Indigenous populations

Symposium on New Ideas and Challenges for Demographic Research in Australia

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Key features of the Indigenous population

- The Indigenous population is relatively young...
- ...is growing at a much faster rate than the non-Indigenous population.
- ... is ageing and projected to age even faster over the next few decades.
- ... has higher rates of temporary and long-term mobility
- ... is much more likely to live in remote and very remote Australia relative to the non-Indigenous population, but primarily an urban population.
- ... and is projected to become more urban over the next few decades.
- Indigenous Australians tend to have worse socioeconomic outcomes than the non-Indigenous population wherever they live, but the difference is greatest in remote areas.
• In the ACLD, there were 14,802 individuals who identified as being Indigenous in 2006 who were linked with a 2011 Census record

• Of those linked pairs who were identified as being Indigenous in 2006:
  • 9.2 per cent (1,367 individuals) were identified as being non-Indigenous in 2011.
  • 1.1 per cent (163 individuals) were identified as not having stated their Indigenous status in 2011.

• 1,697 individuals who were identified as being non-Indigenous in 2006 but Indigenous in 2011
  • A further 226 pairs in the sample who changed from being not-stated to Indigenous.

• We cannot assume that Indigenous status is fixed.
  • Need to keep in mind that most data is on those ‘who are identified’ as being Indigenous as opposed to ‘those who identify’
  • In order to plan for the future and assess policy outcomes, need to understand the factors that influence changes in identification
  • Requires quantitative data that has a person’s Indigenous status at two points in time, *in combination with* other qualitative data
• Many of our demographic models are built around *Homo Economicus*. However, people are neither completely rational, nor completely random in their decisions.
  • People exhibit predictable biases that make it less likely that they will achieve their own stated desires
  • Can complicate the design and efficiency of public policy, but can also be used to better design policy.

• Bounded rationality and heuristics
  • We don’t make the perfect decision, but a good enough decision

• Complexity, scarcity and cognitive load
  • Poverty increases the cost of bad decisions and makes them more likely

• Risk aversion, loss aversion and the endowment effect
  • We care more about what we lose than what we gain

• Framing and construal
  • We make decisions based on how the world appears, not how it is.

• Hyperbolic discounting and the power of defaults
  • We care about the present. A lot

• Happiness and subjective wellbeing
  • Money buys happiness, but it gets more expensive.

• Identity, stereotype threat, social interaction and social norms
  • We care about how we see ourselves and how others see us

• Fairness
  • We care about how much others have, not just how much we have

• Implicit prejudice and discrimination.
  • Most of us are racist/sexist, we just don’t know it (or care to admit it).
Every time a person interacts with government, data is created. At the same time, our interaction with social media and other commercial organisations creates information that, if used properly, can inform the policy process. Improvements in storage and computing power, alongside advances in analytical techniques means that our ability to makes use of such information is greater than ever before.

**Big data** is (according to Wikipedia):
- an all-encompassing term for any collection of data sets so large and complex that it becomes difficult to process using traditional data processing applications.

**Little data** is (according to me):
- Collections that are designed, funded and administered by communities themselves …
- … can provide an alternative source of data with a much tighter focus on the needs of the Indigenous community.

For ‘big data’ to be useful for Indigenous demography, considerable thought needs to go into access, ethics, and analysis.

‘Little data’ requires ‘support for capacity building in their compilation and use of customised data as a means of promoting their full and effective participation in local governance and development planning’
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