

Measures of Australia's Progress



At a glance 2008

Is life in Australia getting better?

This booklet provides a brief summary of the fourteen headline dimensions of progress which cover major features of Australian life.

If you would like more detailed information about whether life in Australia is getting better, there are two other *Measures of Australia's Progress* products available.

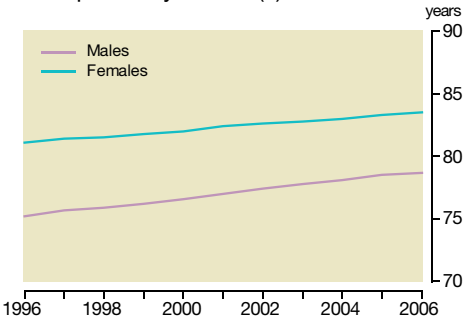
Each year the ABS produces *Measures of Australia's Progress: Summary Indicators* (cat. no. 1383.0.55.001) – a web-based product which provides more information and explanation about the fourteen headline dimensions of progress. The 2008 edition can be accessed or downloaded at **www.abs.gov.au**.

The ABS also produces a detailed publication, *Measures of Australia's Progress* (cat. no. 1370.0), with the most recent edition being 2006 and the next edition planned for 2011. The publication provides more detail as well as a number of additional dimensions of progress. In all, it presents a suite of over a hundred indicators, designed to inform Australians of changes in their lives and the human and natural environment. The 2006 edition can be accessed without charge at **www.abs.gov.au**.

Individuals

Health

Life expectancy at birth(a)



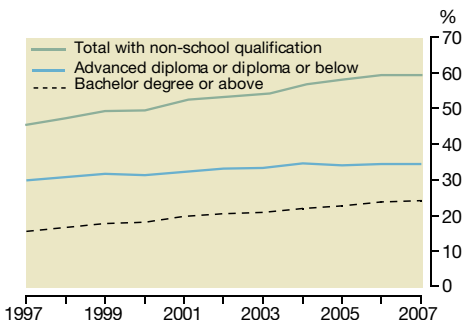
(a) Data are three-year averages.

Source: *Deaths, Australia, 2006* (ABS cat. no. 3302.0).

- Between 1996 and 2006, Australian life expectancy at birth increased by three years for boys and two years for girls.
- A boy born in 2006 could expect to live to be 79, while a girl could expect to reach 83 years of age.
- There are some differences among particular population groups. For example, life expectancy for Indigenous Australians, both male and female, is estimated to be about 17 years shorter than that of all Australians.

Education and training

Highest level of non-school qualification of people aged 25–64 years(a)



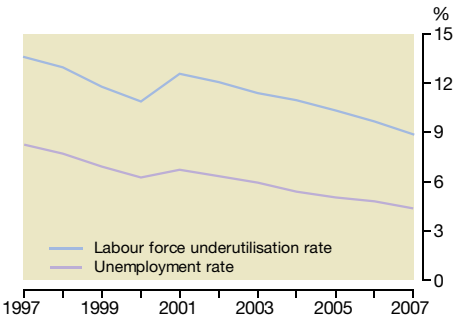
(a) People can hold multiple qualifications, however only data for the highest non-school qualification are collected and presented.

Source: ABS data available on request, *Survey of Education and Work*.

- The proportion of 25–64 year olds with a non-school qualification increased from 46% in 1997 to 59% in 2007.
- The proportion of people with a higher education qualification increased from 16% to 24%, while the proportion of people whose highest qualification was a vocational qualification was 34% in 2007, up from 30% a decade earlier.

Work

Unemployment and labour force underutilisation rates



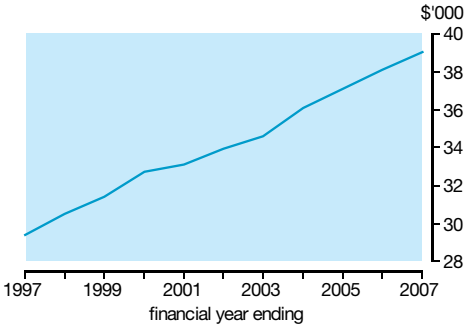
Source: *Australian Labour Market Statistics* (ABS cat. no. 6105.0); *Labour Force, Australia, Spreadsheets* (ABS cat. no. 6202.0.55.001).

- Australia's annual average unemployment rate decreased from 8.3% in 1997 to 4.4% in 2007.
- The labour force underutilisation rate fell from 13.6% to 8.9% over the same decade.

The Economy and Economic Resources

National income

Real net national disposable income per person(a)



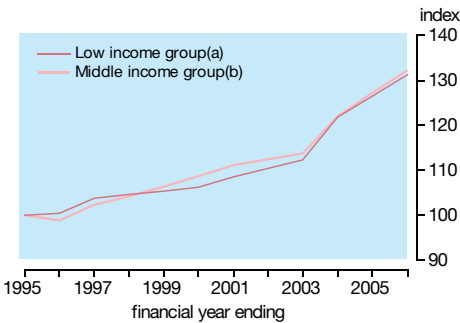
(a) Reference year 2005–06.

Source: Australian System of National Accounts, 2006–07 (ABS cat. no. 5204.0).

- Australia experienced significant real income growth between 1996–97 and 2006–07. Real net national disposable income per person grew on average by 2.9% a year.

Economic hardship

Average real equivalised disposable household income



- (a) People in the 2nd and 3rd income deciles from the bottom of the distribution when all people are ranked, from lowest to highest, by their equivalised disposable household income.

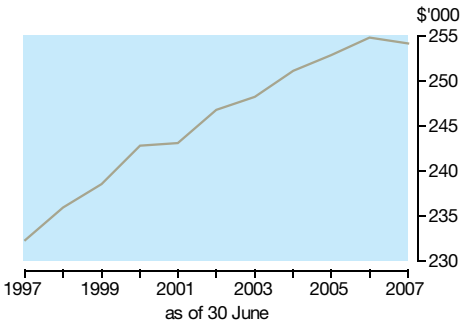
- (b) People in the middle income quintile (5th and 6th deciles) after being ranked, from lowest to highest, by their equivalised disposable household income.

Source: *Household Income and Income Distribution, Australia, 2005–06* (ABS cat. no. 6523.0).

- People in economic hardship are more likely to have low income, which can affect their ability to access a minimum standard of goods and services.
- From 1994–95 to 2005–06 there has been a continuing upward trend in the real income of low and middle income Australians.

National wealth

Real national net worth per person(a)



(a) Reference year 2005–06.

Source: *Australian System of National Accounts, 2006–07* (ABS cat. no. 5204.0).

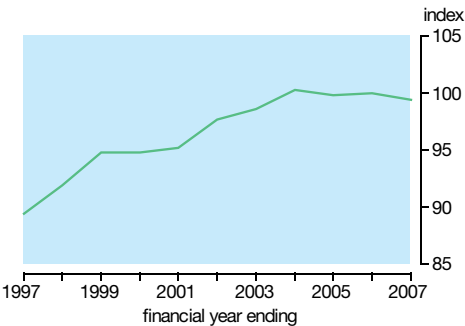
- 'Real national net worth per person' shows the amount by which Australia's assets exceed its liabilities to the rest of the world, adjusted to remove the effects of price change.
- Australia's real net worth per person rose at an average annual rate of 0.9% between June 1997 and June 2007.

Housing: No headline indicator

- Housing provides people with shelter, security and privacy. Having an adequate and appropriate place to live is fundamental to people's wellbeing, and there are many aspects to housing that affect the quality of people's lives. Dwelling attributes, such as size, number of bedrooms, physical condition, location relative to amenities and services, and price, are all important and there is no one indicator that succinctly captures whether people's many needs and desires for suitable housing are being met.

Productivity

Multifactor productivity(a)



(a) Reference year 2005–06.

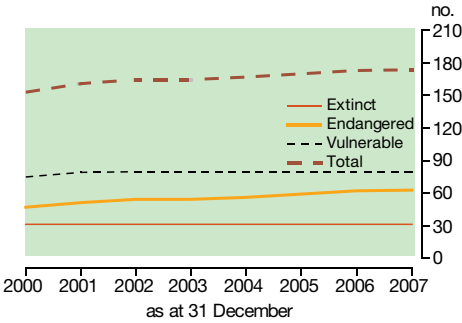
Source: *Australian System of National Accounts, 2006–07* (ABS cat. no. 5204.0).

- 'Multifactor productivity' represents productivity growth (improvement), which occurs when increases in goods and services (outputs) exceed what can be accounted for by increases in labour, capital or other inputs.
- During the decade 1996–97 to 2006–07, multifactor productivity rose on average by 1.1% per year.

