



Department of
**Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries**



**OFFICE OF
MULTICULTURAL INTERESTS**

CENSUS 2021: WA PERMANENT MIGRANTS SNAPSHOT

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries' Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) works in partnership with culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities, community sector organisations, government agencies and the private sector to ensure that migrants—especially humanitarian entrants—are valued, supported and empowered so they can participate and contribute to all aspects of life and feel safe, no matter what their backgrounds may be.

This snapshot is about Western Australian permanent migrants including skilled migrants, family and humanitarian migrants, and is based mainly on an analysis of the 2021 Australian Population and Housing Census data and Migrants Integrated Dataset (ACMID).¹

Permanent migrant refers to a person who:

- holds a permanent skilled, family, humanitarian or other permanent visa
- had an arrival date in Australia between 1 January 2000 and 10 August 2021.

For further information about the methods, scope and coverage of ACMID, refer to [Permanent migrants in Australia methodology, 2021](#).

Major facts and trends: demographic and cultural

Composition

- There were 398,617 permanent migrants residing in Western Australia in 2021, comprising 15 per cent of the total Western Australian population.
- Permanent migrants accounted for almost half of the overseas-born population (46.6%) and 85.8 per cent of the overall culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) population in Western Australia.
- Of the total permanent migrant cohort, two-thirds (67.1%) were skilled migrants, followed by a little over one-quarter (26.7%) of family migrants, and less than one-tenth (6.2%) were humanitarian migrants.
- During the period between 2000 to 2021, the majority of skilled (62.1%) and humanitarian migrants (65.9%) arrived between 2000 and 2011, followed by those who migrated between 2012 and 2017 (27.8% and 21%, respectively) and a small proportion (3.8% and 6.9%, respectively) who migrated in the last four years (2018–2021). The trend is not very different for family migrants with 50.3 per cent, 33.6 per cent and 10.8 per cent respectively, migrating during these periods.
- The low rate of migration between 2018 and 2021 can be attributed mainly to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent border closures that had a negative impact on the overseas migration trend. A very small proportion of all three visa streams (2.4%) migrated prior to the 2000s.

¹ Please note that data for this snapshot is sourced mainly from ACMID, 2021. ACMID links demographic, cultural and other databases of the Census with the Department of Home Affairs Settlement Database including visa status of migrants, and is available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) TableBuilder program.

- Almost three-quarters of skilled and humanitarian migrants (72.8% and 70.1%, respectively) were Australian citizens, compared with 48.7 per cent of family migrants and 82.8 per cent of all Western Australians.

Birthplace and ancestry

- The top 10 birthplaces of both skilled and family migrants were relatively similar. However, humanitarian entrants were from different regions, all originating from non-main English-speaking birthplaces as shown below:
 - *skilled migrants* were born in England, India, South Africa, Philippines, China, Malaysia, Ireland, Scotland, Australia and Zimbabwe
 - *family migrants* were born in England, Philippines, India, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, South Africa, Malaysia and USA
 - *humanitarian migrants* were born mainly in Myanmar, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iraq, Iran, South Sudan, Thailand, Ethiopia, Syria, Congo (Democratic Republic of).
- The 10 most common ancestry responses of:
 - *skilled migrants* were English, Chinese, Indian, Filipino, Irish, Scottish, South African, German, Dutch and Italian
 - *family migrants* were English, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Irish, Thai, Scottish, Vietnamese, Indonesian and German
 - *humanitarian migrants* were Karen, African (so described), Afghan, Burmese, Hazara, Iranian, Sudanese, South Sudanese, Arab (not further defined) and Australian.

