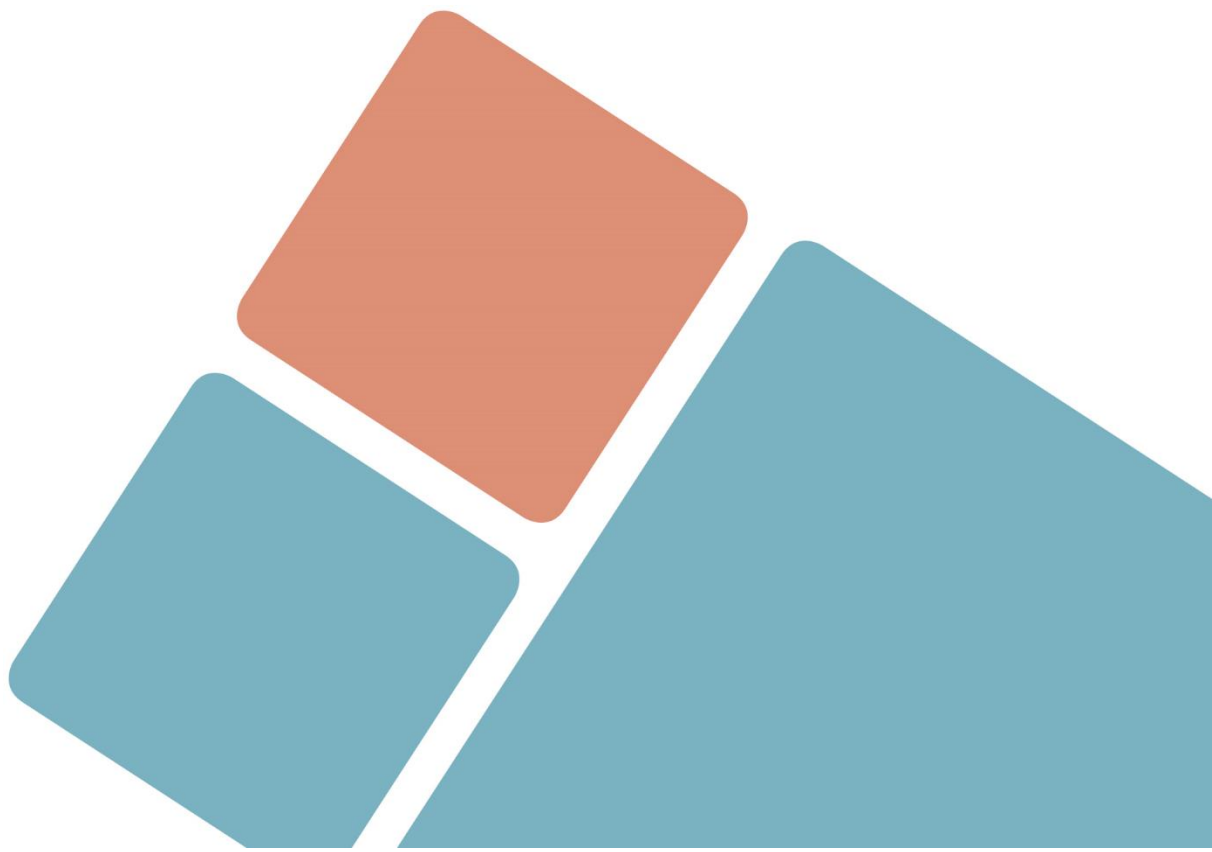




Australian Government

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Australia's welfare snapshots 2019



Australia's welfare snapshots 2019

This document is a point-in-time compilation of the Australia's welfare snapshots (web pages) published on 11 September 2019. For the latest version of the snapshots, including interactive content, visit www.aihw.gov.au/australias-welfare/snapshots.

Australia's welfare snapshots are part of the *Australia's welfare 2019* product suite.

About *Australia's welfare 2019*

This edition of the AIHW's biennial flagship report on welfare introduces a new format and an expanded product suite:

Australia's welfare 2019: data insights is a collection of articles on selected welfare topics, including an overview of the welfare data landscape, and contributions by academic experts. It is available as a print report and online as a PDF.

Australia's welfare snapshots are 41 web pages that present key facts on housing, education and skills, employment and work, income and finance: government payments, social support, justice and safety, and Indigenous Australians. They are available online in HTML (updated when new data are available) and as a compiled PDF.

Australia's welfare 2019: in brief presents key findings and concepts from the snapshots to tell the story of welfare in Australia. It is available as a print report and online as a PDF.

Australia's welfare indicators is an interactive data visualisation tool that measures welfare system performance, individual and household determinants and the nation's wellbeing. It is available online in HTML.

All products can be viewed or downloaded at www.aihw.gov.au/australias-welfare.

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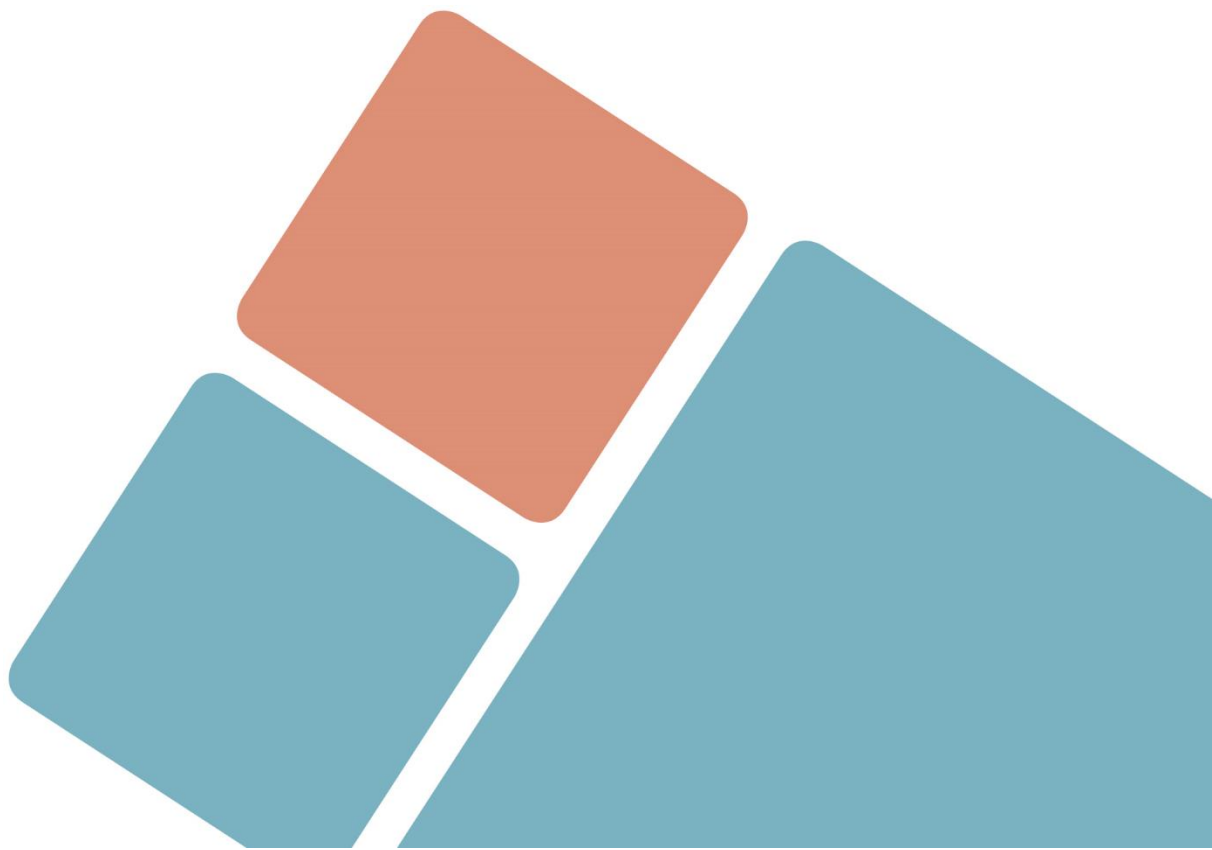
[Indigenous income and finance](#)

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Welfare in Australia

Welfare and wellbeing are often used interchangeably. Many different supports and services—beyond income support and welfare services—are critical to the wellbeing of individuals and their families. The Australian Government and jurisdictions contribute to welfare spending, and a wide range of community services are provided through public and private organisations.



Health and welfare links

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/health-and-welfare-links>

A person's health is the result of a complex interplay of their genetics, lifestyle and environment. 'Health' is more than just being free of illness. 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

Health is a determinant of 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 is both a protective and a risk factor. For example, a person may suffer isolation or loneliness because of poor health (see [Social isolation and loneliness](#)), while good health may enable them to earn a sufficient income to support themselves and live independently, placing them at lower risk of poor outcomes such as poor housing conditions, overcrowding and homelessness.

Conversely, the circumstances in which a person lives and works can impact on their health. A number of social factors act together to strengthen or undermine health. These factors are also strongly related to wellbeing, as shown in [Understanding welfare and wellbeing](#), Figure 1. Factors include educational attainment, employment status, social exclusion (social disadvantage and lack of resources, opportunity, participation and skills) (McLachlan et al. 2013), the built environment and living arrangement (see the Australia's welfare snapshots relating to housing, employment and work and education.

Health inequalities

Health inequalities (avoidable differences in health outcomes and life expectancy 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). It is estimated that closing the gap between the most and least socially disadvantaged groups would spare 0.5 million Australians from chronic illness, save \$2.3 billion in annual hospital costs and reduce Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme prescription numbers by 5.3 million annually (Brown et al. 2012).

One example of the link between social inequalities and disadvantage can be seen through health disparities in educational attainment. People with lower levels of education have higher rates of death due to cardiovascular disease. If all Australians aged 25–74 had the same cardiovascular disease death rate as people with a Bachelor degree or higher in 2011–12, the total cardiovascular disease death rate would have declined by 55%, and there would have been 7,800 fewer deaths (AIHW 2019b).

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 and treatment of diseases and other ill health and injury to maintain health—not just treat illness—to help 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 jab, no pay’ policy. This encourages parents to vaccinate children by requiring them to comply with immunisation requirements in order to receive Child Care and Family Tax payments (Department of Health 2018).

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, as well as protect the health and wellbeing of care recipients (SCRGSP 2018; see [Aged care](#)). While aged care is generally regarded as a ‘welfare’ service, some aged care services may typically be considered a ‘health’ service. For example, recipients of the Commonwealth Home Support Programme may be eligible for allied health support services such as physiotherapy, speech pathology and nutritional advice (Commonwealth of Australia 2018).
- People with permanent and significant disability may access disability support services. Support available for those eligible is wide ranging and includes some health-type supports, such as home modifications, allied health and the provision of aids and equipment (NDIA 2019; see [Supporting 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 2016–17, 4,600 women and 1,700 men were hospitalised due to family and domestic violence (AIHW 2019a) and 121,000 people who sought [homelessness services](#) in 2017–18 had experienced family and domestic violence (AIHW 2019c). Services and initiatives across sectors work to support the wide reach of FDSV. For example, many people who have experienced violence from a current partner report having taken time off work as a result (ABS 2018). This can result

in less income or loss of employment. New government initiatives include the introduction of paid domestic violence leave (SGV 2017).

Health and welfare data

Health and welfare data are hugely valuable. Their strong evidence base enables better decision making and improved outcomes for Australians. People-centred data are needed to understand the experiences of the population and various cohorts within it across health, housing, education and skills, employment, income and finance, social support, and justice and safety.

Data linkage (a process combining information from multiple databases, while preserving privacy) is increasingly being used to link across health and welfare data sets. An example is the National Integrated Health Services Information Analysis Asset, which brings together aged care data with health services data (AIHW 2018). Linked people-centred data are beneficial for insight into an individual's situation, support pathways, interactions and experiences with welfare services, interaction between health and welfare systems, and health and welfare outcomes. See 'Chapter 1 An overview of Australia's welfare' in [Australia's welfare 2019: data insights](#).

Where do I go for more information?

See [Australia's health](#) for more on this topic.

For more information, see:

- [Australia's health 2018](#)
- [Indicators of socioeconomic inequalities in cardiovascular disease, diabetes and chronic kidney disease](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

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International comparisons of welfare data

Find the most recent version of this information at:

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

Comparing welfare and wellbeing data between countries helps inform policy, planning and decision making. It is also of interest to researchers and the general public to compare Australian experiences on a global scale.

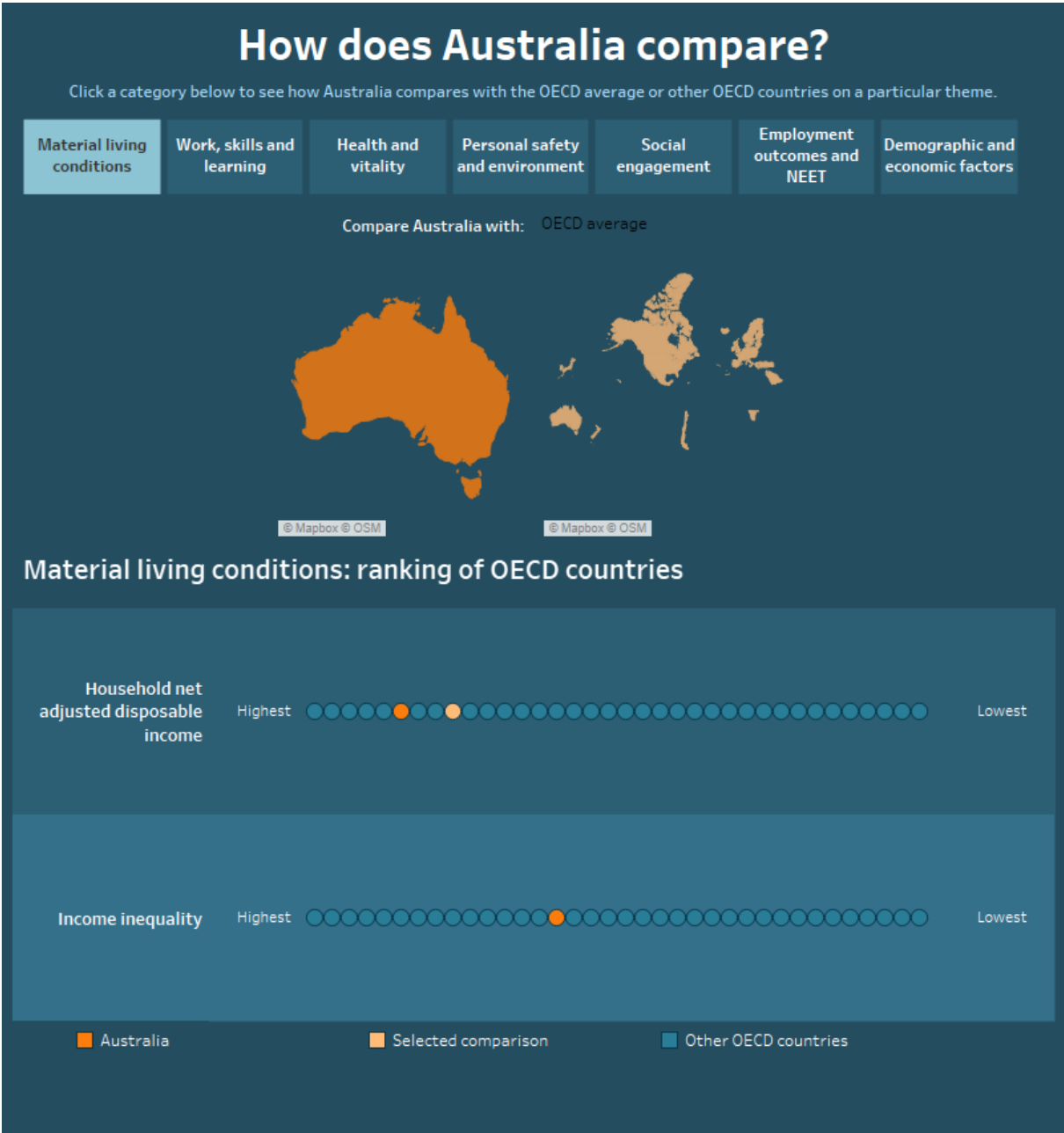
Participating in international efforts to collect and report welfare data also facilitates cooperation between countries, expanding Australia's international profile. For example, AIHW works with the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and its member nations on projects using social data for more effective policy and service delivery.

The interactive visualisation on this page allows data to be compared across the 36 OECD member countries for a range of welfare indicators, highlighting Australia's international performance. OECD countries provide a useful comparison for Australia because most are developed countries with high income economies. The indicators presented are adapted from [Australia's welfare indicators](#).

How does Australia's welfare compare to other OECD countries?

Click through the categories at the top of the visualisation to change the set of indicators.

Figure 1



In 2018 (or based on latest year of data):

Material living conditions

- Australia had a relatively high household disposable income of US\$33,417 at current purchasing power parities per capita, ranking sixth out of 35 OECD countries for which data were available and above the OECD average of US\$30,563. The United States ranked first at US\$44,049 and Mexico 35th at US\$13,891 (OECD 2019a).
- Australia's Gini coefficient of 0.33 ranked 15th out of 36 OECD countries (where a ranking of first represents most equality and 36th represents least equality). Gini coefficients are a measure of income equality that give a number between 0 and 1, where a higher value represents less income equality. Mexico had the least equal income distribution (Gini coefficient of 0.46) and Slovak Republic the most equal (Gini coefficient of 0.24) (OECD 2019g).

Work, skills and learning

- Almost three-quarters (74%) of Australians aged 15–64 were employed. Australia's employment-to-population ratio ranked 14th highest out of 36 OECD countries and was above the OECD average of 69%. Iceland had the highest ratio (85%) and Turkey the lowest (52%) (OECD 2019i).
- More than 1 in 8 (13.2%) Australians worked very long hours (more than 50 per week), which is higher than the OECD average of 12.6%. Australia had one of the highest proportions of people working long hours, ranking eighth out of 35 OECD countries for which data were available. The Netherlands had the lowest proportion of people working long hours (0.5%) and Turkey the highest (34%) (OECD 2019a).
- Almost half (45%) of Australians aged 25–64 had a tertiary education. Australia ranked eighth highest out of 36 OECD countries for which data were available and was above the OECD average of 37%. Canada had the highest rate (57%) and Mexico the lowest (17%) (OECD 2019b).

Health and vitality

- Australians' health-adjusted life expectancy (HALE) at birth was 73.0 years—that is, the number of years a person can expect to live in 'full health'. This was one of the highest of all OECD countries, ranking seventh out of 36, and above the OECD average of 71.1 years. Among OECD countries, HALE ranged from 74.8 years (Japan) to 66.0 years (Turkey) (WHO 2019).
- Australians reported very high life satisfaction, with a score of 7.3 (on a scale from 0 to 10). This placed Australia 10th out of 35 OECD countries for which data were available, and above the OECD average of 6.5. Life satisfaction among OECD countries ranged from 7.5 (Norway) to 5.2 (Portugal) (OECD 2019a).

Personal safety and environment

- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Australians felt safe walking alone at night. Australia ranked 27th lowest out of 35 OECD countries for which data were available, and below the OECD average of 69%. Among OECD countries, this ranged from 88% (Norway) to 46% (Mexico) (OECD 2019a).
- Out of 35 OECD countries for which data were available, Australia had the fourth lowest level of air pollution, with 5.2 micrograms of particulate matter less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter (PM2.5) per cubic metre. This was lower than the OECD average of 14 micrograms. Iceland (3.0 micrograms) had the lowest level of air pollution, and South Korea (28 micrograms) had the highest level of air pollution (OECD 2019a).
- Australia released 22.8 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent greenhouse gases per capita, higher than the OECD average of 12 tonnes per capita. Among 36 OECD countries, Australia emitted the most greenhouse gases per capita. The United States emitted the second most (20.2 tonnes per capita) and Sweden the least (5.4 tonnes) (OECD 2019d). However, Australia's per capita greenhouse gas emissions have reduced in recent years. In the year to September 2018, they were the lowest levels since 1990 (Department of the Environment and Energy 2018).

Social engagement

- The quality of support networks in Australia ranked ninth highest out of 35 OECD countries for which data were available, with 94% Australians reporting they knew somebody they could rely on in times of need. This was higher than the OECD average of 89%. Among OECD countries, this ranged from 98% (Iceland) to 76% (South Korea) (OECD 2019a).
- More than 86% of Australian households had Internet access at home. Australia ranked 21st out of 36 OECD countries for this measure. Among OECD countries, household Internet access ranged from 99.5% (South Korea) to 51% (Mexico) (OECD 2019e).

Employment outcomes and NEET

- Australia's long-term unemployment ratio (proportion of unemployed people aged 15 and over unemployed for 12 months or more) of 24% ranked 12th lowest out of 35 OECD countries for which data were available. This was below the OECD average of 31%. Among OECD countries, South Korea had the lowest long-term unemployment ratio (1.3%) and Greece the highest (73%) (OECD 2019f).
- Australia's youth unemployment rate (ages 15–24) of 11.8% ranked 18th out of 36 OECD countries, and was close to the OECD average of 11.9%. Japan had the lowest youth unemployment rate (3.7%) and Greece the highest (44%) (OECD 2019k).
- Nearly 1 in 9 (11%) young Australians (aged 15–29) were not in education, employment or training (NEET). This was lower than the OECD average (13%). For

this measure, Australia ranked 12th lowest out of 35 OECD countries for which data were available. NEET values ranged from 4.9% (Iceland) to 27% (Turkey) (OECD 2019j).

Demographic and economic factors

- Australia's population dependency ratio (ratio of population aged 0–14 and 65 and over per 100 population aged 15–64) was 22nd highest out of 36 OECD countries at 51%. This ratio ranged from 64% (Israel) to 37% (South Korea) (UN 2019).
- Compared with other OECD countries, a high proportion of Australians (28%), were born overseas. Australia ranked third highest out of 31 countries for which data were available; rates ranged from 44% (Luxemburg) to 0.8% (Mexico) (OECD 2019c).
- Australia's per capita gross domestic product was US\$54,108 (OECD estimated value), which ranked 11th highest out of 36 OECD countries. It was higher than the OECD average of US\$46,025. Luxembourg had the highest per capita gross domestic product (US\$111,710) and Mexico the lowest (US\$20,227, OECD estimated value) (OECD 2019h).

Data presented on this page reflect those in the OECD.Stat database and other published sources for international comparisons. OECD data for Australia may differ from data presented elsewhere due to differences in data sources, definitions, indicator specifications and calculation methods.

Where do I go for more information?

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

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

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Understanding welfare and wellbeing

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/understanding-welfare-and-wellbeing>

What is welfare? In the broadest sense, welfare refers to the wellbeing of individuals, families and the community. The terms welfare and wellbeing are often used interchangeably. Positive wellbeing is associated with being comfortable, happy or healthy (Oxford University Press 2019).

Some people see welfare as primarily income support payments and welfare services. However, support and services in many areas of life aid welfare and are critical to the wellbeing of an individual and their family. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2015) states that 'well-being is multidimensional, covering aspects of life ranging from civic engagement to housing, from household income to work-life-balance, and from skills to health status.'

The conceptual framework for *Australia's welfare* (Figure 1) shows that a person's wellbeing is the interplay of many interrelated factors. This framework shows, at a high level, the complexity of welfare as a concept. It acknowledges the factors that play a part in wellbeing.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for Australia's welfare

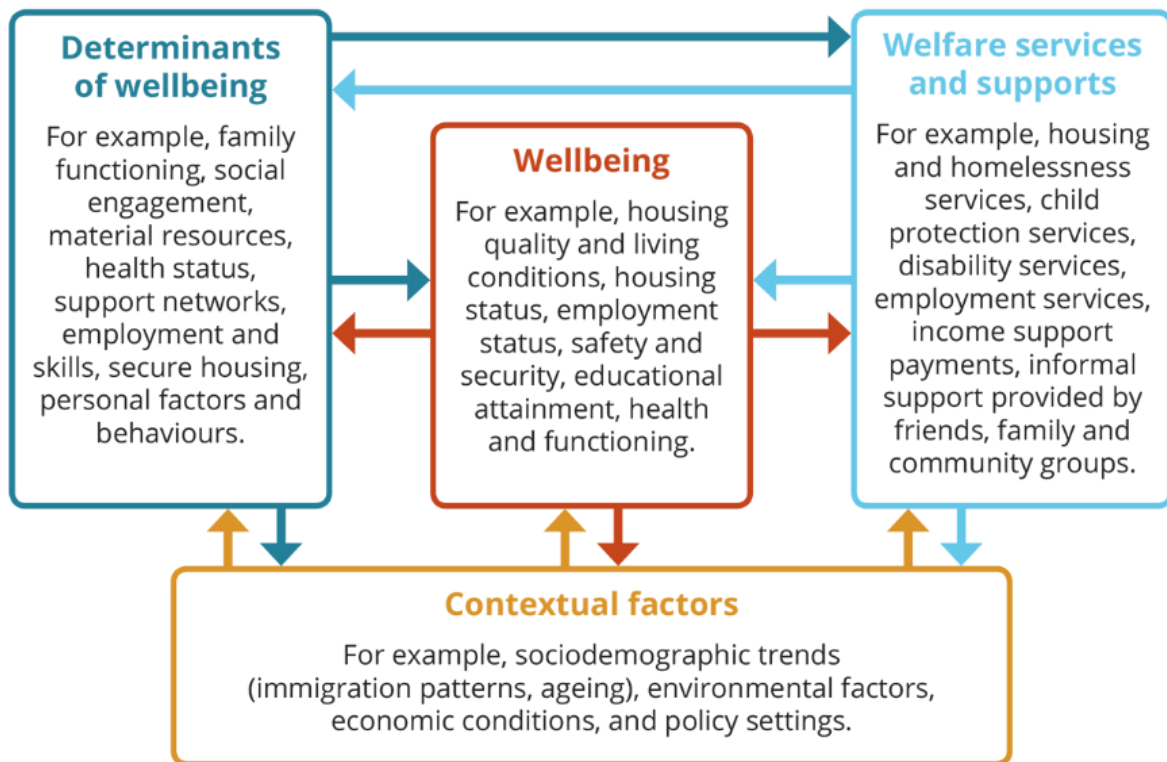


Figure 1 shows that wellbeing, determinants of wellbeing, and services and supports provided to facilitate positive wellbeing are also shaped by contextual factors including social and economic forces, and government policies. The conceptual framework is not a comprehensive framework for measuring wellbeing. Selected frameworks for measuring welfare and wellbeing include AIHW's [Australia's welfare indicators](#) framework and, internationally, the OECD wellbeing framework (OECD 2019) and New Zealand Treasury's *Living Standards Framework* (New Zealand Treasury 2018).

Data about welfare is necessary to understand how different factors interact (Figure 1) and affect a person's life. These data provide a strong evidence base enabling 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. See 'Chapter 1 An overview of Australia's welfare' in [Australia's welfare 2019: data insights](#).

Determinants of wellbeing

Determinants of wellbeing—or risk and protective factors—can positively or negatively affect a person's wellbeing and influence their need for welfare services and support. On an individual level, these factors include a person's circumstances, attitudes, behaviours and how they respond to life events.

On a broader scale, determinants affecting wellbeing include education, employment and skills, secure housing, social support networks and health status. Health, welfare

and wellbeing are strongly interrelated. The World Health Organization defines health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity' (WHO 1948), recognising that a person's health status is linked to their wellbeing. For more information, see [Health and welfare links](#).

Family functioning is an example of a determinant that is both protective and a risk factor. Strong family functioning provides family members with a social support network and contributes directly to wellbeing outcomes. Poor family functioning, and subsequently the loss of this support (physical, emotional, financial and so on), may lead to a family member requiring welfare assistance, such as housing or income support.

Wellbeing measurement

A person's wellbeing is the result of risk, protective and contextual factors and their interaction with services and formal and informal supports.

Wellbeing can be difficult to measure and report on (for example, happiness, confidence, fair treatment). Some frequently measured outcomes include a person's housing status, labour force participation, education, perception of safety in the community, disposable income and civic engagement.

Some outcomes can also be determinants. An example is being employed in a job with the desired number of hours. This is a positive outcome, but it can also be a protective determinant since earning an income helps support a person's needs, like secure housing, and working can provide social interaction and fulfilment. Conversely, people who work more or less hours than they would prefer report lower levels of life satisfaction and mental health than well-matched workers (see AIHW 2017:151–3).

Welfare services and support

A person's wellbeing can be bolstered by the help they receive in time of need. Support can come from sources including informal assistance from family, friends and the community, as well as formal assistance from government and non-government organisations. While the conceptual framework for *Australia's welfare* (Figure 1) acknowledges the role of formal and informal assistance, this section focuses primarily on formal services and support.

When an event triggers change in a person's life, it is often the point at which that person contacts government support services (Qu et al. 2012). 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 all 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 loss of a home in a fire (DSS 2018a). A person's need for assistance can be dynamic. People may access welfare services and support temporarily when circumstances and need arise, or long term.

Welfare assistance in Australia is a complex network of government payments, welfare-related tax concessions and welfare services. However, welfare services and support are not the only policy and program areas that improve wellbeing. Universal services such as education and health, interact with and influence a person's wellbeing, and their need or demand for welfare assistance.

Government payments

Government payments, such as income support payments, family assistance payments and supplementary payments, aim to support people who cannot fully support themselves. They do so by providing sustainable social security payments and assistance (DSS 2018c). Payments 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.

The Age Pension is an example of a major income support payment that helps eligible older people with living costs. It is the main source of income for almost two-thirds of Australians over retirement age. See [Income support payments for older people](#).

Family assistance payments, such as the Family Tax Benefit, help support families with the direct or indirect costs of raising children. It may be provided to eligible parents, grandparent carers or non-parent carers (DHS 2018b). See [Family assistance payments](#).

For more information on government payments, see the income and finance: government payments snapshots at [Australia's welfare snapshots](#).

Tax concessions

Tax exemptions, deductions, offsets and concessional rates 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 is a dependent (ATO 2018). Governments at all levels, and some private organisations, also issue concession and health care cards to eligible Australians for certain discounts (DHS 2018a).

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 2018b). As well as helping people and families directly, services may also indirectly help by, for example, developing community networks and infrastructure.

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.

Who is responsible for welfare services and support?

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.

In many cases, non-government organisations, or NGOs (profit or not-for-profit), 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.

Where do I go for more information?

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

- Housing
- Employment and work
- Social support
- Income and finance: government payments
- Justice and safety

Also visit:

- [Department of Social Services](#)
- [Department of Human Services](#)

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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>

In 2017–18, expenditure on welfare by the Australian Government and state and territory governments was \$160.6 billion (excluding administration expenses such as program support or communication campaign expenses). This comprised:

- \$102.2 billion (64%) in cash payments to specific populations (not including unemployment benefits)
- \$48.1 billion (30%) for welfare services
- \$10.2 billion (6%) in unemployment benefits.

Welfare expenditure covers cash payments and spending on welfare services. This page also provides information on tax concessions and how Australia's welfare spending compares with other countries. It covers the amounts spent on financial assistance and welfare services. It does not cover how well money was spent or outcomes achieved.

About welfare expenditure data

Where possible, welfare expenditure estimates have been developed for consistency with [AIHW's Welfare Expenditure Series of publications](#), in which welfare expenditure was last reported in full for 2005–06. This ensures trend data are consistent.

Expenditure is reported in constant prices (that is, adjusted for inflation) except where noted. Constant price estimates indicate what the equivalent expenditure would have been had 2017–18 prices applied in all years. It removes the inflation effect. The phrase 'real terms' is also used for constant prices. Constant price estimates for expenditure have been derived using deflators produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The Consumer Price Index was used for cash payments and the government final consumption expenditure implicit price deflator for welfare services and tax concessions.

To maintain comparability, unemployment benefits are reported separately from other cash payments and welfare services. For the same reason, Youth Allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY are not included in these estimates.

The most recent welfare expenditure data available for state and territory governments is for 2015–16, as published in the 2017 Indigenous expenditure report (Productivity Commission 2017). State and territory data were estimated for 2016–17 and 2017–18 using available trend data from the Indigenous expenditure report and Government Finance Statistics 2016–17 (ABS 2018). Based on estimated data, in 2017–18, state and territory governments spent \$19.2 billion on welfare services (40% of government expenditure on welfare services and 12% on welfare overall).

Data are sourced from the AIHW welfare expenditure dataset, which is frequently sourced from publicly available data: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Department of Health, Department of the Prime Minister

and Cabinet, Department of Social Services, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Productivity Commission and Australian Treasury. Data for 2016–17 and 2017–18 are extracted from corresponding reports (ABS 2018; Australian Treasury 2017, 2018; Department of Health 2018, 2019; DET 2018, 2019; DHS 2018, 2019; DSS 2018, 2019; DVA 2018, 2019; PM&C 2018, 2019; Productivity Commission 2017).

Trends in welfare expenditure

Figure 1 shows government welfare expenditure by type of expenditure for 2001–02 to 2017–18. The average annual growth rate of welfare expenditure throughout this period was 2.8%. However, the expenditure growth rate was lower in the last three years than this average, mainly caused by a decline in spending on selected cash payments to families and children, as detailed below.

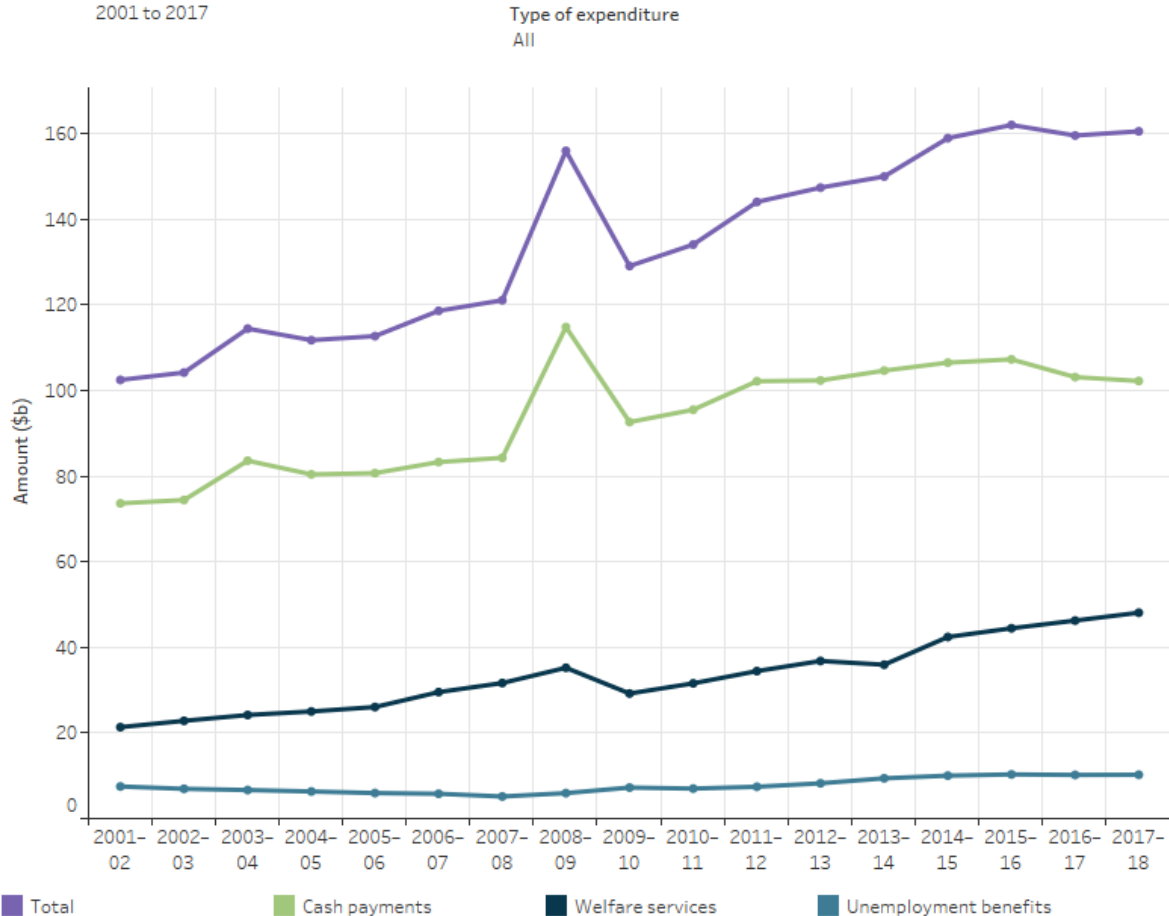
Real expenditure grew slightly faster over the period than the population with per person expenditure rising an average of 1.3% a year (from \$5,287 in 2001–02 to \$6,482 in 2017–18). However, per person expenditure in constant prices decreased in the last two financial years in this period, once again due to a decline in real spending on selected cash payments to families and children.

In 2008–09, the Australian Government implemented initiatives as part of the response to the global financial crisis (GFC), causing a large increase in expenditure.

Expenditure on unemployment benefits is impacted by several factors, including the proportion of people receiving these benefits and changes in payment rates. Spending grew at an average of 2.0% per year throughout the period from 2001–02 to 2017–18. Government spending on unemployment benefits declined by 1.1% in 2016–17 in constant prices (as payments in current prices increased slower than inflation in that year) but picked up slightly by 0.4% in 2017–18.

Figure 1

Government welfare expenditure, by type of expenditure, constant prices, 2001-02 to 2017-18

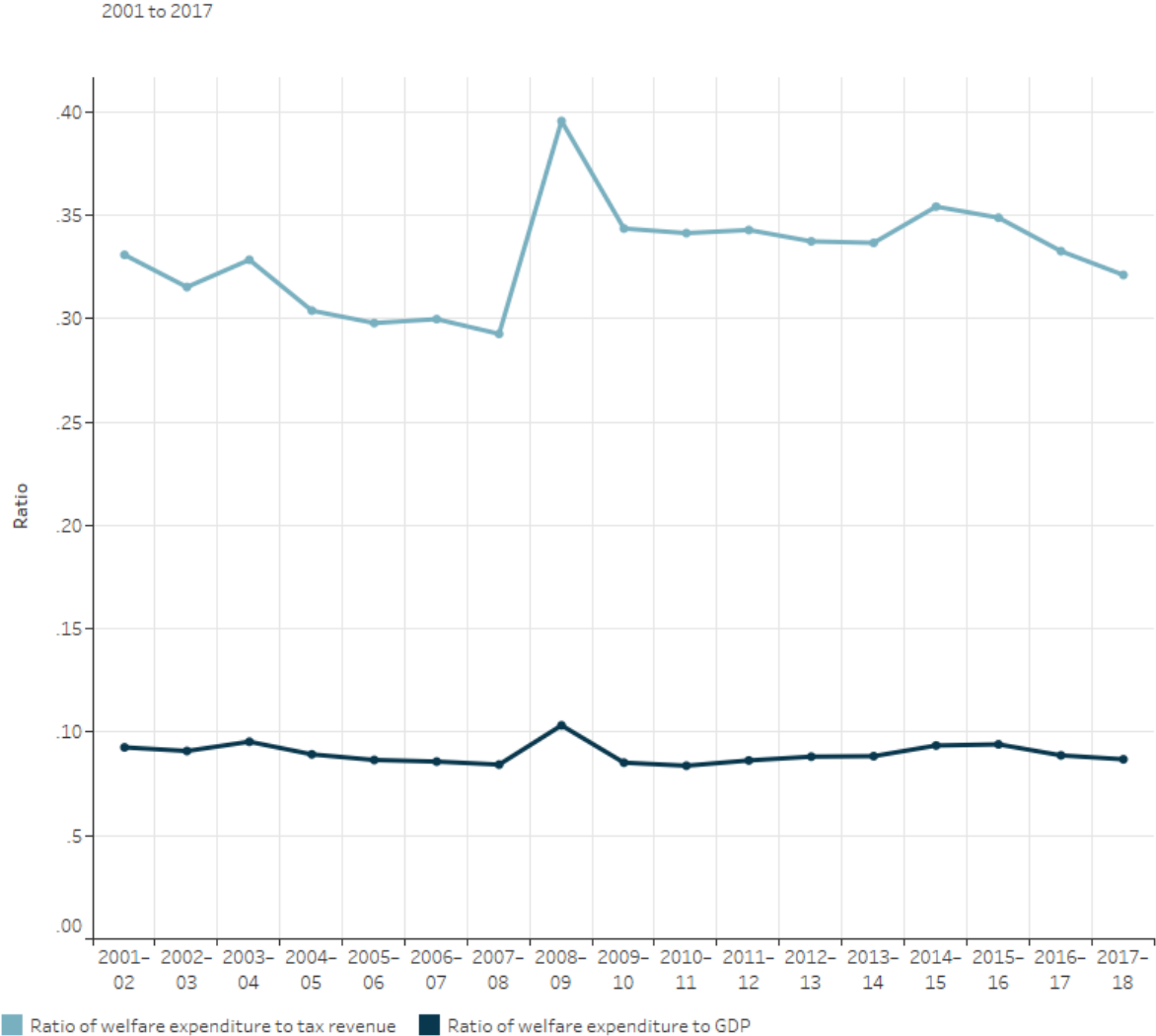


Notes:
 1. Only expenditure on Newstart Allowance and associated Commonwealth Rent Assistance is included in 'Unemployment benefits'. 'Cash payments for specific populations' includes Commonwealth Rent Assistance, as well as one-off payments made as part of the Economic Security Strategy in 2008-09.
 2. Constant price estimates are expressed in terms of 2017-18 prices.
 Source: AIHW welfare expenditure database.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

The ratio of government welfare expenditure to tax revenue has trended downwards in the three most recent financial years (Figure 2). This suggests that the share of tax revenue being directed to welfare spending is declining.

Figure 2

Ratio of government welfare expenditure to tax revenue and GDP, 2001-02 to 2017-18



Source: AIHW welfare expenditure database.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Cash payments

Cash payments to specific populations (excluding unemployment benefits) were estimated at \$102.2 billion in 2017-18. This includes \$47.6 billion spent for older people, \$26.6 billion for people with disability and carers, \$26.4 billion for families and children and \$1.7 billion for other recipients (Figure 3).

Which cash payments are included?

These estimates of cash payments to specific populations include expenditure by the Australian Government such as Age Pension, Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment/Allowance. It does not include expenditure on unemployment benefits.

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

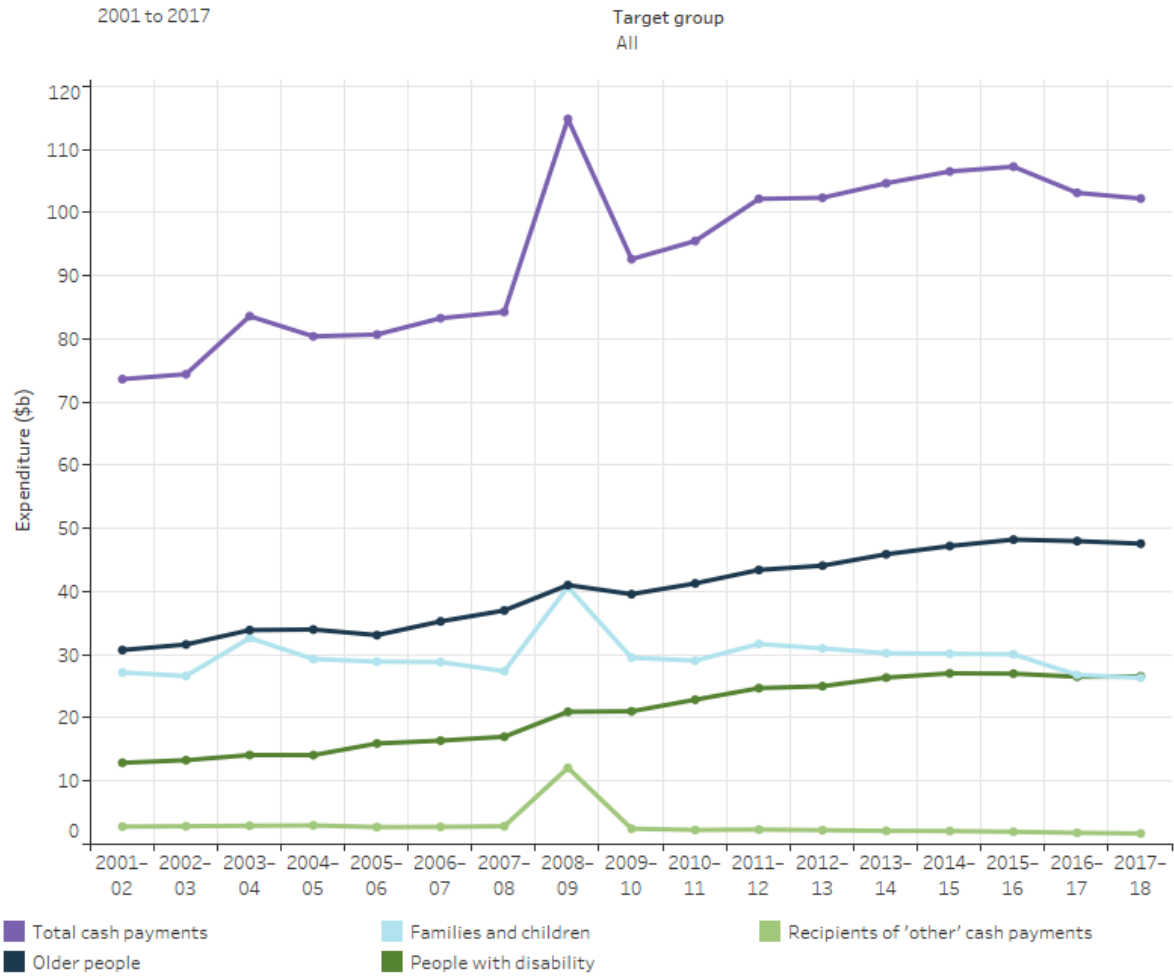
The total amount governments spent on cash payments to specific populations (excluding unemployment benefits) declined by 3.9% in 2016–17 and by 0.9% in 2017–18. The likely main policy changes for this are the phasing out of the Schoolkids bonus program and removing Family Tax Benefit Part B for couple families (other than grandparents and great grandparents) with a youngest child aged 13 and over. Both policy changes became effective from 1 July 2016.

Among the groups of cash payments to specific populations (all measured at constant prices), government spending on payments to:

- people with disability increased at an average rate of 4.6% per year throughout the period
- older people increased at 2.8% per year on average
- families and children decreased by 0.2% per year on average (all measured at constant prices).

Figure 3

Government cash payments expenditure, by target group, constant prices, 2001-02 to 2017-18



Notes:
 1. Data include associated Commonwealth Rent Assistance.
 2. Constant price estimates are expressed in terms of 2017-18 prices.
 Source: AIHW welfare expenditure database.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Welfare services

In 2017–18, the estimated amount governments spend on welfare services was \$48.1 billion, more than double the \$21.4 billion in 2001–02.

Which welfare services are included?

Welfare services encompass services and programs to support and assist people and the community. Examples are family support services, youth programs, childcare services, services for older people, and services for people with disability.

Welfare services expenditure presented here is reported for four target groups as specified in the ABS Government Purpose Classification for welfare service financial transactions. These are welfare services:

- for families and children, for example, youth support services
- for the aged population, for example, home and community care services
- for people with disability, for example, personal assistance
- not elsewhere classified (ABS 2005).

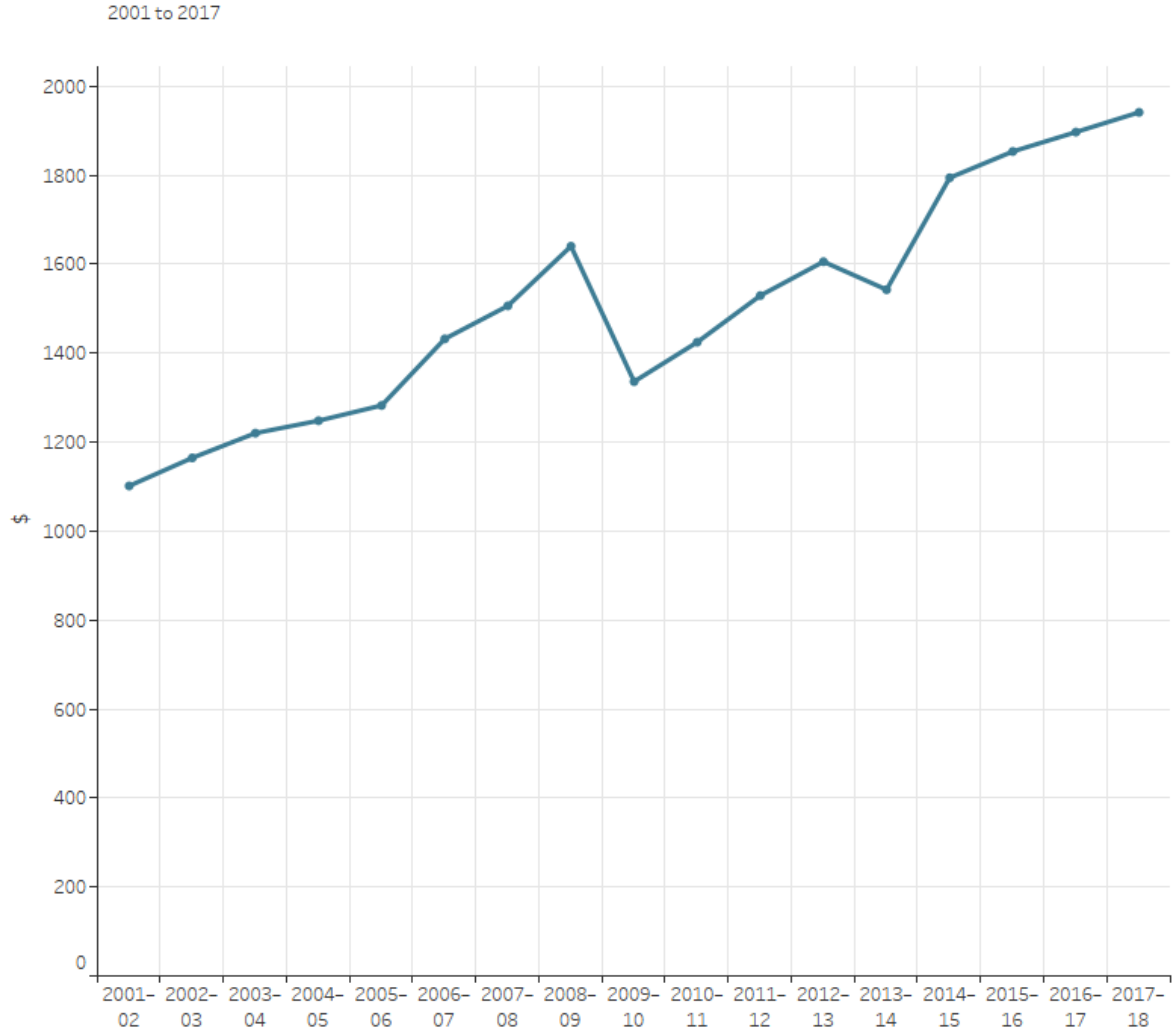
Welfare services estimates include government expenditure only (including spending through non-government community service organisations).

Welfare spending defined according to the four 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 Government Purpose Classification categories of education, health or housing. Employment services are not included. National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) expenditure is not currently included but will be reported in future years.

The average amount governments spent on welfare services per Australian resident in 2017–18 was \$1,942, up from \$1,102 in 2001–02 and \$1,897 in 2016–17 (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Government welfare services expenditure per person, constant prices, 2001–02 to 2017–18



Note: Constant price estimates are expressed in terms of 2017–18 prices.

Source: AIHW welfare expenditure database.

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

Non-government community service organisations

Both the Australian Government 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. 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 NGCSOs' own sources, such as fundraising, is not included, as comparable data on the sources of these funds is not readily available.

Tax concessions

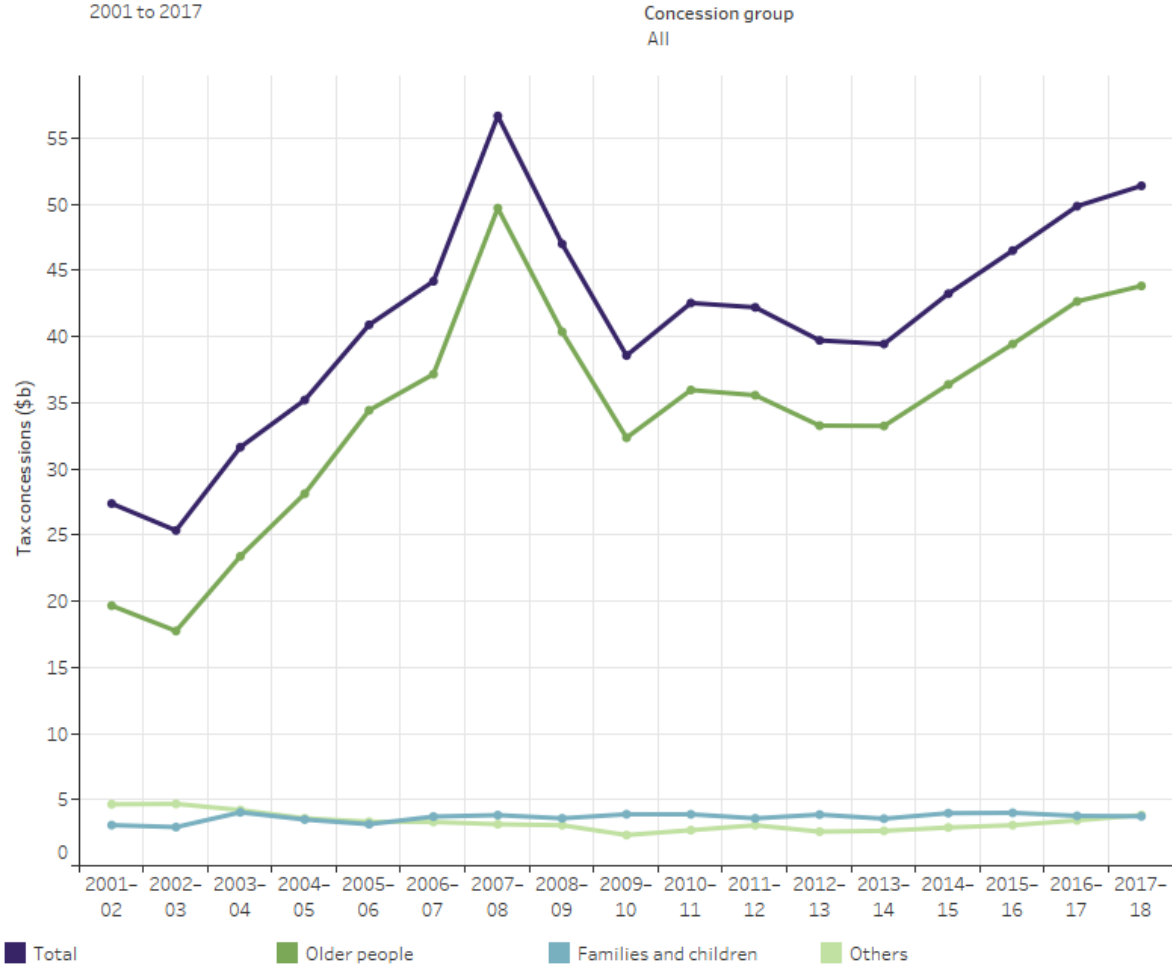
A range of tax exemptions, deductions, offsets, concessional rates and deferral of tax liabilities are provided for welfare purposes. The tax expenditure on concessions by the Australian Government for welfare was estimated to be \$51.4 billion in 2017–18 (excluding state and territory and local government expenditure). This amount is not included in the estimates of total welfare spending as it is generally in the form of foregone potential revenue rather than expenditure (Australian Treasury 2018).

Most of total tax concessions, \$38 billion (75%) was for concessions for superannuation, aimed at assisting people to save for or fund their retirement. Of the remainder, \$3.7 billion (7.0%) was for tax concessions for families and children. This includes taxation exemption for disaster relief and childcare assistance payments.

Australian Government tax concessions for welfare peaked in 2007–08 (Figure 5). The decline in concessions in 2008–09 and 2009–10 reflect the effects of the GFC, in particular slower growth in superannuation returns (Australian Treasury 2012). These tax concessions (mainly for older people) increased rapidly over the last four financial years. The increase could partly be explained by an increase of the superannuation guarantee rate from 9.0% in 2012–13 to 9.25% in 2013–14 then to 9.5% in 2014–15.

Figure 5

Tax concessions by the government for welfare, by type of concession, constant prices, 2001-02 to 2017-18



[Notes]

Source: AIHW welfare expenditure database.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

International comparisons

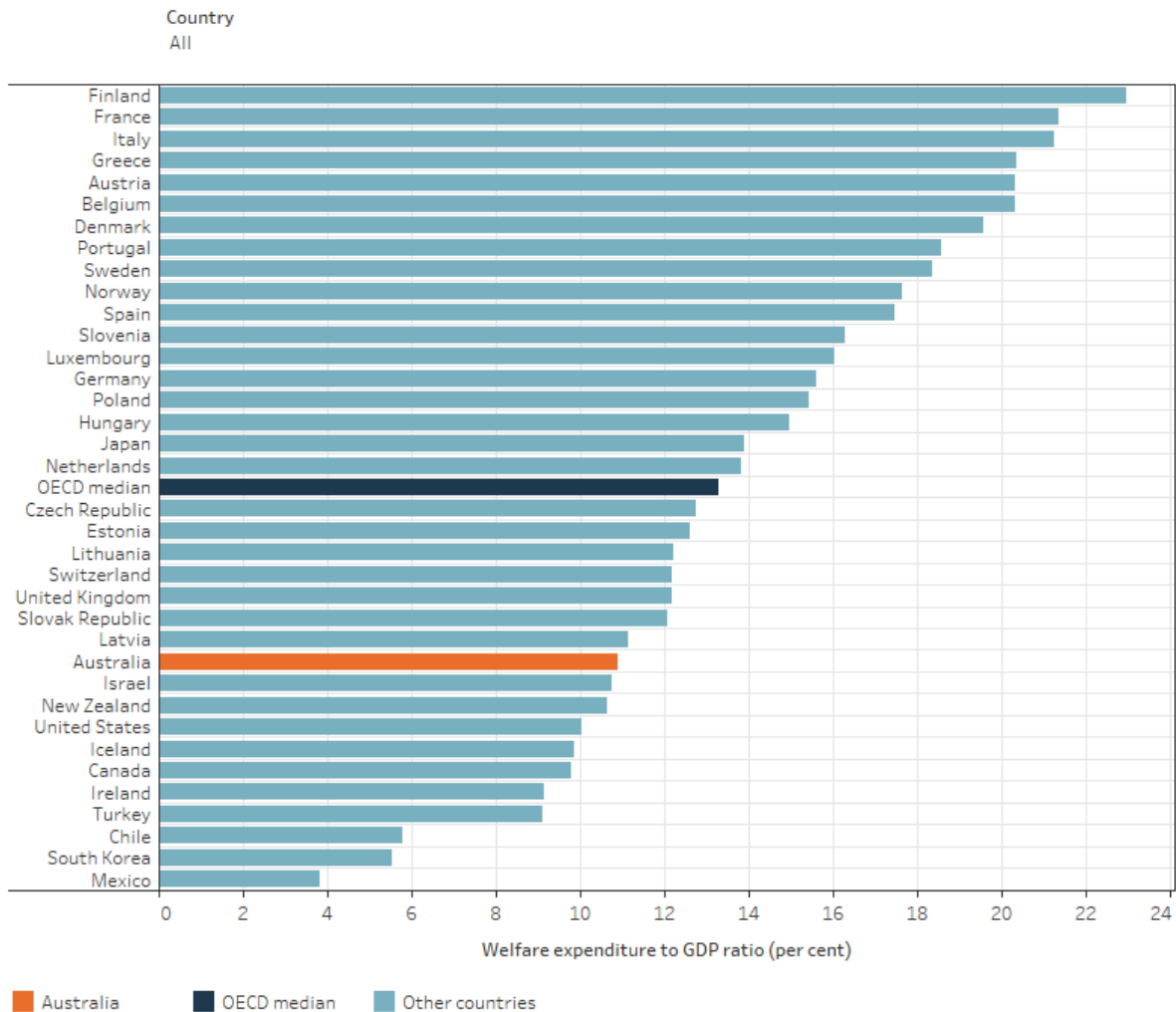
There are recognised challenges in comparing welfare spending across countries. For example, the social support structures in many countries are complex, and not necessarily comparable. Systems generally involve mixtures of:

- 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 society at particular but often differing times. In Australia, for example, unemployment benefits transfer resources through the tax system from the employed to the unemployed. Other schemes redistribute resources over the life course (such as through savings and superannuation-based schemes).
- Targeted versus non-targeted support arrangements—many countries use means-testing to target support, but do so in different ways with different thresholds.

Data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for 2016 (the latest available) show that welfare expenditure in Australia was 10.9% of GDP (using the OECD methods for calculating expenditure which differ from those used for estimates elsewhere on this page). This was lower than the median for OECD countries of 14% (Figure 6) and puts Australia's expenditure in the lowest third of OECD countries (OECD 2018).

Figure 6

Welfare expenditure as a proportion of GDP, OECD countries, 2016



Note: Excludes health, active labour market programs and housing from OECD Social expenditure database.
Source: OECD Social Expenditure database 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Australia’s social security system differs from most other OECD countries in several ways, including:

- benefits are generally more targeted to people in need through means-testing rather than on factors such as past income or tax paid
- the system is largely funded by general government revenue rather than through contributions by employers or insured employees
- benefits are not time limited.

Australia’s demographic and employment structure is different from many other OECD countries. For example, the proportion of the aged population differs and so do unemployment rates. This drives differences in aged and unemployment payment structures. Whiteford (2014) argues that these differences contribute to making the

Australian system relatively efficient with the distribution of benefits to those who need it most due to its more targeted nature.

Where do I go for more information?

More information on welfare expenditure can be found in:

[Welfare expenditure Australia 2005–06](#)

[The health and welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: 2015 \(AIHW\)](#).

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Welfare workforce

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

In 2018, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) labour force survey reported that Australia's welfare workforce numbered more than 550,000 people and made up 4.4% of the working population (Table 1).

The welfare workforce comprises people in paid employment who provide community services to the Australian population. A wide range of community services are provided through public and private organisations. This includes care for the elderly in residential aged care facilities to counselling and social assistance for students in educational settings. The quality of the welfare sector and the assistance people receive is influenced by the size, characteristics and accessibility of the welfare workforce.

Defining the welfare workforce

The Australian welfare workforce comprises paid employees working in a community service occupation within a community service industry (ABS 2006, 2013). Community service industries consist of three main groups:

- residential care services
- child care services and preschool education
- other social assistance services.

This definition excludes some people in community service occupations who do not work in a community service industry. A registered nurse working in a hospital would not be classified as part of the welfare workforce, for example, while a registered nurse working in a residential aged care setting would be.

Table 1: Persons employed in community services occupations and community services industries, 2018

	Community services industries	Other industries	Total
Community services occupations	550,331 ^(a)	535,968	1,086,299
Other occupations	197,680	11,311,515	11,509,195
Total	748,011	11,847,483	12,595,494

Denotes the welfare workforce of Australia.

