

MATURE AGE PERSONS STATISTICAL PROFILE

COMMUNITY
LIFE

EMBARGO: 11.30AM (CANBERRA TIME) TUES 15 FEB 2005

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- For further information about these and related statistics, contact the National Information and Referral Service on 1300 135 070 or Maryann Wood on Brisbane (07) 3222 6206.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Over recent years the issues associated with the structural ageing of the population have received increased attention by governments and researchers. Broad issues affecting the ageing population include ensuring adequate retirement incomes, labour force participation, healthy ageing, and provision of community support, health services and aged care. Challenges in relation to population ageing include improving the capacity of older people for work through better education and health, identifying better incentives for people to remain in the labour force, and improved flexibility in the workplace.

Mature age persons, i.e. persons aged 45-64 years, have been identified as a key population group in terms of policy development to address these challenges. The older members of this group are nearing the traditional retirement age of 65 years and some have already withdrawn from the labour force. Younger mature age persons are part of the baby boom cohort which has special significance due to the large number of people involved.

This profile is a part of the series of Mature Age Persons Statistical Profiles developed to draw on relevant data sources to provide a comprehensive analysis of the characteristics of mature age persons. The complete set of profiles covers the following topics:

Population and Cultural Diversity

Labour Force

Health

Housing

Education and Training

Community Life

Living Arrangements

This profile focuses on the community life aspects of the mature age population. It draws on data from the General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by the ABS in 2002.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographical Classification
cat. no.	Catalogue number
CAI	computer assisted interviewing
ERP	estimated resident population
GSS	General Social Survey
RSE	relative standard error

Dennis Trewin
Australian Statistician

SOCIAL NETWORK

INTRODUCTION

The *National Strategy for an Ageing Australia* notes that future generations of older people will "want to remain active and independent so they can participate in family and community life. With increased longevity and successful approaches to healthy ageing, it is likely that larger numbers of people in the older age groups will continue to participate in the community to an extent that was not possible for earlier generations" (Department of Health and Aged Care 2001, p.24). However, the capacity of people to participate in, and stay connected with the community, is affected by a range of factors, including the links that people have with their family, friends and the broader community.

Family and friends are central to most people's social networks and the first point of call for care, practical help and emotional support. Much of the support provided by families takes place among family members who live together in the same household. Support networks which extend beyond the household (e.g. friends and family members living elsewhere, neighbours, work colleagues, community service organisations) are also important, both in their contribution to the wellbeing of individuals and families, and in creating and maintaining social cohesion and fostering a sense of community (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2004a).

In 2002 the ABS conducted the General Social Survey (GSS), a new multi-topic survey that provides a wide range of information on the social dimensions of the Australian community. The GSS was conducted throughout Australia from March to July 2002. It collected information from adults, i.e. persons aged 18 years and over, living in private households, across all the states and territories. Information was collected about both the individuals being interviewed and about the households in which they lived.

There were 14,503,000 adults covered by the 2002 GSS. See paragraphs 5 to 8 of the Explanatory Notes for more information on the scope of this survey.

This profile focuses on the mature age population, i.e. the 4,529,000 persons aged 45–64 years, and draws on data from the 2002 GSS.

CONTACT WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS

Social networks embody the informal networks operating in society (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2003). Interaction with friends and family outside the household helps to build and strengthen social networks over time. These networks can create a sense of security and wellbeing for individuals and become a source of practical help and support in times of need.

Age groups

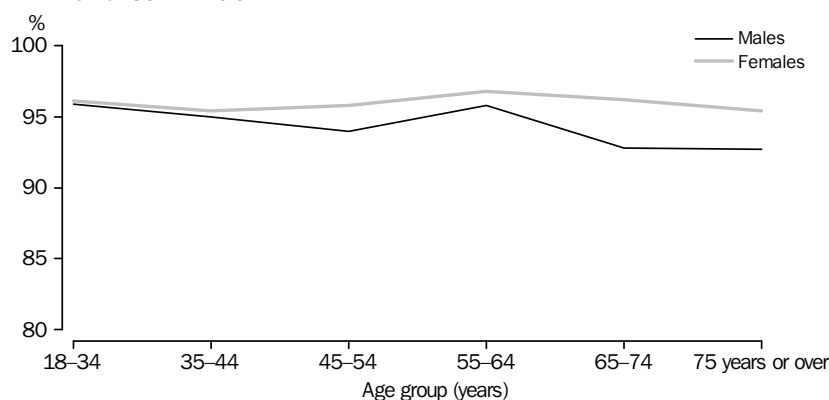
Nearly all adults (95%) reported having contact in the previous week (either in person or via telephone, mail or e-mail) with family or friends with whom they did not live. The proportion of people reporting contact with family and friends in the last week was similar for both men and women and there was little variation across age groups as shown in graph 1.1.

For mature age persons, 95% of males and 96% of females reported contact in the previous week with family or friends with whom they did not live.

SOCIAL NETWORK *continued*

Age groups *continued*

1.1 CONTACT WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS IN LAST WEEK (a), by age and sex—2002



(a) Contact either in person or via telephone, mail or email with family or friends living outside the household.

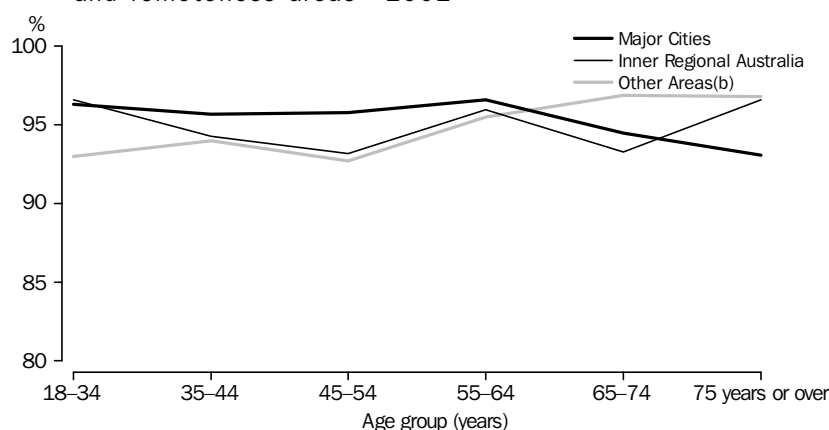
Source: General Social Survey, 2002 (ABS cat.no. 4159.0)

Remoteness Areas

For adults in 2002, contact in the previous week with family and friends with whom they did not live, did not vary with remoteness. There was some variation across age groups as shown in graph 1.2. For mature age persons, residents of Major Cities were slightly more likely to have reported contact with family and friends in the last week. Conversely, for the 75 years and over age group, residents of Major Cities were slightly less likely to have reported contact with family and friends in the last week compared with residents of Inner Regional Australia and Other Areas.

