Northern Territory Population Projections 2024 Release

2024 Release

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| Acronyms | Full form |
| ABS | Australian Bureau of Statistics |
| SA3 | Statistical Area Level 3 |

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# Executive summary

The Northern Territory Population Projections 2024 Release provides population projections for the whole of Territory from 2020-21 to 2050-51, and for the Territory’s regions from 2020-21 to 2040-41. The population projections are disaggregated by five-year age cohorts, sex and Aboriginal identity in five-year time intervals.

The projections are based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) final estimated resident population as at 30 June 2021, published and unpublished ABS Census and population data on fertility, mortality, migration and Aboriginal identification as well as assumptions set out in section 3.3 Assumptions and forecasting approach. These projections and assumptions align with the Northern Territory 2024-25 Budget and consider data released up to 14 May 2024. The first five-year projection period is influenced by the impacts of covid, in particular with elevated levels of net migration flows in the Territory.

Key results:

* The Territory’s population is projected to grow from 248,151 in 2020-21 to 342,083 in 2050-51 (Table 1) in the baseline projection, which equates to a long-term average annual growth rate of 1.1% (Table 2).
* The Territory’s Aboriginal population is projected to grow from 76,487 in 2020-21 to 104,449 in 2050‑51 (Table 1), representing an average annual growth rate of 1.0% (Table 2). The Territory’s non‑Aboriginal population is projected to grow from 171,664 in 2020-21 to 237,635 in 2050-51, which equates to an average annual growth rate of 1.1%.
* The Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population are projected to age, with the Aboriginal population seeing a larger share of people moving into the over 65 age cohort than the non-Aboriginal population. From 2020-21 to 2050-51, the proportion of Aboriginal persons aged 65 and over is projected to increase from 4.5% to 10.5% while the proportion of non-Aboriginal persons aged 65 and over is projected to increase from 10.6% to 14.7% (Table 4).
* ‘Greater Darwin’, which consists of Darwin City, Darwin suburbs, Litchfield and Palmerston, is projected to grow from 147,971 in 2020-21 to 199,902 in 2040-41, which equates to an average annual growth rate of 1.5% (Table 6). The ‘Rest of the Territory’ which consists of Alice Springs, Barkly, Daly‑Tiwi‑West Arnhem, East Arnhem and Katherine is projected to grow from 100,180 in 2020-21 to 110,353 in 2040-41, reflecting an average annual growth rate of 0.5%.

Population projections should be used with a clear understanding of underlying assumptions and limitations. These projections are developed by applying mathematical models and assumptions of population trends to the base population in 2020-21. The value of projections is that they provide information about how a population may change over time, subject to assumed parameters. Alternative scenarios have been produced to show how changing assumptions, relative to the baseline projections, can impact the projections.

Projections are not intended to provide accurate short-term forecasts. Projections are not targets, nor do they reflect future policy changes at the Commonwealth or State level. Similarly, projections do not incorporate the effects of major structural or technological developments in an economy, or future unknown shocks from significant events such as pandemics, which could affect long-run population dynamics.

**Table 1: Territory population projections**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2020-211 | 2025-26 | 2030-31 | 2035-36 | 2040-41 | 2045-46 | 2050-51 |
|  | no. | no. | no. | no. | no. | no. | no. |
| Total population | 248,151 | 261,311 | 278,190 | 294,270 | 310,256 | 326,114 | 342,083 |
| Aboriginal | 76,487 | 81,734 | 86,757 | 91,417 | 95,959 | 100,356 | 104,449 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 171,664 | 179,577 | 191,433 | 202,853 | 214,297 | 225,758 | 237,635 |

1 Actual results.

# Introduction

This document provides an overview of the official Northern Territory Government population projections for the whole of Territory from 2020-21 to 2050-51 (30 years) and the Territory’s regions from 2020-21 to 2040-41 (20 years). All population projections are at 30 June.

