



Culturally and linguistically diverse communities



In SESLHD

SESLHD'S population is highly culturally and linguistically diverse with a large population who were born overseas.

At the time of the 2016 Census, close to 40% of SESLHD residents were born overseas, with 30% born in a mainly non-English speaking country.^{1,2,3}

Population Profile

More than 35% of our residents speak a language other than English at home, with 6% of total SESLHD residents reporting that they do not speak English well or at all.^{2,4}

44% of SESLHD residents who were born in a mainly non-English speaking country live in Georges River LGA (formerly Hurstville and Kogarah LGAs) and Bayside LGA (formerly Rockdale and Botany Bay LGAs).²

Issues and challenges

Differing cultural beliefs regarding health, illness, self-care and experiences with health services, prevention and treatment can lead to varying understandings of the health system and present challenges to accessing health care for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This can be compounded by language barriers and poorer levels of health literacy.

Furthermore, those with limited English proficiency can have patient safety compromised if professional interpreters are not utilised in their interactions with the health system, potentially contributing to adverse events, poorer patient experiences and compliance, higher hospital readmission rates, delays to theatre, and medico-legal action and associated costs.⁵

The top 20 mainly non-English speaking countries of birth of SESLHD residents are:

China, Indonesia, Greece, Nepal, Philippines, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Malaysia, Thailand, Lebanon, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Brazil, Egypt, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Germany, Republic of South Korea, France and Russian Federation.²

The top 20 languages other than English spoken in SESLHD are:

Mandarin, Cantonese, Greek, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, Nepali, Indonesian, Macedonian, Russian, Portuguese, French, Thai, Bengali, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Hindi, German, Korean, and Croatian.²

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2016.

2. Excludes not stated and inadequately described.

3. English speaking countries include: Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, USA, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

4. Excludes not stated and inadequately described.

5. South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (2016). 'Our right to know: Use of professional interpreters for surgical consent'.