

13 Ageing of people with a disability

This chapter examines the impact of population ageing on changes in the age structure of the population with a disability, in particular with severe or profound core activity restrictions. The data used in this chapter are the same as those used in Chapter 12, and include the four ABS disability surveys.

Comparative analyses of data from the four surveys showed that the trend in ageing of people with a disability has three main features:

- a general increase in the proportion of people aged 65 years and over among people with a disability for the 17-year period (1981–1998);
- a recent increase (between 1993–1998) in the proportion of people with a disability aged under 65 years; and
- ageing of the older population with a disability.

These features are associated with several important demographic trends and their impacts on disability prevalence, as discussed in the literature review and the previous chapter. The demographic trends include the ageing of the aged population itself, the rapid pace of ageing of the working-age population, and the passage of some significant age cohorts. The following sections will discuss these features in detail.

13.1 Increase in the proportion of people aged 65 years and over among people with a disability

In line with the ageing of the general population, people with a disability are also ageing. During the 17-year period 1981–1998, the general trend indicated that among all people with a disability or all people with specific restrictions, there was an increase in the proportion of people aged 65 years and over and a decline in the proportion aged under 65 years. Of total people with a disability, the proportion of those aged 65 years and over increased from 30.6% in 1981 to 35.4% in 1998. During the same period, among all people with specific restrictions the proportion of people aged 65 years and over increased from 34.4% to 37.0% (Tables 13.1 and A12.1).

For all people with severe or profound core activity restriction, there was a general increase in the proportion of those aged 65 years and over from 47.1% in 1981 to 50.6% in 1993. However, between 1993 and 1998 this proportion declined from 50.6% to 46.6% (Tables 13.1 and A12.1). This was largely due to a marked increase in the number of people with a severe or profound core activity restriction aged under 65 years between 1993 and 1998 (Table A12.1; Figure 13.1) (detailed discussion about this increase is presented in later sections).

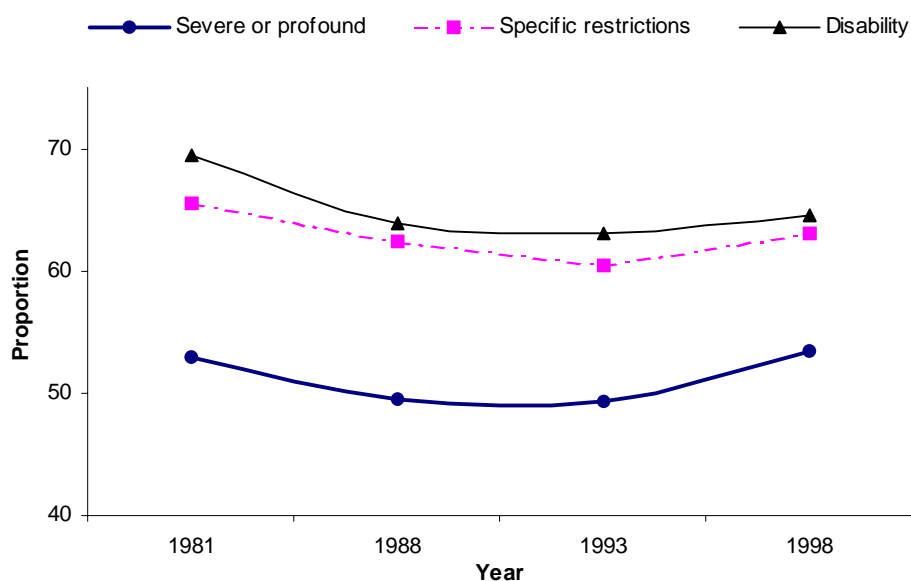
Table 13.1: Age and sex composition of people with a disability (%), Australia, 1981, 1988, 1993 and 1998^(a)

