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Australian Social Trends

USING STATISTICS TO PAINT A PICTURE OF AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

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Ian Ewing
Acting Australian Statistician

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Contents

Introduction

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.

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 *Measuring Wellbeing: Frameworks for Australian Social Statistics, 2001* – ABS 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.

One for the country: recent trends in fertility

With almost 300,000 births registered in both 2008 and 2009, and well over a quarter million per year in the three years before that, the last half decade has seen more babies born to Australian women than any previous five year period.

The number of births and the fertility rate are of broad social policy interest given the long-term implications for the ageing and size of the population, as well as shorter-term impacts such as the provision of health and educational services. This article examines the recent increase in fertility and how socioeconomic and geographic factors are related to the patterns and levels of fertility.

While it is not surprising that the number of births has increased given the growth of the population, only a part of recent increases can be attributed to an increase in the number of women of reproductive age. The total fertility rate (TFR), which takes account of the number of women aged 15–49 years, shows fertility rising steeply throughout most of the first decade of the 2000s. Prior to the 2000s, fertility had been in long-term decline since the peak of the baby boom in 1961 when the TFR reached 3.55 babies per woman.

In 2001, Australia's TFR dipped to its lowest ever level of 1.73 babies per woman, consistent with the downward trend in many other OECD countries. Since then, the TFR climbed to a peak of 1.96 in 2008, before dropping back to 1.90 babies per woman in 2009.

Age of mothers

Over the past few decades there has been a tendency for women to delay childbearing. This is evident in the shift to an older distribution of the age-specific fertility rates (ASFRs). In 1979, for example, just over three-quarters of births were to women aged under 30 years. By 1999,

Data sources and definitions

The majority of data in this article comes from the ABS Birth registrations collection. ABS births statistics are sourced from birth registration systems administered by the state and territory Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages, based on information provided on the birth registration form by the parent(s) of the child.

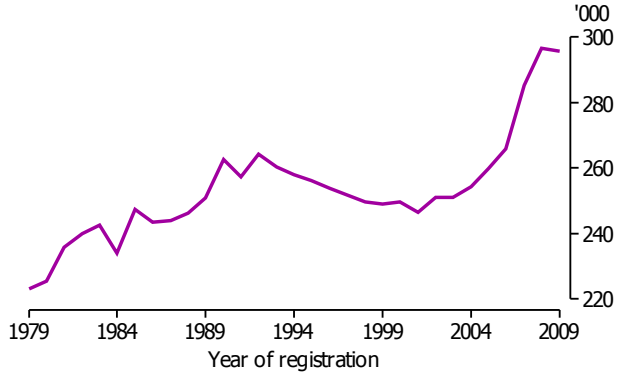
Births data presented in this article are based on the ***year of registration***. For example, the 2009 births and fertility rates are based on births registered in the 2009 calendar year and will differ from the number of births which occurred in 2009, the latter being ***year of occurrence*** statistics. Although ideally, a time series analysis of events data should be on an occurrence basis, the lag between the occurrence and registration of births could mean delaying the analysis until all births from that period have been registered. For more information, see ABS Births, Australia, 2009 (cat. no. 3301.0).

The ***total fertility rate*** (TFR) for any given year is the sum of age-specific fertility rates for that year. It is a hypothetical measure which represents the average number of babies each woman would give birth to during her lifetime if she experienced the current age-specific fertility rates at each age of her reproductive life. While the TFR provides timely information about fertility levels, it may exaggerate fertility trends whenever there are shifts in the timing pattern of births.

Age-specific fertility rates (ASFR) are the number of live births in a year to women at each age per 1,000 females in the population of the same age.

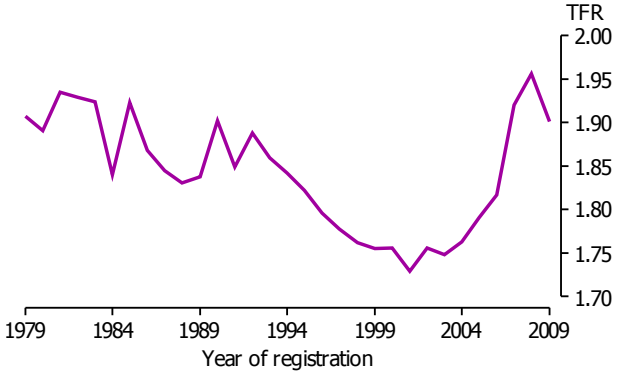
Replacement level fertility is the number of babies a female would need to have to replace herself and her partner, taking into account the deaths of women up to the age of 49 years. At current levels of mortality in Australia, the replacement level is 2.1 babies per woman.

Births — 1979-2009



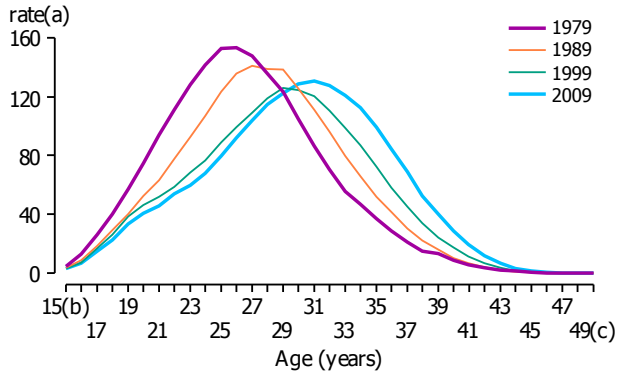
Source: ABS Australian Historical Population Statistics, 2008 (cat. no. 3105.0.65.001); ABS Births, Australia, 2009 (cat. no. 3301.0)

Total fertility rate — 1979-2009



Source: ABS Australian Historical Population Statistics, 2008 (cat. no. 3105.0.65.001); ABS Births, Australia, 2009 (cat. no. 3301.0)

Age-specific fertility rate



(a) Babies per 1,000 women.

(b) Includes births to mothers aged less than 15 years.

(c) Includes births to mothers aged 50 years and over.

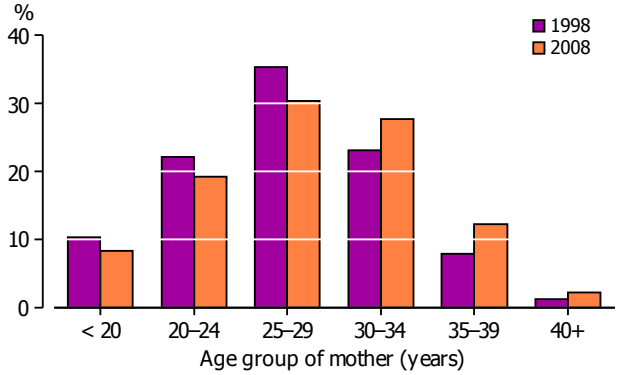
Source: ABS Birth registrations collection

just over half (52%) of births were to women aged under 30 years, and in 2009, the proportion had fallen to 46%. However, between 1999 and 2009, it is apparent that there has been little change in the fertility rates of women aged 15–29 years, but there have been significant increases in the rates for those aged in their 30s.

