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AN INCREASING INDIGENOUS POPULATION?

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

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Introduction

It is well documented that Indigenous people across Australia are over-represented in the criminal justice system, and have been over-represented for some time. Over a decade ago, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) reported on the over-representation of Indigenous Australians in prison, concluding that this was an extremely complex and deep-rooted problem (RCIADIC, vol.4: 1)

In South Australia in recent years there has not been any indication of a substantial decline in the level of Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system. In 2000 for example, this group accounted for 16.3% and 11.5% of all juvenile and adult apprehensions respectively. Moreover, the extent of this over-representation increases as they move further into the system. In 2000, they accounted for 29.3%¹ and 18.7% of the average daily population in South Australian juvenile detention centres and adult prisons respectively.² The other important factor here is that it is the relatively young individuals (i.e. those under 35 years) who account for most Indigenous contact with the system. For example, in 2000, of all Indigenous persons apprehended by police 44.9% were below 25 years of age while an additional 31.7% were aged 25 to 34 years³.

Given this high level of Indigenous contact with the criminal justice system, any predicted increase in the Indigenous population has the potential to lead to increased pressures on the criminal justice system, particularly at the end point of the criminal justice system – namely correctional facilities. This is particularly so if the population increase involves those under 35 years of age.

This Information Bulletin focuses on this one issue, changing trends in the Indigenous population. It details the factors involved in the increased Indigenous count in the 1996 Census and outlines population projections as determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Summary of key findings

- The 1996 Indigenous census count for South Australia was 25% greater than the number recorded for the 1991 census. However, not all of this increase was due to demographic factors. An ABS study has found that the combined effect of births and deaths accounted for only half of the increased Indigenous count in South Australia. A further 10% of the increase could be explained by the combined effects of migration, and changes to census edits. Changes in the ‘transmission rate’ of Indigenous identity from mixed couples to their children accounted for a small proportion of the increase in the SA. Indigenous count. However, a higher level of propensity to identify as Indigenous was seen as the central factor for approximately 35% of the increased Indigenous count. That is, a substantial proportion of the increased Indigenous count was due to people changing their response to the Indigenous status question - from ‘non-Indigenous’ in the 1991 census to ‘Indigenous’ in 1996.
- ABS population projections identify increases in the Indigenous population in the two periods 1996 to 2001 and 2001 to 2006. For both periods, substantial increases are identified for the 15 to 19 year old age group. In addition, between 2001 and 2006 there is a projected increase for the 20 to 24 year old age group. However, the 25 to 29 and 30 to 34 year olds are not projected to increase in number between 2001 and 2006.
- Projections for the total South Australian population for the 20 to 34 years age group in the period from 1997 and 2006 suggest that there will be a drop in the total number of people in the 20 to 34 years age range. However, depending on the levels of migration out of the state, between 2001 and 2006 there could be an increase in the number of 20 to 24 year olds in South Australia.
- While at first glance, these results may lead one to conclude that the increase in the Indigenous population will result in greater pressure on the criminal justice system, there is not necessarily a

¹ Source: OCS, 2001b: 65.

² Source: OCS, 2001a: 189.

³ Source: OCS, 2001c: 70.

one to one relationship. Increased pressure will only result if the extent of Aboriginal contact with the criminal justice system remains at least at current levels. While this had generally been the case in the past, the confounding factor is that the projections from 1996 onwards are based on an Indigenous population, a proportion of whom had not identified as Aboriginal five years earlier. These 'new identifiers' may have a very different (i.e. lower) likelihood of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. If this is so, then the overall increase in the Indigenous population may not translate into an increase of similar magnitude in the numbers of Aboriginal persons entering the criminal justice system.

Changes in the South Australian Indigenous Population, 1991 – 1996

In South Australia the number of people identified as Indigenous in the 1996 Census was 25% greater than the number recorded for the 1991 Census. In addition, the Census recorded the Indigenous population as a very young one.

Because the 1996 Census count forms the basis for population projections in to the future, it needs to be examined in some detail. While it might be assumed that the increased Indigenous count is completely due to demographic factors (i.e. births, deaths and migration), a detailed ABS study (Ross, 1999) has found that, for Australia as a whole and South Australia in particular, the increase was far greater than can be explained by demographic factors.

Factors behind the 1991 – 1996 increase in the Indigenous census count

The following discussion presents a very brief overview of the findings of the ABS study in which there was examination of a range of factors that could impact on the census counts. As a first step data external to the Census was used to estimate the number of births and deaths that occurred in the period between the 1991 and 1996 Censuses. This was then compared with the increase in the Indigenous count between the two censuses. As Table 1 shows, for Australia as a whole, 41.65% of the 1991-1996 increase in the Indigenous count can be attributed to natural increase. However, substantial variations between states and territories were evident. At one extreme was the Northern Territory where the combination of births and deaths accounted for 79.58% of the increase, while for the ACT. only 18.87% of the increase in the Indigenous census count could be attributed to natural increase. For South Australia the figure was 49.88%.

¹ Source: OCS, 2001b: 65.

¹ Source: OCS, 2001a: 189.

¹ Source: OCS, 2001c: 70.

Table 1 Explainable increase in Indigenous census count due to births and deaths, 1991-96

State	Population count (a)		Increase 1991-96		Births and deaths			
	1991	1996	No.	%	Births	Deaths	Explainable increase due to births and deaths	
	No.	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	No.	% (c)
NSW	69,993	101,636	31,643	45.21	12,052	-2,366	9,686	30.61
Vic.	16,701	21,503	4,802	28.75	3,000	-520	2,480	51.65
Qld	70,072	95,374	25,302	36.11	12,171	-2,747	9,424	37.25
SA	16,227	20,421	4,194	25.85	2,666	-574	2,092	49.88
WA	41,844	50,699	8,855	21.16	7,895	-1,754	6,141	69.35
Tas.	8,912	13,929	5,017	56.29	1,468	-247	1,221	24.34
NT	39,857	46,362	6,505	16.32	6,882	-1,705	5,177	79.58
ACT	1,583	2,844	1,261	79.66	277	-39	238	18.87
Aust.(b)	265,371	352,970	87,599	33.01	46,445	-9,959	36,486	41.65

Source: Ross, 1999: 12

- (a) Place of usual residence
(b) Other territories are included in the Australia total.
(c) Percentage of the total increase in Indigenous count between the 1991 and 1996 census.

The ABS study also examined the impact of a change to the edits used during the processing of the Census data. Edits are applied to individual census responses to remove certain inconsistencies and errors. Thus, the Indigenous status variable is edited to change responses of 'Aboriginal' or 'Torres Strait Islander' to 'non-Indigenous' for persons who are unlikely to be Indigenous. These edits were based on the birthplaces of the individual and parents. For the 1991 Census there were two edits which changed responses from 'Indigenous' to 'non-Indigenous' when the relevant conditions were met. However, for the 1996 Census, only one, narrower edit was applied. Thus, there was a group of people whose stated response was left as 'Indigenous' in 1996 who would have been coded as 'non-Indigenous' using 1991 edits. For Australia, there were 6,115 people in this group, representing about 7% of the increase in the Indigenous count. Again, there was variation across the states and territories. As shown in Table 2, for South Australia this change in the edits accounted for 354 persons, or 8.4% of the increase in the state's Indigenous count. For Victoria, over one quarter (28.7%) of the increase in the Indigenous census count could be explained by the changes in the census edits.

Table 2 Explainable increase in Indigenous count due to changes in census edits , 1991 – 1996

State	Population count (a)		Increase 1991-96		Explainable increase due to changes in census edits	
	1991	1996	No	%	No(b)	%
	No	No	No	%	No(b)	%
NSW	69,993	101,636	31,643	45.21	2,266	7.16
Vic.	16,701	21,503	4,802	28.75	1,378	28.70
Qld	70,072	95,374	25,302	36.11	1,163	4.60
SA	16,227	20,421	4,194	25.85	354	8.44
WA	41,844	50,699	8,855	21.16	667	7.53
Tas.	8,912	13,929	5,017	56.29	104	2.07
NT	39,857	46,362	6,505	16.32	114	1.75
ACT	1,583	2,844	1,261	79.66	66	5.23
Aust.(c)	265,371	352,970	87,599	33.01	6,115	6.98

Source: Ross, 1999: 15

- (a) Place of usual residence.
(b) Represents people who would have been recoded to non-Indigenous using 1991 Census editing procedures, but who remained Indigenous, as stated, in the 1996 Census.
(c) Other territories are included in the Australian total.

The impact of migration was another factor studied. From the Census data itself the number of people who were additional to the last Census count due to migration from overseas was determined.⁴ In addition, for each of the states and territories, the effect of interstate migration was determined. Table 3 presents the combined impact of births, deaths, migration and the changes to the census edits. This shows that for Australia as a whole half (49.36%) of the increase in the Indigenous count was accounted for by these four factors. For South Australia, 61.1% (or 2,563 persons) of the increase in the Indigenous count could be explained. This means that approximately 40% of the SA. increase could not be explained by births, deaths, migration or the changes to the census edits. Similarly, approximately half of the increase in the Indigenous count for Australia as a whole could not be explained by these four factors.

Table 3 Explainable increase due to births, deaths, census edits and migration

State	Population count (a)		Increase 1991-96		<i>Explainable increase</i>					Total explainable	
	1991	1996	No	%	% of increase in Indigenous count explained by this factor					No	%
					Births and Deaths	Changes to edits	Overseas migration	Interstate migration			
	No	No	No	%	%	%	%	%	No	%	
NSW	69,993	101,636	31,643	45.21	30.61	7.16	0.60	-4.84	10,611	33.53	
Vic.	16,701	21,503	4,802	28.75	51.65	28.70	1.44	-10.75	3,411	71.03	
Qld	70,072	95,374	25,302	36.11	37.25	4.60	0.66	8.60	12,931	51.11	
SA	16,227	20,421	4,194	25.85	49.88	8.44	0.64	2.15	2,563	61.11	
WA	41,844	50,699	8,855	21.16	69.35	7.53	1.11	1.69	7,056	79.68	
Tas.	8,912	13,929	5,017	56.29	24.34	2.07	0.44	-5.46	1,073	21.39	
NT	39,857	46,362	6,505	16.32	79.58	1.75	0.57	-4.53	5,033	77.37	
ACT	1,583	2,844	1,261	79.66	18.87	5.23	2.38	16.18	538	42.66	
Aust(b)	265,371	352,970	87,599	33.01	41.65	6.98	0.73	0.00	43,243	49.36	

Source: Ross, 1999: 24

- (a) Place of usual residence.
(b) Includes other territories.

In exploring the factors behind the unexplained proportion of the increase in the Indigenous census count, an age cohort analysis was undertaken. For a demographically closed population there will be fewer and fewer survivors in each age cohort as the population ages. That is, if the persons who were born in a particular year were followed each census, there would be fewer people in that cohort in each successive census. However, census data for the Indigenous population do not follow the normal demographic pattern. The census counts indicate that people have entered the population by means other than birth or migration. The ABS study applied an experimental life table of the Indigenous population for Australia to the 1991 Census counts, and derived a graph of the expected change in Indigenous age cohorts across 1991-1996. This was then compared with the actual changes in age cohorts recorded in the census counts.

