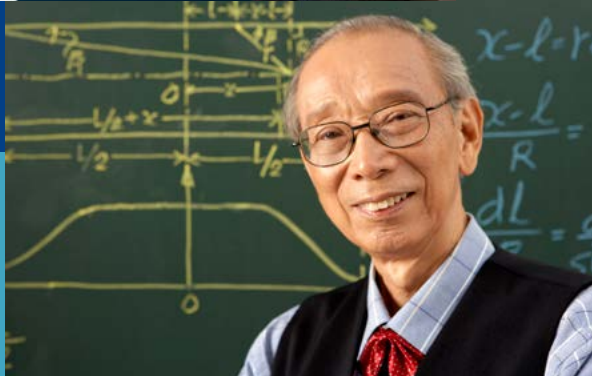




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MELBOURNE

—  
Asia Institute



# Workforce Diversity in Higher Education

The Experiences of Asian Academics  
in Australian Universities

**Nana Oishi**

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Lastly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all the survey respondents and interviewees for participating in this research. This study would never have been possible without their inputs and insights.

I would like to dedicate this report to all minority academics and aspiring postgraduate students with minority backgrounds. It is my sincere hope that this research will help Australian universities create a more inclusive work environment for all.

November 2017

**Associate Professor Nana Oishi**

Asia Institute

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# Foreword

**Emeritus Professor Kwong Lee Dow, AO**

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As a long-standing Australian academic of Asian ancestry, I am particularly pleased to commend this substantial pioneering study of the experiences of Asian academics in Australian universities.

Since the 1970s, Australian universities have increasingly proclaimed a commitment to continuing to build gender equality and cultural diversity within their communities of students and staff. Considerable progress has been achieved on some fronts. Among students, gender balance is now demonstrable at postgraduate as well as undergraduate levels in most fields of study, and comparable female staff representation exists in the junior and middle ranks of both academic and professional appointments. Cultural diversity has increased in the student body due both to the larger numbers and proportions of international students and to the increases in Australian students whose parents were born overseas. There has always been a significant proportion of UK-born academics in Australian universities, and there is now a smaller but significant staff component of North American background.

But what is the situation for Asian academics in Australian universities? Are they equitably represented, and do they exert an appropriate influence?

These are timely questions for three specific reasons. First, our population now has a substantial proportion of Asian-born immigrants. Second, in recent years the highest levels of migrants have come from China and India, with the Philippines, Pakistan, Vietnam, Nepal and Malaysia also within the top 10 source countries. Third, especially important for universities, the student body contains very large numbers who are born and schooled in Asian countries as well as proportionately high numbers of Australians whose parents and/or grandparents come from Asian countries.

Leading universities in the UK and the USA have recently made explicit commitments to promoting cultural and ethnic diversity among their academic staff, and now collect data that is publicly available in order to monitor the extent of the achievement of this policy objective. By comparison, the collection of parallel Australian data is shown to be patchy and the prominence given to any similar commitment is muted.

This first study of the issues has involved collation of Census data alongside unpublished statistics made available by

the Australian Department of Education and Training from what has been collected and reported from the individual universities. A survey of Asian Australian academics has been undertaken, though the identification of precisely who constitute “Asian Australian academics” has not proved to be straightforward, given data limitations. From the online survey, a small group was identified for in-depth face-to-face interviews. Not all universities have been involved – the study encompassed the Group of Eight across Australia and all the universities in Victoria.

The findings from this work have been carefully reported to ensure that readers understand the data limitations, and the qualifications around the conclusions have been clearly stated. While some findings and recommendations for policy are predictable in that they follow parallel work on other aspects for promoting diversity and inclusion, there is much of considerable interest and a sense of urgency in addressing many issues the study has raised.

There is, for example, evidence of “subtle racism, ethnic stereotyping and limited social inclusion”, where one (of a number of) quoted respondents “feels I am non-existent in meetings – people don’t even see my face or talk to me”, and the difficulty of breaking into social and cultural networks is highlighted especially for some professional fields.

That fewer Asian academics reach more senior levels of appointment may not surprise overall. There are perceptions among the Asian academic community that representation on committees and groups of influence is low at the department level, at the faculty level, and even more at the level of institution-wide management.

A number of strategies are suggested: developing and promulgating institution-wide policies, drawing issues to the attention of recruitment and promotion committees, being more transparent in selecting people for particular roles, including more open advertisement of internal opportunities, and providing mentoring and support programs and leadership training.

As I think of the situation in the committees, boards and statutory bodies of influence at senior institutional levels, for me the most relevant of all suggestions is to increase awareness among our leaders of the strong tendency we all have to make appointments of people who are most like ourselves. For Asians in Australia, that remains the stumbling block at the top.

# Executive Summary

Asian Australians are the fastest growing minority group in Australia, constituting 14.4% of the population in 2016 (ABS 2017). Asian Australian academics have been making significant contributions to the internationalisation of Australian higher education and research developments. Despite their major roles, however, research on these academics has been relatively scarce.

This study aimed to provide an overview of the representation and experiences of Asian Australian academics who consist of (1) Asian-born academics and (2) Australian-born academics with Asian ancestry. With the Australian Censuses, the unpublished national data from the Department of Education and Training, the survey data and in-depth interviews, the broad picture of this emerging group was captured. The major findings were the following.

## Overall Trends

1. Asian-born academics made up 15.4% of teaching and research staff at Australian universities in 2015, which is comparable to their overall education attainment, as they comprise 16.8% of PhD holders in Australia. Their overall share of positions in Australian universities increased by 5.4% between 2005 and 2015. The most common countries of birth were China (32.1%), India (15.8%), Malaysia (8.5%) and Sri Lanka (6.3%).
2. The gender gap in academic employment has been more pronounced for Asian-born academics over the last 10 years. The proportion of Asian-born female academics increased only by 2.3% compared with a 3.1% increase of their male counterparts. This was in stark contrast with Australian-born academics, whose gender gap was not only closed but reversed in 2014.
3. The vast majority of Asian Australian academics (90.4%) felt that they were making unique contributions to Australian higher education because of their cultural assets. Over three-quarters of them (76.1%) have collaborated with scholars in Asian countries; 66.3% have worked on joint research projects; and 34.6% have assisted in exchange programs with their countries of origin.

## Representation in Universities

1. Asian-born academics were highly represented in IT (34.4%), Engineering (33.3%) and Management and Commerce (26.6%). They were severely under-represented in Creative Arts (5.3%) and Education (5.3%).
2. Female Asian-born academics occupied only 1.8% of academic staff positions in Agricultural and Environmental Studies and 2.9% in Education. They were most highly represented in Management and Commerce, but their share was still 11.4%. The gender gap was the widest in Engineering (male 28.5% vs female 4.8%) and IT (male 25.1% vs female 9.4%).
3. While Asian-born academics were well represented in lower ranks of academic positions, they were severely under-represented in the most senior management positions in Australian universities. Only 3.4% of Deputy Vice-Chancellors were Asian-born in 2015. Currently, there is no Asian-born Vice-Chancellor at any Australian university. This was in stark contrast to the fact that other overseas-born academics had much higher representation (33% in Deputy Vice-Chancellors and 25% in Vice-Chancellors). The data indicate that the under-representation of Asian-born academics in senior ranks was not due to a pipeline problem.
4. The majority of Asian Australians (63.0%) believed that they were not appropriately represented in the university management. Several senior Asian Australian academics stated that they held little hope of advancing to management and/or the Chancellery positions because of the existing procedural constraints and institutional cultures.

## Limited Inclusion of Asian Australian Academics in the Workplace

1. The majority (54.3%) of Asian Australian academics felt their ethnic and cultural background was a disadvantage in their workplace. Similarly, 58.6% of Asian-born academics felt that their immigrant background was a disadvantage.
2. More Asian female academics felt disadvantaged: 62.1% of them stated that their ethnic and cultural background was a disadvantage in their workplace, compared with 49.4% of Asian male academics. Furthermore, 67.9% of Asian-born female academics felt their immigrant background worked to their disadvantage, compared with 52.7% of their male counterparts. The percentage of those who indicated that their immigrant background had “no impact” was much higher among males (45.1%) than females (27.5%).
3. Among those who perceived their background as a disadvantage, 42.0% experienced racism, ethnic stereotyping and/or marginalisation. Furthermore, 35.2% felt a disadvantage in getting promotion, leadership positions and/or general recognition. Female respondents reported their disadvantage was due to their gender and minority status.

## Future Strategies for More Inclusion and Equity

1. To develop a more inclusive workplace, more efforts need to be made at the institutional levels. Cultural sensitivity training would be necessary for all the staff, particularly for those in management positions. The training materials should be carefully reviewed, since some contents of the existing training materials were found problematic. The comments and inputs from minority academics should be reflected in the content. Leadership training programs could also help minority academics develop more aspirations in their workplace.
2. Senior academics should be encouraged to take the initiative in creating a more inclusive and welcoming workplace environment. Inviting newly appointed minority academics to informal gatherings or academic events could be the first step. University-wide support and mentoring programs would also be necessary to better integrate minority staff in the campus as a whole.

3. To achieve better representation and inclusion at all ranks in universities, recruitment and promotion committees should be diversified and the processes should be more transparent. Ensuring diversity and inclusion in all ranks should be codified in university policies. Just as the world’s leading universities are doing, Australian universities could also monitor their campus diversity data and the progress on a regular basis.

“Diversity and inclusion” have emerged as the key agenda across the world because studies have suggested that diversity alone might not necessarily yield positive outcomes unless inclusive environment is provided. To fully maximise its potential, many organisations, including the world’s leading universities and academic associations, have begun to promote diversity in tandem with inclusion policies and programs, while ensuring appropriate representation of minorities.

This research suggests that levelling the playing field through institutional reforms – by diversifying recruitment and promotion committees, addressing ethnic diversity in human resources policies, improving mentoring programs and increasing the transparency of hiring and selection processes – could greatly improve the representation of academics with diverse backgrounds. Nurturing an inclusive community would also help build a stronger and more cohesive institution, as all members could feel included and thus more easily develop a stronger sense of belonging.

# Introduction

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## Background: Diversity and Inclusion

“Diversity and inclusion” have emerged as the major key agenda for many organisations across the world (Ferdman and Deane 2014). While diversity has already been celebrated for many years as a source of innovation and socio-economic benefits, more studies have suggested that it might not necessarily yield positive outcomes unless inclusive environment is provided. To fully maximise its potential, many organisations have begun to promote diversity in tandem with inclusion policies and programs. This trend has been particularly salient in the field of higher education, where the student body has become increasingly diverse. Numerous studies have been conducted on student diversity and inclusion for the last decade (Basit and Tomlinson 2012; Carroll and Ryan 2007; Ramburuth and McCormick 2001; Milem 2003).

In recent years, more focus of diversity research has been extended to faculty. Faculty diversity has been recognised as a source of innovation in research. One large-scale study based on the National Academy of Sciences rankings data in the United States showed that more faculty diversity led to higher program rankings (Henderson and Herring 2013). Faculty diversity also fulfils an important mission of preparing students for an increasingly diverse workplace in the national and global labour market. Partly in relation to these factors, internationalisation of faculty has generated one of the indicators that constitute some of the major world university ranking systems, such as Times Higher Education and QS.

Furthermore, students have been paying much more attention to faculty diversity as part of their concerns for equity and equality. In the United States, where universities have been experiencing the biggest upsurge in student activism since the 1960s, faculty diversity is their primary concern and was the most widely shared demand that student unions submitted to the university management in 2015 (ACE 2016).

A broader academic community also began to recognise the importance of faculty diversity and inclusion. The US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, for instance, established the committee on the under-representation of minorities and the expansion

of the science and engineering workforce pipeline, and published its report in 2011 (NASEM 2011). In 2016, the United Kingdom’s Royal Academy of Engineering and Science Council launched a major initiative to improve diversity and inclusion – to assess and monitor the progress of increasing the representation of women and ethnic groups (RAE 2016).

## Project Overview

To respond to the growing need for better understanding of diversity and inclusion in academia, this study will examine the representation and workplace experiences of academics of minority backgrounds by focusing on Asian Australian academics (AAAs) in Australian universities. In this study, “Asian Australian academics” refers to a broad group including Asian-born immigrants, Australian-born individuals with Asian ancestry (the second, third or later generations) and those who have mixed roots but identified themselves as at least partly Asian.

Asian Australians are the fastest growing minority group in Australia, constituting 14.4% of the population (ABS 2017). Particularly since the Australian government has encouraged and promoted closer institutional linkages with universities in Asia, AAAs have been making major contributions to the internationalisation of Australian higher education and research developments. Despite their major roles, research on AAAs has been relatively scarce. Existing diversity research in Australian universities has been primarily on women and students (Yu 2013; Arkoudis et al. 2012; Sawir et al. 2015).

Some Australian scholars have begun to shed light on the situation of international academics in recent years, although mostly through small-scale studies (Green and Myatt 2011; Maadad and Tight 2014; Mason and Rawlings-Sanaei 2014). Green and Myatt (2011) found that the value of international academic staff has not been fully recognised within their work units or the wider university. Balasooriya et al. (2014) highlighted the success of international academic staff, but also identified the challenges that they faced, such as taking up lower positions and going through psychological adjustment. They pointed out several migration-related stressors that impinged upon their ability to adapt to their new institutional environment. Maadad (2014) argued that



lack of cultural awareness among some non-English speaking background academics, due in part to not having a cultural training program in place, created a barrier between international academics and their local colleagues. While these studies are valuable contributions to our understanding of international academics, the vast majority of them are small-scale studies and also do not address the issues of representation. This study will fill the gap in research on international and cultural and linguistic minority academics in Australia.

## Project Objectives

This project aims to provide an overview of the representation and experiences of academics with Asian backgrounds in Australian universities. More specifically, it endeavours to:

1. analyse the overall demographic and sectoral representations of AAAs;
2. examine the experiences of AAAs and their representations in universities;
3. promote an inclusive environment where academics of ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds could realise their full potentials and make further contributions to Australian higher education, and society more broadly.

## Data and Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, involving the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. While quantitative data enable us to examine broad demographic trends and representations at the macro level, qualitative data are better suited in highlighting experiences and perspectives of AAAs at the individual or group level.

The quantitative part of the study analysed information from: (1) the Australian Censuses; (2) unpublished statistics requested from the federal Department of Education and Training (DET) (2005–2015 for staff data, 1989–2015 for student data); and (3) results from an online survey designed for and sent out to AAAs working in Group of Eight (Go8 hereafter) universities as well as six universities in Victoria.

When Census and DET data were analysed, the Standard Australian Classification of Countries was used for the definition of origin countries and ancestries. The online survey focused on a narrower set of Asian countries due to the resource constraints. The category “Asia” in the online survey consisted of countries Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China (including Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau), India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The online survey involved sending email invitations to 2,812 potential respondents, who were identified by examining staff profiles publicly available on the websites of Go8 universities and six other universities located in Victoria. Academics with Asian names and Asia-related information in their profiles were presumed to be of Asian background and included in the survey.<sup>1</sup> The questionnaire contained a screening question at the beginning to exclude academics who did not identify themselves as of Asian background. In total, 418 responses were received.

It should be noted that the survey respondents do not constitute a representative sample of all academics with Asian backgrounds in Australian universities. Because it was clear to respondents at the outset that the survey would be used to examine workforce diversity and representation, it is probable that academics who responded were likely to have been negatively affected by workplace diversity issues, or were more concerned about such issues. As there is currently no comprehensive national dataset on ethnic minority academics, the results of this survey represent a meaningful step forward in this regard.

Responses to the open-ended questions in the survey offer a rich source of qualitative or experiential information. Additionally, the study included 42 in-depth interviews with AAAs, using a semi-structured questionnaire. The interviewees were from 11 national backgrounds working across a diverse range of disciplines, including Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Science, Medicine, Information Science, Engineering, Law, Management, Accounting and Design. More detailed information on data and methodology is discussed in the Appendix.

## The Structure of the Report

This report consists of seven sections. The next two sections will provide a brief history of Asian immigration to Australia and a demographic overview of Asian immigrants, as well as Australian-born Asians. Their population size, countries of origin and educational attainment will be presented. The fourth and fifth sections will examine the representation of Asian Australians in academia at the national level and their own perceptions and actual experiences in Australian universities. The concluding sections will discuss various measures that could be taken to tackle the challenges that AAAs and other ethnic minority academics are facing. Drawing on the initiatives taken by the world’s leading universities, it will present some possible strategies that Australian universities could adopt to enhance further diversity and inclusion.

<sup>1</sup> Please see Appendix for the detailed explanations of the ways in which potential respondents were identified.

# Cultural Diversity in Australia: An Overview

## Historical Overview of Immigration in Australia

Australia is one of the world's largest immigrant countries – over 7.5 million settlers have arrived since 1945 (DIBP 2016). In 2015, its immigrant population constituted 28.0% of the national total, a proportion that surpasses those of other major immigrant countries such as the United States (13.5%), Canada (20.3%) and New Zealand (24.5%) (OECD 2017). Australia is now the third-largest immigration country in the OECD after Luxembourg (45.9%) and Switzerland (29.1%).

Australia has relied on immigrants as a source of population and workforce growth since the late eighteenth century (Teicher, Shah and Griffin 2002). The scale and pattern of immigration, however, have varied in accordance with the nation's political and economic priorities. The planned, large-scale, national migration program that commenced after World War II, for instance, initially favoured settlers from Britain, followed by migrants from Continental Europe. This race-based selection policy was, however, relaxed somewhat from the late 1960s and was eventually abolished in 1973 (Jayasuriya and Kee 1999).

Accordingly, the number of immigrants from non-European countries, particularly from Asia, increased steadily, with occasional fluctuations, between the late 1960s and the late 1990s. By the mid-1980s, migrants from Asian countries had begun to outnumber those from European countries, including the United Kingdom, Australia's traditional source of immigration (DIBP 2016). Since the late 1980s, Australia's immigration programs have focused on recruiting immigrants via the skilled migration schemes in a bid to strengthen a skilled labour force and enhance the nation's productivity (Hugo 2014a). A significant portion of them are from Asian countries and arrived in the last two decades. Recently, the annual intake of Asian immigrants has grown to more than triple that of European immigrants in certain years (DIBP 2017).

In an era of globalisation in which goods, information, financial resources and people have become increasingly mobile beyond national borders, immigration programs have become significant tools in managing and planning the nation's socio-economic future. They have also come to be viewed as important vehicles for furthering the

nation's foreign policy aims. The recent growth of Asian immigrants, for instance, reflects in part Australia's political aspiration to build close connections with Asia. Such aspirations are perhaps most clearly articulated in the Commonwealth Government's 2012 White Paper, *Australia in the Asian Century*.

## The Asian Century

In *Australia in the Asian Century*, the recent growth in the Asian Australian population was seen as providing Australia with a unique opportunity to unlock economic and social rewards in the most dynamic region in the world. Among the White Paper's key recommendations was the fostering of Asia-related capabilities, including Asian language skills and cultural knowledge.

It further recommended that the top 200 Australian Stock Exchange registered companies aim to ensure that a third of their board members have "deep experience in and knowledge of Asia" and that the Australian Public Service ensure that a third of its workers were similarly equipped with Asia-related experience (Henry et al. 2012: 18).

In relation to the Australian higher education sector, the White Paper made recommendations to increase Australian students' interest in Asian studies, including languages; increase Australian universities' presence in Asia; and develop institutional links across countries in the region (Henri et al. 2012: 16). By highlighting the significant role that Australia's higher education sector has played and will play in fostering Asian Australian relations, the White Paper offered a reminder of the myriad ways in which Asian academics are vital to Australia's economic and political aspirations in Asia.

The importance of people-to-people links between Australia and its dynamic Asian neighbours, in part forged by the nation's growing Asian Australian communities, is further highlighted in major reports produced by the Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA). Noting the steep rise in expenditure on research and development and the output of scientific publications in the Asia Pacific region, the report *Smart Engagement with Asia: Leveraging Language, Research and Culture* (ACOLA 2015) highlighted the value of Asian cultural and linguistic resources in helping Australia to build stronger

translational research links and diaspora diplomacy in the region. Its second report, *Australia's Diaspora Advantage: Realising the Potential for Building Transnational Business Networks with Asia* (ACOLA 2016), examined Australia's growing Asian diaspora populations, particularly the Chinese and Indian. It highlighted the role of Asian diasporas in fostering the new economy, innovation, enterprise and transitional business activities.

### **Cultural Diversity in Australian Universities: An Overview**

The Australian higher education sector has become highly diversified in the country origins of its academic staff in the last few decades. In 2015, 34,997 academic staff worked for Australian universities under full-time contracts, approximately 45% of whom were born overseas (DET 2016). This figure was significantly higher than the percentage of overseas-born individuals in the total population (26.8%) (OECD 2013). While academics and researchers have traditionally been very mobile, the recent global trend of seeking brainpower beyond national borders has further boosted academic mobility (Hugo 2014b).

In Australia, universities have historically relied heavily on international academics to fulfil their workforce needs. In the 1960s and 1970s, for instance, when the Australian university sector underwent considerable expansion, a large number of young academics were employed from overseas, particularly from the United Kingdom (Hugo 2008; 2014b). The number of overseas-born academics working at Australian universities has continued to grow, as has Australia's focus on recruiting skilled migrants.

Asian countries, especially India and China, had already established themselves as important source nations of academics for Australian universities by the 1980s (Hugo 2010; Baker, Sloan and Robertson 1993). Nonetheless, between 2005 and 2015 the proportion of academics born in Asia among full-time academics in Australian universities grew substantially, from 10% to 15.4% (DET 2016). Furthermore, the proportion of these academics who had undertaken their doctoral training in Australia increased from 39.8% in 2005 to 50.8% in 2015 (DET 2016).

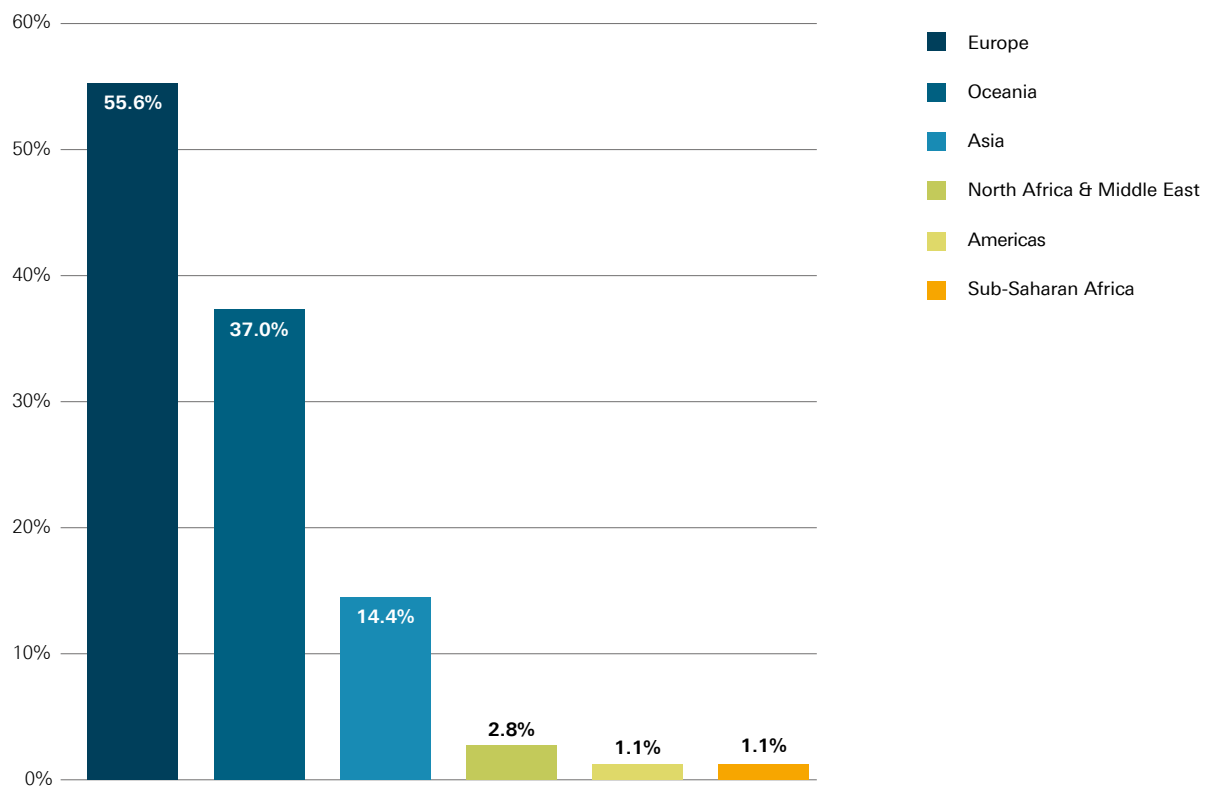
However, despite greater political recognition of the role of the Australian higher education sector in furthering national aims to develop closer relationships with Asia, researchers have shown a lack of interest in the role of Asian academics in Australian universities. While the workplace experiences of academics have been investigated (Coates et al. 2009), their cultural or ethnic backgrounds, and the ways in which these could impact on their workplace experiences, have rarely been examined. Although research on immigrant academics, including those from Asia, has begun to emerge in recent years, the scope of most of these studies has been limited to the experiences of academics at a single university (Maadad and Tight 2014; Mason and Rawlings-Sanaei 2014). Overall, there has been little research on cultural and linguistic diversity within the higher education workforce at both the national and international levels. There are, however, signs of change, as demonstrated by the release of the recent ACOLA reports cited earlier. The 2015 report, *Smart Engagement with Asia: Leveraging Language, Research and Culture*, in particular, signifies the importance of conducting empirical research into the experiences and contributions of Asian academics in Australia. Such research promises to benefit not only the Australian higher education sector, but also our increasingly diverse Australian society.

# Asians in Australia: A Demographic Overview

According to the 2016 Census (ABS 2017), approximately 3.4 million individuals identified themselves as having at least one Asian ancestry – this represents approximately 14.4% of the total population of Australian residents (Figure 3.1). Among these individuals are second-, third- and fourth-generation Asian Australians. The 2016 Census also revealed that the most common Asian backgrounds listed by individuals in this category were Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese and Filipino. Approximately one third of them were born in Australia (ABS 2017).

In addition to the growing number of Australian residents with Asian ancestry, the number of first-generation immigrants from Asian countries has also been steadily increasing from 856,144 to 2,445,232 between 1991 and 2016 (ABS 2017). In 2016, Australian residents who were born in Asian countries constituted 11.2% of the total population in that year. Their percentage share of the population almost tripled between 1991 and 2016 (Figure 3.2). These demographic trends indicate that Asia is the location of important ethnic and cultural roots for local-born residents, as well as a major source of immigrants in Australia.

