

Australian South Sea Islanders in Queensland, Census 2021

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Census of Population and Housing, 2021, data extracted from TableBuilder

This publication uses demographic data from the Census of Population and Housing 2021 to present key characteristics of Queensland's usual resident population of persons reporting Australian South Sea Islander ancestry.

The 2021 Census was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, with mitigation measures in place. People's movements were restricted by international border closures, various areas of Australia in lockdown, and state border closures. An independent review of the 2021 Census¹ found that more people were counted at home than otherwise would have been the case, and that data quality was enhanced as it resulted in less imputation and the collection of more complete information about families and households, including data such as household income.

Population size

At the time of the 2021 Census, 5,562 Queenslanders reported Australian South Sea Islander ancestry, accounting for around 3 in 4 of all Australian South Sea Islanders (7,228). Notably, the most recent census count was 18.5% lower than the 2016 count of 6,826 (Table 1).

Table 1 Australian South Sea Islander usual residents recorded in Queensland

Year	Qld UR	Change
2006	3,051	..
2011	3,093	42
2016	6,826	3,733
2021	5,562	-1,264

The number of Queenslanders reporting Australian South Sea Islander ancestry has varied considerably over the last four censuses. The 2016 count was more than twice the number who so reported in the 2011 Census (3,093). The increase in the count in 2016 was likely the result of an increased propensity for individuals to identify Australian South Sea Islander ancestry in the census, rather than an increase due to population growth caused by either migration from other parts of Australia, or natural increase.

Associated ancestries

Around 2 in 3 Australian South Sea Islanders in 2021 also identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, with 54.5% identifying as being of Aboriginal origin, and another 10.2% collectively identifying as Torres Strait Islander or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.



Around 400 Australian South Sea Islanders in the 2021 Census reported that they were born overseas, primarily in Melanesia (200). Around half of all overseas-born Australian South Sea Islander persons reported arriving in Australia in the last 20 years.

How is Australian South Sea Islander ancestry recorded in the Census?

Respondents were asked to report up to two ancestries in their response to the ancestry question. If either response was 'Australian South Sea Islander', then this counted toward the population. This group excludes later voluntary migrants from the South Pacific region.

In 2016, for the first time, this ancestry was listed on the census form as an example of an ancestry option and the ABS engaged with Australian South Sea Islander communities to increase awareness of the availability of this response to the ancestry question.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *COVID-19 and the 2021 Census*, (abs.gov.au)

Location

Of all Queensland local government areas (LGAs), Mackay recorded the largest number of Australian South Sea Islander residents, with relatively large populations also in Brisbane, Cairns, Townsville, and Rockhampton (Figure 1).

Rockhampton was the only large LGA where the Australian South Sea Islander population increased between 2016 and 2021 (from 480 to 530 residents).

Several other LGAs in Queensland recorded populations of between 100 and 300 Australian South Sea Islander residents in 2021 (Table 2).

Table 2 Local government areas with Australian South Sea Islander populations of between 100 and 300 people, Queensland, 2021

Local government area	Count ^(a)
Moreton Bay	280
Logan	250
Whitsunday	200
Livingstone	180
Fraser Coast	170
Gold Coast	170
Bundaberg	160
Sunshine Coast	150
Gladstone	140
Ipswich	130
Burdekin	110
Cassowary Coast	110

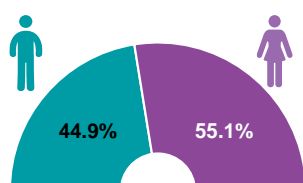
(a) Rounded to the nearest 10.

Age and sex structure

Queensland's Australian South Sea Islander population had a younger age structure than the rest of Queensland's population — 48.9% were under 30 years of age compared with 37.8% for the rest of Queensland (Figure 2).

Around 9.5% of Australian South Sea Islanders were aged 65 years or older, compared with 17% for the rest of Queensland.

More females than males reported Australian South Sea Islander ancestry — 3,069 females compared with 2,498 males. Females comprised 55.1% of the total Australian South Sea Islander population in Queensland in 2021, similar to the 54.4% recorded in 2016.



More than half of Australian South Sea Islanders in Queensland were female

Figure 1 Top five local government areas with Australian South Sea Islander residents, Queensland, 2021

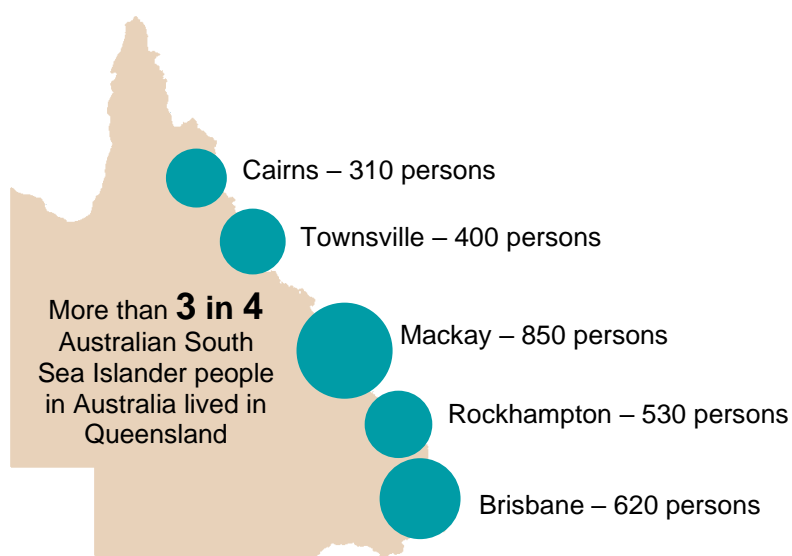
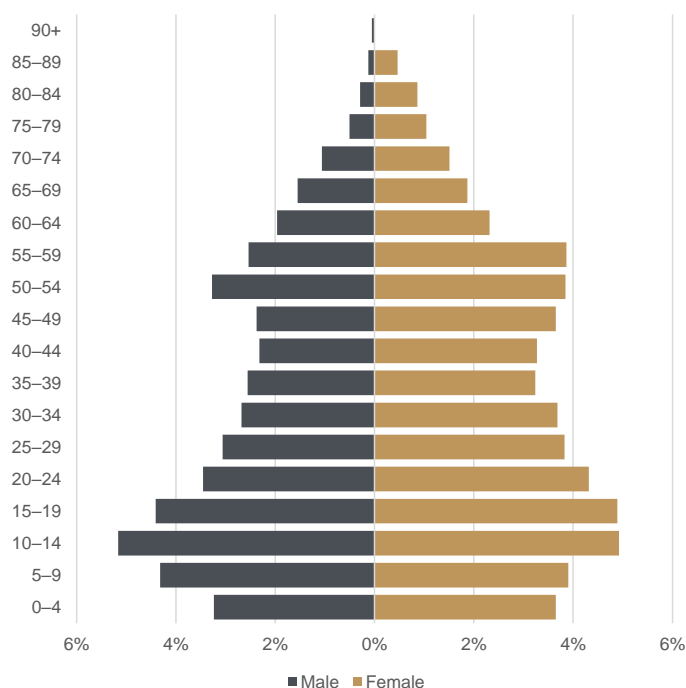


Figure 2 Australian South Sea Islander population by age and sex, Queensland, 2021



