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A profile of NSW women

This chapter provides information about the population of NSW women, including where they live, their age profile, cultural and language background and family and household arrangements. This year, 2011 Census data has been used to provide additional information about the diversity and age structure of NSW's female population.

Key findings

As at August 2011, there were 3.5 million women in NSW, representing 51 percent of the state's population.

NSW is highly urbanised, with 64 percent of women residing in Sydney, the largest city in Australia, and a further 12 percent of women in the Hunter Valley and Illawarra regions. The remaining 24 percent of women reside in regional, rural and remote areas.

At the time of the 2011 Census, 2.5 percent of women in NSW identified as being Aboriginal Australians. There has been a significant increase, 25 percent, in the number of Aboriginal women living in NSW since the 2006 Census.

More immigrant women settle in NSW than in any other state – over 36,280, in 2011-12. Immigrant women's presence in Sydney is significantly greater than in regional NSW (35 percent of women in Sydney are overseas born compared to 11 percent in regional NSW). Similarly, a larger proportion of women living in Sydney than regional NSW spoke a language other than English at home (38 percent compared to 9 percent).

The median age of NSW women in 2011 was 38.3 years – nearly two years older than the median age of men. A girl born in 2011 in NSW can expect to live for 84.2 years, compared to 79.8 years for a boy.

NSW's total fertility rate has been increasing in recent years, and in 2011, at 1.9 births per 1,000 women, was just under the national rate.

Women are having children at a later age. The median age of first-time mothers in 2011 was 29.2 years, compared to 28.8 years a decade earlier.

Population size and distribution

In 2011, NSW's total population was 6.9 million people with women forming a slight majority at 3.5 million (51 percent). NSW women represent about a third of Australia's female population.¹

In 2011, slightly more NSW women than men lived in the Greater Sydney region: 64 percent of women, compared to 63 percent of men. As shown in Table 1.1, the majority of NSW women (70 percent) live in major urban areas (Sydney, Newcastle, Central Coast, Tweed Heads, Queanbeyan, and Wollongong). Twenty percent live in other urban (small and medium towns), 2 percent in bounded localities and the remaining 7 percent are located in rural areas.

The majority of Aboriginal women and men (62 and 60 percent) live outside of major urban areas.

¹ ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011.

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Table 1.1 Population size and distribution, women in NSW and Australia, 2011

	Aboriginal women		Total women	
	NSW (%)	Australia (%)	NSW (%)	Australia (%)
Major urban (100,000 or more people)	40	39	70	70
Capital	25	-	57	-
Other major urban	15	-	13	-
Other urban (1,000-99,000 people)	46	39	20	20
Bounded locality (200-999 people)	5	11	2	3
Rural balance (0-199 people)	9	10	7	8
Total	87,541	278,038	3,508,781	10,873,705

Note: Major urban includes Sydney, Wollongong, Newcastle, Tweed Heads, Central Coast and Queanbeyan. Percentages do not total 100 due to rounding.

Population: All NSW and Australian women.

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011.

At the time of the 2011 Census, Aboriginal women constituted 2.5 percent of the female population in NSW. There were 87,541 Aboriginal women in NSW, up from 70,029 five years earlier in the last census, representing a 25 percent increase in the number of Aboriginal women. This increase can be attributed to a high Aboriginal birth rate, increased life expectancy and a stronger willingness to identify as Aboriginal. All states have seen an increase in the number of Aboriginal women with NSW having the largest numerical increase.

Population structure

As reported in 2012, population ageing in Australia, as in most developed countries, is a result of sustained low fertility and increasing life expectancy. Figure 1.1 shows the distribution of the NSW female population in 1961 and 2011. Over the past 50 years there has been a marked decrease in the proportion of the population in the younger age groups, and a corresponding increase in the older age groups.¹

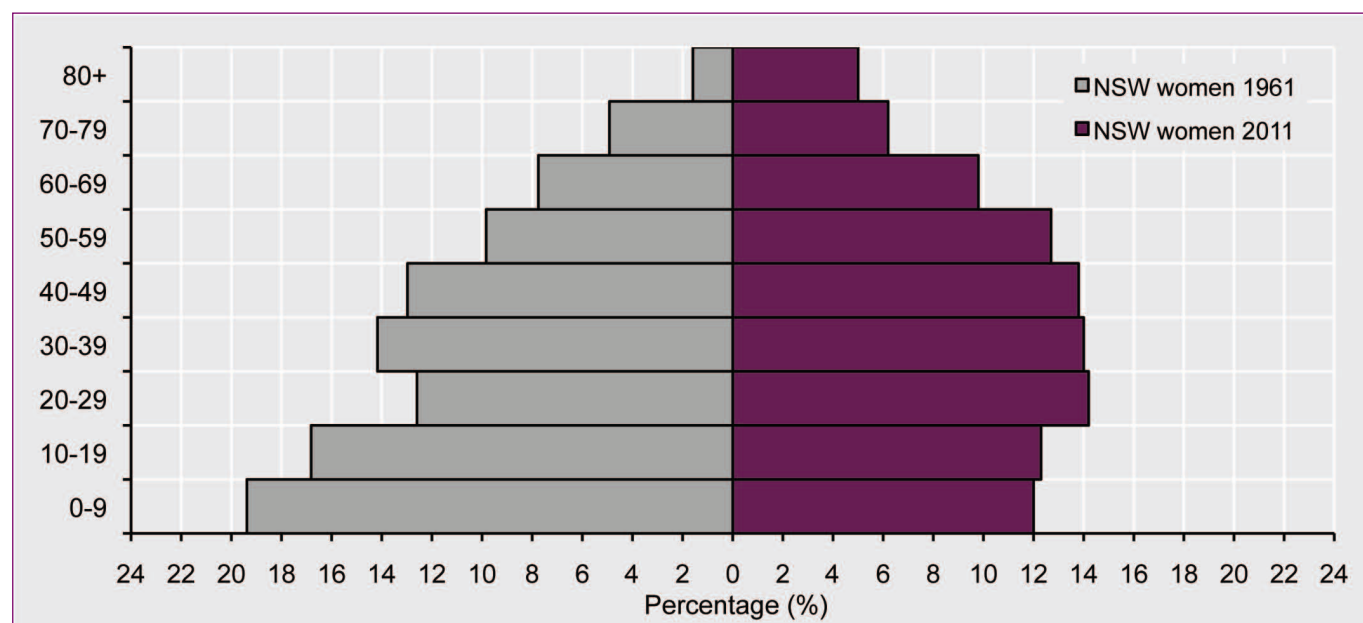
¹ ABS (2010) *Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, 2010*. Cat no. 3105.0.