Figure 3.1: Australian residents by ancestry, 2016 <sup>2</sup>



Note: Due to multiple ancestries, the total percentages exceed 100%. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Oceanians include categories such as “Australian”, “New Zealander”, “Melanesian and Papuan”, “Micronesian” and “Polynesian”. The sub-category “Australian” includes “Australian Aboriginal”, “Australian South Sea Islander”, “Torres Strait Islander”, “Australian” and “Australian peoples”.

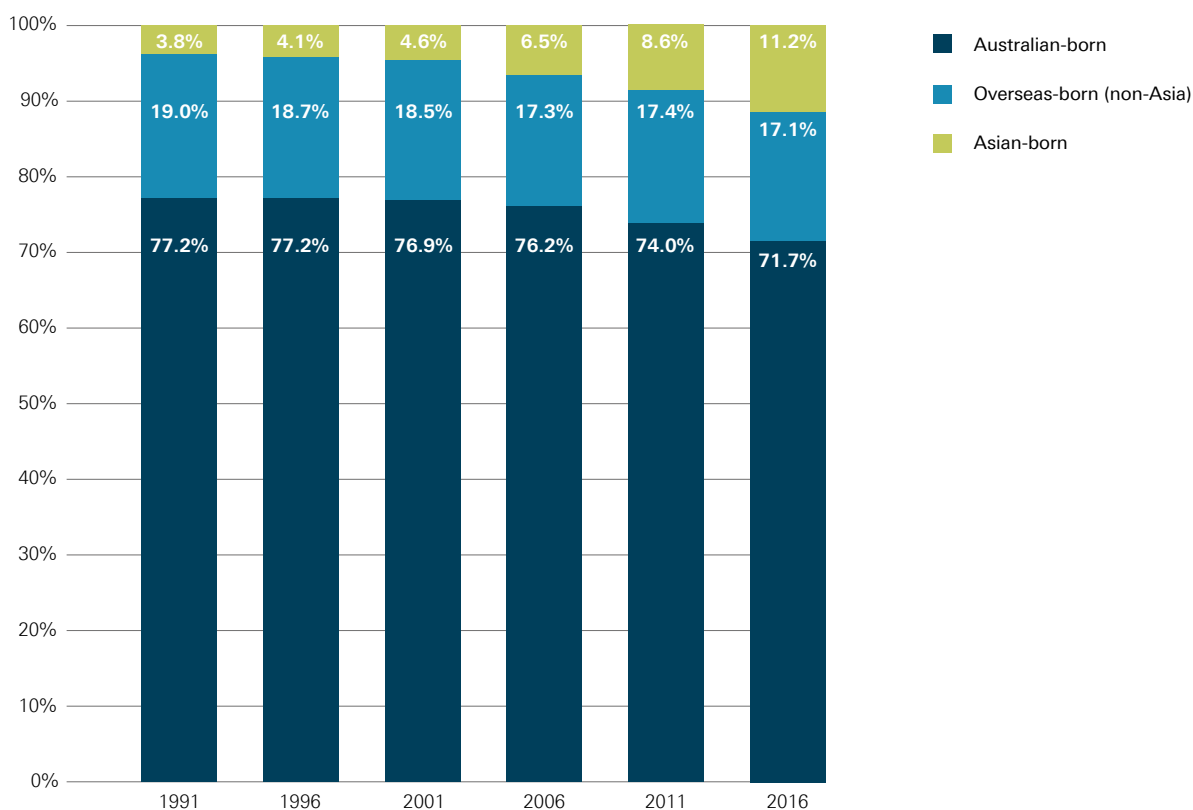
One of the most notable demographic characteristics of the overseas-born population is its high level of educational attainment. While the 2016 Census data on education levels were not available at the time of writing this report, the 2011 Census data show that the educational levels of those born outside Australia, especially in the Asian region, were significantly higher than those of the local-born population. Some 24.3% of Asian-born and 13.2% of other overseas-born populations were Bachelor’s degree holders, while less than 10% of Australian-born residents had completed that level of education (Figure 3.3).<sup>3</sup>

The high levels of educational achievement observed in the immigrant population stem in part from Australia’s strong focus on taking in highly skilled immigrants in order to meet the nation’s workforce demands, as many of these jobs increasingly call for individuals with at least one Bachelor’s degree (Hugo 2014b). Furthermore, the Asian region has been the major source of skilled immigrants in Australia in recent years (DIBP 2016).

Figure 3.3 reveals that a significant proportion of the immigrant population had completed some form of postgraduate education. The 2011 Census data show that the percentage of Asian-born residents who have a Master’s degree (9.2%) was particularly notable in 2011 – the comparable percentages for the non-Asian overseas-born and Australian-born populations were 3.3% and 1.4% respectively. Doctoral degree holders comprised 1.1% of the Asian-born and other overseas-born populations, higher than the comparable figure for their Australian-born counterparts (0.4%).

The Asian-born population occupies significant shares among tertiary degree holders: 18.2% of Bachelor’s, 32.4% of Master’s, and 16.8% of Doctoral degree holders in Australia were born in Asia (Figure 3.4). This is quite high, considering that they comprise only 8.6% of the total population. The human resource benefit of Australia’s immigration program is reflected in these outcomes.

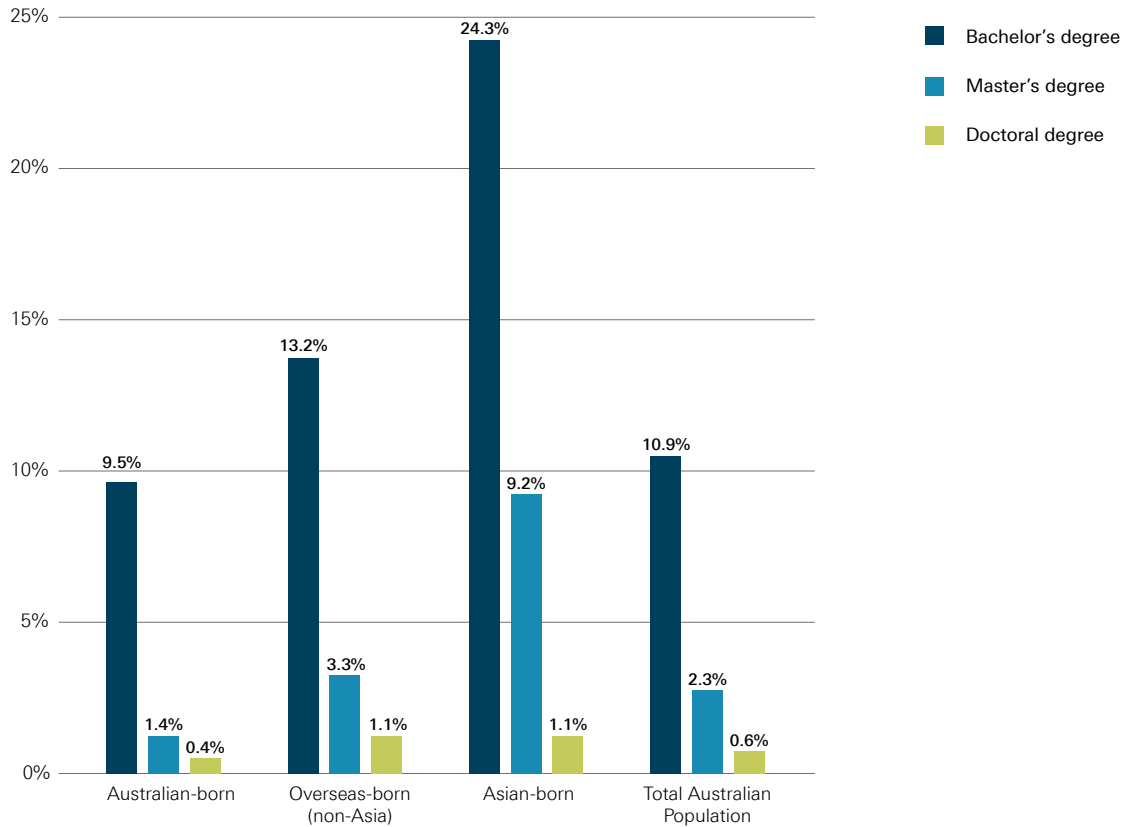
**Figure 3.2: Australian residents by birth region, 1991-2016**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1992; 1997; 2002; 2007; 2012, 2017

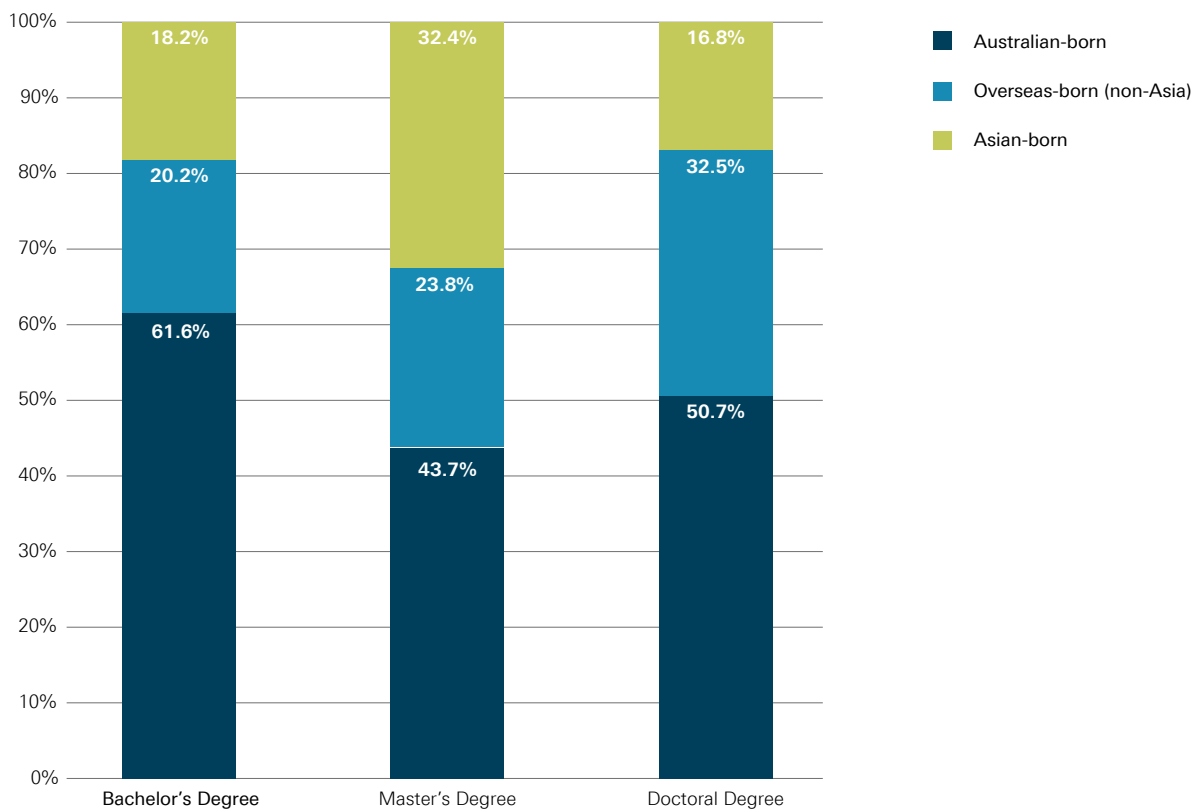
<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the population of “Australian residents” is defined in the Census by “place of usual residence” and thus includes those with temporary residential visas such as international students.

**Figure 3.3: Levels of educational attainment by birthplace group, 2011**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012.

**Figure 3.4: Composition of tertiary degree holders by birth region, 2011**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012.

# Asian-born Academics in Australian Universities<sup>4</sup>

## Overall Trends and Characteristics

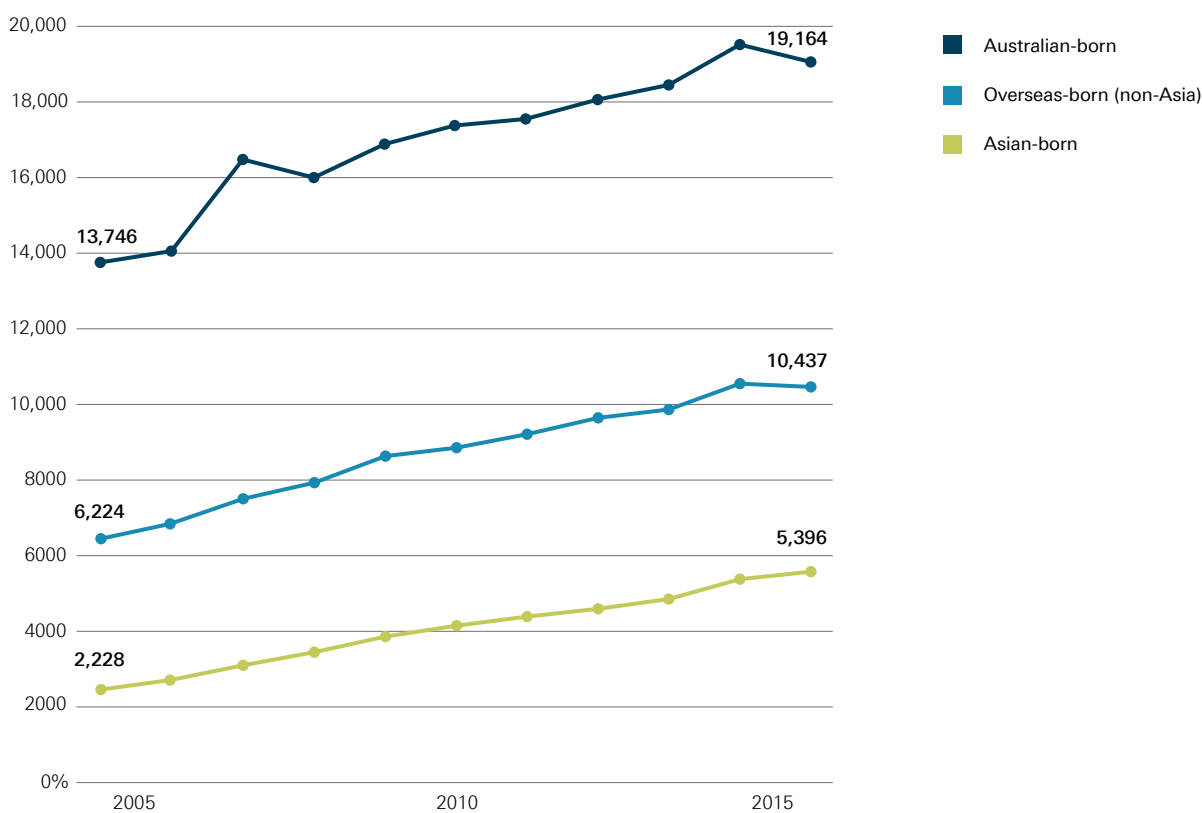
The presence of Asian-born academics (hereinafter ABAs) in Australia has become significant in the last 10 years. Indeed, their numbers more than doubled from 2,228 to 5,396 between 2005 and 2015 (Figure 4.1). Nonetheless, while the rate at which the ABA population has increased is remarkable, their numerical gain (3,168) was small compared with increases in the numbers of Australian-born (5,418) and other overseas-born academics (4,213) in Australia during the same period.

Of all ABAs, academics from mainland China constitute the largest group (32.1%), and their number almost tripled from 613 in 2005 to 1,733 in 2015 (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3). Numerically, the second-largest group was those from

India (15.8%) and their number also more than doubled between 2005 and 2015. In 2015, other major places of origin were Malaysia (8.5%), Sri Lanka (6.3%), Hong Kong SAR (5.2%) and Singapore (4.6%).

While ABAs were spread across different disciplines, 84% were found in five academic fields (Figure 4.4). These fields were Management and Commerce (20.7%), Engineering (19.5%), Health (17.2%), Society and Culture (15.5%), and Natural and Physical Science (11.1%). Only a small percentage of ABAs were working in the fields of Agricultural and Environmental Studies (0.7%), Architecture and Building (1.9%), Education (2.6%), Creative Arts (3.0%) and Information Technology (7.9%).

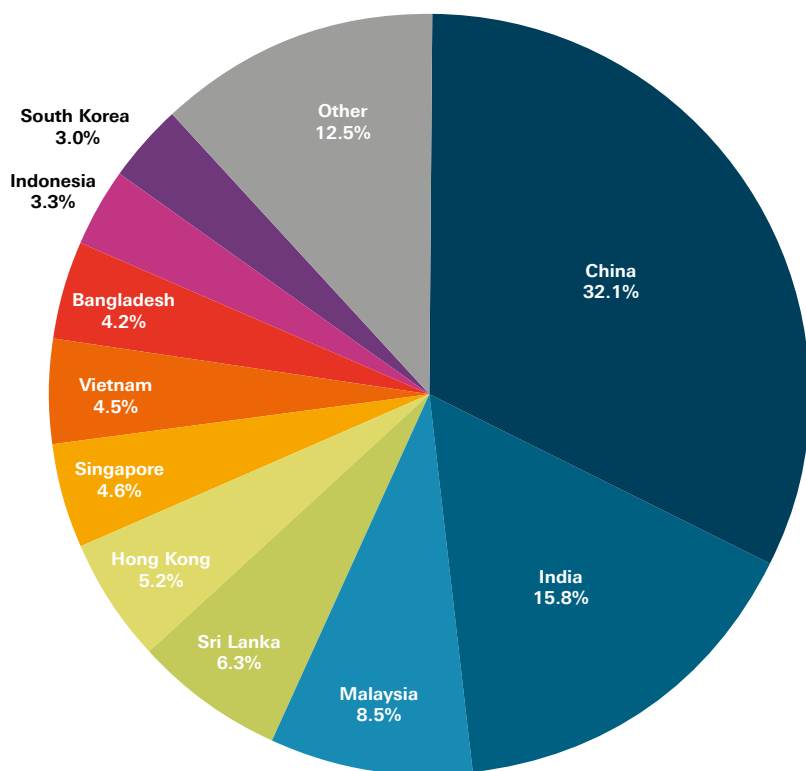
Figure 4.1: Overall trends of academics in Australia by region of birth, 2005–2015



Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (compiled from unpublished data).

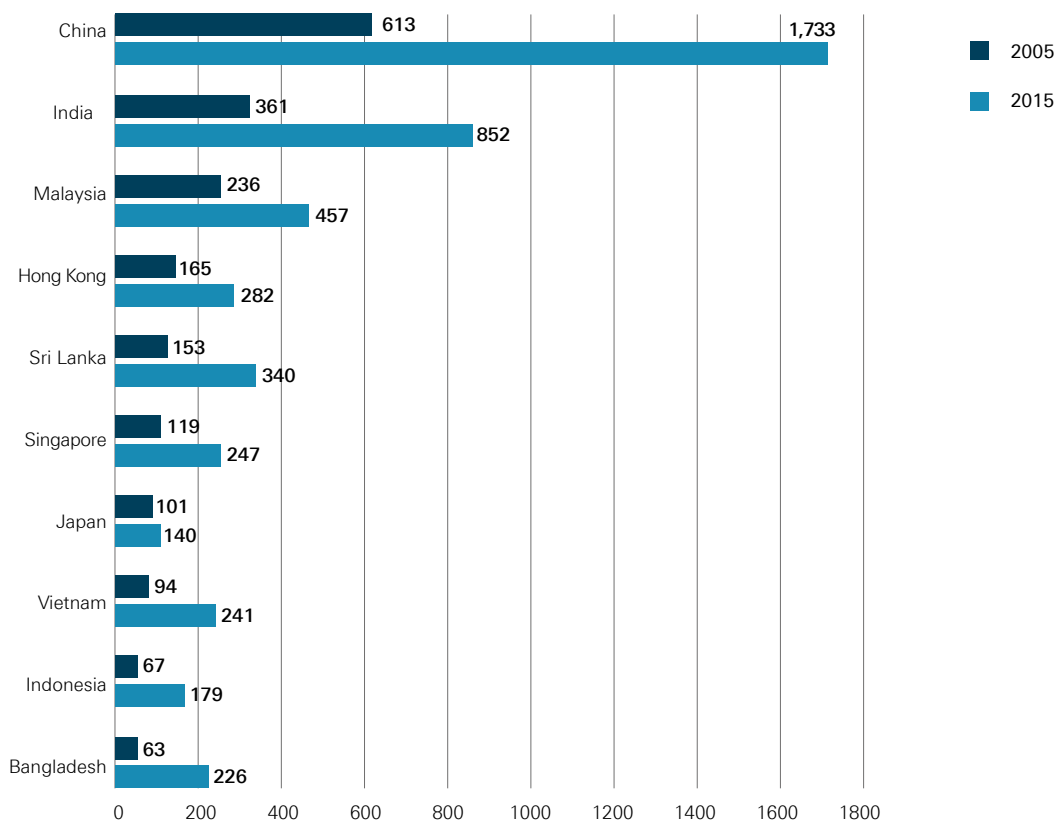
<sup>4</sup> As we noted earlier, the Department of Education and Training does not collect ancestry-based data. While it collects data on languages spoken at home, almost 50% of the data for each year consisted of the category “unknown”, which prevented a sound analysis on linguistic diversity. Hence, no analysis was made of Australian-born academics with Asian ancestry in this section. All the data in this section refer to Asian-born academics only. The analyses in the later sections based on the survey will include Australian-born academics with Asian ancestry.

Figure 4.2: Asian-born academics by place of birth, 2015



Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (compiled from unpublished data).

Figure 4.3: Asian-born academics by place of birth, 2005 and 2015



Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (unpublished data).



Regardless of the disciplines, academics with Asian backgrounds have been actively engaged in linking Australian higher education institutions more closely to Asia. My survey data revealed that the vast majority of them (90.4%) felt that they were making unique contributions to Australian higher education because of their cultural assets. More than three-quarters of them (76.1%) have collaborated with scholars in Asian countries; 66.3% have worked on joint research projects; 49.0% have been visiting fellows in Asian universities; and 34.6% have assisted in exchange programs with Asian universities. Even second-generation Asian academics have been engaged in teaching and research activities in their heritage countries. Clearly, Asian academics are making tangible contributions to internationalisation and diversity of Australian higher education.

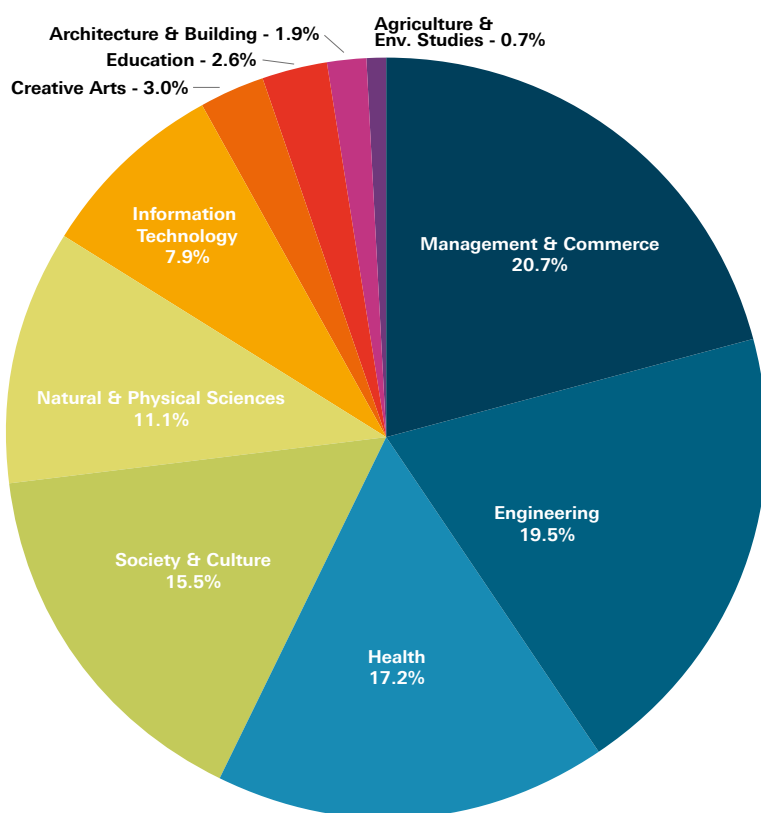
### The Representation of Asian-born Academics in Australian Universities

Overall, ABAs are relatively well represented in terms of numbers. They comprised 15.4% of the total number (headcount) of academics in Australian universities in 2015 (Figure 4.5). According to the 2011 Census, ABAs constituted 16.8% of all PhD holders in Australia. Compared with this figure, their share within the academic workforce

seems slightly lower. Overall, however, the share of ABAs among academics in Australia has increased by 5.4% between 2005 and 2015 (Figure 4.6). The decline of percentage among Australian-born academics partly reflects the percentage decline of Australian-born PhD student enrolment from 82.9% in 2005 to 68.3% in 2015 (DET 2016), and is also due to the retirement of Australian-born academics. Hugo predicted in 2006 that the ageing effect will necessitate Australian universities to take on a major recruitment task over the coming years, including recruiting of staff from overseas as well as attracting high quality postgraduates and retaining them, particularly in the fields of science (Hugo 2006).

It is noteworthy that the overall gender gap has widened for ABAs for the last 10 years (Figure 4.6). The share of female ABAs increased only by 2.3% compared with male ABAs (3.1%). The gender gap has increased by 0.8% between 2005 and 2015. In contrast, the proportion of Australian-born female academics now exceeds that of Australian-born male academics (27.9% vs 26.8%). Even among overseas-born (non-Asian) academics, the gender gap has been gradually closed from 7% in 2005 to 5.6% in 2015. It is not clear why ABAs are the only group that is still experiencing a widening gender gap. This issue will be examined under my sub-project in the coming months.

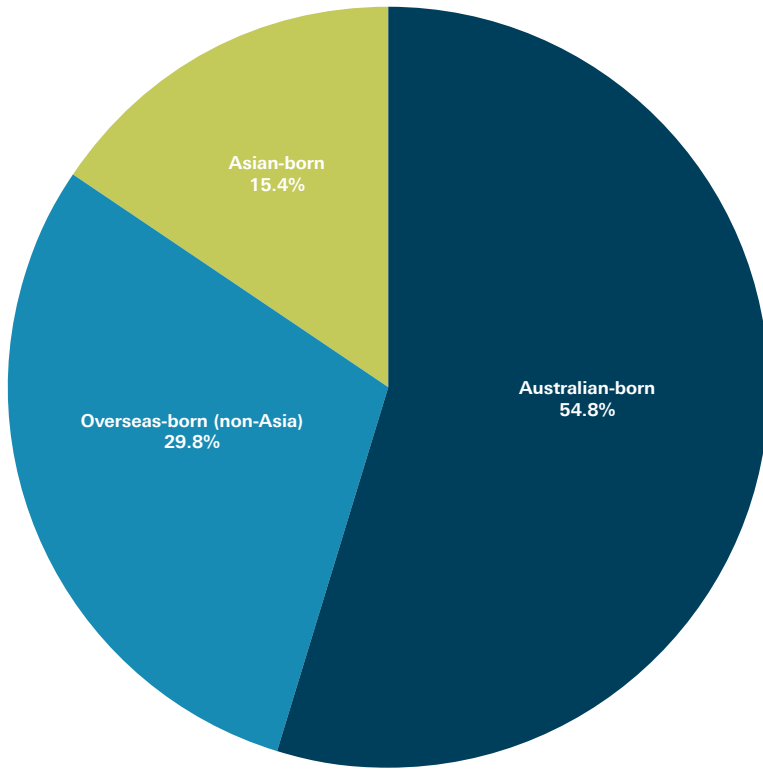
Figure 4.4: Asian-born academics by disciplines, 2015



Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (unpublished data).

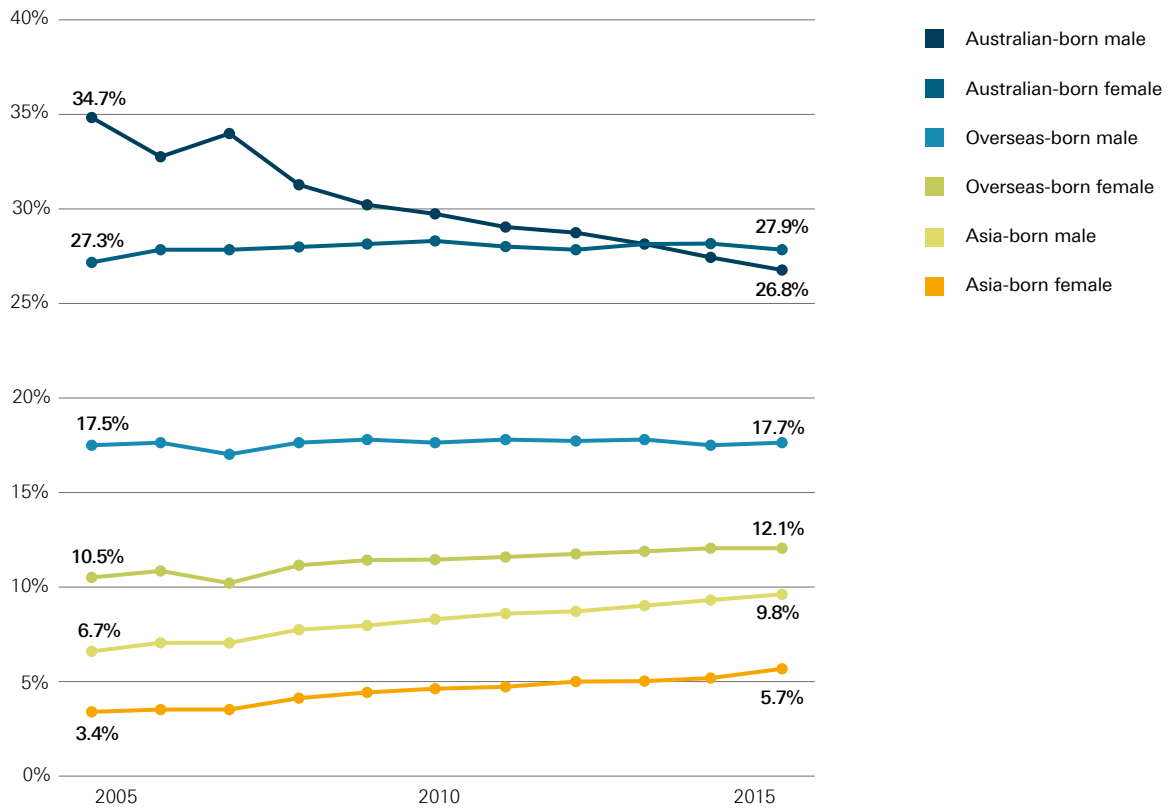
Ⓢ This DET data excludes research-only staff and those who were “uncategorised”.

Figure 4.5: Academics in Australia by region of birth, 2015



Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (compiled from unpublished data).

Figure 4.6: Proportion of academics at Australian universities by birthplace and gender



Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (compiled from unpublished data).

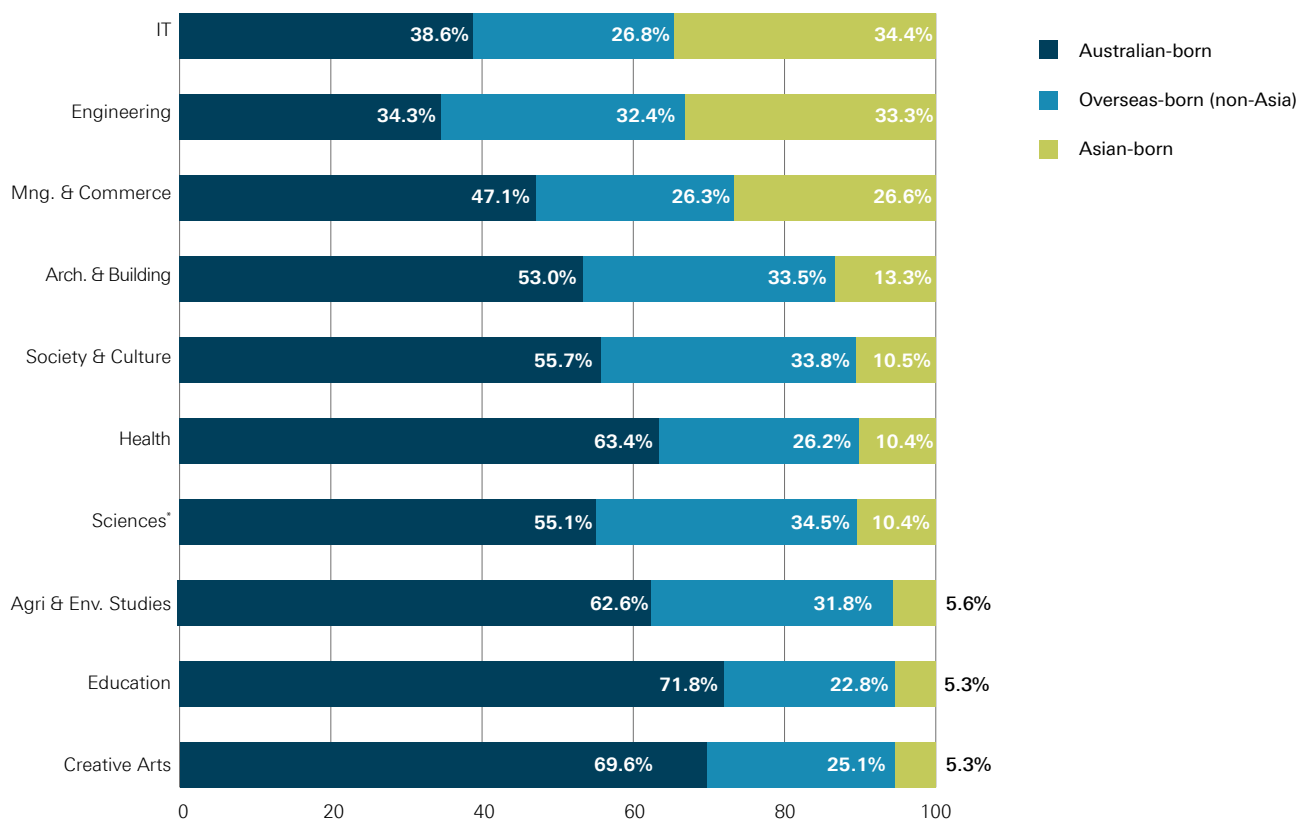
## Disciplinary Differences

While ABAs are well represented in terms of their overall number in comparison to their share among PhD holders, they are not necessarily well represented across all fields (Figure 4.7). While ABAs have a very strong presence in the fields of Information Technology (34.4%), Engineering (33.3%) and Management and Commerce (26.6%), they are under-represented in all other fields. ABAs are particularly under-represented in the fields of Agricultural and Environmental Studies (5.6%), Creative Arts (5.3%) and Education (5.3%). It is surprising that ABAs had such a small presence even in the field of Education where cultural diversity is promoted and advocated.

In terms of overall trends, the representation of ABAs improved in most fields between 2005 and 2015 (Figure 4.8). However, the rate at which ABAs increased their presence across disciplines during this time span varied quite significantly. Information Technology showed the highest increase of ABAs (+13.4%), followed by Management and Commerce (+11.7%) and Engineering (+11.0%). In other fields, the increase of ABAs was relatively small. There was only a 1.9% increase in the numbers of ABAs in the Creative Arts, 2.0% in Society and Culture, 3.2% in Architecture and Building and 3.5% in Education. Agriculture and Environmental Studies was the only field in which the percentage of ABAs declined over the last 10 years, dropping from 8.1% to 5.6%.

There were some notable gender differences in ABAs' representation across disciplines. The proportion of female ABAs slightly outweighed that of male ABAs only in Education and Creative Arts, while still being at the level of 2.9%. In all other fields, male ABAs outnumbered female ABAs. The fields of Engineering and Information Technology (IT) particularly showed wide gaps in their levels of gender representation. The gender gap in Engineering was as wide as 23.7%: female ABAs made up only 4.8% of academics compared with male ABAs (28.5%). The field of IT also had a gender gap of 15.7% (25.1% male ABAs vs 9.4% female ABAs). In some fields, the gender gap has been gradually closed (Agriculture and Environmental Studies, Architecture and Building and Management and Commerce), but in other fields, the gap has been slightly widened (Health, Sciences and Society and Culture).

**Figure 4.7: The representation of academics by disciplines, 2015**

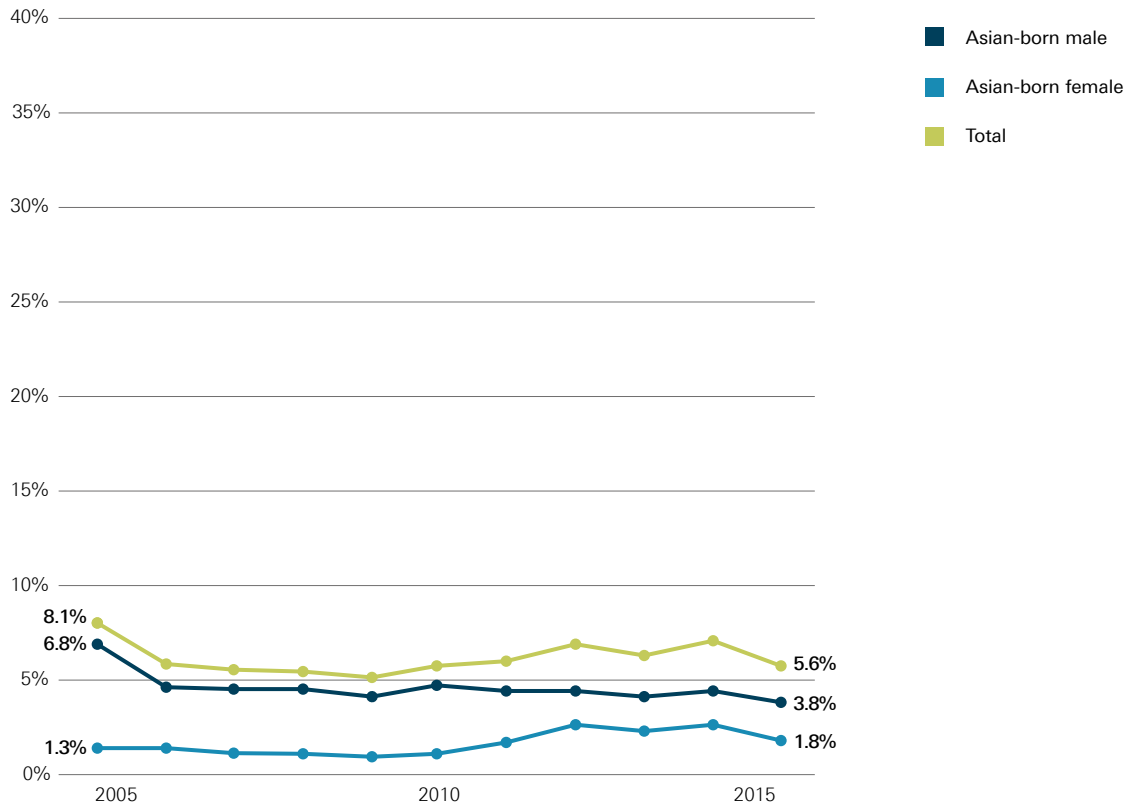


Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (unpublished data). Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

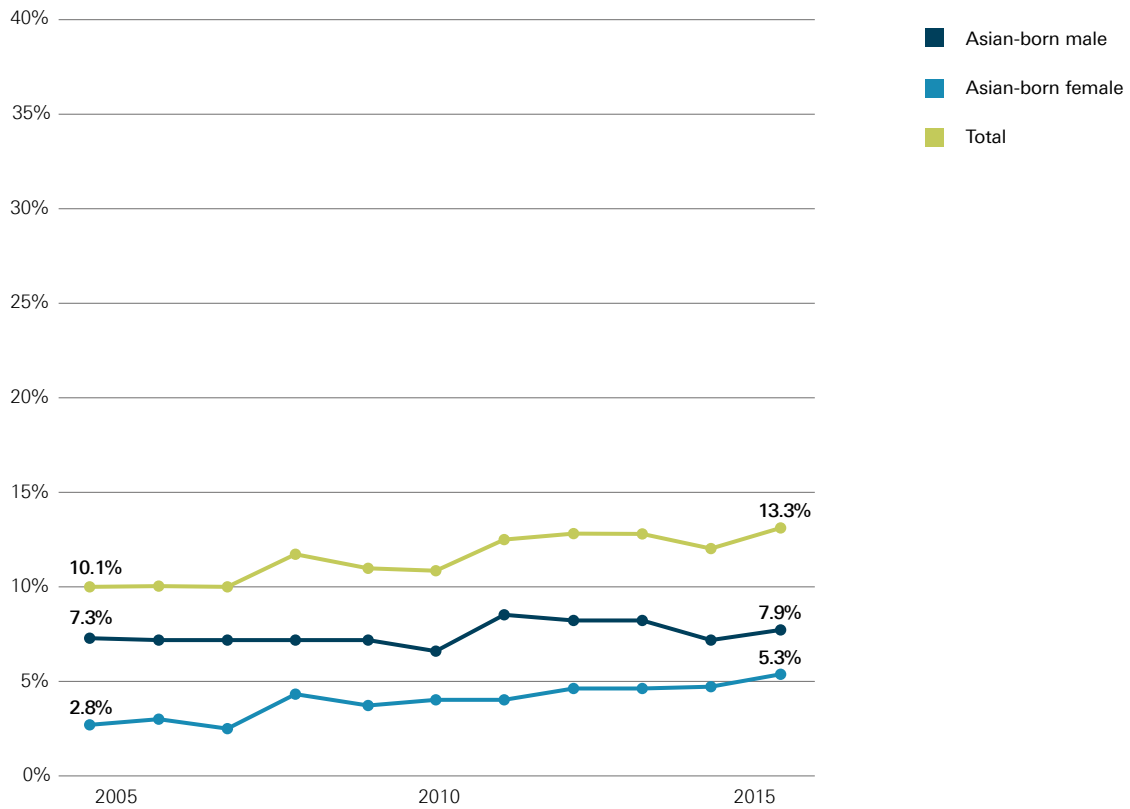
\* Natural and Physical Sciences

Figure 4.8: The representation of Asian-born academics by gender and discipline

**Agriculture and Environmental Studies**



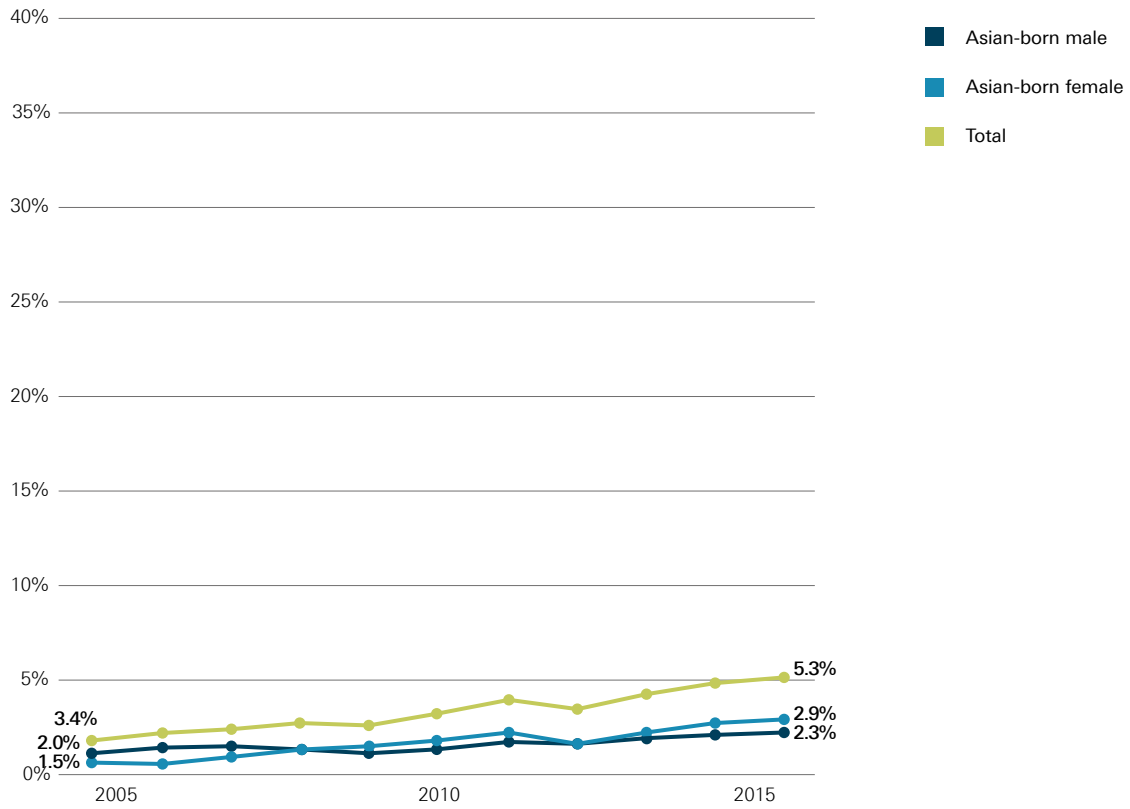
**Architecture and Building**



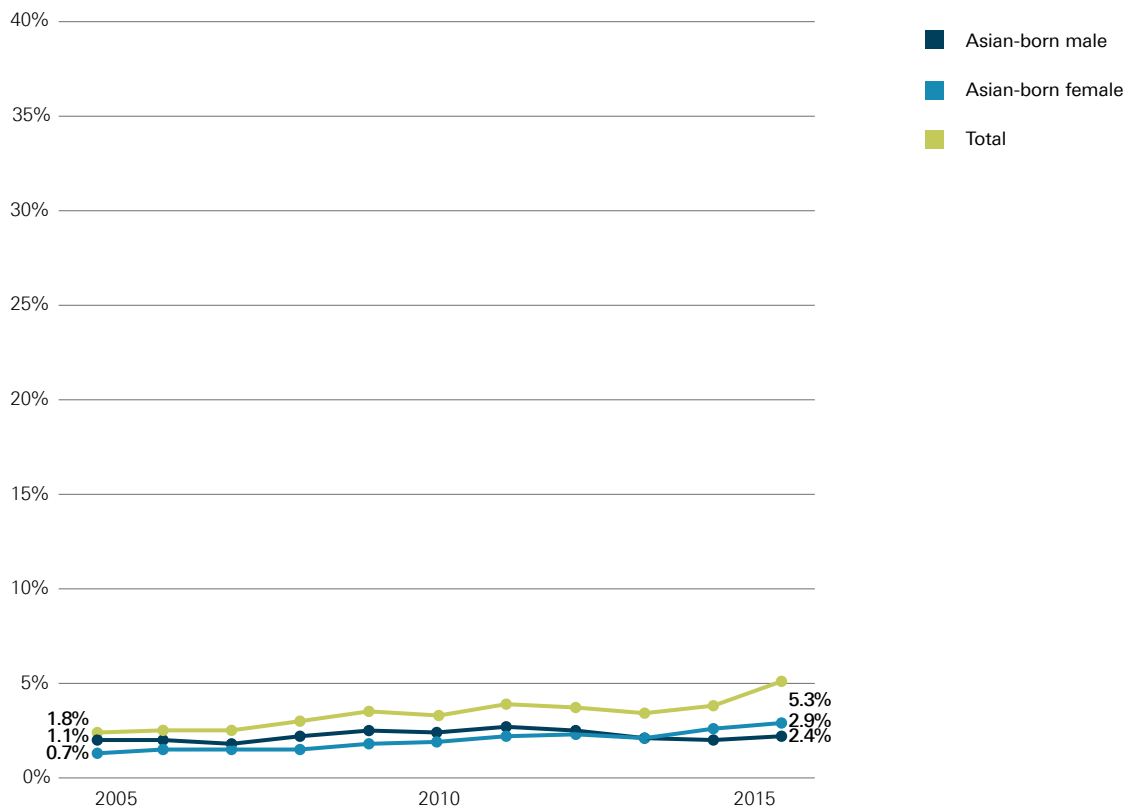
Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (unpublished data).

Figure 4.8: The representation of Asian-born academics by gender and discipline (cont.)

**Creative Arts**



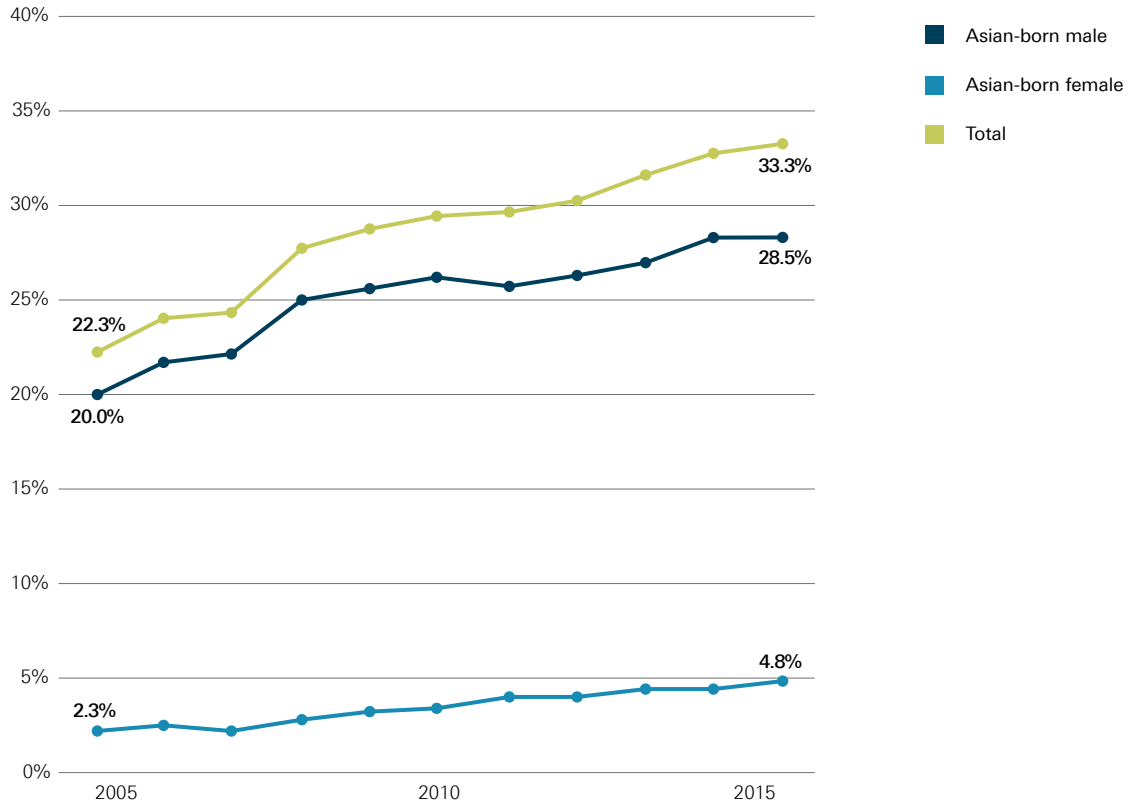
**Education**



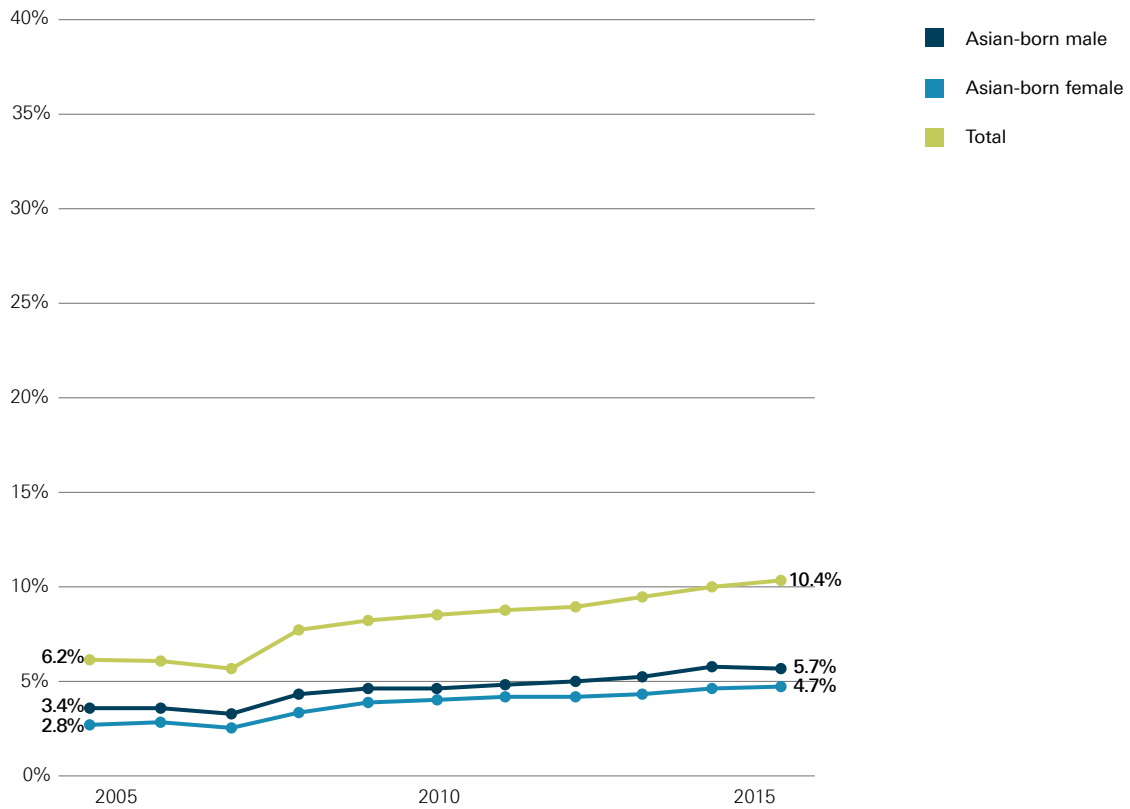
Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (unpublished data).

