

# AUSTRALIA

## *Statistical Profile*

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### INTRODUCTION TO AUSTRALIA



#### About this Statistical Profile

Organizations striving to be employers of choice in different countries around the world need access to current information about the economic, social, political, and demographic characteristics of the countries where their employees live and work.

The Country Profile Series focuses on statistics that can guide decision-making at the workplace: workforce highlights, economic highlights, and population highlights. This Country Profile is part of a set of resources about Australia available on the website of the Global Perspectives Institute: [www.bc.edu/agingandwork](http://www.bc.edu/agingandwork).

In the late 18th century, Europeans began to arrive in the land known today as Australia. The British established a penal settlement on the eastern coast in 1824, and migration from Europe increased, resulting in the foundation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. Australia remains a part of the Commonwealth with a liberal democratic political system.

When Australia became a federation, wool growing was at the center of economic activity, but many kinds of new goods, such as wheat, dairy, and other agriculturally based products, became a part of the Australian export repertoire as well. After World War II, the manufacturing sector experienced marked growth. The government's import restrictions led to increased profits for the manufacturing industry, including motor vehicles, metal processing, textiles, clothing, and chemicals. The country took advantage of its natural resources to rapidly develop agricultural and manufacturing industries. As a consequence, Australia transformed itself into an internationally competitive, advanced market economy.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1990, Australia's economy has grown considerably. Its real economy has grown by an average of approximately 3.3% per year. The country's GDP in 2006–07 (in value terms) was just over \$1 trillion, making it the world's 13th largest economy overall and the 10th largest industrialized economy.<sup>2</sup>

There is no state religion in Australia. However, 64% of Australians in the 2006 Census identified as Christian (26% Roman Catholic and 19% Anglican). There has been a steady growth of Australians identifying as having "no religion" (19% in 2006), including humanism, atheism, agnosticism, and rationalism. Less than 6% of Australians state that they practice a non-Christian religion.<sup>3</sup>

The country is highly multicultural, with the Australian (37.13%), English (31.65%), Irish (9.08%), and Scottish (7.56%) ethnic origins maintaining the highest level of nominated ancestry, according to the 2006 Australian Census.<sup>3</sup> In 2008, four of Australia's capital cities were in the *The Economist's* Top Ten World's Most Livable Cities list, with Melbourne at second place.

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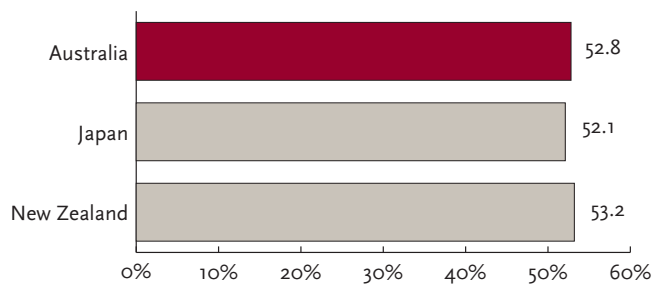


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## LABOR FORCE HIGHLIGHTS

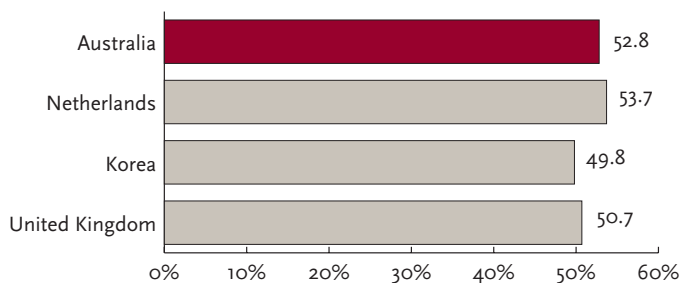
- 🌐 65.3% of the total Australian population was in the labor force in 2009.<sup>4</sup>
- 🌐 The economically active population in Australia is projected to increase from 13.0 million in 2007 to 14.7 million in 2020.<sup>5</sup> The “economically active population” comprises all persons of either sex who furnish the supply of labor for the production of goods and services during a specified time reference period.
- 🌐 In July 2009, the unemployment rate in Australia was 5.8%.<sup>6</sup>
- 🌐 In May 2008, the average weekly hours worked by Australian employees were 36.4. This represents 41.0 hours for males and 30.9 for females.<sup>7</sup>
- 🌐 28.1% of the total labor force worked part-time in 2008.<sup>6</sup>
- 🌐 In 2007, 12.9% of the total civilian employed labor force reported being self-employed.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 1a. Employed as Percent of Total Population - Selected Regional Countries, 2008



