



Skilled Journeys: Navigating IT migration in Australia

Insights and findings from the ACS longitudinal study
of ICT-skilled migrants

March 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri People, the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our research team is located, and we recognise the ongoing impacts of colonisation on First Nations peoples around Australia and the world.

About this paper

This paper reports the findings and insights from the ACS longitudinal study of IT-skilled migrants, Skilled Journeys: Navigating IT migration in Australia. The research is ongoing, and regular reports will be published to inform policy discussions, service design and program development for Australia's migration system and migrant support initiatives.

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Foreword

With around 30 per cent of Australia's population born overseas, immigration has played a critical role in shaping our culture, society and economy and will continue to do so. Ensuring our migration system is working for Australia and for those who have or are seeking to migrate to Australia should be a priority.

However, the Federal Government's 2023 Migration Review laid bare a system that is no longer fit-for-purpose. Unclear objectives and years of piecemeal reforms have produced uncertainty and inefficiencies for business and migrants alike.

Our own research at CEDA has also shown that poor matching between migrants' skills and the jobs they work in is undermining the contribution they can make to Australia and the benefits they derive. While CEDA research found that a quarter of skilled migrants across the whole economy work in a job below their skill level, this report shows outcomes are even worse for ICT migrants, one-third of which report working in a job below their skill level.

This report, which presents the first findings in a new longitudinal survey of outcomes for skilled migrants in ICT, thus comes at a critical moment for Australia's immigration system.

If migrants continue to find it hard to get a job at their skill level in Australia, we will struggle to attract the best talent in technology and other sectors at a time when these skills are critical for leveraging emerging opportunities. This challenge will only grow as other nations compete for workers with in-demand ICT skills. Reforms to the migration system are underway, but there is a long way to go.

This report highlights several key issues for skilled ICT migrants in Australia: the complexity of the migration system; concerns around discrimination; and the need to better recognise international experience. These findings are also reflected more broadly in CEDA's recent report "Making better use of migrants' skills".

Australia is currently facing significant structural adjustments, including digital transformation and decarbonisation. Both will require a rapid expansion of our technology workforce in coming years. The sector

already relies heavily on migrants to deliver skilled workers, and this need will only grow. Almost 60 per cent of ICT professionals in Australia were born overseas, while the ACS has estimated that 1.3 million tech workers will be needed by 2030.

The findings of the ACS's important work in this report show that some elements of the migration system are working well for ICT migrants. Overall, they report positive experiences. But the challenges for skilled migrants outlined in this report must be used to inform better policy if Australia is to continue attract, retain and deploy the skills we need.

CEDA has for many years had a strong focus on migration in our research, advocacy and public forums. This report is a welcome addition to our understanding of the settlement experiences of migrants in a critical sector for Australia, informed by the perspectives of migrants themselves.





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Executive summary

Australia's migration system is stressed. The Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon. Clare O'Neil MP, has gone so far as to describe it as a 'broken'¹ system, with migrants using the Australian education system as a 'back door' to permanent residency (PR). The Government now seeks to embrace this reality by allowing overseas students to apply for permanent residency and formalise existing practices. In doing so, Australia's communities and economy stand to reap the rewards as skilled migrants move from study to rewarding jobs, careers and lives in Australia.

In 2023, ACS established its ICT-skilled migrants longitudinal study, exploring the migration experiences and outcomes for this group of professionals. The research delivered several findings that will support the evolution of our migration system. Those findings are presented in this paper, *Skilled Journeys: Navigating IT migration in Australia*.

Compared to 2017, more ICT-skilled migrants are arriving in Australia to study or fill work placements and then seeking permanent residency than migrants applying for permanent residency while overseas.

ACS has been particularly interested in identifying and exploring employment outcomes for ICT-skilled migrants. Data from the 2017 to 2019 entry cohorts shows that more than 9 in 10 found employment, and 8 out of 10 found jobs in IT. Given the shortage of skilled IT workers in Australia² and the high number of employer-sponsored visas for Software and Applications Programmers (1,492 in 2021-22 versus 782 in 2018-19), it is evident that the local industry is soaking up supply.

Moreover, the Government's focus on migration to regional areas appears to be paying dividends, with recent cohorts more likely to live outside Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Most intend to stay in regional areas.

However, ICT-skilled migrants have mixed feelings about their migration experiences. While most (73%) would recommend it to others, there are issues with the complexity of the migration process, negative experiences with employers who are not always favourable towards visa holders (55% say their visa rights were a hindrance in finding a job) and in some cases, discrimination (28% felt discriminated due to their migrant status).

Overall, the best opportunities to improve migrant outcomes may lie in setting expectations (salary, job prospects, etc.) and helping employers understand the opportunities they can realise when hiring ICT-skilled migrants. Although almost all ICT-skilled migrants find a job, many spend up to a year searching, a crucial period during which they will need significant support because of the stress and uncertainty associated with the process.

Skilled migrants are spending more time in Australia before they start work. They generally hold locally gained higher qualifications, with more recent migrants having postgraduate degrees (mostly Masters). What they need is experience and training. These shifts and the survey's findings inform how the Australian Government, industry and organisations like ACS can better support ICT-skilled migrants and how the skilled migration system can evolve for better outcomes for people, communities and the Australian economy.

¹ <https://minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/ClareONeil/Pages/how-australia-broke-its-migration-system.aspx>

² <https://www.techrepublic.com/article/aiaa-survey-2023-australia-it-skills-shortage/>



Introduction

ACS is the leading Information and Communication Technology (ICT) professional association with over 47,000 members representing Australia's technology community across industry, government and education. We aim to grow the nation's digital skills capabilities and industry capacity and inspire the next generation of technology professionals.

ACS is also the authorised assessing authority for the ICT sector, providing skills assessments for migration purposes. We assess the skills and qualifications of ICT professionals considering migration to Australia, particularly those interested in migration under the General Skilled Migration categories. This works in Australia's national interest, facilitating the entry of skilled migrants to supplement the Australian workforce in areas of domestic shortage to ensure continued economic growth and prosperity.

Australia is a popular destination for ICT-skilled migrants due to its growing tech industry and high demand for skilled professionals.

Skilled Journeys: Navigating IT migration in Australia

A key migration policy debate centres on defining migration goals and whether the current system facilitates their achievement. However, little is known about the migration and employment outcomes of ICT-skilled migrants in this sector or the experiences of migrants. The overall aim of this research is to provide a basis of knowledge to understand better how the current system functions and the outcomes it achieves, both for ICT-skilled migrants and for our country.

In this study, ACS explores migration and employment outcomes from technology sector workers who arrived in Australia from 2017. This paper presents the findings from the survey, which is the first in a new longitudinal tracking program focused on ICT skilled migration outcomes. Areas assessed for experiences and success factors are:

- obtaining an Australian visa
- relocating to Australia
- obtaining employment in the Australian tech sector
- working in a job that aligns with knowledge, skills and experience
- achievement of the migrant's goals and aspirations

The study also addresses the following secondary objectives:

- Identifying challenges or obstacles faced by ICT-skilled migrants in the technology sector in Australia
- Identifying trends and themes in migration, including migrant challenges with changing migration policy and initiatives and outcomes

Project methodology

The findings in this paper are based on a survey undertaken between 26th July and 10th August 2023.

The target audience for the research was ICT-skilled migrants in the tech sector who have completed ACS skills assessments from July 2017 to July 2022 and their Professional Year (PY). The sampling frame constituted N=64,704 individual contact names and associated email addresses.

The survey (see Appendix 4) was distributed via email lists targeting ICT-skilled migrants in Australia's tech sector. Our research technology Partner, The Evolved Group, sent it using a professional survey platform.

The final count of completed surveys was n=1,400 (a response rate of 2.2%). To maximise the base sample, the analysis also includes data from participants who dropped out at different stages of the survey, which increases the analysable base of surveys to n=2,303 (a response rate of 3.6%).

The results were weighted to the sampling frame profile for country of birth (see Appendix 2 for the sample profile).

The median duration for respondents to complete it was 13.8 minutes.

All research activity was conducted in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), the Australian Privacy Principles, the Research Society's Code of Professional Practice and the Privacy (Market and Social Research) Code 2021. All comparisons use standard industry statistical tests at the $p < .05$ confidence level.

Definitions and abbreviations

Migration Assessment Year (cohort): the year in which the migrant completed their ACS Skills Assessment (from 2017 to 2022).

Migration Skills Assessment (MSA): the program designed to assess an applicant's IT skills for migration purposes. ACS conducts MSAs for IT professionals.

PR: Permanent Residency

Professional Year (PY): The ACS Professional Year Program is a structured work development program combining formal learning and workplace experience for international students who have graduated from a university in Australia. It is intended to enhance the employability of international students, especially those who studied Information and Communication Technology (ICT), by providing work readiness training and a 12-week work internship.



Insights from the survey

Most ICT-skilled migrants feel it was a good decision to migrate.

- Most ICT-skilled migrants consider migrating to Australia a good decision, with a solid willingness to recommend migration to others.
- This positive perception could be leveraged in promotional campaigns and information sessions abroad to attract skilled ICT professionals, particularly in under-serviced industries and roles.

There has been a shift from offshore to onshore applications.

- Findings highlight a significant shift in ICT skilled migration applications from offshore to onshore, correlating with increased migrants arriving to study or for work placements before seeking PR.
- This shift suggests that visa policies and skilled migration programs must more fully account for the transition from student visas to skilled migration pathways and potentially provide clearer pathways to PR for those completing Australian qualifications.
- The increase in onshore visa applications after Australian education or study has implications for services like the ACS Professional Year (PY) program, as many participants have secured jobs by the time they complete the program. Policies and programs may need to adapt to the changing profile of skilled migrants, ensuring that such transitional services remain relevant and beneficial.

The visa process has an impact on employment trajectories and outcomes.

- More than half of the ICT-skilled migrants reported that their visa and work rights hindered their job search, with recent cohorts experiencing this more acutely.
- It would be valuable to explore opportunities to streamline visa processes and address the perceived barriers that skilled migrants face in finding employment, including providing more support programs by ACS.

For a minority, finding a job in tech remains challenging.

- Even though a high proportion of migrants find employment in IT, there's a sizeable minority of ICT-skilled migrants who take more than six months to secure a job in the sector or end up employed outside of IT.
- This suggests we need a greater focus on targeted job placement programs and employer incentives to hire recent migrants and enhancing recognition of international experience to mitigate local experience preferences.

Discrimination is a problem.

- Approximately one-quarter of respondents felt discriminated against due to their migration status, with recent cohorts increasingly reporting this issue.
- Policies may need to emphasise anti-discrimination enforcement and education within workplaces, ensuring migrants feel welcomed and valued.

Skilled migrants have a strong desire for permanent residency and citizenship

- Most ICT-skilled migrants intend to stay in Australia long-term, and most seek PR or citizenship.
- Policy efforts might focus on smoothing the path to permanent residency and citizenship to attract and retain global talent. This could include re-evaluating points-based immigration to ensure it reflects skilled ICT professionals' value and potential contributions.

