

# The Ageing Experience of Australians from Migrant Backgrounds

June 2011







**Australian Government**  
**Department of Health and Ageing**

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## FOREWORD

Australia, as is widely known, has an ageing population and is also a country built on immigration. However, it is less well known that the immigrant population has an older age structure than the Australian-born population.

In 2006, almost one in five (19%) of the overseas-born population were aged 65 and over compared with 11% of the Australian-born population. Although a little dated, the only known projections of this group estimate that between 2011 and 2025 the number of people aged 65 and over from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will increase from around 650,000 to 950,000\*.

Behind the well-worn phrase of 'an ageing Australia' lies a wealth of complexity. Just as ageing is a unique journey for all of us as individuals, so too is the ageing experience of people from immigrant backgrounds. So far, research into these differences has been fairly limited.

This report is about digging a little deeper and quantifying the different ageing experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) older adults. Data from the 2006 census on their living arrangements and well-being were analysed to paint a more detailed picture of this large and significant group of older Australians. It should be noted that the 2006 census was the first to collect a range of data that can be used to examine productive ageing and the well-being of older Australians.

The results highlighted in this report are sometimes surprising, and certainly deserve wider recognition. CALD older adults differ in their social and economic well-being by country or region of origin and ancestry even after taking into account differences in demographic and other characteristics. This suggests that cultural factors and migration experiences may have some influence on their well-being and ageing experiences.

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June 2011

\* Gibson, D., P. Braun and C. Benham (2001). Projections of Older Immigrants: People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, 1996–2026, Australia, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra.



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\* The full report, together with separate tables for the 25 largest groups of CALD older adults showing indicators of well-being based on the 2006 census data, is available at [www.productiveageing.com.au](http://www.productiveageing.com.au)

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# The Ageing Experience of Australians from Migrant Backgrounds

## INTRODUCTION

The study aims to improve knowledge and understanding of the ageing experiences of older adults from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD). It does this by analysing data from the 2006 Population Census on their living arrangements and social and economic well-being. The research examines these issues mainly by the older adults' country of birth with the focus on the 25 largest birthplace groups of a CALD background<sup>1</sup>.

The study focuses on the following research questions:

1. Where do older adults of CALD background live in Australia and what are their living arrangements? How many live with their spouse, other family members, alone or in institutional care facilities? Does their residential location and living arrangements differ by country of birth and length of residence for those born overseas, ethnic origin and language spoken at home?

2. What do we know about the social and economic well-being of CALD older adults? Indicators used include their ability to speak English, level of education, income, need for assistance with daily self-care activities, and connectedness to family and community through paid work and volunteering.
3. How is the social and economic well-being of CALD older adults related to their living arrangements, access to family support and demographic characteristics such as age, sex, marital status, country of origin and ethnicity?

The research examines these issues by the country of birth, language spoken at home and ancestry of CALD older adults. The aim is to identify the birthplace, language and ethnic groups that are experiencing productive ageing and others that are doing less well. Some policy implications of the research findings are discussed in the conclusion.

<sup>1</sup> Indicators of CALD older adults' well-being based on the census data are also obtained for the 25 largest groups of CALD older adults identified by ancestry and language spoken at home. These are available as separate tables at [www.productiveageing.com.au](http://www.productiveageing.com.au)

## Conceptual approach

Discussion of population ageing is usually focused on the dependency of the aged and the costs of meeting this dependency. In the case of the 'ethnic aged', it has been suggested that they face the 'double jeopardy' of being aged and ethnic and the consequences of their ageing experiences can be doubly negative (Dowd and Bengston, 1978). On the other hand, the cultural dimensions of ethnicity can make for easier adjustment to the psycho-social and physical constraints of ageing. This study takes the latter approach in looking at ethnicity and the well-being of CALD older adults.

The study also takes a more positive approach to examining the social and economic well-being of the aged by basing it on the concept of the 'Third Age' as a new life cycle stage of productive ageing (see Laslett, 1989). 'The Third Age' refers to a new stage of life of personal fulfilment after retirement, before the Fourth Age of 'true dependency and decrepitude' (Laslett, 1989; Rowland, 2003). The current study uses Rowland's (2003) re-definition of Laslett's concept of the Third Age as a life cycle stage of independent living in old age, and the pursuit of an active retirement as envisioned by Laslett.

## Data and analytical approach

The study is based on data from the 2006 Population Census. The 2006 census was the first to collect a range of data that can be used to examine productive ageing and the well-being of the aged population. These include participation in volunteer work, provision of unpaid child care, care of an older family member or person with a disability or long-term illness, and need for assistance with core daily activities. These and other data from the census are used to derive measures of the social and economic well-being of CALD older adults. These measures include marital status, living arrangements, absence of core daily activity restrictions, English proficiency, level of education, income, workforce participation, volunteer work and care of family members.

Census data allow these measures of social and economic well-being to be examined for the total population of CALD older adults identified by country of birth, ancestry/ethnic origin and language spoken at home. Older adults are defined in this study as individuals aged 50 and over. The ageing experiences of CALD older adults are examined for men and women separately to identify gender differences.

The data analysis differentiates the older adults into three broad age groups reflecting the different stages of ageing: 50-64, 65-79 and 80 and over. The ageing experiences of CALD older adults are also compared with those of older adults born in Australia or English-speaking countries, who report having English/Irish/Scottish/Welsh or Australian ancestry and who speak English only at home to identify similarities and differences.

The study also identifies factors that are associated with well-being and productive ageing among CALD older adults, and examines whether the CALD older adults are different from older adults of English-speaking origin.

## Previous research on the ethnic aged in Australia

Previous studies have focused on the immigrant aged. The studies point to considerable diversity in the ethnic aged. They also show some similarities to the rest of the Australian population in their preference for remaining in their own home with the support of a spouse and/or family members.

In 1984, the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs conducted a major study of the ethnic aged based on a survey of over 1,100 persons aged 60 and over from six birthplace groups (China, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the former Yugoslavia). The study examined their experiences in relation to retirement, living arrangements, community care and use of services. It found differences within and between the birthplace groups in the pattern of these experiences (AIMA 1985; 1986).

This and other studies also showed that English proficiency was relatively low in some birthplace groups, even those who had lived in Australia for many years, and this had limited their social networks and participation (AIMA 1985; Rowland, 1991). The ethnic aged were also found to have lower incomes, a lower rate of home ownership, more restricted family networks and greater likelihood of feeling isolated (AIMA 1985; 1986; Rowland, 1991). However, a higher proportion were married and therefore have the support of a spouse.

In 2000, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs commissioned another study of the immigrant aged to update the earlier studies. Focusing on the social and the financial circumstances of the overseas-born population aged 55 and over, the study found an increase in their English proficiency over time, but lower work participation and higher unemployment rates among the ethnic aged compared to the Australian-born aged. The immigrant aged were also more likely to be dependent on government pensions (Benham et al., 2000).

The ethnic aged in these studies referred to immigrants from continental Europe as there was little immigration from non-European countries until after 1970 and therefore relatively few non-European immigrants in the older age groups. Immigrants from Western European countries such as Germany and the Netherlands were generally more proficient in English than those from Southern and Eastern European countries. Western Europeans also had similar social and economic characteristics to immigrants of English-speaking background and the Australian-born.

