

# Overseas migration: COVID-19 impacts, Queensland, 2020

Migration statistics in this release are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of the international border by the Australian Government from 20 March 2020 directly affected the level of international arrivals and departures from that point, and consequently net overseas migration (NOM).

Data are sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics release, **National, state and territory population, December 2020 edition**, and supplemented with data extracted from ABS.Stat. Data for all quarters in 2020 are preliminary and subject to revision.

The Australian Government implemented caps on the numbers of arrivals into Australia following the international border closure to control volumes for quarantine within the limitations of facilities available. However, the demand for seats on flights into Australia has far surpassed the number available, directly impacting the number of persons able to enter Australia.

## Key figures for 2020

NOM arrivals .....	38,895
NOM departures .....	38,919
NOM .....	-24

### Difference 2019 to 2020

NOM arrivals .....	↓	61.9% from 102,075
NOM departures .....	↓	42.9% from 68,160
NOM .....	↓	100.1% from 33,915

## NOM and Queensland's population growth

In recent years, NOM has been a key contributor to Queensland's population growth. However, in 2020 there were three consecutive quarters of NOM losses (where there were higher NOM departures than NOM arrivals), coinciding with the implementation of the Australian international border closure and travel restrictions. This had a direct impact on population growth for Queensland.

Despite this recent loss through NOM, the Queensland population has continued to experience growth (Figure 1) due to ongoing contributions from both natural increase and net interstate migration (NIM). The increased gains from strong NIM in the most recent quarters have partially offset the losses through NOM (Figure 2).

Figure 1 Population growth, Queensland

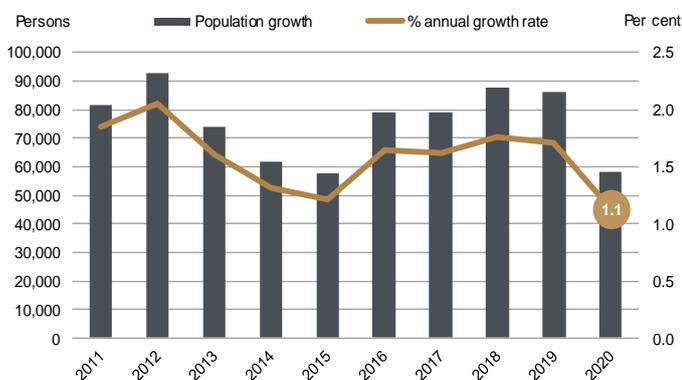
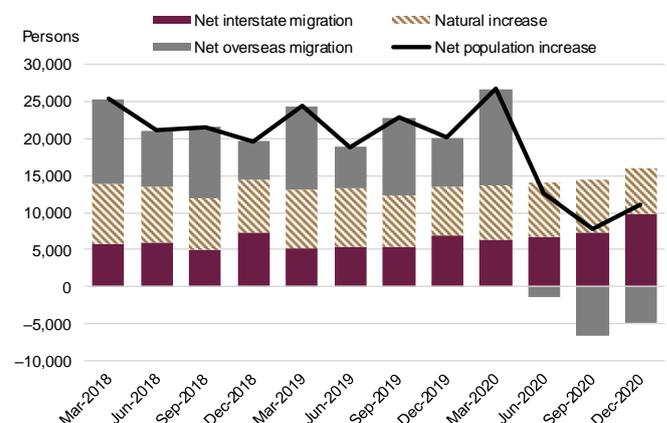
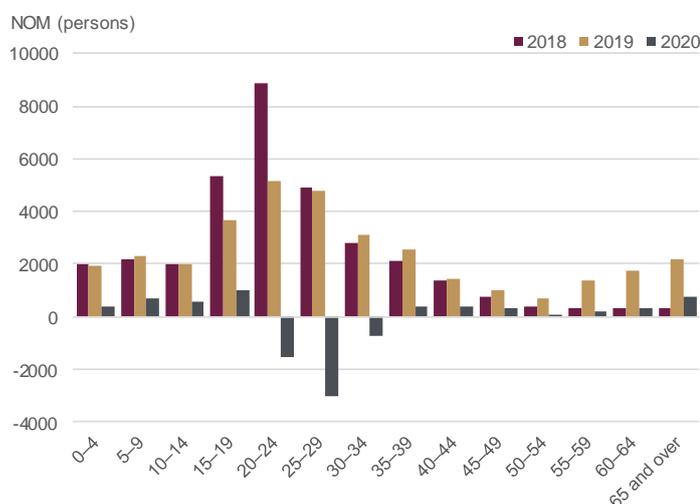


Figure 2 Population growth components by quarter



## NOM by age group

**Figure 3 NOM gains/losses by age group, Queensland**



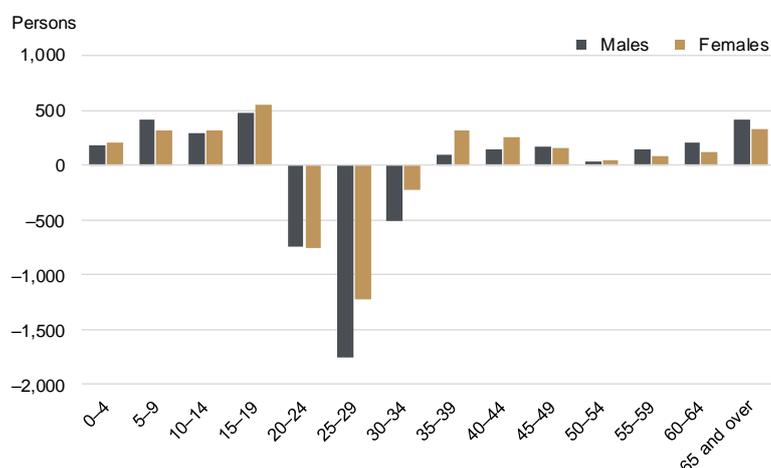
Queensland's largest NOM gains typically come from the age groups between 20–29 years (+9,930 in 2019 and +13,780 in 2018). In 2020, NOM losses were recorded for these age groups (–4,500 in the 20–29 age group), in addition to (–740) for those aged 30–34 years. However, small gains across all other age groups in 2020 largely offset these losses, leading to the near neutral NOM outcome for Queensland (Figure 3).

NOM gains were experienced for children and youth (aged 0–19 years) and for older persons (65 years and over) with gains of 2,740 and 750 persons respectively. In contrast, there was an overall NOM loss for the usual working age group (those aged 20–64 years) of around 3,530 persons.

## NOM by age group and sex

When considering the changes in NOM by sex, in 2020 there was a small overall NOM loss of males (–460) to Queensland, which was almost completely offset by the small NOM gain in females (+440). The majority of the males lost through NOM were aged 25–29 years (–1,760), more than double the level for any other age group. (Figure 4). Among females, 25–29 was also the age category with the largest population loss (–1,220).

**Figure 4 NOM by age group and sex, Queensland, 2020**



There has been an overall NOM loss in the traditional working age groups (20–64 years), with more working-age males than females lost from Queensland's population due to NOM in 2020.

## NOM by visa type

Permanent visa holders and Australian citizens both added to the Queensland population in 2020, while there were losses of both temporary visa holders and New Zealand citizens.

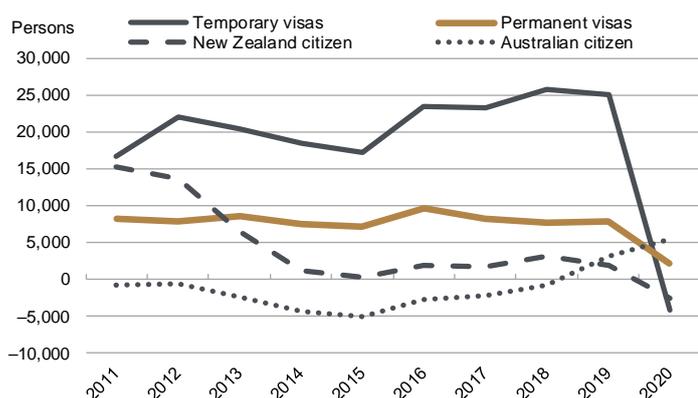
The makeup of NOM by type of visa in 2020 was very different to previous years (Figure 5 and Figure 6), with the largest NOM gain coming from Australian citizens (+5,310 persons).

There was a sharp drop in Australian citizen departures compared with a smaller drop in arrivals, with both of these directly impacted by the closure of the international border and restriction of movement by the Australian Government. The NOM gain due to Australian citizens recorded in both 2019 and 2020 followed nine years of NOM losses for this group.