More support is needed for ICT-skilled migrants in regional parts of Australia.

- An increasing number of ICT-skilled migrants live outside Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane, indicating a trend towards regional migration.
- Policies should continue to support regional migration initiatives, possibly providing additional incentives for migrants and employers in regional areas. There may also be a need to ensure that infrastructure and professional opportunities in these areas keep pace with the growing population of skilled workers.

Our findings

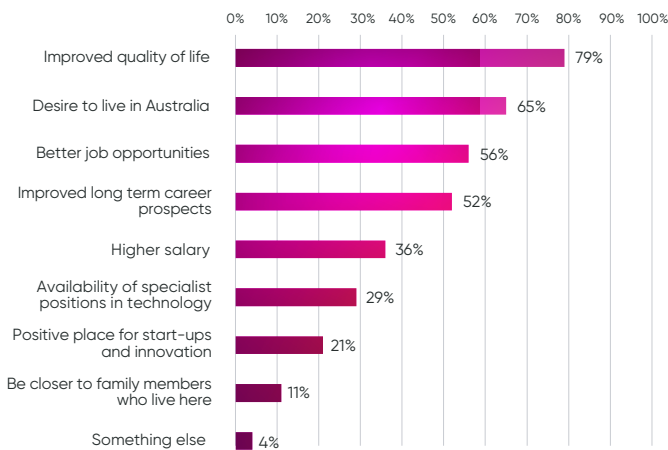
The migrant journey to Australia

Lifestyle is a crucial reason ICT-skilled migrants choose Australia.

ICT professionals are in demand globally, and Australia is just one of many countries they could choose to migrate to. Our survey sought to answer the foundational question: 'Why do skilled migrants choose to migrate to Australia?'

Figure 1 shows that the two main reasons to migrate to Australia were not related to employment specifically but to *improved quality of life* (79%) and the *desire to live in Australia* (65%). Having noted this, it should be pointed out that the availability of jobs remains a compelling factor for migrants. More than half (56%) said they wanted *better job opportunities* or *improved long-term career prospects* (52%). Many were also looking for a *higher salary* (36%) and wanted to *find specialist positions in technology* (29%).

Figure 1: Reasons for migration to Australia



A3: Thinking back, what were your main reasons for migrating to Australia?

Base: All Including Incompletes (n=2,058)

Comparing these results across cohorts shows that reasons to migrate have remained relatively consistent across assessment years, but jobs have become a more critical factor in recent intakes:

- The proportion of ICT-skilled migrants citing *better job opportunities* is higher in more recent intakes (51% noted in 2017 versus 62% in the 2022 cohort).

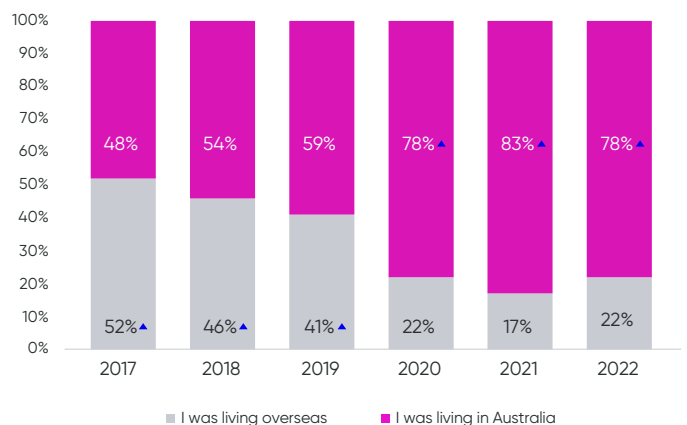
- The *availability of specialist positions in technology* was cited more in the 2022 cohort (34%) than in the cohorts of 2019 (25%) or 2017/2018 (27%).
- On the other hand, the proportion desiring an *improved quality of life* was lower in later intake years (86% in 2018 versus 74% in the 2022 cohort).

Motivations also differed depending on the place of application lodgment – those applying off-shore were more likely to be motivated by the appeal of *improved quality of life* (86%), *desire to live in Australia* (74%) and *being closer to family* (18%), whereas those already living in Australia looked for *better job opportunities* (58%) and *availability of specialist positions* (31%).

The circumstances of skilled migration are changing.

Most ICT-skilled migrants started their migration journey from within Australia (67%), but our survey shows a significant shift from offshore lodging to onshore. COVID accelerated an existing trend with the change most evident from 2020, after which almost four in five applications have been onshore versus around half prior.

Figure 2: Place of residence at the time of applying versus year of MSA finalisation

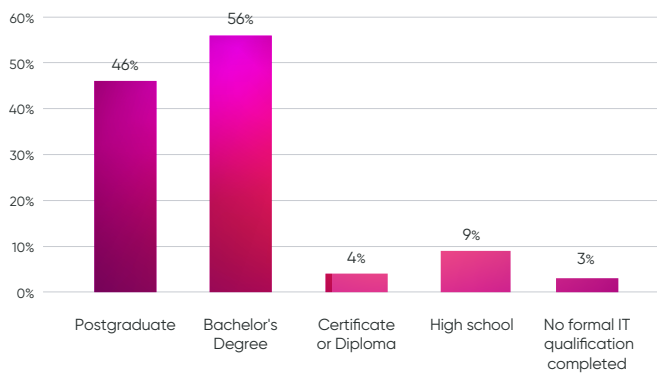


A1: Our records show you submitted your ACS Skilled Migrant Assessment in {submission}. At that time, were you living in Australia or overseas?

Base: All Including Incompletes (n=2,303) | ▲▼ significantly higher / lower at p<.05 versus overall average

ICT-skilled migrants are well educated, with 56% holding a *Bachelor's Degree* and 46% a *Postgraduate* qualification. The proportion holding postgraduate qualifications has increased year on year since 2018. Also of note, the level of qualification differs depending on place of birth: migrants most likely to hold post-graduate qualifications were from *China* (74%), *Nepal* (66%) and *South Asia* (58%).

Figure 3: Educational status at the time of applying

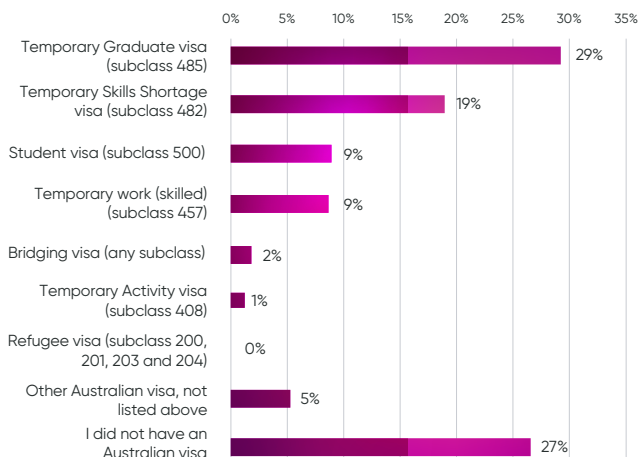


A2: What IT qualification/s (Australian equivalent) did you hold in {submission date}?

Base: All Including Incompletes (n=2,113)

The most popular visa across all cohorts since 2017 has been the Temporary Graduate Visa (subclass 485) (29%), followed by the Temporary Skills Shortage Visa (subclass 482) (19%). Together, these visas were held by almost half of ICT-skilled migrants when they applied for their ACS MSA.

Figure 4: Visa held at the time of submission



A4: At that time in {submission date}, what visa did you hold, as either a primary or secondary holder?

Base: All Including Incompletes (n=2,009)

Temporary Graduate Visas (subclass 485) and temporary skills shortage visas (subclass 482) became significantly more prevalent from 2020. Concurrently, the proportion of ICT-skilled migrants who applied for the ACS MSA without an Australian visa dropped considerably due to the shift to onshore application by arrivals who were educated in Australia.

Table 1: Visa status pre-submission by MSA finalisation year (cohort)

Column %	Cohort Year					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485)	14%	14%	24%	36%	43%	42%
Temporary Skills Shortage visa (subclass 482)	9%	12%	20%	32%	24%	19%
Student visa (subclass 500)	3%	6%	11%	8%	12%	13%
Temporary work (skilled) (subclass 457)	18%	20%	7%	2%	1%	0%
Bridging visa (any subclass)	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	3%
Temporary Activity visa (subclass 408)	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	4%
Refugee visa (subclass 200, 201, 203 and 204)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Australian visa, not listed above	7%	7%	6%	4%	4%	3%
I did not have an Australian visa	48%	40%	30%	16%	12%	15%
Base (n=)	250	459	276	243	460	317

A4: At that time in {submission date}, what visa did you hold, as either a primary or secondary holder?

Base: All Including Incompletes (n=2,009) | ▲ ▼ significantly higher / lower at p<.05 versus overall average

Migration employment outcomes

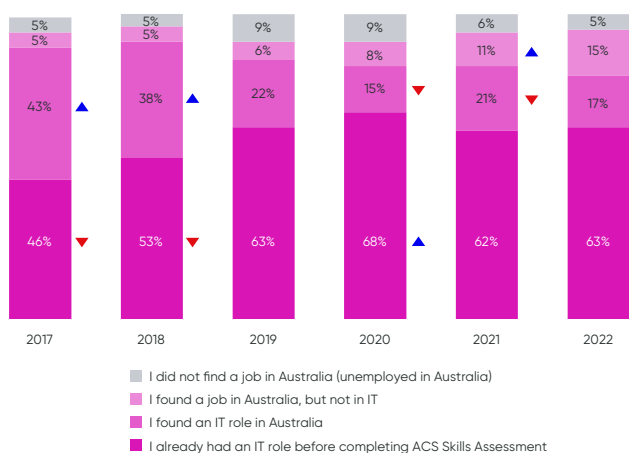
Not all ICT-skilled migrants find a job in tech.

The shift towards on-shore applications and local education has had flow-on effects. ICT-skilled migrants are now much more likely to have a job already when they complete the ACS MSA: 46% of the 2017 cohort said they had a job when they completed the ACS MSA compared to 68% in 2020, when the proportion peaked. The proportion has remained above 60% in every intake since 2019. The proportion of people still seeking a role after assessment has declined substantially, but those who found a job outside the tech sector have increased (from 5% in the 2018 cohort to 15% in the 2022 cohort).

Whilst the COVID-affected intakes of 2019 and 2020 were more likely to have not found a job (in both cohorts, 9% said they did not find a job in Australia), the level of unemployed has tracked steadily at around 5% across cohorts since 2021 indicating the elevated unemployment was transitory.

The shift towards onshore application also impacts the ACS and its PY program. With more onshore visa applications following the completion of Australian education, there are also more ICT-skilled migrants completing the PY. Given that the PY's purpose is job readiness, it is significant that many migrants obliged to complete the PY already have a job. The ACS is aware of the need to reorient and align content to reflect this shift, particularly in light of indicators from the government of more substantial support for the onshore migration option.

