

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

Muslim Demographics: Australia

Dr. Suad Joseph, General Editor

Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and Women and Gender Studies, University of California, Davis

EWIC Staff: Datasheet

- ❖ Indigenous Australians and Muslim communities have a long history of intermarriage and trading. The first Muslims to arrive in Australia predated European settlement. Beginning in the 1770s Muslim Malay fishermen travelled annually from Indonesia to Australia to trade.¹
- ❖ The majority of Australian Muslims are Sunni. Beginning in the 1990s, migration from Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan has created a number of established Shi'ite communities.² Less than 10% of Australia's Muslim population is Shi'ite (2009 estimate).³ Australia is also home to small populations of Alawites and Druze, Muslim minority groups mostly from Lebanon and surrounding countries.⁴
- ❖ According to the Australian national census, the number of Indigenous Australian people who identify as Muslim grew from 641 in 2001 to 1,014 in 2006; more than a 60% increase in five years.⁵
- ❖ Muslims in Australia constitute 2.2% of the population (476,300 people) according to the 2011 census. Islam is the 4th largest religious affiliation following Christians (61.1%), unaffiliated (22.3%), and Buddhists (2.5%).⁶
- ❖ The Muslim population in Australia is largely comprised of younger people; 58.6% of the population of Australian Muslims is 29 years old or younger. Most of them are second-generation Australian Muslims. Of this number 81.8% are under 25 years of age.² Of the entire Australian population, 31.3% is under 25.⁷
- ❖ The majority of Muslims living in Australia, 36%, are Australian by birth. The remaining Muslim populations come mostly from Lebanon (10%), Turkey (8.5%), Bosnia-Herzegovina (4.0%), Afghanistan (3.5%), Pakistan (3.2%), Indonesia (2.9%), Iraq (2.8 %), Bangladesh (2.7%), Iran (2.3%), and Fiji (2.0%).⁴
- ❖ The first Muslim woman to enter Australian parliament was in 2013 (Mehreen Faruqi). Faruqi is Pakistani and migrated to Australia in 1992.⁸
- ❖ The Australian parliament has categorized Muslim discrimination under three themes: Muslim Australians as potential terrorists, no place in Australia for Muslims, and pressure to assimilate and abandon cultural practices. Muslim Women report being physically and verbally abused.⁹

¹ http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/doc/icnsw_muslimhistory.pdf

² http://www.immi.gov.au/gateways/police/resources/pdf/building_bridges.pdf

³ <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2009/10/Shiarange.pdf>

⁴ Hussain, Jamila. "Diaspora studies: Australia." Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures. General Editor Suad Joseph. Brill Online, 2014. Reference. University of California UC Davis CDL. 09 June 2014 http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-women-and-islamic-cultures/diaspora-studies-australia-EWICCOM_0678

⁵ <http://theconversation.com/long-history-with-islam-gives-indigenous-australians-pride-3521>

⁶ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2071.0main+features902012-2013>

⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/as.html>

⁸ <http://www.voanews.com/content/first-muslim-woman-will-enter-australian-parliament/1647010.html>

⁹ http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/archive/MuslimAustralians