About the data

This report, presenting analysis of the ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing, refers to the following Census-based topics:

Severe disability

The Census identified people who reported a need for assistance with at least one of the core activities of daily living—mobility, self-care and communication. The Census topic *core activity need for assistance* is conceptually similar to the item *profound or severe core activity limitation* reported in the SDAC and other disability collections. It is regarded as an approximation of the most severe end of the disability spectrum. For simplicity, *core activity need for assistance* is referred to as *severe disability* throughout this bulletin.

This bulletin compares severe disability rates between local areas; it does not attempt to provide precise estimates of the number of people with disability or those who may need disability services. Because the *core activity need for assistance* topic in the Census is based on a small number of self-reported items, prevalence estimates will be less accurate than those derived from the SDAC. However, the Census data are highly suitable for comparing areas.

Disability rates are related to both age and sex (AIHW 2005: Figure 5.3). All else being equal, a population with a high proportion of older people would have more people with disability than a population with a younger age structure. The Census data for each area have been standardised to account for the effect of the age and sex distribution within each area, so that differences between areas reflect differences in the 'underlying rate' of severe disability.

Not all people who completed the 2006 Census answered the questions relating to disability. To ensure consistency between areas, individuals who did not respond were excluded from the calculations of disability rates.

Statistical Local Area (SLA)

SLAs are one of the smallest units of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ABS 2006), generally based on the administrative areas of local governments. SLAs cover the whole of Australia without gaps or overlap. Because of their relationship to local government areas, the number of SLAs in a city and the average number of people in an SLA differs from state to state.

Some SLAs are also whole Local Government Areas (LGAs). These SLAs adopt the LGA name followed by a suffix indicating the LGA status: City (C), Area (A), Shire (S), Municipality (M), or Town (T). Full SLA names are shown in Appendix Table A5 (available online at <www.aihw.gov.au/publications>); however, for simplicity, the suffixes have not been included on map labels in the body of this report.

SLAs aggregate to Statistical Subdivisions, which in turn aggregate to Statistical Divisions (SDs). Each capital city comprises a single SD. SD boundaries are designed to be stable, so the capital city boundaries have been defined to contain the anticipated development of the city over the next 20 years.

Relative advantage and disadvantage

Socioeconomic disadvantage is a complex concept that incorporates people's access to resources and their ability to participate in the economic and social aspects of society. The ABS has used the 2006 Census data to develop four indexes relating to different aspects of socioeconomic conditions in geographic areas (ABS 2008a). This report uses the Index of Economic Resources to compare the relative disadvantage experienced by people living in different SLAs. This index comprises a range of variables related to the financial aspects of disadvantage, including the percentage of residents with high or low incomes, the proportion of owner-occupied dwellings, and the number of business owners. Some of the variables, such as those relating to lone-parent families and overcrowded housing, have clear social as well as financial aspects. For a full list of variables included in the Index of Economic Resources, see Table A4.

In this report, SLAs have been ranked according to their score on the Index of Economic Resources, then divided into five equal groups called 'quintiles'. The lowest ranking quintile contains SLAs with a relatively high incidence of disadvantage as well as a relatively low incidence of advantage. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the highest ranking quintile contains SLAs with relatively less disadvantage and relatively more advantage. For simplicity, these quintiles will be referred to as 'the relatively most disadvantaged' and 'the relatively most advantaged', respectively.

Two other indexes produced by the ABS, the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage and the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage, provide a more general indication of the average socioeconomic status of people living in an SLA. However, as both of these indexes include the disability variable in their construction, they are not appropriate tools to determine whether disability has a social gradient.

It is important to note that the Index of Economic Resources represents the average of all people living in an area, not the individual situation of each person in the area. Therefore the association between the percentage of people with severe disability in an SLA and the relative economic resources of the SLA shown in this bulletin does not prove that all people with severe disability necessarily have access to few economic resources—although many may. In addition, the index does not take into account the environment or community resources such as public transport or services located in a local area.

A small number of SLAs have not been assigned a score on the Index of Economic Resources due to low populations or high non-response rates. These SLAs, and any other SLAs where fewer than 500 people aged 0–64 years responded to the Census disability questions, have been excluded from the analysis.

For details of the analysis methodology, refer to the Technical Notes on page 22.

The geography of disability and economic disadvantage in Australian capital cities