

section two

Our people

A diverse population



Our people

Introduction

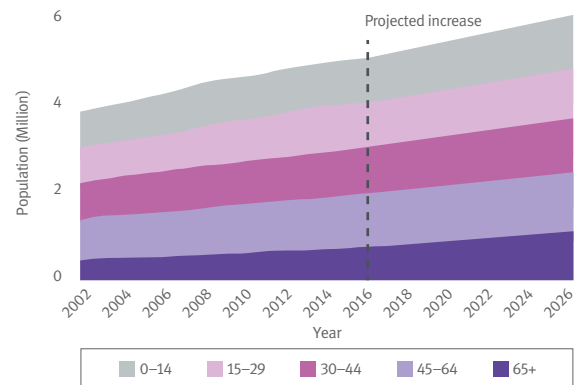
Our people are Queensland’s most important asset. Queensland has the third largest population in Australia. The State’s land mass covers 23% (1,730,648 km²) of the Australian continent yet more than half of its population resides in the South East. Queensland’s geography ranges from sandy beaches and tropical islands to rainforests to dry deserts and its climate ranges from hot desert/semi-arid through to tropical monsoon. The diversity of Queensland’s geography and climate is reflected in the diversity of its people, their social and physical environments, and their health status. Queensland’s people are frequently affected by drought, heatwaves, bushfires, tropical cyclones and floods and these factors play an increasing role in overall health and the ability of governments, health services providers and communities themselves to respond.

This chapter presents an overview of the key demographic characteristics of Queensland (Figure 2.1) including population growth, age and sex distributions, socioeconomic and diversity indices, and regional characteristics.

Our population and growth

In 2018, Queenslanders represented approximately 20% (5,011,216) of Australia’s population. The Queensland population is projected to grow by 14% to 5,720,000 by 2026 (Figure 2.2).²¹ The largest driver of population growth in Queensland is natural increase (36%), followed by net overseas migration (34%) and net interstate migration (30%).^{22,23} The natural increase of about 30,000 people in 2017–18 included more than 60,000 babies born, offset by about 31,000 deaths. Net overseas migration was 16% lower in 2017–18 than in 2016–17. Temporary visa holders (86%) represented the largest contribution to Queensland’s net overseas migration in 2017–18. Net interstate migration from Australian states and territories contributed about 24,700 people to Queensland in 2017–18.

Figure 2.2 Population growth by age, Queensland, 2002–2026²¹



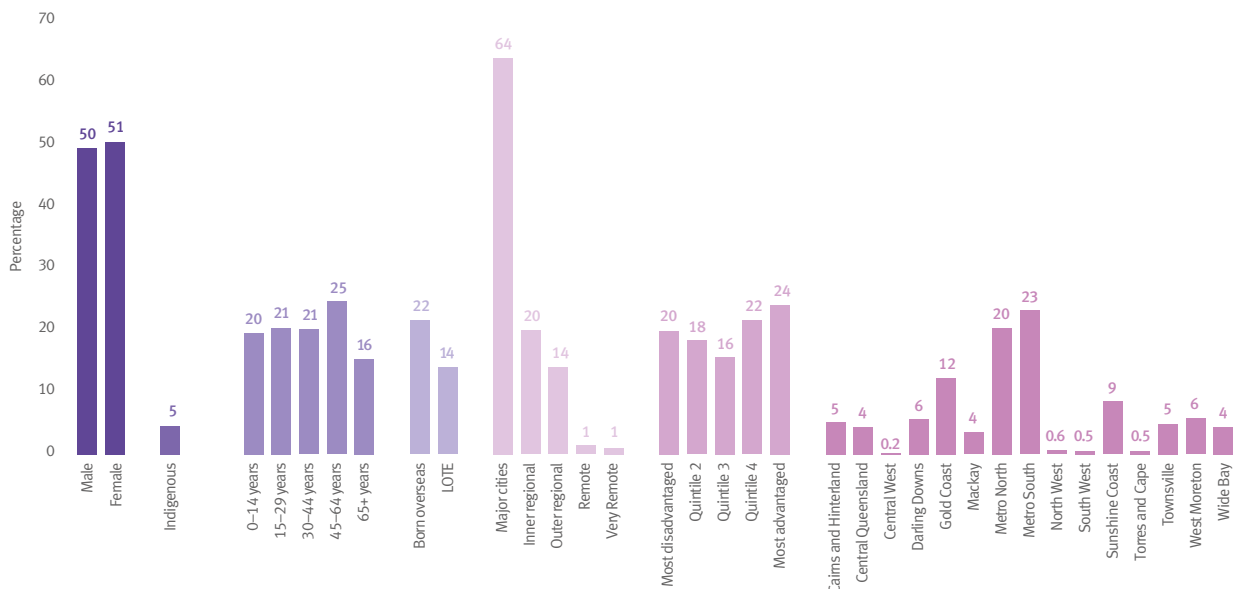
See the [online visualisation](#) for more information

Rural, regional and remote Queensland

Rural, regional and remote areas of Queensland are great places to live and work, however, there are specific population issues of concern in these regions of the state. These include declining population growth due to outmigration of youth and environmental and economic challenges, particularly natural disasters such as drought. These contribute to the ageing of these communities and accelerate challenges with respect to workforce and skills shortages, downturns in service and business viability and equitable access to health care.²⁴

Areas of population decline in Queensland include the North West, Central West and the South West Hospital and Health Service (HHS) areas with declines of 12%, 14% and 7% from 2011 to 2017.²⁵

Figure 2.1 Key population characteristics,¹ Queensland, 2018²⁰



1 LOTE: Languages other than English

Children

The social and physical environments of a child, including during foetal development, are key determinants of health and wellbeing across the lifespan. Safe and healthy environments that incorporate responsive caregiving and nurturing ensure children develop to their full potential.²⁶ In 2018, there were about 980,000 children aged 0–14 years in Queensland—19.6% of the total population (Figure 2.2). Of all families in Queensland in 2016 (1,221,148), 430,937 were couple families with children less than 15 years of age and/or dependent students and 136,240 were one-parent families with children less than 15 years of age and/or dependent students.²³

In 2019, 34.9% of Queensland children aged 0–12 years were attending Australian Government subsidy approved childcare services—the national proportion was 31.5%.²⁴



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children comprised 8.3% of children aged 0–12 years in the community and they represented 5.9% of childcare attendees. Children with a disability represented 7.4% of children in the community but only 2.7% of childcare attendees. Low income families represented 25% of childcare attendees (18% in the community). Children from regional and remote areas were under-represented among childcare attendees.²⁸

In 2019, 335,804 (52.2%) Australian children aged four or five years were enrolled in a preschool program (328,134 attending) and 63,135 (47.9%) Queensland children were enrolled (61,592 attending).^{28,29} Of Queensland children, 5637 of those enrolled were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander of whom 5430 were attending, with 676 (12%) of those in remote/very remote regions.^{28,29} This was a 16% increase from 2018 in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in preschool in Queensland.^{28,29}

In 2019, school attendance for eligible Queensland children was 92.1% for Years 1–6 (93.0% in 2015) and 89.7% (91.1% in 2015) for Years 7–10.³⁰ This was comparable to national proportions of 92.4% and 89.9% respectively. Apparent Year 12 retention (that is, the proportion of children from the respective Year 10 cohort who completed Year 12) for all fulltime students in 2018 was 83.7% (79.2% nationally). The corresponding proportion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were 73.1% for Queensland and 59.8% nationally.³⁰

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's engagement with Year 12 has improved markedly from the 46.7% reported in 2009.

To obtain more information about children in Queensland, The Growing Up in Queensland Study that was conducted in 2018 interviewed more than 7000 children from more than 40 communities in Queensland. It provides a detailed overview of what children and young people consider important to their current and future wellbeing.^{31,32}

Young people

The transition from child to adult is characterised by important stages in physical, intellectual and emotional development. These stages are informed and influenced by the development of autonomous identities, independent social networks and the initiation of intimate relationships. It is a period of developing the capacity to make their own decisions and thus the time when young people make important health and wellbeing choices. In 2018, there were about 1,020,000 young people aged 15–29 years in Queensland—20% of the population.²⁰

At a glance

The 2018 Queensland population was 5,011,216 persons

Areas of population decline in Queensland include the north-west, central-west and south-west

From 2013 to 2018, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders aged 65 years and older increased from about 6900 to 10,000

Queensland is home to people from more than 220 countries, who speak more than 300 languages and belong to more than 100 religions





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Half of young people aged 18–29 years live with their parents.

