NT population
The estimated resident population of the Northern Territory on 31 March 2015 was 243,826 persons. This was an increase of 501 persons from 31 March 2014. Over the previous five years the population increased by 13,602 (5.9%); an annual population growth rate of 1.18%. The Northern Territory has a relatively young population, with a median age of 31.8 years, compared with the national median age of 37.3 years. Males outnumber females, with 112.4 males for every 100 females.1

Indigenous population
There was estimated to be 68,850 Indigenous people residing in the NT at the time of the 2011 Census, which was 29.8% of the total Northern Territory population and 10.3% of the total Australian Indigenous population. The NT Indigenous population was younger than the NT non-Indigenous population (Figure 1). In the Indigenous population, the highest proportion, by age group, was the age group aged 5-9 years. By contrast, the age group with highest proportion of the non-Indigenous population was aged 25-29 years (Figure 1). The median age for the Indigenous population was 23.8 years compared with a median age of 34.8 years in the non-Indigenous population.2

Population distribution by regional centres and relative remoteness
The NT comprises a land area of 1,346,200 km², representing 17.5% of the total Australian landmass.3 It is the third largest of the states and territories after Western Australia and Queensland, yet has only 1.0% of the Australian population. In June 2014, more than three-quarters (76.6%) of the NT population lived in seven major population centres: Darwin (84,751 persons or 34.6% of the total NT population); Palmerston (33,949, 13.9%); Alice Springs (28,667, 11.7%); Litchfield Shire (21,686, 8.8%); Katherine (11,187, 4.6%); Nhulunbuy (3,906, 1.6%) and Tennant Creek (3,634, 1.5%). The balance (57,299 or 23.4%) lived in remote and very remote areas such as discrete Aboriginal communities, outstations, mine sites and cattle stations.4

The NT population lives in three of the five national remoteness categories, with no areas ranked as a Major Metropolitan or an Inner Regional area. Within the Outer Regional remoteness areas, (Darwin City, Palmerston and Litchfield Shire) Indigenous people represent 10.8% of the total population, compared to 30.3% in Remote and 75.1% in Very Remote areas of NT (Figure 2).2,5 Overall, in 2011, 58.3% of the NT Indigenous population lived in a Very Remote area compared with 8.2% of the NT non-Indigenous population.

Figure 1: Population distribution by age group and Indigenous status, Northern Territory, 2013.

Figure 2: Population distribution by Indigenous status and Remoteness Area, Northern Territory, 2011.
Population distribution by Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA)

Socio-economic differences in the population can be reported using Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) scores. The marked difference in distributions, by quintile, for NT Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations is presented in Figure 3. In 2011, 56.7% of the NT Indigenous population lived in an area of relatively high disadvantage (quintile 1) compared with just 1.7% of the NT non-Indigenous population. By contrast, 4.9% of the NT Indigenous population lived in an area of relatively low disadvantage (quintile 5) compared with 29.9% of NT non-Indigenous people.

Figure 3: Population distribution by Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) and Indigenous status, Northern Territory, 2011.

Note: The graph presents population distributions, by quintile, for the Index of Relative Disadvantage (IRSD) at NT Statistical Area Level 1 (SA1) level. The SA1 SEIFA index score was first ordered from lowest to highest, with the lowest 20% of areas given a quintile number of 1 through to the highest 20% being given a quintile number of 5. A lower IRSD score indicates that an area is relatively disadvantaged compared to an area with a higher score. The graph uses the 2011 Census Usual Resident Population (URP) at SA1 level.

Population structure and ageing

The NT Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations each have distinct age distributions and growth characteristics. Figure 4 illustrates past (1971 and 1991), present (2011) and projected (2021) age distributions for both NT Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. These two sets of age distribution are remarkably different, but both demonstrate ageing of the respective population.

Figure 4: Age distribution of the NT Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, 1971, 1991, 2011 and 2021.

Historically, the Indigenous population has consistently been much younger than the non-Indigenous population. In the 1971 Census, information was collected for the first time on a national scale, so that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could be included in official population estimates. In 1971, the NT population was 85,735, with 29,297 (34.2%) Indigenous people. Twenty years later (1991), the population had doubled, to reach 165,493. In the same period, the Indigenous population grew by 58% (46,431), and the proportion dropped to 28.1% of the total NT population. In 2011, the Indigenous population remained much younger with nearly one-third (32.7%) aged less than 15 years compared with 18.5% of the non-Indigenous population. On the other hand, the proportion of aged Indigenous Territorians (65 years and above) is much less (3.1%) than the non-Indigenous (6.6%) population. Similarly, the dependency ratio within the Indigenous population is much higher (55.8%) than the non-Indigenous population (33.6%) (Table 1).


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>0-14 years</th>
<th>15-64 years</th>
<th>65+ years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>13,418 (45.8)</td>
<td>14,941 (51.0)</td>
<td>938 (3.2)</td>
<td>29,297 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>18,325 (39.5)</td>
<td>26,978 (58.1)</td>
<td>1,128 (2.4)</td>
<td>46,431 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>21,769 (36.5)</td>
<td>36,185 (60.6)</td>
<td>1,128 (2.4)</td>
<td>69,082 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>22,520 (32.7)</td>
<td>44,185 (64.2)</td>
<td>2,145 (3.1)</td>
<td>68,850 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>22,207 (27.7)</td>
<td>53,820 (67.0)</td>
<td>4,286 (5.3)</td>
<td>80,315 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026</td>
<td>22,765 (26.5)</td>
<td>57,263 (66.5)</td>
<td>6,032 (7.0)</td>
<td>86,060 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non-Indigenous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>0-14 years</th>
<th>15-64 years</th>
<th>65+ years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>16,173 (28.6)</td>
<td>39,400 (69.8)</td>
<td>865 (1.5)</td>
<td>56,438 (100)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>27,754 (23.3)</td>
<td>88,099 (74.0)</td>
<td>3,209 (2.7)</td>
<td>119,062 (100)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>30,458 (21.4)</td>
<td>105,781 (74.5)</td>
<td>5,802 (4.1)</td>
<td>142,041 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>30,114 (18.5)</td>
<td>121,632 (74.9)</td>
<td>10,696 (6.6)</td>
<td>162,442 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>38,780 (20.0)</td>
<td>136,755 (70.5)</td>
<td>18,604 (9.5)</td>
<td>193,964 (100)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2026</td>
<td>42,139 (20.1)</td>
<td>145,617 (69.6)</td>
<td>21,450 (10.3)</td>
<td>206,206 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On 30 June 2014, the TEHS region had an estimated resident population of 196,573 people, which was 80.2% of the total NT population. Seventy-one per cent of the population lived in the Greater Darwin area (140,386), with the balance in regional towns ( Katherine - 11,187 and Nhulunbuy – 3,906), remote areas and discrete remote communities (Map 1). The Indigenous population was 26% (50,577) of the total TEHS region population.

Central Australia Health Service

The Central Australia Health Service (CAHS) region covers 64.7% (872,861 km²) of the total Northern
Territory geographic area. The CAHS region includes the townships of Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, and major communities including Elliott, Yuendumu, Yuelamu, Mutitjulu, Kaltukatjara (Docker River), Alpurrurulam (Lake Nash), Ali Curung, Ti Tree and many more discrete Aboriginal communities. The CAHS area shares borders with South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia (Map 2).

On 30 June 2014, the CAHS area had an estimated resident population of 48,506 people, which was 19.8% of total Northern Territory (NT) population. Fifty-nine per cent of the population lived in Alice Springs town (28,667), and a further 7.5% lived in Tennant Creek (3,634). The balance of the population (16,205) was spread between discrete communities and outstations. The Indigenous population was 44.0% (21,674) of the total CAHS area population.

The age structure of the Indigenous population in both the TEHS and CAHS regions was generally younger than the non-Indigenous population. Among the Indigenous population the highest proportion was in the 5-9 years age group. By contrast, the highest proportion of the non-Indigenous population was in the 25-29 years age-group.9

References


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Health Gains Planning Information Sheet, October 2015.