

# Social Trends in Australia and Implications for Church Life

## Introduction

This Fact Sheet provides our snapshot findings on six key Australian trends, and provides some insights on the implications these trends have for church life.

**Trend #1: Population Structure:** Australia's population is ageing as it is growing.

- The elderly will make up an increasing **proportion** of the population.
- However, there will still be a **numeric increase** in the number of children and adults in their middle years.
- Churches will need to continue to minister to all ages.

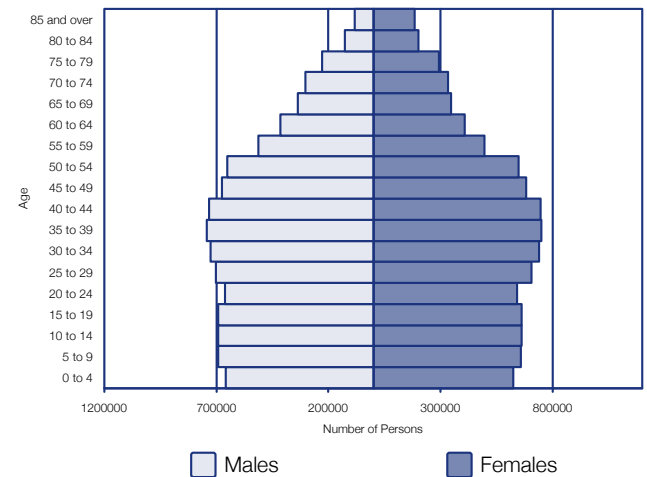
**Trend #2: Education:** Australia's population is increasingly well educated.

- 25% of those over 80 years are tertiary educated, compared to 58% of those in their 20's and 30's.
- Increasingly well educated ministry staff may need to be alert to needs of less formally educated aged attenders.
- There may be changing expectations (from younger generations) placed on teaching and learning situations.

**Trend #3: Employment & Income:** Australian women are working more.

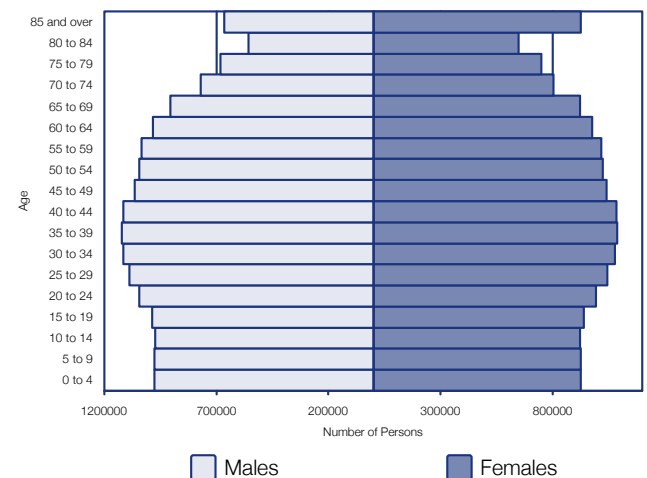
- 53% of all women 15+ employed in 2006 (up from 40% in 1976).
- Big rise in part-time employment: 24% of all women work part-time (up from 14% in 1976).
- Mums with kids under 5 work an average of over 70 hours per week, including paid employment, parenting and housework.
- Dads at work: On average fathers of young children spend the highest number of hours in paid work compared to others at different life stages.
- How can church contribute to quality family time?

