



Community Information Summary

Poland-born

Historical Background

The earliest contact by Poland-born people with Australia was in 1696, when ten citizens of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were included in the crew of Captain Willem Vlamingh's Dutch expedition which explored the Western Australian coast. The first Polish settler in Australia was a convict who arrived in 1803 and became a successful wheat farmer in Tasmania.

Later arrivals included a group of Poland-born people who established a community in South Australia which grew to about 400 people by the 1880s. Some Poles joined the Australian gold rush in the 1850s. The 1921 Australian Census recorded 1780 Poland-born residents and by the 1933 Census this number had almost doubled.

Following World War II, many Polish refugees came to Australia. Between 1947 and 1954, the Poland-born population increased from 6573 to 56 594 people. Many refugees worked under two-year contracts in unskilled jobs and continued in similar work for a period after their contracts ended.

There was further migration from Poland to Australia after the Polish Government relaxed its emigration laws, with almost 15 000 Poland-born people coming to Australia between 1957 and 1966.

The emergence of the Solidarity trade union movement and the declaration of martial law in Poland at the end of 1981 coincided with a further relaxation of Polish emigration laws. During the period 1980-91 Australia granted permanent entry to more than 25 000 Poland-born settlers, many arriving as refugees.

The Poland-born population of Australia peaked at 68 500 at the 1991 Census. Since then, the improvement in living conditions in Poland and its eventual membership in the European Union in 2004, have significantly reduced the levels of Polish migration to Australia.

Today

Geographic Distribution

The latest Census in 2011 recorded 48 678 Poland-born people in Australia, a fall of 6.8 per cent from the 2006 Census. The 2011 distribution by state and territory showed Victoria had the largest number with 16 383 followed by New South Wales (14 330), Western Australia (5568) and South Australia (5550).

Refer to Figure 1.

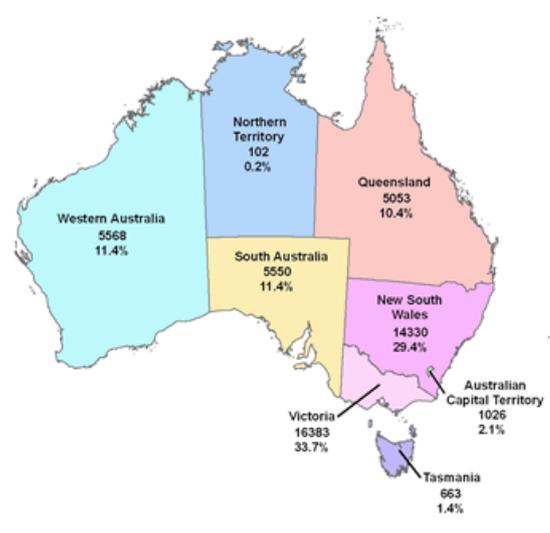


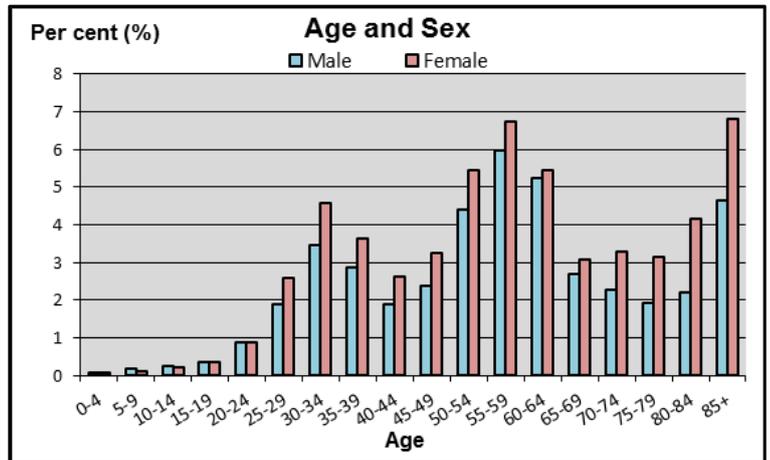
Figure 1

Age and Sex

The median age of the Poland-born in 2011 was 57 years compared with 45 years for all overseas-born and 37 years for the total Australian population.

The age distribution showed 0.9 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 2.5 per cent were 15-24 years, 23.5 per cent were 25-44 years, 38.9 per cent were 45-64 years and 34.2 per cent were 65 years and over.

Of the Poland-born in Australia, there were 21 221 males (43.6 per cent) and 27 458 females (56.4 per cent). The sex ratio was 77.3 males per 100 females.

