

Culture and Customs

Bosnia-Herzegovina's cultural heritage is a complex mixture of Mediterranean, Byzantine, Ottoman and Central European influences.

However, the majority are Muslim and thus adhere to Islamic traditions and norms. But many Bosnians are influenced greatly by the cultures of European countries that surround Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Food

These cultural influences are particularly relevant in relation to Bosnian food.

Bosnia-Herzegovina cuisine tends to include dairy products and meat, particularly beef and lamb. These are often grilled or barbecued.

Popular traditional dishes include:

- *Bosnian pot (bosanski lonac)* – meat and vegetables that are roasted slowly and served in a ceramic pot.
- *Sarma* – rolled cabbage with meat and rice.
- *Jagnjetina* – lamb grilled over an open fire.
- *Filovane paprike* – peppers filled with minced meat and spices.
- *Sirnica pie* (made with cheese) and *zeljanica* (made with spinach).
- The *Cevapi* – skinless sausage with chopped onions. The *Cevapi* is also widely available in Australian supermarkets.
- *Salads* are usually made with tomatoes, lettuce, onion, peppers and cheese.
- Pickled vegetables are often eaten with meals such as pickled cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, carrots and onions.
- The *baklava* is also considered a traditional dessert, a largely Turkish influence.

Attitude to Aged Care

Older Bosnian people expect to be cared for by their children. They are also reluctant to enter into residential care.

The elderly may prefer that their family be involved in the decisions about their care and it is important to ask the elderly person.

Individual elderly Bosnian women prefer to receive care from a female carer. Ask the person about their preference if unsure.

In general any medical procedure is acceptable especially if it is prescribed by a Medical Practitioner.

Attitude to sickness

It is usual that illness is attributed to the will of God.

Death and Burial

Death is viewed as the will of God and how it is handled must be treated with a great deal of respect. The family usually prefers to take the deceased home to wash the body. The body is wrapped in a white shroud and is buried without a coffin which is required on the day of death.

For Muslims it is appropriate to contact the family and the Muslim Imam to identify the arrangements and practices that should be conducted.

For further information contact: Multicultural Communities Council Gold Coast Inc.

Phone: (07) 5527-8011

Fax: (07) 5527-8531

Funded by the Australian Department of Health and Ageing under the 2006 Community Partners Program



BOSNIAN SPEAKING COMMUNITY ON THE GOLD COAST

**Community Partners Program
(CPP)**

Bosnian Speaking Community

Historical Background

Bosnia, which became part of former Yugoslavia after World War I, is now known as Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In 1992 Bosnia (the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina) declared independence from Yugoslavia which resulted in internal conflict. As a result approximately 800,000 Bosnians were displaced to other countries as refugees including to Australia.

Many arrived to Australia as refugees under the Refugee and Humanitarian Program with experiences of torture and persecution.

Historically Bosnia-Herzegovina was made up of three major religious groups - Muslims, Orthodox Christians (mostly Serbian) and Roman Catholic (mostly Croatian). Among Bosnians in Australia this is also reflected in the organisation of the Bosnia-Herzegovina-born local population. (Source: *Community Information Summaries DIMA; and Multicultural Queensland 2001*)

Notably however, the largest number of people who identify as Bosnian immigrated to Australia during the 1960s. After 1992, a large number also arrived to Australia from Bosnia-Herzegovina due to conflicts in the region and deteriorating economic conditions.

The Gold Coast Community

Geographic Distribution

At the 1996 Census there were 13,614 Bosnia-Herzegovina-born persons in Australia and this increased to 23,910 persons by 2001. By 2006 there were 24,632 persons. (Source: *ABS Census Data*)

In 2001 there were 2,910 (12.2%) persons living in Queensland and 532 persons in the Gold Coast Region. By 2006 the number increased to 799 persons.

On the Gold Coast the largest numbers are concentrated in the suburbs of Southport, Labrador, Surfers Paradise, Mermaid Waters-Clear Island Waters, Nerang, Burleigh Waters and Arundel. (Source: *A Social Profile of Gold Coast City, 2004*)

Age

The median age of the Bosnia-Herzegovina-born in 2001 was 37.6 years compared with 46.0 years for all overseas born and 35.6 years for the total Australian population. However, Around 31.8 per cent were aged 45 years and over.

Language

The main languages spoken at home by Bosnia-Herzegovina-born people in Australia were Bosnian (51.1 per cent), Croatian (19.2 per cent), and Serbian (18.8 per cent).

Religion

In Australia, the major religions amongst those born in Bosnia-Herzegovina are Islam (9,900 or 41.6% persons), Western Catholic (5,580 persons or 23.4% and Serbian Orthodox (3,800 persons or 16.0%). (Source: *ABS Census Data*)

Bosnians tend to be diverse with respect to religion but the majority are Muslim and thus adhere to Islamic traditions and norms.

This brochure presents some general information which may be helpful to service providers. It is also important to consult the person being cared for about the preferred spiritual practices.

- Muslims believe in one God, Allah, and that God revealed the religion of Islam through Mohammad, believed to be the direct descendent of Abraham and the last prophet.
- The *Qur'an* is the Holy Book of Muslims which contains many stories that are familiar to Christians and Jews.
- Muslims are required to pray five times a day toward the *Ka'ba*, in Mecca.
- Every year during the month of *Ramadhan*, Bosnian Muslims fast for 30 days from food and drink from sunrise to sunset. It is believed that fasting allows people to become aware of the plight of the poor and develops discipline and willpower.
- The most important feast day is *Bayram*, after Ramadhan and lasts for four days.
- Kurban-Bayram is another important feast day and takes place two months and ten days after the first day Bayram. (Source: *Cultural Care Kit Resource Manual 2nd edition 1997*)
- Elderly and people who are ill do not have to fast.
- Bosnian Muslim women usually wear a scarf to cover their heads and long sleeves and skirts to cover arms and legs.
- Attitudes toward wearing the *hijab* to cover their hair, arms and legs as part of religious practice is more relaxed among the Bosnian community in Australia.