In 2009, fertility levels were highest among women aged 30–34 years, with an ASFR of 124 babies per 1,000 women, up from 108 in 1999. However, the largest increase occurred for 35–39 year olds with 69 babies per 1,000 women in 2009, up from 47 in 1999.

In contrast to increasing fertility rates for women in their 30s, the fertility rates of women aged under 30 years were only marginally less in 2009 than 1999. For example, among women aged 20–24 years, the fertility rate declined from 61 to 54 babies per 1,000 women, while for women aged under 20 years, the rate in 2009 was 17 babies per 1,000 women, down slightly from 18 babies per 1,000 women in 1999.

Women having their first birth, by age group — 1998 and 2008



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Australia's Mothers and Babies, 1998 and 2008 (cat. no. PER 50) <www.aihw.gov.au>

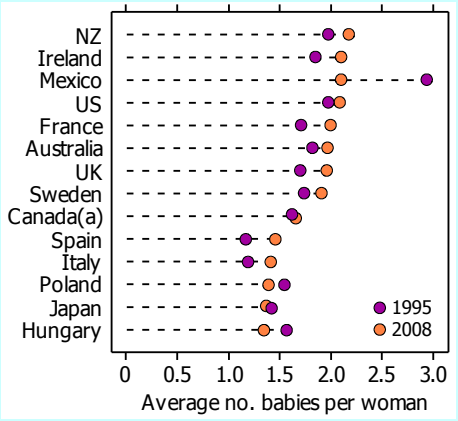
International comparison

Over the last decade many countries throughout the OECD have experienced a recovery in their fertility rate. Some 20 out of 38 OECD countries had higher TFRs in 2008 compared with 1995. The largest increases were in France and Spain (both had TFR increases of 0.29 babies per woman). The United Kingdom also had a large increase (up 0.26), as well as Ireland (up 0.25). Australia's increase in TFR between 1995 and 2008 was 0.15.

In 2008, a number of OECD countries had TFRs at or above the replacement level of 2.1 babies per woman. New Zealand had the highest fertility in the OECD with a TFR of 2.18, followed by Turkey and Iceland (both at 2.14), and Mexico and Ireland both with 2.10 babies per woman.

Despite recent increases in TFR in many countries, many others still had very low rates. For example, Japan's was 1.37, and many European countries had TFRs at similarly low levels such as Poland (1.39), Germany (1.38), Hungary (1.35) and Romania (1.30).

Total fertility rates of selected countries — 1995 and 2008



(a) Data is for 2007.

Source: OECD, Society at a Glance - OECD Social Indicators, 2009. <www.oecd.org>

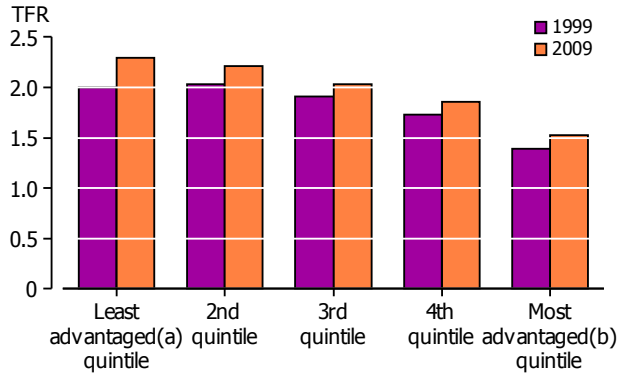
...age at first birth

The delay in childbearing is most clearly represented by the increasing age at which women tend to have their first birth. Of women who had their first birth in 1998, just under one-third were aged 30 years or older, by 2008 this proportion had increased to 42%, and included 15% who were aged 35 years or over having their first child.

...one for the country?

In 2008, one-quarter (25%) of women giving birth were having their third or more baby, similar to the rate in 1998 (26%).

Total fertility rates, by quintile of relative advantage/disadvantage — 1999 and 2009



(a) and most disadvantaged.

(b) and least disadvantaged.

Source: ABS Birth registrations collection

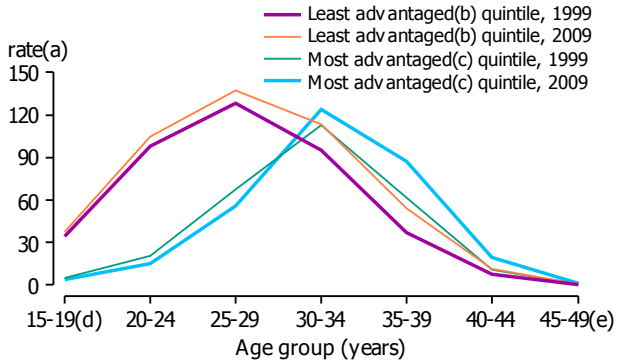
...childlessness

As women have delayed child-bearing, a greater proportion have remained childless into their forties. According to the ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing, 14% of women aged 45–49 years had not had any children. This compares with 11% a decade prior, and 9% in the decade before that (1986).

Socioeconomic patterns

Underlying the trend in delayed childbearing are broad social and economic changes such as increasing levels of educational attainment and labour force participation of women. While these factors may have changed the overall fertility pattern, the impact on the fertility behaviour of individual women will depend on their particular circumstances and life transitions.

Age-specific fertility rates, by quintile of advantage/disadvantage — 1999 and 2009



(a) Babies per 1,000 women.

(b) and most disadvantaged.

(c) and least disadvantaged.

(d) Includes births to mothers aged less than 15 years.

(e) Includes births to mothers aged 50 years and over.

Source: ABS Birth registrations collection

Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas

The ABS has developed summary measures, or indexes, derived from the ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing to measure different aspects of socioeconomic conditions by geographic areas. One of these indexes (the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage/Disadvantage) has been used in this article to investigate the relationship between fertility and socioeconomic conditions in different regions of Australia.

Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) within Australia were divided into quintiles (five groups, each containing around 20% of the population) based on their Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage/ Disadvantage scores. The first quintile includes SLAs in Australia with the lowest index scores; that is, areas in Australia with the lowest proportions of people with high incomes or in skilled occupations, the highest proportions of people with low incomes, more employees in unskilled occupations, etc. In this article this group has been referred to as being 'least advantaged'.

Conversely, the fifth quintile represents areas with the highest index scores; that is, areas with the highest proportions of people with high incomes or in skilled occupations, the lowest proportions of people with low incomes and relatively few people in unskilled occupations, etc. This group has been referred to as being 'most advantaged'.

Using an area-based measure of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage throughout Australia, clear associations are evident between fertility and relative socioeconomic status.

