The Northern Territory occupies nearly one sixth of the Australian landmass and is home to just under 1% of the Australian population.

The Northern Territory Government divides the Territory into five regions: Top End, East Arnhem, Big Rivers, Barkly and Central, with Darwin recognised as a metropolitan centre.

This Story has aligned to this regional structure with one exception. The city of Palmerston and Litchfield Council are part of the Top End region, however many of the reported measures in this Story are more similar to Darwin than the balance of the Top End region. Therefore, for the purposes of this Story, Palmerston and Litchfield are included with Darwin as Greater Darwin (see map).

In this section, we explore the people of the Northern Territory, looking at a number of measures of population, language and culture, education, employment, families, and children and young people.
The Northern Territory population is 247,491 with 2 in 5 people living outside Greater Darwin. Nearly 1 in 3 Territorians are Aboriginal people and more than 1 in 5 were born overseas. There is regular migration in and out of the Northern Territory. In 2016, almost 1 in 7 people had lived interstate five years earlier.

Children and young people make up the greatest proportion of the population in all regions except for Central, with Greater Darwin also being an exception (see graph below).

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017.
A rich cultural diversity is part of what makes the Northern Territory a unique place to live, work and bring up a family. This multicultural environment is significant as a child is first born into relationship, primarily with family. Aboriginal culture is rich and diverse, with over 100 Aboriginal languages and dialects spoken throughout the Territory.\(^6\) Territorians were born in approximately 170 countries and speak around 160 foreign languages in the home. The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of people who speak a language at home other than English of all states and territories.\(^7\) Of the Territory’s children and young people aged 0-24, over 1 in 4 (26.3\%) have one or more parents born overseas.\(^8\)

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**Language and Culture**

- 58.0\%: Almost 6 in 10 people speak only English
- 15.3\%: 1 in 6 people speak an Aboriginal language at home

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**Education**

- 40.8\%: 4 in 10 people (aged over 15) have a higher education qualification
- 12.7\%: For 1 in 8 people (aged over 15), Year 12 is their highest year of education
- 16.0\%: For 1 in 6 people (aged over 15), Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest year of education

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**Employment**

- 73.2\%: More than 7 in 10 people of working age (15-64 years) participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)
- 3.5\%: 3.5\% of the working age population are unemployed

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**Families**

- 22.1\%: About 1 in 5 families with children aged under 15, are single parent families
- 79.5\%: 4 in 5 single parent families have a female as the head of the family

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**Children and Young People**

- 35.1\%: The Territory is young with about 1 in 3 people aged 0-24
- 35.6\%: About 1 in 3 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people

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Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017; ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016; ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.
The Greater Darwin area comprises of the capital city Darwin, the city of Palmerston and the surrounding rural areas of Litchfield Council. The city of Palmerston and Litchfield Council are part of the Northern Territory Government’s Top End region, but for the purposes of this Story, are being reported with the city of Darwin.

**Population**

Greater Darwin contains 60.2% of the Northern Territory’s population, with 148,884 residents. The population is older, on average, than the regions, with the highest proportion of the population aged 25-49 (43.1%). It is a multicultural centre with 1 in 3 people born overseas and 1 in 8 people are Aboriginal people. In 2016, 1 in 6 people had lived interstate five years earlier.

**Language and Culture**

Greater Darwin is a multicultural centre and cultural celebrations are numerous and diverse. They include the Harmony Day Soiree, World Music Festival, NAIDOC week, as well as Nepalese, Thai, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Greek, Indonesian and Italian Festivals to name a few. The area also hosts popular sporting, arts and music, car and bike, rodeo and horse-racing events. There is the annual Royal Darwin and Freds Pass Rural shows, and regular community markets throughout Darwin and Palmerston, as well as Coolalinga and Berry Springs.

