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Diversity in the ageing Australian population

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Abstract

The Aged Care Unit of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) is currently analysing projection data of the older ethnic population to the year 2026. The projections were provided by the Australian Bureaus of Statistics (ABS) and include fifty non-English speaking countries with the largest representation of immigrants, the major English-speaking countries and the Australian born.

Overseas-born people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds comprised 17.8 per cent of the 65+ population in 1996 and this will increase to 21.2 per cent in 2026. Over the next 26 years the ethnic older population will experience an 'ageing of the aged' with significant growth in the oldest age groups, reaching peak growth rates in the 80+ population during the period 2001-2011.

Quinquennial population projections from 1996 through to 2026 demonstrate vividly the dramatic changes taking place in the ethnic composition of the older population. These changes largely reflect past patterns of immigration. While Southern and Central European countries will continue to be strongly represented among the overseas-born aged 65+, by 2026 people from Viet-Nam will form the third largest ethnic older population group.

The projections provide critical data for the provision of aged care services over the next few decades.