Queensland remains Australia’s premier growth state. Recent high levels of population growth – 2003 was the highest on record – have supplemented the strong levels of growth recorded over the past 25 years. Since 1981, Queensland’s population has increased from 2.4 million to pass the 4 million mark by the end of 2005.

Over the same period, the strong population growth in Queensland has been underpinned by an equally solid economic performance. For example, Queensland’s annual average employment growth since 1981 has been 3.0 per cent, compared with 1.6 per cent for the rest of Australia. Strong resources and construction sectors and a rapidly expanding tourism sector have also contributed to our healthy economic scorecard of recent years.

These underlying economic strengths, combined with our favourable natural environment and climate, set the tone for the enviable Queensland lifestyle which has proven a magnet for the thousands of people who move to the State every year.

Driven primarily by this continuing in-migration of people, current projections indicate that, over the next 20 years, Queensland’s population will increase by around 1.5 million people. This projected growth is slightly more than the growth of the past two decades, and is expected to lift the Queensland population to 5.6 million by 2026. We can expect to pass the 6 million mark within 30 years and reach 7 million within 45 years.

The coming decades will no doubt bring more change to Queensland. The challenge we all face is managing this change to ensure that the things we love about Queensland are maintained while we continue to grow and prosper. However, our biggest test over the coming years will be to ensure that the legacy we leave our children is an asset and not a liability. Fortunately, this is a challenge we are well placed to meet together.

The Honourable Anna Bligh MP
Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development, Trade and Innovation

Key points

- Queensland’s population is projected to grow from 4.0 million people in 2006 to 5.6 million people in 20 years (2026), and to reach 7.1 million in 45 years (2051).

- Slightly higher absolute growth (1.5 million people) is projected for the next 20 years than was recorded in the past 20 years (1.4 million).

- Highest levels of absolute growth are expected in the short term, with average increases of 78,000 people each year to 2016.

- Short-term growth rates of around 2% each year are predicted to ease as the size of the population increases.

- The number of births is estimated to rise from current levels of about 52,000 each year to 60,000 by 2024 and almost 70,000 in 2051. The number of deaths is expected to double over the next 30 years and be two and a half times the current level by 2051.

- Queensland will continue to grow substantially from both interstate and overseas migration.

- Ageing of the population will cause the median age of Queenslanders to rise from 36.3 years in 2006 to 45.0 years in 2051.

- The majority of growth is projected for the older age groups, with the number of people aged 65 years or more increasing fourfold by 2051.

- Within 25 years, South East Queensland will have a population the same size as Queensland’s current total of 4 million people.
Population projections for Queensland

Queensland’s population is projected to grow from 4.0 million people in 2006 to 5.6 million in 2026 and 7.1 million in 45 years. The population has grown from 2.6 million people 20 years ago to 4.0 million in 2006, an increase of 1.4 million since 1986. In comparison, the population is projected to grow by more than 1.5 million people in the next 20 years, to reach 5.6 million in 2026 (medium series). Growth of this magnitude will result in Queensland’s 1981 population doubling by 2015, and increasing threefold by 2051.

Three projection series – low, medium and high – have been produced (Figure 1 and Table 1). Queensland will grow from 4.0 million people currently to between 5.1 million (low series) and 6.1 million people (high series) by 2026. Continuing growth will lead to a population of between 5.9 million (low series) and 8.7 million people (high series) by 2051.

Annual population growth has fluctuated substantially in the past 30 years (Figure 2). Estimates of growth since 2001 show that growth in 2003 was the largest in Queensland since 1901. This peak was followed by more subdued growth in the following two years. The projections have taken this into account, resulting in average increases of 77,400 people a year over the next five years (2006-2011), rising to an average of 78,400 people a year in the following decade (to 2021). These increases are then expected to taper slowly, with average growth of around 51,000 people a year by 2051. This outcome is due to declining levels of both natural increase and net interstate migration.

Projected average annual increases in the five years to 2011 (77,400) are very similar to those recorded during the early 1990s, but are somewhat lower that the recent peak years of 2003 and 2004 (growth of 90,000 and 87,000 people respectively).

Growth rates are projected to slow over the projection period as the size of Queensland’s population steadily increases. Growth rates are projected to average 89.6 people for every 100 people of working age by 2051.

Changing distribution
Changing patterns of population distribution have important implications for the provision of infrastructure and the sustainable management of resources and the environment.

Queenslanders have expressed a preference for living close to the coast and particularly in South East Queensland.

As the population becomes increasingly concentrated in a relatively small part of the State, two main impacts will occur. First, the amount of population concentrated in a small area will lead to escalating demand while

Implications

Queensland’s population will continue to grow and this increase can be directly translated into increased demand for infrastructure, goods and services. Demand is also a function of the population composition and distribution, with considerable changes also projected in these characteristics in the future.

Changing composition
Population ageing will be a significant change impacting on Queensland. The impacts will be widespread and become increasingly apparent. For example, over the next two decades (to 2026), while the number of children in Queensland is projected to increase by 18% to 961,000, the number of people aged 65 years or more is expected to more than double (increase of 121%) to 1.1 million people.

There will also be implications for the workforce as projected increases in the number of children and older people outnumber increases among those of working age in every decade from 2011 to 2051. This trend is reflected in dependency ratios which indicate the number of people in the main working age groups (20-64 years) compared with the number in other age groups. In 2006, for every 100 people of working age there will be 65.3 people aged either less than 20 years or 65 years or more. By 2026, this ratio is projected to increase to 75.8, reaching

Table 1: Projected population, Queensland, at 30 June 2006, 2026 and 2051

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2026</th>
<th>2051</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4,029,600</td>
<td>5,124,100</td>
<td>5,902,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>4,041,400</td>
<td>5,584,000</td>
<td>7,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>4,053,400</td>
<td>6,097,100</td>
<td>8,730,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 2: Actual and projected annual population change, Queensland, years ending 30 June 1976 to 2051

Source: ABS 3101.0; and Queensland Government Population Projections, 2006 (medium series)

Figure 1: Actual and projected population, Queensland, at 30 June 1976 to 2051

Source: ABS 3101.0; and Queensland Government Population Projections, 2006

1.8% a year in the five years to 2011, slowing steadily to 0.8% a year by the five years to 2051.

The number of births in Queensland each year is projected to increase steadily over the next 50 years, rising from about 52,000 births a year currently to 61,000 by 2026 and 69,000 births by 2051.

Although there have been improvements in life expectancy, continued strong growth in population will also result in an increase in the number of deaths, which is expected to double over the next 30 years (from 24,000 deaths in 2005 to 48,000 deaths in 2036) and be two and a half times the current level by 2051.

The highest population increases are projected to be among older people, especially those aged 65 years or more.

Major changes will occur to the age structure of the population, with ageing one of the most significant demographic trends currently shaping our world. In 2001, the median age of Queenslanders (that is the age at which half the population is older and half younger) was 35.0 years. By 2026 the median age is projected to reach 40.8 years, increasing further to 45.0 years by 2051.

The base population for these projections (2006 edition) is the revised June 2004 estimated resident Queensland population. The assumptions for fertility, mortality and migration, which largely determine the future projected population, represent the most likely scenario in the medium series of these projections. Compared with the previous Queensland Government population projections (2003 edition) the most notable revisions are for fertility and overseas migration. Fertility, expressed as total fertility rate (TFR), has been revised upwards for the medium series to reflect the current level of approximately 1.8 children per woman in Australia at the beginning of the projection period. The TFR has been assumed to decline to a level of 1.7 by 2014 and then remain

**Figure 3: Actual and projected births and deaths, Queensland, years ending 30 June 1976 to 2051**

![Births and deaths chart](chart1.png)

Source: ABS 3101.0 and 3302.0, and Queensland Government Population Projections, 2006 (medium series)

**Figure 4: Population pyramids, Queensland, at 30 June 1976, 2001, 2026 and 2051**

![Population pyramids chart](chart2.png)

Source: ABS 3101.0; and Queensland Government Population Projections, 2006 (medium series)

**Assumptions**

The impacts of future population growth will be location-specific. Projections of future growth should be examined at both the regional and local levels to assist in determining the nature and scale of impacts in particular areas. For example, in areas with limited land supplies and continuing demand, housing affordability may become an increasingly important issue. Such pressures will present a challenge to all sectors of government and the community to manage change to achieve sustainable economic, social and environmental outcomes.
The patterns of population change in Queensland’s statistical divisions (SDs) are projected to continue as experienced over the past 20 years (Table 2).

