

Research Matters

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Welcome to Issue 72 of *Research Matters*, the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning's quarterly planning research bulletin, featuring DELWP research and analysis, news about recently released data, and research from other sources. If you have any questions or comments, you can contact us at:

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In this issue ...

This issue of *Research Matters* begins by looking at the issue of regional-urban migration from a regional vantage point – what are the stories of those who choose to stay in, or move to, regional centres like Bendigo? The study should be of interest to anyone concerned about the attraction and retention of people in regional areas of Victoria and Australia.

While migration is an important component of population change, the fundamental factors of births and longevity is covered in an article which reveals findings from the latest ABS demographic data.

In the review section, a report on a national housing affordability conference is provided, including details of a field trip to the outer suburbs of Perth where densities might just be higher than you expect.

And finally, if you ever wanted to know where your Nutella really comes from, the review of an international regional studies conference held in Melbourne will reveal the answer.

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Bendigo survey provides insights on regional-urban migration

As part of a wider research project on regional migration, FP&R has been involved in survey-based research in Bendigo. The survey used a sample of workers from Bendigo Bank to investigate the migration histories of a regional workforce sample. The aim was to understand the pathways of those who end up living in regional areas. The survey was undertaken in February 2015 and 440 responses were subsequently received and analysed.

Highlights include:

The survey showed that regional Victoria is prominent in the background of those working at Bendigo Bank with 39% of respondents born in Bendigo, 31% in other parts of regional Victoria and 4% in other parts of regional Australia. The combined proportion of people with non-metropolitan Australian backgrounds is 74% of the respondent sample.

The dominance of regional locations in migration pathways was evident among executive and senior staff. This indicates that professional career paths and human capital development do not necessarily depend upon spending time in a metropolitan location.

Most respondents (85%) had no intention to move away from Bendigo in the near future. Some in this group had lived in metropolitan areas for most of their lives and were in older age groups, thus fitting the pattern of 'late-career tree-changers'.

The survey reinforces that there is a difference between the drivers of migration (the reasons why people move) and the inherent advantages of a particular location. Family and employment were two of the main reasons why people had moved to Bendigo from elsewhere. Reported advantages of living in Bendigo included cheaper housing, accessibility and ease of travel. This is important for policy makers because it is often assumed that the advantages of a place alone will provide the basis for population growth.

The Bendigo case study sample provides information for a single company in a single location. Expanding the survey instrument to other enterprises is already planned with the Bendigo hospital and council workforces having been selected.

It is hoped to test the survey in another location such as Ballarat which is similar to Bendigo in terms of size, but somewhat closer to Melbourne. This could reveal whether the level of 'self-containment' found in Bendigo (in terms of proportions having lived, trained and been employed locally) is affected by distance from Melbourne.



Cradle to Grave: new data on births and life expectancy

Births in Victoria

In October, the ABS released the latest data on births across Victoria for 2014.

In 2014 there were 74,224 births in Victoria. This is only a small increase on last year's total but is part of a long-term positive trend. About 80 per cent of Victorian births occur to mothers living in Melbourne, especially in the outer growth areas. The City of Casey showed the highest number of births with an average of 83 per week. This was followed by Wyndham with an average 76 births per week.

The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) tells us how many children the average woman is likely to have over her lifetime. At the moment the Victorian TFR is 1.73 which is below the replacement rate of 2.1. The TFR includes women who don't have children. The Victoria figure was the lowest since 2004 and the lowest of all the Australian States. The fact that the number of births in Victoria has increased is simply a reflection of the large number of women of childbearing age in the population rather than being due to changes in the TFR.

The data show that women in regional Victoria have higher average fertility rates. The top 20 Local Government Areas (LGAs) are all located in regional Victoria with Loddon Shire having the highest TFR (2.64). Cardinia Shire is the highest ranked metropolitan municipality, ranked 21, with a TFR of 2.28. In contrast, LGAs close to the centre of Melbourne had the lowest rates with Melbourne LGA (0.88) the lowest, followed by Port Phillip and Stonnington (1.1). While women in regional LGAs have more children on average (a higher TFR), the larger population size of Melbourne compared to regional LGAs means that Melbourne dominates the numbers.