Regional patterns of residency are described using the Remoteness Structure of the ABS's Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) (cat. no. 1216.0). For more information, refer to the Explanatory Notes of this publication.

1.2 CONTACT WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS IN LAST WEEK (a), by age and remoteness areas—2002



(a) Contact either in person or via telephone, mail or email with family or friends living outside the household.

(b) Encompasses most of Outer Regional Australia, part of Remote Australia, and only a small proportion of Very Remote Australia.

Source: ABS data available on request, General Social Survey, 2002

SOCIAL NETWORK *continued*

Face to face contact

Women were slightly more likely than men to have had face to face contact in the past week, with family or friends living outside the household (85% and 83% respectively). Within the mature age population (45–64 years), 84% of women and 80% of men had face to face contact on a weekly basis, with family or friends living outside the household. Mature age persons in the 55–64 years age group were more likely to have had face to face contact in the past week than those in the 45–54 years age group (85% compared with 80%).

1.3 FREQUENCY OF FACE TO FACE CONTACT WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS BY AGE GROUP AND SEX—2002

	45–64 YEARS				65 years or over	All ages
Frequency of contact	18–44 years	45–54 years	55–64 years	Total		
MALES (%)						
Weekly	84.3	78.0	83.7	80.4	81.4	82.6
Monthly	10.7	15.7	12.0	14.1	10.8	11.8
Quarterly	2.7	3.9	*1.9	3.1	4.1	3.0
No recent contact	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.4	3.7	2.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
FEMALES (%)						
Weekly	84.9	82.7	86.9	84.4	86.2	85.0
Monthly	10.0	12.4	9.3	11.1	8.5	10.1
Quarterly	3.0	3.9	*1.8	3.1	2.7	2.9
No recent contact	2.1	*1.0	*2.0	1.4	2.6	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
PERSONS (%)						
Weekly	84.6	80.3	85.3	82.4	84.0	83.8
Monthly	10.4	14.0	10.7	12.6	9.6	10.9
Quarterly	2.8	3.9	1.9	3.1	3.3	3.0
No recent contact	2.2	1.7	2.2	1.9	3.1	2.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
NUMBER OF PERSONS ('000)						
Males	3 883.7	1 322.6	951.1	2 273.7	1 019.1	7 176.5
Females	3 861.3	1 322.0	933.0	2 255.0	1 210.5	7 326.8
Persons	7 744.9	2 644.6	1 884.1	4 528.7	2 229.7	14 503.3

* estimate is subject to sampling variability too high for most practical purposes

Source: ABS data available on request, General Social Survey 2002.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

INTRODUCTION

The care and support a family provides form the foundation for an individual's health and social functioning. Relationships with extended family, friends and the community further contribute to the resilience of individuals. The term community encompasses the wider care and support networks surrounding an individual. It can embrace formal support provided by government institutions; non-government care provided by volunteers and charitable organisations; as well as informal support exchanges e.g. assistance between neighbours (ABS 2001).

The GSS primarily provides information on interactions people have with others outside their household. In the following analysis, the focus is on support available to individuals from extended family and friends not residing with them.

In this publication, an individual is defined as having family and community support if they meet three criteria:

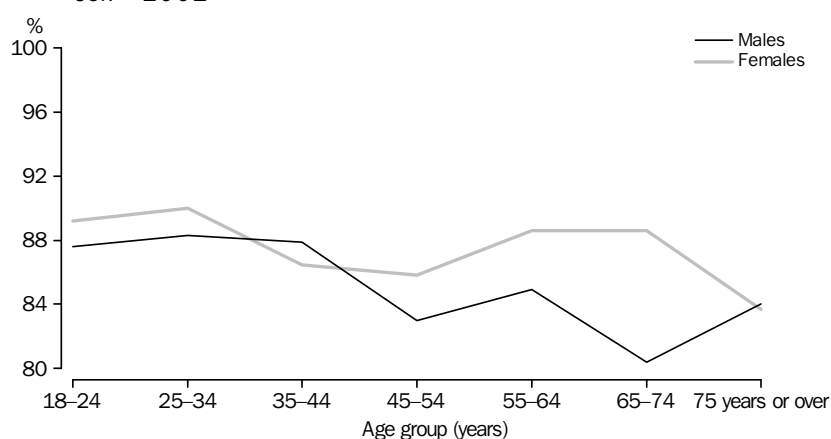
- they had contact with family or friends living outside the household in the previous week;
- they responded that they could ask for small favours from people outside the household;
- they responded that they could get support in a time of crisis from people outside the household.

LEVEL OF SUPPORT

In 2002, 87% of adults had family and community support. That is, they met the three criteria listed above. A further 13% of adults had one or two of these forms of support, while less than 1% received no family and community support (ABS 2004a).

A similar proportion of men and women had access to family and community support (86% and 88% respectively). There were slight variations across age groups particularly for males aged over 45 years, as shown in graph 2.1.

2.1 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT(a), by age group by sex—2002



(a) Had contact with family or friends living outside the household in the previous week, and could ask for small favours and get support in time of crisis from persons living outside the household.

Source: General Social Survey, 2002 (ABS cat.no. 4159.0)

INFLUENCING FACTORS

Many variables influence the level of family and community support available to individuals. The Australian Institute of Family Studies reported that there were important differences in the extent to which family and kinship networks were available and able to provide support to people aged over 55 years. The factors which they note as important are proximity to older persons; financial resources; ethnicity; and family structure and experience (AIFS 2003). Some of these factors, and others, are examined for mature age persons in the analysis that follows.

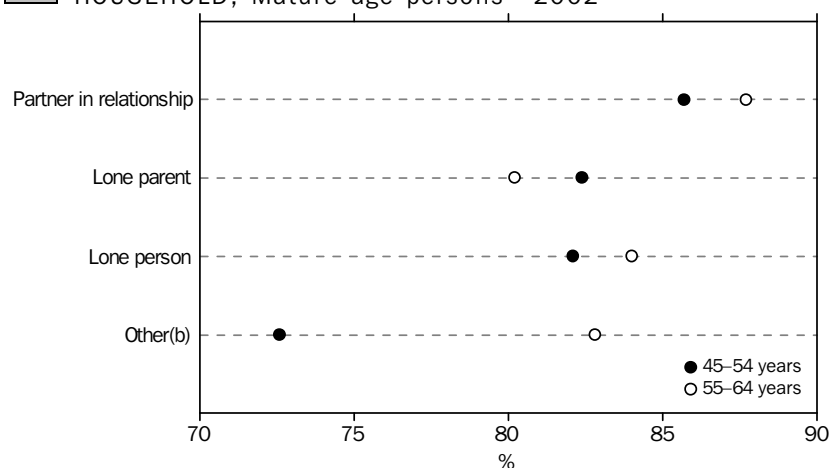
As a benchmark for some of the comparisons which follow, 84% of all persons aged 45–54 years had family and community support compared with 87% of those aged 55–64 years, based on the 2002 GSS.

Relationship in household

In 2002, around three quarters (77%) of mature age persons were a partner in a relationship, 12% lived alone and 6% were lone parents. Small proportions of mature age persons were members of a group household (2%), or non-dependent children in a household (1%), or other individuals living in a family household (2%).

A higher proportion of mature age persons who were a partner in a relationship, had access to family and community support (87%) compared with lone parents (82%) or people living alone (83%). Access to family and community support was lowest for mature age persons in 'other' relationships in the household, particularly those in the 45–54 years age group (73%).

2.2 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT(a) BY RELATIONSHIP IN HOUSEHOLD, Mature age persons—2002



(a) Had contact with family or friends living outside the household in the previous week, and could ask for small favours and get support in time of crisis from persons living outside the household.

(b) Includes non-dependent children, other individuals living in a family household, and group household members.

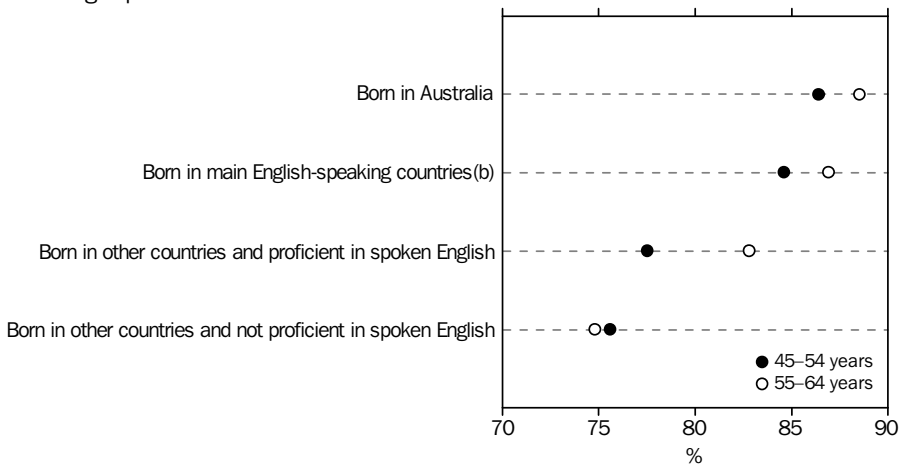
Source: ABS data available on request, 2002 General Social Survey.

Proficiency in English

Where language is a limiting factor, immigrants and their children may not have the same extended family and friendship resources as other families have to draw on in times of need (ABS 2001). Lack of proficiency in English may make it difficult to interact with others in the community and develop social and support networks.

In 2002, 87% of mature age persons born in Australia had family and community support, a similar proportion to those born in main English-speaking countries (86%). However, a lower proportion of mature age people born in all other countries had this support (79%). This proportion was lower again for those mature age persons who were not proficient in spoken English (75%).

2.3 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT(a) BY BIRTHPLACE AND PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH, Mature age persons—2002



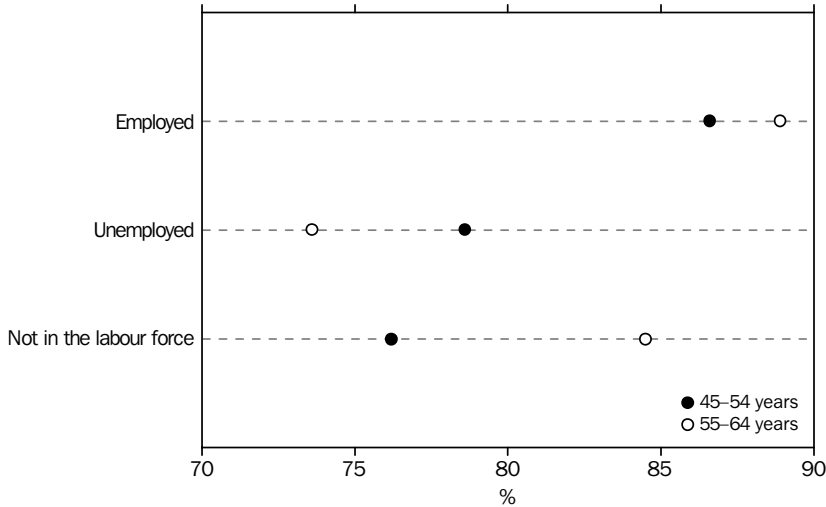
(a) Had contact with family or friends living outside the household in the previous week, and could ask for small favours and get support in time of crisis from persons living outside the household.
 (b) The United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, the United States of America, and South Africa.

Source: ABS data available on request, 2002 General Social Survey.

Labour force status

The workforce provides many people with an avenue for social interaction outside their immediate family and close friends. In 2002, 87% of employed mature age persons had family and community support, compared with 81% for those who were not in the labour force, and 77% for those who were unemployed. There was some variation in the level of support by age group for those mature age persons who were unemployed or not in the labour force as shown in graph 2.4.

2.4 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT(a) BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS, Mature age persons—2002



(a) Had contact with family or friends living outside the household in the previous week, and could ask for small favours and get support in time of crisis from persons living outside the household.
Source: ABS data available on request, 2002 General Social Survey.

Further analysis of the levels of family and community support for mature age persons who were unemployed, and those not in the labour force, shows significant differences between men and women. Among the unemployed a higher proportion of mature age women had support than mature aged men (86% compared with 71%). This was also the case for those not in the labour force (85% of women had support compared with 75% of men). In contrast, the proportions who had support among employed mature age people were much the same (88% of women compared with 87% of men).