| Age/sex | Severe or profound core activity restriction ^(b) | | | | Specific restrictions ^(b) | | | | Total with a disability | | | |
|-----------------|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 1981 | 1988 | 1993 | 1998 | 1981 | 1988 | 1993 | 1998 | 1981 | 1988 | 1993 | 1998 |
| Males | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 15 | 13.6 | 13.3 | 13.0 | 15.8 | 9.8 | 8.8 | 8.3 | 10.0 | 11.9 | 10.1 | 9.7 | 10.7 |
| 15–64 | 52.1 | 47.5 | 48.6 | 49.0 | 64.0 | 59.8 | 58.0 | 58.6 | 63.4 | 59.1 | 57.9 | 58.5 |
| 65+ | 34.4 | 39.2 | 38.4 | 35.2 | 26.2 | 31.4 | 33.6 | 31.3 | 24.6 | 30.8 | 32.4 | 30.8 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| <i>Under 65</i> | <i>65.6</i> | <i>60.8</i> | <i>61.6</i> | <i>64.8</i> | <i>73.8</i> | <i>68.6</i> | <i>66.4</i> | <i>68.7</i> | <i>75.4</i> | <i>69.2</i> | <i>67.6</i> | <i>69.2</i> |
| Females | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 15 | 5.7 | 6.1 | 5.8 | 5.7 | 5.5 | 5.8 | 4.9 | 5.3 | 8.2 | 7.3 | 6.8 | 6.3 |
| 15–64 | 38.3 | 36.1 | 35.0 | 38.8 | 52.0 | 50.6 | 49.5 | 51.8 | 54.9 | 50.9 | 51.2 | 53.1 |
| 65+ | 56.0 | 57.8 | 59.2 | 55.4 | 42.6 | 43.6 | 45.6 | 42.9 | 36.9 | 41.8 | 42.1 | 40.6 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| <i>Under 65</i> | <i>44.0</i> | <i>42.2</i> | <i>40.8</i> | <i>44.6</i> | <i>57.4</i> | <i>56.4</i> | <i>54.4</i> | <i>57.1</i> | <i>63.1</i> | <i>58.2</i> | <i>57.9</i> | <i>59.4</i> |
| Persons | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 15 | 9.0 | 8.9 | 8.8 | 10.1 | 7.6 | 7.2 | 6.7 | 7.7 | 10.1 | 8.7 | 8.3 | 8.6 |
| 15–64 | 44.0 | 40.6 | 40.6 | 43.3 | 57.9 | 55.2 | 53.8 | 55.3 | 59.3 | 55.1 | 54.7 | 56.0 |
| 65+ | 47.1 | 50.5 | 50.6 | 46.6 | 34.4 | 37.6 | 39.6 | 37.0 | 30.6 | 36.2 | 37.0 | 35.4 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| <i>Under 65</i> | <i>52.9</i> | <i>49.5</i> | <i>49.4</i> | <i>53.4</i> | <i>65.6</i> | <i>62.4</i> | <i>60.4</i> | <i>63.0</i> | <i>69.4</i> | <i>63.8</i> | <i>63.0</i> | <i>64.6</i> |

(a) Disability data were re-derived using criteria common to the four surveys.

(b) Only people aged 5 years and over are included.

Source: Tables 13.3, 13.4 and 13.5; AIHW analysis of the ABS 1998 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers unpublished data tables.



Source: Table 13.1.

Figure 13.1: Proportion of people with a disability aged under 65 years, Australia, 1981–1998

13.2 Ageing of aged people with a disability

In the population with a disability aged 65 or more, large increases occurred in the proportion of people aged 75 or over between 1981 and 1998. The proportion increased from 45% to 53% for people with a disability and from 66% to 73% for people with a severe or profound core activity restriction (Table 13.2). These increases were associated with high growth rates in the population aged 70 and over, and particularly in the population aged 75 and over (Chapter 2).

Severity of disability is strongly related to age for people aged 65 and over. In 1998, about 73% of people with a severe or profound core activity restriction were aged 75 or over, compared with 53% for all people with a disability (Table 13.2).

For females with a disability, and with severe or profound core activity restrictions, there were substantially higher proportions aged 65-plus than for males, though these sex differences declined over the 17-year period (Table 13.1). This might be due to the fact that, while the life expectancies of both males and females are increasing, the rate of increase in recent years has been faster for males (McDonald 1997).