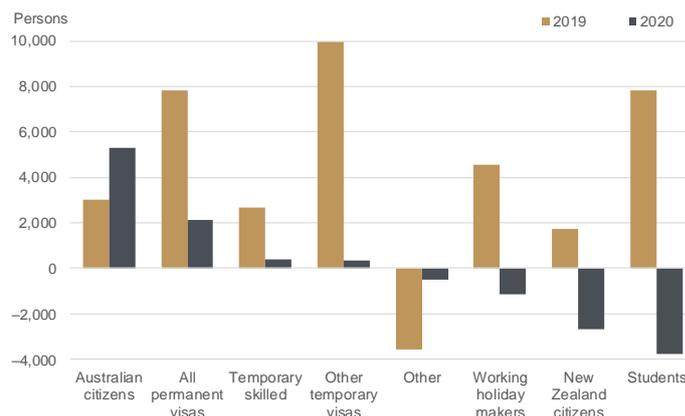
Permanent visa holders contributed the second-largest gain to NOM (+2,100 persons), even though there was a much sharper fall in arrivals than departures in 2020. People on permanent 'skill' visas and 'family' visas were the most common permanent visa holder arrivals (+920 and +880 persons respectively).

In 2020, the largest net loss was recorded for people on student visas (-3,770 persons), accounting for a large proportion of the total NOM loss for temporary visa holders from Queensland (-4,220). There was also a relatively large net loss of New Zealand citizens (-2,710), following more than a decade of gains (Figure 5).

**Figure 5 NOM by broad visa category, Queensland**



**Figure 6 NOM by type of visa, Queensland**



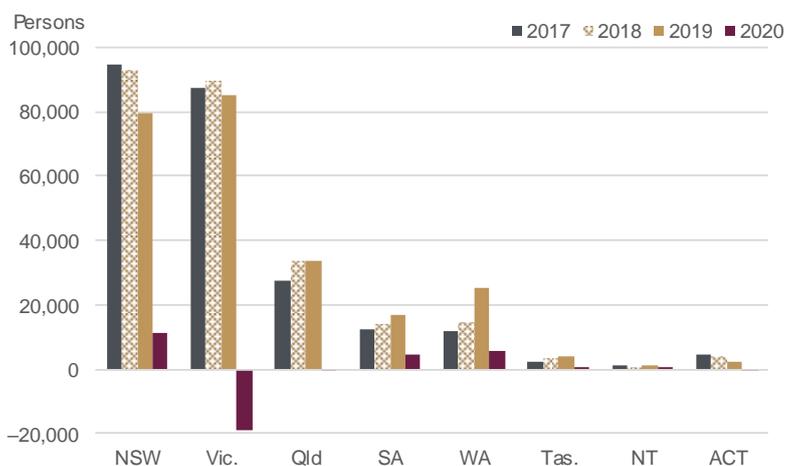
**Student visas**

While there was a net loss of people on student visas from Queensland in 2020 (-3,770 persons), not all student visa types experienced the same outcome, with a small net gain reported for people on Student other<sup>1</sup> visas (600). Net losses were also reported for both higher education visa holders (-2,010) and vocational education and training visa holders (-2,360) in Queensland (Table 1).

**National comparison**

Queensland's preliminary NOM loss of 24 persons in 2020 reflected the national pattern of losses, or significantly moderated gains, due to NOM across all states and territories. NSW reported the largest NOM gain in 2020 (+11,513 persons down from +79,284 in 2019), while Victoria recorded the largest loss (-18,950 down from a gain of 85,063 in 2019) (Figure 7).

**Figure 7 NOM by state and territory**



Although NOM decreased in all states and territories in 2020, Queensland was one of just three jurisdictions to record a loss due to NOM. Losses were also recorded for Victoria (-18,950 persons) and the Australian Capital Territory (-252) in 2020.

<sup>1</sup> Student – other visas include students in the following sectors: Postgraduate Research, Non-Award, Schools and Independent ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students)

**Comparison by visa type (Table 1)**

Queensland:

- accounted for 44.8% of the total Australian net loss of New Zealand citizens living in Australia on subclass 444 visas (–2,710 of a total –6,050 NOM loss).
- had a net loss of people on working holiday visas, compared with the total rest of Australia which reported a small gain (–1,180 persons compared with +370).
- received a small net gain of people on temporary skilled worker visas (+400 persons) compared with a combined NOM loss of –990 persons for the rest of Australia.
- accounted for 10.8% of Australia's net gain of permanent visa holders (2,100 of a total 19,360 NOM gain).

