Public Health Observatory

The cultural, social and economic characteristics of the Canterbury Region of Sydney Local Health District

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Acknowledgments

The data in this report are compiled from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census of Population and Housing.

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Executive Summary

This report provides a brief overview of some of the key cultural and socioeconomic characteristics of the residents of the Canterbury region of Sydney Local Health District. The data were compiled from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census of Population and Housing.

The Census shows that Canterbury is a culturally and linguistically diverse community. Compared to the whole of Sydney, Canterbury had:

- A larger proportion of people who were born overseas
- A smaller proportion who reported that their ancestry is "Australian" or "English"
- A larger proportion who spoke a non-English language at home
- A larger proportion who reported that they do not speak English well.

Canterbury was more socioeconomically disadvantaged than other surrounding areas, with 31% of Statistical Areas Level 1 (SA1s) among the most disadvantaged 20% of SA1s in Australia.

Household incomes tended to be lower, particularly in Lakemba, Wiley Park and Punchbowl. In these three areas, more than 40% of households were classified as low income. In Greater Sydney as a whole, 20% of households were classified as low income.

Unemployment rates in Canterbury were generally higher than average. The highest rates were observed in Lakemba, Wiley Park and Punchbowl. In these suburbs, more than 10% of the total working-age population and more than 17% of the population aged 15 - 24 reported that they were unemployed on Census night. Unemployment tended to be more common among migrants who had arrived in Australia in the last 10 years.

People in Canterbury were more likely to be living in crowded conditions, with a relatively high proportion of households requiring additional bedrooms.

In summary, a number of indicators of socioeconomic disadvantage are more prevalent in Canterbury than in the surrounding areas and in Greater Sydney. This is relevant to health service planning because of the well established links between social disadvantage and health need.
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1 Introduction

Canterbury is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse areas in the Greater Sydney region. With this diversity comes distinct challenges to ensure equitable access to healthcare. Differences in access may arise due to language barriers, cultural norms, or general health literacy, and can affect the ability of an individual to successfully navigate and engage with healthcare services. Using data from the 2016 census, factors that might influence a resident’s access to the healthcare system, as well as general measures of equity and advantage, are analysed and reported.

This report uses geographic regions defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The main focus is the Canterbury Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3, Figure 1.1). For each topic, comparison is made to the whole of Greater Sydney. For certain topics, additional comparisons are made to the neighbouring SA3s of Bankstown, Hurstville, Kogarah - Rockdale, Marrickville - Sydenham - Petersham and Strathfield - Burwood - Ashfield. Variation between Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2s) within Canterbury is also explored.

Figure 1.1: The Canterbury Statistical Area Level 3 (blue), the surrounding SA3s, and the Statistical Area Level 2s (SA2s) within the Canterbury SA3s
2 Cultural and language diversity

2.1 Percent born overseas

48% of the residents of Canterbury SA3 were born overseas compared to 33% in Greater Sydney as a whole (Figure 2.1).

![Bar chart showing proportion of residents born in Australia and overseas in Canterbury SA3 and Greater Sydney as a whole.]

Figure 2.1: The proportion of residents born in Australia and overseas in the Canterbury SA3 and Greater Sydney as a whole.

2.2 Ancestry

People were asked in the Census to nominate up to two ancestries. Figure 2.2 shows the first ancestry nominated by residents of Canterbury SA3 and Greater Sydney. There was greater diversity within the Canterbury region compared to Sydney as a whole. Across Greater Sydney, English and Australian ancestries dominate, collectively accounting for more than 50% of the population. Within Canterbury, Chinese, Lebanese and Greek ancestries were most common accounting for around 47% of the population. The proportion that reported English or Australian ancestry was considerably lower at 24%. About 5% of the population reported Bangladeshi ancestry, which was a markedly higher proportion than in Greater Sydney as a whole.
2.3 Language spoken at home

As Figure 2.3 shows, while English was spoken at home by the majority of residents of Canterbury, it was less commonly spoken than in the rest of Greater Sydney. There are much higher proportions of individuals in Canterbury who speak Arabic, Greek, Bengali and Urdu at home.

2.4 English proficiency by language spoken at home

In Greater Sydney, approximately 6% of people reported that they did not speak English well. In Canterbury, the proportion was 16%.

Residents of Canterbury were less likely to speak English well irrespective of their preferred language. The only exceptions to this trend were Arabic and Nepalese speakers, where the rate of lower spoken English proficiency in Canterbury was roughly equal to the rate in the rest of Greater Sydney (2.4).
Figure 2.3: Language spoken at home.

Figure 2.4: Proportion of people who do not speak English well by language spoken at home
3 Socioeconomic Disadvantage

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) define relative socioeconomic advantage as disadvantage as people’s access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society. Based on this definition, the ABS has developed a number of indices that provide a summary of various dimensions of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage. Here we use the Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage (IRSD) to describe the overall level of disadvantage in Canterbury and the surrounding areas.

