

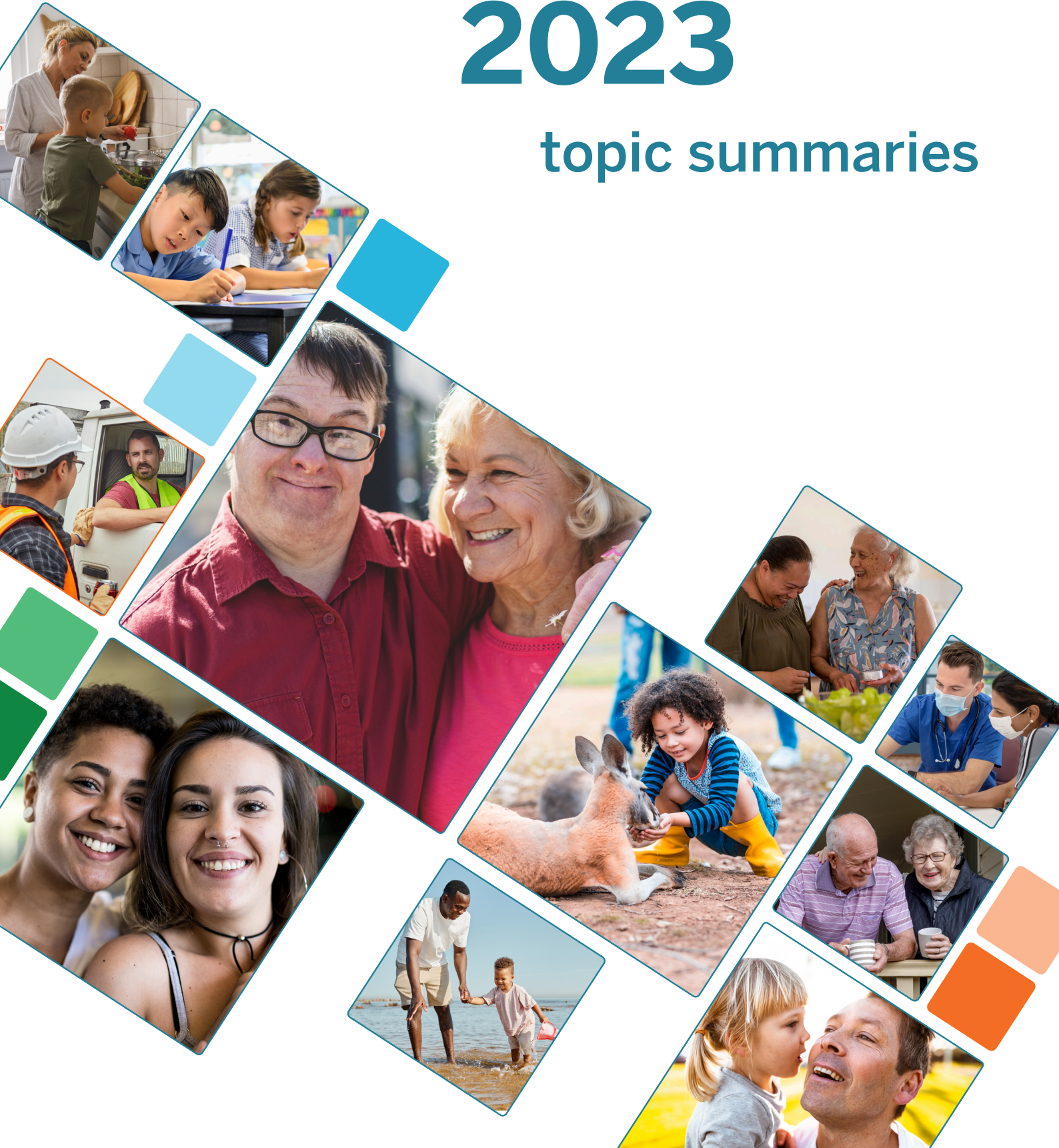


Australian Government

Australian Institute of  
Health and Welfare

# Australia's welfare 2023

## topic summaries



# Australia's welfare 2023: topic summaries

**Release date:** 7 September 2023

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## About

This document is a point-in-time compilation of the Australia's welfare: topic summaries (web pages) as at 7 September 2023. For the latest version of the topic summaries, including interactive content, visit [www.aihw.gov.au/australias-welfare/summaries](http://www.aihw.gov.au/australias-welfare/summaries).

Australia's welfare topic summaries are part of the *Australia's welfare 2023* report.

### About Australia's welfare 2023

Australia's welfare 2023 is the AIHW's 16th biennial welfare report. It explores topical welfare issues and brings together multiple data sources to serve as a report card on the welfare of Australians. Australia's welfare is framed around 'welfare' in its broadest sense – welfare refers to the wellbeing of individuals, families and the community. Welfare and wellbeing are often used interchangeably – see [Understanding welfare and wellbeing](#).

# About Australia's welfare 2023

Australia's welfare 2023 is the AIHW's 16th biennial welfare report. It consists of 3 products:



## ***Australia's welfare 2023: data insights***

This is a collection of 9 original articles on selected welfare issues, including homelessness and housing affordability, employment and income support following the COVID-19 pandemic and measuring quality in aged care. It is available as a printed report and online as a PDF.



## **Australia's welfare: topic summaries**

This is a collection of 42 web pages that present key facts on welfare in Australia, housing, education and skills, employment and income, social support, justice and safety, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



## ***Australia's welfare 2023: in brief***

This presents key findings and concepts to tell the story of welfare and wellbeing in Australia. It is available as a printed report and online as a PDF.

**All products can be viewed or downloaded at:**

[www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/australias-welfare](http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/australias-welfare)

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# Welfare in Australia

# Health and welfare links

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A person's health is the result of a complex interplay of their genetics, lifestyle and environment. The World Health Organization defines health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (WHO 1946). This recognises that health is multi-dimensional, and a person's health is linked to their wellbeing.

## Health, welfare and wellbeing are interrelated

Welfare refers to the wellbeing of individuals, families and the community. The terms welfare and wellbeing are often used interchangeably (see [Understanding welfare and wellbeing](#)).

Both physical and mental health are important aspects of health that affect wellbeing. A person's health status plays a role in their ability to participate in work, education or training and engage with their community and social networks. Health can positively, or negatively, affect a person's wellbeing. For example, a person may suffer isolation or loneliness because of poor health (see [Social isolation and loneliness](#)). Good health may enable a person to earn a sufficient income to support themselves and live independently, placing them at lower risk of poor outcomes such as unsuitable housing conditions, overcrowding and homelessness (see [Income and income support](#) and [Homelessness and homelessness services](#)).

The circumstances in which a person lives and works can affect their health. A number of social and economic factors act together to strengthen or undermine health. These factors are all strongly related to wellbeing and can include housing, working conditions, social support and participation, education, income and employment. Environmental, structural, cultural, biomedical, commercial and digital factors can also influence health (Department of Health 2021).

See the [Australia's welfare: topic summaries](#) on housing, employment and income, social support and education for more.

## Health inequalities

Health inequalities (systematic, avoidable and unfair differences in health outcomes across groups in society) arise because of the conditions in which a person lives and works (CSDH 2008).

Social inequalities and disadvantage are closely linked with health inequalities and the dramatic differences in health experienced across groups in society (CSDH 2008).

## Health and welfare services

The health system is one part of a network of systems working to create positive wellbeing for all Australians. It plays a role in the prevention, early intervention and treatment of diseases and other ill health and injury to maintain health. The health system helps people remain as healthy as possible for as long as possible.

The health system is linked with other sectors, especially welfare. An example of the relationship between health and welfare at the service level is the 'no job, no pay' policy. This encourages parents to vaccinate children in order to receive family assistance payments such as the Family Tax Benefit (DSS 2020; Services Australia 2022).

While health and welfare services are generally distinct but complementary, in some settings the boundaries are less clear, with services intersecting both health and welfare. For example:

- The aged care system aims to promote the wellbeing and independence of older people and their carers by enabling them to stay in their own homes or by assisting them in residential care (SCRGSP 2023; see [Aged care](#)). While aged care is generally regarded as a 'welfare' service, some aged care services may also provide 'health' services. For example, recipients of the Commonwealth Home Support Programme may be eligible for nursing care or allied health support services such as physiotherapy, speech pathology and nutritional advice (Department of Health and Aged Care 2023).
- People with permanent and significant disability may access disability support services. Support available for those who are eligible is wide ranging and includes some health-type supports, such as allied health and the provision of aids and equipment (NDIA 2021; see [Specialised supports for people with disability](#)).

Many issues involve both health and welfare services, requiring people to navigate multiple systems and providers. [Family, domestic and sexual violence](#) (FDSV) is one example of this. FDSV can have a serious impact on a victim's health, but also on other aspects of their life that determine wellbeing. In 2020–21, there were 5,600 hospitalisations for females and 2,000 hospitalisations for males due to family and domestic violence (AIHW 2022b). In 2021–22, 108,000 people who sought [Specialist Homelessness Services](#) had experienced family and domestic violence (AIHW 2022d) and 26,100 people had family and domestic violence Crisis Payment claims granted (AIHW 2022a). Services and initiatives across sectors work to support the wide reach of FDSV. For example, around 1 in 7 (15%) women who experienced violence from their current partner and were working during the period when the violence was occurring, took time



off work as a result of the violence (ABS 2020). This can lead to less income or loss of employment. In February 2023, government initiatives came into effect so all employees of non-small businesses have access to paid family and domestic violence leave (Australian Government 2022).

## Health and welfare during the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is another example that demonstrates the relationship between health and welfare. The pandemic had direct effects on health for individuals who contracted the virus, as well as many indirect effects on the broader community associated with the interventions put in place to contain the spread of the disease. These include impacts on social, economic and environment factors, and adverse effects on income, education, employment, housing and social connections (AIHW 2022a). See for example [Social isolation and loneliness](#), [Higher education, vocational education and training](#) and chapters 3 and 4 '[Employment and income support following the COVID-19 pandemic](#)' and '[Homelessness and housing affordability in Australia](#)' in *Australia's welfare 2023: data insights*.

While there are limited data available, it is estimated around 5–10% of COVID-19 cases in Australia result in the development of long COVID (AIHW 2022c). A significant proportion of people with long COVID (defined as ongoing symptoms 12 weeks or longer after infection) report they have limitations on their daily activities and a reduced quality of life. Persisting symptoms can impact on workforce participation, including delays in return to work, and ongoing residual difficulties that impact the ability to perform the same duties or limit working hours (Gualano et al. 2022).

AIHW has developed a COVID-19 register and linked data set to provide new insights into the health outcomes for people who have been diagnosed with the disease, and the effect that COVID-19 has had on the health system and broader community. It will also offer researchers the opportunity to explore a range of issues associated with the pandemic. For more, see [COVID-19 register and linked data set](#).

## Health and welfare data

The development and collection of health and welfare data is hugely valuable and represents an important investment by public and private organisations. When used well, these data can provide reliable information on the quality of people's lives and how this is changing over time and location within and across different population groups. Data can also inform about the impact of policy and programs, enabling better decision making and improved outcomes for Australians across a range of areas including health, housing, education and skills, employment and income, social support, and justice and safety.

Data linkage (a process combining information from different data collections while preserving privacy) is increasingly being used to analyse the links across health and welfare data sets. Data linkage has the potential to provide new and important insights into people's health and wellbeing by:

- exploring how early events in someone's life can impact subsequent events

- comparing groups so that outcomes for people who do and do not use a particular program can be evaluated
- understanding how service systems operate and observing the way in which people use multiple services.

An important example of this type of work is the development of the [National Disability Data Asset](#) (disability data asset), which is a large-scale data integration project that brings together de-identified Commonwealth and state and territory government data in an effort to gain a better understanding of people with disability's life experiences across time, location and population group. The disability data asset is led by the Australian Government Department of Social services and is overseen by the Disability Reform Ministers Council. To deliver an enduring disability data asset, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the AIHW are working with the states and territories to implement the Australian National Data Integration Infrastructure (ANDII). The development of systems such as the ANDII has the potential to facilitate data linkage across sectors to get a better understanding of how people use services across different policy areas. See '[Chapter 5 Use of mainstream services and outcomes achieved for people with disability](#)' for findings from the recent disability data asset pilot phase.

Another data linkage example is the [National Integrated Health Services Information Analysis Asset](#) (NIHSI AA), which brings together multi-year de-identified data on:

- hospital admissions
- Medicare Benefits Schedule
- Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme
- aged care
- mortality data.

The NIHSI AA has been used to gain new insights about the operation of the health system including analysis of service use in the last year of life and on the extent to which people receive appropriate medications once they leave hospital. None of this analysis would have been possible with existing data on individual services.

The ABS' Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP) is a secure data asset that links data on education, employment, health, income and taxation, government payments and demographic information, over time. It allows for exploration for different population groups in Australia and their interactions with and between various services like health and education over time. For example, the MADIP was recently used to better understand the ex-serving Australian Defence Force population following their separation from service, providing new insights; see '[Chapter 1 The future of data](#)' in Australia's welfare 2023: data insights for more information on the use of MADIP for veterans, and for more information on welfare data and the impact of COVID-19. Also see '[Chapter 7 Relative influence of different markers of socioeconomic status on university participation](#)' for analysis drawing on data from the MADIP to investigate the relative importance of various markers of socioeconomic status for accessing university.

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information see:

- [Australia's health 2022](#)
- [World Health Organization.](#)

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# Measures of welfare and wellbeing for Australia and similar countries

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/international-comparisons-of-welfare-data>

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Welfare refers to the wellbeing of individuals, families, and the community. The terms welfare and wellbeing are often used interchangeably. Comparing welfare and wellbeing data between countries allows us to compare Australian experiences on a global scale and supports policy, planning and decision making.

This page aims to provide a high-level comparison of international welfare and wellbeing data. The interactive visualisation on this page (Figure 1) provides data for Australia and 37 other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries across a range of welfare and wellbeing-related indicators. OECD member countries provide a useful comparison for Australia because almost all have high-income economies (World Bank 2023).

See [Understanding welfare and wellbeing](#) for important contextual information about factors that influence wellbeing. Refer to the [OECD website](#) for further detail on definitions, sources, notes, indicators, and data availability for the measures presented on this page.

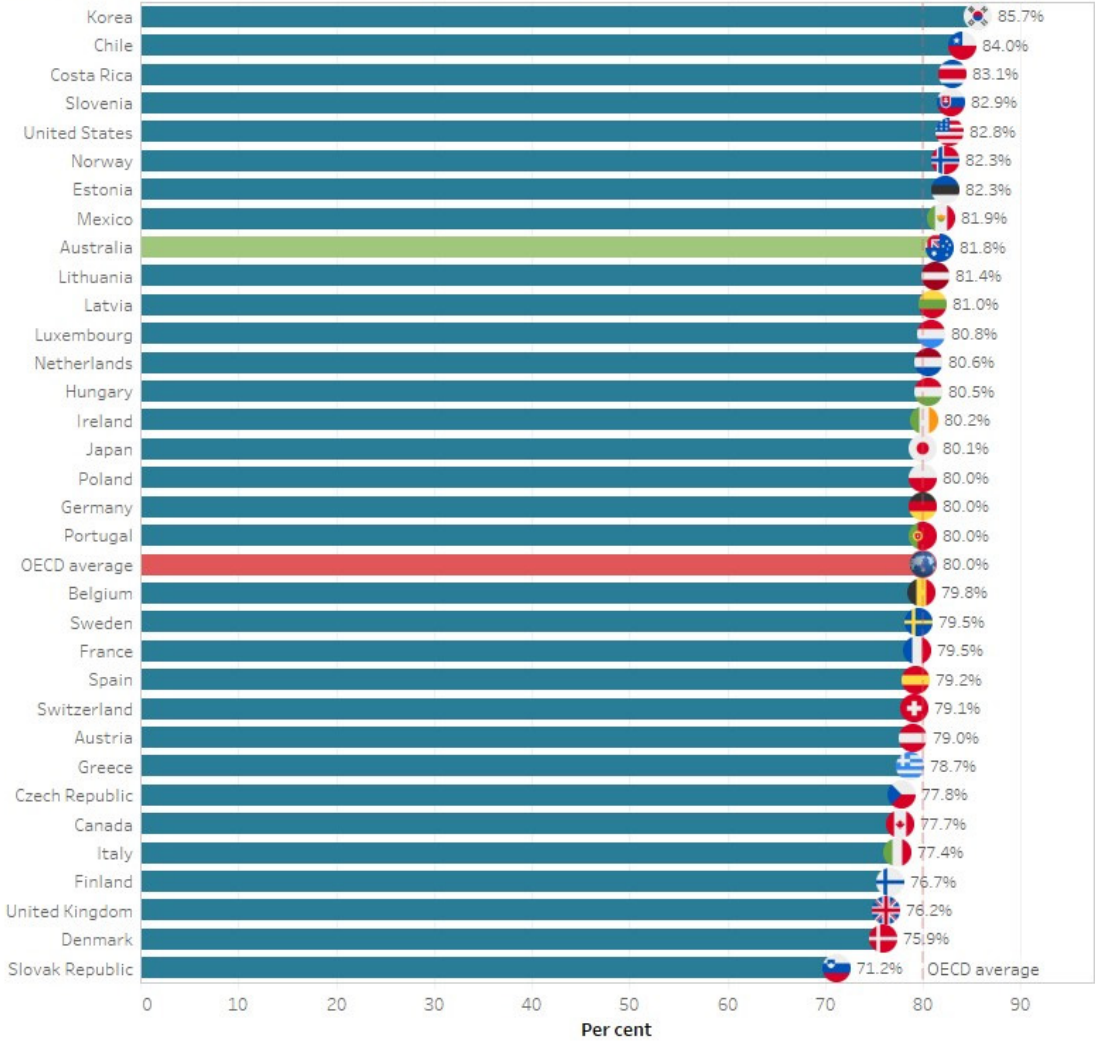
**Figure 1: How does Australia compare?**

# How does Australia compare?

Click a category below to see how Australia compares with the OECD average or other OECD countries on a particular theme.

<b>Housing and income</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Housing affordability
<b>Education and employment</b>	<input type="radio"/> Rooms per person
<b>Community, safety and safety inequality</b>	<input type="radio"/> Gini coefficient
<b>Health, work-life balance and life satisfaction</b>	<input type="radio"/> Household net adjusted disposable income
<b>Environment, demographic and contextual factors</b>	

**Housing affordability measured as a percentage of household gross adjusted disposable income remaining after deductions for housing rent and maintenance**



Source: OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) 2020. How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being. 3. Housing. Paris: OECD. Viewed 20 June 2023, <<https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=HSL>>.

**Notes**

1. All figures are based on latest available data. Data relate to different time periods depending on the data sources.
2. 'OECD total' is supplied by the OECD. 'OECD average' is an AIHW estimated calculation.

Source: OECD 2020a, 2020b, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c, 2023d, 2023e, 2023f, 2023g, 2023h, 2023i, UN 2022, WHO 2020.

# Housing

## Dwelling size

In 2015, Australians had (on average) 2.3 rooms per person in a dwelling. This was above the OECD total of 1.7 rooms per person. Canada reported the highest number of rooms (2.6 rooms per person) and Columbia and Turkey the lowest (1.0 room per person). Australia reported the fourth highest rate of rooms per person in a dwelling out of 38 OECD countries (OECD 2023a).

## Housing affordability

The greater the proportion of a household's income that is spent on housing costs, the less disposable income there is left to support other life costs.

In 2021, households in Australia had, on average, 81.8% of their gross income available after housing costs are met. This was close to the OECD average of 80% (data was available for 33 OECD countries, ranging from 71.2%–85.7%), with Australia reporting the ninth highest proportion of income remaining after housing costs. Korea had, on average, the largest proportion of income available after housing costs (85.7%) (OECD 2020a).

# Income

## Household disposable income

In 2019, Australia had a relatively high household disposable income of US\$37,433 at current purchasing power parities per capita (see [glossary](#)), ranking seventh highest out of 33 OECD countries for which data were available. The OECD total household net adjusted disposable income was US\$30,490 (incomes ranged from US\$16,269 to US\$51,147). The United States reported the highest household disposable income (OECD 2023a).

## Gini coefficient

Gini coefficients are a measure of income equality that give a number between 0 and 1, where a higher value represents less income equality (see [glossary](#)).

In 2020, Australia's Gini coefficient of 0.32 ranked 20<sup>th</sup> out of 35 OECD countries for which data were available – this means Australia was less equal than 19 countries, but more equal than 15. Australia had greater income inequality than the OECD average (0.31). The Gini coefficient among the 35 OECD countries ranged from 0.22 to 0.49. Slovak Republic reported the lowest rate and greatest equality (Gini coefficient of 0.22); Costa Rica reported the highest rate and greatest income inequality (0.49) (OECD 2023f).

# Jobs

## Employment rate

In Q1 2023, the employment rate (the employed population divided by the working age population, see [glossary](#)) for people aged 15–64 in Australia was 77.4%. This was the seventh highest rate of 38 OECD countries and higher than the OECD total of 69.9%. Employment rates varied by sex: in Q1 2023, the employment rate for males aged 15–64 was 81.1% and 73.9% for females in Australia. Australia had the eighth highest employment rate for males and ninth highest for females among 38 OECD countries (OECD 2023d).

## Unemployment rate

Unemployed persons are those who are currently not working but are willing to do so and actively searching for work.

In Q1 2023, the unemployment rate (the number of unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force, see [glossary](#)) for people aged 15–64 in Australia was 3.7%. This was the 10<sup>th</sup> lowest rate of 37 OECD countries and lower than the OECD total of 5%. Unemployment rates varied by sex: in Q1 2023, the unemployment rate for 15–64-year-olds was 3.8% for males and 3.5% for females in Australia. Australia had the ninth lowest unemployment rate for females and 12<sup>th</sup> lowest for males among 37 OECD countries (OECD 2023d).

## Long-term unemployment

The long-term unemployment rate (see [glossary](#)) is defined as the number of people who have been unemployed for one year or more as a percentage of the labour force (the sum of employed and unemployed persons).

In 2020, Australia's long-term unemployment rate of 1.0% ranked 15<sup>th</sup> out of 37 OECD countries for which data were available. The OECD total long-term unemployment ratio was 1.3% (rates ranged from <0.1% to 10.8%) with Korea reporting the lowest rate (<0.1%) (OECD 2023a).

## Youth and the labour market

In 2021, 10.3% of Australians aged 15–29 were not in education, employment or training (NEET). This was lower than the OECD total of 14.5% (rates ranged from 7.4%–28%) with the Netherlands reporting the lowest proportion of youth NEET. For this measure, Australia ranked seventh lowest out of 36 OECD countries for which data were available (OECD 2023h).

## Youth unemployment

In Q1 2023, Australia's youth unemployment rate (for people aged 15–24) of 7.9% ranked 10<sup>th</sup> lowest out of 38 OECD countries for which data were available. This was lower than the OECD total of 10.6% (rates ranged from 4.8%–29%) with Japan reporting the lowest youth unemployment rate (OECD 2023g).



# Work life balance

## Working long hours

In 2018, 12.5% of Australian employees usually worked long hours in paid work (50 hours or more per week), which was higher than the OECD total of 10.2% (rates ranged from 0.3% to 27%). Australia had one of the highest proportions of employed people working long hours, ranking seventh highest out of 36 OECD countries for which data were available. The Netherlands reported the lowest proportion of people working long hours (0.3%) (OECD 2023a).

# Education

## Tertiary education

In 2021, half (50%) of Australians aged 25–64 had a tertiary education which includes having completed a bachelor, masters or doctoral or equivalent education or a short-cycle tertiary education (including an Associate Diploma or Advanced Certificate). Australia ranked eighth highest out of 38 OECD countries and was above the OECD total of 40% (rates ranged from 20%–62%). Canada reported the highest proportion of people with a tertiary education (62%) (OECD 2023b).

# Community

## Support networks

In 2020, Australia was among the fifth highest for the quality of support networks out of all 38 OECD countries. Most (93%) Australians reported they knew somebody they could rely on in times of need, which was higher than the OECD total of 91% (rates ranged from 77%–98%). Iceland reported the highest proportion of people who believe they can rely on their relatives and friends when in trouble (98%) (OECD 2023a).

# Safety

## Perceptions of safety in the community

In 2020, two-thirds (67%) of Australians reported feeling safe walking alone at night. Australia ranked ninth lowest out of 38 OECD countries (rates ranged from 41% to 93%), and below the OECD total of 74%. Norway reported the highest proportion of people feeling safe walking alone at night (93%) (OECD 2023a).

# Safety inequality

## Gender gap in feeling safe

A greater proportion of men feel safe when walking alone at night than women in Australia. In 2013–2018, 80% of men reported feeling safe, while only 50% of women did. The gender gap in feeling safe (the percentage point difference between women

and men) was 30 percentage points in Australia, higher than the OECD average of 16 percentage points (rates ranged from 6.9 to 30 percentage points). Australia ranked last out of 37 OECD countries on this measure, with Austria reporting the smallest gap (6.9 percentage points).

Six OECD countries had less than 50% of women reporting they feel safe walking alone at night – meaning Australian women had the seventh lowest rate at 50% (OECD 2020b).

## Health

### Life expectancy at birth

Life expectancy is the most commonly used measure to describe population health and reflects the overall mortality level of a population. Life expectancy measures how many years from birth, on average, a person is expected to live based on current age and sex-specific death rates.

In 2021, Australia's life expectancy at birth was 83.3 years. Australia ranked fourth highest out of 38 OECD countries and was above the OECD average of 80.3 years. Among OECD countries, life expectancy at birth ranged from 73.1 years (Latvia) to 84.5 years (Japan) (OECD 2023i).

### Health adjusted life expectancy (HALE)

Health-adjusted life expectancy (HALE) extends the concept of life expectancy by considering the time spent living with ill health from disease and injury. It reflects the average length of time a person at a specific age lived in full health.

In 2019, Australia's HALE at birth was 70.9 years. Australia ranked 19th highest out of 38 OECD countries and was above the average of 70.3 years. Among OECD countries, HALE ranged from 65.8 years (Mexico) to 74.1 years (Japan) (WHO 2020).

For more information, see [International health data comparisons](#).

## Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction measures how people evaluate their life as a whole (on a scale from 0 to 10). In 2020, Australians on average scored life satisfaction as 7.1. This placed Australia 13th highest out of 38 OECD countries, and above the OECD total of 6.7 (rates ranged from 4.9 to 7.9). Life satisfaction among OECD countries was greatest in Finland (7.9) (OECD 2023a).

## Environment

### Air pollution

During 2017–2019, Australia had the sixth equal lowest level of air pollution (as measured by PM2.5, see [glossary](#)), with 6.7 micrograms of particulate matter less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter per cubic metre in the air, on average out of 38 OECD countries. This was lower than the OECD total of 14 micrograms (rates ranged from 5.5

to 27) with Finland reporting the lowest level of air pollution (5.5 micrograms) (OECD 2023a).

## Demographic and contextual factors

### Population dependency ratio

In 2021, Australia's population dependency ratio (see [glossary](#)) ranked 18<sup>th</sup> lowest out of 38 OECD countries at 54%. The ratio of children aged 0–14 and people aged 65 and over, compared with the number of people aged 15–64, ranged from 40% (Korea) to 71% (Japan) (UN 2022).

### Overseas born population

Compared with other OECD countries in 2019, a high proportion of Australians (30%), were born overseas. The OECD average was 15% with Luxembourg reporting the highest proportion of resident population born overseas (47%). Australia ranked second highest out of 32 OECD countries for which data were available (rates ranged from 0.9% to 47%) (OECD 2023c).

### Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita

In 2022, Australia's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) was US\$68,701 (OECD estimated value), which ranked eighth highest out of 38 OECD countries. It was higher than the OECD total of US\$54,015, with Luxembourg reporting the highest GDP per capita (US\$143,394) and Ireland the second highest (US\$128,343) (OECD 2023e).

## Welfare data and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic caused worldwide disruption. Throughout the pandemic, many countries introduced restrictions (such as travel bans, lockdowns, and strict physical distancing policies) to contain the spread of the disease. Restrictions had a serious impact on economies and societies worldwide, with travel, trade, and people's ability to work, attend school and socialise all affected and impacts continuing to be experienced.

The ability to capture and compare welfare and wellbeing data internationally throughout the pandemic has been limited, and, for some measures, the latest available data across countries precedes the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on international comparisons of welfare data, see:

- [OECD Better Life Index](#)
- [OECD.Stat](#)
- [United Nations](#)
- [World Health Organisation.](#)

Visit [International comparisons](#) for more on this topic.

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# Philanthropy and charitable donations

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Impact of COVID-19 on giving

Where do I go for more information?

In Australia, philanthropy and giving to charity occur in many ways. [Philanthropy Australia](#) defines philanthropy as the giving of money, time, information, goods and services, influence and voice to improve the wellbeing of humanity and the community. Donations to registered charities can be tax deductible if the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has endorsed the entity as a deductible gift recipient (DGR) (ATO 2023a). Fewer than half of charities in Australia have DGR status.

Some charities are set up primarily to deliver structured philanthropy such as ancillary funds. For others, distributing grants may be only one element of their operations (Cortis et al. 2018).

The legal environment in Australia for making financial donations is complex; hence the information on this page is a broad overview of key elements only.

The not-for-profit sector consists of approximately 30% charities; the remainder of the sector largely consists of self-assessed income tax exempt entities and a small percentage of taxable not-for-profit entities. The self-assessed income tax exempt entities fall into 8 purpose-based categories, such as community service and sporting. These entities play an integral role, along-side charities, to improve the wellbeing of the community (ATO 2020).

Volunteering – time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain (VA 2015) – is also considered to be philanthropy and/or charitable giving but is not directly covered here. For more information see [Volunteers](#).

For more detail on financial philanthropic and charitable donations, see the in-focus report [Philanthropy and charitable donations](#).

## Definition of Structured Giving

Structured giving refers to relatively large-scale giving or philanthropy, for example, through corporate cash donations, or larger scale private contributions that are made on a planned periodic basis.

Structured giving is important to charities and not-for-profit organisations as it provides a regular source of income. Structured giving can involve using a financial vehicle designed to enable giving, including:

- private or public ancillary funds
- sub-funds and giving circles
- testamentary or other legacy trusts.

Structured giving can also occur without using a dedicated financial vehicle from individuals and families ([Philanthropy Australia](#)).

## Giving by source

Charities receive funding from various sources. In 2021, charities generated approximately \$190 billion in revenue, including:

- \$97.2 billion from government (including JobKeeper and other government stimulus initiatives related to COVID-19 and disaster recovery plans)
- \$59.2 billion from funds raised from sales of goods or services
- \$13.4 billion from donations and bequests
- \$6.4 billion from investments
- \$13.7 billion from other revenue sources (ACNC 2023b).

Donations made to non-deductible gift recipients (non-DGRs) or through buying items at a charity auction or gifts made under a will are not captured in income tax returns but are included in the total revenue generated by charities (ATO 2023c).

## How to account for inflation?

To account for the impact of inflation over time, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was used to adjust the nominal amount of donations made to charities to their equivalent real value. This conversion from nominal to real values allows for more accurate comparisons of the value of donations made across different periods. To calculate the real price of an item, the current price is divided by the CPI of the base year and then multiplied by 100. This provides an adjusted price that reflects the purchasing power of the currency in the base year.

## Giving by individuals

The Charities Aid Foundation report on [World Giving Index 2022](#) ranked Australia as the fourth most generous country among 119 countries with 3 in 5 Australians making a financial donation to a charity (CAF 2022). People choose to give for a variety of reasons, including to align with values and cultural identity, for personal satisfaction and caring about 'doing the right thing', and 'giving back' (McGregor-Lowndes et al. 2017).

The [Australia Giving 2019](#) study reported the top 3 reasons why people give are that they:

- care about the cause (54%)
- want to help people less fortunate than them (41%)
- want to make a difference (33%) (CAF 2019).

The study also found that of the majority (68%) of respondents who donated to charity, 63% reported donating money to non-profit organisations and 30% to religious organisations. Around one-third (35%) reported providing volunteering services.

The majority of donors give a one-off donation to charities without intending to make regular or planned ongoing donations to that organisation (Scaife et al. 2016).

Approximately 40% of registered charities have Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) endorsement from the ATO. Organisations endorsed as deductible gift recipients are entitled to receive gifts which are deductible from the donor's income tax. To be DGR endorsed a charity must meet the specific criteria of one of the DGR categories based on the charities purpose. DGR endorsed charities are more likely to be the recipients of donations (ACNC 2023a).

Donors in Australia favoured charities that support children. Almost one-third (30%) of respondents reported giving to charities who support seriously ill children or children with disability, followed by helping the poor (25%) and medical research (21%) (CAF 2019).

In order to inspire greater philanthropy across Australia and encourage future giving, the [2022-2025 Philanthropy Australia Strategic Plan](#) was launched in December 2021 by Philanthropy Australia. Philanthropy Australia has also implemented a national framework to double structured giving from \$2.5 billion in 2020 to \$5 billion by 2030. See Philanthropy Australia's [Blueprint to Grow Structured Giving](#).

Furthermore, in March 2023, the Government established a Productivity Commission review to analyse motivations for philanthropic giving in Australia and identify opportunities to grow it further. The Government is set to receive the Final Inquiry Report by 11 May 2024 (Productivity Commission 2023).

## Tax-deductible donations

Donations by individuals of \$2 or more to a DGR endorsed charity are deductible from an individual taxpayer's assessable income. If the donation is property, a tax deduction may be claimed if the property is purchased and donated to a DGR within 12 months (ATO 2017).

When an individual adds a gift or donation in their tax return, they enter a description, which usually indicates where the donation has been made (ATO 2022a). Tax-deductible donations obtained from tax returns represent only a subset of individual giving, as not all donations made can be (or have been) deducted from income tax. Such non-deductible donations might include non-tax deductible contributions (raffle ticket, donations made directly to people), volunteering, donations to non-DGRs endorsed organisations or donations made by those who are not required to lodge a tax return.

In 2019–20:

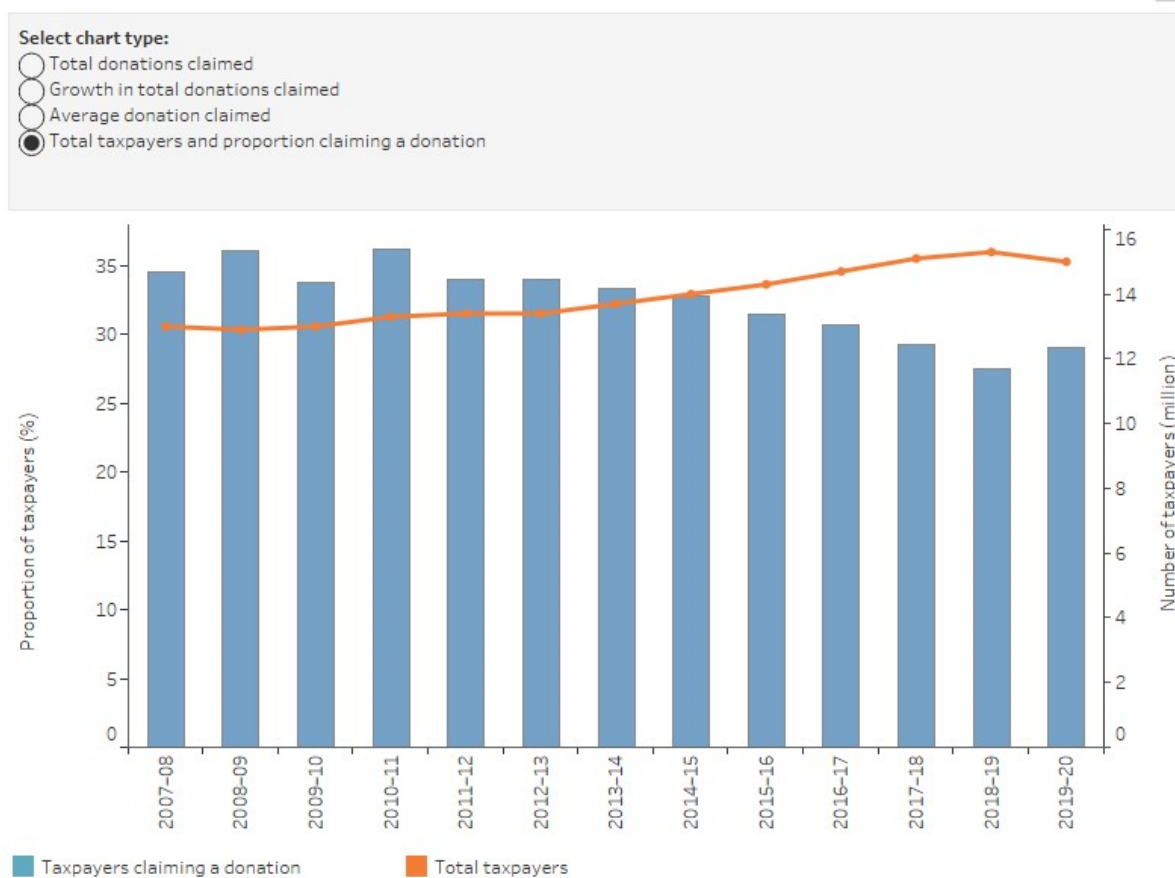
- individual taxpayers claimed a total amount of \$3.85 billion as a tax-deductible donation, a decrease of 3.4% in real terms from the previous year's total of \$3.98 billion (AIHW analysis of ATO 2023b)
- 2.08 million male taxpayers claimed tax-deductible donations totalling \$2.18 billion, accounting for 56.7% of all tax-deductible donations claimed; 2.26 million female taxpayers claimed tax-deductible donations totalling \$1.67 billion
- 29.0% (4.34 million) of all Australian taxpayers claimed an average deduction of \$887. This is in contrast with the previous year where a smaller number of taxpayers (27.5% or 4.21 million) made a greater average tax deduction of \$945, in real terms (ATO 2023b; Figure 1).

Between 2007–08 and 2019–20:

- total donations increased from \$3.02 billion to \$3.85 billion in real terms
- the proportion of individual taxpayers claiming donations fell (from 34.5% to 29.0%; Figure 1).

From 2007–08 to 2009–10 there was a yearly average decrease of 11.0% in donations when adjusted for inflation. However, from 2010–11 to 2019–20, the yearly average growth in donations in real terms was 4.4% based on 2019–20 dollars (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Total number and proportion of taxpayers claiming tax-deductible donations , 2002-08 to 2019-20**



**Notes**

1. Constant price estimates are expressed in terms of 2019-20 prices.
  2. Donations claimed refers to tax deductions made by individual taxpayers for donations to deductible gift recipients.
  3. Data for the period 2018-19 to 2019-20 income years were sourced from individual income tax returns processed by 31 October 2021. The statistics are not necessarily complete.
- Sources: ATO 2023b.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

## Business giving

Business giving is often driven by an ethical desire to give back to the community and the belief the donations will make a difference. Businesses also recognise the benefits a giving culture has on employee recruitment, retention and engagement (Burns et al. 2017).

Giving from the corporate sector in Australia plays an important role. In addition to cash donations, corporates also engage in community investment by providing services at no or substantially reduced cost with no expectation of a commercial return, for example legal and accounting firms. Additionally, corporates contribute to skilled volunteering activities and in-kind donations (WGA 2023a).

Many companies are joining the 'Pledge 1% movement' – wherein companies can pledge any combination of product, equity, profit, or time to whatever charity of their choice. Pledge 1% partners are leading organisations, committed to encouraging the early stage companies they work with, to make giving back a priority.

The Corporate Support Report from JBWere reported that in 2021:

- The top 50 companies contributed \$1.37 billion into community investment, a 4% increase from the previous year. This represented 0.8% of pre-tax profit in 2021.
- The average contribution was \$26.5 million, with the largest contribution being \$234.1 million and the smallest \$3.5 million (WGA 2023a).

## **Workplace giving**

Workplace giving is a joint relationship between employers, employees and charities that enables individuals to donate a proportion of their pre-tax salary to charity and claim a tax deduction equal to the amount of donations. From the employer perspective, workplace giving enhances staff engagement, increases employee pride and demonstrates the company's commitment to the community. A further incentive is that some employers match staff donations (ATO 2021; WGA 2023b).

Data from the ATO showed that in 2019–20:

- about 211,300 Australians donated through workplace giving programs. This represented 5.1% of employees employed by workplace giving employers. The proportion of employees enrolled in these programs has remained constant over the last 10 years.
- the total donations by employees using workplace giving were \$52 million, compared with \$43 million in 2018–19.
- the average donation was \$247.

## **Ancillary funds**

Ancillary funds are charitable trusts created by deed for the purpose of making grants for public benefit in Australia. Ancillary funds cannot operate programs or deliver services, but they play a supporting role by funding eligible non-profit entities. Hence ancillary funds act as an intermediary between donors and DRGs (McGregor-Lowndes et al 2022).

Private ancillary funds (PAFs) enable individuals, families or organisations to put aside money or property in a trust to support charities over the long term. PAFs cannot raise funds from the general public but can be endorsed as a DGR.

Public ancillary funds (PuAFs) are communal and philanthropic structures that must establish a public fund and raise funds from the general public. A PuAF can be a DGR and therefore donations are tax deductible. Common PuAF categories include community foundations, corporate foundations or fundraising foundations for individual charities.

## Ancillary Fund Guidelines

The Public Ancillary Fund Guidelines 2022 mandate a minimum annual distribution rate. During each financial year, a PuAF must distribute at least 4% of the market value of the fund's net assets as valued at the end of the previous financial year, with a minimum annual distribution of \$8,800, unless the expenses of the fund are being met outside the fund (ATO 2022b).

The Private Ancillary Fund Guidelines 2019 mandate a minimum annual distribution rate. During each financial year, a PAF must distribute at least 5% of the market value of the fund's net assets as valued at the end of the previous financial year, with a minimum annual distribution of \$11,000 unless the expenses of the fund are being met outside the fund (McGregor-Lowndes 2022).

In 2019–20:

- There were 1,373 PuAFs and 1,819 PAFs, which received donations of around \$1.31 billion and \$0.81 billion, respectively.
- PuAFs distributed around \$350 million and PAFs distributed around \$521 million, which represent 8.8% of net assets for PuAFs and 7% for PAFs.
- Charities receiving the highest proportion of distribution from PuAFs were those with multiple purposes (34%), health organisations (25%) and welfare and rights organisations (22%) (ATO 2023b; Figure 2).

From 2011–12 to 2019–20:

- The total number of PAFs increased from 1,002 to 1,819; an average growth of 7.8%.
- PuAFs donations increased on average by 18.1% per year in real terms, with the highest increase (53%) between 2018–19 to 2019–20.
- Donations to PAFs increased, on average, by 31.0% per year in real terms, driven by a large donation in 2014–15 from the [Paul Ramsay Foundation](#) (McGregor-Lowndes et al. 2022).
- On average, net assets for both PuAFs and PAFs grew by 13.2% and 12.5% in real term respectively, with assets for PuAFs remaining below those for PAFs over the period.
- PuAFs distributed an average of 14.3% of assets annually and PAFs distributed 6.9% on average (ATO 2023b; Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Donations received, distributions made and net assets of public and private ancillary funds, 2011-12 to 2019-20**



Notes:  
 1. Constant price estimates are expressed in terms of 2019-20 prices.  
 2. Funds received by Private Ancillary Funds in 2014-15 increased sharply due to donations from the Paul Ramsay Foundation (McGregor-Lowndes et al. 2022).  
 Source: AIHW analysis of ABS 2023; ATO 2023b.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

## Recipients of giving

The donations made by individuals and businesses are used for different causes. These include advancing health, education, social or public welfare, environment, religion and culture as well as promoting or protecting human rights.

## Charities

In December 2021, there were approximately 60,000 registered charities in Australia (ACNC 2023b). The charity sector is made up of charities of varying sizes, from tiny local community groups to large universities and international aid organisations. Most charities conduct a range of activities or programs working across Australia and internationally in a broad range of areas, including health, education, social welfare, religion, culture, human rights, the environment and animal welfare. The charity sector employed 1.42 million people in 2021; equating to the third largest workforce in Australia after Retail trade and Health care and social assistance sector (ABS 2023).

However, volunteering is still a vital part with charities reporting 3.2 million volunteers helped deliver services in 2021 (ACNC 2023b).

In 2021:

- charities generated around \$190 billion in revenue, a 7.9% increase from the previous year
- \$13.4 billion came from donations and bequests, an increase of \$700 million (5.3%) from the previous year. Donations and bequests represent 7% of the total charity revenue
- revenue received from government (\$97.2 billion) was more than half of the total revenue for charities, an increase of more than \$8.5 billion from the previous reporting period. Much of this increase in revenue was likely attributable to JobKeeper and other government stimulus initiatives
- total expenses for charities increased to \$175 billion, 4.2% higher compared to 2020. In 2021 the increase in expenses was less than the increase in revenue, this is in contrast to the 2020 reporting period, where the increase in revenue was less than the increase in expenses
- \$9.7 billion was spent on grants and donations and \$99 billion on employee expenses
- net assets for charities increased by \$26.7 billion to \$281 billion which is an increase of 10.5% from the previous year. This increase is higher than growth of Australians' personal financial assets wealth (3.8%)
- the most common activities for charities were religious activities and education (ACNC 2023b).

## **What are bequests?**

Bequests are gifts made as part of a will or trust and are one of the most popular and flexible ways to support the causes that are important to you and your family. A bequest can be to a person or a trust, or it can be a charitable bequest to a non-profit organisation (CDC 2023).

# Disaster relief and recovery fund

Australians have been impacted by climate change related emergencies in the past several years, from bushfires to floods and cyclones. The consequences of such events have substantial impacts on people, communities, the economy, infrastructure and the environment. The total cost of natural disasters in Australia is forecast to increase from \$18.2 billion to \$39 billion per year by 2050 (ARC 2023a). Charities have supported individuals, households and communities during those difficult times.

## Flooding in Queensland and New South Wales

In late February 2022, southeast Queensland and New South Wales experienced multiple rounds of devastating flooding. The estimated total costs from the southeast Queensland floods were \$7.7 billion (DAC 2023).

To address the immediate and long-term impacts from these floods, a range of assistance has been activated through charities, as well as state and commonwealth disaster recovery funding arrangements.

Between February and April 2022, the Australian Red Cross raised \$53.9 million through the Australia Unites Telethon Appeal (\$27.2 million) and Queensland and New South Wales Floods Appeal (\$26.7 million). All proceeds from the Telethon Appeal were distributed as direct cash assistance to people impacted by the floods. In addition, \$1.6 million was spent to deliver 24/7 support during the floods (ARC 2023b).

As at September 2022, the [Salvation Army Strategic and Disaster Management](#) team has distributed \$13.44 million in financial assistance and in-kind support such as food parcels, clothing and household items.

The [Australian and Queensland governments](#) have funded the 2021–22 Southern Queensland Floods – Exceptional circumstances package. This package, with a total value of \$1.5 billion, includes funding for housing, business, agriculture, community development and health and wellbeing assistance.

## Bushfires

In the summer of 2019–20, Australia experienced severe bushfires. During that time, charities raised more than \$640 million for relief and recovery efforts. It is estimated that 53% of Australians had donated to a bushfire appeal, with a median value of \$50 (ACNC 2023c).

As at 31 July 2020:

- Australian Red Cross had received \$232 million in donations and dispensed \$167 million of the funds to its emergency services team, direct relief cash grants, recovery programs and administration costs.
- NSW Rural Fire Service Trust received donations of more than \$100 million to support volunteer fire brigades.
- NSW Wildlife Information Rescue and Education Service (WIREs) had received \$91 million in donations for rescue, rehabilitation and recovery of wildlife (ACNC 2023c).

## Impact of COVID-19 on giving

There was unprecedented disruption with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, causing many charities to change, reduce or cease operations for varying periods. Nearly 2,000 charities of the 49,165 charities who provided an annual information statement to Australian Charities Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) did not operate, with 650 citing COVID-19 as a reason' (ACNC 2023a).

The economic downturn, triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, put financial stress on the non-profit sector (PA 2023). Many fundraising events were also cancelled or postponed (Boseley 2020).

In April 2020, 47% of 366 charities surveyed reported that they had experienced a substantial drop in donation fundraising income, with another 20% reporting a slight decrease (Institute of Community Directors Australia 2020). The pandemic has also affected the ability of charities to engage and retain the services of volunteers. In 2021, the number of volunteers dropped to 3.2 million, a decrease of around 180,000 compared with the previous year (ACNC 2023b).

However, during the pandemic, the Australian government provided a range of support to charities; these included 2 tax-free cash payments of between \$20,000 and \$100,000 to eligible charities and JobKeeper payments (ACNC 2023d). The support from the government helped relieve the financial stress for many charities and, as a result, in 2021 the total revenue generated by charities rose to \$190 billion, an increase of \$14 billion on the previous year. Revenue from government totalled \$97.2 billion, an increase of \$8.4 billion from the previous year (ACNC 2023b).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on philanthropy and charitable giving in Australia, see:

- [Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission](#)
- [Community Foundations Australia](#)
- [Fundraising Institute of Australia](#)
- [Giving Australia](#)
- [Philanthropy Australia](#)
- [Workplace Giving Australia](#)
- ATO [Gifts and fundraising](#).

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# Profile of Australia's population

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/profile-of-australias-population>

## On this page

Overview

Past population growth and trends

Australia's future population

Where do I go for more information?

## Overview

Australia's population story has historically been one of strong growth. Australia's population was 26 million at 30 June 2022, having grown around 1.3% a year on average over the past 3 decades, from 17.5 million at 30 June 1992. Australia's population is concentrated in the major cities, which are home to 72% of the total population. Only, 26% live in inner and outer regional Australia, with the remainder (2%) living in *Remote and very remote* areas (see Demographic snapshot 2021–22 below for more information).

Over this 30-year period:

- Net overseas migration was the main driver of population growth, increasing from a net inflow of 69,000 people in 1991–92 to 241,000 people in 2018–19, directly contributing just over half of total population growth over the whole period. The introduction of international border restrictions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic led to the first *net outflow* of migrants from Australia since World War II (-85,000 people in 2020–21), before recovering to a net inflow of 184,000 people in 2021–22 as restrictions eased. The 2021 Census of Population and Housing (2021 Census) found that 29% of people in Australia were born overseas and almost half (48%) have a parent born overseas (Figure 1).
- Natural increase (number of births minus number of deaths) contributed to almost half of population growth, decreasing from 139,000 people in 1991–92 to 124,000 people in 2021–22:
  - Fertility rates have declined, from 1.86 babies per woman in 1991–92 to 1.69 in 2021–22.
  - Life expectancies at birth have continued to increase, from 74.5 years for males and 80.4 years for females in 1992, to 81.3 years for males and 85.4 years for females in 2019–20.
  - The number of deaths has grown faster than the number of births over this period, reflecting the declining fertility rate and ageing of the population.



- Australia's population has grown older, with the median age increasing from 32.7 years at 30 June 1992 to 38.5 years at 30 June 2022. The percentage of the population aged 65 and over has increased from 11% to 17% over the same period.

Australia's capital cities tend to be younger and age more slowly than regional areas. This is mainly because capital cities have historically attracted a larger share of net overseas migrants, who tend to be younger than the overall population. In addition, younger people tend to move into capital cities from regional areas to pursue educational and job opportunities. While retirement-age people are less likely to move, when they do, they often move out of capital cities to regional areas. These factors more than offset higher fertility rates and lower life expectancies in regional areas.

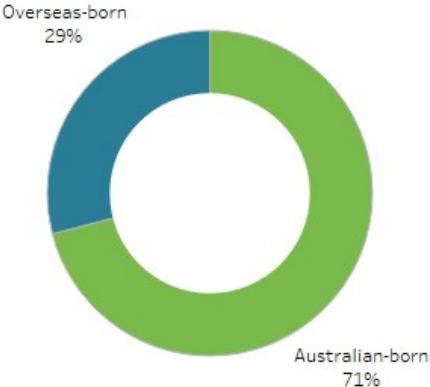
### **The impact of COVID-19 on population growth**

Australia's population growth was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to limit the spread of the disease. Following the easing of international border restrictions and the return of overseas migration in late 2021, Australia's population growth recovered to 1.2% in 2021–22, from a historical low of 0.1% in 2020–21.

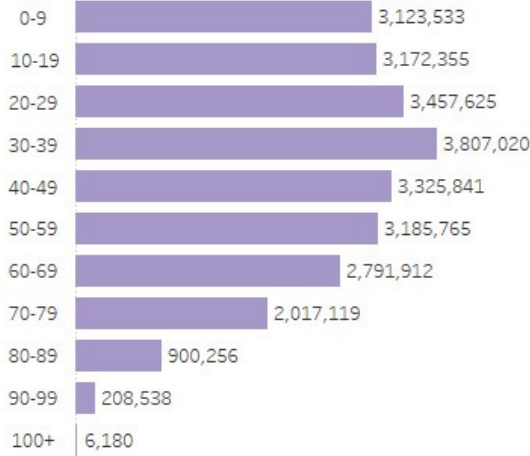
Longer-term trends present prior to the pandemic, such as the ongoing decline in the fertility rate, the decline in the rate of internal migration, and the slower rate of mortality improvement observed in recent years, continue to affect the size and distribution of the population.

**Figure 1: Demographic snapshot 2021-22**

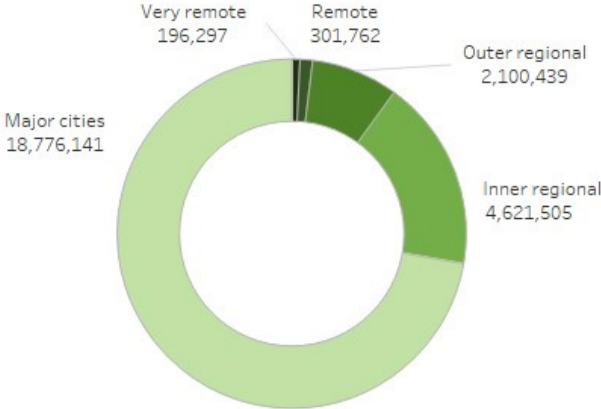
**Country of birth**



**Age group**



**Remoteness area**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Remoteness Areas divide Australia into 5 classes of remoteness on the basis of a measure of relative access to services. Remoteness Areas are intended for the purpose of releasing and analysing statistical data to inform research and policy development in Australia.

Source: ABS 2023a, 2023c, 2022a.

## 2021 Census of Population and Housing

On 28 June 2022, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released data from the [2021 Census](#).

After each Census, the ABS uses the new information to update the estimated resident population for Australia and its states and territories (referred to as 'rebased'). The revised estimates released by the ABS in 2022 are preliminary rebased population estimates. Final population estimates will be available in June 2023 (see [Methodology used in rebased population estimates, June 2021](#) for more detail).

While there was a slight downward revision to estimates of the national population, there were significant revisions at the state and territory level. The populations of New South Wales and Victoria were revised down, Queensland was largely unchanged, while other states and territories saw upward revisions, particularly the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania, which were revised up by around 5%.

Results presented on the rest of this page were prepared by the Centre for Population based on the preliminary revised population estimates from the 2021 Census.

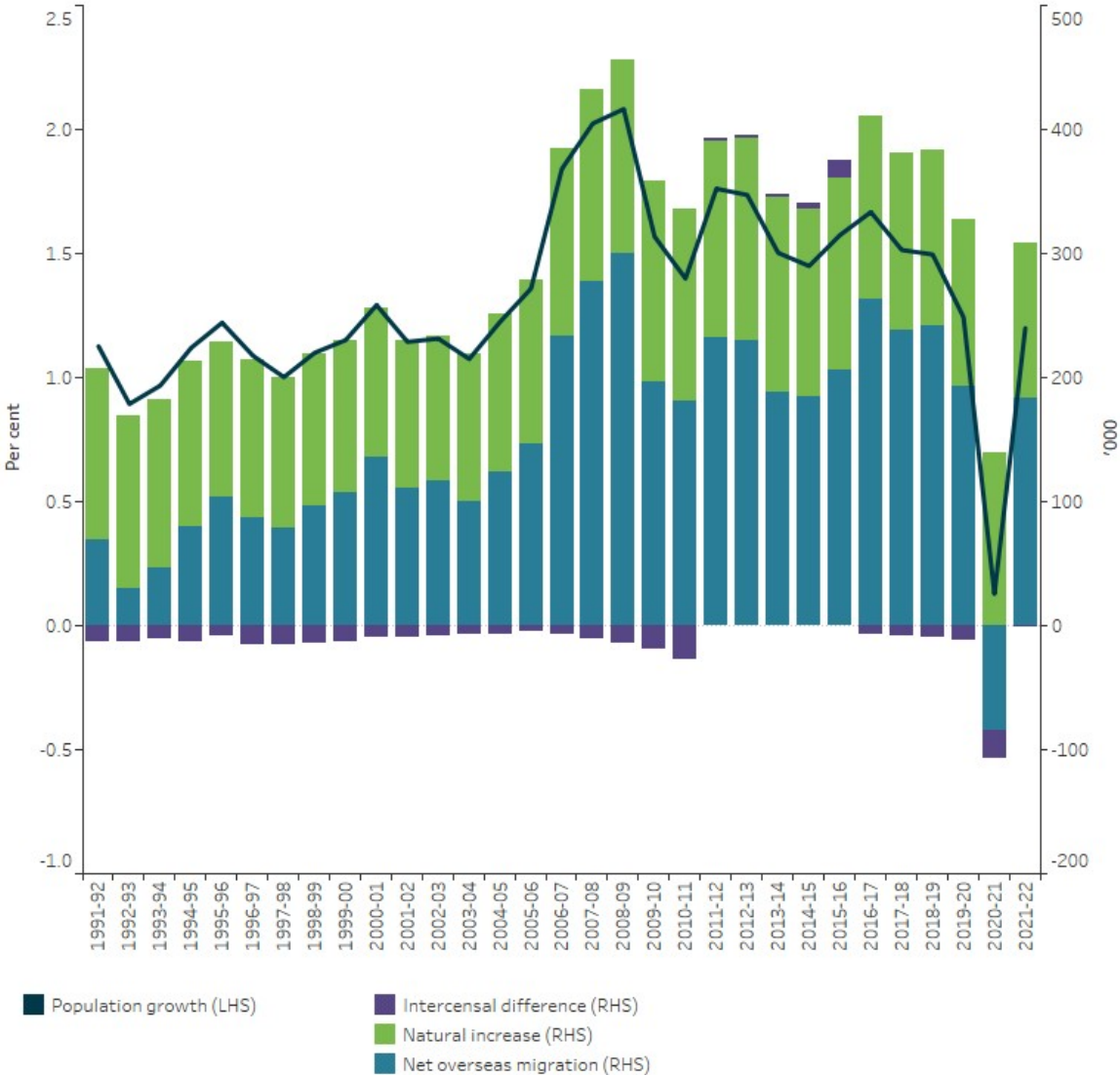
## Past population growth and trends

Australia's population growth from 30 June 1992 to 30 June 2022 averaged 1.3% per year. Natural increase has been relatively steady, while there have been fluctuations in net overseas migration (Figure 2). Natural increase was the main driver of population growth during the early 1990s. However, from 2005–06 net overseas migration contributed more to annual population growth until the introduction of international border restrictions in response to the pandemic. As border restrictions eased, net overseas migration returned as the main driver of population growth in 2021–22. When averaged over the whole period, natural increase and net overseas migration each contributed around half of population growth.

More than two-thirds (67%) of Australia's population lived in the 8 capital cities at 30 June 2022, increasing from 65% at 30 June 1992. Over this period, most capital cities grew faster than their respective regional areas until 2020–21 when regional areas grew at a faster rate than capital cities for the first time since 1993–94. In 2021–22, population growth in capital cities returned, growing as fast as regional areas.

Population growth in Australia has varied widely across cities and regions and has been shaped by flows of internal and overseas migration and varied contributions from natural increase.

**Figure 2: Components of population change, Australia, 1991-92 to 2021-22**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: ABS 2023a.

### Net overseas migration

Net overseas migration was the main driver of Australia’s population growth in the years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The introduction of international border restrictions in early-2020 lowered net overseas migration to -85,000 persons in 2020–21, which was the first recorded net outflow since World War II. Following the easing of international border restrictions from late 2021, net overseas migration grew to 184,000 persons in 2021–22 to become the main driver of population growth over the year again.

## Natural increase

Since the late 2000s, natural increase has added around 150,000 people a year to the Australian population. While the level of natural increase has been relatively steady over this period, it has become smaller as a proportion of the population. Over the past 30 years, the total fertility rate has fallen from 1.86 babies per woman in 1991–92 to 1.69 in 2021–22, remaining below the replacement level of 2.1 since the mid-1970s. At the same time, life expectancies at birth have increased and are among the highest in the world. Despite these improvements in life expectancies, the number of deaths has grown faster than the number of births in recent years, reflecting Australia's ageing population.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Australia's fertility appears to have been relatively short-lived, with a small drop and subsequent rebound in births in 2021. This suggests that people adapted to the uncertainty of the pandemic and quickly caught-up on delayed childbearing plans (Gray et al., 2022a). Over the year to June 2022, there were 306,000 births, an increase of 0.5 per cent from the previous year, and exceeding the number of births in the equivalent period in 2018–19 (305,000 births).

Compared with many other advanced economies, Australia experienced low mortality during the early years of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as infection rates increased significantly from the beginning of 2022, deaths from both COVID-19 and other causes increased. ABS provisional mortality data shows that in 2022, the total number of deaths (191,000) was 10.9% higher than in 2021 and 15.5% higher than the historical average. The number of monthly deaths in Australia peaked in July 2022 at 18,000 deaths and then slowly declined before rising again slightly in December 2022 (ABS 2023b).

## Net interstate migration

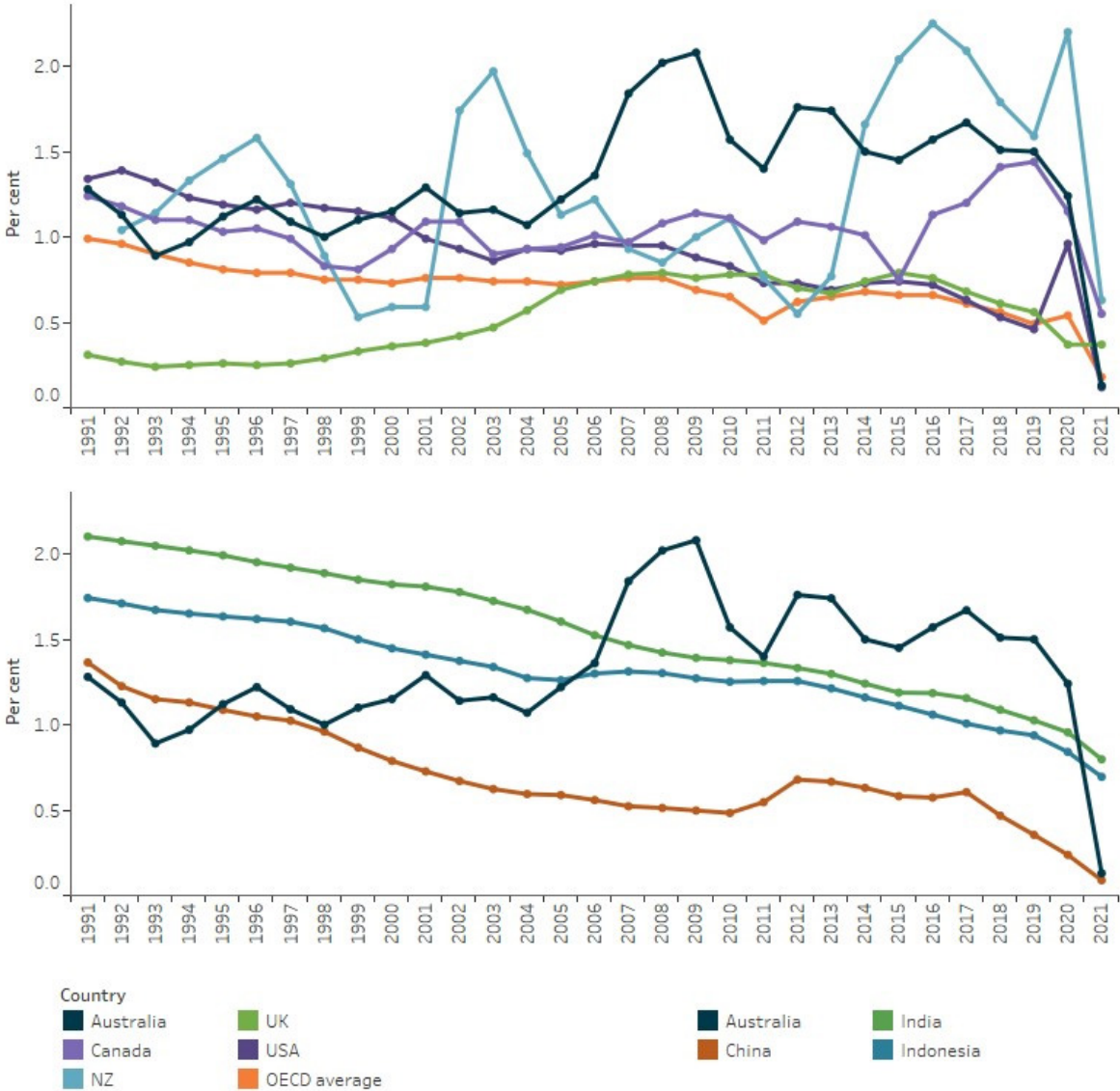
Australia has high rates of internal migration compared to other countries, although this has been declining over time (ABS 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic reduced net internal migration across Australia as state and territory governments temporarily restricted movements in some cities, regions and across state borders. There was an 8.7% drop in the number of interstate moves from 2018–19 (404,000) to 2019–20 (369,000). There was a further fall to 348,000 in the year to March 2021. It is difficult to obtain an accurate picture of movements from the June 2021 quarter to the December 2021 quarter, with the COVID-19 vaccination program affecting Medicare address data used to calculate interstate moves (for more information see [National, state and territory population methodology](#); Interstate migration section). More recent data indicate that interstate moves still remain slightly below pre-pandemic levels.

## Australia's population in a global context

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Australia's population growth rate was higher than that of most other developed countries, largely as a result of net overseas migration. In 2021 Australia's population growth rate fell to 0.1%, which was below the OECD average (Figure 3). China experienced population growth on par with Australia's, while India (0.8%) and Indonesia (0.7%) experienced higher growth in 2021.

**Figure 3: Population growth by country, 1991 to 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

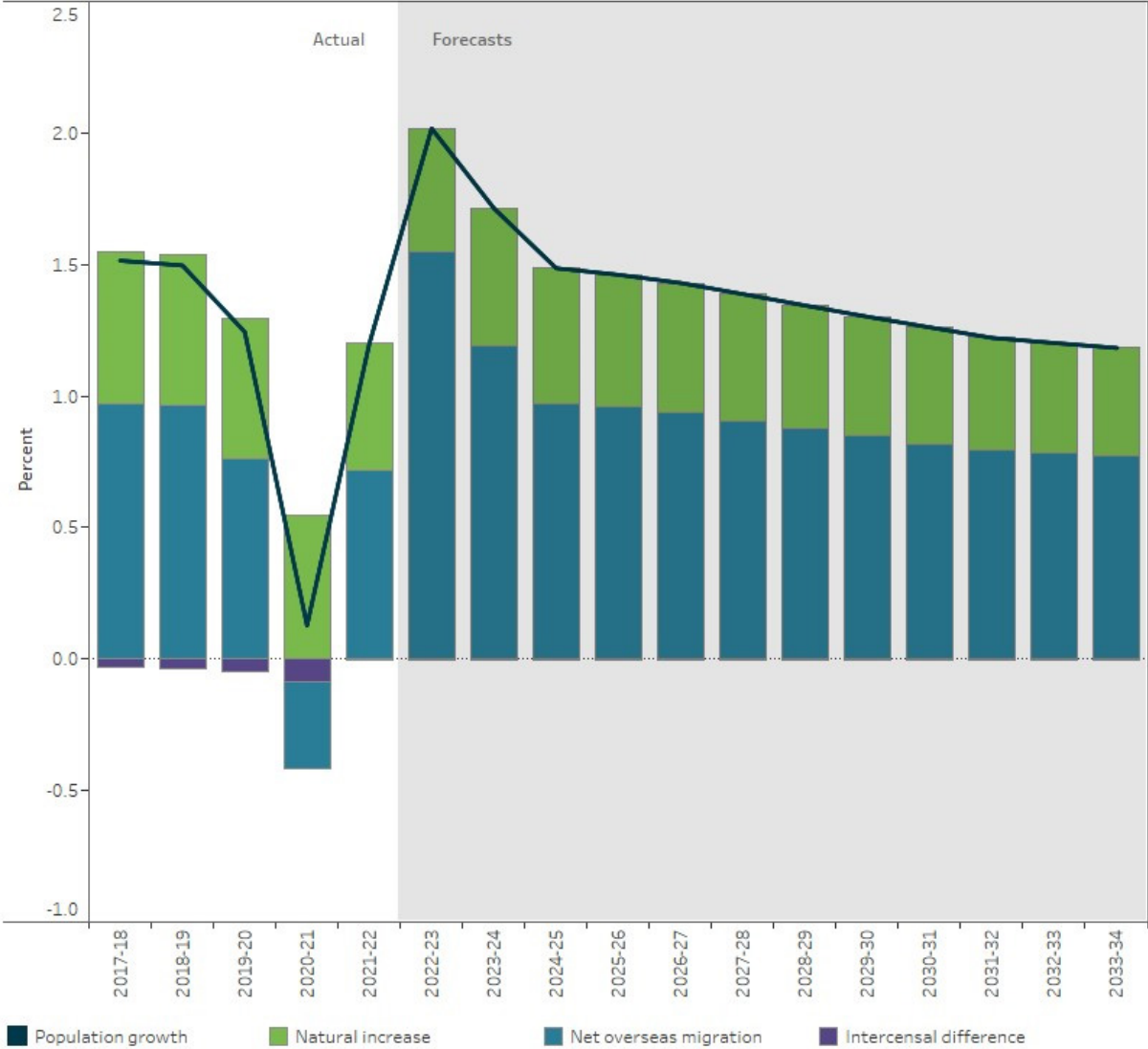
Note: Data for Australia is in financial year format (year ending 30 June), other series are presented in calendar year.

Source: ABS 2023a; World Bank 2022.

## Australia’s future population

As overseas migration returns, population growth is expected to recover and return to the pre-pandemic trend of slowing positive growth. Figure 4 illustrates the population growth projections in the 2023–24 Budget.

**Figure 4: Projected population growth and components, Australia, 2017–18 to 2033–34**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: ABS 2023a; Treasury 2023.

Australia’s future population growth is projected to increase from 1.2% in 2021–22 to 2% in 2022–23, before gradually declining to 1.2% by 2033–34. By this time, Australia’s population is projected to be 30.8 million.

**Net overseas migration**

Net overseas migration is the component of population change that has been most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, owing to international travel restrictions put in place to limit the spread of the virus. With the easing of these restrictions from late-2021, net overseas migration has quickly recovered with the return of temporary visa holders in Australia. Net overseas migration is forecast to be 400,000 in 2022–23 and 315,000 in 2023–24 before returning towards historical trends.



## Natural increase

Consistent with the observed long-run trend, natural increase is projected to continue to decline over the next 10 years reaching 125,000 in 2033–34. This decline is due to the increase in the number of annual deaths growing faster than the increase in the number of births, reflecting an ageing population.

The total fertility rate is projected to continue its long-running decline from 1.66 babies per woman in 2022–23 to 1.62 babies per woman by 2030–31. This decline reflects the trend of women having children later in life and having fewer children when they do. While total births are projected to increase from 309,000 in 2022–23 to 343,000 by 2033–34, births as a proportion of the population will fall.

The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to slightly increase mortality rates in Australia for those aged 60 and above in 2022–23, before returning to pre-pandemic trends. Total deaths are projected to increase from 186,000 in 2022–23 to 218,000 by 2033–34, in line with the increasing size and ageing of the Australian population.

## Net interstate migration

The level of interstate migration is expected to recover, increasing by 9.7% in 2023–24 to reach rates seen immediately prior to the pandemic. The distribution of interstate migration between states and territories is also expected to return to pre-pandemic patterns by 2023–24.

## States and territories

Population growth is forecast to continue to recover in most states and territories in 2022–23, due to the return of overseas migration. Victoria is forecast to be the fastest growing state in 2022–23 and 2023–24. Tasmania is forecast to experience the lowest population growth in 2022–23.

From 2024–25 onwards, the Australian Capital Territory is expected to overtake Victoria as the fastest growing jurisdiction, driven by net overseas migration and a high contribution from natural increase, which reflects its younger age structure.

## Where do I go for more information?

For the latest population projections see:

- Centre for Population – [2022 Population Statement](#)
- Centre for Population – [Centre for Population Projections](#)

For longer term population projections see:

- Australian Treasury – [2021 Intergenerational Report](#)

This page was written by the Australian Government [Centre for Population](#).

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# Social isolation and loneliness

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/social-isolation-and-loneliness>

## On this page

Introduction

Who experiences social isolation and loneliness?

Prevention and reduction of social isolation and loneliness

Where do I go for more information?

Social isolation and loneliness can be harmful to both mental and physical health. They are considered substantial health and wellbeing issues in Australia because of the impact they have on peoples' lives. Some of the measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as physical isolation and lockdowns, may have exacerbated pre-existing risk factors for social isolation and loneliness, such as living alone (Lim et al. in press). Information on loneliness associated with the pandemic may also be found on AIHW's [suicide and self-harm monitoring website](#).

## Difference between social isolation and loneliness

Social isolation 'means having objectively few social relationships or roles and infrequent social contact' (Badcock et al. 2022:18). It differs from loneliness, which is a 'subjective unpleasant or distressing feeling of a lack of connection to other people, along with a desire for more, or more satisfying, social relationships' (Badcock et al. 2022:18). The 2 concepts may, but do not necessarily, co-exist – a person may be socially isolated but not lonely, or socially connected but feel lonely (Badcock et al. 2022; Relationships Australia 2018).

## Who experiences social isolation and loneliness?

Loneliness among Australians was already a concerning issue prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, described both as an 'epidemic' and as one of the most pressing public health concerns in Australia (Ending Loneliness Together 2022). Data from the longitudinal Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey shows that, consistently from 2001 to 2021, about 1 in 5 Australians agreed with the statement 'I often feel very lonely'.

# Social isolation and loneliness a risk for premature death

The risk of premature death associated with social isolation and loneliness is similar to the risk of premature death associated with well-known risk factors such as obesity, based on a meta-analysis of research in Europe, North American, Asia and Australia (Holt-Lunstad et al. 2015).

## Loneliness

An increasing number of people aged under 24, especially females, have reported experiencing loneliness since 2015. According to AIHW analysis of the HILDA Survey data, more than 1 in 4 women aged 18–24 agreed with the statement 'I often feel very lonely' in 2021, an increase from less than 1 in 5 in 2015.

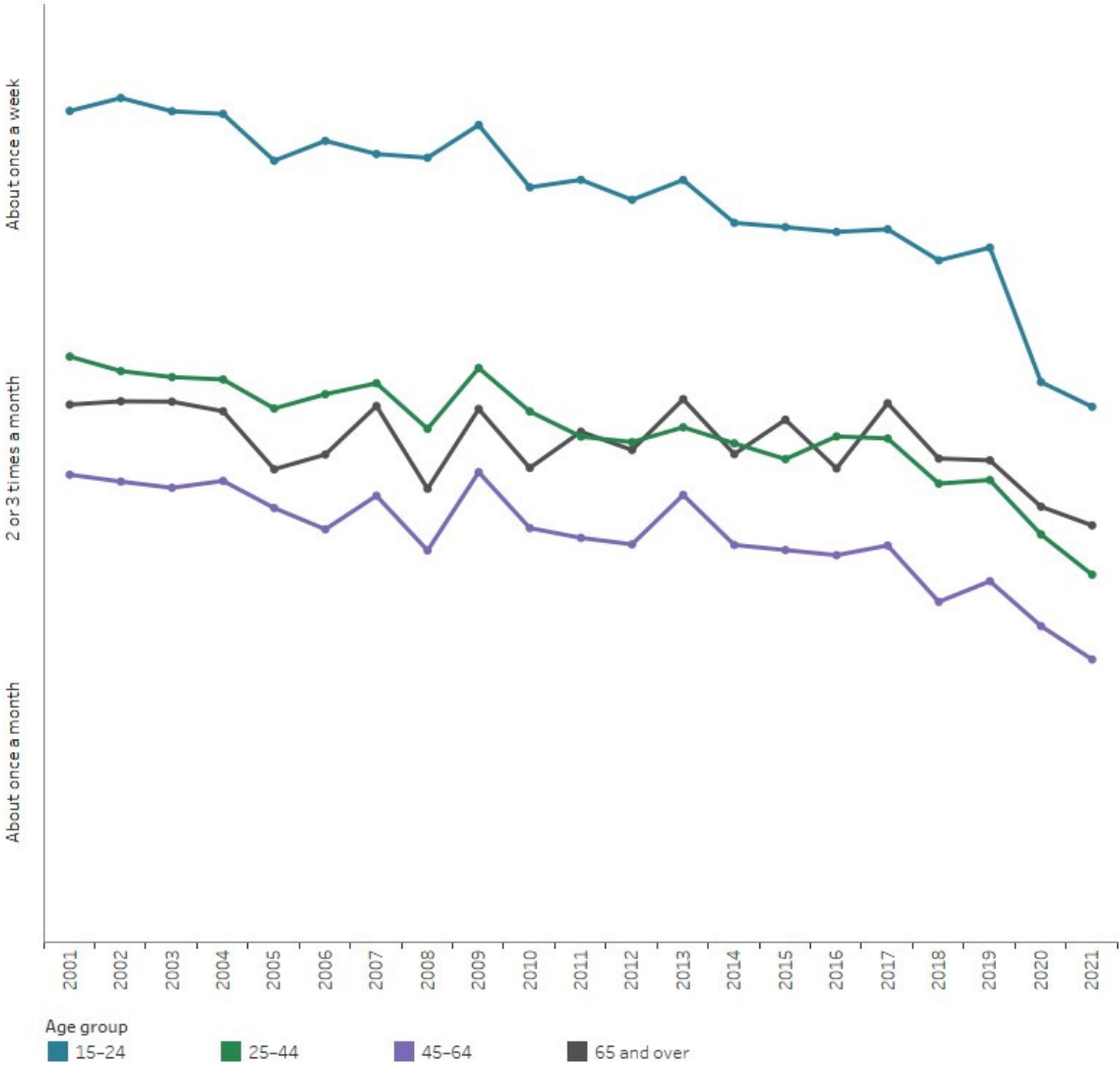
COVID-19 Impact Monitoring data showed that in April 2020, during the nation-wide lockdown, almost half (46%) of respondents reported feeling lonely at least some of the time in the past week – the highest level recorded since the start of the pandemic (Biddle et al. 2022). Loneliness has generally declined since the early 2020 nation-wide lockdown, fluctuating slightly in the 2 years since, however by October 2022 more than one-third (36%) of Australian adults reported experiencing loneliness at least some of the time in the week prior to the survey. Throughout the pandemic, people aged 18–24 years had the highest levels of loneliness (Biddle and Gray 2022).

Australia lacks comparable data on loneliness that would allow for reliable international comparisons. Recently, a systematic worldwide review of loneliness was conducted across 113 countries, led by Australian researchers. Australia was not able to be compared with other countries, due to lack of comparable prevalence data, except for people aged 12–17 (Surkalim et al. 2022). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has no comparable data for Australia on its measures of 'people feeling lonely' and 'people feeling left out of society' (OECD 2022).

## Social isolation

The frequency of social contact has been declining across all age groups in Australia for decades, with data from the HILDA survey showing a relative decline of 11% overall from 2001 to 2020 (Figure 1). Although people aged 15–24 have the highest frequency of social contact overall, on average, getting together with others about once a week, they have also shown the greatest relative decline (17%) over this period (Botha 2022). People completing surveys may define 'social contact' differently, for example, some people may consider online contact, including via text only, as social contact, while others may not. As such, the extent of social isolation may vary between studies, depending on how social isolation is defined.

**Figure 1: Average frequency of social contact, by age group, 2001 to 2021**



<https://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Scoring is reversed from the corresponding HILDA variable (\_LSSOCAL). Higher numbers correspond with higher frequency of social contact.

Source: Adapted from Figure 10.2, Botha 2022. Additional analysis by AIHW.

Data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, which follows two cohorts of young people across time, shows a similar picture. In 2020, the younger cohort, aged 16–17 at the time, reported a higher level of loneliness than the older cohort, aged 18–19. Females also reported a higher level of loneliness than males. For social support, results showed an increase during the study period. Compared to males, females reported a higher level of social support. With the few time points available, it is challenging to differentiate between the effects of age, period and cohort. It is unclear if these results may be related to a gender bias found in some studies, where females may be more comfortable expressing loneliness and receiving support compared with males (Baretto et al. 2021).

## Social media

Whether social media has potential benefits or negative impacts on people's experiences of social isolation has been discussed since the advent of this medium. There is no straightforward relationship, however, between social media use and experiences of social isolation and loneliness, whether positive or negative.

Researchers have identified some positive impacts of how social media can help people feel socially connected, especially adolescents (aged 11–19) who are looking for peers online to boost their psychosocial wellbeing, discuss identity development and encourage a sense of belonging (Allen et al. 2014). Other research has showed that using social media benefited young people (aged under 21) who experienced higher levels of social anxiety by increasing their ability to socialise, reducing their feelings of social isolation (Lin et al. 2017).

Even though adolescents can use social media to create supportive communities, research shows that the relationship between its use and loneliness can be dynamic and bidirectional. When it is used to escape physical social interactions, feelings of loneliness were found to increase (Nowland et al. 2017). Further, Nowland and colleagues (2017) posited that people experiencing loneliness may benefit from external support with their use of the Internet to ensure they engage in existing friendships and learn how to develop new ones online to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

More research has emerged since the pandemic started that investigates the use of social media by people of all ages and their experiences of social isolation, but findings are not always positive. For example, a study of people living in Norway, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Australia looked at the impact of people's use of social media during the pandemic. The researchers found an association between emotional distress and more frequent use of social media (Geirdal et al. 2021).

Another international study investigating current research between online social networking and mental health outcomes for people aged 50 and over found that social media enhanced communication with family and friends, provided greater independence and self-efficacy, aided in the creation of new communities online, helped to form positive associations with wellbeing and life satisfaction, and was associated with decreased depressive symptoms (Chen et al. 2021).

As more studies are conducted through the pandemic and beyond, an understanding of how social media affects feelings of social isolation and loneliness should become clearer.

## Prevention and reduction of social isolation and loneliness

Participating in paid work and caring for others are important safeguards against loneliness. Engaging in volunteer work and maintaining active memberships of sporting or community organisations are also associated with reduced social isolation (Flood 2005). However, it is unclear whether community engagement can consistently act as a protective factor against loneliness. For example, one study found that loneliness is lower in people who spend at least some time each week volunteering (Flood 2005),

while another study found no relationship between loneliness and volunteering, socialising and participating in sport and community organisations (Baker 2012).

For those aged 25–44, being in a relationship is a greater protective factor against loneliness for men than for women (Baker 2012). Women living with others and women living alone report similar levels of loneliness, while men living alone report higher levels of loneliness than those living with others (Flood 2005). During the COVID-19 pandemic, people living with family reported less loneliness compared with people in other living situations (Lim et al. 2020).

## Companion animals

Pets can play an integral part in people's lives regardless of culture, profession, or age. Companion animals have been found to bring substantial health benefits to people both physically and mentally. Multiple studies have found an association between pet ownership and lower experiences of social isolation, particularly for children (Hartwig and Signal 2020; Kretzler et al. 2022). Owning a pet increases the opportunity for people to get to know their neighbours and for social interactions and forming friendships (Wood et al. 2015). All types of companion animals may contribute to reducing social isolation and feelings of loneliness (Brooks et al. 2018; Kretzler et al. 2022).

After the outbreak of COVID-19, studies mostly demonstrated that the relationship between people and their companion animals had strengthened and pets continue to decrease people's experiences of social isolation (Kretzler et al. 2022). It is not yet clear whether this strong relationship between people and their pets at the levels seen in the early years of the pandemic will persist in the future (Hughes et al. 2021).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information about social isolation and loneliness, see:

- 'Chapter 2 Social isolation, loneliness and wellbeing' in [Australia's welfare 2023: data insights](#)
- [Ending Loneliness Together.](#)



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# Understanding welfare and wellbeing

Find the most recent version of this information at:

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## On this page

What are welfare and wellbeing?

Welfare services and support

Measuring wellbeing

Where do I go for more information?

## What are welfare and wellbeing?

The terms welfare and wellbeing are often used interchangeably. In the broadest sense, welfare refers to the wellbeing of individuals, families and the community. Wellbeing can be considered as ‘a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions’ (WHO 2021).

Welfare is understood by some people to mean wellbeing, while others see welfare as primarily government-funded income support payments and welfare services. However, support and services in many areas of life aid welfare in the broader sense and are critical to the wellbeing of an individual and their family. Wellbeing can influence, and be influenced by, a person’s interaction with services and formal and informal supports.

A person’s wellbeing can be influenced by environmental, social and economic factors at the individual, family and community level, and each person’s unique circumstances and experiences contributes to their wellbeing. Wellbeing is multidimensional, covering aspects of life including housing, income, work and job quality, health, knowledge and skills, civic engagement, social connections, safety and work-life-balance (OECD 2020). Analysis of data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey showed social relationships and connectedness are positively associated with subjective wellbeing, as measured by self-reported life satisfaction (AIHW 2021). The analysis showed other factors also play an important role for better life satisfaction – such as employment (unemployed people reported notably lower life satisfaction than employed people) and mental health (which, on average had a greater impact on life satisfaction than physical health) (AIHW 2021).

Health, welfare and wellbeing are strongly interrelated. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’ (WHO 1946), recognising that a person’s health status is linked to their wellbeing. See [Health and welfare links](#).

Not only is current wellbeing and day-to-day factors affecting it important, so too are the resources that support future wellbeing such as natural, economic and social capital (OECD 2020).

## **Wellbeing and COVID-19**

From early-2020 onwards, a range of public health interventions were put in place to help contain the spread of COVID-19. These included border controls; closure of non-essential businesses; work-from-home orders; school closures; density limits within businesses and workplaces; stay-at-home orders; mandated mask use; and test, trace, isolation and quarantine measures. Governments and public health officials aimed to balance the benefits from these interventions in reducing harm from the infectious disease, with the potential harm caused by the interventions themselves.

The indirect impacts of the pandemic and associated interventions extend to social, economic and environment factors, and include adverse effects on education, employment, housing, social connections and income (AIHW 2022). For example, according to the 2021 Families in Australia Survey, almost 1 in 5 (19%) respondents aged 20–21 reported needing more financial help from family during the early stage of the pandemic in 2020 – compared with 1 in 10 (9%) 16–17-year-olds (Baxter and Carroll 2022). Some interventions were minimally disruptive to individuals and society. Others have unintended harms – in particular, stay-at-home orders ('lockdowns'). For this reason, it is difficult to assess the impact of COVID-19 on wellbeing. For example, while lockdowns had an adverse impact on factors like loneliness, if lockdown measures were not introduced, mortality rates may have been higher.

It is useful to look at wellbeing-related measures like loneliness, life satisfaction and psychological distress; to see how they changed during the course of the pandemic and how these levels compare with pre-pandemic levels. For example, average life satisfaction scores and average levels of psychological distress worsened during the pandemic:

- Life satisfaction fluctuated considerably over the COVID-19 period. In August 2023, life satisfaction among Australian's was higher (average of 6.6 on a scale of 0 to 10) compared with the lowest points during the pandemic (April 2020 and August 2021; 6.5). Between January and August 2023 average life satisfaction declined slightly, remaining lower than in late 2020 and prior to the onset of COVID-19 (Biddle 2023; Biddle and Gray 2023a; 2023b).
- Average levels of psychological distress worsened during the pandemic, but then improved; in January 2023, average psychological distress had returned to pre-pandemic levels and was no longer significantly higher than in prior to the onset of the pandemic (Biddle and Gray 2023a). However, in August 2023, the average psychological distress score was again above pre-pandemic levels and similar to the peaks in April and October 2020 when average levels of psychological distress were at their highest (Biddle 2023; Biddle and Gray 2023b).

In April 2023, financial stress was at a higher rate than at any time during the pandemic, with 32% of ANUPoll survey respondents reporting they were finding it difficult or very difficult on their current income; by August 2023, it was 30% (with 10% finding it very difficult to live on their current income) (Biddle 2023; Biddle and Gray 2023b). This was

higher than pre-COVID (February 2020 26.7%) and much higher when compared with the lowest proportion during the pandemic period of 17.3% in November 2020 (Biddle and Gray 2023a). For more on wellbeing, life satisfaction and COVID-19, see: 'Chapter 2 Social isolation, loneliness and wellbeing' and 'Chapter 3 Employment and income support following the COVID-19 pandemic' in Australia's welfare 2023: data insights.

## Welfare services and support

Welfare support can come from:

- informal assistance from family, friends and the community
- formal assistance from government and non-government organisations.

This section focuses primarily on formal services and support. See also [Informal carers](#).

While the responsibility for funding and managing welfare services and support mainly lies with the Australian Government or state and territory governments, arrangements for delivering welfare services are complex. Government welfare assistance in Australia is a network of government payments and services. A person's wellbeing can be boosted by the assistance they receive in time of need.

The level of formal welfare assistance a person receives depends on their life stage, level of disadvantage, and the interactions among these factors. Welfare services and supports are designed to assist people from a variety of backgrounds, including new parents needing time off work or help with the costs of raising children, to people leaving their home due to a crisis such as domestic violence, or those living with permanent disability who receive support to aid independence and economic participation (DSS 2022).

A person's need for assistance can change over time. People may access welfare services and support temporarily when circumstances and need arise (for instance, emergency temporary accommodation for bushfire affected communities), or longer term (for instance, Age Pension) (see DSS 2023). When an event triggers a change in a person's life, it is often the point at which that person contacts government support services (Qu et al. 2012).

## Government payments

Government payments aim to support people at different points in their life and those who cannot, or cannot fully, support themselves. This social security system supports these people by providing targeted payments and assistance. This includes working age payments (such as the JobSeeker payment), family assistance (such as Family Tax Benefit), rent assistance and payments for seniors, people with disability, carers and students (DSS 2022). They can be available short or long term, or for a transitional period, and the eligibility requirements and amounts received vary. Payments are available to eligible people at different stages of life.

Age Pension is an example of a major income support payment that helps eligible people with living costs. As at 31 March 2023, around 2.6 million people aged 65 and over received Age Pension, equating to around 58% of the population aged 65 and over (see [Income support for older people](#)).

Unemployment payments, such as JobSeeker and Youth Allowance (other), also provide income support. They are the main income support payments for working-age Australians (aged over 16 but under the Age Pension qualifying age) who are looking for work or earning under the income and assets threshold. See [Employment services](#), [Unemployment payments](#) and [Parenting payments](#).

For more information on government payments, see the Australia's welfare [Employment and income](#) topic summaries.

## **Tax offsets and concession cards**

Tax offsets are available to support a person financially for welfare purposes. For example, a taxpayer may be entitled to claim a tax offset if a close family member receiving a disability support pension or invalidity service pension is a dependent (ATO 2022). The Australian Government can also provide support with tax and super obligations for people experiencing personal crisis – including experiencing family and domestic violence or serious financial hardship (ATO 2021). Governments at all levels, and some non-government organisations, also issue concession and health care cards to eligible Australians for certain discounts (Services Australia 2022).

## **Welfare services**

Welfare services are provided to people and families of widely differing ages and social and economic circumstances. Services aim to encourage participation and independence and can help enhance a person's wellbeing (DSS 2022). As well as helping people and families directly, services may also indirectly help by, for example, supporting a diverse and harmonious society.

Services respond to need across a person's life. The need and demand for welfare services are mediated by informal supports and the availability of other services at community or individual levels. For example, programs that help people with disability to maintain their housing tenancy can lead to more secure long-term housing arrangements and greater independence. This lessens the demand for informal and other formal support services.

Examples of welfare services include:

- employment services to help people secure and maintain stable employment
- disability services to help people with disability and their carers participate in society
- aged care services to help elderly people with their living arrangements
- child protection services to assist vulnerable children
- youth justice services to support young people to rehabilitate and reintegrate into the community
- family support services to support with family, domestic and sexual violence circumstances
- homelessness services to provide people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with support and accommodation
- social housing to provide people with low incomes and housing need with affordable and secure housing.

## Non-government organisations

In many cases, profit or not-for-profit non-government organisations (NGOs) deliver services. These NGOs are predominantly 'approved providers', meaning they have been formally authorised, contracted and/or funded by government to provide particular services. Further, service delivery can be shared between NGOs and local governments or state and territory governments.

## Measuring wellbeing

Good data about welfare and wellbeing are important for understanding how different factors interact and affect a person's life. Data at the national, community, service and individual level can provide a strong evidence base, help measure progress over time, and enable better policies and decision making for improved outcomes for Australians. For example, understanding how individuals engage with and navigate welfare services can help those responsible for planning, implementing, delivering and evaluating policies and programs.

Certain elements of wellbeing can be particularly difficult to measure (for example, happiness, confidence and fair treatment). Other factors that shape wellbeing tend to be easier to measure. As such, a range of indicators can be used to provide insights on, and track changes in, wellbeing more broadly and at the national level. Some frequently measured wellbeing outcomes include:

- housing status
- labour force participation
- education
- perception of safety in the community
- disposable income and
- community engagement.

A number of frameworks for measuring welfare and wellbeing exist, including:

- The Treasury's *Measuring what matters: Australia's first wellbeing framework* (Treasury 2023)
- the Australian Capital Territory Wellbeing Framework (ACT Government 2020)
- New Zealand Treasury's Living Standards Framework (New Zealand Treasury 2022)
- Stats NZ's Indicators Aotearoa framework (Stats NZ 2022)
- the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's wellbeing framework and biennial *How's Life?* report (OECD 2020).

## Measuring what matters

In July 2023, the Australian Government released the [Measuring what matters statement](#) (*Measuring what matters*). *Measuring what matters* 'is the first iteration of Australia's national wellbeing framework' (Treasury 2023). Its purpose is to help understand how



Australia is tracking and give a better foundation for understanding Australia's economy and society in ways that will support policy making at all levels (Treasury 2023).

*Measuring what matters* presents a framework tailored to the Australian context for measuring what matters to, and for, Australians. It was informed by extensive research and consultation to reflect what matters to Australians and to identify the best available indicators of Australia's wellbeing, as outlined in submissions, community meetings and research, and to embed learnings from the experience of international approaches (Treasury 2023). The consultation process informed the framework with 5 wellbeing themes:

- **Healthy:** A society in which people feel well and are in good physical and mental health, can access services when they need, and have the information they require to take action to improve their health.
- **Secure:** A society where people live peacefully, feel safe, have financial security and access to housing.
- **Sustainable:** A society that sustainably uses natural and financial resources, protects and repairs the environment and builds resilience to combat challenges.
- **Cohesive:** A society that supports connections with family, friends and the community, values diversity, and promotes belonging and culture.
- **Prosperous:** A society that has a dynamic, strong economy, invests in people's skills and education, and provides broad opportunities for employment and well-paid, secure jobs (Treasury 2023).

The 5 themes are supported by 50 key indicators, to monitor and track progress, which will be updated over time. The indicators have been selected for having consistent, comparable and reliable data, including logical alignment with available indicators already captured through existing strategies and plans. The indicators are available on an online [dashboard](#) which will be updated annually (Treasury 2023).

The *Measuring what matters* framework will be refined over time with ongoing engagement. For more information, see The Treasury [website](#).

The AIHW has presented statistics about the performance of Australia's welfare system in *Australia's welfare* reports since 1993, and *Australia's welfare* reports have included reporting on welfare indicators since 2003, with evolutions to the indicators over time – including the addition of a 'wellbeing' domain and indicators in 2017. The AIHW last updated it's Australia's welfare indicators in 2021. In light of the development of this national wellbeing framework by The Treasury, *Australia's welfare 2023* does not include an indicator set. Rather, [Australia's welfare 2023](#) complements *Measuring what matters* by bringing together statistics and contextual information to present a holistic, contemporary picture of the wellbeing of Australians and of the role of government services.

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on income support and welfare services, see the following topics at [Australia's welfare: topic summaries](#):

- Housing
- Employment and income
- Social support
- Justice and safety.

Also visit:

- [Department of Social Services](#)
- [Services Australia](#)
- [The Treasury – Measuring what matters.](#)

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# Welfare expenditure

Find the most recent version of this information at:  
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/welfare-expenditure>

## On this page

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Australia's welfare spending ranking across OECD countries

Where do I go for more information?

Welfare spending is generally directed toward measures that aim to improve the social and economic wellbeing of the population. It is distinct from health spending in that it focuses on measures such as income support and social and economic employment-related programs and services (for example, unemployment relief and family and relationships services).

See the [AIHW's Health expenditure Australia series](#) for more information on health spending.

Both the Australian Government and the state and territory governments contribute to welfare spending, as do non-government organisations and individuals. The Australian Government primarily contributes through cash, which includes family allowances, rent assistance, unemployment benefits and pensions; it also contributes to certain welfare services. The states and territories focus on providing welfare services with less focus on direct payments.

Data on welfare spending that is funded by non-government sources (for example, where a welfare service is funded by donations or fees rather than through government funding) are not readily available in Australia and are not included here.

See [Philanthropy and charitable giving](#) for information on non-government donations.

## Government welfare expenditure in Australia

In 2021–22, government spending on welfare services and payments was \$212.4 billion. The Australian Government funded most of this amount (88% or \$186.2 billion), with the remaining 12% funded by state and territory governments.

## About welfare expenditure data

Where possible, welfare spending estimates have been developed for consistency with the [AIHW's Welfare expenditure Australia](#) series of publications. This ensures trend data are consistent.

### Constant prices and 'real terms'

Spending is reported in constant prices (that is, adjusted for inflation) except where noted. The use of constant price estimates indicates what the equivalent spending would have been had 2021–22 prices applied in all years, as it removes the inflation effect. The phrase 'real terms' is also used to describe spending in constant prices. On this page:

- constant price estimates for spending have been derived using deflators produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
- the Consumer Price Index was used as the deflator for cash payments, while the government final consumption expenditure implicit price deflator was used for welfare services and tax concessions.

### Comparability with other welfare spending estimates

The Youth Allowance (Students), Austudy and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Study Assistance Scheme (ABSTUDY) are excluded from the welfare spending estimates presented on this page since these programs provide financial assistance for students and apprentices and are considered here as education spending. As a consequence, these estimates are not comparable with figures published elsewhere (such as in the Treasury Final Budget Outcome).

### State and territory welfare expenditure

The most recent welfare expenditure data available for state and territory governments are for the 2015–16 financial year, as published in the [2017 Indigenous expenditure report](#) (Productivity Commission 2017), which includes data for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people and non-Indigenous welfare service expenditure. State and territory data were estimated for 2020–21 to 2021–22 using available trend data from the Indigenous expenditure report and from Government finance statistics (GFS) 2021–22, in which the Classification of the Functions of Government – Australia (COFOG-A) was used (ABS 2015, 2023). In previous reports, the GFS was based on the older Government Purpose Classification (ABS 2005). Hence, the estimated time series data on this page are not fully comparable to previously released data. Any additional spending on welfare services by the states and territories related to the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) are also not visible in these data.

### Sources of data

Data are sourced from the welfare expenditure dataset of the AIHW, which is, in turn, sourced from publicly available data from:

- the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
- the departments of Education, Skills and Employment; Health and Aged Care; Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C); Social Services; the Treasury; Veterans' Affairs
- the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
- the Productivity Commission.

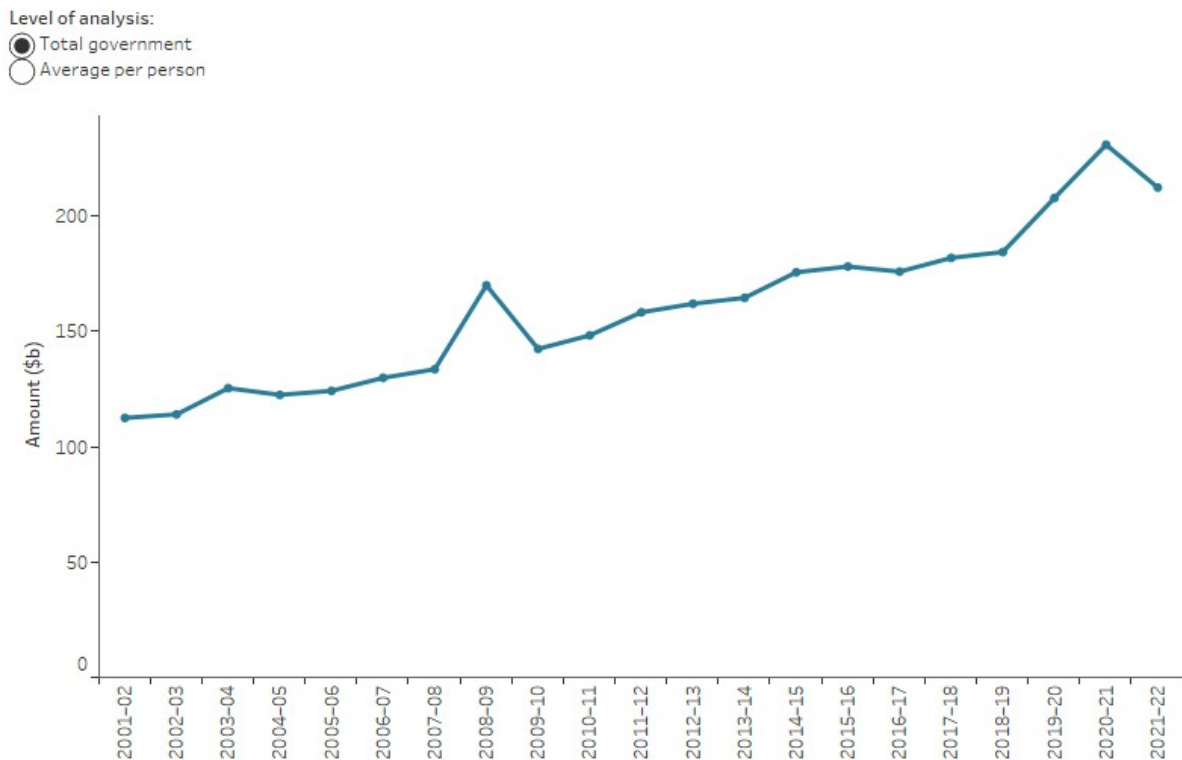
Data for 2020–21 and 2021–22 are extracted from the corresponding reports of these organisations (ABS 2023; Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2022, 2023; Department of Health and Aged Care 2022, 2023; Department of the Treasury 2023; Department of Social Services 2022a, 2023; Department of Veterans' Affairs 2022, 2023; NDIA 2023; PM&C 2022, 2023; Productivity Commission 2023).

## Trends in welfare spending

In 2021–22, the Australian and state and territory governments spent \$212.4 billion on welfare. In real terms (that is, adjusted for inflation), this was \$18.6 billion less than in 2020–21 as many of the pandemic response measures ceased.

Before 2019–20, welfare spending in Australia had grown with modest rates of 3.4% in 2017–18 and 1.4% in 2018–19, then reached growth rates in 2019–20 and 2020–21 of 12.7% and 11.1% respectively (Figure 1). Total welfare expenditure decreased 8.0% in 2021–22 in real terms. However, the 2021–22 value was still above the long-term trend (Figure 2).

**Figure 1: Total government welfare expenditure in Australia, constant prices, 2001–02 to 2021–22**

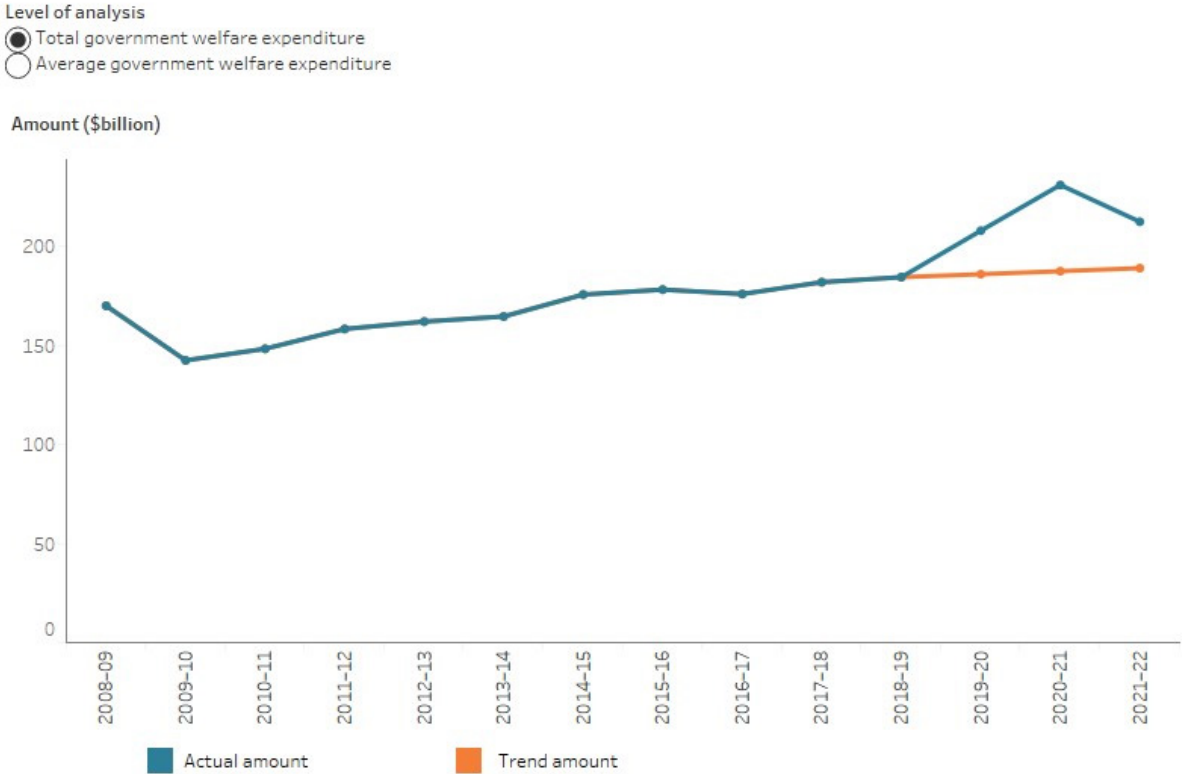


<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Constant price estimates are expressed in 2021–22 prices.

Source: AIHW welfare expenditure database.

**Figure 2: Government welfare spending, constant prices, during the COVID-19 pandemic (2019–20 to 2021–22) compared with the pre-pandemic period**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Notes:

1. Actual amount is the welfare spending in 2021–22 prices.
2. Trend amount is the welfare spending in 2021–22 prices, following the trend of the previous 10-year period (assuming the average annual growth rate for the previous 10-year period remains the same for 2019–20 to 2021–22).

Source: AIHW welfare expenditure database.

The main driver of the decrease in welfare spending in 2021–22 was the phasing out of the economic measures that the Australian Government implemented in 2019–20 and 2020–21 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

See [Economic response to COVID-19](#).

Before these COVID-19 measures, welfare spending in Australia had grown at a similar pace to population growth, with an upward trend and then real spending per person fluctuating around \$7,300 since 2017–18. Then, during the period 2019–20 to 2020–21, real spending per person increased by around 11% per year, as population growth slowed, to achieve \$8,146 per person in 2019–20 and \$9,010 in 2020–21 (Figure 1). However, this annual welfare spending per capita decreased by 8.5% to \$8,245 in 2021–22 in real terms because of the phase out of COVID-19 measures. The government welfare spending per capita in 2021–22 was still higher than the 10-year historical trend before the pandemic (between 2008–09 to 2018–19) (Figure 2).



The welfare spending referred to on this page relates to spending across the entire population and not spending per eligible person in particular programs or per benefit recipient. This more detailed analysis is not included here.

## **COVID-19 economic response measures**

The economic measures mentioned on this page are those which can be related to welfare expenditure data up to the year 2021–22. Note that the COVID-19 Disaster Payment and Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment are outside the scope of this report since these are considered as emergency/crisis payments rather than income support payments. The report does not include the JobKeeper payment since it is wage subsidy for business rather than welfare spending. This page also does not include COVID-19 related spending by other Australian Government agencies, which might fall into a broader scheme [Economic response to COVID-19](#).

During 2020–21 and 2021–22, the following economic measures were implemented to support people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Economic support payments**

In addition to the one-off economic support payment (ESP) in March 2020, the Government provided 3 ESPs to recipients of social security and veteran payments and family tax benefits, as well as to holders of a pensioner concession card or a Commonwealth senior health card during 2020–21 and 2021–22. Payments of \$750 were made in July 2020 and 2 additional ESPs of \$250 each from 30 November 2020 and 1 March 2021.

### **Coronavirus Supplement**

From 27 April 2020, eligible income support recipients of the JobSeeker Payment, Parenting Payment, Partner Allowance, Widow Allowance, Youth Allowance (Other) and Special Benefit received the supplement of \$550 per fortnight, valid to 24 September 2020. From 25 September 2020, the supplement was reduced to \$250 per fortnight, then was \$150 per fortnight from 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021.

The Government made several temporary changes to the JobSeeker Payment which increased the number of recipients. These changes included:

- expanding eligibility to provide access to the payment by sole traders and other self-employed people, permanent employees who have been stood down or who lost their job, and people who are caring for someone affected by COVID-19
- waiving the assets test
- waiving the ordinary waiting period, liquid assets waiting period, newly arrived residents waiting period and the seasonal workers preclusion period
- making the partner income test more generous.

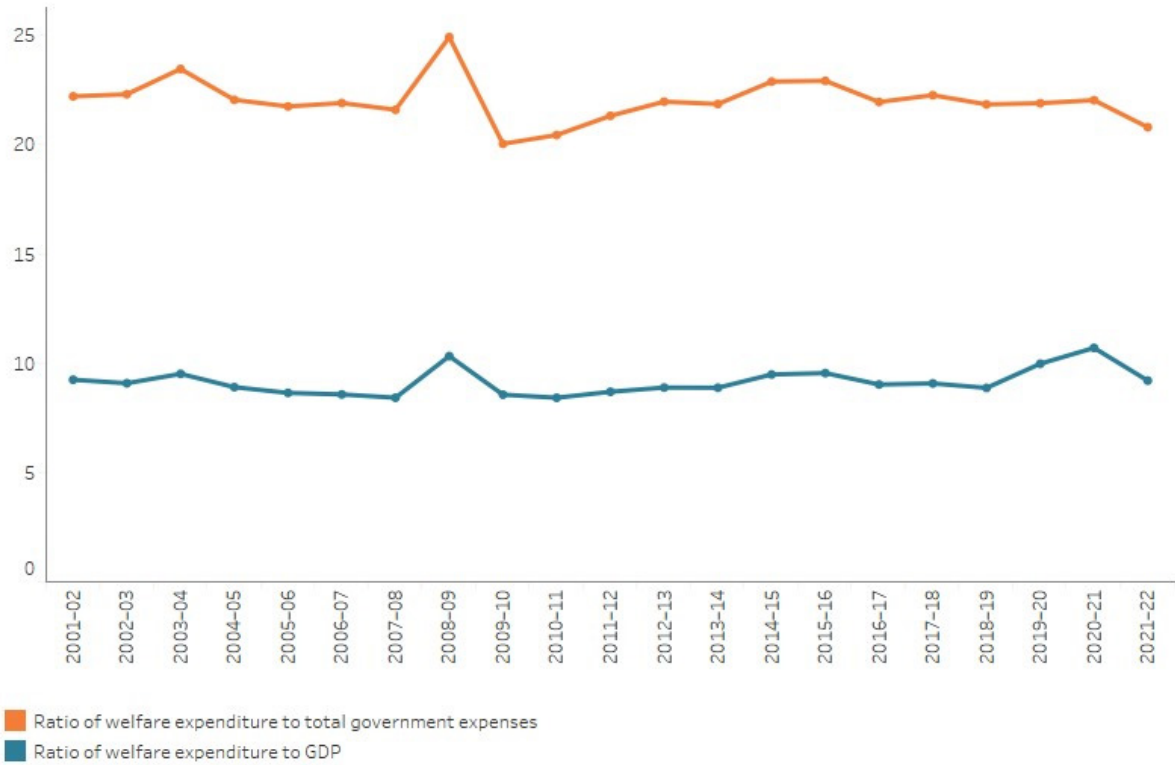
From 1 April 2021, the base rate of the JobSeeker Payment, Parenting Payment, Youth Allowance (Other) and Special Benefit increased by \$50 per fortnight, while the income free area that applied to JobSeeker Payment, Parenting Payment (partnered) and Youth Allowance (Other) was increased to \$150 per fortnight.

In terms of understanding the proportion of community resources dedicated toward welfare issues, it can be useful to consider a number of comparators over time. In particular:

- Comparing welfare spending to overall economic activity indicates how much of the economy is dedicated to welfare issues.
- Comparing to total government spending indicates how much government resources are being dedicated to welfare issues.

As a proportion of overall economic activity, government welfare spending reduced to 8.4% during the 6 years to 2007–08 before going up to 10.3% in 2008–09 during the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). After that, the ratio of welfare spending to gross domestic product (GDP) continued to decrease in the years prior to 2019–20, declining from 9.5% of GDP in 2015–16 to 8.9% in 2018–19. Then, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it grew to 10% and 10.7% of GDP in 2019–20 and 2020–21, respectively. The ratio in 2020–21 was the highest ratio (10.7%) over the last decades up to 2021–22, even higher than that in 2008–09 (10.3%) in the GFC period (Figure 3). However, the ratio of government welfare spending to GDP reduced to 9.2% in 2021–22.

**Figure 1: Ratio of government welfare expenditure to government expenses and GDP, 2001–02 to 2021–22**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: AIHW welfare expenditure database, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2022, 2023).

Other than during the GFC, the proportion of government spending dedicated to welfare has remained relatively stable over the past two decades at around 21–22%. This

proportion reached its lowest levels in the years following the GFC, during which there was a sharp increase in government welfare spending.

## Types of welfare spending

Total amount spent on welfare in 2021–22 was made up of \$124.5 billion (59%) in cash payments (see inclusions below), \$85.1 billion (40%) in welfare services and \$2.8 billion (1%) in departmental administration costs.

The total welfare spending, in real terms, by governments on cash payments had slightly declined in the years before 2019–20, from \$129.3 billion in 2015–16 to \$122.3 billion in 2018–19, but it increased by 13% in 2019–20 and 9.2% in 2020–21 (Figure 4). However, this spending on cash payments declined significantly by 18% in 2021–22. This significant decrease was mostly due to a number of the Australian Government cash payment programmes for income support ending in 2021–22. See also [Income and income support](#).

Once again it is noteworthy that the cash payments by the Australian Government were still above the 10-year historical trend before the pandemic (2008–09 to 2018–19; Figure 5).

In 2021–22, the estimated \$124.5 billion of cash payments by the Australian Government was allocated into these typical welfare programmes:

- Age Pension (\$51.1 billion, accounted for 41%)
- Family Tax Benefit (\$15.7 billion, 13%)
- Disability Support Payment (\$18.3 billion, 15%)
- Carer Allowance/Payment (\$9.6 billion, 7.7%)
- JobSeeker Payment (\$14.8 billion, 11.9%).

### Which cash payments are included?

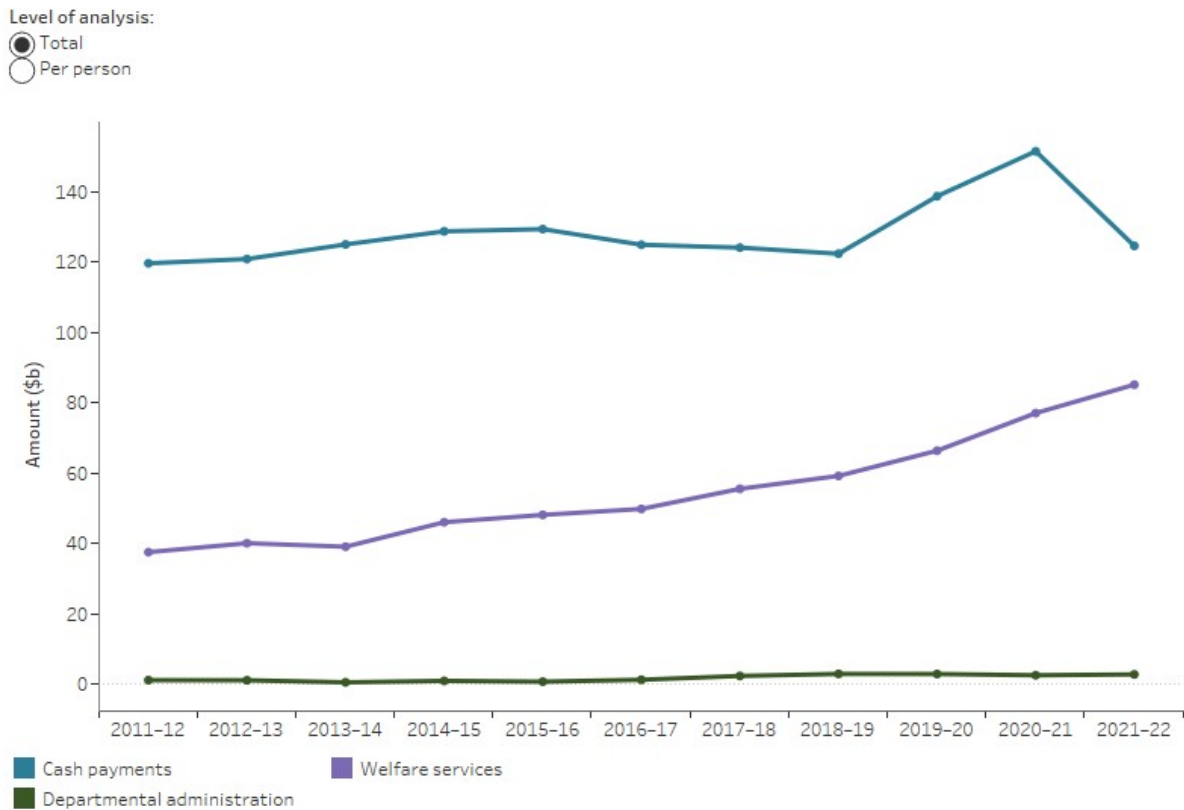
The cash payments mentioned on this page are those provided by the Australian Government to assist older people, people with disability, people who provide care for others, families with children, war veterans and their families, and people who are unemployed.

The estimates of cash payments present expenditure by the Australian Government, including the programmes such as Age Pension, Family Tax Benefit, Disability Support Pension and Carer Allowance/Payment, and the JobSeeker Payment (previously called Newstart Allowance). The JobKeeper payment from March 2020 to March 2021 is not included in the estimates as it was a wage subsidy for businesses rather than a welfare payment for individuals and households.

To maintain comparability over time, the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate are included in the estimates of welfare services expenditure (rather than cash payments) since, historically, these payments were paid to the service providers rather than directly to households.

Also, to maintain comparability over time, Youth Allowance (Students), Austudy and ABSTUDY are not included in the estimates on this page, as mentioned earlier.

**Figure 4: Government welfare expenditure by types of spending, constant prices, 2011–12 to 2021–22**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

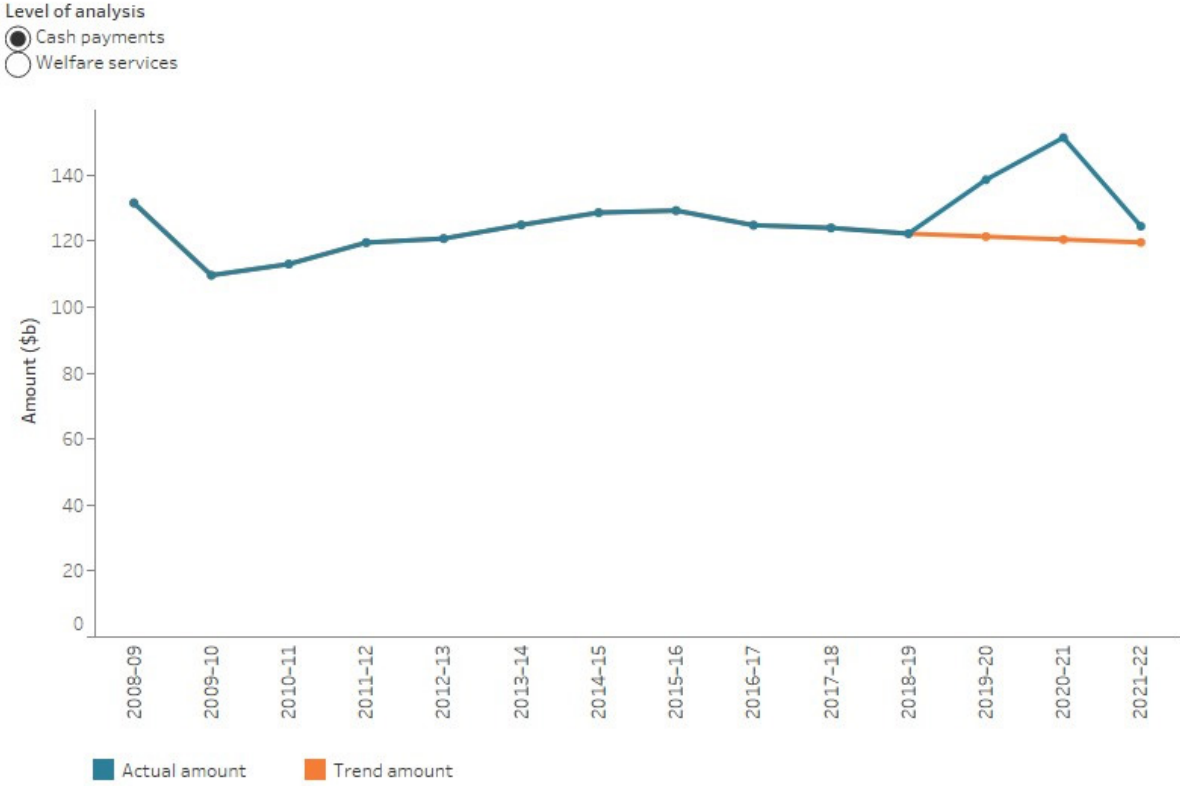
Note: Constant price estimates are expressed in 2021–22 prices.

Source: AIHW welfare expenditure database.

In contrast to cash payments, spending on welfare services has grown steadily over several decades, with the NDIS having a particular impact in recent years on spending on disability services.

In 2021–22, the total amount spent by governments on welfare services was estimated at \$85.1 billion, representing a \$8.1 billion real increase (10.5%) from 2020–21 (Figure 4). Note that this growth in 2021–22 was above the 10-year historical trend before the pandemic (2008–09 to 2018–19; Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Government welfare expenditure by types of spending, constant prices, during the COVID-19 pandemic (2019–20 to 2021–22) compared with the pre-pandemic period**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes:**

- 1. Actual amount is the welfare spending in 2021–22 prices.
- 2. Trend amount is the welfare spending in 2021–22 prices, following the trend of the previous 10-year period (assuming the average annual growth rate for the previous 10-year period remains the same for 2019–20 to 2021–22).

Source: AIHW welfare expenditure database.

The estimates for welfare services spending mentioned on this page include both direct government services and government funding to non-government community service organisations that provide welfare services.

**Which welfare services are included?**

Welfare services encompass a range of Australian and state and territory government services and programs to support and assist people directly and the community – such as family support services, youth programs, childcare services, services for older people and services for people with disability.

Welfare services expenditure presented on this page is reported for the target groups specified in the COFOG-A (ABS 2015) for the provision of social protection as services

provided to individual persons and households, and as services provided on a collective basis:

- welfare services for family and children; for example, youth support services
- welfare services for the aged; for example, home and community care services
- welfare services for people with disability; for example, personal assistance
- welfare services not elsewhere classified (ABS 2015).

Welfare spending as defined according to these 4 target groups does not necessarily include all government spending on services that may have a welfare benefit. For example, some programs relevant to people with disability that might be considered welfare services are in the COFOG-A categories of education, health, or housing. Employment services are not included. Australian Government and state and territory governments funding for welfare services for people with disability under the NDIS are included on this page.

## Non-government community service organisations

Both the Australian and state and territory governments indirectly provide welfare services through funding non-government organisations (NGOs) to deliver services. The NGO sector also contributes some welfare services expenditure from its own sources, including fees charged to individuals and through donations.

Government funding to non-government community service organisations (NGCSOs) is included in welfare services expenditure. NGCSO expenditure that comes through fees paid by clients or from the NGCSOs' own sources, such as fundraising, is not included, as comparable data on the sources of these funds are not readily available.

See [Philanthropy and charitable giving](#) for information on non-government donations.

## Groups of welfare benefit recipients

In 2021–22, the estimated \$212.4 billion of government welfare spending was distributed across these 4 groups of welfare benefit recipients:

- 39% (\$82.9 billion) for eligible people aged 65 and over
- 30% (\$63.2 billion) for people with disability
- 18% (\$37.4 billion) for families and children
- 7.5% (\$15.9 billion) for unemployed people (Figure 6).

The remaining 6.2%, or \$13.1 billion, was for a range of groups including \$2.3 billion in payments specific to First Nations people, and those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

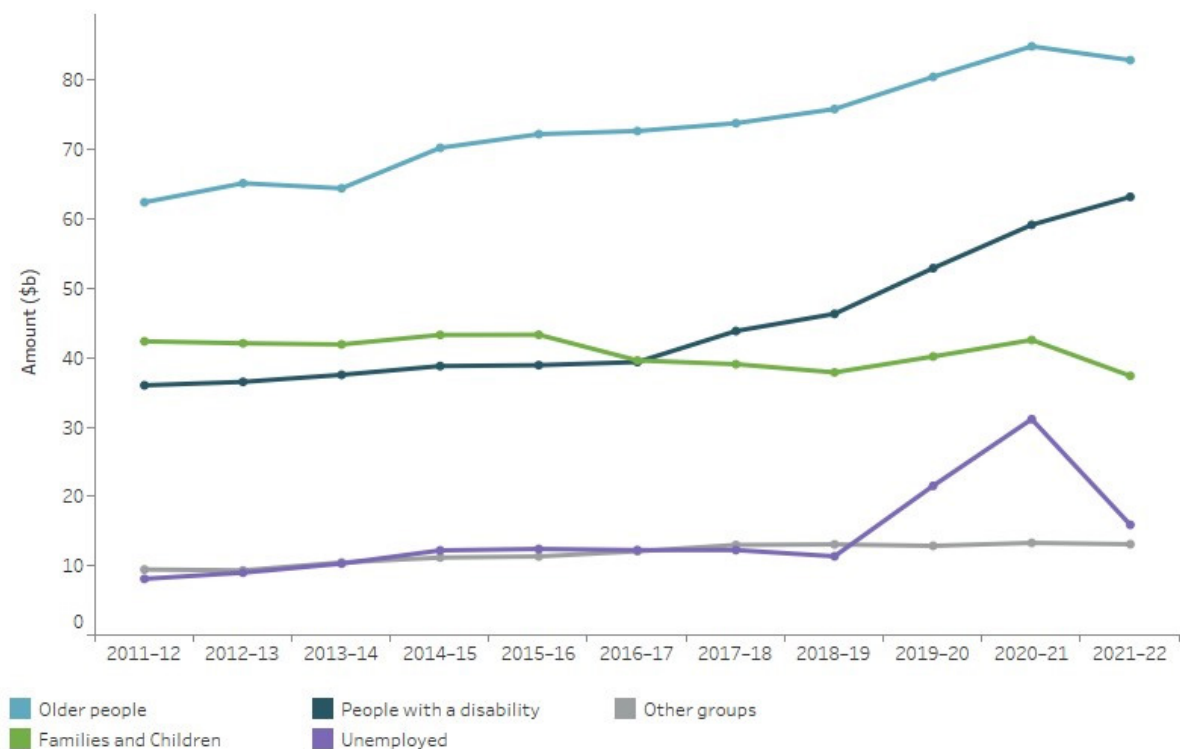
The 8% decrease in government welfare spending between 2020–21 and 2021–22 can be attributed to declines in spending for:

- unemployed people (decreased by \$15.2 billion, largely related to a decrease in unemployment related income support payments caused by fewer number of eligible recipients)
- families and children (decreased by \$5.2 billion, largely related to decreases in Family Tax Benefits and Parenting Payments)
- people eligible for the aged pension (decreased by \$2.0 billion, largely related to the decline in the number of Age Pension recipients after the increases in the eligibility age on 1 July 2021)
- Other groups (\$0.2 billion).

See [Income support for older Australians](#), [Employment and unemployment](#), [Income and income support](#) for further information.

Spending on people with disability increased by \$4.0 billion between 2020–21 and 2021–22 (Figure 6).

**Figure 2: Government welfare expenditure by groups of welfare benefit recipients, constant prices, 2011–12 to 2021–22**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Constant price estimates are expressed in 2021–22 prices.

Source: AIHW welfare expenditure database.

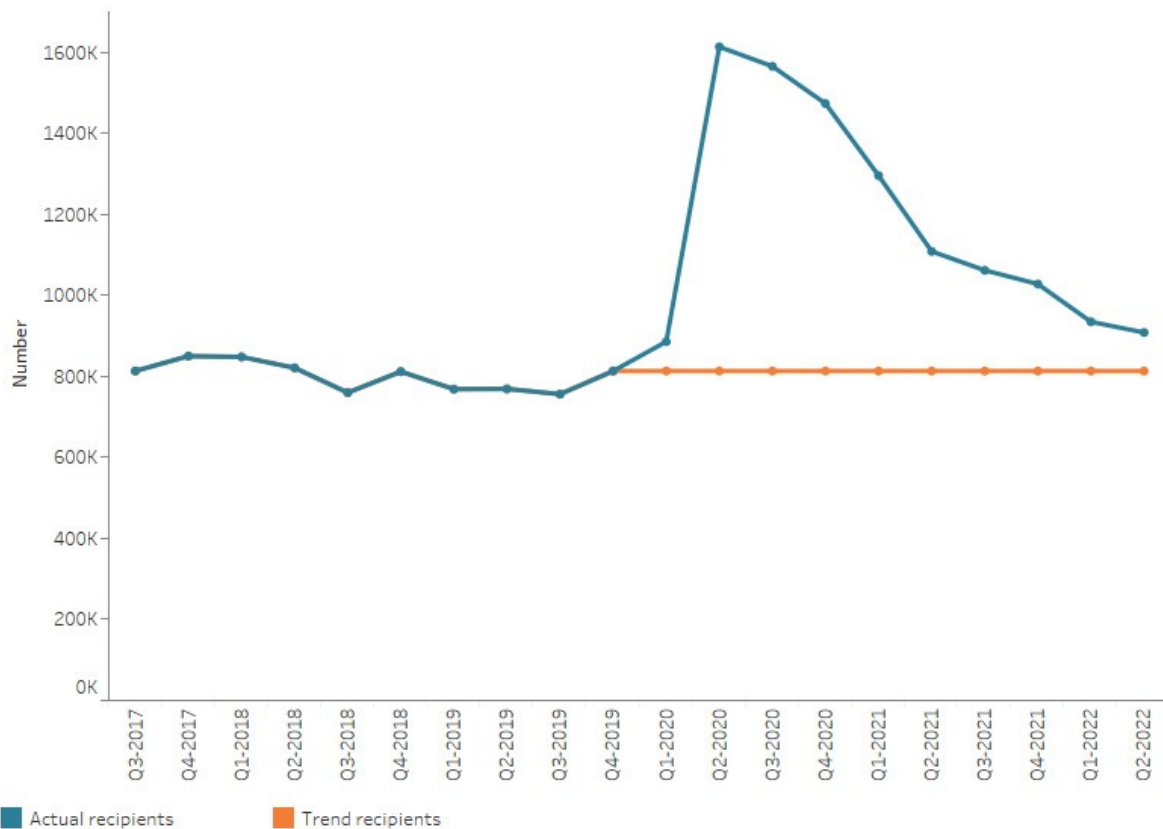


## Unemployed people

Total unemployment related income support payments had declined prior to the pandemic, dropping from \$12.2 billion in 2017–18 to \$11.3 billion in 2018–19. This then increased rapidly to \$21.5 billion in 2019–20 and \$31.1 billion in 2020–21, as the Australian Government’s COVID-19 economic response measures took effect and there was an increase in the number of eligible recipients of payments (DSS 2022b). This decreased remarkably to \$15.9 billion in 2021–22 but was still well above pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 7 shows a large increase in the number of welfare benefit recipients for eligible unemployed people at the commencement of the pandemic, which has been steadily reducing but remains above pre-pandemic numbers (DSS 2022b).

