

Queensland's population



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- The Queensland population was estimated at 4.85 million in 2016, 5.00 million by 2018 and with continuing growth is projected to reach 5.73 million by 2026. Over the past decade, the growth rate in Queensland was third highest of the jurisdictions.
- In 2016, 15% of Queenslanders were aged 65 years and older compared with 13% in 2011. This ageing shift in the population is widespread and an ongoing trend.
- An estimated 955,000 children were living in Queensland in 2016. Numbers are projected to increase to 1.1 million by 2026.
- Queensland's population is clustered around the cities and coastlines. Less than 5% of the population lived in remote and very remote areas in 2016 (128,000), and over half in major cities.
- In 2016, there were about 221,000 Indigenous Queenslanders, representing 4.6% of the Queensland population. Queensland has the second largest Indigenous population after New South Wales and the second highest proportion after the Northern Territory. While Indigenous Queenslanders generally have a younger age profile, the proportion of older people is gradually increasing, indicative of small gains in premature death rate reduction.
- In 2015, there were more than 60,000 births and about 30,000 deaths in Queensland. Overseas and interstate migration brought 25,000 and 11,600 new residents respectively, resulting in a net gain of about 64,500 people.
- 18% of Queenslanders (about 854,000 people) were living in areas of greatest disadvantage based on a range of socioeconomic characteristics.
- More than 1.33 million Queenslanders aged 15 years and older were in full-time work (58% of the labour force) and almost 700,000 in part-time work (30%) in 2016. More than 900,000 people worked 40 hours or more per week. 1.2 million were not in the labour force.
- 18% of Queenslanders reported having a disability with 6% having a severe or profound disability in 2015.
- About 21,700 Queenslanders were homeless in 2016.
- Queensland is a state of cultural and social diversity with almost 30% of the population born overseas, 14% of households speak a language other than English at home, 17% of families are single parent families with children, and 3% of individuals identify as LGBTQI.

Growing and ageing

The Queensland population grew from 4.01 million in 2006 to an estimated 4.85 million in 2016, an overall increase of 841,000 people. It is projected to reach 5.00 million by 2018 and 5.73 million by 2026.⁶

Compared to other jurisdictions, population growth in Queensland was third highest (21% increase) after Western Australia and Victoria.⁷

The Queensland population in 2016 was clustered around the cities and coastlines, with more than half in major cities (3,072,000, 63%), and about one-third in inner regional (969,000, 20%) and outer regional areas (696,000, 14%).⁸ The remainder lived in remote and very remote areas (65,000, 1.3% and 46,000, 1%, respectively).

An ageing population is a key issue in health planning and is driving a shift towards chronic disease prevention and management. In 2016, there were about 714,000 Queenslanders aged 65 years or older⁹, projected to increase to about one million by 2026.⁶ Over the past decade the number of people aged 65 years and older increased by 47% while the total population increased by 21%.⁹

Children and young people

In 2016, there were 955,000 children aged 0–14 years in Queensland (988,000 projected in 2018). The number of children increased by 17% in the past decade⁹ and is projected to reach about one million by 2026.⁶ If projection assumptions are achieved, by 2026 the number of children will be similar to the number of older people. The proportion of children in Queensland has decreased over time and is projected to fall to 19% by 2026.

There were 998,000 young people aged 15–29 years in Queensland in 2016, with the number projected to increase to 1.1 million by 2026 (11% increase). The proportion of 15–29 year olds in the population is projected to decrease, from 21% in 2016 to 19% in 2026.

Indigenous Queenslanders

There were about 221,000 Indigenous Queenslanders in 2016 (224,000 projected in 2018¹⁰), 4.6% of the state's population.¹¹ The age profile of Indigenous Queenslanders was younger than that of the non-Indigenous population, with about one-third under the age of 15 years (75,000), and another third aged 15–34 years (74,000). In contrast, the non-Indigenous population had 19% (879,000) and 27% (1.27 million) respectively in these age groups.

Between 2011 and 2016, the number of Indigenous Queenslanders aged 65 years and older increased from 5790 to 8000, with a proportional increase from 3.1% to 3.9% of the total Indigenous Queensland population. This reflects modest gains in death rate reduction for older Indigenous Queenslanders.

