Germany-born
Community Information Summary

Historical Background

Germans were at the forefront of Australia's early European settlement and exploration. Germans comprised a significant and enduring part of the settlement in South Australia, and German missionaries were among the first Europeans to settle in what is now Moreton Bay in south-east Queensland.

The first significant group of 517 migrants were Lutherans pursuing religious freedom and settled in South Australia in late 1838. Along with other Germans who arrived that year, they were considered by themselves and the British as founding pioneers. The 1850s gold rush in Victoria also drew large numbers of fortune-seeking adventurers from Germany with about 10,000 German migrants working the goldfields by 1861.

German-speaking people in Australia came under suspicion during both World Wars. At the end of World War I, hundreds of Germans were deported and migration from Germany did not resume until 1925. During World War II, anti-German sentiment was high resulting in settlers being interned in Australian camps. More than 2000 Jewish refugees from Germany were also interned for short periods. The two World Wars had a marked impact on the number of Germany-born in Australia, with numbers falling from approximately 45,000 at the 1891 Census to a low of 14,567 at the 1947 Census.

Australia's post-war immigration program, which was founded on settling Europe's displaced persons, saw the Germany-born population increase again to 109,315 by the 1961 Census, peaking at 112,000 in 1991. By 2001, this number dropped to 108,240.
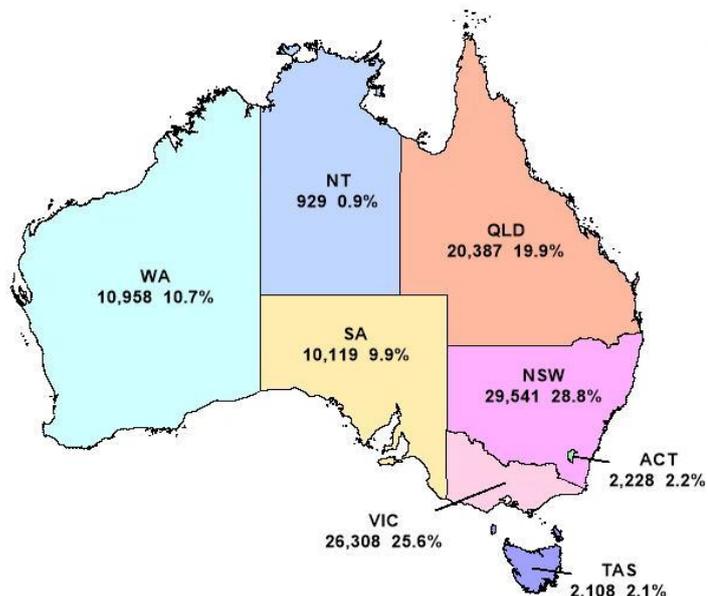
The German-born continues to decline due to its ageing population, return migration and lack of new arrivals.

2016 Census

Geographic Distribution

The latest Census in 2016 recorded 102,595 Germany-born people in Australia, a decrease of 5.0 per cent from the 2011 Census.

The 2016 distribution by State and Territory showed New South Wales had the largest number with 29,541 followed by Victoria (26,308), Queensland (20,387) and Western Australia (10,958).

NT 929 0.9%

QLD 20,387 19.9%

WA 10,958 10.7%

SA 10,119 9.9%

NSW 29,541 28.8%
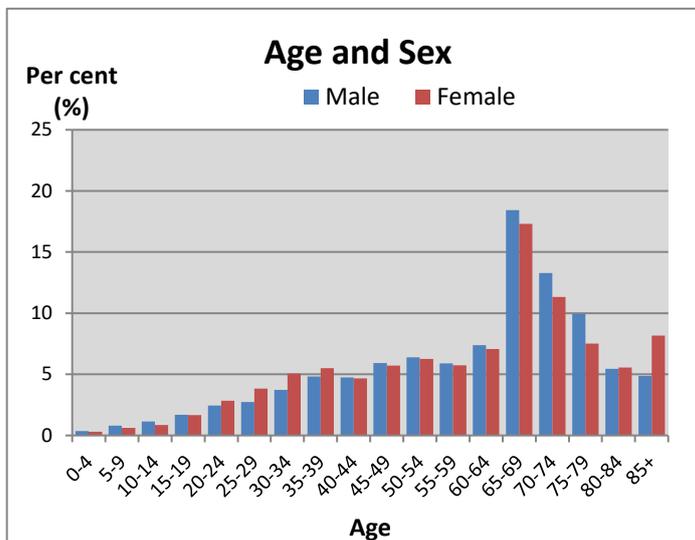
ACT 2,228 2.2%

VIC 26,308 25.6%

TAS 2,108 2.1%

Age and Sex

The median age of the Germany-born in 2016 was 65 years compared with 44 years for all overseas-born and 38 years for the total Australian population.

The age distribution showed 2.0 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 4.3 per cent were 15-24 years, 17.6 per cent were 25-44 years, 25.2 per cent were 45-64 years and 50.8 per cent were 65 years and over.

Of the Germany-born in Australia, there were 48,271 males (47.1 per cent) and 54,324 females (52.9 per cent). The sex ratio was 89 males per 100 females.
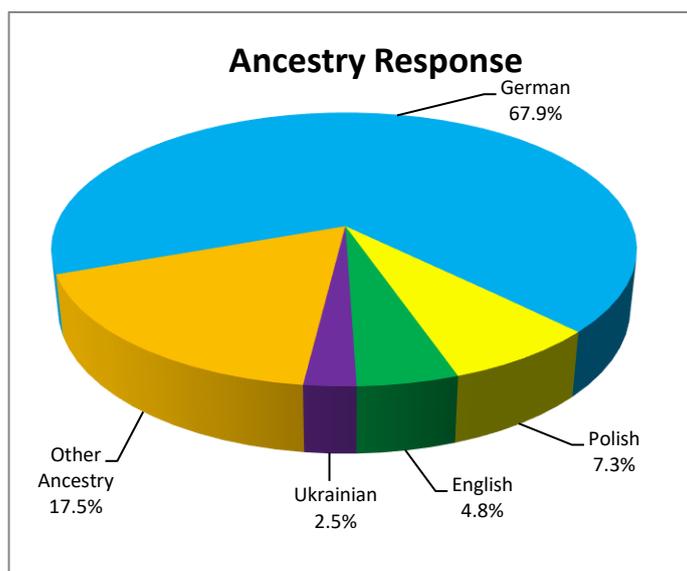
Age and Sex

Ancestry

In the 2016 Census, the top ancestry responses* that Germany-born people reported were German (79,464), Polish (8,575) and English (5,581).

In the 2016 Census, Australians reported over 300 different ancestries. Of the total ancestry responses* 982,226 responses were towards German ancestry.
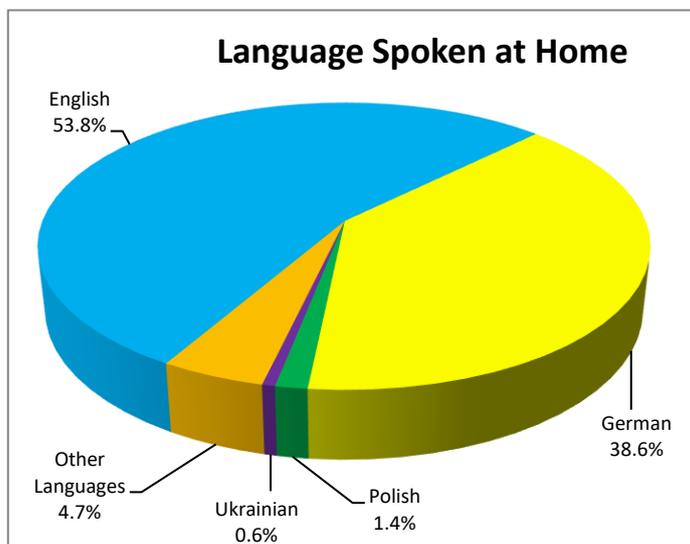
* At the 2016 Census up to two responses per person were allowed for the Ancestry question, therefore there can be more responses than total persons.

Ancestry Response

- German 67.9%
- Polish 7.3%
- English 4.8%
- Ukrainian 2.5%
- Other Ancestry 17.5%

Language

The main languages spoken at home by Germany-born people in Australia were English (55,164), German (39,641) and Polish (1,462).
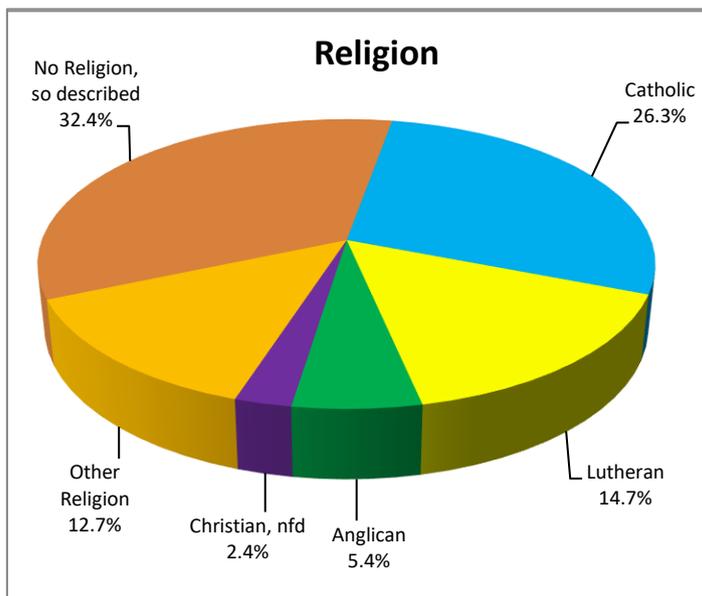
Of the 47,020 Germany-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 96.8 per cent spoke English very well or well, and 2.2 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.

Language Spoken at Home

- English 53.8%
- German 38.6%
- Polish 1.4%
- Ukrainian 0.6%
- Other Languages 4.7%

Religion

At the 2016 Census the major religious affiliations amongst Germany-born were Catholic (27,015), Lutheran (15,109) and Anglican (5,544).
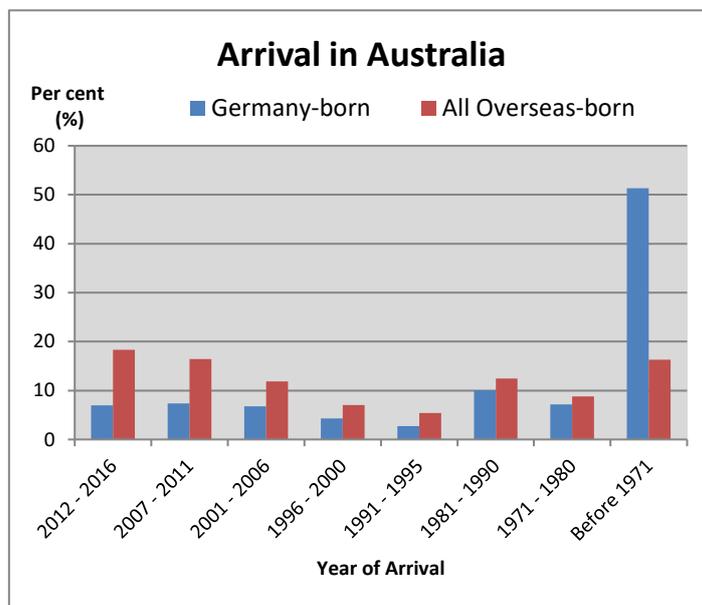
Of the Germany-born, 32.4 per cent stated 'No Religion' which was higher than that of the total Australian population (29.6 per cent), and 5.6 per cent did not state a religion.

Religion

- No Religion, so described 32.4%
- Catholic 26.3%
- Lutheran 14.7%
- Anglican 5.4%
- Christian, nfd 2.4%
- Other Religion 12.7%

Arrival

Compared to 61.8 per cent of the total overseas-born population, 82.3 per cent of the Germany-born people in Australia arrived in Australia prior to 2007.

Among the total Germany-born in Australia at the 2016 Census, 7.4 per cent arrived between 2007 and 2011 and 7.0 per cent arrived between 2012 and 2016.

