

Queensland Government population projections, 2023 edition: Queensland SA4s

Sources: Queensland Government population projections, 2023 edition data and ABS, *Regional Population by Age and Sex, 2021*

Introduction

This publication provides a spatial and temporal overview of projected population change for Queensland's statistical areas level 4 (SA4s) over 25 years from 2021 to 2046. Analysis of the age composition of the future population is included, with a focus on Queensland's younger and older populations. All year references in this publication are "at 30 June".

For a more detailed analysis of the projection results at the small area level, see the related [information brief](#)¹ for local government areas and statistical areas level 2 (SA2s). [Data tables](#)² supporting the range of projection publications are available from the Queensland Government Statistician's Office website. The base population for these projections is the 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [preliminary rebased estimated resident population \(ERP\)](#)³.

Total population by series

Greater Brisbane

Over the next 25 years, the population of Greater Brisbane is projected to grow by a further 1.2 million persons to reach **3.8 million** people by 2046 (medium series)

The Greater Brisbane⁴ 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 expected to gain an additional 1.19 million people over 25 years under the medium series, increasing the population to 3.75 million by 2046 (Figure 1). Over the same period, the population of Greater Brisbane is projected to grow by 0.69 million persons under the low series and up to 1.73 million under the high series. This equates to average annual growth

rates of between 1.0% and 2.1% per annum under the three projection series (Table 1).

Figure 1 Projected population, Greater Brisbane GCCSA

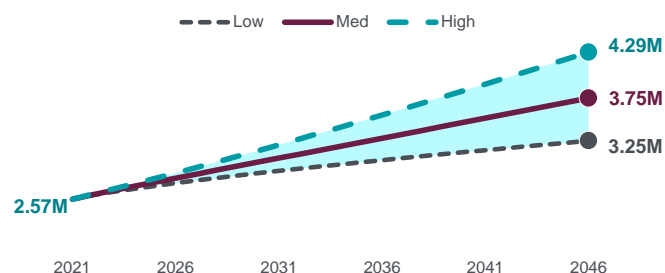


Table 1 Projected population and population change, Greater Brisbane GCCSA

Series	Population		Population change	
	2021	2046	2021–2046	% p.a.
Low	2,568,927	3,254,745	685,818	1.0%
Medium	2,568,927	3,754,887	1,185,960	1.5%
High	2,568,927	4,294,165	1,725,238	2.1%

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).

Under each series, net overseas migration is expected to make the greatest contribution to the 25-year projected population growth. Net overseas migration is projected to contribute between 359,000 and 777,000 persons (or 52.3% and 45.0% respectively) of the total population growth in Greater Brisbane (Table 2).

¹ www.qgso.qld.gov.au/statistics/theme/population/population-projections/regions#current-release-qld-population-projections-region-reports-2023-edn

² www.qgso.qld.gov.au/statistics/theme/population/population-projections/regions#current-release-qld-population-projections-regions-tables

³ www.qgso.qld.gov.au/statistics/theme/population/population-estimates/regions#current-release-rebased-estimated-resident-population-regional-qld

⁴ Excludes the SA4s of Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast.

Natural increase is projected to make the second-largest contribution to population growth in Greater Brisbane by 2046, between 212,000 to 635,000 persons.

Table 2 Components of projected population change, Greater Brisbane GCCSA, 25 years to 2046

Component	Projection series		
	Low	Medium	High
	— persons —		
<i>Births</i>	738,489	910,603	1,061,538
<i>Deaths</i>	526,137	488,163	426,619
Natural increase	212,353	422,440	634,919
Net intrastate migration	-29,853	-4,410	21,033
Net interstate migration	144,770	218,491	292,306
Net overseas migration	358,548	549,438	776,978

The third-largest projected component of SA4 population growth, net interstate migration (people moving to Queensland from elsewhere in Australia), is expected to contribute between 145,000 persons under the low series and 292,000 persons under the high series (or 21.1% and 16.9% respectively of total growth) to Greater Brisbane's population over the 25 years to 2046.

Intrastate migration (people moving elsewhere within Queensland), the fourth component of population change, will make the smallest contribution to population growth in Greater Brisbane under the high series, adding an additional 21,000 people from the rest of Queensland. However, under the low and medium series, it is anticipated that Greater Brisbane will record a net population outflow of 30,000 and 4,000 persons respectively to the rest of Queensland through intrastate migration.

