

Demography: Understanding Preliminary, Revised and Final estimates.

Introduction

Demography is the statistical study of human population in relation to their size, structure, distribution and the changes in them in response to birth, death and migration.

There are three key areas that affect population change: fertility, mortality and migration.

Demography has also other features of population study, such as marriage, divorce, social mobility, ethnicity, religion, family formation, income and education.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) sources data relating to births, deaths and migration primarily from the Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (international migration) and Medicare Australia (interstate migration).

Population estimates are one of the major outputs in demography. Estimates are subject to revision over time. The latest available data is the most accurate at the time, but as time goes on, estimates become more accurate because there is more known data on which to base them. To meet the conflicting demands of accuracy and timeliness, the ABS produces preliminary, revised, and final estimates for the different categories of demographic data.

What is 'Preliminary data'?

Preliminary data is provided as an estimate of the population at a given point in time, as soon as possible after all births, deaths and migration data available at any given time is provided to the ABS. This data provision occurs on an ongoing basis and the ABS aims to release preliminary estimates within six months after the reference quarter. For example, data for the September Quarter of any given

year is generally released about the end of March of the following year.

What is 'Revised data'?

As registrations of births and deaths can occur up to several months after the event, there are lags in some of these events actually being registered and, thus, the ABS having access to this data. The ABS makes an estimate of the "missing" data and produces revised figures of the population. Delays in, or changes to, the processing of migration data can similarly affect initial estimates. Revised population data is released 21 months after the end of each financial year.

What is 'Final data'?

Final population estimates are calculated after each Census of Population and Housing has been held (which occurs every five years), with the data being released about 22 months after the Census. For the reference period concerned, births and deaths that have been registered by the December Quarter in the year after the Census are taken to be final and are used in producing a final population estimate.

Footnotes or cell comments in a table alert users to the presence of preliminary, revised or final estimates.

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Example

Estimated Resident Population, Major Population Regions at 30 June (a)(b)								
					change		growth rate	
		2003 (c)	2007 (d)	2008 (e)	2003–2008	2007–2008	2003–2008	2007–2008
ASGC	Population region	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.	%	%
CAPITAL CITY STATISTICAL DIVISIONS								
105	Sydney	4,190,874	4,344,675	4,399,722	208,848	55,047	0.98	1.27
205	Melbourne	3,577,411	3,817,806	3,892,419	315,008	74,613	1.70	1.95
305	Brisbane	1,744,111	1,902,235	1,945,639	201,528	43,404	2.21	2.28
405	Adelaide	1,121,742	1,159,131	1,172,105	50,363	12,974	0.88	1.12
505	Perth	1,435,907	1,559,178	1,602,559	166,652	43,381	2.22	2.78
605	Hobart	199,853	207,330	209,287	9,434	1,957	0.93	0.94
705	Darwin	107,440	117,333	120,652	13,212	3,319	2.35	2.83
805	Canberra	325,340	340,766	345,257	19,917	4,491	1.20	1.32
(a) Estimates are based on the 2008 Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) boundaries.								
(b) Based on data published in Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2007–2008 (cat. No. 3218.0).								
(c) Estimates for major population regions at 30 June 2003 are final and based on the 2006 Census.								
(d) Estimates for major population regions at 30 June 2007 have been revised.								
(e) Estimates for major population regions at 30 June 2008 are preliminary.								
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Further reading:

Population Estimates: Concepts, Sources and Methods, 2009
(cat. no. 3228.0.55.001)