



## National, state and territory population, March 2021 (Australian Bureau of Statistics)

The Estimated Resident Population (ERP) of Australia was 25.7 million people at 31 March 2021, around 21,000 people larger than at the end of December 2020. Population growth for the year ending March 2021 was around 0.1 per cent (35,700 people), down from 0.5 per cent for the year ending December 2020. This is the lowest recorded annual population growth since 1916-17 when growth was 0.0 per cent.

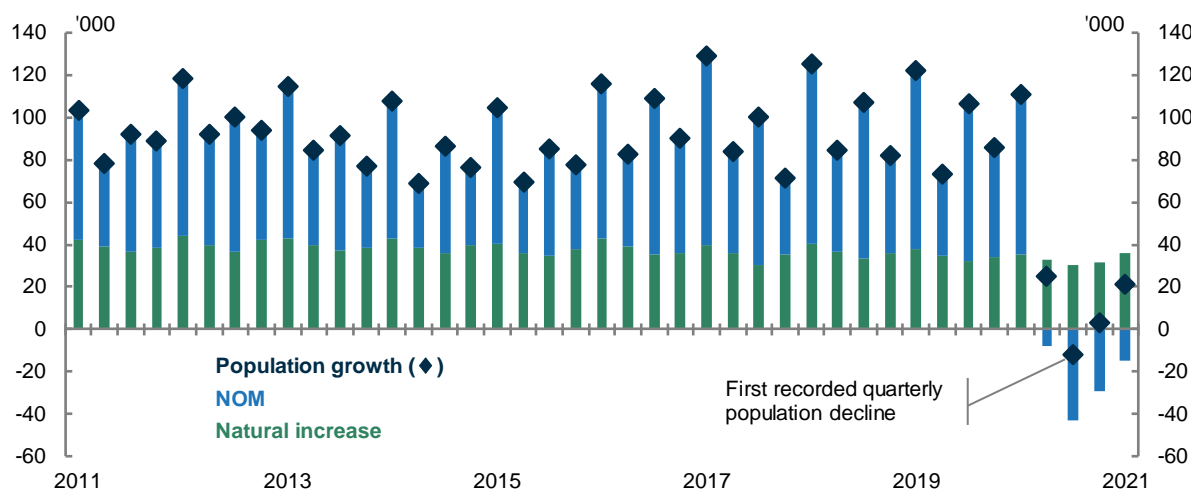
Net overseas migration (NOM) of -14,700 was around 14,700 higher than the previous quarter, but still negative. This is the fourth consecutive quarter recording higher overseas departures than arrivals, leading to the lowest annual NOM in over a hundred years. Natural increase over the year ending March 2021 was relatively more stable, although 5,400 less than the levels observed the previous year, mainly due to 8,600 fewer births over the year.

Annual population growth was positive in all but one of the states and territories, but generally lower compared to the previous year. Victoria, which was the fastest growing state over the year ending March 2020, recorded a population decline of -0.6 per cent for the year after its fourth consecutive quarter of negative net overseas and interstate migration. The negative net interstate migration to Victoria over this period occurred at the same time as positive net interstate migration in South Australia, Western Australia, and Australian Capital Territory, and lower than recently recorded net interstate outflows from Northern Territory, suggesting that some people who might otherwise have moved to Victoria remained in these jurisdictions instead. Northern Territory was the only jurisdiction that experienced a higher population growth compared to the previous year.

### National outcomes

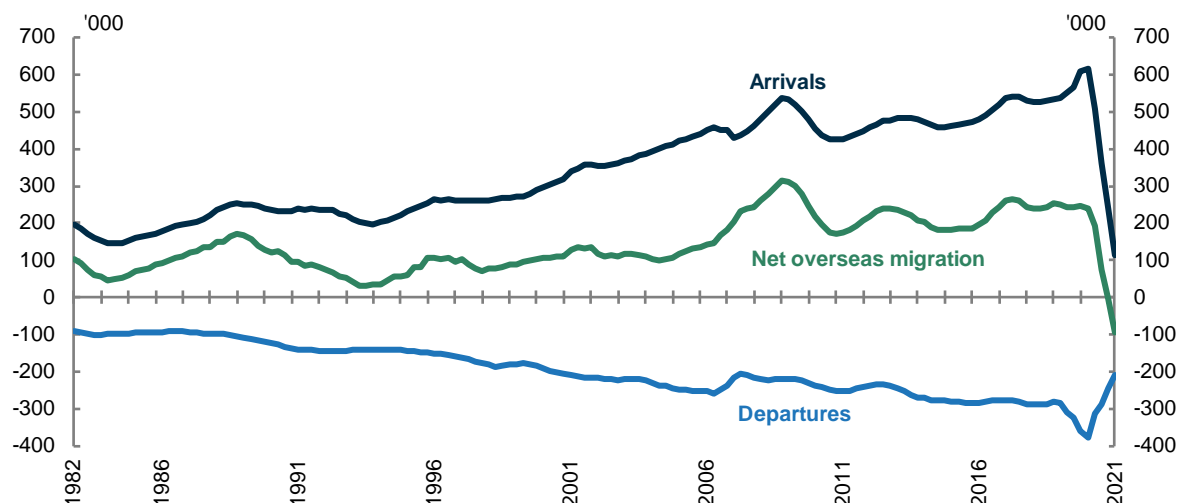
Australia's population grew by around 21,000 people in the March 2021 quarter (0.1 per cent). This was entirely due to natural increase of 35,700 for the quarter, partly offset by net overseas migration of -14,700 (see Chart 1).

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



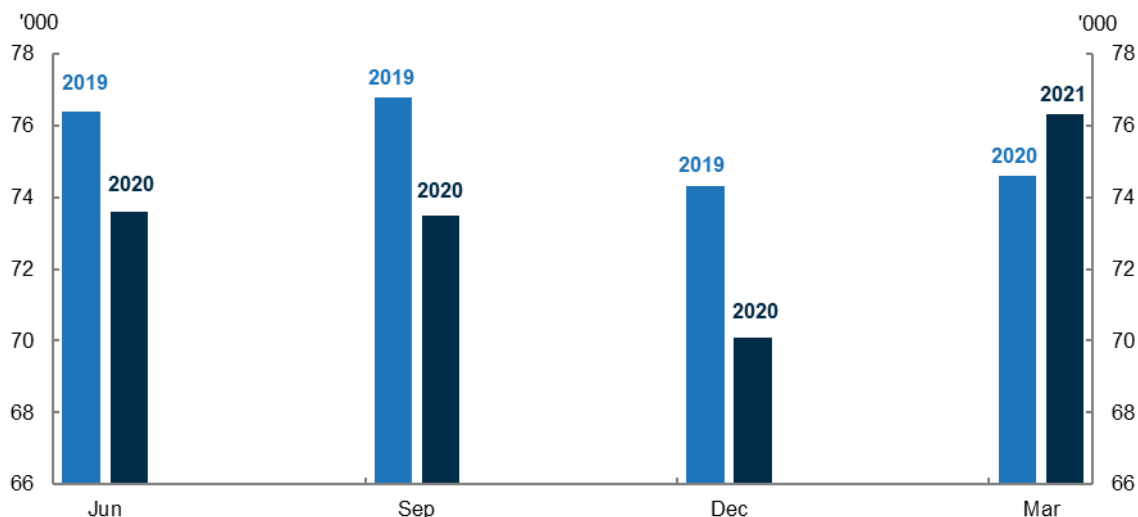
54,900 people emigrated from Australia this quarter compared to 40,200 arriving immigrants. While the resulting NOM of -14,700 is higher compared to -29,400 in the previous quarter (Chart 1), this is the fourth consecutive quarter of negative NOM since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the fifth observation of negative NOM since the ERP series began. Annual NOM over the year ending March 2021 was -95,300, a decrease of 334,500 compared to the year ending March 2020 (Chart 2).

**Chart 2. NET OVERSEAS MIGRATION, YEAR ENDING QUARTERLY**



**Natural increase** over the year ending March 2021 was 131,000 people, comprising 293,500 births less 162,500 deaths. Annual births decreased slightly to 293,500, down 8,600 from the year ending March 2020, although births for the March 2021 quarter itself were higher than for the March 2020 quarter nationally (see Chart 3) and for all states and territories except for Victoria. This is the first quarter where all the births are the result of conceptions that would have taken place following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia.

**Chart 3. BIRTH NUMBERS, QUARTERLY**



The number of deaths in Australia decreased slightly to 162,500 people in the year ending March 2021, down 3,200 compared to the year ending March 2020. 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)*).

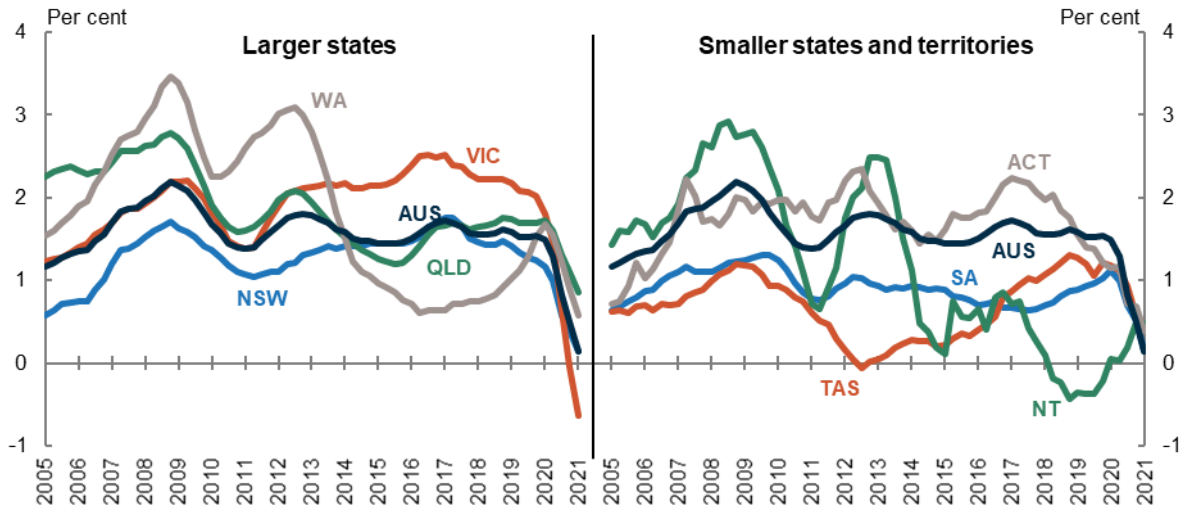
The number of interstate moves in March 2021 quarter remained steady at 104,100, decreasing by only 600 compared to the previous quarter. This is the second quarter to experience growth in annual **net interstate migration (NIM)** since the onset of the pandemic (also see analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Provisional Regional Internal Migration Estimates (March 2021)*). However, compared to year ending March 2020, NIM decreased by 3.4 per cent.

**State and territory outcomes**

With the exception of Victoria, all states and territories recorded low but positive population growth over the year ending March 2021 (Chart 4). Queensland had the highest annual growth rate (0.9 per cent) and Victoria had the lowest (-0.6 per cent). Victoria recorded its third consecutive quarterly decline in

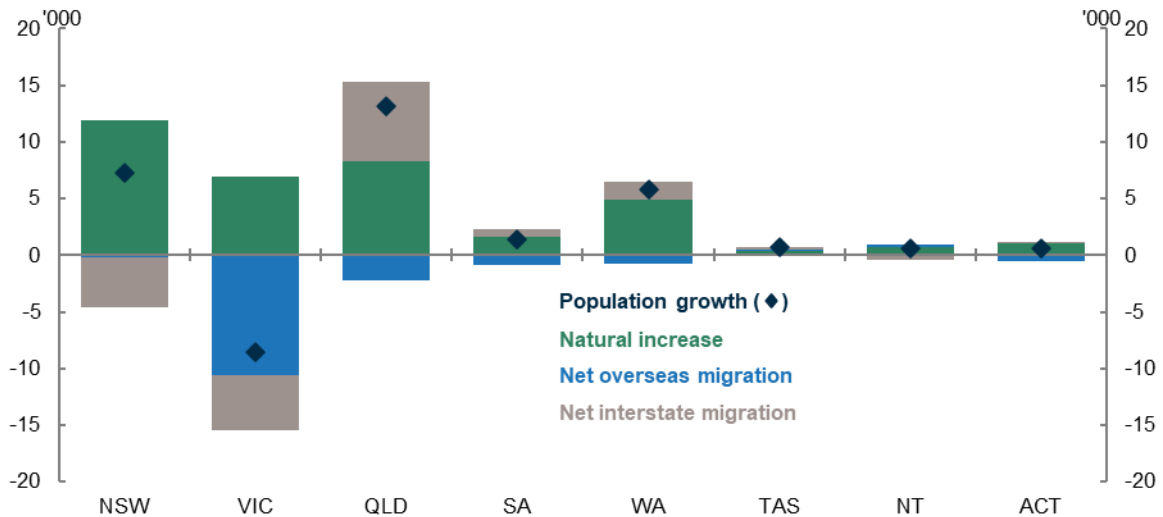
population, with its population falling by 8,600 people over the quarter. All the states recorded negative NOM for the year ending March 2021.

**Chart 4. STATE AND TERRITORY POPULATION GROWTH (PER CENT), YEAR ENDING QUARTERLY**



Following national trends, population growth for the quarter in all states and territories was mainly driven by natural increase. Compared to the March quarter in the previous year there were more births in all jurisdictions except for Victoria and more deaths over the same period in all states except in Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory (Chart 5).

**Chart 5. STATE AND TERRITORY POPULATION GROWTH (NO. PEOPLE), QUARTERLY, MARCH 2021**



- Victoria's** annual population growth of -0.6 per cent is the lowest on record for the state in over one hundred years. This has taken Victoria from the fastest growing state for the year ending March 2020 to the slowest for the latest year. The state's historically low growth was caused by large net outflows of both overseas and interstate migrants, only partially offset by positive natural increase. Most significantly, NOM to Victoria was -53,500 over the year ending March 2021, a decrease of 129,400 from the year ending March 2020.
- New South Wales'** annual population growth fell to 0.1 per cent in the year ending March 2021 compared to 1.2 per cent in the year ending March 2020. This is the lowest growth recorded for the state in over one hundred years making it the next slowest growing after Victoria. The lower population growth was driven by lower than usual NOM. NOM to NSW was -13,500 for the year ending March 2021, and is the first time the state has recorded annual negative NOM in the ERP series.

- **Queensland's** annual population growth slowed to 0.9 per cent compared to 1.7 per cent over the year ending March 2020. This slowdown was driven by negative NOM for the year. While this is the lowest recorded rate of growth for the state since 1943, Queensland was the fastest growing jurisdiction over the year ending March 2021, mainly due to continuing net inflows of interstate migrants.
- **South Australia's** annual population growth dropped to 0.2 per cent from 1.1 per cent over the year ending March 2020. This lower growth is attributable to negative NOM, as NIM and natural increase remained positive in South Australian in year ending March 2021. The positive NIM recorded in South Australia for the year was likely due to some people who might normally move to Victoria remaining in South Australia.
- **Western Australia's** annual population growth decreased to 0.6 per cent compared to 1.7 per cent in the year ending March 2020. The state's growth was primarily driven by natural increase and to a lesser extent positive annual NIM for the first time since the end of the 2013 calendar year.
- **Tasmania's** annual population growth dropped to 0.4 per cent compared to 1.2 per cent in the previous year ending March 2020. Natural increase made the largest contribution to growth, followed closely by NIM.
- The **Northern Territory** was the only jurisdiction to experience stronger population growth compared to a year ago. Annual population growth in the year ending March 2021 was 0.5 per cent, compared to 0.0 per cent in the year ending March 2020. Natural increase was the main driver of population growth for the Northern Territory, as well as relatively lower net interstate outflows.
- The **Australian Capital Territory's** annual population growth slowed from 1.2 per cent in the year ending March 2020 to 0.4 per cent. The lower population growth was mainly due to negative NOM of 2,600 people for the year. NIM was positive for the territory, offsetting some of NOM losses.

**Table 1. POPULATION AND POPULATION GROWTH ACROSS AUSTRALIA**

State	ERP 30 March 2021	ERP Increase Since March 2020	ERP Increase annual %	Natural Increase annual contribution	NIM annual contribution	NOM annual contribution
NSW	8,176,368	11,729	0.1	43,011	-17,796	-13,486
VIC	6,648,564	-42,854	-0.6	28,821	-18,191	-53,484
QLD	5,206,400	43,933	0.9	29,147	30,785	-15,999
SA	1,771,703	2,674	0.2	5,109	963	-3,398
WA	2,675,797	15,245	0.6	17,673	3,248	-5,676
TAS	541,965	2,091	0.4	1,286	1,143	-338
NT	247,023	1,170	0.5	2,642	-1,097	-375
ACT	431,826	1,667	0.4	3,325	945	-2,603
<b>Australia*</b>	<b>25,704,340</b>	<b>35,684</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>131,018</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>-95,334</b>

\* 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
<b>Provisional Regional Internal Migration Estimates, June 2021</b>	N/A	28/10/2021
<b>National, state and territory population, June 2021</b>	3101.0	16/12/2021

## **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](#).