



National, state and territory population, December 2020

The Estimated Resident Population (ERP) of Australia was 25.7 million people at 31 December 2020, around 6,900 people larger than the last quarter in September 2020. Population growth for the year ending December 2020 was 0.5 per cent (136,000 people), down from 1.5 per cent in the year ending December 2019. This is the lowest growth for a calendar year since 1916 when growth was -1.0 per cent.

Natural increase accounted for 97.6 per cent of annual population growth over the year ending December 2020 and net overseas migration (NOM) the other 2.4 per cent.

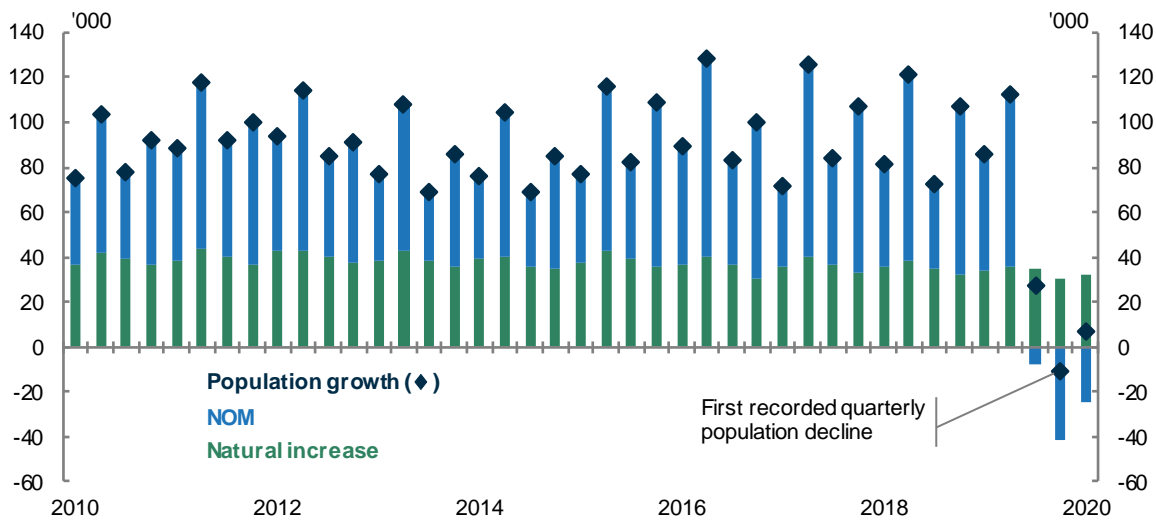
The December 2020 quarter is the third quarter we have seen travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic contribute to negative NOM. Annual NOM dropped to 3,300 people, the lowest annual level in over 20 years.

While annual population growth was positive in all states and territories, growth was dampened compared to the same period in 2019 in all jurisdictions except for the Northern Territory. Victorian population growth declined to a low.

National outcomes

Australia's population grew by 6,900 people in the December 2020 quarter (0.0 per cent change for the quarter). This follows the population decline observed in the September 2020, which was the first quarterly decline since quarterly ERP has been measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1981), and which was revised down from -4,200 people to -10,600 people. Chart 1 shows quarterly population growth and its components.

