Australia's Population Outlook

2025-based Probabilistic Population Forecasts

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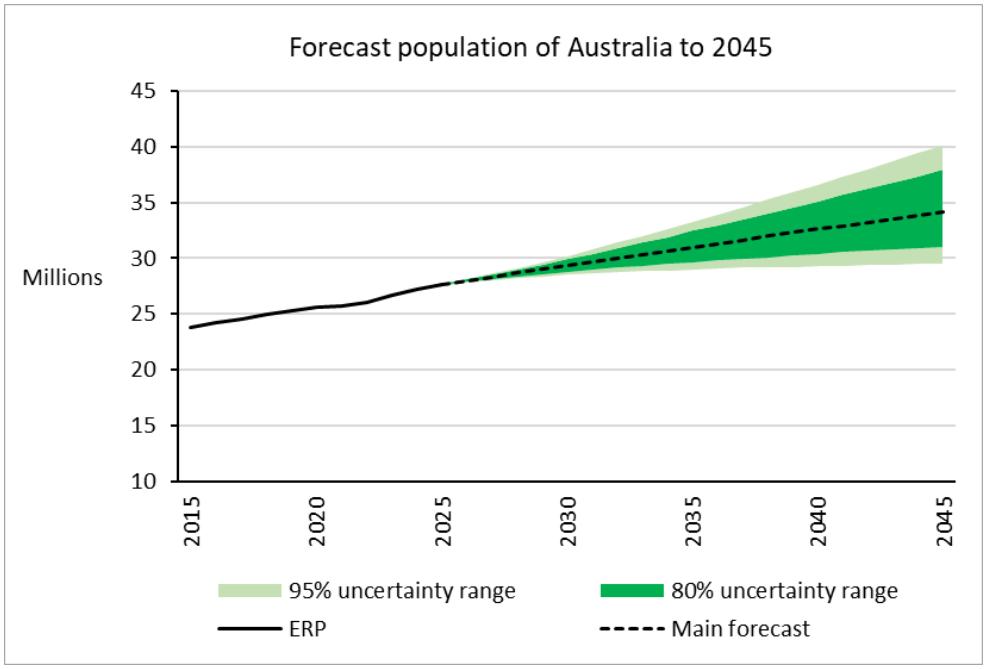
Overview

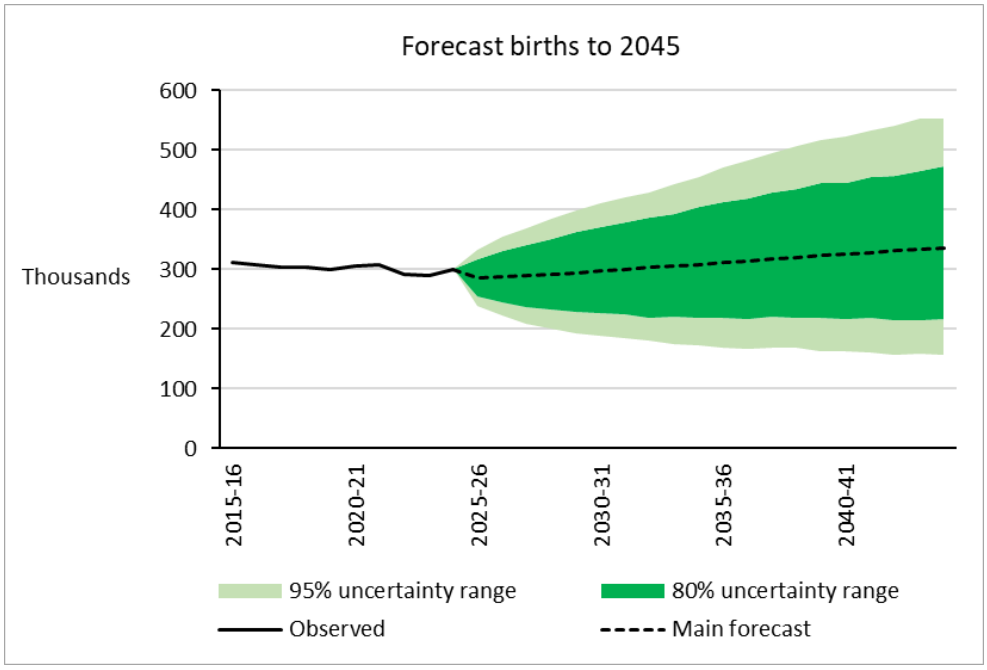
This brief report presents updated probabilistic population forecasts for Australia launched from June 2025 Estimated Resident Populations (ERPs). The forecasts have been produced for a 20 year horizon out to 2045. They were prepared in December 2025 and have a 'best before' date of the end of December 2026, when an update will be published. These are independently-prepared population forecasts which have no relation to any official forecasts or projections.

