First glance

Born in Australia: 77 per cent of population
Aboriginal: 2.5 per cent
Born in Britain: 6 per cent
Born in China or Vietnam: 3 per cent
Born in Italy or Greece: 2 per cent
Born in the Middle East: 0.7 per cent
Speaking a language other than English at home: 16 per cent

Catholic: 27 per cent
Anglican: 21 per cent
Buddhist: 1.9 per cent
Muslim: 1.5 per cent
Jewish: 0.4 per cent
No religion: 16 per cent

Aged over 36: 50 per cent
In a partnership, with children under 16: 38 per cent
Living alone: 9 per cent
Living within fifty kilometres of the sea: 85 per cent
Living on a farm: 1 per cent
Owning or paying off a home: 70 per cent
Living in a home with three or more bedrooms: 75 per cent
Proportion of three bedroom homes containing one or two people: 58 per cent
Homeless: 0.5 per cent
Likely to cohabit before marriage: 74 per cent of couples
 Likely to get divorced: 43 per cent of marriages

Having a beyond-school qualification (degree, diploma etc.): 51 per cent of adults
Income of less than $550 a week after tax: 50 per cent of households
Donating to charity more than once a year: 87 per cent of adults (average $424 per Australian household)

Smokers: 24 per cent of adults
Classified as overweight or obese: 48 per cent
Feeling in good or excellent health: 82 per cent
Experienced a mental disorder (depression, anxiety) in the past year: 18 per cent

Feel safe at home after dark: 82 per cent
Likely to be the victim of a personal crime this year: 6 per cent

Mobile phone owners: 87 per cent
Regular cinema-goers: 72 per cent
In a home with two or more TV sets: 70 per cent
Owning a DVD player: 68 per cent
Using the Internet at least once a week: 60 per cent
Subscribing to pay TV: 25 per cent
**How many of us**

As of 26 January 2006, the population of Australia was 20 470 000.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), this figure rises by one person every 2 minutes and 8 seconds. On average, there is a birth every 2 minutes and 4 seconds, a death every 3 minutes and 55 seconds, and a net gain of one international immigrant every 4 minutes and 9 seconds.

Our population growth of 1 per cent per year is among the lowest in the world: Indonesia is growing by 1.3 per cent a year, Malaysia by 1.9 per cent and Papua New Guinea by 2.2 per cent. Then again, we have the same rate as the United States and we are way ahead of Japan (0.1 per cent a year) and Italy (declining by 0.1 per cent a year).

The Bureau projects that we will reach 21 million in 2009 and 25 million in 2050, then decline in numbers unless we boost immigration and start breeding like bunnies.

Entrepreneurs think we should aim to reach 40 million, the tipping point to make us a world economic player. Environmentalists think we're already bloated because the continent's resources can't sustain more than 12 million people. The Bureau says neither of those scenarios can be achieved this century.

If your idea of fun is to watch big numbers changing, go to <http://www.abs.gov.au> and click on Australia's population. There you'll find the Bureau's nifty people clock.

**This year**

250 000 people will be born in Australia.

374 000 will arrive, intending to stay for more than a year.

220 000 will leave, intending to stay away for more than a year.

130 000 will die: 29 per cent from cancer, 20 per cent from heart disease, and 9 per cent from stroke.

206 000 will get married.

110 000 will get divorced.

392 000 will move from one state to another.

3.3 million will be at school.

1.4 million will work in the retail trade.

1.1 million will work in manufacturing.

370 000 will work in agriculture.

23 820 will be in prison: 22 180 men and 1640 women.

90 000 abortions will be performed in hospitals and private clinics.

800 000 new cars will be bought: 21 per cent Toyota, 19 per cent Holden, 14 per cent Ford, 7 per cent Nissan, 6 per cent Mitsubishi.

15 4 million vehicles will be registered.

14 600 kilometres, the equivalent of two return trips from Sydney to Perth, will be covered by the average car.

1730 people will be killed by cars.

