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Social marital status in Australia: Evidence from 2001 Census

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Abstract

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Over the period of time (1991-2001) there has been an increase in the proportion of never married and de facto relationships; while a decline has been noted for registered marriage. In 2001, nearly half of the 15 million persons aged 15 years and over were never married, divorced, widowed, and separated; while about a million persons were in de facto relationships. People in de facto relationships rose by 28% from 1996 to 2001. While the number of de facto couples is increasing, it only represents 12% of couple relationships. Over two-third of those living in de facto couples have never been previously married.

Never married, divorced, separated, younger age groups, in particular females are more likely to be in de facto relationships. Similarly, persons living in rented dwellings, having affiliation with no religion, speaking Northern European languages, having birthplace in Oceania & Antarctica, and Indigenous people have higher chances to be in de facto relationships.

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Over the period of time (1991-2001) there has been an increase in the proportion of never married and de facto relationships; while a decline has been noted for registered marriage. In 2001, nearly half of the 15 million persons aged 15 years and over were never married, divorced, widowed, and separated; while about a million persons were in de facto relationships. People in de facto relationships rose by 28% from 1996 to 2001. While the number of de facto couples is increasing, it only represents 12% of couple relationships. Over two-third of those living in de facto couples have never been previously married.

Never married, divorced, separated, younger age groups, in particular females are more likely to be in de facto relationships. Similarly, persons living in rented dwellings, having affiliation with no religion, speaking Northern European languages, having birthplace in Oceania & Antarctica, and Indigenous people have higher chances to be in de facto relationships.

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Introduction

In every day life our understanding of marital unions, families and households are often taken for granted. There have been visible shifts, especially in the formation and dissolution of marital unions for the last few decades. As a consequence, there is now far greater diversity in people's marital arrangements than occurred earlier. It is worthwhile to take stock of such changing phenomena periodically.

In the past, generally, only married people were considered to live in couple relationships, while those who were never married, separated, divorced or widowed were assumed not to do so. The rise of de facto partnering in the last few decades suggests that registered marital status alone is not sufficient for describing couple relationships. Some people who had never married or were previously married, together with those who were currently married, were living in couple relationships.

Usually, it has been practice to examine only registered marriages in most countries and societies; ignoring the de facto relationships. This was partly because of the availability of data on registered marital status in contrast to de facto relationships and the ease at measuring registered marital status. There is a need for the conceptual clarification of marital status, both for the registered marriages and de facto ones or social marital status as opposed to registered marital status. A couple not legally married to each other may be living together in a union which satisfy many of the common indicators of marriage such as joint residence, joint economy, sexual relations and even offspring. Under these circumstances, it would be preferable to examine the data and changes in both legal and de facto status.

The objective of the paper is to highlight the magnitude of the marital status, both registered and de facto, as well as identify characteristics of those in registered marital status and in de facto relationships. In this context couple relationships from the 2001 Census data have been examined, with particular emphasis on de facto relationships.

Data and Methodology

The population census, vital registration records and surveys are the three sources of data on marriages in Australia. The Census of Population and Housing, conducted every five years, collects data on the registered and social marital status of all Australians aged 15 years and over (ABS 2001a). The second source of data reports on administrative data collected for the purpose of registration of marriage and divorce and published annually by the ABS (ABS, 2002). The third source is the surveys, which collect marital histories and provide data on the timing and duration of marriages and divorces.

There are two variables that may be used to identify a person's marital status, they are Registered Marital Status and Social Marital Status. Registered marital status refers to formally registered marriages and is a person's relationship status in terms of whether he or she has, or has had, a registered marriage with another person.

Social marital status is the relationship status of an individual with reference to another person who is usually resident in the household. A marriage exists when two people live together as husband and wife, or partners, regardless of whether the marriage is formalised through registration. Individuals are, therefore, regarded as married if they are in a de facto marriage, or if they are living with the person to whom they are registered as married.

The main source of regular information on marital status is the census. In the 2001 Census, all persons over the age 15 years were asked the question, 'What is the person's present marital status?' with response categories of never married; widowed; divorced; separated but not divorced; and married (Question 6). This question does not identify cohabiting or 'de facto' relationships of persons (ABS, 2001c).

The variable dealing with social marital status, derived from the question dealing with household relationships, addresses the de facto relationship. The question asked, 'What is the person's relationship to Person 1/Person 2?' with response options about couple relationships: husband or wife of Person 1; and de facto partner of person 1 (Question 5). According to the 2001 Census Dictionary (ABS, 2001b), using the responses to this question, the registered marital status question and sex of Person 1 and 2, the following variable has been constructed:

Husband, wife in registered marriage;
Partner in de facto marriage, opposite-sex couple;
Partner in de facto marriage, male same sex couple; and
Partner in de facto marriage, female same sex couple.

For the derived variable, these are collapsed into categories of married in a registered marriage; married in a de facto marriage; and not married.

The 2001 Census defined a de facto marriage as existing when the relationship between two people (of same or opposite sex, who live together in the same household), is reported as either: de facto, partner, common law husband/wife/spouse, lover, boyfriend, or girlfriend. The distribution of marital status by registered marital status and social marital status covering various categories is:

Registered Marital Status

Never Married
Widowed
Divorced
Separated but not divorced
Married

Social Marital Status

Married in a registered marriage
Married in a de facto marriage
Not married

There may be some differences in the number of people recorded as being in a registered marriage between these two variables (registered versus social marriage). As reported in the 2001 Census Dictionary (ABS, 2001b) and noted by Gray et al (2003), this could arise for several reasons.

- A person may live alone and still be married. They would be recorded as 'married' in the registered marital status variable and 'not married' in the social marital status variable as they have no other household member to record a relationship with.
- A person in a de facto marriage may have reported their registered marital status as 'married'. They would be recorded as 'married' in the registered marital status variable and 'married in de facto marriage' in the social marital status variable.
- A person in de facto marriage may have reported their relationship to Person 1 as 'husband/wife' as this may best describe the relationship with that person. However, they may also answer 'not married' to the registered marital status question. They would be recorded as 'never married' in the registered marital status variable and 'married in a registered marriage' in the social marital status variable.

A relationship in the household may be because the husband and wife are in a registered marriage; or because partners of opposite-sex couples are in de facto marriage. Relationships in the household may also be because partners in de facto marriage of the same-sex (either male or female); however, this later category of relationships are not considered in this analysis because no provision for same-sex couples to be registered as married has been made in Australia. However, under a new Relationship Bill passed by the Tasmanian state Parliament on 28 August, 2003, it will become the first state to create a registry for same-sex couples. The bill changed state law to recognise gay and lesbian relationships. It also allowed same-sex couples to adopt the children of one of the partners. To have legal protection, it is expected that many heterosexual couples will be encouraged to register their relationships (The Canberra Times, August 30, 2003).

On the basis of available data from the 2001 Census, it is possible to analyse and examine the registered marital status and de facto marriages of opposite sex people. As such, the analysis in this paper has examined level and differentials at various geographical levels of registered and social marital status, with more emphasis on de facto relationships. The associated factors/ variables include: age, sex, dwelling ownership, religious affiliations, language, country of birth, and Indigenous status.

Findings

Registered Marital Status

Percent distribution of registered marital status in Australia and each of its state and territory is shown in table 1. According to the 2001 Census, there were about 15 million population aged 15 years and over in Australia, representing nearly 80% of the total population (ABS, 2001a). The data indicates that in Australia, a little over half of the population aged 15 years and above was married (51%), nearly one-third never married (32%), 7% divorced, 6% widowed, and 3% separated. There were few variations observed in the distribution of various categories of registered marital status across the states/ territories.

Table 1: Percent Registered Marital Status, Australia and States, 2001

States	Never married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	Married	Number
Australia	32.0	6.2	7.4	3.4	51.0	14,968,340
NSW	31.3	6.5	7.2	3.3	51.7	5,012,123
Victoria	31.7	6.4	6.8	3.2	52.0	3,714,578
Qld	31.7	5.8	8.0	3.8	50.7	2,762,643
SA	30.1	7.0	8.0	3.3	51.7	1,182,409
WA	32.5	5.3	7.7	3.6	50.9	1,435,416
Tas	29.6	7.2	8.2	3.7	51.4	363,064
NT	39.5	3.3	7.6	4.2	45.5	139,473
ACT	35.4	4.2	7.6	3.2	49.6	245,289

Among the states/ territories, it is noted that the proportion of never married was high in the Northern Territory (40%) and also in the Australian Capital Territory (35%), followed by Western Australia (33%). Lowest proportion of never married was observed in Tasmania and South Australia (30%). The proportion of never married in Victoria and Queensland followed the national level average (32%), whereas it was slightly low for New South Wales (31%).

Wide variations in the distribution of widowed persons have been noted. It was highest in Tasmania, South Australia and New South Wales (7%), while lowest in the Northern Territory (3%) and the Australian Capital Territory (4%).

There was not much variation across the states/ territories in the distribution of divorced persons. It was highest in Tasmania (8.2%), while the lowest was found in Victoria (6.8%). Similarly, there were not much variations across the states/ territories for those who are separated, lowest being 3.2% for the Australian Capital Territory and 4.2% being the highest for the Northern Territory.

The highest proportion of married persons is noted in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia (52%), followed by Tasmania, Western Australia and Queensland (51%), the Australian Capital Territory (50%), and lowest in the Northern Territory (46%).

De facto Relationships

In table 2, the percent distribution of registered marital status of people in de facto relationships in Australia and each of its state/ territory is given. There were about a million persons in de facto relationships in the 2001 Census.

In 2001, of all the people in de facto relationships in Australia, over two-thirds (68%) were never married, one-fourth (25%) divorced, 5% separated and about 2% each widowed and married.

Table 2: Percent Distribution of People in De Facto Relationships by Registered Marital Status , Australia and States, 2001

States	Never married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	Married	Number
Australia	68.1	2.0	24.5	5.4	1.6	951,464
NSW	67.2	2.0	23.9	5.2	1.7	291,236
Victoria	68.8	1.8	23.2	5.0	1.3	210,661
Qld	67.3	2.0	23.7	5.6	1.4	204,419
SA	66.2	2.0	25.7	4.8	1.3	77,332
WA	68.5	1.7	22.8	5.4	1.7	107,195
Tas	67.0	2.1	24.1	5.3	1.5	27,892
NT	70.1	1.2	18.0	5.3	4.7	15,133
ACT	70.8	1.1	22.5	4.5	1.1	17,473

A similar pattern was observed for the states/ territories. However, in the Australian Capital Territory and in the Northern Territory, little over 70% of all the people in de facto relationships were in the category of never married and also about 5% people in de facto relationships were married in the Northern Territory.

Few other variations in the pattern of people in de facto relationships in various states/ territories was noted. Compared with other states/ territories, Tasmania appears to have slightly higher proportion of widowed persons in de facto relationships.

In South Australia, a little over one quarter of people in de facto relationships were divorced.

The separated people in de facto relationships were found more evenly distributed across the states/ territories (about 5%), except in Queensland, where it was slightly higher (6%).

A small minority of married women (1 to 2%) also reported being in de facto relationships in all the states/ territories, except in the Northern Territory where it was higher, about 5%.

Table 3 contains the proportion of people in de facto relationships among population aged 15 years and over by different categories of registered marital status in Australia and its states/ territories. It is noted that the overall proportion of persons in de facto relationships was 6.4% among total population of aged 15 years and above. There were variations in the level of de

facto relationships among various states/ territories of Australia. The Northern Territory had the highest proportion of people in de facto relationships (11%), followed by Tasmania and Western Australia each 8%, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia each 7%, and New South Wales and Victoria 6% each.

Table 3: Proportion of People in De Facto Relationships Among Registered Marital Status, Australia and States, 2001

States	Never married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	Married	Total
Australia	13.0	2.0	20.3	9.7	0.2	6.4
NSW	12.5	1.8	19.1	9.1	0.2	5.8
Victoria	12.3	1.6	19.4	8.8	0.1	5.7
Qld	15.7	2.6	21.9	10.8	0.2	7.4
SA	14.4	1.9	21.2	9.5	0.2	6.5
WA	15.7	2.4	22.2	11.1	0.2	7.5
Tas	17.4	2.2	22.6	11.1	0.2	7.7
NT	19.5	4.0	25.9	13.5	1.1	10.9
ACT	14.3	1.9	21.0	9.9	0.2	7.1

The likelihood of being in de facto relationships by registered marital status categories varied substantially. The probability of being in de facto relationships were much higher for those who were divorced, followed by never married and separated. Data indicates that in Australia, there were 20% of divorced persons living in de facto relationships. After divorced persons, there were about 13% never married living in de facto relationship. The proportion in de facto relationships was comparatively lower for those who were separated (10%) and much lower for widowed (2%). Few (0.2%) married persons had also reported being in de facto relationships.

A similar pattern of people in de facto relationships is observed for Australian states/ territories indicating a high proportion for those who were divorced, followed by never married, and separated.

Although, a very high proportion of people in de facto relationships had been found among those who were divorced, there were not much variations across the states/ territories. It is evident that about one in every five divorced persons were in de facto relationships in almost all the states, except in the Northern Territory, where about one in four divorced persons were found in de facto relationships. After the Northern Territory, where 26% divorced persons had been found in de facto relationships, highest proportion of people in de facto relationships was found in Tasmania (23%), followed by Western Australia and Queensland (22%), South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory (21%), Victoria and New South Wales (19%).

It was also noted that for those who were never married and were in de facto relationships, differentials were much wider within states/ territories. Northern Territory has the highest with 20%, while 12% for Victoria was the lowest. After the Northern Territory, the second

highest proportion of never married persons in de facto relationships was found in Tasmania (17%), followed by Queensland and Western Australia (16%), South Australia (14%), and New South Wales (13%).

Among separated, the lowest proportion of people in de facto relationships was in Victoria and New South Wales (9%), while it was the highest in the Northern Territory (14%), followed by Western Australia, Tasmania and Queensland (11%), the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia (10%).

Table 4: Percent Trends of People in De Facto Relationships by Registered Marital Status and Sex, Australia

Males

Registered marital status	2001	1996	1991
Never married	68.0	65.7	60.7
Married	1.6	2.7	5.5
Separated	5.5	6.7	8.4
Divorced	23.5	23.6	23.2
Widowed	1.4	1.3	2.3
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	471,709	368,717	290,028

Females

Never married	67.5	65.0	58.8
Married	1.5	2.4	7.2
Separated	4.9	6.0	7.6
Divorced	23.7	24.1	23.3
Widowed	2.4	2.5	3.1
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	479,754	375,361	294,091

Persons

Never married	67.8	65.4	59.7
Married	1.6	2.5	6.4
Separated	5.2	6.3	8.0
Divorced	23.6	23.9	23.2
Widowed	1.9	1.9	2.7
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	951,462	744,078	584,119

The trend of people in de facto relationships by registered marital status and sex in Australia from 1991 to 1996 and 2001 are presented in table 4.

It is evident that between 1996 to 2001 the census count of people in de facto relationships rose by 28%, from 744,078 to 951,462 people following a similar 27% rise (from 584,119 to 744,078 people) noted from 1991 to 1996. In 2001, de facto partners represented 12% of all persons living as couples (up from 8.1% in 1991 and 9.8% in 1996).

There has been a substantial increase in de facto relationships among never married from 60% in 1991 and 65% in 1996 to 68% in 2001. However, a decline has been noted among married, separated and widowed. The distribution of divorced persons in de facto relationships remained almost constant, but high at about 24%, over the period of time.

Social Marital Status

The 2001 Census showed that about eight million men and women lived in couple relationships - couple relationships being defined for this analysis as men and women living as a couple in a registered marriage, and men and women living as a couple in a de facto relationship. Registered married couples were those who lived together and were registered as married to each other. De facto couples were those who lived together but were not registered as married and who identified themselves as de facto in a relationships question. Due to various reasons (e.g. age reporting, contradictory responses, absence of one party, etc.), the total numbers of males and females in married couples or de facto relationships does not agree.

Table 5 presents social marital status by registered marital status in Australia for 2001, 1996 and 1991. There were minor inconsistencies between responses to the household relationships question (question 5 on the census form) and the marital status question (question 6). A small fraction (0.2%) of people described their relationships as 'de facto partner' and then reported their registered marital status as 'married' during 2001. It is also noted that there has been a decline in this inconsistency from 0.5% noted for 1991 and 0.3% for 1996 to 0.2% in 2001.

While the number of de facto couples is increasing, it only represents 12% of couple relationships. Just over two-thirds of those living in de facto couples have never been previously married.

It is noted that there was a decline in the proportion among those who were registered married from 51% in 1991 to 49% in 1996 and 47% in 2001. However, there was an increase in de facto partners as well as among those who were not married. In 1991, the proportion of not married was 35.8%, which rose to 36.6% in 1996 and 37.3% in 2001. The proportion of de facto partners rose from 4.5% in 1991 to 5.3% in 1996 and 6.4% in 2001.

In the ten years period between 1991 and 2001, the proportion of de facto partners among those who were divorced remained steady at 20%. However, among never married, it rose from 9% in 1991, to 12% in 1996, and to 14% in 2001. For separated, the proportion of de facto partners declined from 13% in 1991 to 10% in 1996, but remained nearly constant between 1996 and 2001. A small rise was also noted among those who were widowed.

Table 5: Percent Social Marital Status by Registered Marital Status, Australia

2001

Social Marital Status	Registered Marital Status					Total
	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	
Married						
Registered	0.3	91.1	0.5	0.6	5.4	47.2
De facto	13.7	0.2	2.0	20.4	9.7	6.4
Total	14.0	91.3	2.5	21.0	15.1	53.6
Not married	75.3	1.6	79.5	70.0	74.0	37.3
NA	10.6	7.1	18.1	9.0	10.9	9.1
Number (000)	4,692.3	7,636.3	919.9	1,099.4	509.9	14,857.9

1996

Married						
Registered	0.3	92.0	0.6	0.7	4.7	49.4
De facto	11.5	0.3	1.6	19.9	10.1	5.3
Total	11.8	92.3	2.2	20.6	14.8	54.7
Not married	77.4	1.5	79.9	70.7	75.0	36.6
NA	10.8	6.2	17.8	8.7	10.2	8.6
Number (000)	4,245.3	7,415.5	892.2	893.9	469.2	13,916.1

1991

Married						
Registered	0.0	90.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.9
De facto	9.1	0.5	1.9	19.7	12.5	4.5
Total	9.1	91.0	1.9	19.7	12.5	55.3
Not married	79.3	2.9	78.8	71.2	77.0	35.8
NA	11.6	6.1	19.3	9.1	10.4	8.8
Number (000)	3,817.2	7,312.9	825	688.7	374	13,017.7

NA = Not applicable.