Figure 5: Employment status at the time of the MSA finalisation



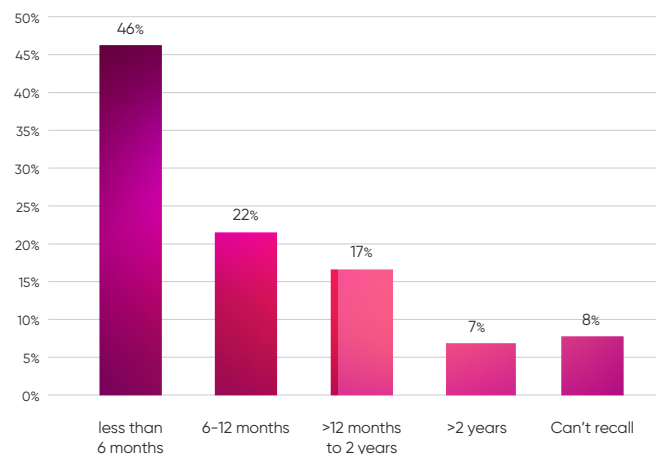
B1: Did you find an IT job in Australia after receiving a suitable ACS Migration Skills Assessment

Base: All Including Incompletes (n=1,950) | ▲▼ significantly higher / lower at p<.05 versus overall average

If you don't have a job, finding one is more challenging than it used to be.

Overall, just under half (46%) of ICT-skilled migrants who did not have a job found their first job *within six months* of completing the ACS MSA. Most (85%) said they found their first job *within two years*, while 15% indicated it took more than two years. These findings suggest that some migrants are locked out of the Australian tech sector for a considerable period. The factors that may contribute to this are explored later in this paper.

Figure 6: How long it took to find a job for those who found employment



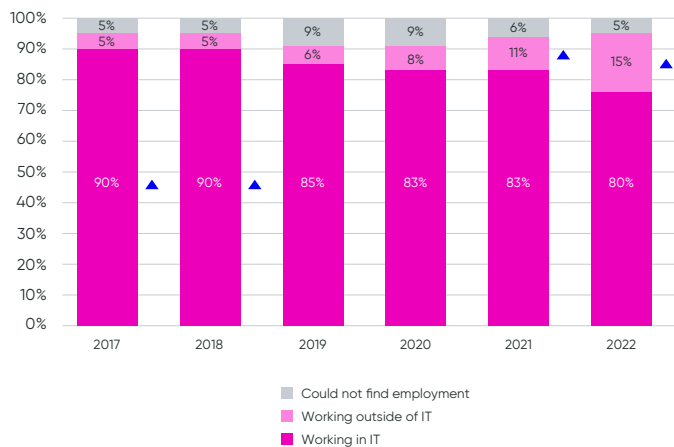
B2: How long did it take you to find your first Australian role in IT after receiving a suitable Migration Skills Assessment

Base: B1=2/found a job in IT role/ n=514

Whilst migrants completing the ACS MSA are increasingly likely to be already employed locally, it is taking those without a job longer to find one. Figure 7 below aggregates all job outcomes to highlight that earlier entry cohorts were more likely to have found a job after completing the ACS MSA but were also more likely to work outside of tech.

Amongst the 2017 cohort, 90% had found a job at the time of the survey compared to 80% of those who completed the ACS MSA in 2022. Fifteen per cent of this latter cohort were working outside the tech sector

Figure 7: IT industry job outcomes by MSA cohort



B1: Did you find an IT job in Australia after receiving a suitable ACS Migration Skills Assessment

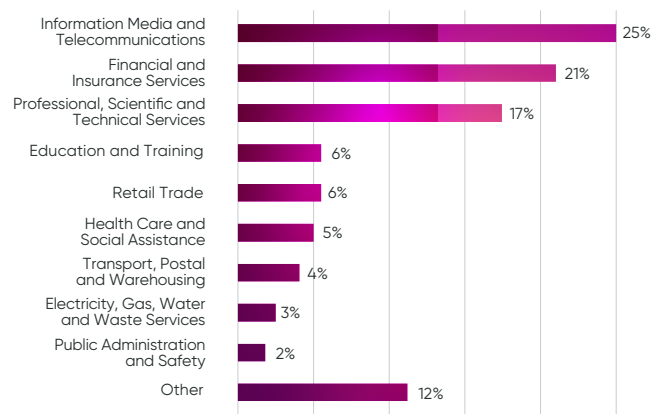
Base: All Including Incompletes (n=1,950) | ▲▼ significantly higher / lower at p<.05 versus overall average

In summary, most ICT-skilled migrants find a job in Australia. Those that do tend to stay employed in the industry. However, the critical trend evident is that, as migration has shifted from offshore to onshore, more skilled migrants are finding employment before they complete the ACS MSA (Figure 5). Finding a job can take time for those without employment before their ACS MSA. More recent cohorts are more likely to be working outside the tech sector.

ICT-skilled migrants find work across many industries and are well-paid.

Returning to those employed within the tech industry, the survey findings reveal that ICT-skilled migrants fill diverse roles across our economic landscape. The top three industries in which ICT-skilled migrants were employed at the time of the survey were *information media and telecommunication* (25%), *financial and insurance services* (21%) and *professional, scientific and technical services* (17%). These three industries account for just under two-thirds of ICT-skilled migrant employment.

Figure 8: Industry of ICT-skilled migrants at the time of the survey



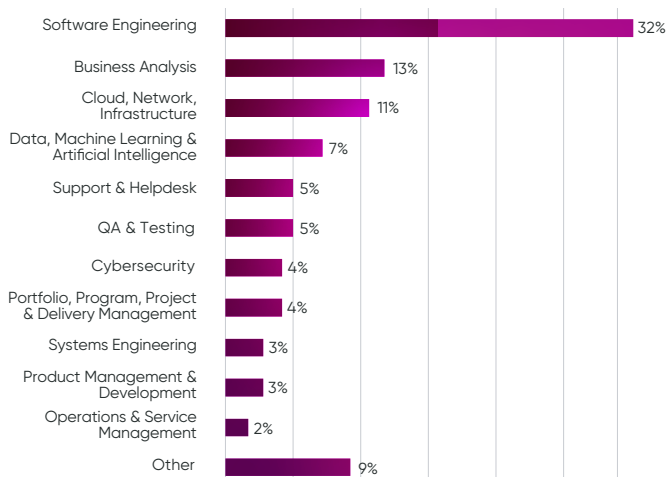
C6: What industry sector are you working in?

Base: currently employed /C4=1-5/ including Incompletes (n=1,676)

Comparing cohort years, a shift is evident towards diversification across industry sectors, with a reduced share in finance compared to pre-COVID years. To illustrate, 26% of employees in the 2017 cohort and 28% of employees in the 2018 cohort worked in *Financial and Insurance Services* compared to 15% of the 2021 cohort and 12% of the 2022 cohort (i.e. less than half the earlier period). Recent cohorts are also more likely generally to work across *retail trade, information media and telecommunications, professional, scientific and technical services* and *transport, and postal and warehousing*.

Almost a third of applicants said their job title during the survey was *Software Engineering*, with 13% saying they worked as a *Business Analyst* and 11% in a *Cloud, Network and Infrastructure* role. Overall, the spread of skills, including specialists in strategically important areas such as *Cybersecurity* (4%) and *Data, Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence* (7%), was notable.

Figure 9: Job title of ICT-skilled migrants at the time of the survey



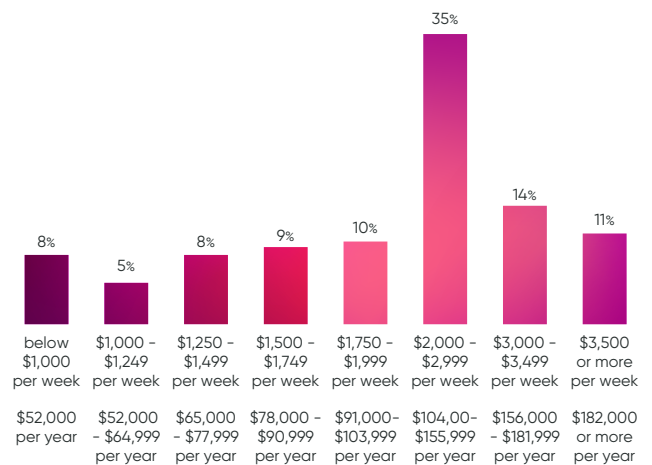
C7: What is your IT job title (select the option that best applies, you can search using the search box).

Base: working in IT role /C4=1-4/ including Incompletes (n=1,525)

The top three job titles have remained consistent across all ACS MSA completion cohorts except for 2022, which had a significantly larger share of jobs within *Support & Helpdesk* (14% versus 2% for the 2017 Cohort).

Over half of the ACS MSA applicants declared a 6-figure yearly income (pre-tax). The mean annual salary of ACS MSA skilled migrants is **\$118,958/year (\$2,288/week)**, almost the same as reported by ABS in August 2023 in the IT sector (\$2,317).

Figure 10: Salary of ICT-skilled migrants at the time of the survey



C8: In which of the following brackets does your pre-tax base salary fall?

Base: currently working /C4=1-5/ including Incompletes; result shown excluding "prefer not to say" (n=1,395)

Reflecting earlier results and entry cohorts, income was lower on average for more recent entry cohorts. Specifically, applicants who finalised their ACS MSA in the most recent two years were more often in the lower income brackets. The highest mean values of yearly pre-tax salary were reported by 2017 and 2018 applicants, reaching nearly \$140,000/year (over 50% more than for the 2022 cohort). Generally, results suggest that later cohorts have commenced working in more junior roles and are paid less and that those here longer have worked their way into more senior and highly paid specialist roles³.

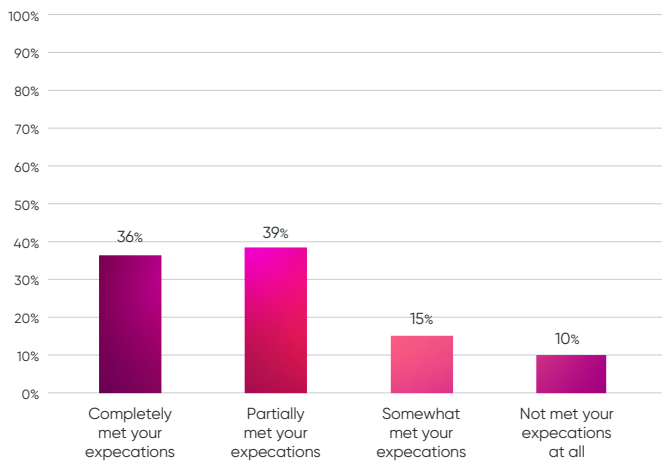
³ Note that it could also be the case that earlier cohorts landed higher paid roles immediately, however, the overall pattern or results suggest otherwise.

ICT-skilled migrants have mixed experiences finding a job.

The survey went beyond job *outcomes* to ask respondents about their *experiences* in finding a job. Specifically, this survey sought to quantify the extent to which experiences have been positive or negative relative to expectations. Overall, findings suggest that whilst most migrants achieve their goals, the experience of finding work in Australia can be personally and professionally challenging.

