

Queensland Government population projections, 2023 edition update

Sources: Queensland Government population projections, 2023 edition update; ABS National, state and territory population, various editions

Introduction

This publication provides an update to the [2023 edition Queensland Government Population Projections](#)¹ (“the 2023 edition”), and incorporates more contemporary information about fertility and migration, both to and within Queensland.

This update looks at population projections at the state level, the Greater Brisbane Greater Capital City Statistical Area and statistical areas level 4 (SA4s) in the rest of Queensland.

A supporting [data table](#)² can be found on the Queensland Government Statistician's Office website. The base population for these projections is the 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [final rebased estimated resident population \(ERP\)](#)³. All year references in this publication are “at 30 June”.

Uncertainty

The projections described in this paper are based on trends and assumptions around fertility, mortality and migration. As the COVID-19 pandemic soundly demonstrated, future levels of fertility, mortality and migration can be unpredictable, and this in turn introduces uncertainty into the projections of the future population.

To account for uncertainty in these components of population change, three projection series (low, medium and high) have been developed to illustrate a range of possible future outcomes. The actual observations for 2021, and where the assumptions for each series sit at 2071, are summarised in Table 1. However, there is uncertainty that any particular future outcome will be realised.

Table 1 Projection assumptions, Queensland

Year	Series	Total fertility rate	Net overseas migration	Net interstate migration	Life expectancy
		Babies per woman	Share of Australia	Number	Years (M–F)
2020–21	Actual	1.74	n.a.	40,223	80.9–85.1
2070–71	Low	1.40	14.0%	13,000	82.0–85.3
	Medium	1.65	17.0%	20,000	86.8–90.5
	High	1.80	20.0%	27,000	94.4–96.4

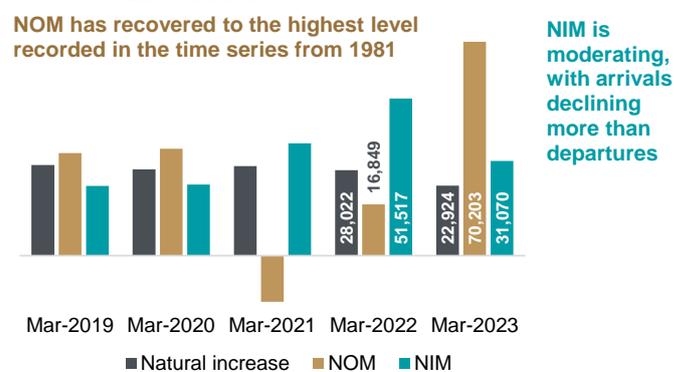
n.a. NOM for both Queensland and Australia was negative in 2020–21

Recent population trends

The background paper to the 2023 edition incorporated information around trends in population growth available up to late 2022. Population data released by the ABS in September 2022 for March 2022 showed that net overseas migration (NOM) to Queensland was beginning to recover from the NOM loss experienced during the pandemic, while net interstate migration (NIM) levels were at a record high. Earlier that year, the Australian Government forecast Australia's NOM levels to recover slowly in response to the reopening of international borders. This anticipated slow recovery was incorporated into the 2023 edition.

Since then, more recent data show that Queensland's NOM levels experienced a rapid increase, largely due to a faster than expected recovery in arrivals. In contrast, the recovery in departures has been much slower due to the lack of arrivals during the pandemic. Queensland NIM levels have moderated since the recent record high (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Components of growth, year to March, Queensland^(a)



(a) Data are preliminary. Components may not sum to total growth.

The 2023 edition medium series anticipated that Queensland's population would grow by 1.7% in 2022–23. Available data for the 12 months to March 2023, show annual growth of 2.3% due to higher than anticipated NOM.

While the pandemic has, so far, had a lesser impact on births and deaths in Queensland, the COVID-19 related impacts on other demographic changes are likely to linger.

