Analysing Charts

The purpose of analysing charts, graphs, tables and diagrams is to turn *data* (facts, figures and numbers) into *information* (describing the meaning behind the data).

The basic format for a description of what a chart shows can be broken up like this:

Introduction

-Explain what the graph shows (this can usually be divined from the heading).

-Explain how it's grouped or organised (this can be seen from the different categories used in the graph and the time period over which it is displayed)

Most significant statistics

-What is the biggest/most noticeable statistic/variation

Less significant statistics/Significant minorities

-What are some other significant statistics?

-Are there any smaller/minority statistics which are still significant?

Trends/Patterns/Anomalies

-What do we notice about the statistics?

-How do they change over time?

-Is there anything unusual about the data?

Comparisons/Contrasts

-How do the statistics compare/contrast to one another?

-How are they similar or different?

Conclusion

-Overall, what can be seen from the data?

Use of language

When writing up an analysis of a graph, it's important to use certain language in order to make it easily digestible and understandable for the reader.

Qualifiers:
"almost," "nearly," "around," "about," "close to," "just over," "just under."

Qualifiers are used to make sure that a sentence is true. If, for example, a statistic show that 47% percent of visitors to New Zealand go for a holiday, we can say "*almost* half," or "*around* one in two visitors."

Hard statistics:
Hard statistics are used to give solid data and exactly figures

"*47%* of people visit NZ to go on holiday."

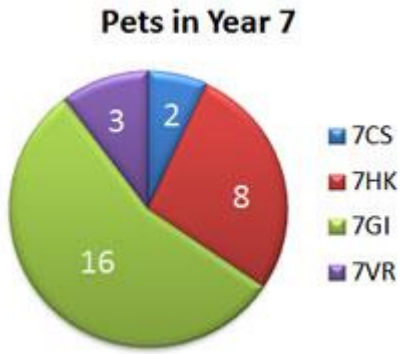
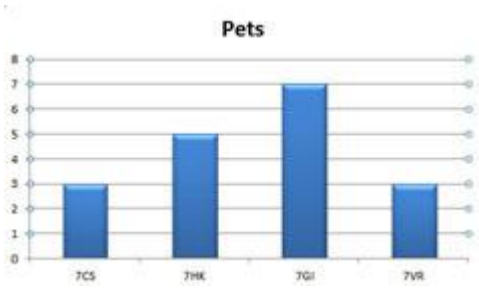
Soft statistics:

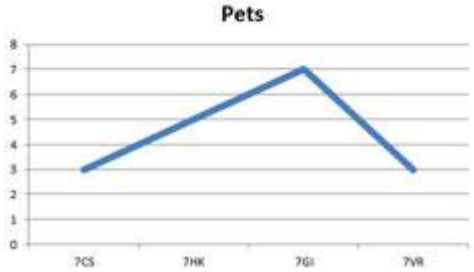
Soft statistics are often combined with qualifiers to give a colourful representation of what a hard statistics means.

For example: "20%, or one in five people…" "32% of people, accounting for *almost one third*…"

There are various types of charts. In the following example we show the numbers of pets in Year 7 of a school.

Types of charts

Charts	English
	table
	pie chart
	bar chart

Charts	English
	line graph

List with phrases to describe charts

- The pie chart is about ...
- The bar chart deals with ...
- The line graph (clearly) shows ...
- The slices of the pie chart compare the ...
- The chart is divided into ... parts.
- It highlights ...
- ... has the largest (number of) ...
- ... has the second largest (number of) ...
- ... is as big as ...
- ... is twice as big as ...
- ... is bigger than ...
- more than ... per cent ...
- only one third ...
- less than half ...
- The number ... increases/goes up/grows by ...
- The number ... decreases/goes down/sinks by ...
- The number ... does not change/remains stable
- I was really surprised/shocked by the ...

- So we can say ...

Use of Tenses

Mind the correct use of tenses when describung a chart. If the charts deals with facts in the present (as in our example), use the Simple Present, if the facts are the past, then use the Simple Past. If there is a connection between the past and the present, use the Present Perfect.

How to describe a chart

With the following example we would like to show you how charts are described. Mind the three parts and do not repeat the global message in the conclusion.

A Pets in Year 7 at a school

We have chosen the pie chart because we think it shows the number of pets in Year 7 best.

1 Introduction

Here you say what the diagram is about. Mind the title of it and do not forget to include the source.

The pie chart is about the pets in Year 7. The chart is divided into 5 parts. It is taken from ...

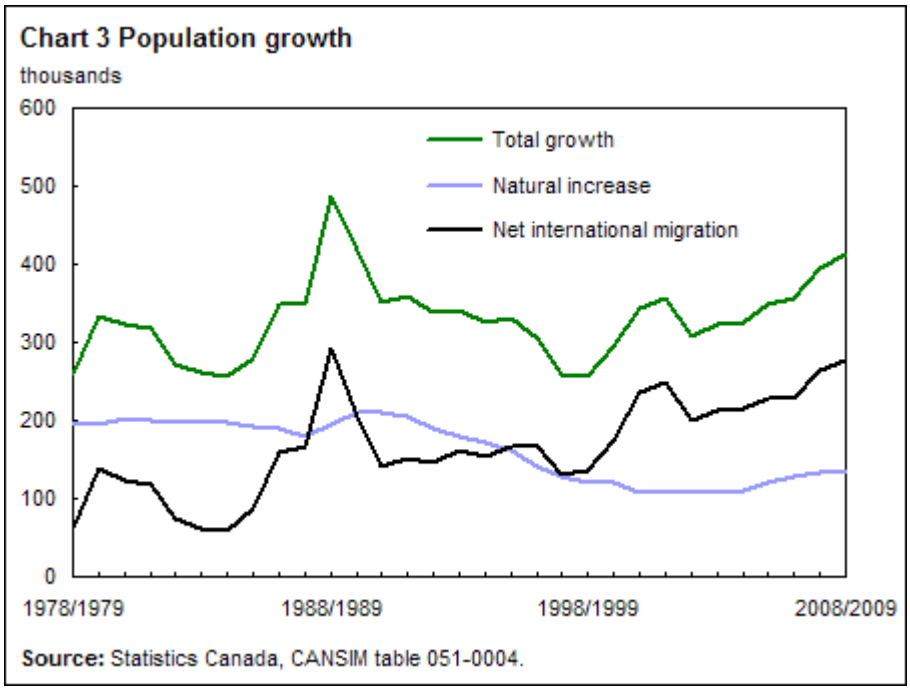
2 Message of the diagram

The largest number of pets are in form 7GI. There are 16 pets.
The second largest number of pets are in form 7HK. There are 8 pets.
So there are more than twice as many pets in form 7GI.
The chart shows that there are only 2 pets in form 7CS and 3 in form 7VR.

3 Conclusion

So we can say that the most pets of Year 7 are in form 7GI and the least in form 7CS. There are more than 50 per cent of all the pets in one form - form 7GI.

B Population growth in Canada



This graph shows the growth of the population in Canada from 1978 to 2009. It is taken from the website about Statistics in Canada.

There are three graphs in the chart. The green graph shows the total growth of the population, the black one deals with the migrated people in Canada and the blue graph shows the natural increase of the population. In 1988/89 there was an enourmous growth. In the following years the total growth went down to about 250,000 in 1998/99. From that time on the Canadian population has been gradually growing again although the natural increase slows down. So we can say that the growth of the population in Canada is based on migration.