Social marital status by registered marital status in various states/territories of Australia during 2001 is contained in Appendix Table 1. Variations in social marital status has been noted across the states/ territories. Highest proportion of registered married has been noted for South Australia and Victoria (50%), followed very closely by Tasmania and New South Wales (49%), Queensland and Western Australia (48%), and Australian Capital Territory (47%). However, proportion of registered married was comparatively lower in the Northern Territory (39%).

In regards to de facto relationships, New South Wales and Victoria almost followed the national level pattern where the proportion is about 6%. However, the proportion of de facto relationships was on the higher side in other states, being highest in the Northern Territory

(11%), followed by Tasmania, Western Australia, and Queensland (8%), the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia (7%).

Among never married, it was highest in the Northern Territory (21%), followed by 19% in Tasmania, 17% in Western Australia and Queensland, 15% in South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, and lowest in New South Wales and Victoria (13%).

Similarly, among those who were divorced, de facto relationships were very high in the Northern Territory (28%), followed by Tasmania 24%, Western Australia and Queensland 23%, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory 22%.

Among separated, de facto relationships were also found being highest in the Northern Territory (14%), followed by Tasmania and Western Australia (12%), Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory (11%), South Australia and New South Wales (10%), and lowest in Victoria (9%).

Social Marital Status and Age

Age is the most important demographic variable used in various analyses. Proportion of de facto relationships by registered marital status, age and sex for 2001 is presented in table 6. For comparison, data by age and sex for 1991 and 1996 is also shown.

A consistent rise has been noted, both for males and females from 1991 to 1996 and 2001. Compared to females, males had more likelihood of being in de facto relationships if divorced, separated and widowed. However, a higher proportion of females were likely to be in de facto relationships if they were never married.

Table 6: Proportion of De Facto by Registered Marital Status, Age and Sex, Australia

Male

Age	Registered Marital Status 2001					1996	1991
	Never Married	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	Total	Total
15-19	0.8	1.3	1.1	3.1	2.4	0.8	0.8
20-24	9.2	0.7	2.4	14.5	5.6	8.8	8.5
25-29	21.1	0.4	6.8	26.8	9.6	15.1	12.5
30-34	24.7	0.3	10.0	31.0	11.4	12.1	9.7
35-39	23.1	0.3	13.4	29.4	12.3	8.9	7.2
40-44	19.9	0.3	13.2	27.2	12.5	7.0	5.7
45-49	16.6	0.2	12.5	25.4	13.2	5.9	4.7
50-54	11.8	0.2	11.3	24.6	13.0	5.0	3.8
55-59	7.9	0.2	9.6	21.7	10.9	3.9	2.7
60-64	5.2	0.1	6.6	16.4	8.3	2.6	1.8
65 & over	3.0	0.1	1.8	9.1	4.8	1.2	0.8
All ages	12.4	0.2	3.5	22.9	11.0	6.4	5.4

Female

15-19	2.5	1.2	1.0	7.7	2.9	2.5	2.7
20-24	15.2	0.4	5.2	21.6	8.4	13.5	12.5
25-29	26.4	0.3	8.9	29.0	9.9	15.5	12.6
30-34	27.6	0.3	12.9	29.3	10.2	10.8	8.6
35-39	25.5	0.3	12.4	25.8	9.8	7.9	6.3
40-44	21.3	0.2	11.5	22.7	9.6	6.3	5.1
45-49	11.4	0.2	10.4	21.0	10.0	5.4	4.1
50-54	7.2	0.1	7.8	18.1	8.3	4.2	3.0
55-59	4.3	0.1	5.0	13.5	5.8	2.9	1.8
60-64	2.6	0.1	2.7	8.2	3.6	1.6	1.0
65 & over	1.5	0.1	0.5	3.4	21.4	0.5	0.4
All ages	14.3	0.2	1.6	18.2	8.5	6.2	5.3

Person

15-19	1.6	1.2	1.0	0.5	2.7	1.6	1.8
20-24	12.1	0.5	4.1	19.4	7.8	11.1	10.5
25-29	23.5	0.3	8.3	28.2	9.8	15.3	12.6
30-34	26.0	0.3	12.2	30.0	10.7	11.4	9.1
35-39	24.1	0.3	12.6	27.3	10.9	8.4	6.7
40-44	20.5	0.2	11.9	24.7	10.9	6.7	5.4
45-49	16.5	0.2	10.9	23.0	11.5	5.7	4.4
50-54	11.5	0.2	8.6	21.0	10.6	4.6	3.4
55-59	7.5	0.1	6.0	17.3	8.4	3.4	2.3
60-64	4.8	0.1	3.5	12.1	6.1	2.1	1.4
65 & over	2.3	0.1	0.7	6.0	3.6	0.8	0.6
All	13.0	0.2	2.0	20.3	9.7	6.3	5.3

In 2001, of people in each age group, those aged 25-29 were most likely to be de facto partners (15%), with high proportion (11%) in the adjacent age groups 20-24 and 30-34 years. Less than 2% of people aged 15-19 were de facto partners, reflecting the small minority of this age group who were living in couple relationships. With increasing age, the proportion of de facto partners continued to decline after age 30-34 to less than 1% of people aged 65 and over. A similar pattern was noted for 1991 and 1996 data.

In 2001, the proportion of never married persons in de facto relationships reached its highest levels of greater than 20% in the four age groups 25-29, 30-34, 35-39 and 40-44. This was equally true both for males and females, however, never married females, particularly in the younger age groups, were more likely to be in de facto relationships than their male counterparts.

Similarly, the proportion of people who were divorced and living in de facto relationships peaked at around 30% for age 30-34 and closely followed by age group 25-29 (28%), 35-39 (27%) and 40-44 (25%).

Among those who were widowed and in de facto relationships, the age profile was slightly older, with the highest proportion (13%) observed in age group 35-39 and 12% for each adjacent age group 30-34 and 40-44 years. For widowed in de facto relationships, it was also high for 45-49 and 50-54 being 11% and 9% respectively.

Like widowed, the age group 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, 45-49 and 50-54 for separated had the highest proportions of over 10% in de facto relationships.

Table 7: Percent Social Marital Status by Sex and Age, Australia 2001

Age	Registered Married			De Facto		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
15-19	0.0	0.1	0.1	1.2	3.4	2.3
20-24	0.8	1.8	1.3	12.0	17.8	14.9
25-29	4.8	7.0	5.9	21.3	21.9	21.6
30-34	9.2	11.2	10.2	17.8	16.3	17.1
35-39	11.6	12.8	12.2	13.3	12.1	12.7
40-44	12.6	13.3	13.0	10.6	9.7	10.2
45-49	12.2	12.3	12.2	8.3	7.6	7.9
50-54	12.1	11.6	11.8	6.7	5.5	6.1
55-59	9.7	8.8	9.2	4.1	2.9	3.5
60-64	7.9	6.9	7.4	2.2	1.4	1.8
65 and over	19.1	14.2	16.7	2.6	1.5	2.0
All ages	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number (000)	3481.0	3531.6	7012.6	471.7	479.8	951.5

Table 7 represents the percentage distribution of persons in social marital status (both registered married and de facto) by sex and age. The findings again confirm that peak age for

de facto relationships was 25-29 years, which had the highest proportion (22%) of persons in de facto relationships, followed by age 30-34 (17%), and age 20-24 (15%). Similar pattern was noted for males. For females, after age 25-29 years, age group 20-24 was the second highest for de facto relationships, followed by age group 30-34. It is also evident that compared to males, females were more likely to be in de facto relationships in much younger ages.

In regard to registered married, the differentials between males and females were similar to those noted for de facto relationships. As expected, females were more likely to be married at younger ages than males.

Table 8 represents a comparison of social marital status, registered married and de facto, within various age groups. It was noted that among younger age groups, below 25 years, majority of the people in social marital status were in de facto relationships. Age group 15-19 indicates that of all the persons in marital status, 82% were in de facto relationships, compared to only 18% being registered married. In age group 20-24, over 60% were in de facto relationships. It was also about one-third in age group 25-29 and nearly one-fifth in age group 30-34. With an increase in age, proportion of de facto relationships declined, while proportion of registered married increased.

Table 8: Percent Social Marital Status within Age groups, Australia 2001

Age Group	Registered Married			De Facto		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
15-19	17.0	18.1	17.8	83.0	81.9	82.2
20-24	33.2	43.2	39.6	76.8	56.8	60.4
25-29	62.2	70.2	66.8	37.8	29.8	33.2
30-34	79.2	83.5	81.5	20.8	16.5	18.5
35-39	86.5	88.6	87.6	13.5	11.4	12.4
40-44	89.8	91.0	90.4	10.2	9.0	9.6
45-49	91.6	92.3	91.9	8.4	7.7	8.1
50-54	93.1	93.9	93.5	6.9	6.1	6.5
55-59	94.1	95.7	95.1	5.9	4.3	4.9
60-64	96.4	97.4	96.8	3.6	2.6	3.2
65 and over	98.2	98.6	98.4	1.8	1.4	1.6
All Ages	88.1	88.0	88.0	11.9	12.0	12.0

Social Marital Status and States

Social marital status in capital city and balance of state in each state/ territory of Australia is presented in table 9. It is evident that there were differentials between various states in registered married and de facto relationships.

At the national level, de facto partners formed 12% of couple relationships. It was observed that New South Wales and Victoria had lower than the national level average of de facto partners, where it was 11% for both of these states. Compared to capital cities, a slightly

higher proportion was found in balance of state in these two more populated states (more visible in NSW).

Table 9: Percent Social Marital Status by Capital city and Balance of State, Australia 2001

State	Registered Married			De Facto		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
NSW	89.1	89.1	89.1	10.9	10.9	10.9
Sydney	89.6	89.6	89.6	10.4	10.4	10.4
Bal NSW	88.3	88.2	88.3	11.7	11.8	11.7
Victoria	89.4	89.4	89.4	10.6	10.6	10.6
Melbourne	89.5	89.5	89.5	10.5	10.5	10.5
Bal Vic	89.2	89.2	89.2	10.8	10.8	10.8
Queensland	86.3	86.3	86.3	13.7	13.7	13.7
Brisbane	87.0	87.1	87.1	13.0	12.9	12.9
Bal Qld	85.7	85.7	85.3	14.3	14.3	14.3
South Australia	88.0	88.0	88.0	12.0	12.0	12.0
Adelaide	88.2	88.2	88.2	11.8	11.8	11.8
Bal SA	87.5	87.4	87.4	12.5	12.6	12.6
Western Australia	86.1	86.1	86.1	13.9	13.9	13.9
Perth	87.3	87.2	87.2	12.7	12.8	12.8
Bal WA	87.0	86.9	86.9	17.0	17.1	17.1
Tasmania	86.0	86.0	86.6	14.0	14.0	14.0
Hobart	85.2	85.1	85.1	14.8	14.9	14.9
Bal Tas	86.6	86.6	86.6	13.4	13.4	13.4
Northern Territory	77.4	77.3	77.3	22.6	22.7	22.7
Darwin	75.8	75.6	75.8	24.2	24.4	24.3
Bal NT	79.6	79.5	79.5	20.4	20.5	20.5
ACT	86.4	86.4	86.4	13.6	13.6	13.6
Canberra	86.4	86.4	86.4	13.6	13.6	13.6
Bal ACT	85.9	87.1	86.5	14.1	12.9	13.5
All Australia	88.1	88.0	88.0	11.9	12.0	12.0

In Queensland, de facto relationships were 13% in Brisbane and 14% in balance of Queensland. Similarly, in South Australia, 12% de facto relationships were in Adelaide, while these were 13% in balance of South Australia.

The differentials are much wider between capital city and balance of state in Western Australia, where de facto relationships were about 13% in Perth and 17% in balance of Western Australia.

In Tasmania and the Northern Territory, de facto relationships were higher in capital cities than balance of state/ territory. Tasmania represents a visible variation between capital city

and balance of state in de facto relationships, where it was 15% in Hobart and 13% in the balance of state.

The highest proportion of de facto relationships was found in the Northern Territory, 23%. In Darwin de facto relationships were over 24%, compared to 21% in balance of the Northern Territory.

It is evident from the analysis that a higher proportion of persons in de facto relationships have been found in the balance of state/ territory, compared to the capital cities in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia. This means that the proportion of registered marriage were higher in the capital cities than balance of state in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. However, proportion of de facto relationships was visibly higher in the capital cities, compared to the balance of state/ territory in Tasmania and the Northern Territory. Hence, registered married were lower in capital cities than balance of state in Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

Social Marital Status and Dwelling

Association of dwelling with social marital status indicates wide differentials (Table 10). It is noted that during 2001 in Australia, 43% of the persons in de facto relationships were living in rented dwelling, 37% in being purchased and 16% in fully owned. In contrast to this, among those who were in registered married, 48% were living in fully owned, 35% in being purchased, and only 14% in rented dwellings.

Table 10: Percent Social Marital Status by Tenure Type (Dwelling), Australia 2001

Tenure Type	Registered Married		De Facto	
	%	Number	%	Number
Fully owned	48.3	3,387,702	16.4	156,210
Being purchased	34.5	2,417,381	37.0	351,788
Rented	13.7	957,521	42.9	408,473
Occupied rent free	1.3	88,697	1.6	15,372
Other tenure type	0.8	58,244	0.8	7,635
Not stated	1.5	103,041	1.3	11,986
Total	100.0	7,012,586	100.0	951,464

Association of dwelling with social marital status in Australian states/ territories is presented in Appendix table 3. Similar patterns were found in New South Wales and Queensland with slight variations. It was noted that in New South Wales, 47% reported being in de facto relationships and living in rented dwellings, followed by 31% in being purchased and 18% in fully owned. In contrast to this, almost half of the registered married (49%) were living in fully owned dwellings and only 15% were living in rented dwellings.

In Queensland, it was noted that 48% persons in de facto relationships were living in rented dwellings, followed by 33% in being purchased, and 15% in fully owned. In comparison to this, among those who were registered married only 16% were living in rented dwellings and most of them 45% and 35% had fully owned or being purchased dwelling respectively.

In Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, and ACT, the highest proportion with de facto relationships were found living in being purchased dwellings, followed by rented dwellings. However, in these states, registered married followed the Australian pattern being highest proportion living in fully owned, followed by being purchased and rented dwellings.

In Victoria, 41% persons in de facto relationships were living in being purchased, followed by 38% living in rented and 18% in fully owned dwellings. However, over half (51%) of the registered married had fully owned dwellings, 35% being purchased and only 11% rented.

In South Australia, 46% persons in de facto relationships were living in being purchased, 35% in rented and 16% in fully owned dwellings. Those who were registered married, 50% had fully owned, 36% being purchased, and 11% rented dwellings.

In Western Australia, of the persons in de facto relationships, 45% were living in being purchased, 37% in rented, and 15% in fully owned. In contrast, among married it was 44% fully owned, 40% being purchased, and only 12% rented dwellings.

In Tasmania, of the persons in de facto relationships 44% were living in being purchased, 36% in rented, and 17% in fully owned. Registered married in Tasmania had a very low proportion (10%) living in rented dwellings, while a very high proportion (over 87%) had either fully owned or being purchased dwellings.

In the Northern Territory, over half of the persons in de facto relationships were living in rented dwellings, followed by 33% being purchased, and only 10% in fully owned dwellings. Those who were registered married, 40% were living in rented dwellings, 32% in being purchased, and 21% in fully owned dwellings. The Northern Territory represented a peculiar situation. In the Northern Territory, more than half (52%) of de facto partners were living in rented dwellings, followed by being purchased and fully owned. Unlike, other states, similar pattern is observed for registered married persons in the Northern Territory, where highest proportion of persons (40%) were living in rented dwellings, 32% in being purchased and 21% in fully owned.

In the Australian Capital Territory, it was noted that 42% persons in de facto relationships were living in being purchased, 41% in rented and 15% in fully owned dwellings. Those who were registered married had 42% each living in fully owned and being purchased dwellings, and only 15% were living in rented dwellings.

Social Marital Status and Religious Affiliation

Social marital status, registered and de facto, within various religious affiliation and sex is presented in table 11. It is noted that de facto relationships were very high among those stating 'no religion' (23%). Those whose religious affiliations were inadequately described even had an higher proportion in de facto relationships (24%). The categories of 'other religions' and 'not stated' also had a high proportion of being in de facto relationships, that was, 17% and 15% respectively.

Table 11: Percent Social Marital Status by Religious Affiliation and Sex, Australia 2001

Religion	Registered married			De Facto		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
Buddhism	91.5	91.0	91.3	8.5	9.0	8.7
Christianity	90.4	90.1	90.3	9.6	9.9	9.7
Hinduism	97.2	97.4	97.3	2.8	2.6	2.7
Islam	96.7	95.5	97.1	3.3	2.5	2.9
Judaism	92.9	92.8	92.8	7.1	7.2	7.2
Other Religions	84.4	81.1	82.7	15.6	18.9	17.3
No Religion	78.1	75.9	77.1	21.9	24.1	22.9
Inadequately described	75.8	76.7	76.2	24.2	23.3	23.8
Not stated	84.8	85.3	85.0	15.2	14.7	15.0

Among the known major religions of the world, highest proportion in de facto relationships was among Christianity (10%), followed by Buddhism (9%), Judaism (7%), Islam and Hinduism (3%). Hence the proportion of registered married was very high (97%) among those having religious affiliations with Hinduism or Islam.

The proportion of females in de facto relationships is slightly higher than males among those who followed Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism or having no religious affiliations. However, proportion of males in de facto relationships was slightly higher than females for those who followed Hinduism or Islam.

Social marital status by religious affiliation and age is also presented in table 12. It is noted that age group 25-29 remained prominent having highest persons in de facto relationships for all religious affiliations. It is interesting to find that compared to other religions, in younger age groups 15-19 and 20-24, those having affiliation with Islam had a higher proportion in de facto relationships. This was followed by those having affiliations with Hinduism, Christianity and Buddhism.

For registered married, age group 40-44 had the highest proportion for all religion, except Hinduism and Islam, having the highest proportion of registered married in age group 35-39, indicating comparatively younger age at marriage for these religious groups. All younger age groups (below 40) also indicated a higher proportion of registered married among those having affiliations with Islam and Hinduism.

The differential in social marital status (both registered married and de facto relationships) by religious affiliation in states of Australia are presented in Appendix table 3.

It is noted that New South Wales and Western Australia followed the similar pattern observed for Australia. In Victoria, similar differentials had also been observed, except that Hinduism had a slightly higher proportion of being in de facto relationships than Islam. Those having affiliation with Christianity also indicated relatively lower proportion being in de facto relationships in Victoria (8%), compared to 10% at the national level.

Table 12: Percent Social Marital Status by Religious Affiliation and Age, Australia 2001

Registered married

Age	Buddhi sm	Christi anity	Hindui sm	Islam	Judais m	Other relig.	No relig.	Inade. desc.	Not stated
15-19	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.1
20-24	1.6	1.2	2.6	6.4	0.7	3.2	1.6	1.9	1.2
25-29	6.7	5.3	10.3	12.8	4.5	9.4	8.0	9.0	5.6
30-34	12.1	9.5	16.0	16.2	7.7	13.4	13.1	14.6	10.0
35-39	16.1	11.5	18.6	16.7	9.4	15.0	14.9	15.6	12.4
40-44	17.5	12.3	17.3	14.3	12.0	15.3	15.2	15.1	13.8
45-49	16.2	11.3	13.8	11.0	13.3	13.7	13.9	13.3	13.2
50-54	11.4	11.9	8.7	8.6	14.9	10.8	11.8	10.9	12.3
55-59	6.3	9.8	4.9	5.8	9.0	6.7	7.4	6.9	9.1
60-64	4.3	8.1	3.2	3.6	6.8	4.8	4.8	4.5	6.8
65 & over	7.7	18.7	4.4	4.0	21.7	7.5	9.2	8.2	15.7

De Facto

Age	Buddhi sm	Christi anity	Hindui sm	Islam	Judais m	Other relig.	No relig.	Inade. desc.	Not stated
15-19	1.2	2.1	1.2	3.2	0.6	3.9	2.7	2.6	2.4
20-24	11.0	14.2	16.4	17.5	7.9	17.0	16.6	17.5	13.9
25-29	19.0	20.5	23.0	22.2	22.6	21.3	24.2	25.5	20.4
30-34	18.4	16.4	14.3	18.4	15.1	17.7	18.2	19.0	17.4
35-39	15.9	12.5	14.8	14.1	9.0	12.9	12.8	12.0	13.8
40-44	13.7	10.3	11.8	9.0	8.5	10.0	9.6	9.1	11.1
45-49	10.5	8.3	8.8	6.9	9.3	7.8	7.0	6.5	8.2
50-54	5.8	6.8	4.9	3.9	11.3	5.2	4.7	4.1	6.0
55-59	2.3	4.1	3.0	2.4	6.6	2.2	2.3	2.0	3.4
60-64	1.0	2.2	0.9	1.4	3.6	1.0	1.0	0.8	1.6
65 & over	1.1	2.6	0.9	1.2	5.6	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.9

In Queensland, variations and changing patterns have been noted for various religious affiliation groups. It is evident that Buddhism had the highest proportion (11.8%) of persons in de facto relationships, just surpassing Christianity. It was visible that those who follow Judaism had a very high proportion (11.2%) in de facto relationships. Another visible change in Queensland worth noting is that those who followed Islam had a substantially higher proportion in de facto relationships (5.2%), compared to those who followed Hinduism (3.3%).

In South Australia, again Buddhism had come up prominently having the highest proportion of persons in de facto relationships (10.2%). The second highest group of religious affiliation was Judaism, having 9.6% persons in de facto relationships, followed by Christianity,

Hinduism and Islam.

In Tasmania, an exceptionally very high rise was noted in de facto relationships for those having affiliation with Buddhism (23%). Similarly a rise had been noted in de facto relationships for other religious groups, such as, Hinduism (6%), Islam (9%) and Judaism (16%). However, the number of cases were very small for these groups, in particular, for Hinduism and Judaism and need caution when drawing any conclusion.

In the Northern Territory, the overall proportion of persons in de facto relationships had been high, so almost all religions had been noted as being high also. However, exceptionally a very high proportion was noted for Judaism, being 30%, but with small number of cases. Nearly, every fifth person having affiliation with Christianity and every seventh with Buddhism had been found in de facto relationships. Every 12th person having affiliation with Islam was found to be in a de facto relationship. A very high proportion, over one third, of the persons having no religion were found in de facto relationships in the Northern Territory.

The Australian Capital Territory, to a large extent, followed the overall Australian pattern of differentials in de facto relationships by religion. However, Judaism had a very high proportion (17%) in de facto relationships in the Australian Capital Territory.

Social Marital Status and Language Spoken at Home

Social marital status, both registered married and de facto, by language spoken at home and sex is presented in table 13. The association of language spoken at home with social marital status showed the highest proportion of 19% in de facto relationships was for persons speaking Australian Indigenous Language, followed by 14% Northern European, 6% Southeast Asian, 4% Eastern Asian and Eastern European, 2% Southwest Asian & North African and Southern Asian.

It is also noted that those speaking South Asian and East Asian languages at home also had a very high proportion (20% and 17% respectively) of persons in de facto relationships in age group 20-24.

Except, for persons speaking Southwest Asian & North African, Southern Asian, Southern European, and Australian Indigenous languages at homes, all other known languages showed slightly higher proportion of females being in de facto relationships than males.

Table 13: Percent Social Marital Status by Language Spoken at Home and Sex, Australia 2001

Language	Registered married			De Facto		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
Northern European	86.6	86.5	86.5	13.4	13.5	13.5
Southern European	95.7	96.4	96.0	4.3	3.6	4.0
Eastern European	95.9	95.8	95.9	4.1	4.2	4.1
Southwest Asian & North African	97.7	98.5	98.1	2.3	1.5	1.9
Southern Asian	98.2	98.5	98.3	1.8	1.5	1.7
Southeast Asian	94.5	93.6	94.0	5.5	6.4	6.0
Eastern Asian	96.0	95.2	95.6	4.0	4.8	4.4
Australian Indigenous	81.4	81.6	81.5	18.6	18.4	18.5
Other	86.5	88.2	87.3	13.5	11.8	12.7
Non-verbal/ inadequately described	87.9	90.6	89.3	12.1	9.4	10.7
Not stated	87.5	89.2	88.4	12.5	10.8	11.6
Total	88.1	88.0	88.0	11.9	12.0	12.0

Data on social marital status by language spoken at home and age is presented in table 14. As observed for religious affiliations, here again age group 25-29 had the highest proportion of persons in de facto relationships for all the languages spoken at home.

Table 14: Percent Social Marital Status by Language Spoken at Home and Age, Australia 2001

Registered married

Age	North European	South European	East European	SW Asian/ N AFri	South Asian	SE Asian	East Asian	Indigenous	Other
15-19	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1	4.1	0.2
20-24	1.2	0.9	1.5	5.3	3.0	2.5	0.7	11.7	2.7
25-29	5.8	4.7	5.7	10.9	10.1	8.7	5.1	14.2	9.1
30-34	10.1	9.0	8.3	14.3	15.8	14.0	10.9	14.3	15.9
35-39	12.1	9.6	9.8	15.4	19.4	17.1	17.5	14.1	19.1
40-44	13.0	9.2	11.4	13.8	17.6	18.2	18.2	11.6	16.8
45-49	12.3	8.8	12.3	11.3	13.5	15.6	16.0	10.1	13.2
50-54	12.1	11.1	12.9	9.9	8.4	10.0	11.4	7.3	9.6
55-59	9.5	10.9	9.5	7.1	4.7	5.1	6.2	4.8	5.6
60-64	7.3	11.6	9.1	4.9	3.0	3.1	5.1	3.4	3.6
65 & over	16.7	24.2	19.4	6.7	4.4	5.5	9.0	4.4	4.1
Number (000)	5,682.1	438.2	205.3	133.1	80.3	143.8	199.1	11.8	29.7