Arrival in Australia

Per cent (%)

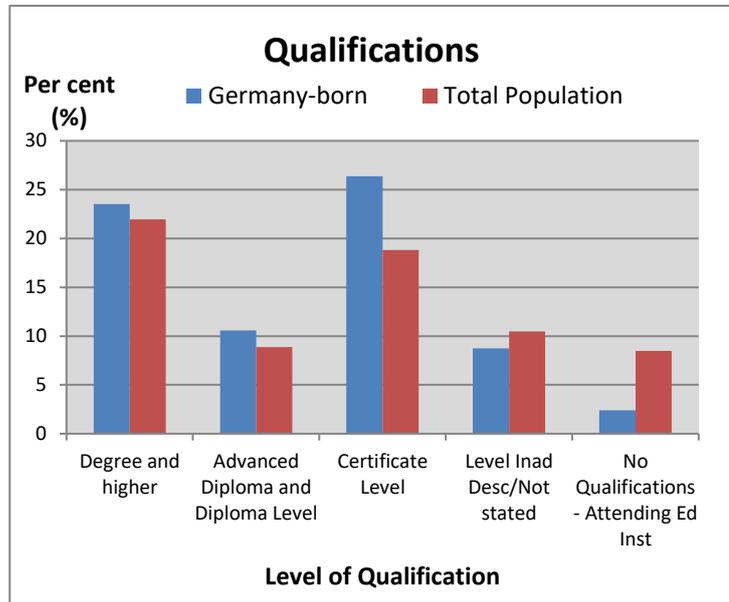■ Germany-born ■ All Overseas-born

Year of Arrival

Median Income

At the time of the 2016 Census, the median Individual Weekly Income for the Germany-born in Australia aged 15 years and over was $534, compared with $615 for all overseas-born and $688 for all Australian-born.

The total Australian population aged 15 and over had a median Individual Weekly Income of $662.

Qualifications

At the 2016 Census, 69.2 per cent of the Germany-born aged 15 years and over had some form of higher non-school qualification compared to 60.1 per cent of the Australian population.

Of the Germany-born aged 15 years and over, 2.4 per cent had no qualifications and were still attending an educational institution. The corresponding rate for the total Australian population was 8.5 per cent.
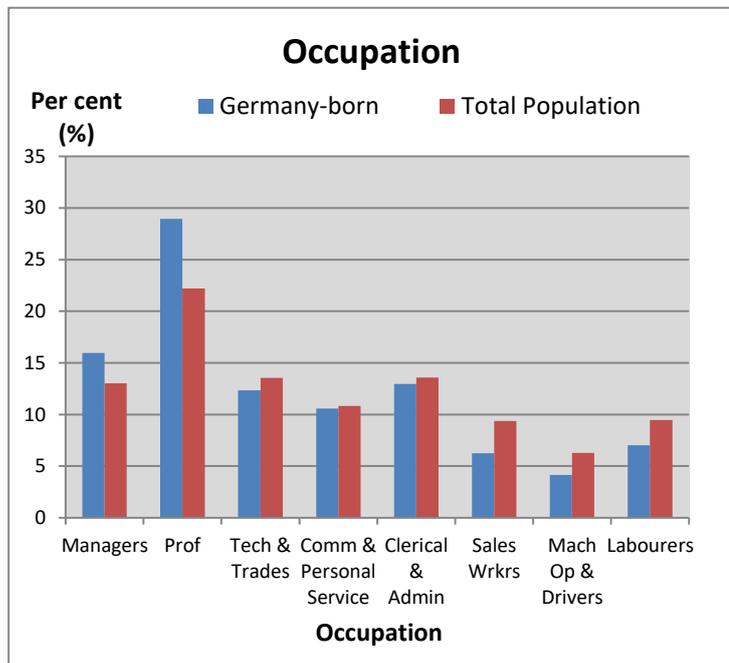
Qualifications

Per cent (%)

Legend: ■ Germany-born ■ Total Population

X-axis (Level of Qualification): Degree and higher | Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level | Certificate Level | Level Inad Desc/Not stated | No Qualifications - Attending Ed Inst

Employment

Among Germany-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 44.9 per cent and the unemployment rate was 5.7 per cent.

The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 64.6 per cent and 6.9 per cent respectively.

Of the 41,658 Germany-born who were employed, 57.2 per cent were employed in either a skilled managerial, professional or trade occupation. The corresponding rate in the total Australian population was 48.8 per cent.

Occupation

Per cent (%)

Legend: ■ Germany-born ■ Total Population

X-axis (Occupation): Managers | Prof | Tech & Trades | Comm & Personal Service | Clerical & Admin | Sales Wrkrs | Mach Op & Drivers | Labourers

Produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the Department of Home Affairs

All data used in this summary is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing.