

Families with young children: a Sydney case study



As families change over time, the areas where they live also change. Identifying areas where large proportions of families with young children live, and understanding how these areas change over time, can assist in the planning of new suburbs and the provision of services for these families. In this article, a family with young children refers to any family that includes at least one child aged under 5.

Over the past 35 years the proportion of young children (those under the age of 5) in Australia has decreased from 9.6% of the total population in 1971, to 6.4% in 2006. This change can be attributed to two main factors: people living longer, which has increased the proportion of older Australians in the population, and a decline of the total fertility rate—the average number of babies born to each woman (see Glossary). The total fertility rate has decreased from 2.95 babies per woman in 1971 to 1.81 in 2006.¹ For more information on the ageing population see the 'Population overview', p. 2–8.

With fewer babies being born, the proportion of families with young children has decreased since 1986, from 22% of all couple and one parent families, with or without children, to 17% in 2006.

Where families with young children live

In 2006, the majority of people in families with young children lived in Major Cities (68%), while 19% lived in Inner Regional areas and 10% lived in Outer Regional areas. Almost 3% of people in families with young children lived in Remote or Very Remote areas of Australia.

Even though there were relatively few people in families with young children living in Remote and Very Remote areas overall, these areas had the highest proportion of their population living in families with young children. One quarter of the total population in Remote and Very Remote areas was living in families with young children, compared with 18% in Major Cities, 18% in Inner Regional areas and 19% in Outer Regional areas.

The higher proportion of families with young children in Remote and Very Remote areas of Australia is associated with the higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in these areas (15% in Remote areas and 48% in Very Remote areas).

People living in families with young children(a): Remoteness areas

Remoteness area	Young children(b)	Families with young children	People in families with young children	
			'000	% of population
Major Cities	836.4	615.3	2 374.8	18.2
Inner Regional	233.6	169.7	669.9	18.1
Outer Regional	117.0	83.5	332.9	19.0
Remote/Very Remote	34.6	23.9	102.6	25.0
Total	1 221.6	892.5	3 480.2	18.4

(a) A family with young children refers to any family that includes at least one child under the age of 5.

(b) Excludes all children who were not at home on Census Night.

Living arrangements...Families with young children: A Sydney case study

Generally, there are higher levels of fertility among Indigenous women, (2.12 babies per Indigenous woman compared with 1.81 for all Australian women¹), and families with at least one Indigenous person have a higher average number of children per family (2.49) than families without an Indigenous person (2.02).

As the majority of families with young children live in Major Cities, this article explores trends and patterns occurring in these areas. For more information about the classification of Major Cities, see 'Remoteness Areas' in Glossary.

Housing—an important factor for families with young children

Most Australians live in a home that is owned, with or without a mortgage (72%). The transition to purchasing a home often occurs when people form a couple and want to start a family.² In 2006, almost two thirds (65%) of people in families with young children were living in a home they owned, either with or

without a mortgage, while almost one third (33%) lived in rented accommodation. For more information about housing across different life-cycle groups see the 'Housing overview', p. 204–214.

In 2006, the majority of families with young children were living in separate houses (86%), while only 7.2% were living in semi-detached, row, or terrace houses and 6.8% were living in flats, units or apartments. Within Australia's Major Cities, the outer suburbs tend to contain higher proportions of families with young children³, as these areas generally have higher proportions of separate houses. Some of these families are attracted by the relatively low cost of the established housing in these areas. For others, new housing developments in the outer suburbs are chosen because they offer larger numbers of new separate houses, which are suitable for families with children. For more information on differences in housing across cities see, 'Housing across Brisbane and Melbourne city rings', p. 224–232.

