



The Bangladesh-born Community



Commonwealth Games

The People's Republic of Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) joined the Commonwealth in 1972 and has participated in four Commonwealth Games, winning several medals.

Historical Background

Bangladesh is part of the historic region of Bengal, the northeast portion of the Indian subcontinent. Over the centuries Bengal was governed by a succession of Indian empires, the Moghuls and then the British. When India and Pakistan became independent from Britain in 1947, the former East Bengal was renamed East Pakistan and was governed by West Pakistan. Inequalities between the two led to an outbreak of Bengali nationalism, and after a short war the independent state of Bangladesh, meaning "Bengali nation", was proclaimed on 26 March 1971. The new country became a parliamentary democracy under a 1972 constitution.

Music has always been an integral part of life in Bangladesh while its literature is dominated by writers such as Rabindranath Tagore, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 and is still a highly revered figure among all who speak Bengali.

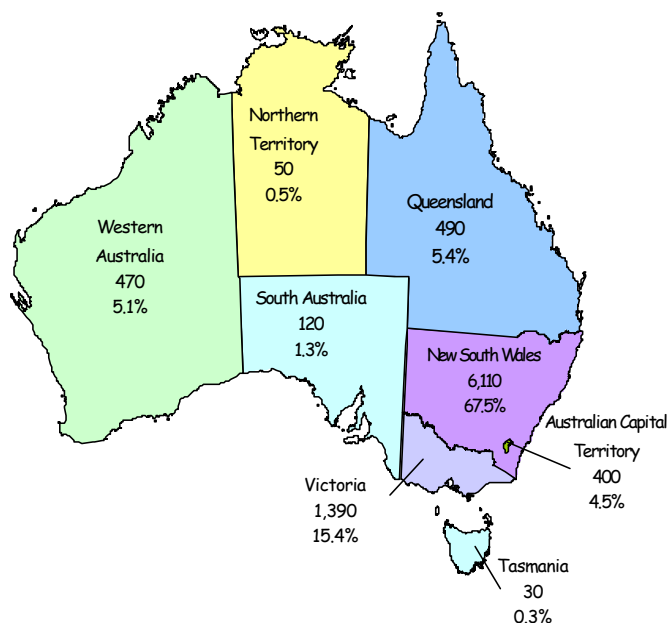
Settlement in Australia

The Bangladeshi community are relatively new migrants to Australia. The majority arrived under the Skilled Migration Category and then settled in the urban areas of NSW.

The Community Today

Geographic Distribution

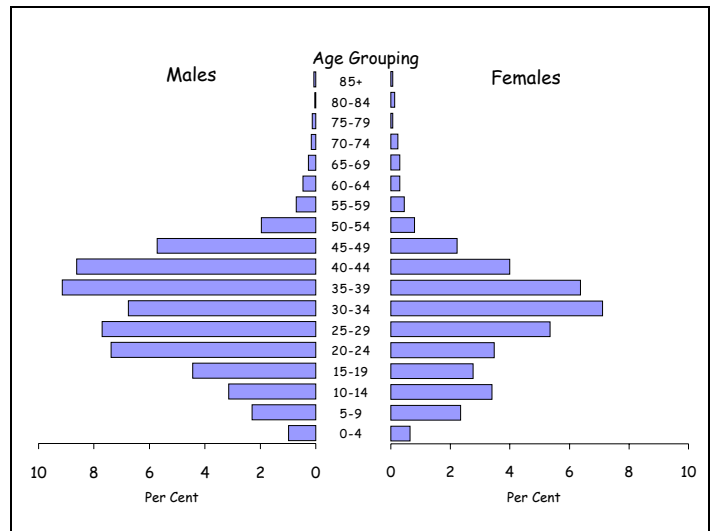
The latest Census in 2001 recorded 9,050 Bangladesh-born persons in Australia, an increase of 79 per cent from the 1996 Census. The 2001 distribution by State and Territory showed New South Wales had the largest number with 6,110 followed by Victoria (1,390), Queensland (490) and Western Australia (470).



Age and Sex

The median age of the Bangladesh-born in 2001 was 32.2 years compared with 46.0 years for all overseas-born and 35.6 years for the total Australian population. The age distribution showed 12.8 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 18.1 per cent were 15-24 years, 55.1 per cent were 25-44 years, 12.6 per cent were 45-64 years and 1.5 per cent were 65 and over.

Of the Bangladesh-born in Australia, there were 5,430 males (60.0 per cent) and 3,620 females (40.0 per cent). The sex ratio was 150.0 males per 100 females.



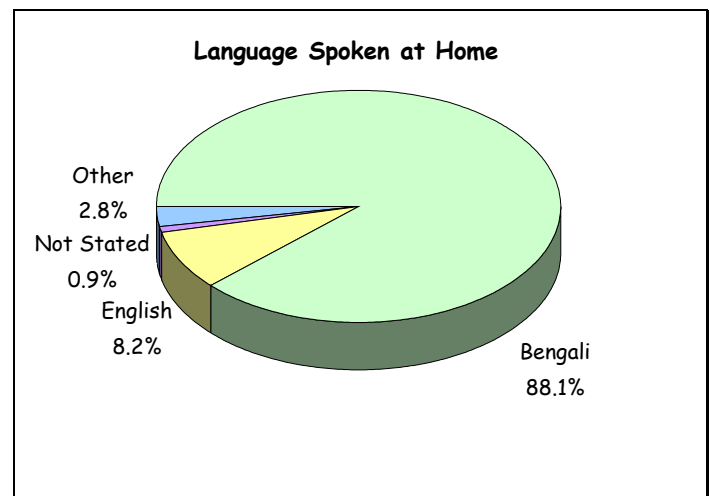
Citizenship

At the 2001 Census, 4,950 (54.6 per cent) Bangladesh-born persons reported Australian Citizenship. 3,850 (42.4 per cent) reported a non-Australian citizenship and the remainder did not state their citizenship.

Language

The main languages spoken at home by Bangladesh-born people in Australia were Bengali (88.1 per cent), English (8.2 per cent), and Not Stated (0.9 per cent).

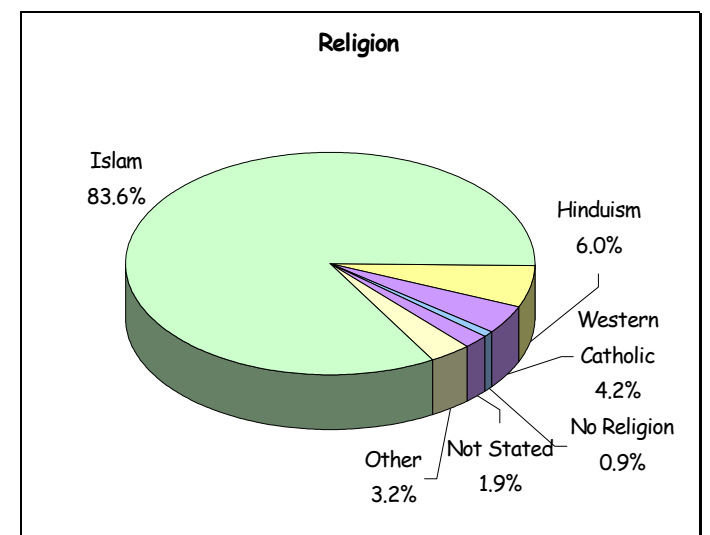
Of the 8,300 Bangladesh-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 92.5 per cent spoke English very well or well and 5.9 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.



Religion

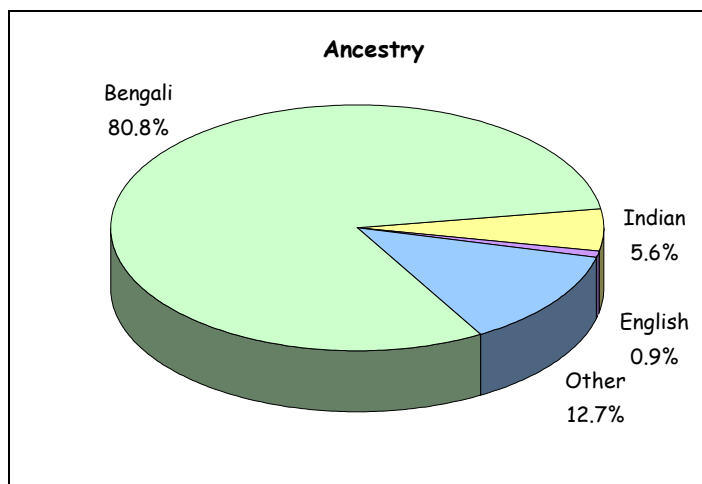
At the 2001 Census the major religions amongst Bangladesh-born were Islam (7,600 persons), Hinduism (550 persons) and Western Catholic (380 persons).

Of the Bangladesh-born, 0.9 per cent stated 'No Religion'. This was lower than that of the total Australian population (15.5 per cent)



Ancestry

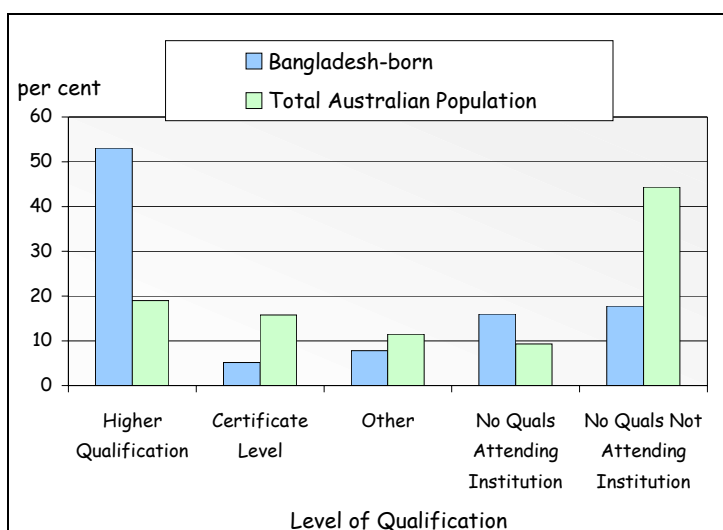
In the 2001 Census, the top three ancestries that Bangladesh-born persons reported were Bengali (7,320), Indian (510) and English (80).



Qualifications

In 2001, of Bangladesh-born people aged 15 years and over, 66.1 per cent held some form of educational or occupational qualification compared with 46.2 per cent for all Australians. Among the Bangladesh-born, 53.1 per cent had higher qualifications* and 5.2 per cent had Certificate level qualifications. Of the Bangladesh-born with no qualifications, 47.3 per cent were still attending an educational institution.

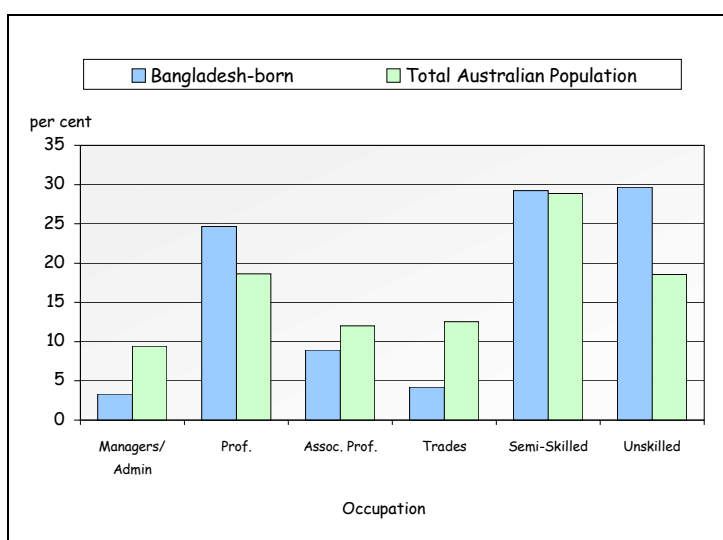
* Higher qualification includes Postgraduate Degree, Graduate Diploma & Graduate Certificate and Bachelor Degree, Advanced Diploma & Diploma Level.



Employment

Among Bangladesh-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 67.9 per cent and the unemployment rate was 13.2 per cent. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 63.0 and 7.4 per cent respectively.

Of the 4,620 Bangladesh-born who were employed, 41.1 per cent were employed in a Skilled occupation, 29.3 per cent in Semi-Skilled and 29.7 per cent in Unskilled. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 52.6, 28.9 and 18.6 per cent respectively.



The ABS has made minor random adjustments to the 2001 Census data for confidentiality reasons. This can affect some calculations (eg percentages) when numbers are very low. Therefore care should be taken when using these low numbers.

Jointly produced by Multicultural Affairs Branch and the Economic and Demographic Analysis Section

All data listed in this summary are from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing

Sources for the Historical Background available at http://www.immi.gov.au/statistics/stat_info/comm_summ/source.htm