

NOTE ON THE DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF AUSTRALIAN POLICE FORCES AND PRISON SERVICES

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This research note presents the results of a cross-tabulation analysis of 1971 Census data on the composition of Australian police forces and prison services by sex, age, country of birth, educational qualifications and religion. One frequently hears confident assertions being made that a certain Department of Corrective Services is run by "poms"; that certain police forces have been more progressive than others in employing large numbers of university graduates or females; that one force is controlled by the Masons, another by Catholics; and the like. With the publication of the following tables, it is to be hoped that in future such assertions might be made by reference to some data.

Police Forces

Table 1 shows that at the time of the 1971 Census all police forces were at least 97 percent male. South Australia was the State with the highest percentage of female police officers (2.9%).

All police forces have very similar age distributions, with the exceptions that the South Australian and ACT forces have notably higher proportions of young officers (Table 2).

From Table 3 it is clear that the three eastern States (Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria) have the lowest proportions of police officers born outside of Australia. This is because the remaining States and Territories employ substantially higher numbers of British born policemen. If we add the Australian and British categories together we find that all forces are between 94 and 98% Anglo-Saxon. No force is remarkable in employing more non-Anglo-Saxon migrants than others. Data are not available on how many aborigines are employed as policemen, but one does not strike many of them on the street.

There are no great differences among forces in the educational qualifications held by officers (Table 4). New South Wales is the State with most university graduates (0.3% of the force).

Table 5 compares the composition of police forces by religion. Because there are considerable interstate differences in the religious composition of the general population, percentages of policemen in a particular denomination are compared with the percentage of the total population in that denomination for the State concerned. Queensland has clearly the most Catholic police force (36.1%), an interesting situation in a State where 17 of the 18 cabinet ministers are

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Protestant. South Australia has the lowest proportion of Catholic policemen (17.8%), but it must be kept in mind that only 20.6% of the general population of South Australia is Catholic.

South Australia also has a strikingly higher proportion of officers in the "Other Christian" category (16%) — a category dominated by more fundamentalist Protestant groups such as Baptists. Again, however, this is merely a reflection of the fact that there are more "Other Christians" in the general South Australian population (18.5%). There are notable overrepresentations of the Church of England in the ACT (40.7%) and New South Wales (44.3%) forces. These differences are minor compared to the more fundamental reality that Australian police forces are by and large quite representative of the religious composition of the populations from which they are drawn. If Catholic-Mason struggles to control police forces loomed large in the past, those struggles are not evident in the religious composition of Australian police forces today.

Prison Officers

As with the police forces, prisons services are overwhelmingly and consistently male (Table 6). Interstate differences in the age structure of prisons services are also minimal (Table 7). While South Australia tended to have the youngest of the eight police forces, the average age of its correctional staff was older than in any other State or Territory, with only one of the 245 South Australian prison officers being under 25.

Prison officers were very different from police officers in country of birth (Table 8). In every State at least 30% of the prison officers were born outside of Australia. In South Australia only 35.9% of prison officers were Australian born. Table 8 shows very clearly the inordinate numbers of British migrants who are attracted into Australian Corrective Services Departments, from a minimum of 21.9% of the service in New South Wales to a maximum of 57.1% in South Australia. In all States, however, non-British migrants comprise only small proportions of the prisons service personnel.

A comparison of educational qualifications of prison officers produces no remarkable differences between States (Table 9). Only two of the States, New South Wales (0.5%) and Western Australia (0.4%) had any university graduates among its prison officers.

With respect to religious denomination, prison officers were typical of the general populations of their States (Table 10). Minor exceptions were a slight underrepresentation of Catholics in Queensland and South Australia, and an overrepresentation of Catholics in Tasmania.

Conclusion

Women and people with tertiary educational qualifications are grossly underrepresented in Australian police forces and prisons services. In police forces Australian born males are overrepresented, while among prison officers it is British migrants who are in numbers out of proportion to their numbers in the general population.

With respect to religion both police and prison officers have denominational affiliations which are by and large typical of the communities from which they are drawn. There is no evidence to support the existence of either Catholic or

Masonic monolithic empires. The demographic similarities among the eight police forces and the seven prisons services are far more striking than the differences.