Areas with high proportions of people living in families with young children(a): top two Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) in capital cities—1986, 1996 and 2006

	1986		1996		2006	
	SLA	%	SLA	%	SLA	%
Sydney	Campbelltown	36.5	Campbelltown	28.6	Blacktown - South-West	26.3
	Penrith	33.6	Blacktown	27.9	Liverpool - West	26.2
Melbourne	Melton	37.3	Knox - South	36.1	Wyndham - South	33.4
	Bulla	36.0	Casey - Cranbourne	34.8	Melton - East	31.1
Brisbane	Eagleby	45.9	Marsden	34.8	Wakerley	34.8
	Marsden	45.0	Greenbank - Part B	32.4	Upper Kedron	32.3
Adelaide	Munno Para	33.7	Munno Para	27.7	Salisbury Bal	23.7
	Happy Valley	33.2	Elizabeth	24.8	Playford - West Central	23.6
Perth	Wanneroo	31.1	Wanneroo - North-West	36.2	Wanneroo - North-West	25.1
	Armadale	28.9	Swan	28.4	Wanneroo - South	23.0
Hobart	Brighton - Pt A	45.9	Brighton	33.2	Brighton	24.8
	Kingborough - Pt A	29.9	Sorell - Pt A	26.7	Kingborough - Pt A	19.9
Darwin	Moulden	51.8	Woodroffe	42.5	City remainder	36.5
	Driver	46.9	Moulden	40.1	Durack	35.2
Canberra	Richardson	51.5	Banks	44.2	Amaroo	35.8
	Monash	47.9	Conder	43.3	Dunlop	31.6

(a) A family with young children refers to any family that includes at least one child under the age of 5.

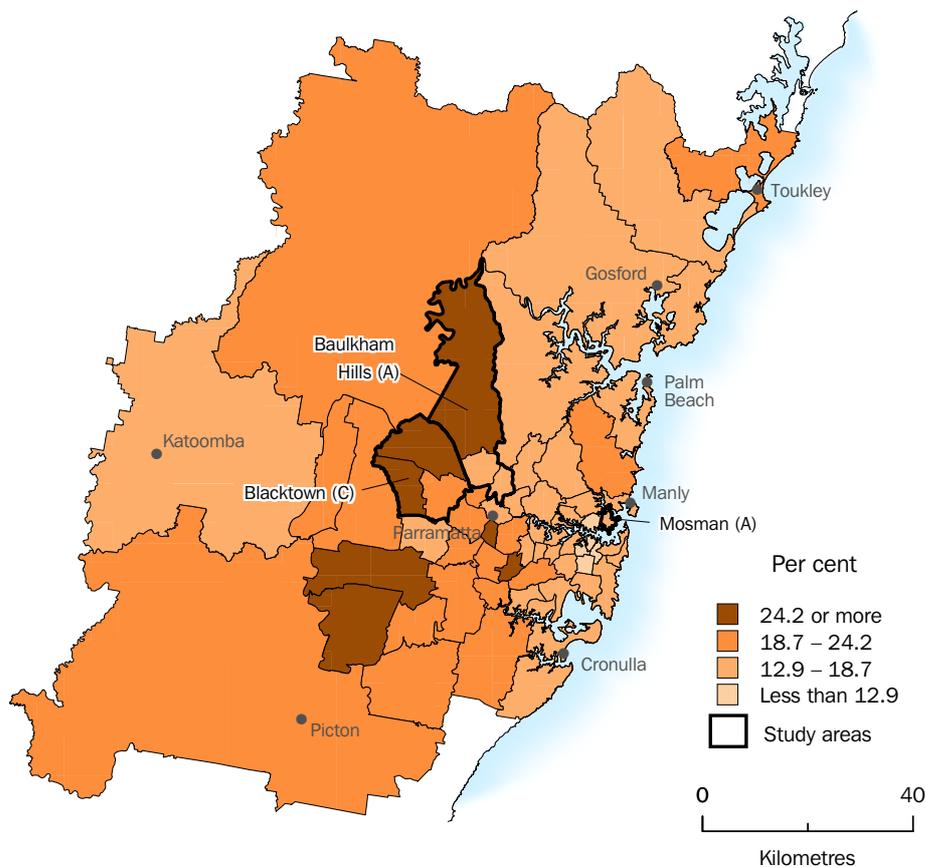
Comparing geographical areas and families over time

