

Second generation Australians



Second generation Australians were born in Australia, with one or both of their parents born overseas. While some may see themselves as Australian only, others may also maintain an affiliation with their parent's former country. The census is one of the few Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) collections that can identify second generation Australians, and portray some of the diversity within the group.

In 1996, a major study of the socioeconomic outcomes for second generation Australians showed that '... the second generation as a group are doing or have done better than their peers who are at least third generation, in terms of educational attainment and occupation status. However, there is also considerable diversity in outcomes by origin'.¹ This article further explores the diversity among second generation Australians and compares their characteristics and socioeconomic status with regard to their different ancestries. It also compares second generation Australians with other generations.

In 2006, there were 3.6 million second generation Australians identified in the census. This group comprises 25% of Australians. In comparison, 18% of people in 1976 and 20% of people in 1996 were second generation.

Second generation Australians are younger than other generations

The characteristics of second generation Australians reflect the timing and composition of their parents' migration to Australia. Migration to Australia increased significantly in the 1950s and 1960s, so most second generation Australians were born after this period. Waves of migration result in migrants with similar cultural backgrounds arriving in Australia at the same time. As a consequence their children also tend to be born around the same time periods.

The median age of all second generation Australians was 28 years. Overall they were younger than both their first and third-plus

First generation Australians are those who were born overseas and migrated to Australia. As a group they are not homogenous but vary enormously in their circumstances. Factors such as their age on arrival, where they came from, the circumstances of their departure from their birthplace, and their length of time in Australia, all contribute to a wide variety of experiences for first generation Australians. In 2006 there were 4.4 million first generation Australians.

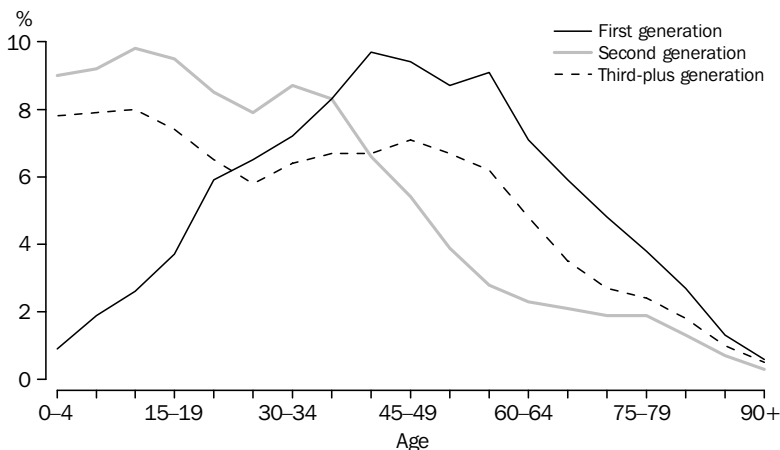
Second generation Australians are Australian-born with one or both parents born overseas. Their parents' experiences of migration and settlement in Australia are likely to impact on the perceptions and circumstances of second generation Australians. Likewise their own experiences of community and acceptance, affect their current situation. In 2006 there were 3.6 million second generation Australians.

Third-plus generation Australians are all other Australians—that is, those who were born in Australia of Australian-born parents. One or more of their grandparents may have been born overseas or they may have several generations of ancestors born in Australia. This group also includes the descendants of Indigenous Australians. In 2006 there were 10.1 million third-plus generation Australians.

In the 2006 Census 1.7 million Australians (9%) did not state either their birthplace or their parents' birthplace. Therefore their generation can not be identified from census data.

In this report, the term Australian refers to all people living in Australia for one year or more at the time of the 2006 Census.

Age distribution of first, second and third-plus generation Australians, 2006



generation counterparts (who had median ages of 46 and 35 years respectively). In 2006, 71% of the second generation were aged less than 40 years old (that is they were born after 1966).

Second generation Australians with only one parent born overseas were younger (median age 26) than their counterparts with both parents born overseas (median age 29).