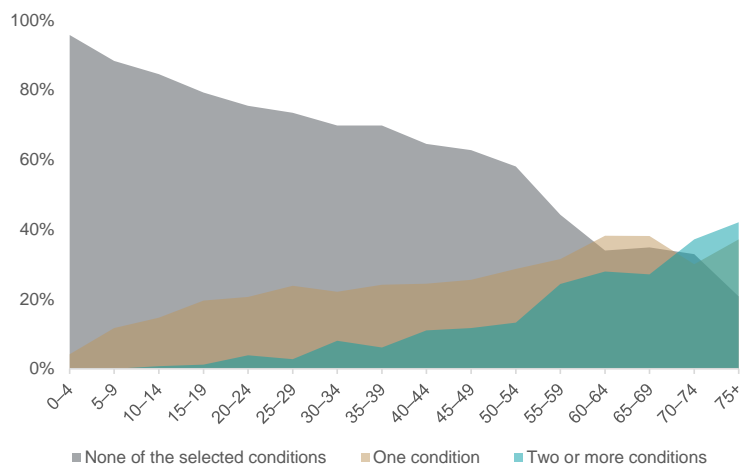
Health

The top three long-term health conditions reported by Australian South Sea Islanders in Queensland were asthma, diabetes, and mental health conditions

In the 2021 Census, for the first time, respondents were asked about their long-term health conditions. Selected conditions included in the census form were: arthritis, asthma, cancer (including remission), dementia (including Alzheimer's), diabetes (excluding gestational diabetes), heart disease (including heart attack or angina), kidney disease, lung condition (including COPD or emphysema), mental health condition (including depression or anxiety) and stroke. People could also nominate 'any other long-term conditions'.

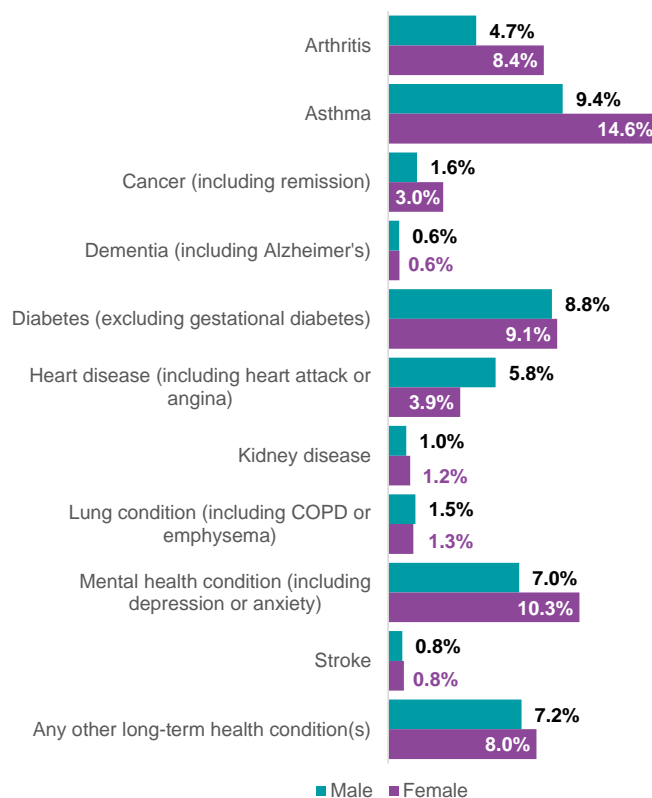
Australian South Sea Islander males (66.7%) were more likely to report no long-term health conditions than females (61.2%). The top three selected long-term conditions reported by females were asthma (14.6%) followed by mental health conditions (10.3%) and diabetes (9.1%) (Figure 3). For males, the same top three conditions were reported, but in a slightly different order: asthma (9.4%), diabetes (8.8%) and mental health conditions (7.0%).

Figure 4 Proportion of Australian South Sea Islanders in Queensland with reported long-term health conditions by age, 2021



core activity² in 2021 (6.0% and 6.2% respectively). One in five Australian South Sea Islanders aged 70–79 years (21.9%) had a need for assistance with a core activity, and this increased to more than half for those aged 80 years and over (56.3%).

Figure 3 Selected long-term health conditions reported by Australian South Sea Islanders in Queensland, 2021



The percentage of Australian South Sea Islanders reporting having none of the selected health conditions decreased with age, from 95.8% among 0–4 year olds to 20.8% among those aged 75 years and over (Figure 4). This older age cohort was more likely to report having two or more of the selected conditions (42.1%).