It has been ten years since the last major study of the immigrant aged. It is therefore timely to examine the circumstances of the ethnic aged that also includes older people of non-European background, since there are now significant numbers of them. With population ageing becoming an important issue in Australia, it is useful to assess the situation of CALD older adults in this broader context.

## DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

### CALD older adults by country of birth, language and ancestry

The 2006 census records over 1.1 million people aged 50 and over who are born in non-English-speaking or CALD countries. They comprise 19% of the total Australian population aged 50 and over. People born in CALD countries have an older age structure than people born in Australia. More than 42% of people born in CALD countries were aged 50 and over and 19% were aged 65 and over in 2006 compared with 26% and 11% respectively of the Australian-born population (see Table 1).

Table 1 also shows the 25 CALD birthplace groups with the largest numbers of people aged 50 and over. Eleven of the 25 countries listed are European countries that have been among the main sources of immigration in the 1950s and 1960s. Many migrants from that period are now reaching old age. Also on the list are nine Asian countries that have been among the main sources of immigration since the mid-1970s, three Middle Eastern countries, one South American country and one Pacific Island country.

Persons born in Italy form the largest birthplace group of CALD older adults with nearly 170,000 people aged 50 and over. Over 85% of Italy-born people in Australia are at least 50 years old and more than half are aged 65 or more. The other European birthplace groups also have a high proportion of older people because of a decline in immigration from these countries after 1970. Migrants from the non-European countries have a much lower proportion (20-30%) aged 50 and over, but still quite a large number. (In the tables, MES countries are the 'Main English-speaking' countries and include UK, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and the USA.)

**Table 1. Number of people and percentage aged 50 and over, by country of birth, 2006**

Country of birth	Aged 50-64	Aged 65-79	Aged 80+	Total 50+	% 50+	% 65+	% 80+
<b>CALD countries</b>	651,014	394,136	114,043	1,159,193	42.5%	18.6%	4.2%
<b>MES countries</b>	448,676	243,324	87,213	779,213	46.5%	19.7%	5.2%
<b>Australia</b>	2,159,484	1,118,047	442,535	3,720,066	26.4%	11.1%	3.1%
<b>Total</b>	3,508,469	1,917,041	727,325	6,152,835	31.0%	13.3%	3.7%
<b>25 largest CALD birthplace groups</b>							
<b>Italy</b>	66,700	80,545	22,732	169,977	85.4%	51.9%	11.4%
<b>Greece</b>	40,035	43,025	6,510	89,570	81.4%	45.0%	5.9%
<b>Germany</b>	41,200	26,763	7,782	75,745	71.1%	32.4%	7.3%
<b>Netherlands</b>	33,445	22,005	7,615	63,065	79.9%	37.5%	9.6%
<b>China</b>	30,105	19,433	5,910	55,448	26.8%	12.3%	2.9%
<b>Vietnam</b>	30,628	9,434	2,250	42,312	26.5%	7.3%	1.4%
<b>India</b>	22,719	11,615	3,380	37,714	25.6%	10.2%	2.3%
<b>Malta</b>	21,674	12,048	2,483	36,205	82.8%	33.3%	5.7%
<b>Poland</b>	14,744	9,549	9,700	33,993	65.1%	36.8%	18.6%
<b>Croatia</b>	17,031	14,326	1,932	33,289	65.3%	31.9%	3.8%
<b>Philippines</b>	25,597	4,613	1,335	31,545	26.2%	4.9%	1.1%
<b>Lebanon</b>	19,597	7,562	1,533	28,692	38.3%	12.2%	2.0%
<b>Malaysia</b>	21,665	5,835	979	28,479	30.8%	7.4%	1.1%
<b>Macedonia</b>	15,024	6,411	992	22,427	55.2%	18.2%	2.4%
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	14,268	5,404	1,765	21,437	34.4%	11.5%	2.8%
<b>Egypt</b>	11,356	7,214	2,208	20,778	62.0%	28.1%	6.6%
<b>Hong Kong</b>	14,235	3,104	570	17,909	24.9%	5.1%	0.8%
<b>Hungary</b>	6,132	7,275	3,021	16,428	81.5%	51.1%	15.0%
<b>Austria</b>	6,669	5,478	1,695	13,842	77.2%	40.0%	9.5%
<b>Fiji</b>	8,912	2,886	508	12,306	25.6%	7.1%	1.1%
<b>Cyprus</b>	6,753	4,280	1,075	12,108	65.9%	29.1%	5.8%
<b>Indonesia</b>	7,565	3,132	1,060	11,757	23.1%	8.2%	2.1%
<b>Singapore</b>	7,332	2,127	394	9,853	24.7%	6.3%	1.0%
<b>Chile</b>	7,287	2,041	371	9,699	41.6%	10.4%	1.6%
<b>Turkey</b>	6,560	2,410	496	9,466	31.0%	9.5%	1.6%

Source: 2006 census

## When CALD older adults arrived

Most of the immigrant aged from Europe arrived before 1970 and have lived in Australia for more than thirty years. Older migrants from Asia arrived more recently, with nearly half of all older adults from China arriving after 1990. The 1970s and 80s were the peak migration years for older migrants from Vietnam, Philippines, Chile and Turkey (see Table 2 in full report).

“People born in CALD countries have an older age structure than people born in Australia.”

## Language groups of older CALD adults

Table 2 shows the 25 largest language groups (other than English) of older adults aged 50 and over. There is a fair amount of overlap in the list of countries of origin with those in Table 1, but there are also differences. People speaking Italian and Greek are the two largest groups of CALD older adults. They are followed by two more recent migrant groups, those speaking Cantonese and

Arabic. Older people speaking Cantonese and Mandarin come from many other Asian countries besides China and Hong Kong; hence the numbers exceed the number of older people born in those two places. Many older migrants from other European countries, such as the Dutch and Germans, no longer speak their native language at home and so the number of Dutch and German speakers is smaller than the number of older people born in the Netherlands and Germany.

**Table 2. Persons aged 50 and over by language spoken at home, 200**

Language	Aged 50-64	Aged 65-79	Aged 80+	Total 50+	% 50+	% 65+	% 80+
<b>Other than English*</b>	514,180	325,458	93,039	932,677	30.2	13.5	3.0
<b>English</b>	2,819,195	1,477,626	563,754	4,860,575	31.2	13.1	3.6
<b>25 largest language groups (other than English)</b>							
<b>Italian</b>	67,347	84,341	23,733	175,421	55.4	34.1	7.5
<b>Greek</b>	48,162	49,232	8,240	105,634	41.9	22.8	3.3
<b>Cantonese</b>	45,194	17,958	5,092	68,244	27.9	9.4	2.1
<b>Arabic</b>	30,542	11,893	2,317	44,752	18.4	5.8	1.0
<b>German</b>	15,616	19,569	7,097	42,282	55.9	35.3	9.4
<b>Mandarin</b>	25,266	9,502	1,565	36,333	16.5	5.0	0.7
<b>Vietnamese</b>	23,992	7,691	1,997	33,680	17.3	5.0	1.0
<b>Spanish</b>	21,339	9,056	1,719	32,114	32.8	11.0	1.8
<b>Croatian</b>	15,263	12,823	1,718	29,804	46.8	22.9	2.7
<b>Polish</b>	14,994	6,386	6,988	28,368	53.1	25.1	13.1
<b>Macedonian</b>	15,961	7,985	1,299	25,245	37.2	13.7	1.9
<b>Maltese</b>	13,224	9,194	2,076	24,494	67.1	30.9	5.7
<b>Dutch</b>	8,788	10,183	4,971	23,942	66.2	41.9	13.7
<b>Serbian</b>	10,994	5,473	902	17,369	33.1	12.1	1.7
<b>French</b>	9,296	4,782	1,733	15,811	36.6	15.1	4.0
<b>Russian</b>	6,439	5,178	2,515	14,132	38.7	21.1	6.9
<b>Hungarian</b>	5,325	5,667	2,577	13,569	62.9	38.2	12.0
<b>Tagalog</b>	10,044	1,697	565	12,306	23.1	4.2	1.1
<b>Filipino</b>	8,784	1,909	517	11,210	28.7	6.2	1.3
<b>Turkish</b>	7,497	2,499	269	10,265	19.1	51.0	0.5
<b>Hindi</b>	7,176	2,226	346	9,748	13.9	3.7	0.5
<b>Korean</b>	5,627	2,046	337	8,010	14.7	4.4	0.6
<b>Portuguese</b>	5,264	2,257	395	7,916	30.7	10.3	1.5
<b>Tamil</b>	5,364	1,752	485	7,601	23.2	6.8	1.5
<b>Ukrainian</b>	2,208	1,205	2,542	5,955	66.0	41.6	28.2

