



Profile of the culturally and linguistically diverse population of Western Australia, 2016

Summary

In Western Australia (WA) in 2016,

- The resident population had grown by an average of 1.3% per year over the past decade, with the overseas-born population growing at around 2.7 times the rate of the Australian-born population.
- People born in main English-speaking countries made up around 15%¹ of the population, having arrived in two waves – one in 1966-1975, and another in 2006-2015. The majority were born in the UK/Ireland and New Zealand.
- People born in non-English-speaking countries made up nearly one-fifth² of the population, with the majority arriving within the last decade (2006-2015). The most common country of birth (COB) regions were the Asian regions and Sub-Saharan Africa.
- There were uneven gender distributions in WA residents from different COB regions. The most pronounced differences occurred in populations born in South-East Asia and North-East Asia where females outnumbered males, and Southern and Central Asia and the Middle East where males outnumbered females.
- The European-born populations have the oldest age distributions, with over half of the population aged 50 and above, while the remaining overseas-born populations and the Australian-born population have younger age distributions.
- Of the WA residents born in non-English-speaking countries, 72% preferred to speak a language other than English at home, compared to 7.5% of Australian-born residents and 3.4% of those born in main English-speaking countries.

Background

Western Australia is culturally diverse with nearly one third (32.2%) of residents born overseas (OMI 2017). While this is higher than the proportion of overseas-born residents in Australia as a whole (26%), it is consistent with the recent national trend of high growth in overseas-born populations, driven largely by migration from Asian countries particularly China and India (ABS 2018a, ABS 2018b).

Nationally, the overseas-born population has an older age distribution than the Australian-born population, with the European-born population having a much older age profile than the Asian-born population (ABS 2018b). This reflects both the ageing of post-war European migrants and the relative youth of the more recent wave of Asian-born migrants, including those who are in Australia as students.

Nearly 18% of the overseas-born population of Australia had arrived in the past 5 years (2012-2016) (ABS 2018a). While the majority of migrants have always chosen to settle in New South Wales and Victoria, the proportion choosing to live in WA has been increasing (ABS 2018b). Perth now has the third largest overseas-born population of all the Australian capital cities, with growth occurring not just in numbers but in the diversity of cultures and languages represented (ABS 2018b).

Aims

This paper aims to describe the key characteristics of WA's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations, examining their rates of growth, age and gender distributions, year of arrival in Australia and preferred language spoken at home by broad COB group and COB region. Details on the definitions of

¹ Excludes around 7% of the population whose country of birth could not be inadequately described

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CALD, broad COB groups and COB regions are provided in the overview, aims and methods paper for this series of CALD information papers (Koh et al. 2019).

Population growth over time

Over the ten years from 2007 to 2016, the resident population of WA grew by an average of 1.26% per year, with WA's overseas-born population growing at an average of 2.01% per year³ (ABS 2019). This exceeded the growth in the Australian-born population of 0.75% per year.

While the proportion of the WA population born in main English-speaking countries remained relatively steady over this time, the proportion of Western Australians born in Australia decreased, and the proportion born in non-English-speaking countries increased steadily (Figure 1).