The graph below illustrates the 2025-based population forecast for Australia. The 80% uncertainty range is shown by the darker green shading, while the pale green shading illustrates the wider 95% uncertainty range. The population of 27.6 million in 2025 is forecast to increase to between 29.7 and 32.5 million by 2035 (80% uncertainty range), and to between 31.0 and 37.9 million by 2045 (80% uncertainty range). The main forecast, depicted by the dashed black line, is 31.0 million in 2035 and 34.2 million in 2045.

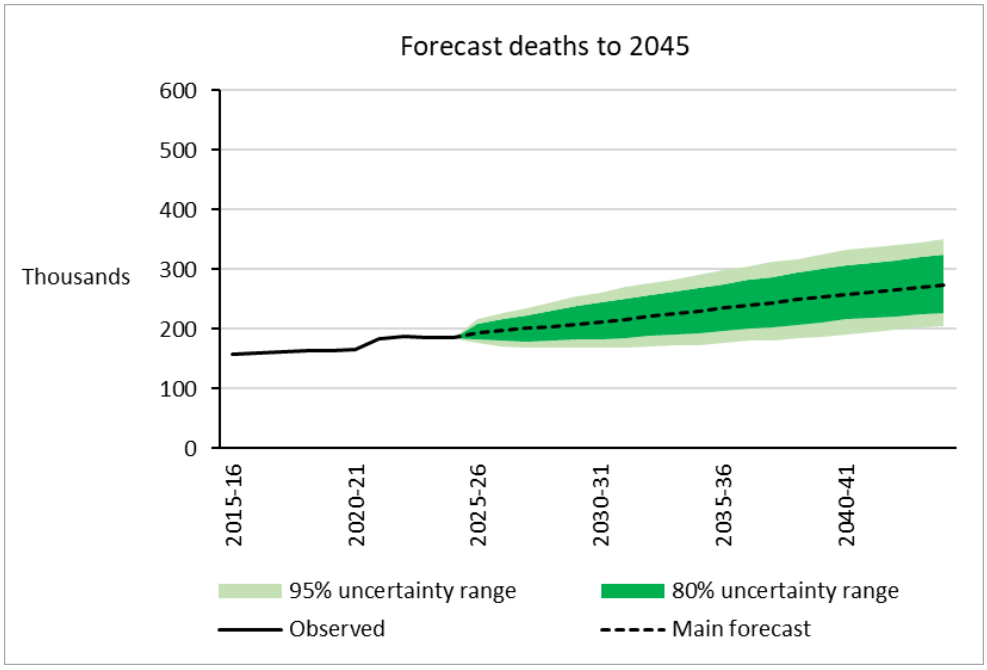


Source of ERP data: ABS

The graphs below show forecasts of the numbers of births and deaths each financial year. The number of births is forecast to be between 256,000 and 316,000 in 2025-26, between 219,000 and 405,000 by 2034-35, and between 217,000 and 472,000 by 2044-45 (all 80% uncertainty ranges). The number of deaths is forecast to be between 182,000 and 209,000 in 2025-26, between 193,000 and 269,000 in 2034-35, and between 228,000 and 324,000 in 2044-45 (all 80% uncertainty ranges). Births are more uncertain than deaths because they are affected by quite high levels of uncertainty about future fertility rates and uncertainty about the size of the female childbearing age population.

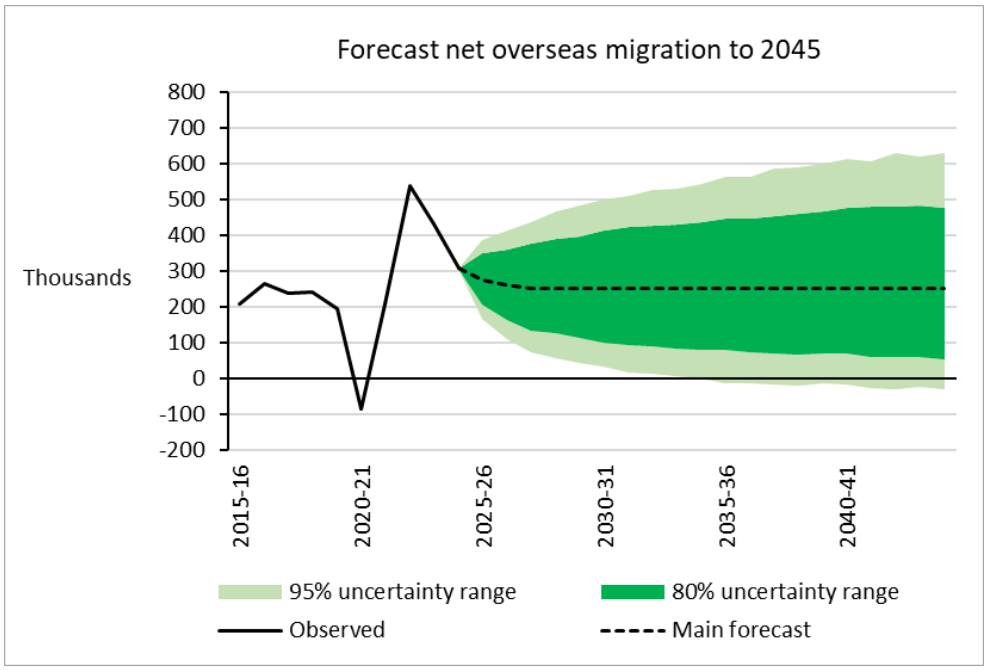


Source of observed births: ABS



Source of observed deaths: ABS

The graph below shows forecasts of net overseas migration for each financial year. As can be seen, uncertainty is considerable. By 2044-45, the 80% uncertainty range for net overseas migration spans 53,000 to 477,000 per year. It reflects the reality that, unfortunately, net overseas migration has limited forecastability.



Source of observed NOM: ABS

Tables

The tables below present the main forecasts and selected percentiles of forecast distributions. The difference between the 2.5th and 97.5th percentile is the 95% uncertainty range; the difference between the 10th and 90th percentile is the 80% uncertainty range.

Table 1: Total population forecasts (millions)

	Year				
Percentile	**2025**	**2026**	**2027**	**2035**	**2045**
2.5th	27.53	27.83	28.05	29.03	29.53
10th	27.56	27.88	28.15	29.66	31.02
Main forecast	27.61	27.98	28.33	31.00	34.19
90th	27.67	28.08	28.52	32.46	37.92
97.5th	27.70	28.13	28.62	33.29	40.10

Table 2: Forecast population aged 5-11 (millions)

	Year				
Percentile	**2025**	**2026**	**2027**	**2035**	**2045**
2.5th	2.25	2.24	2.25	1.86	1.35
10th	2.26	2.25	2.26	2.00	1.72
Main forecast	2.27	2.27	2.28	2.25	2.42
90th	2.29	2.29	2.30	2.52	3.20
97.5th	2.30	2.30	2.31	2.67	3.68

Table 3: Forecast population aged 12-17 (millions)

	Year				
Percentile	**2025**	**2026**	**2027**	**2035**	**2045**
2.5th	2.01	2.02	2.03	1.96	1.40
10th	2.01	2.03	2.04	1.99	1.61
Main forecast	2.03	2.04	2.06	2.05	2.08
90th	2.04	2.06	2.07	2.11	2.55
97.5th	2.05	2.07	2.08	2.15	2.81

Table 4: Forecast population aged 85 years and over (millions)

	Year				
Percentile	**2025**	**2026**	**2027**	**2035**	**2045**
2.5th	0.60	0.61	0.63	0.84	1.00
10th	0.60	0.62	0.64	0.89	1.13
Main forecast	0.60	0.62	0.65	0.99	1.40
90th	0.61	0.63	0.66	1.09	1.70
97.5th	0.61	0.63	0.66	1.14	1.87

Appendix 1: Preliminary evaluation of the 2024-based forecasts

How well did the 2024-based forecasts match the published ERP for 2025 and the published demographic components of change for the 2024-25 financial year? Any evaluation is preliminary at this stage because ERPs from 2022 onwards will be revised following the 2026 Census, and published births, deaths, and NOM for 2024-25 are likely to be revised by the ABS in due course. All numbers in this section are rounded to the nearest thousand.

The main forecast of total population for June 2025 according to the 2024-based forecasts was 27.657 million, with the 80% range spanning 27.559 to 27.760 million. The latest published ERP[1] for June 2025 is 27.614 million (within the 80% uncertainty range). The main forecast had an error of 0.15%.

In terms of population growth during the 2024-25 financial year, the forecast growth was 452,000 while the latest estimate of actual growth is a little lower at 420,000[2].

The main forecast of the number of births for 2024-25 was 288,000, with the 80% uncertainty range extending from 257,000 to 319,000. The latest estimate is 300,000 births in 2024-25 (though due to delays and catch-ups in birth registrations in Victoria, I suspect this will be revised downwards in due course[3]).