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

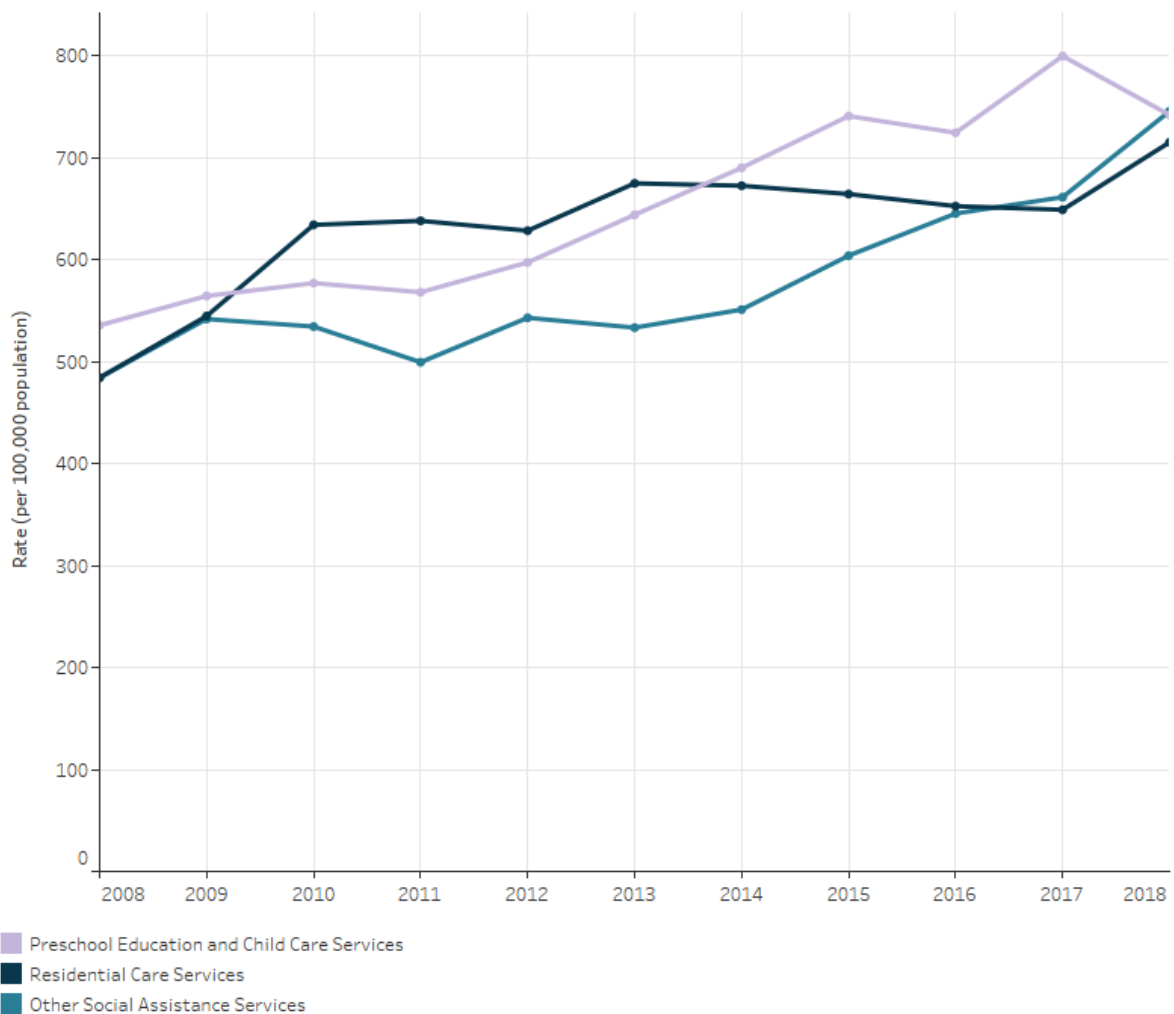
Source: ABS 2019a.

Welfare workforce overview

Between 2008 and 2018 the welfare workforce increased by 72% to more than 550,000 people (ABS 2019a). Over the same period, the total workforce increased by 18%. In 2018, each type of community service industry employed more than 700 people per 100,000 population (Figure 1). Since 2008, each welfare workforce industry employed more people per 100,000 population.

Figure 1

Number of persons employed in the welfare workforce per 100,000 population, by type of community service industry, 2008 to 2018



Source: ABS 2019a.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

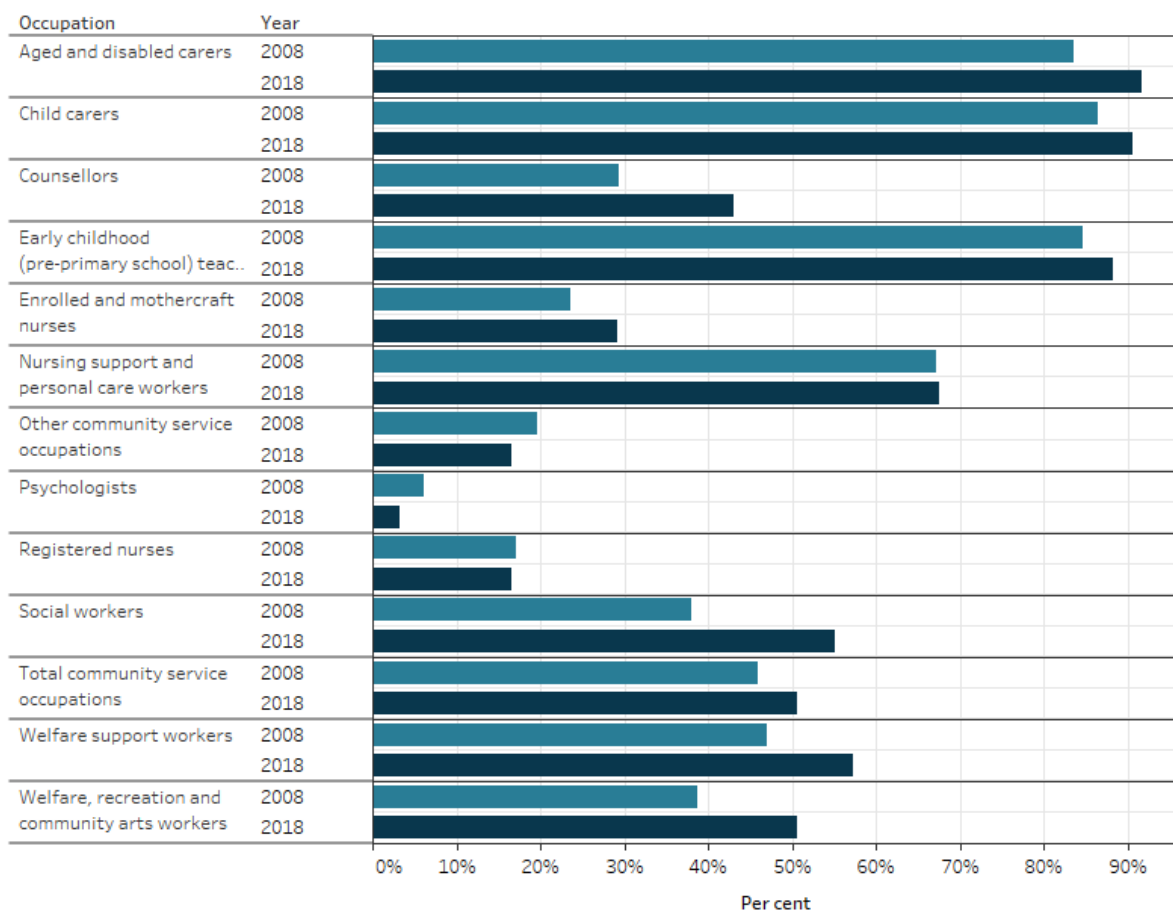
Occupations

More than half (51%) of people employed in community service occupations worked in community service industries, compared with 46% in 2008 (Figure 2). Since 2008, care workers in aged and disability sectors overtook child care workers as the largest occupational group of the welfare workforce with 159,000 employed in 2018 (635 per 100,000 population). For all welfare workforce occupations, the rate of people employed per 100,000 population also increased, except for psychologists.

Figure 2

Proportion of people employed in community service occupations employed within community service industries, by occupation, 2008 and 2018

- Proportion employed within community service industries
- Number employed in the welfare workforce per 100,000 population



Source: ABS 2019a.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Demographics

In 2018, most (87%) of Australia's welfare workforce was female. This has remained relatively unchanged since 2008 (90% in 2008). By comparison, 47% of the total workforce in 2018 was female (ABS 2018).

In 2018, the average age of the welfare workforce was 41.2 years, a slight reduction from 41.7 years in 2008. This is due to an increase in the proportion of the workforce under the age of 35. Child care workers were the occupational group with the youngest average age (35.5 years), nearly 6 years younger than the average age for the total welfare workforce.

In 2018, 2.8% of the welfare workforce identified as being an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australian, compared with 2.4% in 2008. Of all welfare workforce occupations, welfare support workers had the highest proportion identifying as Indigenous at 7.7%.

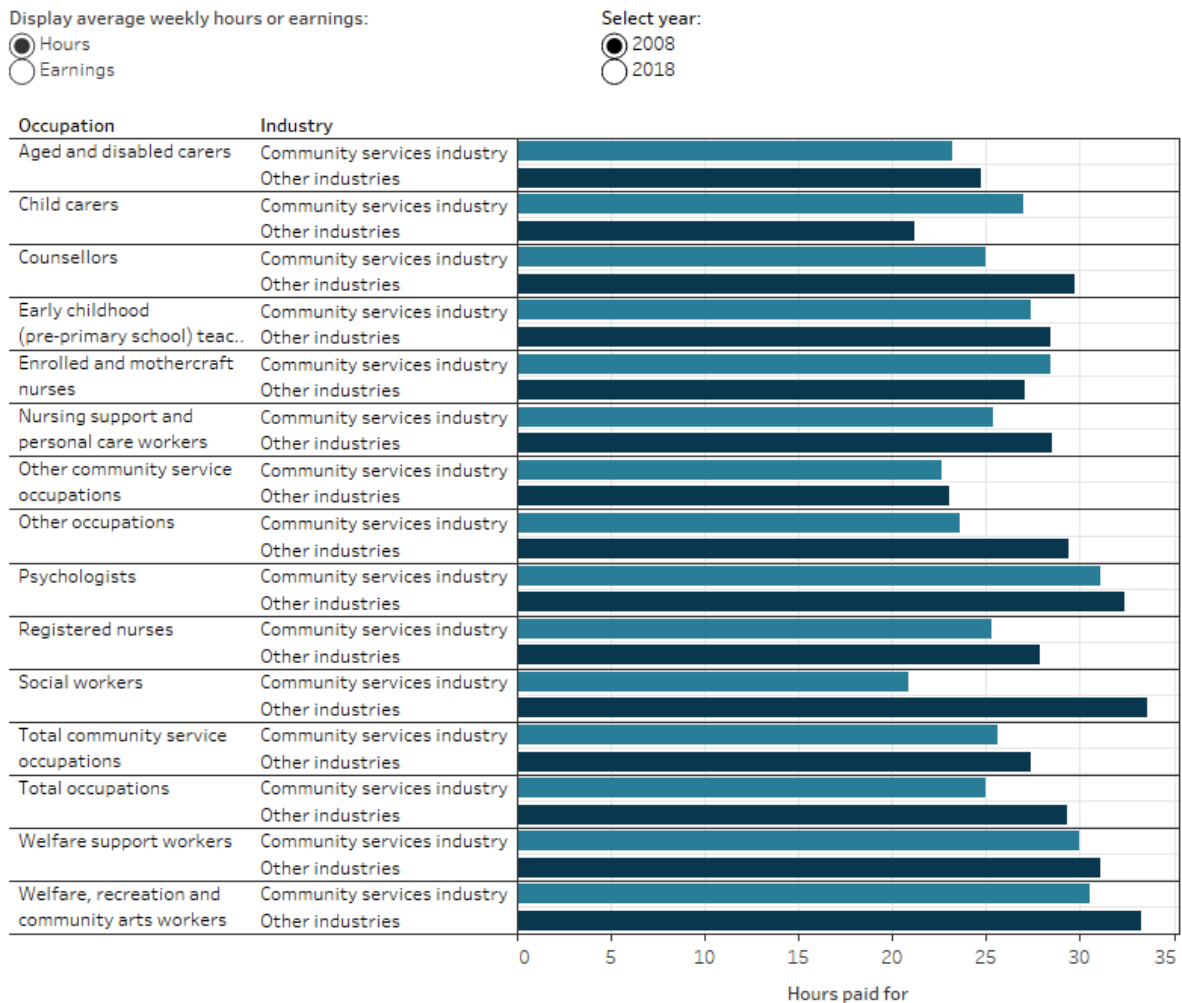
Working hours and pay

In 2018, 351,000 people in the welfare workforce were employed part time (ABS 2019b). Part-time workers made up 64% of the welfare workforce in 2018, similar to 2008 (63%). By comparison, part-time workers made up 32% of the total workforce in 2018 (ABS 2018). Nearly three-quarters (73%) of care workers in the aged and disability sectors worked part time, and were the occupation type most likely to do so. Social workers were least likely to be employed part time (40%).

In May 2018, the average weekly earnings of the welfare workforce was lower than that of the same occupations working in other industries—\$838.90 compared with \$1,106.40 respectively (Figure 3). However, average weekly earnings for the welfare workforce increased by 17% from August 2008 (\$719.60 in real terms). The welfare workforce was also paid less per hour compared with the same occupations working in other industries (\$32.02 per hour compared with \$41.28 per hour). Registered nurses had the highest average earnings per hour of the selected occupations in the welfare workforce in 2018 (\$48.87 per hour) while child care workers had the lowest (\$25.13 per hour).

Figure 3

Average weekly total hours paid for, by selected welfare workforce occupations and industry, August 2008 and May 2018.



Note: Earnings in 2008 are based on a reference period of the second quarter of 2018.

Source: ABS 2018.

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

Aged care workforce

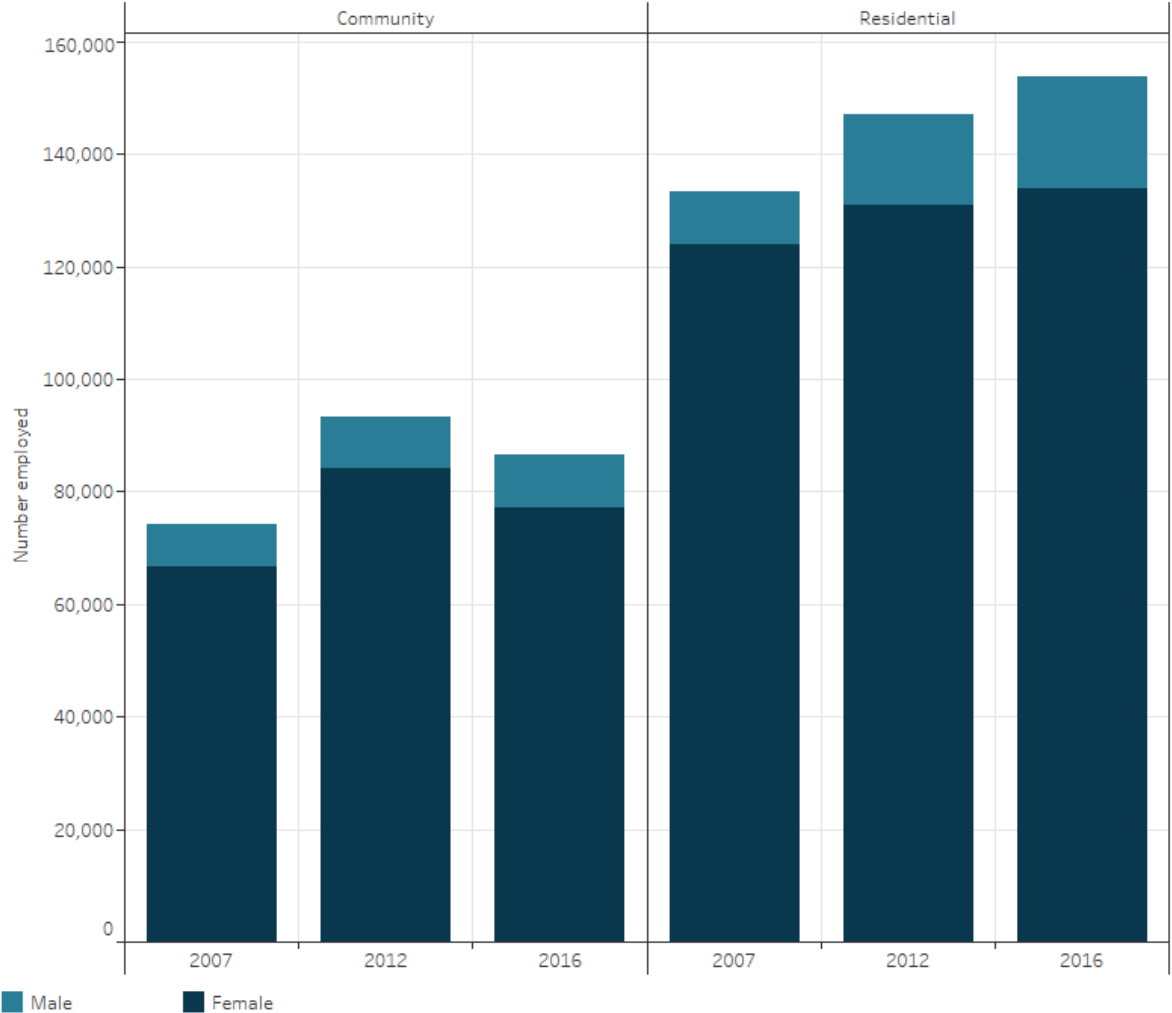
In October 2018, the Australian Government announced the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, highlighting the need for evidence-based policies and strategies for aged care services and its workforce. In the overall aged care workforce, direct carers directly provide or manage care in residential and community aged care settings. They are registered nurses, enrolled nurses, personal care attendants, community care workers and allied health workers.

In 2016, 153,900 direct care employees were in the residential sector (up 5.3% since 2012), and another 86,500 in the community sector (down 7.3% since 2012) (Mavromaras et al. 2017). Both workforces were largely female (87% and 89% respectively) (Figure 4). Most direct care employees for community (72%) and residential

settings (55%) were aged 45 years and over. Almost 9 in 10 (88%) direct care employees had a post-school qualification in 2018, compared with 86% in 2012.

Figure 4

Residential and community direct aged care workers, by sex, 2007, 2012 and 2016.



Source: Mavromaras et al. 2017.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

In 2016, aged care workers were a diverse group with 32% of residential and 23% of community direct carers having been born outside of Australia. About one-quarter (26%) of residential aged care facilities and one-fifth (18%) of community aged care outlets reported employing workers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (non-English speaking countries).

Direct carers are increasingly working part time. In 2016, 78% of residential and 75% of community setting workers were engaged in permanent part-time work. This was up from 71% and 62% respectively in 2012.

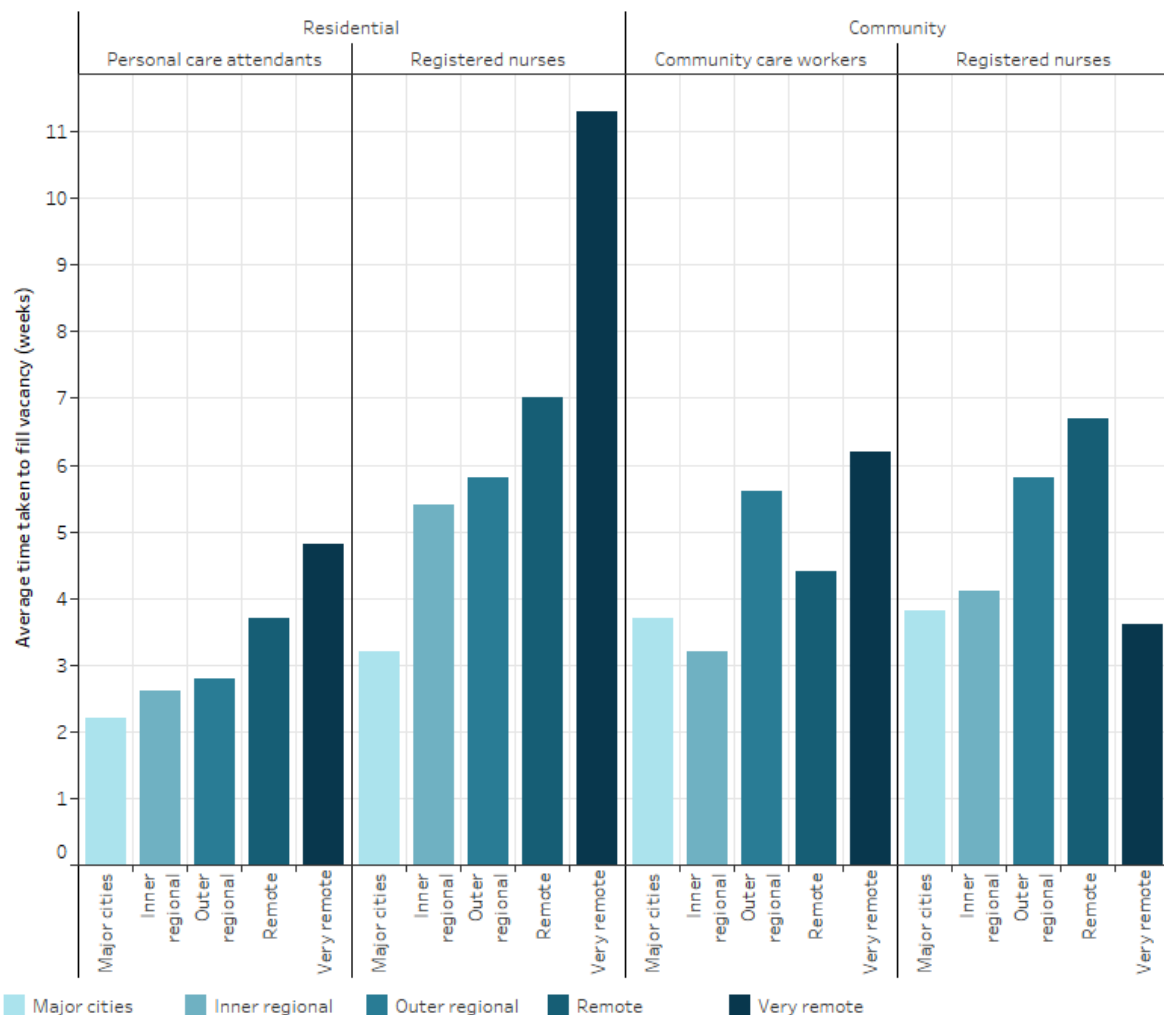
Challenges

In 2016, based on the responses from 2,240 residential aged care facilities and 2,307 community outlets surveyed in Australia:

- 63% of residential facilities and 49% of community aged care outlets with direct care staff reported skills shortages
- 41% of residential facilities reported shortages for registered nurses
- 33% of community outlets reported shortages for community care workers
- the most commonly reported reasons for shortages included lack of suitable applicants and a facility's geographic location
- in response to shortages, aged care services had direct care staff work longer hours
- 24% of residential aged care facilities reported vacancies for registered nurses and personal care attendants
- 25% of community outlets reported vacancies for community care workers
- 21% of residential facilities and 29% of community outlets took more than one month to fill their most recent vacancy
- with residential aged care facilities, the time to fill vacancies for registered nurses and personal care attendants increased with remoteness, a trend not seen among community aged care outlets (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Average time taken to fill vacancies in residential and community aged care facilities, by occupation and remoteness area, 2016



Source: Mavromaras et al. 2017.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Disability workforce

The progressive roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) from mid-2016 has reinforced the need for a workforce capable of supporting the demand for services generated by the NDIS. The growth rate of the workforce supporting the disability sector reflects the progression of the NDIS. The workforce grew 11% per year from September 2015 to September 2017, compared with just 1.6% growth for the entire Australian workforce. This is based on quarterly samples of more than 110 direct support organisations collected between September 2015 and December 2018, covering approximately 45,000 workers nationally (Lui & Alcorso 2018). This growth is due largely to recruitment of casual employees with a growth rate of 26% annually over the same period, compared with 1.3% for permanent employees.

Disability support workers became increasingly engaged as permanent part-time employees. Of permanent workers in September 2015, 65% worked part time. This increased to 83% in September 2017.

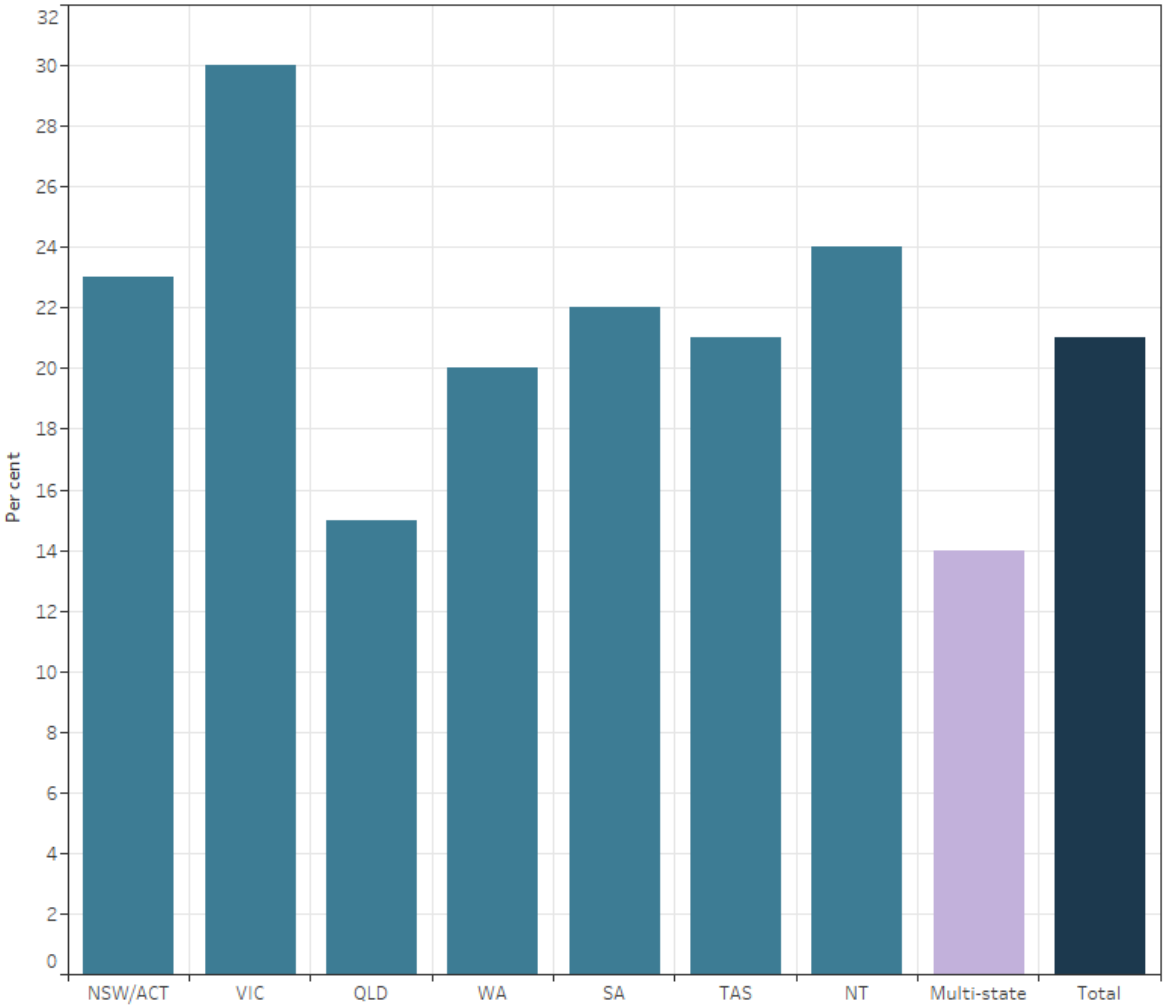
Similar to the aged care and welfare workforces in general, the disability support workforce is largely female, with a female-to-male ratio of 2.3 to 1 (March 2018). Different to the aged care workforce, the disability workforce was relatively younger (only 34% of workers were over 45 years old).

Challenges

- From September 2015 to March 2018, the average turnover rate for permanent disability workers was 4.6% per quarter and 8.5% for casual disability workers. Since most of the disability workforce is casually employed, the higher turnover rate in these non-permanent employees may have implications on continuity and, thus, quality of care.
- In December 2017, 20% of disability service providers indicated that no new recruits had disability-related qualifications.
- In March 2018, the proportion of disability service providers advertising for support worker positions increased to 79% from 76% in March 2017. Only 30% of these advertised positions were being left unfilled compared with 35% in March 2017. The most commonly reported reasons for unfilled vacancies included lack of suitable or qualified candidates.

Figure 6

Proportion of new recruits that were formally qualified, by state and territory of service provider, December 2017.



Source: Lui & Alcorso 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on the Australian workforce, see:

- [ABS Labour Force Survey](#)
- [ABS Employee Earnings and Hours.](#)

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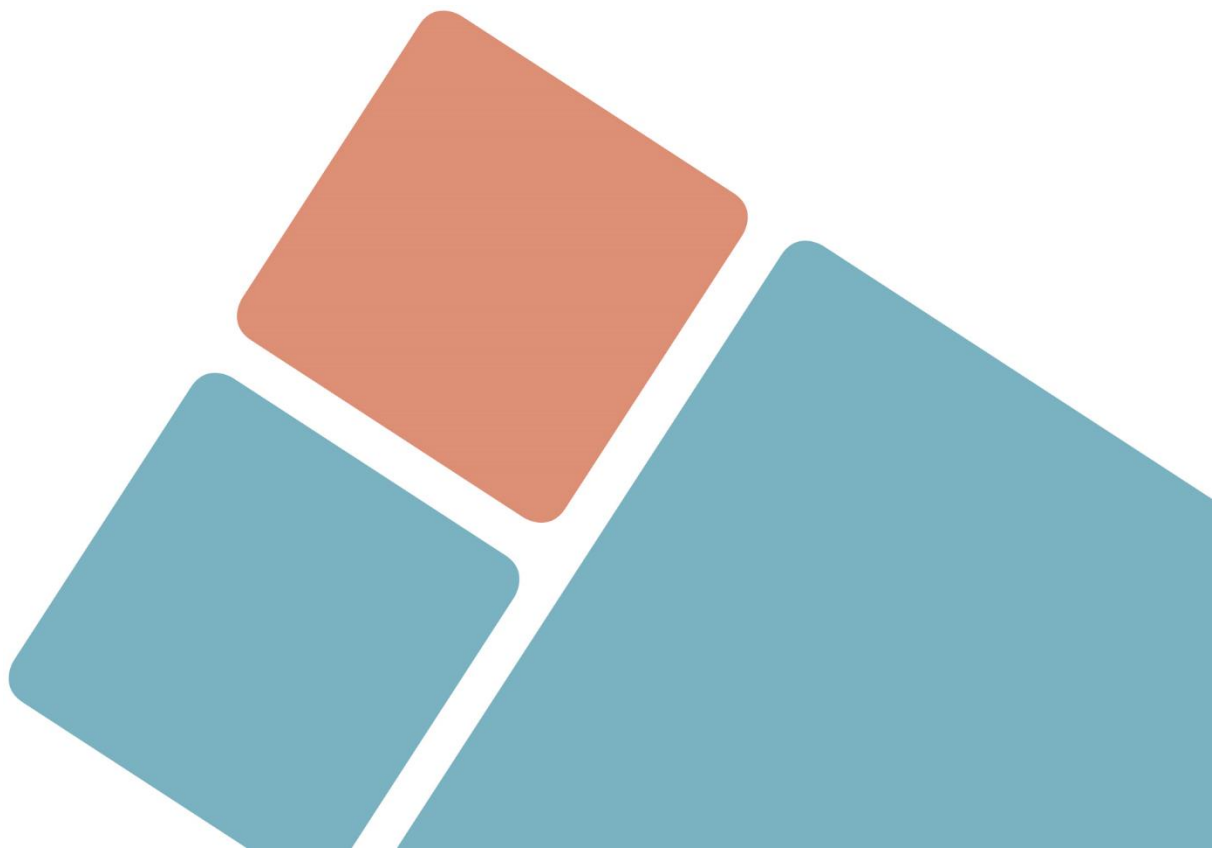
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Housing

Access to safe, affordable and suitable housing is essential to the wellbeing of people and families and can help enhance equal opportunity and protect from homelessness risk. Those unable to access appropriate housing with their own social and economic resources may need the support of housing assistance, while others experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness may be supported by government funded services.



Home ownership and housing tenure

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Secure and affordable housing is fundamental to the wellbeing of Australians. Home ownership continues to be a widely held aspiration in Australia, providing owners with security of housing tenure and long-term social and economic benefits (AIHW 2018). In recent times, there has been much public debate about the rate of home ownership and housing affordability. See [Housing affordability](#) and [Housing assistance](#).

In 2016, there were nearly 8.3 million households in Australia, according to Census of Population and Housing data.

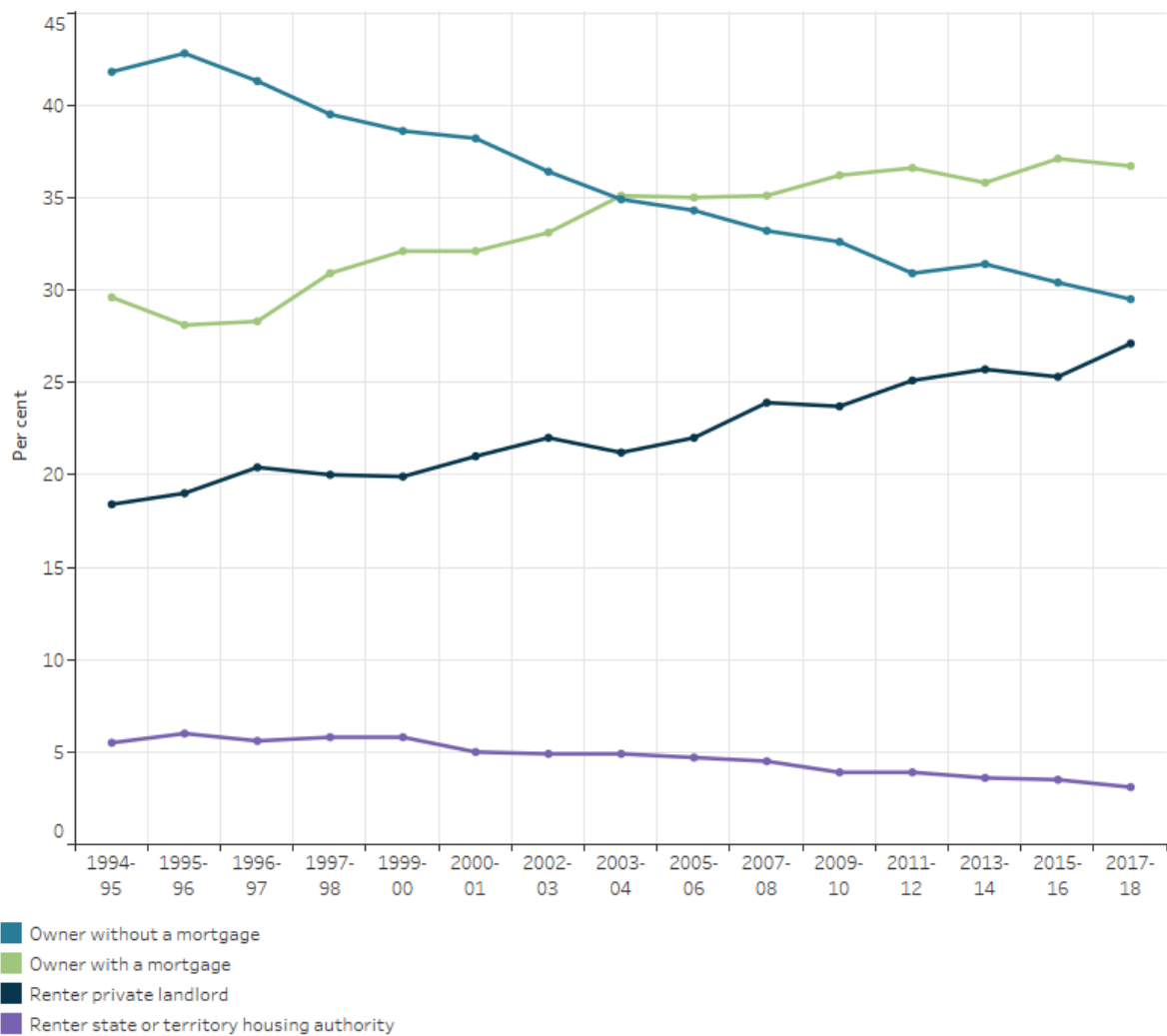
Where household tenure was known:

- 67% (5.4 million households) were home owners:
 - 32% (2.6 million households) without a mortgage
 - 35% (2.9 million households) with a mortgage
- 32% (2.6 million households) were renters; where landlord type was known:
 - 26% (2.1 million households) were renting from private landlords
 - 3.7% (300,000 households) from state or territory housing authorities
 - 1.3% (105,500 households) from other landlords
- 1.0% (79,000 households) were other tenure, including households which are not an owner with or without a mortgage, or a renter (ABS 2017c).

While Census data provides the most comprehensive view of housing tenure among Australian households, it is limited to once every 5 years. Other survey data can be used to monitor changes in housing circumstances during non-Census periods. Survey of Income and Housing data shows that in the past 20 years to 2017–18, 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).

Figure 1

Proportion of households by housing tenure type, 1994–95 to 2017–18



Note: Values have been interpolated for non-survey years.
 Source: ABS 2019a.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Trends in home ownership

Home ownership data from the 2016 Census show a home ownership rate of 67%, down slightly from 68% in 2011. While the home ownership rate remained around 67–70% from the mid-1960s, 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. Specifically, the number of private dwellings by age of household reference person and tenure type can be used to calculate the proportion of homeowners of 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 2016, according to Census data. For Australians aged 25–29, the decrease was similar—50% in 1971, decreasing to 37% in 2016. Home ownership rates

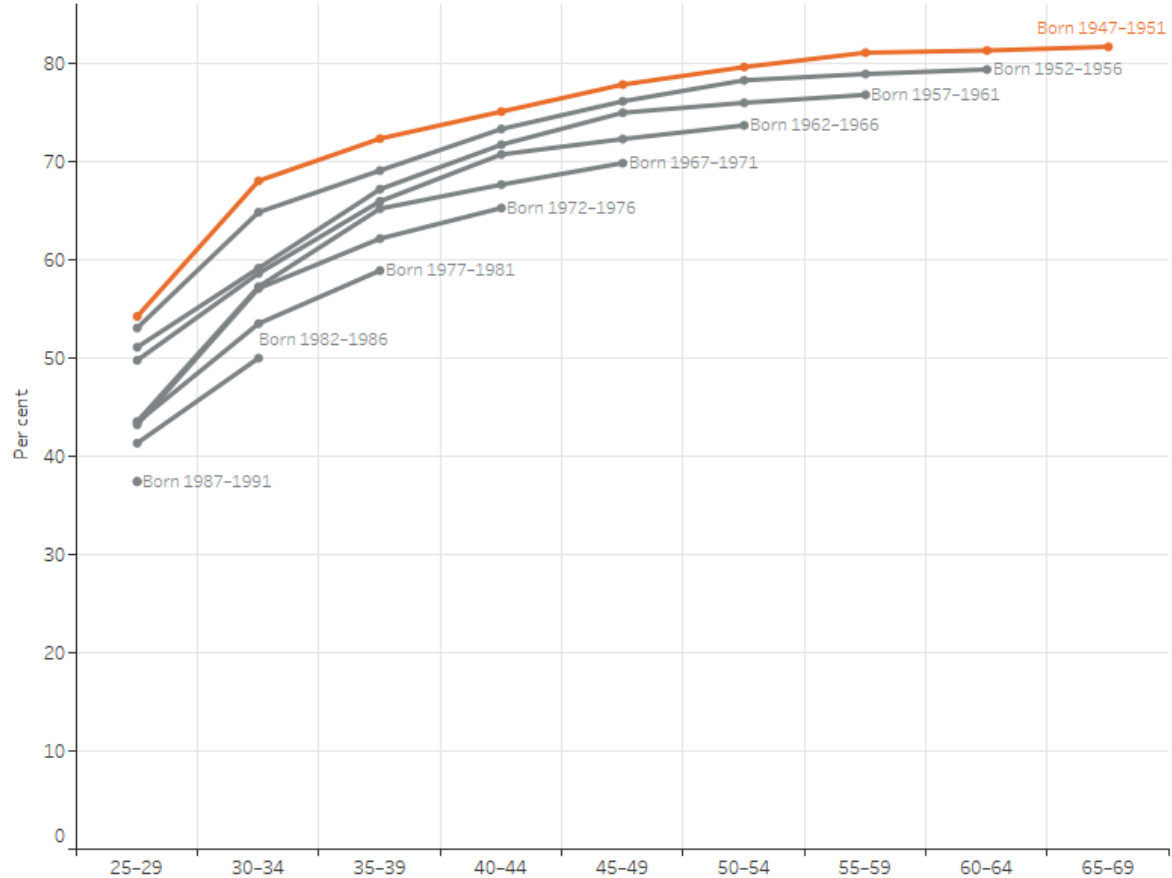
have also decreased among people nearing retirement. Since 1996, home ownership rates have gradually declined; rates for the 50–54 age group have seen a 6.6 percentage point fall over these 20 years (80% to 74%) (AIHW 2019).

To further illustrate these changes in home ownership rates, Census data can be presented by birth cohorts (Figure 2). The rate has fallen for each successive birth cohort since 1947–1951. Home ownership rates of Australians born during 1947–1951 increased from 54% in 1976 (when they were aged 25–29) to 82% 40 years later in 2016 (when they were aged 65–69). By contrast, the home ownership rate of those born during 1987–1991 was 37% in 2016 (when they were aged 25–29), 17 percentage points lower than the 1947–1951 cohort at the same age.

Figure 2

Home ownership rate by birth cohort and age group

Select birth cohort to highlight
1947–1951



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

Source: ABS 2017b.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Financial support for home buyers

Governments provide financial support to assist people to buy a house. The three main types of support available to home buyers are home purchase assistance, First Home Owner Grant scheme, and First Home Super Saver Scheme.

Home purchase assistance includes a range of 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 2018).

First Home Owner Grant scheme, introduced nationally 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 (AIHW 2018).

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, and \$30,000 in total under the scheme. They receive the tax benefit of saving through their superannuation contribution arrangements (ATO 2019; Australian Treasury 2017).

In 2017–18, around 42,400 instances of home purchase assistance were provided across Australia. Of these:

- almost half (49%) of the main applicants receiving assistance were aged 25–44
- one-quarter (26%) of recipients earned a gross income of less than \$700 per week (\$36,400 per annum)
- more than two-thirds (71%, or 30,200) of households receiving home purchase assistance were in *Major cities*, 14% (5,900) in *Outer regional* areas and 12% (5,000) in *Inner regional* areas. Only a small proportion were in *Remote* (3% or 1,000) or *Very remote* (less than 1% or 300) areas (AIHW 2019).

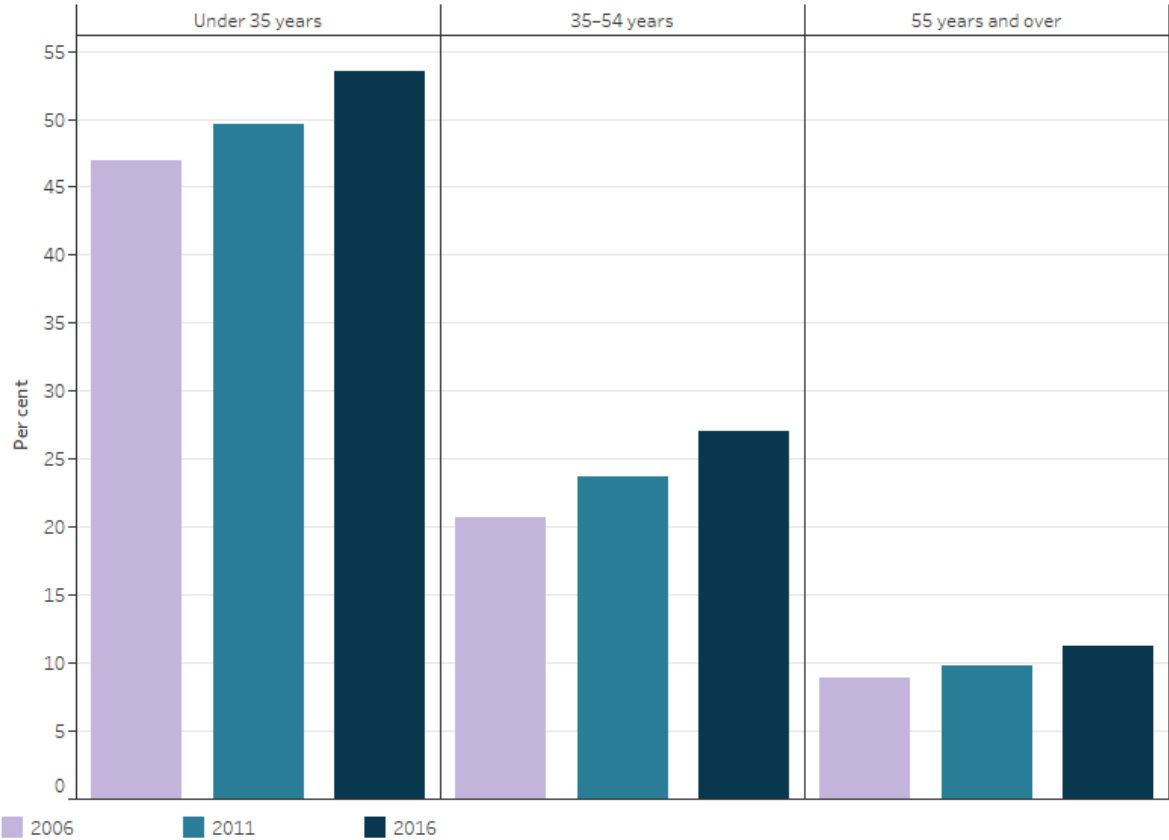
The number of dwellings purchased by first time home buyers—those likely to access First Home Owner Grant payments—decreased, from around 135,800 dwellings in 2009–10 to 98,200 in 2018–19. This decrease is further reflected in a fall in the proportion of all dwellings financed by first home buyers—29% in January 2009 to 18% in January 2019 (ABS 2019b).

Trends in the private rental market

The proportion of households renting from private landlords has had a disproportionate impact on younger households over recent years, with a sharper increase in the proportion of young Australians renting than older Australians (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Proportion of households in the private rental market, by age of household reference person, 2006, 2011 and 2016



Notes:
 1. Households in the private rental market include those paying rent or living rent-free through a real estate agent or a person not living in the same dwelling – related or unrelated.
 2. Analysis excludes not stated landlord or tenure type.
 Source: ABS 2017c.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

What factors are influencing these changes over time?

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 need of households (ABS 2017d; COAG 2018; Yates 2015).

Family and household composition

Family composition and marital status are related to housing tenure (Baxter & McDonald 2005; Stone et al. 2013). Over recent decades, the average household size has

decreased and the number of single-people and single-parent households has increased, tending to have lower home ownership rates than other household types (Yates 2015). In 2016, for example, 16% of single-parent households with dependent children rented privately, an increase from 6.3% in 1981.

Population growth

Population increases in Australia are driving demand for housing, other services and infrastructure (COAG 2018). More than two-thirds (67%) of the population increase in 2016–17 occurred in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney (ABS 2018). 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 20 years, from 76% of all households in 1996 to 73% in 2016, offset by increases in semi-detached and townhouse households. In 2016, around 13% of households lived in semi-detached row or terrace and townhouses, up from 9% in 1996. A total of 13% lived in flats or apartments in both 1996 and 2016 (ABS 2017a).

Where do I go for more information?

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

- [Housing Assistance in Australia 2019](#)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [Australian Social Trends 2014](#)
- ABS [Housing Occupancy and Costs, 2015–16](#)
- ABS [Household debt and over-indebtedness in Australia](#)
- ABS [Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia—Stories from the Census](#)

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Homelessness and homelessness services

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People experiencing homelessness, and those at risk of homelessness (see [glossary](#)), are among Australia's most socially and economically disadvantaged. Governments across Australia fund services to support people who are homeless, or at risk. These are delivered mainly 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 generic services to people facing housing crises (AIHW 2018).

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 (Fitzpatrick & Christian 2006; 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 2018).

How many people are experiencing homelessness?

On Census night in 2016, more than 116,000 people were estimated to be homeless in Australia—58% were male, 21% were aged 25–34 and 20% identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (ABS 2018). Around 51,000 (44%) were living in severely crowded dwellings. Over 21,000 (18%) were living in supported accommodation for the homeless and 8,200 (7%) were rough sleepers (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of homeless persons, by homelessness type, Census night 2016

Type of homelessness	Number
Persons living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out (rough sleepers)	8,200
Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless	21,235
Persons staying temporarily with other households	17,725
Persons living in boarding houses	17,503
Persons in other temporary lodgings	678
Persons living in severely crowded dwellings	51,088
All homeless persons	116,427

Source: ABS 2018.

Trends

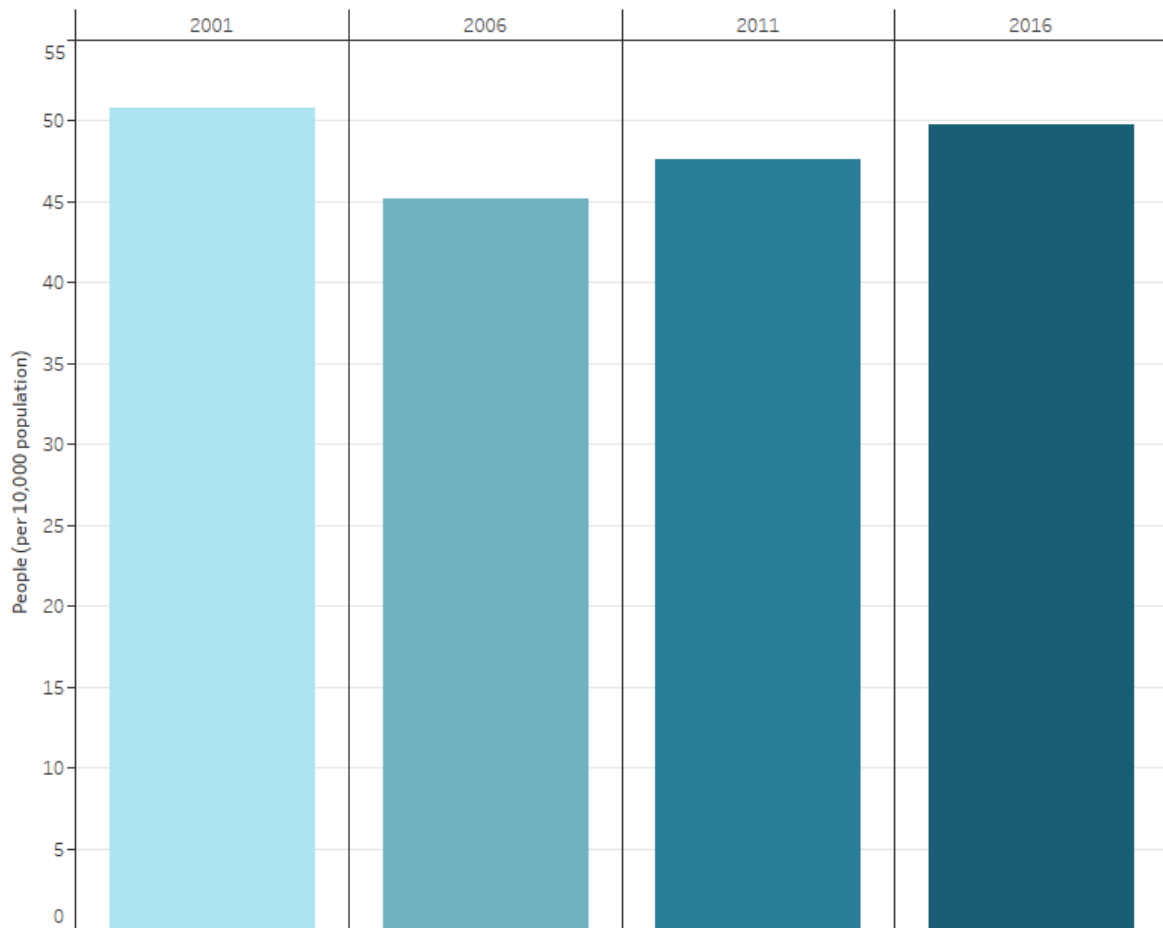
Census data shows the rate of homelessness has fluctuated, from 51 per 10,000 population in 2001 to a low of 45 in 2006. The rate increased to 50 in 2016 (Figure 1, ABS 2018).

- Between 2011 and 2016, most of the increase in homelessness rate was due to persons living in severely crowded dwellings. This increased from 41,370 people to 51,088 over the period.
- From 2011 to 2016, the number of homeless people living in boarding houses increased by 17%, from around 14,900 to 17,500 persons.
- In 2016, the Northern Territory had the highest rate of homeless people (about 600 persons per 10,000 population) and Tasmania the lowest (32 per 10,000).

Figure 1

Rate of homelessness, people per 10,000 population, by homelessness group, 2001 to 2016

Homelessness group
All homeless persons



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

Source: ABS 2018.

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

Homelessness services

Across Australia, SHS agencies provide services aimed at prevention and early intervention, crisis and post crisis assistance to support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The agencies receive government funding to deliver accommodation-related and personal services. They vary in size and in the types of assistance provided.

As noted, SHS agencies provide assistance to both people experiencing homelessness and people at risk of homelessness. Each year (since the start of the collection in 2011–12), SHS have assisted a greater proportion of clients at risk of homelessness than those experiencing homelessness.

How many people received assistance?

SHS agencies supported more than 1 million Australians between 2011–12 and 2017–18 (AIHW 2018). In 2017–18, 288,800 clients were assisted, equating to a rate of 117 clients per 10,000 population, or 1.2% of the Australian population. Most clients (143,000) were at risk of homelessness when first presenting to SHS in 2017–18. Another 109,000 clients were experiencing homelessness. (Housing status at the start of support was unknown for around 36,000 SHS clients.)

Characteristics of SHS clients

Of the 288,800 clients SHS agencies assisted in 2017–18:

- 6 in 10 were female (61% or almost 176,000)
- 1 in 6 were children under the age of 10 (17% or nearly 48,000)
- 1 in 10 were children and youth aged 10–17 (12% or 35,000)
- the largest age group of adult clients were aged 25–34 (19%)
- about 14,000 were women aged 55 or older (4.8% of total clients) and 10,000 were men aged 55 or older (3.6% of total clients)
- 1 in 3 (35%) clients were living in single-parent families when they sought support (AIHW 2018).

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, Indigenous Australians, people leaving health or social care arrangements, and Australians aged 55 or older.

In 2017–18, about 121,100 SHS clients experienced family and domestic violence at some point during the reporting period (Table 2). Some SHS client groups were more likely to be homeless than other groups at the beginning of support. This included young people aged 15–24 presenting alone (52% experiencing homelessness), children on care and protection orders (51%) and Indigenous Australians (47%).

Table 2: Characteristics of cohorts at a particular risk of homelessness, 2017–18

Client group	Number of clients	Female (%)	Homeless at the beginning of support (%)	Median length of support (days) ^(a)	Receiving accommodation (%)
Family and domestic violence	121,000	77.7	39	43	34.6
Young people (15–24 years)	43,200	63.7	52	49	31.2
Children (0–17 years) on care and protection orders	8,700	51.1	51	97	50.6
Indigenous Australians	65,200	42.4 ^(a)	47	48	41.3
People leaving care^(b)	6,900	45.0	26	63	45.1
Older people (55 years or older)	24,000	57.3	33	28	16.0

(a) Proportion based on clients aged 18 years or over.

Clients are identified as leaving care if, in their first support period during 2017–18, their dwelling type was, for example, hospital or aged care facility, or their reason for seeking assistance was, for example, transition from care arrangements.

Source: AIHW 2018.

Trends

The number of clients assisted by SHS agencies each year has increased from around 254,000 people in 2013–14 to more than 288,000 in 2017–18 (Table 3). Over the same period, the:

- rate of all SHS clients increased from 109.7 to 117.4 clients per 10,000 population
- number of support days increased by 4.1 million days, from 20.6 to 24.7 million.

Table 3: SHS clients, by number, rate and housing situation at the beginning of support, 2013–14 to 2017–18

	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18
Number of clients	254,001	255,657	279,196	288,273	288,795
Rate (per 10,000 population)	109.7	108.8	117.1	119.1	117.4
Housing situation at the beginning of the first support period (proportion all clients)					
Homeless	42	43	44	44	43
At risk of homelessness	58	57	56	56	57
Length of support (median number of days)	33	33	35	37	39
Proportion receiving accommodation	34	33	31	30	29
Median number of nights accommodated	35	34	33	33	32

Notes:

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
2. Data for 2013–14 to 2016–17 have been adjusted for non-response; 2017–18 data are not weighted. For more information, refer to the Technical Notes in AIHW 2018.

Source: AIHW 2018.

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 2017–18](#)
- ABS [Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016](#)
- ABS [Information Paper—A Statistical Definition of Homelessness, 2012](#)

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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 (OECD 2018). Affordability is important for Australians wanting to buy a home, and for those renting. Many factors impact the supply, demand and cost of housing across the country, including Australia's growing and ageing population and government policies (AIHW 2019).

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

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 Economics References Committee 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 2017).

Housing costs are defined as the sum of rent payments, rate payments (water and general), and housing-related mortgage payments (ABS 2019).

Housing stress is typically described as lower-income households that spend more than 30% of gross income on housing costs (ABS 2019).

How much do we spend on housing?

In 2017–18, 11.5% of households spent 30% to 50% of gross income on housing costs with another 5.5% spending 50% or more. These proportions have increased from 9.2% and 4.6% respectively since 1994–95 (Table 1).

Table 1: Housing costs as a proportion of household income, 1994–95, 2005–06 and 2017–18

Per cent of income spent on housing costs	1994–95 %	2005–06 %	2017–18 %
50 or more (more likely to be in financial stress)	4.6	5.1	5.5
30–50	9.2	11.4	11.5
25–30	5.8	7.0	7.6
25 or less (less likely to be in financial stress)	80.3	76.5	75.3

Notes

1. Excludes households with nil or negative income.
2. Estimates presented from 2007–08 onwards are not directly comparable with estimates for previous cycles due to the treatment of incomes. See ABS 2019 for more details.

Source: ABS 2019.

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 2018).

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 2019).

Housing stress among low-income households—the 30/40 rule

The 30/40 housing stress rule focuses on low-income households. These are defined as lower-income households (lowest 40% of income; see [glossary](#)) that spend more than 30% of gross household income on housing costs. They are considered to be in financial housing stress (Yates 2007).

Over 1.0 million low-income households were in financial housing stress in 2017–18, based on the 30/40 rule (ABS 2019). Households with low income in the private rental market were more likely to be in housing stress, spending on average 32% of income on housing costs, compared with home owners with a mortgage (29%) or home owners without a mortgage (6.0%) (Table 2). Of household compositions, lone person households on average spent the highest proportion of income on housing costs.

Table 2: Proportion of household income spent on housing costs (lower-income households only), by household composition and housing tenure type, 2017–18

Household composition	Housing costs as a proportion of gross household income		
	Owner without a mortgage	Owner with a mortgage	Private renter
Family households			
Couple family with dependent children	4.1	28.5	26.9
One parent family with dependent children	4.5	29.7*	33.8*
Couple only family	5.6	31.8	33.9
Couple family with non-dependent children	4.4	23.9	25.7
Multiple family households	3.5	19.2	20.7*
Non-family households			
Group households	6.7*	33.5*	38.1*
Lone person households	8.4	38.6	44.4
All households	6.0	28.6	31.9

*Estimate has a high margin of error and should be used with caution.

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.

Source: ABS 2019.

Geographic variation

Housing costs and incomes vary 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

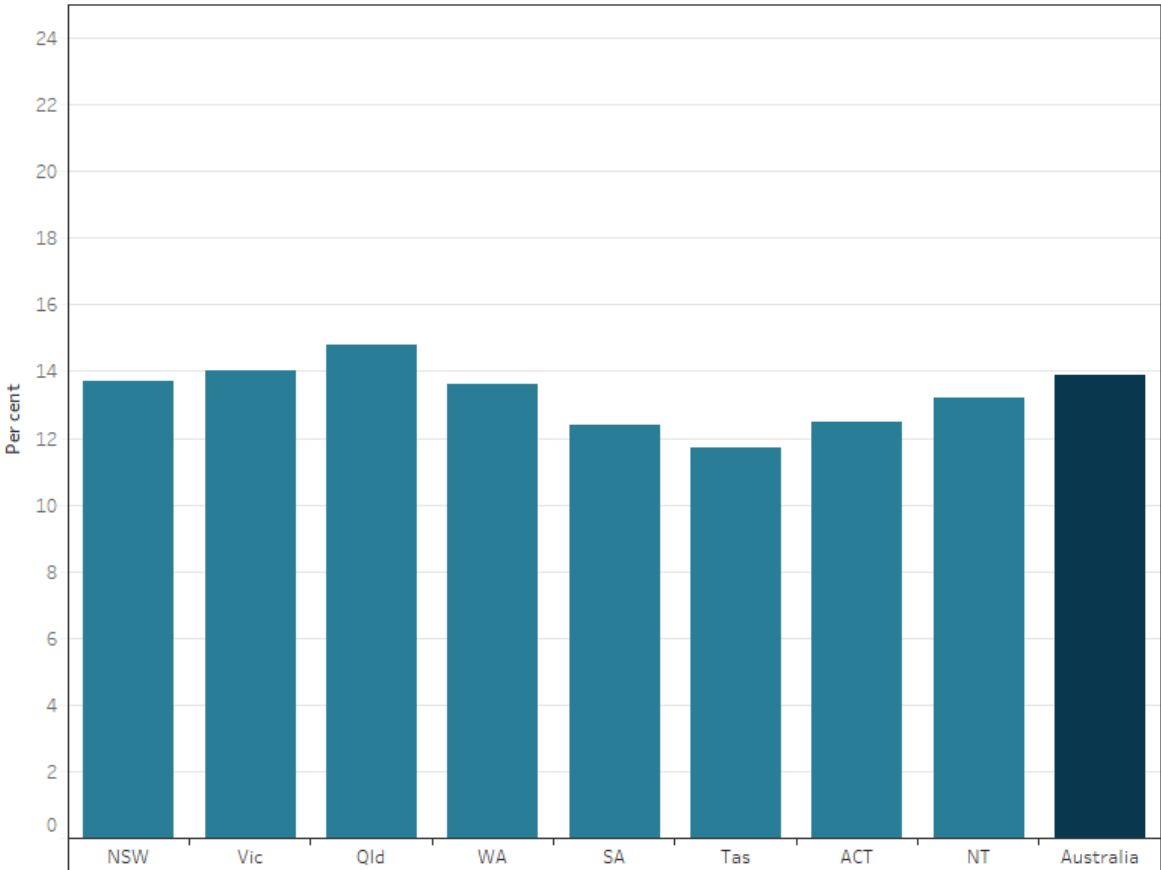
In 2017–18 (Figure 1):

- housing costs as a proportion of income for all households were highest in Queensland (14.8%) and lowest in Tasmania (11.7%)
- for homeowners with a mortgage, housing costs were highest in Victoria (16.7% each) and lowest in the Australian Capital Territory (14.3%)
- for all renters, the highest housing costs were in New South Wales (21.4%). The lowest costs were in the Northern Territory at 15.7% (ABS 2019).

Figure 1

Housing costs as a proportion of gross household income, by housing tenure type and state and territory, 2017–18

Select tenure type
All tenure types



Note: Data have been randomly adjusted (by perturbation) to avoid the release of confidential data.
Source: ABS 2019.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

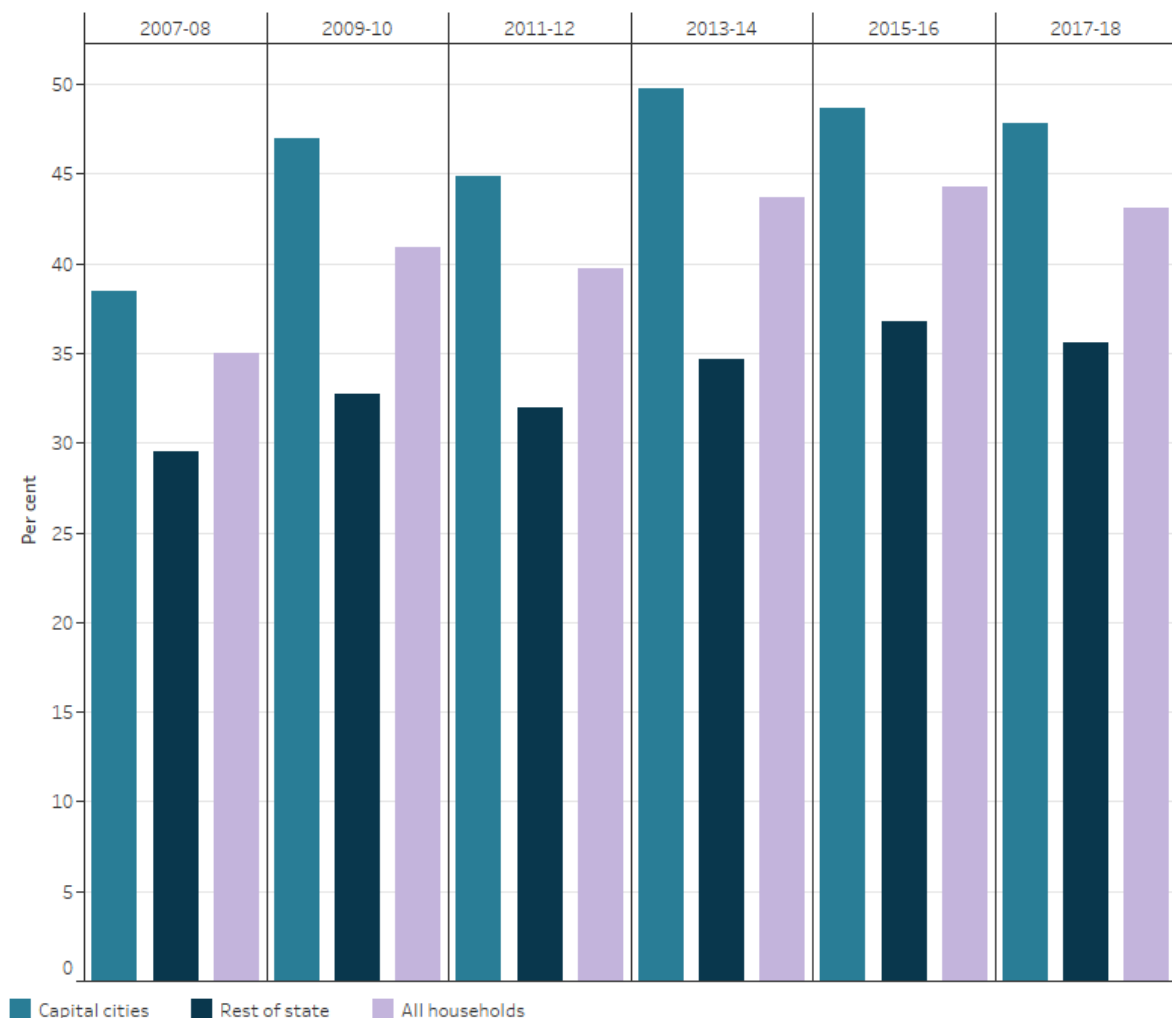
Rental stress among low-income households

For low-income households in the private rental market, the proportion in rental stress (based on the 30/40 rule) varies between the capital cities and the rest of the states and territories. The gap between these areas has increased over time (ABS 2019) (Figure 2):

- In 2007–08, 38.5% of low-income households in greater capital city areas and 29.5% of low-income households in the rest of the states and territories were considered to be in rental stress.
- In 2017–18, 47.8% of low-income households in greater capital city areas and 35.6% of low-income households in the rest of the states and territories were considered to be in rental stress.

Figure 2

Proportion of low income households in rental stress, by household location, 2007–08 to 2017–18



[Notes]

Source: ABS 2019.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

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 between 100 and 120 represents moderately unaffordable rent and a score between 120 and 150 represents acceptable rent (National Shelter et al. 2018).

In general, rental affordability index scores are worse for metropolitan areas compared with the rest of the state or territory. As at June 2018:

- Hobart was the least affordable metropolitan area in Australia
- Greater Perth was the most affordable metropolitan area in Australia
- regional New South Wales was the least affordable of the rest of states and territories
- regional Western Australia was the most affordable of the rest of state areas (Table 3).

Table 3: National rental affordability index summary by metropolitan areas and rest of states and territories, June 2018

Region	Rent affordability index	Proportion of household income spent on rent	Relative unaffordability
Greater Sydney	113	27	Moderately unaffordable rents
Rest of New South Wales	122	25	Acceptable rents
Greater Melbourne	127	24	Acceptable rents
Rest of Victoria	124	24	Acceptable rents
Greater Brisbane	123	24	Acceptable rents
Rest of Queensland	123	24	Acceptable rents
Greater Perth	144	21	Acceptable rents
Rest of Western Australia	157	19	Acceptable rents
Greater Adelaide	114	26	Moderately unaffordable rents

Region	Rent affordability index	Proportion of household income spent on rent	Relative unaffordability
Rest of South Australia	133	23	Acceptable rents
Greater Hobart	101	30	Moderately unaffordable rents
Rest of Tasmania	121	25	Acceptable rents
Australian Capital Territory	128	24	Acceptable rents

Note: Data for the Northern Territory are not available.

Source: National Shelter et al. 2018.

Experience of renting in the private rental market

The experience of tenants in the private rental market is increasing in importance as more households are renting, and for longer periods. The proportion of Australian households renting has increased, from 22% (1.5 million households) in 2006 to 26% (2.1 million households) in 2016 (ABS 2017). Some household demographic, household composition and personal factors that affect the demand for private rental housing include:

- households renting longer before having children (Hulse et al. 2012)
- growth in international students and migrants (Hulse et al. 2012)
- decreasing transition from renting to home ownership, particularly among younger age groups (Wilkins et al. 2018).

Many renters find their housing to be insecure, of poor quality and unaffordable. In 2016, 23% of renters were concerned they may be evicted and 42% were worried they would face rent increases if they complained about the low quality of their housing or asked for repairs. Many leases in Australia last for one year and some for just six months or less. This results in tenants moving more frequently than home owners (CHOICE et al. 2017). By contrast, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands have indefinite and fixed-term leases where it is difficult to terminate the fixed-term lease without the tenant's permission (CHOICE et al. 2017). In Australia in 2016:

- 83% of renters had no fixed-term lease or were on a lease of 12 months or less
- 24% of renters had windows or doors that did not close properly
- 21% of renters had experienced leaks or flooding
- 48% of renters had a personal income of less than \$35,000 a year

- more than half of renters said they rent because they cannot afford to buy their own property (CHOICE et al. 2017).

Households experiencing rental stress and/or unable to access the private rental sector may be at risk of homelessness (AIHW 2018). Further, households with low income may find it difficult to compete with higher-income households in the private rental market and may therefore seek assistance with housing costs or to rent a social housing property. See [Housing assistance](#) for more information.

Where do I go for more information?

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

- [Housing Assistance in Australia 2019](#)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [Housing Occupancy and Costs](#)

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Housing assistance

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

Many people cannot afford to rent or buy a home, so government programs provide Australians with housing assistance. This ranges from financial support to government-owned public housing. See [glossary](#) for definitions of housing types.

Policy context

The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement began in July 2018. It aims to improve access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing across the housing spectrum (Council of Federal Financial Relations 2018). The agreement covers social housing and support for people experiencing homelessness or those at risk of homelessness.

What types of housing assistance are available?

Housing assistance programs funded by Australian and state and territory governments are provided by government and non-government organisations (Table 1).

Table 1: Governments and organisations administering types of housing assistance

Government or organisation providing assistance	Type of housing assistance
Australian Government	Commonwealth Rent Assistance National Rental Affordability Scheme
State and territory governments	Public rental housing State owned and managed Indigenous housing Home purchase assistance Private rent assistance National Rental Affordability Scheme First Home Owner Grant
Community-based organisations	Specialist Homelessness Services Community housing

Government or organisation providing assistance	Type of housing assistance
	Indigenous community housing

This page focuses on private rental market housing assistance and social housing.

For information about:

- home purchase assistance and First Home Owner Grant, see [Home ownership and housing tenure](#)
- Specialist Homelessness Services, see [Homelessness and homelessness services](#)
- housing assistance for Indigenous Australians, see [Indigenous housing](#).

Private rental market housing assistance

Australians on low or moderate incomes renting through the private rental market may be able to receive government assistance with the cost of housing.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance 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 2019b).

Australian Government real expenditure (adjusted for inflation) on Commonwealth Rent Assistance increased by around 12% between 2013–14 and 2017–18, from \$3.95 billion to \$4.44 billion (DSS 2014a, 2018a).

Private rent assistance is provided by state and territory governments to low-income households experiencing difficulty in securing or maintaining private rental accommodation. In 2017–18, it assisted about 114,600 recipients, a decrease from 158,700 in 2010–11 (AIHW 2019).

National Rental Affordability Scheme is delivered by the Australian Government in partnership with state and territory governments. It offers annual financial incentives for up to 10 years to rent dwellings for eligible tenants at 80% or less of market value rent (DSS 2018c).

As at 31 December 2018, there were 34,900 active allocations (dwellings tenanted or available for rent) through the scheme (DSS 2019b).

Social housing programs

Social housing is rental housing made available to Australians on low incomes who cannot afford to rent through the private rental market. Historically, social housing was made available to working families on low to moderately low incomes (Groenhart & Bourke 2014). In more recent years, social housing has increasingly focused on assisting families in greatest need, especially those experiencing homelessness.

These rental properties are owned and managed by government and/or non-government organisations (including not-for-profit organisations).

Social housing programs include:

1. **Public housing:** Rental housing provided and managed by all state and territory governments. Included are dwellings owned by the housing authority or leased from the private sector or other housing program areas and used to provide public rental housing or leased to public housing tenants.
2. **Community housing (also known as mainstream community housing):** Housing managed by community-based organisations, available to low to moderate income or special needs households (see [glossary](#)). Community housing models vary among states and territories. Various groups, including government, own the housing stock.
3. **State owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH):** Housing that state and territory governments provide and manage. This is available to low to moderate-income households that have at least one member who identifies as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. SOMIH is currently available in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.
4. **Indigenous community housing:** Housing that Indigenous communities own and/or manage to provide housing services to Indigenous Australians (AIHW 2019b).

Who receives rental market housing assistance?

In 2018, 1.3 million income units (a person or group of related persons in a household whose income is shared, see [glossary](#)) received Commonwealth Rent Assistance; about 32,200 income units fewer than in 2017 (AIHW 2018b, 2019a). Of the 1.3 million Australian individuals or couples (the reference person) receiving such assistance in 2018:

- just under one-quarter (23%) were aged 65 years and over
- 5.5% identified as Indigenous (see [glossary](#)) (AIHW 2019a).

In 2017–18, there were about 114,600 instances of private rent assistance, a decrease from 158,700 (or 28%) in 2010–11. Of these:

- nearly one-third (30%) were provided to households with the main applicant aged 25–34, and one-fifth (20%) were aged 15–24
- 15% of instances were provided to Indigenous households
- 59% were earning a gross income of less than \$700 per week (or around \$36,400 per year) (AIHW 2019a).

As at 30 April 2018, around 64,300 tenants lived in 33,500 dwellings accommodated under the National Rental Affordability Scheme. Of these:

- 57% were aged 18–54
- 5.4% identified as Indigenous
- 9.1% had disability

- 29% received rent assistance (DSS 2019c).

Social housing tenants

Across Australia, in 2017–18, around 803,900 tenants were in Australia’s 3 main social housing programs (AIHW 2019a):

- 75% were in public housing
- 19% were in community housing
- 6% were in SOMIH.

Most social housing tenants were female (56%) in 2017–18 (AIHW 2019a). Factors such as domestic violence, relationship breakdown, financial difficulty and limited superannuation can put women at risk of homelessness (ABS 2018) and in need of social housing (AIHW 2018a).

Of the households in social housing:

- more than 1 in 7 (14%) included an Indigenous member at 30 June 2018, compared with 12% at 30 June 2015
- almost 2 in 5 (38%) reported having a tenant with disability at 30 June 2018, compared with 42% of households at 30 June 2015
- more than 1 in 2 (55%) consisted of single adults at 30 June 2018, compared with 53% at 30 June 2015 (AIHW 2016, 2019a).

In 2017–18, around one-third of social housing tenants were aged 55 years or over (35% in public housing and 30% in community housing). Almost 1 in 3 (31%) of those in public housing and 36% in community housing were aged 25–54. Also, 22% of public housing tenants and 20% of community housing tenants were children aged 0–14 (AIHW 2019a).

Priority groups

Housing assistance has shifted to target specific vulnerable groups, such as people experiencing homelessness or those at imminent risk of homelessness. For example, public housing, SOMIH and community housing prioritise households by assessing applicants in greatest need (see [glossary](#)). Among all social housing programs, newly allocated dwellings provided to households in greatest need has been increasing since 2013–14. For:

- public housing, 76% (about 15,600) of newly allocated dwellings were provided to households in greatest need in 2017–18; up from 74% (about 15,300) in 2013–14
- community housing, 82% (about 12,900) of newly allocated dwellings were provided to households in greatest need in 2017–18; up from 75% (about 9,300) in 2013–14
- SOMIH, 63% (about 790) of newly allocated dwellings were provided to households in greatest need in 2017–18; up from 59% (about 500) in 2013–14 (Productivity Commission 2019).

Of all newly allocated greatest needs households in social housing, many were assisted because they were experiencing homelessness. For:

- public housing, half (50%, or 7,200) of newly allocated households were provided to households experiencing homelessness in 2017–18, down from a peak of 61% (9,100) in 2013–14
- SOMIH, 43% (170) of newly allocated households were provided to the homeless in 2017–18, a decrease from a peak of 53% (235) in 2015–16
- mainstream community housing, 43% (4,700) of newly allocated households were provided to the homeless in 2017–18, down from 47% (3,100) in 2013–14 (AIHW 2019a).

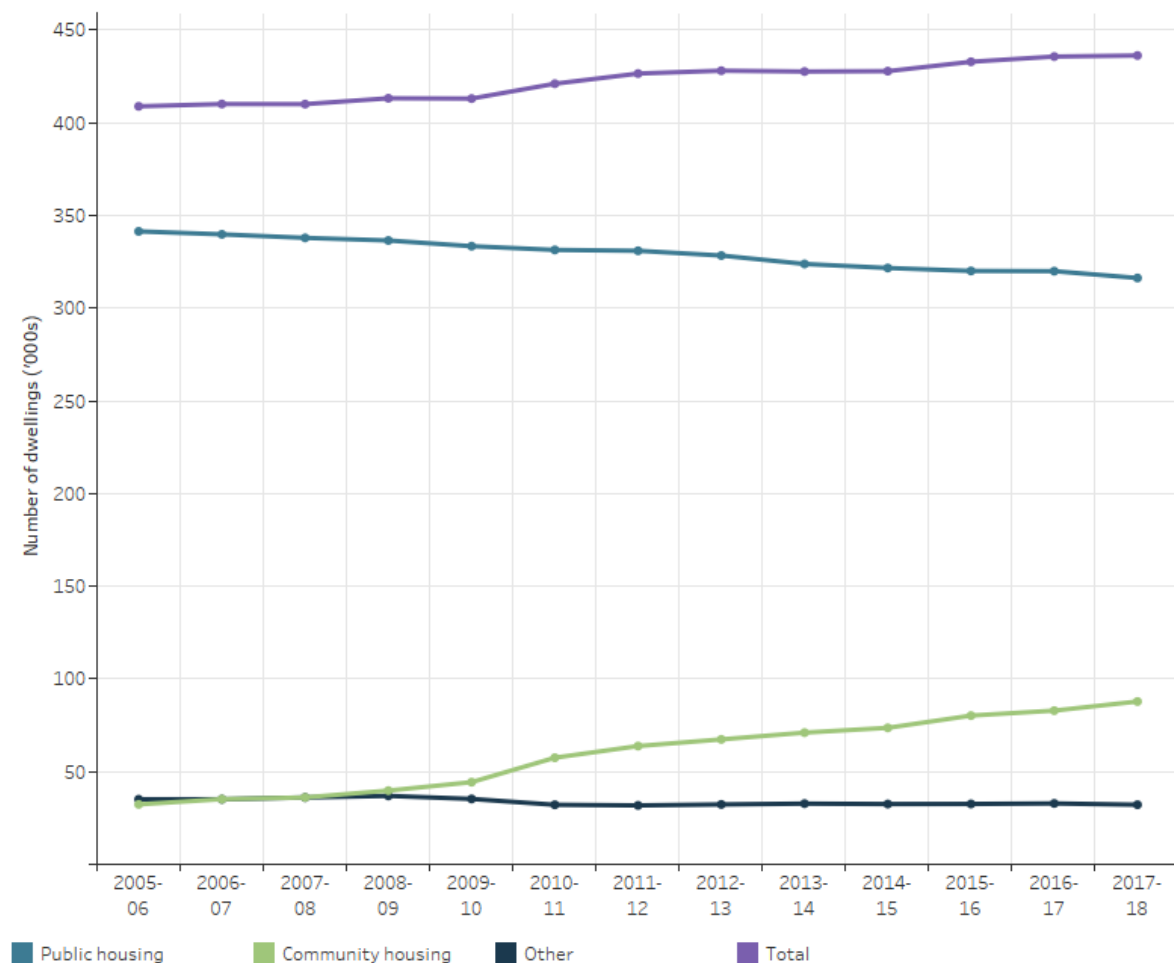
Social housing dwellings

While the number of social housing dwellings has increased overall, it has not kept pace with population growth. Indeed, the number has decreased relative to the number of Australian households (AIHW 2019a).

- In 2017–18, there were about 436,200 social housing dwellings, an increase from 408,800 in 2005–06.
- The number of public housing dwellings declined from around 341,400 in 2005–06 to 316,200 in 2017–18. This was offset by an increase in community housing dwellings, from 32,300 to 87,800 over the same period.
- The number of ‘other’ types of social housing dwellings (SOMIH, Indigenous community housing and NT remote dwellings) decreased from 35,100 to 32,200 over this period (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Number of social housing dwellings, by social housing type, 2005-06 to 2017-18



Notes:

1. 'Other' social housing includes State owned and managed Indigenous housing, Indigenous community housing and NT remote dwellings.
2. Data may not be comparable over time and comparisons could be misleading. See the relevant data quality statements in AIHW 2019a for more information.

Source: AIHW 2019b.

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

Wait lists and wait times

People meeting eligibility requirements for social housing are frequently placed on wait lists until a suitable dwelling becomes available. Factors that may affect a person's position and influence the length of wait lists, include:

- changes to allocation policies
- priorities and eligibility criteria
- people may refuse an option and be removed from the list
- some people who wish to access social housing may not apply because of long waiting times or lack of available options in their preferred location (AIHW 2019a).

A reduction in the number of people on wait lists may not mean a decrease in demand for social housing dwellings, and applicants may be on more than one wait list. This means assessing the total number of people on wait lists is difficult.

Households assessed to be in greatest need are prioritised for housing:

- Nationally at 30 June 2018, there were 140,600 total applicants awaiting a public housing allocation (a decrease from 154,600 at 30 June 2014), and 8,800 total applicants were awaiting allocation for a SOMIH dwelling (an increase from 8,000 at 30 June 2014).
- Of those on the waiting list at 30 June 2018, around 45,800 new public housing applicants were classified as being in greatest need, up from 43,200 at 30 June 2014. For SOMIH, the number on the waiting list classified in greatest need was 4,700 at 30 June 2018, up from 3,800 at 30 June 2014.
- In 2017–18, 43% of newly allocated public housing households and 62% of SOMIH households in greatest need (as defined by state and territory specific public housing criteria) spent less than 3 months on waiting lists (AIHW 2019a).

Overcrowding and underutilisation

Social housing dwelling size and configuration must be considered so dwellings meet household needs and to use social housing stock to greatest effect (AIHW 2019a).

Overcrowding occurs when a dwelling is too small for the size and composition of the household. A dwelling requiring at least 1 additional bedroom is designated as 'overcrowded'. In 2017–18, the proportion of social housing dwellings with tenants living in overcrowded conditions were:

- 3.8% of households in public housing; down from a peak of 4.6% in 2012–13
- 24% of households in SOMIH
- 4.3% of households in community housing; similar to 4.1% in 2013–14 (AIHW 2019a).

A dwelling is considered underutilised when two or more bedrooms are surplus to a household's needs. In 2017–18, the proportion of social housing dwellings with tenants living in underutilised conditions was:

- 10% of community housing households, a decrease from a peak of 13% in 2012–13
- 17% of public housing households; relatively stable over the long term
- 26% of SOMIH households; an increase from a low of 22% in 2012–13 (AIHW 2019a).

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on housing assistance, see:

- [Housing assistance in Australia 2019](#)
- [National Social Housing Survey: detailed results 2016](#)

Visit [Housing assistance](#) for more on this topic.

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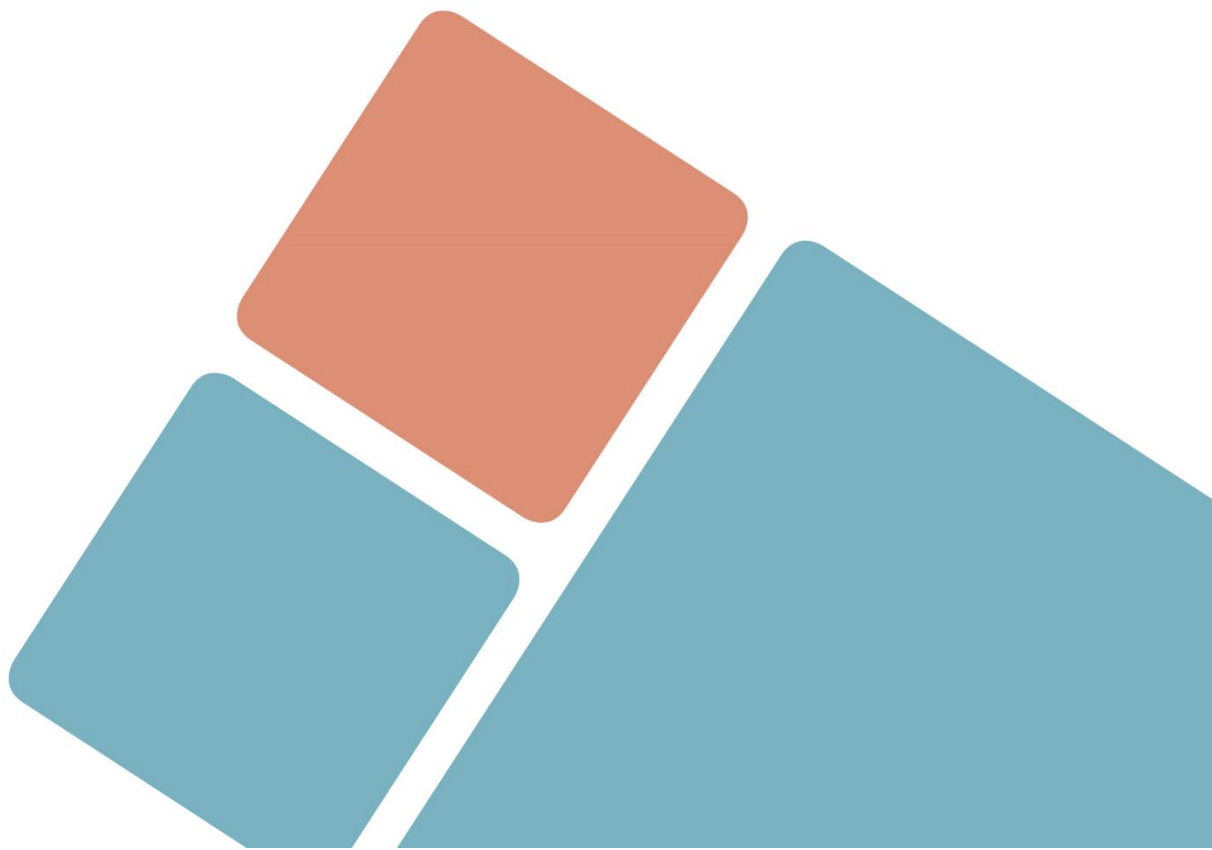
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Education and skills

Participation and engagement in education from an early age are essential for a person's development and future outcomes. Higher levels of education are associated with better employment opportunities, higher relative earnings, better health and greater life satisfaction, and skills learned in early childhood years help establish foundations for academic and life success.



Apprenticeships and traineeships

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Apprenticeships and traineeships 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.

Apprenticeships typically take around 4 years to complete, and involve training towards a skilled trade (for example, carpentry, electrical, plumbing or automotive) or non-trade (for example, hospitality or child care).

Traineeships are normally shorter in duration (1 to 2 years) and involve training in a vocational area such as marketing, administration or events management.

Apprenticeships and traineeships can be full time, part time or school based. School-based apprenticeships and traineeships are available for secondary school students who get on-the-job training towards a formal qualification while still completing their school studies.

Who are apprentices and trainees?

1 in 10 trade workers are apprentices or trainees

In 2018, almost 1 in 10 workers in trade occupations were apprentices or trainees and 1 in 50 workers in all occupations were employed as an apprentice or trainee (NCVER 2019a).

As at 30 September 2018, 267,385 apprentices and trainees were training in Australia, a 21% decrease from 2014 (NCVER 2019a). Of the 2018 apprentices and trainees:

- 25% were female (down from 30% in 2014) and 75% male (up from 70%) (NCVER 2019b)
- 1 in 20 (5.3%) were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (up from 4.2% in 2014) (NCVER 2019b) (see [Indigenous education and skills](#))
- 65% were training for a trade (up from 57% in 2014), and 35% for a non-trade (down from 43%) (NCVER 2019a)
- 1 in 50 (1.9%) had disability (NCVER 2019b)
- the proportion undertaking full-time (81%) or part-time (19%) study remained fairly constant since 2014 (79% and 21% respectively) (NCVER 2019b)
- 7.9% were school-based (up from 6.9% in 2014) (NCVER 2019b).

Trends

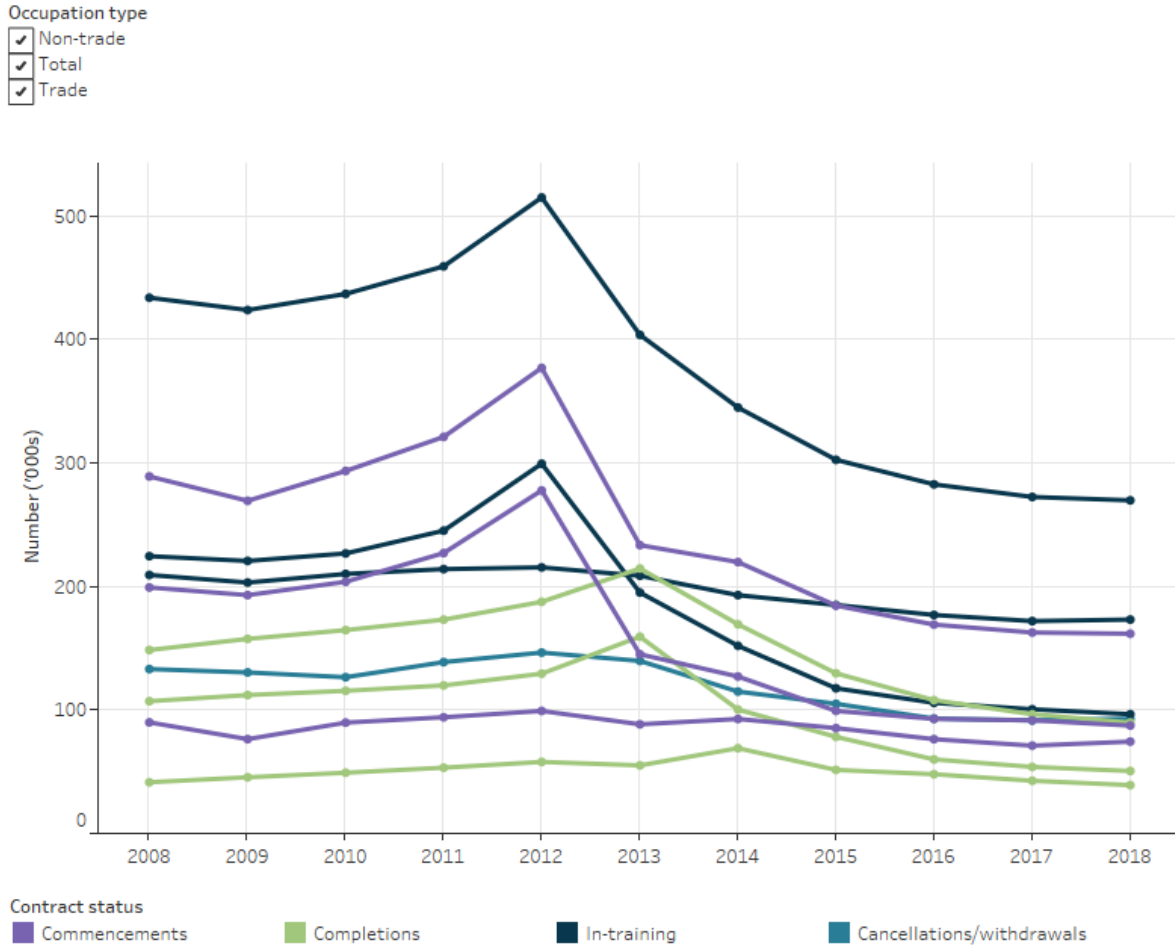
The number of people undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships was lower in 2018 than in 2008 (Figure 1). In 2009, commencements and completions began to increase alongside the Apprentice Kickstart initiative to address skills shortages in Australia, with a peak around 2012 (NCVER 2018c). This was followed by a sharp decline around 2012–2013. The decline coincided with Australian Government changes to incentive payments for qualifications not on the National Skills Needs List (Atkinson & Stanwick 2016) and was steeper for non-trades than trades (NCVER 2018c).

Time series analysis of apprentice and trainee commencements and completions shows that in the 12 months ending 30 June 2018:

- there were 161,700 commencements, a decline from the peak of 377,000 in 2012, and at their lowest since 1998
- completions (89,700) declined sharply since the peak of 214,500 in 2013 and were at their lowest since 2001
- the number of cancellations and withdrawals (92,900) exceeded the number of completions (89,700) for the first time since 2001 (NCVER 2018c).

Figure 1

Number of apprentices and trainees in the 12 months ending 30 June, by contract status and occupation type, 2008 to 2018



Notes:

1. Data for 'in-training' is as at 30 June. All other statuses are for the 12-months ending 30 June.
2. Data for 'cancellations/withdrawals' not available for trade and non-trade occupations.

Source: NCVER 2018b.

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

Age

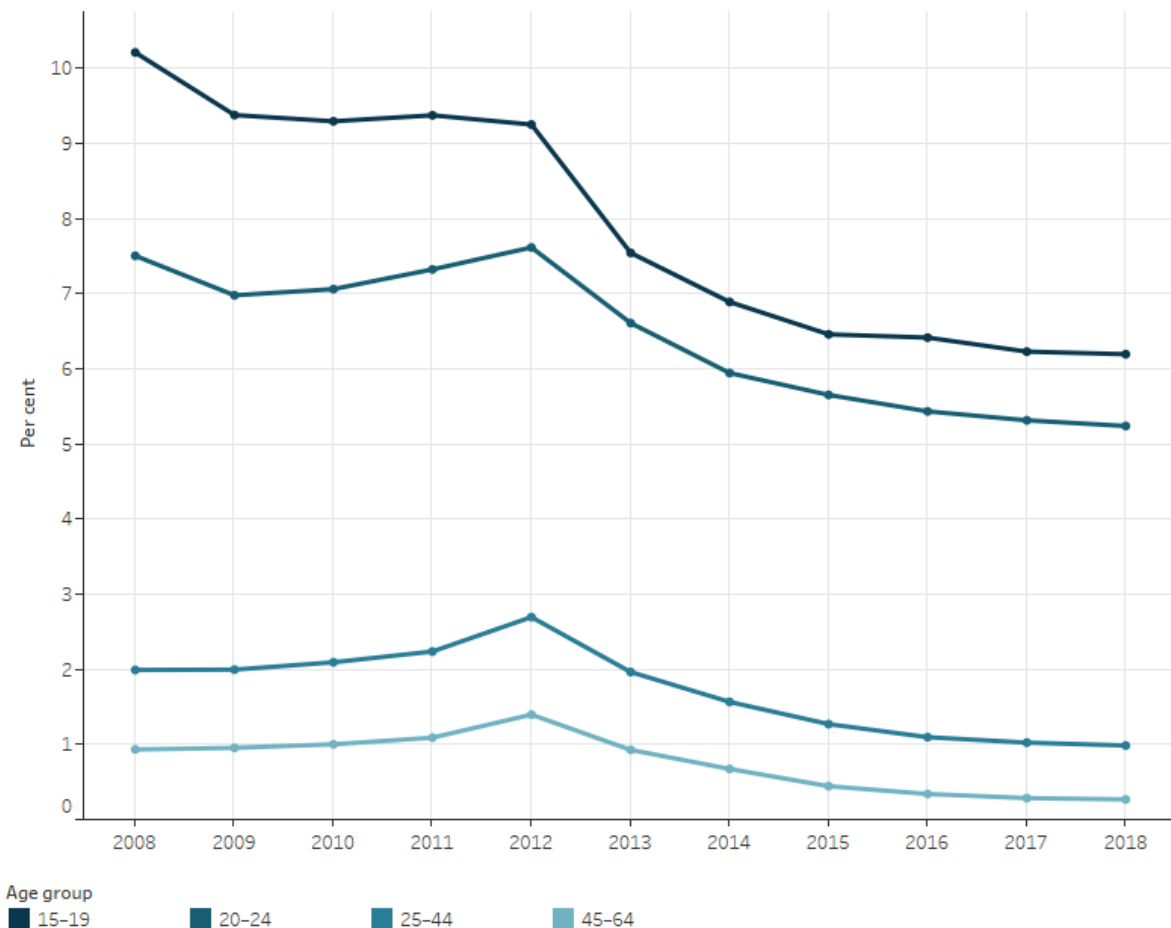
Between 2008 and 2018, the proportion of people undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships reduced across all age groups (VOCSTATS 2018). In 2018:

- 6.2% of all 15–19-year-olds (92,350) and 5.2% of 20–24-year-olds (91,147) were completing an apprenticeship or traineeship (down from 10% and 7.5% in 2008, respectively)
- the proportion of 25–44-year-olds (1.0%) completing an apprenticeship or traineeship was half that of 2008 (2.0%)

- the proportion of 45–64-year-olds completing an apprenticeship or traineeship was 0.3% (16,274), a decline from 0.9% in 2008 (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Proportion of population that are apprentices and trainees, by age group, 2008 to 2018



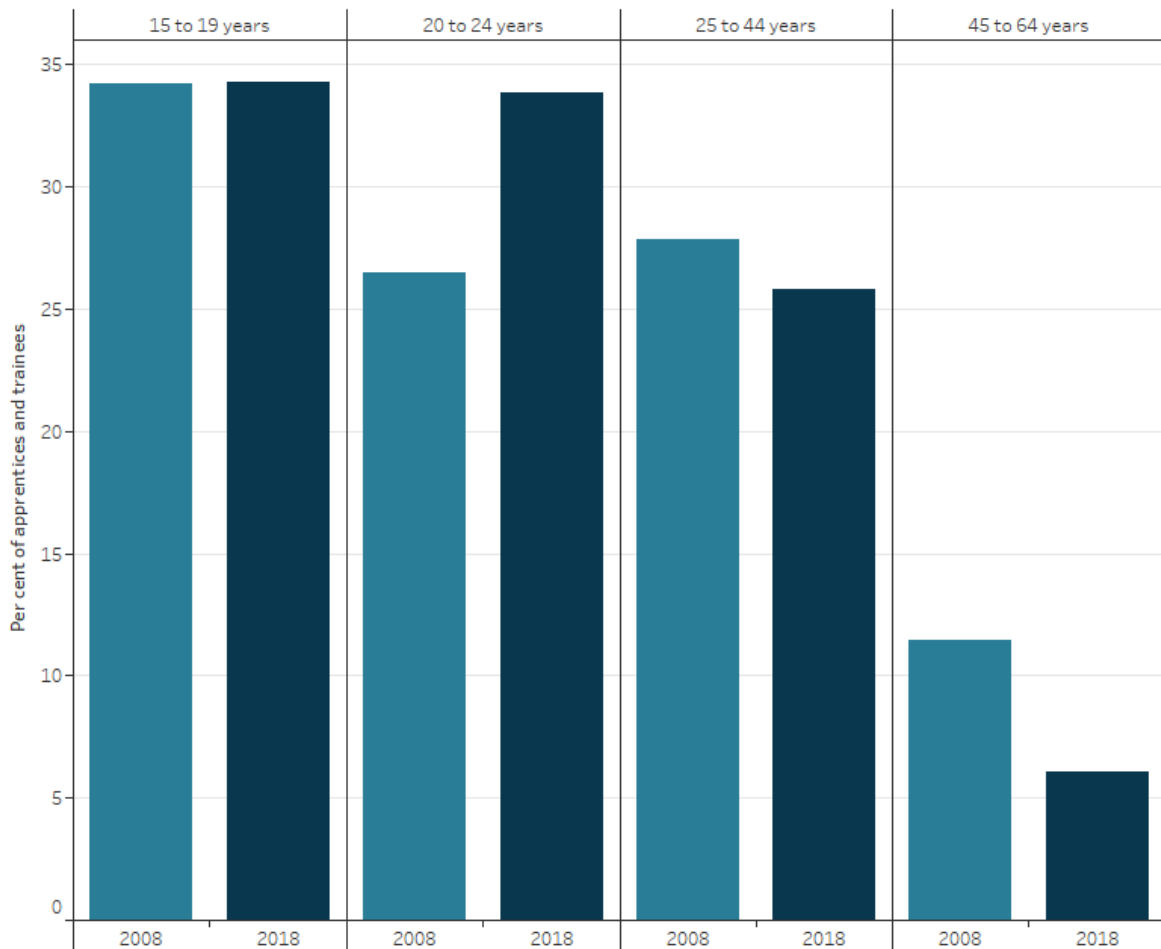
[Notes]

Source: AIHW analysis of VOCSTATS 2018 <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/resources/vocstats.html>>, extracted 06/02/19.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Of students aged 15–64 in training for an apprenticeship or traineeship in 2018, most were aged 15–19 (34%), followed by those aged 20–24 (34%), 25–44 (26%) and 45–64 years (6.0%) (VOCSTATS 2018). Between 2008 and 2018, the age profile of apprentices and trainees shifted, with an increased proportion of those aged 20–24 in training in 2018 (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Apprentices and trainees aged 15–64 years in training, by age group, 2008 and 2018



Notes:

1. Apprentice and trainee 'in training' data are as at June 30 of the respective year.
 2. Data are collected by registered training organisations and state training authorities around Australia.
 3. The NCVET is not responsible for the correct extraction, analysis or interpretation of the data presented herein.
- Source: VOCSTATS 2018 <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/resources/vocstats.html>>, extracted 06/02/19.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Outcomes

More than half (53%) of apprentices and trainees who started training in 2013 had completed their apprenticeship or traineeship requirements by March 2018 (NCVER 2018b). Completions were higher (57%) and cancellations or withdrawals lower (37%) for those in a non-trade occupation compared with those in a trade occupation (completions, 47%; cancellations and withdrawals, 48%).

Of those who completed an apprenticeship or traineeship in 2018, 80% were employed after training (NCVER 2018d). Employment was higher for those who had completed a trade occupation course (91%) than a non-trade (77%) (NCVER 2018d). Younger age groups were slightly more likely to have improved employment circumstances after training (18–19 year olds, 55%; 20–24 years olds, 62%; 25–44 year olds, 60%; 45–64 year

age group, 56%) than the 65 years and over age group (42%) (NCVER 2018d) (also see [Employment trends](#)).

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on apprenticeships and traineeships, see:

- National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) [National Apprentices and Trainees Collection](#)
- NCVER [National Student Outcomes Survey](#)

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Childcare and early childhood education

Find the most recent version of this information at:

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

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 (Warren et al. 2016).

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

Formal and informal care

Childcare can be categorised as formal or informal.

Formal care: The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines formal childcare 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).

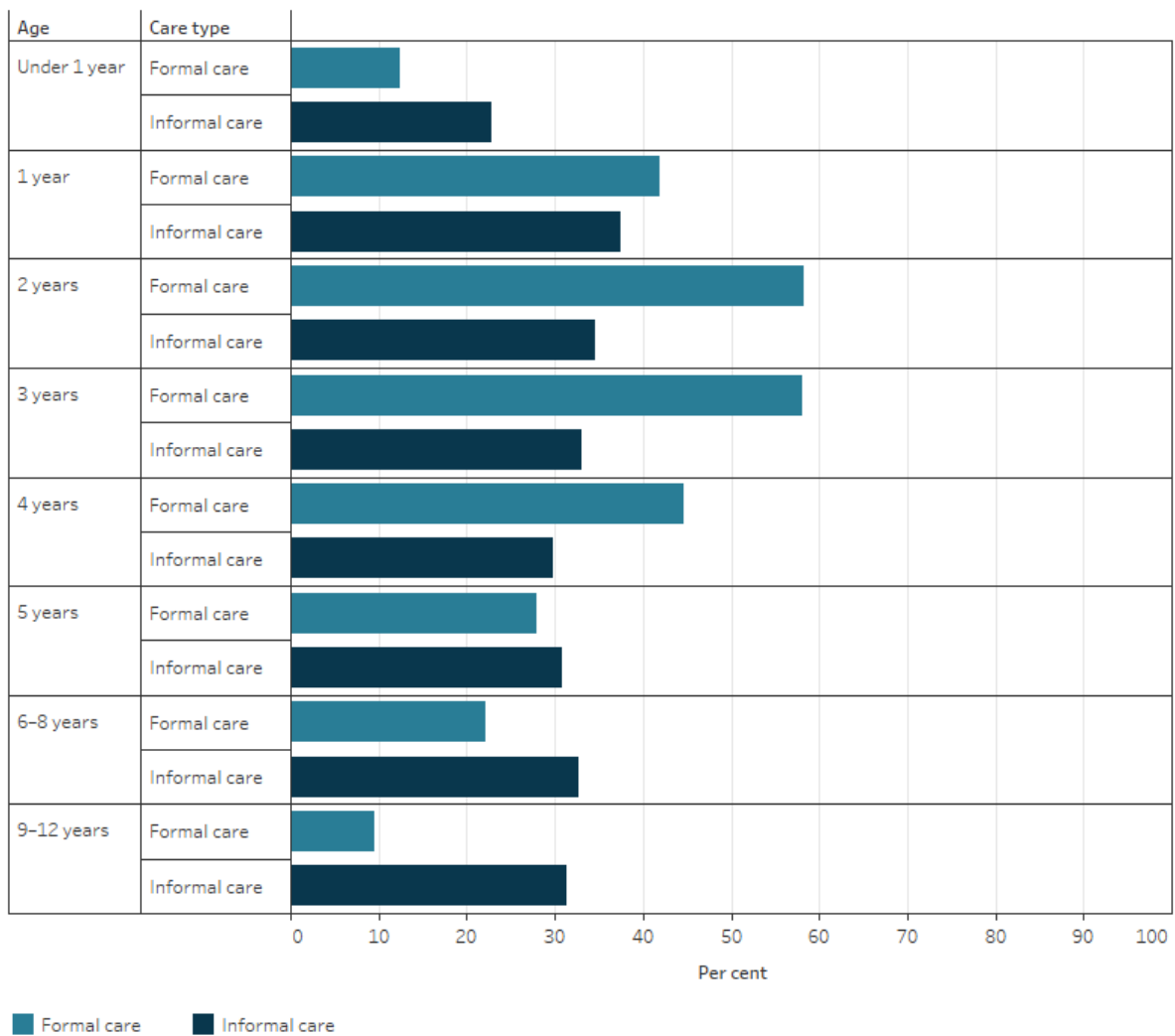
How many children are in childcare?

In 2017, formal or informal early childhood education and care was a usual form of care for 49% (or 2.0 million) of children aged 0–12 (up from 48% in 2014). Patterns of formal and informal care use varied by age (Figure 1).

- Children less than 1 year of age were more likely to attend informal types of care (23%) than formal types (12%). The same was true of children aged 6–8 (informal 33%, formal 22%) and 9–12 (informal 31%, formal 9.6%).
- Children aged 2, 3, and 4 years were more likely to attend formal types of care (58%, 58%, 45% respectively) than informal types (35%, 33%, and 30% respectively).
- The highest level of overall care attendance was among 2- and 3-year-olds (ABS 2018).

Figure 1

Proportion of children aged 0–12 who usually attended child care, by age group and type of care, 2017



Source: ABS 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Trends

Most children have some exposure to formal, non-parental care and/or early learning before starting school (ABS 2018).

Between 1999 and 2017, the proportion of children aged 0–11 attending formal care increased from 17% to 28% and the proportion in informal care decreased from 37% to 29% (ABS 2018) (Figure 2).

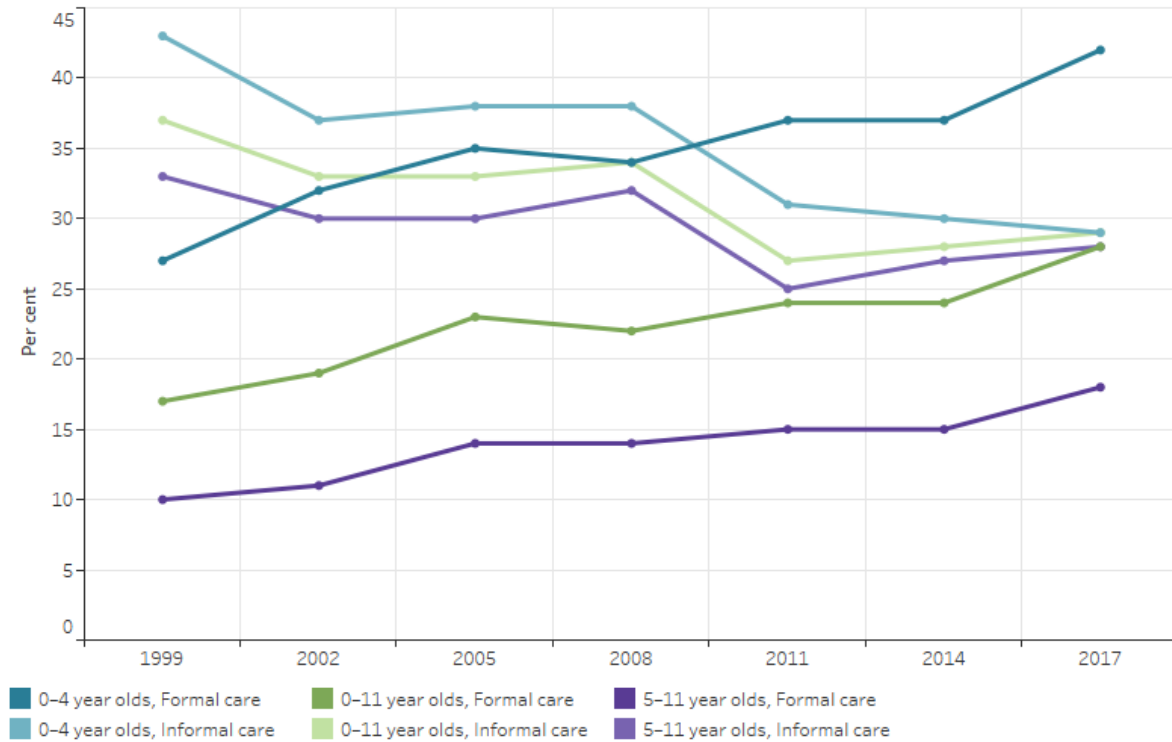
Long day care continues to be the most attended type of formal care for children aged 0–4. The proportion of this cohort attending long day care increased from 18% in 1999 to 35% in 2017 (ABS 2018).

For children aged 5–11, the increase in formal care was driven by an increase in children using before and after school care, up from 8% in 1999 to 15% in 2017 (ABS 2018) (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Proportion of children aged 0-11 in child care services, by age group and care type, 1999 to 2017

Age group
All



Notes:
 1. Care type is assessed as the type of care attended in the week before survey completion.
 2. Formal care does not include preschool for time series analysis.
 3. Some children attend both formal and informal care and will be counted in each sector.
 Source: ABS 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Family characteristics and care type

According to the Childhood Education and Care Survey (ABS 2018), of children aged 0-12 in 2017:

- children from couple families were more likely to attend formal care (28%) than children from one-parent families (24%), and less likely to attend informal care (29% and 45%, respectively). Children from one-parent families were more likely to attend a combination of formal and informal care types (12%) than children from couple families (9%)
- 60% of children from couple families where both parents were employed usually attended care. Among them, 38% used informal care and 35% used formal care

- 75% of children from one-parent families where the parent was employed usually attended care. Of these, 61% were in informal care, while 34% were in formal care
- grandparents were the most common source of childcare for couple families (22%). For one-parent families, grandparents and the non-resident parent were an equal source of childcare (both 20%)
- 52% of children from couple families and 43% from one-parent families did not usually attend care (ABS 2018).

Preschool participation

Preschool programs aim to meet the learning needs of young children through play-based activities (DET 2018). These programs are generally provided by preschools or centre-based day care services (formerly long day care) 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 2019c). Preschool subsidies are available in all states and territories (DET 2019).

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 childcare to children aged 0–5. 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.

Since 2008, the Australian Government has provided funding to assist states and territories to increase preschool participation through the National Partnership Agreements on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (Warren et al. 2016). The initiative aims to provide universal access to quality preschool programs for all children in the year before full-time school for 600 hours per year.

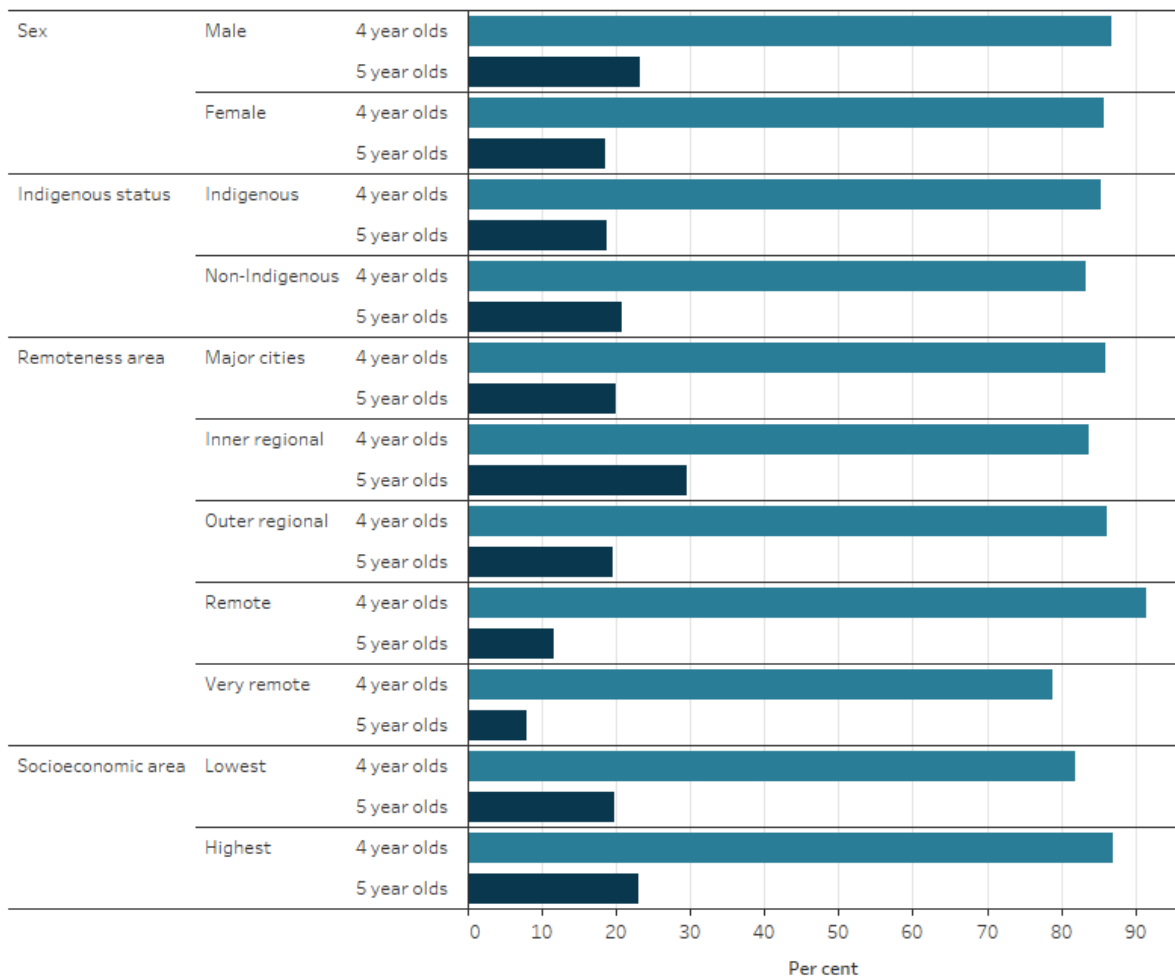
In 2018, nearly 342,500 children aged 4–5 were enrolled in a preschool program, an increase from 339,000 in 2017 (ABS 2019b) (Figure 3). More children were enrolled in a preschool program through a centre-based day care service (50%) than a preschool (42%) (ABS 2019b).

Of children aged 4–5 and enrolled in a preschool program:

- around 275,000 were aged 4 and 68,000 aged 5, representing 86% of all children aged 4 and 21% of all children aged 5
- more than 18,000 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian children (representing 85% of Indigenous 4-year-olds and 19% of Indigenous 5-year-olds). This number is around 5% higher than in 2017 (ABS 2019b)
- most children (95%) were enrolled for 15 hours per week or more
- about half of children (51%) were enrolled in a program that charged between \$1 and \$4 per hour; around 1 in 5 (22%) in a free program (ABS 2019b).

Figure 3

Proportion of children aged 4 and 5 enrolled in a preschool program, by sex, Indigenous status, remoteness area, and socioeconomic area, 2018



[Notes]

Source: ABS 2019a.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on early childhood education and care, see:

- ABS [Childhood Education and Care](#)
- ABS [Preschool Education](#)
- Department of Education [National Partnership Agreements on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education](#)

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Higher education and vocational education

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

Higher levels of educational attainment tend to be associated with increased likelihood of being employed, being in good health, and reporting life satisfaction (OECD 2016b, 2018). Higher educational attainment is also associated with higher earnings, with tertiary educated adults earning 54% more than their secondary-educated peers (OECD 2018).

What are non-school qualifications?

Non-school qualifications include Certificate I to Certificate IV, Diploma, Bachelor, Master and Doctoral level qualifications. 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 2018).

In Australia, non-school education can be broken into two 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 2018).

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

- provides training focused on technical skills and knowledge for a particular job or industry, with apprenticeships and traineeships forming a core part—see <Apprenticeships and traineeships>
- 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 2018).

Table 1: Characteristics of higher education and VET providers and students, 2017

	Higher education	VET
Number of providers	176 ^(a)	4,193 ^(b)
Number of students	1.5 million	4.2 million ^(c)
Percentage of students who are female	55.5 ^(d)	46.7 ^(e)
Percentage who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian students	1.8 ^(d)	3.4 ^(e)
Percentage who are full-time students	71.3 ^(d)	10.7 ^(e)
Percentage who are international students	28.5 ^(d)	4.4 ^(e)

(a) Number of higher education providers in 2016. Data for 2017 was not available at the time of writing.

(b) Includes Australian providers operating overseas (NCVER 2018).

(c) Includes students enrolled with Australian providers operating overseas (NCVER 2018).

(d) Students as a proportion of all higher education student enrolments in 2017 (DET 2018).

(e) Students as a proportion of all VET student enrolments in 2017 (NCVER 2018).

Sources: DET 2018; NCVER 2018; TEQSA 2018.

Enrolments

In May 2018, the proportion of people aged 15–64 enrolled in non-school qualifications was 14% (2.2 million) (ABS 2018), an increase from 12% (1.7 million) in 2008 (ABS 2008).

In 2018:

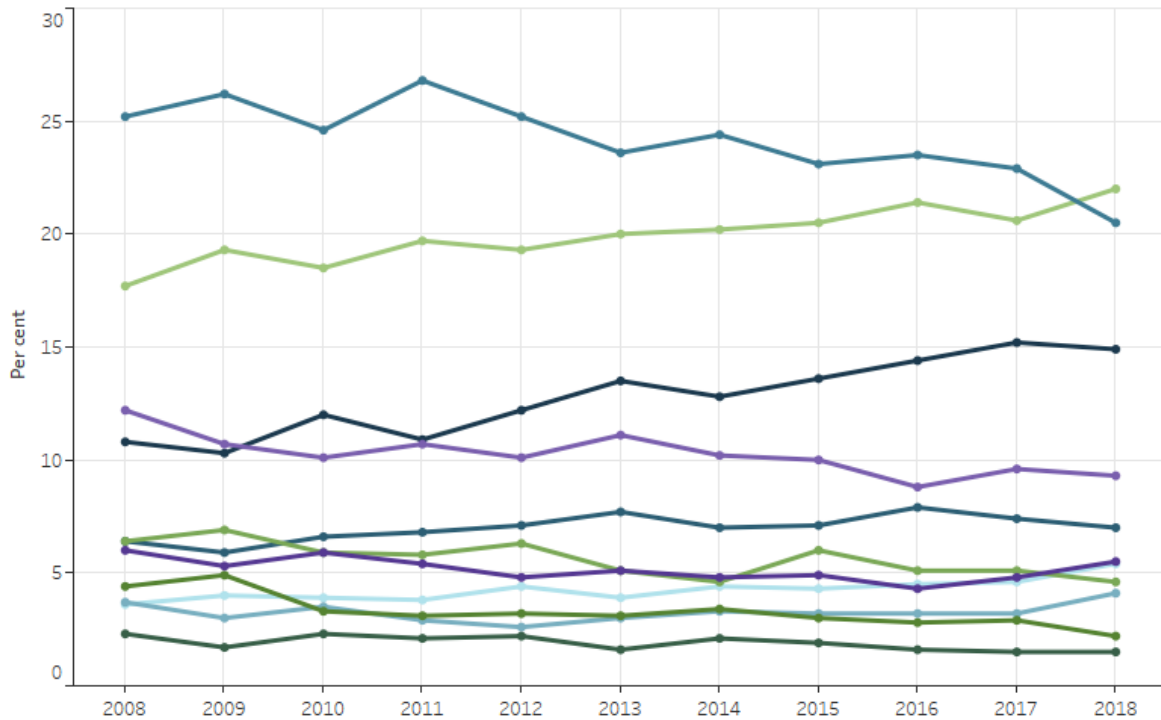
- nearly two-thirds of students aged 15–64 (1.4 million, 63%) were enrolled with a higher education institution, while 1 in 5 (472,800, 21%) were enrolled with a TAFE institution (ABS 2018)
- students most likely to be enrolled in a non-school qualification were aged 20–24 (46% of the population of that age), followed by those aged 15–19 (27%), and 25–29 (19%)

- most enrolments were for a Bachelor degree (42%), followed by Certificate III or IV level study (20%) and postgraduate level degree (14%)
- the age distribution of enrolled students changed compared with 2008. While the proportion of those aged 15–64 studying at a Certificate III level or above increased across all age groups, those aged 20–24 showed the greatest increase (36% to 44%), and those aged 45–54 the smallest increase (4.1% to 4.2%)
- a greater proportion of males (24%) than females (17%) were enrolled in a Certificate III or IV. Females were slightly more likely to be studying for a Bachelor degree (43%) or an Advanced Diploma or Diploma (14%), compared with males (40% and 11% respectively)
- the most common fields of study were Society and culture (22% of people enrolled, up from 18% in 2008) and Management and commerce (21%, down from 25% in 2008) (Figure 1). Health became a more common field of study since 2008 (15%, up from 11%). Enrolments in other fields of study remained fairly consistent over the period (ABS 2018).

Figure 1

Persons aged 15–64 studying for a non-school qualification, by field of study, 2008 to 2018

Field of study
All



Field of study

- Agriculture, environmental and related studies
- Architecture and building
- Creative arts
- Education
- Engineering and related technologies
- Food, hospitality and personal services
- Health
- Information technology
- Management and commerce
- Natural and physical sciences
- Society and culture

Source: ABS 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Attainment of non-school qualifications

Non-school qualifications tend to be associated with improved employment status (SCRGSP 2019). In 2018, 63% of VET graduates who completed a qualification above Diploma level in 2017 had improved employment status, followed by those with a Certificate III (62%), Certificate IV (61%), Diploma (59%), Certificate I (49%) and Certificate II (42%).

In May 2018, of students aged 15–74:

- 3 in 5 (60%), or 11.1 million, had a non-school qualification. Of these, almost half (45%, 5.0 million) had a qualification at the Bachelor degree level or higher, and one-third (30%) had attained a Certificate III or IV
- similar proportions of males (61%) and females (60%) had a non-school qualification
- people aged 30–34 were most likely to have a non-school qualification (77%), with the rate of attainment decreasing with increasing age (35–44 years, 74%; 45–54 years, 67%; 55–64 years, 60%; 65–74 years, 50%)
- people born overseas (65%) were more likely than people born in Australia (58%) to have a non-school qualification
- those living in the highest socioeconomic areas were more likely to have a non-school qualification than people in the lowest socioeconomic areas (69% compared with 50% respectively) (ABS 2018).

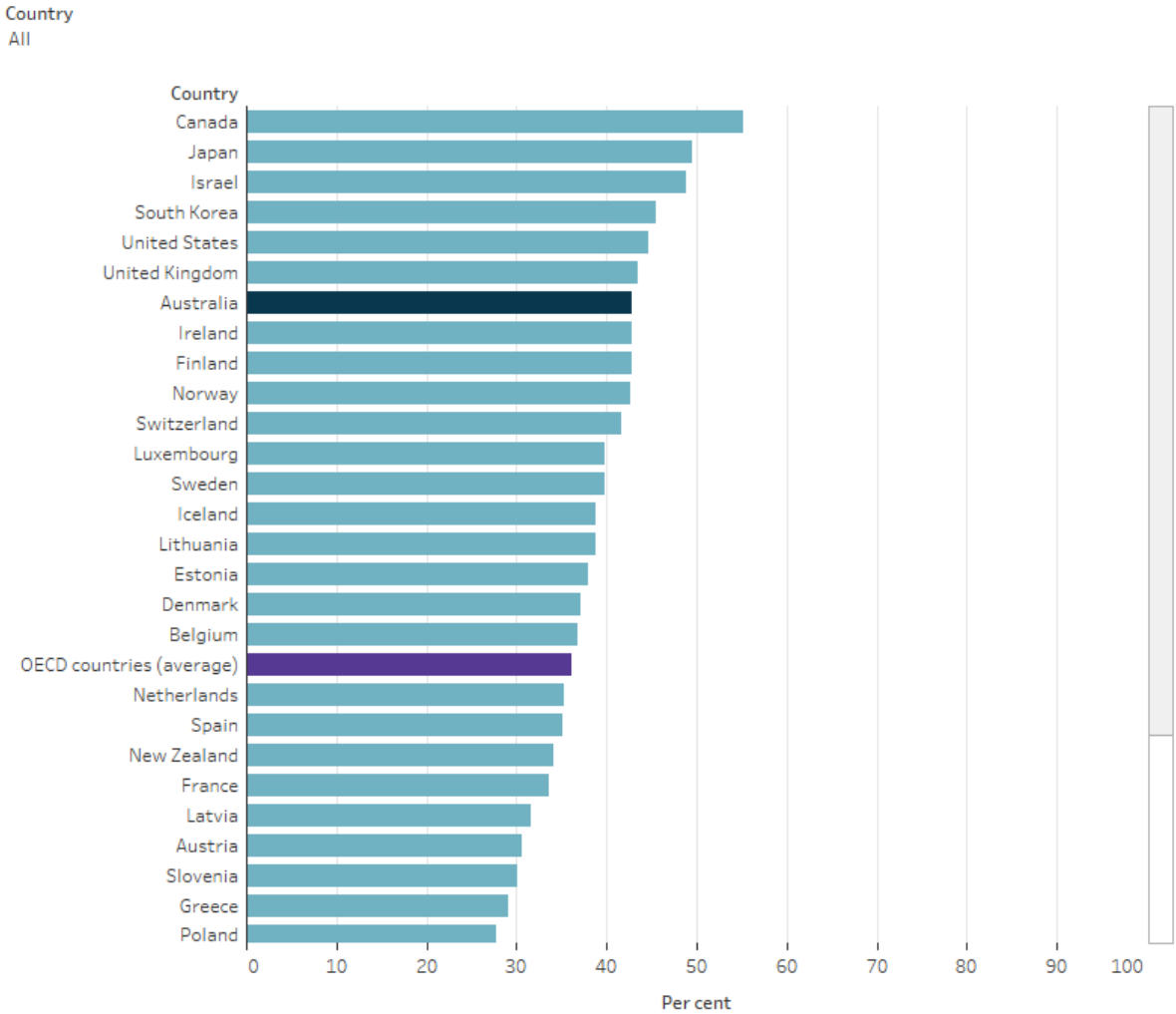
International comparisons

In 2015, Australia ranked seventh out of 36 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries for the proportion of those aged 25–64 having a tertiary education (OECD 2016a).