Source: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2008<sup>9</sup>

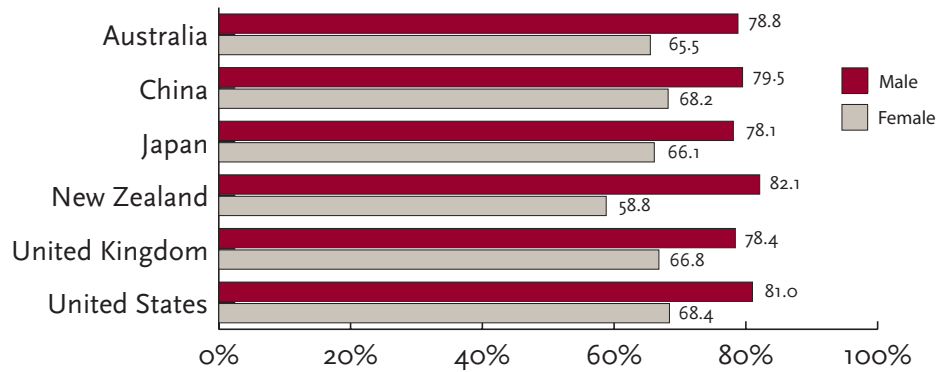
Figure 1b. Employed as Percent of Total Population - Selected Comparable GNI Countries, 2008



Source: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2008<sup>9</sup>

In 2006, Australia's employment rates were 79% for males and 66% for females, respectively, matching almost exactly those for the UK, Japan, and China. New Zealand shows the largest difference in employment rates between males and females (23.3%), and Australia follows with a gap of 13.3%. In all, 61.9% of the total Australian population is employed, a level comparable to that of New Zealand (62%) and China (58%).<sup>10</sup>

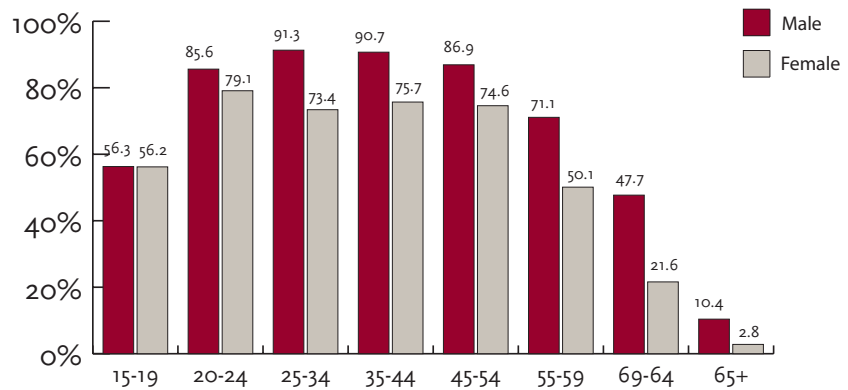
Figure 2. Employment Rate, Ages 15-64, by Gender, Australia and Comparable OECD Nations, 2006



Source: The CIA World Factbook, 2009<sup>10</sup>

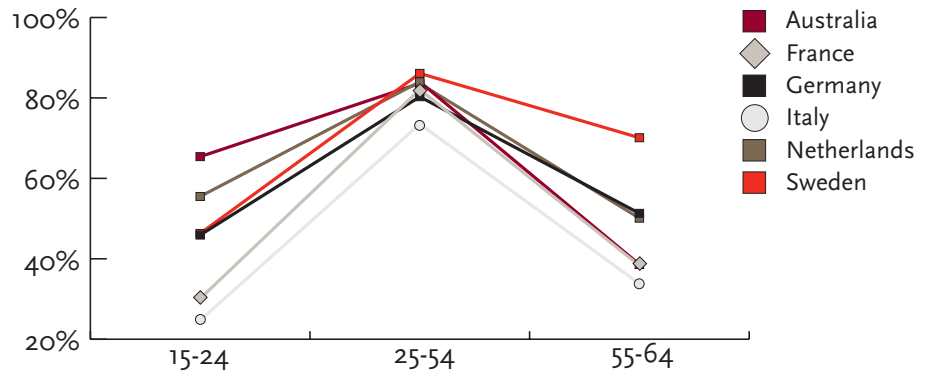
For men, employment peaks in the 25-54 age range and then drops sharply from age 55 onwards.<sup>7</sup> Female employment rates are lower than those for males, but show similar trends, with peaks around the same age. However, it is noteworthy that there is a decrease in employment rate for women ages 25-34, most likely due to child-rearing.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 3. Employment Rates in Australia, within age group, 2009



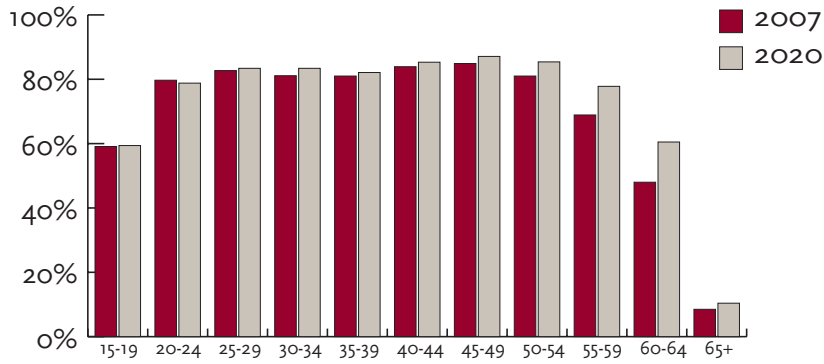
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009<sup>4</sup>

Figure 4. Employment Rates in Australia Compared to Selected Regional Countries, within age group, 2007



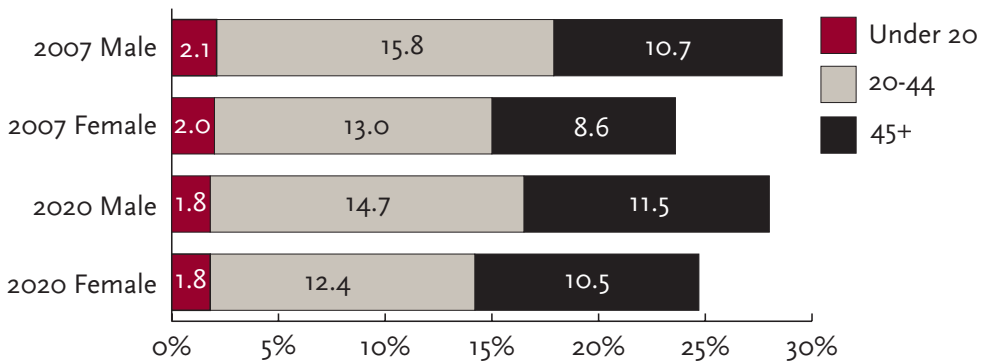
Source: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2008<sup>8</sup>

Figure 5a. Current and Projected Economically Active Population Estimates in Australia, within age group, for years 2007 and 2020



Source: International Labour Office, 2009<sup>5</sup>

Figure 5b. Current and Projected Percentage of Total Population Economically Active in Australia for years 2007 and 2020 for males and females



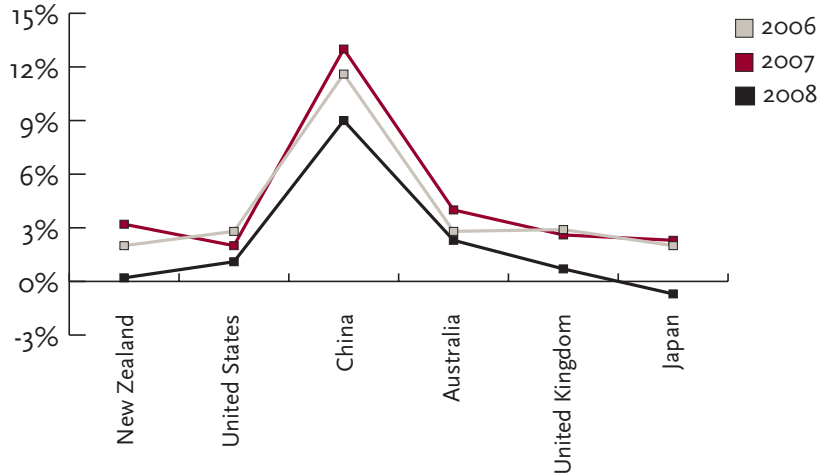
Source: International Labour Office, 2009<sup>5</sup>

## ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS

- 🌐 The 2008 estimate of the gross domestic product purchasing power parity in Australia was the equivalent of \$800.2 billion.<sup>10</sup>
- 🌐 The greatest growth in GDP was in services (71%), with the proportion contributed by industry and agriculture at 26% and 3%, respectively.<sup>10</sup>

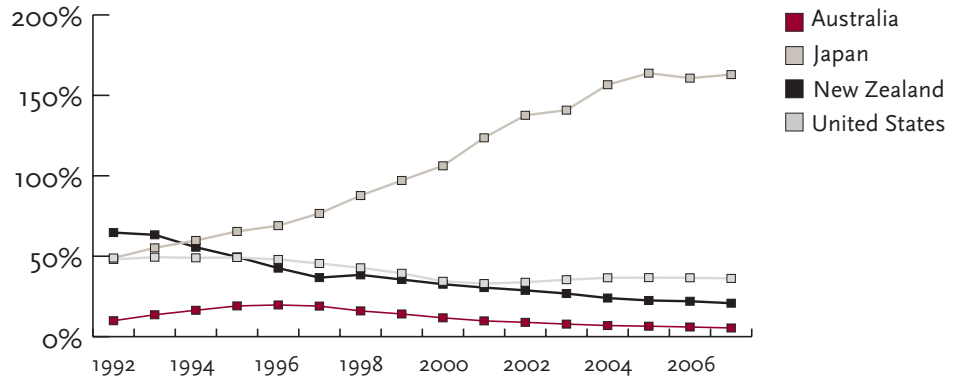
Following a similar pattern to many other countries, Australia's growth in real GDP increased by 1.2% in 2007 but then dropped by 1.7% in 2008.<sup>10</sup>

Figure 6. GDP Growth, Australia and Comparable GDP Comparisons



Source: The CIA World Factbook, 2009<sup>10</sup>

Figure 7. Total National Debt as Percentage of GDP, Selected Regional Countries, 1992-2007



Source: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009<sup>9</sup>

As Table 1 demonstrates, the most important export trading partner for Australia in 2006 was Japan (19.1%), followed by China (14.3%).<sup>10</sup>

**Table 1: Most Important *Export* Trading Partners in Australia, the UK and the US**

	Australia		United Kingdom		United States	
	Trading Partner	Percent	Trading Partner	Percent	Trading Partner	Percent
1	Japan	19.1	US	14.1	Canada	21.4
2	China	14.3	Germany	11	Mexico	11.7
3	South Korea	8	France	7.8	China	5.6
4	India	5.9	Ireland	7.5	Japan	5.4
5	US	5.8	Netherlands	6.4	UK	5.8
6	NZ	5.2	Belgium	5.3	Germany	4.3

Source: The World Factbook, 2008<sup>10</sup>

The most important import trading partners in Australia in 2006 were China (14.5%), and the United States (13%).<sup>10</sup>

**Table 2: Most Important *Import* Trading Partners in Australia, the UK and the US**

	Australia		United Kingdom		United States	
	Trading Partner	Percent	Trading Partner	Percent	Trading Partner	Percent
1	China	14.5	Germany	13.7	China	16.9
2	US	13	US	8.3	Canada	15.7
3	Japan	9.6	Netherlands	7.2	Mexico	10.6
4	Singapore	6.2	France	6.8	Japan	7.4
5	Germany	5.2	China	5.9	Germany	4.8
6	UK	4.5	Norway	4.9		
7	Thailand	4	Belgium	4.8		

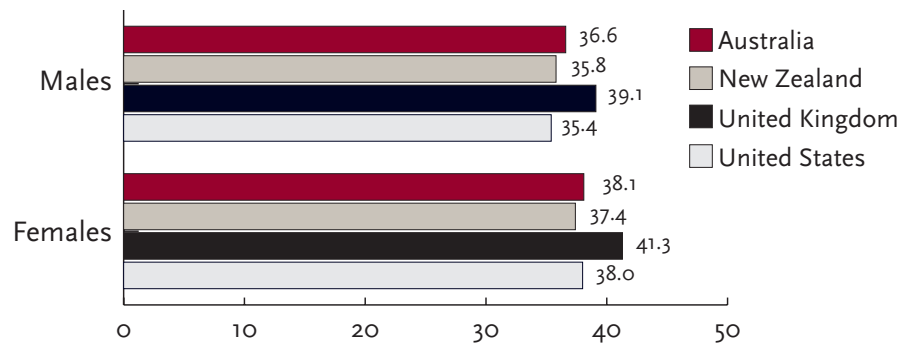
Source: The World Factbook, 2008<sup>10</sup>

## DEMOGRAPHIC HIGHLIGHTS

- 🌐 In 2009, Australia’s estimated population was 21,432,000 persons, with females accounting for 10,771,000 persons (50.2%). The proportion of the population aged 0–14 years and aged 65 years and over was 19.3% and 13.2%, respectively.<sup>11</sup>
- 🌐 In 2006, 24.1% of the Australian population was foreign-born.<sup>8</sup>
- 🌐 Australia’s total fertility rate (TFR) in 2009 was 1.78 children per woman, which is a slight decrease from 2006 (1.81 children per woman).<sup>12</sup>
- 🌐 In 2007, the ratio of the population aged 65 and older to the overall population was 13.7. In comparison, the ratio was 12.6 in New Zealand and 21.5 in Japan.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 8. Median Age, by Gender, Australia and Comparable Developed Nations

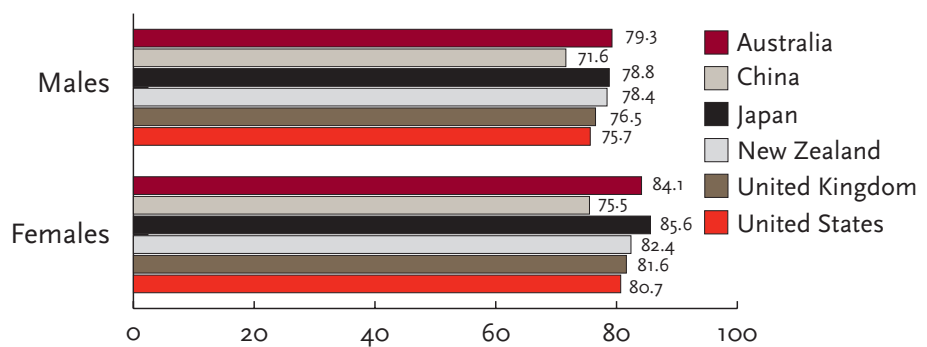
The median age of the Australian population in 2009 was 37.3 years (36.6 years for males and 38.1 years for females). Australia is more similar to the US and New Zealand than the UK in terms of its age profile. However, Australia shows a smaller median age gap between males and females.<sup>10</sup>



Source: The CIA World Factbook, 2009<sup>10</sup>

Figure 9. Life Expectancy at Birth, Australia and Comparable Developed Nations

In 2009, the life expectancy in Australia was 81.63 years. In the past two and a half decades, a reduction in mortality among those aged 50 and over contributed 70% and 73% to the increase in male and female life expectancy in Australia, respectively. Currently, increasing life expectancy is closely tied to aging. Average life expectancy in Australia exceeds that of the UK and the US.<sup>10</sup>



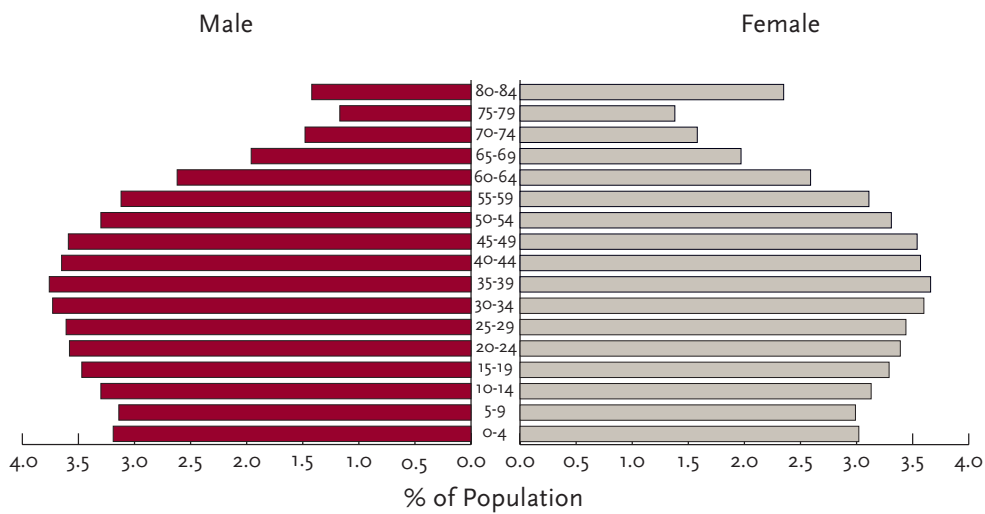
Source: The CIA World Factbook, 2009<sup>10</sup>

🌐 In Australia, 8.7% of the male population and 9.9% of the female population is aged 60 or older. In comparison:

- In Japan, 12.5% of the male population and 16.0% of the female population is 60 or older.
- In the United States, 7.8% of the male population and 10.0% of the female population is 60 or older.

🌐 In Australia, the age distribution of the population is evenly dispersed, with women comprising a slightly larger percentage of the older population. Japan's population, in contrast, has a greater concentration of older adults compared to younger individuals. The age distribution in the United States' population is fairly consistent among the younger age groups and then decreases at the 55-and-older age groups (see Figures 10a–10c).

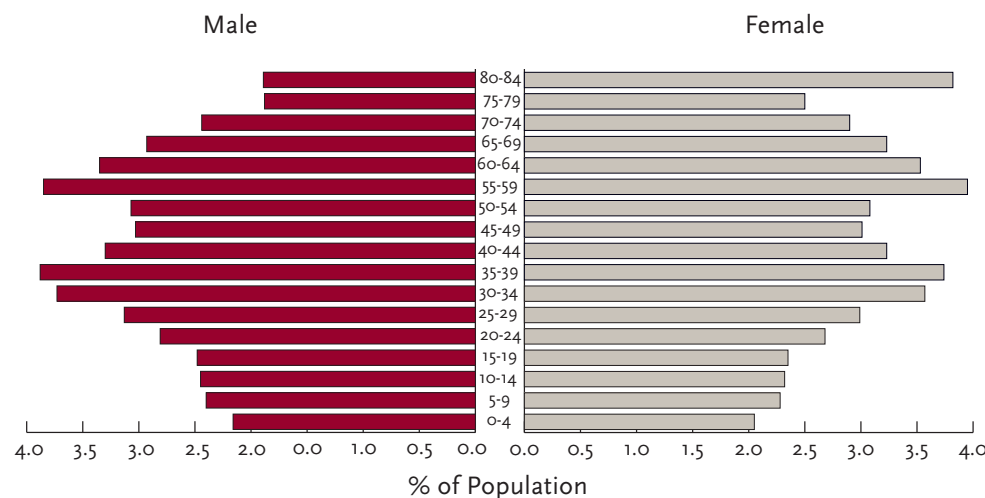
Figure 10a. Population Distribution of Australia, 2008



There is a relatively even distribution of the Australian population by age. There is little difference between men's and women's distributions.

Source: US Census Bureau<sup>13</sup>

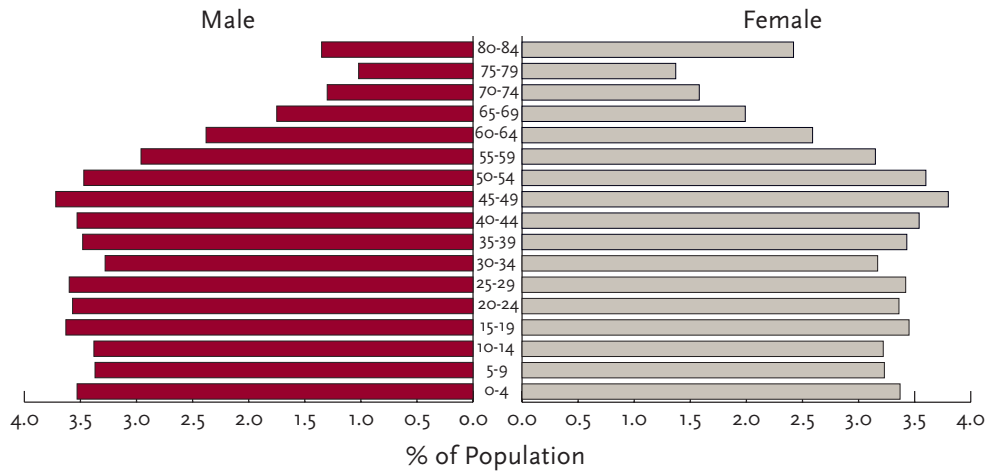
Figure 10b. Population Distribution of Japan, 2008



Source: US Census Bureau<sup>13</sup>



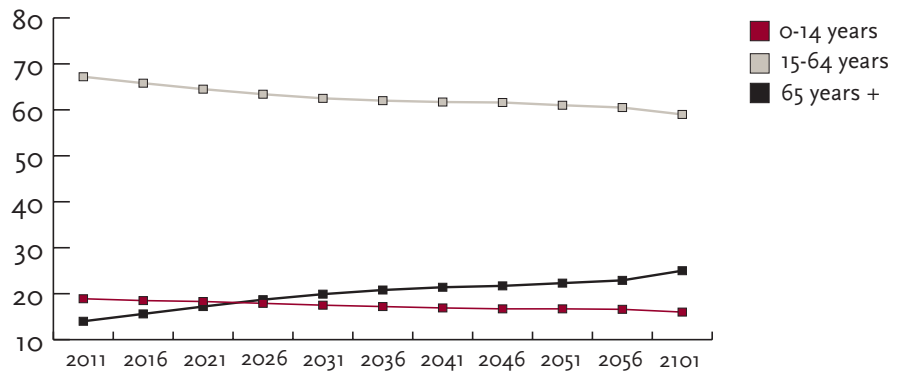
Figure 10c. Population Distribution of the United States, 2008



Source: US Census Bureau<sup>13</sup>

Figure 10d. Age Projections in Australia

The proportion of the Australian population aged 65 years and over is projected to exceed children aged 0–14 years after 2021. By 2051, 22.3% of the population is projected to be aged 65 years and over, in comparison to 16.7% of the population aged 0–14 years.<sup>11</sup>



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009<sup>11</sup>

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## ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

Established in 2007 by the Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College, the Global Perspectives Institute is an international collaboration of scholars and employers committed to the expansion of the quality of employment available to the 21st century multi-generational workforce in countries around the world.

The Global Perspectives Institute focuses on innovative and promising practices that might be adopted by employers and policy-makers.

The Institute's research, publications, and international forums contribute to:

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The Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College promotes quality of employment as an imperative for the 21st century multi-generational workforce. We integrate evidence from research with insights from workplace experiences to inform innovative organizational decision making. Collaborating with business leaders and scholars in a multi-disciplinary dialogue, the Center develops the next generation of knowledge and talent management.

The Sloan Center on Aging & Work is grateful for the continued support of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

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