These projections update previous population projections presented in the Northern Territory Population Projections 2019 Release. Several whole of Territory projection scenarios have been produced to highlight the sensitivity of the projections to changes in input parameters and assumptions.

Datasets of the population projections, as well as projections at Territory Government defined regional areas are available through the Department of Treasury and Finance website at:

<https://treasury.nt.gov.au/dtf/economic-group/population-projections>

# Projections methodology

## Model

The Territory population projections are generated using a cohort-component model developed in collaboration with the Demography and Growth Planning team at the Northern Institute of Charles Darwin University.

The model produces Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population projections for the Territory by five-year age cohorts, sex, and geographical area (the Territory as a whole and nine Statistical Area Level 3 regions), at five-year time intervals.

The model adjusts each age cohort of each population by the components of population change (fertility, mortality, migration, and identification change) to arrive at a future population. Specifically, these adjustments are the addition of births, migration arrivals and Aboriginal identification change in and the subtraction of deaths, migration departures and Aboriginal identification change out.

The adjustment is represented mathematically as:

Where is population, is births, is deaths, and are internal migration in and out respectively, is immigration, is emigration and and are Aboriginal identification change in and out of the population. Additionally, is financial year, is geographical area, is sex, is age, is Aboriginal status. Internal migration refers to interstate and intrastate migration.

The drivers of population change (excluding immigration) are represented mathematically as:

Immigration is incorporated in the model as number of persons rather than a rate, given limitations in determining the persons at risk of immigrating to the Territory from the rest of the world.

Births are assigned to the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations based on rates of infant Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal identification. That is, births are not assigned on the basis of the Aboriginal identification of the mother or father.

The projections for the Territory’s nine Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3) regions are constrained to the whole of Territory population projections. That is, the results for the regions are adjusted to ensure their sum agrees with the population and components for the whole of Territory.

The Territory’s SA3 regions are based on ABS Australian Statistical Geography Edition 3 and include Darwin City, Darwin suburbs, Litchfield and Palmerston (which together constitute ‘Greater Darwin’) and Alice Springs, Barkly, Daly-Tiwi-West Arnhem, East Arnhem and Katherine (which together constitute the ‘Rest of the Territory’).

## Data

The base population for the projections is aligned to the ABS final estimated resident population for 2020‑21, with total fertility, mortality, migration and infant Aboriginal identification rates derived from published and unpublished ABS Census and population data. Rates of Aboriginal identification change are derived from ABS Census Longitudinal Dataset.

## Assumptions and forecasting approach

The population projection results are derived from averages, trends from past data and the following key assumptions:

* Total fertility rates of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal females are assumed to decline over the projection period, with a greater decline in fertility rates assumed for Aboriginal females in line with long-term trends in the Territory.
* Life expectancies for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal females and males are assumed to continue increasing over the projection period. Greater gains in life expectancies are assumed for the Aboriginal population, reflecting anticipated improvements in Aboriginal health outcomes.
* The COVID-19 pandemic led to significant disruptions in migration flows to, from and within Australia. These projections reflect the impact of the pandemic, and the recovery period as borders re-opened, in the first five-year projection period (2020-21 to 2025-26). In particular, lower levels of migration during border closures and higher levels of net interstate migration losses and net overseas migration gains after borders re-opened. Net interstate and overseas migration levels are assumed to return to long-term trends.
  + Net interstate migration of Aboriginal persons is assumed to remain stable at a small net loss over the projection period, while net overseas migration for the Aboriginal population is assumed to be zero, in line with available Census migration data.
  + Net interstate migration of non-Aboriginal persons is assumed to be negative over the projection period, and improve from elevated net outflows in the first five year period (2021-26) to long-term average levels. Similarly, net overseas migration is assumed to remain positive over the projection period, and decline from elevated net inflows projected in 2021-26 to long-term average levels.
* Rates of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal infant identification are held constant over the projection period as trends in infant Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal identification remain unclear.
* Similarly, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal identification changes are held constant over the projection period. The rate of identification change from Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal in the ‘Rest of Territory’ was assumed to be zero.
* The population projections in the first five-year time interval are aligned to forecasts contained in the Northern Territory 2024-25 Budget.

