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European migrants in Australia: Results from the 1996 census

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Abstract

This paper reviews the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the ten largest European groups in Australia. Based on the 1996 census this work forms part of the twenty Community Profiles written by the ANU and published by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. To reflect the similarities and contrast the differences, these groups are divided into three: the United Kingdom and Ireland; Northern Europe (Germany, the Netherlands, Poland); and Southern Europe (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta). Lebanon is included to provide a contrast with other Mediterranean countries.

In general, the numbers of migrants born in these countries is on decline. Moreover, among the first generation, there are significant differences between these groups in terms of their pace of residence in Australia, age and sex structure, marital status, educational attainment and qualification, occupation, industry, income, English proficiency and citizenship.

Thus, this paper argues that among the first generation of European immigrants there are three separate demographic regimes in Australia. These distinct regimes, however, appear less evident among the second generation as degree of convergence towards the Australian average takes place. For some birthplace groups, for example, the second generation achieved a lower educational attainment than their highly selected parents did. From the third generation and ancestry question in the 2001 census, it will be possible in future to establish further developments among European migrant groups.