



Regional Profiles and the Analysis of Regional Characteristics

Regional Statistics Program, Australian Bureau of Statistics

Claire Conroy, Mark Nowosilskyj and Geoff Colton

Introduction

The increased focus by Federal and State Governments on regional and rural issues over the past five years has engendered a demand for more information on the state of country Australia. In response to this need for more data, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) conducted extensive user needs analyses in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia in 1996, the outcome of which was the establishment of Regional Statistics Units (RSUs) in each of its State and Territory Offices in 1997 to help address identified information gaps. The RSUs' primary role has been to develop regional indicators at sub-state levels using both ABS data and as many administrative (non-ABS) data sources as possible, as well as to service the needs of local users of regional statistics. The main dissemination vehicles for the indicators produced to date are annual compendium publications and regional profiles.

Regional Profiles

Regional profiles were specifically developed by the Regional Statistics Units to meet users' needs for a simple and easily understood vehicle that brought together key economic and social information on a given region. The profiles are designed around the three elements that were consistently requested during user consultations:-

time series data - to identify trends and enable assessment of a region's performance over time

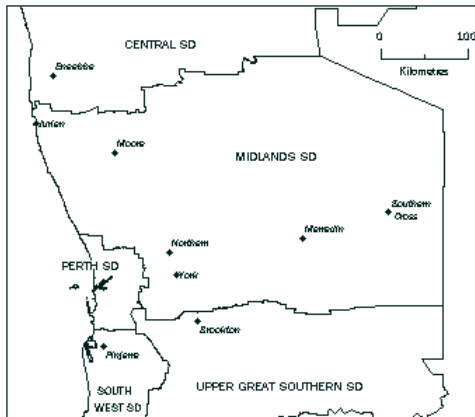
area comparison data - to enable comparisons with other regions

data currency - annual and up-to-date indicators where possible to be used.

Regional profiles utilise non-ABS data (administrative data) as well as ABS data. Profiles generally can be produced for ABS standard geographic areas - Local Government Areas, Statistical Local Areas, Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Divisions and are now available for South Australia, Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. However, the content and levels of geography on which profiles may be available differ from State to State.

For the purpose of this article, the Western Australian regional profile covering the Midlands Statistical Division (see Figure 1) has been chosen as the area of study to provide a succinct example of the range of data presented in regional profiles and how these data can be utilised in putting together a base picture of a region. Only a few illustrative variables are shown - demographic, labour force, income and some economic indicators.

Figure 1. Midlands Statistical Division



Demographic Data

The demographic data presented in the profiles is sourced from the ABS population census, intercensal population estimates, population projections, births and various administrative data sources. Selected population characteristics can be compared over the five year interval of the last two censuses, while estimates of the resident population, illustrated in Table 1, are updated annually.

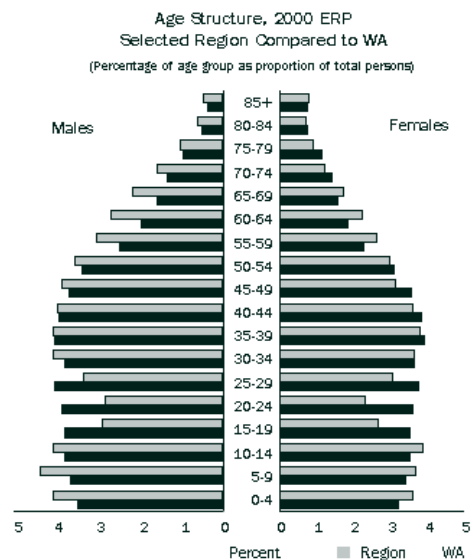
Table 1. Estimated Resident Population by Age Structure, 2000

Age group	Males no.	Females no.	Persons %
0-4	2139	1922	7.7
5-9	2306	1965	8.1
10-14	2146	2074	8.0
15-19	1529	1422	5.6
20-24	1500	1271	5.2
25-29	1751	1646	6.4
30-34	2140	1951	7.7
35-39	2152	2044	7.9
40-44	2090	1939	7.6
45-49	2024	1677	7.0
50-54	1870	1605	6.6
55-59	1619	1404	5.7
60-64	1429	1222	5.0
65-69	1153	957	4.0
70-74	843	685	2.9
75-79	550	521	2.0
80-84	327	402	1.4
85+	254	457	1.3
Total	27822	25164	100.0

Source: Estimated Resident Population, ABS

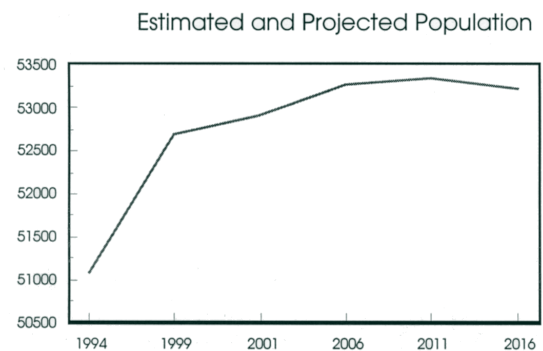
Estimated resident population is typically presented in an age pyramid (Figure 2), enabling a comparison of the selected region's age structure with that of the relevant state, in this case Western Australia.

Figure 2. Age Structure, 2000 ERP Selected Region Compared to WA



Also included in the profile is a breakdown of the components of population change (ie births, deaths and natural increase), and projections of the population to 2016 (Figure 3). This enables analysis of the factors contributing to past population growth, and of a likely scenario for future growth.

Figure 3. Estimated and Projected Population



Labour Force Data

Key non-ABS indicators included in the profiles are quarterly estimates of unemployment for the latest two years (Table 2). These are sourced from small area labour markets data produced by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business (DEWSB).

Table 2. Labour Market, 1998/1999 and 1999/2000

	1998/99	1999/00
Number of unemployed		
June quarter	1351	1055
September quarter	1181	885
December quarter	1000	805
March quarter	1027	1173
Unemployment rate (%)		
June quarter	5.4	4.2
September quarter	4.5	3.5
December quarter	3.6	3.1
March quarter	4.2	4.7
Labour force		
June quarter	25048	24899
September quarter	26147	25310
December quarter	27897	26051
March quarter	24740	25153

Source: Small Area Labour Markets, Dept of Employment, Workplace Relation and Small Business (DEWRSB)

As small area estimates cannot be determined from the ABS Labour Force Survey due to the small sample size, the detailed labour force data presented in the profiles is sourced from the population census. Data from the latest two censuses are broken down by labour force status, industry, occupation, and sector of employment (Table 3).

Table 3. Employment by Occupation, 1991 and 1996

Occupation	1991 Persons	1996 Persons	% Change
Managers and Administrators	5956	5863	-1.6
Professionals	1695	2048	20.8
Associate Professionals	1238	2028	63.8
Tradespersons, etc. Workers	2607	3145	20.6
Advanced Clerical, etc. Workers	687	690	0.4
Intermediate Clerical, etc. Workers	1393	2054	47.5
Intermediate Prod'n, etc. Workers	1847	2071	12.1
Elementary Clerical, etc. Workers	1399	1120	-19.9
Labourers, etc. Workers	2308	2720	17.9
Inadequately described	189	179	-5.3
Not stated	1201	439	-63.4
Total Employed Persons	20520	22357	9.0

Source: Census of Population and Housing, ABS

Data on employment by major occupation groups, such as that presented in Table 3, enable analysis of employment growth over time, and finer breakdowns are available on request. Sector of employment data, illustrated in Table 4, can also be useful in determining the factors which are responsible for employment growth in a region. For example, taking the data presented in these two tables together, it is evident that there was strong growth in private sector employment in Midlands Statistical Division, with above average growth in a number of the major occupation groups.

Table 4. Employment by Industry Sector, 1991 and 1996

Industry Sector	1991 Persons	1996 Persons	% Change
Commonwealth Government	439	435	-0.9
State/Territory Government	3359	2922	-13.0
Local Government	727	737	1.4
Private Sector	15065	17603	16.8
CDEP	n.a.	33	n.a.
Not stated	983	616	-37.3
Total Employed Persons	20573	22346	8.6

Source: Census of Population and Housing, ABS

Income and Taxation Status

The ATO income and taxation status data presented in the profiles can assist in the estimation of gross individual taxable income for the selected region.

