

3 Population

Any snapshot of the status of children and young people in Queensland needs to start by looking at information about their numbers, age distribution and cultural backgrounds. The release of data from Census 2001 has provided information on various aspects of the population, and allows us to describe the main characteristics of Queensland's children and young people, including where they live.

Regional statistics on children and young people

The following maps illustrate the distribution of particular groups using information from Census 2001 by local government areas (LGAs). In reading these maps, it needs to be noted that the data are less reliable for LGAs with small populations.

Map 1 illustrates the distribution of young children in the state aged 0 to 4 years, and indicates where they made up a higher proportion of the population than average.

- The state average of all children aged 0 to 4 was 6.8%, but 13% of the Indigenous (i.e. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) population were aged 0 to 4.
- The proportion of the population aged 0 to 4 showed little variation across Queensland, with most LGAs having a proportion in the range of 6.0 to 7.9% of the population.
- The LGAs with the largest proportions of 0 to 4 year olds (10 to 13%) included those with predominantly Indigenous populations. As discussed later in this chapter, children and young people made up a higher proportion of the Indigenous population than in the total population.

Map 2 illustrates the LGAs with higher proportions of Indigenous children among all those aged 0 to 14.

- Across Queensland the average proportion of Indigenous children in the 0 to 14 population was 5.9%.
- Indigenous children made up larger proportions of children 0 to 14 in the more rural and remote areas, where Indigenous people make up more of the general population.

Map 3 illustrates the location of children in single parent families. As a point of comparison, a state average of 21% of children aged 0 to 14 years were living in single parent families.

- The proportion of children living in single parent families ranged from 15% to 25% of children aged 0 to 14 for 63 of the 125 LGAs.
- There was a much smaller proportion in many rural areas (mostly in LGAs with smaller populations). Larger population areas with proportions in the highest range included Redcliffe (27%), Bundaberg (26%), Hervey Bay (26%) and Logan (25%). Other LGAs with rates of 25% or over included areas with small populations, but notably areas with Indigenous communities, including Aurukun, Mornington, Murgon and Carpentaria.

Children and young people in Queensland

Children and young people aged 0 to 17 made up 24.7% of the population of Queensland in 2004, with 517,769 aged 0 to 9 years (13.3% of the population) and 442,653 aged 10 to 17 (11.4%).

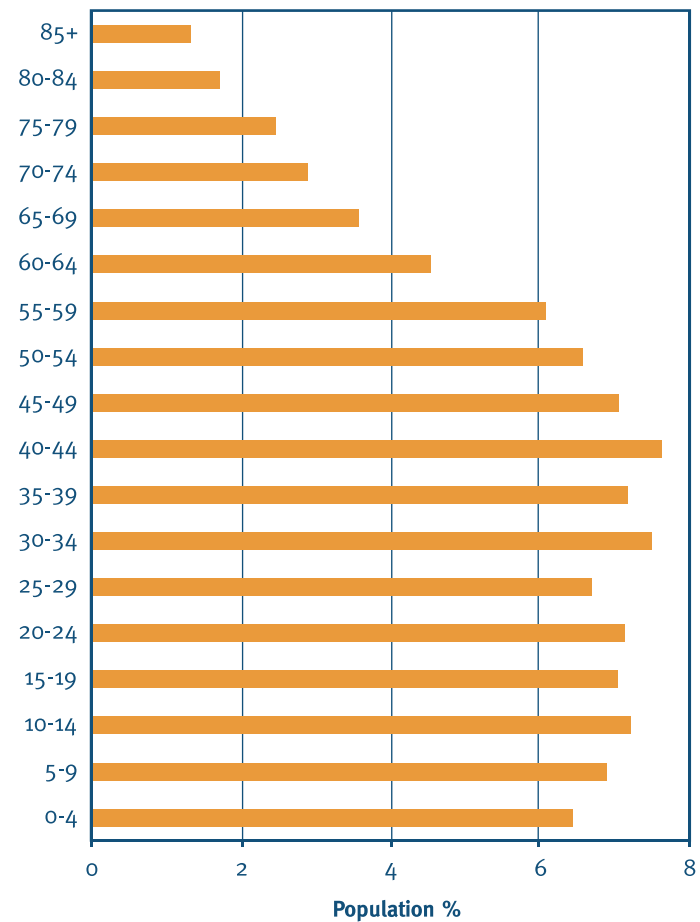
The age profile is dominated by the larger number of people born between 1945 and 1965, who were aged between 39 and 59 in 2004 (Figure 3.1). This group, known as the Baby Boomers, were born in a period of higher levels of fertility in the post-war years. As in the rest of Australia and other developed countries, fertility rates have dropped over the last twenty years. More information on fertility rates can be found in Chapter 4 on Family.