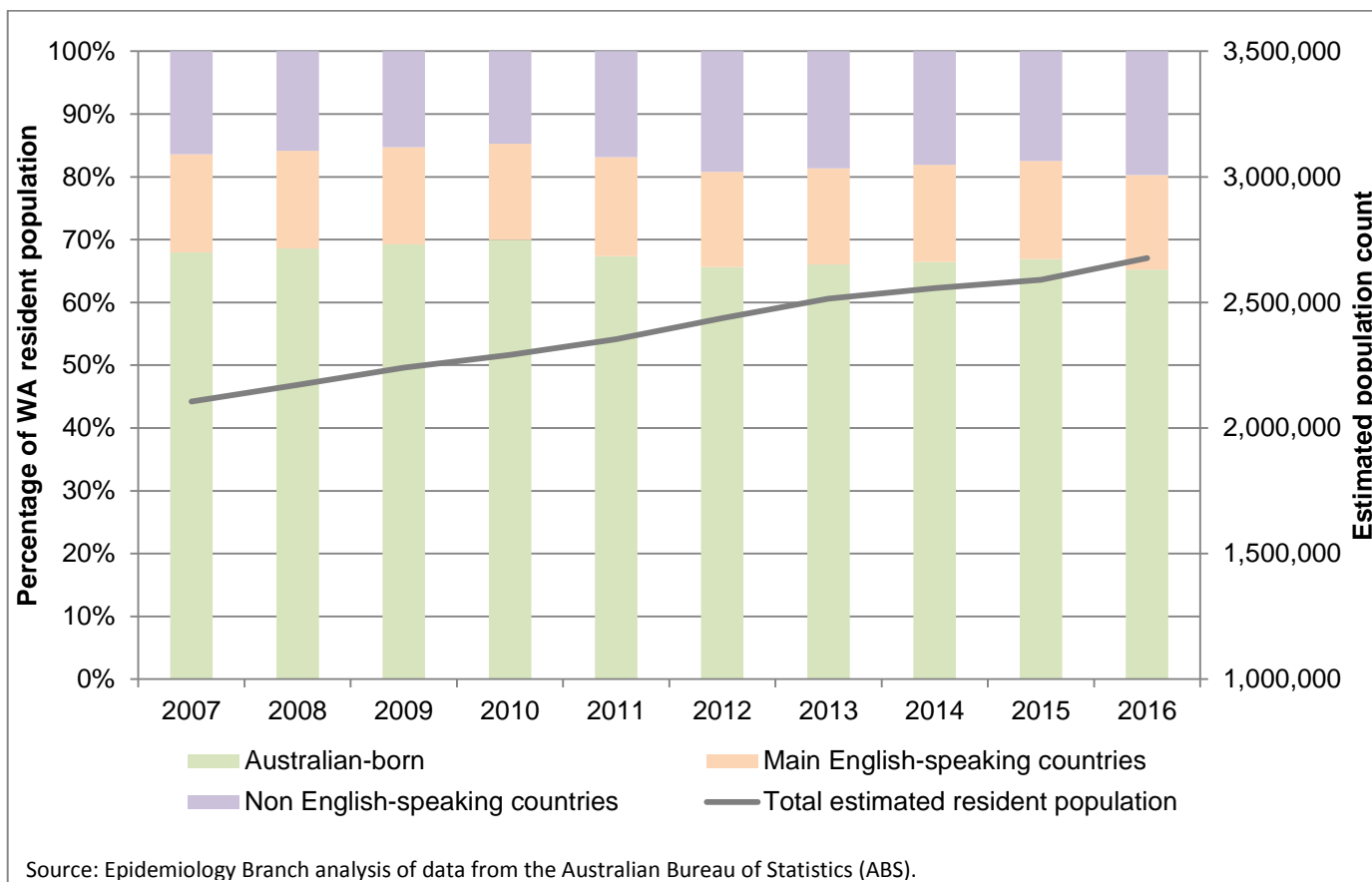


Figure 1. Total estimated population count and percentage of the population by broad COB groups, WA, 2007 to 2016⁴.

The growth in individuals born in non-English-speaking countries between 2007 and 2016 was mainly driven by the Asian-born population, those born in the Americas excluding North America, and the Middle East (Figure 2).

³ Excludes around 7% of the population whose country of birth could not be adequately described

⁴ The percentages in this graph exclude residents whose country of birth could not be adequately described (around 7% of the population).

