



# FACTBase Fremantle

Bulletin 1, March 2015

## Changes and Trends in Fremantle's Demographic Structure: An Overview

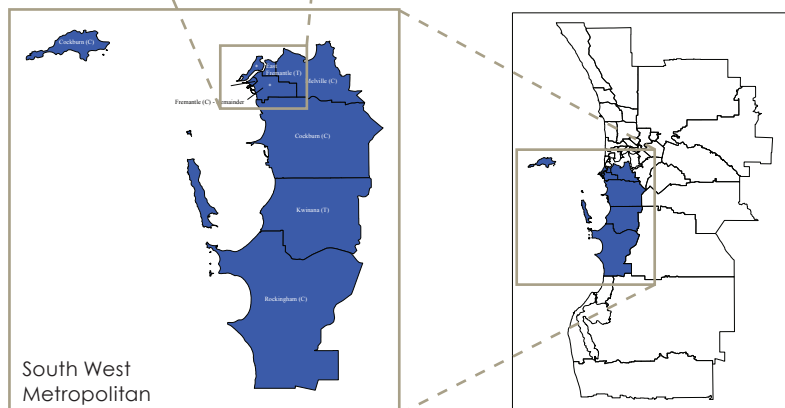
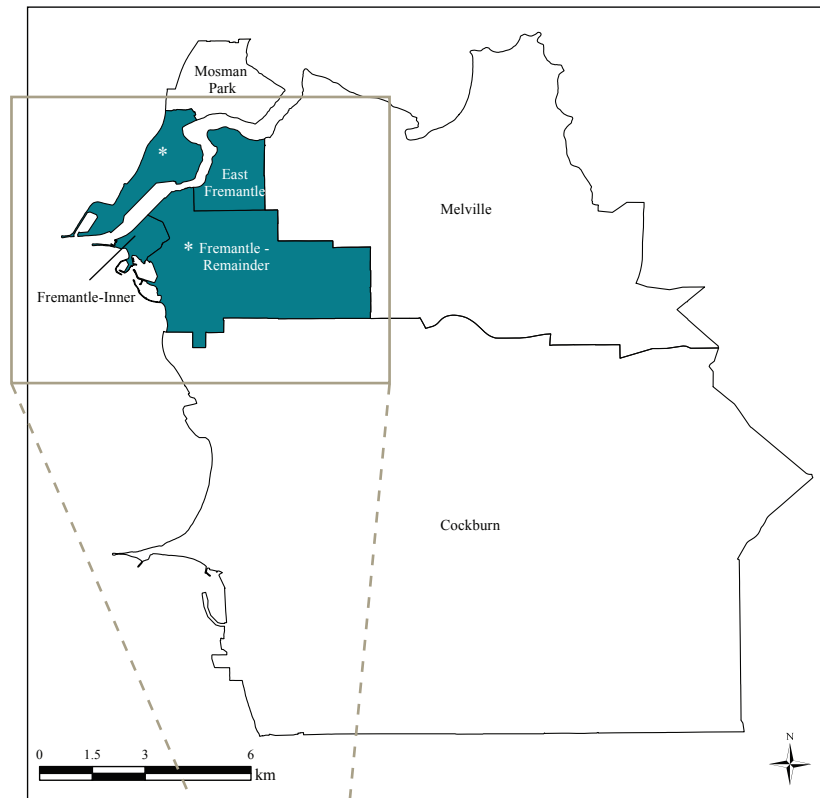
Veronica Huddleston

The past two decades has seen Fremantle and its surrounding suburbs experience quite profound economic, social, demographic and other changes. This Bulletin is the first in a series that will explore these changes in order to provoke dialogue about Fremantle's core attributes and opportunities. The focus will be on a number of statistical local areas (SLAs) that comprise the Greater Fremantle region: East Fremantle, Fremantle – Inner and Fremantle – Remainder (see Figure 1). This Bulletin will examine some of the key demographic changes experienced in Greater Fremantle over the period 2001-2011. Central to this is a consideration of total population change, age and sex structure, ethnic and cultural diversity, and migration trends. Collectively, these provide important insights into the changing character of Fremantle and some of the implications for policy and planning.

### Population Growth and Densities

The total population of the Greater Fremantle region increased by 8.2 per cent over the period 2001-2011, rising from 30,965 persons to 33,513 persons in 2011. Over the same period, the Perth metropolitan

**Figure 1**  
**The Greater Fremantle Region**



region's population increased by 29.3 per cent, indicating that Fremantle did not share in much of the growth associated with the resources boom. Even at more local levels, growth rates were lower than for Perth as a whole (see Table 1). At the height of the boom, between 2006 and 2011, the most significant increases were recorded in Fremantle – Remainder (7.4%) and East Fremantle (3.5%). These population increases helped offset the population decline experienced in Fremantle – Inner where the 2011 population fell to 2001 levels. By comparison, the Perth metropolitan region as a whole increased by 19.6 per cent over the same period.

One of the noteworthy characteristics of the Greater Fremantle area is the relatively high level of population density. This is particularly significant given the growing concerns for urban density in the Perth metropolitan region as a whole, and points to Fremantle already leading the way in this regard. This is, in part, the result of Fremantle's settlement history, which led to relatively dense forms of development as well as a degree of infill over recent years. East Fremantle has one of the highest population densities among the 40 Metro Perth and Peel SLAs. Indeed, its population density of 2,470 people per square kilometre in 2011 was the third highest in Metro Perth and Peel (ABS, 2012).<sup>1</sup> Fremantle – Remainder and Fremantle – Inner had relatively medium densities during the same period, with population densities of 1,579 and 954 people per square kilometre, respectively.

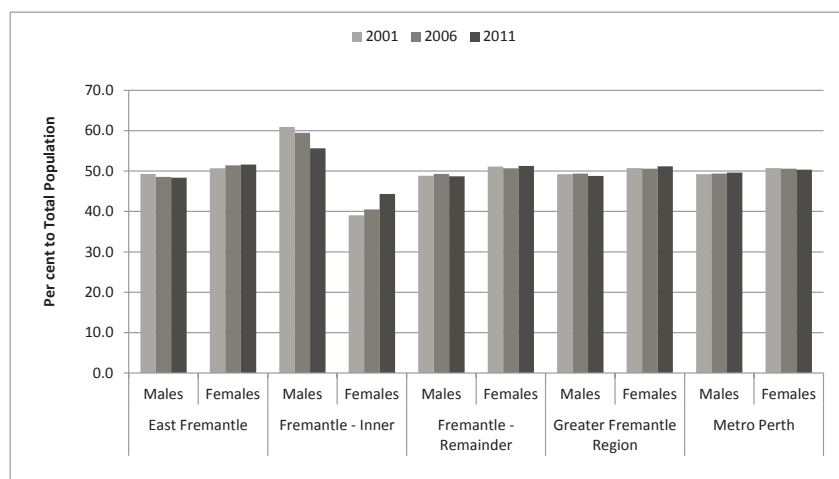
<sup>1</sup> Population densities in 2011 across the 40 SLAs comprising Metro Perth and Peel ranged from a low of 4.7 persons per square kilometre in Waroona to 2,793 persons per square kilometre in Vincent (ABS, 2012b).

**Table 1**  
**Population Levels and Growth Rates, 2001-2011**

	Total Population			Growth Rates	
	2001	2006	2011	2001-2006	2006-2011
Greater Fremantle	30,965	31,533	33,513	1.8	6.3
East Fremantle	6,440	6,696	6,931	4.0	3.5
Fremantle – Inner	791	829	796	4.8	-4.0
Fremantle – Remainder	23,734	24,008	25,786	1.2	7.4

(Source: Calculated from ABS, 2003, 2007 and 2012a).

**Figure 2**  
**Gender Breakdown of the Population, Greater Fremantle, 2001-2011**



(Source: Calculated from ABS, 2003, 2007 and 2012a).

## Sex and Age Structure

Over recent years, one of the characteristics of the Australian population has been a greater ratio of women to men – sometimes described rather colourfully as a 'man drought'.<sup>2</sup> An assessment of Fremantle's age-sex structure suggests a similar situation exists and that this has been increasing. In 2011, there were 803 more females than males residing in Greater Fremantle. In general terms, the situation is comparable to the wider Metro Perth and Peel region, though this has started to rebalance in recent years

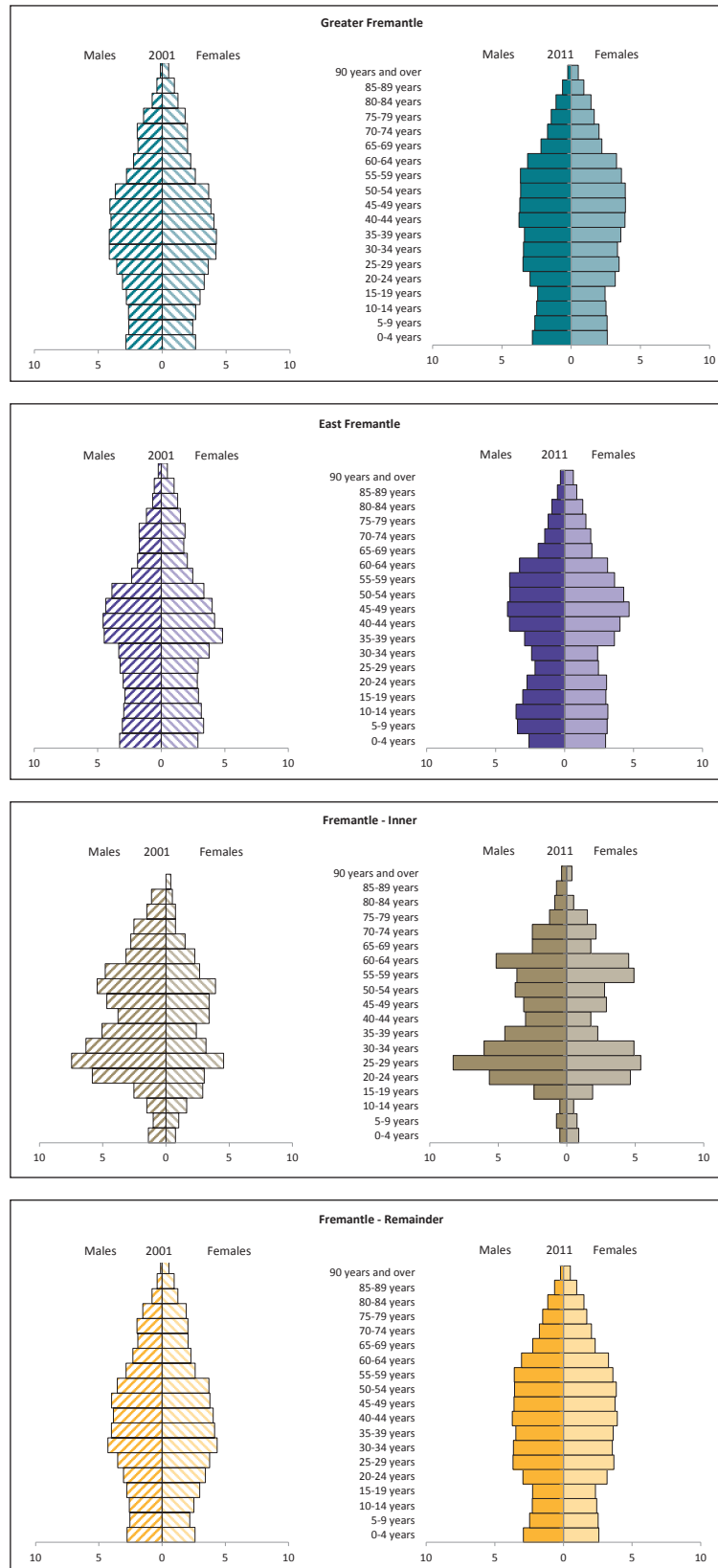
<sup>2</sup> For more details, see <http://blog.id.com.au/2012/population/australian-demographic-trends/the-man-drought-is-it-real/>

(at 49.6% male, 50.4% female in 2011). Fremantle has increased its more feminine structure, rising from 50.8 per cent of the population being female in 2001 to 51.2 per cent in 2011. Figure 2 presents the gender breakdown for each SLA and Greater Fremantle for 2001, 2006 and 2011. Almost across the board, females accounted for a higher proportion of the population. The only exception to this was Fremantle – Inner, where there was a significantly higher proportion of males (55.7%) than females (44.3%). In part, this reflects the historical workforce characteristics of this part of the metropolitan region, and one might expect this to change over the coming decades.

The recent Intergenerational Report released by the Australian Treasury (2015) notes that the nation's population continues to age at a steady rate. Indeed, the report makes reference to an 'ageing boom', with (positive and negative) implications for communities and social institutions, social services, welfare, and the workforce. The Greater Fremantle region is a clear example of how this 'ageing boom' is playing out within Australian cities. Figure 3 shows population pyramids for the SLAs within Greater Fremantle in 2001 and 2011 and the overwhelming trend is one of an ageing population, and a decreasing proportion of younger people. Fremantle – Inner exhibited the most dramatic changes in its population structure with a significant rise in the proportion of people aged 65 years and over, which increased from 11.9 per cent in 2001 to 14.6 per cent in 2011. Males accounted for the majority of the elderly population, particularly those aged 65 to 74 years and over, across both time periods. In contrast, the proportion of children (0-14 years) declined from 7.3 per cent in 2001 to 3.9 per cent in 2011. In terms of its working age population, Fremantle – Inner registered the highest proportion of the 15 to 64 years old population (80.8% in 2001 and 81.5% in 2011). Males in the 20-34 age groups were dominant, particularly in 2011.

The East Fremantle and Fremantle – Remainder SLAs had relatively similar age structures, with children comprising 18.7 per cent and 15.2 per cent of the population, respectively, in 2011. Both SLAs experienced a decline in the proportion of their working age populations from 2001 to 2011. As for the elderly

**Figure 3**  
**Population Pyramids, Greater Fremantle, East Fremantle, Fremantle – Inner and Fremantle – Remainder, 2001 and 2011**



(Source: Calculated from ABS, 2003 and 2012a).

population, both SLAs registered a slight increase between 2001 and 2011: East Fremantle's elderly population increased from 14.0 per cent to 14.5 per cent and Fremantle – Remainder's from 15.5 per cent to 16.5 per cent. Females comprised a higher proportion of the elderly population in these SLAs.

As the Treasury's Inter-generational Report (2015) points out, the implications of an ageing population are variable from place to place, and should not be viewed simplistically as problematic. An ageing population contributes opportunities in terms of recreation and leisure industries, has the potential to form a vibrant pool of volunteers and community members, and can contribute to a diverse and experienced workforce. Exploring and capitalising on these opportunities, as well as recognising the potential challenges, is now a critical policy and planning issue not just nationally, but also at the local level.

## Dependency Ratios

One of the ways local areas can gain an understanding of how an ageing population might affect their community is through an assessment of dependency ratios. A dependency ratio relates to the proportion of the 'working age' population (15-64 years old) relative to the non-working age population (those 0-14 years and 65 years and over). While not strictly a measure of the impact of ageing, dependency ratios give insights into the likely social, economic and fiscal dependency of the non-working population on the working population. The higher the dependency ratio, the greater the public policy

pressure is in terms of providing and paying for services.

The dependent population (below 15 years and those 65 years and over) in Greater Fremantle increased only marginally between 2001 and 2006 (by 1.1%) and quite considerably between 2006 and 2011 (by 10.1%). Consequently, the overall dependency ratio for Greater Fremantle increased from 44.6 per cent in 2001 to 46.4 per cent in 2011. Closer analysis shows that the elderly accounted for 23.5 per cent and young people 22.9 per cent of the total dependency ratio. Whilst most young people will receive direct support as a result of being part of a family unit, the growing and increasingly aged elderly population are relatively more likely to be reliant on aged care facilities and other government support services. However, as pointed out above, this financial cost needs to be balanced against the other range of possible economic, social and cultural benefits that might flow from this component of the population.

At the local level, dependency ratios among the elderly were more pronounced in Fremantle – Inner and Fremantle – Remainder, whereas East Fremantle had a higher dependency ratio amongst its young population across all three Census periods. A careful assessment of these leads to a range of policy questions related to planning for the provision of schools, health care, recreation facilities, social services, and so on.

## Migration Patterns and Trends

One of the most dynamic components of population change relates to mobility and migration. In most advanced cities and regions, population growth is largely driven by the movement of people from one place to another. This, in turn, contributes to changes in social and cultural characteristics, economic structure, services and infrastructure needs, and housing and land. Thus, one of the critical components of understanding Fremantle is the role of internal and international migration.

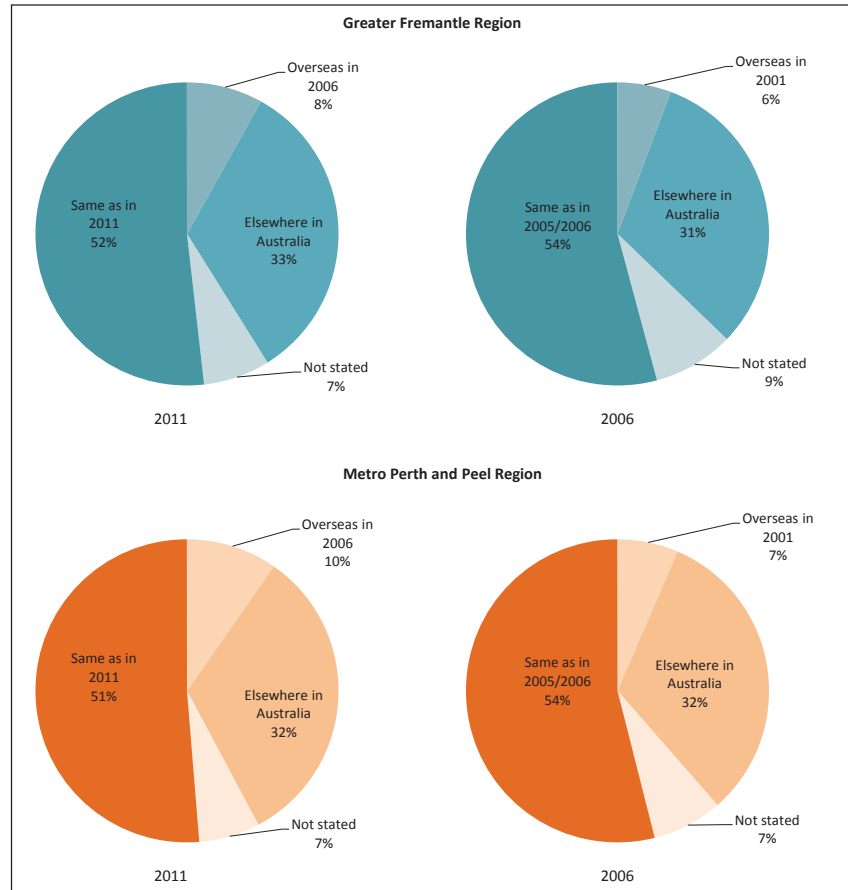
Of the total population living in the Greater Fremantle region in 2011, 52 per cent lived at the same address in 2006. This is slightly down on the 54 per cent of the population who lived at the same address in 2006 as they did in 2001. Thus, around half of Greater Fremantle's population tends to move residence within a five-year period. This is similar to Perth as a whole, where 51.3 per cent moved address between 2006 and 2011. Overall, what this points to is that in any given location, there is a high degree of 'churn' in the population over a five-year period. This means that migrants are constantly making choices about residential location, based on factors such as housing costs, services and facilities, environmental amenity, and other aspects of liveability. Fremantle might therefore be seen as being in 'competition' with other locations on the basis of these factors. For the business community, policymakers and planners, the focus needs to be on maintaining a unique set of advantages and attributes that attract and retain population. However, this should not simply be regarded as a focus on 'growth at all costs', but as a

strategy to develop and maintain a particular and desired demographic structure.

