

The Russian Federation-born Community

Historical Background

The first Russian state was established in the 9th century. Mongols ruled during the 13th and 14th century. Following the collapse of the Mongols, Moscow emerged as the pre-eminent state and it absorbed formally independent principalities. In the early 18th century Peter the Great transformed Russia into a partially Westernized empire, stretching from the Baltic to the Pacific. Following many years of wars, the first Russian Revolution took place in 1905 and the second in 1917. This led to the overthrow of the Romanov dynasty and to the Russian Civil War. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was established in 1922. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union there was a period of rapid and often chaotic political change in the late 1980s and 1990s, which produced a social climate very conducive to emigration.

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 Australian Census of 1901 recorded that there were 3,358 Russia-born living here.

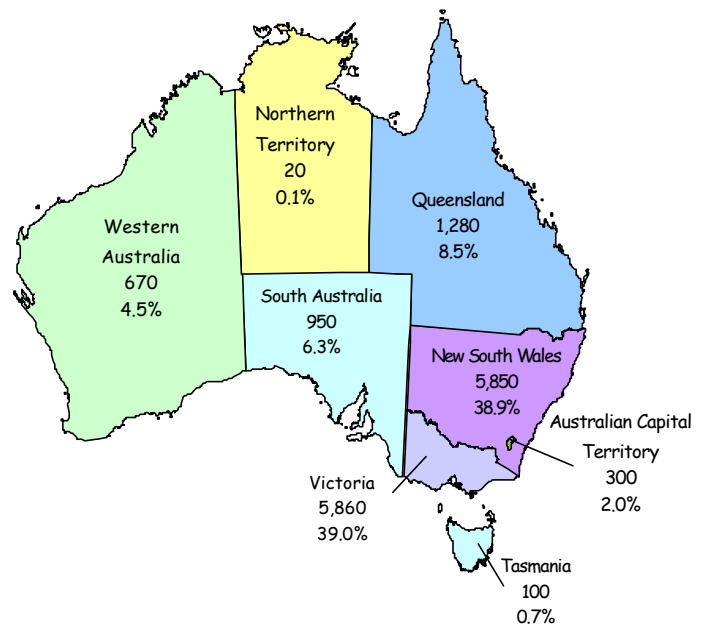
In the wake of the 1905 uprising against the Tsar, there was a wave of emigration of opponents of the Tsar. Those who came to Australia mostly came via England and settled in Melbourne or Sydney. A sizeable portion of this group was made up of Jews, who established Russian-Jewish organisations such as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

Another wave of refugees, this time opponents of the Bolshevik Revolution, came to Australia after 1917. These were the so-called 'White Russians' - not to be confused with people from Belarus, sometimes also known as 'White Russia'. Small numbers of 'White Russian' refugees continued to arrive in Australia from China right up to the early 1970s.

The Community Today

Geographic Distribution

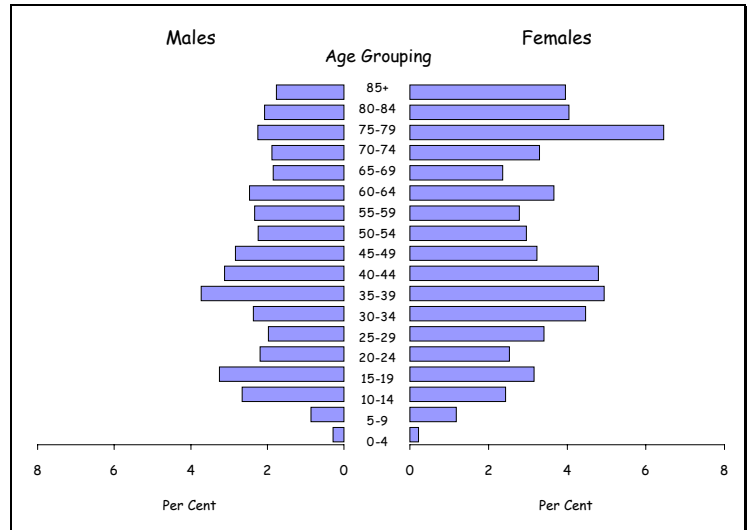
The latest Census in 2001 recorded 15,030 Russian Federation-born persons in Australia, an increase of 7 per cent from the 1996 Census. The 2001 distribution by State and Territory showed Victoria had the largest number with 5,860 followed by New South Wales (5,850), Queensland (1,280) and South Australia (950).