The age distribution of second generation Australians echoes the waves of migration. For example in 2006, the proportion of second generation children peaked at age 10–14 years and matched a similar peak in the age of their migrant parents at 40–44 years.

As well, the age distribution of second generation Australians also reflects the peaks and troughs in the birth rates for all Australians. The peaks in age groups for second generation Australians are similar to the peaks in the third-plus generation (in particular for those aged 0–19 years and 20–39 years). However the second generation has no corresponding peak in the Baby Boomer age group (because there were not many migrants in the 1940s or earlier to parent a large second generation of Baby Boomers).

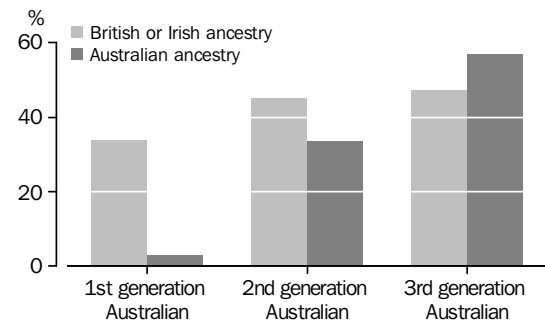
When the differing age profiles of the generations were taken into account, there was little difference in living arrangements between first, second or third-plus generation Australians. However, reflecting their younger age profile, a lower proportion of second generation Australians lived as couples than first or third-plus generation Australians.

Many second generation Australians had British/Irish heritage

The 2006 Census did not ask for the country of birth of an individual’s parents, only whether they were born in Australia or overseas. However it did ask individuals to report their ancestry. They were asked to report up to two ancestries. Ancestry is reported by the individual and ‘...reflects their own assessment of their cultural and ethnic background’.²

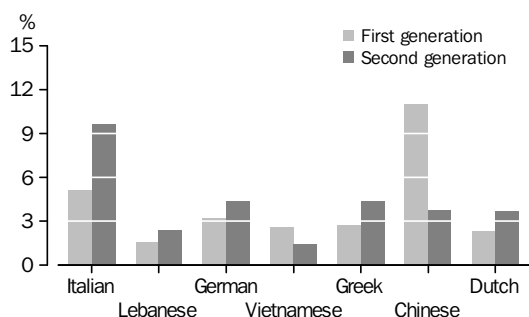
In 2006, 65% of second generation Australians reported either British/Irish ancestry or Australian ancestry or both. Specifically, 46% of second generation Australians reported their ancestry as British/Irish and 35% reported it as Australian. In comparison, 59% of the third-plus generation and 3% of the first generation reported having Australian ancestry.

Highest reported ancestries(a)



(a) The ancestry question in the census allows up to two responses, so an individual can be counted in more than one category.

Selected ancestries(a)(b) reported by first and second generation Australians



(a) The ancestry question in the census allows up to two responses, so an individual can be counted in more than one category.

(b) Ancestries which were most likely to be reported by second generation Australians (excluding British or Irish and Australian).

Of second generation Australians with both parents born overseas, 6% described their ancestry as Australian, compared with 57% of those with only one parent born overseas.

Of all the other ancestries reported by second generation Australians, Italian was the next most common (10%). Around 4% of second generation Australians reported each of German, Greek, Chinese and Dutch ancestries.

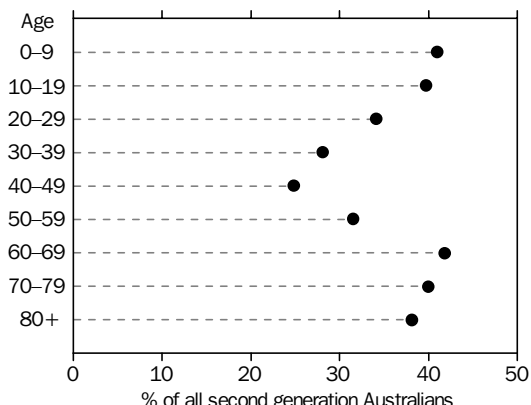
While for most ancestries, more people identify with that ancestry in the second generation than the first, the reverse is true when the main wave of immigration from a region occurred in the recent past. For example, more first generation Australians reported Chinese and Vietnamese ancestries than second generation Australians.