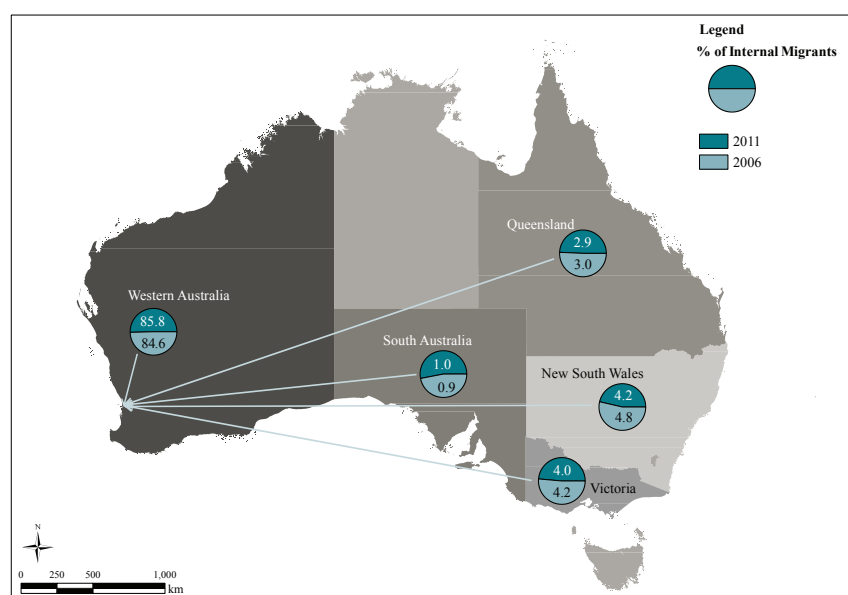
Figure 5 outlines in more detail the origin of internal migrants to Greater Fremantle. The vast majority of these arrivals in 2006 (85.8%) and 2011 (84.6%) came from other parts of Western Australia. In terms of inter-state migration, New South Wales and Victoria accounted for the largest proportion of arrivals. Interestingly, the majority, approximately 52 per cent, of internal migrants were female, which has further reinforced the male/female gender ratios discussed earlier. Furthermore, a significant majority (81%) were of working age with a further 12 per cent under 15 years and only 7 per cent were aged 65 years and over. Twenty-five per cent of migrants were born overseas whilst the remaining 75 per cent were Australian-born.

The overall internal migration trends suggest that the Greater Fremantle region is an attractive destination for new residents, though it does tend to capture a relatively small share of all migrants to the Perth region. However, the migration figures alone only capture part of the story. Questions remain about the occupations and career paths of new arrivals, their income levels, housing choices and other lifestyle factors. These are all important factors in shaping the character of Fremantle, and in many respects are more important than focusing simply on the flows into and out of the region. Also important are the destinations and characteristics of those people who leave Fremantle. These issues will be taken up in the wider *Future Freo* project.

**Figure 4**  
Usual Address Five Years Ago, Greater Fremantle and Metro Perth and Peel Region, 2011 and 2006



**Figure 5**  
Source of Internal Migrants Based on Usual Address Five Years Ago, Greater Fremantle, 2011 and 2006



(Source: ABS, TableBuilder).



In terms of international migrants (based on residents who lived overseas five years ago), this group increased by 862 persons between 2006 and 2011, an increase of 50.8 per cent over the 2001-2006 period. Again, females made up a slightly higher proportion of international migrants (both for residents who lived overseas a year and five years ago) while in terms of age, the majority of migrants were between 15 to 64 years old across both time periods.

As can be seen in Table 2, the countries of birth of international migrants were relatively stable between 2006 and 2011. England topped the list of migrant source countries to Greater Fremantle. There were notable increases from those born in Maritime South East Asia, particularly the Philippines, in 2011.