Geographical areas: Comparing populations within particular areas over time can be difficult as the boundaries defining the areas may change. Comparing where families with young children live over time is particularly difficult as many of these families live in the newer, outer suburban areas. Some of these areas were undeveloped land at the time of past censuses, while others have had their borders changed over time as their populations have increased. The Sydney case studies in this article are based on Local Government Areas (LGAs) whose boundaries have remained relatively consistent over time. The other examples provided in this article are either LGAs or smaller Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) that fit within an LGA. These areas may have undergone more substantial boundary changes over time but are generally comparable. For more information on LGAs and SLAs, see Glossary.

Sydney comparison: Comparisons are made between case study LGAs—Baulkham Hills, Blacktown and Mosman—and the entire Statistical Division (SD) of Sydney. This SD encompasses all areas of Sydney shown in the map below.

Data in this article are based on place of enumeration to allow comparisons over time.

People in families with young children(a): Proportion of the total population in Statistical Local Areas, Sydney Statistical Division, 2006



(a) A family with young children refers to any family that includes at least one child under the age of 5.

Families over time

In censuses before 1986, a family with at least one child under the age of 5 cannot be identified. For years before 1986, this article uses the proportion of children aged 0–4 in an area as a proxy; after 1986 the proportion of families with young children is used.

New suburbs—growth and ageing

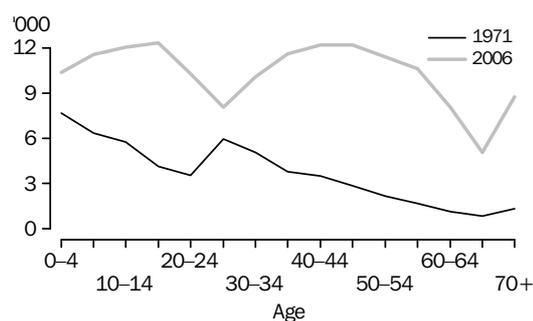
The movement of families with children to more recently developed, outer suburban areas of a city can result in a relatively young age profile in the population when these areas are first established.² However, if many of these families stay in the same area over time and fewer new families with young children move into the area, the profile of the population begins to age. Census data show signs of this ageing process in SLAs such as Browns Plains in Brisbane, Kambah and Kaleen in Canberra, and the southern area of Knox in Melbourne.

Baulkham Hills changes over time

The LGA of Baulkham Hills, in Sydney, is an example of an area where the population has grown and aged. Baulkham Hills is located on the outskirts of Sydney. In the 1960s urban development started to accelerate in the area.⁴ By 1971 Baulkham Hills had the highest proportion of young children (aged 0–4) in Sydney (14%). However, after 1971, the population of the area started to age and the proportion of young children decreased, while the proportion of primary school aged children and then high school aged children increased. By 1996, the proportion of young children had decreased to 5.8%.

However, since 1996, new land development has occurred in the northern part of Baulkham Hills. This and other development has increased the number of houses and has allowed the population of the whole area to grow. People in families with young children moving to the area have contributed to this growth. Almost half (47%) of all people in young families living in Baulkham Hills in 2006 had moved to the area in the past 5 years. This has caused a slight increase in the proportion of young children across the area (6.4% in 2001 to 6.7% in 2006).

Baulkham Hills: age profile, 1971 and 2006



Even though the proportion of young children has increased slightly in the area, the families that have lived in Baulkham Hills for a long time now have older children. This has resulted in a more even distribution of age groups and makes it less likely that the area will return to having a very high proportion of young children in the next 5 to 10 years.