Ancestry responses vary by age

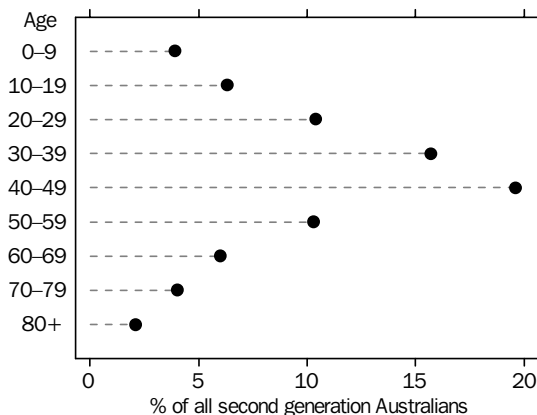
The ancestries of second generation Australians varied by age and reflected the patterns of migration of their first generation parents. While British/Irish and Australian were the most common ancestries for every age group, they were particularly prevalent in the older ages. The response of Australian ancestry was lowest for those aged 40–59 years, but there was resurgence in this response for 0–19 year olds in the second generation. The resurgence was not just among the younger members of that age group where it could reflect the aspirations of their migrant parents (who are likely to have filled in the census). Of second generation Australians aged 18–19, 39% reported Australian as one of their ancestries. The response of British/Irish ancestry followed a similar pattern except that there was no resurgence in the 0–19 age group.

Second generation Australians, selected ancestries

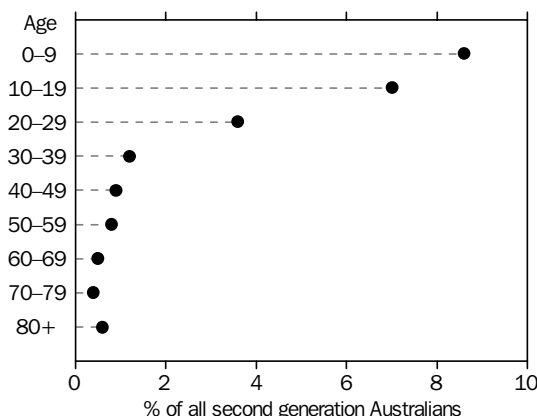
Australian ancestry



Italian ancestry



Chinese ancestry



Aside from British/Irish and Australian ancestry, the ancestries reported by second generation Australians comprised hundreds of diverse backgrounds. While they varied in significance by age, each individual ancestry generally only made up a very small proportion of all second generation Australians. Italian, Greek and German were more common ancestries for middle-age second generation Australians, peaking in the 40–49 years group for Italian (20%) and German (7%), and in 30–39 years group for Greek (9%). Many of the parents of these groups entered Australia in the late 1940s to 1960s, before their second generation children were born.

Chinese was a prominent ancestry for the younger age group, with 9% of 0–9 year old second generation Australians reported as having Chinese ancestry. Chinese migration to Australia peaked in the mid-1990s, and many second generation Australians reporting Chinese ancestry were born after this date.

Most second generation Australians speak English at home

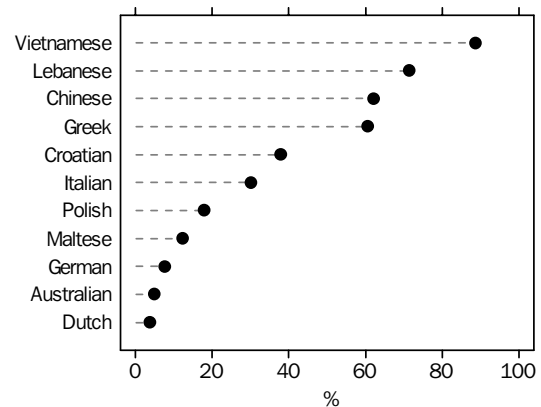
Language and religion can provide useful insights into the cultural connections of second generation Australians.

