

Australia suffering 'man drought'

Australia's coastal regions have been hit by man shortages

An analysis of new census figures has shown that Australia is suffering from an unprecedented "man drought".

The statistics have revealed that there are almost 100,000 more females than males in Australia.

The problem is worse in the coastal cities, where women have moved seeking better jobs and lifestyles, while many men have gone overseas.

Thirty years ago Australia was flush with men thanks to immigration policies that favoured males.

That position has been reversed because thousands of Australian men in their 20s and early 30s have gone overseas either to travel or to work.

It has caused a gender imbalance that is having far-reaching implications.

Town and country

Major cities in Australia now have concentrated

groups of unattached women, along with dwindling numbers of the opposite sex.

Demographer Bernard Salt says the exodus of young men to foreign countries is leaving its mark.

"If you go into the United Arab Emirates census you'll find there is around 12,000 Australians living in Dubai, mostly male, mostly in the 25 to 34-year age group.

"Here is an example of one country that has drawn out a specific age demographic out of Australia which has contributed to the 'man drought'."

But the situation outside of the larger towns and cities is very different.

Vast numbers of women have abandoned the countryside seeking better jobs or education in metropolitan areas. They have left behind communities overloaded with younger males.

In the town of Glenden in the northern state of Queensland there is one single female for every 23 men.



Demographers have compiled a so-called "Love Map" that shows how the various clusters of unattached men and women are distributed across the Australian continent.

By Phil Mercer
BBC News, Sydney

Chocolate to help blood vessels

There's more good news for chocolate lovers. Scientists have found that eating dark chocolate appears to improve the function of important cells lining the wall of blood vessels for at least three hours.

The study, involving 17 healthy young volunteers who agreed to eat a bar of dark chocolate and then get an ultrasound, found that eating dark chocolate seemed to make the blood vessels more flexible, which helps prevent the hardening of the arteries that leads to heart attacks.

But experts cautioned that the weight gain from eating a lot of chocolate probably would cancel out the apparent benefit. Dark chocolate is rich in flavonoids, which act as natural antioxidants - chemicals that combat the damage oxygen does to the body. However, that does not mean that chocolate binges will ward off a heart attack, experts warn.

Cacao, the plant that chocolate



comes from, has for centuries been used for everything from medicine to currency. Although enjoyed worldwide, until recently it was considered a treat that provided fat and calories but no substantial nutritional value.

Studies recently have indicated that it releases the happy chemical serotonin in the brain.

However, during the last few years, studies have suggested - much to the delight of chocoholics - that it is rich in flavonoids.

The latest study, conducted by cardiologists at Athens Medical School in Greece, set out to test whether choco-

late affected the functioning of the so-called endothelial cells in the walls of the blood vessels, which are believed to be affected by oxygen damage and are considered a mirror of the overall health of the cardiovascular system.

The scientists, who presented their work Sunday at Europe's most important cardiology conference, gave 3.5 ounces of either dark, bittersweet, chocolate or fake chocolate to 17 healthy volunteers. On another day, the volunteers were switched. They had no chocolate outside of the study, and investigators did not know what each volunteer ate during the study.

An ultrasound was taken of each volunteer's upper arm to see the functioning of the endothelial cells in the main artery. The cells accomplish their goal of controlling the stiffness of the blood vessel by secreting several active substances that regulate the flexibility of the vessel and influence clot formation.

"During the chocolate session, endothelial function was improved, whereas during the placebo day there were no such changes," the study concluded. "The favorable effects of dark chocolate lasted for three hours at least." By improving the blood vessel flexibility in apparently healthy people, dark chocolate emerges as perhaps a power food, the scientists said.

"At this time, we do not know whether regular intake of dark chocolate or other cocoa beverages could result in a reduction of total cardiovascular problems or death, the study said. Dr. Michael Gibson, associate chief of cardiology at Harvard University-linked Beth Israel Hospital in Boston, said the chocolate study was "interesting."

"There are a few basic science reasons why this might be good, but keep in mind that antioxidants also improved forearm blood flow but that didn't necessarily pan out as an effective treatment," said Gibson, who was not associated with the study.

Most heart attacks easily predictable: study: Virtually the entire risk of heart attack can be predicted and the impact of factors causing attacks is the same whether you live in a rich country or a poor one, a global study released Sunday showed. Results of the study of more than 29,000 people in 52 countries, released at a meeting of the European Cardiology Society, showed that two factors alone -- an abnormal ratio of bad to good cholesterol and smoking -- were responsible for two-thirds of the global risk of heart attack.

Other risk factors were high blood pressure, diabetes, abdominal obesity, stress, a lack of daily consumption of fruits and vegetables, and lack of daily exercise.

Long live the Mediterranean Diet!

However, the Mediterranean not only contributed to humanity in terms of history. The word "Mediterranean" is now closely associated with a popular and effective diet. The Mediterranean diet is a nutritional concept which is founded on the principle that the consumption of olive oil and wine will lower the risk of heart disease and obesity. There are many variations of Mediterranean diet due to social, political and economic differences between Mediterranean countries. However, the Mediterranean diet does share one common characteristic, it is the large consumption of olive oil, which dominates all Mediterranean meals.

In contrast to the standard American diet, the diet of the Mediterranean people includes primarily fresh, seasonal vegetables rather than canned or imported produce. The diet contains low to moderate amounts of dairy products, fish and poultry, very little red meat, eggs, wine, and beer.

The diet contains a fairly high amount of fat, yet the people have less heart disease because they eat healthy fats like olive oil. The fish tend to be oily fish like sardines that are high in Omega-3 oils. The diet eliminates fried foods that have been cooked in rancid vegetable oils or trans fats.

People who tried the classic Mediterranean diet rich in vegetables, fruits, olive oil, cereals and fish are said to live

longer and are healthier. But a study in Greece has shown that it is the diet as a whole, rather than any specific individual component, that confers health benefits.

Researchers from the University of Athens and the Harvard School of Public Health recorded the eating habits of 22,000 Greek people, and followed their subsequent health and mortality for an average upholstery steam cleaners years. It shows that people who ate a diet rich in typical Mediterranean ingredients were less likely to die, suffer coronary heart disease, or cancer during the follow-up period.

Such results of low incidents of heart disease and death rates in the Mediterranean countries has resulted from other countries to look for help from their Mediterranean upholstery cleaner with their diet. However, before anyone should try a Mediterranean diet, more studies are needed to find out whether the diet itself or other lifestyle factors account for the lower deaths and heart diseases.

If these studies prove that the Mediterranean diet is an effective way of reducing heart disease then it will have significant effect for the health community. It also goes to show that the Mediterranean never stopped giving us reasons to rejoice and be in this civilization.