Projected population change

The population of children and young people aged 0 to 17 is projected to increase from 0.9 million in 2001 to 1.1 million in 2051. Growth rates are projected to slow from about 1.2% per year at the beginning of the period to about 0.2% per year at the end of the projection period.

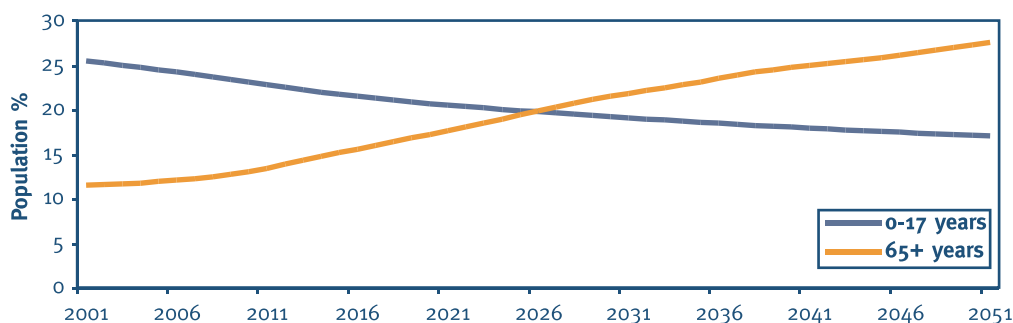
Due to the ageing of the population (as a result of lower fertility and increasing life expectancy) children and young people will make up only 17% of the population in 50 years time, compared to around 26% in 2001 (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.1 Population by age, Queensland, 2004



Source: ABS, Population by Age and Sex, cat. 3201.0

Figure 3.2 Population projections by age, Queensland, 2001 to 2051



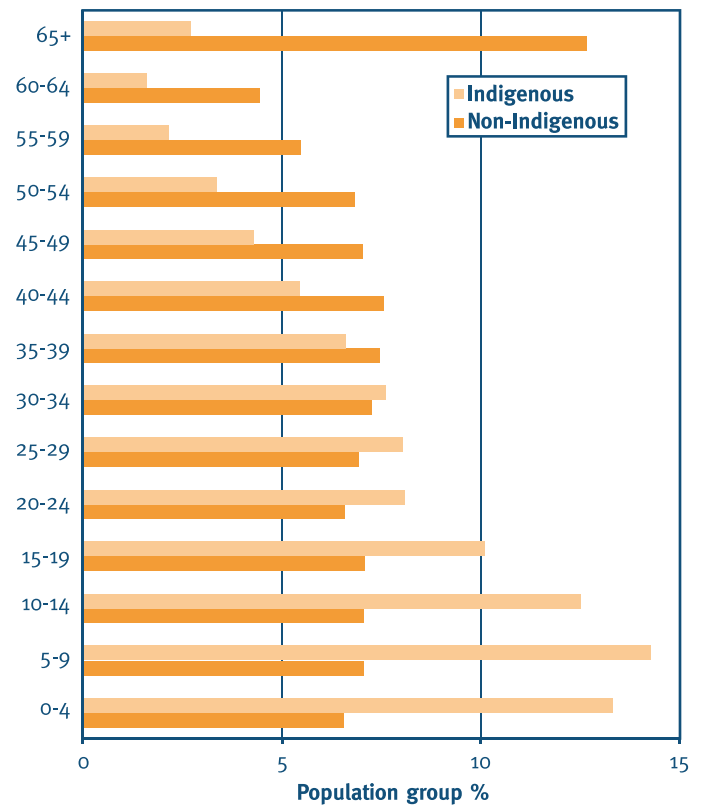
Source: Queensland Government, Population Projections, 2003 (medium series)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people

Across all age groups, the Indigenous population has had higher mortality rates than the non-Indigenous population, particularly in the older age groups. This results in a profile of Indigenous people which is very different to the rest of the population (Figure 3.3). The ratio of children and young people aged under 18 to adults is much higher in the Indigenous population than in the rest of the population, with 46.5% of the Indigenous population aged 0 to 17 compared to 24.9% in the rest of the population in 2001.

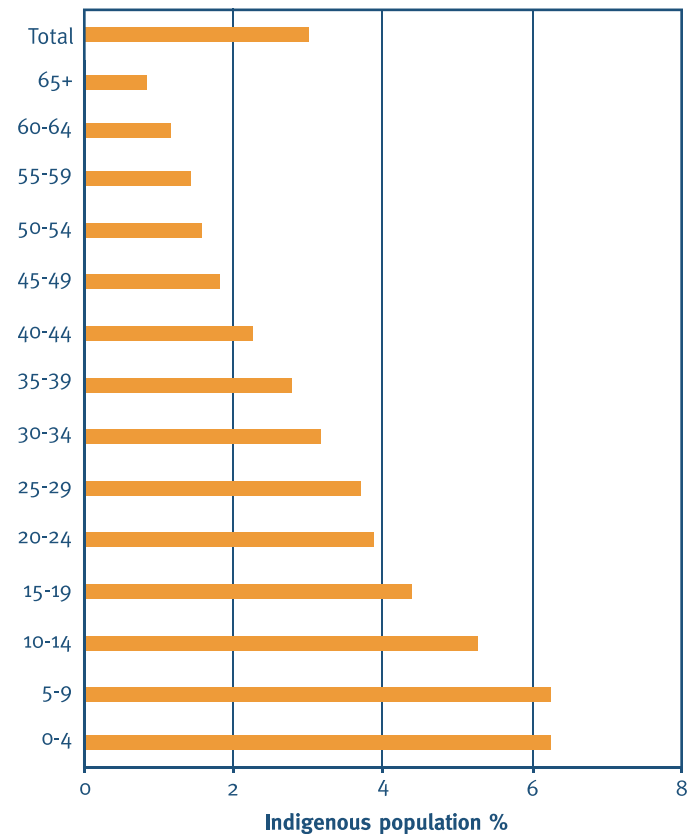
Indigenous children and young people made up 5.7% of 0 to 17 year olds in Queensland, whereas Indigenous people only constituted 3.1% of the total Queensland population (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.3 Population by age and Indigenous status, Queensland, 2001



Source: ABS, Census 2001: Indigenous Profiles

Figure 3.4 Indigenous population as a proportion of the total population by age, Queensland, 2001



Source: ABS, Census 2001: Indigenous Profiles

Children and young people born overseas

Only a small proportion of children and young people in Queensland were born overseas, with 94% of 0 to 14 year olds born in Australia and 6% born overseas (of those with birthplace stated). New Zealand was the most common overseas birthplace (37% of all overseas born), followed by the United Kingdom (13%) and South Africa (6%) (Table 3.1).

However, Queensland's parents were more likely to have been born overseas, with 24% of children under 15 having one or both parents born overseas (where birthplace was stated).

Language spoken at home

Of 0 to 24 year olds in 2001, 94% used English as their main language at home (where language was stated). Languages spoken at home other than English included Mandarin (10% of all other languages), Cantonese (8%), Vietnamese (8%), South Slavic (5%) and Samoan (5%) (Table 3.2).

Australian Indigenous languages were spoken at home by 3% of those speaking languages other than English.

Comments

The most striking finding relates to the differences in the age profiles of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. The higher proportion of Indigenous children and young people compared to the general population can be linked to factors such as shorter life expectancy of Indigenous people due to higher mortality rates, and to higher fertility rates.

This means there is around one Indigenous adult for every person under 18 years, with most of those adults being under 40 years of age.

In comparison, there are around three adults for every person under 18 years in the Queensland population. This has implications for the nature and amount of adult presence and modelling in Indigenous communities and in Indigenous children's lives.

The Census is an important source of information on the demographic profile of the state and its regions. However, as the Census is conducted only once every five years, new information will only be available when the next Census results are released in 2007.

Table 3.1 Birthplace of 0-14 year olds born overseas, Queensland, 2001

Birthplace	Per cent
New Zealand	36.7
United Kingdom	12.9
South Africa	6.0
Philippines	3.4
United States of America	3.2
Hong Kong	2.0
South Korea	1.9
Other country	33.8
Total	100.0

Source: ABS, Census 2001: Expanded Community Profiles

Table 3.2 Language other than English spoken at home, 0-24 year olds, Queensland, 2001

Language spoken at home other than English	Per cent
Mandarin	9.9
Cantonese	8.2
Vietnamese	7.8
South Slavic	5.0
Samoan	4.8
Spanish	4.1
Italian	3.8
Japanese	3.8
Australian Indigenous Languages	3.4
Other language	49.1
Total	100.0

Source: ABS, Census 2001 (unpublished data)