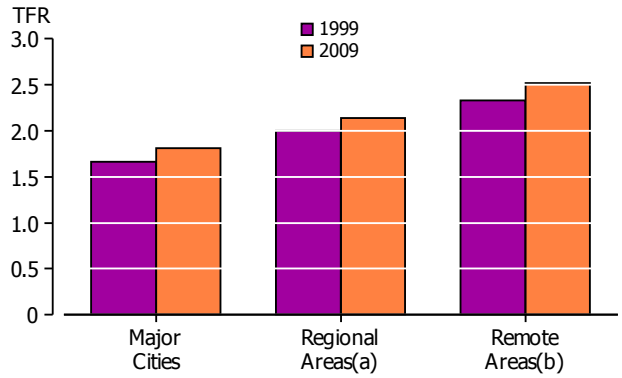
In 2009, women living in areas comprising the least socioeconomically advantaged quintile of the population had a TFR of 2.3 babies per woman. This compares with 1.5 babies per woman among women who were in the most advantaged quintile of the population.

Over the ten years to 2009 the TFRs increased for women living in each quintile of socioeconomic advantage. The largest increases were among women in the least advantaged quintile (from 2.0 to 2.3 babies per woman) followed by those in the second least advantaged quintile (from 2.0 to 2.2).

The age-specific fertility rates of the highest and lowest quintiles of relative socioeconomic advantage show a pattern of contrasting age contribution – women living in the least advantaged areas tending to have their babies at younger ages, while those in the most advantaged areas have their peak levels of fertility in older ages.

While the overall age pattern in age-specific fertility over the last decade shows a decline in fertility rates for women aged under 30 years, the least advantaged quintile was an exception: between 1999 and 2009, in the least advantaged quintile there were increases in fertility rates among women in the 15–19 years, 20–24 years and 25–29 years age groups.

Total fertility rates, by Remoteness Areas — 1999 and 2009



(a) Includes Inner Regional and Outer Regional Areas.
(b) Includes Very Remote Areas.

Source: ABS Birth registrations collection

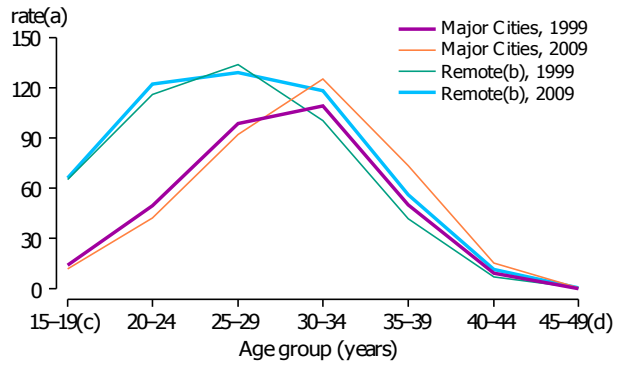
Apart from the second lowest quintile of advantage (which had a slight increase in the fertility rate of women aged 20–24 years and 25–29 years), all other socioeconomic quintiles had declines in fertility rates for those aged under 30 years.

The largest gains in age-specific fertility over the decade came from women aged 35–39 years living in areas comprising the most advantaged quintile, where the ASFR increased from 61 to 87 babies per 1,000 women between 1999 and 2009. The second largest increase in ASFR was for women of the same age but who were in the second most advantaged quintile, where the ASFR rose from 49 to 71 babies per 1,000 women between 1999 and 2009.

Regional patterns

Geographic location, especially the relative remoteness of a population from employment and educational opportunities, shows a similar fertility gradient to the socioeconomic pattern.

Age-specific fertility rates, by Major Cities and Remote Areas — 1999 and 2009



(a) Babies per 1,000 women.
(b) Includes Very Remote Areas.
(c) Includes births to mothers aged less than 15 years.
(d) Includes births to mothers aged 50 years and over.

Source: ABS Birth registrations collection

Remoteness Areas

Remoteness Area (RA) is a structure of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC). It classifies areas sharing common characteristics of remoteness into six broad geographical regions (Remoteness Areas). The remoteness of a point is measured by its physical distance by road to the nearest urban centre. As remoteness is measured nationally, not all Remoteness Areas are represented in each state or territory. The six Remoteness Areas are: Major Cities of Australia; Inner Regional Australia; Outer Regional Australia; Remote Australia; Very Remote Australia; and Migratory. In this article, the Remoteness Areas are collapsed to three levels:

- Major Cities
- Regional Areas (Inner Regional plus Outer Regional)
- Remote Areas (Remote plus Very Remote)

For further information about Remoteness Areas see Chapter 8 of ABS *Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC), July 2010* (cat. no. 1216.0).

Women who live furthest away from large population centres tend to have the highest levels of fertility, while those in Major Cities tend to have the lowest.

In 2009, the TFR in Remote Areas was just over 2.5 babies per woman, and 2.1 babies per woman in Regional Areas. Major Cities, by contrast, had a TFR of 1.8.

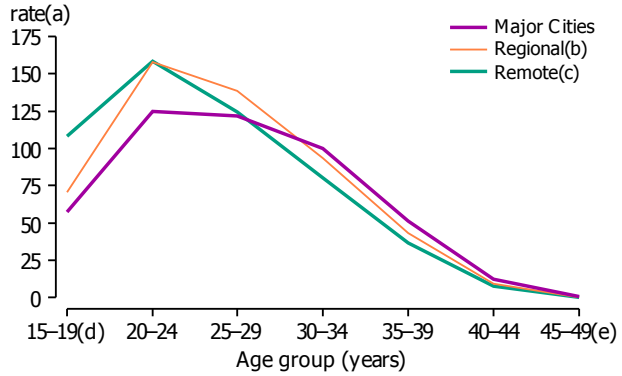
The age-specific fertility rates in the Remoteness Areas show the higher TFR of Remote Areas is closely associated with high rates of fertility among younger people. For example, women aged less than 20 years in Remote Areas had a fertility rate five times higher than those of the same age in the Major Cities, while those aged 20–24 years had a rate three times higher.

...Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fertility

Associated with the higher fertility in the Remote Areas of Australia is the relatively high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the population. In 2009, 131,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians were living in Remote Areas, making up 26% of all people living in remote parts of Australia. This contrasts with the Major Cities where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up around 1% of the population.

In the three years from 2007 to 2009, the number of births registered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers averaged around 10,890 per year, producing a TFR of 2.5 babies per woman. The TFR was higher in Remote Areas (2.6 babies per woman) than in Major Cities (2.4 babies per woman).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander age-specific fertility rates, by Remoteness Area — 2007-09 average



(a) Babies per 1,000 women.
(b) Includes Inner Regional and Outer Regional Areas.
(c) Includes Very Remote Areas.
(d) Includes births to mothers aged less than 15 years.
(e) Includes births to mothers aged 50 years and over.

