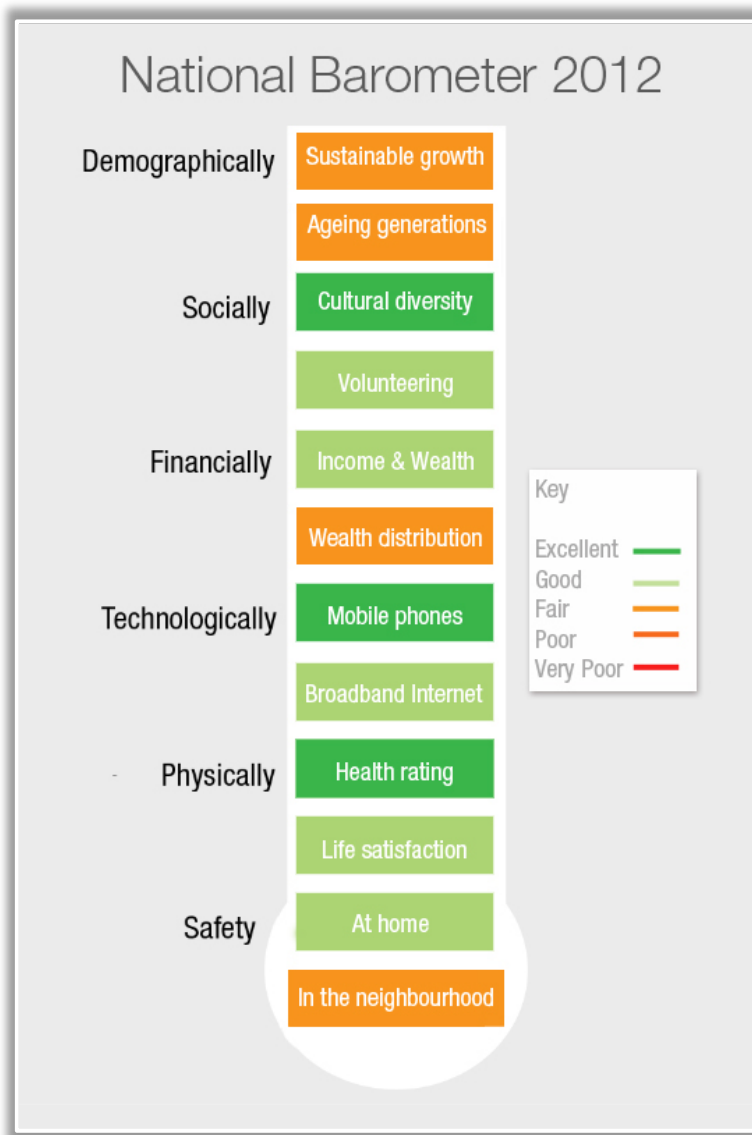


The National Barometer 2012: How we're travelling

Australia in 2012 is experiencing significant population shifts and social trends. So amidst the change, it is encouraging to see that the national barometer shows Australia is travelling pretty well.



Within a few months, Australia's population will exceed 23 million. In fact, Australia's population has doubled since 1966 (11.5 million) which is the same period of time that the total world population has doubled (from 3.5 billion in 1966 to 7 billion today). When asked about this population growth, more than half of Australians (52%) said that they were concerned about Australia's rapid rate of population growth. Only a third (36%) felt that we were growing at the right rate.

The ratio of retirees to workers will double over the next four decades

Australia is ageing rapidly as a nation! By 2050, older people (aged 65-84) are expected to more than double and those aged over 85 will more than quadruple. In today's workforce, there is a ratio of 5 workers per retiree!

By 2050, this will have halved to just 2.5 workers per retiree. We are moving into a prolonged period where there will be fewer people working relative to the total population, to support through taxation, the increasing aged-care and health costs of an older population.

Growing cultural diversity, growing acceptance of it

Of the 1 in 5 (20%) of Australians born in non-English speaking countries, 83% feel they speak English well or very well. Of all Australians, Tasmanians are the most likely to have been born in Australia (87%) and 86% reported that all or most of their friends were from the same ethnic background as they were themselves. NT (67%) and Victoria (69%) had the lowest percentage of people reporting that all or most of their friends were from the same ethnic background that they were.

Australians have embraced cultural diversity, 4 in 5 (80%) stating that it is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different cultures. Those in the ACT were found to be the most accepting of cultural diversity, with 87% feeling this. Tasmanians and Queenslanders were the least likely to feel positive about cultural diversity, but even so, less than 1 in 10 Tasmanians (9%) and Queenslanders (8%) strongly disagree with the idea that cultural diversity is a good thing.

Community involvement and volunteering

As Australians, it's not uncommon to volunteer in the community, with 6.14 million adults (38%) undertaking some form of voluntary work annually. Interestingly, Australians in major cities (34%) were less likely to participate in voluntary or community activities, when compared to Australians living in regional areas (42%). Different generations also volunteered for different activities. Younger generations were more likely to be involved in sports and recreation, older Gen Y and Gen Xers were most commonly volunteering in parenting groups. Welfare and community type activities were most common in the Boomers and Builders.

Wealth of the top 20% of Australian households is 70x more than that of the lowest 20%

In Australia, the national average disposable income is \$44,096. The disposable household income of the lowest 20% of Australian households comprises just 7% of the total Australian household income (\$16,328). The average disposable household income of the top 20% of households is \$88,608, which comprises 40% of all household income! Even after tax strategies to balance Australian earning, this is five times the average earnings of the bottom 20%.

Currently, the average Australian household net worth is \$719,561. The lowest 20% of Australian households own just 1% of Australia's private wealth (with an average net worth of \$31,829), whilst the highest 20% own 62%, with an average net worth of \$2.22 million. The wealth of the average household in the top 20% is seventy times more than the average of those in the bottom 20%.

Mobiles overtake fixed lines as preferred form of communication

As Australians, we not only value our relationships, but we strive to ensure that we're well-connected. On a day-to-day basis, 1 in 5 Australians (20%) have face-to-face contact with family and friends outside of their household, and 4 in 5 (79%) have contact weekly. In terms of non-physical forms of communication, mobile phone and SMS-style communication (84%) were the most common methods of keeping in touch with family and friends, just overtaking fixed phone (83%). There are currently more than 6.2 million Australian households connected with broadband internet which equals 7 in 10 (73%) of all households.

We're optimistic about our health

Most Australian adults rate their health as good, very good or excellent (83%), and when thinking about overall life satisfaction, 2 in 5 (43%) of us are pleased or delighted with our lives, and a further 34% are mostly satisfied. That means that 3 in 4 (77%) Australians are quite satisfied with their lives overall. However, the less contact an adult had with family and friends living outside their household, the less satisfied they were with their lives. Similarly, divorcees and separated adults were also least likely to be feeling satisfied.

Crime and safety

As Australians, we feel safe in our homes, with 85% stating that we felt safe or very safe at home alone after dark. Interestingly, only half of Australians (48%) feel safe if they were to walk in their neighbourhood at night time. There was a large difference between males and females, with men feeling much safer than women whether in or out of their home. 2 in 3 (68%) men feel safe walking in their neighbourhood at night, compared with only 29% of women.

"The Australian Barometer 2012 reads very well. We are connecting positively culturally, socially and technologically. Our communities are culturally diverse and most Australians agree that this enriches our society. Most Australians connect socially with friends and family other than their household each week, and continuing our early adoption of technology, most Australian households are broadband connected, and more use is made of mobile phones than landlines. We are happy with our health with 83% of Australians rating their health as above average (which says more for our positive frame of mind than our statistical abilities!) and we record a high level of feel safe at home and in our communities," said Mark McCrindle, director of McCrindle Research. "Overall, the population growth and ageing, the skewed wealth distribution and safety in our neighbourhoods are the areas of concern."

For further analysis:

For more information or to organise an interview with demographer and social analyst Mark McCrindle, please contact Francesca Dalton on 02 8824 3422 or email francesca@mccrindle.com.au

**Sources: The Australian Bureau of Statistics,
The Australian Government Intergenerational Report (2010),
McCrindle Research findings (2012).**