



Australian Bureau of Statistics

Statistical Language - What is Metadata?



What is Metadata?

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Alternatively, read the transcripts, attached below, containing a text version of the information displayed in the Flash Animation.

This animation explains the concept of metadata. If you are unable to access the video a Transcript (.doc 27kb) has been provided. The animation requires [Adobe Flash Player](#) to run. The animation contains no audio.

What is metadata?

Metadata is the information that defines and describes data.

It is often referred to as *data about data* or *information about data* because it provides data users with information about the purpose, processes, and methods involved in the data collection.

How is metadata presented?

Metadata provides information about all aspects of data collection; from design through to communication.

For example, metadata may appear alongside the data in the form of graph labels and footnotes, or may be compiled as explanatory notes that contain information such as a definition and description of the population, the source of the data, and the methodology used,

to assist with the interpretation of the data.

Why is metadata important?

The processes used to collect data and produce statistics may influence the suitability of the information for different statistical purposes.

Metadata provides information to enable the user to make an informed decision about whether the data are fit for the required purpose.

Further information

External links:

[About Metadata](#)

[OECD Definition of Statistical Metadata](#)

[Return to Statistical Language Homepage](#)

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