



Malaysia-born Community Information Summary

Historical Background

There is a long history of contact between Australia and Malaysia. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Malays were involved in the pearling industry and the collection of trepang (sea slugs) off Australia's northern coast.

Early colonial census records in 1871 showed 149 people born in the Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements residing in Australia. This increased to 932 people by 1901. The 1911 Census recorded 782 'Malaya-born' in Australia. Both the 1911 and 1947 Censuses of the Malaya-born included persons born in Singapore, Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island.

The first significant intake of Malaysians to Australia occurred with the Colombo Plan from 1950, which brought nearly 17,000 overseas students to Australia, the majority of whom were Malaysians. Many of the students married locally, later sponsoring their parents or siblings. Malaysians have one of the highest rates of intermarriage with the Australia-born forming families of mixed ancestries.

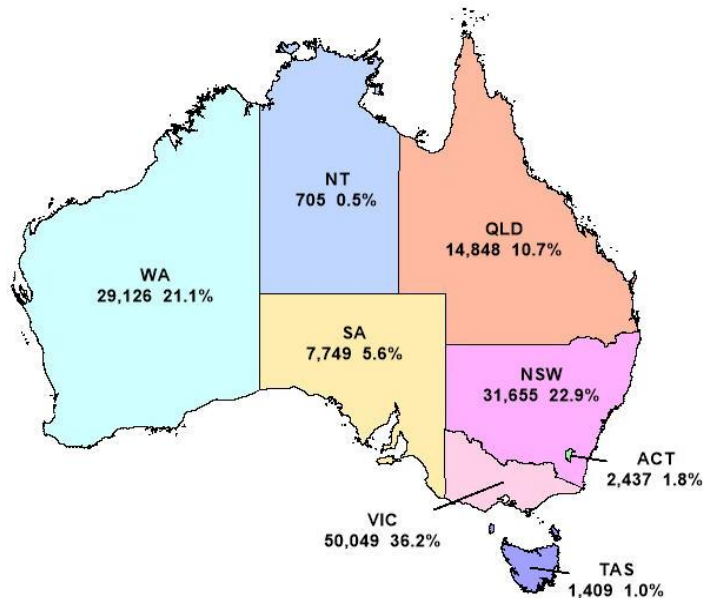
In the late 1960s, the Malaysian Government introduced affirmative action policies favouring indigenous Malays. These policies combined with factors, such as race riots and unfavourable socio-political conditions, had a negative impact on Chinese and other minorities in Malaysia. Many Malaysians of Chinese background left the country during this period migrating to Australia and other countries. The population of the Malaysia-born in Australia almost doubled between the 1986 and 1991 Censuses (from 33,710 to 71,740 people). The 2011 Census recorded 116,196 Malaysia-born in Australia.

2016 Census

Geographic Distribution

The latest Census in 2016 recorded 138,364 Malaysia-born people in Australia, an increase of 19.1 per cent from the 2011 Census.

The 2016 distribution by State and Territory showed Victoria had the largest number with 50,049 followed by New South Wales (31,655), Western Australia (29,126) and Queensland (14,848).

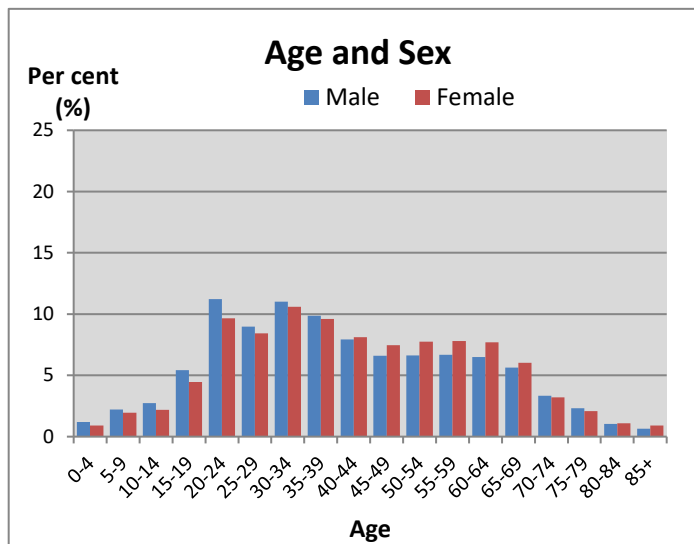


Age and Sex

The median age of the Malaysia-born in 2016 was 39 years compared with 44 years for all overseas-born and 38 years for the total Australian population.

The age distribution showed 5.6 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 15.3 per cent were 15-24 years, 37.2 per cent were 25-44 years, 28.7 per cent were 45-64 years and 13.2 per cent were 65 years and over.

Of the Malaysia-born in Australia, there were 63,664 males (46.0 per cent) and 74,701 females (54.0 per cent). The sex ratio was 85 males per 100 females.

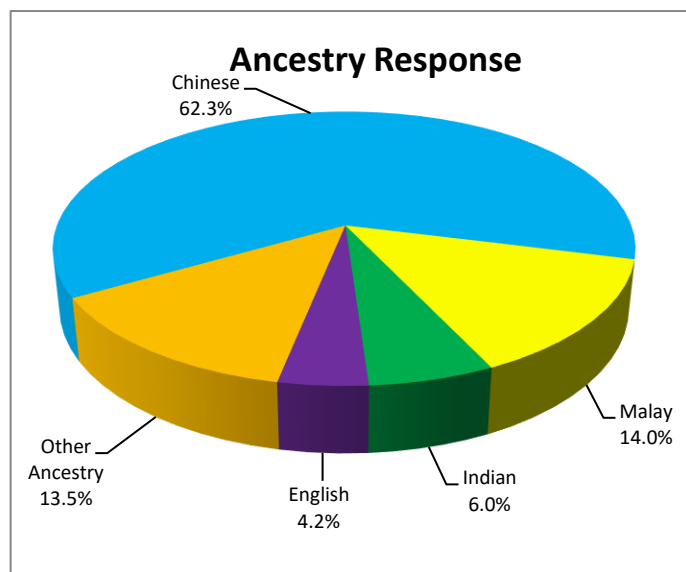


Ancestry

In the 2016 Census, the top ancestry responses* that Malaysia-born people reported were Chinese (97,345), Malay (21,937) and Indian (9,336).

In the 2016 Census, Australians reported over 300 different ancestries. Of the total ancestry responses* 1,213,903 responses were towards Chinese ancestry.

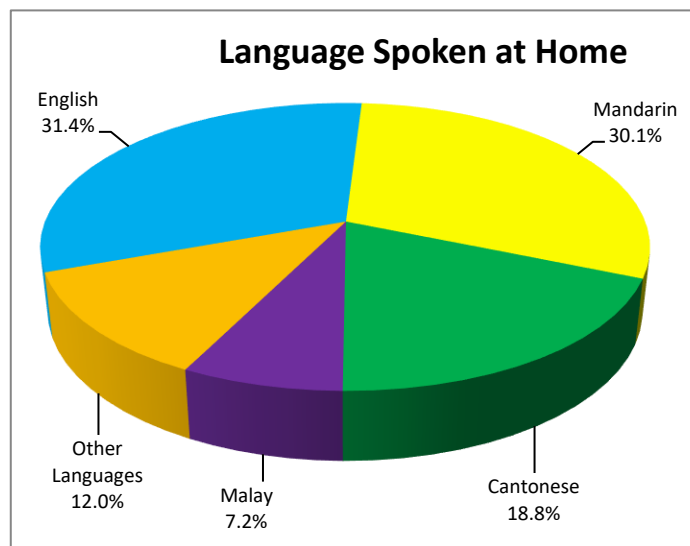
* At the 2016 Census up to two responses per person were allowed for the Ancestry question, therefore there can be more responses than total persons.



Language

The main languages spoken at home by Malaysia-born people in Australia were English (43,419), Mandarin (41,641) and Cantonese (26,034).

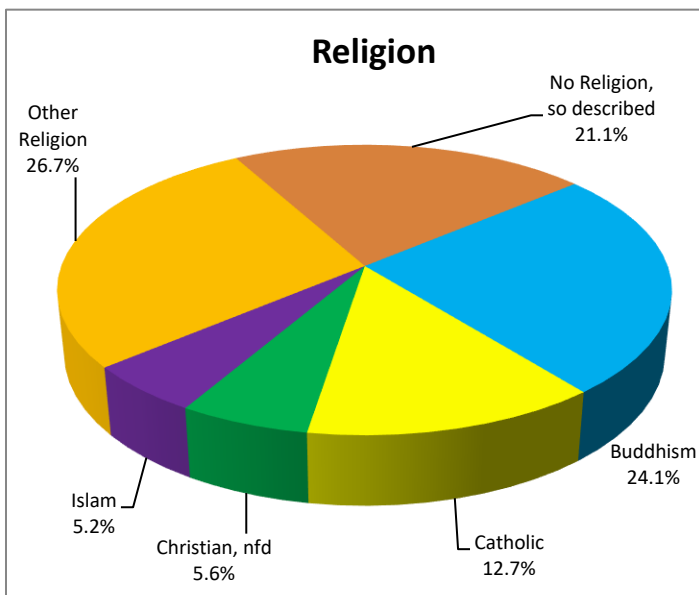
Of the 94,595 Malaysia-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 90.5 per cent spoke English very well or well, and 9.0 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.



Religion

At the 2016 Census the major religious affiliations amongst Malaysia-born were Buddhism (33,311), Catholic (17,606) and Christian, nfd (7,785).

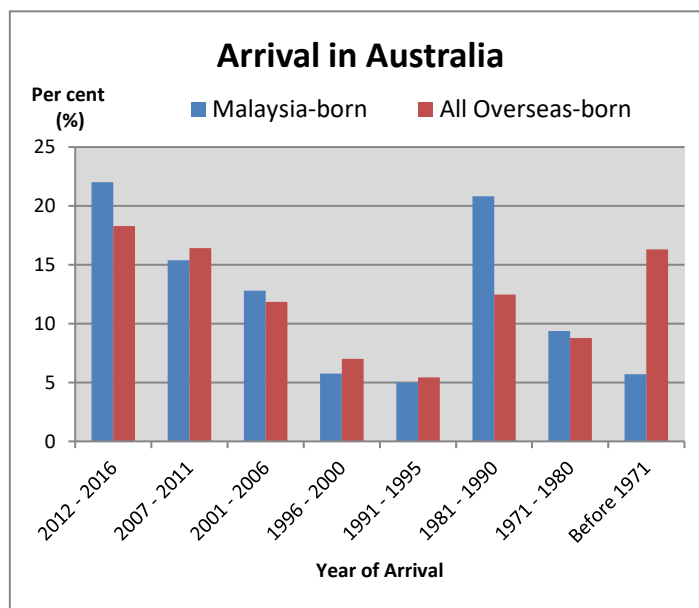
Of the Malaysia-born, 21.1 per cent stated 'No Religion' which was lower than that of the total Australian population (29.6 per cent), and 4.4 per cent did not state a religion.



Arrival

Compared to 61.8 per cent of the total overseas-born population, 59.5 per cent of the Malaysia-born people in Australia arrived in Australia prior to 2007.

Among the total Malaysia-born in Australia at the 2016 Census, 15.4 per cent arrived between 2007 and 2011 and 22.0 per cent arrived between 2012 and 2016.



Median Income

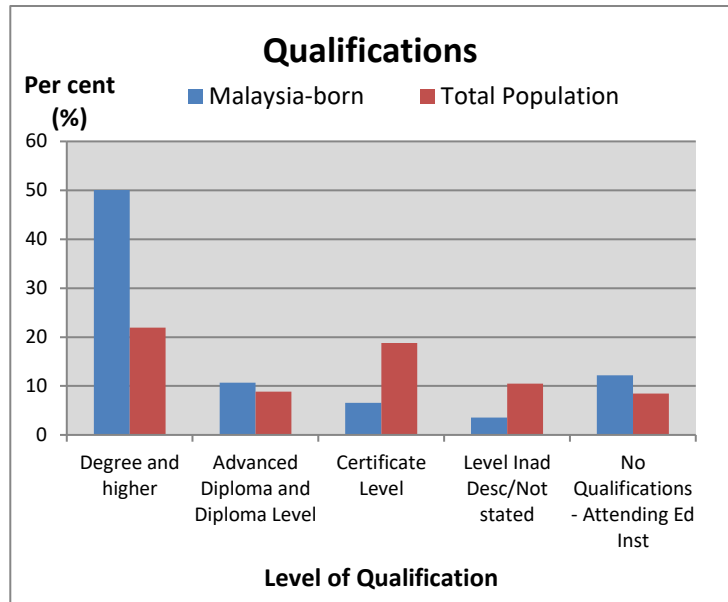
At the time of the 2016 Census, the median Individual Weekly Income for the Malaysia-born in Australia aged 15 years and over was \$721, compared with \$615 for all overseas-born and \$688 for all Australian-born.

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

Qualifications

At the 2016 Census, 70.9 per cent of the Malaysia-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 Malaysia-born aged 15 years and over, 12.2 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.

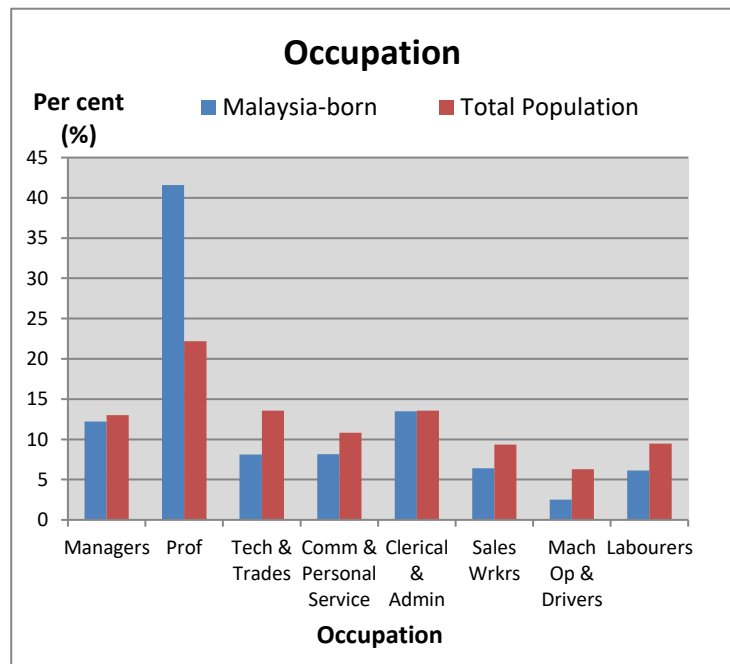


Employment

Among Malaysia-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 65.8 per cent and the unemployment rate was 8.3 per cent.

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

Of the 78,418 Malaysia-born who were employed, 61.9 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.



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.