4.7 million travellers from overseas, mainly from New Zealand, Britain, Japan, the US, Korea, China and Singapore, will enter the country, staying an average 27 nights.

3.5 million trips overseas will be made by Australians, mainly to New Zealand, Britain, the US, Indonesia and Fiji.

12 million credit cards will be used to spend $164 billion, with an average outstanding debt of $2600 each per month.

92 million cinema tickets will be sold.
Comparisons: then and now

Age
In 1901: 35 per cent of the population were under 15; 4 per cent were over 65; the median age was 22.
Now: 20 per cent are under 15; 13 per cent are over 65, and the median age is 37.

Life expectancy for males
In 1901: A baby boy could expect to live till 55 years of age
1935: life expectancy was 65
1960: 70
Now: 77

The mix
In 1901: 23 per cent of the population were born overseas (in Britain)
1947: 10 per cent were born overseas (in Britain)
Now: 23 per cent are overseas born (mainly in Britain, New Zealand, Italy, China, Vietnam, Greece and 180 other countries) and 25 per cent of people born here have at least one parent born overseas.

Main source countries of immigrants (after Britain)
Arriving in 1962: Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia
1972: Lebanon, New Zealand, Yugoslavia
1982: Vietnam, New Zealand, South Africa
1992: New Zealand, China, Vietnam
Now: New Zealand, China, India

The stay-at-homes
In 1976: 21 per cent of 20 to 29 year olds lived with their parents
Now: 30 per cent do

Marriage age
In 1976: The average age for men to marry was 25; for women 22
Now: It’s 30 for men; 28 for women

The wedding service
In 1986: 59 per cent of marriages were performed by a civil celebrant
Now: 55 per cent

Birth rate
In 1960: 3.5 babies were born per woman
1975: 2.2 babies were born per woman
Now: 1.8 babies are born per woman
In 1956: The median age for women giving birth was 23
1976: It was 26
Now: It’s 30
In 1976: 40 per cent of 20 to 29 year olds had children
Now: 16 per cent do

Unemployment
In 1956: 1 per cent
1974: 3 per cent
1983: 10 per cent
1988: 7 per cent
Now: 6 per cent

Inflation
In 1956: 6 per cent
1974: 16 per cent
1983: 9 per cent
1988: 8 per cent
Now: 3 per cent
Comparisons: them and us

Birth rate
- Australia: 1.8 children per woman
- Papua New Guinea: 4.1
- Malaysia: 2.9
- Indonesia: 2.4
- America: 2.1
- Britain: 1.7
- Italy: 1.3

Murder rate
- Australia: 1.9 per 100,000 people each year
- South Africa: 35.9
- America: 5.6
- New Zealand: 2.5
- Britain: 1.6
- Italy: 1.5
- Japan: 1.0

Median age of population
- Australia: 37
- Japan: 43
- Italy: 42
- Britain: 39
- America: 36
- Indonesia: 26
- Papua New Guinea: 20

Life expectancy for females
- Australia: A baby girl born now can expect to live till 83 years of age
- Hong Kong: 85
- Japan: 85
- Italy: 83
- Britain: 81
- America: 80
- Malaysia: 76
- Indonesia: 69

Enrolled in education
- Australia: 83 per cent of people aged between 16 and 19
- France: 87 per cent
- Britain: 77 per cent
- America: 75 per cent
- New Zealand: 72 per cent
- Malaysia: 55 per cent
- Indonesia: 46 per cent

Academic skills
- Literacy: Australia's 15 year olds can read better than teens in France, Hong Kong, Japan, Sweden and America, and less well than teens in Canada, Korea, and Britain.
- Science and maths: Our 15 year olds do better than teens in Italy, America, France and Sweden, and worse than teens in Britain, Japan, Korea and Hong Kong.

Unemployment
- Australia's rate of 6 per cent is equal to America's, better than Canada's (8 per cent), Italy's (9) and France's (10), and worse than Britain's, Sweden's, Japan's and New Zealand's (all 5 per cent).

Cheers
- Australia is the number four wine-exporting country in the world (Italy is top) and the number 16 wine-drinking country, with 22 litres per person per year (France tops this list with 56 litres per person).
Comparisons: men and women

About 51 per cent of our population is female; 49 per cent is male. The difference happens because men die younger than women: in any year roughly 67,000 men will die compared with 62,000 women.

The life expectancy of a boy born this year is 77 and a girl is 83, unless they are Aboriginal, for whom the figures are 60 and 65.

The average weekly total earnings of women is $512; for men it's $898. When hours and types of job are standardised, it appears that women, on average, earn 91 per cent of what men earn: an improvement from 78 per cent in the early 1970s.

Women hold 15 per cent of ministerial-level jobs in Australian state and federal government, and 15 per cent of senior management jobs in private enterprise.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics tells us a woman is more likely than a man to be: old, living alone, at the movies, using a library, seeing a doctor, seeking a divorce, in a botanic garden, sexually assaulted, walking for exercise, suffering arthritis and asthma, and using contraception.

She is less likely than a man to be: murdered, beaten up, robbed, in jail, watching a sporting event, deaf, playing golf, dying of cancer and injured in an accident.

What's wrong with us

We're not hypochondriacs

Health surveys by the Bureau of Statistics find 82 per cent of Australians saying they are in 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent' health. The most common disorders described are:

1. Long sightedness: 22 per cent of the population
2. Short sightedness: 21 per cent
3. Back problems: 21 per cent
4. Arthritis: 13 per cent
5. Asthma: 12 per cent
6. Sinusitis: 11 per cent
7. Total/partial hearing loss: 10 per cent
8. Hypertension: 10 per cent
9. Diabetes: 3 per cent

The major causes of death are:

1. Cancer: 29 per cent of deaths
2. Heart disease: 20 per cent
3. Stroke: 9 per cent
4. Lung diseases: 5 per cent
5. Accidents: 4 per cent
6. Diabetes: 2 per cent
How we feel

When it comes to being happy, we are.

As part of a national health survey in 2002, the Bureau of Statistics slipped in a fundamental question: **how do you feel about your life?** People in 18,000 households were asked to rate their degree of euphoria, using one of the following terms: 'Delighted'; 'Pleased'; 'Mostly satisfied'; 'Mixed'; 'Mostly dissatisfied'; 'Unhappy'; 'Terrible'.

**Overall:**
- 12 per cent of Australian adults said they were ‘Delighted’
- 31 per cent were ‘Pleased’
- 33 per cent were ‘Mostly satisfied’
- Only 1.3 per cent felt ‘Terrible’.

Accordingly, 8 million of us are going around with big smiles on our faces, and most of the rest aren’t complaining.

The Bureau then correlated the core question with a bunch of other measures to deconstruct the components of the ‘Good Life’:

The happiest Australians are people who are hitting their targets. Asked if they had accomplished the tasks they set out to do in the past four weeks, 85 per cent of the sample thought they had. Among people who had achieved what they planned, 47 per cent said they were delighted or pleased with their lives and only 1.5 per cent felt unhappy or terrible. Among people who had accomplished less than they desired, only 16 per cent were delighted or pleased, while 13 per cent were feeling unhappy or terrible.

**Booze helps!** Among people who averaged the equivalent of three glasses of wine a day, 49.7 per cent are delighted or pleased and only 2.2 per cent feel terrible or unhappy. Among people who never drink, only 37 per cent are delighted or pleased with their lives and 6 per cent feel unhappy or terrible.

The happiest drinkers are in a category the ABS calls ‘risky’ rather than ‘moderate’, which suggests that many Australians are balancing short-term pleasure against long-term damage.

Smokers are unhappy, but it’s not clear what’s cause and what’s effect. Only 36 per cent of current smokers were delighted or pleased with their lives, while 42 per cent of ex-smokers and 46 per cent of those who have never smoked were in that state of bliss.

A geographical breakdown suggests Sydney is the happiest kingdom of them all. In the big smoke, 14.4 per cent of people were delighted with their lives and only 0.9 per cent felt terrible, compared with 11.4 per cent delighted and 2.1 per cent terrible in outback New South Wales, and 11.4 per cent and 1.1 per cent in Melbourne.

In relationships the most miserable were separated people (10 per cent felt unhappy or terrible and only 23 per cent were delighted or pleased), while the cheeriest were the marrieds (2.2 per cent unhappy or terrible and 45 per cent delighted or pleased). But the never married were happier than the divorced.

And baby boomers aren’t as smug as we thought. People aged 40 to 64 are less happy than those 18 to 39 (38 per cent of boomers are delighted or pleased, compared with 49 per cent of Gen-Ys and Xers).

**The obese** are uncomfortable: 37.5 per cent of people who are neither are delighted or pleased and 4 per cent feeling terrible or unhappy. People who do lots of exercise every week are blissful: 58.5 per cent delighted or pleased and only 1.7 per cent terrible or unhappy.

Clearly, we still think we’re the lucky country.
What Australians believe

In 2005, The Australian National University's Centre for Social Research published 'Australian Social Attitudes: A First Report'. Edited by Shaun Wilson, the report analysed the results of a mail questionnaire completed by 4270 adults. These were the major opinions held by most Australians:

To be 'truly Australian', it is 'fairly important' that you ... 'speak English', 92 per cent; 'feel Australian', 91 per cent; 'have Australian citizenship', 89 per cent; 'respect Australia's political institutions and law', 89 per cent; 'be born in Australia', 58 per cent; 'be Christian', 36 per cent.

'The father should be as involved in the care of his children as the mother': 90 per cent agree.

'A woman should have the right to choose whether or not she has an abortion': 87 per cent agree.

'The gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large': 84 per cent agree.

'Generally speaking, Australia is a better country than most other countries': 83 per cent agree.

'When big businesses break the law they often go unpunished': 81 per cent agree.

'Media ownership in Australia is too concentrated among a few rich families': 81 per cent agree.

'Large international companies are doing more and more damage to local businesses in Australia': 75 per cent agree.

'Immigrants make Australia open to new ideas and cultures': 74 per cent agree.

'People who receive welfare benefits should be under more obligation to work': 73 per cent agree.

'It is better for society if immigrant groups adapt and blend into the larger society': 71 per cent agree.

'Television violence encourages social violence': 71 per cent agree.

'The media should have less power': 70 per cent agree.

'Immigrants are generally good for Australia's economy': 69 per cent agree.

'Australia should limit import of foreign products to protect the economy': 65 per cent agree.

'Which institutions should be publicly owned: prisons, 67 per cent; Australia Post, 67 per cent; public transport, 63 per cent; electricity, 60 per cent; Telestra, 57 per cent.

'Television is my main source of household entertainment': 67 per cent.

'Commercial television is my daily source of news and information': 65 per cent (ABC and SBS 41 per cent; radio 63 per cent; newspapers 40 per cent).

'Management and employees have good relations in my workplace': 62 per cent agree.

'Is the mass media effective in keeping governments on their toes?': 60 per cent say yes.

'Thinking about the federal government in Australia these days, would you say that it is ... run mainly for a few big interests looking out for themselves, 60 per cent; run for the benefit of all the people, 40 per cent. Australia should pursue greater economic ties with Asia': 56 per cent agree.

'What is most important to your identity? My family, 52 per cent; my occupation, 16 per cent; where in Australia I live, 3 per cent.

'Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?': 47 per cent highly satisfied, 33 per cent highly dissatisfied.

'The death penalty should be the punishment for murder': 47 per cent agree, 33 per cent disagree.

'Australia's television should give preference to Australian films and programs': 46 per cent agree, 24 per cent disagree.

'Government should redistribute income from the better-off to those who are less well-off': 44 per cent agree, 30 per cent disagree.

'A preschool child is likely to suffer if the mother works': 44 per cent of men agree, 30 per cent disagree; 31 per cent of women agree, 45 per cent disagree.

'The law should recognise same sex relationships': 34 per cent agree, 41 per cent disagree.