



Types of Population Concepts

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The concept of a 'population' can take a number of different meanings and is situation specific. For example, 'population' can include the number of people of a particular area that has lived in that area at some time in the past, has an attachment to the area, belongs to the area, was present in the area at a particular time, was a resident in the area, and was serviced in the area. Population concepts can also be referred and used on the basis of different data collection methods and measurement or estimation techniques. Keeping in view various perspectives and demands for different population counts and estimates, there are various population concepts used in defining the population at a particular time such as:

- Census population (based on the census counts)
- Estimated resident population (based on usual resident criterion)
- Legal population (based on citizenship and residency permits)
- Economic population (based on an economic concept of residence)
- Service population (based on demand and use of services)

There are several components and dimensions of each of these population concepts. The difference between all the concepts needs to be understood and made clear for the benefit of population data users. This paper examines differences between all these population concepts with a particular emphasis on the service population. The concept of service population has no standard accepted definition as yet. It is a complex concept, particularly for areas where population mobility is high. The paper discusses various issues and limitations surrounding the conceptual clarification or definition of the service population.