As shown in **Figure 11** below, 36% of the ICT-skilled migrants surveyed agreed that *experiences completely met their expectations*. Of the remainder, 39% said their expectations had been *partially met*, 15% said they were *somewhat met*, and 10% said *they had not met their expectations at all*.

Figure 11: Overall employment outcomes since migrating – extent to which expectations met



D2: Please rate your employment experience as a migrant in Australia.

Base: All migrated to Australia Including Incompletes (n=1,719)

In addition to rating their overall employment outcomes, respondents were asked to rate specific contributing elements of that experience (Figure 12).

The data shows that expectations were most likely to be met when it came to *finding a job in your preferred field* (44% met fully, 27% partially) and somewhat less so for *progression towards career goals* (31% fully, 40% partly), *salary/earnings* (30% fully, 40% partly) and *ease of finding a job* (26% fully met and 31% partly).

Figure 12: Employment outcome ratings



D2: Please rate your employment experience as a migrant in Australia.

Base: All migrated to Australia Including Incompletes (n=1,719) | ▲▼ significantly higher / lower at p<.05

Further analysis of these ratings by cohort reveals:

- The more recent ACS MSA cohorts were less likely to feel the ease of finding a job overall, finding a job in their preferred field, and having their salary or earnings fully meet their expectations. This accords with earlier findings about time to find a job and employment outside of IT being less favourable in recent cohorts.
- The proportion saying their overall employment outcomes have been met declined significantly from 2019 onwards, which coincides with the impacts of COVID and the move to higher levels of onshore visa applications. Whether this effect is transitory remains to be seen.
- Those intending to apply for citizenship were more likely to say their employment experiences completely met expectations (61%) versus those who said they were not interested in citizenship (36% completely met). This likely reflects that ICT-skilled migrants who felt their objectives were met were more likely to want to settle.

Despite the challenges, most ICT-skilled migrants achieve their goals.

As well as asking migrants to give their goals for migrating, the survey also asked them to indicate if their goals had been achieved. The table below shows the proportion of the sample that said they had met their. Of note:

- Overall, most ICT-skilled migrants (79%) said they had an improved quality of life after migrating to Australia. The figure was 86% amongst those who indicated that improved quality of life motivated migration.
- Almost three quarters (72%) who had indicated a higher salary was a goal said they had achieved a higher salary (45% of all ICT-skilled migrants).
- Around seven in ten (69%) who wanted better job opportunities said they had found them (49% of the total base).
- Slightly less (66%) indicated they had improved long-term career prospects where that was a goal (48% of the total).

While these are positive outcomes, less positive outcomes were evident for:

- Improved access to innovation (57% of those for whom this was a stated goal and 28% overall); and
- Finding a desired specialised position in technology (53% achieved by those with this goal and 31% overall).

Table 2: % where goal stated was met

	D1. Goals Achieved		
	% with Goal	% of total Base	% Who had the goal
Improved quality of life (n=1,218)	79%	79%	86%
Higher salary (n=476)	36%	45%	72%
Better job opportunities (n=676)	56%	49%	69%
Improved long-term career prospects (n=591)	52%	48%	66%
Improved access to innovation (n=203)	21%	28%	57%
Found a desired specialist position in technology (n=268)	29%	31%	53%

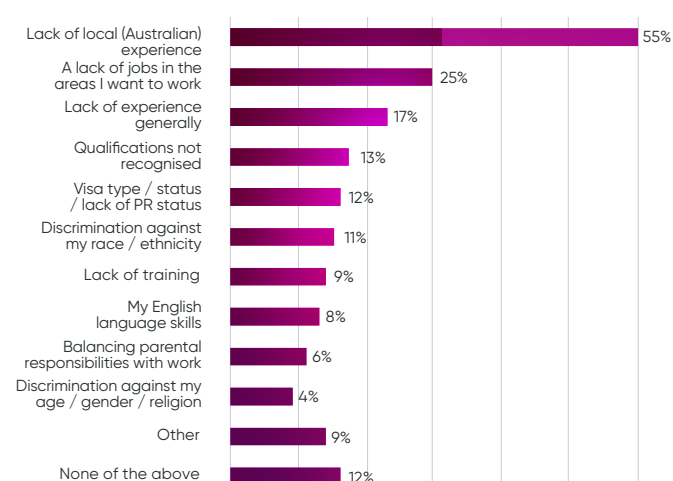
D1: Which of the following have you experienced since migrating to Australia.

Base: All migrated to Australia Including Incompletes (n=1,776)

ICT-skilled migrants feel blocked by their lack of experience.

Respondents who indicated that only some of their expectations of finding a job were met were asked about their main challenges. Results are presented in Figure 13. Overall, the results show that lack of experience was the main stated challenge in finding a job – either *lack of local (Australian) experience* (55%) or *lack of experience generally* (25%).

Figure 13: Challenges faced by ICT-skilled migrants when finding a job in Australia



D6: You said the ease of finding a job only {D2_1}. Which of the following were factors in your difficulty finding a job in Australia?
 Base: : BASE: D2_1=2.3.4 (ease of finding a job less than fully met expectations) / (n=1,074)

Lack of experience generally was the most cited factor amongst the 2021 (24%) and 2022 (28%) cohorts compared to earlier cohorts. For example, only 15% of those who completed the ACS MSA in 2017 said this was a factor in their challenges finding a job.

Also significant is that people applying for their visa onshore were generally more likely to cite a lack of experience (22%) than people who applied offshore (only 4%). Yet the opposite was true regarding *lack of local (Australian) specific experience* (64% cited by those applying offshore versus 51% onshore). This likely reflects onshore visa applicants being younger on average and, therefore, at an earlier career stage.

Further evidence of the lack of job experience as a barrier to employment is found amongst people who either only found employment outside of IT or could not find employment at all. Both groups were more likely to cite a *lack of experience generally* (48% and 26%, respectively) than those who found a job (13%).

Experience is important. ACS's PY Program and other bridging programs could consider a program to promote internships or placements of ICT-skilled migrants to validate job readiness over qualifications alone – local or otherwise.

Aside from these experience-related factors, the biggest challenge reported was *the lack of jobs in the [geographic] areas where they want to work*, cited by 25% of ICT-skilled migrants. A further one in ten (11%) felt *discriminated against due to their race/ethnicity*. The level of self-reported discrimination has been relatively consistent across intake years. It was twice as likely to be reported by respondents who had applied from onshore than those applying offshore (13% versus 5%).

The ACS Professional Year is helpful to ICT-skilled migrants.

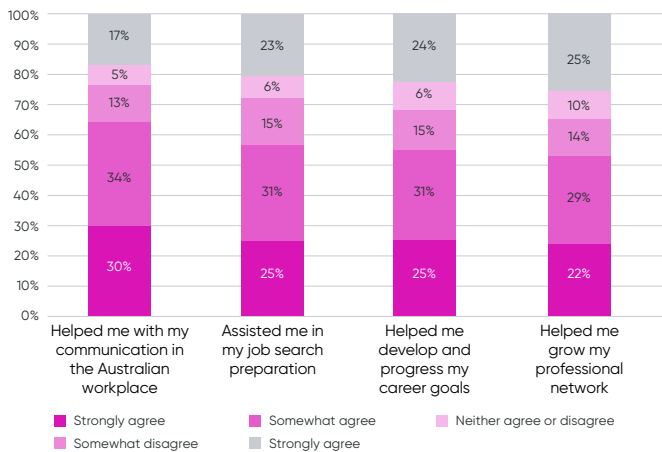
The ACS MSA program and the ACS PY Program are related but serve different purposes. The ACS MSA program is designed to assess an applicant's skills for migration purposes, while the PY Program aims to prepare graduates for professional careers in the Australian workforce.

The ACS PY Program is a structured professional development program combining formal learning and workplace experience for international students who have graduated from a university in Australia. It is intended to enhance the employability of international students, especially those who studied Information and Communication Technology (ICT), by providing work readiness training and a 12-week work internship.

ACS PY participants spend 32 weeks training and complete a 12-week ICT intern placement to provide practical workplace experience. After successful completion, participants might be eligible for additional points on the Department of Home Affairs points test when applying for a visa.

This study found that the PY experience was a positive experience for most ICT-skilled migrants who completed it. Half and two-thirds agreed it helped them navigate the Australian workplace and progress their careers. Feedback has been consistent across cohorts.

Figure 14: Experiences of the ACS PY – agree/disagree



D4: ...and how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Professional Year in IT.

Base: sample tagged PY in IT, Including Incompletes (n=407)

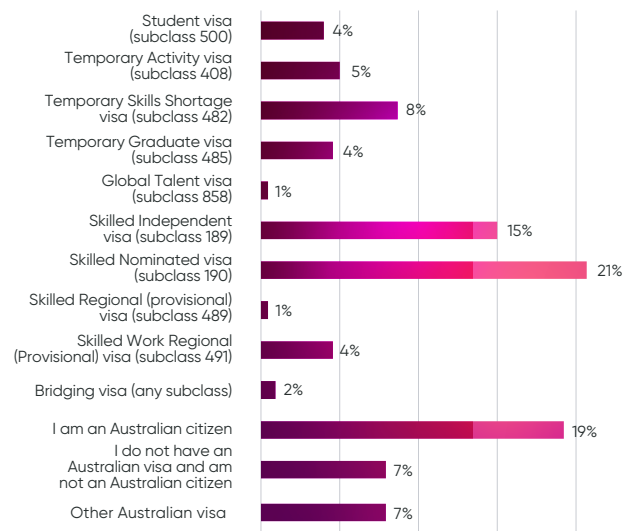
Permanent residency and citizenship outcomes

The mix of visas obtained has changed over recent years.

The survey also considered the outcomes for migrants in terms of visas granted and achievement of permanent residency (PR) and citizenship. This section explores outcomes in this area and considers more general migration experiences.

A third (35%) of ICT-skilled migrants said they held a Skilled Independent or Nominated visa (subclasses 189 and 190) at the time of the survey. Almost one in five of the ACS MSA applicants surveyed were Australian citizens.

Figure 15: Visa status at the time of the survey



C1: What visa do you currently hold?

Base: All migrated to Australia including Incompletes excluding prefer not to say 4% (n=1,790)

There have been significant shifts in visa holdings since 2017, with a broader range of visas held now than in the past, suggesting increasing complexity within the visa system. Whilst the proportion of Skilled Nominated 190 visa holders increased post-COVID, it dropped back in 2022. ICT-skilled migrants in the 2022 cohort were more likely to hold 408 or 485 Student Visas and Bridging Visas due to the shift towards onshore applications and local education (table 3).

