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Census update

Collection of the 2006 Population Census has just been completed. A feature of this years census was the availability of an eCensus completion and return option for the first time. The national result for the use of the e Census was just under 10%.

The ABS continues to make population census data more accessible and affordable. Underpinning this, a number of ABS web based initiatives have taken place over the last twelve months, including "free on the web" data, and a major web site redesign which included a redesign of the product pages. As a result, the [Census data](#) page presents a more simplified format for data access.

Searching and data accessibility has been improved by redefining terms and concepts. Additional features have also been added to data tables to provide detail around census statistics. For example, there are links to meta-data descriptions, an image of the question as it appears on the census form and links to statements describing data quality.

The ABS Census program is developing a suite of "static" and "dynamic" products that cater for the different skills and experience of users, and has just released a schedule of data and system release dates. The release schedule is outlined in the panel to the right.

Further information

A series of information sessions are planned across Australia in late 2006 to better inform you about the new Census products and services. For a list of dates and venues please visit the [ABS website](#).

Census 2006 release schedule.

System release

Stage 1 – QuickStats, Census Tables & Community Profiles - August 2006

Available now for 2001 census Data.

Stage 2 – QuickMaps - November 2006. Will provide access to thematic maps of census data.

Stage 3 – CDATA On-line – April 2007

A row and column based table product that allows the user to interact with geography, tailor output tables to specific requirements, chart data and to thematically map data.

Stage 4 – Table Builder – June 2007. An

advanced table product available via a charged subscription service. This product provides unconfidentialised data, through the Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL which allows the definition of powerful table controls to be applied.

Data Release

Population estimates of Australia, States and Territories for 31 December 2006 using 2006 Census results - 5 June 2006.

First Release of Usual Residence Data – June 2007. Second Release – October 2007

Further information

For an update on release dates please check the [ABS website](#)

Be automatically informed

You can subscribe to NSS News by sending an e-mail to inquiries@nss.gov.au requesting your name be added to the mailing list. Alternatively, you can access the newsletter directly on the NSS web site. We hope you enjoy reading NSS News and look forward to receiving your feedback

The newsletter and web site is produced and maintained and by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

For more information please contact Geoff de Baux on 02 9268 4327 or email geoffrey.debaux@abs.gov.au

Children and Youth portal to be released on the NDN

Work is underway to establish a Children and Youth portal on the National Data Network (NDN) to showcase the functionality of the network, using a selection of data sources and key time series indicators. The portal will demonstrate the benefits of using the NDN, particularly for the development of government policy.

The demonstration portal will be released in November 2006. It is expected to evolve over time, as the range of data sources and web services available through the network expand.



The development of the Children & Youth portal will involve the US Census Bureau product, **DataFerrett** (more information is available from <http://www.thedataweb.org>)

Data Ferrett provides a set of analytical tools for users and can be used for micro, aggregate, time series and longitudinal data. The power of Data Ferrett is its ability to build spreadsheets, graphs (including time series graphs), and maps. Results are made available through the 'Hot Reports' function, which integrates data from a number of sources into the one report. For examples, please see http://www.bls.census.gov/led/hotreport_examples.html.

Further updates on the progress of this work will be published as available.

Agencies can register their interest to participate in this demonstration, or provide comments on the portal by contacting Lorraine Cornehlis via email at Lorraine.Cornehlis@abs.gov.au or by phone on (02) 6252 6079.

Integrating the National Statistical Service and the Statistical Clearing House web sites

The NSS website now houses the full range of information services offered under the National Statistical Service (NSS) banner; including the Statistical Clearing House (SCH), and provides a direct link to the National Data Network (NDN) web site.

The integration of the web sites brings together the identity of all NSS initiatives and highlights their role in achieving the purpose of the NSS. Central to this purpose is the provision of an improved range of statistical information for policy, research and decision making; the web site plays an integral role in the communication and sharing of information about this initiative.

Another aspect of the NSS purpose is in developing the capacity to enhance the scope and quality of statistical activity across all government agencies. The SCH plays a particularly strong role with respect to this. Apart from reviewing government conducted business surveys, the SCH plays a vital role in educating the statistical community about survey best practice and the principles of dissemination. See page 5 of this edition for more information about the SCH seminar series.

In integrating the websites, some changes have been made to the NSS site. The layout of the home page has been redesigned, a key feature being direct links to the SCH home page and the NDN web site. A topics page has been added which contains links to subject specific NSS material including forums, networks and statistical resources.

New tools and information have been added to the Statistical References page, including a sample size calculator, and survey design materials. Frequent SCH web site visitors may recall these tools being available on the old SCH web site.

The SCH website pages have taken on the color shades of the NSS, but essentially the content remains the same. You can visit the SCH or the NDN now, through the NSS website at <http://www.nss.gov.au/>

2006 Census Time Capsule

Many Australians took the opportunity to take part in the 2006 Census Time Capsule by electing to have their Census information, along with their name and address, kept securely by the National Archives for a closed period of 99 years.

Personally-identified Census information is only kept for those people who explicitly consent to having it retained. The information is secured in a time capsule and will not be made available to anyone until the year 2105, creating an amazing resource for family historians and researchers who will want to know who lived in Australia in 2006, how we lived and where we came from.

When asked for the first time in 2001, over 52 per cent of Australians gave consent to have their name-identified information made private and confidential for 99 years and then released in 2100.

All Australians can make a valuable contribution to preserving Australia's history for future generations and give future researchers, genealogists and historians a complete picture of our nation as we are in 2006.

For more information visit the ABS website at <http://www.abs.gov.au>

Community Indicator Developments in the Spotlight:

Over 100 people attended an International workshop on Community Indicators hosted by the ABS on 5 and 6 September, 2006 in Melbourne. The workshop was very successful in highlighting demand for community indicators to measure community health, wellbeing and sustainability. It also provided a valuable forum to share international and Australian experiences, and to discuss the way forward in community indicator development.

The proceedings covered a broad range of knowledge and experiences, including:

- The Work of the OECD in a global project on measuring and fostering the progress of societies
- The World Forum on "Statistics, Knowledge and Policy" to be held in Istanbul in 2007
- A presentation on the Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts Program in Canada, describing the system of community accounts and wellbeing framework
- Australian experiences from the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) and Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA).
- Highlighting the human capital aspect of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Reform Agenda.
- A user perspective on community indicator projects from Professor Mike Salvaris (Victoria University) and Professor John Wiseman (University of Melbourne) examining issues with linking across indicators and the need for an integrated, strategic and sustainable system for developing community indicators.
- The development and future directions of *Measures of Australia's Progress*, an ABS initiative to develop and present national indicators.

- Special subject matter focus in areas of social capital, participation and cohesion; environment and sustainability; and crime and justice.
- A panel discussion on 'Developing a Sustainable Program of Community Indicators' which provided a range of opinions and insights on current and future community indicator developments. Some of the issues raised concerned balancing the objectives of a shared framework and community level relevance, and ways to improve coordination of efforts in this field

Those in attendance, included representatives from Australian, state and local government agencies, and academia. International guests represented the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (OECD), the Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada, and Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency, Canada.



From left to right: Professor Bruce Muirhead (University of Queensland), Professor Mike Salvaris (Victoria University), Jon Hall (OECD), Professor David Adams (Dept for Victorian Communities), Professor Doug May (Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada), Denis Farrell (ABS), Susan Linacre (ABS), Vince Lazzaro (ABS), and Alton Hollett (Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency, Canada)

Population Well-being Data Gaps Workshop.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Australian Treasury and the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) collaborated in hosting a facilitated workshop on 8 June 2006. The workshop brought together senior experts from government, academia and the not for profit sector to discuss population well-being data gaps, including improving priority setting and facilitating whole of government approaches across this field of statistics.

The aims of the workshop were to:

- . identify those information gaps and data shortcomings considered to be of highest priority;
- . consider mechanisms for satisfying the gaps; and to
- . suggest strategies and ongoing processes to drive forward an effective body of statistical information on population well-being over the next 5-10 years.

The Workshop Agenda, papers and a full report can be accessed from the NSS website at: <http://www.nss.gov.au>

New South Wales Regional Statistics (First issue) - due out December 2006

Previously available only as a consultancy service, the ABS will soon be releasing New South Wales Regional Statistics (cat. no. 1368.1), a web-based product providing regional statistics from a wide range of sources.

This product provides users with a snapshot of economic and social conditions in their local region and is a useful source of data for Local Government, students, business and community organisations.

2005 data will be provided for all Local Government Areas (LGA's) in NSW. The data will be presented in excel format, providing flexibility for data manipulation. The product will contain tables for a range of topics including, population, social characteristics, families, health, education, labour force, income, economy, crime, transport and housing. Detailed explanatory notes, geographic area comparisons and thematic maps will also be included.

To ensure that users have access to the most recent data available the product will be updated regularly throughout the year.



Access & further information:

Access this publication at on the ABS web site at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/>

And for further information contact Allan McLean on (02) 9268 4795 or

allan.mclean@abs.gov.au

CensusAtSchool Leads The Way

CensusAtSchool is an internet based data collection and analysis project modelled on the Census process where students respond to questions of interest about themselves by completing the CensusAtSchool online questionnaire. It is a non compulsory learning activity aimed at improving statistical literacy and promoting the Census among students in years 5 to 12.

The response to the CensusAtSchool questionnaire was excellent with 2,337 or 24.3% of schools from across Australia participating in the project. This equated to more than 112,000 students completing the CensusAtSchool questionnaire.

The high response from Australian students provides a sound platform for the future with a significant increase expected in the number of students involved next time the collection is conducted. This response compares very favourably to CensusAtSchool in other countries.

Questionnaire response data has now been released back to teachers and students as random samples, providing real, relevant data that students can directly relate to for use across the curriculum in all states and territories. The Random Sampler opened on 11 July 2006 enabling students to obtain random samples (up to a sample size of 200) from the CensusAtSchool database. To date over 35,000 random samples have been downloaded.

A limiting factor in studying statistics in schools has been the lack of access to relevant raw data. Students now have access to a large database of real and relevant data about themselves and their peers from across Australia, as well as the infrastructure and support services to analyse this data.

As well as promoting statistical literacy and the Census, widespread use of the data will enhance the profile of the ABS in the schools sector and encourage more use of ABS statistics in the classroom.

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Melbourne Hosts International Conference for CensusAtSchool

An international conference of countries conducting the CensusAtSchool project is planned to be held in Melbourne in March 2007.

It is hoped that one of the outcomes of the conference will be an international standard set of questions leading to Australian schools having access to both local and international CensusAtSchool data for analysis and comparison purposes in future collections.

Visit the CensusAtSchool web page to find out more.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/cashome>



Web Forms Seminar 2006

On the 8 September 2006 form consultancy experts Kettie Hewett and Rob Burnside presented a seminar on the topic of web forms. The seminar covered the experience of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and other agencies in the use of web data collection.

Research on this topic shows there are many statistical agencies that have had considerable experience using electronic data collection, particularly web data collection. There is also a growing body of literature pertaining to the advantages and disadvantages of using web forms to collect information from businesses. By examining this mode of data collection the ABS is making a timely and valuable contribution to the ABS's already extensive knowledge base.

Web form data collection is an investment that pays off in the future, so is less than ideal for one-off collections. Using a web form will eliminate mailing and form handling costs and reduce processing costs, however, the set-up costs are high. This is due to the cost of developing the on-line application and ensuring an appropriately sophisticated level of security. For these reasons, the biggest cost savings will be achieved for repeating surveys.

Web forms can realise a higher rate of initial response (before due date) compared with other collection modes, giving potential for increased efficiencies through reducing time and cost of follow-up. By concentrating more resources to following up a smaller set of non-respondents, higher overall response rates can be achieved at less cost.

While there may be more resources to follow-up non-respondents, overall response rates for web forms have not been found to be higher compared with other modes. Poor coverage and technical limitations significantly affect response rates. To overcome coverage limitations, mixed modes should be offered to respondents or only respondents with a known familiarity with using the Internet should be asked to report data using a web form.

Some of the technical limitations which affect response rates include: slow modem speeds, unreliable connections, high connection costs and low-end browsers.

Drop out rates are high for web surveys. A web form that is too long, has confusing navigation, complex graphics and a poor design may lead to respondent frustration and survey abandonment. Not surprisingly, a high number of contacts, personalised contacts and pre-approach contacts lead to higher response rates.

Inappropriate edit checks are another source of survey abandonment. Soft edits alert the respondent to an error, but allows them to continue on with the form whereas hard edits prevent the respondent from continuing in the form until the appropriate correction has been made. Edits should be used sparingly and tested to ensure they do not disrupt the respondent experience. For example, edit checks after every page leads to higher survey abandonment rates than edits at the end of an on-line form. However, using edit checks at the time of data collection has the potential to greatly increase data quality, which is one of the key advantages to web data collection.

There are some limitations to using the web to collect information from businesses. Coverage inaccuracies, technical limitations, expense, low response rates and security are just a few of the issues currently tainting web data collection. The high rate of response associated with web surveys is probably one of its most appealing aspects, suggesting that internet data collection should be considered as part of a multi-mode strategy. That being said, web data collection remains an exciting, new and potentially more efficient data collection methodology.

Please join us for the next SCH seminar on 'Confidentiality' which will be presented by representatives from the ABS Data Access and Confidentiality Methodology Unit. This seminar is scheduled for 10 November 2006.

For more information please contact Kettie Hewett on (02) 6252 7295.
Email: kettie.hewett@abs.gov.au

Statistical Clearing House seminar series

The next seminar will be held on Friday 10 November 2006. The topic is Confidentiality- How to make your data available while preserving confidentiality'. It will cover:

- What is confidentiality?
- When does data need to be confidentialised?
- The impact of confidentiality on your data
- Methods of confidentialising tabular data
- A demonstration of software for tabular confidentiality

Please note that this seminar is an introduction to confidentiality and methods of confidentialising data. It is aimed at those who are conducting or planning surveys of businesses, and people with responsibilities for making data available to users.

Attendance is FREE.

For more information or to reserve a place for this seminar, please contact Kettie Hewett on **02 6252 5701** or email kettie.hewett@abs.gov.au.