The mortality assumptions expressed as life expectancy of an Australian newborn trend to higher levels by the end of the projection period in 2051, when life expectancy is assumed to reach 88.4 years for males and 90.5 years for females in the medium series. Current differentials between life expectancy in Australia and in Queensland’s regions are maintained for the whole projection period. Life expectancy is assumed to improve in all three projections series.

The assumption for overseas migration in the medium series is that Queensland initially gains less than 20,000 people a year, increasing to more than 24,000 at the end of the projection period. The low series assumes a gain of 14,400 a year over the entire projection period. In the high series, net overseas migration is assumed to increase to almost 36,000 by 2051.

For interstate migration and intrastate migration, the model uses separate in-migration and out-migration rates to reflect the propensity of population groups to move to or from each Statistical Division (SD) in Queensland and between Queensland and the rest of Australia. Assumptions for changes to the rates at which people move to individual SDs are based on historical trends, knowledge of current and proposed major developments, and a series of less optimistic to more optimistic migration rate profiles which form the low, medium and high assumptions.
Table 3: Actual and projected percentage share of State population, Queensland statistical divisions, at 30 June 1986, 2001 and 2026

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistical Division</th>
<th>1986</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2026</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreton</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East Queensland</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide Bay-Burnett</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darling Downs</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central West</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far North</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For the purposes of these population projections, South East Queensland is the total of the Brisbane and Moreton Statistical Divisions.

Source: PIFU, BEOPSR, ABS 3235.0.55.001; and Queensland Government Population Projections, 2006 (medium series).

Brisbane SD has the largest population of any of Queensland’s SDs (Table 3). In 1986, 46.4% of Queenslanders lived in the capital city SD. This share is expected to fall slightly to 45.6% in 2006 and is projected to be similar in 2026, at 45.4%. The population of Brisbane SD is also projected to account for less than two-thirds (65.9%) of South East Queensland’s population by 2026, down considerably from 76.4% in 1986.

In contrast, Moreton SD is projected to increase its share of the State’s population as a result of continuing strong population growth. While accounting for 31.3% of South East Queensland’s population in 2006, up from 23.6% in 1986, Moreton SD is projected to be home to 34.1% of South East Queensland’s population by 2026. Nearly one in every four Queenslanders (23.5%) is projected to be living in Moreton SD within 20 years, up from only 14.3% two decades ago and 20.8% currently.

Brisbane SD is expected to be the location of 44.7% of the State’s growth during this period, maintaining its share of growth over the previous 20 years (44.3%). The share of Queensland’s total growth in Moreton SD, in contrast, is expected to ease slightly to 30.5% over the next 20 years compared with 32.7% over the past 20 years.

Each of the remaining regions, except Wide Bay-Burnett (5.8%), is projected to account for less than 5% of Queensland’s growth over the next two decades. However, the Darling Downs, Fitzroy and Mackay SDs are projected to record a slightly larger share of growth in the next 20 years compared with the past 20 years.

Each SD will experience a range of impacts depending on the characteristics of the population and the scale of population change. In each SD, ageing will be one of the most significant of these impacts. Figure 7 illustrates the changing age structure of the Darling Downs SD, which is indicative of the impact of the large projected increase in people aged 50 years or more in Queensland SDs in coming decades. Changes to the age structure will vary in each area depending on the current age structure, the age profile of people moving to and from the area, and projected population growth or decline.

Figure 7: Age profile, Darling Downs statistical division, at 30 June 2006 and 2026

Source: ABS 3235.0.55.001; and Queensland Government Population Projections, 2006 (medium series).

Net interstate migration in the medium series for Queensland in 2006 is assumed to be 30,000 persons, increasing to 34,200 persons by 2014-15, and then slowly trending downwards to 18,800 by 2051. The model uses migration rates, and the low, medium and high series assume varying changes to these rates over the projection period. By 2051, the low series net interstate migration is assumed to reach 14,600 annually, and in the high series 22,500.

The effect of variations to the assumptions can be illustrated by the following questions and answers:

Q: What would be the effect of more babies being born?
A: An increase of 0.1 children per woman in the assumed TFR would result in the total population in 2051 being about 229,000 larger than under the current medium series.

Q: What would happen if more people want to move to Queensland?
A: A 5% increase in the propensity for people to migrate from other Australian states and territories to Queensland would result in an additional 208,000 people by 2051.

Q: What if more overseas migrants come to Queensland?
A: An increase of 1 percentage point in the share of Australia’s overseas migrants coming to Queensland would result in an additional 27,000 people in Queensland by the year 2051 compared with the current medium series.

