

Dependency ratios

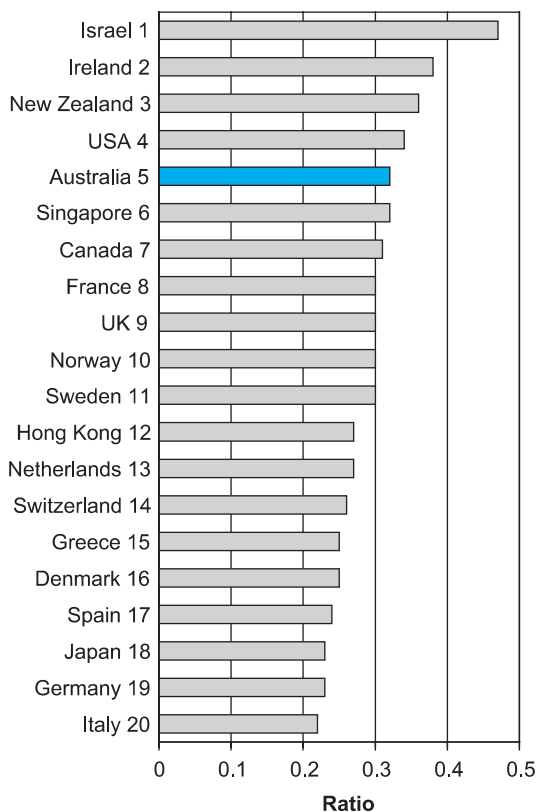


Figure 1: Child dependency ratios, 1995

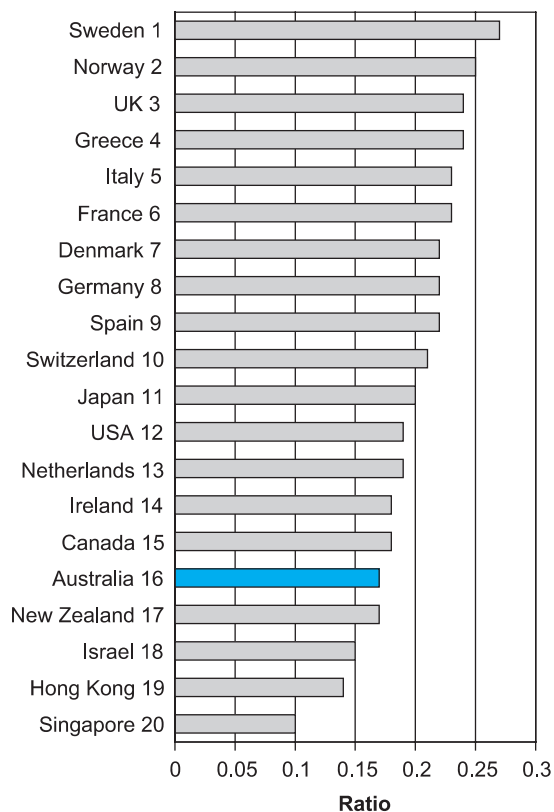


Figure 2: Aged dependency ratios, 1995

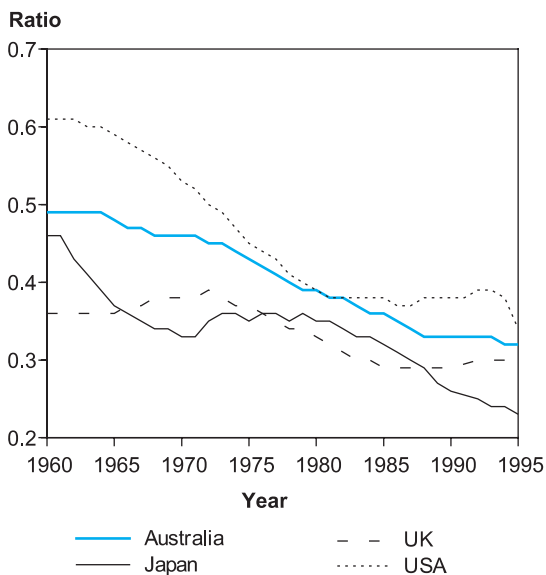


Figure 3: Trends in child dependency ratios, 1960 to 1995

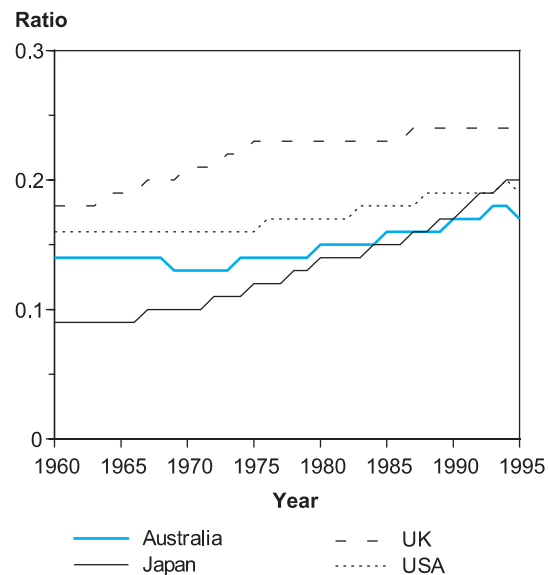


Figure 4: Trends in aged dependency ratios, 1960 to 1995

Dependency ratios

Age distributions and dependency ratios, 1995

Country	Population ('000)	% aged less than 15 years	% aged 15 to 64 years	% aged 65 years and over	Dependency ratio
Australia	18,063	21.5	66.8	11.6	0.50
Canada	29,606	20.8	67.3	11.8	0.48
Denmark	5,228	17.2	67.6	15.2	0.48
France	58,143	19.6	65.5	14.9	0.53
Germany	81,642	16.1	68.7	15.2	0.46
Greece	10,458	16.7	67.4	15.9	0.48
Hong Kong	6,190	19.1	70.7	10.2	0.41
Ireland	3,582	24.5	64.3	11.3	0.56
Israel	5,545	29.1	61.4	9.5	0.63
Italy	57,187	15.1	68.9	16.0	0.45
Japan	125,197	16.2	69.6	14.1	0.44
Netherlands	15,451	18.4	68.4	13.2	0.46
New Zealand	3,542	23.4	65.3	11.3	0.53
Norway	4,360	19.5	64.7	15.9	0.55
Singapore	2,987	22.7	70.5	6.7	0.42
Spain	39,210	16.5	68.6	14.9	0.46
Sweden	8,831	19.0	63.7	17.3	0.57
Switzerland	7,040	17.7	68.1	14.2	0.47
UK	58,258	19.6	65.0	15.5	0.54
USA	263,034	22.0	65.3	12.6	0.53

Sources: United Nations 1997; WHO 1996d.

- The number of non-working-age persons in a community dependent on working-age persons can be expressed as a 'dependency ratio' – the number of persons aged less than 15 years and 65 years and over divided by the number of persons aged 15 to 64 years. It gives some indication of the burden falling on working-age persons in order to provide for non-working-age persons.