Table 5. Income and Taxation Status, 1997/1998 and 1998/1999

	1997/98	1998/99
No of non-taxable persons	4516	6356
No of taxable persons	20672	20250
Mean taxable income (\$)	30787	30593

Source: Australian Taxation Office

The above data (Table 5) are supplemented with weekly household income distribution data (Table 6) from the last population census, which can be compared against the distribution of the relevant state.

Table 6. Weekly Household Income, 1996 – Occupied Private Dwellings

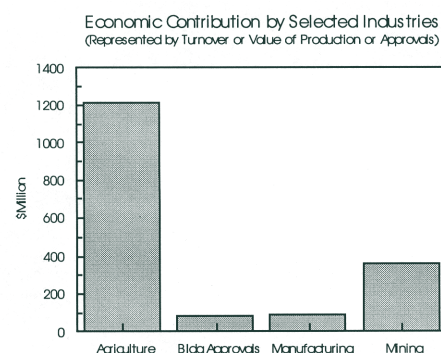
	Households	Households	West Aust
Weekly Income	no	%	%
Neg/Nil	134	1.0	0.6
\$1-\$119	60	0.5	0.4
\$120-\$299	1591	12.1	9.7
\$300-\$499	2207	16.8	15.5
\$500-\$699	2110	16.0	13.0
\$700-\$999	2102	16.0	17.5
\$1,000-\$1,499	1705	13.0	17.6
\$1,500-\$1,999	407	3.1	6.0
\$2,000 or more	468	3.6	5.3
Partial income stated	2051	15.6	12.4
Income not stated	331	2.5	1.9
Total	13166	100.0	100.0

Source: Census of Population and Housing, ABS

Economic Contribution

The profiles are an excellent vehicle for bringing together relevant economic information on a given region. An important area of interest is the contribution of various industries to the regional economy. This is addressed in the profiles by the provision of data on turnover, value of production, and value of building approvals. The time periods of these indicators vary however, depending on the latest data available and whether these are available at the smaller geographic levels.

Figure 4. Economic Contribution by Selected Industries (Represented by Turnover or Value of Production or Approvals)



Notes

Agriculture – Value of Agricultural production, 1999
 Building Approvals – Value of Building Approvals, 1999/2000
 Manufacturing – Manufacturing Turnover, 1998/1999
 Mining – Value of Minerals and Petroleum, 1998/1999

In addition to this overview, data are presented for each of the economic components. For instance, data on the value of building approvals are presented for the latest financial year, broken down by residential and non-residential building activity and sector of ownership. As Table 7 shows, public sector building activity can make a significant contribution to total building activity in regional economies.

Table 7. Value of Building Approvals (\$m), 1999/2000

	Private Sector	Public Sector	Total
New residential buildings			
New houses	48.9	3.5	52.4
Other residential buildings	0.1	2.5	2.6
Total new residential buildings	49.0	6.0	55.0
Alterations and additions to residential buildings	4.4	0.0	4.4
Non-residential buildings			
Hotels, etc	0.0	0.0	0.0
Shops	0.6	0.0	0.6
Factories	4.1	0.0	4.1
Offices	1.2	1.4	2.6
Other business premises	4.6	0.0	4.6
Educational	0.0	2.1	2.1
Religious	0.1	0.0	0.1
Health	0.1	6.4	6.5
Entertainment/recreational	0.4	1.3	1.7
Miscellaneous	1.3	1.2	2.5
Total non-residential buildings	12.4	12.4	24.8
Total Value Building Approvals	65.8	18.4	84.2

Source: Building Approvals Collection, ABS

The predominance of primary production or other industry will vary from region to region. As illustrated in the following two tables (Tables 8 and 9), in a wheatbelt region such as Midlands Statistical Division, crop production is by far the biggest contributor to the regional economy, followed by the minerals and petroleum industry.