Table 3: % Visa held at time of survey by intake year

Column %	Cohort Year					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190)	14%	18%	19%	26%	25%	19%
Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189)	29%	29%	13%	5%	4%	4%
Temporary Skills Shortage visa (subclass 482)	3%	1%	7%	11%	13%	12%
Temporary Activity visa (subclass 408)	0%	1%	2%	5%	8%	14%
Employer Nomination Scheme visa (subclass 186)	1%	2%	2%	5%	10%	7%
Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 491)	0%	1%	5%	4%	10%	3%
Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485)	0%	0%	3%	4%	5%	14%
Student visa (subclass 500)	1%	1%	4%	3%	6%	7%
Bridging visa (any subclass)	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%	6%
Other Australian visa not listed above	7%	6%	4%	4%	3%	1%
I do not have an Australian visa and am not an Australian citizen	6%	7%	10%	12%	3%	7%
Prefer not to disclose	2%	3%	5%	4%	4%	8%
I am an Australian citizen	36%	30%	25%	14%	5%	0%
Base (n=)	250	459	276	243	460	317

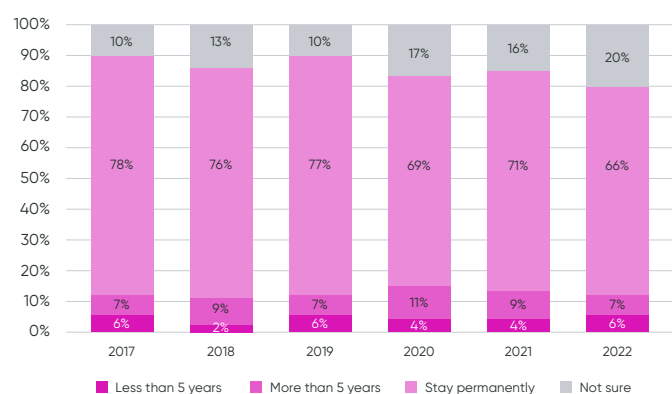
C1: What visa do you currently hold?

Base: All migrated to Australia including Incompletes (n=1,872)

Most ICT-skilled migrants want to stay for the long term.

The intention to stay permanently in Australia is clear overall. Across all cohorts, at least 80% indicated an intent to remain for at least three years. More recent cohorts were less confident about staying, reflecting the complexity of the decision and the need for certainty of factors such as job outcomes. Put another way, in 2022, only 6% had a definite intent to stay for less than five years, with others either uncertain or wanting to stay longer.

Figure 16: Intention to stay in Australia versus year of ACS MSA finalisation

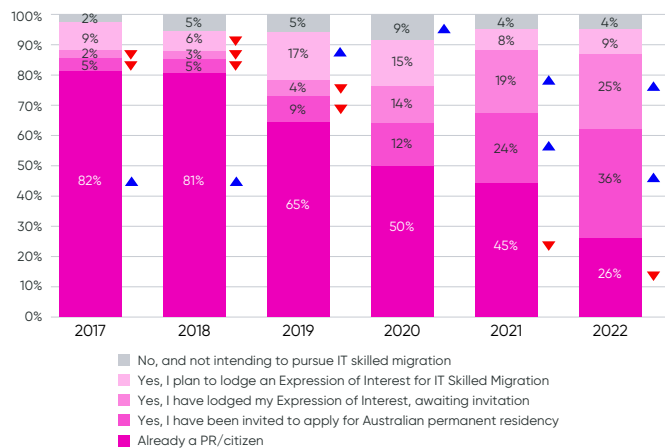


C10: Thinking ahead, how long do you intend to stay in Australia?

Base: Reside in Australia including incompletes (n=1,666) | ▲▼significantly higher / lower at p<.05

Consistent with these results, PR is a goal for most ICT-skilled migrants, with only one in twenty not intending to obtain it (Figure 16). Over time, the aggregate proportion that has sought or wants to pursue PR has remained stable.

Figure 17: Permanent residency intention versus year of ACS MSA finalisation

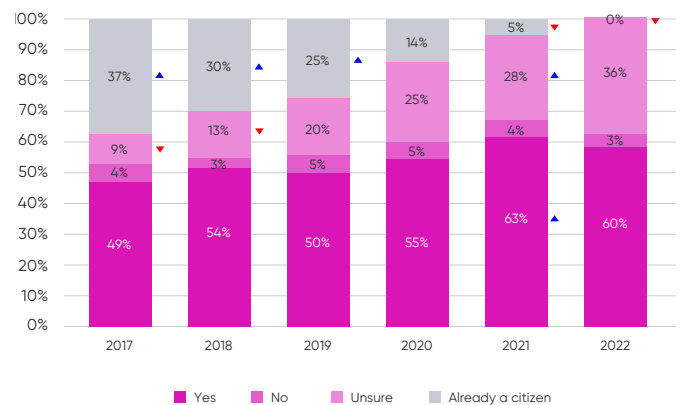


C2: Are you pursuing Australian permanent residency through IT Skilled Migration?

Base: All migrated to Australia including Incompletes (n=1,855) | ▲▼ Significantly higher / lower at p<.05

Further evidence of migrant commitment to remaining in Australia is the high proportion of ICT-skilled migrants who intend to apply for citizenship. Across all cohorts, only 4% of applicants did not intend to apply for Australian citizenship, and the rate has been stable across cohorts. More recent intakes have a higher proportion of applicants saying they were unsure compared to earlier cohorts, who were more likely to have become citizens.

Figure 18: Citizenship intention versus year of ACS MSA finalisation



C3: Do you intend to apply for Australian Citizenship?

Base: All migrated to Australia including Incompletes (n=1,851) | ▲▼ Significantly higher / lower at p<.05

Major eastern states are popular, with regional areas becoming more popular.

At the time of the survey, most ICT-skilled migrants were residing in Victoria or New South Wales and capital cities across all states. There has been a clear shift towards other states since 2019, with more ICT-skilled migrants residing in other states, especially Western Australia.

Table 4: State of residents at the time of the survey

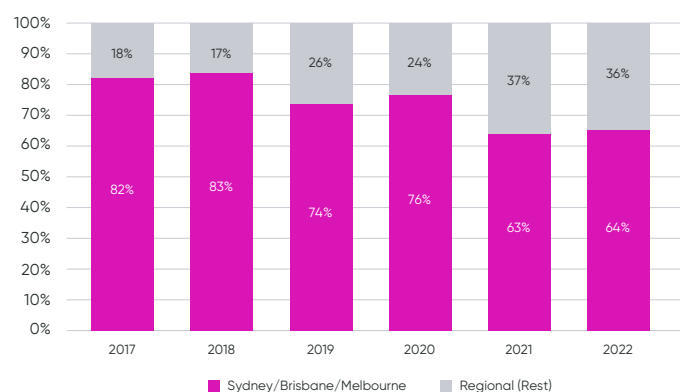
	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	Tas	ACT	NT	Not living in Australia
2017	38%	41%	4%	3%	5%	0%	3%	0%	6%
2018	36%	41%	6%	4%	1%	1%	1%	0%	9%
2019	35%	31%	7%	6%	3%	1%	2%	1%	13%
2020	41%	28%	7%	2%	4%	0%	6%	1%	11%
2021	33%	34%	4%	5%	9%	3%	4%	2%	5%
2022	32%	32%	4%	5%	9%	2%	6%	2%	10%
Base (n=)	690	642	125	84	105	25	74	20	155

CPI: In which state do you currently live?

Base: All migrated to Australia including Incompletes (n=1,924)

For migration, the Department of Home Affairs defines regional as anywhere outside Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane⁴. Whilst three-quarters of ACS MSA applicants (73%) lived in the three main cities (Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane), the trend of people moving to regional areas is evident, with over a third of 2021 and 2022 cohort applicants living in regional areas compared to 18% from the 2017 cohort.

Figure 19: Area of current residence versus year of ACS MSA finalisation



CP2: Do you currently live...

Base: Migrated to Australia including incompletes (n=1,767)

This finding could also reflect the movement of ICT-skilled migrants from regional areas to metro areas over time, a possibility that will be assessable in future longitudinal surveys. From the survey data, we can see that consistently, three in five regionally located ICT-skilled migrants intended to stay in regional areas. However, there is significant uncertainty, especially in more recent intake years.

The survey also found that ICT-skilled migrants who have been in Australia for less than three years are significantly more likely to be located in regional areas. Amongst those who have been here more than three years, people who migrated from overseas were substantially more likely to have settled in a regional area. This may challenge the government in achieving its regional settlement goals, given that ICT-skilled migrants are increasingly applying onshore.

ICT-skilled migrants in regional areas were significantly more likely to hold Skilled Nominated visas (subclass 190) or Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visas (subclass 491). They were also more likely to hold Temporary Graduate visas (subclass 485) or Student visas (subclass 500), suggesting that visas shape people's choices about where to settle, at least to some degree.

⁴ <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/working-in-australia/regional-migration/eligible-regional-areas>

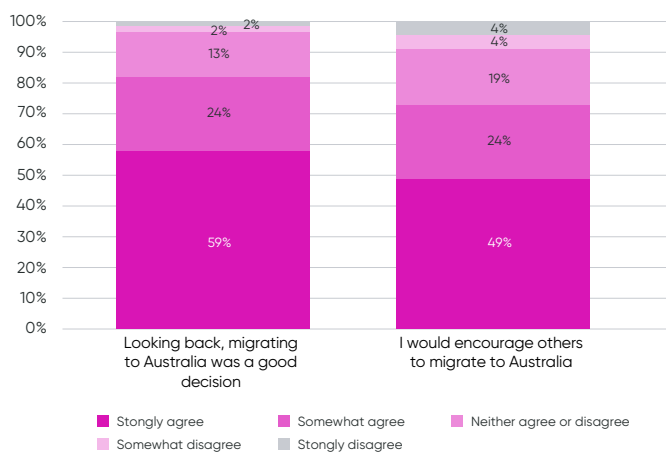
The migration experience

Recapping earlier findings, the ability to find a job in the tech sector is a critical factor influencing intention to stay in Australia and whether ICT-skilled migrants feel their goals have been met. In this section of the report, we further assess the experiences of migrants, including factors related to employment, employers and support resources. We also asked skilled migrants to express in their own words how they have experienced migration and what, if anything, could be improved for future migrants.

Most respondents are happy they decided to migrate.

83% of skilled migrants agreed that 'looking back, migrating to Australia was a good decision', and 73% agreed that they 'would encourage others to migrate to Australia'.

Figure 20: How ICT-skilled migrants feel about their decision to migrate to Australia



D3: ...and how strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements.

Base: All migrated to Australia Including Incompletes (n=1,682)

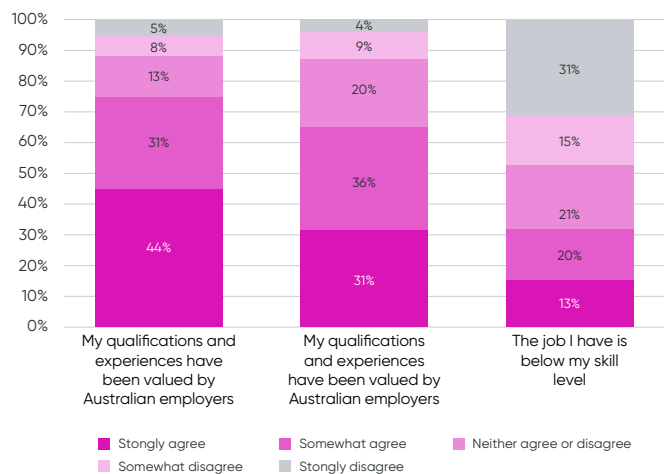
Most respondents believe employers value them, but some feel underemployed.

We also asked migrants how strongly they agree with three statements about their employment experiences since migrating to Australia:

- 75% agreed their *qualifications and experiences have been valued by Australian employers* (13% disagreed)
- 67% agreed they had *sufficient resources and support to succeed in their job search* (13% disagreed)
- 46% disagreed that *the job I have is below my skill level* (33% agreed)

These results suggest the foremost opportunity is to equip employers with better information about migrant qualifications and skills and to help migrants assess their skills relative to the market and available jobs. It is worth noting the earlier related finding that relatively few migrants looking for specialist roles felt they had met this goal.

Figure 21: How ICT-skilled migrants feel about employment experiences



D3: ...and how strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements.

Base: All migrated to Australia Including Incompletes (n=1,682)

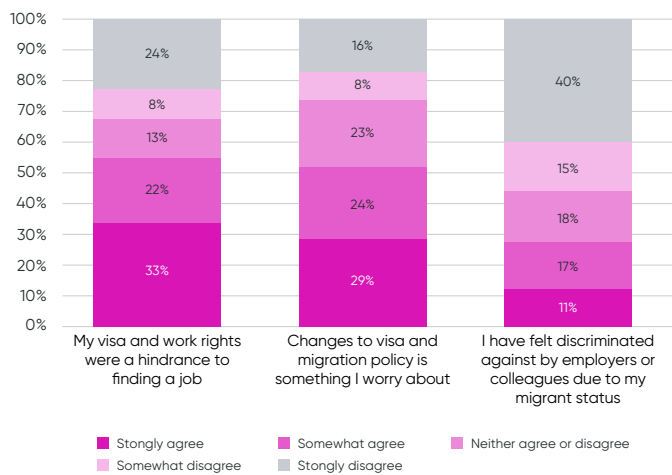
ICT-skilled migrants worry a lot about visas and sometimes experience discrimination.

Exploring migrants' attitudes towards migration policy and discrimination revealed some less positive findings:

- Overall, 55% agreed that *my visa and work rights were a hindrance to finding a job* (32% disagreed).
- More than half (53%) also agreed that *changes to visa and migration policy is something I worry about* (24% disagreed).

- Just over a quarter (28%) agreed that *I have felt discriminated against by my employers or colleagues due to my migration status.*

Figure 22: How ICT-skilled migrants feel about visa experiences and discrimination



D3: ...and how strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements.

Base: All migrated to Australia Including Incompletes (n=1,682)

Two differences in responses were noted when comparing cohorts:

- Recent migrants were more likely to identify that their visa and work rights had hindered them in finding a job.
- The proportion indicating that they had been discriminated against was also significantly higher in more recent intake years. They were also more likely to be concerned about visa changes and migration policy and less likely to say migrating was a good decision.

Migration does not fully meet the expectations of many ICT-skilled migrants.

Earlier in the report, we identified that 75% of the ICT-skilled migrants surveyed rated their overall employment outcomes as either fully or partially meeting expectations. It is essential to understand the factors that weighed into respondents' assessment of whether their expectations had been met. We examined the responses provided in response to the survey item:

'You said the outcomes to date from your decision to migrate have {met/not met expectations}. Can you please share why you feel that way, providing as much detail as possible.'

Text analytics applied to the data showed both positive and negative experiences. In this final part of the report, we have included respondents' voices, providing valuable insight into their lived experiences, expectations and hopes. Their responses have been reproduced verbatim.

Overall, setting aside issues with the migration experience, we identified two critical positive factors:

1. Improved work-life balance and quality of life

Many ICT-skilled migrants highlighted work-life balance and quality of life in Australia. They mentioned having more time for hobbies and family and enjoying the country's natural beauty and diverse culture.

"I currently have a job I like in IT field, have many friends and have great work-life balance."

Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485), China.

"I found a career in a very reputable organisation with good work life balance. Moreover, this opportunity has enabled me to take care of myself and my family so I really appreciate being part of Australian community. ACS skill assessment was a smooth process and I found it very straight forward. If I can recommend something, then that would be to improve the turnaround time of application outcome after submission. Overall I'm satisfied with ACS Skills Assessment process."

Visa Status undisclosed, Nepal.

"Outcomes from decision to migrate have met my expectations as I have found a good job with nice work life balance."

Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190), India.

2. Positive experiences and outcomes

Despite the challenges, many ICT-skilled migrants shared positive experiences and outcomes of migrating to Australia. They mentioned better career prospects, a supportive work environment, improved quality of life, and personal and professional growth opportunities. They appreciated the welcoming community, access to healthcare and education, and the overall positive impact on their lives.

"It was easy for me to access different work projects and it helped me get an experience of work culture in Australia."

Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189), India.

"Migrating to Australia was the best decision. Pursuing Master and finding the right job in my stream helped me visioning my future to improve my quality of living. The best thing to point is the work life balance."

Temporary Skills Shortage visa (subclass 482), India.

"Moving to Australia as an IT specialist has been a transformative experience that has exceeded all my expectations. From the moment I arrived in this vibrant and diverse country... The friendly and multicultural environment has made integrating into the local community an effortless endeavour, and I've had the privilege of forming meaningful friendships with people from all walks of life."

Australian citizen from Bulgaria.

We also identified five negative factors which may identify opportunities to improve outcomes and experiences.

1. Difficulty in finding job opportunities

Many ICT-skilled migrants mentioned facing challenges in finding job opportunities in their field, particularly in the tech sector. They noted that employers often preferred candidates with local experience or permanent residency.

"My work involved working with colleagues in other continents and time zone differences severely impacted my work-life balance. I looked for a job last year and haven't found any employer willing to sponsor for TSS visa. I submitted an EOI for PR last year, and I'm not optimistic that I will be invited this year. There's a good chance I will have to leave Australia once my studies finish end of the year as I don't qualify for a graduate visa and I don't think I'll be able to find a job without PR."

Student visa (subclass 500), Türkiye.

"Finding a job is difficult and takes time, salaries are not so great compared to back home now."

Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190), India.

"Local experience is a very important factor here in Australia, so it makes it harder on immigrants to find jobs at first."

Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189), Egypt.

"Is hard to find a job in my career because they first thing they always asking me is for my experience in Australia, I hadn't had the opportunity to work here so is hard to have a job if they always asking you about your experience here."

Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190), Colombia.

2. Slow and complex migration process

ICT-skilled migrants expressed frustration with the lengthy and complex migration process, including skills assessments and waiting for visa invitations. Some mentioned that changes in migration policies and age restrictions affected their eligibility.

"I came here as an IT person with a job, they fire me within 15 days. I left my job there and move here with my family, exhausted all my money. I have no money to survive now here and cannot go back because I have left with nothing. I have a responsibility of two daughters. I don't have any amount and the compensation they promised is not yet received. I don't know how I will survive."

Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189), India.

"I have applied many EOI for many stats but no call during covid and PTE Expired. Wasted by two years. Really disappointed by Australia."

Prefer not to disclose, Saudi Arabia.

"Applied for 189 permanent residency in 2020, didn't get it and application expired. Had 90 points at that time. Did everything that was required. Had to move to another student visa and eventually ended up in a 491 regional visa. That wasted so many years."

Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 491), Sri Lanka.

"The system's limitations and constant changes have caused a significant amount of pain and stress for skilled professionals like me. Comparing the visa policies in countries like New Zealand, Germany, and Canada, it's evident that they prioritise and value IT talents, offering job visas to IT graduates who contribute to their economies. In contrast, the two-year working visa I received with working right from 2018-2019, and ACT put our IT graduates in a disadvantage place as ACS requires 1-year experience to do skill assessment. A lot of graduates with software engineer choose to do skill assessment with Engineering Australia, rather than ACS. the

subsequent challenges you faced with skill assessment and the website upgrade, have put you in a difficult situation. The interruption caused by COVID-19 further complicated matters, and you found yourself unable to work or leave Australia due to the lack of flights. The points system for gaining invitation for skilled migration has proven exhausting and time-consuming for IT graduates. The effort and expenses we put into obtaining extra points through NAATI exams should yield better opportunities for contributing to the job market and wider communities, rather than being an additional burden. It is evident that the visa system in Australia should be more stable and consistent, like the policies seen in Germany, New Zealand, and Canada, to better accommodate high-skilled professionals, such as IT graduates, who possess valuable skills the job market needs. A more supportive and less complicated system would benefit both skilled professionals and the broader community, fostering an environment where everyone can contribute and thrive."

Temporary Activity visa (subclass 408), China.

"Hello, The cost of Getting skill assessment is on a higher side and the way assessment is done is not very transparent, you can look at my case specifically, initial assessment was nowhere close to logical, they ask for all doc's and finalize only on employer/boss undertaking, moreover I didn't migrate as during COVID I had to travel back to country of origin, skill points I had were not enough to get an invite as the criteria was further made strict and invites were limited, I really like the cross cultural folks and the weather, post retirement and health benefits which doesn't exist in my country of origin, but yeah hope this helps you further and good luck with what you started, was really happy to see a mail from AU domain after such long Aussie Aussie Oi Oi Oi."

I do not have an Australian visa and am not an Australian citizen, India.

3. Cost of living and salary expectations

Some ICT-skilled migrants mentioned that the cost of living, particularly housing expenses, was higher than expected. They also noted that salaries in the industry were sometimes low compared to other countries.

"Australia still needs to evolve a lot, as we can see Subtle Racism in and out. Real estate market has been so crazy with nothing done by Govt to manage it so that new immigrants can afford to buy one. On top of it, looking at current scenario, Rentals have sky rocketed.

These small things make you question, is this country worth migrating leaving all the good benefits you had back home. Not to forget, Bulk Billing is history and Insurances cost is rising daily. You might be paying the highest bracket tax, but still feel like a poor person with so much expenses you are forced to do just for basic necessities of life."

Australian citizen, India.

"I feel the cost of living in Sydney is so high that my salary does not justify it. Also, it's very difficult for me to buy a house with the salary I have."

Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189), India.

"I don't think technology sector in Australia is as lucrative or valuable as in US or India. I rarely see immigrants on top positions in tech companies or IT divisions of major orgs. Salary is good but so are the expenses. My purchasing power has reduced significantly. Planning to move back to India soon."

Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190), India.

4. Limited job prospects in regional areas

ICT-skilled migrants residing in regional areas expressed difficulties in finding job opportunities in their field, as the market was often limited compared to major cities.

"With lack of jobs in IT in my regional location in Australia, I had to step down and take a job that I was doing 10 years ago."

Skilled Regional (provisional) visa (subclass 489), Singapore.