**Figure 1: 2001 Australian Population by Age & Sex**



Source: ABS 2008a

**Figure 2: 2051 Australian Population by Age & Sex (Projected)**

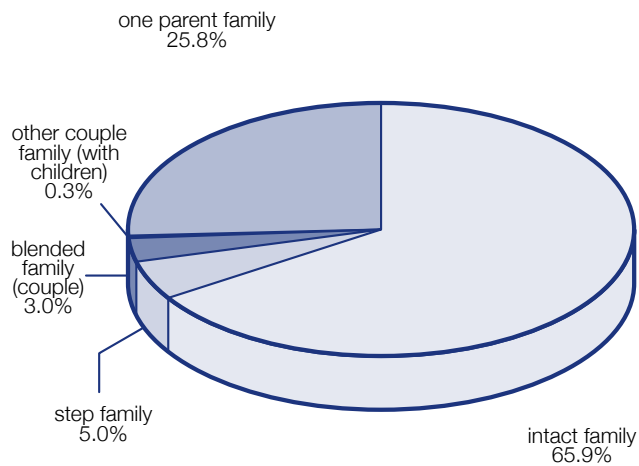


Source: ABS 2008b

**Trend #4: Households & Families:** Families are forming and re-forming increasingly flexibly.

- Only two-thirds of all children live in a 'traditional nuclear family'.
- Church activities will need to be open to non-traditional family structures.
- Stable Christian marriages and families can provide valuable support networks and role models.

**Figure 3: Families with Children**

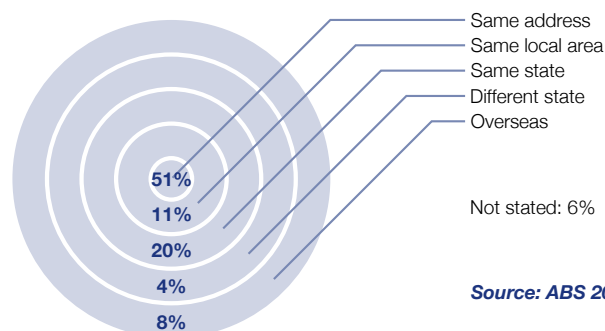


Source: ABS 2006a

**Trend #5: Housing:**

- New arrivals in your local area are most likely to be from other parts of your state (82%).
- At least 3 out of every ten people in our communities have arrived in the last five years from outside the local area.
- This provides opportunities for churches to welcome, provide support and local knowledge.

**Figure 4: Residential Mobility after 5 years**



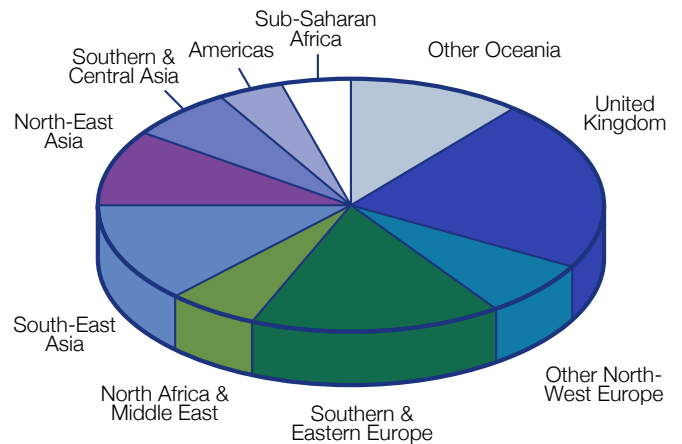
Source: ABS 2006a

**Trend #6 Culture & Religion:**

**Cultural Background**

- There is an increasing diversity of source countries in migration to Australia.
- Diversity makes it increasingly problematic for churches to minister to ethnic groups one-by-one.

**Figure 5: Country of Birth 2007**



Source: ABS 2008a

**Religion**

- Christian affiliation has declined from 96% in 1911 to 64% in 2006.
- Increasing proportions of Australians select 'no religion' on their census form - up to 19% in 2006
- While the proportion has increased, only 5.6% of Australians identify with religions other than Christianity.

Understanding Australian social trends and their implications on church in the broader social context can equip individuals and churches to better engage their community.

**Authors**

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**References**

This fact sheet was based on the presentation *Community Connections Seminar: Social Trends in Australia*. For references and further information on data sources, access the presentation at [www.ncls.org.au/community](http://www.ncls.org.au/community).