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Recent trends in household formation in Melbourne

John O'Leary and Chris Wight (john.o'leary@dse.vic.gov.au)
Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment

Abstract

To what extent have changes in household formation between 1991 and 2001 been due to the ageing of the population and to what extent have they been due to other societal changes such as declining fertility rates, deferring of major demographic events such as leaving the parental home, partnering and having children, and increased levels of divorce?

To answer this question household propensity rates for Victoria, the Melbourne Statistical Division and Regional Victoria from the 1991, 1996 and 2001 censuses have been analysed. Assuming the propensity rates at the 1991 Census had remained constant the changes in household formation due to ageing of the population and other societal factors can be estimated.

The results of this study are an estimate of the change in the number of household by household type (couple with children, couple without children, one parent family, other family, group household and living alone) between 2001 and 2001 that is due to the ageing of the population and the change that is due to other societal changes. Although household projections indicate a future growth in one and two person households due to the ageing of the population this study indicates that the growth in these small sized households between 1991 and 2001 have come more from partnership separation and deferring of major life events than from ageing of the population.

The conclusions of this study are similar to a study by Tony Champion in the United Kingdom that found that a major factor in recent growth in lone person households has been marital separation with the consequential increase in the number of divorced / separated males aged in their 30s and 40s living alone.

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