



# Australian Social Trends

USING STATISTICS TO PAINT A PICTURE OF AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY





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S o c i a l T r e n d s  
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# Introduction

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*Australian Social Trends* draws on a wide range of data, sourced both from ABS and other agencies, to present a picture of Australian society. This publication aims to inform decision-making, research and discussion on social conditions in Australia. It covers social issues of current and ongoing concern, population groups of interest, and changes in these over time.

The selection of articles aims to address current and perennial social concerns and to provide answers to key social questions. Some topics are revisited as new data become available. The aim of this approach is for each report to remain responsive to contemporary concerns, while accumulating a more comprehensive picture of Australian social conditions over time. For this reason, articles often include cross references to other relevant articles in the current issue, and in previous issues. All articles published since 1994 are available from the Australian Social Trends page of the ABS web site: [www.abs.gov.au/socialtrends](http://www.abs.gov.au/socialtrends).

*Australian Social Trends* is structured according to the ABS Wellbeing Framework which identifies areas of social concern, population groups and transactions among people and entities within their social environments (see ABS [Measuring Wellbeing: Frameworks for Australian Social Statistics, 2001](#) – cat. no. 4160.0). The broad areas of social concern are:

- population
- family and community
- health
- education and training
- work
- economic resources
- housing
- crime and justice
- culture and leisure
- other areas - including environment, religion, and transport and communication.

*Australian Social Trends* is now issued on a quarterly basis, and in the course of a year the articles will cover a wide range of the areas of social concern.

The articles focus strongly on people and social concerns. Each article aims to tell a story, providing a sense of the social and historical context in which a particular topic is embedded, moving from the general to the specific, and using statistics to bring light to the issue. Articles aim to balance 'what' analysis (relating the relevant statistical facts surrounding the issue, e.g. number, characteristics, change over time, sex, age and other differences), with 'why' analysis (providing context and explanation by highlighting relevant social changes and events and the chronologies of these). For example, an article on work may examine current labour force participation, how the labour market has changed over time, how different groups of people are affected by social and economic conditions, and how these factors may be linked to observed employment trends.







# Australian farming and farmers

In 2012, Australia celebrates the Year of the Farmer, a chance to pay tribute to the important role that farming and agriculture plays in our economy and society, and the unique place it holds in our cultural heritage. The events associated with the Year of the Farmer aim to establish closer links between Australia's rural and urban communities, celebrating the range and quality of Australian farm produce, and highlighting the role of Australian agriculture in maintaining national and global food security.<sup>1</sup>

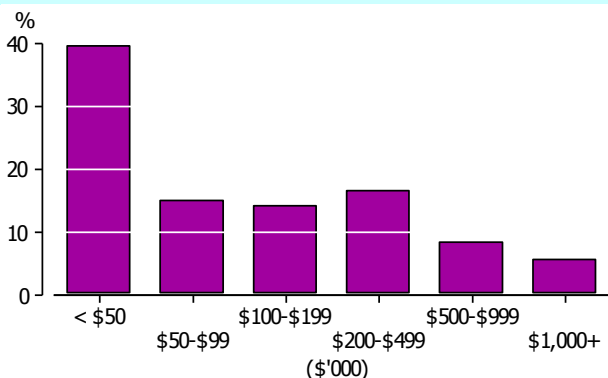
Farming has been a major contributor to the Australian economy since the earliest days of European settlement. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, agriculture accounted for around a quarter of the nation's output and up to 80% of Australia's exports.<sup>2</sup> Such was the importance of agriculture, particularly wool production, to Australia's prosperity that the country was said to "ride on the sheep's back".

In recent decades, the growth of other industries, including a thriving services sector, has seen a relative decline in Australia's reliance on agriculture. While this is consistent with trends in other developed countries, Australia's agricultural output as a proportion of the economy is among the highest in the OECD.<sup>2</sup>

## Farming – big business and small

The 2010–11 Agricultural Census found that there were 135,000 farm businesses across Australia. The majority of these were involved in specialised beef cattle farming (28%), mixed grain-sheep or grain-beef cattle farming (9%),

Size(a) of Australian farm businesses – 2011



(a) Based on estimated value of agricultural operations.

Source: ABS [Agricultural Commodities](#), Australia, 2010-11 (cat. no. 7121.0)

## Data sources and definitions

The information in this article comes from a variety of sources. The information on individuals and families draws on data from the ABS 1981, 2006 and 2011 Censuses of Population and Housing, as well as the 2009–10 Survey of Income and Housing. Information about farm businesses and agricultural production comes from a range of sources, including the ABS 2011 Agricultural Census, and Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) Agricultural Commodities Statistics, 2011.

The data on farmers from the 2006 and 2011 Census and the 2009–10 Survey of Income and Housing is based on the *Australia and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations* (ANZSCO). Data on farmers from the 1981 Census is based on the *Classification and Classified List of Occupations* (CLO). While there are some differences between these two classifications, and it is not possible to directly map CLO categories onto ANZSCO, the considerable degree of overlap at the broad level (e.g. farmers and farm managers) is sufficient for the comparisons contained in this article.

In this article, *farmers* are those people who were employed during the week prior to the Census of Population and Housing and who reported that their main occupation was a farmer or farm manager.

*Farmers and farm managers* plan, organise, control, coordinate and perform farming operations in agricultural establishments. Tasks performed typically include planning and coordinating the operation of hatcheries and crop production; breeding and raising livestock; monitoring and maintaining the health of stock; identifying and controlling environmental toxins, weeds, pests and diseases; organising and conducting farming operations such as maintaining buildings, water supply and equipment; managing business capital, monitoring market activity and planning production to meet contract requirements and market demand.

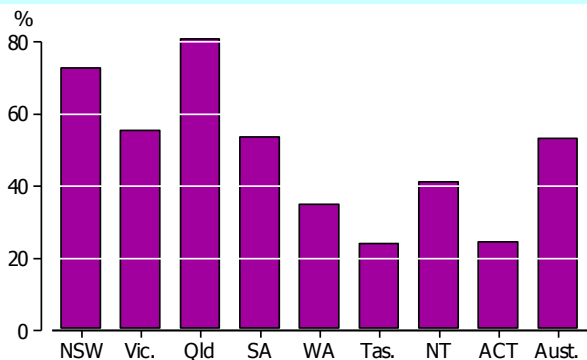
*Farming families* are those families where the family reference person and /or their spouse or partner reported that their main occupation was a farmer or farm manager.

For any distribution (e.g. age) the *median* value is that which divides the relevant population into two equal parts, half falling below the value, and half above it.

other grain growing (9%) or specialised sheep farming (8%). Other common types of farming businesses included dairy cattle farming (6%), mixed sheep-beef cattle farming (5%) and grape growing (4%).<sup>3</sup>

Despite agricultural production being increasingly concentrated in large farms in recent decades,<sup>2</sup> the majority of Australia's farms are comparatively small. In 2010–11, just over half (55%) had an estimated value of

### Proportion of land used for agriculture by state and territory – 2011



Source: ABS [Agricultural Commodities](#), Australia, 2010-11 (cat. no. 7121.0)

agricultural operations of less than \$100,000. There were, however, a small number (7,700 or 6%) of large farms with estimated agricultural operations in excess of \$1 million.<sup>3</sup> This reflects the diverse nature of farming in Australia ranging from small, often family-owned businesses, to very large (family and corporate) businesses. In all, the value of agricultural production across both large and small farms in Australia in 2010-11 was \$46 billion,<sup>4</sup> with the value added by the agriculture industry accounting for 2.4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).<sup>5</sup>

The majority of farms were also small in terms of land area, with around a third covering less than 50 hectares (36%), and a similar proportion (36%) between 50 and 500 hectares. Conversely, there were a small number (100) of massive farms that occupied more than 500,000 hectares, which is more than twice the land area of the Australian Capital Territory. The total area of agricultural land in 2011 amounted to 410 million hectares or just over half (53%) of the nation's landmass.<sup>3</sup>

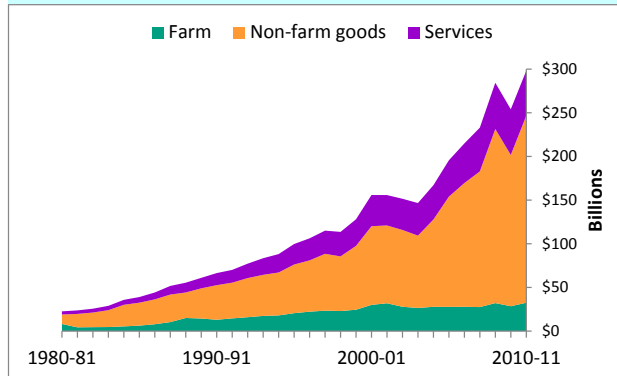
The proportion of land devoted to agriculture varied across states and territories. In Queensland, for example, agriculture occupied the vast majority (81%) of the state, while in Tasmania just under a quarter (24%) of all land was used for agriculture.

**In 2009, 60% of Australia's farm produce was exported overseas, helping feed 40 million people.**

### Feeding the world

A sharp increase in global food prices in recent years has focused attention on the adequacy and affordability of global food supplies. With the challenge likely to become more pressing over time, Australia's role as a net food exporter will be critical. In 2009, Australian farms

### Value of Australian exports(a), by sector – 1980-81 to 2010-11



(a) Balance of payments basis.

Source: ABARES [Agricultural commodity statistics](#) 2011

produced 93% of the total volume of food consumed in Australia. After catering for the needs of the Australian population, 60% of Australia's farm produce was exported, helping feed some 40 million people outside Australia each day.<sup>6</sup>

### A growing export market

Agricultural produce has traditionally been among Australia's biggest export commodities. In the three decades to 2010-11, the value of Australian farm exports rose from \$8.2 to \$32.5 billion - an average increase of 5% per year. Even stronger growth in exports of non-agricultural goods and services (by an average of 10% per year)<sup>7</sup> has seen the proportion of Australia's exports coming from the farm sector fall from 36% in 1980-81 to 11% in 2010-11.<sup>7</sup>

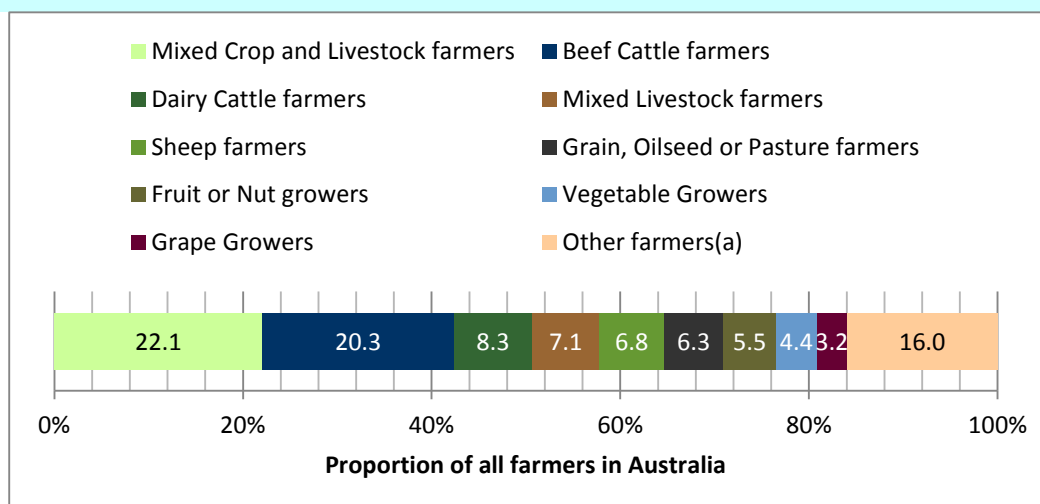
### ...what are we exporting and where?

Of the total value of farm exports in 2010-11, 54% came from crop exports including wheat (17%) and wine (6%), while 46% came from livestock exports such as beef and veal (13%) and wool (9%).<sup>7</sup> The majority of Australia's farm exports go to countries in Asia. While China's demand for Australia's mineral exports is well documented, in recent years it has also emerged as the largest market for our agricultural goods. In 2010-11, 14% of the total value of agricultural exports went to China (up from 7% a decade earlier). A further 13% went to Japan and 8% to Indonesia. Australian farmers also exported to countries beyond our immediate region such as those in the Middle East (10% of agricultural exports), the European Union (8%), and the United States (7%).<sup>7</sup>

### Farmers in Australia

In 2011, there were 157,000 farmers in Australia. Around half of these were mixed crop and livestock farmers (22%), beef cattle farmers

## Farmers in Australia – 2011



(a) Includes sugar cane growers, poultry farmers, flower growers and apiarists, etc.

Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

(20%) or dairy farmers (8%). Among the less common types were sugar cane growers (2%), flower growers (1%) and apiarists (i.e. bee keepers) (less than 1%). There were also 223 goat farmers and 56 deer farmers.

The number of farmers in Australia has been declining for many decades as small farmers sell up to large-scale farming operations, and fewer young people take over family farms.<sup>2</sup> In fact, there were 19,700 fewer farmers in Australia in 2011 than in 2006, a fall of 11% over five years. Over the 30 years to 2011, the number of farmers declined by 106,200 (40%), equating to an average of 294 fewer farmers every month over that period. Evidence suggests that events such as major droughts have a big impact on the farming workforce. For example, there was a decline of 15% in just 12 months in the midst of the 2002–03 drought.<sup>2</sup>

### Men and women on the land

The traditional masculine image of the farmer is reflected in the fact that men made up the majority (72%) of farmers in Australia in 2011. Women did, however, account for a sizable minority of the nation's farming workforce (28% or 44,700). The proportion of female farmers has fallen slightly in recent decades (from 30% in 1981), even as the proportion of women in other occupations has increased (from 37% in 1981 to 47% in 2011).

The contribution that women make to the nation's farm sector is not simply measured by the number who report farming as their main job. It is also necessary to take into account the many other women who live in families where their partner is a farmer. In 2011, this included around 35,100 women who had a job outside the farm, helping supplement farm income while also supporting the operation of the farm

through other means including unpaid domestic work, with more than half (57%) doing 15 or more hours per week. Equally, there were around 16,000 women in farming families who were not employed in paid work, but most (79%) spent 15 or more hours per week doing unpaid domestic work.

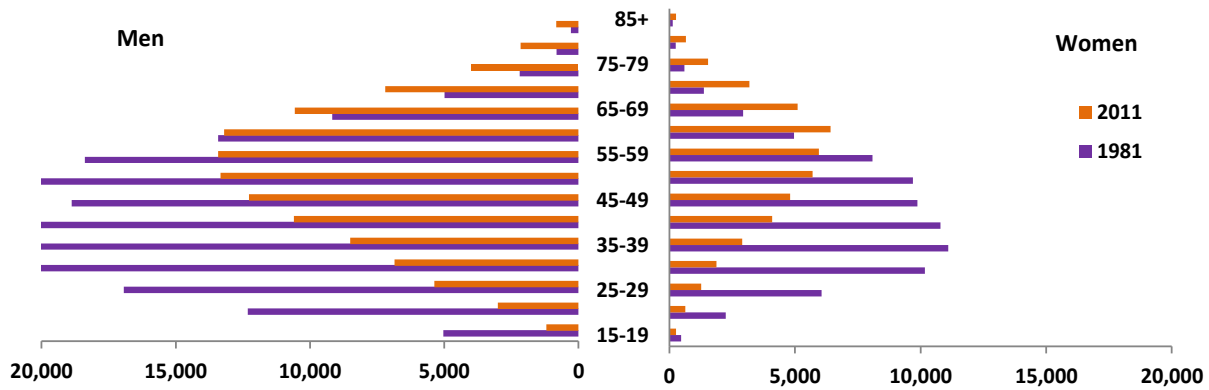
### An ageing workforce

Australia's farmers tend to be considerably older than other workers. In 2011, the median age of farmers was 53 years, compared with 40 years for people in other occupations. This is partly due to the fact that farmers are more likely to continue working well beyond the age at which most other workers retire. In 2011, almost a quarter (23%) of farmers were aged 65 years or over, compared with just 3% of people in other occupations. The tendency of farmers to work beyond the traditional retirement age may reflect the decline in younger generations taking over family farms.<sup>2</sup>

***In 2011, nearly a quarter (23%) of farmers were aged 65 years or over, compared with just 3% of other workers.***

The age profile of farmers has changed markedly over the past few decades. The median age of farmers increased by nine years between 1981 and 2011, while the median age of other workers increased by just six years. Over the same period, the proportion of farmers aged 55 years and over increased from 26% to 47%, while the proportion of farmers aged less than 35 years fell from 28% to just 13%.

## Age profile of farmers – 1981 and 2011



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing

### Most farmers are home grown

In terms of national origin, there tends to be less diversity among farmers than among the rest of the Australian population. In 2011, only 11% of Australian farmers were born overseas, compared with 26% of the total population. The proportion of Australian farmers born overseas has remained fairly steady over recent decades, (10% in 1981), while the proportion of the total population who were born overseas has risen five percentage points.

Of the 17,000 farmers in 2011 who reported being born overseas, the most common place of birth was the UK (20%), followed by countries in Southern and South Eastern Europe (17%), South-East Asia (16%), and New Zealand (12%).

### Family life on the farm

In 2011, there were 93,300 farming families. Almost half (48%) of these comprised a couple living by themselves (compared with 38% of other families), many of whom were likely to have had older children no longer living at home.

Of those families with children living at home, farming families were slightly larger on average than other families (4.0 people compared with 3.7). Close to a third (29%) of farming families with children had three or more children, compared with one fifth (20%) of other families.

One parent families were much less common among farming families (3%), than among other families (16%). This may suggest that separation and divorce is less common among farming families. Indeed, of those people who had been married, farmers were much less likely than other people to be divorced or separated (8% compared with 18%). However, the relative infrequency of one parent farming families may also reflect the fact that lone parents (who are predominantly women) tend to leave the farm after separating. The other parent (usually the father) who stays on the

farm by themselves becomes a lone person, no longer classified as a farming family. Of the male farmers who were living by themselves in 2011, close to a third (30%) were either divorced or separated.

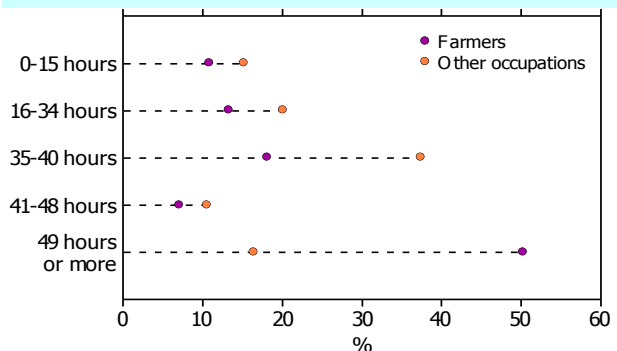
### Working life on the farm

Farming as a vocation tends to be characterised by a high degree of self-employment and long working hours. In 2011, half (50%) of farmers worked 49 hours or more a week. Only 17% of other workers put in such long hours. More than half (56%) of Australia's farmers were self-employed owner managers (compared with 15% of other workers), with a further 17% working as employees managing farms owned by someone else.

**In 2011, half (50%) of farmers worked 49 hours or more a week, compared with just 17% of other workers.**

Although people who are self-employed generally work longer hours than others, this only goes part of the way to explaining the working hours of farmers. Even when comparing just among the self-employed, farmers were still much more likely to work

### Weekly hours worked by occupation – 2011



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

## Equivalising income and wealth

To enable comparison of the relative economic wellbeing of households of different size and composition, measures of income and wealth in this article have been adjusted or equivalised to take account of these differences. For a lone person household, the equivalised value is equal to the original value. For a household containing more than one person, it is an indicator of the level that would be needed by a lone person household to enjoy the same level of economic wellbeing as the household in question.

long hours, with 56% farmers working 49 hours or more a week, compared with 30% of self-employed people in other occupations. This may in part reflect the nature of farm work which can necessitate tending to crops and animals at various times of the day and night.

## ...income and wealth

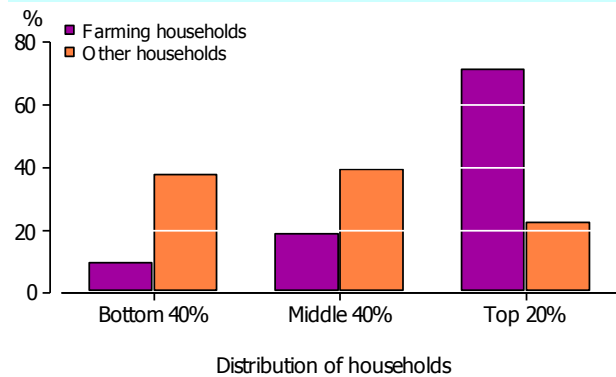
Despite working such long hours, the average weekly disposable income of farmers in 2009–10 (\$568) was considerably lower than that of people working in other occupations (\$921). However, the fact that most farmers own and manage their own businesses means it can be difficult to analyse their personal financial circumstances in isolation from the financial arrangements of the farm. Losses from farm income, for instance, can be deferred over subsequent years and profits are often reinvested into the business.

While the reported income of farmers might have been relatively low, it is important to recognise that income is only one aspect of economic wellbeing. Wealth, in the form of bank accounts, shares, superannuation or property, is another important component, and can be drawn upon to smooth and support consumption over time, including during periods of low income. Indeed, wealth is particularly crucial for farming families given that farming income is often at the mercy of climatic conditions. The average equivalised net worth (taking into account both assets and liabilities) of farming households in 2009–10 was \$1.3 million, much higher than the average across other households (\$393,000). However, such high levels of wealth are not enjoyed by all farming households. In fact, 10% of farming households could be classified as having relatively low levels of wealth (i.e. in the lowest 40% of the wealth distribution). However, the bulk of farming households (71%) were in the top 20% of the wealth distribution. The high levels of wealth explain why, despite relatively

## Low economic resources

People with low economic resources are those in households in the lowest 40% of both equivalised adjusted disposable household income and equivalised household net worth.

## Equivalised household net worth by household type – 2011



Source: ABS 2009-10 Survey of Income and Housing

low income, only a fraction (5%) of farming households are classified as having low economic resources, compared with a fifth (21%) of other households.

## Education

With the operation of farm businesses becoming increasingly complex, many farmers are coming to see themselves less as traditional farmers and more as managers with the same skills and responsibilities as any business manager.<sup>8</sup> This approach has seen growing numbers of farmers pursuing formal educational qualifications.

Over the three decades to 2011, for instance, the proportion of Australian farmers with non-school qualifications more than doubled, from 15% to 38%. The proportion of farmers with a certificate-level qualification doubled over this period, while the proportion with a bachelor degree or above increased six-fold.

While the trend towards formal education among farmers mirrors the shift across all occupations, the increase among farmers in proportional terms has outstripped that among other occupations. That said, farmers were still less likely than people in other occupations to hold non-school qualifications.

## Non-school qualifications by occupation



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing



This increasing prevalence of non-school qualifications among farmers is partly due to the entry of younger generations of farmers. For example, in 2011 half of farmers aged 25–44 years had non-school qualifications, compared with just a third of those aged 45 and over.

## Looking ahead

With the global population expected to rise from around 7 billion in 2012 to 9.1 billion by 2050, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates that food production worldwide will need to increase by 70%.<sup>9</sup> With much of this increased demand coming from our own region, particularly China and India, Australian farmers are well placed to contribute to the challenge and capitalise on the associated commercial opportunities.

The recent white paper *Australia in the Asian Century* suggests that our farm sector will be transformed by the changes occurring in Asia, and lists as a national objective that “Australian food producers be recognised globally as innovative and reliable producers of more and higher-quality food and agricultural products, services and technologies to Asia.”<sup>10</sup>

These opportunities come in the context of challenges relating to water and land management at a time of climatic change and the likelihood of more intense extreme weather events.<sup>11</sup> That said, Australia’s farmers have a long history of embracing new technologies and innovative practices, and strong productivity growth,<sup>12</sup> all of which bodes well for this Year of the Farmer and beyond.

## Endnotes

- 1 Australian Year of the Farmer – Objectives, viewed 29 October, 2012. <[www.yearofthefarmer.com.au](http://www.yearofthefarmer.com.au)>.
- 2 Productivity Commission, 2005, *Trends in Australian Agriculture*, Research Paper, Canberra.
- 3 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010–11, Agricultural commodities, Australia, cat. no. 7121.0, <[www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)>.
- 4 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010–11, Value of agricultural commodities produced, cat. no. 7503.0, Table 2. <[www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)>.
- 5 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010–11, Australian system of national accounts, cat. no. 5204.0, Table 5. <[www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)>.
- 6 Australia and food security in a changing world (2010) Prime Minister’s Science, Engineering and Innovation Council.
- 7 ABARES, Agricultural commodity statistics 2011.
- 8 Cary, Webb & Barr (2002). *Understanding landholders’ capacity to change to sustainable practices: Insights about practice adoption and social capacity for change*. Canberra: Bureau of Rural Sciences.
- 9 *How to feed the world in 2050 – Global agriculture towards 2050*, 2009, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- 10 Australian Government, 2012, *Australia in the Asian Century*, viewed 29 October 2012, <[www.asiancentury.dpmc.gov.au](http://www.asiancentury.dpmc.gov.au)>.

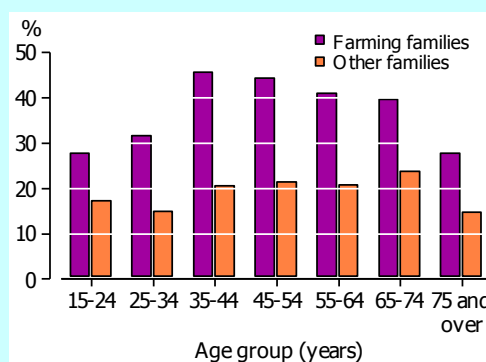
## Farming communities

People in farming families are typically known for having a greater sense of connectedness to their local community than many others. This is reflected in the comparison of volunteering rates with people in farming families more than twice as likely as those in other families to do voluntary work for an organisation or group (39% compared with 19%) in the 12 months to August 2011.

This may be partly explained by the fact that volunteering is more common in smaller communities which rely on volunteers to carry out essential functions such as fire fighting. The rate of volunteering is certainly much higher among those who live in smaller communities (27% among those who live in areas of less than 1,000 people, compared with 17% of those who live in cities larger than one million people). Nonetheless, people in farming families were more likely to volunteer than others, regardless of the size of the area in which they live.

Similarly, the age profile of people in farming families is skewed towards the age range in which people are most likely to volunteer (i.e. 35–74 years). However, the higher rate of volunteering among those in farming families is apparent across the age spectrum.

## Volunteering rates by family type – 2011



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

- 11 Garnaut Climate Change Review – Update 2011, Update paper 4: *Transforming rural land use*, viewed 13 November 2012. <[www.garnautreview.org.au](http://www.garnautreview.org.au)>.
- 12 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012, *Year of the farmer*, Year Book Australia, cat. no. 1301.0. <[www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)>.



# Leaving Australia forever?

International migration is an important population component influencing Australia's society, culture, labour force and economy.

Australians have a prominent travelling culture and although temporary travel is very common, permanently leaving Australia is less so.

Upon leaving Australia, a large proportion of people state that they are departing permanently, but return to Australia within the following year. This article looks at the characteristics of people who stated on their passenger card they are departing permanently and are still out of the country 16 months later. These people are referred to throughout this article as permanent departures. It should be remembered that some of these individuals could still return to Australia one day.

Global events can have a large impact on migration. The number of permanent departures over the last decade may have been affected by the Global Financial Crisis, world events such as the Bali and London bombings and natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and tsunamis in Asia.

## Permanent departures?

Each year, many Australians plan to leave the country permanently but most return to Australia within a year of their departure. In 2010, of the 84,000 Australian residents who stated they were departing permanently, only 17,000 (20%) spent 12 months or more overseas.

### Data sources and definitions

Most of the data in this article have been sourced from the ABS Travellers Characteristics Database.

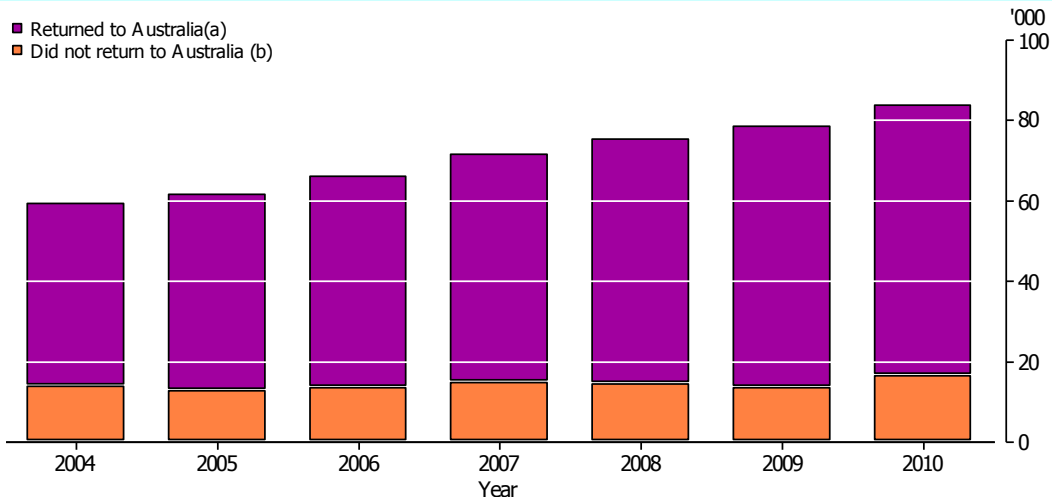
Under a '**12/16 month rule**', those travellers departing Australia (who are currently counted in the population) must be absent from Australia for a total of 12 months or more during the 16 month follow-up period are not considered part of Australia's estimated resident population. This takes into account Australians who live most of the time overseas but periodically return to Australia for short periods. Annual data based on this methodology is available from 2004.

**Intended permanent departures** are Australian residents who on departure state they are departing permanently, however, did not stay overseas for 12 months or more.

**Permanent departures** are Australian residents (including former migrants) who on departure state that they are departing permanently, and stayed overseas for at least 12 months out of 16 months.

The number of permanent departures from Australia has increased by 18% since 2004. The number rose from 14,000 in 2004 to 17,000 in 2010. Nearly all of the increase was observed in 2010. This change may have been influenced by more affordable international travel, a more global labour market or simply the prominent travelling culture of Australians.

### Number of people who permanently departed from Australia – 2004-2010

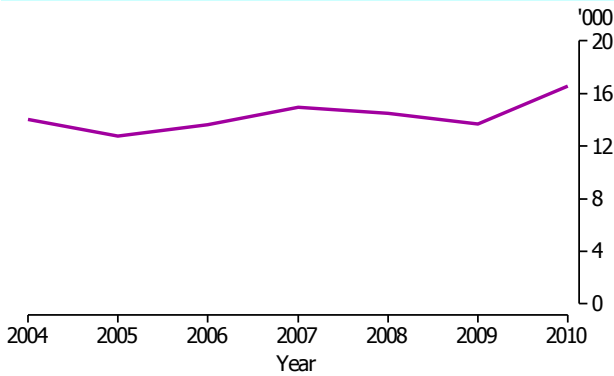


(a) Those that stated permanent departure but returned to Australia and did not stay overseas for 12 months or more.

(b) Those that stated permanent departure and did spend 12 months or more overseas.

Sources: ABS Travellers Characteristics Database

## Number of permanent departures – 2004-2010



Source: ABS Travellers Characteristics Database

Declines were observed in 2005, 2008 and 2009. The decrease in the number of permanent departures in 2008 occurred at the time of the Global Financial Crisis.

When looked at as a rate, for every 100,000 of Australia's population, only 69 people departed permanently in 2004. Although fluctuating in between, by 2010 the rate had risen to a peak of 75 people departing per 100,000 of the population.

Although there has been an increase in the number of people departing Australia permanently, the level of permanent departures continues to be much lower than that of permanent arrivals to Australia, with 78,000 permanent arrivals in 2010 compared with 17,000 permanent departures.

## Who is leaving?

The information on migration and permanent departures is collected from passenger cards that are completed when people leave Australia. This provides demographic information about the traveller but not the reason why they are permanently departing.

### ...by age

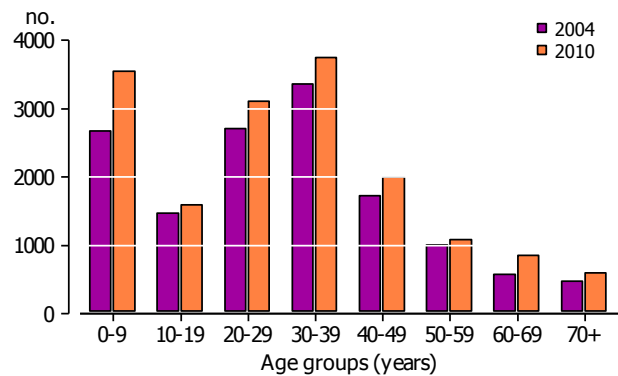
Permanent departures have increased across all age groups from 2004 to 2010. In 2010, younger adults (aged 20-39 years) were most likely to leave, often with young children.

Nearly a quarter (23%) of all people permanently departing in 2010 were aged 30-39 years, while 19% were aged 20-29 years. One in five permanent departures (21%) in 2010 was aged less than ten years.

In 2004, there were similar patterns, with both the 20-29 and 30-39 age groups most likely to permanently depart with their young children.

The relatively low number of 10-19 year olds departing permanently may be related to the stage these children are at with their education, as parents may not want to disrupt their schooling.

## Number of permanent departures by age – 2004-2010



Source: ABS Travellers Characteristics Database

### ...by sex

Proportionally, slightly more women depart permanently than men (51% on average between 2004 and 2010).

In 2010, of the 17,000 people who departed, 8,500 were women (52%). In 2004, 7,200 women permanently departed from Australia compared with 6,800 men.

**The most popular age to permanently leave Australia was the 30-39 years age group.**

### ...by state

The most populous states had the highest proportions of permanent departures in 2010 with a third (33%) of permanent departures previously living in NSW, 25% in Queensland and 20% in Victoria.

However, Queensland and Western Australia had the highest permanent departures relative to the number of people in those states, with 95 and 94 per 100,000 of their respective populations permanently departing in 2010.

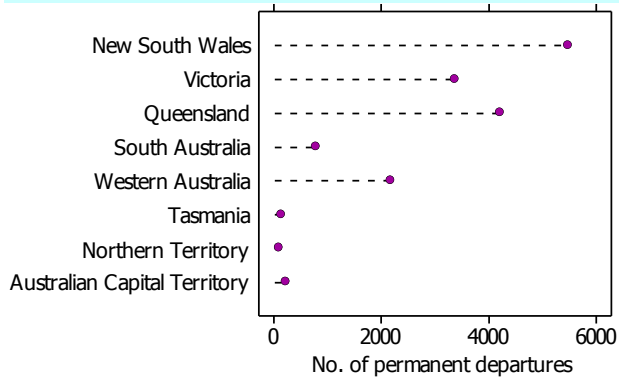
## Permanent departures by sex – 2004-2010



Source: ABS Travellers Characteristics Database



## Permanent departures by state(a) – 2010



(a) State of residence before permanent departure.  
Source: ABS Travellers Characteristics Database

Tasmania (30 per 100,000) and South Australia and the Northern Territory (both 49 per 100,000) had the lowest number of permanent departures relative to their respective population sizes.

In 2004, the ACT had the highest rate of permanent departures for its population size, with 91 per 100,000 leaving permanently for overseas, closely followed by Western Australia (87 per 100,000).

### ...by country of birth

People are more likely to leave permanently if they were born overseas. In 2010, of the 17,000 people who departed permanently, three out of five (61%) were born overseas. This was a small increase from 2004 (57%).

After Australian born residents, people born in New Zealand had the highest number of departures, with just under 4,000 of those departing Australia permanently in 2010. Australian residents born in the United Kingdom also had high levels of permanent departures, with 2,300 people in 2010 leaving Australia permanently.

### Where are they going?

When comparing the years 2004 to 2010, the top

## Number of permanent departures by country of birth – 2004 and 2010

Country of Birth	2004	2010
Australia	5,976	6,518
New Zealand	3,311	3,979
U.K.	1,532	2,252
U.S.A	330	374
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	201	324
Other	2,683	3,108
<b>Total permanent departures</b>	<b>14,033</b>	<b>16,555</b>

Source: ABS Travellers Characteristics Database

destinations for those departing Australia permanently remained almost completely the same. More than half (53%) of all permanent departures in 2010 went to either New Zealand (29%) or the United Kingdom (24%).

The unique migration agreement between Australia and New Zealand allowing citizens to move freely means there is a constant flow of overseas arrivals and departures between the two countries. As a result, New Zealand continues to be the most popular country to move to permanently, with 4,900 Australian residents departing. It should be noted that the

## New Zealand and the UK were the most popular destinations for Australians departing permanently.

vast majority of these were born in New Zealand.

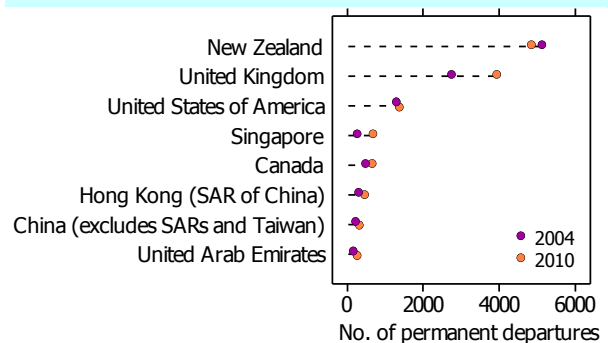
Many of Australia's permanent departures go to the United Kingdom, with a large increase from 2,800 in 2004 to 4,000 in 2010 (24% of all permanent departures). In 2011, 21% of all migrants in Australia were born in the UK, more than those born in any other country.<sup>1</sup>

### Return migration

Return migration relates to former migrants to Australia who depart Australia permanently to return to their country of birth. Traditionally, overseas-born residents departing Australia permanently are likely to be return migrants, those returning to their country of birth.<sup>2</sup>

Overseas-born permanent departures may return to their country of birth for a variety of reasons; some may simply be homesick, while others may not have been able to secure satisfactory employment. Younger migrants may return to their country of birth because they are needed by their family.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, over the long-term, migrants may return after successful employment and increased wealth, for retirement, family formation and dissolution, or when conditions have improved

## Top countries for permanent departures - 2004 and 2010



Source: ABS Travellers Characteristics Database

## Short-term departures

Short-term departures comprise both Australian residents and overseas visitors who depart Australia and stay abroad for less than 12 months.

People who leave Australia for the short-term were most likely to be going for a holiday, visiting friends or relatives, or for business.

The most popular reason from 2004 to 2010 was a holiday. With 3.6 million Australian residents departing for a holiday in 2010, this made up over half (59%) of the total short-term departures. Visiting friends and relatives (18%) and business (6%) were also popular.

Many of the countries to which residents were permanently departing were also popular for short-term departures by Australian residents. New Zealand was the number one destination from 2004 (19%) to 2010 (15%). Other popular destinations in 2010 were Indonesia (11%), the U.S.A (10%), and the United Kingdom (7%).

within their country of birth.

New Zealand had the highest intake of Australian permanent departures in 2010, and of the 4,800 that departed Australia and migrated to New Zealand permanently, 3,500 (72%) were born in New Zealand. As the median age of arrivals from New Zealand was 23 years, and the median age for those returning to New Zealand was 31 years on average, New Zealanders stayed in Australia for approximately eight years before leaving permanently.

## Looking ahead

With the increasing internationalisation of labour markets and global demand for skilled workers, both Australian born and overseas-born residents may choose to permanently depart Australia for employment.

With many Australian residents stating they would permanently depart, but then returning within 16 months, it is likely that some of the 17,000 who departed permanently in 2010 could return to Australia one day. However the exact number that return will be unknown.

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3 Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2009, [Fact Sheet 5 – Emigration from Australia](#) <<http://www.immi.gov.au/>>

## Those that returned

Not all of those who plan to leave permanently do stay away. In 2010, 80% of those who had planned to leave permanently did not stay overseas for 12 months or more, and instead returned to Australia.

The highest proportion of people who returned were in the 30-39 age group (28%), outnumbering the 23% in the same age group who left permanently in 2010. Those aged over 40 were also more likely to return within 12 months, rather than stay away (40% compared with 27%).

Those who aimed to depart permanently but returned were most likely to do so in the first quarter of each year.



# Women in leadership

Women in Australia have more employment opportunities and are more educated than ever before, however gender equality at senior levels in the workplace has yet to be achieved. In senior leadership positions, men outnumber women across the public and private sectors, as well as in the upper and lower houses of federal parliament.

This article focuses on the number of women in senior positions, some of the barriers that may be blocking women from reaching senior positions, and current initiatives being put in place to not only increase the number of women in leadership roles, but also get people to look outside the square and start cultural change within the workplace.

## A lack of a great push forward

When Queen Elizabeth II touched down in Canberra for the start of her Australian tour in October 2011, she was greeted by an entourage of women, all in senior positions; Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Governor-General Quentin Bryce, and ACT Chief Minister Katy Gallagher. It was a considerable 'first'.

Despite aspirations for more women in senior leadership roles, progress over the last 10 years has been slow. While in 2011–12 women represented close to half of the labour force as a whole (46%), and 45% of Professionals, women remain under-represented at senior levels within both the private and public sector.

## ...in parliament

A key measure of women's empowerment in society is their participation in politics.<sup>1</sup> Women make up half of Australia's total population (50%),<sup>2</sup> however as of 1 January 2012, less than one-third (29%) of all Federal Parliamentarians across Australia were women (66 out of 226). In the federal government, seven ministers including the Prime Minister were women, compared with 23 ministers who were men.<sup>3</sup> In the Federal Parliament, there is a higher proportion of women in the Senate or upper house (38%) than in the House of Representatives or lower house (25%). The Senate has traditionally had a higher proportion of women than the House of Representatives.<sup>3</sup> This may be due to people regarding upper house seats in the Senate as less desirable than seats in the House of Representatives, particularly ambitious people who aim their careers towards working in the House of Representatives where government is formed.<sup>3</sup>

## Data sources and definitions

Data relating to senior leadership has been sourced from ABS [Gender Indicators, Australia, Jul 2012](#) (cat. no. 4125.0).

For other data relating to the proportion of women in the workforce, and selected industries and occupations, this article draws on information from ABS [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed](#) (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001), and ABS [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly](#) (cat. no. 6291.0.55.003).

**Labour force** refers to those who were employed or unemployed.

**Parliamentarian** is a member of parliament.

**House of Representatives** is one of the two houses of the Australian Federal Parliament, the other being the Senate. It is sometimes referred to as the 'lower house', and has 150 members.

**Senate** is the other house of the Australian Federal Parliament. It is sometimes referred to as the 'upper house', and consists of 76 senators, 12 from each of the six states and two from each of the mainland territories.

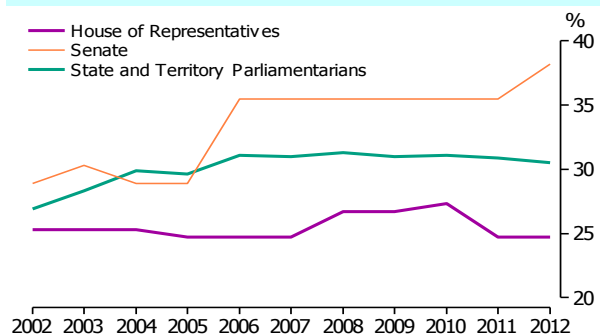
**Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** is the most senior person within an organisation.

**Board of Directors** is a body of elected or appointed members who jointly oversee the activities of a company or organisation.

**Dependent child** refers to a child aged less than 15 years, or a child aged 15–24 years and a full-time dependent student.

In 2012, the proportion of state and territory parliamentarians who were women was 30% – slightly higher than the proportion of Federal Parliamentarians, but still just less than a third. Female state and territory parliamentarian representation rose from 27% in 2002 to 31% in 2006, but has remained relatively stable since then.

## Federal and State Parliamentarians who were women(a), 2002 - 2012



(a) Reference period is at 1 January each year.

Source: [ABS Gender Indicators, Australia, Jul 2012](#) (cat. no. 4125.0)

## The Pioneers

Over the years there have been a number of successful women who have become role models for other women to look up and aspire to.

One of the earliest women to become successful in business was Mary Reibey. Originally sent to Australia from England in the late 1700s as a convict, Mary went on to become a respected businesswoman in Sydney during the 1800s.<sup>4</sup>

During the 1970s and 80s, Ita Buttrose paved the way forward as editor and chief within some of Australia's top magazines and newspapers.<sup>5</sup> And in the corporate world, Gail Kelly became Australia's first woman Chief Executive Officer of a top Australian bank in 2002.<sup>6</sup>

In parliament, Edith Cowan was elected to the Western Australian Legislative Assembly as member for West Perth in 1921 – she was the first woman elected to any Australian Parliament, and she fought to improve conditions for women, children, families, the poor, the under-educated and the elderly.<sup>7</sup>

In 1943, the first women were elected to federal Parliament when Dame Dorothy Tangney won a Senate position to represent Western Australia, and Dame Enid Lyons was elected to the House of Representatives in the seat of Darwin, Tasmania.<sup>3</sup>

## ...CEOs and Board Directors

Corporate leadership is an important aspect of governance in Australian society. The business sector drives our economy, and provides support to the community. Gender diversity in corporate leadership indicates the level of access and support available for women to take up business leadership roles.<sup>8</sup>

The Australian Government Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) collects information on women in executive management and board director positions by conducting a census of Australia's top 200

## Benefits of women in senior leadership

A number of benefits have been put forward as to the advantages of increasing female representation at senior levels including:

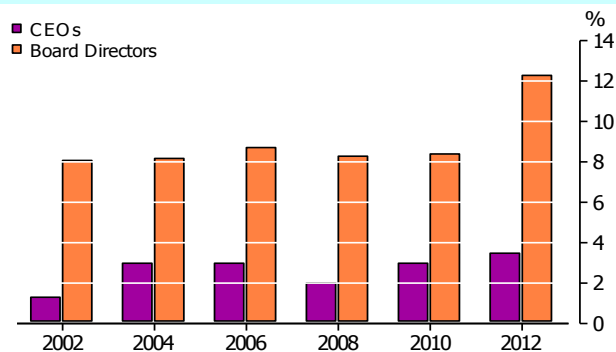
- Women bring new ideas, and different decision-making and communication styles that can have positive effects on board function and company management.<sup>9</sup>
- Women on boards can provide insights into consumer behaviour for women, and their presence improves company and brand reputations - especially for the female market.<sup>9</sup>
- Companies and organisations miss half the talent pool by not investing in gender diversity.<sup>9</sup>
- Women in management positions serve as role models for others; they encourage the career development of women and ensure the pipeline of qualified and experienced women remains open.<sup>9</sup>
- Companies with female CEOs, female board membership and a higher proportion of women in senior management are more profitable.<sup>10</sup>
- Equal representation of women and men in leadership roles allows quality outcomes for all Australians by ensuring the issues, perspectives and needs of women and men are equally represented in decision-making processes.<sup>11</sup>

companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX 200). In the 10 years the Australian Census of Women in Leadership has been run, there has been very little change in the number of women in executive ranks. However, there has been a positive increase in the number of female board directors.<sup>12</sup>

In 2012, women remained under-represented in the most senior corporate positions within the top 200 ASX companies.<sup>12</sup> Six boards (3.0%) had a woman as chair (one more than in 2010, and two more than in 2008), and seven (different) companies had a female Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (3.5%, up from 1.3% in 2002).<sup>12</sup>

At board director level there was a significant increase in female representation, with an increase from 8.4% in 2010 to 12.3% in 2012.<sup>12</sup> For the first time since the Women in Leadership Census began, more ASX 200 companies had at least one woman director than those who did not (62%).<sup>12</sup> The number of ASX 200 companies with more than one woman director has also increased from 13% in 2010 to 23% in 2012. The 2012 Women in Leadership Census shows that women are more likely to have multiple directorships than men, suggesting companies are looking for proven women directors rather than searching for new female talent.<sup>12</sup>

## Women CEOs(a) and Board Directors in top 200 ASX companies(b), 2002–2012



(a) CEO - Chief Executive Officer.

(b) 200 ASX companies - the top 200 companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange.

Sources: [ABS Gender Indicators, Australia, Jul 2012](#) (cat. no. 4125.0), and Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA), [2012 Australian Census of Women in Leadership](#)

## Achievers

There are a number of Australian women – too many to mention – who are known for their achievements; whether it be in science, sport or giving back to the community.

In science, Dr Fiona Wood has been a burns surgeon and researcher for the past 20 years. She pioneered the ‘spray-on-skin’ cell technology used to treat burn victims, and was awarded Australian of the Year in 2005.<sup>13</sup>

In sport, Layne Beachley is the first woman ever to win seven world surfing championships – six of them consecutive.<sup>14</sup> And swimmer Jacqueline Freney won eight gold medals at the 2012 London Paralympics, making her Australia’s most successful athlete at a single games.<sup>15</sup>

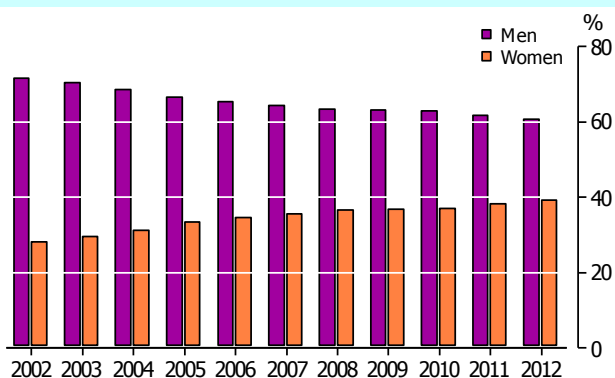
Dr Catherine Hamlin; an Australian obstetrician and gynaecologist co-founded with her late husband Dr. Reg Hamlin, the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia 33 years ago. The hospital is the world’s only medical centre dedicated to treating women with obstetric fistulas – devastating childbirth-related injuries rarely seen in Western nations since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999.<sup>16</sup>

## ...Senior Executives in the Australian Public Service

The Senior Executive Service (SES) forms the senior leadership group of the Australian Public Service (APS). The role of the SES is to provide expertise and policy advice within the APS. SES officers are expected to have high level management and leadership skills.

Women comprised more than half (57%)<sup>17</sup> of all Commonwealth public servants in 2012, but despite the proportion of women in senior roles within the APS increasing in recent years, women are still not equally represented in the most senior roles within the APS.<sup>18</sup>

### Women Senior Executive Service managers in the APS(a), 2002–2012



(a) APS - Australian Public Service.

Sources: [ABS Gender Indicators, Australia, Jul 2012](#) (cat. no. 4125.0), and Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), [State of the Service 2011–12, Chapter 6 Diversity](#)

## Making a difference

In 2011–12, women made up a notable proportion of people employed in Health care and social assistance (78%), and Education and training (69%) industries.

Within the Managers occupation group, women made up the vast majority of Child care centre managers (96%), three quarters of Health and welfare services managers (78%), and there was almost an equal proportion of School Principals (48%). Of the Professionals occupation group, women represented the majority of Early childhood teachers (97%), and Primary school teachers (86%), as well as Counsellors (82%), and Welfare, recreation and community arts workers (80%).

Women made up a notable proportion of those employed in the Community and personal service workers occupation group, Child carers (96%) and Enrolled and mothercraft nurses (95%). Also, 91% of Education aides, 87% of Special care workers, and 80% of Aged and disabled carers were women.

In 2012, women made up 39% of the Senior Executive Service (up from 28% in 2002).<sup>17</sup> The proportion of women in middle management within the APS was much closer to that of men, with 47% of Executive Level (EL) Managers (up from 36% in 2002) being women.<sup>17</sup>

One possible reason for the lack of ‘examples’ of senior women for the current generation in the APS may be due to the marriage bar which was in place until 1966.<sup>19</sup> Prior to 1966, women were forced to resign once they married, and were therefore inhibited from progressing their careers. Although it might seem like the removal of the marriage bar happened a long time ago, attitudes and unconscious bias towards women in the workplace have been slow to change.<sup>18</sup>

## Barriers

Although men and women may enter the workplace at similar levels, with similar credentials and career aspirations, their career paths often diverge.<sup>20</sup>

## ...work and family balance

Women may not seek promotion because of family responsibilities, and a lack of family friendly and flexible working environments. Even if women were to have the support necessary to succeed in advancing their career, some women may not be prepared to make the sacrifices necessary to do so.<sup>20</sup>

An increasing trend for families with children is where both parents are employed. In 2009–10, both parents were employed in 63% of the 2.3 million couple families with dependent children.<sup>21</sup> Although time spent looking after children is usually a responsibility shared among couples, women do usually take on a large share of the caring and nurturing role,



## Other factors

### ...lacking confidence

Some women are seen to have a lack of confidence in their abilities and are less likely to put their hands up for promotion.<sup>23</sup> Whereas men are willing to put their hand up for a role where they may not tick some or all of the boxes, some women may only apply for the job if they feel confident they are a good fit for the job.<sup>23</sup>

It has been suggested that women tend to be uncomfortable with self-promotion.<sup>24</sup> Being more hesitant to promote themselves and their accomplishments may come across as a lack of confidence in their own abilities.<sup>24</sup> Ironically, the very qualities that hold women back from putting themselves forward for higher roles – being cautious and risk adverse – may also make them better in those roles.<sup>24</sup>

### ...unconscious bias

The glass ceiling is a term that is often applied to women being unable to progress from middle to senior management. One reason for this may be due to unconscious bias towards leaders of a certain age, gender and race.<sup>23</sup> Unconscious bias is not a concept that can be measured, but it is seen as a barrier.<sup>23</sup>

whether that be with their children, the household, and increasingly, their elderly parents.<sup>22</sup> For example in 2006, women employed full time spent 6 hours and 39 minutes per day taking care of children, compared with men employed full time who spent 3 hours and 43 minutes. The time men spent taking care of children remained unchanged since 1997, whereas for women it increased by 49 minutes.

## International comparisons

Boards around the world are under increasing pressure to increase the number of women in senior roles.<sup>25</sup>

## Quotas vs. cultural change

Although targets and quotas make a difference to the number of women in senior leadership roles, some believe quotas are wrong in principle, are tokenistic and counterproductive to changing the workplace culture.<sup>26</sup> One of the most common objections to quotas is that they aren't based on the principle of merit and don't represent the best person for the job.<sup>27</sup>

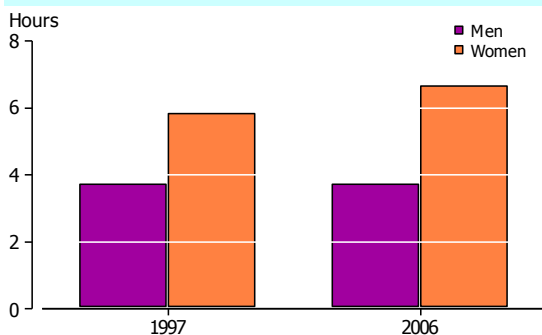
Quotas can have some unintended consequences for companies and boards. For example, Norway introduced mandatory quotas in 2003. While they did achieve the legislative requirement that at least 40% of the board members of listed companies be women, there was no change in the proportion of women senior executive positions, which in 2010 remained at 12%. The proportion of women chairs stayed at 2%, and the proportion of women CEOs remained at 5%.<sup>28</sup> Instead of increasing the number of women holding board positions in Norway, a select few held between 25 to 35 director positions each.<sup>29</sup>

Other ways suggested for increasing the number of women in senior leadership positions include reviewing diversity policies such as recruitment practices to address barriers, implementation of family friendly policies and flexible work options, and intervention programs to foster the career development of women employees.<sup>26</sup>

When it comes to women in leadership, Australia has fallen behind. In 2012, 16% of board directors in the United States were women (compared with 12.3% in Australia). In South Africa 5.3% of board chairs were women (compared with 3.0% in Australia), and in Canada, 6.1% of CEOs were women (compared with 3.5% in Australia).<sup>30</sup>

It's not just in the corporate world that Australia has fallen behind. When comparing the proportion of women in national parliaments internationally, Australia's ranking has slipped from 21 to 38 over the past decade.<sup>3</sup>

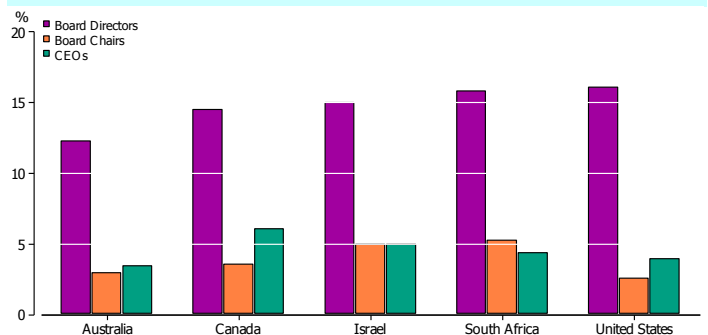
### Total hours a day spent taking care of children by parents employed full time(a)(b), 1997 and 2006



- (a) Parents aged 15 years and over.  
(b) Children aged between 0–14 years.

Source: [ABS Gender Indicators, Australia, Jul 2012](#) (cat. no. 4125.0)

### International comparisons: Women who were Board Directors, Board Chairs and CEOs(a)(b), 2012



- (a) CEO - Chief Executive Officer.  
(b) Canada, Israel, South Africa and the United States were as at Aug 2012. Australian figures are from November 2012.

Sources: Catalyst, [<www.catalyst.org/file/728/qt\\_australia\\_canada\\_israel\\_south\\_africa\\_us.pdf>](#), and Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA), [2012 Australian Census of Women in Leadership](#)

## Looking ahead

The Australian Human Rights Commission's *Gender Equality Blueprint 2010* identified women in leadership as one of five key priority areas in achieving gender equality.<sup>31</sup> To address the low number of women in senior leadership positions, a number of initiatives have been introduced by both corporate organisations and government.

Corporately, since 2010 the Australian Stock Exchange requires companies to report the numbers of women in senior decision-making roles, set targets and report on their progress each year.<sup>32</sup> There have also been positive outcomes following the Australian Institute of Company Directors introducing the Chairmen's Mentoring Program, which involves Australia's leading chairs mentoring women over a 12 month period.<sup>33</sup>

At the government level, the Commonwealth Government's Office for Women manages the AppointWomen initiative, which gives women the opportunity to be considered for appointment to a variety of Commonwealth Government boards and other decision making bodies.<sup>34</sup> Individual government departments may also have their own initiatives to widen and deepen the pool of future women leaders.<sup>35</sup>

Boardlinks is a network established in 2012 to provide more opportunities for women seeking board positions.<sup>11</sup> In particular, Boardlinks will focus on strategies to ensure women, who are otherwise skilled and experienced, gain their first board appointment.<sup>11</sup>

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# Older carers

Older people contribute to society in many ways. One of these is through providing care to others, some of whom may have disabilities. In 2006, it was estimated that the unpaid contribution of older people who provided care to people with a disability was \$3.9 billion.<sup>1</sup>

In 2009, although only around 13% of the population were aged 65 years and over, nearly 20% of all carers were of this age.

Providing care can have an impact on carers regardless of age. However, the impact on older carers may be exacerbated by factors such as their own age-related health problems, given that around half of all older carers (55%) had a disability themselves.

With the ageing of the population, and consequently an increase in the number of older people who may require assistance, it is likely that the demand for carers will increase. The role of carers in the community will, therefore, be of continuing importance.

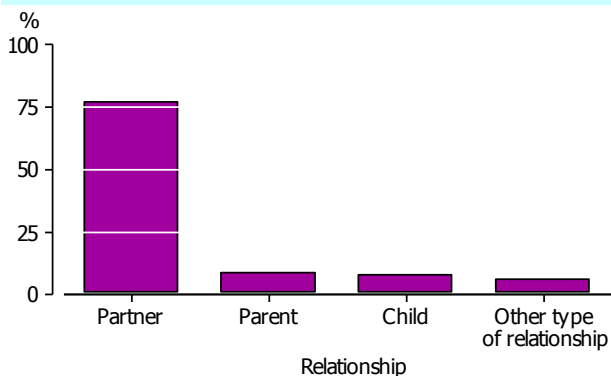
Although there are many carers in Australia who provide formal assistance through organisations, this article focuses on the characteristics of people aged 65 years and over who provided some level of informal care to others with a disability or long-term health condition, or to other older people.

## Number of carers over time

The total number of informal carers has risen from 2.3 million in 1998, or 13% of the total population, to around 2.6 million in 2003, still around 13% of the population.

In 2009, there were again around 2.6 million informal carers. However, the proportion of informal carers in the total population slightly dropped to 12%.

### Relationship of older primary carers(a) to the main receiver of care – 2009



(a) Aged 65 years and over.

Source: ABS 2009 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Caring

### Data source and definitions

The main data source for this article is the ABS 2009 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers.

In this article, an **older carer** is defined as a person aged 65 years and over who provides any informal assistance, in terms of help or supervision, to people with a disability, long-term condition or people who are elderly (60 years and over). This assistance has to be ongoing, or likely to be ongoing, for at least six months.

**Disability** refers to a limitation, restriction or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months and restricts everyday activities.

**Formal assistance** includes help provided to persons with one or more disabilities by organisations or individuals representing organisations (whether profit making or non-profit making, government or private). Formal assistance providers are persons (excluding family, friends or neighbours as described in informal help) who provide assistance on a regular, paid basis and who were not associated with any organisation.

**Impairment** refers to a loss or abnormality in body structure or physiological function (including mental functions).

**Informal assistance** is unpaid help or supervision and includes assistance that is provided because of a person's disability or because they are older. Informal assistance may be provided by family, friends or neighbours. Further, any assistance received from family or friends living in the same household was considered to be informal assistance regardless of whether or not the provider was paid. It does not include providers whose care is privately organised for profit.

**Long-term condition** refers to a disease or a disorder which has lasted or is likely to last for at least six months; or a disease, disorder or event which produces an impairment or restriction which has lasted or is likely to last for at least six months.

**Primary carers** are people who provide the most informal assistance, in terms of help or supervision, to a person with one or more disabilities. The assistance has to be ongoing, or likely to be ongoing, for at least six months and be provided for one or more of the core activities (communication, mobility and self-care).

**Respite care** services provide alternative care arrangements for people with one or more disabilities, or older people, to allow carers a short-term break from their care commitments.

## Who are older carers?

### ...primary carers and other carers

In 2009, there were approximately 521,000 carers aged 65 years and over. Nearly one fifth (19%) of people aged 65 years and over were carers, compared with around one tenth (11%) of people under the age of 65.

A number of people may provide care to one person, but in most cases, a person is cared for by a primary (i.e. main) carer. In 2009, nearly two in every five (38%) older carers, or 196,000 people, were primary carers. These older carers represented a quarter of all primary carers aged 15 years and over in Australia.

### ...male or female carers

In 2009, the proportion of older male and female carers was fairly even, though there were more male carers (54%) than female carers. The proportion of older male and female primary carers was also fairly even, but there were more female primary carers (54%) than male primary carers.

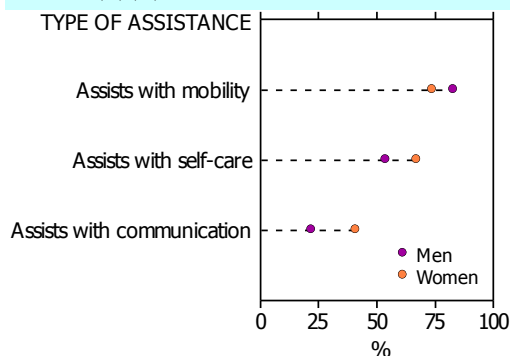
When an older woman took on the caring role, she was more likely to be the primary carer than would an older man who provided care - 44% of older female carers were a primary carer compared with 32% of older male carers.

### Why does someone become a carer?

Taking on the role of a carer can be a major commitment, and is done for a number of reasons.

In 2009, around half (53%) of older primary carers reported that they took on their caring role due to a sense of family responsibility and about half (52%) thought that they could provide better care than someone else. Further, around a third (36%) took on the role because they felt an emotional obligation, about a fifth (22%) had no other family or friends available while around 14% took on the role because alternative care was too costly.

**Types of assistance provided to the main receiver of care by older primary carers(a)(b) – 2009**



(a) More than one type of assistance may have been provided.

(b) Aged 65 years and over.

Source: ABS 2009 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Caring

## Definitions

### Core activity tasks

**Communication tasks** refer to activities that can include understanding others and being understood by others.

**Mobility tasks** refer to activities that can include getting into or out of a bed or chair, moving around the home, moving about a place away from home, and walking up and down stairs without a handrail.

**Self-care tasks** refer to tasks that can include activities like showering or bathing, dressing, eating, toileting and bladder or bowel control.

### Core activity limitations

Four levels of **core activity limitation** are determined based on whether a person needed help, had difficulty, or used aids or equipment with any of the core activities. A person's overall level of core activity limitation is determined by their highest level of limitation in these activities. The four levels of limitation are:

**Profound** The person is unable to do, or always needs help with, a core activity task.

**Severe** The person sometimes needs help with a core activity task; has difficulty understanding or being understood by family or friends; can communicate more easily using sign language or other non-spoken forms of communication.

**Moderate** The person needs no help, but has difficulty with a core activity task.

**Mild** The person needs no help and has no difficulty with any of the core activity tasks, but uses aids and equipment; cannot easily walk 200 metres; cannot walk up and down stairs without a handrail; cannot easily bend to pick up an object from the floor; cannot use or has difficulty using or needs help or supervision with public transport.

### Who are older primary carers caring for?

In general, older primary carers were caring for a member of their family who they lived with. In 2009, nine out of 10 (92%) older carers were caring for one person, and 91% lived in the same household as the main person they cared for.

Around three quarters (77%) of older primary carers were the partner or spouse of the main person they cared for. Men (88%) were more likely to have provided care for their partner or spouse when compared with women (68%).

In addition, 9% of older primary carers were the parent of the main person they cared for. Elderly parents who are responsible for caring for their child are often very concerned about who will provide care to their child once they pass away.<sup>2</sup>

Further, around 8% of older primary carers were caring for their parent. Given that older primary carers are 65 years and older, the person they are caring for was likely to be very elderly, at least in their 80s.

**In 2009, around 8% of older primary carers were caring for their parent.**

### What is the age and disability status of people being cared for?

In 2009, four out of five (82%) older primary carers were providing care to a person aged 65 years and older, while nearly one fifth (16%) were providing care to a person aged between 35 and 64 years.

In 2009, nearly all those receiving care had serious core activity limitations (i.e. needed help in communication, mobility or self-care tasks). Of the main receivers of care who lived with their carer, more than half (56%) had a profound core activity limitation and nearly two fifths (39%) had a severe core activity limitation.

### What types of assistance are provided by older primary carers?

Older primary carers provided assistance to the person they cared for in many ways, but some types of assistance were required more than others. In 2009, older primary carers usually assisted the person they provided care for with tasks related to mobility (78%), self-care (61%), and to a lesser degree, communication (32%). Men were more likely to assist with mobility tasks, while women were more likely to assist with communication and self-care.

### Do older carers have their own disabilities?

Older carers were slightly more likely (55%) to have a disability themselves than older people who were not carers (50%).

**In 2009, around half (55%) of all older carers had a disability themselves.**

Further, while four fifths (80%) of all older carers with disability did not require assistance with core activities, one in five (20%) had a severe or profound disability themselves. Therefore, these carers were providing care to someone while needing some form of assistance themselves.

### Physical and emotional affects of caring

In 2009, nearly three quarters (72%) of older primary carers thought that their physical or emotional wellbeing had not changed because of their carer role. Moreover, about one third (32%) felt satisfied with their role as carer.

However, around 29% reported that they lacked energy or felt weary because of their caring role and about a quarter (24%) frequently felt worried or depressed.

### How much time do older primary carers spend caring?

The years of care provided by older carers varied. In 2009, nearly two fifths (39%) of older primary carers had provided less than five years of care, about a quarter (26%) had provided between five and nine years of care and more than a third (36%) had provided ten or more years of care.

For most older primary carers, the main person they cared for was their partner. However, for those older primary carers who had been providing care for 10 years or more, one in five (22%) cared for their child, and 69% cared for their partners.

In 2009, 85% of parents who provided care to their child had done so for 10 years or more. Additionally, nearly a third (32%) of older primary carers who provided care to their partner had done so for 10 years or more.

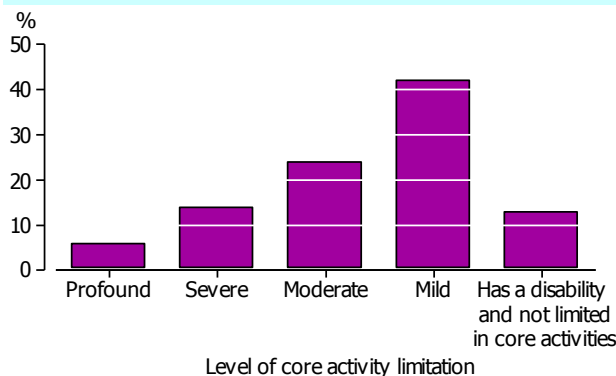
The number of hours per week spent providing care varied. Around two fifths (41%) of older primary carers provided care for less than 20 hours per week while a similar proportion (42%) provided care for the much longer period of 40 or more hours per week.

### Older carers and work

Although most people aged 65 years and over are not in the workforce, in 2009, around 8% of older primary carers were still employed, despite also having the responsibility of being a primary carer. However, this proportion was lower than other carers or other people in that age group (both 12%).

Employed older primary carers were more likely to have worked part time (78% of primary carers, 57% of other carers and 56% of

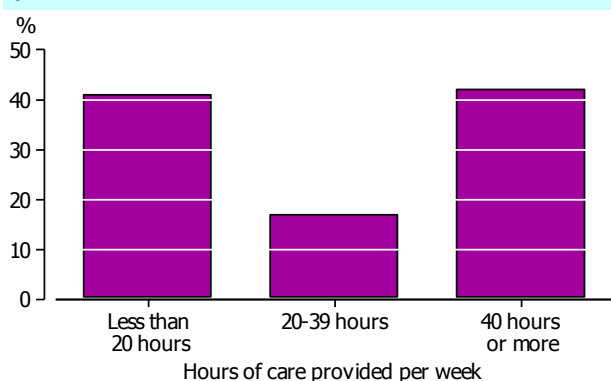
### Level of core activity limitation for older carers with disability (a) – 2009



(a) Aged 65 years and over.

Source: ABS 2009 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Caring

## Total weekly hours older primary carers(a) provided care – 2009



(a) Aged 65 years and over.

Source: ABS 2009 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Caring

non-carers). This, in conjunction with the lower employment rate for older primary carers, indicates that older primary carers are much less involved in the labour force than others aged 65 years and older. That is, older primary carers are less likely to be employed and more likely to work part time.

The majority (79%) of older primary carers who were unemployed or not in the labour force at the time of survey were also not working just prior to taking on the caring role.

However, of the older primary carers who were unemployed or not in the labour force at the time of the survey but were working just prior to taking on the caring role, two fifths (42%) left their job because of retirement, while around a fifth (22%) had left their job to become a carer.

## Support for carers

### ...respite care

Although caring for someone can be rewarding, at times the work and responsibility of being a carer can be both exhausting and overwhelming.<sup>3</sup> Respite services can provide some relief to the carer, their families, and those requiring care.

While many older primary carers do not feel they need to use respite care, some want to, but encounter barriers that stop them from doing so. Some carers feel they are neglecting their responsibilities if they use respite care, and others feel guilty about enjoying their time while the person requiring care is in respite.<sup>4</sup>

In 2009, the majority of all older primary carers (89%) had never used respite care. Nearly three quarters of these carers (72%) didn't think they needed it while a further 20% never used respite care because either the carer or the person being cared for did not want it.

Of the 23,000 (12%) older primary carers who needed respite care, or more respite care, more

## Labour force status by carer status for people aged 65 years and over – 2009

Labour force status	Carer status			Total
	Primary carer	Other carer	Not a carer	
	%	%	%	%
Employed	8.2	12.5	11.7	11.6
Not employed	91.8	87.5	88.3	88.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: ABS 2009 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Caring

than two fifths (43%) had previously used respite care and needed more, while nearly three fifths (57%) had never received respite care but needed it.

### ...is more support needed?

In 2009, nearly two thirds of all older primary carers (64%) did not require additional support or improvement in their current situation to aid their role as a carer.

However, some older primary carers felt that they did need more support or an improvement in their situation in a number of areas. The most common types of support needed were for more financial assistance (18%), more physical assistance (14%), and more respite care (12%).

## Looking forward

Population projections predict a rise in the number and proportion of older Australians with a disability.<sup>5</sup> Given this, the importance of the health and wellbeing of all people involved in caring is, and will continue to be, a key concern.

In 2009, a parliamentary inquiry aimed at understanding the challenges facing carers inspired the National Carer Recognition Framework.<sup>6</sup> This framework includes the *Carer Recognition Act 2010*, which aims to increase recognition and awareness of carers and to acknowledge the valuable contribution they make to society.<sup>7</sup> Similar legislation has been put in place, or has been proposed, in all states and territories.<sup>8</sup>

The National Carer Recognition Framework also includes the National Carer Strategy, which aims to provide carers with services and supports that are coordinated, flexible, appropriate, affordable, inclusive and sustainable.<sup>9</sup>

These recent measures signify the contribution of carers to society. With the ageing population in mind, the role of carers in the community will be of continuing importance.

## Endnotes

- 1 National Seniors Productive Aging Centre (NSPAC), 2009, [Still putting in. Measuring the economic and social contributions of older Australians](#), viewed 20 November 2012, <[www.productiveageing.com.au](http://www.productiveageing.com.au)>.
- 2 Aged Services Learning and Research Collaboration (ASLaRC), 2008, [Futures planning for older carers of adults with disabilities](#), viewed 19 November 2012, <<http://www.scu.edu.au>>.
- 3 Living Caring Working, 2012, [Looking after yourself-emotionally](#), viewed 7 September 2012, <<http://www.livingcaringworking.com>>.
- 4 Carers Northern Territory, 2012, [Respite](#), viewed 13 August 2012, <<http://carersnt.asn.au>>.
- 5 Giles, C., Crotty, M., & Cameron, I., 2003, [Disability in older Australians: projections for 2006-2031](#). The Medical Journal of Australia, viewed 3 October 2012, <<https://www.mja.com.au>>.
- 6 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth, 2009, [Who cares...? Report on the Inquiry into better support for carers](#). Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, viewed 7 August 2012, <[www.communities.wa.gov.au](http://www.communities.wa.gov.au)>
- 7 Commonwealth of Australia, 2010, [Carer Recognition Act 2010](#). Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, viewed 7 August 2012, <<http://www.comlaw.gov.au>>.
- 8 Care Aware. National Carer Awareness Initiative, 2012, [Official Carer Recognition](#), viewed 10 September 2012, <<http://careaware.com.au>>.
- 9 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2012, [National Carer Strategy](#), viewed 7 August 2012, <<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au>>.





# People identified as having dementia or Alzheimer's disease

Dementia and Alzheimer's disease are health conditions that most of us have heard of, but few of us fully understand. These conditions are caused by the gradual death of brain cells, and can have a profound impact on the lives of those who have the condition and their carers. As their loss of cognitive ability leads to impairments in memory, reasoning, planning, and behaviour, people with dementia or Alzheimer's disease lose control of many of the essential features of their lives, becoming increasingly dependent and unpredictable.

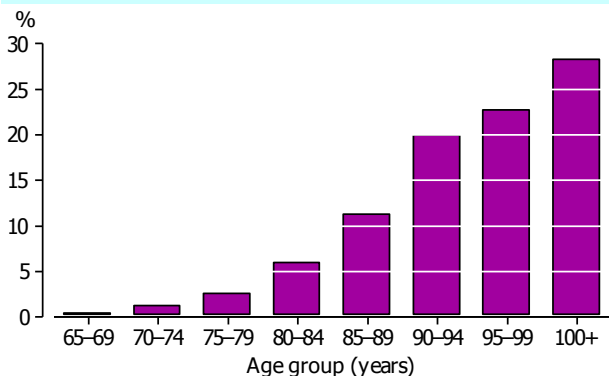
The onset of dementia and Alzheimer's disease is usually in old age. Because the proportion of the population in older age groups is projected to increase, it has been suggested that dementia and Alzheimer's disease represent significant challenges to current health, aged care and social policies.

In 2012, Australian health ministers recognised dementia as the ninth National Health Priority Area, and the Australian Government announced its intention to reform aged care. As part of its \$3.7 billion Aged Care Reform package, the Australian Government stated its intention to allocate \$268.4 million over five years to 'tackle' dementia.<sup>1</sup>

## How common is dementia and Alzheimer's disease?

In the 2009 ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), around 110,000 Australians were identified as having dementia (ICD-10 codes F01 and F03 only) or Alzheimer's disease (see blue box 'Measuring dementia and Alzheimer's disease'). Although people as young as their late 20s were identified as having dementia or Alzheimer's disease in

Proportion of each age group identified as having dementia or Alzheimer's disease – 2009



Source: ABS 2009 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

## Data sources and definitions

Data presented in this article have been sourced from the ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's (AIHW) Australian Hospital Statistics and Principal diagnosis data cubes, and the ABS Causes of Death collection.

To be able to integrate data from these different sources, the same definition of *dementia and Alzheimer's disease* has been used throughout this article. This definition is the World Health Organisation's recommended cause of death dissemination category comprising *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems Tenth Revision (ICD-10)* codes F01 (Vascular dementia), F03 (Unspecified dementia) and G30 (Alzheimer's disease).<sup>2</sup>

A *health establishment* is a hospital, nursing home, aged care hostel, or the cared component of a retirement village.

A *hospitalisation* is an episode of admitted patient care which can be either a total hospital stay (from admission to discharge, transfer or death) or a portion of a hospital stay beginning or ending in a change of type of care (for example, from acute care to palliative care).<sup>3</sup>

2009, these conditions were rarely identified among people under 45 years, and were still uncommon among 45–64 year olds. Among senior Australians, the proportion identified as having dementia or Alzheimer's disease in 2009 progressively increased with age from less than 1% of 65–69 year olds to 28% of centenarians.

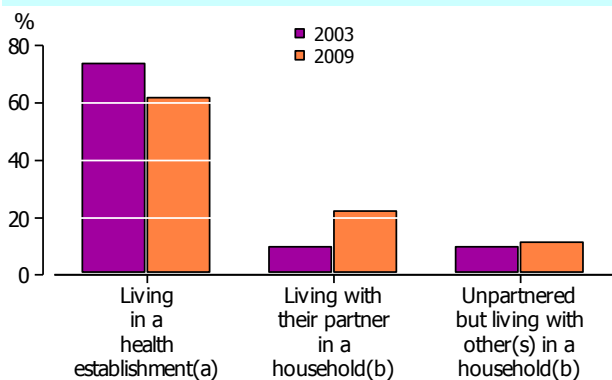
## Who is affected?

Of people identified with dementia or Alzheimer's disease in 2009, 96% were 65 years or older, nearly two-thirds (64%) were women, and 63% were widowed, divorced, separated or never married. This demographic profile reflects the age at which the symptoms of dementia and Alzheimer's disease become obvious. It also reflects Australian women's tendency to marry older men and live longer than their husbands.

## Where do they live?

In 2009, nearly two-thirds (62%) of people identified as having dementia or Alzheimer's disease were living in a health establishment such as a nursing home, an aged care hostel, or the cared component of a retirement village. Another 22% were living in a household with their partner, and a further 11% were unpartnered but were sharing a household with at least one other person such as a family member.

### Living arrangements of people identified as having dementia or Alzheimer's disease



(a) A hospital, nursing home, aged care hostel, or the cared component of a retirement village.

(b) A household is a group of two or more related or unrelated people who usually reside in the same dwelling and who make common provision for food and other essentials of living, or a person living in a dwelling who makes provision for his or her own food and other essentials for living without combining with any other person.

Source: ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

In both 2003 and 2009, Australians identified as having these conditions were not likely to have been living at home alone. However, in line with de-institutionalisation and non-institutionalisation policies initiated in the mid-1980s, they were more likely to be residing in private dwellings (i.e. households) in 2009 (38%) than in 2003 (26%).

Whether a person with dementia or Alzheimer's disease lives in a household or health establishment partly depends upon whether they have someone to live with, such as a spouse, child or other potential care giver. It also depends upon the degree of restriction they experience in performing the tasks of daily living, and their consequent level of need for care and/or supervision. The financial cost of living in a health establishment, and the supply of such accommodation relative to the demand for it, are also likely to be factors.

### How disabling are their conditions?

Almost all (98%) of the people identified as having dementia or Alzheimer's disease in the 2009 SDAC were limited in their ability to perform at least one basic, everyday self-care, mobility or vocal communication task. Such limitations were not necessarily due to dementia or Alzheimer's disease though, as 96% of Australians identified as having dementia or Alzheimer's disease in 2009 had more than one long-term health condition (e.g. arthritis, back problems, hearing loss, heart disease). Nearly two-thirds (63%) had at least five long-term health conditions, and 11% had nine or more.

### Measuring dementia and Alzheimer's disease

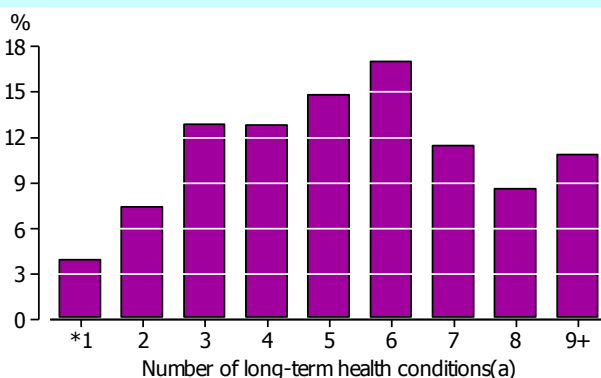
The primary aim of the ABS SDAC is to produce information about people with a disability, older people and carers.<sup>4</sup> SDAC collects information on all health conditions experienced by people living in households or cared accommodation that have lasted or are likely to last for at least 6 months, and whether or not these conditions restrict their activities in some way. It may not capture those people who have mild or early stages of dementia or Alzheimer's disease because they have not yet been diagnosed, or because they attribute impairments to the effects of old age or another condition, rather than to the existence of dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

Other organisations and researchers have indirectly estimated the number of Australians with impaired brain function by applying age-specific prevalence rates derived from various studies to estimated resident population data.<sup>5,3</sup> Most recently, the AIHW estimated that if all Australians had been screened in 2011, and then (when relevant) diagnostically assessed, that 298,000 people would have been found to have impairment of brain function associated with more than 100 different diseases, including dementia, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, and AIDS.<sup>3</sup>

A little over half (53%) of those who were living in households were mainly restricted by their dementia or Alzheimer's disease, rather than by some other long-term health condition.

