

Insights into Auslan

Auslan: Statistics & Interesting Facts.

(From Johnston & Schembri, "Australian Sign Language: An introduction to sign language linguistics")

- The prevalence of **severe to profound deafness** in developed societies is estimated to be about 0.1% of the population (about 1 in every 1,000 people).
- **In Australia this would mean there are approximately 20,000 deaf Auslan users.** (As in 2005 there were approximately 20 million people in Australia).
- This is consistent with a 1991 survey by **Hyde and Power** which suggested **Australia has approximately 15,000 signing deaf people** (with an additional approximately **15,000 hearing Auslan signers**).
- **Native Auslan signers** are estimated to be approximately 5-10% of the Deaf Community.
- A much larger proportion of the population (approximately 5%) have some hearing loss (mostly mild or moderate and acquired during adulthood – due mainly to disease, ageing or regular exposure to loud noise).
- For most adults in the Deaf Community, Auslan is acquired later in life once they become more independent and discover the signing Deaf Community.
- Deaf people value membership of their community and **80-90% of deaf people who get married marry other deaf people.**
- Most deaf couples have hearing children (90%).
- Most deaf children have hearing parents(90%).
- The rare deaf children with deaf parents are like royalty in the Deaf Community and are often envied by those deaf people with hearing parents.
- In most cases, Auslan is not passed on from parent to child but often from child to child (peers).
- Auslan was only recognised as being a language in the 1980's.