Age and Sex

The median age of the Russian Federation-born in 2001 was 47.0 years compared with 46.0 years for all overseas-born and 35.6 years for the total Australian population. The age distribution showed 7.6 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 11.1 per cent were 15-24 years, 28.8 per cent were 25-44 years, 22.5 per cent were 45-64 years and 29.9 per cent were 65 and over.

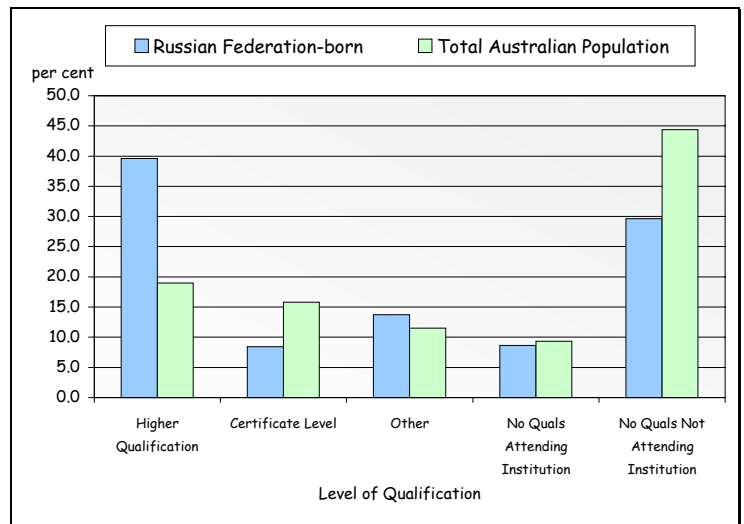
Of the Russian Federation-born in Australia, there were 6,030 males (40.1 per cent) and 9,000 females (59.9 per cent). The sex ratio was 67.0 males per 100 females.



Qualifications

In 2001, of Russian Federation-born people aged 15 years and over, 61.6 per cent held some form of educational or occupational qualification compared with 46.2 per cent for all Australians. Among the Russian Federation-born, 39.5 per cent had higher qualifications* and 8.4 per cent had Certificate level qualifications. Of the Russian Federation-born with no qualifications, 22.5 per cent were still attending an educational institution.

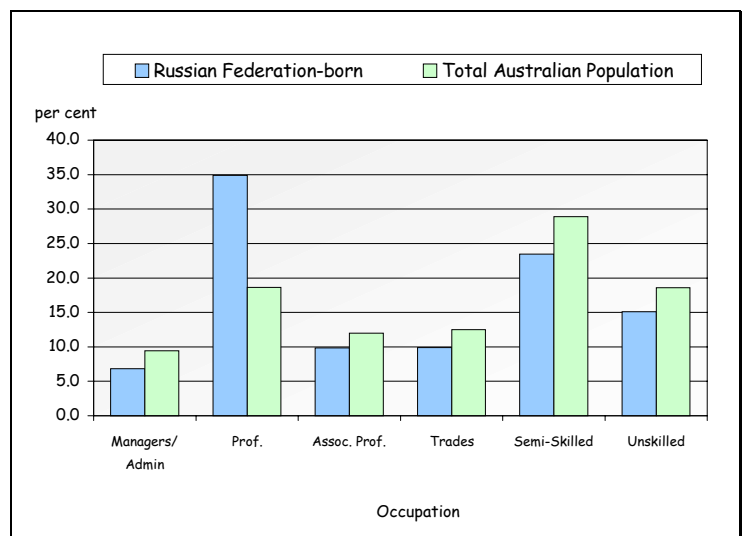
* Higher qualification includes Postgraduate Degree, Graduate Diploma & Graduate Certificate and Bachelor Degree Advanced Diploma & Diploma Level.