**Figure 3: Number of welfare benefit recipients for eligible unemployed persons, quarter 3 2017 to quarter 2 2022, compared with the pre-pandemic period**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Notes:

1. Actual recipients are the number of welfare benefit recipients of JobSeeker Payments and Youth Allowance (Other).
2. Trend recipients are the number of recipients, following the trend of the previous 10-quarters (assuming the average quarterly growth rate for the previous 10-quarter period remains the same for quarter 4-2019 to quarter 2-2022).

Source: DSS payment demographic (DSS 2022b).

## People with a disability

In 2021–22, the total amount spent for people with disability was \$63.2 billion – an increase of 6.8% (\$4.0 billion) from 2020–21 (in real terms). Between 2018–19 and 2021–22, spending on people with disability increased at an annual average rate of 10.9%, which is higher than the average over the decade since 2011–12 (5.8%). This upward trend appears to be mostly attributed to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) transitioning to the full scheme in all states and territories (except Western Australia) beginning in 2019–20 (DSS 2020). In 2021–22, the NDIS funded about \$29.6 billion for people with disability – \$19.6 billion by the Australian Government and \$10 billion by state and territory governments.

### The National Disability Insurance Scheme

The NDIS provides support for Australians with permanent and significant disability, and their families and carers. The Australian and state and territory governments jointly fund the NDIS through intergovernmental agreements.

See [Intergovernmental agreements](#) for more information.

#### Sources and bases of data

- Data for the Australian Government’s contribution to the NDIS for the period 2020–21 and 2021–22 is sourced from Department of Social Services reports.
- Data for state and territory governments over the trial and transition periods of the NDIS were based on the estimates of state and territory data, as described in About welfare expenditure data.
- Data for the full scheme periods are sourced from the NDIS intergovernmental agreements.
- Data for spending outside the NDIS scope are sourced from the Productivity Commission’s Report on Government Services (Productivity Commission 2023).

## Australia's welfare spending ranking across OECD countries

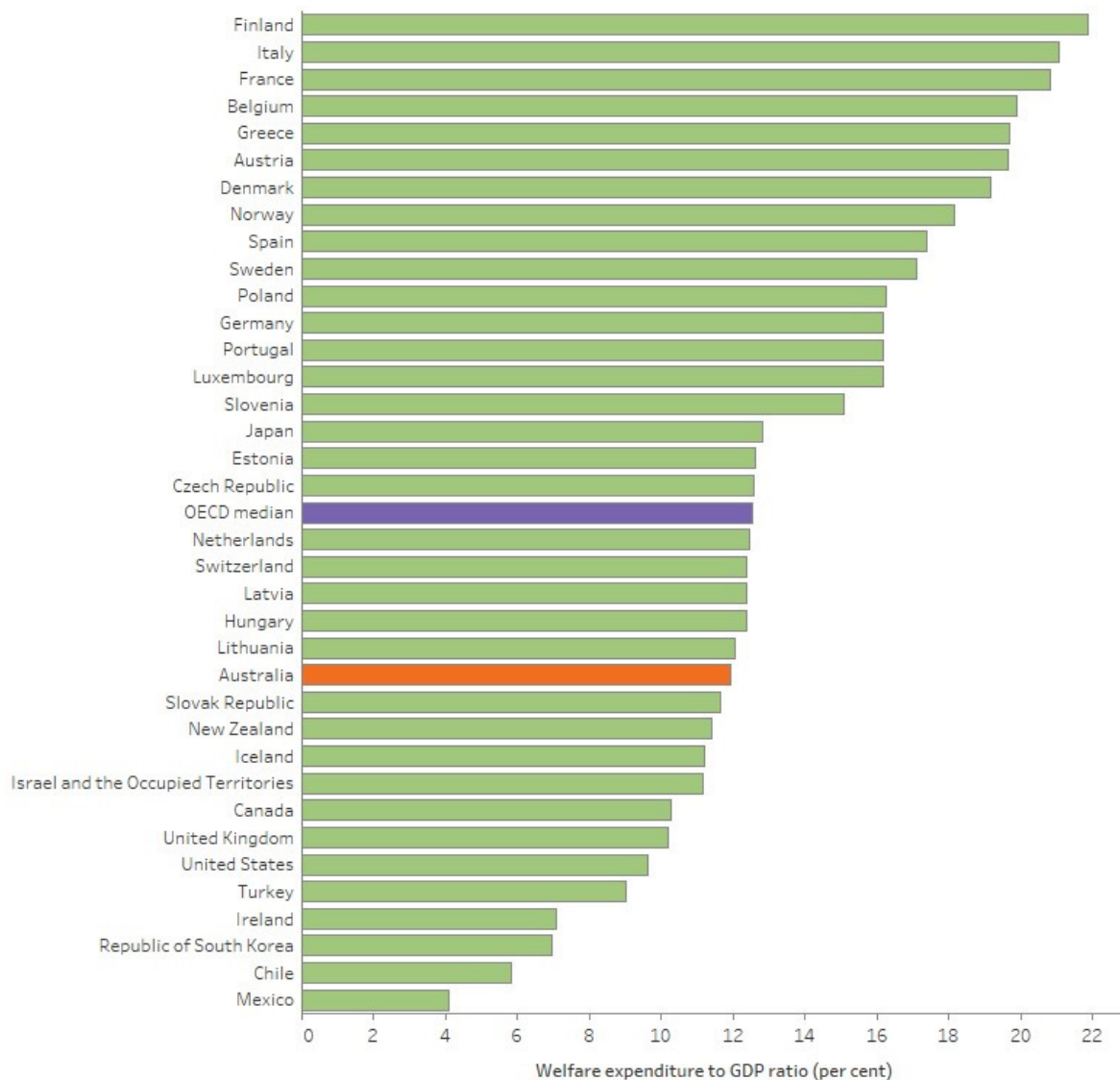
There are many difficulties in comparing welfare spending across countries. Social support structures in many countries are complex, and not necessarily comparable. Systems generally involve mixtures of:

- government and non-government funding arrangements – including programs funded directly by governments, tax-based systems, employer-focused schemes, and fee-for-service systems
- redistribution models – social support structures in some countries focus on redistribution between sections of the society at particular, but often differing, times. For example, in Australia, unemployment benefits transfer resources via the tax system from the employed to the unemployed. Other schemes act to redistribute resources over the life course (such as through savings and superannuation-based insurance)

- targeted versus non-targeted support arrangements – many countries use means-testing to target support, but do it in different ways, with different thresholds.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data for 2019 (the latest data available) show that welfare expenditure in Australia was 12% of GDP (using the OECD methods for calculating expenditure, which differ from those used for estimates elsewhere on this page). This figure of 12% was slightly lower than the OECD median of 12.5% (Figure 8) and puts Australia ranking 12<sup>th</sup> out of 36 OECD countries (OECD 2023). Please note that Australia’s welfare spending is generally more targeted with a broadly progressive effect than many other OECD countries.

**Figure 8: Welfare expenditure as a proportion of GDP, OECD countries, 2019**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes:**

- Comparable data are only available for 36 countries (excluding Columbia and Costa Rica) among 38 OECD nations.
- For comparison across OECD countries, health, active labour market and housing programs are excluded from OECD Social expenditure database.

Source: OECD Social expenditure database 2023.

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on welfare expenditure, see:

- [Welfare expenditure Australia 2005–06](#)
- [The health and welfare of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: 2015.](#)

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# Welfare workforce

Find the most recent version of this information at:  
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/welfare-workforce>

## On this page

Introduction

Welfare workforce overview

Increase in welfare workforce: disability and aged care industries and occupations  
Employment status, demographics, and educational attainment for the welfare workforce

Where do I go for more information?

The welfare workforce comprises individuals in paid employment who directly provide welfare-related services. These services are provided by a diverse range of public and private organizations and encompass various areas, including care in residential aged care facilities and counselling and social assistance for students in educational settings. It is important to note that medical and healthcare services, as well as hospitality, are not included in the welfare workforce. In general, a formal definition for the welfare workforce used here is mentioned in defining the welfare workforce.

This page provides a broad summary of the welfare workforce, including its size, growth, and structural changes from 2012 to 2022, as well as notable features in 2022. It also highlights which occupations and industries within the welfare workforce experienced significant changes in their workforce during the period of 2012–2022.

Volunteering is also an important part of the welfare workforce, with a significant proportion of welfare-related services provided by adult Australians in an unpaid capacity (25% in 2020 (ABS 2021)) participating in this workforce. Volunteering in welfare-related services is separately reported and is not discussed on this page. For more information on volunteering, please see [Volunteers](#) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [General Social Survey – summary results, Australia](#). Also see [Philanthropy and charitable donations](#) for more information on the volunteer workforce and voluntary financial contributions.

## Defining the welfare workforce

The welfare workforce is difficult to quantify and study, particularly due to diverse range of roles and sectors involved. Overlapping responsibilities between education, social, and community assistance settings, as well as the mobility of workers between settings, further create challenges. Additionally, there is a lack of dedicated data collection focus on this professional group. Given these limitations, the AIHW uses data from the [ABS Labour Force Survey](#) (ABS 2023) and identifies individuals working in specific

occupations and industries related to community services as the best approximation for the welfare workforce.

The AIHW derives estimates of the Australian welfare workforce, which encompasses individuals in community service occupations and working in community service industries. Community service occupations are defined from a group of 17 4-digit ANZSCO occupations, including age and disable carers, child carers and teachers in pre-school. Community service industries consist of a group of 4 3-digit ANZSIC industries: residential care services, childcare services, preschool education, and other social assistance services (see glossary).

This definition excludes some people in community service occupations who do not work in a community service industry. For example, a registered nurse working in a hospital would not be classified as part of the welfare workforce, though a registered nurse working in a residential aged care setting would be. Similarly, a teacher working in childcare or preschool would be included while a teacher working in a school would be excluded. According to the [classification of ABS](#), teachers in preschool education only include those in purely preschool units, not those in units where pre-primary school education is provided in conjunction with normal primary school education.

Data presented on this page are based on sample survey data from the ABS and may be subject to errors arising from sampling or non-sampling issues. For more information on sample sizes, please refer to the ABS [Labour Force, Australia methodology](#).

For more detailed information on the welfare workforce, including demographics, education attainment, earnings, and the impact of COVID-19, see 'Chapter 9 Welfare workforce: demand and supply' in [Australia's welfare 2023: data insights](#).

## Welfare workforce overview

In 2022, the welfare workforce accounted for 4.9% of total employment; up from 3.6% in 2012 (Figure 1). Over the decade from 2012 to 2022, the welfare workforce in Australia grew by 65%, reaching over 662,542 people (Table 1). During the same period, the total employment increased by 20%.

The welfare workforce's contribution to the growth of the total employment was approximately 11% for the period 2012 to 2022. The average annual growth rate of the welfare workforce was 5.1% while the growth rate of the total employment was 1.9% over this period. The highest growth level during this period was recorded in 2022, with an approximate increase of 7% (Figure 2).



**Table 1: Welfare workforce equals persons employed in community service occupations that are in community service industries, 2022**

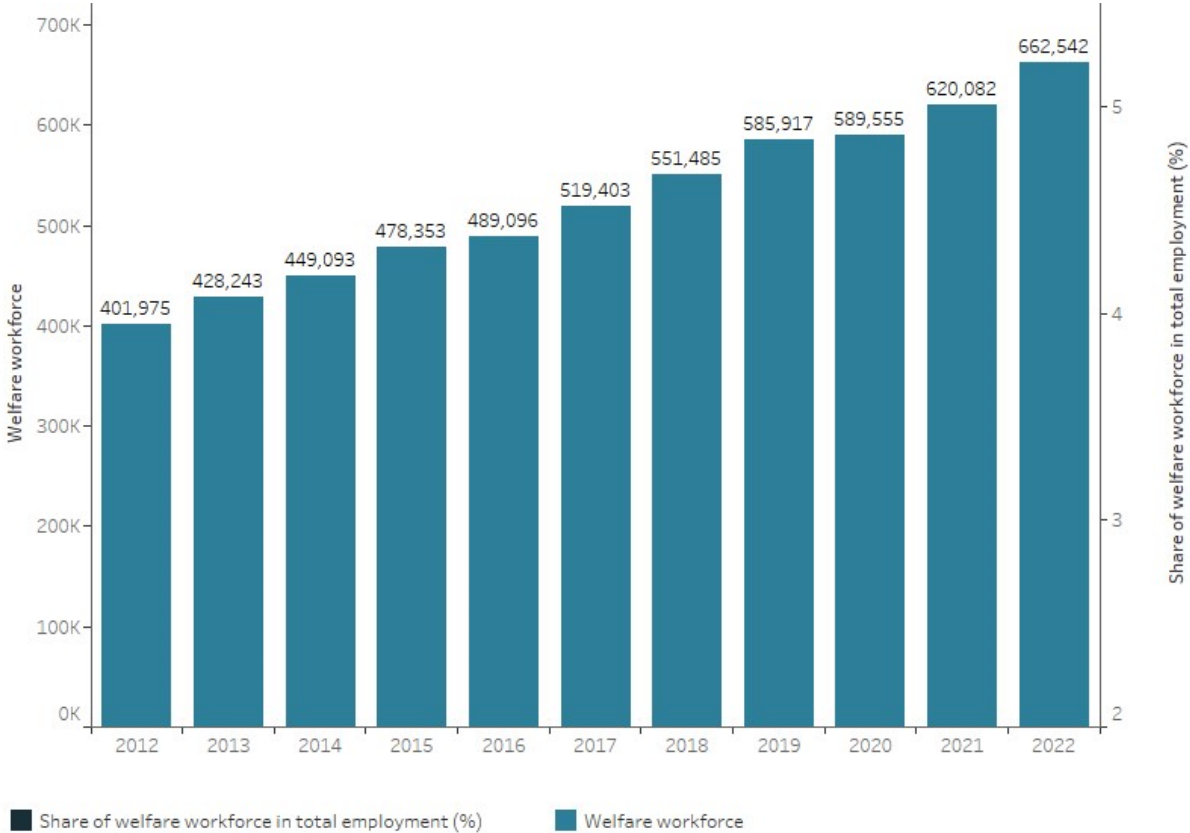
	Community service occupations	Other occupations	Total
<b>Community service industries</b>	662,542 people employed in community service occupations in community service industries (for example, child care workers in the child care services industry) <sup>(a)</sup>	242,704 people employed in other occupations in community service industries (for example, as administrators, accountants, tradespersons and labourers)	905,246
<b>Other industries</b>	621,673 people employed in community service occupations in other industries (for example, nurses working in hospitals and counsellors in the education industry)		
<b>Total</b>	1,284,215		

(a) People employed in community service occupations in community service industries (for example, childcare workers in the child care services industry) are considered to be the welfare workforce of Australia, for this page.

Note: Annual average of quarterly data from original series estimates.

Source: ABS 2023.

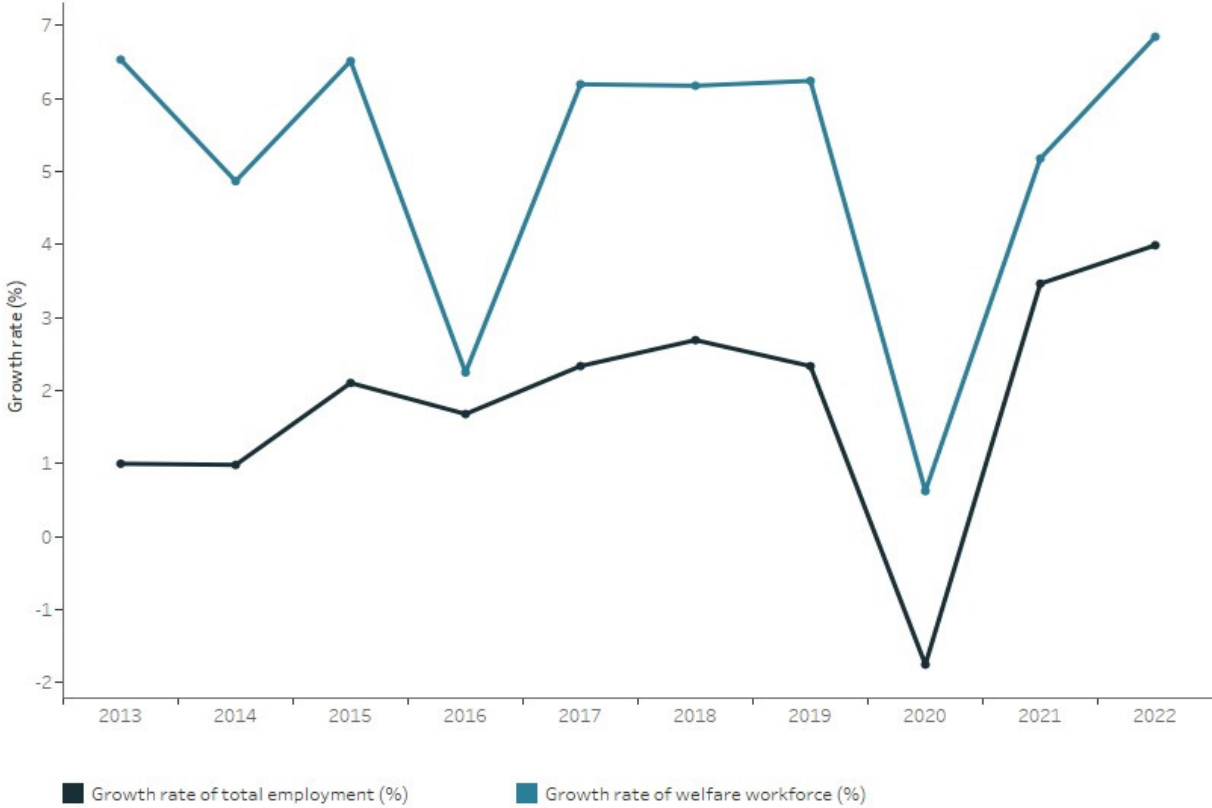
**Figure 1: Welfare workforce proportion, 2012 to 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: ABS 2023.

**Figure 2: Welfare workforce growth, 2013 to 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: ABS 2023.

## Increase in welfare workforce driven by disability support and aged care services

### Welfare workforce by industry

Changes in the structure of industries in the welfare workforce:

- The Other Social Assistance Services industry (ANZSIC-879), which includes disabilities and aged care services (excluding residential care services), continued to increase its share in the welfare workforce, reaching 45% in 2022 compared with 44% in the previous year. This industry has been the largest within the welfare workforce since 2018, when its share was 34%.
- The Residential Care Services industry, which was previously the largest with shares above 31% in previous years, began to decline from 2018 and reached 26% by 2022.
- The Preschool Education industry has been gradually increasing and had a share of 11% in 2022, which was one percentage point higher than in 2021, and 3 percentage points higher than in 2012.
- The Child Care Services industry experienced a decrease in recent years (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Share of industries in welfare workforce, 2012 to 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: refer to [glossary](#) for full list of inclusions for 'Other Social Assistance Services'.  
 Source: ABS 2023.

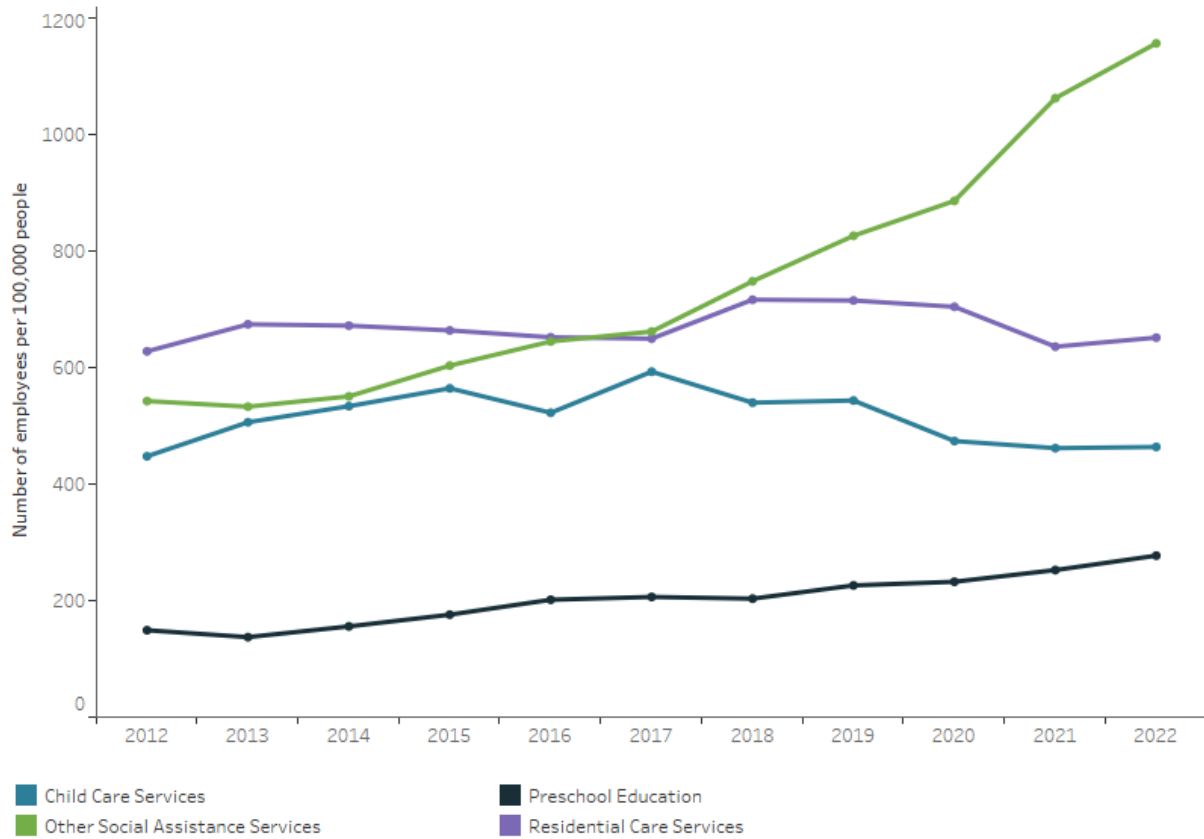
Changes in the number of employees of industries in the welfare workforce:

- The Other Social Assistance Services industry saw a significant increase in employment, with the number of employees in 2022 increasing by 113% from 2012 and 61% from 2018. The number of employees per 100,000 population increased from 543 in 2012, to 749 in 2018 and 1157 in 2022.
- Preschool Education saw an increase in the number of employees, with a rise of 86% from 2012 to 2022, or from 149 employees per 100,000 population to 277 employees, respectively.
- The number of employees per 100,000 population in the Child Care Services and Residential Care Services industries has decreased in recent years. In 2022, these industries had 464 and 652 employees per 100,000 population, respectively. Although these numbers were slightly higher compared to their respective levels of 462 and 636 in 2021, they remained lower than the peak levels observed in previous years, 593 in 2017 for Child Care Services and 717 in 2018 for Residential Care Services (Figure 4).

This decline can be attributed to a decrease in the overall number of employees within these industries. Specifically, the number of employees in the Child Care Services industry decreased from over 145,900 in 2017 to over 120,500 in 2022. Similarly, the

number of employees in the Residential Care Services industry decreased from over 178,900 in 2018 to over 169,300 in 2022.

**Figure 4: Welfare workforce per 100,000 population for industries, 2012 to 2022**



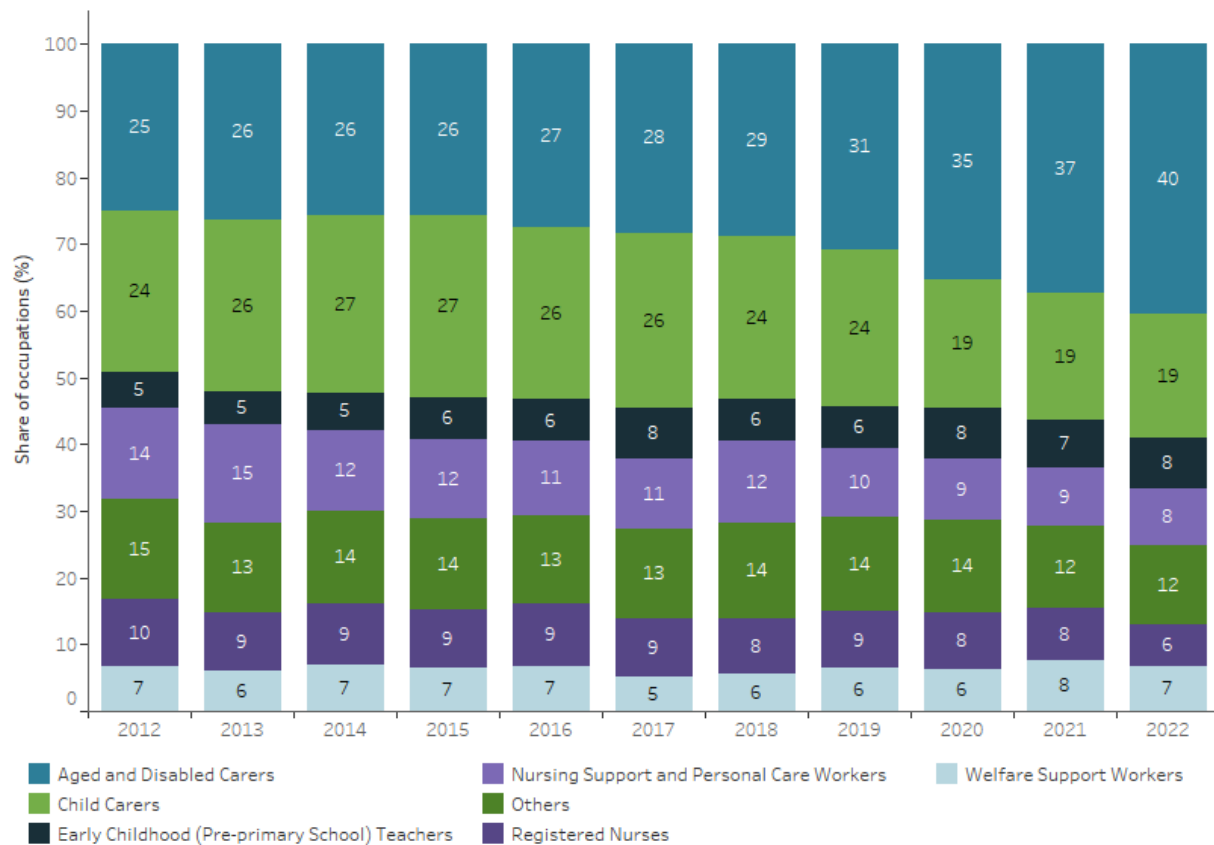
Source: ABS 2023.

## Welfare workforce by occupation

Changes in the structure of occupations in the welfare workforce:

- In 2022, the occupation structure of the welfare workforce continued to shift towards the Aged and Disabled Carers occupation (ANZSCO-4231). The proportion of employees in this occupation increased to 40% of the welfare workforce, up from 37% in 2021 and 25% in 2012. The Aged and Disabled Carers' share of the welfare workforce began to expand in 2019 when it was at 31%.
- In contrast, the Child Carers occupation had shares almost similar to that of the Aged and Disabled Carers before 2018, but its share has since decreased. As of 2022, the Child Carers' share was 19%, less than half of the Aged and Disabled Carers' share.
- Among occupations with smaller shares, only Early Childhood Teachers saw an increasing trend in recent years, with a share of 8% in 2022 (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Share of occupations in welfare workforce, 2012 to 2022**



Note: "Others" represents a combination of occupations with relatively small shares in the welfare workforce. These include Counsellors; Enrolled and Mothercraft Nurses; Other Community Service Occupations; Psychologists; Social Workers; and Welfare, Recreation and Community Arts Workers.

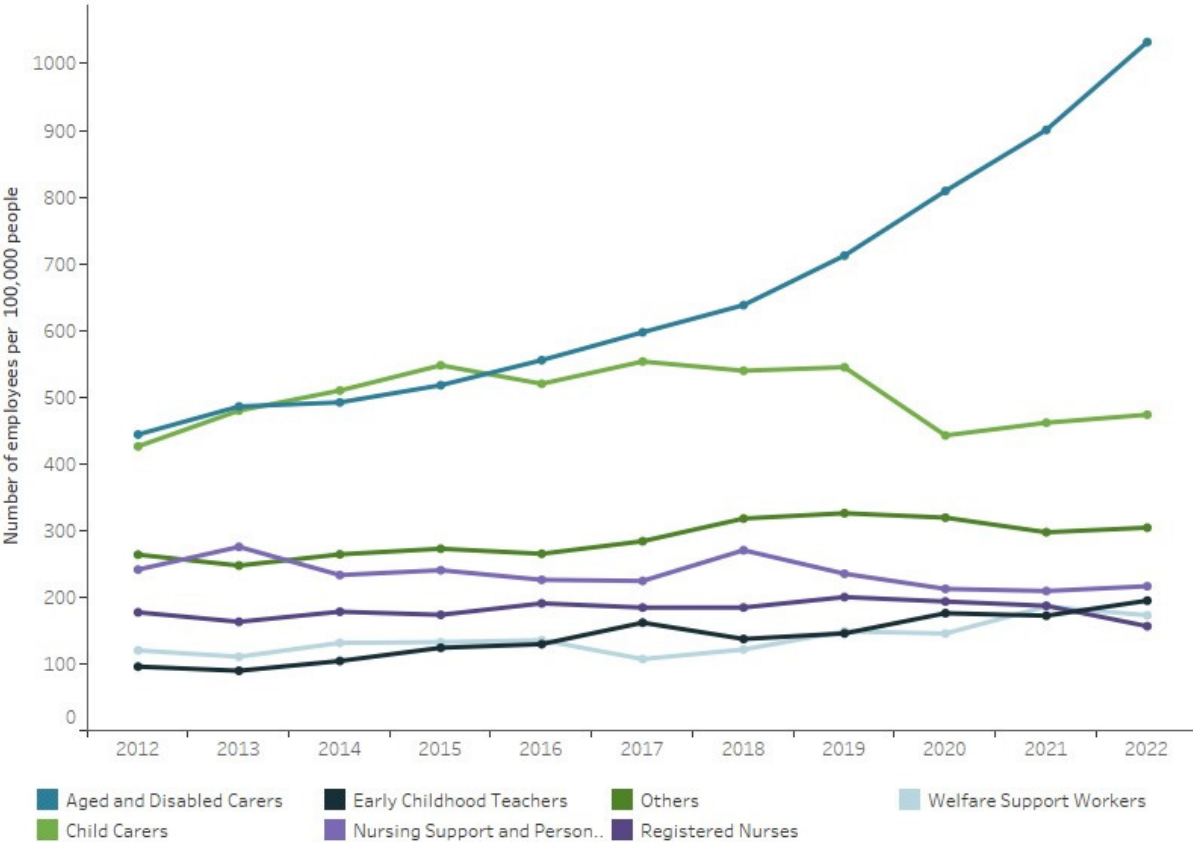
Source: ABS 2023.

Changes in the number of employed people in the welfare workforce occupations:

- The Aged and Disabled Carers' number of employees in 2022 increased by 166% since 2012, and by 49% since 2019. The number of employees in this occupation increased from 444 per 100,000 population in 2012 to 712 in 2019, and 1,032 in 2022.
- The Aged and Disabled Carers occupation had an average employment growth rate of 13% between 2019 and 2022, compared to 6.2% between 2012 and 2018. Additionally, the number of employees in Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teachers (another occupation with a relatively stable increase over time), increased from 96 to 195 per 100,000 population between 2012 and 2022 (Figure 6).

To sum up, the increase in employment in the Aged and Disabled Carers occupation (ANZSCO-4231) and the Other Social Assistance Services industry (ANZSIC-879) was the primary driver of growth in the welfare workforce from 2012 to 2022, accounting for 51% of the growth. Meanwhile, during the COVID-19 pandemic period from 2020 to 2022, this workforce contributed to 106% of the growth in the welfare workforce.

**Figure 6: Welfare workforce per 100,000 population for occupations, 2012 to 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: "Others" represents a combination of occupations with relatively small shares in the welfare workforce. These include Counsellors; Enrolled and Mothercraft Nurses; Other Community Service Occupations; Psychologists; Social Workers; and Welfare, Recreation and Community Arts Workers.

Source: ABS 2023.

## Employment status, demographics, and educational attainment for the welfare workforce

The welfare workforce has distinct characteristics compared with the overall employment, including a higher proportion of females, part-time jobs, an older average age, and lower educational attainment. In 2022, there was a significant increase in the number of employment in occupations or industries related to aged and disabled care, continuing the trend from previous years. As a result, the characteristics of the welfare workforce continued to change compared with those of the overall employment.

- In 2022, the proportion of people working part time (see [glossary](#)) in the welfare workforce was 49%, which was slightly lower than the 51% recorded in 2012 and the 53% recorded in 2021. In comparison, the proportion of people employed part time in the overall employment was 31% in 2022, representing a slight increase from 30% in 2012.

- In 2022, women made up 83% of the welfare workforce in Australia, a decrease from 88% in 2012. This trend contrasts with the representation of women in the whole employment, which increased from 46% in 2012 to 48% in 2020.
- The proportion of workers under 34 in the welfare workforce increased from 35% in 2012 to 38% in 2022, while this proportion decreased in the overall employment (39% in 2012 and 38% in 2022). The average age of the welfare workforce decreased from 41.05 years in 2012 to 40.7 years in 2022, while the average age of the overall workforce increased from 40.0 in 2012 to 40.7 in 2020.
- The proportion of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people in the welfare workforce was 2.3% in 2022, which was a decrease from 2.6% in 2012. This proportion, however, is a slight increase in the overall workforce from 1.2% in 2012 to 1.3% in 2022.
- The proportion of welfare workers with a bachelor degree or higher increased from 21% in 2012 to 32% in 2022, which is quite similar to the increase in the overall employment (25% to 36%).
- In 2022, the proportion of overseas-trained migrant workers was 12.2%, which slightly increased from 11.7% in 2016. Comparatively, the proportion of these workers in overall employment was 10.0% in 2016 and 10.5% in 2022.

For more information, see 'Chapter 9 Australia's care workforce' in [Australia's welfare 2023: data insights](#). This chapter provides a detailed analysis of Australia's welfare workforce, including demographics, employment status, educational attainment, earnings, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the welfare workforce.

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on the Australian workforce, see:

- ABS [Labour Force Survey](#)
- ABS [Employee Earnings and Hours](#)
- Australia's welfare 2023: data insights.

## References

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# Housing

# Home ownership and housing tenure

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/home-ownership-and-housing-tenure>

## On this page

Trends in home ownership

Trends in the private rental market

What factors are influencing these changes over time?

Changes in dwelling types

Where do I go for more information?

## Introduction

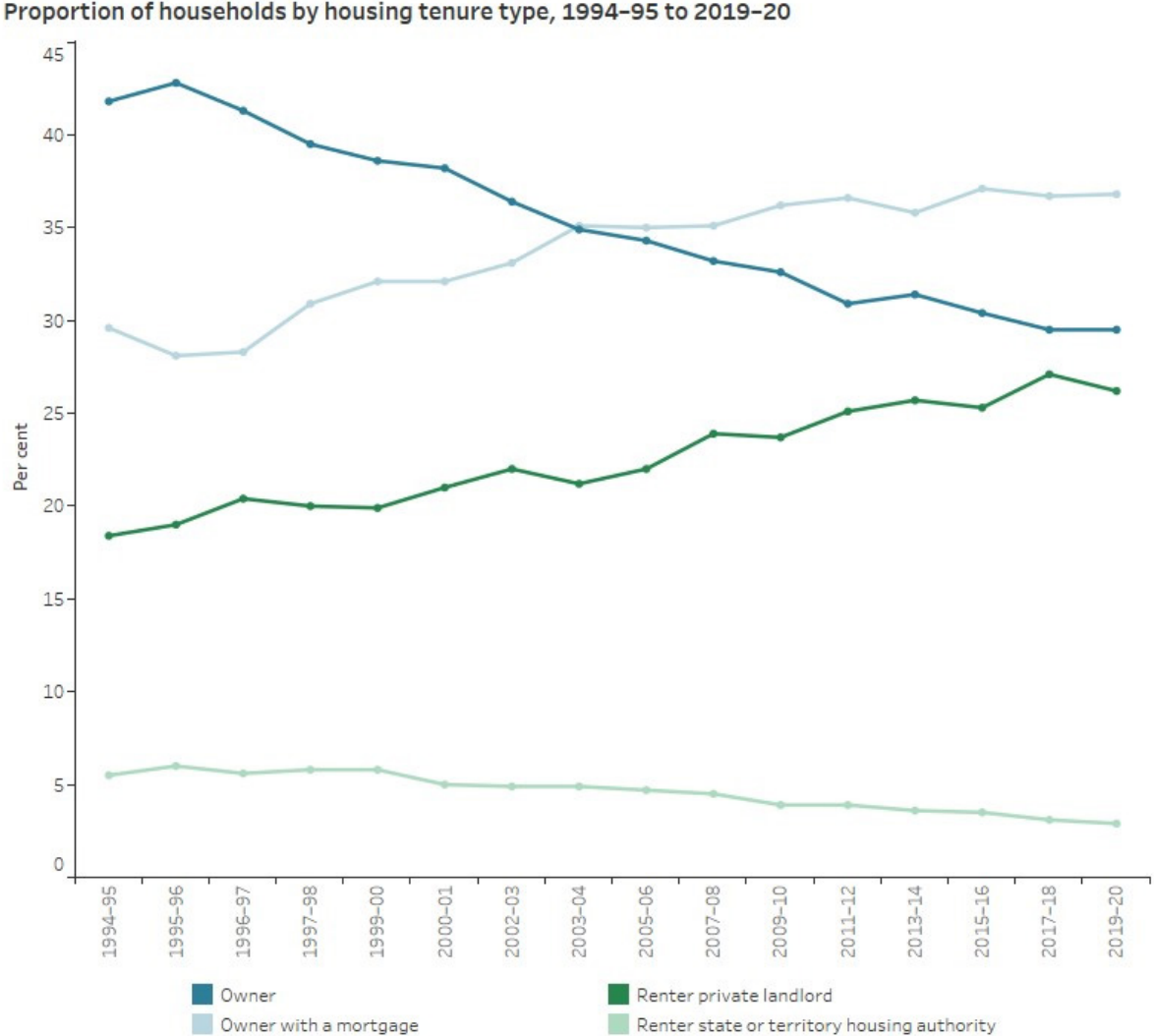
Secure and affordable housing is fundamental to the wellbeing of Australians. Home ownership continues to be a widely held aspiration in Australia, as it affords owners with security of housing tenure and both long-term social and economic benefits (AIHW 2022). There has been much public debate about the rate of home ownership and housing affordability. See [Housing affordability](#) and [Housing assistance](#).

In 2021, there were nearly 9.8 million households in Australia (ABS 2022a). Where household tenure was known:

- 67% (6.2 million households) were home owners.
  - 32% (2.9 million households) without a mortgage
  - 35% (3.3 million households) with a mortgage.
- 31% (2.9 million households) were renters.
  - 26% (2.4 million households) were renting from private landlords
  - 3.0% (277,500 households) from state or territory housing authorities
  - 2.4% (223,600 households) from other landlords.
- 2.1% (192,200 households) were other tenure, including households which are not an owner with or without a mortgage, or a renter (ABS 2022a).

Although Census data provides the most comprehensive view of housing tenure among Australian households, it is only conducted once every 5 years. To monitor changes in housing circumstance during non-Census periods, other survey data can be used. Survey of Income and Housing data shows that in the past 20 years to 2019–20, there has been a decline in the proportion of households owning their home without a mortgage and increases in households with a mortgage and in private rental agreements (Figure 1) (ABS 2022b).

**Figure 1: There are almost as many households renting in the private rental market as homeowners without a mortgage**



Note: Values have been interpolated for non-survey years.

Source: ABS 2022

## Trends in home ownership

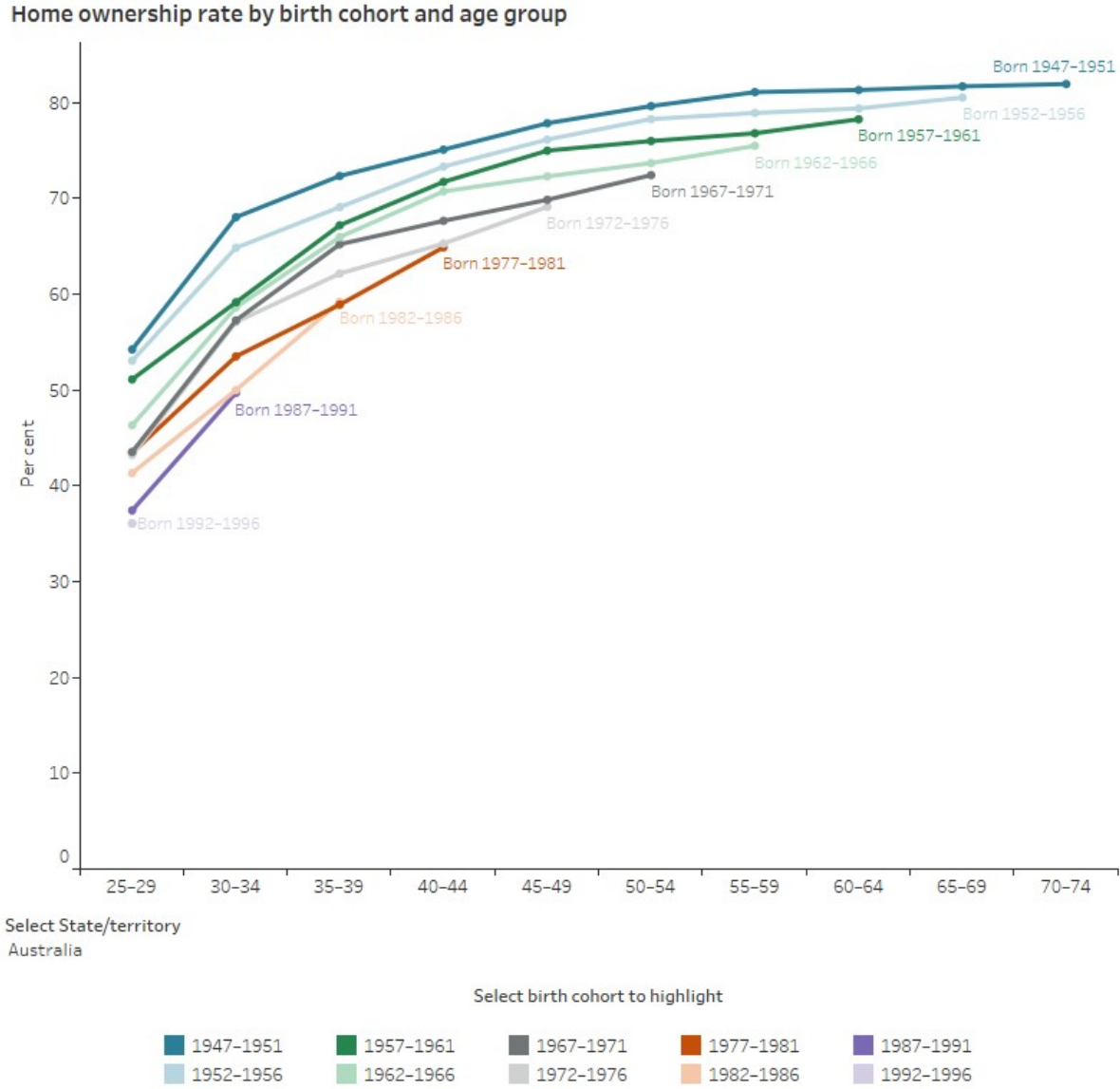
Home ownership data from the 2021 Census show a home ownership rate of 67%, down from 70% in 2006. While the home ownership rate remained around 67–70% from the early 1970’s, the rate for different age groups has varied markedly over this time. The rates among different age groups can be determined using the age of the Census household reference person. The following analysis uses the number of private dwellings by age of household reference person and tenure type to calculate the proportion of homeowners for specific age groups from total households (excluding not stated).

The home ownership rate of 30–34 year olds was 64% in 1971, decreasing 14 percentage points to 50% in 2021 (Unpublished, AIHW analysis of Census data). For Australians aged 25–29, the difference was similar – 50% in 1971, compared with 36% in 2021. Home ownership rates have also gradually decreased among people nearing retirement. Since 1996, home ownership rates for the 50–54 age group has fallen by 8 percentage points over 25 years (80% to 72%) (Figure 2).

To further illustrate these changes in home ownership rates, data can be presented by birth cohorts (Figure 2). Home ownership rates of Australians born during 1947–1951 increased from 54% in 1976 (when they were aged 25–29) to 82% 45 years later in 2021 (when they were aged 70–74). By contrast, the home ownership rate of those born during 1992–1996 was 36% in 2021 (when they were aged 25–29), 18 percentage points lower than the 1947–1951 cohort at the same age.

Nationally, the rate of home ownership was lower for almost each successive birth cohort since the 1947–1951 birth cohort (Figure 2). The home ownership rate has been higher in only two instances; 0.2 percentage points for the 1977–1981 cohort in the 25–29 age group and 0.3 percentage points for the 1982–1986 cohort in the 35–39 age group. In the most recent results, the home ownership rates in birth cohorts 1972–1976, 1977–1981 and 1982–1986 increased to similar levels as their preceding birth cohort. However, rates were still lower compared with older birth cohorts.

**Figure 2: Home ownership rates have been consistently lower for successive birth cohorts than older groups**



**Notes:**

1. Analysis excludes not stated.
2. Home ownership rates reflect the year the household reference person was born.
3. Census data; data for 1991 has been extrapolated.

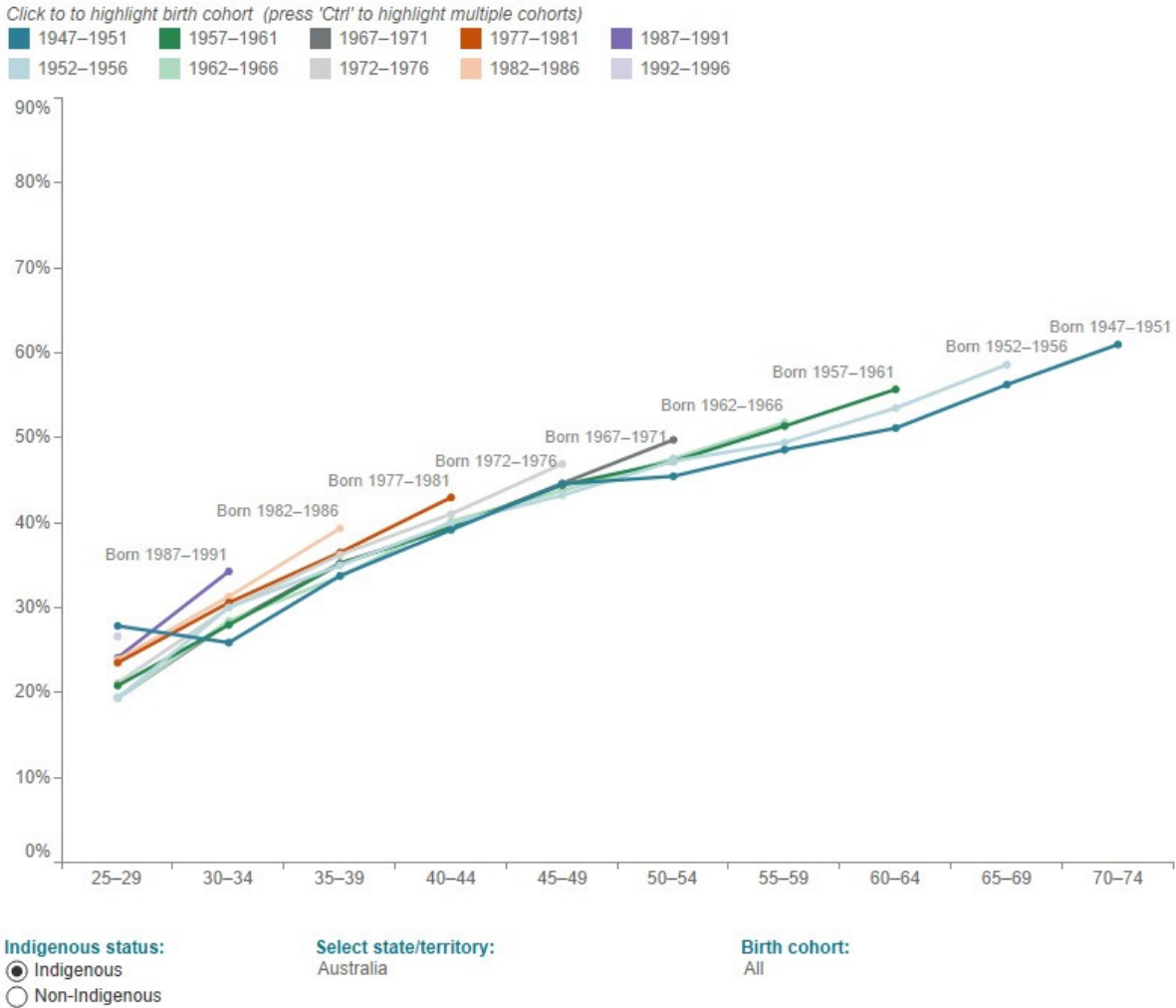
Source: Unpublished, AIHW analysis of ABS data.

The home ownership rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 2021 was 42%. This was the highest rate ever reported for Indigenous Australians with home ownership rates steadily increasing since 25% in 1981. Broadly, the rate of home ownership for Indigenous Australians has increased for each successive birth cohort (Figure 3), however, rates for Indigenous Australians were consistently around 20

percentage points lower than home ownership rates for non-Indigenous Australians across all birth cohorts and age groups.

**Figure 3: Home ownership among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians has increased**

**Indigenous home ownership rate (%), by birth cohort and age group**



**Notes:**

1. Analysis excludes not stated.
2. Home ownership rates reflect the year the household reference person was born.
3. Data are small for some states/territories and some age groups within birth cohorts; data points have been suppressed where the numerator is less than 20.
4. Comparisons over time should be approached with caution as trends may be affected by changes in Indigenous identification over time.

Source: Unpublished, AIHW analysis of ABS data.

## Financial support for home buyers

Governments provide financial support to assist first home buyers, low-income households, Indigenous Australians, and vulnerable people to buy a house. The four main types of support available to home buyers are Home purchase assistance, First Home Owner Grant scheme, First Home Super Saver Scheme and Home Guarantee Scheme.

**Home purchase assistance** provides financial assistance, such as direct lending, concessional loans, and mortgage relief, to eligible low-income households to improve their access to, and to maintain home ownership. Households may receive more than one type of home purchase assistance (AIHW 2022).

**First Home Owner Grant Scheme**, introduced nationally on 1 July 2000, is funded by the state and territory governments and administered under their legislation. A one-off grant is payable to low-income first homeowners who apply and satisfy eligibility criteria. Examples are that at least one applicant must be a permanent resident or Australian citizen, each applicant must be at least 18 years of age, and temporary residents do not qualify to receive the grant (Australian Government 2020).

**The Indigenous Home Ownership Program** facilitates home ownership for Indigenous Australians by providing access to affordable home loan finance. The program aims to address barriers to home ownership, such as loan affordability, low savings, impaired credit histories and limited experience with long-term loan commitments (IBA 2021).

**First Home Super Saver Scheme**, introduced by the Australian Government in the 2017–18 Federal Budget, supports first home buyers who meet the eligibility criteria to save money for a house deposit using their superannuation fund. They can voluntarily contribute up to \$15,000 in any one financial year, up to a total of \$50,000, from 1 July 2022. They receive the tax benefit of saving through their superannuation contribution arrangements (ATO 2022).

**Home Guarantee Scheme (HGS)**, comprises the First Home Guarantee (FHBG), previously known as the First Home Loan Deposit Scheme, and the Family Home Guarantee (FHG). Under the First Home Guarantee, an eligible first homebuyer can purchase a property with a deposit of as little as five per cent, while through the Family Home Guarantee a single parent with dependents can purchase a home with a deposit of as little as two per cent. From 1 July 2022, the number of places available through the First Home Guarantee increases from 10,000 to 35,000 per financial year. The Family Home Guarantee will have an annual allocation of 5,000 places from 1 July 2022 until 30 June 2025 (NHFIC 2022).

**HomeBuilder scheme** was announced on 4 June 2020, with the aim of encouraging eligible owner-occupiers to build a new home or substantially renovate an existing home. The grant provided \$25,000 to eligible contracts signed between 4 June 2020 and 31 December 2020. Eligible contracts signed between 1 January 2021 and 31 March 2021 were offered \$15,000. On 17 April 2021, the construction commencement requirement was extended from six months to 18 months for all existing applicants (The Treasury 2021).



In 2020–21, around 44,200 instances of home purchase assistance were provided across Australia. Of these:

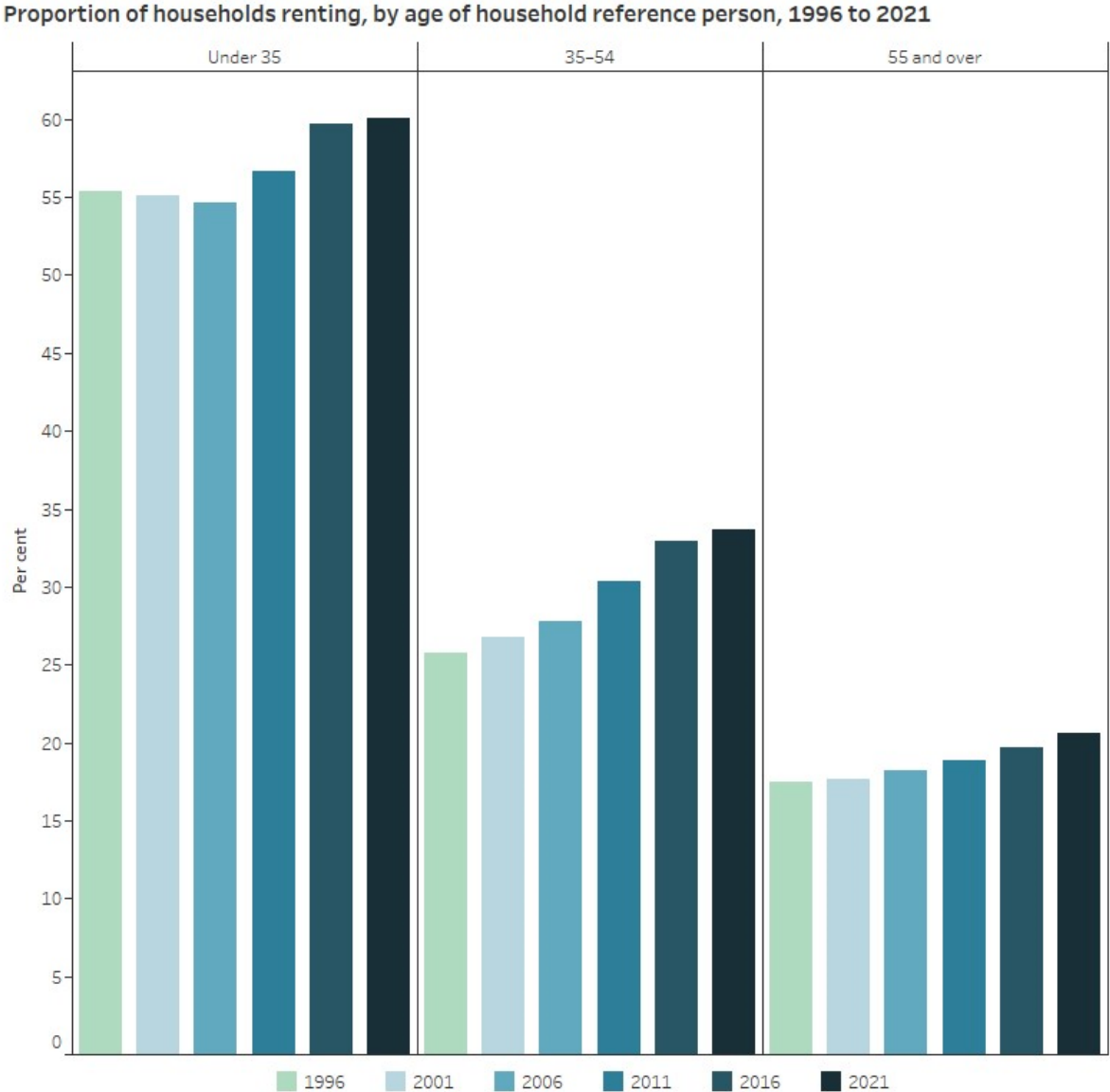
- over one-quarter (27% or 11,900) of the main applicants receiving assistance were aged 35–44
- about one-fifth (20%) of recipients earned a gross income of less than \$700 per week (\$36,400 per annum)
- 58% (or 25,700) of households receiving home purchase assistance were in *Major cities*, 25% (11,300) in *Inner regional* areas and 12% (5,300) in *Outer regional* areas. Only a small proportion were in *Remote* (2.8% or 1,200) or *Very remote* (2.7% or 1,200) areas (AIHW 2022).

Lending commitments to owner occupier first time home buyers increased, from around 81,650 commitments in the 12 months to May 2017 to 138,400 in the 12 months to May 2022 (ABS 2022c).

## **Trends in the private rental market**

The proportion of households renting – which also includes renting from state or territory authority, community housing provider, person not in the same household, other landlord types, dwellings occupied rent free or under a life tenure scheme – has had a disproportionate impact on younger households over recent years. There has been a sharper increase in the proportion of young Australians renting compared with older Australians (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Young adults are more likely than other ages to rent in the private rental market and the proportion renting has been increasing**



Notes:

1. Households who rent include those renting from: Real estate agent, State or Territory housing authority, Community housing provider, Person not in same household, Other landlord type, Landlord type not stated. It also includes dwellings being occupied rent free and dwellings being occupied under a life tenure scheme.
2. Analysis excludes Tenure type not stated.

Source: Unpublished, AIHW analysis of Census data.

**What factors are influencing these changes over time?**

The price of housing, changing household demographics and population increases have influenced home ownership trends and a move from home ownership to renting

privately. They have also influenced changes to the dwelling type needs of households (ABS 2017; COAG 2018; Yates 2015).

## House prices

Economic factors, such as changes in house prices, have influenced the changes in home ownership over time (Yates, 2015). The mean price of residential dwellings has increased by more than 60% over seven years, from \$579,300 in the March 2015 quarter, to \$944,000 in the March 2022 quarter (ABS 2022d). For the June 2022 and September 2022 quarters, average house prices started trending downwards for Australia and across most states and territories, however, prices were still above 2015 prices.

## Family and household composition

Family composition and marital status are related to housing tenure (Baxter and McDonald 2005; Stone et al. 2013). Over recent decades, the number of single-people households and single-parent households have increased and as a result, the average household size has decreased. These household types tend to have lower home ownership rates than other household types (Yates 2015). In 2017–18, 47% of single-parent households were renting, an increase from 42% in 2007–08. While changing household composition may be related to an increase in the proportion of people living in private rental dwellings, the percentage of couples with children who rented privately also increased from 20% to 24% during this 10-year period (ABS 2022b; Warren and Qu 2020).

## Population growth

Population increases in Australia are driving demand for housing, other services, and infrastructure (COAG 2018). Brisbane (0.9%) and Perth (0.8%) had the highest growth rates of the capital cities in 2020–21 (ABS 2022e). Overseas migration has contributed to increased housing demand (Daley et al. 2018). Most immigrants move to major cities, leading to an increase in demand for housing in these areas. International students have also had an impact on the private rental market, predominantly in major cities (Parkinson et al. 2018). The subsequent pressure on housing stocks in these areas highlights the need for coordinated and well considered urban planning strategies.

## Changes in dwelling types

The types of dwellings Australians live in has changed over time. The proportion of households occupying separate houses (see [glossary](#)) has decreased in the past 25 years, from 76% of all households in 1996 to 71% in 2021, offset by increases in semi-detached and townhouse households. In 2021, around 13% of households lived in semi-detached row or terrace and townhouses, up from 8% in 1996. Around 15% of households lived in flats or apartments in 2021, an increase from 13% in 1996 (ABS 2001; ABS 2022a).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on home ownership and housing tenure, see:

- [Housing Assistance in Australia](#)
- [Housing data dashboard](#)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [Australian Social Trends 2014](#)
- ABS [Housing Occupancy and Costs, 2019–20 financial year](#)
- ABS [Households Income and Wealth, 2019–20 financial year](#)
- ABS [Housing: Census](#)

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# Homelessness and homelessness services

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/homelessness-and-homelessness-services>

## On this page

Introduction

Why do people experience homelessness?

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People experiencing homelessness, and those at risk of homelessness (see [glossary](#)), are among Australia's most socially and economically disadvantaged. To support Australians at risk of or experiencing homelessness, governments across Australia fund housing and homelessness services. These services are mainly delivered by non-government organisations, including those specialising in delivering services to specific target groups (such as young people or people experiencing [Family and domestic violence](#)) and those providing more general services to people facing housing crises (AIHW 2022).

The data on Specialist Homelessness Services on this page are drawn from the [Specialist Homelessness Services annual report](#) (AIHW 2022) and the [Specialist Homelessness Services monthly data](#) report (AIHW 2023).

## Why do people experience homelessness?

Homelessness can be the result of many social, economic and health-related factors. Individual factors, such as low educational attainment, whether someone is working, experience of family and domestic violence, ill health (including mental health issues) and disability, trauma, and substance misuse may make a person more at risk of becoming homeless (Fitzpatrick et al. 2013). Structural factors, including lack of adequate income and limited access to affordable and available housing, also contribute to risk of homelessness (Johnson et al. 2015; Wood et al. 2015). Determining how individual and structural risk factors interact to influence a person's vulnerability to, and experience of, homelessness is an important ongoing focus of homelessness research (Culhane et al. 2020; Lee et al. 2010).

## Defining homelessness

There is no single definition of homelessness.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines homelessness, for the purposes of the Census of Population and Housing, as the lack of one or more elements that represent 'home'.

The ABS statistical definition of homelessness is '... when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations' (ABS 2012).

The Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) (see [glossary](#)) collection is the national dataset about specialist support provided to Australians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It considers that a person is homeless if they are living in non-conventional accommodation (such as living on the street), or short-term or emergency accommodation (such as living temporarily with friends and relatives) (AIHW 2022).

## People experiencing homelessness

On ABS Census night in 2021, more than 122,000 people were estimated to be experiencing homelessness in Australia – 56% were male, 21% were aged 25–34 and 20% were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people (ABS 2023). The highest rate of homelessness was in the Northern Territory (about 563 people per 10,000 population), while the lowest was in Western Australia (37 people per 10,000).

Around 47,900 (39%) people were living in severely crowded dwellings. Over 24,300 (20%) were living in supported accommodation for the homeless and 7,600 (6%) were rough sleepers (Table 1).

**Table 1: Number of homeless persons, by homelessness type, Census night 2021**

Type of homelessness	Number
People living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out (rough sleepers)	7,636
People in supported accommodation for the homeless	24,291
People staying temporarily with other households	16,597
People living in boarding houses	22,137
People in other temporary lodgings	3,934
People living in 'severely' crowded dwellings	47,895



All homeless persons

122,494

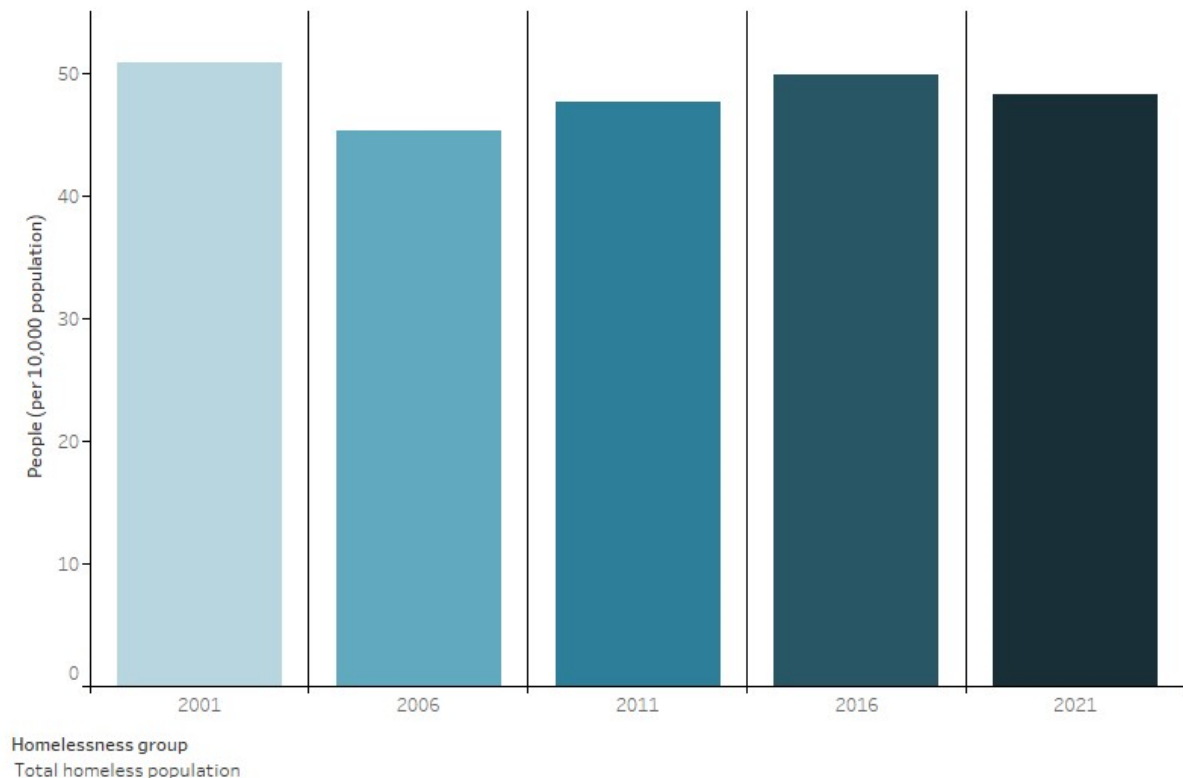
Source: ABS 2023.

## Trends in the number of people experiencing homelessness

The rate of homelessness in Australia has fluctuated between 51 people per 10,000 population in 2001 and 48 in 2021 (ABS 2023). The rate fell between the last 2 Census collections; from 50 people per 10,000 in 2016 to 48 in 2021.

- Between 2011 and 2021, most of the increase in the rate of homelessness was due to people living in severely crowded dwellings, increasing from 41,370 people in 2011 to 47,900 in 2021.
- From 2011 to 2021, the number of people living in boarding houses increased by 48%, from 14,900 in 2011 to 22,100 in 2021.
- The number of people living in other temporary lodgings increased by almost 5-fold, from 700 in 2016 to 3,900 in 2021 (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Rate of homelessness, people per 10,000 population, by homelessness group, 2001 to 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Note: Homelessness groups are mutually exclusive, therefore persons will only appear in one category.

Source: ABS 2023.

## Homelessness services

SHS agencies receive government funding to provide assistance to both people experiencing and people at risk of homelessness. The services are aimed at prevention, early intervention, crisis and post crisis assistance and include accommodation-related services and personal services. SHS agencies vary in size and in the types of assistance provided.

In 2021–22, about 273,000 clients were assisted; a rate of 106.2 clients per 10,000 population, or 1.1% of the Australian population (AIHW 2022). Most clients were at risk of experiencing homelessness (56% or 140,000 clients) when first presenting to SHS. Another 110,000 clients (44%) were homeless. (Housing status at the start of support was unknown for around 22,400 SHS clients.)

SHS agencies have supported more than 1.5 million Australians since the collection began on 1 July 2011 (AIHW 2022).

### Characteristics of SHS clients

Of the 273,000 clients SHS agencies assisted in 2021–22:

- 6 in 10 were female (60% or 164,000 clients)
- 1 in 6 were children under the age of 10 (16% or 43,000 clients)
- 1 in 10 were children and youth aged 10–17 (12% or 33,000 clients)
- the largest age group of adult clients were aged 25–34 (19% of all clients or 50,600 clients)
- about 13,900 were women aged 55 or older (8.4% of total female clients) and 11,500 were men aged 55 or older (11% of total male clients)
- 1 in 3 (34% or 87,000) clients were living in single-parent with one or more children families when they sought support (AIHW 2022).

Australians known to be at particular risk of homelessness include those who have experienced family and domestic violence, young people, children on care and protection orders, First Nations people, people leaving health or social care arrangements, and older Australians.

In 2021–22, around 108,000 SHS clients had experienced family and domestic violence at some point during the reporting period (Table 2). Some SHS client groups were more likely to be experiencing homelessness than other groups at the beginning of support, including clients with problematic drug or alcohol issues (60% of the cohort), young people aged 15–24 presenting alone (52%) and clients who are current or former members of the Australian Defence Force (52%).

**Table 2: Characteristics of client groups of interest, 2021–22**

<b>Client group</b>	<b>Number of clients</b>	<b>Female (%)</b>	<b>Homeless at the beginning of support (%)</b>	<b>Median length of support (days)</b>	<b>Receiving accommodation (%)</b>
<b>Family and domestic violence</b>	107,683	76	38	66	37
<b>Current mental health issues</b>	85,200	63	50	90	36
<b>Indigenous Australians</b>	72,869	62	47	57	39
<b>Young people presenting alone (15–24 years)</b>	39,300	66	52	62	31
<b>Older people (55 years or older)</b>	25,326	55	35	40	19
<b>Problematic drug or alcohol issues</b>	23,433	49	60	119	50

Note: Clients may be in one or more client vulnerability group. Client vulnerabilities groups are domestic and family violence, mental health, and problematic drug and/or alcohol.

Source: AIHW 2022.

## **Trends in clients assisted by SHS agencies**

The number of clients assisted by SHS agencies each year decreased from around 288,800 people in 2017–18 to about 272,700 in 2021–22 (Table 3). Over the same period, the:

- rate of all SHS clients decreased from 117.4 to 106.2 clients per 10,000 population
- number of support days increased by 3.5 million days, from 24.7 to 28.2 million.

**Table 3: SHS clients, by number, rate and housing situation at the beginning of support, 2017–18 to 2021–22**

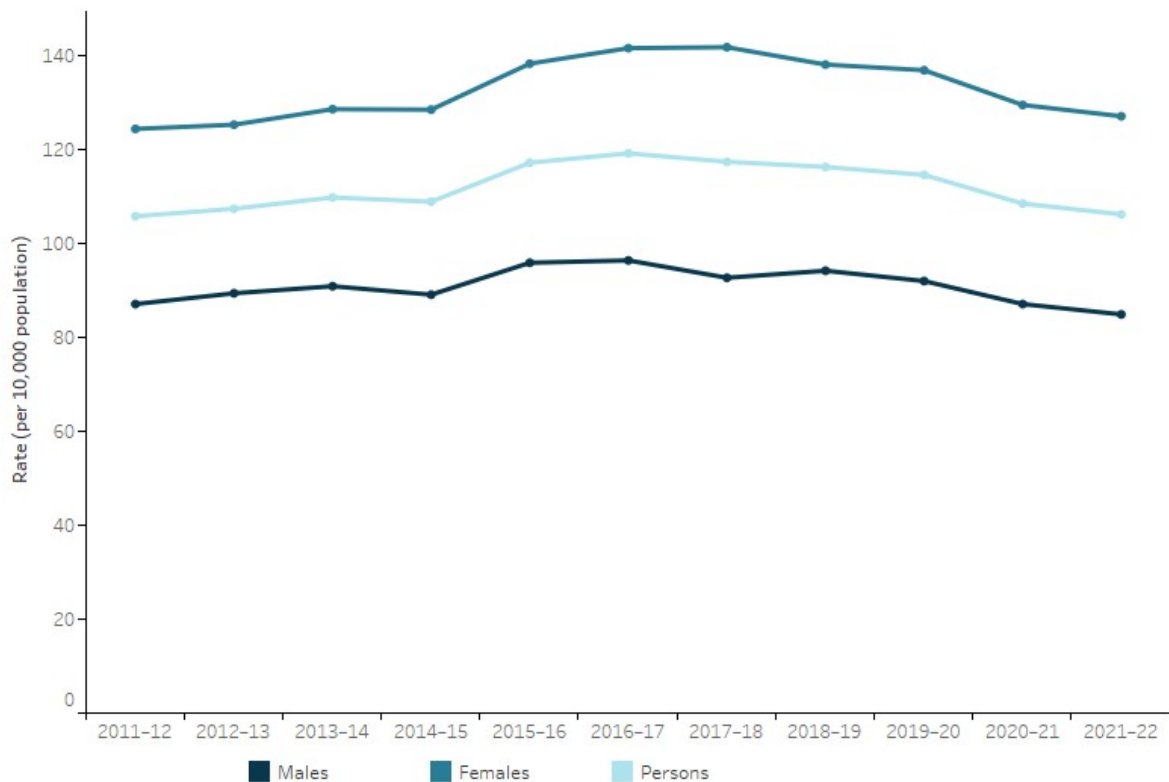
	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22
Number of clients	288,795	290,317	290,462	278,275	272,694
Rate (per 10,000 population)	117.4	116.3	114.6	108.5	106.2
<b>Housing situation at the beginning of the first support period (proportion of all clients)</b>					
Homeless	43	42	43	43	44
At risk of homelessness	57	58	57	57	56
Total days of support (millions)	24.7	26.0	26.1	27.7	28.2
Length of support (median number of days)	39	44	43	51	53
Median number of nights accommodated	32	29	28	31	32

Note: Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year. Minor adjustments in rates may occur between publications reflecting revision of the ERP by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2017–18 to 2021–22.

Between 2011–12 and 2021–22, the rate of SHS clients was highest in 2016–17, decreasing in more recent years. The overall rate for female clients increased from around 124.4 clients per 10,000 population in 2011–12 to 127.1 in 2021–22; the rate of male clients declined from 87.1 in 2011–12 to 84.9 in 2021–22 (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Rate of SHS clients by sex, 2011–12 to 2021–22**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2011–12 to 2021–22.

## Where do I go for more information?

See [Homelessness services](#) for more on this topic.

For more information on homelessness and homelessness services, see:

- AIHW [Specialist homelessness services annual report](#)
- AIHW [Housing data dashboard](#)
- AIHW [Specialist Homelessness Services: monthly data](#)
- ABS [Estimating homelessness: Census, 2021](#)
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# Housing affordability

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## On this page

Introduction

The cost of housing

How is housing affordability measured?

How much do we spend on housing?

Geographic variation of housing affordability

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Access to good quality, affordable housing is fundamental to wellbeing. It can help reduce poverty and enhance equality of opportunity, social inclusion and mobility (Gurran et al. 2021; Maclennan et al. 2019). Affordability is important for both Australians wanting to buy a home and for those renting. Many factors influence the supply, demand and cost of housing across the country, including Australia's growing and ageing population and government policies (AIHW 2023; Burke et al. 2020; Gurran et al. 2021).

Housing affordability typically refers to the relationship between expenditure on housing (prices, mortgage payments or rents) and household incomes (Thomas and Hall 2016). [Home ownership and housing tenure](#) and [Housing assistance](#) are related to housing affordability.

## The cost of housing

### Purchasing a home

House prices have risen across Australia over the decade to 2023. The median transfer price for established houses in major cities increased substantially, with the median house transfer price in Sydney increasing from around \$615,000 in the first quarter of 2013 to around \$1.2 million at the start of 2023 (ABS 2023a). Median transfer house prices in Canberra (\$975,000) were the second highest among the capital cities at the start of 2023, followed by Melbourne (\$810,500) and Brisbane (\$750,000), while Perth/Darwin (\$575,000) were the lowest.

The median transfer price of attached dwellings (units, apartments etc.) in capital cities has also generally increased since 2013. Sydney prices increased from \$520,000 at the start of 2013 to \$750,000 at the start of 2023 (ABS 2023a). Canberra (\$610,000) was the



second most expensive price for units/apartments at the start of 2023, followed by Melbourne (\$577,000) and Hobart (\$560,000).

The price paid for housing in non-capital city areas has also increased, however, in general housing is less expensive than in capital city areas.

Throughout 2023, house prices have fallen compared to the same time period in 2022, as interest rates increased (CoreLogic 2023a; RBA 2023). Since 2021, housing costs as a share of income have risen considerably faster for households with a mortgage than for households that rent due to rises in interest rates (Phillips 2023).

## Cost of rental accommodation

Around one-third (31%) of households in Australia were renting in 2019–20 (ABS 2022). The cost of private rental accommodation has increased substantially over recent years, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the 12-months to June 2023, median advertised rents increased by 11.5% in capital city areas, with strong increases in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth (13% in each city) (CoreLogic 2023b). Canberra (-2.8%) was the only capital city area where advertised rents fell.

Advertised rents are important to understand potential barriers faced by people seeking a new rental lease, however, rental affordability is broader than advertised rents. That is, rents paid by existing and new tenants are important to understand housing affordability in context with other cost of living pressures.

Across Australia, rents paid increased by 2.5% in the June quarter 2023 and 6.7% annually; the largest annual rise since 2009 (ABS 2023b). Among the capital cities, Brisbane (8.9%), Perth (8.2%) and Sydney (7.3%) had the largest annual increases, while Hobart (2.9%) had the smallest increase.

## How is housing affordability measured?

Measuring housing affordability is not straightforward. A household's financial situation, the overall demand in the housing market and housing tenure type (whether a household is seeking to rent, is renting, is looking to buy or is a home owner with or without a mortgage) all influence individual housing affordability (Senate Standing Committees on Economics 2015). The simplest measure of housing affordability compares housing costs to gross household income.

### Measures relating to housing affordability

**Housing affordability** can be expressed as the ratio of housing costs to gross household income (ABS 2022).

**Housing costs** are defined as the sum of rent payments, rate payments (water and general), and housing-related mortgage payments (ABS 2022).

**Housing stress** is typically described as lower-income households that spend more than 30% of gross income on housing costs (ABS 2022).

## How much do we spend on housing?

In 2019–20, 10.5% of households spent more than 30% to 50% of gross income on housing costs and 5.7% of households spent 50% or more. These proportions have increased from 10.2% and 5.2% respectively since 2007–08 (Table 1).

**Table 1: Housing costs as a proportion of gross household income, 2007–08, 2013–14 and 2019–20**

Per cent of income spent on housing costs	2007–08 %	2013–14 %	2019–20 %
More than 50 (more likely to be in financial stress)	5.2	5.7	5.7
More than 30 to 50	10.2	12.0	10.5
More than 25 to 30	6.4	7.2	7.2
25 or less (less likely to be in financial stress)	78.2	75.1	76.6

(b) Note: Excludes households with nil or negative income.

Source: ABS 2022.

The proportion of household income spent on housing costs in Table 1 does not consider that high-income households may choose to spend more than 30% of their household income on housing. Their higher income means they have sufficient income after housing costs to avoid financial stress (AHURI 2019; Rowley et al. 2015).

By contrast, low-income households (lowest 40% of household income distribution) are more likely to lack the resources to deal with financial impacts arising from critical life events and/or housing market factors, often leading them to need additional [housing assistance](#) (AIHW 2023).

### Housing stress among low-income households

Around 1.0 million low-income households were in financial housing stress in 2019–20, spending more than 30% of their income on housing (ABS 2022). More than half (58%) of low-income households in the private rental market were in housing stress, compared with home owners with a mortgage (37%) and home owners without a mortgage (0.9%) (Table 2).

**Table 2: Proportion of household income spent on housing costs (lower-income households only), by household characteristics, 2019–20**

Low-income household characteristic	Households spending more than 30% of income on housing (%)
Owner without a mortgage	0.9
Owner with a mortgage	37.4
Private renter	58.0
Family households	
Couple family with dependent children	30.3
One parent family with dependent children	41.8
Couple only family	15.4
Other one family households	16.2
Multiple family households	8.4*
Group households	51.3*
Lone person households	25.7
<b>All households</b>	<b>25.1</b>

(c) \*Estimate has a high margin of error and should be used with caution.

(d) Notes

1. Due to limitations of housing costs information, care should be taken when comparing costs of different tenure and landlord types.
2. Housing costs as a proportion of gross household income is the sum of housing costs of a group divided by the summed gross weekly income of that group of households.
3. Cells in this table have been randomly adjusted (by perturbation) to avoid the release of confidential data.

Source: ABS 2022.

## Geographic variation of housing affordability

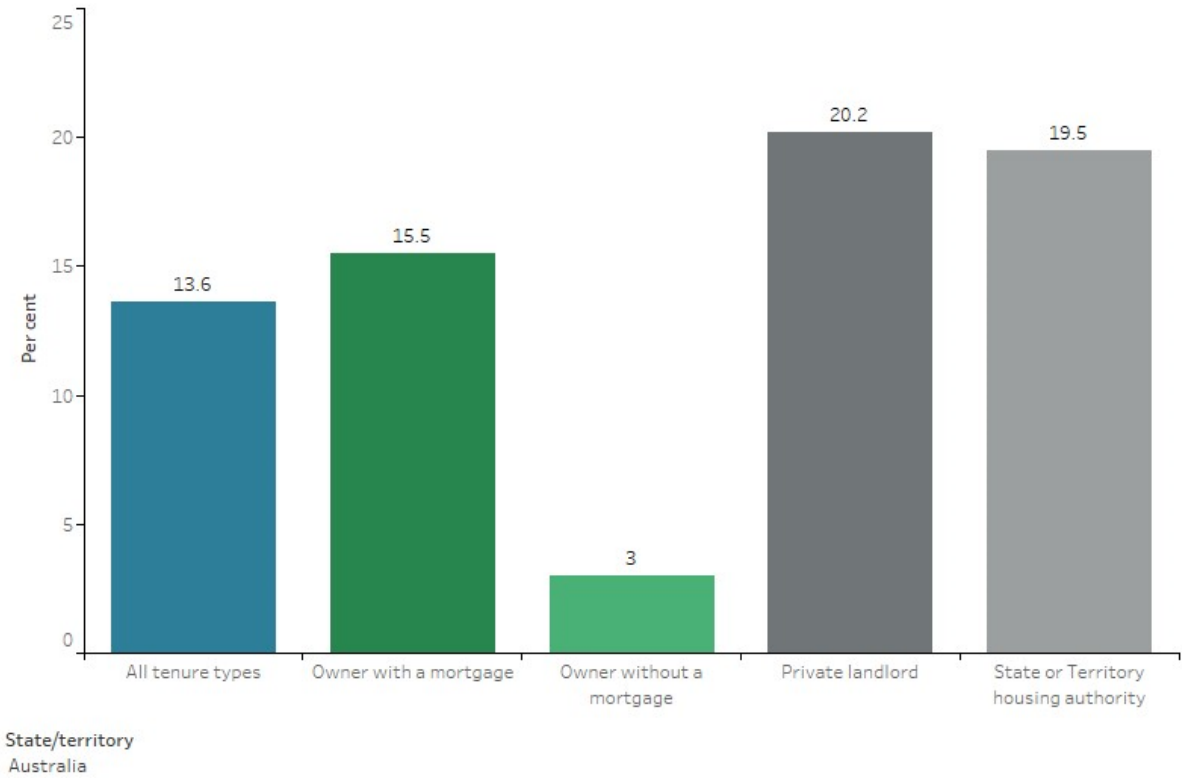
Housing costs and incomes varies across Australia, meaning housing affordability differs within and between states and territories and among housing tenure types (for example, home owners with a mortgage or renters).

# Housing costs

Housing cost as a proportion of income varied across Australia and between landlord types. In 2019–20:

- for all households housing costs as a proportion of income was highest in New South Wales (14.7%) and lowest in Western Australia (12.1%)
- for homeowners with a mortgage, housing costs were highest in New South Wales (17.0%) and lowest in Western Australia (14.0%)
- for private renters, housing costs were highest in New South Wales (22.2%) and lowest in Western Australia (17.4%) (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Housing costs as a proportion of gross household income, by housing tenure type and state and territories, 2021–22**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

### Notes

1. # indicates that the proportion has a high margin of error. Caution should be taken when interpreting the data.
2. Data have been randomly adjusted (by perturbation) to avoid the release of confidential data.

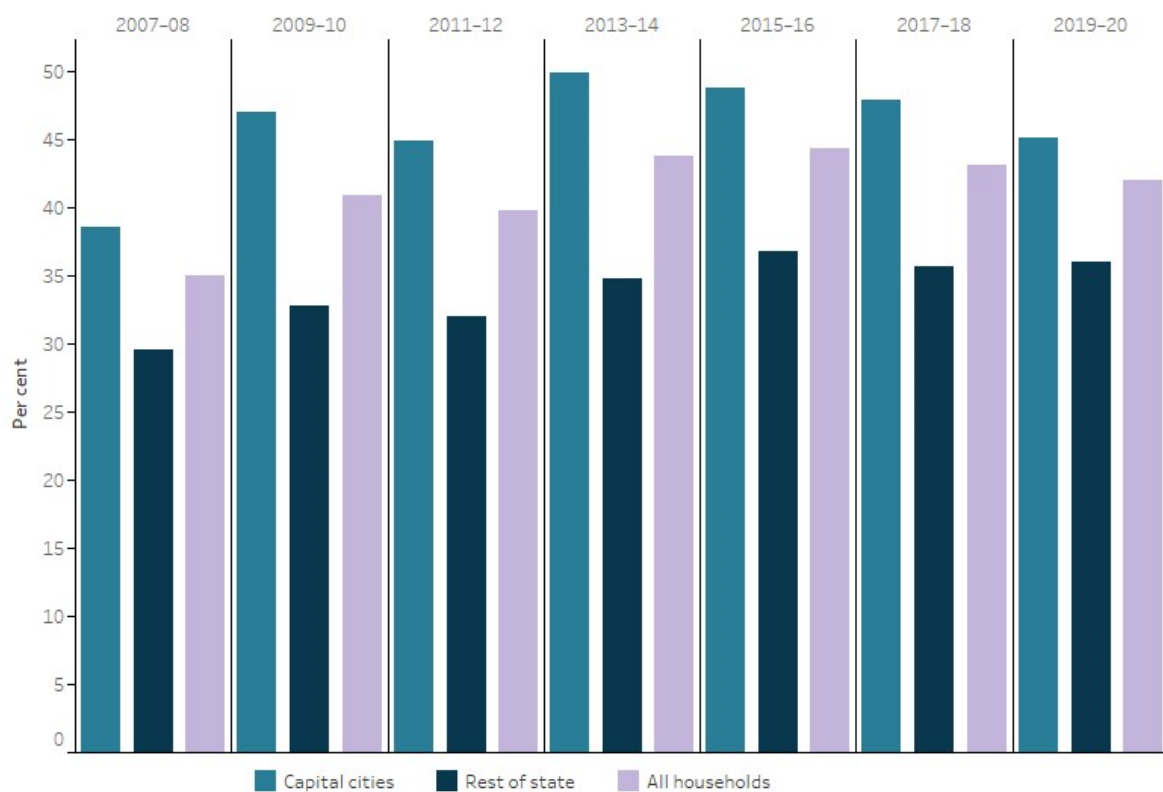
Source: ABS 2022.

## Rental stress among low-income households

For low-income households in the private rental market, the proportion in rental stress (based on the 30/40 rule) varied between capital city and rest of state areas (ABS 2022):

- In 2007–08, 38.5% of low-income households in greater capital city areas were considered to be in rental stress increasing to 45.1% in 2019–20.
- In 2007–08, 29.5% of low-income households in rest of state areas were considered to be in rental stress increasing to 36.0% in 2019–20 (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Proportion of low-income households in rental stress, by household location, 2007–08 to 2019–20**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

### Notes

1. Low-income households in rental stress in this figure are defined as the 40% of households with equivalised disposable household income (excluding Commonwealth Rent Assistance) spending more than 30% of their gross income on housing costs. Values are calculated for greater capital city areas and rest of state, on a state-by-state basis.
2. Households in Northern Territory SA1s defined as very remote were excluded, accounting for 22% of the population of the NT.

Source: ABS 2022.

## Rental affordability index

The rental affordability index (see [glossary](#)) is a price index for housing rental markets across geographical areas of Australia, calculated using median incomes. A rental affordability index score of 80–100 represents unaffordable rent (that households spend 30 percent or more of their income on rent), a score between 100 and 120 represents moderately unaffordable rent, a score between 120 and 150 represents acceptable rent and a score greater than 150 represents affordable rents (SGS Economics and Planning 2022).

In general, rental affordability index scores are worse for the rest of the state or territory compared with metropolitan areas. As at June 2022:

- Hobart was the least affordable metropolitan area in Australia.
- Melbourne was the most affordable metropolitan area in Australia.
- Affordability decreased compared with the previous year for all metropolitan areas.
- Regional Queensland was the least affordable of the rest of states and territories.
- Regional South Australia was the most affordable of the rest of state areas (Table 3).

Very low-income households continue to face unaffordable rent in most capital cities (Baker et al. 2020).

**Table 3: National rental affordability index summary by metropolitan areas and rest of states and territories, June 2022**

Region	Rental affordability index	Proportion of household income spent on rent	Relative unaffordability
Greater Sydney	120	25	Moderately unaffordable rents
Rest of New South Wales	106	28	Moderately unaffordable rents
Greater Melbourne	140	21	Acceptable rents
Rest of Victoria	115	26	Moderately unaffordable rents
Greater Brisbane	113	27	Moderately unaffordable rents
Rest of Queensland	104	29	Moderately unaffordable rents
Greater Perth	124	24	Acceptable rents

Region	Rental affordability index	Proportion of household income spent on rent	Relative unaffordability
Rest of Western Australia	134	22	Acceptable rents
Greater Adelaide	119	25	Moderately unaffordable rents
Rest of South Australia	137	22	Acceptable rents
Greater Hobart	102	29	Unaffordable rents
Rest of Tasmania	108	28	Moderately unaffordable rents
Australian Capital Territory	121	25	Acceptable rents

(e) Note: Data for the Northern Territory are not available.

Source: SGS Economics and Planning 2022.

## Where do I go for more information?

See [Housing assistance](#) for more information on this topic. Also see:

- [Housing assistance in Australia](#)
- [Housing data dashboard](#)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [Housing Occupancy and Costs, financial year 2019–20](#)

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# Housing Assistance

This topic summary is part of the [Housing assistance in Australia](#) report.

Australian and state and territory governments provide various types of assistance to people having difficulty with finding or sustaining affordable and appropriate housing in the private housing market. Housing assistance refers to both access to social housing (such as public housing), and targeted financial assistance to eligible Australians.

Social housing provides eligible households with rents set below market rates (based on a percentage of a tenant's income). Forms of social housing include:

- public housing
- state owned and managed Indigenous housing
- community housing
- Indigenous community housing.

Governments also provide various forms of financial support to assist people on lower incomes to meet housing costs. Forms of financial support include:

- Commonwealth Rent Assistance
- Private Rent Assistance
- Home Purchase Assistance.

The data visualisation displays a summary of key data from the AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository and Australian Government Housing Dataset. Data presented are available in the individual sections of this report and in the data download section.

## Key messages

- At June 2022, there were around 442,700 social housing dwellings. For more see [Social housing dwellings](#)
- In 2021–22, there were 31,703 households newly allocated social housing, including 15,023 households allocated public housing, 16,052 to community housing and 628 to state owned and managed Indigenous housing. For more see [Entries, exits and transfers](#).
- The proportion of social housing households in Australia fell from 4.6% in 2014 to 4.1% in 2022. For more detail see [Households and waiting lists](#).
- In 2021–22, 56,854 households in Australia received Private Rent Assistance and 43,289 households received Home Purchase Assistance. For more see [Financial assistance](#).
- At June 2022, over 1.3 million income units were receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA). For more see [Financial assistance](#).

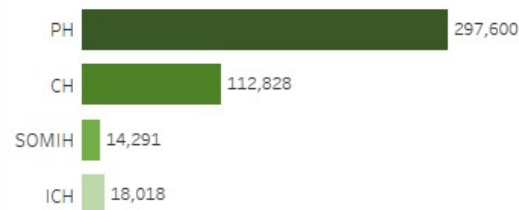
Australians having difficulty meeting costs of housing can be supported by housing assistance programs, including social housing and financial assistance.

## Social housing programs

Social housing provides eligible households with rents set below market rates (based on a percentage of a tenant's income). Forms of social housing include:

- public housing (PH)
- state owned & managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH)
- community housing (CH)
- Indigenous community housing (ICH).

Number of social housing dwellings 2022



## Newly allocated households

In 2021-22, there were 31,703 households newly allocated social housing including, 15,023 households allocated public housing, 16,052 to community housing and 628 to state owned and managed Indigenous housing.

## Supply of social housing

There has been a decline in the proportion of social housing households in Australia since 2014, from 4.6% of all households to 4.1% in 2022.

Proportion of social housing households (per cent)



Source: Housing assistance in Australia (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/haa>)  
Published 7 July 2023

## Quick facts – Australia

In 2022 there were:

- 442,737 social housing dwellings
- housing 418,434 households
- with 815,504 occupants throughout 2021-22.

In 2022, most (314,207) social housing dwellings met the size requirements for the household composition. There were 61,444 dwellings that were considered to be underutilised and 21,318 dwellings that were considered to be overcrowded.

## Financial assistance programs

Governments provide various forms of financial support to assist people on lower incomes to meet housing costs.

In 2021-22, 56,854 households in Australia received Private Rent Assistance.

Number of households receiving Private Rent Assistance



In 2021-22, 43,289 households in Australia received Home Purchase Assistance.

Number of households receiving Home Purchase Assistance



# Education and skills

# Early childhood and transition to school

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/childcare-and-early-childhood-education>

## On this page

Introduction

How many children are in child care?

Transition to school

What was the impact of COVID-19?

Where do I go for more information?

The early childhood years are a time when children begin to learn to communicate and get along with others, as well as adapt their behaviour, emotions, and attention (CDCHU 2011). These developmental skills play an important role when a child transitions to primary school and establish the foundations for academic and life success (Pascoe and Brennan 2017).

Early childhood education and care programs assist parents with their caring responsibilities. These programs can support the economic and social participation of parents, while helping to ease the transition to full-time school for children (Warren et al. 2016).

## How many children are in child care?

In Australia, early childhood education and care services are provided by government and non-government organisations. They may be formal or informal.

### Formal and informal care

Child care can be categorised as formal or informal.

Formal care: The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines formal child care as regulated care away from the child's home, including:

- outside school hours care
- centre-based day care
- family day care (ABS 2017).

Preschool was once considered a type of formal care, however since 2005 the definition of formal care has excluded preschool. Preschool data is collected separately from child care data and is discussed later on this page.

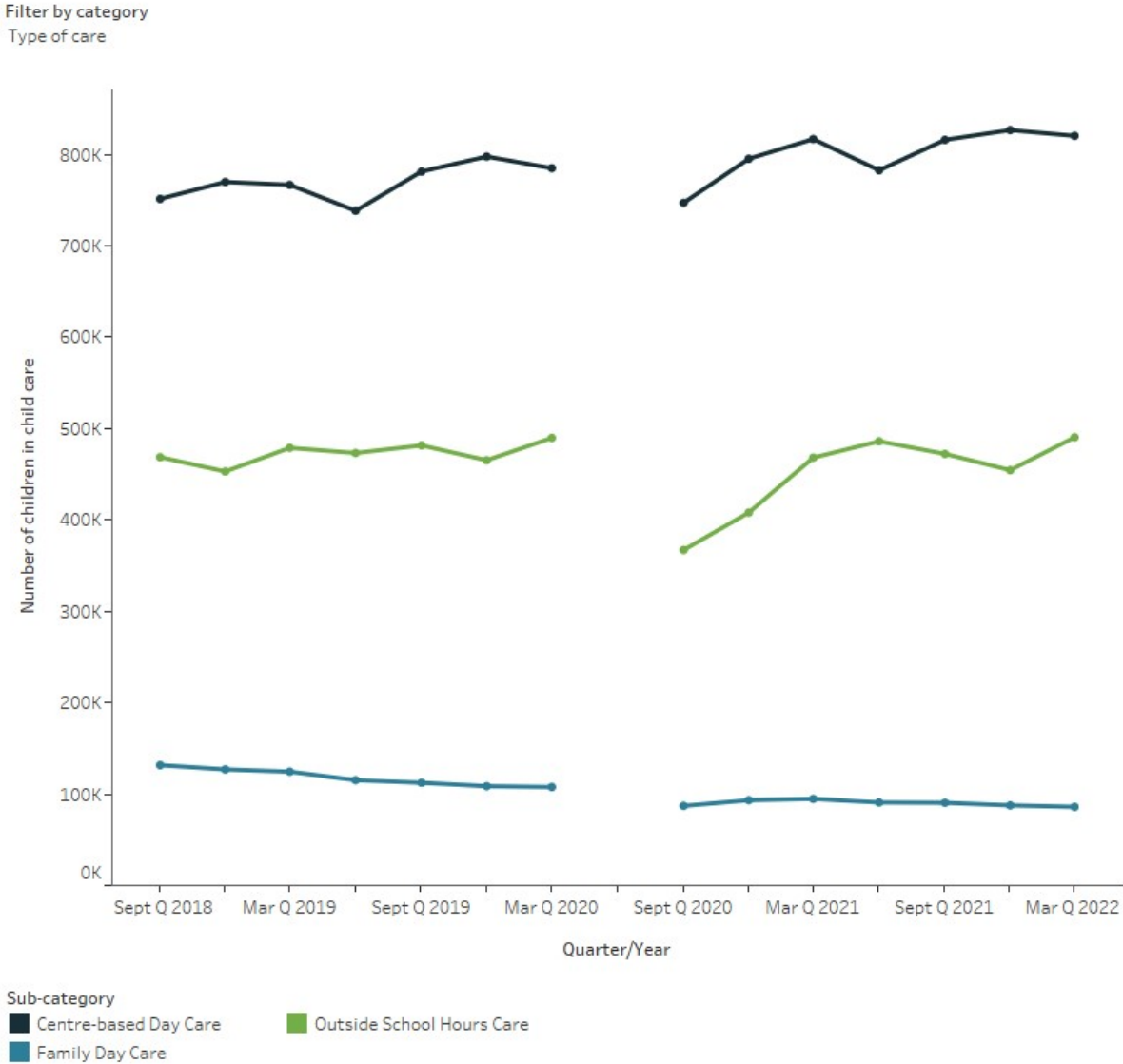
Informal care: The ABS defines informal care as non-regulated care, paid or unpaid. Informal care may be provided by:

- grandparents
- other relatives (including siblings and a parent living elsewhere)
- other people (including friends, babysitters, and nannies)
- other child minding services (for example, a crèche) (ABS 2017).

## **Child Care Subsidy approved child care**

The Australian Government provides a Child Care Subsidy to support children and families attending early childhood education and care services. In the March quarter 2022, 48% of 0–5-year-olds (883,510 children) and 33% of 0–12-year-olds (1,334,240 children) used Australian Government subsidised child care (Figure 1). Of all children attending child care, 62% attended Centre Based Day Care, 37% attended Outside School Hours Care, and 6.4% attended Family Day Care. The average weekly hours of child care use per child was 27 hours (DoE 2023).

**Figure 1: Number of children using Australian government subsidised child care, September quarter 2018 to March quarter 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

**Notes**

1. Only includes children who accessed Australian government subsidised child care who had been allocated a Customer Reference Number by Centrelink.
2. Figures and tables measuring total children includes children in in-home care. For confidentiality, when total children are reported for jurisdictions, children in in-home care are not included.
3. The introduction of a new child care package in July 2018 changed major components of the child care system resulting in a break in series for some child care metrics.
4. Due to the temporary measures implemented as part of the Australian Government’s Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) COVID-19 relief package, data for June quarter 2020 are not available.
5. Children accessing government supported child care through special purposed grants delivered through the Child Care Community Fund are not included.

6. Quarters can be of different lengths, for example, only 11 weeks of data were available for September quarter 2020, while September quarter 2021 contained 14 weeks of data.

Source: DoE 2023.

Participation in preschool programs aim to meet the learning needs of children through play-based activities (DET 2018). These programs are generally provided by preschools or centre-based day care services (formerly long day care) (see [glossary](#)) in the years before children enter full-time school (Warren et al. 2016). Preschool participation is not compulsory and age entry requirements vary across states and territories (ABS 2022b). Preschool subsidies are available in all states and territories (DoE 2022b).

## Preschool and centre-based day care

A preschool program can be offered by a preschool or a centre-based day care service.

According to the ABS (2014), preschools deliver a structured educational program to children before they start school. The preschool program can be delivered from a stand-alone facility or the preschool may be integrated or co-located within a school. Preschools can be operated by government or non-government entities.

Centre-based day care services provide child care to 0–5-year-olds. Services may include delivery of a preschool program by a qualified teacher. Like preschools, centre-based day care can be offered from a stand-alone facility or be co-located within a school. Centre-based day care can also be operated by for-profit and not-for-profit organisations.

In 2022, 334,440 4–5-year-olds were enrolled in a preschool program, a decrease of 1.3% since 2021 (ABS 2023). More children were enrolled in a preschool program through a centre based day care service (49%) than a preschool (37%) (ABS 2023).

Of 4–5-year-olds enrolled in a preschool program in 2022:

- About 266,100 were aged 4 and 68,300 aged 5, representing 87% of all 4-year-olds and 22% of all 5-year-olds (note that the lower proportion of 5-year-olds is due to those children starting primary school).
- More than 17,500 4-year-olds enrolled in a preschool program were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) children and about 4,000 were First Nations children aged 5, representing 91% and 21% of all First Nations children aged 4 and 5, respectively.
- The number of First Nations children enrolled in a preschool in 2022 was around 2.7% higher than in 2021 (ABS 2023 and ABS 2022a). For more information see [Education of First Nations people](#).
- 21% of all children enrolled in a preschool program were from an area in the least disadvantaged socioeconomic area quintile (see [glossary](#)) and 17% were from an area in the most disadvantaged socioeconomic area quintile (17% and 16% for 4-year-olds and 5-year-olds, respectively). The largest group of children (23%) resided in the second most advantaged socioeconomic area quintile. Each quintile represents 20% of the population.

- 72% were from *Major cities*, 26% from *Inner and outer regional* areas and 2% from *Remote and very remote* areas. These proportions changed minimally between 2021 and 2022.
- Most (over 95%) children were enrolled for 15 hours per week or more.
- About one-quarter (25%) were enrolled in a program where no fee was paid, which was down 9% from 2021. Forty four percent paid between \$1 and \$4 per hour; around 1 in 3 (31%) paid \$5 or more (ABS 2023).

## Transition to school

This section presents information on the development of children in Australia by the time they reach primary school, using data from the 2021 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC).

### What is the Australian Early Development Census?

The AEDC was introduced nationally in 2009 to measure the developmental vulnerability of children every 3 years. Data is provided by teachers using the Australian version of the Early Development Instrument. The census assesses children in their initial year of formal schooling. Parents/carers can opt out of the census if they do not want their child to participate (AEDC 2016). The proportion of eligible children participating in the AEDC has been above 95% in all collection cycles (AEDC 2022).

The AEDC measures early development across 5 domains:

- Physical health and wellbeing – physical independence, motor skills, energy levels, ability to physically cope with the school day.
- Social competence – self-control and self-confidence, ability to work and play well with others, respect for others, responsibility, ability to follow instructions.
- Emotional maturity – absence of anxious and fearful behaviour, ability to concentrate, ability to provide assistance to other children.
- Language and cognitive skills (school-based) – interest and ability relating to literacy, numeracy, memory.
- Communication skills and general knowledge – communication with children and adults, articulation, ability to tell a story (AEDC 2016).

The AEDC scores are grouped into 3 categories using benchmark scores calculated in 2009:

- developmentally on track (above the 2009 25th percentile)
- developmentally at risk (between the 2009 10th and 25th percentile)
- developmentally vulnerable (below the 2009 10th percentile).

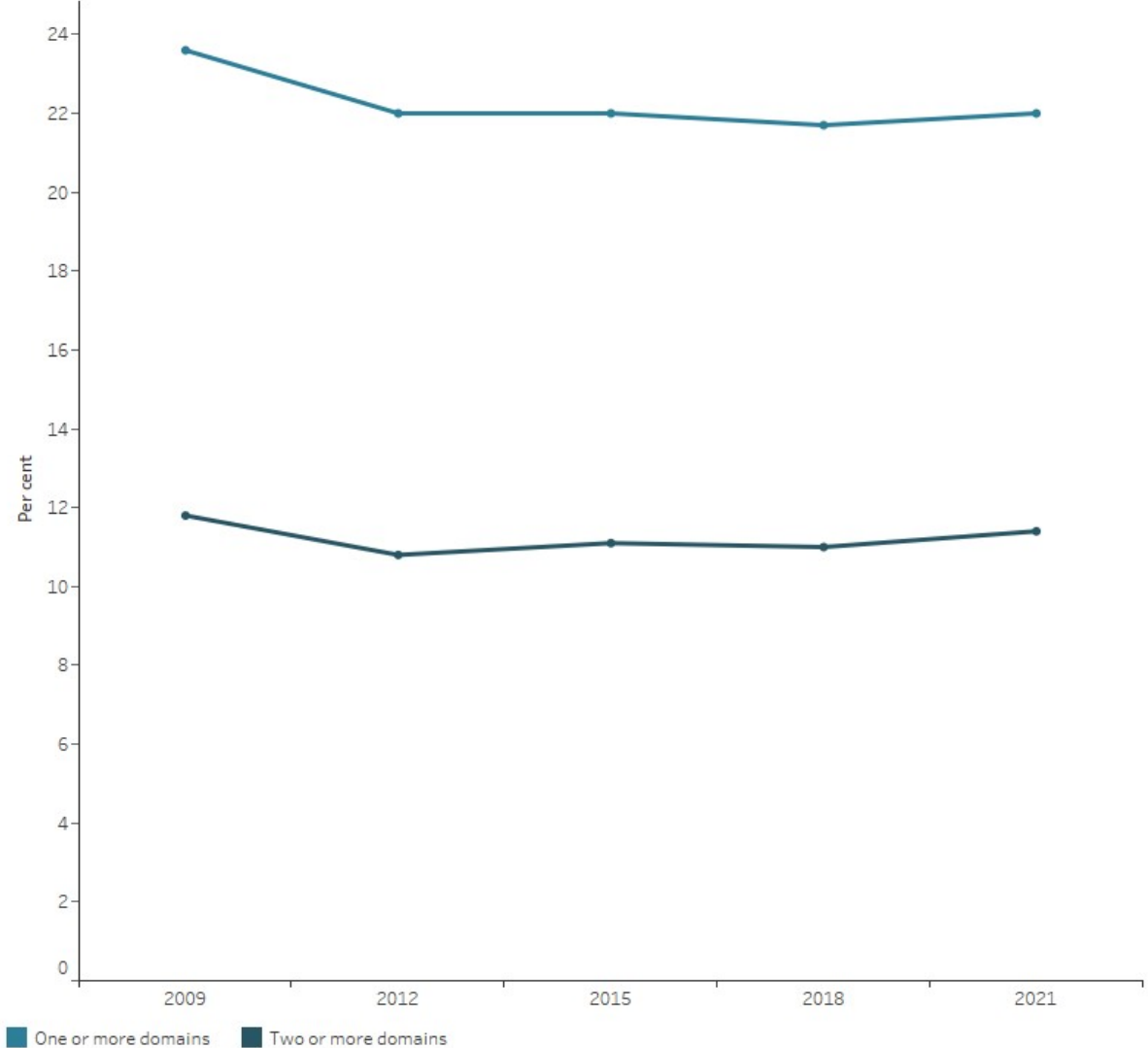
### How many children were developmentally vulnerable?

Based on the most recent data in 2021, the proportion of children in the first year of school classified as developmentally vulnerable on one or more domain(s) was 22%, while the proportion classified as developmentally vulnerable on 2 or more domains was 11%. Developmental vulnerability has remained relatively stable since 2012 and



decreased slightly since 2009 (Figure 2). The percentage of children who were on track on all 5 domains decreased slightly in 2021 for the first time since 2009, dropping by 0.6 percentage points to 54.8% from its peak in 2018 of 55.4% (AEDC 2022).

**Figure 2: Percentage of children in the first year of school classified as vulnerable on one or more AEDC domains(s) or on 2 or more domains, 2009 to 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Source: AEDC 2022.

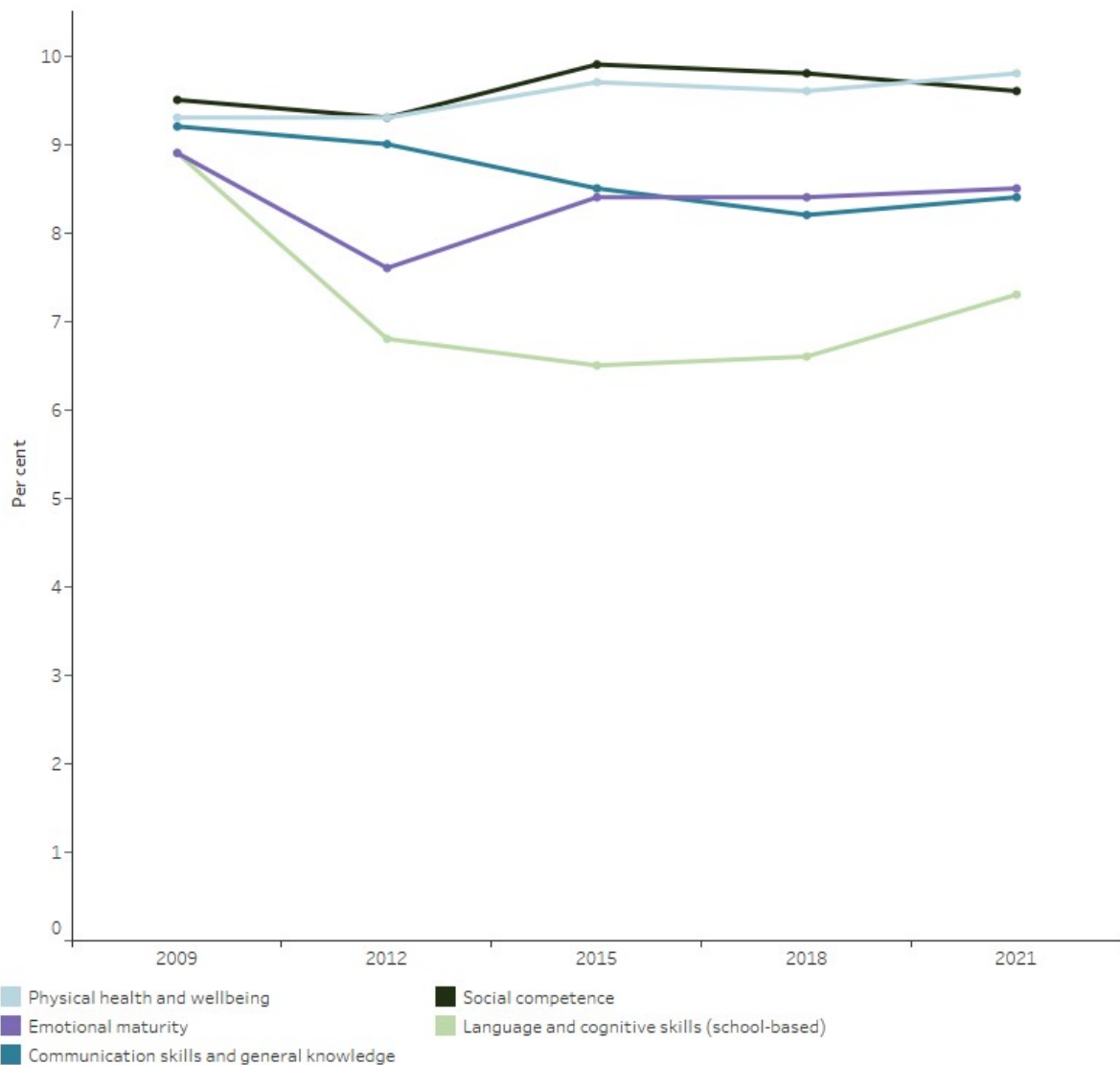
Some changes took place in the proportion of children in the first year of school considered to be developmentally vulnerable across the 5 AEDC domains between 2009 and 2021. Over this time period, the proportion of children developmentally vulnerable on:

- physical health and wellbeing increased from 9.3% to 9.8%
- social competence increased from 9.5% to 9.6%, peaking at 9.9% in 2015

- emotional maturity decreased from 8.9% to 8.5%
- language and cognitive skills decreased from 8.9% to 7.3%
- communication skills and general knowledge decreased from 9.2% to 8.4% (Figure 3).

In 2021, there were small increases in the percentage of children who were developmentally vulnerable in 3 of the 5 domains compared with 2018: language and cognitive skills (increase of 0.7 percentage points), physical health and wellbeing (0.2 percentage points) and communication and general knowledge (0.2 percentage points). There was a small decrease in the percentage of children who were developmentally vulnerable in the social competence domain (0.2 percentage point decrease), while emotional maturity remained unchanged (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Proportion of children in the first year of school classified as developmentally vulnerable on each of the 5 AEDC domains, 2009 to 2021**



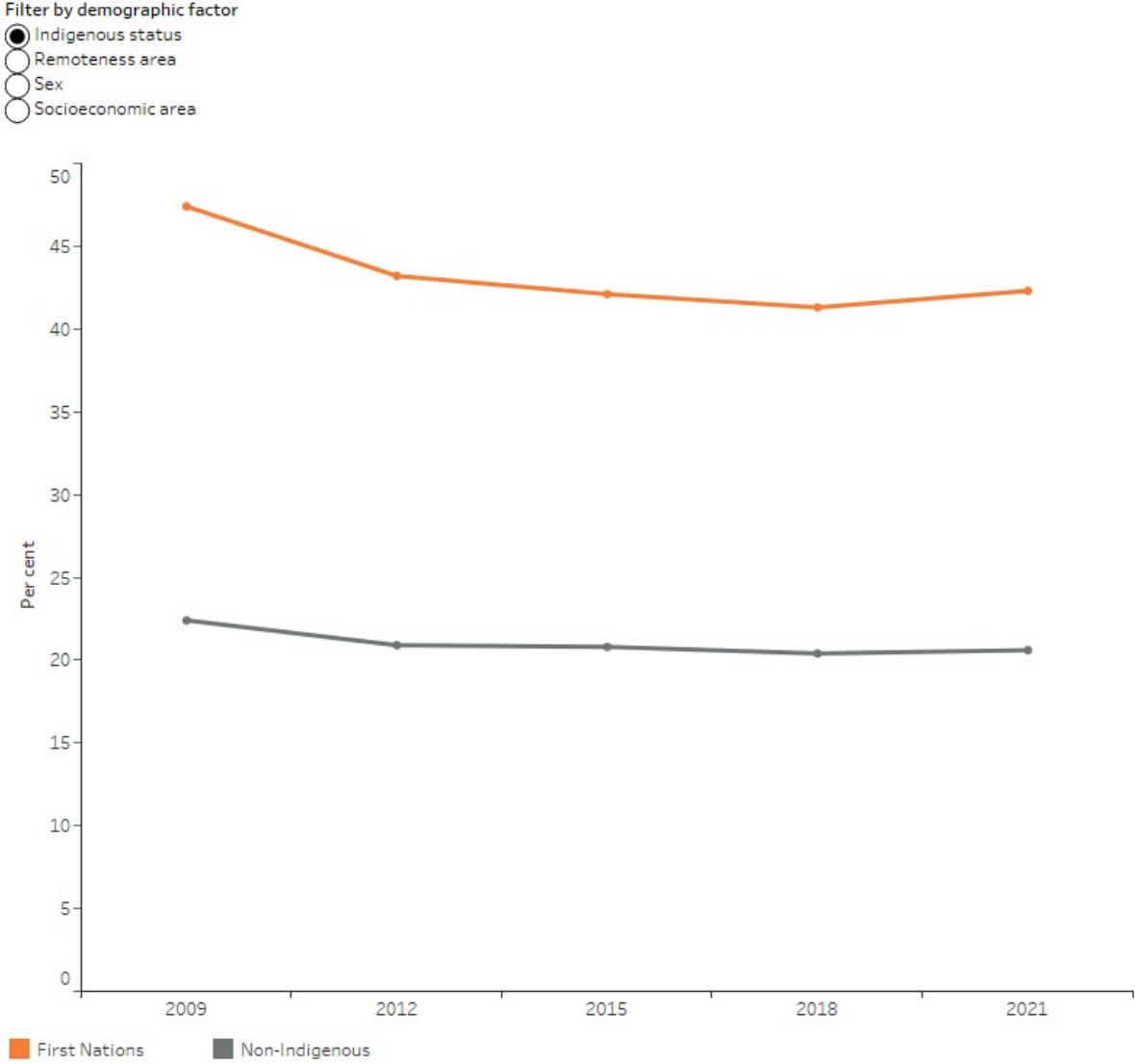
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Source: AEDC 2022.

In 2021, the developmental vulnerability of children in the first year of school also differed across demographic factors:

- Boys were nearly twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable on one or more and 2 or more domains than girls. This difference has been consistent in all AEDC collection cycles.
- 34% of First Nations children were developmentally on track across all 5 domains, a decline of 0.9 percentage points from 2018 (AEDC 2022). The proportion of First Nations children classified as developmentally vulnerable in one or more domain declined between 2009 and 2021 (see [Education of First Nations people](#) for more information).
- Children living in low socioeconomic areas (see [glossary](#)) were more likely to be developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains than children living in other socioeconomic areas. In 2021, 33% of children in the lowest socioeconomic areas were developmentally vulnerable, compared with 15% of children in the highest areas.
- Children living in *Very remote* areas were more likely to be developmentally vulnerable than children in other remoteness areas. In 2021, 46% of children in *Very remote* areas were developmentally vulnerable, compared with 21% of children living in *Major cities* (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Proportion of children in the first year of school classified as developmentally vulnerable on one or more AEDC domain(s) by sex, Indigenous status, socioeconomic area, and remoteness area, 2009 to 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Source: AEDC 2022.

## What was the impact of COVID-19?

In 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many Australian families withdrew their children from Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services. The impacts of COVID-19 on child care attendance differed across states and territories and care types and a number of relief packages were put in place aimed at keeping ECEC services open (DoE 2022a). Locations that were subject to frequent lockdowns and school closures saw larger drops in child care use. In particular, there were substantial declines in Outside School Hours Care usage in Victoria in the September and December quarters 2020 (DoE 2022e). The number of children who attended Australian Government subsidised child

care largely returned to pre-COVID-19 levels in the March quarter 2021, except in Victoria where the number of children remained below pre-COVID-19 levels until mid-2021 (Figure 1).

Research into the impact of COVID-19 on children's development is ongoing. Initial data from the most recent AEDC found that, nationally, the impact of COVID-19 on children's transition to school and development may have been small, with only modest increases in developmental vulnerability between 2018 and 2021 (AEDC 2022). However, the impact may have been unevenly felt, with larger increases in developmental vulnerability among First Nations children and children living in the most disadvantaged areas of Australia (AEDC 2022).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on early childhood and transition to school, see:

- Department of Education [Early childhood data and reports](#)
- ABS [Preschool Education, Australia](#)
- AEDC [Australian Early Development Census](#).

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# Higher education, vocational education and training

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/higher-education-and-vocational-education>

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Enrolments in non-school qualifications

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Non-school qualifications and employment

International comparisons

Where do I go for more information?

Higher levels of educational attainment tend to be associated with an increased likelihood of being employed, and higher earnings (OECD 2022). On average across Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, adults with a tertiary degree earn twice the amount of their secondary-educated peers (OECD 2022).

Increasing levels of education has been shown to have an overall positive effect on an individual's life satisfaction, particularly through the indirect effects of improved income and better health (Powdthavee et al. 2015), see 'Chapter 2 Social determinants of subjective wellbeing' in [Australia's welfare 2021: data insights](#).

## Impacts of COVID-19

In 2020 and 2021, the higher and vocational education and training sectors were heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In an effort to reduce the spread of the virus, initiatives such as international travel restrictions and border control measures, non-essential service shutdown, social distancing and remote and home-based learning were implemented.

Restrictions on international travel saw a fall in the number of international students undertaking studies at Australian universities. In 2020, the number of international students enrolled in Australian higher education institutions dropped by about 34,400 –

this was the first year in which the number of international students decreased since 2011 (DoE 2022a, 2022b). In 2021, the number of international students enrolled in Australian higher education institutions decreased again by approximately 48,700 students (DoE 2023). The proportion of students studying externally (entirely online or off-campus) also increased substantially. In 2021, 27% of domestic students and 15% of international students studied externally, compared with 22% and 2% respectively in 2019 (DoE 2023).

Similarly, face-to-face classes in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector were heavily restricted and moved to online methods. The impact was more profound for those students undertaking work placements in the health, aged care, and early childhood sectors, as these sensitive settings were subject to strict infection control conditions. The changes in mode of delivery of VET in response to COVID-19 may have lasting impacts, with the blended delivery of VET (that is, online in combination with another delivery mode), continuing to grow in 2021, and the proportion of online-only VET subjects remaining steady in 2021 compared with 2020 (Hume and Griffin 2021).

In April and May 2020, the number of apprenticeship and traineeship contract commencements declined, and the number of suspended contracts increased dramatically (Hall 2021). The then Australian Government's COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan included measures to support new apprenticeships, including the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements wage subsidy. Over the period between 5 October 2020 and 31 June 2022, the subsidy provided up to \$7,000 per quarter to cover 50% of wages for commencing or recommencing apprentices (DEWR 2023). The introduction of the subsidy did appear to impact apprenticeship and traineeship numbers as, in 2020–21, the number of people commencing an apprenticeship or traineeship increased by 61% compared with the previous financial year (NCVER 2022d).

The COVID-19 pandemic also affected the outcomes of those who had completed their education or training in 2019. Based on data from the National Student Outcomes Survey, of people who completed vocational education or training in 2019, 56% reported better employment after training. This was 10 percentage points less than for those who completed a qualification in 2018 (66%) (NCVER 2021a).

Of people completing VET qualifications in 2019 who were employed after completing their training:

- about 1 in 3 (35%) reported having their hours reduced in 2020 since COVID-19
- 7.1% reported being temporarily stood down in 2020 due to COVID-19.

Of those who were not employed at the end of May 2020, 21% reported they had lost their job due to the pandemic (NCVER 2021b) (see [Employment and unemployment](#)).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the higher and vocational education and training sectors is yet to be completely understood and will be a topic for researchers and the education sector into the future.



# Characteristics of non-school education students

## What are non-school qualifications?

Non-school qualifications include Certificate I to Certificate IV, Diploma, Bachelor, Master and Doctoral level qualifications. When determining an individual's highest level of educational attainment, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) considers non-school qualifications at a Certificate III level or above to be higher than a Year 12 level of education (ABS 2021). However, other measures of school attainment group Certificate III with Year 12 attainment (ACARA 2020).

In Australia, non-school education can be broken into 2 categories:

### Higher education

- usually leads to the attainment of a Bachelor, Master or Doctoral degree, Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma
- is provided by universities, for-profit or not-for-profit institutions, or Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes (TEQSA 2019).

### VET

- provides training focused on technical skills and knowledge for a particular job or industry, with apprenticeships and traineeships forming a core part
- usually leads to the attainment of Certificate or Diploma qualifications
- is offered by private providers, enterprise providers, community education providers, schools, universities, and TAFE institutes (NCVER 2022e).

Table 1 provides a summary of the characteristics of people enrolled in higher education or VET during 2021.

**Table 1: Characteristics of higher education and VET providers and students, 2021**

	Higher education	VET
<b>Number of providers</b>	140	3,529 <sup>(a)</sup>
<b>Number of students</b>	1.6 million	2.6 million <sup>(b,c)</sup>
<b>Percentage of students who are female</b>	57.2 <sup>(d)</sup>	48.2 <sup>(e)</sup>
<b>Percentage who are First Nations students</b>	1.5 <sup>(d)</sup>	5.1 <sup>(e)</sup>
<b>Percentage who are full-time students</b>	67.6 <sup>(d)</sup>	22.3 <sup>(e)</sup>

<b>Percentage who are international students</b>	27.5 <sup>(d)</sup>	11.0 <sup>(e)</sup>
<b>Percentage of students in regional/remote areas</b>	13.4 <sup>(d)</sup>	28.5 <sup>(e)</sup>

(a) Includes Australian providers operating overseas (NCVER 2022e).

(b) Includes students enrolled with Australian providers operating overseas (NCVER 2022e).

(c) Only includes VET students enrolled in Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level courses.

(d) Students as a proportion of all higher education student enrolments in 2020 (DoE 2023).

(e) Students as a proportion of VET students enrolled in AQF level courses in 2021 (NCVER 2022e).

Sources: DoE 2023; NCVER 2022e.

## Enrolments in non-school qualifications

In May 2022, almost 3 million people aged 15–74 years (16%) were studying, either in school or non-school education. Of these, 2.1 million people aged 15–74 (10% of males and 12% of females aged 15–74) were enrolled in non-school qualifications (ABS 2022).

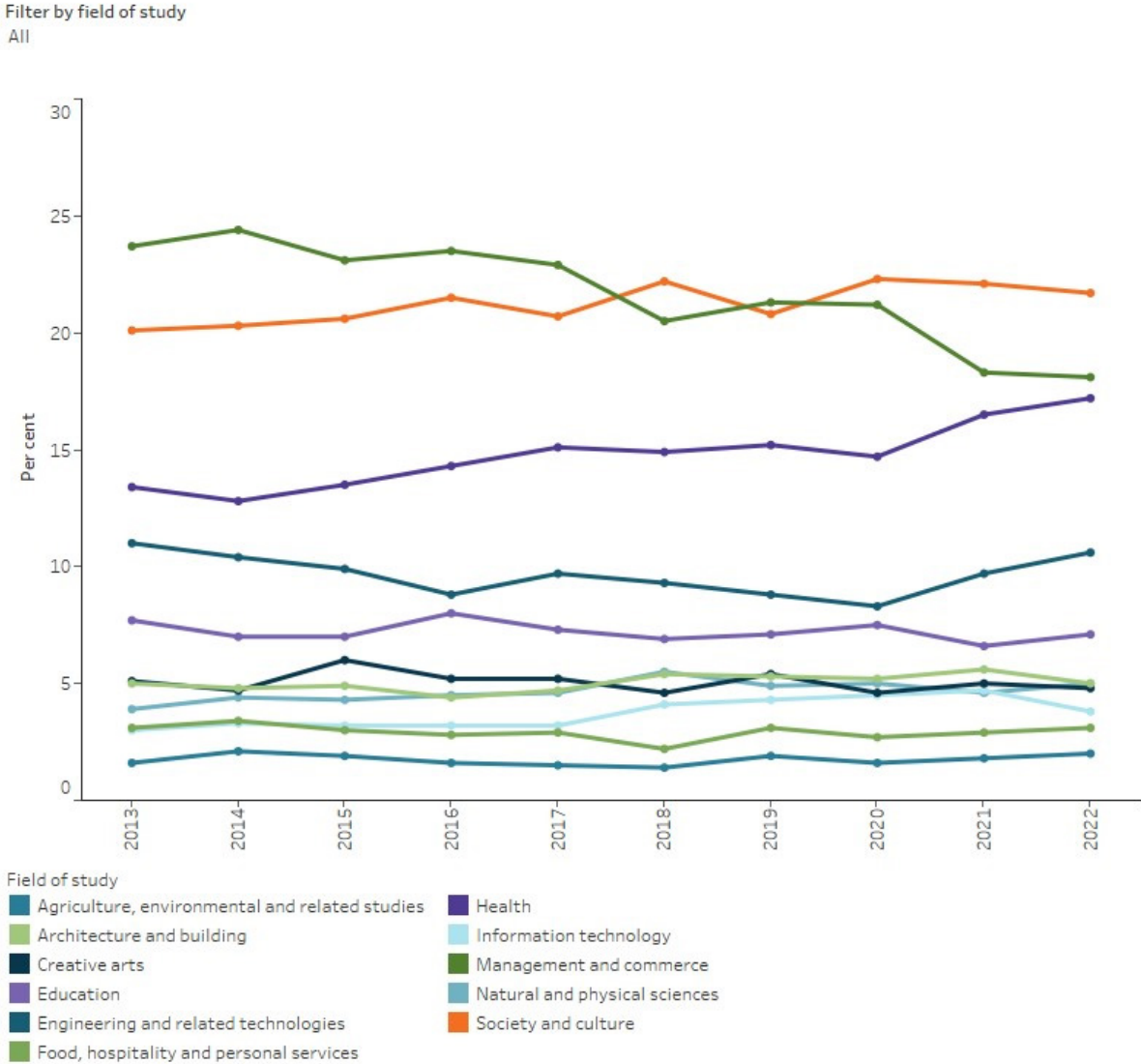
In May 2022:

- People aged 20–24 were the most likely to be enrolled in a non-school qualification (43% of the population of that age), followed by those aged 15–19 (23%), and 25–29 (17%).
- Most enrolments were for a bachelor’s degree (39%), followed by Certificate III or IV level study (22%), postgraduate level degree (18%), and diploma or advanced diploma (12%).
- Among people enrolled in a non-school qualification, a greater proportion of male students (27%) than female students (18%) were enrolled in a Certificate III or IV. Female students were more likely than male students to be studying for a bachelor’s degree (40% and 38%, respectively) and a postgraduate level degree (21% and 16%, respectively).
- The most common fields of study were Society and culture (22% of people enrolled, up slightly from 20% in 2013), Management and commerce (18%, down from 24% in 2013) and Health (17%, up from 13% in 2013) (Figure 1). Enrolments in other fields of study remained fairly consistent over the period (ABS 2022).

For information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people and higher education, vocational education, and training, see [Education of First Nations people](#).

For information on the association between socioeconomic status and university participation, see ‘Chapter 7 Relative influence of different markers of socioeconomic status on university participation’ in [Australia’s welfare 2023: data insights](#).

**Figure 1: Percentage of people aged 15–74 studying for a non-school qualification, by field of study, 2013 to 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Source: ABS 2022.

## Pathways after leaving school

One of the major pathways after completing school is further education and training. Of people aged 15–20 who left school in 2021, 55% were enrolled in non-school study in May 2022: 39% in higher education, 13% in TAFE and 3.7% in another type of study institution (ABS 2022).

The proportion of school leavers who enrolled in further study and the type of study they enrolled in was different for students that did or did not complete year 12. Among people who left school having completed year 12 or equivalent, 58% were enrolled in non-school study; 46% in higher education, 9.2% in TAFE and 2.2% in another type of study institution. Among people who left school having completed year 11 or below,

42% were enrolled in non-school study the following year; 13% in higher education, 19% in TAFE and 10% in another type of study institution (ABS 2022).

Another major pathway after leaving school is entering the labour force. About 32% of 2021 school leavers were employed and not enrolled in study in May 2022, 18% part time and 14% full time. Almost twice the proportion of 2021 school leavers who left school in year 11 or below were employed full time and not enrolled in study (22%) compared with those who completed year 12 (12%) (ABS 2022).

## Attainment of non-school qualifications

In May 2022, just over 6 in 10 people aged 15–74 (63%), or 12.0 million people, had a non-school qualification. Approximately 6.1 million people (32%) had a non-school qualification at the bachelor's degree level or higher, and 5.6 million people (30%) had a certificate, diploma, or advanced diploma as their highest non-school qualification. Between 2013 and 2022, the percentage of people aged 15–74 years that have a non-school qualification has increased from 56% to 63% (ABS 2022).

In May 2022:

- People aged 35–44 were most likely to have a non-school qualification (79%), with the rate of attainment decreasing with increasing age (45–54 years, 72%; 55–64 years, 62%; 65–74 years, 54%).
- Among people aged 50–74, men were more likely than women to have a non-school qualification. For people aged 15–49, women were more likely to have a non-school qualification than men.
- By highest level of non-school qualification, a higher percentage of women (35%) had a bachelor's degree or above than men (29%), while men (33%) were more likely than women (27%) to have a certificate, diploma, or advanced diploma as their highest non-school qualification.
- People born overseas (69%) were more likely than people born in Australia (60%) to have a non-school qualification.
- People living in the highest socioeconomic area quintile, using the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (see [glossary](#)) were more likely to have a non-school qualification than people in the lowest socioeconomic area quintile (72% compared with 51%, respectively).
- People living in *Major cities* were more likely to have a non-school qualification than those living in regional or remote areas (*Major cities*, 65%; *Inner regional*, 60%; *Outer regional*, 56%; *Remote and very remote*, 58%) (ABS 2022).

