

Registers used at Statistics Iceland for production of statistics

Administrative registers

The Icelandic National Register of Persons

Statistics Iceland is responsible for all civil registration in Iceland. The National Registry, which is a department within Statistics Iceland, supervises and carries out the registration. The register was established in 1953 on the basis of the 1950 census and a special census taken solely for that purpose in 1952. The purpose of the register is to provide unified, centralized registration of the population for administrative and statistical uses.

The population register is maintained and updated continuously by the National Registry. Main registration items are: name, ID-number, full residence, sex, marital status, nationality, place of birth, religious affiliation and registration of consensual union. Information for updating the register is obtained from various sources as provided in legislation. Among such legislation is a special law on the Icelandic National Register, a law on domicile and a law which obliges the citizens to notify change of address. Information on births is obtained from birth reports submitted by the maternity institutions and, in exceptional cases, directly by midwives. The majority of births is registered within 24 hours of birth. Ministers of the State Lutheran Church and heads of other religious organizations report at least monthly on baptisms, marriages and deaths. From 1 January 1999, District Commissioners will report on deaths. District Commissioners report on civil marriages and on separation licences issued by them. District Commissioners and courts report on divorces and changes in the custody of children. The Ministry of Justice reports on naturalization of foreign nationals and other changes in nationality as well as on adoptions and name changes.

Changes in residence must be reported to the municipality to which a person moves. In the capital these changes may be reported to the nearest police station or directly to the National Registry. The ID-numbers are 10-digit numbers. The first 6 digits refer to the date of birth, i.e. day, month and year (last two digits), the 7th and 8th digits are random numbers, the 9th is a check digit (modulus 11 check) and the 10th digit shows the century when the person was born. Everybody born from 1900 to 1999 will get a 9 in this position, those born before 1900 get 8 and those born after 1999 will get a 0. The ID-numbers are issued at birth to all children born in Iceland and at first registration to all persons taking up residence in the country. The ID-number system is the only universal one used in the country.

The Register of Persons has a central role in more or less all administrative systems. It is the single register of persons in the country and is therefore utilized by virtually all relevant public authorities, e.g. taxation authorities, the social security system, health system, education system and for mailing purposes. The Register is also used extensively by the private sector, e.g. the banking system, insurance companies and many larger firms, for information on ID-numbers, addresses and address changes, deaths etc.

Within Statistics Iceland, the Register is used extensively for statistical purposes. It forms the basis for demographic statistics which are published annually and to a limited extent every three months. On the basis of the register and other sources, e.g. birth reports and death reports, statistics on the population according to age, sex, marital status and residence are produced. Fertility statistics are also produced. The most significant shortcoming of the register is perhaps the fact that it does not allow the production of statistics on households and families. The residence of a person is recorded with the code of the municipality and the street and a house number (in rural areas a code is given to

each house). Different units in multiple-dwelling houses are not identified. It is therefore impossible to identify families or households in such houses. Apart from the items listed above each person on the Register of Persons is given a family number. The family number of a person is his or her own ID-number if he or she is a single person 16 years or older, or the older person of a married couple, a couple registered as living in consensual union (also called registered cohabitational union) or in registered partnership (also called recognized union). In one-parent families the family number is the ID-number of the single parent. By using the family number it is possible to identify so called nuclear families, which consist of couples with or without children or a single parent with children.

The National Register of Persons is used extensively as a sampling frame for all kinds of surveys. These surveys may be conducted either by the Statistics Iceland or other agencies, private or public. The Register of Persons is a very good sampling frame for persons as it provides a complete coverage of all persons residing in the country. As was mentioned above it is not, however, possible to identify families or households in the Register of Persons and indeed there exists no frame of dwellings from which a sample of households can be taken. For household budget surveys a sample of persons is drawn and the household of the sampled individuals constitute the survey unit. This, however, poses some weighting problems.

The National Register of Persons is really a series of files. Two ancillary files are worth mentioning. One is for the registration of all changes that occur to a person. Every change entered into the National Register of Persons is registered in this file. This file has material from the year 1986 onwards so all changes can be traced back to that date (data on changes back to 1977 exist on film). The other file consists of registered persons who are removed from the National Register, either because they have died or have left the country and are not expected to return.

Statistical registers

Copies of the population register

For statistical purposes copies are made of the population register that refer to a particular point in time. Methods have to be developed for making the statistical register reflect the situation on that date as accurately as possible, taking into account the time-lag in the reporting of certain events. Two methods are used:

1. A reference date is selected, all updates referring to the period before this point are entered into the register for about two weeks after this date. All other updates wait. A copy is taken of the register and kept for statistical use. Reference date in Iceland for official population figures by administrative divisions is 1 December. Traditionally this method has been used to derive the statistical register used for official population counts.
2. A reference date is selected and a copy made of the population register. The file of changes is then used to make the file reflect the situation on that date as closely as possible. All changes recorded for a certain period after this date but referring to the period before the date are entered into the statistical register. This method has recently been taken up to derive statistical registers for population figures for 31 December and 1 July. From 1997, mid-year population will replace mean population as calculated earlier.

Register with migration data

From 1986, migration data has been derived from the register of changes on a monthly basis and entered into a special statistical register. All movements, both within the country and in and out of the country, are recorded on an individual basis. Extensive tabulation is produced from this register.

Register of causes of death

As well as registering deaths in the National Register of Persons, Statistics Iceland registers all data from death certificates in the register of causes of death. Cause of death is coded according to the *International Classification of Diseases*. ID-number and cause of death is entered into the register together with all other information from the death certificate. Information that Statistics Iceland uses from the National Register of Persons for its statistics on deaths and the termination of marriage at death is also entered into the register. The register is used to a considerable extent for medical research. Those who obtain permission from the Data Protection Commission to use the register send a list of ID-numbers to Statistics Iceland of those persons they wish to investigate. Statistics Iceland then links these ID-numbers to the register of causes of death.