Another way to look at population is to compare median age. Median age refers to the age at which approximately half of the population is older and half is younger. The median age of NSW women increased from 29 years in 1961, to 38 years in 2011, a gain of nine years in four decades. This change is nearly two years more than the change in the median age of men.²

² ABS (2008) *Australian Historical Population Statistics, 2008*. Cat no. 3105.0.65.001.

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Figure 1.1 Population distribution, NSW women by age, 1961 and 2011



Population: All NSW women.

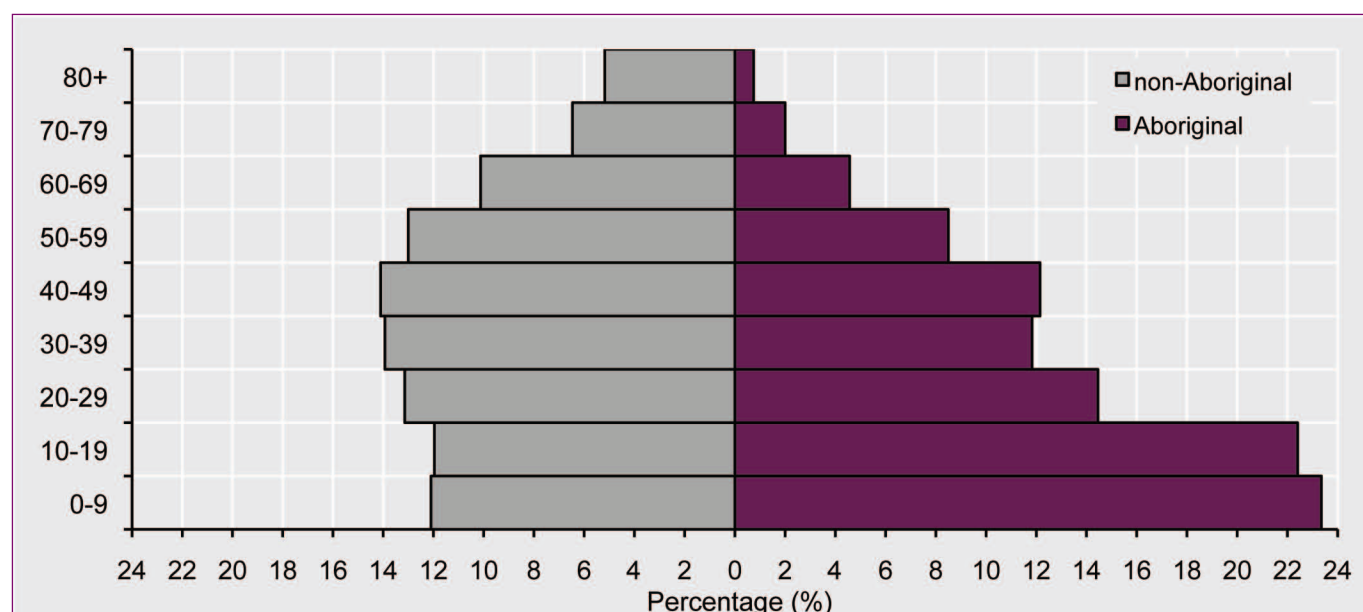
Source: ABS (2008) Australian Historical Population Statistics, 2008. Cat no. 3105.0; ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011.

The population distribution of Aboriginal women differs strikingly from that of non-Aboriginal women. As shown in Figure 1.2 the majority

of Aboriginal women (60 percent) are under the age of 40. The largest groups of Aboriginal women are those aged 0-9 and those aged

10-19. Comparatively, the largest groups of non-Aboriginal women are those aged 40-49 and those aged 30-39.

Figure 1.2 Population distribution, NSW women by age and Aboriginal status, 2011



Population: All NSW women.

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011.