This comparison for Australia as a whole is plotted in Figure 1. As shown, for all age groups under 65 years the number of people counted increased rather than decreased. However, it can be seen that the largest increase in percentage points occurred for the 5-9 years and 10-14 years age groups.

⁴ It needs to be noted that data about Indigenous Australians leaving Australia for overseas in the intercensal period were not available and this may be a source of error in the data.

Figure 1 Change in Indigenous Age Cohorts, Australia: 1991-96

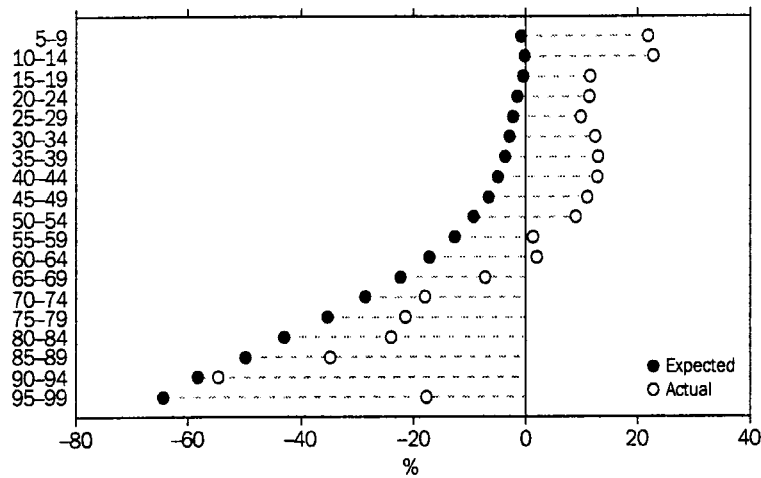
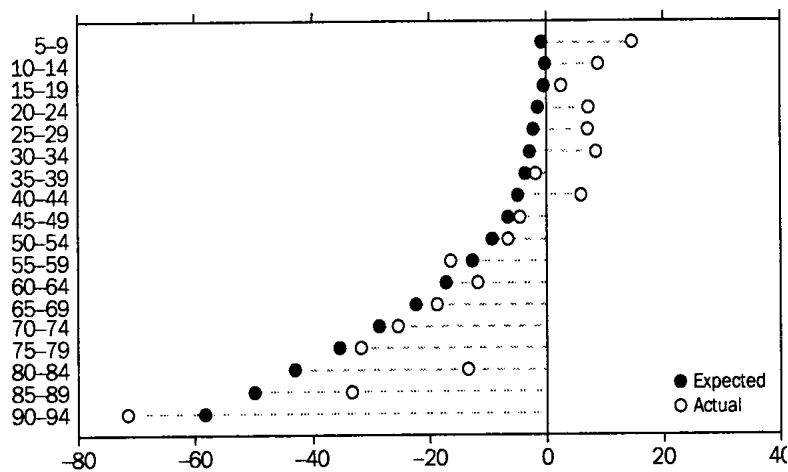


Figure 2 details the equivalent change in Indigenous age cohorts for South Australia. This shows a somewhat different pattern from that for Australia as a whole. Whereas for Australia as a whole for all age groups under 65 years of age the number of people increased rather than decreased, in South Australia there were some age groups that showed no or virtually no increase. For example, this was the case for the 15 to 19 and 35 to 39 year olds. Nonetheless, for South Australia as for Australia as a whole, the two youngest groups, the 5 to 9 and 10 to 14 year olds, showed substantial increases in the 1991 to 1996 period.

Figure 2 Change in Indigenous Age Cohorts, South Australia: 1991-96



Source: Ross, 1999: 24

This prominence of the very young age groups for Australia as a whole was investigated further, with the issue of intermarriage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people being examined. The children of such couples have at least two identities available to them, and when census forms are being filled in, a choice needs to be made as to This prominence of the very young age groups was investigated further, with the issue of intermarriage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people being examined.

Study of both the 1991 and 1996 censuses revealed that the transmission rates increased between 1991 and 1996. During this period, the transmission rate rose from 80% to 88% for Australia as whole, and

similar increases were recorded for all states and territories.⁵ The ABS study produced an estimate of the impact of this change in transmission rate on the 1996 census count. As shown in Table 4, for Australia as a whole, the change in transmission rate accounted for 3.3% of the increase in the Indigenous count. There was not a great deal of variation between the states and territories, and for South Australia this factor contributed 3.4% of the state's increased count.

Table 4 also presents the impact on the 1996 Indigenous census count of all the factors so far examined, and shows that, for Australia as a whole:

‘Just over half the increase in Indigenous count from 1991 to 1996 can be explained by the demographic factors of births and deaths, migration and changes in transmission rate, and the non-demographic factor of changes to census editing procedures.’ (Ross, 1999: 53).

However, as might be expected from the earlier discussion, there was substantial variation between the states/territories. For example, less than 40% of the increase for both Tasmania and NSW could be explained by the factors examined (24.65% and 36.85% respectively), while over 70% of both the NT's and Victoria's increases were accounted for (79.07% and 75.98% respectively). For South Australia the factors outlined so far in this paper accounted for 64.55% of the intercensal Indigenous increase.

Table 4 Explainable increase due to all factors considered so far (births, deaths, migration, change in census edits, change in transmission rate)

State	Increase in count 1991-96 (a)		Explainable increase							
			Natural increase, change to census edits, migration		Change in transmission rate		Total explainable			
			No	%	No	% (b)	No	% (b)	No	% (b)
NSW	31,643	45.21	10,611	33.53	1,050	3.32	11,661	36.85		
Vic.	4,802	28.75	3,411	71.03	238	4.95	3,649	75.98		
Qld	25,302	36.11	12,931	51.11	891	3.52	13,822	54.63		
SA	4,194	25.85	2,563	61.11	144	3.44	2,707	64.55		
WA	8,855	21.16	7,056	79.68	245	2.77	7,301	82.46		
Tas.	5,017	56.29	1,073	21.39	164	3.26	1,237	24.65		
NT	6,505	16.32	5,033	77.37	111	1.70	5,144	79.07		
ACT	1,261	79.66	538	42.66	46	3.67	584	46.33		
Aust. (c)	87,599	33.01	43,243	49.36	2,902	3.31	46,145	52.68		

Source: Ross, 1999: 52

- (a) Place of usual residence
- (b) Percent of increase 1991-96
- (c) Includes other Territories.

While the ABS was able to quantify the aspects discussed so far, there were other factors that were thought to impact on the Indigenous count but which were more difficult to quantify than those discussed above. They were undercount, non-response and changes in answers to questions relating to Indigenous status:

- Some people are missed at each census and some are counted more than once. The term ‘net undercount’ refers to the difference between the true population and the census count, and may vary across censuses.

⁵ The estimated contribution of children in mixed couple families to the increase in the count is likely to be conservative. The analysis only considered children aged 0-14 years whereas the same changes in identification may occur for older children. Further details on factors impacting on the calculation of the transmission rate are detailed in the original study.

- Some people who are enumerated may not answer some or all of the census questions. In all censuses since 1976, the number of people who have not answered the Indigenous status question has been greater than the number who have responded positively as 'Indigenous'. In 1996, while 352,970 people reported that they were Indigenous, 525,403 gave non-responses to the question relating to Indigenous status. Some of those coded as 'not stated' will be Indigenous. However, as the non-response rate in 1996 was slightly lower than in 1991, this could explain a portion of the increase in the Indigenous count.
- The way some people answer the Indigenous status question can change over time, even short periods of time. This has been demonstrated in the ABS Post-Enumeration Survey (PES) which is conducted a short time after the census and is designed to measure undercount, but includes the Indigenous status question. For the 1996 survey, of those who had reported Indigenous origin in the census, 16% changed their response to non-Indigenous when re-questioned in the PES.

ABS efforts⁶ to minimise the number of Indigenous persons missed by the Census and to encourage Indigenous people to answer the Indigenous status question affirmatively are likely to have impacted on each of these factors.

Nonetheless, the ABS study concluded that :

'The primary force behind the unexplained component of the increase appears to be related to what has been termed ..."recruitment" or changes in self-identification.' (Ross, 1999:54)

Implications for the impact on criminal justice programs

The above discussion of the SA. Indigenous count recorded for the 1996 Census highlights that the increased Indigenous Census count involved both demographic and other factors. While the Indigenous count for South Australia increased by 25% between the 1991 and 1996 Censuses, the ABS. study concluded that a substantial proportion of that increase, approximately one-third, appears to have been due to people changing identity.

This issue adds a particular complexity when considering the impact of population changes on the criminal justice system. The level of criminal justice contact by the 'new identifiers' sub group is unknown. It may be similar to the documented Indigenous rate of contact or it may be significantly different. As a group, these 'new identifiers' may have a level of contact that is substantially lower and more in line with that of the non-Indigenous group.

An additional complexity relates to the age profile of those who changed identity at the 1996 Census. As noted earlier, it is the relatively young Indigenous groups that are most over-represented in the criminal justice system. These age groups may contain substantial proportions of persons belonging to the 'new identifiers' category. The earlier discussion indicates that it is likely that some of the young age groups did in fact have relatively high levels of 'new identifiers'. As discussed earlier (see Figures 1 and 2), for Australia as a whole and South Australia in particular, the young age groups of 5 to 9 years and 10 to 14 years did display substantially higher numbers than expected (approximately 17% and 10% respectively). Figure 2 also indicated that some of the other young age groups had substantial proportions of 'new identifiers'.

These two complexities arising from the 'change in self-identification' factor need to be borne in mind when considering the data presented in the next section.

South Australia: ABS Population Projections

In the following discussion, population projections for the Indigenous population are detailed, and then, to put these figures in context, population projections for the whole state are considered.

⁶ For more information about the ABS Indigenous Enumeration Strategy (IES) see Ross, 1999: 54.

Indigenous population projections

Given the changes in self-identification evident in the 1996 Census Indigenous count, the ABS has made two sets of projections for the Indigenous population for the years 1996 - 2006:

- one based on an assumption that there will be no change in propensity to identify as Indigenous – the low series (that is, no further growth due to increased identification as Indigenous); and
- the other on an assumption of an increasing propensity to identify equivalent to that witnessed in the 1991-1996 period – the high series.

It needs to be noted that while the low series assumes no further growth due to increased identification as Indigenous, it does incorporate the ‘change’ in identification recorded at the time of the 1996 Census.

Table 5 presents summary information from these projections for both Australia and South Australia and shows that the two projections give substantially different results. According to the low series projection, Australia’s Indigenous population is projected to increase from 386,000 to 469,135 in 2006. The high series projection gives 649,009 in 2006. For South Australia, under the low series projection, the Indigenous population for 2006 will be 26,633, while under the high series projection it will be 32,330. That is, the high series projection for South Australia results in a 2006 figure that is 21.4% higher than the one according to the low series projection.

Table 5: Total Indigenous Population for South Australia and Australia. Low Series and High Series Projections

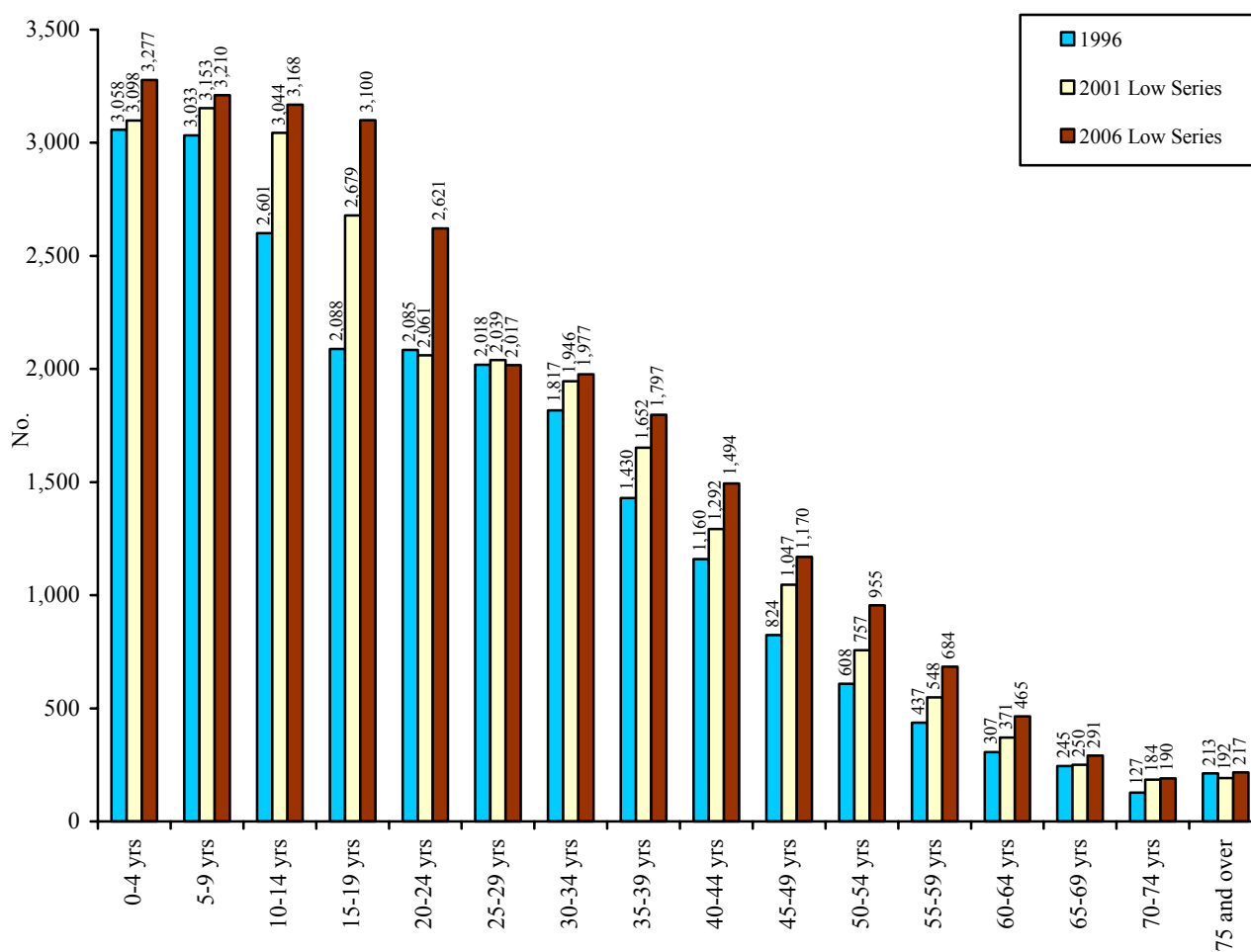
Year	South Australia		Australia	
	Low Series	High Series	Low Series	High Series
1996 base (a)	22,051*	22,051*	386,049*	386,049*
2001	24,313	26,852	427,094	502,339
2006	26,633	32,220	469,135	649,009

(a) The 1996 figures are base figures – hence, the low and high series are equal.

* The 1996 figure is based on the experimental Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population as at 30 June 1996. This differs from the Census Count detailed in Tables 1, 2 and 3. For more information on the differences between these counts see ABS, 1998a: 16.

Figure 3 presents the low series projection for the different age groups and shows that the numbers in some age groups remain relatively constant for one or both periods displayed. For example, the youngest age group of 0-4 years is projected to have approximately the same number in 2001 as was recorded in the 1996 census (3,058 and 3,098 respectively). However, some age groups show substantial increases between census periods. This is the case for the 15 to 19 years age group which is projected to increase from 2,088 in 1996 to 2,679 in 2001.

Figure 3: South Australia: low series projection 1996 – 2001-2006



As the five age groups of 10-14, 15-19, 20-24, 25-29 and 30-34 year olds are the ones from which the majority of apprehensions of Indigenous persons are made, Table 6 subsets out the population data for these age groups. This shows that the 2001 low series projection for the combined 10-34 year age group was 11,769 which was 10.9% greater than the 10,609 base population for 1996. The 15 to 19 years age group was predicted to have the most substantial increase of all the age groups depicted: 28.3% or 591 individuals. This was followed by the 10 to 14 year age group with a projected increase of 17.0% (or 443 individuals).

For the adult age groups, the predicted increases were relatively small in terms of both percentages and raw numbers, ranging from 7.1% (or n = 129) for the 30 to 34 year age group down to 1.0% for those aged 25 to 29 years. At the same time, the 20 to 24 year age group was predicted to decline slightly (by 1.2%). In summary then, the major part of the population increase up to 2001 involved the younger age groups. A proportion of these, youth aged 18 to 19 years would have come within the ambit of the adult component of the criminal justice system. This means that any impact of these increased numbers has already been dealt with by agencies such as the Department for Correctional Services.