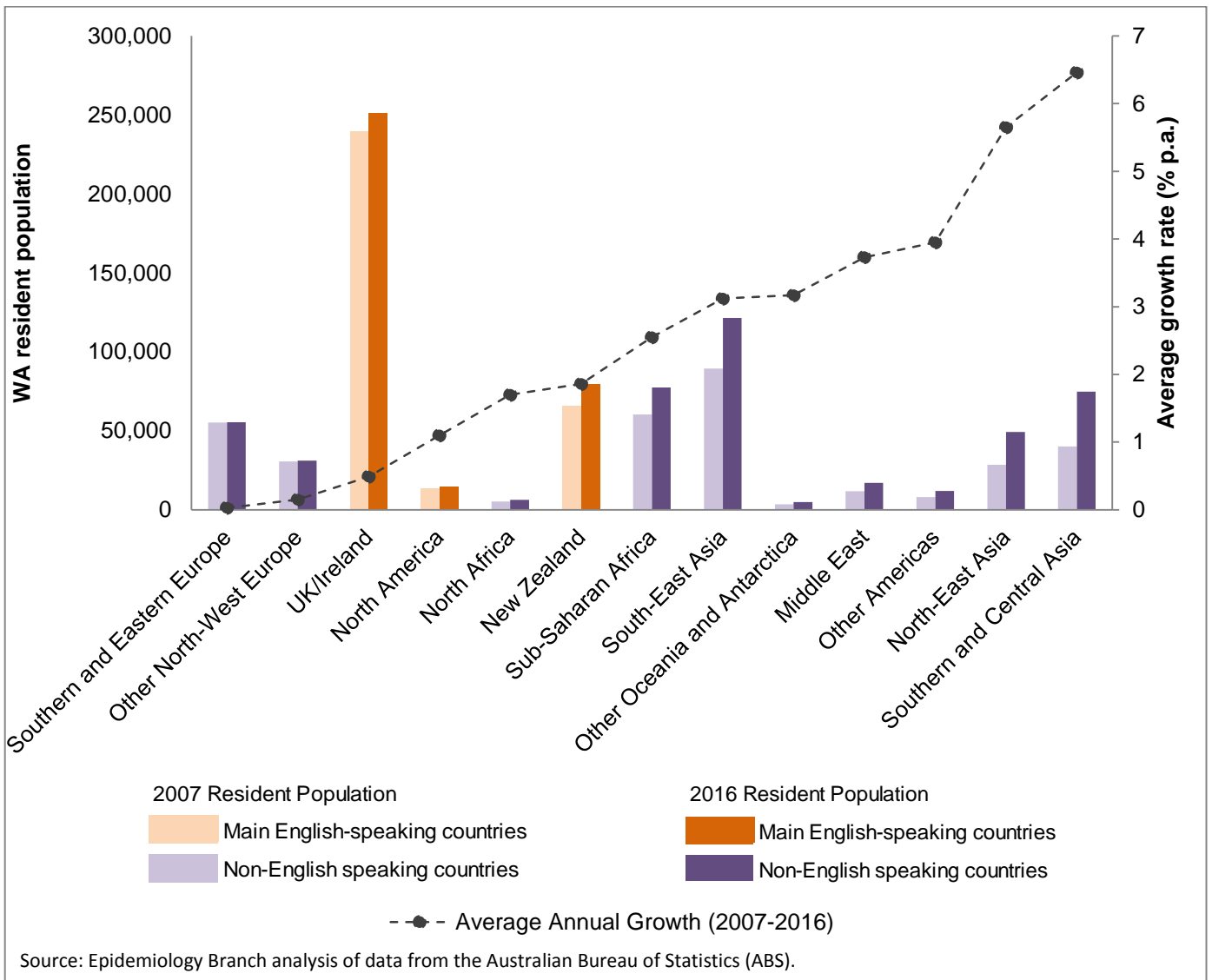


Figure 2. Resident population counts and average annual growth rate of overseas-born population groups by COB region, WA, 2007 to 2016⁵.

⁵ Excludes around 7% of the population whose country of birth could not be adequately described.

Gender and age distributions by COB region

While the Australian-born population showed a fairly even split between males and females, most of the CALD populations showed very different gender distributions (Figure 3). For those born in Southern and Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and New Zealand, there were more males than females. For those born in South-East Asia, North-East Asia, the Americas, Other North-West Europe, and Southern and Eastern Europe, there were more females than males.