Figure 4.8: The representation of Asian-born academics by gender and discipline (cont.)

**Engineering**



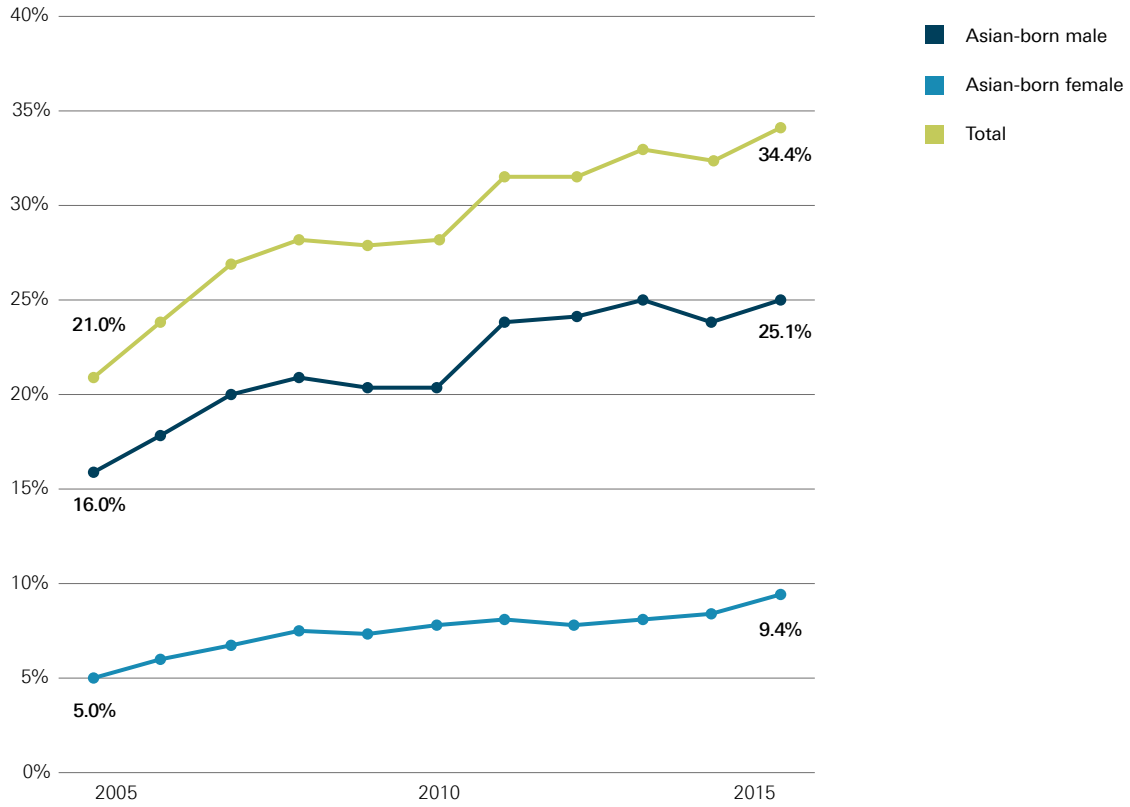
**Health**



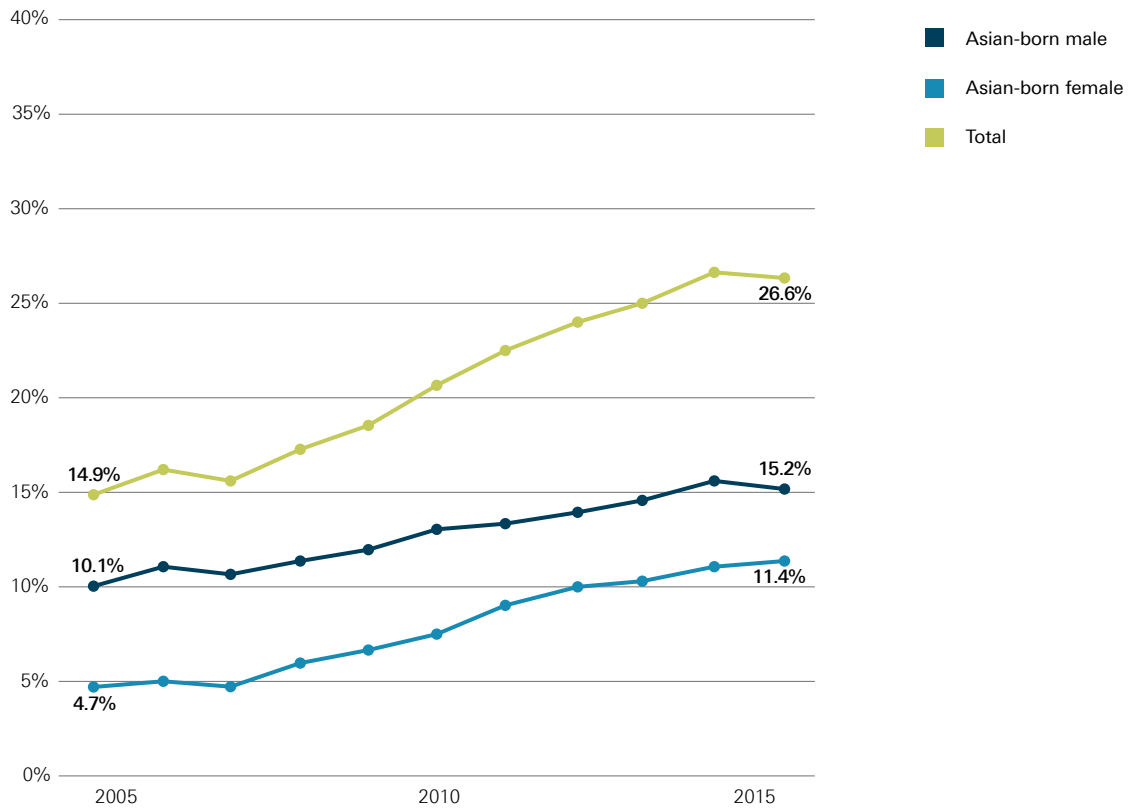
Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (unpublished data).

Figure 4.8: The representation of Asian-born academics by gender and discipline (cont.)

**Information Technology**



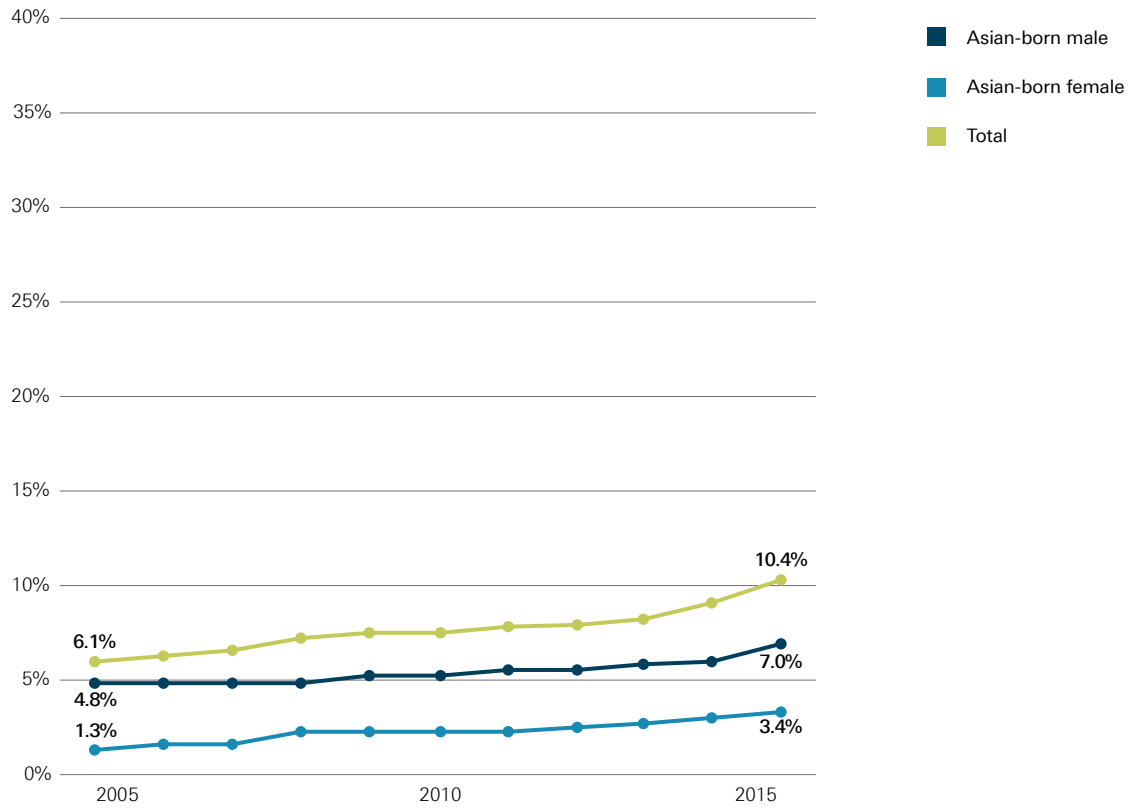
**Management and Commerce**



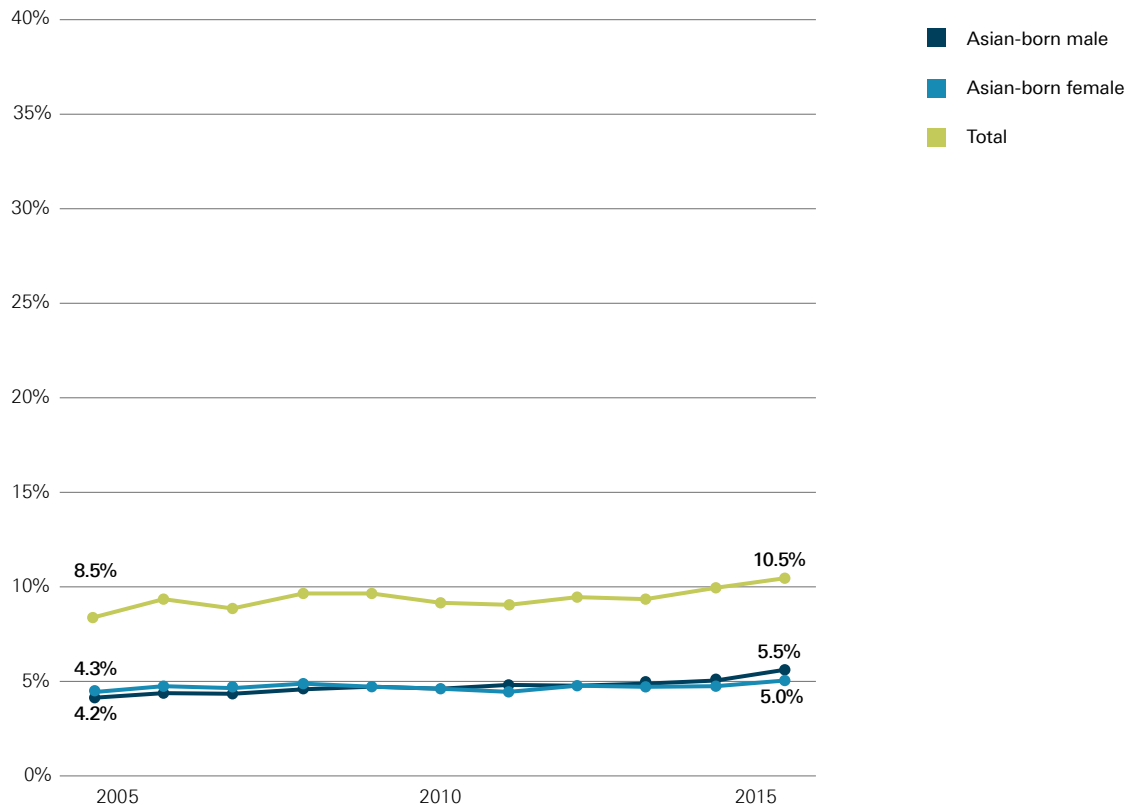
Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (unpublished data).

Figure 4.8: The representation of Asian-born academics by gender and discipline (cont.)

**Sciences\***



**Society and Culture**



Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (unpublished data).  
 \* Natural and Physical Sciences



## Differences across Universities

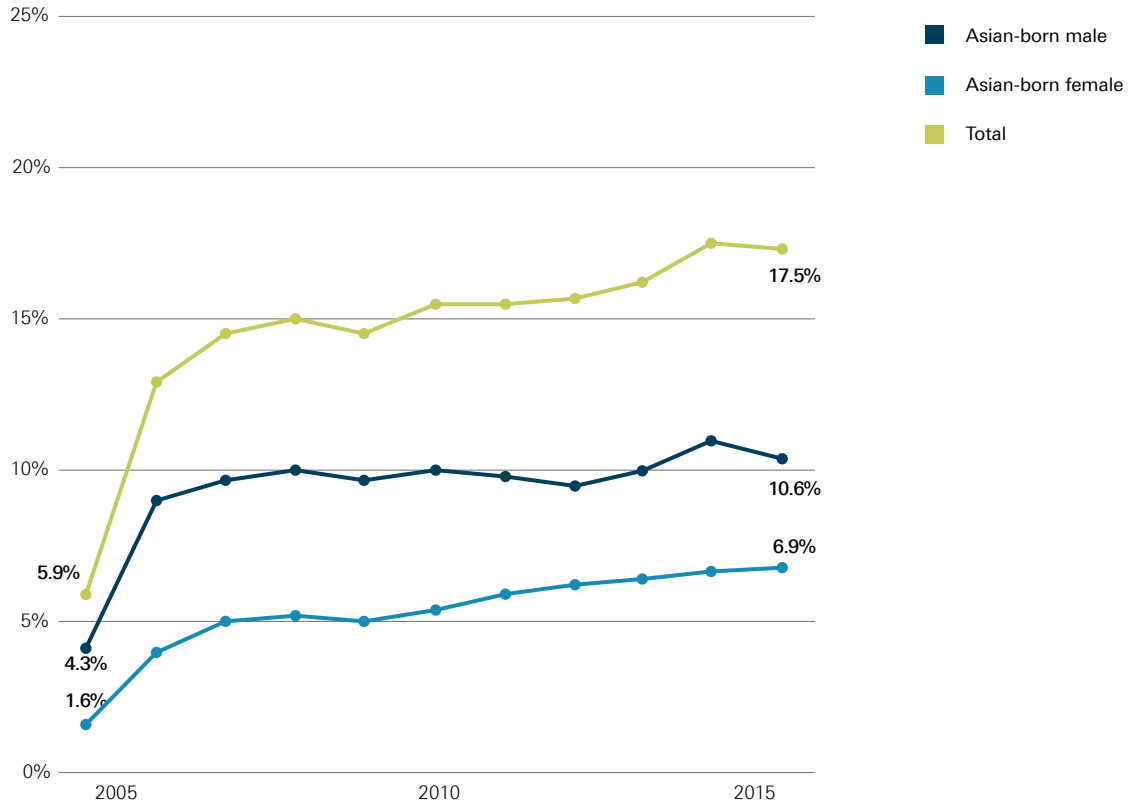
The presence of ABAs also increased in most Go8 universities between 2005 and 2015 (Figure 4.9).<sup>6</sup> ABAs are most highly represented in the University of New South Wales (22.5%), followed by Monash University (20.3%), and the University of Queensland (18.3%). The University of Melbourne had the smallest percentage of ABAs (3.8%) among its academic staff. In terms of the overall trends, the Australian National University experienced the most significant increase in its share of ABAs: from 5.9% to 17.5% between 2005 and 2015. The University of Adelaide has also seen a rapid increase of ABA staff, particularly from 2013 to 2015. The University of Melbourne is the only university where the share of ABAs has declined over the last 10 years, from 7.3% to 3.8%.

It should be noted that gender disparities were quite significant. Female ABAs constituted a smaller share than male ABAs at all Go8 universities. Their shares of the total academic population were particularly small at the University of Melbourne (1.5%), the University of Adelaide (5.1%) and the University of Western Australia (6.3%). On the other hand, the Australian National University and the University of Queensland had very high rates of growth in female ABAs between 2005 and 2015, showing an increase of 5.3 % and 3.7% respectively. Again, the University of Melbourne was the only university at which share of female ABAs has declined over the last 10 years.

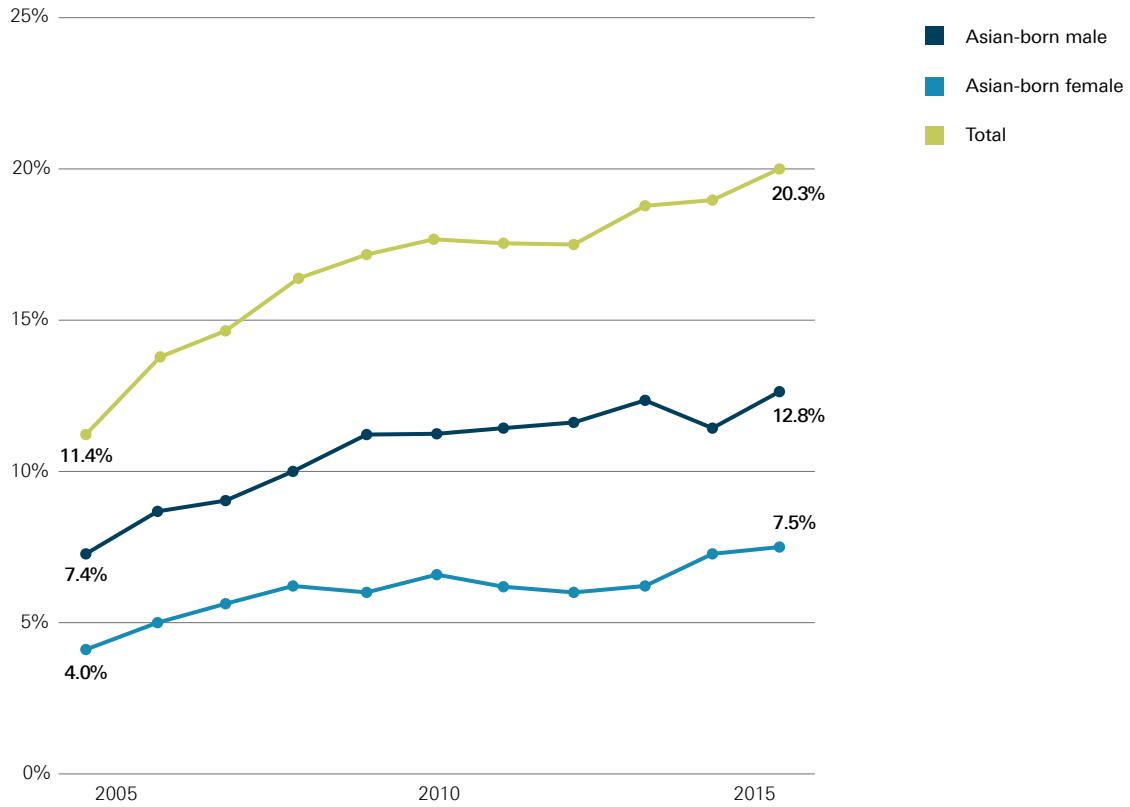
<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the headcount data of academics working for Go8 universities by their birth regions includes a significant number of “No Information” responses.

Figure 4.9: The representation of Asian-born academics at Go8 universities

**Australian National University**



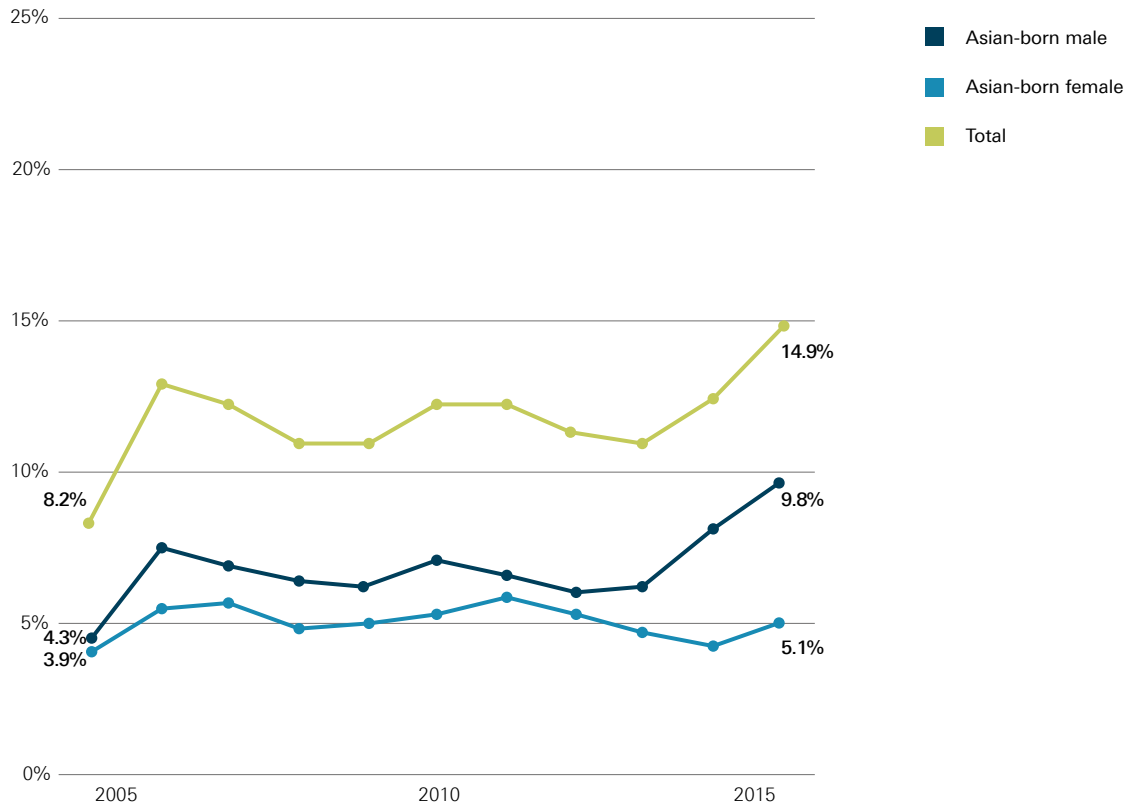
**Monash University**



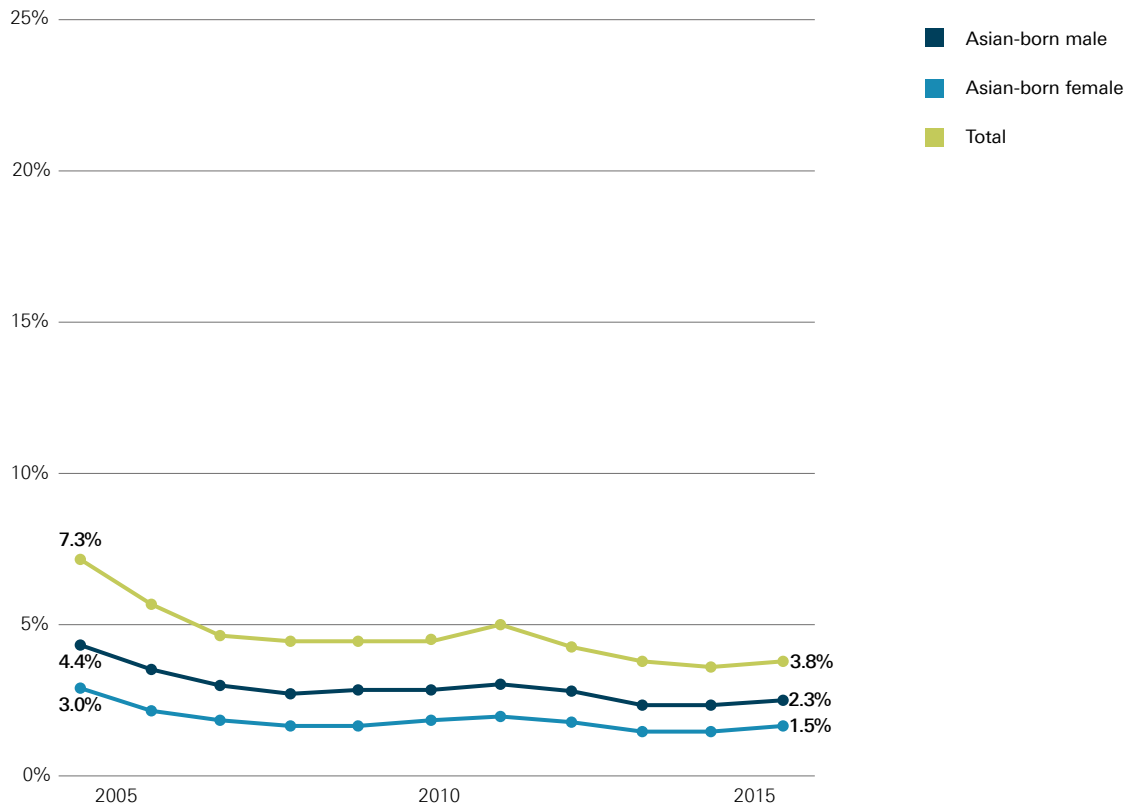
Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (unpublished data).

Figure 4.9: The representation of Asian-born academics at Go8 universities (cont.)

