

Population estimates and projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, 2001 to 2026

Source: ABS 3238.0, released 30 April 2014, 11:30 am AEST

Key points

At 30 June 2026, Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is projected to number between 266,755 and 278,019 persons:

- The number of children (0–14 years) is projected to increase from 70,796 persons in 2011 to between 88,954 and 98,103 persons.
- The number of persons aged 55 years and over is projected to more than double over the projection period, from 15,537 persons in 2011 to between 33,548 and 35,165 persons.
- The Brisbane Indigenous Region is projected to remain the most populous Indigenous Region in Australia.

Introduction

This brief presents estimates and projections of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Queensland for the period 30 June 2001 to 30 June 2026. Estimates for 30 June 1996 to 30 June 2000 are also included as an illustrative series and should be used with caution.

The size, structure and components of the estimated and projected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population presented in this brief supersede those previously published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for the period 1991 to 2021.

Data notes

Three projection series are presented in this paper representing high, medium and low growth rate scenarios for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Queensland. The underlying assumptions used to produce these series are summarised on page 4. For more detailed information about the assumptions, methodology and data quality issues, please refer to the full publication of *Estimates and projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2001 to 2026* (ABS 3238.0).

The projection series presented here are not intended as predictions or forecasts, but are illustrations of growth and change in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population that would occur if assumptions about future demographic trends were to prevail over the projection period. There can be no certainty that any particular outcome will be realised, or that future outcomes will necessarily fall within the projected ranges.

Due to the inherent uncertainties in these data, including volatility in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander census

counts and the quality of births, deaths and migration data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons, the ABS advises that estimates and projections should be interpreted with caution.

Population size

The estimated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resident population in Queensland at 30 June 1996 was 120,460, increasing to an estimated 188,954 persons at 30 June 2011 (Table 1). This equates to an average annual growth rate of 3.0%, or 4,566 persons per year, the highest average annual increase of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of any Australian state or territory over the 15-year period.

Queensland recorded the largest increase of all states and territories in its share of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, from 25.7% at 30 June 1996 to 28.2% at 30 June 2011. Queensland was second only to New South Wales in its share of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population during this period.

Table 1: Estimated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resident population, Queensland, 30 June

	1996	2001	2006	2011
Estimated resident population (no.)	120,460	143,545	166,304	188,954
% total Queensland population	3.6	4.0	4.1	4.2
% national Indigenous population	25.7	26.8	27.7	28.2
% average annual growth rate for five-year period	..	3.6	3.0	2.6

Despite this growth in the resident population, there was minimal change to the proportion of Queenslanders of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin over the reference period, accounting for 3.6% and 4.2% at 30 June 1996 and 2011 respectively.

Looking ahead to 2026, Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is projected to be the third fastest growing of the states and territories behind the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and Victoria, with an average annual growth rate of between 2.3% and 2.6% over the 15-year projection period. (ACT: 2.8% to 3.1% and Victoria: 2.5% to 2.8%). At 30 June 2026, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Queensland is projected to number between 266,755 and 278,019 persons (Table 2 and Figure 1).

Table 2: Projected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resident population by main projection series, Queensland, 30 June

	2016	2021	2026
Projected resident population (no.)			
Series A (high)	213,712	243,452	278,019
Series B (medium)	213,160	240,971	271,860
Series C (low)	212,722	238,913	266,755
Average annual 5 year growth rate (%)			
Series A	2.5	2.6	2.7
Series B	2.4	2.5	2.4
Series C	2.4	2.3	2.2

Figure 2: Proportion of national estimated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, states and territories, 2011 and 2026 (series B)



By 30 June 2026, the proportion of Queenslanders of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin is projected to have increased slightly to between 4.5% and 4.7% of the state population.

Population structure

Median age

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population has a relatively young age structure. In 2011, the median age of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Queensland was estimated to be 20.9 years, compared with 36.6 years for the total Queensland population. By 30 June 2026, the median age of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders is projected to increase to between 23.3 and 24.1 years (Table 3).

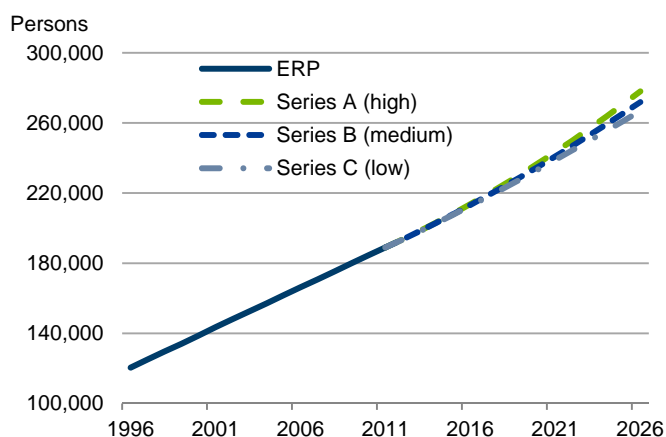
The median age of female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders is projected to be between 24.0 and 24.8 years by 2026, compared with between 22.7 and 23.5 years for males.