Of all second generation Australians, 20% spoke a language other than English at home, compared with 49% of first generation Australians and 2% of third-plus generation Australians. Second generation Australians were more likely to speak a language other than English at home if both parents were born overseas (38% compared with 5% if only one parent was born overseas).

The most common languages spoken at home by second generation Australians included Italian, Greek, Arabic, Vietnamese and Cantonese.

The propensity of second generation Australians to speak a language other than English in the home declined with age. While 28% of 0–19 year old second generation Australians spoke a non-English language at home, only 1% of those aged 80 years and over did. This is not surprising given that second generation children are more likely to live with their migrant parents, and converse with them in their native language.

Second Generation Australians who spoke a language other than English at home, selected ancestries(a)



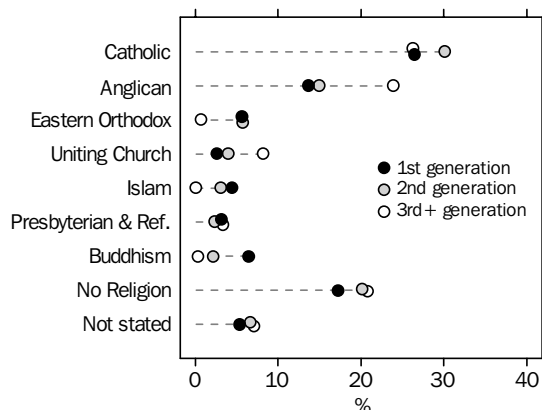
(a) Australian ancestry plus other top second generation ancestries (excluding those that mainly speak English).

The likelihood of speaking a language other than English at home varied significantly by ancestry group. Second generation Australians with Vietnamese (89%) and Lebanese (71%) ancestry were highly likely to speak a language other than English in the home, while people with Dutch (4%) and German (8%) ancestry were far less likely. This pattern can be partly explained by the varying ages of second generation Australians from different ancestries and the length of time that some ancestry groups have been in Australia. It may also reflect the higher importance attached to maintaining language within some ancestry groups.

Catholic affiliation strong among second generation Australians

Religious affiliation often reflects the ancestries of second generation Australians. It can be a tie between separate ancestry groups. For example, two ancestry groups which are both predominantly Catholic may have higher intermarriage rates. On the other hand, religion can separate communities within an ancestry group: an ancestry group where some are Christian and others Islamic could reflect two quite separate cultural groups.

Religious affiliations



Like the first and third-plus generations, second generation Australians were more likely to be Catholic (30%) than any other Christian denomination or religion. But some of the other common religious affiliations of second generation Australians varied from other Australians. For example, 6% of second generation Australians reported Eastern Orthodox as their religion compared with 1% of third-plus generation Australians.

The median age of second generation Australians varied considerably across religious affiliations. The median age of Catholics was 27 years compared with 30 years for Eastern Orthodox and 10 years for Islam. Second generation Australians with Anglican, Uniting Church, or Presbyterian and Reformed Church affiliations were all older (with median ages of 35, 39 and 46 years respectively). For more information on religion and age see 'Religion across the generations', p. 54–58.

Socioeconomic circumstances of second generation Australians

Because second generation Australians are so diverse, their socioeconomic circumstances vary greatly. The following analysis excludes people who reported British/Irish ancestry. The outcomes for this group are in most cases broadly equivalent to those reporting Australian ancestry which are, in turn, similar to third-plus generation Australians. Only Australians aged 20 years or more are included in the analysis.

Second generation Australians have higher education levels than third-plus generation Australians

Of second generation Australians aged 20 years or more in 2006, 21% held a Bachelor degree or higher, compared with 24% of first generation and 17% of third-plus generation Australians. Since levels of educational attainment can differ markedly depending on age, and the three generation groups have different age patterns, this could merely reflect the differences in their ages. However, in every age group, second generation Australians hold Bachelor degrees at a similar or lower level than first generation Australians but at a higher level than the third-plus generation.

Similar proportions of first and second generation Australians held no qualifications and did not complete Year 12—30% and 29% respectively, compared with 39% of third-plus generation Australians.