¹ <https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/statistics/theme/population/population-projections/overview>

² <https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/statistics/theme/population/population-projections/2023-edition-update>

³ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/detailed-methodology-information/information-papers/methodology-used-final-rebased-population-estimates-june-2021>

Queensland

Over the next 50 years, Queensland is projected to grow by over 4 million to reach **9.26 million** persons (medium series)

Total population

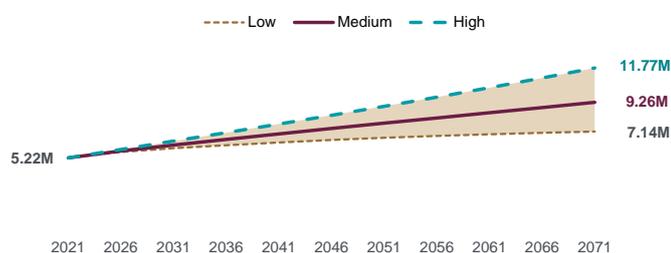
Based on the low, medium and high projection series, Queensland's population is projected to grow from 5.22 million persons in 2021 to between 6.52 million and 8.33 million persons by 2046. Continued growth is expected to result in a population of between 7.14 million (low series) and 11.77 million persons (high series) by 2071 (Table 2 and Figure 2).

When compared with the original 2023 edition, the updated medium series is 0.6% (or 52,400 persons) greater at 2071. The difference is largely driven by higher assumed levels of overseas migration prior to 2031 under the updated series.

Table 2 Projected population and growth, by projection series, Queensland

Year	Actual	Projection series		
		Low	Medium	High
2021	5,215,814			
2031		5,920,597	6,155,353	6,439,909
2041		6,342,690	6,967,870	7,688,392
2051		6,679,884	7,747,098	8,977,607
2061		6,941,045	8,506,684	10,328,521
2071		7,139,041	9,263,346	11,768,288
Growth (2021 to 2071)		1,923,227	4,047,532	6,552,474

Figure 2 Projected population (millions), by projection series, Queensland



While Queensland's population is projected to continue to grow, the rate of growth is anticipated to moderate over each of the projection series and over time:

- In the 10 years to 30 June 2021, the annual average population growth in Queensland was 1.5%.
- By 2031, 10-year annual average growth rates are projected to range between 1.3% and 2.1% over the

low to high series, then moderating further to between 0.3% and 1.3% in the 10 years to 2071 (Table 3).

Table 3 10-year average annual population growth (%), Queensland

Year	Actual	Projection series		
		Low	Medium	High
2021	1.5%			
2031		1.3%	1.7%	2.1%
2041		0.7%	1.2%	1.8%
2051		0.5%	1.1%	1.6%
2061		0.4%	0.9%	1.4%
2071		0.3%	0.9%	1.3%

Components of population change

State-level population change comprises **three components**:

- *natural increase (births minus deaths)*
- *net interstate migration (interstate arrivals minus interstate departures) and*
- *net overseas migration (overseas arrivals minus overseas departures).*

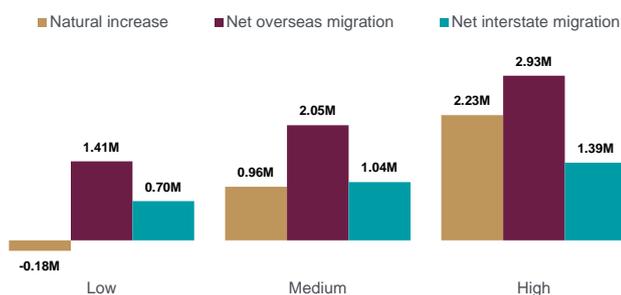
In each of the projection series (low, medium and high), net overseas migration is projected to make the greatest contribution to Queensland's population, adding between 1.41 and 2.93 million persons over the 50 years to 2071.

This is followed by net interstate migration, which is expected to add a further 700,000 to 1.39 million persons by 2071. In contrast, under the low series, Queensland's deaths are expected to exceed births, leading to a natural decrease of 184,000 persons over the 50 years to 2071. However, under the medium and high series, natural increase is projected to add 957,000 and 2.23 million persons respectively by 2071 (Figure 3).

Over the 50 years to 2071, Queensland is projected to gain over **2 million** overseas migrants (medium series)

Over the 50 years to 2071, Queensland's growth under the medium series of 4.05 million persons is projected to be made up of 50.7% net overseas migrants, 25.7% net interstate migrants, and 23.7% natural increase.