Employment

Among Russian Federation-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 45.8 per cent and the unemployment rate was 12.6 per cent. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 63.0 and 7.4 per cent respectively.

Of the 5,410 Russian Federation-born who were employed, 61.5 per cent were employed in a Skilled occupation, 23.5 per cent in Semi-Skilled and 15.1 per cent in Unskilled. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 52.6, 28.9 and 18.6 per cent respectively.



Citizenship

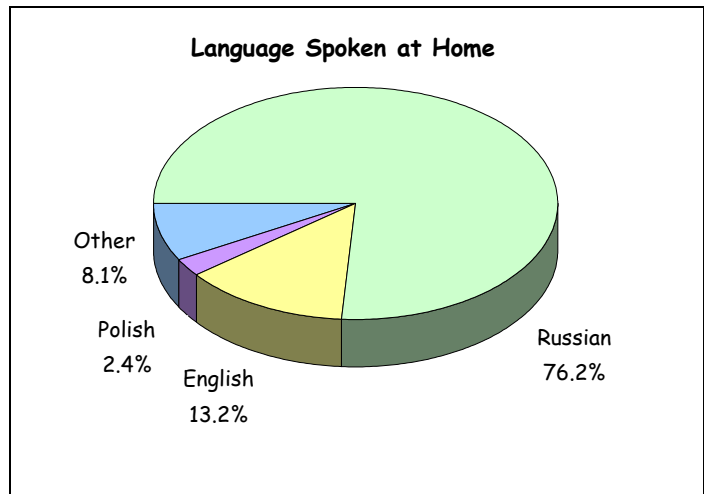
At the 2001 Census, the rate* of Australian Citizenship for the Russian Federation-born in Australia was 88.8 per cent. The rate for all overseas-born was 75.1 per cent.

* Includes adjustments for people not meeting the residential requirement for citizenship, temporary entrants to Australia and underenumeration at the Census.

Language

The main languages spoken at home by Russian Federation-born people in Australia were Russian (76.2 per cent), English (13.2 per cent), and Polish (2.4 per cent).

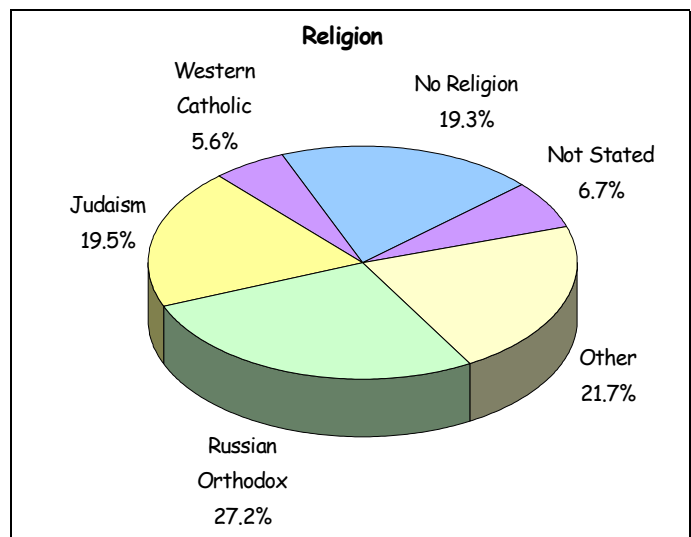
Of the 12,950 Russian Federation-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 73.3 per cent spoke English very well or well and 25.7 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.



Religion

At the 2001 Census the major religions amongst Russian Federation-born were Russian Orthodox (4,080 persons), Judaism (2,930 persons) and Western Catholic (850 persons).

Of the Russian Federation-born, 19.3 per cent stated 'No Religion'. This was higher than that of the total Australian population (15.5 per cent).



Ancestry

In the 2001 Census, the top three ancestries that Russian Federation-born persons reported were, Russian (10,660), Jewish (1,080) and Jewish-Russian (330).