Almost 7 in 10 people speak only English

After English, the most common languages spoken at home are

- Tagalog/Filipino: 3.1%
- Greek: 2.3%
- Chinese: 2.3%

Less than 1% of the population speak an Aboriginal language at home.
**EDUCATION**

- 47.9% Almost 1 in 2 people (aged over 15) have a higher education qualification.
- 14.3% For 1 in 7 people (aged over 15), Year 12 is their highest level of education.
- 14.1% For 1 in 7 people (aged over 15), Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest year of education.

**EMPLOYMENT**

- 70.4% 7 in 10 people of working age (15–64 years) participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work).
- 3.3% 3.3% of the working age population are unemployed.

Major employment industries are public administration and safety, construction, and health care and social assistance.

**FAMILIES**

- 18.4% Almost 1 in 5 families with children aged under 15, are single parent families.
- 76.9% About 4 in 5 single parent families have a female as the head of the family.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

- 32.5% 1 in 3 people are aged 0-24.
- 13.4% 1 in 7 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people.

The highest proportion of children and young people (23.1%) are aged 0-4.

In 2016, over 450 young people contributed to the City of Darwin’s Youth Strategy. They stated that they:

- valued employment and the opportunities it can bring
- aspired to have more activities for young people
- aspired to have a safer community.

In 2018, a survey of 150 young people from Palmerston revealed young people aspired to have:

- more activities
- opportunities for families to learn new skills
- a safer community overall that looks after vulnerable children and families.

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017; ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016; ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.
The Top End region incorporates the north/north-east section of the Territory including the Tiwi Islands. It encompasses six townships which include Batchelor, Jabiru and Adelaide River. The region also consists of 17 communities including Wadeye and Maningrida, four town camps and 138 outstations. For the purposes of this Story, the city of Palmerston and Litchfield Council, which are part of the Northern Territory Government’s Top End region, are being reported with Greater Darwin.

POPULATION

Top End has a population of 17,190 people. The highest proportion of the population is aged 0-24 (39.7%) compared with the working and retired populations. 3 in 4 people are Aboriginal people and 1 in 7 people were born overseas. In 2016, 5.5% of people had lived interstate five years earlier.

Population
- Aboriginal people: 74.1%
- Overseas born: 13.7%
- Population who lived interstate five years earlier: 5.5%

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The Top End has a strong Aboriginal culture. From the salt water and seaside communities, to river, plain and escarpment country, local communities work with the uniqueness of their land. There is an array of small community events happening every week, as well as larger events which as well as being important for locals, also attract visitors. Such events include the Tiwi Islands Grand Final and Art Sale, a Taste of Kakadu Festival, the Mahbilli Festival Jabiru, Wadeye Festival, NAIDOC Day and International Women’s Day. The region is home to numerous art and culture centres including Injalak Arts Centre in Gunbalanya, Bawinanga’s Maningrida Arts and Culture, and Bäbarra Women’s Centre, Marrawuddi Gallery, and Munupi, Tiwi Designs and Jilamara art centres of the Tiwi Islands.

- Almost 3 in 10 people speak only English (27.7%)
- About 6 in 10 people speak an Aboriginal language at home, with Murrinh Patha, Tiwi and Kunwinjku being the most common (62.2%)
**EDUCATION**

- **18.9%** Almost 2 in 10 people (aged over 15) have a higher education qualification
- **10.6%** For 1 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 12 is their highest level of education
- **27.7%** For almost 3 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest year of education

**EMPLOYMENT**

- **67.0%** 2 in 3 people of working age (15-64 years) participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)
- **6.0%** 6% of the working age population are unemployed

Major employment industries are education and training, public administration and safety, and health care and social assistance.

**FAMILIES**

- **28.4%** About 3 in 10 families with children aged under 15, are single parent families
- **82.4%** About 8 in 10 single parent families have a female as the head of the family

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

- **39.7%** 4 in 10 people are aged 0-24
- **82.3%** About 8 in 10 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people

The highest proportion of children and young people (23.0%) are aged 5-9.

