

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Brain gain from High-skilled Immigrants in Western Australia (WA) in the Oil and Gas sector.

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BACKGROUND:

Western Australia has had several mining booms in its 100-year history, with many Australians remembering the earliest mining boom as per the 1960s.

The latest boom is in the Oil and Gas sector in Western Australia, and therefore might be believed to have the highest number of high-skilled immigrants than any other mining sector. A sector that has been in the construction phase over the last few years and is now coming into the production phase.

Many workers from the several phases of a mining boom came from overseas: some came as high-skilled immigrants through company transfers, others came through overseas recruiting agencies. Some may want to stay in Western Australia permanently. What all of them seem to have in common are their skills, which appear crucial to supporting Western Australia's Oil and Gas sector.

There is little literature on high-skilled immigrants that are mobile. Many of them just stay in one country for one to approximately four years (depending on visa conditions). Most of them are believed to be highly educated and are in the high average income bracket. Their expertise in their areas will most probably contribute to knowledge transfer between high-skilled immigrants and locals.

What started in the literature as a 'brain gain' debate in the 1960s (insinuating the win of knowledge through new immigrants into the receiving country), has become a major debate outside the scholarly field in the past fifteen years. We are now seeing OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, such as Australia, changing visas to accommodate high-skilled immigrants to help their "knowledge-based economy". And as the OECD sees knowledge as the driver of productivity and economic growth for a country, high-skilled immigrants are seen as an important force for economic growth. My research aims to make a contribution to the literature as to the impact of high-skilled immigration in the workforce.

AIMS / RESEARCH QUESTION:

The project aims to establish a profile of temporary high-skilled immigrants who work in the Oil and Gas sector in order to examine the knowledge transfer between high-skilled immigrants and locals. Furthermore, the study hopes to give details on temporary high-skilled immigrant mobility and their impact in the companies they work for (e.g. in form of knowledge transfer).

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- Significant contribution on temporary high-skilled immigrant profiles in Perth/Western Australia.
- Understanding of knowledge transfer of temporary high-skilled immigrants in the workplace.
- Contribution to the literature in migration and expat knowledge transfer in companies/firms.