\*Excluding Australian aboriginal languages

Source: 2006 census

## Older CALD adults by ancestry

The 25 largest CALD groups of older people identified by ancestry are shown in Table 3. People can identify up to two different ancestries in the 2006 census and these numbers include people who identify that ancestry as one of

two ancestries. People of German ancestry are the largest group of older adults of CALD background, followed by people of Italian ancestry. There are more than 25,000 people of Italian or German ancestry who are aged 80 or older.

**Table 3. The 25 largest ethnic groups of CALD background and percentage aged 50 and over, 2006**

Ancestry	Aged 50-64	Aged 65-79	Aged 80+	Total 50+	% 50+	% 65+	% 80+
German	167,758	87,344	27,542	282,644	34.8	14.2	3.4
Italian	119,798	99,358	26,748	245,904	28.8	14.8	3.1
Chinese	97,772	36,254	9,141	143,167	21.4	6.8	1.4
Greek	56,864	50,525	8,646	116,035	31.8	16.2	2.4
Dutch	51,469	26,378	9,181	87,028	28.1	11.5	3.0
Polish	44,312	11,512	9,892	65,716	40.1	13.1	6.0
Maltese	28,147	13,931	2,933	45,011	29.3	11.0	1.9
Croatian	19,799	15,417	2,034	37,250	31.6	14.8	1.7
Indian	25,836	8,615	1,805	36,256	15.4	4.4	0.8
French	21,820	8,765	3,102	33,687	34.3	12.1	3.2
Lebanese	21,710	8,658	1,879	32,247	17.7	5.8	1.0
Filipino	24,522	4,349	1,228	30,099	18.8	3.5	0.8
Serbian	18,330	9,041	1,911	29,282	30.7	11.5	2.0
Vietnamese	20,880	6,273	1,572	28,725	16.5	4.5	0.9
Macedonian	16,641	7,952	1,289	25,882	30.8	11.0	1.5
Hungarian	12,982	9,156	3,521	25,659	37.9	18.7	5.2
Spanish	16,282	7,431	1,550	25,263	30.0	10.7	1.8
Russian	14,074	6,607	3,444	24,125	36.0	15.0	5.1
Danish	12,450	6,404	2,137	20,991	41.6	16.9	4.2
Austrian	8,136	6,248	1,918	16,302	39.3	19.7	4.6
Ukrainian	9,792	2,593	3,498	15,883	42.3	16.2	9.3
Sinhalese	11,171	3,601	1,061	15,833	21.4	6.3	1.4
Portuguese	7,772	3,387	736	11,895	28.9	10.0	1.8
Swedish	6,655	3,317	1,189	11,161	36.7	14.8	3.9
Maori	8,815	1,554	163	10,532	11.3	1.8	0.2

Note: Numbers are based on first and second ancestry responses

Source: 2006 census

## Age and sex

Because of the higher mortality of males, the number of women usually exceeds the number of men in the older ages. In the case of CALD older adults in Australia, the ratio of males to females in the older ages is also affected by the sex distribution of past cohorts of immigrants. Consequently, the excess of females over

males in the older ages due to women living longer is reduced or not observed in some birthplace and ethnic groups when there is a predominance of male immigrants from some countries. Conversely, a predominance of female migrants from some countries can also result in exceptionally low sex ratios in the older ages in some birthplace and ethnic groups.

The sex ratio (the number of men per 100 women) is higher among the overseas-born population aged 50 and over than the Australian-born population of the same age (see Table 4). This is due to a higher proportion of males than females in past migration cohorts to Australia. The ratio of men to women is relatively high among the immigrant aged from Southern and Eastern European countries and also from the Middle Eastern countries. Migrants

from these countries have included more men than women. In contrast the sex ratio is particularly low among older migrants from the Philippines, due to the large number of women who migrate as spouses of Australian residents. Females have outnumbered males by about 2 to 1 in the Philippines-born population in Australia since 1981.

**Table 4. Sex ratio (males per 100 females) of the population aged 50 and over by birthplace**

Birthplace	Age group			
	Aged 50-64	Aged 65-79	Aged 80+	Aged 50+
<b>CALD countries</b>	97	102	70	96
<b>MES countries</b>	106	102	68	100
<b>Australia</b>	97	86	55	87
<b>25 largest CALD birthplace groups</b>				
<b>Italy</b>	109	110	84	106
<b>Greece</b>	89	104	87	96
<b>Germany</b>	101	105	38	93
<b>Netherlands</b>	110	115	73	106
<b>China</b>	95	86	65	88
<b>Viet Nam</b>	92	77	69	87
<b>India</b>	112	91	66	100
<b>Malta</b>	109	118	70	106
<b>Poland</b>	94	66	84	83
<b>Croatia</b>	101	128	64	109
<b>Philippines</b>	38	37	37	38
<b>Lebanon</b>	122	115	81	118
<b>Malaysia</b>	78	90	58	80
<b>Macedonia</b>	116	101	74	109
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	115	86	61	101
<b>Egypt</b>	111	103	70	103
<b>Hong Kong</b>	86	111	62	89
<b>Hungary</b>	100	138	79	110
<b>Austria</b>	115	152	51	116
<b>Fiji</b>	89	85	60	87
<b>Cyprus</b>	95	100	124	99
<b>Indonesia</b>	83	99	80	87
<b>Singapore</b>	76	85	54	77
<b>Chile</b>	93	88	42	89
<b>Turkey</b>	107	126	69	109

\*Excluding year of arrival not stated

Source: 2006 census

## Marital status

Marital status can be an important indicator of family resources (Rowland, 2003) and social well-being. Older people who are married have the family support and companionship of a spouse in contrast to those who are widowed, never married, divorced or separated. On the other hand, some married older persons are also the primary carers of their spouse and marital status can also affect the living arrangements of the aged.

