



# Community Information Summary

## Syria-born

### Historical Background

Syria was part of the Ottoman Empire from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries. Under Ottoman rule, all emigrants were issued with Turkish documents, regardless of their regional, linguistic or religious origins. This meant that early Syrian and Lebanese immigrants were classified as 'Turks' even when many of them were not of Turkish origin.

Syrian immigration to Australia began over a century ago and a few individuals and small groups arrived in Australia in the 1870s. At that time, Syrians migrating to Australia may have included Syrian Christians persecuted by the Ottomans, people escaping economic hardship caused by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and Lebanese and rural workers devastated by droughts and plagues.

It was not until late the 1880s and early 1890s that Syrians began arriving in sufficient numbers for attention in the colonial census. As officials became aware of internal differences among 'Turks' they began categorising immigrants on the basis of region of origin. This made it possible to distinguish Syrians from other 'Turkish' immigrants.

Among the early migrants from Syria were Jews, Copts, Greeks, Armenians, and Lebanese from the province of Greater Syria. At the time, all those coming from Syria were called Syrians even though the majority may have been Lebanese.

Since the 1960s, following the easing of immigration restrictions, there has been steady migration from Syria, though small in numbers, mainly under the Family component of the Migration Program.

### Today

#### Geographic Distribution

The latest Census in 2011 recorded 8392 Syria-born people in Australia, an increase of 20.4 per cent from the 2006 Census. The 2011 distribution by state and territory showed New South Wales had the largest number with 5152 followed by Victoria (2262), Queensland (315) and Western Australia (288).

Refer to Figure 1.

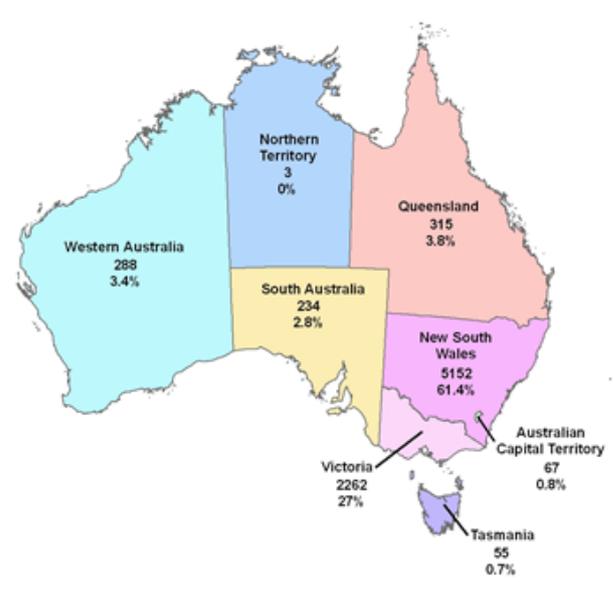


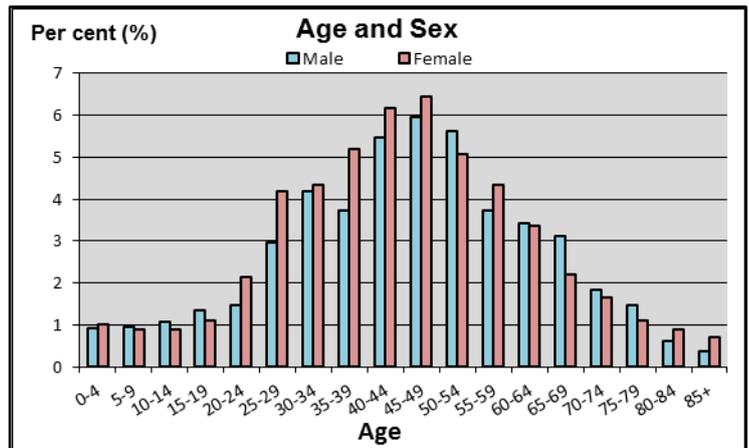
Figure 1

### Age and Sex

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

The age distribution showed 5.7 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 6.1 per cent were 15-24 years, 36.2 per cent were 25-44 years, 38 per cent were 45-64 years and 14 per cent were 65 years and over.

Of the Syria-born in Australia, there were 4042 males (48.2 per cent) and 4349 females (51.8 per cent). The sex ratio was 92.9 males per 100 females.

