Is location the missing link for generating smarter national statistics?

Simon Costello and Alexis McIntyre (Australia)

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SUMMARY

Statistics are a key component for governments undertaking place-based decision-making, policy formulation or service delivery. Many critical policy challenges such as climate change, disaster management, tackling social disadvantage and poverty, and economic development rely upon statistics coded to a place or geography. Such statistics are fundamental to national governments and the UN in delivering economic, social and environmental benefits to citizens.□□Use of administrative data collected through government programs and service delivery is emerging as a more cost-effective method for collecting and reusing data for generating statistics. Data can be geocoded to a variety of geographies including addresses, grids, postcodes, properties, catchments, suburbs and localities. Statistics ideally can be reported on different geographies such as the Australian Statistical Geography Standard, national and subnational boundaries, health districts, school catchments, indigenous geographies, and natural resource areas. The number of geographies, the sheer volume of administrative data, and the lack of agreed international standards geocoding is preventing efficient reuse of administrative data for statistics generation. □□A well-structured 'location spine' that links together units of different geographies including the Australian Statistical Geography Standard, as well as the implementation of agreed international standards for geocoding data in different recording geographies, will go a long way to maximising the utility of administrative data for generating statistics for place-based decision-making.□□This paper presents the journey so far for the ABS and our partners across government, outlines our thinking to date, and invites interested stakeholders to participate in shaping the next generation of Australia's geospatially-enabled statistical infrastructure.