Table 3: Median age (years), projected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resident population by main projection series and sex, Queensland, 30 June

	2011 ^(a)	2016	2021	2026
Males				
Median age (years)				
Series A (high)		21.4	22.3	22.7
Series B (medium)	20.2	21.4	22.4	23.1
Series C (low)		21.4	22.6	23.5
Females				
Series A		22.5	23.4	24.0
Series B	21.5	22.5	23.6	24.4
Series C		22.6	23.7	24.8
Persons				
Series A		21.9	22.9	23.3
Series B	20.9	21.9	23.0	23.7
Series C		22.0	23.2	24.1

(a) Median age of base population.

Figure 1: Estimated and projected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resident population by main projection series, Queensland, 30 June



Queensland's share of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is projected to increase to 29.4% at 30 June 2026 (Figure 2). Across the main projection series, Queensland is projected to retain its position as the state or territory with the second largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, behind New South Wales (282,962 persons or 30.6% share) in 2026.

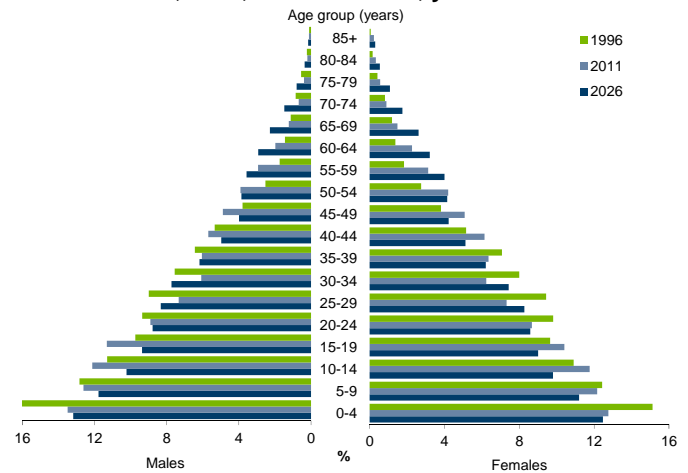
Age and sex structure

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons in Queensland is projected to increase across all age groups between 2011 and 2026. The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (0–14 years) is projected to increase from 70,796 in 2011 to between 88,954 and 98,103 in 2026 (Table 4), equating to an average annual growth of 1.5% to 2.2% over the projection period. The number of young adults (15–24 years) is projected to increase from 37,133 in 2011 to between 48,605 and 48,634 persons in 2026 at an average annual growth rate of 1.8%.

As a proportion of the total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, children are projected to decrease from 37.5% in 2011 to between 33.3% and 35.3% in 2026, continuing the downward trend observed over the 15 years to 2011. In contrast, the proportion of older persons (65 years and over) is projected to increase over the projection period, from 3.1% in 2011 to between 5.7% and 5.9% in 2026.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons aged 55 years and over are projected to more than double over the projection period, from 15,537 persons in 2011 to between 33,548 and 35,165 persons in 2026. This equates to an average annual growth of between 5.3% and 5.6%. The estimated share of the total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of persons aged 55 years and over is projected to increase from 8.2% in 2011 to between 12.5% and 12.6% in 2026.

Figure 3: Estimated and projected (Series B) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resident population by age and sex, Queensland, 1996, 2011 and 2026, year ended 30 June



Components of population change

The number of births of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies in Queensland is projected to increase from between 5,066 and 5,081 births in 2012 to between 6,587 and 7,906 in 2026. In Series C, which assumes constant life expectancy at birth, the number of deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons is projected to increase from 825 deaths in 2012 to 1,232 in 2026. In comparison, in Series A and B, which incorporate increasing life expectancy at birth assumptions, the number of deaths is projected to increase to 927 and 1,124 deaths respectively in 2026.

As the number of births is considerably larger than the number of deaths in each projections series, natural increase remains consistently high across the main projection series, reaching between 5,355 and 6,979 persons in 2026 (Figure 4). Table 5 summarises the projected components of population change and total growth in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resident population for Series B by five-year periods.