In 2015, 1 in 5 (21%) Indigenous Queenslanders was of Torres Strait Islander origin (including those who identified as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people), and 3 in 4 (77%) recognised traditional country or homelands.¹² One-third of Indigenous Queenslanders lived in major cities (33%, 66,600), half in regional areas (51%, 109,100), 1 in 14 (7%, 14,300) in remote areas and 1 in 10 (9%, 20,100) in very remote areas in 2015.⁸

Components of population growth

The largest driver of population growth in Queensland in 2015–16 was natural increase, with more than 62,000 babies born, offset by about 30,000 deaths.⁶ Despite the high number of births, the fertility rate is falling and in 2015–16 was 1.84 babies per 1000 women aged 15–49 years. Net overseas migration contributed almost 25,000 people in 2015–16, representing early signs of recovery from previously declining migration levels in recent years. Net interstate migration from Australian states and territories contributed 11,600 people to Queensland in 2015–16. Interstate migration varies dramatically over time and shows few consistent trends but appears to be recovering after recent declines.

Employment

Two-thirds of Queenslanders aged 15 years or older reported being in the labour force in the week before census night in 2016—a labour force participation rate of 66% or 2.31 million people.¹³ In July 2018, the unemployment rate was 6.1%.¹⁴ On census night 2016, of those employed (about 2.4 million people), 561,000 were aged 15–29 years, 707,000 aged 30–44 years, 783,000 aged 45–64 years, and more than 85,000 aged 65 years or older.¹⁵ About 4 in 10 workers (about 923,000 people) completed 40 hours or more per week, 1 in 10 worked 16–24 hours per week and a further 1 in 10 worked 1–15 hours.¹⁶ Long working weeks were completed by about 1 in 2 workers aged 30–64 years, and by one-third of workers in the age groups 15–29 and 65 years or older.¹⁵ More than 800,000 Queenslanders aged 15 or older undertook 15 hours or more of unpaid domestic work in the week before the 2016 census. One in five couple-based families (20%) had neither person working.¹⁶

Disabilities

There were an estimated 859,000 Queenslanders living with a disability in 2015, with 261,000 of these having a severe or profound disability that imposed limitations to their core activities (see also page 15).¹⁷ Of all those reporting a disability, 340,000 people (40%) were aged 65 years or older and 75,000 (9%) were children aged 0–14 years. The majority of Queenslanders with a disability (96%) lived in a private household, either alone (21%), or with others (74%), and 4% lived in care-accommodation. Of those aged over 80 years, 33% lived in their home alone, 47% lived in a private house with others and 21% in care-accommodation. Queenslanders with a disability were more likely to live in areas of relative socioeconomic disadvantage and rely on a government pension or allowance as their main income source. However, almost four in 10 people with a disability earned an income as their main means of support. One in five persons living with a disability were in full-time or part-time employment. In 2015, an estimated 154,000 Queenslanders were primary carers and of these 66,000 were caring for someone with a disability. An additional 319,000 carers provided other than primary care, 107,000 of these for someone with a disability.

Diversifying

Queensland is a socio-demographically and culturally diverse state:

- In 2016, 1 in 6 (18%) or about 854,000 people lived in the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, compared with 1 in 5 (20%) in the most advantaged areas (about 975,000 people).⁸
 - 2.3% of the population (111,000 people) lived in remote and very remote areas in 2016.⁸
 - 24% of those aged 15 years or older in 2016 had a low education level (year 10 equivalent or lower), slightly more than those with a bachelor degree or higher (779,630 compared with 693,410).¹⁶
 - 1 in 6 families (17%) was a single parent family in 2016, and in 82% the parent was female.¹⁶
 - An estimated 3% of Australian adults identified as LGBTQI in 2014, equivalent to about 145,000 Queenslanders.¹⁸ In 2016, there were 8391 same-sex couple families, 0.8% of all couple families.¹⁹
 - 1 in 7 people (13%) spoke a language other than English at home in 2016, the most common languages being Mandarin, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Spanish and Italian.¹⁶
- 3 in 10 people (29%) were born outside Australia: New Zealand 4.3%, England 3.8%, India 1.0%, China 1.0% and South Africa 0.9%.¹⁶
 - More than half (55%) reported both parents were born in Australia, 26% reported both parents were born overseas and 11% that one parent was born overseas.
 - In 2017, 2098 humanitarian visa recipients settled in Queensland—the third highest number after NSW (6541) and Victoria (5439).²⁰
 - An estimated 21,700 people were homeless in Queensland in 2016.²¹ While 20% of Queensland's homeless persons were Indigenous, in 2014–15 almost 1 in 3 (30%) Indigenous Queenslanders aged 15 years or older reported having been homeless during their lifetime.¹²
 - In 2017, 8448 prisoners were in full-time custody in Queensland on an average day: 91% (7716) were males, 9% (732) were females and 32% (2704) were Indigenous Queenslanders.²² There were 19,963 people in community-based correction facilities: 77% (15,339) were males, 23% (4624) were females and 23% (4599) were Indigenous Queenslanders.²²