Rest of Queensland (Queensland excluding Greater Brisbane)

Over the next 25 years, the population of the rest of Queensland is projected to grow by a further 900,000 persons to reach 3.5 million people (medium series)

The rest of Queensland (RoQ) is comprised of the remaining 10 SA4s of Cairns, Central Queensland, Darling Downs–Maranoa, Gold Coast, Mackay–Isaac–Whitsunday, Queensland–Outback, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba, Townsville and Wide Bay.

Population growth in RoQ is projected to be slower than in Greater Brisbane under each comparable projection series. Over the 25 years to 2046, the average annual growth in RoQ is anticipated to range from 0.7% under

the low series, up to 1.6% under the high series (Table 3).

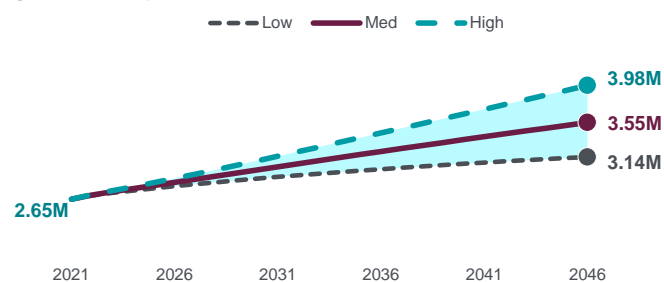
Table 3 Projected population and population change, rest of Queensland

Series	Population		Population change	
	2021	2046	2021–2046	% p.a.
	— persons —		persons	% p.a.
Low	2,648,726	3,142,388	493,662	0.7%
Medium	2,648,726	3,545,047	896,321	1.2%
High	2,648,726	3,978,743	1,330,017	1.6%

p.a. average annual growth per annum

Under each series, between 3.1 and 4.0 million persons are projected to be living in RoQ by 2046, adding between 494,000 and 1.3 million persons to the 2021 population of 2.65 million (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Projected population, rest of Queensland



Similar to Greater Brisbane, net overseas migration is projected to make the largest contribution to population growth in RoQ over the 25-year period to 2046, adding between 261,000 and 565,000 persons (Table 4).

Net interstate migration is projected to be the second largest contributor to RoQ's population growth during the 25 years to 2046, adding between 241,000 persons under the low series and 440,000 persons under the high series.

Table 4 Components of projected population change, Rest of Queensland, 25 years to 2046

Component	Projection series		
	Low	Medium	High
	— persons —		
<i>Births</i>	674,439	813,969	929,404
<i>Deaths</i>	712,396	661,850	582,710
Natural increase	-37,957	152,120	346,694
Net intrastate migration	29,853	4,410	-21,033
Net interstate migration	241,204	340,507	439,716
Net overseas migration	260,562	399,284	564,641

Medium series: Greater Brisbane

Within Greater Brisbane GCCSA (which excludes Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast), Brisbane–South was the most populous SA4 in 2021. However, by 2046, Ipswich is projected to have the largest population, increasing from 374,000 to 702,000 persons. Logan–Beaudesert is projected to have the second-largest population by 2046, followed by Moreton Bay–North, Brisbane–South and Brisbane Inner City (Table 5).

Within Greater Brisbane, over 25 years to 2046, the largest change is projected to be in Ipswich SA4...

with the population expected to nearly double from 374,000 to 702,000 persons (medium series)

Over the 25 years to 2046, the SA4 with the largest projected population growth in Greater Brisbane is Ipswich, up by 329,000 persons, an average annual growth rate of 2.6%. Moreton Bay–North's population is also projected to grow significantly (by 221,000 persons), followed by Logan–Beaudesert and Brisbane Inner City.

Older people

Greater Brisbane's population is ageing, in line with global, national and state trends. People are living longer, and the large baby boomer cohort is progressively moving into the older age groups.

Over the 25 years to 2046, Greater Brisbane is projected to experience growth in the number of older people (defined as those aged 65 years and older). Additionally, the proportion of older people in the population is also expected to rise.

Between 2021 and 2046, Greater Brisbane's population aged 65 years and over is projected to almost double to 717,000 persons, resulting in close to 1 in 5 residents (19.1%) expected to be aged 65 and over by 2046, up from 1 in 7 residents (14.4%) in 2021.

Populations in all nine SA4s in Greater Brisbane are ageing, albeit by various magnitudes and at different rates. The largest increase in the number of older persons is projected to occur in Moreton Bay–North, up by 74,000 persons from the 57,000 older persons recorded in 2021. Significant increases in older persons are also expected in Ipswich (up 67,000), Logan–Beaudesert (up 55,000 persons), and Brisbane Inner City (up 38,000 persons).