Table 8. Value of Agricultural Production (\$m) 1997-1999

Selected Commodities	1997	1998	1999
Crops			
Cereals for grain	851.2	753.0	780.6
Vegetables	23.0	24.6	25.4
Fruit (inc. grapes)	7.8	7.3	7.7
Other crops	157.7	161.1	169.8
Total Crops	1039.9	945.9	983.6
Livestock products	136.	1 143.1	102.5
Livestock slaughterings/disposals	126.0	134.6	130.7
Total Agriculture	1302.0	1223.6	1216.9

Source: Agricultural Commodity Survey, ABS

Table 9. Value of Minerals and Petroleum, 1998/1999

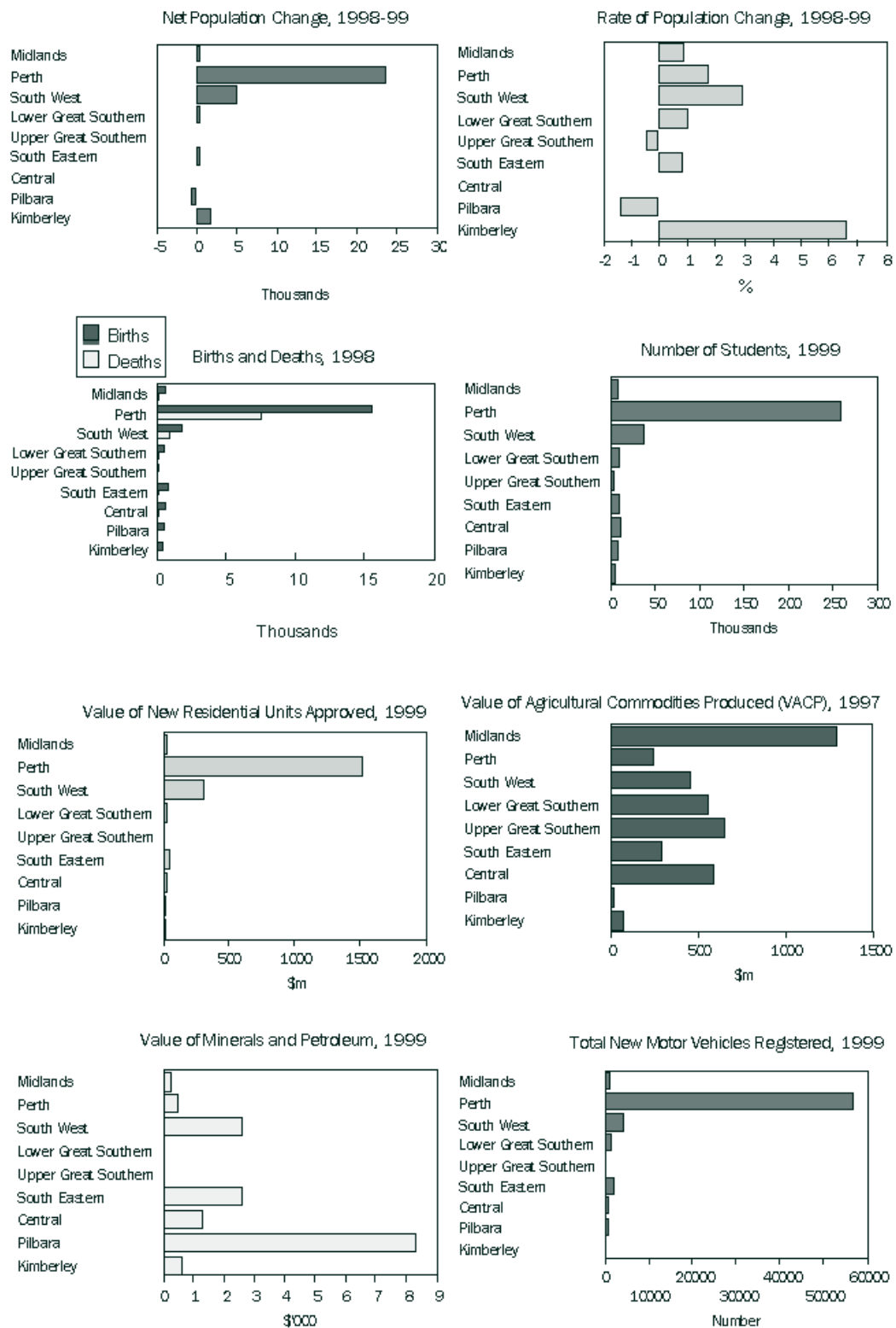
Mineral	Value (\$'000)
Base Metals	0.0
Bauxite-Alumina	0.0
Clay	88.8
Construction Materials	91.0
Dimension Stone	0.0
Gold	215513.5
Gypsum	2375.9
Heavy Mineral Sands	103133.5
Iron Ore	32174.3
Limesand-Limestone-Dolomite	679.2
Nickel Industry	0.0
Petroleum Products	0.0
Salt	4900.2
Silica and Silica Sand	900.7
Silver	0.0
Talc	0.0
Other	8.7
Total Minerals	359865.7