## Apprenticeships and traineeships

Apprenticeships and traineeships (see [glossary](#)) are central components of the vocational education and training system. They provide the opportunity to train and study toward a nationally recognised qualification, combining on- and off-the-job training to enable individuals to develop their skills while participating in the workforce and earning an income.

## 1 in 8 trade workers are apprentices or trainees

As at 30 June 2022, 1 in 8 (13%) workers in trade occupations were apprentices or trainees and 1 in 33 workers (3.1%) in all occupations were employed as an apprentice or trainee (NCVER 2022a).

As of 30 June 2022, 415,240 apprentices and trainees were training in Australia, an increase of 22% since June 2021 (Figure 2). Of these apprentices and trainees in training:

- 58% were training for a trade and 42% were training for a non-trade
- 35% were aged 25–49, 31% were aged 20–24, 29% were aged under 19, and 5.0% were aged 50 or older
- 31% were female and 69% were male
- around 1 in 20 (5.4%) were First Nations people
- around 1 in 36 (2.8%) had disability
- around 1 in 14 (6.4%) were school-based (NCVER 2022c).

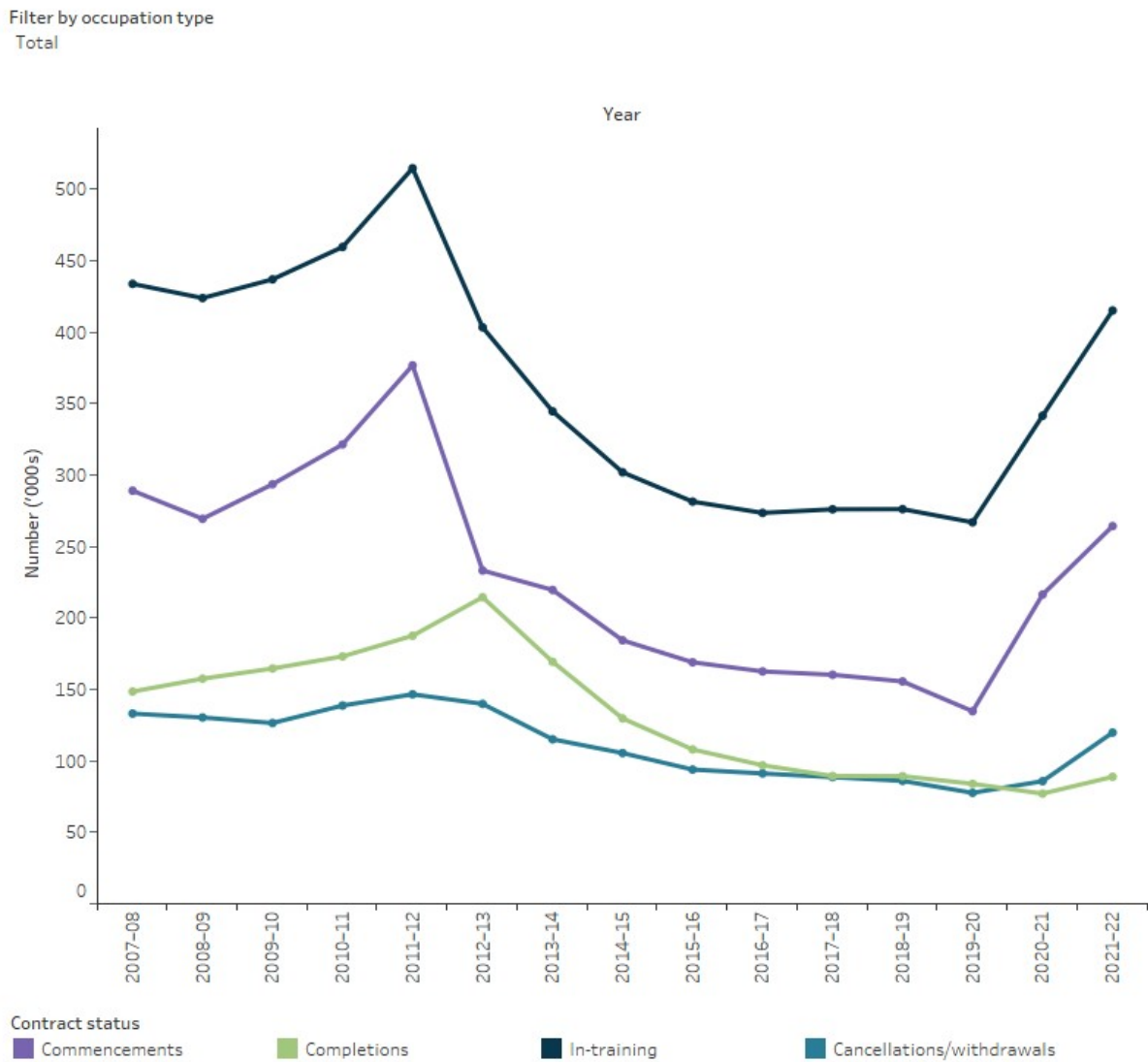
## The number of people commencing apprenticeships and traineeships has increased

Between 2019–20 and 2020–21, the number of people commencing an apprenticeship or traineeship increased by 61%, with 216,428 people commencing in 2020–21. This was the first time since 2010–11 that the number of people commencing an apprenticeship or traineeship had increased. In 2021–22, the increase continued, with 264,320 apprentices and trainees commencing, an increase of 22% since 2020–21 (Figure 2). These increases may be related to the apprenticeship and traineeship wage subsidies provided by the Australian government as part of the COVID-19 economic recovery plan (see Impacts of COVID-19).

The increase was greater for non-trade occupations (68% increase from 2019–20 to 2020–21 and 30% from 2020–21 to 2021–22) than trade occupations (increases of 52% and 13%, respectively) and greater for females (increases of 73% and 30%, respectively) than males (53% and 17%, respectively) (NCVER 2022d).

Between 2012–13 and 2019–20, the number of people commencing apprenticeships and traineeships declined steeply. The number of people commencing apprenticeships increased between 2009 and 2011 due to the Apprentice Kickstart initiative. The decline from 2012–13 reflects changes to Australian Government incentive payments and a decrease in demand for labour in some industries such as mining and utilities (Gilfillan 2016). In the 12 months ending 30 June 2020, 134,800 people commenced an apprenticeship or traineeship, the lowest number since 1996–97. The decline in 2019–20 may be due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals, businesses, and governments. As such, data covering the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 should be interpreted carefully when comparing with previous years (NCVER 2022d).

**Figure 2: Number of apprentices and trainees in the 12 months ending 30 June, by contract status and occupation type, 2007–08 to 2021–22**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Note: Data for 'in-training' is as at 30 June. All other statuses are for the 12-months ending 30 June.

Source: NCVER 2022d.

## Completion of apprenticeships and traineeships

In 2021–22, more than 88,800 people completed an apprenticeship or traineeship, with 42,800 (48%) completing a trade occupation and 46,100 (52%) completing a non-trade occupation (Figure 2).

More than half (56%) of apprentices and trainees who started training in 2017 completed their apprenticeship or traineeship requirements. Completions were slightly higher for those in a non-trade occupation (57%) compared with those in a trade occupation (54%) (NCVER 2022b).

## **Non-school qualifications and employment**

Non-school qualifications are associated with improved employment status, with employment rates higher for people with non-school qualifications compared to those without. Of people aged 15–74 with non-school qualifications, 79% were employed in May 2022, compared with 58% of those without qualifications (ABS 2022).

Of people aged 15–74 who completed a non-school qualification in 2021, 85% were employed in May 2022, 5.2% were looking for work, and 10% were not in the labour force. The proportion of people who were employed was highest for people who had completed a Graduate Diploma/Graduate Certificate (93%) and lowest for people who had completed a Certificate I/II (71%). By field of study, the proportion of people who were employed was highest among people who studied in the natural and physical sciences (93%), education (92%) and engineering and related technologies (91%), and lowest for people who had studied in the creative arts (71%) (ABS 2022).

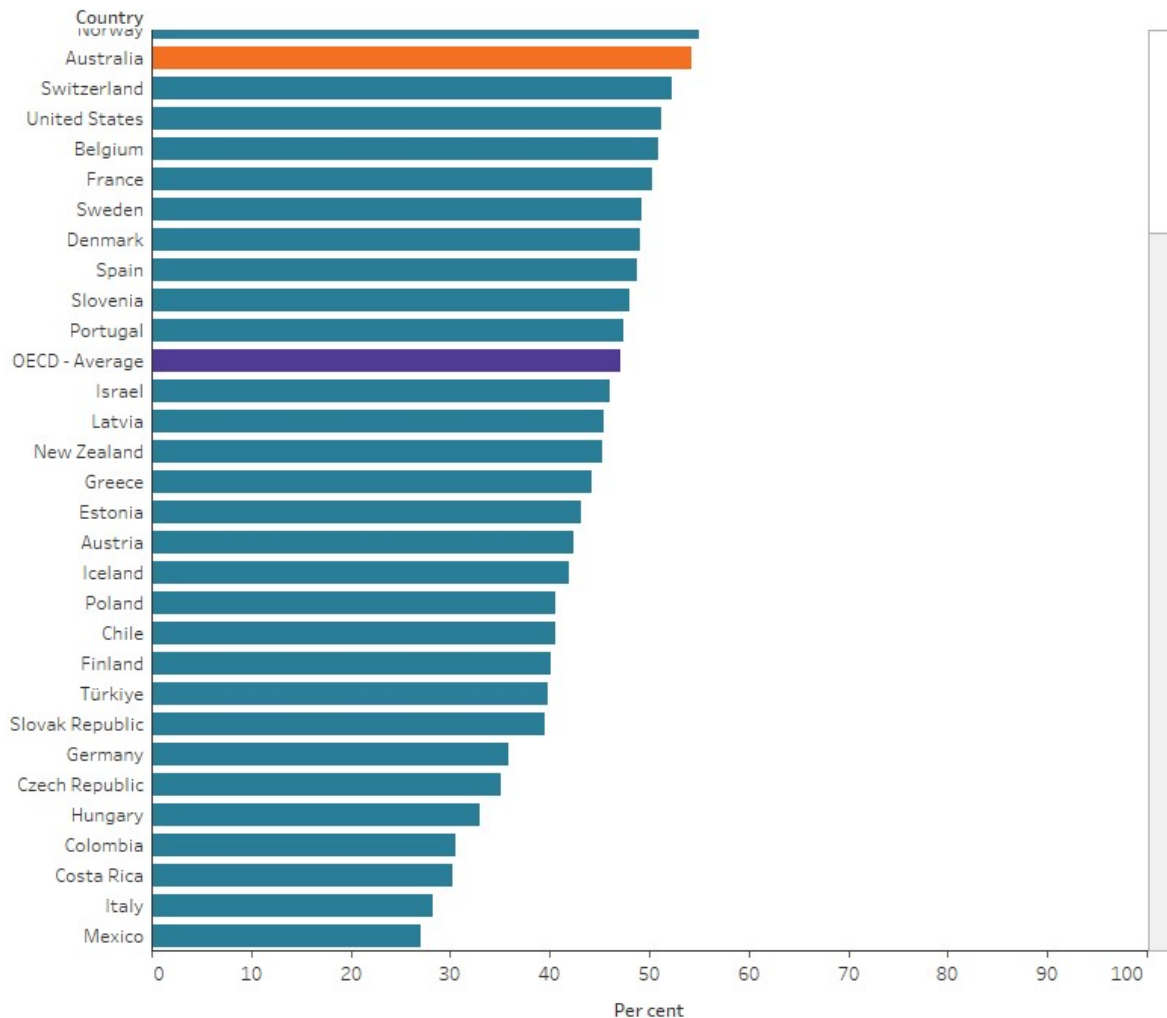
## **International comparisons**

In 2021 (or latest available year), Australia ranked 10th highest out of 38 OECD countries for the proportion of those aged 25–34 having a tertiary education (OECD 2023).

The OECD defines tertiary education as having an International Standard Classification of Education of 5 or above (OECD 2017). In Australia, this means tertiary education comprises qualifications at Diploma level or above (UNESCO 2019). According to the OECD, Australia (54%) ranked below South Korea (69%), Canada (66%) and the United Kingdom (58%), but above the United States (51%), and the OECD average (47%) (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Percentage of people aged 25–34 with tertiary education, OECD countries, 2021 or latest available year**

Filter by country  
All



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Source: OECD 2023.

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on higher education, vocational education and training, see:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [Education and Work, Australia](#)
- Department of Education [Higher Education Statistics](#)
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) [Total VET students and courses](#)
- NCVER [Apprentices and trainees collection](#)
- NCVER [National Student Outcomes Survey](#)
- OECD [Education](#).



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# Primary and secondary schooling

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/primary-and-secondary-schooling>

## On this page

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Where do I go for more information?

Higher levels of education are associated with increased likelihood of being employed, being in good health and reporting higher life satisfaction (ABS 2022; OECD 2016). In Australia, children must attend school until they complete Year 10. After year 10, people are required to participate in education, training, or employment until they are 17 years old. In Australia, completing Year 12 or an equivalent qualification is now considered to be an important milestone in the transition to adulthood (Liu and Nguyen 2011). Those who have completed Year 12 are more likely to continue with further education or training and have a more successful transition into the workforce (ABS 2011; Deloitte 2012; Ryan 2011).

This page presents national statistics for an overview of Australia's performance in primary and secondary education.

## School achievement

School student achievement refers to the extent to which a student has attained their short- or long-term educational goals. Ongoing assessment of student achievement can be used to help teachers monitor student learning, identify gaps in a student's knowledge, and target teaching to each student's needs.

States and territories require schools to measure, monitor, and report on students' school achievement across the school's curriculum. However, the nature and format of this reporting is often specific to schools or jurisdictions. School-reported student achievement data is not collated nationally. This section reports on national sources of data on student achievement. These sources tend to focus on literacy and numeracy measured through standardised tests.

## NAPLAN

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an annual assessment of students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9. NAPLAN assesses the following:

- reading
- writing
- language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation)
- numeracy (ACARA 2022b).

NAPLAN results provide data to assess achievement against the national minimum standard and mean score (see [glossary](#)). NAPLAN mean scores generally range from 0–1,000 points, with higher scores indicating better performance. NAPLAN test results are equated to a scale established in 2008 so that a score of 700 in reading has the same meaning in each year, thus results can be compared with previous years (ACARA 2022b). From 2023 onwards there are changes to the way NAPLAN results are reported (see [Changes to NAPLAN in 2023](#)). In 2022, NAPLAN tests were completed by students entirely online for the first time (ACARA 2022b). While results are standardised across years, this change must be taken into account when comparing 2022 results to previous years. No results are available for 2020 as Education ministers made the decision to cancel NAPLAN due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Changes to NAPLAN in 2023

A review of the NAPLAN standardised testing was commissioned in 2019. The review considered whether NAPLAN remains fit-for-purpose and made several recommendations for future versions of the national standardised assessment (McGaw et al 2020). Based on this review, in 2023, the test was held in Term 1 (instead of Term 2) in March. This allows results to be published earlier in the year to inform school programs and will allow teachers to better support students for the year ahead (ACARA 2022a).

In addition, from 2023 onwards, NAPLAN results will be reported against 4 levels of achievement bands, 'Exceeding', 'Strong', 'Developing' and 'Needs additional support' instead of the existing national minimum standard and 10 proficiency bands (DoE 2023). A new NAPLAN time series begins from 2023. Data reported on this page (2008 and 2022) cannot be compared with [NAPLAN 2023 results](#).

Since its inception, national average achievement in NAPLAN scores have remained stable or modestly improved. In 2022, the average achievement, or national mean score, was above 2008 results for year 3 students in reading, spelling and grammar and for year 5 students in reading, spelling and numeracy. Average achievement in all other domains across years 3, 5, 7 and 9 remained similar or not statistically different from inception (Figure 1).

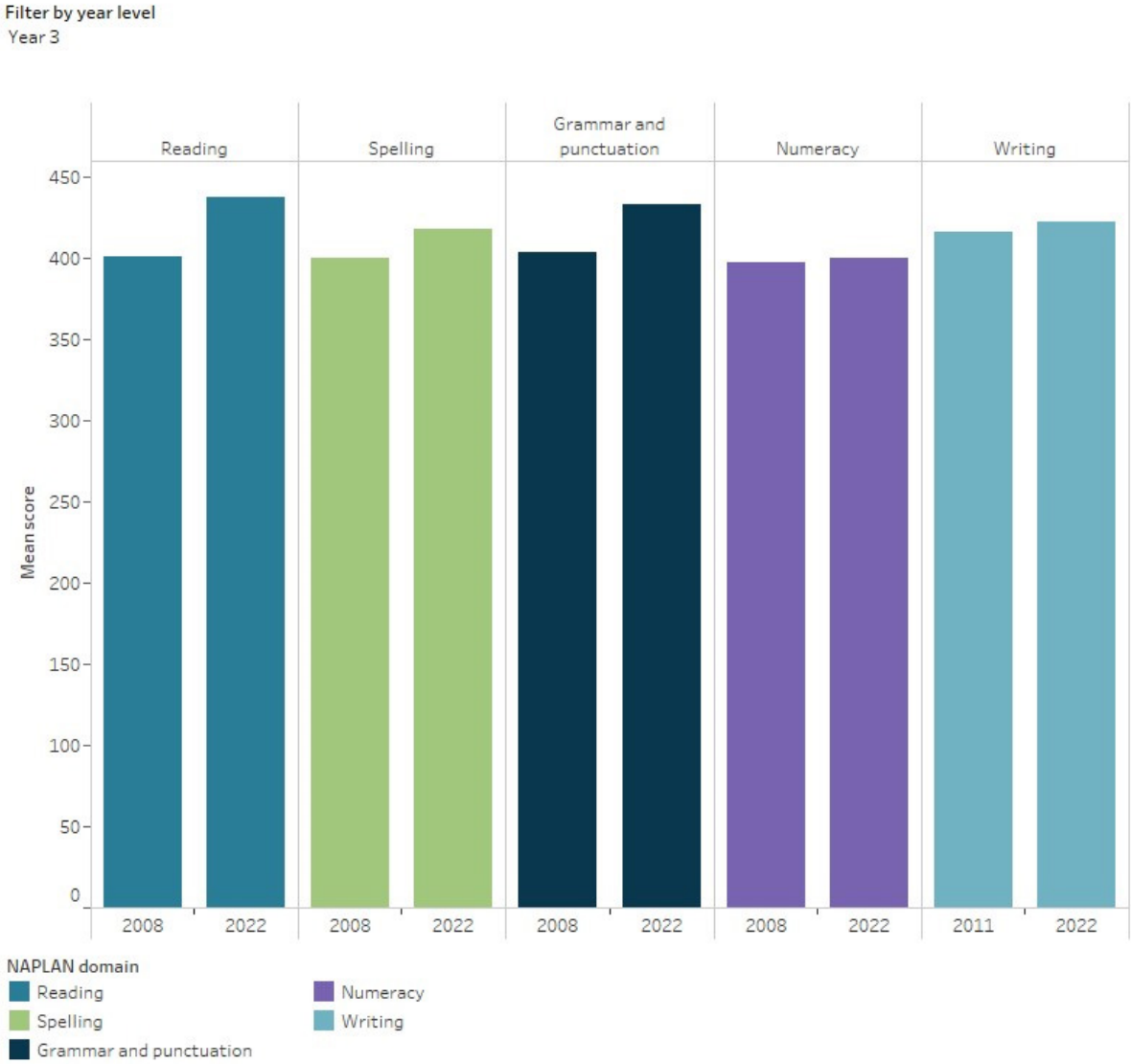
For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) students, NAPLAN average scores since inception have trended upwards with modest improvements across most domains and year levels. For more information see [Education of First Nations people](#).

National mean scores on NAPLAN domains in 2022 did not change substantially from 2021 results.

In 2022:

- Across all assessed year levels, female students attained a higher mean score than males in reading, writing, spelling, and grammar and punctuation. On the numeracy domain, females attained a lower mean score than males.
- Students from *Very remote* areas scored lowest across all NAPLAN domains when compared with students in other remoteness areas, with scores generally increasing with decreased remoteness.
- By parental education level, children whose parents had attained a bachelor's degree or higher returned the highest mean scores, and mean scores were lower for students whose parents had no post-school education or certificate level post-school education only (ACARA 2022b).

**Figure 1: National mean scores across NAPLAN domains by year level, 2008, 2011 and 2022**



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Notes

1. Due to changes in the Writing assessment in 2011, the earliest year against which 2022 results on the Writing domain can be compared is 2011.
2. The 2022 increase in mean score for year 3 reading, spelling and grammar & punctuation and year 5 reading, spelling and numeracy are statistically significant. All other changes are not statistically significant.

Source: ACARA 2022b.

Using equivalised years of learning (see [glossary](#)), gaps in NAPLAN achievement widened as students progressed through school year levels. For example, year 3 students with a parent who had a bachelor’s degree or higher had an additional 1.3 years of learning

compared to those who did not. At year 9, the difference in years of learning increased to 3.7 years (PC 2023).

## **Program for International Student Assessment**

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a triennial survey of 15-year-old students around the world. It focuses on the core school subjects of science, reading and mathematics (OECD 2019b). Results can be compared over time from the first year a subject was a major domain on the PISA, 2000 for reading, 2003 for mathematics and 2006 for science.

For all three domains, the performance of Australian students was highest at the first year of measurement and have since declined slightly (Figure 2). In 2018, Australian students continued to perform above the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average in science and reading and performed similar to the OECD average in mathematics (OECD 2019a).

The most recent PISA was completed in 2022, results are expected to be available in late 2023.

**Figure 2: Mean performance on the PISA, Australia and the OECD, 2000 to 2018**

Filter by PISA Scale  
All



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**Notes**

1. This OECD average includes all OECD member countries for which data were available for the corresponding subject and year. Depending on data availability, the countries contributing to this average might vary by cycle and subject.
2. The first full PISA assessment for reading literacy was in 2000, for mathematical literacy in 2003 and for science in 2006. Results for mathematical literacy prior to 2003 and for science prior to 2006 are not comparable with results from later cycles.

Source: OECD 2020.

**Progress in International Reading Literacy Study**

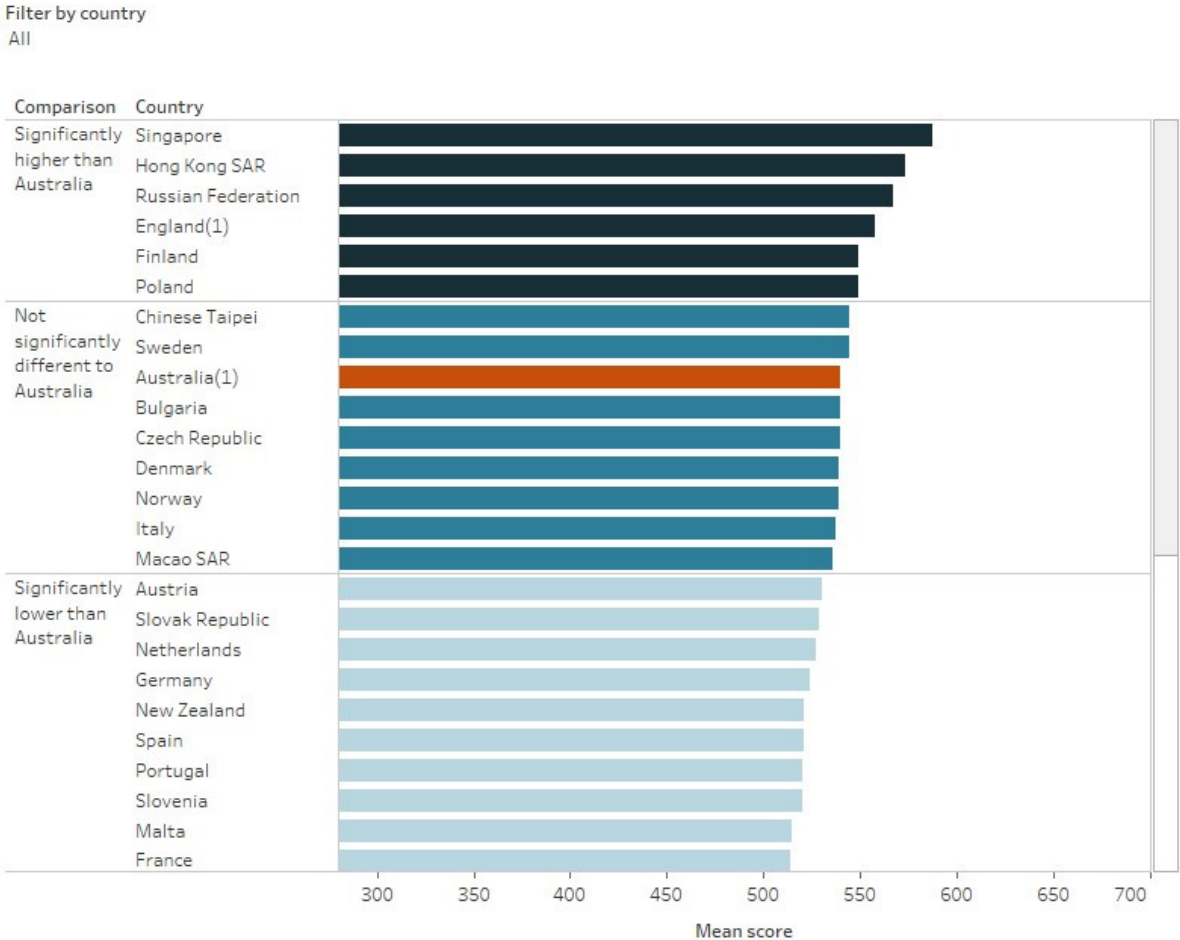
The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assesses reading literacy in Year 4 students across over 50 countries every five years. The latest available data from the PIRLS comes from the 2021 report. COVID-19 restrictions caused many countries to delay assessing students, meaning the results for some countries are not comparable



with others. Australia’s national report presents results from 43 countries that assessed students towards the end of year 4, whether in 2020 as originally scheduled, or in 2021 or 2022. Australia completed the PIRLS assessment in 2021 (Hillman et al. 2023).

- Australia’s average reading score (540) was significantly higher than 28 participating countries, significantly lower than 6 countries, and similar to 8 countries (Figure 3).
- Australia’s average reading score in 2021 was similar to the average reading score in 2016 (544) and an increase since 2011 (527).
- Of the 32 countries that assessed students in year 4 and participated in both PIRLS 2021 and PIRLS 2016, 8 countries had similar scores in 2021 as in 2016, 21 countries experienced a decline and 3 countries had improved scores.
- 80% of Australian year 4 students met or exceeded the PIRLS Intermediate benchmark (the Australian proficient standard), similar to 2016 (81%).

**Figure 3: Comparison of mean scores on the PIRLS reading literacy assessment, 2021**



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- Significantly higher than Australia
- Not significantly different to Australia
- Significantly lower than Australia
- Australia

## Notes

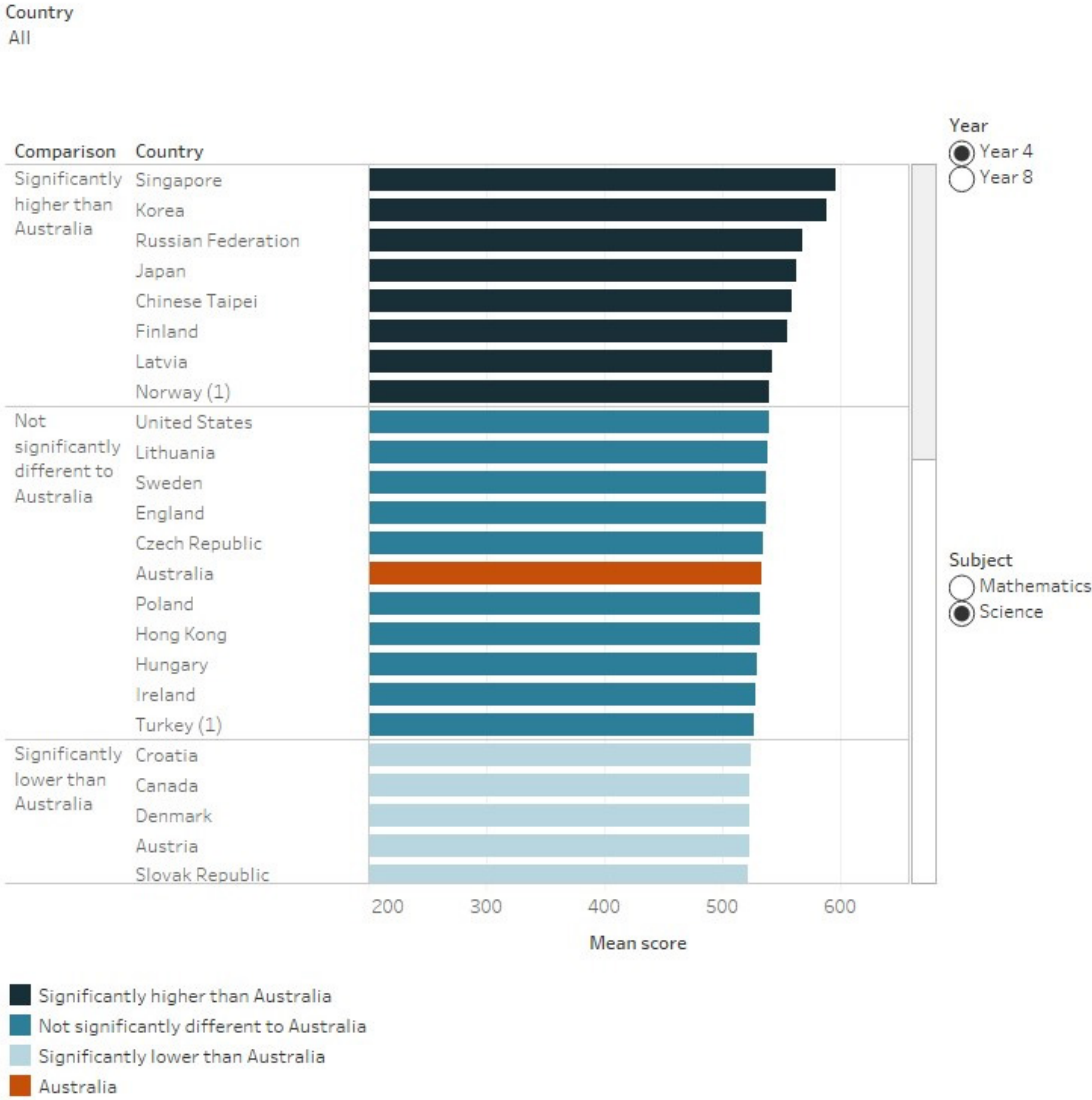
1. Countries and educational systems conducted the assessment one year later than originally scheduled are signified with a (1).
2. Only countries that completed the PIRLS assessment at a comparable age and school year to Australia are included.

Source: Hillman et al. 2023.

## **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study**

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) has compared the performance of Year 4 and Year 8 students in mathematics and science internationally every 4 years since 1995. In the 2019 TIMSS report, of the 64 countries that participated, Australia was outperformed by 22 countries in Year 4 mathematics, 6 countries in Year 8 mathematics, 8 countries in Year 4 science, and 6 countries in Year 8 science (Figure 4). The next TIMSS is due to be conducted in 2023.

**Figure 4: Comparison of mean scores in the International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), by year level and subject, 2019**



**Notes**

1. TIMSS assessment in countries marked with a (1) were undertaken by year 5 students instead of year 4 students.
2. TIMSS assessment in countries marked with a (2) undertaken by year 9 students instead of year 8 students.
3. Whether a country is categorised as significantly or not significantly different to Australia is dependent on both the mean score and the score distribution in each country. Therefore, some countries with the same mean score may be in a different category of whether they are significantly different or not significantly different from Australia.

Source: Thomson et al. 2020.

## School attendance

Attendance is an indicator of a child's participation in school. Each day of attendance in school contributes towards a child's learning and there does not appear to be a 'safe' threshold for which school absences do not have an impact (Hancock et al. 2013).

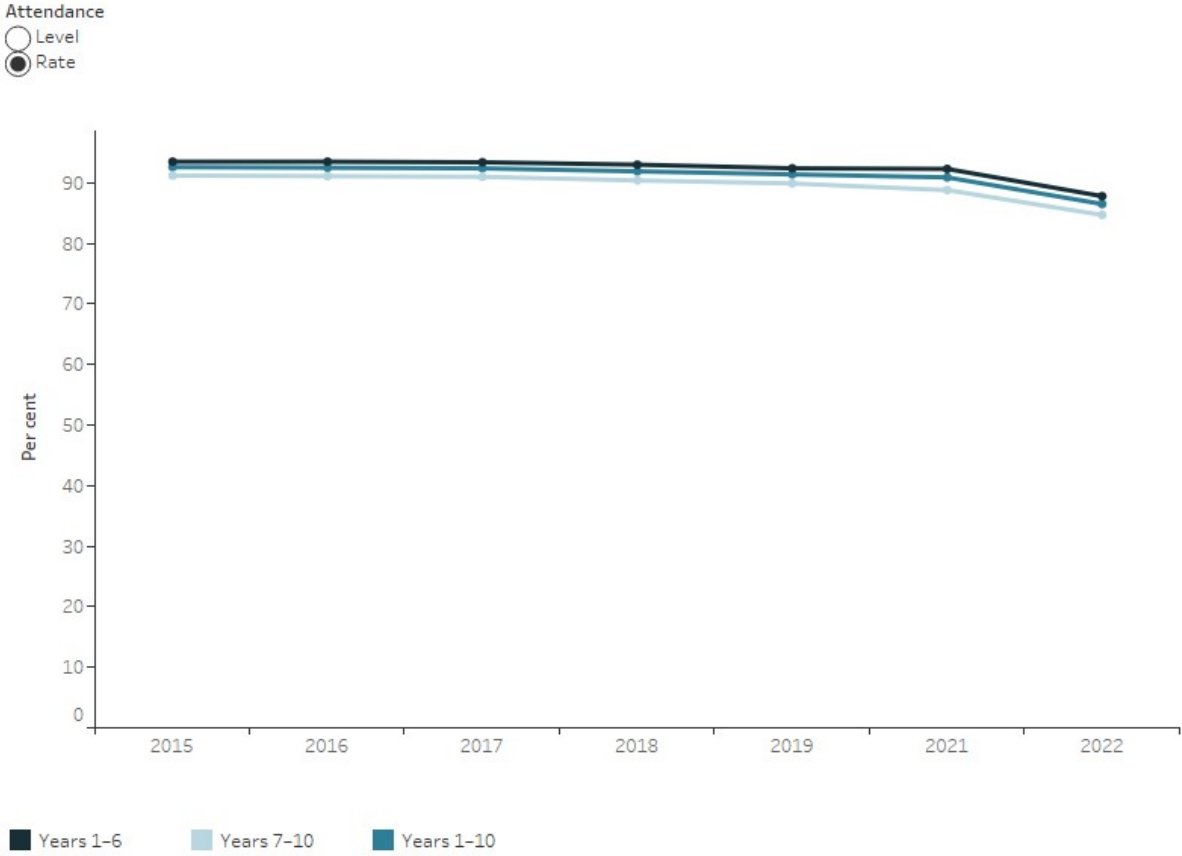
Student attendance rates refer to the number of actual full-time equivalent days attended by full-time students as a percentage of the total number of possible school days over the period (see [glossary](#)). School attendance level refers to the percentage of students who attended school greater than 90% of the time.

In 2022, student attendance rates were:

- 88% for all students in years 1–6 and 85% for all students in years 7–10, this is a decrease since 2015 (94% and 91% respectively) (Figure 5). Some of the decrease may be due to COVID-19 from 2020 onwards and flooding events in 2022
- lower in later year levels (83% in Year 10) than in earlier year levels (87% in Year 7)
- higher in non-government schools (88%) than government schools (86%) for years 1–10
- lower for First Nations children than for non-Indigenous children in years 1–10 (75% and 87% respectively). Between 2015 and 2022, attendance rates declined for both First Nations children (84% in 2015 to 75% in 2022) and for non-Indigenous children (93% in 2015 to 87% in 2022) (see [Education of First Nations people](#))
- higher in *Major cities* (88%) compared with *Inner regional* (85%), *Outer regional* (84%), *Remote* (79%), and *Very remote* (63%) areas for years 1–10 (ACARA 2023b).

In 2022, student attendance levels were 53% for all students in years 1–6 and 45% for students in years 7–10. This is a decrease since 2015 (from 80% and 74% respectively) (ACARA 2023b). The larger decrease in attendance level from 2015 to 2022 compared to attendance rate may be due to the high cut off for measuring attendance level (90%). An attendance rate of 88% and an attendance level of 53% suggests that many students may be attending at rates just below the cut-off level.

**Figure 5: Rate and level of school attendance by year level group, 2015 to 2022**



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**Notes**

1. Attendance rates are the number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in Years 1 to 10 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended over the period.
2. Attendance level is the percentage of students who attended school more than 90% of the time.
3. From 2018, attendance data for NSW government schools has been collected and compiled consistently with the National Standards. Prior to 2018, NSW government schools data were not collected on a comparable basis with other jurisdictions. From 2015 to 2017, for government school attendance rates for NSW, comparisons across jurisdictions and with 2018 for should be made with caution.
4. ACT government school data for 2018 and 2019 are derived from a school administration system in the process of implementation. Care should be taken when comparing these data with previous years and from other jurisdictions.
5. School attendance in Semester 1 2022 declined due to the impact of the COVID-19 Omicron variant and high influenza season outbreaks and floods in certain regions experienced across Australia at that time.

Source: ACARA 2023b.

## School retention

The apparent retention rate to year 12 is an estimate of the percentage of students who stay enrolled full time in secondary education from the start of secondary school (year 7 or 8, depending on the state or territory) to year 12 (see [glossary](#)).

In 2022, the apparent retention rate to year 12 was:

- 81%, an increase from 79% in 2011, but a decrease since a peak of 85% in 2017
- higher for females (85%) than males (76%)
- higher for non-Indigenous people (82%) than First Nations people (57%). The school retention rate for First Nations people has increased 8.2 percentage points since 2011 while the retention rate for non-Indigenous people has increased 1.3 percentage points (ABS 2023).

## School attainment

### Year 12 attainment

The attainment rate is the proportion of all estimated year 12 students who meet the requirements of a year 12 or equivalent qualification (see [glossary](#)) (SCRGSP 2023). After decreasing from 79% in 2018 to 72% in 2019, the year 12 attainment rate has increased back to 79% in 2021 (SCRGSP 2023). The attainment rate in 2019 may have been affected by a half cohort in Queensland (ACARA 2023a). In 2021, attainment rates increased with increasing socioeconomic position (see [glossary](#)), from 74% in low socioeconomic areas to 85% in high socioeconomic areas. Attainment rates were substantially lower in *Very remote* areas (51%) compared with other areas (82% in *Major cities*, 72% in *Inner and outer regional* areas and 73% *Remote* areas) (SCRGSP 2023).

In 2022, 4 in 5 (80%) people aged 15–64 had attained year 12 or equivalent or a non-school qualification at certificate III level or above, an increase of 7 percentage points since 2013 (73%) (ABS 2022).

In 2022, of people aged 20–24:

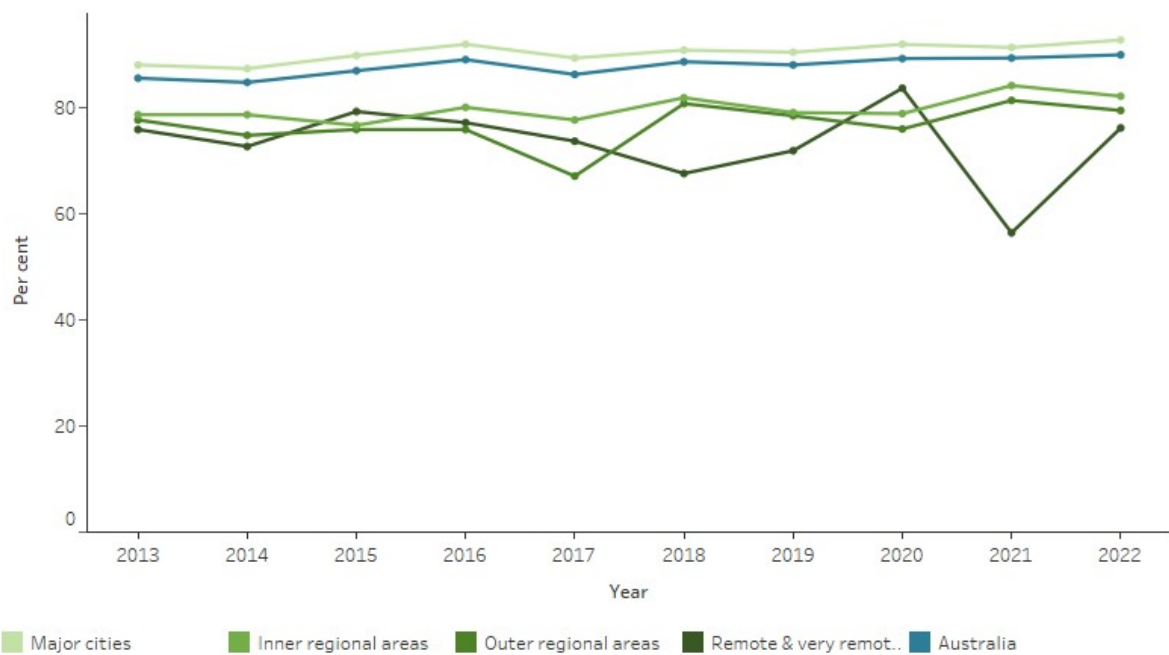
- 90% had attained a qualification at year 12 or certificate III level or above
- women (93%) were more likely than men (88%) to have completed year 12 or a certificate III or above, consistent with previous years
- people living in *Major cities* (93%) were more likely than those living in other remoteness areas to have completed year 12 or a certificate III or above (ABS 2022).

Among people aged 20–24, the attainment rate of year 12 or certificate III or above increased overall between 2013 and 2022, from 86% to 90%. The attainment rate fluctuated more for people in regional and remote areas than for people living in *Major cities*, but in general increased with decreasing remoteness area (Figure 6).

Labour market participation rates are higher for those with higher levels of education attainment. In 2020, the participation rate for those with a highest level of educational attainment of year 12 or equivalent was 71%, compared with 62% for those who had completed year 11 and 51% for those who had completed year 10 or below (National

Skills Commission 2021). For more information see [Higher education, vocational education and training](#) and [Employment and unemployment](#).

**Figure 6: Proportion of people aged 20–24 with year 12 or equivalent, or non-school qualification at certificate III level or above, by remoteness area, 2013 to 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Note: Year12/Certificate III education attainment for *Remote* and *Very remote* areas should be interpreted with caution due to a high relative standard of error (25% to 50%) (ABS 2022).

Source: ABS 2022.

## Highest level of education

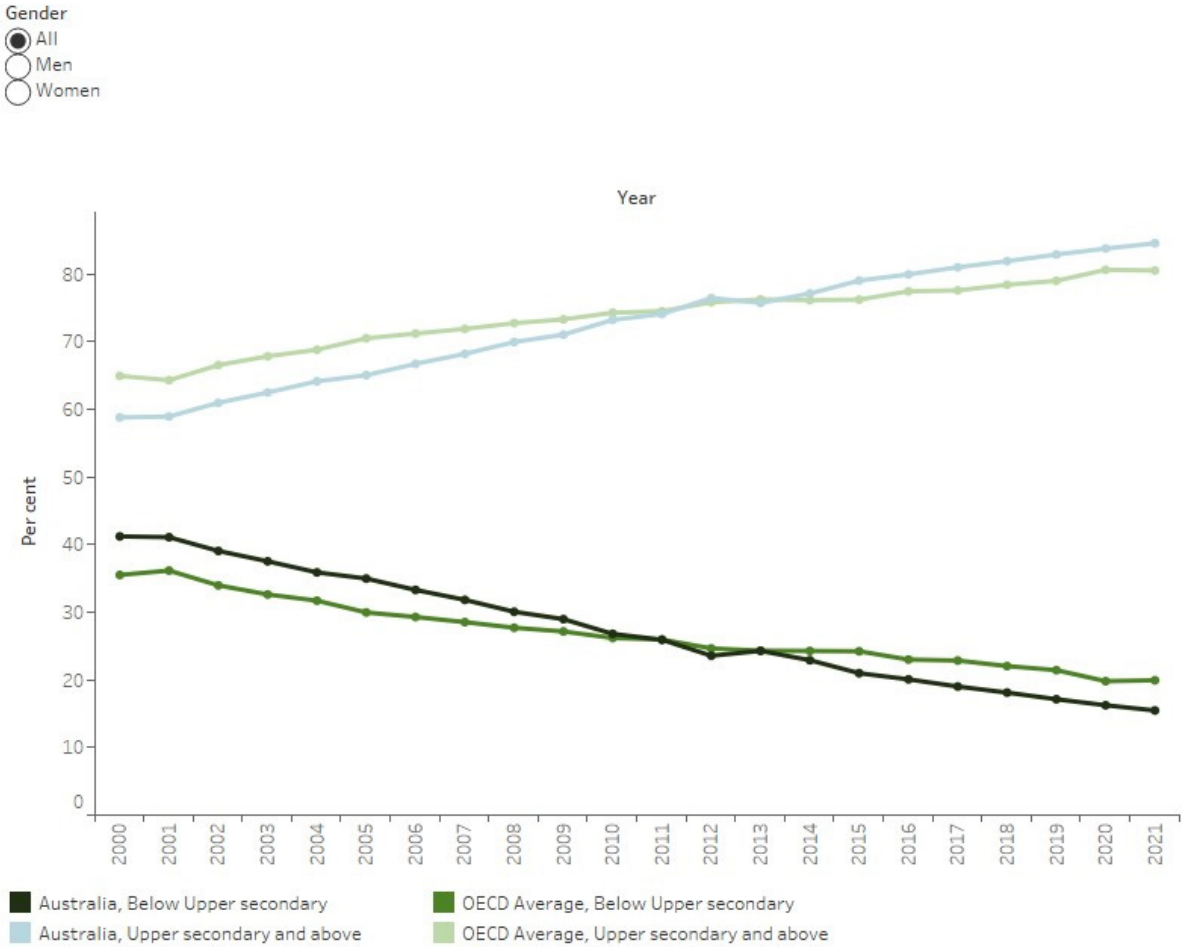
The OECD publishes annual estimates of adult education level for each member country using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) system. This is defined as the highest education level of the 25–64 year old population. Categories of highest education level include below upper secondary and upper secondary and above. While it varies between country, lower secondary education includes provision of basic education, upper secondary is considered to be the final 3 years of secondary school (in Australia years 10–12), and levels above this are classified as tertiary education.

Since 2000, the percentage of people aged 25–64 years in Australia with upper secondary or above has increased at a faster rate than the OECD average. The percentage of adults with an upper secondary or above education level in Australia has increased from 59% in 2000 to 85% in 2021. In comparison, the OECD average has increased from 65% in 2000 to 81% in 2021 (Figure 7). Meanwhile, the percentage of

Australian adults whose highest education is below upper secondary has decreased substantially from 41% in 2000 to 15% in 2021 (OECD 2023).

The increase in upper secondary and above education between 2000 and 2021 in Australia has been greater in women (33 percentage point increase) than men (19 percentage point increase) (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Proportion of adult population aged 25–64 years old, Australia and OECD average, by highest level of education completed and gender, 2000 to 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

**Notes**

1. Indicator is measured as a percentage of the same age population.
2. The category “Upper Secondary and Above” includes adults who have either upper secondary or tertiary as their highest level of education completed.
3. Data for men and women are only available for the category “Upper secondary and above”.

Source: OECD 2023.



# The impact of COVID-19

School students and teachers across Australia were severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. It disrupted teaching and learning across all states and territories. However, each state and territory experienced and responded to the pandemic differently. Some were able to maintain a capacity for classroom learning, while others had to quickly adapt to an entirely online learning environment for an extended period of time, continuing into 2021 (Sullivan et al. 2021).

Due to the impact of COVID-19, school attendance data, usually published on an annual basis, were not available for 2020. Similarly, the NAPLAN tests scheduled to take place in 2020 were cancelled.

Despite the effects of the pandemic, NAPLAN results for 2021 and 2022 were similar to 2019 results for the population as a whole (ACARA 2021, 2022b). One report found that the COVID-19 pandemic had a smaller impact on learning delays in Australian students than other countries. The estimated learning delay for Australian students was less than two months while students in other countries may be more than a year behind (McKinsey and Company 2022). However, the impact of COVID-19 on learning and teaching is yet to be fully understood and is likely to be a focus of research well into the future.

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information, see:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [Education and Work](#)
- ABS [Schools](#)
- Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services](#)
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) [The National Assessment Program](#)
- OECD [Programme for International Student Assessment](#)
- Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) [Progress in International Reading Literacy Study](#)
- ACER [Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study](#)

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# Employment and income

# Carer Payment

Find the most recent version of this information at:  
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/carers-payment>

## On this page

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Australia's social security system administered by Services Australia aims to support people who cannot, or cannot fully, support themselves, by providing targeted payments and assistance. Where this is a regular payment that helps with the everyday costs of living it is referred to as an income support payment, with the type of payment often reflecting life circumstances at the time of receipt.

This page examines the primary income support payment for people with caring responsibilities – Carer Payment.

In 2018, there were an estimated 2.7 million carers in Australia (11% of all Australians) providing unpaid care to people with disability and older Australians, according to the latest release from the [Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers](#). Of these, 33% (or 861,600) were primary carers, meaning they provided the most informal assistance to a person with disability. In 2018, 1 in 3 (33%) carers aged 15 and over were receiving a government pension or allowance as their main source of income (ABS 2019). See [Informal carers](#) for more information and the [glossary](#) for definitions of terms used on this page.

Unless otherwise stated, income support data on this page are sourced from [Department of Social Services payment demographic data](#) (from September 2013 to March 2023) and from previously unpublished data derived from Services Australia administrative data (June 2001 to June 2013).

## About Carer Payment

Carer Payment is a means-tested income support payment for people providing constant care for someone who:

- has physical, intellectual or psychiatric disability
- has a severe medical condition
- is frail aged.

This payment is for people who, due to their caring responsibilities, are unable to support themselves through substantial paid employment. Carer Payment recipients can engage in employment or study for up to 25 hours per week (including travel time) and remain eligible for payment.

A small number of people receiving Carer Payment are aged under 16 (5 as at 31 March 2023). These carers are included in calculating the proportion of Carer Payment recipients aged 16 and over in the population, to ensure consistency in recipient numbers reported on this page.

As at 20 March 2023, the maximum basic rate for Carer Payment, including Maximum Pension Supplement and Energy Supplement, is \$1,064.00 per fortnight for a single person, or \$1,604.00 for a couple combined. Carer Payment is paid at the same rate as Age Pension, and the payment rate is reviewed in March and September each year. Carer Payment is subject to the pension income and assets tests, and payments are reduced incrementally for every dollar of income over \$190 per fortnight.

For more information on payment rates, see [Carer Payment - How much can you get?](#)

People receiving Carer Payment may also be eligible for the Carer Allowance (for which income testing for eligibility was introduced in September 2018), and the annual Carer Supplement. Carer Allowance recipients caring for a child may also be eligible for the annual Child Disability Assistance Payment. These allowances and supplements are not reported on this page.

See [glossary](#) for definitions of the terms used in this box.

## How many people receive Carer Payment?

As at 31 March 2023, 304,500 people were receiving Carer Payment – 1.4% of the population aged 16 and over.

The majority of people receiving Carer Payment were aged 16–64 (80% or 243,700), representing 1.5% of the working age population (aged 16–64).

## Trends

The number of people receiving Carer Payment has increased steeply over the last 2 decades, from 57,800 in June 2001 to 301,200 in June 2022 (Figure 1). The rate of growth was steeper between 2001 and 2014 and has slowed in more recent years; there was an average annual rate of growth of 12% between 2001 and 2014 compared with 3.0% between 2015 and 2021. The number of people receiving Carer Payment remained relatively stable in the 12 months to June 2022.

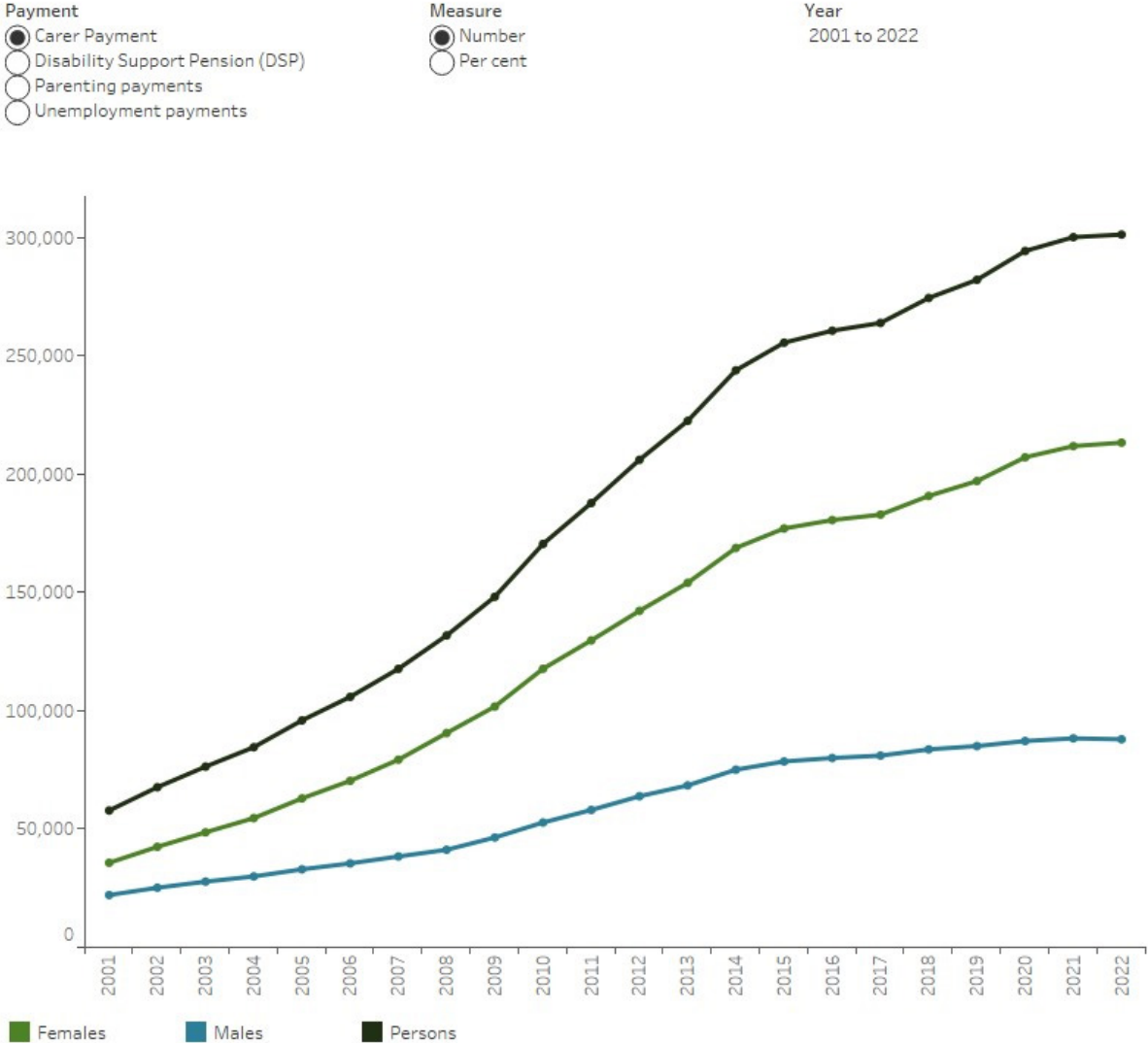
As a proportion of the population aged 16 and over, the number of people receiving Carer Payment increased from 0.4% in 2001 to 1.3% in 2014 and has remained relatively stable around 1.3–1.5% since then.

These increases in Carer Payment receipt reflect growth in the number of informal carers as well as key policy changes, in particular the closure of various payments and allowances that were primarily paid to women (women account for almost 3 in 4 Carer Payment recipients; see AIHW 2019 for further details).

There were large increases in the number of people receiving income support in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic (12 months to March 2021; see 'Chapter 4 The impacts of COVID-19 on employment and income support in Australia' in [Australia's welfare 2021: data insights](#) for further details). However, COVID-19 did not specifically affect the number of people receiving Carer Payment, as the proportion receiving Carer Payment remained relatively stable in the 12 months to March 2021 (at 1.4–1.5% of the population aged 16 and over).

For further information on long-term trends in receipt of Carer Payment, see 'Chapter 3 Income support over the past 20 years' in [Australia's welfare 2019: data insights](#).

**Figure 1: Trends in people aged 16 years and over receiving Carer Payment and other payments, June 2001 to June 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. Data are as at June 30 in each year.
2. Data before 2013 may differ from official sources due to differences in methodology.
3. A small number of people receiving income support payments are aged under 16 (70 for Parenting Payment Single, 5 for unemployment payments (Youth Allowance (other)), and 5 for Carer Payment in March 2023). These people are included in the numerator in calculating the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving these payments.
4. Per cent refers to the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving different payment types, using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Estimated Resident Population data for June 2001 to June 2022.

Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Social Services Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics – quarterly data on [www.data.gov.au](http://www.data.gov.au) (June 2014– June 2022), and of unpublished data constructed from Services Australia administrative data (June 2001–June 2013).



## Age and sex

- People receiving Carer Payment were typically in older age groups, with over 1 in 4 (28%) aged 55–64 as at 31 March 2023 – almost 3 times as high as for people aged 25–34 (9.6%) and 1.6 times as high for people aged 35–44 (17%). This equates to an age-specific proportion of 2.8% of people aged 55–64 receiving Carer Payment, compared with 0.8% and 1.5% of people aged 25–34 and 35–44, respectively (Figure 2).

There are a number of people aged 65 and over receiving Carer Payment (60,800 people as at 31 March 2023), and this proportion has risen slightly over recent years (from 1.2% of the population aged 65 and over in December 2017 to 1.4% in March 2023), in line with increases to the qualifying age for Age Pension over this period (see [Income support for older Australians](#)).

As at 31 March 2023, females accounted for 71% of people receiving Carer Payment, equating to 2.0% of females aged 16 and over compared with 0.9% of males (Figure 2).

## First Nations people

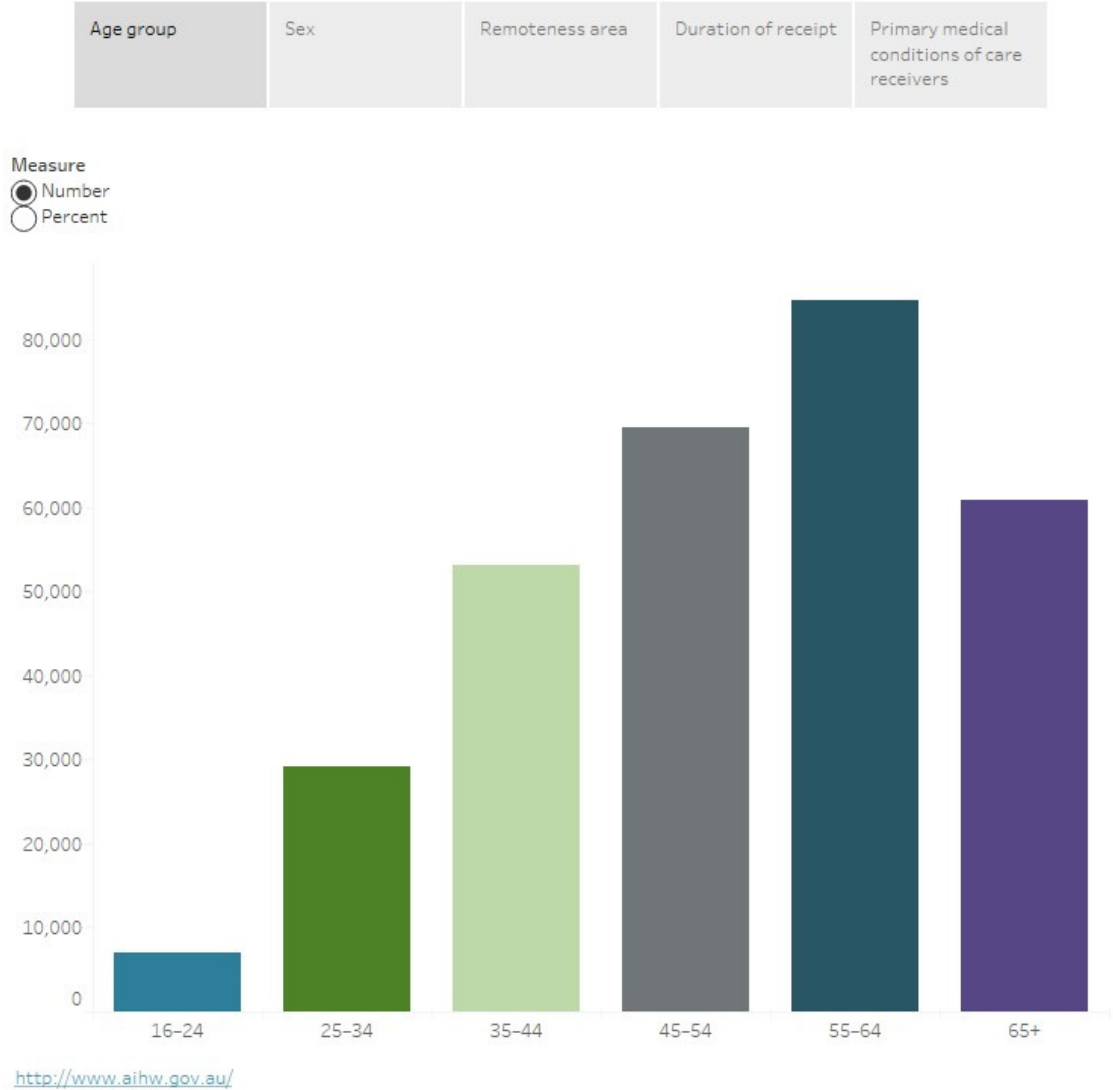
As at 31 March 2023, 20,300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people (see [glossary](#)) received Carer Payment, representing 3.1% of the First Nations population aged 15 and over. This compares with 1.4% of Other Australians (see [glossary](#)) aged 15 and over receiving Carer Payment. See [Income and finance of First Nations people](#) for more information.

Note that Indigenous status identification in most data collections is voluntary. This may influence the quality and completeness of the data and subsequent reporting on the number and proportion of First Nations people receiving income support payments, especially among older First Nations people.

## Remoteness area

As at 31 March 2023, people aged 16 and over were slightly more likely to be receiving Carer Payment if they were living in *Inner regional* (1.8%) and *Outer regional* (1.8%) areas compared with people living in *Major cities* (1.4%), *Remote areas* (1.4%) or *Very remote areas* (1.2%) (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Number and proportion of people aged 16 years and over receiving Carer Payment, by selected characteristics, as at 31 March 2023**



**Notes**

1. Proportions are as at 31 March 2023, using ABS population data (September 2022 for age group and sex, and June 2021 for remoteness area). Duration of receipt and medical condition are reported as a proportion of all Carer Payment recipients.
2. A small number of people receiving Carer Payment are aged under 16 (5 in March 2023). These people are included in the numerator in calculating the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving Carer Payment.

Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Social Services Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics – quarterly data on [www.data.gov.au](http://www.data.gov.au) (March 2023).

**Primary medical condition of care receivers**

As at 31 March 2023, psychological or psychiatric conditions were the most commonly recorded primary medical conditions for care receivers of Carer Payment aged 16 and

over (29%). The second most commonly recorded conditions were musculo-skeletal and connective tissue conditions (21%).

## Earning an income while receiving income support

Means-tested arrangements are designed to ensure that income support targets the people most in need by assessing an individual's income and assets to determine eligibility for a full or part-rate payment. People receiving income support are required to report income from all sources (including work, investments and/or substantial assets).

- As at 31 March 2023, for people receiving Carer Payment:
  - 19% received a part-rate payment
  - 9.3% declared earnings from employment in the preceding fortnight, with 89% earning at least \$250 in the last fortnight.

There was a fall in the proportion of people receiving the part-rate Carer Payment between March 2016 and March 2023, from 23% to 19%. However, the proportion of people receiving Carer Payment declaring earnings remained relatively similar over this period – around 9.0–9.3%.

## Duration of income support receipt

As at 31 March 2023, 71% of people receiving Carer Payment had received an income support payment for 5 years or more (including 48% for 10 or more years) compared with 53% for people receiving other income support payments (excluding Age Pension).

Many people receiving Carer Payment tend to remain on this payment for long periods – almost half (49%) had received Carer Payment for 5 years or more. The equivalent proportion for people receiving unemployment payments was much shorter (22%), but for people receiving Disability Support Pension it was much longer (78%).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on Carer Payment, see:

- Services Australia [A guide to Australian Government payments](#)
- Department of Social Services [payment demographic data](#).
- For more information on carers, see [Informal carers](#).

## References

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# Changing patterns of work

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/changing-patterns-of-work>

## On this page

Introduction

Working from home

Internal migration

Job mobility

Where do I go for more information?

The public health measures implemented to contain the spread of COVID-19 (such as widespread social distancing, national lockdowns, and activity/business-related restrictions) had a considerable impact on the working arrangements of many Australians. Many of these changes to working arrangements that were accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic show no signs of reverting to pre-pandemic levels. This page examines changes in working patterns in Australia, including working from home, internal migration, and job mobility.

Data are drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as well as other sources as described in the Data sources used on this page box below.

## Data sources used on this page

### The Household, Income, and Labour Market Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey

The HILDA Survey commenced in 2001 and is managed by The Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research (University of Melbourne) and funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS). HILDA is Australia's first nationally representative longitudinal household-based panel study following more than 17,000 working age members (over 15 years) of randomly selected Australian households over the course of their lifetime.

HILDA collects information on household and family relationships, family dynamics, economic and subjective wellbeing, labour market measures, income, employment, health, and education. Australian households are interviewed annually, providing a picture of longer-term trends and the recurrence of specific life circumstances, for example, poverty, unemployment, or welfare reliance (DSS 2022). This page uses data covering the period 2019–2021.

### ABS Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey

The ABS Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey commenced in April 2020, with surveys covering differing topics related to the impacts of COVID, including questions on working from home arrangements. The survey was initially administered on a weekly basis and

became less frequent from August 2020, with the latest available data from April 2022 (ABS 2022b).

### **Taking the Pulse of the Nation Survey**

The Taking the Pulse of the Nation survey (TTPN), which began in April 2020, is administered by the Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic and Social Research and, since 2022, in partnership with Roy Morgan. The survey was conducted bi-weekly until 2022, at which point it became monthly. It asks questions concerning current and emerging issues facing Australians. It is a representative sample of Australia, stratified to reflect the Australian adult population in terms of age, gender, and location (Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic and Social Research 2022a).

The data presented on this page is based on survey responses across a number of waves from April 2021 to May 2022, on around 2,900 respondents who were working and had tasks they could perform at home.

### **Recruitment Experiences and Outlook survey**

The National Skills Commission conducts the Recruitment Experiences and Outlook survey to monitor recruitment activity and conditions. Up to 14,000 businesses around Australia are invited to respond to the survey each year (Jobs and Skills Australia 2023).

Additional questions were added to the survey to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on businesses. Between 16 November 2020 and 5 February 2021, around 2,000 employers from 19 industries responded to these additional questions; it is these data that are reported on this page (National Skills Commission 2021).

## **Working from home**

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced several changes to working arrangements, many of which are still in place and will likely remain into the future in some capacity; working from home is one example.

Prior to the pandemic (before 1 March 2020), 13% of people aged 18 and over with a job reported working from home all or most days according to the ABS Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey. Following the lockdowns and restrictions in the early months of the pandemic to contain the spread of COVID-19, the proportion working from home all or most days more than doubled to around 26–31% between September 2020 and February 2021. It then declined to around 22–23% in April–May 2021, presumably reflecting fewer lockdowns in place around the country at this time, before increasing again to 30% by April 2022 – over twice as high as prior to the pandemic.

Results from this survey also highlighted that the proportion of people working from home at least one day per week also increased in the 2 years to April 2022, from 24% before 1 March 2020, increasing to 39–41% from September 2020 to February 2021, and dropping slightly to 36% in April and May 2021. By April 2022, 46% of people had worked from home at least once per week (in the last 4 weeks), the highest level recorded since the pandemic began in March 2020 (ABS 2021a; ABS 2022a).

The sustained increase in working from home suggests there may not be a return to pre-pandemic levels. Indeed, the results from the TTPN survey from July 2022 suggest that 88% of Australian workers would like to work from home at least partially, and 60%

would prefer a hybrid work arrangement with days in both the office and at home (Melbourne Institute Applied Economic and Social Research 2022a). Many workers under the age of 54 have reported that they would leave their job or seek alternative employment if they were not able to access flexible work options (Ruppanner et al. 2023).

It is worth noting that some population groups in particular, such as caregivers or people living with chronic illnesses, may stand to benefit from more flexible work arrangements (Ruppanner et al. 2023).

## **Labour productivity**

Working from home may affect productivity (that is, the measure of output per unit of labour) of employees in different ways. For example, it may have hindered productivity due to the physical distance between colleagues and challenges in collaborating and exchanging information. On the other hand, many employees have an improved work-life balance due to the elimination of their daily commute and being better rested for work as a result (Productivity Commission 2021).

Most people in paid employment who had increased the amount of time they spent working from home at the start of the pandemic reported little change in productivity. According to self-reported data from HILDA, almost 3 in 5 (58%) respondents indicated that productivity was the same or better following an increase in hours worked from home – 24% reported positive impacts, 33% no change in productivity, and 42% reported negative impacts. It is worth noting that this reporting is from the earlier months of the pandemic (in 2020), when many employees were forced to work from home at short notice, potentially with inadequate workstations, and with many families required to supervise children undertaking remote learning (Melbourne Institute Applied Economic and Social Research 2022b). It is also important to note that productivity as it is reported in HILDA is self-reported, and not an objective or economy-wide measure; employers may have a different view than those reported by individual employees in the survey.

This finding that working from home has a minimal impact on productivity is consistent with other studies. One such study conducted a randomised control trial to investigate the effects of hybrid work arrangements on the attrition, job satisfaction and productivity of both managerial and non-managerial knowledge workers. This study found that – despite a drop in productivity being one of the more commonly touted criticisms of working from home – there was no evidence to suggest a substantial positive or negative impact of hybrid working on productivity (Bloom et al. 2023).

## **Job satisfaction**

In terms of job satisfaction, there are advantages and disadvantages in working from home. It may provide employees with a greater sense of autonomy and control. On the other hand, if employees are excessively monitored it may decrease organisational attachment (Productivity Commission 2021). This relationship may depend to some extent on the amount of time spent working from home (or away from the office) (Allen et al. 2015).

Research from the Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic and Social Research found a positive association between working from home and job satisfaction for women, but not for men (Laß et al. 2023). This analysis used a linear fixed effects model to examine job satisfaction of people employed in both 2019 and 2021 (but who only worked from home in 2021) and controls for the characteristics of workers – including, for example, age, partnership status, employment type, supervisory responsibilities, employer size and industry. Mothers who worked at home for 3 days per week and in the workplace for 2 days had a 12% increase in average job satisfaction. This may be related to increased opportunities to undertake both work and family responsibilities (Laß et al. 2023).

## **Technology enabling working from home**

The increase in regularly working from home in a job or business relied on employers making the most out of available technologies, such as digital collaboration tools and cloud-based project planning tools (National Skills Commission 2021).

The National Skills Commission's Recruitment Experiences and Outlook survey of around 2,000 employers between 16 November 2020 and 5 February 2021 collected information on the impact of COVID-19 on businesses, including the implementation of automation and new technologies. This survey found that 33% of employers had implemented automation or new technology during the pandemic, which was a major factor enabling remote work (National Skills Commission 2021).

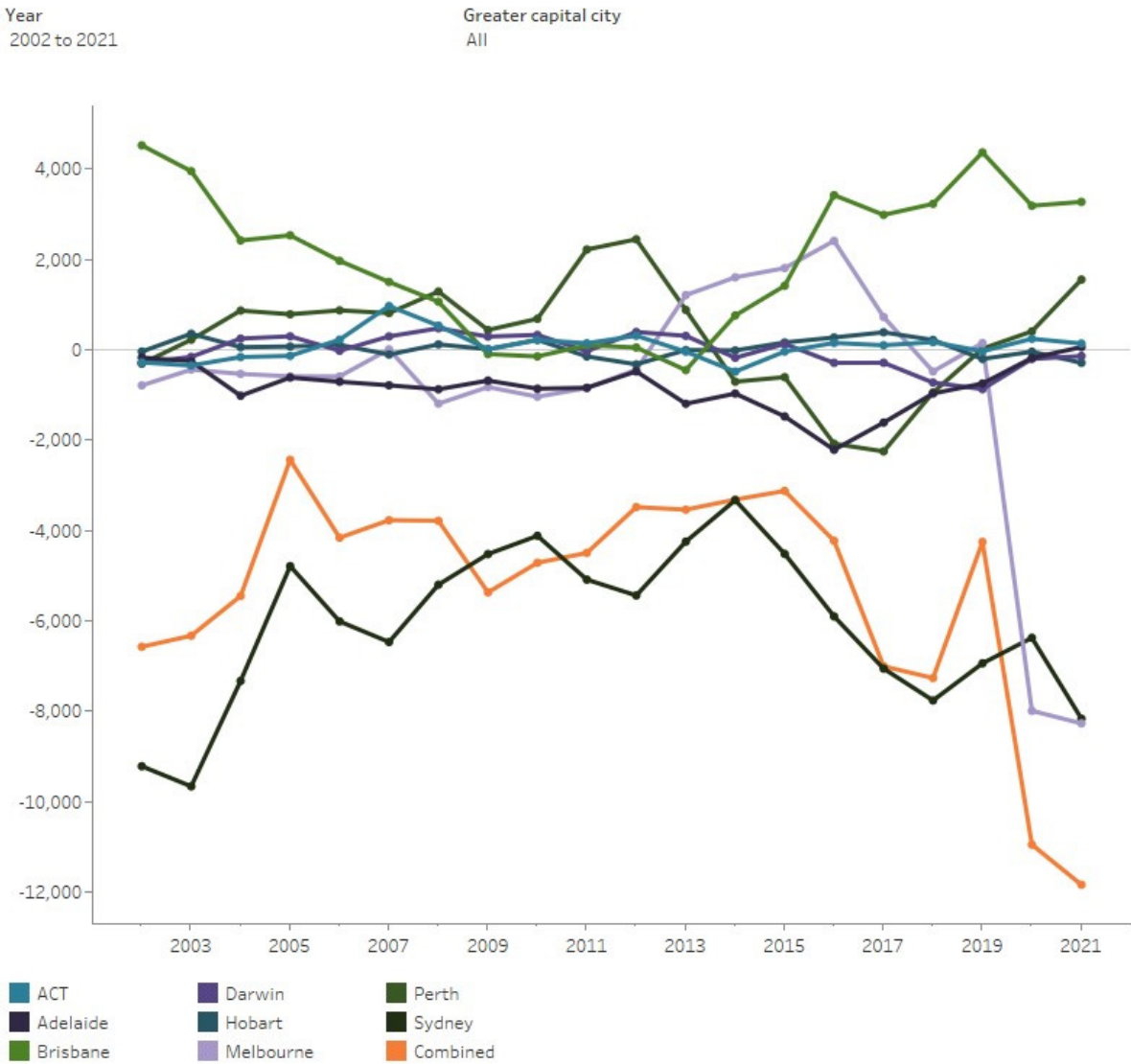
## **Internal migration**

The option to work from home can shift how people make decisions about the physical location of their home and workplace. For example, with employees working from home, the distance, time, and cost of a commute may no longer feature so heavily when deciding where to work or live (Doling and Arundel 2020). This may create opportunities for people to move further away from central business districts.

While Australian capital cities have had net losses from internal migration since 2001, this was accelerated at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. From June 2002 to June 2019, the net loss in the population of all Australian capital cities ranged from 2,400 to 8,600 people each quarter. In March 2020, this rose to a net loss of 10,100.

By March 2021 (the latest available data), the net loss for capital cities from internal migration had increased slightly again to 11,800 (Figure 1). Over this quarter, Brisbane gained the most people (3,300), while Melbourne and Sydney lost the most people (8,300 and 8,200, respectively) (ABS 2021b). This steep decline was the result of both fewer arrivals in capital cities from, and an increased number of departures to, non-capital city areas.

**Figure 1: Net internal migration in Australian capital cities, 2002–2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. 'Combined' is the net internal migration across all Greater capital cities.
2. Net internal migration is the number of arrivals minus the number of departures and can be either positive or negative.
3. The figure presents data from the June quarter in each corresponding year.

Source: ABS 2021b Table 1.



## **Job mobility**

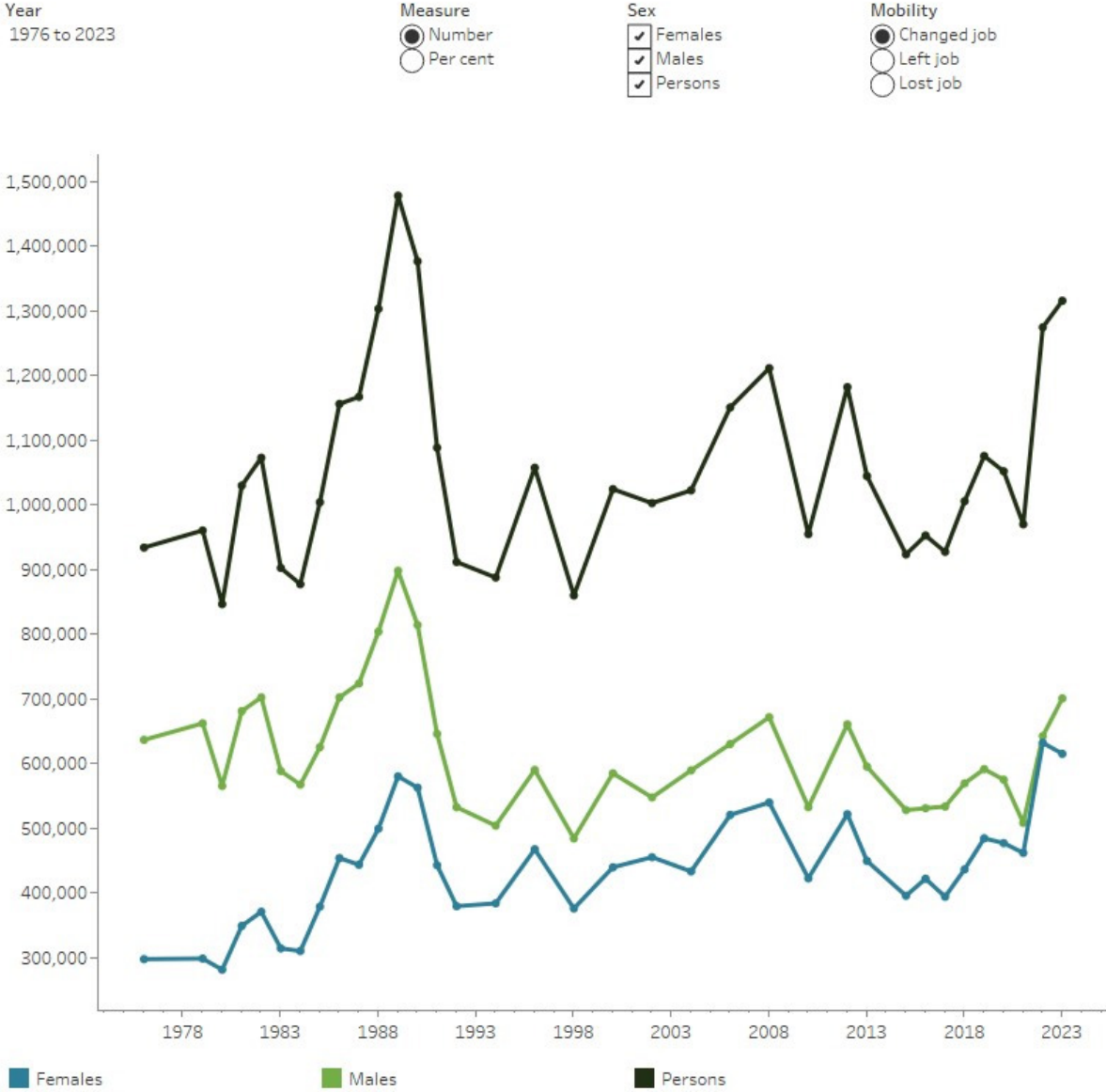
The pandemic has had a large impact on the job mobility of many Australians. Job mobility on this page refers to employed people who have changed jobs, left jobs or lost their jobs in the 12 previous months.

### **Changing jobs**

The proportion of employed people who change employer or business in the previous 12 months has been gradually declining since the 1990's – from 20% of employed people in the 12 months to February 1989, to 8.5% by February 2019, declining further to 7.5% by February 2021. By February 2022 this had increased to the highest level in a decade (9.5%; Figure 2), which equates to 1.3 million people changing jobs in the 12 months to February 2022. This was around 215,600 more people than in the 12 months to February 2020. Between February 2022 and February 2023 the proportion of employed people who changed jobs remained steady at 9.5%.

This increase in job mobility since February 2021 may be due to workers following up on plans to change jobs following a pause during the pandemic, or taking advantage of the strong labour market (Black and Chow 2022).

**Figure 2: Persons who changed jobs or left or lost a job in the 12 months to February of each year 1976–2023**



Note: The figure presents the number of people who changed jobs in the 12 months to February of each year as a proportion of all employed people, and the number of people who left or lost jobs in the 12 months to February each year as a proportion of the population aged 15 and over.

Sources: ABS 2018: Table 17, 2023: Table 1.

**Leaving or losing jobs**

In the early months of the pandemic (the 12 months to February 2021), employees were less likely to leave their jobs, and slightly more likely to lose their jobs, as compared with the previous year.

In the 12 months to February 2021, there was a decline in the number of employees leaving their jobs (from 1.3 million in 2019–20 to 1.1 million in 2020–21; Figure 2). This period covers the early months of the pandemic, during which time many employees were reluctant to change jobs due to economic uncertainty, fewer advertised roles, and

the JobKeeper program introduced in March 2020 which assisted people in maintaining employment with their current employer (Black and Chow 2022).

Over the same period, there was a slight increase in the number of people who lost their jobs, from 667,600 in 2019–20 to 715,700 in 2020–21 (or from 3.3% to 3.5% of the population aged 15 and over; Figure 2). Over half (55%) of these job losses were due to people being retrenched (the termination of an employee when their position is no longer required). It is likely that the number of people recorded as losing their jobs would have been substantially higher without the introduction of the JobKeeper payment (see 'Chapter 4 The impacts of COVID-19 on employment and income support in Australia' in [Australia's welfare 2021: data insights](#) for further details).

In the 12 months to February 2022, however, these patterns had reversed with an increasing number of people leaving jobs and a decreasing number of people losing their jobs, as compared with the previous year – 7.7% of the population aged 15 and over left their jobs in 2021–22, which is the highest since 2011–12 (7.5%), and 2.4 percentage points higher than the previous year (5.3%). The most common reason for people leaving their jobs was to get a better job or just wanting a change – 53% of all people who left their jobs, compared with 39–47% each year since 2015.

In the 12 months to February 2022, 2.5% of the population aged 15 and over lost their jobs, compared with 3.5% in 2020–21. Of all the job losses, 38% were due to people being retrenched. While retrenchment rates increased at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (from 1.1% to 4.4% between February and May 2020 quarters), retrenchment rates remained lower than previous recessions (AIHW 2021). For example, during the recessions of the early 1990s, the annual retrenchment rate reached 7.2% in 1991.

In the year to February 2023, the proportion of the population aged 15 and over who left their jobs continued to grow to 8.4%, while the proportion who lost their jobs remained steady at 2.5%.

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on changing patterns of work, see:

- University of Melbourne [HILDA Survey publications](#)
- Jobs and Skills Australia [Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey](#).

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# Disability Support Pension

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/disability-support-pension>

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Australia's social security system administered by Services Australia aims to support people who cannot, or cannot fully, support themselves, by providing targeted payments and assistance. Where this is a regular payment that helps with the everyday costs of living it is referred to as an income support payment, with the type of payment often reflecting life circumstances at the time of receipt.

This page examines the primary income support payment for people with a reduced capacity to work due to disability – the Disability Support Pension (DSP).

In 2018, there were an estimated 4.0 million people aged 15 and over (or 20% of the population aged 15 and over) in Australia with disability, according to the latest release from the [Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers](#) (ABS 2019). Of the 427,600 people aged 15–64 with severe or profound disability (who sometimes or always need help with daily activities), 69% of those with an income received a government pension or allowance as their main source of income in 2018 (AIHW 2020).

Government pensions and allowances are just one form of financial support available to people with disability. See [Specialised supports for people with disability](#) for further details on other services and assistance available to people with disability. See also [Welfare expenditure](#) for information on government expenditure on these payments. Also see [glossary](#) for definitions of all terms used on this page.

Unless otherwise stated, income support data on this page are sourced from [Department of Social Services payment demographic data](#) (from September 2013 to

March 2023) and from previously unpublished data derived from Services Australia administrative data (June 2001 to June 2013).

## About Disability Support Pension

Disability Support Pension (DSP) is a means-tested income support payment for people aged 16 and over – but under Age Pension age (at claim) – who have reduced capacity to work because of their disability. This includes people who:

- are permanently blind
- have a physical, intellectual or psychiatric condition resulting in functional impairment that makes them unable to work for 15 hours or more per week for the next 2 years
- are unable, because of impairment, to undertake a training activity that would equip them for work within the next 2 years.

People receiving DSP are encouraged to participate in employment where they have the capacity to gain the benefits of working, such as improved wellbeing. On reaching Age Pension age, people already receiving DSP may continue to receive it.

In 2012, there were changes made to the DSP including revised impairment tables (a set of tables designed to assess the severity of impact of functional impairment as it relates to work performance), an increase of allowable work hours to 30 hours (from 15), and the introduction of participation requirements for participants aged under 35. These requirements included a participation plan with Services Australia (DSS 2022). On 1 April 2023, further revisions were made to these impairment tables (see [Federal Register of Legislation 2023](#) for more information).

As at 20 March 2023, the maximum basic rate for DSP, including Maximum Pension Supplement and Energy Supplement, is \$1,064.00 per fortnight for a single person, \$802.00 for a couple each and \$1,604.00 for a couple combined. DSP is paid at the same rate as Age Pension, and the payment rate is reviewed each year. A further increase to the DSP rate for some customers under 21 was announced in the May 2023 budget to be introduced on 20 September 2023. For people receiving DSP, their payment is reduced incrementally for every dollar of income over \$190 per fortnight.

For more information, see [Disability Support Pension, DSP – qualification & payability](#), and [Disability Support Pension – payment rates](#).

See [glossary](#) for definitions of the terms used in this box.

## How many people receive Disability Support Pension?

As at 31 March 2023, 769,300 people received DSP (3.7% of the population aged 16 and over). The majority of people receiving DSP were aged 16–64 (84% or 664,600), representing 3.9% of the population aged 16–64.

- In addition to people receiving DSP, there were 345,000 people aged 16 and over receiving other income support payments who, due to an impairment, had a work capacity of fewer than 30 hours per week as at 31 March 2023. These people have reduced mutual obligation requirements as compared to other payments – that is, fewer obligations to be looking for work or engaging in activities that will help them find work in the future. This affects payments such as the JobSeeker and Youth

Allowance (other) payments (see [Unemployment payments](#)), and Parenting Payment Single.

## Trends

Over the last 2 decades the number of people receiving DSP has increased overall – from 625,800 in June 2001 to 765,000 in June 2022 (22% increase over this period). This overall increase is driven by growth in the number of people receiving DSP between June 2001 and 2011 (reaching 818,900 recipients in June 2011), before declining by 6.6% between June 2011 and 2022 (or 53,900 fewer recipients in June 2022 than in June 2011). The proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving DSP increased from 4.2% to a peak of 4.6% between June 2001 and 2011, and then declined to 3.7% in June 2022 (Figure 1).

When analysing trends over the medium to long-term it is also important to monitor trends in the ‘working age’ population (people aged 16–64), given the growth in the population aged 65 and over in recent decades. Based on available data (from September 2013), the proportion of the working age population receiving DSP declined from 5.2% to 3.9% between June 2014 and June 2022, compared with a corresponding decline from 4.4% to 3.7% of the population aged 16 and over.

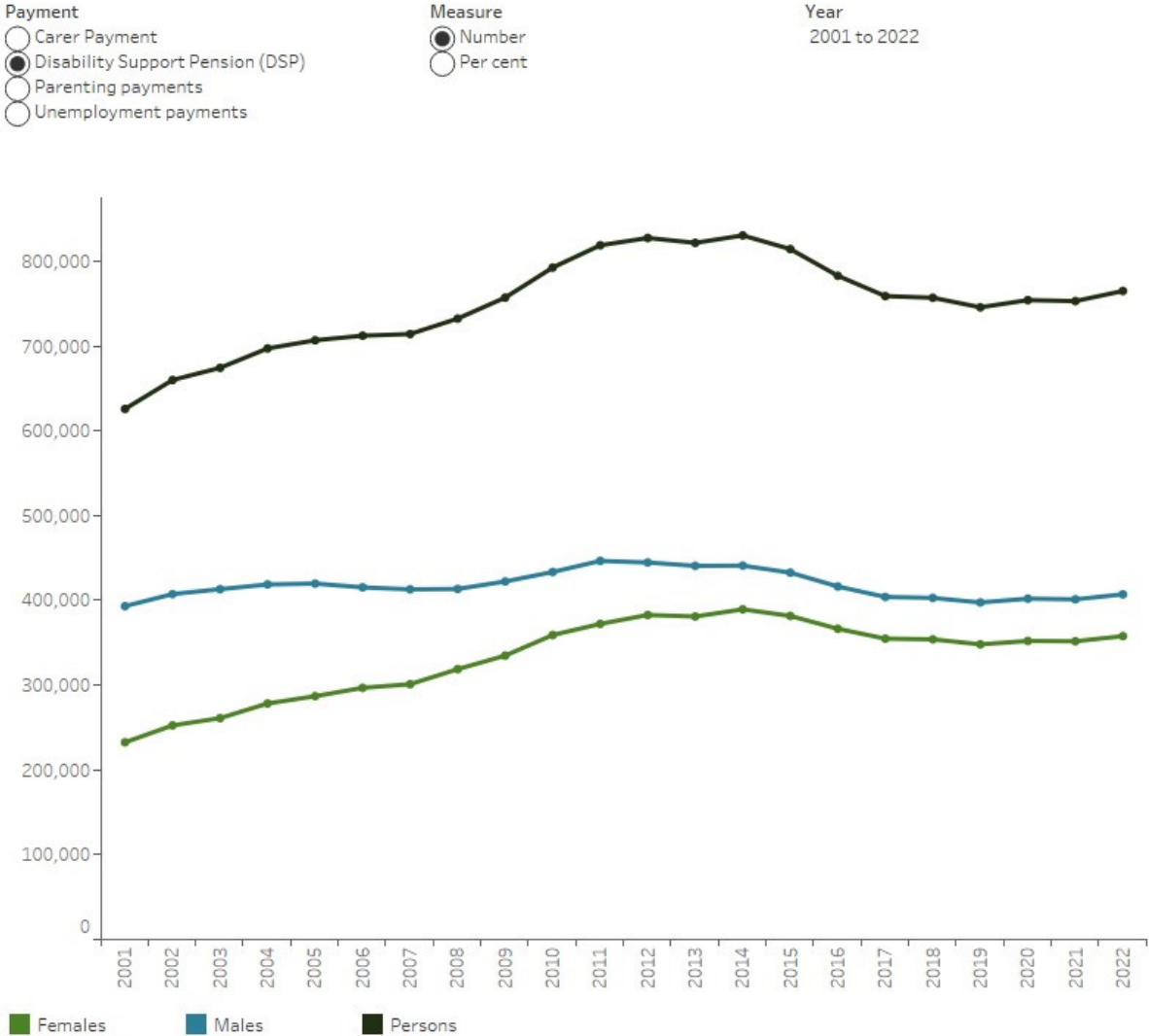
These declines in DSP receipt over the last decade may reflect policy changes as described in box above and discussed further in [People with disability in Australia 2022 – income support](#). They also coincide with an increase in the proportion of Newstart Allowance/JobSeeker Payment recipients assessed as having a partial capacity to work – from 20% to 43% between June 2014 and June 2022 (an increase of 195,000 recipients; see [Unemployment payments](#) for further details).

There were large increases in the number of people receiving income support in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic (12 months to March 2021; see ‘Chapter 4 The impacts of COVID-19 on employment and income support in Australia’ in [Australia’s welfare 2021: data insights](#) for further details). However, COVID-19 did not specifically affect the number of people receiving DSP. The proportion receiving DSP remained relatively stable in the 12 months to March 2021 (around 3.6% of the population aged 16 and over).

For further information on the long-term trends of DSP, see ‘Chapter 3 Income support over the past 20 years’ in [Australia’s welfare 2019: data insights](#).



**Figure 1: Trends in people aged 16 years and over receiving Disability Support Pension and other payments, June 2001 to June 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. Data are as at June 30 in each year.
2. Data before 2013 may differ from official sources due to differences in methodology.
3. Before September 2020, unemployment payments included Newstart Allowance (before March 2020), JobSeeker Payment (from March 2020) and Youth Allowance (other). From September 2020, Sickness and Bereavement Allowance are also included in the JobSeeker counts.
4. A small number of people receiving income support payments are aged under 16 (70 for Parenting Payment Single, 5 for unemployment payments (Youth Allowance (other)), and 5 for Carer Payment in March 2023). These people are included in the numerator in calculating the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving these payments.
5. Per cent refers to the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving different payment types, using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Estimated Resident Population data for June 2001 to June 2022.



Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Social Services Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics – quarterly data on [www.data.gov.au](http://www.data.gov.au) (June 2014– June 2022), and of unpublished data constructed from Services Australia administrative data (June 2001–June 2013).

## Age and sex

People receiving DSP were typically in older age groups, with around 1 in 3 (33%) aged 55–64 as at 31 March 2023, or around 8.3% of all people aged 55–64. People aged 55–64 were almost 4 times as likely to receive DSP than people aged 25–34 (2.2% of all people aged 25–34), and 3 times as likely as people aged 35–44 (2.8%; Figure 2).

There were also a number of people aged 65 and over receiving DSP (124,700). The proportion of this age group receiving DSP has increased over recent years (from 1.4% in March 2017 to 2.8% in March 2023) as the qualifying age of Age Pension continues to increase (see [Income support for older Australians](#)).

Over the past 2 decades, the number of females receiving DSP increased by 54% (from 232,600 in June 2001 to 357,800 in June 2022) while the rate of increase was slower for males (3.5% increase from 393,200 to 407,100) (Figure 1). However, as at 31 March 2023, males remained slightly more likely to receive DSP than females (4.0% of males aged 16 and over compared with 3.4% of females) and accounted for 53% of all people receiving DSP.

## First Nations people

As at 31 March 2023, 59,300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people (see [glossary](#)) received DSP – representing 9.0% of First Nations people aged 15 and over. This compares with 3.5% of Other Australians (see [glossary](#)) aged 15 and over receiving DSP (see [Income and finance of First Nations people](#) for more information).

Note that Indigenous status identification in most data collections is voluntary. This may influence the quality and completeness of the data and subsequent reporting on the number and proportion of First Nations people receiving income support payments, especially among older First Nations people.

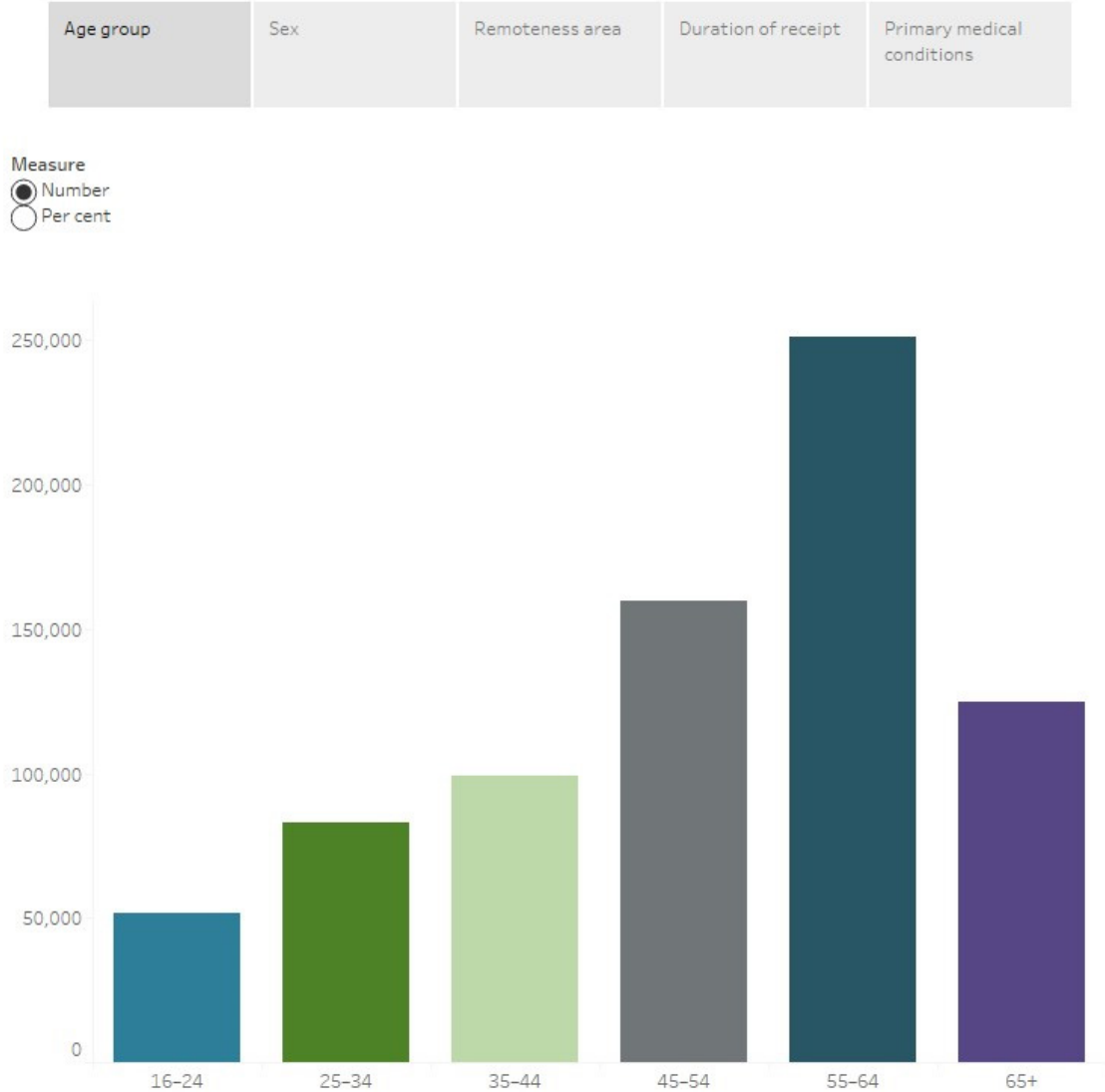
## Remoteness area

As at 31 March 2023, people aged 16 and over were more likely to be receiving DSP if they were living in *Inner regional* (5.1%) and *Outer regional* (5.0%) areas compared with people living in *Major cities* (3.2%), *Remote areas* (4.4%) or *Very remote areas* (4.6%) (Figure 2).

## Primary medical condition of recipients

As at 31 March 2023, psychological or psychiatric conditions were the most commonly recorded primary medical conditions for people aged 16 and over receiving DSP (37%), followed by musculo-skeletal and connective tissue conditions (18%) and intellectual and learning conditions (15%) (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Number and proportion of people aged 16 years and over receiving Disability Support Pension, by selected characteristics, as at 31 March 2023**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Proportions are as at 31 March 2023, using ABS population data (September 2022 for age group and sex and June 2021 for remoteness area). Duration of receipt and medical conditions are reported as a proportion of all DSP recipients.

Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Social Services Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics – quarterly data on [www.data.gov.au](http://www.data.gov.au) (March 2023).

## Earning an income while receiving income support

Means-tested arrangements are designed to ensure that income support targets the people most in need, by assessing an individual's income and assets to determine eligibility for a full or part-rate payment. People receiving income support are required to report income from all sources including work, investments and/or substantial assets.

As at 31 March 2023, for people receiving DSP:

- 12% received a part-rate payment
- 7.0% declared earnings from employment in the preceding fortnight, with nearly 3 in 4 (72%) earning at least \$250 in the last fortnight.

The proportion of people receiving a part-rate DSP payment declined between March 2016 and March 2023, from 15% to 12%. The number of DSP recipients declaring earnings also fell from 8.0% to 7.0%.

## Duration of income support receipt

As at 31 March 2023, 86% of people receiving DSP had received an income support payment for 5 years or more (including 71% for 10 or more years) compared with 41% for people receiving other income support payments (excluding Age Pension).

Many people receiving DSP tend to remain on this payment for long periods – 78% had received DSP for 5 years or more, including 63% for 10 years or more (this does not include time in receipt of other payments).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on DSP, see:

- Services Australia [A guide to Australian Government payments](#)
- Department of Social Services [payment demographic data](#).
- For more information on disability, see [People with disability in Australia, 2022](#).

## References

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# Employment and unemployment

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/employment-unemployment>

## On this page

Introduction

Employment

Unemployment

Not engaged in education, employment or training

Labour force participation

Where do I go for more information?

Employment underpins the economic output of a nation and enables people to support themselves, their families and their communities. Employment is also connected to physical and mental health and is a key factor in overall wellbeing.

This page explores key measures for reporting on participation in the labour market including employment, unemployment and underemployment (see **Labour force definitions**). It explores these patterns from the early months of 2020 – with the introduction of social distancing and other business-related restrictions to slow the spread of COVID-19 – until July 2023 (the latest available data at the time of writing). It provides longer term trends to highlight the impact of the economic downturn during the pandemic on employment and how the recovery compares with that for previous recessions and economic downturns. See [glossary](#) for definitions of all terms used on this page.

Unless otherwise stated, data on this page are sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [Labour Force Survey](#) (LFS). It includes data from 1978, when this Labour Force series commenced, up to July 2023 unless otherwise stated.

## Labour force definitions

Data from the ABS LFS are used to report on labour market participation measures – employment, unemployment, underemployment, and participation in the labour force. The information presented on this page uses the original and seasonally adjusted data series where available. Information is also presented on labour force experiences, such as casual employment and those marginally attached to the labour force.

This box presents summarised definitions of these measures. See ABS [Standards for labour force statistics](#) for further details (ABS 2018).

**Employment rate** (also known as the employment-to-population ratio) describes the number of employed people aged 15 and over as a proportion of the civilian population. Employed people includes those who have a job (for at least 1 hour during the reference period). This could be full-time, part-time, or away from work during the reference period.

On this page, the employment rate refers to the 'working age population', those aged 15–64. This age restriction has been applied as it is important to account for the size of the population when monitoring longer term trends in employment rates, given the growth in the population aged 65 and over in recent decades.

Despite increases to the qualifying age for Age Pension in recent years (from 65.5 on 1 July 2017 to 67 on 1 July 2023), the 'working age' population on this page is defined as those aged 15–64 for consistency with previous reporting and for comparability across the reporting period (1978 to 2023).

**Unemployment rate** describes the proportion of the population aged 15 and over in the labour force who are unemployed. Unemployed is defined as those not employed in the survey reference week who had either:

- actively looked for work in the last 4 weeks and were available for work in the reference week or
- been waiting to start a new job within the last 4 weeks and could have started had it been available.

**Underemployment rate** describes the proportion of the population aged 15 and over in the labour force who are underemployed. Underemployed is defined as those who are either:

- employed part time who want to work more hours and are available to start working more hours within the next 4 weeks or
- employed full time but worked fewer than 35 hours during the survey reference week for economic reasons (including being stood down or insufficient work being available).

**Labour force participation rate** describes the proportion of the population aged 15 and over who are in the labour force (employed or unemployed). On this page, the labour force participation rate refers to the working age population, those aged 15–64.

**Part-time employment** in the LFS includes people who usually work less than 35 hours per week (in all jobs).

**Full-time employment** in the LFS includes people who usually work 35 hours or more per week (in all jobs).

**Casual employment** describes a large variety of work arrangements, and typically includes employees who do not tend to have leave entitlements (such as paid sick leave or annual leave). Such entitlements are usually for non-casual or permanent employees. Note that in March 2021, a statutory definition for casual work was introduced. This definition states an employee is casual if they accept an offer of employment without a firm advance commitment to ongoing work with an agreed pattern of work (Fair Work Ombudsman 2021). However, data presented on this page are based on currently available data from the ABS LFS on employees without leave entitlements that are used as a proxy for casual employment.

### **JobKeeper and JobSeeker Payments and ABS LFS definitions**

In response to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Australian Government introduced various economic support packages to protect the economy and offset the adverse impacts on the labour market from the measures introduced earlier to slow the spread of COVID-19 (such as widespread social distancing and other business-related restrictions). The JobKeeper Payment wage subsidy scheme was one of the largest of these

support packages. It allowed many employees who otherwise may have lost their jobs to remain connected with their employer.

People who received the JobKeeper Payment were counted as being employed in the ABS LFS, as the LFS considers people to be employed if they were away from their job for any reason (including if they were stood down) and were paid for some part of the previous 4 weeks (including through the JobKeeper scheme) (ABS 2020a).

People who received the JobSeeker Payment were classified in the ABS LFS based on their labour market activity. Between March 2020 and March 2021, the mutual obligation requirements that people till then ordinarily had to meet to receive the JobSeeker Payment (which could include looking for work or studying) were suspended, in response to the business and activity restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes may have influenced whether people were actively searching for jobs – which would affect whether they were classified as ‘unemployed’ or ‘not in the labour force’ in the ABS LFS. They would, however, remain as ‘not employed’ in the ABS LFS unless they actually had a job.

See [glossary](#) for definitions of the terms used in this box.

In July 2023, the seasonally adjusted:

- employment rate (for people aged 15–64) was 77.5%
- unemployment rate was 3.7%
- underemployment rate was 6.4%
- labour force participation rate (for people aged 15–64) was 80.6% (ABS 2023a).

## Employment

Since 1978, when the Labour Force series began, the employment rate has been generally increasing, associated with rises in female labour force participation. However, over this time, there were several economic downturns (the early 1980s and 1990s recessions, the 2008–09 global financial crisis (GFC) and the COVID-19 pandemic) that resulted in falls in the employment rate.

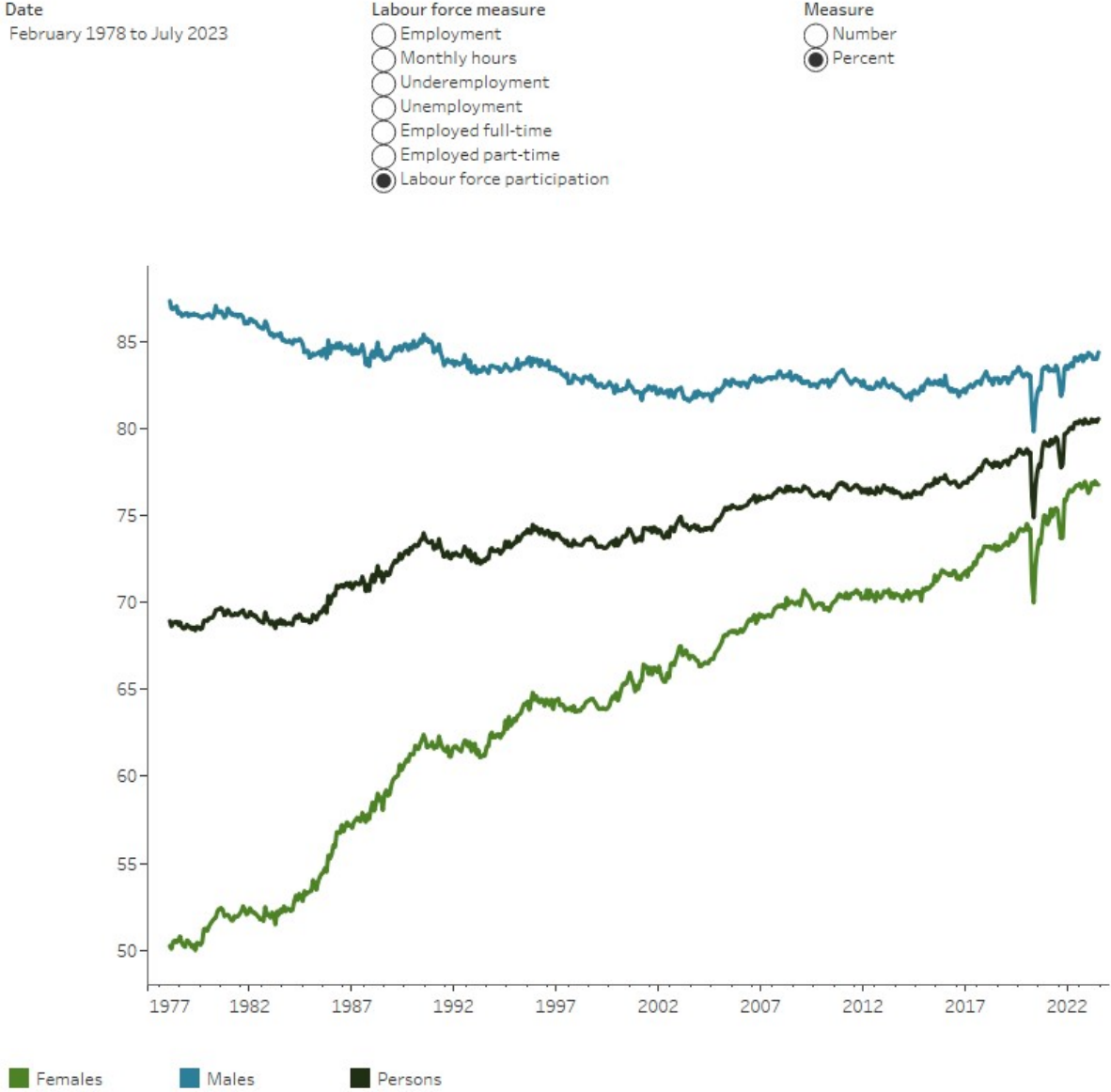
Following these recessions and economic downturns, the seasonally adjusted employment rate (for those aged 15–64) took many years to recover, as highlighted below. In contrast, the employment rate had recovered within one year of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (see ‘Chapter 3 Employment and income support following the COVID-19 pandemic’ in [Australia’s welfare 2023: data insights](#) for more detail).

Between 1978 and July 2023, the seasonally adjusted employment rate for people aged 15–64 (Figure 1):

- decreased from 66% in 1981 to 62% in 1983, before increasing to 69% in 1990 and then falling again to 64% in 1993
- gradually increased to 73% in 2007 and remained relatively stable around 71–73% until 2017
- increased to 74% between 2018 and March 2020
- decreased to 69.5% in May 2020 (lowest level since 2003), in response to measures introduced to contain the spread of COVID-19

- gradually increased to 75.6% in July 2021, and then fell to 73.7% in October 2021 (301,400 fewer employed people than in July 2021), coinciding with the tightening of restrictions and lockdowns in response to containing the spread of the Delta variant of the coronavirus
- increased again reaching a record high of 77.7% in November 2022 and then returned to a similar level (77.6%) in March 2023 and remained relatively stable in most months to July 2023, despite some fluctuations between December 2022 and April 2023. In July 2023 there were 1.0 million more employed people than in March 2020.

**Figure 1: Trends in labour force measures, by sex, 1978 to 2023**



**Notes**

1. The employment rate and labour force participation rate are proportions of the working age population aged 15–64, and the underemployment and unemployment rate are proportions of the population aged 15 and over in the labour force.
2. Data are seasonally adjusted.

Source: Labour Force Australia (ABS 2023a: Table 1, Table 18, Table 19, Table 22).

**Monthly hours worked**

Another way to understand changes in employment is to examine monthly hours worked, which may highlight the impact of a recession or economic downturn on the labour market before it is reflected in changes to the employment rate. Reducing hours during an economic downturn is often an early response taken by businesses to minimise people losing their jobs (ABS 2020b).



Consistent with the above-mentioned growth in employment, the total number of monthly hours worked has been generally increasing since 1978. However, over this period, there have been some monthly dips in hours worked, consistent with previous recessions in the early 1980s (monthly falls up to 2.5%), 1990s (monthly falls up to 1.6%), and the economic downturn in 2008–09 (monthly falls up to 2.0%). The decline in monthly hours worked at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was by far the steepest on record, with a drop of 10% between March and April 2020. The high number of people receiving the JobKeeper Payment in April 2020 (3.4 million), who were counted as employed even if they were working zero hours, may have contributed to this large decline in monthly hours worked (AIHW 2021a).

Hours worked in July 2023 was 11% higher than in March 2020 and 5.2% and 9.7% higher than July 2022 and July 2021, respectively, continuing the upward trend that was observed prior to the pandemic (Figure 1).

For more information on hours worked see 'Chapter 3 Employment and income support following the COVID-19 pandemic' in [Australia's welfare 2023: data insights](#).

## Part-time employment

The hours an individual works is an important aspect of their employment. For many people, working part time enables them to balance work with other activities, such as a caring responsibility, study, or transition to retirement.

The seasonally adjusted share of employed people in part-time employment reduced from 32% in March 2020 to 30% in April–May 2020, similar to the levels observed prior to 2013 (ABS 2023b; Figure 1). It returned to 31–32% for most months from June 2020 until April 2022, then stabilised around 30% until July 2023.

For more information on part-time employment see 'Chapter 3 Employment and income support following the COVID-19 pandemic' in [Australia's welfare 2023: data insights](#).

## Casual employment

The share of all employees engaged on a casual basis (defined on this page as those without leave entitlements) in Australia grew from the late 1980s to the early 2000s (25% in August 2003) but remained relatively steady in the 6 years to February 2020 (around 24–25%) (ABS 2022b). Since then, there have been various fluctuations in the proportion of employees engaged on a casual basis coinciding with measures introduced in March 2020 to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Between 2020 and 2023, the proportion of employees engaged on a casual basis:

- decreased from 24.1% in February 2020 to 20.6% in May 2020, the lowest rate since August 1991
- progressively increased to 23.6% by May 2021
- decreased again in August 2021 to 22.6% and remained around 23% until February 2023 when it declined again to 22.1% and has remained relatively stable until May 2023 (ABS 2023b: Table 13).

Casual workers may work full time or part time. Both the decline in casual employment at the onset of the pandemic, and the recovery since, have been driven by part-time

casual employees, who made up 66% of the fall in casual employment from February–May 2020 and 70% of the growth from May 2020 to May 2023. Conversely, the decline in non-casual employment from February to May 2020 was driven by full-time employment (87%).

Retail and accommodation, and food services industries – among the most affected by social distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic – account for a large proportion of casual workers across Australia (Parliamentary Library 2020).

Note that data reported on this page uses a person’s lack of leave entitlements (such as paid sick leave and annual leave) as a proxy for casual employment, rather than the statutory definition of casual employment, based on currently available data from the ABS LFS (see Labour force definitions box for further details).

## **Underemployment**

Alongside the employment rate – whereby a person is counted as employed regardless of how many hours they have worked in the reference period – the underemployment rate provides important insights on whether people are working enough hours to meet their needs. People are underemployed if they are part time and want more hours, or full time and worked part-time hours in the reference week for economic reasons (see Labour force definitions box above for more detail).

While the seasonally adjusted underemployment rate for the population aged 15 and over has been gradually increasing since the late 1970s, it has also fluctuated in line with the above-mentioned recessions and economic downturns between 1990 and 2023 (Figure 1). In particular, the underemployment rate rose steeply in the early months of the pandemic, when many employees had their hours reduced.

The seasonally adjusted underemployment rate for the population aged 15 and over:

- increased from around 4% in early 1990 to around 7% in 1992 and then remained relatively stable until 2009
- increased to around 8% in 2009, declined again to around 7% between 2010 and 2014 and then remained around 8–9% between 2014 and March 2020
- rose steeply, from 8.7% in March 2020 to 13.7% in April 2020 – the highest on record since the current Labour Force series began in 1978 – before gradually declining to 6.2% in April 2022 (despite some fluctuations from July to October 2021). In the 12 months to April 2023, the underemployment rate fluctuated between 5.8%–6.2% before increasing slightly to 6.4% in May 2023 and remaining steady until July 2023.

Long-term trends in seasonally adjusted underemployment rates up until the pandemic were driven by the underemployment of part-time workers, reflecting the growing share of part-time employment in the labour market and underemployment among part-time workers. At the onset of the pandemic, however, almost all of the increase in underemployment was people who were employed full time and working fewer hours for economic reasons. This is likely to have been influenced by the JobKeeper payment as some people on JobKeeper worked zero or reduced hours; see Labour force definitions above for further details).

The seasonally adjusted underemployment rate has been consistently higher for females than males since the current Labour Force series began in 1978. In July 2023, the underemployment rate was 7.5% for females and 5.3% for males.

## Employment by age groups

The employment rate has increased for all age groups of 'working age' (15–64) people since the current Labour Force series began in 1978 (see Labour force definitions). By early 2021, the employment rate had recovered to pre-pandemic levels (March 2020) for all age groups. By June 2023, it was around 2–5 percentage points higher for the 25–64 age groups than prior to the pandemic (Figure 2).

In June 2023, the 25–34, 35–44 and 45–54 age groups had employment rates of 83–86%. In contrast, employment rates were lower for those aged 15–24 and 55–64 (66% and 67%, respectively), reflecting that people in these age groups are transitioning into and out of work.

Over the last 40 years, the increase in employment rates for people aged 15–24 has been considerably slower than for other age groups – increasing by 4 percentage points between 1978 and 2023 (from 62% to 66%) compared with increases of 13–21 percentage points for other age groups. The slower growth for the 15–24 age group may reflect delayed entry into the labour market due to more people under 24 remaining in education/training over the last few decades. According to the ABS Survey of Education and Work, people aged 15–24 in 2022 were 3 times as likely to be engaged in tertiary education than 40 years ago. In 2022, 9.3% of males and 13.6% of females aged 15–24 have a Bachelor degree or above, which require longer periods of study at university than other non-school qualifications. This compares with 2.6% and 3.7%, respectively, in 1982 (ABS 2022a).

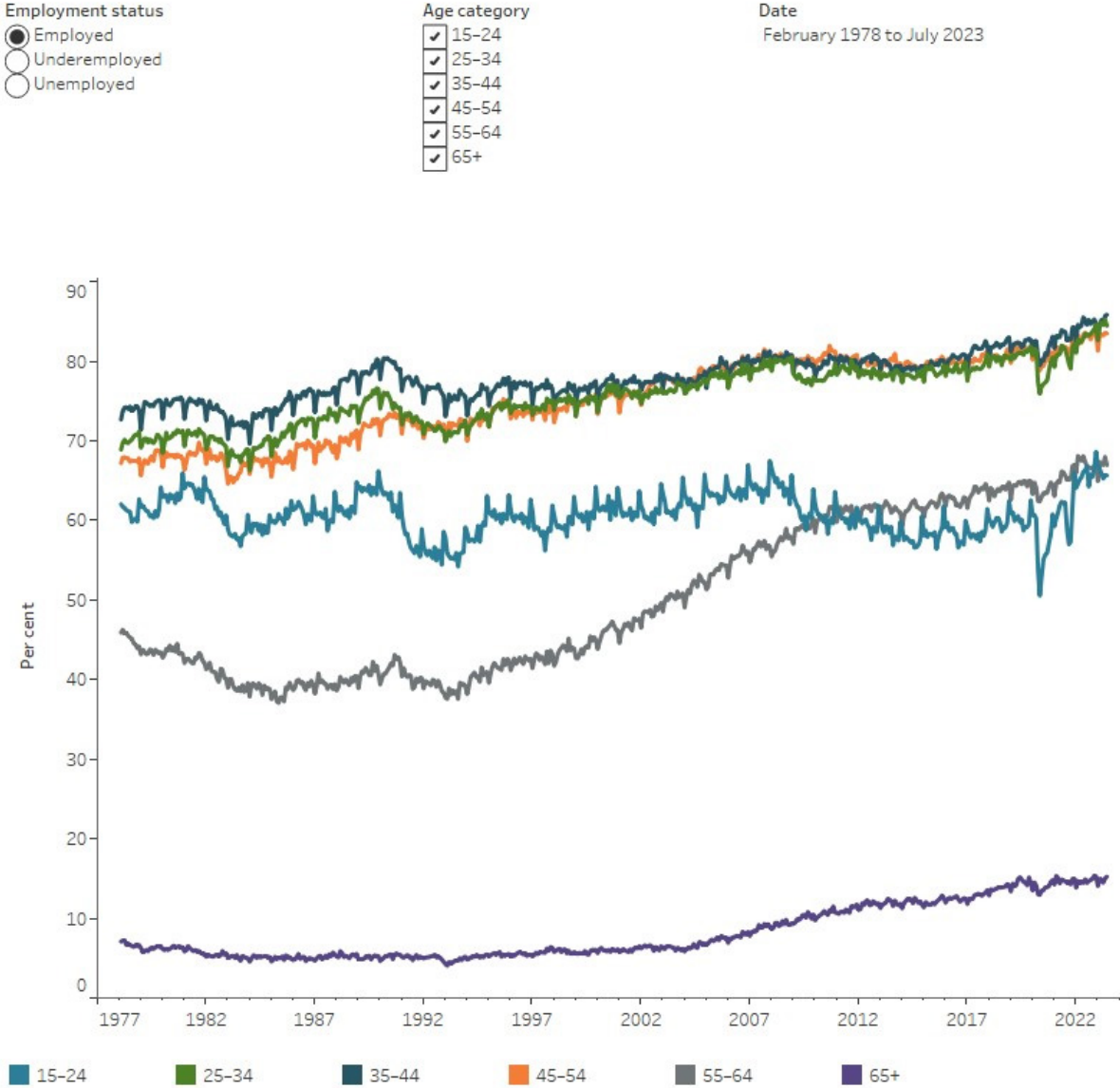
The 55–64 age group have:

- a lower employment rate – 67%, compared with 83–86% for those aged 25–54 in 2023
- the fastest growth in employment rates – 21 percentage point increase between 1978 and 2023, from 46% to 67%.

This reflects the increasing retirement age and more mature aged Australians remaining in the workforce for longer (AIHW 2021b).

People aged 15–24 are also more heavily affected by economic downturns as they are more likely to be engaged on a casual or part-time basis than other age groups – 53% of employed people in this age group work part-time compared to 22–30% of other age groups. People aged 15–24 had the steepest falls in employment rates at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a fall of 10 percentage points reaching the lowest rate on record. However, they were also the first age group to return to pre-pandemic levels and had the largest percentage point increase in employment rates between March 2020 and June 2023 (Figure 2). See 'Chapter 3 Employment and income support following the COVID-19 pandemic' in [Australia's welfare 2023: data insights](#) for more information.

**Figure 2: Employment, underemployment and unemployment rates, by age, 1978 to 2023**



**Notes**

1. Employment rate is a proportion of the working age population aged 15–64, while the unemployment and underemployment rates are proportions of the population aged 15 and over in the labour force.
2. Employment rates and unemployment rates for people 55 and over are based on the original LFS, otherwise data are seasonally adjusted.

Source: Labour Force Australia (ABS 2023a: Table 22, 2023b: Table 1).

**Employment by sex**

Over the last 40 years, the employment rate for females aged 15–64 has been generally rising, while the male employment rate has been slowly falling:

- Between February 1978 and January 2020, the female employment rate increased from 46% to 71%, the highest rate at that point since the current labour force data series began in 1978.

- The male employment rate fell from 82% in 1978 to 80% before the GFC (most of 2007–2008) and to 79% in January 2020.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, there were differences in employment levels between males and females:

- Between March and May 2020, the number of employed females (seasonally adjusted) fell by 7.9% compared with a 5.7% fall for males.
- The number of employed females increased at a faster rate than for males between June 2020 and May 2021 (a 7.3% and 5.0% increase, respectively).
- Females returned to pre-pandemic employment rates earlier than males (February 2021 compared with May 2021 for males).
- In November 2022, both males and females reached highest employment rates in over 2 decades, 81.2% and 74.2%, respectively – for females the highest on record (since 1966), and for males the highest since the early 1980s.
- The employment rate for males then declined slightly to 80.6% in April 2023 before increasing to 81.1% in July 2023, while the female employment rate declined to 73.6% in January 2023 before increasing again to 73.9% in July 2023 (Figure 1).

For more information on the impact of COVID-19 on employment in 2020–21, see 'Chapter 4 The impacts of COVID-19 on employment and income support in Australia' in [Australia's welfare 2021: data insights](#).

## Employment by education level

People with higher levels of educational attainment are generally more likely to have better employment outcomes, including increased real wages (National Skills Commission 2021).

The number of employed Australians with a Bachelor degree or above as their highest educational qualification increased by 47% from August 2015 (earliest data from ABS LFS) to May 2023 – from an estimated 3.6 million to 5.2 million, or from 30% to 37% of all employed people aged 15 and over. Corresponding with this increase, there was a slight decline in the proportion of employed Australians whose highest educational qualification was Certificate III/IV (from 21% to 18%) or Year 12 or below (from 35% to 32%) over this period.

At the onset of the pandemic, people with lower levels of education (Year 12 or below as their highest educational attainment) had much steeper declines in employment – average quarterly decline of 10% from February 2020 to May 2020, compared with an average decline of 1% for those with a Bachelor degree or above. This compares to minimal changes in employment (by 1–2%) for both those with a Bachelor degree or above, and those with Year 12 and below as their highest level of attainment, in the corresponding quarters in 2018 and 2019.

In May 2023, the employment rate of people with a postgraduate degree as their highest level of educational attainment was 83%, for people with a Bachelor degree it was 79%, and for people with Year 12 or equivalent it was 68% (ABS 2023b).

For more information see [Primary and secondary schooling](#) and [Higher education, vocational education and training](#).

# Unemployment

Since the early 1990's, the unemployment rate has declined, reaching its lowest rate in 50 years in October 2022. Over this period, there have been various increases to the unemployment rate, coinciding with economic downturns due to the GFC and COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 1).

Over the last 40 years, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for people aged 15 and over:

- reached a peak of around 10–11% in the early 1990s, coinciding with the recessions in the early 1990's
- decreased to around 4% for most of 2007 and 2008
- increased to 6% for most of 2009, following the GFC, and has generally remained around 5–6% between March 2010 and March 2020
- increased from 5.2% to 7.5% between March and July 2020, in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic
- gradually declined to 3.4% by October 2022 – the lowest rate in almost 50 years – before increasing slightly to 3.7% by July 2023 (172,400 fewer unemployed people than in March 2020).

A period of unemployment can be a short-term transition between jobs, a long struggle to find work, or something in between. Long-term unemployment can detrimentally affect a person's financial resources and their job prospects (Cassidy et al. 2020).

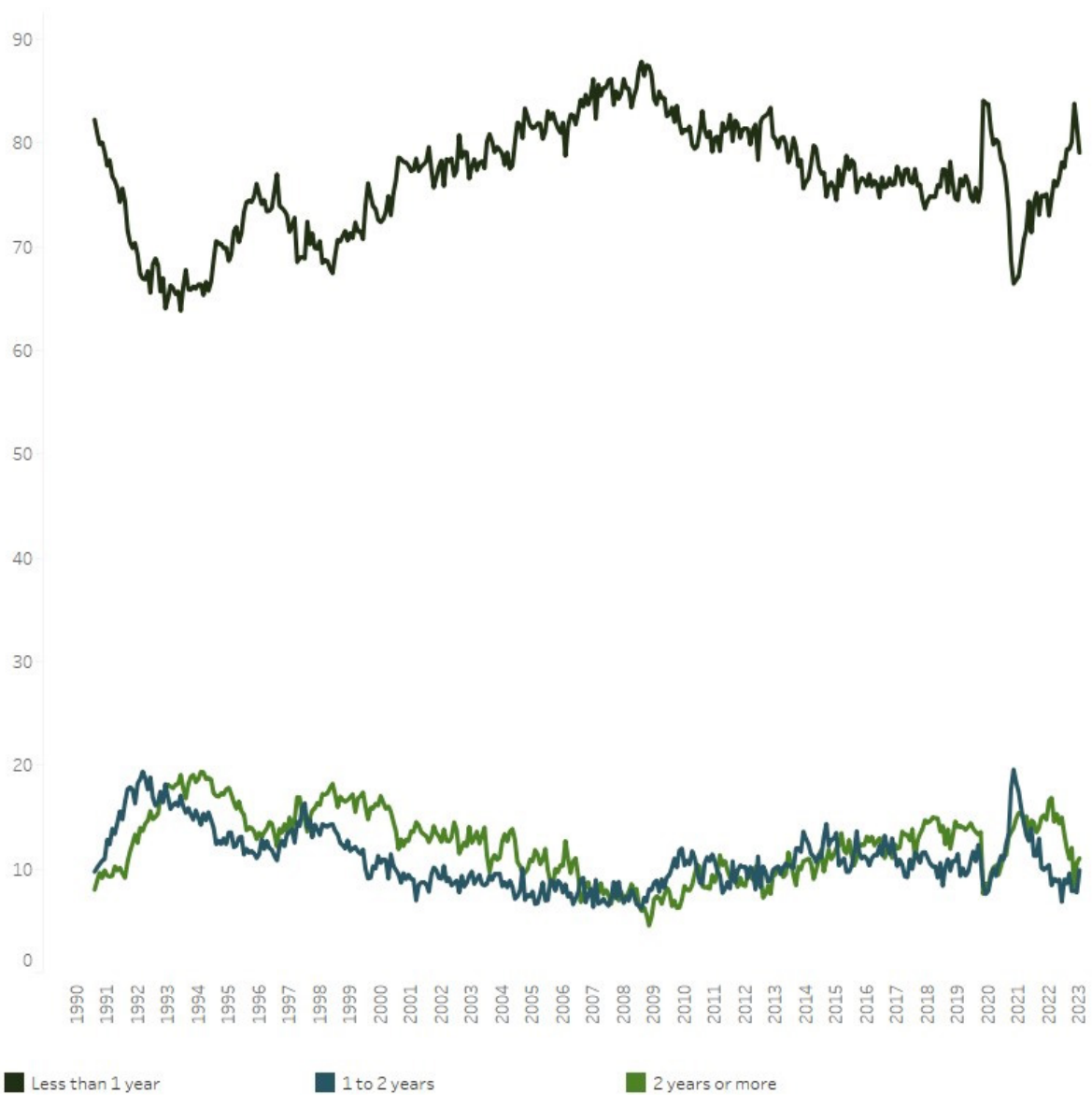
Of the 488,100 unemployed people aged 15 and over in June 2023:

- 79% (or 385,900) had been unemployed for less than 1 year
- 9.9% (or 48,400) had been unemployed for 1–2 years
- 11% (or 53,900) had been unemployed for 2 or more years (ABS 2023b: Table 14a).

Duration of unemployment has fluctuated over the past 2 decades, including increases in the number of people who are short-term unemployed (a year or less) at the onset of each recession and economic downturn (including in the early 1980s and 1990s, the 2008–09 GFC and COVID-19). This is then followed by increases in those unemployed for 1–2 years and 2 or more years in subsequent years (Figure 3). In particular:

- Between March and April 2020 (at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic), the proportion of short-term unemployed (less than 1 year) had the largest monthly increase since the data series began in 1991 (from 76% to 84%). Note this was still lower than the peak in January 2009 (88%).
- In April 2021 (12 months later), the proportion of those unemployed for 1–2 years (20%) was the highest it has been in 30 years (since 1991). It was almost twice as high as in previous years (11–13% for the corresponding months in 2017–2019).
- In July 2022, the proportion of long-term unemployed (2 or more years) increased slightly to 17% (compared with 12–15% for the corresponding months in 2017–2019). It was similar to the level in 2000, but still below the high levels observed following the early 1990's recession (18–19% for most of 1993–1994).

**Figure 3: Proportion of unemployed people by duration of unemployment, from January 1991 to June 2023**



Note: Figure presents proportion of unemployed people by duration of unemployment, from January 1991 to June 2023.

Source: Labour Force Australia, detailed (ABS 2023b: Table 14a).