Q: What if more people from New South Wales and other parts of Australia want to move to Queensland?
A: A 5% increase in the propensity for people to migrate from other Australian states and territories to Queensland would result in an additional 208,000 people by 2051.

For further information please see the Summary table of assumptions on the back page.
Queensland
Population 2026 and population growth (%) 30 June 2006 to 30 June 2026, statistical divisions

Total population 2026
5,584,000
Growth 2006 to 2026
38.2%

Figure 8: Projected population change, by Queensland statistical divisions, 30 June 2006 to 30 June 2026

Map Legend
Share of 2026 population
- Between 7.1 and 45.4 per cent
- Between 3.1 and 7 per cent
- Less than 3 per cent

Far North
317,200
Growth 31.0%

North West
35,000
Growth 2.0%

Northern
264,800
Growth 26.3%

Mackay
207,400
Growth 37.4%

Fitzroy
248,400
Growth 29.4%

South West
27,700
Growth 2.8%

Darling Downs
274,600
Growth 21.5%

Wide Bay-Burnett
352,600
Growth 33.9%

Moreton
1,310,500
Growth 56.1%

Brisbane
2,533,400
Growth 37.3%

Map produced by the Planning Information and Forecasting Unit, Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation.

Summary table of assumptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Fertility (TFR)</th>
<th>Mortality (life expectancy at birth)</th>
<th>Interstate migration</th>
<th>Overseas migration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Decline to 1.6 babies per woman in Australia by 2020-21, constant thereafter.</td>
<td>To reach 84.9 years for males and 88.0 years for females by 2050-51.</td>
<td>Net gain of 24,000 per year between 2005-06 and 2008-09, declining to 14,600 by 2050-51.</td>
<td>Net gain of 14,400 per year for the entire projection period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>1.8 babies per woman in Australia until 2007-08, declining to 1.7 babies per woman by 2013-14, constant thereafter.</td>
<td>To reach 88.4 years for males and 90.5 years for females by 2050-51.</td>
<td>Net gain of 30,000 per year between 2005-06 and 2008-09, increasing to 34,200 by 2014-15, declining to 18,800 by 2050-51.</td>
<td>Net gain of 19,800 per year, increasing to 24,200 in 2050-51.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>2.0 babies per woman in Australia by 2020-21, constant thereafter.</td>
<td>To reach 92.7 years for males and 95.1 years for females by 2050-51.</td>
<td>Net gain of 36,000 per year between 2005-06 and 2008-09, increasing to 60,200 persons by 2014-15, declining to 22,500 by 2050-51.</td>
<td>Net gain of 25,200 per year increasing to 35,800 in 2050-51.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Process**

The 2006 edition projections were produced under a collaborative, whole-of-government process with all Queensland Government agencies invited to participate. Agencies represented on the Population Projections Advisory Group were the Office of Economic and Statistical Research in Queensland Treasury, the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation, the departments of Health, Housing, Primary Industries and Fisheries, Employment and Training, Corrective Services, and Emergency Services, and also the Environmental Protection Agency and the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. The 2006 edition of the Queensland Government population projections is the second series produced using a state-of-the-art, multi-regional cohort component population projection model developed by the Queensland Centre for Population Research at the University of Queensland. The model produces projections by single year of age and by sex for each year of the projection period, adding projected births and in-migration and subtracting deaths and out-migration for each year into the future. These projections update the previous series produced in 2003. An assumptions background paper was produced to assist the Advisory Group to determine the assumptions used in the model. This report is available for downloading (see Further information below). While the chosen assumptions represent the Advisory Group’s current preferred options, other outcomes may result from changed circumstances in the future. As a result, three series, low, medium and high, were produced to indicate the most likely range of outcomes that may eventuate. Users should recognise the variability associated with any population projections and focus on the range that populations may fall within rather than on single numbers.

State and statistical division projections will be reviewed against new information on an annual basis, and updated at least twice every five years in line with the ABS Census of Population and Housing cycle.

**Acknowledgements**

The Population Projections Advisory Group was responsible for the preparation of the Queensland Government Population Projections for Queensland and statistical divisions in 2006. Membership of this group included personnel from Queensland Treasury (the Office of Economic and Statistical Research), the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation (the Planning Information and Forecasting Unit), other Queensland Government agencies mentioned above, and the Queensland Centre for Population Research, University of Queensland.

Please reference these projections as follows: