



2 Indicators of Australia's welfare

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides broad summary indicators of the welfare of Australia's population as well as context for the following chapters that focus on specific aspects of welfare service provision. New information is presented, where available, against indicators developed and reported in previous editions of this report (AIHW 2001, 2003a).

The chapter introduces the conceptual framework underlying the indicators, then proceeds to describe each indicator, and to present, where possible, updated or trend data from authoritative sources.

Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework for welfare information is depicted in Figure 2.1. Welfare, placed at the top of the diagram, may be considered as a concept, goal or vision of individual and social wellbeing. In practice, welfare proves hard to define in specific and universally agreed terms. In certain contexts or policy areas, it may nevertheless be quite feasible to agree on definitions and operational goals. The three boxes – 'Welfare components', 'Influential factors' and 'Interventions, services and assistance' – represent more tangible and measurable aspects of welfare and the 'welfare system' in human society (refer to AIHW 2001 for description of the development process).

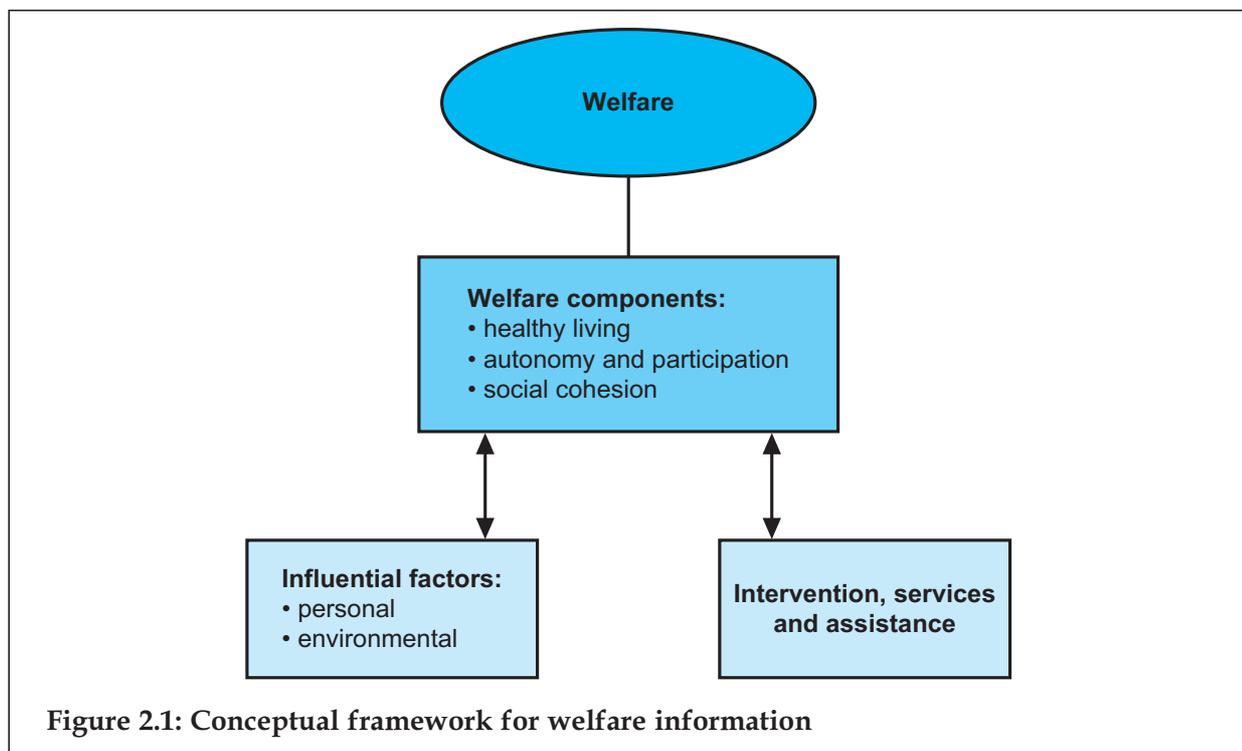


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework for welfare information

The welfare of Australian people is reflected in the ‘welfare components’—healthy living, autonomy and participation, and social cohesion—in particular the measurable aspects of welfare status. ‘Influential factors’ include the features of the physical and social environment in which a person lives, and the person’s own characteristics, which work together to shape wellbeing. ‘Interventions’ encompass the system of formal services, financial assistance and unpaid assistance that contribute further to welfare. This chapter focuses on these welfare components and measures of their status, so as to provide contextual information for other chapters in this volume, which cover the welfare services and assistance available to Australians.

‘Healthy living’ embodies the prerequisites for human welfare—the basic needs of water, food and shelter, along with health and safety from harm. ‘Autonomy and participation’ reflects the value people place on freedom and their capability to act as autonomous beings, plus the opportunities to participate socially, economically and recreationally as they choose. Finally, ‘social cohesion’ represents the intricacy of relationships, interactions and social behaviours that form webs of cohesiveness between and within different members of society, and act to nurture individual and social wellbeing.

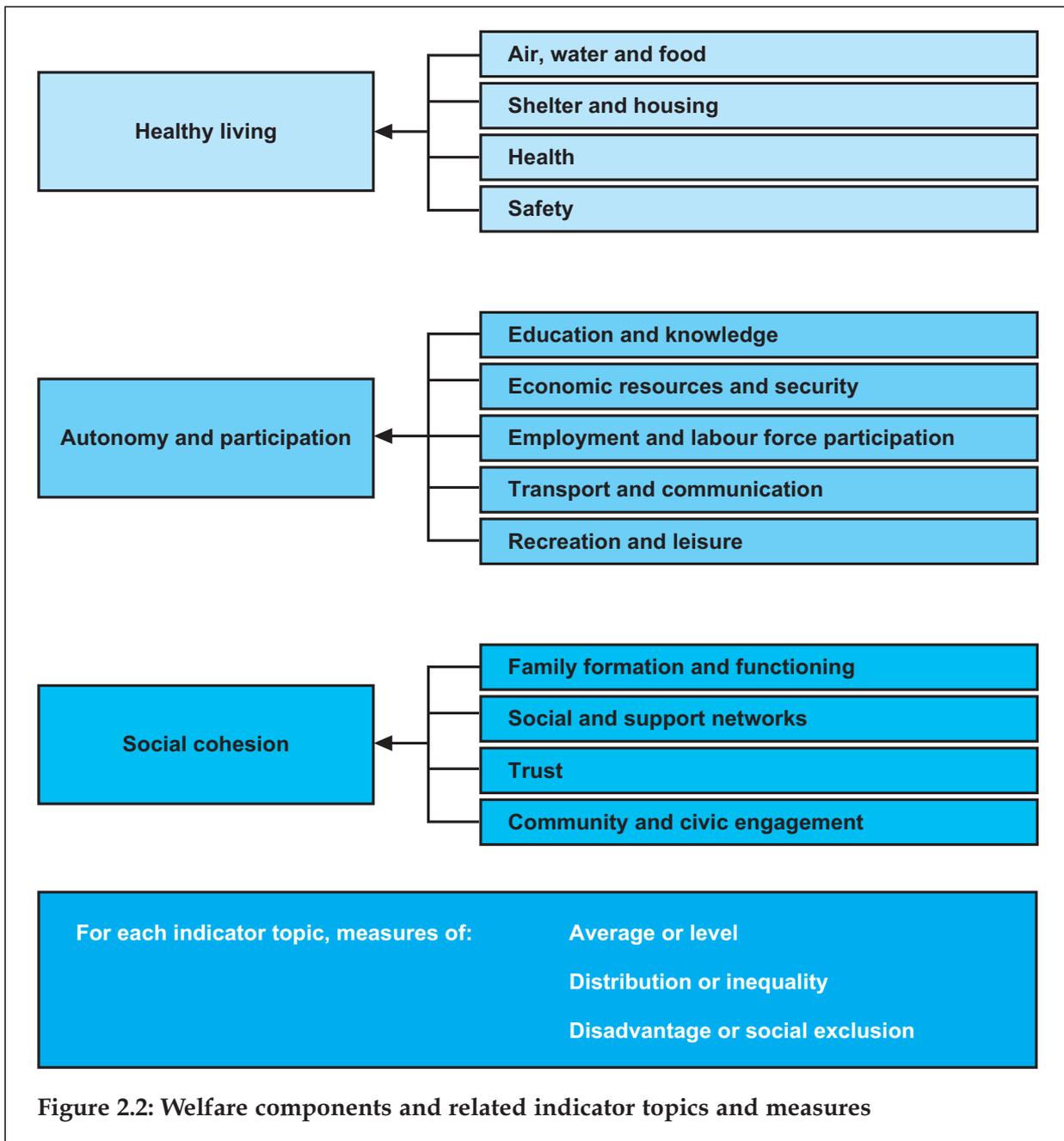
Figure 2.2 sets out 13 indicator topics that relate to these major components. These topics indicate the interconnected, valued components of human welfare and needs that can be measured statistically. The figure does not, however, assume a theoretical model of cause and effect, nor does it explicitly recognise the interconnection of many aspects of social advantage and disadvantage (for instance, education, income and health). This figure was constructed to illustrate the nature and scope of a field of measurement, rather than to explore or suggest directions of causality.

The indicator topics point to the broad subject areas on which the indicators in this chapter focus. On each of these topics, the three types of measures are:

- measures of average or level (for instance, average incomes);
- measures of distribution or inequality (for instance, income distribution across age groups, population groups, or geographic regions); and
- measures of disadvantage or social exclusion (for instance, poverty and indicators of income-related disadvantage).

Where possible, information for these measures is included.

Criteria used to select indicators of welfare are presented in Appendix Table A2.1; status of indicators presented in 2003 and 2005 is described in Appendix Table A2.2.



2.2 Healthy living

Healthy living encompasses the basic needs of life—a ready supply of clean water and nutritious food, access to shelter, a clean environment in which to live, and safety from harm—all fundamental to human health.

Air, water and food

Access to nutritious food and potable water are basic requirements of human life, and, together with air quality, greatly influence the current and future health and wellbeing of individuals and society at large. The indicators presented below—urban air quality,

access to potable water, reported usual daily intake of fruit and vegetables (an indicator of food and nutrient intake), and prevalence of obesity (as an indicator of nutritional status)—represent key issues in the monitoring of air and water quality, and nutrition, in Australia.

Urban air quality

Air quality in Australia is relatively good by international standards (Manins et al. 2001). In rural and regional Australia, levels of most pollutants are normally below actual or proposed national ambient air quality standards. However, some urban and industrial areas are susceptible to potentially dangerous levels of air pollutants, which can have serious impacts on people's health, the environment and economy, and subsequently on quality of life (EPAV 2000; Lewis et al. 1998; Morgan 2000; Simpson et al. 2000).

Particles with diameters 10 micrometres or less (known as PM10) and ozone are two air pollutants of concern in Australia (DEH 2004). Particles are emitted directly from motor vehicles, domestic wood fires, bushfires and industrial processes. Ozone is a secondary pollutant formed when oxides of nitrogen and volatile organic compounds react with sunlight in the atmosphere. Motor vehicle emissions and industrial activities are the main sources of these primary pollutants.

In 1998, Ambient Air Quality NEPM (National Environmental Protection Measure) standards were established with the goal of achieving air quality that protects human health and wellbeing (NEPC 1998). Particles (as PM10) and ozone are measured in terms of the number of days per year when the average concentration exceeds the Air NEPM. In 2003, standards for fine particles 2.5 micrometres or less in size (known as PM2.5) were included in the Air NEPM because of the adverse health effects of these finer particles which are known to penetrate deeper into the lung than larger size particles (EPHC 2004). Due to inconsistencies in the monitoring and reporting of past data, trend data for PM2.5 are not included in this section but may be available in the future.

The annual number of days in which the concentration of particles as PM10 exceeded the NEPM standard level of 50 µg/m³ generally fluctuated over the period 2000–03 (Table 2.1). The downward trend observed in most major capital cities over the period 1990–99 was not obvious across 2000–03.¹ Particle levels remained relatively high in Sydney and Melbourne; both cities exceeded the goal of 5 days per year in 2002 and 2003. Severe bushfires and dust storms may have been responsible for these peaks in Sydney in 2002, and Melbourne in 2003 (ABS 2005a). Perth was the only city which did not exceed the maximum allowable days of PM10 over the period.

Ozone concentrations exceeding 0.10 ppm per hour were much more frequent in Sydney during 2000–03 than in any of the other major capital cities. No obvious trend of increase or decrease in ozone pollution occurred for any of the capital cities during this period.

1. The 1990–99 data in *Australia's Welfare 2003* (AIHW 2003a) are not directly comparable with the 2000–03 data presented here and so have not been included as part of the trend information.

Table 2.1: Number of days per year when concentrations of PM10 and ozone exceeded the Air NEPM standard levels, in major capital cities, 2000–03

	2000	2001	2002	2003
Number of days when concentration of PM10 exceeded 50 g/m³ (over 24 hours)^(a)				
Sydney	2	5	17	10
Melbourne	0	2	6	13
Brisbane	0	1	7	2
Perth	0	1	2	1
Adelaide	n.a.	n.a.	1	6
Number of days when concentration of ozone exceeded 0.10 ppm (over 1 hour)^(b)				
Sydney	4	9	2	4
Melbourne	1	0	0	2
Brisbane	0	0	2	0
Perth	0	0	0	0
Adelaide	n.a.	n.a.	0	0

(a) The maximum allowable exceedence is 5 days per year, to be achieved by 2008.

(b) The maximum allowable exceedence is 1 day per year, to be achieved by 2008.

Source: Data provided to AIHW by Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH).

Access to potable water

Water is a precious resource in a country as dry and climatically variable as Australia. Access to a reliable supply of clean safe water is a necessity for healthy living. The Australian Drinking Water Guidelines developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council, in collaboration with the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, provide the Australian community and the water supply industry with guidance on acceptable water quality in Australia (NHMRC & NRMCC 2003). The guidelines define good quality drinking water from the perspectives of both health and aesthetics (appearance, taste and odour); drinking water must be safe for human consumption (i.e. the levels of bacteria, chemicals and pesticides should not exceed levels stated in the guidelines), and should be aesthetically pleasing.

No national data are currently available on access to potable water. Regulation of drinking water is the responsibility of each state and territory; government bodies are responsible for establishing the level of impurities that is acceptable for a given water supply, and water authorities are required to regularly monitor the quality and safety of the water they distribute (NHMRC 2004).

Not all Australians have access to good quality drinking water. The 2001 Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey found that 56 of the 169 Indigenous communities (about 17,000 people) that had been tested had drinking water supplies that failed testing at least once in the 12 months prior to the survey, a similar result to that obtained in 1999 (ABS 2002a:19).

Reported usual daily intake of fruit and vegetables

Regular consumption of fruit and vegetables plays an important role in ensuring a healthy diet which is fundamental to the maintenance of good health through all stages of life.

Fruit and vegetables provide significant protection against a number of major chronic diseases, including coronary heart disease, stroke, certain cancers, hypertension, and Type 2 diabetes (NHMRC 2003). Further, the consumption of fewer than 5 serves of fruit and vegetables per day was estimated to contribute to 3% of the total burden of disease and 11% of the total cancer burden in Australia in 1996 (AIHW: Mathers et al. 1999). Increasing the consumption of fruit and vegetables has been identified as a nutrition priority initiative to optimise health and reduce the burden of preventable diet-related death, illness and disability among Australians (SIGNAL 2001).

Dietary guidelines endorsed by the NHMRC recommend that women eat 4–7 serves of vegetables and legumes per day, and 2–3 serves of fruit; for men the recommendation is 5–8 serves of vegetables and legumes per day and 2–4 serves of fruit (NHMRC 2003). The 2001 National Health Survey provides the most recent national data on the food intake of Australian adults.

