

Recent Demographic Experiences of Australia

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INTRODUCTION

The demographic experience of Australia has been undergoing changes over the last twenty to thirty years with respect to fertility, mortality, migration and marriage. In general, the Australian population is ever increasing. From 1981 natural increase has been the major element in population growth, whereas immigration also has its considerable bearing on it. With the outbreak of Second World War, Australia entered a new phase. The immediate effect of the war was to increase the number of marriages and births. The period 1947 to 1961 was marked by a continued high natural increase and international migration resulting in a very high net gains. Between 1961 and 1971 there were declines in the crude birth rate and the rate of natural increase. The years from 1971 till 1980 were characterized by a reduced rate of natural increase due to a decline in birth rate. In 1981, however, the crude birth rate was 15.8 per 1000 mean population and this was also maintained in 1982. In 1982, births numbered 239903, deaths 114771 and the natural increase was 125,132.

Table 1
Births, Deaths and Natural Increase

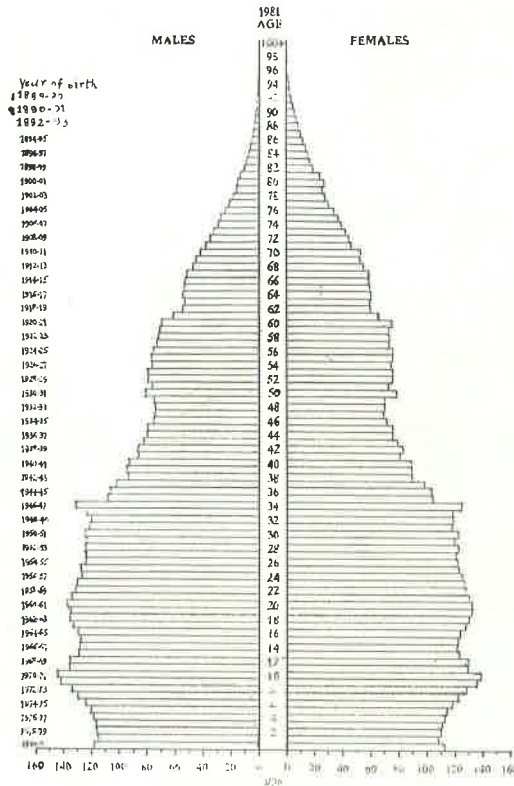
Period	Number			Crude rates per 1,000 of mean population		
	Births	Deaths	Natural increase	Births	Deaths	Natural increase
Annual averages:						
1961-65	232,952	95,465	137,487	21.3	8.7	12.6
1966-70	240,325	107,263	133,062	20.0	8.9	11.1
1971-75	253,438	111,217	142,221	18.8	8.3	10.6
1976-80	225,388	109,028	116,360	15.7	7.6	8.1
Annual totals:						
1977	226,291	108,790	117,501	15.9	7.7	8.3
1978	224,181	108,425	115,756	15.6	7.5	8.1
1979	223,129	106,568	116,561	15.4	7.3	8.0
1980	225,527	108,695	116,832	15.3	7.4	8.0
1981	235,842	109,003	126,839	15.8	7.3	8.5
1982	239,903	114,771	125,132	15.8	7.6	8.2

Source: ABS Year Book 1984, p. 100.

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The table indicates the movements in crude births, deaths, and natural increase of Australian population from 1961-65 to 1982. There has been a steady fall in the natural increase of population from 12.6 per 1000 in 1961-65 to 8.1 per 1000 in 1976-80. The annual crude rate of natural increase per 1000 mean population in 1982 was 8.2. The population pyramid illustrates, graphically, sex distribution of the population at a given time. The attached figure is the age pyramid of the estimated resident population, 1981.

AGE PYRAMID OF THE ESTIMATED RESIDENT POPULATION, 1981 (PRELIMINARY)



POPULATION OF AUSTRALIA: AGE LAST BIRTHDAY, BY SEX, 30 JUNE 1981

Source: ABS year book 1983, p. 125.

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The basic form of pyramid reveals the dynamic effects of economic conditions on a basically increasing births, low mortality, high migration type of population. The pyramid at the 30-39 age group reflects the effects of the economic depression of the 1930's when many marriages were postponed and births were delayed because couples could not afford to establish families or to increase existing families. Similarly, the rapid decline in the birth rate since 1970-71 is evident by the drop in the number of males and females in age group 0 to 7 years despite a continued increase in numbers of women in the fertile age group. At the beginning of the second world war there was a brief "baby boom" as economic conditions improved them from 1946 onward there was a sustained "baby boom" as the effects of war and depression on family formation were wiped out during a period of sustained prosperity. The increasing proportion of married women in the workforce and the increasing real cost of rearing children of acceptable quality are interrelated factors of economic significance for family formation during recent years.