The OECD defines tertiary education as having an International Standard Classification of Education of 5 or above (OECD 2016a). In Australia, this means tertiary education comprises qualifications at Diploma level or above (UNESCO 2019). According to the OECD, Australia (43%) ranked below Canada (55%), the United States (45%), and the United Kingdom (44%), but above the OECD average (36%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Proportion of those aged 25–64 with tertiary education, OECD countries, 2015

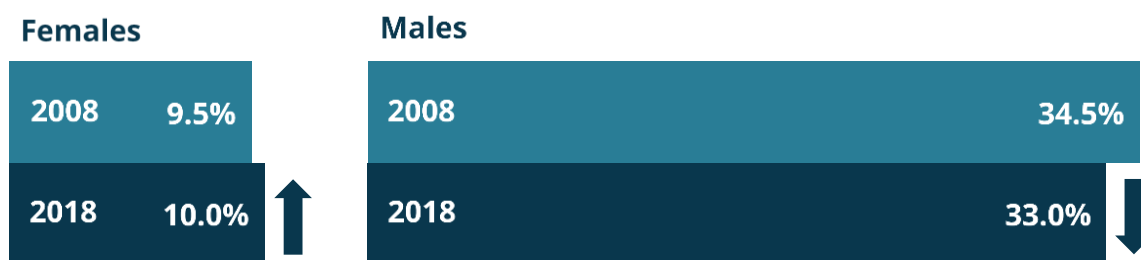


Source: OECD 2016a.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

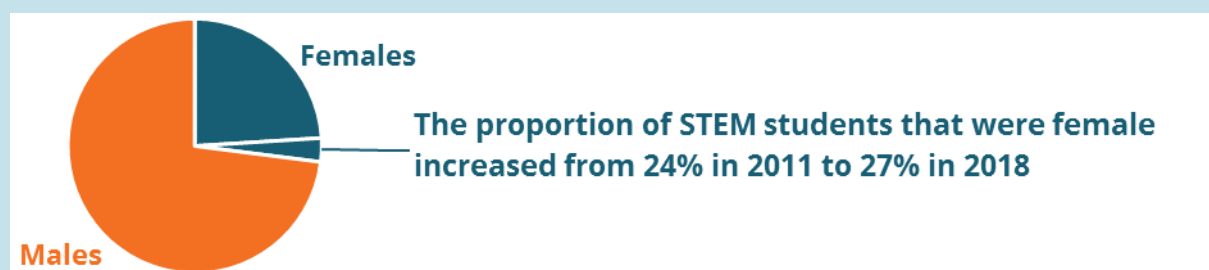
Participation in STEM fields

In 2018, of students aged 15–64 who were studying for a non-school qualification, 20% were studying in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields (down from 22% in 2008). A greater proportion of males (33%) were studying STEM than females (10%). Between 2008 and 2018, the proportion of males studying for a non-school STEM qualification decreased by 1.5 percentage points, while the proportion of females increased by half a percentage point.

STEM students as a proportion of all students by sex



Of those studying for a non-school qualification in a STEM field in 2018, 73% were male and 27% female. The proportion of males decreased by 2.3 percentage points between 2011 and 2018, while the proportion of females increased by 2.9 percentage points (ABS 2008, 2011, 2018).



Where do I go for more information?

For more information on non-school education, see:

- [ABS Survey of Education and Work](#)
- [Department of Education Document Library: Higher Education Statistics](#)
- [National Centre for Vocational Education Research \(NCVER\) Total VET Students and Courses](#)
- [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency \(TEQSA\) Publications](#)

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School student engagement and performance

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<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/school-student-engagement-and-performance>

Higher levels of education are associated with better health and greater life satisfaction (OECD 2016a). In Australia, children must attend school until they complete Year 10. They then can participate in full-time education, employment or training (or a mix) until they are 17. This page presents national statistics to provide an overview of Australia's performance in education (for these compulsory schooling years).

School attendance

Student attendance rates refer to the number of days school attended as a percentage of the total number of possible school days. See [glossary](#) for more information.

In 2018, student attendance rates were:

- 93% for all students in years 1–6 and 90% for all students in years 7–10, similar to rates in 2014, which were 94% and 91% respectively
- lower in later year levels (89% in Year 10) than in earlier year levels (93% in Year 7)
- higher in non-government schools (93%) than government schools (91%) for years 1–10
- lower for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian children than for non-Indigenous children in years 1–10 (82% and 93% respectively). Attendance rates for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children remained relatively stable between 2014 and 2018
- higher in *Major cities* (93%) compared with *Inner regional* (91%), *Outer regional* (90%), *Remote* (87%), and *Very remote* (72%) areas for years 1–10 (SCRGSP 2019).

Literacy and numeracy

The National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an annual assessment of students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9. NAPLAN assesses the types of skills essential for every child to progress through school and life:

- reading
- writing
- language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation)
- numeracy (ACARA 2018a).

NAPLAN results provide data to assess achievement against the national minimum standard and mean score. See [glossary](#) for more information.

NAPLAN mean scores generally range from 0–1,000 points, with higher scores indicating better performance, and are equated so that a score of 700 in Reading has the same meaning in 2008 and 2018 (ACARA 2018c).

Trends

Since NAPLAN was introduced in 2008, national mean scores have improved for all year levels across all domains, except Writing (Figure 1).

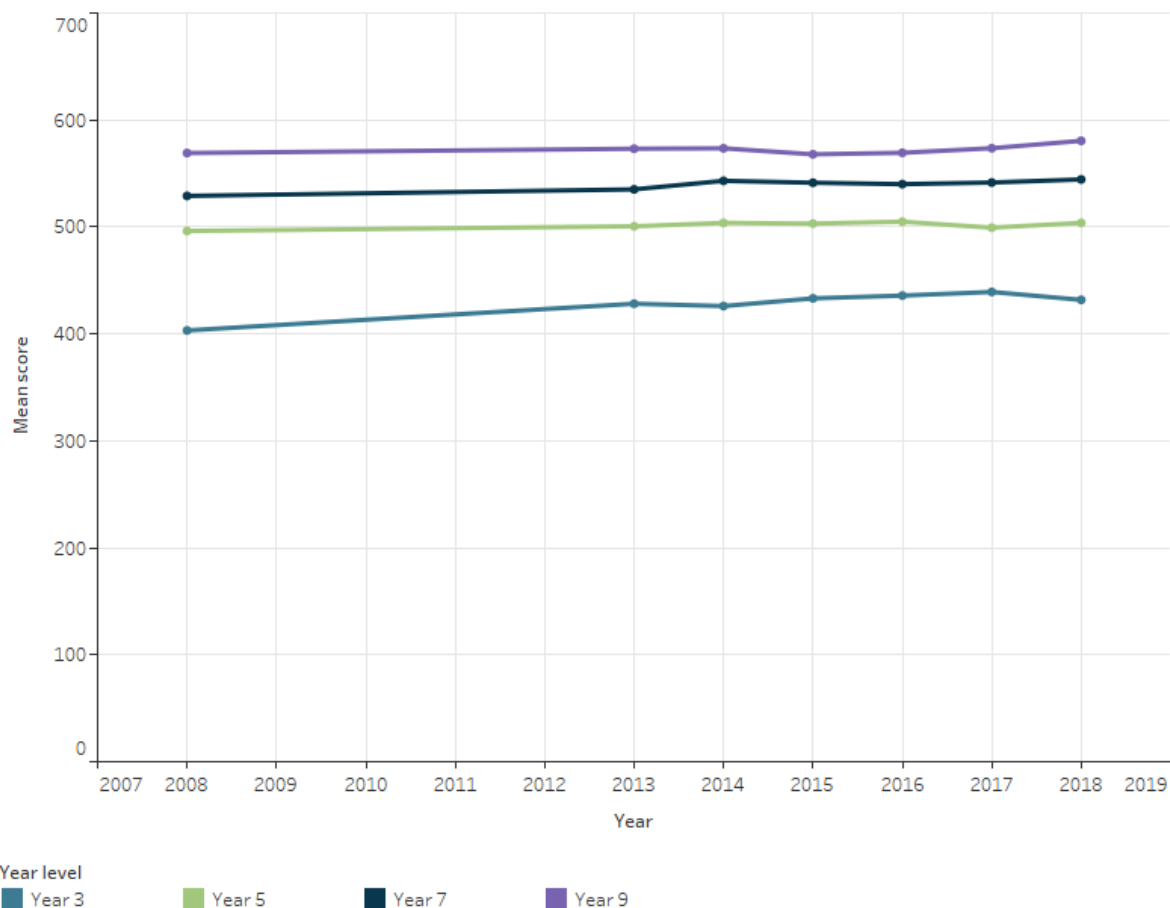
The largest improvements were in the Reading domain at Year 3 (33 points) and Grammar and punctuation at Year 3 (29 points). The greatest reductions in skill were in Writing for Year 7 (24 points) and Year 9 (27 points).

National mean scores on NAPLAN domains in 2018 did not change substantially from 2017. The only significant changes in the proportion of students at or above the national minimum standard were for years 5 and 9 students in the Grammar and punctuation domain, where increases of 2.5 and 2.4 percentage points were observed respectively (ACARA 2019).

Figure 1

National mean scores across NAPLAN domains by year level, 2008 to 2018

NAPLAN domain
Grammar and punctuation



Note: Due to changes in the Writing assessment in 2011, the earliest year against which 2018 results on the Writing domain can be compared is 2011.
Source: ACARA 2019.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Table 1 shows significant changes in NAPLAN domain scores between 2008 and 2018.

Table 1: NAPLAN mean scale scores in 2018, with significance of change between 2008 and 2018^(a), by year level

Domain	Year 3		Year 5		Year 7		Year 9	
	2018	Change	2018	Change	2018	Change	2018	Change
Reading	433.8	↑	509.3	↑	542.2	↑	584.1	↑
Writing ^(b)	407.1	↓	464.7	↓	505.3	↓	542.4	↓
Spelling	417.6	↑	502.4	↑	545.4	↑	583.4	↑

Domain	Year 3		Year 5		Year 7		Year 9	
	2018	Change	2018	Change	2018	Change	2018	Change
Grammar and punctuation	431.8	↑	503.8	↑	544.4	↑	580.5	↑
Numeracy	407.7	↑	494.0	↑	548.4	↑	595.7	↑

↑ Statistically significant increase from base year.

↓ Statistically significant decrease from base year.

↑ Increase from base year (not statistically significant).

↓ Decrease from base year (not statistically significant).

Source: ACARA 2019.

(a) Significance testing calculated by ACARA.

(b) Due to changes in the Writing assessment in 2011, the Writing score comparison is based on 2011 results as this is the earliest year against which 2018 results can be compared.

1 in 5 students completed the NAPLAN test online

In 2018, NAPLAN tests were delivered using the standard pen-and-paper test or NAPLAN Online. Approximately 1 in 5 students completed the NAPLAN tests online (ACARA 2018b).

Although results are considered comparable between the two versions of the test, concerns were raised about differences in testing methods. Year 9 students scored higher on the Writing domain if they completed the online test rather than the pen-and-paper test (ACARA 2018b). Year 9 students may have more confidence writing electronically than on paper. Students are also able to review and edit their work online in a way that is not possible with a paper test.

Population groups

In 2018:

- 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 scored an average of 10 points lower than males
- children whose parents had attained a Bachelor degree or higher returned the highest mean scores. They were more likely to perform at or above the national minimum standard than children whose parents had not attained a Bachelor degree or higher

- students from *Very remote* areas scored lowest across all NAPLAN domains when compared with students in other remoteness areas
- when averaged across all domains, Victoria had the highest mean achievement for years 3 and 5 and the Australian Capital Territory the highest for years 7 and 9.

International comparisons

Some international studies monitor the performance of primary and secondary school students around the world. These can be used to compare Australian students with their peers in other countries.

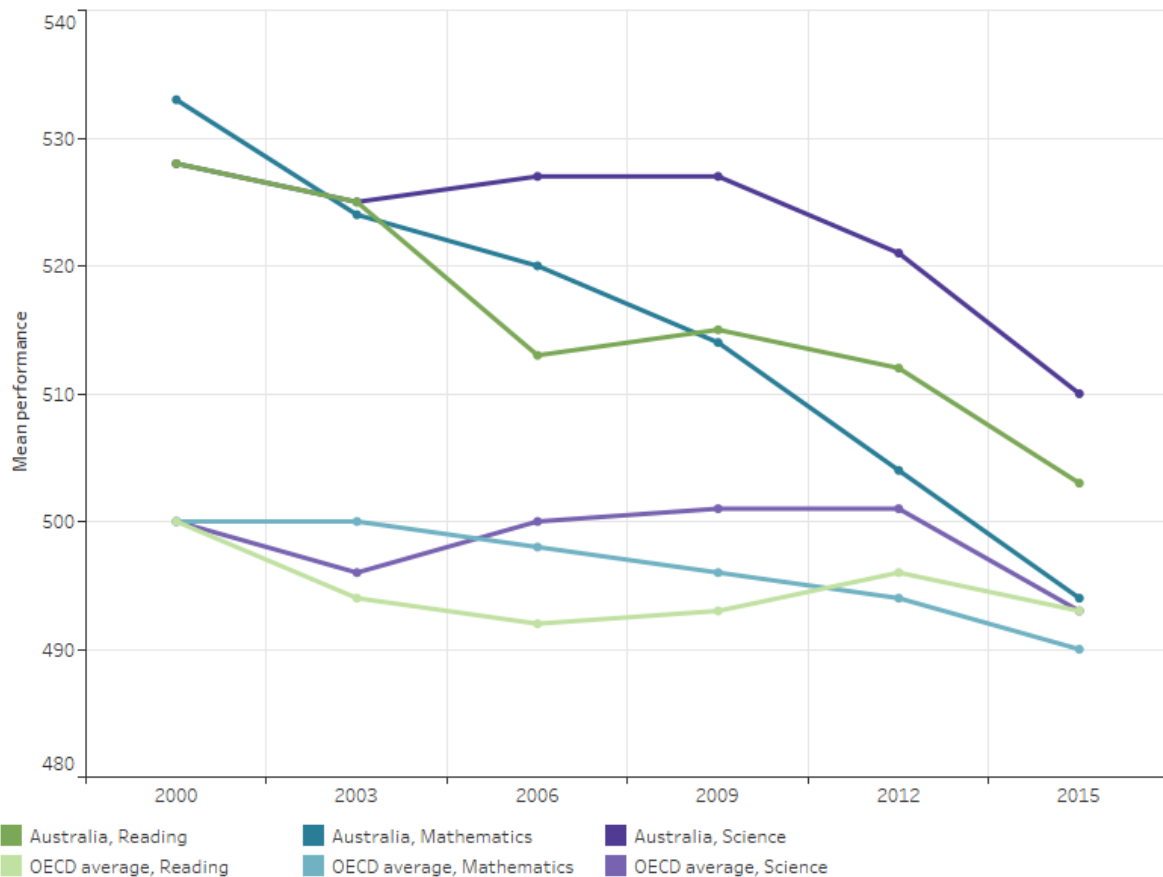
Programme for International Student Assessment

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. The performance of Australian students was highest at the first year of measurement (2000) and has since declined across reading, science and mathematics (Figure 2). While Australian students have performed above the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average on all three measures, the difference between Australia and the OECD average has been decreasing (OECD 2016b).

Figure 2

Mean performance on the PISA, Australia and OECD average, 2000 to 2015

PISA Scale
All



Source: OECD 2001, OECD 2004, OECD 2007, OECD 2010, OECD 2014, OECD 2016b.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

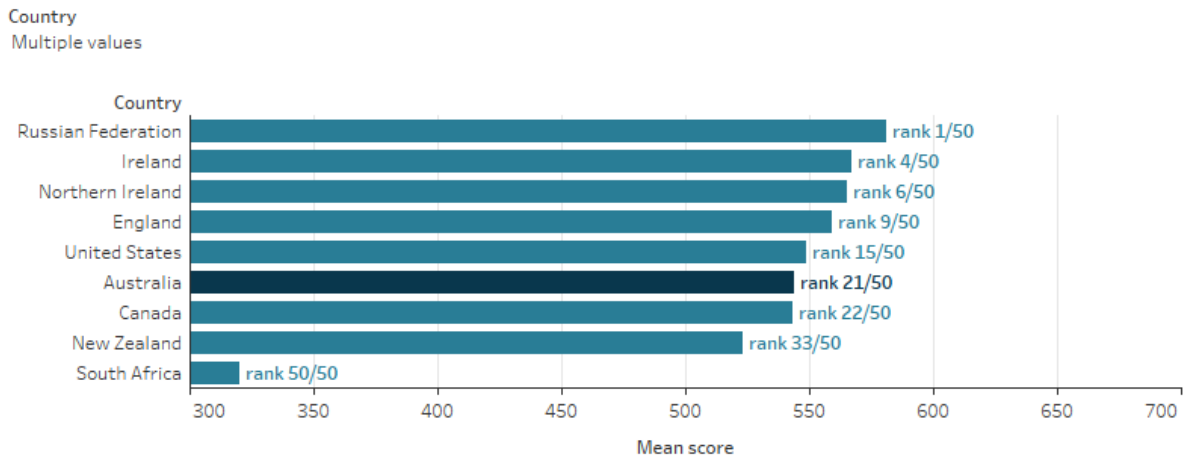
The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assesses reading literacy in Year 4 students across 50 countries. According to the PIRLS 2016 report (Thomson et al. 2017a):

- Australia's average reading score (544) was significantly higher than 24 participating countries and significantly lower than 13 countries.
- Australia scored similarly to the United States (549) and Canada (543), significantly higher than New Zealand (523), and significantly lower than Ireland (567), Northern Ireland (565) and England (559). The Russian Federation was the top scoring country (581) and South Africa the lowest (320) (Figure 3).

- Australian's mean reading score improved by nearly 20 points since 2011 (527 points in 2011).

Figure 3

Comparison of mean scores on the PIRLS reading literacy assessment, 2016



Source: Thomson et al. 2017a.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) has internationally compared the performance of Year 4 and Year 8 students in mathematics and science since 1995. In the 2015 TIMSS report, of the 57 countries that participated, Australia was outperformed by 21 countries in Year 4 mathematics, 12 countries in Year 8 mathematics, 17 countries in Year 4 science, and 14 countries in Year 8 science (Thomson et al. 2017b).

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on overall education, see:

- [The National Assessment Program](#)
- [Programme for International Student Assessment](#)
- [Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study](#)
- [Report on Government Services](#)
- [Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study](#)

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Secondary education: school retention and completion

Find the most recent version of this information at:
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/secondary-education-school-retention-completion>

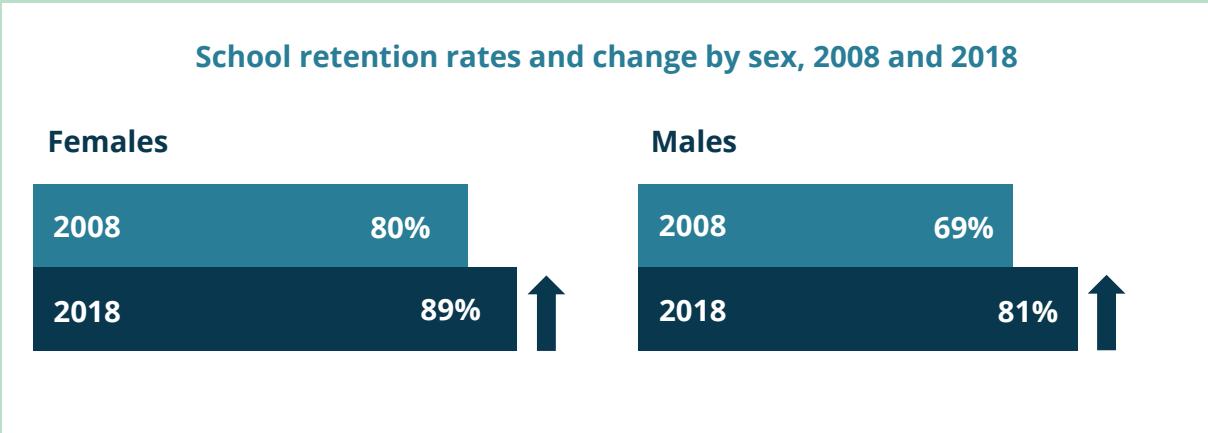
Participation in secondary school enables young people to develop their skills and knowledge, increasing their productivity and often leading to higher personal earnings and improved health and wellbeing outcomes. A highly skilled workforce also contributes to economic growth (World Bank 2005). In Australia, completing Year 12 or an equivalent qualification is an important milestone in the transition to adulthood (Liu & 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).

Are students staying in school?

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 2018, the apparent retention rate to Year 12 was 85%, an increase from 75% in 2008 (ABS 2009, 2019).

In 2018, more females than males were staying in school until Year 12; 89% of females compared with 81% of males. Apparent retention rates for both sexes have increased since 2008, by 9 percentage points for females and 12 percentage points for males (ABS 2009, ABS 2019).



Attainment of Year 12 or equivalent

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 2018b). This rate has been steadily increasing over the last few decades.

In 2018, more than three-quarters (78%) of people aged 15–64 had attained Year 12 or equivalent or a non-school qualification at Certificate III level or above. This proportion rose slightly to 79% when including people with a Certificate II (ABS 2018).

COAG attainment rate targets

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has endorsed national targets to increase the Year 12 attainment rate in Australia. These targets are described through national education (COAG 2016) and Indigenous reform agreements (SCRGSP 2018a).

The target to lift the Year 12 or equivalent (including Certificate III) attainment rate of those aged 20–24 to 90% by 2020 is on track (Productivity Commission 2017). The attainment rate increased overall between 2008 and 2018, from 83.2% to 88.8% (ABS 2019). However, the rate decreased from the peak of 89.2% in 2016 (Productivity Commission 2017).

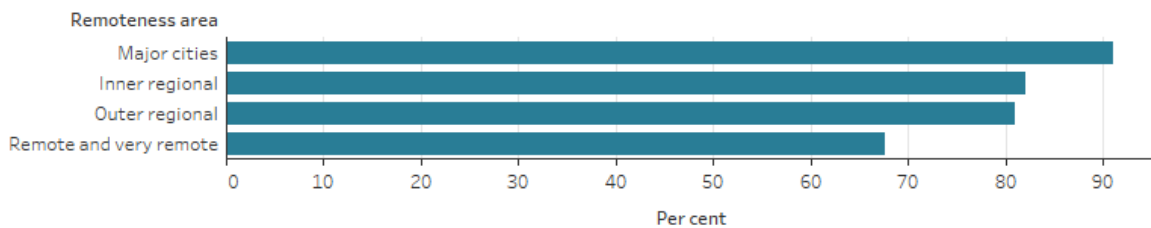
The target to halve the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians aged 20–24 in Year 12 or equivalent attainment is on track to be met by 2020. See [Indigenous education and skills](#) for more on this target.

In 2018, of people aged 20–24:

- women (90%) 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* (91%) were more likely than those living in other remoteness areas to have completed Year 12 or a Certificate III or above (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Proportion of persons aged 20–24 with Year 12 or equivalent, or non-school qualification at Certificate III level or above, by remoteness area, 2018



Note: Year 12/Certificate III educational attainment for *Remote and very remote* areas should be interpreted with caution due to a high relative standard of error (25% to 50%) (ABS 2018).

Source: ABS 2018.

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

Expectation of university study

A student's expectations of future education can influence their motivation, behaviour and achievement in school. Students with higher expectations of future study, including those who expect to go to university, tend to perform better (Khattab 2015; Hillman 2018).

According to the Programme for International Student Assessment, in 2015:

- 54% of Australian students aged 15 expected to continue their study at university when they finished Year 12. Another 3.2% expected they would study at a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institution
- 60% of female students expected to complete a university degree compared with 49% of male students (Hillman 2018).

Between 2003 and 2015, the proportion of Australian students aged 15 expecting to study at a:

- university declined from 63% to 54%
- TAFE institution declined from 8.0% to 3.2% (Hillman 2018).

The total number of commencing undergraduate students in 2015 was 361,412 (DET 2016). This was a 67% increase from 216,559 in 2003 (DET 2013).

Marked disparities in educational expectations exist across different population groups, often reflecting wider patterns of disadvantage in Australia. In 2015:

- only 28% of Indigenous students expected to complete a university degree, down from 43% in 2003
- 39% of students in schools in remote areas expected to complete a university degree, compared with 59% of students in metropolitan areas

- only 34% of students in the lowest socioeconomic quartile expected to complete a university degree, compared with 77% in the highest socioeconomic quartile
- even among high achieving students, only 74% of those from low socioeconomic backgrounds expected to complete a university degree, compared with 92% from high socioeconomic backgrounds (Hillman 2018).

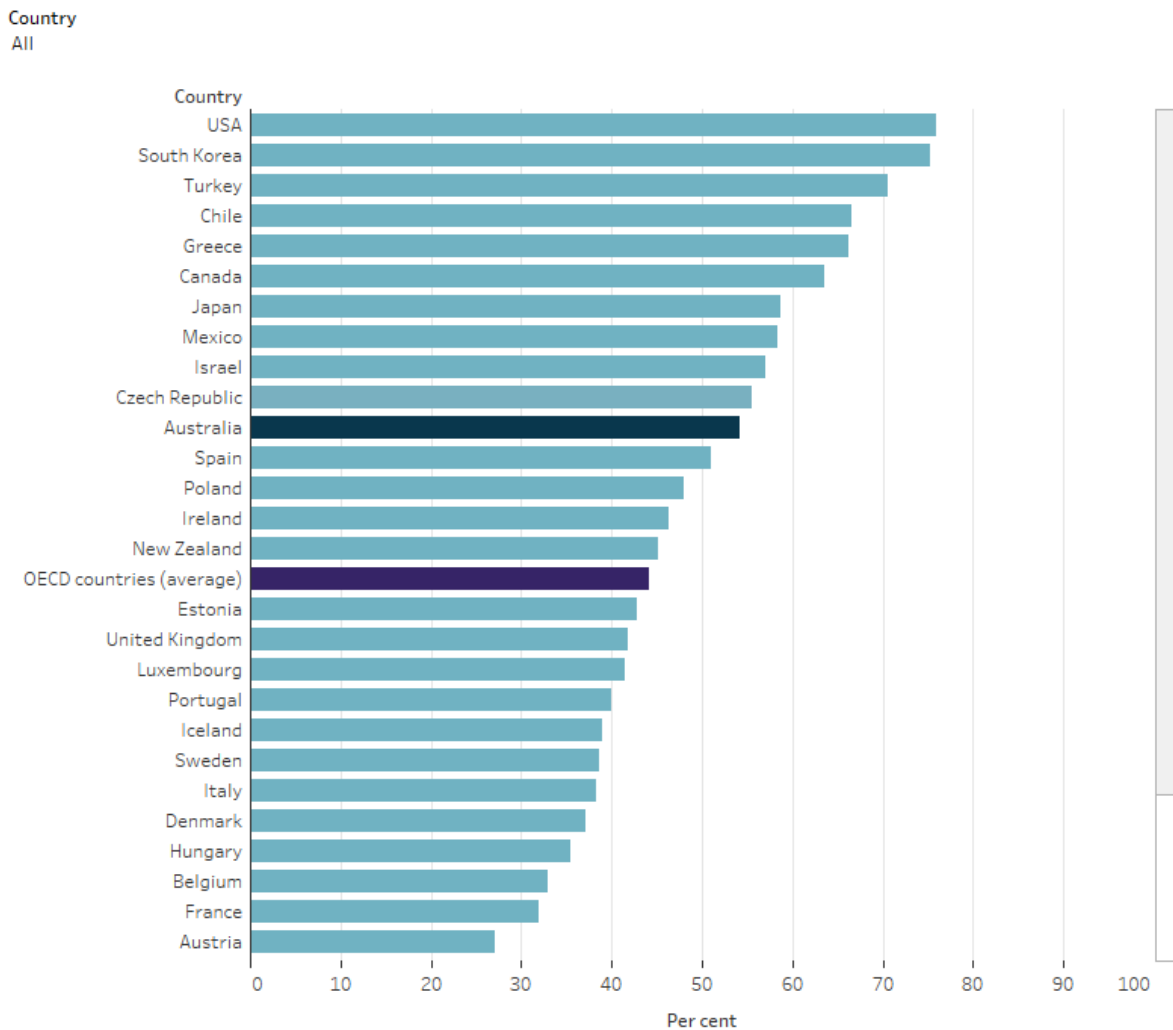
Of students born in Australia, only 48% expected to complete a university degree, compared with 70% of students born overseas (Hillman 2018).

International comparisons

In 2015, Australia ranked 11th (at 54%) out of 35 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries for the proportion of 15-year-olds expecting to complete university (Figure 2). This was below the United States (first at 76%) and Canada (sixth at 64%) but above New Zealand (15th at 45%) and the United Kingdom (17th at 42%; Figure 2). The OECD average was 44% (OECD 2015).

Figure 2

Proportion of 15-year-olds expecting to complete university, OECD countries, 2015



Note: Slovak Republic omitted due to missing data.

Source: OECD 2015.

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

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on school retention and completion, see:

- Productivity Commission [performance reporting dashboard](#)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [Survey of Education and Work](#)
- [ABS Schools](#)
- [Programme for International Student Assessment](#)

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Transition to primary school

Find the most recent version of this information at: www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/transition-to-primary-school

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 2014). These developmental skills play an important role when a child transitions to primary school, and establish the foundations for academic and life success (Pascoe & Brennan 2017).

This page presents information on the development and school readiness of children in Australia by the time they reach primary school, using data from the 2018 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC).

What is the Australian Early Development Census?

The AEDC was introduced nationally in 2009 to define and measure the developmental vulnerability of children every three years. Data is collected by teachers using the Australian version of the Early Development Instrument. They assess children in their initial year of formal schooling. Participation is voluntary (AEDC 2016).

The AEDC measures school readiness across five 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 three categories:

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

Who participated in the AEDC 2018?

In 2018, 309,000 children participated in the AEDC, 96% of the estimated number of eligible children at the time. The proportion of eligible children participating has remained fairly constant since 2009 (97% in 2015, 97% in 2012 and 98% in 2009).

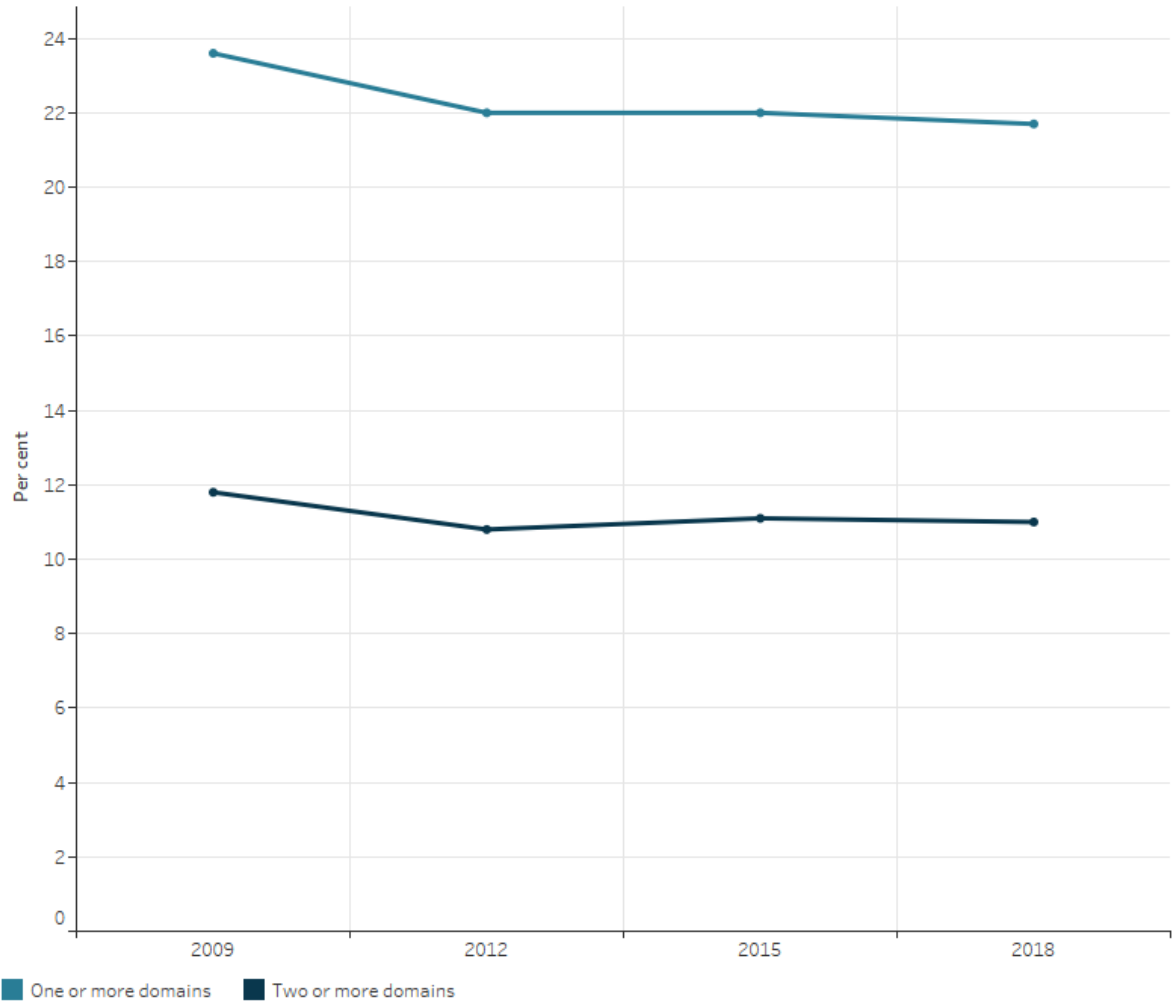
The average age of children in the 2018 AEDC was 5.6 years, consistent with previous years. Mean age differed by state and territory, reflecting the different ages at which children start their first year of full-time school. The highest mean age was 5.9 years in Tasmania, while the lowest was 5.3 years in Western Australia (AEDC 2019).

How many children were developmentally vulnerable?

The proportion of children classified as developmentally vulnerable on one or more domain(s) in 2018 was 22%, while the proportion classified as developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains was 11%. Developmental vulnerability has remained relatively stable since 2009 (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Proportion of children classified as vulnerable on one or more AEDC domain(s) or on two or more domains, 2009 to 2018



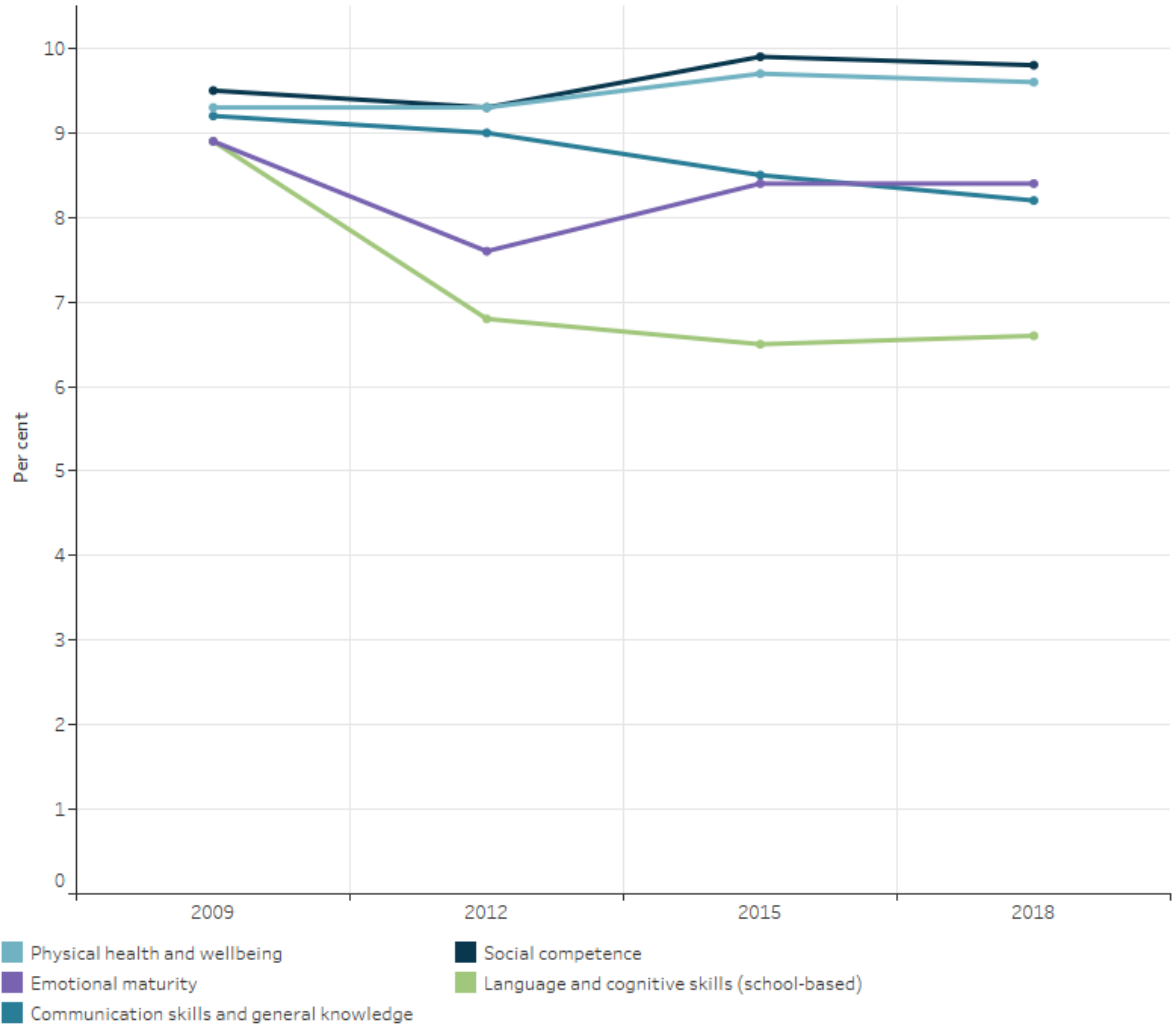
Source: AEDC 2016, 2019.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Some changes took place in the proportion of children considered to be developmentally vulnerable across the five AEDC domains. Between 2009 and 2018, the proportion of children developmentally vulnerable on:

- physical health and wellbeing increased from 9.3% to 9.6%
- social competence increased from 9.5% to 9.8%
- emotional maturity decreased from 8.9% to 8.4%
- language and cognitive skills decreased from 8.9% to 6.6%
- communication skills and general knowledge decreased from 9.2% to 8.2% (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Proportion of children classified as developmentally vulnerable on each of the five AEDC domains, 2009 to 2018



Source: AEDC 2016, 2019.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

The developmental vulnerability of children also differed across demographic factors.

Sex

In 2018, boys were around twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable on one or more and two or more domains than girls.

Boys were also more likely to be developmentally vulnerable across each domain than girls. This sex difference has been consistent in the AEDC since 2009 (Figure 3). The AEDC has noted that sex differences in academic performance resolve by Year 9; however, data is not available on the outcomes of early sex differences in social and emotional development in Australia (AEDC 2014).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian status

Indigenous children were twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable as non-Indigenous children in 2018.

In 2018, 41% of Indigenous children were developmentally vulnerable on one or more domain(s). The proportion of developmentally vulnerable Indigenous children declined between 2009 and 2018 (Figure 3).

Socioeconomic area

Children living in low socioeconomic areas were more likely to be developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains than children living in other socioeconomic areas.

In 2018, 32% of children in the lowest areas were developmentally vulnerable, compared with 15% of children in the highest areas. This was consistent between 2009 and 2018 (Figure 3).

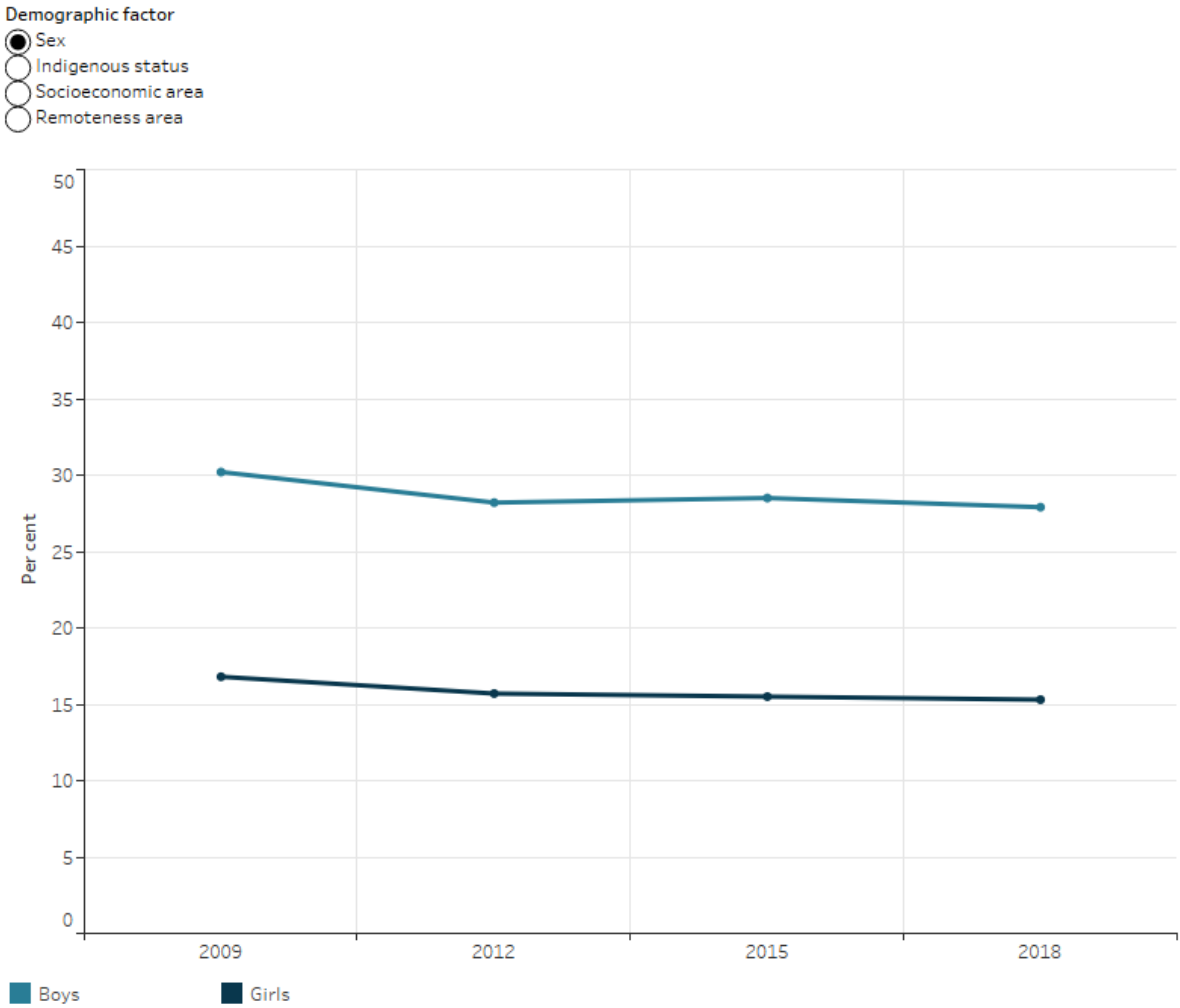
Remoteness area

Children living in *Very remote* areas were more likely to be developmentally vulnerable than children in other remoteness areas.

In 2018, 46% of children in *Very remote* areas were developmentally vulnerable, compared with 21% of children living in *Major cities* (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Proportion of children classified as developmentally vulnerable on one or more AEDC domain(s) by sex, Indigenous status, remoteness area and socioeconomic area, 2009 to 2018



Source: AEDC 2016, 2019.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on transitioning to primary school, see:

- [Australian Early Development Census](#)

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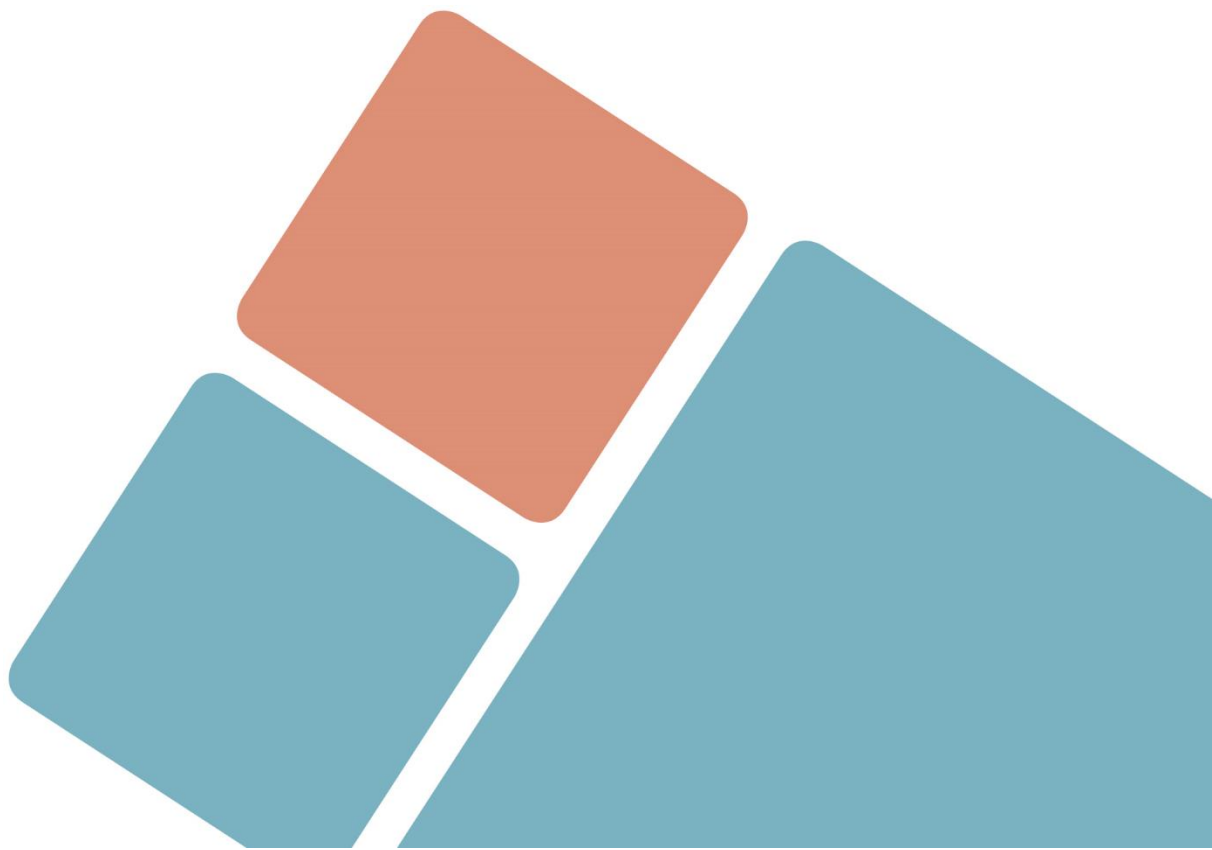
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Employment and work

Having a job helps people support themselves, their families and communities, and employment is tied to physical and mental health. Patterns of employment change over time, and people have different experiences of employment. Some people may have difficulty finding work or developing skills to improve employability, and may receive help from government employment services.



Employment services

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/employment-services>

The purpose of employment services is to provide assistance to help people find employment and/or acquire the skills necessary to find and maintain work. Many also provide support services during the early stages of employment. In Australia, employment services may be delivered by for-profit or not-for-profit organisations (Nevile 2013).

Employment services primarily provide support to recipients of specific income support payments for unemployed individuals, such as the Newstart Allowance. For an individual to continue to receive income support payments, they may be required to meet 'mutual obligation' requirements. For more information on types of income support and eligibility, see [Unemployment and parenting income support payments](#).

Mutual obligation requirements

Income-support recipients subject to mutual obligation requirements include unemployed people on Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance, and some receiving Parenting Payment and Special Benefit.

Mutual obligation requirements are tailored to an individual's circumstance, but often involve:

- agreeing to a job plan with a provider or the Australian Government Department of Human Services
- applying for up to 20 jobs per month
- attending regular appointments with a provider or periodic appointments with Human Services
- undertaking activities to increase skills and employability, which may include part-time work, study, language training or voluntary work.

The Australian Government provides funding for participatory programs to help unemployed individuals meet these requirements, including Work for the Dole, Youth Jobs PaTH, and the National Work Experience Program. For more information, see the Australian Government [Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business](#) website.

jobactive

The *jobactive* program funds employment services to support individuals receiving unemployment benefits. Under the program, service providers assist individuals to access relevant training needs, apply for and find employment in suitable jobs. The

program also provides financial incentives for qualifying businesses that employ eligible individuals. In 2018, there were 1,700 *jobactive* service providers in Australia (DJB 2018b).

More than 364,000 job placements were recorded in *jobactive* during the period April 2017 and March 2018 (DJB 2018a). An individual generally leaves *jobactive* if they have reduced their reliance on income support to zero. In the 12 months to March 2018, 64% who exited the program during this time reported being employed 3 months after exiting, 21% were unemployed, and 16% had left the labour force (DJB 2018a). For all individuals who exited or remained in the program in the same period, 49% were employed 3 months after exiting, 34% were unemployed and 17% had left the labour force (DJB 2018a).

Disability Employment Services

The Disability Employment Services (DES) program assists individuals with a disability, injury or health condition to prepare for, find and maintain employment. An individual may receive different services depending on their needs. Services can include resume development and employment-related training. They can also include in-workplace support for employers such as wage subsidies and workplace modifications (DSS 2018b). In 2016–17, 118 service providers were contracted or receiving funding under the program (DSS 2017).

Between 2014–15 and 2017–18, the number of people starting with DES dropped by approximately 6.6%, from around 96,900 to 90,500 (DSS 2017, 2018a). In 2017–18, 49,328 employment placements were recorded. Of these, 32% of individuals were in employment 3 months after DES participation (DSS 2018a).

Community Development Program

The Community Development Program (CDP) is an employment and community development program operating in more than 60 remote regions and more than 1,000 communities across Australia since mid-2015 (PM&C 2018a). About 80% of participants identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians (PM&C 2019). As of September 2018, participants had been supported into approximately 27,600 jobs since the CDP began (PM&C 2018b).

Transition to Work

The Transition to Work program provides pre-employment support to improve the work-readiness of young people and help them into work (including apprenticeships and traineeships) or education (DJB 2018d). From February 2016, when the program was introduced, to 31 January 2019, a total of 74,856 young people have started and 31,253 have had a job placement (DJB 2019b).

ParentsNext

The ParentsNext program provides parents of young children with services to enable them to plan and prepare for employment by the time their children reach school age (DJB 2019c). Eligible participants receive services including education, training, mentoring, work experience and job opportunities (DJB 2019c). ParentsNext aims to help break the cycle of intergenerational welfare dependency, increase female labour force participation and help Close the Gap in Indigenous employment.

ParentsNext initially operated in 10 Australian local government areas (between April 2016 and June 2018). It was implemented nationally in July 2018 (DJB 2019a). The program has two streams—intensive and targeted. The intensive stream operates in 30 locations identified as having a high level of disadvantage and/or a high proportion of Indigenous parents (DJB 2019a). It provides access to additional support including a Participation Fund, wage subsidies and relocation assistance. The targeted stream operates in all 51 employment regions across Australia (DJB 2019a). The program is expected to assist more than 68,000 parents each year (DJB 2018c).

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on employment services, see:

- Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, [Jobs Homepage](#)
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, [Community Development Program](#)
- Department of Social Services, [Disability Employment Services](#)

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Employment trends

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<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/employment-trends>

Employment underpins the economic productivity of a nation and enables people to support themselves, their families and their communities. Employment is also tied to physical and mental health outcomes and is a key factor in overall wellbeing. This page provides insight into employment trends in Australia.

Employment definitions

The information on this page is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Labour Force Survey (December 2018) (ABS 2018a) except where otherwise specified. Where available, seasonally adjusted data has been used. The ABS Labour Force survey uses these definitions:

Working-age population: All people aged 15–64.

Labour force: All people in the working-age population who are employed or unemployed (actively looking for work).

Not in the labour force: All people in the working-age population who are unemployed and not looking for work.

Unemployed people: All people in the working-age population who were unemployed in the survey reference week and:

- had actively looked for full-time or part-time work at any time in the 4 weeks up to the end of the survey reference week and were available for work in the reference week, or
- were waiting to start a new job within 4 weeks from the end of the reference week and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available then.

Participation rate: Percentage of the working-age population that is in the labour force.

Employment rate: Number of employed people, for any group, expressed as a percentage of the civilian population in the same group. Also referred to as the employment-to-population ratio.

Unemployment rate: Number of unemployed people, expressed as a percentage of the labour force.

Underemployment rate: Number of employed people in the working-age population who are either employed:

- part time and want to work more hours and are available to start with more hours in the survey reference week or in the 4 weeks after the survey

- 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.

The underemployment rate is expressed as a percentage of the labour force.

Full-time unemployment rate: Number of unemployed people looking for full-time work as a percentage of the full-time labour force (full-time employed and unemployed looking for full-time work).

Part-time unemployment rate: Number of unemployed people looking for part-time work as a percentage of the part-time labour force (part-time employed and unemployed looking for part-time work).

More definitions and information on how data on employment are collected can be found in the explanatory notes of the ABS Labour Force Survey (ABS 2018a) and Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods (ABS 2018b).

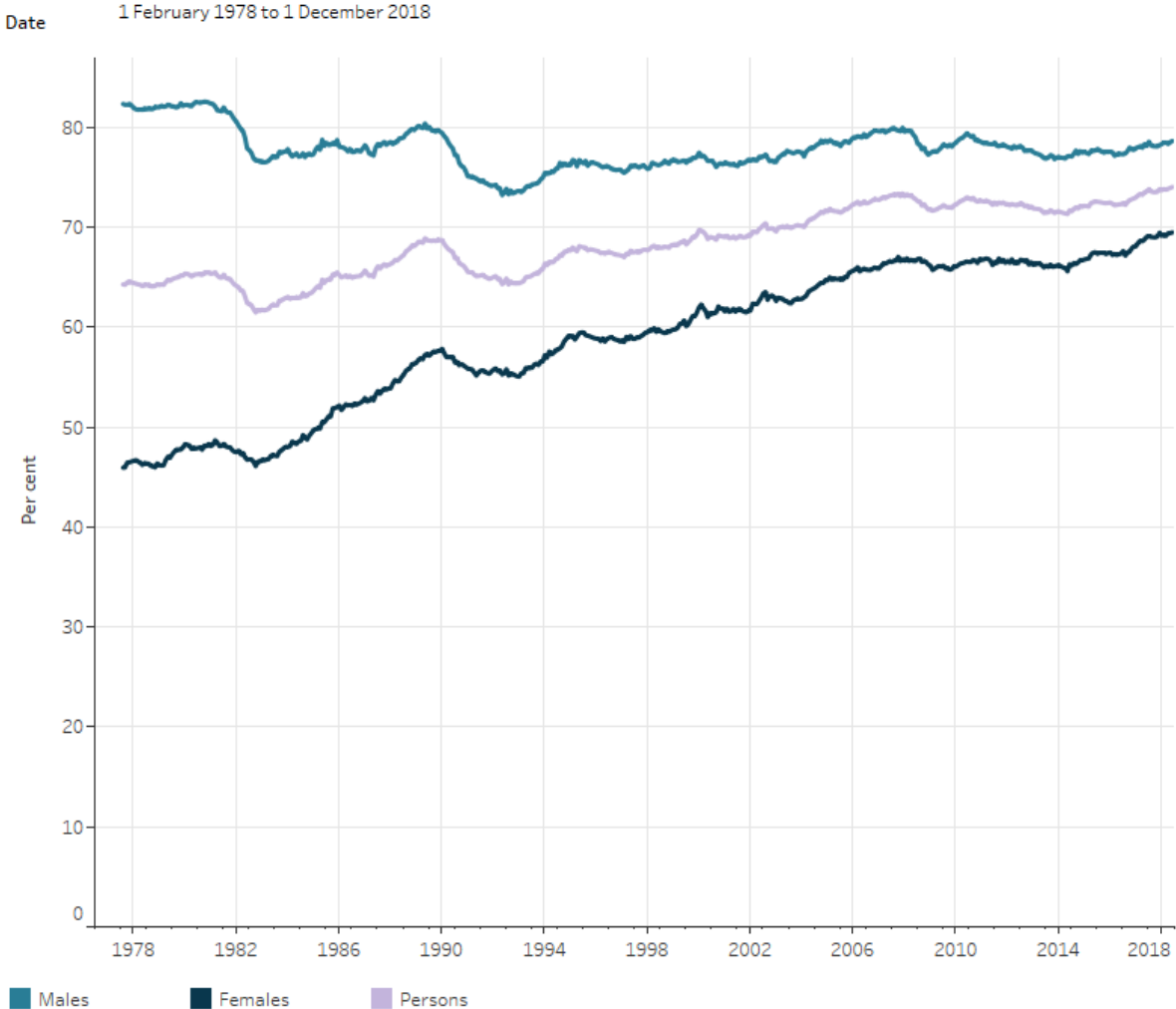
Employment

Since the late 1970s, Australia has generally experienced increases in the level of employment. The average employment rate for all working-age Australians in this period was around 70%, with a low of 62% in April 1983 and a high of 74% in December 2018. Nonetheless, the employment experiences of individuals differ with age, sex, educational attainment and other factors, explored further in [The experience of Employment](#).

This period saw three major economic downturns—the early 1980s recession, early 1990s recession and the 2008–09 global financial crisis (GFC). Following the 1980s and 1990s recessions, the employment rate for the working-age population fell. It then increased above pre-recession levels (Figure 1). The employment rate was slower to return to pre-recession levels following the 1990s downturn. During the GFC, the employment rate fell from approximately 73% to 72% over mid-2008 to mid-2009. Since mid-2009, the employment rate has moved between a low of 71% and a high of 74% (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Employment rate, by sex, 1978 to 2018



Note: This figure includes only the working age population (15–64 years of age). This figure uses ABS seasonally adjusted data.
Source: ABS 2018a (Table 18).
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

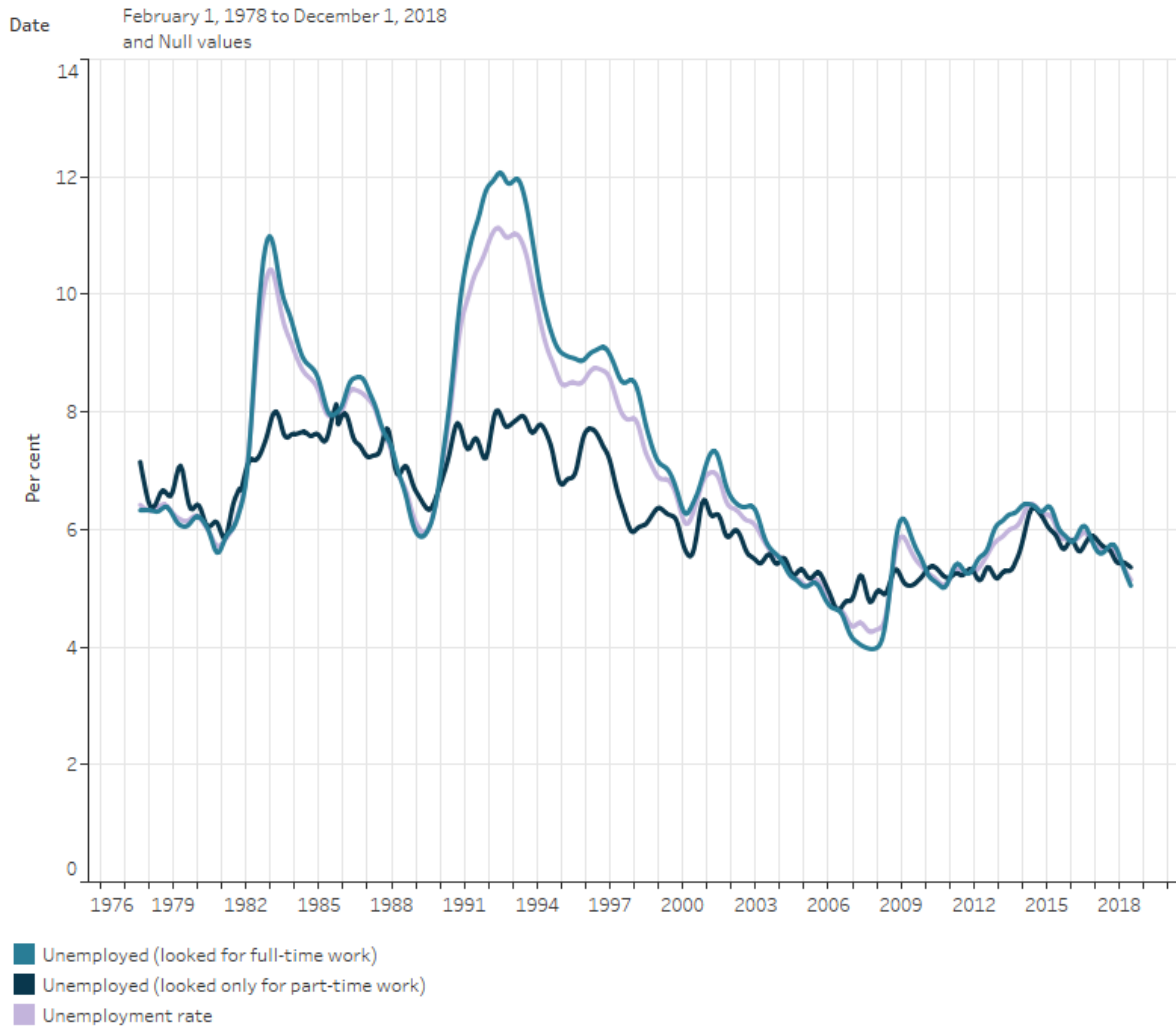
In 2018, the female employment rate reached the highest point recorded in Australia at 70%. This rate has risen over the period since the late 1970s. From 1985, at least half of working-age females were employed. The male employment rate peaked at 83% in 1981. It was 79% in December 2018. Male employment declined more through each economic downturn than did female employment.

