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How does immigration work in Australia

Come over to the sunny side now. Australia has come a long way since the days of the Ten Pound Pom. Back then the country remarkably had a white Australia policy. Europeans with pale faces were given priority. But that was the twentieth century and this is the Asian century.

This isn't Shanghai, it's Sydney. Those following the debate in the UK might be surprised to know Australia has a higher proportion of migrants than almost any other developed country.

Professor Stephen Castles, University of Sydney, Author of *The Age of Migration* : "Australia was one of the most diverse societies in the world. 28% of our population were born overseas. And if you add in their children, you'd have to say that 45% of people in Australia have either a personal migration experience or their parents do." And the fastest-growing migrant sector is skilled workers from Asia coming here under the points-based immigration system.

It's easy to see why people want to move to Australia, one of the world's most liveable and prosperous countries. But how does the immigration points system work ? Well, age is a key factor. Generally, the younger, the better. 25 to 32 will score you the most points. Then, there's education. Having a university degree is good. Work experience and also proficiency in English.

And plenty have profited. Supporters of the system say it allows Australia to pick and choose who comes and to issue quotas for different skill sectors. Britain actually already operates its own points system for non-EU migrants. But if it were expanded, as Brexit supporters want, what would the impact be ?

Professor Stephen Castles : " There's no reason to think that immigration would fall with a points-based system because there are gaps in the labour force that can be effectively and rapidly filled by migrants. »

Not everyone though is welcome across the waves. Australia has been far less tolerant to the asylum seekers trying to reach its shores, detaining them in off-shore camps, a policy that has been panned by human rights groups. Those who do make it here though legally find a country which far from having restricted immigration has very much thrived on it.

John Donnison, *BBC News*, Sydney