Nationally, among those aged 15–24 years, the majority live in couple-parent or single parent households but a small share (6.6%) live in couple households without children and 4.6% live alone.³³ Queensland has experienced higher growth in the proportion of young people aged 18–29 years living at home compared with the rest of the country, rising from 31% in 2001 to 52% in 2017.³³

Nationally, the proportion of young adult women living with their parents increased by 48% compared to 20% for men. The reasons for the increase are complex, however, economic and educational factors as well as marriage decline are likely to be key drivers as they are over-represented among the unemployed, non-working fulltime students and those who are single.³³

In 2019, proportionate to population size, 81% of 15–19 year-olds, 70% of 20–24 year-olds and 73% of 25–29 year-olds were fully engaged in work and/or study (83% in major cities, 74% in inner regional areas and 72% in outer regional and remote areas).^{33,34} There has been no clear trend in young people fully engaged in work and/or study in Queensland over the past 10 years.

Younger and middle-aged adults

The period from 30–64 years of age is dominated by employment, careers and job security, finding a stable place to call home, consolidating social networks, establishing and nurturing long-term relationships, raising children and planning for retirement. It is also the period in which many chronic diseases of adulthood transition from pre-clinical to clinical conditions and thus when early screening and detection are key to reducing the burden of disease.

In 2018, there were about 2,250,000 people aged 30–64 years living in Queensland, representing 45% of the population.²⁰

- In 2019, an estimated 645,000 (64%) younger adults aged 30–44 years and 695,000 (56%) aged 45–64 years were currently fully engaged in employment and/or enrolled in some form of study.³⁴

- Nationally in 2014, 17% of 35–44 year-olds, 26% of 45–54 year-olds and 32% of 55–64 year-olds had cared for a person with a disability, long-term condition or older person in a 4-week period and 29%, 29% and 36% respectively were providing support to other relatives living outside the household.³⁶
- Approximately 9–16% of those aged 35–64 years of age were living alone in 2014.³⁶
- Between 13–16% of people aged 35–64 years had experienced homelessness in 2014.³⁶
- In 2017–18, of the 21% of Australian males and 24% of Australian females aged 15–64 years who had no superannuation coverage, 16% were males and 22% were females aged 55–64 years.³⁷



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Older people

The ageing of the population is possibly the most important demographic change that is occurring in developed countries. As medical advances extend life, key components of health and wellbeing such as quality of life for our older people become more important. Thus, initiatives that facilitate independence, active participation in society and the ability to spend as much time as possible in their own homes, close to family and friends, will be increasingly needed.

In 2018, there were about 770,000 people aged 65 years and older in Queensland—15.4% of the population. The proportion of people in this age group is expected to reach 17.3% in 2026.

In 2017–18, it was estimated that 35% of Australians aged 65–74 years lived in single person households, increasing to 52% among those aged 75 years and over.³⁸ Approximately 70% of those aged 65–74 years lived in households that were owned without a mortgage, increasing to 74% in those aged 75 years and older. Similarly, the majority lived in households in which there were no persons in the labour force (65% and 90% respectively). The contribution of government pensions

and allowances to gross household income was 90% or more in 31% of households in which the reference person was aged 65–74 years and 49% for those aged 75 years and older.³⁸



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Queensland

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the world's oldest living culture with many strengths to be celebrated. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience health inequity which is due to a variety of reasons, including systemic racism that continues to pervade daily life. We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are best placed to define what their health needs are and what solutions are most appropriate. While moving forward we plan to have a strong partnership focus, we are not relinquishing our responsibility to eliminate systemic racism in our health services and promote environments that are culturally safe.