Older Australians born in non-English-speaking countries have a higher proportion

who are married and a lower proportion who are separated or divorced or never married than their peers who are born in Australia or other English-speaking countries (see Table 5). CALD older adults are therefore more likely to have a spouse compared with other older Australians. Older adults from Southern European countries such as Italy, Greece and Macedonia have the lowest proportions divorced or separated (4-6% of those aged 65-79). More of the immigrant aged from Eastern and Western European countries are divorced or separated.

**Table 5. Population aged 50 and over by birthplace, sex and marital status**

	Aged 50 to 64		Aged 65 to 79		Aged 80 and over		Total aged 50+	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>CALD countries</b>								
<b>Married</b>	79.1%	71.7%	79.2%	55.9%	66.5%	22.1%	78.1%	60.9%
<b>Widowed</b>	1.5%	7.6%	6.5%	32.6%	23.6%	71.2%	5.1%	23.0%
<b>Divorced</b>	10.0%	12.4%	7.0%	7.0%	4.0%	3.7%	8.4%	9.6%
<b>Separated</b>	4.0%	4.2%	3.2%	2.4%	2.1%	0.9%	3.5%	3.3%
<b>Never married</b>	5.5%	4.1%	4.1%	2.0%	3.8%	2.0%	4.9%	3.2%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>MES countries</b>								
<b>Married</b>	71.5%	67.3%	75.6%	58.4%	61.9%	24.1%	71.9%	58.8%
<b>Widowed</b>	1.7%	5.1%	7.6%	25.6%	28.2%	67.7%	5.9%	19.8%
<b>Divorced</b>	14.7%	18.0%	9.9%	11.3%	4.6%	4.4%	12.3%	14.1%
<b>Separated</b>	4.6%	4.6%	2.9%	2.1%	1.8%	0.8%	3.8%	3.3%
<b>Never married</b>	7.5%	5.0%	4.1%	2.5%	3.5%	3.1%	6.0%	4.0%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Australia</b>								
<b>Married</b>	69.7%	66.0%	73.5%	54.4%	60.6%	21.3%	70.0%	56.0%
<b>Widowed</b>	1.7%	5.6%	8.0%	29.3%	28.2%	69.0%	6.0%	21.9%
<b>Divorced</b>	14.0%	17.1%	8.9%	9.8%	3.9%	3.7%	11.6%	13.0%
<b>Separated</b>	4.4%	4.4%	2.8%	2.1%	1.5%	0.6%	3.6%	3.1%
<b>Never married</b>	10.2%	6.8%	6.8%	4.5%	5.7%	5.3%	8.8%	5.9%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: 2006 census

Because of higher mortality rates among men and because the husband is usually older than the wife, the percentage married is higher for men than women in the older ages and the gap increases with age. Just 56% of women from CALD countries who are aged 65-79 are married compared to about

80% of men in the same age group, and in the 80+ age group only 22% of the women are married compared to two-thirds of the men. The situation is the same for older adults born in Australian and the main English-speaking countries.

## Where do CALD older adults live?

Knowing where CALD older adults live is important for delivery of programs and services for older people. Previous census data has shown that ethnic diversity is not uniform across the country and that there are big differences across states and territories and between cities and regional areas (Khoo, 2003; Khoo and Lucas, 2004). Different immigrant groups seem to prefer certain locations because of the presence of relatives and friends, employment and lifestyle choices.

CALD older adults as identified by country of birth are more likely to live in New South Wales and Victoria compared with their peers who come from English-speaking countries or who are born in Australia (Table 6). NSW and Victoria have always received a disproportionate share of immigrants, particularly those from Southern European, Middle Eastern and Asian countries. This is due partly to Sydney and Melbourne being important ports of arrival of immigrants and also many immigrants joining relatives later through family reunion migration (Hugo, 2003).

**Table 6. Population aged 50+ by birthplace and state/territory of residence, 2006**

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>CALD countries</b>	37.4	33.4	10.3	7.2	8.8	0.9	0.5	1.5
<b>MES countries</b>	26.5	19.7	21.9	10.5	16.9	2.4	0.6	1.5
<b>Australia</b>	33.4	23.4	21.2	8.4	8.2	3.3	0.6	1.4
<b>Total</b>	33.2	24.7	19.3	8.5	9.5	2.7	0.6	1.4
<b>25 largest CALD birthplace groups</b>								
<b>Italy</b>	27.0	41.8	7.0	11.7	10.6	0.5	0.2	1.0
<b>Greece</b>	32.1	49.4	3.5	10.3	2.7	0.5	0.6	1.0
<b>Germany</b>	28.5	27.7	17.9	12.6	8.3	2.1	0.7	2.2
<b>Netherlands</b>	23.4	29.9	18.6	10.4	12.4	3.3	0.5	1.5
<b>China</b>	59.3	25.1	7.4	2.8	3.4	0.4	0.2	1.3
<b>Vietnam</b>	41.4	35.3	8.3	6.8	6.4	0.1	0.4	1.4
<b>India</b>	32.3	30.9	9.2	4.6	19.9	0.7	0.5	1.8
<b>Malta</b>	39.6	47.0	6.4	3.8	2.1	0.3	0.1	0.7
<b>Poland</b>	28.8	35.9	9.6	11.5	10.3	1.7	0.1	2.0
<b>Croatia</b>	36.1	35.6	7.2	6.9	10.1	0.7	0.1	3.4
<b>Philippines</b>	49.1	21.8	15.4	4.5	5.4	0.9	1.6	1.4
<b>Lebanon</b>	75.6	18.5	1.8	2.4	1.1	0.1	0.0	0.5
<b>Malaysia</b>	28.2	30.3	9.0	4.8	23.8	0.7	0.8	1.7
<b>Macedonia</b>	45.5	44.3	1.6	1.2	6.6	0.1	0.0	0.8
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	29.4	50.0	8.9	2.0	6.2	0.3	0.5	2.8
<b>Egypt</b>	49.8	35.7	5.6	3.5	4.4	0.2	0.1	0.6
<b>Hong Kong</b>	57.9	21.8	9.7	2.7	5.3	0.5	0.5	1.7
<b>Hungary</b>	38.9	31.1	13.3	8.2	4.7	1.3	0.3	2.1
<b>Austria</b>	33.7	28.4	14.6	9.9	7.6	2.2	0.7	2.9
<b>Fiji</b>	59.7	15.2	19.3	2.1	1.6	0.6	0.3	1.2
<b>Cyprus</b>	37.1	45.1	6.2	8.4	1.6	0.3	0.7	0.6
<b>Indonesia</b>	43.3	17.1	17.6	3.4	14.4	0.8	1.5	1.7
<b>Singapore</b>	26.3	20.6	10.5	4.3	34.9	0.9	0.8	1.5
<b>Chile</b>	56.7	27.4	5.5	2.4	4.4	0.5	0.2	2.9
<b>Turkey</b>	42.5	48.9	2.8	2.8	2.1	0.1	0.1	0.7

There are some differences by country of birth in the residential patterns of CALD older adults. Older people from Lebanon are highly concentrated in NSW, with three out of four living there. About half or more of all older people from China, Hong Kong, Philippines, Fiji, Chile and Egypt also live in NSW, mostly in Sydney. The largest number of older adults born in Italy, Greece, Malta, Sri Lanka and Turkey live in Victoria, mostly in Melbourne. Western Australia has disproportionate numbers of older people from India, Malaysia and Singapore perhaps because, of all the States, it is closest to their home countries.

“English proficiency among CALD older adults declines with increasing age and women are less likely to speak English well.”