De Facto

Age	North European	South European	East European	SW Asian/ N AFri	South Asian	SE Asian	East Asian	Indigenous	Other
15-19	2.4	1.1	1.2	2.8	1.7	1.8	2.0	4.6	2.3
20-24	15.1	9.8	10.6	14.3	19.7	12.7	17.3	14.2	16.1
25-29	21.8	19.2	18.6	21.7	23.5	18.8	23.7	19.1	22.9
30-34	17.0	19.0	14.6	19.1	16.3	17.7	15.6	17.3	19.3
35-39	12.6	15.0	11.2	15.5	13.1	16.7	15.8	14.9	15.0
40-44	10.1	11.5	9.8	9.7	10.7	14.2	10.9	10.1	9.8
45-49	7.9	7.8	10.2	6.7	7.6	9.6	7.2	8.1	7.0
50-54	6.1	6.5	9.0	4.4	3.9	4.8	3.4	4.5	4.2
55-59	3.5	3.9	5.5	2.4	1.9	1.7	1.6	2.6	1.8
60-64	1.7	2.5	3.7	1.7	0.5	0.8	1.0	2.1	0.8
65 & over	1.9	3.8	5.9	1.9	1.0	1.2	1.6	2.5	0.9
Number (000)	883.8	18.0	8.9	2.6	1.3	9.2	9.2	2.7	4.3

Social Marital Status and Birthplace

The differential in social marital status were also visible by birthplace (Table 15). It was found that the highest proportion of persons in de facto relationships was among those whose

birthplace was in Oceania & Antarctica (14%), followed by Americas (11%), North West Europe (10%), Sub-Saharan Africa (8%), South-east Asia (7%), North-east Asia (5%), Southern & Eastern Europe (3%), Southern and Central Asia (3%), and North Africa and Middle East (2%).

It was noted that compared to males, the proportion of females in de facto relationships was visibly higher among those having birthplace in South-east Asia and North-east Asia. However, the situation was other way around in North Africa & Middle East and Southern and Central Asia, where compared to females, males had higher proportion in de facto relationships. Other areas of birth place, such as Oceania & Antarctica, North West Europe, and Americas showed no differentials in de facto relationships by sex, and indicated an equally high rate of de facto relationships among both males and females.

Table 15: Percent Social Marital Status by Birthplace and Sex, Australia 2001

Birthplace	Registered married			De Facto		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
Oceania & Antarctica	85.9	86.0	85.9	14.1	14.0	14.1
North West Europe	90.1	90.2	90.1	9.9	9.8	9.9
Southern & Eastern Europe	96.8	97.1	97.0	3.2	2.9	3.0
North Africa & Middle East	97.3	98.4	98.4	2.7	1.6	2.2
South-east Asia	94.1	93.1	93.5	5.9	6.9	6.5
North-east Asia	96.1	94.4	95.2	3.9	5.6	4.8
Southern and Central Asia	96.9	97.7	97.3	3.1	2.3	2.7
Americas	88.6	89.0	88.8	11.4	11.0	11.2
Sub-Saharan Africa	91.5	92.5	92.0	8.5	7.5	8.0
Inadequately described	91.8	93.7	92.9	8.2	6.3	7.1
Not stated	89.4	90.5	90.0	10.6	9.5	10.0
Total	88.1	88.0	88.0	11.9	12.0	12.0

Table 16 contains data on social marital status by birthplace and age. Age group 25-29 had the highest proportion of persons in de facto relationships for Oceania & Antarctica, South-east Asia, North-east Asia, Southern and Central Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. The remaining areas of birthplaces (North West Europe, Southern & Eastern Europe, and North

Africa) had slightly higher age groups (30-34 and 35-39), capturing the highest proportions of persons in de facto relationships.

Table 16: Percent Social Marital Status by Birthplace and Age, Australia 2001

Registered married

Age	Oceania & Antarctic	NW Europe	SE Europe	North Africa/ME	SE Asia	NE Asia	South/Central Asia	Americas	SS Africa
15-19	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
20-24	1.5	0.3	0.5	2.8	1.9	0.6	1.9	1.6	1.1
25-29	7.0	1.8	1.7	7.1	7.6	5.0	7.2	6.6	6.0
30-34	11.5	5.5	3.9	12.3	12.4	11.2	12.8	12.0	11.5
35-39	12.8	9.9	6.3	15.0	15.8	18.3	16.7	14.5	15.2
40-44	13.4	10.7	8.4	13.9	17.8	18.0	15.8	14.6	17.1
45-49	12.3	10.7	10.7	12.2	16.3	14.9	13.2	13.6	15.6
50-54	11.2	15.0	14.0	11.4	11.7	10.5	10.3	13.9	12.2
55-59	8.6	12.8	12.5	8.7	6.0	5.6	7.6	9.6	7.7
60-64	6.6	10.4	13.3	6.1	4.1	5.2	4.9	5.6	5.2
65 & over	15.2	22.9	28.8	10.2	6.3	10.6	9.7	8.0	8.4
Number (000)	4,824.5	774.8	512.5	130.4	240.4	145.8	105.4	78.0	71.3

De Facto

Age	Oceania & Antarctic	NW Europe	SE Europe	North Africa/ME	SE Asia	NE Asia	South/Central Asia	Americas	SS Africa
15-19	2.6	0.5	0.6	1.0	1.4	2.1	0.9	0.9	1.0
20-24	16.3	5.5	5.9	6.4	14.1	15.3	11.7	9.7	11.6
25-29	22.9	13.1	10.1	12.9	22.2	22.1	17.5	18.9	23.9
30-34	17.4	15.4	11.0	18.7	16.8	16.6	16.8	19.1	17.6
35-39	12.3	16.0	11.9	16.9	14.4	17.0	12.1	14.1	13.1
40-44	9.7	12.8	12.4	12.1	12.7	10.8	11.6	11.8	11.6
45-49	7.4	10.5	12.5	10.8	9.0	7.4	9.6	9.8	8.6
50-54	5.3	11.3	12.8	9.6	5.2	3.9	7.8	8.0	7.2
55-59	2.9	7.2	8.2	5.5	1.9	1.7	6.4	4.3	2.8
60-64	1.5	3.9	5.8	2.9	1.1	1.2	2.6	1.8	1.3
65 & over	1.6	4.0	9.0	3.4	1.2	2.1	3.1	1.7	1.3
Number (000)	790.7	84.8	16.0	2.9	16.7	7.4	2.9	9.9	6.2

Social Marital Status and Indigenous People

This section examines the social marital status of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) population of Australia. A wide differential was found in social marital status by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Table 17).

Table 17: Percent Social Marital Status by Indigenous and Non-Indigenous People and Sex, Australia 2001

People	Registered married			De Facto		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
Non-Indigenous	88.0	88.3	88.3	12.0	11.7	11.7
Indigenous	64.3	64.1	64.2	35.7	35.9	35.8
Not stated	90.6	92.0	91.3	9.4	8.0	8.7
Total	89.1	88.0	88.0	11.9	12.0	12.0

Indigenous people were found to have three times the chance of being in de facto relationships than non-Indigenous people. De facto relationships were equally high for both male and female Indigenous people (36%).

Table 18: Percent Social Marital Status of Indigenous People by Age and Sex, Australia 2001

Age	Registered Married			De Facto		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
15-19	0.7	1.6	1.2	3.3	6.1	4.7
20-24	4.0	5.7	4.9	15.0	18.4	16.8
25-29	9.5	11.4	10.5	21.3	20.6	20.9
30-34	13.4	15.3	14.4	18.8	18.2	18.5
35-39	14.8	15.6	15.2	14.4	14.0	14.2
40-44	14.7	14.5	14.6	10.8	9.1	9.9
45-49	12.9	12.2	12.5	7.1	6.2	6.7
50-54	10.7	9.2	9.9	4.4	3.5	3.9
55-59	7.4	6.1	6.7	2.3	1.9	2.1
60-64	5.4	4.2	4.7	1.3	1.1	1.2
65 & over	6.6	4.4	5.5	1.3	0.9	1.1
Number	27,799	30,222	58,021	15,398	16,934	32,332

Data on social marital status of Indigenous people by age and sex in Australia is presented in table 18. It is noted that the peak age for Indigenous people in de facto relationships was 25-29 (21%), followed closely by adjacent age groups of 30-34 (19%), 20-24 (18%) and 35-39 (14%).

A similar pattern was noted for both male and female Indigenous people who reported themselves in de facto relationships. However, female Indigenous persons were more likely to be in de facto relationships in younger ages than their male counterparts.

The age distribution of Indigenous persons in registered marriage indicated that age group 35-39 appeared to be the most attractive group having maximum persons, both males and females.

Table 19: Percent Social Marital Status of Indigenous People by State, Australia 2001

State	Registered Married		De Facto	
	%	Number	%	Number
NSW	64.8	16,241	35.2	8,834
Vic	68.0	3,560	32.0	1,675
Qld	57.5	13,986	42.5	10,353
SA	64.3	3,067	35.7	1,701
WA	55.2	6,970	44.8	5,665
Tas	74.1	3,231	25.9	1,127
NT	79.4	10,369	20.6	2,682
ACT	66.7	553	33.3	276
Total	64.2	57,977	35.8	32,313

Table 19 contains data on social marital status of Indigenous people by state. It is evident that Western Australia had the highest proportion (45%) of Indigenous persons in de facto relationships, followed by Queensland (43%), South Australia (36%), New South Wales (35%), Victoria (32%), the Australian Capital Territory (33%), Tasmania (26%), and the Northern Territory (21%).