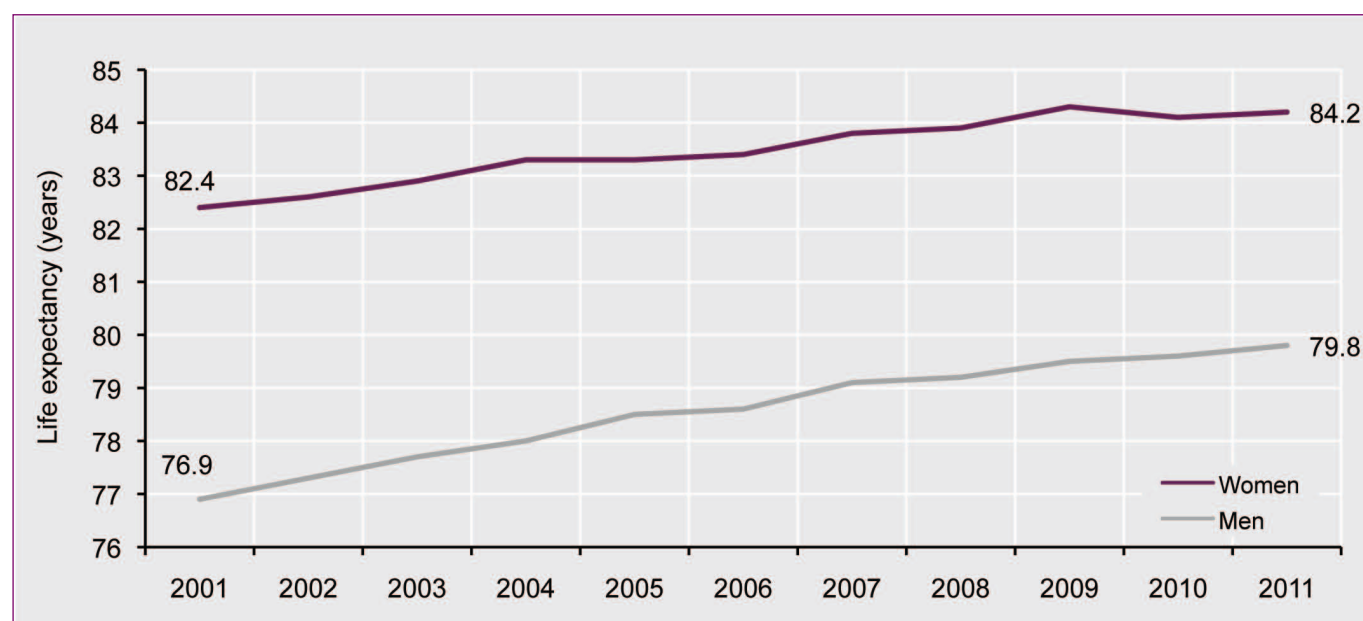
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NSW women also have a longer life expectancy than men, though this is changing. Although women

can still expect to live longer than men, the difference between the sexes is decreasing. In NSW in

2011, female life expectancy was 4.4 years higher than that of males. This compares with a difference of 5.5 years in 2001 (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3 Life expectancy at birth, NSW, 2001 to 2011



Population: NSW girls and boys born between 2001 and 2011.
Source: ABS (2011) *Deaths, Australia*. Cat no. 3302.0.

In 2011, 5.0 percent of the NSW population reported that they required assistance with core activities. Women were more likely than men to report that they required assistance with core

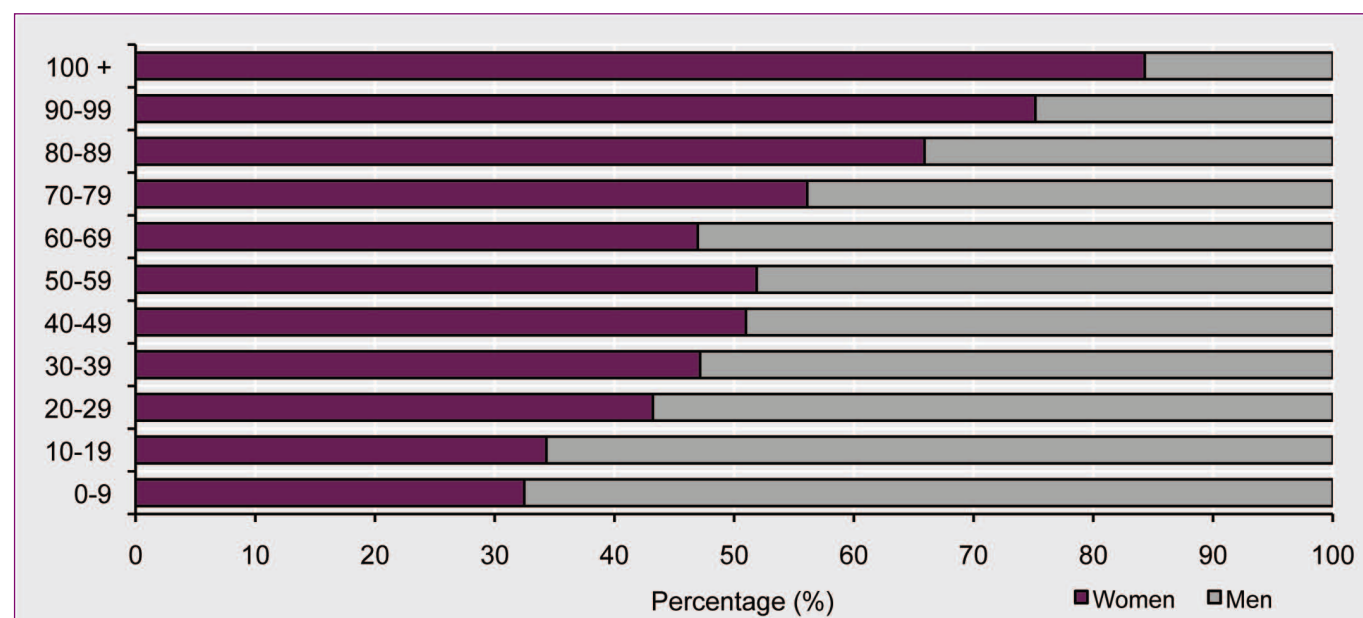
activities (5.3 percent of women compared to 4.8 percent of men).¹ Figure 1.4 shows how this