AGE/SEX DISTRIBUTION AND FERTILITY RATES

The age and sex distribution of the population will affect the fertility and consequently further growth in population. The following table describes the age and sex distribution of the Australian population between 1966 to 1979. With the decline in births the percentage of population

Table 2
Population in Age Groups: 1966 to 1979

30 June	Number ('000)				Per cent			
	Under 15	15-44	45-64	65 and over	Under 15	15-44	45-64	65 and over
MALES								
1966	1,748.2	2,517.5	1,161.8	414.1	29.9	43.1	19.9	7.1
1971	1,920.9	2,844.7	1,284.1	456.5	29.5	43.7	19.7	7.0
1976	1,932.7	3,133.3	1,394.9	518.4	27.7	44.9	20.0	7.4
1977	1,920.2	3,199.1	1,401.5	534.6	27.2	45.3	19.9	7.6
1978	1,910.1	3,266.3	1,410.8	552.0	26.8	45.8	19.8	7.7
1979	1,898.2	3,336.5	1,418.2	571.1	26.3	46.2	19.6	7.9
FEMALES								
1966	1,665.0	2,375.9	1,142.0	575.0	28.9	41.3	19.8	10.0
1971	1,827.6	2,701.3	1,272.8	629.3	28.4	42.0	19.8	9.8
1976	1,834.1	3,002.1	1,382.2	717.7	26.4	43.3	19.9	10.4
1977	1,822.9	3,069.3	1,387.9	738.6	26.0	43.7	19.8	10.5
1978	1,813.3	3,138.2	1,395.8	762.1	25.5	44.1	19.6	10.7
1979	1,803.1	3,205.8	1,400.7	788.6	25.0	44.5	19.5	11.0
PERSONS								
1966	3,413.2	4,893.4	2,303.8	989.1	29.4	42.2	19.9	8.5
1971	3,748.5	5,546.0	2,556.9	1,085.9	29.0	42.9	19.8	8.4
1976	3,766.8	6,135.4	2,777.1	1,236.1	27.1	44.1	20.0	8.9
1977	3,743.1	6,268.3	2,789.4	1,273.3	26.6	44.5	19.8	9.0
1978	3,723.4	6,404.5	2,806.6	1,314.1	26.1	45.0	19.7	9.2
1979	3,701.3	6,542.2	2,818.8	1,359.7	25.7	45.4	19.5	9.4

under 15 age group has declined for both males and females, 3.6 percent and 3.9 percent fall in case of males and females, respectively. On the other hand, population of 15-44 age group has increased. The increase for males is by 3.1 percent, while the population aged 45-64 has remained almost constant.

In Australia masculinity ratios are usually high for all age groups. These ratios for the period 1956-1979 have varied little, ranging from 105.65 in 1956-60 to 105.62 in 1979.

Fertility varies with a number of factors such as age, duration of marriage and number of previous children. Fertility is also determined by socio-economic factors such as housing conditions, education, income, religion and attitude towards family size.

The accompanying table shows the fertility rates for Australia for the age group 15-44. The fertility rates for this age group are of direct interest since very few children are born to women outside this age range.

Table 3
Fertility Rates: Australia

Period	Births per 1,000 women aged 15-44 years	Nuptial births per 1,000 married women aged 15-44 years	Ex-nuptial births per 1,000 single, widowed or divorced women aged 15-44 years	Index numbers (base year 1900-02 = 100)		
				Births per 1,000 women aged 15-44 years	Nuptial births per 1,000 married women aged 15-44 years	Ex-nuptial births per 1,000 single, widowed or divorced women
1880-82	170	321	14	145	137	108
1890-92	159	332	16	136	141	123
1900-02	117	235	13	100	100	100
1910-12	117	236	13	100	100	100
1920-22	107	197	11	91	84	85
1932-34	71	131	7	61	56	54
1946-48	104	160	11	89	68	85
1953-55	109	149	14	93	63	108
1960-62	112	154	18	96	66	138
1965-67	95	132	21	81	56	162
1970-72	97	n.a.	n.a.	83	n.a.	n.a.
1975-77	76	n.a.	n.a.	65	n.a.	n.a.
1980-82	69	n.a.	n.a.	59	n.a.	n.a.

Source: ABS (1984), Year Book, p. 102

The rates show a substantial decline in fertility over the total period with a low point in 1932-34 and a minor recovery, picking in 1960-62. By 1980-82 however, the rates had again declined, this time to the lowest level recorded during the past 100 years. The 1980-82 fertility rate of 69 births per thousand females aged 15-44 was notable. A higher reduction in fertility rate can be attributed to the fall in births among married women. According to the above table there were 154 births per thousand married women in 1960-62 which had dropped to 132 in 1965-67. The further figures are not available. Under the ex-nuptial births, the fertility rate has fluctuated, however, a general increase in the number of ex-nuptial births is apparent.

The general decline in fertility rates can further be studied by considering the age-specific birth rates. The age-specific birth rates provide a measure for changes in the fertile age groups (15-49 years) of population.

Table 4
Age-Specific Birth Rates*

Period	Age group (year)							Total fertility@
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	
1961-65	46.5	204.0	207.1	122.4	59.2	17.5	1.2	3.289
1966-70	49.4	172.6	187.6	103.0	46.8	12.9	1.0	2.866
1971-75	48.0	154.0	166.9	85.0	33.7	8.5	0.6	2.484
1976-80	30.7	116.4	143.8	73.8	23.7	4.8	0.3	1.968
1977	32.1	122.0	145.7	74.1	23.9	5.0	0.3	2.016
1978	29.9	115.8	144.0	73.4	23.5	4.5	0.2	1.957
1979	28.5	109.1	142.5	73.9	23.6	4.6	0.3	1.913
1980	27.6	107.0	141.0	75.1	23.7	4.4	0.3	1.895
1981	28.2	107.4	145.2	77.6	24.5	4.5	0.3	1.938
1982	27.4	103.9	145.0	80.6	25.6	4.5	0.3	1.937

Source: ABS (1984), Year Book, p. 102.

*Number of births per 1,000 women in each age group. Excludes particulars of full-blood Aboriginals before 1966 rates from 1971 have been revised using estimated resident population introduced after the 1981 Census.

@The sum of the age specific rates multiplied by 5 and divided by 1,000. This is the number of children a woman would bear in her lifetime if she experienced the rates of the year shown.

The age specific birth rate for the most fertile age group of mothers (25-29) fell from 145.2 per 1000 in 1981 to 145.0 in 1982. The birth rate in this group was as high as 200 per thousand in the late 1950's and early 1960's.

The total fertility rate of the above table also takes into account the changing age structure of the population within the fertile age groups. It gives the number of children a woman would have in her lifetime if she experiences the fertility rate of a year with no consideration of mortality. This has fallen considerably from 3.289 in 1961-65 to 1.937 in 1982. This decline is evident during the 1960's and 1970's within the older age groups. However, this trend has occurred progressively among the younger women.

The median age of mothers having their first child has been increasing over the last few decades as is evident from the following table:

Table 5
Median Age of Mothers

Year	Mothers age
1961-65	23.1
1966-70	23.1
1971-75	23.6
1976-80	24.8
1977	24.6
1978	24.9
1979	25.1
1980	25.2
1981	25.3
1982	25.5

Source: Based on ABS (1984) Year Book, p. 101.

The median age of mothers having their first child was 23.1 in 1961-70. In 1979 it was 25.1 while in 1982 it increased to 25.5.

FERTILITY WITHIN MARRIAGES

It is of significant to note the fertility trends within marriage, since most births occur within wedlock. Therefore, it is a fact that marriage and divorce rates influence fertility. The following table gives the varying marriage and divorce rates from 1961-65 to 1982.

Table 6
Marriage and Divorce

Period	Number		Crude rates per 1000 of mean Population	
	Marriages	Divorces	Marriages	Divorce
Annual Averages:				
1961-65	83,250	7,568	7.6	0.7
1966-70	106,188	10,681	8.8	0.9
1971-75	111,803	17,348	8.3	1.3
1976-80	106,297	45,220	7.4	3.2
Annual Totals:				
1977	104,918	45,150	7.4	3.2
1978	102,958	40,608	7.2	2.8
1979	104,396	37,854	7.2	2.6
1980	109,240	39,258	7.4	2.7
1981	113,905	41,412	7.6	2.8
1982	117,275	44,088	7.7	2.9

Source: ABS (1984), p. 100.

In 1961-65, the annual average marriages were 83,250 and the crude marriage rate per 1000 of mean population was 7.6. In 1976-80, the average marriages were 106,297 but the crude marriage rate per 1000 of mean population was 7.4, on the other hand, in 1961-65, registered divorces were 7,568 and the divorce rate per 1000 mean population was 0.7 while these figures in 1976-80 increased to 45,220 and 3.2 respectively. There were 117,275 marriages registered in 1982 and the crude marriage rate rose to 7.7 percent. The divorces numbered 44,088 and the crude divorce rate rose to 2.9 percent.