Since 1971 this picture is bound to have changed in some ways. Given staff cutbacks at the Australian Bureau of Statistics, it will be a long time, if ever, before comparable data can be accessed from the 1976 census.

TABLE 1
Sex of Australian Police Officers

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT
	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n
	7252	4864	3068	2321	1532	722	472	282
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Males	7146	4761	3033	2253	1493	709	466	276
	98.5	97.9	98.9	97.1	97.5	98.2	98.7	97.9
Females	106	103	35	68	39	13	6	6
	1.5	2.1	1.1	2.9	2.5	1.8	1.3	2.1

TABLE 2
Age of Australian Police Officers

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT
	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n
	7252	4864	3068	2321	1532	722	472	282
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
15-19	303	411	145	360	155	66	1	0
	4.2	8.4	4.7	15.5	2.8	9.1	0.2	0
20-24	1362	807	411	551	304	114	105	35
	18.8	16.6	13.4	23.7	19.8	15.8	22.2	12.4
25-29	1511	737	531	403	295	108	174	100
	20.8	15.2	17.3	17.4	19.3	15.0	36.9	35.5
30-34	1061	622	419	240	245	139	77	72
	14.6	12.8	13.7	10.3	16.0	19.3	16.3	25.5
35-39	842	702	355	223	194	117	44	40
	11.6	14.4	11.6	9.6	12.7	16.2	9.3	14.2
40-44	785	651	457	193	169	64	33	12
	10.8	13.4	14.9	8.3	11.0	8.9	7.0	4.3
45-49	615	441	345	160	127	39	20	8
	8.5	9.1	11.2	6.9	8.3	5.4	4.2	2.8
50-54	443	282	223	137	86	31	11	8
	6.1	5.8	7.3	5.9	5.6	4.3	2.3	2.8
55-59	312	169	178	46	59	26	6	7
	4.3	3.5	5.8	2.0	3.9	3.6	1.3	2.5
60-64	15	39	2	8	4	18	1	0
	0.2	0.8	0.1	0.3	0.3	2.5	0.2	0
65-69	2	3	1	0	4	0	0	0
	0	0.1	0	0	0.3	0	0	0
70+	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0

TABLE 3
Country of Birth of Australian Police Officers

Country of Birth	NSW		VIC		QLD		SA		WA		TAS		ACT		NT	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Australia	6661	91.9	4200	86.3	2862	93.3	1958	84.4	1245	81.3	571	79.1	373	79.0	215	76.2
UK and Eire	383	5.3	509	10.5	147	4.8	281	12.1	193	12.6	129	17.9	78	16.5	55	19.5
NW Europe	97	1.3	88	1.8	28	0.9	46	2.0	37	2.4	13	1.8	11	2.3	5	1.8
Italy	8	0.1	10	0.2	3	0.1	3	0.1	5	0.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Greece	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mediterranean	14	0.2	4	0.1	4	0.1	3	0.1	1	0.1	1	0.1	0	0	0	0
Poland	9	0.1	2	0	2	0.1	2	0.1	1	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yugoslavia	5	0.1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Communist Europe	20	0.3	8	0.2	2	0.1	7	0.3	2	0.1	1	0.1	1	0.2	0	0
Other	53	0.7	41	0.8	21	0.7	21	0.9	45	2.9	6	0.8	9	1.9	6	2.1

TABLE 4
Educational Qualifications of Australian Police Officers

Educational Qualifications	NSW		VIC		QLD		SA		WA		TAS		ACT		NT	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No qualification	5788	79.8	4078	83.8	2627	85.6	2070	89.1	1183	77.2	627	86.8	335	71.0	216	76.6
Trade	1178	16.2	671	13.8	363	11.8	182	7.8	287	18.7	80	11.1	82	17.4	45	16.0
Technician	168	2.3	67	1.4	46	1.5	35	1.5	36	2.3	10	1.4	38	8.1	16	5.7
Non-degree tertiary	28	0.4	12	0.2	15	0.5	15	0.6	11	0.7	2	0.3	4	0.8	0	0
Bach degree Post-grad Dip	20	0.3	2	0	4	0.1	1	0	2	0.1	1	0.1	0	0	0	0
Higher degree	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not classified by level	69	1.0	33	0.7	13	0.4	18	0.8	13	0.8	2	0.3	13	2.8	5	1.8