Source: Department of Minerals and Energy

Area Comparisons

A key feature of the regional profiles is the inclusion of an area comparison table and graphs. Clients can nominate a number of regions of their choice for comparative analysis. The graphs below (Figure 5) display demographic, social and economic indicators for the selected region, comparing these with indicators for other regions at the same or different geographic levels. In our example, indicators for Midlands Statistical Division are compared with those for the other statistical divisions in Western Australia.

Figure 5. Area Comparison Charts



Profile Summary

The indicators outlined above and others presented in the regional profiles enable users to access a range of current data in a single document which facilitates an immediate insight into the comparative strengths and weaknesses of an area. A quick assessment can be gained of the overall performance of a region's economic sectors, demographic and social trends, and the relativity of good years and poor years. A degree of benchmarking between regions is also enabled through the capacity to compare areas.

The regional profiles are continually being revised in response to user preferences. They will include more non-ABS administrative data as these become available. The aim of the Regional Statistics program over the next 18 months is to develop a core set of variables for every region in Australia.

Full sample copies of the profiles can be viewed on the ABS Website: www.abs.gov.au via the Themes -> Regional Statistics menus. Further information on the regional profiles can be obtained from Mark Nowosilskyj, email mark.now@abs.gov.au.

Other ABS Developments

To optimise this work of increasing the availability and accessibility of regional data, the ABS has established the Rural and Regional Statistics National Centre (RRSNC) based in Adelaide. The focus of the National Centre will be to produce and disseminate data that will assist policy analysts and researchers interested in studying the underlying causes of change across rural, regional and remote Australia. The aim is to provide information from a national perspective which will enable comparative analyses of regions Australia-wide, as well as within specific States. The RRSNC also has a role to coordinate aspects of the work of the Regional Statistics Units and the National Centre and RSUs will undertake collaborative projects where appropriate. For information on the work of the Regional Statistics Units and the establishment of the Rural and Regional Statistics National Centre, please contact Claire Conroy, Director RRSNC, email claire.conroy@abs.gov.au.

New Regional Website

What is New Connections?

New Connections is a website providing regional stakeholders and the general public with one-stop access to information on regional communications. Content covers commercial services, government projects, funding programs and policies, and consumer issues that relate to, or aim to benefit, regional and rural communities. Key features of the site include a powerful search facility, the ability for stakeholders to make contributions and a mapping function to assist users to identify contributions relevant to their region or state/territory. The recently published New Connections Toolkit is also featured on the website.

What is the New Connections Toolkit?

The Toolkit gives information on new telecommunications network models that have been developed, both in Australia and overseas, by communities taking the initiative and identifying solutions for their specific communications needs.

The models in the Toolkit recognise that all regions are different and there is no 'one size fits all' solution. The needs and circumstances of different communities may require different approaches and the Toolkit provides advice on the options and issues for communities to consider.

Who administers New Connections?

New Connections is being developed and administered by the Commonwealth Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. The website is an initiative of the Online Council and is its portal for regional communications information. All State and Territory governments support and participate in the New Connections initiative.

Further Information Contact:

Call the New Connections Help Line on 1800 88 34 88 or visit

http://www.telstra.com.au/zoning_review/index.htm

<http://www.newconnections.gov.au>