Appendix 1 provides a numerical summary of the assumptions.

# Overview of Territory projection results

## Projected population

The Territory population is projected to grow from 248,151 in 2020-21 to 342,083 in 2050-51, which equates to an average annual growth rate of 1.1% (Chart 1 and Table 1). Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations are projected to grow over the projection period, with the Aboriginal populations growing from 76,487 to 104,449 from 2020-21 to 2050-51 and non-Aboriginal populations growing from 171,664 to 237,635 over the same period.

**Chart 1: Territory population actual results and projections**



**Table 1: Territory population actual results and projections**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2020-211 | 2025-26 | 2030-31 | 2035-36 | 2040-41 | 2045-46 | 2050-51 |
|  | no. | no. | no. | no. | no. | no. | no. |
| Total population | 248,151 | 261,311 | 278,190 | 294,270 | 310,256 | 326,114 | 342,083 |
| Aboriginal | 76,487 | 81,734 | 86,757 | 91,417 | 95,959 | 100,356 | 104,449 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 171,664 | 179,577 | 191,433 | 202,853 | 214,297 | 225,758 | 237,635 |

1 Actual results.

Population growth rates vary across time periods as assumptions adjust recent outcomes towards longer‑term averages levels. For example, an average annual growth rate of 1.0% is projected for the Territory for 2021‑26, increasing to 1.3% over 2026-31, before moderating to 1.0% in the outer years of projections (Table 2). The projected Territory population increase of 1.3% in the 2026-31 period largely reflects the transition of net interstate migration from the elevated net outflows in the 2021-26 period towards long‑term average levels, while the decline to 1.0% reflects the assumptions of declining total fertility rates broadly in line with trends.

**Table 2: Territory population, average annual growth rate**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2011-16 | 2016-21 | 2021-26 | 2026-31 | 2031-36 | 2036-41 | 2041-46 | 2046-51 | 2020-21 to  2050-51 |
|  | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Total population | 1.2 | 0.2 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.1 |
| Aboriginal | 1.6 | 0.5 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 1.0 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 1.0 | 0.1 | 0.9 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.1 |

## Age structure

The Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations are projected to age over the projection period (Chart 2). All broad age groups (under 15 years for minors, 15-64 years for working age, and 65 years and over for retirees) are projected to grow in number from 2020-21 to 2050-51 (Table 3), with the proportion of persons aged 65 and over (Table 4) to increase.

The increase in the proportion of persons aged 65 and over is projected to be greater for the Aboriginal population, increasing from 4.5% in 2020-21 to 10.5% in 2050-51, compared to the non-Aboriginal population increasing from 10.6% to 14.7% for over the same period.

**Chart 2: Territory Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population age pyramid**



**Table 3: Territory population by broad age groups**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2020-211 | 2025-26 | 2030-31 | 2035-36 | 2040-41 | 2045-46 | 2050-51 | 2020-21 to  2050-51 |
|  | no. | no. | no. | no. | no. | no. | no. | % |
| **Aged under 15** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Aboriginal | 21,426 | 21,805 | 22,409 | 23,238 | 23,412 | 23,517 | 23,634 | 0.3 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 31,283 | 31,776 | 32,985 | 34,816 | 36,234 | 37,749 | 39,373 | 0.8 |
| Total population | 52,709 | 53,581 | 55,394 | 58,055 | 59,646 | 61,265 | 63,007 | 0.6 |
| **Aged 15-64** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Aboriginal | 51,646 | 55,293 | 58,432 | 60,765 | 63,905 | 67,135 | 69,837 | 1.0 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 122,236 | 125,972 | 133,427 | 140,373 | 148,220 | 156,021 | 163,253 | 1.0 |
| Total population | 173,882 | 181,265 | 191,860 | 201,138 | 212,125 | 223,156 | 233,091 | 1.0 |
| **Aged 65 and over** | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Aboriginal | 3,415 | 4,636 | 5,916 | 7,414 | 8,641 | 9,704 | 10,977 | 4.0 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 18,145 | 21,829 | 25,021 | 27,664 | 29,843 | 31,988 | 35,008 | 2.2 |
| Total population | 21,560 | 26,465 | 30,937 | 35,078 | 38,485 | 41,692 | 45,985 | 2.6 |