TABLE 5
Religion of Australian Police Officers and Religion of Total State Populations

	NSW		VIC		QLD		SA		WA		TAS		ACT		NT	
	Police n	Total popn %	Police n	Total popn %	Police n	Total popn %	Police n	Total popn %	Police n	Total popn %	Police n	Total popn %	Police n	Total popn %	Police n	Total popn %
	7252	26.7	4884	24.4	3068	25.6	2321	20.6	1532	26.0	722	19.8	472	32.2	282	21.4
Catholic	1935	26.7	1187	24.4	1108	36.1	413	17.8	350	22.8	131	18.1	112	23.7	63	22.3
Meth and Presb	1223	16.9	1174	24.1	610	19.9	608	26.2	252	16.4	107	14.8	92	19.5	35	12.4
Church of England	3212	44.3	1552	31.9	843	27.5	647	27.9	644	42.0	340	47.1	192	40.7	95	33.7
Other	307	4.2	468	9.6	236	7.7	372	16.0	117	7.6	64	8.9	33	7.0	29	10.3
Christian	290	4.0	315	6.5	102	3.3	161	6.9	100	6.5	43	6.0	23	4.9	46	16.3
Other	285	3.9	168	3.5	169	5.5	120	5.2	69	4.5	37	5.1	20	4.2	14	5.0
Not Stated		5.8		6.1		6.9		5.9		6.0		6.2		6.1		30.0

TABLE 6
Sex of Australian Prison Officers

	NSW		VIC		QLD		SA		WA		TAS		NT	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Males	736	91.1	369	97.6	269	96.4	229	93.5	246	91.8	65	91.5	45	88.2
Females	72	8.9	9	2.4	10	3.6	16	6.5	22	8.2	6	8.5	6	11.8

TABLE 7
Age of Australian Prison Officers

Age	NSW		VIC		QLD		SA		WA		TAS		NT	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
15-19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.4	0	0
20-24	71	8.8	9	2.4	16	5.7	1	0.4	21	7.8	2	2.8	1	2.0
25-29	119	14.7	35	9.3	25	9.0	13	5.3	29	10.8	1	1.4	8	15.7
30-34	118	14.6	42	11.1	44	15.8	23	9.4	42	15.7	13	18.3	13	25.5
35-39	139	17.2	62	16.4	49	17.6	34	13.9	52	19.4	6	8.5	4	7.8
40-44	157	19.4	90	23.8	61	21.9	44	18.0	46	17.2	12	16.9	12	23.5
45-49	106	13.1	66	17.5	43	15.4	61	24.9	33	12.3	15	21.1	10	19.6
50-54	60	7.4	41	10.8	17	6.1	39	15.9	24	9.0	8	11.3	3	5.9
55-59	36	4.5	20	5.3	13	4.7	21	8.6	10	3.7	9	12.7	0	0
60-64	2	0.2	13	3.4	11	3.9	8	3.3	8	3.0	4	5.6	0	0
65-69	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.4	3	1.1	0	0	0	0

TABLE 8
Country of Birth of Australian Prison Officers

Country of Birth	NSW		VIC		QLD		SA		WA		TAS		NT	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Australia	566	70.0	219	57.9	155	55.6	88	35.9	140	52.2	49	69.0	26	51.0
UK and Eire	177	21.9	125	33.1	105	37.6	140	57.1	104	38.8	16	22.5	17	33.3
NW Europe	23	2.8	12	3.2	9	3.2	4	1.6	5	1.9	3	4.2	3	5.9
Italy	1	0.1	1	0.3	1	0.4	2	0.8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mediterranean	3	0.4	3	0.8	0	0	0	0	1	0.4	0	0	0	0
Poland	3	0.4	0	0	0	0	4	1.6	1	0.4	0	0	1	2.0
Yugoslavia	2	0.2	1	0.3	0	0	0	0	1	0.4	0	0	1	2.0
Communist Europe	8	1.0	5	1.3	2	0.7	0	0	1	0.4	1	1.4	1	2.0
Other	25	3.1	12	3.2	7	2.5	5	2.0	15	5.6	2	2.8	2	3.9