The register now covers material for the years 1971–1995. For the years 1971–1980 ICD-8 was used for classification of diseases and ICD-9 for the years 1981–1995. From 1996 ICD-10 is used in Iceland for classification of diseases and all causes entered on the death certificate are coded.

Register of births

Maternity institutions and midwives submit birth reports to Statistics Iceland. In addition to information entered into the National Register of Persons on births, Statistics Iceland records data from the birth reports into a special file. This includes such information as date of birth of parents, marital status of parents, whether the birth is a single birth or multiple birth and the birth order. During this process data from the file of changes is combined with data entered directly from the birth reports. On the basis of this data fertility calculations are made. Machine-readable data on births is now available from the year 1987.

Register of changes in marital status

Reports on ecclesiastic marriages are obtained from Ministers of the State Lutheran Church and heads of other religious organizations, reports on civil marriages and separations from District Commissioners and on divorces from District Commissioners and the courts. Information on these vital events is entered into the National Register of Persons and linked with additional data entered explicitly for statistical purposes. Machine-readable data on these events is available from 1987.

Other events

Statistics Iceland also keeps records on the change of citizenship and adoptions. Change of citizenship is recorded in the National Register of Persons and additional data is recorded for statistical purposes. Data on adoptions is only kept for statistical purposes.

Production of statistics

Population

Population statistics are produced from the statistical registers derived from the National Register of Persons, traditionally mainly from the register referring to the population on December 1 each year. The statistical registers include all persons registered in the National Register of Persons, whether or not they reside in the country at that time and irrespective of nationality. However, official population counts only include persons domiciled in the country on the reference date. On the basis of the registers, distribution by age and sex is produced, by administrative divisions (municipalities, parishes of the State Lutheran Church), by other geographic locations, by marital status, by religious organizations, by citizenship and place (country) of birth. Counts of nuclear families by size, type and residence are also made.

Various laws state that official population counts should refer to 1 December each year. Until 1997 no statistical register for a population count for 31 December existed. Population by age, sex and marital status on 31 December was estimated from the population counts on 1 December by applying birth reports, death reports and changes in marital status during the month of December. From 1997 onwards a special statistical register will be made with 31 December as a reference date. A copy is made of the National Register on 31 December and then all changes recorded in the following January that refer to the period before 31 December will be entered into the register. In the future it will be possible to publish population counts referring to 31 December the following February or March. From 1997 onwards all population counts published by Statistics Iceland other than those required by law to refer to 1 December will have 31 December as a reference date.

Until 1997, mean population for a given year was calculated from population counts on 1 December for two consecutive years. From 1997 a special statistical register for mid-year population counts has been produced. This register is made by taking a copy of the National Register of Persons on 30 June and entering all changes from the file of changes recorded until end of the year but referring to the period before 1 July that year.

Migration

Migration statistics are produced from the register of migration data on a monthly basis, quarterly basis and a yearly basis. Date of registration is used as reference date. This year Statistics Iceland started to publish quarterly data on migration in news releases.

Vital statistics

Deaths

From the register of deaths, various statistics are produced, such as counts of deaths by age, sex and marital status, death rates and life tables. Deaths by causes of death are also tabulated. All persons domiciled in Iceland at the time of death are included in the official statistics.

Births

From the register of births, various statistics are produced such as live births by age of mother, mean age of mother, number of multiple births and births by birth order. Fertility of women is also calculated. All children whose mother is domiciled in Iceland at the time of birth are included in the official statistics.

Changes in marital status

From the registers covering marriages and divorces, these events are tabulated according to various variables such as the age of spouses. Mean age of spouses is also calculated. The criterion for

inclusion in official statistics is that two out of three possible domiciles must be in Iceland. These domiciles are, in the case of marriage, domicile of the bride, the bridegroom and of the couple after marriage, and in the case of divorce, the domicile of the couple before divorce and of the man and the woman after the divorce.

Future developments

The system of the National Register of Persons is now undergoing revision. Plans are also under way to prepare for a register-based Census in the year 2001. The most important change that has to be made to the National Register of Persons so that a register-based census is feasible is to register persons per dwelling. An experimental project was started last year to register persons per dwelling in certain municipalities. It is hoped that this project can be extended to the whole country in the next two years. Then it will be possible to identify households. The National Register of Persons will use the same unique identifiers for dwellings as are used in a national register of real estate that is being developed. When this has been achieved it should be possible to link the various statistical population registers with the register of real estate and produce tables showing the relationship between types and sizes of households and the type of accommodation available to them. This is the type of tabulation produced from a population and housing census.

Quality issues

The quality of the information in an administrative register is never better than the authority maintaining the register or the persons supplying information for registration see fit to make it. Individuals make sure the information is correct if they gain from it in some way (privileges or financial gains) and the authority enforcing the registration secures its correctness if the administration gains from it. If the citizens gain from incorrect data or inaccurate data, the tendency will be to keep the data inaccurate as long as people can get away with it. A good example of this is the registration of domicile and consensual union in Iceland. Domicile is linked to all kinds of duties and privileges. The same applies to the registration of consensual union. Single mothers get some tax benefits and privileges which they lose when they register as living in consensual union. On the other hand, they may also lose benefits by not registering.

Publications

Statistics Iceland has published reports on population and vital statistics since 1911. These reports used to be published on a five- or ten-year basis. The last published report is for the period 1971–1980. Demographic reports are also published in Monthly Statistics, the Statistical Yearbook (from 1991) and in news releases.