1 Actual results.

**Table 4: Territory population proportions by broad age groups**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2020-211 | 2025-26 | 2030-31 | 2035-36 | 2040-41 | 2045-46 | 2050-51 |
|  | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| **Aged under 15** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Aboriginal | 28.0 | 26.7 | 25.8 | 25.4 | 24.4 | 23.4 | 22.6 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 18.2 | 17.7 | 17.2 | 17.2 | 16.9 | 16.7 | 16.6 |
| Total population | 21.2 | 20.5 | 19.9 | 19.7 | 19.2 | 18.8 | 18.4 |
| **Aged 15-64** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Aboriginal | 67.5 | 67.6 | 67.4 | 66.5 | 66.6 | 66.9 | 66.9 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 71.2 | 70.1 | 69.7 | 69.2 | 69.2 | 69.1 | 68.7 |
| Total population | 70.1 | 69.4 | 69.0 | 68.4 | 68.4 | 68.4 | 68.1 |
| **Aged 65 and over** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Aboriginal | 4.5 | 5.7 | 6.8 | 8.1 | 9.0 | 9.7 | 10.5 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 10.6 | 12.2 | 13.1 | 13.6 | 13.9 | 14.2 | 14.7 |
| Total population | 8.7 | 10.1 | 11.1 | 11.9 | 12.4 | 12.8 | 13.4 |

1 Actual results.

The median age of the Territory population is projected to increase from 33 years to 36.1 years over the projection period, with the increase in Aboriginal population median ages greater than the increase in non‑Aboriginal population median ages (Table 5).

**Table 5: Territory population median age**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2020-211 | 2025-26 | 2030-31 | 2035-36 | 2040-41 | 2045-46 | 2050-51 |
|  | no. | no. | no. | no. | no. | no. | no. |
| Aboriginal | 26.5 | 27.8 | 28.8 | 29.9 | 30.9 | 31.9 | 32.7 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 35.5 | 35.8 | 36.1 | 36.4 | 36.6 | 36.9 | 37.3 |
| Total population | 33.0 | 33.5 | 34.1 | 34.5 | 35.0 | 35.6 | 36.1 |

1 Actual results.

# Regional projections

Regional projections are produced for the nine SA3 regions of the Territory. The regions are Darwin City; Darwin suburbs; Litchfield; Palmerston; Alice Springs; Barkly; Daly-Tiwi-West Arnhem; East Arnhem and Katherine.

Darwin City, Darwin suburbs, Litchfield and Palmerston together constitute ‘Greater Darwin’ and the remaining five SA3 regions together constitute the ‘Rest of the Territory’. Regional projections are produced from 2020-21 to 2040-41 (20 years) and are constrained to sum to the results of the whole of Territory population projections.

The population in the ‘Greater Darwin’ region is projected to grow from 147,971 in 2020-21 to 199,902 in 2040-41, which equates to an average annual rate of 1.5% (Chart 3 and Table 6). The population in the ‘Rest of the Territory’ region is projected to remain relatively stable over the period 2021-26 with an average annual growth of 0.5%. The ‘Rest of the Territory’ population is projected to grow from 100,180 in 2020-21 to 110,353 in 2040-41.

**Chart 3: Territory population by regions**



For ‘Greater Darwin’, populations in Palmerston and Darwin City are projected to record the fastest average annual growth of 2.1% and 1.9% respectively over the period 2021-2041 (Chart 6 and Table 6). Darwin suburbs are expected to record the slowest population growth of 0.9% over the period 2021-2041.

Alice Springs and Katherine are projected to grow at the fastest pace across the ‘Rest of the Territory’, growing at an average annual growth rate of 0.7% and 0.6% respectively over the period 2020-21 to 2040‑41. Barkly and Daly-Tiwi-West Arnhem are projected to record average annual growth of 0.3%. East Arnhem is projected to be the slowest growing region in the Territory with average annual growth projected to be 0.1% over the period 2020-21 to 2040-41.

The Aboriginal population in ‘Greater Darwin’ and the ‘Rest of the Territory’ is projected to grow over the projection period (Charts 4 and 5).

**Chart 4: Greater Darwin population by Aboriginal identity**



**Chart 5: Rest of Territory population by Aboriginal identity**



**Table 6: Territory regional population and average annual population change by Aboriginal identity**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Population** | | | | | **Average annual population change** | | | | |
| 2020-211 | 2025-26 | 2030-31 | 2035-36 | 2040-41 | 2021-26 | 2026-31 | 2031-36 | 2036-41 | 2020-21 to  2040-41 |
|  | no. | no. | no. | no. | no. | % | % | % | % | % |
| Aboriginal |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Darwin City | 1,883 | 2,279 | 2,629 | 2,932 | 3,194 | 3.9 | 2.9 | 2.2 | 1.7 | 2.7 |
| Darwin Suburbs | 7,516 | 7,925 | 8,350 | 8,812 | 9,320 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| Litchfield | 3,536 | 3,713 | 3,953 | 4,276 | 4,657 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 1.4 |
| Palmerston | 6,529 | 7,650 | 8,700 | 9,717 | 10,844 | 3.2 | 2.6 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.6 |
| **Greater Darwin** | **19,464** | **21,568** | **23,632** | **25,738** | **28,015** | **2.1** | **1.8** | **1.7** | **1.7** | **1.8** |
| Alice Springs | 17,475 | 19,043 | 20,502 | 21,811 | 23,008 | 1.7 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1.4 |
| Barkly | 4,118 | 4,338 | 4,513 | 4,630 | 4,747 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.7 |
| Daly–Tiwi– West Arnhem | 13,269 | 13,553 | 13,831 | 14,069 | 14,262 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.4 |
| East Arnhem | 10,084 | 10,494 | 10,869 | 11,162 | 11,381 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.6 |
| Katherine | 12,077 | 12,739 | 13,410 | 14,008 | 14,546 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 0.9 |
| **Rest of Territory** | **57,023** | **60,167** | **63,125** | **65,680** | **67,944** | **1.1** | **1.0** | **0.8** | **0.7** | **0.9** |
| **Total NT** | **76,487** | **81,734** | **86,757** | **91,417** | **95,959** | **1.3** | **1.2** | **1.1** | **1.0** | **1.1** |
| Non-Aboriginal |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Darwin City | 26,624 | 28,622 | 31,789 | 34,918 | 38,128 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 1.9 | 1.8 | 1.8 |
| Darwin Suburbs | 50,114 | 52,407 | 55,038 | 57,172 | 59,021 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 0.6 | 0.8 |
| Litchfield | 18,893 | 19,947 | 21,746 | 23,693 | 25,825 | 1.1 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.6 |
| Palmerston | 32,876 | 35,902 | 40,410 | 44,710 | 48,913 | 1.8 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 1.8 | 2.0 |
| **Greater Darwin** | **128,507** | **136,878** | **148,982** | **160,493** | **171,887** | **1.3** | **1.7** | **1.5** | **1.4** | **1.5** |
| Alice Springs | 23,083 | 23,070 | 23,115 | 23,199 | 23,184 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Barkly | 1,888 | 1,849 | 1,821 | 1,752 | 1,675 | -0.4 | -0.3 | -0.8 | -0.9 | -0.6 |
| Daly–Tiwi– West Arnhem | 4,731 | 4,612 | 4,567 | 4,710 | 4,949 | -0.5 | -0.2 | 0.6 | 1.0 | 0.2 |
| East Arnhem | 4,423 | 4,051 | 3,803 | 3,533 | 3,347 | -1.7 | -1.3 | -1.5 | -1.1 | -1.4 |
| Katherine | 9,032 | 9,118 | 9,145 | 9,166 | 9,255 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.2 | 0.1 |
| **Rest of Territory** | **43,157** | **42,699** | **42,451** | **42,360** | **42,409** | **-0.2** | **-0.1** | **0.0** | **0.0** | **-0.1** |
| **Total NT** | **171,664** | **179,577** | **191,433** | **202,853** | **214,297** | **0.9** | **1.3** | **1.2** | **1.1** | **1.1** |
| Total persons |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Darwin City | 28,507 | 30,902 | 34,418 | 37,850 | 41,322 | 1.6 | 2.2 | 1.9 | 1.8 | 1.9 |
| Darwin Suburbs | 57,630 | 60,332 | 63,388 | 65,984 | 68,340 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0.9 |
| Litchfield | 22,429 | 23,660 | 25,699 | 27,969 | 30,482 | 1.1 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.5 |
| Palmerston | 39,405 | 43,552 | 49,109 | 54,427 | 59,757 | 2.0 | 2.4 | 2.1 | 1.9 | 2.1 |
| **Greater Darwin** | **147,971** | **158,446** | **172,614** | **186,230** | **199,902** | **1.4** | **1.7** | **1.5** | **1.4** | **1.5** |
| Alice Springs | 40,558 | 42,113 | 43,617 | 45,010 | 46,192 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.7 |
| Barkly | 6,006 | 6,187 | 6,334 | 6,382 | 6,422 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.3 |
| Daly–Tiwi–West Arnhem | 18,000 | 18,165 | 18,398 | 18,779 | 19,211 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.3 |
| East Arnhem | 14,507 | 14,544 | 14,672 | 14,695 | 14,728 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.1 |
| Katherine | 21,109 | 21,856 | 22,555 | 23,174 | 23,800 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.6 |
| **Rest of Territory** | **100,180** | **102,866** | **105,576** | **108,040** | **110,353** | **0.5** | **0.5** | **0.5** | **0.4** | **0.5** |
| **Total NT** | **248,151** | **261,311** | **278,190** | **294,270** | **310,256** | **1.0** | **1.3** | **1.1** | **1.1** | **1.1** |

1 Actual results.

**Chart 6. Territory regional population by Aboriginal identity**



# Comparison of projections

## Territory projections 2024 Release compared to 2019 Release

The 2024 Release incorporates updated data and assumptions for the components of population change (fertility, mortality, migration and Aboriginal identification change). The main differences in assumptions between the releases include declining total fertility rates across the projection period in the 2024 Release compared to the 2019 Release where fertility rates were held constant. Population growth rates are also allowed to adjust over the long-term, in-line with historical trends in time series data for key assumptions, instead of being held constant at a long-term rate, as was the case in the 2019 Release.

**Table 7: Territory average annual population change, 2024 Release compared to 2019 Release**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2021-2026 | 2026-2031 | 2031-2036 | 2036-2041 | 2041-2046 | 2046-2051 | 2020-21 to 2050-511 |
|  | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| **2024 Projections** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total population | 1.0 | 1.3 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.1 |
| Aboriginal | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 1.0 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 0.9 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.1 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **2019 Projections** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total population | 1.0 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.4 | n/a | 1.3 |
| Aboriginal | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.1 | n/a | 1.1 |
| Non-Aboriginal | 1.0 | 1.5 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.6 | n/a | 1.5 |

n/a: not available  
1 Average annual population change reflects 2020-21 to 2045-46 period for 2019 projections.

# Scenario analysis, risks and limitations

## Scenario analysis

Population projections are reliant on assumptions. Several population projection scenarios have been produced with alternative assumptions on the components of population change to highlight the sensitivity of the projections and the extent to which projected population outcomes can vary. These scenarios are compared to the baseline projection reported in sections 1 – 6. The scenarios are outlined in Table 8 and the scenario results are presented in Chart 7 and Table 9.

**Table 8: Territory population projection scenarios, assumptions and impact**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Scenario | Migration and fertility assumptions | Impacts on population growth (average annual) and components (five-year periods) |
| Baseline projection | The input variables and parameters are allowed to change as per schedule in the Appendix. | Population grows at 1.1% per annum over 2021-51.  Population growth components change from 2021‑26 to 2046-51 as follows.  Natural increase: 13,800 to 12,500 persons  Net interstate migration: -12,700 to -6,000 persons  Net overseas migration: 12,100 to 9,400 persons |
| High growth scenario | Total fertility rates are increased by 10% in each of the projection periods. Interstate and overseas migration rates are adjusted to increase migration levels by 10% relative to the baseline projection from 2026‑31 onwards. | Population grows at 1.3% per annum over 2021-51. Population growth components change from 2021‑26 to 2046-51 as follows.  Natural increase: 15,800 to 16,000 persons  Net interstate migration: -12,800 to -5,300 persons  Net overseas migration: 12,100 to 10,400 persons |
| Low growth scenario | Total fertility rates are decreased by 10% in each of the projection periods. Interstate and overseas migration rates are adjusted to decrease migration levels by 10% relative to the baseline projection from 2026‑31 onwards. | Population grows at 0.8% per annum over 2021-51. Population growth components change from 2021‑26 to 2046-51 as follows.  Natural increase: 11,800 to 9,300 persons  Net interstate migration: -12,600 to -6,600 persons  Net overseas migration: 12,100 to 8,500 persons |

**Chart 7: Territory population projection scenarios**



**Table 9: Territory population and average annual growth rates by scenarios**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Scenario | Total population as at  30 June 2051 (variance to the baseline) | Average annual growth rate  2020-21 to 2050-51 |
|  | no. | % |
| Baseline projection | 342,083 | 1.1 |
| High growth scenario | 364,977 (+22,894) | 1.3 |
| Low growth scenario | 319,829 (-22,254) | 0.8 |

## Scenario analysis – Commonwealth migration settings

Net overseas migration has been, and will continue to be, an important contributor to the Territory’s overall population growth. The level and composition of net overseas migration to the Territory is influenced by Commonwealth policies and decisions. The 2024-25 Commonwealth Budget released forecasts of Territory net overseas migration that are lower than the projections contained in the baseline projections.

A scenario has been produced to highlight the long-term impact of lower net overseas migration levels aligned to the Commonwealth 2024-25 Budget forecasts, relative to the Territory’s baseline projections (Chart 8 and Table 10). The Commonwealth 2024-25 Budget forecast annual net overseas migration to be about 900 persons by 2027-28.

By 2050-51 this lower overseas migration outcome could reduce population levels in the Territory by 34,676 persons relative to the Territory baseline projections.

**Chart 8: Territory population projections low net overseas migration scenario**



**Table 10: Territory population and average annual growth rates, low net overseas migration scenario**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Scenario | Total population as at  30 June 2051 (variance to the baseline) | Average annual growth rate  2020-21 to 2050-51 |
|  | no. | % |
| Baseline projection | 342,083 | 1.1 |
| Low net overseas migration scenario | 307,407 (-34,676) | 0.7 |

## Risks and limitations

In addition to understanding the underlying assumptions of the projections, users of the Territory’s projections should also note the risks and limitations involved in developing the projections.