In 2001, just over half (53%) of the Australian population aged 12 years and over reported eating at least 2 serves of fruit a day (Table 2.2). Females, overall and for almost all age groups – with the exception of those aged 12–14 years – were more likely than males to do so. The proportion of people meeting the recommended daily fruit intake was generally higher at older ages.

Table 2.2: Self-reported usual daily intake of fruit and vegetables, by age, 2001 (per cent)^(a)

Age group	2 or more serves of fruit a day			4–5 or more serves of vegetables a day		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
12–14	56.7	54.8	55.7	22.2	24.2	23.2
15–24	42.1	50.6	46.2	21.1	23.2	22.2
25–34	40.0	50.6	45.3	21.8	27.6	24.8
35–44	43.1	53.3	48.3	24.7	33.3	29.0
45–54	46.6	60.8	53.8	29.6	36.8	33.2
55–64	53.1	70.7	61.8	32.0	42.7	37.3
65–74	60.4	69.1	64.9	34.5	40.0	36.8
75+	61.9	68.4	65.7	36.1	38.6	37.6
Total	47.1	58.1	52.7	26.4	32.8	29.7

(a) Percentage of the population within each age group.

Source: ABS 2002b.

Only 30% of Australians aged 12 years and over reported consuming at least 4–5 serves of vegetables per day in 2001. Females, overall and for each age group, were more likely than males to meet this recommended daily intake of vegetables. The proportion of the population who reported their usual intake of vegetables as being 4 or more serves was higher in older age groups, especially from age 35+ years.

Prevalence of obesity

Body weight is an important indicator of past and current health status, as well as a predictor of future health and wellbeing. Obesity is related to a number of adverse health outcomes, including diabetes, heart and circulatory conditions, low participation in leisure-time physical activity, and poor self-reported health status (AIHW: O'Brien & Webbie 2004).

While many factors may influence an individual's body weight, a balanced diet and participation in regular physical activity are key elements in the prevention and management of obesity (NHMRC 1997). Obesity is, then, an indicator of 'disadvantage' when considering nutritional status.

In 2001, an estimated 2.4 million (16%) Australians aged 18 years and older were obese, and a further 4.9 million (34%) were overweight but not obese, based on self-reported height and weight data from the National Health Survey (AIHW: Dixon & Waters 2003; see Table 2.3 footnotes for definitions of 'overweight but not obese' and 'obese'). Men were more likely than women to be overweight but not obese—42% compared to 25%. However, women were just as likely as men to be obese—17% and 16% respectively. It is important to note that these results are based on self-reported height and weight estimates; thus the true prevalence of overweight and obesity is expected to be higher, as people tend to overestimate their height and underestimate their weight (ABS 1998a; AIHW: O'Brien & Webbie 2003). (See Chapter 4 for the prevalence of obesity among the population aged 65 years and older.)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in non-remote areas were almost twice as likely to be obese as other Australians living in similar locations in 2001—31% and 16% respectively. However, the prevalence of being overweight but not obese in 2001 was similar for Indigenous Australians and other Australians—32% and 34% respectively (AIHW: O'Brien & Webbie 2003).

The prevalence of obesity rose rapidly among both men (an 80% increase) and women (a 71% increase) between 1989–90 and 2001, a much greater increase than the prevalence of overweight but not obese (14% in both men and women) (Table 2.3). Among OECD countries, obesity levels in Australia now rank fourth behind the United States, Mexico and the United Kingdom (OECD 2004).

Table 2.3: Prevalence of overweight and obesity: Australian men and women aged 18 years and over, 1989–90, 1995 and 2001 (per cent)

	Overweight but not obese		Obese	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1989–90	37.0	22.2	8.6	9.9
1995	40.3	24.3	11.6	12.2
2001	42.0	25.3	15.5	16.9

Notes

1. Data based on BMI (body mass index) derived from self-reported height and weight measurements. BMI is calculated as Weight (kg)/Height²(m). 'Overweight but not obese' is measured as BMI 25 and BMI <30. 'Obesity' is measured as BMI 30.
2. Age-standardised to the 2001 Australian population 18 years and older.

Source: AIHW: Dixon & Waters 2003:17.

Shelter and housing

A person's access to stable, adequate shelter is recognised as a basic human need. Housing provides shelter and a place where people are guaranteed security and privacy, and where they can form and maintain relationships with family and friends. Having a home also enables people to engage with the wider community—socially, recreationally and economically—and may influence both their physical and mental health.

Housing tenure, housing affordability, and homelessness are used here as indicators of the housing circumstances of Australians. However, housing adequacy, in terms of quality, condition and size of dwelling, and accessibility are also important indicators, and especially significant for some Indigenous communities and people living in remote areas (ABS 2004a; see also AIHW 2005a for other national indicators on Indigenous housing). Further information on assistance for housing can be found in Chapter 6, and services for persons experiencing homelessness in Chapter 7.

Housing tenure

Australians have traditionally aspired to home ownership and compared with other developed countries, Australia has one of the highest home ownership rates (ABS 2001a).

In 2002–03, 70% of Australian households owned their home (Table 2.4). Couple-only and lone-person households accounted for 37% and 28% of all households respectively that owned their home outright, while couples with dependent children made up 41% of all household owners with a mortgage. Public and private renters mostly lived in lone-person households (47% and 32% respectively).

Table 2.4: Tenure type and composition of households, 2002–03

	Owner without a mortgage	Owner with a mortgage	Public renter ^(a)	Private renter	Total ^(b)
Number ('000)	2,780.4	2,525.0	372.8	1,680.2	7,638.2
Per cent	36.4	33.1	4.9	22.0	100.0
Household composition—per cent of each tenure type					
Couple-only households	37.2	21.1	7.7	18.1	25.4
Couple with dependent children only households	11.6	41.4	7.7	17.5	22.6
Other couple, one-family households	13.5	13.9	5.6	4.3	10.8
One-parent, one-family households with dependent children	2.7	4.9	24.4	12.6	6.9
Other family households	6.6	4.4	7.4	6.0	5.7
Lone person	27.6	12.5	46.6	31.9	25.2
Group households	0.8	1.9	0.6	9.5	3.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Renting from a state or territory housing authority.

(b) Includes other renters and other tenure type.

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: ABS 2004b.

Between 1994 and 2003, the percentage of Australians who owned their homes stayed relatively even at around 70% (ABS 2005b:158). During this period, the proportion of households without a mortgage dropped from 42% in 1994 to 36% in 2003 and the proportion of households with a mortgage increased from 28% to 33%.

These differences partly reflect age effects – for instance, a large proportion of couple-only households are likely to be older couples, and home ownership rates increase with age

(AIHW 2003a:20). For example, in 2002–03, 80% of older person (i.e. 65 years and older) households lived in a dwelling they owned outright, compared with 25% of younger person households (ABS 2005b:168–9).

Indigenous households were less likely to own or be in the process of buying their homes. In 2002, 30% of Indigenous households were home owners or purchasers and 66% were renting (Table 2.5). Around 15% of Indigenous households were renting from Indigenous Community Housing Organisations and mainstream community housing organisations. Land tenure arrangements in remote and very remote areas often translate to community ownership of dwellings, rather than individual ownership, and may account in part for lower ownership among Indigenous Australians in these areas (ABS & AIHW 2003).

Table 2.5: Tenure type of Indigenous households, 2002

	Home owner/ purchaser	Private/other renter	Renter (state/territory housing)	Renter (Indigenous/ community housing)	Other	Total
Number ('000)	50.4	46.8	37.7	24.5	6.2	165.7
Per cent	30.4	28.2	22.8	14.8	3.7	100.0

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: ABS & AIHW 2005.

Housing affordability

Housing affordability indicates the capacity of households to meet housing costs while maintaining the ability to meet other living expenses. No single indicator of housing affordability has yet been recognised as an Australian standard, but most rely on cut-off points to identify 'low-income households', since such households should be considered at risk of having problems with affordability (AIHW: Karmel 1998).

A commonly used indicator of housing affordability is the proportion of low-income households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs. In Table 2.6, low-income households are defined as those with an equivalised disposable household income that is between the bottom 10% and bottom 40% of the distribution. Data are also presented on low-income households spending more than 50% of their income on housing costs, an indicator of more severe affordability problems. These households are described as those at potential risk of affordability problems.

In 2002–03, 20% of low-income Australian households spent more than 30% of their income on housing costs (i.e. major cash outlays such as mortgage repayments, property rates, or rent). Housing affordability problems were felt most by owners with a mortgage and by private renters—around 22% of all low-income household owners with a mortgage and 44% of private renters spent 30–50% of their income on housing costs, and 9% and 13% respectively spent more than 50%.

An alternative indicator, used to measure affordability stress among low-income Indigenous households, calculates the percentage of such households paying 25% or more of their income for rent. In 2002, 43% of low-income Indigenous households

(15,013 households in total) spent 25% or more of their income on rent (AIHW 2005a:35).²

Table 2.6: Households with equivalised disposable incomes in the bottom 10% and bottom 40%: households that spent between 30–50% and more than 50% of their gross income on housing costs,^{(a)(b)} by tenure type, 2002–03 (per cent)^(c)

Tenure type	Proportion of gross income spent on housing costs	
	30–50%	More than 50%
Owner without a mortgage	0.0	0.0
Owner with a mortgage	22.0	8.6
Renter—state/territory housing authority	5.0	0.0
Renter—private landlord	43.9	13.4
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>All tenure types^(d)</i>	<i>14.9</i>	<i>4.7</i>

(a) Housing costs include major cash outlays on housing, that is, mortgage repayments and property rates for owners, and rent. Housing costs here do not include outlays such as repairs, maintenance and dwelling insurance.

(b) The use of gross weekly income in this method masks assistance on the income side, such as rent assistance. On the supply side, it illustrates that people renting public housing were less likely to have affordability problems.

(c) Per cent of all low-income households.

(d) Includes other renters.

Note: The percentages indicate the proportions of low-income households, as published in ABS (2005c). In *Australia's Welfare 2003* (AIHW 2003a), the percentages related to all households.

Source: ABS 2005c: Table 5.

Homelessness

Homelessness can be viewed as an indicator of housing deprivation and, more broadly, as evidence of social exclusion. Defining and counting homeless people remains a challenge and the various strategies and approaches used are discussed in Chapter 7. However, some of the approaches proposed to measure homelessness do not always 'fit' when estimating homelessness among particular groups in Australian society. An exploration of Indigenous Australians' interpretation of homelessness by Memmott et al. (2004) found quite different ideas about who may be considered homeless. They emphasised the importance of understanding cultural antecedents (e.g. culturally obliged transience) behind supposed episodes of homelessness, as opposed to the conventional and cultural expectations of the majority of other Australians that tend to focus on the lack of appropriate accommodation and security of tenure.

On Census night 2001, it was estimated that 99,900 people were homeless in Australia (Table 2.7). Forty-nine per cent of these people stayed with friends or relatives, and 23% lived in boarding houses. An estimated 105,300 people were homeless on Census night in 1996; however, changes to the definition of improvised dwellings between censuses make comparison between absolute numbers problematic. (See Chapter 7 for further data on homelessness.)

2. Low-income households were defined as those in the bottom 40% of all Australian gross household incomes spending more than 25% of their income on rent.

Table 2.7: The whereabouts of homeless people on Census night, 1996 and 2001

	1996		2001	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
SAAP accommodation ^(a)	12,926	12	14,251	14
Boarding house	23,299	22	22,877	23
Friends/relatives	48,500	46	48,614	49
No conventional accommodation ^(b)	20,579	20	14,158	14
Total homeless	105,304	100	99,900	100

(a) Provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.

(b) Includes improvised dwellings, tents and sleepers out. Counting rules in the 1996 Census included any dwelling which did not have a working bath/shower and toilet as an improvised dwelling. This methodological approach was not taken in 2001, to account for those Indigenous households who used bathroom and toilet facilities in properly constructed amenity blocks.

Sources: Chamberlain 1999; Chamberlain & McKenzie 2003.

Health

Health is broadly defined as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’ (WHO 1946). This section takes a somewhat narrower view of health, as one subcomponent of welfare, recognising the important links between health and other aspects of welfare. Health can influence participation in many aspects of life, including education, work and recreation. Furthermore, a person’s mental health can impact upon their social functioning and capacity to carry out everyday activities and responsibilities. Good health is therefore a major resource for personal, social and economic development as well as an important factor in quality of life (WHO 1986).

In this section we present indicators of health status. Some indicators of important determinants of health are presented in other sections of this chapter – notably dietary intake and obesity in ‘Air, water and food’ (see AIHW 2004a for an overview of determinants of health).

Life expectancy

Life expectancy refers to the average number of additional years a person of a given age and sex can expect to live if current age-specific mortality rates continue to apply throughout that person’s lifetime. Life expectancy at birth provides an indication of the prevailing level of mortality in the population at a given point in time (ABS 1997a), while life expectancy at age 65 is a broad, mortality-based indicator of the health of older people (OECD 2001).

Life expectancies at birth in Australia are among the highest in the world and increased significantly over the twentieth century (AIHW 2004a; WHO 2005). In the period 1998–2000, life expectancy at birth was 76.6 years for males and 82.0 years for females (Table 2.8), a substantial increase from the beginning of the previous century when a male at birth was expected to live to 55.2 years and a female to 58.8 years (AIHW 2004a). There have also been substantial improvements in the life expectancy of the older population. In 1998–2000, males aged 65 years could expect to live to 81.9 years and females to 85.4 years – some 7 years more than people of the same age in the period 1901–10.

Table 2.8: Life expectancy, by Indigenous status (years)

	Life expectancy at birth		Life expectancy at age 65	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1996–2001				
Indigenous Australians ^(a)	59.4	64.8	10.7	12.0
1998–2000				
All Australians	76.6	82.0	16.9	20.4

(a) Data on life expectancy for Indigenous Australians are based on experimental life tables (see ABS 2004c).

Source: ABS & AIHW 2005.

The Indigenous Australian population has substantially lower life expectancy than the total Australian population—approximately 17 years less. This difference reflects much higher death rates in the Indigenous population, for both males and females, in every age group (ABS & AIHW 2005).

Life expectancy also varies with socioeconomic status—people in more disadvantaged groups tend to have shorter life expectancies. This pattern is illustrated by a comparison of life expectancies among regions categorised according to the Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage. In 2000–01, there was a 3.6 year gap in life expectancy at birth for males between the lowest and highest quintiles of socioeconomic disadvantage, and a 2.4 year gap for females (Table 2.9). The gap in life expectancy at 65 years was 1.6 years for males and 1.3 years for females.

Table 2.9: Life expectancy at birth and at age 65, by quintile of socioeconomic disadvantage^(a), 2000–01 (years)

	Quintile of socioeconomic disadvantage				
	Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest
Life expectancy at birth					
Males	76.2	77.0	77.6	78.5	79.8
Females	82.1	82.8	83.0	83.5	84.5
Life expectancy at age 65					
Males	17.0	17.5	17.7	18.0	18.6
Females	20.8	21.2	21.2	21.4	22.1

(a) The measure of socioeconomic status used here (IRSD) categorises SLAs based on a range of attributes including levels of income, educational attainment, and unemployment. People are classified according to the average socioeconomic disadvantage of their area of residence at death.

Note: The quintiles of socioeconomic disadvantage are based on the 2001 Census and therefore cannot be compared with SEIFA data based on the 1996 Census such as the life expectancy by SEIFA presented in *Australia's Welfare 2003*.

Source: AIHW analysis of AIHW National Mortality Database.