Ipswich is projected to have the fastest growth in the number of older persons, at 3.6% per annum on average, followed by Moreton Bay–North at 3.4% per annum and Brisbane Inner City at 3.3% per annum.

Table 5 Projected population and population change, medium series, Greater Brisbane GCCSA SA4s

Region	Population		Population change		Median age	Population change 0 to 14-year-olds		Population change 65+ year-olds	
	2021	2046	2021–2046		2046	2021–2046		2021–2046	
	— persons —		persons	% p.a.	years	persons	% p.a.	persons	% p.a.
Greater Brisbane GCCSA	2,568,927	3,754,887	1,185,960	1.5%	39.6	134,118	1.0%	346,297	2.7%
Brisbane–East	243,487	275,243	31,756	0.5%	46.1	–2,906	–0.3%	25,972	1.8%
Brisbane–North	227,863	275,408	47,545	0.8%	41.3	561	0.1%	19,527	1.8%
Brisbane–South	377,406	477,219	99,813	0.9%	37.4	4,927	0.3%	28,159	1.9%
Brisbane–West	192,140	210,340	18,200	0.4%	39.4	–4,248	–0.5%	10,713	1.2%
Brisbane Inner City	298,121	448,508	150,387	1.6%	38.0	5,827	0.6%	38,160	3.3%
Ipswich	373,651	702,449	328,798	2.6%	37.3	60,134	2.2%	67,439	3.6%
Logan–Beaudesert	365,653	560,542	194,889	1.7%	38.7	30,209	1.3%	54,535	3.1%
Moreton Bay–North	268,995	489,869	220,874	2.4%	46.1	27,304	1.8%	74,420	3.4%
Moreton Bay–South	221,611	315,310	93,699	1.4%	38.5	12,310	0.9%	27,371	2.8%
Rest of Queensland	2,648,726	3,545,047	896,321	1.2%	43.8	81,981	0.6%	373,503	2.3%
Queensland	5,217,653	7,299,934	2,082,281	1.4%	41.5	216,099	0.8%	719,800	2.5%

p.a. average annual growth per annum

All SA4s in Greater Brisbane are projected to have a larger proportion of older persons by 2046. Notably, Moreton Bay–North and Brisbane–East are expected to have the greatest proportion of older people, at more than a quarter of their population (Figure 3).

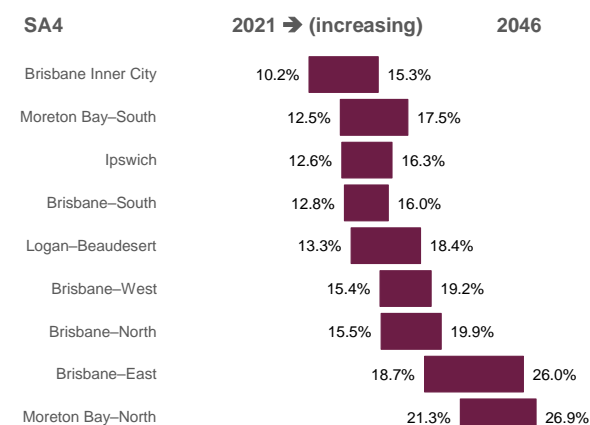
By 2046, the populations of all SA4s in Greater Brisbane (and RoQ) are projected to be **older** (medium series) with...

- a higher median age, and
- a larger proportion of people aged 65+ years

Other SA4s in Greater Brisbane projected to have comparatively high proportions of older people in 2046 are Brisbane–North, Brisbane–West and Logan–Beaudesert, where close to 1 in 5 residents will be aged 65 years or older.

Moreton Bay–North is projected to have the largest increase in the number of older persons by 2046. This growth is expected to increase the proportion of older persons in the population by around 5.6 percentage points between 2021 and 2046, from 21.3% to 26.9%.

Figure 3 Proportion of persons aged 65 years and older, medium series, Greater Brisbane GCCSA SA4s



Children and young people

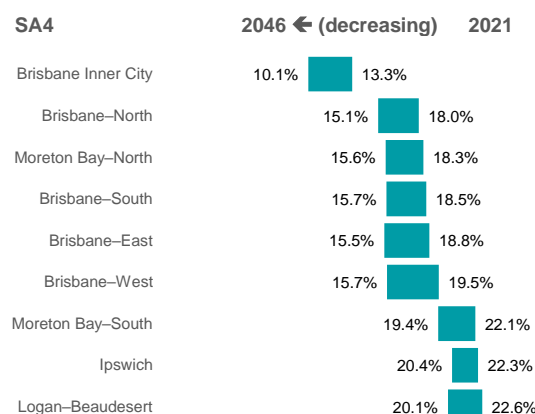
The number of children and young people (those aged 0 to 14 years) in Greater Brisbane is projected to rise to 632,000 by 2046. While the number of children and young people is expected to increase, growth rates for this age group are projected to be lower than for the overall population. Consequently, the 0 to 14 years cohort is projected to account for a smaller share (16.8%) of Greater Brisbane's population in 2046, down from 19.4% in 2021.

The projected changes in the number of children and young people are not expected to be evenly distributed. Across Greater Brisbane, more children and young people are projected to reside in all SA4s, except Brisbane–West and Brisbane–East (see Table 5).

Over the 25-year projection horizon, the largest growth in the number of persons aged 0 to 14 years is expected to occur in Ipswich, increasing by 60,000 persons in 2021 to reach 143,000 persons in 2046 (Table 5). The second-largest increase in the number of children and young people in Greater Brisbane is expected to occur in Logan–Beaudesert (up 30,000 persons). The number of children and young people in Brisbane–West is expected to be lower by 4,000 persons, followed by Brisbane–East (down 3,000 persons).

While the number of children and young people is increasing across most SA4s in Greater Brisbane, their share of total population is expected to steadily fall (Figure 4). In terms of the proportion of persons aged 0 to 14 years in the population, the largest decrease (–3.7 percentage points) is projected in Brisbane–West (from 19.5% in 2021 to 15.7% in 2046). The proportion of children and young people is anticipated to ease from 22.3% in 2021 to 20.4% in 2046 in Ipswich and from 18.8% to 15.5% in Brisbane–East.

Figure 4 Proportion of persons aged 0 to 14 years, medium series, Greater Brisbane GCCSA SA4s



Median age

Greater Brisbane's population is expected to progressively age. The median age⁵ is projected to rise to 39.6 years over the 25-year period from 2021 to 2046.

Within Greater Brisbane, all SA4s are projected to experience a rise in the median age, with increases ranging from +1.3 years in Brisbane–West up to +4.3 years in Brisbane–East. By 2046, the SA4s with the highest median age in Greater Brisbane are projected to be Brisbane–East and Moreton Bay–North (46.1 years).

⁵ The age at which half the population is older, and half is younger.

Ageing is projected to be least pronounced in Ipswich with a median age of 37.3 years by 2046, followed by Brisbane–South with a median age of 37.4 years (Table 5).

Medium series: Rest of Queensland

There is considerable variation in the projected population change between the 10 SA4s in the rest of Queensland (RoQ). Under the medium series, average annual rates of change over the 25 years will range from a decline of –0.1% per annum in Queensland–Outback up to +1.7% growth per annum in both Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast (Table 6).

Gold Coast is projected to remain the most populous SA4 in RoQ, increasing from 650,000 persons in 2021 to 1.0 million persons by 2046. Notably, the projected population increase in Gold Coast is anticipated to be at least one and a half times that of any other SA4 in RoQ.

After peaking at almost 87,000 persons in 2011, the population of Queensland–Outback eased to 82,000 persons in 2021. Looking ahead, Queensland–Outback SA4 is projected to remain the least populated SA4 in RoQ. However, the rate of population decrease is anticipated to moderate over the projection period, with the population projected at 80,000 persons by 2046.

Components of population change

Of the four components of population change in RoQ, overseas migration is projected to make the largest

By 2046,
within the rest of Queensland
(outside Greater Brisbane),
the largest population change is
projected to be in the **Gold Coast SA4**
(medium series)

contribution to population growth over the 25-year period. Of the 949,000 additional people projected to be living in Queensland in 2046 due to net overseas migration, RoQ is expected to be home to 399,000 (42.1%) of these migrants. For overseas migrants to RoQ, Gold Coast SA4 is expected to be the primary destination. Gold Coast is projected to gain 157,000 or 16.5% of Queensland's net overseas migration, followed by Sunshine Coast (6.1%), and Cairns (5.1%).