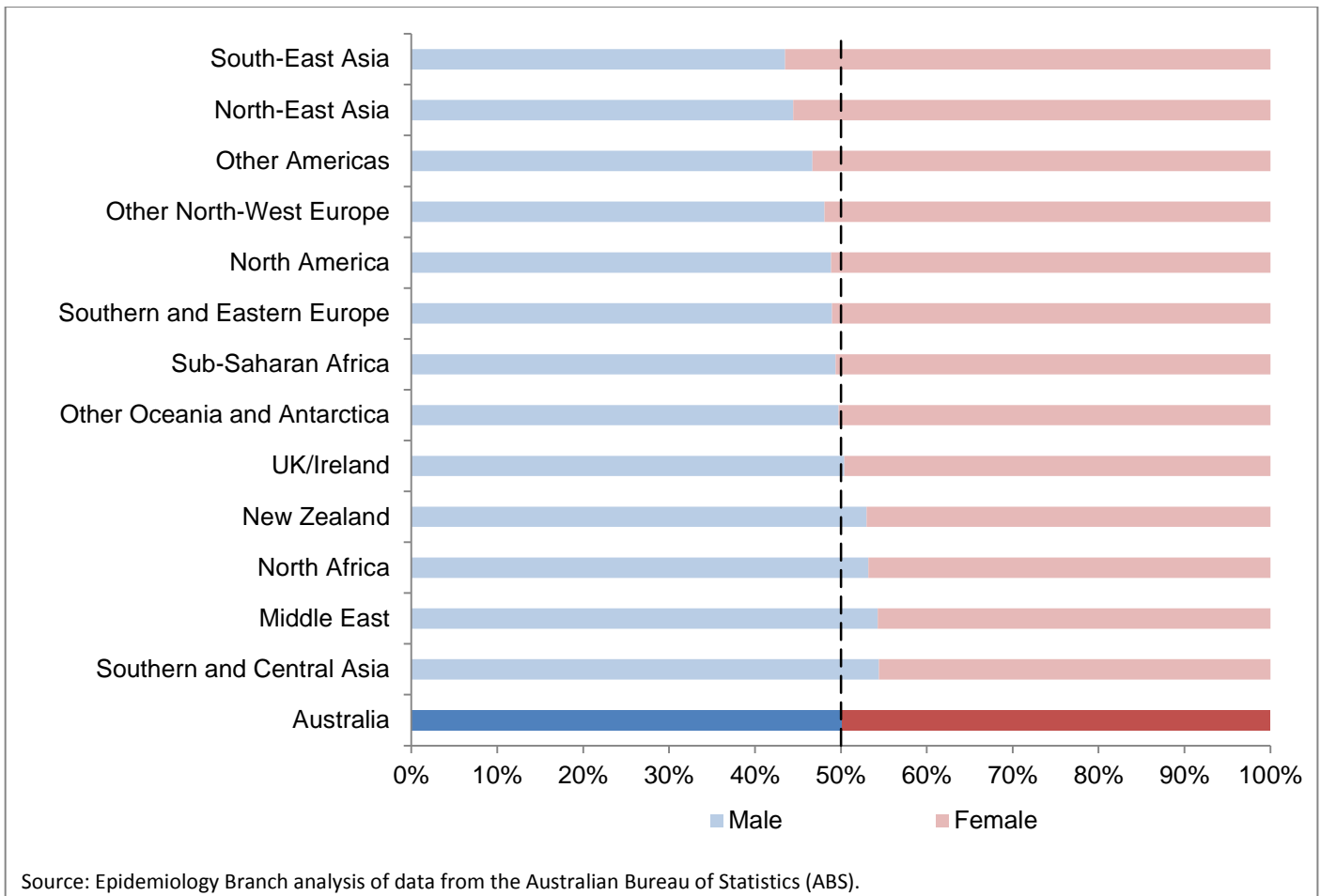


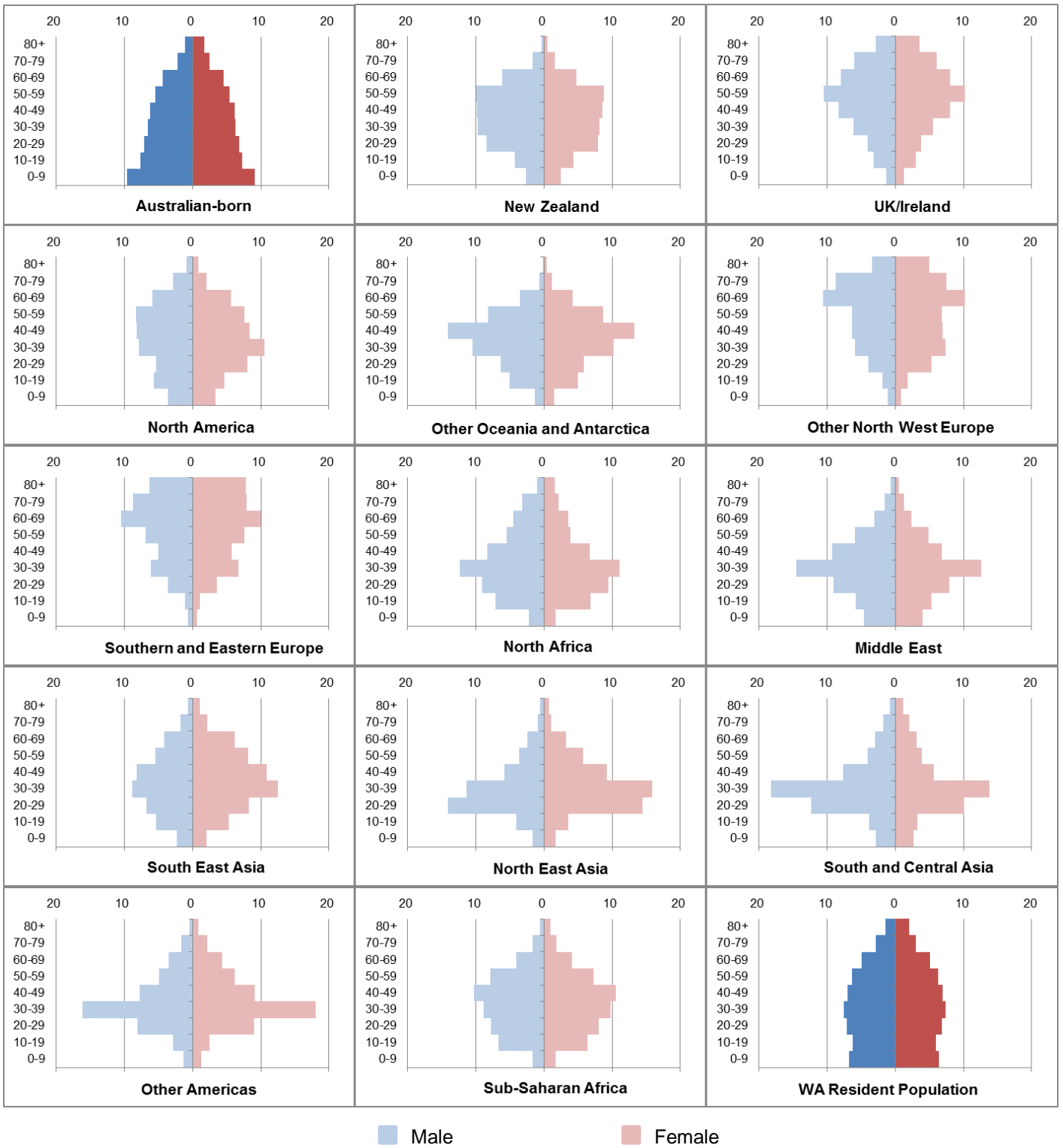
Figure 3. Percentage of the population by gender and COB region, WA, 2016.

The population pyramids in Figure 4 show the proportion of people in different age groups from each COB region. This allows us to compare the age distribution of each COB regional sub-population to those who are Australian-born, and with the age distribution of the WA population as a whole.

Around 62% of WA residents have at least one parent who was born overseas (OMI 2017). The overseas-born populations each have a higher proportion of people aged 20 or above compared to the Australian-born population. This reflects the high adult proportion of migrants who give birth to children in Australia.

The populations born in UK/Ireland, Other North West Europe, and Southern and Eastern Europe have relatively high proportions of people aged 50 and above. This reflects the ageing of migrants who arrived during the post-World War II migration schemes (ABS 2018b). The remaining overseas-born populations have younger age distributions, with high proportions aged between 20 and 49. More than 50% of the populations born in North-East Asia, South and Central Asia, and the Other Americas are aged between 20 and 39.

Together, these populations make up the overall age distribution of the WA resident population (Figure 4, bottom right).



Source: Epidemiology Branch analysis of data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Figure 4. Age and gender distributions (by percent of total population) by COB region and for the total WA estimated resident population (bottom right), 2016.

Year of arrival in Australia

As of 2016, the majority of the CALD population in WA consisted of migrants who arrived in the most recent decade, between 2006 and 2015 (Figure 5). Migration from main English-speaking countries was steady since 1946, with two peaks – one in 1966-1975, and another in 2006-2015. In contrast, migration from non-English-speaking countries grew faster in recent years and peaked in 2006-2015.

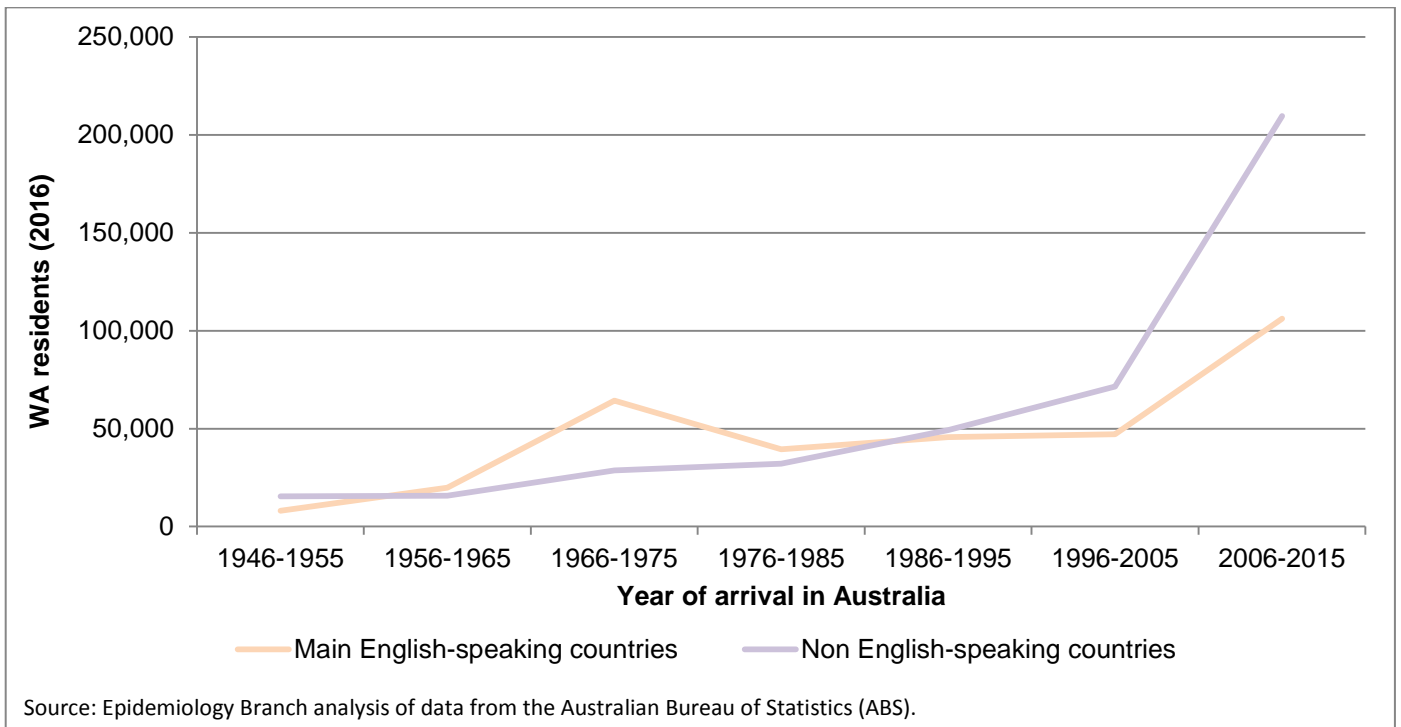


Figure 5. Number of WA residents from each broad COB group by year of arrival in Australia, WA, 2016.