Expected years of life lived with disability

Indicators of functioning and disability in the population are a key component of national health status measurement (NHPC 2004). Expected years of life lived with a disability is an estimate of the average number of years that a person, at birth, can expect to live with a disability. Just as life expectancy is a population average, so is this an indicator of population health rather than a prediction of any individual's experience.

According to 2003 data, men can expect, on average, to experience 19 years of life lived with a disability (5 of which are expected to be years of life lived with a severe or profound core activity limitation). Women can expect, on average, to experience 21 years of life lived with a disability (8 with a severe or profound core activity limitation) (Table 2.10; for definitions and further discussion of methodology, see AIHW: Wen (forthcoming)). The 1998 and 2003 estimates of years of life lived with a disability both equate to 24% of total life expectancy for men, and estimates of severe or profound core activity limitation to 7% of total life expectancy. For women, estimates of years of life lived with a disability equate to 25% of total life expectancy in 2003, up slightly from 24% in 1998, while years of life lived with a severe or profound core activity limitation equate to 10% of total life expectancy in 2003, up from 9% in 1998.

Table 2.10: Expected years of life lived with disability and with severe or profound core activity limitation, 1998 and 2003

	Males				Females			
	Number of years		% of total life expectancy		Number of years		% of total life expectancy	
	1998	2003	1998	2003	1998	2003	1998	2003
Expected years of life:								
Free of disability	58.0	59.1	76	76	62.1	62.2	76	75
With disability (all severity levels) ^(a)	17.9	18.6	24	24	19.4	20.7	24	25
With severe core activity limitation ^(b)	5.3	5.4	7	7	7.6	8.3	9	10
Total life expectancy at birth	75.9	77.8	100	100	81.5	82.8	100	100

(a) Disability is defined as the presence of one or more of 17 limitations, restrictions or impairments that lasted, or were likely to last, for at least 6 months, and which restricted everyday activities (see also Chapter 5).

(b) Severe or profound core activity limitation is a subset of all disability and is defined as sometimes or always needing personal assistance or supervision with a core activity (self-care, mobility or verbal communication).

Note: The 1998 data were calculated using 1998 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers CURF data and therefore are different to the 1998 data in Australia's Welfare 2003 which were extracted using definitions that were common to the previous surveys.

Sources: AIHW analysis of ABS 1998 and 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers confidentialised unit record files; ABS unpublished abridged Australian life tables 1996–98, 2001–03.

Infant mortality

Infant mortality is defined as the number of deaths of children within their first year of life in a calendar year per 1,000 live births in the same calendar year.

Infant mortality in Australia has declined significantly since the beginning of the twentieth century, from 103 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 1900 to 4.8 per 1,000 in 2003 (ABS 2004d). However, Australia's infant mortality rate is still relatively high compared with other industrialised countries, ranking equal eleventh (with Greece and the Netherlands) among 26 OECD countries in 2003 – Iceland had the lowest rate with 2.4 deaths per 1,000 live births (OECD 2005a).

The Australian rate is relatively high partly because of the high death rates among Indigenous infants (NHPC 2004:32). Nonetheless, over the period 1991–2002, these rates in Western Australia, South Australia, and the Northern Territory all decreased significantly (Table 2.11).

Table 2.11: Indigenous infant mortality rates^(a), WA, SA and NT, 1991–2002

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Western Australia ^(b)	20.8	22.8	16.3	20.3	22.1	18.9	19.0	17.0	16.7	13.9	16.9	15.5
South Australia	16.9	25.0	13.5	7.5	16.2	14.4	8.5	4.5	6.3	11.1	8.2	11.8
Northern Territory	25.5	28.1	25.8	21.7	17.0	24.6	23.8	21.0	28.2	17.0	16.0	13.0

(a) Infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

(b) The average of births over 1993–95 in WA was used as the denominator for the estimates of the infant rates for 1991 and 1992. This is because implausibly small numbers of births were recorded for 1991 and 1992.

Note: Death data are based on year of death and state of usual residence. Birth data are based on year of registration.

Source: ABS & AIHW 2005.

Mental health

Mental ill-health is one of the leading causes of the non-fatal burden of disease and injury in Australia (AIHW 2004a). Mental health problems and disorders can affect people's ability to carry out their daily activities and responsibilities, and are associated with increased exposure to health risk factors, poorer physical health and higher rates of death from numerous causes including suicide. In 2001, an estimated 1,812,600 people, or 9.6% of the adult population, reported a long-term mental or behavioural problem (ABS 2004e).³

Psychological distress is a major risk factor for mental disorders. The 2001 National Health Survey included a set of 10 questions (the Kessler 10 scale) to measure psychological distress over the 4 weeks prior to the survey. The K10 scores were grouped into four categories: low (indicating little or no psychological distress), moderate, high, and very high (which may indicate a need for professional help).

In 2001, an estimated 508,700 people, or 3.6% of the adult population, were classified as having 'very high' levels of psychological distress (Table 2.12). Proportionally more women than men overall (4.4% and 2.7% respectively), and across almost all age groups, reported very high levels. The highest rates were recorded for persons aged 45–54 years (5.5% of women and 3.7% of men). Results from surveys conducted in 2003 in New South Wales and Victoria showed similar patterns but lower proportions (2.8% and 2.6%, respectively) (NSW Department of Health 2004; Victorian Department of Human Services 2004).

There are currently no national data concerning the incidence or prevalence of mental health disorders among Indigenous Australians. The 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey included, for the first time, a module to assess various aspects of mental health and social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous Australians. Results are expected to be available in 2006.

3. The 1998 Child and Adolescent Components of the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing—the first and latest survey to investigate the mental health and wellbeing of young Australians at a national level—found that 14% of children and adolescents had mental health problems (Sawyer et al. 2000).

Table 2.12: Number and proportion^(a) of the adult population reporting very high levels of psychological distress, by age and sex, 2001

Age	Males		Females		Persons	
	Number ('000)	Per cent	Number ('000)	Per cent	Number ('000)	Per cent
18–24	24.9	2.7	46.9	5.4	71.7	4.0
25–34	29.2	2.1	65.2	4.6	94.4	3.4
35–44	35.5	2.5	62.5	4.2	98.0	3.4
45–54	47.7	3.7	73.1	5.5	120.8	4.6
55–64	32.3	3.6	31.9	3.6	64.2	3.6
65–74	*12.0	1.9	22.7	3.4	34.7	2.7
75 and over	*7.5	1.9	17.3	3.0	24.8	2.5
All ages	189.1	2.7	319.5	4.4	508.7	3.6

(a) Proportion of the population within each age group.

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: ABS 2002b.

Physical activity

The health benefits of regular physical activity are well established and include an overall reduced risk of premature mortality, as well as reduced risks of cardiovascular diseases, Type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, musculoskeletal disorders, injurious falls, obesity, and symptoms of mental ill-health (AIHW 2003b). Overall, physical inactivity ranks second only to tobacco, as the most important risk factor for preventable disease in Australia (Bauman et al. 2002).

Sufficient physical activity to achieve health benefits is interpreted as the accrual of at least 150 minutes of physical activity over at least five sessions per week (AIHW 2003c; DHAC 1999). Data from the 2000 National Physical Activity Survey identified that more than half (54%) of Australians aged 18–75 years did not undertake enough physical activity to obtain health benefits (AIHW 2004a). Rates were highest among 30–59 year olds and lowest among 18–29 year olds, for both males and females. More men (18%) than women (13%) reported 'no physical activity' during the week prior to the survey, with the proportion of people not doing any at all increasing with age— from 11% of men and 9% of women aged 18–29 years to 20% of men and 17% of women aged 45 years and over (see Chapter 4 for participation rates among the population aged 65 years and older).

Comparisons with the 1997 National Physical Activity Survey show that the proportion of Australians reporting insufficient physical activity increased from 49% in 1997 to 54% in 2000 (AIHW 2003c). It should be noted that non-leisure time physical activity such as work or domestic activity was not taken into account because of the difficulty in measuring this component.

There are currently no recent national data on the physical activity patterns of Australian children and adolescents; however, it has been found that many activities widely undertaken by young Australians involve very little physical activity. The 2003 Survey of Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities found that watching television and videos was the most popular leisure activity outside school hours—

undertaken by 98% of boys and girls aged 5–14 years for an average of 22 hours over a school fortnight (ABS 2004f).

Safety

Direct experiences or perceptions of safety can greatly impact upon a person's physical and mental health and wellbeing. Safety indicators are often expressed as negative indicators (or indicators of system breakdown), for instance experiences of crime and injury. The effects of these negative events are felt not only by the victims of crime or accidental injury, but also by their family and friends and members of the wider community, including those who are involved in rescuing and treating the victims and apprehending and sentencing the perpetrators of crime. Less directly, individuals and society at large experience these effects in terms of perceptions of danger or, more positively, feelings of safety and security.

Feelings of safety

In 2002, around 80% of people reported that they felt safe or very safe at home alone during the day, and 69% felt this way after dark (ABS 2003a). Females (61%) were less likely than males (78%) to report feeling safe particularly after dark. People in capital cities reported feeling less safe during the day (78%) and after dark (67%) than those in other areas (83% and 73%, respectively).

Data on perceptions of safety collected in the 2002 ABS General Social Survey showed similar patterns, but higher proportions (82%) of people reported feeling safe or very safe at home alone after dark (ABS 2003b). People living in rented accommodation or in low-income households and people not in the labour force were more likely to feel unsafe at home alone after dark.

Crime

Data on crime vary depending on the way information is collected. Household surveys provide a picture of crime as experienced by people and households and, for some crimes, present a more complete picture of crime victimisation than data on crimes reported to the police. Data from both household surveys and police records are used here.

An estimated 8.9% of households experienced at least one household crime in the 12 months prior to the 2002 National Crime and Safety Survey (ABS 2003a). This figure has remained much the same since 1998 (9.0%). Break-ins were the most commonly reported household crime in 2002, with 4.7% of households reporting at least one break-in to their home, garage or shed. Some 3.4% of households reported finding signs of at least one attempted break-in, and 1.8% reported at least one motor vehicle stolen from their household.

An estimated 5.3% of people aged 15 years and over were victims of at least one personal crime in the 12 months prior to the same survey (ABS 2003a). This figure increased slightly from 4.8% in 1998. Assault was the most commonly reported personal crime, with 4.7% of people reporting being victims of at least one assault in 2002. Some 0.6% of people reported being victims of at least one robbery, and 0.2% of people aged 18 years and over reported experiencing at least one sexual assault.

Data on crime victimisation collected in the 2002 ABS General Social Survey showed that 9.0% of people aged 18 years and over reported being victims of physical or threatened violence in the 12 months prior to the survey (ABS 2003b). Men were more likely (10.9%) than women (7.2%) to experience physical or threatened violence, with men aged 18–24 years the most likely (21.1%) to have been victims.

Almost one-quarter (24%) of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and older in 2002 reported that they had been a victim of physical or threatened violence in the 12 months prior to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (ABS 2004g). This rate was nearly twice the rate reported in 1994 (13%). After adjusting for age differences between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Indigenous persons aged 18 years or over experienced more than double the victimisation rate of non-Indigenous persons (20% compared to 9%).

National data relating to victims of a selected range of crimes that were recorded by police in 2003 are presented in Table 2.13. It is important to keep in mind that not all crimes are reported to the police, nor are all incidents reported to police recorded as crimes and, to the extent that this is so, police data underestimate the complete picture of crime in Australia.

Table 2.13: Victims of crime,^{(a)(b)} by sex, age, and offence category, 2003 (rate per 100,000 persons in age group)

Age	Murder		Driving causing death		Assault		Sexual assault		Robbery	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
0–9	0.7	1.0	n.p.	n.p.	162.0	104.7	89.9	195.8	4.5	1.7
10–14	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	760.1	510.7	87.9	474.7	114.1	18.3
15–19	2.4	n.p.	3.3	1.9	1,825.6	1,425.6	64.9	519.6	467.9	111.3
20–24	2.1	2.1	1.6	n.p.	1,852.8	1,415.5	24.7	213.6	310.9	117.0
25–34	3.6	1.2	1.6	0.8	1,594.5	1,159.4	18.6	122.7	144.7	71.9
35–44	2.8	1.1	1.2	n.p.	1,026.5	794.4	13.3	73.9	77.0	44.6
45–54	1.8	n.p.	1.0	n.p.	644.1	413.1	7.8	30.9	61.2	45.4
55–64	1.9	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	357.9	183.8	2.2	10.8	38.4	35.5
65 and over	0.9	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	126.2	60.4	n.p.	5.2	18.2	29.3
Total^(c)	2.0	0.9	1.1	0.6	918.8	663.9	33.0	148.8	115.8	49.8
Persons										
All ages ^(c)	1.5		1.2		798.0		91.7		84.2	
Total number ^(c)	302		245		158,629		18,237		16,736	

(a) Refers to individual person victims only and therefore does not include organisations as victims.

(b) The offence of manslaughter is not included due to small numbers.

(c) Includes victims for whom age and/or sex was not specified.

Source: ABS 2004h.

Based on police records, assault was the crime affecting most individuals in 2003—158,629 people, or a rate of 798 victims per 100,000 persons. This is a 2% decrease from

2002, and is the first decrease for this offence since 1995 (ABS 2004h). Persons aged between 15 and 34 years were most affected by assault. Overall, the male victim rate for assault (919 per 100,000) exceeded the female rate (664 per 100,000), and did so in every age group. Male rates also exceeded female rates for murder, driving causing death, and robbery. Females, however, experienced more sexual assault—149 per 100,000 were victims compared with 33 males per 100,000. As with crime generally, it was the younger age groups that were most affected by sexual assault, with the highest rate among males occurring in the 0–9 age group (90 per 100,000) and among females in the 15–19 age group (520 per 100,000).

Injury

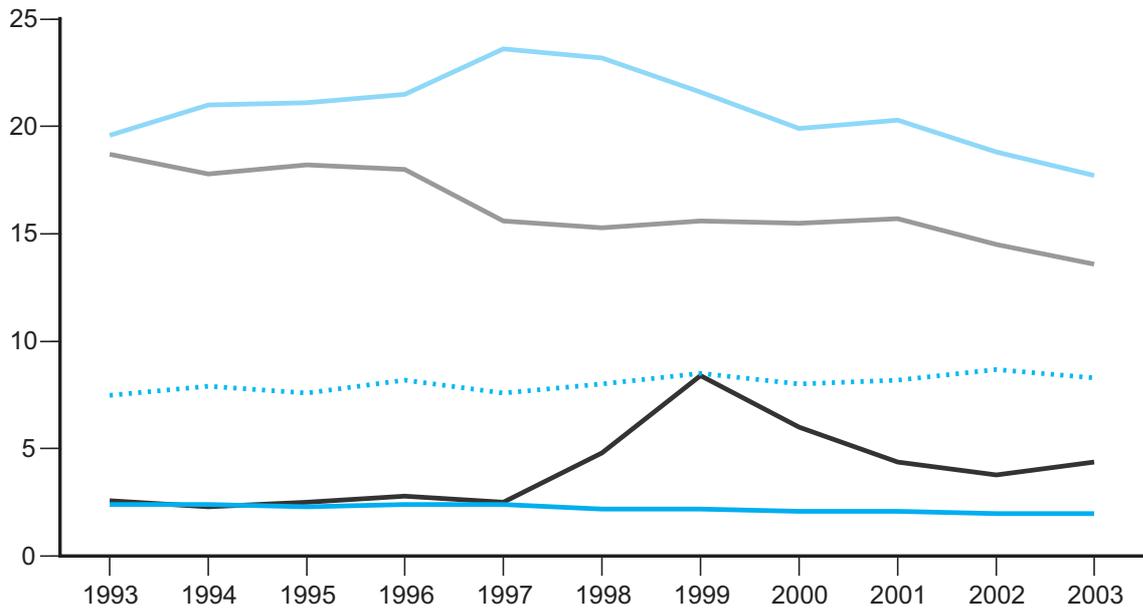
Injury (including poisoning) is the principal cause of death among people aged 1–44 years, and a leading cause of mortality, morbidity and permanent disability in Australia (AIHW 2004a). Injuries may cause a range of physical, cognitive and psychological disabilities that seriously affect the quality of life of injured people and their families. Furthermore, there are significant health costs attributable to injury—an estimated \$4 billion in 2000–01, or 8% of total allocated health expenditure (AIHW 2005b).