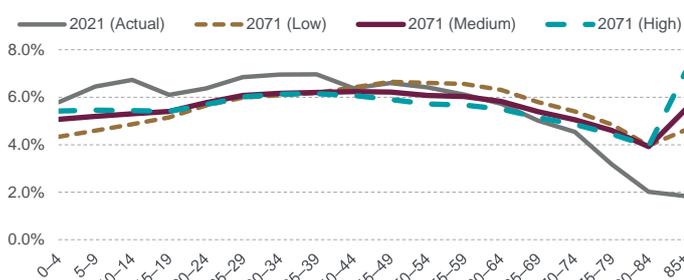
Figure 3 Components of population growth, by projection series, 2021 to 2071, Queensland



Age structure

The age structure of Queensland's population is expected to change significantly over the 50-year projection period (Figure 4). Overall, while there are likely to be more Queenslanders in all five-year age groups by 2071 under the medium series, a significant increase in both the number and proportion of people in older age groups is expected. By 2071, Queenslanders aged 65 years and older are projected to make up between 24.5% and 25.5% of the State's population compared with 16.6% in 2021.

Figure 4 Population share by five-year age groups, Queensland



The projected increasing proportion of older persons is expected to result in an increase in the median age from 38.4 years in 2021 to between 43.5 and 45.6 years by 2071 (Table 4).

The projected median age under the high series is somewhat younger than under the low series, due to the higher assumed levels of fertility and net overseas migration in the high series contributing to greater proportions of young people over time.

Table 4 Median age (years), Queensland

Year	Actual	Projection series		
		Low	Medium	High
2021	38.4			
2031		40.2	39.5	38.8
2041		42.0	40.7	39.7
2051		43.2	41.8	41.0
2061		44.6	42.9	42.3
2071		45.6	43.9	43.5

Queensland's regions

SA4 population change comprises **four components**:

- natural increase (births minus deaths)
- net interstate migration (interstate arrivals minus interstate departures)
- net overseas migration (overseas arrivals minus overseas departures) and
- net intrastate migration (arrivals from other SA4s in Queensland minus departures to other Queensland SA4s).

Greater Brisbane

Over the next 25 years, the population of Greater Brisbane is projected to grow by 1.29 million persons to reach **3.86 million persons** by 2046 (medium series)

The Greater Brisbane Greater Capital City Statistical Area (GCCSA) includes the nine SA4s of Brisbane–East, Brisbane–North, Brisbane–South, Brisbane–West, Brisbane Inner City, Ipswich, Logan–Beaudesert, Moreton Bay–North and Moreton Bay–South.

Greater Brisbane is projected to grow by an average of 1.6% per year to reach 3.86 million persons by 2046 under the medium series (Figure 5). This compares with an average of 2.0% per year over the 25 years to 2021.

Under each of the low, medium and high series, the primary driver of growth is expected to be overseas migration, accounting for up to 52.9% of growth.

Figure 5 Projected population, Greater Brisbane GCCSA

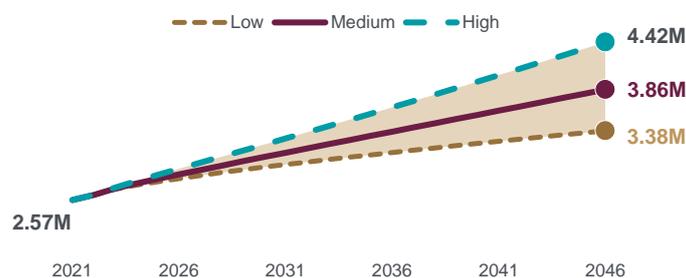


Table 5 Projected population and population change, Greater Brisbane GCCSA

Series	Population		Population change	
	2021	2046	2021–2046	% p.a.
Low	—	3,378,902	811,188	1.1%
Medium	2,567,714	3,859,660	1,291,946	1.6%
High	—	4,415,176	1,847,462	2.2%

Rest of Queensland (Queensland excluding Greater Brisbane)

Growth in rest of Queensland over the 25 years to 2046 is expected to account for 37.9% of total Queensland population growth. Growth rates under each series are anticipated to be lower than in Greater Brisbane. Under the medium series, rest of Queensland is projected to gain an extra 854,000 persons to reach 3.50 million (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Projected population, rest of Queensland

