	7,473	-0.91
Riverina	1,386	1,946	-3,757	3,197	-1.18
Shepparton	1,028	556	-2,088	2,560	-0.82
South East	1,019	78	482	459	1.05
Far West and Orana	1,009	1,484	-1,919	1,444	-1.33
Warrnambool and South West	989	221	-1,128	1,896	-0.59
Queensland - Outback	962	2,509	-2,720	1,173	-2.32
Launceston and North East	516	58	-2,361	2,819	-0.84
West and North West	310	-438	-466	1,214	-0.38
South Australia - Outback	295	515	-1,188	968	-1.23
Other Territories	92	-7	-	99	-
North West	-547	408	-3,813	2,858	-1.33
Total FY 2023 to 2025	**1,594,933**	**322,618**	**-**	**1,272,315**	**-**

Source: IPA, ABS

Where Melbournians and Sydneysiders are moving

Consistent with the outcome of previous research by the IPA, post-pandemic ABS data show that new migrants tend to settle in large capital cities, especially Sydney and Melbourne.

Over the course of the most recent three full financial years, net overseas migration contributed to about 108 per cent of Sydney's population growth and 86 per cent of Melbourne's population growth. Migration accounting for such a high proportion of total population growth is only possible because another component of population growth has been negative – in this case, domestic (i.e., net internal) migration.

Sydney and, to a lesser extent, Melbourne would have had a much larger population but for the number of Sydneysiders and Melbournians departing to areas such as Southeast Queensland (e.g., Logan, Ipswich, and the Sunshine Coast), regional NSW (e.g., the Mid North Coast and the Hunter Valley), and regional Victoria (e.g., Geelong and Ballarat). The data additionally show a net movement of people from Sydney and Melbourne not only to Perth, on the other side of the country, but also to regional Western Australia as well as the Northern Territory and other areas outside state capitals.

In the case of Sydneysiders, Melbourne itself was a target migration destination, without which Melbourne's domestic exodus would have been higher by roughly one third.

Specifically, the analysis finds:

- In net terms, 11,368 former residents of Sydney moved to Melbourne from 2023 to 2025.
- Domestic migration from Sydney and Melbourne to Brisbane totalled 20,184 from 2023 to 2025.
- Domestic migration from Sydney and Melbourne to the rest of Queensland totalled 29,403 from 2023 to 2025.
- Domestic migration from Sydney and Melbourne to Perth totalled 12,994 from 2023 to 2025.

- Domestic migration from Sydney and Melbourne to the rest of Western Australia totalled 2,642 from 2023 to 2025.
- The movement of Melbournians and Sydneysiders to other areas of their respective states was a significant component of overall movement, an accelerating phenomenon that defies the long-term historical trend of capital cities absorbing regional communities.[4]

***Table 3**: Regions of origin/destination of domestic migration to/from Sydney and Melbourne*

Region	Movement to / from (-)	
	Greater Sydney	Greater Melbourne
Australian Capital Territory	-3,089	1,921
Greater Adelaide	-1,042	4,117
Greater Brisbane	-14,272	-5,912
Greater Darwin	-63	896
Greater Hobart	1,014	3,693
Greater Melbourne	-11,368	
Greater Perth	-9,015	-3,979
Greater Sydney		11,368
Rest of New South Wales	-54,973	2,306
Rest of Northern Territory	-455	-851
Rest of Queensland	-17,558	-11,845
Rest of South Australia	-573	-359
Rest of Tasmania	-389	1,725
Rest of Victoria	-44	-30,585
Rest of Western Australia	-1,261	-1,381
Total domestic migration	**-113,088**	**-28,886**
Net overseas migration	**352,874**	**349,476**
Natural increase	**86,157**	**86,580**
Total change FY 2023 to 2025	**325,943**	**407,170**

Source: IPA, ABS

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End Notes

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Regional population, 2024-25 financial year' (31 March 2026): https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population/2024-25. This note builds on research in Kevin You and Morgan Begg, *Analysis of Regional Population, Migration, and Housing Data* (Institute of Public Affairs Research Note, March 2024).
2. See Jobs and Skills Australia, 'Jobs and Skills Atlas' (September 2025): https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/jobs-and-skills-atlas/about.
3. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS): Volume 1 – Main Structure and Greater Capital City Statistical Areas, July 2011' (23 December 2010): https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/B01A5912123E8D2BCA257801000C64F2?opendocument.
4. See Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, *The evolution of Australian towns* (Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development Research report 36, 2 May 2014): "Over the twentieth century, the strong long-term settlement pattern trends in Australia were increasing centralisation of population and activity, a decline in rural inland towns and growth in coastal locations".