Table 13.2: People with a disability aged 65 years and over: proportion in selected age groups, by sex, Australia, 1981–1998^(a)

| | 1981 | 1988 | 1993 | 1998 |
|---|-------|-------|---------|---------|
| Severe or profound core activity restriction | | | | |
| Male | | | | |
| Total 70+ (%) | 76.2 | 76.4 | 81.5 | 83.8 |
| Total 75+ (%) | 55.2 | 53.0 | 61.4 | 65.2 |
| Total number 65+ ('000) | 64.4 | 92.3 | 105.2 | 147.4 |
| Females | | | | |
| Total 70+ (%) | 85.9 | 87.7 | 88.2 | 90.4 |
| Total 75+ (%) | 70.0 | 72.2 | 70.6 | 76.4 |
| Total number 65+ ('000) | 148.8 | 211.0 | 232.4 | 297.4 |
| Persons | | | | |
| Total 70+ (%) | 83.0 | 84.3 | 86.1 | 88.2 |
| Total 75+ (%) | 65.5 | 66.4 | 67.7 | 72.7 |
| Total number 65+ ('000) | 213.2 | 303.3 | 337.6 | 444.8 |
| Specific restrictions | | | | |
| Male | | | | |
| Total 70+ (%) | 68.5 | 68.0 | 73.7 | 76.8 |
| Total 75+ (%) | 40.7 | 41.6 | 45.6 | 50.5 |
| Total number 65+ ('000) | 170.4 | 324.0 | 382.9 | 447.3 |
| Females | | | | |
| Total 70+ (%) | 78.4 | 79.7 | 81.4 | 83.8 |
| Total 75+ (%) | 57.4 | 57.4 | 57.9 | 63.1 |
| Total number 65+ ('000) | 278.9 | 458.6 | 510.3 | 587.2 |
| Persons | | | | |
| Total 70+ (%) | 74.7 | 74.8 | 78.1 | 80.8 |
| Total 75+ (%) | 51.1 | 50.9 | 52.6 | 57.7 |
| Total number 65+ ('000) | 449.3 | 782.5 | 893.1 | 1,034.5 |
| Total with disability | | | | |
| Male | | | | |
| Total 70+ (%) | 65.4 | 65.7 | 70.7 | 73.5 |
| Total 75+ (%) | 37.0 | 38.7 | 41.6 | 45.9 |
| Total number 65+ ('000) | 246.5 | 399.2 | 494.8 | 569.2 |
| Females | | | | |
| Total 70+ (%) | 74.5 | 77.5 | 78.7 | 81.3 |
| Total 75+ (%) | 51.3 | 54.0 | 53.7 | 59.2 |
| Total number 65+ ('000) | 347.5 | 521.2 | 586.1 | 671.0 |
| Persons | | | | |
| Total 70+ (%) | 70.7 | 72.4 | 75.0 | 77.7 |
| Total 75+ (%) | 45.3 | 47.4 | 48.2 | 53.1 |
| Total number 65+ ('000) | 594.1 | 920.4 | 1,081.0 | 1,240.2 |

(a) Disability data were re-derived using criteria common to the four surveys.

Source: AIHW analysis of the ABS 1998 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers unpublished data tables.

13.3 Recent increase in the proportions of people with a disability aged under 65 years

In contrast to the trends in the period 1981–1993, between 1993 and 1998 the proportion of people with a disability aged under 65 years increased by 1.6 percentage points for all disability, 2.6 percentage points for all specific restrictions and 4.0 percentage points for severe or profound core activity restrictions (Figure 13.1 and Table 13.1). This is mainly attributable to the large increase (54.8%) in the number of people aged under 65 with a severe or profound core activity restriction over the 5-year period (Table 13.3).

A closer examination of the age and sex patterns found that the increases occurred mainly in the age group of 45–54 years for both males and females, and among males aged 5–14 years (Tables 13.3, 13.4 and 13.5). The number of males aged 5–14 years with a severe or profound core activity restriction as a proportion of all males aged under 65 with a severe or profound core activity restriction increased from 21.2% to 24.4% between 1993 and 1998 (Table 13.3).

The significant increases in the proportion of people with a disability in the age range 45–54 years reflect the bulge of the baby-boom generation who are now entering age groups associated with high risk of disability (Table 13.6). Between 1981 and 1998 the population growth rates for people aged between 35 and 54 years ranged from 48% to 76%, with a peak in the age group 40–49 (Chapter 12: Table 12.3).

The decline in the proportion of people with a disability aged 55–64 years between 1981 and 1998 was associated with low growth rates of the working-age population aged 50–54 and 55–59 during the 1980s, reflecting the passage of people born in the low-fertility years of the 1930s (Table 13.5; Chapter 2: Tables 2.2 and 2.3).

Table 13.3: People with a severe or profound core activity restriction aged under 65 years^(a), age and sex composition (%), Australia, 1981, 1988, 1993 and 1998^(b)

| Age/sex | 1981 | 1988 | 1993 | 1998 |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Males | | | | |
| 5-14 | 20.7 | 21.9 | 21.2 | 24.4 |
| 15-24 | 8.9 | 8.8 | 10.1 | 8.9 |
| 25-34 | 12.5 | 12.3 | 13.4 | 11.3 |
| 35-44 | 12.7 | 17.0 | 17.7 | 12.6 |
| 45-54 | 18.2 | 16.8 | 17.2 | 20.4 |
| 55-59 | 14.1 | 10.2 | 11.2 | 12.8 |
| 60-64 | 13.0 | 13.1 | 9.2 | 9.7 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Total 35-64 | 57.9 | 57.0 | 55.3 | 55.5 |
| Total 45-64 | 45.3 | 40.1 | 37.6 | 42.9 |
| Total 55-64 | 27.1 | 23.3 | 20.4 | 22.5 |
| <i>Total number under 65 ('000)</i> | <i>123.0</i> | <i>143.2</i> | <i>169.1</i> | <i>270.9</i> |
| Females | | | | |
| 5-14 | 13.0 | 14.5 | 14.2 | 12.9 |
| 15-24 | 10.6 | 9.6 | 11.7 | 8.6 |
| 25-34 | 11.3 | 14.0 | 14.7 | 11.3 |
| 35-44 | 16.0 | 20.2 | 18.2 | 19.3 |
| 45-54 | 20.7 | 18.1 | 20.6 | 24.5 |
| 55-59 | 13.9 | 10.9 | 11.0 | 11.9 |
| 60-64 | 14.5 | 12.7 | 9.6 | 11.6 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Total 35-64 | 65.1 | 61.9 | 59.4 | 67.2 |
| Total 45-64 | 49.1 | 41.7 | 41.2 | 48.0 |
| Total 55-64 | 28.4 | 23.7 | 20.6 | 23.5 |
| <i>Total number under 65 ('000)</i> | <i>116.7</i> | <i>154.0</i> | <i>160.4</i> | <i>239.2</i> |
| Persons | | | | |
| 5-14 | 16.9 | 18.1 | 17.8 | 19.0 |
| 15-24 | 9.8 | 9.2 | 10.9 | 8.7 |
| 25-34 | 11.9 | 13.2 | 14.0 | 11.3 |
| 35-44 | 14.3 | 18.6 | 18.0 | 15.7 |
| 45-54 | 19.4 | 17.5 | 18.8 | 22.3 |
| 55-59 | 14.0 | 10.6 | 11.1 | 12.4 |
| 60-64 | 13.7 | 12.9 | 9.4 | 10.6 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Total 35-64 | 61.4 | 59.6 | 57.3 | 61.0 |
| Total 45-64 | 47.2 | 40.9 | 39.3 | 45.3 |
| Total 55-64 | 27.7 | 23.5 | 20.5 | 23.0 |
| <i>Total number under 65 ('000)</i> | <i>239.7</i> | <i>297.2</i> | <i>329.4</i> | <i>510.1</i> |

(a) Only people aged 5 years and over are included.

(b) Disability data were re-derived using criteria common to the four surveys.

Source: Tables A13.1, A13.2 and A13.3; AIHW analysis of the ABS 1998 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers unpublished data tables.

Table 13.4: People with specific restrictions aged under 65 years^(a), age and sex composition (%), Australia, 1981, 1988, 1993 and 1998^(b)

| Age/sex | 1981 | 1988 | 1993 | 1998 |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Males | | | | |
| 5-14 | 13.3 | 12.8 | 12.6 | 14.6 |
| 15-24 | 8.3 | 9.1 | 9.3 | 11.0 |
| 25-34 | 11.7 | 12.6 | 12.5 | 11.9 |
| 35-44 | 13.4 | 16.3 | 17.0 | 16.3 |
| 45-54 | 19.0 | 17.3 | 20.6 | 21.1 |
| 55-59 | 17.3 | 13.0 | 12.3 | 11.9 |
| 60-64 | 16.9 | 19.0 | 15.8 | 13.2 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Total 35-64 | 66.7 | 65.6 | 65.7 | 62.6 |
| Total 45-64 | 53.2 | 49.3 | 48.7 | 46.3 |
| Total 55-64 | 34.2 | 32.1 | 28.1 | 25.2 |
| <i>Total number under 65 ('000)</i> | <i>478.9</i> | <i>707.2</i> | <i>755.5</i> | <i>980.3</i> |
| Females | | | | |
| 5-14 | 9.5 | 10.2 | 9.1 | 9.3 |
| 15-24 | 10.7 | 9.6 | 10.5 | 9.7 |
| 25-34 | 13.7 | 13.4 | 14.3 | 12.0 |
| 35-44 | 14.6 | 19.2 | 18.9 | 19.5 |
| 45-54 | 21.8 | 20.3 | 22.2 | 24.6 |
| 55-59 | 14.8 | 11.8 | 12.8 | 13.0 |
| 60-64 | 14.9 | 15.4 | 12.3 | 11.9 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Total 35-64 | 66.1 | 66.7 | 66.1 | 69.0 |
| Total 45-64 | 51.5 | 47.5 | 47.2 | 49.5 |
| Total 55-64 | 29.7 | 27.2 | 25.1 | 24.9 |
| <i>Total number under 65 ('000)</i> | <i>376.2</i> | <i>593.4</i> | <i>609.0</i> | <i>781.6</i> |
| Persons | | | | |
| 5-14 | 11.6 | 11.6 | 11.0 | 12.2 |
| 15-24 | 9.3 | 9.3 | 9.8 | 10.4 |
| 25-34 | 12.6 | 13.0 | 13.3 | 11.9 |
| 35-44 | 14.0 | 17.6 | 17.8 | 17.7 |
| 45-54 | 20.3 | 18.6 | 21.3 | 22.7 |
| 55-59 | 16.2 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 12.4 |
| 60-64 | 16.0 | 17.4 | 14.2 | 12.6 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Total 35-64 | 66.4 | 66.1 | 65.9 | 65.4 |
| Total 45-64 | 52.5 | 48.5 | 48.1 | 47.7 |
| Total 55-64 | 32.2 | 29.8 | 26.7 | 25.0 |
| <i>Total number under 65 ('000)</i> | <i>855.0</i> | <i>1,300.6</i> | <i>1,364.6</i> | <i>1,761.9</i> |

(a) Only people aged 5 years and over are included.

(b) Disability data were re-derived using criteria common to the four surveys.

Source: Tables A13.1, A13.2 and A13.3; AIHW analysis of the ABS 1998 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers unpublished data tables.

Table 13.5: People with a disability aged under 65 years, age and sex composition (%), Australia, 1981, 1988, 1993 and 1998^(a)

| Age/sex | 1981 | 1988 | 1993 | 1998 |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Males | | | | |
| 0-4 | 3.1 | 2.8 | 2.9 | 2.4 |
| 5-14 | 12.8 | 11.9 | 11.5 | 13.0 |
| 15-24 | 9.8 | 9.8 | 9.1 | 9.7 |
| 25-34 | 13.1 | 12.8 | 13.1 | 12.0 |
| 35-44 | 14.1 | 16.5 | 17.1 | 17.1 |
| 45-54 | 18.5 | 16.6 | 20.5 | 21.5 |
| 55-59 | 14.9 | 12.1 | 11.4 | 11.9 |
| 60-64 | 13.7 | 17.4 | 14.4 | 12.3 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Total 35-64 | 61.2 | 62.7 | 63.4 | 62.8 |
| Total 45-64 | 47.1 | 46.2 | 46.3 | 45.7 |
| Total 55-64 | 28.6 | 29.5 | 25.8 | 24.2 |
| <i>Total number under 65 ('000)</i> | <i>754.2</i> | <i>896.3</i> | <i>1,032.6</i> | <i>1,280.2</i> |
| Females | | | | |
| 0-4 | 2.7 | 2.2 | 2.9 | 1.6 |
| 5-14 | 10.2 | 10.4 | 8.7 | 9.0 |
| 15-24 | 12.0 | 10.7 | 11.1 | 9.6 |
| 25-34 | 15.1 | 13.7 | 14.8 | 12.9 |
| 35-44 | 15.0 | 18.8 | 18.9 | 19.4 |
| 45-54 | 19.5 | 19.0 | 20.0 | 24.0 |
| 55-59 | 12.8 | 11.0 | 11.7 | 12.6 |
| 60-64 | 12.6 | 14.2 | 11.7 | 10.8 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Total 35-64 | 59.9 | 63.1 | 62.3 | 66.9 |
| Total 45-64 | 44.9 | 44.3 | 43.4 | 47.4 |
| Total 55-64 | 25.5 | 25.2 | 23.4 | 23.4 |
| <i>Total number under 65 ('000)</i> | <i>593.9</i> | <i>726.4</i> | <i>807.0</i> | <i>983.2</i> |
| Persons | | | | |
| 0-4 | 2.9 | 2.5 | 2.9 | 2.1 |
| 5-14 | 11.6 | 11.2 | 10.3 | 11.3 |
| 15-24 | 10.8 | 10.2 | 10.0 | 9.6 |
| 25-34 | 14.0 | 13.2 | 13.9 | 12.4 |
| 35-44 | 14.5 | 17.6 | 17.9 | 18.1 |
| 45-54 | 18.9 | 17.7 | 20.3 | 22.6 |
| 55-59 | 14.0 | 11.6 | 11.5 | 12.2 |
| 60-64 | 13.2 | 16.0 | 13.2 | 11.7 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Total 35-64 | 60.6 | 62.9 | 63.0 | 64.6 |
| Total 45-64 | 46.1 | 45.3 | 45.0 | 46.5 |
| Total 55-64 | 27.2 | 27.6 | 24.7 | 23.9 |
| <i>Total number under 65 ('000)</i> | <i>1,348.1</i> | <i>1,622.7</i> | <i>1,839.6</i> | <i>2,263.5</i> |

(a) Disability data were re-derived using criteria common to the four surveys.

Source: Tables A13.1, A13.2 and A13.3; AIHW analysis of the ABS 1998 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers unpublished data tables.

Table 13.6: Population age structure for people aged under 65 years, Australia, 1981, 1988, 1993 and 1998

| Age/sex | 1981 | 1988 | 1993 | 1998 |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Males | | | | |
| 0-4 | 8.6 | 8.5 | 8.4 | 8.0 |
| 5-14 | 19.6 | 17.1 | 16.5 | 16.2 |
| 15-24 | 19.1 | 18.3 | 17.8 | 16.5 |
| 25-34 | 17.6 | 18.1 | 17.9 | 17.4 |
| 35-44 | 13.7 | 16.5 | 16.9 | 17.3 |
| 45-54 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 13.2 | 14.9 |
| 55-59 | 5.5 | 5.1 | 4.8 | 5.3 |
| 60-64 | 4.3 | 4.9 | 4.5 | 4.4 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Total 35-64 | 35.1 | 38.0 | 39.4 | 42.0 |
| Total 45-64 | 21.4 | 21.5 | 22.5 | 24.6 |
| Total 55-64 | 9.8 | 10.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| <i>Total number under 65 ('000)</i> | <i>6,727.9</i> | <i>7,363.4</i> | <i>7,898.0</i> | <i>8,289.1</i> |
| Females | | | | |
| 0-4 | 8.4 | 8.3 | 8.2 | 7.7 |
| 5-14 | 19.1 | 16.6 | 16.1 | 15.8 |
| 15-24 | 19.1 | 18.4 | 17.5 | 16.1 |
| 25-34 | 18.1 | 18.7 | 18.4 | 17.8 |
| 35-44 | 13.5 | 16.6 | 17.3 | 17.8 |
| 45-54 | 11.3 | 11.2 | 13.0 | 14.9 |
| 55-59 | 5.7 | 5.0 | 4.9 | 5.3 |
| 60-64 | 4.8 | 5.1 | 4.7 | 4.5 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Total 35-64 | 35.2 | 38.0 | 39.8 | 42.6 |
| Total 45-64 | 21.7 | 21.4 | 22.5 | 24.7 |
| Total 55-64 | 10.4 | 10.2 | 9.5 | 9.8 |
| <i>Total number under 65 ('000)</i> | <i>6,539.2</i> | <i>7,194.2</i> | <i>7,682.3</i> | <i>8,100.3</i> |
| Persons | | | | |
| 0-4 | 8.5 | 8.4 | 8.3 | 7.8 |
| 5-14 | 19.4 | 16.8 | 16.3 | 16.0 |
| 15-24 | 19.1 | 18.4 | 17.7 | 16.3 |
| 25-34 | 17.9 | 18.4 | 18.1 | 17.6 |
| 35-44 | 13.6 | 16.5 | 17.1 | 17.6 |
| 45-54 | 11.4 | 11.4 | 13.1 | 14.9 |
| 55-59 | 5.6 | 5.1 | 4.8 | 5.3 |
| 60-64 | 4.6 | 5.0 | 4.6 | 4.5 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Total 35-64 | 35.2 | 38.0 | 39.6 | 42.3 |
| Total 45-64 | 21.5 | 21.4 | 22.5 | 24.7 |
| Total 55-64 | 10.1 | 10.1 | 9.4 | 9.8 |
| <i>Total number under 65 ('000)</i> | <i>13,267.2</i> | <i>14,557.6</i> | <i>15,580.3</i> | <i>16,389.4</i> |

Source: AIHW analysis of the ABS 1998 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers unpublished data tables.

13.4 Discussion

Comparative analyses of data from the four surveys show that, as a result of population ageing, the population with a disability has also aged over the period 1981 to 1998. This is particularly true for the population with a severe or profound core activity restriction. The ageing of people with a disability was indicated by a general increase in the proportion of people with a disability aged 65 years and over and the ageing of the older population with a disability.

The more recent (1993–1998) increase in the proportion of people with a disability aged under 65 years, in particular the increase in the proportion with a severe or profound core activity restriction, should not be seen as a reversal of the general ageing trend among people with a disability. Further investigation is needed to understand the recent increase between 1993 and 1998. Three main trends need attention in terms of their implications for disability service planning and understanding the recent increase in severe or profound core activity restrictions among people aged under 65 years.

First, the marked increase in the prevalence of disability among males aged 5–14 merits further investigation. Between 1981 and 1998, age-standardised rates of severe or profound core activity restrictions for males aged 5–14 years increased by 2.9 percentage points. Most of this increase (2.2 percentage points) occurred between 1993 and 1998. This increase is more than two times the average increase for males aged 15–64 years in the period 1993–1998 (Chapter 12.2: Table 12.1). A major concern is whether this trend reflects an increase in the underlying prevalence of early onset disability. If so, what are the implications for disability prevention and early intervention? Further study is needed to investigate whether the increase might be a result of increased labelling and recognition of particular disabilities in young males—for example, specific learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder and autism (AIHW 1999a). Another possible explanation is increased survival rates for babies and children with a disability, due to improved medical technologies (Chapter 7).

Second, it seems there may be an increase in the number of older working-age people with a severe or profound core activity restriction. Among people reporting a severe or profound core activity restriction the number of people aged 45–54 increased significantly between 1981 and 1998 (Table 13.3). During the next decade, the progressive upward movement of the baby-boom generation in the population age pyramid could potentially continue to increase the number of people with a severe or profound core activity restrictions in the 55 to 64 year age group. Between 1997 and 2006, the population aged 50–64 years is projected to increase at a markedly higher rate than the population aged 65 years and over (Chapter 2).

Third, the ageing of older people with a severe or profound core activity restrictions could be very significant from the second decade of this century because of the size of the baby-boom generation moving into older age groups. The growth of the population aged 65 years and over is projected to reach record rates (to increase by 36.2%) between 2011 and 2021 (Table 2.3). Between 1997 and 2051 the number of people aged 75 years and over is projected to increase by around 3.5 times, and 5.3 times for people aged 85 and over (Table A2.3).