In 2018, one-third (34%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Queensland were aged 0–14 years (82,500), and 28% were aged 15–29 years (67,300).²¹

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland is projected to decrease to 32% by 2026 and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to remain similar at 28% by 2026.³⁹ The proportion of younger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults is projected to remain similar at 17% in 2020 and 18% by 2026 and to remain the same for middle-aged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults at 16% in both 2020 and 2026.³⁹

From 2013 to 2018, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland aged 65 years and older increased from about 6900 to 10,000, an increase of the total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population from 3.3% to 4.3%.³⁹ The proportion of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is projected to increase from 4.8% in 2020 to 6.3% in 2026.³⁹

Language is a key element of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's sense of identity, cultural expression, spiritual and intellectual sovereignty and wellbeing.⁴⁰ However, a consequence of colonisation, removal, or migration from traditional lands and government policy up until the 1970s has been the loss of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. In many areas of Australia attempts are being made

to restore and preserve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. In the Torres Strait and Cape York Indigenous Regions, 78% and 40% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents respectively spoke an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language at home.⁴¹ Less than 10% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Queensland reported speaking an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language at home in 2016, a decline of 20% since 2006.⁴¹

Fourteen per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households were lone person and 5.1% were multiple family compared to 24.0% and 2.0% among other Queenslanders. Single parent (36%) or couple-parent (40%) families with children predominated in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households.⁴¹

More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Queensland rent than own or have a mortgage on their home than other Queenslanders, equivalised household incomes remain lower, and the difference in median total weekly household incomes has continued to grow from 2006 (from \$138 to \$190 per week).⁴¹



Diversity

The diversity of a population generates substantial social, cultural and economic benefits. Valuing diversity is important to the health and wellbeing of individuals and their communities, as well as to the quality of policies and strategies aimed at promoting equity, creativity, innovation and adaptability in societies and organisations.⁴²

Country of birth

Queensland is home to people from more than 220 countries, who speak more than 300 languages, and inclusive of more than 100 religions.⁴³ Of those born overseas, New Zealand (4.3%), England (3.8%), India (1.0%) and China (1.0%) were the most common countries of birth. One in four Queenslanders (26%) reported both parents were born overseas and 11% had one parent who was born overseas. One in seven people (14%) spoke a language other than English at home in 2016, the most common being Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Cantonese.⁴³ Detailed data on the characteristics of Queensland's overseas population can be found in the Queensland Government's *Diversity Figures* report.⁴⁴



Budd photography

Religion

Religion and spirituality are known determinants of health behaviours and health outcomes, both positive and negative. Religious affiliation in Australia is decreasing, with an estimated 0.2% of Australians in 1911 reporting no religion compared to 30% of Australians in 2016.⁴⁵ The reasons for this change are complex but thought to be related to the increasing pluralisation and liberalisation of developed societies.⁴⁵ In 2016, the largest religious groups were Western (Roman) Catholic (21.7%) and Anglican (15.3%) whereas Islam (3.6%), Buddhism (3.2%) and Hinduism (2.6%) comprised the largest of the non-Christian religions; 29.5% of people reported no religion and 9.5% did not answer the question.⁴⁶



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International students

With a steady increase in the number of international students in Australia, greater attention is being paid to the health and wellbeing of these students, as well as the resulting impact on our health systems.^{47,48}

In March 2020, there were 91,270 international students in Queensland compared to 80,297 students in 2010.⁴⁸ Students from China, India and South Korea accounted for 41% of international students. Students were enrolled in 97,957 courses (average of 1.1 per student) and most of these courses were in higher education (48%).⁴⁹ While only 5% of international students in Queensland were located in regional areas, Cairns, Toowoomba and Townsville were among the top six regional centres nationally for international student enrolments.⁵⁰

Refugees

The health and wellbeing of refugees is highly dependent on their experiences prior to and after arrival. In 2018–19, 3037 persons from 48 countries arrived in Queensland through the Humanitarian Settlement Program (50% female), representing 18% of Australia’s humanitarian intake.⁵¹ The Brisbane, Toowoomba and Logan LGAs accepted the largest number of arrivals (738, 720 and 556 respectively). The largest number of people came from Iraq (800) and The Democratic Republic of the Congo (607). Children aged 0–14 years comprised 1266 (42%) of Queensland arrivals and there were 63 (2%) persons aged 65 years and older.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ+)

The number of Australians who identify as non-heterosexual is increasing.⁵² Multiple studies internationally have demonstrated that experiences of stigmatisation, prejudice and discrimination have been contributing factors to the poorer health and wellbeing experienced by those who identify as LGBTIQ+.⁵³ In 2016, an estimated 3.0% of Queensland adults aged 18 years and older identified as LGBTIQ+.⁵²

The 2016 Census reported same-sex couples in Australia represented around 1 in 100 of all couple families (either with or without children), a 39% increase on the 2011 Census.⁴⁶ This is likely due to increasing willingness to identify and improvements in the rights of same-sex couples. Just under half of same-sex couples were female (49%), and one-quarter (25%) of female same-sex couples had children in 2016. A considerably smaller proportion of male same-sex couples had children (4.5%). The proportion of same-sex couple families in Australia with children increased from 12% in 2011 to 15% in 2016 and the percentages with children for female and male couples were unchanged.