Languages spoken and English proficiency

- The 10 most common languages other than English (LOTE) spoken at home by:
 - *skilled migrants* were Mandarin, Afrikaans, Tagalog, Filipino, Punjabi, Malayalam, Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil and Cantonese
 - *family migrants* were Mandarin, Vietnamese, Thai, Tagalog, Indonesian, Punjabi, Cantonese, Filipino, Arabic and Hindi
 - *humanitarian migrants* were Arabic, Karen, Persian, Hazaraghi, Burmese, Dari, Dinka, Swahili, Serbian and Tigrinya.
- Over half of skilled (54%) and almost two-thirds of family migrants (62.3%), compared with most humanitarian migrants (90.5%) spoke a language other than English at home.
- Most skilled migrants (95%) spoke English very well or well and only five per cent reported not speaking English well or at all, compared with 83 per cent and 16.2 per cent of family migrants, respectively.
- In comparison, almost three-quarters of humanitarian migrants (73.4%) spoke English very well or well, while one-quarter (25.1%) did not speak English well or at all.

Religious affiliations

- Larger proportions of both skilled and family migrants were affiliated with Christianity (46.2% and 39.2%) and secular beliefs, or no religion (30.5% and 30.7%, respectively), compared with other religions.

- The next common religious affiliations were Hinduism (9.4%), Islam (4.8%) and Buddhism (3.9%) for skilled migrants, and Buddhism (10.4%), Islam (9%) and Hinduism (5.6%) for family migrants.
- More than half of humanitarian migrants were affiliated with Christianity (52.2%), followed by one-third of Muslims (33.7%), while smaller proportions were identified with secular beliefs or no religion (5.6%), Buddhism (2.2%) and Hinduism (1%).

Location

- Most of skilled (91.5%) and family migrants (89.3%) lived in Perth metropolitan Local Government Areas (LGAs), which is consistent with the number of Western Australians from CaLD backgrounds (91%). However, a larger proportion of humanitarian entrants lived in metropolitan LGAs (96.1%).²
- The top 10 LGAs were relatively similar for all three cohorts of permanent migrants, with a slight difference for humanitarian migrants as shown below:
 - 68.9 per cent of *skilled migrants* lived in Wanneroo, Joondalup, Stirling, Gosnells, Canning, Swan, Cockburn, Armadale, Rockingham and Melville
 - 63.8 per cent of *family migrants* lived in Wanneroo, Stirling, Gosnells, Swan, Joondalup, Canning, Cockburn, Armadale, Rockingham and Melville
 - 87.2 per cent of *humanitarian migrants* lived in the top 10 LGAs of Stirling, Wanneroo, Gosnells, Swan, Armadale, Canning, Bayswater, Belmont, Cockburn and Kwinana.
- The top regional LGAs where:
 - *skilled migrants* resided were Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Capel, Greater Geraldton, Busselton, Bunbury and Harvey
 - *family migrants* resided were Busselton, Albany, Greater Geraldton, Bunbury, Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Karratha.
 - *humanitarian entrants* resided were Katanning, Albany and Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

² Please note that this data is obtained from the place of enumeration database in TableBuilder, while the rest are sourced from the place of usual residence.