In 2003, there were 7,749 deaths (5,273 males and 2,476 females) in Australia attributed to injuries and poisoning, a rate of 39.0 per 100,000 population (see Table A2.3). Suicide was the leading cause of injury death, accounting for 2,214 of all such deaths (11.1 per 100,000), followed by transport-related injuries (1,811 deaths, 9.1 per 100,000) and falls (1,447 deaths, 7.3 per 100,000). The male suicide rate was considerably higher than that for females from age 15+ years, and the overall male adjusted rate of 17.6 per 100,000 was approximately 3.7 times the female rate of 4.8 per 100,000. The main cause of death for which the number of females exceeded the number of males was falls (776 deaths or 7.8 per 100,000, compared with 671 deaths or 6.8 per 100,000); this reflects the predominance of women in the age group at most risk of this cause, that is, older women (AIHW: Pointer et al. 2003).

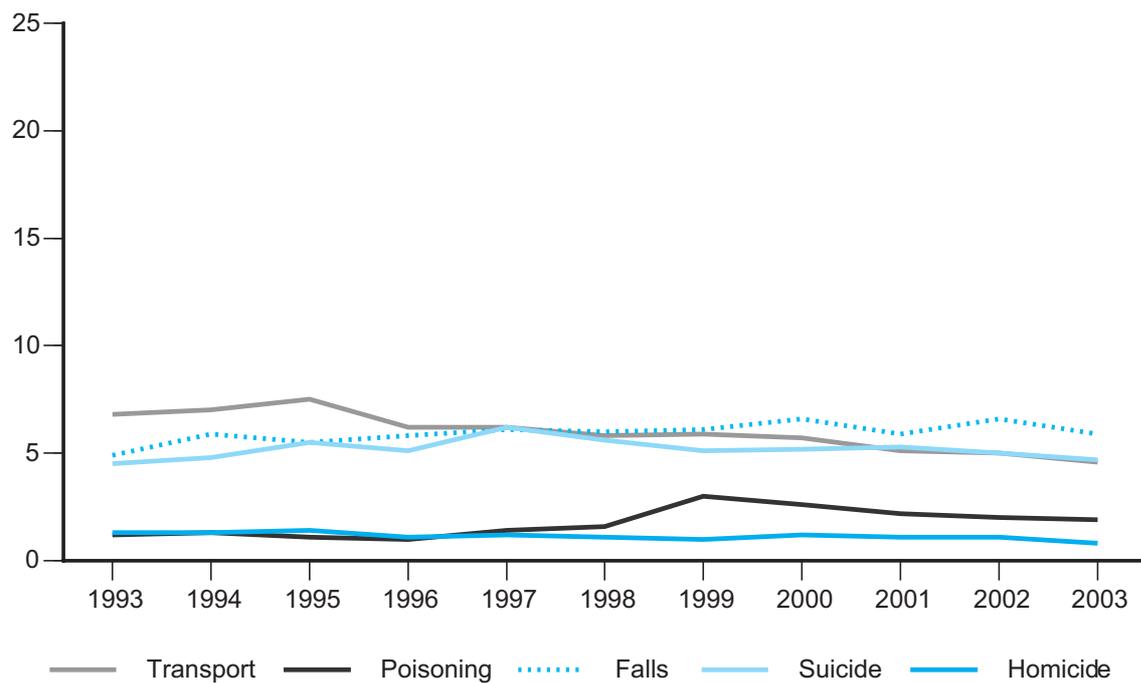
Rates of injury mortality are substantially higher among Indigenous Australians than non-Indigenous Australians (AIHW 2004a). Injury and poisoning accounted for 8.0% of all Indigenous deaths registered in South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory in 2002. Suicide was the leading cause of injury deaths (34%), followed by deaths related to transport accidents (27%).

Injury death rates have been subject to considerable change over recent years (Figure 2.3). The continual steady decline in transport-related deaths (from 12.6 deaths per 100,000 in 1993 to 9.1 per 100,000 in 2003) is perhaps the most noticeable feature of these trends. Suicide has continued to exceed transport-related deaths as the most common type of injury death among males since the early 1990s, although the rate has steadily declined since its peak in 1997 from 23.6 deaths per 100,000 to 17.7 per 100,000 in 2003. Female death rates for suicide and transport-related accidents converged in 1997 when suicide rates peaked, and both have steadily declined since. Falls have become the most common type of injury death for females since 1997, with no obvious declining trend. Death rates from poisoning appear to have risen in both males and females over the last decade, but the changes between 1998 and 1999 should be interpreted with caution due to changes in the coding systems (see footnotes to Table A2.4).

Males per 100,000 population



Females per 100,000 population



Source: Table A2.3

Figure 2.3: Injury and poisoning deaths, by sex and type of injury, 1993–2003

2.3 Autonomy and participation

Autonomy is a vital ingredient of welfare, and an objective for human development and social policy. Personal autonomy, or the ‘opportunity to make and implement choices in life and to develop the capacities to do so’ (AIHW 2003a:30), is promoted by and reflected in active participation in the economy and society, and the self-sufficiency to undertake activities of daily living (OECD 1999).

Employment, appropriate working conditions, a good education and a reliable income facilitate autonomy and an ability to participate more widely in society. Autonomy and participation also rely on having the means, either private or public, to move around the community and the ability to communicate within it, captured in the indicator topics of transport and communication. Finally, respite from the more structured demands of life, such as engaging in recreational activities and leisure, creates a more balanced lifestyle, and improves health and wellbeing.

Education and knowledge

Education and knowledge are important means by which individuals can enhance their autonomy. The acquisition of knowledge and skills attained through education allows people to realise their full potential and makes for a more competent and knowledgeable society. Education involves, and may also enhance, other participation in society, including employment, social and cultural life, and in civic and democratic engagements. While education tends to be particularly important during the earlier stages of life, it is increasingly recognised as a lifelong process.

This section focuses on indicators of education: levels of participation in education, educational attainment, and literacy among schoolchildren and adults.

Participation in education

Two commonly used indicators of educational participation are participation rates and apparent retention rates. School education in Australia is compulsory until 15 years of age (16 years in Tasmania and South Australia), thus participation rates in education are essentially 100% up until these ages.

Participation rates

Of the approximately 13.2 million Australians aged 15–64 years in May 2004, 18% were enrolled in a course of study (ABS 2004i).⁴ Of these people, approximately 38% were attending a higher education institution, 29% were at school, 22% were at Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions, and 11% were at other educational institutions (for institution definitions, see ABS 2002c). People enrolled in a course of study were most likely to be aged 15–19 years (43%), due to completion of secondary schooling and strong retention to Year 12. (See Table 3.25 in Chapter 3 for participation rates for young people aged 15–19 years between 1994 and 2004.)

4. Rates presented here are for the total population from the annual Survey of Education and Work. There have been no new published data on these rates in population subgroups as presented in *Australia's Welfare 2003* (see Table A2.2).

In line with the emphasis on lifelong learning, the scope of the ABS Survey of Education and Work will increase from 15–64 years to 15–74 years from 2006. Data from the previous Census showed that some 8,400 persons aged 65 years and over (0.4% of this age group) attended TAFE, university or other tertiary institutions in 2001 (ABS 2003c).

Education is considered to be a key factor in improving the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians (ABS & AIHW 2005). In 2001, the Indigenous population was found to have lower participation rates in education than the total Australian population between the ages of 15 and 34 years—52% compared with 76% (ABS 2002c). However, the overall participation rate for Indigenous people aged 15–64 was similar to that of the population as a whole (21% and 20% respectively); this is related to the younger age profile of the Indigenous population compared with the population as a whole, and the higher participation rates in education among younger age groups in the total population (ABS 2002c).

Apparent retention rates at school

Completion of secondary school is important in equipping young people with knowledge and skills and providing increased opportunities to pursue further education or gain employment. The apparent retention rate provides an approximate measure of the proportion of students who remain at school until the final year of secondary education. Retention rates are termed ‘apparent’ because no adjustments are made for movements of students in and out of Australia, students repeating a year of education, or students moving between jurisdictions.

National retention rates increased rapidly during the 1980s, and more gradually from the mid-1990s (see Figure 3.10 in Chapter 3 for trends in retention rates). In 2004, 76% of Australians who had entered Year 7/8 stayed at school until Year 12 (Table 2.14). The retention rate for females (81%) was noticeably higher than the rate for males (70%). Some part of this difference is accounted for by higher male participation in post-school vocational education and training such as apprenticeships and traineeships (Ball & Lamb 2001). Retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (40%) were just over half that for all Australians in 2004 (ABS 2005d).

Table 2.14: Year 12 apparent retention rates, by sex and Indigenous status, 2004 (per cent)

	Males	Females	Indigenous	All Australians
Retention to Year 12 as % of cohort entering Year 7/8 ^(a)	70.4	81.2	39.5	75.7

(a) The apparent retention rate to Year 12 is the percentage of students who remain in secondary education from the start of secondary schooling to Year 12. To calculate the apparent retention rate in Year 12 in 2004, the total number of full-time students enrolled in Year 12 in 2004 is divided by the number of full-time students who were in the base year—Year 7 in NSW, Vic, Tas and the ACT in 1999 and Year 8 in Qld, SA, WA and the NT in 2000.

Source: ABS 2005d.

Educational attainment

Levels of educational attainment in the population provide an indication of Australia’s stock of knowledge and skills derived from formal education (ABS 2002c). The indicator used in this section focuses on the highest level of formal education completed by an individual (for information on how this measure is derived, see ABS 2004i:34–5).

In 2004, 22% of Australians aged 25–64 years reported their level of highest educational attainment as being a bachelor degree or above, 27% a certificate or diploma, 16% Year 12 and 28% Year 10 or below (Table 2.15). These percentages were seen to differ by age group – with each older age group, the proportion of people with Year 10 or below as their highest educational attainment increased, whereas a higher proportion of those aged 25–34 years held a bachelor’s degree or higher compared with those aged 55–64 years (27% and 15% respectively). This indicates that levels of educational attainment in Australia have been increasing over time.

Table 2.15: Level of highest educational attainment, by age, 2004 (per cent)^(a)

Age group	Bachelor degree or above ^(b)	Certificate or diploma ^(c)	Year 12	Year 11	Year 10 or below
25–34	27.0	27.7	22.6	6.5	15.5
35–44	22.0	28.0	15.0	8.0	25.8
45–54	22.6	27.8	13.4	6.0	30.3
55–64	15.2	25.7	9.6	4.5	43.3
Total	21.9	27.4	15.5	6.4	27.6

(a) Percentage of the population within each age group.

(b) Includes Bachelor degree, Graduate diploma or Graduate certificate, and Postgraduate degree.

(c) Includes Certificate I, II, III or IV, Certificate not further defined, Diploma and Advanced diploma.

Source: ABS 2004i.

Literacy among schoolchildren

Reading, writing and numeracy are essential skills needed for functioning in everyday life, for further educational opportunities and for employment prospects. As part of monitoring national goals for schooling in Australia, performance against national benchmarks for reading, writing and numeracy are assessed for Year 3, 5 and 7 students (DEST 2002; MCEETYA 2002). These national benchmarks represent the minimum level of competence deemed necessary to allow meaningful participation in school learning.

Over the period 1999–2002, the majority of Year 3 and 5 students who participated in the testing achieved these benchmarks (Table 2.16). The results remained fairly stable over this 4-year period, with the only significant change being an increase in the proportion of Year 5 students meeting the reading benchmark (MCEETYA 2002). While it can be seen that the majority of Year 7 students also achieved the benchmark levels for the three subject areas in 2001 and 2002, the numeracy benchmark was not achieved by approximately one in six Year 7 students in the two reported years.

The proportion of female students in Years 3, 5 and 7 achieving the reading and writing benchmarks was higher than the proportion of male students for all reported years between 1999 and 2002; however, there was no apparent sex difference in the achievement of numeracy benchmarks (see Chapter 3 for further discussion).

Compared with Australian students as a whole, levels of achieving the reading, writing and numeracy benchmarks were slightly lower for students with language backgrounds other than English, and substantially lower for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Table 2.16: Year 3, 5 and 7 students achieving national educational benchmarks, by sex and Indigenous status, 1999–2002 (per cent)^(a)

	National reading benchmark				National writing benchmark				National numeracy benchmark			
	1999	2000	2001	2002	1999	2000	2001	2002	1999	2000	2001	2002
Year 3												
Males	87.9	90.9	88.4	90.6	90.0	87.4	86.4	91.8	n.a.	92.7	93.7	92.5
Females	92.0	94.3	92.3	94.1	93.9	92.6	92.7	95.5	n.a.	92.8	94.3	93.1
<i>All students</i>	<i>89.7</i>	<i>92.5</i>	<i>90.3</i>	<i>92.3</i>	<i>91.9</i>	<i>90.0</i>	<i>89.5</i>	<i>93.6</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>92.7</i>	<i>93.9</i>	<i>92.8</i>
Indigenous ^(b)	73.4	76.9	72.0	76.7	66.9	65.0	67.8	77.1	n.a.	73.7	80.2	77.6
LBOTE ^(b)	89.3	90.8	88.6	90.2	89.8	88.0	88.5	95.0	n.a.	90.3	92.5	91.3
Year 5												
Males	83.4	85.2	87.8	87.2	91.4	90.2	91.9	91.5	n.a.	89.4	89.5	89.9
Females	88.4	89.6	92.0	91.5	95.4	94.9	96.2	95.7	n.a.	89.8	89.8	90.2
<i>All students</i>	<i>85.6</i>	<i>87.4</i>	<i>89.8</i>	<i>89.3</i>	<i>93.0</i>	<i>92.5</i>	<i>94.0</i>	<i>93.6</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>89.6</i>	<i>89.6</i>	<i>90.0</i>
Indigenous ^(b)	58.7	62.0	66.9	68.0	74.6	74.3	79.9	76.4	n.a.	62.8	63.2	65.6
LBOTE ^(b)	83.9	84.9	87.7	87.1	91.4	90.2	92.2	92.1	n.a.	87.1	87.9	87.9
Year 7												
Males	n.a.	n.a.	86.0	86.8	n.a.	n.a.	89.8	87.3	n.a.	n.a.	81.7	83.3
Females	n.a.	n.a.	91.0	91.6	n.a.	n.a.	95.6	94.1	n.a.	n.a.	81.9	83.8
<i>All students</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>88.4</i>	<i>89.1</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>92.6</i>	<i>90.7</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>82.0</i>	<i>83.5</i>
Indigenous ^(b)	n.a.	n.a.	60.1	65.3	n.a.	n.a.	74.3	71.6	n.a.	n.a.	48.6	51.9
LBOTE ^(b)	n.a.	n.a.	84.8	85.6	n.a.	n.a.	90.4	89.0	n.a.	n.a.	77.8	79.2

(a) The data represent students who have achieved the benchmark as a percentage of the students participating in the state and territory testing, including students who were formally exempted (these students are reported as below the benchmark). Students who were absent or withdrawn by parents/caregivers from the testing, and students attending a school not participating in the testing, are not included in the data.

(b) Methods used to identify Indigenous and students with a language background other than English (LBOTE) varied between jurisdictions. There is likely to be some overlap between these two groups.