Discussion and Conclusion

Using data from the 2001 Population and Housing Census, the analysis has examined and highlighted the magnitude of people with registered marital status and de facto relationships as well as association of various factors (age, sex, dwelling, religious affiliation, language spoken at home, birth place, and Indigenous status) with social marital status, both registered married and in de facto relationships.

Out of the 15 million population aged 15 years and over, nearly half were never married, divorced, widowed, and separated. About a million persons were found in de facto relationships with large number from never married and divorced. The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of people in de facto relationships, followed by Tasmania, Western Australia, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, New South Wales, and Victoria.

At the national level, de facto partners formed 12% of couple relationships. New South Wales and Victoria had lower than national level average of de facto partners (11%). Highest

proportions of de facto relationships was found in the Northern Territory (23%), followed by Tasmania, Western Australia and Queensland. A higher proportion of persons in de facto relationships has been found in balance of state, compared to capital cities in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia. However, it was higher in capital cities of Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

Over the period of time, a decline has been noted in the proportion among those who were registered married from 51% in 1991 to 49% in 1996 and 47% in 2001. However, there was an increase in de facto partners as well as those who were not married. The proportion of not married rose from 35.8% in 1991 and 36.6% in 1996 to 37.3% in 2001. The proportion of de facto partners in the total population aged 15 years and above rose from 4.5% in 1991 and 5.3% in 1996 to 6.4% in 2001. The highest proportion of de facto partners was 20% among people who were divorced, followed by 14% among never married, and 10% among separated. The proportion of de facto partners among divorced remained steady at 20% from 1991 to 2001. However, among never married, it increased from 9% in 1991 and 12% in 1996 to 14% in 2001. An increase in the number of never married and de facto relationships, and a decrease in the number of married persons over the period of time suggest that people in the younger age group were not only delaying their marriages, but also remaining never married throughout. It was also noted that over the period of time more and more people in de facto relationships had been among never married. Similarly, divorced persons were contributing substantially and separated ones also reasonably to the de facto relationships.

A consistent rise but different pattern in de facto relationships was noted for males and females from 1991 to 2001. Males were more likely to be in de facto relationships if they were divorced, separated and widowed. However, a higher proportion of females were likely to be in de facto relationships if they were never married. On the whole, females were more likely to be in de facto relationships and also in much younger ages as compared to males.

Age is an important factor in all demographic analysis. Those aged 25-29 years were most likely to be de facto partners (15%), with the high proportion (11%) in adjacent age groups 20-24 and 30-34 years. The proportion of those persons who were never married and living in de facto relationships reached its highest levels of greater than 20% in four age groups 25-29, 30-34, 35-39 and 40-44. This was equally true both for males and females, however, never married females, particularly in younger age groups were more likely to be in de facto relationships than their male counterparts. Similarly, the proportion of people who were divorced and living in de facto relationships peaked at around 30% for age 30-34 and closely followed by age groups 25-29 (28%), 35-39 (27%) and 40-44 (25%).

Association of dwelling with social marital status indicated that those living in rented dwellings had the highest proportion (43%) in de facto relationships, followed by being purchased (37%) and fully owned (16%). In contrast to this, registered married persons had the highest proportion for persons living in fully owned (48%), followed by being purchased (35%) and rented (14%).

The differentials between registered and de facto relationships by religious affiliation indicated that de facto relationships were very high among those describing their religious affiliation inadequately (24%), followed by no religion (23%), other religion (17%), and not stated (15%). Among the known major religions of the world, highest proportion in de facto relationships is among Christianity (10%), followed by Buddhism (9%), Judaism (7%), Islam

and Hinduism (3%). The proportion of females in de facto relationships was slightly higher than males among those who followed Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, or having no religious affiliations. However, the proportion of males in de facto relationships was higher than females for those who followed Hinduism or Islam.

Few variations by religious affiliation were noted for the states/ territories. In Queensland, Buddhism had the highest proportion of persons in de facto relationships (12%). Also those having affiliations with Judaism and Islam had a higher rate of de facto relationships in Queensland at 11% and 5% respectively. In Tasmania and the Northern Territory, a reasonably high proportion of persons in de facto relationships had been noted for all religions.

Association of language spoken at home with social marital status showed that the highest proportion of 19% in de facto relationships was among persons speaking Australian Indigenous languages, followed by 14% Northern European, 6% Southeast Asian, 4% Eastern Asian and Eastern European, 2% Southwest Asian & North African and Southern Asian. Except for persons speaking Southwest Asian & North African, Southern Asian, and Australian Indigenous languages at homes, all others showed slightly higher proportion of females being in de facto relationships than males.

The differential in social marital status by birthplace indicated that the highest proportion of persons in de facto relationships was among those whose birthplace was in Oceania & Antarctica (14%), followed by Americas (11%), North West Europe (10%), Sub-Saharan Africa (8%), South-east Asia (7%), North-east Asia (5%), Southern & Eastern Europe (3%), Southern and Central Asia (3%), and North Africa and Middle East (2%). It was also noted that compared to males, the proportion of females in de facto relationships was visibly higher among those having birthplace in South-east Asia and North-east Asia. However, the situation was the other way around in North Africa & Middle East and Southern and Central Asia, where compared to females, males had higher proportion in de facto relationships. Other places of birth, such as Oceania & Antarctica, North West Europe, and Americas showed no differentials in de facto relationships by sex, and indicated equally high rates of de facto relationships among both males and females. As noted for religious affiliation and language spoken at home, it was noted that birthplace also affected the level of de facto relationships.

A wide differential was found in social marital status by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Indigenous people had three times higher chance of being in de facto relationships than of those being non-Indigenous people. De facto relationships were equally high for both male and female Indigenous people (36%). The peak age for Indigenous people in de facto relationships was also 25-29 (21%), followed closely by adjacent age groups of 30-34 (19%), 20-24 (18%) and 35-39 (14%). Similar patterns were noted both for male and female Indigenous people who reported themselves in de facto relationships. However, female Indigenous persons were more likely in younger ages than their male counterparts to be in de facto relationships. Western Australia had the highest proportion (45%) of Indigenous persons in de facto relationships, followed by Queensland (43%), South Australia (36%), New South Wales (35%), Victoria (32%), the Australian Capital Territory (33%), Tasmania (26%), and the Northern Territory (21%).

It is evident that over the period of time there has been an increase in the proportion of those

who were never married and in de facto relationships; while a decline has been noted for registered married. Persons in de facto relationships are more likely to have the following characteristics:

- Never married;
- Divorced;
- Separated;
- Younger age groups, in particular females;
- Living in rented dwellings;
- Having affiliation with no religion or Buddhism and Christianity;
- Speaking Northern European languages at home;
- Having birthplace in Oceania & Antarctica; and
- People with Indigenous origin.

An increase in the proportion of never married, de facto relationships, in particular among young age groups and females over an extended period of time may have demographic implications for the Australian society. These include affecting fertility negatively and contributing to aging population. More research is recommended to find out the underlying factors in these areas.

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Appendix Table 1: Percent Social Marital Status by Registered Marital Status, Australian States/ Territories 2001

Social Marital Status	Registered Marital Status					Total
	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	
NSW						
Married						
Registered	0.3	93.1	0.6	0.7	7.3	49.0
De facto	13.1	0.2	1.9	20.0	9.7	6.0
Total	13.4	93.3	2.5	20.7	17.0	55.0
Not married	79.8	1.9	82.6	73.7	77.2	38.8
Not applicable	6.8	4.9	15.0	5.6	5.9	6.2
Number (000)	1,500.8	2,532.1	312.6	347.9	157.4	4,850.7
Victoria						
Married						
Registered	0.3	94.2	0.5	0.7	6.9	49.6
De facto	12.8	0.2	1.7	20.2	9.3	5.9
Total	13.1	94.4	2.2	20.9	16.2	55.5
Not married	81.3	1.5	82.8	74.4	78.9	39.1
Not applicable	5.6	4.1	15	4.7	4.9	5.4
Number (000)	1,130.3	1,874.1	227.7	241.9	112.3	3,586.3
Queensland						
Married						
Registered	0.3	93.9	0.6	0.6	4.2	48.4
De facto	16.5	2.2	2.7	22.9	11.4	7.7
Total	16.8	95.1	3.3	23.5	15.6	56.1
Not married	76.5	1.6	81.9	71.7	79.2	38.2
Not applicable	6.7	4.3	14.9	4.9	5.2	5.7
Number (000)	833.8	1,363	153	212.2	99.3	2,661.4
SA						
Married						
Registered	0.3	94.9	0.5	0.6	3.9	49.7
De facto	15.1	0.2	1.9	22.0	10.2	6.8
Total	15.4	95.1	2.4	22.6	14.1	56.5
Not married	79.6	1.4	82.2	73.6	81.6	38.7
Not applicable	5.1	3.6	15.4	3.9	4.5	4.9
N (000)	339.1	592.7	80.2	90.2	37.1	1,139.3

Social Marital Status	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	Total
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WA