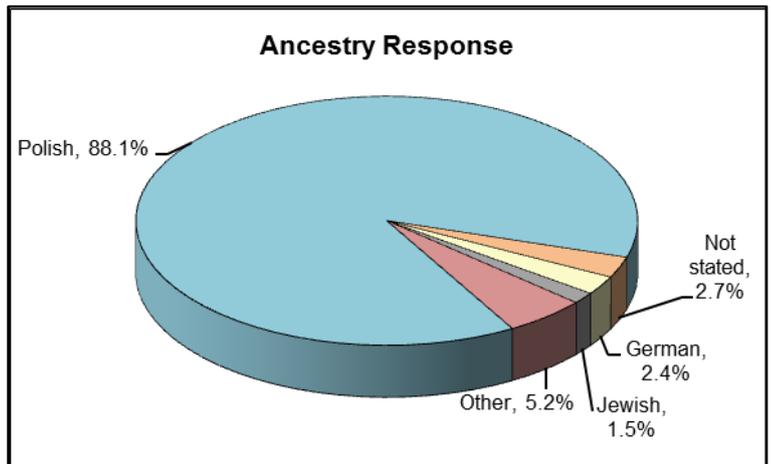


Ancestry

In the 2011 Census, the top ancestry responses* that Poland-born people reported were Polish (44 818), German (1239) and Jewish (763).

In the 2011 Census, Australians reported around 300 different ancestries. Of the total ancestry responses*, 170 354 responses were towards Polish ancestry.

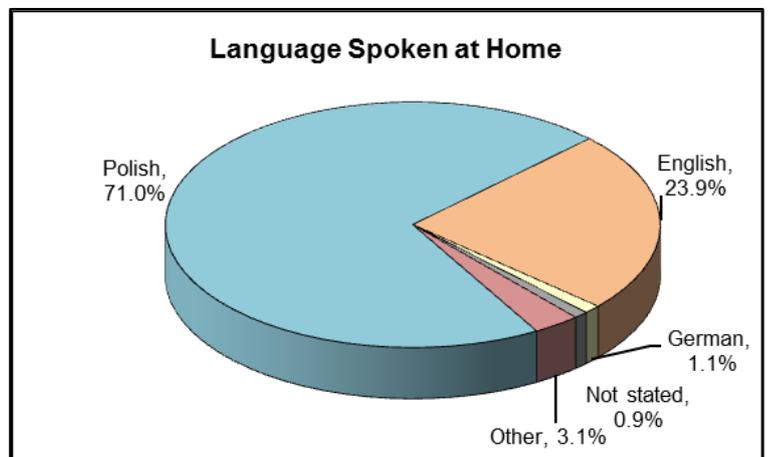
*At the 2011 Census up to two responses per person were allowed for the Ancestry question; therefore providing the total responses and not persons count.



Language

The main languages spoken at home by Poland-born people in Australia were Polish (34 549), English (11 644) and German (539).

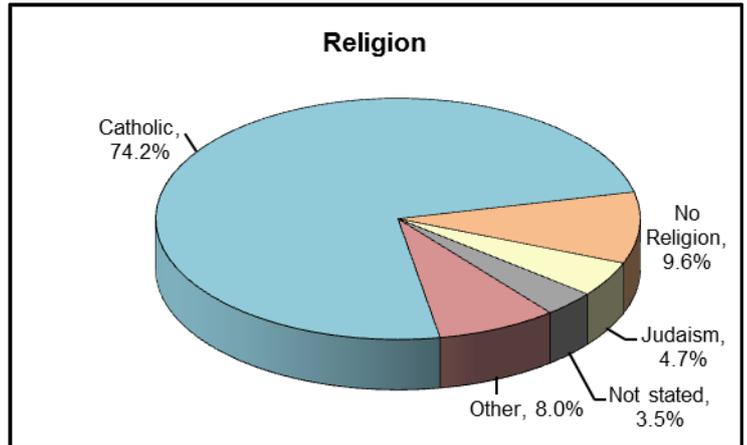
Of the 37 035 Poland-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 85.4 per cent spoke English very well or well, and 13.1 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.



Religion

At the 2011 Census the major religious affiliations amongst Poland-born were Catholic (36 121) and Judaism (2304).