Table 1: Demographic and cultural backgrounds of permanent migrants, Census 2021

Skilled migrants			Family migrants			Humanitarian migrants		
Birthplace	Number	%	Birthplace	Number	%	Birthplace	Number	%
England	54,256	20.3	England	14,571	13.6	Myanmar	3,476	14.2
India	31,362	11.7	Philippines	8,154	7.6	Afghanistan	2,831	11.6
South Africa	27,999	10.5	India	8,125	7.6	Sudan	1,689	6.9
Philippines	21,405	8.0	China	7,352	6.9	Iraq	1,615	6.6
China	12,174	4.6	Thailand	5,221	4.9	Iran	1,525	6.2
Malaysia	11,690	4.4	Vietnam	4,601	4.3	South Sudan	1,090	4.5
Ireland	8,387	3.1	Indonesia	4,353	4.1	Thailand	1018	4.2
Scotland	8,305	3.1	South Africa	3,669	3.4	Ethiopia	868	3.6
Australia	7,980	3.0	Malaysia	3,294	3.1	Syria	673	2.7
Zimbabwe	7,728	2.9	USA	2,677	2.5	Congo, DR	651	2.7
Ancestry	Skilled migrants		Ancestry	Family migrants		Ancestry	Humanitarian migrants	
English	72,404	13.5	English	20,175	9.4	Karen	2,180	7.9
Chinese	32,468	6.1	Chinese	14,831	6.9	African, so described	1,848	6.7
Indian	32,354	6.1	Filipino	7,771	3.6	Afghan	1,784	6.5
Filipino	21,105	3.9	Indian	7,156	3.4	Burmese	1,685	6.1
Irish	19,833	3.7	Irish	5,284	2.5	Hazara	1,553	5.6
Scottish	16,801	3.1	Thai	5,003	2.3	Iranian	1,161	4.2
South African	15,117	2.8	Scottish	3,955	1.9	Sudanese	1,126	4.1
German	6,678	1.2	Vietnamese	3,852	1.8	South Sudanese	990	3.6
Dutch	5,245	1.0	Indonesian	3,331	1.6	Arab, nfd*	965	3.5
Italian	4,305	0.8	German	3,079	1.4	Australian	879	3.5
Language	Skilled migrants		Language	Family migrants		Language	Humanitarian migrants	
Mandarin	19,288	7.2	Mandarin	8,779	8.2	Arabic	3,927	16.0
Afrikaans	11,098	4.2	Vietnamese	4,307	4.0	Karen	2,138	8.7
Tagalog	10,723	4.0	Thai	4,124	3.9	Persian	1,549	6.3
Filipino	7,646	2.9	Tagalog	3,394	3.2	Hazaraghi	1,537	6.3
Punjabi	7,606	2.8	Indonesian	2,897	2.7	Burmese	1,108	4.5
Malayalam	6,495	2.4	Punjabi	2,513	2.4	Dari	1,048	4.3
Hindi	6,075	2.3	Cantonese	2,385	2.2	Dinka	844	3.4
Gujarati	5,808	2.2	Filipino	2,152	2.0	Swahili	722	2.9
Tamil	4,208	1.6	Arabic	1,855	1.7	Serbian	702	2.9
Cantonese	4,090	1.5	Hindi	1,582	1.5	Tigrinya	593	2.4

*Note: nfd means 'not further defined'.

Table 2: The top metropolitan and regional LGAs where permanent migrants live, Census 2021

LGA Metro	Skilled migrants		LGA Metro	Family migrants		LGA Metro	Humanitarian migrants	
	Number	%		Number	%		Number	%
Wanneroo	33,696	12.6	Wanneroo	10,974	10.3	Stirling	4,616	18.8
Joondalup	22,205	8.3	Stirling	10,946	10.2	Wanneroo	4,436	18.1
Stirling	21,848	8.2	Gosnells	8,442	7.9	Gosnells	3,816	15.6
Gosnells	20,088	7.5	Swan	7,747	7.2	Swan	3,303	13.5
Canning	19,252	7.2	Joondalup	5,953	5.6	Armadale	1,476	6.0
Swan	15,704	5.9	Canning	5,792	5.4	Canning	1,191	4.9
Cockburn	14,114	5.3	Cockburn	5,405	5.1	Bayswater	779	3.2
Armadale	13,342	5.0	Armadale	4,670	4.4	Belmont	683	2.8
Rockingham	13,017	4.9	Rockingham	4,297	4.0	Cockburn	631	2.6
Melville	10,959	4.1	Melville	3,973	3.7	Kwinana	417	1.7
Regional	Skilled migrants		Regional	Family migrants		Regional	Humanitarian migrants	
Kalgoorlie- Boulder	2,205	0.8	Busselton	970	0.9	Katanning	192	0.8
Capel	1,755	0.7	Albany	819	0.8	Albany	177	0.7
Greater Geraldton	1,621	0.6	Greater Geraldton	792	0.7	Kalgoorlie- Boulder	69	0.3
Busselton	1,564	0.6	Bunbury	744	0.7			
Bunbury	1,544	0.6	Kalgoorlie- Boulder	738	0.7			
Harvey	1,514	0.6	Karratha	639	0.6			