



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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### **The childlessness 'gap' narrows**

There was slower growth in childlessness amongst Australian women with tertiary education than for all women between 1986 and 2006 according to new research from the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) at the University of Canberra.

This is just one of many new significant findings to be presented in a research paper entitled *Where Have all the Children Gone? Trends in the Childlessness of Professional Women in Australia* at the upcoming Australian Population Association 14th Biennial Conference at Alice Springs.

The paper examines trends in childlessness for Australian women aged 20-44 from Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data spanning a twenty year period from 1986 to 2006.

Women qualified in medicine, law, dentistry and veterinary science, although having higher rates of childlessness than the average rate for all women in 2006, experienced only a 0.9 percentage point growth in childlessness between 1986 and 2006. This was compared to a growth of 3.8 percentage points for other women with tertiary degrees, and 10 percentage points for all women.

The study also examined childlessness by occupational category, and found that women working as specialist doctors and general practitioners, lawyers, dentists and vets had higher rates of childlessness than women in other occupations, but that the rate of childlessness among this group of women had grown more slowly than that of other working women between 1986 and 1996. The overall childlessness gap between women working in these selected professions and women in other occupations narrowed in the twenty years to 2006.

However, rates of childlessness overall grew between 1986 and 2006, with just over half of all working women aged 20-44 childless in 2006. Riyana Miranti, one of the paper's authors, points out that "these differences in rates of childlessness need to be interpreted in the context of the very large increases in the number of women completing degrees and working as professionals and managers since 1986, including entering the selected professions we focused on in this paper".

Professional women in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane continue to have a higher rate of childlessness than women living in other parts of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, a finding which holds true for all women as well as for those working in, or qualified for medicine, law, dentistry and veterinary science.

The research will be presented on Monday 30 June at the Australian Population Association Conference at the Alice Springs Convention Centre between 3:45pm and 5:30pm. Throughout the conference, over 100 population experts will discuss topics including Indigenous fertility and life expectancy, motivations for mothers to return to work after childbirth, and family planning.

The paper is co-authored by Riyana Miranti, National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) at the University of Canberra; Mandy Yap at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at Australian National University; and Justine McNamara and Robert Tanton, also from NATSEM.

The Australian Population Association Conference sponsors include The Northern Territory Government, the Federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre, with in-kind support from the School for Social and Policy Research at Charles Darwin University. For further details go to [www.nt.gov.au/ntt/apa2008](http://www.nt.gov.au/ntt/apa2008).

## **ENDS**

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### **About the conference**

The 14th biennial conference of the Australian Population Association will be held in Alice Springs from Monday 30th June to Thursday 3rd July 2008 at the Alice Springs.

The conference will share international perspectives on contemporary population issues. The keynote speaker program features highly respected international population experts, and a comprehensive program of concurrent sessions based on the conference themes:

- Indigenous demography
- Policy responses to demographic change; and
- The demography of Australia's northern neighbours

For full details, including the conference program and abstracts, go to [www.nt.gov.au/ntt/apa2008/](http://www.nt.gov.au/ntt/apa2008/)