

# Asylum seekers: onshore

June 2018

The Humanitarian Program comprises offshore and onshore components. The offshore component selects refugees overseas, with available places dependent on the number of asylum seekers granted refugee status in Australia (onshore). An increase in protection visas onshore results in a corresponding decrease offshore. (See *Fact Sheet 4* for the offshore program.)

Asylum seekers arrive onshore by sea or by air. Those who in past years **arrived by sea were classified as 'Irregular Maritime Arrivals' (IMA)**, those who arrive by air as **'non-Irregular Maritime Arrivals' (non-IMA)**. Most who arrive by air enter Australia as visitors or students.

The number of onshore refugee applications lodged by those arriving by air averaged 4,681 per annum from 2002-11, with a low of 3,062. In past years there was considerable variation in the number arriving by sea; an average of 1,312 from 2002-11, with no arrivals in some years. **In 2011-12, 7,983 asylum seekers arrived by boat, in 2012-13, 24,173.**

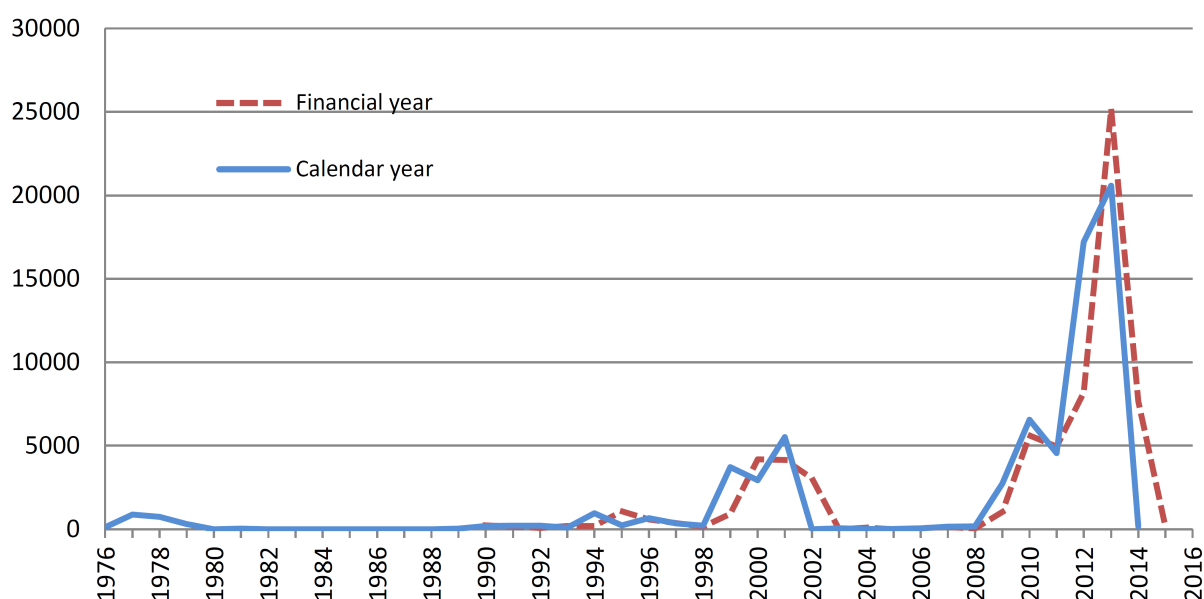
**Most onshore asylum seekers came from the Asian region.** In 2011-12, of asylum applications lodged by sea arrivals, 43% (3,179) were from Afghanistan, 21% (1,553) from Iran, and 11% (825) from Sri Lanka. Of arrivals by air, 17% (1,216) were from China, 13% (906) India and 9% (667) Pakistan.

**More men than women sought asylum within Australia.** In 2011-12, of arrivals by sea, 88% were male, 12%, female; of arrivals by air, 64% were male, 36% female. **The largest proportion was in the age group 18-30.**

In July 2013, Prime Minister Rudd announced that asylum seekers **arriving by boat would no longer have the opportunity for resettlement in Australia**, with their asylum claims processed in Papua New Guinea and Nauru.

The Liberal-National Coalition government, elected in September 2013, established **Operation Sovereign Borders, a military-led border security initiative to stop boat arrivals**. While details are incomplete, it is known that between 2013 and 2017, 30 boats carrying a total of 765 people were turned back and prevented from reaching Australian territory.

**Boat arrivals by calendar year since 1979 to 2014 and by financial year since 1989-90 to 2014-15**



Source: Janet Phillips, 'Boat arrivals and boat turnbacks in Australia since 1976: a quick guide to the statistics,' Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library, updated 17 January 2017. See also Janet Phillips, 'Boat "turnbacks" in Australia: a quick guide to the statistics since 2001,' Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library, updated 22 June 2017.