Information Paper

Population Data – sources and uses

Introduction

Estimated Resident Populations, Population Projections and ABS Census counts, what are they, where do they come from, why are they all different and which ones do you use when?

Abbreviations

ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics
AHS – Area Health Service
CD – Collector District, smallest unit of geographic classification by ABS, building block for SLAs, LGAs and larger statistical areas.
ERP – Estimated resident population
LGA – Local Government Area
SLA – Statistical local area, generally one or two of these make up an LGA

ABS Census of Population and Housing

Census Counts – Place of Usual Residence
The Census count for Place of Usual Residence is a count of every person in Australia on Census Night, based on the area in which they usually live. Each person is required to state his/her address of usual residence on the census form. Where sufficient information is provided, this enables the area in which they usually reside to be identified and coded. Census counts compiled on this basis minimise seasonal factors such as the school holidays and snow season, and provide information about the usual residents of an area.

From the Census we gain community profiles for small areas with characteristics of families and working populations. Information includes age, sex, education levels, employment, housing, income, family characteristics, ethnicity, transport, internet usage, voluntary work and home-based work. Some characteristics in turn are used to define Socio-economic indexes to show areas of disadvantage.

Uses:
The Census is the major source of population characteristics beyond age and sex aggregations. It can be used to define target populations, highlight areas of socioeconomic disadvantage, and generally give a picture of the population in any given geographic area.

Notes:
These figures are not official population estimates; they are based on those people in Australia on Census night who gave sufficient address details to code their place of usual residence (see ERP below). Always acknowledge the source of the data i.e. the 2011 ABS Census, and note that this is the “usual resident” profile as on Census night August 2011. The “total” numbers for the area will not match the ERP for that area, and the ERP should be used as the official population estimate. Census data is available by LGA, SLA and larger aggregations of these. It is not released by Local Health District. Local Health District data must be compiled using
constituent geographic areas. In general this aggregation is done manually by Population Health as data are released.

**Sources:**
ABS 2011 Census – see www.abs.gov.au

**Estimated Resident Population (ERP)**

The ERP is based on Census of Population and Housing usual residence counts. It is compiled as at 30 June of each census year and updated quarterly between censuses. These intercensal estimates of the resident population are revised each time a population census is conducted.

In compiling 30 June ERP for a census year, three important factors are taken into account:

1. Census net underenumeration (or undercount). The level of underenumeration is derived from the Census Post Enumeration Survey which is conducted soon after the Census, and from estimates based on demographic analysis.
2. Australian residents who are temporarily overseas on Census Night and are therefore not covered by the Australian Census. The number of such people is obtained from statistics on overseas arrivals and departures.
3. The Census does not fall on 30 June. For example, the 2006 Census was held on 8 August. Back-dating of population estimates from 8 August to 30 June is accomplished using data from birth and death registrations, overseas arrivals and departures, and estimates of interstate migration, for the period 1 July to 8 August.

**Uses:**
These figures should be used as the official population estimates for LGA and AHS

**Notes:**
ERPs will first be released as total population for the LGA, and later releases include age by sex estimations. ERPs are not released by NSW Area Health Service, these must be compiled locally. In general this aggregation is done manually by Population Health as data are released.

**Sources:**
ABS Catalogue 3218 – Regional Population Growth
ABS Catalogue 1368.1 – NSW Regional Statistics

**Population Projections**

Population projections use the ERPs for the previous year to predict population figures for future years. This is done by the NSW Department of Planning, and its predecessors, who have produced population projections to assist the NSW Government for more than 30 years.

Population projections are a view of future populations based on historical trends, current settlements patterns, and demographic modelling techniques. It is highly likely that Government
responses to issues raised by these projections, as well as other unforeseen societal changes, may result in a future population that is different in size, composition or distribution to the projections presented.

The populations of all SLAs in NSW are projected for 25 years from 2011 to 2035 and are disaggregated by age and sex. The projections are based on SLA boundaries. In some cases these boundaries differ quite considerably to those of previous releases and so caution is advised when comparing population projections across different releases.

These projections replace previous releases. The data has been prepared in collaboration with the NSW Department of Planning and is titled - NSW Health Population Projection Series 1, 2009. This 2009, Series 1 release is mandated for NSW Health planning purposes and will differ to population projections for NSW which will be available from the NSW Department of Planning website. A technical paper (Technical paper – NSW Health Population Projection Series 1, 2009 June 2009, Amended version) detailing the methods used to compile these projections is available from the NSW Health webpage (http://www0.health.nsw.gov.au/reports/population_projections.asp).

**Uses:**
Use projections to give a possible scenario of the future population in an area, based on current trends and historical data. Also look at changing age profile.

**Notes:**
Don’t use projections as an estimated resident population. Source the latest ERPs for the area of interest for an official population estimate. Figures in the population projection workbooks are unrounded to facilitate further analysis. However accuracy to the single person is not claimed and should not be assumed. It is recommended that projected populations be rounded when quoting or discussing the projections in text. Totals and other derived values have been calculated from unrounded data and rounded separately. Any discrepancies between components and totals are due to rounding.

**Sources:**

**References**
This information was compiled from text available on the ABS web-site and notes supplied by the NSW Department of Planning with the latest population projections.

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