Other factors may also help to keep the proportion of families with young children lower for the whole LGA in the near future. Firstly, in 2006, the proportion of women of child-bearing age (20–39 years) in Baulkham Hills, was lower than in 1971 (27% compared with 34%). Secondly, in 2006, the total fertility rate of women living in the area was 1.72 babies. This was below the national rate of 1.81 babies per woman and well below the rates in some other areas in Sydney that also had high proportions of families with young children, such as Blacktown (2.08) and Camden (2.06).¹

In 2006, families with young children in Baulkham Hills had higher housing costs (rent and mortgage payments) than other areas of Sydney. The median monthly home loan repayment for families with young children in Baulkham Hills in 2006, was \$2,250, \$250 more than the Sydney median for families with young children (\$2,000). The median weekly rent for families with young children was \$340 per week, compared with \$250 for families with young children across Sydney.

Along with the higher cost of housing in the area, the *household incomes* of families with young children in Baulkham Hills were also high compared with families with young children across Sydney. In 2006, 36% of young families living in Baulkham Hills were living in households with *higher household incomes*⁵ compared with 24% for Sydney. Higher housing costs may be a factor in families with young children on lower incomes not living in this area.

Families with young children in Baulkham Hills

	Baulkham Hills	Sydney
	%	%
Living in separate houses	88.8	72.4
Main tenure types		
Renting	19.2	34.0
Home owners with mortgage	69.0	54.7
Home owners without mortgage	10.8	10.1
One parent families	6.6	13.6
Living in households with higher household income(a)	36.1	24.3
	\$	\$
Median weekly rental payment	340	250
Median monthly mortgage loan repayment	2 250	2 000
	no.	no.
Average no. of children per family(b)	2.04	2.00
	years	years
Mean age of mothers	34.2	33.3

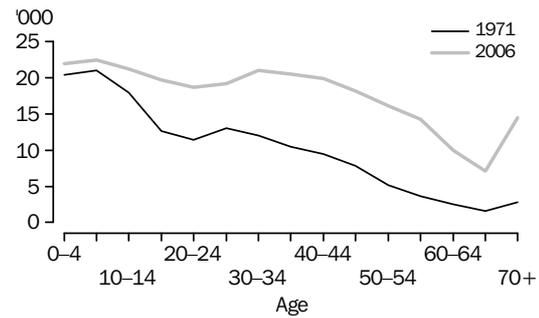
(a) For details of the income groups used see Glossary.

(b) This average includes all children under the age of 25 present on Census Night. It also accounts for children under the age of 15, and/or dependent students under the age of 25, who were temporarily absent on Census Night.

Some suburbs stay young

While in some areas the proportions of young children and their families decline with time, in others a relatively high proportion of families with young children can be maintained for many years. Although LGAs such as Melton in Melbourne, Wollondilly in Sydney, Wanneroo in Perth and Brighton in Hobart, have all experienced a decrease in the proportion of people living in families with young children since 1986, they have maintained a high proportion of people in families with young children when compared with other areas in their respective capital cities.

Blacktown(a): Age profile, 1971 and 2006



(a) There was a small boundary change in Blacktown between 1971 and 1981.

Blacktown—many families with young children

The LGA of Blacktown, in Sydney, is an example of an area that has had a high proportion of families with young children for many years. In 2006, Blacktown had the second highest proportion of families with young children in Sydney (24.1%) and in 1986 it had the fifth highest proportion (29.8%). While such families cannot be separately identified in 1971 Census data, the data do show that in 1971 the area had the second highest proportion of children aged 0–4 in Sydney (13.4% of the population): in 2006 this proportion was 8.3%.

Many factors could contribute to the high proportion of families with young children living in Blacktown over a long period of time. One factor may be the consistent addition of separate houses to the area since 1976. Between 1976 and 2006 the number of separate houses in Blacktown increased by 94%. As many families prefer to live in separate houses, this steady increase is likely to have attracted families (or people planning to start a family) to move to Blacktown or to stay within the area.

In addition to the increase in the total number of separate houses in Blacktown over the last 30 years, the housing costs are lower than in some other parts of Sydney. This may have helped to attract families with young children who wanted to buy or rent a separate home. In 2006, the median housing loan repayment for families with young children in Blacktown was \$1,840 per month, \$160 lower than the median for all families with young children in Sydney (\$2,000). The median weekly rent was also lower than for Sydney as a whole (\$220 and \$250 per week respectively).

