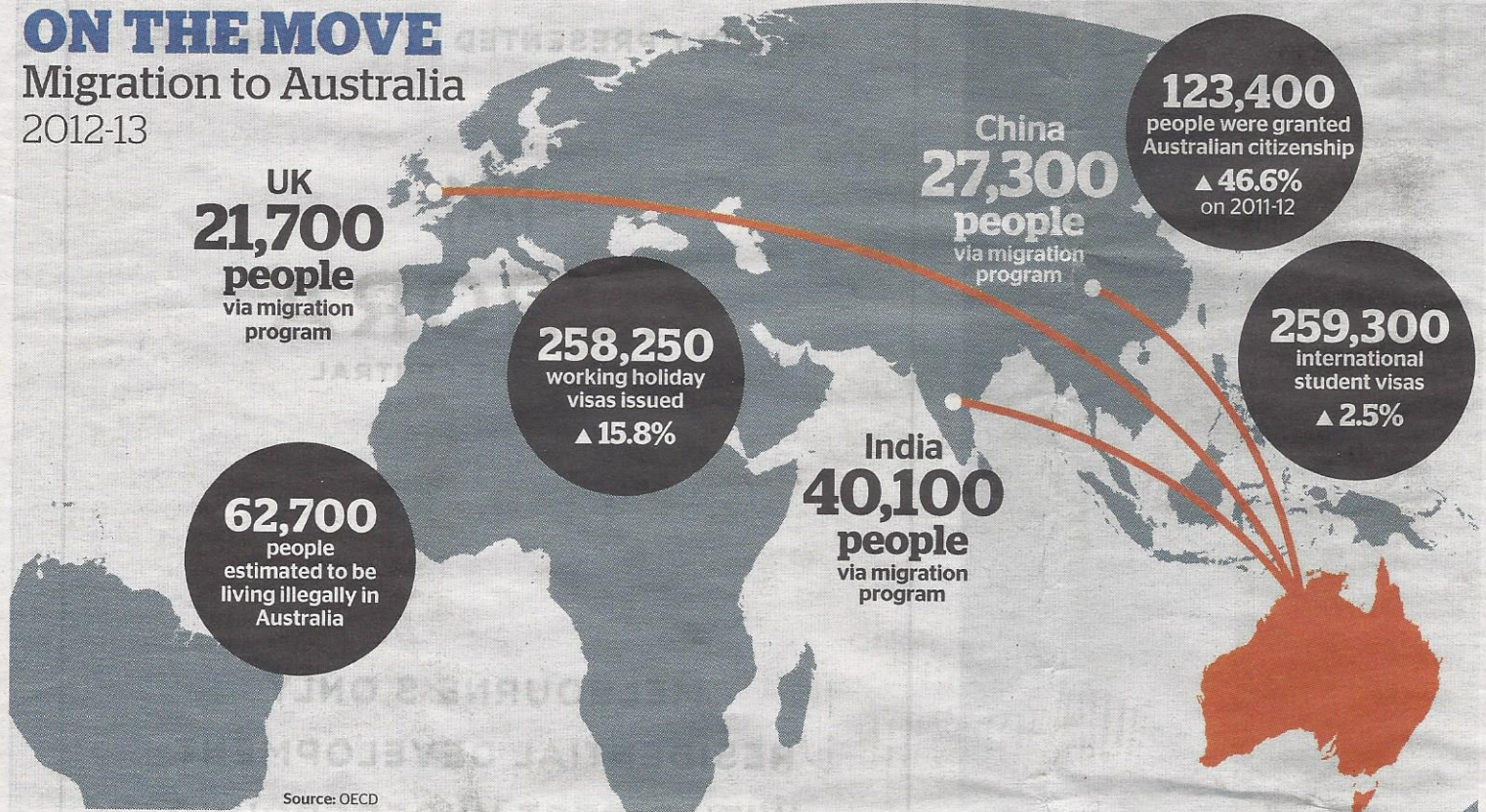


ON THE MOVE

Migration to Australia

2012-13



Indians calling Australia home

Sarah Whyte
Immigration

Indian citizens are flocking to Australia to work, beating the once-dominant British expats, while the granting of Australian citizenship is at a six-year high, according to migration figures released this week.

The statistics from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development show there has been a 46.6 per cent increase in the number of people becoming Australian citizens. During the 2012-13 year, 123,400 pledged to become citizens of Australia, the highest number since 2011-12, the International Migration Outlook report said.

Australia's Migration Program has also seen a significant increase, with 40,100 India citizens applying to migrate during 2012-13, while China had 27,300 applications and Britain 21,700.

According to Migration Law expert Sharon Harris, there is a growing trend of Indian and Chinese citizens seeking citizenship in Australia for greater global movement.

"India and China is without any doubt the most prolific source countries for pursuing visas and ultimately citizenship," she said "With an Australia passport, this opens up greater travel access globally."

Ms Harris, who has been a migration lawyer for 20 years, said the change in governments was particularly popular with Chinese citizens, who were attracted to the Abbott government.

"With the change of government they have more confidence in a stable political environment," Ms Harris said.

But the report also showed that 62,700 people whose temporary visas had expired or had been cancelled were living illegally in Australia.

Jobs which only offer cash in hand such as in the hospitality industry or agriculture contributed significantly to the number of workers who went "missing".

"This is a huge issue but the Department of Immigration did not have the resources to find these people.

"They do checks in area of high concern such as farming and hospitality, where those employers are happy to pay cash in hand."

In October, it was revealed by a Fair Work Ombudsman that more than an estimated 20,000 workers on the skilled 457 visa had gone missing.

The audit assessed 1807 skilled workers on 457 visas and found 338 – or about 20 per cent – were no longer employed by their sponsor.

India has now replaced the United Kingdom as the top origin country applying for 457 visas, the report said.