"The reason for the same being, firstly South Australia in itself has limited IT opportunities as compared to other Australian states. Within that too, more than 50% are reserved for Australian citizens having baseline clearance. Of the small chunk that says open to all but in reality the employers prefer local experience irrespective of you being more than qualified for the job. So its a race till you exhaust on yours savings and have to choose between either starting 5 years back from where you have come or work outside of IT."

Skilled Regional (provisional) visa (subclass 489), India.

"IT job market in Australia is mostly based in Big cities, like for my case i live in NSW and have lived in Wollongong and i want to live in a small to medium town as i don't like city living given that i have previously lived in cities and unhealthy lifestyle in big cities is not my preference. So the job opportunities are already slim

in number here and then you have to struggle very hard to get an IT role, like currently i am doing its not purely IT company but it is a very good base for me to practice my Data Analytics, IT Project/Solution management and software engineering skills as the company just transitioned from SAP to Microsoft Business Central ERP system along with all IT services and infrastructure. But i got lucky finding this role and you have to make compromises to work in an environment where not looking at innovation in IT but want to employee the stable proven technologies to help there business, which is not bad but my preferences would be different if there are more options available."

Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485), Pakistan.

"I haven't landed to job of my expertise and experience yet. It's been 3 months, most of companies have their offices in CBD and my work visa restrictions doesn't allow me to work in CBD as my visa is regional only. There are very less opportunities in regional area for IT skills. Companies are rejecting my profile because of regional condition. I was very hopeful when I moved to Australia and now after 3 months of regressive job search, I am highly disappointed. Most of data and analytics jobs require PR and Citizenship, which I have to wait. Its difficult to manage high rent, insurance and education of kids without landing in good job."

Skilled Regional (provisional) visa (subclass 489), India

5. Discrimination and issues with employers

Some ICT-skilled migrants felt they were not getting the same opportunities as others due to their visa status, ethnicity or age.

"It's super hard to find a job and when I got a job I am underpaid than my Australian born colleagues. Career progression is only for locals and not for immigrants like me! Discrimination at workplace indirectly affects immigrants like me. Difficult to find a better paying job."

Temporary Activity visa (subclass 408), India.

"I was asked for a local experience to be eligible for a role. How can an immigrant ever have local experience on day 1 in Australia. What changes could be made to improve your Australian migration experience as a skilled technology worker? Consider international experience and qualifications at par with Australian qualifications. The discrimination starts then and there itself."

Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189), India.

"One crucial change that I would suggest is the removal of age limits for skilled technology workers applying for permanent residency in Australia. Currently, the age limit of 45 years can be a significant barrier for talented professionals who have valuable skills and expertise to contribute to the Australian workforce and society."

Australian citizen, from Russia.



Next steps in the study

This is the first report from the *Skilled Journeys: Navigating IT migration in Australia* longitudinal study. ACS will complete a new survey every six months to track trends and follow the trajectory of ICT-skilled migrants over time and will publish the findings.

The expected sample size in each wave is around n=500.

An initial baseline survey will be conducted when migrants first arrive. ACS will then ask each respondent to update their situation 12 and 24 months post-arrival.

The study will seek to explore different aspects of the ICT-skilled migrant experience in alignment with trends and developing interest in the topic.

Over time, ACS intends the Skilled Journeys data to become an invaluable source of insight to inform policy debates, discussions and decisions and to contribute to developing a strong, healthy migration system and IT industry in Australia.

Appendix 1: Methodology detail

Overview of the program and longitudinal tracking

- This research will be conducted annually in two waves (cohorts). This first 'baseline' wave included two primary samples
 - » People that completed the ACS MSA before Jan 2023 but not before Jul 2022 (6-12 month window)
 - » People who completed the ACS MSA before Jul 2022 but not before Jul 2021 (12-24 month window)
- From now on, the survey will be repeated every six months (i) with recently completed MSA becoming a new 6-month cohort and (ii) the first 6-month cohort becoming the 12 and 24-month cohorts, respectively. This approach will allow us to explore case-level changes for individuals every six months over a two-year period following the ACS MSA.
- The total number of skilled migrants in the ACS database from 2017 to 2021 was over 170,000. A cleaning process was applied to the sample, reducing it to approximately 67,000 records. In most instances, this included removing duplicate entries because individuals completed the skills assessment more than once.

Weighting

- The first step in the analysis process was to review the data to identify any skews or biases against the sampling frame concerning relevant variables. Given that the sampling frame was comprehensive of all applications, our goal was to ensure the report findings represent the population of ICT-skilled migrants completing the ACS MSA from 2017 to 2022.
- Overall, the sample was close to representative of the sampling frame. The only notable skew was in the Country of Birth, although it was relatively benign. To correct this, the survey data were weighted to match the proportions of the sampling frame concerning country of birth. This reduced the effective sample size to 88% of the unweighted base.

Interpretation of Cohorts

- A cohort is the group of ICT-skilled migrants who completed the ACS MSA that year. When we compare cohorts, we are not tracking trends per se (each cohort comprises different people) but instead looking at how attitudes and behaviours have shifted from other intake groups. This reflects (i) that earlier cohorts have been in the country longer and (ii) that the environment and experiences of each cohort will differ. For example, the 2019 and 2020 cohorts were affected by COVID.
- Therefore, caution must be taken when interpreting cohorts; e.g. comparing across cohorts is not the same as tracking changes over time.



Appendix 2: Sample profile

Table 5: Country of Birth

Column %	Including Incompletes	Finished Successfully
India	63%	61%
Nepal	4%	5%
China	5%	6%
Southeast Asia	7%	7%
ASEAN	6%	7%
Europe	2%	3%
Americas	2%	2%
Africa	2%	2%
Middle East	3%	3%
Australia & Oceania	2%	2%
Other	2%	2%
Column n	2299	1398

Table 6: Region of birth

Column %	Including Incompletes	Finished Successfully
Subcontinent	75%	72%
Europe	2%	3%
South Asia	6%	7%
South America	1%	1%
North America	1%	1%
Africa	3%	2%
West Asia	3%	3%
North Asia (Russia, China, HK, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Mongolia)	7%	8%
Australia and Oceania	2%	2%
Column n	2299	1398

Table 7: Year of Birth

Column %	Including Incompletes	Finished Successfully
1961-1980	10%	12%
1981-1990	55%	57%
1991-2000	34%	31%
Column n	2297	1398

Table 8: Application Type

Column %	Including Incompletes	Finished Successfully
Post Australian Study	29%	29%
Temporary graduate	1%	1%
Skills	63%	63%
Recognition of prior learning	7%	7%
Column n	1398	1398

Table 9: ACS Skilled Assessment Submission Date

Column %	Including Incompletes	Finished Successfully
2017	16%	18%
2018	21%	21%
2019	13%	13%
2020	13%	13%
2021	24%	23%
2022	12%	11%
Column n	2299	1398

Appendix 3: Migration outcomes

Share of sample	2017 [^]			2018			2019			2020			2021			2022		
	PAS	Skills	other	PAS	Skills	other	PAS	Skills	other	PAS	Skills	other	PAS	Skills	other	PAS	Skills	other
	13%			23%			14%			13%			22%			15%		
Type of application	14%	76%	10%	11%	79%	9%	23%	71%	6%	34%	58%	9%	46%	47%	7%	48%	44%	7%
Completed PY	8% (n=15)			8% (n=25)			17% (n=34)			24% (n=42)			38% (n=118)			45% (n=92)		
Visa when applied	Temp. visa [^]	No visa		Temp. visa [^]	No visa		Temp. visa [^]	No visa		Temp. visa [^]	No visa		Temp. visa [^]	No visa		Temp. visa [^]	No visa	
	50%	50%		59%	41%		70%	30%		75%	15%		79%	11%		74%	16%	
Applied on/off-shore	On-shore	Off-shore		On-shore	Off-shore		On-shore	Off-shore		On-shore	Off-shore		On-shore	Off-shore		On-shore	Off-shore	
	47%	53%		54%	46%		63%	37%		85%	15%		86%	14%		81%	19%	
Currently in AUS	96% (100%)			94% (97%)			87% (97%)			88% (94%)			95% (99%)			92% (99%)		
Living Regionally	19% (32%)			16% (29%)			23% (17%)			21% (31%)			35% (49%)			34% (50%)		
Employed	95% (88%)			93% (95%)			87% (79%)			88% (89%)			93% (91%)			88% (90%)		
Employed in IT	92% (70%)			89% (79%)			84% (70%)			82% (76%)			82% (66%)			76% (70%)		
Employed in IT at a right level (t2b agree)	56% (62%)			57% (45%)			46% (39%)			51% (43%)			43% (33%)			37% (35%)		

[^] year is the MSA Finalisation Year.

*Base is completed surveys | [^] Includes all visa types including bridging, student and refugee

**Values in brackets for applicants who completed PY – indicative reading for cohorts 2017 and 2018 due to low n.

Appendix 4: Survey questionnaire

Base: All

A1. Application location

Format: Single response

First, we have some questions about your situation when you first started the process of applying for it skilled migration. Our records show you submitted your ACS skilled migrant assessment in {submission date – show month and year}.

At that time, were you living in Australia or overseas?

1. I was living overseas
2. I was living in Australia

Base: All

A2. Qualifications pre

Format: Multiple response

What IT qualification/s (Australian equivalent) did you hold in {submission date – show month and year}?

1. High School
2. Certificate or Diploma (specify course completed)
3. Bachelor's Degree (specify course completed)
4. Postgraduate (specify course completed)
99. No formal IT qualification completed

Base: All

A3. Migration goals - pre

Format: Multiple response, randomise

Thinking back, what were your main reasons for migrating to Australia? Please select ALL that apply

1. Higher salary
2. Better job opportunities
3. Improved quality of life
4. Improved long term career prospects
5. Desire to live in Australia
6. Availability of specialist positions in technology
7. Positive place for start-ups and innovation
8. Be closer to family members who live here
9. Something else (please specify)

Base: All

A4. Visa status – pre

Format: Single response

At that time in {submission date – show month and year}, what visa did you hold, as either a primary or secondary holder?

1. Student visa (subclass 500)
2. Temporary Activity visa (subclass 408)
3. Temporary Skills Shortage visa (subclass 482)
4. Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485)
5. Refugee visa (subclass 200, 201, 203 and 204)
6. Bridging visa (any subclass)
7. Other Australian visa, not listed above (please specify subclass e.g. 456)
8. I did not have an Australian visa

Base: All

B1. Post MSA employment result

Format: Single response

Thanks for that. We now have some questions about what happened after your Migration Skills Assessment was deemed suitable by ACS in {finalised date – show month and year}.

Did you find an it job in australia after receiving a suitable acs migration skills assessment in {finalised date – show month and year}?

1. I already had an IT role before completing ACS Skills Assessment
2. I found an IT role in Australia
3. I found a job in Australia, but not in IT
4. I did not find a job in Australia (unemployed in Australia)
5. I did not migrate to Australia

Base: B1=2 (Found a job in it role)

B2. How long to find first job in it

Format: Single response

How long did it take you to find your first Australian role in IT after receiving a suitable Migration Skills Assessment?

