

## 1.4.2 Socioeconomic factors

*“Even in the most affluent countries, people who are less well off have substantially shorter life expectancies and more illnesses than the rich.”*

WHO 2003<sup>21</sup>

Evidence shows that health is linked to socioeconomic position, with the socioeconomically disadvantaged having higher mortality rates for most major causes of death. Their morbidity pattern indicates they experience more ill health<sup>37</sup> and their use of healthcare services suggests they are less likely to act to prevent disease or to detect it at an asymptomatic stage.<sup>193</sup>

Socioeconomic differences are reported for many outcome indicators in section 1.3 of this chapter and where possible in *Children, Young people, Older people* and *Indigenous peoples* chapters. Socioeconomic differences are also reported for many health related behaviours and risk factors in section 1.4.4. This section examines some key socioeconomic factors that influence health. Complementary socioeconomic factors are included in other sections in this document. These include housing and homelessness indicators in section 1.4.1, and use of computers and Internet, gambling and transport access indicators in section 1.4.3.

### Income

In 2001, a larger proportion of males (52.3%) than females (27.0%) were in the higher income categories (greater than \$500 per week: Table 1.32).<sup>194</sup> The income of the majority of males aged 15-24 years or 65 years and older was less than \$500 per week, with 62-64% of males earning less than \$300 per week. More females than males earned less than \$300 per week in each age group. Income is considered the single most important modifiable determinant of health.<sup>35</sup> Details of income by age group are reported in each chapter of this report.

The weekly income of a quarter (25.3%) of Queensland families was less than \$500 per week in 2001, where 27% of such families were one-parent families and 30% were couple families with children (Table 1.33). In 2001, the median gross weekly income of one parent households was \$386 and the median gross weekly income of couple-with-dependants households was two and a half times higher (\$933).<sup>56</sup>

**Table 1.32: Individual income received by age and sex, percentage of persons, Queensland 2001**

\$ per week	15-24		25-64		65+		15+	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
< 300	61.9	66.5	22.7	42.4	63.8	77.4	35.5	52.0
300-499	19.4	20.3	15.9	24.1	21.1	15.6	17.3	22.1
500-999	17.1	12.8	41.2	27.0	11.6	5.5	32.8	21.2
1000-1499	1.1	0.4	20.1	6.6	3.5	1.5	14.5	4.7
1500+	0.4	0.1	6.9	1.5	1.6	0.7	5.0	1.1

Source: ABS Census of population and housing 2001

**Table 1.33: Weekly family income received (percentage) and numbers of families by type of family in occupied private dwellings, Queensland 2001**

	Couple family with children	Couple family without children	One parent family	Other family	Total
Number of families	353,854	315,837	133,162	15,111	817,964
Family income (\$ weekly)					
< 300	1.4	2.7	13.6	7.7	4.0
300-499	7.4	29.5	37.9	26.0	21.3
500-999	34.2	29.8	35.1	37.8	32.7
1000-1499	28.3	19.5	9.6	18.8	21.7
1500+	28.7	18.4	3.8	9.7	20.3

Source: ABS Census of population and housing 2001

In Queensland, almost half (43.3%) the households in 2001 reported having at least some difficulty making ends meet (Table 1.34). A significantly lower proportion of households in remote areas of Australia had difficulty makes ends meet, than in urban and regional areas. Consistent with the measure of socioeconomic disadvantage, a greater proportion of households in the highest 60% of socioeconomically disadvantaged areas had difficulty making ends meet. Considering individuals rather than households, in 2001 5.5% of Queensland adult males and 6.6% of females reported running out of food and being unable to afford to buy more (Table 1.35). A greater proportion of young males (18-24 years) and women younger than 45 years were unable to afford to buy more food once they had run out. One in 10 people in areas of greatest socioeconomic disadvantage reported being unable to buy required additional food due to financial constraints.

**Table 1.34: Percentage of households having trouble making ends meet (95%CI), by region and socioeconomic disadvantage, Queensland and Australia 2001**

	With some difficulty, with difficulty, or great difficulty (%)		With some difficulty, with difficulty, or great difficulty (%)
Queensland	41.9 (41.8-42.0)	Australia: (socioeconomic disadvantage)	
Australia	40.1 (40.1-40.2)	quintile 1(least)	32.7 (32.7-32.8)
Australia:		quintile 2	37.0 (36.8-37.1)
Major cities and Inner regional	39.9 (39.8-39.9)	quintile 3	41.4 (41.3-41.5)
Outer regional	44.1 (44.0-44.2)	quintile 4	43.1 (43.0-43.2)
Remote, very remote and migratory	27.9 (27.6-28.2)	quintile 5 (most)	47.8 (47.7-47.8)

Source: HILDA 2001

**Table 1.35: Percentage of people who reported running out of food and being unable to afford to buy more, in past 12 months, by age, sex and socioeconomic disadvantage, Queensland 2001**

	Male	Female		Male	Female	Persons
18+	5.5	6.6	Socioeconomic disadvantage:			
18-24	13.9	8.1*	Quintile 1 (least)	1.1**	2.8*	2.0*
25-34	7.6	9.9	Quintile 2	4.3*	3.8*	4.0
35-44	6.3	9.7	Quintile 3	4.2*	6.8	5.5
45-54	2.1*	4.7*	Quintile 4	6.1	7.5	6.8
55-64	3.4*	4.7*	Quintile 5 (greatest)	10.3	10.5	10.4

Source: ABS National health survey 2001

\*Relative SE of the estimate = 25-50%;

\*\*Relative SE of estimate >50%

## Income inequality

Between 1994-95 and 1997-98, the real income of Australian households increased for all levels of socioeconomic disadvantage (Table 1.36).<sup>195</sup> The close to uniform changes in the average income of households with low, middle and high incomes over this period suggests that there has been little change in the income gap between households. However, for the longer period 1990-2000, there is evidence that the growth in incomes over the decade has benefited high income earners to a greater degree than those on low income, and thus increased income inequality. Income inequality in Queensland was similar to Australia in 1997-98, as determined by the gini coefficient (Table 1.37). The gini coefficient is expressed as a ratio that is always between 0 and 1, with lower values reflecting lower inequality. The similarity between Queensland and Australia is shown in the similar shares of high and low income received by Queenslanders and Australians.

**Table 1.36: Household income increase, weekly estimates, Australia 1994-95 to 1997-98**

	Increase %	Increase in weekly disposable income
Most disadvantaged households	5	\$408 to \$427
Households in the middle level of disadvantage	5	\$687 to \$720
Households with least disadvantage	6	\$1,566 to \$1,642

Source: CSIRO Measuring Australia's progress 2002

**Table 1.37: Selected income inequality indicators, Queensland and Australia 1997-98**

	Queensland	Australia
Share of total income received by households with		
high incomes (%)	38.9	39.2
low incomes (%)	10.3	10.2
Gini coefficient	0.316	0.322

Source: ABS Australian social trends 2002

## Pensions and disability support

Almost half of all Queensland children aged under 16 years (48.2%) lived in families receiving income support payments in 1996 (Table 1.38).<sup>22</sup> Income support payments include age, disability, Newstart allowance; sickness and special benefits; youth training allowance; sole parent pensions and family allowance payments.

The proportion of children in families receiving income support payments was generally higher in Brisbane than in most other capital cities in Australia, while Queensland's non-metropolitan areas were similar to non-metropolitan areas in other states. The number and proportion of dependent children in families receiving an income support payment in Brisbane increased in the period 1989-96. Unskilled and semi skilled workers and early school leavers were significantly more likely to receive support payment. In contrast, high income families, managers and administrators, and professionals were less likely to receive support payment.

The percentage of Older people on an aged pension and the percentage of people on disability support pensions in Queensland in 2001 were similar to Australia (Table 1.39). However, in 1997- 98, government payments were the main income source of a greater proportion of Queensland households of couples with dependent children and one-parent families than comparable households in Australia.

**Table 1.38: Dependent children of selected pensioners and beneficiaries, percentage of population aged 15 years and younger, Queensland and Australia 1989, 1996**

	Queensland	Australia
1996		
Capital city	43.7	39.2
Other major urban centres	48.4	44.0
Rest of State	52.5	51.4
Total	48.2	43.5
1989		
Rest of State	41.0	37.8

Source: A social health atlas for Australia, 1999

**Table 1.39: Selected income support indicators, Queensland and Australia 2001**

	Queensland	Australia
Aged on aged pension (%)	65.3	67.8
Disability support pensioners (% of persons 15+ years)*	4.1	4.1
Single parent payment (% of all persons in families in occupied private dwellings)*	3.3	3.6
Main income source from government payments (%)** (of couple with dependant households)	12.2	11.1
Main income source from government payments (%)** (of one parent households)	66.5	64.6

Source: Australian social trends 2002

\*Calculated by QH \*\*1997-98

## Socioeconomic disadvantage

In 2001, there were 47 Statistical Local Areas in Queensland with substantial socioeconomic disadvantage, defined as greater than 60% of the population in the quintile of greatest socioeconomic disadvantage (Table 1.40).<sup>197</sup> These disadvantaged areas were located in outer Brisbane metropolitan, coastal rural and northern remote areas. In the 2001 census, the criteria used by ABS to construct the socioeconomic indices were modified, thus comparison between 1996 and 2001 census is not reported

in this document. Socioeconomic disadvantage is reported for small areas in Queensland in Chapter 6: *Health Service District profiles*.

**Table 1.40: Socioeconomic disadvantage by Statistical Local Area, Queensland 2001**

% population in quintile of greatest disadvantage	Number	(%of SLAs)
80-100%	28	6%
60-80%	19	4%
40-60%	45	10%
20-40%	55	12%
20% or less	305	67%

Source: ABS Index of socioeconomic advantage/disadvantage 2001

## Education

In 2001, 41.1% of the Queensland population aged 15 years and older had post school qualifications (Table 1.41), compared with 43.8% nationally. Full time employed people were twice as likely to have a post school qualification as unemployed people, 51.7% and 27.6% respectively. Of the Queensland population aged 15 years and older, 62.8% of females and 50.6% of males had no recognised post school qualifications (Table 1.42). Some groups of people, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people with disabilities, are disadvantaged in gaining access to education and training.<sup>198</sup> In contrast, people who were born overseas generally had higher educational attainment, with higher attainment where language spoken was not English (Table 1.43). This reflects Australia's immigration policies, which require education and skills as prerequisites for entry into Australia.

In 2001, Queensland's apparent retention rate for secondary school students from Year 7/8 to Year 12 was 79%, compared with the Australian average of 73.4%.<sup>1</sup> The apparent retention rate for female students was 83.2% and males 74.9%. Children's education is more fully discussed in the *Children* chapter of this report.

**Table 1.41: Highest educational attainment by labour force, percentage of persons aged 15 years and older, Queensland 2001**

	Employed full-time	Employed part-time	Unemployed	Not in the labour force	Total
Postgraduate degree	2.6	1.7	0.4	0.8	1.9
Graduate diploma / Graduate certificate	4.2	1.9	1.5	2.3	3.1
Bachelor degree	13.0	9.1	4.3	5.1	10.0
Advanced diploma / Diploma	8.1	7.9	5.7	5.5	7.4
Certificate	23.8	14.0	15.7	12.1	18.7
Year 11 or 12	22.2	31.7	36.0	20.5	24.8
Year 10 or below	24.8	32.0	34.8	52.2	32.6
Level not determined	1.2	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.3
Never attended school	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ABS survey of education and training 2001

**Table 1.42: Percentage of persons aged 15 years and older with post school qualification by sex, Queensland 2001**

	Male	Female
Postgraduate degree	1.7	1.0
Bachelor degree	7.6	9.1
Graduate diploma and graduate certificate	0.9	1.4
Advanced diploma and diploma	5.0	6.0
Certificate	24.2	8.1
Do not have a qualification or within scope of Australian classification	50.6	62.8
Not stated	10.0	11.6

Source: ABS census of population and housing 2001

**Table 1.43: Highest educational attainment by language and country of birth, percentage of persons aged 15 years and older, Queensland 2001**

	Bachelor degree	Grad. diploma / grad. certificate	Year 12	Year 10 or below
English - born in Australia	9.1	2.6	19.0	36.1
English - born overseas	10.2	3.5	18.3	28.7
Other language - born in Australia	12.1	4.7	16.1	30.4
Other language - born overseas	12.5	6.0	20.6	21.6
Total	9.5	3.0	19.0	34.2

Source: ABS survey of education and training 2001

Generally, people with the worst health status have lower education levels and people with lower levels of education face a much higher risk of becoming unemployed.<sup>199</sup> Literacy influences health and health determinants in a variety of ways, including the choice of activities of daily living, coping skills, safety risks in the workplace/home, and vulnerability to changes in social and medical circumstances. All of these can lead to errors in following medical instructions, lower or late access of health services, lifestyles which can lead to chronic illness and eventually preventable morbidity and mortality.<sup>200</sup>

## Employment

In January 2004, the unemployment rate in Queensland was 5.9%, compared with the Australian rate of 5.6% (Table 1.44).<sup>201</sup> The unemployment rate for females in Queensland was higher than the male rate. Unemployment rates in Queensland have fallen over the past two years, and are currently being driven by population increase. Rates in Queensland regions vary. In February 2003, rates varied from 5.2% to 15.1%, with generally higher rates in non-metropolitan regions.<sup>202</sup> Long term unemployment as a proportion of total unemployment in February 2003 was lower in Queensland than in Australia, 15.7% compared with 21.5% respectively, where long term unemployment was defined as 52 weeks or longer.<sup>202</sup> The proportion of long term unemployment to total unemployment has varied over time in Australia peaking in 1993 for both males and females (Figure 1.39). Long term unemployment has been a higher component of total unemployment for males than females.<sup>202</sup> The unemployment rate for Indigenous peoples in Queensland is double that of the total population,<sup>56</sup> as discussed in the *Indigenous peoples* chapter of this report.

**Table 1.44: Unemployment by sex and location, proportion of persons aged 15 years and older looking for work, Queensland and Australia by state 2003, 2004**

	Queensland	Australia		Queensland	Australia
Unemployment rate (%)			Unemployment rate (%)		
Persons	5.9	5.6	Persons	7.7	6.7
Male	5.4	5.3	Male	7.1	6.7
Female	6.5	6.0	Female	8.5	6.7

Source: ABS January 2004 Labour force

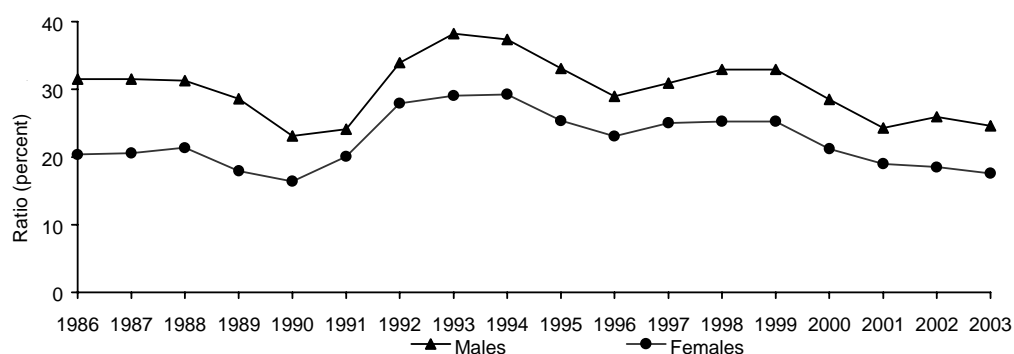
Source: ABS February 2003 Labour force

Long term unemployment as a proportion of total unemployment

	Queensland	Queensland	
		Unemployment rate (%)	Range
Queensland	15.9		
New South Wales	29.9	Brisbane metropolitan	6.9 5.2-7.9
Victoria	23.3	Balance of State	8.5 6.8-15.1
South Australia	30.5		
Western Australia	22.0		
Tasmania	37.2		
Australian Capital Territory	27.2		
Australia	24.7		

Source: ABS February 2003 Labour force

**Figure 1.39: Trends in ratio (seasonally adjusted) of long term unemployed (greater than 104 weeks) to total unemployed by gender, Australia 1986-2003**



Source: ABS Labour force Australia

Employment provides income. Unemployment reduces people's ability to purchase goods and services, such as adequate nutrition and housing. In addition, employment is a primary source of status in industrialised countries, while also significant in providing social support, structure to life and a means of participating in society.<sup>35,203</sup> Unemployment rates fluctuate and are strongly associated with periods of economic downturn. Unemployment in Queensland has remained consistently higher than the national average in recent years.<sup>2</sup> The employment trend for both Queensland and Australia has been toward higher growth in part-time and casual employment rather than full-time employment, although current growth in employment was reported in full-time positions.<sup>201</sup> The trend towards part-time and casual employment is likely to continue into the foreseeable future.

Males continue to outnumber females in the labour force, particularly on a full time basis.<sup>183</sup> Similar proportions of males and females are unemployed and seeking work. More than twice as many females than males are employed part-time (Table 1.45). Employed females are equally likely to be employed part time or full-time. However, more females (36.4% of all female employees) than males (28.9% of all male employees) are employed without leave entitlements. This social disadvantage is greater in Queensland than for Australia as a whole, where the proportions employed without leave entitlements are 31.9% for females and 23.5% for males.<sup>204</sup>

**Table 1.45: Labour force status by age and sex, Queensland 2001**

	15-24 years		25-64 years		65+ years		15+ years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total labour force (% of total population, aged 15+ years)	69.7	66.4	83.6	64.7	70.9	55.6	70.9	55.6
Not in the labour force (% of total population, aged 15+ years)	30.3	33.6	16.4	35.3	29.1	44.4	29.1	44.4
Employed: working full-time (% of labour force)	47.6	35.5	74.9	48.4	69.4	45.5	69.4	45.5
Employed: working part-time (% of labour force)	31.9	47.4	15.3	43.3	18.9	44.3	18.9	44.3
Total employed (% of labour force)	83.3	86.1	92.8	94.1	91.2	92.5	91.2	92.5
Total unemployed (% of labour force)	16.7	13.9	7.2	5.9	8.8	7.5	8.8	7.5

Source: ABS Census of population and housing 2001