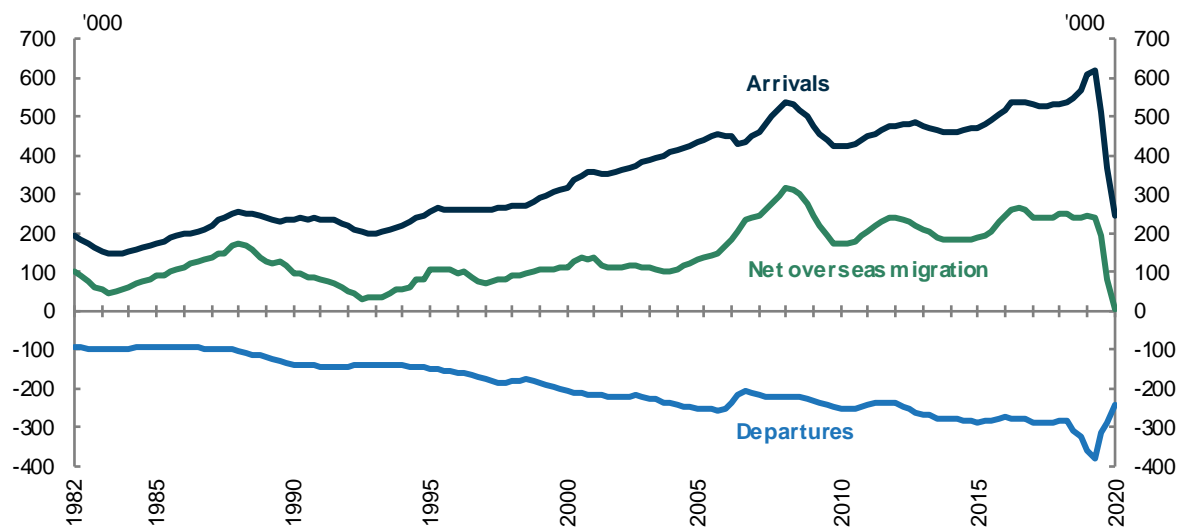
Chart 1. QUARTERLY NATIONAL POPULATION GROWTH AND COMPONENTS, NUMBER OF PEOPLE



In the December 2020 quarter, 67,000 people emigrated from Australia compared to 42,100 arriving immigrants. While the resulting **net overseas migration (NOM)** of -24,900 is higher compared to -41,200 in the previous quarter (Chart 1), this is the third consecutive quarter of negative NOM since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and is the fourth observation of negative NOM since the ERP series began.

Annual NOM over the year to December 2020 was 3,300, a decrease of 244,000 (98.7 per cent) from the year to December 2019 (Chart 2).

Chart 2. NET OVERSEAS MIGRATION, YEAR ENDING



Natural increase over the year to December 2020 was 133,000 people, and accounted for 97.6 per cent of annual population growth. Annual births fell slightly to 294,000 – the lowest level since year ending December 2007 (293,000 births). This may in part be due to delays in birth registrations during lockdowns.

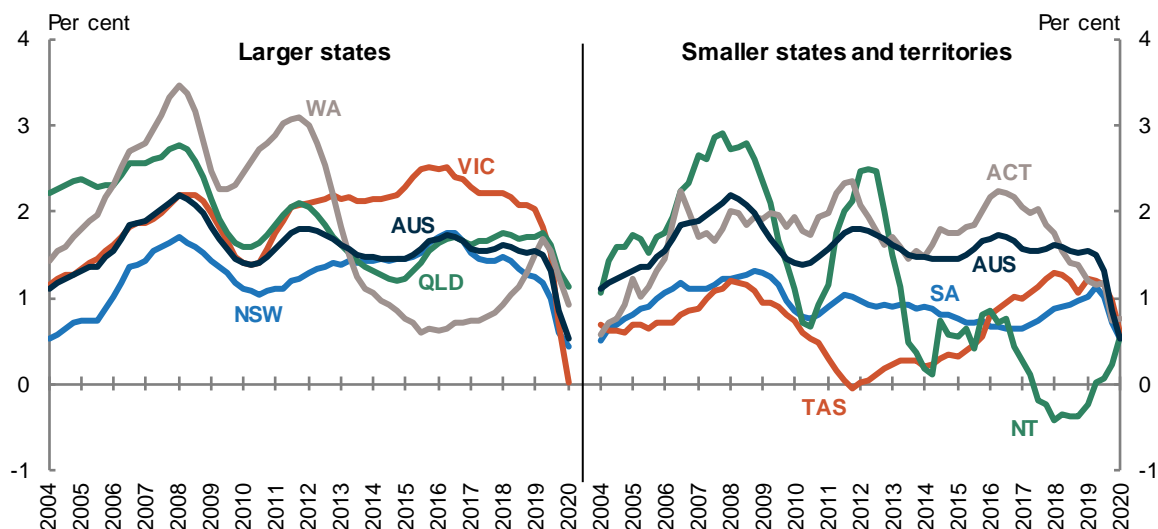
The number of deaths in Australia decreased slightly by -5,700 people in the year to December 2020, with 161,000 deaths in total for the calendar year. This decrease could in part be a result of pandemic-related restrictions, social distancing, and better hygiene practices (also see analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ *Provisional Mortality Statistics (January 2020 – December 2020)*).

There was a quarterly increase of 28,600 moves between the September and December 2020 quarters. However, total number of people moving interstate (**net interstate migration, or NIM**) declined by 10.6 per cent over the year to December 2020, compared to a decline of 0.7 per cent in the previous year – around 41,800 fewer interstate moves in this period compared to a year earlier (also see analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ *Provisional Regional Internal Migration Estimates (December 2020)*).

State and territory outcomes

All states and territories had positive population growth over the year ending December 2020. Queensland had the highest growth rate (1.1 per cent) and Victoria had the lowest (0.0 per cent) (Chart 3).

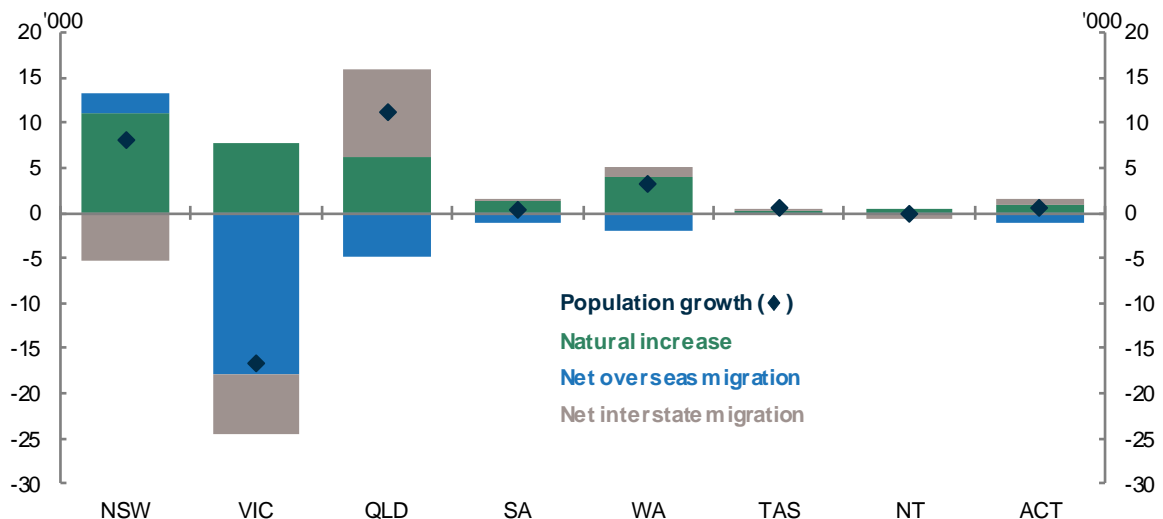
Chart 3. STATE AND TERRITORY POPULATION GROWTH (PER CENT), YEAR ENDING



Victoria and the Northern Territory both experienced quarterly declines in population, with the Victorian population falling by 16,600 people over the quarter.

Following national trends, population growth for the quarter in all states and territories was mainly driven by natural increase except for Queensland, where positive NIM made the greatest contribution. Compared to the previous year there were fewer births in all jurisdictions except for Tasmania and the Northern Territory, and an even greater decrease in the number of deaths in the same period except in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory (Chart 4).

Chart 4. STATE AND TERRITORY POPULATION GROWTH (NO. PEOPLE), QUARTERLY, DECEMBER 2020



- Victoria's** annual population growth of 0.0 per cent is the lowest on record since 1903. This has taken Victoria from the fastest growing state in 2019 to the slowest in 2020. The state's historically low growth is caused by large outflows of international and interstate migrants, offset by positive natural increase.

 - Most significantly, NOM to Victoria was -19,000 over the year to December 2020, a decrease of 104,000 from the year to December 2019.
- New South Wales'** annual population growth fell to 0.4 per cent in the year to December 2020 compared to 1.2 per cent in the year to December 2019. This is the lowest recorded since 1975, making it the next slowest growing after Victoria. The lower population growth was driven by lower than usual NOM.
- Queensland's** annual population growth slowed to 1.1 per cent compared to 1.7 per cent over 2019. Queensland also recorded negative NOM for the year. While this is the lowest recorded rate of growth for the state since 1946, Queensland was the fastest growing jurisdiction over the year to December 2020, mainly due to large inflows of interstate migrants have driven this growth.
- South Australia's** annual population growth halved to 0.5 per cent from 1.0 per cent in 2019, with the lower growth attributable to negative NOM.
- Western Australia's** annual population growth decreased to 0.9 per cent from 1.5 per cent in 2019, making it the next fastest growing state after Queensland. The state's growth was primarily driven by natural increase.
- Tasmania's** annual population growth halved to 0.6 per cent from 1.2 per cent in the year ending December 2019. Like many other states, natural increase made the largest contribution to growth.
- The **Northern Territory** was the only jurisdiction to experience stronger annual population growth compared to a year ago. Annual population growth in the year ending December 2020 was 0.5 per cent, compared to -0.2 per cent in the year ending December 2019. Natural increase was the main driver of population growth for the Northern Territory.
- The **Australian Capital Territory's** annual population growth slowed from 1.2 per cent in the year ending December 2019 to 0.8 per cent. The lower population growth was mainly due to negative

NOM of 250 people for the year. Net internal migration returned to an inflow for the territory, offsetting NOM losses.

Table 1. POPULATION AND POPULATION GROWTH ACROSS AUSTRALIA

State	ERP 30 December 2020	ERP Increase Since December 2019	ERP Increase annual %	Natural Increase annual contribution	NIM annual contribution	NOM annual contribution
NSW	8,172,505	35,608	0.4	42,968	-18,873	11,513
VIC	6,661,736	745	0.0	32,432	-12,737	-18,950
QLD	5,194,879	58,114	1.1	28,120	30,018	-24
SA	1,770,790	9,401	0.5	4,889	98	4,414
WA	2,670,241	24,537	0.9	17,432	1,385	5,720
TAS	541,506	3,237	0.6	1,344	1,164	729
NT	246,561	1,344	0.6	2,610	-1,342	76
ACT	431,484	3,241	0.8	3,206	287	-252
Australia*	25,694,393	136,261	0.5	133,008	NA	3,253

* Includes other Territories comprising Jervis Bay Territory, Christmas Island, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Norfolk Island

Table 2. UPCOMING MAJOR POPULATION RELEASES

Release	Former catalogue	Release date
Regional internal migration estimates, provisional (PRIME)	N/A	3/08/2021
Regional population by age and sex	3235.0	27/08/2021
National, state and territory population March 2021	3101.0	16/09/2021

NOTES

To ensure the ongoing production of fit-for-purpose official population estimates through the COVID-19 pandemic, the ABS has been assessing the likely impact of changed traveller behaviour on preliminary overseas migration estimates, a component of ERP. The ABS has introduced more frequent revisions to overseas migration to ensure the suite of demographic statistics continue to be of high quality and reflect the most timely data available. Preliminary overseas migration estimates will be revised every quarter over four quarters, instead of once after four quarters, until it becomes final. These more frequent revisions will ensure the most timely and accurate data flows through to ERP.

Further detail is available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics [here](#).