Notes

1. Numeracy benchmark results were not reported in 1999.
2. Reading, writing and numeracy benchmark results for Year 7 students have only been published for 2001 and 2002.

Sources: MCEETYA 2001, 2002.

Population literacy

Prose literacy refers to the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from various texts, including newspapers, brochures and instruction manuals, in daily activities at home, at work and in the community (OECD 2000). The Survey of Aspects of Literacy conducted by the ABS in 1996 is the latest source of such information relating to Australian adults.⁵ Prose literacy was measured using a five-point

5. The Australian Literacy and Lifeskills Survey will be conducted in 2006 and will update data from the 1996 Survey of Aspects of Literacy.

scale, in which Level 3 or above was deemed to be the level at which people could cope with many printed materials found in daily life (ABS 2002c).

In 1996, 53% of the population aged 15–74 years were at Level 3 or above for prose literacy. Younger people tended to have higher levels of literacy than older people. Rates were highest in the 20–24 year age group (64%) and lowest among people aged over 55 years (35% for those aged 55–64 and 24% for those aged 65–74). A greater proportion of females than males had prose literacy of Level 3 or above for most age groups. However, this situation was reversed for people aged over 55.

Greater proportions of Indigenous Australians had low literacy skills compared with the general population in 1996 – 41% at Level 1 compared with 20% (ABS 1997b). People for whom English was not their first language were also more likely to have lower prose literacy levels (48% at Level 1).

Economic resources and security

Income-based indicators are commonly used to measure and describe economic wellbeing. However, the income a household receives at any point in time may not give a full picture of economic wellbeing. For some households, income fluctuates markedly over time, so current income may not be a reliable indicator. Some households have greater financial commitments than others and need more income to achieve a given standard of material wellbeing, and some households have more assets than others, which may provide a buffer during periods of lower income. In this section, indicators of financial stress and household wealth are reported along with data on income distribution and income disadvantage, to give a more complete picture of economic wellbeing.

Income and income distribution

Equivalised disposable household income is used here as a basis for the indicators of income level, distribution, and disadvantage. Disposable income is gross income less direct tax and Medicare levy. This measure is adjusted for differences in household composition and size using an equivalence scale, to better reflect the level of economic wellbeing of each member of the household.⁶

In 2002–03, median equivalised weekly disposable household income was \$448 per week (Table 2.17). Median income in the highest income quintile (\$870) was nearly double this figure, and that of households in the lowest quintile (\$218) was less than half the overall median. In real terms, median income increased by 14% between 1994–95 and 2002–03.

6. Equivalence scales are sets of ratios that show the relative income levels required for households of different size and composition to maintain a similar standard of living. Income data in this section have been standardised to the income requirements of a single person household, using the 'modified OECD' equivalence scale (see ABS 2004b: Appendix 3).

Mean equivalised weekly disposable income across all households (\$510) was higher than median income, reflecting the effect on this measure of the very high incomes of a small proportion of households at the top of the income distribution.

Table 2.17: Weekly household equivalent disposable income, by quintile, 2002–03 (dollars)

	Weekly household equivalent disposable income quintile ^{(a)(b)}					All households
	Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest	
Median income (\$)	218	325	448	602	870	448
Mean income (\$)	195	325	449	603	975	510

(a) The modified OECD equivalence scale has been used to facilitate comparisons of income levels across different household types. Data have been standardised to the income requirements of a single-person household.

(b) Quintiles have been calculated by ranking persons on the basis of weekly household equivalent disposable income and allocating an equal number of persons to each quintile.

Source: ABS 2004b.

Income is distributed asymmetrically in Australia, as in most countries, with a relatively small number of people in very high-income households and a large number of people in low-income households. The concept of income inequality is difficult to capture in a single indicator, as unequal distributions of income can occur in many different ways. However, looking at trends in a range of different measures, the ABS has concluded that income inequality appears to have risen over the period 1994–95 to 2002–03⁷ (ABS 2004b). The share of total income received by people living in low-income households decreased, while the share received by people in high-income households increased (although only the former change is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level) (Table 2.18).

Table 2.18: Share of total income received by persons in low-income^(a) and high-income^(b) households, 1994–95 to 2002–03 (per cent)

	1994–95	1995–96	1996–97	1997–98	1999–2000	2000–01	2002–03
Low income ^(a)	10.8	11.0	11.0	10.8	10.5	10.5	10.6
High income ^(b)	37.8	37.3	37.1	37.9	38.4	38.5	38.3

(a) Persons in the second and third lowest income deciles.

(b) Persons in the highest income quintile.

Note: Data are not available for the years 1998–99 and 2001–02.

Source: ABS 2004b.

7. While most of the indicators considered by the ABS suggested growing inequality over the period, only two showed a trend that was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Measures of disposable income do not take account of indirect taxes paid, government services received, or non-market activities (e.g. unpaid household work) that contribute to material living standards. The tax and transfer system in Australia redistributes income between households. Analysis focusing on the effects of major Australian Government direct and indirect taxes, cash transfers and non-cash benefits (e.g. government-provided health services) found that, in 2001–02, there was a net transfer from the most affluent 40% of Australians to the less affluent 60% (Harding et al. 2004). Aged and sole-parent households benefited most from this redistribution, while couples without children and single people on average paid more in taxes than they received in benefits. There was a general pattern of redistribution between households at different stages of the life-cycle, from younger households without children to older, retired households (Lloyd et al. 2005).

Using the Gini coefficient as a measure of the inequality of distribution of equivalised disposable household income,⁸ Australia was close to the average for OECD countries around the year 2000 (Förster & d’Ercole 2005). Denmark had the least income inequality of all OECD countries, followed by Sweden and the Netherlands.

Income disadvantage

The indicator presented here focuses on households which have very low income relative to that of all households and which may, as a consequence, experience relatively low material living standards. A measure that has commonly been used in Australia and internationally is the proportion of households with equivalised disposable income below 50% of the median for all households (OECD 2005b). However, as 50% of median income is close to the value of some government benefits (e.g. the Age Pension), this measure may be sensitive to small changes in income support payments. Therefore, a suite of three measures is presented here—the proportion of households with income below 40%, 50% and 60% of median income—to give a more meaningful picture of income disadvantage.

In 2002–03, nearly 2.2 million Australians, including almost 501,600 children aged under 15, lived in households with an equivalised weekly disposable income below 50% of the median (Table 2.19).⁹ Using this measure, 14% of households, 13% of children, and 11% of persons, were living in income disadvantage. Almost 4 million Australians (20%) lived in households with income that fell below the 60% median income threshold, and 989,000 (5%) lived in households with income below the 40% threshold.

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8. The Gini coefficient is a single statistic that lies between 0 and 1 and summarises the degree of inequality, with values closer to 0 representing a lesser degree of inequality, and values closer to 1 representing greater inequality.
 9. It should be noted that income data for households that report very low or negative current income may not accurately reflect the living standards of those households. Low or negative current income may be due to losses incurred in an unincorporated business or negative returns from investments. Many such households have higher expenditure levels than would be suggested by their low reported income, perhaps because they are able to draw on accumulated wealth or because their low income is temporary (ABS 2004b).

Table 2.19: Income disadvantage: households with weekly equivalised disposable income below 40%, 50% and 60% of the median for all households, and people and children living in those households, 2002–03

	Households	Children aged <15 living in low-income households	All persons living in low-income households
Below 40% median weekly equivalent disposable income			
Number ('000)	464.2	238.9	988.6
Per cent	6.1	6.1	5.1
Below 50% median weekly equivalent disposable income			
Number ('000)	1,101.5	501.6	2,178.5
Per cent	14.4	12.9	11.3
Below 60% median weekly equivalent disposable income			
Number ('000)	1,871.8	862.3	3,912.4
Per cent	24.5	22.1	20.3

Source: 2002–03 ABS Survey of Income and Housing Costs (unpublished data).

Trend data for the period 1995–96 to 2002–03 (Table 2.20) suggest that there were increases in the percentages of Australians living in households with incomes falling below each of these three thresholds between the first part of the period (1995–96 to 1997–98) and the second part (1999–2000 to 2002–03). Only the change in the below 50% indicator is significant at the 95% confidence level, although this could reflect small changes in welfare payments that are set at close to 50% of median household income.

Table 2.20: Trends in income disadvantage: Australians living in households with weekly equivalised disposable income below 40%, 50% and 60% of the median for all households, 1995–96 to 2002–03

	1995–96	1996–97	1997–98	1999–2000	2000–01	2002–03
Number of Australians ('000) living in households with equivalent weekly disposable income						
Below 40% of median	856.2	763.1	856.9	973.2	989.7	988.6
Below 50% of median	1,580.2	1,408.3	1,549.4	1,970.7	2,062.1	2,178.5
Below 60% of median	3,334.4	3,388.4	3,427.6	3,858.0	3,883.4	3,912.4
Percentage of Australians living in households with equivalent weekly disposable income						
Below 40% of median	4.8	4.2	4.7	5.2	5.2	5.1
Below 50% of median	8.8	7.8	8.5	10.6	10.9	11.3
Below 60% of median	18.7	18.7	18.8	20.7	20.6	20.3
Median income (in 2002–03 dollars)	388	402	409	429	438	448

Sources: ABS Surveys of Income and Housing Costs, 1995–96, 1996–97, 1997–98, 1999–2000, 2000–01, and 2002–03 (unpublished data).

As well as looking at the number of households that fall below a particular threshold, it is also important to know how far below that threshold they fall. This measure is sometimes referred to as the 'poverty gap'. A comparison of data for OECD countries showed that poverty gaps decreased in the second half of the 1990s in about half of the countries, including in Australia (Förster & d'Ercole 2005).

Financial stress and hardship

In the 2002 ABS General Social Survey, households were asked to report whether they had experienced certain 'cash flow problems' within the past 12 months. These included problems such as being unable to pay certain bills on time, having pawned or sold something because cash was needed, and going without meals.

While experiencing any one of these problems may not necessarily indicate financial stress, a combination of them is more likely to. Overall, 7% of households reported 3 or more cash flow problems in the last 12 months (Table 2.21). Using this indicator, one-parent households were the most likely to experience financial stress (23% did so).

Table 2.21: Proportion of households reporting 3 or more cash flow problems in last 12 months, and proportion of total population, 2002

Household type	3 or more cash flow problems	Proportion of total population
One-parent, one-family household with dependent children	22.9	8.5
Couple-only household (under 65)	3.3	12.8
Couple-only household (65 or over)	**0.1	6.0
Couple with dependent children	6.6	44.4
Lone person aged under 35	14.7	1.8
Lone person aged 35–64	7.9	4.1
Lone person aged 65 or over	*0.8	3.7
All households	7.2	100.0

Source: ABS 2004a.

Wealth and wealth distribution

Wealth is a source of economic security. Accumulated assets can buffer material living standards during periods of low income and can boost capacity to borrow money.

Analyses of the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey showed that in 2002 the average household had a net worth (i.e. assets minus debts) of \$404,300, while the median household had a net worth of \$218,300 (Table 2.22). This large difference between mean and median household net worth reflects the asymmetry of wealth distribution. In 2002, the least wealthy 50% of households owned less than 10% of total household wealth, while the most wealthy 10% owned 45% of total household wealth (Headey et al. 2004).

Wealth varies with life-cycle stage. Median household net worth was \$8,000 for households in which the reference person was aged 15–24 years, and \$309,000 for households in which the reference person was aged 65–74 years (see Headey et al. 2004 for criteria used to identify a reference person for each household). The distribution of household income shows the opposite pattern—in 2002–03, mean equivalised disposable household income was highest for younger couples without children, and lowest for lone persons aged 65 and over (ABS 2004b:7).

Table 2.22: Assets, debts and net worth per household, 2002 (\$'000)

	Mean	Median ^(a)
Total assets	472.8	270.5
Total debts	68.5	53.2
Net worth	404.3	218.3

(a) The reported medians are for the median household in the 50th and 51st percentiles of net worth, and not the median over the entire distribution.

Source: Headey et al. 2004: Table 3.

According to the HILDA data, housing and other property constituted 54% of household assets overall, and almost 75% of the assets of the median household. Superannuation was the second most significant asset category, accounting for 16% of household assets overall (Headey et al. 2004).

Employment and labour force participation

Income gained through employment provides the main financial means by which people obtain the goods and services they do not produce themselves. Paid work is therefore a major source of material wellbeing, the means by which people not only obtain the basic necessities to sustain life but also finance many social and recreational activities. Furthermore, satisfying and rewarding employment can contribute to personal development, a sense of identity and positive social interactions. The type and amount of work, as well as job security and working conditions, underpin the success of employment in providing these various sources of individual wellbeing.

Employment is also intricately linked to other aspects of a person's life that may affect wellbeing—notably housing, education and health. Furthermore, participation in employment is recognised as a key source of adult participation in society. Employment is, in these ways, an integral part of the 'autonomy and participation' component of welfare.

Trends in employment during the 1990s need to be interpreted in the context that this was a period of sustained economic growth in Australia.

Labour force participation and employment

In 2004, the labour force participation rate was 63.5% for the population aged 15 years or more—71.6% for men and 55.6% for women (Table 2.23). The overall participation rate was fairly steady over the decade, rising only slightly from 62.7% in 1994 (ABS 2005b:108). There was a slight fall in participation rates for men (from 73.6% in 1994 to 71.6% in 2004) and a slight rise for women (from 52.2% to 55.6%). This narrowed the gap between male and female participation rates from 21 percentage points in 1994 to 16 percentage points in 2004 (ABS 2005b). These differences between male and female participation rates should be kept in mind when considering differences in levels of employment and unemployment.

In 2004, an average of 5.8% of the labour force was unemployed—5.6% for males and 6.0% for females (Table 2.23). The overall unemployment rate fell over the decade, from 10.2% in 1994 (ABS 2005b:108). The long-term unemployment rate was 1.2% of the

labour force in 2004, a decrease from 3.5% in 1994. The extended labour force underutilisation rate is a broader measure, developed to take into account unemployment, underemployment and also some groups who are not in the labour force but would like to work (see footnote to Table 2.23). This rate was 12.2% in 2004.

Employment basis and conditions

In 2004, 28.4% of all people employed were part-time workers—14.7% of employed males and 45.6% of employed females (Table 2.23). These proportions have risen since 1994 for both males and females, when they were 10.5% and 42.2% respectively (ABS 2005b:108).

The proportion of workers without leave entitlements rose over the decade, from 23.7% in 1994 to 27.7% in 2004 (ABS 2005b). This change was due largely to the marked increase in the proportion of males without leave entitlements, as the proportion for females remained relatively stable. In 2004, 24.7% of males and 31.2% of females employed full-time had no leave entitlements; in 1994, these figures were 18.1% and 30.8% respectively.

Average weekly hours worked by full-time workers were 40.4 hours per week in 2004, with no noticeable trend since 1994 when the average was 40.7 hours (ABS 2005b). Of those persons employed full-time, 23.4% worked 50 or more hours per week in 2004. Again there was no obvious trend over the decade since 1994 when the figure was 23.7%.

Employment and labour force differentials

Employment and labour force participation vary considerably between age groups. The ages that might be termed 'middle working ages', from 25 to 54 years, share a similar labour force pattern characterised by high rates of participation (over 90% in 2004) and unemployment rates below the national average of 5.8 in 2004 (ABS 2004j). After the age of 55 years, labour force participation rates are found to decrease for each older age group (53.8% for people aged 60–64 years, and 10.9% for people aged 65 years and over, in October 2004), while unemployment rates remain relatively low.