Unemployment

In a similar manner to the employment rate, the unemployment rate has varied with economic downturns since the late 1970s. The economic downturns in the 1980s and 1990s, in particular the latter, saw unemployment rates maintained at higher rates for a longer period compared with the impact of the GFC (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Unemployment rate, by kind of work looked for, 1978 to 2018



Note: This figure includes only the working age population (15–64 years of age). This figure uses ABS trend data.
Source: ABS 2018a (Table 18).
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

In December 2018, the unemployment rate for the working-age population was 5.1%, compared with 6.4% in December 1978 (Figure 2). In the same months, the male unemployment rate was 5.0% in 2018, compared with 5.5% in 1978. The female unemployment rate saw the greatest change, at 5.2% in 2018 compared with 8.2% in 1978.

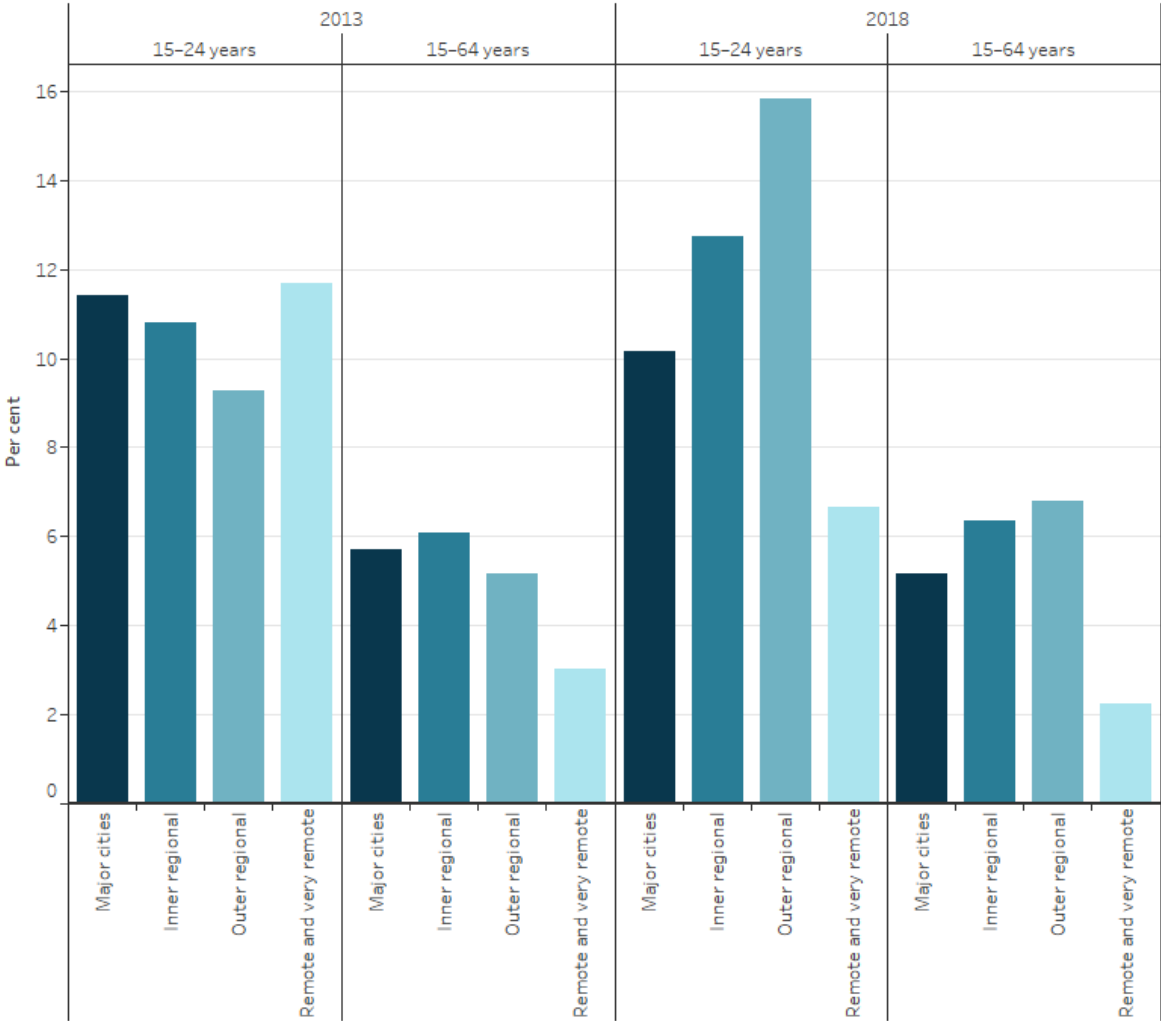
In 2018, the highest rate of unemployment for the working-age population was in *Outer regional* areas at 6.8%, compared with 2013 where the highest unemployment rate was in *Inner regional* areas at 6.1% (Figure 3). In 2018, for people aged 15–24, the highest unemployment rate was in *Outer regional* areas (15.8%). In 2013, the highest unemployment rate for those aged 15–24 was in *Remote and very remote* areas (11.7%).

Outer regional areas showed the greatest variance in unemployment rates from 2013 to 2018 for both the working-age population and those aged 15–24. Over this period, the

unemployment rate rose in *Outer regional* areas by 31% for the working-age population (5.2% to 6.8%), and 70% for those aged 15–24 (9.3% to 15.8%). The unemployment rate in *Major cities* remained stable between 2013 and 2018 for the working-age population (5.7% and 5.2% respectively), however it showed greater variance for those aged 15–24 between 2013 and 2018 (11.4% and 10.2% respectively) (ABS 2013, 2018c).

Figure 3

Unemployment rate by age and remoteness area, 2013 and 2018



Note: Data for 'Remote and Very remote' populations has a high standard error and should be treated with caution.
Sources: ABS 2013, 2018c.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Underemployment

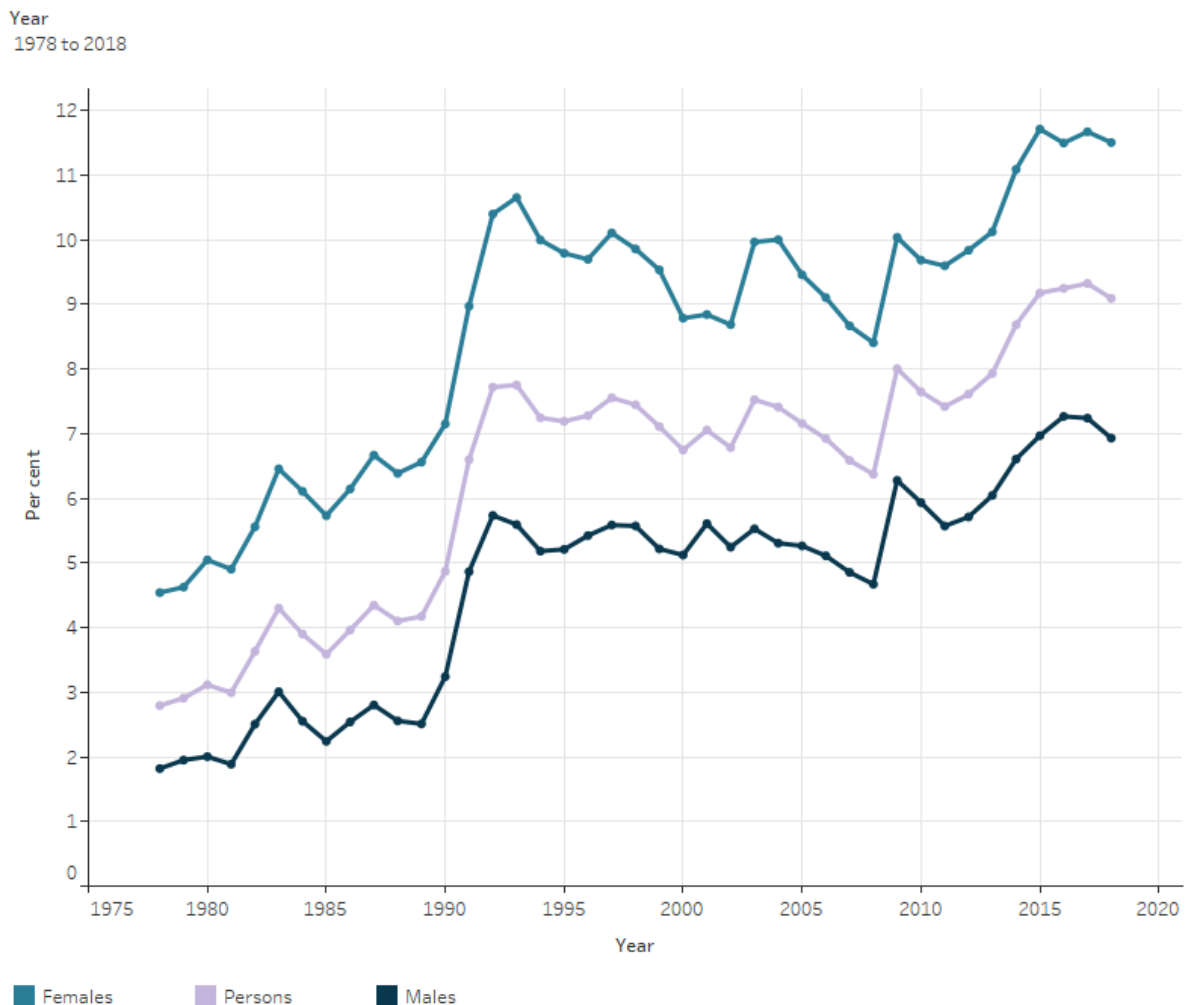
The concept of underemployment relates to the underuse of the productive capacity of the labour force (ABS 2018b). This section focuses on time-related underemployment, which relates to workers reporting insufficient availability of working hours compared with the number of hours they are willing and available to work.

Since the late 1970s, the underemployment rate has trended upwards for males and females in the working-age population (Figure 4). As with employment and unemployment, the rate of underemployment was impacted by economic downturns. The underemployment rate increased during the recession of the early 1990s, but did not return to pre-recession levels. In December 2018, the underemployment rate was 9.0% of employed people aged 15–64, which included 7.0% and 11.2% of the male and female labour force respectively.

Also, females are more likely to be working part time and more likely to prefer part-time hours. Males are more likely to work longer hours and more likely to prefer long hours (AIHW 2017).

Figure 4

Underemployment rate yearly averages, by sex, 1978 to 2018



Note: This figure includes only the working age population (aged 15–64). Yearly averages are calculated from ABS monthly seasonally adjusted data.
Source: ABS 2018a (Table 22).
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on employment trends, see:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Labour Force Survey](#)
- ABS [Survey of Education and Work](#)
- ABS, [Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods](#)

References

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The experience of employment

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/the-experience-of-employment>

Employment plays a significant role in the lives of many Australians. An individual who begins full-time work in their 20s will likely spend approximately 70,000 hours at work over the next 40 years.

This page considers aspects of employment and unemployment, including experiences by age and sex, the impact of education on employment outcomes, full-time and part-time employment, perceptions of employment and experiences of leaving the workforce.

Where available, seasonally adjusted Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Labour Force Survey data has been used.

See [Employment trends](#) for definitions of employment measures such as employment rate, unemployment rate and labour force participation rate.

Employment by age and sex

Different groups within the labour force, such as those characterised by age and sex, have different employment experiences. These differences contribute to aggregate changes in the overall employment rate.

In Australia, the employment rate of the working-age population (aged 15–64) has followed a general upward trend since the late 1970s. It experienced declines resulting from recessions in the early 1980s and 1990s and the global financial crisis (ABS 2018a).

In December 2018, the female employment rate was 70%, the highest level ever recorded for females and continuing a long-run trend of increasing female participation in the labour force. Male employment peaked at 83% in 1981, and was 79% in December 2018 (ABS 2018a).

The employment rate of people aged 65 and over has trended upwards in recent decades. In the late 1990s, 6% of people aged 65 and over were employed (including those aged 65 and over not in the labour force). For men aged 65 and over, 9.5% were employed in the late 1990s (including men aged 65 and over not in the labour force), compared with 3.3% of women (including women aged 65 and over not in the labour force). On the same reasoning, at the end of 2018, 14% of those aged 65 and over were employed (18% of men and 10% of women) (ABS 2018a).

Young people in the labour market

The Australian youth labour market is categorised by high participation rates and high unemployment rates. This section considers the experiences of employed and unemployed people aged 15–24 (called ‘youth’).

Australia has one of the highest youth labour market participation rates across all Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (OECD 2018). For youth in full-time education, the participation rate has increased over the past 30 years, from an average of 35% in 1987 to 51% in 2018. For youth not in full-time education, the participation rate has decreased slightly, from 88% in 1986 to 86% in 2018 (ABS 2018a).

The youth unemployment rate fell by 8.9% between December 2017 and December 2018 (12.3% and 11.2% respectively) (ABS 2018a). Nonetheless, over recent decades the unemployment rate for those aged 15–24 has been more than twice that of the total unemployment rate. Many factors may contribute to this high rate, including that youth, on average, may have less skills and experience than older counterparts. It is also worth noting that approximately 50% of those aged 15–24 are attending full-time education (ABS 2018b). This is encouraging, given that higher educational attainment ultimately leads to more favourable labour market outcomes.

Some people are not engaged in education, employment or training (often referred to as NEET). NEET youth may be susceptible to long-term unemployment and disadvantage. In 2018, 9.4% of females and 8.6% of males aged 15–24 were NEET (ABS 2019a). The rate of NEET youth increased with age—in 2018, 5.5% of people aged 15–19 were NEET, compared with 12% of those aged 20–24 (ABS 2019a).

Youth NEET rates also differ by remoteness, with higher rates observed in more remote areas. Reasons for these regional differences include the concentration of education or employment opportunities and higher mobility in major cities (OECD 2016). In 2018:

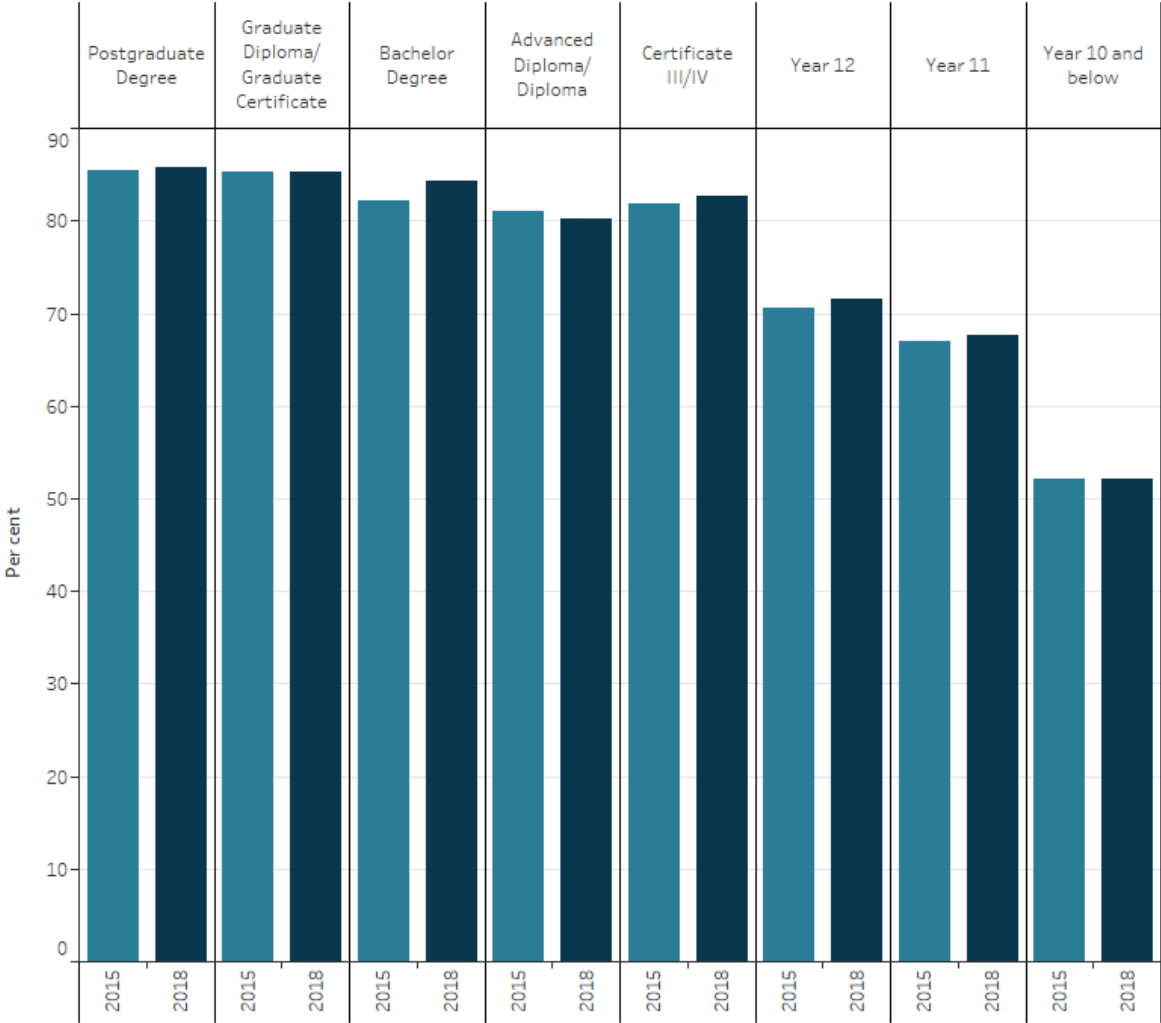
- 7.8% of youth in *Major cities* were NEET
- 11.6% of youth in *Inner regional* areas were NEET
- 14.3% of youth in *Outer regional* areas were NEET
- 9% of youth in *Remote and very remote* areas were NEET (ABS 2018c).

Education and employment

On average, people with a higher level of educational attainment are more likely to be employed (Figure 1). The employment rate of people aged 20–64 whose highest qualification was Year 10 and below was essentially steady between 2015 and 2018 (52.2% and 62.1% respectively). By comparison, the employment rate of people whose highest qualification was a Bachelor degree rose marginally from 82.2% in 2015 to 84.3% in 2018 (ABS 2019b).

Figure 1

Employment rate by level of educational attainment, 2015 and 2018



Note: This figure includes people aged between 20–64 years. Data is an average of the August and November recordings for each year.
Source: ABS 2019b (Table 24b).
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Working hours

Australia has one of the highest shares of part-time workers across all OECD countries (OECD 2018). Between December 2008 and December 2018, the share of people who work full time has fallen by 4.2%, from 72% to 69% of the overall employment share. Over the same period, the share of people who worked part time has risen by 11%, from 28% to 31% of the overall employment share (ABS 2018a). These patterns, which reflect longer-term trends, could be caused by factors including the economy’s industrial composition change, with an increasing proportion of workers being employed in the services sector (excluding agriculture, mining, manufacturing, forestry and fishing). Changes in full-time and part-time employment shares may also be caused by the increase in the labour force participation rate of females (AIHW 2017).

For many people, working part time enables them to balance work with other activities, including caring responsibilities (for children, parents or those with disability). It also helps older Australians to stay in work while transitioning to retirement, and enables students to work part time while studying full time.

Full-time, part-time and casual employment definitions

Full-time employment refers to people who usually work 35 or more hours per week, plus those who usually work less than 35 hours, but worked for 35 hours or more in the reference week for the ABS Labour Force Survey (ABS 2018d).

Part-time employment refers to those who usually work less than 35 hours per week, and did so in the reference week for the ABS Labour Force Survey (ABS 2018d).

Casual employment is often characterised by no set or regular weekly hours, lack of paid leave and no notice period for ending employment. However, casual employees may work full-time or part-time hours.

Perceptions of work

Issues such as employment satisfaction, stress and security can have substantial impact on a person's wellbeing (Wilkins & Lass 2018). For those aged 15 and over, employee perceptions of their employment remained relatively stable from 2005–06 to 2015–16.

Of note:

- employee views of job flexibility and autonomy at work (including flexibility of working hours, choosing what to do at work, having a say about what happens at work, and freedom to decide when to do work) remained constant
- the perception of job security decreased, including the future of work in a current job and the employer still being in business in 5 years
- employees noted a decrease in high levels of stress over the 10-year period, but an increase in their perception that work is intense and that they must work fast
- employees were more likely to agree they used many of their skills and abilities in their current job and that it provided them with variety and required them to take initiative (Wilkins & Lass 2018).

Retirement

As working Australians age, they will be faced with decisions surrounding retirement from the labour force. The ABS defines retired people as those who have retired from work or retired from looking for work, and do not intend to recommence or look for work in the future (ABS 2017).

In 2016–17, 38% of people aged 45 and over were retired from the labour force. Fifteen per cent of those aged 45–64 were retired, compared with 76% of those aged 65 and

over (ABS 2017). For retirees whose last job was less than 20 years ago, the most commonly cited reason for retiring was reaching retirement age, or being eligible for superannuation or a pension. Government pension or allowance was the most common source of income for retirees (ABS 2017).

It should be noted that the status of 'retired' does not entitle a person to a Centrelink pension; age cut-offs are used instead. As of July 2017, the minimum age to access an Age Pension was 65 years and 6 months, depending on birthdate (DHS 2018).

Where do I go for more information?

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Labour Force Survey](#)
- ABS, [Survey of Education and Work](#)
- ABS, [Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods](#)

References

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Volunteers

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/volunteers>

Data about people in Australia who volunteer are primarily drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2014 General Social Survey (GSS) (ABS 2015b). Volunteering in that survey is defined as the 'provision of unpaid help willingly undertaken in the form of time, service or skills, to an organisation or group, excluding work done overseas' (ABS 2018).

3 in 10 people are volunteers

In 2014, 31% of the Australian population aged 15 and over participated in voluntary work. Over a 12-month period, volunteers contributed an estimated 743 million hours to the community. In 2012–13, the estimated value of voluntary work in not-for-profit organisations was \$17 billion (ABS 2015a).

In Australia, volunteers provide substantial benefit to their communities. Organisations report that they bring new insights, enhance the image of the organisation, increase efficiencies and volume of operations, and improve effectiveness. Volunteering also broadens the networks and professional skills of the volunteers.

Volunteering is an indicator of wellbeing. It also has links to the economic and health status of a nation. It benefits the economy and the health and wellbeing of volunteers by providing a personal sense of satisfaction and making them happier (AIHW 2017).

Who volunteers?

In 2014, 5.8 million people participated in voluntary work—more than half (54%) were female. Younger people were more likely to be volunteers, with 42% of people aged 15–17 volunteering, followed by 39% of people aged 35–44 and 35% of people aged 65–74. While limited information is collected at national level about younger volunteers, the literature suggests that they volunteer to engage in their community for a combination of reasons, similar to volunteers of other age groups. Reasons include a combination of personal gain, desire to contribute, and social, cultural and family expectations. A 2015 study identified that the key motivators for people aged 12–25 for volunteering were linked to factors such as socioeconomic circumstances, education, gender, location, and cultural identification (ARACY 2015).

The volunteering rate in 2014 was higher for people who had attained a Bachelor degree or above. A total of 41% of this cohort had participated in voluntary work, compared with 32% whose highest non-school qualification was an advanced diploma or below, and 25% who did not have a non-school qualification.

Patterns of volunteering varied by geographic location, with 30% living in *Major cities* volunteering in the past 12 months, 33% in *Inner regional* and 39% in *Outer regional* and *Remote* areas.

Couples with children were more likely to volunteer than individuals without children or couples without children (38% compared with 25% and 29% respectively). People who worked part time were more likely to volunteer (38%) than those who worked full time (30%), were retired (27%) or not in the labour force for a different reason (30%).

Volunteering rates increased with increasing household income—39% of people living in households with the highest quintile of gross household income volunteered, compared with 23% in the lowest quintile.

How often and where do people volunteer?

Volunteers in Australia are generous with their time. In 2014, 50% of all who had volunteered in the previous 12 months contributed more than 50 hours during that period and almost one-fifth (19%) contributed 200 or more hours. Half (50%) of all volunteers had been volunteering for more than 10 years, and 70% had parents who had been volunteers.

In 2014, almost two-thirds (63%) of people who volunteered did so for 1 organisation, 24% for 2 organisations and 14% for 3 or more. The most common types of organisations were sports and recreation (31%), education and training (24%) welfare/community (21%), and religious groups (19%).

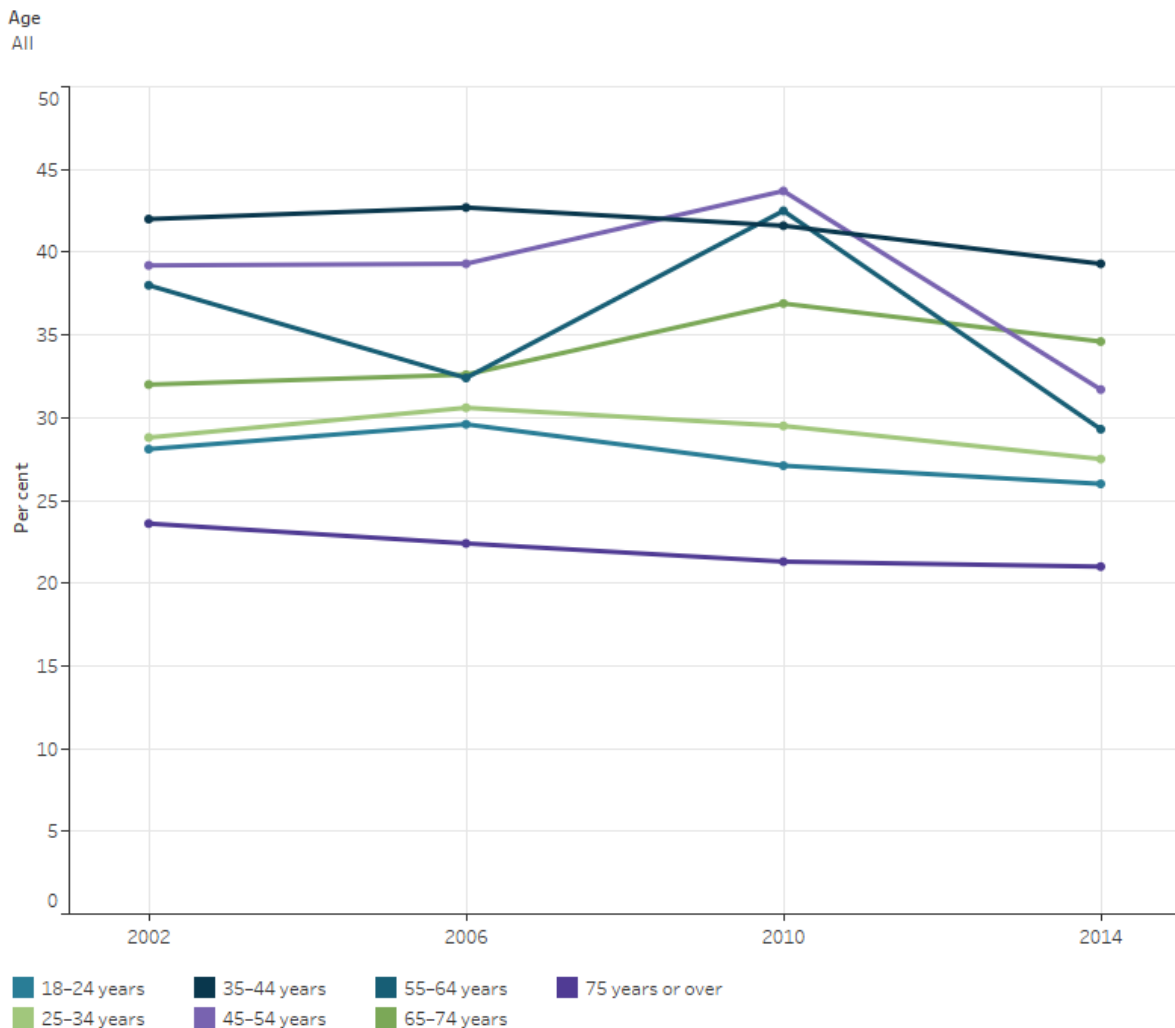
Trends

Overall volunteering rates have fluctuated over time. In 2002 and 2006, 34% of all people aged 18 and over reported volunteering in the previous 12 months. In 2010, this increased to 36% and in 2014 it decreased to 31%.

Across age groups, fluctuations have been more noticeable, including increases in 2010 among those aged 45–54 and 55–64 and the subsequent steep decline in these age ranges in 2014, along with declines in all other age groups (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Proportion of people who undertook unpaid voluntary work in the last 12 months, by age, 2002 to 2014



Source: ABS 2015b.
<https://www.aihw.gov.au>

These decreases reflect the broader changes noted in the GSS of a decrease in the levels of involvement in activities that connect people to their broader community. The ABS *Measures of Australia's progress, 2013* also noted a decrease in the time and opportunity that Australians have for recreation and leisure, and social and community interaction (ABS 2014). The proportion of people providing help and assistance, such as home maintenance jobs, gardening, running errands and unpaid childcare to others outside their household, also declined (49% in 2010 down to 46% in 2014).

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on volunteers in Australia, see [General Social Survey: Summary of Results, Australia 2014](#)

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2014. [Measures of Australia's progress, 2013](#). ABS cat no. 1370.0. Canberra: ABS.

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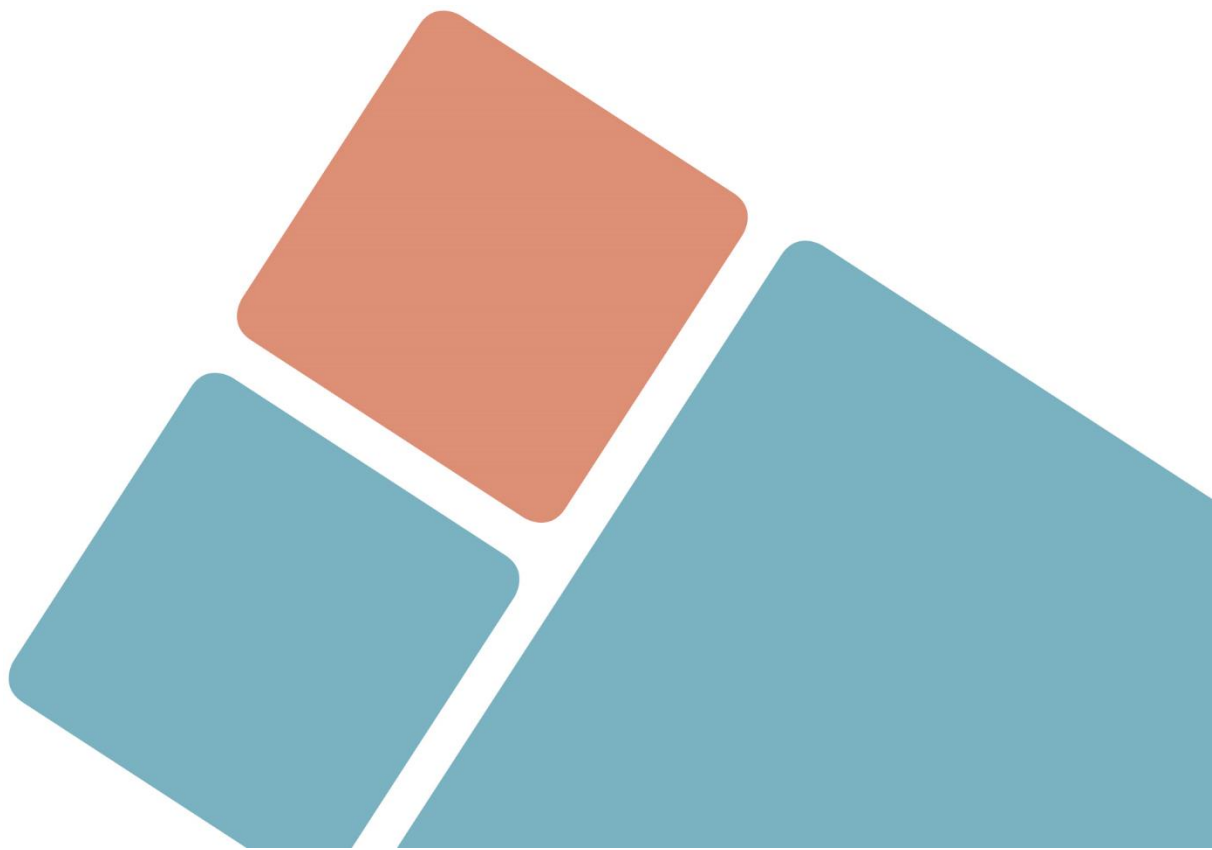
ABS 2015b. [General Social Survey: Summary results, Australia, 2014](#). ABS cat. no. 4159.0. Canberra: ABS. ABS 2018. [Information paper: Collection of volunteering data in the ABS, March 2018](#). ABS cat. no. 4159.0.55.005. Canberra: ABS.

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Income and finance: government payments

Government payments support those who may not be able to fully support themselves or would benefit from financial assistance at certain life stages—such as people unable to work or find work, or people who would benefit from support with the cost of raising children.



Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/disability-support-pension-and-carer-payment>

Many Australians, including those with disability or carers of people with disability, require government welfare assistance to meet their everyday costs of living. When these payments are a person's primary source of income they are called an 'income support payment', which is a specific category of social security payments. Australian social security payment policy is administered by the Department of Social Services, and income support payments are delivered by the Department of Human Services through its network of Centrelink offices. Payments are targeted to individuals who do not have the means to support themselves.

These Centrelink payments support working-age people who have employment restrictions due to disability or are caring for someone with disability, a severe medical condition or who are frail-aged. Recipients of these payments are encouraged to participate in employment where they have capacity to and can gain from the benefits of working, including improved wellbeing. Carer Payment recipients, for example, can engage in employment or study for up to 25 hours per week (including travel time), and remain eligible for payment. These payments are an important part of a larger network of services and assistance designed to improve the wellbeing of Australians.

This page focuses on people aged 18–64 receiving Disability Support Pension (DSP) or Carer Payment. Data are sourced from the Department of Human Services administrative data and exclude recipients aged under 18. People aged 65 and over receiving these payments are covered in [Income support payments for older people](#). Information on government expenditure on these payments are included in [Welfare expenditure](#).

As at 29 June 2018, 908,200 adults aged 18–64 received DSP or Carer Payment, equating to 5.9% of the population aged 18–64. Of these:

- 75% received DSP (680,300 or 4.4% of the population aged 18–64)
- 25% received Carer Payment (227,800 or 1.5% of the population aged 18–64).

Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment

DSP: is a means-tested income support payment for people aged 16 and over but under age pension age (at claim) who have a reduced capacity to work because of impairment. This includes those who are: permanently blind; unable to work for 15 hours or more per week for the next 2 years due to their disability or medical condition; unable, as a result of impairment, to undertake training that would equip them for work within the next 2 years.

Carer Payment: is a means-tested income support payment for people providing constant care for someone with a physical, intellectual or psychiatric disability or severe medical condition. The carer cannot support themselves through substantial paid employment because of their caring role. People receiving this payment are also eligible for other allowances and supplements, such as the Carer Allowance (income testing for eligibility introduced September 2018), annual Carer Supplement and annual Child Disability Assistance payment. Carer Allowance and Carer Supplement are not reported on this page.

Trends

Overall, the number of people aged 18–64 receiving DSP or Carer Payment increased by 35% over the last 2 decades—from 672,700 in 2001 to 908,200 in 2018 (as at end June in each year). The rate of increase varied for women and men (81% for women; 5% for men). In 2001, 1.5 times as many men received DSP or Carer Payment as women (408,100 and 264,600 respectively). By 2018, the number of women who received DSP or Carer Payment was higher than for men—478,600 and 429,600 respectively (Figure 1).

When accounting for population growth, the proportion of the population aged 18–64 receiving DSP or Carer Payment remained relatively stable. Proportions increased slightly between 2001 and 2014 (5.6% to 6.8%) and declined thereafter to 5.9% in 2018.

Between 2001 and 2018, the number of:

- DSP recipients aged 18–64 increased overall by 10% (616,400 to 680,300), peaking in 2012 at 793,900 and falling in 2018 to 680,300 (14% decline between 2012 and 2018). The proportion of the 18–64 population receiving DSP remained relatively stable between 2001 and 2014 (5.1 to 5.3%) and declined thereafter to 4.4% in 2018.
- Carer Payment recipients aged 18–64 increased 4-fold (56,300 to 227,800). The rate of increase was slower between 2014 and 2018 than in previous years, with a 9.0% increase over this period. The proportion of the population aged 18–64 receiving the Carer Payment increased from 0.5% in 2001 to 1.4% to 1.5% from 2014 onwards (Figure 1).

See 'Chapter 3 Income support over the past 20 years' in [Australia's welfare 2019: data insights](#) for more long-term trends.

Figure 1

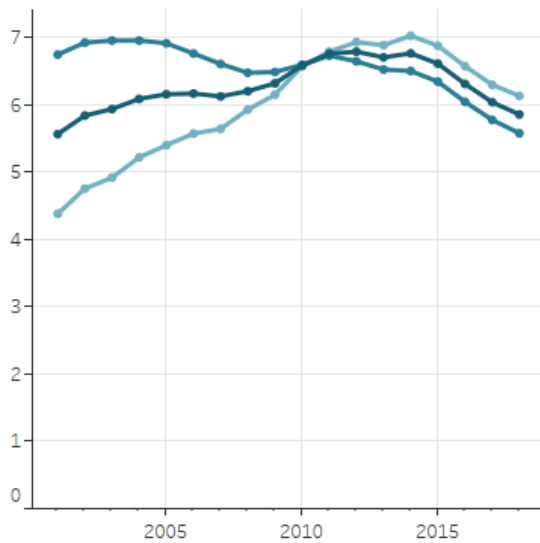
Recipients of Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment, people aged 18–64, 2001 to 2018

Measure
Proportion

Payment type

- Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment
- Disability Support Pension
- Carer Payment

Proportion of people receiving Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment by sex



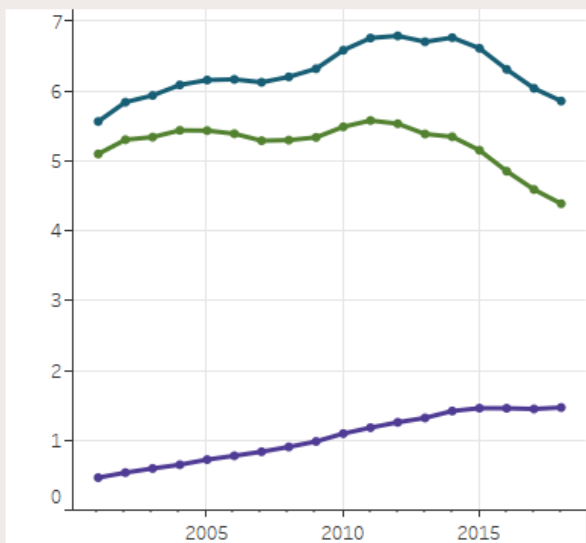
Sex, Payment type

- Persons, Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment
- Men, Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment
- Women, Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment

Sex

- Persons
- Men
- Women

Proportion of people receiving Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment



Payment type, Sex

- Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment, Persons
- Disability Support Pension, Persons
- Carer Payment, Persons

Notes:

1. Data are as of end of June of the corresponding year.
2. Data may differ from official statistics on income support payments and recipients, due to differences in methodology and/or data source.

Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Human Services administrative data.

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

Age

Recipients of DSP or Carer Payment (aged 18–64) are typically in older age groups, with more than half (53%) aged 50–64.

Just over 1 in 10 (11%) 50–64-year-olds receive DSP or Carer Payment. People in this age group are far more likely to be receiving these payments than those in younger age groups—1.8 times as likely to receive DSP or Carer Payment as those aged 40–49 and 3.4 times as likely as those aged 25–39, as at 29 June 2018 (Figure 2).

Sex

Overall, women aged 18–64 were slightly more likely to receive DSP or Carer Payment than men in the same age group (6.1% compared with 5.6%, as at 29 June 2018; Figure 2). This pattern was driven by those receiving Carer Payment (2.1% of women compared with 0.9% for men). Women accounted for 71% of Carer Payment recipients compared with 47% of DSP recipients. Men were slightly more likely to receive DSP than women (4.7% compared with 4.1% respectively).

Indigenous Australians

As at 29 June 2018, 61,700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians aged 18–64 received DSP or Carer Payment. This equates to 14% of the Indigenous population aged 18–64 receiving these payments, compared with 5.6% for Other Australians (11% compared with 4.2% for DSP and 3.4% compared with 1.4% for Carer Payment; Figure 2).

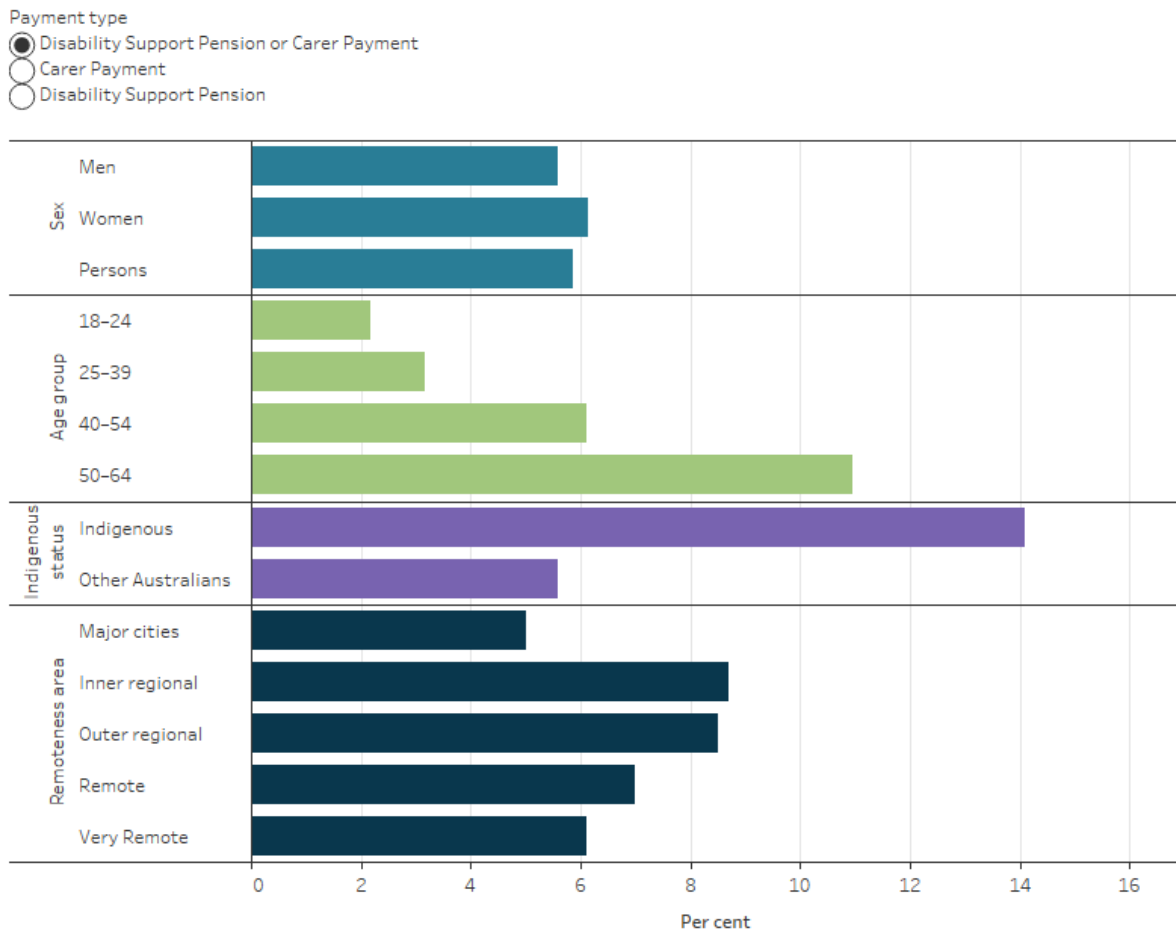
After taking into account the differences in the age structures between Indigenous and Other Australians, Indigenous Australians were 3.1 times as likely as Other Australians to receive DSP and 2.7 times as likely to receive Carer Payment.

Remoteness area

As at 29 June 2018, people aged 18–64 living in *Inner regional* and *Outer regional* areas were more likely to be receiving DSP or Carer Payment (8.7% and 8.5% respectively) than those living in *Major cities* (5.0%), *Remote areas* (7.0%), or *Very remote areas* (6.1%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Proportion of people aged 18–64 receiving Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment, by sex, age, Indigenous status and remoteness area, as at 29 June 2018



Notes:

1. All proportions are as at 29 June 2018.
 2. Data may differ from official statistics on income support payments and recipients, due to differences in methodology and/or data source.
- Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Human Services administrative data.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Primary medical condition

As at 29 June 2018, psychological or psychiatric conditions were the most common recorded primary medical condition for DSP recipients aged 18–64 (36%) and carer receivers of those aged 18–64 receiving Carer Payment (31%). Musculoskeletal and connective tissue conditions were also frequently reported (20% for DSP recipients and 21% for care receivers), and intellectual and learning conditions (15% for DSP recipients and 10% for care receivers).

Earning an income while receiving income support

Individuals who report income from work, investments, superannuation, and/or substantial assets, may have their benefit payments reduced to a part-rate payment.

This income test is designed so at low incomes individuals will not have their benefit payments reduced, but once their income increases past a threshold, their payment will decrease. Income support recipients are required to report earnings from all sources.

For recipients aged 18–64 receiving DSP or Carer Payment as at 29 June 2018:

- almost 1 in 6 (16%) received a part-rate payment
- less than 1 in 10 (8.9%) declared earnings.

Duration of income support

People receiving DSP or Carer Payment tend to be long-term income support recipients, with the vast majority aged 18–64 (81%) receiving income support for at least 5 years. The corresponding proportion for those in the same age group receiving all other income support payments was 32%.

For those aged 18–64 receiving DSP or Carer Payment as at 29 June 2018:

- 87% of DSP recipients had received income support for at least 5 years, including 65% for 10 or more years
- 64% of Carer Payment recipients had received income support for at least 5 years, including 36% for 10 or more years

The vast majority of DSP recipients aged 18–64 at 29 June 2018 had been in receipt of this payment for at least 5 years—81% remained on DSP for 5 or more years, including 50% for 10 or more years. The duration on Carer Payment tended to be shorter than for DSP with 31% of recipients having been on this payment for 2 to less than 5 years and 40% for 5 or more years.

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on Centrelink payments and data, see:

- ‘Chapter 3 Income support over the past 20 years’ in [Australia welfare 2019: data insights](#)
- [A guide to Australian Government payments](#)
- [DSS Payment Demographic Data](#) on data.gov.au

Family assistance payments

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/family-assistance-payments>

A range of Centrelink payments, administered through the Department of Human Services, are available to support families with their work and family responsibilities. Family Assistance payments, such as the Family Tax Benefit (FTB), assist with the everyday costs of raising children. They provide additional financial assistance to income support recipients (a specific category of social security payments that serve as a primary source of income) and others in need of support.

This page focuses on individuals receiving the main family assistance payments provided to families to assist with the cost of raising children. For more information, see [Family Tax Benefit](#). It does not include other payments for parents, such as the parenting payment that provides support for principal carers because of their reduced capacity to support themselves while caring for young children (see [Unemployment and parenting income support payments](#)). Information on government expenditure on these payments is covered in [Welfare expenditure](#).

Data for this page are sourced from the Department of Human Services administrative data.

As at 29 June 2018, 1.4 million Australians were receiving FTB payments, supporting 2.8 million children. Of these recipients:

- 77% (1.1 million) received FTB Part A and Part B
- 22% (311,000) received FTB Part A only and 1.2% (16,800) Part B only.

Family Tax Benefit

FTB has 2 parts:

- FTB Part A is a [per child payment](#) to assist with the cost of raising children (dependent child aged 0–15, or 16–19 in full-time secondary study). A supplement may be paid at the end of the financial year for families with an adjusted taxable income of \$80,000 or less. Part A is income tested on family income.
- FTB Part B is a [per family payment](#) to single parents, non-parent carers, grandparent carers and families with one main income to assist with the cost of raising children. A supplement may be paid at the end of the financial year. Part B is income tested, with single parent families' automatically receiving maximum payment if their income is less than \$100,000 (as at 1 July 2015, before that date the income was less than \$150,000).

Families can receive their FTB entitlement through fortnightly instalments or by lodging a lump sum claim at the end of the financial year.

The data on this page has been largely sourced from fortnightly instalment data, given that nearly all FTB recipients (93% in 2013–14) receive instalment payments (DSS 2018c). As such, it does not include data on recipients who choose to receive FTB as a lump sum.

Trends

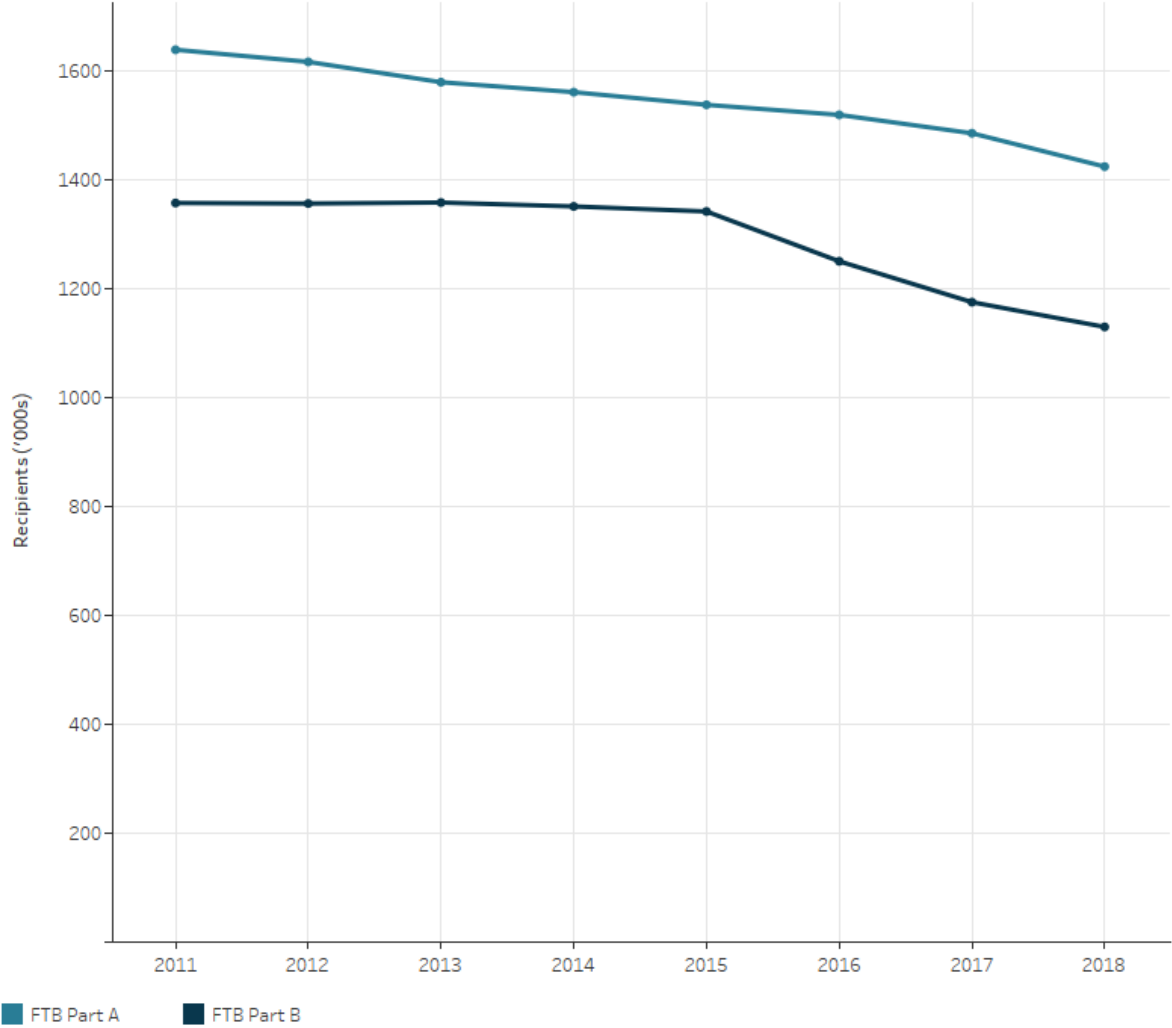
Overall, the number of FTB recipients declined between June 2011 and June 2018 (DSS 2018b). For FTB:

- Part A, the number of recipients declined steadily from 1.6 million in 2011 to 1.4 million in 2018 (13% decline)
- Part B, the number of recipients remained relatively steady between 2011 and 2014 (around 1.4 million). The number then declined by 16% between 2015 and 2018 (1.3 million to 1.1 million) (Figure 1).

There was also a downward trend in the number of Australian families with children aged 16 or under receiving FTB, from 63% to 59% for Part A and 56% to 50% for Part B between 2013–14 and 2015–16 (DSS 2018a).

Figure 1

Number of recipients receiving Family Tax Benefit, 2011 to 2018



Note: Data are as of June for the corresponding year.
Sources: DSS 2018a, 2018c.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Age

Almost 1 in 2 FTB children (47%) were of primary school age at June 2018. Almost 3 in 10 FTB children were of early childhood age (28%) and around 1 in 4 were of secondary school age (16% of lower secondary age and 10% of senior secondary age).

FTB families receiving income support

Almost half (44% or 629,300) of FTB recipients (Part A or Part B) were receiving income support payments as at June 2018. FTB Part B recipients were more likely to be receiving income support payments than FTB Part A recipients (51% compared with 44%). Of the FTB recipients receiving income support:

- almost half (47%) received Parenting Payment Single (241,000) or Parenting Payment Partnered (53,000)
- one-quarter (26% or 162,800) received Newstart Allowance
- one-fifth (22%) received Disability Support Pension (72,900) or Carer Payment (67,800).

Since 2012, the proportion of FTB recipients receiving income support payments has increased, from 38% in June 2012 to 44% in June 2018.

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on Centrelink payments and data, see:

- [A guide to Australian Government payments](#)
- [DSS Payment Demographic Data](#) on data.gov.au

References

DSS (Department of Social Services) 2018a. [Department of Social Services annual report 2017–2018](#). Viewed 18 January 2019.

DSS 2018b. [DSS Payment Demographics Data](#). Viewed 19 March 2019.

DSS 2018c. [Family Tax Benefit payment trends and profile report June 2016](#). Viewed 19 March 2019.

Income support payments for older people

Post-retirement, nearly two-thirds of Australians receive government assistance as their main source of income (ASIC 2018), to meet everyday costs of living. Australian social security payment policy is administered by the Department of Social Services, and income support payments are delivered by the Department of Human Services, through its network of Centrelink offices. There is also a network of services and assistance available designed to improve the wellbeing of older Australians (see [Aged care](#)).

A range of social security payments support older Australians (defined on this page as those aged 65 years and over). The most common payment is Age Pension, which is paid to people who meet certain requirements, such as age and residency as well as being subject to income and asset testing. In response to Australians living longer and healthier lives, which has placed increased demand on this payment, policy changes have been made to achieve sustainability of Age Pension system. This includes the incremental increase in the qualifying age for Age Pension (Australian Government 2009). As the qualifying age for this payment continues to increase (from 65.5 in 2017 to 67 years in 2023), there may be increased demand on other associated payments, such as Disability Support Pension (DSP), Carer Payment and Newstart Allowance (see [Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment](#) and [Unemployment and parenting income support payments](#)).

This page examines the main income support payments received by the Australian population aged 65 and over. Data are sourced from the Department of Human Services administrative data. Information on government expenditure on payments for older Australians is covered in [Welfare expenditure](#).

As at 29 June 2018, 2.6 million people aged 65 and over received income support payments, equating to 2 in 3 (67%) of the population aged 65 and over. Of these:

- 95% (2.5 million) received Age Pension
- 4.5% (119,000) received either DSP or Carer Payment (2.8% or 72,600 received DSP and 1.8% or 46,400 received Carer Payment).

Trends

The 18 years to 2018 saw a 60% rise in the number of income support recipients aged 65 and over, from 1.6 million in 2001 to 2.6 million in 2018. This broadly reflected the growth in the aged population over this period. As a result, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over receiving income support payments remained relatively stable between 2001 and 2018. The proportion rose slightly between 2001 and 2015 (from 68% to 72%) and fell to 67% in 2018 (Figure 1).

For Age Pension, the:

- proportion of the population aged 65 and over receiving this payment has remained relatively stable, 67% in 2001 and 63% in 2018
- number of people receiving this payment, however, increased overall between 2001 and 2018—1.62 million in 2001 which increased to 2.54 million in 2016 and dropped slightly to 2.48 million in 2018. Note that before 2014, a substantial number of women under the age of 65 were receiving Age Pension (174,600 in 2001 declining to 26,300 in 2013). This reflects the increasing qualifying age for the Age Pension from 61.5 in 2001 to 65.5 from July 2017 (see 'Chapter 3 Income support over the past 20 years' in [Australia's welfare 2019: data insights](#) for more information on shifts in income support data over the last 20 years).

Receipt of DSP or Carer Payment has increased substantially over the 18 years to 2018. The number of recipients receiving these payments rose from 4,200 to 119,000 between 2001 and 2018, equating to an increase from 0.2% to 3.0% of the population aged 65 and over, over this period.

There was some variation in the age profile of Age Pension recipients over time. In particular, between 2001 and 2018, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over receiving Age Pension:

- fell by 38% for those aged 65–69 (71% to 44%), with the rate of decline faster in recent years (with a fall of 12 percentage points since 2016, compared with 9 percentage points in the preceding decade, between 2006 and 2015)
- rose by 36% for those aged 75–84 (57% to 78%), with the rate of increase steeper in earlier years (with a rise of 15 percentage points between 2001 and 2008, compared with 5-percentage points between 2008 and 2018).

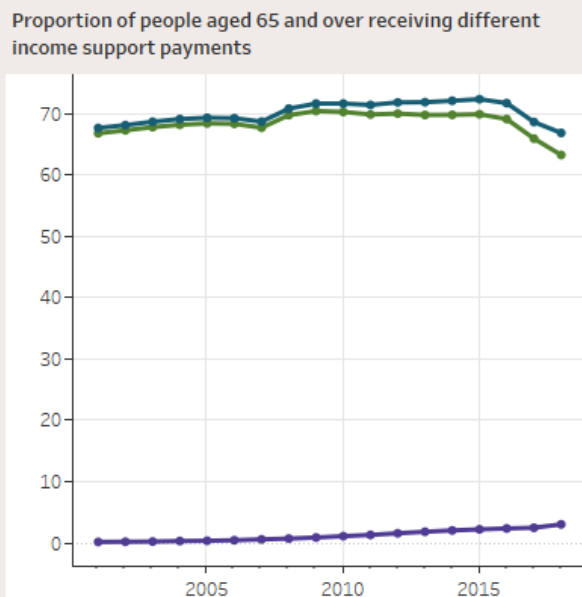
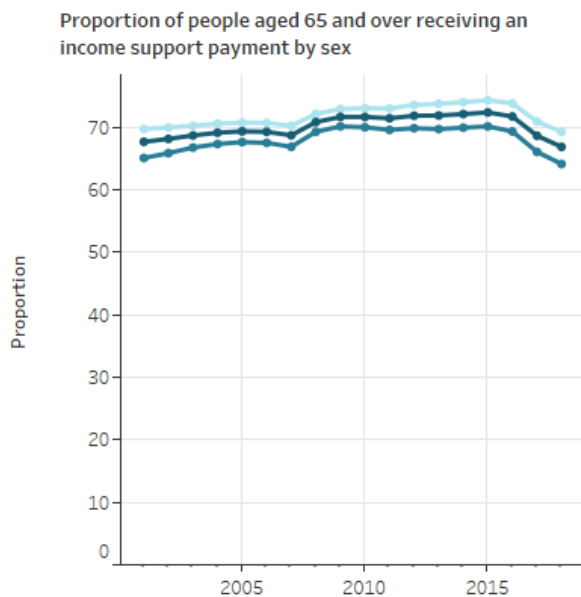
Figure 1

Recipients of income support payments, people aged 65 and over, 2001 to 2018

Measure
Proportion

Payment type
 ● All income support payments
 ○ Age Pension
 ○ Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment

Sex
 ● Persons
 ○ Men
 ○ Women



Sex, Payment type
 ■ Persons, All income support payments
 ■ Men, All income support payments
 ■ Women, All income support payments

Payment type, Sex
 ■ All income support payments, Persons
 ■ Age Pension, Persons
 ■ Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment, Persons

Notes:

1. Data are as of the end of June of the corresponding year.
 2. Data may differ from official statistics on income support payments and recipients, due to differences in methodology and/or data source.
- Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Human Services administrative data.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Age

As at 29 June 2018, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over who received income support payments increased with age, up to age group 80–84 (52% for those aged 65–69 to 82% for those aged 80–84). It fell to 71% for those 85 and over (Figure 2).

The age profile of older income support recipients (aged 65 and over) varied by payment type. Those who received DSP or Carer Payment were typically younger than those receiving Age Pension. Almost 2 in 3 (64%) were aged 65–69, compared with 1 in 5 (22%) for Age Pension recipients. Conversely, 52% of Age Pension recipients were aged 75 and over compared with 10% for those receiving DSP or Carer Payment.

Sex

As at 29 June 2018, among those aged 65 and over, women were slightly more likely to receive income support payments than men—1.4 million (69% of women in this age group) compared with 1.2 million (64%) of men (Figure 2).

Indigenous Australians

As at 29 June 2018, 22,100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians aged 65 and over received income support payments. This equates to 63% of the Indigenous population aged 65 and over receiving these payments compared with 67% for Other Australians (Figure 2).

After taking into account the differences in the age structures between Indigenous and Other Australians, Indigenous Australians aged 65 and over were slightly less likely to receive income support payments. However, there was some variation by payment type. Compared with Other Australians, Indigenous Australians were:

- less likely to receive Age Pension—56% of the Indigenous population aged 65 and over compared with 63% for Other Australians. (Note: 90% of older Indigenous income support recipients receive Age Pension compared with 95% for other older recipients.)
- more likely to receive DSP or Carer Payment—5.4% compared with 3.0% for Other Australians.

Note: Indigenous identification in 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 Indigenous Australians receiving income support payments.

Remoteness area

As at 29 June 2018, people aged 65 years and over living in *Inner regional* and *Outer regional* areas were more likely to be receiving income support payments (72%) than those living in *Major cities* (64%), *Remote* areas (66%) or *Very remote* areas (57%) (Figure 2).

