

Polish Cultural Profile

PLEASE NOTE: This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Polish people who live in the Eastern Region of Melbourne. This description may not apply to all people as individual experiences may vary. However this profile can be used as a guide to some of the issues that may concern your clients. This is an update of the profile in the Home and Personal Care Kit developed by the MIC in 2004.

Introduction:

Over two-thirds (69.6%) of Victoria's Poland-born community arrived in Australia prior to 1986; and 12.6% arrived between 1986 and 1990 (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

Migration:

- The Polish have a long history of migration to Australia. The first wave of Polish refugees arrived in Australia post World War II. 65,000 Polish displaced persons immigrated between 1947 and 1952. Many were employed on the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme in NSW.
- In the early 1980s a second wave of migrants arrived from Poland. This wave was known as the Solidarity wave. The Government declared martial law due to demands for political reform from an independent trade union movement called Solidarity. During this period 15,000 new Polish migrants arrived. These migrants were different from the previous wave as they were mostly young, educated and married.

Local Demographics: Poland-born residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total Poland-born Population	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Poland-born people aged 65 and over	People aged 65+ as a % of the Poland-born population
City of Boroondara	513	108	79	87	120	239	47%
City of Knox	624	197	44	39	69	121	19%
City of Manningham	278	65	63	37	40	111	40%
City of Maroondah	266	69	20	39	42	92	35%
City of Monash	906	227	116	116	100	271	30%
City of Whitehorse	465	117	66	70	72	173	37%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	261	72	38	40	31	90	34%
Eastern Region	3313	855	426	428	474	1097	33%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

- There were 18,070 Poland-born persons in Victoria at the last census, decreasing from 20,414 persons in 2001 due to the ageing population and lack of new arrivals (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- The median age of the Poland-born population is 57 years compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

Language: Polish-speaking people in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total number of people speaking Polish at home	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Polish speaking people aged 65 and over	Polish speaking people aged 65+ as a % of the Polish speaking population
City of Boroondara	391	80	27	39	68	120	31%
City of Knox	701	205	32	30	50	89	13%
City of Manningham	267	51	41	23	28	71	27%
City of Maroondah	302	64	24	28	28	68	23%
City of Monash	1046	242	105	104	87	236	23%
City of Whitehorse	454	94	60	41	54	115	25%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	240	56	26	31	17	57	24%
Eastern Region	3401	792	315	296	332	756	22%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

- The main languages spoken at home by the Poland-born population in Australia are: Polish (68.3%), English (23.8%), Yiddish (2.5%) and German (1.2%) (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- 10.6% of the Poland-born population in Victoria identified as speaking English 'not-well' and 1.3% spoke English 'not at all' (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- 33.0% of the Poland-born population in Victoria assessed themselves as speaking English 'very well' and 29.8% as 'well' (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- Many Polish elderly speak and understand English, but for some Polish-born elderly this may be limited.
- Some Polish people may not read or write in English and therefore may have trouble filling in forms.
- Some Polish-born elderly have lost their ability to speak English due to dementia.

Religion:

- The majority of the Polish-born population in Victoria is Roman Catholics.
- Other religions include Russian Orthodox, Lutheran, Adventists and Jewish.

Attitudes and Issues with Ageing:

- Traditionally the elderly have been respected for their wisdom, although these values have begun to decline through the influence of western European culture where youth is valued over age.
- Traditionally the role of the extended family in caring for the elderly is very important, however a large number of Polish-born people living in Victoria do not have extended family.
- There is often a moral obligation within the Polish community to support and care for the elderly within their own homes for as long as possible.
- Older Polish-born people may resist seeking assistance until a crisis point is reached, for fear of losing their independence.
- Polish grandparents often play an important role in caring for their grandchildren while their own children work.

Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- There is a stigma attached to mental illness and physical disabilities.
- Some Polish-born people may look for a physical cause of disease before considering a mental illness. If mental health issues do exist, home visits are preferred instead of clinic visits.

Customs / Values:

- Traditionally the Polish community is patriarchal in social structure.
- Traditionally the extended family is the norm in the Polish community, although many older Polish-born people living in Australia do not have an extended family.
- Polish-born people tend to display grief openly.
- Punctuality is important to Polish people, being late is seen as a sign of bad manners.
- Polish people are practically minded, they do not like participating in activities just for the sake of filling in time.

Communication Styles:

- Most Polish people are comfortable with directness, as opposed to the Anglo-Saxon rule of 'not asking personal questions'.
- Polish-born people have an expressive communication style, where emotions are displayed freely.
- Polish people may be quite formal with strangers, but touch as a form of caring is common among friends and family.
- Handshaking is considered polite in formal situations.
- Elders in the Polish community may have a high status, but may be reluctant to express their opinions.

Naming Conventions:

- It is important to use titles, particularly with older Polish-born people.
- Older Polish people do not like to be addressed as, 'You' or by their first name. They prefer to be addressed by their title and surname.

Health Beliefs and Practices:

- Traditionally doctors and other health professionals are well respected and given great authority by Polish people.
- Polish-born people may use alternative therapies alongside mainstream medical treatment. Herbal medicines may be used.
- Polish-born people generally express pain openly.
- Preventative health actions may not be widely adopted by the Polish community.

Greetings:

English Greeting	Polish	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	Cześć	CHESH
Good Morning	Dzień dobry	JEN DOBRY
Goodbye	Dowidzenia	DAW VEE-DZEN-YA
Yes	Tak	TAAK
No	nie	N-YEH
Thankyou	Dziękuję	GEN-COO- YEAH

Key Polish Festivals / Significant Dates:

- May Third Holiday (Commemorates the constitution of 1794) *3rd of May*
- Independence Day (1918 Poland gained independence) *11th of November*

* For other significant dates related to religious observances, refer to the Christian and Jewish religious profiles.

* To search for exact dates of key cultural and religious events, festivals and national days for this year, visit: <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/a-diverse-australia/calendar-australia/>

Local services useful for Polish-born residents in the Eastern Region

Settlement Services

Provide information, referral and casework for refugees and family migrants who arrived in the last five years.

Name	Address	Contact
Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne)	Suite 2, Town Hall Hub, 27 Bank Street, Box Hill, 3128	Ph: 9285 4888
New Hope Migrant and Refugee Centre	18 Chester Street Oakleigh, 3166	Ph: 9563 4130

Aged Care & Disability Support Services

Australian Polish Community Services Inc.

Address: Level 1, Unit 111, 44-56 Hampstead Road, Maidstone, 3012

Ph: 9689 9170

APCS is a community-based non-profit and charitable organisation, established to respond to the needs and aspirations and promoting the interests of the Polish Australian community and other linked communities within a multicultural Australia. In the Eastern Region the APCS provides Community Aged Care Packages, Community Visitors Scheme, Polish Older Persons Outreach Program, Community Partners Program, Supported Access (HACC) and Brokerage Services.

Migrant Information Centre Aged & Disability Services

Address: Suite 2, Town Hall Hub, 27 Bank Street, Box Hill, 3128

Ph: 9275 6905

The aged and disability team aims to increase access to aged care and disability services for CALD communities in the EMR through working with CALD communities to promote those services, provide information and referral and supporting organisations to provide culturally appropriate care. The team also receives funding for specific projects in this area.

Polish Retirement Home

Address: 3 Percival Street, Bayswater, 3153

Ph: 9720 3575

Polish Retirement Home is a modern, purpose built hostel for the elderly members of the Polish community.

The Polish Community Council of Victoria Inc.

Address: Level 2 43-51 Queen Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000

Ph: 9629 8277

The Polish Community Council of Victoria Inc. aims to enrich and enhance the well-being of the Polish-Australian community within the multicultural context of the Victorian community. In the Eastern Region the Polish Community Council of Victoria provides Community Aged Care Packages, Planned Activity Groups, friendly visiting and telephone monitoring. The following Planned Activity Groups are available:

Name	LGA	Address	Contact
Polish Community Council of Victoria Ph: 9629-8277	Whitehorse	Kerrimuir Neighbourhood House 57 Linda Avenue, Box Hill	Every Tuesday - 9.00 am to 3.30 pm
Polish Community Council of Victoria Ph: 9629-8277	Monash	'Don Bosco' Senior Citizens' Hall 40 Houghton Road, Oakleigh	Every Thursday - 9.00 am to 3.30 pm
Polish Community Council of Victoria Ph: 9629-8277	Knox	Dom Polski 'Syrena' 1325 Stud Rd, Rowville	Two Sundays per month - 12.00 pm to 4.00 pm

Senior Citizens Groups

For more information please contact local councils or the Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne) on 9275 6905.

Name of the Club	LGA	Venue	Time / Day
Polish Senior Citizens' Club	Knox	Polish House 'Syrena' 1325 Stud Rd Rowville, 3178	12:00pm – 3:00pm Thursday
Polish Senior Citizens' Club of Doncaster	Manningham	North Blackburn Community Room North Blackburn Shopping Centre North Blackburn, 3130	10:00am – 2:00pm Monday
Polish Senior Citizens' Club Mt Waverley	Monash	Mt Waverley Community Centre 47 Miller Crescent Mt Waverley, 3149	10:00am – 3:00pm 2nd & 4th Wednesday

References:

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Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), 2008, *Seniors from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*, Demography on the 50 years plus Victorian population from the 2006 census, Victoria, Australia.

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Residential Care Rights, 1997, *Cultural Care Kit: Resource Manual*, 2nd Edition, Residential Care Rights, Melbourne, Australia.

Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2008, *The Poland-Born Community in Victoria*, Fact Sheet No. A-49, viewed 20 April 2010, <<http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/images/stories/pdf/polandfs-24apr08.pdf>>.