People with disabilities

The Queensland Government’s vision is for people with disability to be welcomed, valued and respected members of their communities. This is reflected in the *Everybody has a role to play—All Abilities Queensland* initiative that was established under the State Disability Plan 2017–2020.^{54,55}



Queensland Health Asset Library

It was estimated that 19% of Queenslanders were living with a disability and in 2018–19²³ there were an estimated 285,000 Queenslanders living with severe or profound disability that imposed limitations on their core activities. Approximately 3%

of Queenslanders 15 years or older with a disability were living in cared accommodation.²³ Of those in households, about one in four people were living alone. About 49% Queenslanders aged 65 years or older were living with a disability in 2018—an estimated 377,300 people. Among older Queenslanders, 14% were living with severe or profound disability.²³

Residents of aged care facilities

Residents of aged care facilities are a growing demographic in Queensland as our population ages. The period of transition from independence to the need for residential aged care creates challenges for individuals, their families and service providers that significantly influence their physical and mental health and wellbeing. The needs of residents, and their caregivers, has received increasing attention in recent years, particularly through the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. In 2017–18 there were 49,158 people in residential aged care facilities in Queensland.⁵⁶ Approximately 7% of the target population for residential aged care in Queensland (that is, adults aged 65 years and older and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50–64 years) are living in aged care.⁵⁷



In 2017–18, approximately 0.4% of men and 0.2% of women in residential aged care were less than 50 years of age—of those, 89% had a selfcare limitation, 63% had a movement limitation and 52% had a communication limitation.⁵⁸ In 2013–14, 15.5% of people aged less than 50 years who entered permanent residential aged care nationally were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people compared to 6.6% of those aged 65 years and older. The proportion of people aged less than 50 years in aged care who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has risen progressively since 2003–04 (9%).⁵⁸

Carers

Carers are those people who look after someone, usually a relative or friend, who needs help with their day-to-day living. The recipients of care comprise those with a disability, mental health problems, a medical problem or the frail aged. It is estimated that it would cost \$60.3 billion annually to replace carers in Australia.²³

About 11% of Australians will become an unpaid carer at some point and carers can be any age. In Queensland, approximately 10% of people are carers of whom 11.5% are young carers (carers under 25 years of age). Over half of carers (56%) are not working and not looking for work and 6% are in paid full-time work.⁵⁹ Approximately 7% of Queensland carers identify as

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons and a further 10% are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The most common primary diagnosis of care recipients is physical/spinal cord injury (20%), followed by autism (18%). The frail aged and people with dementia or Alzheimer's disease represent 7% and 8% of care recipients respectively. Half of Queensland's carers are providing 12 or more hours of care and support per day.⁶⁰

Prisoners and youth in detention

Imprisonment and youth detention are largely consequences of adverse social, economic, physical and family environments. A history of child-abuse and domestic violence is common, and people in prison or detention often have complex pre-existing and ongoing health problems.⁶¹

In 2018, 8843 prisoners were in full-time custody in Queensland on an average day; 91% (8003) were males, 9.5% (840) were females and 31% (2781) were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.³⁵ In 2018, there were 20,630 people in community-based correction facilities—76% (15,751) were males, 24% (4879) were females and 23% (4798) were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.³⁵ The median age of adult prisoners was 33 years of age and overseas-born prisoners accounted for 12% of the Queensland adult prisoner population. The median aggregate sentence length was three years.