1. Less than 6 months
2. Between 6 months to 12 months
3. More than 12 months to 2 years
4. More than 2 years (specify how many months / years)
5. Can't recall

Base: B1=2-4 (Looked for a job in Australia)

B3. Job search resources

Format: Multiple response, randomise

What resources did you most rely on to try to find your first IT job in Australia? *Select ALL that apply*

1. ACS Professional Year program
2. Other ACS resource or service
3. Job website (e.g., SEEK, Glassdoor, etc.)
4. Professional networking (e.g., IT industry events and associations)
5. Recruitment agency or head-hunter
6. Internal job posting at a company I was working outside of IT
7. Company website
8. Referral from friend or colleague
9. Social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.)
10. Community events (e.g., job fair, career events)
11. Training program (e.g, certification, formal study, or internship program)
98. Other (please specify)
99. None of the above

Base: B1<>5 (Migrated to Australia)

CP1. State

Format: Single response, vertical radio

Thanks for that, we'd now like to understand where you are on your migration journey today. .

In which state do you currently live? *Please select one only.*

1. New South Wales
2. Victoria
3. Queensland
4. South Australia
5. Western Australia
6. Tasmania
7. Australian Capital Territory (ACT)
8. Northern Territory
99. Not currently living in Australia

Base: CP1=1-8 (Live in Australia)

CP2. Regional area

Format: Single response, vertical radio

Do you live...

CP1a=1	1. In Sydney	2. Outside Sydney
CP1a=2	1. In Melbourne	2. Outside Melbourne
CP1a=3	1. In Brisbane	2. Outside Brisbane
CP1a=4	1. In Adelaide	2. Outside Adelaide
CP1a=5	1. In Perth	2. Outside Perth
CP1a=6	1. In Hobart	2. Outside Hobart
CP1a=7	1. In Canberra	2. Outside Canberra but in the ACT
CP1a=8	1. In Darwin	2. Outside Darwin

Base: CP1=1-8 (Live in Australia)

CP3. Postcode

Format: Numeric (4 digits)

What is your postcode?

Programmer, create an autoclassification variable of regionality based on ABS ASGS boundaries and DOHA designated regional areas <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/working-in-australia/regional-migration/eligible-regional-areas>

Base: CP1<>99 1 (Reside in Australia)

CP4. Time in australia

Format: Single response

...and how long has it been since you FIRST arrived in Australia?

1. Less than 1 year
2. More than 1 year, less than 3 years
3. More than 3 years, less than 5 years
4. More than 5 years, less than 8 years
5. More than 8 years

Base: B1<>5 (Migrated to Australia)

C1. Visa status

Format: Single response

What visa do you currently hold?

Study

1. Student visa (subclass 500)
2. Student Guardian visa (subclass 590)
3. Training visa (subclass 407)

Temporary work Visa

4. Temporary Activity visa (subclass 408)
5. Temporary Skills Shortage visa (subclass 482)
6. Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485)
7. Business Innovation and Investment (provisional) visa (subclass 188)
8. Global Talent visa (subclass 858)

Skilled Migration Visas

9. Business Innovation and Investment (provisional) visa (subclass 188)
10. Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189)
11. Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190)
12. Skilled Regional (provisional) visa (subclass 489)
13. Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 491)

Other

94. Refugee visa (subclass 200, 201, 203 and 204)
95. Bridging visa (any subclass) – (Please specify what visa you have applied for)
96. I am an Australian citizen
97. I do not have an Australian visa and am not an Australian citizen
98. Other Australian visa not listed above (please specify subclass e.g. 456)
99. Prefer not to disclose

Base: C1=1-9. 94.95.97.98.99 – (not a prior citizen)

C2. OEI PR intention

Format: Single response

Are you pursuing Australian permanent residency through IT Skilled Migration?

1. No, and not intending to pursue IT skilled migration
2. Yes, I plan to lodge an Expression of Interest for IT Skilled Migration
3. Yes, I have lodged my Expression of Interest, awaiting invitation
4. Yes, I have been invited to apply for Australian permanent residency

Base: B1<>5 (Migrated to Australia) & C1 <> 96 (not a citizen)

C3. Citizenship intention

Format: Single response

Do you intend to apply for Australian Citizenship?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Unsure / don't know

Base: B1=1.2.3
(Employed since assessment date)

C4. Employment status

Format: Single response

What is your current employment status?

1. Permanent full time IT role
2. Permanent part time IT role
3. Casual or contract work in IT
4. Self-employed in IT
5. Working but not in IT
6. Not working

Base: C4=5.6
(Not currently employed in IT)

C5. Work search status

Format: Single response

Are you currently looking for work?

1. Yes, for an IT Role
2. Yes, for any role
3. No, not looking for work

Base: C4=1-5 (Currently employed)

C6. Industry sector

Format: Single response, ABS API call

What industry sector are you working in?

If you have more than one job, please answer with respect to your MAIN source of income

1. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
2. Mining
3. Manufacturing
4. Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
5. Construction
6. Wholesale Trade
7. Retail Trade
8. Accommodation and Food Services
9. Transport, Postal and Warehousing
10. Information Media and Telecommunications
11. Financial and Insurance Services
12. Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services
13. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
14. Administrative and Support Services
15. Public Administration and Safety
16. Education and Training
17. Health Care and Social Assistance
18. Arts and Recreation Services
19. Other Services

Base: C4=1-4 (Working in it role)

C7. Job title

Format: Single response, search box

What is your IT job title (select the option that best applies, you can search using the search box).

If you have more than one job, please answer with respect to your MAIN job through which you earn the most income

Programmer, see IT job code list at end of survey. Show alphabetised list and allow a searchable box to find level 1 and level 2 codes, not list needs to be extensible within blocks

Programmer: show alphabetised job list with search box

Base: C4=1-5 (Working)

C8. Current salary

Format: Single response

In which of the following brackets does your pre-tax base salary fall? The data gathered from this question will guide us in understanding the employment outcomes of ACS Migration Skills Assessment and will be used solely for statistical analysis.

1. \$0 or nil income
2. \$1 - \$149 per week \$1 - \$7,799 per year
3. \$150 - \$299 per week \$7,800 - \$15,599 per year
4. \$300 - \$399 per week \$15,600 - \$20,799 per year
5. \$400 - \$499 per week \$20,800 - \$25,999 per year
6. \$500 - \$649 per week \$26,000 - \$33,799 per year
7. \$650 - \$799 per week \$33,800 - \$41,599 per year
8. \$800 - \$999 per week \$41,600 - \$51,999 per year
9. \$1,000 - \$1,249 per week \$52,000 - \$64,999 per year
10. \$1,250 - \$1,499 per week \$65,000 - \$77,999 per year
11. \$1,500 - \$1,749 per week \$78,000 - \$90,999 per year
12. \$1,750 - \$1,999 per week \$91,000 - \$103,999 per year
13. \$2,000 - \$2,999 per week \$104,000 - \$155,999 per year
14. \$3,000 - \$3,499 per week \$156,000 - \$181,999 per year
15. \$3,500 or more per week \$182,000 or more per year
16. Prefer not to say

Base: CP1<>99

C10. Intended period stay in Australia

Format: Single response

Thinking ahead, how long do you intend to stay in Australia? *Select one only*

1. Less than 6 months
2. Between 6 months to 1 year
3. Between 1 to 3 years
4. Between 3 to 5 years
5. More than 5 years
6. Stay permanently
7. Not Sure

Base: CP1<>99

C11. IT work intentions

Format: Single response

In future, is your preference to... *Select ONE only*

1. Work in an IT role
2. Work in a non-IT role
3. Will not work in future
4. Not sure

Base: CP2 = all options except "in Melbourne/ Brisbane/Sydney"

C12. Time intend to stay regional

Format: Single response

...and how long do you intend to reside in a regional area (i.e. outside Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne)?

1. Less than a year
2. 1 to 2 years
3. 3 to 4 years
4. 5 years or more
5. Indefinitely

Base: B1<>5 (Migrated to Australia)

D1. Migration goal outcomes

Format: Multiple response, randomise

This final section is about your personal experiences migrating to Australia and seeking a role in IT. Which of the following have you experienced since migrating to Australia

1. Higher salary
2. Better job opportunities
3. Improved quality of life
4. Improved long term career prospects
5. [Reserved]
6. Found a desired specialist positions in technology
7. Improved access to innovation
8. [Reserved]
9. _PIPE Response from A3 code 9
10. None of the above

Base: B1<>5 (Migrated to Australia)

D2. Employment outcomes ratings

Format: Grid, randomise (show code 5 last)

Please rate your employment experience as a migrant in Australia.

Rows

1. The ease of finding a job
2. Finding a job in your preferred field
3. Your salary / earnings
4. Progression towards your career goals
5. Overall employment outcomes since migrating

Columns

1. Completely met your expectations
2. Partially met your expectations
3. Somewhat met your expectations
4. Not met your expectations at all

Base: B1<>5 (Migrated to Australia)

D3. Migration outcomes ratings

Format: Grid, randomise (always show 7 and 8 last)

...and how strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements.

Rows

1. I have felt discriminated against by employers or colleagues due to my visa status
2. My qualifications and experiences have been valued by Australian employers
3. I have sufficient resources and support to succeed in my job search
4. My visa and work rights were a hindrance to finding a job
5. **C4+1-5** The job I have is below my skill level
6. Changes to visa and migration policy is a something I worry about
7. Looking back, migrating to Australia was a good decision
8. I would encourage others to migrate to Australia

Columns

1. Strongly Agree
2. Somewhat Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Somewhat Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Base: sample tagged – professional year in it

D4. PY experiences

Format: Grid, randomise

...and how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Professional Year in IT.

Rows

1. Assisted me in my job search preparation
2. Helped me with my communication in the Australian workplace
3. Helped me grow my professional network
4. Helped me develop and progress my career goals

Columns

1. Strongly Agree
2. Somewhat Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Somewhat Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Base: B1<>5 (Migrated to Australia)

D5. Reason for outcomes

Format: Eve

I am EVE, your survey companion. I'd like to discuss your experiences with migrating to Australia and ACS Migration Skills Assessment. You said the outcomes to date from your decision to migrate have **{D2_5 response}**. Can you please share why you feel that way, providing as much detail as possible.

Based on your own experiences to date, what advice would you give to other IT-skilled migrants looking to work in Australia?

What changes could be made to improve your Australian migration experience as a skilled technology worker?

Base: D2_1=2.3.4 (Ease of finding a job less than fully met expectations)

D6. Challenges finding a job

Format: Multiple response, randomise

You said the ease of finding a job only {D2_1}. Which of the following were factors in your difficulty finding a job in Australia.

1. My English language skills
2. Qualifications not recognised
3. Lack of training
4. Lack of experience generally
5. Lack of local (Australian) experience
6. A lack of jobs in the areas I want to work
7. Discrimination against my age
8. Discrimination against my gender
9. Discrimination against my race / ethnicity
10. Discrimination against my religion
11. I have had health issues
12. Balancing parental responsibilities with work
13. Other (SPECIFY)
14. None of the above





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