The main forecast of the number of deaths for 2024-25 was 186,000, with the 80% uncertainty range extending from 174,000 to 200,000. The latest estimate of the number of deaths in 2024-25 is 186,000.

The main forecast of net overseas migration for 2024-25 was 350,000, with the 80% uncertainty range spanning 275,000 to 428,000. The published value of NOM for 2024-25 is 306,000.

For selected age groups:

- The main forecast for the population aged 5-11 for 2025 was 2.276 m (2.259-2.293 m 80% uncertainty range), while the 2025 ERP is 2.272 m.
- The main forecast for the population aged 12-17 for 2025 was 2.031 m (2.016-2.047 m 80% uncertainty range), while the 2025 ERP is 2.029 m.
- The main forecast of the population aged 85+ for 2025 was 0.604 m (0.597 to 0.609 m 80% uncertainty range), while the 2025 ERP is 0.603 m.

[1] https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/jun-2025
[2] This is inconsistent with the ERP error because ABS recently revised the June 2024 ERP downwards slightly.
[3] Discussed in the Demographic Modelling Newsletter, December 2025.

Appendix 2: Technical Notes on Methods and Assumptions

Population forecasts for Australia from 2025 to 2045 were produced by the Spatially Adaptable Probabilistic Population Forecasting Model (SAPPFORM). The probabilistic forecasting approach acknowledges that population cannot be forecast precisely, but the likely range of possible population futures *can* be estimated.

Forecasts were calculated by a cohort-component model which is run 10,000 times using randomly varying fertility, mortality and migration rates. The random variation mimics the annual variability of fertility, mortality and migration observed over past decades. The initial (jump-off) population is also subject to random variation because it is also uncertain and will be revised after the next census. Varying demographic rates are based on ARIMA(1,0,0) models for fertility, immigration and emigration, and random walk with drift models for life expectancy at birth. Random variations are correlated by gender for migration and life expectancy, and correlated between immigration and emigration.

The main assumption for the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is set at 1.40 babies per woman in the long run. However, this is the main assumption, and actual fertility may well recover somewhat, or it may fall further. Table A1 presents the assumed uncertainty of future fertility by showing the range of the middle 80% of simulations (the 80% uncertainty range) and the middle 95% of simulations (the 95% uncertainty range) for selected years.

Table A1: Total Fertility Rate forecasts

	Financial year			
	2025-26	**2026-27**	**2034-35**	**2044-45**
Main assumption	1.42	1.41	1.40	1.40
80% uncertainty range	1.27-1.57	1.20-1.62	1.01-1.81	0.94-1.87
95% uncertainty range	1.19-1.65	1.09-1.74	0.81-2.01	0.70-2.10

For life expectancy at birth, the main assumption is that life expectancy will remain fractionally below the long-run trend following COVID-19. This represents a very slight change from the 2024-based forecasts. But of course, reality may be different, and the life expectancy forecast distribution includes both more pessimistic as well as more optimistic outcomes. Table A2 presents the assumed uncertainty of future life expectancy by gender for selected years.

Table A2: Life expectancy at birth forecasts (in years)

	Financial year			
	2025-26	**2026-27**	**2034-35**	**2044-45**
Females				
Main assumption	85.6	85.7	86.7	87.8
80% uncertainty range	84.9-86.3	84.8-86.7	84.5-88.9	84.9-90.8
95% uncertainty range	84.6-86.6	84.3-87.2	83.4-90.0	83.3-92.4
Males				
Main assumption	81.6	81.8	83.0	84.3
80% uncertainty range	80.9-82.3	80.8-82.8	80.8-85.2	81.2-87.5
95% uncertainty range	80.6-82.7	80.3-83.3	79.5-86.3	79.6-89.1

Migration forecasts are calculated in terms of immigration and emigration in the cohort-component model, though they are constrained to annual net overseas migration (NOM) forecasts. The long-run assumption reflects my view that despite their public pronouncements on controlling and reducing migration, both major political parties in Australia are generally supportive of high NOM because of its contribution to economic growth and its moderating effects on population ageing. However, migration forecasting in the past has proved notoriously error-prone, and is likely to remain so. Huge fluctuations in NOM have occurred over quite short time periods, and these forecasts assume that a similarly wide range in NOM values is possible in the future. Table A3 presents the assumed uncertainty of future NOM for Australia.

Table A3: Annual net overseas migration forecasts (thousands)

	Financial year			
	2025-26	**2026-27**	**2034-35**	**2044-45**
Main assumption	275	260	250	250
80% uncertainty range	204-347	161-359	79-437	53-477
95% uncertainty range	166-386	109-412	-1-543	-32-630

Suggested citation
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