Figure 4: Projected natural increase of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population by main projection series, Queensland, 30 June

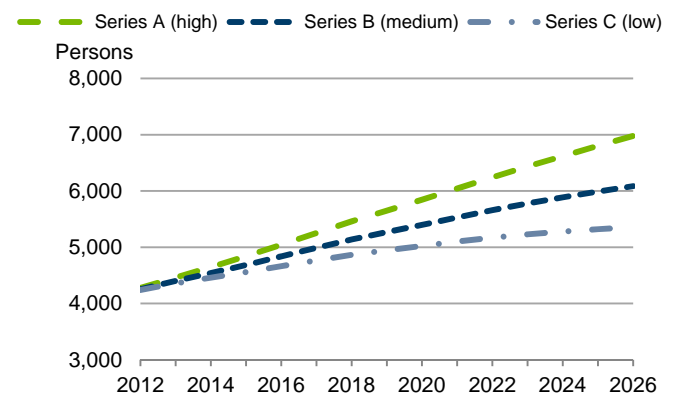


Table 4: Estimated and projected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resident population by age group (years), Queensland, 1996, 2011 and 2026, year to 30 June

Age group (years)	Series A Series B Series C				
	1996	2011	2026	2026	2026
— persons —					
0–14	47,364	70,796	98,103	93,337	88,954
15–24	23,230	37,133	48,634	48,601	48,605
25–34	20,471	25,496	43,254	43,194	43,177
35–44	14,459	22,909	30,664	30,565	30,512
45–54	7,769	17,083	22,199	22,049	21,959
55–64	3,847	9,750	18,918	18,646	18,499
65–74	2,403	4,073	11,377	11,042	10,859
75 and over	917	1,714	4,870	4,426	4,190
Total	120,460	188,954	278,019	271,860	266,755

Figure 3 shows the estimated and projected proportional change (Series B) in the age structure of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population over the 30-year period between 30 June 1996 and 30 June 2026 by males and females.

The sex ratio (the number of males per 100 females) of the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in 2026 is projected to be comparable to the estimated sex ratio in 2011 (99.7 and 99.2 respectively).

Table 5: Projected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resident population by main projection series and components of change, Queensland, five years to 30 June

Series B (medium)	2011–2016	2016–2021	2021–2026
Start population	188,954	213,160	240,971
Births	26,947	31,037	34,746
Deaths	4,226	4,711	5,342
Natural increase	22,721	26,326	29,404
Net interstate migration	1,485	1,485	1,485
Total growth	24,206	27,811	30,889
End population	213,160	240,971	271,860

Indigenous Regions

The Brisbane Indigenous Region (IREG) is projected in all series to remain the largest Indigenous Region in Australia over the period to 2026, with an average annual growth rate of 2.7%. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in the Brisbane IREG is projected to increase by 49.8% (32,354 persons) (Table 6). The NSW Central and North Coast IREG and Sydney–Wollongong IREG have the largest projected growth of Indigenous Regions in the rest of Australia with projected increases of 29,964 and 16,840 persons respectively over the 15-year period.

Other Indigenous regions in Queensland with projected high average annual rates of growth include Cairns–Atherton IREG and Rockhampton IREG (3.1% and 2.8% respectively), leading to projected population increases over the 15-year period of 58.3% and 51.6% respectively.

The Torres Strait IREG was the only Indigenous Region in Queensland with a projected decrease over the 15-year period, projected to decline by 10.0% or 687 persons by 2026.

Table 6: Indigenous Regions, projected increase and rate of growth (Series B), year to 30 June, 2011 and 2026

Indigenous Region	2011	2026	Projected growth	
	— persons —		no.	%
Brisbane	64,993	97,347	32,354	49.8
Cairns–Atherton	29,088	46,035	16,947	58.3
Cape York	9,812	11,310	1,498	15.3
Mount Isa	9,358	10,682	1,324	14.1
Rockhampton	22,822	34,595	11,773	51.6
Toowoomba–Roma	18,389	25,236	6,847	37.2
Torres Strait	6,885	6,198	-687	-10.0
Townsville–Mackay	27,607	40,457	12,850	46.5
<i>Queensland</i>	<i>188,954</i>	<i>271,860</i>	<i>82,906</i>	<i>43.9</i>
Australia	669,616	924,611	254,995	38.1

Assumptions

Base population

The base population used to produce the estimates and projections is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June 2011. This ERP was derived from the 2011 Census of Population and Housing counts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, adjusted for net undercount and demographic components of change.

Estimates

The underlying migration assumptions used to produce estimates of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population for the period 30 June 1996 to 30 June 2010 were as follows:

- Net overseas migration for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was set at zero.
- Net interstate migration for each intercensal period was based on the levels observed in each respective intercensal period.

Table 7 summarises the underlying assumptions about past levels of mortality that were applied to the base population to obtain a 'reverse-survived' population for the reference period. Over the 15-year period, it is estimated there was an overall increase in life expectancy at birth of 3.9 years for males and 2.3 years for females.