The age group 15–19 years is characterised by relatively low labour force participation rates and relatively high unemployment rates—the unemployment rates for this age group include people attending school or a tertiary institution who are actively looking for work. (See Figure 3.19 in Chapter 3 for employment pattern trends for people aged 15–19 years.) The age group 20–24 years shares some similar characteristics, although its pattern is closer than the younger group's to the 'middle working age' pattern. The employment patterns of young people aged 15–24 years have changed in recent decades, with increases in educational participation and the growing tendency to combine part-time work with full-time study.

People with disabilities have a lower labour force participation rate than the general population (see Chapter 5 for further information). Their participation rate in 2003 was 53% compared with a rate of 81% for people without a disability. Participation rates for people with profound or severe core activity limitations were even lower—15.2% and 36.0% respectively (see Table 5.28, Chapter 5).

Table 2.23: Employment indicators, 2004

	Total (’000)	Total (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)
Employment and labour force participation				
Labour force (LF) size and participation rate	10,146	63.5	71.6	55.6
Employed (number and % of total population)	9,560	47.5	n.a.	n.a.
Unemployed (number and % of LF)	586	5.8	5.6	6.0
Long-term unemployed (% of LF)	n.a.	1.2	n.a.	n.a.
Extended labour force underutilisation rate	n.a.	12.2	n.a.	n.a.
Employment basis and conditions				
Part-time workers (% of total employed)	n.a.	28.4	14.7	45.6
Employees without leave entitlements (% of all employees)	n.a.	27.7	24.7	31.2
Average hours worked (full-time workers)	40.4 ^(a)
Full-time workers working 50+ hours per week (% of full-time employees)	n.a.	23.4	n.a.	n.a.

(a) Number is not presented in 1,000s.

Notes

1. Reference periods are annual averages for the year ending 30 June, except for: employees without leave entitlements (August), labour force underutilisation (September).
2. Definitions in brief:
 - Employed person: person aged 15 years or more who, during the reference week of the labour force survey, worked for one hour or more for pay, profit or commission.
 - Unemployed person: person aged 15 years or more who was not employed during the reference week but who had actively looked for work or was currently available for work.
 - The labour force comprises employed and unemployed persons.
 - Underemployed person: employed person working less than 35 hours per week who is willing and available to work more hours.
 - Extended labour force underutilisation rate: the number of people who are unemployed or underemployed, plus two groups of people who are marginally attached to the labour force (i.e. people actively looking for work, not available to start work in the reference week, but available to start within 4 weeks, and ‘discouraged jobseekers’ who could start within 4 weeks but were not actively seeking work because they believed they could not find a job for specified reasons), as a percentage of the labour force augmented by these two groups of people marginally attached to the labour force.

Source: ABS 2005b.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people generally experience higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of labour force participation than non-Indigenous Australians. In 2002, 46.2% of Indigenous people aged 15 years and older were employed, up from 36.3% in 1994 (ABS 2004g). The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme accounted for approximately one in four jobs held by Indigenous people in 2002.

After adjusting for the differing age structure of Indigenous and non-Indigenous population, 42.7% of Indigenous people aged 18 years and older were employed compared with 63.5% of other Australians in 2002 (Table 2.24). Indigenous people were also more than twice as likely to be unemployed as non-Indigenous people (9.4% compared with 3.7%), and were more likely to be not in the labour force (47.9% compared with 32.8%).

Table 2.24: Labour force status of persons aged 18 years and over, by Indigenous status, 2002^(a)

	Indigenous	Other Australians
Labour force status:		
Employed: full-time	23.6	45.2
Employed: part-time	19.0	18.3
Total employed	42.7	63.5
Unemployed	9.4	3.7
Not in the labour force	47.9	32.8

(a) Results have been adjusted to account for differences in the age structure between Indigenous and other Australian populations, and to allow comparisons between the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey and the 2002 General Social Survey.

Source: ABS 2004g:30.

Transport and communication

Access to means of transport and communication is important in enabling people to participate fully in community life. With ongoing advances in technology, communication can act as a substitute for transport in some aspects of life, enabling people to participate in social and cultural activities, work and education, to access services, and to be informed about and have a voice in political issues.

While trends in some of the indicators presented here paint a picture of increasing access to means of transport and communication, inaccessibility remains an issue for certain groups, particularly people with disabilities and people living in regional and remote areas.

Transport

Nationally in 2002, 85% of people aged 18 and over had access to a motor vehicle to drive (Table 2.25). Access peaked among people aged 35–54 years (over 90% in this age group), and dropped to just 54% among those aged 75 and over. For all ages, higher proportions of males than females had access to motor vehicles to drive, but the difference was much more marked in older age groups.

Table 2.25: Access to motor vehicles to drive, 2002 (per cent)

	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+	All persons
Male	79.4	89.6	93.5	95.4	95.5	85.5	75.3	89.7
Female	75.3	88.2	90.9	87.5	81.8	65.5	38.3	80.4
Persons	77.4	88.9	92.2	91.4	88.7	75.2	53.9	85.0

Source: ABS 2003b.

These patterns of access to motor vehicles closely mirror data on whether people could easily get to the places they needed to go (Table 2.26)—overall, 84% of people said they could do so, while 4% could not, or often had difficulty. Of people aged 75 and over, 11% said they could not get, or often had difficulty getting, to where they needed to go.

Table 2.26: Ease of getting to places needed, 2002 (per cent)

	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+	All persons
Can easily get to the places needed	74.4	85.3	88.1	87.6	89.3	82.5	73.2	84.3
Cannot get, or often has difficulty getting, to the places needed	3.7	3.1	2.7	3.2	3.4	5.2	10.5	3.8

Note: Not all categories are shown for this data item.

Source: ABS 2003b.

Private motor vehicles are the most widely used mode of transport in Australia, even in cities. In Sydney, 70% of weekday trips in 2002 were made in a private vehicle, and only 14% of households did not have a car (down from 18% in 1991) (TPDC 2004). Car usage grew between 1991 and 2001—on average over that period the number of car trips made on a typical weekday increased by 1.8% annually and vehicle kilometres travelled increased by 2.3% annually. Annual population growth was only 1.3% over the same period (TPDC 2005).

Public transport is of particular importance in cities and for people who may not be able to afford or drive a car. National data on public transport use and accessibility are very limited. In Sydney in 2002, trains and buses together accounted for 11% of weekday trips. Of people who travelled to work by car, 36% gave the unavailability or inaccessibility of public transport as a reason why they used a car (TPDC 2004).

Accessible public transport can also be an important facilitator of participation in economic, social and cultural life for people with disabilities. In 2003, 39% of people aged 5 years and over with a disability used public transport (ABS 2004k). Nearly a third (30%) said that they had difficulty using public transport and, of these people, 44% reported difficulty with getting into or out of vehicles or carriages due to steps. These figures are similar to those from the 1998 disability survey, which could suggest that the accessibility of public transport for people with disabilities did not improve markedly between 1998 and 2003.

Communication

Communication involves both transmitting and receiving information. Indicators of people's ability to communicate may include measures of the accessibility of the technological means of communication (e.g. telephones, Internet, and communication aids such as tele-typewriter phones) as well as measures of the freedom and quality of the press, and individual freedom to communicate and express views. The indicators presented here focus on access to telephones and the Internet, as these are two key means of communication on which data are readily available.

Telephone access

The number of fixed phone lines and mobile phones increased markedly over the period from 1993 to 2002, from 52 to 118 per 100 Australians (International Telecommunications Union 2003, cited in ABS 2004a). This rise was largely driven by an increase in numbers of mobile phones—by 2002, 72% of households had a mobile phone (ABS 2003d). This apparent increase in access was accompanied by a fall in the price of telecommunications over the period 1994–95 to 2002–03 (ABS 2004l).

The code division multiple access (CDMA) terrestrial mobile phone network is the larger of the two networks that operate in Australia, the smaller being the global system for mobile communications (GSM). In 2003–04, the CDMA network covered around 20% of Australia’s land area and over 98% of the population (ACA 2004). This is an increase from 13% of land area and 97% of the population in 2001–02 (ACA 2002). There is a government-funded satellite phone subsidy, to help improve phone access in areas not covered by the terrestrial mobile phone networks.

The use of payphones has been declining over recent years; the number of payphones Australia-wide dropped by 14% between 2000–01 and 2003–04 (ACA 2004). However, payphones remain an important means of communication, particularly for certain groups in the population, such as those who are financially disadvantaged, Indigenous communities and homeless people. In 2003–04 there were 3.2 payphones per 1,000 people in Australia, compared with 5.1 per 1,000 in the USA. The number of Telstra teletypewriter-equipped payphones, which are used by people with speech or hearing impairments, increased from 88 in 1998–99 to 204 in 2004.

Internet access

The Internet is an increasingly important means of social and business communication, of accessing information and services, and of participating in the cultural, recreational and political aspects of society. The Internet is most commonly accessed through a computer. In 2002, 61% of households had a computer and 46% of households had Internet access (Table 2.27). By 2003, 66% of households had a computer and 53% had Internet access (ABS 2005b). Household Internet access has been increasing steeply, up from just 16% in 1998 (ABS 2004a).

Table 2.27: Households with computers and with Internet access, by income quintile and geographic location, 2002

	Households with computers (%)	Households with Internet access (%)	All households ('000)
Equivalised gross household income quintile^(a)			
Lowest quintile	35.0	21.1	1,755
Second quintile	51.9	34.4	1,286
Third quintile	68.3	50.6	1,215
Fourth quintile	74.0	59.6	1,228
Highest quintile	80.5	69.2	1,462
Geographical area			
Major cities	64.0	49.9	5,048
Inner regional	57.9	41.0	1,515
Other areas ^(b)	48.3	32.6	933
All households	60.8	46.0	7,495

(a) Excludes households where household income was not known or was not adequately reported.

(b) Excludes sparsely settled areas.

Source: ABS 2003b.

Internet access varies with household income—in 2002 only 21% of households in the lowest income quintile had Internet access, compared with 69% of households in the highest quintile (Table 2.27). Access also varies with geographical area—50% of households in major cities had access, compared with 41% in inner regional areas and just 33% in other areas. Indigenous Australians, people with lower levels of educational qualifications and people who do not speak English very well or at all are other groups with much lower levels of Internet use than the general population (ABS: Lloyd & Bill 2004). Of the 4.1 million households without Internet access in 2002, 41% reported lack of interest in, or no use for the Internet as the main reason, while high costs was the main reason for 26% of households (ABS 2004a).

The proportion of people who had accessed the Internet at home in the past 12 months was highest in the 18–24 year age group, and declined steeply beyond age 44 (Table 2.28). In all age groups, a higher proportion of men than women had accessed the Internet from home. Of people aged 15 years and over with a disability in 2003, 61% reported that they had not used the Internet in the last 12 months (ABS 2004k).

Table 2.28: Proportion of people who accessed the Internet at home in last 12 months, 2002

	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+	Total
Males	60.2	54.8	57.2	47.9	35.9	18.9	7.5	46.5
Females	54.2	48.6	53.4	42.4	27.4	8.5	3.3	39.4
Persons	57.3	51.7	55.3	45.1	31.7	13.5	5.1	42.9

Source: ABS 2003b.

Recreation and leisure

Participation in recreational and leisure activities has important benefits for the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Australians. Recreation and leisure provide people with an opportunity to recover from work and the pressures of life, and offer important opportunities for personal development and physical activity, as well as social interaction and community engagement. So important is the human need for leisure, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that ‘Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay’ (UN 1948).

Participation is indicated by the time spent engaged in recreational and leisure activities. This approach enables the recognition of a balance in lifestyle, as time spent on recreation and leisure can be compared with time spent on other activities.

This section reports on how Australians spend their time, using data from the 1997 Time Use Survey (ABS 1998b). It is expected that this survey will be conducted again in 2006 (ABS 2001b). Time use is reported as an average across the whole population aged 15 years and over and across every day of the week. These estimated averages are based on household surveys and diary records kept by survey respondents (for further explanation on how this measure is derived, see ABS 1998b and AIHW: Bricknell et al. 2003). Because people can carry out more than one activity at a time, activities may be tabulated as ‘main activities’ (for which time used can be summed to a whole day) or else as ‘all activities’.

Overall pattern of time use

In 1997, Australians spent almost half (46%) of their time on personal care activities, largely because of the inclusion of 'sleep' in this category, in which people spent an average of 36% of their time (ABS 1998b). Recreation and leisure was the next main activity (19% of people's time each day), followed by employment (14%) and domestic activities (10%).

There were male–female differences apparent in this pattern of time use. On average, males spent more time on employment-related activities than females (18% of time compared with 9%), slightly more time on recreation and leisure (20% compared with 18%), and less time on domestic activities (7% compared with 13%).

Overall pattern of recreation and leisure activities

Almost half of a person's time spent on recreation and leisure activities involved audiovisual media (130 minutes per day of a total of 268 minutes on recreation and leisure), of which watching television and listening to the radio/CDs accounted for over 90% of this time. Talking was the second most common activity (35 minutes), followed by sports and outdoor activities (27 minutes), and reading (25 minutes) (Table 2.29). A number of differences were apparent between the sexes—females spent more time talking and males spent more time on sporting, outdoor, and audiovisual activities.

Recreation and employment

People who were employed full-time spent the least amount of time on recreation and leisure activities—an average of 30 minutes per day less than those who were employed part-time and 120 minutes less than those who were not employed (Table 2.30). Females spent less time on leisure and recreation than males, regardless of their employment status.

Table 2.29: Time spent on recreation and leisure as main activities, by sex, 1997

Main free-time activities ^(a)	Average daily time (minutes)		
	Males	Females	Persons
Sport and outdoor activity	33	20	27
Games/hobbies/arts/crafts	18	15	17
Reading	24	26	25
Audio/visual media	143	118	130
Attendance at recreational courses	1	1	1
Other free time	23	20	21
Talking (including phone)	27	44	35
Writing/reading own correspondence	1	2	1
Associated travel	11	7	9
Other	2	1	1
Total	283	254	268

(a) 'Free time' is a time use category comprising religious observance, socialising, and a range of activities commonly associated with recreation and leisure.

Source: ABS 1998b:18.

Table 2.30: Time spent on recreation and leisure as main activities, by employment status and sex, 1997

Employment status	Average daily time (minutes)		
	Males	Females	Persons
Employed full-time	225	198	217
Employed part-time	304	226	247
Not employed	392	303	337

Source: ABS 1998b:34.

2.4 Social cohesion

Social cohesion is defined here as ‘the connections and relations between societal units such as individuals, groups (and) associations’ (Berger-Schmitt 2000:2, following McCracken 1998); it is the ‘glue’ that holds communities together. Cohesiveness is created from connections based on a shared sense of belonging and attachment, similar values, trust and a sense of ‘social solidarity’.

Implicit within social cohesion is the concept of social capital. Both conceptual areas have been an increasing focus of government policy and study, and academic research, primarily to gauge elements essential for building and sustaining community strength. This is considered of particular value for disadvantaged areas, where there is emerging evidence that community cohesiveness generates resilience and protects against further disadvantage (see, for example, Vinson 2004). Nonetheless, strong social capital on its own is not always a positive outcome, as it may result in the exclusion or discrimination of ‘others’. For societies to be truly cohesive there must also be the purpose to reduce existing disparities and inequalities, and prevent the establishment of social exclusion (Berger-Schmitt 2000).

Family formation and functioning

The concepts of family and social capital are often interlinked in social theory and policy (e.g. Fukuyama 1999; Putnam 1995), with the prediction that factors shaping a cohesive society – trust, social support, and community and civic awareness – are often nurtured and developed within the family. With this comes the view that changes to the family are reflected in changes to the community, primarily that a high incidence of family breakdown produces less cohesive communities. Recent work by Hughes & Stone (2003) suggests some translation of family ‘capital’ to social ‘capital’; however, the effect is on the whole relatively small.

Family formation

Families are ‘embedded within society’ and hence responsive to both social and economic changes (De Vaus 2004). In the last three decades, families have undergone considerable transformation, in both their composition – increases in de facto relationships, and couple-only and single-parent families – and their pattern of formation and dissolution, with decreases in registered marriage rates and fertility rates, and an increase followed by a decrease in divorce rates (AIHW 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003a;

De Vaus 2004; and see Chapter 3, Section 3.3, for further data on family formation and dissolution). Indicators of family formation described here include social marital status, family type and age-specific divorce rates.

Social marital status

Social marital status indicates persons in registered marriages and persons in de facto marriages, and includes both opposite-sex and same-sex couples among de facto marriages.

The percentage of persons aged 15 years and over in registered marriages declined from 56% in 1991 to 47% in 2001; the percentage of de facto marriages rose from 4% to 7% in the same period (Table 2.31). The proportion of people who were not married (i.e. never married, or separated, divorced or widowed) fell from 40% in 1991 to 37% in 2001. Because 9% of Australians were categorised within the 'not applicable' category in 1996 and 2001, these patterns in social marital status should be interpreted with caution.

De facto marriages were more common among younger couples, particularly those aged 25–34 years (ABS 2003e). Correspondingly, the greatest increase in de facto relationships between 1991 and 2001 occurred in this age group, from 8% to 14%.

Table 2.31: Social marital status of Australians aged 15 years and over, 1991, 1996 and 2001 (per cent)

	Registered marriage	De facto marriage ^(a)	Not married ^(b)	Not applicable ^(c)	Number ('000)
1991	56.2	4.2	39.6	n.a.	13,017.7
1996	49.4	5.5	36.5	8.6	13,914.9
2001	47.2	6.7	37.0	9.1	14,856.8

(a) In 1996 and 2001, de facto marriage includes same-sex couples.

(b) In 1991, not married includes 'Persons in non-classifiable households, 'Persons in non-private dwellings', 'Persons in migratory or off-shore CDs' and 'Visitors (from within Australia)'.

(c) In 1996 and 2001, not applicable includes 'Persons in non-classifiable households, 'Persons in non-private dwellings', 'Persons in migratory or off-shore CDs' and 'Visitors (from within Australia)'.

Source: ABS 2003e: Table T05.

Family type

Family structure is sensitive to social and economic trends. In Australia, for example, the decline in fertility means that more couples live together without children; relationship breakdown and remarriage are related to an increase in one-parent, step and blended families; and increased longevity means a greater number of persons living alone or in couple-only families (De Vaus 2004:7).

In 1976, the predominant family type in Australia was a couple with dependent children—48% of all family types (Table 2.32). By 2001, couples with dependent children had dropped to 39% of all family types, similar to couple families with no children (36%, a rise of 8 percentage points since 1976). The proportion of one-parent families with dependent children also rose, but not quite so markedly, from 7% to 11% respectively (see Table 3.4, Chapter 3, for additional data on family structure).

Table 2.32: Australian family types, 1976–2001 (per cent)

	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001
Couple family with no children	28.0	28.7	30.3	31.4	34.1	35.7
Couple with dependent children	48.4	46.6	44.8	44.4	40.6	38.6
Couple family with non-dependent children	11.1	10.0	10.9	9.5	9.0	8.4
One-parent family with dependent children	6.5	8.6	7.8	8.8	9.9	10.7
Other families	5.9	6.0	6.2	5.9	6.4	6.5

Note: Other families include one-parent families with non-dependent children.

Source: De Vaus 2004 (based on ABS Census data).

Age-specific divorce rates

Between 1983 and 2003, the pattern in age-specific divorce rates for registered married couples varied depending on age group. Divorce rates declined among younger (under 35 years) Australians of both sexes, stayed much the same for 35–44 year olds, and rose slightly for those aged over 45 years (Table 2.33). In 1983, husbands aged 30–34 years and wives aged 25–29 years experienced the highest divorce rates (15.3 and 15.9 respectively). By 2003, the highest rates were experienced in older age groups—35–44 years for husbands (12.6) and 30–39 years for wives (13.1). This upward shift is probably related to later age of marriage and an increase in the duration of marriages before divorce (De Vaus 2004:214).

Table 2.33: Age-specific divorce rates,^(a) 1983, 1993 and 2003

	<24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–49	50–54	55+
Husbands								
1983	1.9	12.3	15.3	14.2	12.5	9.9	7.2	2.7
1993	1.0	8.5	13.1	13.1	12.8	10.8	8.4	2.7
2003	0.4	5.3	10.8	12.6	12.6	11.7	9.5	3.6
Wives								
1983	4.3	15.9	15.0	13.3	10.9	8.2	5.2	1.4
1993	2.3	12.5	13.9	13.2	11.5	9.4	5.9	1.3
2003	1.1	8.5	13.1	13.1	12.3	10.5	7.3	1.9

(a) Per 1,000 estimated resident males and females respectively, at 30 June for each year shown. In *Australia's Welfare 2003* the rates were per 1,000 married men and women.

Note: Overall divorce rates were not published in ABS (2005e).

Source: ABS 2005e.

Family functioning

How successfully a family 'functions' is influenced by the strength and quality of family relationships (i.e. cohesion) and the support family members offer one another (Amato 1998; Coleman 1988; Furstenburg & Hughes 1995). A well-functioning family could thus be envisaged as one which communicates well, maintains strong relations, and is resilient during episodes of stress.

Despite the importance attached to family functioning, particularly with relation to child wellbeing, there has been little progress in developing a single measure of family functioning. One potential measure described in *Australia's Welfare 2003* (AIHW 2003a)

collates responses to questions on the frequency of positive interactions between family members, such as conversation, attention and pursuit of common activities (Amato 1998; Berger-Schmitt 2000; Coleman 1988). Other potential indicators measure family discord and parental disciplinary style (Silburn et al. 1996) or the ability of family members to 'get on with one another' (see AIHW 2005c). These and other measures discussed in the literature, however, are liable to subjective interpretation, both on the part of the reporting family member and the collator of responses. More rigid definitions of functioning and its components are needed to develop a more appropriate indicator.

The antecedents or effects of family dysfunction are more quantifiable. Domestic violence and child abuse/neglect are commonly used indicators of serious family discord and breakdown.

Domestic violence

Domestic violence refers to all potential forms of family violence, including physical, sexual, verbal, psychological and emotional abuse (see a review of definitions in Laing & Bobic 2002), and can have serious consequences for the wellbeing of individuals and families, and the wider community. It is estimated that up to a quarter of young Australians aged 12–20 years have witnessed an incident of domestic violence against their mother or stepmother (NCP 2001), and a review of overseas and Australian literature describes an increased risk of child abuse within families suffering domestic violence (Laing 2000).

With the exception of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) collection, data on domestic violence remain limited in Australia, and what are available tend to focus on violence inflicted on women by a male intimate partner. There are few or no data on men's experience of domestic violence, nor on the prevalence of violence between same sex partners. (Information on violence directed against men will be available in 2006 from data collected in the ABS Personal Safety Survey.) The data on women's experience of domestic violence are undermined by problems of under-reporting—at least two studies have shown that only a small proportion of women contact police or domestic violence crisis services while in abusive relationships (ABS 1996a; Keys Young 1998).

The 1996 Australian Women's Safety Survey found that 8% of women currently in a relationship had experienced domestic violence from their partner; around 3% had been victims of either physical or sexual violence in the 12 months preceding the interview (ABS 1996a). More recent data on domestic violence have been published by the Australian Institute of Criminology, drawn from the Australian component of the International Violence against Women Survey. In this survey, domestic violence, or intimate partner violence, was defined as 'actual or threatened physical, sexual, psychological or emotional violence involving current or former spouses (married and de facto partners) or current or former boyfriends' (Mouzos & Makkai 2004:42). Just under 5% of women interviewed reported experiencing intimate partner violence over 12 months prior to the December 2002–June 2003 survey; 34% had experienced at least one form of intimate partner violence over their lifetime. In the 2002 Crime and Safety Survey, 35% of women reported being assaulted by a family member, of whom 60% were a current or former partner (AIHW 2003a).

Domestic violence is a common reason for people, particularly women, to seek crisis accommodation and support. For each period starting 1996–97 through to 2003–04, domestic violence was the main reason clients sought assistance through SAAP for 20–24% of support periods (AIHW 2003a, 2004b, 2005d). In 2003–04, females seeking SAAP assistance because of domestic violence were accompanied by 31,800 children, who were provided with an estimated 32,700 support periods (AIHW 2005e).

Child abuse and neglect

Child abuse and neglect may result from family breakdown and domestic violence, lack of parenting skills, coping issues, and external factors such as social isolation. Estimates of prevalence are difficult to obtain and in Australia are inferred from reports provided by child protection agencies. One indicator of abuse and neglect is the rate of children who were the subject of a child protection substantiation. Notifications of child abuse to community services departments are substantiated if there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been, was being or is likely to be abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. (See also the section on child protection in Chapter 3.)

The trend in rates of children in substantiations between 1998–99 and 2003–04 varied across jurisdictions and for most states and territories did not follow a particular pattern (Table 2.34). Only Queensland showed a steady change in rates, in this case an increase from 5.1 per 1,000 children in 1998–99 to 14.0 in 2003–04. Interpretation of these trends is complicated by changes to policies and procedures, in particular in New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, where new Acts have been introduced in the last 5 years, combined with heightened public awareness and willingness to report child abuse and neglect (AIHW 2005f).

Table 2.34: Rates of children aged 0–16 per 1,000 who were the subject of a child protection substantiation, by state and territory, 1998–99 to 2003–04

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
1998–99	4.4	6.3	5.1	2.5	5.2	1.1	5.2	n.a. ^(a)
1999–00	3.9	6.3	5.6	2.3	5.0	0.7	2.6	6.2
2000–01	4.4	6.6	7.3	2.4	5.0	0.9	2.8	5.8
2001–02	4.8	6.6	8.3	2.4	5.3	1.4	2.7	5.8
2002–03	7.5 ^(b)	6.3	10.1	1.9 ^(c)	5.8	1.8	3.6	5.5
2003–04	n.a. ^(d)	6.4	14.0	2.0	5.9	3.0	6.7	8.7

(a) Data for 1998–99 were not available.

(b) Data for 2002–03 and previous years should not be compared. NSW implemented a modification to the data system to support legislation and practice changes during 2002–03 which would make any comparison inaccurate.

(c) The decline in the number of notifications for 2002–03 is associated with organisational and practice changes.

(d) Data for 2003–04 were not available.

Source: AIHW 2005f.

Rates of substantiation in 2003–04 were again highest for children under 1 year and generally declined with age (Table 2.35). Indigenous children were also considerably more likely to be the subject of a substantiation. In Victoria, for example, the substantiation rate was almost 10 times as high for Indigenous children, and in South Australia and Western Australia, 8 times as high. The over-representation of Indigenous

children in child protection substantiations is a consequence of a complex web of factors, including the intergenerational effects of previous separations from family and culture, poverty and disadvantage, and substance abuse (HREOC 1997).

Table 2.35: Rates of children who were the subject of a child protection substantiation, by age, Indigenous status, and state and territory, 2003–04

Age (years)	NSW ^(a)	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
<1	n.a	15.6	25.1	5.0	9.1	2.4	14.7	22.6
1–4	n.a	7.3	15.9	2.2	7.3	2.5	8.6	13.0
5–9	n.a	5.9	14.9	2.1	6.6	2.5	6.3	6.5
10–14	n.a	5.9	13.6	1.8	5.2	2.3	5.3	6.6
15–16	n.a	3.3	6.2	0.8	1.8	1.5	3.2	1.5
Indigenous	n.a.	57.7	20.8	11.2	39.9	1.6	25.3	16.2
Other Australian children	n.a.	5.9	13.6	1.4	4.7	3.1	6.2	3.5

(a) NSW unable to provide data due to ongoing implementation of data system.

Note: Data from Tas should be interpreted carefully due to low incidence of workers recording Indigenous status at time of substantiation.

Source: AIHW 2005f.

Social and support networks

Support networks can be extensive and embody connections from face-to-face contact with relatives and close friends, to local community groups and online, telephone and other communication with professionals. Support received from any of these sources may come in the form of information, practical help or emotional support. Social and support networks are defined here as those more informal networks between family members, friends and more immediate contacts such as neighbours and work colleagues.

The frequency of contact with family and friends, and particularly the quality of those interactions, build feelings of acceptance, social trust, and shared norms and identities between members of that network. Regular and harmonious contact with a support or social network can have a protective effect on a person's general health, morbidity and mental health (see, for example, Baum et al. 2000; Henderson 1991; Kendler et al. 2005; Seeman 1996) and can improve their ability to deal with stress (Cassel 1976; Monroe & Steiner 1986).

Data on the frequency of contact with families and friends, and sources of support in times of crisis, are collected in the ABS General Social Survey. However, no national data are collected on the quality of these contacts. Quality contact between people not only defines the existence of actual bonds between the persons involved in the relationship (Black & Hughes 2001) but also enables establishment of reciprocal bonds of support among different members of the network.

Contact with family and friends

In 2002, the great majority (over 90%) of Australians aged 18 years and over had contact with family or friends living outside the household (Table 2.36). There were no major differences between the sexes or age groups.

Table 2.36: Australians who were in contact in the last week with family and friends living outside the household, 2002 (per cent)

	Age group							Total	Total ('000)
	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+		
Males	95.6	96.1	95.0	94.0	95.8	92.8	92.7	94.9	7,177.00
Females	94.7	97.1	95.4	95.8	96.8	96.2	95.4	96.0	7,237.00

Source: ABS 2003b.

Sources of support

Most Australians seek support from a family member when faced with a crisis (Table 2.37). Friends are another important source of support but much more so for younger age groups. For example, in 2002 Australians aged 18–24 years were equally likely to rely on a friend or a family member as a source of support (82% and 83% respectively). In contrast, only 40% of those aged 75 years or older felt they could seek support from a friend, compared with 82% who reported being able to rely on a family member.

Table 2.37: Sources of support in times of crisis, by age group, 2002 (per cent)

	Age group							All persons
	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+	
Family member	82.9	87.0	82.6	77.6	81.8	82.6	81.5	82.4
Friend	81.5	72.3	71.1	66.3	60.0	46.2	39.8	66.1
Neighbour	25.4	26.3	36.5	38.0	39.9	37.5	40.7	34.1
Work colleague	28.4	29.4	24.9	24.9	16.4	2.1	**0.2	21.5

Notes

- Categories of sources of support are not mutually exclusive and do not include community, charity or religious organisation; local council or other government services; health, legal or financial profession; and other, as collected in the General Social Survey.
- Types of crisis support include advice on what to do; emotional support; help when experiencing a serious injury or illness; help in maintaining family or work responsibilities; and provision of emergency money, accommodation and/or food.

Source: ABS 2003b.

Neighbours and work colleagues were less common but not unusual sources of support. Between 37% and 41% of Australians over the age of 35 years nominated a neighbour as a source of support, and persons aged over 75 years were equally likely to rely on a neighbour as they would a friend. (Neighbours are an important resource for older persons in the community (Schwirian & Schwirian 1993; Young et al. 2004).) Work colleagues were also reported by 25–28% aged 18–54 years as a reliable source of support.

Social detachment

For persons already experiencing some level of social exclusion, disengagement from their support network can impact even more harmfully on their ability to rejoin mainstream society. For example, Eyrich et al. (2003) found that periods of homelessness were significantly longer for people unable to count on their family and friends, and lower levels of social support are associated with, and may prompt, engagement in criminal behaviour (e.g. Colvin et al. 2002). Youth are also at a much increased risk of suicide if they have poor social supports (Esposito & Clum 2003).