## Not engaged in education, employment or training

Not participating in work or study can contribute to future unemployment, lower incomes and employment insecurity (Pech et al. 2009).

In May 2022 (the most recent data available), 1 in 4 (24%) people aged 15–74 were not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET). All age groups have seen declines in the proportion of those NEET between 2013 and 2022, from:

- 11% to 7.6% for those aged 15–24
- 18% to 13% for those 25–44
- 27% to 23% for those aged 45–64.

Between 2019 and 2020, there was a large increase in the proportion of people who were NEET across most age groups (24% to 28% for those aged 15–74). This was in line with declines in the above-mentioned employment measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (ABS 2022a). By May 2022, the proportion of each age group (between ages 15 and 74) that was NEET was between 2.5 and 4.8 percentage points lower than in May 2019.

## Labour force participation

The seasonally adjusted labour force participation rate has been gradually increasing since the current LFS began in 1978 (69%), despite some fluctuations in line with recessions in the early 1980s and early 1990s.

Consistent with previous economic downturns, there was also a large fall in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic from 78.6% in March 2020 to a low of 74.9% in May 2020. It then gradually increased to a peak of 80.6% in November 2022 (highest on record), and then remained relatively stable to July 2023 (between 80.3–80.6%).

The share of females in the labour force has been steadily increasing over the past 50 years – from 36% in 1978 to 47% by July 2023. This is due to the number of females in the labour force almost tripling over this period compared with an 86% increase for males. When taking into account the size of the population over this 40-year period, the labour force participation rate for females increased by 27 percentage points (from 50% to 77%) compared with a 3-percentage point decline for males (from 87% to 84%; Figure 1).

## Potential workers

In February 2023, of the 7.4 million people not employed, 1.8 million (25%) wanted to work (referred to as potential workers; ABS 2023c).

Of the 1.8 million people who wanted to work (potential workers):

- 467,800 (26%) looked for work
- 356,400 (20%) had a job to go to or return to
- 980,500 did not look for work.

## Not potential workers

In February 2023, of the 7.4 million people not employed, 5.6 million people (76%) did not want to work or were permanently unable to work (not potential workers). Of these 5.5 million not potential workers, the majority (88% or 4.9 million) did not want to work



while 691,100 (12%) were permanently unable to work. The main activities reported by those who did not want to work were:

- retirement (61% or 3.0 million)
- duties around the home (10% or 518,100)
- attending an educational institution (10% or 474,000)
- ill health or disability (6% or 301,200).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on employment and unemployment, see:

- ABS [Labour Force Survey](#)
- ABS [Labour statistics: concepts, sources and methods.](#)

## References

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Pech J, McNevin A and Nelms L (2009) [\*Young people with poor labour force attachment: a survey of concepts, data and previous research\*](#), Australian Fair Pay Commission, accessed 3 May 2023.

# Employment services

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/employment-services>

## On this page

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Overview of main employment services programs

Trends in mainstream employment services

Outcomes of employment services

Trends in Disability Employment Services

Outcomes of Disability Employment Services

Age and sex

Where do I go for more information?

The Australian Government funds employment services so that people receiving income support have access to support that will help them find and keep a job. The kinds of services typically included in employment services programs include:

- services that help individuals during their job search, such as helping to find jobs or writing resumés
- training programs aimed at helping to improve the employability of people who are unemployed
- services that help unemployed individuals start their own business
- work experience programs that place unemployed people in work-like activities (such as Work for the Dole).

Employment services primarily support people who receive specific income support payments, such as those receiving unemployment and parenting payments (see [Unemployment payments and Parenting payments](#)). To continue to receive such payments, an individual may need to participate in an employment services program to meet mutual obligation (activity-testing) requirements.

This page focuses on the main employment services programs administered by the Australian Government. These data are sourced from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations for mainstream employment services (unpublished data for the period June 2005 to January 2023, and published data for February-March 2023) and Department of Social Services for Disability Employment Services (from June 2011 to March 2023; DSS 2023).

Other government labour market policies that have a direct impact on employment are wage subsidy programs that incentivise employers to employ jobseekers. One example

of these was the JobKeeper Payment, which ended in March 2021 (see 'Chapter 4 The impacts of COVID-19 on employment and income support in Australia' in [Australia's welfare 2021: data insights](#) for further details).

See the [glossary](#) for definitions of terms used on this page.

## Defining employment service programs

### Main employment service programs

There are many different employment service programs, tailored to different support needs. Some of the main employment services include:

#### Mainstream employment services:

- **Workforce Australia:** is the Australian Government's key mainstream program to support individuals to find and keep a job, change jobs or create their own job. It includes an online service and a network of providers to deliver personalised support. In July 2022, Workforce Australia replaced jobactive as the mainstream employment services program.
- **Transition to Work:** aims to assist 15–24 year olds into work (including apprenticeships and traineeships) or education through practical intervention and work experience.

**Disability Employment Services (DES) program:** supports people with disability to prepare them to find – and keep – a job (includes help with resumé preparation and interview skills, in-workplace support for employers, and workplace modifications).

**JobAccess:** provides tailored employment information to employers, employment service providers, and people with disability, connecting them with free government disability employment supports, and content to help people with disability find long-term employment.

**ParentsNext:** aims to help parents of children over 9 months and under 6 years of age (in particular, those receiving a Parenting Payment) to plan and prepare for employment. Note, the May 2023 budget announced the ParentsNext program will be abolished from 1 July 2024.

**Community Development Program:** aims to support jobseekers in remote Australia to build skills, address barriers to employment and contribute to their communities through a range of flexible activities.

There are also several smaller targeted programs and complementary services.

Complementary services (such as Work for the Dole and Youth Jobs PaTH) may be accessed through general employment services programs and form part of the package of services accessed by the participant.

### Mainstream employment service outcomes

This section also reports on employment outcomes for a sample of jobseekers who have previously participated in, or are currently participating in, Workforce Australia (or jobactive before 4 July 2022) or Transition to Work. These jobseekers are selected to respond to a survey at the end of a given month and their employment outcomes are measured around three months after being selected (the outcome being their employment status at the time).

Data are aggregated over 12 month periods, and this page reports on participants selected for the survey between January 2021 and December 2021.

## Employment services and labour force measures

The total number of employment service participants does not necessarily align with the total number of people who are unemployed, based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force definition (that is, people who looking for work, and available to start work, but who did not work any hours at all in the reference week). Employment service participants includes people who are unemployed, but also people who are employed and eligible for income support as they are not earning enough or not working enough hours. It also includes some people who would otherwise be defined as not in the labour force. This includes Australians aged 55 and over who volunteer full time to meet their mutual obligation requirements, and individuals with temporary exemptions from mutual obligation requirements due to illness, caring responsibilities, and other personal circumstances.

Employment service data provides insights into the characteristics of people who have been able to move closer to the labour market, and people experiencing longer-term unemployment. It provides a different perspective on the scale and composition of unemployment and underemployment in Australia than that based on the ABS Labour Force measures as presented in [Employment and unemployment](#).

## Overview of main employment service programs

The number of people registered with the main employment service programs were:

- 645,600 in mainstream employment service programs (including Workforce Australia Services, Workforce Australia Online and Transition to Work) as at 31 March 2023 (DEWR 2023)
- 273,600 in Disability Employment Services (DES) program as at 31 March 2023 (DSS 2023)
- 79,600 in ParentsNext as at 31 March 2023 (DEWR 2023)
- 33,900 Community Development Program participants as at 30 September 2022 (NIAA 2022).

The rest of this page is focussed on mainstream employment services and the DES program, due to data availability. Together, these programs cover the majority of job seekers using employment services.

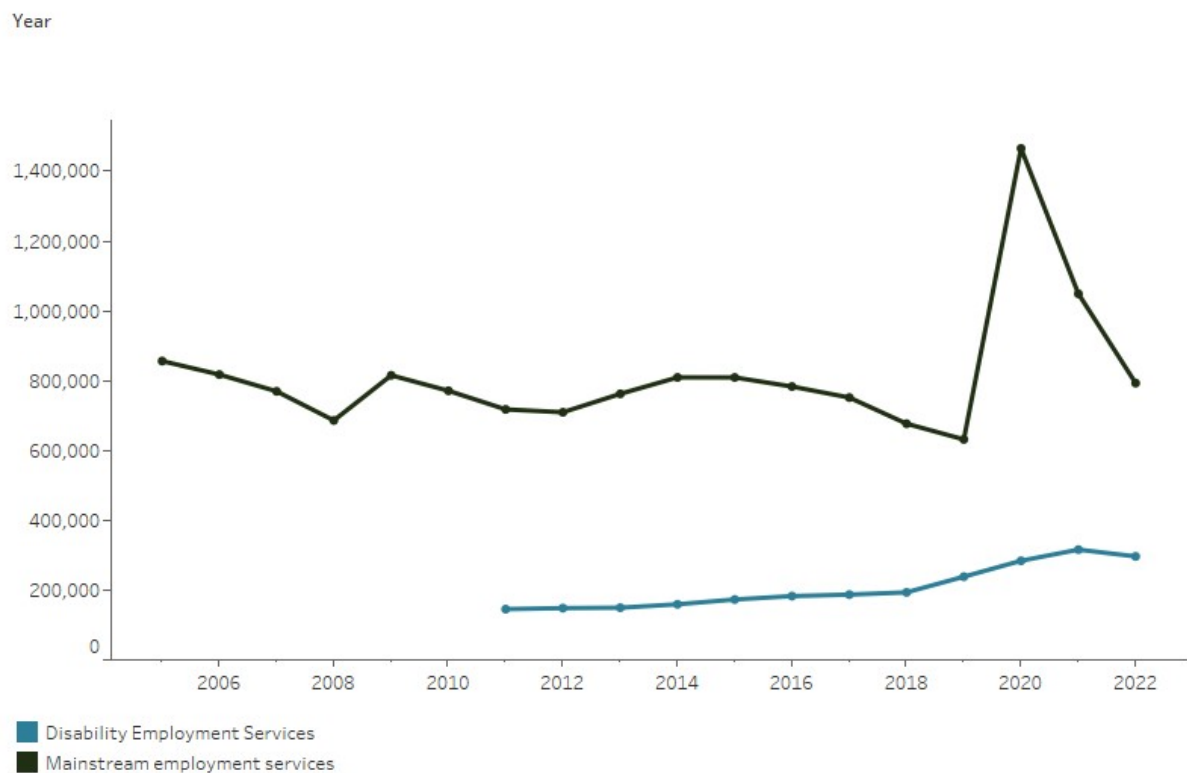
## Trends in mainstream employment services

Overall, between June 2005 and March 2023, the number of people participating in mainstream employment services declined by 25%, from 856,200 to 645,600 (Figure 1). As a proportion of the number of people in the labour force (ABS 2023), this represents a decline from 8.2% to 4.5% over this period.

Very different trends were observed, however, before and after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020:

- Before the pandemic, participant numbers were falling – from 856,200 to 653,600 between June 2005 and February 2020.
- Between February and September 2020, the number of participants more than doubled (from 653,600 to 1.5 million), following the introduction of social distancing and business-related restrictions in March 2020.
- From September 2020 to January 2023, the number of participants steadily declined to 641,000, which was 1.9% lower (12,600 fewer participants) than in February 2020, before increasing slightly to 645,600 by March 2023.
- These changes are broadly consistent with patterns observed for people receiving [Unemployment payments](#) in the 12 months to March 2021.

**Figure 1: Trends in people participating in mainstream employment services (2005 to 2022) and disability employment services (2011 to 2022)**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Data are as at 30 June in each year.

Source: AIHW analysis of unpublished mainstream employment service data from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations from June 2005 to June 2022; [Department of Social Services Disability Employment Services – monthly profile \(June 2011 – June 2022\)](#) for disability employment service data.

## Outcomes of employment services

- Despite a large increase in the number of mainstream employment service participants in the early months of the pandemic, the proportion of participants able to secure employment declined, based on a monthly survey of respondents of

their employment outcomes 3 months later (see box above for further details). Around 42% of all people who responded to the survey in 2020 were employed when outcomes were measured, compared with 46–50% in 2017–2019. This decline reflects labour market conditions at the start of the pandemic and coincided with falls in employment (see [Employment and unemployment](#) for further details). By 2021, this had recovered to 51%.

- The proportion of participants reported as not in the labour force 3 months after participating remained relatively stable from 2017–2021 (17–20%), suggesting that the pandemic did not have a large impact overall on participants who were not in the labour force (DEWR 2022; see ‘Chapter 3 Employment and income support following the COVID-19 pandemic’ in [Australia’s welfare 2023: data insights](#) for further details).

## Trends in Disability Employment Services

Between June 2011 and June 2022, the number of DES participants more than doubled from 145,400 to 296,500, with the rate of increase varying over this period (Figure 1):

- Between June 2011 and June 2018, participant numbers increased by 33%, or by an average of 572 participants per month.
- Between June 2018 and June 2021, participant numbers rose more quickly, a 63% increase overall or by an average of 3,400 per month over this period.
- From June 2021 until January 2022, participant numbers remained relatively stable (around 313,000) before gradually declining to 273,600 in March 2023.

## Outcomes of Disability Employment Services

While the number of people accessing DES continued to steadily increase throughout the early months of the COVID -19 pandemic, the number of participants who had maintained employment following their engagement with DES declined slightly in mid-2020. From May 2020 to August 2020, for example, the number of people who had been working at or above their minimum required hours for 13 weeks (that is, people with 13-week outcomes) were between 14% and 18% lower than the same months in the previous year (a reversal of the pattern seen in previous years). Similar to the decline in jobactive employment outcomes, this decline reflects labour market conditions at the start of the pandemic and coincided with falls in employment.

As at March 2023, the numbers of people with 4-, 13-, 26- and 52-week outcomes were all higher than before the pandemic in February 2020 (DSS 2023).

## Age and sex

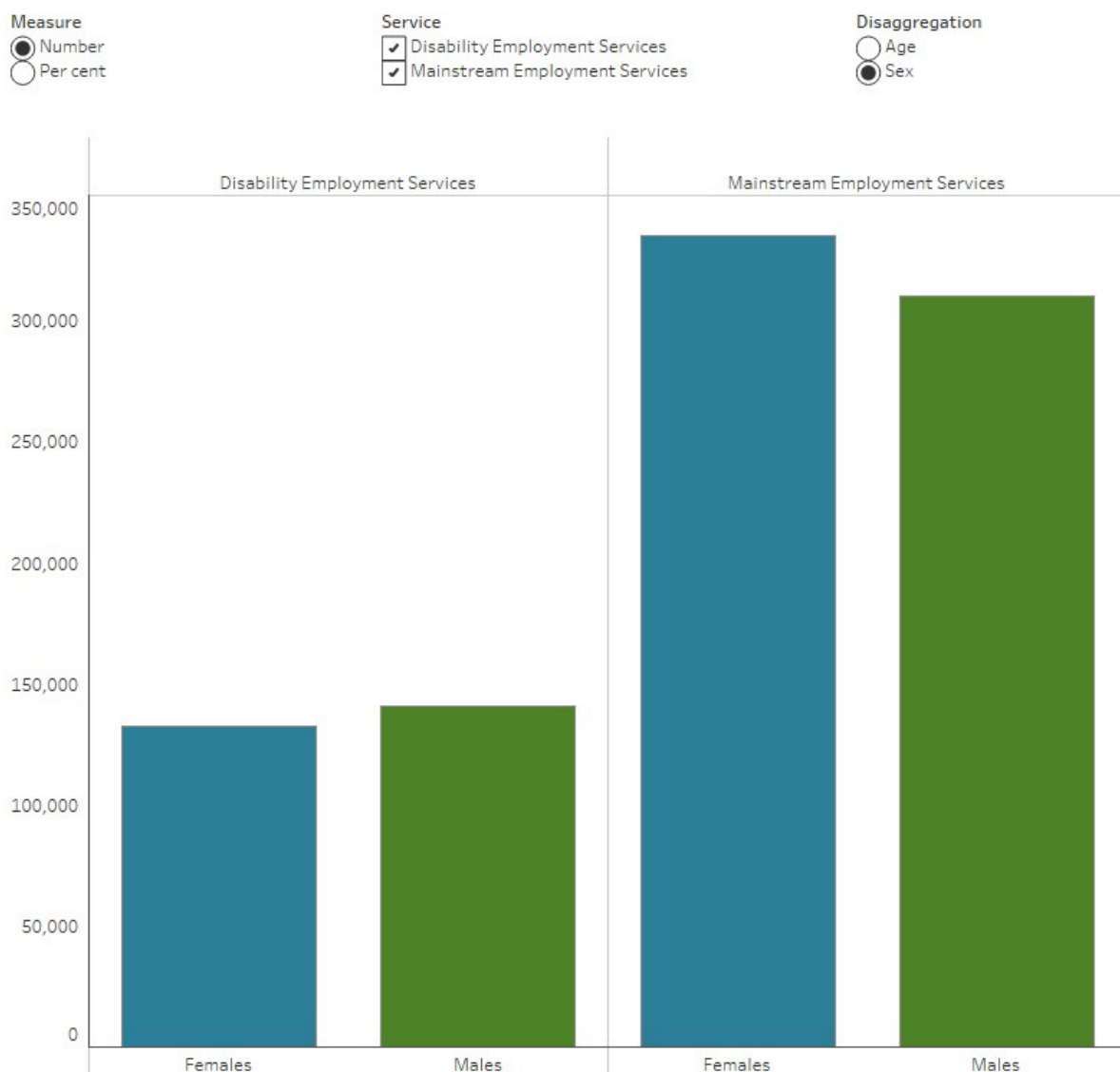
As at 31 March 2023, males accounted for 48% of mainstream employment service participants, and 51% of DES participants.

As at 31 March 2023, the age profile of participants in these employment services programs differed substantially, with DES participants tending to be older:

- 18% of mainstream employment service participants were under 25, 43% were aged 25–44, and 39% were aged 45 and over
- 11% of DES participants were under 25, 32% were aged 25–44 and 57% were 45 and over (Figure 2).
- Additionally, of all DES participants, the majority reported either a physical (43%) or psychiatric (41%) condition as their primary disability.

Some of the cohorts examined above may have been targeted by separate employment services and therefore be under-represented in these data.

**Figure 2: Number of mainstream employment services and disability employment services participants by age group and sex, as at 31 March 2023**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note. Per cent refers to participation in employment services by age group and sex as a proportion of all participants.

Source: [Department of Social Services Disability Employment Services – monthly profile](#); [Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Workforce Australia and ParentsNext Caseload Time Series – October 2022 to May 2023](#)



## Where do I go for more information?

For more information about employment services, see:

- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations [Workforce Australia](#)
- NIAA [Community Development Program](#)
- Department of Social Services [Disability Employment Services](#).

## References

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# Income and income support

Find the most recent version of this information at:  
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/income-support>

What are the main sources of household income?

Have income levels changed over time?

How many people receive income support payments?

Where do I go for more information?

A person's wellbeing is influenced by many factors, but having an adequate income remains an essential component in measuring individual and household wellbeing. Adequate income can help people support themselves, their families, and their broader communities. For most people, income can be an indicator of a person's ability to access food, clothing, education, housing and leisure activities. A person's income is influenced by their economic circumstances, in particular employment status and type, hours worked, occupation, and government support through Australia's social security system.

This page examines various measures that provide an overview of the economic wellbeing of Australians, including household income and income support payments through the social security system (see Income and Income support data sources). See [Glossary](#) for definitions of terms used on this page.

## Income and income support data sources

### Income data

Several ABS data sources are used to report on income on this page:

[Survey of Income and Housing 2019–20](#) – the latest available data from this survey has been used on this page to report on main sources of household income.

[Consumer Price Index \(September 1997 – June 2023\)](#) – the Consumer Price Index is a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by households for a fixed 'basket' of goods and services. It measures household inflation and changes in price for categories of household expenditure.

[Survey of Average Weekly Earnings \(May 2012 – May 2023\)](#) – this survey is conducted twice a year in May and November and is the source of data on average weekly earnings. The data presented on this page are estimates of average weekly earnings (not including earnings from overtime) and are affected by compositional changes in employment. On this page, these data have been adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index.

**[National accounts: Distribution of Household Income, Consumption and Wealth \(2003–04 to 2021–22\)](#)** – integrates ABS micro and macro data to generate information on household income, consumption and wealth. This data source is used to report on equivalised disposable household income by income quintiles. The ABS Households Final consumption expenditure implicit price deflator was used to measure changes in household income by adjusting these data for changes in both prices and the composition of expenditure (ABS 2023b).

**[Wage price index \(September 1997 – June 2023\)](#)** – measures changes in the price of labour. This measure is compiled using hourly rates of pay for a sample of employee jobs and is therefore not affected by compositional shifts in employment. The WPI is also unaffected by the quality and quantity of work performed and does not reflect changes in payments for overtime work, or bonuses.

This page has also used the **ANU COVID-19 Monitoring Survey Program** (February 2020 to August 2023) and unpublished analysis from the ANU on projected household income to 2023.

### **Income support data**

Income support data are sourced from the Department of Social Services [payment demographic data](#) (from September 2013 to March 2023) and previously unpublished data derived from Services Australia administrative data (June 2001 to June 2013).

## **What are the main sources of household income?**

In 2019–20, about 3 in 5 (62%) households reported wages and salaries as their primary source of income, followed by government pensions and allowances (22%), superannuation (6.0%), and investment income (4.4%).

Government pensions and allowances were more likely to be the primary source of income for households in the lowest (63%) or second lowest (30%) income quintile compared with other quintiles (8.7% in the third to fifth quintiles; ABS 2022).

## **Have income levels changed over time?**

### **Income from wages**

Income from wages can be measured using several data sources. Average weekly ordinary time earnings (AWOTE) for full-time employees, from the ABS Survey of Average Weekly Earnings is one way to measure changes in weekly earnings (ABS 2023c). Movements in average weekly earnings can be affected by changes in both wage rates and in the composition of employment.

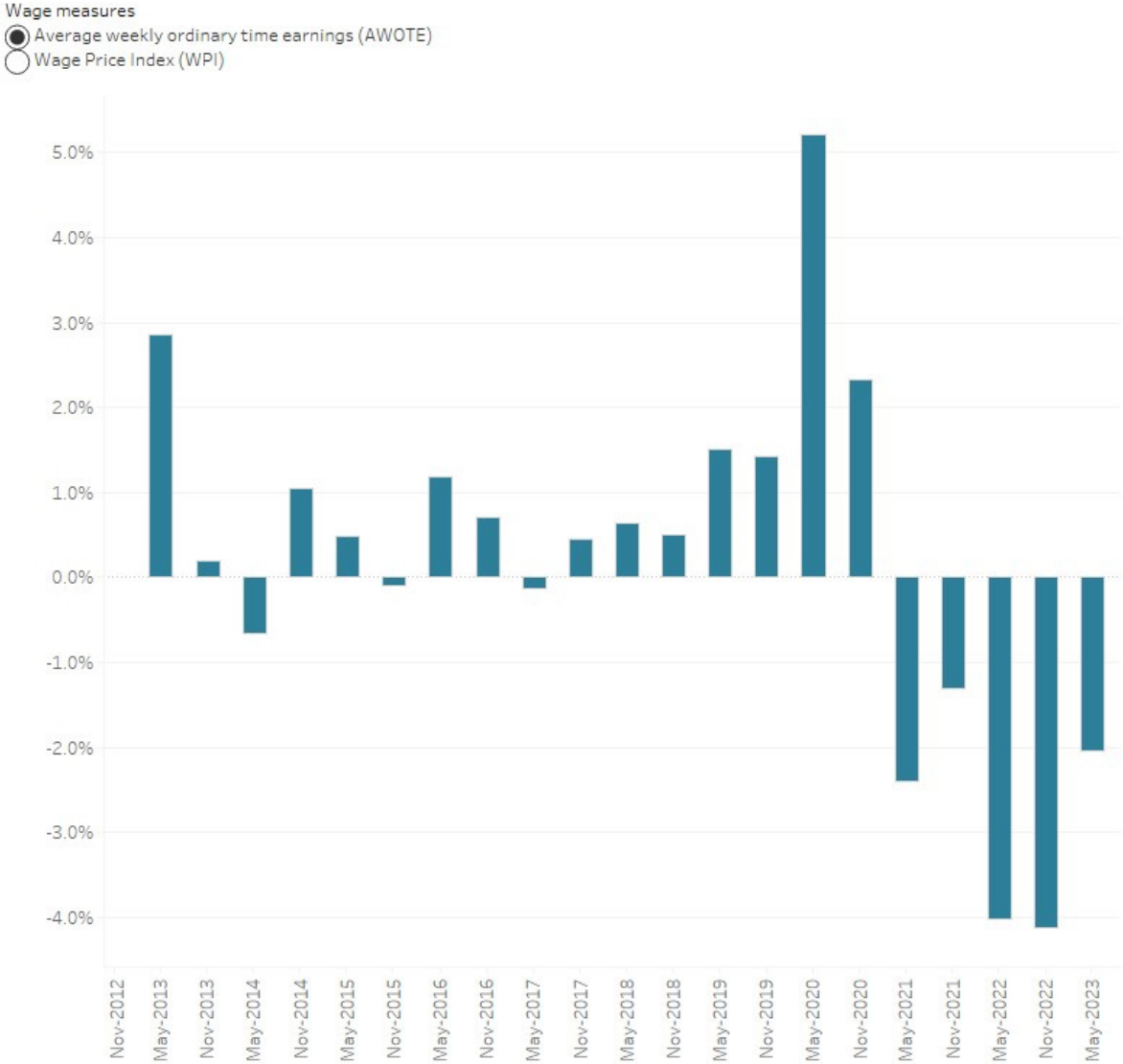
Prior to the onset of COVID-19 AWOTE grew at an average annual rate of 2.5% from November 2012 to November 2019 in nominal terms. In the 6 months to May 2020, AWOTE for full-time employees increased steeply by 3.3% (to \$1,714). The sharp rise reflects compositional changes in the structure of employment in the early months of the pandemic, in particular the loss of relatively low paid jobs led to a rise in average

earnings (ABS 2020b). From May 2020 to May 2023, AWOTE for full-time employees grew at an average annual rate of 2.4%.

From December 2001 to December 2019 the Consumer Price Index (CPI) grew at an average annual rate of 2.4%. Consistent with the experience in other OECD countries, annual inflation has accelerated following the initial COVID-19 period. The CPI grew by 6.1% over the year to the June quarter 2022, which at the time was the fastest increase since June 2001. Annual growth in the CPI reached a peak of 7.8% over the year to the December quarter 2022. It has subsequently moderated to 6.0% over the year to the June quarter 2023.

This rise in inflation has led to declines in the real value of wages. As Figure 1 shows after adjusting for changes in the CPI, real AWOTE has been falling in annual terms since May 2021. Real AWOTE fell by 4.1% over the year to November 2022, and by 2.0% over the year to May 2023. This compares to annual increases of 0.4–1.4% from November 2017 and November 2019.

**Figure 1: Annual change in income from wages in real terms, June 2011 to June 2023**



**Notes**

- 1. AWOTE and WPI data are seasonally adjusted.
- 2. Data have been adjusted for changes in prices using the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Source: For AWOTE ABS 2023c Table 2, ABS 2023d Tables 1 and 2; for WPI ABS 2023e Table 1, ABS 2023d Tables 1 and 2

The Wage Price Index (WPI) measures changes in the price of labour. This measure is compiled using hourly rates of pay for a sample of employee jobs and is therefore not affected by compositional shifts in employment. The WPI, unlike measures of average weekly earnings, provides a measure of changes in wage rates. In other words, it shows how pay changes for a particular job.

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, annual growth in the WPI was quite subdued; it grew by an average annual rate of 2.2% between March quarter 2013 and March quarter 2020.

However, during the early months of COVID-19 annual wage growth fell, with the WPI growing by 1.4% over the year to the September quarter 2020, the December quarter 2020 and the March quarter 2021. At 1.4%, annual WPI growth was at its lowest level since the introduction of this index in the late 1990s.

Annual growth in the WPI has subsequently accelerated with the WPI growing by 3.7% over the year to the March quarter 2023 (the fastest annual increase since September 2012) and by 3.6% over the year to the June 2023 quarter. This compares with average annual growth of 2.2% between June 2013 and June 2020.

The recent acceleration in growth in the WPI has not kept pace with inflation and as a result the real value of the WPI has been falling in annual terms since the June quarter 2021, as shown in Figure 1. Over the year to the June quarter 2023 the real value of the WPI fell by 2.3%.

## Household income

While wages data provide important information on changes in living standards many families do not rely on income from wages, such as people who are retired or receiving income from other sources (for example government payments). For that reason, it is also important to look at changes in household income and how this has changed at different points of the income distribution.

The ABS has published estimates of household income, wealth and consumption using data from the Australian National Accounts and other data.

In 2021–22, average equivalised gross disposable household income (equivalised income adjusts for household, size, and composition) was \$139,064 per household (ABS 2023a).

Tables 1 and 2 show changes in nominal and real gross disposable income per household. The ABS Households Final consumption expenditure implicit price deflator was used to adjust these data for changes in prices.

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, real household income was growing across the income distribution with the fastest increases experienced by households in the highest and lowest quintile of the distribution both in nominal and in real terms. For example, for households in the highest and lowest quintiles average real equivalised gross disposable income per household grew at an average annual rate of 2.3% and 2.2%, respectively, between 2003–04 and 2019–20, compared with annual increases of around 1.5–1.8% in the other quintiles.

Following the onset of COVID-19 a different pattern was evident. From 2019–20 to 2020–21, the fastest increases in real equivalised gross disposable income per household were experienced by households in the lowest and second lowest quintiles of the income distribution (5.8% and 4.7% increases, respectively, compared to 3.0–3.7% increases for other quintiles). This reflects the COVID-related government economic support packages, such as the introduction of the Coronavirus Supplement for working-age income support recipients.

From 2020–21 to 2021–22, however, households in the lowest and second lowest income quintiles saw their real income fall (by 2.2% and 0.6%, respectively), in line with the unwinding of some economic support measures. This compares to slight increases

of 0.9–1.2% in other quintiles. Real incomes for these households were still 3.5% higher (for the lowest quintile) and 4.1% higher (for the second lowest quintile) in 2021–22 than in 2019–20.

Over the whole period from 2003–04 to 2021–22, real incomes grew across the income distribution with the fastest growth experienced by households in the highest and lowest income quintiles (2.3% and 2.2% growth, respectively).

At \$288,311 in 2021–22, average equivalised gross disposable income per household for the top quintile was 5.3 times as high as that for the lowest income quintile (\$54,134). Net worth (wealth) per household at \$3.2 million for the highest quintile was 5.9 times as high as that for the lowest quintile (\$551,460).

The Gini Coefficient is a measure of income inequality that is often used in international comparisons. The coefficient varies between 0 and 1 with lower numbers representing less inequality and higher numbers representing more inequality. The latest ABS data (ABS 2022) shows that the GINI coefficient for equivalised disposable household income remained quite stable from 2007–08 (0.336) to 2019–20 (0.324) (ABS 2019).

**Table 1: Average annual change in equivalised gross disposable household income (in nominal terms) by income quintiles, 2003–04 to 2021–22**

<b>Average annual change</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> (most disadvantaged)</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>3rd</b>	<b>4th</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> (least disadvantaged)</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>2003–04 to 2019–20</b>	4.3%	3.9%	3.7%	3.6%	4.5%	4.1%
<b>2019–20 to 2020–21</b>	6.9%	5.8%	4.7%	4.8%	4.0%	4.7%
<b>2020–21 to 2021–22</b>	0.8%	2.4%	3.9%	4.1%	4.3%	3.7%
<b>2003–04 to 2021–2022</b>	4.3%	4.0%	3.8%	3.7%	4.4%	4.1%

Note: Equivalised gross disposable household income by income quintile has been adjusted for changes in prices using the ABS Households Final consumption expenditure implicit price deflator.

Sources: ABS 2023a, 2023b.

**Table 2: Average annual change in equivalised gross disposable household income (in real terms) by income quintiles, 2003-04 to 2021-22**

<b>Average annual change</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> (most disadvantaged)</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>3rd</b>	<b>4th</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> (least disadvantaged)</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>2003-04 to 2019-20</b>	2.2%	1.8%	1.6%	1.5%	2.3%	2.0%
<b>2019-20 to 2020-21</b>	5.8%	4.7%	3.6%	3.7%	3.0%	3.7%
<b>2020-21 to 2021-22</b>	-2.2%	-0.6%	0.9%	1.0%	1.2%	0.6%
<b>2003-04 to 2021-22</b>	2.2%	1.9%	1.7%	1.6%	2.3%	2.0%

Note: Equivalised gross disposable household income by income quintile has been adjusted for changes in prices using the ABS Households Final consumption expenditure implicit price deflator.

Sources: ABS 2023a, 2023b.

To compliment the ABS data, the AIHW commissioned the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods to generate estimates of changes in equivalised disposable income at different points of the income distribution. These estimates were generated by the centre using the ANU's microsimulation model, PolicyMod. PolicyMod effectively creates a new ABS Survey of Income and Housing (SIH) for each year beyond the base year (in this case 2017-18 SIH). The results are only a simulation of income change. The simulation updates incomes using the best publicly available data, such as wages and employment, and also updates to social security and personal income taxation policy. The simulated data cannot be expected to accurately cover all changes in the economy and do not directly model behavioural change that may flow from policy change.

The ANU PolicyMod estimates were projected to December 2022. For the period 2019 to the end of 2022, the PolicyMod estimates suggest that the fastest growth in nominal incomes occurred for households in the highest income quintile (quintile 5) with overall growth of 14.4% (average annual growth rate of 4.6%) and the lowest income quintile (quintile 1; total growth 12.7% and average annual growth rate of 4.1%) (see Table 3).

In 2022, income growth differed across the income distribution. The lowest income quintile was estimated to have an income growth of 4.6% compared to 3.8% for the highest income households. The stronger growth of income for the lowest quintile is driven by the indexation of income support payments by the CPI which in 2022 grew more strongly than wages. Income support payments go mostly to low-income households.



The standard approach for adjusting changes in income for changes in prices is to create real estimates that use overall price indexes such as the CPI. While this approach is sound, it does not take into account that different households may face different financial pressures. The ANU has constructed a living cost index that accounts for different prices faced at different points of the income distribution. As an example, rises in living costs were more substantial for higher income households in 2022 mostly due to mortgage cost increases impacting higher income households more so than lower income households who are more likely to rent. Rents while increasing sharply through the latter part of 2022 and through 2023, have not increased nearly as sharply as mortgage costs.

Using the ANU’s living cost index, living costs grew at a faster rate than incomes in 2022 and as a result real incomes fell across the income distribution with the largest falls affecting the middle-income quintiles (3 and 4) (see Table 4). Over the whole period from 2019 to 2022 real incomes rose for the bottom quintile (0.6%), the second (0.1%) and the top quintile (2.0%), while the third and fourth quintiles experiencing modest declines of 1.6% and 1.8%, respectively.

These estimates do not take account of changes announced in the 2023–24 Federal Budget nor increases to the minimum and award wages that took effect on 1 July 2023. In addition, inflation is forecast to fall. According to the 2023–24 Federal Budget the CPI is forecast to grow by 3 1/4% over the year to the June quarter 2024 after growing by 6% over the year to the June quarter 2023.

**Table 3: Growth in equivalised disposable household income (in nominal terms) by income quintiles, using ANU PolicyMod estimates, 2019 to 2022**

Income Quintile	2019– 2021	2021– 2022	2019– 2022
Quintile 1	7.7%	4.6%	12.7%
Quintile 2	9.3%	2.6%	12.1%
Quintile 3	8.9%	1.4%	10.4%
Quintile 4	8.5%	1.5%	10.1%
Quintile 5	10.2%	3.8%	14.4%
<i>All Households</i>	9.2%	2.8%	12.2%

Notes

1. PolicyMod is based on the ABS Survey of Income and Housing 2017-18 and all dollar variables updated with latest available data such as average weekly earnings, rental incomes and national accounts data.
2. Projections for wages and income support payments set to government budget estimates and projections. Policy changes include those up to 2023 Budget and assumes all measures pass legislation.
3. Income quintile calculations based on equivalised income for households and based on OECD modified equivalence scale formula.
4. Analysis excludes negative and zero income households. These households are included in income quintile calculation.

Source: ANU PolicyMod

**Table 4: Growth in equivalised disposable household income (in real terms) by income quintiles, using ANU PolicyMod estimates, 2019 to 2022**

Income Quintile	2019– 2021	2021– 2022	2019– 2022
Quintile 1	3.9%	-3.2%	0.6%
Quintile 2	5.6%	-5.2%	0.1%
Quintile 3	5.2%	-6.5%	-1.6%
Quintile 4	5.3%	-6.7%	-1.8%
Quintile 5	6.8%	-4.5%	2.0%
<i>All Households</i>	5.7%	-5.3%	0.1%

Notes

1. PolicyMod is based on the ABS Survey of Income and Housing 2017-18 and all dollar variables updated with latest available data such as average weekly earnings, rental incomes and national accounts data.
2. Projections for wages and income support payments set to government budget estimates and projections. Policy changes include those up to 2023 Budget and assumes all measures pass legislation.
3. Income quintile calculations based on equivalised income for households and based on OECD modified equivalence scale formula.
4. Analysis excludes negative and zero income households. These households are included in income quintile calculation.

Source: ANU PolicyMod

## Financial stress

The decline in real wages since 2022 – as indicated by both the WPI and AWOTE – has been driven in part by increases in inflation over this period. As mentioned above, CPI grew by 6.1% in the year to June quarter 2022, reaching a peak of 7.8% over the year to the December 2022 quarter, before returning to 6.0% growth over the year to the June quarter 2023. This compares with an average annual growth rate of 2.4% between December 2001 and 2019.

Biddle and Gray (2023a, 2023b) explored income levels and financial stress over the last 3 years. They found that financial stress (measured by ‘difficult/very difficult to live on present income’) declined from 27% to 17% between February 2020 and November 2020, then increased to 25% by October 2022 (slightly below pre-pandemic levels), continuing to increase to 32% in April 2023. By August 2023, 30% of Australians reported finding it difficult or very difficult to live on their present income (higher than before the pandemic); 10% found it very difficult.

The large decline from February to November 2020 in the proportion of people reporting financial stress is largely due to the introduction of a range of economic support packages (including the Coronavirus Supplement introduced in April 2021 and expanded eligibility for some income support payments), resulting in income increases for low-income households who are more likely to experience financial hardship. Growth in financial stress from October 2021 may have been influenced by the phasing

out of these government support packages in 2021. The continued increase in financial stress from October 2022 may reflect the steep increase in inflation in late 2022 that means real household income is declining (Biddle and Gray 2023a; Biddle 2023).

In response to increasing levels of financial stress, the Fair Work Commission granted a 5.75% increase in award wages and an 8.6% increase in the National Minimum Wage to take effect from 1 July 2023. This decision will impact the wages of around one quarter of the Australian employee workforce (Fair Work Commission 2023).

## How many people receive income support payments?

### About Government income support payments

Australia's social security system administered by Services Australia aims to support people who cannot, or cannot fully, support themselves, by providing targeted payments and assistance. Where this is a regular payment that helps with the everyday costs of living it is referred to as an income support payment, with the type of payment often reflecting life circumstances at the time of receipt.

Means-tested arrangements are designed to ensure that income support targets those most in need, by assessing an individual's income and assets to determine eligibility for a full or part-rate payment (see [Glossary](#)). People receiving income support are required to report income from all sources (including work, investments and/or substantial assets). Some payments are also subject to activity tests; for example, to remain qualified for JobSeeker, parenting payments or Youth Allowance (Other) recipients are required to actively look and prepare for work in the future. Individuals can receive only one income support payment at a time.

The main income support payments are:

- Age Pension
- Disability Support Pension
- Carer Payment
- parenting payments – Parenting Payment Single and Parenting Payment Partnered
- student payments – Youth Allowance Student and Apprentice, ABSTUDY (Living Allowance), Austudy
- unemployment payments – Newstart Allowance (closed 20 March 2020) and JobSeeker Payment (from 20 March 2020) for people aged from 22 to [Age Pension qualifying age \(see Glossary\)](#), and Youth Allowance (other) for people aged 16 to 21. These payments are referred to as unemployment payments on this page (for brevity), noting that some people receiving these payments (those working insufficient hours or exempt from mutual obligations to be looking for work) may not be counted as unemployed (see [Glossary](#)) according to the ABS Labour Force Survey definition (see [Glossary](#)).

Note, on this page, the proportions of the population receiving Age Pension are presented for those aged 65 and over for consistency with previous reporting and for comparability across the reporting period (2001-2022), despite increases to the qualifying age for Age Pension (see [Age Pension](#) for further details).

On this page, 'income support payments' are defined as the combination of all these payments, as well as other small payments. These other payments include Special Benefit and some payments that have now ceased but are included in earlier counts:

- Partner Allowance, closed to new entrants September 2003 and ceased January 2022
- Widow Allowance, closed to new entrants July 2018 and ceased January 2022
- Bereavement Allowance, closed to new entrants March 2020 and ceased once bereavement period of all recipients ended
- Sickness Allowance, closed to new entrants in March 2020 and ceased September 2020
- Wife Pension, closed to new entrants in July 1995 and ceased March 2020.

For more information on specific payment types, including payment rates, see [Unemployment payments](#), [Parenting payments](#), [Disability Support Pension](#), [Carer Payment](#) and [Age Pension](#). See also [Services Australia's income support payments](#) and the [Department of Social Services benefits and payments](#) for more details on government payments.

### **Recipients aged under 16**

A small number of people receiving income support payments were aged under 16 as at 31 March 2023 – 645 for ABSTUDY (Living Allowance), 10 for Youth Allowance (student and apprentice), 5 for Youth Allowance (other), 5 for Carer Payment, 70 for Parenting Payment Single and 800 for Special Benefit. These individuals are included in the numerator in calculating the proportion of people receiving income support payments aged 16 and over in the population, to ensure consistency with income support receipt reported on this page.

### **COVID-19 response**

In late March 2020 to 31 March 2021, short-term policy changes were made to the JobSeeker Payment (such as waiving the assets tests, waiting periods, and mutual obligation requirements in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (see [Glossary](#) for definitions of these terms). These changes provide important context as increasing the number of people eligible for the payment is likely to increase the number of people who receive it.

As well as short-term policy changes to the JobSeeker Payment, some new and existing recipients of unemployment payments and other income support payments also temporarily received the Coronavirus Supplement (See Box 4.1 in 'Chapter 4 The impacts of COVID-19 on employment and income support in Australia' in [Australia's welfare 2021: data insights](#) for further details). These temporary changes to the JobSeeker Payment and Coronavirus Supplement ended 31 March 2021. Additional economic support packages continue to be available for individuals who work in high-risk settings and have tested positive for COVID-19 (Services Australia 2023).

## Income support payments

As at 31 March 2023, 5.0 million Australians received income support payments, equating to 24% of the population aged 16 and over. Of these:

- 52% (2.6 million) received Age Pension, or 58% of the population aged 65 and over
- 16% (809,700) received unemployment payments (JobSeeker Payment or Youth Allowance (other)), or 3.8% of the population aged 16 and over
- 16% (769,300) received Disability Support Pension, or 3.7% of the population aged 16 and over
- 6.1% (304,500) received Carer Payment, or 1.4% of the population aged 16 and over
- 5.8% (289,300) received parenting payments, or 1.4% of the population aged 16 and over
- 3.6% (179,600) received student payments, or 0.9% of the population aged 16 and over
- 0.2% (9,200) received other payments, or 0.04% of the population aged 16 and over.

## Trends in income support receipt

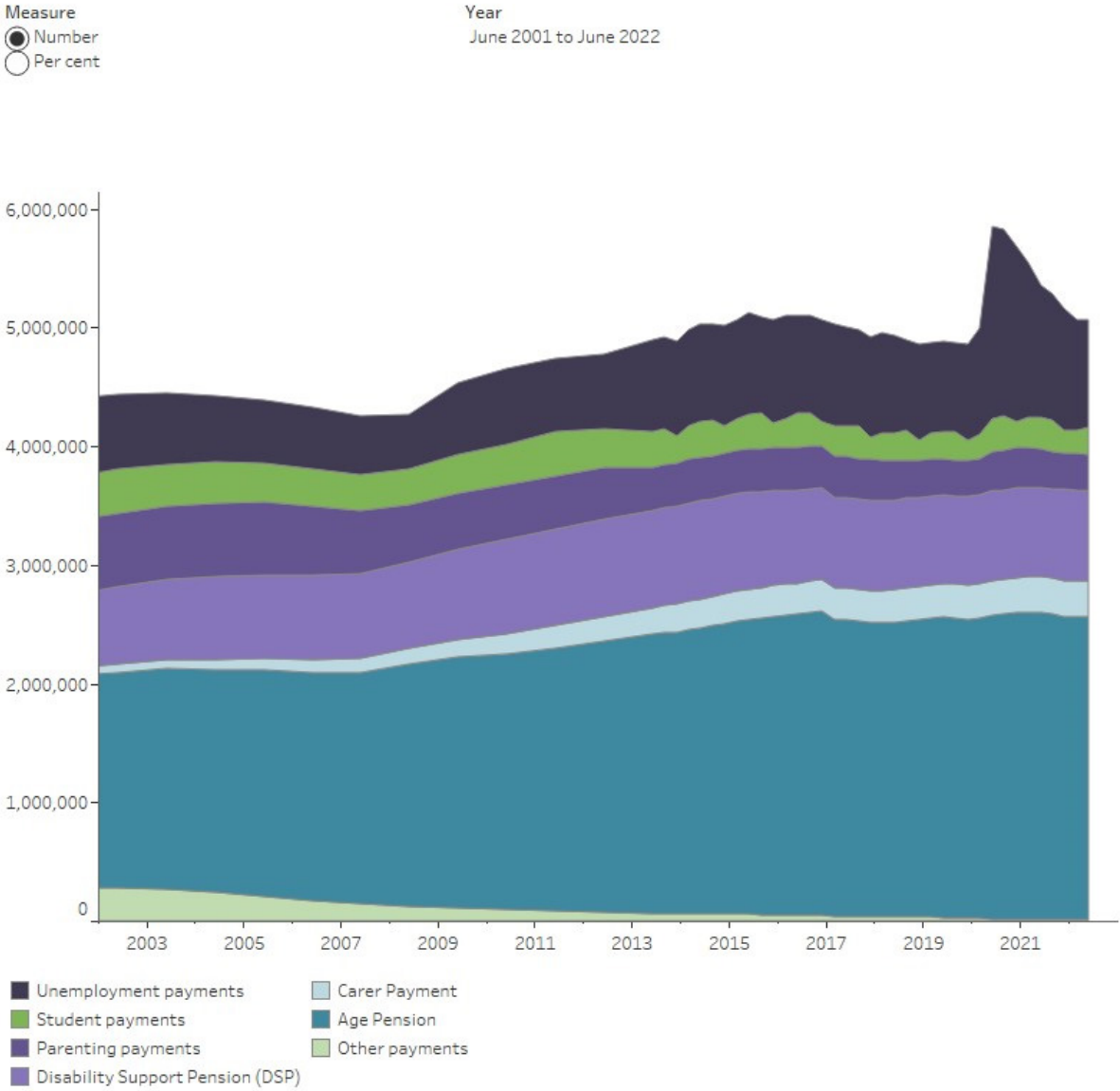
Before March 2020, the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving income support payments had been generally falling, reaching its lowest level in 20 years in June 2019 (24% compared with 28–29% in 2001 to 2005; Figure 2). This reflected, in part, labour market conditions as well as changes to the social security system, such as enhancements to mutual obligation requirements over the last decade (see 'Chapter 3 Employment and income support following the COVID-19 pandemic' in [Australia's welfare 2023: data insights](#) for further details).

- Reliance on income support increased steeply following the introduction of social distancing and business-related restrictions in early 2020 aimed at reducing the spread of COVID-19. There were 861,000 additional people receiving income support between March to June 2020 (a 17% increase in people receiving income support, which equated to an increase from 24% of the population aged 16 and over receiving an income support payment in March to 28% in June).
- This steep rise was driven by people receiving unemployment payments, who accounted for 85% of the increase in income support payments over this period. The number of people receiving unemployment payments doubled from 886,200 to 1.6 million (from 4.3% to 7.8% of the population aged 16 and over) between March and June 2020. This reflects the high number of people unemployed or unable to work and increasing eligibility for this payment.
- The number of people receiving student payments and parenting payments had more modest increases from March to June 2020 (32% and 12%, respectively), while the number of people receiving disability-related payments remained relatively stable over 2020.

Income support receipt then gradually declined from June 2020 and by June 2022 had returned to pre-pandemic levels and then remained relatively stable to March 2023 (24% of the population aged 16 and over).

For more information on trends on the receipt of particular payment types, see [Unemployment payments](#), [Parenting payments](#), [Disability Support Pension](#), [Carer Payment](#) and [Age Pension](#).

**Figure 2: Trends in people receiving income support payments, by payment type, June 2001 to June 2022**



**Notes**

1. Data are as at the end of each corresponding month.
2. Data before 2013 may differ from official sources due to differences in methodology.
3. Per cent refers to the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving these payments.

4. A small number of people receiving income support payments are aged under 16 (1,535 in March 2023). These people are included in the numerator in calculating the proportion of people receiving income support aged 16 and over in the population.

Sources: AIHW analysis of Department of Social Services payment recipient demographic data on [www.data.gov.au](http://www.data.gov.au) (June 2014 – June 2022); unpublished data derived from Services Australia administrative data (June 2001– June 2013).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on income and income support, see:

- Services Australia [A guide to Australian Government payments](#)
- Department of Social Services [payment demographic data](#).

## References

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# Income support for older Australians

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/income-support-older-australians>

## On this page

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Australia's social security system administered by Services Australia aims to support people who cannot, or cannot fully, support themselves, by providing targeted payments and assistance. Where this is a regular payment that helps with the everyday costs of living it is referred to as an income support payment, with the type of payment often reflecting life circumstances at the time of receipt.

This page examines income support receipt for people aged 65 years and over, and the main payment types they receive. The most common payment for this age group is Age Pension. However, in recent years receipt of other income support payments has increased among those aged 65–69 due to the increasing qualifying age for Age Pension.

Information on government expenditure on these payments is included in [Welfare expenditure](#). See also the [glossary](#) for definitions of terms used on this page.

Unless otherwise stated, income support data are sourced from [Department of Social Services payment demographic data](#) (September 2013 to March 2023) and from previously unpublished data derived from Services Australia administrative data (June 2001 to June 2013).

## Types of income support payments for people aged 65 and over

### Age Pension

Age Pension is paid to people who meet certain requirements, such as age and residency requirements, and is subject to income and asset testing.

Several policy changes have been made to Age Pension over the last 6 years, including a rebalancing of the assets test from 1 January 2017, and incremental increases to the qualifying age for people born on or after 1 July 1952 (DSS 2021). The qualifying age for Age Pension has been increasing by 6 months every 2 years since 2017, depending on the year in which you were born. Since 1 July 2023, Age Pension qualifying age is 67 for people born on or after 1 January 1957 and between 65 and 66.5 for people born before that (see [Qualifying age for Age Pension](#) for further details).

Despite increases to the qualifying age for Age Pension, population proportions on this page are presented for those aged 65 and over (unless otherwise specified) for consistency with previous reporting and for comparability across the reporting period (2001 to 2023).

For people who receive Age Pension, the specific amount received depends on their income and assets. As at 20 March 2023, the maximum basic rate for Age Pension, including Maximum Pension Supplement and Energy Supplement, is \$1,064.00 per fortnight for a single person, \$802.00 for a couple each and \$1,604.00 for a couple combined. Age Pension is paid at the same rate as Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment, and the payment rate is reviewed regularly. Payments are reduced incrementally for every dollar of income over \$190 per fortnight.

For more information on this payment see [Age Pension](#) and [Age Pension – payment rates](#).

### **Other income support payment types**

There is also an increasing number of Australians aged 65 and over receiving other income support payments, such as [Unemployment Payments](#), [Disability Support Pension](#) and [Carer Payment](#) (224,700 people as at 31 March 2023). These increases are likely to be a result of the above-mentioned increases to the eligibility age for Age Pension and people continuing to receive other income support payments for longer before transitioning to Age Pension.

As at 31 March 2023, there was also a small number of people aged 65 and over receiving other income support payments: parenting payments (225), ABSTUDY (Living Allowance) (5), Austudy (90), and Special Benefit (3,165). These recipients are included in the totals for income support receipt but are not the focus of this page.

See [glossary](#) for definitions of the terms used in this box.

## **How many older Australians receive income support?**

As at 31 March 2023, around 2.8 million people aged 65 and over received income support payments, equating to 63% of the population aged 65 and over. Of these, the vast majority (92% or 2.6 million) received Age Pension.

As at 31 March 2023, 228,200 people aged 65 and over received other income support payments, including:

- Disability Support Pension (DSP) – 124,700 people
- Carer Payment – 60,800 people
- JobSeeker Payment – 39,100 people.

For more information on these other income support payments, see [Disability Support Pension](#), [Carer Payment](#), and [Unemployment payments](#).

## **Trends**

The number of Australians aged 65 and over receiving income support has been steadily increasing over the past 8 years, from 2.5 million in June 2014 to 2.8 million in June 2022. However, when taking into account population growth for the 65 and over population over this period, income support receipt has declined – from 72% to 63% of the

population aged 65 and over between 2014 and 2022. This is due to the population aged 65 and over growing more than twice as quickly as the number of people in this age group receiving income support (29% population increase compared with a 12% increase in the number of people receiving income support over this period).

Patterns in income support receipt for Australians aged 65 and over are largely driven by those receiving Age Pension, which accounted for 92% of all income support receipt for this age group as at 31 March 2023. The number of people receiving Age Pension increased by 6% over the last 8 years – from 2.4 million to 2.6 million between June 2014 and June 2022, despite a slight dip in 2017. This decrease reflected changes to the Age Pension assets test from January 2017.

Consistent with income support receipt overall, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over receiving Age Pension has gradually declined – from 70% in 2014 to 58% by June 2022 (Figure 1). Some of this decline reflects increases to the qualifying age for Age Pension from 65 in 2017 to 67 by 2023 (depending on year of birth) <see Age Pension box above>. For Australians aged 70 and over, who meet the age eligibility requirements, the decline in the proportion of the population receiving Age Pension over this period was not as steep (from 76% to 69%).

Between June 2014 and June 2022, the number and proportion of people aged 65 and over receiving other income support payments have been steadily increasing:

- DSP increased from 36,200 to 119,300 (1.1% to 2.7% of the population aged 65 and over)
- Carer Payment increased from 34,400 to 59,700 (1.0% to 1.3%)
- Newstart Allowance/JobSeeker Payment increased from 0 recipients to 41,800 (0% to 0.9%).

## **Changing distribution of payment types**

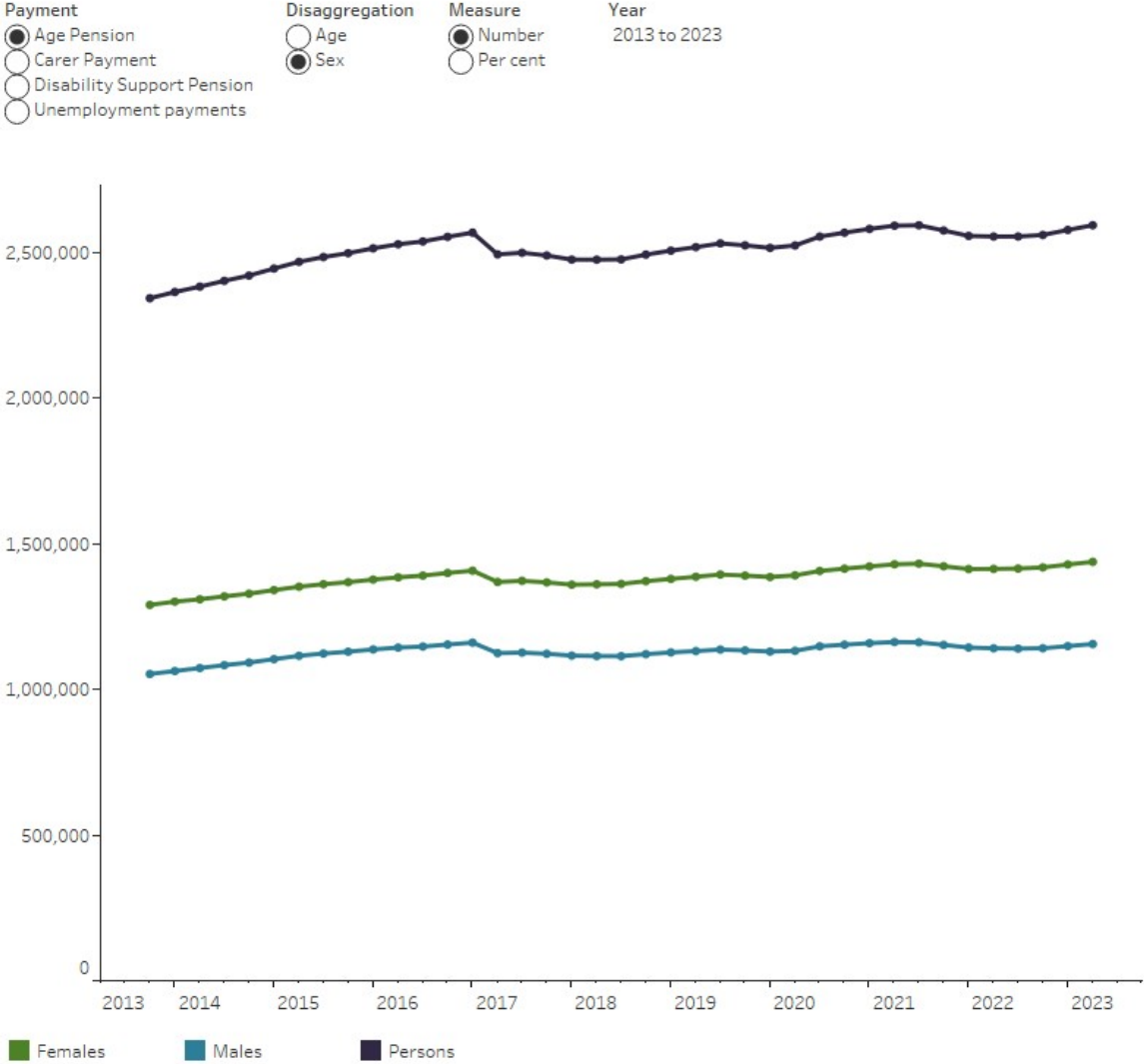
The growth in receipt of the above-mentioned income support payments has led to a relative decrease in the share of income support recipients aged 65 and over receiving Age Pension – from 97% of recipients in June 2014 to 92% in March 2023. This is likely due to increases to the eligibility age for Age Pension as mentioned above (on 1 July in 2017, 2019 and 2021), leading to recipients commencing or remaining on other income support payments <see Age Pension box above>. Following each incremental increase in the qualifying age for Age Pension there have been steep declines in the number of people aged 65–69 receiving Age Pension over the subsequent three quarters. This included declines of 2.7–4.6% from September 2017, 2.0–4.6% from September 2019, and 2.6–6.1% from September 2021, compared with small increases or decreases of less than 1.0% in most other quarters since 2017.

Coinciding with these declines in Age Pension were increases in the receipt of other income support payments, including DSP, Carer Payment and Newstart Allowance/JobSeeker Payment. For example, the number of people aged 65–69 receiving Newstart Allowance increased by 51% in September 2019 and 38% in December 2019 (11,100 more recipients from June to December 2019), compared with declines of 4.7% to increases of 2.5% in most other quarters. The number of people aged 65–69 receiving DSP increased by 18% (6,300 more recipients) and 9.8% (5,100 more recipients) in the

September 2017 and September 2019 quarters, compared with 0.4–3.7% increases in most other quarters.

These patterns of people aged 65–69 increasingly receiving income support payments other than Age Pension, has led to the age profile of people receiving Age Pension becoming older – 85% were aged 70 and over as at March 2023, compared with 77% in December 2017.

**Figure 1: Trends in people receiving Age Pension and other payments (for those aged 65 years and over), September 2013 – March 2023**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. Data are as at the last Friday of each corresponding month.
2. Data before 2013 may differ from official sources due to differences in methodology.
3. Before September 2020, unemployment payments included Newstart Allowance (before March 2020), JobSeeker Payment (from March 2020) and Youth Allowance (other). From September 2020, Sickness and Bereavement Allowance are also included in the JobSeeker counts.
4. Per cent refers to the proportion of the population aged 65 and over receiving different payment types, using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Estimated Resident Population data for September 2013 to September 2022.

Source: AIHW analysis of unpublished data provided by the Department of Social Services (September 2013 – March 2023).

# Age, sex and other characteristics of people receiving Age Pension

Given the vast majority (92%) of people aged 65 and over receiving income support are receiving Age Pension, the rest of this page focuses on the characteristics of those receiving Age Pension.

## Age and sex

As at 31 March 2023, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over who received Age Pension increased with age – from 30% of those aged 65–69, to 60% of those aged 70–74, and 78% of those aged 85 and over (Figure 2).

As at 31 March 2023, women were more likely to receive Age Pension than men – 1.4 million (61% of women aged 65 and over) compared with 1.2 million men (55% of men aged 65 and over) (Figure 2).

## First Nations people

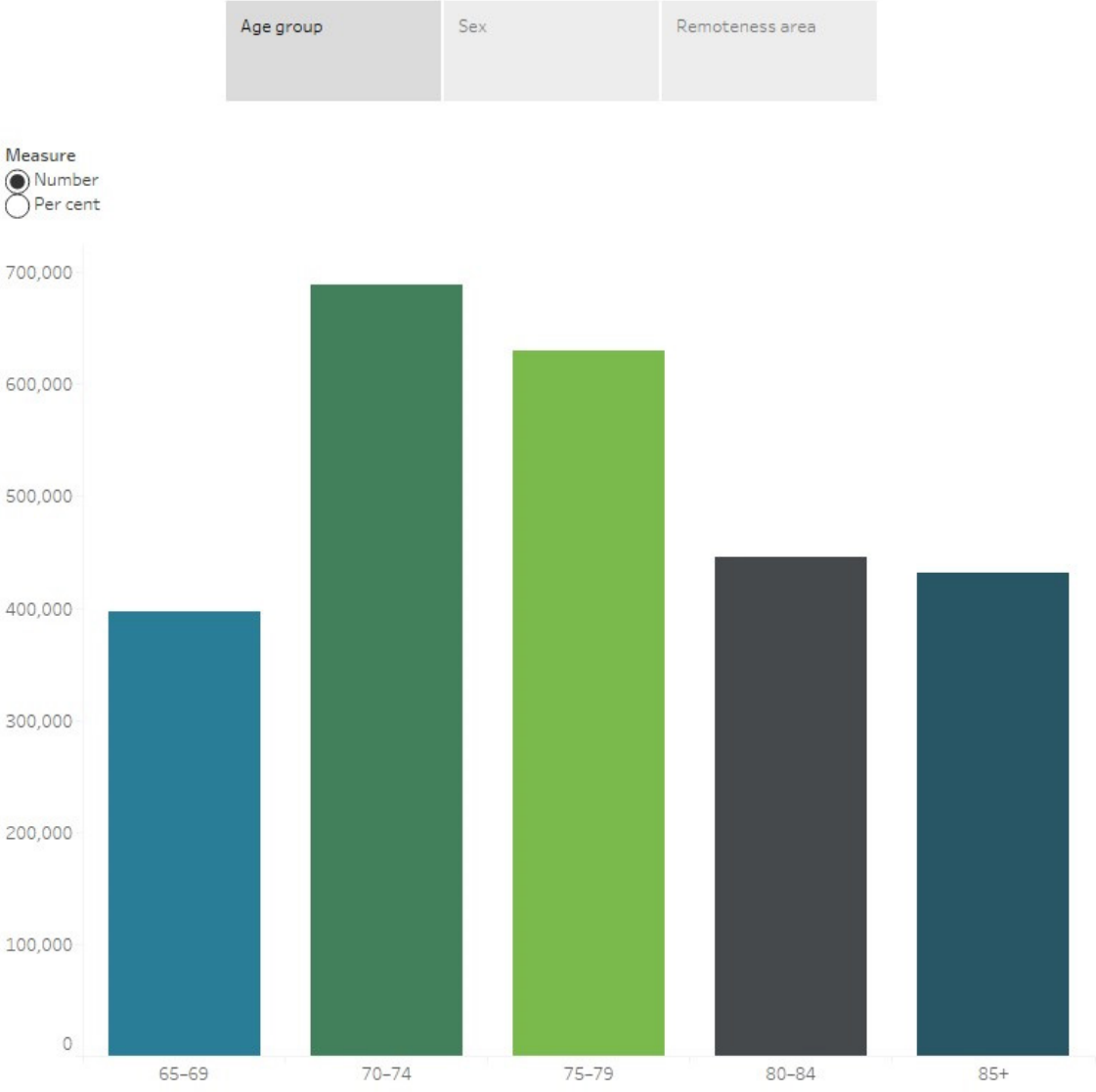
As at 31 March 2023, 27,100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people (see [glossary](#)) received Age Pension, representing 51% of the First Nations people aged 65 and over. See [Income and finance of First Nations people](#) for more information.

Note that Indigenous status identification in most data collections is voluntary. This may influence the quality and completeness of the data and subsequent reporting on the number and proportion of First Nations people receiving Age Pension.

## Remoteness area

As at 31 March 2023, people living in *Inner regional* and *Outer regional* areas were more likely to be receiving Age Pension (63% and 61%, respectively, of the population aged 65 years and over living in these areas) than those living in *Major cities* (56%), *Remote areas* (57%) or *Very remote areas* (52%) (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Number and proportion of people aged 65 years and over receiving Age Pension, by selected characteristics, as at 31 March 2023**



Note: Proportions are as at 31 March 2023, using ABS population data (September 2022 for age group and sex and June 2021 for remoteness area).

Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Social Services Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics – quarterly data on [www.data.gov.au](http://www.data.gov.au) (March 2023).

### Earning an income while receiving income support

Means-tested arrangements are designed to ensure that income support targets the people most in need, by assessing an individual’s income and assets to determine eligibility for a full or part-rate payment. People receiving income support are required to report income from all sources (including work, investments and/or substantial assets).

As at 31 March 2023, for people receiving Age Pension:

- 31% received a part-rate payment

- 3.2% declared earnings from employment in the preceding fortnight, of which over 4 in 5 (86%) earned at least \$250 in the last fortnight.

The proportion of people receiving a part-rate Age Pension has declined – from 41% of people receiving Age Pension in March 2015, to 38% in March 2017, to 36% in March 2020. The rate of decline was steeper over the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic (from 36% to 33% between March and June 2020) and stabilised around 30–33% between June 2020 and March 2023.

This overall decline in part-rate Age Pension payments between 2015 and 2022 is partly attributable to changes to the assets test in January 2017. This included an increase to the assets 'test free area' (that is, the amount of assets an individual can have without their pension being affected). It also changed the rate at which assets over the free area reduce the rate of pension – thereby changing the proportion of part-rate pensioners.

Earnings from employment for those receiving Age Pension declined very slightly over the same period. Prior to December 2020, the proportion of people receiving Age Pension who reporting earnings was consistently around 4–4.5%, it then gradually declined reaching a record low of 2.9% in September 2021 and remained relatively stable to March 2023 (3.2%).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on Age pension, see:

- Services Australia [A guide to Australian Government payments](#)
- Department of Social Services [payment recipient demographic data](#).

## Reference

DSS (2023) [DSS benefit and payment recipient demographic data](#), DSS, Australian Government, accessed 19 June 2023.



# Parenting payments

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/parenting-payments>

## On this page

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Australia's social security system administered by Services Australia aims to support people who cannot, or cannot fully, support themselves, by providing targeted payments and assistance. Where this is a regular payment that helps with the everyday costs of living it is referred to as an income support payment, with the type of payment often reflecting life circumstances at the time of receipt.

- This page examines the main income support payments for parents aged 16 and over who are unable to work full time – Parenting Payment Single and Parenting Payment Partnered. These payments are part of a larger network of labour market policies and services, designed to support individuals seeking further employment (see [Employment services](#)).
- This page also presents information on additional payments to help with the cost of raising children – Family Tax Benefit.
- In June 2022, there were 3.3 million families with dependent children in Australia (including 2.1 million couple families and 399,300 one parent families with a child aged less than 10). In June 2022, 7.1% of all families with dependent children were jobless families (each family member aged 15 and over was unemployed, retired or not in the labour force; ABS 2022).
- For more information on unemployment and labour force participation, see [Employment and unemployment](#). Information on government expenditure on these payments is included in [Welfare expenditure](#). Also see the [Glossary](#) for definitions of all terms used on this page.

- Unless otherwise stated, income support data are sourced from [Department of Social Services payment demographic data](#) (from September 2013 to March 2023) and from previously unpublished data derived from Services Australia administrative data (June 2001 to June 2013).

## About the main family-related payments

### Parenting payments

Parenting payments are paid in recognition of the impact that caring for children can have on a parent's capacity to undertake full-time employment. Only one parent or guardian can be the principal carer and receive the payment.

- Parenting Payment Single (PPS): an income support payment for single parents where the youngest child is aged under 8. Single parents must satisfy part-time mutual obligation requirements of 30 hours per fortnight once their youngest child turns 6 (unless they have a partial capacity to work). Note, the May 2023 budget announced a change to expand the eligibility to include single parents with children aged under 14 from 20 September 2023.
- Parenting Payment Partnered (PPP): an income support payment for partnered parents until their youngest child turns 6.

For people who receive these payments, the specific amount they receive depends on their, and their partner's, income and assets. As at 20 March 2023, the maximum fortnightly payment for a single person is \$949.30 (including Parenting Payment and a pension supplement of \$27.20), and the maximum fortnightly payment for a person who is partnered is \$631.20. These payments reduce incrementally for every dollar over the income threshold (\$202.60–\$251.80 for parents with 1–3 children). Payment rates are updated in March and September each year, and a further increase to the PPP rate was announced in the May 2023 budget to be introduced on 20 September 2023.

For further information on the payment rates for each of these payments, see [Social Security Guide – current rates](#).

### Recipients aged under 16

A small number of people receiving parenting payments were aged under 16 in March 2023 (70 for PPS). These recipients are included in the numerator in calculating the proportion of people receiving parenting payments aged 16 and over in the population, to ensure consistency in recipient numbers reported on this page.

### Family assistance payments

Family assistance payments help families with the cost of raising children. They include:

- Family Tax Benefit (FTB) Part A: a per-child payment for a dependent child aged 0–15, or 16–19 and meeting study requirements.
- FTB Part B: a per-family payment, paid to couples with one main income and care for a dependent child aged under 13. It is also paid to single parents, non-parent carers or grandparent carers who care for a dependent child aged 0–15, or 16–18 and meeting study requirements.

This page does not include all income support payments for people aged 16 and over – for more information on other payment types, see [Unemployment payments](#), [Disability Support](#)

[Pension](#) and [Carer Payment](#). For an overview of income support payments see [Income and income support](#).

See [glossary](#) for definitions of the terms used in this box.

## How many people receive parenting payments?

As at 31 March 2023, 289,300 people (1.4% of the population aged 16 and over) received one of the following parenting payments:

- 226,500 received Parenting Payment Single (PPS)
- 62,800 received Parenting Payment Partnered (PPP).

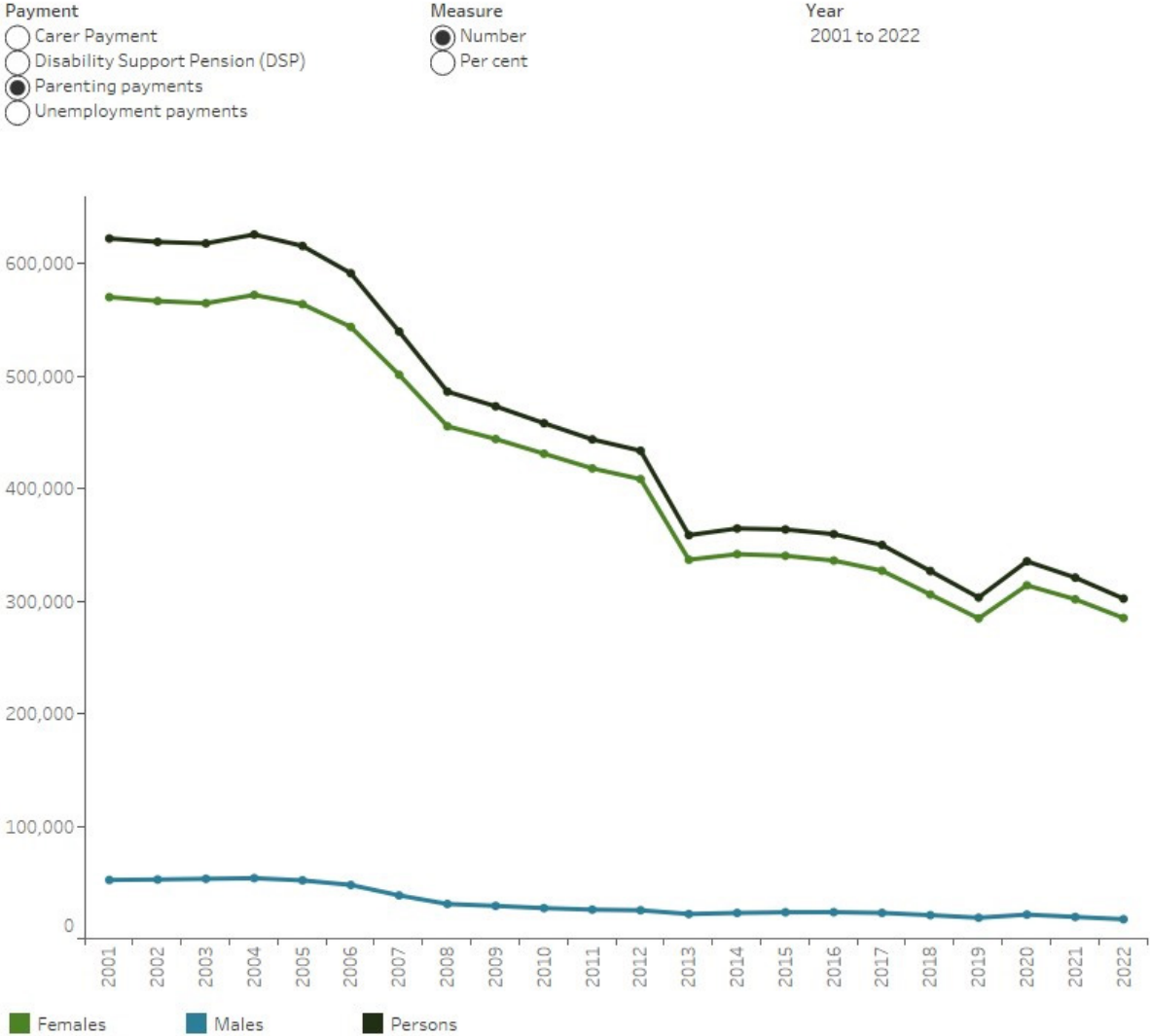
## Trends

The number and proportion of the population receiving parenting payments has generally declined since 2001 – from 622,500 in June 2001 to 302,300 in June 2022 (or from 4.1% to 1.4% of the population aged 16 and over; Figure 1). This decline reflects in part labour market conditions as well as changes to parenting payment policies in 2006 and 2013, where new recipients had part-time participation requirements and could only continue to receive the payment until their youngest child turned 6 (for partnered recipients) or 8 (for single recipients). See Box 3.1 in ‘Chapter 3 Income support over the past 20 years’ in [Australia’s Welfare 2019: data insights](#), for further details. Note, further policy changes to PPS were announced in May 2023 budget on increasing the age eligibility of youngest child (to 14 years) for single parents.

Despite declines in the number of people receiving parenting payments prior to March 2020, receipt did increase in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, by 12% from March to June 2020 (an additional 37,200 recipients, or from 1.5% to 1.6% of the population aged 16 and over). However, receipt of parenting payments returned to pre-pandemic levels by September 2021 (1.5% of the population aged 16 and over) and remained relatively stable to March 2023.

For more information on the impact of COVID-19 on these payments, see ‘Chapter 3 Employment and income support following the COVID-19 pandemic’ in [Australia’s welfare 2023: data insights](#) and ‘Chapter 4 The impacts of COVID-19 on employment and income support in Australia’ in [Australia’s Welfare 2021: data insights](#).

**Figure 1: Trends in people aged 16 and over receiving parenting payments and other payments, June 2001 to June 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. Data are as at June 30 in each year.
2. Data before 2013 may differ from official sources due to differences in methodology.
3. Before September 2020, unemployment payments included Newstart Allowance (before March 2020), JobSeeker Payment (from March 2020) and Youth Allowance (other). From September 2020, Sickness and Bereavement Allowance are also included in the JobSeeker counts.
4. A small number of people receiving income support payments are aged under 16 (70 for Parenting Payment Single, 5 for unemployment payments (Youth Allowance (other)), and 5 for Carer Payment in March 2023). These people are included in the numerator in calculating the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving these payments.
5. Per cent refers to the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving different payment types, using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Estimated Resident Population data for June 2001 to June 2022.

Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Social Services Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics – quarterly data on [www.data.gov.au](http://www.data.gov.au) (June 2014– June 2022), and of unpublished data constructed from Services Australia administrative data (June 2001–June 2013).

## Age and sex

As at 31 March 2023, almost 1 in 2 (49%) people receiving parenting payments were aged 25–34 and just under 1 in 3 (32%) were aged 35–44. This equates to 3.8% of people aged 25–34 and 2.6% of people aged 35–44 receiving parenting payments (Figure 2).

Females accounted for nearly all people receiving parenting payments – 96% for PPS and 90% for PPP.

## First Nations people

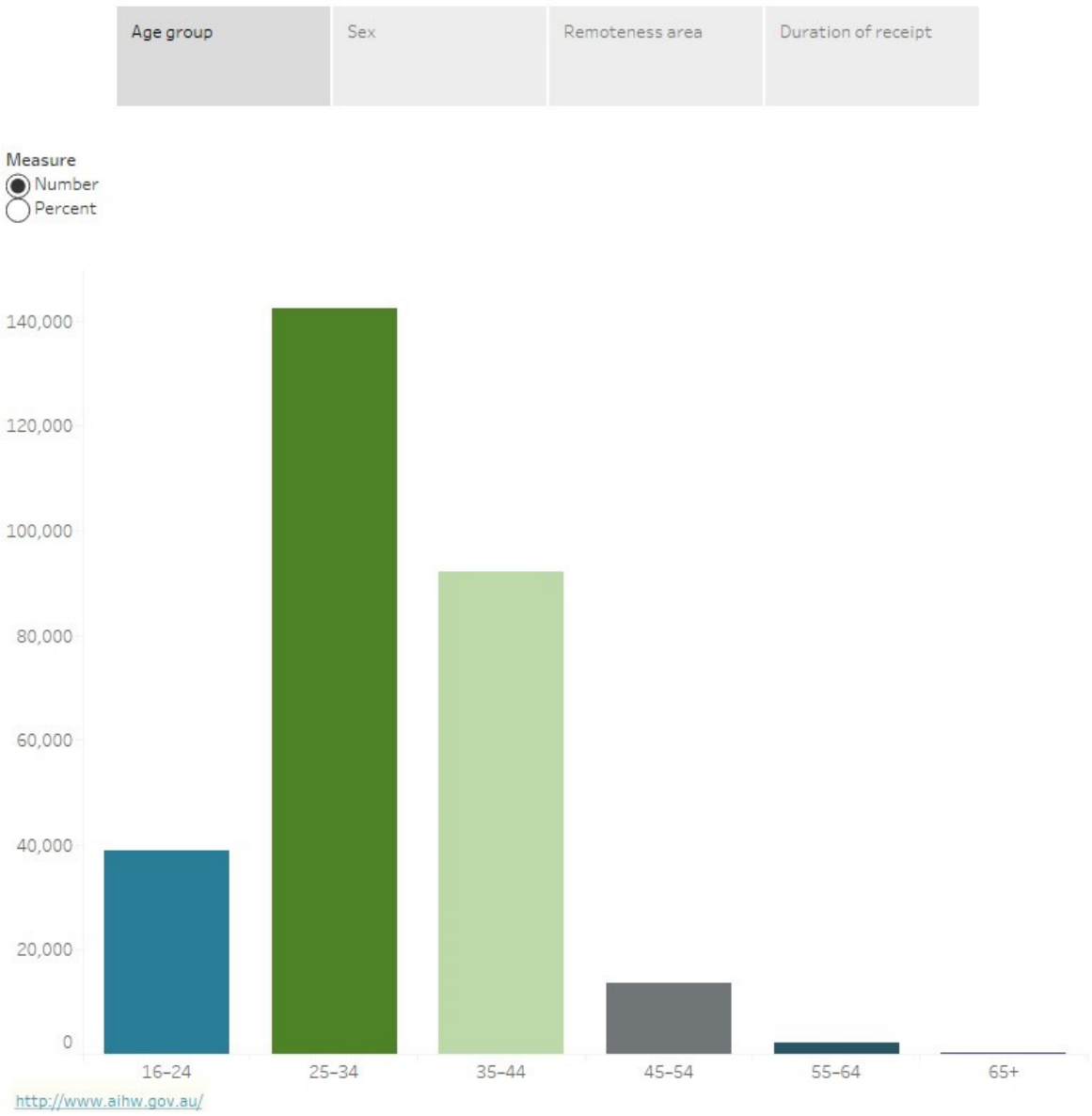
As at 31 March 2023, 48,400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people (see [glossary](#)) received a parenting payment, representing 7.4% of First Nations people aged 15 and over. This compares with 1.2% of Other Australians (see [glossary](#)) aged 15 and over receiving parenting payments (see [Income and finance of First Nations people](#) for more information).

Note that Indigenous status identification in most data collections is voluntary. This may influence the quality and completeness of the data and subsequent reporting on the number and proportion of First Nations people receiving income support payments, especially among older First Nations people.

## Remoteness area

As at 31 March 2023, people aged 16 and over living in *Very remote* areas were 4 times as likely to be receiving parenting payments as people living in *Major cities* (4.9% and 1.2%, respectively; Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Number and proportion of people aged 16 years and over receiving parenting payments, by selected characteristics, as at 31 March 2023**



**Notes**

1. Proportions are as at 31 March 2023, using ABS population data (September 2022 for age group and sex and June 2021 for remoteness area). Duration of receipt is reported as a proportion of all parenting payment recipients.
  2. A small number of people receiving parenting payments are aged under 16 (70 for Parenting Payment Single in March 2023). These people are included in the numerator in calculating the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving parenting payments.
- Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Social Services Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics – quarterly data on [www.data.gov.au](http://www.data.gov.au) (March 2023).

## Earning an income while receiving income support

Means-tested arrangements are designed to ensure that income support targets the people most in need, by assessing an individual's income and assets to determine eligibility for a full or part-rate payment (see [glossary](#)). People receiving income support are required to report income from all sources, including work, investments and/or substantial assets.

As at 31 March 2023, for people receiving parenting payments:

- over 1 in 4 (29%) received a part-rate payment, which is slightly higher than recent years (24–28% since 2019)
- almost 1 in 3 (30%) declared earnings from employment in the preceding fortnight – 34% and 15% for people receiving PPS and PPP, respectively. Of these, the vast majority (93%) earned at least \$250 in the last fortnight.

The proportion of people receiving parenting payments who declared earnings declined from 25% in September 2019 to 21% in June 2020, before gradually increasing to 30% in March 2023. This increase in the proportion with earnings since June 2020 may reflect the growth in employment over this period, as well as changes made to the income threshold (see [glossary](#)) for PPP from April 2021.

## Duration of income support receipt

As at 31 March 2023, 14% of people receiving parenting payments had received income support for less than 1 year, 11% for 1–2 years, 32% for 2–5 years and 43% for 5 or more years. These proportions were similar to those observed between 2017 and 2019.

- People receiving PPS tended to receive income support payments for longer than people receiving PPP – 46% of people receiving PPS had received income support for 5 or more years compared with 32% of people receiving PPP. This partially reflects differences in eligibility for these payments (see box for further details).

## How many people receive Family Tax Benefit?

As at 31 March 2023, there were 1.3 million Family Tax Benefit (FTB) Part A recipients and 1.0 million FTB Part B recipients receiving FTB through fortnightly instalments. The majority of recipients (76%) receive both FTB Part A and FTB Part B. As well, almost half (42%) received an income support payment (based on previously unpublished December 2022 data from Department of Social Services).

Between June 2015 and June 2022, the number of FTB recipients has been generally declining:

- 10% decline for FTB Part A (from 1.54 to 1.38 million)
- 20% decline for FTB Part B (from 1.34 to 1.07 million).

Taking into account the total number of families with dependants in Australia (ABS 2022), this represents a decline from 43% of families in June 2015 receiving FTB Part B to 32% in June 2022.

For more information on the impact of COVID-19 on parenting and family payments, see 'Chapter 4 The impacts of COVID-19 on employment and income support in Australia' in [Australia's welfare 2021: data insights](#)'.

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on parenting payments, see:

- Services Australia [A guide to Australian Government payments](#)
- Department of Social Services [payment demographic data](#).

## References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2022) [Labour Force Status of Families, June 2022](#), ABS website, accessed 27 March 2023.

DSS (Department of Social Services) (2023) [DSS Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics – quarterly data](#), DSS, Australian Government, accessed 19 June 2023.



# Unemployment payments

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/unemployment-payments>

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Australia's social security system, administered by Services Australia, aims to support people who cannot, or cannot fully, support themselves, by providing targeted payments and assistance. Where this is a regular payment that helps with the everyday costs of living, it is referred to as an income support payment, with the type of payment often reflecting life circumstances at the time of receipt.

- This page examines the main income support payments for people aged 16 and over who are unable to find work or work sufficient hours –JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance (other). These payments are referred to on this page as unemployment payments (for brevity). Note that some people receiving these payments (people working insufficient hours or exempt from the mutual obligation to be looking for work) would not be defined as unemployed according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Labour Force Survey definition; see [Employment and unemployment](#).

Unemployment payments are part of a larger network of labour market policies and services, designed to support individuals seeking further employment (see [Employment services](#)). Not all unemployed people will receive these unemployment payments, as they may receive other income support payments or not meet eligibility requirements. It was estimated that people receiving unemployment payments accounted for over 1 in 4 (28%) of those unemployed in 2017–18 (Parliamentary Library 2019).

This page also presents information on those receiving student payments, as receipt of unemployment payments is likely to be influenced by engagement with other activities (such as education and training), especially for people aged 16–24.

Information on government expenditure on these payments is included in [Welfare expenditure](#). For information on unemployment and labour force participation, see [Employment and unemployment](#). Also see [glossary](#) for definitions of all terms used on this page.

- Unless otherwise stated, income support data are sourced from [Department of Social Services payment demographic data](#) (from September 2013 to March 2023) and from previously unpublished data derived from Services Australia administrative data (June 2001 to June 2013).

## About the main unemployment income support payments

The main income support payments available to people who are unable to find work, or to work sufficient hours (and who are under the income and assets threshold) are:

- Newstart Allowance (until March 2020)
- JobSeeker Payment (from March 2020)
- Youth Allowance (other).

On this page, the term ‘unemployment payments’ is used (for brevity) to include those receiving Newstart Allowance/JobSeeker Payment or Youth Allowance (other) and does not include closed payments such as Newstart Mature Age Allowance.

Individuals receiving these payments are required to be looking for work or be engaged in activities that will help them find work in the future (such as volunteering or training) – these are known as mutual obligation requirements.

Where individuals have a reduced capacity to work fewer than 30 hours per week due to an impairment but are not eligible for [Disability Support Pension](#), they may have reduced mutual obligation requirements in relation to their income support payments (JobSeeker Payment, Parenting Payment Single and Youth Allowance (other)). This is referred to as having a partial capacity to work.

### JobSeeker Payment

In March 2020, this payment replaced Newstart Allowance, consolidating it with several other payments (such as Sickness Allowance and Bereavement Allowance). JobSeeker Payment (and previously Newstart Allowance) is the main income support payment for people who are unable to find work, or to find sufficient hours of work, who are aged 22 and over but under the Age Pension qualifying age (which increased to 67 on 1 July 2023).

### Youth Allowance (other)

This payment provides financial help to those aged 16–21 who are looking for work, temporarily unable to work, or undertaking approved activities. Qualifying for this payment is subject to a parental income test unless the young person is considered independent.

This page does not include all work-related income support payments for people aged 16 and over – in particular, see [Parenting payments](#) and disability-related payments ([Disability Support Pension](#) and [Carer Payment](#)) for more information. For an overview of income support payments see [Income and income support](#).

## Payment rates

For people who receive unemployment payments, the specific amount received depends on whether they have children, their income and assets, those of their partner, and – in the case of dependent recipients of Youth Allowance (other) – those of their parents.

As at 20 March 2023, the maximum fortnightly JobSeeker payment for a single person with no children was \$693.10. The maximum fortnightly Youth Allowance (other) payment for a single person with no children, over 18 and living at home, was \$389.40, or if they are living away from home \$562.80. These payments reduce incrementally for every dollar of income over \$150 per fortnight. These rates are updated in March and September each year, and a further increase to the JobSeeker rate was announced in the May 2023 budget to be introduced on 20 September 2023.

For further information on the payment rates for each of these payments, see [Social Security Guide – current rates](#).

## Recipients aged under 16

A small number of people receiving unemployment payments were aged under 16 in March 2023 (5 for Youth Allowance (other)). These recipients are included in the numerator in calculating the proportion of people receiving unemployment payments aged 16 and over in the population, to ensure consistency in recipient numbers reported on this page.

## COVID-19 response

In late March 2020 to 31 March 2021, short-term policy changes were made to the JobSeeker Payment (such as waiving the assets tests, waiting periods, and mutual obligation requirements) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes provide important context as increasing the number of people eligible for the payment is likely to increase the number of people who receive it. As well as short-term policy changes to the JobSeeker Payment, some new and existing recipients of unemployment payments and a number of other income support payments also temporarily received the Coronavirus Supplement until 31 March 2021. The COVID-19 disaster payment and pandemic leave disaster payment were also made available from August 2020 to December 2021, and from August 2020 to June 2022, respectively. Since then, additional payments have been available for individuals who work in high-risk settings and have tested positive for COVID-19 (Services Australia 2023).

For further details on COVID-19 policy responses and impacts on unemployment payments see 'Chapter 3 Employment and income support following the COVID-19 pandemic' in [Australia's welfare 2023: data insights](#) and 'Chapter 4 The impacts of COVID-19 on employment and income support in Australia' in [Australia's welfare 2021: data insights](#).

See [glossary](#) for definitions of the terms used in this box.

## How many people receive unemployment payments?

As at 31 March 2023, 809,700 people (3.8% of the population aged 16 and over) received one of the following unemployment payments:

- 740,800 received JobSeeker Payment
- 69,000 received Youth Allowance (other).

The vast majority of people receiving unemployment payments were aged 16–64 (95% or 770,600), representing 4.6% of the population aged 16–64.

## Trends

The number of people receiving unemployment payments increased from 662,000 in June 2001 to 908,800 in June 2022 (Figure 1). However, taking into account population growth over this period, the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving unemployment payments has remained relatively stable at around 4%.

Over the past 2 decades there have been various fluctuations in the receipt of unemployment payments coinciding with several economic downturns and changes to the social security system. In 2007–08, the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving unemployment payments dropped to below 3%, followed by an increase around 2009 in line with the global financial crisis. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the number and proportion of people receiving unemployment payments was the highest on record since 2001 – a peak of 7.8% in June 2020 or 728,200 additional people compared to March 2020. This steep rise in receipt of unemployment payments in the early months of the pandemic reflects the labour market impacts and the need for income support associated with widespread social distancing measures and activity/business restrictions to control the spread of the virus.

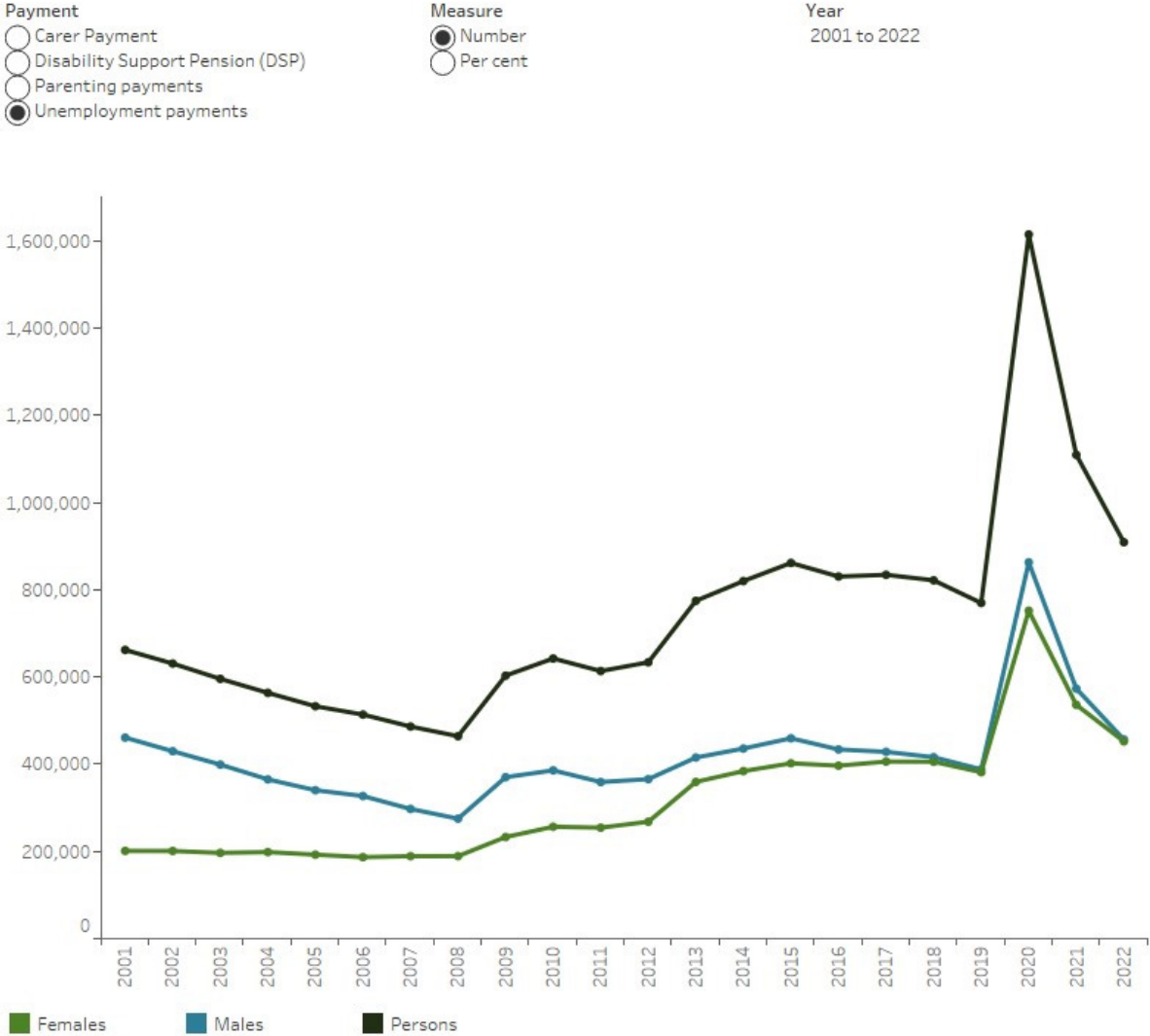
By September 2022, the proportion of the population aged 16 and over in receipt of unemployment payments had returned to pre-pandemic levels (4.0%). By March 2023 it had decreased slightly to 3.8% (with 76,500 fewer recipients than in March 2020).

This pattern of return to pre-pandemic levels has been consistent across all age groups and for males and females, despite those aged 15–24 and females having steeper initial increases in receipt of unemployment payments in the early months of the pandemic.

When analysing trends over the medium to long-term it is also important to monitor trends in the ‘working age’ population (those aged 16–64), given the growth in the population aged 65 and over in recent decades. Based on available data, the proportion of the ‘working age’ population receiving unemployment payments was declining before the pandemic (from 5.2% in June 2014 to 4.5% in June 2019) before increasing to 9.6% in June 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and declining again to 5.3% in June 2022. This is consistent with trends in the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving unemployment payments over this period (declined from 4.4% in June 2014 to 3.8% in June 2019, before increasing at the onset of the pandemic and then declining, as mentioned above).

For more information on the impact of COVID-19 on these payments, see ‘Chapter 3 Employment and income support following the COVID-19 pandemic’ in [Australia’s welfare 2023: data insights](#); ‘Chapter 4 The impacts of COVID-19 on employment and income support in Australia’ in [Australia’s welfare 2021: data insights](#).

**Figure 1: Trends in people aged 16 and over receiving unemployment payments and other payments, June 2001 to June 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. Data are as at 30 June in each year.
2. Data before 2013 may differ from official sources due to differences in methodology.
3. Before September 2020, unemployment payments included Newstart Allowance (before March 2020), JobSeeker Payment (from March 2020) and Youth Allowance (other). From September 2020, Sickness and Bereavement Allowance are also included in the JobSeeker counts.
4. A small number of people receiving income support payments are aged under 16 (70 for Parenting Payment Single, 5 for unemployment payments (Youth Allowance (other)), and 5 for Carer Payment in March 2023). These people are included in the numerator in calculating the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving these payments.
5. Per cent refers to the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving different payment types, using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Estimated Resident Population data for June 2001 to June 2022.

Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Social Services Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics – quarterly data on [www.data.gov.au](http://www.data.gov.au) (June 2014– June 2022), and of unpublished data constructed from Services Australia administrative data (June 2001–June 2013).

## JobSeekers with a partial capacity to work

Over the last decade, the proportion of people receiving JobSeeker (and previously Newstart Allowance) and Youth Allowance (other) who had a partial capacity to work has doubled overall. However, there was a large fall during the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting short-term policy changes, such as suspending mutual obligation requirements in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that were then gradually re-introduced after August 2020.

The proportion of people receiving:

- JobSeeker (and Newstart Allowance) with a partial capacity to work increased from 26% to 41% between June 2014 and March 2020, before falling steeply to 25% in June 2020. It then increased each quarter to reach pre-pandemic levels in March 2022, and continued to increase to 45% by March 2023.
- Youth Allowance (other) with a partial capacity to work increased from 9.2% to 15% between June 2014 and June 2019, before falling to 9.4% in June 2020. It then increased each quarter to March 2022 (17%), to levels similar to before the pandemic, and has since declined to 14% in March 2023.

## Age and sex

As at 31 March 2023, the age distribution of people receiving unemployment payments was similar for each 10-year age group between ages 25–64 (around 18–22%). However, it was slightly lower for those aged 16–24 (16%) and considerably lower for those 65 and over (4.8%; Figure 2).

In recent years, the proportion of people aged 65 and over receiving unemployment payments has been increasing – from less than 5 recipients aged 65 and over in June 2017 to 41,800 (0.9% of the population aged 65 and over) in June 2022. This shift reflects the increasing qualifying age for Age Pension over this period (increased from 65 to 65.5 years on 1 July 2017, and to 67 on 1 July 2023; see [Income support for older Australians](#) for further details). Following each increase to Age Pension eligibility age since 2017 there has been a marked quarterly increase in the number of people receiving unemployment payments aged 65 and over. See 'Chapter 3 Employment and income support following the COVID-19 pandemic' in [Australia's welfare 2023: data insights](#) for more information.

As at 31 March 2023, the number and proportion of males and females receiving unemployment payments was very similar – 3.9% of males and 3.8% of females aged 16 and over received unemployment payments (Figure 2).

## First Nations people

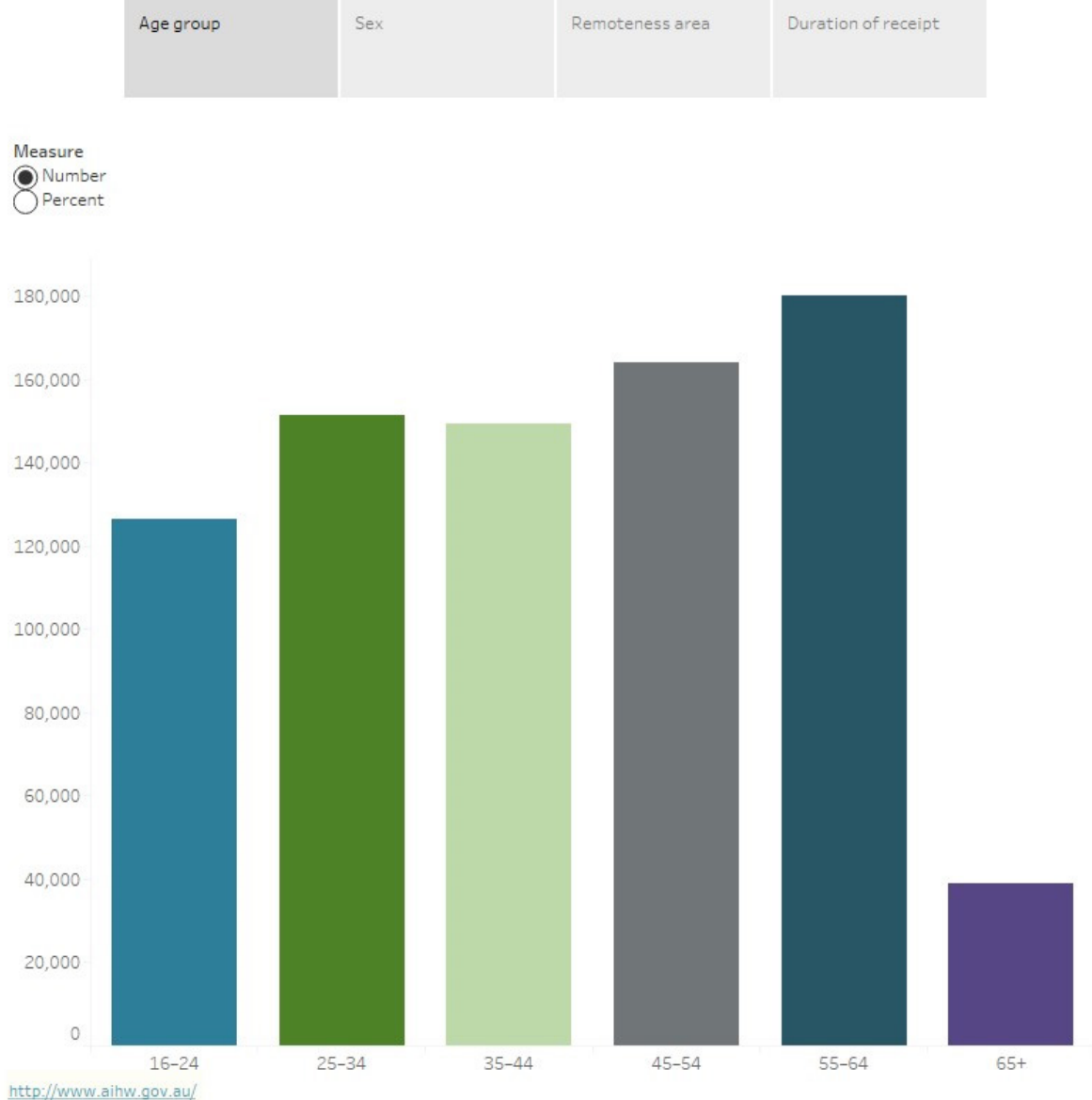
As at 31 March 2023, 114,800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people (see [glossary](#)) received unemployment payments, representing 17% of First Nations people aged 15 and over. This compares with 3.4% of Other Australians (see [glossary](#)) aged 15 and over receiving unemployment payments. See [Income and finance of First Nations people](#) for more information.

Note that Indigenous status identification in most data collections is voluntary. This may influence the quality and completeness of the data and subsequent reporting on the number and proportion of First Nations people receiving income support payments, especially among older First Nations people.

## **Remoteness area**

As at 31 March 2023, people aged 16 and over living in *Very remote* areas were 5 times as likely to be receiving unemployment payments as people living in *Major cities* (17% of people living in *Very remote* areas received unemployment payments, compared with 3.4% of people living in *Major cities*; Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Number and proportion of people aged 16 years and over receiving unemployment payments, by selected characteristics, as at 31 March 2023**



**Notes**

1. Proportions are as at 31 March 2023, using ABS population data (September 2022 for age group and sex and June 2021 for remoteness area). Duration of receipt is reported as a proportion of all unemployment payment recipients.
2. A small number of people receiving unemployment payments are aged under 16 (5 in March 2023). These people are included in the numerator in calculating the proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving unemployment payments.

Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Social Services Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics – quarterly data on [www.data.gov.au](http://www.data.gov.au) (March 2023).



## Earning an income while receiving income support

Means-tested arrangements are designed to ensure that income support targets those most in need, by assessing an individual's income and assets to determine eligibility for a full or part-rate payment (see [glossary](#)). People receiving income support are required to report income from all sources (including work, investments and/or substantial assets).

As at 31 March 2023, for people receiving unemployment payments:

- almost one-quarter (23%) received a part-rate payment, which is slightly higher than in recent years (20% to 22% since 2019)
- around 1 in 5 (22%) declared earnings from employment in the preceding fortnight – 22% for those receiving JobSeeker and 21% for Youth Allowance (other). Of these, the vast majority (87%) earned at least \$250 in the last fortnight
- the proportion who declared earnings dropped from 19% in September 2019 to 16% in June 2020, before increasing and stabilising around 22% from March 2021 until March 2023.

This increase in the proportion of people receiving unemployment payments with earnings since June 2020 may reflect the growth in employment over this period as well as short-term policy changes made to these payments during 2020 (which ended on 31 March 2021), including increasing the income free area for these payments from September 2020.

## Duration of income support receipt

- As at 31 March 2023, almost 1 in 4 (24%) people receiving unemployment payments had received income support for less than 1 year, with a further 29% receiving payments for 2–5 years and 37% for 5 or more years (including 19% for 10 or more years). People receiving unemployment payments are remaining on income support for longer than in previous years – for example, 29% had been on income support payments for 2–5 years in March 2023 compared with 24–27% between 2017 and 2019.
- In terms of duration receiving the JobSeeker Payment specifically (or Newstart prior to March 2020), recipients are also receiving this payment for longer than in previous years. In March 2023, 56% of people had been receiving this payment for 2 years or more, compared with 44–49% between 2017 and 2019. Further, the proportion receiving JobSeeker/Newstart for 5–10 years has increased by 5 percentage points between 2017 and 2023 (from 12% to 17%), and more than doubled for those receiving this payment for 10 years or more (from 3% to 8% over this period).
- See 'Chapter 3 Employment and income support following the COVID-19 pandemic' in [Australia's welfare 2023: data insights](#) for more information.

# How many young people receive student payments?

Employment is tied closely with engagement with other activities, such as education and training. Hence, when describing patterns in unemployment payments it is important to also present income support payments available to support people studying or undertaking an apprenticeship.

Individuals in receipt of student payments are most commonly young people aged 16–24, with 77% of all people receiving student payments in this age range as at 31 March 2023. This section focuses on this age range.

Of people aged 16–24 in receipt of income support payments, 38% received student payments, 35% unemployment payments and 11% parenting payments.

## About the main student income support payments

The main student payments for those aged 16–24 are Youth Allowance Student and Australian Apprentices, and ABSTUDY.

**Youth Allowance Student and Youth Australian Apprentices:** a means-tested payment for full-time students and Australian apprentices aged 16–24.

**ABSTUDY (Living Allowance):** a means-tested living allowance and range of supplementary benefits for eligible First Nations students or apprentices who are in an approved course, Australian Apprenticeship or traineeship.

This page does not include information on all student payments and excludes ABSTUDY (Non-Living Allowance – a supplementary payment only) and Austudy (as the qualifying age for this payment starts at age 25).

Student payments are subject to other eligibility criteria, including personal, parental and partner income tests.

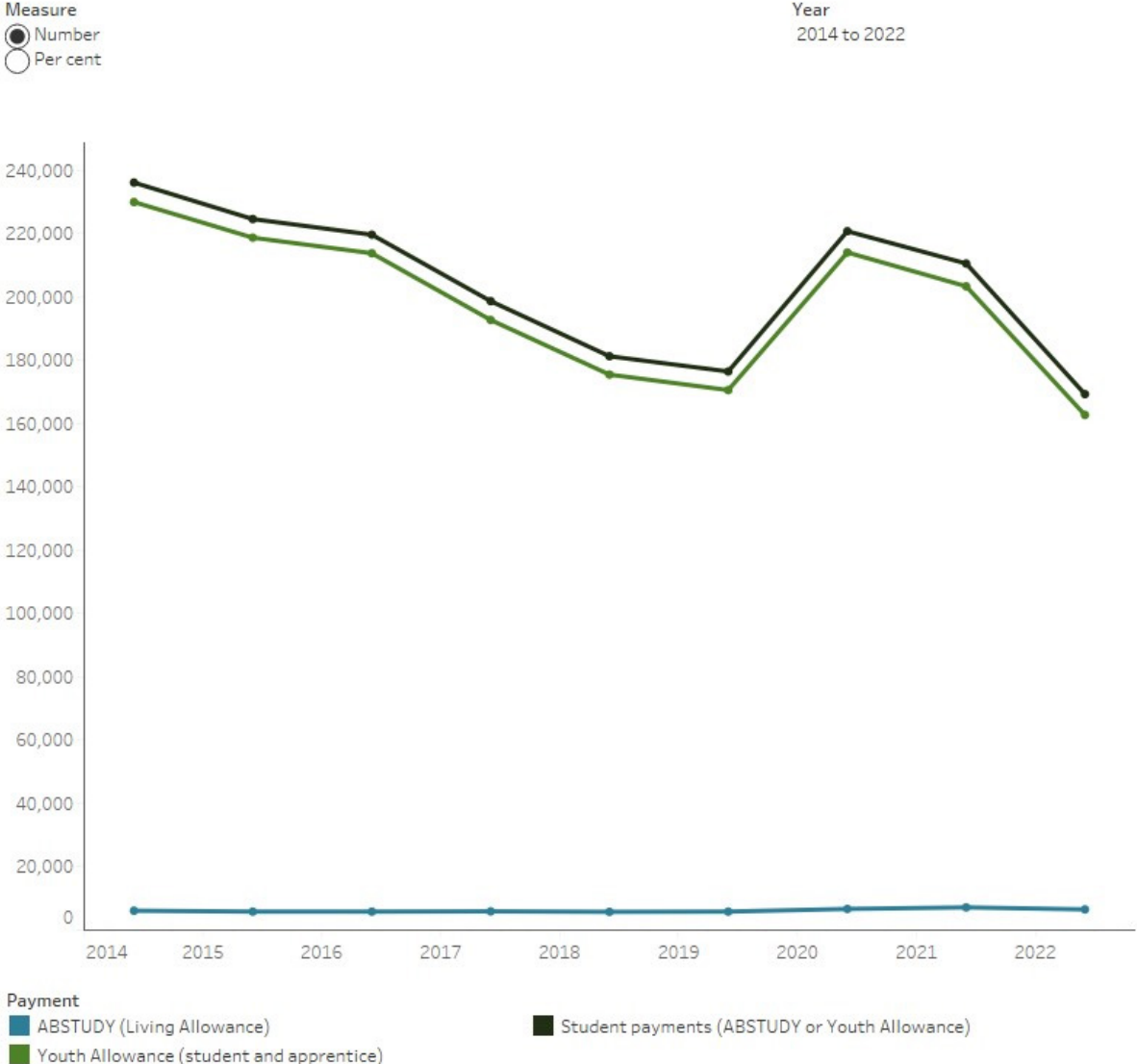
As at 31 March 2023, 138,100 people aged 16–24 (4.8% of the Australian population of this age) received one of the following student payments:

- 132,600 received Youth Allowance (student and apprentice combined)
- 5,400 received ABSTUDY (Living Allowance).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the number and proportion of young people aged 16–24 receiving student payments were generally declining, from 236,100 to 164,500 between June 2014 and March 2020 or from 8.3% to 5.6% of the population aged 16–24. However, following the business restrictions associated with the pandemic in March 2020, the number of people receiving student payments increased steeply by 39%, an additional 64,000 recipients in September 2020 or from 5.6% to 8.0% of the population aged 16–24. This was similar to the previous high rates observed in September 2015. These increases in 2020 may have been influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and young people commencing or continuing to study due to unfavourable job market conditions.

The number of people receiving student payments then steadily declined to 4.8% of the population aged 16–24 in March 2023, 16% below March 2020 levels (26,500 fewer people receiving student payments), and between 18–21% below March levels in 2018–2019.

**Figure 3: People aged 16–24 receiving student payments, June 2014 to June 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. Data are as at 30 June in each year.
2. Per cent refers to the proportion of the population aged 16–24 receiving these student payments, using ABS Estimated Resident Population data for June 2014 to June 2022.

Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Social Services Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics – quarterly data on [www.data.gov.au](http://www.data.gov.au) (March 2023).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information about unemployment payments, see:

- Services Australia [A guide to Australian Government payments](#)
- Department of Social Services [payment demographic data](#).

## References

DSS (Department of Social Services) (2023) [\*DSS Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics – quarterly data\*](#), DSS website, accessed 19 June 2023

Parliamentary Library (2019) [\*Measuring overlap between the unemployed and people ‘on the dole’\*](#), Parliamentary Library, Australian Government, accessed 15 February 2023.

# Social support

# Adoptions

This topic summary is part of the [Adoptions Australia 2021–22](#) report.

## On this page

Types of adoption

Trends in adoptions

Characteristics of adoptees

Adoptive parent(s) and birth mothers

Adoption processes

Impact of COVID-19

Where do I go for more information?

Adoption aims to provide a nurturing, safe and permanent family for children and young people who are not able to live with their families. It is a process where full parental rights and responsibilities for a child are legally transferred from a child's parents to their adoptive parents.

This report covers the latest data on adoptions of Australian children (domestic adoptions) and children from overseas (intercountry adoptions). Data covers characteristics of adopted children, their parents, and their adoptive families, as well as adoption processes and consent arrangements in place.

## Types of adoption

The type of adoption practiced in Australia is known as a 'plenary open adoption', characterised by an open exchange of information between parties. The [National Adoptions Australia data collection](#) includes the following categories of adoption:

- Domestic adoptions of Australian children, which include:
  - local adoptions, where the child and adoptive parent(s) did not know each other before the adoption
  - known child adoptions, where the child and adoptive parent(s) knew each other before the adoption. Known child adoptions can be further categorised into adoptions by step-parent(s), relative(s), carers, or other.
- Adoptions of children from overseas (or intercountry adoptions), where the child and adoptive parent(s) did not know each other before the adoption.
  - These can be further categorised as either 'Hague' or 'bilateral' adoptions, depending on the arrangement in place between Australia and the partner country. 'Hague' countries are those who are party to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Hague

Convention). Australia has 'bilateral' arrangements with countries who are not party to the Hague Convention, but who can satisfy the principles of the Convention, regardless of whether the country is a signatory. More information on these differences is in [Appendix A](#).

- Australia has intercountry adoption programs with the following partner countries who are party to the Hague Convention – Bulgaria, Chile, China, Colombia, Hong Kong, India, Latvia, Poland, South Africa, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand ([Intercountry Adoption Australia](#) 2022). Australia also has intercountry adoption programs through bilateral arrangements with South Korea and Taiwan.

In 2021–22, 208 adoptions were finalised in Australia. Of these:

- 192 (92%) children were adopted within Australia (31 local adoptions, 161 known child adoptions).
- Most known child adoptions were by a carer (94, or 49% of domestic adoptions) or step-parents (60, or 31% of domestic adoptions).
- 16 children (7.7% of all adoptions) were adopted from overseas – 7 of these children came from countries party to the Hague convention, while 9 were adopted from countries which had a bilateral agreement with Australia.
- All intercountry adoptions were from Asian countries – 7 from South Korea, 6 from Thailand, 2 from Taiwan and one from the Philippines (Figure 1).

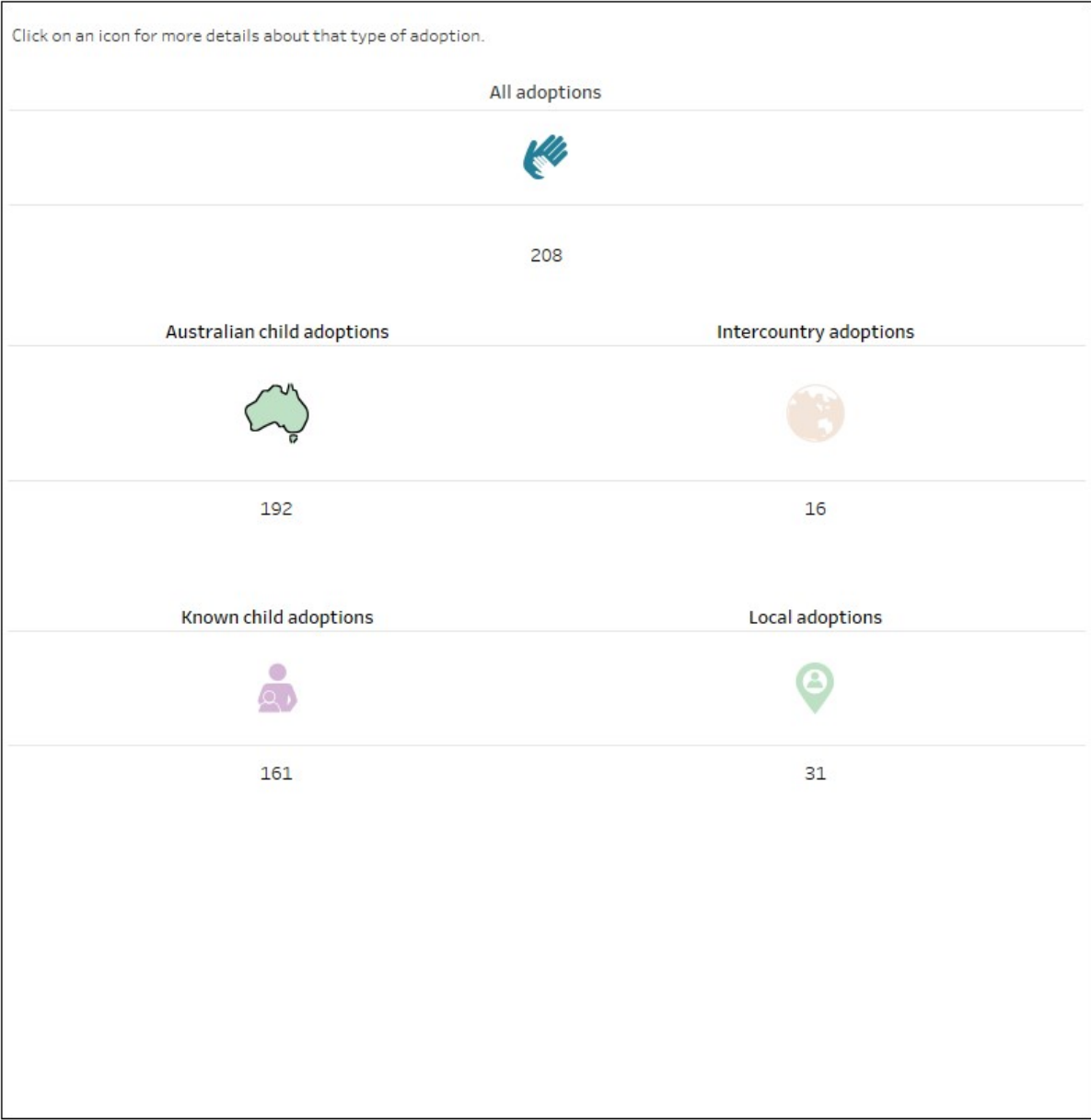
Adoptions by relatives or other known carers of children from other countries, or known child intercountry adoptions, are not included in national counts but are collected by all jurisdictions.

- These can be further categorised as either intercountry relative adoptions or intercountry known non-relative adoptions ([Intercountry Adoption Australia](#) 2022).
- In 2021–22, there were 6 known child intercountry adoptions.

For definitions of each of these adoption types, see the [glossary](#).

More information on intercountry known child adoptions can be found at [Intercountry Adoption Australia](#).

**Figure 1: Number of finalised adoptions in Australia, by type of adoption, 2021–22**



Source: AIHW Adoptions Australia data collection.  
<https://www.aihw.gov.au>

**Notes**

1. Excludes intercountry known child adoptions.
2. See [glossary](#) for definitions.

**Trends in adoptions**

National adoption trends go back to 1968–69, when adoptions began being recorded across Australia. Between 1968–69 to 1971–72, there was an increase in adoption

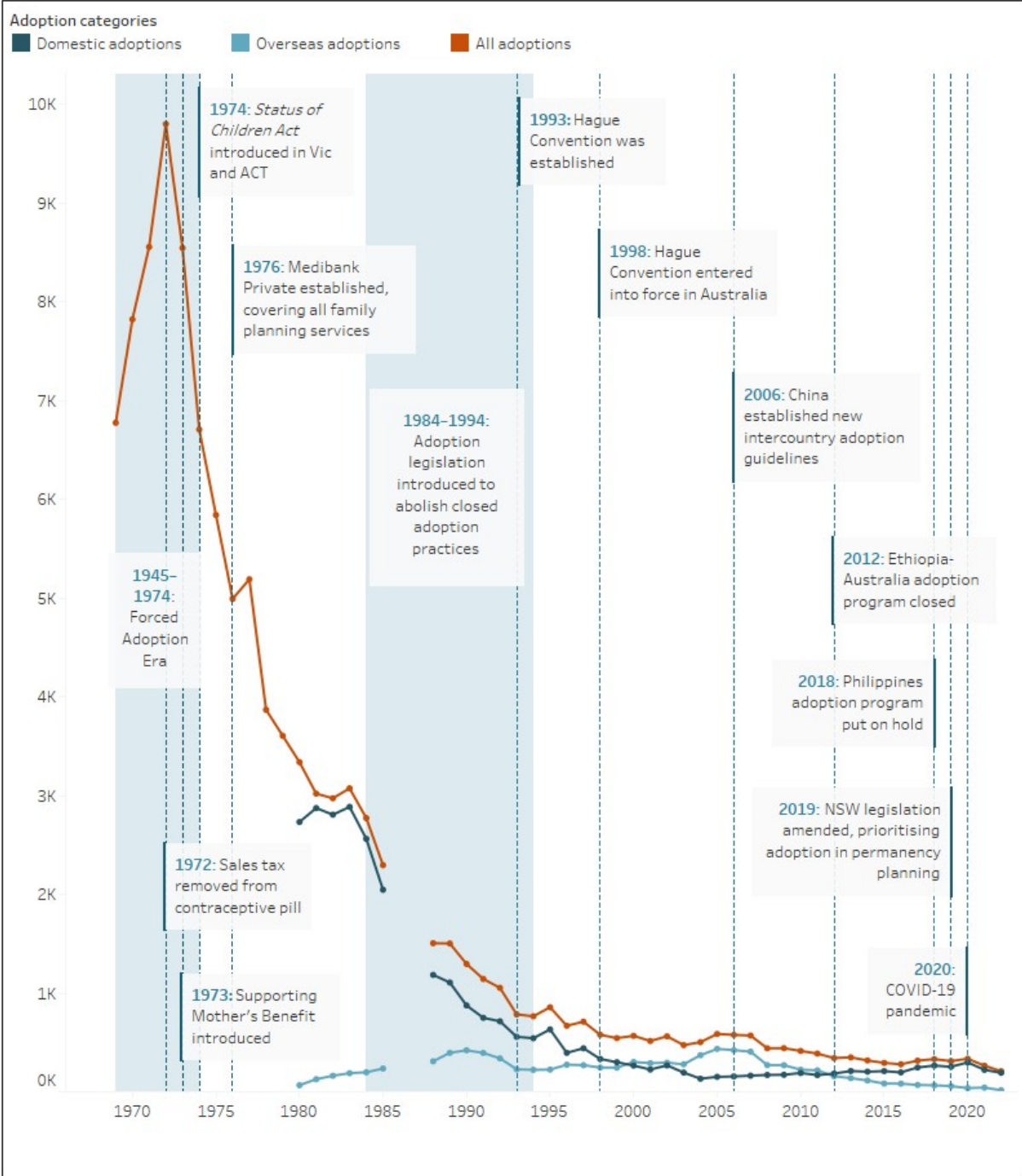


numbers, from 6,773 to 9,798. Compared to 1971–72, the number of adoptions in 2021–22 has declined by 98% from 9,798 to 208 (Figure 2).

Information on whether children were adopted from Australia or overseas was not recorded until 1979–80. The number of children adopted from overseas has declined by 76% from 66 in 1979–80 to 16 in 2021–22. Over the same period, children adopted within Australia has declined by 93% from 2,731 to 192.

For more information on key social and policy developments impacting adoption trends see [Adoptions in Australia over time](#).

**Figure 2: Number of adoptions and key moments in Australia, 1968–69 to 2021–22**



Source: AIHW Adoptions Australia data collection (1990–91 to 2021–22), AIHW analysis of ABS cat no. 4406.0 (1979–80 to 1984–85), AIHW analysis of Adoptions National Data Collection WELSTAT (1987–88 to 1989–90). <https://www.aihw.gov.au>

**Notes**

1. Each year represents a financial year, for example 2022 represents the 2021–22 financial year.
2. No national data were collected in 1985–86 and 1986–87.
3. National data prior to 1979–80 did not differentiate between overseas and domestic adoptions.
4. Totals for 1979–80 to 1981–82, 1983–84, 1984–85, 1987–88 and 1991–92 include adoptions involving children where birthplace or relationships to the adoptive parent(s) were unknown. Therefore, numbers for subcategories may not add to totals. A full list of these data discrepancies is in Table S10 in the [Adoptions Australia supplementary data tables](#).
5. Prior to 1998–99, 'intercountry adoptions' were referred to as 'adoptions of overseas-born children by non-relative'.

## Characteristics of adoptees

The characteristics of adoptees varies by type of adoption. Younger children are more likely to be adopted through local adoptions, whereas known child adoptions are more likely to be older children or adults.

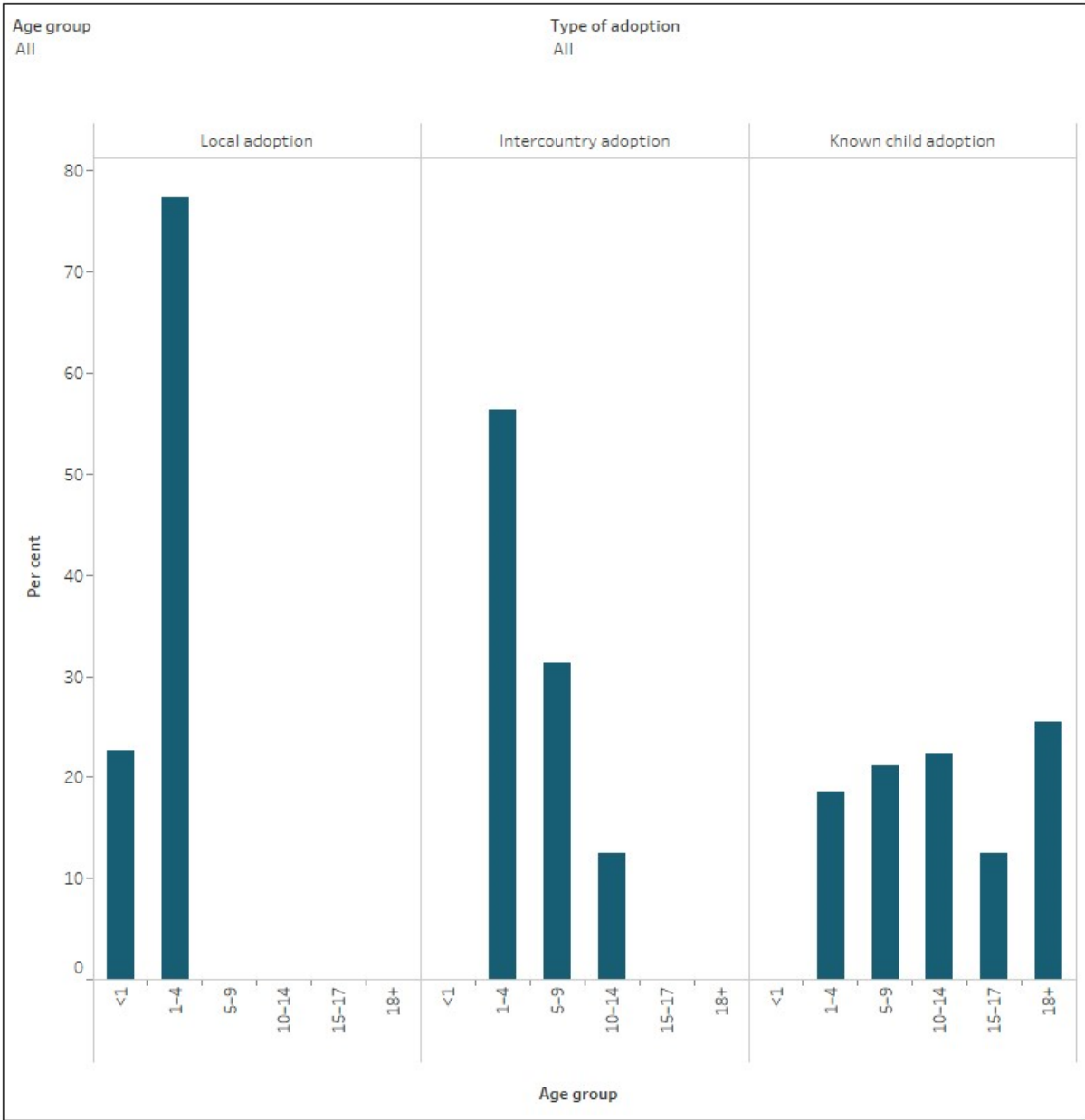
In 2021–22:

- All local adoptees were aged 4 years and under, and 23% of these were under one year old. Known child adoptees were generally older, with 60% aged 10 or more years, and 25% aged 18 and over. Most (88%) intercountry adoptees were under 10 years (Figure 3).
- There were 41 adult adoptions. Adoptions of people aged 18 and over occur mostly through known child adoptions, and primarily when a step-parent decides to become a permanent adoptive parent of their partner's child. All adults were adopted as part of a known child adoption, with a majority (88%) being adopted by a step-parent. Legislation and processes for adopting people aged 18 and over can be found in [Appendix A](#).
- 12 intercountry adoptions were finalised for single children. Four children were adopted as part of 2 sibling groups – that is, a child and at least one of their siblings were adopted at the same time by the same family.
- For known child adoptions, sibling group adoptions are only collected from those adopted by carers. Of the 94 children adopted by a carer, 45 children were adopted as part of 20 sibling groups. For local adoptions, there was only one sibling group of 2 children (Supplementary table S5).
- 14 (45%) local adoptees were adopted into families where there were no other children.

For more information on adoptions of specific sub-populations go to:

- [adoptions of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children](#)
- [adoptions of children with additional care needs](#).

**Figure 3: Age group of adoptees, by type of adoption, 2021–22**



Source: AIHW Adoptions Australia data collection.  
<https://www.aihw.gov.au>

Note: For local and intercountry adoptions, 'age of child' refers to the age of the adopted child at the date of placement with the adoptive parent(s). For known child adoptions, 'age of child' refers to the age of the adopted child at the date the adoption order was granted.

## Adoptive parent(s) and birth mothers

Data on adoptive parent(s) are captured for local and intercountry adoptions. For known child adoptions, these data are only available for carer (known child) adoptions.

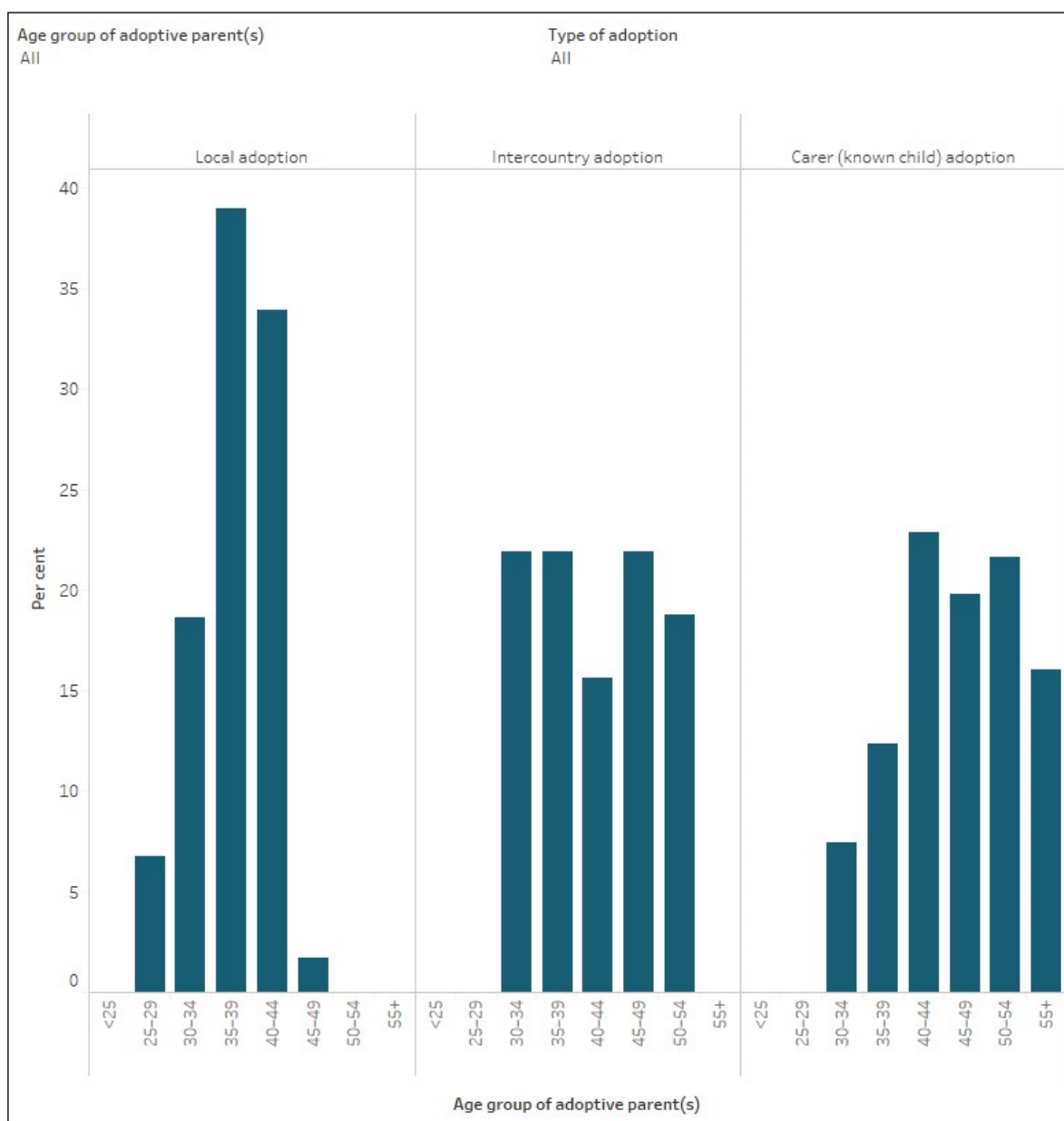
In 2021–22:

- All adoptive parent(s) in finalised intercountry adoptions, and most (28) adoptive parent(s) in finalised local adoptions, were in a registered marriage. Although most

(57) adoptive parent(s) in carer (known child) adoptions were married, 22 were single (Supplementary table S7).

- 130 adoptive parent(s) in carer (known child) adoptions were aged 40 and over, compared with 18 adoptive parent(s) in intercountry adoptions and 21 adoptive parent(s) in local adoptions (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Age of adoptive parent(s), by type of adoption, 2021–22**



Source: AIHW Adoptions Australia data collection.  
<https://www.aihw.gov.au>

Note: Unknowns have been excluded from percentage calculations.

Data on the characteristics of birth mothers are available for finalised local adoptions. In 2021–22:

- the median age of birth mothers was 28 years (Supplementary table S35), slightly younger than the median age of 31.7 years for all mothers giving birth in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022)
- the age of birth mothers ranged from 20 to 46 years (unpublished data from AIHW Adoptions Australia data collection)
- 83% of birth mothers were not married to the child's birth father at the time of birth (Supplementary table S36).

## Adoption processes

In Australia, there are specific processes for adopting a child, depending on the jurisdiction and the type of adoption. For more information see [Technical notes](#) and [Appendixes A to D](#).

### Consent arrangements

In 2021–22:

- consent was provided by both parents for about half of all local adoptions
- consent from both parents was dispensed or not required for 3 out of every 4 carer (known child) adoptions. This includes adoptions of children aged 12 and over where the child can consent to their own adoption.

### Information applications and vetoes

Parties to a domestic adoption can access or restrict ('veto') information. Types of information applications and vetoes are detailed in the [Technical notes](#).

At 30 June 2022, 8,348 contact vetoes were in place (Supplementary table S13).

In 2021–22:

- 1,479 applications were lodged to access either [identifying](#) or [non-identifying information](#). Most (82% or 1,215) were for identifying information applications, and of these, 905 (74%) were lodged by adoptees (unpublished data from AIHW Adoptions Australia data collection).
- 6 [contact vetoes](#) were lodged, while no [identifying information vetoes](#) were lodged.

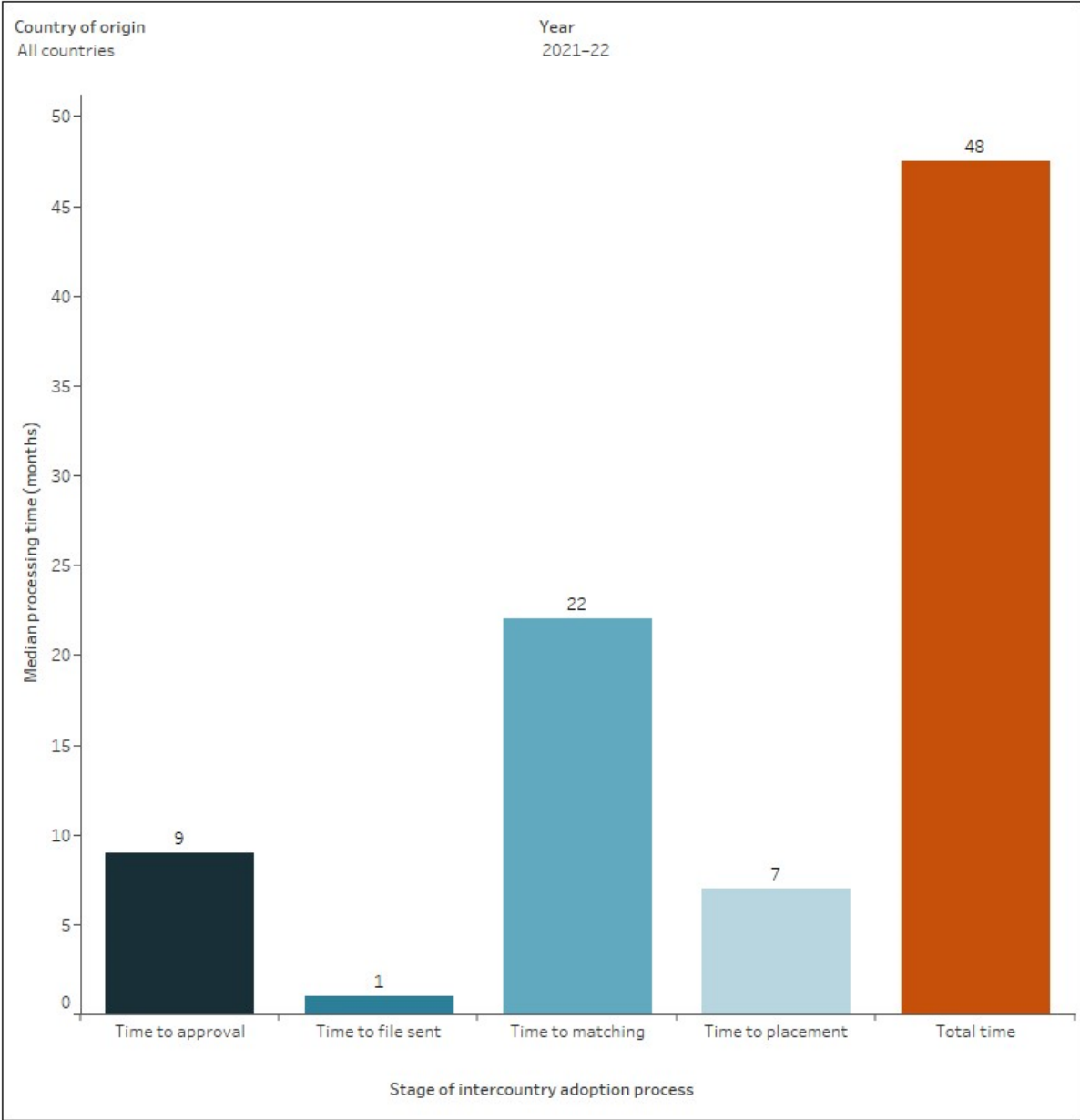
### Intercountry adoption processing time

For intercountry adoptions, the length of time is measured from when a prospective adoptive parent is approved to when a child is placed (Figure 5). For further information on the intercountry adoption process see [Technical notes](#).

In 2021–22:

- the total median length of time from approval of an application to placement of a child was 4 years
- South Korea had the shortest median adoption process at 2 years, while the Philippines had the longest median waiting time of 7 years.

**Figure 5: Median processing time (in months) for children placed in intercountry adoptions, by country of origin and stage of intercountry adoption process, 2012–13 to 2021–22**



Source: AIHW Adoptions Australia data collection.  
<https://www.aihw.gov.au>

**Notes**

1. 'Time to approval' is the median length of time (in months) from when the applicant(s) become official clients of the department to when an approval decision is made. 'Time to file sent' is the median length of time (in months) from when an approval decision was made to when the file was sent overseas. 'Time to matching' is the median length of time (in months) from when the file was sent overseas to when the child was matched. 'Time to placement' is the median length of time (in months) from when the child was matched to when the child was placed.

2. 'Total time' is the median length of time (in months) from when the applicant(s) become official clients of the department to when the child was placed. This may not equal to the sum of medians for each constituent step of the process.
3. Excludes one adoption from Rwanda which was a known child intercountry adoption.

## Impact of COVID-19

Measures in place as part of government responses to COVID-19 during 2020 and 2021 (including closure of international borders, travel bans/restrictions, lockdowns, quarantine requirements, limitations on non-urgent face-to-face work, and resource allocations) may have affected domestic and intercountry adoption processes from 2019–20 to 2021–22.

Although the long-term impact of COVID-19 on adoption processes is still unknown, there was a 62% drop in intercountry adoptions from 42 in 2020–21 to 16 in 2021–22, indicating that border closures may have had some effect on intercountry adoption numbers. The impact of COVID-19 on adoptions data may become more apparent in future years.

## Where do I go for more information?

See also [Adoptions](#) for more information on this topic.

Information on adopting a child can be found at [state and territory departments responsible for adoption](#), and the [Department of Social Services](#).



# Aged care

This topic summary is part of the [Older Australians](#) report.

## On this page

[Aged care assessments](#)

[Entering aged care](#)

[People using aged care](#)

[Impact of COVID-19 on people in aged care](#)

[Assessment of care needs](#)

[Leaving aged care](#)

[Where do I go for more information?](#)

[References](#)

Australia's aged care system delivers services through a range of care types to cater for the diverse needs of the ageing population. Services range from supports to remain living largely independently at home, through to full-time care in a residential setting. Access to government-subsidised aged care services does not involve a minimum age of eligibility (with the exception of home support) – rather, access is determined based on assessed need. Although the majority of people using aged care services are aged 65 and over, younger people also access these services (AIHW 2023d).

This page explores the use of mainstream residential and community-based aged care programs by people aged 65 years and over. It provides information about how people are assessed for, and enter, aged care, the types of care they use, and how they leave aged care. It is important to note that a person may use multiple programs during the year, and may be counted more than once as an admission or exit. For more information on aged care in Australia, including younger people using aged care, see [GEN aged care data](#).

## Types of aged care

There are 3 mainstream types of care:

**Residential aged care** provides accommodation and care at a facility on a permanent or respite (temporary) basis. Permanent care is intended for those who can no longer live at home due to increased care needs, while respite provides a break from normal living arrangements.

**Home support** (Commonwealth Home Support Programme) provides entry-level support at home for people as well as their carers. Services available through home support include domestic assistance, personal care, social support, allied health and respite services.

**Home care** (Home Care Packages Program) provides different levels of aged care services for people in their own homes. It is targeted towards people with needs that go beyond what home support can provide. Ongoing services are available to keep people well and independent (such as nursing care), stay in their home (through help with cleaning, cooking and home maintenance) and remain connected to their community through transport and social support.

There are also several types of flexible care available that extend across the spectrum from home support to residential aged care, including:

- **Transition care**, which provides short-term care to restore independent living after a hospital stay.
- **Short-term restorative care**, which provides early intervention services to reduce difficulty with everyday tasks and maintain or restore independence.
- **Multi-Purpose Services Program**, which provides integrated health and aged care services in small regional and remote communities that cannot support both a separate aged care facility and a hospital.
- **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program**, which delivers a mix of care types in a culturally appropriate way for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- **Department of Veterans' Affairs community nursing** and **Veterans' Home Care services** for eligible veterans and their families, which provides support to help people stay in their own home.

## Aged care assessments

To access government-funded aged care services, people undergo an assessment of need. These processes assess people's circumstances and care needs and, where appropriate, approve them for particular aged care services. They also refer people to service providers.

My Aged Care is a contact centre and website which serves as the starting point for access to government-subsidised aged care services. Access to My Aged Care can be gained by self-referral, or requests from carers or health and aged care professionals.

Following an initial screening through the My Aged Care platform, people are directed to one of 2 types of assessment:

- Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACATs) conduct comprehensive assessments and approve people for entry into residential aged care (permanent or respite), home care and transition care programs.
- Regional Assessment Services assess eligibility for entry-level home support services, known as the Commonwealth Home Support Programme.

In 2021–22 there were around 273,000 home support assessments and 201,000 comprehensive assessments completed (Department of Health and Aged Care 2022). The number of completed comprehensive aged care assessments increased by 13% between 2012–13 and 2021–22, however trends tend to fluctuate generally from year to year (SCRGSP 2023).

## Entering aged care

The time between an individual's ACAT approval and access to an aged care service can be influenced by a range of factors, including availability of places and packages of care, and a person's individual preferences about entering care.

In 2021–22:

- 41% of new entrants to permanent residential care entered permanent care within 3 months of their ACAT assessment (Department of Health and Aged Care 2022)
- the median time elapsed for access to a Home Care Package ranged from 1 month for a Level 4 package, 5 months for a Level 1 package and 8 months for a Level 2 or Level 3 package (SCRGSP 2023).

In 2021–22, 245,000 people aged 65 and over entered residential care and home care. Around 3 in 5 (62%) admissions were for residential aged care, including approximately 68,400 for permanent care and 82,300 for respite care (AIHW 2023a).

Characteristics of people entering aged care in 2021–22 include:

- Over half (54%) of people aged 65 and over entering permanent residential aged care were aged 85 and over.
- Almost 3 in 5 (59%) people aged 65 and over entering permanent residential care for the first time were women. This proportion increased with age. This is partly driven by the fact that women's life expectancy exceeds men's, so there are more women than men at older ages entering and using aged care.
- Almost 2 in 5 (37%) people aged 65 and over entering home care were aged 85 and over (AIHW 2023a).

Of all people entering residential and home care in 2021–22, 1.0% were aged under 65 (AIHW 2023a).

## People using aged care

People tend to use different aged care programs at different stages of their life. As people get older, it is likely they will experience escalating care needs that require different care types. However, people's journey through aged care can vary. Some people may start using lower-level care services, then progress to using increasing levels of care as their needs change. For others, their first experience with aged care services may be when they require higher level care after a sudden event, such as the loss of a carer or a health crisis.

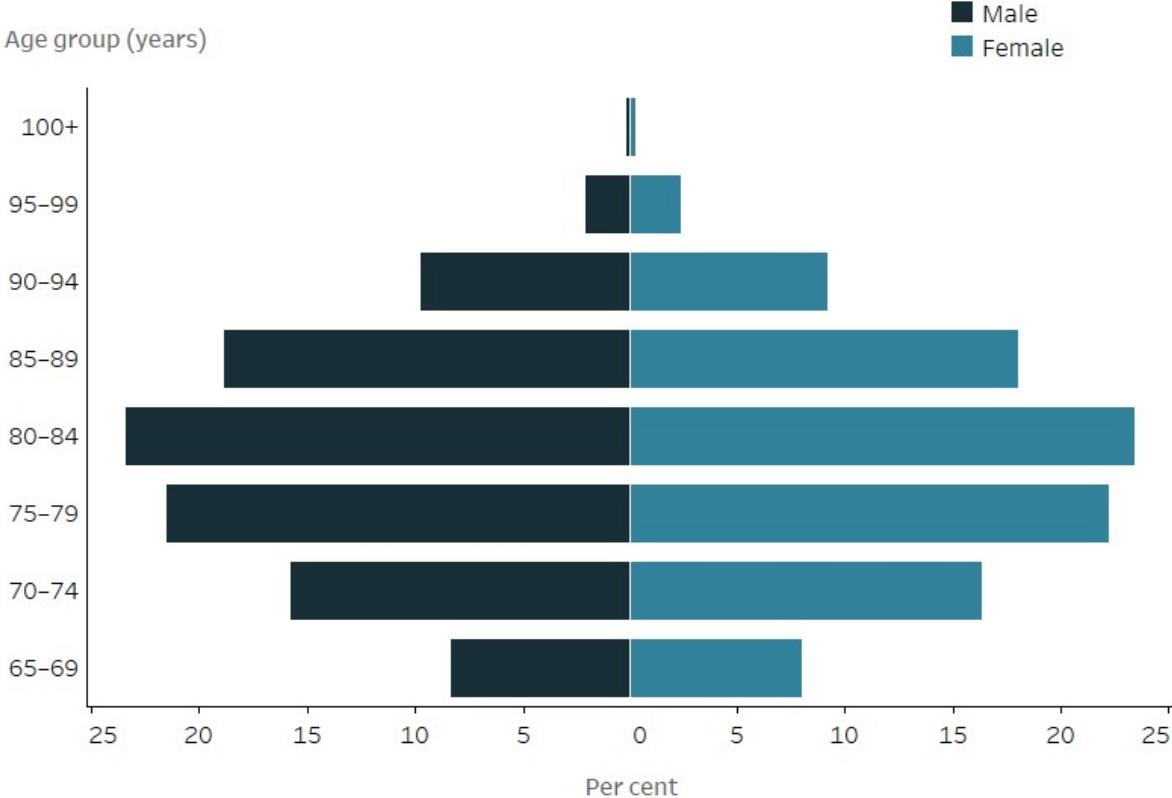
### Home support

In 2021–22, around 800,000 people aged 65 and over used home support services. Of these:

- 2 in 3 (65%) were female
- the highest proportion of people were aged 80–84 (23%) (AIHW 2023d) (Figure 4.1).

In 2021–22, including people whose sex is unknown, 30% of people aged 65 and over using home support were aged 85 and over. This is lower than home care (41%) and residential aged care (59%).

**Figure 4.1 Home support recipients by age group and sex, 2021–22**



**Notes**

- 1. Excludes unknown age and sex.
- 2. Proportions sum to 100% for males and females separately.

Source: AIHW 2023d – GEN aged care data.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Home care**

At 30 June 2022, almost 213,000 people using home care were aged 65 and over. This is more than triple the 69,500 people aged 65 and over who were accessing home care services at 30 June 2017 (AIHW 2023d). The growth in home care follows the introduction of the *Increasing Choice in Home Care* reforms in February 2017 which changed the way home care services were delivered. Under these reforms, funding for home care packages were assigned to the recipient rather than the provider, giving recipients more choice and flexibility (Department of Health and Aged Care 2021).

**Levels of home care**

Home care provides varying levels of care to individuals based on their assessed care needs. A coordinated package of care is available at 4 levels, from Level 1 (basic care – for example, shopping assistance, transportation, and meal preparation), through to Level 4 (high-level

care – for example, assistance with bathing, dressing, and getting out of bed, including support for additional care needs such as dementia, or vision and hearing impairment).

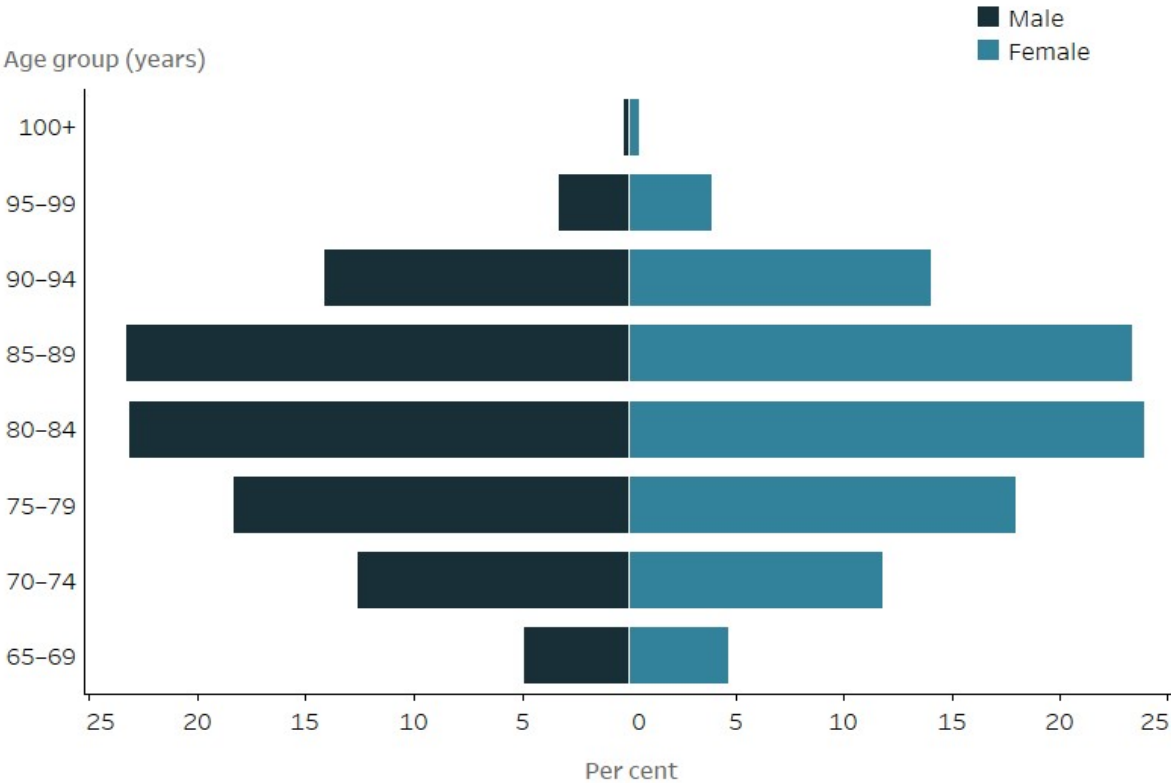
At 30 June 2022, of all home care recipients:

- 5.4% were receiving care at Level 1
- 41% were receiving care at Level 2
- 31% were receiving care at Level 3
- 22% were receiving care at Level 4 (AIHW 2023d).

At 30 June 2022, of people aged 65 and over using home care (including where sex is unknown):

- 2 in 3 (65%) were women (139,000 people)
- the highest proportion were aged 85 and over (41%, 88,300 people) (Figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.2 Home care recipients by age group and sex, 30 June 2022**



**Notes**

1. Excludes unknown age and sex.
2. Proportions sum to 100% for males and females separately.

Source: AIHW 2023d – GEN aged care data.

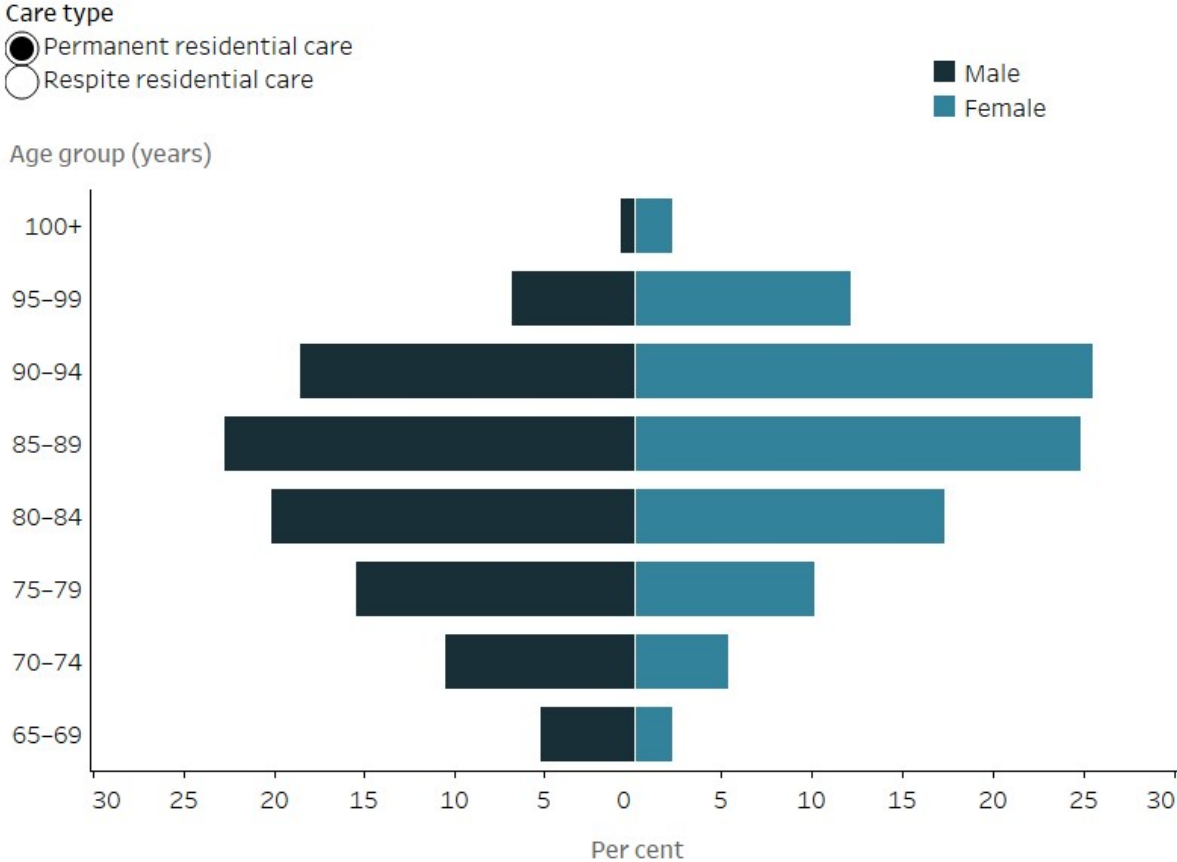
## **Residential aged care**

At 30 June 2022:

- 185,000 people using residential care were aged 65 years and over, with:
  - 178,000 living in permanent residential care
  - 7,400 using respite care.
- Among people aged 65 and over in permanent residential care:
  - the number of women was almost double the number of men
  - people were most commonly aged 85–89 (Figure 4.3) (AIHW 2023d).
- The number of people aged 65 and over living in permanent residential aged care increased by 3.1% over the last 5 years (from 172,000 at 30 June 2017 to 178,000 at 30 June 2022) (AIHW 2023d). This change may be partially attributed to the growth in the Australian population aged 65 and over, which increased 17% over the same period (from 3.8 million to 4.4 million people) (ABS 2023).

Compared with other aged care programs, people generally use residential aged care at older ages. For all admissions to permanent residential aged care in 2021–22, the average age at admission was 83 years for men and 85 years for women (Department of Health and Aged Care 2022).

**Figure 4.3 Residential aged care recipients by age group and sex, 30 June 2022**



**Notes**

- 1. Excludes unknown age and sex.
- 2. Proportions sum to 100% for males and females separately.

Source: AIHW 2023d – GEN aged care data.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Impact of COVID-19 on older people in aged care**

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the health and wellbeing of people using aged care, particularly those in residential aged care. Compared to the general community, people in residential aged care were disproportionately affected by COVID-19 infection in terms of risk of serious illness and related mortality (Department of Health and Aged Care 2023a). Three-quarters (75%) of all COVID-19 related deaths in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic (to 5 March 2021) were among people living in residential aged care (Department of Health and Aged Care 2023b).

The 2021–22 financial year saw an increased COVID-19 case load on the aged care sector. Most of Australia’s residential aged care homes experienced a COVID-19 outbreak during 2021–22 (2,570 facilities experienced one or more outbreaks in 2021–22). During the 12-month period, there were over 56,000 resident cases and almost 2,200 resident deaths in

aged care (Department of Health and Aged Care 2022). As at 30 June 2022, 29% of all COVID-19 related deaths in Australia were among people living in residential aged care (Department of Health and Aged Care 2023b).

Across all types of aged care, the lockdowns and social restrictions may have affected access to formal and informal support. For example, older people living in the community were encouraged to seek health services remotely through telehealth, and a number of temporary Medicare items were added. Additionally, measures introduced in the aged care sector meant that people in residential aged care could temporarily return to community-living through 'emergency leave' that provided up to eight weeks of home support.

The restrictions imposed may also have affected people's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. The isolation and social disconnection experienced by permanent residential aged care residents as a result of visitor restrictions and lockdowns at many facilities, placed older people at greater risk of health problems including anxiety and neurocognitive conditions.

## Assessment of care needs

Until recently, the Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI) has been used to assess the care needs of people living in permanent residential aged care to determine the government funding provided to care providers. Residents may be reappraised in the same year if their needs change. The ACFI measures care needs across 3 different areas of care:

- activities of daily living
- cognition and behaviour
- complex health care.

On 30 June 2022, among people aged 65 and over living in permanent residential aged care, almost 2 in 5 (37%) had high care ratings across all 3 ACFI assessment areas (AIHW 2023b).

## Australian National Aged Care Classification

On 1 October 2022, the Australian National Aged Care Classification (AN-ACC) residential care funding model replaced the ACFI. The AN-ACC Assessment Tool focuses on the characteristics of residents that drive care costs in residential care. AN-ACC data are not currently reported on this page.

For more information about AN-ACC, see the [AN-ACC Reference Manual and AN-ACC Assessment Tool](#) on the Department of Health and Aged Care website.

## Health of people in aged care

People using aged care continue to interact with the health system through General Practitioners (GPs), specialists and the hospital system. For example, GPs are an important part of the health care of people living in residential aged care. Among people living in permanent residential aged care in 2016–17, some 92% had at least one Medicare Benefits Scheme claim for a GP visit, and almost all of the remaining would have seen a doctor through some other interface with the health or aged care system,



such as hospitals or through Department of Veterans' Affairs arrangements (AIHW 2020).

For more information on use of health services, see the [Health – service use](#) chapter.

## Leaving aged care

Many people use aged care in their final years of life. For deaths among people aged 50 and over in 2016–17, over two thirds (67%) had used at least one aged care service in the last 2 years of life. For people over the age of 85 in 2016–17, 50% of deaths were in residential care, compared with 40% in hospital (AIHW 2021).

People may also leave care to move back home, to enter other aged care, or to be admitted to hospital. The following information covers exits from aged care services in 2021–22. A person may be counted twice if they exited aged care services more than once over the 12-month period.

In 2021–22, for people aged 65 years and over:

- there were almost 201,000 exits from residential aged care and home care
- the majority of exits were by people leaving respite residential care (82,000, 41%), followed by permanent residential care (71,200, 35%) and home care (47,700, 24%)
- most (86%) exits from permanent residential care were due to death, compared with 38% from home care. The majority of exits from home care were to residential care (51%).

Of all people who exited permanent residential aged care, those who died in care had the longest median length of stay (approximately 25 months) (AIHW 2023c).

Among people aged 65 and over exiting aged care, those in permanent residential care had the longest median length of stay (22 months), followed by home care (17 months) and respite residential care (21 days). Women stayed longer in permanent residential care than men, while this difference was less pronounced in respite care.

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on Australians' use of aged care services, see the AIHW's aged care data website, [GEN aged care data](#).

## References

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AIHW (2023b) [GEN Aged Care Data: Care needs of people in aged care](#), AIHW, accessed June 2023.

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SCRGSP (Steering Committee Report on Government Service Provision) (2023) [Report on Government Services 2023. Part F. Community Services Section 14](#), Productivity Commission, accessed March 2023.

# Gambling in Australia

Find the most recent version of this information at:  
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/gambling>

## On this page

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Gambling is a major public policy issue in Australia, affecting the health and wellbeing of individuals and families in a range of ways. Estimates suggest that Australians lose approximately \$25 billion on legal forms of gambling each year, representing the largest per capita losses in the world (Letts 2018; QGSO 2022).

The social costs of gambling – including adverse financial impacts, emotional and psychological costs, relationship and family impacts, and productivity loss and work impacts – have been estimated at around \$7 billion in Victoria alone (Browne et al. 2017). Gambling-related harms affect not only the people directly involved, but also their families, peers and the wider community (Goodwin et al. 2017).

This page aims to:

- improve understanding of gambling participation and expenditure in Australia
- describe gambling-related impacts on health and wellbeing
- highlight emerging gambling trends and opportunities for improved monitoring.

Data on gambling trends should be interpreted in the context of recent global events and changes to some state and territory data collections. This includes:

- changes in the availability of gambling in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic and related government restrictions, with land-based gambling venues temporarily closed and major national and international sporting codes suspended. Individual state and territory governments implemented and eased restrictions at different times during 2020 and 2021 (for more detail see ACMA 2022, Biddle 2020, Jenkinson et al. 2020).
- changes to gambling policy and legislation in Australia by state and territories (see Section 3 of latest [Australian Gambling Statistics](#) report by the Queensland Government Statistician's Office (QGSO))

- changes to the way wagering (see glossary) is taxed by Australian state and territories (see Table 1 of the latest [Australian Gambling Statistics](#) report by the QGSO).

## **Support services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:**

Gambling Help: 1800 858 858, [www.gamblinghelponline.org.au](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au)

Lifeline: 13 11 14, [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

## **Gambling participation**

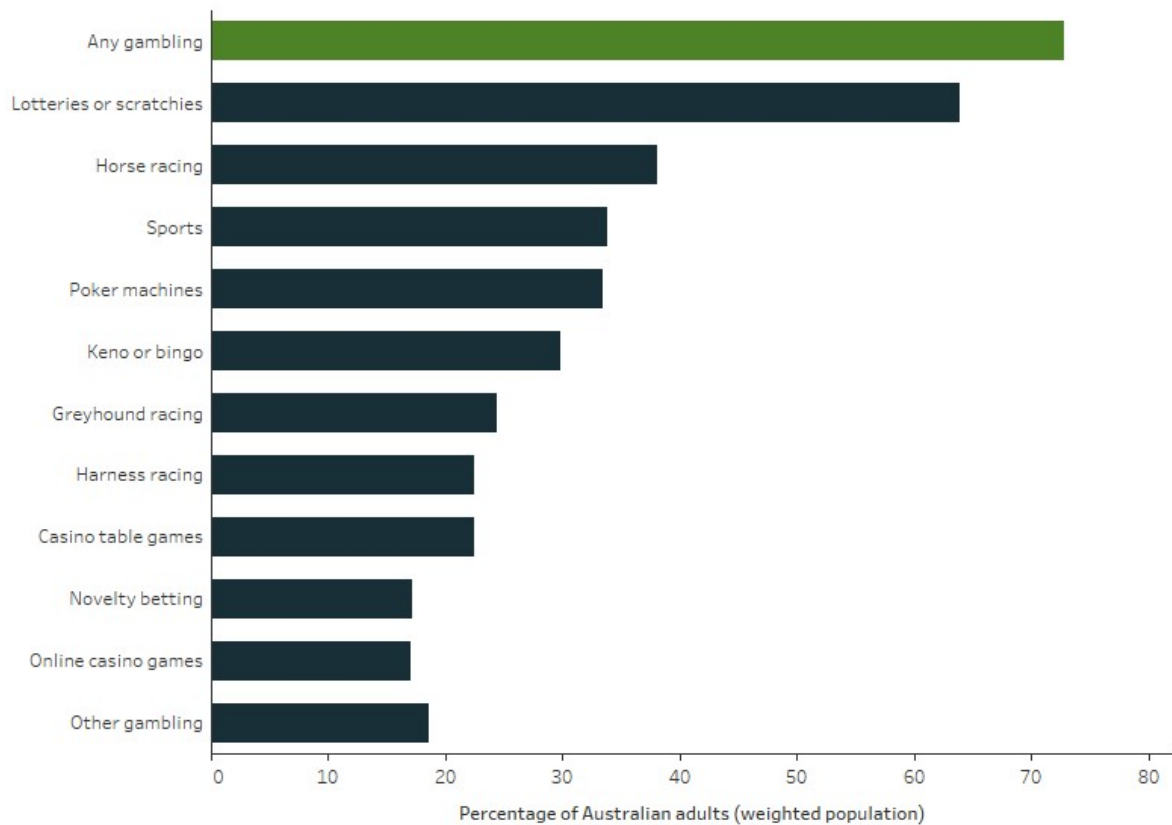
### **Gambling in the Australian adult population**

In 2022 the Australian Gambling Research Centre conducted an online general community panel survey to explore gambling participation and related harm among Australian adults (AGRC 2023).

Three in 4 (73%) Australians aged 18 and over reported spending money on one or more gambling products in the past 12 months (Figure 1). Lotteries/scratchies were the product with the highest participation (64%), followed by race betting (horse, greyhound and/or harness racing, 39%), sports betting (34%) and poker machines/'pokies' (33%) (see glossary).

Among those who reported gambling in the past 12 months, the average number of products gambled on was 2, but around one-quarter (23%) of respondents reported gambling on 6 or more different products.

**Figure 1: Gambling among Australian adults in the past 12 months, 2022**



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**Notes**

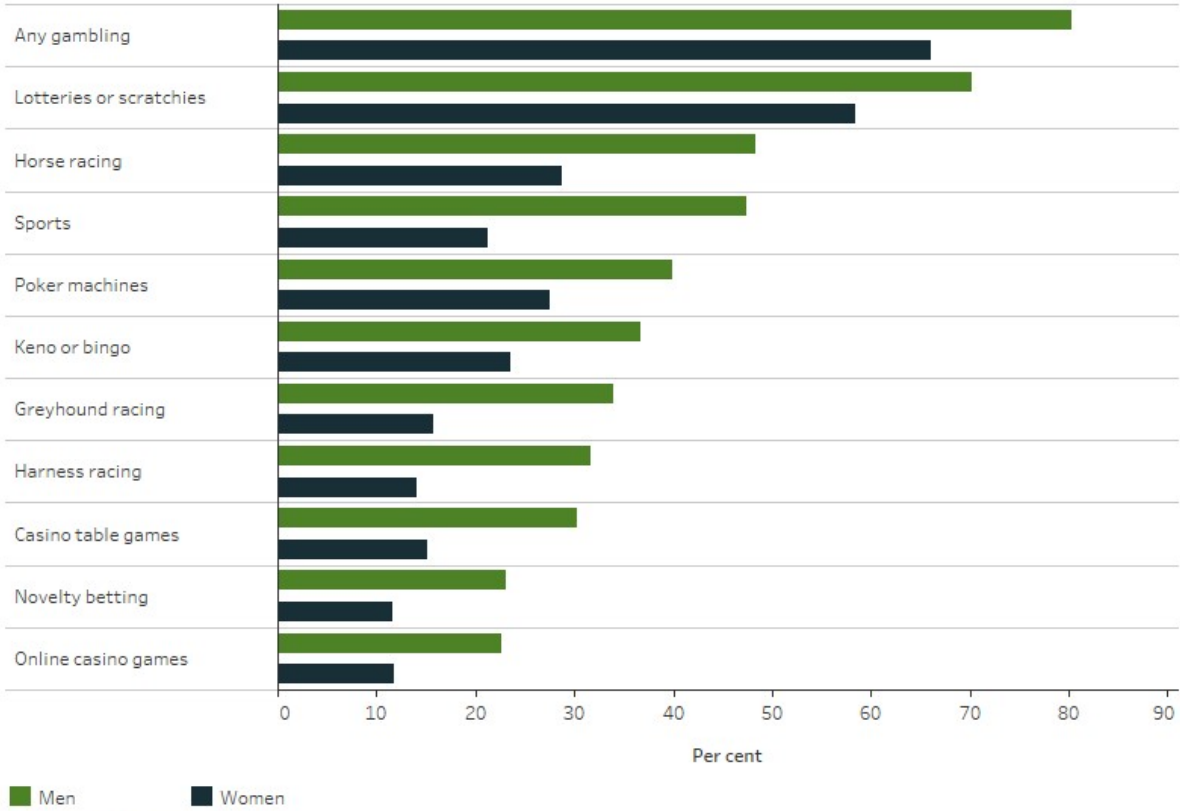
1. Data was collected as part of an online general community panel survey conducted in July 2022. Sample consisted of 1,765 Australian residents aged 18 years and over, aligned with ABS population parameters of age, gender and location of residence (metro and non-metro).
2. Recent (past 12 months) gambling participation was derived from responses regarding frequency of involvement in 13 types of gambling activities, including: Sports betting; Horse race betting; Greyhound race betting; Harness race/trots betting; Lotteries or scratchies; Keno or bingo; Poker machines (pokies); Casino table games (e.g. blackjack, poker); Online casino games; eSports; Fantasy sports; Novelty betting; and Virtual sports (see definitions of gambling activities in the [glossary](#)).
3. The research was conducted by the Australian Gambling Research Centre in partnership with ORIMA Research and the Online Research Unit (ORU).

Source: Community Attitudes Survey (Australian Gambling Research Centre 2023).

Around 2 in 5 (38%) adult Australians gambled at least weekly, though this differed by gender (48% for men and 28% for women). Regular gambling was higher in adults aged 18–54 than adults aged 55 and over for all gambling activities, apart from lotteries/scratchies which was highest among those aged 55 years and over.

More men than women gambled on every product included in the survey (for example, sports, racing, pokies; Figure 2). Men also gambled more frequently, spent more money and were more likely to be at risk of harm during the past 12 months.

**Figure 2: Gambling among Australian adults in the past 12 months, by gender, 2022**



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**Notes**

1. Data was collected as part of an online general community panel survey conducted in July 2022. Sample consisted of Australian residents aged 18 years and over, aligned with ABS population parameters of age, gender and location of residence (metro and non-metro). Male n=865; Female n=887 (total N = 1,752, excluding other genders due to small sample size).
2. The research was conducted by the Australian Gambling Research Centre in partnership with ORIMA Research and the Online Research Unit (ORU).

Source: Community Attitudes Survey (Australian Gambling Research Centre 2023).

**Gambling among Australian men**

In 2020–21 the *Ten to Men: The Australian Longitudinal Study on Male Health* examined the prevalence, frequency and characteristics of gambling participation among Australian men (aged 18–63), and the prevalence and predictors of ‘at-risk or problem gambling’. The survey asked about gambling on 8 different products: poker machines (pokies); horse racing; sports events; greyhound racing; casino table games (for example, blackjack, roulette, but not poker); poker; esports (for money); and fantasy sports (for money).

More than 2 in 5 men (44% or an estimated 2.8 million Australian men aged 18 and over) reported having gambled in the past 12 months. Most men who gambled spent money on multiple activities, including:

- horse racing (56%)
- poker machines (54%)
- sports betting (46%) (Tajin et al. 2022).

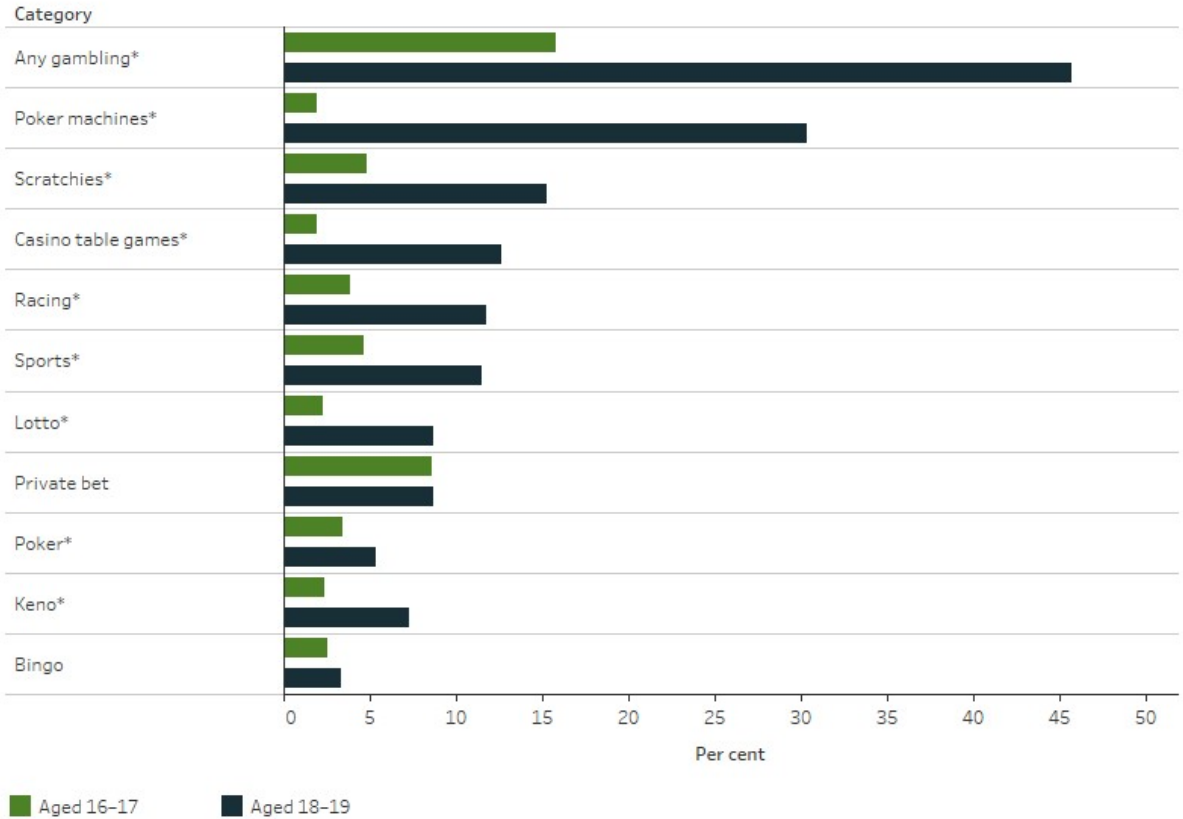
Men who gambled on esports and fantasy sports tended to be younger (average age 32 and 33 years, respectively) than men who spent money gambling on horse racing (average age 41 years), sports betting and poker machines (average age 39 years, each) (Tajin et al. 2022).

## **Gambling among young people in Australia**

*Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* follows the development of 10,000 children and families from across Australia. Analysis from Wave 7 (in 2016; K cohort) revealed that approximately 1 in 6 (16%) Australians aged 16–17 participated in underage gambling in the 12 months prior to survey (most commonly private betting; Figure 3). Two years later (when aged 18–19), almost half (46%) of the same cohort reported having spent money gambling. The most common activities were:

- poker machines (30%)
- instant scratch tickets ('scratchies' 15%)
- casino table games (13%)
- betting on horse or dog races (12%)
- betting on sports (12%) (Sakata and Jenkinson 2022).

**Figure 3: Changes in gambling participation from age 16–17 years (2016) to age 18–19 years (2018) in Australia**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: LSAC K cohort, Waves 7 and 8, weighted. The asterisk (\*) denotes a statistically significant difference in results between the ages 16–17 and 18–19 ( $p < 0.05$ ). The sample size varied from  $n = 2,937$  to  $n = 2,466$ .

Source: LSAC Wave 7 (2016) and Wave 8 (2018).

### Different modes of gambling

In 2011 and 2019, national telephone surveys were conducted to estimate the prevalence of online and land-based modes of gambling in Australia (Hing et al. 2014, 2021). The research found overall gambling participation (online and land-based modes combined) decreased from 64.3% in 2010–11 to 56.9% in 2019; this was mostly attributable to a decline in land-based gambling during that time, while online gambling increased by 9.4%. In 2019 the most common online products that money was spent on were lotteries, race betting and sports betting.

More recent research has examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions on gambling participation in Australia. A 2020 survey of more than 2,000 adults who gamble found that almost 1 in 3 participants signed-up for a new online betting account during COVID-19, and 1 in 20 started gambling online (Jenkinson et al. 2020). The survey also examined roughly what proportion of participants' gambling was conducted via different modes (for example online, at land-based venues). On average, before COVID-19, around 62% of participants' gambling was conducted online; during COVID-19, this increased to 78%. Consumer surveys, key expert reports and industry



data suggest that the increased spending on online gambling during the pandemic has been sustained (see [Gambling Trends Study](#)).

## Gambling expenditure

### Gambling expenditure data

Gambling expenditure data are compiled annually for the Australian Gambling Statistics report (QGSO 2022). This report defines expenditure as net amount lost (amount wagered minus amount won) by people who gambled in Australia up to 2019–20 (the most recent data available).

See [Australian gambling statistics, 37th edition](#) for background information and more detail on the definition of gambling products, sources of gambling data, relevant legislation and notes attached to specific tables and data items.

This page presents a summary of expenditure/losses data on legal, regulated forms of gambling in Australia, including:

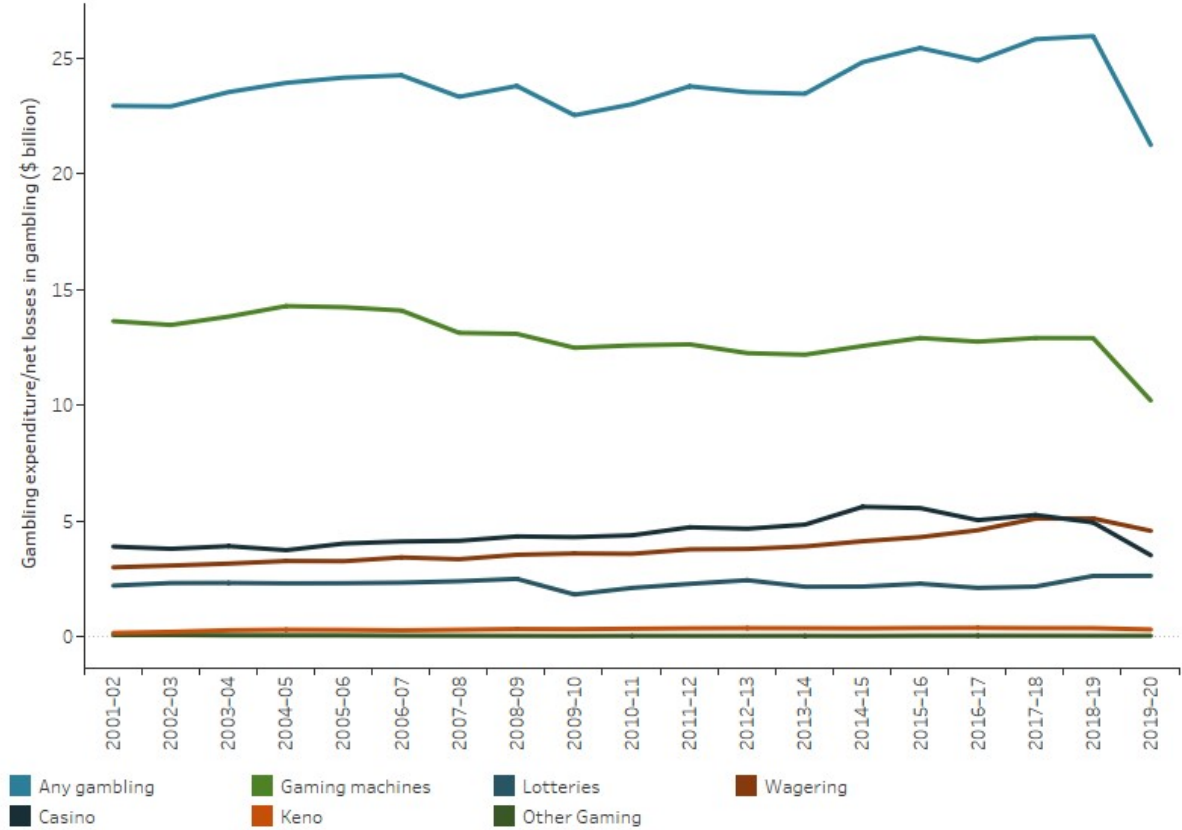
- electronic gaming/poker machines operating in clubs, pubs, and hotels
- wagering on races, sports, and other approved events (for example, elections)
- gambling at casinos, including on table games, gaming machines and keno systems
- lotteries, including lotteries, lotto, pools and instant scratchies
- Keno, excluding at casinos
- other gaming, including minor gaming.

All expenditure/losses data reported on this page represents 'real expenditure', that is, adjusted for inflation to 2019–20 dollars to enable comparisons to previous years.

Total gambling expenditure (net losses) in Australia was \$21.2 billion in 2019–20, a decrease from \$25.9 billion in 2018–19 and \$22.9 billion in 2001–02 (Figure 4). It is important to note that the decline in total gambling expenditure in 2019–20 mostly reflects decreases in land-based gambling expenditure such as casino gambling (down 29%) and poker machines in pubs/clubs (down 21%), which were directly impacted by temporary venue closures during the COVID-19 restrictions (see Notes in Figure 4).

During the 2001–02 to 2019–20 reporting period, poker machines in pubs/clubs accounted for 48–60% of the total gambling expenditure in Australia, followed by casino gambling (15–23%), wagering (13–22%), lotteries (8–12%), Keno (<2%) and other gaming (<1%).

**Figure 4: Total real gambling expenditure/net losses (\$ billion) in Australia, by product, 2001-02 to 2019-20**



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**Notes**

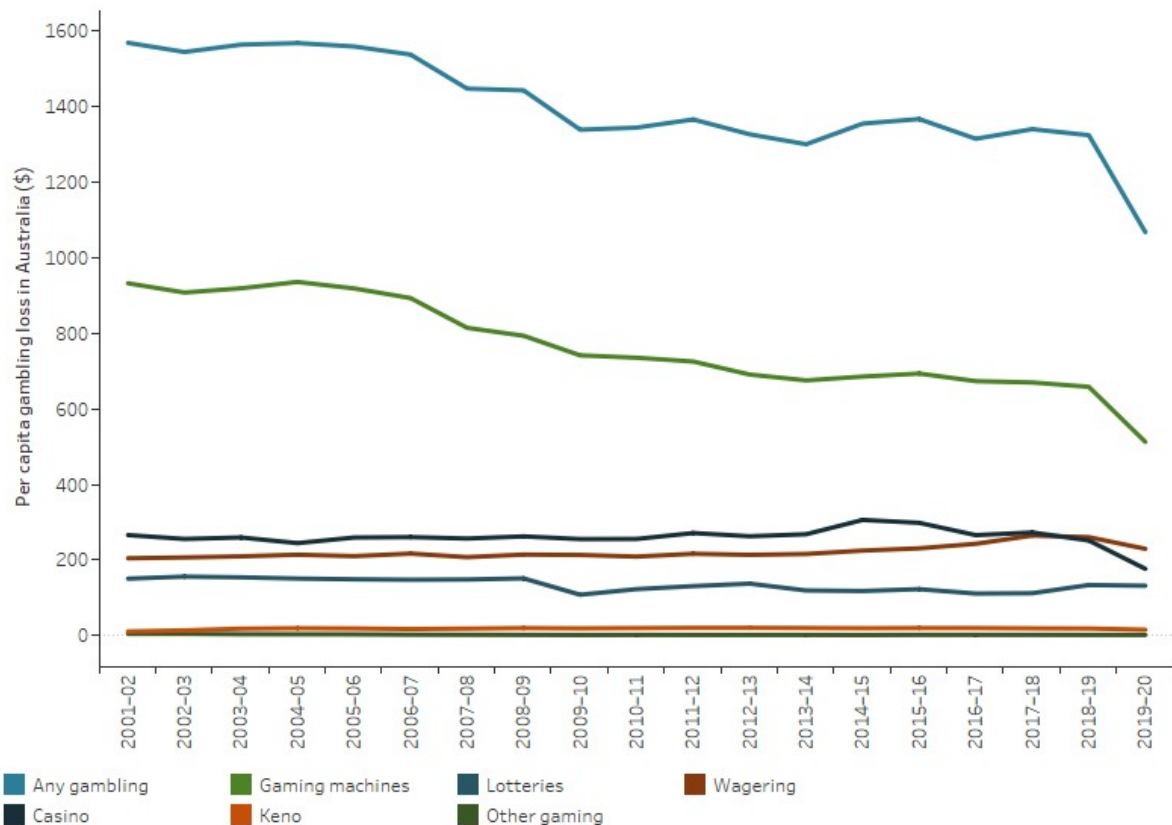
1. Expenditure data (that is, the net amount lost or the amount wagered less the amount won by people who gamble) should be read in conjunction with the explanatory notes in the Australian Gambling Statistics (AGS) report.
2. All jurisdictions, except Western Australia, have a state-wide gaming (poker) machine network operating in clubs and/or hotels. 'Gaming machines' does not include gaming/poker machine data from casinos.
3. 'Wagering' includes all legal forms of gambling on racing, sporting events and other approved events (e.g., elections). As a result of the introduction of point of consumption tax and subsequent changes to the way wagering data are collected, detailed breakdowns for 'Wagering' are no longer reported in AGS as of 2019-20 and represent a break in series for all states and territories. Wagering expenditure data in 2019-20 for the Northern Territory was estimated for residents only and is not comparable to previous years.
4. 'Casino' represents wagers at casinos and includes wagers on table games, gaming machines and keno systems.
5. 'Lotteries' includes lotteries, lotto, pools and instant scratchies. In June 2018, pools was withdrawn from the Australian lottery market.
6. 'Keno' is a game where a player wagers that their chosen numbers match any of the 20 numbers randomly selected from a group of 80 numbers via a computer system or a ball-draw device.

7. 'Other Gaming' includes Minor Gaming (Western Australia only - raffles, bingo, lucky envelopes and the like) and Interactive Gaming (Northern Territory only - gambling on activities conducted via the internet, excluding wagering in the form of racing and sports betting, keno and lotteries via the internet).
8. The 2019–20 financial year was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions and these data should be read in conjunction with the explanatory notes in the *Australian Gambling Statistics* report.

Source: QGSO 2022.

In 2019–20, per capita gambling expenditure/losses in Australia were estimated at around \$1,068, down from \$1,324 in 2018–19 (Figure 5). Over time, per capita expenditure on poker machines has been declining (although it still accounts for the most losses), while per capita expenditure on wagering (races, sports, other events) has been increasing.

**Figure 5: Per capita real gambling expenditure/net losses in Australia, by product, 2001–02 to 2019–20**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

#### Notes

1. Per capita calculations are undertaken by dividing the relevant data for a given financial year by the mean resident population aged 18 and over in the region during the relevant financial year.
2. Wagering expenditure data in 2019–20 for the Northern Territory was estimated for residents only and is not comparable to previous years.
3. The 2019–20 financial year was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions and these data should be read in conjunction with the explanatory notes in the *Australian Gambling Statistics* report.

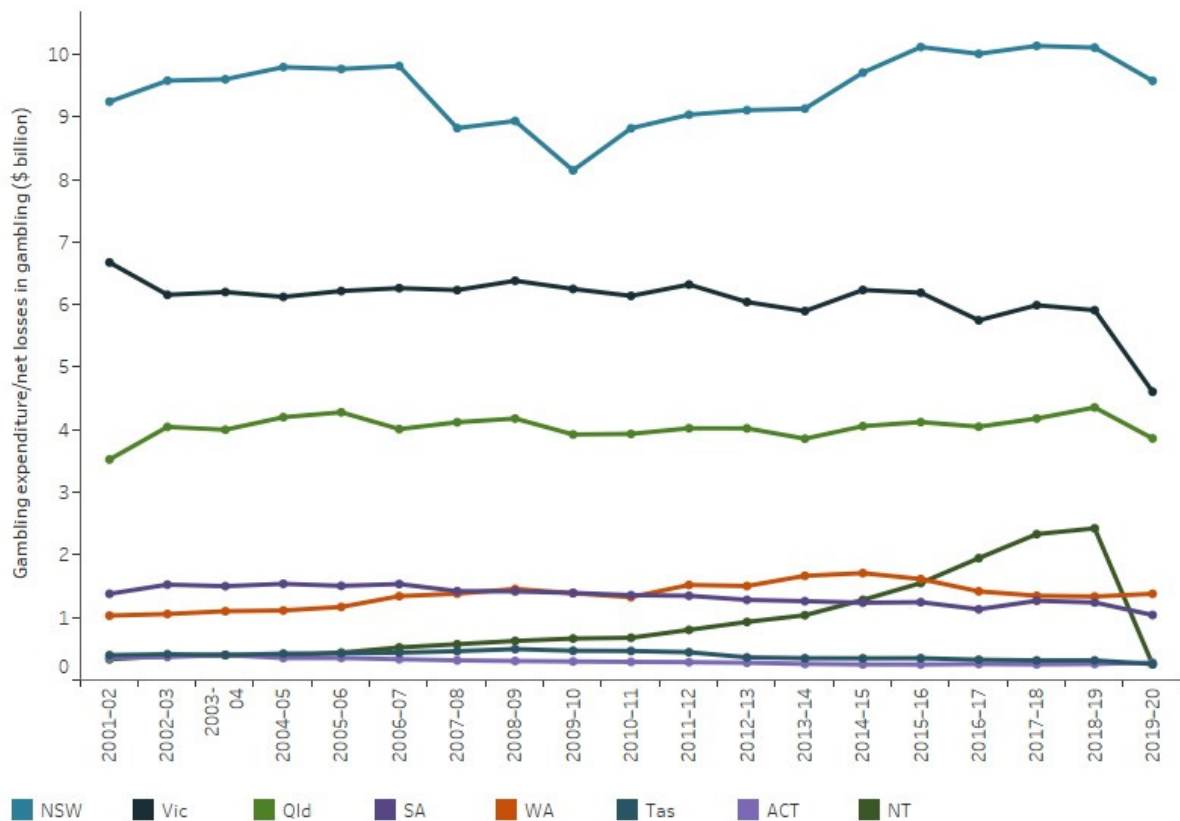
Source: QGSO 2022.

Total gambling expenditure/losses remain highest in the most populated states and territories in Australia (Figure 6). For example, estimates suggest that New South Wales recorded the highest expenditure (\$9.6 billion or \$1,508 per capita), followed by Victoria (\$4.6 billion or \$882 per capita), and Queensland (\$3.9 billion or \$977 per capita).

Availability of gambling, when measured in total number of poker machines, for example, is also highest in these states:

- New South Wales (91,675 machines; equivalent to around 48% of Australia's machines)
- Queensland (44,918; 24%)
- Victoria (29,404; 15%).

**Figure 6: Total real gambling expenditure/net losses (\$ billion), by state and territory, 2001-02 to 2019-20**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

#### Notes

1. Caution should be used when comparing data between states and territories as each jurisdiction has its own data collection systems, processes and reporting methods. Gambling regulation also differs across jurisdictions; for example, most wagering providers in Australia are registered in the Northern Territory and this accounts for the growing proportion of national expenditure in that jurisdiction up until 2018-19. The wagering expenditure data in 2019-20 for the Northern Territory was estimated for residents only and is not comparable to previous years.
2. There have been changes in point of consumption (POC) tax for wagering by state/territory. The Northern Territory is the only jurisdiction not to include POC tax and the 2019-20 data is not able to be compared to previous years' data.
3. Figures may be incomplete for any period or jurisdiction due to unavailable expenditure data.

4. The data for each individual state/territory include expenditure generated by residents of that state/territory as well as by interstate and overseas visitors.
5. The 2019–20 financial year was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions and these data should be read in conjunction with the explanatory notes in the *Australian Gambling Statistics* report.

Source: QGSO 2022.

## Gambling-related harm

### Measuring gambling-related harm among people who gamble

Gambling-related harm is commonly assessed via the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI). The PGSI provides a measure of at-risk gambling behaviour during the previous 12-month period.

It consists of 9 items (questions), such as 'have you bet more than you could really afford to lose?', with response options being never (0), sometimes (1), most of the time (2) and almost always (3).

Scores are summed for a total between 0 and 27.

Respondents are grouped into 4 categories based on their scores:

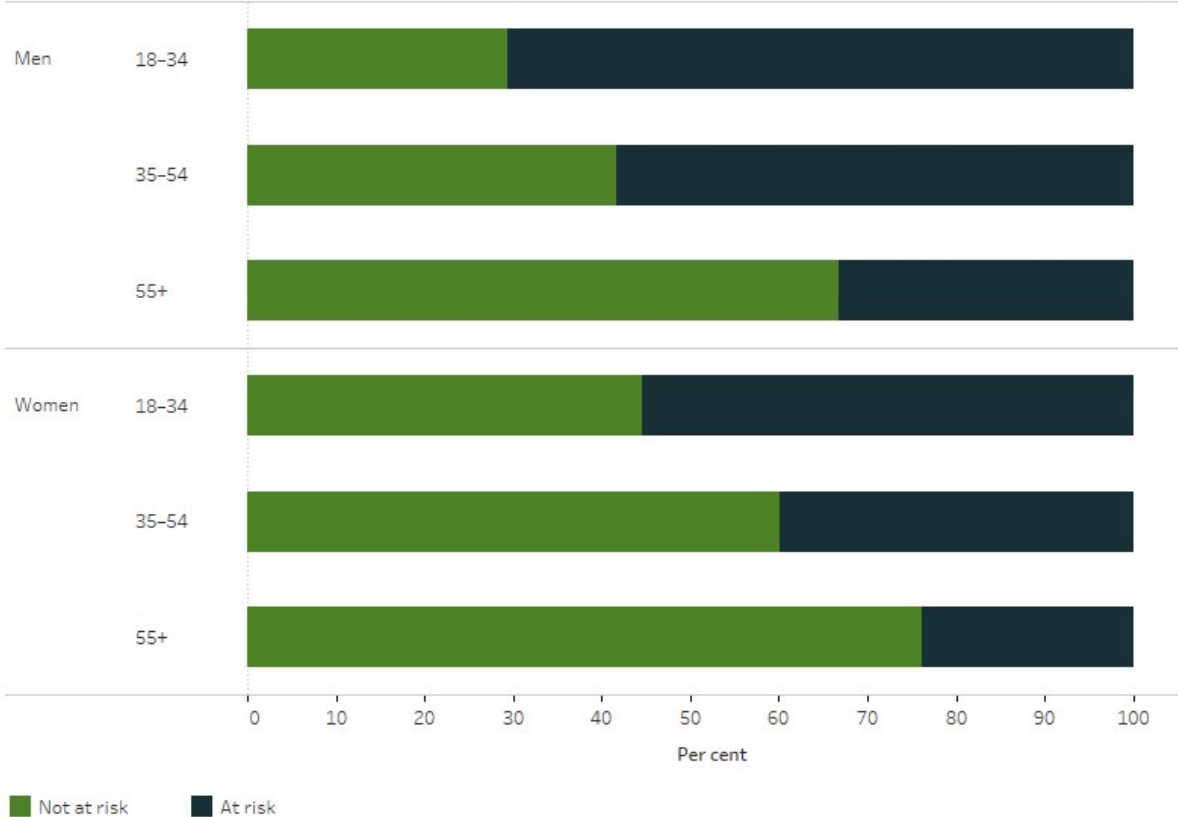
- non-'problem'/non-risk gambling (0)
- low-risk gambling (1–2)
- moderate-risk gambling (3–7)
- 'problem'/high-risk gambling (8–27).

Respondents scoring 1+ may be classified as being at some risk of, or already experiencing, gambling-related harm (Ferris and Wynne 2001).

Research conducted in 2022 found that almost half (46%) of Australians aged 18 and over who gambled would be classified as being at-risk of, or already experiencing, gambling harm (low, moderate, or high-risk PGSI categories combined).

Differences were observed by gender and age group, with a greater proportion of men who gambled being classified as at-risk of harm (53% for men and 38% for women). At-risk gambling was highest in 18–34-year-olds among both men (71%) and women (56%) (AGRC 2023; Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Levels of at-risk gambling among Australian adults who gamble, by age and gender, 2022**



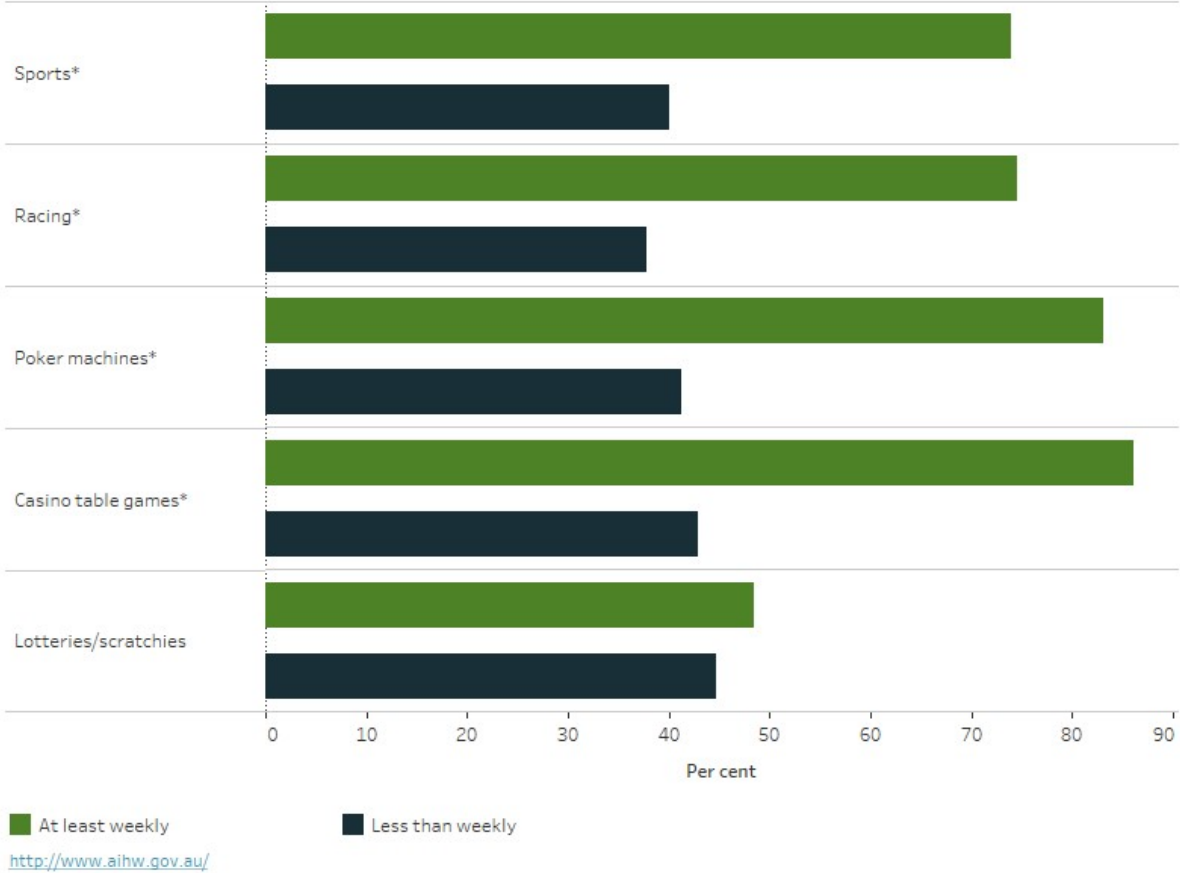
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Note: Sample analysed consisted of n=1,282 Australian residents aged 18 years and over who had gambled in the past 12 months.

Source: Community Attitudes Survey (Australian Gambling Research Centre 2023).

Adults (aged 18 and over) who engaged in regular (at least weekly) gambling on sports, racing, poker machines and casino tables games were significantly more likely to be classified as being at-risk of harm than those gambling less than weekly (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: At-risk gambling among Australian adults who gamble, by product and frequency (less than weekly, at least weekly), 2022**



**Notes**

1. Sample analysed consisted of n=1,287 Australian residents aged 18 years and over who had gambled in the past 12 months.
2. \*Statistical difference between groups is significant at the p<.05 level.

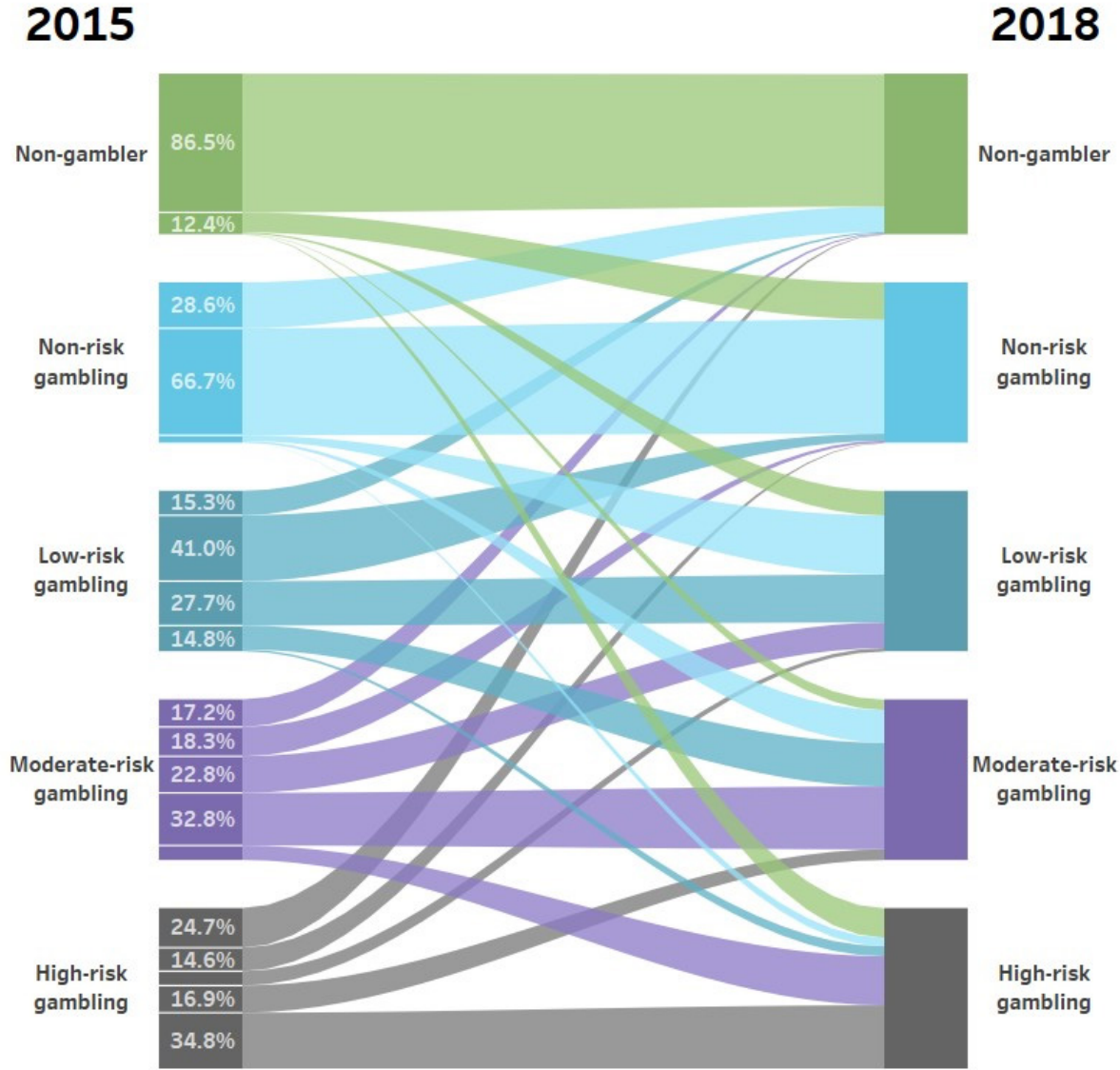
Source: Community Attitudes Survey (Australian Gambling Research Centre 2023).

Longitudinal data from the nationally representative [Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia](#) (HILDA) Survey highlights how an individual’s at-risk gambling behaviour and experience of harm can change over time. For example, analysis of PGSI data from Wave 15 (in 2015) and Wave 18 (in 2018) found that:

- around 1 in 3 participants (35%) who were classified in the high-risk category in 2015 remained at this level 3 years later
- one-quarter (25%) who were classified in the high-risk category had ceased gambling and around 40% decreased their level of at-risk gambling
- around 16% who were categorised as low-risk gambling in 2015 gambled at more harmful levels 3 years later (Figure 9).



**Figure 9: Changes in at-risk gambling among Australian adults who gamble, 2015 and 2018**



<https://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. Only the respondents who answered all 9 PGSI items in Wave 15 and 18 (n = 12,156) are included in the estimation. Sample sizes by PGSI group: non-gambler (n = 7,234); non-risk gambling (n = 4,153); low-risk gambling (n = 412); moderate-risk gambling (n = 268); high-risk gambling (n = 89).
2. Estimations use the SCQ weighting values provided in the HILDA survey dataset.
3. Guide to highlighted cells in table: green = from 2015 to 2018 at-risk level decreased; yellow = from 2015 to 2018 at-risk level stayed the same; orange = from 2015 to 2018 at-risk level increased.

Sources: HILDA Wave 15 2015, HILDA Wave 18 2018. AIFS' calculation.

**Types of gambling-related harm**

Gambling-related problems and harm can be experienced on a spectrum, ranging from lower-level negative experiences or general harms (such as reduced performance due to

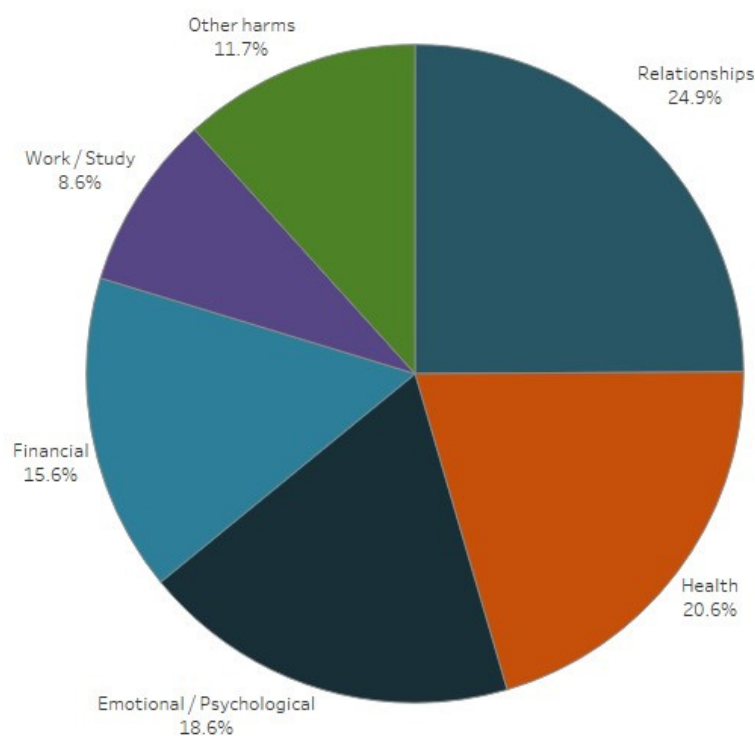


tiredness or distraction, relationship conflict, impacts on health and wellbeing and erosion of savings) to crisis harms (where immediate support is needed) and legacy harms (occurring sometime after gambling has ceased) (see glossary).

Browne and colleagues (2016) developed a conceptual framework for gambling-related harm that comprises 7 main domains: financial, relationships, emotional/psychological, decrements to health, reduced performance at work/study, and cultural harm and criminal activities (combined below as 'other harms').

Estimates of the distribution of harm across these domains are presented in Figure 10. Harms to relationships (25%), health (21%), and emotional/psychological wellbeing (19%) accounted for the greatest share of gambling-related harm.

**Figure 10: Distribution of gambling-related harm by domain**



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## **Gambling and its impact on others**

In recent years, it has been increasingly recognised that gambling-related harms affect not only people who gamble, but also their families, friends, and the wider community (see, for example, Browne et al. 2016, Dowling 2014, Goodwin et al. 2017, Hing et al. 2020, Langham et al. 2016, and Wardle et al. 2018).

Research conducted by Goodwin and colleagues (2017) examined how many people (on average) could be negatively affected by someone else's at-risk gambling. The research found that a person experiencing problem gambling can affect up to 6 other people around them, moderate-risk gambling up to 3 others, and low-risk gambling up to one

other. Close family members, including spouses and children, were most often identified as the people impacted by others' gambling problems (Goodwin et al. 2017).

The National Telephone Survey of the [2019 Interactive Gambling Study](#) asked a representative sample of Australian adults whether they had been personally and negatively affected by another person's gambling in the past 12 months (Hing et al. 2021). Overall, 6.0% reported being harmed by someone else's gambling. Those most commonly affected were family members (including spouses/partners, other relatives, siblings, former spouse/partners), friends, and work colleagues. The most common harms experienced due to another person's gambling were feeling angry, distressed or hopeless about their gambling, and experiencing greater tension and conflict in their relationships. Reduction of available spending money or savings, loss of sleep and less enjoyment from time spent with people they care about were also commonly reported.

## Gambling-related help seeking

State and territory prevalence studies suggest that a very small proportion of people seek help for gambling-related harms. For example, the most recent New South Wales gambling survey found that just under one per cent (0.9%) of people who gamble had sought help for harms related to their gambling in the past 12 months.

Estimates of help seeking in other states and territories were similar: 1.0% in Tasmania; 1.5% in the Northern Territory and 2% in the Australian Capital Territory (Browne et al. 2019; Menzies School of Health Research 2019; O'Neil et al. 2021; Paterson et al. 2019). Among those who did seek help, the strategies used included talking with friends or family and accessing services such as Gambling Helplines.

### **Support services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:**

Gambling Help: 1800 858 858, [www.gamblinghelponline.org.au](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au)

Lifeline: 13 11 14, [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

## Emerging gambling trends

The National Gambling Trends Study was developed to improve understanding of current and emerging trends in gambling and related harm in Australia, and areas for future policy and practice focus. The study includes surveys of people who gamble regularly (at least fortnightly) on land-based pokies and/or online on sports or wagering, and interviews with key experts in gambling policy, regulation, treatment, and consumer advocacy.

In 2022 participants described a range of emerging trends in gambling that they had observed, including (AGRC 2023):

- an increase in exposure to gambling marketing, including advertising (for example, television, social media), promotions and incentives (for example, multi-bets, bonus bets, cash back offers, bet with mates), and sponsorships (for example, promotion of sports, by celebrities or athletes)

- an increase in online gambling and concern about the potential harms due to factors such as the widespread availability and ease of access, new onshore and offshore gambling operators and products (for wagering and online pokies/casino products), and limited consumer protections or monitoring of people who might be at risk of harm
- increased spending on poker machines post-COVID-19 restrictions and concern about the widespread availability of pokies in the community and the increased 'addictiveness' of the machines with offers such as linked jackpots and increases in minimum machine denominations
- convergence of video gaming and gambling through products that are appealing to young people, including simulated gambling games, loot boxes, and in-game purchases
- an overall increase in gambling-related harm in Australia and concerns about the normalisation of gambling for youth, increases in youth gambling and risk of harm.

## Data gaps and opportunities for improved gambling monitoring

Globally, gambling has expanded at a rapid pace in recent decades with new technologies and emerging products, and related harms are an increasing concern. This page draws on available data to describe trends in gambling participation, expenditure and related harms in Australia; however, there are limitations to these data sources (including a lack of consistency in study design, sample selection and measurement of gambling consumption and harm). A continuing, cost-effective system for monitoring gambling consumption and related harms is needed.

The Australian Gambling Research Centre is conducting the National Gambling Trends Study to better inform and support evidence-based policy and practical responses. The national system will enable the collection of regular, comprehensive and standardised data – within and across Australian jurisdictions – on trends in gambling consumption among people who gamble, experience of related harms and help-seeking behaviours, and emerging issues warranting further in-depth investigation. See the [Gambling Trends Study](#) for further details.

Further investment in a national gambling prevalence study and longitudinal research programs would provide representative population-level data on the prevalence and patterns of different gambling behaviours in Australia, allowing changes in the extent and nature of gambling and related harms to be assessed over time and policy and practical initiatives to be evaluated.

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on gambling, please see:

- Australian Gambling Research Centre [Gambling participation, experience of harm and community views](#)
- Australian Institute of Family Studies [Gambling in Australia during COVID-19](#)

- Australian Institute of Family Studies [The link between video games and gambling](#)
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts [Harms associated with loot boxes, simulated gambling and other in-game purchases in video games](#)
- National Gambling Trends Study ([Gambling Trends Study](#)).

## Acknowledgements

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# Informal carers

Find the most recent version of this information at:  
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/informal-carers>

## On this page

Introduction  
How many people are informal carers?  
Income support payments  
Carers and care receivers  
Other support services  
Impact of COVID-19 on informal carers  
Where do I go for more information?

Informal carers are people who provide care to those who need it within the context of an existing relationship, such as a family member, a friend or a neighbour. The demands of the role often go beyond what would normally be expected of these relationships. People who need help may also receive formal services from government and other organisations.

The majority of informal carers are unpaid, although some may receive assistance through income support payments and other support services. For information on people who work as paid carers in the welfare sector, see [Welfare workforce](#).

Informal carers and informal volunteers may be involved in similar forms of unpaid work, however, while some informal carers care for people living in the same household, informal volunteers provide unpaid support to people who are not family and do not live in the same household. For information on people who volunteer their time to help others, see [Volunteers](#).

The type and level of informal care can vary considerably. This may relate to people's physical function, mental health, an end-of-life health condition, old age or disability. An informal carer might carry out many tasks that paid services would otherwise provide, to help someone with showering, eating or shopping, provide in-home supervision, provide transport for moving about in the community, or carry out medical or therapeutic care.

## How many people are informal carers?

According to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, in 2018 there were an estimated 2.65 million people (11% of Australians) who provided informal care in Australia (ABS 2019). More than one-third (35%, or an estimated 929,000 people) of all carers were aged 35–54 (average age was 51) (ABS 2019).

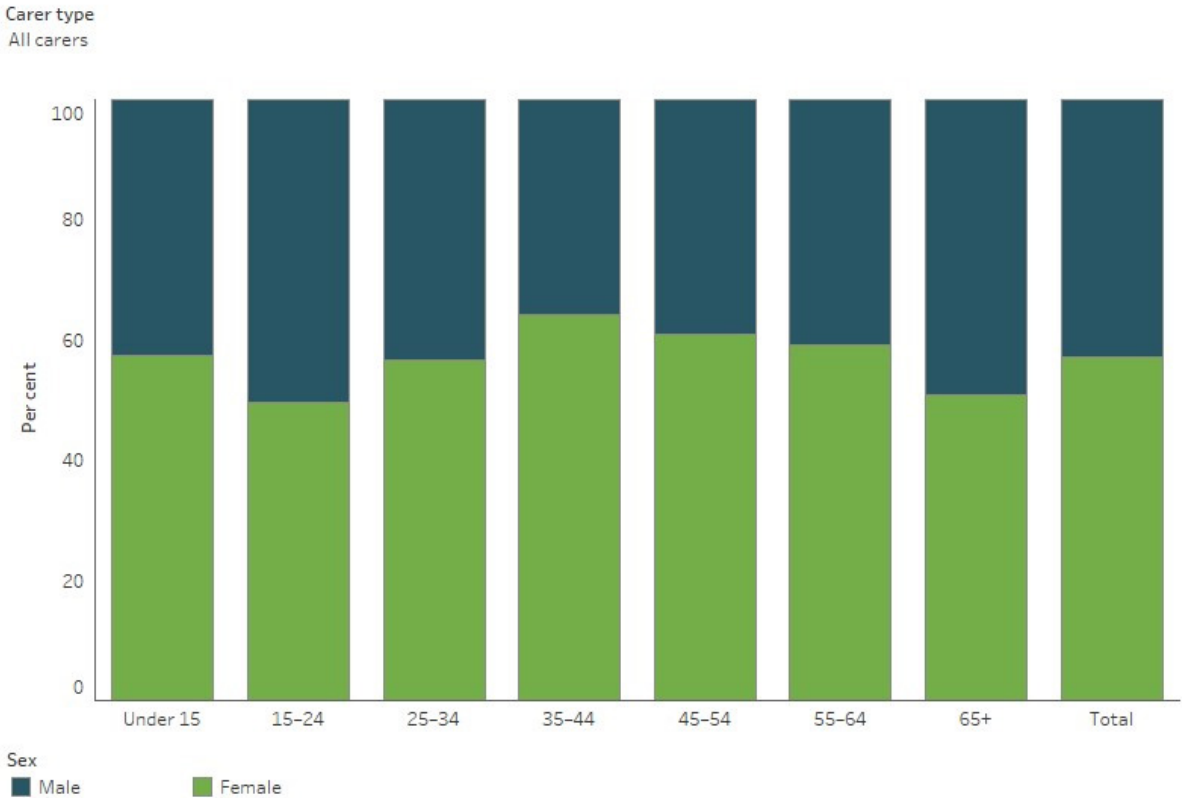


# 1 in 10 Australians are informal carers, the majority of whom do not receive government support payments.

In 2018, 1 in 3 carers (33% or an estimated 861,600 people) were primary carers, meaning they provided the most care to a person with disability in one or more core activities (self-care, mobility and communication) (ABS 2019). 'Other informal carers' are people who provided informal care to someone but were not their primary carer.

Primary carers are most commonly female (72%, compared with 50% of other informal carers in 2018). This varied further by age, with primary carers between the ages of 25 and 54 particularly likely to be female (81% of those aged 25–34, 82% of those aged 35–44, and 75% of those aged 45–54) (Figure 1).

**Figure 4: Proportion of all carers, primary carers and other carers, by sex and age group, 2018**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: ABS 2019.



## Income support payments

People who provide informal care are not paid for the care they provide, although some receive income support payments from the Australian Government. This is a smaller subgroup of all informal carers – people whose caring duties are significant enough to limit their ability to engage in paid work.

The means-tested Carer Payment is the primary income support payment (specific category of payments which serves as a person's primary source of income) for people providing constant care for someone who has considerable needs due to disability, old age or ill health. As at 30 December 2022, around 303,500 people aged 16 and over received Carer Payment (DSS 2022). The number of people receiving Carer Payment has grown rapidly over the last 20 years, increasing from 57,800 in June 2001. For more information on long-term trends, see [Carer Payment](#).

Of people receiving Carer Payment at 30 December 2022:

- 4 in 5 (80%) were being paid the full rate of payment (meaning their assets and income were both below relevant thresholds)
- almost half (49%) had been receiving the payment for 5 years or more
- almost half (47%) had been on some form of income support for 10 years or more (DSS 2022).

People may also, or instead, receive the Carer Allowance, which is a smaller supplementary payment for carers who provide daily care and attention at home for a person with disability, with a severe medical condition or who is frail aged. The Carer Allowance may be paid in addition to income support payments. At 30 December 2022, over 628,800 people received this allowance (DSS 2022).

The Carer Gateway is a program that provides free online and in-person services and support for unpaid carers. It was started in 2015 and was significantly expanded in 2019. Services currently available include peer support groups, online skills courses, counselling and access to emergency respite. In the 2021–22 Federal Budget the Government committed nearly \$800 million towards increasing supports available to informal and family carers of older Australians, namely by increasing access to respite services and home support services. This amount included \$103 million in additional funding for the Carer Gateway program. For more information see [Department of Social Services Supporting Carers, Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment](#).

## Carers and care receivers

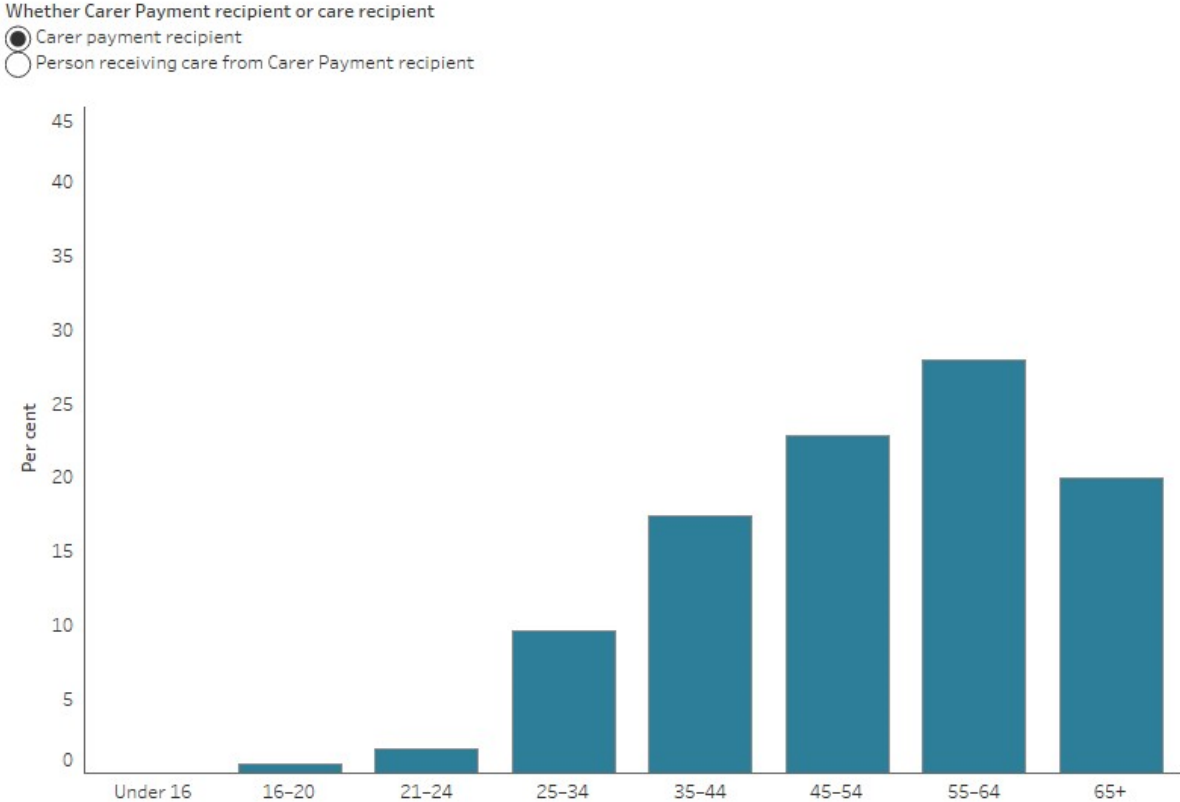
This section presents selected data for Carer Payment recipients (the carer) and the people they provided care to (the care receiver). As at 30 December 2022, there were over 300,400 care receivers (people receiving care who qualify their carer for Carer Payment) (DSS 2022).

### Age and sex

Around 7 in 10 Carer Payment recipients and care receivers were aged 45 and over (71% and 67%, respectively) (Figure 2). However, people receiving Carer Payment most

commonly provided care to a person aged 65 and over (42%), with 16% providing care to a person aged 55–64 and 15% providing care to a child aged under 16.

**Figure 5: Proportion of people receiving Carer Payment or care from Carer Payment recipients, by age group, December 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: DSS 2022.

While the majority of Carer Payment recipients were female (71%), more than half (55%) of people receiving care from a Carer Payment recipient were male. This varied with age: males made up 70% of care receivers aged under 16, compared with 49% of those aged 65 and over (DSS 2022).

### Medical conditions

The nature of care a person requires can affect the demands of the caring role. For example, someone with a physical disability may require a different kind of care compared with someone with a psychological disability.

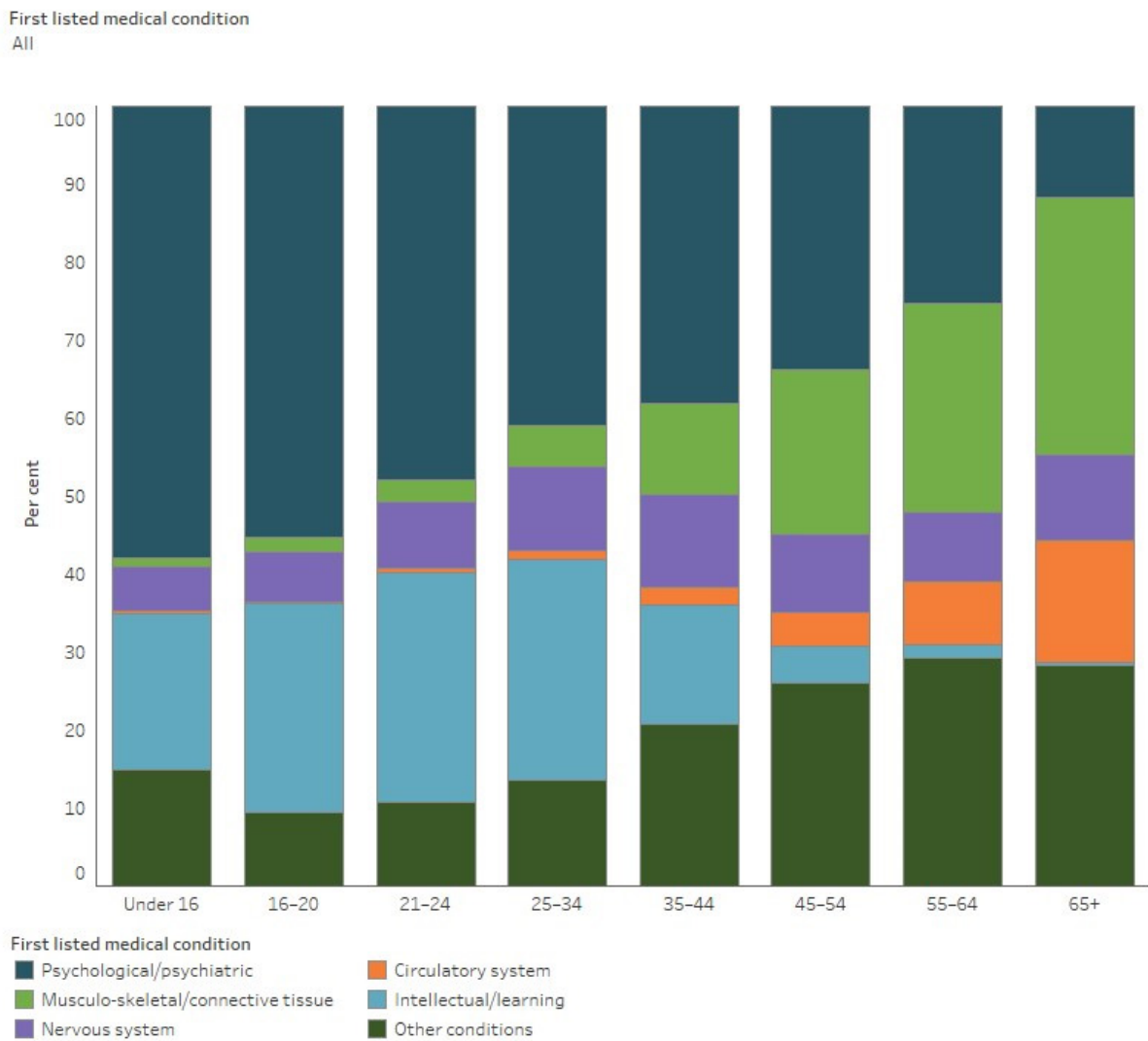
As at 30 December 2022, for people receiving care from a Carer Payment recipient, the most commonly recorded primary medical condition was psychological/psychiatric (29%) and the second most common category was musculoskeletal and connective tissue (21%). These conditions varied by age (DSS 2022), for example:

- Nearly 3 in 5 (58%) care receivers aged under 16 had a psychological/psychiatric primary medical condition. This proportion decreased with increasing age. For

example, 38% of care receivers aged 35–44 and only 12% of care receivers aged 65 and over had this as their primary medical condition.

- Musculoskeletal and connective tissue conditions increased with age. Only 1.1% of care receivers aged under 16 had this as their primary medical condition, with this proportion rising to 12% of those aged 35–44 and 33% among those aged 65 and over (Figure 3).

**Figure 6: Primary medical conditions for care receivers of Carer Payment recipients, by age group, December 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: DSS 2022.

## Other support services

In addition to income support payments, services are available to support carers in other ways. Examples include meeting their needs in study and work and supporting them and the person they care for through counselling, help at home, transport or

equipment. The [Outcomes Framework](#) for Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 lists support for informal carers of people with disabilities as a policy priority (DSS 2021).

Respite care is used by a range of people for different reasons. There may be barriers to accessing services such as cost, availability or lack of knowledge about availability. However, having someone else provide care for a few hours or a few days can sustain the informal carer in their caring responsibilities and support the caring relationship. In 2018, the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers found that 86% of carers reported no unmet need for respite care (ABS 2019).

## Respite care

Respite care services are offered under different programs. For example:

- The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) includes respite care, such as short-term accommodation and assistance, where it is considered a reasonable and necessary support.
- The Commonwealth Home Support Programme offers centre-based, cottage and flexible respite services. In 2021–22, these were used by 14,700 people who had an informal carer (representing 35% of all respite users).
- In residential aged care, respite stays of (generally) up to 63 days in a year are available. In 2021–22, there were 16,100 admissions to respite care for people who were living with family members (representing 19% of all respite admissions; noting that not all family members are informal carers).

## Impact of COVID-19 on informal carers

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a significant challenge for many Australians. The virus can have a more serious impact on older people, those who have pre-existing medical conditions and people with disability – groups of people who often rely on informal carers. To reduce the risk of infection, different levels of formal restrictions were in place throughout 2020, 2021 and early 2022, and these may have affected informal carers differently. For example, people who do not live with the person they look after may have had these arrangements disrupted. In addition, people may have voluntarily limited contact with either the person they care for, or with the wider community to reduce the risk of infecting the person they care for. For more information on the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations, see [Aged care](#), [Aged care for First Nations people](#) and [Specialised supports for people with disability](#).

According to the ABS Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey, in November 2020, around 1 in 6 (16%) Australians aged 18 and over reported being an informal carer (ABS 2020). Between March 2020 and November 2020:

- 1 in 4 (25%) of these informal carers had difficulty providing care or assistance because of restrictions put in place following COVID-19
- 22% reduced their recreational activities
- 22% changed their working arrangements (ABS 2020).

For more information on the impacts of COVID-19, see [ABS Household Impacts of COVID-19 survey](#).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on informal carers, see:

- ABS [Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers](#)
- [Carers Australia](#)
- Carer Gateway [Services and support](#)
- Department of Social Services [Supporting carers](#).

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# Specialised supports for people with disability

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/supporting-people-with-disability>

## On this page

Introduction

How many people have disability?

Do people with disability get the support they need?

What formal specialist disability services are provided?

Income support

Where do I go for more information?

Many Australians, including those with disability, use social support services intermittently throughout their life – for example, during periods of unemployment, relationship breakdown or in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Other Australians may need longer-term support to participate in all facets of life.

People with disability who need support may use specialist disability services (provided specifically for people with disability), mainstream services (such as education, healthcare and housing), and/or be supported by informal carers. They may also receive financial assistance (income support) to assist with everyday costs of living.

This page mainly focuses on one part of this interacting system of supports – specialist disability support services funded or provided by government. For information about the diverse experiences of people with disability when accessing mainstream services, see [People with disability in Australia](#) and 'Chapter 5 Use of mainstream services and outcomes achieved for people with disability' in [Australia's welfare 2023: data insights](#).

## What is disability?

Disability is an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions, all of which can interact with a person's health condition(s) and environmental and/or individual factors to hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (UN General Assembly 2007; WHO 2002).

## What is severe or profound disability?

A person is said to have severe or profound disability if they always (profound) or sometimes (severe) need help, have difficulty, or use aids or equipment with one or more core activities – self-care, mobility, and/or communication (ABS 2019a).

## Australia's Disability Strategy

[Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–31](#) (the Strategy) is Australia's national disability policy framework. It sets out a plan for continuing to improve the lives of people with disability in Australia over the 10 years to 2031. The Strategy was launched on 3 December 2021 and builds on its predecessor, the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020.

The Strategy covers all people with disability, irrespective of whether they need or use specialist disability services. It helps to protect, promote and realise the human rights of people with disability in line with Australia's commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Strategy's [Outcomes Framework](#) tracks, reports and measures the outcomes for people with disability across 7 outcome areas. For up-to-date information on how the Strategy is going, see [Reporting on Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–31](#).

## Sources of disability information

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) is the most detailed and comprehensive source of disability information in Australia. The latest available SDAC data are from SDAC 2018. Findings from SDAC 2022 are expected to become publicly available in 2024. Detailed information on the SDAC is available on the [ABS website](#).

Information on the use of specialised disability services can be found on the data reporting webpages for the [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(NDIS\)](#), [Disability Employment Services \(DES\)](#) and the [Disability Support Pension \(DSP\)](#).

A future source of information about people with disability is the [National Disability Data Asset](#). The National Disability Data Asset will bring together de-identified information from different government and non-government agencies about people with disability. The disability data asset went through 2 years of development and testing through a Pilot. The next phase of the asset is currently in development. For a summary of the pilot findings, see 'Chapter 5 Use of mainstream services and outcomes achieved for people with disability' in [Australia's welfare 2023: data insights](#).

A key initiative of the Australia's Disability Strategy is the [National Disability Research Partnership \(NDRP\)](#). NDRP will be instrumental in building the evidence base for the Strategy to help to improve outcomes for people with disability.

## How many people have disability?

In 2018 (according to the latest available data on disability prevalence), an estimated 4.4 million Australians, or 18% of the population, had some form of disability (ABS 2019a).

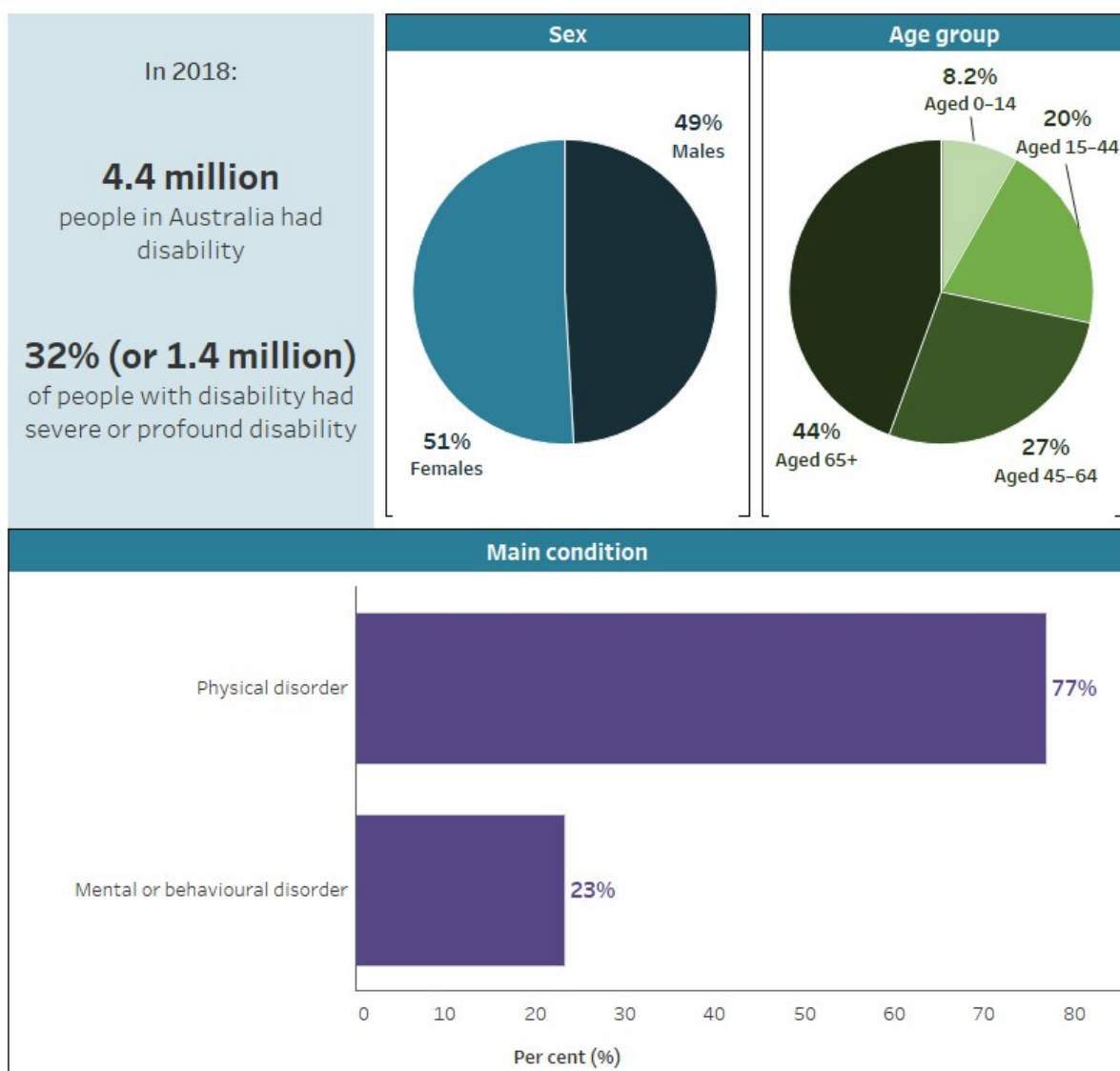
In 2018, of people with disability:

- 49% (or an estimated 2.1 million) were males and 51% (or an estimated 2.2 million) were females
- 8.2% were aged 14 or under, 20% were aged 15–44, 27% were aged 45–64, and 44% were aged 65 or over

- 77% had a physical disorder as their main condition (the condition causing them the most problems), and 23% had a mental or behavioural disorder as their main condition
- 32% (an estimated 1.4 million people, or 5.7% of the Australian population) had severe or profound disability (Figure 1; ABS 2019a).

The number of people with disability has increased since 2003 (4.0 million), however the prevalence of disability (proportion of the population who have disability) has been decreasing. In 2003, people with disability accounted for 20% of the Australian population (ABS 2019a).

**Figure 1: Profile of people with disability, 2018**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Numbers are rounded.

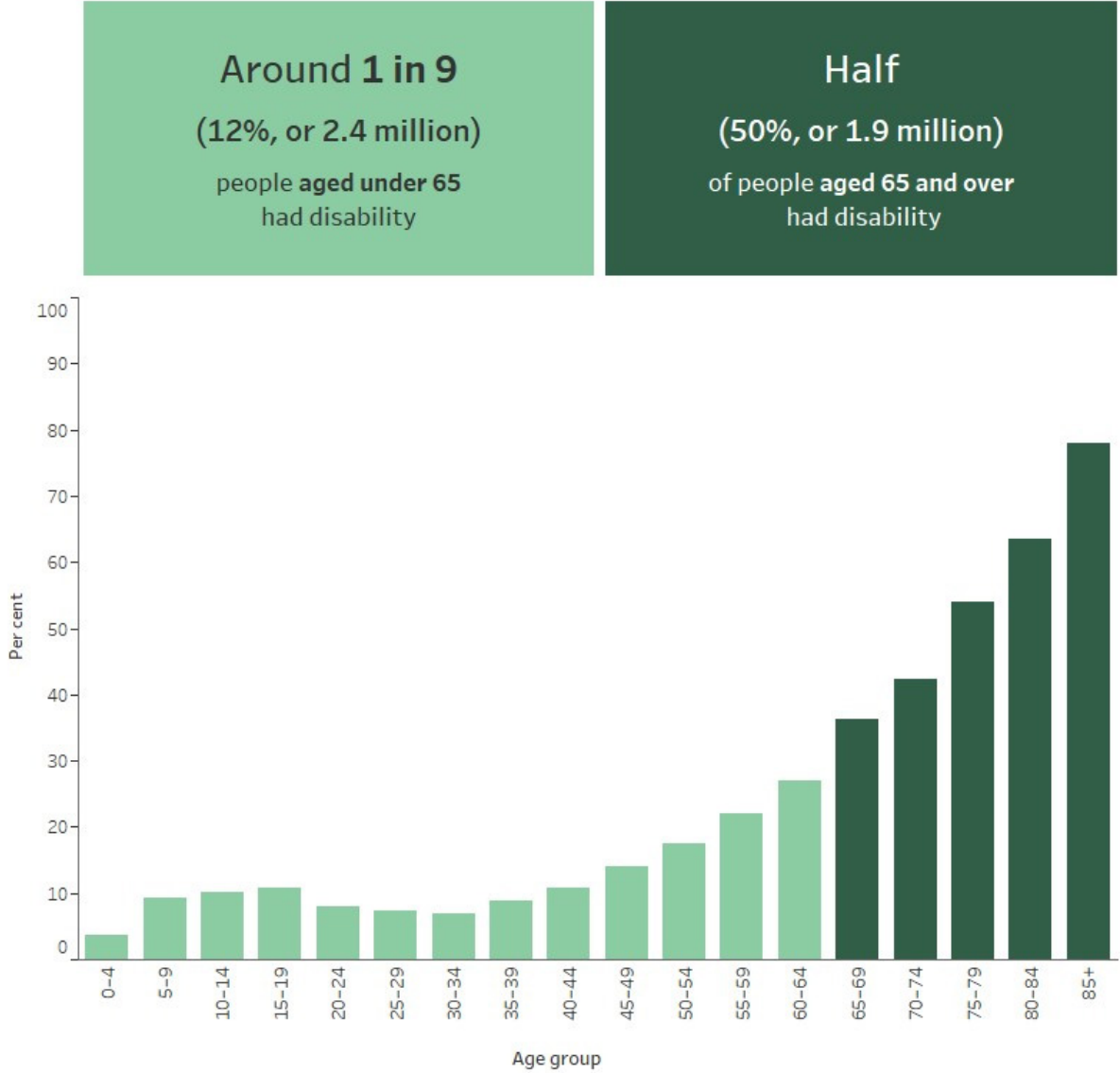
Source: ABS 2019a; AIHW 2022.



The prevalence of disability increases with age (Figure 2). Around 1 in 9 (12%) people aged under 65 have some level of disability, rising to 1 in 2 (50%) for those aged 65 and over (ABS 2019b). This means that the longer we live, the more likely we are to experience some form of disability.

Disability does not necessarily equate to poor health or illness. For more information about experiences of people with disability across various aspects of life see [People with disability in Australia](#).

**Figure 2: Proportion of people with disability in the population, by age group, 2018**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Numbers are rounded.

Source: ABS 2019b.

## Do people with disability get the support they need?

People with disability may require assistance with common everyday activities, such as showering or dressing, moving around, housework and gardening, or using transport. This includes help received, as well as help that may be needed but is not received. Assistance can be formal (provided by formal organisations or paid providers) or informal (provided by family, friends or neighbours). Not all people with disability require or use formal or informal assistance.

In 2018, around 60% of people with disability living in households (an estimated 2.5 million people) identified as needing help with at least one of 10 activities of daily living. The most common activities people needed help with were health care (30%), property maintenance (27%), and cognitive or emotional tasks (24%) (ABS 2019a).

In comparison, 40% of people with disability living in households said they needed assistance from formal providers (36% of those aged under 65 and 45% of those aged 65 and over) (ABS 2019b).

Of people who needed formal assistance with at least one activity, most (86%) had received some assistance from formal providers. The receipt of formal assistance among those who needed it was higher for those aged 65 and over (89%) than for those aged under 65 (82%) (AIHW 2022).

About 3 in 4 (73%) people with disability (aged 15 and over and living in households) who needed formal assistance were satisfied with the range of services available to assist with all activities they needed assistance for (where the level of satisfaction could be determined) (AIHW 2022). About 4 in 5 (82%) of those who received formal assistance in the last 6 months were satisfied with the quality of all services received (where the level of satisfaction could be determined) (AIHW 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic had some adverse impact on supports received by people with disability. For more information, see [Experiences of people with disability during COVID-19 pandemic](#) in [People with disability in Australia](#).

## What formal specialist disability services are provided?

Specialist disability services are now largely provided through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). One notable exception is the Disability Employment Services (DES) program administered by the Australian Government.

This section provides information about the NDIS and the DES program. It also outlines some of the other available support services for people with disability (both specialised and mainstream), including continuity of support programs for people with disability who were ineligible to transition across to the NDIS.

# National Disability Insurance Scheme

## What is the NDIS?

The NDIS provides funding to eligible people with disability to pay for supports and services they need, thus gaining more time with family and friends, greater independence, access to new skills, and an improved quality of life.

The NDIS is administered by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The NDIS is jointly funded and governed by the Australian, and state and territory governments (NDIA 2022a).

Participant choice and control are core features of the NDIS design. Each NDIS participant has an approved plan with an individually allocated budget based on their goals. This funding can be used by the participant to pay for supports and services they need.

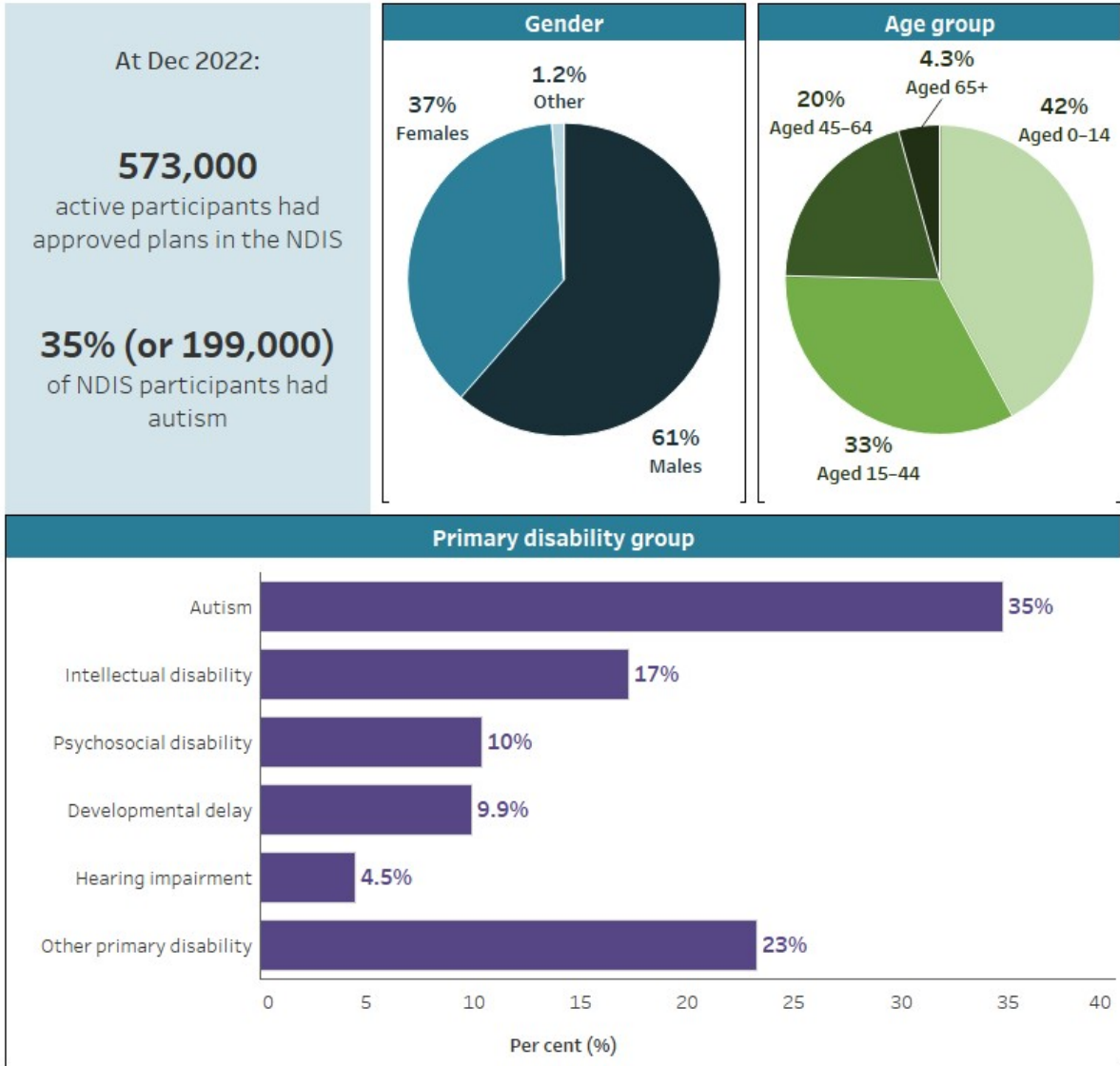
The NDIS provides reasonable and necessary supports to eligible Australians with a permanent (or likely to be permanent) and significant disability, who enter the scheme under the age of 65 years. The available supports include core supports to help with daily living activities, capacity building supports that help build skills and independence, and capital supports including assistive technology and home modifications (see [Supports and services funded by the NDIS](#)) (NDIA 2021).

The NDIS also provides supports through the early childhood approach to children younger than 7 with developmental delay or disability, as well as the children who do not fully meet the definition of developmental delay and have developmental concerns.

At 31 December 2022, the NDIS had more than 573,000 active participants with approved plans. Of these (Figure 3):

- 61% (around 352,000) were males and 37% (around 214,000) were females
- 42% (around 242,000) were aged 14 or under, 33% (around 190,000) were aged 15–44, 20% (around 116,000) were aged 45–64, and 4.3% (around 24,800) were aged 65 and over
- the top 5 primary disability groups were:
  - autism (35% or around 199,000 people)
  - intellectual disability, including Down syndrome (17%, 98,800 people)
  - psychosocial disability (10%, 59,500 people)
  - developmental delay (9.9%, 56,800 people)
  - hearing impairment (4.5%, 25,600 people)
- 7.4% of participants identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people
- 9.2% of participants identified as culturally and linguistically diverse (NDIA 2022b).

**Figure 3: Profile of NDIS participants, December 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Numbers are rounded.

Source: NDIA 2022b.

At 31 December 2022, there were around 92,400 children younger than 7 years (4.3% of the estimated resident population aged 0-6 as at June 2022 (ABS 2023)) with an approved NDIS plan developed as part of the early childhood approach. The early childhood approach is the way the NDIA supports children younger than 7 with developmental concerns, developmental delay or disability. In addition to those with an approved plan, 12,500 children were supported through early connections as part of the early childhood approach (NDIA 2022b). Early connections includes a program called early supports which is for children with developmental concerns who do not fully meet the definition of developmental delay and have developmental concerns, and works by connecting the children and their families with early childhood partners, local organisations chosen for their skills in early childhood intervention.

The NDIS regularly collects data about the ongoing experiences of participants, their families and carers during their time in the scheme, and reports on the [outcomes and goals](#) achieved (NDIA 2023).

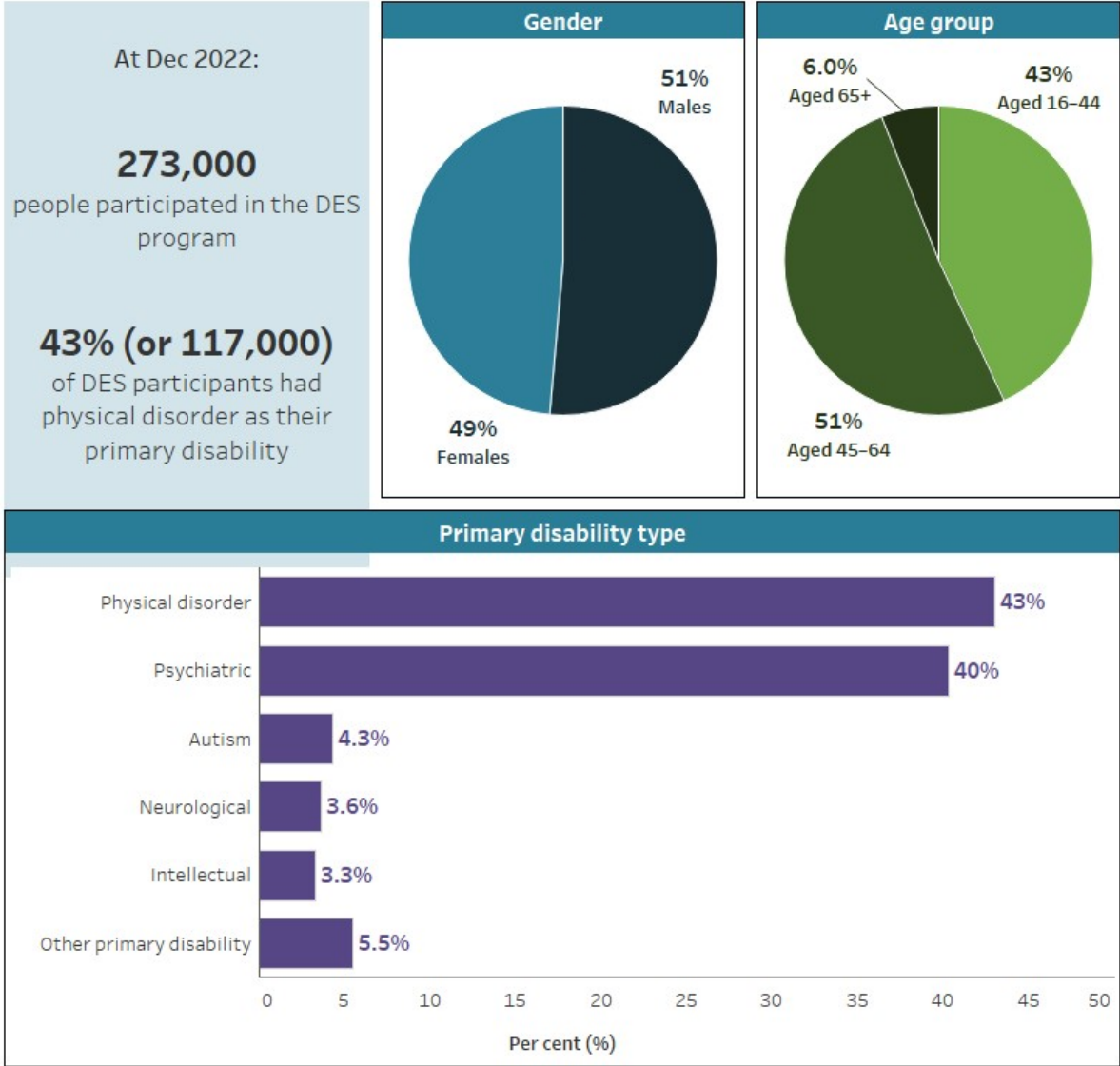
## **Disability Employment Services**

The Australian Government is responsible for managing DES.

At 31 December 2022, there were 273,000 participants in DES (DSS 2023a). Of these (Figure 4):

- 51% (or about 140,000) were males and 49% (about 133,000) were females
- 43% were aged 44 and under, 51% were aged 45–64, and 6.0% were aged 65 and over
- the top 5 primary disability types were physical disorder (43%), psychiatric (40%), autism (4.3%), neurological (3.6%), and intellectual (3.3%)
- 76% received JobSeeker Payment or Youth Allowance, 11% received Disability Support Pension (DSP), 0.8% were recipients of Parenting Payment (Single or Partnered), and 1.3% received other income support payments or allowances; the remaining 11% were not in receipt of any income support (DSS 2023a).

**Figure 4: Profile of DES participants, December 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Numbers are rounded.

Source: DSS 2023a.

During the 2021-22 financial year, DES achieved about 107,000 employment placements, a 6% increase from 2020-21 (when the number of placements was around 102,000). Over the same period, the number of 26-week sustained employment outcomes increased by 51%, from 32,000 to 48,000. This reflected improving economic and labour market conditions during 2021-22, especially in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic (DSS 2022).

**How are DES outcomes measured?**

DES outcomes data show to what extent people with disability are supported by DES providers to find and maintain employment. The following outcomes are commonly reported:

- employment placements: the number of DES employment (and, in some cases, education) placements where a person with disability has been placed in a job appropriate to their work capacity
- sustained employment outcomes: the number of placements which are sustained for a period of at least 13, 26, and 52 weeks (referred to as 13-, 26-, and 52-week outcomes) (DSS 2022).

The reported numbers refer to claims rather than people, since one person can have multiple placements or achieve multiple sustained employment outcomes within a reporting period.

[Australia's Disability Strategy Outcomes Framework website](#) reports on the [DES 52-week outcome data](#) as one of the measures the Strategy is keeping track of to ensure things are improving for people with disability.

## Other specialised and mainstream supports

In Australia, governments also provide other services (specialised and mainstream) that support people with disability, including:

- the [Disability Gateway](#), an Australian Government initiative aiming to assist all people with disability, their families and carers to locate and access services across Australia
- the [National Disability Advocacy Program](#), which provides people with disability with access to effective disability advocacy that promotes, protects and ensures their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights
- the [Information, Linkages and Capacity Building](#) program, which provides funding to deliver community projects that benefit all people with disability, their carers and families
- [JobAccess](#), a national hub for workplace and employment information for people with disability, employers and service providers
- the [Australian Disability Parking Scheme](#), which helps eligible people park nearer to their destination
- [Community Mental Health](#) programs, which provide assistance to people with mental illness and their families and carers to manage the impacts of mental illness on their lives and improve their overall wellbeing
- [My Aged Care](#) website and contact centre, providing Australians aged 65 years and over (50 years or older for First Nations people), their families and carers an entry point to Australian Government-funded aged care services for the general population
- the [Disability Support for Older Australians Program](#) (which replaced the Continuity of Support Programme), providing support to people with disability aged 65 years and over (50 years or older for First Nations people), who were receiving state-managed specialist disability services but were not eligible for the NDIS.

A more complete listing of services and programs for people with disability is available on the [Department of Social Services \(DSS\) website](#).

## Income support

Australia's social security system, administered by Services Australia, aims to support people who cannot, or cannot fully, support themselves financially. In general, people with disability, especially those with severe or profound disability, are more likely than people without disability to receive their income primarily from a government pension, benefit or allowance (see [People with disability in Australia](#) for more information).

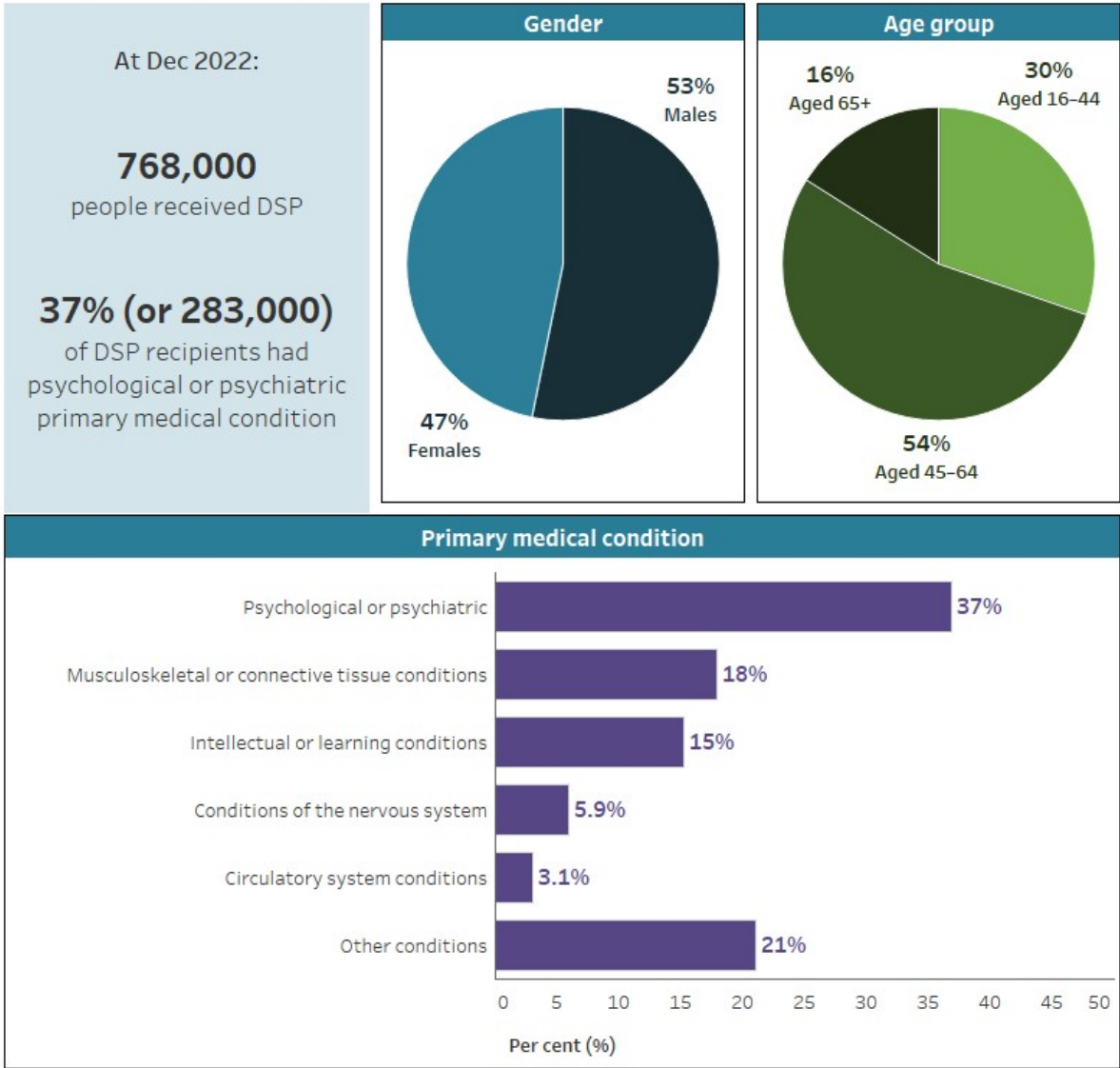
DSP is the primary income support payment for people aged 16 and up to Age Pension age with disability who have a reduced capacity to work because of their impairment (see [Disability Support Pension](#) for more information).

At December 2022, 768,000 adults aged 16 and over received DSP (DSS 2023b). Of these (Figure 5):

- 53% (or around 408,000 recipients) were males and 47% (or around 359,000) were females
- 30% were aged 16–44, 54% were aged 45–64, and 16% were aged 65 and over
- the most prevalent primary medical conditions (conditions associated with the highest level of impairment for the recipient) were:
  - psychological or psychiatric (37% of all DSP recipients)
  - musculoskeletal or connective tissue conditions (18% of recipients)
  - intellectual or learning conditions (15%)
  - conditions of the nervous system (5.9%)
  - circulatory system conditions (3.1%)
  - other conditions (21% of all DSP recipients) (DSS 2023b).



**Figure 5: Profile of DSP recipients, December 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Numbers are rounded.

Source: DSS 2023b.

Some people with disability may be ineligible to receive DSP due to the nature of their impairment, work capacity, age, or other factors. Depending on their circumstances, people with disability may receive other income support payments, such as Age Pension, Carer Payment, Parenting Payment, JobSeeker Payment, and others (see [Income and income support](#) for more information on these payments).

During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Australian Government introduced a range of measures to support individuals and businesses. These included the Coronavirus Supplement (a fortnightly payment boost for recipients of some income support payments) and JobKeeper Payment (a wage subsidy and/or income transfer program administered by the Australian Taxation Office for employees of businesses significantly affected by the pandemic). DSP recipients were not eligible for the Coronavirus Supplement.

According to ABS survey data, relatively few people with disability received Coronavirus Supplement or JobKeeper Payment (ABS 2021). This could be due to the payments' eligibility criteria – people with disability are less likely to be employed than people without disability, which would prevent them being eligible for the JobKeeper payment, and, as mentioned above, DSP recipients were not eligible for the Coronavirus Supplement. In March 2021:

- 12% of adults with disability (aged 18 and over) reported receiving the Coronavirus Supplement compared with 8.0% of those without disability
- 2.6% of adults with disability reported receiving the JobKeeper Payment compared with 5.2% of adults without disability (ABS 2021).

Both the Coronavirus Supplement and JobKeeper Payment stopped at the end of March 2021.

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information about people with disability, see:

- ABS [Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers](#)
- [People with disability in Australia](#)
- Australia's Disability Strategy Outcomes Framework [website](#) and [first annual report](#).

For more information on NDIS participants and recipients of specialised disability services, see:

- NDIA [Quarterly reports](#)
- DSS [Disability Employment Services Monthly Data](#)
- DSS [Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics](#).

Visit [Disability](#) and [Disability services](#) for more on this topic.

## References

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# Volunteers

Find the most recent version of this information at:  
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/volunteers>

## On this page

Introduction  
Who volunteers?  
How often and where do people volunteer?  
Informal volunteering  
[Trends in volunteering](#)  
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Volunteers substantially benefit their communities through providing important services to others. They may also bring new insights to the organisations or groups for which they volunteer, increase efficiencies and improve effectiveness.

Volunteering broadens people's networks and professional skills, and serves as an indicator of wellbeing and social cohesion. It also has links to the economic and health status of a nation. By volunteering, people can become more outwardly focused, which may strengthen social interactions or even reduce anxiety (Department of Health 2019).

People can volunteer formally through an organisation ('volunteering'), or informally through the provision of unpaid work and support to non-household members, excluding family members ('informal volunteering'). Informal volunteers and informal carers may be involved in similar forms of unpaid work, however, while some informal carers care for people living in the same household, informal volunteers provide unpaid support to people who are not family and do not live in the same household. For more information, see [Informal carers](#).

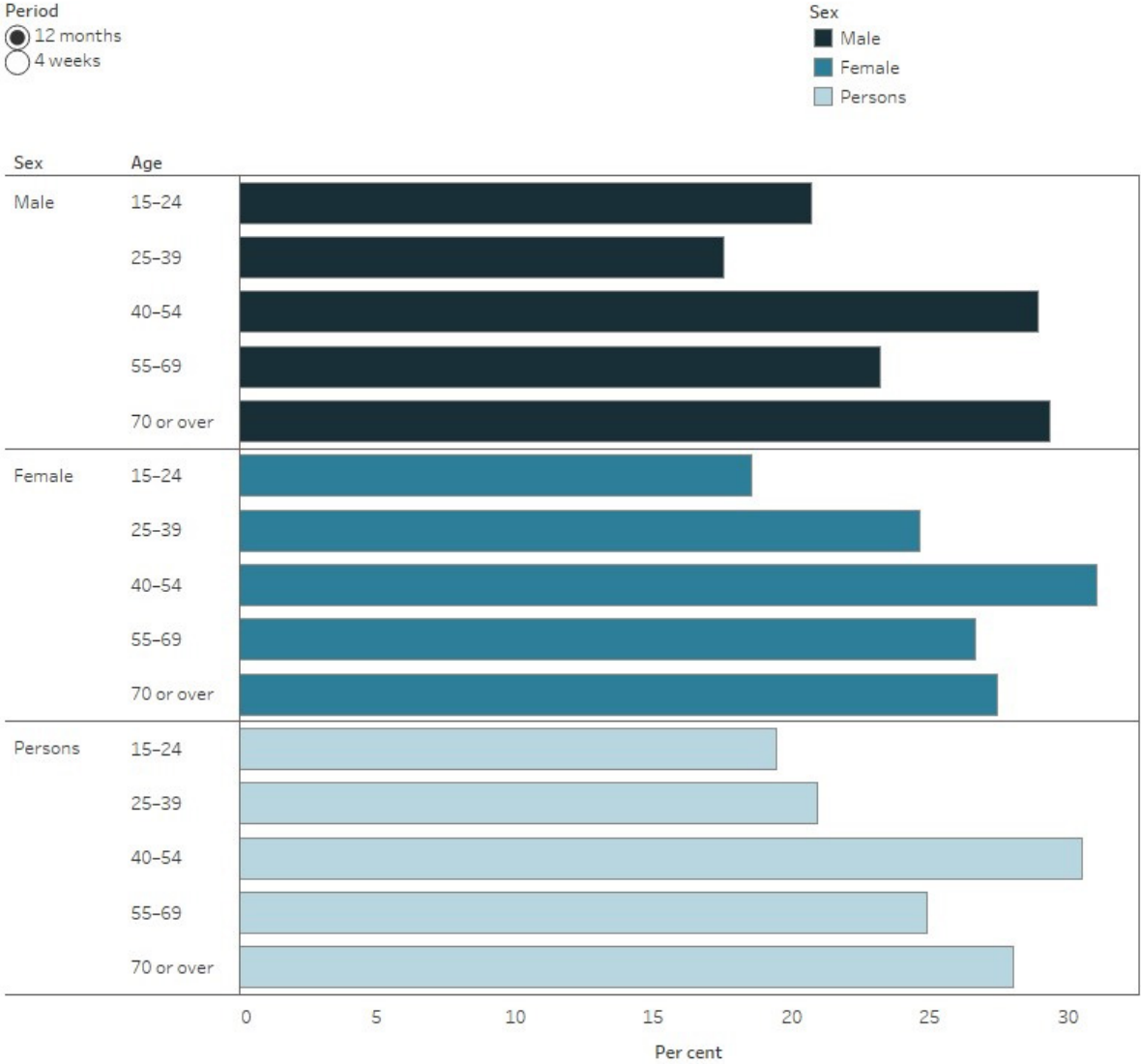
Data about people in Australia who volunteer are primarily drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2020 General Social Survey (GSS). In this survey, volunteering is defined as providing unpaid help (time, service or skills) to an organisation or group, excluding work done overseas (ABS 2018).

**1 in 4 (25%) Australians aged 15 and over participated in unpaid voluntary work through an organisation or group in 2020 – lower than 30% in 2019.**

## Who volunteers?

In 2020, just over an estimated 5 million people participated in voluntary work through an organisation. The proportion of females who participated in voluntary work was slightly higher than males (26% and 23%, respectively), and the proportion of people volunteering fluctuated with age. People aged 40–54 were most likely to have participated in unpaid voluntary work through an organisation (31%) followed by people aged 70 and over (28%) (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Proportion of people aged 15 and over who undertook voluntary work (last 12 months) or informal voluntary work (last 4 weeks), by age and sex, 2020**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: ABS 2021a.

The proportion of people who participated in voluntary work in 2020 was higher among people who had attained a Bachelor degree or above or an Advanced diploma (31% and 25%, respectively), compared with those whose highest qualification was a primary or secondary school qualification (18%).

Couples with children were more likely to volunteer than other family compositions, such as single individuals (30% compared with 22%).

# How often and where do people volunteer?

**Volunteers contributed an estimated 489.5 million hours to the community in the last 12 months prior to the GSS survey in 2020.**

Volunteers in Australia are generous with their time. In 2020, 34% of people who volunteered in the previous 12 months had contributed 21 to 99 hours during that period, and 28% contributed 100 or more hours. Just over 2 in 5 (42%) volunteers had been volunteering for more than 10 years. A similar proportion of males and females had been volunteering for that period of time (43% and 41%, respectively).

In 2020, two-thirds (66%) of people who volunteered did so for one organisation, 23% for 2 organisations and 10% for 3 or more. The most common types of organisations were:

- sports and recreation (31%)
- religious groups (23%)
- education and training (19%)
- community/ethnic groups (16%).

The most common reason for people's first involvement with unpaid voluntary work was that they knew someone involved or were asked to volunteer.

## Informal volunteering

In addition to voluntary work for organisations, people may participate in informal volunteering, which is the provision of unpaid work and support to non-household members, excluding family members. Examples of informal volunteering include providing transport or running errands, unpaid childcare for a friend or neighbour, and providing emotional support. Almost one-third (32%) of the Australian population aged 15 and over participated in informal volunteering in the 4 weeks prior to the 2020 GSS.

Unpaid work undertaken for anyone within a person's household falls outside the scope of informal volunteering and is referred to as informal caring (ABS 2018). Formal volunteering is distinct from informal caring, but informal volunteering can be closely related to informal caring. For more information on informal caring, see [Informal carers](#).

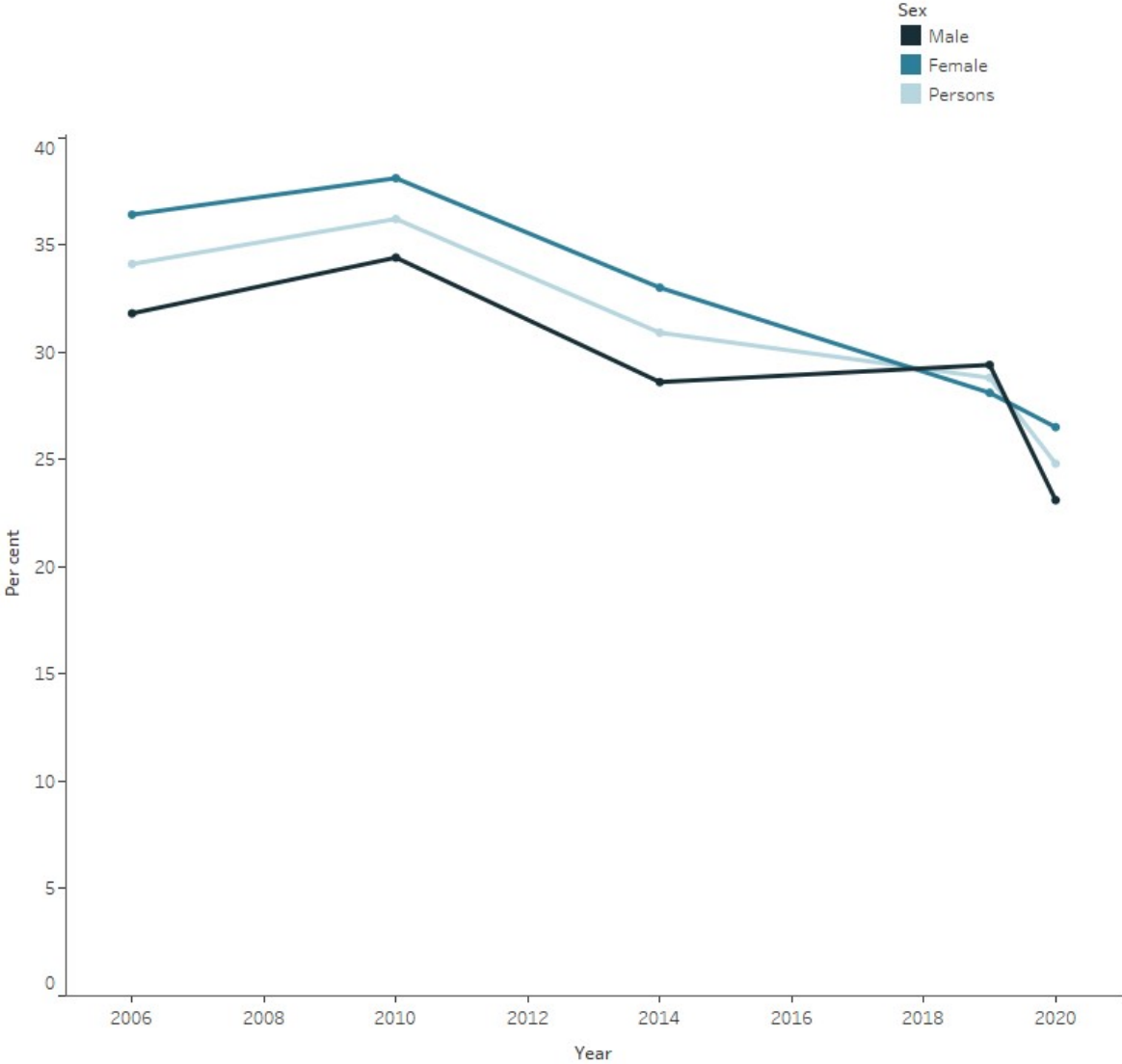
## Trends in volunteering

Overall, the proportion of Australians who participate in voluntary work has fluctuated over time.

More than 1 in 3 people aged 18 and over reported undertaking unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in the last 12 months in 2006 and 2010 (34% and 36%, respectively). This progressively decreased in subsequent years with 31% of people volunteering in 2014, 29% in 2019 and 25% in 2020 (Figure 2), this decline in voluntary work may have been affected by COVID-19 in recent years, see [Impact of COVID-19 on](#)

volunteers. In contrast, informal volunteering rates – only measured since 2019 – remained steady. One-third (33%) of people aged 15 and over participated in informal volunteering in the 4 weeks prior to the survey in 2019, compared with 32% in 2020.

**Figure 2: Proportion of people aged 18 and over who undertook voluntary work in the last 12 months, by sex, 2006 to 2020**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: ABS 2021a.

The decrease in people volunteering through an organisation reflects the broader changes noted in the 2020 GSS: there has been a decrease in the time and opportunity that Australians have for recreation and leisure, and social and community interaction (ABS 2014). Between 2010 and 2020, the proportion of people involved in social, community support and civic/political groups has decreased (ABS 2021a).

## Impact of COVID-19 on volunteers

The COVID-19 pandemic limited the communal and social activities of many Australians, especially between 2020 and 2021. To reduce the risk of infection, different levels of formal restrictions were established, and these may have affected how or when people volunteered.

The 2020 GSS, which is referenced throughout this page, was conducted between June and September 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The GSS had different reference periods for voluntary work – informal volunteering was reported for the 4 weeks preceding the survey, while unpaid voluntary work through an organisation was reported for the 12 months preceding the survey. Therefore, it is possible COVID-19 restrictions and other seasonal effects may impact informal volunteering estimates more than unpaid voluntary work estimates.

The ANUpoll survey found that in April 2023, 33% of people had undertaken voluntary work in the previous 12 months, compared with 27% in April 2022 and 36% of people in late 2019. This study reported that social contact was one of the key motivators for people to volunteer (opportunities for which were severely limited during the pandemic). It also reported that people who stopped volunteering during the pandemic had greater reductions in life satisfaction than people who had not volunteered (Biddle 2023; Biddle and Gray 2022).

The Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey conducted by the ABS also indicated a decline in volunteering in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2021, over 1 in 5 (21%) respondents had participated in unpaid voluntary work for an organisation or group in the last 12 months, compared with 26% of respondents before March 2020. Among respondents who had ever volunteered for an organisation or group but did not do so in the 4 weeks leading up to March 2021, their reasons for not volunteering included:

- previous volunteering group stopped or reduced their operation (16%)
- couldn't volunteer in person due to COVID-19 restrictions (13%)
- didn't want to volunteer in person due to health concerns (9.8%)
- not sure how to volunteer due to COVID-19 restrictions (7.2%)
- unable to or not comfortable with online volunteering (3.4%).

In the 4 weeks before March 2021, people aged 18 and over were more likely to participate in informal volunteering than volunteering through an organisation or group (27% and 15%, respectively). More than 2 in 5 (43%) people aged 18 and over provided unpaid help to people living outside of their own household. Of those who could not provide unpaid help, 15% wanted to minimise their exposure to people to protect their health and others (ABS 2021b).

For more information, see the [Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey](#).



## Where do I go for more information?

For the latest data and more information on volunteers in Australia, see:

- ABS [General Social Survey](#)
- [Volunteering Australia](#).

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# Justice and safety

# Adult prisoners

Find the most recent version of this information at:  
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/adult-prisoners>

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- Overrepresentation of population groups in prison
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- Impact of COVID-19 in the prison setting
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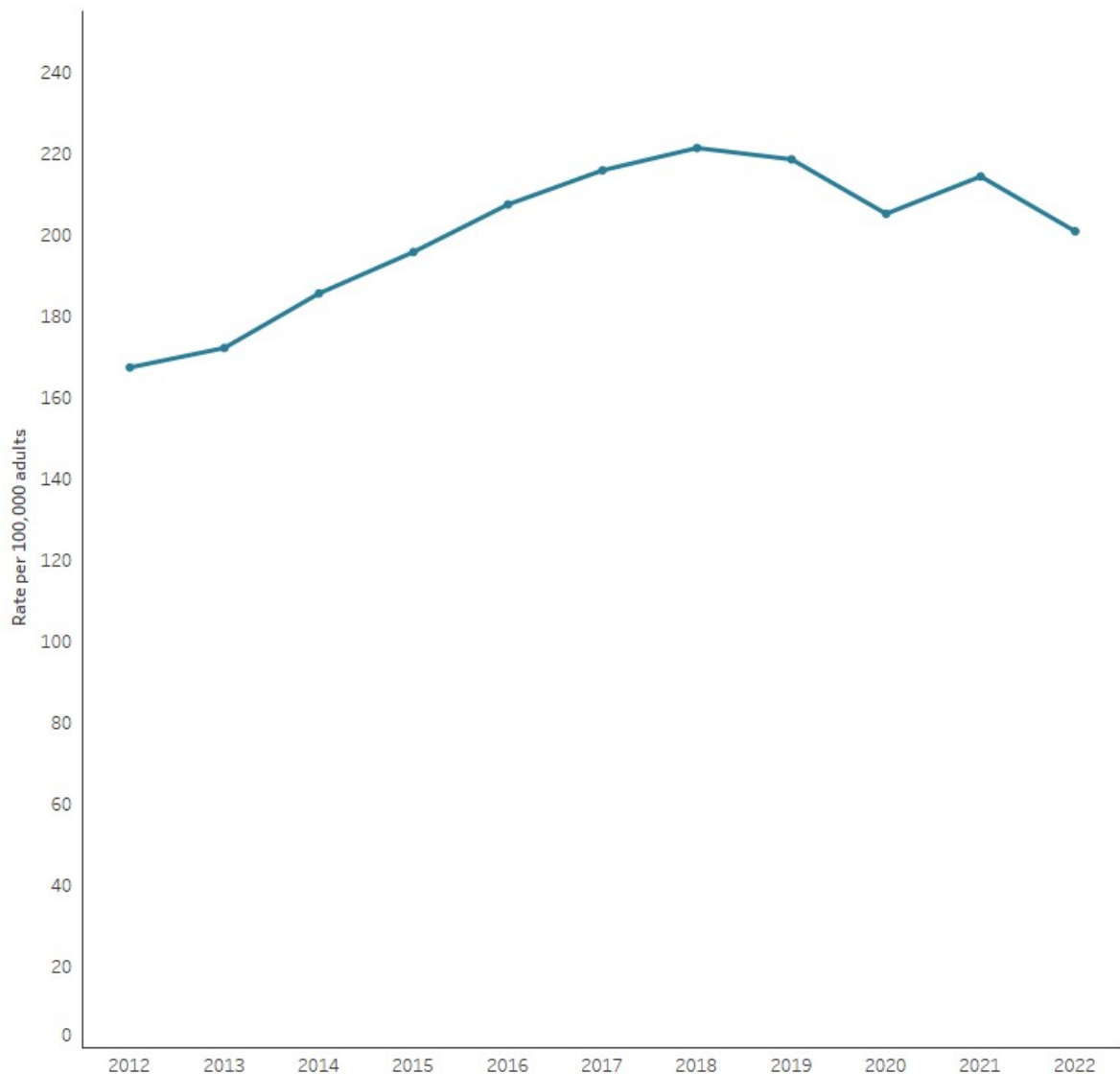
People in prison are some of the most vulnerable people in society and often come from disadvantaged backgrounds. People who spend time in prison experience higher rates of homelessness, unemployment, mental health disorders, chronic physical disease, communicable disease, tobacco smoking, high-risk alcohol consumption, and illicit use of drugs than the general population (AIHW 2019).

Adults in Australia who commit or allegedly commit crimes are managed by the criminal justice system. There are 116 custodial correctional facilities across Australia (SCGRSP, 2023). On 30 June 2022, there were 40,591 adult prisoners in custody (ABS 2023b). Australia has 9 legal systems, 1 for each state and territory and 1 for the Commonwealth. While the criminal justice systems in each jurisdiction are similar, they remain separate. Therefore, laws, penalties and arrangements for administering justice differ across state and territory boundaries (ABS 1997).

## Australia's prison population over time

Over the decade to 2022, Australia's prison population increased in number and as a proportion of the population. Despite a slight drop recently, the average daily prison population grew from 29,380 at 30 June 2012 to 40,591 at 30 June 2022. During the same period, the rate of prisoners increased from 167 to 201 per 100,000 adults (Figure 1). The most common offences for prisoners in Australia as at 30 June 2022 were acts intended to cause injury (26%), sexual assault and related offences (16%) and illicit drug offences (14%) (ABS 2023b).

**Figure 1: Adult imprisonment rate, 2012 to 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Source: ABS 2023b.

## **Overrepresentation of population groups in prison**

When comparing the 2022 prison population to the general adult population, prisoners were:

- more likely to be male – more than 9 in 10 (93%) adult prisoners were male, compared with 5 in 10 (50%) of the general adult population (ABS 2023a, 2023b)
- more likely to identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people – nearly 1 in 3 (32%) of the adult prison population were First Nations people, compared with 3.8% of the general adult population (ABS 2022, 2023b) (see [Community safety for First Nations people](#))

- more likely to be younger – almost 2 in 3 (63%) prisoners were aged 18–39, compared with about 1 in 3 (30%) in the general adult population (ABS 2023a, 2023b).

July 2020 saw the release of *The National Agreement on Closing the Gap*. Target 10 of the agreement aims to reduce the overrepresentation of First Nations adults in the criminal justice system. The target is to reduce the rate of First Nations adults in incarceration by at least 15 per cent by 2031 (Joint Council on Closing the Gap 2020).

## Health of people in prison

Prisoners have higher levels of mental health problems, risky alcohol consumption, tobacco smoking, illicit drug use, chronic disease and communicable diseases than the general population (AIHW 2019). This means they have substantial and complex health and welfare needs, often long term or chronic. The health of prisoners is sufficiently poorer than that of the general community that prisoners are often considered to be 'old' at age 50–55 (Williams et al. 2014).

### The National Prisoner Health Data Collection

Since 2009, the AIHW has run the National Prisoner Health Data Collection (NPHDC), over a 2-week period every 3 years. The 2018 NPHDC has the most recent available data, which is presented on this page. The collection took place again in 2022 and data will be released in late 2023.

According to the 2018 NPHDC:

- Just under 1 in 3 (30%) prison entrants reported a history of one or more selected chronic conditions (asthma, arthritis, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and/or cancer) (AIHW 2019).
- 2 in 5 (40%) prison entrants reported a previous diagnosis of a mental health disorder, including alcohol and drug misuse.
  - Female prison entrants (65%) were more likely than male prison entrants (36%) to report a history of a mental health condition.
  - Non-Indigenous prison entrants (44%) were more likely to report a history of a mental health condition than First Nations prison entrants (33%) (AIHW 2019).

Entering and leaving prison can be highly stressful for those in the prison system. The experience of being in prison, the prison environment, relationships with other prisoners, family, housing and employment, as well as alcohol and other drug use may all be potential causes of concern and distress for prisoners.

**Almost 3 in 4 (73%)** prison entrants had been in prison before, and **almost half (45%)** of prison entrants had been in prison within the previous 12 months (AIHW 2019).

Prison entrants and discharges were asked about their recent psychological distress levels, and about their perceived reasons for any distress. In 2018, just over 1 in 4 (26%) prison entrants scored high or very high levels of psychological distress, with female

prison entrants more than twice as likely to score high or very high levels (52%) when compared with male prison entrants (22%) (AIHW 2019).

## Employment status of people in prison

The ability to gain and maintain employment is key to successful reintegration of former prisoners into the community post release. Many prisoners, particularly First Nations prisoners, have complex and sometimes traumatic histories and experiences which remain following release from prison and can make employment difficult (COAG 2016).

**More than half (54%)** of prison entrants reported they were unemployed during the 30 days before prison (AIHW 2019).

Prisoners come from a group who already face difficulties in gaining employment. They generally have low levels of education, low socioeconomic position, high levels of drug and alcohol misuse, high levels of mental health issues and poor work histories. Imprisonment adds to this mix, making it even more difficult for people leaving prison to find a job, particularly for those who have been in prison for longer than 6 months (Ramakers et al. 2014).

**Over 1 in 5 (22%)** prison discharges reported they had paid employment organised to start within 2 weeks of release from prison (AIHW 2019).

## Education prior to entering prison

Education is a recognised social determinant of health, with lower levels of education associated with poorer health (Mitrou et al. 2014). People in prison have lower levels of educational attainment and higher levels of learning difficulties and learning disabilities than people in the general community (AIHW 2015; Kendall and Hopkins 2019). Lower levels of educational attainment are associated with poorer employment opportunities and outcomes, and unemployment is a risk factor for incarceration and for reoffending after release (Baldry et al. 2018).

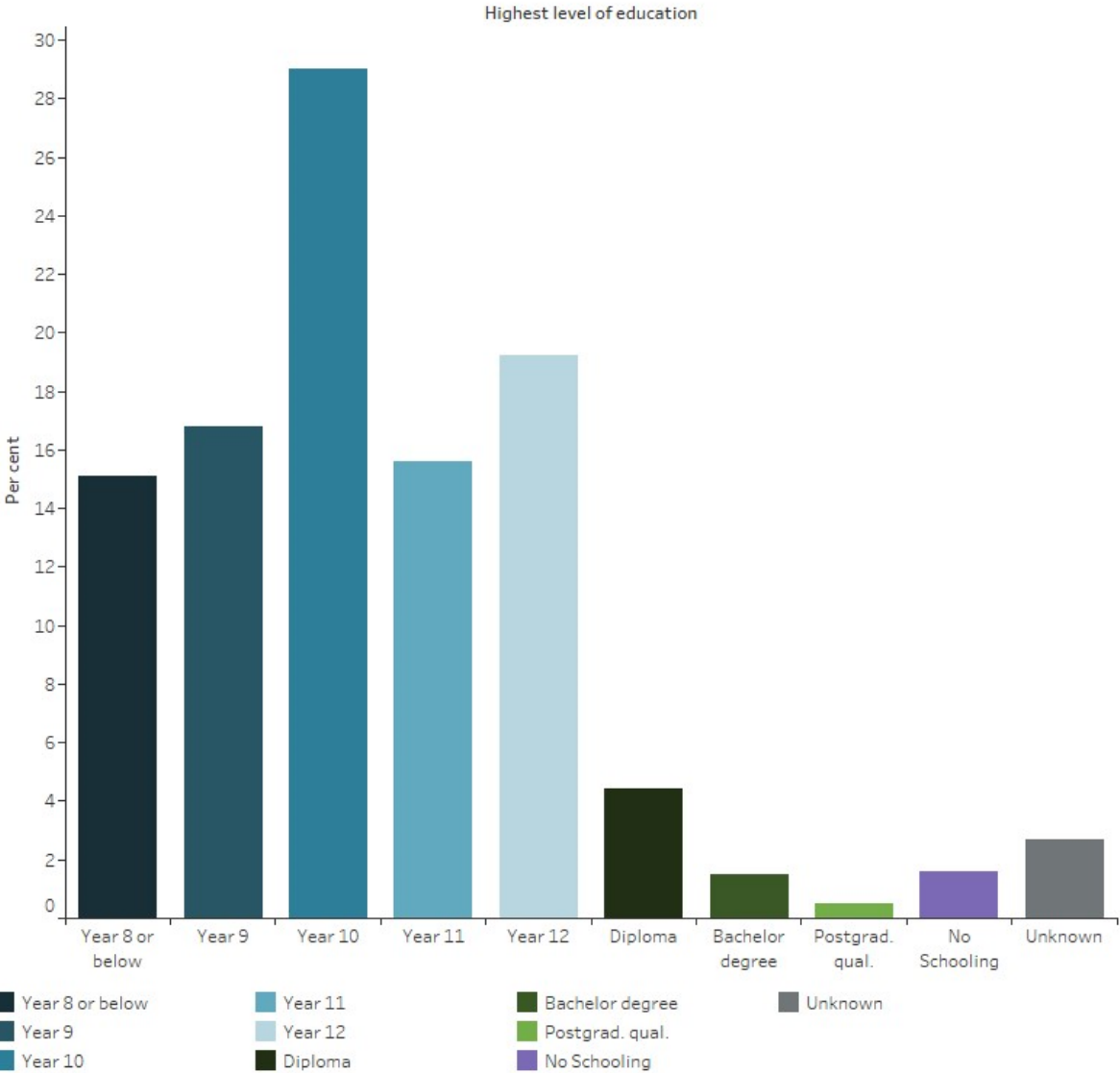
In the NPHDC, prison entrants were asked about the highest level of schooling they had completed and qualifications they attained other than school.

In 2018, prison entrants were more likely than the general population (aged 15–64) to have had an education level of Year 10 or below (63% compared with 19%) (ABS 2020; AIHW 2019). Of prison entrants, 15% had completed Year 8 or below as their highest level of education. A total of 1.6% had no formal schooling.

Education at the tertiary level was not common – the highest level of completed education for entrants was a diploma (4.4%), followed by a bachelor degree (1.5%), and a postgraduate qualification (0.5%).

Prison entrants were less likely than the general population (19% compared with 64%) to report they had completed the equivalent of Year 12 (ABS 2020; AIHW 2019).

**Figure 2: Highest level of education achieved by prison entrants, 2018**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

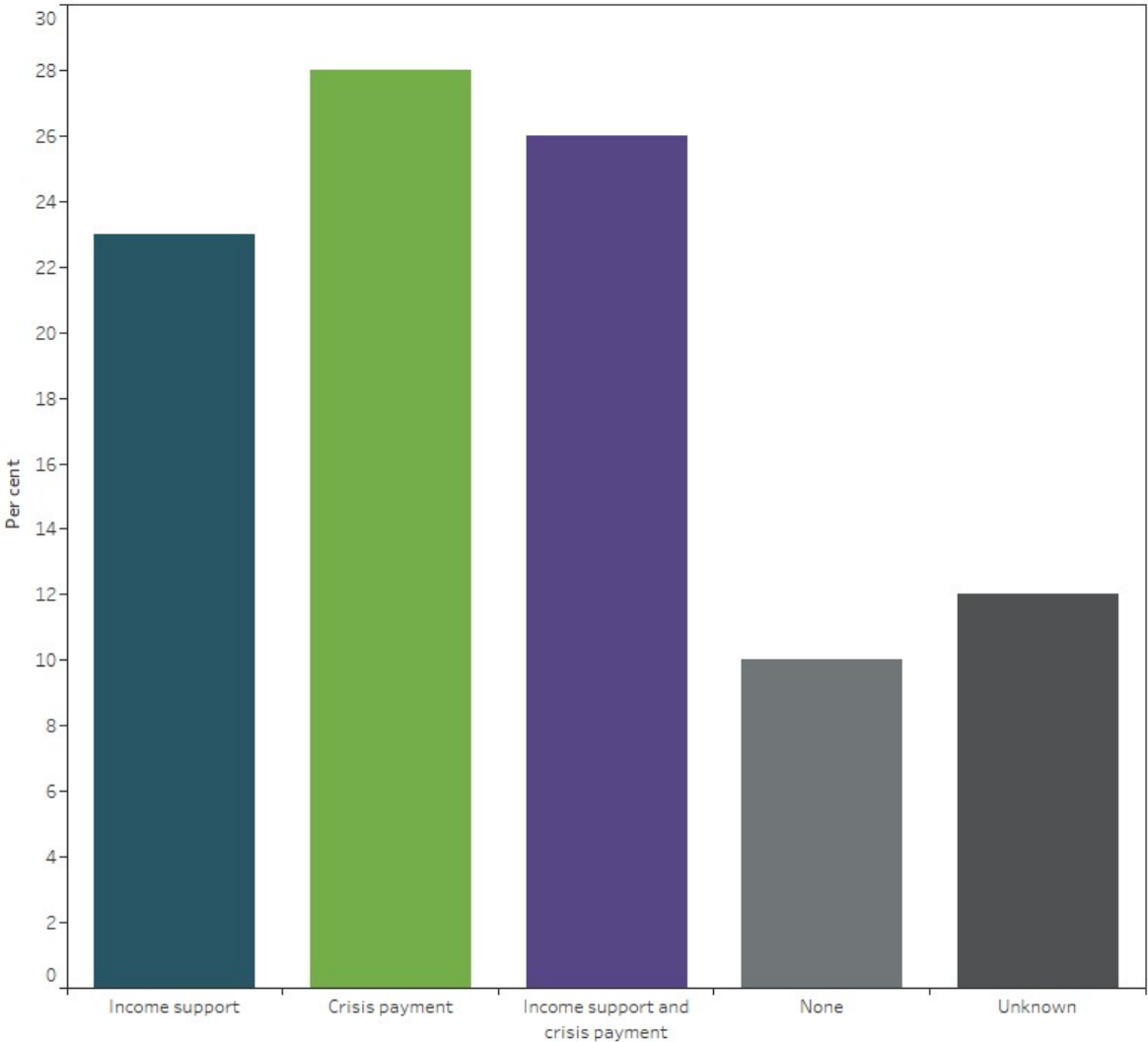
Source: AIHW 2019.

## Income support following release from prison

On average people who are unemployed have poorer outcomes than people who are employed. This includes mental health issues, alcohol and other drug use disorders, and criminal offending (Fergusson et al. 2014; Winter et al. 2019).

Most (78%) prison discharges in 2018 were expecting to receive some form of financial assistance from Centrelink after release (Figure 3). Almost 1 in 4 (23%) expected to receive income support (including Disability Support Pension) and a further 28% a crisis payment. Another 26% of prison discharges expected to receive both payments.

**Figure 3: Expected income source of prison discharges, 2018**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Note: Proportions are rounded to whole numbers, so components may not sum to total expecting to receive some form of financial assistance from Centrelink after release.

Source: AIHW 2019.

## Impact of COVID-19 in the prison setting

From March 2020, a range of measures were introduced in adult prisons to reduce the impact of COVID-19, including vaccinations, social distancing, virtual visits and the use of personal protective equipment such as face masks.

People in prison are known to have a high vulnerability to infectious diseases due to the living conditions within prison (Ndeffo-Mbah et al. 2018) and as such, COVID-19 poses a serious risk to the physical health of this population. Measures introduced to reduce the spread of COVID-19 are also likely to have had an impact on the mental, emotional and social wellbeing of a person in prison (Department of Health 2022). However, there is



currently limited data available to understand the extent to which COVID-19 has impacted the health and wellbeing of people in Australia's prisons. The 2022 NPHDC included items on COVID-19. Data are scheduled for release by the AIHW in late 2023.

For more information on current COVID-19 measures and reported COVID-19 cases within prisons in each state and territory, see:

- [New South Wales Corrective Services](#)
- [Corrections Victoria](#)
- [Queensland Corrective Services](#)
- [Western Australia Corrective Services](#)
- [South Australia Department for Correctional Services](#)
- [Tasmania Prison Service](#)
- [Australian Capital Territory Corrective Services](#)
- [Northern Territory Correctional Services.](#)

## Where do I go for more information?

See [Prisoners](#) for more on this topic.

For more information on prisoners in Australia, see:

- [The health of Australia's prisoners, 2018](#)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics [Crime and Justice](#) statistics
- Australian Bureau of Statistics [Prisoner](#) statistics.

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# Child protection

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/child-protection-system-in-australia>

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Child protection refers to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect, and harmful practices against children (UNICEF 2021). When children cannot live safely at home, child protection systems prioritise children's physical, mental and psychosocial needs to safeguard their lives and futures (UNICEF 2021). Child protection functions to protect the fundamental rights of children which include safety, freedom from violence and a stable family environment (UN General Assembly 1989).

The child protection system aims to protect children from maltreatment in family settings.

**Child maltreatment** is the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power (WHO 2020).

In Australia, state and territory governments are responsible for statutory child protection. Relevant departments support vulnerable children:

- who have been, or are at risk of being, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed
- whose parents are unable to provide adequate care or protection.

This page looks at children aged under 18 years who came into contact with the child protection system in 2021–22. This includes being:

- subjects of investigations for alleged child maltreatment notifications
- on a care and protection order, which gives child protection departments partial or full legal responsibility for their welfare
- placed in out-of-home care as they were unable to live at home due to child safety concerns.

## Children in the child protection system

In 2021–22, around 1 in 32 (178,000) Australian children aged under 18 came into contact with the child protection system (see: [Data table 2.2](#)). About 1 in 124 (45,500) Australian children aged under 18 became subjects of substantiated maltreatment (see: [Supplementary data table S3.3](#)). That is, an investigation concluded that they were being, or were at risk of being, maltreated.

A summary of children by components of the child protection system is outlined in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1 Summary of children in the child protection system, 2021–22**

Component of the child protection system	Description	Number of events	Number of children
Notifications of alleged maltreatment	A report made to a child protection department alleging child maltreatment or harm to a child  (Notifications do not count as a contact with the system until an investigation is undertaken)	471,000	275,000
Notifications resolved by means other than an investigation	For children who were assessed as having low risk of harm, notifications made about them were resolved without an investigation, such as by providing advice or referring to services  (These notifications do not count as a contact with the system)	292,000	152,000
Investigations of alleged maltreatment notifications	Child protection departments obtain more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification and make an assessment about the harm or degree of harm to the child and their protective needs	178,000	119,000
Substantiated maltreatment	An investigation concluded that a child had been, was being, or was at risk or significant risk of being, maltreated	61,900	45,500

<b>Component of the child protection system</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Number of events</b>	<b>Number of children</b>
Not substantiated allegation of maltreatment	An investigation concluded that there was no reasonable cause to suspect prior, current or future maltreatment of a child	73,300	55,300
Investigation in process	An investigation that began for a notification received in the financial year, but was not completed by 31 August the following year	34,300	12,200
Care and protection orders	Legal orders or arrangements that give child protection departments some responsibility for a child's welfare	39,800	72,300
Out-of-home care placements	Overnight care for children for which there is ongoing case management and financial payment	116,000	55,800
Child protection system	Includes children who were subjects of investigation, on a care and protection order and/or in out-of-home care	334,000	178,000

#### Notes

1. 'Number of events' includes the total occurrences of the specific component of the child protection system.
2. For the 'Number of children' count, a child is counted only once, even if they had multiple occurrences of the event during the year.
3. For care and protection orders, the number of events are orders that were issued in 2021–22, while the number of children are those who had an ongoing care and protection order during 2021–22.
4. For readability, numbers have been rounded.

Sources: Data tables 2.2, supplementary data tables S3.1, S3.3, S4.1, T1, unpublished data, AIHW Child Protection Collection 2021–22.

Nationally, focus is increasingly on early intervention and family support services to:

- help prevent families entering or returning to the child protection system
- minimise the need for more intrusive interventions (AIHW 2021; Bromfield & Holzer 2008; DSS 2021).

Most jurisdictions have enacted strategies that help families in a more holistic way, by:

- coordinating family support service delivery
- providing better access to different types of child and family services (DSS 2021).

More information on the performance of governments in providing child protection services across Australia can be found in the [Report on Government Services 2023](#).

## Impact of COVID-19

Measures put in place as part of government responses to COVID-19 during 2020 and 2021 (including travel bans/restrictions, lockdowns limiting non-urgent face-to-face work, remote learning for students and quarantine requirements) may have affected child protection processes during 2019–20 to 2021–22. The long-term impact of COVID-19 on child protection processes is still unknown. No specific impacts on the annual data are highlighted in this page, however effects may become apparent in future years.

Some potential impacts of COVID-19 on Australian children in child protection are explored in [Child protection in the time of COVID-19](#). The report presents monthly child protection data from March 2020 to September 2020 compared with 2019. It contains selected information on risk factors for child abuse, including income and housing stress, parental mental health, substance use, and domestic violence.

For information on the impact of COVID-19 on population data, see Box 1.1 in the [Technical notes](#).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on this topic, see [Child protection, state and territory departments responsible for child protection](#) and [Department of Social Services](#).

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# Family, domestic and sexual violence

Find the most recent version of this information at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence>

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Family, domestic and sexual violence is a major health and welfare issue in Australia, occurring across all socioeconomic and demographic groups, but predominantly affecting women and children. These types of violence can have a serious impact on individuals, families and communities and can inflict physical injury, psychological trauma and emotional suffering. These effects can be long-lasting and can affect future generations.

For information, support and counselling contact **1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732** or visit the [1800RESPECT website](#).

## What is family, domestic and sexual violence?

Family violence is a term used for violence that occurs within family relationships, such as between parents and children, siblings, intimate partners or kinship relationships. Family relationships can include carers, foster carers and co-residents (for example in group homes or boarding residences).

Domestic violence is a type of family violence that occurs between current or former intimate partners (sometimes referred to as intimate partner violence).

Both family violence and domestic violence include a range of behaviour types such as:

- physical violence (for example, hitting, choking, or burning)
- sexual violence (for example, rape, penetration by objects, unwanted touching)
- emotional abuse, also known as psychological abuse (for example, intimidating, humiliating)

For more details, see [glossary](#).

Coercive control is often a significant part of a person's experience of family and domestic violence. It is commonly used to describe a pattern of controlling behaviour, used by a perpetrator to establish and maintain control over another person.

Sexual violence can take many forms, including sexual assault, sexual threat, sexual harassment, child sexual abuse, and image-based abuse (NASASV 2021). However, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Personal Safety Survey (PSS) uses a narrower definition of sexual violence, including only sexual assault and sexual threat, with sexual harassment and experiences of abuse in childhood reported separately (ABS 2023a).

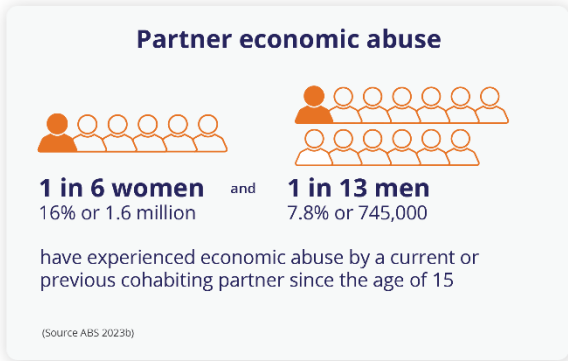
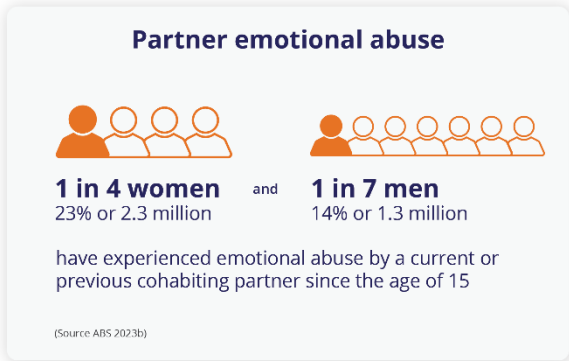
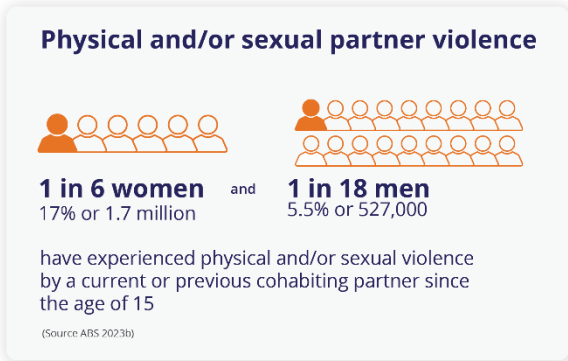
Other forms of violence that can occur within the context of family and domestic violence include: stalking and elder abuse, with the latter occurring where there is an expectation of trust and/or where there is a power imbalance (Kaspiew et al. 2019).

## How common is family, domestic and sexual violence?

The ABS PSS provides an estimate of the number of Australians who have been victims of family, domestic and sexual violence. While every experience of family, domestic or sexual violence is very personal and different, it is most common for this type of violence to be perpetrated against women, by men. There is currently no national data on the proportion of Australians who have perpetrated family, domestic and sexual violence.

The most recent PSS was conducted between March 2021 and May 2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic (ABS 2023a). The ABS are releasing data in stages, and topics on this page will be updated as more data become available. Because of some changes to the survey methodology in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, some 2021–22 data are only available for women, including some time series.

According to the 2021–22 PSS:





## Physical and/or sexual family and domestic violence

Results from the 2021–22 PSS show that an estimated 3.8 million Australian adults (20% of the population) reported experiencing physical and/or sexual family and domestic violence since the age of 15. It is estimated that of all Australian adults:

- 11.3% (2.2 million) had experienced violence from a partner (current or previous cohabiting).
- 5.9% (1.1 million) had experienced violence from a boyfriend, girlfriend or date.
- 7.0% (1.4 million) had experienced violence from another family member.

Experiences of partner violence in the 12 months before the survey (last 12 months) remained relatively stable for both men and women between 2005 and 2016. However, between 2016 and 2021–22 the proportion of women who experienced partner violence decreased from 1.7% in 2016 to 0.9% in 2021–22. There was also a decrease in the proportion of women who had experienced violence by any intimate partner (also includes current or previous boyfriend, girlfriend and date) between 2016 and 2021–22, from 2.3% in 2016 to 1.5% in 2021–22.

## Partner emotional abuse and economic abuse

According to the 2021–22 PSS, an estimated 3.6 million Australian adults (19% of population) had experienced emotional abuse at least once by a partner since the age of 15. The proportion of women (23% or 2.3 million) who had experienced emotional abuse was higher than men (14% or 1.3 million). Estimates of partner emotional abuse in the 12 months before the survey have changed over time:

- the proportion of women who experienced partner emotional abuse was stable between 2012 and 2016, but decreased from 4.8% in 2016 to 3.9% in 2021–22
- the proportion of men who experienced partner emotional abuse increased from 2.8% in 2012 to 4.2% in 2016 before decreasing to 2.5% in 2021–22.

It was also estimated that 2.4 million Australian adults (12% of the population) had experienced economic abuse by a partner since the age of 15, with the proportion of women (16%) who had experienced this type of abuse around double the proportion of men (7.8%).

## Sexual violence

The 2021–22 PSS estimated 2.8 million Australians (14% of the population) experienced sexual violence (occurrence, attempt and/or threat of sexual assault) since the age of 15. It is estimated that of all Australian adults:

- 13% (2.5 million) had experienced sexual violence by a male
- 1.8% (353,000) had experienced sexual violence by a female.

Of all women:

- 11% (1.1 million) experienced at least one incident of sexual violence by a male intimate partner since the age of 15
- 2.1% (203,000) experienced at least one incident of sexual violence by a male family member since the age of 15

- 11% (1.1 million) experienced at least one incident of sexual violence by another known male since the age of 15
- 6.1% (605,000) experienced at least one incident of sexual violence by a male stranger since the age of 15.

In the 12 months before the 2021–22 PSS, it is estimated that 1.9% of women experienced sexual violence. This does not represent a change from 2016.

Based on the 2021–22 PSS, around 1 in 8 (13% or 1.3 million) women and 1 in 22 (4.5% or 427,000) men had experienced sexual harassment (see [glossary](#)) in the last 12 months (ABS 2023a). This represents a decrease from 2016 for both women (previously 17%) and men (previously 9.3%).

## Other forms of violence and abuse

Violence exists on a spectrum of behaviours. The same social and cultural attitudes underpinning family, domestic and sexual violence are at the root of other behaviours such as stalking. Technology can facilitate abuse and has become an important consideration in these types of violence.

Stalking is classified as unwanted behaviours (such as following or watching in person or electronically) that occur more than once and cause fear or distress and is considered a crime in every state and territory of Australia (ABS 2023a). Based on the 2021–22 PSS, 1 in 5 (20% or 2.0 million) women and around 1 in 15 (6.8% or 653,000) men had experienced stalking since the age of 15.

Preliminary findings from the 2022 Australian eSafety Commissioner’s adult online safety survey of around 4,700 Australians aged 18–65 years, indicate that:

- 75% of those surveyed had a negative online experience in the 12 months prior to the survey, an increase from 58% in 2019
- 18% of those surveyed said their location had been tracked electronically without consent, an increase from 11% in 2019
- 16% of those surveyed said they received online threats of real-life harm or abuse, an increase from 9%.

Due to the opt-in nature of the survey, these results may not be generalisable to the broader Australian adult population.

## Family, domestic and sexual violence during the COVID-19 pandemic

The impacts of a pandemic can be wide-ranging with people experiencing different circumstances depending on their situation. Situational stressors, such as victims and perpetrators spending more time together, or increased financial or economic hardship, can be associated with increased severity or frequency of violence (Payne et al. 2020). It is also possible that increased protective factors, such as access to income support, time away from a perpetrator, or increased social cohesion, could suppress violence (Diemer 2023). Pandemics can also affect help-seeking and individual responses to violence, meaning support services have to adapt their delivery to new circumstances.

We continue to learn about the impact of the emergency phase of the COVID-19 pandemic on family, domestic and sexual violence, with some different patterns observed between research, drawing on a variety of data sources and methods, and national population prevalence data (Diemer 2023).

Results from the PSS showed that between 2016 and 2021–22 there was a decrease in the number of women experiencing physical and/or sexual partner violence in the 12 months before the survey, and a decrease in women and men experiencing partner emotional abuse. The rate of sexual violence for women remained stable. See How common is family, domestic and sexual violence?

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) conducted an online survey of women’s experiences of violence during the first 12 months of the COVID-19 pandemic. While not comparable with the PSS, the survey of more than 10,000 women found that the pandemic coincided with first-time and escalating intimate partner violence for some women (Table 1). However, given this is a cross-sectional survey, a causal relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and women’s experiences of intimate partner violence cannot be established (Boxall and Morgan 2021).

**Table 1: Intimate partner violence <sup>(a)</sup> experienced by women in Australia during the first 12 months of the COVID-19 pandemic**

	Physical violence	Sexual violence	Emotionally abusive, harassing and controlling behaviours
<b>Overall prevalence of intimate partner violence <sup>(b)</sup></b>	9.6%	7.6%	32%
<b>Experienced intimate partner violence for the first time <sup>(b)</sup></b>	3.4%	3.2%	18%
<b>Reported that intimate partner violence had increased in frequency or severity <sup>(b, c)</sup></b>	42%	43%	40%

(a) Violence from a person the respondent had a relationship with during the previous 12 months. This includes current and former partners, cohabiting, or non-cohabiting.

(b) Of women aged 18 years and older who had been in a relationship longer than 12 months.

(c) Of women who had a history of violence from their current or most recent partner.

Source: Boxall and Morgan 2021.

See also AIHW’s [Family, domestic and sexual violence service responses in the time of COVID-19](#).

For more information on how the pandemic has affected Australians in the context of longer-term trends, see 'Chapter 2 Changes in the health of Australians during the COVID-19 pandemic' in [Australia's health 2022: data insights](#).

## **What influences family, domestic and sexual violence?**

Social attitudes and norms shape the context in which violence occurs. The National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) shows that in Australia, between 2009 and 2021, there was a positive shift in attitudes that reject gender inequality and violence against women. There was also an improvement in understanding of violence against women.

The NCAS indicated that in 2021 Australians, on average, had:

- higher understanding of violence against women compared to previous survey years (2009, 2013 and 2017)
- higher rejection of attitudes supportive of gender inequality compared to previous survey years
- improved attitudes towards sexual violence compared to 2017
- improved attitudes towards domestic violence compared to 2009 and 2013 (Coumarelos et al 2023).

While results were generally encouraging, some findings were concerning and highlight areas for improvement, select findings are summarised below.

### **Attitudes towards violence against women and gender inequality**

Of all NCAS respondents in 2021:

- 25% believed that women who do not leave their abusive partners are partly responsible for violence continuing
- 34% agreed it was common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men
- 23% believed domestic violence is a normal reaction to day-to-day stress
- 19% agreed that sometimes a woman can make a man so angry he hits her without meaning to
- 15% agreed that there is no harm in sexist jokes
- 41% agreed that many women misinterpret innocent remarks as sexist (Coumarelos et al. 2023).

### **Understanding of violence against women**

Of all NCAS respondents in 2021:

- 31% did not know that women are more likely to be raped by a known person than a stranger

- 41% did not know where to access help for a domestic violence issue
- 43% did not recognise that men are the most common perpetrators of domestic violence
- 24% did not recognise that women are more likely than men to suffer physical harm from domestic violence (Coumarelos et al. 2023).

## Who is at risk of family, domestic and sexual violence?

Family, domestic and sexual violence occurs across all ages and demographics. However, some groups are more vulnerable than others because they are at greater risk or because the impacts and outcomes of violence can be more serious or long-lasting.

### Children

Children are more vulnerable to family, domestic and sexual violence.

The 2021 Australian Child Maltreatment Study surveyed Australians (aged 16 years and over) about experiences of maltreatment as a child. Of 8,500 respondents, around:

- 1 in 3 (32%) had experienced physical abuse by a parent or caregiver
- 3 in 10 (29%) had experienced sexual abuse by any person
- 3 in 10 (31%) had experienced emotional abuse by a parent or caregiver
- 1 in 10 (8.9%) had experienced neglect by a parent or caregiver
- 2 in 5 (40%) had experienced exposure to domestic violence (Haslam et al. 2023).

The PSS also collects some information from adults about the nature and extent of violence experienced since the age of 15, for more information see Personal Safety, Australia.

### Child protection services

In Australia, state and territory governments are responsible for providing child protection services to anyone aged under 18 who has been, or is at risk of being, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed, or whose parents are unable to provide adequate care and protection. In 2021–22:

- Almost 178,000 Australian children (31 per 1,000) came into contact with the child protection system.
- Infants aged under one were most likely (38 per 1,000) to come into contact with the child protection system and adolescents aged 15–17 were the least likely (26 per 1,000).
- Emotional abuse, including exposure to family violence, was the most common primary type of abuse identified for children with substantiated cases (substantiations) (57% or 25,900 children). Neglect (21% or 9,400 children) was the next most common primary type of abuse substantiated, followed by physical abuse (13% or 6,100 children) and sexual abuse (9% or 4,000 children).

- Similar proportions of girls and boys were the subjects of substantiations for physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. However, girls (12%) were more likely to be the subjects of substantiations for sexual abuse than boys (5%) (AIHW 2023).

The rate of children who were the subject of notifications has increased from 44 per 1,000 in 2017–18 to 49 per 1,000 in 2021–22. However, the rate of children who were the subject of substantiations remained fairly stable in the 5 years to 30 June 2022.

Data on child protection services during the first 7 months after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic (March to September 2020) can be found in [Child protection in the time of COVID-19](#).

## Women

More women than men experience family, domestic and sexual violence. Table 2 shows the proportion of people aged 18 and over who experienced violence from a partner since the age of 15.

**Table 2: Proportion of men and women who experienced violence or abuse from a partner since the age of 15, by type of violence or abuse, 2021–22**

	Women (%)	Men (%)
<b>Physical and/or sexual violence from a partner</b>	16.9	5.5
<b>Physical violence from a partner</b>	14.9	5.3
<b>Sexual violence from a partner</b>	6.2	n.p.
<b>Emotional abuse from a partner</b>	22.9	13.8
<b>Economic abuse from a partner</b>	16.3	7.8

n.p. not published

Note: Where a person has experienced both physical and sexual violence by a cohabiting partner, they are counted separately for each type of violence they experienced but are counted only once in the aggregated total.

Source: ABS 2023b.

Women’s exposure to violence differs across age groups, with the 2016 PSS finding that young women aged 18–34 were more likely to experience intimate partner violence and/or sexual violence than those aged 35 and over in the 12 months before the survey. 2016 estimates indicated:

- 1 in 25 (4.0% or 117,000) women aged 18–34 experienced intimate partner violence, compared with 1.5% (96,000) aged 35 and over
- 1 in 25 (4.3% or 125,000) women aged 18–34 experienced sexual violence, compared with 0.7% (45,000) aged 35 and over (ABS 2017).

## Other at-risk groups

Other social and cultural factors can also increase the risk of experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence. In some cases, these factors may overlap or combine to create an even greater risk. Additional factors that can increase the risk of violence include remoteness and socioeconomic area of residence, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and cultural influences. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) women are particularly at risk and have much higher rates of hospitalisation because of family violence. Data on the experiences of First Nations women can be found in [Community safety for First Nations people](#).

## What services or support do those who have experienced family, domestic and sexual violence use?

Responses to family, domestic and sexual violence are provided informally in the community and formally through justice systems, and treatment and support services.

The 2016 PSS found that there were differences in propensity to seek help, advice or support following partner violence depending on partner status and victim sex:



Similarly, estimates indicate that more females (50% or 316,900) than males (28% or 20,900) sought help, advice or support after the most recent incident of sexual assault by a male perpetrator. The 2016 PSS also found that for 87% (553,900) of most recent incident of sexual assaults against women by men, the police were not contacted.

## Police responses

When an incident of violence is reported to police by a victim, witness or other person, it can be recorded as a crime. The ABS collects data on selected family, domestic and sexual violence crimes recorded by police. In 2022:

- More than 1 in 2 (53% or 76,900) recorded assaults were related to family and domestic violence (excluding Victoria and Queensland), a 6.1% increase from 72,500 in 2021.
- Around 1 in 3 (33% or 71) recorded murders were related to family and domestic violence (ABS 2023c).

Since 2011, the number of sexual assault victims recorded by police has increased each year (ABS 2023c). It is unclear whether this change reflects an increased incidence of sexual assault, an increased propensity to report sexual assault to police, increased reporting of historical crimes, or a combination of these factors. Of all 2022 police-recorded sexual assaults, 69% were reported to police within one year (ABS 2023c).

## Homelessness services

People accessing specialist homelessness services (SHS) may need support due to family and domestic violence. Data cannot currently distinguish between victims and perpetrators of violence.

In 2021–22, SHS agencies assisted around 108,000 clients (39% of all SHS clients) who had experienced domestic and family violence. Of these 108,000 clients:

- Over 3 in 4 (76% or 82,100) clients were female; and of the 21,900 aged 25–34, more than 9 in 10 (92% or 20,100) were female.
- 4 in 10 (40% or 34,200) of those aged 10 and over also had a current mental health issue.
- Over 1 in 10 (11% or 9,400) of those aged 10 and over had problematic drug and/or alcohol use.
- Almost 1 in 10 (7.3% or 7,800 clients) were living with disability.

See also [Homelessness and homelessness services](#).

## Hospitalisations

Hospitals provide health services for individuals who have experienced family, domestic and sexual violence. The family and domestic violence assault hospitalisations presented here are those where the perpetrator is coded as a family member (Spouse or domestic partner, Parent, or Other family member) in the hospital record. As information on cause of injury (such as assault) is not available in national emergency department data, family and domestic violence assault hospitalisations do not include presentations to emergency departments and underestimate overall hospital activity related to family and domestic violence. These hospitalisations also relate to more severe (and mostly physical) experiences of family and domestic violence.



**In 2021-22, 3 in 10 (32% or 6,500) assault hospitalisations were due to family and domestic violence.**

Of all family and domestic assault hospitalisations in 2021–22:

- 73% (4,700) were female and 27% (1,700) were male
- 63% (4,100) had the perpetrator reported as a spouse or domestic partner
- 37% (2,400) had the perpetrator reported as a parent or other family member.



See also [Injury in Australia, Hospital care, Examination of hospital stays due to family and domestic violence 2010–11 to 2018–19](#).

## **1800RESPECT**

1800RESPECT is Australia's national telephone and online counselling and support service for people affected by family, domestic and sexual violence, their family and friends and frontline workers. In 2020–21, 1800RESPECT responded to 286,546 telephone and online contacts. (These numbers include every contact to the service including disconnections, pranks and wrong numbers).

See also [1800RESPECT contacts](#) in Family, domestic and sexual violence data in Australia.

## **What are the consequences of family, domestic and sexual violence?**

### **Burden of disease**

Burden of disease refers to the quantified impact of living with and dying prematurely from a disease or injury.

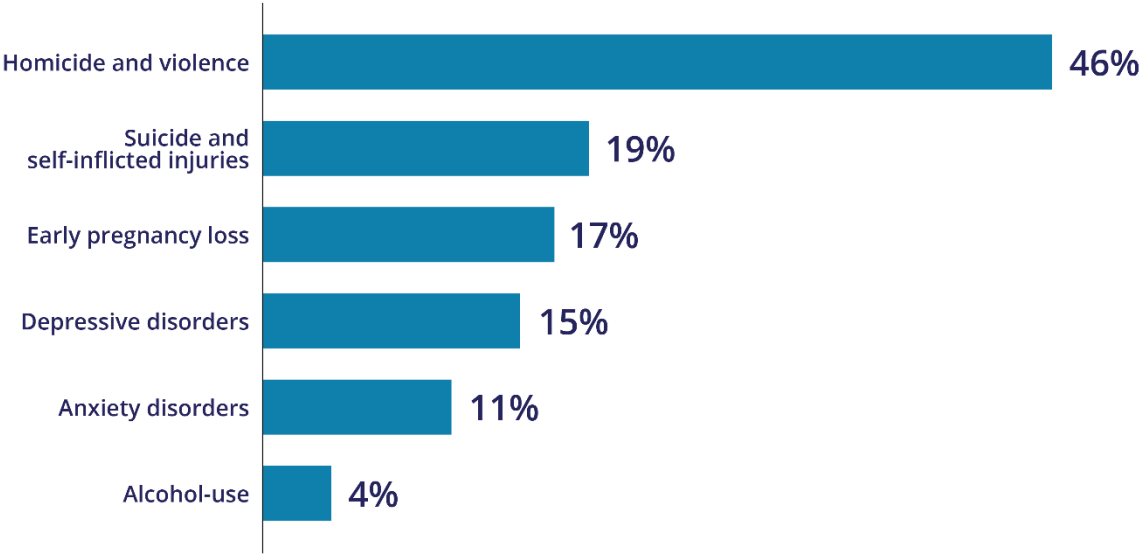
The Australian Burden of Disease Study 2018 estimated the impact of various diseases, injuries and risk factors on total burden of disease for the Australian population. For females aged 15–44, intimate partner violence was ranked as the fourth leading risk factor for total disease burden, and child abuse and neglect was the leading risk factor. Child abuse and neglect was ranked third for males in the same age group (AIHW 2021a).

In 2018, intimate partner violence contributed to:

- 228 deaths (0.3% of all deaths among females) in Australia
- 1.4% of the total burden of disease and injury among Australian females.

Figure 1 shows the estimated total burden attributable to intimate partner violence for females in 2018 by disease/health problem/injury. For example, it shows that almost half of all homicide and violence burden amongst females was attributable to intimate partner violence.

**Figure 1: Total burden attributable to intimate partner violence, 2018**



Note: Burden estimated in females only.

Source: AIHW 2021a.

In 2018, child abuse and neglect contributed to:

- 813 deaths (0.5% of all deaths) in Australia
- 2.2% of the total burden of disease and injury.

Figure 2 shows the estimated total burden attributable to child abuse and neglect in 2018 by disease/health problem/injury.

**Figure 2: Total burden attributable to child abuse and neglect, 2018**



Source: AIHW 2021a.

See also: [Burden of disease.](#)

## Long-term health impacts

Findings from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health demonstrated that women who had experienced childhood sexual abuse were more likely to have poor general health and to experience depression and bodily pain, compared with those who had not experienced sexual abuse during childhood (Coles et al. 2018). Women who had experienced childhood sexual or emotional or physical abuse had higher long-term primary, allied, and specialist health care costs in adulthood, compared with women who had not had these experiences during childhood (Loxton et al. 2018).

## Deaths

Between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, the AIC's National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP) recorded 78 domestic homicide victims from 76 domestic homicide incidents (see [glossary](#) for definitions). Data from the NHMP are from police and coronial records (Bricknell 2023).

Of all domestic homicide victims, 58% (45) were female. Of all female victims of domestic homicide, 56% (25) were killed by an intimate partner. For male victims of domestic homicide, 39% (13) were killed by an intimate partner.

In 2020–21, the rate of domestic homicides was 0.3 per 100,000. The domestic homicide rate has halved since 1989–90, with an overall decrease of 56 per cent (Bricknell 2023).

A report, [Examination of hospital stays due to family and domestic violence 2010–11 to 2018–19](#), found that people who had had a family and domestic violence hospitalisation were 10 times as likely to die due to assault, 3 times as likely to die due to accidental poisoning or liver disease, and 2 times as likely to die due to suicide, as a comparison group (AIHW 2021b).

See also [Deaths in Australia](#).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on health impacts of family, domestic and sexual violence, see:

- [Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story 2019](#)
- Department of Social Services [National Plan to End Violence against Women and their Children 2022–32](#)

Visit [Family, domestic and sexual violence](#) for more on this topic.

For information, support and counselling contact **1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732** or visit the [1800RESPECT website](#).

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# Youth justice

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/youth-justice>

People who commit or allegedly commit a crime when aged 10–17 may be dealt with under the youth justice system. Each state and territory in Australia has its own youth justice legislation, policies and practices but the general processes by which young people are charged, and the types of legal orders available to the courts, are similar.

Some people aged 18 and over may also be supervised in the youth justice system. Depending on the jurisdiction, this may be because they were apprehended for a crime that was (allegedly) committed when they were 17 or younger, their existing supervision continues once they turn 18 (instead of being transferred to the adult correctional system), or a court determines that they should be detained in a youth justice facility due to their vulnerability or immaturity.

Young people may be supervised when they are unsentenced – that is, when they are awaiting the outcome of their court matter or sentencing – or they may be sentenced to supervision after being proven guilty in court. Both unsentenced and sentenced supervision can take place in the community or in a detention facility (see [glossary](#) for definitions).

Data on this page are taken from the AIHW's Youth Justice National Minimum Data Set and includes information about young people in Australia who were under youth justice supervision during 2021–22 and recent trends (AIHW 2023). Numbers include young people of all ages (including those aged 18 and over) unless otherwise specified. Population rates are only calculated for people aged 10–17.

## Impact of COVID-19 on youth justice data (2020, 2021 and 2022)

In an effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19, restrictions were put in place across Australia throughout 2020 and 2021, including non-essential service shutdowns and social distancing. During 2022, small restrictions remained in place in a variety of settings for all jurisdictions.

While youth justice centres and other places of custody, courts or tribunals were considered essential services (Prime Minister of Australia 2020), COVID-19 still has had a substantial impact on the operations of these services and restrictions may have continued beyond the easing of restrictions in the general community. The impact may differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction (Judicial College of Victoria 2020).

- In New South Wales, for example, Children's Court hearings were vacated from 24 March to 1 May 2020 with few exceptions. This led to a decrease in the number of court finalisations between March and June 2020, which resulted in a reduction of young people in sentenced detention.

- During this period, there was also a decline in unsentenced detention as more young people were discharged to bail and fewer young people had their bail revoked when breaching bail conditions (Chan 2021).

This page includes data from March 2020 to June 2022, which coincides with the presence of COVID-19 in Australia. However, the direct impact of COVID-19 and related social restrictions on the number of young people in youth justice supervision is difficult to determine due to a range of factors including:

- variability of the data
- variations in state-based legislation, policy and practice
- small numbers of young people under supervision.

More research is required to better understand the impact of COVID-19 and related social restrictions on youth justice supervision across Australia.

## How many people are under youth justice supervision?

On an average day in 2021–22, 4,536 people aged 10 and over were under youth justice supervision. Among those aged 10–17, this was a rate of 13 per 10,000. A total of 8,982 young people were supervised by youth justice at some time during the year (from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022).

About 4 in 5 (82%) young people under supervision on an average day in 2021–22 were supervised in the community, and 18% were in detention.

Most (84%) young people under community-based supervision on an average day were serving a sentence, while almost 3 in 4 (76%) of those in detention were unsentenced.

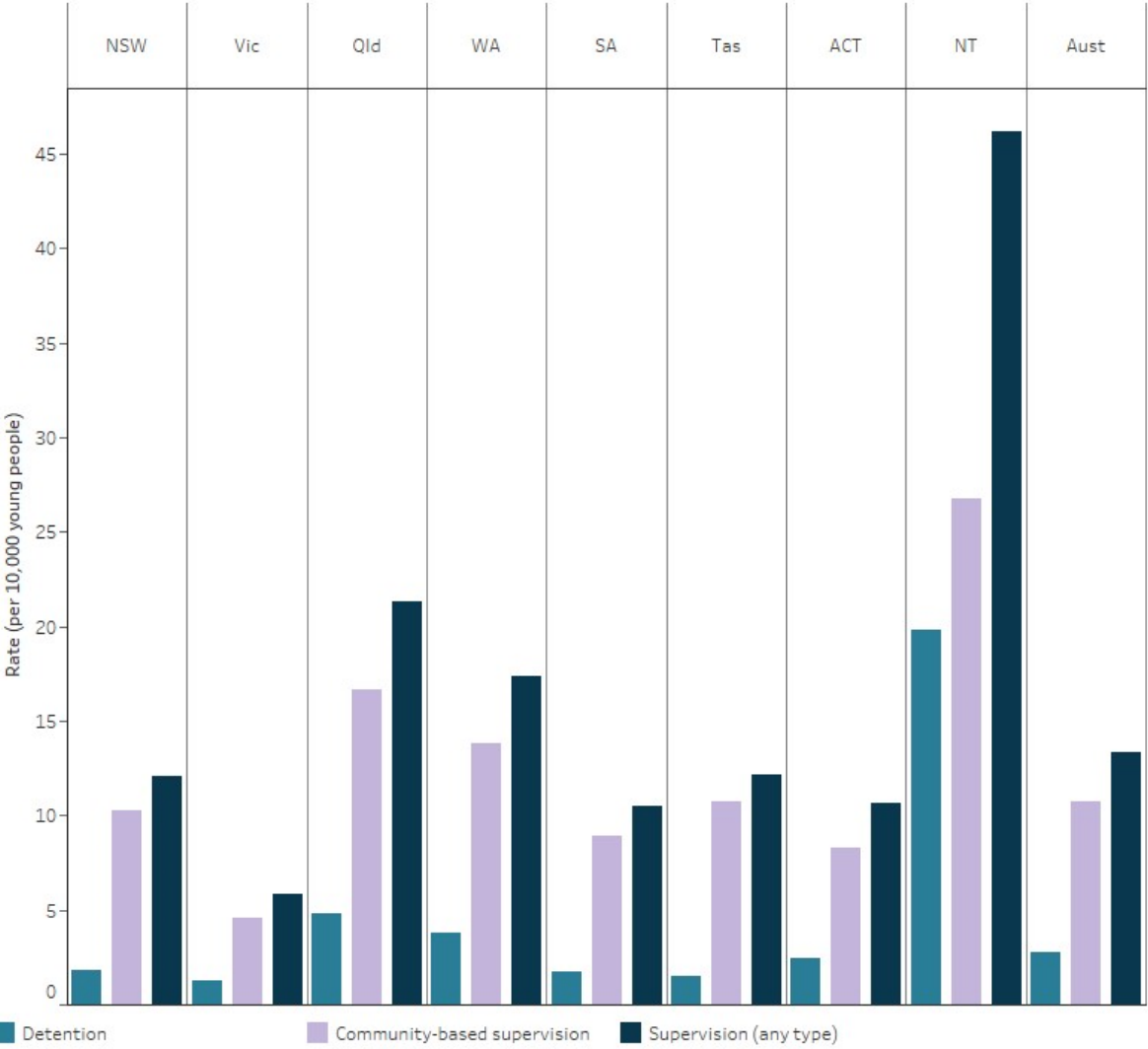
## Variation in rates of supervision

For young people aged 10–17 on an average day of youth justice supervision in 2021–22:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were about 19 times as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to be under supervision – about 17 times as likely to be under community-based supervision, and about 24 times as likely to be in detention (see [Indigenous community safety](#)).
- Males were almost 4 times as likely as females to be under supervision.
- Young people from *Very remote* areas were about 7 times as likely as those from *Major cities* to be under supervision.
- Young people from the lowest socioeconomic areas were about 5 times as likely as those from the highest socioeconomic areas to be under supervision.

Among the states and territories, rates of supervision for young people aged 10–17 years ranged from 5.8 per 10,000 on an average day in Victoria to 46 per 10,000 in the Northern Territory (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Rate of young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day, by supervision type, states and territories, 2021–22**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Source: AIHW 2023

## Time under supervision

Individual periods of supervision completed during 2021–22 lasted for a median of 99 days (about 14 weeks). Completed periods of community-based supervision were much longer than completed periods of detention, with a median duration of 89 days (about 13 weeks) compared with 8 days. The median duration of completed periods of sentenced detention was longer than unsentenced detention, with a duration of 61 days (nearly 9 weeks) compared with 7 days.

When the total time spent under supervision during 2021–22 is considered (including multiple periods and those not yet completed), young people supervised during the year spent an average of 185 days or about 6 months under supervision.



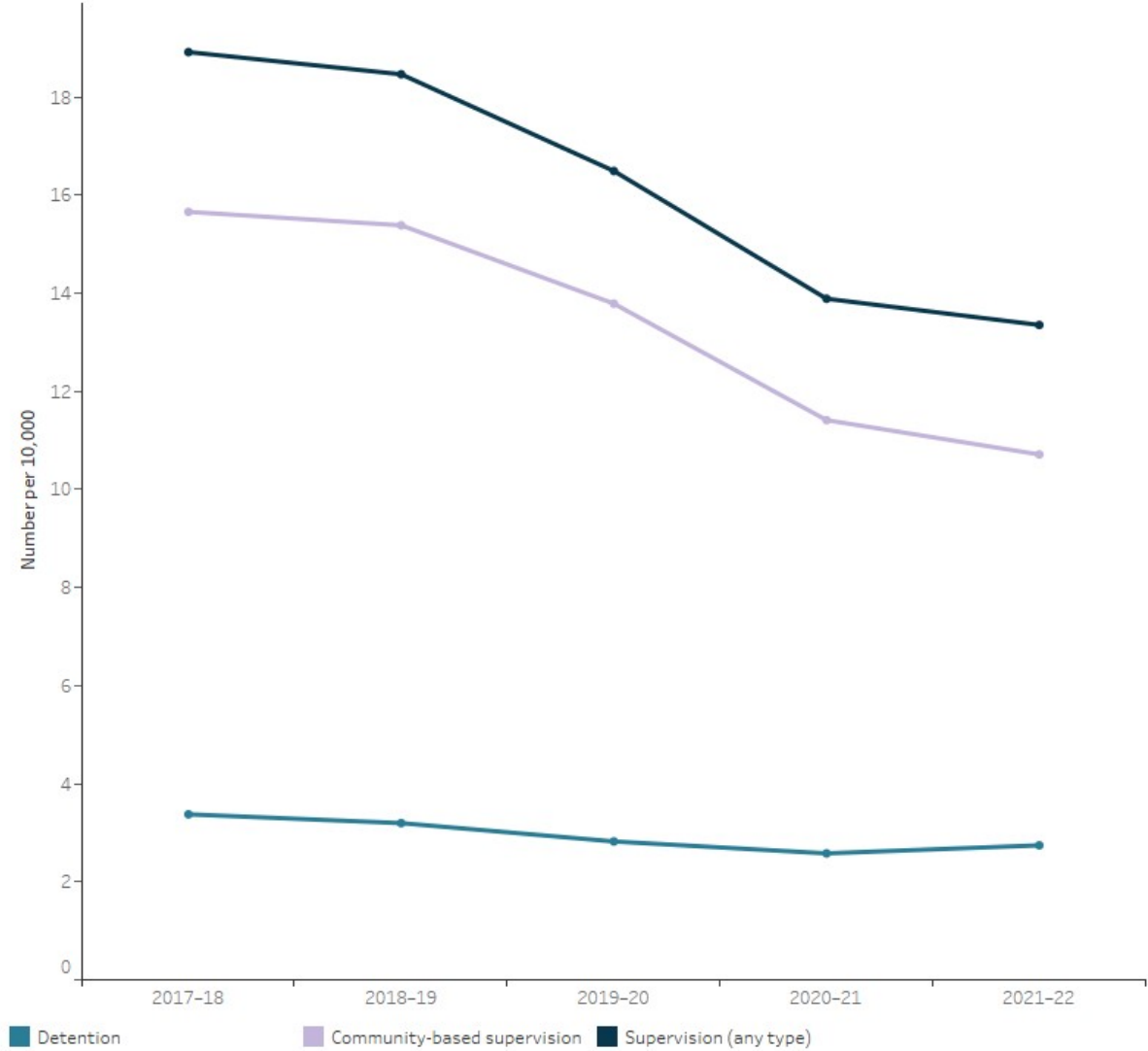
## Trends

Over the 5 years from 2017–18 to 2021–22, the number of young people aged 10 and over who were under supervision on an average day fell by 18% (5,505 to 4,536), however the number fluctuated throughout this period, with a high of 5,679 in 2018–19. The rate for people aged 10–17 dropped from 19 to 13 per 10,000 (Figure 2).

In community-based supervision, the number of young people on an average day fell by 18% (4,563 to 3,742) over the 5-year period. The rate dropped from 16 to 11 per 10,000 for those aged 10–17.

In detention, the number on an average day fell by 15% (971 to 822) over the same period. The rate fell from 3.4 to 2.7 per 10,000 for those aged 10–17 between 2017–18 and 2021–22. However, in the most recent year, the number of young people in detention rose by 3.8% (from 792 to 822) and the rate was slightly higher, from 2.6 to 2.7 per 10,000.

**Figure 2: Rate of young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day, by supervision type, 2017–18 to 2021–22**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Source: AIHW 2023

## Interaction with other services

Many vulnerable young people under youth justice supervision are also involved with other services. Data are available on young people’s involvement with: youth justice and alcohol and other drug treatment services; and youth justice and child protection.

### Alcohol and other drug treatment

People aged 10–17 under youth justice supervision at any time between June 2012 and July 2016 were 30 times as likely as the general population to have received alcohol and other drug treatment services during that period (33% compared with just over 1%) (AIHW 2018).

## Child protection

More than half of young people (or 53%) aged 10 and over under youth justice supervision, during 2020–21 had received a child protection service in the 5 years from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2021 (AIHW 2022).

## Where do I go for more information?

See [Youth justice](#) for more on this topic.

For more information on youth justice, see:

- [Youth justice in Australia 2021–22](#)
- [Youth detention population in Australia 2022](#)
- [Young people under youth justice supervision and their interaction with the child protection 2020–21](#)
- [Young people returning to sentenced youth justice supervision 2019–20](#)
- [Overlap between youth justice supervision and alcohol and other drug treatment services: 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2016.](#)

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# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

# Aged care for First Nations people

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/aged-care-for-indigenous-australians>

## On this page

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Changes over time

The impact of COVID-19

Aged care for First Nations people

Where do I go for more information?

The population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people has a much younger age structure (see [glossary](#)) than the non-Indigenous population (see [Profile of First Nations people](#)). However, like the general population, the First Nations population is ageing.

Access to aged care services (see [glossary](#)) in Australia is determined by need, rather than age. However, the target population for government-funded aged care services is the First Nations population aged 50 and over and the non-Indigenous population aged 65 and over (Department of Health and Aged Care 2022). A broader age group is used for First Nations people because of their greater need for care at a younger age compared with non-Indigenous Australians.

This page focuses on First Nations people aged 50 and over and their use of aged care services. Throughout this page, the age of the person receiving aged care is calculated as of 30 June of the relevant financial year. For more information regarding use of aged care services, particularly among the general population, see [Aged care](#), and 'Chapter 8 Measuring quality in aged care: what is known now and what data are coming' in [Australia's welfare 2023: data insights](#).

## First Nations people aged 50 and over

Preliminary Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimates indicate that there were around 174,000 First Nations people aged 50 and over on 30 June 2021 (AIHW analysis of ABS 2022a). This included about:

- 120,200 aged 50–64
- 50,500 aged 65–84
- 2,900 aged 85 and over.

First Nations people aged 50 and over comprised:

- 18% of the First Nations population (of all ages)
- 1.9% of the total Australian population aged 50 and over.

## Use of aged care services by First Nations people

Data on the use of aged care by First Nations people are sourced from the AIHW [National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse](#), made readily available on the [GEN aged care data website](#). The main types of government-subsidised aged care are home support, home care, and residential aged care (see [glossary](#)). In some cases, these aged care services are provided as part of a separate program, such as one of the flexible aged care (see [glossary](#)) programs. For the purposes of this page, the quoted numbers of home support, home care and residential care recipients do not include recipients who received these services as part of a flexible aged care program. Among First Nations people aged 50 and over:

- 22,100 (14%) received home support during 2021–22. This is entry-level support provided through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (see [glossary](#)), aimed at helping people manage independently at home for as long as possible
- 5,800 (3.6%) were receiving home care at 30 June 2022. This is a coordinated package of care and services, from basic through to high-level support, based on need, provided through the Home Care Packages Program (see [glossary](#))
- 2,100 (1.3%) were receiving residential aged care at 30 June 2022. This means staying in a residential aged care facility, on a permanent or temporary basis.

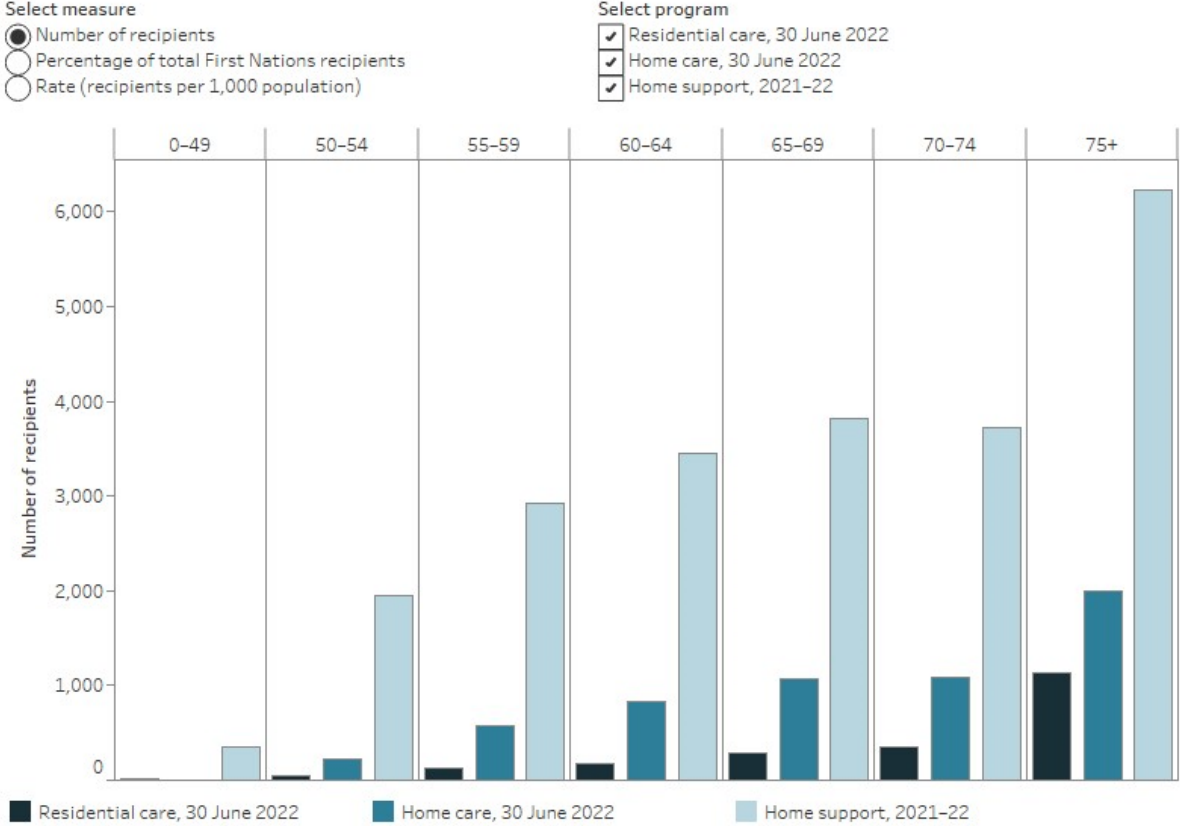
Included in the numbers above are respite care (see [glossary](#)) users, who receive care through home support or residential care, depending on the need of the user.

First Nations people using residential aged care tended to be older than those using home care or home support (Figure 1). For example, over half (53%) of the First Nations people in residential aged care were aged 75 and over. The same age group made up around one-third (35%) of all First Nations home care clients, and 28% of First Nations home support users.

Indigenous status (referring to whether a person has identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin) was not stated for more than 1 in 6 (36,500, or 17%) of home care recipients at 30 June 2022 – greatly exceeding the number of First Nations home care recipients – so home care data should be interpreted with caution.

Flexible care services constitute, for the purposes of this page, a separate set of aged care services, in which care is provided for special groups or in circumstances where the abovementioned services are not appropriate. For example, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program provides culturally appropriate flexible care for First Nations people in locations close to their communities. On 30 June 2022, this program had funding for a total of 1,310 places across home care and residential aged care. The Multi-Purpose Services Program also funds flexible care services in many rural and remote areas. Among those who received Multi-Purpose Services care in 2021–22, 196 identified as First Nations people (Department of Health and Aged Care 2023b).

**Figure 7: Use of aged care by First Nations people for selected programs, by age group and program**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. Rates of First Nations people are calculated using ABS 2016 Census-based population projections (Series B) (ABS 2023).
2. First Nations people refers to people who have identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. Data exclude recipients whose Indigenous status and/or age was not stated or inadequately described.

Sources: AIHW National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse; AIHW analysis of ABS (2023).

**Variation by remoteness**

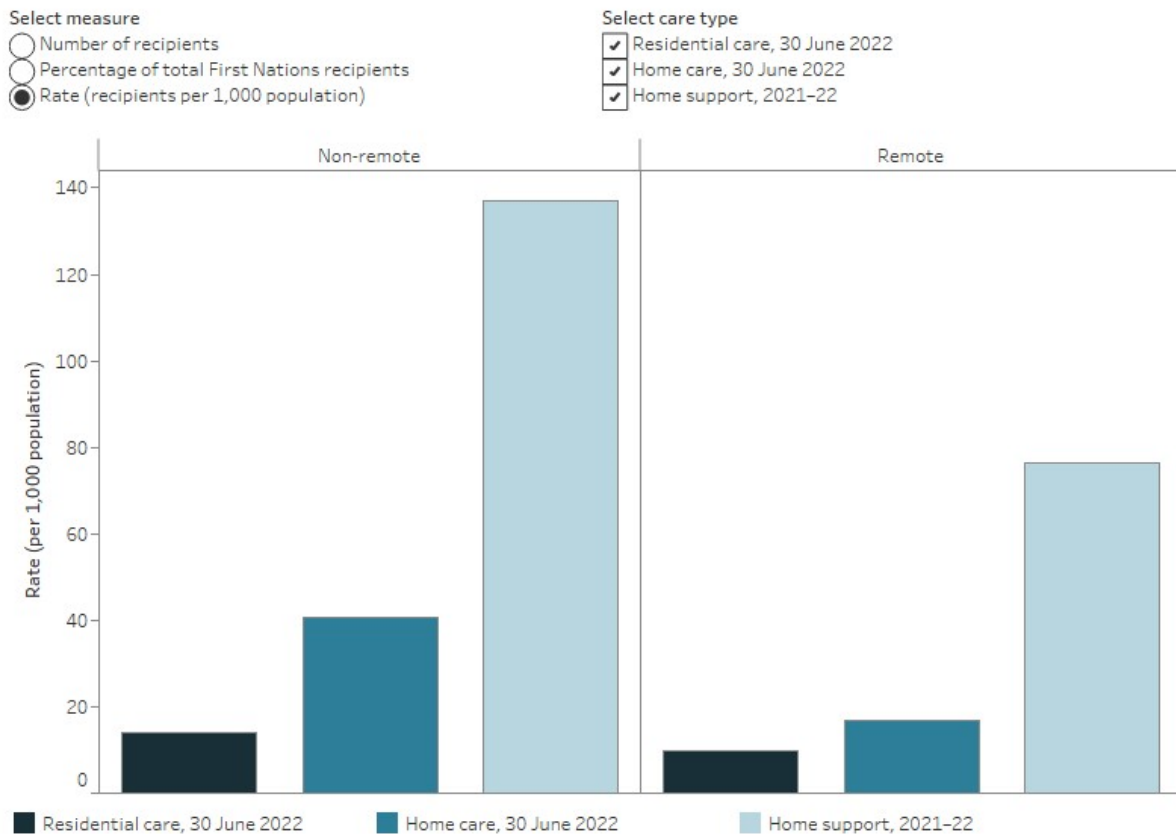
Among First Nations people aged 50 and over who used home support in 2021-22 or who received home care or residential aged care on 30 June 2022, most lived in non-remote areas (Figure 2). This is consistent with the fact that a higher number of First Nations people live in non-remote areas (*Major cities, Inner regional or Outer regional areas*) than in remote areas (*Remote or Very remote areas*).

Considering the rate of aged care service use per population, among First Nations people aged 50 and over:

- Those living in non-remote areas were 1.8 times more likely to receive home support services than those living in remote areas in 2021-22.

- Those living in non-remote areas were 2.4 times more likely to receive home care services than those living in remote areas on 30 June 2022.
- Those living in non-remote areas were 1.4 times more likely to receive residential aged care services than those living in remote areas on 30 June 2022.

**Figure 8: Variation in use of selected aged care programs by First Nations people aged 50 and over, by remoteness area and program**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

#### Notes

1. Rates of First Nations people are calculated using ABS 2016 Census-based population projections (Series B) (ABS 2023).

2. First Nations people refers to people who have identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. Data exclude recipients whose Indigenous status, age and/or remoteness area was not stated or inadequately described.

Sources: AIHW National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse; AIHW analysis of ABS (2023).

### Comparisons with non-Indigenous Australians

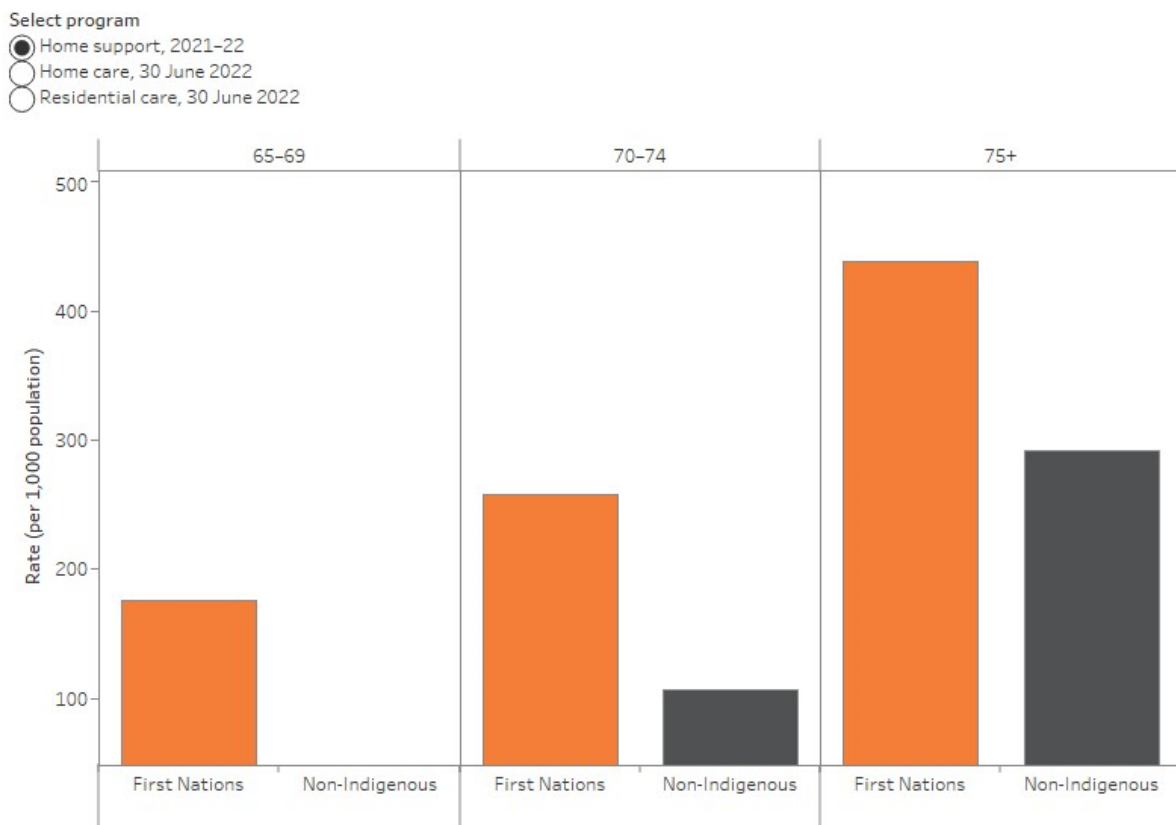
Except for use of residential aged care among people aged 75 and over, rates of aged care use were higher for First Nations people than for non-Indigenous Australians across all age groups and care types (Figure 3).

Among people aged 65–74, compared with the rate among non-Indigenous Australians, First Nations people were:



- 2.8 times more likely to use home support in 2021–22 (7,500 First Nations recipients, receiving care at a rate of 209 per 1,000 population, and 178,000 non-Indigenous recipients, receiving care at a rate of 74 per 1,000 population)
- 5.3 times more likely to use home care, as at 30 June 2022 (2,100 First Nations recipients, receiving care at a rate of 60 per 1,000 population, and 27,200 non-Indigenous recipients, receiving care at a rate of 11 per 1,000 population)
- 2.3 times more likely to use residential aged care, as at 30 June 2022 (640 First Nations recipients, receiving care at a rate of 18 per 1,000 population, and 18,600 non-Indigenous recipients, receiving care at a rate of 8 per 1,000 population).

**Figure 9: Rate of aged care use (per 1,000 population) among persons aged 65 and over in selected programs, by age group and Indigenous status**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

#### Notes

1. Rates of First Nations people are calculated using ABS 2016 Census-based population projections (Series B) (ABS 2023). Non-Indigenous rates are calculated using ABS ERP calculations (ABS 2022b), subtracted by First Nations population projections for the same time.

2. First Nations people refers to people who have identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. Data exclude recipients whose Indigenous status and/or age was not stated or inadequately described.

Sources: AIHW National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse; AIHW analysis of ABS (2022b, 2023).

## Changes over time

Over the past few years, home support has been delivered through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme. Prior to 1 July 2018, home support was (partially) delivered through the Home and Community Care program, after a gradual rollout which started 1 July 2015. Overall, the number of First Nations home support recipients has increased since 5 years ago, however, due to a relatively stronger increase in the population size of First Nations people aged 50 and over, the rate of home support service use per population has decreased – from 149 to 138 recipients per 1,000 population between 2017–18 and 2021–22 (Table 1).

**Table 1: Number and rate of persons aged 50 and over using home support, by Indigenous status, 2017–18 to 2021–22**

Time period	First Nations people	Non-Indigenous Australians	Rate of First Nations people (per 1,000)	Rate of non-Indigenous Australians (per 1,000)
2017–18	20,200	705,429	149.3	86.1
2018–19	21,337	759,552	151.3	90.7
2019–20	21,791	774,375	131.7	90.1
2020–21	22,210	763,755	145.8	86.9
2021–22	22,095	761,259	138.1	85.0

### Notes

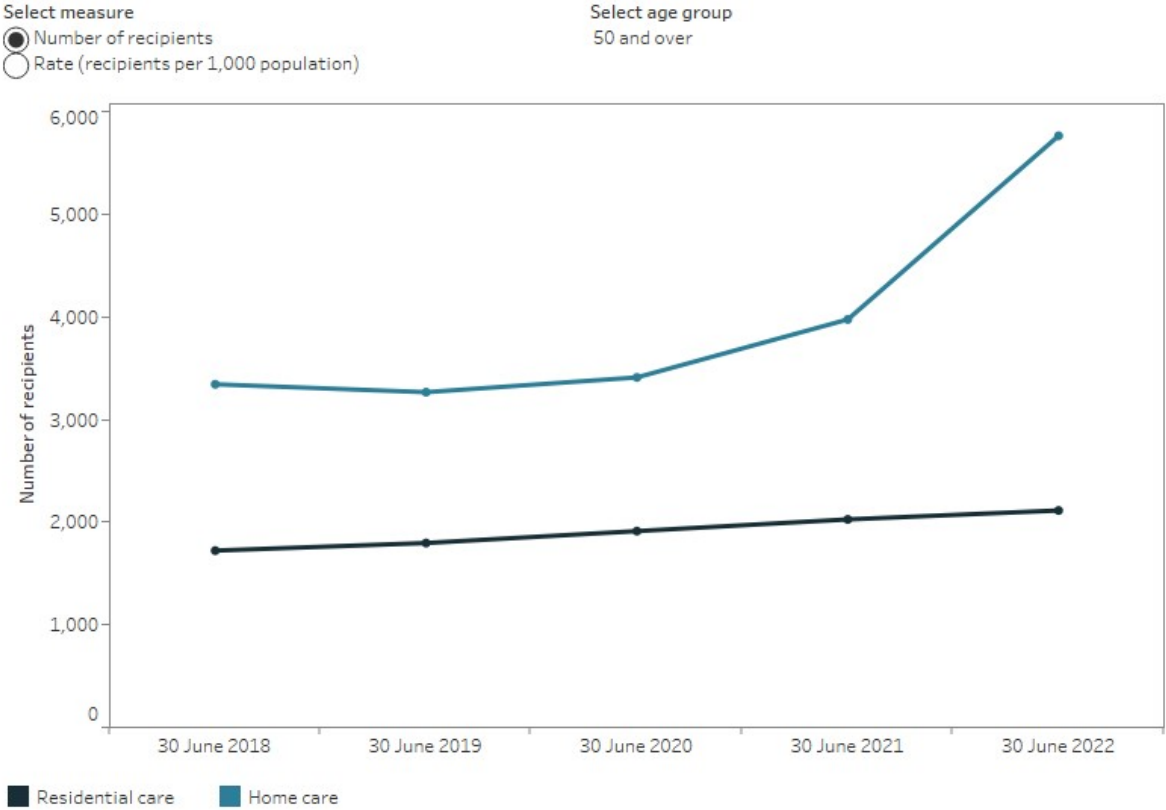
1. Rates of First Nations people are calculated using ABS 2016 Census-based population projections (Series B) (ABS 2023). Non-Indigenous rates are calculated using ABS ERP calculations (ABS 2022b), subtracted by First Nations population projections for the same time.
2. Indigenous status refers to whether a person has identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. Data exclude persons for whom Indigenous status and/or age was not stated or inadequately described. In 2017–18 Indigenous status was lacking for 6.7% recipients, 6.6% in 2018–19, 4.9% in 2019–20, 4.5% in 2020–21, and 4.0% in 2021–22.
3. Dates that home support providers input can reflect dates of data submission rather than dates of service use.

Sources: AIHW National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse; AIHW analysis of ABS (2022b, 2023).

Between 30 June 2018 and 30 June 2022, the rate of home care use for First Nations people aged 50 and over increased from 25 to 36 per 1,000, with numbers increasing from 3,300 to 5,800 (Figure 4). The trend over the past 5 years has varied between the different age groups – with some age groups seeing lower home care numbers in the years between 2018 and 2022, and others steadily increasing each year.

Between 30 June 2018 and 30 June 2022, the number of First Nations people aged 50 and over in residential aged care rose from 1,700 to 2,100 (Figure 4). It is worth noting that the rate and number of First Nations people using residential aged care services has only risen for those aged 65 and over. For First Nations people aged 50–64, the number and rate of residential aged care use has declined over the same period.

**Figure 10: Residential aged care and home care use by First Nations people aged 50 and over, by age group and age care type, 30 June 2018 to 30 June 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. Rates of First Nations people are calculated using ABS 2016 Census-based population projections (Series B) (ABS 2023).
2. First Nations people refers to people who have identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. Data exclude recipients whose Indigenous status and/or age was not stated or inadequately described.
3. In the home care data, Indigenous status is unknown for 17% of the recipients on 30 June 2022, 36% on 30 June 2021, 36% on 30 June 2020, 18% on 30 June 2019, and 1.2% on 30 June 2018. As a result, the number of recipients and rate of use presented here may not be representative of true service use.
4. The way service use is captured, and how this is reflected in the dates of use, vary between the aged care programs. For example, dates registered by home support providers may reflect dates of data submission rather than dates of service use.

Sources: AIHW National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse; AIHW analysis of ABS (2023).

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program was expanded between 2018–19 and 2021–22 (Department of Health 2018b). Between 30 June 2018 and 30 June 2022, the program grew by more than 50% (an increase of 450 places) from 860 to 1310 (Table 2).

**Table 2: Number of places funded for National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program, 30 June 2018 to 30 June 2022**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Residential care places</b>	<b>Home care places</b>	<b>Total number of places</b>
<b>30 June 2018</b>	489	371	860
<b>30 June 2019</b>	474	598	1,072
<b>30 June 2020</b>	494	770	1,264
<b>30 June 2021</b>	480	824	1,304
<b>30 June 2022</b>	475	835	1,310

Sources: Department of Health 2018a, 2019a, 2020a, 2021a; Department of Health and Aged Care 2022.

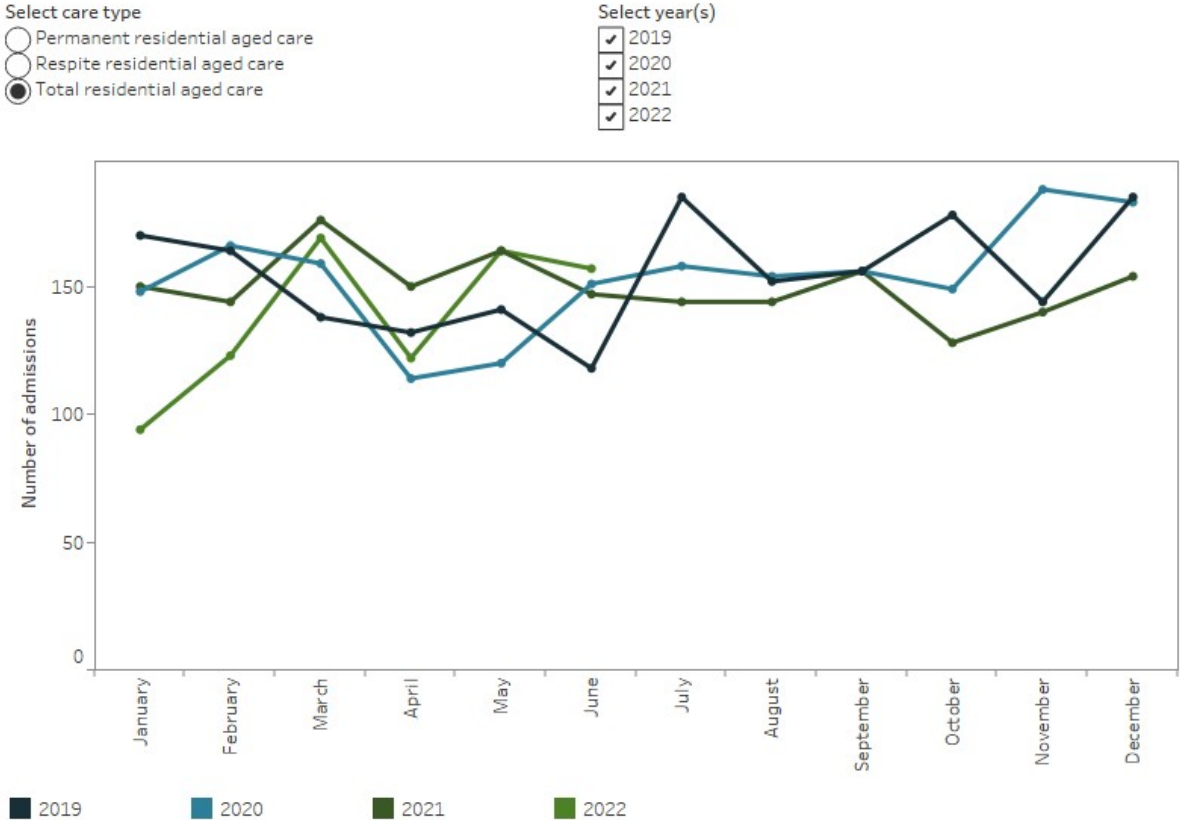
## **The impact of COVID-19**

In March 2020, measures to reduce the risk of community transmission of COVID-19, including limiting public gatherings and reducing non-essential travel, were put in place across Australia (Campbell and Vines 2021). The reduction of non-essential travel included restrictions on travel to and between remote and very remote communities (Department of Health 2020b), which potentially affected the use of aged care services in those areas. Additionally, provisions for aged care providers were included in jurisdictional public health orders – with changes including the restriction of visits to and from residential aged care facilities – however, the details differed across states and territories, and across individual facilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated changes to aged care services may have influenced First Nations people’s patterns of accessing aged care. A potential impact of COVID-19 can be seen in the lowered number of admissions of First Nations people to respite residential aged care in April and May 2020 (Figure 5), when many COVID-19 related restrictions were first put in place in Australia. Similarly, the lowest monthly admission numbers during 2021 were seen in October, when COVID-19 related deaths due to the Delta variant were at their highest (AIHW 2022). The lowest number of residential aged care admissions seen in any month between the start of 2019 and mid-2022 occurred in January 2022, when COVID-19 confirmed case numbers and deaths were at their highest so far during the first outbreak of the Omicron variant following the winding back of COVID-19 restrictions nationwide (AIHW 2022).

It should be noted that admission numbers include both new admissions and movements between facilities.

**Figure 11: Admissions of First Nations people into residential aged care for selected programs, by aged care type and month, 2019 to 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. First Nations people refers to people who have identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. Data exclude admissions where Indigenous status was not stated or inadequately described.
2. Respite residential aged care is when dependent people living in the community are temporarily admitted into residential aged care, giving people – or their carers – a short break from their usual care arrangements.
3. Permanent residential aged care is when a person is admitted into long-term residential aged care, making it their ongoing place of residence.
4. The fluctuations in admissions could reflect a number of factors that may or may not be related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: AIHW National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse.

See [Aged care](#) for information on the impacts of COVID-19 on aged care use in the general population.

## Aged care for First Nations people

In Australia, the aged care system offers options to meet the care needs of individuals. To help ensure aged care services are appropriate to the diverse needs of all people, the *Aged Care Act 1997* highlights the breadth of service needs by specifying some groups of people as ‘people with special needs’. First Nations people are one such group (*Aged Care Act 1997*: s11–3).

In the context of First Nations people, challenges for the aged care system include ensuring access to culturally appropriate care, especially for those living in remote and

very remote areas (ANAO 2017). In 2019, the Australian Government published *Actions to support older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, developed under the Aged Care Diversity Framework. These outline actions to support more inclusive and culturally appropriate care for First Nations people (Department of Health 2019b).

The [Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety](#) (Royal Commission) has also identified areas of importance in providing aged care to First Nations people.

## The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

In its *Final Report*, the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety identified that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have specific needs when accessing aged care. The report makes several recommendations, covering topics such as:

- the importance of culturally appropriate and safe care – including growing the First Nations aged care workforce through targeted programs and providing interpreter services for First Nations languages
- the requirement for trauma-informed approaches to providing care, particularly with members of the Stolen Generations
- the need to increase facilitation of provision of care on Country (or with options to return to Country where this is not possible)
- the potential to integrate aged care with existing First Nations organisations such as healthcare providers, disability services and social service providers (RCACQS 2021).

In response to the Royal Commission, the Australian Government promised \$572.5 million to ensure First Nations people can receive quality, culturally safe aged care, can access advice to make informed decisions about their care, and will be treated with dignity and respect (Department of Health 2021b).

The AIHW have also partnered with the Department of Health and Aged Care to work on the development of a National Aged Care Data Strategy, a National Minimum Data Set and a National Aged Care Data Asset. This will improve the available data on aged care – including with respect to First Nations recipients (for more information, see the data improvements on the [GEN aged care data website](#)).

A new aged care Act to replace and improve upon the *Aged Care Act 1997* and the *Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Act 2018* is currently under development, with this work being undertaken by the Department of Health and Aged Care in consultation with a range of stakeholders (Department of Health 2021c; Department of Health and Aged Care 2023a).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on First Nations people aged 50 and over and aged care use among the First Nations population, see:

- [Insights into vulnerabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 and over](#)

- [Regional Insights for Indigenous Communities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 and over](#)
- AIHW's dedicated aged care data website – [GEN aged care data](#); [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using aged care](#) dashboard.

Visit [Aged care](#) and [Indigenous Australians](#) for broader information on each of the topics.

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# Community safety for First Nations people

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-community-safety>

## On this page

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Safe communities, where people feel protected from harm within their home, workplace and community, are important for physical and mental wellbeing. The feeling of being safe enables a better quality of life and the capacity to be involved in the community in a positive way, both of which are protective factors for social and emotional wellbeing (AIHW and NIAA 2022a; Commonwealth of Australia 2017). While the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people feel safe in their communities and do not experience negative outcomes, they tend to experience greater rates of hospitalisation and death as a result of violence than the wider community (AIHW and NIAA 2022a).

Many factors influence community safety for First Nations people. Stronger connections to culture and Country, amongst other positive cultural determinants, improve outcomes for community safety (Commonwealth of Australia 2017). Factors that lead to unsafe situations include long-term social disadvantage and the ongoing impact of past dispossession and forced child-removal policies, which result in intergenerational trauma and breakdowns of traditional culture and kinship practices (Commonwealth of Australia 2018; Healing Foundation 2023).

This page focuses on First Nations people and their experiences of safety and violence in the community, contact with child protection services, and contact with criminal justice systems.

## Closing the Gap targets

In 2020, all Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations worked in partnership to develop the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) (the National Agreement), built around 4 Priority Reforms. The National Agreement also identifies 19 targets across 17 socioeconomic outcome areas. Four of these targets directly relate to community safety, monitored annually by the Productivity Commission and reported in their [Closing the Gap Information Repository Dashboard](#).

## **National Agreement on Closing the Gap: community safety-related targets**

### **Outcome area 10: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system**

- Target: By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15 per cent (from an age-standardised rate of 2,142.9 per 100,000 in 2019 to 1,821.5 per 100,000 by 2031).
- Status: In 2021, the age-standardised imprisonment rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults was 2,222.7 per 100,000, which was higher than the target trajectory rate for 2021 of 2,089.3 per 100,000 population (Productivity Commission 2022a).

### **Outcome area 11: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system**

- Target: By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10–17 years) in detention by at least 30 per cent (from 31.9 per 10,000 in 2018–19 to 22.3 per 10,000 by 2031).
- Status: In 2020–21, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10–17 years) in detention was 23.2 per 10,000, which was lower than the target trajectory rate of 30.3 per 10,000 population in 2020–21 (Productivity Commission 2022b).

### **Outcome area 12: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not overrepresented in the child protection system**

- Target: By 2031, reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent (from 54.2 per 1,000 in 2019 to 29.8 per 1,000 by 2031).
- Status: In 2021, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care was 57.6 per 1,000, which is higher than the target trajectory rate of 50.1 per 1,000 population (Productivity Commission 2022c).

### **Outcome area 13: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe**

- Target: By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced by at least 50%, as progress towards zero (from 8.4% in 2018–19 to 4.2% by 2031).
- Status: The target trajectory of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females aged 15 years and older experiencing domestic physical or threatened physical harm was a reduction from 8.4% in 2018–19 to 7.4% in 2021–22. However, at the time of writing, progress towards this target could not be assessed because there were no new data on self-reported experiences of violence since the baseline year of 2018–19 (Productivity Commission 2022d).

# Community experiences of safety and violence

This section covers information on feelings of safety and experiences of violence using a range of data sources, including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2014–15 (NATSISS), the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2018–19 (NATSIHS), the National Hospital Morbidity Database (NHMD), the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Causes of Death Collection, the AIHW National Mortality Database (NMD) and the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) National Homicide Monitoring Program.

## Feelings of safety

Feeling safe is an indicator of how an individual perceives their community; those who feel safe are able to live a better quality and healthier life and are more likely to engage in the community, and the community as a whole faces a lower incidence of, and costs from, injuries and violence (AIHW and NIAA 2022a). The most recent data on feeling of safety comes from the NATSISS.

In 2014–15, among First Nations people aged 15 and over who reported they walked alone in their local area after dark:

- 68% said they felt safe or very safe
- 12% felt neither safe nor unsafe
- 20% felt unsafe or very unsafe.

For those who spent time home alone after dark:

- 87% felt safe or very safe
- 5% felt neither safe nor unsafe
- 8% felt unsafe or very unsafe.

## Experiences of physical or threatened violence

In an Indigenous community context, where family and kinship networks can be broad and complex, the term 'family violence' can be considered as covering relevant issues and behaviours within a broader set of relationships. Interventions to address family violence have therefore moved away from the approach of treating incidents as one-off events, and instead follow holistic, culturally appropriate approaches that are integrated into communities. For more information on these programs, see [Family violence prevention programs in Indigenous communities](#). Also see [Family, domestic and sexual violence](#).

Results from the latest NATSIHS indicate that in 2018–19, 16% (an estimated 76,900) of First Nations people aged 15 and over had experienced physical and/or threatened physical harm in the preceding 12 months, while 6.3% (an estimated 30,900) experienced physical harm. Of those experiencing physical harm, 74% believed that the offender was under the influence of alcohol or other substances during the most recent incident.

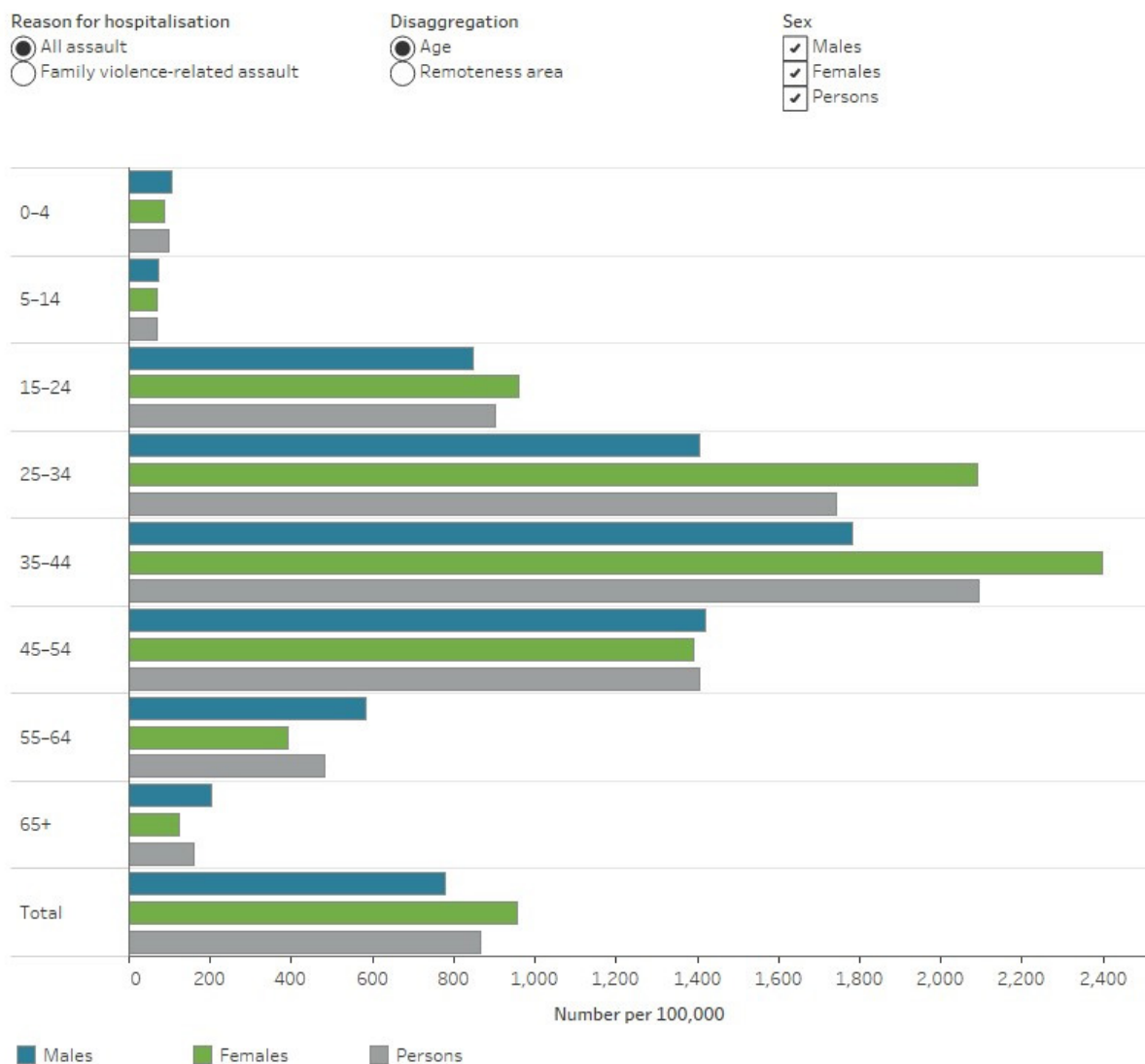
## Assault hospitalisations

In the two-year period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2021, there were 14,954 assault hospitalisations for First Nations people, accounting for 32% of all assault hospitalisations (a rate of 867 per 100,000 hospitalisations). The rates were highest for First Nations females living in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas (Figure 1).

First Nations people were 15 times as likely to be hospitalised for assault as non-Indigenous Australians (age-standardised rates of 975 compared with 67 per 100,000, respectively). The ratio was higher for females, with First Nations females being 27 times as likely as non-Indigenous females to be hospitalised for assault.

Between 2010–11 and 2020–21 there was a 12% increase in the age-standardised rate of assault hospitalisations for all First Nations people (from 885 to 995 per 100,000 population) (Figure 2).

**Figure 1: Hospitalisations for assault, First Nations people, by sex, age and remoteness, Australia, 2019–20 to 2020–21**



## Notes

1. Categories are based on the ICD-10-AM 10th edition. Causes of injury are based on the first reported external cause as 'Assault' ICD-10-AM codes X85–Y09, where the principal diagnosis was 'Injury, poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes' (S00–T98).
2. Family violence-related assault refers to non-fatal hospitalisations (mode of separation was not equal to 'died') where the perpetrator of assault was coded as 'spouse/domestic partner', 'parent' or 'other family member'.
3. Remoteness area is determined by usual residence of the patient hospitalised, based on the ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) 2016. Remote Victoria has been included in *Outer regional*.
4. The rates presented for hospitalisation are crude rates.

Source: AIHW analysis of National Hospital Morbidity Database.

In the two-year period 2019–20 to 2020–21, of the total assault hospitalisations for First Nations people, half (7,527 assaults) were family violence-related. However, the AIHW has previously found that the number of hospitalisations due to family violence is likely to be an undercount because the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator may be unknown or unreported (AIHW 2021c).

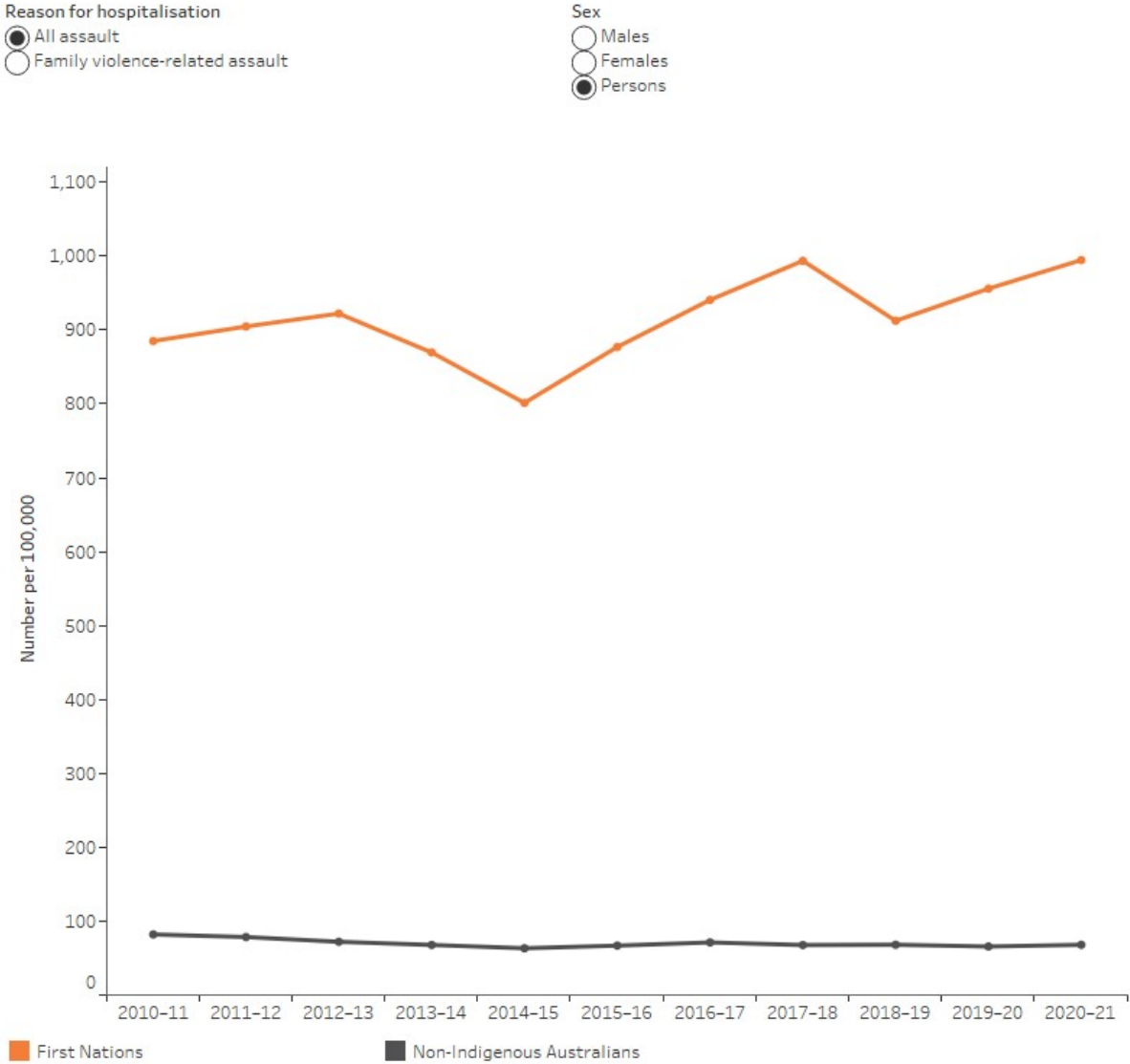
The remaining 7,419 assault hospitalisations were due to assault perpetrated by a carer, acquaintance or friend; official authorities; person unknown to the victim; multiple people unknown to the victim; other specified person or an unspecified person.

Among First Nations people, the rate of family violence-related assault was:

- higher for females compared with males
- highest for those aged 35–44 compared with other age groups
- highest in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas of Australia compared with non-remote areas (Figure 1).

Based on age-standardised rates, the rate of family-violence related assault hospitalisations for First Nations people was 29 times the non-Indigenous rate. Over the period 2010–11 to 2020–21, there was a 37% increase in the rate of family violence-related assaults for First Nations people (based on age-standardised rates), or an increase from 364 to 503 hospitalisations per 100,000 population (Figure 2). Note: data presented on this page may differ from that in the [Injury in Australia](#) and [Family, domestic and sexual violence data in Australia](#) reports due to differences in methodology. For more information, see [Family, domestic and sexual violence](#).

**Figure 2: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates for assault, by Indigenous status and sex, Australia, 2010–11 to 2020–21**



<https://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. Categories are based on the ICD-10-AM 11th edition (Australian Consortium for Classification Development 2019); Causes of injury are based on the first reported external cause as 'Assault' ICD-10-AM codes X85–Y09, where the principal diagnosis was 'Injury, poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes' (S00–T98). Codes from previous editions (7th to 10th) of ICD-10-AM have been mapped to 11th edition.
2. Family violence-related assault refers to non-fatal hospitalisations (mode of separation was not equal to 'died') where the perpetrator of assault was coded as 'spouse/domestic partner', 'parent' or 'other family member'.
3. Hospitalisation rates directly age-standardised using the Australian 2001 standard population.
4. Time series analyses may be affected by changes in the quality of First Nations identification over time. Time series presentations in this report include data from both public and private hospitals across several jurisdictions, so the overall effect of changes in Indigenous identification over time is unclear. This should be taken into account when interpreting time series data.

## COVID-19 and intimate partner violence

In response to outbreaks occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic, several states and territories imposed lockdowns to prevent the disease from spreading. As a result, women who were vulnerable to domestic violence may have been required to socially isolate with their offending partners. For some people, the pandemic also increased other stressors, such as financial hardship and social isolation, which are risk factors for domestic violence (Morgan and Boxall 2020).

Boxall and Morgan (2021) surveyed women about their experiences of intimate partner violence since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. They found that of the women who were experiencing physical violence from their partners for the first time during the pandemic, almost 1 in 3 (29%) had been in the relationship for 11 or more years. Among women experiencing first-time violence or an escalation of violence, pandemic-related factors were the most commonly reported relationship-level factors contributing to a change in violence (Boxall and Morgan 2021). The authors noted that First Nations women were more likely to experience both physical and non-physical abuse, but the effect of the pandemic on this was unclear.

The ABS also reported on co-habiting partner violence in 2021–22 in the Personal Safety Survey. The ABS found a decrease in the prevalence of women experiencing partner violence compared to previous collection years (ABS 2023a). However, this survey did not examine factors contributing to violence and did not specifically collect data on the effect of the pandemic. No data about First Nations people has been published from this survey.

## Deaths due to homicide

Information on deaths due to homicide is available from death registrations data. The AIHW reports deaths data about First Nations people for the 5 jurisdictions in which the AIHW considers the quality of First Nations identification to be adequate – New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory.

In these 5 jurisdictions combined, over the period 2006 to 2019, the rate of deaths due to homicide for First Nations people trended downwards, decreasing by 37% overall, from 6.9 per 100,000 to 3.8 per 100,000 (from 39 deaths in 2006 to 28 deaths in 2019).

Over the five-year period 2015 to 2019, among First Nations people:

- There were 174 deaths due to homicide.
- The rate of deaths due to homicide was 1.7 times higher for males compared with females (6.1 and 3.6 per 100,000, respectively).
- Rates were highest for those aged 35–44, at 14 per 100,000 (AIHW and NIAA 2022a).

The AIC also reports on homicides in Australia. According to AIC data, between July 2020 and June 2021, there were 22 homicide victims who were First Nations people. The offender was an intimate partner, child, parent, sibling or other relative for half (11) of these victims, including all 5 female victims. The remaining victims of homicide were male, and the offender was an acquaintance (5), a stranger (2), relationship not stated/unknown (2) or offender not identified (2) (AIC 2023).



Statistics about homicide presented on this page come from different sources and may differ due to differences in reporting periods and methodology.

## Contact with child protection services

The safety of children in their homes and communities is a key part of community safety. Police, teachers, doctors, and others notify child protection services when there is a risk or perceived risk of harm to a child. Historical child welfare policies targeting First Nations people led to the Stolen Generations, and the trauma experienced by survivors and their descendants is ongoing (AIHW 2018, 2021a). The consequences of these removal policies have long-term effects, including social, physical and psychological impacts for those directly involved, as well as for their families and communities (Atkinson 2013). Child protection issues continue to be very significant for the First Nations population, reflecting this history of trauma and stressors that have impacted on parents and communities. In addition, children who are abused or neglected are at greater risk of future contact with the criminal justice system (AIHW 2022d).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) sets out a placement hierarchy for First Nations children being placed in out-of-home care. The intention of the ATSICPP is to ensure culture, human rights and self-determination are embedded in child welfare decisions (SNAICC 2017). Placements must be made in consultation with the child's family and community representatives, and must be geographically close to the child's family, unless the child is placed with extended First Nations family (SNAICC 2017).

In order, priority is given to placement with:

1. First Nations or non-Indigenous kin
2. other First Nations members of the community
3. First Nations family-based carers
4. a non-Indigenous carer or in a residential setting.

As at 30 June 2021, 63% of First Nations children in out-of-home care were placed with Indigenous or non-Indigenous kin or with another First Nations carer, in accordance with the ATSICPP. This proportion has been relatively stable since 30 June 2017 (AIHW 2022a). For more information about the ATSICPP, including indicator development, see [The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle indicators](#) report.

From July 2020 to June 2021:

- 14,596 First Nations children were the subject of substantiated notifications, a rate of 43 per 1,000 First Nations children (Figure 3).
- 58,034 First Nations children were receiving services, accounting for 32% of all children in Australia receiving services. This was a rate of 172 per 1,000 (AIHW 2022b).

As of 30 June 2021:

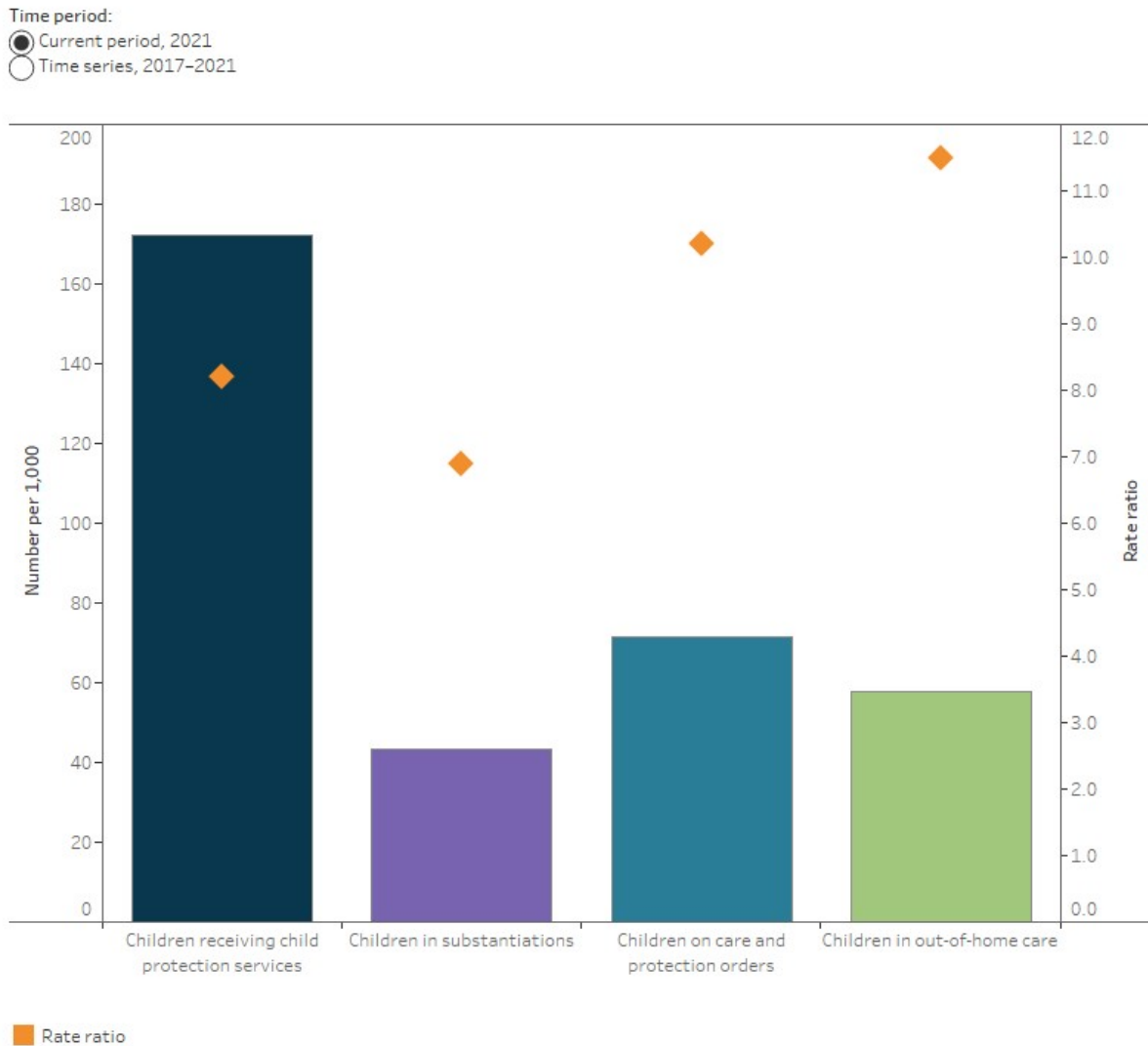
- 24,174 (71 per 1,000) First Nations children were on care and protection orders.
  - Between 30 June 2017 and 30 June 2021, there was a 19% increase, from 60 per 1,000 to 71 per 1,000 (Figure 3).



- 19,480 (58 per 1,000) First Nations children were in out-of-home care.
  - Between 30 June 2017 and 30 June 2021 there was a 13% increase, from 51 per 1,000 to 58 per 1,000 (AIHW 2022b) (Figure 3).

When interpreting the time series data presented in Figure 3, please note, there was a break in the time trend for substantiation data, due to a change in processes in New South Wales in 2017–2018.

**Figure 3: First Nations children in the child protection system, 2017 to 2021**



<https://www.aihw.gov.au/>

#### Notes

1. Children on care and protection orders and in out-of-home care were measured as at 30 June each year. Children in substantiations are measured in financial years (in other words, 2021 indicates substantiations from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021).

2. In 2017–18, New South Wales was unable to provide data on substantiations due to the implementation of a new client management system. Therefore, time trend substantiation data is not published.

3. In 2018–19, all states and territories adopted a national definition of out-of-home care. The out-of-home care data have been back cast to 30 June 2017 with the national definition and may differ from those published elsewhere.

4. Rate ratio is the rate for First Nations people divided by the rate for non-Indigenous Australians.

Source: AIHW Child protection Australia 2020–21.

## Impact of COVID-19 on child protection notifications

Suspicious about child abuse or neglect are often reported by schools, child care centres, and other people or services children regularly come into contact with. The COVID-19 pandemic affected daily life through restrictions on people's movements and interactions – potentially limiting opportunities for child abuse and neglect to be detected and reported. In April 2020, the number of school notifications decreased normally as school holidays started, but upon returning to school the increase was larger than was seen in 2019. However, numbers for substantiations and out-of-home care orders remained relatively stable across the period (AIHW 2021b). The long-term impact of COVID-19 on child protection processes is still unknown; however, there have been no specific impacts on the annual data. For a more information, please see [Child protection system in Australia](#).

## Contact with criminal justice systems

Criminal justice systems are used to protect individuals and communities. This includes incarcerating people who commit serious crimes. However, imprisonment can compound existing social and economic disadvantage and affects family, children, and the broader community with intergenerational effects (AIHW and NIAA 2022b).

People in contact with the criminal justice system are at risk of poorer health and wellbeing outcomes for themselves, their family and their broader community. First Nations people experience contact with criminal justice systems, as both offenders and victims, at much higher rates than non-Indigenous Australians (AIHW and NIAA 2022b).

## Youth justice

Australians under the age of 18 who have been sentenced, or are awaiting sentencing, may be placed under supervision within the community or detention facilities. Rates of supervision for First Nations people aged 10–17 have trended downwards for both community supervision and detention since 2011–12 (AIHW 2022c). Rates of community supervision have always been higher than rates of detention (Figure 4).

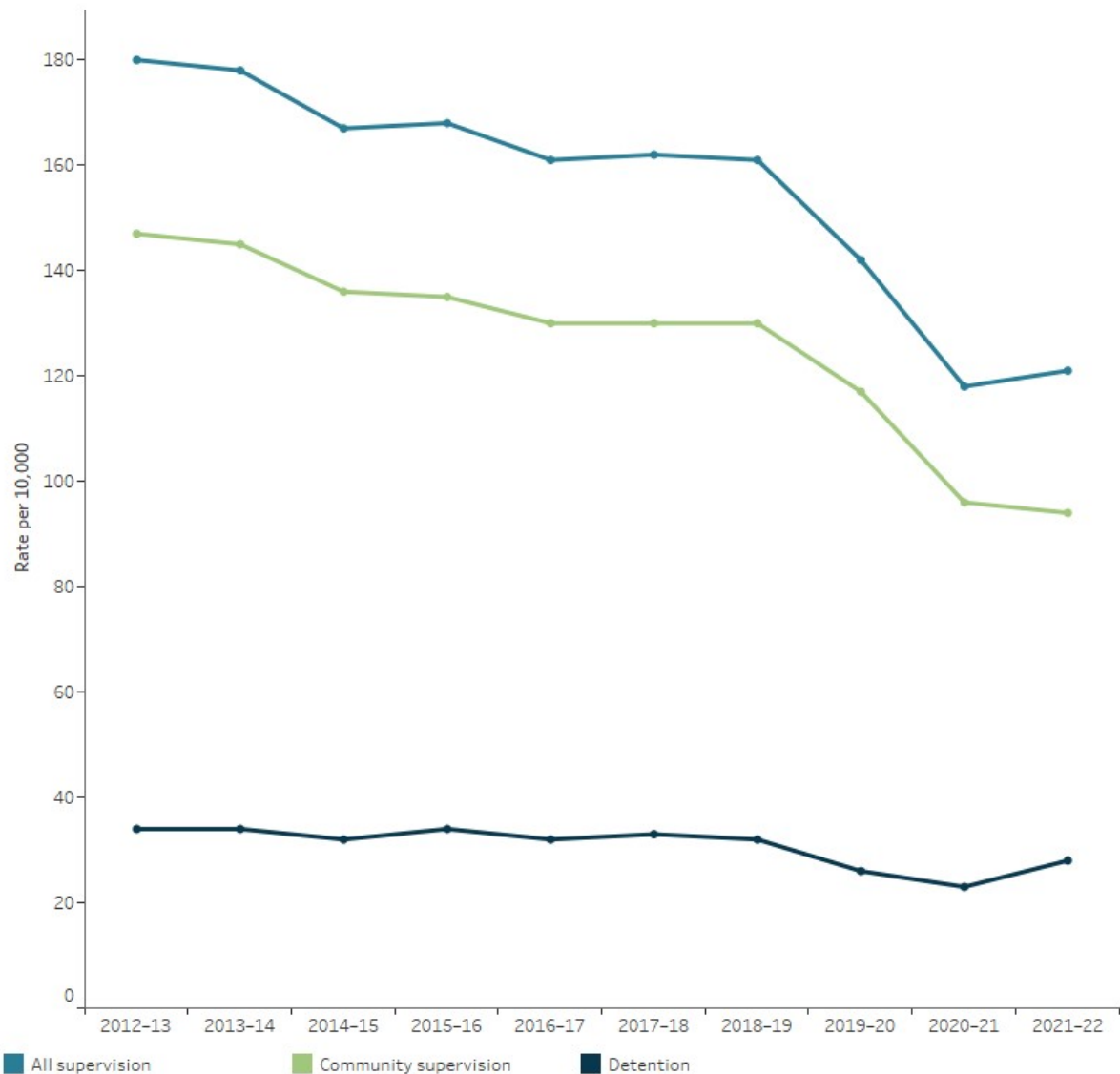
The rate of First Nations people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day declined from 180 per 10,000 in 2012–13 to 121 per 10,000 in 2021–22 (Figure 4). The largest declines occurred in 2019–20 and 2020–21 (AIHW 2022c). This may be partly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a substantial impact on the operation of courts. However, more data is required to determine the impact of the pandemic on youth justice data.

Though the rate of First Nations people aged 10–17 in supervision has decreased, in 2021–22 First Nations people were 19 times as likely as non-Indigenous Australians aged

10–17 to be under supervision on an average day (121 per 10,000, compared with 6.5 per 10,000, respectively) (AIHW 2022c). (See [Youth justice](#)).

There are no national data available on the principal (most serious) offences among First Nations people under supervision.

**Figure 4: Youth justice rates, First Nations people aged 10–17 under sentenced supervision on an average day, by supervision type, 2012–13 to 2021–22**



<https://www.aihw.gov.au/>

#### Notes

1. Trend data may differ from those previously published due to data revisions.
2. Rates are number of people (aged 10–17) per 10,000 relevant population.
3. Rates are not published where there were fewer than five people aged 10–17.

4. Age on an average day is calculated based on the age a person is each day that they are under supervision. If a person changes age during a period of supervision, then the average daily number under supervision will reflect this. Average daily data broken down by age will not be comparable to *Youth justice in Australia* releases prior to 2019–20.

5. Closing the Gap Target 11 focusses on rates of youth in detention only.

Source: AIHW Youth justice in Australia 2021–22.

## Impact of COVID-19 on youth justice

While youth justice centres and other places of custody, courts or tribunals were considered essential services (Prime Minister of Australia 2020), COVID-19 still has had a substantial impact on the operations of these services and restrictions may have continued beyond the easing of restrictions in the general community. The impact may differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In New South Wales, for example, Children’s Court hearings were vacated from 24 March to 1 May 2020 with few exceptions. This led to a decrease in the number of court finalisations between March and June 2020, which resulted in a reduction of young people in sentenced detention.

During this period, there was also a decline in unsentenced detention as more young people were discharged to bail and fewer young people had their bail revoked when breaching bail conditions (Chan 2021). More research is required to better understand the impact of COVID-19 and related social restrictions on youth justice supervision across Australia. For more information, see [Youth justice](#).

## Adult prisoners

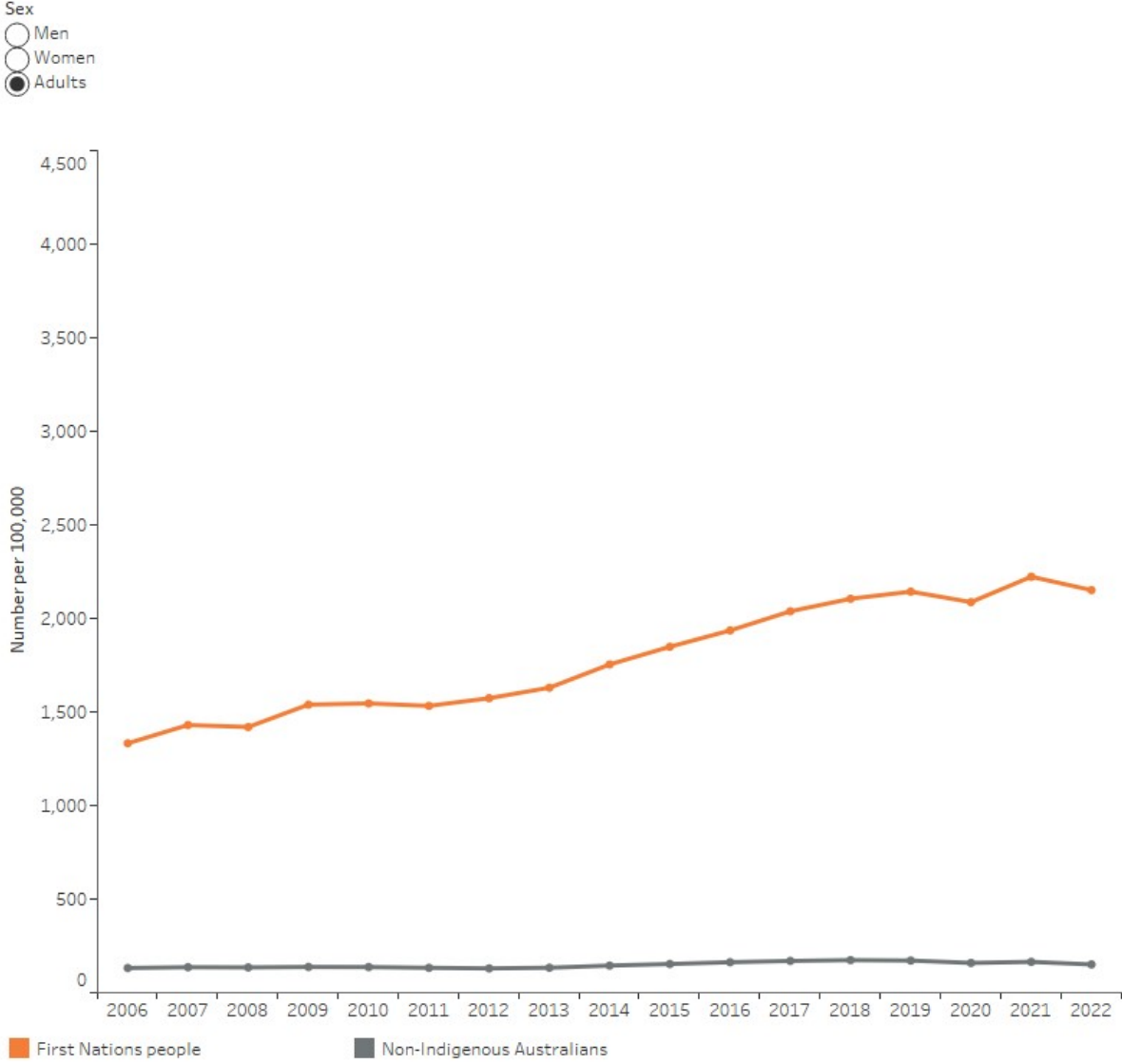
As at 30 June 2022:

- there were 12,902 First Nations prisoners in custody, representing 32% of the prison population, up from 24% in 2006
- the majority (91% or 11,744 people) of First Nations prisoners were male
- almost 4 in 5 (78% or 10,025 people) First Nations prisoners had previously experienced adult imprisonment (ABS 2023b).

Between 30 June 2006 and 30 June 2022, the age-standardised rate of adult First Nations imprisonment increased by 61%, from 1,333 to 2,151 per 100,000 (Figure 5) (ABS 2021, 2023b).

In 2022, the age-standardised rate of imprisonment for First Nations adults was 14 times as high as for non-Indigenous Australians (2,151 compared with 151 per 100,000 population) (Figure 5). Among adult First Nations prisoners, the most commonly recorded most serious offences/charges were acts to cause injury (38% of prisoners), unlawful entry with intent (11%), sexual assault (10%), robbery/extortion (9%) and offences against justice (9%) (ABS 2023b).

**Figure 5: Age-standardised adult imprisonment rates, by Indigenous status and sex, 2006 to 2022**



<https://www.aihw.gov.au>

**Notes**

1. Data includes all persons in the legal custody of adult corrective services in all states and territories as at midnight 30 June of the reference year.
2. From 2019, in all states and territories persons remanded or sentenced to adult custody are aged 18 years and over.
3. In Queensland, prior to 2018, 'adult' referred to persons aged 17 years and over.
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rates were revised using updated numbers based on the 2016 Census.

Source: ABS Prisoners in Australia.

## Impact of COVID-19 on adult prisons

From March 2020, a range of measures were introduced in adult prisons to reduce the impact of COVID-19, including vaccinations, social distancing, virtual visits and the use of personal protective equipment such as face masks.

Due to the living conditions within prison, prisoners are vulnerable to infectious diseases (Ndeffo-Mbah et al. 2018) and as such, COVID-19 poses a serious risk to the physical health of this population. Measures introduced to reduce the spread of COVID-19 are also likely to have had an impact on the mental, emotional and social wellbeing of a person in prison (Department of Health 2020). However, there is currently limited data available to understand the extent to which COVID-19 has impacted the health and wellbeing of people in Australia's prisons. The 2022 National Prisoner Health Data Collection included items on COVID-19. Data are scheduled for release by the AIHW in late 2023. For more information, see [Adult prisoners](#).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on First Nations community safety, see: [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework – Measure 2.10: Community safety](#).

For more information on contact with the justice system, see: [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework – Measure 2.11: Contact with the criminal justice system](#).

For more information on child protection, see: [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework – Measure 2.12: Child protection](#) and [Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026](#).

For more information on the health impacts of family, domestic and sexual violence, see: [The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032](#).

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# Education of First Nations people

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-education-and-skills>

## On this page

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Higher levels of education have been linked with improved health and wellbeing, health literacy, income, employment, better working conditions and a range of other social benefits (ABS 2011; Biddle and Cameron 2012; Hart et al. 2017).

Education is fundamental to improving health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people. Specific areas requiring action and improvement have been highlighted, in particular, early childhood education, school readiness and achievement, attainment of Year 12 or equivalent and tertiary and post school education (for more information, see [Closing the Gap](#)).

This page provides an overview of indicators relating to education and skills of First Nations people, progress towards the Closing the Gap education targets, and some effects of COVID-19 on the education of First Nations People. See [glossary](#) for definitions of terms used on this page.

## Closing the Gap targets

In 2020, all Australian governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition of peaks representatives worked in partnership to develop the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) (the National Agreement), built around 4 Priority Reforms. The National Agreement also identifies 19 targets across 17 socioeconomic outcome areas. Five of these targets relate to school readiness and education.

## National Agreement on Closing the Gap: education-related targets

**Outcome area 3:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years.

- Target: By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95%.
- Status: The baseline proportion in 2016 was 77%. The most recent proportion, using data for 2021, is 96.7%. This is above the target trajectory proportion for 2021 of 86.9%.

**Outcome area 4:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years.

- Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all 5 domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55%.
- Status: The baseline proportion in 2018 was 35%. The most recent proportion, using data for 2021, is 34.3%. This is below the target trajectory proportion for 2021 of 39.8%.

**Outcome area 5:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full learning potential.

- Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20–24) attaining Year 12 or equivalent (Certificate III or above) qualification to 96%.
- Status: The baseline proportion in 2016 was 63%. The most recent level, using data for 2021, is 68%. This is below the target trajectory proportion for 2021 of 74.1%.

**Outcome area 6:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways.

- Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years who have completed a **tertiary qualification** (Certificate III and above) to 70%.
- Status: The baseline proportion in 2016 was 42%. The most recent proportion, using data for 2021, is 47%. This is below the target trajectory proportion for 2021 of 51.5%.

**Outcome area 7:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are engaged in employment or education.

- Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15–24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67%.
- Status: The baseline proportion in 2016 was 57%. The most recent proportion, using data from 2021, is 58%. This is below the target trajectory proportion for 2021 of 60.5%.

Note: The baseline values for these targets were derived from the 2016 National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (Outcome area 3), 2018 AEDC (Outcome area 4), and the 2016 Census of Population and Housing (Census) (Outcome areas 5, 6 and 7).

Prior to establishment of the National Agreement, there were 7 Closing the Gap targets set by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, 4 of which related to education. These were:

- a target to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school attendance by 2018;
- a target to halve the gap for Indigenous children in reading, writing, and numeracy in the decade 2008 to 2018;
- a target to halve the gap for Indigenous Australians aged 20–24 with a year 12 or equivalent (Certificate II or above) qualification from 2006 to 2020;
- and a target to increase enrollment of Indigenous four-year-olds in early childhood education to at least 95% by 2025.

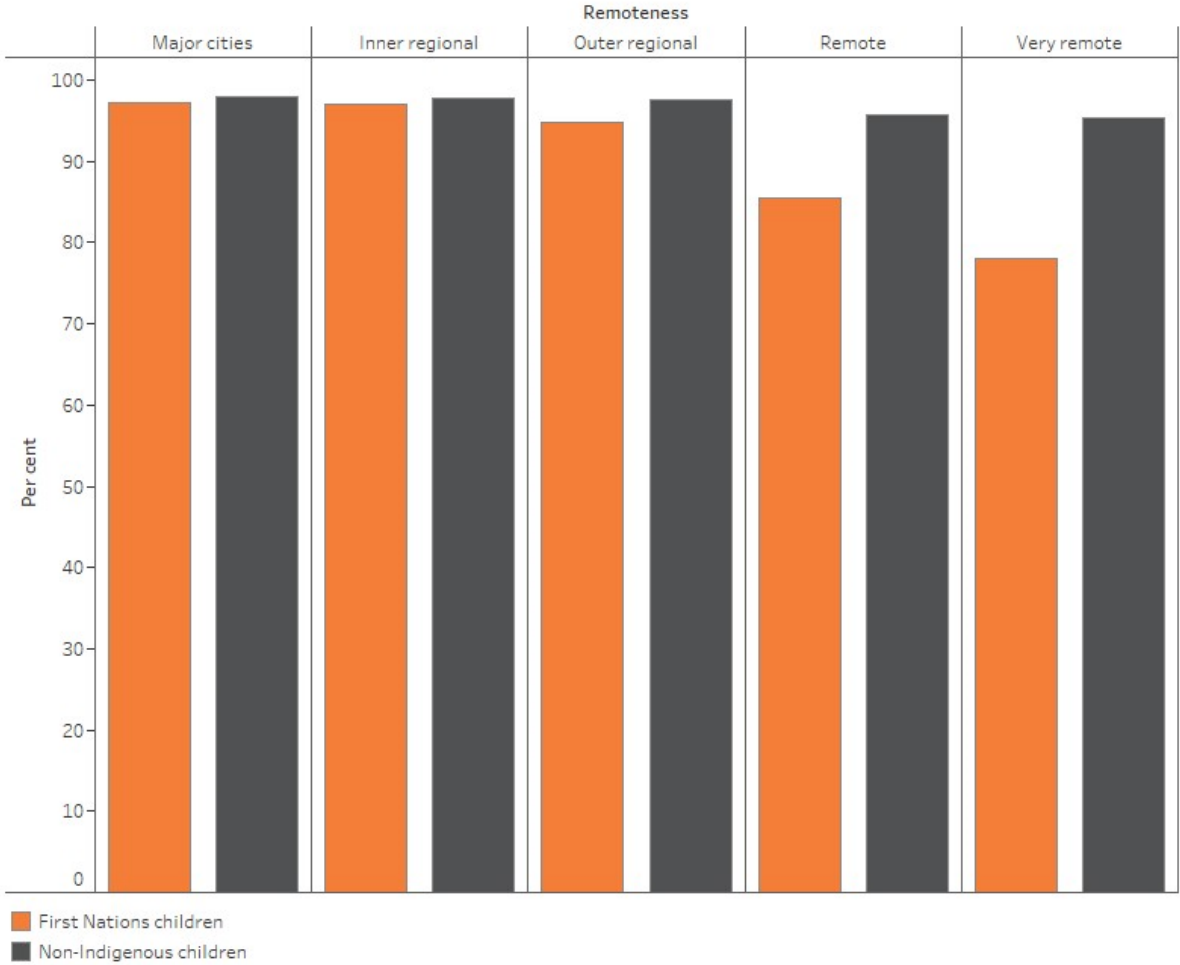
The [Closing the Gap Report 2020](#) found that the first and second targets expired unmet, while the third and fourth targets which had not yet expired were on track.

## Early childhood education

From 2016 to 2022 the percentage of First Nations children enrolled in early childhood education in the year before full-time schooling increased by more than 20 percentage points, from 77% to 99%. Over the same period, enrolments for non-Indigenous children decreased by 4 percentage points, from 92% to 88% (Productivity Commission 2023).

Attendance rates (the proportion of enrolled children who attended for at least 1 hour in a reference week) for First Nations children were highest in *Major cities* and lower in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas (Figure 1). Data by remoteness are only available for 2019.

**Figure 1: Attendance rates for children enrolled in a preschool program in the year before full-time schooling, by remoteness and Indigenous status, 2019**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Attendance rates are the proportion of enrolled children who attended for at least 1 hour in the reference week.

Source: SCRGSP 2020.

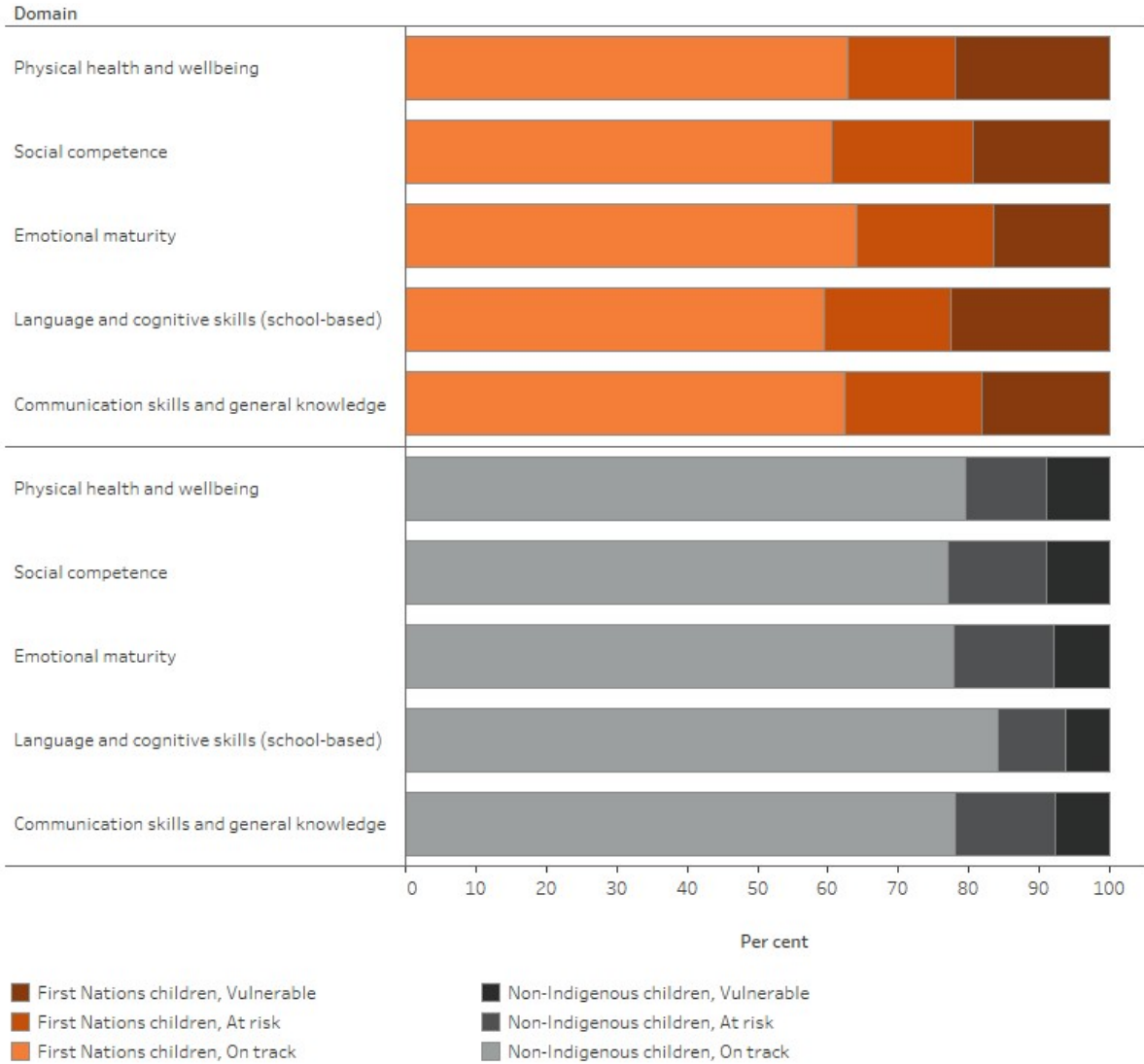
## Early child development

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a census type data collection for all children in their first year of full-time schooling, conducted every 3 years. Based on their observations, school teachers assess children on 5 domains of early childhood development (Figure 2).

The 2021 AEDC assessed 305,000 children, of whom 20,600 (6.8%) were First Nations. Across each of the 5 AEDC domains, around 6 in 10 (between 59% and 64%) First Nations children were assessed as being developmentally on track (Figure 2) (DESE 2022).

Around 3 in 10 (34%) First Nations children were assessed as on track on all 5 domains in 2021. While the proportion of children who were developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains was higher among First Nations children than non-Indigenous children (42% compared with 22%), the vast majority of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains were non-Indigenous (55,400 of 63,300).

**Figure 2: Proportion of children in their first year of full-time school who were assessed as developmentally on track, at risk, or vulnerable, by Indigenous status and AEDC domain, 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

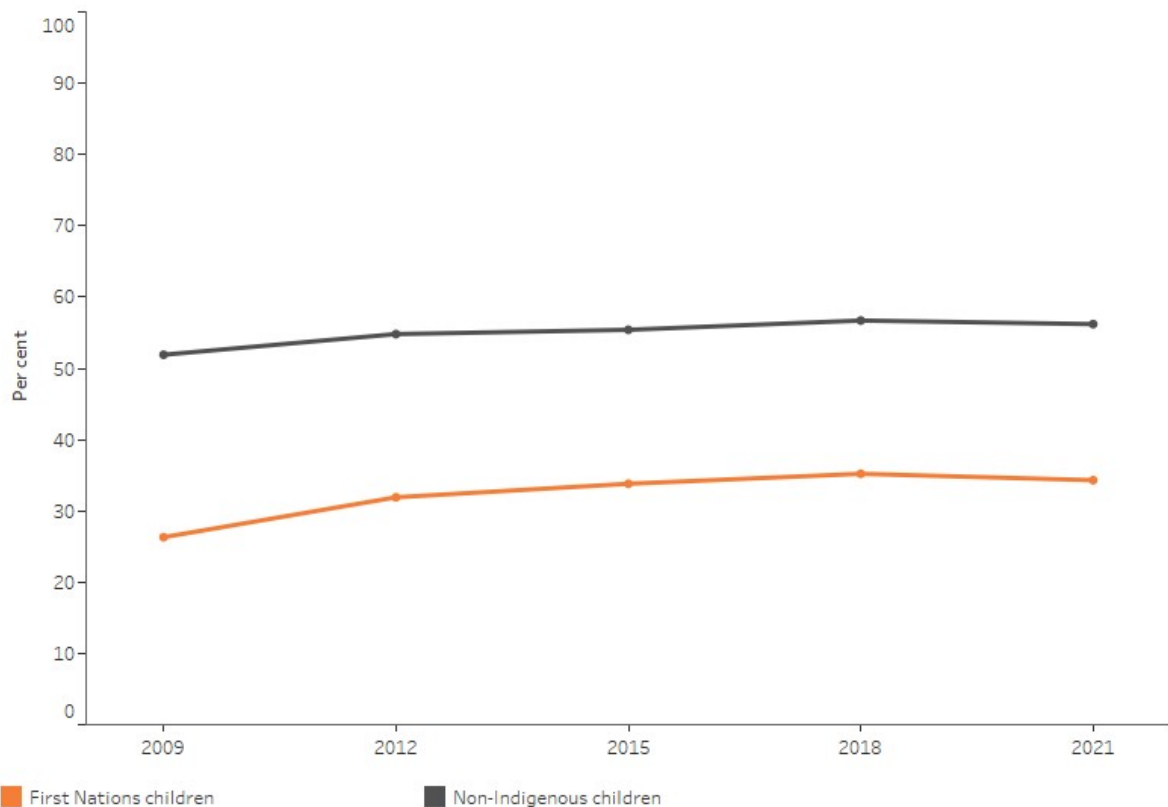
Source: DESE 2022.

The 2021 AEDC results also showed that, nationally:

- First Nations children living in *Major cities* were 2.4 times as likely as those living in *Very remote* areas to be assessed as developmentally on track on all 5 domains (38% compared with 16%) (Figure 3).

- 64% of First Nations children were assessed as developmentally on track in the Emotional maturity domain, 63% in the Physical health and wellbeing domain, 63% in the Communication skills and general knowledge domain, 61% in the Social competence domain and 59% in the Language and cognitive skills (schools-based) domain (Figure 2).
- The gap between First Nations and non-Indigenous children assessed as developmentally on track in all 5 domains narrowed by 4 percentage points, from 26% in 2009 to 22% in 2021 (Figure 3).
- There was a slight decrease in the percentage of both First Nations and non-Indigenous children assessed as developmentally on track in all 5 domains from 2018 to 2021 (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Proportion of children in their first year of full-time school who were assessed as developmentally on track on all 5 domains, by Indigenous status, 2009 to 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: DESE 2022.

## School attendance

Overall, school attendance rates for First Nations and non-Indigenous students in years 1 to 10 have been relatively stable between 2014 and 2019, with a slight decreasing trend. However, between 2019 and 2022 attendance rates decreased by 7 percentage

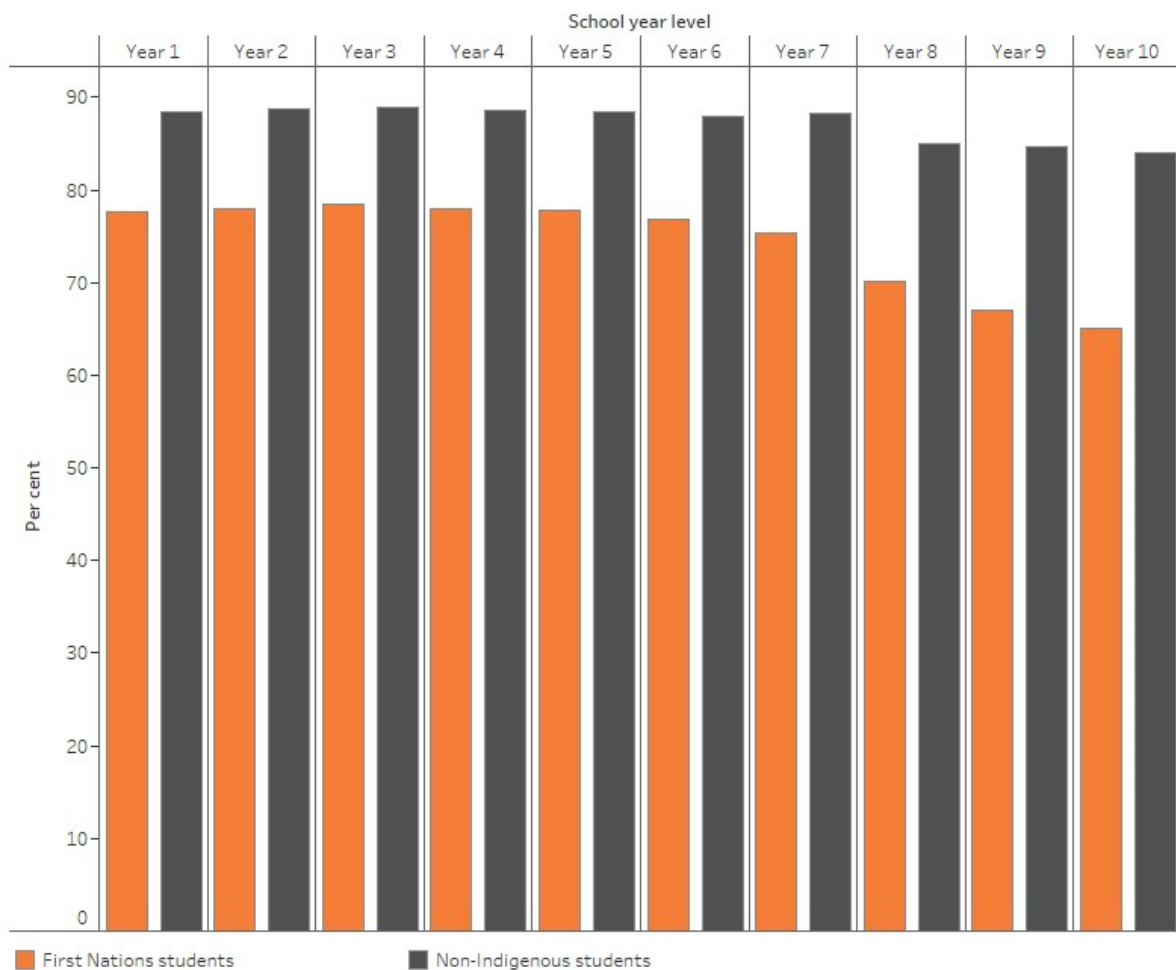
points for First Nations students (from 82% to 75%) and by 5 percentage points for non-Indigenous students (from 92% to 87%) (ACARA 2023a).

Western Australia had the largest change between 2019 and 2022, with First Nations student attendance decreasing by 9 percentage points. All jurisdictions had a decrease of 5 percentage points or greater over this period (ACARA 2023a).

In 2022, the attendance rate was 25–26 percentage points lower for First Nations students in *Very remote* areas (52%) than those in *Inner regional* areas (78%) and *Major cities* (77%). Attendance rates for non-Indigenous students did not vary greatly by remoteness, and the gap between First Nations and non-Indigenous students was highest in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas (ACARA 2023a).

In 2022, school attendance rates for First Nations students were steady between primary school year levels (77%–78%) but reduced as the secondary school year level increased (to a low of 65% for Year 10 students). For non-Indigenous students, the attendance rate ranged from 88%–89% during primary school and declined slightly in high school to 84% for Year 10 students (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: School attendance rates, by Indigenous status and school year level, Year 1 to Year 10, 2022**



Source: ACARA 2022 (National Student Attendance Data Collection).

## Reading and numeracy

Reading and numeracy was not included as one of the 19 targets in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap but is included as an indicator for Outcome 5 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full learning potential.

From the inception of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in 2008 to 2022, reading and numeracy for First Nations children have improved across most year levels, with the exception of Year 7 numeracy and Year 9 reading. Over the same period, the gap between First Nations and non-Indigenous students narrowed between 1–12 percentage points for all year levels that improved (ACARA 2022). Note that no NAPLAN assessment was conducted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and disruption to student learning. From 2023 onwards there are changes to the way NAPLAN results are reported (see Changes to NAPLAN in 2023).

### Changes to NAPLAN in 2023

A review of the NAPLAN standardised testing was commissioned in 2019. The review considered whether NAPLAN remains fit-for-purpose and made several recommendations for future versions of the national standardised assessment (McGaw et al 2020). Based on this review, in 2023, the test was held in Term 1 (instead of Term 2) in March. This allows results to be published earlier in the year to inform school programs and will allow teachers to better support students for the year ahead (ACARA 2022a).

In addition, from 2023 onwards, NAPLAN results will be reported against 4 levels of achievement bands, 'Exceeding', 'Strong', 'Developing' and 'Needs additional support' instead of the existing national minimum standard and 10 proficiency bands (DoE 2023). A new NAPLAN time series begins from 2023. Data reported on this page (from 2008 to 2022) cannot be compared with [NAPLAN 2023 results](#).

The NAPLAN 2023 results show that on average, across all domains (reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation and numeracy) a higher proportion of First Nations students are in the Needs additional support proficiency level than non-Indigenous students. At each year level tested (3, 5, 7 and 9), over 30% of First Nations students fall into this category compared to less than 10% of non-Indigenous students (ACARA 2023b).

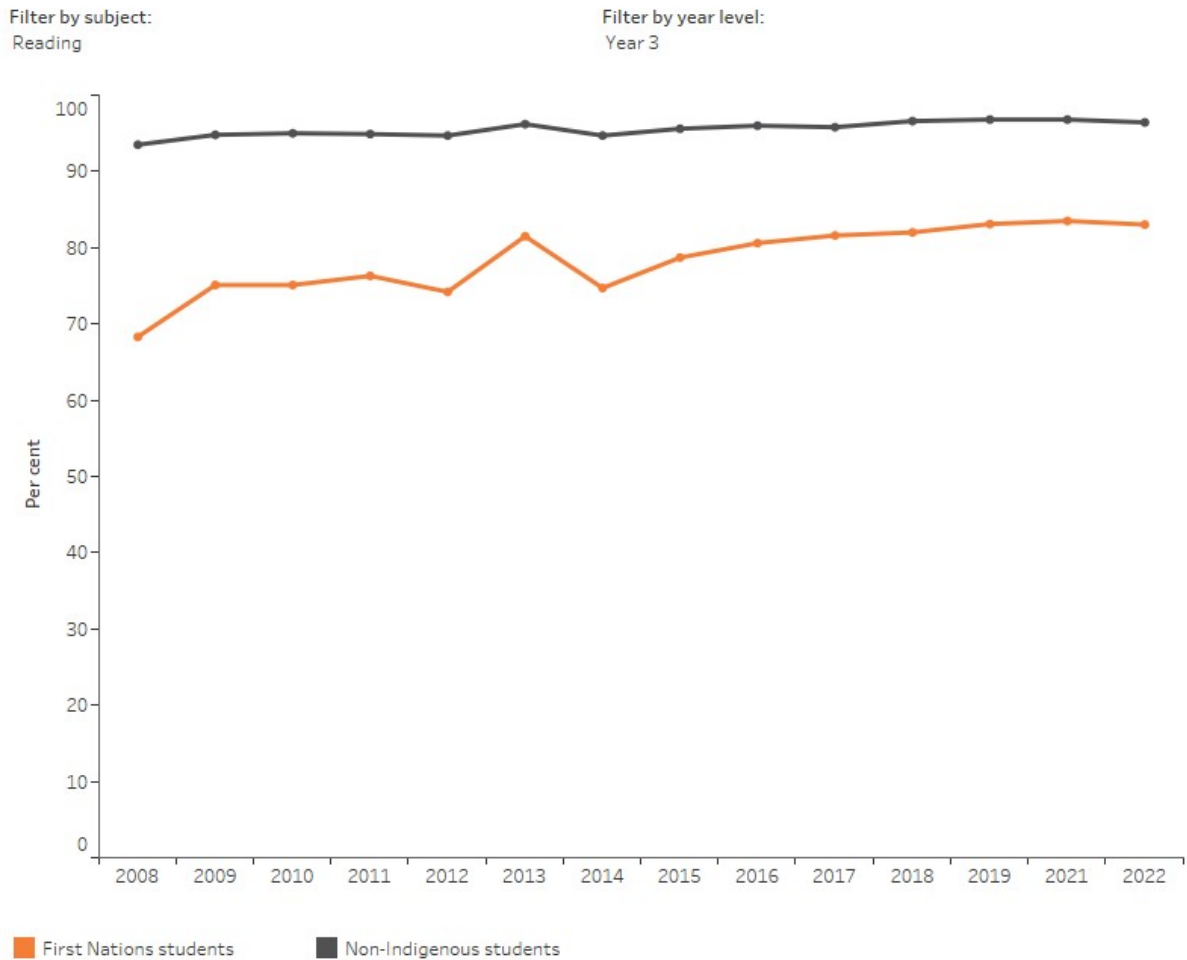
Based on NAPLAN data, between 2008 and 2022:

- the proportion of First Nations students meeting the national minimum standard for reading increased in years 3, 5 and 7, from:
  - 68% to 83% for Year 3
  - 63% to 79% for Year 5
  - 72% to 77% for Year 7
- the proportion of First Nations students meeting the national minimum standard for numeracy increased in years 3, 5 and 9, from:
  - 79% to 80% for year 3
  - 69% to 78% for Year 5



- 73% to 81% for Year 9
- the gap between First Nations and non-Indigenous students at or above the national minimum standard narrowed for years 3, 5 and 7 for reading (by 12, 12 and 5 percentage points, respectively) and for years 3, 5 and 9 for numeracy (by 1, 7 and 7 percentage points, respectively) (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Students meeting the national minimum standard in reading and numeracy, by Indigenous status, 2008 to 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: ACARA 2022 (National Assessment Program – Reading and Numeracy).

## Programme for International Student Assessment

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a standardised test of knowledge and skills administered to a representative sample of 15-year-old students by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in over 70 countries. For more information on Australia’s results, see [Primary and secondary schooling](#).

Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 PISA test was deferred until 2022, and first results are expected to be published in late 2023 (OECD 2023).

Australia's 2018 PISA results showed that:

- The proportion of First Nations students who met the National Proficient Standard (achieved a score above 480) was 32% for reading literacy, 27% for mathematical literacy, and 31% for scientific literacy.
- There was a decline in reading literacy for First Nations students from 2000 to 2018 (from a mean score of 448 to 431). There was no significant change over time for mathematical and scientific literacy. For non-Indigenous students, there was a decline over time in all domains (Figure 6).
- The mean score for First Nations students was 431 in reading literacy, 426 in mathematical literacy and 432 in scientific literacy. The mean scores for non-Indigenous students were 507, 495 and 507, respectively.
- The gap in the mean scores for scientific literacy between First Nations and non-Indigenous students narrowed from 2006 to 2018 (from 88 to 75). This can largely be attributed to a decline in the performance of non-Indigenous students.

**Figure 6: PISA mean performance scores in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy, by domain and Indigenous status, 2000 to 2018**



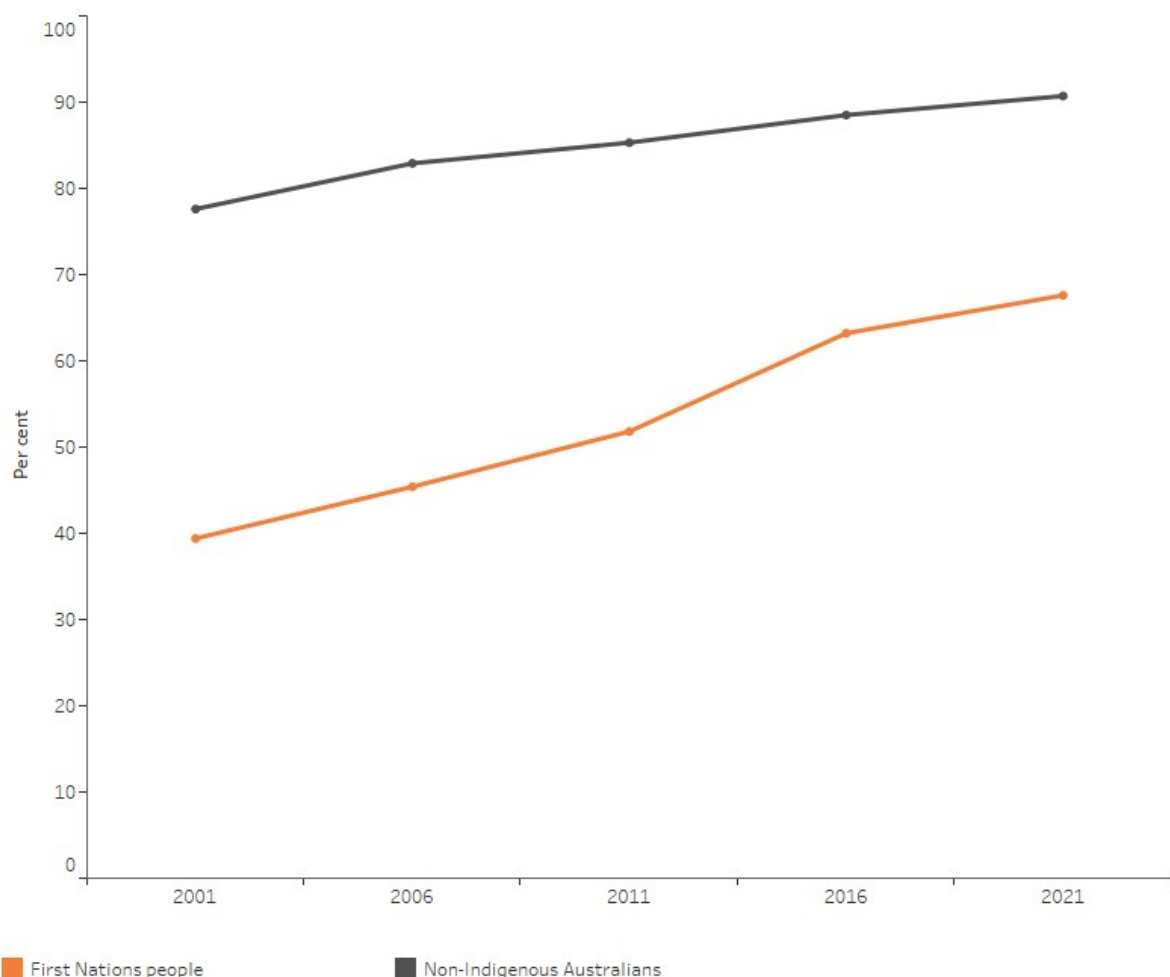
Note: The starting year for each domain is determined by the first cycle that a domain had a full assessment (the first cycle it was the major domain). This occurs every third cycle from the starting year. Reading literacy was the major domain in 2018.

Source: Thomson et al. 2019.

## Attainment of Year 12 or equivalent

In the 2021 Census, the proportion of First Nations Australians aged 20–24 who had attained a Year 12 or equivalent qualification (Certificate III or above) was 68%, an increase of 16 percentage points from 2011. The rate for non-Indigenous Australians increased by 6 percentage points over the same period (from 85% in 2011 to 91% in 2021) (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Proportion of people aged 20–24 who had attained a Year 12 or equivalent (Certificate III or above) qualification, by Indigenous status, 2001 to 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: AIHW analysis of ABS Census of Population and Housing 2001–2021 (ABS 2021a).

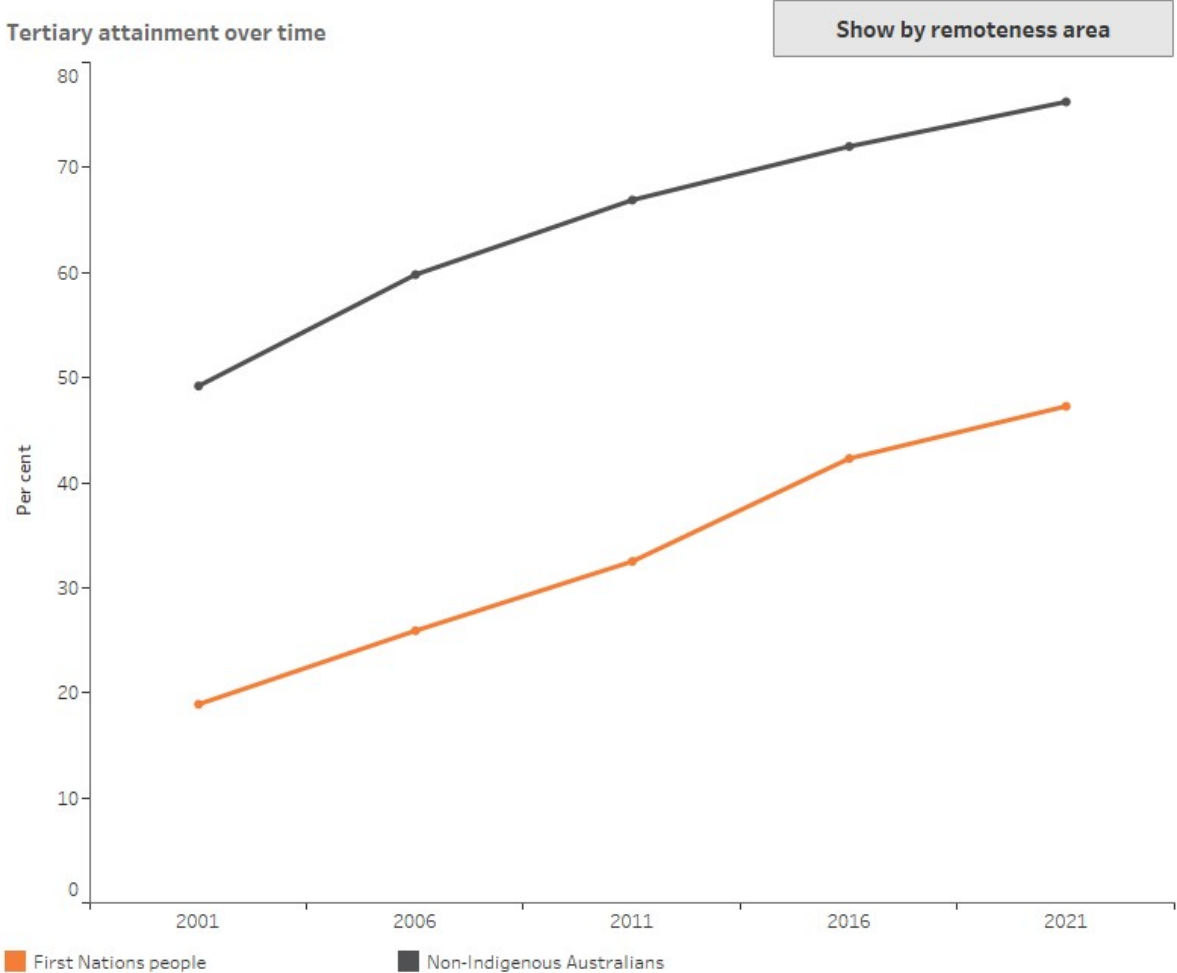
The gap in Year 12 or equivalent (Certificate III or above) attainment rates for First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians aged 20–24 narrowed by around 10 percentage

points over the decade to 2021 – from a gap of 36 percentage points in 2011 to around 23 percentage points in 2021.

## Tertiary qualifications

Based on data from the 2021 Census, 47% of First Nations Australians aged 25–34 had completed a tertiary qualification as their highest educational attainment (Certificate III and above). This was 76% for non-Indigenous Australians aged 25–34 (Figure 8). Completion rate for First Nations people ranged from 57% in *Major cities* to 18% in *Very remote* areas.

**Figure 8: Proportion of people aged 25–34 who had attained Certificate III or above, by Indigenous status, 2001 to 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: AIHW analysis of ABS Census of Population and Housing 2001–2021 (ABS 2021a).

For First Nations students aged 34 and under in Certificate III or above government-funded Vocational education and training (VET) courses, enrolments increased by 11%

from 33,400 in 2020 to 36,950 in 2021. This remains below the peak of 43,800 in 2019, before the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (NCVER 2022).

Improvements have been made in university enrolments and course completions for First Nations Australians in recent years. Between 2011 and 2021:

- the number of First Nations students enrolled in university doubled, from 11,800 to 24,000
- there was a 97% increase in the number of higher education course completions by First Nations students (from 1,800 to 3,500) (Department of Education 2023).

Despite this progress, First Nations Australians continue to be under-represented in universities, comprising 2.4% of the domestic higher education student population, compared with 3.8% of the total Australian population (ABS 2022; Department of Education 2023). For more information on factors affecting university participation, see 'Chapter 7 Relative influence of different markers of socioeconomic status on university participation' in [Australia's welfare 2023: data insights](#).

## Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted all levels of the education system in Australia throughout lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, and the flow-on effects of these into 2022 and 2023. However, there is a shortage of research specifically on how First Nations students have been affected, and it will take some time before the full impact of these disruptions becomes clear (AITSL 2021).

The majority of Australian students experienced a rapid transition to home-based online learning due to school and university closures. Although children of essential workers and vulnerable students were still able to attend school, the vast majority of students used home-based learning. The response to COVID-19 emphasised persistent inequities experienced by vulnerable population groups (Drane et al. 2020). First Nations students across Australia were less likely to have access to reliable internet or digital technologies necessary for remote learning (Bennett et al. 2020; Walker et al. 2021).

The short-term COVID-19 response also included social distancing measures, travel restrictions, the closure of non-essential services, stimulus packages and free childcare for working parents (Storen et al. 2020). Many regular student assessments were cancelled or deferred during the lockdown period due to the disruption in student learning, including NAPLAN 2020 and PISA 2021. Other data sources, such as the National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection, limited the scope of their reporting and have significant sections of missing data for the years 2020 and 2021 (ABS 2021b).

These and many other complex factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic may shift trends in education data. Further assessments on the impact of COVID-19 on education for First Nations Australians will be made in the future as data allow.

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on education and skills of First Nations people and on progress on the education-related Closing the Gap targets, see:

- [Closing the Gap website](#)
- [Closing the Gap data dashboard](#)
- [Closing the Gap Report 2022.](#)
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2020:*
  - [2.04 Literacy and numeracy](#)
  - [2.05 Education outcomes for young people](#)
  - [2.06 Educational participation and attainment of adults.](#)

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# Employment of First Nations people

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-employment>

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Employment lies at the heart of socioeconomic opportunity. It provides direct economic benefit to individuals and families, including financial security, increased social mobility and access to higher standards of living. Beyond this, it is well established that working is associated with benefits to physical and mental health, social inclusion and improved developmental outcomes for the children of employed persons (Biddle 2013; Gray et al. 2014; WHO 2016).

This page provides an overview of employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people over time.

See [Income and finance of First Nations people](#) for more information on the household and personal income of First Nations people (including wages and salaries from employment).

## Closing the Gap targets

In 2020, all Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations worked in partnership to develop the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) (the National Agreement), built around 4 Priority Reforms. The National Agreement also identifies 19 targets across 17 socioeconomic outcome areas. Two of these targets directly relate to employment.

## National Agreement on Closing the Gap: employment-related targets

**Outcome area 7:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are engaged in employment or education



- Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15–24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67 per cent.
- Status: The 2016 baseline of Indigenous youth who are in employment, education or training was 57.2%. The most recent level, using data from 2021, is 58.0%. This is below the target trajectory proportion for 2021 of 60.5%.

**Outcome area 8:** Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities

- Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–64 who are employed to 62 per cent.
- Status: The 2016 baseline for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was 51.0%. The most recent level, using data from 2021, is 55.7%, higher than the target trajectory proportion for 2021 of 54.7%.

Note that data for these targets were derived from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing (Census) (ABS 2021; PC 2021).

Prior to establishment of the National Agreement, there were 7 Closing the Gap targets set by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, one of which was to halve the gap in employment rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians between 2008 and 2018. The [Closing the Gap Report 2020](#) found that this target expired unmet.

## Overview of First Nations people’s employment status

The [2021 Census](#), conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), provides the most recent data on employment of First Nations people. For those aged 25–64 (the age group specified in Target 8 of the National Agreement), the employment rate (the proportion of people who are employed) was 56% in 2021 (ABS 2021).

For the rest of this page, employment data are presented for First Nations people aged 15–64, as this is generally considered to represent ‘working age’. Between July 2017 and July 2023, the age a person becomes able to receive Age Pension was gradually increased from 65 to 67 years (see <Income support for older Australians >). This may lead to increased employment among people of this age. On this page, however, data are shown for people aged 15–64 for consistency with previous reporting and for comparability over the reporting period (2006 to 2021). In 2021, 26% of First Nations people aged 65–67 were employed, compared with 21% in 2016.

### Labour force definitions

This page presents information on the number of First Nations people who are employed, unemployed or not in the labour force, as a proportion of the First Nations population aged 15–64. While the age when a person is eligible for the Age Pension has increased to 67, this report still uses ages 15–64 for consistency with previous reporting and comparisons across the reporting period. The following definitions are used:

**Employed:** Person aged 15–64 who has a job (for at least 1 hour during the reference period). This could be full time, part time, or away from work during the reference period.

**Unemployed:** Person aged 15–64 who does not have a job and is actively looking for one. This could be looking for a full or part time job.

The sum of employed and unemployed is the number of people in the labour force.

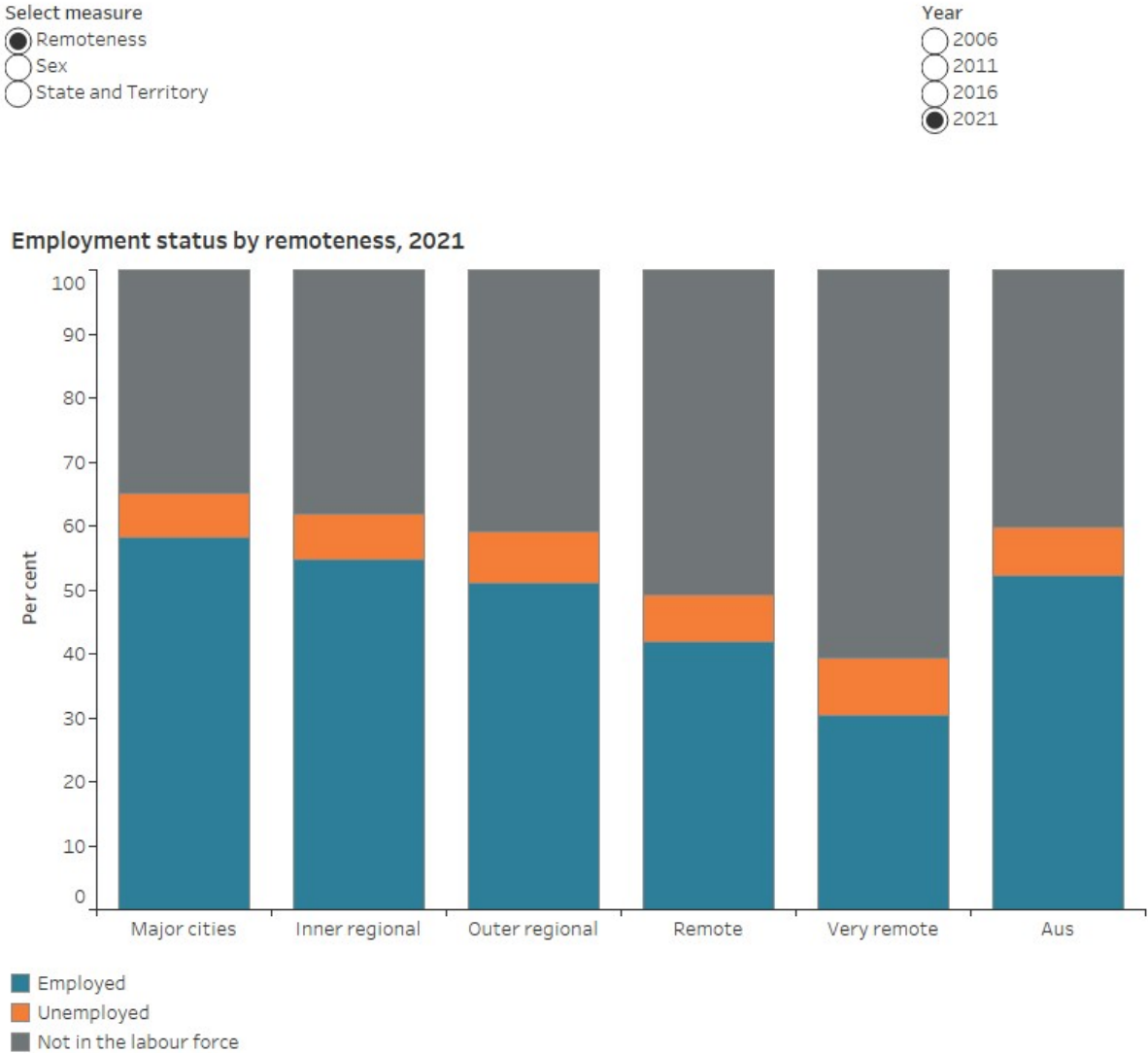
**Not in the labour force:** Person aged 15–64 who is not employed and not actively looking for work during the reference week of the Census. This definition applies to the Census and may differ somewhat from the definitions in other collections.

Note that 'proportion unemployed' as reported on this page is not the same as the 'unemployment rate' presented elsewhere. The unemployment rate is calculated as the number of people who are unemployed divided by the number of people in the labour force – that is, the denominator excludes people who are not in the labour force. The unemployment rate for First Nations people in 2021 was 12% (ABS 2021).

In 2021:

- a similar proportion of First Nations males and females aged 15–64 were employed (53% and 51%)
- a higher proportion of males than females were unemployed (8.3% compared with 6.6%)
- a lower proportion of males than females were not in the labour force (38% compared with 42%).

**Figure 1: First Nations people aged 15–64 by employment status 2006 to 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Note: People whose employment status was not stated and those whose remoteness or state/territory is outside of the categories listed are excluded from the proportions.

Sources: AIHW analysis of ABS 2006, 2011, 2016, 2021.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

### Interpreting changes over time

The Commonwealth Development Employment Projects (CDEP) was an employment assistance program established in 1977 to create employment opportunities in remote communities by pooling unemployment benefits. Assessing First Nations employment trends is complicated by the many changes in the coverage – and subsequent re-branding and closure in 2013 – of the CDEP, as well as changes in whether participants were considered to be ‘employed’ for the purposes of labour force data collection. For more information, see section 4.7 of [Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2020](#).

# Employment

## Employment by location

In 2021, the proportion of First Nations people who were employed decreased consistently with increasing remoteness, from 58% in *Major cities* to 30% in *Very remote* areas. This pattern is consistent with that of data for 2011 and 2016; however, in 2006, *Outer regional* areas had the lowest proportion employed (Figure 1). In contrast, the proportion of non-Indigenous Australians who are employed does not decrease with remoteness (PMC 2020).

The proportion of First Nations people employed in 2021 also varied markedly by state and territory. It was highest in the Australian Capital Territory (69%), followed by Tasmania (59%), and lowest in the Northern Territory (31%). This pattern has remained roughly the same since 2006.

## Employment by education level and sex

The employment rate of First Nations people has consistently shown an increase with higher levels of education. In 2021, the observed employment rate pattern relative to the highest level of education completed was:

- 85% for those with a Bachelor degree or higher
- 72% for those with a Certificate III or IV
- 45% for those with secondary year 10 to year 12
- 23% for those with secondary year 9 and below (Figure 2).

This pattern is reasonably consistent across age groups.

The full-time employment rate (the proportion of people of workforce age who are employed full time) for First Nations people was 30% in 2021, and the pattern of full-time employment by education level was similar to that for the overall employment rate: those with a Bachelor degree or higher had the highest full-time employment rate (58%) and those with secondary year 9 and below had the lowest (9%) (Figure 2).

The overall part-time employment rate was 18% in 2021 for First Nations people; however, a slightly different pattern emerged when viewed by education level. The part-time rate was highest for those with an Advanced diploma or Diploma (22%), and again lowest for those with secondary year 9 and below (10%) (Figure 2).

In 2021, the gap in the employment rate between First Nations people and non-Indigenous Australians narrowed with higher levels of education. Overall, non-Indigenous Australians had a higher rate of employment for all education levels, although for a Bachelor degree or higher this narrowed to a difference of 0.6 percentage points.

The exception was for females with a Bachelor degree or higher. In this group:

- First Nations females had a higher overall employment rate by 1.8 percentage points

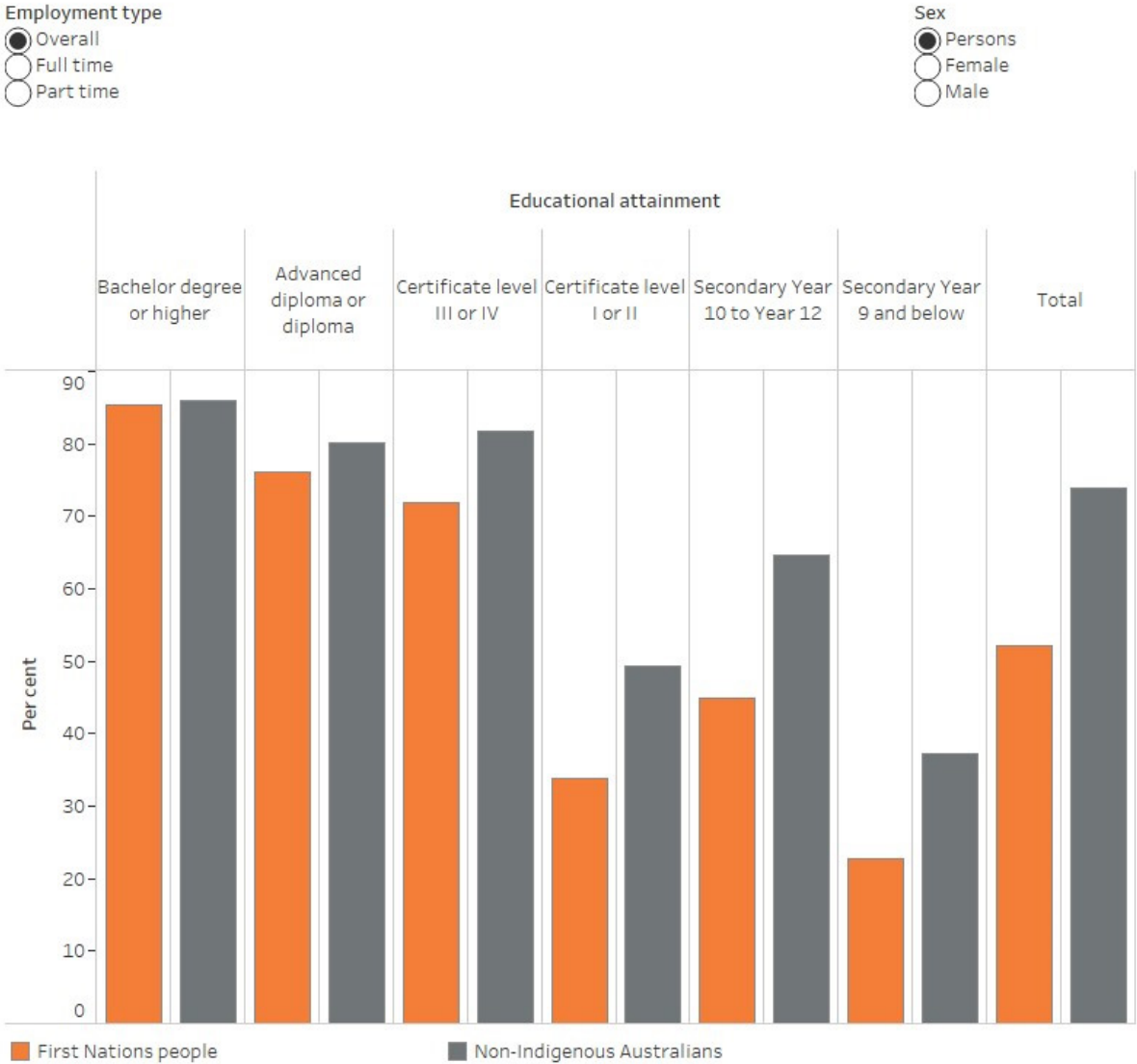
- First Nations females had a higher full-time employment rate than non-Indigenous females, with a gap of 5.4 percentage points
- Non-Indigenous females had a higher part-time employment rate than First Nations females, with a gap of 4.6 percentage points.

Employment rates for First Nations people in 2021 differed by sex. Males had a higher overall employment rate (53%) than females (51%), and this difference was consistent across all levels of educational attainment except for the Bachelor degree or higher, with females having a higher employment rate (Figure 2). The biggest gap in employment rate between males and females was at the Certificate I/II level at 12 percentage points, with males higher than females (41% and 28%). The smallest gap was at the Bachelor degree level at 1 percentage point higher for females than males (86% and 85%).

Across all educational attainment levels, part-time employment rates for First Nations people were higher among females than males, and full-time employment rates were higher among males than females (Figure 2).

For more information on this topic see [Education of First Nations people](#).

**Figure 2: Proportion of employed people aged 15–64, by employment type, sex, Indigenous status and highest level of education, 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Note: ‘Employed but away from work’ is included in the ‘Overall’ employment type, but is excluded from the ‘Full-time’ and ‘Part-time’ employment types due to unknown data.

Source: AIHW analysis of ABS 2021.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

### Employment by sector

In 2021, just over 10% of First Nations people aged 15–64 were employed in the public sector, that is, by federal, state, territory or local governments. Just over 41% of First Nations people were employed in the private sector. The gap in the public sector employment rate was less than 2 percentage points (10.4% for First Nations people compared with 12.0% for non-Indigenous Australians), while the gap in private sector employment was much greater at 21 percentage points (41.2% compared with 62.4%) (ABS 2021).

## **Main occupations and industries of employment**

This section provides 2 types of information about employed First Nations people:

- their occupation (in high-level groupings); the type of job they do
- their industry of employment; the main type of activity their employer undertakes.

For example, a person who works as an accounts clerk for a major clothing store would have 'clerical and administrative workers' as their occupation group and 'retail trade' as their industry of employment.

### **Main occupation groups**

The 5 most common occupation groups of working age First Nations people in 2021 were:

- community and personal service workers (17%)
- labourers (14%)
- professionals (14%)
- technicians and trades workers (14%)
- clerical and administrative workers (12%) (Figure 3; ABS 2021).

In 2021, First Nations people were over-represented in labouring and community and personal service occupations. First Nations people were under-represented as professionals and managers, relative to the working age non-Indigenous population – 14% of working age non-Indigenous Australians were managers compared with 8% of First Nations people (ABS 2021).

First Nations people who worked part time were most likely to be employed as community and personal service workers (24%), labourers (19%) or sales workers (16%), whereas those who worked full time were most likely to be employed as technicians and trades workers (18%), professionals (16%) or clerical and administrative workers (13%) (ABS 2021).

### **Main industries of employment**

The 5 most common industries of employment for working age First Nations people in 2021 were:

- health care and social assistance (16%)
- public administration and safety (10%)
- construction (10%)
- retail trade (9.1%)
- education and training (8.9%) (Figure 3; ABS 2021).

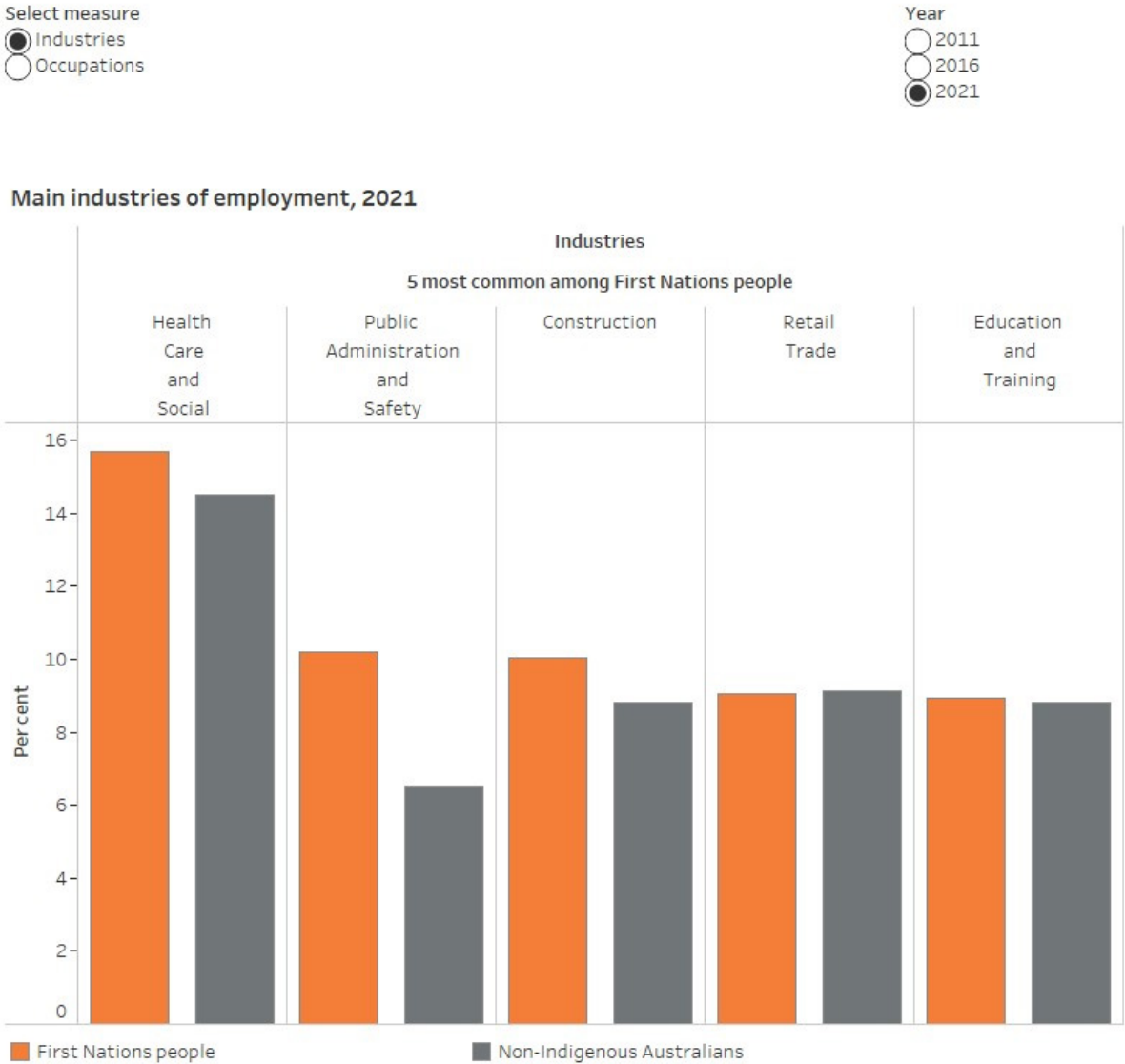
Between 2016 and 2021, the proportion of First Nations people employed in health care and social assistance increased while the proportion employed in public administration and safety decreased (Figure 3).

In 2021, First Nations people were over-represented in the public administration and safety sector, and were under-represented in the professional, scientific and technical services sector. Only 3.2% of First Nations people were employed in the professional,

scientific and technical services sector compared with 8.0% of non-Indigenous Australians (ABS 2021).

Among First Nations people employed part time, the retail trade and accommodation & food services industries were among the top 5 industries of employment, accounting for 16% and 14% of workers, respectively; this was also the case for non-Indigenous Australians (14% and 12% of workers). Health care and social assistance was the most common industry of employment for part-time workers in both groups (19% of First Nations people and 20% of non-Indigenous Australians) (ABS 2021).

**Figure 3: Occupations and industries of employment, First Nations people aged 15–64, 2011, 2016 and 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Sources: AIHW analysis of ABS 2021; PC 2020.



## Unemployment

In 2021, 7.4% of First Nations people aged 15–64 were unemployed. This has decreased from a high of 9.8% in 2016. Unemployment varies between males and females. In 2021, more males were unemployed than females (8.3% and 6.6% respectively).

Western Australia and South Australia had the highest proportion of First Nations people unemployed, both with 8.8%. The Australian Capital Territory had the lowest unemployment rate with 5.4%.

In 2021, *Very remote* areas had a higher unemployment proportion with 8.9% compared with 6.9% in *Major cities* (Figure 1).

## Not in the labour force

There are many reasons why a First Nations person may not be in the labour force. These include:

- lack of available and appropriate employment options
- cost associated with job searching
- need for further education or training for employment
- health concerns
- disability
- family responsibilities, including caregiving duties
- community responsibilities (Dinku and Hunt 2019; Hunter and Gray 2001; Kalb et al. 2014; Savvas et al. 2011).

In 2021, 40% of First Nations people of working age (**15–64 years**) were not in the labour force. This was slightly higher for females than males (42% and 38%, respectively).

The percentage of First Nations people not in the labour force ranged from 26% in the Australian Capital Territory to 61% in the Northern Territory. It also increased with increasing remoteness with 61% in *Very remote* areas compared with 35% in *Major cities* (Figure 1).

## Impact of COVID-19

Although the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment in Australia has been substantial, there are few studies on the effect on the employment of First Nations people. However, some impacts may be inferred from differences between populations and characteristics of the First Nations workforce.

JobKeeper was a federal initiative that helped employees remain in jobs during the pandemic. To be eligible, a person needed to be employed in an ongoing position or have been in a job for more than 12 months (The Treasury 2020). First Nations workers are more likely to be in industries with more casual employees (Dinku et al. 2020). In addition, economic recessions often disrupt smaller sized businesses as they do not have the resources to withstand the pressures. First Nations-owned businesses are

more likely to be small-medium sized business and employ more First Nations staff (Dinku et al. 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic caused many businesses to move to remote working, requiring a reliable home internet. In 2016, 75% of First Nations-only households had internet access, compared with 86% of non-Indigenous-only households (Hunter and Radoll 2020). If this 'digital divide' were to continue, exclusion from working remotely could be a risk to employment opportunities for First Nations people.

First Nations people have a relatively high proportion of people aged 15–24 among those of working age – in 2021, 30% of First Nations people of working age were 15–24, compared with 18% of non-Indigenous Australians (ABS 2021). Youth Allowance is a federal program that provides financial help for those aged 21 and under (or 24 and under if studying or undertaking an apprenticeship) while looking for a job or finishing study (Services Australia 2022). First Nations youth were more likely than non-Indigenous youth to be participating in youth allowance payments before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. In December 2021, the rate of participation in youth allowance payments had decreased to pre-pandemic levels for non-Indigenous Australian youth but remained above pre-pandemic levels for First Nations youth (Dinku and Yap 2022).

Work hours and happiness with career prospects decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic for all youth, but more so for First Nations youth. The rate of transition from unemployment to employment between 2019 and 2020 was lower for First Nations youth than non-Indigenous Australian youth (Dinku and Yap 2022).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on employment among First Nations people, see:

- NIAA [Closing the Gap Report 2020](#)
- Productivity Commission [Performance Reporting Dashboard on the National Indigenous Reform Agreement](#)
- ABS [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, 2018–19](#)
- [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#)
- Productivity Commission [Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: key indicators 2020](#).

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# Housing circumstances of First Nations people

Find the most recent version of this information at:

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## On this page

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A safe, secure home with working facilities is essential for good health and wellbeing. The quality, quantity and affordability of housing is a fundamental contributor to disadvantage and a driver of homelessness. Historical experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people and the ongoing impacts of colonisation have had a significant impact on housing situations and conditions (AIHW 2019a).

Although the housing situation of First Nations people has improved – for example with rises in home ownership and falling levels of homelessness – it has been recognised that First Nations people have significantly less access to affordable, secure and quality housing (AIHW 2019a; AIHW and NIAA 2020). As such, governments are increasingly targeting housing as an essential policy area for improving the health and wellbeing of First Nations people.

This page focuses on housing tenure (including ownership, rental, and social housing), housing affordability, housing assistance, housing quality (including facilities and structural soundness) and overcrowding. It also looks at homelessness and the use of relevant services by First Nations people.

For information on housing as a determinant of health for First Nations people, see the latest update for the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework \(HPF\) – summary report 2023 \(PDF 9 MB\)](#); for regional level information on housing circumstances and health, see the [Regional Insights for Indigenous Communities](#) website.

## Closing the Gap targets

In 2020, all Australian governments and the [Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations](#), including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association (NATSIHA), worked in partnership to develop the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) (the National Agreement), built around 4 Priority Reforms. The National Agreement also identifies 19 targets across 17 socioeconomic outcome areas.

The National Agreement has identified the importance of addressing appropriate and affordable housing that is aligned with the priorities and needs of First Nations people (socioeconomic outcome area 9 in the National Agreement). There are 2 targets associated with this outcome, monitored annually by the Productivity Commission and reported in their [Closing the Gap Information Repository Dashboard](#) (PM&C 2020).

### National Agreement on Closing the Gap: housing-related targets

**Outcome area 9:** People can secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and needs. Within this outcome area, there are 2 targets.

**Target 9a:** By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88 per cent.

The 2016 baseline was 78.9% of the proportion of Indigenous Australians living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing. The most recent level, using data from 2021, is 81.4%. This is below the target trajectory proportion for 2021 of 81.9%.

*Note:* The baseline value for the appropriately sized housing target was derived from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016 Census of Population and Housing (Census).

**Target 9b:** By 2031, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households:

- within discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, receive essential services that meet or exceed the relevant jurisdictional standard
- in or near to a town, receive essential services that meet or exceed the same standard as applies generally within the town (including if the household might be classified for other purposes as a part of a discrete settlement such as a “town camp” or “town based reserve”).

At the time of writing, no data for Target 9b had been published.

## Household characteristics

A First Nations household is defined as an occupied private dwelling where at least one of its usual residents identifies as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

According to the 2021 Census of Population and Housing (Census), there were 352,041 First Nations households, representing 3.8% of all households in Australia – up from 2.1% in 2001 (ABS 2022b).

Of these households:

- 80% (281,729 dwellings) were separate houses

- 11% (38,396) were semi-detached, row or terrace houses, or townhouses
- 8% (27,919) were flats or apartments (ABS 2022b).

In 2021, the majority (96%, or around 779,300 persons) of First Nations people counted on Census night lived in private dwellings. The remainder (4.1% or around 33,400 persons) lived in non-private dwellings (such as prisons, hotels, motels or bed and breakfasts, staff quarters, boarding schools and nursing homes) (ABS 2022a).

## Housing tenure

Housing tenure describes whether a dwelling is owned, rented or occupied under some other arrangement. According to the 2021 Census, more than half of First Nations households were rented (56%, or 192,703 dwellings), while 42% (145,101) were owned (with or without a mortgage) – other tenure types (including dwellings being occupied rent free or under a life tenure scheme) accounted for the remaining 1.6% of First Nations households (ABS 2022a).

## Home ownership

Of First Nations households in 2021, 28% (96,647 dwellings) owned their home with a mortgage and 14% (48,452) owned their home outright (ABS 2022a). Home ownership (with and without a mortgage) has increased over time to 42% in 2021, up from 37% (75,095) in 2011, and 33% (46,188) in 2001 (ABS 2022b).

For detailed information on home ownership among First Nations people, by birth cohort and age group, see [Home ownership and housing tenure](#).

## Private rental and social housing

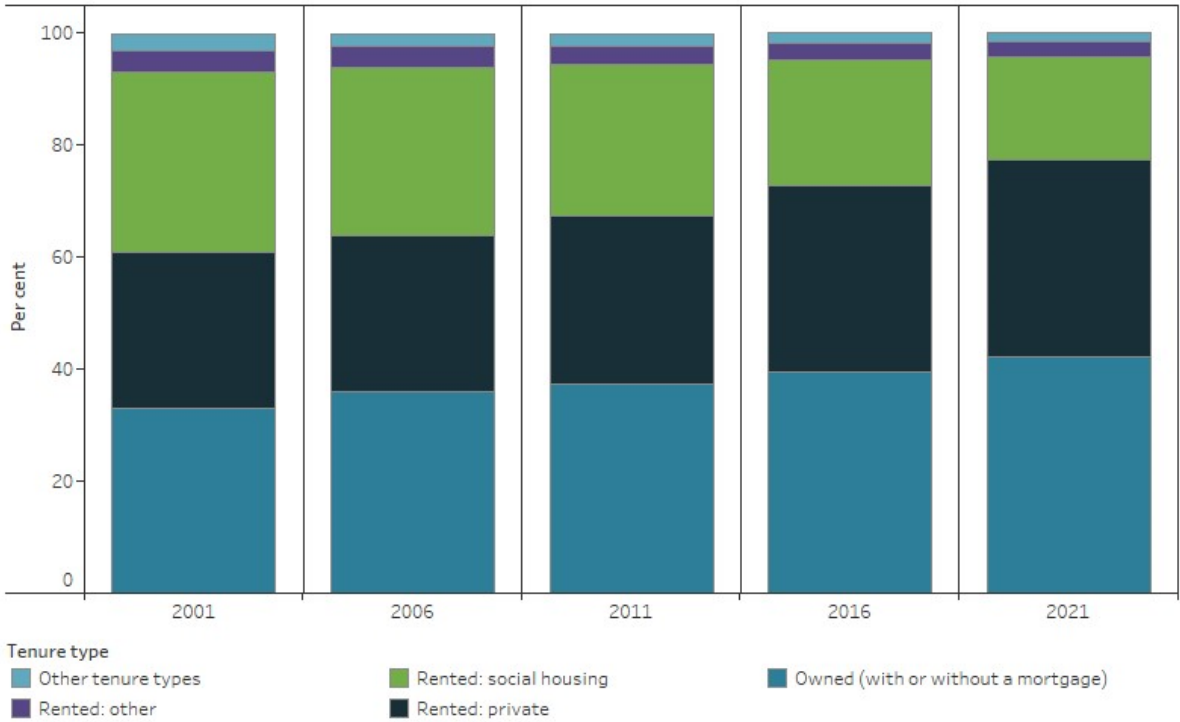
Of First Nations households in 2021, 35% (120,246 dwellings) were renting privately, 18% (63,269) were living in social housing (see [glossary](#)), and 2.7% (9,187) were renting from another landlord type (ABS 2022a).

Census data indicates that, between 2001 and 2021, the proportion of First Nations households who were:

- living in social housing fell – from 32% in 2001, to 27% in 2011 and 18% in 2021
- renting privately rose – from 28% in 2001, to 30% in 2011 and 35% in 2021 (Figure 1) (ABS 2022b).

**Figure 1: Tenure type, First Nations households, 2001 to 2021**

Filter by tenure type:  
All



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. First Nations households are defined as any occupied private dwelling where at least one person of any age as a resident at the time of the Census who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. Excludes 'Visitors only' and 'Other non-classifiable' households.
2. Data are based on Place of Enumeration. Includes Migratory, Offshore and Shipping.
3. 'Owned with a mortgage' includes participants in rent/buy and shared equity schemes and those living in a household in which payments were being made on mortgages or secured loans towards the purchase of the dwelling.
4. 'Social housing' includes state/territory housing authority, housing co-operative, church group, Indigenous housing organisation, community housing or council.
5. 'Private renters' includes renting through real estate agents, unrelated persons, relatives, owner/managers of caravan parks, employers and other landlords.
6. 'Other tenure type' includes other tenure types and persons living under life tenure schemes.
7. Denominator excludes Tenure type not stated.
8. Discrepancies may occur between the sums of the component items and totals due to random adjustment to avoid the release of confidential data.

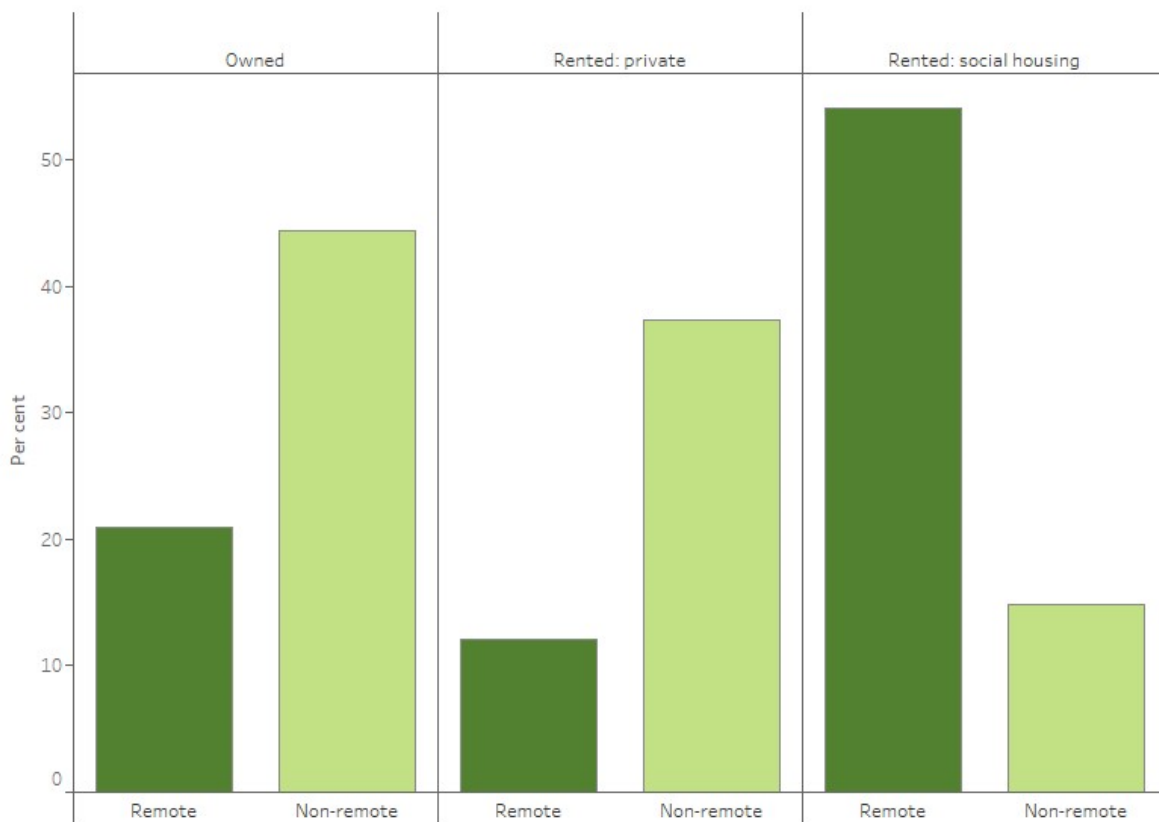
Sources: ABS 2022b; AIHW analysis of ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021.

## Remoteness area

Tenure type varies with remoteness area. According to the 2021 Census, First Nations households in remote areas (*Remote* and *Very remote* areas combined) were:

- less likely to be home owners (with or without a mortgage) than First Nations households in non-remote areas (*Major cities, Inner regional* and *Outer regional* areas) (21% of dwellings, compared with 44%)
- more likely to be living in social housing than First Nations households in non-remote areas (54% of households, compared with 15%) (ABS 2022a) (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Tenure type, First Nations dwellings, by remoteness area, 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

### Notes

1. First Nations households are defined as any occupied private dwelling where at least one person of any age as a resident at the time of the Census who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. Excludes 'Visitors only' and 'Other non-classifiable' households.
2. Remoteness data are based on Place of Enumeration. Includes Migratory, Offshore and Shipping.
3. 'Owned with a mortgage' includes participants in rent/buy and shared equity schemes and those living in a household in which payments were being made on mortgages or secured loans towards the purchase of the dwelling.
4. 'Social housing' includes state/territory housing authority, housing co-operative, church group, Indigenous housing organisation, a community housing or council.



5. 'Private renters' includes renting through real estate agents, unrelated persons, relatives, owner/managers of caravan parks, employers and other landlords.
6. Denominator excludes Tenure type not stated.

Source: AIHW analysis of ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021.

## Housing affordability

Measuring housing affordability is complex. One measure of housing affordability is to compare housing costs to gross household income. A commonly used indicator of housing affordability is the proportion of households that spend more than 30% of gross income on housing costs.

According to the 2021 Census:

- 14% (11,765 dwellings) of First Nations households that were owned with a mortgage were spending more than 30% of their gross income on mortgage repayments (ABS 2022a)
- 35% (58,867 dwellings) of First Nations households that were rented were spending more than 30% of their gross income on rent payments (ABS 2022a).
- The median monthly mortgage repayment paid by First Nations households was \$1,721 (ABS 2022b)
- the median weekly rent paid by First Nations households was \$300. This amount differed by landlord type (higher for privately rented households than for those rented through social housing) (ABS 2022b).

## Housing assistance

Access to secure and affordable housing has significant social, economic, and personal benefits (DSS 2023). First Nations people face many barriers in the housing market, some of which include discrimination, challenges in meeting criteria for properties, and lack of appropriate and good quality housing (Moskos et al. 2022; Tually et al. 2022). Hence, First Nations people are a priority group for many housing assistance services provided under the [National Housing and Homelessness Agreement](#) (Australian Government 2018). Housing assistance refers to both access to social housing and targeted financial assistance for those who are eligible (AIHW 2022a).

### Financial assistance

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) is a non-taxable income supplement payable to eligible people who rent in private or community housing rental markets. It is the most common form of housing assistance received by First Nations households (AIHW 2019a).

CRA recipients are classified as 'income units', rather than households. An income unit is one person, or a group of persons within a household, whose command over income is shared, or any person living in a non-private dwelling who is in receipt of personal income. For this section, the term CRA recipients is used instead of income units.

At the end of June 2022, 89,500 CRA recipients reported having a First Nations member. This equates to 6.6% of all CRA recipients, an increase from 4.3% in 2013 (AIHW 2023).

Changes to social security payments were made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, the number of recipients receiving CRA peaked in 2020 (AIHW 2022a).

Rental stress is defined here as a CRA recipient that spends more than 30% of gross income on rent. At June 2022, of First Nations CRA recipients:

- 68% (60,200) would have been in rental stress without CRA
- 36% (32,100) were still in rental stress after receiving CRA – an increase since 2013 (30%, or 16,495) (AIHW 2023).

Between 2013 and 2022, the proportion of First Nations CRA recipients in rental stress generally increased over time, with the exception of 2020 (19%, or 19,031). This is because the 2020 calculation of rental stress included the temporary Coronavirus Supplement (AIHW 2022a).

## Social housing programs

Social housing is low cost or subsidised rental housing provided by state and territory governments and the community sector. Its purpose is to assist people who are unable to afford or access suitable rental accommodation in the private rental market (Thomas 2018).

There are 4 main social housing programs operating in Australia, 2 of which are specifically targeted at First Nations people (Table 1):

- state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH) – accessed by those on low incomes and/or with special needs
- Indigenous community housing (ICH) – owned and/or managed by First Nations organisations for the provision of housing services to First Nations people (AIHW 2019a, 2022a).

Allocating social housing to eligible applicants depends on their level of priority (based on need) and dwelling availability. Social housing is generally allocated to those with the greatest need (see [glossary](#)) (AIHW 2022a).

**Table 1: Types of social housing available to First Nations people**

Type	First Nations specific housing	Owner and/or managed
<b>Public housing</b>	No	State or territory government
<b>Community housing</b>	No	Community organisation
<b>State owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH)</b>	Yes	State or territory government
<b>Indigenous community housing (ICH)</b>	Yes	First Nations organisations

According to data from the AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository, as at 30 June 2022 there were around 79,166 First Nations households in social housing:

- 38,251 in public housing
- 11,210 in community housing
- 13,424 in SOMIH
- 16,281 in ICH (may include some ICH households that are not First Nations households) (AIHW 2023).

Fewer households left SOMIH in the last 6 months of 2019–20 and in 2020–21, thus increasing waiting lists for SOMIH in some jurisdictions (AIHW 2022a). In addition, fewer people left all housing programs during these years due to a combination of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, a tighter private rental market and increase living costs (Buckle 2023; NHFIC 2023).

### **Social housing dwelling standards and tenant satisfaction**

Tenant satisfaction is measured by how the tenant/s rate the condition of their home and the number of its working facilities (see Housing quality).

According to the [2021 National Social Housing Survey](#) (NSHS):

- of First Nations households, 69% of public housing tenants were satisfied or very satisfied with their housing, compared with 67% of community housing and 64% of SOMIH tenants
- 82% of First Nations households said that the size of their living spaces met their needs
- whether amenities met needs of SOMIH tenants varied by amenity type and over time:
  - thermal comfort (increased from 62% in 2018 to 69% in 2021)
  - number of bedrooms (remained around 84% in 2018 and 2021)
  - safety/security of the home (declined from 81% in 2018 to 78% in 2021) (AIHW 2022b).

The 2021 NSHS, did not include a survey of ICH tenants due to COVID-19 and its impact on face-to-face survey methods.

## **Housing quality**

Housing quality is closely related to environmental health and affects a range of health indicators (SCRGSP 2020). For instance, poor air quality, lack of power and safe drinking water and inadequate waste and sanitation facilities, all contribute to poorer health and welfare.

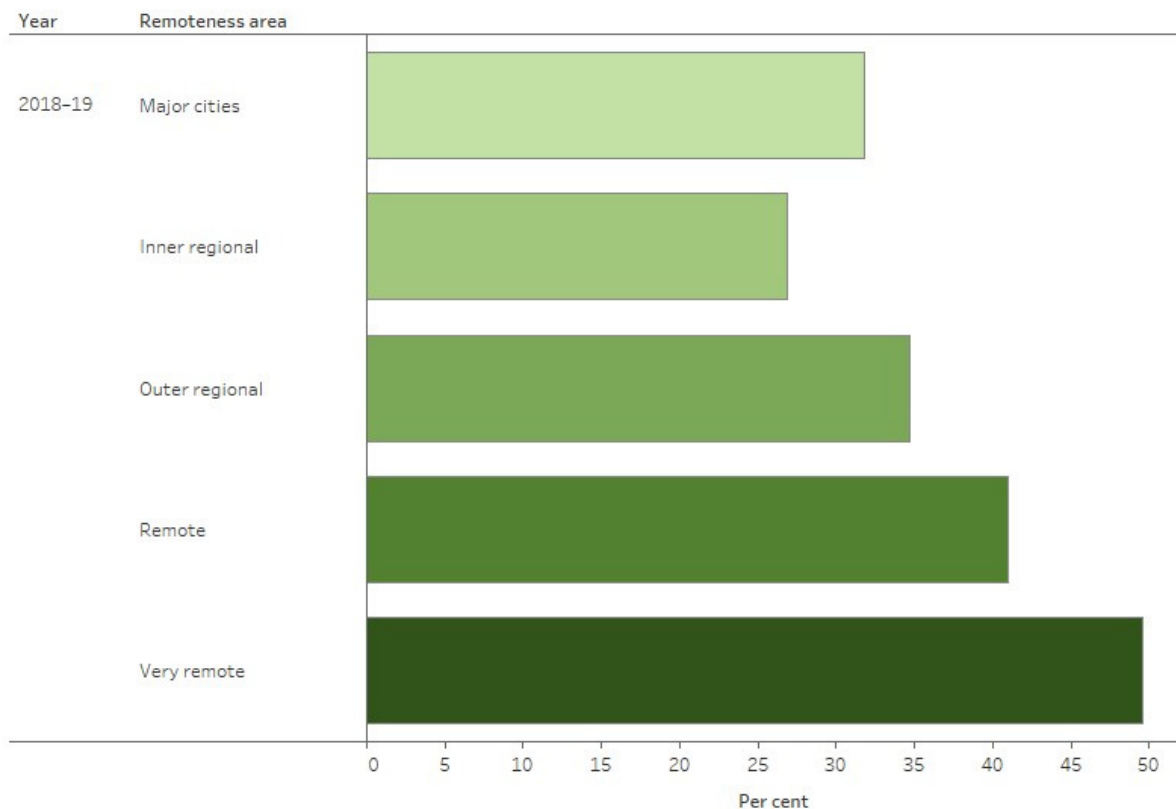
In 2018–19:

- 1 in 5 (20%) First Nations households were living in dwellings that did not meet an acceptable standard – defined in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) as having at least one basic household facility that was unavailable or having more than 2 major structural problems.
- 1 in 3 (33%) First Nations households were living in dwellings with at least one major structural problem (for example, major cracks in walls/floors, walls or windows that

are not straight, or major plumbing problems). First Nations households in remote areas were more likely to live in dwellings with structural problems than those in non-remote areas (46% and 31%, respectively) (Figure 3).

- 1 in 11 (9.1%) First Nations households had no access to working facilities for food preparation, 4.5% had no access to working facilities to wash clothes and bedding and 2.8% had no access to working facilities to wash household residents (AIHW and NIAA 2020).

**Figure 3: First Nations households with major structural problems, by remoteness area, 2018–19**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Note: A First Nations household is defined as an occupied private dwelling where at least one permanent resident identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.

Source: AIHW and ABS analysis of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2018–19.

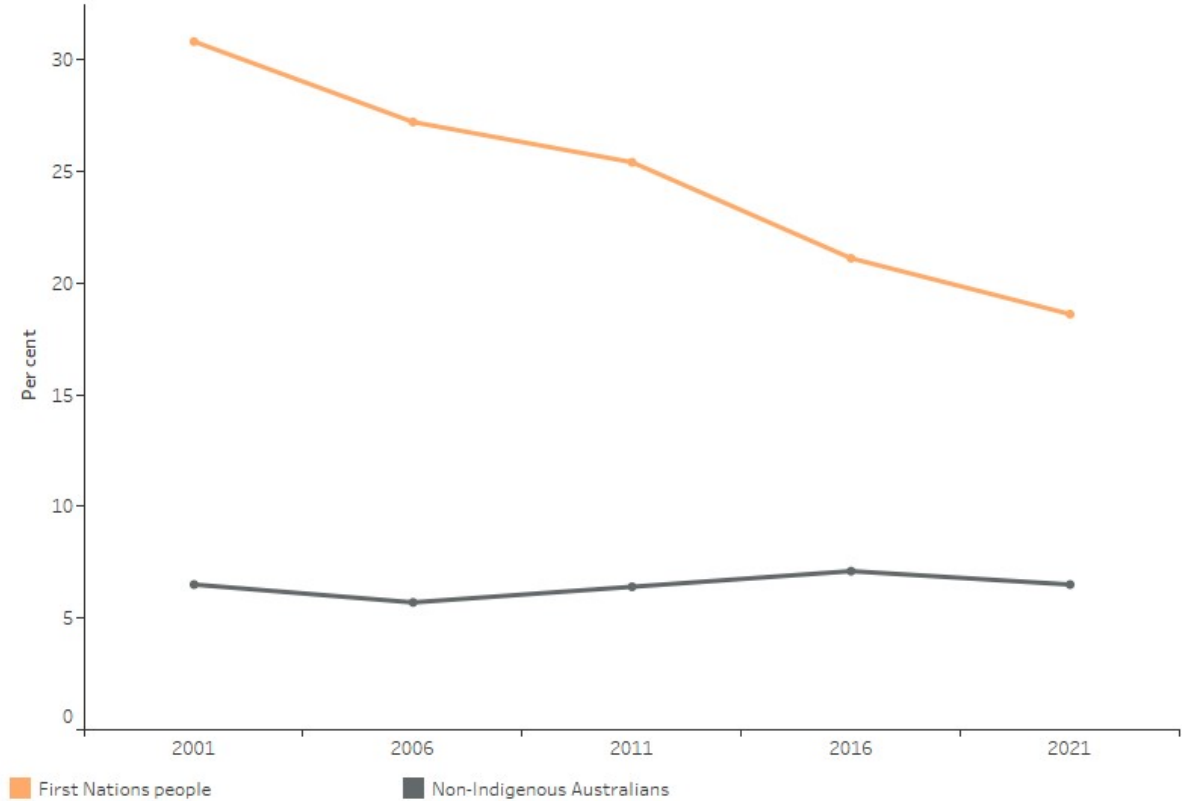
## Overcrowding

The following definition for overcrowding is based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (see [glossary](#)). This definition may not adequately reflect the perspectives First Nations people have on overcrowding, as it does not consider differences like cultural norms around shared living and sleeping arrangements (Dockery et al. 2022).

The 2021 Census identified that 81% of First National people (569,355 persons) across all types of housing tenure were living in appropriately sized housing (not overcrowded) – an increase from 79% (426,638) in 2016, and 69% (241,659) in 2001 (ABS 2022b).

Available data suggests a decline in overcrowding over time. The proportion of First Nations people living in overcrowded conditions fell from 31% in 2001 to 19% in 2021 (Figure 4). This drop in overcrowding represents a narrowing of the gap between First National people and non-Indigenous Australians from 24 to 12 percentage points (ABS 2021b; AIHW and NIAA 2020).

**Figure 4: Overcrowded housing, by Indigenous status, 2001 to 2021**



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**Notes**

1. Indigenous status refers to whether a person has identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
2. Includes people living in households requiring at least one additional bedroom, based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard for Housing Appropriateness.
3. Data excludes overseas visitors and persons who did not state their Indigenous status.

Sources: AIHW analysis of ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021; PM&C 2020.

Overcrowding rates varied with remoteness. According to the 2021 Census, the proportion of First Nations people living in overcrowded dwellings was higher in remote areas (55% in *Very remote* areas and 32% in *Remote* areas), than in non-remote areas (18% in *Outer regional* areas, 13% in *Inner regional* areas and 12% in *Major cities*) (ABS 2022a).

First Nations households were particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and border restrictions, with visitors unable to return to homelands placing

added pressure on households in urban centres, as well as the influx of people returning to country (Dockery et al. 2022).

## Homelessness

First Nations people are over-represented in both the national homeless (see [glossary](#)) population and as users of Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS).

The ABS 2021 Census showed that First Nations people accounted for over one-fifth (20% or an estimated 24,930 people) of the homeless population nationally but only 3.8% of the total Australian population (ABS 2022b, ABS 2023).

Of First Nations people experiencing homelessness at the time of the 2021 Census:

- 60% (14,956 persons) were living in severely crowded dwellings (see [glossary](#))
- 19% (4,753) were in supported accommodations for the homeless
- 9% (2,320) were living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleepouts (ABS 2023).

2021–22 SHS data show that:

- around 72,900 First Nations people received SHS support
- First Nations people made up 28% of all SHS clients (AIHW 2022c) – an increase from 22% (43,600) of all SHS clients in 2011–12
- more First Nations clients (70%) than non-Indigenous clients (61%) were returning clients (that is, they had received SHS services at some point since the collection began in July 2011)
- 50% (almost 36,500) of First Nations SHS clients were aged under 25 compared with 39% (71,700) of non-Indigenous clients
- family and domestic violence (24%), housing crisis (for example, eviction) (19%), and inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (13%) were the main reasons First Nations people sought assistance from SHS agencies (AIHW 2022c).

For more information on First Nations people receiving support from specialist homelessness services, see the [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021–22](#).

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on housing for First Nations people, see:

- [Housing assistance in Australia 2023](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework – summary report 2023](#)
- [National Social Housing Survey, 2021](#)
- Productivity Commission [Report on Government Services, Chapter 18 – housing](#)
- Productivity Commission [Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage – key indicators 2020](#)

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# Income and finance of First Nations people

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-income-and-finance>

## On this page

Introduction

Median weekly equivalised household income

Income distribution

Personal income

Income support payments and COVID-19

Financial stress

Where do I go for more information?

Higher levels of household income and lower financial constraints have well-established associations with:

- lower risk of disease
- better mental health
- longer lifespans
- lower levels of stress in meeting basic living costs
- greater choices and accessibility of quality food, housing, physical exercise, social participation, health care, and
- better ability for people to maintain a feeling of control or security over their lives (Braveman et al. 2011; Finkelstein et al. 2022; Kiely et al. 2015; Mackenbach 2015, 2020; Marmot 2002; Marmot and Wilkinson 2001; Subramanian et al. 2002).

Income and finances play a crucial role in determining better health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people. This page presents information on the median weekly equivalised household income of First Nations people and examines changes in that income between 2016 and 2021. It also presents statistics on the personal income and reliance of First Nations people on income support payments and experience of financial stress.

See [Employment of First Nations people](#) for more information on employment of First Nations people. Employment is usually the main source of household and personal income.

# Median weekly equivalised household income

## About household and personal income data

Data on personal and household income for First Nations people come from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [Census of Population and Housing](#) (the Census) 2016 and 2021 (ABS 2016, 2019, 2021a, 2023).

The Census provides details on household income for specific sub-groups, including for First Nations people, non-Indigenous Australians, and the total population. A household is defined as a First Nations household if it has at least one person who identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. A household with no person who identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is referred to as an 'Other household'. The Census computes total household weekly income for First Nations households as the sum of total personal weekly income of each resident aged 15 or over who was present in the household on Census night (ABS 2019, 2023).

The Census also reports on weekly personal income of all individuals aged 15 years and over based on their usual place of residence, and this data can be used to compute the median weekly personal income of all First Nations people. The Census collects weekly personal income in ranges (and not specific amounts), but the ABS derives medians using additional information from the Survey of Income and Housing. The main components of personal income are wages and salaries, pensions, allowances, interest, and dividends.

This page reports on both the household and personal weekly incomes for First Nations people. The household income is reported as equivalised gross weekly household income with adjustments for differences in household size and age profile of household members.

For comparisons across years, incomes are adjusted for inflation (see [glossary](#)) using ABS Consumer Price Index data for June 2016 and June 2021 (ABS 2022b). The incomes for both First Nations people and non-Indigenous Australians are presented in 2021 dollars equivalents. The income categories and quintiles used to further illustrate the full income distributions are, however, based on income in each Census period unadjusted for inflation between 2016 and 2021.

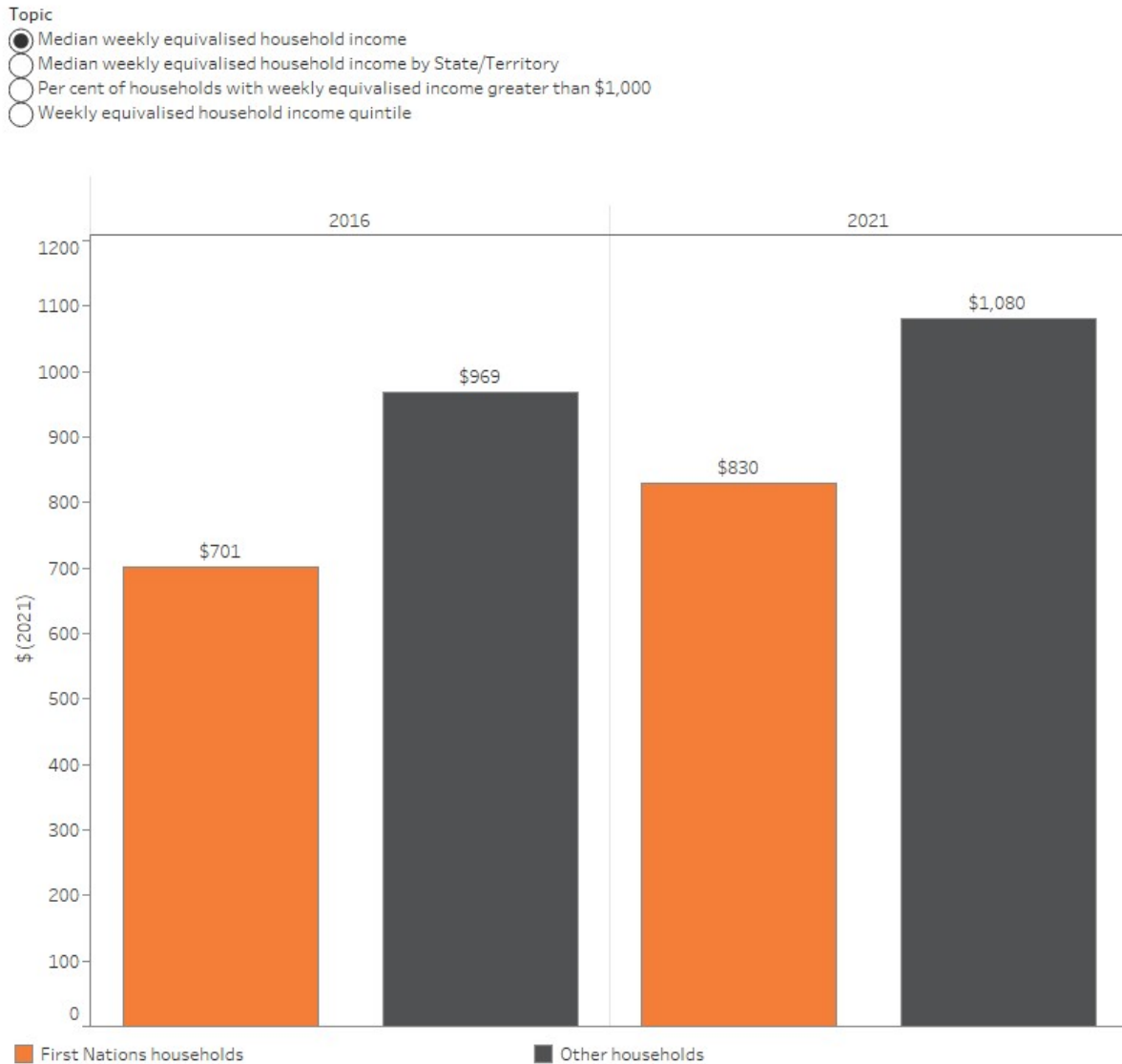
Figure 1 shows inflation-adjusted median weekly equivalised household income of First Nations households in 2016 and 2021.

In 2021:

- Median weekly equivalised household income for First Nations households was \$830. Between 2016 and 2021, median weekly equivalised household income for First Nations households grew by over 18%, compared with a growth of 11% for Other households.
- Among all states and territories, the median weekly equivalised household income in First Nations households was highest in the Australian Capital Territory (\$1,379) and lowest in the Northern Territory (\$578). Since 2016, the median weekly equivalised household incomes in First Nations households have grown in all states and territories.

- 40% of First Nations households had an equivalised weekly household income of \$1,000 or more. This has increased from 29% of First Nations households in 2016.
- The proportion of Other households with an equivalised weekly income of \$1,000 or more was 54%, an increase from 44% in 2016.

**Figure 12: Weekly equivalised household income by state and territory, and Indigenous status, 2016 and 2021, in 2021 dollars**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: ABS 2016, 2019, 2021a, 2021d, 2022b, 2023.

## Income distribution

In 2021:

- 35% of First Nations people had equivalised weekly household incomes in the bottom 20% of the household income distribution for all Australians aged 15 and over, a reduction from 37% in 2016. (Note: the quintiles have been calculated based on the equivalised weekly household income across all Australian households.)

- 9.5% of First Nations people had weekly equivalised household incomes in the top 20% of the household income distribution for all Australians aged 15 and over. The proportion has not changed much since 2016 (9.1%).
- The proportion of First Nations people in the middle 60% of the weekly equivalised household income distribution was 55%, a slight increase from 54% in 2016.

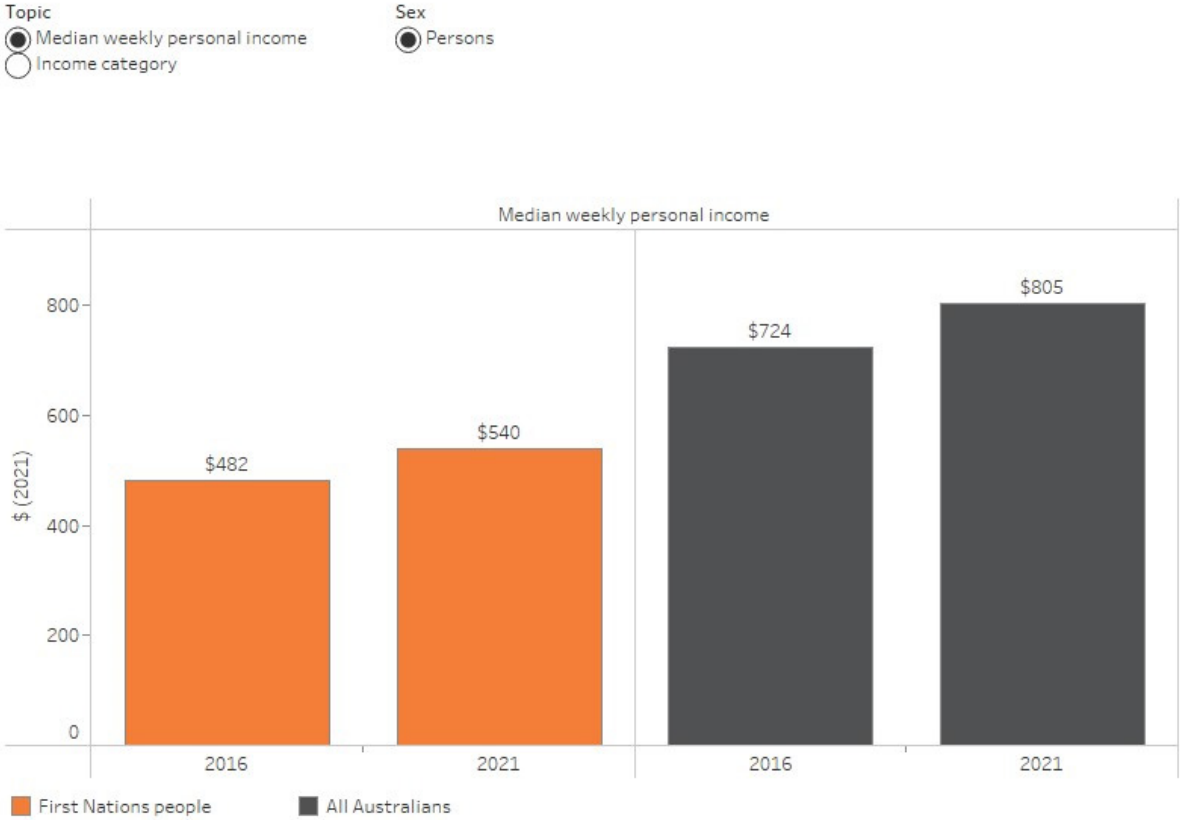
## Personal income

Figure 2 shows inflation-adjusted median weekly personal income for First Nations people aged 15 and over in 2016 and 2021.

For First Nations people aged 15 and over in 2021:

- median gross personal income was \$540 per week. This was an increase from \$482 per week in 2016 after adjusting for inflation
- median personal income between 2016 and 2021 grew at a faster rate (12%) than for all Australians aged 15 and over (11%)
- 28% had a gross weekly personal income of \$1,000 or more, an increase from 20% in 2016
- First Nations males (32%) were more likely to have a weekly personal income of \$1,000 or more compared with First Nations females (23%). The proportion was lower for both First Nations males (24%) and First Nations females (15%) in 2016.

**Figure 13: Weekly personal income by sex and Indigenous status, 2016 and 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Source: ABS 2016, 2019, 2021a, 2021d, 2022b, 2023.

## Income support payments and COVID-19

Australia’s social security system, administered by [Services Australia](#), aims to financially support people who cannot, or cannot fully, support themselves, by providing targeted payments and assistance. Where this is a regular payment that helps with the everyday costs of living it is referred to as an income support payment, with the type of payment often reflecting life circumstances at the time of receipt. Individuals can receive only one income support payment at a time.

## About Government income support payments data

On this page, the information on income support payments for First Nations people is sourced from the [DSS Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics - quarterly data](#) for different periods between June quarter 2016 and June quarter 2022. The latest data was available up until December quarter 2022. However, June quarter data is used to avoid potential seasonality in some of the payments. The population estimates for First Nations people and total populations are based on 2016 and 2021 Census based projections of the estimated resident population by single year of age (ABS 2022a). On this page, 'recipients of income support payments' refer to those who had received any of the following groups of payment type/s:

1. Age Pension
2. student payments that include ABSTUDY (Living Allowance), Austudy, and Youth Allowance (student and apprentice)
3. disability-related payments that include Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment
4. unemployment payments that include Newstart Allowance (closed 20 March 2020) or Jobseeker Payment (from 20 March 2020), and Youth Allowance (other)
5. parenting payments that include Parenting Payment Partnered and Parenting Payment Single
6. Special Benefit that is for those who are not eligible for any other income support.

For some years, the recipients of Bereavement Allowance, Sickness Allowance and payments that are closed to new recipients but still paid to existing recipients (including Partner and Widow Allowance to January 2022, Wife Pension (Partner on Age Pension or Partner on Disability Support Pension) to March 2020) were also included in the total number of income support payment recipients.

DSS does not publish numbers of recipients aged under 16 years separately for First Nations people and Other Australians. However, the number of recipients under 16 years were small (a total of 600 on any income support payment for First Nations people and a total of 1,300 on any income support payment for all Australians in the June quarter 2022).

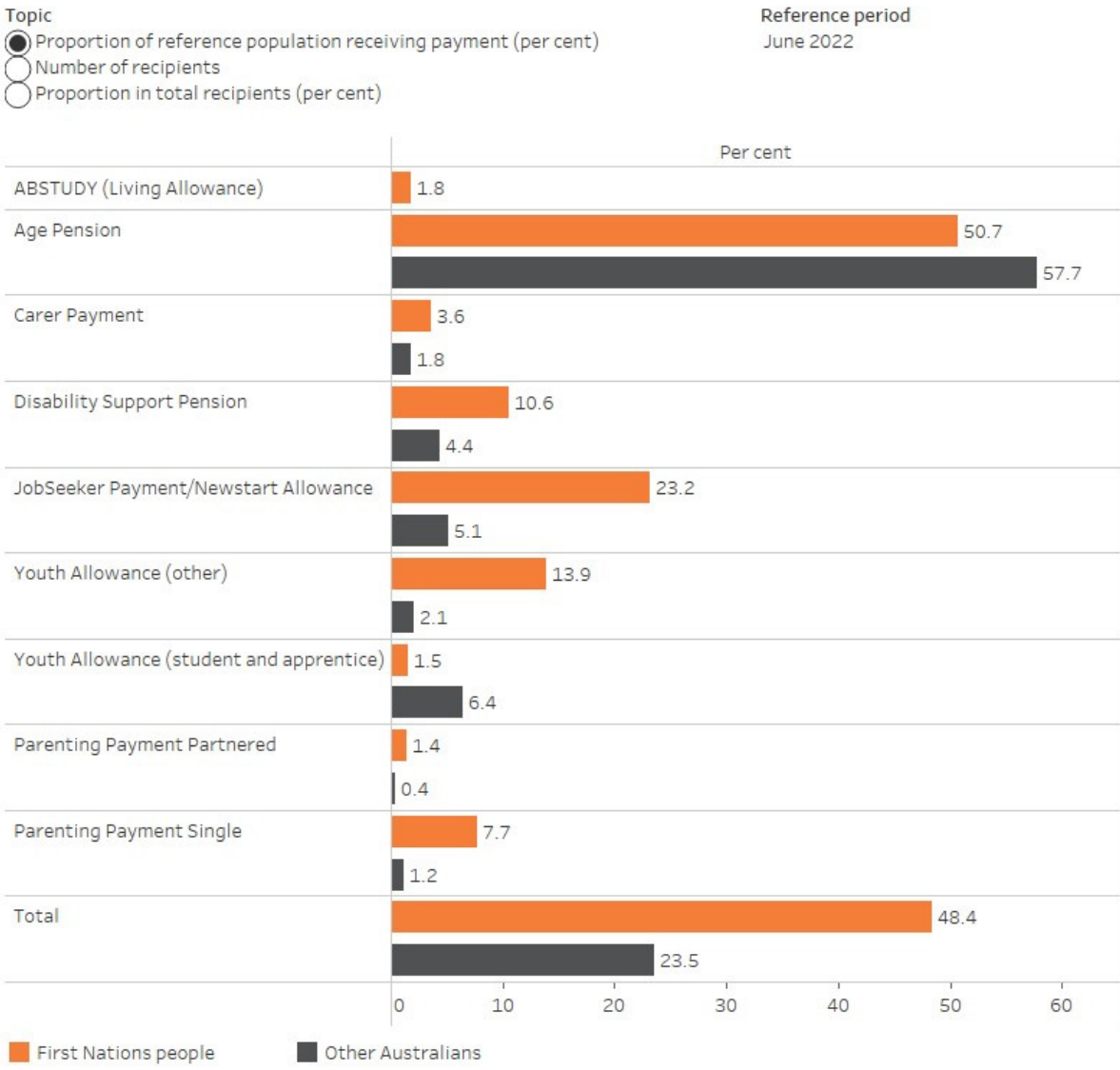
To ensure consistency with previous reporting of First Nations recipients of income support payments, this page reports the total number of all First Nations recipients in all ages (including those aged under 16 years). However, in computing the proportion of income support recipients in the population, by Indigenous status, the numerator still includes recipients of all ages, but the denominator includes only the estimated reference population aged 16 and over. This proportion is very close to the true proportion of First Nations people aged 16 and over who are on income support payments because of the very small number of recipients aged under 16 years.

For detailed definitions, descriptions of income support payments and more information, see [Unemployment payments](#), [Parenting payments](#), [Disability Support Pension](#), [Carer Payment](#), [Income support for older Australians](#), [A guide to Australian Government payments](#) and [glossary](#).

### Data qualification

Indigenous status identification in [Services Australia \(Centrelink\)](#) and population data is voluntary and self-identified. This may influence the quality and completeness of the data and subsequent reporting on the number and proportion of First Nations people receiving income support payments, especially among older First Nations people.

**Figure 14: Number and proportion of income support payment recipients by payment type and Indigenous status, June 2016 to June 2022 quarters**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Sources: ABS 2019, 2021a, 2022a; AIHW 2021a; DSS 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2022.

Figure 3 presents several related aspects of income support payments for First Nations people between the June 2016 and June 2022 quarters.

As at 24 June 2022, a total of 285,600 First Nations people received income support payments, equating to an estimated 48% of the total population of First Nations people aged 16 years and over. Out of 285,600 First Nations people who received income support payments:

- 35% (100,900) were recipients of Jobseeker Payment
- 20% (57,200) were recipients of Disability Support Pension
- 15% (41,600) were recipients of Parenting Payment Single
- 8.9% (25,500) were recipients of Age Pension
- 7.4% (21,200) were recipients of Youth Allowance (other)
- 6.8% (19,400) were recipients of Carer Payment
- the remaining (6.9%) were recipients of ABSTUDY (Living Allowance), Austudy, Parenting Payment Partnered, Youth Allowance (student and apprentice) and Special Benefit.

In June 2022, about 5.6% of all income support payment recipients in Australia were First Nations people in the Services Australia administrative records. This compares with the estimated 2.8% share of First Nations people aged 16 years and over in the total Australian population aged 16 years and over.

The equivalent proportion of First Nations recipients of income support payments in all income support payment recipients in Australia by specific payment types were:

- 27% in Youth Allowance (other)
- 18% in Parenting Payment Single
- 12% in JobSeeker Payment
- 11% in Parenting Payment Partnered
- 7.5% in Disability Support Pension
- 6.4% in Carer Payment
- 1.3% in Youth Allowance (student and apprentice)
- 1.0% in Age Pension.

First Nations people are over-represented in being recipients of certain payment types, such as Youth Allowance (other), Parenting Payment Single and Jobseeker Payment (where the percentages reported above are considerably higher than the proportion of First Nations people in the relevant total population age-groups).

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in Australia in early 2020, the Australian Government has made considerable changes to policies and eligibility for income support payments. In late March 2020 short-term policy changes were made to the JobSeeker Payment (such as waiving the assets tests, waiting periods, and mutual obligation requirements) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The changes that resulted in relaxing the eligibility criteria for specific income support payments, such as JobSeeker Payment, as well as the general decline in economic activity in the context of lockdowns and other business-related restrictions, led to an increase in the number of income support payment recipients among both First Nations people and non-Indigenous Australians (see Box 4.1 in 'Chapter 4 The impacts of COVID-19 on employment and income support in Australia' in [Australia's welfare 2021: data insights](#) for further details).

This is reflected in the increasing number of First Nations recipients of income support payments in the periods indicated below:



- 10,700 (or 4.3% more) First Nations recipients were added between the December 2019 and March 2020 quarters.
- An additional 36,000 First Nations people received income support payments between March and June 2020. This was a 14% increase.
- In June 2020 the number of First Nations recipients of income support payments as a proportion of the total population of First Nations people aged 16 and over increased to 53%, compared to 47% in March 2020.
- There was a further increase of 4,100 First Nations people on income support between June and December 2020 (a 1.4% increase).
- The total number of First Nations people on income support peaked at 299,600 in December 2020; however, expressed as the proportion of the total population of First Nations people aged 16 and over who were income support recipients, the peak of 53% persisted from the June 2020 to December 2020 quarters.
- As the short-term changes to the JobSeeker Payment and Coronavirus Supplement ended on the 31 March 2021, the number of First Nations recipients of income support payments fell by 3.2% between December 2020 and March 2021.

Figure 3 compares the number and proportion of First Nations recipients of income support payments in June 2021 and June 2022. Both datasets should be relatively unaffected by the short-term responses to COVID-19 which ended in March 2021, though the June 2021 data may be affected more than the data for June 2022.

The data show that between June 2021 and June 2022:

- The total number of First Nations recipients of income support payments increased by 1.4%.
- The proportion of First Nations recipients in the population of First Nations people aged 16 years and over decreased from 49% to 48%. This is consistent with the patterns for Other Australians recipients for whom the proportion also fell, from 25% to 24%.
- The proportion of First Nations recipients among all income support payment recipients in the Australian population increased from 5.3% to 5.6%.
- The number of First Nations people receiving specific income support payments increased by 6.1% for Disability Support Pension, 5.7% for Carer Payment, 5.1% for Parenting Payment Single, 3.2% for Age Pension and 1.1% for JobSeeker Payment.
- The number of First Nations recipients declined for several payment types: by 13% for Youth Allowance (student and apprentice), 9.9% for Parenting Payment Partnered and 9.7% for Youth Allowance (other).

## Financial stress

The higher the level of financial stress on a household, the lower its ability to cope when faced with unexpected shocks that lead to a fall in income or rise in expenditure.

Financial stress is a complex area and may differ from household to household.

However, some common aspects of financial stress can be captured by measures of housing stress, security of necessities, and the ability to raise funds in an emergency.

Households with lower financial stress are expected to have lower housing stress, higher security of necessities, and are better able to raise funds in an emergency.

An individual's inability to raise emergency funds and having cash-flow problems are typically used to gauge financial stress and income vulnerability (Breunig and Cobb-Clark 2006; Saunders et al. 2007). Thus, people who are unable to raise emergency funds or are experiencing cash-flow problems can be considered as financially stressed or vulnerable (Breunig et al. 2017; Whiteford 2013).

Expenditure on housing (such as rent payments or mortgage repayments) constitute a major component of a household's total living costs. Households that spent a high proportion of gross income on housing are more likely to be in financial stress. Housing affordability and financial stress are typically measured by assessing the proportion of a household's gross income that is spent on housing costs – like rent payments or mortgage repayments (AIHW 2021b; ABS 2021b, 2021c; Thomas and Hall 2016). While rental or mortgage stress may not necessarily indicate that a household is in overall financial stress (ABS 2021b, 2021c), these capture crucial aspects of their financial status.

## About financial stress data

Data on First Nations people's ability to raise emergency funds and experience of cash-flow issues come from the 2018–19 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey ([NATSIHS](#)) (AIHW 2021a).

To measure housing stress, the Census provides data on the rent affordability indicator (RAID) for rented households and mortgage affordability indicator (MAID) for mortgaged households (see [glossary](#)). The data on RAID and MAID for First Nations people reported in this page were supplied through ABS customised reports of Census 2016 and 2021 (ABS 2019, 2023) and supplemented by data derived from the Census TableBuilder.

The ABS computes the rent affordability indicator by dividing rent payments by an imputed household income. A household is often considered under rental stress if it spends more than 30% of household income on rental payments. Similarly, mortgage stress for mortgaged households is measured through the mortgage affordability indicator, calculated by dividing mortgage repayments by an imputed household income. A household is often considered under mortgage stress if mortgage repayments are more than 30% of household income.

The data presented on this page exclude households that were unable to determine the proportion of household income as rent payments or mortgaged repayments. The tabulations on this page are in reference to either First Nations households or First Nations people aged 15 years and over.

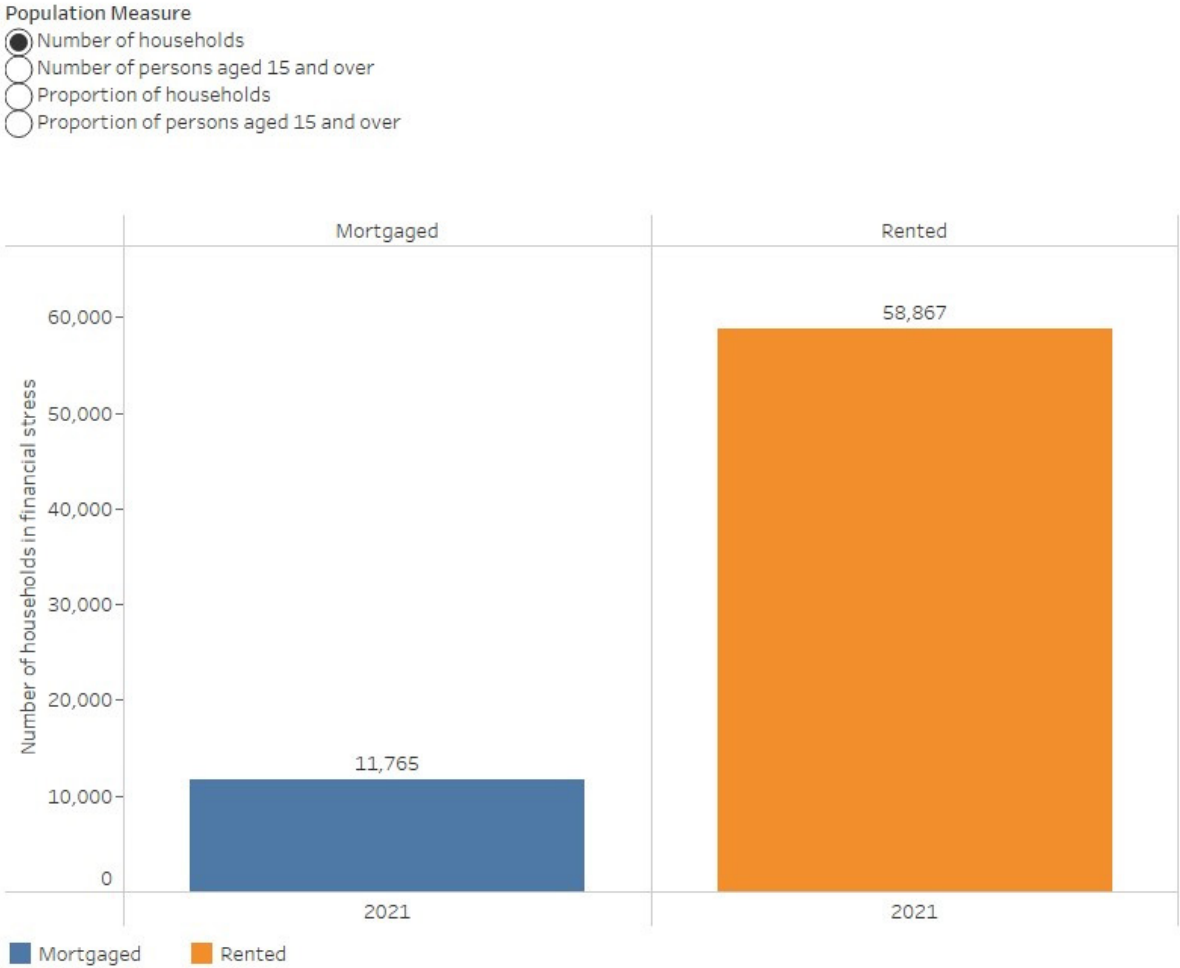
AIHW (2021a) shows that the proportion of financially stressed First Nations people aged 15 and over had increased between 2014–15 and 2018–19. In 2018–19:

- over half (53%) of First Nations people aged 15 and over lived in households that could not raise \$2,000 within a week for an emergency, an increase from 48% in 2014–15
- 39% of First Nations people aged 15 and over had reported that their household had days without money for basic living expenses in the last 12 months, compared with 28% in 2014–15 (AIHW 2021a).

Figure 4 shows that in 2021:

- 35% (58,900) of rented and 14% (11,800) of mortgaged First Nations households reported to have more than 30% of household income as rent payments (for rented households) or mortgage repayments (for mortgaged households).
- 27% (65,400) of First Nations people aged 15 years and over had rent payments more than 30% of their household income. This was a decrease from 30% (54,900) in 2016.
- 12% (13,400) of First Nations people aged 15 years and over had mortgage repayments of more than 30% of their household income, a reduction from 18% (14,100) in 2016.

**Figure 15: Number and proportion of First Nations households and people aged 15 and over in financial stress by tenure type, 2016 and 2021**



<https://www.aihw.gov.au>

**Notes**

1. Financial stress is measured through household’s mortgage repayments exceeding 30% of household income (mortgage stress) and rent payments exceeding 30% of household income (rental stress).
2. Data on number and proportion of households with mortgage and rental stress in Census TableBuilder is available for 2021 only.
3. Data for the number and proportion of persons aged 15 years and over in the households with rental or mortgage stress are available for 2016 and 2021 through ABS 2023 Customised report.

Sources: ABS 2016, 2019, 2021a, 2023.

**Where do I go for more information?**

For further information on the income and finance of First Nations people, see:

- ABS [Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2021](#)
- ABS [Census of Population and Housing: Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2016](#)

- ABS [Census of Population and Housing: Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2021](#)
- Services Australia [A guide to Australian Government payments](#)
- ABS [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2018-19](#)
- Productivity Commission [Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: key indicators 2020.](#)

See also [Indigenous Australians](#).

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# Profile of First Nations people

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/profile-of-indigenous-australians>

## On this page

Introduction

Population size and location

Language and culture

Closing the gap targets

Where do I go for more information?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people are the first peoples of Australia. They are not one group, but rather comprise hundreds of groups that have their own distinct set of languages, histories and cultural traditions (AIHW 2015). The health and welfare of First Nations people living in the big cities are different to those living in the Torres Strait, which are different again to those living on the outskirts of Alice Springs or those living in remote communities.

This page provides demographic information on the First Nations population, including information on their languages and cultures. Information is also included on the Closing the Gap targets.

## First Nations identification in data collections

In most Australian data collections, First Nations people refers to people who have identified themselves, or have been identified by a representative (for example, their parent or guardian), as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. For a few data collections, such as those associated with government grants and payments, information on acceptance of a person as being First Nations by a First Nations community may also be required.

Colonisation is recognised as having a fundamental impact on the disadvantage and poor health of First Nations peoples worldwide, through social systems that maintain disparities (see, for example, Thurber et al. 2022; Paradies 2016; Paradies and Cunningham 2012). In Australia, the historical and ongoing effects of colonisation and racism have contributed, at least in large part, to current inequities in the health and wellbeing of First Nations people. In contrast, cultural factors – such as connection to Country and caring for Country, knowledge and beliefs, language, self-determination, family and kinship, and cultural expression – can be protective and positively influence First Nations people's health and wellbeing (see, for example, Thurber et al. 2022; Bourke et al. 2018).

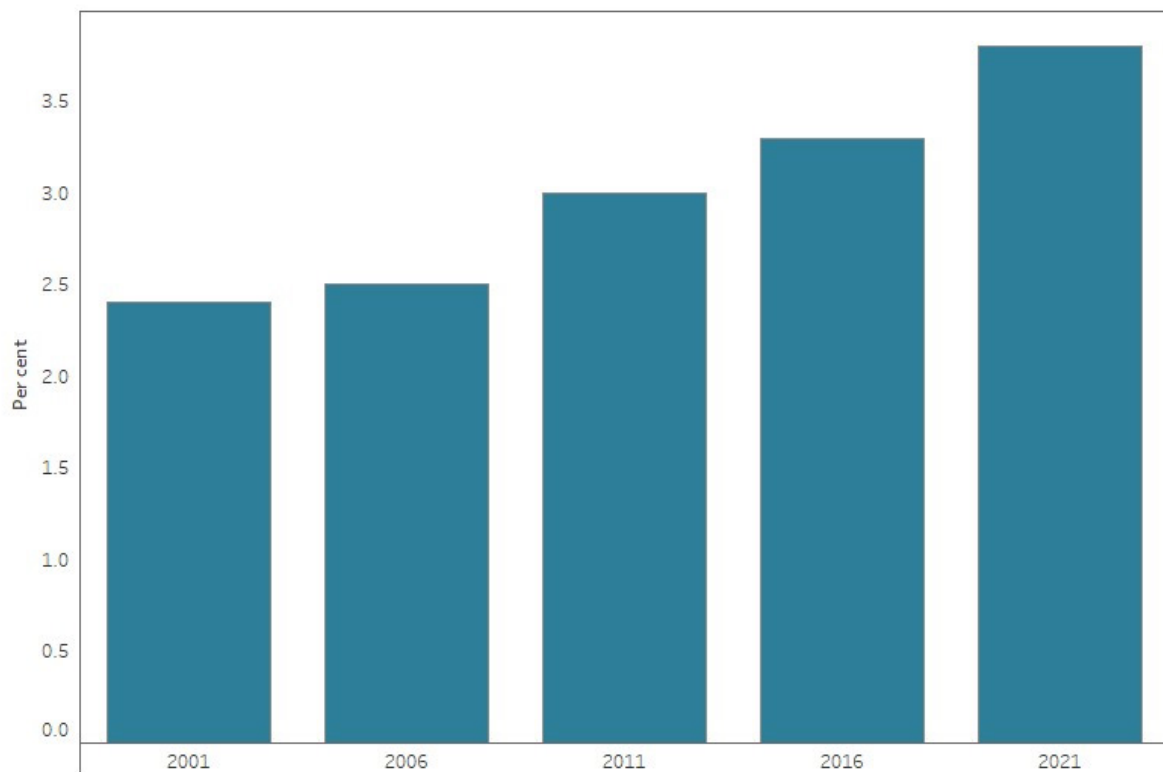


## Population size and location

As of 30 June 2021, preliminary Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) estimates indicate that 984,000 First Nations people were living in Australia, representing 3.8% of the total Australian population. This was an increase of 23% (185,600 people) from the 30 June 2016 estimate of 798,400 (ABS 2018, 2022b).

The proportion of First Nations people has increased each Census of Population and Housing (the Census) since 2001 – from 2.4% in 2001, to 2.5% in 2006, 3.0% in 2011, 3.3% in 2016, and 3.8% in 2021 (Figure 1). This increase is not completely explained by demographic factors. Other factors, such as changing identification in the Census and throughout life, an undercount for ages 0–4 in the 2016 Census, greater participation in the 2021 Census and a higher response rate to the question on Indigenous status, have also contributed to changes in counts of First Nations people (ABS 2023).

**Figure 1: Proportion of First Nations people in the Census, 2001 to 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Data are ABS Census-based estimated resident population (final estimates for 2001 to 2016 and preliminary estimates for 2021).

Sources: ABS 2003, 2008, 2013, 2018, 2022b.

Based on 2021 Census counts of First Nations population (around 812,700 people):

- 91.4% identified as being of Aboriginal origin
- 4.2% identified as being of Torres Strait Islander origin
- 4.4% identified as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ABS 2022a).

## About First Nations populations estimates

The ABS produces Estimated Resident Populations (ERPs) for First Nations people every 5 years (the Census years).

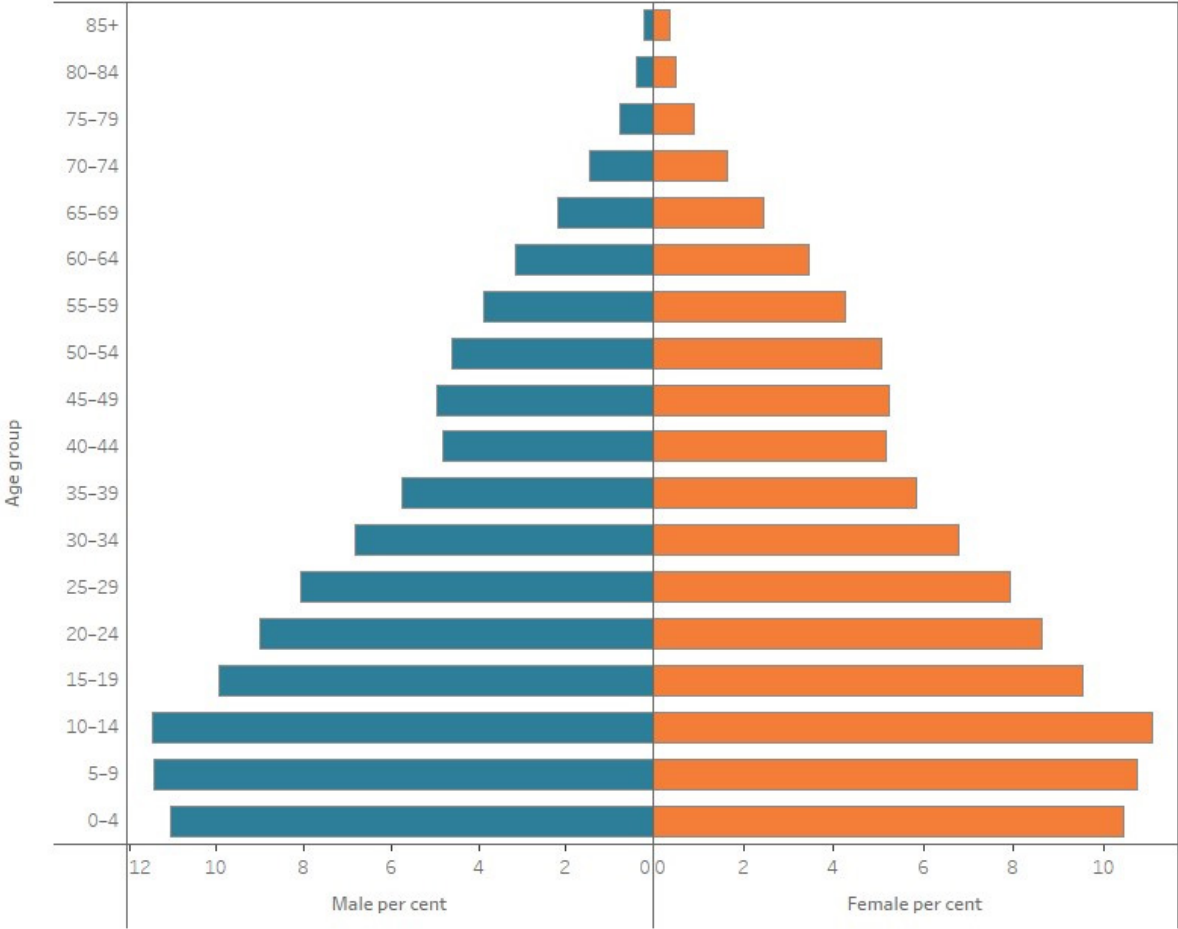
The 2021 estimates of First Nations population on this page are from the ABS preliminary 2021 Census-based estimated resident population of First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians. Final estimates will be released 31 August 2023. See [Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians](#) for details.

The ABS also produces 'back cast estimates' for years before the latest Census year and 'projections' for future years, based on the latest Census year estimates along with assumptions about births, deaths and migration (see [Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians](#) for details). The latest available projections are based on the 2016 Census. The 2016 Census-based projections, first published by the ABS in 2019, do not account for any impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. See [Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians](#) and [Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians](#) for details.

## Age distribution

The First Nations population has a relatively young age structure, with larger proportions of people aged 29 and under, when compared with the non-Indigenous population. As of 30 June 2021, an estimated one-third (33%) of the First Nations population was aged under 15, compared with 18% of non-Indigenous people in the same age group (ABS 2022a; Figure 2). The median age of First Nations people has increased – from 21 in 2011, to 23 in 2016 and 24 in 2021 (ABS 2022b).

**Figure 2: First Nations population by age and sex, 30 June 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Data are ABS 2021 Census-based estimated resident population (preliminary estimates).

Source: ABS 2022b.

**Geographic distribution**

First Nations people are more likely to live in urban and regional areas than remote areas, though the proportion of the total population who are First Nations is generally higher in more remote areas.

Based on 2016 Census-based projections, in 2023, among First Nations people:

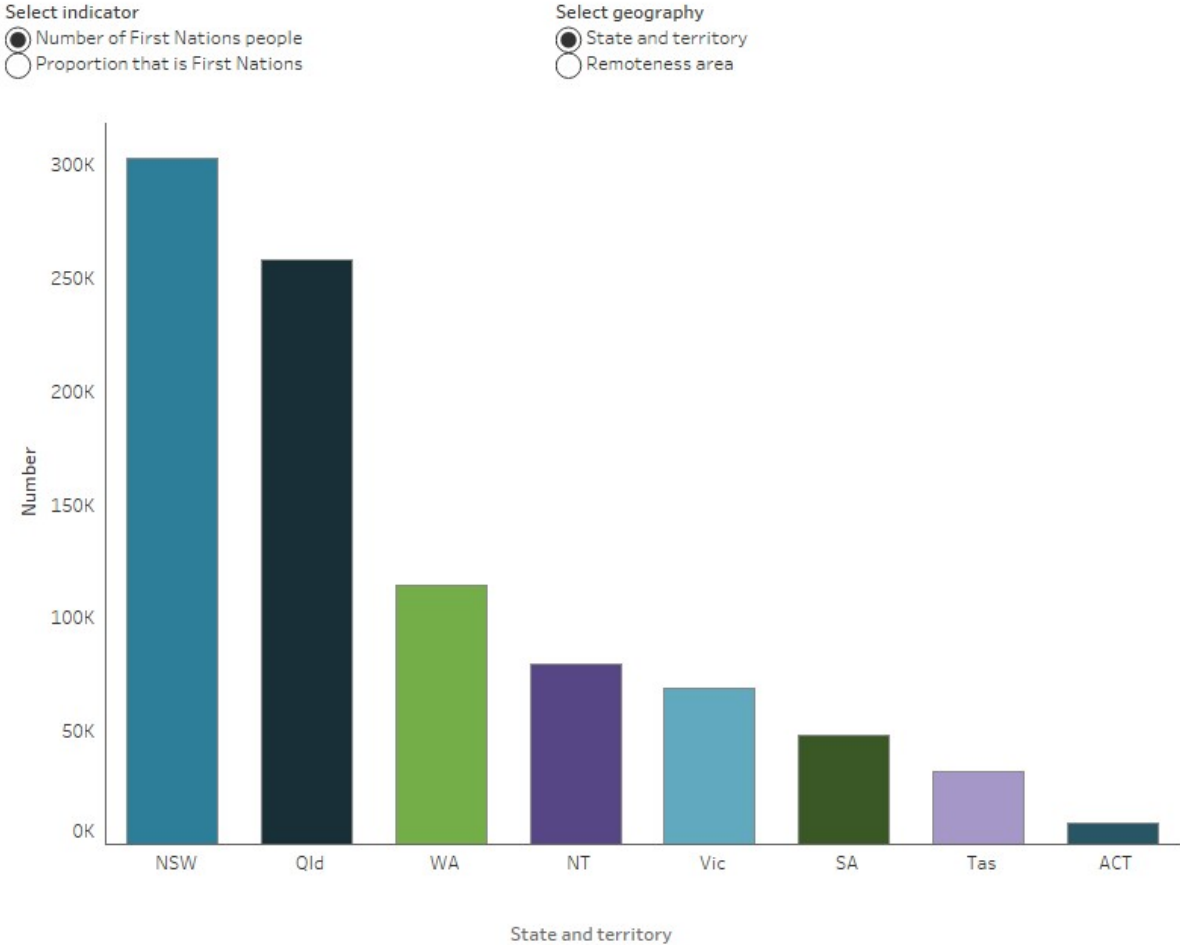
- 39% (353,300) live in *Major cities*
- 44% (404,000) live in *Inner and outer regional* areas
- 17% (156,600) live in *Remote and very remote* areas combined (Figure 3; ABS 2019).

The proportion of the total population who were First Nations increased with remoteness, from 1.9% in *Major cities*, to 32% in *Remote and very remote* areas.

In 2023, a projected 33% of First Nations people (303,200 people) live in New South Wales and 28% (258,400 people) in Queensland (Figure 3).

The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of First Nations residents among its population – a projected 30% (79,700 people) (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: First Nations population by geography, 2023**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. 'Proportion that is First Nations' by remoteness is calculated using ABS 2016 Census-based projections for 2021 as the denominator.
2. All other data are ABS 2016 Census-based projections for 2023 (Series B).

Source: ABS 2019.

## Language and culture

First Nations communities pass on knowledge, tradition, ceremony and culture from one generation to the next through language, performance, protection of significant sites, storytelling and the teachings of Elders. Cultural factors, such as connection to community, land and spirituality, are important for the social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations people (Bourke et al. 2018).

In the 2021 Census, almost 1 in 10 (9.5% or around 77,000) First Nations people reported that they spoke a First Nations language at home, with over 150 different First

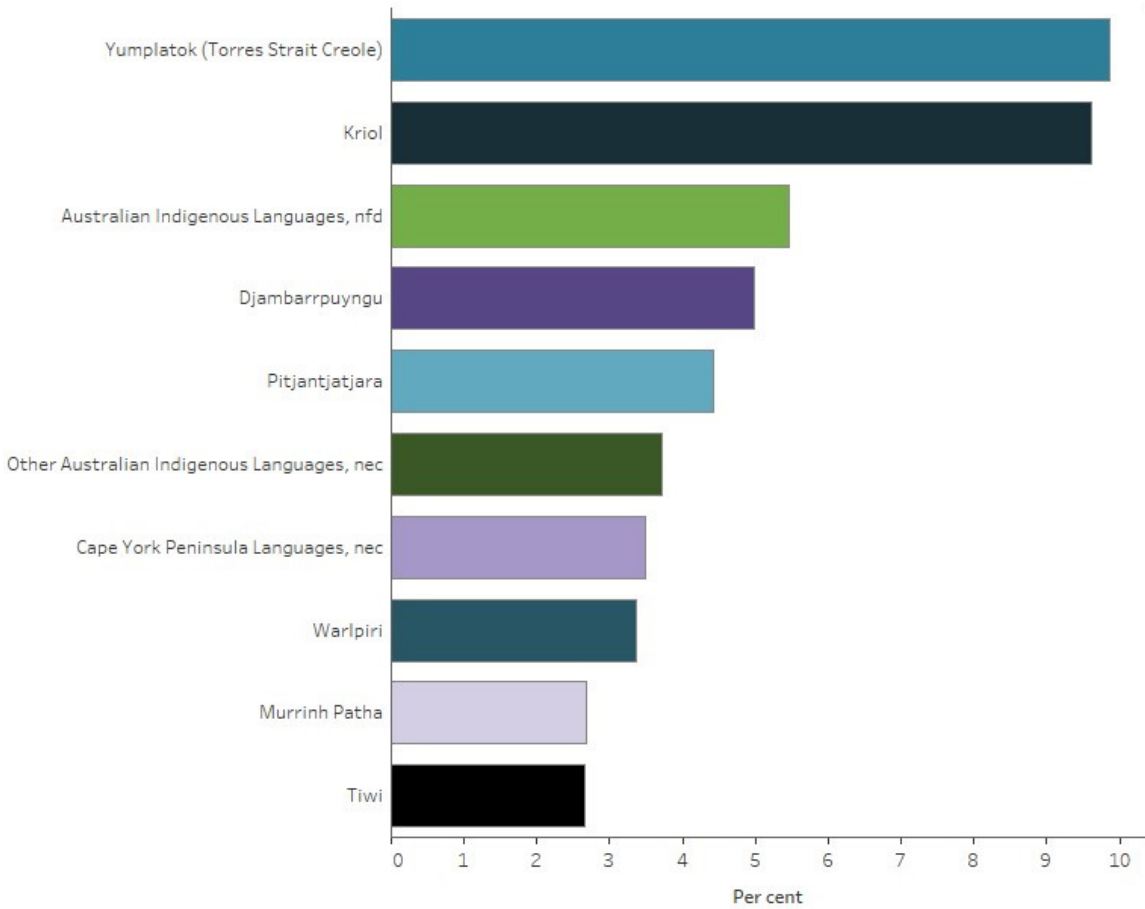
Nations languages being spoken. The Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL) used for the Census does not list all languages spoken and, in order to be separately identified, a First Nations language must have 3 or more known speakers. Where responses to the Census question on language cannot be coded to a finer level or where there are not enough speakers of a language for it to be given a separate code, supplementary codes of 'nes' and 'nec' are used, respectively.

In 2021, the most common First Nations languages spoken at home were Yumplatok (Torres Strait Creole) (around 7,600 or 9.9% of First Nations people who spoke a First Nations language at home) and Kriol (around 7,400 people or 9.6%) (ABS 2022c; Figure 4). These were also the most commonly spoken languages in 2016 (ABS 2022c).

### **Yumplatok (Torres Strait Creole) and Kriol**

During colonisation, speaking traditional languages was generally discouraged. This resulted in some languages being lost or merging with other languages to form new languages. Yumplatok and Kriol are both recently developed English-based creole languages (that is, these languages are a mixture of Standard Australian English and traditional languages). Yumplatok, in particular, is a common language shared by all Torres Strait Islanders and is often spoken in addition to other local languages.

**Figure 4: Proportion of First Nations people who spoke a First Nations language at home, by language spoken, 2021**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

**Notes**

1. Proportion is of First Nations people who spoke a First Nations language at home from the 2021 Census.
2. 'Australian Indigenous language, nfd' is a supplementary code in the ASCL and is used when responses cannot be coded to a finer level.
3. 'Other Indigenous language, nec' is used for any language which is not separately identified in the ASCL because it does not meet the threshold for the minimum number of speakers.

Source: ABS 2022c.

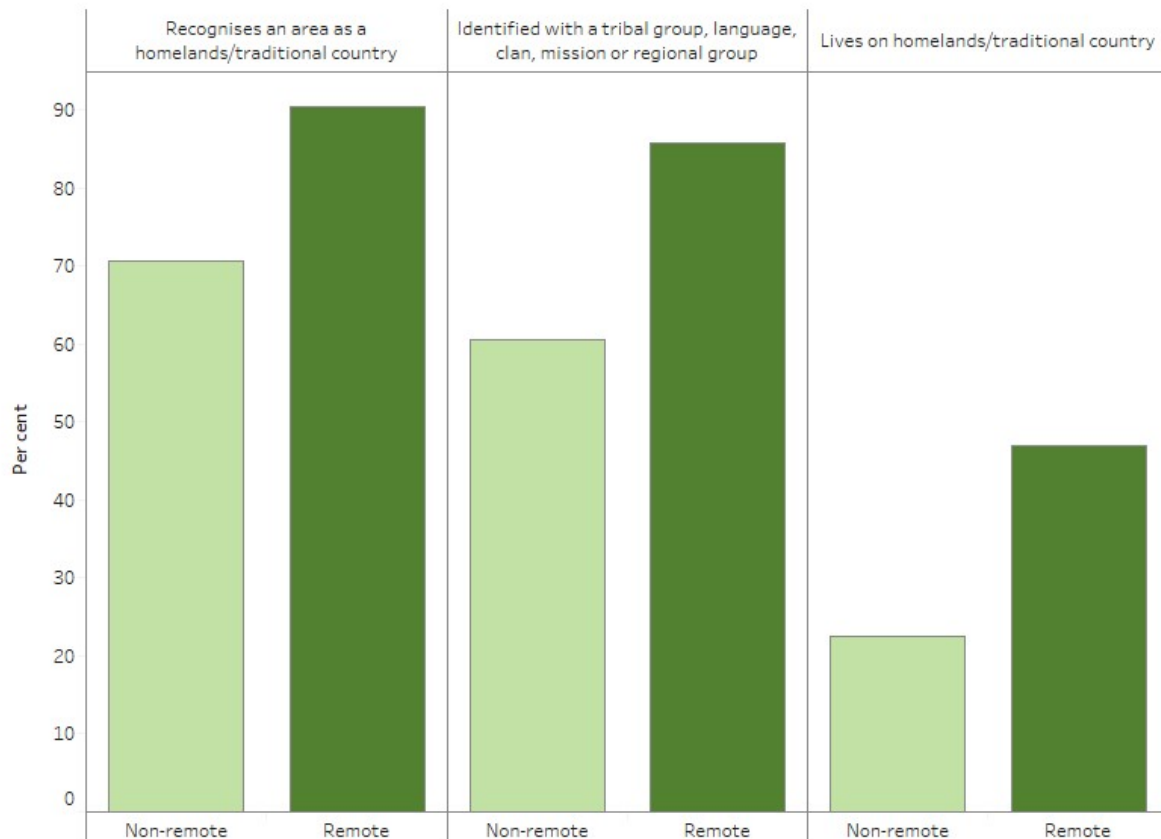
The proportion of First Nations people who spoke a First Nations language at home has declined over time – from 16.4% in 1991 to 9.8% in 2016 and 9.5% in 2021 (ABS 2022c).

Data from the 2018–19 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey show that First Nations people have strong connections to their family, community and culture. In 2018–19, among First Nations people aged 18 and over an estimated:

- 74% (357,800 people) recognised an area as a homeland/traditional country – this was 90% in *remote* areas compared with 71% in *non-remote* areas.

- 65% (314,200 people) identified with a tribal group, language, clan, mission or regional group – this was 86% in *remote* areas compared with 61% in *non-remote* areas.
- 27% (130,500 people) lived on their homeland – this was 47% in *remote* areas compared with 23% in *non-remote* areas (Figure 5; AIHW and NIAA 2020).

**Figure 5: Selected measures of cultural connectedness among First Nations people aged 18 and over by remoteness, 2018–19**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Note: Remoteness classified according to the Australian Statistical Geography standard 2016. 'Non-remote' includes *Major cities*, *Inner regional* areas and *Outer regional* areas. 'Remote' includes *Remote* and *Very remote* areas.

Source: AIHW and NIAA 2020.

## Closing the Gap targets

Closing the Gap is a government framework aiming to reduce disadvantage among First Nations people. It was first agreed in 2008. Four of the original 7 targets expired unmet.

In 2020, there was a marked shift in the approach to the Closing the Gap framework, with the signing of a new [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) (National Agreement). For the first time, this agreement was developed in genuine [partnership](#) between Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations.

The National Agreement is built around 4 Priority Reforms that focus on changing the way governments work with First Nations people. The National Agreement also identifies 17 socioeconomic outcome areas with 19 targets across these areas (Table 1).

The [targets](#) in the National Agreement are monitored annually by the Productivity Commission and reported in their [Closing the Gap Information Repository Dashboard](#) (PC 2022).

**Table 1: National Agreement on Closing the Gap socioeconomic outcome areas and targets**

Socioeconomic outcome area	Target
1	Close the Gap in life expectancy within a generation, by 2031.
2	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birthweight to 91%.
3	By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95%.
4	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55%.
5	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20–24) attaining year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%.
6	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%.
7	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15–24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67%.
8	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–64 who are employed to 62%.
9	<p>A: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88%.</p> <p>B: By 2031, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• within discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities receive essential services that meet or exceed the relevant jurisdictional standard</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in or near to a town receive essential services that meet or exceed the same standard as applies generally within the town (including if the household might be classified for other purposes as a part of a discrete settlement such as a 'town camp' or 'town based reserve').</li> </ul>
10	By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15%.
11	By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10–17 years) in detention by 30%.
12	By 2031, reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45%.
13	By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50%, as progress towards zero.
14	Significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards zero.
15	<p>A: By 2030, a 15% increase in Australia's landmass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests.</p> <p>B: By 2030, a 15% increase in areas covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests in the sea.</p>
16	By 2031, there is a sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken.
17	By 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion.

For more information on the Closing the Gap targets, see [Community safety for First Nations people](#), [Education of First Nations people](#) and [Employment of First Nations people](#).

## Indigenous COVID-19 advisory groups and response

The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), in partnership with the Australian Government, has been critical in responding to COVID-19 for First Nations people. NACCHO is the national leadership body for First Nations health in Australia. It provides advice and guidance to the Australian Government on policy and budget matters and advocates for community-developed solutions that contribute to the quality of life and improved health outcomes for First Nations people.

In March 2020, the Australian Government established the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19](#) (the Taskforce), co-chaired by NACCHO and the Department of Health. The Taskforce provides culturally appropriate advice to the Department of Health about health issues related to COVID-19, and developed the [Management Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations](#). This plan focuses on

culturally appropriate testing and care for First Nations people. It supports health care professionals working with First Nations communities and peoples to develop and implement local operational plans.

After consultation with the First Nations health sector (through the Taskforce) and with state and territory governments, in March 2021, the Australian Government released the [COVID-19 Vaccination Program – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Implementation Plan](#). This plan builds on Australia's [COVID-19 Vaccine National Rollout Strategy](#) (released 7 January 2021) and complements the [Management Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations](#). Under it, vaccines were administered to First Nations people at Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, state and territory government-run Aboriginal Medical Services and other providers.

The [First Nations Peoples Strategic Advisory Group \(FNPSAG\)](#) was set up in 2020 to support the Disability Royal Commission in its work by providing leadership and guidance on matters specific to First Nations people with disability. Regarding COVID-19, the FNPSAG released a [Statement of Concern](#) endorsed by over 70 disability organisations in March 2020 and an [issues paper](#) on emergency planning and response in April 2020. The FNPSAG noted in their Statement of Concern that First Nations people with disability are not only disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in general because they have an increased risk of infection and death. They are also disproportionately affected by the associated social restrictions imposed on them and the resulting breaks in the continuity of essential services (Disability Royal Commission 2020a, 2020b).

## Where do I go for more information?

Visit [Indigenous Australians](#) for more on this topic.

For more information on First Nations people, see:

- [Indigenous Health Performance Framework](#)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples](#).

For information on the Closing the Gap framework, such as the National Agreement and targets, see [Closing the Gap](#).

For data on each Closing the Gap target by jurisdiction, see the [Productivity Commission Closing the Gap Information Repository Dashboard](#).

# Specialised support and informal care for First Nations people with disability

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/disability-support-for-indigenous-australians>

## On this page

Introduction  
Disability prevalence  
Formal disability support  
Informal care  
The impact of COVID-19  
Where do I go for more information?

People with disability may need help with daily activities – for example, eating, showering, or moving around. They may also need help to participate in social and economic life. To do so, people with disability may use a range of formal support services and informal care.

In recent years, there have been several policy initiatives relating to disability that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people.

## Disability policy environment

The disability policy environment has significantly changed in recent years, especially in relation to service delivery, including:

- the launch of the new [Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031](#), which included [engagement with Indigenous Australians with disability](#) and an associated [action plan](#) which outlines actions to improve community attitudes towards people with disability
- the implementation of the [National Disability Insurance Scheme](#), which includes the co-designing of a new [First Nations Strategy](#) and action plan
- the establishment of the [NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission](#)
- pilot-testing of the [National Disability Data Asset](#)
- the establishment of a [Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability](#)
- changing community attitudes and improving awareness of disability.

## Disability prevalence

There are currently 3 main sources of data on First Nations people with disability (see ABS 2019a for more information). These are the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS):

- Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) – the SDAC uses the most comprehensive method to determine disability status and severity but it was not specifically designed to collect data about First Nations people and it also has limited coverage of smaller geographies and populations. In particular, it excludes First Nations people from *Very remote* areas and discrete First Nations communities.
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) – the NATSIHS uses the summarised Short Disability Module (which is not as detailed as the method used in SDAC) to determine disability status and severity but it was designed to generate results that are representative for First Nations people. It includes non-remote areas, remote areas and discrete First Nations communities.
- Census of Population and Housing (Census) – the scope of the Census is very large but it collects limited information on disability. Rather than being a broad measure of people with disability, it only captures people with more severe forms of disability (referred to as 'needing assistance with core activities' and equivalent to severe or profound disability as collected in the SDAC and the NATSIHS). Census data presented on this page excludes 'not stated' responses and may differ from that published elsewhere.

While each data source has different purposes and methodologies for capturing disability, and their estimates of overall disability among First Nations people vary, their estimates of severe or profound disability are broadly similar (ABS 2019a):

- The 2018 SDAC estimated that:
  - 24% of First Nations people were living with disability (or around 140,000 out of 581,000), similar to the proportion in 2015
  - 8.8% (51,100) of First Nations people were living with severe or profound disability, compared with 7.3% in 2015
  - based on age-standardised rates, First Nations people were 1.9 times as likely to be living with disability as non-Indigenous Australians (ABS 2021).
- The 2018–19 NATSIHS estimated that:
  - 38% of First Nations people were living with disability (306,100 out of 814,000) (ABS 2019b)
  - 8.1% (66,100) of First Nations people were living with severe or profound disability (ABS 2019b)
  - based on age-standardised rates, First Nations people were 1.5 times as likely to be living with disability as non-Indigenous Australians, and 2.5 times as likely to be living with severe or profound disability (AIHW and NIAA 2022).
- The 2021 Census estimated that 8.6% (66,400 out of 813,000) of First Nations people needed assistance with core activities (ABS 2022a). This was an increase from 7.2% in 2016 and 5.8% in 2011 (ABS 2011; ABS 2016).

Despite these differences, the data consistently indicate that for First Nations people (Tables 1 and 2):

- rates of disability are generally similar for males and females
- those aged 55 and over are more likely to experience disability than those aged under 55
- rates of overall disability are highest in *Inner regional* areas.

**Table 1: Rates of disability for First Nations people, by selected population characteristics and data source (%)<sup>(a)</sup>**

	<b>2018 SDAC</b>	<b>2018-19 NATSIHS</b>
<b>With disability</b>	24.0	37.6
<b>Aged 55 and over</b>	53.5	74.6
<b>Aged under 55</b>	19.4	32.5
<b>Male</b>	23.7	38.7
<b>Female</b>	24.3	36.5
<b>Major cities</b>	23.8	37.1
<b>Inner regional areas</b>	29.6	40.3
<b>Outer regional areas</b>	22.0	35.7
<b>Remote areas</b>	18.1	37.4
<b>Very remote areas</b>	n.a.	35.9

n.a. not available

(a) Each data source has different purposes and methodologies for capturing information about disability, and therefore their estimates of disability vary.

Sources: ABS 2019b, 2021.

**Table 2: Rates of severe or profound disability for First Nations people, by selected population characteristics and data source (%)<sup>(a)</sup>**

	<b>2018 SDAC</b>	<b>2018–19 NATSIHS</b>	<b>2021 Census<sup>(b)</sup></b>
<b>Aged 55 and over</b>	17.9	18.6	21.3
<b>Aged under 55</b>	7.6	6.7	6.6
<b>Male</b>	8.5	8.6	9.3
<b>Female</b>	9.7	7.6	7.9
<b>Major cities</b>	n.a.	9.6	9.3
<b>Inner regional areas</b>	n.a.	8.5	9.7
<b>Outer regional areas</b>	n.a.	7.3	8.2
<b>Remote areas</b>	n.a.	6.6	5.9
<b>Very remote areas</b>	n.a.	5.3	4.3

n.a. not available

(a) Each data source has different purposes and methodologies for capturing information about disability, and therefore their estimates of disability vary.

(b) For the Census, 'severe or profound disability' refers to 'needed assistance with core activities'. Calculations exclude 'not stated' need for assistance.

Sources: ABS 2019c, 2021, 2022b.

## Education and employment

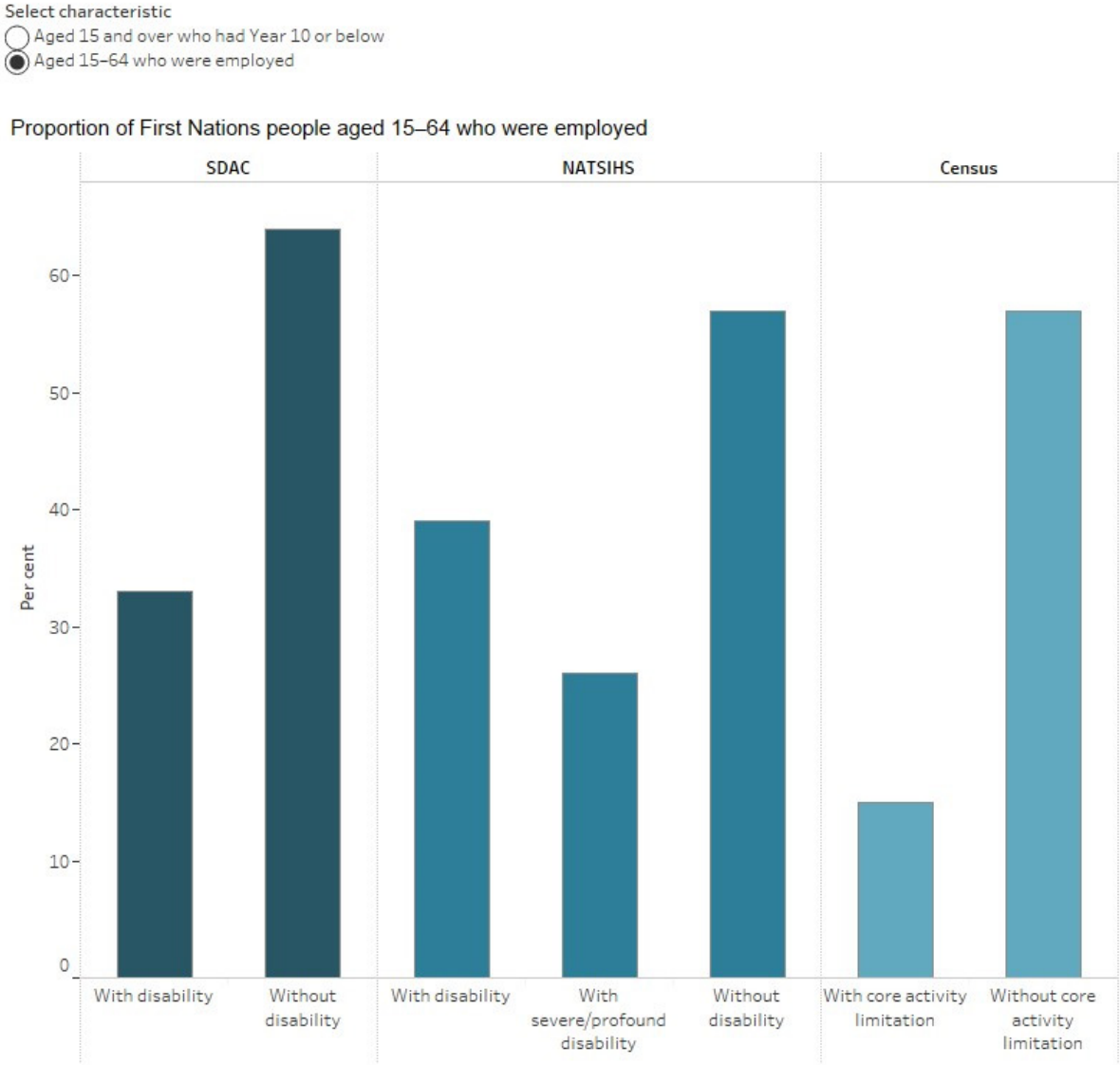
Disability can affect participation in education and in the labour force (Figure 1). According to the 3 main sources of data on First Nations people with disability, compared with First Nations people without disability:

- First Nations people with disability aged 15 and over were more likely to have Year 10 or below as their highest level of education:
  - The 2018 SDAC estimated that 45% (47,400) of First Nations people aged 15 and over with disability had Year 10 or below as their highest level of education, compared with 30% (81,300) of First Nations people aged 15 and over without disability (ABS 2021). This was similar to 2015 when 46% (46,900) of First Nations people with disability in this age group had Year 10 or below as their highest level of education (ABS 2021).
  - The 2018–19 NATSIHS estimated that 43% (103,300) of First Nations people aged 15 and over with disability and 46% (20,400) of First Nations people aged 15 and over with severe or profound disability had Year 10 or below as their highest

level of education, compared with 36% (or 100,200) of First Nations people aged 15 and over without disability (ABS 2019b).

- The 2021 Census estimated that 54% (23,900) of First Nations people aged 15 and over who needed assistance with core activities had Year 10 or below as their highest level of education, compared with 34% (150,000) of First Nations people aged 15 and over who did not need assistance with core activities (ABS 2022b).
- First Nations people with disability aged 15–64 were less likely to be employed:
  - The 2018 SDAC estimated that 33% (27,400) of First Nations people aged 15–64 with disability were employed, compared with 64% (166,100) of First Nations people aged 15–64 without disability (ABS 2021).
  - The 2018–19 NATSIHS estimated that 39% (84,600) of First Nations people aged 15–64 with disability and 26% (10,500) of First Nations people aged 15–64 with severe or profound disability were employed, compared with 57% (159,000) of First Nations people aged 15–64 without disability (ABS 2019b).
  - The 2021 Census estimated that 15% (5,170) of First Nations people aged 15–64 who needed assistance with core activities were employed, compared with 57% (246,000) of First Nations people aged 15–64 who did not need assistance with core activities (ABS 2022b).

**Figure 1: Education and employment among First Nations people, by disability status and data source**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

**Notes**

1. Each data source has different purposes and methodologies for capturing information about disability, and therefore their estimates of disability vary.
2. Census calculations exclude 'not stated' need for assistance.

Sources: ABS 2019b, 2021, 2022b.

## Formal disability support

### Specialist disability support services

Specialist disability support services assist people with disability to participate fully in all aspects of everyday life. Specialist disability support services in Australia are now largely provided through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) but there are also a



range of other government and mainstream services that support First Nations people with disability. For more information on disability support services, see [Specialised supports for people with disability](#).

## Data sources for specialist disability support services

Data for specialist disability support services provided through the NDIS are sourced from the National Disability Insurance Agency's publicly released reports. The NDIS quarterly reports and data downloads contain the latest available data on the funding and provision of NDIS supports. However, these do not include comprehensive breakdowns for all participant groups, such as First Nations people. Data on specific participant groups are periodically released in a series of [special reports](#), such as [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants: 30 June 2019](#).

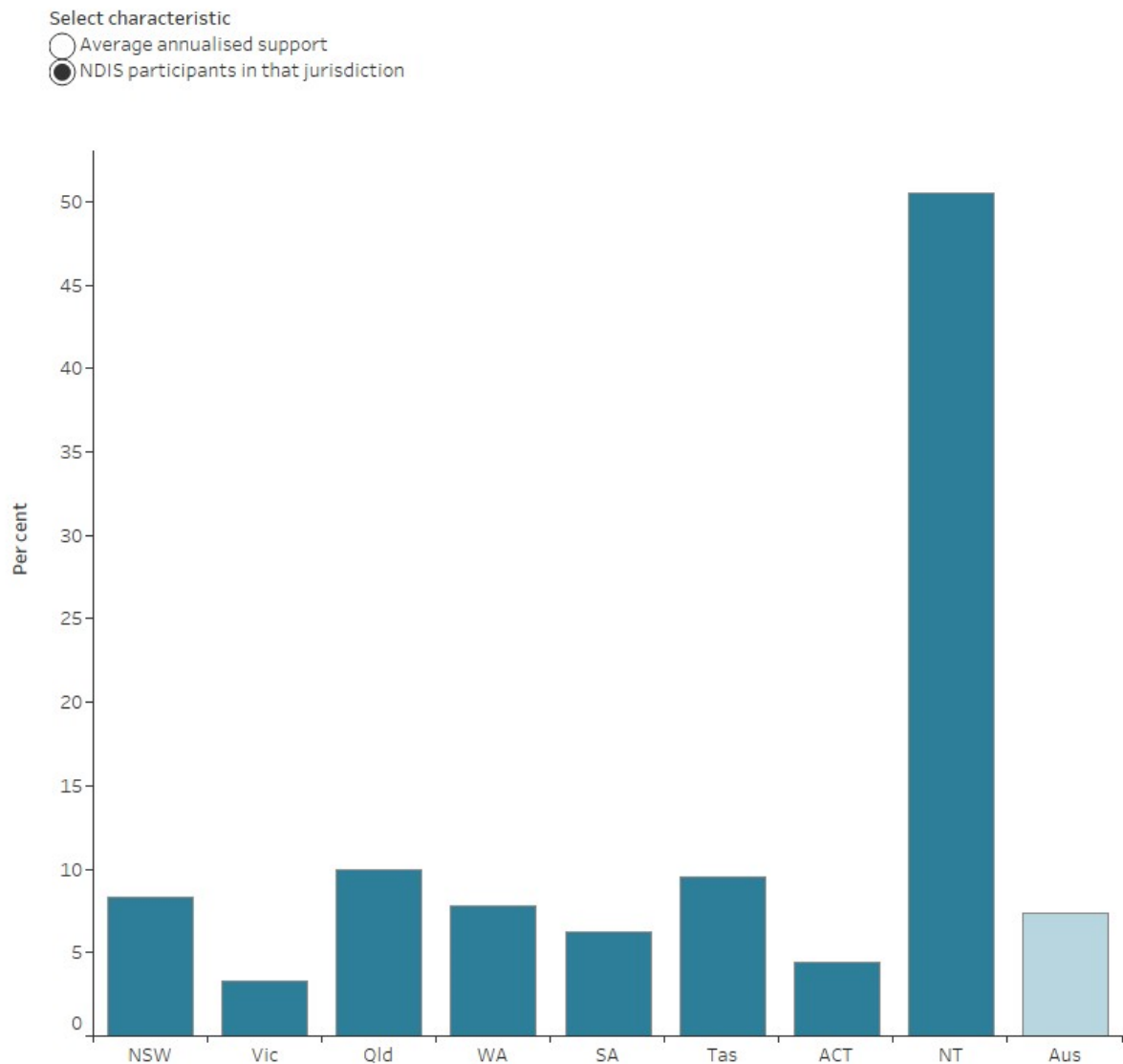
The proportion of First Nations NDIS participants has increased over time – from 6.2% (or around 19,200) in September 2019 to 7.4% (42,600) in December 2022 (NDIA 2023a).

The average annualised committed support provided to First Nations NDIS participants can provide an indication of the relative amount of support they receive. Not all committed support, however, may have been accessed or used by participants. The average annualised committed support is calculated using participants' support budget converted to a yearly rate and divided by the number of participants (rounded to the nearest thousand dollars).

Among the First Nations NDIS participants on 31 December 2022:

- the average annualised committed support was \$74,000
- there were 18,900 participants in *Major cities* and 19,400 participants in *Inner and outer regional* areas, averaging support amounts of \$72,000 and \$69,000 respectively
- there were 4,300 participants in *Remote and very remote* areas averaging \$105,000
- the Northern Territory had the highest average support with \$152,000, while Victoria had the lowest average support with \$59,000 (NDIA 2023b; figures 2 and 3).

**Figure 2: Average annualised committed support amounts for First Nations NDIS participants and proportion of First Nations NDIS participants, by jurisdiction, at 31 December 2022**

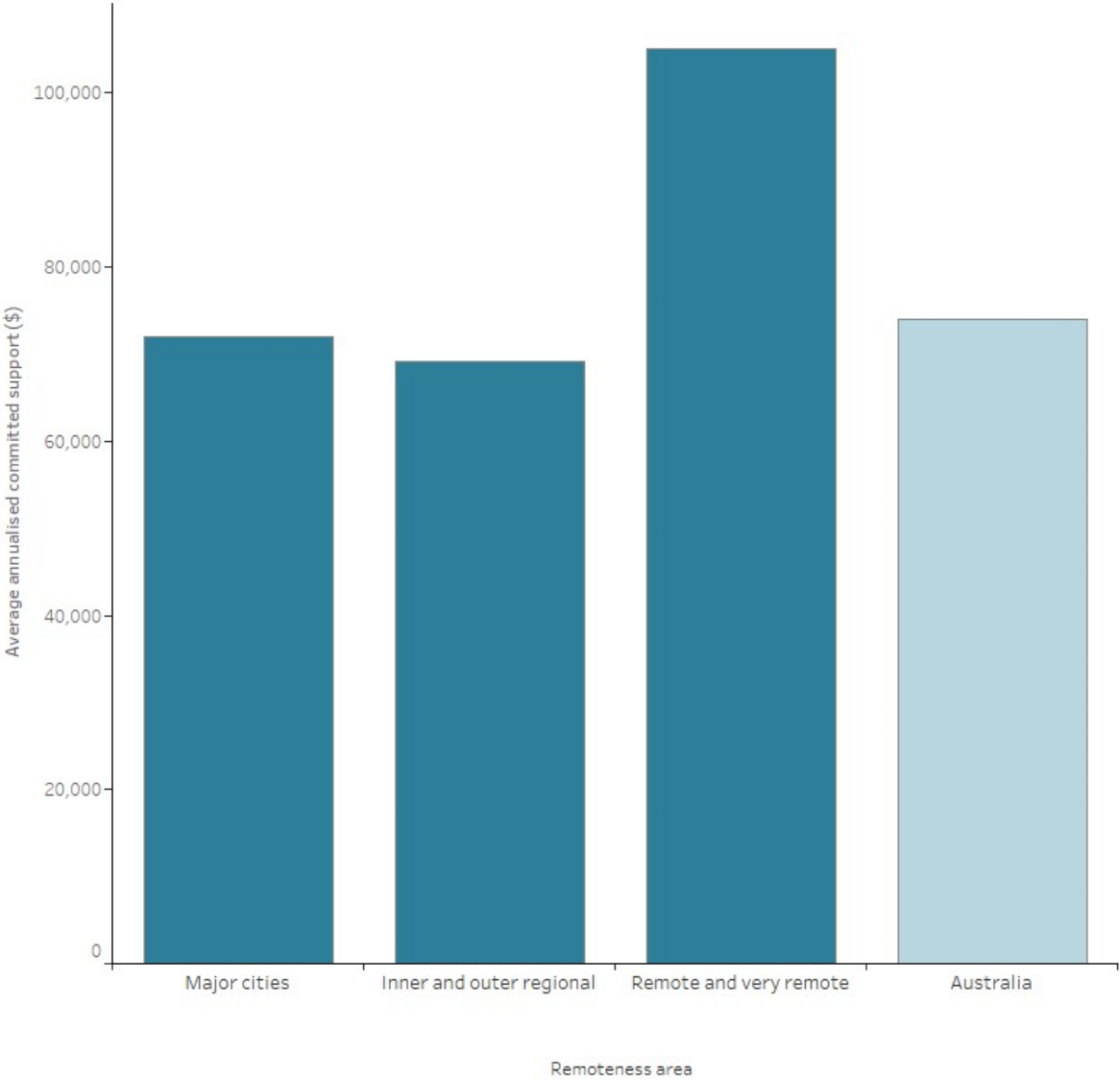


<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Note: The average annualised committed support amounts are rounded to the nearest thousand dollars.

Source: NDIA 2023b.

**Figure 3: Average annualised committed support amounts for First Nations NDIS participants, by remoteness, at 31 December 2022**



<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Note: The average annualised committed support amounts are rounded to the nearest thousand dollars.

Source: NDIA 2023b.

First Nations people with disability in remote communities, along with their families and carers, can face particular challenges such as:

- limited service choice and availability
- the need for travel and transportation
- availability of trained professionals
- issues relating to service/support quality
- lack of alternative accommodation options, and
- the achievement of positive outcomes for those most in need (NDIA 2016; PwC 2018).

The higher average annualised committed NDIS support for First Nations people in *Remote and very remote* areas compared with other remoteness areas could be one indication of these challenges. This also applies to the Northern Territory, as a significant proportion of the population in the Northern Territory live in rural, remote and very remote locations (NTMHC 2017).

## **Income support payments**

Disability Support Pension (DSP) is the primary income support payment for people aged 16 and over with disability who have a reduced capacity to work because of their impairment. In December 2022, 58,500 First Nations people were receiving DSP, making up 7.6% of total recipients (DSS 2023).

Carer Payment provides income support for carers who are unable to support themselves through substantial paid employment because of the demands of providing constant care to a person with disability, a medical condition, or who is frail aged. In December 2022, 20,000 First Nations people were receiving Carer Payment, making up 6.6% of total recipients (DSS 2023).

Carer Allowance is a supplementary payment for carers who provide additional daily care and attention to someone with disability, a medical condition, or who is frail aged. In December 2022, 28,900 First Nations people were receiving Carer Allowance, making up 4.6% of total recipients (DSS 2023).

For more information on these payments, see [Specialised supports for people with disability](#), [Disability Support Pension](#), [Carer Payment](#) and [Informal carers](#).

## **Homelessness services**

People with disability who are homeless or at risk of homelessness can receive support from specialist homelessness services (SHS). In 2021–22, 25% (1,720) of SHS clients with severe or profound disability who provided information about their Indigenous status were First Nations people (AIHW 2022).

## **Informal care**

A person's interaction with both formal and informal welfare support and services can help support their wellbeing. Informal (unpaid) care provided by family, friends or neighbours within the context of an existing relationship often complements formal

(paid) services from government and other organisations. The demands of the role, however, often go beyond what would normally be expected of the relationship.

The 2021 Census included a question about whether people had provided unpaid assistance to someone with disability, a long-term health condition or a problem related to old age in the 2 weeks before Census night. In 2021, of First Nations people aged 15 and over for whom responses to this question were provided:

- an estimated 15% (or 76,600 First Nations people) had provided unpaid assistance to someone with disability, a long-term health condition or a problem related to old age in the 2 weeks before Census night, staying constant from the rate in 2016 (15%)
- an estimated 18% (or 48,100) of females had provided unpaid assistance, compared with 12% (28,500) of males
- the proportion who had provided unpaid assistance was similar among First Nations people living in remote and non-remote areas (an estimated 16% or 11,600, and 15% or 46,700, respectively) (ABS 2022b).

For more information, see [Informal carers](#).

## The impact of COVID-19

First Nations people face increased risk of contracting and developing serious illness from COVID-19 compared with non-Indigenous Australians (Disability RC 2020).

Looking at the impact of COVID-19 on First Nations people with disability specifically, however, is challenging as data on this population are either not collected at all, not publicly available, or not regularly published. In particular, while some data are available by either disability status or by Indigenous status, data are rarely publicly available by both. For example:

- While the Department of Health and Aged Care collects data about COVID-19 infections, hospitalisations and deaths among First Nations people, data are not generally available by disability status.
- The primary source of disability support services data (that is, data collected as part of the NDIS) includes information on COVID-19 infections but these data are not regularly reported. Researchers, academics and government agencies/departments, however, can submit a data request to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) for a tailored NDIS data release.
- While the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission's activity reports include data on complaints and compliance activities related to COVID-19, and on COVID-19 infections among NDIS participants, these are not available by Indigenous status.
- The main First Nations-specific primary health care data collections, the national Key Performance Indicators and the Online Services Report, do not collect data by disability status or on COVID-19 infections.

Some indirect inferences about the impact of COVID-19 on First Nations people with disability could be made by looking at changes in the First Nations disability population or at changes in the use of NDIS services by First Nations people. These data, however, would be difficult to interpret – for example, it is not always possible to separate the

data into time periods that would allow clear comparison of before or during the pandemic; and some data, such as SDAC, are not regularly available.

## Where do I go for more information?

For more information on disability for First Nations people, see:

- [ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability](#)
- [People with disability in Australia](#)
- [Reporting on Australia's Disability Strategy.](#)

For more information on First Nations participants of the NDIS, see the NDIA's:

- [Quarterly Reports](#)
- [Data and insights](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants 30 June 2019.](#)

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## Glossary

**Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people:** People who have identified themselves, or have been identified by a representative (for example, their parent or guardian), as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. See also [First Nations people](#).

**ABSTUDY:** A group of means-tested payments (which may include a living allowance and/or other supplementary benefits) for eligible First Nations students and apprentices who are in an approved course, Australian Apprenticeship or traineeship.

**accommodation support (disability):** Services that provide accommodation to people with disability, and services that provide support to enable a person with disability to remain in their existing accommodation or to move to more suitable or appropriate accommodation.

**administrative data collection:** Data set that results from the information collected for the purposes of delivering a service or paying the provider of the service. This type of collection is usually complete (all in-scope events are collected), but it may not be fully suitable for population-level analysis because the data are collected primarily for an administrative purpose.

**adoptee:** Children or adults who have been the subject of an adoption order. Also known as adopted children or adopted persons.

**adoption:** Legal process by which a person legally becomes a child of the adoptive parents and legally ceases to be a child of his/her existing parents. See also [intercountry adoption](#), [known child adoption](#) and [local adoption](#).

**adoptive parent:** A person who has become the parent of a child or adult as the result of an adoption order.

**adult prison:** A place administered and operated by a justice department, where individuals are detained while under the supervision of the relevant justice department on a pre-sentence or sentenced detention episode.

**age of adopted child:** For known child adoptions, the age when the adoption order for the child was granted. For local adoptions and intercountry adoptions, the age at which the child is placed with the adoptive family. Age is calculated from date of birth, in completed years.

**Age Pension:** Income-support payment paid to older Australians who have reached the qualifying age and residency requirements, subject to income and asset tests. The qualifying age has changed over time and depends on a person's date of birth. Between 1 July 2013 and 30 June 2017, the age pension age was 65 years. From 1 July 2017, the qualifying age increased to 65 years and 6 months and increased by 6 months every 2 years to reach 67 years by 1 July 2023.

**Age Pension age:** Age at which a person becomes eligible to receive Age Pension (subject to income, asset and residency requirements). The age has changed over time and depends on a person's date of birth. Between 1 July 2013 and 30 June 2017, the age pension age was 65 years. From 1 July 2017, the qualifying age increased to 65 years and 6 months, and increased by 6 months every 2 years to reach 67 years by 1 July 2023.

**age structure:** Relative number of people in each age group in a population.

**Aged care services:** Regulated care delivered in residential or community settings, including a person's own home. Most formal care is subsidised through government programs.

**Aged care workforce:** describes direct carers directly provide or manage care in residential and community aged care settings. They are registered nurses, enrolled nurses, personal care attendants, community care workers and allied health workers.

**age-specific rate:** Rate for a specific age group. The numerator and denominator relate to the same age group.

**age-standardisation:** Method to remove the influence of age when comparing rates between population groups with different age structures. This is used when a rate, for example, hospitalisations, varies strongly with age – a population group with an older age structure will likely have more hospitalisations. The age structures of different populations are converted to the same 'standard' structure, and then the hospitalisations that would have occurred within that structure are calculated and compared.

**age-standardised rate:** Rate for which the influence of age is removed by converting the age structures of the different populations to the same 'standard' structure. This provides a more valid way to compare rates from populations with different age structures.

**air pollution:** This OECD measure is of the average of annual concentrations of particulate matters less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5) in the air. Data are averaged over a three-year period.

**Allied health professionals:** describes a range of professions involved in providing health services outside of emergency, medical, dental and nursing care (JSCNDIS 2020).

**apparent retention rate (secondary school):** Indicative measure of the proportion of students who stayed enrolled in full-time education from the start of secondary school (Year 7 or Year 8 depending on the state or territory) to Year 12. A higher retention rate suggests more students are staying in school, which may result in improved educational outcomes.

The measure is an estimate as it is calculated using the total number of students in each school year, rather than tracking individual students over time. Care should be taken when interpreting this measure as factors such as students changing schools, moving overseas, or repeating a school year cannot be accounted for.

**apprentices and trainees:** People who enter into a legal contract (training agreement or contract of training) with an employer, to serve a period of training to attain tradesperson status in a recognised trade.

**arthritis:** A group of disorders for which there is inflammation of the joints – which can then become stiff, painful, swollen or deformed. The two main types of arthritis are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

**asset test:** Test to determine eligibility for government payments based on property or items an individual or their partner owns, or has an interest in.

**asthma:** A chronic inflammatory disorder of the airways. This inflammation causes recurrent episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and coughing, particularly in the night or in the morning.

**at-risk gambling:** Gambling problems are indicated by endorsing one or more items on the Problem Gambling Severity Index. The items include gambling behaviours that either caused or put people at risk of problems.

**at risk of homelessness:** Person who is at risk of losing their accommodation or are experiencing one or more factors or triggers that can contribute to homelessness. Risk factors include financial or housing affordability stress, inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions, previous accommodation ended, child abuse, family, sexual and domestic violence, and relationship or family breakdown.

**Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC):** Common framework defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for collecting and disseminating geographically classified statistics. The ASGC was implemented in 1984 with the final release in 2011. It has been replaced by the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard](#).

**Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS):** Common framework defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for collecting and disseminating geographically classified statistics. The ASGS replaced the [Australian Standard Geographical Classification](#) in July 2011.

**Austudy:** Means-tested payment for full-time students and Australian Apprentices aged 25 and over.

**average annualised committed support:** Under the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the total annualised budget for participants' active plans, divided by the number of active participants, rounded to the nearest thousand dollars. This represents the average of the annualised amounts in the participants' active plans, and gives an indication of the relative amount of support that participants of different demographics receive. See also [committed support](#).

**average day:** Measure that reflects the number of people within a service on a typical day during the year. It takes into account the number of people, number of contacts and duration of each contact.

**average:** Sum of all the values in a set of values, divided by the number of values in that set. Often used as a representative value of that set.

**bachelor degree or higher:** Undergraduate or post-graduate qualification at a university.

**bequest:** a gift of property to a person or organisation in a Will. In common usage, the term bequest is used to include gifts of money.

**bilateral adoption:** Intercountry adoption of a child from a country with which Australia had an active intercountry adoption program, but where the Hague Convention had not entered into force before the file of the applicants was sent.

**bingo:** A game in which players mark off numbers on cards as the numbers are drawn randomly, the winner being the first person to mark off all their numbers.

**Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS):** A measure of the appropriateness of housing that is sensitive to both household size and composition. The CNOS specifies that:

no more than 2 people shall share a bedroom

parents or couples may share a bedroom

children under 5, either of the same sex or opposite sex, may share a bedroom

children under 18 of the same sex may share a bedroom

a child aged 5–17 should not share a bedroom with a child aged under 5 of the opposite sex

single adults aged 18 and over and any unpaired children require a separate bedroom (Statistics Canada 2019).

**cancer:** A group of several hundred diseases in which abnormal cells are not destroyed by normal metabolic processes, but instead proliferate and spread out of control (after being affected by a carcinogen or after developing from a random genetic mutation) and form a mass called a tumour or neoplasm. In this data collection, cancer includes leukaemia, lymphoma, kidney cancer, bladder cancer, digestive system cancer, stomach cancer, bowel cancer, breast cancer, genital cancer, head and neck cancers, liver cancer, lung cancer, nervous system cancers and skin cancer (excluding non-melanoma skin cancer).

**cardiovascular disease:** Any disease that affects the circulatory system, including the heart and blood vessels. Examples include coronary heart disease, heart failure, rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease, congenital heart disease, stroke and peripheral vascular disease.

**care and protection order:** Legal order or arrangement that gives child protection departments some responsibility for a child's welfare.

**carer (known child adoption):** Foster parent or other non-relative who has been caring for the child and has had the responsibility for making decisions about the daily care and control of the child for the relevant period (as specified by the relevant state or territory department) before the adoption.

**Carer Allowance:** an income-tested fortnightly supplement for those who give additional daily care to a person with a disability, medical condition, or who is frail aged.

**Carer Payment:** Means-tested income support payment for people providing constant care for a person with physical, intellectual or psychiatric disability, severe medical condition, or who is frail aged and, due to their caring role, are unable to support themselves through substantial paid employment.

**Carer Supplement:** an annual supplement eligible for those who care for a person with a disability or medical condition or who is frail aged, and receive Carer Allowance, Carer Payment, Department of Veterans' Affairs Partner Service Pension and Carer Allowance or Department of Veterans' Affairs Carer Service Pension.

**carer:** Person who cares for another person (often a relative or friend) and has the responsibility for making decisions about that person's daily care. In the Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, a carer is defined as a person who provides any informal assistance (help or supervision) to people with disability or older people, with assistance being ongoing, or likely to be ongoing, for at least 6 months. See also [direct carer](#), [informal carer](#) and [primary carer](#).

**casino table games:** Casino games played at a table including roulette, craps and card games such as blackjack and baccarat. Tables games usually involve a dealer and participants wager on the outcome of the game.

**casual workers:** Employed person who generally has no set or regular weekly hours, is not entitled to paid leave and has no notice period for ending employment. Casual workers may work full-time or part-time. The Australian Bureau of Statistics uses 'employees without paid leave entitlements' as a proxy for measuring casual employment. See also [full-time workers](#) and [part-time worker](#).

**centre based day care:** Child care that is provided in licenced or registered centres. It can include any pattern or arranged of care provided in this setting.

**Centrelink:** Centrelink social security payments and services administered by Services Australia for retirees, the unemployed, families, carers, parents, people with disability, First Nations people, and people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

**charitable purpose:** is the reason a charity has been set up and what its activities work towards achieving. All registered charities must have a charitable purpose.

**charity:** often used as a synonym for voluntary or non-profit organisations, such as those that raise funds for or offer support to the disadvantaged in society. However, in legal terms, a charity is an entity defined by the *Charities Act 2013* (Cth), as being established for with charitable purposes that are for the public benefit.

**Child Disability Assistance Payment:** An annual yearly payment for those receiving Carer Allowance for a child with disability or serious illness.

**child maltreatment:** Child maltreatment refers to the abuse and [neglect](#) that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of [physical](#) and/or [emotional](#) ill-treatment, [sexual abuse](#), [neglect](#), negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

**children receiving child protection services:** Children who are the subject of an investigation of a notification, on a care and protection order, and/or in out-of-home care.

**civilian population:** All usual residents of Australia aged 15 and over, except members of the permanent Defence Force, certain diplomatic personnel of overseas governments customarily excluded from Census and estimated population counts, overseas residents in Australia, and members of non-Australian defence forces (and their dependants) stationed in Australia.

**committed support:** Under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), this is the cost of supports contained within an NDIS participant's plan, approved to be provided to support a participant's needs. This is sometimes annualised to allow for comparison of plans of different lengths. See also [average annualised committed support](#).

**Commonwealth Home Support Programme:** Entry-level support services for older people so they can continue to live independently at home. Effective from 1 July 2015, the program integrates various services previously providing basic home support

(including the Commonwealth Home and Community Care program, National Respite for Carers, Day Therapy Centres and Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged).

**Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA)** is a non-taxable income supplement, paid fortnightly to eligible recipients. It is paid at 75 cents for every dollar above a minimum rental threshold until a maximum rate is reached. Minimum thresholds and maximum rates vary depending on the household or family situation. This includes the number of children (DSS 2019).

**community access:** Services designed to provide opportunities for people with disability to gain and use their abilities to enjoy their full potential for social independence.

**Community service industries:** comprise four 3-digit ANZSIC codes: residential care services (ANZSIC-860), childcare services (ANZSIC-871), preschool education (ANZSIC-801), and other social assistance services (ANZSIC-879). ANZSIC stands for the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification.

**Community service occupations:** comprise a group of seventeen 4-digit ANZSCO codes. ANZSCO stands for the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations.

1341- Child Care Centre Managers  
2411- Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teachers  
2415- Special Education Teachers  
2544- Registered Nurses  
2721- Counsellors  
2723- Psychologists  
2725- Social Workers  
2726- Welfare, Recreation and Community Arts Workers  
4113- Diversional Therapists  
4114- Enrolled and Mothercraft Nurses  
4115- Indigenous Health Workers  
4117- Welfare Support Workers  
4211- Child Carers  
4221- Education Aides  
4231- Aged and Disabled Carers  
4233- Nursing Support and Personal Care Workers  
4234- Special Care Workers.

**community support:** Services that provide the support needed for a person with disability to live in a non-institutional setting.

**community-based supervision (youth justice):** Legal arrangement that requires a young person to be supervised by a youth justice agency within the community. Community-based supervision may be unsentenced or sentenced. Unsentenced community-based legal orders include supervised or conditional bail and home detention bail. Sentenced community-based orders include probation and similar orders, suspended detention, parole or supervised release.

**completions (apprenticeships and traineeships):** Point at which all course requirements for an apprenticeship or traineeship have been met.

**constant prices:** Estimates that indicate what expenditure would have been if prices for a given year had applied in all years (removing the inflation effect). Changes in expenditure in constant prices reflect changes in volume only. An alternative term is 'real expenditure'. Compare with **current prices**.

**Consumer price index:** The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is an important economic indicator to measure price changes experienced by households.

**core activity limitation:** Limitation where someone needs help with – or is having difficulty or uses aids and equipment for – self-care, mobility and/or communication. See also [disability](#), [severe or profound core activity limitation](#) and [mild or moderate core activity limitation](#).

**core activity:** Term used in discussions of disability, referring to the basic activities of daily living, namely self-care, mobility and communication.

**Coronavirus Supplement:** From 27 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, a Coronavirus Supplement was provided for new and existing recipients of select government payments, including JobSeeker Payment, Parenting Payment, Youth Allowance, Austudy, Widow Allowance, Partner Allowance, ABSTUDY living allowance, Farm Household Allowance and Special Benefit.

**country of origin (adoption):** The usual country of residence of the child being adopted. This is generally the child's country of birth.

**COVID-19:** A disease caused by the new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 virus, a novel type of coronavirus which emerged in December 2019 and was classified as a global pandemic in March 2020 by the World Health Organization.

**current partner:** A person with whom the respondent currently (at the time of survey) lives with in a married or de facto relationship.

**customer satisfaction:** The proportion of social housing survey respondents who indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service provided by their housing provider.

**data linkage:** Bringing together (linking) information from two or more data sources believed to relate to the same entity, such as the same individual or the same institution. This linkage can provide more information about the entity. In certain cases it can provide a time sequence, helping to tell a story, show pathways and perhaps unravel cause and effect. The term is used synonymously with record linkage and data integration.

**deductible gift recipient (DGR):** financial donations to charities can be tax-deductible providing the organisation receiving the gift is a registered charity and has been endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office as a DGR. There are also some non-profit entities, such as some fire and emergency services, that have DGR status and are not registered as charities.



**dementia:** General term for disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease or vascular dementia, characterised by worsening mental processes. Symptoms include impaired memory, understanding, reasoning and physical functioning.

**dependency ratio:** See [population dependency ratio](#).

**dependent child:** Person who is aged under 15 or a dependent student. Note, this definition applies to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing and may differ somewhat from the definitions in other collections. See also [non-dependent child](#).

**dependent student:** Natural, adopted, step or foster child aged 15–24 who attends a secondary or tertiary educational institution as a full-time student and who has no identified partner or child of their own living in the same household. See also [dependent child](#).

**detention (youth justice):** Legal arrangement requiring a young person to be detained in a youth justice facility. Includes sentenced and unsentenced detention.

**developmentally on track:** children who scored above the 25th percentile (top 75 per cent) of the national population on *one or more* of the 5 domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC). The domains are physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge.

The AEDC report a summary indicator, on track on all 5 domains, which is the number and proportion of children assessed as being developmentally on track on all 5 domains of the AEDC.

**developmentally vulnerable:** Children who scored in the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile on one or more of the 5 domains of the Australian Early Development Census. The domains are physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognition skills, and communication skills and general knowledge.

**diabetes:** A chronic condition in which the body cannot properly use its main energy source, the sugar glucose. This is due to a relative or absolute deficiency in insulin, a hormone that is produced by the pancreas and helps glucose enter the body's cells from the bloodstream and then be processed by them. Diabetes is marked by an abnormal build-up of glucose in the blood, and it can have serious short- and long-term effects. The three main types of diabetes are Type 1 diabetes, Type 2 diabetes and gestational diabetes.

**direct carer:** Welfare employee directly involved in providing or managing care of clients.

**Disability Support Pension:** Means-tested income support payment for people aged 16 and over but under age pension age (at claim) who have reduced capacity to work (i.e., unable to work for 15 hours or more per week at or above the relevant minimum wage), because of their disability.

**Disability support workers:** assist people with disability with various physical and emotional tasks, including personal care; cooking and cleaning; shopping; programs for community activities; and emotional support and friendship (JSCNDIS 2020).

**disability:** Umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions, all of which can interact with a person's health condition(s) and environmental and/or individual factors to hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equitable basis with others. There are varying degrees of disability – from experiencing limitation in core activities and/or restrictions in schooling or employment, to having no specific limitations or restrictions. Disability can be associated with genetic disorders, illnesses, accidents, ageing, injuries, or a combination of these factors. See also [core activity limitation](#), [severe or profound core activity limitation](#) and [mild or moderate core activity limitation](#).

**disability-related payments:** Benefits or payment available to support people with disability or carers of people with disability, including Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment.

**dischargee:** Full-time prisoner aged at least 18 who expects to be released from prison within the next 4 weeks.

**disposable income:** See [equivalised household income \(disposable or gross\)](#).

**domestic homicide:** Unlawful killing of an intimate partner or family member.

**donation:** unconditional voluntary transfers of money, goods or services to community organisations, institutions, government entities, or individuals, in which the donating organisation is not expected to receive anything in return.

**during the year:** Measure that reflects the number of people who received a service at some point during the year. It is calculated by counting each distinct person once, even if they received a service more than once.

**dwelling:** Structure or discrete space within a structure intended for people to live in, or where a person or group of people live. A structure that people live in is a dwelling regardless of its intended purpose. A vacant structure is only a dwelling if intended for human residence. A dwelling may include one or more rooms used as an office or workshop, provided the dwelling is in residential use.

**early childhood education and care worker:** Category of workers that includes child carers, child care centre managers and early childhood (pre-primary school) teachers.

**early intervention:** Services aimed at improving outcomes for people experiencing or at risk of experiencing negative outcomes, such as homelessness and developmental delay in children.

**educational attainment:** Defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development "as the highest grade completed within the most advanced level attended in the educational system of the country where the education was received".

**elder abuse:** Single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.

**Electronic Gambling Machines (EGMs):** Also known as 'slots', 'pokies', 'poker machines', 'gaming machines', and 'fruit machines'. EGMs usually have three or more computer-simulated reels which "spin" when a button is pushed. When winning symbols line up a prize is awarded.

**emotional abuse (children):** Act by a person having the care of a child that results in the child suffering any kind of significant emotional deprivation or trauma. Children affected by exposure to family violence are also included in this category.

**emotional abuse:** Behaviours or actions that are perpetrated with the intent to manipulate, control, isolate or intimidate, and which cause emotional harm or fear. Can include limiting access to finances, preventing the victim from contacting family and friends, demeaning and humiliating the victim, and any threats of injury or death directed at the victim or their children.

**employed:** Person aged 15–64 who has a job. This could be full-time, part-time, or away from work during the reference period. Definitions may vary depending on the data collection. Compare with [unemployed](#). See also [labour force](#).

**employment rate:** Also referred to as employment-to-population ratio. Number of employed persons expressed as a percentage of the civilian population of the same group. The denominator includes persons who are unemployed or not in the labour force.

**employment restriction:** Restriction determined for persons aged 15–64 with one or more disabilities if, because of their disability, they: were permanently unable to work; were restricted in the type of work they can or could do; needed or would need at least 1 day a week off work on average; were restricted in the number of hours they can or could work; required or would require an employer to provide special equipment, modify the work environment or make special arrangements; required assistance from a disability job placement program or agency; needed or would need to be given ongoing assistance or supervision; or would find it difficult to change jobs or get a better job. This definition applies to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers and may differ somewhat from other collections' definitions.

**employment to population ratio:** Number of employed people in a specified group expressed as a percentage of the civilian population in the same group. See also [employment rate](#).

**enrolled:** Describes a person's status who is registered for a course of study at an educational institution.

**enrolment:** registration of a student at a training delivery location for the purpose of undertaking a program of study. The enrolment is considered valid only if the student has undertaken enrolment procedures, met their fee obligations, and has engaged in learning activity regardless of mode of delivery.

**entrant:** A person aged at least 18, entering full-time prison custody, either on remand (awaiting a trial or sentencing) or on a sentence. Prisoners who have been transferred from one prison to another are not included as entrants.

**equivalised household income (disposable or gross):** Adjustment made to the total household income to facilitate comparison of income levels between households of differing size and composition. An indicator of the economic resources available to a standardised household. For a lone-person household, equal to income received. For a household comprising more than one person, an indicator of the household income that a lone-person household would require to enjoy the same level of economic wellbeing as the household in question. Can be measured as gross (total) income, net (after tax) income, or disposable income (after taxes and other essential costs are deducted from total income).

**equivalised years of learning:** Uses mean NAPLAN scores to calculate the estimated years of study that it would take to get a specific NAPLAN score. For example, the national mean average year 3 NAPLAN numeracy score would have an equivalised years of learning score of 3. This method takes into account that the change in NAPLAN score between school year levels is greater at younger ages. For example, there is a greater increase in national mean score between year 3 and year 5 than year 5 and year 7.

**esports betting:** Wagering on esports, which are professional video game competitions.

**estimated resident population (ERP):** Official Australian Bureau of Statistics estimate of the Australian population. Derived from the 5-yearly Census counts and updated quarterly between Censuses, based on births, deaths, and net migration. Based on a person's usual residence. Rates are calculated per 1,000 or 100,000 mid-year (30 June) ERP.

**family and domestic violence:** Any violence between family members as well as current or former intimate partners. Can include acts of violence between a parent and a child. Family violence is the preferred term used to identify experiences of violence for First Nations people as it encompasses the broad range of extended family and kinship relationships in which violence may occur.

**family assistance payments:** Benefits paid by the Australian Government to assist with everyday costs of raising children and to ensure families have adequate financial resources. See also [parenting payments](#).

**family day care:** Comprises services provided in the carer's home. Care is largely aimed at 0–5 year olds, but primary school children may also receive care before and after school, and during school vacations. Central coordination units in all states and territories organise and support a network of carers, often with the help of local governments.

**Family Tax Benefit Part A:** A per-child payment for a dependent child aged 0–15, or 16–19 and meeting study requirements.

**Family Tax Benefit Part B:** A per-family payment, paid to couples with one main income and care for a dependent child aged under 13. It is also paid to single parents,

non-parent carers or grandparent carers who care for a dependent child aged 0–15, or 16–18 meeting study requirements.

**Family Tax Benefit:** Income-tested government benefits to assist with the everyday costs of raising children. See also [Family Tax Benefit Part A](#) and [Family Tax Benefit Part B](#).

**family:** Two or more persons, one of whom is aged at least 15, who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who are usually living in the same household. Each separately identified couple relationship, lone parent to child relationship or other blood relationship forms the basis of a family. Some households contain more than one family.

**fantasy sports betting:** Wagering money on fantasy sports, which is a type of online game where participants assemble virtual teams of real sports players.

**fertility rate (total):** The total fertility rate is a commonly used summary measure for the number of children a woman is expected to have during her lifetime. This provides an indication of the number of children a woman would have during her life if she experienced the age-specific fertility rates for that year over her entire lifetime.

**finalised adoption:** Adoption order completed during the reporting period. Includes orders made in Australia and, in the case of some intercountry adoptions, where the full adoption order was made in the country of origin. The way in which an adoption is finalised depends on the process used in the country of origin and the procedures of the state or territory department responsible for adoption in Australia.

**First Home Owner Grant:** Scheme introduced 1 July 2000 to offset the effect of the goods and services tax on home ownership. A national scheme funded by states and territories and administered under their own legislation. Under the scheme, a one-off grant is payable to first home owners that satisfy all eligibility criteria.

**First Nations household:** Household that contains one or more people identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

**First Nations people:** People who have identified themselves, or have been identified by a representative (for example, their parent or guardian), as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

**flexible care (aged care):** An aged care stream that addresses people's needs, in either a residential or home care setting, in ways other than the care provided through the mainstream residential and home care programs. Flexible care programs include Multi-Purpose Services, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program, and Innovative Pool. Some publications also include transition care and short-term restorative care under the term 'flexible care.'

**formal child care:** Regulated care away from the child's home. May include: outside school hours care; [centre-based day care](#); family day care.

**full-time employees:** See [full-time workers](#).

**full-time employment rate:** The proportion of the total working age (15–64 years) population currently in full-time employment. The denominator includes persons who

work in a less than full-time capacity, along with those who are unemployed or not in the labour force.

**full-time employment:** a person who worked, or usually works 35 hours or more each week at the time of survey. This includes people who were employed in two or more part-time jobs and in total worked more than 35 hours.

**full-time unemployment rate:** Number of unemployed persons looking for full-time work as a percentage of the full-time labour force (full-time employed and unemployed looking for full-time work). See also [labour force](#).

**full-time workers:** Employed people who usually worked 35 hours or more a week (in all jobs) and those who, although usually working fewer than 35 hours a week, worked 35 hours or more during the reference week of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Labour Force Survey. This definition applies to the ABS Labour Force Survey and may differ somewhat from the definitions in other collections. Compare with [part-time workers](#).

**fund:** a legal vehicle that manages and/or holds trust property to make distributions to other entities or persons.

**gambling problems:** Gambling problems are indicated by endorsing one or more items on the Problem Gambling Severity Index. The items include gambling behaviours that either caused or put people at risk of problems.

**gambling:** Gambling/betting requires a player to risk losing something of value (usually money) for the chance of winning more. Gambling outcomes may depend on correctly predicting an uncertain outcome (such as a particular horse coming first in a race), or luck (such as a winning combination of symbols on a poker machine).

**gambling-related harm:** Adverse consequences which occur as a result of someone's gambling. Gambling-related harm can be divided into key areas: financial harm, relationship disruption, emotional or psychological distress, decrements to health, cultural harm, reduced work or study performance and criminal activity. These harms can further be considered as general harms (which occur at any time), crisis harms, which are associated with attempts to seek help, and legacy harms, which occur long after gambling has ceased. Gambling-related harm can be experienced by other gambler and others close to them (affected others). The Short Gambling Harm Scale (Browne et al., 2017) is a measure of gambling-related harm.

**gini coefficient:** Statistical measure of economic distribution, ranging from 0 to 1. Zero represents perfectly equal income distribution (all people have the same amount of money), while 1 represents perfectly unequal income distribution (one person has all available money).

**greatest need (social housing):** Household in greatest need which is, at the time of allocation, either homeless or at risk of homelessness, in housing inappropriate to their needs, in housing placing them at risk or in housing with very high rental costs. These households are prioritised for placing in social housing.



**gross domestic product:** Statistic commonly used to indicate national income. The total market value of goods and services produced within a given period after deducting the cost of goods and services used in the process of production, but before deducting allowances for the consumption of fixed capital.

**gross household income:** See [equivalised household income \(disposable or gross\)](#).

**Hague adoption:** Intercountry adoption where the adoptive child's country of origin has ratified or acceded to the Hague Convention, and the file of the applicant(s) was sent after the Hague Convention entered into force in that country.

**Hague Convention (intercountry adoption):** A convention – specifically, The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption – that establishes standards and procedures for adoptions between countries. The Hague Convention includes legally binding safeguards, a system of supervision, and established channels of communication between countries. Came into force in Australia on 1 December 1998.

**health literacy:** The ability of people to access, understand and apply information about health and the health care system so as to make decisions that relate to their health.

**health-adjusted life expectancy at birth:** Average number of years a new-born child can expect to live in 'full health', after taking into account years expected to be lived in less than full health due to disease and/or injury.

**home care (aged care):** Support and care services given to older people in their own homes. See [Home Care Packages Program](#).

**Home Care Packages Program:** Services and support offered to older people in their own homes, offered in packages of care. These packages can consist of personal care and domestic support, as well as clinical and allied health services. There are four levels of care to support those with basic (Level 1), low (Level 2), intermediate (Level 3), and high (Level 4) care needs. Home Care Packages were started in 2013, combining three previous programmes: Community Aged Care Package (CACP), Extended Aged Care at Home (EACH), and Extended Aged Care at Home Dementia (EACHD).

**home ownership:** Household residing in a dwelling that at least one member of the household owns, with or without a mortgage.

**home support (aged care):** Entry-level support for older people in their homes. See [Commonwealth Home Support Programme](#).

**home-based out-of-home care:** Care provided for a child placed in the home of a carer who is reimbursed (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement) for the cost of care of that child. Home-based out-of-home care includes: relatives/kin who are reimbursed, foster care, and other home-based out-of-home care.

**homeless:** See [homelessness](#).

**homelessness:** There is no single definition of homelessness.

The Specialist Homelessness Services Collection defines a person as homeless if they are living in either:

non-conventional accommodation or sleeping rough (such as living on the street)

short-term or emergency accommodation due to a lack of other options (such as living temporarily with friends and relatives).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines homelessness, for the purposes of the Census of Population and Housing, as the lack of one or more of the elements that represent home. According to the ABS, when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

is in a dwelling that is inadequate

has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable

does not allow them to have control of and access to space for social relations.

**hospitalisation:** Synonymous with admission and separation; that is, an episode of hospital care that starts with the formal admission process and ends with the formal separation process. An episode of care can be completed by patients being discharged, transferred to another hospital or care facility, or dying, or by a portion of a hospital stay beginning or ending in a change of type of care (for example, from acute to rehabilitation).

**household composition:** Grouping of people living in a dwelling. Based on couple and parent-child relationships. A household is a single-family type if it contains a main tenant, and if that main tenant lives with a partner and/or the main tenant's children. Group households consist of two or more tenants aged 16 or over, who are not in a couple or parent-child relationship. Mixed households are households not described by the other two types; for example, multiple single-family households.

**household reference person:** Person who is used as the basis for determining the familial and non-familial relationships within a household. Usually the person who has identified themselves as a person on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census Household form.

**household:** Group of two or more related or unrelated people who usually reside in the same dwelling, and who make common provision for food or other essentials for living. Can also be a single person living in a dwelling who makes provision for their own food and other essentials for living, without combining with any other person.

**housing affordability:** Cost of housing compared with the financial situation of households. Term generally used to refer to housing across major cities, states or territories or nationally, as opposed to individual households. Often measured using the proportion of households in a given area in housing stress.

**housing cost overburden rate:** Proportion of households or population that spend more than 40% of their disposable income on housing costs. Calculated using Eurostat methodology. See also [housing stress](#).



**housing costs:** Depending on household tenure type, housing costs can comprise rent payments, rates payments (general and water), and mortgage or unsecured loan payments if the initial purpose was primarily to buy, build, add to, or alter the dwelling.

**housing stress:** Measure of housing affordability, where the proportion of household income spent on basic housing costs (rent or mortgage) is calculated. Low-income households spending 30% or more of their income on housing are considered to be in housing stress.

**housing tenure:** Describes whether a household rents or owns an occupied dwelling, or whether it is occupied under another arrangement.

**illicit drug use:** Includes use of:

any drug that is illegal to possess or use

any legal drug used in an illegal manner, such as

a drug obtained on prescription, but given or sold to another person to use

glue or petrol which is sold legally, but is used in a manner that is not intended, such as inhaling fumes

stolen pharmaceuticals sold on the black market (such as pethidine)

any drug used for 'non-medical purposes', which means drugs used

either alone or with other drugs to induce or enhance a drug experience

for performance enhancement (for example, athletic)

for cosmetic purposes (for example, body shaping).

**impairment:** Loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function.

**improvised dwelling:** Dwelling not designed for human habitation or considered unfit for human habitation. May include shacks, sheds, cabins, boats or tents.

**income support payments:** Sub-category of benefits paid by the Australian Government which are regular payments that assist with the day-to-day costs of living.

**income test:** Test to determine an individual's eligibility for the full or part-rate of a government payment, based on their earnings from work, investments and/or substantial assets.

**income threshold:** For the purposes of income support payments and other benefits, the income threshold is the amount a person can earn before their payment is reduced.

**income unit:** One person or a group of related persons within a household, whose command over income is shared, or any person living in a non-private dwelling who is in receipt of personal income.

**Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage:** One of the set of Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas for ranking the average socioeconomic conditions of the population in an area. Summarises attributes of the population such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment and jobs in relatively unskilled occupations.

**Indigenous Regions (IREGs):** Large geographical areas used to report data about First Nations people. Part of the Indigenous Structure in the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS), comprising three levels of geographical units – Indigenous Locations, Indigenous Areas and Indigenous Regions. Compared with other structures in the ASGS, the Indigenous structure better reflects the distribution of the Indigenous population.

**Indigenous status:** Whether a person has identified themselves, or has been identified by a representative (for example, their parent or guardian), as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

**inflation adjusted:** An adjustment factor is applied to dollar values reported in previous years to align them with the value of a reference year (e.g., 2021). This accounts for the effect of inflation, which decreases the value of money over time.

**informal carer:** Person who provides unpaid assistance or supervision to someone – usually family and friends – who needs help because of disability, physical or mental health condition, end-of-life health condition or old age, with assistance being ongoing, or likely to be ongoing, for at least 6 months. In the Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, informal assistance may include instances where small amounts of money, or payments for expenses incurred, are paid to the carer by the person that they care for, or where assistance is received from family or friends who are living in the same household, whether or not the carer is paid. See also [primary carer](#).

**informal child care:** Non-regulated care that may be paid or unpaid. May include care provided by grandparents, other relatives, other people, and other child minding services.

**informal volunteer:** A person who provides unpaid help, in the form of time, skills or services outside a formal organisation or group, to non-household members. It can include providing assistance to a member outside of their household with errands, chores, transport, childcare or providing emotional support and personal care. It excludes support provided only to family members living outside the household.

**in-game purchases:** Financial purchases in games for digital goods or services, also referred to in the literature as ‘microtransactions’. In-game purchases may be purely aesthetic (e.g. cosmetic items or ‘skins’), confer gameplay advantages (e.g. pay-to-win), contain these items as randomised contents of uncertain value (e.g. loot boxes), or include any other in-game expenditure (Zendle, Meyer, & Ballou, 2020).

**instant scratch tickets:** Commonly known as “scratchies”, where a player scratches a coating off the ticket to identify whether the ticket is a winner.

**intercountry adoption:** Adoption of a child or children from countries other than Australia with which Australia has an official adoption program, who may be legally placed for adoption, but who generally have had no previous contact with the adoptive parents. There are two categories of intercountry adoptions – Hague adoption and bilateral adoption. See also [Hague adoption](#) and [bilateral adoption](#).

**intercountry known child adoption:** Adoption of a child or children from countries other than Australia, who have a pre-existing relationship with the adoptive parents, and who are generally not able to be adopted by anyone other than the adoptive parents.

There are two categories of intercountry known child adoptions: intercountry relative adoptions or intercountry known non-relative adoptions.

**intercountry known non-relative adoption:** Adoption of a child or children from countries other than Australia, who are known but not biologically related to the adoptive parent(s).

**intercountry relative adoption:** Adoption of a child or children from countries other than Australia, who are known and are biologically related to the adoptive parent(s).

**International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health:** World Health Organization's internationally accepted classification of functioning, disability and health (endorsed in May 2001).

**intimate partner violence:** Violent or intimidating behaviours perpetrated by current or former intimate partners, including cohabiting partner, boyfriend, girlfriend or date. See also [partner violence](#).

**in-training (apprentices and trainees):** Apprentices and trainees actively training under the terms of their training contract, which has not been completed, cancelled, withdrawn, suspended, or expired without the contract requirements being met.

**investigation (child protection):** Process whereby a relevant child protection department obtains more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification. Departmental staff assess the harm, or degree of harm, to the child and their protective needs. An investigation includes sighting or interviewing the child where it is practical to do so.

**investigation in process:** An investigation that began for a notification received between 1 July and 30 June of that financial year, but was not completed nor an outcome recorded by 31 August.

**JobSeeker Payment:** Means-tested income support payment for working-age Australians (aged over 22 but under the [Age Pension](#) qualifying age) who are looking for work, participating in approved activities that may increase their chances of finding a job, or earning under the income threshold. Receipt of this payment is typically subject to asset tests and [mutual obligation requirements](#) (such as looking for work or engaged in activities that will assist with finding work in the future). In March 2020 this payment replaced [Newstart Allowance](#), consolidating it with several other payments (such as Sickness Allowance and Bereavement Allowance).

**keno:** Keno is a rapid-draw game where a player gambles that their chosen numbers match any of the 20 numbers randomly selected from a group of 80 numbers via a computer system or a ball-draw device.

**Kinship** – A term that describes the structured societal system which prescribes responsibility that First Nations people position themselves within, which establishes their relationship to others and to the universe.

**known child adoption:** Adoption of a child or children born or permanently living in Australia before the adoption, who have a pre-existing relationship with the adoptive parents and who are generally not able to be adopted by anyone other than the

adoptive parents. These types of adoptions are broken down into these categories, depending on the relationship to the adoptive parent(s): step-parent, relatives, carer and other. See also [step-parent \(known child adoption\)](#), [relatives \(known child adoption\)](#), [carer \(known child adoption\)](#), and [other adoption \(known child adoption\)](#).

**labour force participation rate:** For any group, the labour force (employed or unemployed) expressed as a percentage of the civilian population aged 15 and over in the same group.

**labour force:** People employed or unemployed but actively looking for work. See also [not in the labour force](#).

**life expectancy:** Indication of how long a person can expect to live, depending on the age they have reached. Technically, the average number of years of life remaining to a person at a particular age if age-specific death rates do not change. The most commonly used measure is life expectancy at birth. See also [health-adjusted life expectancy](#).

**local adoption:** Adoption of a child or children born or permanently living in Australia before the adoption who can legally be placed for adoption but who generally have had no previous contact or relationship with the adoptive parents.

**loneliness:** Subjective state of negative feelings about having a lower level of social contact than desired.

**long day care:** see [centre-based day care](#).

**longitudinal data:** Data source that collects data from the same sample of subjects multiple times over a given time.

**long-term care (children in child protection):** Children who had been continuously in out-of-home care for 2 or more years.

**long-term order (child protection):** An order that transfers guardianship/custody to the nominated person for a specified period greater than 2 years, generally until the child reaches the age of 18.

**long-term unemployed:** People aged 15 and over who have been unemployed for 52 weeks or more.

**long-term unemployment rate:** proportion of labour force that have been unemployed for 12 months or more.

**long-term unemployment ratio:** Number of long-term unemployed people, expressed as a percentage of the total unemployed population.

**loot boxes:** An in-game purchase of a virtual container (i.e. loot box, mystery box or chest) that randomly awards players with functional items or modifications (such as cosmetic items or weapons) based on chance or adjusted probabilities (King & Delfabbro, 2020). Loot boxes can also be obtained for free via gameplay (Rockloff et al., 2020).

**lotteries, lotto or lottery games:** Common lotto or lottery games include TattsLotto, Gold Lotto, Lotto, X-Lotto and Powerball. Lotto is a game where a player selects any six numbers from 1 to 45 in anticipation that those numbers will be among eight numbered

balls, randomly drawn from a ball-draw device containing 45 balls numbered from 1 to 45. The first six of the eight balls drawn are known as the “winning numbers” and the last two balls are called supplementary numbers”. Lotteries may also include less defined activities which broadly involve the purchase of a ticket, a draw and a prize.

**lower income households:** Households containing the 38% of people with equivalised disposable household income between the third and 40th percentiles.

**low-risk gambling:** Low-risk gambling is characterised by the experience of a low level of problems with few or no identified negative consequences. Low-risk gamblers have scores of one or two on the PGSI.

**main tenant:** Tenant who is party to the residential tenancy agreement. Where this is not clear, it is the person who is responsible for rental payments.

**marital status of adoptive parent(s):** Applicable status at the time the child is placed with the adoptive parent(s), using one of the following categories: registered marriage, de facto relationship and single.

**mean score (NAPLAN):** Average of scores for all students in the relevant group for the National Assessment Program–Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

**mean:** Average of a group of numbers. See also [average](#).

**means tested:** Most social security payments are means-tested; a formal process used to determine eligibility for full or part payment based on whether a person’s income from all sources (income, investments, assets) is below certain [income thresholds](#), and whether the value of a person’s assets are within the asset test limits.

**median age:** For a given measure, the age at which half the population is older and half is younger.

**median:** Midpoint of a list of observations ranked from smallest to largest.

**mental health issue (specialist homelessness services clients):** Client presenting to a specialist homelessness service identified as having a current mental health issue. They can be identified as such if they provide information on recent mental health disorders or concerns.

**mental health:** State of wellbeing in which the person realises their own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and can make a contribution to the community. Mental health is the capacity of individuals and groups to interact with one another and their environment in ways that promote subjective wellbeing, optimal development and the use of cognitive, affective and relational abilities.

**mental illness/mental health disorder:** Range of cognitive, emotional and behavioural disorders that interfere with the lives and productivity of people. Mental health disorders are diagnosed using certain criteria. They include depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, personality disorders and psychoses.

**mild or moderate core activity limitation:** Limitation where a person needs no help with core activities (self-care, mobility, and communication), but has difficulty with one

or more core activities (moderate), or has no difficulty but uses aids or equipment for core activities (mild), or has one or more of these limitations:

cannot easily walk 200 metres

cannot walk up and down stairs without a handrail

cannot easily bend to pick up an object from the floor

cannot use public transport

can use public transport but needs help or supervision

needs no help or supervision but has difficulty using public transport.

See also [disability](#), [core activity limitation](#), and [severe or profound core activity limitation](#).

**moderate-risk gambling:** Moderate-risk gambling is characterised by the experience of a moderate level of problems from gambling, with some negative consequences, like spending more than you can afford, losing track of time or feeling guilty about your gambling. Moderate-risk gamblers have scores of 3 to 7 on the PGSI.

**mortality rate:** Number of deaths in a given period, adjusted to take account of population age structure, expressed per 1,000 population.

**mortgage affordability indicator:** The Mortgage affordability indicator (MAID) is calculated by dividing Mortgage repayments by an imputed household income. Both Mortgage repayments and an imputed household income are expressed as single dollar values. The calculation determines whether mortgage repayments are less than or equal to 30% of household income or are more than 30% of household income

**mortgage stress:** A household is often considered under mortgage stress if mortgaged repayments are more than 30% of the household income.

**mutual obligation requirements:** Mutual obligations are designed to ensure that people receiving activity tested income support payments are actively looking for work and participating in activities that will assist them into employment. Mutual obligation requirements differ depending on the person's age, assessed work capacity and whether they are the primary carer of a dependent child. Examples of mutual obligation requirements include accepting offers of suitable paid work, job search, attending appointments with employment services providers, and participating in approved education or training courses or programs.

**national minimum standard:** Describes some of the skills and understandings students can generally demonstrate at their particular year of schooling, in a specific area or domain, as assessed through the National Assessment Program–Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) test.

**National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS):** Scheme delivered by the Australian Government in partnership with the state and territory governments and offers annual financial incentives for up to 10 years to rent dwellings for eligible NRAS tenants at 80% or less of the market value rent.

**neglect:** Any serious act or omission by a person having the care of a child that, within the bounds of cultural tradition, constitutes a failure to provide conditions that are essential for the healthy physical and emotional development of the child.

**Newstart Allowance:** Means-tested income support payment for working-age Australians (aged over 22 but under the [Age Pension](#) qualifying age) who are looking for work, participating in approved activities that may increase their chances of finding a job, or earning under the income threshold. This payment was replaced by the [JobSeeker Payment](#) in March 2020.

**nominal dollars:** dollar values reported for a particular year, unadjusted for inflation.

**non-dependent child:** Natural, adopted, step or foster child of a couple or lone parent usually resident in the household, who is aged 15 or over and is not a full-time student aged 15–24, and who has no identified partner or child of their own usually resident in the household. This definition applies to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing and may differ somewhat from definitions in other collections. See also [dependent child](#).

**non-Indigenous:** People who indicated they are not of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

**non-Indigenous household:** Household in which people have indicated they are not of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.

**non-problem gambling:** Non-problem gambling is characterised by the experience of no negative consequences from gambling. Non-problem gamblers have a score of zero on the PGSI. In this snapshot non-problem gambling has been labelled as 'non-risk gambling'.

**non-profit:** organisations whose primary objective is something other than the generation of profit. Non-profit (also known as not-for-profit or community) organisations range from sporting clubs and hobby groups to community centres, neighbourhood houses, traditional charities, health promotion organisations, aged care homes, disability support groups, etc.

**non-school education:** Refers to higher education or vocational education and training. Non-school education generally leads to qualifications at Certificate I–IV, Diploma, Bachelor, Master and Doctoral level.

**non-school qualification:** Educational attainments other than those of pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Include qualifications at these levels: Post-graduate degree, Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate, Bachelor degree, Advanced Diploma and Diploma, and Certificates I, II, III and IV. Non-school qualifications may be attained concurrently with school qualifications. See also [post-school qualification](#).

**non-trades:** Occupations that are not classified as *technicians and trade workers* under the **Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO)**.

**not in education, employment or training (NEET):** People (usually young people aged 15–24) who are not engaged in any study, training or employment. These people are often at greater risk of long-term unemployment and disadvantage.



**not in the labour force:** People not employed and not looking for work or about to begin work (unemployed). Includes retirees, students, and people taking care of children or other family members among others. See also [labour force](#).

**not potential workers:** People who are not currently employed and do not want to work or are permanently unable to work.

**not substantiated allegation of maltreatment:** A notification where an investigation concluded that there was no reasonable cause to suspect prior, current or future abuse, neglect or harm to the child.

**notification (child protection):** Contact made to an authorised department by people or other bodies alleging child abuse or neglect, child maltreatment or harm to a child.

**notifications resolved without investigation:** A notification responded to by means other than an investigation, such as by providing advice or referring to services.

**novelty event betting:** Wagering on a non-sporting event, such as who will win an Academy Award, a political event, or a reality TV show.

**one-parent family:** Family comprising a lone parent with at least one dependent or non-dependent child (regardless of age) who is also usually living in the household. Examples of one-parent families include a parent aged 25 with dependent children, and a parent aged 80 living with a child aged 50. See also [single parent](#).

**Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):** An organisation of 38 countries, including Australia, that collaborate to develop, evaluate, and promote policies that will improve economic and social wellbeing through sustainable economic growth.

**other adoption (known child adoption):** Adoption of a child or children by the commissioning (surrogate) parents, whether the commissioning parents are a relative or not.

**other Australians:** Includes people who did not identify as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and people for whom information on Indigenous status was not available.

**other household:** A household in which nobody identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. May include people for whom information on Indigenous status was not available.

**Other Social Assistance services:** includes:

Adoption service

Adult day care centre operation

Aged care assistance service

Alcoholics anonymous operation

Disabilities assistance service

Marriage guidance service



Operation of soup kitchen (including mobile)

Welfare counselling service

Youth welfare service

**out-of-home care:** Overnight care for children aged under 18 for which there is ongoing case management and financial payment (including where a financial payment has been offered but has been declined by the carer).

**outside school hours care:** Services provided for school-aged 5–12 year olds outside school hours during term and vacations. Care may be provided on student-free days and when school finishes early.

**overcrowding:** Situation in a dwelling when one or more additional bedrooms are required to adequately house its inhabitants, according to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard. Compare with [underutilisation \(housing\)](#).

**over-representation:** Likelihood of occurrence for one population compared with another. May be expressed as a rate ratio and may be calculated as: population A rate divided by population B rate. See also [rate ratio](#).

**owner (of dwelling):** Household in which at least one member owns the dwelling in which the household members usually live. Owners are divided into two categories:

without a mortgage – no mortgage or loan secured against the dwelling

with a mortgage – any outstanding mortgage or loan secured against the dwelling.

**Parenting Payment Partnered:** Means-tested income support payment for partnered parents until their youngest child turns 6.

**Parenting Payment Single:** Means-tested income support payment for single parents where the youngest child is aged under 8. Single parents must satisfy part-time mutual obligation requirements of 30 hours per fortnight once their youngest child turns 6 (unless exempt; see [Partial Capacity to Work](#)). Note, the May 2023 budget announced a change to expand the eligibility to include people single parents with children aged under 14 years, which will be implemented on 20 September 2023.

**Parenting payments:** Means-tested income support payment for principal carers in recognition of the impact that caring for young children can have on a parent's capacity to undertake full-time employment. See also [Parenting Payment Single](#) and [Parenting Payment Partnered](#).

**part-time employees:** ABS considers people who usually work less than 35 hours a week in all jobs as part time employments.

**Partial Capacity to Work:** A person with a physical, intellectual or psychiatric impairment has a partial capacity to work if the impairment prevents them from working at least 30 hours per week at the relevant minimum wage or above, independently of a program of support, within the next 2 years. Work capacity is assessed for activity-tested payments, such as [JobSeeker Payment](#), [Parenting Payment Single](#) and [Youth Allowance \(other\)](#) Payment.

**participation:** The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health defines participation in terms of involvement in life situations, from basic learning and applying knowledge, through general tasks and demands, to domestic life, relationships, education and employment, and community life.

**participation rate:** See [labour force participation rate](#).

**Partner Allowance:** Partner Allowance provides income support for older partners of income support recipients who face barriers to finding employment because of their previous limited participation in the workforce. Partner Allowance has been closed to new entrants since 20 September 2003.

**partner violence:** Violent or intimidating behaviours perpetrated by a current or former cohabiting partner. See also [intimate partner violence](#).

**part-rate payment:** Government payment received by an individual that is not the full amount that may be received for that particular benefit type. Whether an individual is eligible for full or part payment is often determined based on whether the income they earn is above or below a certain threshold, and on the value of their assets.

**part-time employment rate:** The proportion of the total working age (15–64 years) population currently in part-time employment. The denominator includes persons who work in a full-time capacity, along with those who are unemployed or not in the labour force.

**part-time employment:** People who worked, or usually work, less than 35 hours a week at the time of survey or census.

**part-time unemployment rate:** Number of unemployed persons looking for part-time work as a percentage of the part-time labour force (part-time employed and unemployed looking for part-time work).

**part-time worker:** Employed person who usually worked fewer than 35 hours a week (in all jobs) and did so during the reference week of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Labour Force Survey or was not at work in the reference week. This definition applies to the ABS Labour Force Survey and may differ somewhat from definitions in other collections. Compare with [full-time workers](#). See also [employed](#).

**people leaving care (Specialist Homelessness Services clients):** Clients of Specialist Homeless Services who, in their first support period of the reporting year:

had a dwelling type of hospital, psychiatric hospital or unit, disability support, rehabilitation, aged care facility

reported their reason for seeking assistance as transition from foster care or child safety residential care, or transition from other care arrangements.

**philanthropy:** defined by Philanthropy Australia (2012) as the 'planned and structured giving of time, information, goods and services, voice and influence well as money to improve the wellbeing of humanity and the community.' The term is derived from the Ancient Greek *philanthrōpía*: love of mankind.

**physical abuse (children):** Any non-accidental physical act inflicted upon a child by a person having the care of a child.

**physical violence:** Non-accidental physical act inflicted on a person by another person. Can include slaps, hits, punches, being pushed down stairs or across a room, choking and burns, as well as the use of knives, firearms and other weapons, or threats of such acts. For some data sources, the term **physical abuse** is used to refer to physical violence in specific contexts or for a certain age group, such as elder abuse or child abuse. For example, in the Personal Safety Survey, physical abuse refers only to incidents that occurred before the age of 15.

**poker:** Poker refers to a group of card games in which the winner of each hand is determined according to the combinations of players' cards, at least some of which remain hidden until the end of the hand.

**pools:** Pools is a numbers game of chance where the winning numbers are based on the results of the matches. Also called 'football pools', they were administered by the Australian Lottery Market until 23 June 2018.

**population dependency ratio:** ratio of population aged 0–14 and 65 and over per 100 population aged 15–64.

**post-school qualification:** See [non-school qualification](#).

**potential workers:** People who are not currently employed and want to work, or not classified as employed but with an attachment to a job.

**preschool program:** Deliver a structured educational program to children before they start school. Programs can be delivered by a preschool or a centre-based day care service.

**preschool:** Services licensed and/or funded by state or territory governments to deliver preschool services at a particular location. Comprises a structured educational program provided by a qualified teacher in various settings, usually aimed at children in the year before they start formal schooling.

**previous partner:** A person with whom the respondent lived with at some point in a married or de-facto relationship and from whom the respondent is now separated, divorced or widowed.

**primary carer:** Subgroup of informal carers who provide the majority of help or supervision that a person requires with core activities.

**primary medical condition (Disability Support Pension):** For Disability Support Pension reporting, the medical condition with the highest impairment rating determines which primary medical condition a recipient is recorded under. Twenty-one Primary Medical Condition classification groups cover a number of medical conditions. The medical condition of Care Receivers of the Carer Payment is the first listed medical condition provided by the treating health professional. A person can have up to 4 medical conditions listed.

**prison:** Place administered and operated by a justice department, where individuals are detained while under the supervision of the relevant justice department on a pre-sentence or sentenced detention episode.

**prisoner:** Adult prisoners (aged 18 and over) held in custody whose confinement is the responsibility of a correctional services agency. Includes sentenced prisoners and prisoners held in custody awaiting trial or sentencing (remandees). Does not include youth offenders, persons in psychiatric custody, police cell detainees, those in periodic detention, asylum seekers or Australians held in overseas prisons.

**private betting:** This may include unregulated informal betting on games such as cards or mah-jong, or other agreed-upon outcomes, often with friends or family.

**Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI):** The PGSI is a Canadian screening tool for use in community settings (Ferris & Wynne, 2001). It has been adapted for use in Australia and is commonly used in Australian studies to assess problem gambling prevalence and also as a self-assessment tool ([take the quiz- external site opens in new window](#)).

**problem gambling:** Problem gambling is characterised by difficulties in limiting money and/or time on gambling, which leads to adverse consequences for the person gambling and often others in the community. Problem gamblers have scores of 8 or more on the PGSI. In this snapshot problem gambling has been labelled as 'high-risk gambling'.

**projection (population):** Not a forecast but instead an illustration of changes that would occur if stated assumptions were to apply over the period in question.

**psychological abuse:** Behaviours that include limiting access to finances, preventing the victim from contacting family and friends, demeaning and humiliating the victim, and any threats of injury or death directed at the victim or their children

**psychological distress:** Psychological distress is commonly measured using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale – 10 items (K10). The K10 questionnaire was developed to yield a global measure of psychosocial distress, based on questions about people's level of nervousness, agitation, psychological fatigue and depression in the past four weeks. The Kessler 6 Scale is an abbreviated version of K10.

**purchasing power parities:** rates of currency conversion that try to equalise the purchasing power of different currencies, by eliminating the differences in price levels between countries.

**qualifying age:** Age at which a person is eligible for a specific government benefit.

**quintile:** Group derived by ranking a population according to specified criteria (for example, income) and dividing it into five equal parts. Can also mean the cut-points that make these divisions—that is, the 20th, 40th, 60th and 80th percentiles—but the first use is the more common one. Commonly used to describe socioeconomic groups based on socioeconomic position. Also used to describe income groups.

**race betting:** Wagering on the outcome of horse and greyhound races, excluding all sweeps.

**raffle:** A gambling competition in which people buy numbered tickets, each ticket having the chance of winning a prize.

**rate:** One number (numerator) divided by another number (denominator). The numerator is commonly the number of events in a specified time. The denominator is the population 'at risk' of the event. Rates (crude, age-specific and age-standardised) are generally multiplied by a number such as 100,000 to create whole numbers.

**rate ratio:** Shows the relative difference between two rates. May be calculated as the rate for population A divided by the rate for population B. Commonly used to compare rates between:

two points in time for the same population

different populations at the same point in time.

A rate ratio of 1 indicates no difference between the rates. A rate ratio less than 1 indicates that rates have decreased over time (use i), or that the rate for Population A is lower than that for Population B (use ii). A rate more than 1 indicates an increase over time or that the rate for Population A is higher than that for Population B.

**real terms:** The phrase 'real terms' is used to describe spending in constant prices. Constant price estimates for spending have been derived using deflators produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

**reference person:** Is chosen for each household by applying, to all household members aged 15 and over, these selection criteria, in the order listed, until a single appropriate reference person is identified:

one partner in a registered or de facto marriage, with dependent children

one partner in a registered or de facto marriage, without dependent children

lone parent with dependent children

person with the highest income

eldest person.

This definition applies to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Income and Housing and may differ somewhat from definitions in other collections.

**relatives (known child adoption):** Any relatives of the child being adopted, as defined by the *Family Law Act 1975*, other than step-parents. For First Nations children, a relative includes anyone related through kinship arrangements. See **relative kinship care**.

**remand or remandee:** When a person is placed in custody while awaiting the outcome of a court hearing.

**remoteness area:** Classification that divides each state and territory into several regions based on their relative accessibility to goods and services (such as general practitioners, hospitals and specialist care) as measured by road distance. These regions are based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia and defined as Remoteness Areas by the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (before 2011)

or the Australian Statistical Geographical Standard (from 2011 onwards) in each Census year.

**rent affordability indicator:** The Rent affordability indicator (RAID) is calculated by dividing rent payments by an imputed household income. Both rent payments and an imputed household income are expressed as single dollar values. The calculation determines whether rent payments are less than or equal to 30% of household income or are more than 30% of household income

**rent assistance:** Rent Assistance is a non-taxable income supplement payable to eligible people who rent in the private rental market or community housing. Pensioners, allowees and those receiving more than the base rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A may be eligible for Rent Assistance.

**rental affordability index:** Price index for housing rental markets, used to compare rental affordability to household incomes. Defined as the ratio of gross household income to the income at which 30% of gross income is spent on housing costs, multiplied by 100. A rental affordability index score between 100 and 120 represents moderately unaffordable rent. A score between 120 and 150 represents acceptable rent. A score of 100 or below indicates that a household is in housing stress.

**rental stress:** A household is often considered under rental stress if a rented household spends more than 30% of household income on rental payments.

**replacement-level fertility:** Replacement-level fertility is the number of babies a female would need to have over her reproductive life span to replace herself and her partner.

**residency requirements:** Requirements for a person to be a citizen or hold certain visas in order to be eligible for particular government benefits.

**residential care (aged care):** Provided to a person in an Australian Government-approved aged care home, including accommodation (bedding and other furnishings, meals, laundry, social activities), personal care (bathing, showering, toileting, dressing, eating, moving about), and nursing and allied health services if required. Residential aged care can be provided on a permanent basis, or a short-term basis for respite or emergency support.

**respite (aged care):** An alternative care arrangement for dependent people living in the community, giving people – or their carers – a short break from their usual care arrangements. Friends, family, or the community may provide informal respite. Formal respite services are provided by residential aged care facilities and by the [Commonwealth Home Support Programme](#).

**restriction:** A person has a restriction if they have difficulty participating in life situations, need assistance from another person, or use an aid.

**retirement:** People who have previously worked for 2 weeks or more, have retired from work, or from looking for work, or are not intending to look for, or take up, work. This definition applies to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Survey and may differ somewhat from definitions in other collections.

**Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM):** STEM fields of education are based on the definition in the [Report on Australia's STEM Workforce- external site opens in new window](#) by the Office of the Chief Scientist. This includes the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED) fields of education:

01. Natural and Physical Sciences (including 0101. Mathematical Sciences)
02. Information Technology
03. Engineering and Related Technologies
05. Agriculture, Environment and Related Studies.

**sentenced supervision:**

**Any form of sentenced youth justice supervision (community-based or detention).**

**separate house:** House separated from other dwellings by a space of at least half-a-metre. A separate house may have a flat attached to it, such as a granny flat or converted garage. The number of storeys of separate houses is not recorded. Also included are occupied accommodation units in manufactured home estates which are identified as separate houses.

**severe or profound core activity limitation:** Limitation where a person always (profound) or sometimes (severe) needs help with one or more core activities (self-care, mobility and/or communication), has difficulty understanding or being understood by family or friends, or can communicate more easily using sign language or other non-spoken forms of communication. See also [disability](#), [core activity limitation](#) and [mild or moderate core activity limitation](#).

**severely crowded dwelling:** Dwelling that requires four or more extra bedrooms to accommodate the usual residents of that dwelling, according to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard. This definition applies to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census and may differ somewhat from definitions in other collections. See also [overcrowding](#).

**sexual abuse:** Behaviours of a sexual nature by one person upon another, typically used within specific contexts or for a certain age group, such as elder abuse or child abuse. Sexual abuse of a child refers to any act that exposes a child to, or involves the child in, sexual activities that: the child does not understand, the child does not or cannot consent to, are not accepted by the community, or are unlawful. It includes, but is not limited to, sexual assault. Other behaviours include forcing a child to watch or hear sexual acts, taking sexualised photos of a child, and sexually explicit talk.

**sexual assault:** Sexual act carried out against a person's will through the use of physical force, intimidation or coercion, including any attempts to do this. Includes rape, attempted rape, aggravated sexual assault (assault with a weapon), indecent assault, and penetration by objects, forced sexual activity that did not end in penetration and attempts to force a person into sexual activity. These acts are an offence under state and territory criminal law.

**sexual harassment:** behaviours that make a person uncomfortable and are offensive due to their sexual nature. In the Personal Safety Survey behaviours include: indecent text messages, emails or social media posts; indecent exposure; inappropriate



comments; unwanted sexual touching; distributing of posting pictures of a sexual nature without consent; and unwanted exposure to picture, videos or materials which were sexual in nature.

**sexual violence:** Behaviours of a sexual nature carried out against a person's will using physical force and/or coercion (or any threat or attempt to do so). Can include sexual abuse, sexual assault and sexual harassment.

**Short Gambling Harm Screen (SGHS):** The SGHS is a validated shortened (10-item) measure derived from the work of Browne and colleagues (Browne, Goodwin, & Rockloff, 2017). Scores range from 0 to 10 with a higher score indicating experiencing more gambling-related harms.

**Sickness Allowance:** Sickness Allowance is a payment made to people who are temporarily unfit, due to illness or injury, to perform their usual work or study, and have a job to return to or intend to resume studying when fit to do so.

**simulated gambling:** Games with features that resemble or function like commercial gambling activities (King, 2018). This includes social casino games, free demo (demonstration) games, and other games with gambling-like components. Some, but not all, simulated gambling activities have in-game purchases; however, these in-game purchases operate in a closed-loop economy where they cannot be redeemed for money or traded among players.

**single parent:** See [one-parent family](#).

**sleeping rough:** State of sleeping with no shelter on the street, in a park, in the open, or in a motor vehicle. See also [homeless](#).

**social exclusion:** Opposite of [social inclusion](#).

**social housing:** Rental housing funded or partly funded by government and owned or managed by the Australian Government or a community organisation and let to eligible persons. See also [social housing programs](#).

**social housing programs:** Rental housing funded, or partly funded, by the Australian Government, that is owned or managed by the government or a community organisation. Australia has four main social housing programs:

public rental housing

state owned or managed Indigenous housing

mainstream community housing

Indigenous community housing.

**social inclusion:** According to the former Social Inclusion Board, an inclusive society is one in which all members have the resources, opportunities and capability to learn, work, engage with and have a voice in the community. See also [social exclusion](#).

**social isolation:** State of having minimal contact with others.

**social security system and payments:** Aims to encourage self-reliance and provide for a minimum acceptable standard of living, with payments targeted to people who do not



have the means to support themselves. Payments are administered by Services Australia to those unable to work due to disability or caring responsibilities, those unable to find work, those pursuing post-school learning, families with the cost of raising dependent children, and rental costs.

**Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas:** Set of indexes, created from Census data, that aim to represent the socioeconomic position of Australian communities and identify areas of advantage and disadvantage. The index value reflects the overall or average level of disadvantage of the population of an area. It does not show how individuals living in the same area differ from each other in their socioeconomic group. Generally, where analyses on socioeconomic position are presented, the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage has been used.

**socioeconomic position:** Indication of how 'well off' a person or group is. Socioeconomic groups are mostly reported using the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas, typically for five groups (quintiles), from the most disadvantaged (worst off or lowest socioeconomic group) to the least disadvantaged (best off or highest socioeconomic group).

**Special Benefit:** an income support payment for people who are not eligible for other income support payments and experiencing financial hardship due to reasons beyond their control, such as not meeting age or residency requirements of payments.

**special needs households:** Descriptor for households that have a member with disability, a main tenant aged under 25 or 75 and over, or households defined as Indigenous households.

Indigenous households in state owned and managed Indigenous housing are considered special needs households if they have a member with a disability or a main tenant aged under 25 or aged 50 and over.

**specialist disability services:** Services provided under the National Disability Insurance Scheme, as well as a range of other government services for people with disability so they can access the support and services they need for an enhanced quality of life and to participate as valued members of the community.

**specialist homelessness services:** Assistance provided by a specialist homelessness agency to a client aimed at responding to or preventing homelessness. Includes accommodation provision, assistance to sustain housing, domestic/family violence services, mental health services, family/relationship assistance, disability services, drug/alcohol counselling, legal/financial services, immigration/cultural services, other specialist services and general assistance and support.

**sports betting:** Wagering on local, national or international sporting activities (other than horse and greyhound racing).

**stalking:** Unwanted behaviours, such as following or unwanted contact, that occur more than once and cause fear or distress. Stalking is a crime in every state and territory of Australia. In the Personal Safety Survey, behaviours include, but are not limited to: loitering, following or watching, unwanted contact, posting unwanted messages or

personal information on the internet, giving offensive or disturbing objects, and interfering with property.

**step parent (known child adoption):** A category of known adoption that includes a non-biological parent who is the spouse of the child's birth or adoptive parent. Foster parents are not included in this category.

**step parent:** Non-biological parent who is the spouse of the child's birth parent or previously adoptive parent. Foster parents are not included in this category.

**student attendance rate:** Number of actual full-time equivalent student days attended by full-time students as a percentage of the total number of possible student attendance days attended over the period.

**student payments:** Range of Centrelink payments available to support people who are studying or undertaking an apprenticeship. On this page it is focused on means-tested income support payments, including [Youth Allowance \(student or Australian Apprentices\)](#), [ABSTUDY](#) (Living Allowance) and [Austudy](#) (for those aged 25 and over).

**substantiation of notification (child protection):** Child protection notification made to relevant authorities between 1 July and 30 June that was investigated (with the investigation finalised by 31 August), and where it was concluded there was reasonable cause to believe the child had been, was being, or was likely to be, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. Substantiation does not necessarily require sufficient evidence for a successful prosecution, and does not imply that treatment or case management was provided. Substantiations may also include cases where there is no suitable caregiver, such as children who have been abandoned, or whose parents are deceased.

**superannuation:** Money set aside over a person's lifetime to provide for their retirement. Can be accessed when a person reaches eligible age (between 55 and 60, depending on year of birth) and retires, or when they turn 65. Access can be through pension payments or a lump sum.

**supplementary payments:** Additional payments available to recipients of particular government benefits, typically subject to additional eligibility criteria.

**survey data collection:** Data set that results from sampling individual units from the population. No sample will ever be fully representative of the population, but if carefully designed and implemented, samples will be highly representative for drawing conclusions about characteristics of the whole population.

**tenure type:** Circumstances in which a household resides in a dwelling that is owned outright or with a mortgage, rented privately, or part of a social housing program or some other tenure type.

**tertiary education:** In Australia can be broadly categorised as higher education or vocational education and training (VET). Higher education is generally delivered in a university setting, leading to a Bachelor, Masters or Doctoral degree. VET focuses on delivering skills and knowledge for a specific industry, leading to Certificate and Diploma qualifications. It is delivered by registered training organisations such as technical and further education institutions.

**trades:** Occupations that are classified as *technicians and trade workers* under the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO)

**underemployed:** Employed persons aged 15 and over who want, and are available for, more hours of work than they have. Comprises: people employed part time who want to work more hours and are available to start work with more hours, either in the reference week or in the 4 weeks after the survey; or persons employed full time who worked part-time hours in the reference week (fewer than 35 hours) for economic reasons (including being stood down or insufficient work being available). This definition applies to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Survey and may differ somewhat from definitions in other collections.

**underemployment rate:** Number of underemployed workers expressed as a percentage of the labour force.

**underutilisation (housing):** Occurs where a dwelling contains one or more bedrooms surplus to the needs of the household occupying it, according to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard. Compare with [overcrowding](#).

**unemployed:** Describes people aged 15 and over who were not employed during the reference week of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Survey and had actively looked for work in the previous 4 weeks and were available for work in the reference week or were waiting to start a new job within 4 weeks of the end of the reference period and could have started had it been available. This definition applies to the Labour Force Survey and may differ somewhat from definitions in other collections. Compare with [employed](#).

**unemployment payments:** Benefits or payments available to working age people (aged 16 and over but under the **Age Pension** qualifying age) looking for work or earning under the income threshold, including [Youth Allowance \(other\)](#), [JobSeeker Payment](#) and [Newstart Allowance](#) (ceased 20 March 2020).

**unemployment rate:** Number of unemployed people, expressed as a percentage of the labour force.

**unsentenced supervision:** Youth justice supervision (community-based or detention) that occurs when a young person has not been sentenced. May occur when they have been charged with an offence and are awaiting the outcome of their legal matter, or when they have been found guilty in court and are awaiting sentencing.

**virtual betting:** Placing bets on virtual (simulated) games where the outcomes are algorithm-based, for example betting on the match outcome of a virtual sports event.

**vocational education and training (VET):** VET focuses on delivering skills and knowledge for a specific industry, leading to Certificate and Diploma qualifications. It is delivered by registered training organisations such as technical and further education institutions.

**volunteer:** A person who willingly provides unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, to an organisation or group excluding work done overseas.

**wagering:** The used to refer officially to bets placed on racing and sporting events. It is used as a term for a distinct form of gambling, in contrast with betting on poker machines or buying lottery tickets.

**weighted data:** Data collected from survey participants are adjusted to represent the population from which the sample was drawn.

**welfare workforce:** comprises paid employees working in a community service occupation within a community service industry.

**Widow Allowance:** Widow Allowance provides income support for older working age women who lose the support of a partner and face barriers to finding employment because of limited participation. Access to Widow Allowance is restricted with new grants only being made available to women who were born on or before 1 July 1995.

**Widow B Pension:** Widow B Pension is an income support payment for older widows who does not qualify for parenting payment, have limited needs, and have lost the financial support of their partner.

**Wife Pension:** Wife Pensions are income support payments for the female partner of an Age or Disability Support Pensioner respectively. There have been no new grants of Wife Pension since 1 July 1995.

**workforce:** People who are employed or unemployed (not employed but actively looking for work). Also known as the [labour force](#).

**working age population:** Generally refers to people aged 15–64 years.

**Year 12 attainment rate:** Number of students who meet the requirements of a Year 12 or equivalent qualification, expressed as a percentage of the estimated potential Year 12 population.

**Youth Allowance (other):** Means-tested income support payment for young people aged 16–21 who are looking for work, temporarily unable to work, or undertaking approved activities. Qualifying for this payment is subject to a parental income test unless the young person is considered independent.

**Youth Allowance (Student and Australian Apprentices):** Means-tested income support payment for full-time students and Australian Apprentices aged 16–24.

**Youth justice system:** The set of processes and practices for managing children and young people who have committed or allegedly committed an offence.

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