

Papua New Guinean Australians

- Papua New Guineans have travelled to Australia for thousands of years. In 1978, a treaty was signed enabling the coastal people of Papua New Guinea to carry on their traditional way of life travelling without restriction across the Torres Strait between Papua New Guinea and Australia within defined boundaries⁴.
- In the 1880s approximately 5000 Papua New Guineans were trafficked illegally to Queensland to work in the sugarcane industry. Many of the workers died soon after their arrival in Queensland⁵. An average of 450 Papua New Guineans came to Australia each year between 1905 and 1910 to work in the pearling industry. This number declined to around 350 by 1928².
- While the 1954 Census showed only 1523 Papua New Guinea-born people in Australia², by the time of the 1976 Census, there were 15,562 Papua New Guinea-born people living in Australia. However, many were the children of Australians working in Papua New Guinea when Australia was responsible for administering either the Australian Territory of Papua or the Territory of Papua and New Guinea².
- An average of around 350 Papua New Guineans settled in Australia each year over the five years from 2006 to 2010 with more than half settling in Queensland³.
- **Ethnicity:** Papua New Guinea is one of the most ethnically diverse and complex countries on earth. There are more than 700 ethnic groups which are often separated into two major divisions, Papuans (84 per cent) and Melanesians (15 per cent). In addition, Negritos, Micronesians, Polynesians and other ethnicities comprise the remaining one per cent.

Population of Papua New Guinea-born people in Australia (2006 Census): 24,022¹

Population of Papua New Guinea-born people in Queensland: 12,590

Population of Papua New Guinea-born people in Brisbane: 6703

Population of Papua New Guinea-born people in Cairns: 1426

Population of Papua New Guinea-born people in Gold Coast: 971

Gender ratio (Queensland): 77.7 males per 100 females¹

Median age (Australia): The median age of Papua New Guinea-born people in 2006 was 37.8 years compared with 46.8 years for all overseas-born and 37.1 for the total Australian population².

Age distribution (Queensland)¹:

Age	Per cent
0-19	12.5%
20-39	44.5%
40-59	35.3%
60+	7.7%

Arrivals – past five years (Source – Settlement Reporting Database³)

Year	Australia	Queensland
2006	357	217
2007	357	224
2008	449	243
2009	407	205
2010	198	134

- **Language:** There are more than 830 indigenous languages of Papua New Guinea⁶. The three official languages are English, Tok Pisin (Pidgin) and Hiri Motu (spoken mainly on the south coast)^{6,7}. Other languages include Chinese, and languages of the Philippines and India which are spoken by Papua New Guineans of these Asian backgrounds^{6,8}.
- **Religion:**
 - Catholic – 27 per cent
 - Evangelical Lutheran – 19.5 per cent
 - United Church – 11.5 per cent
 - Seventh-Day Adventist – 10 per cent
 - Pentecostal – 8.6 per cent
 - Evangelical Alliance – 5.2 per cent
 - Anglican – 3.2 per cent
 - Baptist – 2.5 per cent
 - Other Protestant – 8.9 per cent
 - Bahai – 0.3 per cent
 - Indigenous beliefs and other – 3.3 per cent⁹.

Ancestry, language and religion in Australia (2006 Census for Papua New Guinea-born)²

- The top four ancestry responsesⁱ of Papua New Guinea-born people in Australia were:
 - Australian – 23 per cent
 - Papua New Guinean – 20.6 per cent
 - English – 17.1 per cent
 - Chinese – 8.5 per cent².
- The main languages spoken at home by Papua New Guinea-born people in Australia were:
 - English – 79.7 per cent
 - Pidgin/Tok Pisin – 7.4 per cent
 - Cantonese – 6 per cent.

- The main religions of Papua New Guinea-born people in Australia were:
 - Catholic – 32.5 per cent
 - No religion – 15.1 per cent
 - Anglican – 13.4 per cent
 - Uniting Church – 10.5 per cent².

Communication

- Relations between older and younger people and men and women are generally relaxed for Papua New Guinean people⁷. However, in Melanesian culture, women may be restricted from speaking with the opposite gender⁸. Therefore, many women prefer health providers of the same gender⁸.
- On meeting, men and women clasp hands or clasp one another around the waist⁷. However many Papua New Guinean Australians prefer to shake hands¹⁰.
- Direct eye contact is acceptable and people often stand close to each other⁷.
- Many Papua New Guinean people place less emphasis on keeping time and being punctual⁸. Reminder calls may be required prior to appointments⁸. Scheduling appointments at *event* time, such as *around lunch time at 12:30pm* instead of scheduling a time that may have no event association, may assist in clients getting to appointments on time.

Health in Australia

- Average life expectancy in Papua New Guinea is 66.2 years (male 64, female 68.6) compared to 81.7 years for all people in Australia (male 79.3, female 84.3)⁹.
- Although the rates of diabetes in Papua New Guinea are relatively low¹¹, based on Queensland hospital separation data, Papua New Guinea-born people in Queensland had significantly higher rates of hospital admissions for diabetes than the total Queensland population¹².