## LIVING ARRANGEMENTS AND WELL-BEING

Older people’s living arrangements are an important aspect of their well-being, providing an indication of their independence and access to family support. Previous research has shown that the ethnic aged, like other older Australians, prefer to live in their own homes as long as they can, with support from family members and others if they become dependent (Kendig, 1986; Rowland, 1991).

The living arrangements of CALD older adults are examined in terms of four measures:

1. Living with a spouse;
2. Living with other family members;
3. Living alone; and
4. Living in an institutional care facility.

**Table 7. Living arrangements of persons aged 50 and over, by birthplace, age and sex**

Birthplace	Aged 50 to 64		Aged 65 to 79		Aged 80 and over		Total aged 50+	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Living arrangements	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>CALD countries</b>								
With spouse/partner	79.3	71.2	76.8	53.4	60.2	18.9	78.9	59.4
With other family members	5.6	14.4	4.3	16.5	8.2	25.2	5.2	16.2
With non-relatives	2.2	1.7	1.8	1.4	1.7	1.3	2.1	1.6
Alone	9.2	9.9	12.2	23.5	17.8	35.1	11.0	17.2
Not living at home	0.4	0.3	1.8	2.0	9.8	16.6	1.6	2.7
<b>MES countries</b>								
With spouse/partner	74.1	69.4	72.6	55.6	55.3	20.7	71.9	58.6
With other family members	4.0	9.1	2.7	7.4	5.9	13.4	3.8	9.2
With non-relatives	2.9	2.4	2.3	1.8	1.6	1.0	2.6	2.0
Alone	12.5	14.0	15.1	27.9	23.0	41.1	14.2	21.9
Not living at home	0.4	0.4	1.7	2.1	11.1	21.0	1.8	3.6
<b>Australia</b>								
With spouse/partner	70.8	66.4	68.4	50.0	52.4	17.7	68.4	54.5
With other family members	5.8	10.5	3.5	8.7	5.8	12.4	5.1	10.2
With non-relatives	2.7	2.1	2.2	1.6	1.5	1.0	2.4	1.9
Alone	13.3	14.6	16.0	30.1	23.1	42.6	15.0	23.3
Not living at home	0.6	0.5	2.5	2.8	13.1	22.9	2.3	4.4

Not living at home includes those enumerated in a hospital, nursing home or aged care accommodation

## Living with a spouse or other family members

As shown in Table 7, the percentage of older people living with a spouse decreases rapidly in the older age groups, especially for women because of higher male mortality and also because women tend to marry men older than themselves. Living alone increases in older age, as does living in an institutional care facility. While these trends occur for all older adults, there are some differences between those from CALD countries and other older adults.

Older adults born in CALD countries are more likely to be living with a spouse or partner than Australian-born older adults (Table 7). They are also more likely to be living with other family members, usually their children, than older people born in Australia and other English-speaking countries. This is particularly so among CALD women aged 65 and over. CALD older adults are less likely than other older people to be living alone or in an institutional care facility.

Differences by birthplace and between some birthplace groups and the Australian-born in the proportion living with other family members are quite large, particularly for women (see Table 12 in full report). The proportion living with other family members was three to four times higher for women aged 80 and over from Asian countries, and twice as high for women from Southern European countries, than for Australian-born women and women from Germany or Netherlands in the same age group. The aged from Vietnam and the Philippines have the highest percentage living with family members other than the spouse.

## Living alone

Living alone is much less prevalent for older persons from Asian and Southern European countries than for older persons from Western or Eastern European countries or Australian-born older adults.

## Living in institutional care

The percentage of older people in institutional care facilities is very small until after the age of 80. Among older people aged 80+ about 10% of men and 20% of women are in hospitals, nursing homes or other accommodation for the aged or disabled. The percentage is lower for the aged of CALD background than for other older people (Table 7). There are differences by country of birth, with less than 10% of women aged 80+ from Vietnam or Philippines in institutional care facilities compared with over 22% of women of the same age from the Netherlands or Hungary. The percentage of old people in institutional care facilities is also relatively low for the aged from Lebanon and Macedonia – they are much more likely to live with family members than in institutional care facilities.

## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

This section examines five measures of social and economic well-being that are correlated with independent living in old age, including one that applies specifically to CALD older adults, i.e. English language proficiency. This is followed by discussion of five measures of productive ageing and the pursuit of an active retirement in the next section.

Two measures of human capital that are associated with the social well-being of the ethnic aged in Australia are English language proficiency and level of education. Being able to speak English is essential for immigrants from CALD countries to engage with Australian society beyond one's ethnic community. Not being able to speak English well can inhibit social connection and increase the risk of social isolation among older people. Education is an important personal resource that may contribute to both quantity and quality of life in old age through its effect on health and lifetime earnings (Rowland, 2003) Migrants with more education are more likely to participate in social and community groups and activities (Khoo, 2007; Khoo and Temple, 2008).

## Social well-being: English proficiency

Table 8 shows the 25 largest CALD birthplace groups ranked by the percentage of CALD older adults who speak English only or can speak it well or very well. As expected, English proficiency among CALD older adults declines with increasing age and women are less likely than men to speak English well. Differences by country of birth are evident.

Most immigrants from countries where English is widely spoken (Western Europe, Commonwealth

countries, the Philippines) are proficient in English. The lowest English proficiency is found among the immigrant aged from Vietnam and China. Less than half of all men aged 50 and over and less than one-third of the women from these two countries are able to speak English well. These older people are mainly family reunion migrants and many are relatively recent arrivals. Their low level of English language proficiency would suggest that their social networks are restricted to their families and ethnic community. Older men and women from countries such as Greece, Macedonia,

**Table 8. Percentage who speaks English only or well: men and women aged 50 and over from CALD countries.**

Country of birth	Aged 50 to 64		Aged 65 to 79		Aged 80 and over		Total aged 50+	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>ALL CALD countries</b>	85.3	80.3	75.6	64.7	68.8	58.5	80.5	72.7
<b>25 largest CALD birthplace groups</b>								
<b>Netherlands</b>	99.5	99.4	98.6	98.2	95.1	89.7	98.7	97.6
<b>Germany</b>	98.8	99.0	98.0	97.7	93.0	89.8	98.1	97.2
<b>Austria</b>	99.0	98.6	97.9	97.7	92.0	91.7	97.6	97.1
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	98.1	95.1	97.9	90.3	92.2	84.7	97.7	92.8
<b>India</b>	97.9	93.9	96.0	88.4	94.5	88.2	97.1	91.6
<b>Singapore</b>	97.5	96.6	93.5	86.7	87.1	78.2	96.3	93.8
<b>Philippines</b>	97.3	97.3	86.5	83.2	71.3	64.7	94.6	93.7
<b>Fiji</b>	96.6	91.8	90.2	73.5	84.1	68.8	94.7	86.4
<b>Hungary</b>	96.0	95.2	94.2	90.3	87.8	77.5	93.7	88.6
<b>Egypt</b>	95.6	92.1	92.7	80.7	86.0	69.1	93.8	85.2
<b>Malaysia</b>	94.4	94.0	90.2	77.7	86.9	64.2	93.3	89.7
<b>Malta</b>	94.8	95.0	90.5	86.1	81.0	68.0	92.6	89.9
<b>Indonesia</b>	88.8	84.1	86.7	76.7	89.2	81.4	88.2	82.0
<b>Poland</b>	89.7	88.0	85.3	77.4	83.6	72.3	86.8	80.2
<b>Hong Kong</b>	81.8	74.7	78.2	69.2	57.1	40.7	80.5	71.0
<b>Italy</b>	92.4	88.4	75.8	60.6	56.4	38.4	80.1	68.0
<b>Cyprus</b>	84.9	73.4	75.3	52.0	59.8	26.5	79.0	62.1
<b>Croatia</b>	81.8	80.0	74.7	62.4	66.3	44.8	77.9	70.5
<b>Chile</b>	80.4	77.6	62.4	53.9	36.7	20.7	75.6	69.7
<b>Lebanon</b>	81.2	67.1	60.2	42.1	46.9	31.6	74.3	58.2
<b>Greece</b>	79.3	68.3	60.0	46.6	43.1	26.0	67.1	55.1
<b>Macedonia</b>	77.2	61.6	48.9	30.9	26.8	13.7	67.6	49.9
<b>Turkey</b>	61.8	47.6	42.4	32.9	49.0	39.0	56.1	43.6
<b>China</b>	54.5	45.2	30.1	19.5	28.2	17.4	43.7	32.7
<b>Viet Nam</b>	48.4	33.8	22.8	8.8	12.8	5.1	41.4	26.2

Lebanon and Turkey also have relatively low proportions who speak English well, even though they have lived in Australia for many more years.

## Social well-being: level of education

The data show that older adults from CALD countries have lower proportions with post-school education than older adults born in Australia or other English-speaking countries (see Table 14 in full report). Very low proportions of migrants from the Southern European countries who arrived in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s have post-school qualifications. This contrasts with older migrants from Western and Eastern European countries who are relatively well educated. Older migrants from Lebanon, Turkey and Vietnam also have relatively low proportions with post-school qualifications. In contrast, the majority of more recent migrants from Asian countries such as the Philippines and Malaysia have some post-school qualifications.

## Economic well-being: personal income

Older people with income of their own generally have more control over their lives; they are less dependent on other family members and can afford to live on their own. The population is divided into two income groups in the data analysis: those with a weekly income of less than \$250 and those with a weekly income of \$250 or more. These two categories provide an approximate differentiation between those whose income provides for a basic standard of living, and those with higher income.

A lower proportion of the older people from CALD countries have a weekly income of \$250 or more than older adults from English-speaking countries and those born in Australia (see Table 15 in full report). Within the CALD birthplace groups, the proportion was also lower for migrants from the Southern European countries and from Vietnam, China, Lebanon and Turkey, and higher for migrants from Austria, Germany and the Netherlands, and from Malaysia, Philippines, Hong Kong, India and Sri Lanka. The aged from Vietnam, China, Lebanon and Turkey are mainly family reunion migrants

and have lower levels of education. The birthplace groups that have higher proportions with a weekly income of \$250 or more are more likely to have post-school qualifications, as shown earlier.

## Economic well-being: home ownership

Older people who live in homes that they own are more secure economically and in their living arrangements than those who live in rental accommodation. Home ownership is higher among older adults from CALD countries than those from English-speaking countries, although on average it is still slightly lower than the rate for Australian-born older persons (see Table 16 in full report). The Southern European birthplace groups have much higher rates of home ownership than Australian-born older adults, with close to 90% of all adults aged 50+ owning their homes, compared with just over 80% of the Australian-born aged 50+. Groups with lower rates of home ownership are those from Chile, Lebanon and Turkey and also those of more recent migration, such as those from China, Vietnam and Fiji. The Western and Eastern European groups are more similar to the Australian-born in their rate of home ownership.

Comparison of the two measures of economic wellbeing shows that while some CALD older adults (such as the Southern Europeans), may have lower current income, they have higher than average rates of home ownership. Other groups such as those from Vietnam, Lebanon and Turkey rate below average on both economic measures. Many older people from these countries live with family members and may be more dependent on them for some economic support.

## Physical and social well-being: needing help with daily living

Not needing help with core daily self-care activities is a direct indicator of physical independence in old age and a strong measure of both physical and social well-being. Self care activities include getting out of bed, dressing, eating, showering, toileting and being able to do other things around the house.

The percentage of older adults not needing help with core activities is the measure of independent living examined here for CALD groups. CALD older adults are more in need of assistance than other older adults. A lower percentage of men and women from CALD countries indicate that they have no need for assistance with daily activities compared to their peers who are born in Australia or other English-speaking countries (see Table 17 in full report). Differences by country of birth can be seen. In the 65-79 age group, men and women from Lebanon, Turkey, Vietnam and Macedonia have lower than average proportions not needing assistance. The aged from Western and Eastern European countries have better physical health by comparison. Migrants aged 80+ from the Philippines also have relatively poorer health, with below average proportions not needing assistance with core activities.

## Social and economic well-being: summing up

These five measures of social and economic wellbeing show that as a group older people of CALD background are not doing as well as older people from English-speaking backgrounds. However, as its name implies the CALD group is diverse and there are differences within the group in all the five measures of social and economic well-being by ethnicity as measured by country of birth. Differences include:

- The aged from countries such as Lebanon, Turkey and Vietnam have lower levels of social and economic well-being than the other CALD groups.
- Older people of Southern European origins, many of whom migrated to Australia in the 1950s and 1960s, also have lower English language proficiency, education and income but have higher rates of home ownership.
- The social and economic well-being of older people of Western and Eastern European origins is more similar to that of older people of English-speaking background.

- There are also differences among the Asian birthplace and ethnic groups. Older people from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, India and Sri Lanka are generally more proficient in English because English is widely spoken in those countries that are/were part of the British Commonwealth.
- Older people from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, India and Sri Lanka are also better educated and have better incomes and some are likely to have been overseas students in the 1960s or 1970s or skilled or business migrants in the 1980s.
- Older people from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, India and Sri Lanka are also less in need of assistance with daily core activities than their counterparts from other Asian countries such as Vietnam and China.

## PRODUCTIVE AGEING

Productive ageing is examined in terms of five measures that are available from the 2006 census data:

- participation in paid work
- volunteering
- provision of unpaid domestic work
- looking after children, and
- care of family members and others with long-term illness, old age or disability.

The first two measures examine older people's engagement with the broader community. The other three measures relate to caring responsibilities within the family. Obviously the ability of older people to pursue these activities in the community and the family is correlated with their social and economic well-being.

### Participation in paid work

Older adults from CALD countries as a group have a lower rate of participation in paid work when compared with Australian-born older adults and those from English-speaking countries (Table 9).

**Table 9. Percentage employed in paid work: men and women aged 50 and over by birthplace**

Birthplace	Aged 50-64		Aged 65-79		Aged 80+		Total aged 50+	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>CALD countries</b>	66.0	44.8	12.3	4.6	3.1	1.2	41.9	26.6
<b>MES countries</b>	74.6	58.9	14.9	6.8	2.2	0.9	49.2	35.1
<b>Australia</b>	72.0	58.0	17.4	7.9	4.1	1.2	49.6	34.6
<b>25 largest CALD birthplace groups</b>								
<b>Italy</b>	69.3	38.4	11.8	3.3	2.3	0.6	33.6	16.4
<b>Greece</b>	56.1	28.9	10.4	3.3	1.4	0.9	29.4	15.0
<b>Germany</b>	66.3	50.9	13.7	5.3	3.5	0.8	42.9	28.5
<b>Netherlands</b>	70.1	50.4	12.2	5.2	2.4	0.8	42.4	28.2
<b>China</b>	69.3	44.5	8.2	3.4	2.7	1.3	42.3	24.7
<b>Vietnam</b>	55.7	33.8	6.2	1.8	6.9	3.0	43.1	24.4
<b>India</b>	79.3	58.6	20.2	6.8	4.3	1.0	56.6	35.6
<b>Malta</b>	59.1	35.4	7.8	2.9	2.2	0.4	38.5	21.9
<b>Poland</b>	70.3	54.9	12.8	4.9	2.7	1.0	36.7	24.1
<b>Croatia</b>	56.8	36.5	9.6	3.8	4.1	1.3	32.7	21.0
<b>Philippines</b>	83.1	60.4	16.2	6.9	5.8	3.2	70.3	35.3
<b>Lebanon</b>	45.1	17.1	10.5	2.9	4.2	1.7	34.3	12.3
<b>Malaysia</b>	78.8	64.4	25.1	10.2	3.6	3.2	64.9	51.5
<b>Macedonia</b>	58.7	36.6	7.2	2.0	2.4	1.1	42.5	24.4
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	82.7	63.3	33.9	7.9	4.8	0.9	64.0	41.8
<b>Egypt</b>	68.5	45.1	16.1	4.7	1.4	0.6	44.5	25.4
<b>Hong Kong</b>	76.3	54.0	20.9	9.1	5.6	4.3	63.8	45.2
<b>Hungary</b>	65.1	49.3	14.1	7.9	6.2	2.1	31.0	22.9
<b>Austria</b>	67.9	51.5	13.3	7.0	5.1	1.1	38.8	27.5
<b>Fiji</b>	75.0	53.6	16.9	7.4	6.4	1.3	59.2	40.1
<b>Cyprus</b>	61.9	34.4	9.3	2.6	1.7	0.6	37.3	20.6
<b>Indonesia</b>	73.2	50.5	16.7	7.6	6.2	3.0	51.5	24.4
<b>Singapore</b>	76.1	59.2	23.0	12.2	4.3	3.1	61.7	46.9
<b>Chile</b>	72.4	46.9	18.1	8.2	14.0	2.7	59.7	36.4
<b>Turkey</b>	38.8	15.8	6.1	2.3	6.4	2.0	28.6	11.7

The gap is particularly large in the 50-64 age group, where just two-thirds of the men and less than half of the women of CALD background is employed in paid work compared to more than 70% of men and nearly 60% of women of English-speaking background in the same age group. The lower employment rate of the CALD group is due mainly to lower rates of participation in paid work by older adults from European and Middle Eastern countries and from Vietnam. This may be the result of early retirement from low skilled work and low English proficiency in these birthplace groups as shown earlier. Older people

from Asia-Pacific countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Hong Kong and Fiji who are more proficient in English have higher participation in paid work than other CALD groups. They are more similar to the Australian-born and older men and women from English-speaking countries. It is also notable that about 5-7% of men and 3-4% of women aged 80+ from several Asian countries are employed in paid work, which is more than the rate for that age group. It is likely that many of them are in their early 80s and are working in family businesses.

## Volunteering

Participation in volunteering is generally lower among older men and women of CALD background than those of English-speaking background or born in Australia (see Figure 1 in full report).

There is also a decrease in volunteering among CALD adults after age 65 compared with the 50-64 age group that is not observed among men and women born in Australia and other English-speaking countries. For these latter two groups, participation in volunteering increases after age 65 when people are usually retired from the work force. The participation rate in volunteering of older persons aged 65 and over is more than twice as high for men and women from English-speaking countries and the Australian-born as for men and women from CALD countries (see Table 19 in full report).

Studies focusing on volunteering by the overseas-born have suggested that some people of CALD background may not have identified the unpaid work they do in their communities as volunteering or that it fits the formal definition of volunteering (see discussion in *Volunteering Australia, 2007*). Studies have also identified some of the barriers to volunteering by people of CALD background, including English language comprehension (the most common barrier) and time, family and travel constraints.

## Domestic work

The percentage doing some domestic work is lower for older men and women of CALD background than other older men and women in the age groups 50-64 and 65-79. In the 80+ age group, there is not much difference between women of CALD background and those of English-speaking background. Over 40% of people aged 80 and over still do some housework.

As in the other measures of well-being and productive ageing, there are differences by country of birth within the group of CALD older adults in the proportions doing housework (See Table 20 in full report). For example, men and women from Germany, Netherlands and Austria are

similar to the Australian-born and persons from English-speaking countries in their proportions doing some housework. The Southern European older adults are less likely than their Western European counterparts to be doing domestic work. Differences are also observed among the Asian birthplace groups. Those from China and Vietnam are less likely to be doing domestic work than those from India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore. The percentage doing some domestic work is lowest for older men and women from Turkey and Lebanon. These differences may be due partly to differences in marital status and living arrangements and/or social norms in relation to the role of older family members in the household.

## Looking after children

Men and women aged 65 and over from CALD countries have a higher proportion caring for children compared to the Australian-born aged and others from English-speaking countries (See Table 21 in full report). A higher percentage of men and women from Greece and Macedonia contribute to caring for children than older people from other European countries. The proportion looking after children is much lower for men and women from the Western and Eastern European countries compared to the Southern European countries. The percentage looking after children is also higher than average for men and women from most of the Asian countries. It is likely that the greater likelihood of co-residence with other family members among older adults from Asian, Middle Eastern and Southern European countries contributes to their involvement in caring for the younger members of the family even as it reduces their likelihood of having to do any housework.

“CALD older adults are more in need of assistance than other older adults.”

## Caring for an older person or family member with a long-term illness or disability

There is not much difference in the proportion caring for someone who is old, ill or disabled between the older people from CALD countries and the Australian-born and others from English-speaking countries (see Table 22 full report). Differences within the CALD group by country of origin in the proportion caring for other elderly, disabled or sick family members are also small. About 10% of men and women aged 65-79 are carers of someone who is ill, old or disabled. However, about 20% of women in the 50-64 age group from a number of European countries are carers, either of their older spouses or parents. Among older people from all ethnic backgrounds, women are more likely than men to be carers, but in the oldest age group, those aged 80 and over, a higher proportion of men are carers. Men in this age group are less likely than women to be widowed and therefore are more likely to be caring for their spouse.