Between 2001 and 2006, the situation is somewhat different with approximately equivalent increases projected for both the under 20s and the 20 to 34 year olds. Again, the 15 to 19 year age group is projected to increase substantially. However, the increase is not as large as that depicted for the period up to 2001. In the period up to 2006, it is anticipated that this teenage group will increase by 15.7% (or 421 individuals). It is anticipated that the number of Indigenous 10 to 14 year olds will increase, but far less substantially than in the earlier period (4.1% compared with 17.0% between 1996 and 2001).

When the projections for the adult age groups for the period from 2001 to 2006 are examined it can be seen that the number of Indigenous 20 to 24 year olds is expected to increase by a substantial 27.2%

(representing an increase of 560 individuals). However, a slight decline in numbers is predicted for the 25 to 29 year olds and only a small increase is projected for the 30 to 34 year olds (-1.1% and + 1.6% respectively).

In summary then, from 2001 to 2006, it is projected that there will be substantial increases in the numbers in both the 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years age groups. However, it should be noted that the increase for the younger age group of 15 to 19 year olds is not as substantial as that already experienced between 1996 and 2001. For the other age groups, the projections give either slight increases or, in fact, small declines in numbers.

Table 6 South Australia: Low Series projections for the Indigenous population in the 10-34 year age group

Age group	1996 census count	2001 low series projection		2006 low series projection		
	No.	No.	% Change 1996 - 2001	No.	% Change 2001-2006	% Change 1996 - 2001
10-14	2,601	3,044	+17.0	3,168	+4.1	+21.8
15-19	2,088	2,679	+28.3	3,100	+15.7	+48.5
Sub-total of 10 – 19 year olds	4,689	5,723	+22.1	6,268	+9.5	+33.7
20-24	2,085	2,061	-1.2	2,621	+27.2	+25.7
25-29	2,018	2,039	1.0	2,017	-1.1	0
30-34	1,817	1,946	7.1	1,977	+1.6	+8.8
Sub-total of 20 – 34 year olds	5,920	6,046	2.1	6,615	+9.4	+11.7
Total of 10-34 year olds	10,609	11,769	10.9	12,883	+9.5	21.4

As detailed earlier, the ABS. has presented two series of projections for the Indigenous population – the low series which has just been discussed and the high series. Also detailed earlier was the fact that the high series projection is based on the assumption of an increasing propensity to identify as Indigenous equivalent to that witnessed in the 1991-1996 period. In effect, that assumption takes the same starting point as the low series but incorporates a factor for additional people shifting from the non-Indigenous to Indigenous population in the period from 1996. However, the purpose of this discussion is to explore the implications of the increased actual population for criminal justice agencies. It seems reasonable to assume that people shifting identity from one group to another should not lead to increased demand on the agencies responsible for administering the criminal justice system. In other words, it could be argued that the likelihood of a specific individual coming into contact with the criminal justice system would remain the same, irrespective of how s(he) chose to classify themselves on the census form. Hence, the high series is not discussed any further in this paper. However, the Appendix contains some information on that projection.

South Australia: total population projections

The projected Indigenous population for South Australia needs to be considered in the context of the projection for the total South Australian population. The ABS has developed eighteen alternative projections based on various assumptions relating to future births and deaths, levels of overseas and interstate migration and has presented three of these in one of its publications (ABS, 1998b). Table 7 details the results for those three projections for persons in the 10 – 34 year age range for South Australia.

As shown, the combined 10 – 34 year old population is at its highest in 1997, when these age groups accounted for 522,500 persons. According to each of the three projections, the population for the 10 – 34 year olds drops between 1997 and 2001 and drops further between 2001 and 2006.

However, not all sub groups within the 10 – 34 year age range conform to this pattern of declining numbers. For each series, the projected population for the 15-19 year olds is higher in 2001 than in 1997. However, under each scenario, the number of 15 to 19 year olds drop back from the 2001 peak to a lower level in 2006.

Given the increase in the projected populations for 15-19 year olds in the period 1997 to 2001, it would be expected that in the period 2001 to 2006, there would be a corresponding increase for the next age group, the 20 – 24 year olds. For each series, this is the case (with increases of 5,200, 4,300 and 3,400 for Series 1, 11 and 111 respectively). However, it should be noted that only for Series 1 does this result in the projection for 2006 being higher than the 1997 base (104,500 compared with 103,100 respectively).

For all three projections, the other sub groups in the 20 to 34 year age range show declining numbers across the two periods. As a result, the number in the combined age range of 20 to 34 years is projected to drop between 2001 and 2006, with the decrease being of the order of 4,000(1.3%), 7,700 (2.4%) or 11,100 (3.6%) (Series 1, 11 and 111 respectively).

While projected numbers for the years 2011 to 2051 are not included in Table 8, the ABS projections give declining numbers for the combined 20 to 34 years age group (Series 1 drops this age group from 310,700 in 2006 to 256,100 by the year 2051). Further, the projected population for the 20 to 24 year olds declines from 104,500 in 2006 to 84,200 by the year 2051.