Married						
Registered	0.4	93.3	0.6	0.5	3.7	48.2
De facto	16.6	0.3	2.5	23.1	11.8	7.8
Total	17.0	93.6	3.1	23.6	15.5	56.0
Not married	76.0	1.6	81.9	70.8	78.6	37.9
Not applicable	7.0	4.8	15.1	5.5	6.0	6.2
Number (000)	443	707.4	73.6	105.7	49	1,378.7

Tasmania

Married						
Registered	0.3	94.8	0.5	0.6	3.3	49.4
De facto	18.5	0.2	2.3	23.8	11.9	8.0
Total	18.8	95.0	2.8	24.4	15.2	57.4
Not married	76.0	1.3	83.7	71.8	81.1	37.6
Not applicable	5.3	3.8	13.5	3.8	3.7	4.9
Number (000)	101.3	179.8	25	28.2	12.4	346.7

NT

Married						
Registered	1.2	83.3	0.8	1.1	4.2	38.9
De facto	20.6	1.2	4.3	27.5	14.4	11.4
Total	21.8	84.5	5.1	28.6	18.6	50.3
Not married	65.1	6.3	82.2	60.8	69.5	38.6
Not applicable	13.1	9.3	12.8	10.6	11.9	11.1
Number (000)	51.9	60.8	4.4	9.9	5.5	132.6

ACT

Married						
Registered	0.2	93.8	0.4	0.5	4.8	47.1
De facto	14.9	0.2	2.0	21.9	10.5	7.4
Total	15.1	94.0	2.4	22.4	15.3	54.5
Not married	75.5	1.4	83.0	72.7	78.7	38.7
Not applicable	9.4	4.7	14.7	4.8	6.0	6.8
Number (000)	82.8	117.9	9.8	17.9	7.4	235.8

Appendix Table 2: Percent Social Marital Status by Tenure Type (Dwelling), Australian States/ Territories 2001

NSW

Tenure Type	Registered Married		De Facto	
	%	Number	%	Number
Fully owned	49.4	1,175,600	18.0	52,305
Being purchased	31.5	748,409	30.8	89,798
Rented	15.4	365,104	47.5	138,382
Occupied rent free	1.2	29,215	1.6	4,679
Other tenure type	1.0	23,457	0.9	2,573
Not stated	1.5	35,909	1.2	3,499
Total	100.0	2,377,694	100.0	291,236

Victoria

Fully owned	51.1	908,839	17.6	36,974
Being purchased	34.9	621,592	41.1	86,541
Rented	10.5	186,164	37.7	79,486
Occupied rent free	1.0	18,194	1.5	3,125
Other tenure type	0.9	15,259	0.8	1,708
Not stated	1.7	30,182	1.3	2,828
Total	100.0	1,780,230	100.0	210,662

Queensland

Fully owned	45.0	580,324	14.8	30,145
Being purchased	35.3	454,784	33.1	67,586
Rented	16.1	207,757	48.3	98,684
Occupied rent free	1.5	18,799	1.7	3,373
Other tenure type	0.8	10,016	0.9	1,787
Not stated	1.4	17,583	1.4	2,846
Total	100.0	1,289,263	100.0	204,421

South Australia

Fully owned	50.0	282,849	15.7	12,137
Being purchased	35.9	203,171	46.2	35,761
Rented	11.0	62,183	35.1	27,104
Occupied rent free	1.4	7,791	1.4	1,069
Other tenure type	0.5	3,037	0.6	438
Not stated	1.2	6,902	1.1	827
Total	100.0	565,933	100.0	77,336

Registered Married

De Facto

Western Australia

Tenure Type	%	Number	%	Number
Fully owned	44.3	294,315	14.6	15,685
Being purchased	40.0	265,877	44.5	47,727
Rented	12.2	81,212	37.0	39,671
Occupied rent free	1.5	9,841	1.9	2,062
Other tenure type	0.9	4,625	0.7	785
Not stated	1.3	8,405	1.2	1,266
Total	100.0	664,275	100.0	107,196

Tasmania

Fully owned	51.7	88,603	17.3	4,824
Being purchased	35.4	60,682	43.5	12,117
Rented	10.0	17,051	35.9	10,019
Occupied rent free	1.2	2,087	1.7	480
Other tenure type	0.4	736	0.5	130
Not stated	1.3	2,252	1.1	319
Total	100.0	171,411	100.0	27,889

Northern Territory

Fully owned	20.6	10,657	9.7	1,469
Being purchased	32.4	16,703	32.5	4,923
Rented	40.3	20,813	52.1	7,882
Occupied rent free	4.0	2,048	3.0	459
Other tenure type	1.1	560	0.9	139
Not stated	1.6	848	1.7	259
Total	100.0	51,629	100.0	15,131

ACT

Fully owned	41.5	46,146	15.2	2,663
Being purchased	41.5	46,115	41.9	7,329
Rented	15.0	16,711	40.9	7,150
Occupied rent free	0.6	698	0.7	121
Other tenure type	0.5	546	0.4	73
Not stated	0.8	932	0.8	138
Total	100.0	111,148	100.0	17,474

Appendix Table 3: Percent Social Marital Status by Religious Affiliation, Australian States/Territories 2001

Religion	Registered Married		De Facto	
	%	Number	%	Number
NSW				
Buddhism	91.8	56,926	8.2	5,049
Christianity	90.5	1,847,112	9.5	193,773
Hinduism	97.5	24,497	2.5	626
Islam	97.4	53,339	2.6	1,423
Judaism	92.5	15,347	7.5	1,247
Other Religions	84.8	10,241	15.2	1,839
No Religion	78.8	225,159	21.2	60,427
Inadequately described	78.1	24,917	21.9	6,987
Not stated	85.8	120,156	14.2	19,865
Victoria				
Religion	%	Number	%	Number
Buddhism	92.3	41,021	7.7	3,411
Christianity	91.9	1,285,754	8.1	112,584
Hinduism	97.3	10,967	2.7	305
Islam	97.4	35,713	2.6	955
Judaism	93.6	17,244	6.4	1,171
Other Religions	93.7	6,597	16.3	1,281
No Religion	78.6	243,085	21.4	66,227
Inadequately described	77.2	24,384	22.8	7,212
Not stated	86.8	115,465	13.2	17,516
Queensland				
Buddhism	88.2	12,874	11.8	1,715
Christianity	88.4	1,008,375	11.6	131,626
Hinduism	96.7	4,010	3.3	137
Islam	94.8	5,720	5.2	311
Judaism	88.8	1,403	11.2	177
Other Religions	78.2	4,221	21.8	1,178
No Religion	75.8	146,486	24.2	46,656
Inadequately described	75.2	16,317	24.8	5,367
Not stated	83.9	89,857	16.1	17,254

Religion	Registered Married		De Facto	
	%	Number	%	Number
South Australia				
Buddhism	89.8	6,523	10.2	737
Christianity	91.7	412,811	8.3	37,508
Hinduism	96.3	1,132	3.7	43
Islam	96.4	2,678	3.6	99
Judaism	91.4	424	9.6	45
Other Religions	82.5	2,433	17.5	515
No Religion	76.0	88,801	24.0	27,975
Inadequately described	25.1	8,400	24.9	2,784
Not stated	84.8	42,731	15.2	7,630
Western Australia				
Buddhism	90.5	11,313	9.5	1,185
Christianity	89.2	483,265	10.8	58,649
Hinduism	97.5	2,199	2.5	57
Islam	96.1	7,236	3.9	293
Judaism	93.5	2,358	6.5	164
Other Religions	81.7	3,330	18.3	748
No Religion	74.8	97,496	25.2	32,867
Inadequately described	73.6	10,298	26.4	3,690
Not stated	83.1	46,780	16.9	9,543
Tasmania				
Buddhism	77.4	547	22.6	160
Christianity	88.9	134,027	11.1	16,738
Hinduism	94.4	221	5.6	13
Islam	91.5	303	8.5	28
Judaism	84.0	63	16.0	12
Other Religions	72.1	372	27.9	144
No Religion	74.2	21,193	25.8	7,382
Inadequately described	73.5	1,952	26.5	705
Not stated	82.5	12,733	17.5	2,707

Religion	Registered Married		De Facto	
	%	Number	%	Number
Northern Territory				
Buddhism	84.5	931	15.5	171
Christianity	81.1	36,266	18.9	8,442
Hinduism	94.8	199	5.2	11
Islam	91.7	377	8.3	34
Judaism	69.8	37	30.2	16
Other Religions	83.2	739	16.8	149
No Religion	64.8	8,258	35.2	4,496
Inadequately described	64.9	851	35.1	461
Not stated	74.6	3,971	25.4	1,351
ACT				
Buddhism	90.0	2,333	10.0	259
Christianity	89.5	79,090	10.5	9,281
Hinduism	98.3	1,107	1.7	19
Islam	96.5	1,319	3.5	48
Judaism	83.3	199	16.7	40
Other Religions	81.9	555	18.1	123
No Religion	75.8	18,040	24.2	5,766
Inadequately described	73.9	1,439	26.1	509
Not stated	83.2	7,066	16.8	1,429