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Australian Social Trends

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Contents

Introduction

Australian Social Trends draws on a wide range of data, sourced both from ABS and other agencies, to present a picture of Australian society. This publication aims to inform decision-making, research and discussion on social conditions in Australia. It covers social issues of current and ongoing concern, population groups of interest, and changes in these over time.

The selection of articles aims to address current and perennial social concerns and to provide answers to key social questions. Some topics are revisited as new data become available. The aim of this approach is for each report to remain responsive to contemporary concerns, while accumulating a more comprehensive picture of Australian social conditions over time. For this reason, articles often include cross references to other relevant articles in the current issue, and in previous issues. All articles are available from the Australian Social Trends page of the ABS web site: www.abs.gov.au/socialtrends.

Australian Social Trends is structured according to the ABS Wellbeing Framework which identifies areas of social concern, population groups and transactions among people and entities within their social environments (see ABS *Measuring Wellbeing: Frameworks for Australian Social Statistics, 2001* – cat. no. 4160.0). The broad areas of social concern are:

- population
- family and community
- health
- education and training
- work
- economic resources
- housing
- crime and justice
- culture and leisure
- other areas - including environment, religion, and transport and communication.

Australian Social Trends is now issued on a quarterly basis, and in the course of a year the articles will cover a wide range of the areas of social concern.

The articles focus strongly on people and social concerns. Each article aims to tell a story, providing a sense of the social and historical context in which a particular topic is embedded, moving from the general to the specific, and using statistics to bring light to the issue. Articles aim to balance 'what' analysis (relating the relevant statistical facts surrounding the issue, e.g. number, characteristics, change over time, sex, age and other differences), with 'why' analysis (providing context and explanation by highlighting relevant social changes and events and the chronologies of these). For example, an article on work may examine current labour force participation, how the labour market has changed over time, how different groups of people are affected by social and economic conditions, and how these factors may be linked to observed employment trends.

Housing assistance for renters

Access to affordable and suitable housing is a major determinant of the economic and social wellbeing of Australians. Australians are generally well housed, with about 70% of Australian households, in 2009–10, owning or purchasing their homes, and about 30% of Australian households renting.

However many people, particularly those on low incomes, require assistance in accessing affordable and suitable housing. Recognising the fundamental importance of housing to individual and family wellbeing, and the impact that housing costs have on a household's ability to meet other important needs, governments and not-for-profit community organisations provide a range of housing assistance programs to support renters in need. This article focuses on social (public and community) housing and Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA), and the characteristics of those people who receive these types of assistance.

Data sources and definitions

Data in this article are from the 2001 to 2011 annual editions of the Report on Government Services, and the ABS Survey of Income and Housing (SIH), 2007–08 and 2009–10.

In this article, ***housing assistance*** covers public housing, community housing and Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA).

Public housing refers to dwellings managed by state and territory housing authorities including State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing (SOMIH).

Community housing is owned by local governments and not-for profit community organisations such as housing co-operatives and church groups and includes Indigenous Community Housing.

Social housing refers to both public and community housing as an overall group. Crisis accommodation dwellings (e.g. women's refuges and homeless shelters) have not been included in this article.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) is a non-taxable payment received by eligible income units (i.e. singles and families) who rent in the private rental market. In this article, ***CRA recipient households*** are households who contain at least one income unit (single person or family) that receives CRA.

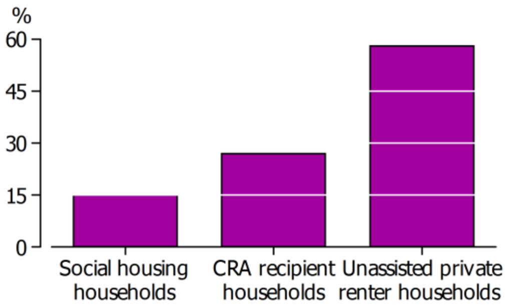
Types of assistance for renters

In 2009–10, 42% of renter households received some form of housing assistance. Of those, 65% were households receiving CRA, and 35% were households living in social housing.

...Commonwealth Rent Assistance

The largest single component of housing assistance for renters is CRA. CRA is paid by the Australian Government to provide additional assistance to income support recipients and low income families in the private rental market. As at June 2010, CRA was paid to over 1.1 million singles and families, at an average of $98 per fortnight, and totalled nearly $3 billion.[1]

Renter households by type of housing assistance — 2009-10



Source: ABS 2009-10 Survey of Income and Housing

...social housing

Social housing provides affordable and accessible housing on a priority basis to households with special needs or challenging circumstances. Social housing programs are managed by both state and territory

Other housing assistance for renters

Governments provide a range of other housing assistance to low income households experiencing financial difficulty in securing or maintaining private rental accommodation. A range of assistance is also provided to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness including transitional supported accommodation.

In addition to the traditional forms of housing assistance, governments have been pursuing improvements to the operation and effectiveness of the private rental market e.g. the National Rental Affordability Schemes (NRAS).

The NRAS is a financial incentive to the providers of new rental dwellings (e.g. private owners, developers and not for profit organisations) that aims to stimulate the supply of affordable rental dwellings for low and moderate income households. As of January 2011, there were 2,830 tenanted NRAS dwellings with an additional 4,922 dwellings either about to commence or under construction.[2]

Recent trends in housing assistance — 2000-2010(a)

	CRA(b)	Social housing				
		Public housing		Community housing		Total
		Mainstream	SOMIH(c)	Mainstream	Indigenous	
	No. of income units(d)	No. of occupied dwellings	No. of occupied dwellings	No. of occupied dwellings	No. of dwellings	No. of occupied dwellings(e)
2000	937 078	348 584	n.a.	23 351	n.a.	n.a.
2001	976 333	346 999	11 826	24 880	21 287	404 992
2002	943 877	342 819	11 996	26 237	n.a.	402 221
2003	940 708	337 959	11 959	28 480	n.a.	399 449
2004	949 698	336 238	12 219	26 083	20 932	395 472
2005	941 120	335 259	12 286	28 248	n.a.	396 696
2006	941 306	333 967	12 386	28 684	20 874	395 911
2007	943 718	333 139	12 622	33 526	21 127	400 414
2008	946 641	331 136	12 374	35 043	22 364	400 917
2009	1 038 137	328 679	11 582	38 524	19 607	398 392
2010	1 105 154	325 673	11 452	42 559	n.a.	399 684

n.a. not available

(a) Estimates generally refer to June.

(b) Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

(c) State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing.

(d) An income unit is a single person or family.

(e) Data has been estimated for the number of Indigenous community housing dwellings in 2002, 2003, 2005 and 2010.The number for Indigenous community housing dwellings counted in the total include a small number of unoccupied dwellings.

Source: Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *Report on Government Services, issues 2001-2011*, <www.pc.gov.au>

governments and by community organisations. Together these services were provided to 15% of all renter households. Mainstream public rental housing accommodated around 81% of all households in social housing in Australia, while mainstream community housing accommodated around 11%. The balance of households were accommodated by State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing (SOMIH) and Indigenous Community Housing (ICH).

Recent trends in housing assistance

CRA is a very flexible form of housing assistance that can follow the recipients as they move to accommodate job mobility and other life changes. The number of singles and families receiving CRA has risen over the previous decade from 937,100 in 2000 to 1.1 million in 2010 (up 18%).

Over the same period, mainstream public housing stock has declined from 348,600 in 2000 to 325,700 in 2010. However this decline has largely been offset by an increase in the mainstream community housing stock which has increased from 23,350 in 2000 to 42,560 in 2010 (excludes ICH). The growth in community housing is set to continue through the NRAS and the transfer of housing stock funded under the Social Housing Initiative of the Nation Building Economic Stimulus plan and the National Partnership Agreement social housing.[3]

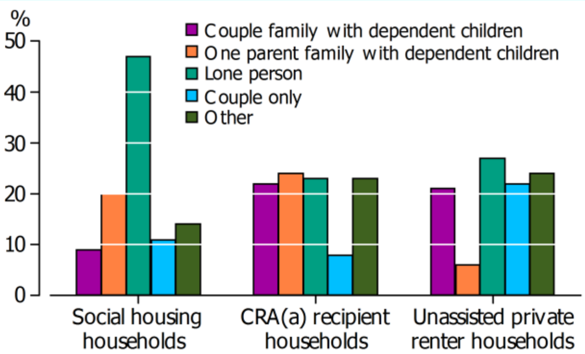
Who lives in assisted housing?

Priority access to both public and community housing is typically given to people in greatest need. Greatest needs households are defined as households that, at time of allocation, are either homeless, in housing inappropriate to their needs, or in housing that is adversely affecting their health or placing their life or safety at risk.[1]

...what kinds of families?

The family composition of the household in which people live can vary according to the type of housing assistance received. In 2009–10, lone person households comprised 47% of all renter households in social housing, and 23% of households receiving CRA. One parent families made up 20% of renter households in social housing and 24% of renter households receiving CRA. In comparison, only 6% of unassisted renter households were one parent families.

Housing assistance type by family composition of household — 2009-10



(a) Commonwealth Rent Assistance

Source: ABS 2009-10 Survey of Income and Housing

Housing assistance type by selected personal characteristics — 2009-10

	Social housing households	*CRA(a) recipient households*	*Unassisted private renter households*
	% persons	% persons	% persons
Sex			
Male	42	46	53
Female	58	54	47
Age			
Under 18 years	32	39	20
18-30 years	8	18	35
31-40 years	10	17	23
41-50 years	15	9	13
51-64 years	17	9	8
65 years and over	18	8	1
Employment status (aged 15 years and over)			
Employed full time	10	19	64
Employed part time	11	20	20
Unemployed looking for work	5	10	3
Not in the labour force	74	51	13
Disability			
Persons with a disability	67	44	19
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

(a) Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

Source: ABS 2009-10 Survey of Income and Housing

...age and sex

Women were more likely than men to be living in renter households receiving assistance (55% compared with 45%). More than one-third of people living in renter households that were receiving some form of housing assistance were under the age of 18 years (37%), in part reflecting the high proportion of one parent families (largely headed by women) receiving such assistance. In comparison, 20% of those living in unassisted renter households were under the age of 18.

There was a much higher proportion (18%) of older people, aged 65 years and over, living in social housing than in either CRA recipient households (8%) or unassisted renter households (1%).

...employment

About three-quarters of the adults renting social housing were not in the labour force, compared with 51% of those in CRA recipient households and 13% of those in unassisted private renter households. Conversely, 64% of people in unassisted private renter households were employed full time compared with much lower proportions in social housing and CRA recipient households (10% and 19% respectively).

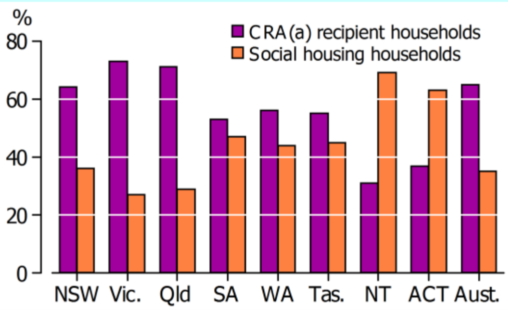
...disability

Social housing households and those receiving CRA were much more likely to be home to people with a disability, partly reflecting the older age profile of people living in social housing. Of all renters living in social housing 67% reported having a disability, compared with 44% of those receiving CRA and 19% of renters receiving no housing assistance.

...state and territory differences

The mix of housing assistance to renters differed by state and territory. CRA was the predominant type of assistance across most jurisdictions (ranging from 53% in SA to 73% in Vic.), with the exceptions of the NT and the ACT where proportionally more households received assistance through social housing (69% and 63%).

Housing assistance type by state and territory — 2009-10



(a) Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

Source: ABS 2009-10 Survey of Income and Housing

Housing assistance type by income, housing costs, and tenure — 2007-08

	Units	Social housing households	CRA(a) recipient households	Unassisted private renter households
Household income				
Gross weekly income from all sources(b)	$	559	718	1 719
Selected household housing-related outlays				
Proportion of households who paid a rental bond	%	37	80	85
Bond paid by households who paid a rental bond	$	382	888	1 194
Weekly rent payment(b)	$	105	157	278
Residential tenure				
Proportion of households who have life tenure	%	76	12	8
Years lived in current dwelling	years	7	2	2

(a) Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

(b) Gross weekly income and weekly rent exclude CRA.

Source: ABS 2007–08 Survey of Income and Housing

Affordability and tenure in social housing

On average, social housing bonds and rents are considerably lower than bonds and rents in the private rental market. This is because rents are capped so that they do not exceed a certain proportion of income.

In 2007–08, those renting social housing averaged a weekly gross household income of $559 and weekly rent payments of $105. In comparison, CRA recipient households received $718 in weekly gross household income and paid $157 in weekly rent, on average, excluding CRA payments. In contrast, unassisted private renter households averaged more than three times as much gross weekly income ($1,719), and paid just over two and a half times as much rent ($278 per week on average).

Far fewer households in social housing reported paying a rental bond (37%) compared with households in the private renter market (80% of CRA recipient households, 85% of unassisted renters). Of households who paid a rental bond, those renting social housing paid an average of $382. This was substantially lower than the amount that households paid in the private rental market. Private renters not receiving housing assistance paid an average of $1,194 in 2007–08 while those receiving CRA paid $888.

In 2007–08, people aged 15 years and over living in social housing households had lived in their home for an average of seven years. Three-quarters of households renting social housing had life tenure (i.e. were able to continue living in their home for as long as they wanted). In comparison, people living in a home rented from a private landlord had lived in their home for an average of just two years for renters not currently receiving housing assistance and for CRA recipient households. Only 8% of unassisted renter households had indefinite tenure.

What kind of dwelling?

Separate houses are the predominant dwelling type for all tenures, including renters. However, in 2009–10 there were fewer households in social housing compared with other renter households living in separate houses (55% compared with 68% of CRA recipient households and 65% for private renters not receiving housing assistance). Households in social housing were also more likely to live in a townhouse (22% compared with 13% of CRA recipient households and 14% of unassisted renters). The proportion of households in flats was similar for each type of renter household.

...and in what condition?

In 2007–08, the condition of rental dwellings varied by landlord type, with major structural problems of all kinds being most frequently reported by 28% of renters in social housing, compared with 21% of renters receiving no housing assistance. In 2009–10, in terms of overcrowding, in accordance with the Canadian National Occupancy Standard,[4] 3% of all Australian households required one or more extra bedrooms, compared with 9% of CRA recipient households and 6% of social housing and private renter households not receiving assistance. Households receiving some form of assistance were less likely to have spare rooms with only 54% having at least one spare bedroom compared with 64% of unassisted private rental households.

Housing assistance type by dwelling characteristics

	Social housing households	*CRA(a) recipient households*	*Unassisted private renter households*
	%	%	%
Major structural problems and need for repair(b)			
1 or more structural problems	28	22	21
No structural problems	69	74	75
No/low need for repairs	56	55	53
Moderate need for repairs	11	7	6
Essential need for repairs	14	15	15
Essential and urgent need for repairs	18	24	26
Overcrowding and spare rooms(c)			
At least 1 or more bedrooms needed	5	9	6
At least 1 or more bedrooms spare	55	54	64
No extra bedrooms required and none spare	40	37	30
Dwelling structure(c)			
Semidetached/ townhouse	22	13	14
Flat/unit/apartment	23	19	21
Separate house	55	68	65

(a) Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

(b) Data is for 2007-08.

(c) Data is for 2009-10.

Source: ABS 2007-08 and 2009-10 Survey of Income and Housing

Satisfaction and feelings of safety

On measures of satisfaction, renters living in households receiving some form of housing assistance were more satisfied with their dwelling compared with other renters. Unassisted private renters were most satisfied with their location (90%), but least satisfied with the size of their block (57%).

The feelings people have of safety or lack of safety when alone at home can relate to their understandings of local crime levels, previous experiences as a victim of assault or break-in, and in turn, their trust in, and relationships with, people in their local community as well as their personal sense of strength and ability to stay in control. In 2007–08, people living in social housing were less likely to feel safe at home alone after dark compared with unassisted private renters (74% compared with 87% respectively).

Looking ahead

CRA and social housing are likely to continue to dominate housing assistance in Australia over the coming years. There is currently investment in the social housing sector, particularly the community housing sector, with government initiatives such as the Nation Building - Social Housing Initiative which provides funding for the construction of around 19,600 new social housing dwellings. However, governments are also pursuing other initiatives, such as the National Rental Affordability Scheme, to improve the supply of affordable private rental housing to low and moderate income households.[3]

Housing assistance type by feelings of safety and satisfaction — 2007-08

	Social housing households	*CRA(a) recipient households*	*Unassisted private renter households*
	% persons	% persons	% persons
Safe at home alone after dark	74	79	87
Safe at home alone during the day	86	92	95
Can easily get to the places needed	68	74	82
Satisfied with block	59	64	57
Satisfied with dwelling	81	77	75
Satisfied with location of dwelling	84	86	90

(a) Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

Source: ABS 2007-08 Survey of Income and Housing

Endnotes

1 Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Report on Government Services 2011, <www.pc.gov.au>.

2 Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications Legislation Committee, Answers to questions on notice Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio, <www.aph.gov.au>

3 Department of Families, Housing, Community Housing, and Indigenous Affairs, Regulation and Growth of the Not-For-Profit Housing Sector: Discussion Paper, viewed 1 September 2011, <www.fahcsia.gov.au>.

4 According to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard for housing appropriateness. See paragraphs 24 to 26 of the Explanatory Notes in ABS Housing Occupancy and Costs, 2007–08 , cat. no. 4130.0 <www.abs.gov.au>.

Long-term unemployment

People who are unemployed for long periods of time may experience economic hardship and be at greater risk of poverty than those unemployed for shorter periods. They can also miss out on the networks and social interactions that employment can offer, while low income and lack of access to the job-market can lead to disadvantage and in turn social exclusion.[1] Families with members who are unemployed for a year or more (long-term unemployed) may also be negatively affected, and there is concern that this may contribute to intergenerational disadvantage.[2]

What's more, the longer people are unemployed, the harder it may become to return to, or gain, employment. This can be related to the gradual loss of social or workplace networks, relevant skills, confidence, motivation or because of employers' negative perceptions of their 'employability'.[3]

Long-term unemployment places a strain on the economy because of people's reliance on government pensions or allowances.

Data sources and definitions

Most of the data in this article has been sourced from the ABS Labour Force Survey.

A person is ***unemployed*** if they were aged 15 years and over and were not employed in the reference week, and:

- had actively looked for full-time or part-time work at any time in the four weeks up to the end of the reference week and were available for work in the reference week; or
- were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available then.

A person is ***long-term unemployed*** if they were continuously unemployed for 52 weeks or more.

The ***unemployment rate*** is the proportion of the labour force who were unemployed.

The ***long-term unemployment rate*** refers to the proportion of the labour force who were long-term unemployed.

In this article, *the* ***long-term unemployment ratio*** refers to the proportion of the unemployed population who were long-term unemployed.

Non-dependent children are people aged 15 years and over who:

- do not have a spouse or offspring of their own in the household;
- have a parent in the household; and
- are not full–time students aged 15–24 years.

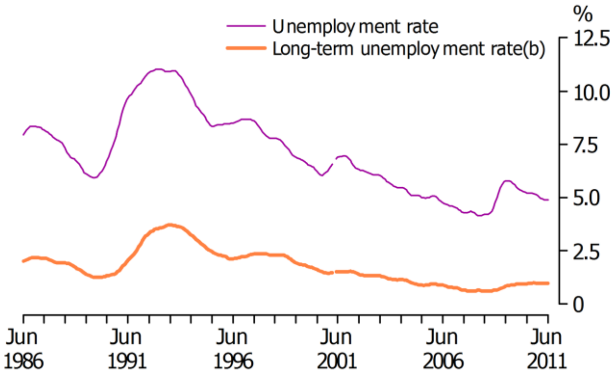
NewStart allowance is a Centrelink payment for people looking for paid work, who are aged at least 21 but below the Age Pension age, who are prepared to enter into an Employment Pathway Plan and meet activity test requirements, and who are not involved in industrial action.

Trends in long-term unemployment

Australia's unemployment rate peaked soon after the economic downturn of the early 1990s. Since then it has generally declined, with only three notable increases – the biggest in mid-2009 around the time of the global financial crisis.

The long-term unemployment rate shows some of the same patterns as the general unemployment rate – peaking in the early 1990s and generally declining since.

Long-term unemployment rate(a): trend



(a) People unemployed for 52 weeks and over as a proportion of the labour force.

(b) Break in series at April 2001 due to changes in methodology. For more information see Explanatory Note 18 in ABS Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0).

Source: ABS *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery, February 2011 and June 2011* (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001); ABS *Labour Force, Australia, June 2011* (cat. no. 6202.0)

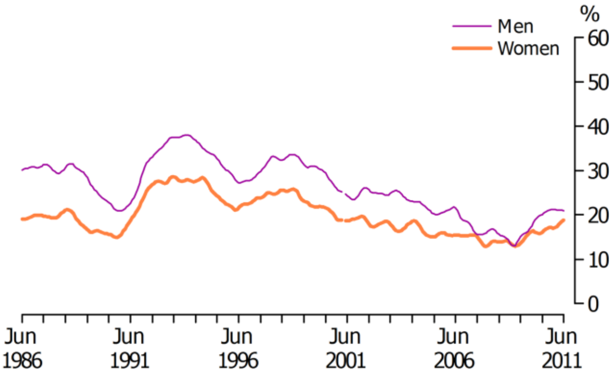
However, the long-term unemployment rate was less volatile over the period, not showing the same peaks and troughs as the general unemployment rate.

The long-term unemployment rate was, like general unemployment, at an all-time low throughout most of late 2007 and 2008 (0.6%), although both increased going into 2009. While unemployment started to decline again in late 2009, long-term unemployment has not shown the same pattern, appearing relatively stable over the 12 months to June 2011 (at 1.0%).

...as a ratio to unemployment

In January 1994, following the recession of the early 1990s, one in three (34%) unemployed people were long-term unemployed. The ratio for men (38%) was higher than for women (28%). A decline over the following years in long-term unemployment numbers relative to general unemployment saw a decrease in the long-term unemployment ratio. By February 2009 just over one in eight (13%) unemployed men and women were long-term unemployed.

Long-term unemployment ratio(a): trend(b)



(a) People unemployed for 52 weeks or more as a proportion of all unemployed people.

(b) Break in series at April 2001 due to changes in methodology. For more information see Explanatory Note 18 in ABS Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0).

Source: ABS *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery, February 2011 and June 2011* (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001)

Since then, the long-term unemployment ratio has risen and in June 2011 it had increased to one in five (20%) and a small difference had reopened between men (21%) and women (19%).

Who are the long-term unemployed?

In 2010–11, there were on average 116,700 long-term unemployed people, and over half (56%) were men. In comparison, 52% of all unemployed people were men.

While around two-thirds (66%) of the long-term unemployed were aged 15–44 years, the long-term unemployed did tend to be older than the general unemployed population (33% were aged 45–64 years compared with 22% of the total unemployed).

Many people (45%) who were in long-term unemployment had in fact been unemployed for two years or more. Most of these people were men (58%), and most were aged 15–44 years (60%).

The annual average long-term unemployment rate for 2010–11 was 1.0%, and this represented around one-fifth (19%) of the unemployed population (the long-term unemployment ratio). While the rate was similar between men (1.0%) and women (0.9%), there was a slight difference in the ratio (21% for men compared with 17% for women) and there was further variation across age groups.

...younger people

The long-term unemployment rate was highest for people aged 15–24 years (1.5%, compared with around 0.8% for most other age groups). However of all age groups, they had the lowest long-term unemployment ratio (13%), due to high overall unemployment for young people.

...older people

In older age groups, long-term unemployment rates were fairly consistent at around 0.8%, except for men aged 55–64 years where the long-term unemployment rate increased to 1.2%.

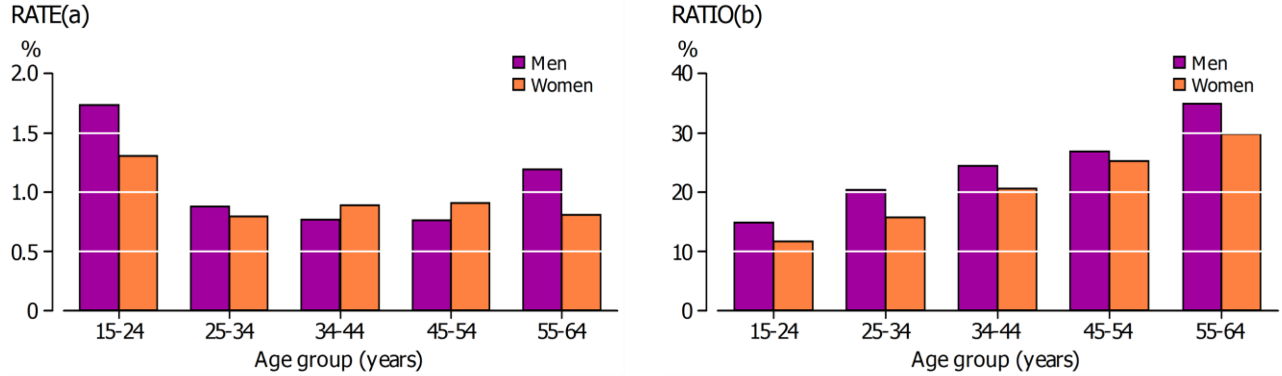
Generally, the older unemployed people were, the more likely they were to have been in long-term unemployment. In 2010–11, one-third (33%) of unemployed people aged 55–64 years were long-term unemployed. This compared with 22% of those aged 35–44 and 13% of those aged 15–24.

...across Australia?

In 2010–11, New South Wales had a high long-term unemployment rate (1.1%) and ratio (22%) while Western Australia (0.6% and 14%), the NT (0.4% and 15%) and the ACT (0.4% and 11%) had both low rates and ratios.

Within the states, there was also a difference in long-term unemployment between the capital city and the balance of the state. The long-term unemployment rate was slightly higher outside the state capitals (1.2%) than within them (0.9%). The long-term unemployment ratio was also slightly higher outside state capital cities (22% compared with 18%).

Long-term unemployment rate(a) and ratio(b), by age and sex: annual average — 2010-11



(a) The proportion of the labour force who were long-term unemployed.

(b) The proportion of the unemployed population who were long-term unemployed.

Source: ABS *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery, June 2011* (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001)

At a regional level, some of the highest rates of long-term unemployment, over double the national average, could be found in the Statistical Regions of Far North (Qld), Fairfield-Liverpool (NSW), and Northern Adelaide (SA).

Fairfield-Liverpool (NSW) was also a region with a high long-term unemployment ratio (34%), with one-third of all unemployed people in long-term unemployment. North Western and Central Western (NSW) — which includes towns such as Armidale, Dubbo and Bathurst — and Central Highlands-Wimmera (Vic.) were also regions where a large proportion of unemployed people were long-term unemployed (31% and 29% respectively).

...in different types of households?

Long-term unemployment has the potential to impact upon not just the individual concerned, but also their families. Children with unemployed parents may face additional challenges and may see a negative impact upon their education and future prospects.[2] In this context it is important to see what kind of Australian households are most likely to be affected by long-term unemployment. One group with a high rate of long-term unemployment were non-dependent male children aged 15 years and over living with their parents. Their long-term unemployment rate was two and half times the average (2.5%, with a ratio of 23%). Lone mothers also had a high rate of long-term unemployment (2.4% and a ratio of 26%). Men living alone had a relatively high rate of long-term unemployment (1.7%), and a relatively high long-term unemployment ratio (30%).

While people in couple relationships (with or without children) had a low long-term unemployment rate (0.5%), the sheer size of this group meant that it made up one-third (33%) of all long-term unemployed people.

Selected regions of high long-term unemployment (LTU); annual average —2010-11

	LTU Rate	*LTU Ratio*	*Labour force*
	%	*%*	*(000's)*
High rates			
Far North (Qld)	2.5	27.6	148.8
Fairfield-Liverpool (NSW)	2.4	33.8	169.9
Northern Adelaide (SA)	2.1	26.7	193.8
High ratios			
Fairfield-Liverpool (NSW)	2.4	33.8	169.9
Nthn, N.Western and C.West (NSW)	1.7	30.8	258.9
Central Highlands-Wimmera (Vic.)	1.9	28.5	112.3
Australia	**1.0**	**19.2**	**11,993.8**

Source: ABS *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery, June 2011* (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001)

Discouraged job seekers

The official measure of unemployment requires a person aged 15 years or over to be wanting to work, available to start work and actively looking for work. Discouraged job seekers are people who wanted to work, were available to start work, but were not actively looking for work because they believed they would not find a job for any of the following reasons:

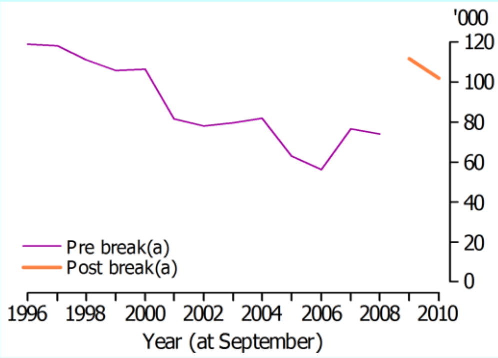
- considered to be too young by employers;
- considered to be too old by employers;
- believes ill health or disability discourages employers;
- lacked necessary schooling, training, skills or experience;
- difficulties because of language or ethnic background;
- no jobs in their locality or line of work;
- no jobs in suitable hours; and
- no jobs at all.

In September 2010 there were 102,100 discouraged job seekers. Although there were fewer discouraged job seekers than a year prior (111,800 in 2009), the figure was still higher than any other year since 2000.

In September 2010, around one-third (35%) of discouraged job seekers were aged 65 years and over, with similar proportions aged 15–44 years (35%) and 45–64 years (30%).

Around three-quarters (74%) of discouraged job seekers aged 65 years and over reported that the main reason they were not actively looking for work was because they were considered too old by employers. Younger discouraged job seekers aged 15–44 years were more likely to have cited their lack of necessary schooling, training, skills or experience (34%) or the lack of jobs in their locality or line of work (22%).

Discouraged job seekers(a)



(a) There is a break in the time series between 2008 and 2009, although it only has a small impact on the numbers. See the Explanatory Notes in the source below.

Source: ABS *Persons Not in the Labour Force, Australia, September 1996-2010* (cat. no. 6220.0)

How skilled are they?

While not all jobs require vocational or higher education, having such qualifications may provide people with the skills and knowledge that can help them obtain employment.

The ABS Job Search Experience Survey shows that in July 2010, around half of long-term unemployed people (49%) had not attained

Long-term unemployment and health

The ABS 2007–08 National Health Survey allows us to see where health differs between people who are long-term unemployed and those in employment. While a person's poor health may impact upon the amount of time they spend in unemployment, extended periods of unemployment and the potential resultant financial and/or psychological stress may also contribute to poor health.

People aged 15 years and over who were long-term unemployed were four times as likely as employed people to say that their health was only fair or poor (34% compared with 9%). They were twice as likely as employed people to be a current smoker (44% compared with 22%), twice as likely as those employed to have back pain, back problems or disc disorders (32% compared with 16%) and almost three times as likely to have mental or behavioural problems (27% compared with 11%).

The 2009 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers allows us to see where disability status differs between people who are long-term unemployed and those in employment. Of people aged 15–64 years living in households, people who were in long-term unemployment were around twice (or 2.3 times) as likely as employed people to have a disability (23% compared with 10%).

Year 12 or above as their highest educational attainment. This compared with around two fifths (41%) of people who had been unemployed for less than 12 months and with around one-quarter (24%) of those who had started their current job in the last 12 months.

How many hours would they prefer to be working?

Many long-term unemployed would prefer to be working full-time hours.

In July 2010, three-quarters (75%) of long-term unemployed men and half (50%) of long-term unemployed women stated they would have preferred to have been working full-time hours (35 hours or more per week).

Difficulties in finding work

The most common difficulty in finding work reported by long-term unemployed people was that there were too many applicants for the available jobs (54%). This was also the most common difficulty cited by people unemployed for a shorter period (47%).

Long-term unemployed people were more likely than those who had been unemployed for a shorter period to cite insufficient work experience (46% compared with 33% of short-term unemployed), lack of necessary skills or education (40% compared with 29%), and more likely to say that a job was too far to travel or they had transport problems (34% compared with 18%). They were also twice as likely to have cited their own health or a disability as one of the difficulties they faced in finding work (26% compared with 12%).

International Comparisons

Australia's long-term unemployment rate in 2010 (1.0%) was low relative to rates in the United States (2.8%) and many European countries; however the long-term unemployment rate in New Zealand (0.5%) was around half that of Australia (1.0%).

Australia's long-term unemployment ratio in 2010 (19%) was also relatively low compared with most of the countries mentioned above; however again New Zealand's ratio was lower (8%).

Between 2008 and 2010 (which shows the impact of the global financial crisis), the long-term unemployment rate increased in all these selected countries. The most dramatic rise was in the United States, where it more than quadrupled from 0.6% to 2.8%. The largest increase in the long-term unemployment ratio was also in the United States. In 2008, only 1 in 10 (11%) unemployed people in the United States were long-term unemployed, whereas in 2010 over 1 in 4 (29%) were in the same situation.

Long-term unemployment(a), selected countries; annual average — 2010

	Rate(b)		*Ratio(c)*	
	2008	**2010**	**2008**	**2010**
Greece	3.6	5.6	47.5	45.0
France	2.7	3.7	37.1	39.7
Italy	3.0	4.0	45.2	48.0
United States	0.6	2.8	10.6	29.0
United Kingdom	1.4	2.5	24.1	32.6
Sweden	0.8	1.5	12.5	17.4
Australia	0.6	1.0	14.9	18.6
New Zealand	0.2	0.5	4.0	8.1

(a) 'Long-term unemployment' can refer to different durations of unemployment in various countries. In this table it refers to unemployment of approximately more than one year (see the original source for accurate definitions).

(b) Long-term unemployed as a proportion of the labour force.

(c) Long-term unemployed as a proportion of the unemployed.

Note: Rates and ratios were derived from rounded data, therefore rounding errors may exist.

Source: International Labour Organization, *Short term indicators of the labour market*, *viewed 29 August, 2011*, <laborsta.ilo.org>

Steps taken to find work

Long-term unemployed people may undertake a variety of steps to find work. In July 2010, some of the most common steps taken included looking at ads for jobs in a newspaper (91%); or on the Internet (77%); and writing, phoning, or applying in person to an employer for work (87%).

These were also common steps for those who were only unemployed for a shorter period (77%, 78% and 84% respectively). They were also some of the most common steps for those who had started their current job in the last 12 months and who had been looking for work prior (48%, 62% and 70%).

Where the steps taken to find work by the long-term unemployed population differed the most from these other groups was in the proportion who reported registering or checking with Job Services Australia (JSA) and/or Centrelink. In July 2010, around three quarters (77%) of the long-term unemployed had registered with Centrelink as a job seeker, two-thirds (66%) had registered with a JSA provider and a similar proportion (65%) had checked with a JSA provider. These rates were almost double those for people unemployed for a shorter period, and around four times as high as those for people who had started their current job in the last 12 months and who had been looking for work prior. Despite this, there were still 14% of the long-term unemployed who had not registered/or checked with a JSA provider, with another employment agency, or registered as a job seeker with Centrelink.

Pathways into long-term unemployment

Long-term unemployed people were more likely than the short-term unemployed to have lost their last job (mostly through being laid off, retrenched, or because the job was temporary or seasonal) rather than having left it (either for unsatisfactory work arrangements or for other reasons such as returning to studies). Of those who were long-term unemployed, almost three-quarters (72%) had lost their last job while around a quarter (27%) had left their last job.[4] This compared with 57% of short-term unemployed people having lost their last job and 43% having left their last job.

Government pensions and allowances

In 2009–10, almost all (96%) of households with at least one long-term unemployed person had received some form of government pension or allowance in the previous financial year. Newstart allowance was one of the most common payments, with around half (53%) of these households having someone who received this payment.

In 2009–10, nearly three-quarters (71%) of households with at least one long-term unemployed person had at least 20% of their household income coming from government pensions or allowances, and over two-fifths (43%) had at least 90% of their household income coming from these sources. This financial dependence was less common for households without any long-term unemployed people. Around one-third (34%) of these households had at least 20% of their household income coming from government pensions or allowances.

Comparing unemployment and the claimant count

The ABS Labour Force Survey (LFS) has provided the official measures of employment and unemployment on a monthly basis for over 50 years. Another important source of data is compiled by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and relates to a count of the number of Labour Market Payment (LMP) recipients.

While both of these series have tended to move broadly in line with each other over time, the two measures differ in many ways. For example, some people may be considered unemployed by the ABS, but they may have not have received LMP due to income from other sources. At the same time, other people who would not be considered unemployed by the ABS may be receiving LMP while working to supplement their income.

For a more in-depth discussion of the differences between these two perspectives see 'Comparing unemployment and the claimant count' in *Australian Labour Market Statistics, Jan 2009* (cat. no. 6105.0).

Looking ahead

Despite a recent peak, for almost eight years Australia's unemployment rate has been lower than at any other time within the last quarter of a century. This indicates an economy with a high demand for workers. In this context, people in long-term unemployment may be presented with more opportunities now than ever before to overcome barriers to their employment.

In the 2011–12 Australian Government Budget two measures, costing $227.9 million, were announced that aim to specifically target the Very Long Term Unemployed (VLTU). One measure increases the obligations of VLTU job seekers to participate in activities designed to help them secure a job (increasing required participation from 6 to 11 months in a year). The second measure is a new wage subsidy that is designed to encourage employers to take on VLTU job seekers.[5]

Endnotes

1 Australian Social Inclusion Board, *A Compendium of Social Inclusion Indicators: How's Australia Faring?*, Canberra, p. vii, <www.socialinclusion.gov.au>.

2 Kalil, A., 2009, "Joblessness, family relations and children's development" in *Family Matters*, No. 83, Australian Institute of Family Studies, <www.aifs.gov.au>.

3 Australian Social Inclusion Board, *A Compendium of Social Inclusion Indicators: How's Australia Faring?*, Canberra, p. 29, <www.socialinclusion.gov.au>.

4 Excluding those who had never worked, whose last job was for less than two weeks or was more than two years prior.

5 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, "Building Australia's Future Workforce: Very Long Term Unemployment" factsheet within the *Budget 2011–12* section of DEEWR's website, <www.deewr.gov.au>.

Community service workers

The community services sector is vital to sustaining the wellbeing of communities in Australia. Community service workers not only provide aged care and child care services that benefit many Australians, they also provide welfare and support services to assist some of the most vulnerable people in the community. These services often complement those provided by family members and volunteers.

Recent and ongoing changes in Australia have placed increasing demands on the community services sector. Changes in society, particularly the growth in women's workforce participation, have resulted in greater demand for child care and after school care services.[1] Similarly, the ageing of Australia's population has resulted in an increasing proportion of the population in need of aged and residential care services.[2]

As demands placed on community services evolve, so to do the demands placed on workers providing these services. Dealing with potential workforce shortages is expected to be a key challenge for the aged care and child care industries in the future. Moreover, as expectations of the types of community services provided change,[2] the need for workers to be adequately equipped and qualified to meet these changes grows.

This article presents an overview of workers in industries that provide residential care services, child care services and other social assistance services in Australia.

How many people work in community service industries?

The past decade has seen substantial growth in the number of people employed in community service industries. Between 2000–01 and 2010–11, the number of people employed in community service industries grew 51% compared with 26% for all industries. The number of people working in community service industries went from an average 340,000 workers in 2000–01 to 513,000 in 2010–11.

While growth was reflected across all community service industries, some of these industries grew more rapidly than others. The number of people employed in the Child Care Services industry grew by 72% between 2000–01 and 2010–11, while in the Other Social Assistance Service industry and the Residential Care Services industry, the number grew by 55% and 38% respectively.

Data sources and definitions

Data for this article are sourced primarily from the ABS Labour Force Survey. The data used in this article are collected quarterly and have been averaged to produce a financial year average.

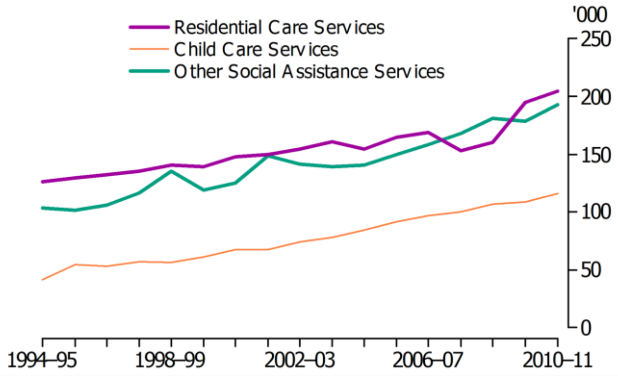
Information on workers' earnings is taken from the ABS 2010 Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership Survey conducted in August. Information on workers' education and qualifications is sourced from the ABS 2010 Survey of Education and Work conducted in May.

While there is a broad understanding of what is meant by community services, the area is complex and classifications of the sector tend to vary in definition and scope.[3] In line with previous approaches used by the ABS, this article employs an industry view to present information on workers in industries whose predominant activity is the provision of community services.

For the purposes of this article, community service industries are defined as the following three Australian and New Zealand Standard Industry Classification (ANZSIC) Groups:

- 860 ***Residential Care Services*** — provide care services in aged accommodation, aged care hostels, nursing homes, private residences, children's homes, community mental health hostels, crisis care accommodation, homes for the disadvantaged, hospices, residential refuges, and respite residential care.
- 871 ***Child Care Services*** — provide services such as before and/or after school care, child care, childminding, children's nursery, and family day care services.
- 879 ***Other Social Assistance Services*** — provide a wide array of social support services including adoption services, adult day care services, aged care assistance services, alcoholic anonymous, disabilities assistance services, marriage guidance services, soup kitchens (including mobile), welfare counselling services, and youth welfare services.

Workers in community service industries



Source: ABS *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, May 2011* (cat. no. 6291.0.55.003)

In 2010–11, there were an average half a million people (513,000), or 4.5% of all employed people, working in community service industries. Workers in the Residential Care Services industry comprised the largest group (204,000 people), followed closely by the Other Social Assistance Services industry (193,000). The Child Care Services industry was smaller, employing 116,000 people.

Who are they?

...mostly women

Women form the majority of people who work in community service industries. In 2010–11, women represented 84% of workers in community service industries, compared with 45% of workers in all industries.

In the Child Care Services industry, 96% of those employed in 2010–11 were women. In the Residential Care Services industry, women comprised 86% of workers, while in the Other Social Assistance Services industry, three-quarters (75%) of those employed were women.

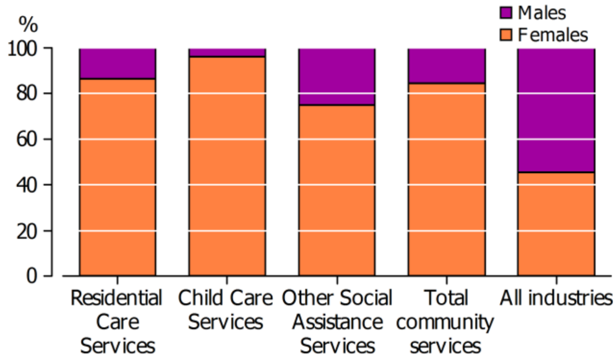
In the Child Care Services industry, 96% of those employed in 2010-11 were women.

...mostly older

The age profile of workers in community service industries also differs considerably from that of workers employed in all industries. The age profiles of the Residential Care Services industry and the Other Social Assistance Services industry are similar in that older workers constitute a large proportion of the overall workforce. In 2010–11, more than half of Residential Care Services workers (58%) and Other Social Assistance Services workers (54%) were aged 45 years and over compared with 38% of workers in all industries.

In contrast, people working in the Child Care Services industry tended to be much younger.

Workers in community service industries by sex — 2010-11



Source: ABS *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, May 2011* (cat. no. 6291.0.55.003)

In 2010–11, 27% of workers in this industry were aged 15–24 years despite this age group representing just 17% of those employed in all industries.

Recent years have seen greater attention paid to workforce ageing and its potential to exacerbate skills and labour shortages in some health and community service industries.[4] Between 2000–01 and 2010–11, there was substantial ageing of workers in the Residential Care Services industry. Notably, the proportion of workers aged 55 years and over increased considerably over the decade, more than doubling their share from 11% in 2000–01 to 27% in 2010–11. During this same period, there was a substantial decline in the proportion of workers aged 25–34 years and 35–44 years.

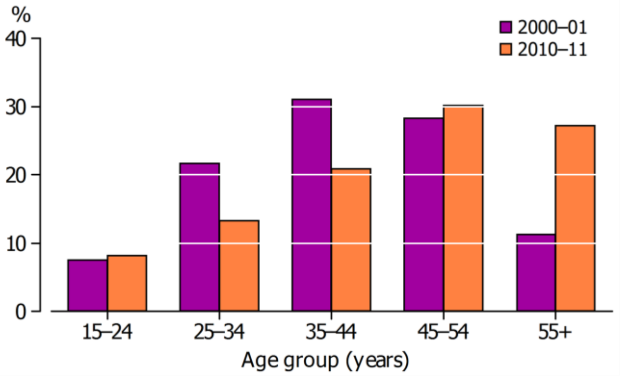
Although some workforce ageing was also in the Other Social Assistance Services industry, this ageing was more modest. Between 2000–01 and 2010–11, the proportion of workers in the Other Social Assistance Service industry aged 55 years and over increased 11 percentage points (from 14% to 25%), compared with six percentage points for workers in all industries (from 11% to 17%).

Workers in community service industries by age group — 2010-11

	Age group (years)					
	15–24	*25–34*	*35–44*	*45–54*	*55 and over*	*Total*
	%	*%*	*%*	*%*	*%*	*%*
Residential Care Services	8.2	13.3	21.0	30.3	27.3	100.0
Child Care Service	26.9	25.5	21.0	18.1	8.5	100.0
Other Social Assistance Services	7.0	16.9	21.7	29.1	25.2	100.0
Total community services	**12.0**	**17.4**	**21.3**	**27.1**	**22.3**	**100.0**
All industries	**16.7**	**22.5**	**22.4**	**21.7**	**16.7**	**100.0**

Source: ABS Labour Force Survey

Workers in the Residential Care Services industry by age group



Source: ABS Labour Force Survey

...qualifications

While workers in community service industries in May 2010 were more likely to have educational attainment at a Year 12 level or higher than people employed in all industries (82% compared with 76%), they were less likely to have completed a bachelor level degree or higher (20% compared with 26%). Even after taking into account the effect of different age profiles, these differences were still evident.

However, workers in community service occupations were more likely to be enrolled in some form of study than people employed in all industries. In May 2010, 20% of community service workers were engaged in formal learning during the year, compared with 15% for workers in all industries. Moreover, this proportion for community service workers increased when adjusted to account for differences in age.

The large proportion of young people working in the Child Care Services industry meant that the educational characteristics of this workforce differed from those working in other community service industries. In May 2010, 88% of workers in Child Care Services had educational attainment at a Year 12 level or higher, and 28% were currently enrolled in some form of study, nearly twice the proportion for people employed in all industries (15%).

What are their working arrangements?

Although full-time work is the most common working arrangement for people employed in all industries (70%), workers in community service industries were just as likely to work part-time as they were to work full-time (51% and 49% respectively). While this in part reflects the high proportion of older workers and women working in these industries, these factors did not account for all the differences seen in working arrangements. After taking into account age and sex differences, workers in community service industries were still substantially more likely to work part-time than workers in all industries.

The propensity for a greater proportion of community service workers to work part-time was reflected in the average hours worked by these workers. In 2010–11, workers in community service industries worked an average 28 hours per week, six hours less than the average for people employed in all industries (34 hours per week).

While part-time work has generally become more prevalent among all employed people, this trend is particularly apparent in community service industries. Between 2000–01 and 2010–11, the proportion of workers in all industries employed part-time increased three percentage points from 27% to 30%. In the same

Community services providers

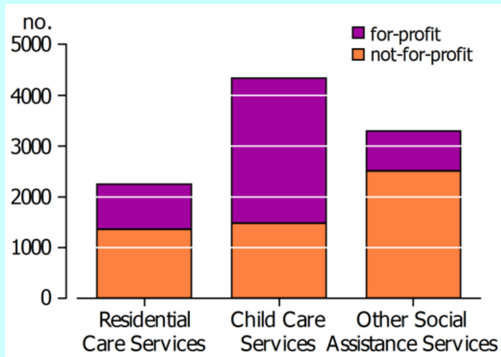
ABS *Community Services, 2008-09* (cat. no. 8696.0) presents economic and financial data on the performance of organisations and businesses involved in the provision of community services.

In 2008–09, there were 9,864 organisations and businesses working in community service industries. These groups generated $24.4 billion in income during the 2008–09 financial year with over half of this income coming from the Commonwealth and state and territory governments ($13.8 billion). Overall expenditure during the same period was close to the level of income generated with organisations spending $23.7 billion during the year.

The industry with the largest number of providers in 2008–09 was the Child Care Services industry which had 4,330 providers. This was followed by the Other Social Assistance Services industry (3,287 providers) and the Residential Care Services industry (2,247).

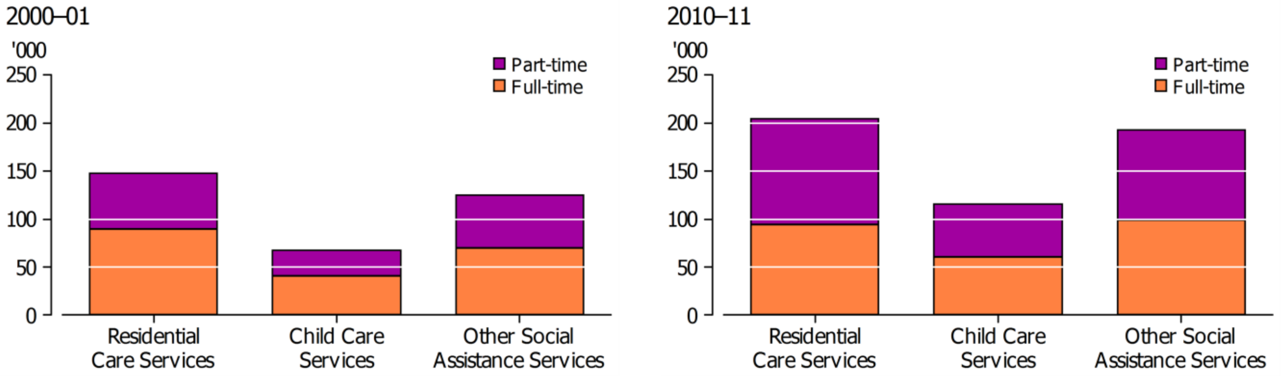
In the Child Care Services industry, two thirds (66%) of providers were businesses operating for-profit, while in the Other Social Assistance Services industry and the Residential Care Services industry, the majority of providers were not-for-profit organisations (60% and 76% not-for-profit respectively).

Number of providers in community service industries — 2008-09



Source: ABS *Community Services, 2008-09* (cat. no. 8696.0)

Workers in community service industries by part-time and full-time status — 2000-01 and 2010-11



Source: ABS *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, May 2011* (cat. no. 6291.0.55.003)

period, the proportion of community service workers employed part-time increased 10 percentage points, from 41% to 51%. This difference was most pronounced in the Residential Care Services industry where 91% of total workforce growth in this industry was due to an increase in part-time workers. In the other community service industries, this proportion was also high, at 59% and 58% for the Child Care Services industry and the Other Social Assistance Service industry respectively.

Proportion of employed persons in selected occupation groups — 2010-11

	%
Residential Care Services	
Personal Carers and Assistants	44.5
Midwifery and Nursing Professionals	17.5
Health and Welfare Support Workers	8.1
Food Preparation Assistants	5.5
Other occupations	24.4
Total	**100.0**
Child Care Services	
Child Carers	75.5
Education, Health and Welfare Service Managers	7.8
School Teachers	5.9
Food Trades Workers	*2.2
Other occupations	8.7
Total	**100.0**
Other Social Assistance Services	
Personal Carers and Assistants	36.5
Social and Welfare Professionals	13.3
Health and Welfare Support Workers	11.2
Packers and Product Assemblers	3.0
Other occupations	36.0
Total	**100.0**

* proportion has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution

Source: ABS Labour Force Survey

What jobs do they perform?

Workers in community service industries perform a wide range of roles that not only vary between industries, but also vary considerably within industries.

In the Residential Care Services industry, 44% of workers worked as Personal Carers and Assistants in 2010–11. Nurses was the second largest occupation group with 17% of workers working as Midwifery and Nursing Professionals. The remainder of workers in this industry worked in a wide range of support roles.

A considerable proportion of those employed in the Child Care Services industry are involved in the direct provision of services. In 2010–11, three-quarters (75%) of those employed in the industry worked as Child Carers. Managers of child care centres was the second largest occupation group in this industry with 8% of workers in this industry working as Education, Health and Welfare Service Managers.

The variety in the services offered by the Other Social Assistance Services industry is reflected in the occupations of people who work in this industry. More than a third (36%) of those working in the Other Social Assistance Services industry worked as Personal Carers and Assistants. Social and Welfare Professionals (13%) and Health and Welfare Support Workers (11%) were the other significant occupation groups in this industry.

How much do they earn?

A recent case brought to the Fair Work Ombudsman has seen greater attention paid to the wages and earnings of workers in community services.[5] As demand for workers in some community service industries increases, ensuring that wages are competitive enough to attract and retain workers is a key concern.[2]

Average weekly earnings of employees in community service industries(a) — August 2010

	Part-time	*Full-time*
	$	$
Residential Care Services	480	882
Child Care Services	377	810
Other Social Assistance Services	484	967
Total community services	**460**	**904**
All industries	**468**	**1 263**

(a) Excludes persons who had nil or negative earnings.

Source: ABS 2010 Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership Survey

In August 2010, the earnings of full-time employees in community service industries tended to be below the average for full-time employees in all industries. Where full-time employees in all industries earned an average $1,263 per week, full-time employees in community service industries earned around three-quarters this amount ($904 per week). This difference was marked for Child Care Services employees who earned two-thirds the average of employees in all industries ($810 per week).

For part-time employees in community service industries, average weekly earnings were similar to the average for part-time employees in all industries, with the exception of the Child Care Services industry. Where part-time employees in all industries earned an average $468 per week, part-time employees in the Child Care Services industry earned substantially less than this amount, at $377 per week.

Differences in earnings may reflect a multitude of factors. The hours a person works for example considerably influences their overall earnings. Lower earnings in some industries may also reflect the type of working arrangements of workers, or the types of work performed. These differences should be considered when comparing average earnings.

Future directions

In addition to national disability and carer strategies, recent years have seen a range of initiatives aimed at ensuring the continued provision of high quality community services in Australia.

In 2009, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a new National Quality Agenda for early childhood education and care and Outside School Hours Care. The purpose of this framework is to see better quality services provided to children in care environments. The implementation of this agreement intends to see, amongst other changes, the movement towards a National Quality Standard for all Australian states and territories.[6]

In aged care, the Productivity Commission has recently concluded a substantial inquiry into providing care for older Australians. This report has developed a range of policy options that potentially could alter the way in which aged care services are provided and funded in Australia.[2]

More broadly, the recent establishment of the Office for the Not-for-Profit Sector, and the appointment of the Not-For-Profit Sector Reform Council, aims to see stronger and more productive relationships pursued between not-for-profit organisations and the Government.[7] As not-for-profit organisations provide the majority of services in some community service areas, the consequence of these developments could be wide ranging, with lasting impacts on community service workers and the community.

Endnotes

1 More information on child care in Australia can be found in *Australian Social Trends June 2010*, 'Child Care', cat. no. 4102.0.

2 Productivity Commission, 2011, *Caring for Older Australians*, <www.pc.gov.au>.

3 Productivity Commission, *Report of Government Services*, (part F.2), <www.pc.gov.au>.

4 Recent publications that have discussed workforce ageing with respect to health and community services include the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council's *Environmental Scan 2011*, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' *Employment outlook for health care and social assistance*, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's *Health and community services labour force 2006*. Workforce ageing was also raised in *Australian Social Trends 2004*, 'Community service workers', cat. no. 4102.0.

5 Fair Work Australia, 18 May 2011, Social & Community Services equal pay case update, viewed 01 September 2011, <www.fairwork.gov.au>.

6 Council of Australian Governments, 2009, *Council of Australian Governments' Communique – 7 December 2009*, COAG, viewed 01 September 2011, <www.coag.gov.au>.

7 Office for the Not-for-Profit Sector, 2011, *About the Office*, viewed 01 September 2011 <www.notforprofit.gov.au>.

Are all schools uniform?

Schools aim to assist students to gain knowledge and skills, develop their talents and self-confidence, and increase their ability to contribute to economic development. Schools are differentiated by the type and level of education they provide and their ownership and management.[1]

Both government and non-government schools have existed in Australia since 1848. While government schools continue to educate the majority of Australian students, over the past decade the number of student enrolments and the number of teaching staff have grown at a faster rate in non-government schools than in government schools.

Australian schools have continued to generate public interest. In April 2010, the Australian Government announced the Review of Funding for Schooling. The review will consider how schools are funded and lay the foundation for ongoing investment in the school sector.[2] There is also an increasing interest in student performance, partly driven by the advent of the My School website in January 2010. *My School* provides comparisons of school's students' performances and reports financial information for each school.[3]

This article examines changes over time in the number of government and non-government schools, student enrolments and teaching staff, as well as government school funding. It also explores education outcomes for young adults (15–24 years) who last attended government or non-government schools.

Data sources and definitions

Data in this article come mainly from ABS Schools, Australia, 2010 (cat. no. 4221.0), the ABS 2010 Survey of Education and Work, the ABS 2009 Survey of Education and Training and the Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2011.

A ***student*** is a person, who on the date of the survey, is formally enrolled in a school and is active in a primary, secondary and/or special education program at the school.

A ***full-time student*** is one who undertakes a workload equivalent to, or greater than, that prescribed for a full-time student of that year level in a particular jurisdiction. The ***full-time equivalent (FTE)*** of a student is equal to 1.0.

The ***full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff*** value is a measure of staffing resources used. All full-time staff, employed full time and engaged solely on activities that fall within the scope of ABS Schools, Australia, have a FTE value of 1.0.

Full-time equivalent (FTE) student/teaching staff ratios are calculated by dividing the number of FTE students by the number of FTE teaching staff. They are an indicator of the level of staffing resources, not class size.

Government schools are those which are administered by a state or territory government.

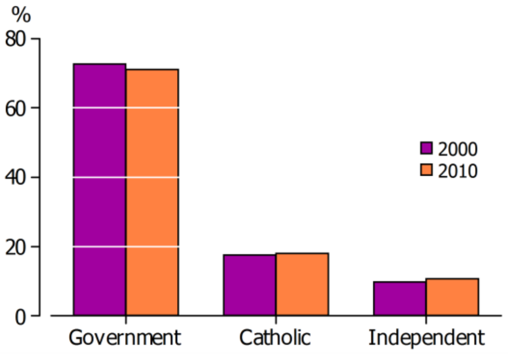
Non-government schools include Catholic and Independent affiliations. The Catholic affiliated group is the largest non-government affiliated group in Australia. The Independent affiliated group is made up of schools affiliated with the Anglican schools system. Other schools have associations with religious or secular bodies, or are entirely independent.

Remoteness Area is a structure of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC). It classifies areas sharing common characteristics of remoteness into broad geographical regions. In this article, Major Cities and Inner/Outer Regional Areas are examined.

Schools

In 2010, there were a total of 9,468 schools across Australia, a decrease of 1.4% since 2000. Of these, seven in ten (71%) were government schools. Three in every five (62%) non-government schools were Catholic and nearly two in five (37%) were Independent schools.

Affiliation of schools

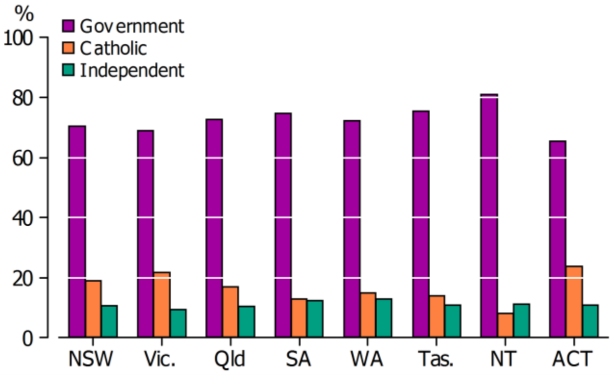


Source: ABS Schools, Australia, 2010 (cat. no. 4221.0)

Over the past decade there has been a decline in the number of government schools in Australia, while the number of non-government schools has increased.

Between 2000 and 2010, government schools decreased by 223 – including a comparatively large drop of 59 schools between 2009 and 2010. Part of this decrease can be attributed to decisions affecting structural changes of schools, for example, amalgamations of secondary schools so that there are two campuses for one school rather than two

Affiliation of schools in each state and territory — 2010



Source: ABS *Schools, Australia, 2010* (cat. no. 4221.0)

schools. So while the number of government schools has decreased, the number of students enrolled in government schools has still increased over the past decade (by 1.3%).

Over the same period, the number of non-government schools increased by 91, mainly driven by the rise in numbers of Independent schools (79 since 2000). However, there has been a slight decrease in Independent schools since 2008 (from 1,024 to 1,017).

...state and territory differences

Between 2000 and 2010, the number of government schools decreased in most states and territories, while the number of non-government schools increased.

In 2010, the Australian Capital Territory had the greatest proportion of non-government schools (35%), followed by Victoria (31%). This was mainly driven by the high proportion of Catholic schools in both the Australian Capital Territory (24%) and Victoria (22%). Independent schools made up around 10–13% of schools across all the states and territories. The Northern Territory had the lowest proportion of non-government schools (19%). This reflected the same pattern a decade earlier.

Seven in ten school students were enrolled in government schools, two in ten in Catholic schools and one in ten in Independent schools.

Students

In 2010, there were 3.5 million students formally enrolled in all Australian schools (an increase of 7% since 2000). Of these students, seven in ten (66%) were enrolled in government schools, two in ten (20%) in Catholic schools and one in ten (14%) in Independent schools (compared with 69%, 20% and 11% respectively in 2000).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

In 2010, there were around 163,000 students who were identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander enrolled in Australian schools – an increase of 3.9% since 2009. In comparison, non-Indigenous students increased by less than 1%. The increase in Indigenous student enrolments may partly be due to increases in the propensity for Indigenous students to identify as such, or improvements in Indigenous data collection.

In 2010, 15% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in non-government schools compared with 35% of non-Indigenous students.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students in non-government schools accounted for 0.4% to 1% of the total student population in each state and territory, except for Victoria (0.1%) and the Northern Territory (7.5%). The majority of Indigenous students attending non-government schools in the Northern Territory were attending Catholic schools.

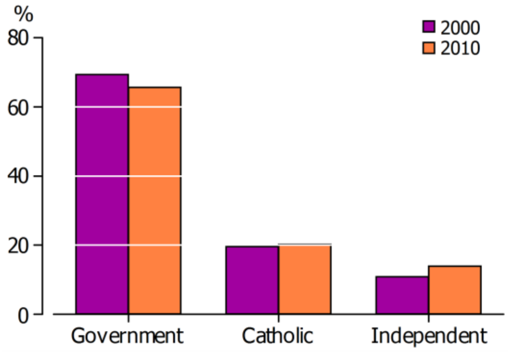
Although government schools continue to educate the majority of students in Australia, the number of students enrolled in non-government schools has been increasing at a faster rate over the last decade. Since 2000, Catholic and Independent schools had the largest proportional increases in the number of students (11% and 37% respectively) while the number of students in government schools increased by only 1.3%.

In 2010, there was little difference between the proportions of male and female students enrolled in government and non-government schools.

...disability or health conditions

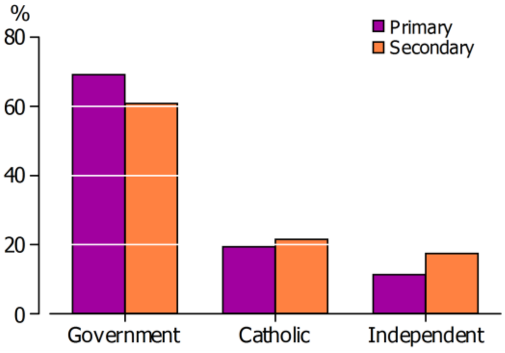
The ABS 2009 Survey of Education and Training estimated that there were around 135,000 students, aged 15 years and over, who had a disability or long term health condition, for example asthma or a mental health condition.

School affiliation of students — 2000 and 2010



Source: ABS *Schools, Australia, 2010* (cat. no. 4221.0)

Students at primary or secondary school by school affiliation — 2010



Source: ABS *Schools, Australia, 2010* (cat. no. 4221.0)

There was no significant difference between these students attending government schools (17%), Catholic schools (14%) or Independent schools (12%).

...in primary and secondary schools

In 2010, around two million students were enrolled in primary schools and around 1.5 million students were enrolled in secondary schools. A higher proportion of students were enrolled in government primary (69%) and secondary (61%) schools than students enrolled in non-government primary and secondary schools. The proportion of students enrolled in Catholic and Independent schools was lower in primary schools (19% and 11% respectively) compared with secondary schools (22% and 17% respectively).

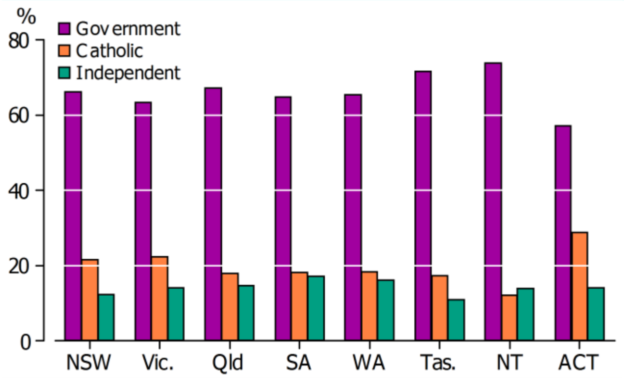
Many students may not remain in one particular type of school (government or non-government) for their entire schooling. For example, some students may attend a government primary school and complete their education in a non-government secondary school.

...state and territory differences

In 2010, student enrolments varied across the states and territories by school affiliation. Reflecting the proportion of government and non-government schools in the states and territories, students were most likely to be enrolled in government schools in the Northern Territory (74%) and least likely to be enrolled in government schools in the Australian Capital Territory (57%).

Students in South Australia were the most likely to be enrolled in Independent schools (17%), while students in the Australian Capital Territory were the most likely to be enrolled in Catholic schools (29%).

School affiliation of students by state and territory — 2010



Source: ABS *Schools, Australia, 2010* (cat. no. 4221.0)

Staffing

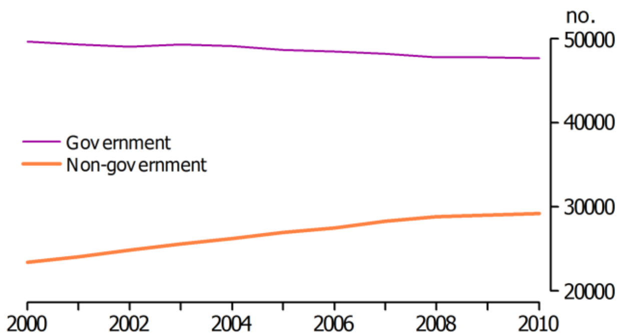
As school student numbers have increased, so too have the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff. In 2010, there were around 251,000 FTE teaching staff, representing an increase of 15% since 2000 (218,000).

Reflecting student enrolment patterns, the rate of increase of FTE teaching staff between 2000 and 2010 was higher in non-government schools (30%) than in government schools (9%). For secondary schools, the increase of FTE teaching staff in non-government schools was five times greater than in government schools (30% compared with 6%).

For secondary schools, the increase of FTE teaching staff in non-government schools was five times greater than in government schools.

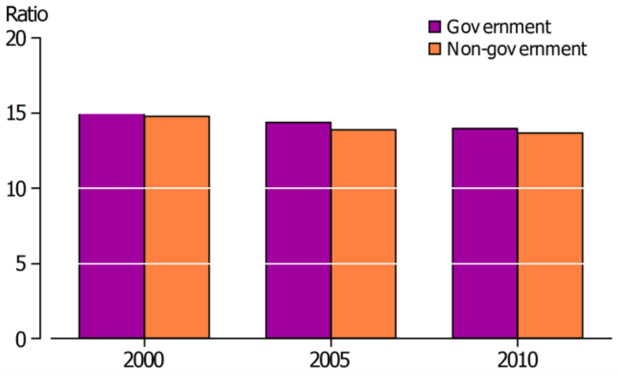
Since 2000, there has been a small increase (5%) in the overall number of male FTE teaching staff across all schools. However, the increase only occurred in non-government schools. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of male FTE teaching staff increased by almost one-quarter (24%) in non-government schools, compared with a decrease of 4% in government schools.

Male teachers by school affiliation — 2000 and 2010



Source: ABS *Schools, Australia, 2010* (cat. no. 4221.0)

FTE(a) student to teaching staff ratios by school affiliation — 2000, 2005 and 2010



(a) Full-time equivalent.

Source: ABS Schools, Australia, 2010 (cat. no. 4221.0)

...student to teaching staff ratio

Full-time equivalent (FTE) student to teaching staff ratios are calculated by dividing the number of full-time students by the number of full-time teaching staff. They are an indicator of the level of staffing resources used in schools and are not a measure of class size. Theoretically, the lower the student to teaching staff ratio, the higher the availability of teacher services to students.[4]

In general, the student to teaching staff ratio has decreased across all affiliations in the previous 10 years. In 2010, student to teaching staff ratios were lower in government primary schools than non-government primary schools (15.4 compared with 16.5). For secondary schools, the opposite was the case, with lower student to teaching staff ratios in non-government secondary schools (11.7) compared with government secondary schools (12.3).

Government funding

All schools receive funding from both the Australian and the state and territory governments, with the proportion of funds received varying between school sectors. Overall, the majority of total public expenditure is allocated to government schools.[5]

...government schools

Under constitutional arrangements, state and territory governments have the responsibility of providing funding for all Australian children of school age. State and territory governments provide the majority of funding to government schools and the Australian government provides supplementary funding under the *National Education Agreement (2008)*.

In 2008–09, total government recurrent expenditure on all schools was $38.9 billion. Of this, $30.9 billion was provided to government schools, representing 79% of total government recurrent expenditure on all schools. This was similar to the pattern in 2004–05, where total government recurrent expenditure on government schools represented 78% of total government recurrent expenditure on all schools.

Government recurrent expenditure on school education(a) — 2008-09

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.
				($ million)					
Government schools									
Australian government	1 119	807	690	260	346	91	76	53	3 441
State and territory governments	8 643	5 849	5 718	1 862	3 604	690	505	543	27 415
Total	**9 762**	**6 656**	**6 409**	**2 122**	**3 950**	**781**	**581**	**596**	**30 856**
Non-government schools									
Australian government	1 823	1 456	1 146	457	605	121	70	109	5 787
State and territory governments	797	471	497	136	278	44	31	43	2 297
Total	**2 620**	**1 926**	**1 643**	**594**	**884**	**165**	**101**	**152**	**8 084**
All schools									
Australian government	2 942	2 263	1 836	717	951	212	146	162	9 227
State and territory governments	9 441	6 319	6 215	1 999	3 882	734	536	586	29 713
Total	**12 382**	**8 582**	**8 051**	**2 716**	**4 833**	**946**	**682**	**748**	**38 940**

(a) See source for advice on caveats and further interpretation of the data.

Source: Productivity Commission, 2011, Report on Government Services 2011

In 2008–09, state and territory governments provided 89% of total government recurrent expenditure on government schools and the Australian government provided 11%.

...non-government schools

The Australian government provides the majority of funding for non-government schools. Under the [*Schools Assistance Act (2008)*](), based on the funding model introduced in 2001, the Australian government allocates funding according to the socioeconomic status (SES) of the school community. Recently, the equity of this funding model has been the source of public debate, and in mid-2010 the Australian government announced a *Review of Funding for Schooling*. In March 2011, legislation was passed extending existing non-government school funding to the end of 2013. [6]

In 2008–09, total government recurrent expenditure on non-government schools was $8.1 billion, representing 21% of total government expenditure on all schools. This reflected a similar pattern seen in 2004–05.

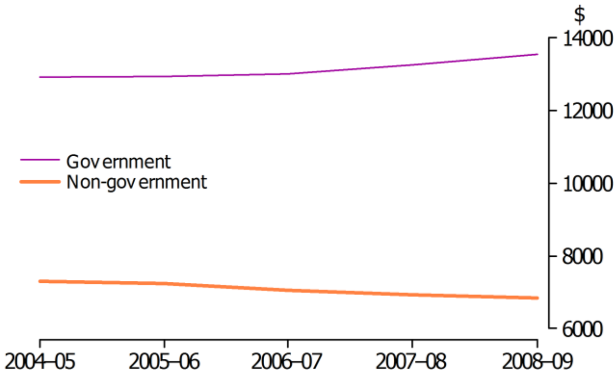
Nearly three-quarters (72%) of government recurrent expenditure on non-government schools was provided by the Australian government in 2008–09, with the state and territory governments providing 28%.

...private funding

Along with government funding, non-government schools also receive significant income from private sources, including fees, charges, donations and income. [7]

In 2008, private sources accounted for 43% of total non-government school income. In Catholic schools, private sources accounted for 29% of total school income and in Independent schools, private sources accounted for 58% of total school income.

Government recurrent expenditure per FTE(a) student by school affiliation(b) — 2004-05-2008-09



(a) Full-time equivalent.
(b) In 2008-09 real dollars.

Source: Productivity Commission, 2011, *Report on Government Services 2011*

Pathway definitions

Year 12 marks the completion of the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education. Entry to this level is usually the completion of Year 11 or equivalent and the duration is usually one year of full-time study.

Non-school qualifications refer to qualifications at the Postgraduate degree level, Master degree level, Graduate diploma and Graduate certificate level, Bachelor degree level, Advanced diploma and Diploma level and Certificates I, II, III, IV level and certificate not further defined.

...funding per student

Government recurrent expenditure per full-time equivalent (FTE) student is measured by dividing total government recurrent expenditure by the total number of FTE students. Holding other factors constant, a low or decreasing government recurrent expenditure per FTE student may represent better or improved efficiency.[1] Since 2004–05, government expenditure per FTE student has increased in government schools and decreased in non-government schools.

In 2008–09, government recurrent expenditure per FTE student in all schools was $11,260, an increase (in average annual real terms) of 0.4% per year since 2004–05.

Government expenditure per FTE student in government schools was $13,544, an increase of 1.2% per year since 2004–05. In comparison, since 2004–05, government expenditure per FTE student in non-government schools decreased by 1.6% per year to $6,850 in 2008–09.

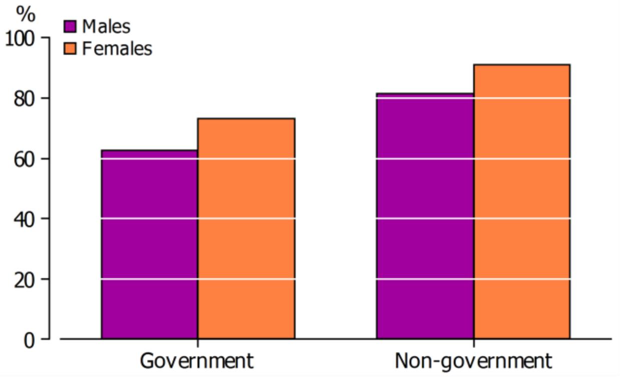
On average, total private sources across all non-government schools amounted to $5,400 per student.

Pathways

Student outcomes are not exclusively determined by the type of school they attended. They may be affected by several factors that lie outside the influence of the school system, such as student commitment, family environment and the proximity of the school to other educational facilities.[1] However, there is some argument that the distribution of engaged and achieving students is linked to the better resourcing of some schools over others and the public and parental perceptions of particular schools and sectors. [8]

The following analysis uses the 2010 ABS Survey of Education and Work to look at the educational outcomes of young adults (15–24 years) who were not currently at school. This analysis only captures the school the young adult last attended and as such does not distinguish between those who may have attended a combination of government and non-government schools over their schooling life.

People aged 15-24 years with Year 12 by school affiliation(a) and sex — 2010



(a) Last school attended, excluding those still at school.

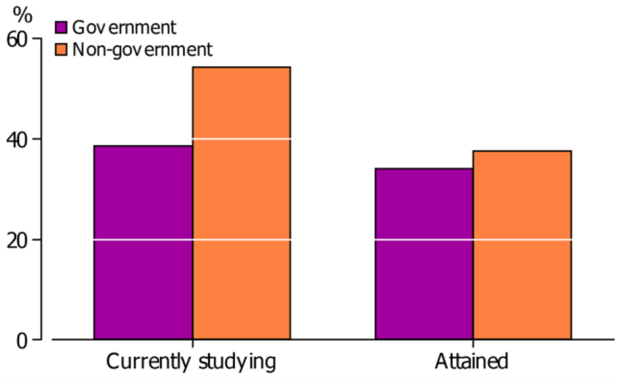
Source: ABS 2010 Survey of Education and Work

...Year 12 attainment

Research has shown that those who have completed Year 12 are more likely to continue on to further education as well as enter into the workforce.[9] Looking at young adults not currently studying at school in 2010, those who had last attended a non-government school were more likely to have completed Year 12 than those who had last attended a government school (86% compared with 68%). There was little difference between those who last attended Independent schools (88%) and Catholic schools (84%).

The same trend could also be observed across Major Cities and Inner/Outer Regional Areas. In Major Cities, young adults who had attended a non-government school were more likely to have attained Year 12 than those who last attended a government school (88% compared with 72%). In Inner/Outer Regional Areas, young adults who had last attended a non-government school were also more likely to have attained Year 12 than those who had last attended a government school (79% compared with 57%).

People aged 15-24 years who are studying for, or have attained, a non-school qualification by school affiliation(a) — 2010



(a) Last school attended, excluding those still at school.

Source: ABS 2010 Survey of Education and Work

Young men were less likely than young women to have attained Year 12, irrespective of the type of school they last attended. Amongst young adults who last attended a government school, 63% of men had attained Year 12, compared with 73% of women. Amongst young adults who last attended a non-government school, 81% of men and 91% of women had attained Year 12.

For further information on Year 12 attainment, please see Year 12 Attainment in *Australian Social Trends, March 2011* (cat. no. 4102.0).

Non-school qualifications

In 2010, young adults (15–24 years), who were not currently studying at school and who had last attended non-government schools were more likely to be currently studying for, or have already attained, a non-school qualification than those who last attended government schools.

...currently studying

Over half (54%) of young adults, who last attended non-government schools, were enrolled in study for a non-school qualification at the time of the survey. In comparison, under two-fifths (39%) of young adults who last attended government schools were enrolled in study for a non-school qualification.

There was little difference between the sexes in the proportion who were enrolled in study for a non-school qualification and last attended a government school (38% of men and 39% of women) or a non-government school (53% and 56% respectively).

...attained a non-school qualification

Young men were less likely to have attained a non-school qualification than young women. In 2010, 31% of young men who had last attended a government school had attained a non-school qualification compared with 39% of young women.

The level of non-school attainment was likely to be higher for those who last attended non-government schools compared with those who had not. For example, of those young adults who had last attended non-government schools and had attained a non-school qualification, 39% had attained a Bachelor degree or above, compared with 25% of those who had last attended government schools.

Looking ahead

The number of student enrolments and the number of schools have increased more in non-government schools than in government schools. While it has been suggested that this growth is due to the lack of 'public values' being taught in government schools, others contend that non-government schools fail to protect these values, instead seeking exclusivity.[10]

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) confirmed in the *National Education Agreement (2008)* that all children should be engaged in, and benefit from, schooling. A sound education at the primary and secondary levels is expected to provide a solid base for further learning experiences and contribute to the development of a skilled workforce.

Endnotes

1 Productivity Commission, 2011, *Report on Government Services 2011*, Chapter 4, *School Education*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, p. 4.3.

2 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 9 July 2010, *Review of School Funding – Final Terms of Reference*, <www.deewr.gov.au>.

3 Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2010, *My School*, ACARA, Sydney, <www.myschool.edu.au>.

4 Caution should be used when interpreting the student to teaching staff ratio. A low or decreasing student-to-teacher ratio may reflect decreasing efficiency, but may also reflect a higher quality education system, if it is assumed that teachers have more time for each student and that this results in better student outcomes. Student to teaching staff ratio can be affected by several factors, including the proportion of special needs students and the degree to which administrative work is undertaken.

5 All data on government funding is sourced from: Productivity Commission, 2011, *Report on Government Services 2011*, Chapter 4, *School Education*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

6 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011, *School funding certainty a step closer*, DEEWR, Canberra, <www.deewr.gov.au>.

7 Data on private funding is sourced from: Harrington, M., 2011, *Australian Government funding for schools explained*, Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliament of Australia, Canberra, pp. 22-23.

8 Bonner, C., 2011, *My School, PISA and Australia's Equity Gap*, Australian Policy Online, Canberra, <www.apo.org.au>, p. 5 and Figure 2.

9 Foundation for Young Australians, 2009, *How Young People are Faring 2009*, Foundation of Young Australians, Melbourne, p. vii, <www.fya.org.au>.

10 Denniss, R., Macintosh, A. and Wilkinson, D., 2004, *The Accountability of Private Schools to Public Values*, No. 71, The Australian Institute, Melbourne, p. 4.

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