Table 7 Projected population for South Australia: for persons 10-34 years of age - 1997, 2001 and 2006

Persons	1997 base	Series 1			
		2001	2006	% Change 2001 to 2006	% Change 1997 to 2006
10-14 yrs	101,800	99,800	99,100	-0.7	-2.7
15-19	98,100	102,600	100,900	-1.7	+2.9
Sub-total	199,900	202,400	200,000	-1.2	+0.1
20-24	103,100	99,300	104,500	+5.2	+1.4
25-29	109,400	103,100	97,900	-5.0	-10.5
30-34	110,100	108,300	104,300	-3.7	-5.3
Sub-total	322,600	310,700	306,700	-1.3	-4.9
Total	522,500	513,100	506,700	-1.2	-3.0

Persons	1997 base	Series 11**			
		2001	2006	% Change 2001 to 2006	% Change 1997 to 2006
10-14 yrs	101,800	99,400	97,700	-1.7	-4.0
15-19	98,100	102,200	99,700	-2.4	+1.6
Sub-total	199,900	201,600	197,400	-2.1	-1.3
20-24	103,100	98,600	102,900	+4.4	-0.2
25-29	109,400	102,100	95,600	-6.4	-12.6
30-34	110,100	107,400	101,900	-5.0	-7.4
Sub-total	322,600	308,100	300,400	-2.5	-6.9
Total	522,500	509,700	497,800	-2.3	-4.7

Persons	1997 base	Series 111***			
		2001	2006	% Change 2001 to 2006	% Change 1997 to 2006
10-14 yrs	101,800	99,000	96,600	-2.4	-5.1
15-19	98,100	101,900	98,700	-3.1	+0.6
Sub-total	199,900	200,900	195,300	-2.8	-2.3
20-24	103,100	98,000	101,400	+3.5	-1.6
25-29	109,400	101,400	93,700	-7.6	-14.3
30-34	110,100	106,800	100,000	-6.4	-9.0
Sub-total	322,600	306,200	295,100	-3.6	-8.5
Total	522,500	507,100	490,400	-3.3	-6.1

* Series 1 is based on assumptions of high fertility and low internal migration flows.

** Series 11 is based on assumptions of high fertility, low overseas migration and medium internal migration.

*** Series 111 is based on assumptions of low fertility, low overseas migration and high internal migration.

Comparison of projected changes for the Indigenous population and the total SA. population

Table 8 combines the Indigenous and total population projection information already presented for the period 2001 to 2006. For the total population, the Series 1 projection has been used as it resulted in the highest population numbers. This means that as far as the impact on criminal justice agencies is concerned, the 'worst case scenario' is being presented. As shown, for both the Indigenous and total populations, the 20 to 24 year age group is projected to show a substantial increase (27.2% and 5.2% respectively). The projections give an increase of 560 for the Indigenous population and 5,200 for the total population of 20 to 24 year olds. However, as noted earlier, the total population of 20 to 24 year olds is only 1,400 or 1.4% higher than the 1997 figure for this age group.

As a counterbalance to these increases, it is significant that for both the Indigenous and total populations, the number of 25 to 29 year olds is projected to drop (by 1.1% and 5.0% respectively). For the other age groups of 10 to 14, 15 to 19 and 30 to 34 year olds, increases are projected for the Indigenous population (4.1%, 15.7% and 1.6% respectively), but a decline in numbers is expected for the total population (0.7%, 1.7% and 3.7% respectively).

Finally, it should again be stressed that the 2001 and 2006 projections are based on the 1996 census figures which contained a 25% increase in the Indigenous population. However, as noted, approximately one third of this increase was due to 'new identifiers' whose propensity to become involved with the criminal justice system may be different from the level recorded in the past for the Indigenous population.

Table 8 Comparison of projected changes for the Indigenous population and the total SA. population by age group

Age group	Indigenous				Total SA. population – Series 1			
	2001	2006	Change in no.s 2001 to 2006	% Change 2001 to 2006	2001	2006	Change in no.s 2001 to 2006	% Change 2001 to 2006
10 – 14	3,044	3,168	+124	+4.1	99,800	99,100	-700	-1.7
15 – 19	2,679	3,100	+421	+15.7	102,600	100,900	-1,700	-1.7
20-24	2,061	2,621	+560	+27.2	99,300	104,500	+5,200	+5.2
25-29	2,039	2,017	-22	-1.1	103,100	97,900	-5,200	-5.0
30-34	1,946	1,977	+31	+1.6	108,300	104,300	-4,000	-3.7

Conclusion

The 1996 Census recorded an increased Indigenous count for South Australia, with the 1996 figure being 25% greater than the 1991 count. Population projections indicate further increases between 1996 and 2001 and between 2001 and 2006, including increases in some of the age groups most likely to have contact with the criminal justice system, particularly the 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 year olds age groups. In addition, population projections for South Australia as a whole across the period 2001 to 2006 show the number of 20 to 24 year olds increasing.

However, certain factors need to be borne in mind when trying to translate such population increases into impact on the criminal justice system. First, the Indigenous population projections were based on the 1996 Census count which included a proportion of people who changed 'self identification' between the 1991 and 1996 Censuses. While the Indigenous level of contact with the criminal justice system has been high for many years, it cannot be assumed that this 'new identifiers' group will have

the same disproportionately high level of contact. This sub group may have a substantially lower likelihood of becoming involved with the criminal justice system.

Second, when the projections for the total South Australian population are considered two facts need to be borne in mind. One is that most of the age groups likely to have contact with the criminal justice system are projected to decline in the period from 2001 to 2006. The other relates to the 20 to 24 year age group, the only one predicted to increase in this period. For this group, the level of increase varies with the particular projection being considered. While the numbers in this age group are projected to increase between 2001 and 2006, they actually decreased in the period 1997 to 2001. The result is that only one projection puts the 2006 figure for the 20 to 24 year olds at a higher level than for 1997, and even then it is only 1.4% higher.

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Appendix

High Series Projections

Figure 4 presents the high series projections for all age groups. As detailed earlier, this series assumes a higher level of propensity to identify as Indigenous. As might be expected, this series inflates those increases identified already in the low series and introduces additional ones. All age groups, apart from the very oldest of those aged 75 years and over⁷, are projected to show increases for both periods 1996-2001 and 2001-2006. However, in terms of raw numbers, the most substantial increases are projected for the younger age groups.