3.1 The Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage

The Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage (IRSD) provides an indication of the overall social and economic disadvantage of an area. It incorporates factors such as the proportion of people with low incomes, the proportion unemployed, the proportion of one parent families and the proportion with poor English.

The geographic distribution of IRSD by Statistical Area Level 1 (SA1) is shown in Figure 3.1. The most disadvantaged SA1s are concentrated in the Canterbury and Bankstown SA3s. Around 31% of SA1s in the Canterbury SA3 (with about 33% of the population) are among the 20% most disadvantaged in Australia (Figure 3.2). At the same time, just 2% of SA1s (and 1.5% of the population) were among the 20% least disadvantaged in Australia.
Figure 3.1: The geographic distribution of socioeconomic disadvantage (IRSD) in Canterbury and the surrounding areas. Source: IRSD, ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), 2016

Figure 3.2: The proportion of SA1s in each quintile of socioeconomic disadvantage by SA3. Source: IRSD, ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), 2016
4 Income

4.1 Equivalised household income

Equivalised household income is a standardised measure of the economic resources available to a household. It takes into account the total income of a household and the number of people dependent on that income. The ABS have calculated equivalised income based on data collected during the 2016 Census. The ABS defines low-income households as those with an equivalised income in the lowest 20% of equivalised incomes. This is approximately $500 per week.

Overall,

As Figure 4.1 shows, every SA2 in the Canterbury region had a higher than average proportion of low-income households compared to the whole of Greater Sydney. This was especially pronounced in the SA2s of Wiley Park, Punchbowl and Lakemba, where 41.0%, 41.6% and 44.8% of households had an equivalised income of less than $500 a week, respectively. Canterbury SA2s also tended to have a higher proportion of low-income households than other SA2s in the regions surrounding Canterbury.

4.2 Household income by family composition

Figure 4.2 shows the proportion of households with an equivalised income less than $500 by household composition in Canterbury and in Greater Sydney as a whole. The proportion in the low-income group was higher in Canterbury across all household types. The most marked difference was among “couple families” (with or without children) and lone person households.
Figure 4.1: The proportion of low-income households in Greater Sydney, Canterbury SA2s and other SA2s in regions neighbouring Canterbury.
Figure 4.2: Equivalised household income by household structure.
5 Unemployment

5.1 Overall and youth unemployment

Figure 5.1 shows the proportion of working age residents who reported that they were unemployed at the time of the 2016 Census in Canterbury and in the whole Greater Sydney region. Compared to Greater Sydney, there were higher rates of unemployment in all SA2s in Canterbury except Kingsgrove (North) - Earlwood. The pattern was similar for all adults and for adults aged less than 24. In the SA2s of Wiley Park and Lakemba the unemployment rate was roughly double the rate for the Greater Sydney region.

Figure 5.1: Proportion of working-age adults nominating their employment status as "unemployed" at the time of the 2016 Census. The data exclude those who are retired, pensioners or those solely engaged in unpaid home duties.
5.2 Employment by year of arrival in Australia

As Figure 5.2 shows, unemployment rates were generally higher among those who migrated to Australia within the last ten years. This is to be expected given the substantial obstacles that recent migrants may face related to, for example, language barriers and knowledge of local services.

However, the unemployment rate among recent migrants living in Canterbury was higher than the Greater Sydney average in all but one SA2. In Lakemba, the rate was roughly twice as high.

![Figure 5.2: Unemployment by year of arrival in Australia, Canterbury SA2s and Greater Sydney.](image-url)
6 Housing

6.1 Number of people per bedroom

Figure 6.1 shows the average number of persons per bedroom by SA2. Overall, SA2s in Canterbury had a higher ratio of persons to bedrooms. While not a perfect measure, higher numbers on this scale suggest a greater likelihood of overcrowding. By contrast, the average for the Greater Sydney region was 0.98 persons per bedroom.

Figure 6.1: The average number of persons per bedroom by SA2. The Canterbury SA3 is shown in red.
6.2 Housing suitability

The proportion of dwellings in Greater Sydney that required one or more extra bedrooms was 7%. In Canterbury, the proportion was 15%, more than twice the average. There was marked variation even within Canterbury (Figure 6.2). 6% of dwellings in Kingsgrove (North) - Earlwood required at least one extra bedroom. In Lakemba, the figure was 29%.

Figure 6.2: The proportion of households reporting a need for at least one additional bedrooms by SA2.
7 Conclusion

This report used data from the 2016 Census to describe various aspects of the cultural, social and economic characteristics of residents of the Canterbury region of Sydney Local Health District. It shows the cultural diversity of Canterbury residents, many of whom have arrived in Australia relatively recently. The Canterbury region is also characterised by above average levels of socioeconomic disadvantage.