## Fremantle's Cultural and Ethnic Diversity

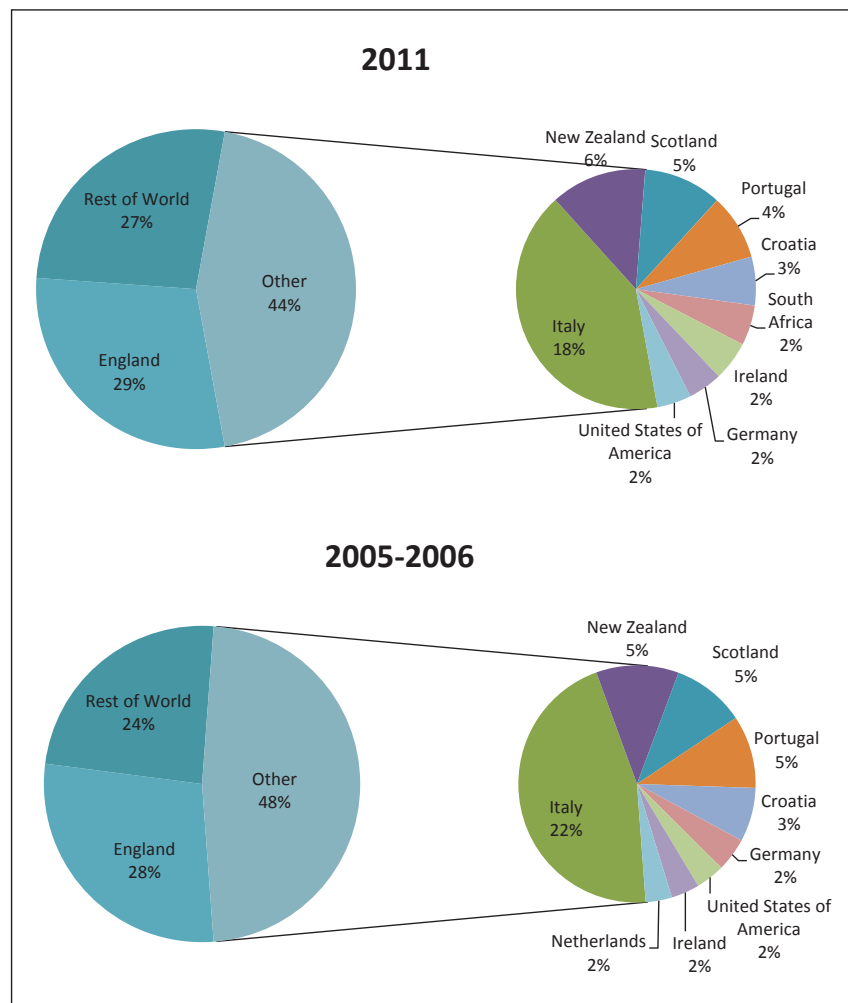
Fremantle's heritage and character is in large part shaped by its culturally and ethnically diverse population. The overseas-born population comprised 30 per cent of the total population of Greater Fremantle in 2011, compared to 28.4 per cent in 2006. This follows the same upward trend noted for the proportion of overseas-born people to the total resident population in Metro Perth and Peel, which increased from 31.0 per cent in 2006 to 34.6 per cent in 2011 (Huddleston and Huddleston, 2013). The Fremantle – Inner SLA posted the highest proportion of the population born overseas in 2011 at 40.1 per cent, followed by Fremantle – Remainder (31.0%) while East Fremantle registered the lowest proportion (25.3%).

**Table 2**  
Top Ten Countries of Birth of Greater Fremantle Residents who Lived Overseas in 2001 and 2006

Rank	Overseas in 2001	Rank	Overseas in 2006
1	England	1	England
2	New Zealand	2	New Zealand
3	Scotland	3	Ireland
4	United States of America	4	Scotland
5	Germany	5	United States of America
6	Canada	6	Germany
7	France	7	Philippines
8	Italy	8	South Africa
9	South Africa	9	France
10	Ireland	10	Canada

(Source: ABS, Calculated from TableBuilder).

**Figure 6**  
Overseas-Born Residents who Lived in the Same Address by Country of Birth, Greater Fremantle, 2005-06 and 2011



(Source: ABS TableBuilder).

Figure 6 further highlights the cultural and ethnic diversity in Greater Fremantle. It shows the countries of birth of overseas-born residents who had lived in the same address in 2006 and 2011. In addition to England and New Zealand, individuals born in southern and south-eastern Europe, in particular, Italy, Portugal and Croatia were the dominant groups among the residents of the Greater Fremantle region in both Census periods.

Huddleston and Tonts (2007) had noted that historically, the dominance of these nationalities has been reflected in the development of the fishing and port industries. The presence of this diversity of European nationalities also contributed to the character of Fremantle, including its restaurant and café sector, the various festivals and events in the city, and aspects of the built environment. Notre Dame University also plays a critical role, attracting a relatively diverse staff and student mix to the city (as also reflected in the small but growing American presence in Fremantle). Indeed, it could be argued that this cultural and ethnic diversity has long been one of the great attributes and 'selling points' of Fremantle.