Figure 4: South Australia: high series projection 1996 – 2001-2006

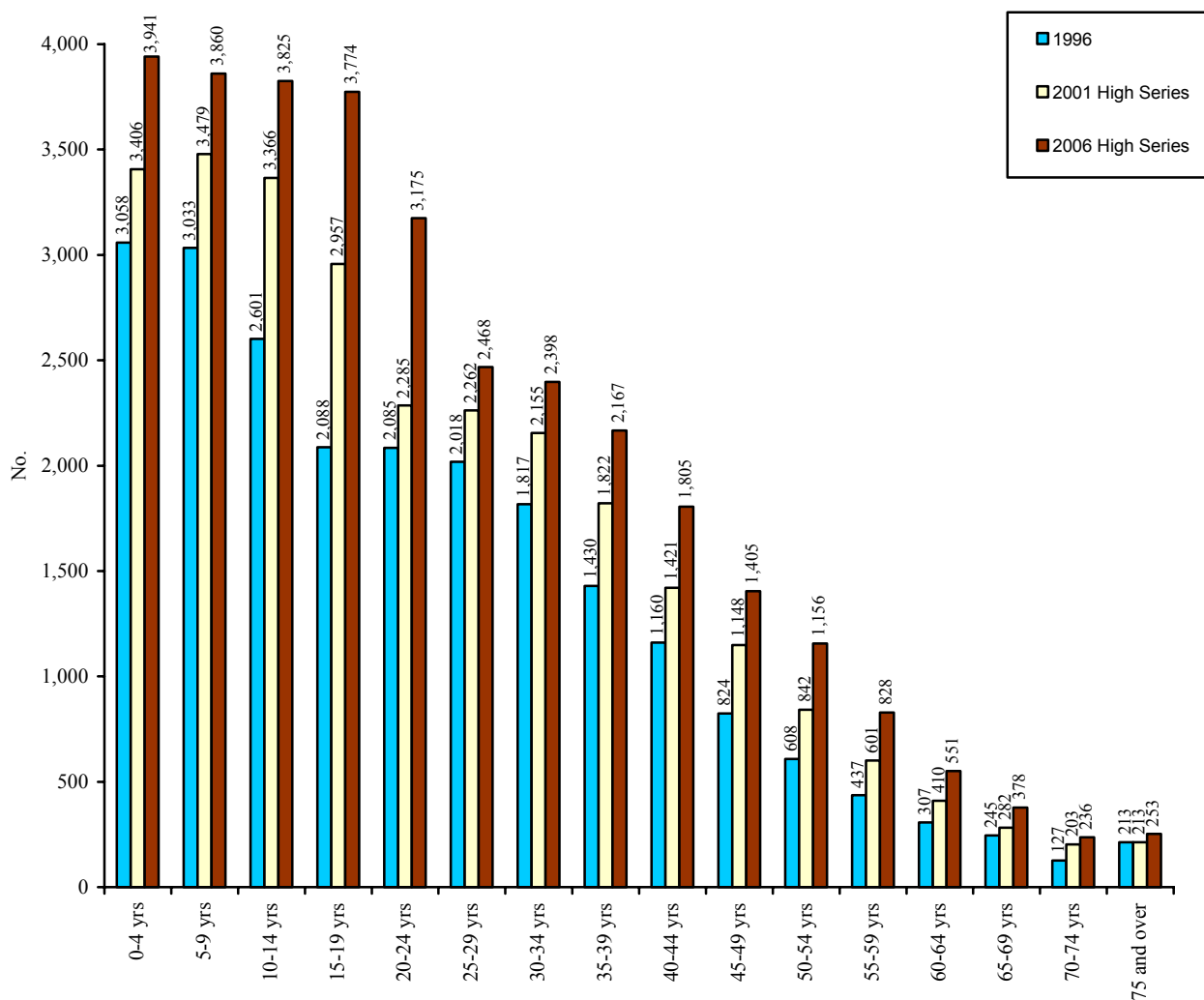


Table 9 subsets out the data for the age groups within the 10 – 34 year old age range and shows that, according to the high series projection, these combined age groups are projected to increase by 2,416 between 1996 and 2001 and by a slightly higher 2,615 between 2001 and 2006. Taking the 1996 to 2001 period first, the combined 10-19 year olds are projected to increase by 1,634, with substantial increases for both sub groups (765 for 10-14 year olds and 869 for 15-19 year olds). In contrast, the 20-34 year age group is projected to increase by only 780 in this period, with this increase fairly evenly

⁷ For the 75 year olds and over, the 1996 and 2001 figures are equal and the 2006 figure is a little higher.

spread across the three sub-groups of 20-24, 25-29 and 30-34 year olds (200, 244 and 338 respectively).

Over the period 2001 to 2006, it can be seen that the 10-19 year old age groups are projected to increase by 1,276, with substantial increases for both sub groups of 10-14 and 15-19 year olds. An equivalent increase (n = 1,339) is projected for the combined 20-34 year age group an increase, with the 20-24 year sub-group accounting for two-thirds (n = 890) of this projected increase.

Table 9 South Australia: High Series projections for the Indigenous population in the 10-34 year age group

Age group	1996 census count	2001 high series projection	2006 high series projection
10-14	2,601	3,366	3,825
15-19	2,088	2,957	3,774
Sub-total of 10 – 19 year olds	4,689	6,323	7,599
20-24	2,085	2,285	3,175
25-29	2,018	2,262	2,468
30-34	1,817	2,155	2,398
Sub-total of 20 – 34 year olds	5,920	6,702	8,041
Total of 10-34 year olds	10,609	13,025	15,640