## A COMPLEX PICTURE: FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH WELL-BEING AND PRODUCTIVE AGEING IN CALD OLDER ADULTS

The descriptive results and further analysis show some consistent patterns of differences in many of the measures of social and economic well-being of older adults from CALD countries by country of origin. Patterns of difference include:

### General differences

- Older people from Western European, Eastern European and Southern European countries show differences in living arrangements, English proficiency, education, income, absence of restrictions with core activities, participation in paid work and volunteering and taking care of children.
- Asian birthplace groups also differ from one another in many of these characteristics. Older people from Malaysia, India and Sri Lanka have higher proportions with post-school education, English language proficiency, participation in paid work, volunteering and higher income than those from Vietnam and China.
- Older people from Vietnam appear to be the most disadvantaged on a number of measures of social and economic well-being.
- Older people from Southern and Eastern European and Asian countries were all more likely to be living at home and not in an institutional care facility than immigrants from the English-speaking or Western European countries and the Australian-born aged.
- Older people who are married were more likely to live at home than those who are widowed or not married.
- Older people with higher education or who are more proficient in English are also more likely to live at home and not in institutional care than those with less education or who do not speak English well.
- Older people from the Middle East and the Pacific region are the most likely to need assistance with daily activities, implying poorer physical health.
- Older people from Southern and Eastern European countries (aside from Italy and Greece) are also more likely to need assistance with daily activities compared to older people born in Australia or other English-speaking countries. Many migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe who arrived in the 1950s and 1960s had worked in physically demanding jobs in construction and manufacturing and this might have affected their physical health in old age.
- Older people from Northeast Asia (aside from China) and Southeast Asia (aside from Vietnam) are significantly more likely not to need assistance with daily activities when compared with the Australian-born.
- Better physical health in old age is associated with being married, being proficient in English and post-school education.

## Participation in paid work and volunteering

- Older people from Europe, the Middle East and Vietnam are significantly less likely to be working compared to the Australian-born even after controlling for English proficiency and education.
- There is significantly higher employment among older immigrants from China and other Northeast Asian countries. This group includes people from Hong Kong, Korea and Taiwan some of whom may be business migrants and would be working in their own or family business.
- Older people from Southern and Eastern European countries, Germany, North Africa and Middle East, China and Southeast Asia are significantly less likely to volunteer compared with older migrants from other countries, even after controlling for English proficiency and education, suggesting other barriers to volunteering besides English language proficiency and education. As expected, participation in paid work and volunteering by older people is positively correlated with English proficiency and education.
- While older men are more likely to be in paid work than older women, the reverse pattern is seen in volunteering.
- Among overseas-born older people, recent migrants are significantly less likely to be in paid work or to volunteer than earlier migrants.

## Contributions to household and family

- Older adults from CALD countries are less likely to be doing domestic work for their households than older people of English-speaking background.
- Older people from Greece and the Pacific region are more likely to be caring for children compared to the Australian-born or older adults from other English speaking countries.
- Older adults from Italy, other Southern and Eastern European countries and Vietnam are more likely than older people of English-speaking background to be caring for

other family members, but other CALD older adults are less likely to do so.

- Older women are more likely to be carers than older men, those who are married are more likely to be carers than those who are widowed and those with more education are more likely to be carers than those with lower education.
- More recently arrived migrants are also more likely to be caring for children than earlier migrants.

## CONCLUSION

The 2006 census showed more than a million people aged 50 and over who are born in non-English-speaking or CALD countries. They comprise 19% of the total Australian population aged 50 and over. People born in CALD countries have an older age structure than people born in Australia. This is a large and significant group of older Australians with a different experience of ageing, as this research shows.

CALD older adults differ in their social and economic well-being by country or region of origin and ancestry even after taking into account differences in demographic and other characteristics. This suggests that cultural factors and migration experiences may have some influence on their well-being and ageing experiences.

Older people of Italian and Greek origins are the two largest birthplace and language groups of CALD background. Those born overseas have lived in Australia for more than thirty years. They show many distinctive characteristics. Both groups have a strong family network, are more likely to be still married and/or living with family and helping to look after (grand) children and other older family members. Although the indicators of independent living show they are more likely to need assistance with daily living activities and to be in the lower income group, they are less likely to be in institutional care than the Australian-born aged. In contrast, older people of Western and Eastern European origins are more similar

to the Australian-born and older adults from the English-speaking countries, particularly in their living arrangements with family.

There are also differences among older people from the Asian countries by country of origin. While they are all more likely to be living at home with family, many older people from China and Vietnam may also be more dependent on their family because they do not speak English well and have lower income. Older adults from China and other Northeast Asian countries are more likely to be involved in paid work and this may be related to some of them being business migrants. Older people from Malaysia, Philippines, India and Sri Lanka are generally more proficient in English, have more education and higher income.

The findings indicate that ethnicity appears to contribute to productive ageing that is focused within the family rather than in the broader community. While it was thought initially that perhaps the lower education and lack of English of some of the CALD older adults might have been barriers to their community participation, controlling for these characteristics in the data analysis did not eliminate the differences in work participation and volunteering between CALD and other older adults. This may suggest the absence of a tradition of community volunteering in some cultures or less social integration among some of the immigrant aged that are related to other (perhaps cultural) factors besides lack of proficiency in English.

While having a productive role in the family can give purpose and meaning to the daily lives of the aged, the data do not inform us about the perception of the elderly in relation to their care-giving role. The greater stability of marriage within some of the Southern European and Asian ethnicities also means that these immigrant aged are more likely to have the support and family resource of a spouse, which is shown to facilitate living at home.

The lower participation in paid employment among some CALD birthplace groups may be related to their greater likelihood of

poorer physical health. Those from Southern and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific region are particularly at risk of needing assistance with daily activities. The lower income of older people from some Asian countries and the Middle East suggest they are likely to be dependent on government income support. Their circumstances may be related to their migration or personal histories associated with country of origin rather than ethnic or cultural factors. The findings suggest that the older adults from these countries and regions are likely to be more dependent on the public health and welfare systems, because of poorer health and lower income, even though they may have family support at home.

While mainstream health and welfare systems will remain important to the health and economic well-being of CALD older adults, their social well-being is much more dependent on their families and ethnic communities. This is particularly the case when they do not speak English very well or have a tradition of strong family networks that encourage co-residence and co-dependence across generations. Families and CALD communities therefore have an important role in enhancing the ageing experiences of their older members.

## Next steps

The current study has examined some indicators of the living arrangements and social and economic well-being of CALD older adults and shown considerable diversity in these indicators by ethnic background. However, questions remain about the ways in which cultural dimensions of ethnicity can facilitate their adjustment to the ageing process.

### **More research needed**

These questions can only be answered by more detailed studies of specific birthplace or ethnic groups of CALD older adults, as there is much diversity both between and within geographic regional groups.

## **Exploring policy responses**

While more detailed research is needed, the current study suggests policy avenues worth exploring. A few examples include:

- There may be better ways to increase English proficiency in CALD older adults, including for those who have lived in Australia for many years.
- Given the complex patterns of ageing shown by this study, can health and other services be better tailored to meet the needs of older CALD people?
- Are there wider lessons to be learnt from some CALD communities about intergenerational connections and how to maintain them, in pursuit of well-being amongst all older Australians?
- What policies might help older CALD adults from various backgrounds to have a better experience of ageing?
- Do some cultures 'do' ageing better than others? If so, do we need to look at productive ageing through different policy and cultural lenses?

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## ABOUT THE NATIONAL SENIORS PRODUCTIVE AGEING CENTRE

The National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre is an initiative of National Seniors Australia and the Department of Health and Ageing. The Centre's aim is to advance knowledge and understanding of all aspects of productive ageing to improve the quality of life of people aged 50 and over.

The Centre's key objectives are to:

- Support quality consumer oriented research informed by the experience of people aged 50 years and over;
- Inform Government, business and the community on productive ageing across the life-course;
- Raise awareness of research findings which are useful for older people; and
- Be a leading centre for research, education and information on productive ageing in Australia.

For more information about the Productive Ageing Centre, visit [www.productiveageing.com.au](http://www.productiveageing.com.au) or call 02 6230 4588.





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