- In 1995, Australia ranked ninth for the overall dependency ratio among developed countries, with a value of 0.50. Israel has the highest ratio (0.63) due mainly to a large proportion of children aged less than 15 years, and Hong Kong the lowest (0.41) due mainly to a small proportion of aged persons. Australia's dependency ratio has fallen steadily since 1960, although it appears to have stabilised since the early 1990s, on account of the ageing of the population.
- The ratio can be further separated into two components, namely the child dependency ratio (children aged 0–14 divided by persons aged 15–64), and the aged dependency ratio (persons aged 65 and over divided by persons aged 15–64).
- Compared to other developed countries, Australia has a relatively large number of young persons, and hence a high child dependency ratio. In 1995, Australia ranked fifth for this aspect of the ratio (with a value of 0.32), behind Israel, Ireland, New Zealand and the United States (Figure 1). Even though the Australian child dependency ratio is high among developed countries, the proportion of the Australian population aged 0–14 has been declining steadily since 1960. Child dependency ratios have also been declining steadily in Japan and the United States, although the decline in the United States has stabilised since the early 1980s (Figure 3).
- In contrast, Australia's aged dependency ratio is low, at 0.17 in 1995. Sweden, Norway, the United Kingdom and Greece have higher ratios. Singapore, in comparison, has a very low ratio, with only 6.7% of its population aged 65 years and over (Figure 2). The aged dependency ratio has increased slowly in Australia since 1960, although this is expected to accelerate in the coming decades with an increased proportion of aged persons. The United States and the United Kingdom have also demonstrated slow increases in the ratio, whereas the increase in Japan has been more rapid (Figure 4).

For more information, see:

United Nations 1997. 1995 demographic yearbook. New York: United Nations.