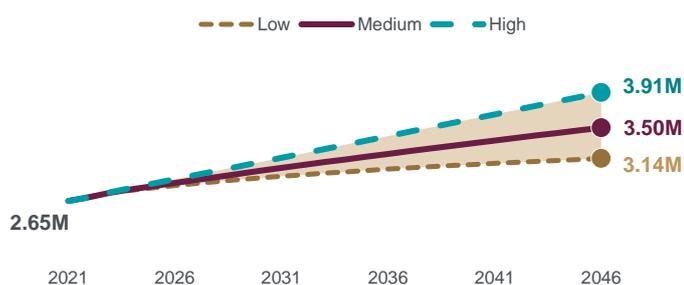


Table 6 Projected population and population change, rest of Queensland

Series	Population		Population change	
	2021	2046	2021–2046	% p.a.
	— persons —		persons	% p.a.
Low	3,142,316	3,142,316	494,216	0.7%
Medium	2,648,100	3,501,888	853,788	1.1%
High	3,913,215	3,913,215	1,265,115	1.6%

Medium series

There is considerable variation in the projected population change between the 10 SA4s in the rest of Queensland. Under the medium series, average annual rates of change over the 25 years will range from a decline of -0.2% per annum in Darling Downs–Maranoa up to $+1.8\%$ growth per annum in Gold Coast (Table 7).

Several regions are projected to age faster than others. Wide Bay is projected to have the oldest population, on average, in Queensland in 2046, with a median age of 54.5 years, and the highest proportion of persons aged 65 years and older (34.7%) (Figure 7 and Table 7). In comparison, Mackay–Isaac–Whitsunday is projected to have the fastest growing population of persons aged 65 years and older (3.0% per annum) in the 25 years to 2046, followed by Central Queensland and Greater Brisbane (2.5% per annum).

Figure 7 Projected population aged 65 years and over

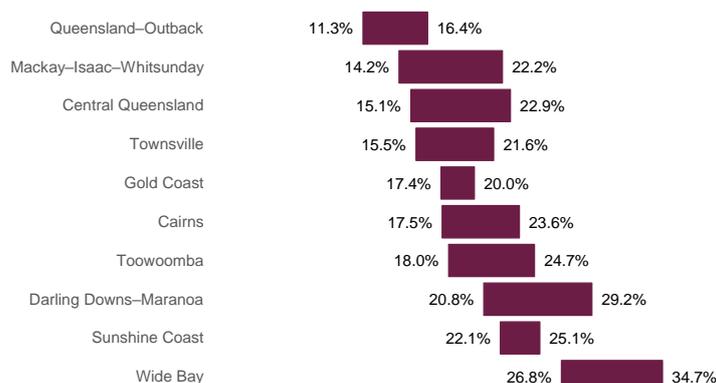


Table 7 Medium series projected population and population change, rest of Queensland SA4s and Greater Brisbane GCCSA

Region	Population		Population change		Median age	Population change 0 to 14-year-olds		Population change 65+ year-olds	
	2021	2046	2021–2046	% p.a.		2046	2021–2046	% p.a.	2021–2046
	— persons —		persons	% p.a.	years	persons	% p.a.	persons	% p.a.
Rest of Queensland (RoQ)	2,648,100	3,501,888	853,788	1.1%	43.8	75,376	0.6%	336,858	2.1%
Cairns	257,065	322,873	65,808	0.9%	44.6	4,148	0.3%	30,995	2.1%
Darling Downs–Maranoa	130,036	124,263	–5,773	–0.2%	48.6	–4,903	–0.8%	9,303	1.2%
Central Queensland	231,029	285,111	54,082	0.8%	42.0	3,035	0.2%	30,324	2.5%
Gold Coast	649,491	1,007,124	357,633	1.8%	41.3	43,301	1.3%	88,657	2.3%
Mackay–Isaac–Whitsunday	183,209	241,429	58,220	1.1%	42.5	5,408	0.6%	27,734	3.0%
Queensland–Outback	81,605	78,899	–2,706	–0.1%	37.9	–2,972	–0.7%	3,672	1.3%
Sunshine Coast	403,508	609,357	205,849	1.7%	45.5	29,025	1.4%	64,187	2.2%
Toowoomba	164,082	206,518	42,436	0.9%	43.2	1,877	0.2%	21,506	2.2%
Townsville	237,383	280,134	42,751	0.7%	40.0	1,599	0.1%	23,634	2.0%
Wide Bay	310,692	346,180	35,488	0.4%	54.5	–5,141	–0.4%	36,847	1.5%
Greater Brisbane GCCSA	2,567,714	3,859,660	1,291,946	1.6%	39.0	165,705	1.2%	323,440	2.5%
Queensland	5,215,814	7,361,549	2,145,735	1.4%	41.2	241,081	0.9%	660,299	2.3%