

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.

Introduction:

Over half (53.8%) of Victoria's Poland-born community arrived in Australia prior to 1986; and 21.9% arrived between 1986 and 1995 (ABS 2016).

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	275	54	80	60	79	178	64%
City of Knox	372	99	163	35	59	166	44%
City of Manningham	155	22	53	44	33	99	63%
City of Maroondah	166	48	57	30	33	84	50%
City of Monash	524	139	211	85	91	285	54%
City of Whitehorse	271	56	92	60	63	171	63%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	193	44	79	36	36	106	54%
Eastern Region	1955	458	743	343	385	1087	55%

(ABS Census 2016)

- There were 14,706 Poland-born persons in Victoria at the last census, decreasing from 16,383 persons in 2011 due to the ageing population and lack of new arrivals (ABS 2016).
- The median age of the Poland-born population is 61 years compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (ABS 2016).

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	204	58	64	34	46	109	53%
City of Knox	376	105	171	35	61	178	47%
City of Manningham	124	26	42	25	22	63	50%
City of Maroondah	145	46	47	23	28	72	49%
City of Monash	489	132	101	85	76	269	55%
City of Whitehorse	220	56	77	40	37	163	74%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	188	51	77	30	23	80	42%
Eastern Region	1742	475	693	271	309	909	52%

(ABS Census 2016)

- The main languages spoken at home by the Poland-born population in Australia are: Polish (69.1%), English (25.2%), Yiddish (1.4%) and German (0.9%) (ABS 2016).
- 11% of the Poland-born population in Australia identified as speaking English 'not well' or 'not at all' and 37.2% of the Poland-born population in Australia assessed themselves as speaking English 'very well' (ABS 2016).
- 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.

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 <u>and</u> 18 Bond Street, Ringwood 3134	Ph: 9285 4888 (Box Hill) 9870 1351 (Ringwood)
New Hope Foundation	Grattan Gardens Community Centre 40 Grattan Street, Pahran 3181	Ph: 9510 5877

Aged Care & Disability Support Services

Australian Polish Community Services Inc.

Address: Maidstone VIC 3012

Ph: (03) 9689 9170

Email: info@polishcommunity.org.au

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.

Migrant Information Centre Aged & Disability Services

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

Ph: 9275 6901

Email: wzhang@miceastmelb.com.au

Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne)
www.miceastmelb.com.au



A.B.N. 27 084 251 669

Website: <http://miceastmelb.com.au/our-services/elderly-people-younger-people-disabilities-carers/>

The Access & Support Program provides short term support to help people access aged care and other services so they can continue living at home independently. The Program provides information, referral, support and monitoring. The aged and disability team generally 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.

Polish Retirement Home

Address: 3 Percival Street, Bayswater, 3153

Ph: (03) 9720 3575

Email: apba@apba.org.au

The Polish Retirement Home was built and opened in 1993 thanks to the generosity of the Polish community in Victoria and the Federal Government. It is a government subsidised Hostel, operating to approved standards set by the Federal Department of Health and Aged Care.

The Polish Community Council of Victoria Inc.

Address: Suite 305, 3 Chester St, Oakleigh VIC 3166

Ph: (03) 9569 4020

Email: info@pccv.org.au

The Polish Community Council of Victoria Inc. (Federacja Polskich Organizacji w Wiktorii) was established in 1962 as the state's peak Polish organisation, or federation, of Victoria's Polish associations, organisations and individual groups of Polish migrants. The Council represents the concerns, needs, aspirations, achievements and interests of the Polish community of Victoria. Currently the Polish PAG Centres run by the PCCV are provided at three locations in the EMR:

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 Haughton 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 (03) 9275 6905.

Name of the Club	LGA	Venue
Rowville Polish Senior Citizens' Club	Knox	Polish House 'Syrena', 1325 Stud Rd Rowville, 3178
Blackburn Polish Senior Citizens Club (Doncaster)	Manningham	North Blackburn Community Room North Blackburn Shopping Centre North Blackburn, 3130
Waverley Polish Senior Citizens Club	Monash	Mt Waverley Community Centre 47 Miller Crescent, Mt Waverley, 3149

Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne)

www.miceastmelb.com.au



A.B.N. 27 084 251 669

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