The following table shows the fertility within Australian marriages:

Table 7
Fertility of Australian Marriages: Annual Rates

Births occurring in-	Duration of Marriage (Years)										20 and over	Total
	Under 1	1	2	3	4	5	5-9	10-14	15-19	Total		
Annual averages:												
1956-60	369	317	309	227	243	1,515	751	292	101	26	2,685	
1961-65	377	304	311	281	239	1,512	741	293	100	22	2,668	
1966-70	302	248	278	265	227	1,320	663	234	79	17	2,313	
1971-75	232	211	248	249	219	1,159	606	178	54	14	2,011	
Annual rates:												
1973	228	201	240	246	214	1,129	581	170	54	12	1,946	
1974	206	202	240	242	215	1,105	572	152	45	9	1,883	
1975	185	192	222	228	205	1,032	544	135	37	9	1,757	
1976	172	185	214	222	206	999	555	126	32	7	1,719	
1977	163	182	206	214	201	967	567	129	30	6	1,699	
1978	167	170	193	207	195	933	569	124	27	6	1,659	

Source: ABS (1980), Year Book, Australia.

The table shows that fertility in the first two to three years of marriage has fallen very substantially. For instance, births under one year of marriage fell from 369 births per 1000 marriages in 1956-60 to 167 in 1978. There has also been a substantial decline in births for duration of marriages of (10-14) years as they declined from 292 per 1000 marriages in 1956-60 to 124 per 1000 in 1978. At longer durations the fall is proportionately greater. According to ABS (1980), the index of marriage fertility declined from the equivalent of 2.7 children per marriage in 1956-60 to 1.7 in 1978. Thus, it is clear that there is an increasing tendency for couples to delay having their first child.

Among other things (changes in economic activities, government policy, changes in social attitudes, etc.) a large proportion of the decline in fertility within marriages in developed countries like Australia could be due to their consciousness to maintain and increase their standard of livings, availability of large contraceptive measures, and most possibly, due to changes in social attitudes towards married women entering the work force.

WORK PARTICIPATION OF MARRIED WOMEN

The following table shows the married women's work participation rate:

Table 8
Married Female Labour Force and their Work Participation Rate by Age
(1971-1983)

Age Group	Married Females (000)			M.F. Work Participation Rate		
	1971 (May)	1980 (May)	1983 (May)	1971 (May)	1980 (May)	1983 (May)
15 - 19	19.6	16.2	15.4	44.5	48.3	56.0
20 - 24	158.9	165.8	164.2	45.8	57.5	57.0
25 - 34	271.5	453.6	483.8	36.1	47.2	49.0
35 - 44	297.0	431.7	503.1	44.6	56.9	58.0
45 - 54	234.0	284.2	294.1	38.6	46.1	46.6
55 - 59	57.0	78.1	74.0	24.4	27.5	25.6
60 - 64	20.0	28.3	25.4	12.3	13.8	10.6
65 +	6.5	10.4	10.3	3.0	3.3	2.9
Total	1064.5	1468.3	1570.3	35.2	42.4	42.6

Sources: Based on ABS, Year Book Australia, 1972, 81, 84.

The percentage of married women in the workforce has increased considerably especially within the reproductive age group, 15-44 years. In 1971, the work participation rate of the married women aged 15-19 was 44.5 percent which increased to 48.3 percent in 1980, which further jumped to 56 percent in 1983. Between 1971 and 1983 the number of married women

entering the workforce in the age group 15-19 years has increased by 11.5 percent, within the age group 25-34, it increased by 12.9 percent and for ages 35-44, the increase was 13.4 percent.

The increase in the work participation rate of the married women shows that they have become more career oriented and less home-bound over the last two decades or so. They tend to postpone having children so that they could continue to participate in the workforce. As has been noted earlier, the availability of wide range of contraceptives has enabled them to prevent unwanted pregnancies and hence they could be free from their home-bound duties. Such measures have also allowed the couples to plan when and how many children they want. In other words, the couples might delay having their first child until they are economically secured.

Since couples are able to plan their families, the prevailing economic conditions will more directly influence their decision on family size. The fertility is likely to be declined during periods of prolonged economic depression as was in the 1930's, when marriages were postponed and births were delayed because couples could not afford to establish families or to increase existing families. Similarly, political instability can also affect the fertility to a greater extent. During 1974-75, there was a rapid decline in fertility in Australia due to the instability of "Whitlam Government."

CONCLUSION

Considering the evidences presented above, the downward trend in fertility would seem to decline in the future years to come because the married women are seemed to accept career challenges in their lives. Besides, the future would seem to hold considerable economic hardships for many people as unemployment and inflation have continued to rise. This will have a dampening effect on fertility.

Future trends in marriages will depend largely on changes in social attitudes. For example, if de facto relationships between men and women become more acceptable, in that case, marriages will be delayed which will have its impact on the growth of family size.

In general, it seems that the current demographic trends will continue in the years to come.

SELECTED REFERENCES

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