



The baby bust: trends in fertility among professional women, 1986 to 1996

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The decline in Australia's fertility rate over the past 30 years is well established, and concerns about the social and fiscal implications of the "baby bust" are frequently raised. Women's education and occupation are known to be associated with fertility, with more highly educated women in professional occupations having fewer children than other women. This paper will examine more closely trends in fertility among professional women, using data from the 1986 and 1996 census. Particular emphasis will be placed on changing fertility patterns among very highly educated women in highly-paid occupations, and differences between fertility trends for these women, other professional women, and non-professional women in urban and rural areas. Data will be presented for Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, and the non-capital city portions of NSW, Victoria and Queensland, as well as for Australia as a whole. Differences in fertility between professional women working in the public and private sectors will also be examined. Findings will be used to shed light on the implications of declining fertility for urban development planning and social policy.