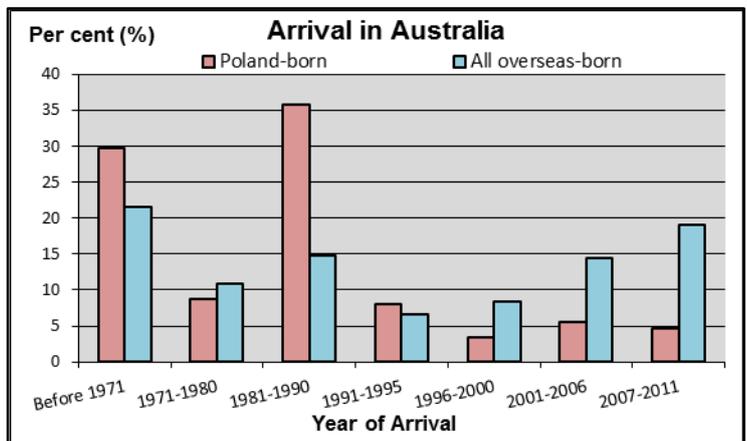
Of the Poland-born, 9.6 per cent stated 'No Religion' which was lower than that of the total Australian population (22.3 per cent), and 3.5 per cent did not state a religion.



Arrival

Compared to 62 per cent of the total overseas-born population, 85.7 per cent of the Poland-born people in Australia arrived in Australia prior to 2001.

Among the total Poland-born in Australia at the 2011 Census, 5.6 per cent arrived between 2001 and 2006 and 4.7 per cent arrived between 2007 and 2011.



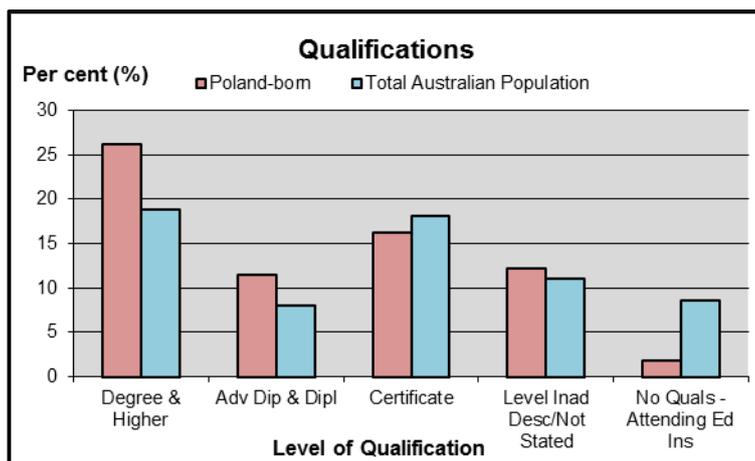
Median Income

At the time of the 2011 Census, the median individual weekly income for the Poland-born in Australia aged 15 years and over was \$487, compared with \$538 for all overseas-born and \$597 for all Australia-born. The total Australian population had a median individual weekly income of \$577.

Qualifications

At the 2011 Census, 66.1 per cent of the Poland-born aged 15 years and over had some form of higher non-school qualifications compared to 55.9 per cent of the Australian population.

Of the Poland-born aged 15 years and over, 1.8 per cent were still attending an educational institution. The corresponding rate for the total Australian population was 8.6 per cent.

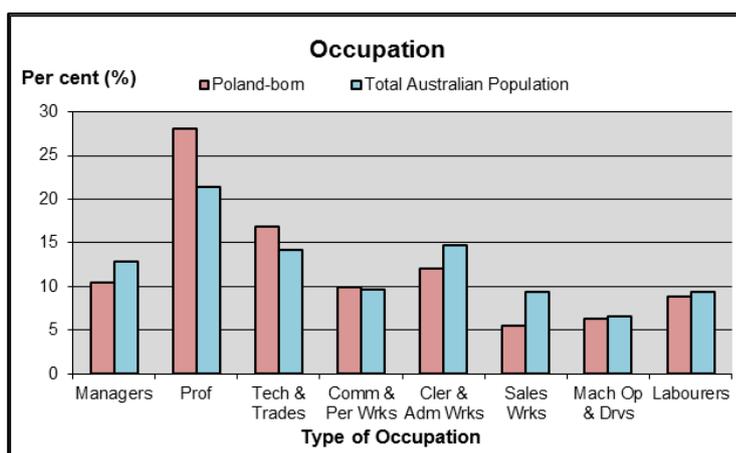


Level Inad Desc/Not Stated = Education level inadequately described or not stated
No Quals - Attending Ed Ins = No qualifications and still attending educational institution

Employment

Among Poland-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 52.9 per cent and the unemployment rate was 5.2 per cent. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 65 per cent and 5.6 per cent respectively.

Of the 23 520 Poland-born who were employed, 55.3 per cent were employed in either a skilled managerial, professional or trade occupation. The corresponding rate in the total Australian population was 48.4 per cent.



Comm & Per Wrks = Community & Personal Service Workers

Produced by Community Relations Section of DIAC

All data used in this summary is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing. Sources for the Historical Background available at <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/comm-summ/source.htm>