

VIETNAMESE

Pre and Post Migration Experiences

- Many Vietnamese people have experienced re-education camps
- Many have faced traumatic experiences when trying to leave Vietnam
- Some may be suffering from problems related to their trauma experiences

Vietnamese Population in Australia and QLD

Australia:

- 219,355 Australian residents
- declared that they were born in Vietnam (Sixth largest)

Queensland: 19,544

S.E QLD: 17,824

Source: ABS 2016 census

Interesting fact! 'Nguyen' is the 13th most common surname in Australia. By 2023 it is projected to overtake 'Smith' as the country's most common surname.

Source: <https://theculturetrip.com/pacific/Australia/articles/a-history-of-the-Vietnamese-community-in-Australia>



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Language Spoken at Home

- Vietnamese 82.7%
- Cantonese 10.2%
- English 3.9%
- Mandarin 1.0%
- Other Language 1.4%

Source: ABS Census 2016



Communication

- Importance of non-verbal communication
- Greetings: title + birth order
- Avoid touching people on the head (taboo)
- Avoid hugs/kisses
- It takes time to develop trust relationship
- Topics to avoid: politics, serious illnesses, disability, all abuses, mental illness, and domestic violence



Greetings

- Address a person by their title and family name when greeting them for the first time.
- People should always be greeted in order of age, with the oldest first.
- Vietnamese men are accustomed to shaking hands. Some may use two hands to shake.
- Bowing the head while shaking hands indicates respect.
- Elders should be greeted respectfully. Hold both their hands while greeting or give a respectful bow.
- Younger person should lower their eyes when greeting an elder.
- Women generally don't shake hands, so wait for a woman to extend her hand first when greeting her.
- It is more appropriate to verbally greet someone of the opposite sex and give a brief bow or nod.
- People usually only hug to greet their relatives or very close friends.
- Questions about someone's family are appreciated during or after introductions.

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Cultural Customs

- Objects should be passed, given or received with both hands together.
- Incense is generally only lit for rituals, anniversaries, times of mourning or in temples.
- Feet are thought to be the 'dirtiest' part of the body. Be careful how you sit to avoid pointing soles of your feet to others.
- Vietnamese people don't wear shoes around the house.
- The top of the head is considered to be the most important part of the human body. Avoid touching people on the head or pass things over people's heads.
- Vietnamese people are generally punctual and expect the same from others.

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Food & Leisure Activities

Food

- Three meals:
light breakfast and two main meals
- Main types of food:
rice, noodles, pork/chicken, and fresh herbs
- Many Vietnamese sources their food from Asian Grocery stores in Queensland

Leisure activities

- Watching TV and DVDs, Chinese chess, singing, gardening, walking, meeting friends, going to temple or church
- Grocery stores in Queensland

Family

- Traditionally extended family lived together, this is changing as modern families adopt more Western lifestyles
- Family is very important – it is expected that you put the family's interest ahead of your own. Help your own family before helping others.
- Strong gender roles
- Hierarchical and patriarchal
– age and gender matter

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Religion

- 40.46% Buddhists
- 28.77% Christians
- 26.46% follow secular or no religious beliefs

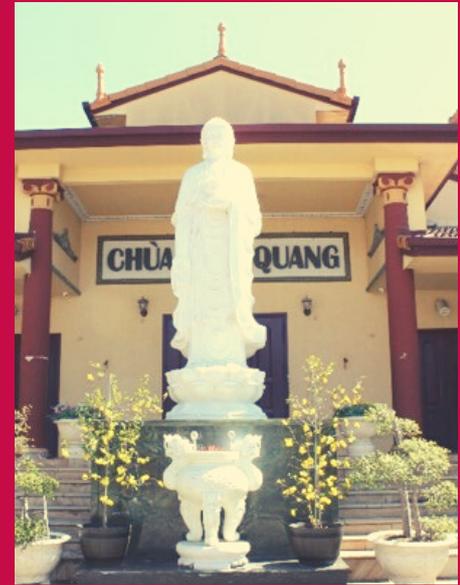
Source: ABS 2016 census

- Religion is not that important to the culture of Vietnam
- There are a mix of religions - many find it hard to say which religion they belong to
- Christianity was initially brought into Vietnam by the Portuguese Catholic missionaries in the 16th century. Then increased in numbers when the French ruled the country

<https://www.insideasiatours.com/southeast-asia/Vietnamese-culture/religion/>

Important Days

- Vietnamese use the Lunar Calendar. The dates of special events vary from year to year
- **Tết** – Vietnamese Lunar New Year Day
- Mid-Autumn festival – Children’s festival
- Buddha’s Birthday and Wandering Souls Day (only for Buddhist people)
- Easter, Christmas, All Saints and All Souls Day (only for Catholic people)



Cultural Considerations/Taboos

- It is considered taboo to discuss anything related to the war or associated mental health issues.
- Call Ho Chi Minh City “Saigon” to show respect to people from the South.
- Older Vietnamese people can be very blunt and may ask personal questions.
- Avoid directly criticising someone or pointing out his or her mistakes.
- Try not to interrupt or ‘fill in’ the silence if a Vietnamese person quietens during a conversation
- Do not break any promises that you have already committed to, verbally or in writing
- Vietnamese people can be quite superstitious
- Please, excuse me and thank you are not commonly used

Health & Illness

- Both Western and  alternative medicine used
- Herbal treatments
- Rubbing coins
- Heated patches (salonpas)
- Medicated oil
- May be quite stoic about pain
- Buddhists may believe the illness is due to previous deeds in a past life

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Death & Dying

- Prefer to die at home
- Prefer to have a monk or priest to be present at the time of death
- Up to 3 years mourning (depending on the relationship)
- Only immediate family wear white clothing and white headbands at funerals

Image: <https://medium.com/the-how-guide/how-Vietnamese-bury-their-dead-380d96946119>

<http://www.vanhoaviet.info/mourning.htm>



Attitudes to Aged Care

- Family members are expected to take care of their older loved ones
- Staying with extended families, or to be nearby is preferred
- May not accept residential facilities



Sources

- <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/>
- <http://www.vanhoaviet.info/mourning.htm>
- <https://theculturetrip.com/pacific/Australia/articles/a-history-of-the-Vietnamese-community-in-Australia>
- <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/vietnamese-refugees-boat-arrival>
- <https://www.insideasiatours.com/southeast-asia/Vietnamese-culture/religion/>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnamese_Australians



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CONTACTING US

Compliments or complaints

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