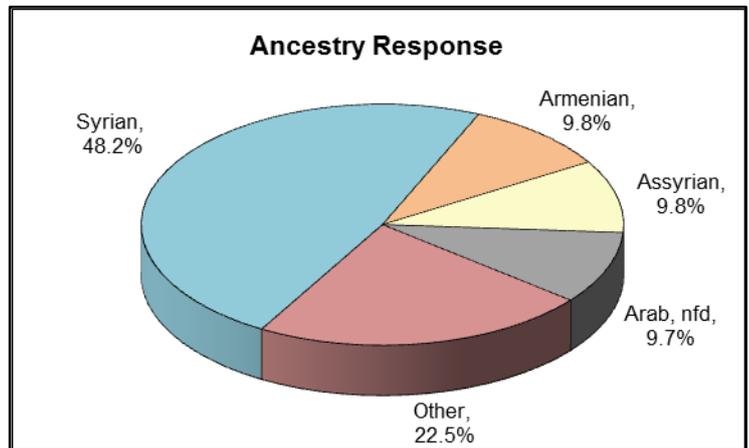


### Ancestry

In the 2011 Census, the top ancestry responses\* that Syria-born people reported were Syrian (4316), Armenian (875) and Assyrian (874).

In the 2011 Census, Australians reported around 300 different ancestries. Of the total ancestry responses\*, 13 517 responses were towards Syrian ancestry.

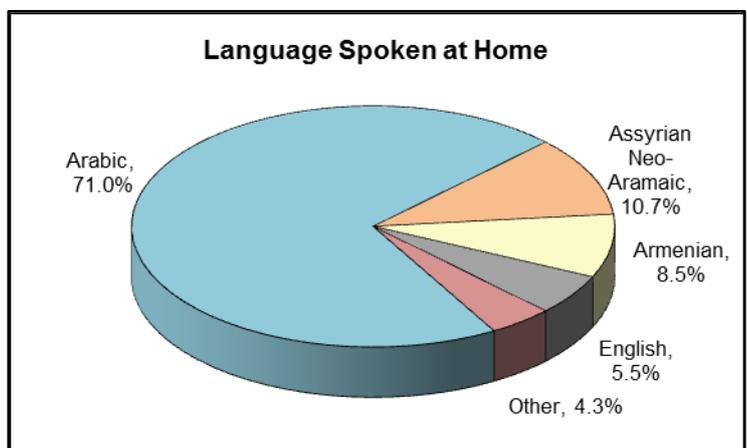
\*At the 2011 Census up to two responses per person were allowed for the Ancestry question; therefore providing the total responses and not persons count.



### Language

The main languages spoken at home by Syria-born people in Australia were Arabic (5958), Assyrian neo Aramaic (899) and Armenian (713).

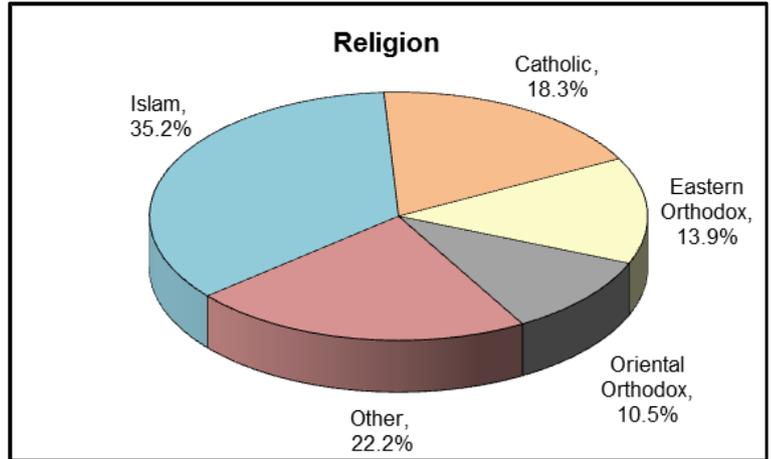
Of the 7931 Syria-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 72.9 per cent spoke English very well or well, and 25.7 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.



### Religion

At the 2011 Census the major religious affiliations amongst Syria-born were Islam (2951), Catholic (1533) and Eastern Orthodox (1165).

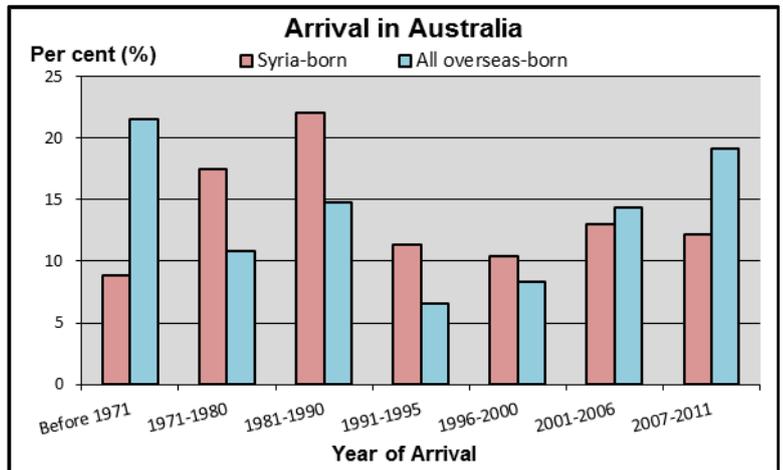
Of the Syria-born, 3.1 per cent stated 'No Religion' which was lower than that of the total Australian population (22.3 per cent), and 3.8 per cent did not state a religion.



### Arrival

Compared to 62 per cent of the total overseas-born population, 70.1 per cent of the Syria-born people in Australia arrived in Australia prior to 2001.

Among the total Syria-born in Australia at the 2011 Census, 13 per cent arrived between 2001 and 2006 and 12.2 per cent arrived between 2007 and 2011.



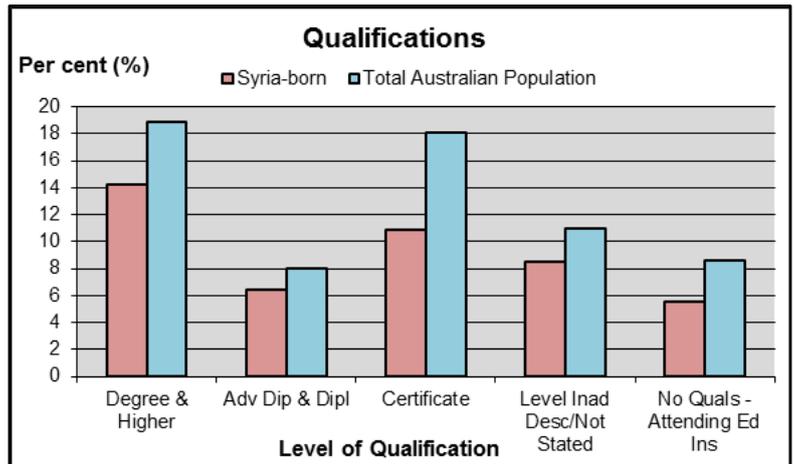
### Median Income

At the time of the 2011 Census, the median individual weekly income for the Syria-born in Australia aged 15 years and over was \$322, 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, 40 per cent of the Syria-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 Syria-born aged 15 years and over, 5.6 per cent were still attending an educational institution. The corresponding rate for the total Australian population was 8.6 per cent.

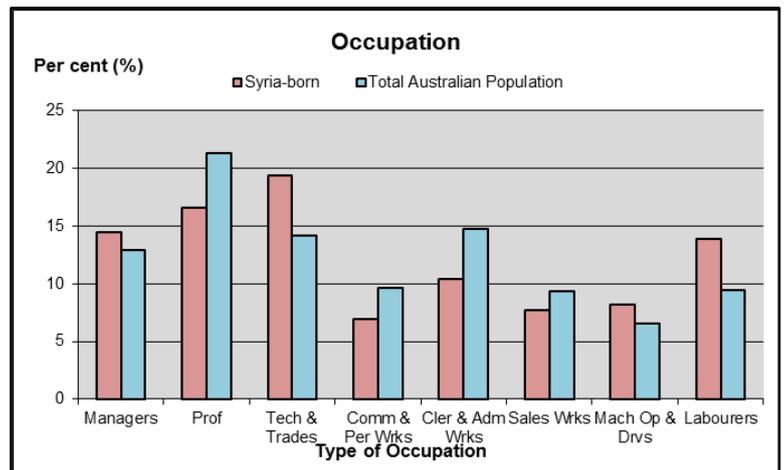


*Level Inad Desc/Not Stated* = Education level inadequately described or not stated  
*No Quals - Attending Ed Ins* = No qualifications and still attending educational institution

## Employment

Among Syria-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 44.4 per cent and the unemployment rate was 10.7 per cent. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 65 per cent and 5.6 per cent respectively.

Of the 3070 Syria-born who were employed, 50.4 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>