



Language Skills



New South Wales and Sydney are rich in multiculturalism and linguistic diversity. At the time of the last census in 2006, over 1.3 million or 20% of New South Wales residents reported speaking a language other than English at home. In Sydney, around a third of people living in the greater metropolitan area speak a non-English language at home.

Over 40% of Australian residents who speak a language other than English reside in New South Wales. Besides English, the most commonly spoken languages in the State are Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin and other dialects), Arabic, Italian, Greek and Vietnamese. European languages are prominent in the State as a result of cultural and historic links to Europe, and Asian languages have flourished due to higher levels of immigration from Asia.

Sydney's availability of foreign language speakers, particularly its abundance of Asia language speakers, has proven to be a desirable factor for global firms wishing to establish regional operations hubs or Asia-Pacific customer service centres. Many of these non-English language speakers are also highly qualified, with a significant number having attained tertiary qualifications.

Language Skills - selected languages in Australian states, 2006 (1)

Language	NSW	Sydney	Victoria	Queensland	Other	Australia	NSW % of Aust
Speaks English only	4,846,670	2,635,998	3,668,282	3,371,684	3,694,696	15,581,332	31.1
Speaks a non-English language:	1,314,556	1,205,145	1,007,436	303,096	521,108	3,146,196	41.8
Arabic	164,986	161,097	55,926	7,285	15,475	243,672	67.7
Cantonese	129,606	125,292	66,854	19,625	28,472	244,557	53.0
Mandarin	100,594	96,704	64,378	24,445	31,180	220,597	45.6
Italian	87,297	71,770	133,327	22,030	74,240	316,894	27.5
Greek	86,158	80,149	117,875	10,995	37,188	252,216	34.2
Vietnamese	74,588	72,616	72,162	17,144	30,969	194,863	38.3
Spanish	49,557	44,663	24,505	11,298	12,636	97,996	50.6
Hindi	38,147	36,982	18,181	7,956	5,721	70,005	54.5
Korean	36,683	35,943	5,978	7,369	4,600	54,630	67.1
Tagalog (excludes Filipino)(c)	29,215	27,335	11,281	6,754	6,036	53,286	54.8
Macedonian	28,940	19,033	30,771	1,144	6,978	67,833	42.7
Croatian	23,605	20,664	22,958	4,359	12,689	63,611	37.1
German	22,107	14,707	19,603	14,741	19,174	75,625	29.2
Serbian	21,613	18,658	16,866	4,035	10,024	52,538	41.1
Turkish	20,592	18,863	29,749	1,581	1,941	53,863	38.2
Indonesian	19,061	18,205	10,448	3,240	9,288	42,037	45.3
Filipino (excludes Tagalog)(c)	18,260	16,958	10,661	5,023	5,108	39,052	46.8
Tamil	15,743	15,172	11,094	1,679	4,185	32,701	48.1
Polish	15,497	13,034	17,784	4,997	15,105	53,383	29.0
French	15,184	12,884	11,868	7,529	8,625	43,206	35.1
Maltese	14,344	12,987	19,022	1,521	1,628	36,515	39.3
Russian	14,052	13,223	14,339	3,340	4,762	36,493	38.5
Portuguese	13,542	11,681	4,206	2,650	5,383	25,781	52.5
Other languages	275,185	246,525	217,600	112,356	169,701	774,842	35.5
Not stated	387,953	278,047	256,703	229,754	253,350	1,127,760	34.4

Total	6,549,179	4,119,190	4,932,421	3,904,534	4,469,154	19,855,288	33.0
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Footnotes:

1: Numbers of people who speak a language other than English at home based on place of usual residence.

Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing.