

Australian Population

Revised March 2004

In The Beginning

Australia has been populated for 40,000 years. The first human inhabitants are believed to have come by canoe from South East Asia when sea levels were lower. These peoples were hunter gatherers.

In the 1600 and 1700's ships from England, Spain Portugal and Holland made contact with various parts of the continent for the first time.

In 1788 a fleet of ships from England landed with 1,066 people which provided the first European inhabitants. At that time there were 300,000 native inhabitants.

Counting People

Since 1788 the population derived from European settlement has been regularly counted. This was required to account to British authorities to support application for further supplies. Counting was also later required for electoral boundaries and planning public services.

First counting occurred by "musters" where people gathered at nominated locations and were counted. Later counting occurred though formal State census. The first national census was in 1901.

People of native origin, Aborigines, were first officially counted in 1967 following amendment of the Constitution.

Population Growth

European immigrants have been the main source of growth of population. Since 1788 the average population growth has been 4.7%pa.

In recent decades the population growth rate has slowed to be 1.28% p.a. in 2002. This includes +1.28% from birth, -0.68% from deaths and +0.68% from net migration.

Total population reached 10 million in 1959 and reached 20 million on 4 December 2003. The following table shows the years when the million milestones were reached.

Year	M*	Year	M*	Year	M*
1858	1	1949	8	1981	15
1877	2	1954	9	1986	16
1889	3	1959	10	1990	17
1905	4	1963	11	1995	18
1918	5	1968	12	1999	19
1925	6	1971	13	2003	20
1939	7	1976	14		

* Millions

A Two-City Country

The population and industry is concentrated in the two cities of Sydney and Melbourne, so much so that this is the busiest air route in the World.

The following table compares the percentage of population in the top two cities of five countries.

Country	No.1 City	No.2 City	Total Top 2
Aust.	21%	17%	38%
Japan	6%	3%	9%
NZ	10%	9%	19%
UK	11%	2%	13%
USA	3%	1%	4%

In 1901 at the beginning of the 20th century 67% of the Australian population lived in non-metropolitan areas.

Age Profile Features

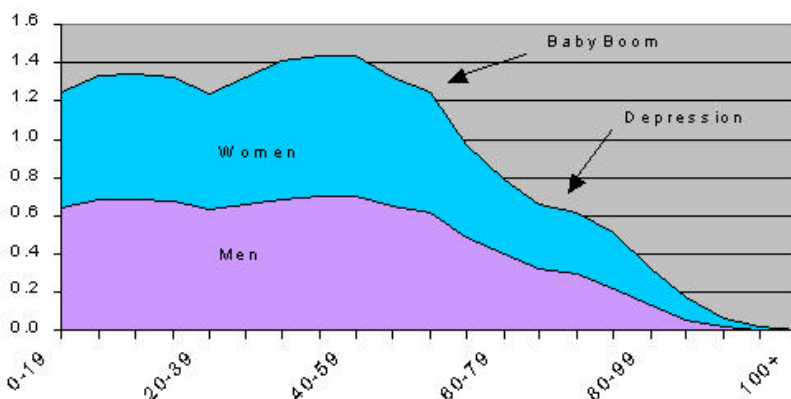
The current age profile of the population is marked by three significant features.

Firstly, the economic depression in the 1929-33 period saw reduced births and deferred marriage rates. This led to a dip in population now aged 70 to 75.

Secondly, the Baby Boom from 1946 to 1963 after World War 2 and a golden age of economic growth, brought a surge in population which shows up now in ages 40 to 55.

The third feature is the surge in migration during the 1980's which shows as two bumps in the 35-45 age range (parents) and 10-20 age range (children).

The graph to the left highlights these bumps in the age profile of Australians as at the 2001 Census.



Ageing Projections

Much attention is now being paid to the hump of population in the 40 to 60 age range as it moves through into later years.

The concern is that the relatively fewer numbers in the workforce will have a large tax burden to pay taxes to cover pensions and aged care services.

The following table shows a projection of the age structure from 2000 to 2050 assuming the total fertility rate and migration stay around current levels:

Age Group	2000 %	2050 %	Change +x%
0-14	20.9	15.5	-5.4
15-44	44.3	35.1	-9.2
45-64	22.4	24.7	+2.3
65-74	6.8	10.7	+3.9
75+	5.6	14.0	+8.4

While both births and migration affect the total numbers in the population, it is really only the birth rate which can significantly affect the ratio of old to young in the population.

Sources:

Australian Bureau of Statistics (1988, 2000, 2001, 2002), *“Year Book Australia”*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

Stuart Macintyre, (1999), *“A Concise History of Australia”*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Graeme Hugo, (2001), *“Population Centenary Article – A century of population change in Australia”* in *Year Book 2002*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

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Countries of Origin

Because of migration being a strong source of population growth, many Australians have overseas affiliations. At the 2001 Census 28.2% of Australians were born overseas and 70.3% have one or more parents who were born overseas.

Most prevalent overseas country of birth is United Kingdom at 6.1% of total population, followed by New Zealand 2.1%, Italy 1.3%, Viet Nam 0.9%, China 0.8% and Greece 0.7%.

Composition by country of origin or immigrants has gradually changed. The following table shows the top 6 countries of origin in 1965-70 compared to 1995-2000.

1965-1970		1995-2000	
UK	47%	NZ	18%
Yugoslavia	8%	UK	11%
Italy	8%	China	8%
Greece	7%	Yugoslavia	7%
Germany	2%	Sth. Africa	5%
USA	1%	India	4%

Neighborhood Stats

Australia’s six nearest neighbours have borders within 2,000 km of the Australian coast and have total population of 240 million. The following table compares the year 2000 populations and age profiles with Australia.

Country	Pop. In M	% Aged 0-14	% Aged 65+
Australia	19.6	20.4	12.6
Indonesia	231.3	30.6	4.5
New Caledonia	0.2	30.5	5.6
New Zealand	3.9	22.2	11.5
Solomon Is.	0.5	43.3	3.1
Vanuatu	0.2	37.1	3.1

Higher fertility rates and higher mortality are the main factors producing younger populations in neighbouring countries, other than New Zealand.

Indonesia has a population more than 10 times that of Australia spread over a land mass 25% of the size of Australia.