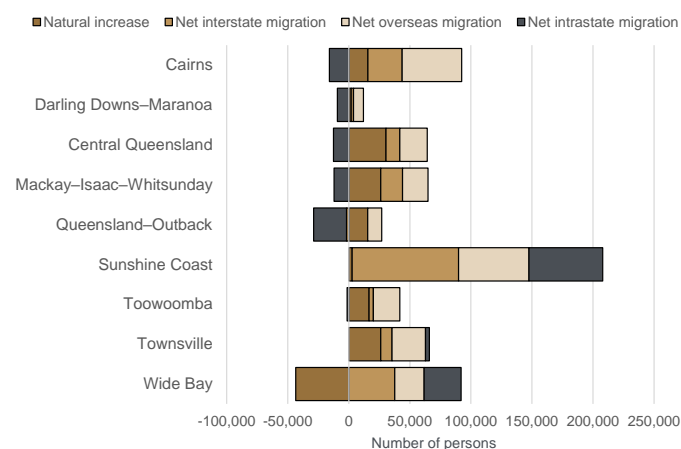
Net interstate migration is projected to be the second-largest contributor to population growth in RoQ over the 25-year horizon, contributing around 341,000 additional persons, or 60.9% of Queensland's interstate migrants. The top SA4s for contributions from net interstate migrants into RoQ are projected to be Gold Coast (146,000 persons), followed by Sunshine Coast (87,000 persons), Wide Bay (38,000 persons) and Cairns (28,000 persons). In contrast, Queensland–Outback is projected to experience a net loss of –2,000 persons due to interstate migration over the projection period (Figure 5).

Table 6 Projected population and population change, medium series, rest of Queensland SA4s

Region	Population		Population change		Median age	Population change 0 to 14-year-olds		Population change 65+ year-olds	
	2021	2046	2021–2046		2046	2021–2046		2021–2046	
	— persons —		persons	% p.a.	years	persons	% p.a.	persons	% p.a.
Rest of Queensland (RoQ)	2,648,726	3,545,047	896,321	1.2%	43.8	81,981	0.6%	373,503	2.3%
Cairns	257,149	333,642	76,493	1.0%	43.2	7,765	0.6%	32,473	2.2%
Darling Downs–Maranoa	130,066	132,723	2,657	0.1%	47.7	–3,641	–0.6%	11,120	1.4%
Central Queensland	231,104	282,790	51,686	0.8%	40.7	2,917	0.2%	24,693	2.2%
Gold Coast	649,659	1,001,623	351,964	1.7%	42.2	40,521	1.2%	108,816	2.7%
Mackay–Isaac–Whitsunday	183,269	236,081	52,812	1.0%	41.4	5,569	0.6%	23,739	2.6%
Queensland–Outback	81,634	79,697	–1,937	–0.1%	38.3	–3,158	–0.8%	3,578	1.3%
Sunshine Coast	403,521	611,513	207,992	1.7%	47.4	23,268	1.2%	82,632	2.7%
Toowoomba	164,144	204,377	40,233	0.9%	41.9	2,432	0.3%	18,205	1.9%
Townsville	237,452	303,407	65,955	1.0%	39.0	7,016	0.6%	25,429	2.1%
Wide Bay	310,728	359,195	48,467	0.6%	53.9	–708	–0.1%	42,818	1.7%
Greater Brisbane GCCSA	2,568,927	3,754,887	1,185,960	1.5%	39.6	134,118	1.0%	346,297	2.7%
Queensland	5,217,653	7,299,934	2,082,281	1.4%	41.5	216,099	0.8%	719,800	2.5%

p.a. average annual growth per annum

Figure 5 Components of population change, medium series, 25 years to 2046, rest of Queensland SA4s



Note. Components for Gold Coast not shown due to their scale

The third largest component of population change in rest of Queensland (RoQ) during the projection period is natural increase, adding 152,000 persons over the 25 years to 2046. The top SA4s for natural increase in RoQ are projected to be Gold Coast (61,000 persons), followed by Central Queensland (31,000 persons), and Mackay–Isaac–Whitsunday and Townsville (26,000 persons each). In contrast, Wide Bay is projected to experience a natural decline with a net loss of 44,000 persons over the projection period (deaths are projected to exceed births). However, Wide Bay's population is still expected to grow as the combined effects of the other components of population change are projected to more than offset the impacts of natural decrease (Table 6).

Net intrastate migration (movements between SA4s in Queensland) is anticipated to be the smallest driver of population change in RoQ. Over the 25-year period to 2046, net intrastate migration is projected to contribute around 4,000 additional persons to RoQ's population.