**The University of Adelaide**



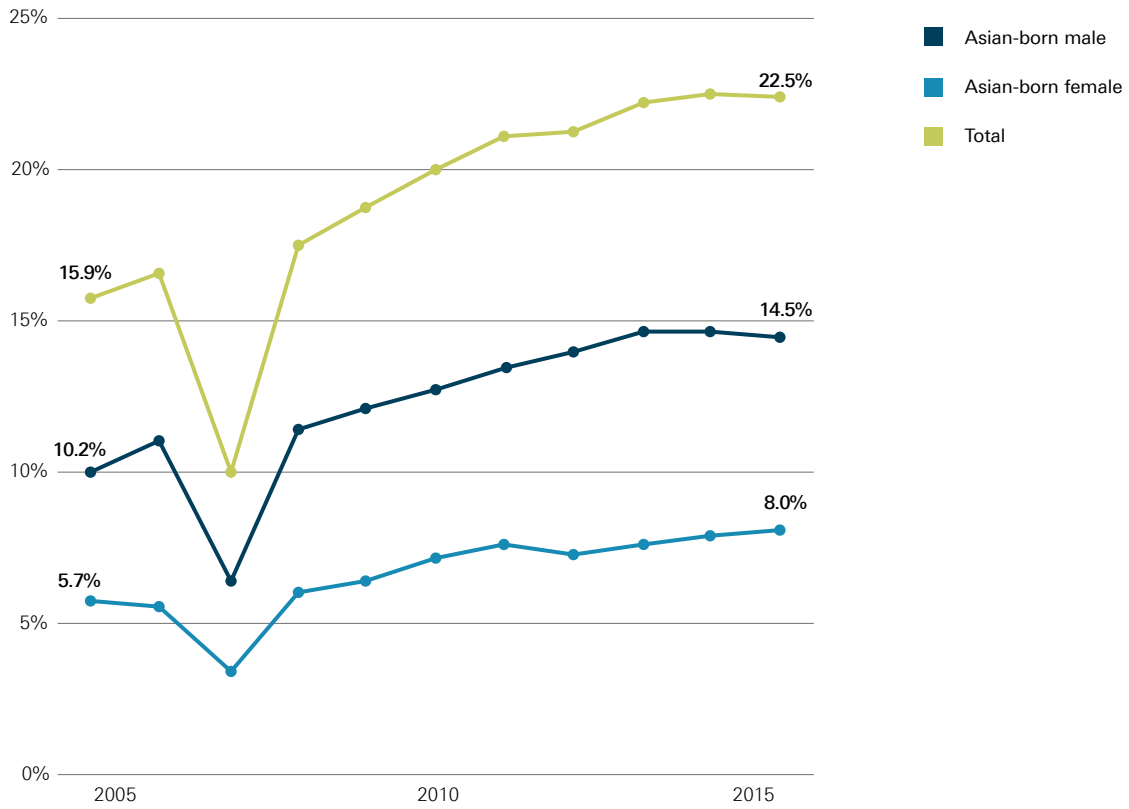
**The University of Melbourne**



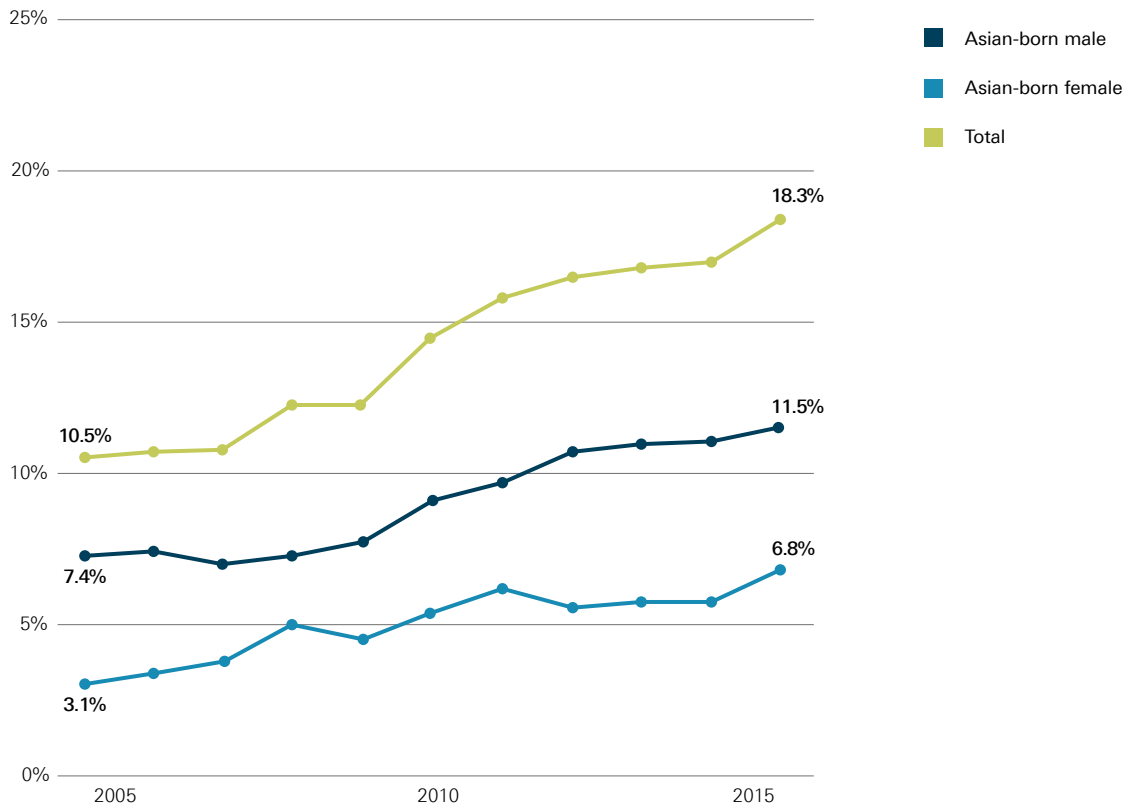
Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (unpublished data).

Figure 4.9: The representation of Asian-born academics at Go8 universities (cont.)

**The University of New South Wales**



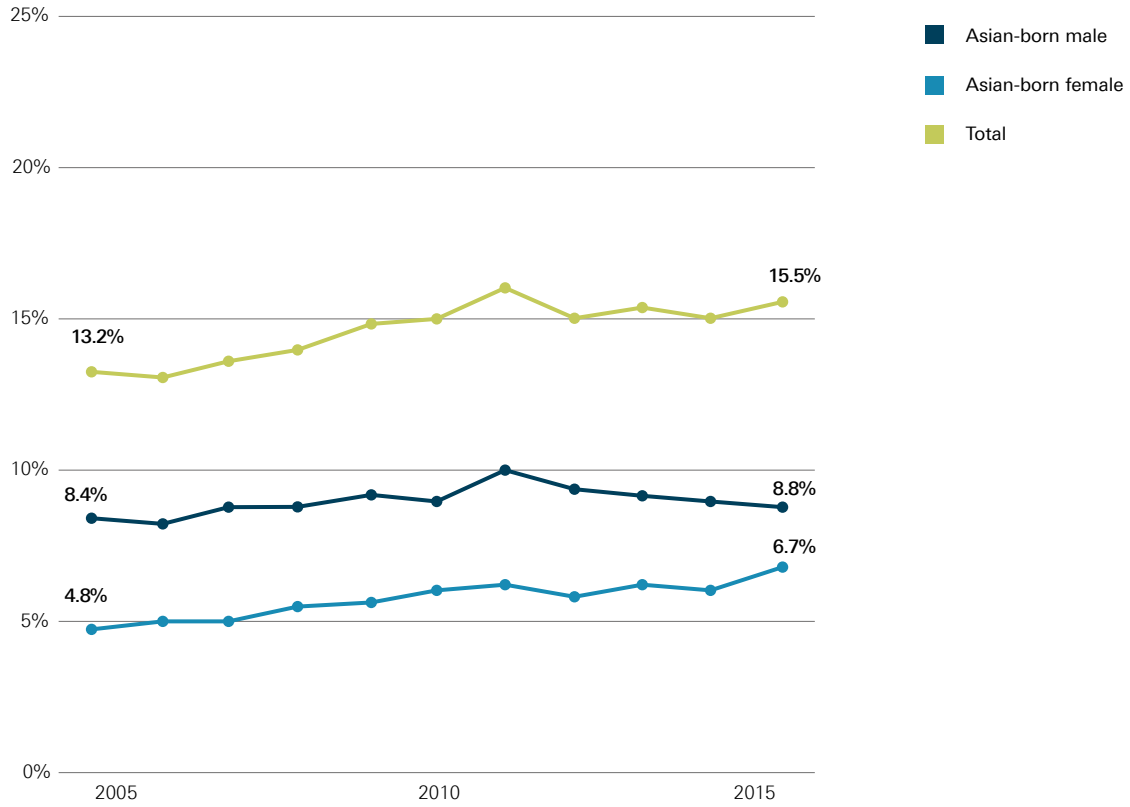
**The University of Queensland**



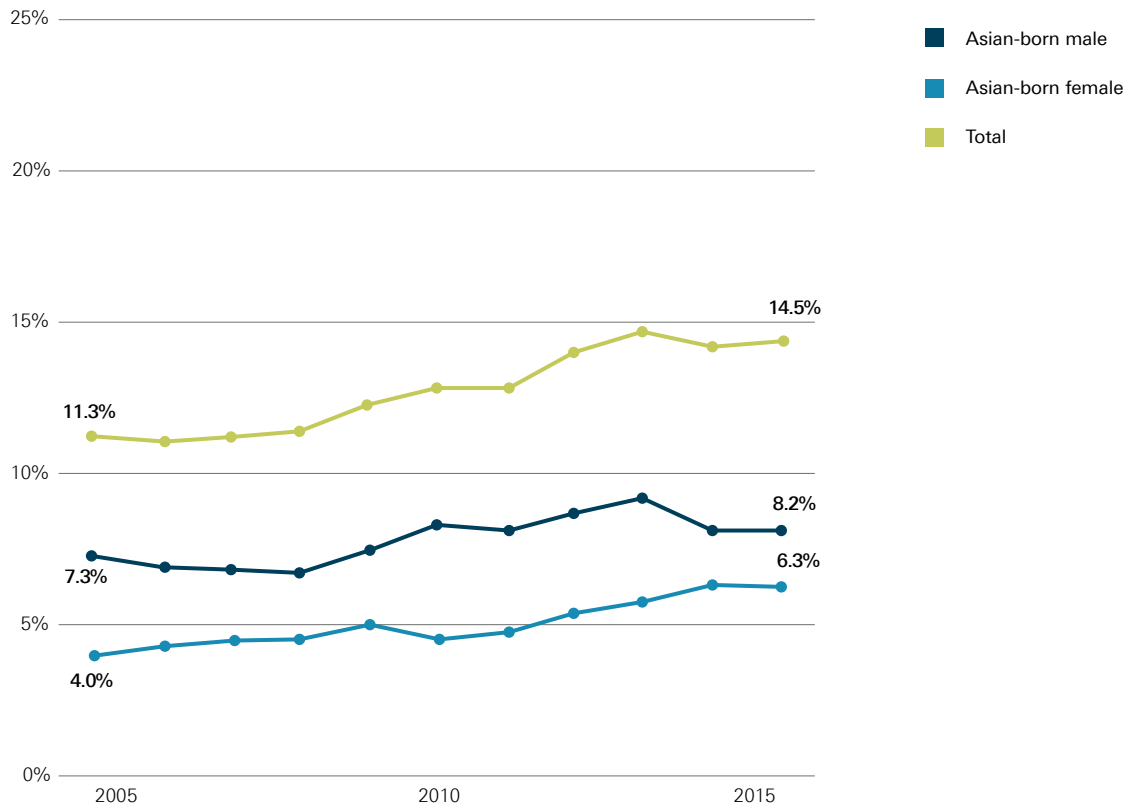
Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (unpublished data).

Figure 4.9: The representation of Asian-born academics at Go8 universities (cont.)

**The University of Sydney**



**The University of Western Australia**



Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (unpublished data).

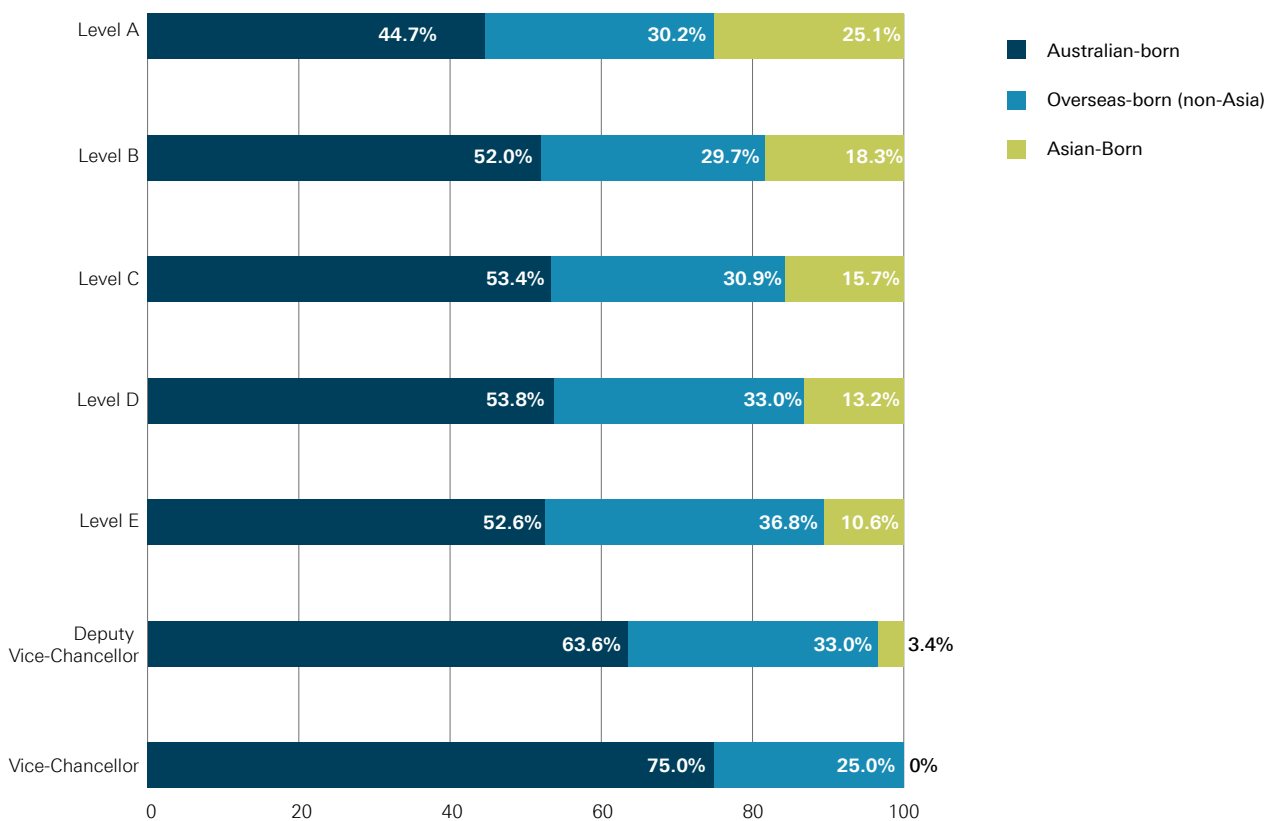
## Differences across Academic Ranks

The ABAs' levels of representation among all Australian universities vary greatly across academic ranks (Figure 4.10). ABAs are most heavily concentrated in low-level academic ranks, particularly at Level A – 25.1% of them were in this rank in 2015. The more senior the rank, the lower the level of representation of ABAs. They are also severely under-represented in university management. Only 3.4% of Deputy Vice-Chancellors are Asian born, and currently there is no Asian-born Vice-Chancellor at any Australian university. The figures are in stark contrast to those for European-born academics, who constitute 33.0% of Deputy Vice-Chancellors and 25.0% of Vice-Chancellors.

The representation of ABAs has increased in all academic ranks between 2005 and 2015, except for Chancelleries (Figure 4.11). The rate of increase was particularly high at Level A, where it increased from 14.8% to 25.1% (+10.3%), followed by Level D (+6.3%), Level B (+5.9%), Level C (+5.8%), and Level E (+5.4%).

While the proportion of ABA females among academics has increased, gender disparities in the representation of male and female ABAs working at Australian universities have widened over the last 10 years. At Level A, the gender gap increase was particularly salient: the percentage difference between ABA males and females rose by 4.1% from 2.4% in 2005 to 6.5% in 2015. At Level D, the gender gap was the highest among all ranks (6.7%) in 2015, increasing by 1.7% from 2005. At the level of Chancelleries, the gender gap slightly declined from 2.5% to 0.9%. However, female ABA comprised only 0.9% in all Chancellery positions – up from 0% in 2005.

Figure 4.10: Birthplace representation by academic ranks, 2015

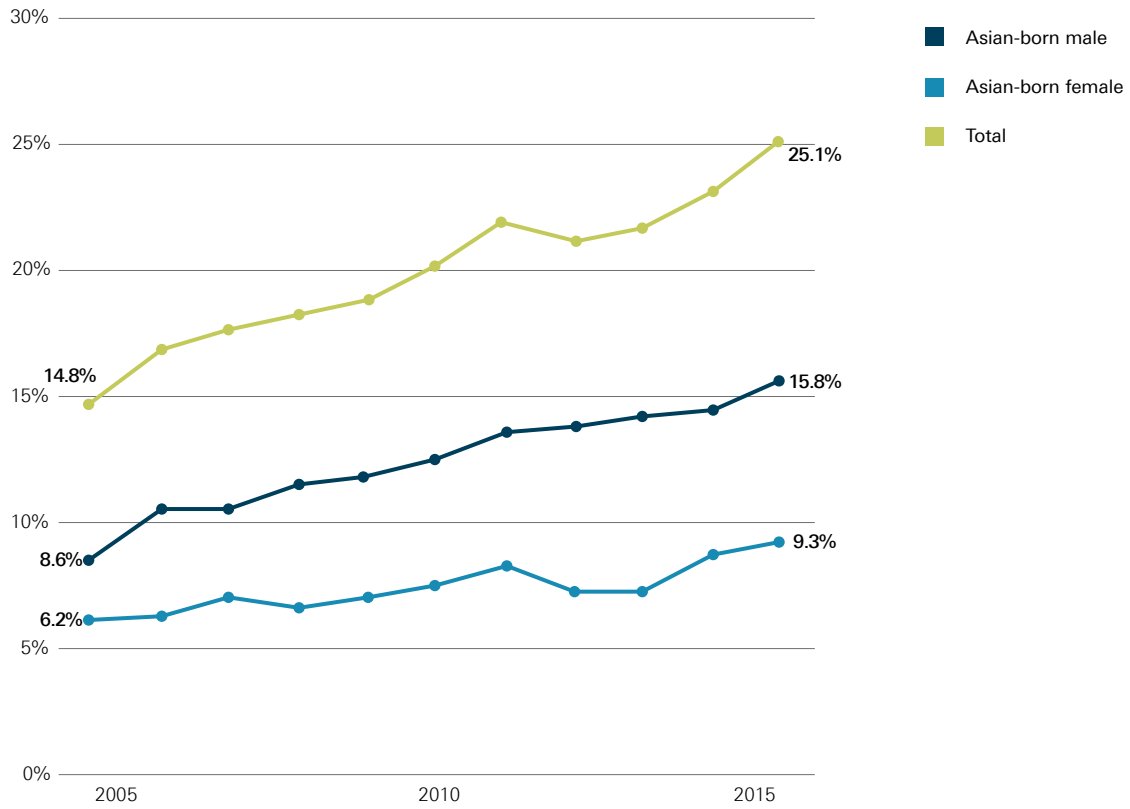


Source: Department of Education and Training 2016 (compiled from unpublished data).

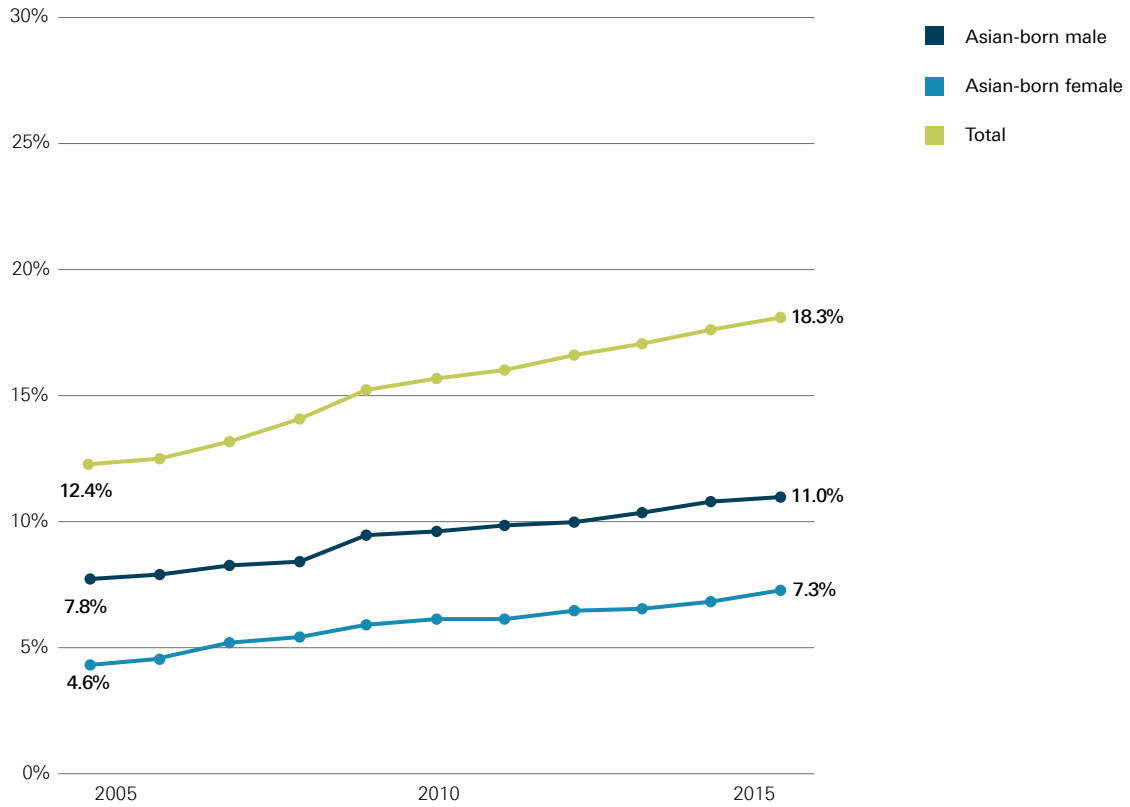
It should be noted that the number of “unspecified” on country of birth is large (43.3%) among academics in Chancelleries.

Figure 4.11: The representation of Asian-born academics by academic rank

**Level A**



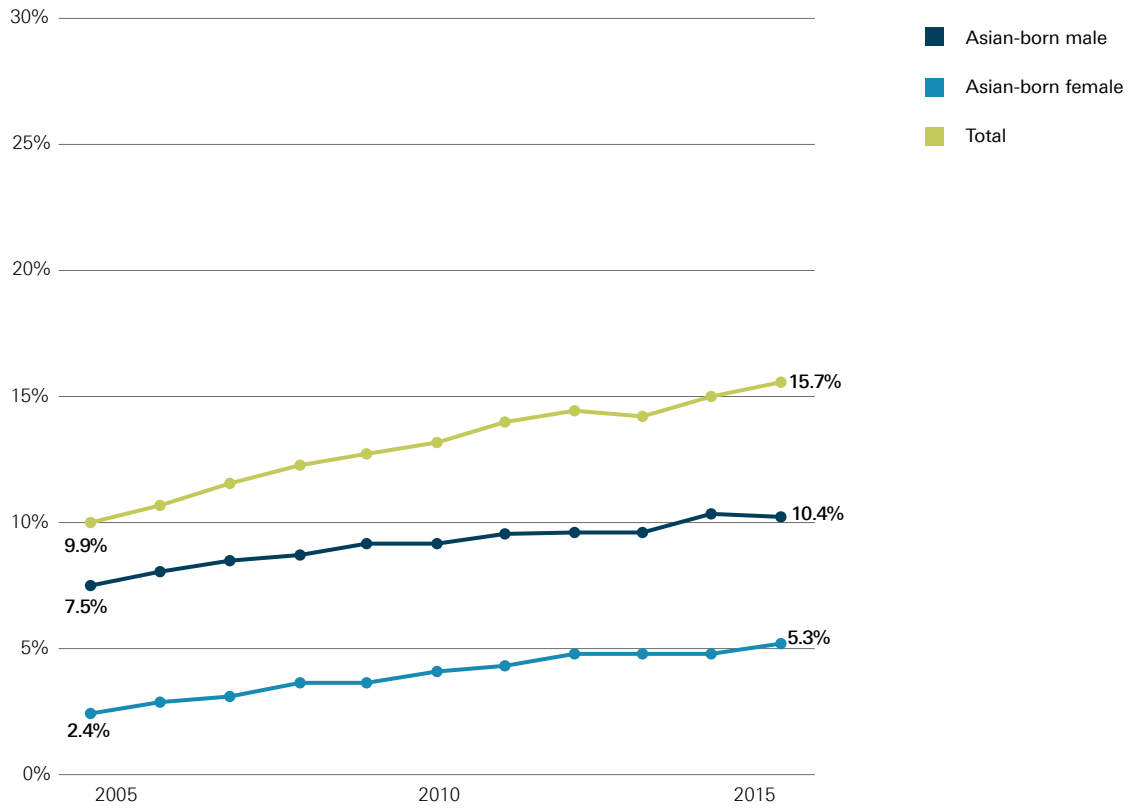
**Level B**



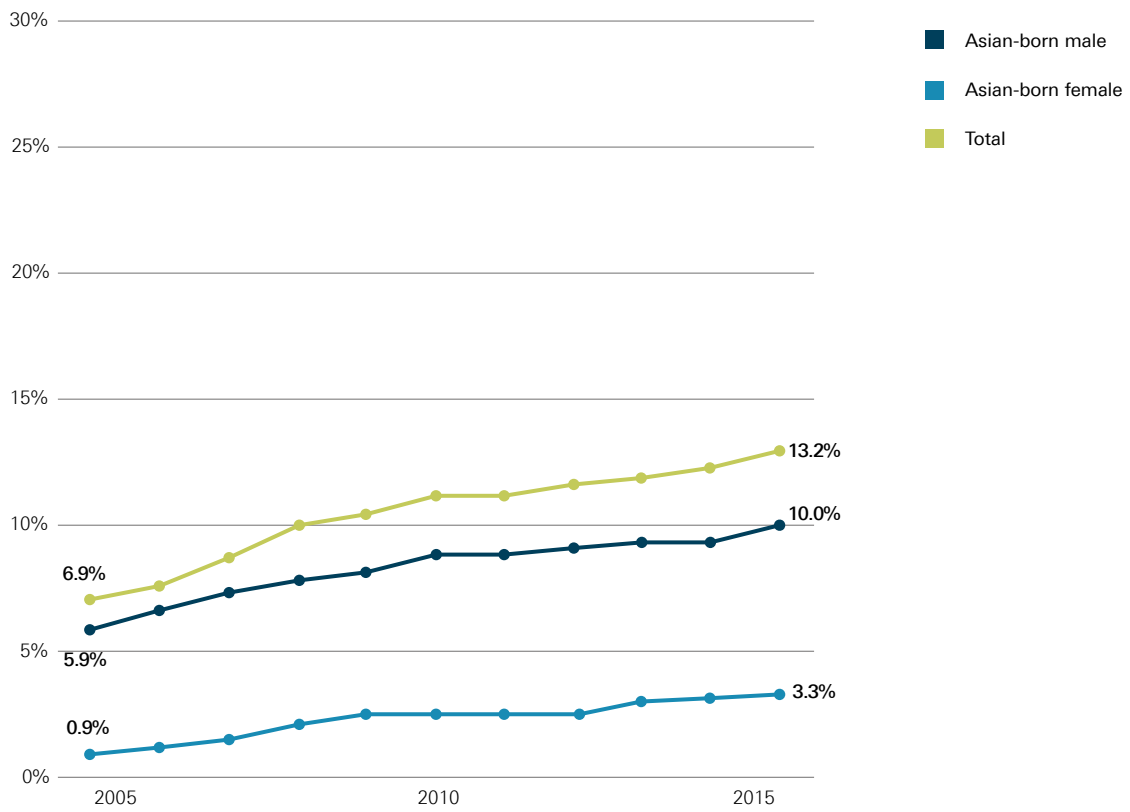
Source: Department of Education and Training, 2016 (compiled from unpublished data).

Figure 4.11: The representation of Asian-born academics by academic ranks (cont.)

**Level C**



**Level D**

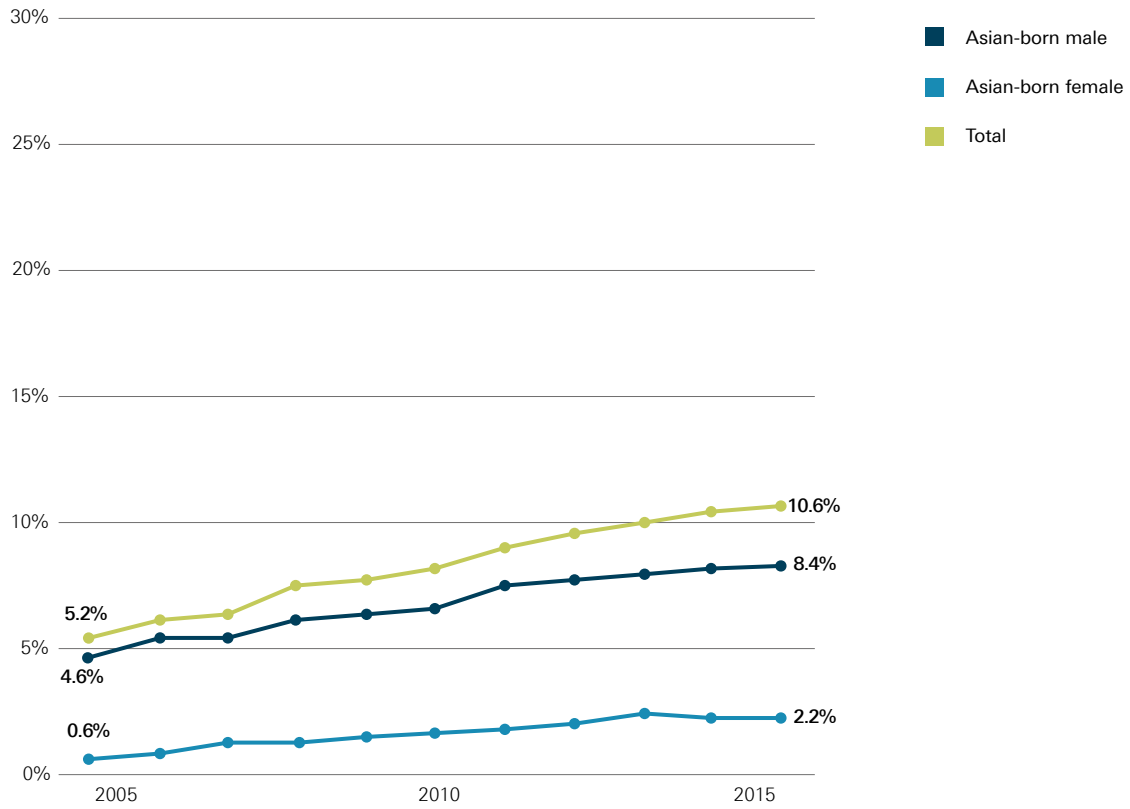


Source: Department of Education and Training, 2016 (compiled from unpublished data)

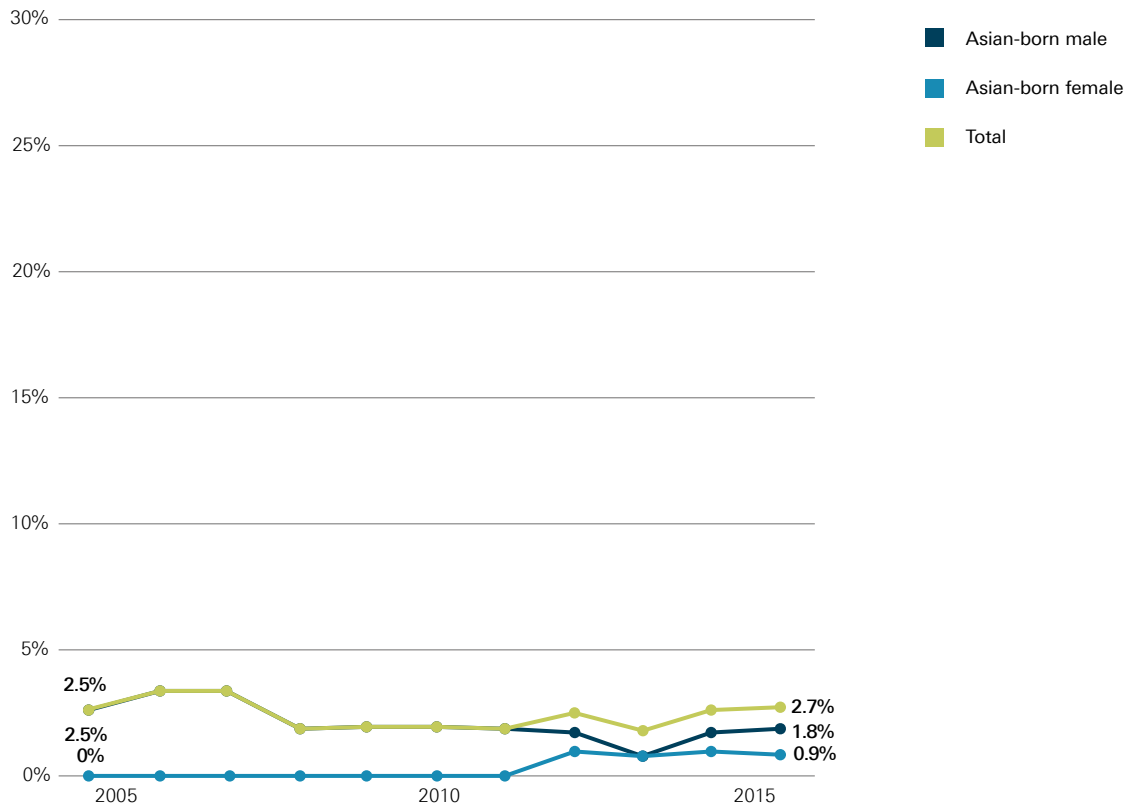


Figure 4.11: The representation of Asian-born academics by academic ranks (cont.)

**Level E**



**Chancelleries**



Source: Department of Education and Training, 2016 (compiled from unpublished data)

Overall, ABAs constitute only a small presence, particularly in the higher academic ranks, relative to the proportion of Asian-born PhD holders within the population. This is in stark contrast to the situation for other overseas-born academics, who make up 37% of Level E positions, 33.3% of Deputy Vice-Chancellors and 27.3% of Vice-Chancellors.

This is not a so-called “pipeline problem”, which is often highlighted in discussions of gender and ethnic equity in academia. In fact, the share of Asian-born students has consistently exceeded that of European-born students for the last 28 years. As early as 1989 (the earliest data available from DET), 70.2% of international students in PhD programs were from Asia and the Middle East<sup>8</sup> and only a small minority of them were from Europe (9.7%) and the Americas (7.1%). While the relative proportion of Asian students in PhD enrolment declined to 58.4% in 2015, Asian students still constitute the majority of international students in PhD programs, and 18.5% of all PhD students in Australian universities. In other words, the pipeline of ABAs has been more than adequate for the last two decades, and thus cannot explain the problem.

Some scholars suggest that pipelines can be “leaky” and higher enrolment numbers do not always lead to higher proportions of women and minorities being employed as faculty (Pell 1996; Barr et al. 2008; Carr et al. 2015). What makes pipelines leaky? Why is it that ABAs are so under-represented in senior positions and in university management? The next section will identify and discuss what many ABAs perceive to be potential obstacles to their employment and career advancement, as well as potential strategies to aid their greater inclusion.

<sup>8</sup> From 1989 to 1999, DET used “Asia and the Middle East” as one region of origin of PhD students. Judging by the 2001–2015 data, the vast majority of students in this regional category were from Asia. DET separately identified Asia from the Middle East in 2000, when 66.2% of international students in PhD programs were from Asia.

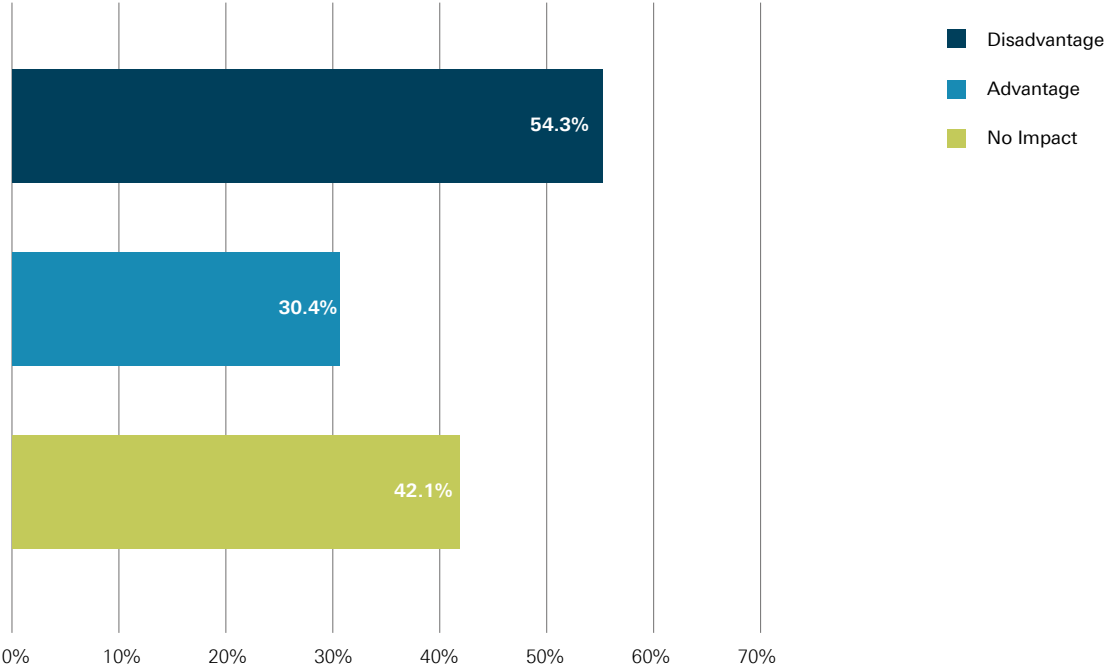
# The Representation and Inclusion of Asian Australian Academics

## The Perceived Impacts of Ethnic, Cultural and Immigrant Backgrounds

While faculty diversity has become widely recognised in universities, numerous studies have revealed that the academic workplace is a challenging environment for women and ethnic and cultural minorities. A review of 317 studies on minority faculty found that major issues such as negative stereotypes, tokenism and marginalisation have not changed for ethnic minority scholars for the last two decades (Aguirre 2000; Lee 2011; Turner et al. 2008). Overall, this research corroborated these findings in that the majority (54.3%) of Asian Australian academics (AAAs) felt that their ethnic and cultural background worked to their disadvantage (Figure 5.1). AAAs’ sense of disadvantage was the highest in Humanities and Social Sciences (62.5%); followed by Architecture, Design and Arts (60.0%); IT and Engineering (56.3%); Business, Economics and Management (54.0%); Health (52.6%); Sciences (51.0%); and Law (36.8%).<sup>9</sup>

These perceptions varied across gender. Women felt more disadvantaged than men: 62.1% of female AAAs stated that their ethnic and cultural background was a disadvantage in their workplace, compared with 49.4% of male AAAs (Figure 5.2). This result was largely consistent with the findings of Diversity Council Australia’s report (2017) that culturally diverse women face a “glass-cultural ceiling”. In the report, one in four culturally diverse women (26%) in Australian organisations agreed that cultural barriers in the workplace had caused them to scale back at work. Only 10% of culturally diverse women strongly agreed that their leadership traits were recognised or that their opinions were valued and respected (Diversity Council Australia 2017).

**Figure 5.1: The perceived impact of ethnic/cultural background in the workplace\***



Source: The author’s own survey in 2016. \*The total exceeds 100% since respondents could choose “both advantage and disadvantage” for their answer.

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that the size of samples for Architecture, Design and Arts, and Law was quite small (10 and 19 respectively).

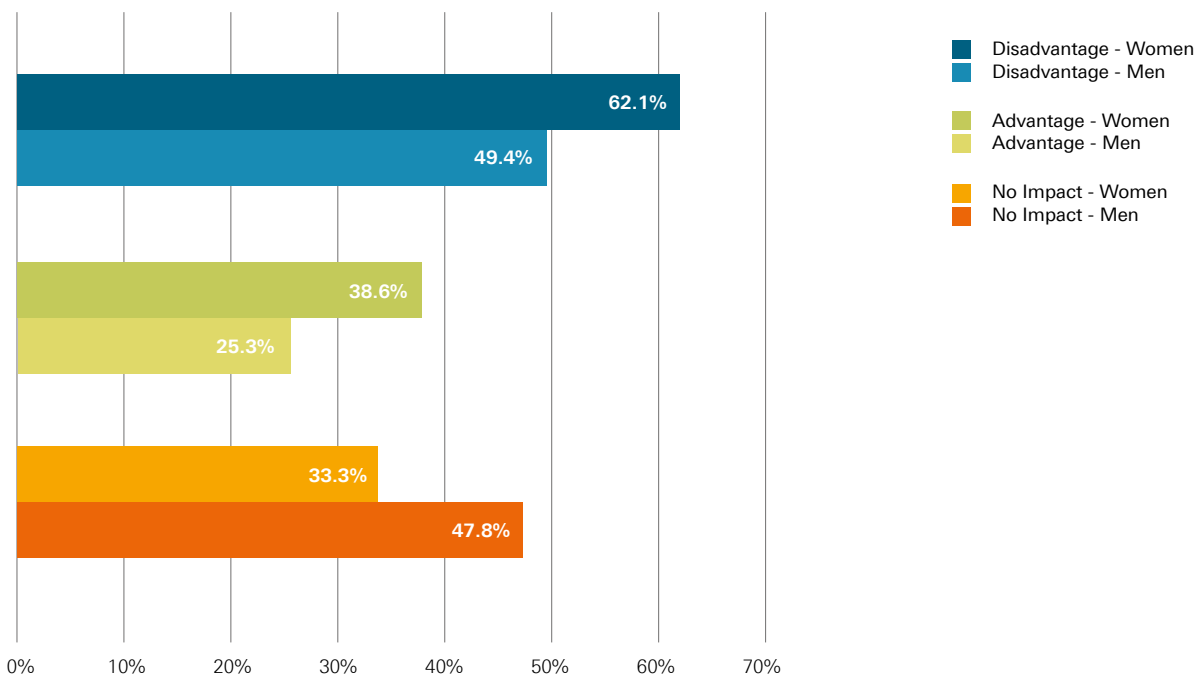
An immigrant background put Asian-born academics in a slightly more difficult situation (Figure 5.3). To the question as to whether being an immigrant had affected them in the workplace, 58.6% of Asian-born academics felt that it worked to their disadvantage, which was 4.3% higher than the answer on the impact of ethnic/cultural background. Only 34.4% of them found their immigrant background an advantage. The sense of disadvantage was the highest among those in Humanities and Social Sciences (64.4%), followed by IT and Engineering (63.6%), Health (59.0%), Architecture, Design and Arts (57.1%), Sciences (55.6%), Law (53.3%) and Business, Economics, and Management (53.0%).

The gender differences in the impact of immigrant background were more significant than those in ethnic and cultural background. As seen in Figure 5.4, 67.9% of Asian-born female academics felt their immigrant background was a disadvantage in their workplace, compared with 52.7% of their male counterparts.

The percentage of those who felt their immigrant background had “no impact” was much higher among males (45.1%) than females (27.5%). Overall, these data indicate that Asian women in academia feel more disadvantaged than Asian men.

Why do the majority of AAAs perceive their ethnic, cultural and immigrant background as a disadvantage in the workplace? In the course of taking part in the survey and interviews, AAAs addressed several issues. The following sections will present some of the challenges that they face in their workplace.

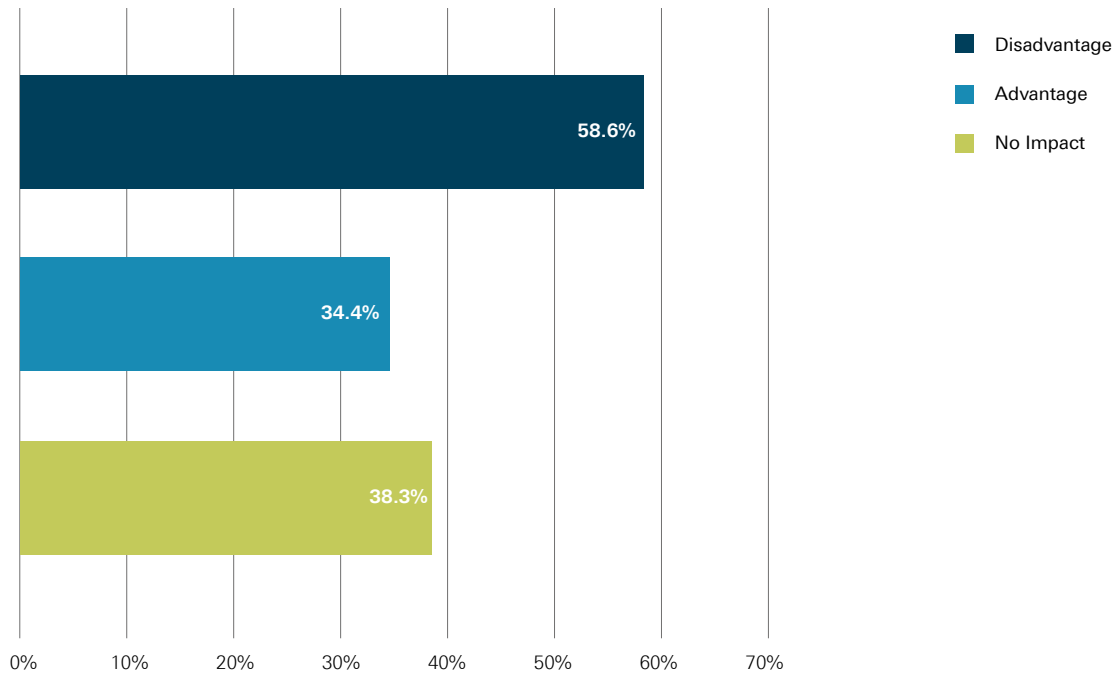
**Figure 5.2: Gender differences in perceived impacts of ethnic/cultural background in the workplace**



Source: The author's own survey in 2016.

\*The total exceeds 100% since respondents could choose “both advantage and disadvantage” for their answer.

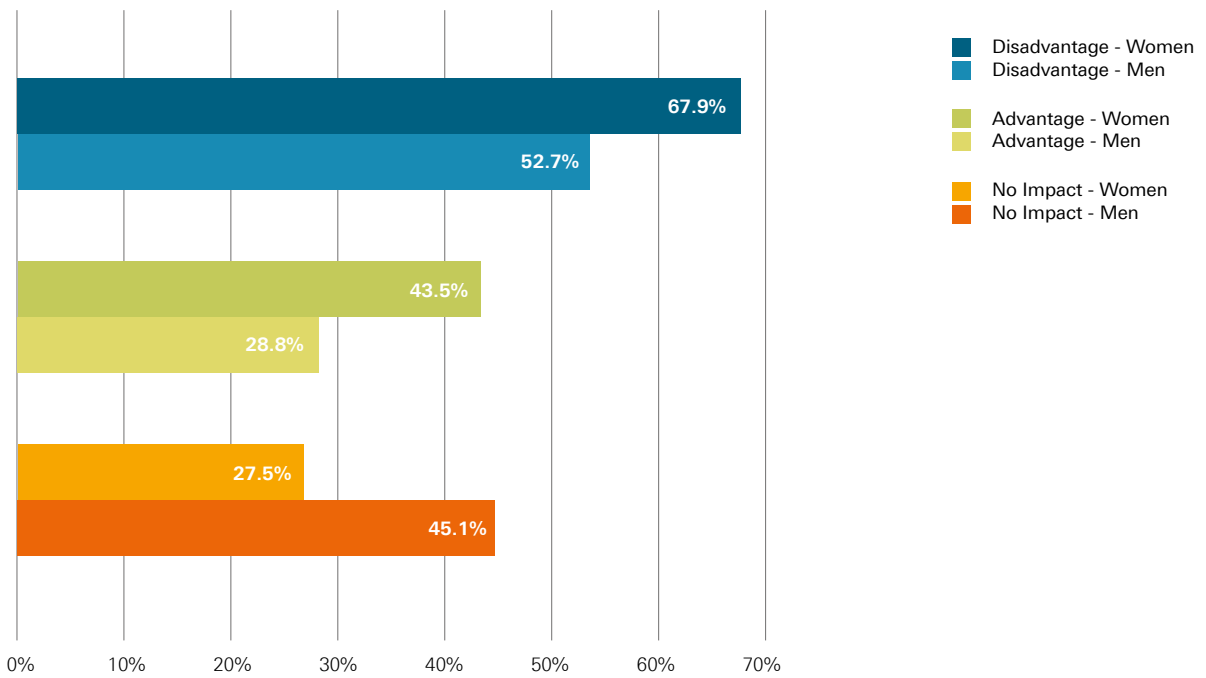
Figure 5.3: The perceived impact of immigrant background in the workplace\*



Source: The author's own survey in 2016.

\*The total exceeds 100% since respondents could choose "both advantage and disadvantage" for their answer.

Figure 5.4: Gender differences in perceived impacts of immigrant background in the workplace



Source: The author's own survey in 2016.

\*The total exceeds 100% since respondents could choose "both advantage and disadvantage" for their answer.

## Perceived Challenges in the Workplace

### Limited Workplace Inclusion

This study corroborated the findings of existing research that minority academics suffer from subtle racism, ethnic stereotyping and limited social inclusion through everyday interactions (Bhopal and Jackson 2013; ECU 2015; Bhopal 2016). While overall the extent of this issue in Australian universities appears to be less severe than it is in the UK, a substantial portion (41.8%) of the survey respondents stated that they had experienced racism, micro aggressions, ethnic, racial or cultural stereotyping, and marginalisation in their workplaces. The ways in which subtle racism manifested itself, according to this research, were very similar to those outlined in studies from the UK, including Gibney's article published in the *Nature* magazine in 2015 (Gibney 2015). This Australian study suggests that some respondents were often ignored in meetings, not given eye contact, or had their opinions undervalued. Respondents felt a lack of inclusiveness and supportive environment due to their ethnic background and not being a "mainstream Australian". Some respondents outlined their experiences as follows:

*I often feel that I am non-existent in meetings. People don't even see my face or talk to me.*

*The silent treatment... You can feel this sometimes – how they talk to you versus how they talk to other people... When you go to meetings, it's interesting to see how the dynamics work... They want to talk with non-Asian people.*

*Although I am second generation, I still feel that I am treated differently from most other colleagues within my department. In particular, I am often forgotten or left off email chains, not invited to social functions.*

*[I have been] treated as a second-class citizen [not only by my colleagues and also by professional staff.*

Some even received discouraging or hostile comments in a more direct manner. One senior full professor in Science recalls being told when she was still a postgraduate student that she would never get a job in Australia. Another female academic confessed that she received the following comment from her colleague after appearing in the mainstream media:

*Another one [comment she received from her colleague] was, "With a name like yours, you will never be famous".*

### Gender Stereotypes

Many female interviewees struggled with a triple disadvantage as women, minorities and individuals possessing an ethnic minority background. This study corroborates many other research findings that Asian women face difficulty in academia because of the existing stereotypes against them (Aguirre 2000; Li and Beckett 2006; Pittman 2010; Shrake 2006). One senior female academic stated her voice was not being heard fully because of the stereotypes:

*Being a short Asian female... there are some stereotypes that persist about your nature that you're not necessarily an outspoken person. People speak over you... I find it hard... There have been times in meetings where I've had to literally raise my voice to a really stupidly high level [to be heard]. It just didn't [work] even though I'm saying, "Can I..."  
That's where I've noticed those kinds of negative stereotypes coming into play.*

Other female AAAs also referred to their experiences struggling against overt stereotypes that intersected with both their gender and their ethnicity. One such respondent recalled the biases against Asian women that affected her:

*There are a lot of things under the surface and people feel okay to say, "small Asian girl", you know. They would not say, "You're a small white guy"... There's a lot of indirect and direct discrimination still... It has definitely affected me in a sense that there's a lot of implicit biases that people have towards Asian females. That's manifested by other comments that I've received over the years... "Oh yeah, [you are] so small, I can't imagine you standing up to all these hard judges"... So, I think it has had a negative impact. If I were a white male, I would have gotten much further than I have now.*

Existing research suggests women and minorities also have a more difficult time in classrooms, receiving lower teaching evaluations (Flaherty 2016; Huston 2005; Lilienfeld 2016). In particular, the stereotype of being considered soft and feminine devalued Asian women's authority in the classroom. This study also found that female AAAs often felt that students challenged their authority and/or did not show respect for them in their classrooms. Among their responses were the following comments:

*If I had the look of being an older woman, I don't know if I would get it [negative treatment from students] as much. I think being short really compounds it... Now I've learnt... You have to make sure that you claim your authority up front.*

*There may be some very subtle undercurrents which you analyse and think, "What's going on here? Is this because I have an exotic name or because people know what my background is?" There's sometimes this sort of unsettling moment.*

### Limited Social and Cultural Capital

Social and cultural capital has long been recognised as crucial for individuals' employment and career success (Bourdieu 1985; Portes 1998; Metz and Tharenou 2001). Some studies indicate that social and cultural capital is particularly important for women and minorities, playing an equal or sometimes even more important role in advancing their careers than educational credentials (Metz and Tharenou 2001; Friesen 2011).

This research found that it is also true of the situation in Australian higher education. AAAs surveyed and interviewed for this study were aware of the importance of developing local professional networks and research partners in Australia, but some experienced difficulties in doing so. This was particularly true for AAAs who immigrated to Australia for employment. One AAA commented:

*[I felt like] a fish out of the water, not being able to easily get truly within “closed circles” of groups. Due to the weaker “Australian network”, I have to work much harder to achieve certain outcomes compared to local colleagues. It takes time to get familiar with the academic environment and also to get to know the colleagues in the new academic environment. When you move here, nobody knows you. Nobody knows your work. So initially it is quite hard.*

Some AAAs who immigrated to Australia for employment particularly found it challenging in terms of securing research grants. Their unfamiliarity with grant application procedures is one challenge, but what adds to this is lack of networks. They were concerned about the tacit advantage given to the research team that includes a senior colleague with a grant track record. With limited local connections, it is not easy for immigrant AAAs to identify scholars with grant track records who are willing to work with them on the same projects.

AAAs who were educated in Australia tended to have less difficulty in this particular regard as they tended to have already developed social capital and were often able to access help from their former supervisors and peers more easily. Nevertheless, some still experience difficulties in their workplaces, which they also attribute to limited cultural capital and different cultural orientations. They felt that implicit cultural and social expectations played a role in shaping the nature of their personal relationships and bonds with their colleagues. Some AAAs, for instance, felt that the drinking culture in Australia was an obstacle in their networking efforts and to their full incorporation into their workplaces. One AAA stated:

*Networking... can be a challenge and there is still a drinking culture even in [Australian] academia. I don't drink... So I didn't go to single one of those [regular drinks in his school]. Certainly, it means that I was a little bit on the “outer”.*

Others found more generic cultural syntax such as jokes and one's sense of humour to be a barrier.

*My background may exclude me from the informal network at my workplace because I may not share the same humour or cultural background. These informal networks are important in obtaining information and opportunities to progress in my career.*

## Tokenism

AAAs appeared to develop particular anxiety and experienced more overt tokenism in disciplines where Asians were under-represented. One interviewee was the only Asian and the only person from an ethnic minority in his faculty, though almost half of its students were Asians. The fact that there is no full professor with an ethnic minority background in his faculty has made him worry whether he can secure enough support for his promotions in the future. The situation was similar in other fields. One interviewee in legal studies explained as follows:

*When you go into the big law firms, there may be a handful [of Asians]. Maybe five out of 200 will be Asian. There are very few people [who] get through the system in the first place, even Australian-born Asians. It's mainly the old boys' club... I think there are a lot of issues... It's very, very pronounced in the Asian representation of female barristers, female lawyers in top-tier law firms and female partners. There are very few [females] compared to males. I think the system sets it up that way and that translates to law schools as well. There are very few Asians in law schools as lecturers and academics.*

It is also important to note that AAAs are a diverse group, and different groups experience different challenges. Some of the AAAs from smaller countries in Asia, for instance, stated that they felt they were in a more disadvantaged position than Chinese and Indian scholars who are more “mainstream minorities” and have developed their own forms of cultural and social capital in their own communities. They were worried that they might remain disadvantaged even if the number of “Asians” were to rise in academia, since they would still remain a minority among minorities and could not form tightly knit communities to help each other.

## Employment and Career Advancement

As a result of the challenges they have faced in their everyday interactions and forms of networking as discussed above, some AAAs perceive there to be a number of difficulties in advancing their careers. The existing literature has revealed that women and minority faculty are often disadvantaged in workplaces, including in academia (Turner et al. 2008) and tend to be perceived as less competent than white male faculty (ERIC 2000). They are also more concentrated in the lower academic ranks and progress more slowly than their white male colleagues toward senior ranking (Menges and Exum 1983; Misra et al. 1999). Recent research in the UK also revealed that the majority of minority faculty felt they had to work “doubly hard” compared to their white colleagues – publishing more, submitting more grant applications and getting more international recognition – in order to be considered for promotion (Gibney 2013).

The same issues are clearly recognised and experienced by AAAs in Australia. Among those in the survey who felt their background was a disadvantage, 35.2% stated that they experienced difficulties in getting recognition, promotion and leadership positions. Some AAA interviewees also revealed that they had to make extra efforts to gain recognition and promotion. Their comments included the following:

*I have to work much harder to prove my competence because I look and sound different.*

*One of the things I've always told my students is "If you are an Asian in Australia, you had better make sure that you are better than anyone else to get the same treatment as the locals".*

*I struggled quite a bit to get into a position where I thought it would be very easy. For example, there are people that I mentored and so I knew their background. I've also been referees for them, so I've seen their resumes. It was not very difficult for them to go from Level B [Lecturer] to Level C [Senior Lecturer]. But when the time came for me, I had to jump a lot of hoops... I have to tick all the boxes and even more. Whereas, my other colleagues would tick half of the boxes and would be easily promoted, and there would not be any sort of surprises about it.*

Some respondents mentioned that "assumed benefits for students" have been used as a reason for not hiring scholars from Asia and the Middle East. For Asians, their accents represent a potential obstacle to gaining employment because hiring panels are often concerned that students might not easily understand them when they teach. For Muslim job applicants, their cultural practices constituted another potential hindrance. Some interviewees, for instance, made the following remarks:

*I have encountered where Middle Eastern people have not been hired, not because of language, because they were Middle Eastern – [for] clothing and stuff like that. There were concerns that they [students] would have bias against them. So when you're on the committee and you're hiring people, you make the least offensive choice for students... I've seen that once before and – not very good.*

*The problem is that people tend to hire people who look like themselves. I think that's what they do. They hire people who they feel can get along. And a really good example is recently we had hiring for a Level B position. The person who I thought was the most creative, innovative candidate has a Middle Eastern name and the others didn't. They rejected him.*

Even when AAAs do reach senior management positions and then take part in important decision-making processes, they may continue to face more challenges because of their linguistic minority background. As one interviewee recounted:

*I served quite a few senior [management] positions. However, [in] the politics of bargaining discussions at the university level, [and] faculty level... you have to really talk well, [and] speak well. If you are not a native, sometimes you feel a little bit of negativity. I sometimes wished I were a native speaker... Sometimes people are not really willing to listen to you. They say, "I think I understand you", "I don't want to listen to you further"... That sometimes happens. You really have to argue, saying, "Look, listen, listen".*

The majority (75%) of AAA interviewees felt that the composition of university management should be more diverse. While some felt that this would happen in due course, others felt that it would be quite difficult to reach equity in the near future. A few interviewees commented on the limited transparency of selection processes for managerial and leadership positions. They claimed that some leadership positions are not openly advertised, and selections are internally made. In such environments, they argued, personal networks inevitably play key roles in the selection of candidates and ethnic minorities are therefore often at a disadvantage.

Several AAAs stated that they held little hope of advancing to management and/or the Chancellery positions because of these procedural constraints and institutional cultures. There was a view that Australia's ties with Europe, especially the UK, also constitute part of the institutional cultures. One commented as follows:

*I think... all the universities in Australia have a problem in terms of the university boards being able to value talent which is outside – basically England. Either you are Australian, or you are somebody from the UK. So, there hasn't been much of an openness to bring in [others].*

Since many of those holding Chancellery positions do not report their countries of origin to DET, it is difficult to assess the precise composition of Chancelleries in Australia. However, as far as the DET data show, at least 16 European-born individuals held Chancellery positions in Australian universities in 2015 (among whom 13 were speaking English at home), in contrast to one from the Americas,<sup>10</sup> one from Asia and two from Africa. One senior academic mentioned that a source of this skew in senior academic profile might be attributable to the fact that recruiting firms, which universities rely upon for attracting global talent to senior and management positions, often lack cultural diversity. In his view, the lack of diversity of recruiting firms, some of which are headquartered in the UK and US, might affect the pool of potential candidates who are contacted, leading to the "reproduction" of existing professorial profiles.

<sup>10</sup> This regional category of DET refers to North America, Central America and South America.



## Perceptions of Asian Australian Academics' Representation in Higher Education

In this survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether they felt AAAs were appropriately represented within their department, faculty and university management, as well as what they believed would constitute the “appropriate representation” of scholars in these areas.

As seen in Figure 5.5, 48.8% indicated that AAAs were adequately represented in their school or department, while 33.6% felt they were not. The percentage slightly changed for the representation at the faculty level, where only 35.2% felt AAAs were adequately represented and 31.4% answered they were not.

As for the appropriate level of representation, 31.3% of respondents chose the answer “No ethnic/cultural representation should be necessary” for their department and 29.1% for faculty. On the other hand, the majority (approximately 60%) of AAAs believed that there should be some measure of securing Asian representation at all levels. Among them, the most appropriate level of representation was “equal or close to the percentage of Asians and Asian Australian PhD holders in the relevant academic fields in Australia”, followed by the proportional percentage composition in the national population and the university’s study body.

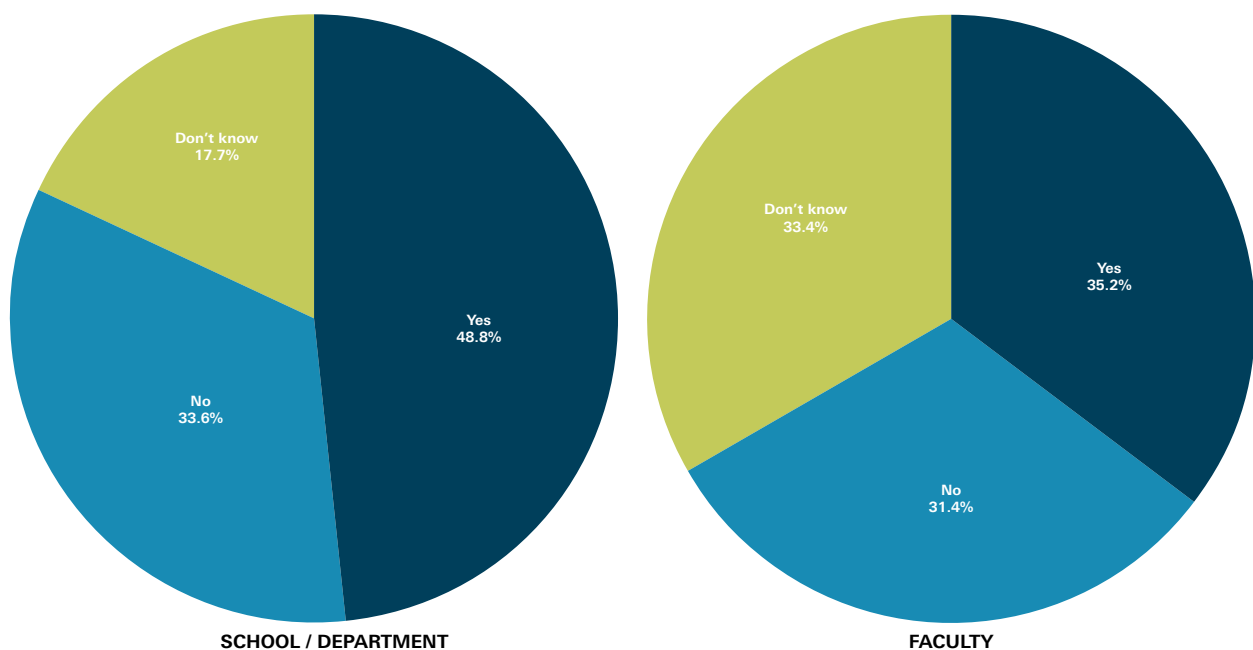
With regard to senior university management, their responses were significantly different. A much higher proportion (63%) of respondents felt that AAAs were not

appropriately represented at this level (Figure 5.6). As for “appropriate representation”, by far the most common answer was “equal or close to the percentage of Asian or Asian Australian scholars among all senior scholars in the university”. Only 15.2% responded that “No ethnic or cultural representation should be necessary” in university management (Figure 5.7).

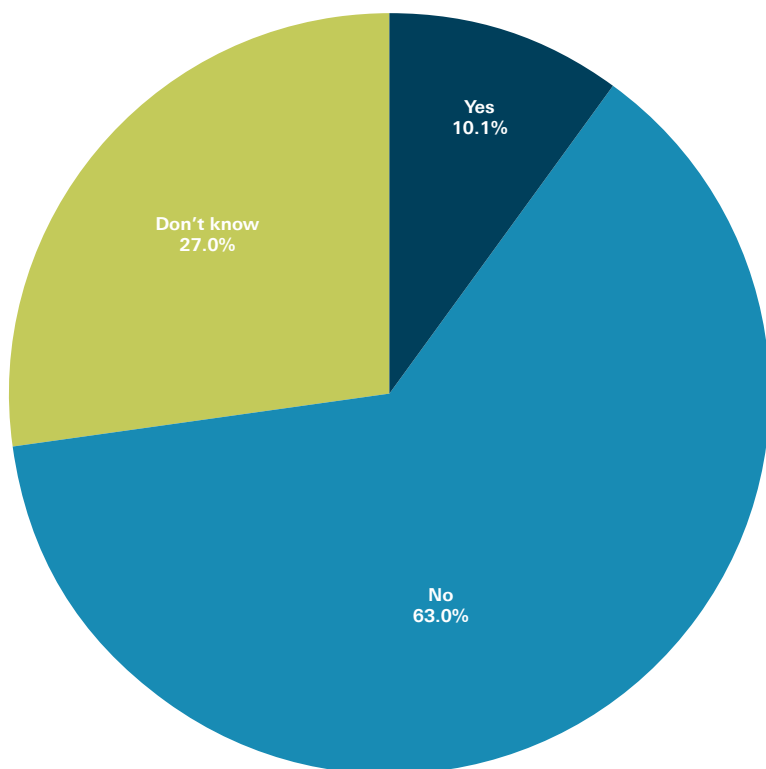
This strong support for more diverse representation in university management reflects Asian Australians’ notably low representation in senior management of Australian universities as discussed earlier. More AAAs recognised the need for diverse ethnic and cultural representation in university management than at the faculty, school or department levels. Only 10.1% of respondents were comfortable with the current level of AAA representation in senior university management. It suggests that AAAs saw a distinctive role of ethnic and cultural representation in senior university management. Several interviewees commented that greater diversity among leaders would enhance a stronger sense of inclusion and belonging in a culturally diverse workforce.

University management symbolises the “showcase” of institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion. It epitomises the ways in which the institutions project their image to the general public in their country and the world, particularly with regard to future students and top academic talent that we would like to attract from overseas. The next section will discuss the potential strategies to bring in more ethnic and cultural diversity in senior and managerial positions in universities.

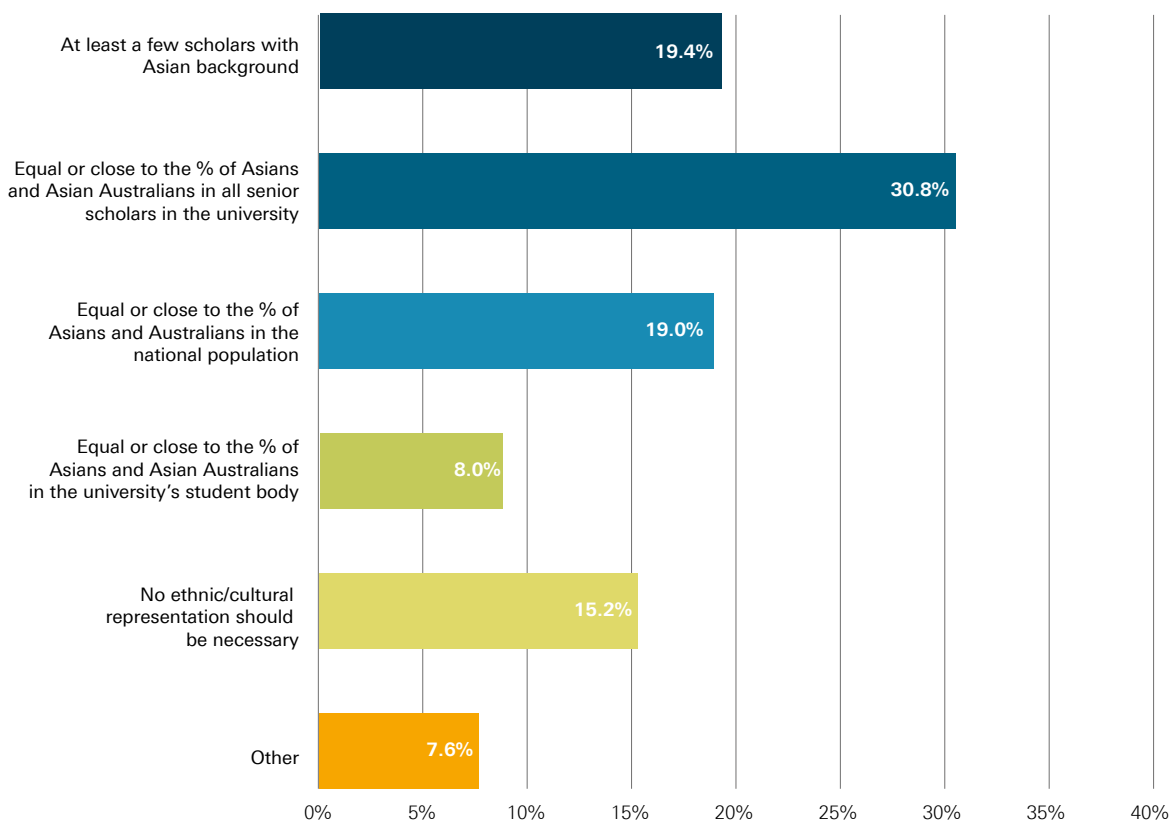
**Figure 5.5: Do you feel that academics with Asian backgrounds are appropriately represented in your school/department and faculty?**



**Figure 5.6: Do you feel that Asian Australian academics are appropriately represented in the management of your university?**



**Figure 5.7: In your view, what should be the “appropriate representation” of scholars with Asian backgrounds in the management of your university?**



# Strategies for More Inclusion and Equity

Survey respondents and interview research participants provided numerous suggestions and strategies for increasing diversity in senior positions and university management. This section will highlight some of their recommendations.

## More Diverse Committees for Recruitment and Promotion

There is a growing body of research indicating that unconscious bias against women and minorities does exist in the labour market, both in recruitment and promotion. For instance, researchers at the Australian National University showed that identical CVs with Chinese names and Anglo-Saxon names had significantly different interview rates. To get as many interviews as an applicant with an Anglo-Saxon name, a Chinese person had to submit 68% more job applications and a Middle Eastern person 64% more applications (Perkins 2016).

In an effort to tackle such unconscious bias and bring in more workforce diversity, various efforts have been made. For instance, an increasing number of companies are introducing “blind applications” by removing personal details – including name, gender, age and location – during a job application process (Perkins 2016).

While blind applications are not likely to be useful in academia, many universities and academic associations have taken steps to tackle this problem. In the United States, affirmative action programs have helped increase the number of women and minorities in state universities. Some universities keep track of the data in the academic labour market, particularly the data on recent PhD graduates, and can advise faculty search committees to re-examine the list of finalists when no candidate from under-represented ethnic minority groups is included in the list.<sup>10</sup>

This research has found, however, that Australian universities have not specifically addressed the issues of ethnic and cultural diversity so far. When asked about the processes of recruitment and promotion of academic staff, only 16.9% of the survey respondents answered that their schools and/or faculties had paid attention to ethnic and cultural representation in the process of hiring and/or promotion.

Some research participants advocated for the need to diversify selection panels in charge of recruitment and promotion. As one interviewee described it, the problem lies in the fact that “people tend to hire people who are like themselves”. In fact, existing research does indicate that the composition of decision-making committees matters, as employers do tend to hire those who have similar characteristics and backgrounds (Aslund et al. 2014; Cornell and Welch 1996; Nielsen 2009).

Professor Marybeth Gasman, a prominent professor in higher education at the University of Pennsylvania, clearly stated the problem as follows:

*The reason we don't have more faculty of colour among college faculty is that we don't want them. We simply don't want them. (Gasman 2016)*

One of the barriers she pointed out was indeed the diversity of panel. She argued:

*Faculty search committees are part of the problem. They are not trained in recruitment, are rarely diverse in makeup, and are often more interested in hiring people just like them rather than expanding the diversity of their department. They reach out to those they know for recommendations... How many books, articles, or training sessions have you attended on how to recruit faculty of colour? How many times have you reached out to departments with great diversity in your field and asked them how they attract and retain a diverse faculty?*

According to one study that investigated 267 faculty searches in three leading public universities in the United States, having more diversity in selection panels resulted in more diversity among finalist pools (Smith et al. 2004). It also revealed that 70% of under-represented minority faculty were hired with a diversity indicator in the job description or via a special hire intervention. The authors concluded that a specific approach to diverse recruitment, coupled with the use of position description diversity indicators, proved to be a powerful strategy in the hiring of faculty from all racial/ethnic backgrounds (Smith et al. 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Personal communication with a senior academic at a leading university in the United States.

It should be noted that such diversity-driven recruitment strategies must be carefully balanced with post-recruitment policies and programs, including workloads. For instance, North American studies have shown that minority academics tend to assume a greater administrative workload than white academics (Baez 2000; Laden and Hagedorn 2000; Turner 2002). Ironically, this disparity is partly due to some institutional desire for diversity on committees (Tierney and Bensimon 1996). A more recent study (Porter 2007) points out that the difference in administrative workload tends to be fairly small, but still acknowledged that minority faculty in major universities (those that offer doctoral degrees) tend to shoulder more administrative work. Thus, while ensuring ethnic and gender representations is important, measures must also be put in place so that achieving this goal does not come at the expense of the workload of minority academics.

### Open Advertisement and Transparency of Selection Processes

With regard to the under-representation of AAAs in university management, some interviewees pointed out that the limited transparency of selection processes for managerial and leadership positions made it difficult to advance to that level. According to them, some managerial and leadership positions are not publicly advertised and selection processes are often not transparent. In such cases, personal networks often end up playing a key role in determining successful candidates, leaving ethnic minorities at a disadvantage – indeed, they may not even be privy to the manner in which such decisions are made. Some AAAs described these challenges in the following ways:

*[For senior and management positions], you have to know the management and up there, it's all white people. So, there are likely fewer opportunities for Asians.*

*One of the problems in Z University and perhaps in most universities here is that leadership positions are often not advertised. There are no very strict criteria. For example, to get a grant... you need to have an H index, and you've got to have so many publications [and] so many citations. But for leadership [positions], there are no such criteria. As a result, you can give it to someone whom you are more comfortable with... If I am the Dean, and if I'm comfortable with you, I don't have to justify giving it – calling you and saying you take over this role.*

Transparency in tandem with the monitoring of cultural and linguistic representations could be the key. One senior academic commented as follows:

*If you do want equity, I think equity has to be matched with the numbers. They go hand in hand, rather than the university saying, "Yes, we have a beautiful environment. Everything is equal. Trust us". Trust usually goes hand in hand with transparency. If we do have*

*that transparency and we can show how things are progressing for all those involved maybe that's a good step forward and it's a more defensible position rather than saying that the university will guarantee that we will have 25 per cent ethnicity at level E by year 2020 because sometimes that's not the right answer.*

As discussed earlier, female AAAs are more severely under-represented in university management than their male counterparts and other overseas-born groups. Increasing the presence of minority women – even if not Asian women – in senior management who could serve as role models for young minority academics should be considered an important goal.

### Ensuring Diversity and Inclusion through University-wide Policies

Many survey respondents and the interviewees believed that the current situation would improve if university management adopted official policies for diversity and inclusion. There were diverse views in terms of approaches, however. Some felt that the quotas would not be helpful. One was strongly opposed to affirmative action, stating:

*I don't think in the long term that's the best way of doing things... Sometimes you end up with people in higher positions who aren't good enough. That's not a good thing. I think the key thing is to make sure that the people who are good enough get equal opportunity. I think to ensure equal opportunity is the way to go. It's the fairer way to do it, and if you know that your base has a high ethnic mix, and we do, and if you do provide equal opportunity and do it in a transparent manner then by default over a period of time it will happen, nothing will get in the way.*

On the other hand, some questioned the objectivity of competency and meritocracy, and thus advocated for more official measures.

*Because of your Asian ethnic background or other factors, you may not be strongly established or seen prominent. It may make it very difficult for you to compete for those positions. So, I guess it's complex. I'm not really sure whether anything can be done, unless you enforce certain quotas, or where you say at least one person who is being interviewed needs to be of background A, B or C.*

*I think it's also about... who is perceived as being competent and who is perceived as not being competent. Maybe there are negative perceptions about Asians and competency at that [management] level... I think having mentors that explicitly recognise these constraints that we face as minority faculty [would be helpful].*

Indeed, some studies have challenged the objectivity of meritocracy. As discussed earlier, ethnic minorities with identical qualifications tend to have more difficulty securing interview opportunities than mainstream groups (Booth et al. 2012). It is the case in academia as well. Ethnic minorities and women tend to have more difficulty in securing employment and tend to progress more slowly than their white male counterparts (Fang et al. 2000; Menges and Exum 1983; Misra et al. 1999). It is especially notable that certain types of research that ethnic minority scholars are often engaged in tend to be marginalised and not to be as highly regarded as other types of research. Research on ethnicity and racial inequality is not always rewarded in academia and its rigor and worthiness are often questioned (Bernal and Villalpando 2002; Stanley 2006). Language barriers pose another challenge, as academic publications in top journals or books published in non-English speaking countries do not count as major academic outputs in English-speaking academia.