¹ This section is drawn from Census 2011 data. It should be noted that this data does not indicate the severity of the disability nor does it indicate the total number of hours of assistance required.

changes with different age groups. Men represent the largest group of people needing assistance in the younger age groups, whereas women comprise a larger portion of those needing assistance in the older age groups.

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Figure 1.4 Need for assistance with core activities by sex, NSW, 2011



Population: NSW people who indicated that they required assistance with core activities.

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011.

Fertility and births

Since the baby boom in the 1950s, women across Australia have had fewer and later births. NSW women registered higher fertility than the national average during the mid-1980s. The birth rate then gradually slowed to a low point of 1.8 births per 1,000 women in 2001, but subsequently increased slightly to 1.9 births per 1,000 women by 2011. This is just below the replacement level of 2.1 births per 1,000 women.¹

Aboriginal women, both in NSW and Australia-wide, have much higher fertility rates at 2.9 births for NSW Aboriginal women and 2.7 births for Aboriginal women across Australia in 2011. Up until 2011

the fertility rates of NSW Aboriginal women were lower than that of Aboriginal women Australia-wide.

The median age of NSW mothers for first births increased from 28.4 years in 1994 to 29.2 years in 2011. From 1996 to 2010 the fertility rate for women aged 35 years and over increased from 19 to 30 percent. In 2010, 24 percent of births were to women aged 35 years and over compared to 15 percent in 1996.² Conversely, 3.4 percent of births were to women aged between 12 and 19 years in 2010 compared to 5.0 percent in 1996.

The fertility rate for teenagers has decreased from 21 births per 1,000 women in 1996 to 14 per 1,000 women in 2010 (Figure 1.5).

¹ ABS (2011) *Births, Australia*. Cat no. 3301.0.

² NSW Health (1998) New South Wales Mothers and Babies 1996, *Public Health Bulletin Supplement, Number 1*, January 1998.

Regional variation in birth rates

Variation in birth rates across NSW's regions is very pronounced when we consider both older and younger mothers. Table 1.2 shows the regions with the lowest and highest percentages of births to older and younger women in 2010. Note however that total numbers of teenage births are low.

In North Sydney, nearly two-fifths of all births were to women aged 35 and older in 2010, and 0.5 percent (58 in total) to teenagers.

In the Far West, some 14 percent of births were to older women, and a similar percentage was to teenagers (34 births in total).

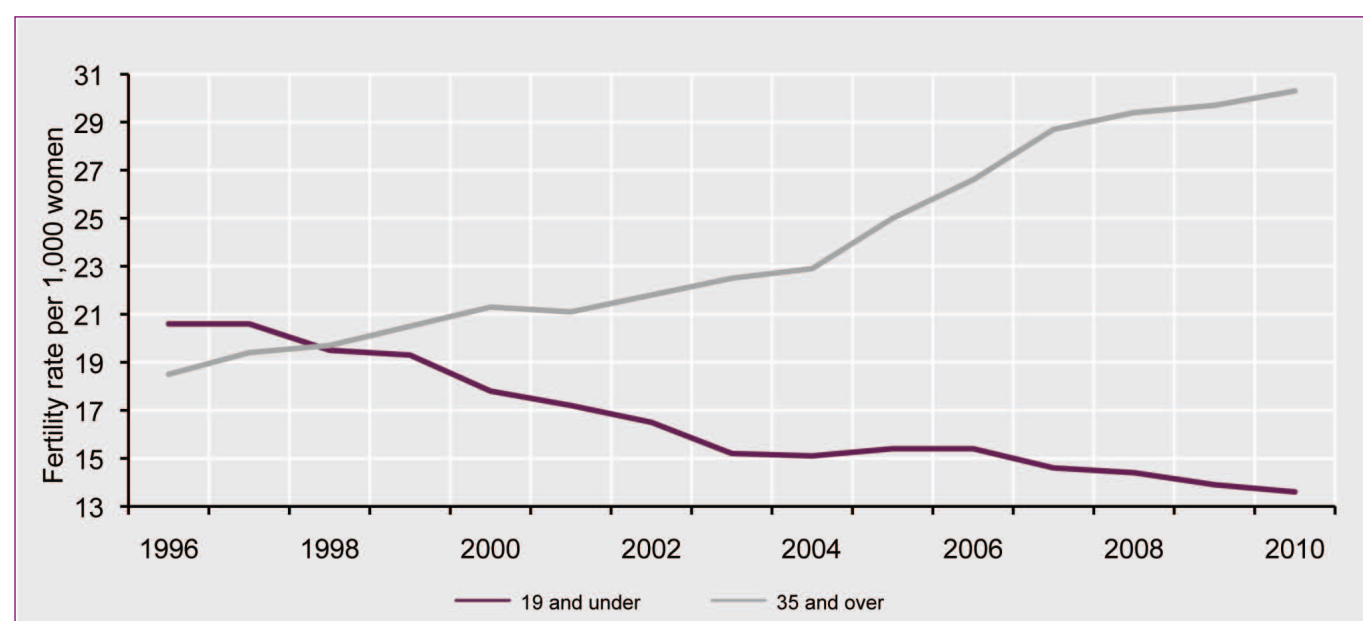
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Note that *ABS Births Australia, 2011* data confirms this pattern. It indicates that while in major cities, the teenage birth rate remained roughly stable between 2006 and 2011 at 11 births per 1,000

women, the rate rose in Remote and Very Remote NSW over the same period. For 15 to 19 year-olds living in Remote areas, the change was from 40 births per 1,000 women in 2006 to 44 births

per 1,000 women in 2011. In Very Remote NSW the change was 45 births per 1,000 women to 53 births per 1,000 women.

Figure 1.5 Fertility rate, teenagers and women aged 35 years and over, NSW, 2010



Population: Teenage women and women aged 35 and over.

Source: NSW Perinatal Data Collection (HOIST), Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, NSW Ministry of Health.

Table 1.2 Maternal age by Local Health District, NSW 2010

	Share of births to women under 20 years %	Share of births to women 35 years & over %
High teenage share		
Far West	13.4	13.8
Western NSW	7.6	15.1
Southern NSW	6.9	18.0
Low teenage share		
Northern Sydney	0.5	39.4
South Eastern Sydney	1.0	33.5
Sydney	1.0	33.8
NSW total	(N= 3,199) 3.4	(N=22,992) 24.2

Population: Births in NSW.

Source: NSW Perinatal Data Collection (HOIST), Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, NSW Ministry of Health.

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Living arrangements

The majority of families living in the same household in NSW have dependent children (aged under 15 years) (Figure 1.7). Couple families with children made up 43 percent of all families, while women-headed lone parent families made up 14 percent and male-headed lone parent families were 2.8 percent.¹

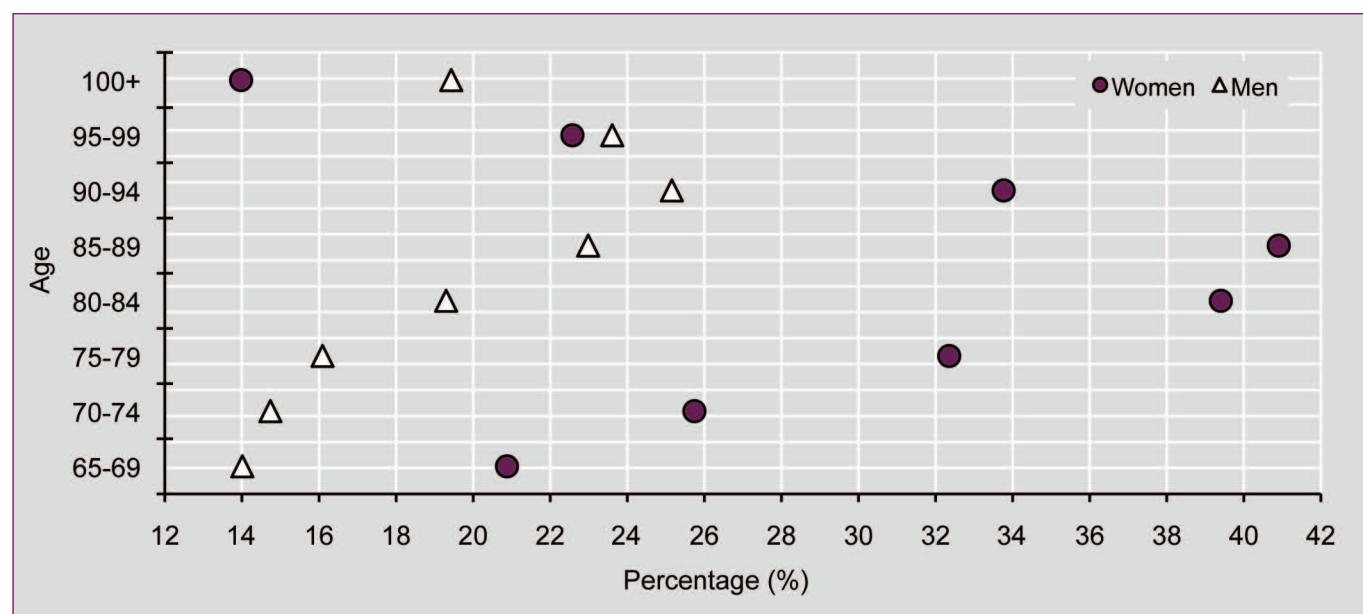
¹ ABS (2010) Household and family projections, Australia, 2006 to 2031. Cat no. 3236.0, Series II projections.

The marriage rate in NSW has decreased slightly in the last decade from 6.4 per thousand in 1999 to 5.7 per thousand in 2011, as has the divorce rate. In 2011, there were 1.9 divorces per thousand of population, compared to 2.4 12 years earlier.

As people get older, they are more likely to live alone. About a quarter (23.6 percent) of all people 65 years and over in NSW were in lone person households in 2011 compared to 8.7 percent of the general population who lived alone.

There are more than twice as many older (65 years and over) women living alone than men (164,300 women compared to 75,500 men). The proportion of women aged 65 and over who are living alone is 30 percent, compared to 16 percent for men of this age. Among 80 to 84 year old, some 33,900 women (39 percent of women in that age group) live alone compared to some 12,500 men (19 percent of 80 to 84 year old men). See Figure 1.6.

Figure 1.6 People aged 65 years or older who are living alone by sex, NSW, 2011

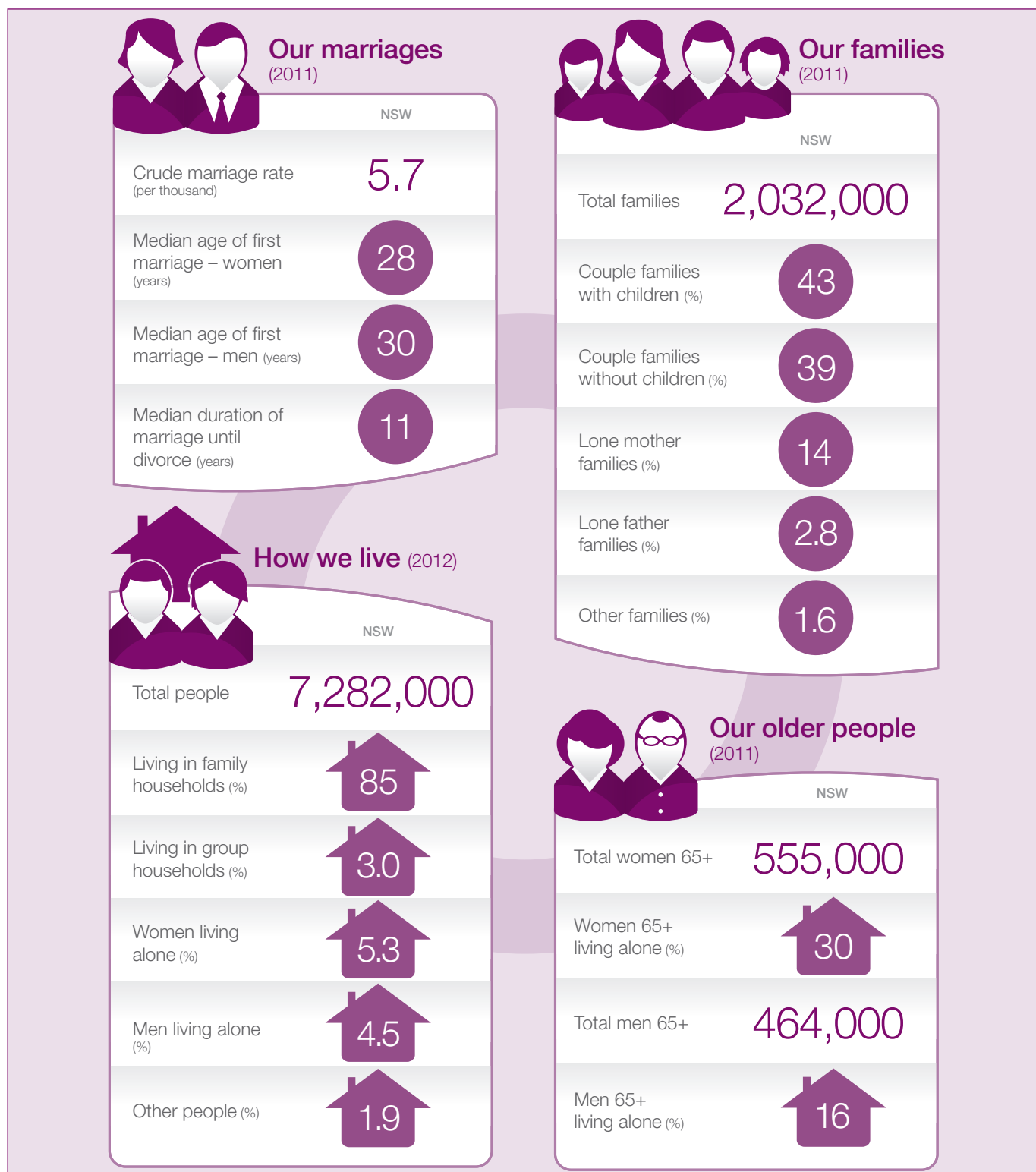


Population: People aged 65 years and over.

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011.

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Figure 1.7 Marriages, families and living arrangements, NSW



Population: All women and men, age groups as specified.

Source: ABS (2011) *Marriages and Divorces, Australia*. Cat no. 3310.0, ABS (2010) *Household and family projections, Australia, 2006 to 2031*. Cat no. 3236.0 & ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011.

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Immigration and cultural diversity

Immigration continues to play an important part in the growth and diversity of NSW. In 2011, just over a quarter of the state's female population were born overseas with the top 10 countries of birth being England, China, New Zealand, India, Philippines, Vietnam, Lebanon, Italy, South Korea and South Africa.¹ A similar proportion (27.5 percent) of NSW women spoke a language other than English at home.

The female population in Sydney was more multicultural than the rest of the state, with a significantly larger proportion born overseas (35 percent in Sydney compared to just over 11 percent in regional NSW). Since 2006, Sydney's overseas-born female population has grown by 3 percentage points, while there has been little change in the rest of NSW. Thirty eight percent of women in Sydney spoke a language other than English at home compared with 9 percent of women in the rest of NSW. Since 2006 the number of women who spoke a language other than English at home increased by 8

percentage points in Sydney (30 to 38 percent) and 4 percentage points in the rest of NSW (5 to 9 percent). See Table 1.3.

The cultural diversity of NSW is also shown by the number of women whose parents were born overseas. In 2011, close to 45 percent of women had one or both parents born overseas (an increase of 2.6 percent since 2006 and 3.8 percent since 2001). Of those women who indicated that one or both of their parents were born overseas, 6.3 percent indicated their father, 4.2 percent their mother and 34 percent indicated that both of their parents were born overseas.

Over the last 60 years there has been a shift in the overseas countries in which immigrant women living in NSW were born. Eighty-six percent of overseas-born women who are currently living in NSW and arrived prior to 1951 were born in Europe. In contrast close to two-thirds of overseas-born women who arrived in the period between 1992 and 2011 were born in Asia. See Table 1.4.²

² Sizable populations have arrived from the following countries located in Asia:

China, India, Philippines, Vietnam, South Korea, Iraq, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nepal, Japan, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Singapore, Taiwan, Cambodia, Turkey, Burma, Syria and Saudi Arabia.

In 2010-11, 34,500 female immigrants (32 percent of the Australian total and proportional to NSW's population share) gave NSW as their intended state of residence. The number of men was 31,000. In 2011-12, this increased by 4.6 percent to 36,300 women, and by 8.7 percent to 33,700 men.³ Just under two-thirds of these women were overseas arrivals. The remaining 36 percent were women already in Australia on temporary visas who had been granted permanent resident status.

³ Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2012) Overseas arrivals and departures statistics, unpublished data.

¹ ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011.

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Table 1.3 Cultural diversity and distribution, women in NSW and Australia, 2011

	Population composition		NSW breakdown	
	Australia	NSW	Sydney	Balance of state
Total women	10,873,706	3,508,779	2,229,453	1,279,326
Born overseas	2,699,981	911,525	770,959	140,566
Main English speaking countries	948,833	241,294	169,285	72,009
Other countries	1,751,148	670,231	601,674	68,557
Speaks a LOTE* at home	2,511,993	965,450	846,241	119,209
Percentage of total women	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Born overseas	24.8	26.0	34.6	11.0
Main English speaking countries	8.7	6.9	7.6	5.6
Other countries	16.1	19.1	27.0	5.4
Speaks a LOTE at home	23.1	27.5	38.0	9.3

Note: Main English speaking countries comprise the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, USA and South Africa. *Language other than English.

Population: All NSW women.

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011.

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Table 1.4 Countries of origin of women living in NSW by period of arrival

Country of birth	Number	%	World map
Arrived prior to and including 1951			
England	6,620	26	
Germany	3,271	13	
Italy	1,828	7	
Scotland	1,436	6	
Netherlands	1,228	5	
Malta	1,190	5	
Poland	1,188	5	
New Zealand	766	3	
Ukraine	590	2	
Hungary	563	2	
Other	7,134	28	
Total	25,814	100	
Arrived between 1952 and 1971			
England	40,520	26	
Italy	18,054	11	
Greece	12,595	8	
Scotland	6,888	4	
Germany	5,925	4	
Lebanon	5,280	3	
New Zealand	5,202	3	
Croatia	5,118	3	
Malta	4,877	3	
Netherlands	4,851	3	
Other	48,452	31	
Total	157,762	100	
Arrived between 1972 and 1991			
England	27,260	11	
Vietnam	21,057	8	
New Zealand	19,830	8	
Philippines	18,131	7	
China	16,496	6	
Lebanon	13,570	5	
Hong Kong	9,555	4	
Fiji	6,984	3	
Malaysia	6,803	3	
South Africa	6,246	2	
Other	112,791	44	
Total	258,723	100	
Arrived between 1992 and 2011			
China	64,229	15	
India	34,231	8	
England	30,797	7	
New Zealand	27,870	6	
Philippines	22,681	5	
Vietnam	15,873	4	
South Korea	15,752	4	
South Africa	12,634	3	
Iraq	12,453	3	
Indonesia	10,210	2	
Other	183,973	43	
Total	430,703	100	

Note: For those who arrived between 1992 and 2011 the category other is split evenly between Asian and non-Asian countries of birth.
Population: All NSW women born overseas. Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011.

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Religion

Historically, Christianity has held a firm place in Australian society. Whilst the percentage of Christians has experienced a slow decline over the years, Christianity was the religious affiliation reported by over two-thirds of women in 2011. Some 4.5 million adherents reside in NSW of whom 2.3 million are women.

As the state has become increasingly culturally diverse so too has the faith of its residents. Among Christians, Catholicism accounts for 28 percent of women, Anglicanism 21 percent and other Christian denomination make up

18 percent of women (see Figure 1.8). The number of adherents for several Christian denominations has decreased in the last decades. Most noticeably the number of female Anglicans has dropped 7.5 percent in the last decade, whereas the number of female Catholics has increased 5.0 percent.

There has been an even greater increase in the number of other religions. The past decade has seen a 129 percent increase in the number of women practising Hinduism, 59 percent in Islam, 43 percent in Buddhism and 14 percent in Judaism. These increases have resulted in

Christianity dropping from 73 percent of the population in 2001 to 67 percent of the population in 2011. See Table 1.5.

From 2001 to 2011 there was also a significant increase (72 percent) in the number of women with no religion. There are a larger number of men with no religion than women, 662,700 compared with 577,800 or 19 percent of men and 16 percent of women. More men also practise Islam than women and more women practise Buddhism than men.

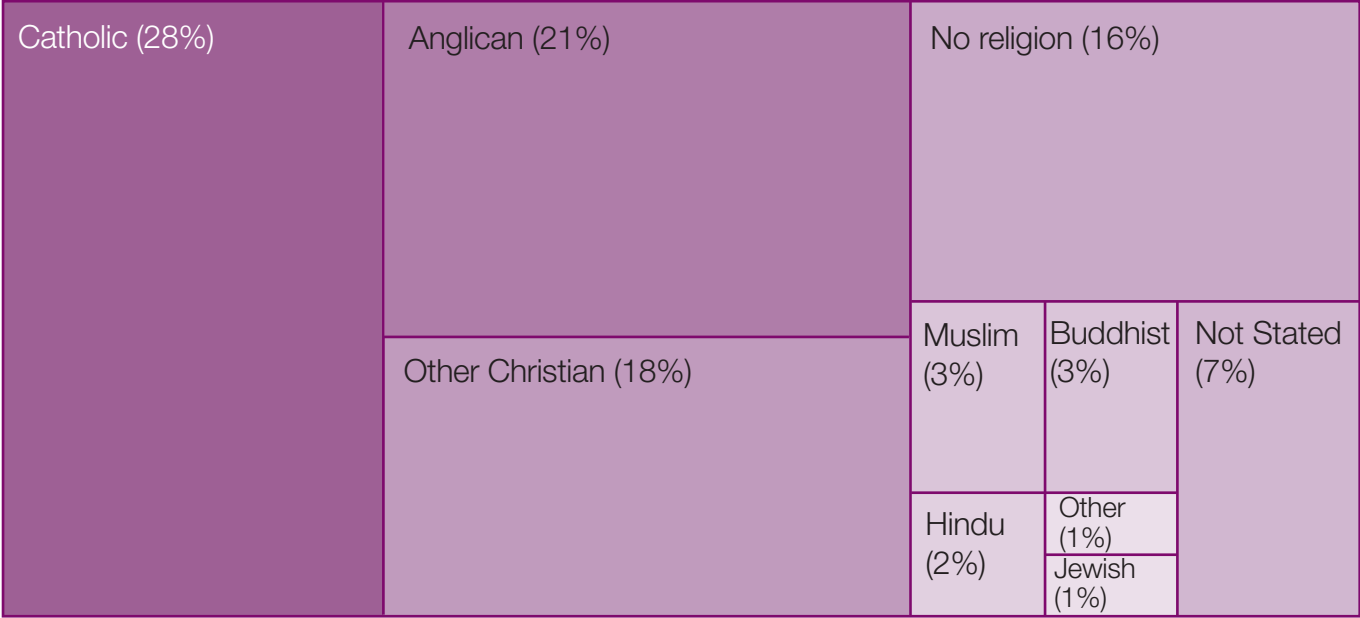
Table 1.5 Change in religious affiliation, women, NSW, 2001, 2006 and 2011

	2001	2006	2011	% Change	
				2001-2006	2006-2011
Christian	2,349,346	2,318,418	2,341,839	-1.3	1.0
Catholic	941,846	956,863	989,220	1.6	3.4
Anglican	785,559	747,818	726,856	-4.8	-2.8
Other Christian	621,941	613,737	625,763	-1.3	2.0
No religion	336,528	433,763	577,822	28.9	33.2
Buddhism	77,420	90,199	110,436	16.5	22.4
Islam	66,513	80,619	105,437	21.2	30.8
Hinduism	24,580	34,789	56,257	41.5	61.7
Other	58,141	32,870	44,472	-43.5	35.3
Judaism	18,027	19,048	20,626	5.7	8.3
Not stated	272,356	311,020	251,890	14.2	-19.0
Total	3,202,911	3,320,726	3,508,779	3.7	5.7

Population: All women living in NSW.
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011.

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Figure 1.8 Religious affiliation of NSW women, 2011



Population: All women living in NSW.
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011.

Conclusion

The population of women in NSW continues to grow through birth and migration. The population composition is continually shifting as is the state’s cultural make-up.

Nearly 28 percent of NSW women speak a language other than English at home, compared to 23 percent nationally.

Women are living longer and are choosing to start families later in

life. They are getting married later and larger numbers of women aged over 35 are having children. Women’s faith is becoming more diverse and increasing numbers of women no longer follow any religion.

The median age of women is nearly two years older than that of men, and there are nearly twice as many older women (65 years and over) living alone as men.