The long-term trend of mothers having children later in life has continued. Since 1975 the peak age for childbearing has increased from 25 in 1975 to 31 in 2013.

Up to date information on births goes directly into State Government population projections models and is of vital interest to those planning infant-related services such as maternal health care and pre-school/primary education. The number of births in Casey last year translates into 180 prep classes in 2020 (at a class size of 25).

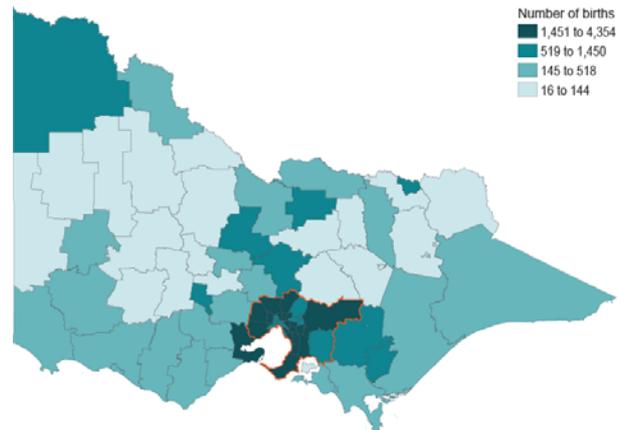


Figure 1: Number of births, Victorian LGAs 2014

Source: ABS Births Australia

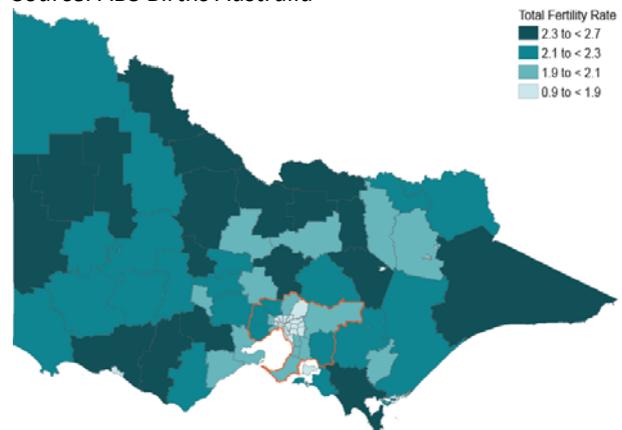


Figure 2: Total Fertility Rate, Victorian LGAs 2014

Source: ABS Births Australia

Life expectancy in Victoria

In November, the ABS released the latest data on life expectancy for Victoria (ABS cat. no. 3302.0.55.001). Key highlights for the 2012-14 period include:

Victorians born today have the highest life expectancy ever at 81 for males and 85 for females.

Only a handful of other countries – Japan, Iceland and Switzerland – have life expectancies above age 80 for both males and females.

Victoria has a higher life expectancy than New Zealand, the United States and United Kingdom.

Victoria has the highest life expectancy of any Australian State (just behind the Australian Capital Territory).

Life expectancy as a concept is extremely useful. Insurers use it to determine the cost of a life insurance policy. Governments use it to determine

how long people might survive after retirement. We use it to inform our demographic projections.

At its simplest life expectancy refers to the average number of years a person might expect to live holding current death rates constant. For example, a male born in Victoria today is expected to live to 81 years, while a girl is expected to live to 85 years.

A common misconception is that life expectancy is an exact estimate of the age at which people will die. This not the case for a few reasons:

Life expectancy is an average – when you do finally reach it, approximately half of the people of your age are still alive.

Life expectancy does not take into account technology and lifestyle change.

Life expectancy grows with you. For example, males born in 1946-48 were estimated at birth to live to 66 years but are now expected to live on average into their mid-80s.

There are important implications from rising life expectancy. For individuals, this includes decisions about when to retire and how much money they will need to retire comfortably. Governments need to plan for: a growing population (because people surviving increases the population and growth rates); an ageing population (in which age-specific services need to be provided) and a larger dependent population (requiring government assistance for health care or pensions).

Higher life expectancy has generally been accompanied by an increase in healthy life expectancy. Healthy life expectancy is an estimate of how many years of that people are likely to be 'healthy' and thus able to enjoy their longer life expectancy. People aged 65 now are healthier than were people of the same age 20 years ago (AIHW 2014).

References:

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2015, *Births Australia 2014*, cat. no. 3301.0

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2015, *Life Tables, States, Territories and Australia, 2012-2014*, cat. no. 3302.0.55.001

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2014, *Healthy Life Expectancy in Australia: Patterns and Trends 1998 to 2012*, Bulletin 126, Australian Government, Canberra.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129549632>

Conference review

Australian Housing Conference

In October, Planning Minister Wynne, and several DELWP staff attended the National Housing Conference in Perth. The conference theme was housing affordability and it drew around 800 delegates from housing and related industries. The Minister spoke as part of a panel on what it would mean if social and affordable housing were treated as infrastructure. He outlined the Victorian Government plan to facilitate social and affordable housing through inclusionary zoning on surplus government land as well as presenting the response to housing issues in the *Plan Melbourne Refresh*.



A site visit by public transport to Perth's southern growth corridor was offered at the conference. The destinations included two dedicated transport-oriented development town centres up to 35 kilometres south of the CBD. The developments are successful joint ventures between the Western Australia Housing Authority and the private sector. A major initiative has been the attainment of housing density between 2 and 7 storeys, not typically associated with the urban fringe. Another notable feature was the use of innovative sustainable pre-fabricated modular units (shipped from a Melbourne factory) which were assembled into high rise apartment buildings.

Overall, the conference emphasised the desire by many to reform Australia's property tax and incentive system to generate more socially and economically progressive outcomes.

Conference review

Regional Studies Conference

The Regional Studies Association (RSA) held its first Australasian conference in Melbourne in September. The Association is UK-based and, for the past 50 years, has examined a variety of 'regional' issues – that is, issues playing out at a sub-national level. Unlike Australia where the term 'regional' has a non-metropolitan meaning, European discussions on regional issues includes city regions as well as non-urban regions.

A total of 74 delegates from 9 countries met at RMIT to discuss topics and pose questions such as:

- Does economic agglomeration lead to faster economic growth or not?
- Why have child poverty levels remained high in developed countries like the UK and NZ?
- Do UK "City Deals" live up to their promise?
- How has the end of the resources boom affected firms in Australia?
- What are the outcomes of spatial economic restructuring in places like Geelong?
- What are regional outcomes of the global economy?

I was impressed by some innovative approaches to urban issues such as:

- Bruges becoming a 'dementia-friendly city' <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/apr/21/bruges-most-dementia-friendly-city>
- the Bosco verticale in Milan, showing that even high rise apartments can offer a positive environmental experience for their inhabitants [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosco_Verticale#/media/File:Bosco_Verticale_from_UniCredit_Tower,_Milan_\(17591709258\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosco_Verticale#/media/File:Bosco_Verticale_from_UniCredit_Tower,_Milan_(17591709258).jpg) and,
- a 'deep place' approach to create equitable and sustainable places http://www.regenwales.org/project_9_The--Deep-Place--Study

At a broader scale, there is some interesting work being done to map global value chains in agricultural and electronics industries. Such work is of relevance to both metropolitan and non-metro regions http://www.oecd.org/dac/aft/MappingGlobalValueChains_web_usb.pdf

The Nutella® global value chain



Source: OECD Mapping Global Value Chains, p. 17