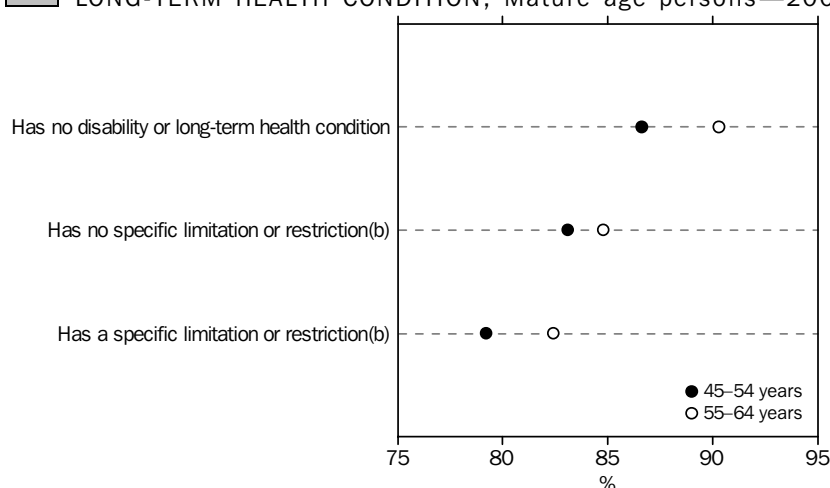
Disability or long-term health condition

In 2002, 40% of the adult population had a disability or long-term health condition with the proportion increasing with age. Just under half of all mature age persons (46% or 2,093,000 people) reported that they had a disability or long-term health condition.

Older age groups were more likely to experience limitations in self care, mobility or communication as a result of a disability or long-term health condition (ABS 2003). Within the mature age population, 23% of people experienced an employment restriction or limitations in self care, mobility or communication.

As shown in graph 2.5, the proportion of mature age persons with family and community support varied with the presence of a disability or long-term health condition. Support was highest for those without a disability or long-term health condition (88%) and lowest for those with an employment restriction or limitations in self care, mobility or communication (81%).

2.5 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT(a) BY DISABILITY OR LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITION, Mature age persons—2002



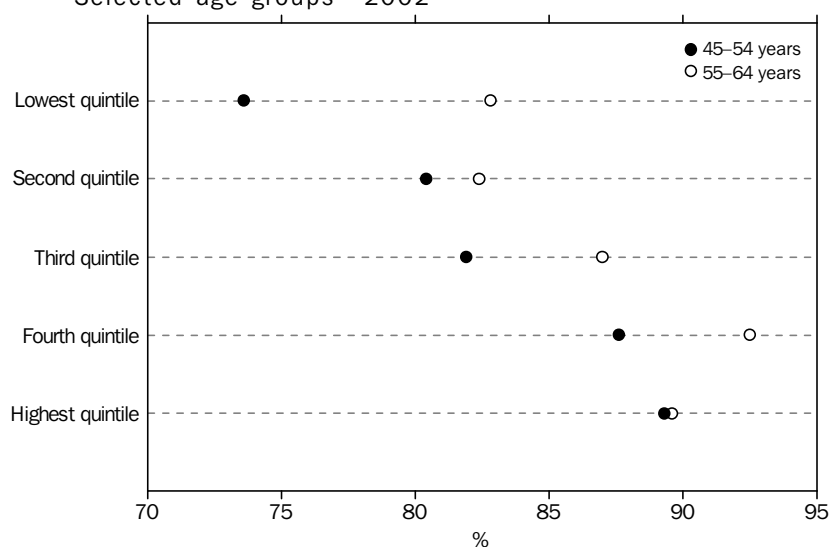
(a) Had contact with family or friends living outside the household in the previous week, and could ask for small favours and get support in time of crisis from persons living outside the household.
 (b) Persons with a disability or long-term health condition (see Glossary on p.21).

Source: ABS data available on request, 2002 General Social Survey.

Household income

Higher household income has been found to be associated with increased participation in social activities and higher levels of family and community support (ABS 2004a). As shown in graph 2.6, the proportions of mature age persons with family and community support were highest for those whose household income was in the two highest income quintiles (both 89%). For the younger group aged 45-54 years, the proportion with support increased consistently as household income increased. For the 55-64 years age group, the pattern was not as clear. However, those in the two lowest income quintiles had lower levels of support than those in the two highest income quintiles.

2.6 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT(a) BY INCOME QUINTILE(b), Selected age groups—2002



(a) Had contact with family or friends living outside the household in the previous week, and could ask for small favours and get support in time of crisis from persons living outside the household.

(b) Equivalised gross household income. Excludes persons where household income was not known or was not adequately reported

Source: ABS data available on request, 2002 General Social Survey.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT *continued*

SUPPORT IN TIME OF CRISIS

In 2002, most people (94%) reported that, in a time of crisis, they could get support from outside their household. For mature age persons the figure was 92%. For all age groups, support was primarily available from a family member (82%) or friend (66%) as shown in table 2.7.

2.7 SOURCES OF SUPPORT IN TIME OF CRISIS BY AGE — 2002

	45–64 YEARS				65 years or over	All ages
	18–44 years	45–54 years	55–64 years	Total		
Sources of support (a)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Able to get support from						
Friend	74.1	66.3	60.0	63.7	43.5	66.1
Neighbour	29.9	38.0	39.9	38.8	38.9	34.1
Family member	84.3	77.6	81.8	79.3	82.1	82.4
Work colleague	27.5	24.9	16.4	21.4	1.3	21.5
Community, charity or religious organisation	13.3	16.0	14.7	15.5	12.9	13.9
Local council or other government services	7.4	9.1	7.4	8.4	7.3	7.7
Health, legal or financial professional	13.2	16.9	13.7	15.6	9.2	13.3
Not able to get support	4.3	8.2	7.6	7.9	7.8	6.0
Total (b)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

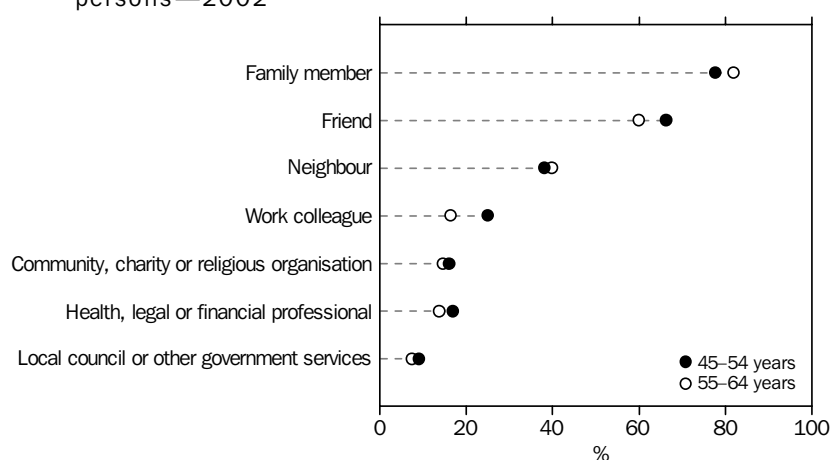
(a) More than one source of support can be nominated.

(b) Includes other sources of support.

Source: ABS data available on request, 2002 General Social Survey

A comparison of the sources of support for the 45–54 years age group compared with the 55–64 years age group, shows an increase in the proportion that could get support from a family member (78% compared with 82%). Conversely, for the older mature age persons, there were decreases in the proportions that could get support from a friend (66% compared with 60%) or a work colleague (25% compared with 16%) as shown in graph 2.8.

2.8 SOURCES OF SUPPORT (a) IN A TIME OF CRISIS, Mature age persons—2002



(a) More than one source can be nominated.

Source: General Social Survey, 2002 (ABS cat. no. 4159.0)

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Social and cultural activities often provide an opportunity for social interaction and contribute to the social and physical wellbeing of individuals.

In 2002, most adults (92%) participated in at least one of a range of social activities in the three months prior to being interviewed. People in the older age groups had lower levels of participation in social activities as seen by the higher proportions of people reporting 'none of these activities' in table 3.1.

For mature age persons, popular activities included going out to a restaurant, café or bar (80%), attending the movies, theatre or concert (55%), and attending or participating in sporting events (55%).

3.1 SOCIAL ACTIVITIES IN LAST 3 MONTHS BY AGE —2002

	45–64 YEARS				65 years or over	All ages
	18–44 years	45–54 years	55–64 years	Total		
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Type/s of social activity in last 3 months(a)						
Recreational or cultural group activities	16.6	16.9	17.9	17.3	16.6	16.8
Community or special interest group activities	13.7	17.9	17.7	17.8	17.9	15.6
Church or religious activities	21.4	24.1	26.6	25.2	26.5	23.4
Went out to a restaurant, cafe or bar	84.6	81.4	78.4	80.1	63.3	79.9
Took part in or attended/watched sport/physical activities	66.6	57.5	51.1	54.8	30.9	57.4
Visited library, museum or art gallery	44.2	42.2	38.0	40.4	32.8	41.3
Attended movies, theatre or concert	70.1	59.8	48.9	55.2	32.5	59.7
Visited park/gardens, zoo or theme park	58.4	50.2	45.2	48.1	30.0	50.8
None of these activities	5.0	7.6	9.2	8.3	16.7	7.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) More than one social activity could be nominated

Source: ABS data available on request, 2002 General Social Survey.

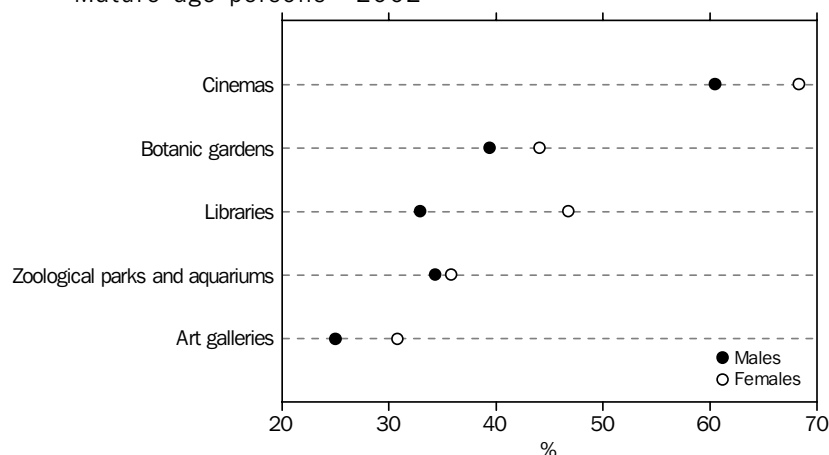
ATTENDANCE AT SELECTED CULTURAL VENUES AND EVENTS

Graph 3.2 shows the five most popular cultural venues and events attended by mature age people in the previous twelve months. For each venue, females were more likely than males to have attended in the past year. Attending the cinema was popular with both mature age males and females (61% and 68% respectively), followed by visiting botanic gardens (39% and 44% respectively).

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION *continued*

ATTENDANCE AT SELECTED CULTURAL VENUES AND EVENTS *continued*

3.2 ATTENDANCE AT SELECTED CULTURAL VENUES AND EVENTS,
Mature age persons—2002



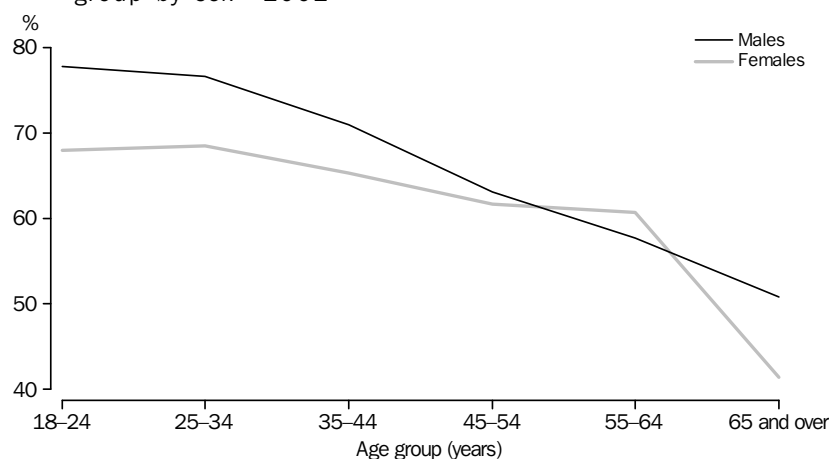
(a) Attendance in previous 12 months

Source: Attendance at selected cultural venues and events, 2002 (ABS cat. no. 4114.0)

PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND RECREATIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

Sport and recreation form an integral part of Australian culture and have many benefits including social interaction, health and community involvement (ABS 2005). In 2002, nearly two out of three adults (64%) had participated in sport or physical recreational activities in the previous twelve months. Overall, males had a higher participation rate than females and participation rates declined with age as shown in graph 3.3. For mature age persons, 62% of those aged 45-54 years had participated compared with 59% of those aged 55-64 years.

3.3 PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES (a), by age
group by sex—2002



(a) Includes both players and non-players such as coaches, officials, umpires and administrators.

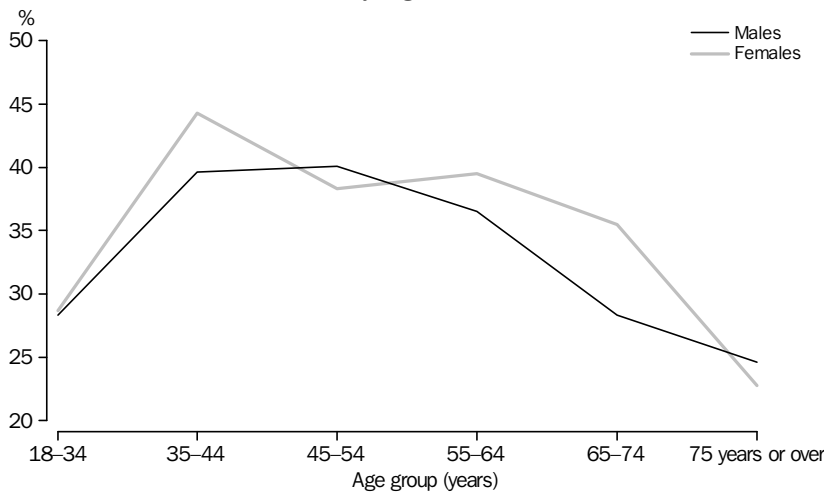
Source: General Social Survey, 2002 (ABS cat.no. 4159.0)

INVOLVEMENT IN
VOLUNTARY WORK

Volunteering often involves face to face interaction, bringing together a variety of people for the benefit of others (AIHW 2003). As well as building social networks, voluntary work in the community makes a substantial contribution to the national economy (ABS 2001).

In 2002, 34% of adults participated in voluntary work with similar participation levels for men and women as shown in graph 3.4. People aged 35-44 years had the highest level of participation in voluntary work (42%) and the level of participation declined with age after that.

3.4 VOLUNTEER RATE(a), by age and sex—2002



(a) Had undertaken voluntary work in last 12 months.

Source: General Social Survey, 2002 (ABS cat.no. 4159.0)

Type of organisation

In 2002, 39% of mature age persons participated in voluntary work. The most popular types of organisations that mature age people volunteered for included 'welfare/community' (14%), 'sport/recreation/hobby' (13%), and 'religious' (10%) (ABS 2003).

Remoteness

Participation in voluntary work increased with remoteness, from 31% of adults in Major Cities to 41% in Inner Regional areas and 43% in Other Areas. For mature age persons, the participation rates were higher overall (35% in Major Cities, 44% in Inner Regional areas, and 50% in Other Areas), and they also increased with remoteness.

Future trends in
volunteering

In 2004, the Productivity Commission examined the relationship between volunteering and age and looked at the likely trends in volunteering over the next 40 years based on demographic projections. Age-specific volunteering rates were fixed at their values in the year 2000 based on the ABS Survey of Voluntary Work. However, it is not known how rates of volunteering will change over time, as personal and social factors are also involved in commitments to voluntary work.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION *continued*

*Future trends in
volunteering continued*

The Commission projected that the number of volunteers would increase by 36% over the next 40 years, to almost 6.5 million people. The total Australian population is projected to increase by 30% over the same time period. The number of volunteers in the 45–54 years and 55–64 years age groups are expected to increase by 27% and 78% respectively (Productivity Commission 2004).

EXPLANATORY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 This publication presents summary results across a range of social dimensions for people aged 18 years and over, compiled from the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS). The survey collected information about personal and household characteristics for people aged 18 years and over resident in private dwellings throughout non-sparsely settled areas of Australia from March to July 2002.

2 The 2002 GSS collected data on a range of social dimensions from the same individual to enable analysis of the interrelationships in social circumstances and outcomes, including the exploration of multiple advantage and disadvantage experienced by that individual.

DIMENSIONS AND TOPICS INCLUDED IN THE 2002 GSS

3 The dimensions and topics included in the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS) were:

- demographic characteristics
- family and community
 - social networks
 - social participation
 - volunteering
 - personal stress
- health
 - self-assessed health
 - disability
- education
 - educational attainment
 - current study
- work
 - labour force status
 - employment characteristics
- economic resources
 - income
 - assets and liabilities
 - financial stress
- housing
 - tenure
 - housing costs
- crime
 - victims of crime
 - feelings of safety
- culture and leisure
 - attendance at culture and leisure venues
 - attendance at sporting events
 - participation in sport and recreational activities
- transport and communication
 - access to transport
 - journey to work
 - use of information technology

4 The following topics were included in the 2002 GSS as supplementary topics:

- household use of information technology
- attendance at selected culture/leisure venues
- sports attendance
- participation in sport and recreational physical activities.

EXPLANATORY NOTES *continued*

SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

5 Only people who were usual residents of private dwellings in Australia were covered by the survey. Private dwellings are houses, flats, home units and any other structures used as private places of residence at the time of the survey. People usually resident in non-private dwellings such as hotels, motels, hostels, hospitals and short-stay caravan parks were not included in the survey. Usual residents are those who usually live in a particular dwelling and regard it as their own or main home. Visitors to private dwellings are not included in the interview for that dwelling. However, if they are a usual resident of another dwelling that is in the scope of the survey they have a chance of being selected in the survey or, if not selected, they will be represented by similar persons who are selected in the survey. At June 30 2002, there were 384,000 people living in non-private dwellings throughout Australia. The exclusion of these people (2% of the population) is unlikely to impact on the estimates included in this publication.

6 The GSS was conducted in both urban and rural areas in all states and territories, except for sparsely settled parts of Australia. New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory have sparsely settled areas. With the exception of the Northern Territory, the population living in the sparsely settled areas represents only a small proportion of the total population. For this and other practical reasons no adjustment was made to state population benchmarks (population benchmarks are discussed below) when deriving survey results. However, at June 30 2002, a significant number of people aged 18 years or over were living in sparsely settled areas in the Northern Territory. These people have therefore been excluded from the population benchmarks in deriving the Northern Territory survey results. However, as these people represent only a very small proportion of the total Australian population, their exclusion has had a negligible impact on national estimates.

7 Only persons aged 18 years and over were included in the survey. The Australian population at 30 June 2002, after the exclusion of people living in non-private dwellings and in sparsely settled areas of the Northern Territory, was 19,171,000, of which 14,503,000 were aged 18 years and over.

8 The following non-residents were excluded from resident population estimates used to benchmark the survey results, and were not interviewed:

- diplomatic personnel of overseas governments
- members of non-Australian defence forces (and their dependants) stationed in Australia
- persons whose usual place of residence was outside Australia.

DATA COLLECTION

9 ABS interviewers conducted personal interviews at selected dwellings during the period March to July 2002. Interviews were conducted using a Computer Assisted Interviewing (CAI) questionnaire. CAI involves the use of a computer to record, store, manipulate and transmit the data collected during interviews.

10 Much of the detail obtained from the GSS was provided by one person aged 18 years or over randomly selected from each participating household. The random selection of this person was made once basic information had been obtained about all household members. Some financial and housing items collected in the GSS required the selected person to answer on behalf of other members of the household. In some cases, particularly where household information was not known by the selected person, a spokesperson for the household was nominated to provide household information.

11 A copy of the GSS interview questions is available in the *2002 General Social Survey: Data Reference Package* (cat. no. 4159.0.55.001) which is available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>.

EXPLANATORY NOTES *continued*

SURVEY DESIGN

12 The GSS was designed to provide reliable estimates at the national level and for each state and territory. The sample was therefore spread across the states and territories in order to produce estimates that have a relative standard error (RSE) of no greater than 10% for characteristics that are relatively common in the national population, say that at least 10% of the population would possess.

13 Dwellings included in the survey in each state and territory were selected at random using a multi-stage area sample. This sample included only private dwellings from the geographic areas covered by the survey. The initial sample for the survey consisted of approximately 19,500 dwellings. This number was reduced to approximately 17,000 dwellings due to the loss of households which had no residents in scope for the survey and where dwellings proved to be vacant, under construction or derelict. Of the eligible dwellings, 91% responded fully (or adequately) which yielded a total sample from the survey of just over 15,500 dwellings.

14 Some survey respondents provided most of the required information, but were unable or unwilling to provide a response to certain data items. The records for these persons were retained in the sample and the missing values were recorded as 'don't know or not stated'. No attempt was made to deduce or impute for these missing values. Approximately 1,200 respondents did not provide one or more required answers but were deemed to have responded adequately.

WEIGHTING, BENCHMARKING AND ESTIMATION

15 For information on the processes of weighting, benchmarking and estimation, see 'Explanatory Notes' in *General Social Survey, Summary Results, 2002* (cat. no. 4159.0).

RELIABILITY OF ESTIMATES

16 All sample surveys are subject to error. Errors in sample surveys come in two broad groups. Sampling error occurs because only a small proportion of the total population is used to produce estimates that represent the population. Sampling error can be reliably measured as it is calculated based on the scientific methods used to design surveys. The second type of error is referred to as non-sampling error. These errors occur when survey processes work less effectively than intended. For example, not all persons selected respond to the survey, questions in the survey are not always clear to the respondent, and occasionally errors can be made in processing data from the survey.

Sampling error

17 Sampling error is the difference between the published estimates, derived from a sample of persons, and the value that would have been produced if all persons in scope of the survey had been included. For more information refer to 'Explanatory Notes' in *General Social Survey, Summary Results, 2002* (cat. no. 4159.0), *Appendix 3: Measuring Sampling Variability*. Sampling error is measured for this survey by relative standard errors (RSEs). In this publication estimates with RSEs of 25% to 50% are preceded by an asterisk (e.g. *3.4) to indicate that the estimate should be used with caution. Estimates with RSEs over 50% are indicated by a double asterisk (e.g. **0.6) and should be considered unreliable for most purposes.

Non-sampling error

18 One of the main sources of non-sampling error is non-response by persons selected in the survey. Non-response can affect the reliability of results and can introduce a bias. The magnitude of any bias depends upon the level of non-response and the extent of the difference between the characteristics of those people who responded to the survey and those who did not.

19 To reduce the level and impact of non-response, the following methods were adopted in this survey:

- face-to-face interviews with respondents
- the use of interviewers who could speak languages other than English where necessary
- follow-up of respondents if there was initially no response

EXPLANATORY NOTES *continued*

Non-sampling error continued

- ensuring the weighted file is representative of the population by aligning the estimates with population benchmarks.

20 Of the dwellings selected in the GSS, 9% did not respond fully or adequately. As the non-response to the GSS was low, the impact of non-response bias is considered to be negligible.

21 Every effort was made to minimise other non-sampling error by careful design and testing of questionnaires, intensive training and supervision of interviewers, and extensive editing and quality control procedures at all stages of data processing.

22 An advantage of the Computer Assisted Interviewing (CAI) technology used in conducting interviews for this survey is that it enables edits to be applied as the data are being gathered. The interviewer is alerted immediately if information entered into the computer is either outside the permitted range for that question, or contradictory to information previously recorded during the interview. These edits allow the interviewer to query respondents and resolve issues during the interview. CAI sequencing of questions is also automated such that respondents are asked only relevant questions and only in the appropriate sequence, eliminating interviewer sequencing errors.

SEASONAL EFFECTS, DATA INTERPRETATION, AND COMPARABILITY WITH OTHER RESULTS

23 For information on seasonal effects, data interpretation and comparability with other results see 'Explanatory Notes' in *General Social Survey, Summary Results, 2002* (cat. no. 4159.0).

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

24 Other ABS publications which may be of interest are shown below and are available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>:

- *Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events, Australia* (cat. no. 4114.0)
- *Australian Labour Market Statistics* (cat. no. 6105.0)
- *Census of Population and Housing – Ageing in Australia* (cat. no. 2048.0)
- *General Social Survey, Summary Results* (cat. no. 4159.0)
- *Household Use of Information Technology, Australia* (cat. no. 8146.0)
- *Measuring Social Capital, An Australian Framework and Indicators* (cat. no. 1378.0)
- *Measuring Wellbeing*, (cat. no. 4160.0)
- *Participation in Sport and Physical Activities, Australia* (cat. no. 4177.0)
- *Sports Attendance, Australia* (cat. no. 4174.0).
- *Voluntary Work, Australia, 2000* (cat. no. 4441.0)

25 Current publications and other products released by the ABS are listed in the *Catalogue of Publications and Products* (cat. no. 1101.0). The Catalogue is available from any ABS office or the ABS web site. The ABS also issues a daily Release Advice on the web site which details products to be released in the week ahead.

GLOSSARY

Adults	Persons aged 18 years and over.
Age	The age of a person on their last birthday.
Art galleries	This category includes national, state and regional galleries primarily engaged in the collection, acquisition, research into, conservation, communication and exhibition of visual art and craft objects, for the purposes of study, education and enjoyment by the general public and/or specialists. Commercial art galleries where works are exhibited for sale are excluded.
Attendance rate	For any group, this is calculated by expressing the number of people who attended a venue or event at least once during the year as a percentage of the population aged 18 years and over in the same group.
Botanic gardens	These are institutions established as a large garden to collect, study, exchange and display native and/or exotic plants.
Cinemas	This category includes drive-ins and public screenings of films at other locations (e.g. at a community hall) in addition to cinema screenings.
Contact with family or friends living outside the household	Refers to face to face contact, or other types of contact such as telephone, mail and email, which a person has had with family or friends who do not live with them.
Disability or long-term health condition	<p>A disability or long-term health condition exists if a limitation, restriction, impairment, disease or disorder, had lasted, or was likely to last for at least six months, and which restricted everyday activities.</p> <p>It is classified by whether or not a person has a specific limitation or restriction. Specific limitation or restriction is further classified by whether the limitation or restriction is in self care, mobility or communication, or a schooling/employment restriction only.</p>
Equivalised gross household income	Gross household income adjusted using an equivalence scale. For a lone person household it is equal to gross household income. For a household comprising more than one person, it is an indicator of the gross household income that would need to be received by a lone person household to enjoy the same level of economic wellbeing as the household in question. For further information see <i>Appendix 2: Equivalised gross household income quintiles of General Social Survey, Summary Results, 2002</i> (cat. no. 4159.0).
Equivalised gross household income quintiles.	These are groupings of 20% of the total population when ranked in ascending order according to equivalised gross household income. The population used for this purpose includes all people living in private dwellings, including children and other persons under the age of 18 years. As the scope of this publication is restricted to only those persons aged 18 years and over, the distribution of this smaller population across the quintiles is not necessarily the same as it is for persons of all ages, i.e. the percentage of persons aged 18 years and over in each of these quintiles may be larger or smaller than 20%. For further information see <i>Appendix 2: Equivalised gross household income quintiles of General Social Survey, Summary Results, 2002</i> (cat. no. 4159.0).
Family	Two or more people, one of whom is at least 18 years of age, who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who usually live in the same household. A separate family is formed for each married couple, or for each set of parent-child relationships where only one parent is present.
Family and community support	<p>In this publication, an individual is defined as having family and community support if they meet three criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ they had contact with family or friends living outside the household in the previous week; ■ they responded that they could ask for small favours from people outside the household; ■ they responded that they could get support in a time of crisis from people outside the household.

GLOSSARY *continued*

Household	A household may comprise one person living alone or a group of people who usually reside and eat together. It includes boarders but excludes lodgers, who form a separate household within the dwelling.
Labour force status	<p>Refers to the situation of respondents in relation to the labour force at the time of the survey.</p> <p>Categories are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ employed — had a job or business, or undertook work without pay in a family business in the week prior to the survey, including being absent from a job or business they had <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ full-time — persons who usually work 35 hours or more per week ■ part-time — persons who usually work at least one hour, but less than 35 hours, per week ■ unemployed — not employed and actively looked for work in the four weeks prior to the survey and available to start work in the week prior to the survey ■ not in the labour force <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ retired from work — persons over the age of 45 years who were no longer working and did not intend to work in the future ■ other — other persons who were neither employed nor unemployed. Such persons may have never worked and never intend to work, persons keeping house (unpaid), voluntarily inactive and permanently unable to work.
Libraries	This category includes national and state libraries as well as public libraries. The latter are institutions funded by state and local government which are primarily engaged in the provision of a free library service to the population of a community or region. Special libraries and those located in educational institutions are excluded from this category.
Main English-speaking countries	Refers to the main countries from which Australia receives, or has received, significant numbers of overseas settlers who are likely to speak English. These countries comprise the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, the United States of America and South Africa.
Mature age persons	Persons aged 45–64 years.
Non-dependent child/ren	All persons aged 15 years or over (except those aged 15–24 years who are full-time students) who have a parent in the household and do not have a partner or child of their own in the household.
Participants in sport and physical recreational activities	Participants comprise those people who physically undertook a sport or physical recreational activity in the last 12 months, as well as people involved in 'non-playing roles', such as coaches, officials, umpires and administrators.
Participation rate	For any group, the number of participants in the last 12 months, expressed as a percentage of the population of that group.
Proficiency in spoken English	A self assessment by persons who speak a language other than English at home, of whether they speak English very well, well, not well, or not at all.
Remoteness Areas	Broad geographical regions which share common characteristics of remoteness based on the Remoteness Structure of the ABS's <i>Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC)</i> . In this publication the categories Major Cities of Australia, and Inner Regional Australia from the Remoteness Structure are presented along with a residual category labelled 'Other areas'. As the GSS did not cover sparse areas of Australia, 'Other Areas', encompasses most of Outer Regional Australia, part of Remote Australia, and only a small proportion of Very Remote Australia.
Small favours	<p>Assistance which a person may seek from other people in their day to day lives.</p> <p>Examples of small favours include looking after pets or watering the garden, collecting mail or checking the house, minding a child for a brief period, helping with moving or lifting objects, and borrowing equipment.</p>

GLOSSARY *continued*

Social attachment	Social attachment' refers to the nature and strength of relationships that people have with each other. It includes the more intimate relationships with family and friends as well as people's associations with individuals and organisations in the wider community.
Sport and physical recreational activities	<p>Whether an activity was regarded as a sport or physical activity was left to the opinion of the respondent. However a prompt card which listed a number of suggestions was provided as guidance. Headings on the prompt card were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ fitness/health activities ■ other leisure physical activities ■ ball sports ■ racquet sports ■ other team sports ■ water sports ■ other sports ■ any other physical activities.
Support in time of crisis	Refers to whether there is someone outside the person's household that could be asked for support in a time of crisis. Support could be in the form of emotional, physical or financial help. Potential sources of support could be family members, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and various community, government and professional organisations.
Voluntary work	<p>The provision of unpaid help in the form of time, service or skills, through any of the following types of organisations or groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ sport/recreation/hobby ■ welfare/community ■ health ■ emergency services ■ education/training/youth development ■ religious ■ environmental/animal welfare ■ business/professional/union ■ law/justice/political ■ arts/culture ■ foreign/international (excluding work done overseas).
Zoological parks and aquariums	This category comprises zoological gardens, other wildlife parks, aquariums and marine parks primarily engaged in the breeding, preservation, study and display of native and/or exotic fauna in captivity, enclosures or natural environments, so as to be accessible to the general public.

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