Latest state and national population estimates
The latest preliminary population estimates show that New South Wales had a population of 7.6 million people as at 31 March 2015 – 32 per cent of the national population. New South Wales has the largest population of any state, followed by Victoria and Queensland (Table 1).

New South Wales also had the largest growth compared to the previous year with more than 101,000 new people, closely followed by Victoria.

The rate of growth in New South Wales for the year ending March 2015 equaled the national rate of 1.4 per cent. Only Victoria recorded a higher rate (Table 1). Since 1983, there have been just four years when the rate of population change in New South Wales was higher than 1.4 per cent (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. NSW population change (%) over previous year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Population (no. persons)</th>
<th>Change over previous year</th>
<th>% of growth because of natural increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘000</td>
<td>‘000</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>7,596.0</td>
<td>101.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>5,914.9</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>4,766.7</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>1,696.2</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>2,587.0</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>516.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>243.8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>389.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>23,743.3</td>
<td>316.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Births registered after the September 2014 quarter in this year are not included due to processing delays within NSW Registry. Future revisions to the population estimates will see this per cent change.
The ABS released the latest data on births in Australia in October 2015. The information relates to births registered during 2014. The 2014 births data for New South Wales are incomplete. In June 2014, the NSW Registry introduced a new data processing system that delayed the processing of birth registrations. Many birth records received in 2014 were processed in 2015 and are not included in the 2014 numbers. Current figures show the number of births in 2014 being 9.3 per cent lower than in 2013. This main reason for this difference is not because women are having fewer children but is likely to be because many births registrations are not yet processed. This means the number of births that occurred in New South Wales during 2014 was higher than the 91,074 births shown by these data. It also means that fertility rates are higher than those published in this data release. This is because a fertility rate is calculated by dividing the number of births by the number of women at a certain age. When the number of births is smaller, the fertility rate is lower. This delay in birth registrations means that the 2013 data are currently the most complete and up-to-date for NSW. The missing births data will have an impact on population estimates and the calculation of the contribution of natural increase to population growth. Current estimates of the resident population include revisions to births data up to the September 2014 quarter. More recent population estimates may be lower because of processing delays. Despite these issues, ABS analysis indicates that the published births data for NSW does have information about the age of mothers, usual residence and Indigenous status that is similar to data for 2011-13. This means the proportion of births across key characteristics can be looked at, but not the level of births. Do not compare fertility rates for 2014 with these earlier periods.

The proportion of births that were registered shows the peak age of childbearing in New South Wales remained 30-34 years (Figure 3). Two-thirds of registered births were to mothers living in Sydney reflecting the large population in Sydney and its relatively young age profile.

**Figure 3. Age distribution of mothers in NSW, 2014**
What does this mean?

Population ageing means every community is going to change. Ageing will impact all aspects of social and economic life in terms of labour force, demand for housing, goods and services, aged care and public spending.

An important implication of the increase in the number of older persons is a steady decline in the ratio of older persons to those of working ages (defined here as 20-64 years). Over the past 20 years or more we’ve seen a reduced number of people of working age for each person aged 65 and over. It’s fallen from five, to four people between 1991 and 2011, and is projected to reach three working age people per older person by 2031.

Looking at the population by age gives us an idea of the impact of ageing on the labour force. The number of people under 15 show the potential number of entrants into the labour force. Counts of people in the ages prior to retirement (50-64 years) indicate the potential number of exits from the labour force. Historically we’ve always had a growing labour force as more people entered than exited the population defined as working age (Figure 5).

In New South Wales, even though the size of the working age population is projected to increase, its share of the total population is going to decline. Workforce planning is needed to account for this mismatch between the share of the population in the labour force and those out of the labour force while maintaining productivity, economic growth and standards of living.

Opportunities for active ageing...

Population ageing is an Australian success story built on an increase in life expectancy. Australia has one of the longest life expectancies in the world. People are living longer than was previously the case and are projected to continue to live longer into the future.

But an increase in life expectancy doesn’t necessarily mean we will be “old” for longer. Healthy life expectancy is also projected to increase with persons at age 65, on average, gaining more years of life, without severe or profound core activity limitation, than with it.

This ‘active ageing’ presents opportunities for older persons to continue to participate in the labour force well into their 60s. The Commonwealth Government’s 2015 Intergenerational Report predicted strong increases in participation rates among those aged 65 and over, from 13 per cent in 2014/15 to 17 per cent by 2054/55. Policies and infrastructure put in place to support older persons who want to work will help ease some of the stress that an ageing population would otherwise put on economic growth. This will also help to maintain stability between the size of the populations in and out of the labour force. Workplaces will benefit from the wisdom of people with significant work experience.

The 2011 Census shows that seniors are already active, and that there are differences between those aged 65-74 and those 75 years and over. The youngest seniors are participating in the workforce with one in six either employed or actively seeking work. Just one in 33 people aged 75 years and over are in this category.

Many seniors also volunteer. One in five people aged 65-74 and one in eight people aged 75 years and older contribute to the community through volunteering.

Most older people are physically active, however, the need for help with core activities does increase with age. Help is needed among one in 11 people aged 65-74, and rises to one in three for those 75 years and over. With the present patterns of increasing life expectancy and high activity levels, it will be interesting to see in 10 years’ time if someone aged 65 will be seen as an “older person”.

Somehing to look forward to!

Population ageing reflects a great success story for Australia’s public health system. According to the General Social Survey of Australia conducted in 2014, older Australians are the most satisfied among the population. When asked to rank their level of overall life satisfaction on a scale of 0-10, persons 75 years and over were the most satisfied. Almost half of them responded with a nine or above compared to just 30 per cent for the population as a whole.

Australia is also a good place to grow old. To see how we rank globally in terms of how well our older people are faring, check out the Age Watch Report Card.

Celebrated on 20 October 2015, World Statistics Day is a United Nations initiative held every five years to recognise how statistics help in shaping societies around the world. This year’s theme was “Better Data. Better Lives”. As the Demography Unit both uses and creates statistics, World Statistics Day was a chance to acknowledge how important statistics are for helping to make planning decisions in NSW communities.

Much of our ability to persuade others of the importance of any issue or decision comes in the form of numbers. But many people don’t like statistics. Some may be overwhelmed when they see a row of numbers. As understanding statistics makes for better decision making, we prepared this list of issues to think about when trying to understand what the numbers mean.

- **Assumptions** – what assumptions underpin the statistical output (see our website for information about the assumptions used for the NSW population projections)
- **History** – how much historical data was used and what was the time scale? A too-short time frame can focus on short term differences that will not hold true for the long term
- **Samples** – are the statistical outputs based on a random sample? Is the sample big enough to do quality analysis? Is the sample biased (by age or geographic location?)
- **Data quality** – if the input data is poor quality, the output will often be too
- **Falsification and omission** – are all the data included? Are outliers or results against trend reported?
- **Correlation does not mean causation** – when two things happen at the same time it does not mean one thing causes the other (see some examples of what not to do)
- **Not everything can be measured** – numbers help us make sense of a complex world but we don’t have data for everything and we don’t have full knowledge of the probability of future outcomes
- **Statistical outputs are often summary measures** – try to understand the process that allows those numbers to be produced and how to read them. For the non-statisticians start with this list of statistical terms than have different every day meanings.

We also celebrated the day, by taking part in an expo staged by the ABS in Sydney.

The Demography team represented the Department of Planning and Environment, joining other NSW Government statistical agencies, including State Records, Government Record Keeping and Digital Archives, and agencies from around the world. The Sydney event attracted more than 200 attendees, many of whom visited the Department of Planning & Environment stand where our Demographers answered questions both technical and practical.

**Data Sources**

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015, Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia 2014 (Cat No. 3235.0), released 18/08/2015.

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This newsletter has been compiled by the Demography Unit of NSW Department of Planning and Environment to make key demographic information available to all levels of government, the private sector and the community. Some of the data was originally published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. However, the Demography Unit is responsible for the analysis and interpretation contained in this Bulletin.