Families with young children in Blacktown

	Blacktown	Sydney
	%	%
Living in separate houses	85.2	72.4
Main tenure types		
Renting	37.8	34.0
Home owners with mortgage	55.0	54.7
Home owners without mortgage	6.3	10.1
One parent families	20.3	13.6
Living in households with higher household income(a)	11.3	24.3
	\$	\$
Median weekly rental payment	220	250
Median monthly mortgage loan repayment	1 840	2 000
	no.	no.
Average no. of children per family(b)	2.13	2.00
	years	years
Mean age of mothers	31.8	33.3

(a) For details of the income groups used see Glossary.

(b) This average includes all children under the age of 25 present on Census Night. It also accounts for children under the age of 15, and/or dependent students under the age of 25, who were temporarily absent on Census Night.

Along with the lower housing costs, the incomes of families with young children in Blacktown were lower than other areas. In 2006, 11% of these families were living in households with a *higher household income*⁵, compared with 24% of all families with young children in Sydney.

Of all people in families with young children living in Blacktown in 2006, 32% had moved to the area in the 5 years prior to the 2006 Census. This was a much lower proportion than in Baulkham Hills (47%). It was also lower than the proportion of all people in families with young children, living in Sydney, who had moved between LGAs in the previous 5 years (38%). This indicates that a higher proportion of people already living in Blacktown may be having their first child. Further, many of the families who had children in 2001 have had more children since.

In 2006, the women in Blacktown were having more children than those in other areas of Sydney. This was shown by the high fertility rate in the area—2.08 babies per woman.¹ This was the third highest fertility rate in Sydney after Bankstown (2.15) and Auburn (2.12).¹ On average the mothers in Blacktown were younger (32 years) than mothers in Sydney as a whole (33 years).

Established, high socioeconomic suburbs

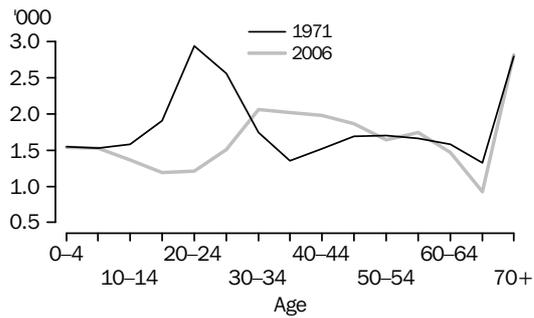
Even though areas such as Blacktown have maintained a high proportion of children compared with other areas in major cities, they have still experienced a decrease in the proportion of families with young children over time. However, this trend has not been repeated in many well-established, ‘more advantaged’⁶, metropolitan areas where the proportion of families with young children is usually low. In these well-established areas, the proportion of families with young children has remained relatively stable or has risen slightly. Examples of such areas are the LGAs of Cottesloe in Perth, Burnside in Adelaide, Woollahra and Mosman in Sydney and the smaller SLA of Bayside-Brighton in Melbourne.

The slight increase in the proportion of families with young children in these areas may reflect the recent increase in the fertility rate that has occurred in many of the more advantaged areas of Australia. Women in more advantaged areas have traditionally had lower fertility rates than in other areas. However, between 2001 and 2005 the fertility rate for women living in more advantaged areas accounted for 59% of the overall increase in Australia's total fertility rate.⁷ This might be attributed to ‘catch up’ fertility as older women, who may have delayed having children while they completed study and/or established careers, start a family.

Mosman women start families

The LGA of Mosman is a typical example of a high socioeconomic, advantaged area where the proportion of people in families with young children has remained low and fairly stable, with only a slight increase from 15.6% in 1986 to 16.6% in 2006. In line with this, over the same period, the proportion of young children aged 0–4 also increased slightly, from 5.2% in 1986 to 6.2% in 2006.