Table 7: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy at birth assumptions by sex, Queensland, 30 June¹

	1996	1996–2006	2006–2011	2010–12 (base)
Females	72.1 years	↑ 0.15 years per year	↑ 0.15 years per year	74.4 years
Males	64.8 years	↑ 0.20 years per year	↑ 0.30 years per year	68.7 years

Projections

Ten projection series of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population were produced for the period 30 June 2012 to 30 June 2026 through applying varying demographic assumptions to the base population. The projections presented in this brief, Series A, B and C, represent the main projection series and are used to respectively imply high, medium and low growth rate scenarios for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Queensland. The underlying assumptions used to produce the main projection series are summarised in Table 8 and Table 9, and apply for the duration of the projection period.

These assumptions were formulated on the basis of past demographic trends and do not attempt to allow for possible future changes in non-demographic factors (such as major government policy decisions, economic

¹ Mortality differentials between Queensland and Australia have been calculated and applied to the assumed Australian life expectancies at birth for the base population. The same rates of increase in life expectancy at birth are assumed for each state and territory.

factors or significant health treatment improvements) which may affect future demographic behaviour or outcomes.

These projections represent three of a range of possible outcomes for the future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Queensland. Using a range of possible outcomes, rather than a single projection series, gives a more realistic view of the possible future size, distribution, and age structure of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

Table 8: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fertility and paternity projection assumptions by main projection series, Queensland²

	Fertility rates (babies per woman)	Paternity rates (babies per man)
Series A (high)	Constant at 2.51	↑ 2.0% annually
Series B (medium)	↓ 0.5% annually	↑ 1.0% annually
Series C (low)	↓ 1.0% annually	Constant at 0.94

Table 9: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy at birth projection assumptions by main projection series and sex, Queensland³

	Females	Males
Series A (high)	↑ 0.45 years per year	↑ 0.50 years per year
Series B (medium)	↑ 0.25 years per year	↑ 0.30 years per year
Series C (low)	↑ 0.15 years per year	↑ 0.20 years per year

Assumptions for the remaining demographic factors were held constant:

- sex ratio of 105.6 male births per 100 female births
- interstate migration at levels observed in the 2011 Census (assumed positive net interstate migration of 297 persons each year for Queensland)
- zero net overseas migration
- zero unexplained growth in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

Table 10 presents a summary of the projected number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders at 30 June 2026 for the main projection series and the accompanying assumptions for the year ended 30 June 2026.

Over the 15-year projection period, life expectancy at birth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders is projected to increase by between 2.8 years (Series C) and 7.0 years (Series A) for males and between 2.3 years (Series C) and 6.8 years (Series A) for females.

Table 10: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, main projection series, Queensland, 30 June 2026

	Series A (high)	Series B (medium)	Series C (low)
Assumptions, year ended 30 June 2026			
Total fertility rate (babies per woman)	2.51	2.33	2.17
Total paternity rate (babies per man)	1.25	1.08	0.94
Male life expectancy at birth (years)	75.7	72.8	71.3
Female life expectancy at birth (years)	81.2	78.2	76.7
Projected resident population at 30 June 2026			
Males (no.)	138,858	135,711	133,089
Females (no.)	139,161	136,149	133,666
Persons (no.)	278,019	271,860	266,755

Glossary

Indigenous Regions (IREG) — are large geographical units loosely based on the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission boundaries. They are created by aggregating one or more Indigenous Areas.

Intercensal period — the time period between 30 June in the previous census year and 30 June of the latest census year.

Life expectancy — refers to the average number of additional years a person of a given age and sex might expect to live if the age-specific death rates of the given period continued throughout his or her lifetime.

Median age — the age at which half the population is older and half is younger.

Natural increase — the excess of births over deaths.

Net interstate migration — the difference between the number of persons who have changed their place of usual residence by moving into a given state or territory and the number who have changed their place of usual residence by moving out of that state or territory during a specified time period.

Net overseas migration — the net permanent and long-term overseas migration, adjusted for change in traveller duration, intention and multiple movement error.

Sex ratio — the number of males per 100 females.

Total fertility rate (TFR) — the average number of children an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman could expect to bear during her lifetime if she experienced current age-specific fertility rates at each age of her reproductive life.

Total paternity rate (TPR) — the average number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies born per Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander father where the mother is non-Indigenous (calculated the same way as the TFR).

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² The same rate of decline in fertility rate and rate of increase in paternity rate is assumed for each state and territory. Constant rates are as at 30 June 2012.

³ Mortality differentials between Queensland and Australia have been calculated and applied to the assumed Australian life expectancies at birth for the base population, and assumed to remain constant throughout the projection period.