While eighty per cent of the population of Greater Fremantle identified English as the most common language spoken at home, ethnic diversity is reflected in the prevalence of other languages most commonly spoken at home. In 2011, these included: Italian (4.8%), Iberian Romance (1.6%), South Slavic (1.4%), German and related languages (0.8%), and French (0.7%).

## Future Population Growth and Implications

If the annual population growth rate for Greater Fremantle of 0.8 per cent were to continue over the next decade, the population will increase to around 36,000. While official population forecasts vary somewhat, it seems likely that in reality, growth will be higher than this. A number of new housing and other developments, the continued expansion of Perth's southern corridor, and efforts to revitalise the central area are all likely to stimulate growth. Perhaps a more important question than *how many* people might live in Fremantle is the question of *who* will live in Fremantle. One of the traps often made in discussing the future of cities and regions is the simplistic focus on, or pursuit of growth, rather than planning for, and developing, a particular and desired demographic structure.

The evidence presented in this brief Bulletin suggests that Fremantle is currently moving towards an older population that will remain relatively diverse in cultural and ethnic terms. It is also a highly mobile population, with more than half of the residents either leaving or arriving over a five-year period. This population churn, and the decision-making processes of migrants, can contribute to considerable opportunity to both grow and reshape demographic structures, but at the same time poses risks for Fremantle. Careful planning is needed across a range of areas, including economic development and employment, housing and development decisions, service provision, infrastructure and environmental amenity. All of these intersect with demographic change, and are important in shaping

population growth and structure. Future Bulletins in this series will begin to unpack some of these elements, and highlight how Fremantle is performing and where there are opportunities for development.

## References

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003) *Usual Residents Profile*, various SLAs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2007) *2006 Census Community Profile Series – Basic Community Profile*, various SLAs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2012a) *2011 Census of Population and Housing – Basic Community Profile*, various SLAs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2012b) *Regional Population Growth, Australia*, ABS Cat. 3218.0. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Commonwealth of Australia (2015) *2015 Intergenerational Report Australia in 2055*, ISBN 978-1-925220-41-4. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Huddleston, V. and Huddleston, P. (2013) *The Profile and Spatial Distribution of Perth's Overseas-Born Population*, FACTBase Bulletin No. 30, The University of Western Australia and Committee for Perth, Perth.
- Huddleston, V. and Tonts, M. (2007) *A Scenario Analysis of the Social Impact of the Western Rock Lobster Industry Management Options on Fleet Hosting Communities*, FRDC Final Report. Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra.



## About FACTBase

FACTBase is a collaborative research project between the Committee for Perth and The University of Western Australia to benchmark the liveability of Perth and its global connectedness through an examination of Perth's economic, social, demographic and political character.

The FACTBase team of academics and researchers condense a plethora of existing information and databases on the major themes, map what is happening in Perth in pictures as well as words, and examine how Perth compares with, and connects to, other cities around the world.

## Copyright

This paper is copyright of The University of Western Australia and the Committee for Perth. While we encourage its use, it should be referenced as:

Huddleston, V. (2015) *Changes and Trends in Fremantle's Demographic Structure: An Overview*, FACTBase Fremantle Bulletin 1, The University of Western Australia and the Committee for Perth, Perth.

## Acknowledgments

The author acknowledges the comments provided by Dr Paul Maginn and Dr Matthew Tonts in the finalisation of this Bulletin and the assistance of Mei Ruu Kok, Graduate Research Assistant – GIS Analyst of the School of Primary, Aboriginal and Rural Health Care, The University of Western Australia, in preparing the maps used in this Bulletin.

## About the author



Veronica Huddleston is an Associate Professor of human geography at The University of Western Australia's School of Earth and Environment. With an extensive international development assistance experience in Asia and Australia, her research and project interests include macroeconomic and strategic policy and planning, restructuring and adjustment of resource-dependent communities, and social dimensions of development projects.



Future Freo is a project of the Committee for Perth and funded by the following organisations:

