

Preface

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Australia experienced increased prosperity, albeit punctuated by the global financial crisis. This decade also saw the introduction or enhancement of progressive social policies, including paid parental leave and family benefits. However, housing and education became more expensive, income inequality increased and job security deteriorated.

Against this background, there has been rapid and fascinating change in patterns of family formation. As a consequence, demographic research, sociological theory and population projections have dated quickly. In this decade, new partnering and fertility patterns have emerged, some of which are common to other developed nations. (Indeed, Australian trends have the potential to illuminate many of the most pressing issues in international research on family formation.) This book provides a timely empirical overview of family formation trends, using up-to-date sources.

Each contribution contained in this volume investigates a different and topical aspect of family formation in Australia. Some chapters interrogate data from the most recent (2011) Australian Census of Population and Housing. Others take advantage of the fact that more than ten waves of data are now available from the large-scale longitudinal survey, Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA), enabling analysis of change over the full decade. The methodology employed across chapters is diverse and is mostly quantitative, with qualitative insights providing depth on key issues. Findings are described with reference to contemporary theories of family change.

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