By 2016, the migrant group that arrived in 1966-1975 from main English-speaking countries was mostly aged between 50 and 79 years, and the more recent group arriving in 2006-2015 was mostly aged between 20 and 39 years. Most of these migrants were born in the UK/Ireland (Figure 6).

In contrast, by 2016, the migrant group coming from non-English-speaking countries was mostly aged between 20 and 49 years, and were born in South-East Asia, Southern and Central Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa (Figure 6).

These trends are consistent with the relative youth of the populations born in non-English-speaking countries compared to those born in main English-speaking countries (Figure 4).

Broad COB Group	Country of Birth Region	Year of Arrival in Australia						
		1946-1955	1956-1965	1966-1975	1976-1985	1986-1995	1996-2005	2006-2015
Main English-speaking countries	New Zealand							
	UK/Ireland							
	North America							
Non English-speaking countries	Other Oceania and Antarctica							
	Other North-West Europe							
	Southern and Eastern Europe							
	North Africa							
	Middle East							
	South-East Asia							
	North-East Asia							
	Southern and Central Asia							
	Other Americas							
	Sub-Saharan Africa							

Source: Epidemiology Branch analysis of data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Figure 6. Heat map showing the relative numbers of WA residents by country of birth region and year of arrival in Australia. Darker shades of colour denote higher counts, while lighter shades denote lower counts.

Language Spoken at Home

Of WA residents born in non-English-speaking countries, 72% preferred to speak a language other than English at home, compared to 7.5% of Australian-born residents and 3.4% of those born in main English-speaking countries (Figure 7). Language groupings are based on the Australian Standard Classification of Languages 2016 (ABS 2016).

For those born in main English-speaking countries, the most common non-English languages spoken included Other Northern European Languages (spoken by 0.6% of UK/Ireland-born residents), and Southern Asian languages (spoken by 0.4% of UK/Ireland-born residents and 0.4% of New Zealand-born residents).

Of those born in non-English-speaking countries, those who did not speak English mostly spoke languages that were consistent with their COB region. The most common non-English language groups spoken were the Asian languages, followed by the Southern European languages (Figure 7). The majority of WA residents from the following COB regions spoke English at home: Other Oceania and Antarctica (59.1%), Sub-Saharan Africa (56.6%), and Other North-West Europe (51.3%).

People born in Asian regions, the Middle East, North Africa, Southern and Eastern Europe and Other Americas were more likely to speak a language other than English at home, compared to those born in Other North-West Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa and Other Oceania and Antarctica (Figure 8). This does not mean that they are unable to communicate in English, but that they may be more comfortable communicating in a different language.

Language Spoken at Home	Australian-born	Main English-speaking countries	Non-English speaking countries
English Language	92.5	96.6	28.0
Other Northern European Languages	0.3	0.5	5.7
Southern European Languages	1.4	0.4	8.4
Eastern European Languages	0.6	0.1	5.1
Southwest and Central Asian Languages	0.4	0.1	5.0
Southern Asian Languages	0.5	0.4	12.9
Southeast Asian Languages	0.9	0.1	14.6
Eastern Asian Languages	0.9	0.1	15.5
Australian Indigenous Languages	0.7	0.0	0.0
Other / Not Stated	1.7	1.7	4.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Epidemiology Branch analysis of data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census TableBuilder (ABS 2019).

Figure 7. Percentage of WA residents from each broad COB group who prefer to speak languages from each language group at home, WA, 2016.

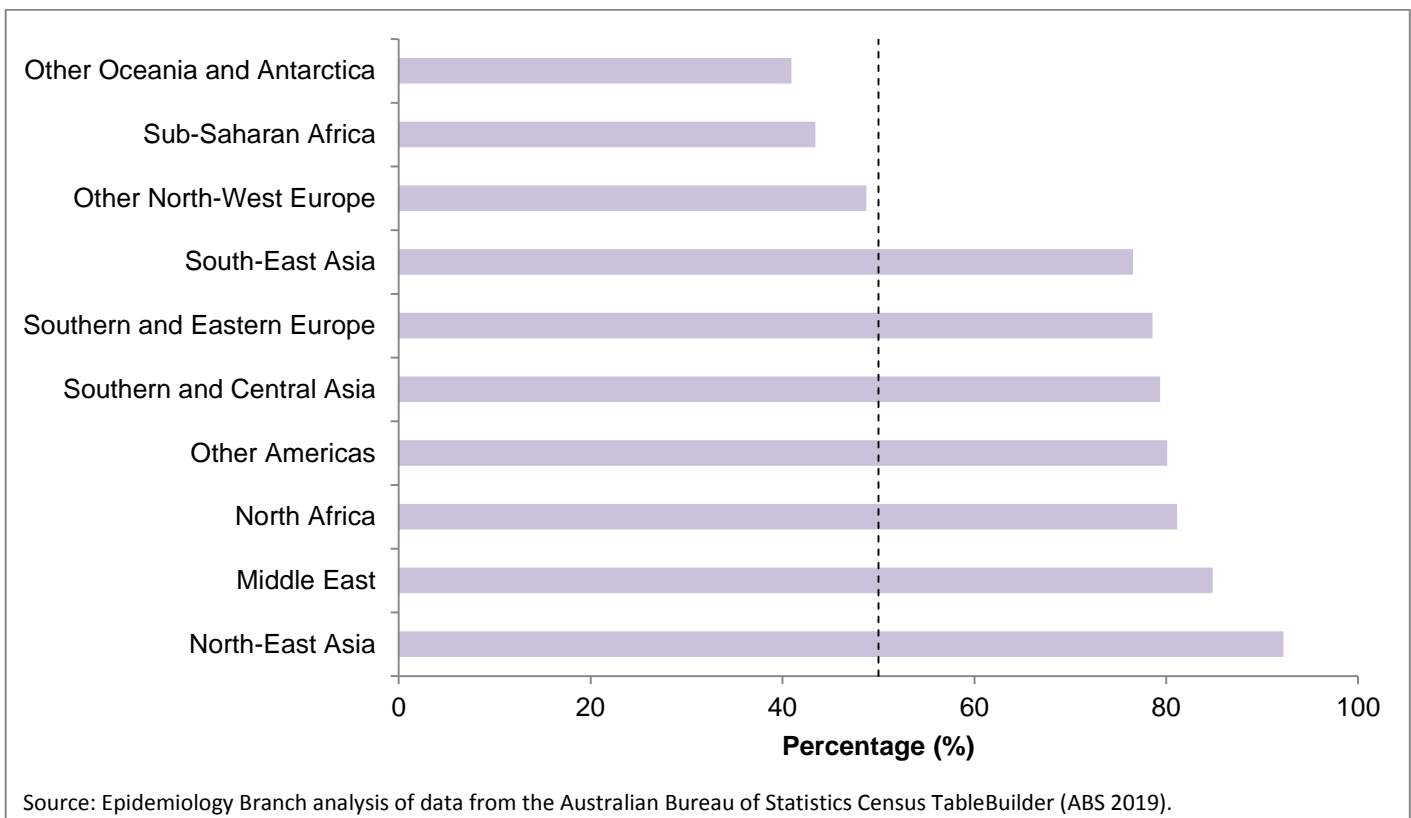


Figure 8. Percentage of WA residents from non-English-speaking COB regions that prefer to speak a language other than English at home, WA, 2016⁶.

⁶ Excludes around 0.4% of residents whose language spoken at home was not stated

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For more information

Please contact Epidemiology Branch, Public and Aboriginal Health Division, Western Australia Department of Health @ EPI@health.wa.gov.au

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