

FIJIAN ETHNICITY AND BACKGROUND

This profile relates to Melanesian Fijians – not Fiji-Indians who comprise 56% of Fiji-born people in Australia. Melanesian Fijians comprise 19% of Fiji-born people in Australia. For information about the Indian background, refer to the Indian profile.

Communication

- A handshake and saying *bula* (hello) is the traditional Fijian greeting.

It is important not to touch a Fiji-born person on the head as to do so is considered an insult. If you do need to touch a Fijian's head it is vital you explain why and excuse yourself for having to touch.

- It is inappropriate to walk in front of someone (especially if you are standing and they are sitting down), but if you accidentally do so, it is important you lower yourself to their height and say *tu lou* (excuse me).

Health related beliefs and practices

- It is common for Fiji-born people to tell good friends or family if they are in pain, but not if a stranger is present.
- Fiji-born people will accept medication and pain relief, if the health professional clearly tells the person the benefits.
- Instructions of health professionals will be followed if the health professional has developed a trusting relationship with the person.
- Fijian people are often less likely to participate in traditional healings due to Christian beliefs.

Pregnancy

- Motherhood elevates the status of a married woman; infertile women may be seen as wasting family resources.
- Use of antenatal care by Fijian women is relatively high.
- Unwanted pregnancy is considered a personal responsibility and is linked to moral failure of control and bad luck. It is not linked to failure in the use or effectiveness of contraception.

Birth

Almost all women (98%) in Fiji deliver in hospitals. However, NSW data indicates that Fiji-born women are less likely than Australia-born women to have their first antenatal appointment before 20 weeks.

After birth

- Postpartum women have relief from household duties and from work on plantations.
- In Fijian culture, it is important to support postpartum women and infants emotionally and materially. Women lacking social support could be at risk of postnatal depression. Postnatal depression is relatively rare among Fijian women, and may take a culturally sanctioned form of dissatisfaction with social support.

Information in this column relates to all Fiji-born Australians

Population in Australia: 48,150 people

Population in Queensland: 8,950 people

Population in Brisbane: 6,789 people

Gender ratio: 86.3 males per 100 females

Median age: 35.9 years

Age	%
0-14	5.5
15-24	12.8
25-44	45
45-64	29.7
≥ 65	7

The main spoken languages are Hindi, English, Fijian

Almost all Fijians are proficient in English

The Fiji-born comprise people of Fijian, Chinese, Indian, European, Rotuman and other ancestries

Religious affiliations: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity

The Fijian community is well established, with immigration from the mid-1950s.

Reasons for immigration to Australia included better employment, higher wages, and improved welfare services. Migration accelerated in post-independence (in the 1970s) and by 1986, there were 14, 749 Fiji-born people in Australia.

Following military coups and political unrest in Fiji in 1987, Australia received an influx of Fijian-Indians seeking asylum.

Infant care

- Traditionally, no special treatment is given to the stump of the umbilical cord, except applying some oil.
- It is believed that infants benefit from extensive material and emotional support provided by family and maternal relatives.
- Close relatives, extended family members and friends frequently share the provision of the infant's care.

Infant feeding

- Breastfeeding is usually prolonged.
- Fijians believe that breastfeeding is essential for a child's development. According to Fijian cultural norms, becoming pregnant during lactation is considered unacceptable and shameful. Pregnancy while still breastfeeding is believed to weaken the child, due to an insufficient period of breastfeeding.
- Bottle and mixed feeding are also popular. In Fiji, cans of infant formulas are often given to women as samples at the time of their visits to health centres.
- Solid foods are usually introduced from the age of four months.
- In 2006, of the 196 Fiji-born women who gave birth in Queensland Health facilities, at the time of discharge, 77% (150) exclusively breastfed, 15% (30) breastfed and formula fed and 8% (16) exclusively formula fed.

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