Two indicators of social detachment are rates of suicide (see ‘Safety’) and rates of imprisonment. In the last 10 years, the imprisonment rate for all Australians rose from 126.9 per 100,000 in 1994 to 157.1 per 100,000 in 2004, with slight downturns in 2000 and 2002 (Table 2.38). Females made up less than 7% of the prison population in any one year—4.8% in 1995 to 6.9% in 2004 (ABS 2004m).

Table 2.38: Rates of imprisonment, all prisoners and Indigenous prisoners, 1994–2004

Year	All prisoners	Indigenous prisoners
1994	126.9	1,250.6
1995	128.7	1,307.3
1996	132.4	1,405.9
1997	137.3	1,507.7
1998	141.1	1,546.0
1999	150.7	1,737.5
2000	149.7	1,614.2
2001	152.5	1,711.9
2002	150.3	1,689.2
2003	154.9	1,766.5
2004	157.1	1,851.9

Notes

1. Data exclude persons held in juvenile institutions, psychiatric custody and policy custody. Data were collected on all persons held in Australian prisons on the night of 30 June of each reference year, based on administrative records held by corrective services in each Australian state and territory.
2. Rates are per 100,000 population in each age group and are age-standardised. They were derived using resident and estimated Indigenous populations for June of each reference year.

Source: ABS 2004m.

The Indigenous imprisonment rate also rose in this period from 1,251 per 100,000 to 1,852 per 100,000 (Table 2.38). Indigenous persons were imprisoned at a rate 10 to 12 times greater than the overall population between 1994 and 2004 and accounted for 17– 21% of all prisoners over the decade (ABS 2004m:Table 16).

Trust

Trust may be held in familiars (interpersonal trust), casual acquaintances and strangers (social trust), and in public or high-level institutions (civic trust). Social trust is perceived as a more sensitive measure of overall acceptance than interpersonal trust (Cox & Caldwell 2000). Less than half of Australians, however, are socially trusting—in 2003, 39% of Australians (41% of males and 37% of females) responding to the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AUSSA) agreed that most people can be trusted. A similar proportion of Australians in the 1990s reported trusting most people, down from 46% in the early 1980s (AIHW 2003a:53).

Civic trust reflects interactions between different strata in society, and potentially promotes better access to resources and socially useful links (Anheier & Kendall 2000; Black & Hughes 2001). Confidence in institutions is often used in Australian surveys as a proxy indicator of civic trust and is again used here for the same purpose.

Table 2.39: Levels of confidence in selected institutions,^(a) 1983, 1995, 2001 and 2003

	Federal government	Legal system	Police ^(b)	Major Australian companies	Trade unions	Armed forces
1983^(c)						
A great deal	8.6	11.6	27.4	15.6	4.3	22.2
Quite a lot	46.7	48.9	53.0	63.7	19.8	44.6
Not very much	37.4	34.9	17.3	19.2	55.7	28.5
None at all	7.3	4.6	2.2	1.6	20.2	4.6
1995^(c)						
A great deal	2.2	4.9	18.5	5.7	2.9	14.7
Quite a lot	23.9	29.8	57.3	52.8	22.7	52.9
Not very much	53.3	53.2	20.2	36.7	51.9	28.0
None at all	20.5	12.1	4.0	4.7	22.4	4.5
2001^(d)						
A great deal	6.2	4.9	13.2	2.9	2.3	26.2
Quite a lot	44.6	31.1	55.0	43.5	24.5	58.2
Not very much	37.8	51.3	27.2	44.3	56.6	14.2
None at all	11.3	12.7	4.6	9.4	16.8	1.4
2003^(e)						
A great deal	4.5	4.4	12.6	1.7	3.3	24.3
Quite a lot	34.2	24.2	57.8	37.9	23.6	55.9
Not very much	43.5	46.0	22.7	43.6	45.3	15.6
None at all	14.2	23.5	5.3	10.5	22.6	1.7

(a) In the text, 'confidence' comprises the survey responses 'A great deal' and 'Quite a lot'.

(b) The 2003 data relate to police in their own state or territory.

(c) Data from Australian Values Survey and World Values Survey.

(d) Data from the 2001 Australian Election Study.

(e) Data from the 2003 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes.

Sources: Papadakis 1999 analysis of 1983 Australian Values Study and 1985 World Values Study; SSDA 2001; AUSSA 2003 unpublished data.

Among a small number of selected institutions, Australians, in 2003, had the highest level of confidence in the armed forces (80%), followed by the police force (70%) (Table 2.39). Confidence in other institutions was considerably lower, with less than 50% of the population holding a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the federal government, major Australian companies, the legal system and trade unions.

Australians held similar levels of confidence in the police, armed forces and trade unions between 2001 and 2003. Confidence in the armed forces rose from 67% in 1995 to 80% in 2003, while remaining relatively even for trade unions at around 25%. The police force experienced a slight decline in public-held confidence since 1983. Confidence in the legal system, major Australian companies and the federal government fell considerably between 2001 and 2003. This decline in confidence in the former two institutions continued a downward trend observed since 1983. Confidence in the federal government followed a less clear pattern.

Community and civic engagement

Engagement with more formal social networks typifies community and civic participation, and allows individuals who may not normally associate with one another to do so. Some authors argue that interaction with people outside one's informal network builds understanding and acceptance of diversity (Hughes et al. 1999). The formation of 'bridges' between community members enhances social cohesion, by building the 'trust and capacity for collective action within the group' (Stolle & Rochon 1998:48).

Community engagement

Voluntary work is often considered a key indicator of social cohesion, since it demonstrates social trust and social investment. Volunteers tend to be more integrated within their community (Baum et al. 1999; Onyx & Leonard 2000) and so in communities where more people engage in voluntary work, social connectedness is considered more firmly established.

In 2002, 34% of the Australian population reported involvement in voluntary work in the previous 12 months (Table 2.40). A similar proportion (32%) engaged in voluntary work in 2000, up from 24% in 1995. Females were slightly more likely than males to volunteer.

Table 2.40: Participation in voluntary work in last 12 months, by age and sex, 1995, 2000 and 2002 (per cent)

	1995 ^(a)	2000 ^{(a)(b)}	2002 ^(c)
Age group			
18–24	16.6	26.8	28.1
25–34	20.4	27.5	28.8
35–44	31.7	40.1	42.0
45–54	27.7	35.4	39.2
55–64	23.8	32.5	38.0
65–74	23.0	30.3	32.0
75+	14.9	17.8	23.6
Sex			
Males	22.9	30.5	30.6
Females	24.4	33.0	35.1
All persons	23.6	31.8	34.4
Number ('000)	3,189.4	4,395.6	4,931.0

(a) Voluntary activity includes administration/clerical work/recruitment, befriending/supportive/counselling, coaching/judging/refereeing, fundraising/sales, management/committee work, performing/media production, personal care/assistance, preparing/serving food, repairing/maintenance/gardening, teaching/instruction/ providing information, and transporting people and goods (see source for definitions).

(b) Voluntary work for the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games is excluded from the data and thus does not account for the higher rate of volunteering in 2000.

(c) Voluntary work includes sport/recreation/hobby; welfare/community; health; emergency services; education/training/youth development; religious; environmental/animal welfare; business/professional/union; law/justice/political; arts/culture; foreign/international (excluding work done overseas).

Sources: ABS 1996b, 2001c, 2003b.

Rates of voluntary work varied across age groups but participation was most common among people aged 35–44 years. Participation in voluntary work increased for most age groups during this period, the biggest increase being for those aged 55–64 years—14 percentage points between 1995 and 2002. (Additional information on volunteering amongst persons aged 65 years and over is presented in Chapter 4.)

Just over a quarter (28%) of Indigenous Australians reported participation in voluntary work (ABS 2004g). There was little difference between the sexes and the age groups, although 35% of persons aged 35–44 years volunteered compared with around 25% for other age groups.

Philanthropy is an alternative indicator of community engagement by reflecting the desire to contribute financially to the betterment of other individuals, groups, the community or society in general. Monetary donations made to charitable and non-profit organisations, in which the donor does not receive any benefit from the donation, were made by three-quarters of Australians in 2000 (Table 2.41).

While more recent data are not available, the ‘Giving Australia’ project, which commenced in 2004, plans to examine in part current levels of, attitudes to and motivations for philanthropic giving by both individuals and businesses in Australia (see <http://www.partnerships.gov.au/philanthropy/philanthropy_research.html>). A report is planned for publication late in 2005 which will include data derived from individual giving and business community involvement surveys.

Table 2.41: People who made monetary donations to charities and non-profit organisations, by volunteer status, 2000

	By volunteers		By non-volunteers		Total	
	No. ('000)	Per cent	No. ('000)	Per cent	No. ('000)	Per cent
Age						
18–24	333.5	67.6	806.3	59.7	1,139.7	61.8
25–34	649.1	83.9	1,357.7	66.5	2,006.8	71.3
35–44	996.6	86.1	1,299.6	75.1	2,296.2	79.5
45–54	792.0	88.2	1,224.4	74.9	2,016.4	79.6
55–64	472.0	86.5	829.7	73.1	1,301.7	77.4
65–74	328.6	86.2	586.5	66.7	915.1	72.6
75+	127.2	86.7	467.5	69.2	594.6	72.3
Sex						
Males	1,719.3	82.6	3,165.0	66.6	4,884.3	71.5
Females	1,979.7	85.5	3,406.8	72.6	5,386.4	76.9
Total	3,698.9	84.2	6,571.8	69.6	10,270.7	74.2

Note: A donation was defined as a ‘voluntary transfer of funds made in the preceding 12 months by a person, on an individual not a business basis. The donor should not have received any benefit in return. Excludes purchase of goods and raffle tickets but includes door knocks and sponsoring walkathons etc.’

Source: ABS 2001c.

Civic engagement

Civic engagement is an extension of community engagement, delineating more ‘active’ participation in political and more civically oriented organisations or events. Such

active participation ranges from involvement in protest meetings and signing petitions to regular commitment to an organisation's activities and holding a decision-making role.

The 2003 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes asked respondents if they were a member, active member or office-holder in specific organisations. Active members were defined as those who were 'regularly involved in an organisation's activities', and office-holders as 'persons with a decision-making role in the group' as well as being regularly involved. These members are considered here as being 'actively engaged' in civic organisations.

In 2003, the percentage of respondents who were office-holders in specific organisations was very low – 2% or less (Table 2.42). The proportion who were active members was not much higher, at 6% or less. Overall active membership (i.e. office-holders and active members) was largest for groups helping people with special needs and neighbourhood/community groups (both 7% of all respondents).

Table 2.42: Active membership in various civic organisations, 2003 (per cent)

	Level of membership			Does not belong	Total
	Office-holder ^(a)	Active member ^(b)	Member ^(c)		
Union	0.6	2.1	17.1	80.2	100.0
Political party	0.1	0.6	3.0	96.2	100.0
Lobby group	0.4	1.1	2.6	96.0	100.0
Group promoting human rights	0.5	1.5	3.6	94.3	100.0
Environmental group/aid organisation	0.3	1.5	8.8	89.3	100.0
Neighbourhood or community group	2.0	4.6	13.7	79.9	100.0
Group helping people with special needs	1.2	5.6	7.6	75.5	100.0
Self-help/consumer group	0.2	1.4	6.6	91.8	100.0

(a) Office-holders include persons who have a decision-making role in the group as well as participating in activities and paying membership fees etc.

(b) Active members include persons who are regularly involved in an organisation's activities as well as paying membership fees/subscriptions or making donations.

(c) Members include persons who pay membership fees/subscriptions or make donations, but do not get actively involved in the activities or running of the organisation.

Source: AUSSA 2003 unpublished data.

2.5 Conclusion

The 13 indicator topics presented in this chapter – under the welfare components of healthy living, autonomy and participation, and social cohesion – provide an updated picture of the welfare of the Australian population, and a context for the other chapters in this report.

This chapter represents the third stage in the development of indicators of Australia's welfare. The first stage, in 2001, described the development of the framework, and the second stage, in 2003, presented data against indicator topics. The third stage, reflected

here, further refined the indicators, added new data, and included trend analyses where possible. National data, particularly in the area of social cohesion, have been improved recently with collections such as the ABS General Social Survey and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey.

The welfare of Australians

Healthy living

Overall, the health of the Australian population is good. There have been considerable improvements over the last century in life expectancy and infant mortality, although still not realised for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our health is supported by relatively low levels of air pollution in our capital cities, enjoyment of a nutritious diet, and regular engagement in physical activity. Most Australians are also adequately housed, with 70% either owning or buying their house, and many feel safe in their community.

Areas of concern, however, exist. Obesity rates have been rising in all age groups and an increase in sedentary behaviour, coupled with a sizeable proportion of Australians not consuming the recommended daily amounts of fresh fruit and vegetables, indicate risks to the population's health. Suicide continues to be the leading cause of injury among males, particularly younger males, where the suicide rate is higher than for transport-related injury deaths and 3.7 times higher than the suicide rate for females.

A proportion of Australians are also having difficulties accessing affordable and secure housing, with 20% of low-income households at risk of housing affordability problems, and around 100,000 Australians homeless.

Autonomy and participation

Educational and labour force participation continue to improve in Australia. Around three-quarters of secondary school students now stay to Year 12, and over 80% of Year 3, 5 and 7 students meet literacy and numeracy benchmarks. Labour force indicators suggest a similarly positive picture – unemployment rates have declined since 1993, and relatively high labour force participation rates (63.9%) have remained steady, with a small rise in female and Indigenous participation over the last 10 years. Counter to these favourable findings are indications of worsening working conditions, in particular an increase in the number of employees who do not have leave entitlements (around 28% in 2004), and a move towards longer working hours.

Australian households, on average, are enjoying rising levels of economic wellbeing in terms of their disposable income. As with health, results are mixed. While there is some evidence that the distribution of disposable income has become more unequal over the past decade or so, there is also evidence that the effect of government taxes and benefits tends to mitigate this inequality. Nonetheless, there is inequality in the distribution of economic resources in Australia, with the top income quintile receiving 38% of total household disposable income, and the top wealth quintile owning 63% of total household wealth. Measures of both income and wealth show strong life-cycle effects, with younger households tending to have higher income while older households have greater wealth. The measure of financial stress reported here indicates that one-parent households are more likely than other household types to struggle financially.

Social cohesion

The majority of Australians are confident they can rely on their support network in times of crisis, and they make contact with family and friends on a weekly basis. A third of Australians also spend their time engaging with the wider community, mostly as volunteers, and three-quarters donate money to charities and non-profit organisations. Only a small percentage, however, could be described as civically engaged, in terms of being regularly involved in the activities of a political, advocacy or community organisation. These patterns of communication and interaction within and between social groups suggest well developed cohesiveness among the Australian population, although less than half of Australians are socially trusting (i.e. of less well-known acquaintances and strangers).

The benefits of cohesiveness still elude some members of the Australian population, who for various reasons seem separated from support networks. Domestic violence and child abuse remain very real for some Australian women and children, and suicide rates, especially for young men, are still high, at over 25 deaths per 100,000 males aged 15–29 years in 2003. Rates of imprisonment have increased markedly, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who were 10 to 12 times more likely to be imprisoned than the overall Australian population between 1994 and 2004.

Overall welfare

Many, if not all, of the indicators presented in this chapter are influenced by one another, and act in concert to affect the welfare of the individual and of the population as a whole. These indicators suggest that the wellbeing of the Australian population is generally good, but that there are a number of areas for improvement. There are certain population groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who experience disadvantage across multiple areas. Other groups, such as younger Australians, illustrate mixed patterns with many positive effects of life in Australia but some areas of considerable or emerging concern.

Future reports will include more trend analyses on the status of welfare among the Australian population and in the key factors affecting individual, community and national wellbeing.

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