**Table 1 NOM by visa type, Queensland and rest of Australia, 2020**

Visa type	Queensland		Rest of Australia <sup>(a)</sup>	
	persons	change from 2019	persons	change from 2019
<b>Permanent</b>	<b>2,100</b>	<b>–73.1%</b>	<b>17,260</b>	<b>–69.9%</b>
Family	880		7,200	
Skill	920		7,650	
Special eligibility and Humanitarian programs	480		3,070	
Other permanent visas	–180		–650	
<b>Temporary</b>	<b>–4,220</b>	<b>–116.9%</b>	<b>–31,900</b>	<b>–120.8%</b>
Vocational education & training sector	–2,360		–12,780	
Higher education sector	–2,010		–13,930	
Student other	600		–220	
Temporary skilled visas (482)	400		–990	
Visitor <sup>(b)</sup>	4,180		25,070	
Working holiday	–1,180		370	
Other temporary visas	–3,830		–29,410	
<b>New Zealand citizen</b>	<b>–2,710</b>	<b>–256.6%</b>	<b>–3,340</b>	<b>–195.4%</b>
<b>Australian citizen</b>	<b>5,310</b>	<b>75.8%</b>	<b>23,850</b>	<b>155.1%</b>
<b>Other<sup>(c)</sup></b>	<b>–490</b>	<b>–86.4%</b>	<b>–2,590</b>	<b>–62.0%</b>
<b>Total<sup>(d)</sup></b>	<b>–20</b>	<b>–100.1%</b>	<b>3,280</b>	<b>–98.7%</b>

Counts of persons in table rounded to nearest 10; percentages rounded to 1 decimal place.

(a) The region 'rest of Australia' excludes Queensland.

(b) Includes tourists, business visitors, medical treatment and other.

(c) Includes residents returning (i.e. non-Australian citizens who are permanent residents), onshore visas and visa unknown.

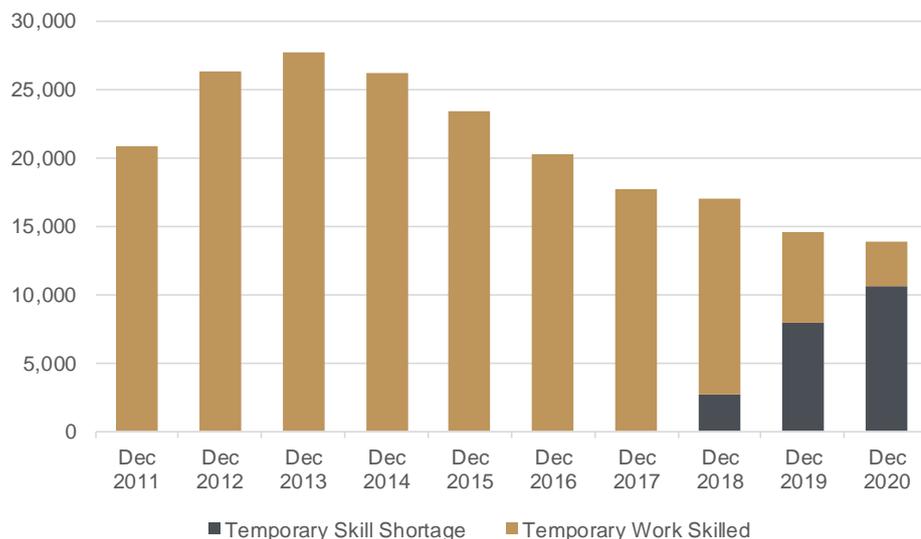
(d) Figures in this table have been rounded and, as such, discrepancies may occur between sums of component items and totals.

Source: ABS *Net Overseas Migration: Arrivals, departures and net, State/territory, Major groupings and visas - Calendar years, 2004 onwards*. June 2021.

## Temporary skilled visa holders in Queensland

The number of temporary skilled worker visa<sup>2</sup> holders (both primary and secondary applicant types) located within Queensland at 31 December 2020 (13,914 visa holders) was the lowest reported at year's end for the last 10 years (Figure 8).

**Figure 8** Temporary resident (skilled) visa holders<sup>(a)</sup> in Queensland at 31 December



(a) Includes Temporary Work (Skilled) (subclass 457 visa) and Temporary Skill Shortage (subclass 482 visa) primary and secondary applicants.

Source: Department of Home Affairs *Temporary resident (skilled) visa holders in Australia* pivot table.