Earning an income while receiving income support

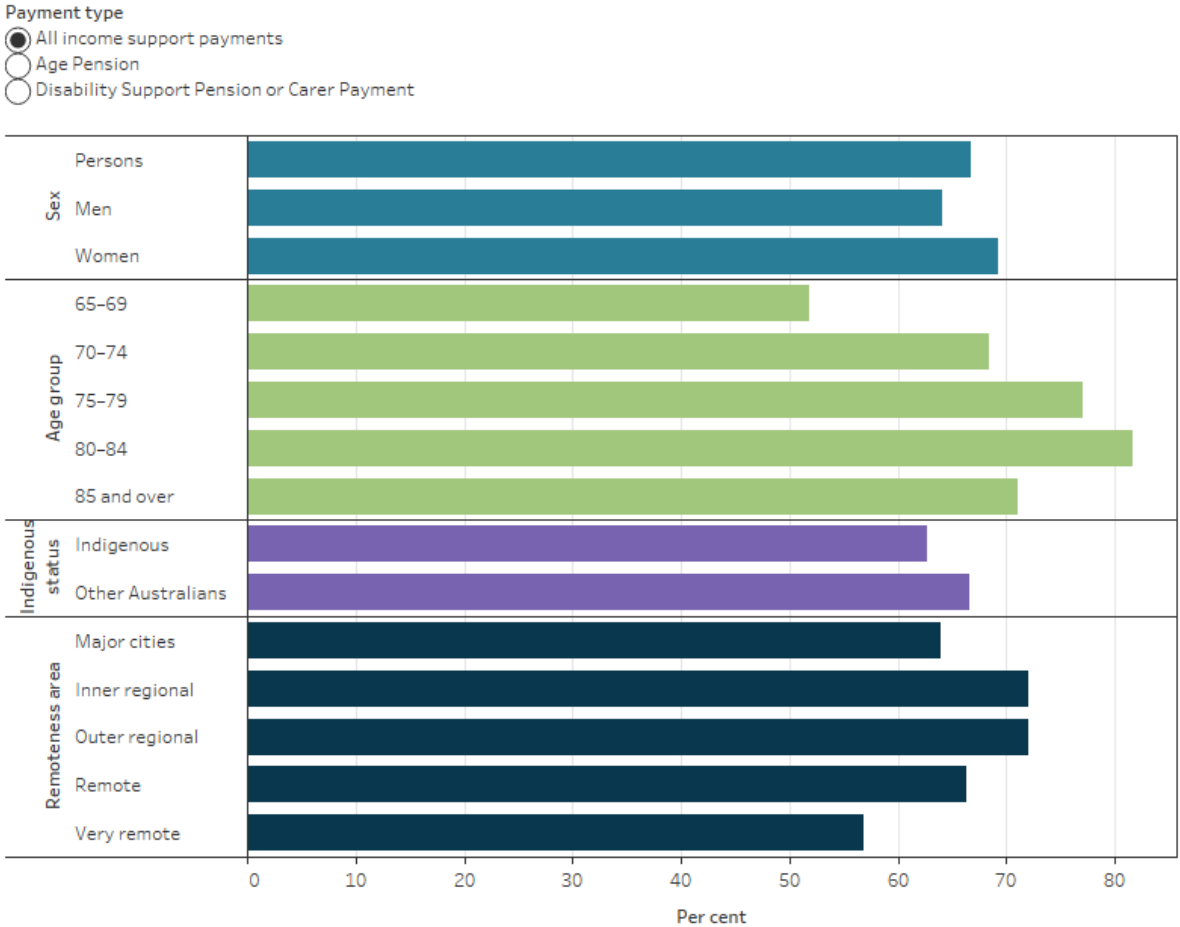
Receipt of earnings (from work, investments, superannuation, and/or substantial assets of either a recipient or their partner) influences whether a recipient receives a full or part-rate payment. Income support recipients are required to report earnings from all sources.

As at 29 June 2018, for recipients aged 65 and over receiving income support payments:

- 37% received a part-rate payment
- 4.1% declared earnings.

Figure 2

Proportion of people aged 65 and over receiving income support payments, by sex, age, Indigenous status and remoteness area, 29 June 2018



Notes:
 1. All proportions are as at 29 June 2018.
 2. Data may differ from official statistics on income support payments and recipients, due to differences in methodology and/or data source.
 Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Human Services administrative data.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on Centrelink payments and data, see:

- [A guide to Australian Government payments](#)
- [DSS Payment Demographic Data](#) on data.gov.au

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Australian Government 2009. [Secure and sustainable pension reform: age pension age](#).

Unemployment and parenting income support payments

Many Australians require government welfare assistance to meet their everyday costs of living. When these payments are a person's primary source of income they are called an 'income support payment', which is a category of social security payments. Australian social security payment policy is administered by the Department of Social Services, and income support payments are delivered by the Department of Human Services, through its network of Centrelink offices. Payments are targeted to individuals who do not have the means to support themselves.

These payments support people unable to work or find work. In addition to financial assistance, the requirements of these payments—such as actively looking and preparing for work—aim to build a person's capacity to support themselves and encourage self-reliance. They are an important part of a larger network of services and assistance, designed to improve the wellbeing of Australians (see [Employment Services](#) for more information).

This page focuses on people aged 18–64 years receiving the [main unemployment and parenting income support payments](#). Data are sourced from the Department of Human Services administrative data. Information on government expenditure on these payments is covered in [Welfare expenditure](#).

As at 29 June 2018, 1.1 million people aged 18–64 received an unemployment or parenting payment, equating to 7.3% of the population aged 18–64. Of these:

- 71%, or 802,600, received an unemployment payment—717,000 for Newstart Allowance and 85,600 for Youth Allowance (other). This represents 5.2% of the population aged 18–64.
- 29% or 325,700 received a parenting payment—243,400 for Parenting Payment Single (PPS) and 82,300 for Parenting Payment Partnered (PPP). This represents 2.1% of the population aged 18–64.

In late June 2018, 10,600 Newstart Allowance recipients were aged 65, reflecting the increase in the qualifying age for the Age Pension to 65.5 from 1 July 2017 (see [Income support payments for older people](#)).

Main unemployment and parenting income support payments

Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance (other) are the main income support payments for unemployed people of workforce age, while they look for work or participate in approved activities that may increase their chances of finding a job.

Newstart Allowance is paid to people aged 22 or over but less than Age Pension age.

Youth Allowance (other) is paid to people aged 16–21 who are seeking or preparing for paid employment. Certain 15 year olds, including those who are homeless, may also receive

assistance. Youth Allowance (other) recipients considered dependent are subject to a parental income test. Data on this page do not include recipients aged 15–17.

Parenting payment is the main income support payment available to people with sole or primary responsibility of a young child. It provides a safety net for parents who might otherwise be at risk of hardship. Parenting payment is paid in recognition of the impact caring for a young child 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.

Single parents may be eligible for PPS until their youngest child turns eight. Single parents must satisfy part-time mutual obligation requirements of 30 hours per fortnight once their youngest child turns six (unless exempt). Partnered parents may be eligible for PPP until their youngest child turns six.

This page does not include all working-age income support payments for people aged 18–64, in particular recipients with disability or caring for people with disability (see [Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment](#) for more information).

Trends

Overall, both the number and proportion of people aged 18–64 receiving an unemployment or parenting payment decreased over the last 2 decades. Between 2001 and 2018, the:

- number of recipients fell by 11%, from 1.3 million in 2001 to 1.1 million in 2018, with a low of 930,700 in 2008
- proportion of the population aged 18–64 receiving unemployment or parenting payments fell by 3 percentage points, from 10% in 2001 to 7.3% in 2018, with a low of 6.9% in 2008 (Figure 1).

These overall trends were largely driven by recipients of unemployment payments (Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance (other)), given that they account for the largest proportion of recipients receiving an unemployment or parenting payment.

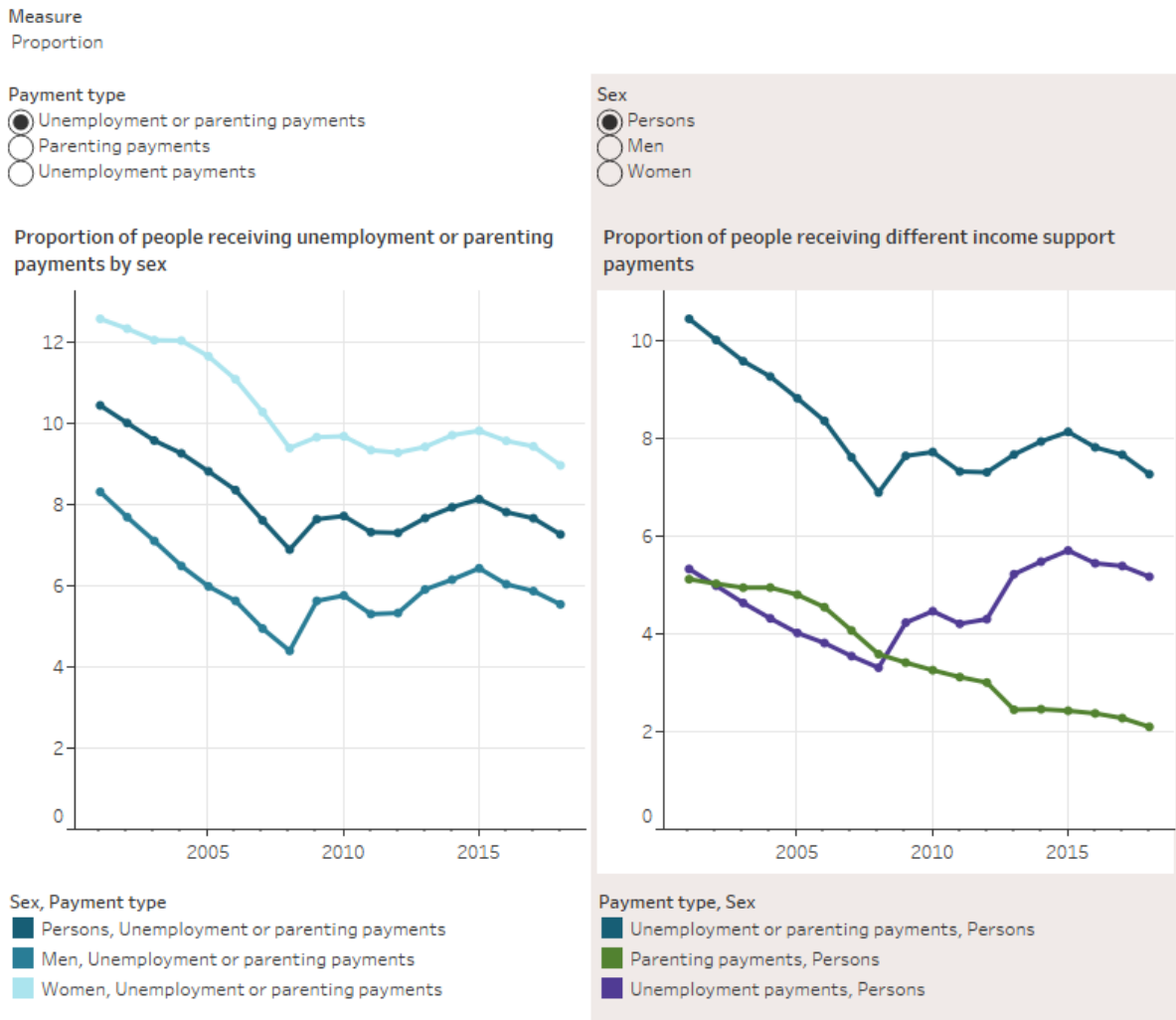
Notable variations were observed in the trends for specific payments. Between 2001 and 2018, the number of recipients of parenting payments (PPP and PPS) aged 18–64 fell steadily from 619,600 to 325,700 (5.1% to 2.1% of the population aged 18–64).

Unemployment payments increased from 645,000 in 2001 to 802,600 in 2018 (24% increase), with a low of 446,700 in 2008 and a peak of 851,400 in 2015. As a proportion of the population aged 18–64, this equates to proportions remaining relatively flat overall between 2001 and 2018 (5.3% and 5.2% respectively), with some fluctuations from a low of 3.3% in 2008 to a high of 5.7% in 2015.

See 'Chapter 3 Income support over the past 20 years' in [Australia's welfare 2019: data insights](#) for more information on long-term trends.

Figure 1

Recipients of unemployment or parenting payments, people aged 18–64, 2001 to 2018



Note: Data may differ from official statistics on income support payments and recipients, due to differences in methodology and/or data source.
 Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Human Services administrative data.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Age

The age profile of people aged 18–64 receiving unemployment or parenting payments varies by payment types. This reflects the influence of life stages (Figure 2). As at 29 June 2018, for:

- parenting payment recipients (PPS and PPP), 67% were aged 25–39 and 16% aged 18–24
- unemployment payment recipients, 31% were aged 50–64, 28% 25–39 and 19% aged 18–24
 - when accounting for the size of the population in each age group, the proportion receiving unemployment payments was highest for those aged 18–24 (6.3%) and lowest for those aged 25–39 (4.1%, Figure 2).

- young people aged 18–24 were 19 times as likely to be receiving student payments as those aged 25–64, reflecting that young people are more likely to be studying or undertaking apprenticeships than those in older age groups.

Overview of study-related income support payments for people aged 18–24

A range of Centrelink payments are available to support people studying or undertaking an apprenticeship administered through the Department of Human Services. The main student payments for those aged 18–24 are Youth Allowance (Student), Youth Allowance (Australian Apprentices) and ABSTUDY. Another student payment, Austudy, is excluded from this section because the qualifying age of the payment starts from 25 years.

Youth Allowance Student (YAS) and Youth Australian Apprentices (YAA): This is a means-tested payment for full-time students (YAS) and Australian Apprentices (YAA) aged 16–24.

ABSTUDY: This is a means-tested living allowance and range of supplementary benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and apprentices aged 16 and over.

As at 29 June 2018, 172,300 people aged 18–24 received one of these student payments (168,000 YAS and YAA combined, and 4,300 ABSTUDY). This equates to 7.3% of the Australian population aged 18–24.

Females aged 18–24 were 1.4 times as likely to be receiving study-related payments as males—8.6% compared with 6.0% respectively.

Overall, the number of student payment recipients aged 18–24 declined by 6.1% over the last 18 years—from 183,400 in 2001 to 172,300 in 2018. Similarly, the proportion of those aged 18–24 receiving student payments declined from 10% in 2001 to 7.3% in 2018.

When considering all people aged 18–64 who received any student payment (YAS, YAA, ABSTUDY and Austudy), people aged 18–24 accounted for 77% of recipients.

Sex

The vast majority of parenting payment recipients aged 18–64 were women (95% for PPS and 90% for PPP), as at 29 June 2018 (Figure 2).

Of those receiving unemployment payments (aged 18–64), the number of men and women receiving the payment was relatively similar (men accounted for 51%). When accounting for population size, 5.3% of men aged 18–64 received unemployment payments compared with 5.1% of women.

Indigenous Australians

As at 29 June 2018, 136,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians aged 18–64 were receiving unemployment or parenting payments. This equates to 31% of the Indigenous population aged 18–64 receiving these payments, compared with 6.5% for

Other Australians (21% compared with 4.7% for unemployment payments and 10% compared with 1.9% for parenting payments respectively, Figure 2).

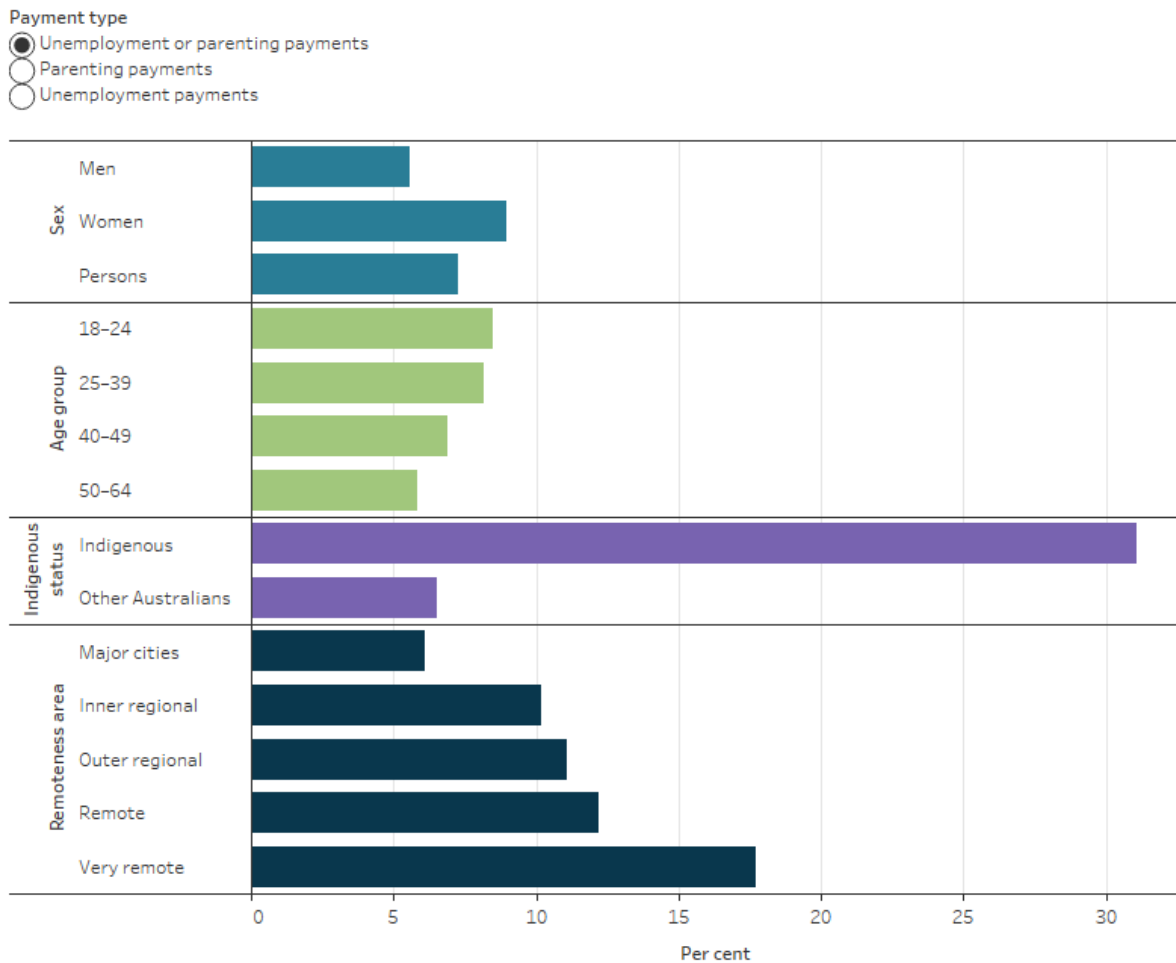
After taking into account the differences in the age structures of Indigenous and Other Australians, Indigenous Australians were 4.5 times as likely as Other Australians to have received unemployment or parenting income support payments (4.5 times as high for unemployment payments and 4.7 times for parenting payments). The disparity between Indigenous and Other Australians was particularly high for PPS, with Indigenous Australians 5.3 times as likely to be receiving PPS as Other Australians.

Remoteness area

As at 29 June 2018, people aged 18–64 living in *Very remote* areas were almost 3 times as likely to be receiving unemployment or parenting payments as those living in *Major cities* (18% compared with 6.1% respectively). The corresponding proportions for unemployment payments were 13% and 4.4%. For parenting payments it was 5.2% and 1.8% respectively (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Proportion of people aged 18–64 receiving unemployment or parenting payments, by sex, age, Indigenous status and remoteness area, as at 29 June 2018



Note: Data may differ from official statistics on income support payments and recipients, due to differences in methodology and/or data source.
Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Human Services administrative data.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Earning an income while receiving income support

Means-tested arrangements are designed to ensure that income support is targeted to those most in need and that support reduces as recipients are more capable of providing for themselves. Recipients can earn a certain amount per fortnight before their payment is slowly reduced to a part-rate payment. Income support recipients are required to report income from all sources (including work, investments and/or substantial assets).

For recipients aged 18–64 receiving unemployment or parenting payments, as at 29 June 2018:

- almost 1 in 4 (23%) received a part-rate payment

- more than 1 in 5 (21%) declared earnings (20% of unemployment payment recipients, 27% of PPS recipients and 10% of PPP recipients).

Duration on income support

As at 29 June 2018, almost 2 in 3 (64%) unemployment or parenting income support recipients aged 18–64 had been receiving income support for 2 or more years.

Unemployment payments: 25% of recipients on these payments had received income support for less than 1 year, 26% for 2 to less than 5 years, and 34% for 5 or more years (including 15% for 10 or more years).

Parenting payments: 24% of recipients on these payments had received income support for less than 2 years, and 45% for 5 or more years (including 16% for 10 or more years). PPS recipients tended to stay on income support payments longer than PPP recipients—48% of PPS recipients had received income support for 5 or more years compared with 37% for PPP.

Remaining on the same payment: Around half (50%) of unemployment or parenting income support recipients aged 18–64 at 29 June 2018 had been in receipt of this payment for less than 2 years, including 30% for less than 1 year. For unemployment payments, 34% had been in receipt of this payment for less than 1 year, 20% for 1 to less than 2 years and 28% for 2 to less than 5 years. Recipients of parenting payments tend to stay on the same payment longer than those receiving unemployment payments. The corresponding proportions for recipients of parenting payments at 29 June 2018 were 20%, 19% and 37% respectively.

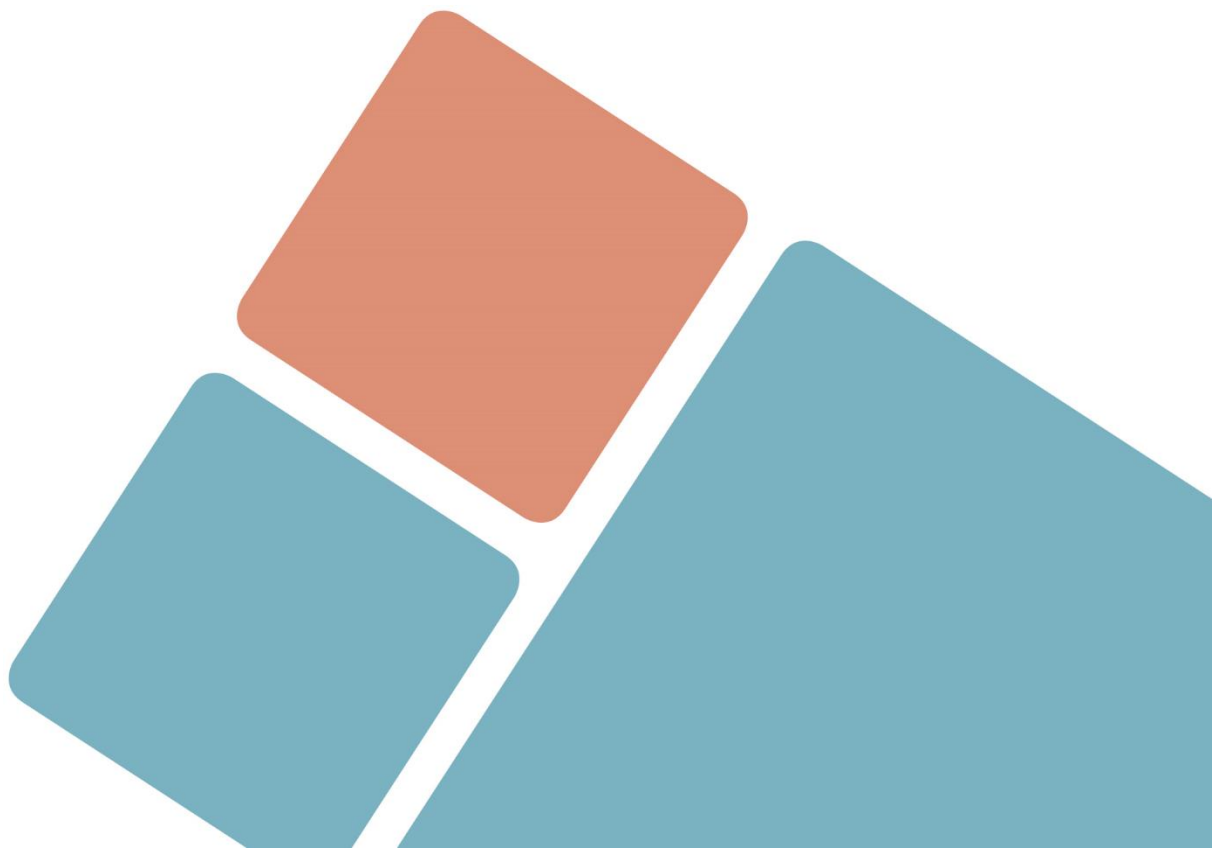
Where do I go for more information?

For more information on Centrelink payments and data, see:

- 'Chapter 3 Income support over the past 20 years' in Australia's welfare 2019: data insights
- [A guide to Australian Government payments](#)
- [DSS Payment Demographic Data](#) on data.gov.au

Social support

Social support from other people and services can be vital in times of need. It can be formal—usually services and programs, like disability services and aged care—or informal care from family, friends or the community. Social support can also contribute to connectedness through interactions between people.



Aged care

Find the most recent version of this information at: www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/aged-care

The aged care system in Australia comprises a spectrum of services ranging from basic supports to enable people to remain independent at home, through to full-time care in a residential aged care facility (also called 'nursing home'). The vast majority of aged care services are provided to people in their home, or elsewhere in a community setting; however, the greatest proportion of aged care spending is on residential aged care.

People may receive services from different levels of service, depending on their needs, and some services may only be used temporarily. The AIHW has reported more than 1,000 'pathways' through the aged care system, with most people using a small number of common pathways (AIHW 2011, 2017).

Most statistics on this page are drawn from gen-agedcaredata.gov.au, AIHW's dedicated website for aged care statistics.

Who is aged care for?

There is no minimum age to be eligible to receive government-subsidised aged care in Australia; rather, access is determined by assessed needs. Although the age of 65 is often considered a threshold to be an 'older person', nearly 19,000 people under the age of 65 used an aged care service in 2017–18. Around 1 in 3 (34%) of these were in permanent residential aged care. Note that for planning and reporting purposes, the concept of 'older' is extended to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians aged 50–64, reflecting their generally higher care needs at younger ages relative to other Australians. Approximately 9,600 Indigenous Australians aged 50–64 used an aged care service in 2017–18, 6% of whom were in residential aged care. See [Disability support for Indigenous Australians](#) and [Aged care for Indigenous Australians](#).

How many people use aged care?

More than 1.2 million people received aged care services during 2017–18, with most (77%) receiving support in their home or other community-based settings. Putting this in context, of Australians aged 65 and over in 2017–18:

- 7% accessed residential aged care
- 22% accessed some form of support or care at home
- 71% lived at home without accessing government-subsidised aged care services.

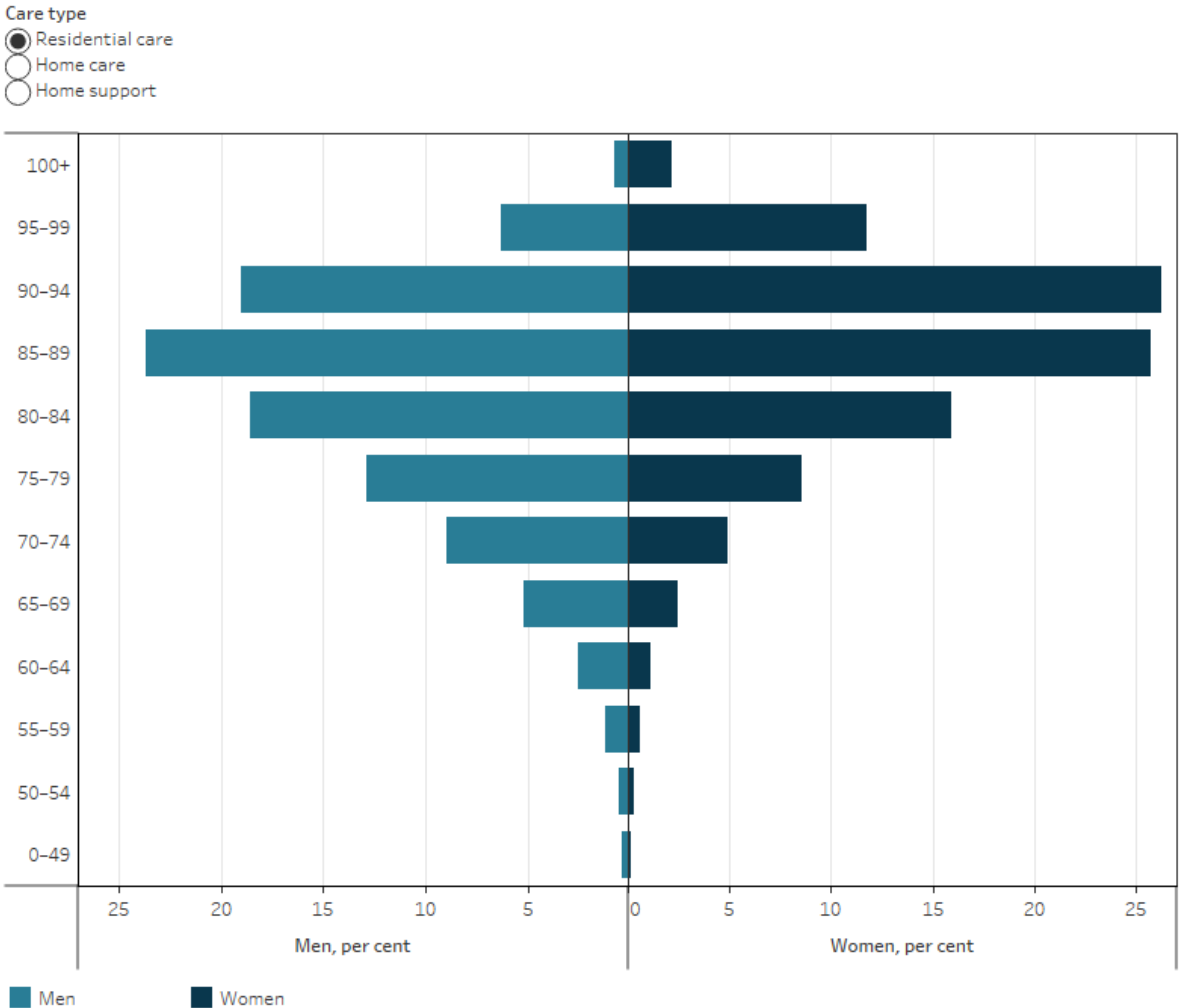
The largest aged care program is the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP), with around 783,000 clients during 2017–18. This program provides entry-level services to help people remain independent at home and in the community. The next

largest program involves residential aged care, supporting around 270,500 clients during the year (including nearly 62,000 people who received temporary, respite care). The Home Care Packages Program—which provides a tailored, coordinated package of care services to enable people to remain living at home—is the fastest-growing program. It supported around 116,800 people in 2017–18, up from 97,200 in 2016–17. Additionally, a small number of people received care through a group of flexible care programs, including the new Short-Term Restorative Care Programme.

The age profile of clients accessing the main care programs varies considerably across the programs (Figure 1). As at June 2018, clients accessing residential age care were generally older (59% of care recipients were aged 85 or older), and clients accessing CHSP were younger (29% were aged 85 or older).

Figure 1

Age profile of aged care clients, by program, June 2018



Source: GEN Aged Care Data.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Managing access to a Home Care Package

In 2017, along with other changes to the Home Care Packages Program (such as shifting the package of funding from a service provider to the client), the National Prioritisation System (NPS) was introduced, which is designed to provide a consistent and equitable process for allocating home care packages based on people's individual needs and circumstances, regardless of where they live. Apart from informing the allocation of packages, the NPS also allows reporting on the number of people waiting for a package at their approved level (there are four levels of package available), and the typical wait time. For example, at 31 December 2018, there were around 123,000 waiting for a package at their approved level, of which nearly 54,000 had been offered a lower-level package. The estimated (typical) wait time for someone to enter a Level 1 package (the lowest level) was 3–6 months, but for all other levels was more than 12 months (Department of Health 2019).

There is no equivalent queue information for the other aged care programs.

How big is the aged care system?

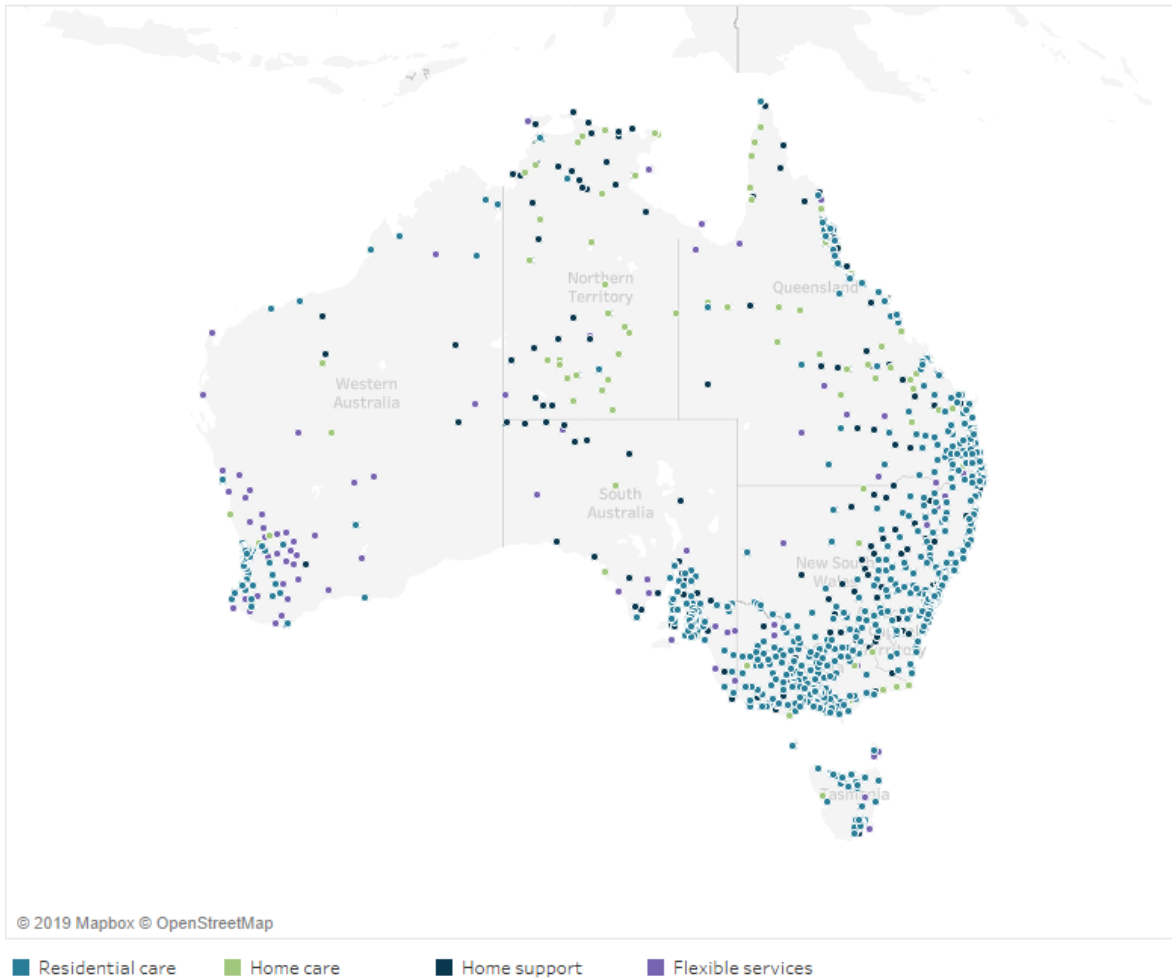
More than 3,000 aged care providers in Australia deliver care through nearly 9,000 services (outlets) (Figure 2). The sector comprises private (for-profit) providers alongside community-based and charitable providers, and state and territory and local government providers. The mix of ownership type varies across programs, with the largest proportion of for-profit services in the residential care program (41% of residential aged care places are managed by for-profit providers).

Collectively, these services supported the care needs of more than 1.2 million people in 2017–18, at a total cost to governments of \$18.4 billion. Consumers may also be asked to contribute to the cost of care. In residential aged care, for example, the cost to governments in 2016–17 was \$12.1 billion, and residents contributed a further \$4.7 billion (ACFA 2018).

Figure 2

Distribution of aged care services, 2018

Aged care services
All



Source: GEN Aged Care Data.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Growth in aged care

Through the use of a ‘target provision ratio’ (a policy that sets the overall number of funded places per 1,000 target population), the aged care sector is set to expand to match the growing older Australian population. This means providing 125 places or packages (in residential care, home care and restorative care) per 1,000 people aged 70 or older in 2021–22. Although most of these places are allocated to the residential care segment, the home care segment is growing rapidly, reflecting consumers’ expressed preference for remaining at home for as long as possible (ACFA 2018).

Workforce

In 2016, more than 366,000 aged care workers operated across the residential and community settings, including 240,000 direct care workers (Mavromaras et al. 2017). Most direct care workers (around 154,000) were in the residential sector, although there has been greater growth in the workforce for the community sector since 2012. This reflects the shifting balance of capacity towards the community sector. The aged care workforce is predominantly female (87% of workers in residential care services are female, as are 89% in home care or home support), is generally older than the average across all industries, and has relatively high levels of post-school education and training compared with other industries (Mavromaras et al. 2017).

What are the aims and outcomes of aged care?

The aim of the aged care system, as described by the Productivity Commission (2018), is to promote the wellbeing and independence of older people (and their carers), by enabling them to stay in their own homes or by supporting their care needs in residential care. This overall aim is implicit in the *Aged Care Act 1997*. The Act also outlines objectives of equitable access on the basis of need, high-quality care to meet individuals' needs, and protection of the health and wellbeing of care recipients. Increasingly, policy and practice is encompassing a 'wellness and reablement' approach, where people are assisted to regain functional capacity and improve independence (Nous Group 2018). While there are little data on this aspect of aged care, there are data on access to aged care for special needs groups (such as Indigenous Australians, people who are financially or socially disadvantaged, or people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless). For more information, see the *Report on government services attachment tables* (PC 2019).

One source of information on quality of care is accreditation audits of residential facilities (generally every 3 years), in which services are assessed against a set of care standards. As at June 2018, most (97%) re-accredited residential care services had the full 3-year re-accreditation period in effect. Although accreditation does not apply to services in the home care and support sector, they are still required to meet minimum services standards. As at June 2018, 92% of services met all expected outcomes of the 'effective management' standard; 94% met all outcomes of the 'appropriate access and service delivery' standard; and 97% met the 'service user rights and responsibilities' standard (SCRGSP 2018).

Quality of care data are also captured in the form of client experience surveys associated with re-accreditation of residential services. This involves interviews with at least 10% of residents about their experience of care (including feelings of safety and respect, perceived competency of staff, and whether the resident likes the food). Findings from the first year of interviews, published by the [then] Australian Aged Care Quality Agency (2018), show:

- 73% of respondents said staff always treated them with respect
- 81% said they always felt safe in the service

- 39% said they always liked the food.

Finally, quality of care data are expected to expand during 2019 following the Australian Government's announcement that mandatory reporting of three clinical indicators (pressure ulcers, use of physical restraint, and unplanned weight loss) for residential aged care services will start from July 2019. Reporting of these indicators has been voluntary, with about 10% of services participating. There are no published results from this voluntary program.

Aged Care Royal Commission

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety—established in October 2018—is exploring a wide range of issues relating to the quality and safety of aged care services and future demand for such services. The final report of the Commission is expected in April 2020.

The AIHW is undertaking several analysis projects that might inform the Commission and generally add to the knowledge base on quality of care. These analyses cover the movements between hospital and aged care services; patterns of pharmaceutical use across different aged care settings; and patterns of doctor (general practitioner and specialist) use across different settings.

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on aged care, see:

- AIHW's dedicated aged care data website: [GEN aged care data](#)
- *Report on government services* [attachment tables](#)
- Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's [accreditation reports](#) page and [consumer experience reports](#) page.

See also [Aged care](#) for more on this topic.

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Informal carers

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/informal-carers>

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 informal (unpaid) care often complements formal (paid) services. (For information on people who work as paid carers in the welfare sector, see [Welfare workforce](#).)

The type and level of informal care can vary considerably depending on the care recipient's needs and condition. These may relate to 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 2015 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, there were 2.7 million informal carers in Australia. More than one-third (37% or 991,000 people) of all carers were aged 35–54 (average age was 50) (ABS 2016).

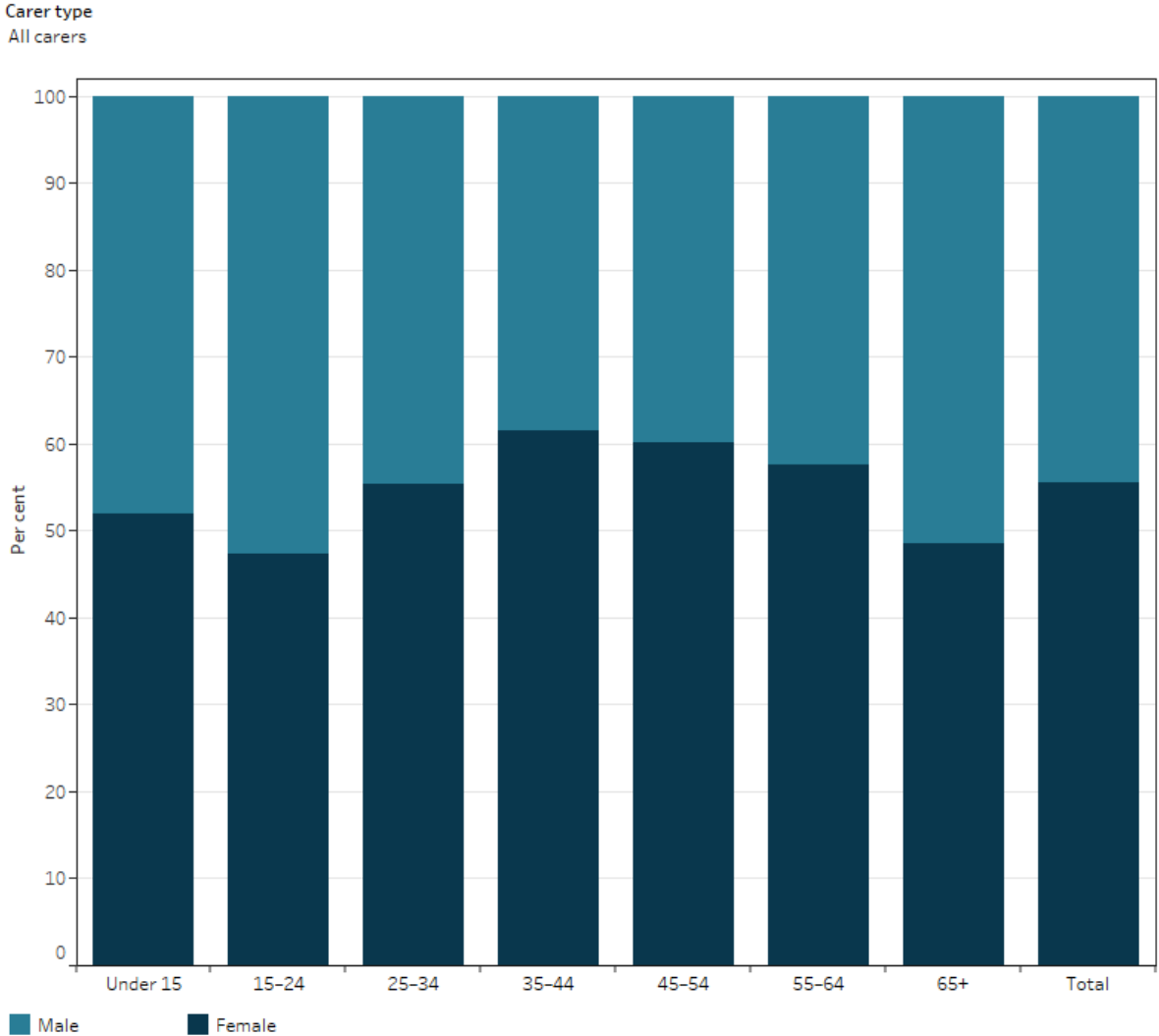
More than 1 in 10 Australians are informal carers

In 2015, almost 860,000 people (32% or 1 in 3 carers) were primary carers, meaning they provided the most care to the person needing support in one or more core activities (self-care, mobility and communication) (ABS 2016). 'Other carers' are people who provided informal care to someone but were not their primary carer.

Primary carers are most commonly female (68%, compared with 50% of other carers in 2015). This varied further by age, with middle-aged primary carers particularly likely to be female (81% of those aged 35–44, and 76% of those aged 45–54) (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Primary or other informal carers, by sex and age group, 2015



Source: ABS 2016.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Formal assistance

Informal carers 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.

As at 29 June 2018, 274,000 people aged 16 and over received the means-tested Carer Payment (DSS 2018). This payment provides income support for people who care for someone who has considerable needs due to disability or ill health. People may also, or instead, receive Carer Allowance, which is a smaller payment (in June 2018, 622,000 people received this allowance).

Of people receiving Carer Payment at 29 June 2018:

- almost 4 in 5 (78%) were being paid the full rate of payment (meaning their assets and income were both below relevant thresholds)
- more than 2 in 5 (44%) had been receiving the payment for 5 years or more
- 2 in 5 (40%) had been on some form of income support for 10 years or more
- 7 in 10 (69%) were aged 45 and over
- 7 in 10 (70%) were female.

Carers and care recipients

This section presents selected data for carers who received the Carers Payment (the carer) and the people they provided care to (the care recipient). As at 29 June 2018, there were 273,000 care recipients.

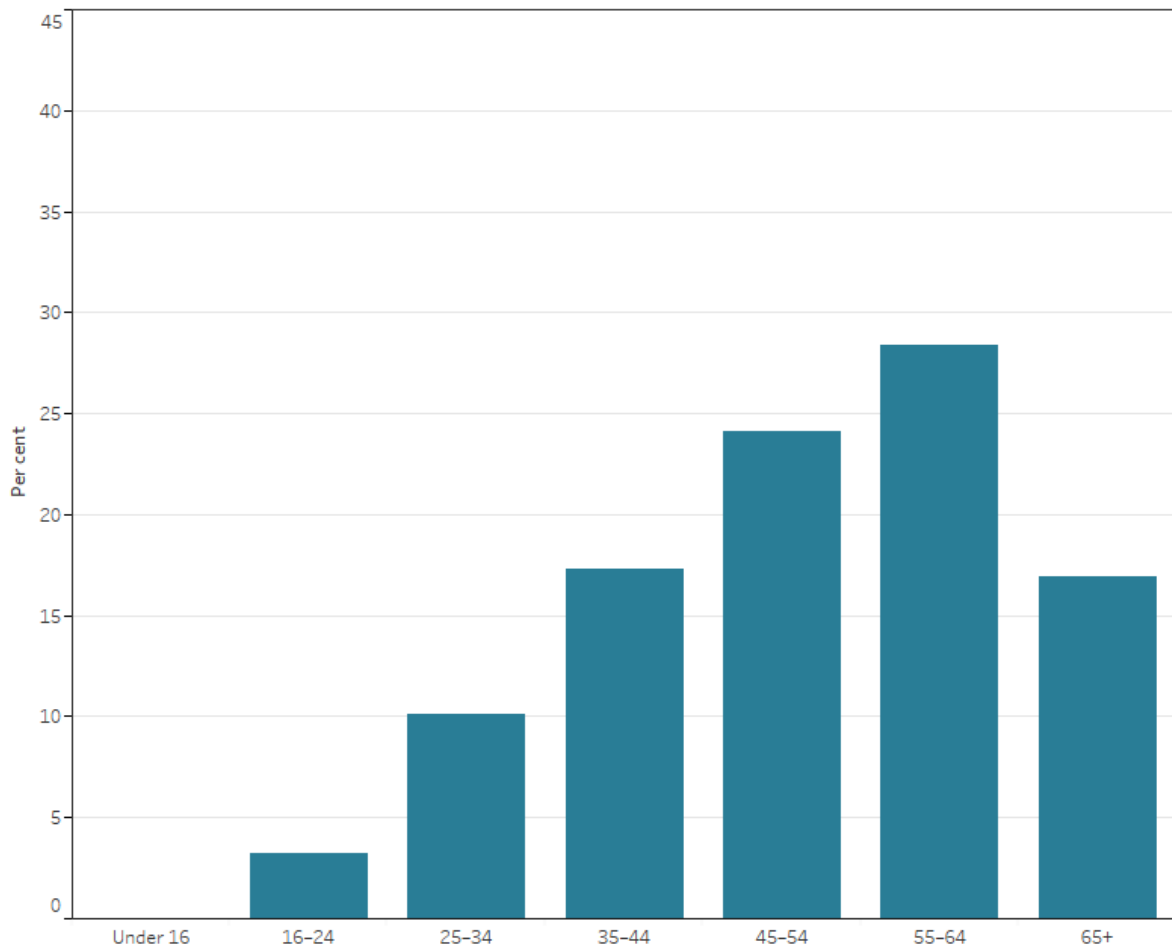
Age and sex

Around 7 in 10 (69%) carers and care recipients were aged 45 and over. However, people receiving Carer Payment most commonly provided care to a young child (13% were children aged under 16) or to an older person (40% were aged 65 and over) (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Proportion of people receiving Carer Payment or care from Carer Payment recipients, by age group, June 2018

Whether Carer Payment recipient or care recipient
Carer Payment recipient



Source: DSS 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Overall, more than half (54%) of care recipients were male, but this varied with age. Males made up 71% of care recipients aged under 16, compared with 49% of those aged 65 and over (DSS 2018).

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 or level of care to someone with a psychological disability.

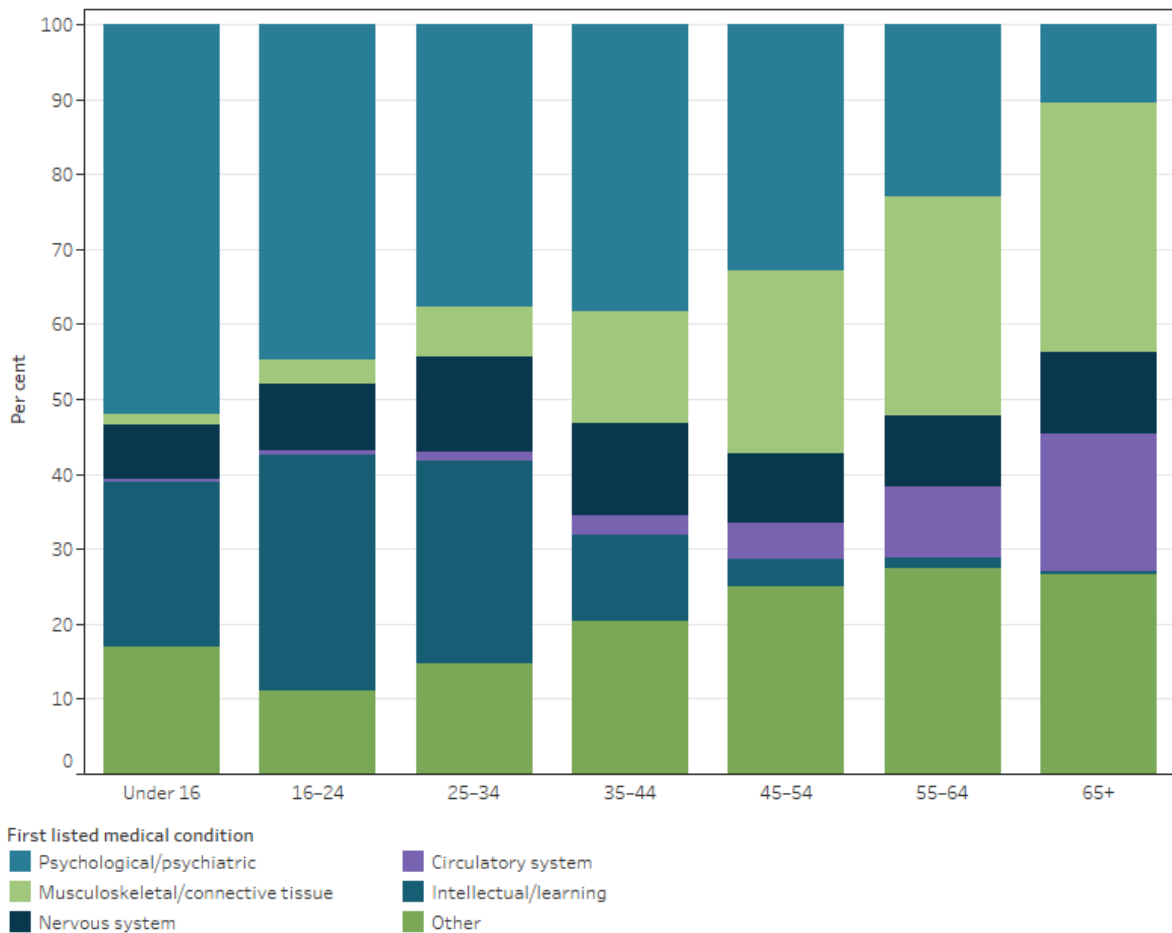
For care recipients at 29 June 2018, the most common first-listed medical conditions were psychological/psychiatric (26%) and musculoskeletal/connective tissue conditions (23%); but this varied by age (DSS 2018). For example:

- Around half (52%) of care recipients aged 16 and under had a first-listed medical condition of psychological/psychiatric. This condition became less common with age. Only 11% of care recipients aged 65 and over had this as their first-listed medical condition.
- Musculoskeletal and connective tissue conditions increased as age increased. Just over 1.4% of people aged under 16 had this as their first-listed condition, rising to 33% among those aged 65 and over (Figure 3).

Figure 3

First-listed medical condition for people who received care from Carer Payment recipients, by age group, June 2018

First listed medical condition
All



Source: DSS 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

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.

Respite services temporarily replace the care given by informal carers. Carers may not need or want a break from their responsibilities, and sometimes there are barriers in accessing services due to 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.

Giving carers a break

Respite services are offered under different programs. For example:

- Respite services are provided under the National Disability Agreement (NDA), although this is progressively winding down as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) rolls out—in 2017–18, NDA-funded respite services were used by 21,900 people who had an informal carer (representing 83% of all respite users) (AIHW 2019).
- NDIS does not specifically provide for 'respite services', and comprehensive data are not available on how many people with disability who have a carer receive supports that have the effect of sustaining the carer as well.
- The Commonwealth Home Support Programme offers centre-based, cottage and flexible respite services. In 2017–18, these were used by 22,200 people who had an informal carer (representing 48% of all respite users).
- In residential aged care, respite stays of (generally) up to 63 days in a year are available. In 2017–18, there were 26,800 admissions to respite care for people who were living with family members (representing 34% of all respite admissions; noting that not all family members are informal carers).

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on informal carers, see:

- ABS [Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers](#)
- [Carers Australia](#)

The [Carer Gateway](#) also has information on services that are available for informal carers.

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Social isolation and loneliness

Find the most recent version of this information at:

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

Social isolation and loneliness can be harmful to both mental and physical health. They are considered significant health and wellbeing issues in Australia because of the impact they have on peoples' lives. Part of the challenge in reporting on social isolation and loneliness stems from a lack of information about these experiences. Also, there are no universally-agreed upon definitions.

Difference between social isolation and loneliness

Social isolation is seen as the state of having minimal contact with others. It differs from loneliness, which is a subjective state of negative feelings about having a lower level of social contact than desired (Peplau & Perlman 1982). Some definitions include loneliness as a form of social isolation (Hawthorne 2006) while others state that loneliness is an emotional reaction to social isolation (Heinrich & Gullone 2006). The two concepts do not necessarily co-exist—a person may be socially isolated but not lonely, or socially connected but feel lonely (Australian Psychological Society 2018; Relationships Australia 2018). For example, research suggests that the number of friends a person has is a poor predictor of their loneliness (Jones 1982).

How many people are lonely?

Most Australians will experience loneliness at some point in their lives (Relationships Australia 2018). One in 3 Australians reported an episode of loneliness between 2001 and 2009, with 40% of these people experiencing more than 1 episode, according to a study of loneliness using data from the longitudinal Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey (Baker 2012).

Additionally:

- 1 in 10 (9.5%, or around 1.8 million based on 2016 population) Australians aged 15 and over report lacking social support (Relationships Australia 2018)
- about 1 in 4 report they are currently experiencing an episode of loneliness (Australian Psychological Society 2018)
- 1 in 2 (51%) report they feel lonely for at least 1 day each week (Australian Psychological Society 2018).

Most incidents of loneliness will last for 1 year or less, however, if loneliness lasts longer than this it is likely to last for 3 or more years (Baker 2012).

What causes social isolation and loneliness?

Although there is no guarantee that an individual's family household composition will either lead to or protect against loneliness, some situations are more likely to be associated with loneliness than others.

According to the 2016 Census of Population and Housing, about 1 in 4 (24%) Australian households are lone person households and 71% are family households. Of family households, 45% consisted of a couple with children, 38% a couple without children and 16% were a one-parent family with one or more children (ABS 2016).

Living alone and not being in a relationship with a partner are substantial risk factors for loneliness (Flood 2005; Lauder et al. 2004; Relationships Australia 2011). Relationship separation tends to result in an increase in loneliness across ages and genders, however, the effects are more pronounced for men than women. Recently separated men are more than 13 times more likely to develop loneliness than married men, as opposed to twice as likely for separated women compared with married women (Franklin & Tranter 2008). Single parents experience higher levels of social isolation (38% for men, 18% for women) than singles adults without children, or couples with or without children (Relationships Australia 2018).

Disconnection from community (Relationships Australia 2018) is a risk factor for developing loneliness. It has been suggested (for example, MacKay 2017) that social fragmentation, or disorganisation and isolation in a particular geographic area (Maguire & O'Reilly 2010) can influence social isolation and loneliness, although there appears to be little difference between levels of social isolation and loneliness in particular geographic areas (Baker 2012).

Unemployment, receiving income support (Relationships Australia 2018) and lack of satisfaction with financial situation (Baker 2012) are also substantial factors in the development of loneliness across age groups and gender.

Loneliness can be self-reinforcing if it is associated with an experience of depression and anxiety, particularly around social interactions (Australian Psychological Society 2018).

Social media

The relationship between social media and loneliness is complex and depends on the individual and their life circumstances. Users of social media experiencing loneliness have reported increased use of social media to communicate with family and friends (Relationships Australia 2011), while at the same time reporting fewer online 'friends' and being less likely to consider these as real friends than users who are not experiencing loneliness (Baker 2012). Others have argued that online socialising can increase levels of loneliness as these relationships are generally fragile and shallow (Franklin 2009). The

number of online friends appears less important than the quality and strength of the relationships.

Impact

Loneliness has been linked to premature death (Holt-Lunstad et al. 2015), poor physical and mental health (Australian Psychological Society 2018; Relationships Australia 2018), and general dissatisfaction with life (Schumaker et al. 1993).

Social isolation has also been linked to mental illness, emotional distress, suicide, the development of dementia, premature death, poor health behaviours, smoking, physical inactivity, poor sleep, and biological effects, including high blood pressure and poorer immune function (Hawthorne 2006; Holt-Lunstad et al. 2015). High levels of social isolation are also associated with sustained decreases in feelings of wellbeing (Shankar et al. 2015).

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).

The economic cost of loneliness in Australia is likely to be substantial, although no current estimate of this cost is available. By way of example, a 2017 United Kingdom (UK) study estimated the total cost to UK employers, including absenteeism, caring, lost productivity and turnover, from loneliness experienced by their employees at £2.5 billion (AUD\$4.5 billion) per year (New Economics Foundation & The Co-Op 2017).

Who experiences social isolation and/or loneliness?

Social isolation and loneliness vary across age groups (Figure 1). Loneliness tends to be more common in young adults, males, those living alone and those with children, either singly or in a couple (Baker 2012).

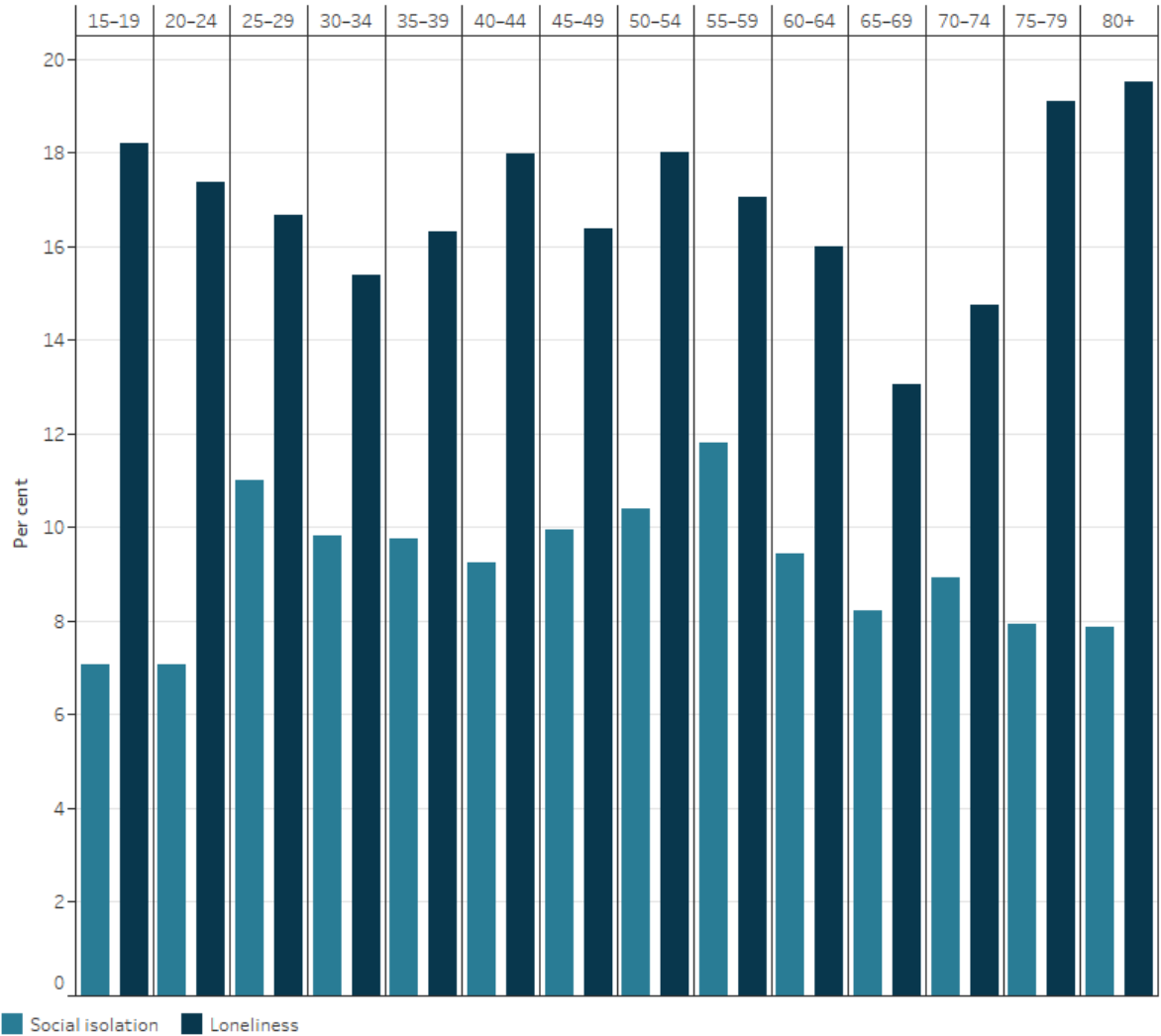
Men tend to report higher levels of loneliness than women (Flood 2005; Relationships Australia 2018). In a study using HILDA data, among adults aged 25–44, more men living alone experienced loneliness (39%) than women living alone (12%) (Baker 2012). This difference in loneliness may be due to women tending to have more social support than men (Flood 2005).

Studies investigating the relationship between age and loneliness often have contradictory findings, likely related to differences in study methods and sample

variations. Some studies find higher levels of loneliness among older people (Relationships Australia 2018) while others find lower levels in these age groups (Relationships Australia 2011). Rates of loneliness may also vary according to relationship status, with another study finding that Australians aged over 65 who are married experience the lowest levels of loneliness (Australian Psychological Society 2018).

Figure 1

Proportion of people experiencing social isolation and loneliness by age, 2018



Source: Relationships Australia 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

The relationship between income and loneliness varies depending on age and gender. For example, men aged 25-44 on high incomes are more likely to be lonely, while women of all ages on low incomes are far more likely to be lonely than those on high incomes (Baker 2012).

There are few differences in loneliness levels between urban, regional and rural areas (Baker 2012). Young men who live in regional areas, however, experience higher rates of social isolation than men in *Major cities* (Relationships Australia 2018).

Can social isolation and loneliness be prevented or reduced?

Having 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 in the development of 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). As social contact alone does not reduce loneliness (Masi et al. 2011), it may be that the building of quality relationships, rather than volunteering in and of itself, can reduce feelings of loneliness.