Selected highlights from the regions

Growth and ageing

- The population of West Moreton HHS has grown very quickly with a net growth of 36% over the past decade, followed by Gold Coast (23%), Sunshine Coast and Metro North (both 21%).²³ Growth was slower in Central Queensland, Darling Downs, Mackay, Townsville and Wide Bay (11–13%). There was a 10% decline in Central West and no change for North West or South West HHSs.
- The proportion of people aged 65 years and older grew significantly in each HHS, with faster than state growth occurring in Cairns and Hinterland (56% increase), Sunshine Coast (51%), West Moreton (49%), Torres and Cape, and Wide Bay (both 47%).²³ Slower growth occurred in Central Queensland (35%), South West and North West (both 29%) and Central West (20%).
- Of the 212,000 additional older Queenslanders, the greatest number lived in Metro North and Metro South HHSs (40,000 each), Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast (28,000 each), Wide Bay, Darling Downs and West Moreton (each between 11,000 and 16,000).

Children and young people

- The number of children aged 0–14 years grew by 14% in Queensland over the past decade. Highest growth was seen in West Moreton (30% increase), Gold Coast (24%) and Metro North (21%) HHSs.²³ In contrast, Wide Bay did not change, and the number of children decreased in Central West (21% decrease), South West (12%), and North West (8%).
- The number of young people aged 15–29 years grew by 15% in Queensland over the past decade. Growth was greater than the state average in West Moreton HHS (32% increase), Torres and Cape (21%), Gold Coast, Metro North, Sunshine Coast and Metro South (all 18–20%), and slower than the state average in Cairns and Hinterland (11%), Townsville (10.5%), Wide Bay (10.5%) and Darling Downs HHSs (8%). No significant growth in the number of young people occurred in Central Queensland, Mackay and South West HHSs, while there were fewer young people than a decade ago in North West (12% decrease) and Central West (19%).

Indigenous Queenslanders

In 2016, Cairns and Hinterland HHS had the largest Indigenous Queensland population (29,700), followed by Metro South (25,900), Metro North (22,400), and Townsville (20,900).²³ However, 70% of the Torres and Cape HHS were Indigenous Queenslanders, almost one-third (31%) of the North West, 13% of South West and 9% of Townsville.

Although Torres and Cape had the highest proportion of Indigenous Queenslanders, it had the fifth largest number with 18,500 people.

Where will we be in the future?

The state population is projected to exceed 5.73 million by 2026 with differential growth in the HHSs.⁶ Between 2016 and 2026, the largest change in absolute number of people is projected for Metro South (166,000 more people) and Metro North (145,000), followed by Gold Coast and West Moreton (about 120,000 each). A large increase is also projected for Sunshine Coast (72,000), Central Queensland and Townsville (more than 50,000 each), Mackay and Cairns and Hinterland (more than 40,000 each), Darling Downs and Wide Bay (about 30,000 each). Relatively small increases are projected for North West (7000), South West (2500), Torres and Cape, and Central West (about 1500 each).

The number of children is projected to increase in most HHSs by 2026 except in Central West, North West and South West where a small decrease is forecast.⁶ Increases include West Moreton (27,000 more children), Metro South (27,000), Gold Coast (23,000), Metro North (21,500), Sunshine Coast (12,500), Townsville (7000), and Mackay (5000).

For older people, projected increases in number and proportion for all HHSs up to 2026 are greatest in Metro South (an extra 59,000), Metro North (54,000), Gold Coast (38,000), Sunshine Coast (33,000), West Moreton (22,000) and Wide Bay (18,000).⁶

Data sources and methods: demography

The two major data sources for this chapter were:

- ABS: Estimated resident population and census with the latest estimate for 2016.⁹
- Queensland Government population projections 2015.⁶
- Updated Queensland Government projections will be released in late 2018.

For further information: Data visualisations and statistical tables online (page vii)