Across the Top End, parents desire for their children to:

- be connected to their communities and culture
- be safe and stay safe
- be healthy when they are born, as they grow and as they have children of their own
- have access to early learning opportunities and a good quality ongoing education.

Parents also desire:

- to have enough income to be able to buy food
- to keep food safe to ensure children stay healthy
- that all children have enough to eat.

Top End parents want to protect their children from community violence and stop it before it becomes generational violence or trauma. To do this, community members desire a safe shelter for their children so that they have a sense of security, feel supported and well connected to their peers, community adults and to their country.

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017; ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016; ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.
The East Arnhem region incorporates the north-east tip of the Territory and covers a landmass of over 33,000km². The major centre is Nhulunbuy, there are 10 other communities and over 70 homelands.

**POPULATION**

East Arnhem has a population of 14,522 people. It is a young region with the highest proportion of people aged 0-24 (44.9%) of any region in the Territory. About 7 in 10 people are Aboriginal people, and 1 in 8 people were born overseas. In 2016, about 1 in 11 people had lived interstate five years earlier.

- Population: 14,522
- Aboriginal people: 72.7%
- Overseas born: 12.1%
- Population who lived interstate five years earlier: 8.7%

**LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

Yolŋu and Anindilyakwa families are actively engaged in culture through ceremony and have a deep connection with their land and seas. The annual Garma Festival provides an Aboriginal cultural exchange event and a national forum for Aboriginal policy debate. Several smaller annual festivals are held in the region’s communities. Most communities have an arts centre, Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre in Yirrkala having established an international reputation. Nhulunbuy has a strong volunteer culture with over 30 registered clubs and associations. Many of them engage children and their families in community events, the arts, music, and sport and recreation.

- 1 in 4 people speak only English: 25.9%
- About 6 in 10 people speak an Aboriginal language at home: 62.2%

Yolŋu Matha is the main Aboriginal language spoken (48.1%) in East Arnhem
There is almost an even split across the age groups of children and young people.

Yolŋu and Anindilyakwa leaders want their children to grow up strong in two worlds:
- Strong in the language, culture, knowledge and wisdom of their ancestors and leaders
- Strong in Balanda (Western) knowledge to ensure they can prosper through jobs and business on their country, and to interact with the broader world for generations to come.

Leaders want to ensure children and young people have the best opportunities to thrive, and to ensure that in education, children and young people grow up with a strong cultural identity, but also can be successful in the Western World. Leaders also want to ensure their long-standing, unbroken cultural structures are recognised and are working with government through agreement-making processes such as Local Decision Making.

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017; ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016; ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.
The Big Rivers region sits in the mid north, with borders that span the width of the Territory. Its major centre is Katherine and it also includes over 20 communities and over 100 homelands and outstations.

**Population**

Big Rivers has a population of 21,479. More than half the population are Aboriginal people and 2 in 10 people were born overseas. Big Rivers has the third highest proportion of children and young people, aged 0-24, of any region in the Territory (40.7%). It also has a high proportion of people aged 25-49 (37.7%). In 2016, about 1 in 10 people had lived interstate five years earlier.

| 21,479 | Population |
| 57.8% | Aboriginal people |
| 21.5% | Overseas born |
| 11.9% | Population who lived interstate five years earlier |

**Language and Culture**

Aboriginal people of the region frequently engage in hunting and gathering and enjoy sharing in their culture through a number of festivals including Barunga Festival, Walking with Spirits Festival in Beswick and Freedom Day Festival in Kalkarindji. Cultural expression is diverse and celebrated through a rich tapestry of other events such as the Mataranka Rodeo, Pine Creek Gold Rush Festival, Yugul Mangi Ngukurr Festival and the Lajamanu Sports Festival. With a strong agricultural history and current status as the agri-business hub of the Territory, the region holds the Katherine Show as well as other horse-racing and camp drafting events in town and on surrounding cattle stations.

- Almost half of the population speak only English (45.5%)
- 1 in 3 people speak an Aboriginal language at home (34.2%)
- Kriol (19.5%) is the most common Aboriginal language spoken (19.5%)
**EDUCATION**

- **27.9%** Almost 3 in 10 people (aged over 15) have a higher education qualification
- **8.2%** For about 1 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 12 is their highest level of education
- **19.8%** For 2 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest year of education

**EMPLOYMENT**

- **80.3%** 8 in 10 people of working age (15-64 years) participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)
- **3.5%** 3.5% of the working age population are unemployed

Major employment industries are public administration and safety, health care and social assistance, education and training, and construction.

**FAMILIES**

- **25.2%** 1 in 4 families with children aged under 15, are single parent families
- **83.3%** About 8 in 10 single parent families have a female as the head of the family

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

- **40.7%** 4 in 10 people are aged 0-24
- **64.1%** Over 6 in 10 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people

The highest proportion of children and young people (22.0%) are aged 0-4.

While there is a unique blend of communities, cultures and history in the region, there is a common aspiration to create thriving opportunities for children and young people and to promote opportunities for them to be valued and respected. Recent consultations with young people and community members from across the region identified the need for:

- after-hours activities to engage young people
- youth leadership development opportunities
- accessible primary health and wellbeing services
- learning and job pathways and safe places to live in.

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017; ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016; ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.
The Barkly region has a landmass of 322,500km². It sits in the centre of the Northern Territory and has borders with the Big Rivers and Central regions, as well as Queensland. Tennant Creek is the one major town, incorporating nine town camps or Aboriginal community living areas. There are also 13 communities and 74 outstations in the region.

**POPULATION**

Barkly has a population of 6,935 people. More than 7 in 10 people are Aboriginal people and more than 1 in 6 people were born overseas. Barkly has the second highest proportion of children and young people, aged 0-24, of any region in the Territory (41.6%). In 2016, 1 in 10 people had lived interstate five years earlier.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Aboriginal people</th>
<th>Overseas born</th>
<th>Population who lived interstate five years earlier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6,935</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

The region is vast and rich in culture. For thousands of years, the region has been home to no less than nine Aboriginal groups, and today numerous language groups are represented. In addition to traditional ceremony, expressions of culture include the annual Desert Harmony Festival, featuring local art and music, the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre, and the Papulu Apparr-kari Language Centre, all in Tennant Creek. There is also a fascinating history of communications, explorers, pastoralists and mining in the region. The communities engage in vibrant art and several galleries are open to visitors. The region also hosts popular sporting, camp drafting, bronco branding, rodeo and horse-racing events, in Tennant Creek and on cattle stations, and there is the annual Agricultural Show held each July.

- Nearly half the population of Barkly speak only English (46.3%)
- More than 1 in 3 people speak an Aboriginal language at home (37.0%)
- Alyawarr (9.3%) is the most common Aboriginal language spoken (9.3%)
Education

- **26.9%** About 3 in 10 people (aged over 15) have a higher education qualification
- **9.1%** For about 1 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 12 is their highest level of education
- **20.0%** For about 2 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest year of education

Employment

- **68.1%** 7 in 10 people of working age (15-64 years) participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)
- **5.5%** 5.5% of people are unemployed

Major employment industries are public administration and safety, health care and social assistance, education and training, and agriculture, forestry and fishing.

Families

- **32.7%** Nearly 7 in 10 families with children aged under 15, are single parent families
- **82.5%** More than 8 in 10 single parent families have a female as the head of the family

Children and Young People

- **41.6%** About 2 in 5 people are aged 0-24
- **75.6%** 3 in 4 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people

- **23.3%** 20-24 years
- **21.7%** 0-4 years
- **16.0%** 15-19 years
- **21.3%** 5-9 years
- **17.8%** 10-14 years

The highest proportion of children and young people (23.3%) are aged 20-24.

In 2018, the 1,000 Voices community consultation was conducted, reaching children and adults in the Tennant Creek area. It revealed 'The Big Eight' community aspirations:

- children gaining a quality education
- children are with their families and parents are supported to be involved and accountable for their children
- addressing problem drinking, particularly for parents
- ensuring all children and families have appropriate, stable housing
- the community coming together as one
- children have fun and safe activities to engage them after school hours
- stopping fighting and violence (among children and adults)
- living in a beautiful and clean town.

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017; ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016; ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.
The Central region covers approximately 549,969 km$^2$. It sits at the southern end of the Territory. The region includes the major centre of Alice Springs and 27 communities, 16 town camps and over 200 outstations.

**Population**

Central region has a population of 38,481 people. Almost 3 in 10 people were born overseas, while 4 in 10 people are Aboriginal people. The greatest proportion of the Central population is aged 25-49 (39.8%), and when compared to the other regions, has the highest proportion of individuals aged 50-74 (22.9%). In 2016, more than 1 in 10 people had lived interstate five years earlier.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38,481</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal people</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas born</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population who lived interstate five years earlier</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Language and Culture**

The Aboriginal cultures of the Central region underscore and shape community; they are fostered in significant cultural institutions such as Akeyulure, Alice Springs Desert Park, the Strehlow Centre and the Institute for Aboriginal Development. The spectacular landscape is richly inscribed with stories, song lines, history and tradition from the Aboriginal ancestors through to contemporary cross-cultural society. Annual arts, music and sporting events include the Desert Mob art exhibition and marketplace; Bush Bands Bash; Country Clash football carnival; Youth Arts and Music festival (YAM Fest); NAIDOC week and the Phoney Film Festival. Iconic activities in the region include the Finke Desert Race, Camel Cup, Henley-on-Todd dry river boat race, the Partijima Festival in Light and the Uluru Field of Light.

- 52.8% About half the population speak only English
- 22.7% About 1 in 5 people speak an Aboriginal language at home
- Arrernte language dialects (10.6%) are the most common of the Aboriginal languages spoken.
Story of Our Children and Young People | People of the Northern Territory

**EDUCATION**
- Almost 4 in 10 people (aged over 15) have a higher education qualification: 37.1%
- For 1 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 12 is their highest level of education: 10.6%
- For 1 in 7 people (aged over 15), Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest year of education: 14.7%

**EMPLOYMENT**
- More than 4 in 5 people of working age (15-64 years) participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work): 84.9%
- At 2.7%, Central has the lowest proportion of unemployment of the NT regions

Major employment industries are public administration and safety, education and training, and health care and social assistance.

**FAMILIES**
- 1 in 4 families with children aged under 15, are single parent families: 25.5%
- More than 8 in 10 single parent families have a female as the head of the family: 83.5%

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**
- Over 1 in 3 people are aged 0-24: 35.1%
- Almost 5 in 10 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people: 48.1%

The highest proportion of children and young people (22.0%) are aged 5-9.

In 2018, the Child Friendly Alice survey of over 600 adults in the Alice Springs area revealed people want their children and young people to grow up:
- safe and free, with safe spaces and environments
- with a good education, good employment and career opportunities
- loved and cared for, with happy and healthy lives
- respected and living in harmony, with strong families and social networks.

These themes were mirrored in the aspirations of the 400 children and young people surveyed, who want to have:
- more opportunities and places to cool down, play sport, participate in recreation and go shopping, with more activities and services
- better schools, education options and housing
- less crime and better safe spaces and security.

Aboriginal community groups advocate for community-led responses to family and domestic violence and other forms of violence that impact young people such as jealousy and bullying, management of drug and alcohol use and gambling, and environmentally healthy living conditions to ensure positive, safe and healthy home lives.

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017; ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016; ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.