Mosman: Age profile, 1971 and 2006



These changes reflect an increase in the total fertility rate in the area, although it still remains low. The total fertility rate of women in Mosman increased from 1.36 babies per woman in 2001 to 1.47 in 2006.¹

Mosman is much closer to the central business district of Sydney than Blacktown and Baulkham Hills and has a higher proportion of higher density housing than the outer suburban areas. In 2006, only 37% of dwellings in Mosman were detached houses while 52% were flats, units or apartments and 11% were semi-detached houses. There has also been little development of new housing in the area with only a 9% increase in dwellings between 1986 and 2006.

The low proportion of families with young children in the area may be associated with the small proportion of separate houses compared with many outer suburban areas of Sydney, as well as the small amount of new housing development in Mosman. The high price of real estate in Mosman may also be a factor. In 2006, families with young children in Mosman, who had a mortgage on their home, were paying a median monthly home loan repayment of \$3,790, which was \$1,790 more than the median monthly home loan repayment for all families with young children in Sydney. The median rent for families with young children in Mosman was also higher (\$580 per week) than for families with young children in Sydney overall (\$250 per week). These high housing costs are likely to be putting living in Mosman out of reach for many families with young children. Associated with these higher housing costs, 68% of families with young children that were living in the area in 2006, were living in households with a *higher household income*⁵.

Despite the factors that might discourage families with young children from living in Mosman, 54% of people in families with young

Families with young children in Mosman

	Mosman	Sydney
	%	%
Living in separate houses	55.3	72.4
Main tenure types		
Renting	42.3	34.0
Home owners with mortgage	41.9	54.7
Home owners without mortgage	15.1	10.1
One parent families	5.8	13.6
Living in households with higher household income(a)	67.7	24.3
	\$	\$
Median weekly rental payment	580	250
Median monthly mortgage loan repayment	3 790	2 000
	no.	no.
Average no. of children per family(b)	1.89	2.00
	years	years
Mean age of mothers	36.8	33.3

(a) For details of the income groups used see Glossary.

(b) This average includes all children under the age of 25 present on Census Night. It also accounts for children under the age of 15, and/or dependent students under the age of 25, who were temporarily absent on Census Night.

children living in the area in 2006 had moved there in the past 5 years. Of those in families with young children who had moved, over half (53%) were renting. This was very different to Baulkham Hills where a similarly high proportion of people in young families had moved into the area in the past 5 years (47%), but a much lower proportion of these were renting (27%).

Although renting is often associated with lower household income⁸, this was not the case in Mosman. Of those people in young families who had moved into Mosman in the past 5 years and were renting, a high proportion (65%) were living in households with *higher household incomes*⁵. This may indicate that these families choose to rent in Mosman rather than be owners with a mortgage further away from the centre of the city.

Endnotes

1 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2007, *Births, Australia, 2006*, cat. no. 3301.0, ABS, Canberra.

2 Baum S. and Wulff, M. 2003, *Housing aspirations of Australian households*, Final Report No. 30, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne.

3 ABS 2002, 'Regional population ageing' in *Australian Social Trends 2002*, cat. no. 4102.0, ABS, Canberra.

4 Baulkham Hills Shire Council 2007–2008, *History of the Shire—Timeline*, viewed 17 June 2008, <<http://www.baulkhamhills.nsw.gov.au/History-of-the-Shire-Timeline.html>>.

5 Household income is equivalised gross household income. For details of the household income groups used see Glossary.

6 More advantaged areas are those areas in the top 40% of all Australian SLAs indexed by the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage/ Disadvantage (SEIFA). For more information, see *Information Paper: An Introduction to Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), 2006*, cat. no. 2039.0, ABS, Canberra.

7 ABS 2007, 'Recent increases in Australia's fertility' in *Australian Social Trends 2007*, cat. no. 4102.0, ABS, Canberra.

8 ABS 2008, 'Renter households' in *Australian Social Trends 2007*, cat. no. 4102.0, ABS, Canberra.