

Annual population growth in the Territory and nationally continued to moderate in the December quarter 2010 (Chart 1). Nationally, this reflects a large fall in net overseas migration (NOM), while in the Territory it reflects both declining net interstate migration (NIM) and lower levels of NOM.

Population

	NT	Aust
Annual population growth	0.8%	1.5%
Estimated Resident Population (000)	229.9	22 477

In annual terms, growth in the Territory's resident population moderated to 0.8 per cent in the December quarter 2010, reflecting declining NIM and lower levels of NOM through the year. Weakness in NIM in the Territory is likely due to the movement of defence personnel from the Territory, the strengthening national economy and jobs market, and the completion of a number of major projects. Lower NOM in the Territory reflects changes to Commonwealth Government policy on student and temporary work visas.

The Territory recorded the second lowest annual population growth rate of the jurisdictions ahead of Tasmania (0.77 per cent), while Western Australia recorded the highest annual population growth rate (2.1 per cent). Nationally, the annual population growth rate moderated to 1.5 per cent (Chart 2).

Net Interstate Migration (NIM)

NIM in the Territory is highly volatile, reflecting the young and transient nature of the Territory's population. In the Territory, in the December quarter 2010, NIM declined by 859 persons, compared to a decline of 288 persons in the previous quarter.

In 2010, the Territory had a net loss of 1690 persons to interstate jurisdictions. This was likely due to defence movements of personnel, the strengthening national economy and jobs market, and the completion of several major projects in the Territory.

Net Overseas Migration (NOM)

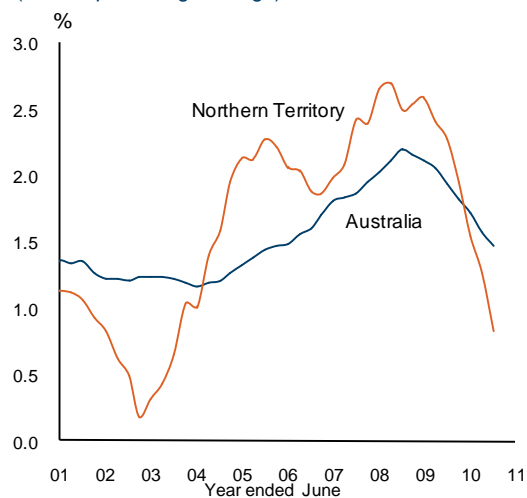
The ABS has developed a new method of estimating NOM (see data statement on the following page).

In the December quarter 2010, NOM in the Territory decreased by 115 persons, compared to a 192 increase in persons in the September quarter 2010. NOM in the Territory moderated to 693 persons in the year to 2010 (Chart 3).

Natural Increase

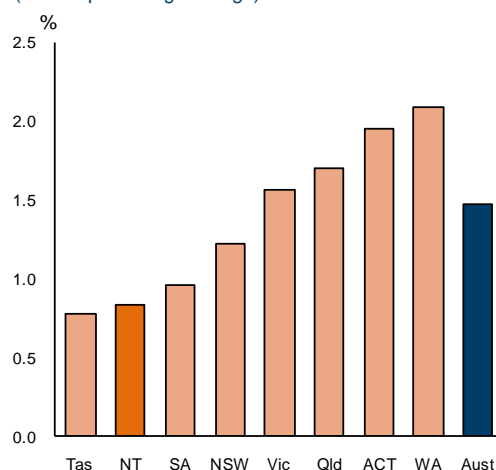
Natural increase (births less deaths) is a fairly stable contributor to the Territory's population growth rate. In the December quarter 2010, natural increase contributed 662 persons to growth, which included 931 births and 269 deaths.

Chart 1: Population Growth
(annual percentage change)



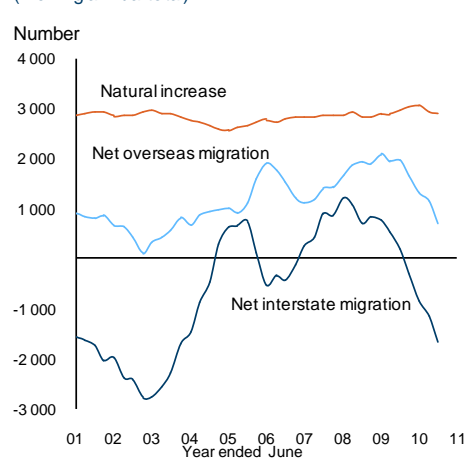
Source: ABS Cat. No. 3101.0

Chart 2: Population Growth
(annual percentage change)



Source: ABS Cat. No. 3101.0

Chart 3: Territory Population Components¹
(moving annual total)



Source: ABS Cat. No. 3101.0

¹New methods were introduced into the calculation of net overseas migration from the September quarter 2006.

Estimated Resident Population and Components of Change

	December Quarter		change		
	quarter	year to date	quarterly ¹	annual ²	year on year ³
Northern Territory					
population growth	- 312	1 889			
natural increase	662	2 886			
<i>births</i>	931	3 898			
<i>deaths</i>	269	1 012			
net migration					
<i>overseas</i>	- 115	693			
<i>interstate</i>	- 859	- 1 690			
total population	229 874		-0.1%	0.8%	1.4%
Australia					
population growth	69 703	325 469			
total population	22 477 378		0.3%	1.5%	1.6%

¹ compares the latest quarter with the previous quarter

² compares the latest quarter with the same quarter last year

³ compares the 4 quarters up to and including the latest quarter with the previous 4 quarter period

Caution is advised when using monthly data for the Territory, which is often derived from small samples and highly volatile.

Source: ABS Cat. No. 3101.0

Interstate Migration Model

Northern Territory Treasury has ongoing concerns over the ability of the ABS interstate migration model to accurately estimate interstate flows to and from the Territory and therefore population growth.

The ABS model for estimating interstate migration flows is based on Medicare 'change of address' information with adjustments for defence personnel not covered by Medicare. While this model balances at a national level and works well for most large jurisdictions, it performs poorly in the estimation of movements to and from the Territory.

The Territory has a much higher level of population transience compared to other states. In a typical year, around 8% to 10% of the total population of the Territory will move interstate. The youth and mobility of those migrating to the Territory and their low propensity to use medical services means their 'place of residence' record with Medicare is often incorrect. Hence, the Medicare model (using Medicare Australia data, formerly the Health Insurance Commission) probably under enumerates the residence of many short-term migrants to the Territory. Compounding this is the typically older and higher health care user profile of those migrating from the Territory. This type of person is more likely to update their Medicare 'place of residence' record once settled in another state. Under-estimation of the Territory's population has a significant impact on population-based funding the Territory receives from the Commonwealth.

Data Statement

The current interstate migration model has been revised to include updated expansion factors, based on Census 2006 data. Expansion factors are used to account for an under coverage of Medicare data by various ages and sex.

ABS has developed a new method for estimating net overseas migration (NOM) which is expected to better reflect movements of travellers and whether they should be included in the Australian resident population. Results of the new NOM method are final up to June 2007, all estimates onwards are revised preliminary.

ABS advises that ERPs for 30 June 2006 and the 2001-06 intercensal period are now final. All estimates from September quarter 2006 onwards are preliminary.