Nearly 3 in 10 of these visa holders reported their working location as within the Brisbane Inner City Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (29.7% or 4,136 persons), followed by the Gold Coast SA4 (8.5% or 1,188 persons). While Queensland experienced an overall decrease in the number of temporary skilled visa holders living in the state in the 12 months between 31 December 2019 and 2020, some regions reported an increase. The largest increase was recorded for Central Queensland SA4, an increase of 195 visa holders since 31 December 2019 (+22.7%), followed by Ipswich (up 73 or +13.7%) and Townsville (up 63 or +10.2%).

### Largest occupation groups

Of the 7,371 primary applicant temporary skilled worker visa holders with a nominated position location in Queensland, the most common nominated occupations were:

- Resident medical officers (644 persons), accounting for 8.7%
- Chefs (452 or 6.1%)
- Cooks (223 or 3.0%).

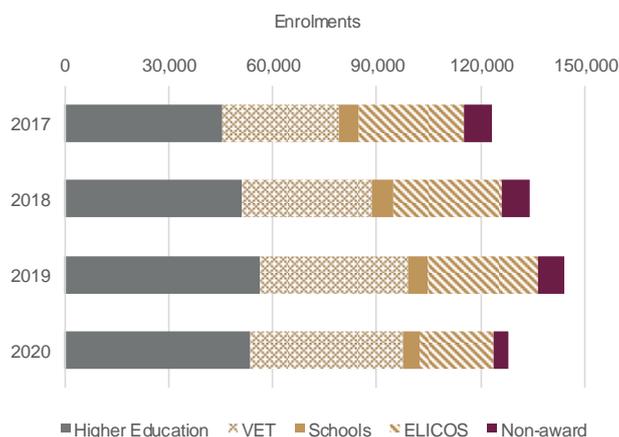
The number of resident medical officers on temporary skilled worker visas at the end of 2020 was 16.7% higher than the previous year, and was the highest level recorded over the 10-year period.

<sup>2</sup> Includes both Temporary Work (Skilled) (visa subclass 457) and Temporary Skill Shortage (visa subclass 482) visa holders.

## International students in Queensland

Historically, international students on temporary visas have made significant positive contributions to Queensland's NOM. The closure of the international border directly affected the number of students able to enter and reside in Queensland, with both commencements and enrolments affected.

**Figure 9 International student course enrolments**



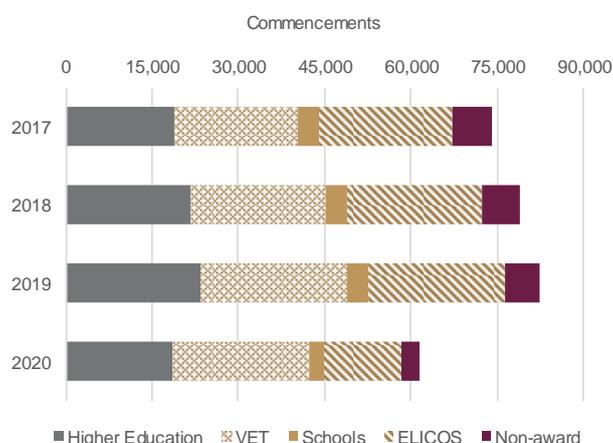
*International student enrolment data count actual course enrolments in Australia — if a student is enrolled in two different courses in the same reference period, they will have both enrolments counted.*

International student course enrolments in December 2020 were 11.3% lower than the previous year (Figure 9).

The Non-award (-42.1%) and ELICOS (-32.7%) sectors had the largest declines in enrolments in Queensland.

Higher education, which traditionally has been the sector with the highest enrolments, recorded a 5.1% decline between 2019 and 2020.

**Figure 10 International student course commencements**



*A commencement is a new student enrolment in a particular course at a particular institution.*

International student commencements for the full year of 2020 were 25.6% lower compared with 2019 (Figure 10).

The impact was largest for the Non-award and ELICOS sectors, with declines in commencements of 48.7% and 44.1% respectively.

Higher education commencements decreased by 21.2% to 18,559 in 2020 following two years of steady increases.

ELICOS – English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students

VET – Vocational Education and Training

Non-award study – where students study individual units offered by an educational institution but are not enrolled in or eligible for the completion of a full degree.

Source: Department of Education, Skills and Employment, *International Student Enrolment Data 2020* (pivot tables), onshore student data derived from the Commonwealth Provider Registration and International Student Management System.