Source: ABS Birth registrations collection

Across each level of Remoteness Area, the highest fertility rates were among 20–24 year old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. For women in this age group Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fertility rates were particularly high in Remote and Regional Areas, averaging 159 babies per 1,000 women in 2007–09, compared with 126 per 1,000 women in the Major Cities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Remote Areas also had relatively high fertility among teenagers with an average 109 babies per 1,000 women aged 15–19 years in 2007–09. In contrast, the teenage fertility rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Major Cities was 47% lower, at 58 babies per 1,000 women.

Statistical Divisions: highest and lowest fertility

Differences in fertility between areas with different levels of socioeconomic advantage, and between Major Cities and other areas is further highlighted when examining smaller geographic areas.

Of the 60 Statistical Divisions (SDs) in Australia, more than half (32) had TFRs of over 2.1 babies per woman (based on the three years of birth registrations from 2007–09). The highest TFRs were in particular SDs in the Remote and Regional Areas of Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia. The SD of South West in Queensland had the highest overall TFR with 2.85 babies per woman, followed by North West SD (adjoining the Gulf of Carpentaria) which had a TFR of 2.79 babies per woman. The SD of Southern (encompassing the mid to south east portion of Tasmania) had a TFR of 2.64, while Upper Great Southern and Midlands (both to the east of Perth) had TFRs of 2.62 and 2.58.

Total fertility rates, selected Statistical Divisions — 2007-09 average

Statistical Division	*TFR*
Highest	
South West (Qld)	2.85
North West (Qld)	2.79
Southern (Tas.)	2.64
Upper Great Southern (W.A.)	2.62
Midlands (W.A.)	2.58
Lowest	
Canberra	1.75
Melbourne	1.77
Gold Coast	1.79
Sydney	1.79
Adelaide	1.82

Source: ABS Births, Australia, 2009 (cat. no. 3301.0)

In contrast to the areas with high fertility, most of the capital city SDs featured among the areas with the lowest TFRs. Canberra had the lowest TFR in 2007–09 with 1.75 babies per woman, followed by Melbourne (1.77), the Gold Coast (1.79), Sydney (1.79) and Adelaide (1.82). Within Major Cities, the inner city areas tended to be where the TFR was especially low. For example, the Statistical Local Areas of 'Sydney (C) - Inner' and 'Melbourne (C) - Inner' both had TFRs of 0.67 babies per woman in the three years to 2009.

Looking ahead

Although the total fertility rate has generally trended upwards for much of the last decade, it has nonetheless remained below the replacement level of 2.1 babies per woman since 1976. The significance of below replacement fertility is in its long-term effect on the age structure of the population.

ABS population projections show that if Australia had a steady TFR of 2.0 from 2021, (as well as moderate net overseas migration and medium life expectancy from birth) then around 21% of the population would be aged 65 years and over in 2051 (up from 13% in 2009). If the TFR were to fall to 1.6 babies per woman, and stay at that level throughout this century, then the proportion aged 65 years and over in 2051 would be 23% (assuming the same moderate level of migration and medium life expectancy). The relatively small difference in the proportions of older people between the two fertility scenarios reflects the inbuilt momentum associated with the below replacement fertility of the previous decades. As a result, moderate changes in fertility into the future can only have marginal impacts on the future age structure. For more information, see *Australian Social Trends, March 2009, Future population growth and ageing*.

Australian households: the future

Living arrangements are important for individuals and communities. Much of the nurturing, care and support received by people is given by family members within the same household, and as such, families are often seen as the building blocks of society.

Recent rapid population growth has led to a renewed focus on the projections of the population. By 2031, the population of Australia is projected to be over 28 million. A closely related question to the size of the future population is how will household and living arrangements change?

This article looks at historical trends in living arrangements and uses household and family projections to examine a range of possible scenarios for future living arrangements for Australian households.

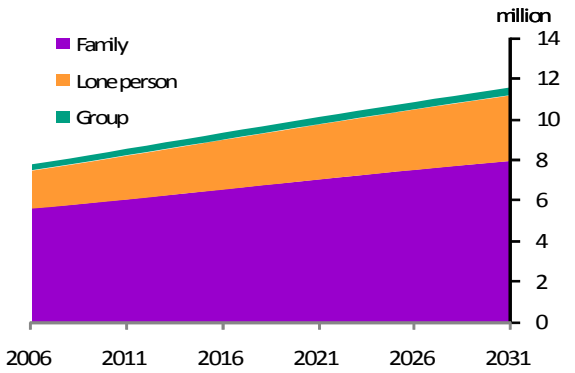
Future households

In 2006, there were a total of 7.8 million households in Australia. By 2031, the number of households is projected to grow to between 11.4 and 11.8 million.

Whilst the number of households is projected to increase, the average number of people within each household is projected to decline from 2.6 in 2006 to between 2.4 and 2.5 people per household in 2031. The decrease in the average number of people within households means that the number of households is projected to grow faster than the overall population.

The projection of an extra 3.8 million households between 2006 and 2031 (Series II) represents growth of 1.6% per year, while the population is projected to grow by an average 1.3% per year over the same period.

Projected number of households(a) — Series II



(a) At June 30.

Source: ABS *Household and Family Projections, Australia, 2006 to 2031* (cat. no. 3236.0)

Data sources and definitions

This article is based on data from ABS *Household and Family Projections, 2006 to 2031* (cat. no. 3236.0) which presents projections for households, families and living arrangements.

Projections are not predictions or forecasts, but are illustrations of growth and change in Australian households which would occur if assumptions about Australia's population were to prevail over the projection period.

Three main series have been produced based on the trends in living arrangement propensities (or likelihood to be in a certain household type) in the population between 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006 Censuses. Projections of households, families and living arrangements in Australia are in turn based on ABS projections of the population's size, age structure and geographical distribution (see Series B from: ABS *Population Projections, Australia, 2006 to 2101* (cat. no. 3222.0).

Projection series, assumptions used

Series I: No change in living arrangement propensities from 2006. Any changes observed will only reflect changes in population dynamics.

Series II: Low rate of change.

Series III: High rate of change.

The analysis in this article is based on Series II unless otherwise stated.

In this article, ***family*** refers to two or more persons, one of whom is 15 years or over, who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who are usually resident in the same household.

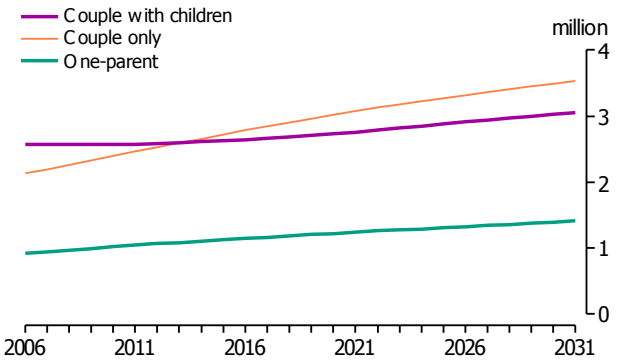
A ***household*** refers to a group of two or more people usually resident in the same dwelling who make shared provision for food and other essentials for living, or one person who makes his or her own provision for food and other essentials for living.

Types of households

The majority of growth in the number of households is projected to come from family households. Family households are projected to increase from around 5.7 million in 2006 to over 7.9 million in 2031 (or 1.4% per year). By 2031, family households are projected to make up over two-thirds (69%) of households, down from 72% in 2006.

However, the fastest growing household type is lone person households, projected to grow by an average of 2.2% per year, from 1.9 million in 2006 to 3.2 million in 2031. This results from the share of lone person households increasing from 24% in 2006 to 28% in 2031. Group households are projected to continue to make up around 3.5% of all households.

Projected family types(a) — Series II



(a) At June 30.

Source: ABS *Household and Family Projections, Australia, 2006 to 2031* (cat. no. 3236.0)

Families

There are many different combinations of related individuals who can live together, making up a diverse range of families. However, to simplify the analysis, families are classified into three main types: couples with children; couples without children; and one-parent families.

...couples with and without children

In 2006, 2.6 million families were couple families with children, making it the most common type of family and accounting for 45% of all families. Despite a projected increase of almost half a million by 2031 (to 3.1 million), the proportion of families with children in 2031 (38%) is projected to be overtaken by couples without children (43%). Couples without children are projected to be the fastest growing family type, increasing by 1.4 million over the 2006–2031 period (to 3.5 million).

The relatively faster growth in couples without children is in part due to the increasing propensity for couples to remain childless, but is largely due to the ageing of the population.

Household and family types

A ***couple family with children*** consists of two persons who are in a registered or de facto marriage, and one or more children (of any age) who are usually resident in the same household. The family may include any number of other related individuals usually resident in the household.

A ***couple family without children*** contains two persons who are in a registered or de facto marriage who are usually resident in the same household where no children of any age are usually resident. The family may include any number of other related individuals usually resident in the household.

Group households comprise two or more unrelated people aged 15 years or over. There are no reported couple relationships, parent-child relationships or other blood relationships in these households.

A ***one-parent household*** consists of a person who has no spouse or partner present in the household but who forms a parent-child relationship with at least one child usually resident in the household.

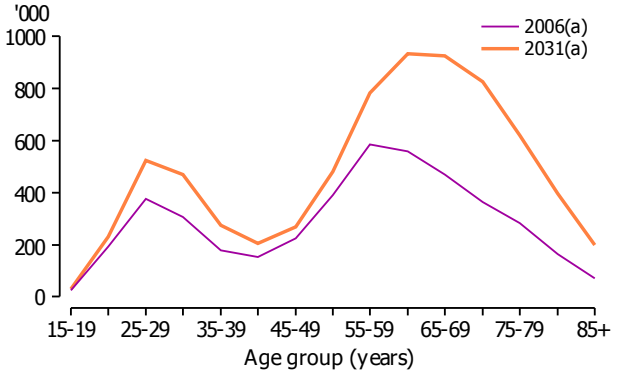
A ***lone person household*** is a person at least 15 years of age who lives in a dwelling on their own.

A ***child*** can be a natural, adopted, step or foster son or daughter. In order to be classified as a child, the persons can have no partner or child of his/her own usually resident in the household.

Other families are related individuals living in the same household, however do not form a couple or parent-child relationship with any other householder, and are not attached to a couple or lone parent family. For example, a household consisting of a brother and sister only.

The ageing effect is most evident in the 60 to 79 years age range, where there are projected to be 1.6 million more people in couple families without children in 2031 than in 2006 (from 58% to 60% of all households). The growth in the number of older people who are in couples without children can be mostly attributed to the growing number of post-child couples or 'empty nesters'. The proportion of younger people (20–39 years) in couple families without children is projected to increase slightly from 18% to 20%, with a numeric increase of 440,000 between 2006 and 2031 under Series II.

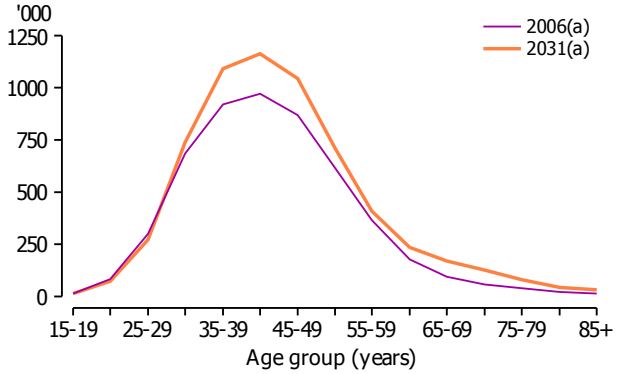
People in couple families without children — Series II projections



(a) At June 30.

Source: ABS *Household and Family Projections, Australia, 2006 to 2031* (cat. no. 3236.0)

People in couple families with children — Series II projections



(a) At June 30.

Source: ABS *Household and Family Projections, Australia, 2006 to 2031* (cat. no. 3236.0)

Another way of representing the increase in the number of empty nesters is as a proportion of all people in couples without children. In 2006, 44% of people in couples without children were aged 60 years and over. By 2031 this is projected to be 55%.

...one-parent families

The proportion of one-parent families has remained relatively steady over recent decades, and that proportion is projected to remain fairly stable into the future. Series II projections show the proportion of one parent families increasing slightly from 16% in 2006 to 17% by 2031. However, population growth means that the number of lone-parents is projected to rise from 0.9 million to 1.4 million between 2006 and 2031.

Series II projects that women continue to be the principal parent in one-parent families, accounting for 83% or 1.2 million parents in one-parent families in 2031.

By 2031, it is projected that 17% of lone-parents will be men. The most common age for men to be a lone-parent is 45–49 years, in both 2006 and projected for 2031, and for a lone-female parent it was 40–44 years in both 2006 and projected for 2031.

Lone person households

There are various situations in which a person will live by themselves; people not forming live-in partnerships, as a result of a relationship breakdown, or as a result of becoming widowed. Between 2006 and 2031, lone person households are projected to grow from 1.9 million to 3.2 million, with the proportion of all households containing only one person rising from 24% to 28%.

As older people are more likely to live alone (most often because of widowhood), an ageing population has the effect of increasing the number of lone person households[1]. Almost two-thirds of the increase in lone person households between 2006 and 2031, is projected to be among people aged 60 years and over. In 2006, the peak age for people living alone was 55–59 years. In 2031, this is projected to have shifted to 80–84 years.

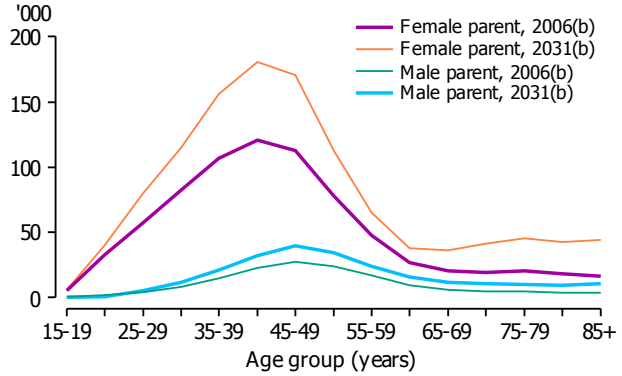
At older ages (60 years and over), women are projected to drive the growth in lone person households, with a projected growth rate of 2.8% per year. Under Series II, there will be 1.1 million older women (aged 60 years and over) living alone in 2031, up from 0.6 million in 2006, and representing over three-fifths of the number of older people living alone. In contrast, among younger age groups, many more men than women are projected to be living alone in 2031, as men are less likely to form one-parent families after relationship breakdown, and are more likely to live alone. Between the ages of 25 and 49 years there are projected to be 0.6 million men living alone in 2031 compared with 0.4 million women at the same age.

Group households

Group households are generally transient in nature as their formation is often associated with a period of transition for young adults from living with parents to forming their own partnership[1].

Series II projections show that in 2031 there are projected to be 379,000 group households, up from 291,000 in 2006. As a proportion of all households, group households are projected to account for around 3% in 2031, a similar proportion to 2006. The majority (54%) of people living in a group households are projected to be aged between 15–29 years, as in 2006 (51%).

One-parent families(a), by age and sex — Series II projections

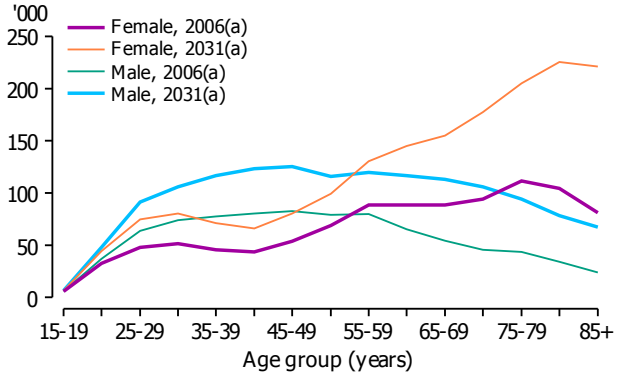


(a) Parent only in a one-parent family.

(b) At June 30.

Source: ABS *Household and Family Projections, Australia, 2006 to 2031* (cat. no. 3236.0)

Projected lone person households, by age and sex — Series II



(a) At June 30.

Source: ABS *Household and Family Projections, Australia, 2006 to 2031* (cat. no. 3236.0)

Other living arrangements of older people

The majority of older people aged 85 years and over live independently within the community, however, there is a considerable proportion who live in non-private dwellings such as retirement villages, hostels and nursing homes.

In 2006, 31% of people aged 85 years and over were a usual resident of a non-private dwelling. By 2031, this is projected to be 28%. However, the projected number of older people aged 85 years and over who will be a usual resident of a non-private dwelling is expected to increase by 131,000 individuals, from 98,000 in 2006 to 229,000 by 2031.

Cities, states and territories

By 2031, Melbourne is projected to have experienced the largest increase in the number of households of all capital cities (with an increase of 720,000 households), followed by Sydney (661,000). However, Perth is projected to have the fastest growth rate (2.2% per year), followed by Brisbane (2.1% per year).

Of the smaller cities, Canberra is projected to have the largest numeric increase adding around 50,000 households between 2006 and 2031, while Darwin is projected to have the fastest growth rate (2.0% per year).

Overall, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory are projected to be the three states with the fastest annual household growth, whilst Tasmania and South Australia are projected to have the slowest.

Looking ahead

Population growth and the ageing of the population, along with societal changes such as the propensity for people to have smaller families, or live alone, are projected to lead to an extra 3.8 million Australian households by 2031.

Growth in particular types of households may be reflected not only in the types of dwellings required but also in the types of services needed. An ageing population may put more emphasis on single person accommodation, in particular for older people, as well as on health, caring and support services for older people living alone. Meanwhile, the projected increase in family households may continue demand for family accommodation and allied services.

The scale of the projected growth, particularly in the capital cities, is likely to present significant public policy challenges for city planning and service provision.

Endnotes

1 Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2004, Diversity and change in Australian families: Statistical profiles, viewed 18 October 2010, <www.aifs.gov.au>

Projected number of households, by capital cities — Series II

	2006(a)	*2031(a)*	*Numeric change*	*Annual average growth rate*
Capital city	'000	'000	'000	%
Sydney	1 572.1	2 233.1	661.0	1.4
Melbourne	1 391.9	2 111.6	719.7	1.7
Brisbane	671.6	1 131.0	459.4	2.1
Adelaide	459.5	606.1	146.6	1.1
Perth	578.3	988.0	409.8	2.2
Hobart	82.2	106.2	24.0	1.0
Darwin	40.1	65.5	25.4	2.0
Canberra(b)	126.5	176.8	50.3	1.3
Total	**4 922.1**	**7 418.4**	**2 496.3**	**1.7**

(a) At June 30.

(b) Projections are for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), as capital city projections were not generated given the small population that lives outside Canberra in the ACT.

Source: ABS *Household and Family Projections, Australia, 2006 to 2031* (cat. no. 3236.0)

Moving house

People move house for a number of reasons. For many, moving is associated with moving to a bigger or better house, purchasing a new home, taking up new educational or work opportunities, moving in with a partner, or having a lifestyle change such as gaining greater independence. For others, moving may be associated with relationship breakdown, family conflict or being given notice by their landlord. For some people, affordability issues may mean that moving house may not always be a viable option when desired.

This article explores the rates and reasons behind housing mobility across the life course, as well as barriers to housing mobility. It focuses primarily on recent movers, that is people who have changed address in the last five years.

How often do people move?

According to the 2007–08 Survey of Income and Housing, of people aged 15 years and over, over one-quarter (27%) had been living in their current home for 15 years or more, 30% had been there for 5–14 years, and 43% had moved in the last five years (recent movers).

Some groups of people are more mobile than others. In 2007–08, among recent movers aged 15 years and over, almost half (46%) had moved once, 19% had moved twice, 17% three times, 8% four times, and 11% had moved five times or more in the last five years.

Mobility through the life course

Mobility varies across the life course as people's circumstances and opportunities may change. People aged in their 20s and early 30s are more likely than people of other ages to be going through life transitions that may be related to mobility such as transitions from education to employment, out of (and potentially back into) the parental home, and into or out of live in relationships.

People reaching their 30s and moving into older age groups, may find they have housing or family reasons that make it more difficult to move, such as a family, a long-term career or children in education.

Moving at older ages may be due to illness or disability, the death of a spouse, or reflect a desire to downsize after children have moved out.