Older people

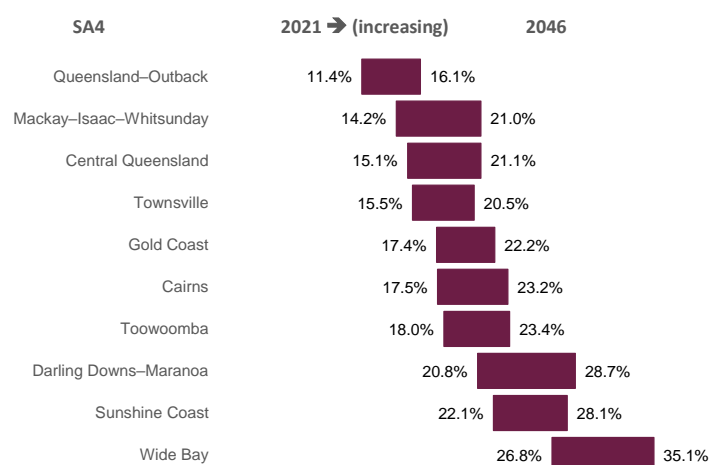
For RoQ, the number of people aged 65 years and older is projected to almost double to 868,000 persons in 2046, close to a quarter of RoQ's total population. Growth in the number of older Queenslanders (65 years and older) is projected across all SA4s over the 25 years, with increases outside Greater Brisbane ranging from 4,000 persons in Queensland–Outback up to 109,000 persons in Gold Coast (Table 6).

Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast are projected to have the fastest growth in the number of older persons, both with an annual average increase of 2.7% between 2021 and 2046. In comparison, the projected growth of the 65 years and older cohort for the state of Queensland is an average annual 2.5%, and for the remaining SA4s in RoQ the rate of growth ranges from 1.3% per annum to 2.6% per annum.

With the steady ageing of the population in all 10 SA4s in RoQ, the proportion of older persons is also projected to increase. Wide Bay is expected to have the highest proportion of older persons by 2046 at 1 in 3 persons (35.1%). Darling Downs–Maranoa is also expected to experience a large increase, with the proportion of older persons increasing from 20.8% in 2021 to 28.7% by 2046 (Figure 6).

Although Gold Coast is projected to have the largest increase in the number of older persons by 2046, this is only expected to increase the proportion of older persons by 4.7 percentage points from 17.4% to 22.2% between 2021 and 2046.

Figure 6 Proportion of persons aged 65 years and older, medium series, rest of Queensland SA4s



Children and young people

The number of persons aged 0 to 14 years in RoQ is projected to increase by 82,000 to 574,000 persons by 2046 (Table 6). Notwithstanding the growth in the number of children and young people, their share of total population in RoQ is expected to moderate from 18.6% in

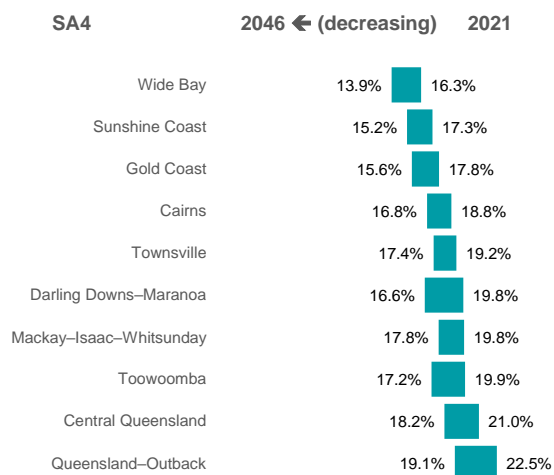
The proportion of 0 to 14-year old persons is projected to decline in all SA4s in the rest of Queensland. (medium series)

2021 to 16.2% by 2046.

Most SA4s in RoQ are projected to experience growth in the number of children and young people. However, the numbers of those aged 0 to 14 years in Darling Downs–Maranoa, Queensland–Outback and Wide Bay are projected to decline over the projection horizon. By 2046, the 0 to 14 years cohort is expected to

represent a smaller share of the population across all RoQ SA4s (Figure 7).

Figure 7 Proportion of persons aged 0 to 14 years, medium series, rest of Queensland SA4s



Median age

Median ages⁶ in all RoQ SA4s are projected to increase over the 25-year period from 2021 to 2046, ranging from an increase of +1.8 years in Townsville (to 39.0 years) up to +5.3 years in Darling Downs–Maranoa to reach 47.7 years (Table 6).

Wide Bay is projected to continue to have the oldest population among all SA4s in Queensland, with a median age of 53.9 years in 2046. Conversely, Queensland–Outback is expected to have the lowest median age of 38.3 years by 2046.

⁶ The age at which half the population is older, and half is younger.