- In Papua New Guinea, major cancers in men are oral and liver and major cancers in women are cervical, oral and breast¹³. Standardised separation ratios for Papua New Guinea-born Queenslanders were not significantly higher than the total Queensland population¹².
- In Queensland, mental health service snap-shot data (July 2008) shows Papua New Guinea-born people as the fourth largest group of overseas-born consumers¹². This ranking is disproportionate to population size, with the Papua New Guinea-born population ranking 12th among overseas-born populations in Queensland. This is indicative of a higher use of mental health services by Papua New Guinea-born people in Queensland¹².
- Papua New Guinea-born Queenslanders have lower rates for musculoskeletal disease and external causes compared to the total Queensland population¹².

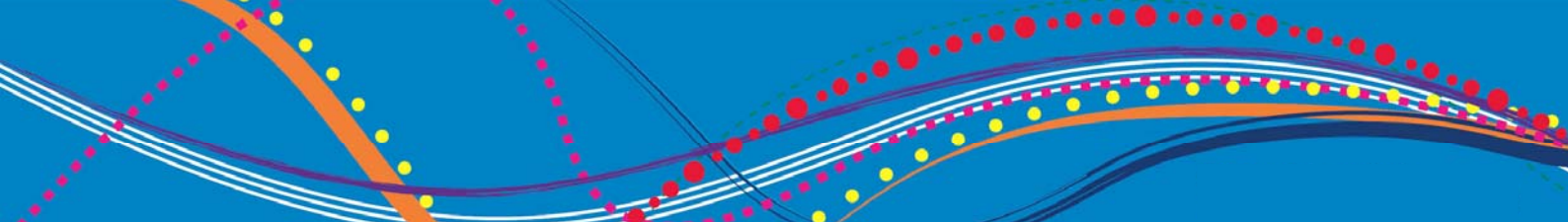
Health beliefs and practices

- In considering health beliefs of Papua New Guinean Australians, it is important to acknowledge the great cultural diversity of the country. However, there are some health beliefs that may be common to many people from Papua New Guinea.
- Since the introduction of Christianity, traditional healing through ancestors and spirits has often been replaced by church healing prayers and group gatherings to pray for health⁸.
- Some people believe in the power of spirits, sorcery and black magic as causes of illness and death⁸.
- There is a belief that the physical and non-physical worlds of the spirits are intertwined and that the health of people is directly related to the maintenance of proper social ties, adherence to the rules around taboos, and making peace with the spirits. If these traditions are disrespected, serious illness and death may result¹⁴.

- Many Papua New Guinea-born people practice traditional health remedies based on plant or tree medicines. For specialised treatment, a traditional practitioner or sorcerer may be consulted¹⁵.
- Papua New Guineans make use of both Australian medicines and traditional remedies and treatments when dealing with illness. Traditional remedies may be used to cure the underlying social and cultural causes of illness⁷.

Social determinants of health

- The overall literacy rateⁱⁱ in Papua New Guinea is low, especially in females. In 2000, the literacy rate was 57.3 per cent for the total population, 63.4 per cent for males and 50.9 per cent for females⁹.
- Australian census data on Papua New Guinea-born people is impacted by the high percentage of people who are the children of Australians working in Papua New Guinea. As a result, proficiency in English, education and employment rates are not accurately represented for ethnic Papua New Guineans.
- Proficiency in English in Australia (2006 Census)^{iii,1}:
 - 96 per cent of Papua New Guinea-born men and 94 per cent of Papua New Guinea-born women reported that they spoke English well or very well.
 - Four per cent of men and five per cent of women reported that they did not speak English well.
 - Less than one per cent of men and one per cent of women reported that they did not speak English at all.
- At the time of the 2006 census^{iv}, 58.8 per cent of Papua New Guinea-born people aged 15 years and older had some form of higher non-school qualifications^v compared to 52.5 per cent of the total Australian population².
- The participation rate in the workforce (2006 Census) was 73.3 per cent and the unemployment rate was 5.1 per cent compared to the corresponding rates of 64.6 per cent and 5.2 per cent



in the total Australian population². The median weekly income for Papua-New Guinea-born people in Australia aged 15 years and older was \$593 compared to \$466 for the total Australian population².

- Violence against Papua New Guinean women has been shown to be widespread and domestic violence a normal part of marital relationships¹⁶⁻²⁰.
- The lack of cohesiveness in the Papua New Guinea community living in Queensland has been highlighted in a qualitative study¹².

Utilisation of health services in Australia

- Barriers to health service access and utilisation (including mental health services) include language, cultural differences, lack of appropriate information, communication and stigma^{12,21}.
- Qualitative research in Queensland has shown that shyness, fear of asking questions, and a lack of confidence when dealing with authority figures are additional barriers to Papua New Guinea-born people accessing and utilising health services¹².



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It should be noted that there is great diversity within communities and people do not fit into a pre-determined cultural box or stereotype. The information presented here will not apply to all Papua New Guinean Australians and this profile should be considered in the context of the acculturation process.

ⁱ At the 2006 Census, up to two responses per person were allowed for the Ancestry question. Therefore, the count is total responses, not person count.

ⁱⁱ Definition of literacy – Age over 15 years, can read and write.

ⁱⁱⁱ Missing and not-stated responses to this question on the census were excluded from the analysis.

^{iv} It needs to be noted that a substantial proportion of Papua New Guinea-born people responding to the census are children of Australians working in Papua New Guinea.

^v Non-school qualifications are awarded for educational attainments other than those of pre-primary, primary or secondary education.