This article will look at four typical household groups that represent different living arrangements across the life course and the mobility experiences in these life course stages.

Data source and definitions

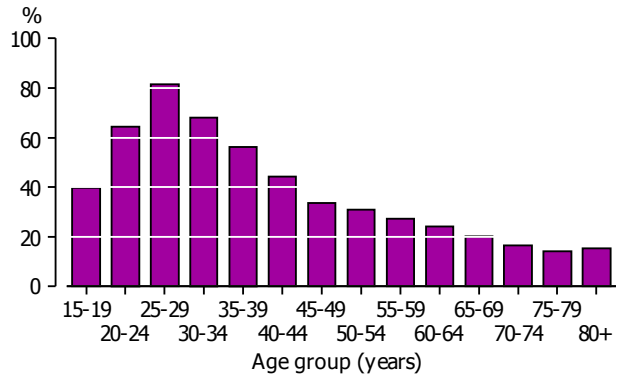
Information in this article comes from the ABS 2007–08 Survey of Income and Housing and relates to people aged 15 years and over.

The Survey of Income and Housing does not include people in non-private dwellings, and this analysis therefore excludes young people moving into non-private university accommodation or aged people moving into aged care institutions.

Recent movers are people who report changing address in the five years prior to the survey.

A ***private renter*** is a person paying rent to a landlord who is a real estate agent, or another person not in the same household (including a parent or other relative).

Proportion of people who were recent movers, by age — 2007-08



Source: ABS 2007-08 Survey of Income and Housing

...young households without children

In 2007–08, people living in young households without children were very mobile with the vast majority having moved at least once (90%), and two-fifths (40%) reported having moved three or more times in the last five years. Of recent movers, 14% were in young households.

Around half (48%) of recent movers living in young households cited housing reasons for their latest move, most commonly that they had purchased their own dwelling (25%) or that they wanted a bigger/better home (12%). One-third (33%) cited family reasons, the most common being getting married or moving in with their partner (20%).

Life course group definitions

There are a wide range of possible living arrangements which reflect the diverse range of households in which people live. In this article four household groups have been used to represent different living arrangements across the life course:

Young households without children refers to people who were either living alone or in a couple only household, where the reference person was aged under 35 years and where there were no dependent or non-dependent children present. This group excludes people living in group or other households.

Parents in couple families with dependent children are parents living in a one family household containing a couple and at least one dependent child. The household may also contain non-dependent children but cannot contain any other related or unrelated individuals.

Lone parents with dependent children are parents living in a one family household containing a lone parent and at least one dependent child. The household may also contain non-dependent children and other related or unrelated individuals.

Older households without children refers to people living either alone or in a couple only household, where the reference person was aged 65 years and over and where there were no dependent or non-dependent children present. This group excludes people living in group or other households.

Dependent children refers to all people aged under 15 years and people aged 15–24 years who are full-time students, have a parent in the household and do not have a partner or child of their own in the household.

Non-dependent children refers to all people aged 15 years and over who do not have a spouse or offspring of their own in the household; have a parent in the household; and are not full-time students aged 15–24 years.

Recent movers aged 15–24 years living in young households were just as likely to have cited family reasons (42%), such as partnering or being independent, as they were to cite housing reasons (37%) for their latest move. In comparison, people aged 25–34 years were more likely to cite housing reasons (53%) than family reasons (30%) for their latest move.

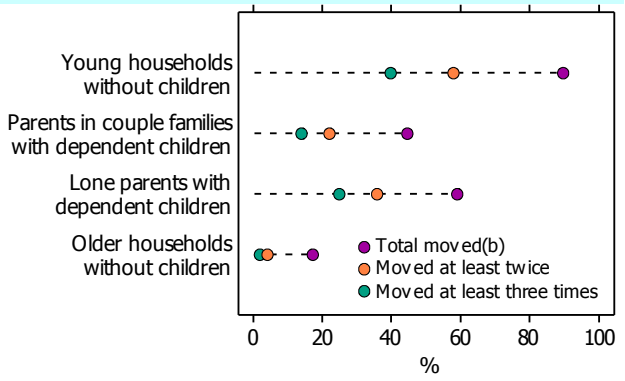
In 2007–08, people in young households were most likely private renters (53%) or owners with a mortgage (39%). The flexible tenures of private renters, relative to other tenure types, would allow for, but not necessarily be the cause of, the high mobility of people in this life course group.

...parents in couple families with dependent children

In 2007–08, 45% of parents in couple families with dependent children were recent movers, accounting for around one-quarter (26%) of all recent movers.

The mobility of parents in couple families with dependent children decreased as the age of the children increased. Of those with dependent children only, those whose eldest child was under five years were more likely to have moved (72%) than those whose eldest child was aged 5–14 years (46%) or 15–24 years (29% moved). The higher mobility rates of those with younger children may be associated with moving into accommodation suitable for a family. The lower mobility rates of those with older dependent children could be related to the more stable/established careers and housing circumstances of these parents, and their desire not to disrupt their children's education.

Mobility in the last five years(a), by selected life course groups — 2007-08



(a) People aged 15 years and over.

(b) Includes people who moved in the last five years but didn't know how many times they had moved.

Source: ABS 2007-08 Survey of Income and Housing

Almost two-thirds (63%) of parents in couple families with dependent children who were recent movers reported housing reasons for the latest move, with 30% citing a desire for a bigger/better home and 22% saying they moved because they had purchased their own dwelling.

Around three-quarters (76%) of parents in couple families with dependent children were owners with or without a mortgage and 19% were private renters.

...lone parents with dependent children

While representing only 4% of all recent movers, lone parents with dependent children were more likely than parents in couple families with dependent children to have moved in the last five years (59% compared with 45%).

Around one-fifth (21%) of lone parents who had recently moved cited the breakdown of their marriage or relationship as a reason for their move.

The relatively high mobility rates of lone parents with dependent children compared with parents in couple families with dependent children is also associated with the higher likelihood of such lone parents being private renters (42%) compared with parents in couple families with dependent children (19%) in 2007–08.

How far do people move?

Most people who move house move relatively close to their former address. Of people who had moved house in the year prior to the 2006 Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, 60% moved a distance of only 0–9 kilometres from their former residence.

People who moved for work or study related reasons tended to move much further than those who moved for other reasons. Around half of people (48% of men and 50% of women) who moved house for work-related reasons in the year prior to the 2006 HILDA survey had moved more than 100km.[1]

...older households without children

In 2007–08, people in older households without children had lower rates of housing mobility than people in younger life course stages. Only 17% of people in older households were recent movers, and only 5% of all recent movers were from older households.

People living in older households without children were mostly owners without a mortgage (80%), while 12% were renting.

For people in older age groups, moving house is often associated with 'empty nesters' downsizing, making a 'sea/tree change' or moving into more suitable accommodation for health or age reasons. Of people in older households who had moved in the last five

Mobility by tenure

Housing mobility varies greatly across different housing tenures. As people move through their life course, different circumstances or decisions may lead them into or out of certain housing tenures.

In 2007–08, people renting privately were very mobile, with the vast majority having moved at least once in the last five years (87%). Of the four life course groups examined in this article, people living in young households without dependent children (53%) were the most likely to be private renters, followed by lone parents with dependent children (42%).

Public renters (i.e. people renting their home from a state or territory housing authority) were less likely than the general population to report being a recent mover (37% compared with 43%). Most (64%) of those renting public housing who were recent movers were people who had made the transition to renting public housing. Renting public housing was more common among lone parents with dependent children (15%) and among those in older households (5%) than in the general population aged 15 years or older (3%).

Less than one-third (29%) of people who owned their home were recent movers. There was a large difference in mobility between those who owned their home outright (15%) and those with a mortgage (42%).

Of the four life course groups examined in this article, parents in couple families with dependent children were most likely to be owners with a mortgage (59%), while people in older households without children were likely to be owners without a mortgage (80%).

Reasons for latest move(a), by selected life course group — 2007-08

All reasons for last move	*People in young households without children* %	*Parents in couple families with dependent children* %	*Lone parents with dependent children* %	*People in older households without children* %	*All recent movers* %
Housing					
Wanted bigger/ better home	*11.8*	*29.5*	*13.6*	*7.0*	*16.2*
Wanted smaller home/downsize	***0.2*	**1.4*	**0.9*	*22.5*	*2.7*
Purchased own dwelling	*25.4*	*22.2*	*7.8*	**3.5*	*14.4*
Total housing(b)	48.2	62.7	48.2	48.9	47.3
Employment	14.9	12.4	*6.2	*1.6	10.5
Family					
Get married/live with partner	*20.2*	*7*	***0.6*	**2.7*	*7.5*
Breakdown of marriage/relationship	*1.8*	**1.1*	*21.0*	***0.9*	*4.0*
Total family(b)	33.1	17.6	36.4	22.3	32.5
Lifestyle change	6.7	7.1	5.1	19.7	8.9
Other(c)	6.3	8.4	9.9	23.0	9.4
Total(d)	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

* estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution

** estimate has a relative standard error of greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use

(a) All reasons for latest move for people aged 15 years and over who had moved in the last five years.

(b) Not all housing or family reasons are displayed in the table, but are included in totals.

(c) 'Other' comprises neighbourhood reasons, health reasons, accessibility reasons and other reasons.

(d) Proportions may add up to more than 100% as respondents could provide more than one reason for their last move.

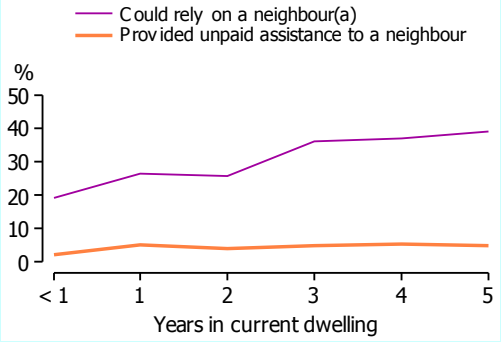
Source: ABS 2007-08 Survey of Income and Housing

Social networks and support

A person's integration into their local community may be related to the length of time they have spent in their current dwelling, especially if their previous dwelling was in a different area. People who have only lived in their current dwelling for a short period may be less inclined to support their neighbours or rely on their neighbours in a time of crisis.

In 2006, people aged 18 years and over who had been in their current dwelling for less than one year were around half as likely as people who had been in their current dwelling for five or more years to report that they could rely on a neighbour for support in a time of crisis (19% compared with 39%). They were also half as likely to have provided unpaid assistance to a neighbour (2% compared with 5%).

People aged 18 years and over, by years in current dwelling — 2006



(a) Could rely on a neighbour for support in a time of crisis.

Source: ABS 2006 General Social Survey

years, almost a quarter (23%) cited wanting a smaller home or to downsize as a reason for their latest move. Similar proportions reported family reasons (22%), lifestyle change (20%) and/or other reasons (23% - mostly health or neighbourhood reasons).

Unlikely to move, but want to

There are a number of people who report that they would like to move but who also reported that they were unlikely to do so.

In 2007–08, 1.2 million people aged 15 years and over (7%) wanted to move in the next 12 months but indicated that they were unlikely to do so.

People who were most likely to report wanting to move but being unlikely to do so included lone parents with dependent children (16%), people renting public housing (13%), non-dependent children (11%) and parents in couple families with dependent children only where their eldest child was under 15 years (11%).

Having a desire to move in the next 12 months, but being unlikely to do so, was more common among the most disadvantaged Socio-Economic Index For Areas (SEIFA) quintile (10%), than the least disadvantaged quintile (6%).[2]

Moving out (and back)

The first move most people make as an adult is to move out of the parental home, although such a move may not always be permanent.

In 2006–07, almost half (46%) of those who reported leaving home before their mid-30s returned home at least once, usually within three years.

Young people are now more likely to live with their parents than in previous decades. In 2006, almost one in four (23%) people aged 20–34 were living with their parents compared with 19% in 1986.

Money issues were a common reason young people stayed or returned home, but many also said they enjoyed living at home and it was convenient.

For more information, see *Australian Social Trends June 2009*, 'Home and Away: the living arrangements of young people'.

...barriers to moving

In 2007–08, among people who wanted to move in the next 12 months, but were unlikely to do so, 72% indicated that they could not afford to buy a new dwelling, or afford the costs associated with moving, while 14% said that moving was too much effort.

Conclusion

Nationally, around two in five (43%) people aged 15 years and over were recent movers in 2007–08. However, some groups were more mobile, including people in young households without children (90%), parents in couple families with dependent children only where their eldest child was under five years (72%) and lone parents with dependent children (59%).

People in young households without children are more likely than people in other selected life course groups to cite forming relationships as the reason for making a move. Lone parents with dependent children are more likely than others to cite relationship breakdown. People in older households are more likely than others to cite lifestyle change. However, across each of the life course groups, housing reasons, such as a desire for a bigger or better home, or a recent dwelling purchase, were generally the most common reasons for moving.

The financial costs of moving, or the costs of purchasing a new home can influence the mobility of some. For the small proportion of people who had a desire to move in the next 12 months, but considered it unlikely to happen, financial reasons were the most commonly reported barrier.

Endnotes

1 Wilkins, R., Warren, D. and Hahn, M., 2009, 'How often do people move house?' In *Families, Incomes and Jobs, Volume 4: A Statistical Report on Waves 1 to 6 of the HILDA Survey*, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, pp. 140–144. <www.melbourneinstitute.com>

2 Based on the 2006 SEIFA Index of relative socio-economic disadvantage at the Collection District level.

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