Risks and limitations include:

* The Territory’s population projections are generated separately for the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations to better account for the large size of the Aboriginal population and differing drivers of population change. As a result, the projections are constrained by the availability, quality and timeliness of Aboriginal specific data on population estimates (released every five years following the Census) as well as on fertility, mortality and migration.
* The Territory’s relatively small population, particularly for the regional areas within the ‘Rest of the Territory’, presents challenges in reliably analysing and observing demographic trends and patterns. This is further exacerbated when these populations are disaggregated by age, sex and Aboriginal identity.
* The Territory’s population is characterised by a high turnover for some population cohorts, which can drive significant swings in population as migration into and out of the Territory adjusts to economic and other policy related drivers. Given the influence migration has on the Territory’s population growth outcomes, any changes to these patterns from the assumptions or unforeseen policy change can have a significant impact on the outcome of the projections.
* Overseas migration flows can be influenced by a range of factors such as economic conditions and employment opportunities within the Territory and in other jurisdictions, as well as Commonwealth policies and global conditions.
* The Territory’s relatively small economy and population size can exacerbate the volatility in migration rates, particularly from large-scale public and private construction and resource related projects. These projects can materially shift the level of economic activity and demand for labour required in the Territory over a given period. This can cause great volatility in interstate and overseas migration flows in the Territory.

Appendix 1: Assumptions for the Territory population projections1

| **Growth component** | **Parameter** |
| --- | --- |
| Total fertility rate |  |
| * Aboriginal mothers | * 2.097 over 2021-26 to 1.860 over 2046-51 |
| * Non-Aboriginal mothers | * 1.714 over 2021-26 to 1.707 over 2046-51 |
| Life expectancy (mortality rates) |  |
| * Aboriginal males | * 66.20 years over 2021-26 to 71.60 years over 2046-51 |
| * Aboriginal females | * 71.19 years over 2021-26 to 76.01 years over 2046-51 |
| * Non-Aboriginal males | * 82.16 years over 2021-26 to 83.22 years over 2046-51 |
| * Non-Aboriginal females | * 85.85 years over 2021-26 to 86.45 years over 2046-51 |
| Net interstate migration |  |
| * Total persons | * -12,700 persons over 2021-2026 to -6,000 over 2046-51 |
| * Aboriginal persons | * -1,100 persons over 2021-2026 to -1,100 over 2046-51 |
| * Non-Aboriginal persons | * -11,600 persons over 2021-2026 to -4,900 over 2046-51 |
| Net overseas migration |  |
| * Aboriginal persons | * Zero |
| * Non-Aboriginal persons | * 12,100 persons over 2021-2026 to 9,400 over 2046-51 |
| Infant Aboriginal identification | |
| * Aboriginal infant to Aboriginal mother | * 0.991, held constant over projection period |
| * Non-Aboriginal infant to Aboriginal mother | * 0.009, held constant over projection period |
| * Aboriginal infant to non-Aboriginal mother | * 0.057, held constant over projection period |
| * Non-Aboriginal infant to non-Aboriginal mother | * 0.943, held constant over projection period |
| Aboriginal identification change (gross identification change rate) | |
| Greater Darwin regions |  |
| * Non-Aboriginal to Aboriginal females | * 0.216, held constant over projection period |
| * Non-Aboriginal to Aboriginal males | * 0.245, held constant over projection period |
| * Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal females | * 0.342, held constant over projection period |
| * Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal males | * 0.199, held constant over projection period |
| Rest of Territory regions |  |
| * Non-Aboriginal to Aboriginal females | * 0.216, held constant over projection period |
| * Non-Aboriginal to Aboriginal males | * 0.245, held constant over projection period |
| * Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal females | * Zero |
| * Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal males | * Zero |

1 Assumptions and inputs are based on published and unpublished ABS Census and population data.