In Australia, children may be charged with a criminal offence if they are aged 10 years or older.⁶² The upper age limit in the youth justice system is 17 years (at the time of the offence) in all states and territories. On an average night in the June quarter of 2019, there were 949 Australian youth in detention (90% male). Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people nationally made up about half (500 or 53%) of all those in detention on an average night in the June quarter of 2019 equating to a detention rate 21 times higher than other Australian youth.⁶²



The homeless

The definition of homeless includes sleeping rough as well as staying in temporary, unstable or substandard accommodation. Homelessness is on the rise in Australia.⁶³ Homelessness can affect anyone at any stage of life and, although the causal pathways are complex in Australia, it is frequently a result of financial difficulties and family and domestic violence—financial difficulties (47%), housing crisis (41%), and housing affordability stress (35%).⁶⁴

There were an estimated 21,760 homeless people in Queensland in 2016. Of these, 58% were male, 8% were sleeping rough and 17% were in specific accommodation for the homeless.⁶⁵ Almost half (45%) of those who were homeless had a personal income of less than \$400 per week and 38% were born overseas. In Queensland in 2016, one in five (21%) people experiencing homelessness identified as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person.⁶⁶ The largest number of homeless persons were young adults aged 25–34 years (3968, 18%) followed by children aged under 12 years (2979, 14%).⁶⁶

Broad socioeconomic factors

In the 2016 census, seven of Australia’s top 10 most disadvantaged LGAs were in Queensland and there were no Queensland LGAs in Australia’s top 10 most advantaged.

Nationally, more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lived in disadvantaged areas (48% in the most disadvantaged areas) than other Australians (18%). Nationally, 5.3% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lived in areas of the highest relative advantage compared with 22% of other Australians. For those born overseas, 20% were in the most disadvantaged areas and 24% were in the most advantaged compared to 19% and 20% of Australian-born persons respectively.²²



Employment

Prior to the implementation of policies to contain the spread of COVID-19, the unemployment rate in Queensland in March 2020 was 5.7% with the range over the previous five years being from 5.7 to 6.4%. The under-employment rate was 8.8% and unchanged from March 2019.⁶⁷

In 2018, the employment rate was around 49% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people nationally compared to around 75% for other Australians.⁶⁸ The difference was widest in remote and very remote Australia.⁶⁸ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with higher levels of education had employment rates similar to those of other Australians.

Household economic wellbeing

Household equivalised income is a measure of material living standards, obtained by adjusting household disposable income for the household’s needs.³⁸ For example, a household of six people will require a greater household income than that of one person, however, other factors such as age and sex, health,

home ownership status and region of residence should be included in determining need. From 2012–13 to 2016–17, there was a 1.1% increase in median equivalised incomes among residents of the Brisbane region (\$51,078 to \$51,652 in 2017 dollars) compared to a 0.5% increase (\$41,779 to \$41,971) for the rest of Queensland over that time period.³³ Given COVID-19 in 2020, estimates of household economic wellbeing need to be interpreted cautiously.

Education and training

In 2018, 81% of males and 87% of females (84% combined) in the Queensland potential Year 12 population of that year attained Year 12 certification.⁶⁹ This compares to 75% of males and 83% of females nationally.⁶⁹ The proportion of females obtaining certification was higher than males across all socioeconomic status categories and the overall certification rate in the lowest socioeconomic group (84%) was the same as Queensland overall. The lowest certification was for students in remote or very remote regions (72%).

Year 12 certification nationally has risen progressively from 64% reported in 2009.⁶⁹ From 2008 to 2018–19, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20–24 years attaining Year 12 or equivalent increased by about 21%.³⁰

In Queensland in 2018–19, there were 238,533 students (7.4% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) participating in a publicly funded Australian Vocational and Education Training (VET) programme, a decline from 256,302 students in 2014–15.⁷⁰ Approximately one-third (32%) of VET students were aged 15–19 years, 6.2% had a disability and 46.8% were female. The percentage of students with a disability were the only demographic that did not decline from 2016–17.⁷⁰

In 2019, 27% of Queenslanders aged 20–64 years had a non-school qualification at Bachelor degree level or above compared to 21% in 2009.³⁴ The proportion of Queenslanders aged 25–34 years with this level of education increased from 26% to 34% over that time period. In 2018–19, 39% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20–64 years reported having a non-school qualification at Certificate III/IV, Diploma or Advanced Diploma level and 6.4% reported having a Bachelor degree or above.⁷¹ In 2018, there were 5229 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled or commencing in higher education courses in Queensland, 42% of whom were commencing their courses. This compares to 2541 students in 2009 with 45% commencing.⁷²