Indicative of the generally more advanced stage of these conditions experienced by those living in health establishments, dementia or Alzheimer's disease was the long-term health condition causing most problems for more than two-thirds (69%) of these people identified as having dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

### Number of long-term health conditions(a) experienced by people identified as having dementia or Alzheimer's disease— 2009



(a) A long-term health condition is a disease or disorder which has lasted or is likely to last for at least six months; or a disease, disorder or event (e.g. stroke, poisoning, accident etc.) which produces an impairment or restriction which has lasted or is likely to last for at least six months.

\* This estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and, if used, should be used with caution.

Source: ABS 2009 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

## What sort of help do they need?

Need for help to perform physical tasks such as household chores, home maintenance and gardening may be more attributable to the existence and severity of physical health conditions than to dementia or Alzheimer's disease. The ability to perform communicative, cognitive and emotive tasks such as understanding others, decision making, and coping with feelings is more likely to be impaired by dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

In 2009, 29% of people living in households who were identified as having dementia or Alzheimer's disease sometimes or always needed help to understand or be understood by family or friends, and 38% sometimes or always needed help to understand or be understood by a stranger. A strong indication that their

counterparts living in health establishments tend to have more advanced dementia or Alzheimer's disease is that 69% of them needed help sometimes or always to understand or be understood by family or friends, and 81% sometimes or always needed help to understand or be understood by a stranger.

Of people living in households who were identified as having dementia or Alzheimer's disease, 24% needed help to cope with their feelings or emotions, and 35% needed help to make friendships, interact with others, or maintain relationships. More than half of them needed some help with reading and writing tasks such as checking bills or bank statements, writing letters or filling in forms (58%), and with making decisions or thinking through problems (59%). All up, 94% of these people needed help with at least one task of daily living.

### People identified as having dementia or Alzheimer's disease: need for help by activity/task – 2009

	Lives in a household %	Lives in a health establishment %
Selected activities and tasks of daily living		
Self-care – ever needs help or supervision:		
to shower or bathe	48.3	96.8
to dress	53.4	95.9
when eating a meal	33.6	82.7
with controlling bladder or bowel	34.3	85.8
Health care – ever needs help or supervision:		
to cut and clean toe nails and wash and dry feet	70.4	98.5
with other health care tasks(a)	76.2	98.0
Mobility – ever needs help or supervision:		
to move about the house/health establishment(b)	29.8	80.8
when going to or getting around a place away from home(c)	77.0	67.0
Vocal communication – ever needs help:		
to understand or be understood by family or friends	28.6	69.2
to understand or be understood by someone he/she does not know	37.9	80.9
Cognitive and emotive tasks – ever needs help:		
making friendships, interacting with others, or maintaining relationships	34.8	(d)66.9
copied with his/her feelings or emotions	23.9	(d)74.9
with making decisions or thinking through problems	58.7	(d)79.0
Needs help with reading and writing tasks(e) because of health or old age	58.0	87.3
Needs help to prepare his/her meals because of health or old age	62.2	(f)
Needs help to do household chores(g) because of health or old age	62.4	(f)
Ever needs to be driven by someone else in a private vehicle or taxi to travel from home	(h)80.1	(i)

(a) Taking medication (including injections), dressing wounds, manipulating or exercising muscles or limbs, therapeutic massage, using medical equipment or aids (e.g. connecting to machines, pumps, etc.), skin care, and preventing pressure sores.

(b) Those who do not move about their house/health establishment are considered to never need help or supervision to perform this task.

(c) Those who do not leave their home/health establishment are considered to never need help or supervision to perform this task.

(d) Those who do not perform this task at all (e.g. those in a coma) are considered to never need help to perform this task.

(e) Such as checking bills or bank statements, writing letters or filling in forms.

(f) This task is usually performed by paid employees of health establishments.

(g) Like laundry, vacuuming or dusting.

(h) Those who do not leave home are considered to never need to be driven to places away from home by someone else in a private vehicle or taxi.

(i) This data was not collected on behalf of people living in health establishments.

Source: ABS 2009 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers



## Hospitalisations(a) for which dementia or Alzheimer's disease was the principal diagnosis



(a) Episodes of admitted patient care which can be total hospital stays (from admission to discharge, transfer or death) or portions of hospital stays beginning or ending in a change care type (for example, from acute care to palliative care).<sup>3</sup>

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [Separation statistics by principal diagnosis in ICD-10-AM, Australia, 1998-99 to 2007-08](#); Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [Separation statistics by principal diagnosis in ICD-10-AM, Australia, 2008-09 to 2009-10](#); Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [Australian hospital statistics 2010-11](#) (AIHW cat. no. HSE 117)

### How many hospitalisations are mainly because of dementia or Alzheimer's disease?

During 2010-11, dementia or Alzheimer's disease was the principal diagnosis for 9,492 hospitalisations. This was up from 8,135 in 1998-99, but down from the 21st century peak of 10,438 in 2007-08.

In 2010-11, the average length of a hospitalisation when dementia or Alzheimer's disease was the principal diagnosis was 16 days.<sup>6</sup> While this was shorter than the average during the previous year (18 days),<sup>7</sup> and the year before that (19 days),<sup>7</sup> it was over five times longer than the average length of other hospitalisations in 2010-11 (3 days).<sup>6</sup>

**The hospital stay of patients principally diagnosed with dementia or Alzheimer's disease is over five times longer than it is for other hospital patients.**

Hospital care is far from being the only formal care received by people with dementia or Alzheimer's disease. Recent decades have witnessed an expansion of the delivery of formal care inside recipients' own homes via organisations such as the Blue Nurses and Meals on Wheels. Additionally, many retirement villages now offer assisted living accommodation where residents receive considerable formal care outside of a hospital setting.

### How many Australians die from dementia or Alzheimer's disease each year?

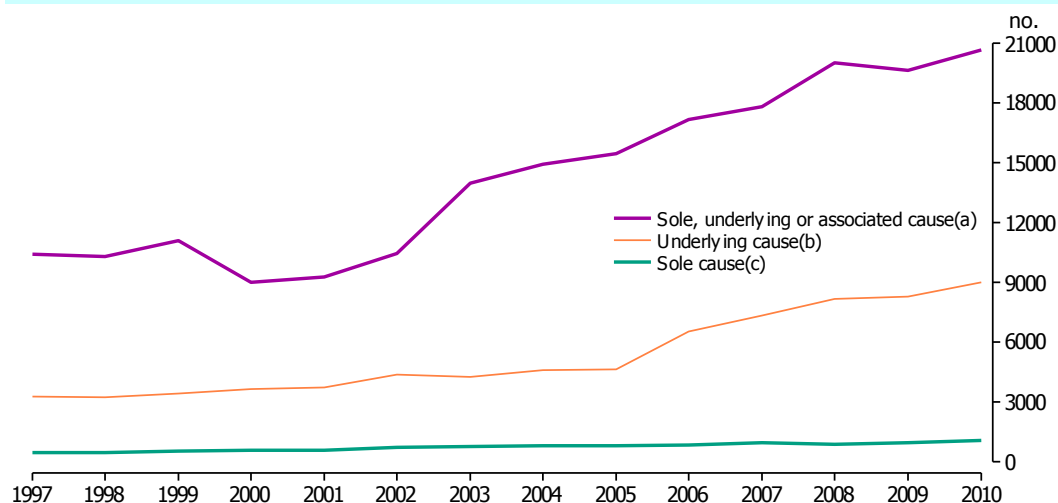
A health condition can be certified by a doctor or coroner as the underlying (i.e. main) cause of death, or as an associated (i.e. contributing) cause of death when a person dies mainly from something else. Dementia and Alzheimer's disease was the third leading underlying cause of death in 2010, behind Ischaemic heart diseases (21,708 deaths) and Cerebrovascular diseases (11,204 deaths). The number of deaths for which dementia or Alzheimer's disease was the underlying cause increased from 3,740 in 2001 to 9,003 in 2010. This is largely due to an increase in the number of deaths for which dementia was the underlying cause (from 2,133 in 2001 to 6,297 in 2010).<sup>8</sup>

Some health conditions are more likely than others to accompany death from dementia or Alzheimer's disease. For example, nearly a third (31%) of the deaths attributed to dementia or Alzheimer's disease as the underlying cause in 2010 were also due to influenza and pneumonia as an associated cause.

Hypertensive diseases and Ischaemic heart disease were each associated causes for 12% of deaths where dementia or Alzheimer's disease was the underlying cause. In contrast, malignant cancers were an associated cause of death for just 5% of deaths when dementia or Alzheimer's disease was the underlying cause.<sup>8</sup>

There are three reasons for the rising death toll from dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Firstly, the number of Australians in older age groups,

## Registered deaths certified to have been caused by dementia or Alzheimer's disease



(a) Deaths for which dementia or Alzheimer's disease was entered on the medical certificate of cause of death as a disease or morbid condition that either resulted in the death, or contributed to the death. For most of these deaths, dementia or Alzheimer's disease contributed to the death as an associated cause but was not the main (i.e. sole or underlying) cause. The dip in deaths registered in 2000, 2001 and 2002 is the result of a known data quality issue associated with coding software used internationally at that time. This issue reduced the number of deaths for which dementia or Alzheimer's disease was an associated cause only, and was rectified in 2003 with a new version of the software.

(b) Deaths for which dementia or Alzheimer's disease initiated the train of morbid events leading directly to death.

(c) Deaths for which dementia or Alzheimer's disease was the only morbid condition, disease or injury entered on the medical certificate of cause of death.

Source: ABS [Causes of Death, Australia, 2010](#) (cat. no. 3303.0); ABS Causes of Death collection

where dementia and Alzheimer's disease is more prevalent, has been increasing. This has occurred partly because life expectancy at all ages has been increasing (see *Australian Social Trends, March 2011* '[Life expectancy trends – Australia](#)'). Longer life expectancy means that Australians are becoming increasingly likely to live long enough to develop and eventually die from dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

Secondly, updates to the coding instructions in the *International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (Tenth Revision)* resulted in the assignment of some deaths to Vascular dementia where previously they may have been coded to a cerebrovascular disease.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, changes to the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* and the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*, and a subsequent promotional campaign targeted at health professionals, allowed for death from Vascular dementia of veterans or members of the defence forces to be related to their relevant service. This is believed to have had an effect on the number of deaths attributed to dementia.<sup>8</sup>

### Looking ahead

Changes in diet, exercise levels and smoking rates have the potential to change dementia prevalence rates, because these behaviours are considered to be risk factors for developing Vascular dementia from strokes.

Ongoing research into causes, treatments and cures may eventually lead to the adoption of other preventative health measures,<sup>9</sup> and/or to pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and medical techniques which could slow, halt or reverse the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. For example, there has been recent, well-publicised research into the long-term effects of traumatic brain injuries (e.g. concussion) more commonly experienced by ex-boxers and past participants of collision sports such as gridiron and rugby.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, if in the future there is earlier diagnosis of dementia and Alzheimer's disease combined with greater willingness to disclose diagnosis of these health conditions, then the proportion of Australians identified as having dementia or Alzheimer's disease could increase in all age groups.

### Endnotes

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3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012, [Dementia in Australia](#), cat. no. AGE 70, <[www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)>.
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010, [Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings](#), cat. no. 4430.0, <[www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)>.

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10. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012, *What are the Potential Effects of Traumatic Brain Injury?*, viewed 21 May 2012, <[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)>.





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