### Mentoring and Support Programs for Minority Academics

Research has demonstrated that women and minority academics progress more slowly partly because they tend to have limited access to informal networks that can promote professional socialisation (Aguirre 1987; Johnsrud 1993; ERIC 2000: 4). These networks are important, as they confer a variety of instrumental resources that are critical for career development and social support (Ibarra 1993).

Mentoring and support systems can therefore play vital roles in assisting academics with ethnic minority backgrounds in the workplace and in advancing their careers. A number of faculties and schools in Australian universities have begun to introduce various mentoring programs in recent years. Nevertheless, most of the interviewees indicated that there were limited university-wide official mentoring programs available in their institutions. Only 10 interviewees out of 42 stated that they had a formal mentor.

Even where mentors were available, their quality varied. The effectiveness of mentoring programs depended heavily on the availability of mentors and their willingness to devote time and effort to such activities. While four interviewees said they greatly benefited from the formal mentoring program, two of them had their former thesis supervisors as mentors. Others confessed that their mentors were too busy to help them. One female academic argued that the success of mentoring programs depends on the commitment of leaders (Deans, Heads of Schools and Department Chairs) in terms of resource allocations or workload adjustments, since very few senior scholars would be willing to spare their time on mentoring without receiving any rewards in terms of

workload points or formal recognition. Asked how the current mentoring programs could function better, she gave the following answer:

*The management team needs to be aware of the importance of mentoring and needs to have expertise in how to design a mentoring program. You also have to secure resources as well for funding people who work as a mentor. You can't just ask people to do mentoring work without any recognition or reward.*

Due to the lack of formal mentors or the difficulty in getting advice from formal mentors, 15 respondents sought unofficial mentors inside or outside their workplace. In the cases of those who received postgraduate education in Australia, their former supervisors filled the role of mentor outside their workplace. Academics who came to Australia for employment, on the other hand, found it difficult to identify unofficial mentors due to their limited social and cultural capital in Australia.

AAAs with no mentors faced difficulties when the time came for them to put in promotion applications for review. One interviewee suggested that limited institutional knowledge and lack of mentoring affected his promotion process. He found it difficult to identify someone who was willing to offer him help and support him when he was preparing his application for promotion. He explained that situation as follows:

*I've been to some senior people to gain that support within the university and senior HR people. But... the only help I got was Professor X whom I know from my work here. Professor X gave me the contact for an individual who had been through the same process. It took me a long time to get to that person.*

Studies show that mentor-mentee matching in terms of gender, ethnicity and shared experience can significantly improve outcomes for mentees. According to a US survey on 2,000 medical school fellows, 49.5% of women felt that their supervisors displayed a more condescending attitude toward women physicians, and non-white residents also stated they received less positive mentoring during their training, which created a barrier to their consideration of academic careers (Cain et al. 2001). While one study cautioned that not all racially homogenous relationships produce substantive benefits (Behr 2000), Allen and Butler (2014) suggest that matching individuals who have similar backgrounds (race/ethnicity and gender) and shared experiences can produce positive outcomes for minority academics.

In this interview research, only two AAAs had mentors with an Asian ethnic background, but they found their co-ethnic mentors extremely valuable. Those mentors had lived through similar situations, and thus could guide these AAAs through their various institutional transitions and cultural adjustments to their new environment. One interviewee stated:

*Having a mentoring program that almost really closely resembles this faculty diversity helps you to navigate some of these issues. I think that could be a start. I think we're excellent on gender diversity. We have all these programs for women – I think that's great. But that – we're academics so I'll use that word, intersectionalities – the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity isn't really addressed at all. So, I think that's what we need to start doing.*

*It is important that you have some colleagues with a similar background. They can help me – they can introduce us certainly to other colleagues and help us to get used to the environment here. Also, it is important we have a good personal relationship to understand the culture and also the academic community here.*

Even though matching mentors and mentees with similar backgrounds is a time-consuming task, carefully considered mentor-mentee relationships could significantly improve the retention and career advancement of AAAs and other minority academics.

Some universities established various other support programs that could be further tailored to more diverse needs, such as the program for early career researchers and single parents. Nevertheless, no programs appeared to have been established for ethnic minority academics or newly arrived international academics. One interviewee offered the following comment:

*There is an early career researchers' network. And there are mentoring things for women, single mothers, and single parents. For some reason, I seem to have missed all of the formal programs, because, for example, I don't have caring responsibilities. So, I don't fit into that. The accelerator programs I wasn't able to take on because of my teaching load... So, in terms of a formal structured mentoring program, I haven't been able to tap into it here.*

Helping ethnic minority academics cope with stress and maintain their well-being is another important issue to address. Studies indicate that ethnic minority academics experience higher levels of occupational stress than white academics (Bronstein 1993; Ruffins 1997; Smith and Witt 1996; Smith et al. 2004). They feel they have to “work twice as hard to be treated as equal” (Laden and Hagedorn 2000). As discussed earlier, the majority of the respondents have also felt that their backgrounds as an ethnic minority and migrants had worked negatively in their workplace.

Some respondents strongly advocated for cultural sensitivity training for all academic and professional staff. While most universities have introduced online programs to develop cultural competency and awareness, the respondents found the content of these programs problematic, as they included material that could reinforce the existing ethnic biases and stereotypes. Re-examining such online training programs and soliciting comments from ethnic minority academics and professional staff on the training materials would be the first step. The cultural sensitivity training should also be made compulsory for students, since some Asian academics reported receiving racist remarks from them.

Minority academics tend to be more isolated in their workplaces, and being “one of a kind” or even “two of a kind” in a workplace can be a lonely and demanding experience (Pell 1996). Pell (1996) argued that even though the exclusion usually is unintentional, an explicit invitation to join a social gathering and intentional inclusion efforts in tandem with good mentoring programs would ease the transition from outsider to insider.

### **Leadership Training for Asian Australian Academics and Networking among Minority Academics**

Diversity Council Australia's recent report showed that 88% of culturally and linguistically diverse women in Australian organisations were ambitious, planning to advance to a very senior role. However, some argue that Asians might not be as ambitious as other groups or even if they are, they might not possess sufficient cultural capital to fulfil their ambitions. According to Hyun (2005), Asian Americans' limited career advancement in the US could be not only the outcome of institutional factors, but can also be intimately intertwined with cultural factors (Hyun 2005). Some interviewees indeed echoed that Asians tend not to be good at promoting themselves, reflecting traditional cultural values that emphasise modesty and humility. The comments from the research participants include the following:

*My culture does not breed assertiveness. Consequently, I have been perceived as a “quiet achiever” and often my achievements are not easily recognised.*

*For a long time, it [promotion] was a big problem. I still think it is not too nice to show off [his academic achievements to his colleagues]. And the whole Australian [promotion] system is based on you talking about how wonderful you are. I can help people by talking about how wonderful they are, but I struggled with talking about myself. After having been in all these years in Australia, I still struggle with that... It is cultural values – not to stand out and blow your own trumpet.*

Mentoring can play a pivotal role in such cases, however. One respondent emphasised the importance of having senior colleagues who understand the cultural environment where AAAs are in this situation.

*One of my mentors supports Asians. Although he's a white man, he's told me, "Be careful with the 'bamboo ceiling'. He said he had a friend who is a Chinese man. He was producing and doing well, [but] just keeping his head down, and people just overlooked him all the time for promotion. I don't know whether it's partly cultural that we don't sell ourselves, or we're not aggressive enough compared to others.*

Some senior AAAs are aware that AAAs tend not to be particularly skilled at promoting themselves, and have attempted to encourage junior AAA colleagues to overcome such cultural obstacles by speaking out more and promoting themselves further. They noted, however, that even if AAAs get promoted to senior academic ranks, they may not be willing to take up further senior management positions. Some argued that not many AAA colleagues in senior positions in their schools were interested in those positions, partly because of their perceived cultural disadvantage. One academic in science commented:

*Asian-background professors or scientists do not have the ambitions to take management roles due to some disadvantage with their cultural background or the language background.*

Certain Asian cultural values and practices, such as the practice of deference towards individuals of senior rank, can work to discourage younger, competent individuals from taking up leadership positions. Indeed, one female AAA initially declined an offer of a leadership position out of concern for senior colleagues who had more experience in the university. She reflected on her experience as follows:

*I was offered quite a big leadership role, which I said "No" to, at first... One of the reasons why I turned it down was because part of that job was managing my colleagues. And a lot of them have been at Y University longer than I have, and also more senior than me in terms of age. I felt uncomfortable in terms of how they might respond, particularly because I'm fairly new – not only to Y University, but also as an academic. So, I had some reservations about that.*

While developing cohesive support networks seems challenging for minorities, some AAAs have begun to take some initiatives. One of them is the Asian Australian Studies Research Network (AASRN), which was established to promote research on issues relating to Asian Australians. This network is comprised of mostly academics in the humanities and, to a lesser extent, social sciences. However, for AAAs in science, engineering, architecture and design, cross-disciplinary networking opportunities still appear to be very limited. The Movement of Asian Australian Academics (MAAA) was established in New South Wales in January 2016 to raise issues concerning AAAs, including their representation in decision-making processes within higher education institutions. Similar networking opportunities could be further promoted and developed elsewhere.

It is equally important to provide leadership training for AAAs and all other minority groups who tend to feel less capable or more disadvantaged for higher positions because of their backgrounds. Developing the culture for aspiration is an important first step. As institutional support and mentoring helped female academics advance in senior positions and university management during the past few decades, similar opportunities could be provided for minority academics – particularly minority female academics, who appeared especially under-represented. Aspirations are not solely attributed to individual wills, but are also shaped by their institutional culture. A supportive environment where minority academics can receive sufficient mentoring would be crucial for fostering higher aspirations among them.

This research suggests that levelling the playing field would require various institutional reforms, including diversifying recruitment and promotion committees, increasing the transparency of recruitment/promotion processes, addressing ethnic diversity in human resources policies and improving mentoring programs. These measures could help increase the representation of minorities in Australian universities. A more diverse and inclusive academic workplace will lead to a more cohesive institution, as all members will feel part of the community and can thus develop a stronger sense of belonging.

<sup>12</sup> The legal basis for filing the report lies in section 709(c), Title VII, *Civil Rights Act of 1967* and Title 29, Chapter XIV Code of Federal Regulations (<http://www.eeoc.gov/employers/eeo1survey/legalbasis.cfm>).

<sup>13</sup> Section 149 of the *Equality Act 2010* (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/11/chapter/1>).

# Conclusion: Toward More Inclusive University Communities for Ethnic and Cultural Minorities

## Institutional Initiatives

During the last decade, leading universities across the world have been paying more attention to diversity, inclusion and equality among their staff as well as students. All top 20 universities in Times Higher Education's world rankings have a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) and office specifically in charge of tackling diversity and inclusion issues among staff and students. They also have dedicated websites that disseminate the information on their efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.

These top-ranked universities have demonstrated their commitment to increase the representations not only of women, but also of ethnic and cultural minorities. In the United Kingdom, the University of Oxford established the Race Equality Charter Action Plan and is committing itself to targets for the recruitment and representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) staff in 2017. Its Strategic Plan also includes the "specific commitments to increase the proportion of women and minority groups in areas where they are currently under-represented" (University of Oxford 2016).

The University of Cambridge also sets its "Equality Objectives", which specifically commit to developing "a race equality strategy focusing on key issues and actions for 2012–16" to improve BME representation (University of Cambridge 2016). The university's latest report (2017) also acknowledges the severe under-representation of minority faculty members and commits itself to improving the situation. Most notably, Cambridge's "InterConnect Initiative" attempts to identify barriers faced by minority ethnic groups and non-British white staff to facilitate and promote internal research and policy-based initiatives on diversity and inclusion. The InterConnect Action Plan focuses on increasing senior level representation of BMEs and non-British white staff, benchmarking in the sector and nationally, and improving institutional intercultural awareness. Cambridge's Vice-Chancellor also hosts the university's Annual Race Equality Lecture series to raise awareness of diversity on campus.

## Evidence-based "Inclusion Strategies"

Another important development in these top-ranked universities has been that they not only openly acknowledged the existing reality of under-representation of women and minority staff, but also set up concrete action plans based on the data and empirical evidence. Some leading universities, such as University of Oxford and University of Cambridge, compile and analyse voluntarily submitted data from staff and students with minority ethnic or cultural backgrounds, in some cases including sexual orientations, and publish their findings. It may be argued that the provision of such information should be voluntary. However, as universities are committed to utilising the information to tackle existing problems, many respondents seem to be willing to offer the information.

As the Australian Human Rights Commission (2016) rightfully advocated, it will be difficult to make progress on cultural diversity without data collection and progress monitoring. Australia's Workplace Gender Equality Agency requires the collection and reporting of gender equality data from all companies with 100 or more staff. However, currently there is no such requirement on ethnic or cultural diversity. This is in stark contrast with the US and UK. In the US, all employers of more than 100 staff are required to file a report on racial and ethnic composition of their workplace with the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (US EEOC 1972).<sup>12</sup> The UK's anti-discrimination law requires public authorities to advance equality of opportunity, which has led to the data collection on the staff's racial and ethnic backgrounds<sup>13</sup> (DCMS 2017). The UK's *Equality Act 2010* also requires universities to publish equality objectives at least every four years, as well as information to demonstrate their compliance with the equality duty, at least annually. Australia could take similar legislative initiatives to ensure fairer representation of all groups in higher education institutions.

<sup>12</sup> The legal basis for filing the report lies in section 709(c), Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1967 and Title 29, Chapter XIV Code of Federal Regulations (<http://www.eeoc.gov/employers/eeo1survey/legalbasis.cfm>).

<sup>13</sup> Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/11/chapter/1>).



At present, Australian universities do not seem to collect data on ethnic and cultural backgrounds of their students and staff. Or at least they do not reveal the diversity data on their websites. Even at the national level, data on ethnic diversity do not exist. This was one of the difficulties that the author encountered in this research. The federal Department of Education and Training (DET) collects data on academics who were born in Asia, but not those with Asian ancestry. Therefore, it was not possible for us to figure out how well academics with Asian ancestry fare in institutional hierarchies. This presents a prominent gap in bench-marking Australian universities against universities in other countries in the promotion of diversity and inclusion. The survey on 418 Asian Australian academics showed that Australian-born Asian academics also experienced challenges in their workplaces because of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds. This suggests the need to go beyond collection of birthplace data at the DET. An ancestry question is already included in recent Australian censuses, and ethnic identification and race questions have been in the Canadian and US censuses and other data for many years. Collecting ancestry and/or ethnic identification data at the university and national levels will be an important first step to grasping the demographic composition of campus community.

The collection of data could provide us with a specific goal for future progress. Many leading universities in culturally diverse countries report on their progress in such endeavours, revealing detailed statistics, trends, and their leaders' vision and strategies for improvement. Harvard University, for example, involved not only academic staff but also professional staff and students in its Working Group on Diversity and Inclusion. These constituencies jointly draft the report of the situation and present recommendations for the central university administration.

Some universities have taken further steps in this drive. Dartmouth College, for instance, has established an action plan that included a "diversity promotion section" in its staff's annual performance evaluation document. Staff in all ranks, including senior management teams, are asked to report their tangible contributions to campus diversity, inclusion and equity. This inclusion has not only made all staff aware of the importance of diversity, inclusion and equity, but also provided the incentives for all to do more in these areas.

Public and non-profit sectors have been even more actively engaged in these issues in recent years in the US and UK. In the US, the Education Resources Information Centre, which is sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences of the United States Department of Education, has published a review report on women and minority faculty in the academic workplace (ERIC 2000). In the UK, the University and College Union conducted a major survey on its black members in 2015 to find out the detailed experiences and challenges that they face in universities (UCU 2016). The effort was followed by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), an independent non-profit organisation specialising in diversity and inclusion. The ECU conducted an even more comprehensive study on black and ethnic minority academics in the UK. Both studies point to subtle forms of racism that exist in academia and need to be more openly addressed and tackled. These multi-tiered approaches inside and outside universities help in identifying problems and exploring innovative approaches to tackling diversity and inclusion issues.

## Toward More Inclusive Higher Education for Minority Academics

The realities of the daily struggles of ethnic and cultural minorities are often neglected in ongoing multiculturalism discourses in Australian media, government and higher education. This research has demonstrated that AAAs in Australian universities have encountered experiences and challenges very similar to those of minority academics in the UK and US. The majority of them felt that their ethnic or cultural background affected them negatively in their workplace, and many of them sensed the lack of inclusion in everyday interactions and communications. Their lack of representation and ongoing role models in university management also prevented them from pursuing higher career aspirations. In particular, female AAAs have faced additional stereotypes and discrimination because of their gender. Their accounts highlighted constant struggles with persistent stereotypes against and expectations for Asian women in their workplaces and in the opportunities for further career advancement. The voices arguing for racial and ethnic diversity among faculty, and better representation in decision-making processes, have been almost non-existent thus far. This research presents small but valuable voices of AAAs who have broken their silence. Their experiences have shed light on broader national patterns and trends revealed by statistics on Asian Australian representation from the Department of Education and Training.

An examination of the academic workplace and its inclusion of ethnic minority faculty is imperative in Australian universities, as their student and staff population are becoming increasingly diverse. Australian universities should address staff diversity and representation issues more openly, especially if they want to succeed in attracting academics of higher calibre in the competitive global talent market. International students are also increasingly paying attention to an inclusive community environment and seeking successful role models. Furthermore, students need diverse faculties so as to better prepare themselves for a diverse workforce in the local and global work place.

Australian universities should join major international universities' efforts to address and tackle diversity and inclusion issues by (1) setting up specific units, (2) collecting information on the representation of all minority groups across different academic ranks, (3) identifying challenges faced by women and minority groups, and (4) establishing strategies to overcome those challenges and provide more inclusive university communities for all, including those with minority status in terms of Indigeneity, gender, sexual orientation and disabilities. Institutional vision and commitment within senior university management hold the key to advancing the situation of all minority groups on campuses, but any bottom-up initiatives would be helpful as well.

Research and practice suggest that diversity will result in positive benefits only if appropriate inclusion practices are incorporated. That is why "diversity and inclusion" now constitute the major platform of human resources policies in major organisations in the world (Ferdman and Deane 2014). This research presented the first major overview of the situation of ethnic minorities in academia by focusing on academics with Asian background to promote "diversity and inclusion" in Australian academia. It is my hope that more academics will join the efforts in promoting research on diversity and inclusion in Australian universities, and that there will be more open discussions on successful roadmaps in making university communities fully global and inclusive.

# Appendix: Data and Methodology

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This report is based on analysis of: (1) the Australian Census for 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016; (2) unpublished statistics on academics in Australian universities requested from the Department of Education and Training (DET 2016); (3) results of an online survey conducted among Asian Australian academics in selected universities; and (4) interviews with Asian Australian academics sourced from respondents of the online survey.

In analysing data from the Australian Census for 2006, 2011 and 2016, the “Counting Persons, Place of Usual Residence” datasets were used. Full details of these censuses are accessible through the Australian Bureau of Statistics website. For the 1991, 1996 and 2001 censuses, a more limited range of data is available. Only “Place of Enumeration” data is accessible for the 1991 and 1996 censuses.

In the analyses of the Department of Education and Training (DET), “Not Stated” or “No Information” categories were excluded. DET statistics on birth countries of academics in Australian universities contained a large number of “No Information” responses. For example, the total headcount of academics in 2015 contained “No Information” for 52,974 individuals. The total headcount of academics in 2015 excluding the figure of “No Information” was 34,997 (DET 2016).

The unpublished data that the author obtained from the DET refers solely to academic staff working for Australian universities on full-time contracts. The disciplinary data, meanwhile, also excludes “research only” staff due to the DET’s data collection method. The author requested statistical information that dealt specifically with academics working for Go8 universities, as well as aggregated data to provide national totals. The information that the author obtained includes: the gender breakdown of the target population; place of birth; academic rank; academic discipline; state of their institutions; and language spoken at home.

The DET provided me with both headcount and Full-time Equivalent (FTE) data. This study used headcount data, as it captures employee numbers more precisely and is generally recognised as a better measurement of diversity than FTE. However, the author was obliged to rely on FTE data in cases in which there were less than five responses in a given data category, as the DET did not disclose detailed headcount data for these categories.

The online survey was conducted among academics at Go8 universities (the Australian National University, Monash University, the University of Adelaide, the University of Melbourne, the University of New South Wales, the University of Queensland, the University of Sydney and the University of Western Australia) as well as six universities in Victoria. Go8 universities are among the oldest, best established and internationalised and share a number of uniform academic and administrative requirements and benchmarking. The survey questionnaires were also sent to Federation University Australia, Deakin University, La Trobe University, RMIT University, Swinburne University and Victoria University. The focus only on these universities in Victoria was due to the project’s funding and other resource constraints.

The potential respondents were identified through publicly available staff profiles on the universities' websites. It should be noted that the staff profiles posted on these websites typically do not specify staff members' ethnic backgrounds. Therefore surnames, public photographs and other information had to be used to find out which academics *might* possess Asian ethnic backgrounds. The possible cultural origins of these academics' surnames were researched via online surname databases. As user-friendly and large as these databases proved to be, however, it was nonetheless impossible to conclusively determine if all the academics identified for the survey did indeed possess Asian ethnic backgrounds. The author attempted to minimise this problem by asking potential respondents to participate in the survey only if they identified themselves as having Asian ethnic background. However, the author is fully aware that this was not a perfect solution and that this survey has its limitations, as do similar online surveys.

In total, 2,812 academics were invited to take part in the online survey in February 2016, and 418 responses were received. The response rate of 14.9% exceeded the average response rate of 13% for general online surveys (Hamilton 2009). The author subsequently coded their responses to the open-ended questions and analysed them to identify common themes in the respondents' experiences and collective opinions. This survey contained 35 questions relating to: respondents' cultural, migratory, educational and professional backgrounds; their workplace experiences; their perceptions of the level of ethnic diversity at their workplaces; their connections with Asian countries; and their interest in taking part in in-depth qualitative interviews at a later stage. The questions tended to make the aim of investigating ethnic diversity of the Australian higher education sector explicit, and the author was thus aware that the survey design may have unduly influenced whether and which respondents chose to take part in this study.

Survey respondents as well as other academics were invited to participate in in-depth interviews. In total, 42 interviews were conducted between March 2016 and August 2017, using a semi-structured questionnaire. The average duration of each interview was approximately 45 minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, coded using the qualitative software NVivo 11 and analysed. The interview questions mainly explored the types of support available at interviewees' institutions, such as mentoring and career development services; the nature of their experiences in the Australian higher education sector as ethnic and cultural minorities; and their perceptions of the levels of ethnic diversity at their workplaces and within management.

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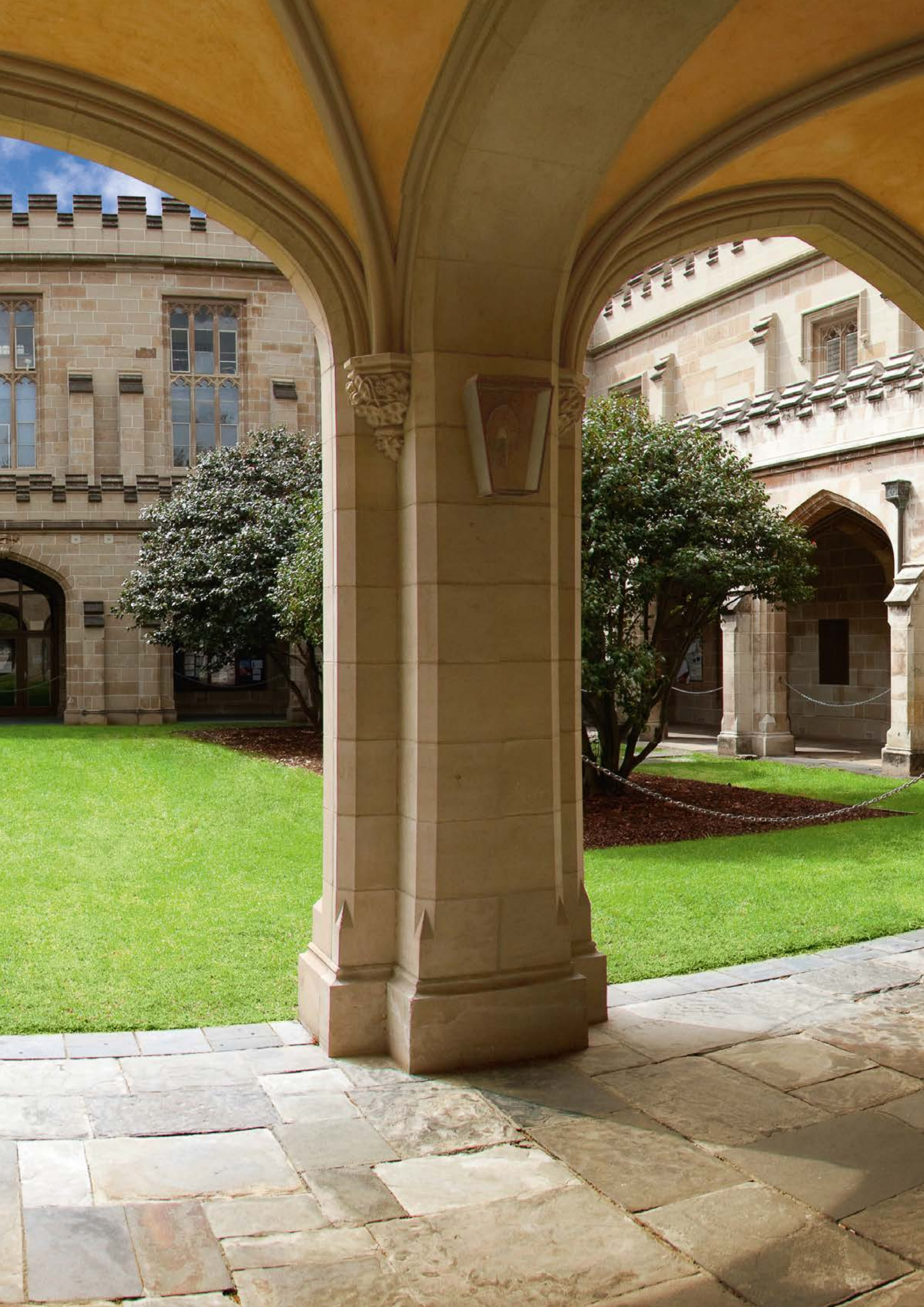
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