The Environment

The natural landscape

Biodiversity: Threatened bird and mammal species(a)

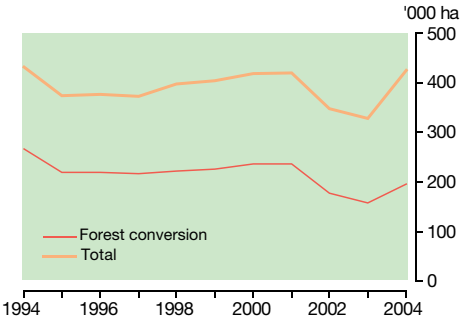


(a) Excludes seabirds, marine mammals and animals living on islands far offshore.

Source: Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2008.

- Although the numbers of extinct, endangered and vulnerable birds and mammals are only a small part of the overall biological diversity in Australia, a decline in these groups threatens ecological processes and can point to a wider decline in biodiversity.
- Between 2000 and 2007 the number of terrestrial bird and mammal species assessed as extinct, endangered or vulnerable rose from 153 to 174, an increase of 14%.

Biodiversity: Annual area of land cleared

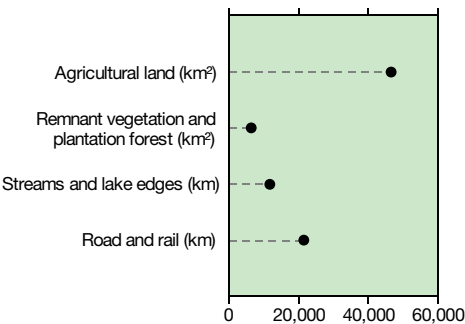


Note: The figures do not distinguish between the type of vegetation (native or non-native) that was cleared. Estimates for 2003 and 2004 are preliminary.

Source: Department of Climate Change 2007, Australian Greenhouse Emissions Information System.

- Land clearing is a key threat to biodiversity. It destroys and degrades the habitat on which native species rely.
- Between 1994 and 2004, the rate of land clearing declined slightly. An estimated 425,000 ha of land was cleared in 2004. The annual area of land cleared declined after 2001 before rising again in 2004.

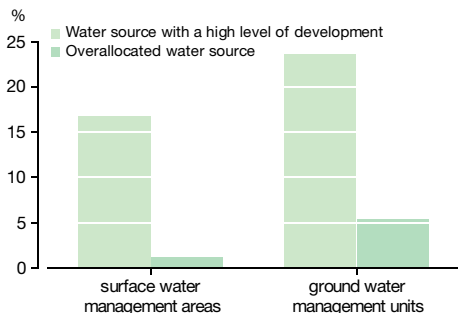
Land: Assets at risk from dryland salinity – 2000



Source: National Land and Water Resources Audit 2001, Australian Dryland Salinity Assessment 2000.

- Dryland salinity occurs when the water table rises, bringing natural salts to the surface. In sufficient quantity, these salts impact on vegetation, water resources, pipelines, houses and roads.
- In 2000, about 46,500 km² of agricultural land, 1,600 km of rail and 19,900 km of roads were at risk from salinity.

Inland waters: level of development of water sources – 2004–05



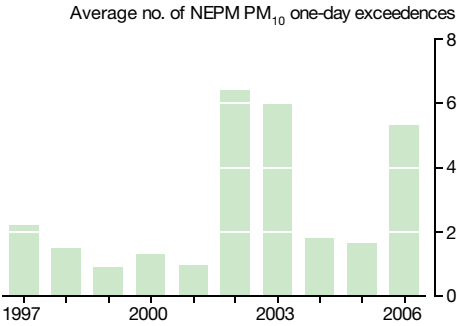
Note: a water source with a high level of development is one where water access entitlements are between 70% and 100% of sustainable yield. An overallocated water source is one where water access entitlements are more than 100% of sustainable yield.

Source: National Water Commission 2006, Australian Water Resources 2005.

- Much of our economy (agriculture in particular) relies on water, so the condition of freshwater ecosystems has a critical impact on the wider environment.
- In 2004–05, about 1% of assessed surface water management areas and 5% of assessed groundwater management units were overallocated. A further 17% of surface water management areas and 24% of groundwater management units had a high level of development.

The air and atmosphere

Urban air quality, days fine particle health standards were exceeded

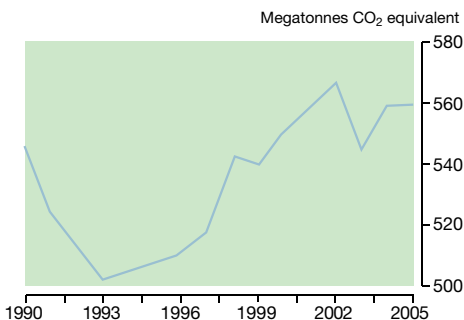


Note: Data are from sites from selected capital cities, and have been averaged in proportion to each city's population. The indicator measures the number of days when fine particle (PM₁₀) concentrations in the air exceeded the National Environment Protection Measures (NEPM) standard.

Source: State environmental protection agencies, 2007 and 2008.

- Poor air quality can cause health problems, damage infrastructure, reduce crop yields and harm flora and fauna.
- The relatively high number of days in excess of the standard in 2002, 2003 and 2006 were mainly due to bushfires and dust storms in some of our capital cities, which overshadowed the contribution from everyday sources, such as car exhausts.

Australia's net greenhouse gas emissions



Source: Australian Greenhouse Office 2007, National Greenhouse Gas Inventory 2005.

- Australia's net greenhouse gas emissions in 2005 totalled about 559 megatonnes (Mt) CO₂ equivalent, an increase of 2.2% since 1990.

Oceans and estuaries: No headline indicator

- Australia's coastal and marine regions support a large range of species, many of them found only in Australian waters. These regions are also important to Australian society and the economy. Although this dimension has no headline indicator, it does have important aspects which different organisations have attempted to measure. Such aspects include the sustainability of fish stocks and the condition of our estuaries.

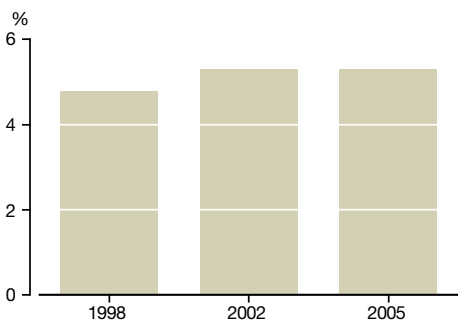
Living together

Family, community and social cohesion: No headline indicator

- Family and community are important aspects of society, but the way in which they contribute to progress is difficult to define and measure, and so there is no single indicator that captures all that might be important. The effective functioning of families and communities depends on a wide range of factors. For example, the quality and strength of people's relationships and bonds with others – their family, friends and the wider community – are important elements which contribute to social cohesion. A more cohesive society is one in which communities are strong and inclusive, in which inequalities are reduced and people have a sense of belonging. When the support offered by people's families and communities declines or is absent, it can contribute to a range of social problems such as poverty, illiteracy, ill-health and social exclusion.

Crime

Victims of selected personal crimes(a)

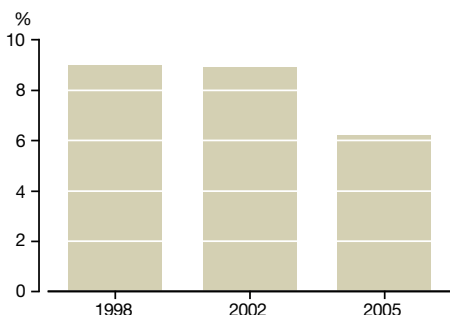


- (a) Assault and robbery among people aged 15 and over.
Sexual assault among people aged 18 and over.

Source: *Crime and Safety, Australia, 2005* (ABS cat. no. 4509.0).

- Though small, the changes in the victimisation prevalence rates for personal crimes between 1998 and 2005 showed an increase from 4.8% to 5.3%, the same level as in 2002.

Victims of selected household crimes(a)



(a) Actual or attempted break-in and motor vehicle theft.

Source: *Crime and Safety, Australia, 2005* (ABS cat. no. 4509.0).

- Between 1998 and 2005, the proportion of households that were the victim of selected household crimes fell from 9.0% to 6.2%.

Democracy, governance and citizenship: No headline indicator

- National life is influenced by both the wellbeing of individual citizens in terms of tangible factors such as income, wealth, health and education and by less tangible factors such as the quality of our public life, the fairness of our society, the health of democracy and the extent to which citizens of Australia participate actively in their communities or cooperate with one another. While these areas are important to the functioning of society, it is difficult to measure these aspects, and there is no single indicator that summarises this dimension of progress.

For more information...

Internet

www.abs.gov.au

The ABS web site is the best place for data from our publications and information about the ABS.

Library

A range of ABS publications is available from public and tertiary libraries Australia wide. Contact your nearest library to determine whether it has the ABS statistics you require.

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