Historical Background

Russia has had close links with Australia since the eighteenth century when Russian navigators assisted the British in charting the coast of Australia and Russian ships frequented Australian ports.

The first known Russian settler in Australia was a former Russian officer who arrived as a convict from England in 1804. There is no evidence of any substantial migration for the next hundred years, although the Census of 1901 recorded 3360 Russia-born living in Australia.

With the 1905 Russian uprising, there was a wave of emigration of opponents of the Tsar. Those who came to Australia mostly came via England and settled in Melbourne or Sydney. A sizeable portion of this group was made up of Jews, who established Russian-Jewish organisations such as 'Bund' and 'Kadimah' and furthered Russian emigration through the sponsoring of family and friends.

Another wave of refugees, this time opponents of the Bolshevik Revolution, came to Australia after 1917, with 4711 arriving between 1920 and 1940. These were the so-called 'White Russians', not to be confused with people from Belarus which was also sometimes referred to as 'White Russia'.

A third major wave of Russian migration occurred following hostilities from 1947-1952, mostly refugees from displaced persons camps in Germany, Austria and Italy. This increased the Russia-born population in Australia from 5000 to over 13,000 by 1952.

Small numbers of Russian refugees continued to arrive in Australia from exile in China right up to the early 1970s and then again following political unrest in Russia during the 1980s and 1990s, coinciding with the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

2016 Census

Geographic Distribution

The latest Census in 2016 recorded 20,425 Russian Federation-born people in Australia, an increase of 11.8 per cent from the 2011 Census.

The 2016 distribution by State and Territory showed New South Wales had the largest number with 7,586 followed by Victoria (6,307), Queensland (2,909) and Western Australia (1,769).
**Age and Sex**

The median age of the Russian Federation-born in 2016 was 40 years compared with 44 years for all overseas-born and 38 years for the total Australian population.

The age distribution showed 6.6 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 8.5 per cent were 15-24 years, 43.2 per cent were 25-44 years, 24.2 per cent were 45-64 years and 17.4 per cent were 65 years and over.

Of the Russian Federation-born in Australia, there were 7,560 males (37.0 per cent) and 12,870 females (63.0 per cent). The sex ratio was 59 males per 100 females.

**Ancestry**

In the 2016 Census, the top ancestry responses* that Russian Federation-born people reported were Russian (17,980), Jewish (998) and Ukrainian (955).

In the 2016 Census, Australians reported over 300 different ancestries. Of the total ancestry responses* 85,657 responses were towards Russian 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 Russian Federation-born people in Australia were Russian (16,327), English (2,964) and Greek (121).

Of the 17,386 Russian Federation-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 84.5 per cent spoke English very well or well, and 15.0 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.
**Religion**

At the 2016 Census the major religious affiliations amongst Russian Federation-born were Eastern Orthodox (6,697), Christian, nfd (1,929) and Judaism (1,703).

Of the Russian Federation-born, 35.3 per cent stated 'No Religion' which was higher than that of the total Australian population (29.6 per cent), and 5.2 per cent did not state a religion.

![Religion Pie Chart]

**Arrival**

Compared to 61.8 per cent of the total overseas-born population, 55.8 per cent of the Russian Federation-born people in Australia arrived in Australia prior to 2007.

Among the total Russian Federation-born in Australia at the 2016 Census, 20.0 per cent arrived between 2007 and 2011 and 21.2 per cent arrived between 2012 and 2016.

![Arrival in Australia Chart]

**Median Income**

At the time of the 2016 Census, the median Individual Weekly Income for the Russian Federation-born in Australia aged 15 years and over was $623, 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, 80.6 per cent of the Russian Federation-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 Russian Federation-born aged 15 years and over, 5.9 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 Russian Federation-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 64.9 per cent and the unemployment rate was 9.3 per cent.

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

Of the 11,114 Russian Federation-born who were employed, 60.1 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.

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