



Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas: A tool for assessing locational disadvantage

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Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is a suite of four indexes produced from the Census, each of which summarise a number of variables associated with socio-economic disadvantage. SEIFA from the 2006 Population Census and Housing is planned for release in March 2008. The four separate indexes measure different aspects of socio-economic conditions at the Census Collection District (CD) level. Different sets of variables are used to construct each index. The variables included describe aspects of advantage and disadvantage, and cover areas such as education occupation, employment, income and some measure of wealth (such as owning a car or number of bedrooms in the dwelling). SEIFA is a relative measure and does not provide a measure of the magnitude of disadvantage. In this paper we give an overview of the method used to construct the SEIFA indexes. We outline the features of SEIFA and its application. We demonstrate the distributional properties of SEIFA and show how it can be use to describe locational disadvantage through comparison across areas and across time. In addition to discussing uses of SEIFA we will also discuss issues, limitations and some common misuses.