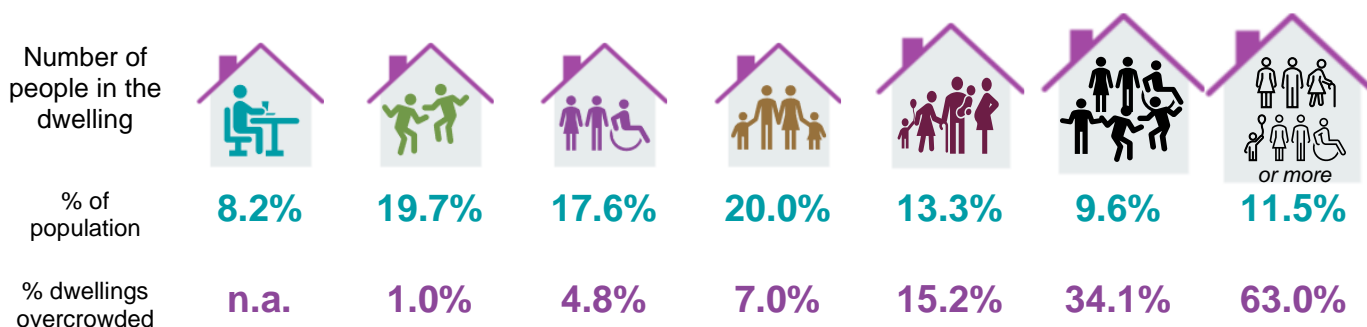
Similar proportions of Australian South Sea Islander males and females had a need for assistance with a

² People with a profound or severe core activity limitation are those needing assistance in their day-to-day lives in one or more of the three core activity areas of self-care, mobility and communication because of: a long-term health condition (lasting six months or more); a disability (lasting six months or more); and/or old age

Housing

While 8.2% of Australian South Sea Islander people in Queensland lived alone, 11.5% lived in dwellings where at least seven people were reported to live.

Around 81% of Australian South Sea Islander Queenslanders lived in housing where no additional bedrooms were required for the number and composition of people living there. The most overcrowded households were those where at least seven people lived — with 2 in 3 living in homes requiring more bedrooms.

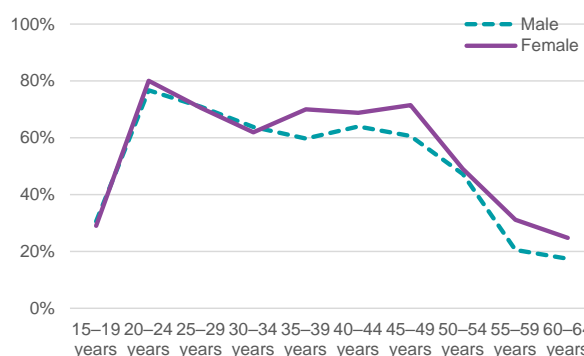


Year 12 attainment (15–64 year olds)

Just over half (53.7%) of Queensland's Australian South Sea Islander people aged 15–64 years had completed Year 12 or equivalent. Attainment rates were highest among 20–24 year olds (78.5%), and decreased with age from 45–49 years (65.3%), falling to 22.3% among 60–64 year olds (Figure 5).

There were also differences by sex, with 56.2% of women having attained year 12 or equivalent compared with 50.7% of men in the 15–64 year old age group. The largest differential was among 45–49 year olds where 71.4% of women had year 12 or equivalent qualification compared with 57.1% of men.

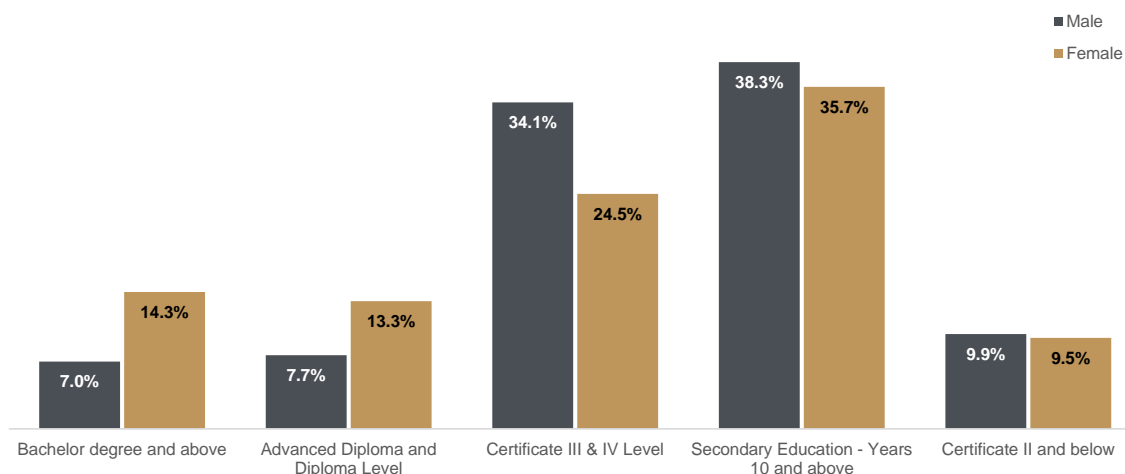
Figure 5 Year 12 or equivalent attainment, Australian South Sea Islanders by age and sex, Queensland, 2021



Highest level of education (20+ year olds)

Fifty-six Australian South Sea Islander Queenslanders reported having post graduate qualifications as their highest level of educational attainment—3 in 4 of these were women (76.8%). Australian South Sea Islander women were more likely than men to have higher education at the Diploma level or above (27.6% compared with 14.7%). Australian South Sea Islander men were more likely than women to have Certificate III or IV as their highest level of qualification (34.1% compared with 24.5%) (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Highest level of educational attainment by sex, Australian South Sea Islanders, Queensland 2021



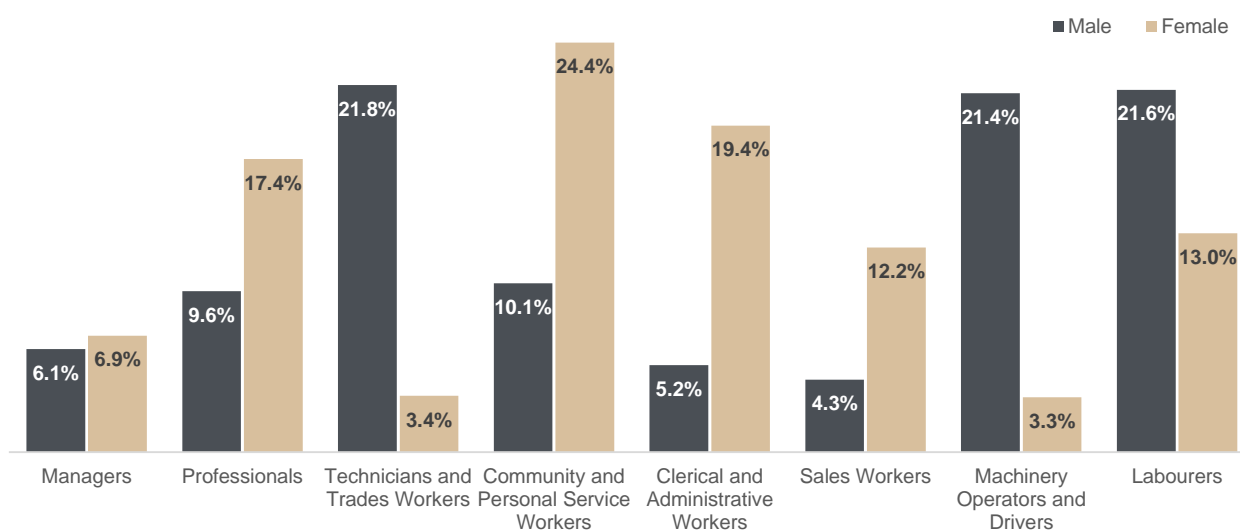
Employment (15–64 year olds)

Nearly three in four Australian South Sea Islanders (15–64 years) were participating in the labour force in 2021, including 71.9% of females and 78.3% of males. While males had a higher labour force participation rate than females, they were also more likely to be unemployed: 11.9% compared with 8.6%.

One in four (24.4%) Australian South Sea Islander working females was employed as a community and personal services worker, while 1 in 5 (19.4%) was employed as a clerical or administrative worker. The third-most common occupation group for working Australian South Sea Islander females was professionals (17.4%) (Figure 7).

The top three occupation groups for males, were technicians and trades workers (21.8%), followed by labourers (21.6%), and machinery operators and drivers (21.4%). These patterns are consistent with the reported levels of highest educational attainment.

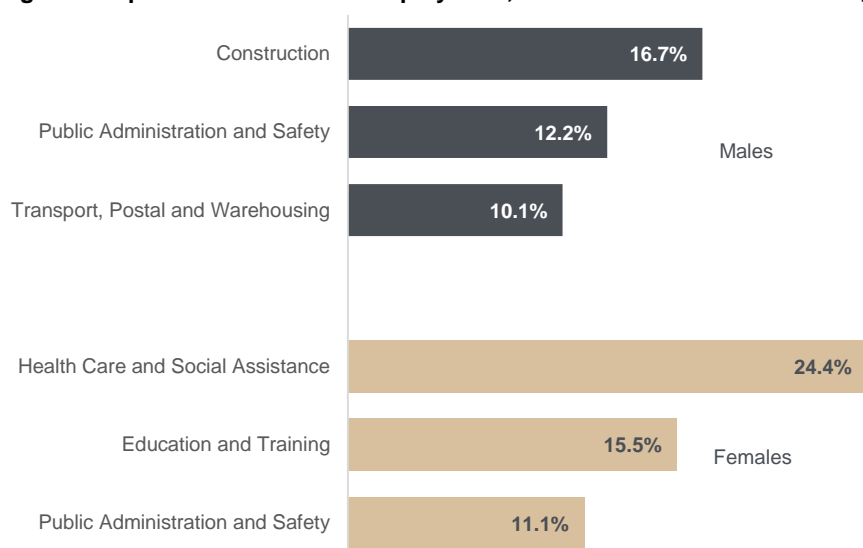
Figure 7 Occupation by sex, Australian South Sea Islanders, Queensland 2021



One in four Australian South Sea Islander employed females aged 15–64 years was working in the health care and social assistance industry (24.4%), followed by education and training (15.5%) and public administration and safety (11.1%). In 2021, more than half of all employed females were working in these three industries.

Construction was the most commonly reported industry for Australian South Sea Islander males, employing one in six men aged 15–64 years in 2021. Public administration and safety was in the top three industries of employment for both Australian South Sea Islander males and females, employing more than one in ten for both (Figure 8).

Figure 8 Top three industries of employment, Australian South Sea Islander, Queensland, 2021





Technical notes

All data in this report are sourced from the [ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021](#). All data are based on place of usual residence unless otherwise stated. Count of occupied private dwellings excludes 'Visitors only' and 'Other non-classifiable' households.

Australian South Sea Islander status has been derived from Ancestry responses in the Census. Respondents can provide up to two ancestries. When a respondent reports one ancestry they are coded to 'One response' and when a respondent reports two ancestries, they are coded to 'Two responses'. Where a respondent does not answer the question, they are coded to 'Not stated'. The variable used to report Australian South Sea Islander status was the Ancestry multi response: where a person responded Australian South Sea Islander to either the first or second ancestry, they were coded as Australian South Sea Islander for the purposes of this report.

Where possible, 'not stated' responses are excluded from totals and percentage calculations.

Total populations for each state and territory include 'Migratory - Offshore - Shipping' and 'No usual address' SA4s that are not detailed specifically in this report. As such, the sum of SA4 regions is not equivalent to the state/territory total.

n.a. = not applicable