Second generation Australians' education levels by selected ancestry(a)

Ancestry	Aged 20–39	Aged 40 and over
	Bachelor degree or higher (%)	Did not complete Year 12(b) (%)
Italian	23.0	38.7
Greek	27.5	28.2
German	22.6	37.6
Chinese	48.4	27.4
Dutch	23.9	31.8
Lebanese	18.6	37.0
Maltese	17.4	49.3
Polish	32.0	30.8
Vietnamese	27.8	(c)
Croatian	25.5	29.7
Australian	22.7	44.1

(a) Australian ancestry plus top 10 second generation ancestries excluding British/Irish.
 (b) Or a non-school qualification.
 (c) The numbers of older Vietnamese second generation Australians were very small.

Second generation Australians with different ancestries have markedly different educational outcomes. Because both the levels of educational achievement vary with age across the Australian population, and the pattern of ancestries also varies with age, it is necessary to analyse educational attainment within age groups.

In 2006, 48% of second generation people reporting Chinese ancestry aged 20–39 held a Bachelor degree or higher qualification, compared with 17% of Maltese and 19% of Lebanese of the same age. A high proportion of second generation people aged 20–39 with Polish ancestry also held a Bachelor degree or above (32%). In comparison, of those in this age group who reported Australian ancestry, 23% held a Bachelor degree or above.

Of second generation people aged 40 and over who reported Australian ancestry, 44% had not completed Year 12 or a non-school qualification. In comparison, most other ancestry groups had lower proportions who had no school or non-school qualification. Only Maltese ancestry was higher, with 49% of those aged 40 and over reporting no school or non-school qualification.

Unemployment among second generation was lower than first generation Australians

Low unemployment rates can be a key indicator of economic success.³ In 2006, the unemployment rate (see Glossary) for second generation Australians aged 20 years and over was 4%, which was the same as that for third-plus generation Australians. In comparison, the unemployment rate for first generation Australians was 6%. It made little difference whether second generation Australians had one or both parents born overseas.

However, unemployment levels varied across ancestry groups. The unemployment rate for second generation Australians was low for Italian, Dutch and Maltese ancestry (all around 3% when age standardised) while it was high for Turkish, Vietnamese and Lebanese (11%, 11% and 7% respectively when age standardised). The latter three groups had very high proportions of second generation Australians who spoke a language other than English at home (78%, 89% and 71% respectively) compared with all second generation Australians (20%).

Second generation Australians more likely to be professionals

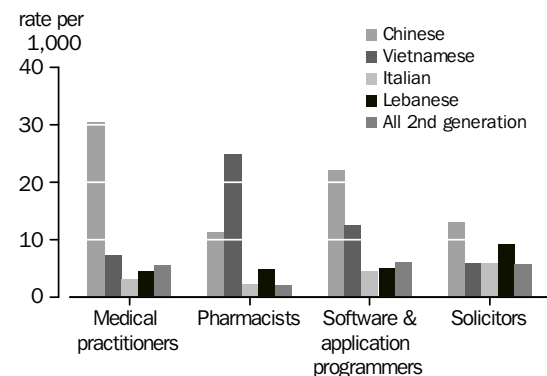
Second generation Australians aged 20 years and over had a similar occupational profile to first and third-plus generation Australians: in each group the most common occupation category was Professionals.

Some specific occupations that stood out as particularly popular with second generation Australians included Graphic and web designers and illustrators, Cabinetmakers, Solicitors, Hairdressers and most computing professions. Those least reported included Taxi drivers and Cleaning and laundry workers.

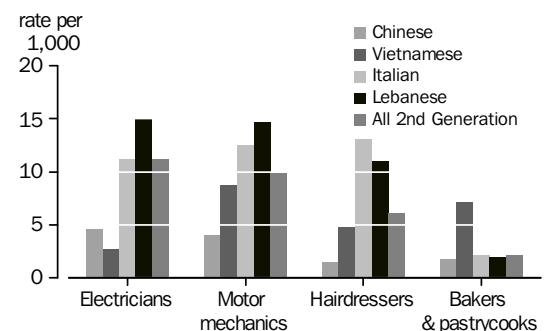
Certain ancestry groups stood out among second generation Australians for their differing occupation choices. Sometimes these differences may be related to the average age of those from particular ancestries.

Occupation and ancestry(a) of second generation Australians

Professional occupations



Trade occupations



(a) The ancestry question in the census allows up to two responses. Thus an individual can be counted in more than one category.

Second generation Australians with Chinese ancestry were more likely to hold a professional position (39%) than people from any other ancestry group. In particular second generation Australians with Chinese ancestry were more likely than most other Australians to be doctors, dentists and most other health professionals with the exception of nursing.

Second generation Australians with Vietnamese ancestry were more likely to be Sales workers (18%) than any other ancestry groups and also had a high proportion of Professionals (27%). Like those with Chinese ancestry, second generation Australians with Vietnamese ancestry were commonly found in health-related professions, particularly as Pharmacists. They also worked as Bakers and pastry cooks at a higher rate than any other ancestry.

Second generation Australians with Italian ancestry (who tended to be older than their Chinese and Vietnamese counterparts) tended to work in skilled trade occupations such as Motor mechanics and Hairdressers.

Despite having a younger age profile, second generation Australians reporting Lebanese ancestry had some similar occupational patterns to those with Italian ancestry. In particular they were commonly found in skilled trades such as Electricians, Motor mechanics and Hairdressers.

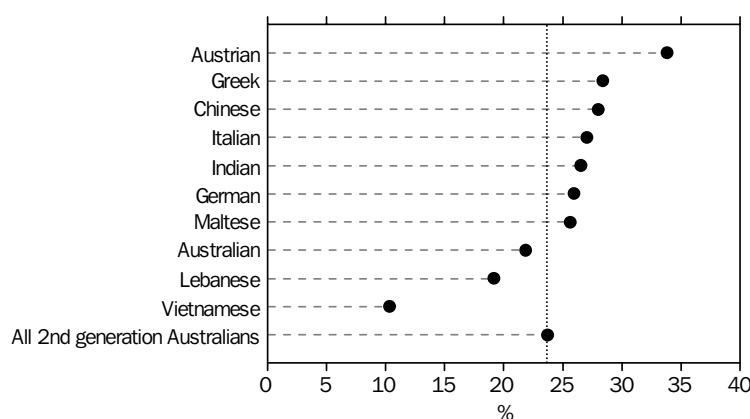
Second generation Australians have higher incomes than other Australians

Slightly more second generation Australians (aged 20 years and over) than those in the first or third-plus generations had *higher incomes* (i.e. gross personal incomes of \$1000 per week or more)—24%, compared with 20% and 22% respectively. This was true even when the different age structures of the three populations were taken into account.

Further, a higher proportion of second generation Australians with both parents born overseas had *higher incomes* (25%) than those with only one parent born overseas (22%).

Of the top 30 ancestries for second generation Australians, those with Austrian ancestry were the most likely have *higher incomes* (34%). While the older age profiles of some ancestry groups (such as Austrian, Greek and Italian) were likely to have resulted in those groups having higher *personal incomes* among second generation Australians, others such as Chinese, had a younger age profile but still reported a relatively high proportion with *higher incomes*. In contrast, only 22% of those with Australian ancestry and 10% of those with Vietnamese ancestry had *higher incomes*.

Second generation Australians aged 20 years and over, with higher incomes(a), selected ancestries(b)



(a) Weekly gross personal income of \$1000 or more.

(b) The ancestry question in the census allows up to two responses. Thus an individual can be counted in more than one category.

Endnotes

1 Khoo, S., McDonald P., Giorgas, D., and Birrell, B. 2002, *Second Generation Australians*, a joint publication of the Australian Centre for Population Research and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.

2 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2003, 'Ancestry of Australia's population' in *Australian Social Trends 2003*, cat. no. 4102.0, ABS, Canberra.

3 Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) 2007, *Migrant Labour Market Outcomes*, Fact sheet 14, DIAC, Canberra.