Companion animals

In 2016, 62% (5.7 million) of Australian households owned a pet, with the two most common types of pet being dogs (38%) and cats (29%). Around two-thirds of dog and cat owners reported 'Companionship' as a reason for owning a pet and a similar proportion consider their pet a part of their family (Animal Medicines Australia 2016). Another survey found 60% of owners felt more socially connected as a direct result of owning a pet (Petplan Australia 2016). Pet ownership has been linked to increased social contact, for example, through facilitating contact with neighbours and acting as a trigger for conversations (Wood et al. 2015), which may help counter social isolation (McNicholas et al. 2005).

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).

Government initiatives

Awareness of loneliness and social isolation as significant public health and wellbeing issues has increased in recent years, along with the development of targeted government and community support programs for affected Australians. Federal, state and territory and local governments have all provided varying degrees of funding and support to local councils and community organisations for programs to address the social isolation and loneliness of Australians. For example, the Australian Government funds a national Community Visitors Scheme, which supports local organisations to

recruit volunteers who provide regular visits to Australians in receipt of Commonwealth-subsidised aged care services (Sutherland Shire Council 2018).

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on social isolation and loneliness, see:

- [Household, Income and Labour Dynamics and Australia \(HILDA\) survey](#)
- Psychology Week 11–17 November 2018 [Loneliness study](#)

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Supporting people with disability

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/supporting-people-with-disability>

Many Australians, including those with disability, use social support services intermittently throughout their life—for example, in times of unemployment, relationship breakdown or housing crisis. Others may need longer-term support to fully participate in all facets of life.

Australia's overarching policy approach to improving life for Australians with disability, their families and carers—across specialist, mainstream and informal supports—is encompassed in the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 (DSS 2011). This page focuses on two key aspects of the broader, and interacting, system of supports—specialist disability support services and financial assistance payments that are funded, or provided, by government.

How many people have disability?

Approximately 4.3 million Australians, or 18%, have some form of disability (ABS 2016a).

Nearly 1 in 3 (32%) people with disability (1.4 million people; 5.8% of the Australian population) have severe or profound disability, meaning they sometimes or always need help with day-to-day activities related to self-care, mobility or communication.

While the number of people with disability has risen over time (from about 4.0 million in 2003), the proportion of the population affected by disability has fallen slightly (from 20% in 2003).

Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) is the definitive source of disability prevalence in Australia.

In the SDAC, a person is considered to have disability if they have at least 1 of a list of limitations, restrictions or impairments, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least 6 months and restricts everyday activities.

The severity of disability is defined according to the degree of assistance or supervision required in 3 core activities—self-care, mobility, and communication. They are grouped for mild, moderate, severe, and profound limitation.

See the [ABS website](#) for more information on the SDAC.

Specialist support services

Not all people with disability require or use formal support, but for those who do, specialist disability support services are available to assist them to participate fully in all aspects of everyday life. These specialist services may supplement other support that a person receives, such as that provided by mainstream services, the community or informal carers. It can include:

- assistive technology (for example, wheelchairs, hearing aids, voice-recognition software)
- case management
- early childhood intervention services
- life skills development
- specialist accommodation
- support to live in the community (such as personal care and domestic assistance)
- support to participate in community activities
- respite care.

Specialist disability support services in Australia are primarily aimed at people aged under 65, but support is also available to those aged 65 and over provided they meet eligibility requirements.

In Australia currently, specialist disability support services are provided through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or under the National Disability Agreement (NDA). This is changing, with most, but not all, services provided under the NDA, and the people using them, expected to progressively transition to the NDIS as it rolls out.

Disability service provision is changing

In 2013, the NDIS was introduced in trial sites and is being progressively rolled out across Australia from 1 July 2016 (except in Western Australian where the state-wide roll out of the NDIS began on 1 July 2018). Before this, government-funded services for people with disability were largely provided under various iterations of the [NDA](#). As it rolls out, the NDIS is expected to largely replace the provision of services under the NDA. However, some NDA service users will not be eligible to enter the NDIS (such as those aged 65 and over). Also, some specialist disability programs, such as open employment services, are not included in the NDIS and will continue to operate separately. The transition to the NDIS is expected to be completed by July 2020.

The NDIS changes how services are provided to people with disability. Under the NDIS, eligibility for the scheme is assessed against a common set of criteria. Each participant receives an individual support plan and a funding package to pay for this support. Under the NDA, eligibility requirements vary between states and territories and service providers are mostly funded to deliver places in a set number of assistance programs.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

The NDIS is designed to provide Australians with ‘permanent and significant disability’ with the ‘reasonable and necessary support’ needed to participate in everyday life. By July 2020, when the NDIS is expected to be fully implemented, it is expected to support around 475,000 people (about 460,000 of these aged under 65), at an estimated annual cost of \$22 billion (NDIA 2018; PC 2017). The NDIS will support around 11% of all people with disability, and 64% of those with severe or profound disability aged under 65 (PC 2017).

At 30 June 2018, about 172,000 people were active participants in the NDIS, at a cost of \$7.7 billion. The number of NDIS participants has increased each year as the NDIS progressively has rolled out across Australia (see the [quarterly reports](#) published by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) for the latest data on scheme participants).

Of active NDIS participants at 30 June 2018:

- more than 3 in 5 (62%) were male
- almost half (47%) were aged 18 and under
- 5.4% were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
- the most common primary disability groups were autism (29%), intellectual (28%) and psychosocial (7.8%) (NDIA 2018).

National Disability Agreement

In 2017–18, about 280,000 people used specialist disability support services provided under the NDA, at a cost of \$6.4 billion (AIHW 2019). This is 6.5% of the estimated 4.3 million people with disability in Australia (ABS 2016a; AIHW 2019). The number of NDA service users has decreased in recent years as eligible service users progressively move to the NDIS—down from 331,000 in 2016–17 and 332,000 in 2015–16 (AIHW 2019).

Of NDA service users in 2017–18:

- almost 3 in 5 (58%) were male
- the average age was 37
- 5.9% were Indigenous
- the most common primary disability groups were psychiatric (25%), intellectual (22%) and physical (21%)
- the most common service types used were open employment (49%) and community support (38%)
- more than half (54% or 150,000) used services that are largely expected to move to the NDIS (Table 1 and AIHW 2018).

Table 1: NDA agencies, service type outlets and service users by service group, 2017–18

Service group	Agencies ^(a)	Service type outlets ^(b)	Service users
Accommodation support	787	5,680	28,311
Community support	636	2,385	105,164
Community access	805	2,603	35,626
Respite	650	1,623	26,454
Open employment	149	1,410	136,093
Supported employment	265	267	14,810
Advocacy, information, alternative forms of communication	148	220	..
Other support	128	146	..
Total	2,002	14,334	280,274

.. Not applicable.

(a) An agency is usually a legal entity funded under the NDA to provide 1 or more types of services at 1 or more different locations. Agencies may provide more than 1 type of service, so components will not add to total.

(b) A service type outlet is managed by an agency and delivers a particular NDA service type, at or from a discrete location.

Source: Disability Services National Minimum Data Set (DS NMDS) 2017–18.

Financial support

People with disability may receive financial assistance to help with the activities of daily life. The Disability Support Pension (DSP) and the Mobility Allowance are two such programs that are specifically for people with disability (see [glossary](#) for descriptions of

these payments; see [Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment](#)). Other more general financial support, such as to assist with study, housing or finding work, may also be available but is not included on this page.

At June 2018, around 757,000 Australians were receiving DSP (DSS 2018b). This is around one-third (35%) of people with disability aged 16–64 (ABS 2016a; DSS 2018b). The number of DSP recipients decreased in the last few years—down from 759,000 at June 2017 and 783,000 at June 2016 (DSS 2018b).

Around 32,800 people received the Mobility Allowance at June 2018—down from 45,200 at June 2017 and 60,000 at June 2016 (DSS 2018a). The Mobility Allowance is affected by the roll out of the NDIS. Current recipients assessed as eligible for the NDIS receive support for reasonable and necessary transport costs as part of their NDIS package and will no longer receive the Mobility Allowance. People not eligible for the NDIS will continue to receive the Mobility Allowance.

People with disability may also be eligible for various government concession cards, which provide access to selected goods and services at a discounted rate (DHS 2018a). DSP recipients are generally issued a Pensioner Concession Card. People who receive the Mobility Allowance but not DSP are issued a Health Care Card. State and territory governments, local governments and private businesses may provide further concessions for health, household costs, education or transport.

Financial support for children with disability is available through payments made to their parents or carers. This includes through the Child Disability Assistance Payment, available to recipients of the Carer Allowance, and Carer Payment. As at June 2018, around:

- 178,000 children aged under 16 qualified their carer for Carer Allowance, up from 171,000 at June 2017 and 167,000 at June 2016
- 36,200 children aged under 16 qualified their carer for Carer Payment, up from 33,900 in June 2017 and 32,100 at June 2016 (DSS 2018b).

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on the prevalence of disability, see ABS [Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers](#).

For more information on participants of the NDIS, see the [NDIA quarterly reports](#).

For the latest data on income support payments for people with disability, see [data.gov.au](#).

See [Disability](#) and [Disability Services](#) for more on this topic.

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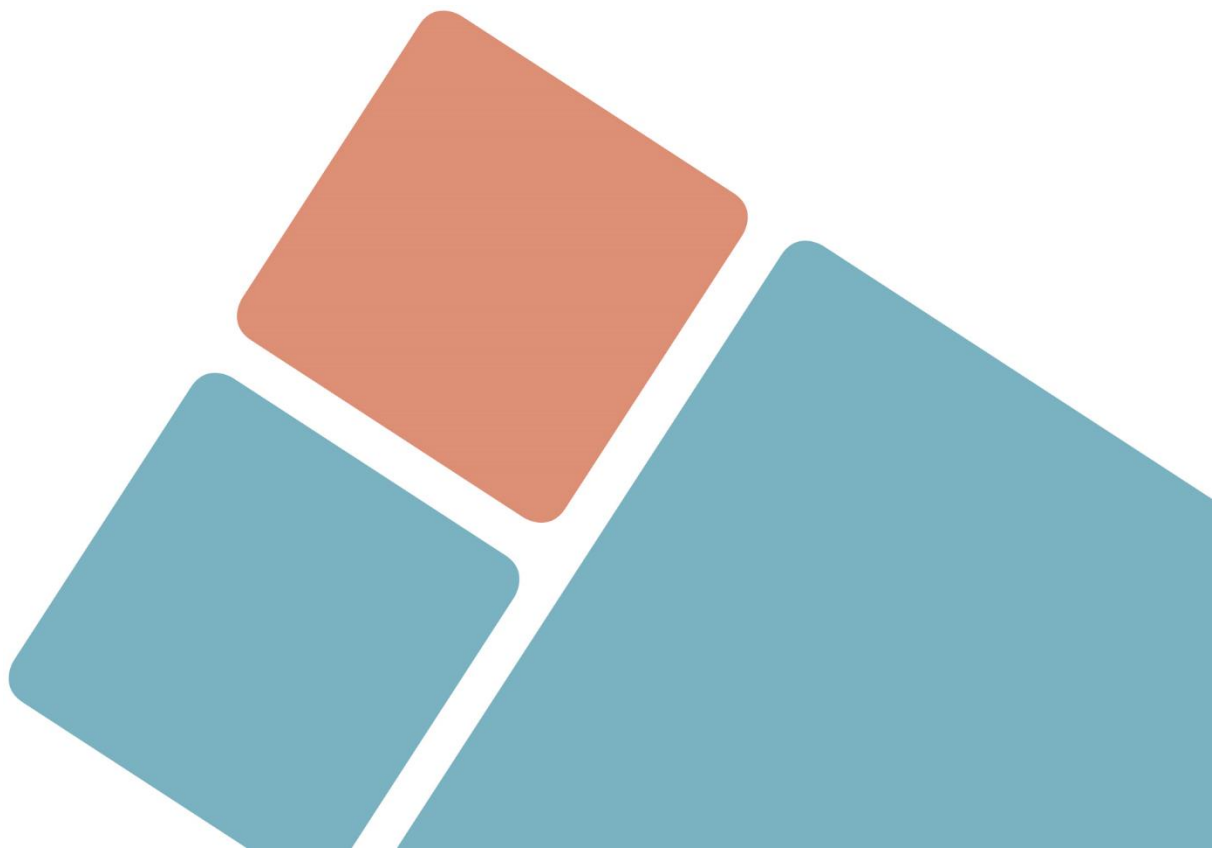
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NDIA (National Disability Insurance Agency) 2018. [National Disability Insurance Scheme—COAG Disability Reform Council Quarterly Report \(30 June 2018\)](#). Canberra: NDIA.

PC (Productivity Commission) 2017. [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(NDIS\) Costs, position paper](#). Canberra: PC.

Justice and safety

A person's wellbeing can be affected by their experience of crime, and people who have had contact with the justice system may experience negative effects on their health and welfare. Governments work to protect the safety of the community and those at greater risk of harm, for example services designed to protect children from harm.



Adoptions

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

Adoption is one option used to provide permanent care for children not able to live with their families. It is a process where full parental rights and responsibilities for a child are legally transferred from the child's parents to their adoptive parents.

This page provides an overview of adoptions in Australia in 2017–18. It also covers types of adoption, historical trends in adoption and a focus on recent increases in adoptions by known carers, such as foster parents (AIHW 2018).

Types of adoption

In 2017–18, 330 adoptions were finalised in Australia. Of these, 265 (80%) were domestic adoptions of children born or permanently living in Australia.

The two main types of domestic adoption of Australian children are: known child adoption, where the child and adoptive parents know each other before adoption, and local adoption, where the child and adoptive parents do not know each other. Known child adoptions made up almost three-quarters (71%) of all adoptions finalised in 2017–18, while local adoptions represented 10% (Figure 1).

Australian adoptive parents can also adopt children from overseas. Adoptions of children from other countries are called intercountry adoptions. These children can legally be adopted but generally have had no previous contact or relationship with the adoptive parents. Intercountry adoption accounted for 20% of all adoptions in Australia in 2017–18, with 97% of intercountry adoptees originating from Asian countries. The most common country of origin was Taiwan (32%), followed by South Korea (29%), Thailand (14%) and the Philippines (14%).

Generally, adoptions by relatives or other known carers of children from other countries, are termed 'known child intercountry adoptions'. This type of adoption is outside the scope of national adoptions data. See [glossary](#) for definitions of adoption categories.

Figure 1

Number of adoptions, by type of adoption, 2017–18

Click on an icon for more details about that type of adoption.



Notes:
 1. Excludes intercountry known child adoptions.
 2. See glossary for definitions.
 Source: AIHW Adoptions Australia data collection.
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Trends

Over the past few decades, the overall number of adoptions has fallen dramatically. In 1998–99, 543 adoptions were finalised. By 2015–16, this number had fallen to 278—a decrease of 49%. More recently, adoptions have begun to increase slightly. From 2015–16 to 2017–18, there was a 5% increase in the number of adoptions finalised (Figure 2).

These long-term adoption trends are due to factors such as:

- changing views in Australian society on the circumstances in which adoption and parenthood are considered appropriate

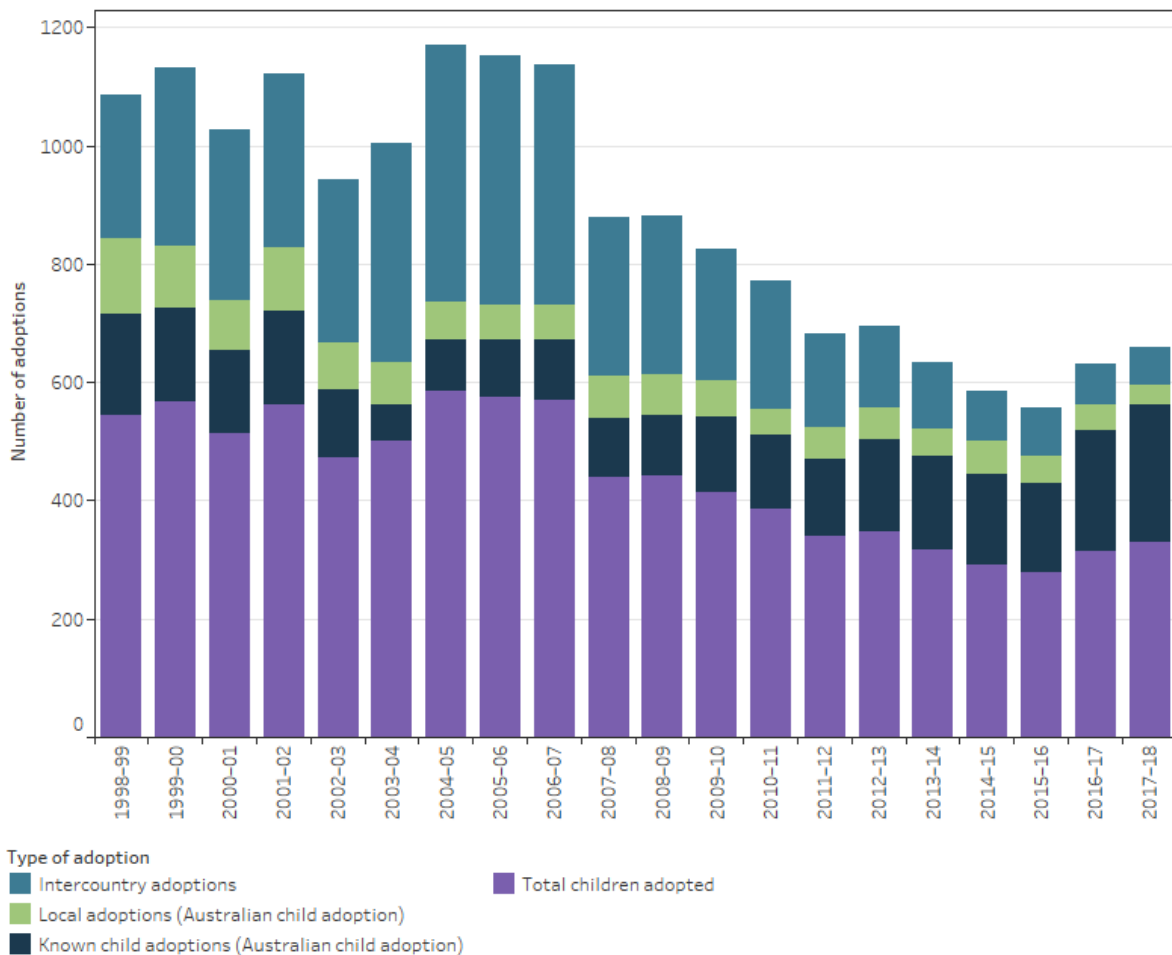
- changes in intercountry adoption programs and the capacity of overseas countries to provide domestic care for children unable to live with their biological parents.

The recent increase in adoptions between 2015–16 and 2017–18 is due to the increase in known child adoptions. In 2017–18, there were 233 known child adoptions—an increase of 54% since 2015–16. The increase can be attributed to a policy change in New South Wales that has resulted in a higher number of adoptions by known carers, such as foster parents.

Figure 2

Number of adopted children, by type of adoption, 1998–99 to 2017–18

Reporting year
All



Source: AIHW Adoptions Australia data collection.
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Adopted children and siblings

Children adopted through intercountry and local adoptions are typically younger than children adopted through known child adoptions. In 2017–18:

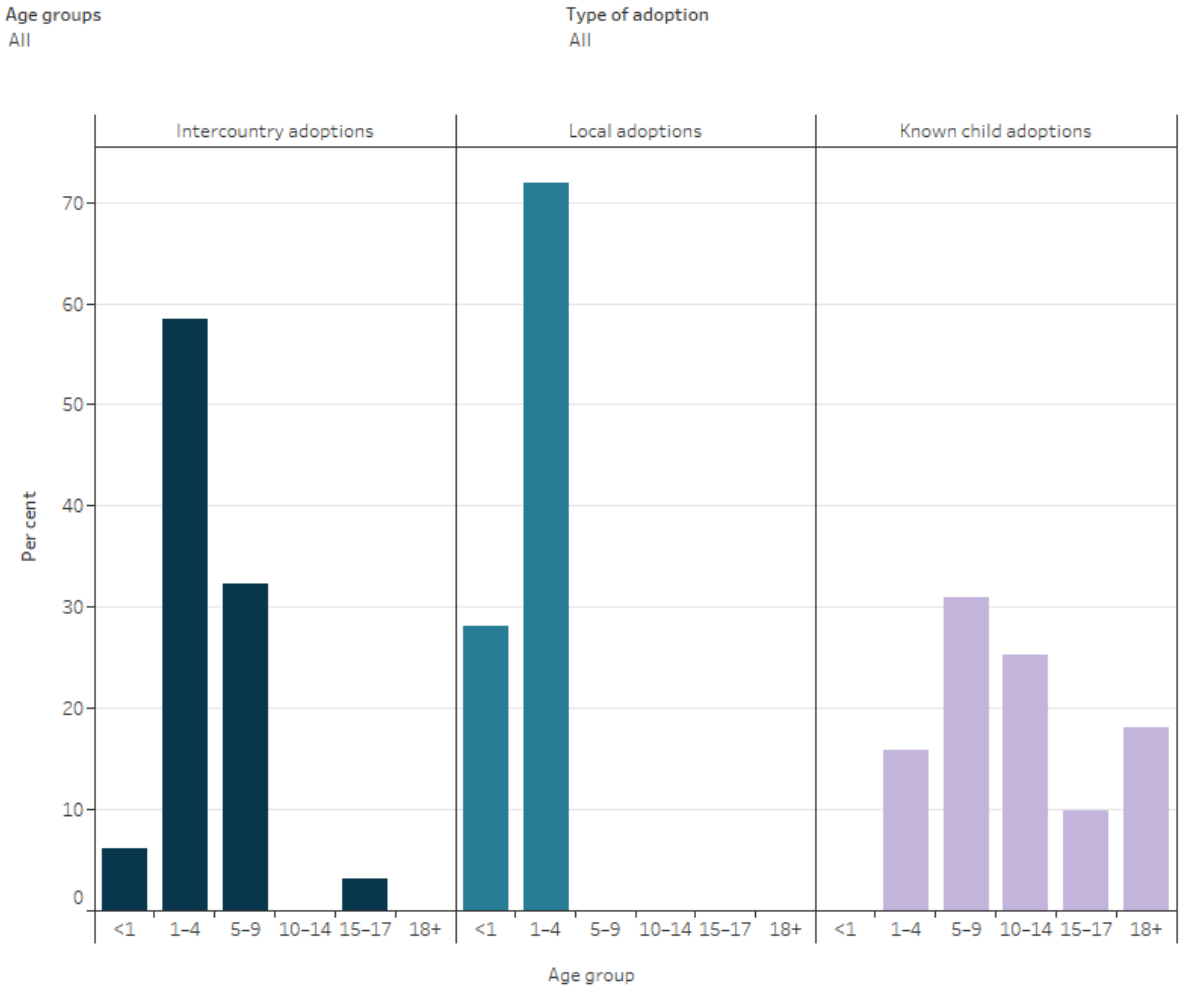
- 65% of intercountry adoptees were younger than 5 years—58% were between 1–4 years and 6% were infants under 12 months
- all local adoptees were younger than 5 years—72% were aged 1–4 and 28% were infants
- around half of known child adoptees were aged 10 or over—25% were aged 10–14, 10% 15–17 and 18% were 18 years or over
- only 16% of known child adoptees were aged 1–4 and there were no infants (Figure 3).

The three main reasons why children in known child adoptions are generally older are:

1. some types of known child adoptions have minimum age requirements
2. legislation mandates that adoptive parents have an existing relationship with the child before an adoption is possible
3. the additional time involved in forming step-families.

Figure 3

Adoptees, by type of adoption and age group, 2017–18



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 parents; for 'known' child adoptions, 'age of child' refers to the age of the adopted child at the date the adoption order was granted.
Source: AIHW Adoptions Australia data collection.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Most adoptions finalised in 2017–18 were for a single child, but a number of sibling groups were adopted (where a child is adopted with at least one sibling at the same time by the same family).

In 2017–18, 35 sibling groups involved 75 adoptees—55 children in carer (known child) adoptions, 4 children in local adoptions and 16 children in intercountry adoptions.

Adoptive parents

Of the 233 known child adoptions finalised in 2017–18, 63% were by carers. Carers are foster parents or other non-relatives who have been caring for the child and have been responsible for making decisions about the daily care of the child before adoption (Figure 4).

Age

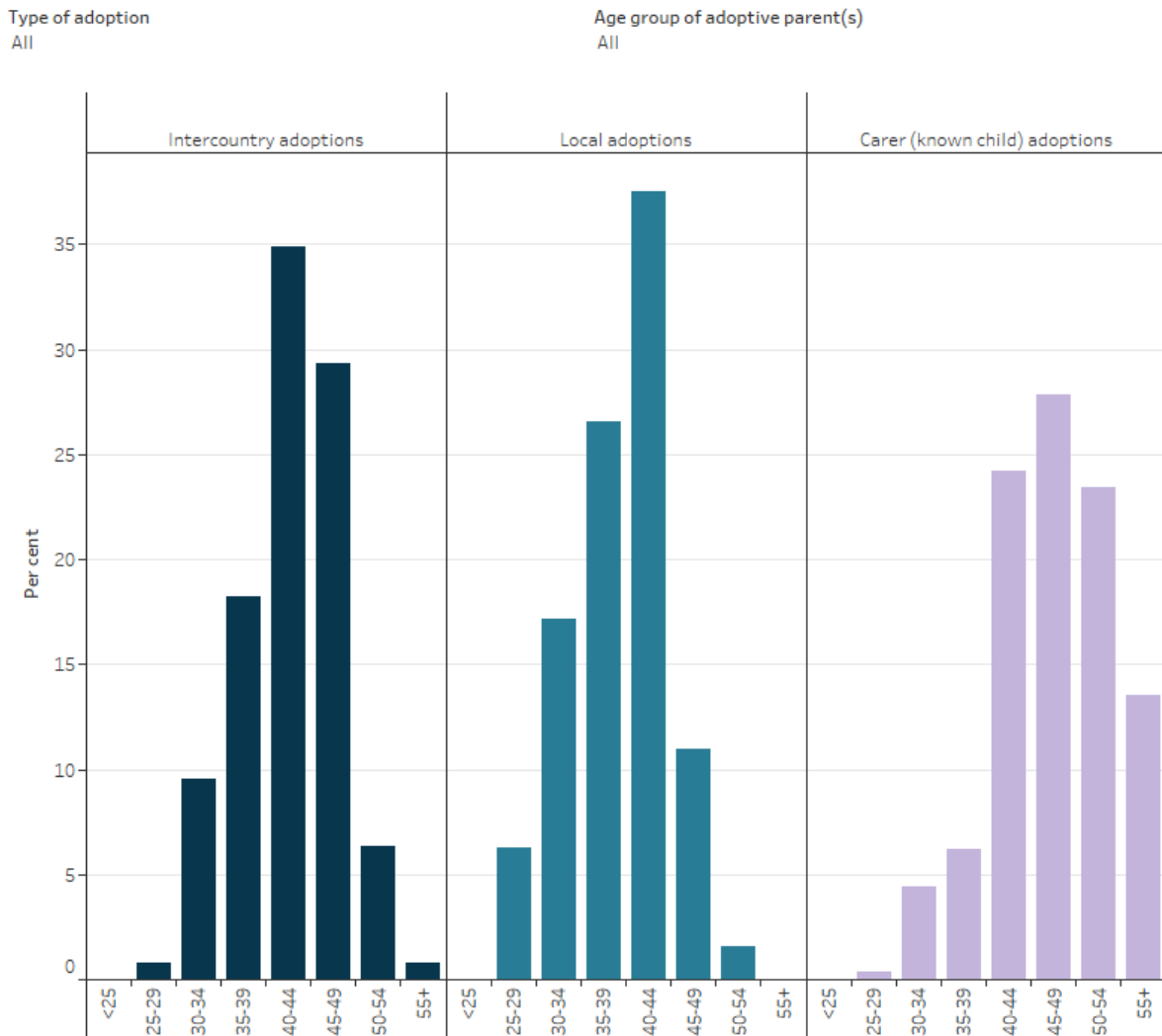
Carers who become adoptive parents of a child in their care tended to be older than adoptive parents involved in intercountry or local adoptions. In 2017–18, 88% carer (known child) adoptive parents were aged 40 or over. In comparison, 69% of adoptive parents involved in intercountry adoption, and 50% in local adoptions were aged 40 or over.

Marital status

Most carers who become adoptive parents of a child in their care were in a registered marriage (82%), 12% were single persons (including widowed parents) and 5% were de facto couples. In comparison, 97% of adoptive parents in intercountry adoptions and all adoptive parents in local adoptions were in a registered marriage. There were no local or intercountry adoptions by single persons.

Figure 4

Adoptions, by type of adoption and age group of adoptive parents, 2017–18



Source: AIHW Adoptions Australia data collection.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Where do I go for more information?

See [Adoptions Australia 2017–18](#), including relevant data tables and [interactive data displays](#).

Information on adopting a child can be found in [state and territory departments responsible for adoption](#), [Intercountry Adoption Australia](#) and the [Department of Social Services](#).

See also [Adoptions](#) for more information on this topic.

References

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2018. [Adoptions Australia 2017-18](#). Child welfare series no. 69. Cat. no. CWS 66. Canberra: AIHW.

Adult prisoners

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/adult-prisoners>

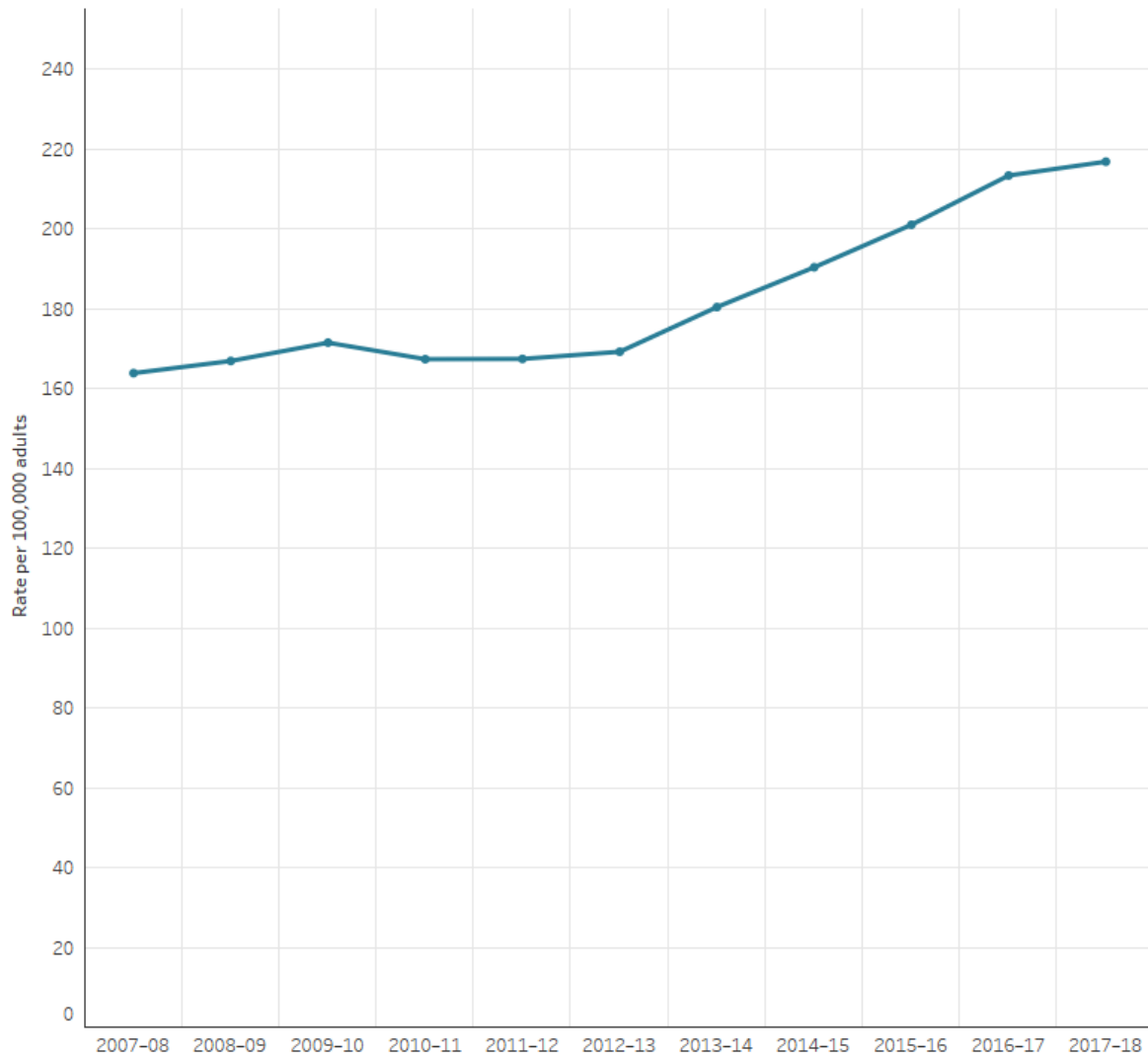
Adults in Australia who commit or allegedly commit crimes are dealt with by the criminal justice system. There are 118 custodial correctional facilities across Australia. On an average day in 2017–18, these housed almost 42,000 prisoners. Australia has 9 legal systems, 1 for each state and territory 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).

Trends

Australia's prison population is increasing in both number and as a proportion of the population. The average daily prison population grew from 27,612 in 2008–09 to 41,867 in 2017–18. During the same period, the imprisonment rate increased from 166.9 to 216.8 per 100,000 adults (Figure 1). The most common offences for prisoners in Australia as at 30 June 2018 were acts intended to cause injury (22%), illicit drug offences (16%), and sexual assault and related offences (12%) (ABS 2018b).

Figure 1

Adult imprisonment rate, 2007–08 to 2017–18



Source: SCGRSP 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Overrepresentation

When comparing the 2018 prison population to the general adult population, prisoners were:

- far more likely to be male—more than 8 in 10 (85%) adult prisoners were male, compared with 49.6% of the general adult population (AIHW 2019)
- more likely to be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians—almost 2 in 5 (38%) adult prison entrants were Indigenous, compared with just 3.2% of the adult population (see [Indigenous community safety](#))
- younger—2 in 3 (66%) prisoners were under 40, compared with around 1 in 3 (32%) in the general community aged 18 to under 40 (ABS 2018a).

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).

Health

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 2013). This means they have significant and complex health and welfare needs, often long term or chronic. The health of prisoners is sufficiently poorer than that of the general community, and prisoners are often considered to be 'old' at age 50–55 (Williams et al. 2014).

Since 2009, the AIHW has run the National Prisoner Health Survey, over a 2-week period every 3 years. In the 2018 survey, 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). These conditions must be managed while they are in prison.

In 2018, 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 also more likely to report a history of a mental health condition than Indigenous prison entrants (33%) (AIHW 2019).

2 in 5 (40%) prison entrants reported a previous diagnosis of a mental health disorder, including alcohol and drug misuse (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.

Prison entrants and dischargees were asked about their recent psychological distress levels, and about their perceived reasons for any distress. 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%).

Employment

The ability to gain and maintain employment is key to successful reintegration of former prisoners into the community post release. Many prisoners, particularly Indigenous prisoners, have complex and sometimes traumatic personal histories which remain upon release and 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 prisoners to find a job, particularly for those who have been in prison for longer than 6 months (Ramakers et al. 2014).

Fewer than 1 in 4 (22%) prison discharges reported they had paid employment organised to start within 2 weeks of release from prison (AIHW 2019).

Education

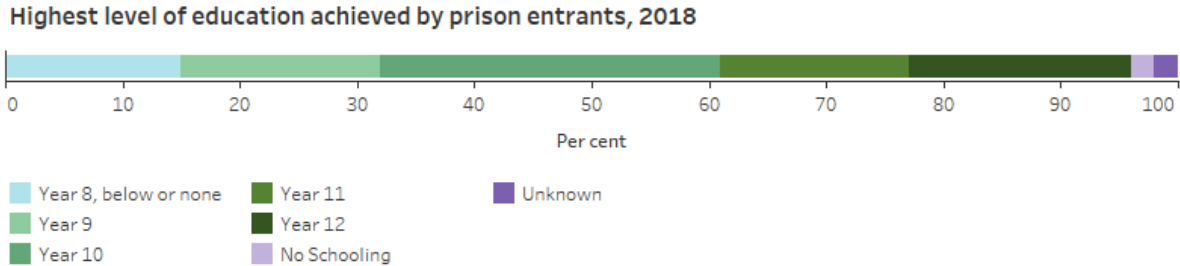
Education is a recognised social determinant of health, with lower levels of education associated with poorer health (Mitrou et al. 2014). People in prison have lower levels of educational attainment and higher levels of learning difficulties and learning disabilities than people in the general community (AIHW 2015; Kendall & 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).

Prison entrants were asked about the highest level of schooling they had completed and qualifications they attained other than school.

1 in 3 (33%) prison entrants had an education level of below Year 10 (AIHW 2019).

In 2018, 1 in 3 (33%) prison entrants had not completed Year 10 and 15% had completed Year 8 or below as their highest level of education completed. A total of 2% had no formal schooling. Less than 1 in 5 (19%) prison entrants reported they had completed

Figure 2



Source: AIHW 2019.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

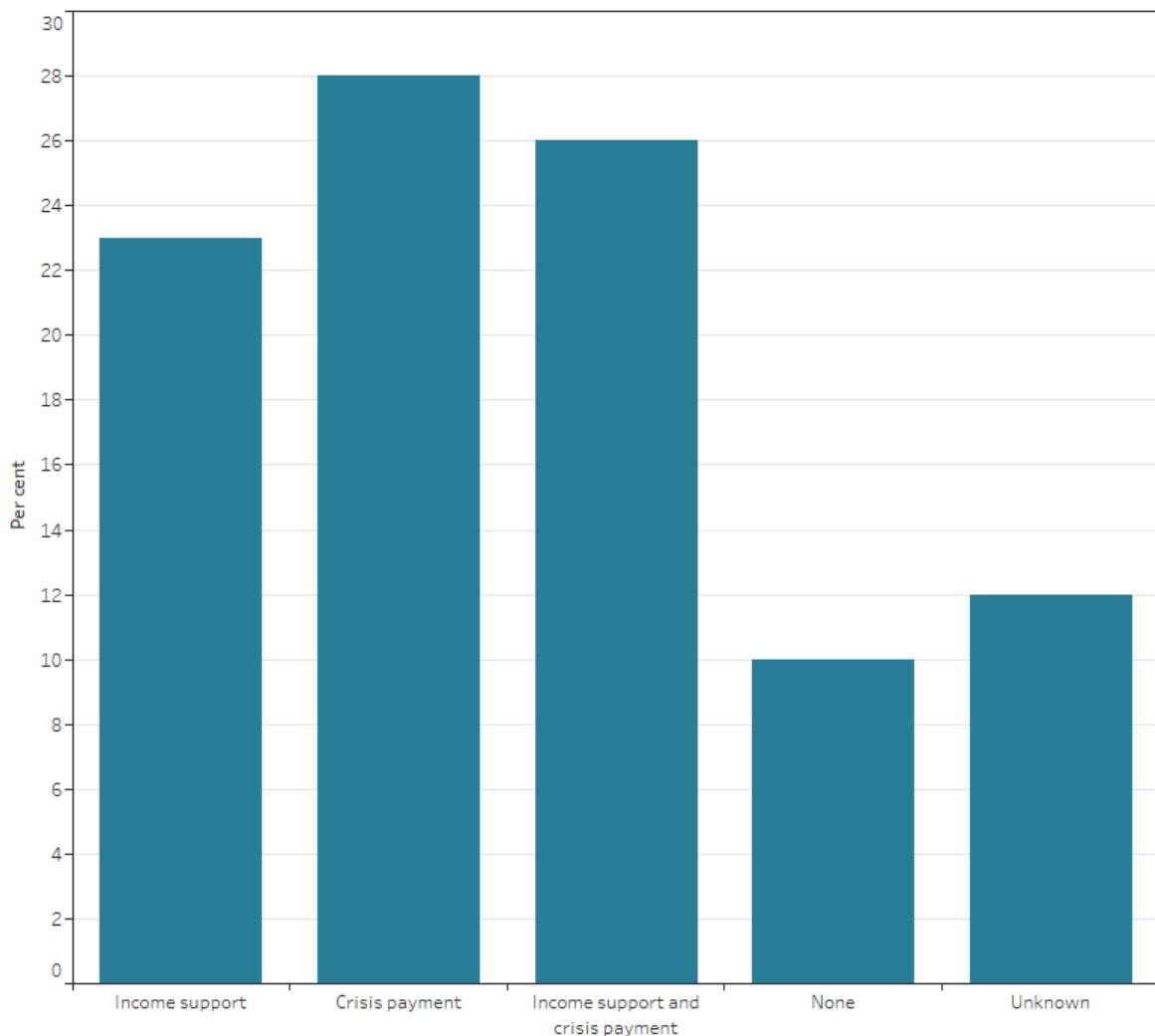
Income support

Unemployment is linked with poor psychosocial outcomes. This includes mental health issues, alcohol and other drug use disorders, and criminal offending (Fergusson et al. 2014).

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% expected to receive both payments.

Figure 3

Expected income source of prison discharges, 2018



Source: AIHW 2019.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

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:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/child-protection>

In Australia, statutory child protection is the responsibility of state and territory governments. Each responsible department assists vulnerable children who have been, or are at risk of being, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed, or whose parents are unable to provide adequate care and protection.

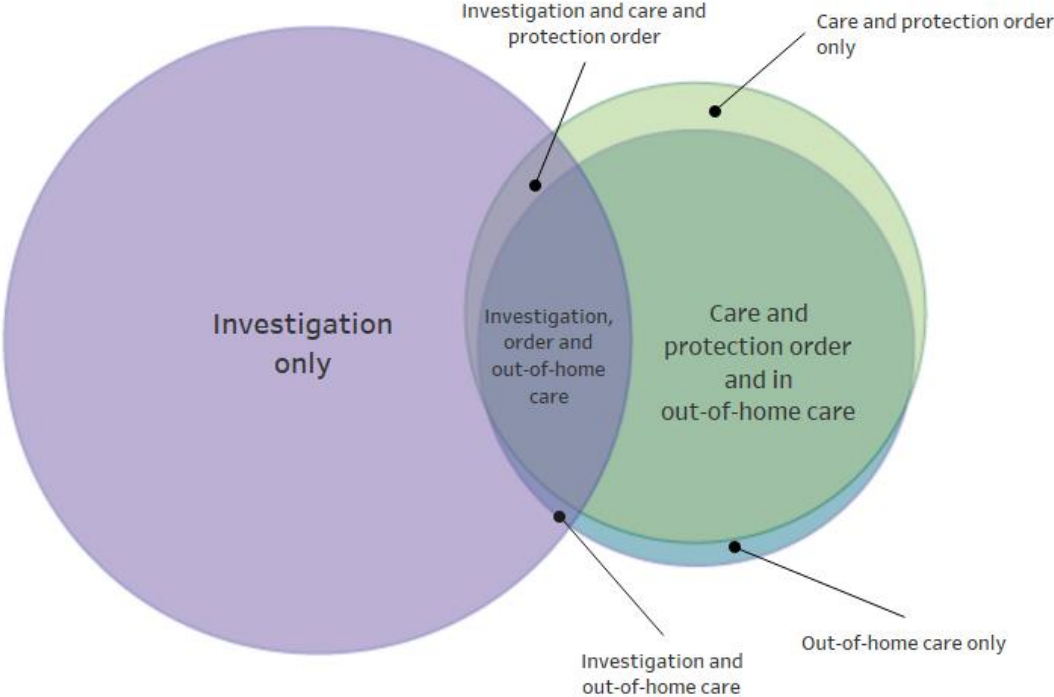
This page provides an overview of children who received child protection services in 2017–18. It also covers historical trends in child protection services and the types of services provided to children in need of care and protection.

Children who received child protection services

In 2017–18, about 159,000 children aged 0–17 received child protection services. These include investigations (which may or may not lead to substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect), care and protection orders and/or out-of-home care placements (Figure 1). This equates to a rate of 28.7 per 1,000 children. More than half (56%) of these children were the subject of an investigation only and were not subsequently placed on a care and protection order or in out-of-home care. A small proportion (7.4%) were involved in all 3 components of the system. See [glossary](#) for definitions of the child protection service types.

Figure 1

Children who received child protection services, by component of service, 2017–18



Source: AIHW Child Protection data collection 2017–18.
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Some groups of children are consistently overrepresented in the child protection system. In 2017–18:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 8 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to have received child protection services (163.8 per 1,000 children compared with 19.7 respectively)
- infants (aged under 1) were more likely to have received child protection services than those aged 15–17 (37.8 per 1,000 compared with 21.3 respectively)
- children from geographically remote areas had the highest rates of substantiations—children from *Very remote* areas were 4 times as likely as those from *Major cities* to be the subject of substantiations (26.1 per 1,000 compared with 7.0, respectively)

- children who were the subjects of substantiations were more likely to be from lower socioeconomic areas (36% were from the lowest socioeconomic area compared with 5.4% from the highest).

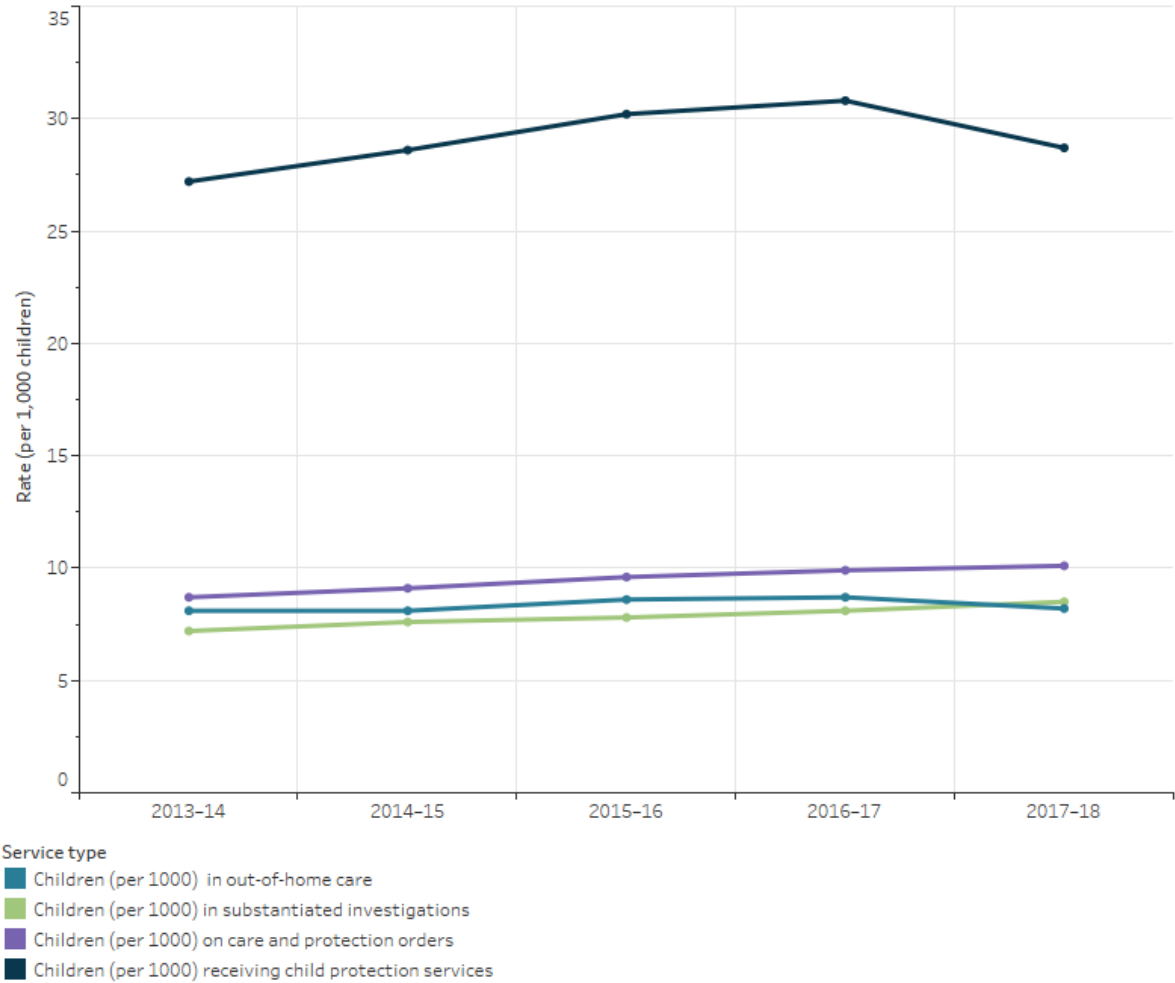
For further information about child protection services for Indigenous children see [Indigenous community safety](#).

Trends

The number of children receiving child protection services continues to rise. Over the 5-year period from 2013–14 to 2017–18, the overall number of children who received child protection services in Australia rose by 11%—from around 143,000 children (27.2 per 1,000) to around 158,600 children (28.7 per 1,000) (Figure 2). The fall in the number of children receiving services between 2016–17 and 2017–18 resulted from a change in the

Figure 2

Children in the child protection system, by service type, 2013-14 to 2017-18



Note: These data include unborn children and children of unknown age. Children on care and protection orders, in out-of-home care and on investigations were measured as at 30 June each year. Substantiation rates have been recalculated for all years to exclude NSW.
Source: AIHW Child Protection data collections 2013-14 to 2017-18.
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Substantiated investigations

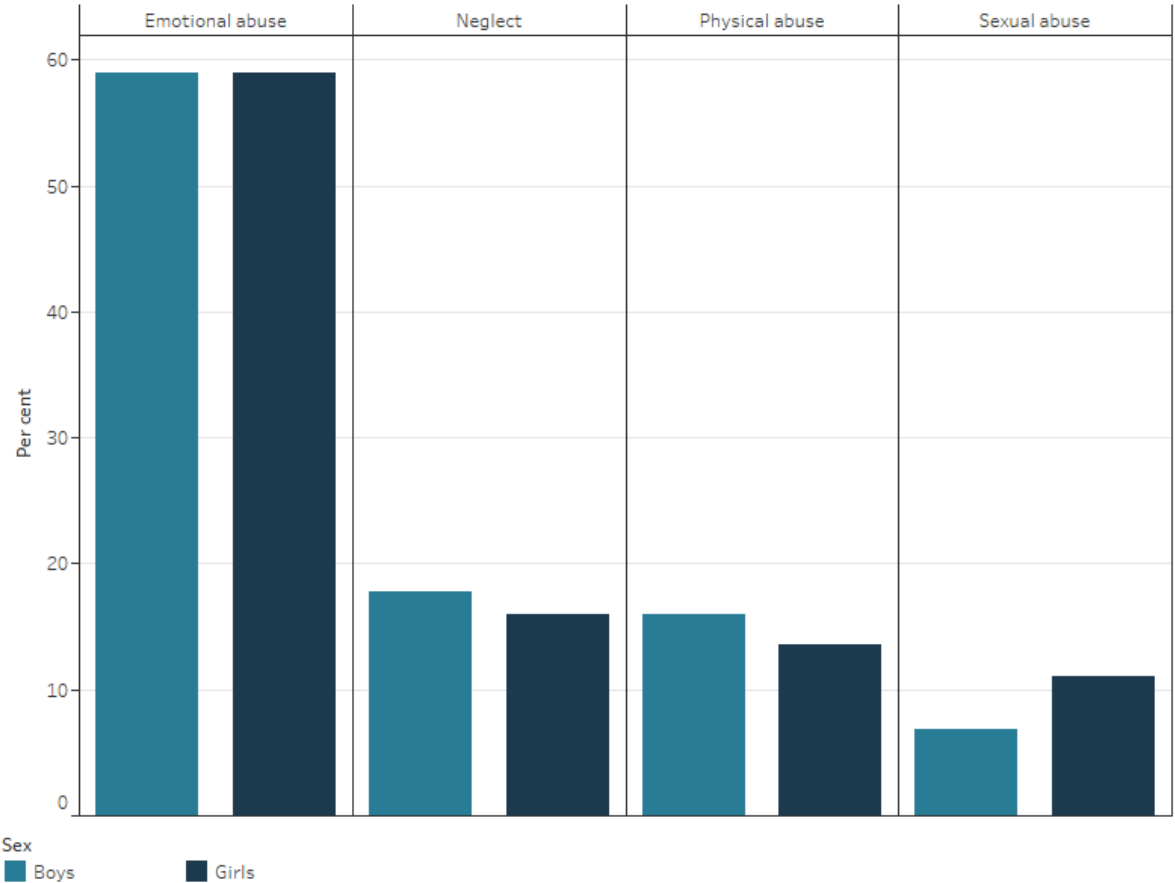
An investigation can lead to a substantiation if there is sufficient reason to believe a child has been, or is at risk of being, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed by a carer. The rate of children who were the subjects of substantiations rose from 7.2 per 1,000 children in 2013-14 to 8.5 per 1,000 children in 2017-18, an increase of 18%.

In 2017-18, the rate of children who were the subjects of substantiations was 8.5 per 1,000 children. The primary type of abuse or neglect reported for a substantiation is the one considered most likely to place the child at risk or be more severe in the short term. Emotional abuse was the most common primary type of abuse or neglect substantiated for all children (59%).

Girls were more likely to be subjects of substantiations of sexual abuse than boys (11% and 6.8% respectively). Boys were slightly more likely than girls to be subjects of substantiations for neglect (18% and 16% respectively) and physical abuse (16% and 14%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Children who were the subjects of substantiations, by sex and primary type of abuse or neglect, 2017-18



Notes:
 1. Excludes NSW. NSW has implemented a new client management system in 2017-18 and has provided limited data. NSW is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.
 2. Only the abuse type that is most likely to place the child at risk or be most severe in the short term is reported for the first substantiation in the year.
 Source: AIHW Child Protection data collection.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Care and protection orders

Care and protection orders are legal orders or arrangements that give child protection departments some responsibility for a child’s welfare. Between 30 June 2014 and 30 June 2018, the rate of children on care and protection orders increased from 8.7 to 10.1 per 1,000 children.

Out-of-home care

Out-of-home care is overnight care for children aged 0–17, where financial support from child protection departments is given or offered to the carer. At 30 June 2018, about 45,800 children were in out-of-home care. Between 30 June 2014 and 30 June 2018, the rate of children in out-of-home care rose from 8.1 to 8.2 per 1,000 children—an increase of 1%.

As at 30 June 2018, the vast majority (93%) of children in out-of-home care were in home-based care, mostly with relative or kinship carers (51%), or in foster care (39%). Another 5.8% were living in residential care, mainly used for children with complex needs. Half (50%) of children in relative or kinship placements were living with their grandparents and 23% with an aunt or uncle.

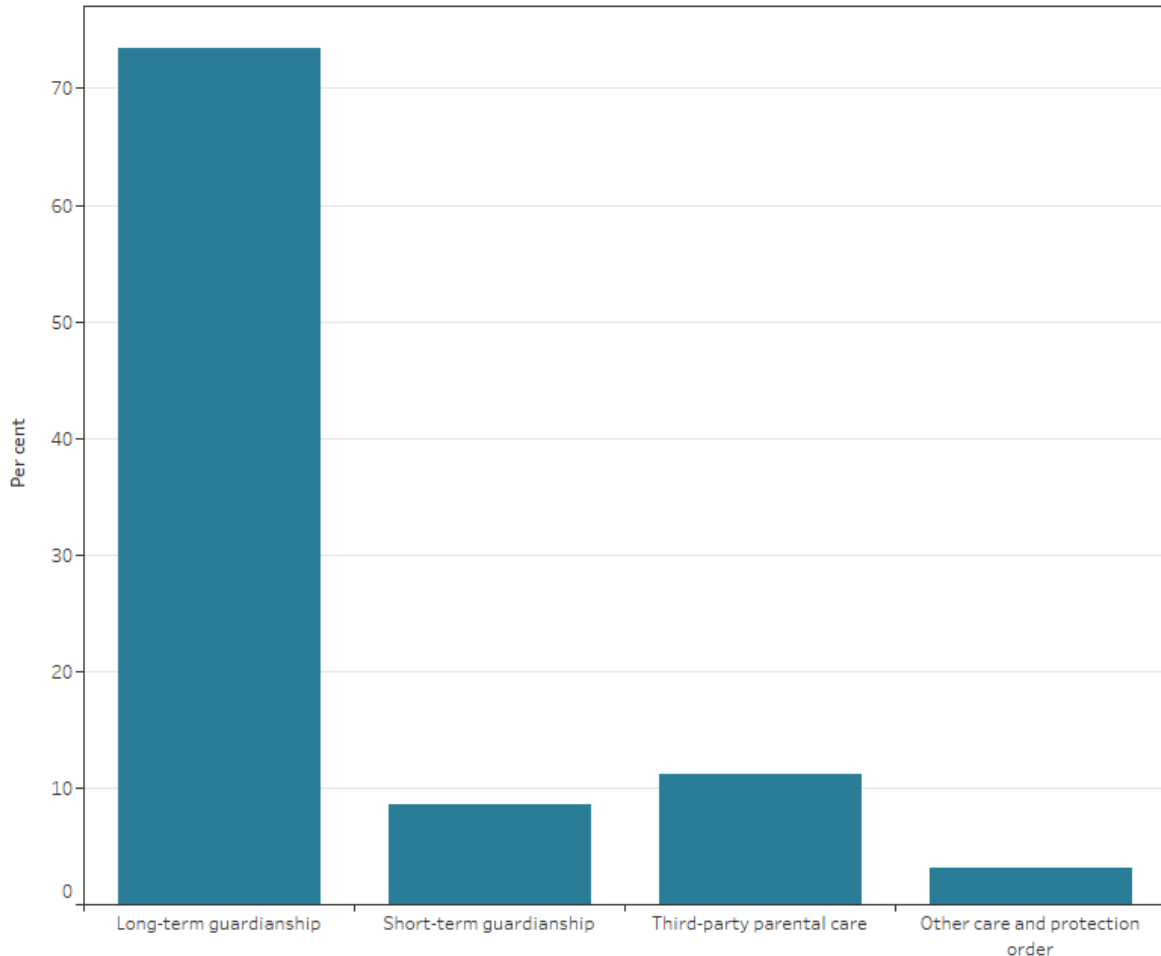
Most (82%) of the children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2018 had been continuously in out-of-home care for 1 year or more. This included:

- 30% who had been in out-of-home care for between 2 years and less than 5 years
- 40% who had been in out of home care for 5 years or more.

Most (73%) children in long-term (2 years or more) out-of-home care were under long-term legal responsibility of the state or territory. Another 11% lived with a third-party carer who had long-term legal responsibility for them (Figure 4). Permanency planning is used in all states and territories with a view to achieving a stable long-term care arrangement for all children in out-of-home care (AIHW 2016, 2018, 2019).

Figure 4

Children in long-term out-of-home care, by legal arrangements as at 30 June 2018



Notes:

1. Data excludes NSW.

2. Long-term out-of-home care includes children who have been continuously in out-of-home care for 2 or more years.

Source: AIHW Child Protection data collection.

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

Where do I go for more information?

See [child protection](#) for more on this topic.

Also see [Child protection Australia 2017–18](#) (report and supplementary data tables).

The AIHW is progressing national reporting on permanency and long-term care through the development of [permanency indicators](#) and expanded reporting on known-carer [adoptions](#).

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AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2016. [Permanency planning in child protection](#). Child welfare series no. 64. Cat. no. CWS 58. Canberra: AIHW.

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AIHW 2019. [Child protection Australia 2017–18](#). Child welfare series no. 70. Cat. no. CWS 65. Canberra: AIHW.

Family, domestic and sexual violence

If you are experiencing domestic or family violence, or know someone who is, call **1800RESPECT (1800 737 732)** or visit the [1800RESPECT website](http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence) (National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service for people living in Australia).

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence>

Family, domestic and sexual violence is a major health and welfare issue in Australia. It occurs across all socioeconomic, demographic and age groups, but predominantly affects women and children.

What is family, domestic and sexual violence?

Family violence is violence between family members, such as between parents and children, siblings, and intimate partners.

Domestic violence is a type of family violence, that occurs specifically between current or former intimate partners.

Both family violence and domestic violence include various behaviours:

- physical violence (hitting, choking, use of weapons)
- emotional abuse, also known as psychological abuse (intimidating, humiliating)
- coercive control (controlling access to finances, monitoring movements, isolating from friends and family).

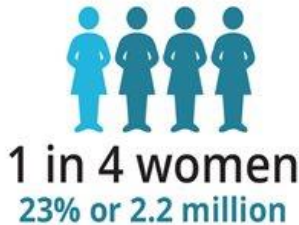
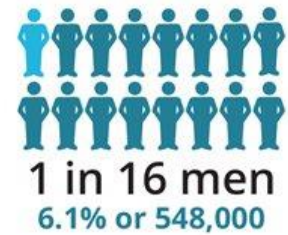
Sexual violence covers sexual behaviours carried out against a person's will. This can occur in the context of family or domestic violence, or be perpetrated by other people known to the victim or by strangers (ABS 2017b).

How common is family, domestic and sexual violence?

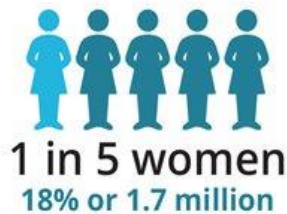
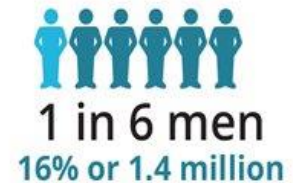
The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016 Personal Safety Survey (PSS) indicates that since the age of 15:



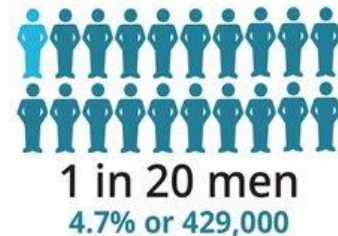
have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or previous partner since the age of 15



have experienced emotional abuse by a current or previous partner since the age of 15



have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15



Source: ABS 2017a.

Data from the 2016 PSS show that partner violence and sexual violence have remained relatively stable since 2005. This contrasts with declines in total violence over the same period (ABS 2017a).

Groups most at risk

Some social, economic and personal factors can increase a person's vulnerability to family, domestic and sexual violence. These factors are a complex web of potential influences, rather than direct causes.

Children

Children are more vulnerable to family, domestic and sexual violence.

The 2016 PSS asked participants (aged 18 and over) about their experiences of violence before the age of 15, also referred to as abuse.

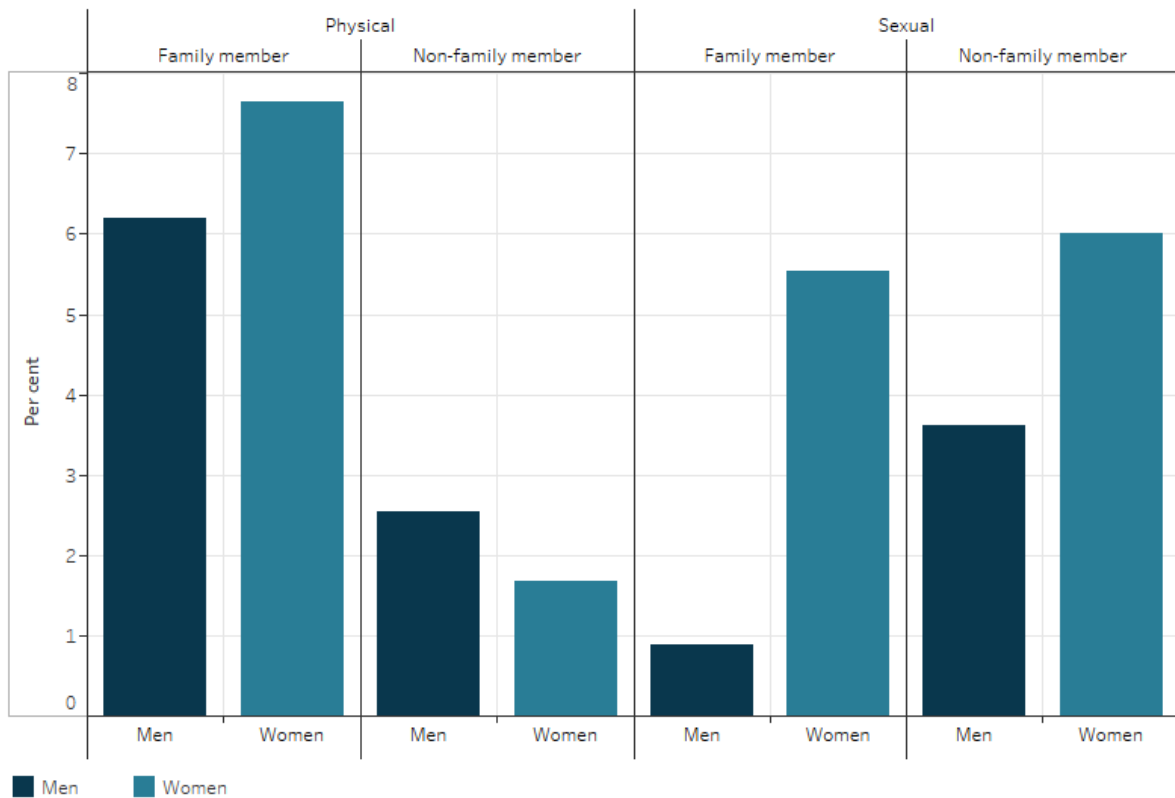
- Around 1 in 14 (7.0% or 1.3 million) respondents had experienced physical abuse by a family member.
- 1 in 30 (3.3% or 600,000) respondents had experienced sexual abuse by a family member (Figure 1) (ABS 2017a).

Figure 1

Experiences of physical and sexual abuse before the age of 15, by relationship to perpetrator and sex of respondent, 2016

Select a type of abuse

- All
- Physical
- Sexual



Note: Respondents reporting more than one type of violence (family or non-family perpetrators for both physical and sexual violence) were counted in each group so values will not sum to the total of victims. Respondents reporting more than one perpetrator for the same type of violence (for example: physical violence from more than one family member) were counted only once in that group.

Source: ABS 2017a.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

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 2017–18:

- 3% of all Australian children (159,000) received child protection services
- infants aged less than 1 were most likely (38 per 1,000) to receive child protection services and adolescents aged 15–17 were least likely (21 per 1,000)
- emotional abuse, including witnessing violence between intimate partners and adults, was the most common abuse type, identified in 59% (18,800) of substantiated cases. Neglect was identified in 17% (5,500) of cases, physical abuse in 15% (4,700) and sexual abuse in 9% (2,800) (AIHW 2019a).

Older Australians

For information about the risk factors for older age groups, see 'Chapter 7 Elder abuse: context, concepts and challenges' in [Australia's welfare 2019: data insights](#).

Women

More women than men experience family, domestic and sexual violence. Table 1 shows the proportion of people aged 18 and over who have experienced violence from a previous or current partner since the age of 15.

Table 1: Proportion of men and women who experienced violence or abuse from a partner since the age of 15, by type of violence or abuse, 2016

	Women (%)	Men (%)
Physical and/or sexual violence from a previous partner	14.6	4.4
Physical and/or sexual violence from a current partner	2.9	1.7
Emotional abuse from a previous/current partner	23.0	15.9

Source: ABS 2017a.

Women's exposure to violence differs across age groups and by perpetrator type. When experiences of partner violence are expanded to those perpetrated by all intimate partners—including current or previous boyfriends, girlfriends or dates—young women are particularly at risk.

The 2016 PSS reported that young women were more likely to experience intimate partner violence and/or sexual violence than older women in the 12 months before the survey:

- 1 in 20 (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 20 (4.3% or 125,000) women aged 18–34 experienced sexual violence, compared with 0.7% (45,000) aged 35 and over (ABS 2017a).

In interpreting these results, it is important to note that younger women were less likely to have ever had a cohabiting partner compared with women aged 35 and over. Similarly, men aged 18–34 were more at risk of intimate partner violence in the 12 months before the survey than those aged 35 and over—2.0% of men aged 18–34 experienced intimate partner violence compared with 0.8% aged 35 and over (ABS 2017a).

Other at-risk groups

Other social and cultural factors also shape experiences of family, domestic and sexual violence. People can be more at risk of violence due to factors such as disability, sexual orientation or cultural influences. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are particularly at risk and have much higher rates of hospitalisation because of family violence. Data on the experiences of Indigenous women can be found in [Indigenous community safety](#). For more information, see [AIHW's Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia, 2019 report](#).

Responses and support services

Responses to family, domestic and sexual violence are provided informally in the community and formally through welfare services.

The 2016 PSS asked victims of domestic violence if they sought support following their most recent incident. Victims were more likely to seek support for violence from a previous partner than a current partner, and women were more likely to seek support than men.

Among women who had experienced partner violence since the age of 15:

- 2 in 3 (63% or 864,000) victims of previous partner violence sought support, compared with 1 in 2 (54% or 150,000) victims of current partner violence.

Among men who had experienced partner violence since the age of 15:

- 2 in 5 (41% or 162,000) victims of previous partner violence sought support, compared with 1 in 3 (29% or 43,500) victims of current partner violence, although this should be interpreted with caution due to small numbers (ABS 2017a).

Informal support

According to the 2016 PSS, a friend or family member was the most common source of support for men and women who had experienced partner violence.

Of those who sought support or advice, a friend or family member was the source of support for:

- 65% of female victims of previous partner violence
- 67% of female victims of current partner violence
- 54% of male victims of previous partner violence (ABS 2017a).

Note: Data regarding male victims of current partner violence are not provided due to small numbers.

Police responses

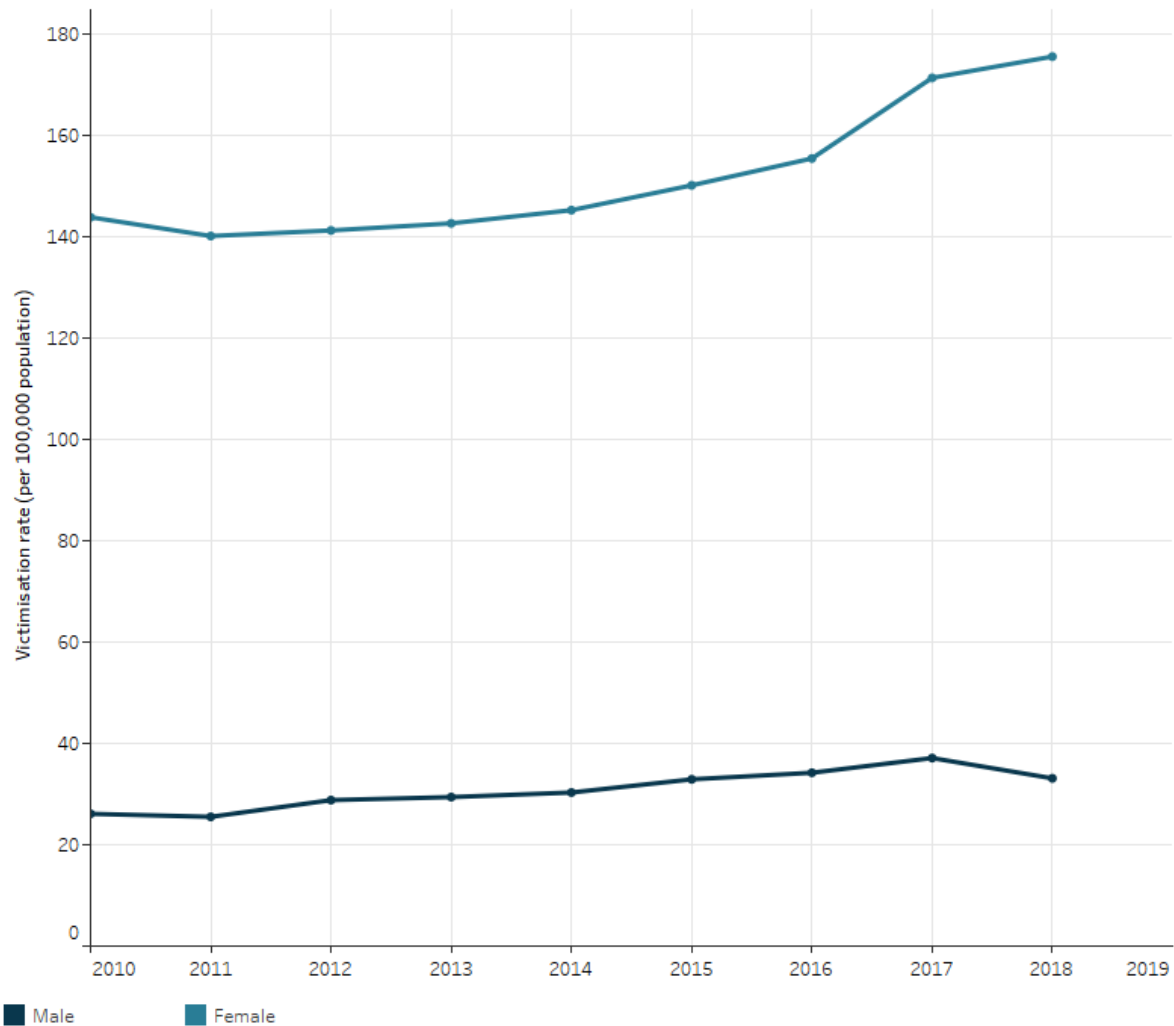
When an incident of violence is reported to police by a victim, witness or other person, it can be recorded as a crime. The ABS collects data on selected family, domestic and sexual violence crimes recorded by police. In 2018:

- at least 2 in 5 recorded assaults were related to family and domestic violence
- around 2 in 5 recorded murders were related to family and domestic violence (93 victims) (ABS 2019).

The ABS has collated national police recorded sexual assault incidents since 2010. Since 2011, the number of victims recorded by police has increased each year. In 2018, it increased to 26,000 victims, representing 176 female victims and 33 male victims of sexual assault per 100,000 people (Figure 2) (ABS 2019). Increases in recording of sexual assault can be caused by an increase in incidents, an increase in reporting to police, or a combination.

Figure 2

Recorded victims of sexual assault per 100,000 of the population, by sex, 2010 to 2017



Source: ABS 2019.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Homelessness services

People accessing specialist homelessness services (SHS) are asked if they have experienced family and domestic violence. These data cannot currently distinguish between victims and perpetrators of violence. From 1 July 2019, additional information will be collected on the type of services provided to SHS clients, including whether these are victim or perpetrator services (AIHW 2018).

In 2017–18, SHS agencies assisted around 121,000 clients who had experienced domestic and family violence. In 2017–18:

- more than 3 in 4 (78%) clients were female
- almost half were single parents (47% lived in single parent households)
- 1 in 5 (22%) clients were Indigenous

- 1 in 4 (26%) clients had a current mental health issue
- 8% of clients had experienced problematic drug and/or alcohol use, and had a current mental health issue.

Nationally, the number of clients reporting they had experienced family and domestic violence and sought assistance from SHS agencies has risen on average by 9% each year. This represents an increase from 84,800 people in 2013–14 to 121,000 in 2017–18 (AIHW 2018).

See also [Homelessness and homelessness services](#).

Health services

Hospitals provide mainstream health services for assault victims. The AIHW National Hospital Morbidity Database includes data about individuals admitted to hospital with injuries caused by physical assault, sexual assault or maltreatment.

In 2016–17:

- 3 in 10 (29% or 6,300) people admitted to hospital with assault injuries reported they were victims of family or domestic violence
- 1 in 5 (19% or 4,200) reported that the perpetrator was a spouse or domestic partner (AIHW 2019b).

Victims may also present to emergency departments and primary health care professionals. Data on these presentations are not currently available.

Community attitudes

Social attitudes and norms shape the context in which violence occurs. The National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey provides information about knowledge and attitudes towards violence against women, gender roles and responses to violence. The survey was conducted in 2009, 2013 and 2017.

Overall, the 2017 survey results showed encouraging trends in violence-related knowledge and attitudes. For example, most Australians had accurate knowledge of violence against women and most recognised that violence can occur in different forms and involve more than just physical and sexual violence. While most people's knowledge of violence against women has increased, there are still areas for improvement, such as:

- 1 in 3 Australians did not know that women are more likely to be sexually assaulted by a known person than a stranger
- 2 in 5 Australians did not know where to access help for a domestic violence issue
- while 2 in 3 Australians recognised that men are more likely to be perpetrators of domestic violence, this declined by 7 percentage points between 2013 and 2017
- 1 in 5 Australians did not recognise that women are more likely than men to suffer physical harm from domestic violence (Webster et al. 2018).

Overall, most Australians rejected attitudes supportive of violence against women. Only a small and declining proportion since 2013 agreed that partner violence is a private, family matter. While results were generally encouraging, some attitudes were concerning:

- 1 in 3 Australians believed that women who do not leave their abusive partners are partly responsible for violence continuing
- 2 in 5 Australians agreed it was common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men
- 1 in 5 Australians believed that domestic violence is a normal reaction to stress and that sometimes a woman can make a man so angry he hits her without meaning to (Webster et al. 2018).

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 sexual harassment and stalking.

What is sexual harassment and stalking?

In the ABS 2016 PSS:

Sexual harassment includes indecent phone calls, text messages, emails or social media posts; indecent exposure; inappropriate comments; and unwanted sexual touching.

Stalking is classified as 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 (ABS 2017b).

Based on the 2016 PSS:

- 1 in 2 (53% or 5 million) women and 1 in 4 (25% or 2.2 million) men had experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime
- 1 in 6 (17% or 1.6 million) women and 1 in 16 (6.5% or 587,000) men had experienced stalking since the age of 15.

Of the 1.2 million women who experienced stalking from a male in the 20 years before the survey:

- 31% (364,000) perceived the most recent incident as a crime at the time
- 29% (337,000) reported that police were contacted about the most recent incident (ABS 2017a).

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on family, domestic and sexual violence, see:

- [Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia 2019](#)
- [Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey](#)

- [Australian Bureau of Statistics, Personal Safety Survey](#)
- [Australian Bureau of Statistics, Recorded Crime—Victims, Australia, 2017](#)
- [1800RESPECT](#)

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AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2018. [Sleeping rough: a profile of Specialist Homelessness Services clients](#). Cat. no. HOU 297. Canberra: AIHW.

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Webster K, Diemer K, Honey N, Mannix S, Mickle J, Morgan J et al. 2018. [Australians' attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality: findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey \(NCAS\)](#). Sydney: ANROWS.

Youth justice

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://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 Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set (AIHW 2019). 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.

How many people are under youth justice supervision?

On an average day in 2017–18, 5,513 people aged 10 and over were under youth justice supervision. Among those aged 10–17, this was a rate of 21 per 10,000, or 1 in every 486 in this age group. A total of 10,638 young people were supervised by youth justice at some time during the year (from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018).

More than 4 in 5 (83%) young people under supervision on an average day in 2017–18 were supervised in the community, and 18% were in detention (some were supervised in the community and detention on the same day).

Most (90%) young people under community-based supervision on an average day were serving a sentence, while most (60%) of those in detention were unsentenced.

Variation in rates of supervision

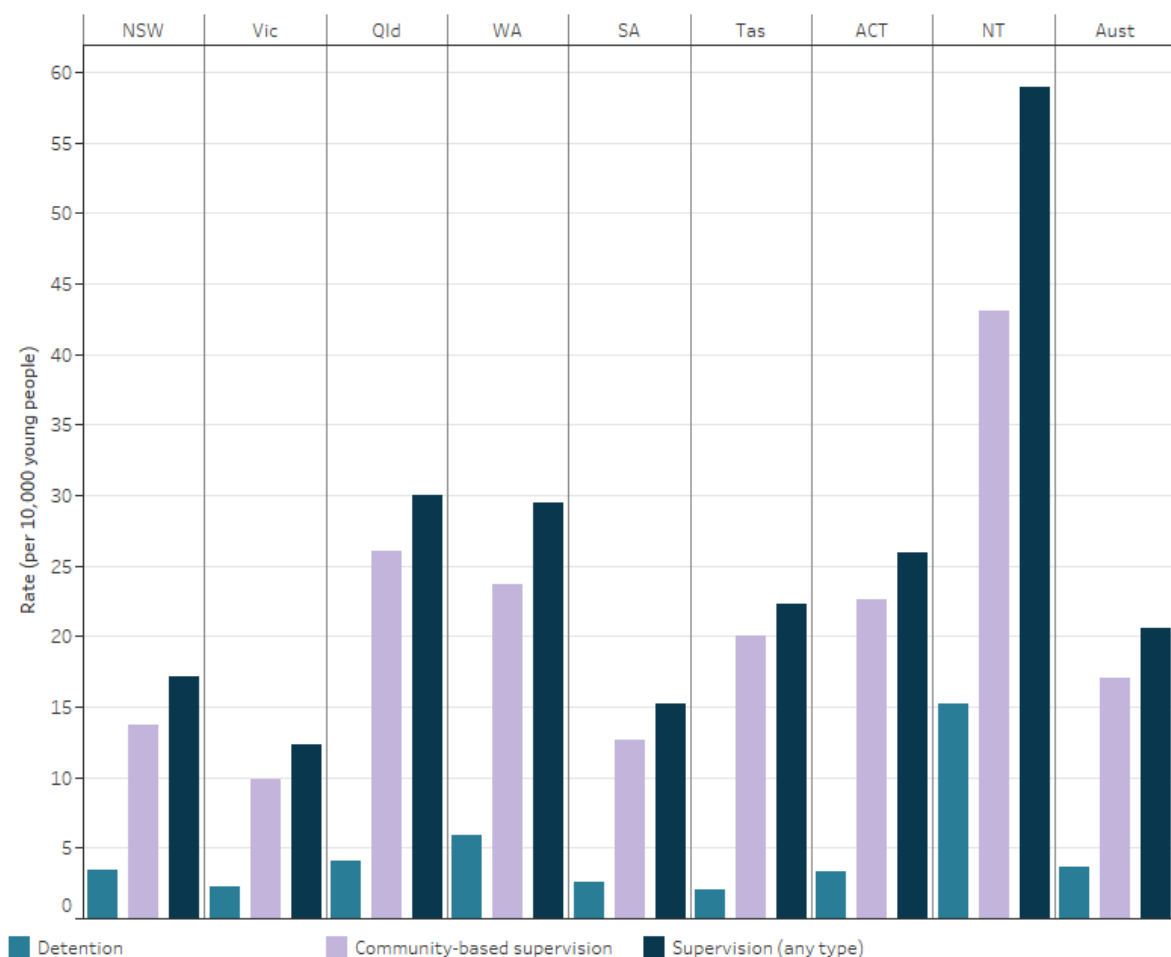
On an average day of youth justice supervision in 2017–18:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians were 17 times as likely as non-Indigenous people to be under supervision—almost 17 times as likely to be under community-based supervision, and 23 times as likely to be in detention (see [Indigenous community safety](#))
- males were 4 times as likely as females to be under supervision
- young people from *Very remote* areas were 9 times as likely as those from *Major cities* to be under supervision
- young people from the lowest socioeconomic areas were 6 times as likely as those from the highest socioeconomic areas to be under supervision.

Among the states and territories, rates of supervision ranged from 12 per 10,000 on an average day in Victoria to 59 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, 2017–18



Source: AIHW 2019.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Time under supervision

Individual periods of supervision completed during 2017–18 lasted for a median of 119 days (about 4 months). Completed periods of community-based supervision were much longer than completed periods of detention, with a median duration of 95 days (about 3 months) compared with 8 days. The median duration of periods of sentenced detention was longer than unsentenced detention (72 days compared with 7 days).

When the total time spent under supervision during 2017–18 is considered (including multiple periods and those not yet completed), young people supervised during the year spent an average of 189 days or about 6 months under supervision.

Trends

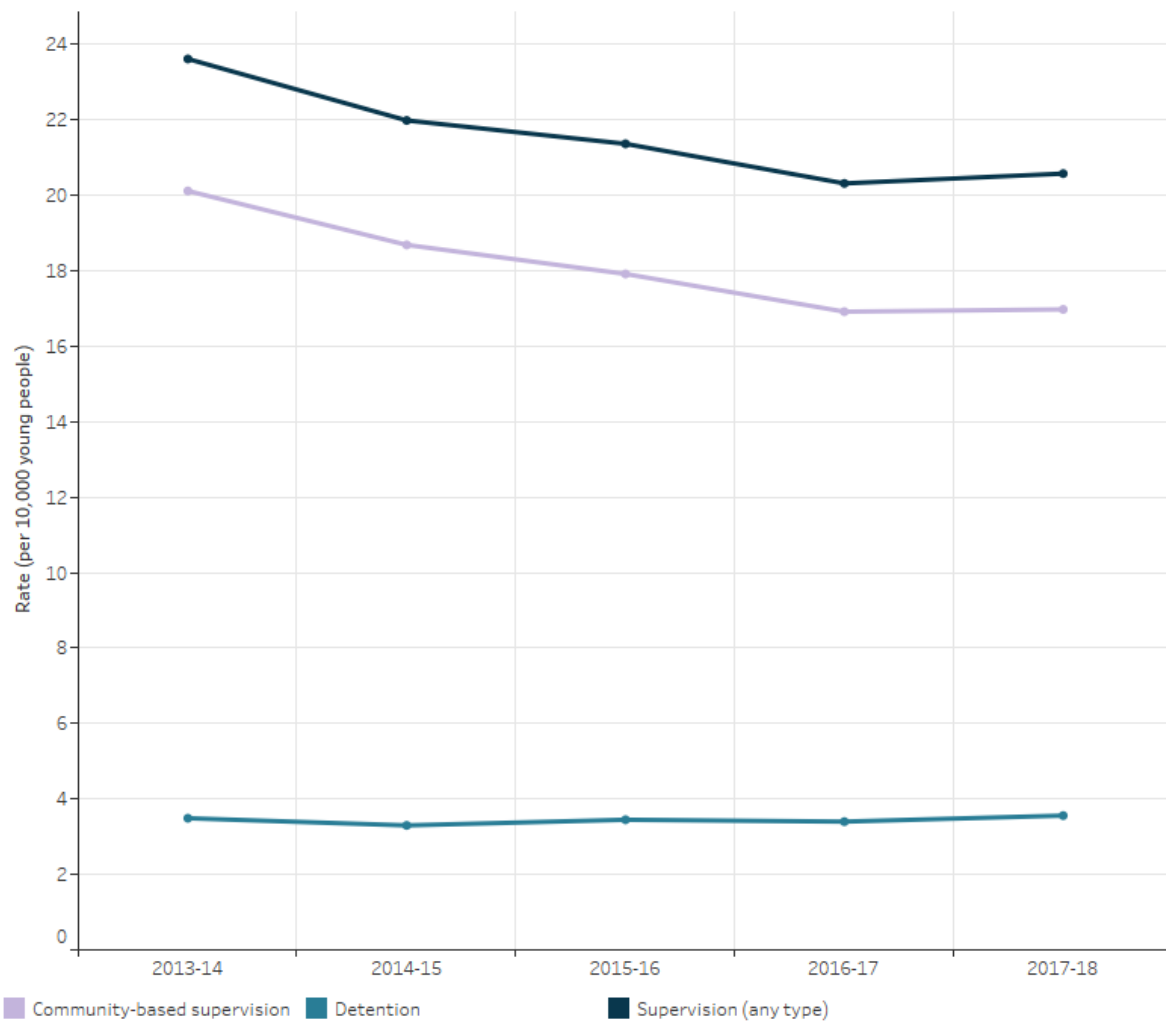
Over the 5 years from 2013–14 to 2017–18, the number of people aged 10 and over who were under supervision on an average day fell by 12% (6,256 to 5,513). The rate for people aged 10–17 dropped from 24 to 21 per 10,000 (Figure 2).

In community-based supervision, the number of young people on an average day fell by 14% (5,334 to 4,568) over the 5-year period. The rate dropped from 20 to 17 per 10,000 for those aged 10–17.

In detention, the number on an average day rose by 3% (949 to 974) over the same period.

Figure 2

Rate of young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day, by supervision type, 2013–14 to 2017–18



Source: AIHW 2019.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

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 2018a).

Child protection

Similarly, young people aged 10–17 under youth justice supervision at any time between July 2013 and June 2017 were about 9 times as likely as the general population of the same age to have received child protection services during this period (48% compared with 5%) (AIHW 2018b).

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 2017–18](#)
- [Overlap between youth justice supervision and alcohol and other drug treatment services: 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2016](#)
- [Youth detention population in Australia 2018](#)
- [Young people in child protection and under youth justice supervision: 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2017](#)
- [Young people returning to sentenced youth justice supervision 2016–17.](#)

References

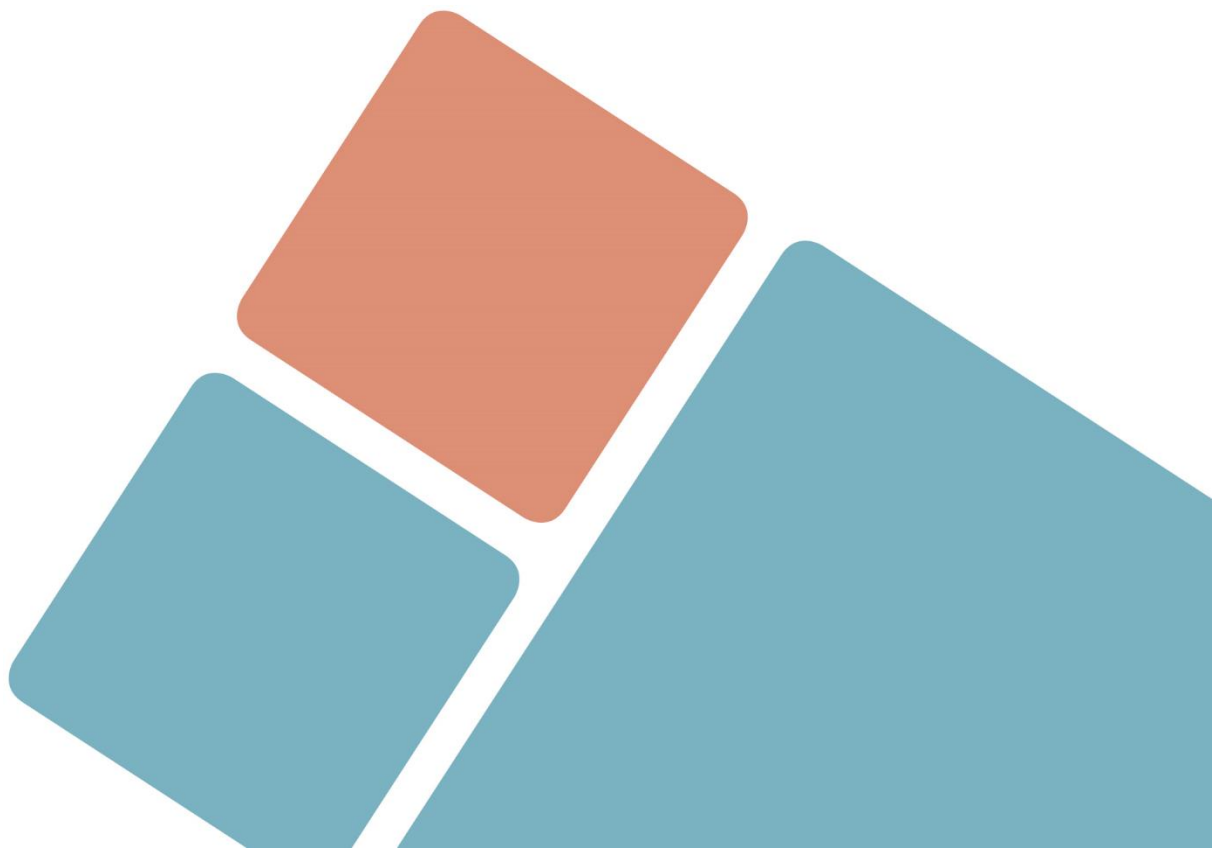
AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2018a. [Overlap between youth justice supervision and alcohol and other drug treatment services: 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2016](#). Cat. no. JUV 126. Canberra: AIHW.

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AIHW 2019. [Youth justice in Australia 2017–18](#). Cat. No. JUV 129. Canberra: AIHW.

Indigenous Australians

Many factors contribute to the welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Welfare is closely linked to health and is influenced by social determinants such as education, employment, housing, access to services, and community safety. Contextual and historical factors are particularly important for understanding the welfare of Indigenous Australians.



Aged care for Indigenous Australians

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/aged-care-for-indigenous-australians>

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population has a much younger age structure than the non-Indigenous population, due to higher rates of fertility and deaths occurring at younger ages (see also [Profile of Indigenous Australians](#)). However, as with the general population, the Indigenous population is also ageing.

Access to aged care services in Australia is determined by need, rather than age. However, planning for aged care services takes into account the specific needs of the Indigenous population aged 50 and over and the non-Indigenous population aged 65 and over (Department of Health 2018). A broader age group is used for Indigenous Australians because of their greater need for care at a younger age compared with non-Indigenous Australians.

This page focuses on Indigenous Australians aged 50 and over and their use of aged care services.

Indigenous Australians aged 50 and over

At 30 June 2016, around 124,000 Indigenous Australians were aged 50 and over. This includes about:

- 90,000 aged 50–64
- 32,100 aged 65–84
- 1,900 aged 85 and over (ABS 2018).

Indigenous Australians aged 50 and over comprised:

- 16% of the Indigenous population (of all ages)
- 1.5% of the total Australian population aged 50 and over (ABS 2018).

Use of aged care services by Indigenous Australians

In Australia, the aged care system offers options to meet the different care needs of individuals. To help ensure aged care services are appropriate to the needs of all clients, the *Aged Care Act 1997* designates some groups of people as 'people with special needs'. Indigenous Australians are one such group (*Aged Care Act 1997*: s11–3). For Indigenous Australians, challenges for the aged care system include ensuring access to culturally

appropriate care, especially for those living in remote and very remote areas (Australian National Audit Office 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 Indigenous Australians (Department of Health 2019).

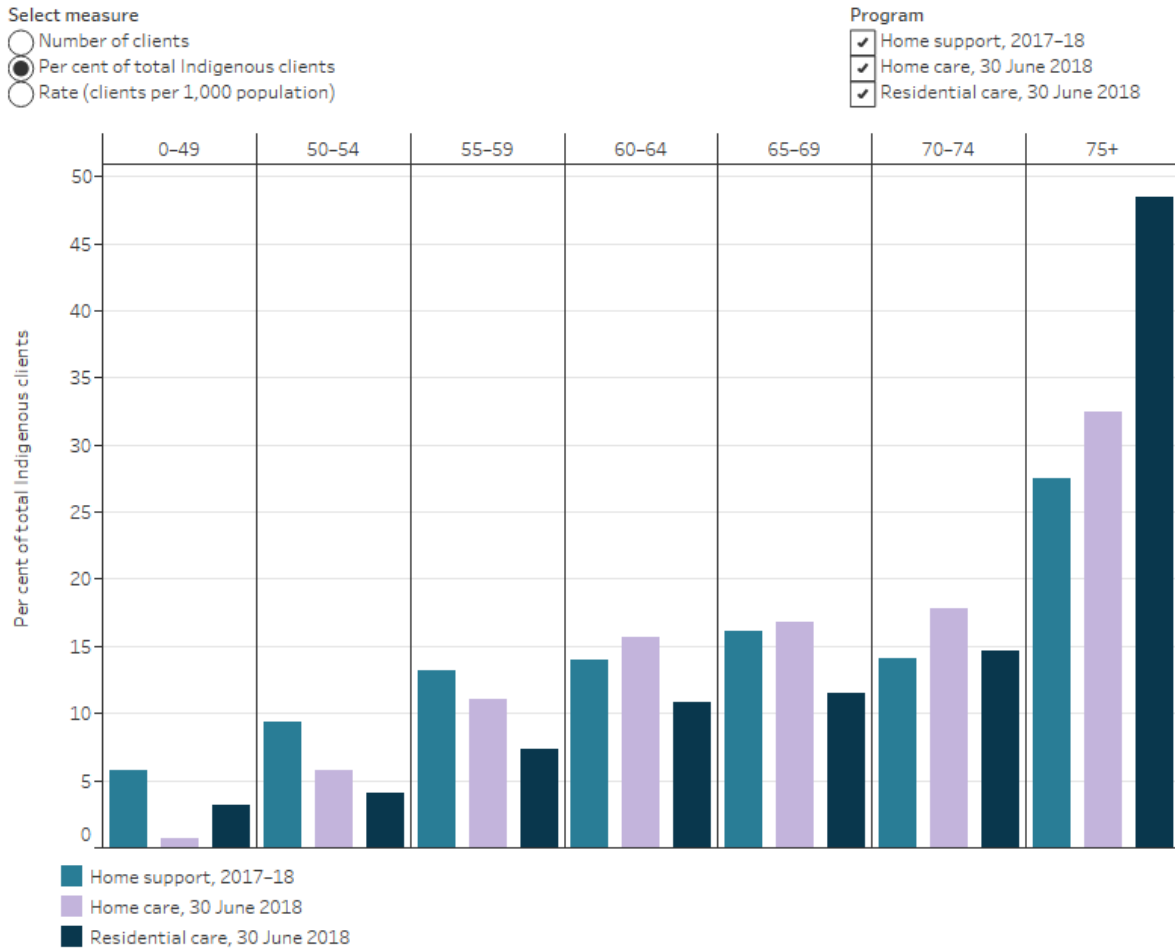
Data on the use of aged care by Indigenous Australians are available from the AIHW National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse. Considering the main types of government-subsidised aged care, among Indigenous Australians aged 50 and over, about:

- 20,200 received home support during 2017–18. This is entry-level support provided through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme, aimed at helping people manage independently at home for as long as possible
- 2,900 were receiving home care at 30 June 2018. 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
- 1,700 were receiving residential care at 30 June 2018. This means staying in a residential aged care facility, on a respite or longer-term basis.

Indigenous Australians using residential aged care tended to be older than those using home care or home support (Figure 1). For example, nearly half (49%) in residential aged care were aged 75 and over, compared with 32% of Indigenous home care clients, and 27% of Indigenous home support clients.

Figure 1

Indigenous Australians using aged care in selected programs, by program and age group



Notes:
 1. For the 'rate (clients per 1,000 population)' measure, rates were calculated using ABS 2011 Census-based population projections (series B) for the Indigenous population (ABS 2014).
 2. Data exclude clients for whom Indigenous status was not stated or inadequately described.
 Source: AIHW National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Most Indigenous Australians using home care, home support or residential aged care lived in non-remote areas, as shown by data from the AIHW National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse. In 2017-18, among Indigenous home support clients (of all ages):

- 4 in 5 (80%) lived in non-remote areas (*Major cities, Inner regional or Outer regional areas*)
- the remaining 1 in 5 (20%) lived in remote areas (*Remote or Very remote areas*).

Similarly, for home care and residential aged care, at 30 June 2018, around 4 in 5 Indigenous clients lived in non-remote areas (82% for home care and 83% for residential aged care).

While most Indigenous clients lived in non-remote areas, the proportion of total Indigenous clients was considerably higher in remote areas. For example, among home

support clients in 2017–18 whose Indigenous status was recorded, 31% in remote areas were Indigenous, compared with 2% in non-remote areas.

Another type of aged care is flexible aged care, which provides care for special groups or circumstances in a range of settings. An example is the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program, which provides culturally appropriate care for Indigenous Australians in locations close to their communities, and services mainly located in remote areas. On 30 June 2018, the program had 860 places (Department of Health 2018).

Comparisons with non-Indigenous Australians

Differences in aged care use exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians aged 50 and over. With the exception of those aged 75 and over using residential care, rates of aged care use were higher for Indigenous Australians than for non-Indigenous Australians (Figure 2).

Among people aged 65–74, compared with non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous Australians were:

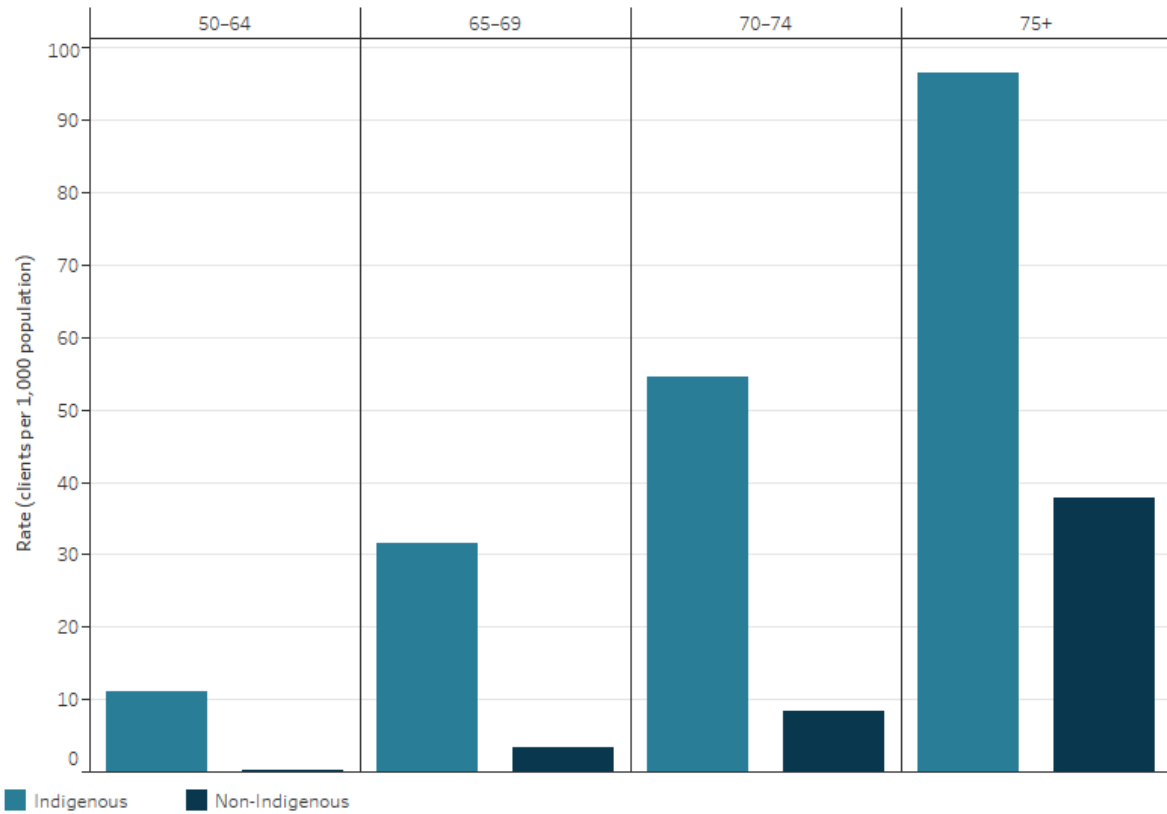
- **3.1x as likely to use** home support (2017–18)
- **7.1x as likely to use** home care (June 2018)
- **2.1x as likely to use** residential aged care (June 2018).

Figure 2

Rate per 1,000 population of aged care use among people aged 50 and over in selected programs, by age and Indigenous status

Select program:

- Home care, 30 June 2018
- Home support, 2017-18
- Residential aged care, 30 June 2018



Notes:

1. Rates calculated using ABS 2011 Census-based population projections (series B) (ABS 2014, 2016).

2. Data exclude clients for whom Indigenous status was not stated or inadequately described.

Source: AIHW National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse.

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

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on older Indigenous Australians and aged care among the Indigenous population, see:

- [Insights into vulnerabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 and over—in brief](#)
- AIHW's dedicated aged care data website: [GEN aged care data](#).

See also [Aged care for more on this topic](#).

References

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Department of Health 2019. [Actions to support older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people](#). Canberra: Department of Health. Viewed 27 February 2019.

Disability support for Indigenous Australians

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/disability-support-for-indigenous-australians>

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, such as that provided by family and friends.

This page provides information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians with disability, and their use of specialist disability support services.

Indigenous Australians with disability

Among Indigenous Australians living in private households in 2015:

- 24% (125,000 people) were living with disability—defined as any limitation, restriction or impairment which restricts a person’s everyday activities, and has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least 6 months
- 7.3% (38,100) had severe or profound disability—meaning they sometimes or always needed help with daily activities related to self-care, mobility or communication (ABS 2017).

These estimates are based on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2015 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC). They relate to people living in private households, not those in cared accommodation such as residential aged care. Recent estimates are also available from two other ABS data sources—the 2014–15 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) and the 2016 ABS Census of Population and Housing.

While each collection has different purposes and methodologies for capturing information about disability, their estimates of severe or profound disability among Indigenous Australians are broadly similar. For example, among Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over living in non-remote areas, the rate of severe or profound disability was 7.2% according to the SDAC, 7.8% according to the NATSISS, and 8.5% according to the Census (ABS 2019; see that report for more information about sources of disability data about Indigenous Australians).

Based on the SDAC, in 2015:

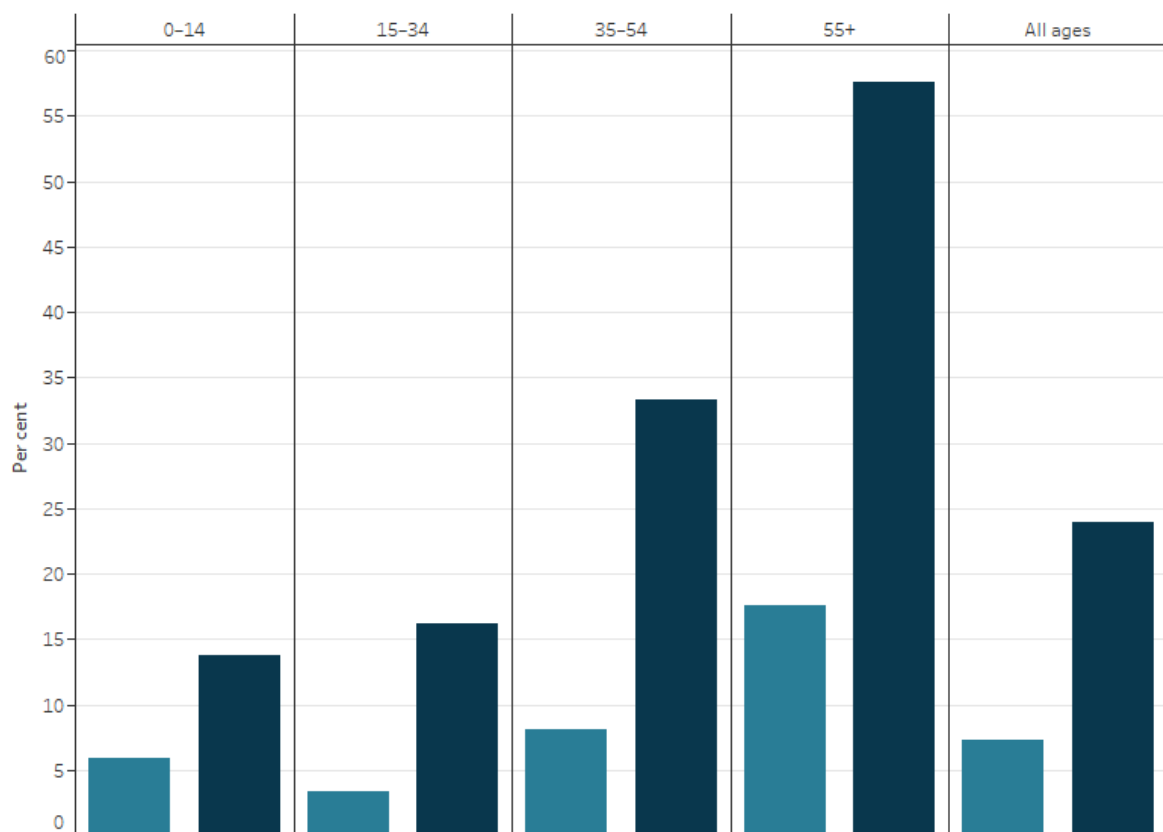
- disability rates for Indigenous males and females were similar (23% and 25%, respectively)

- Indigenous Australians aged 55 and over had a higher rate of disability than those in younger age groups. More than half (58%) of Indigenous Australians aged 55 and over were living with some form of disability and 18% had severe or profound disability (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Disability prevalence among Indigenous Australians living in households, by age and sex, 2015

Select characteristic
Age group



Disability status
■ Had severe or profound disability
■ Had disability (all severity levels)

Note: The estimate of severe or profound disability for those aged 15-34 has a relative standard error between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution.

Source: ABS 2017.

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

Disability can affect participation in education and in the labour force. In 2015, among Indigenous Australians living in households:

- 46% of those aged 15 and over with disability had Year 10 or below as their highest level of education (compared with 36% without disability). This was an improvement from 2012 when 60% of Indigenous Australians with disability in this age group had Year 10 or below as their highest level of education

- 33% of those aged 15–64 with disability were employed, compared with 65% without disability (ABS 2017).

The 2015 SDAC also collected information on experiences of discrimination. In 2015, 15% of Indigenous Australians with disability living in households reported experiencing discrimination due to their disability, and 38% had avoided situations due to their disability in the previous 12 months.

Use of specialist disability support services by Indigenous Australians

Specialist disability support services assist people with disability to participate fully in all aspects of everyday life (see also [Supporting people with disability](#)). In Australia, specialist disability support services are largely provided through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or under the National Disability Agreement (NDA).

In 2017–18, nearly 16,000 Indigenous Australians received disability support services under the NDA (constituting 6.1% of NDA disability support service users whose Indigenous status was recorded).

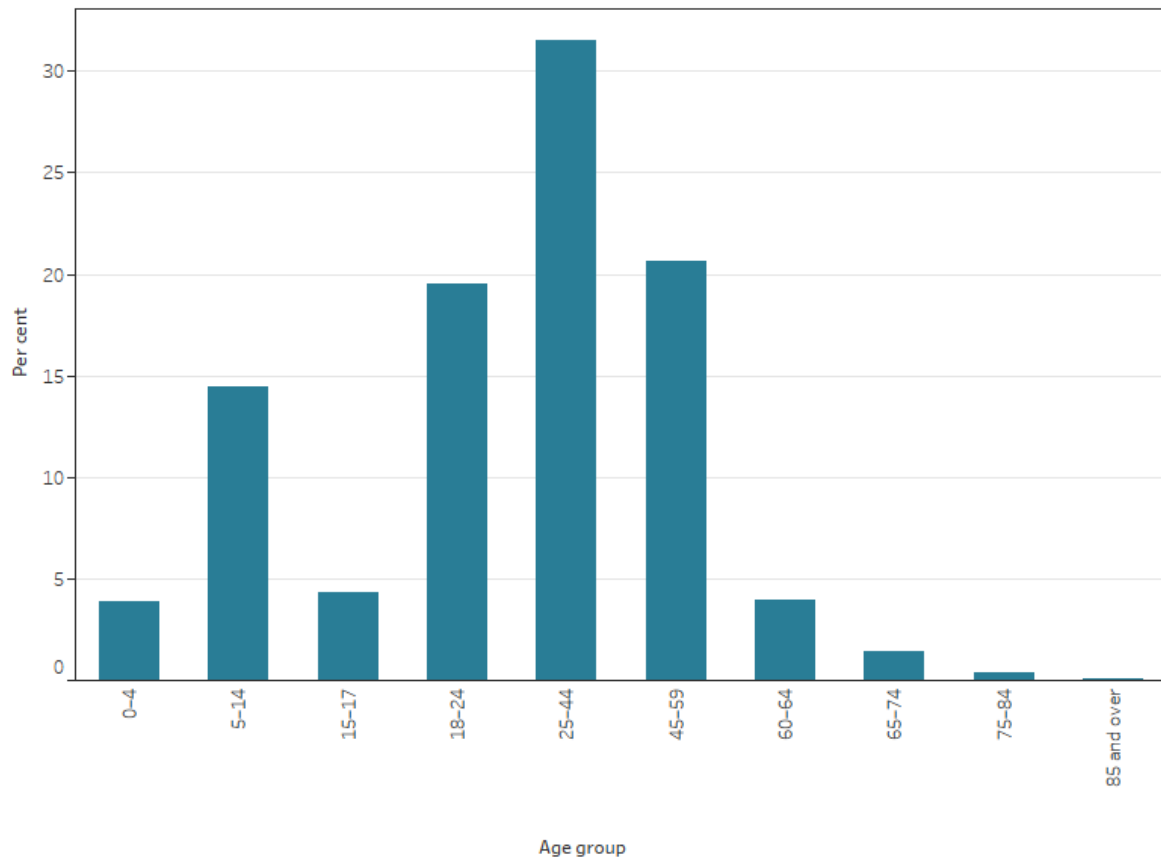
Among Indigenous disability support service users in 2017–18:

- 60% were male
- 72% lived with family or others
- 28% lived alone
- the most common primary disability groups were psychiatric disability (25% of service users), intellectual disability (25%) and physical disability (21%)
- of those aged 15 and over, 13% were employed, 61% looking for work (that is, unemployed), and 25% not in the labour force (for example, stay-at-home parents or people who were retired).

Figure 2

Indigenous disability support service users, by age, sex, primary disability group, living arrangement, main source of income and labour force status, 2017–18

Select topic
Age group



Notes:

1. For each topic, the proportions exclude people for whom relevant information was not stated or not collected.

2. Data are for service users of all ages, except for labour force status (service users aged 15 and over) and main income source (16 and over).

Source: Disability Services National Minimum Data Set 2017–18.

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

The number of Indigenous Australians receiving services under the NDA decreased between 2016–17 and 2017–18, from around 19,300 to 15,800. This was largely due to service users transitioning to the NDIS. The NDIS started in trial sites in July 2013 and started being progressively rolled out across Australia from July 2016.

At 30 June 2018, the NDIS was fully operational in New South Wales, South Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory. The stage of the roll out in other states and territories varied. At 30 June 2018, 68% of the eligible population in Victoria could access the NDIS, 49% in Tasmania, 29% in Queensland, 25% in the Northern Territory, and 17% in Western Australia (NDIA 2018).

At 30 June 2018:

- 9,255 Indigenous Australians were active NDIS participants, an increase from 4,515 participants at 30 June 2017

- 5.4% of all NDIS participants were Indigenous (excluding those for whom Indigenous status was not stated)
- in the Northern Territory, about three-quarters (77%) of NDIS participants were Indigenous
- across the other states and territories, the proportion of Indigenous NDIS participants ranged between 2.3% and 9.6% (NDIA 2017, 2018).

Comparisons with non-Indigenous Australians

When taking differences in the age structure of the two populations into account, Indigenous Australians experienced disability, and used disability support services, at a higher rate than non-Indigenous Australians.

Compared with non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous Australians were:

- **1.8x as likely to** have disability (2015)
- **2.0x as likely to** use disability support services provided under the NDA (2017–18).

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on disability and aged care among the Indigenous population, see:

- ABS [Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers](#) and [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey](#)
- [Disability support services: services provided under the National Disability Agreement 2017–18](#)
- NDIA [quarterly reports](#) on the NDIS.

References

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Indigenous community safety

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-community-safety>

Many factors can influence community safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Among the positive influences are: being connected to Country, land, family and spirit; having strong and positive social networks; and having strong leadership in both family and community. See [Understanding Indigenous welfare and wellbeing](#) for more information about these and other positive influences on community functioning.

This page focuses on community experiences of safety and violence, contact with child protection services, and contact with criminal justice systems.

Indigenous Australians experience violence (particularly family and domestic violence) at higher rates than non-Indigenous Australians. They are also over-represented in Australia's child protection, youth and adult justice systems. Factors contributing to this include: past experience of violence and abuse (including in childhood); long-term social disadvantage; and the ongoing impact of past dispossession and forced removal policies that have caused psychological trauma and contributed to the breakdown of traditional parenting, culture and kinship practices (SCRGSP 2016). See [glossary](#) for definitions of terms used on this page.

Experiences of safety and violence

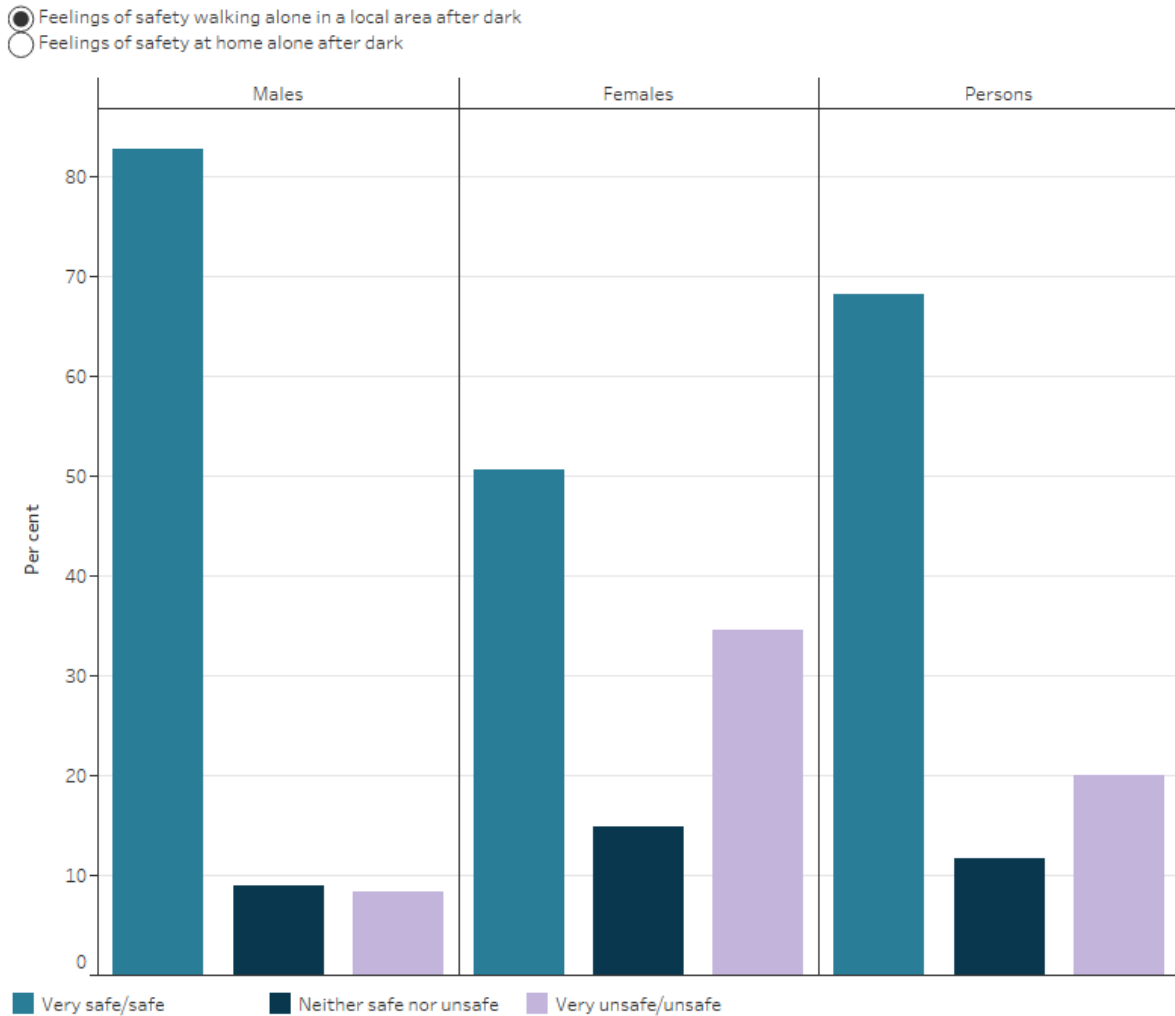
Safe communities, where people feel protected from harm within their home, workplace and community, are important for physical and mental wellbeing. Indigenous Australians are significantly more likely to experience high rates of hospitalisation and death as a result of violence than the wider community. See [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework \(HPF\) report measure 2.10: Community safety](#).

Feeling safe

In 2014–15, among Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over who reported they walked alone in their local area after dark, 68% said they felt safe or very safe, and 20% felt unsafe or very unsafe. For those who reported feelings of safety while at home after dark, 87% felt safe or very safe, and 8% felt unsafe or very unsafe (AIHW 2017) (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Feelings of safety for Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over, by sex, Australia, 2014–15



Note: Calculations exclude 'never walk alone after dark' and 'never home alone after dark'.

Source: AIHW 2017.

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

Experience of violence

In 2014–15, 22% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over reported they were a victim of physical or threatened violence in the last 12 months. Rates were similar for Indigenous females (22%) and males (23%). Actual physical violence was experienced by 13% of Indigenous Australians (AIHW 2017).

Hospitalisations due to assault

Indigenous Australians experience high rates of hospitalisation as a result of violence. From July 2015 to June 2017, the:

- hospitalisation rate for Indigenous Australians due to non-fatal assault was 8.6 per 1,000 (or 13,000 hospitalisations), with the rate higher for females than males—9.4 compared with 7.9 per 1,000 (or 7,000 compared with 5,900 hospitalisations)
- rate was higher for people living in *Remote and very remote* areas (23.0 per 1,000, or 6,900 hospitalisations) compared with non-remote areas (4.8 per 1,000 or 5,700 hospitalisations)
- Indigenous females living in *Remote and very remote* areas experienced a rate of hospitalisation due to non-fatal assault of 28.2 per 1,000 (4,200 hospitalisations). The rate for Indigenous males was 18.0 per 1,000 (2,700 hospitalisations) (AIHW forthcoming 2019a, AIHW 2019c) (Figure 2).

Deaths due to assault

Over the 5-year period 2013–2017, in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory combined:

- 191 deaths occurred among Indigenous Australians due to assault (a decrease from 200 deaths in 2011–2015)
- the rate of deaths for Indigenous Australians due to assault was 5.9 per 100,000
- Indigenous males were 1.5 times as likely as their female counterparts to die due to assault (rate of 7.1 per 100,000 compared with 4.8 per 100,000, or 114 deaths compared with 77 deaths) (AIHW forthcoming 2019a, [National Mortality Database](#)).

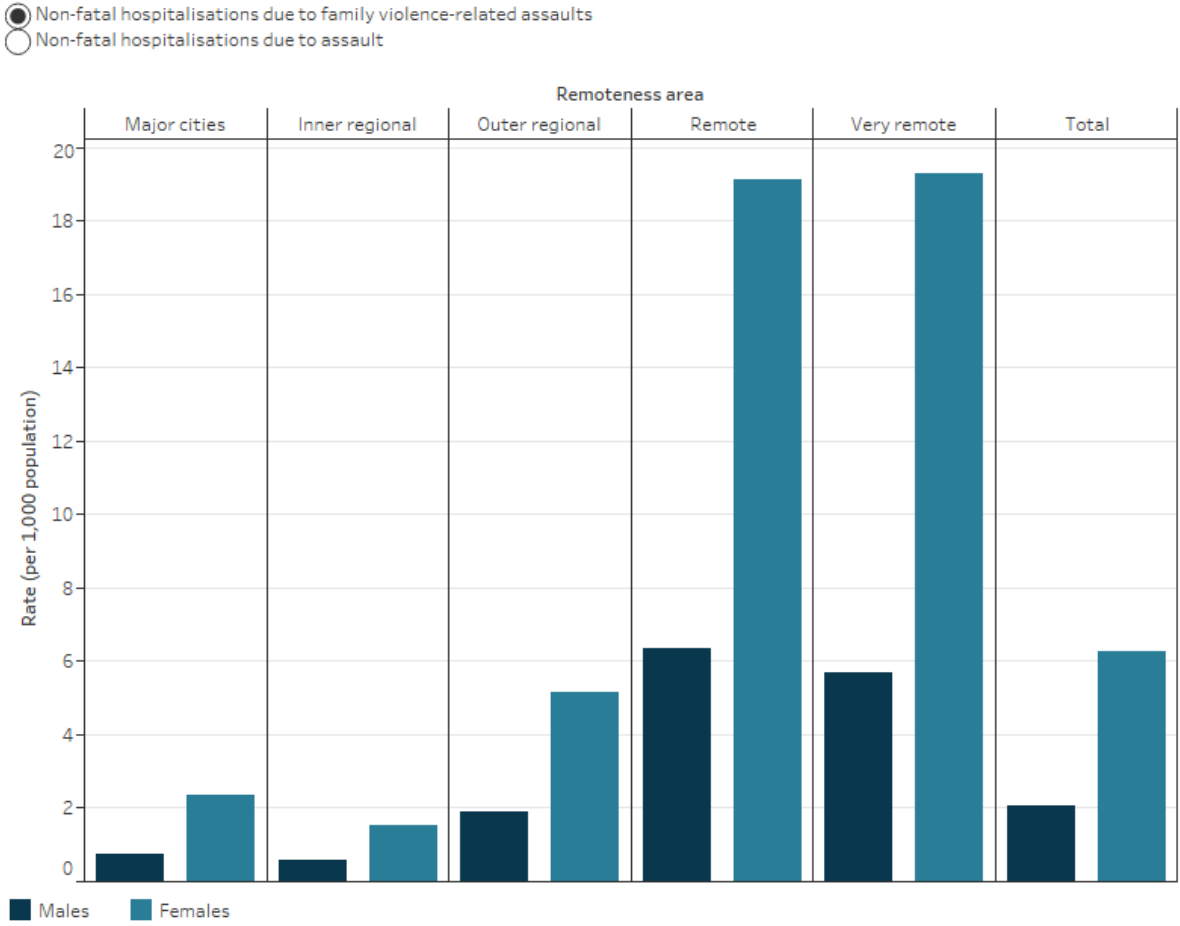
Family, domestic and sexual violence

Men, women and children from all walks of life can experience family, domestic and sexual violence, however Indigenous women are among those at highest risk. Also see [Family, domestic and sexual violence](#).

- In 2014–15, 1 in 7 (14% or 32,000) Indigenous females experienced physical violence in the previous year (ABS 2016). Of these, about 1 in 4 (28%) reported that their most recent incident was perpetrated by a cohabiting partner (AIHW 2018).
- From July 2015 to June 2017, there were 6.3 hospitalisations per 1,000 Indigenous females (or 4,700) due to family violence-related assaults. By remoteness, Indigenous females in *Very remote* areas experienced the highest rate—19.3 per 1,000 (or 1,800 hospitalisations) (AIHW forthcoming 2019a, AIHW 2019c) (Figure 2).
- From 2012–13 to 2013–14, 41% of all Indigenous homicide victims (or 32 victims) were killed by a current or previous partner (Bryant & Bricknell 2017).

Figure 2

Non-fatal hospitalisations due to family violence related assault and non-fatal hospitalisations due to assault, Indigenous Australians, by sex and remoteness, Australia, July 2015 to June 2017



Note: Across all assault hospitalisations for Indigenous Australians, 37% did not have information on the perpetrator and this varied by remoteness and sex. Therefore, comparisons across groups in family violence related assaults should be interpreted with caution.
Source: AIHW forthcoming 2019a, AIHW 2019c.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Child protection

The child protection system supports vulnerable children aged 0–17 who have been, or are at risk of being abused, neglected or otherwise harmed, or whose parents are unable to provide them with adequate care or protection. In 2017–18, more than 48,300 (164 per 1,000) Indigenous children received child protection services (Figure 3). Also see [Child protection](#).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle is a policy for Indigenous children in out-of-home care to be placed with relatives or extended family members in accordance with the hierarchy of placement options. As at 30 June 2018, 65% of Indigenous children in out-of-home care were placed with relatives or kin, other Indigenous caregivers or in Indigenous residential care.

Protecting Indigenous children requires a multifaceted approach that takes into account the factors affecting Indigenous Australians, and strengthens and empowers Indigenous families and communities (SNAICC 2015).

In 2017–18:

- the rate for Indigenous children who were the subject of a substantiated child protection notification was 42 per 1,000 (or 8,400 children).

As at 30 June 2018:

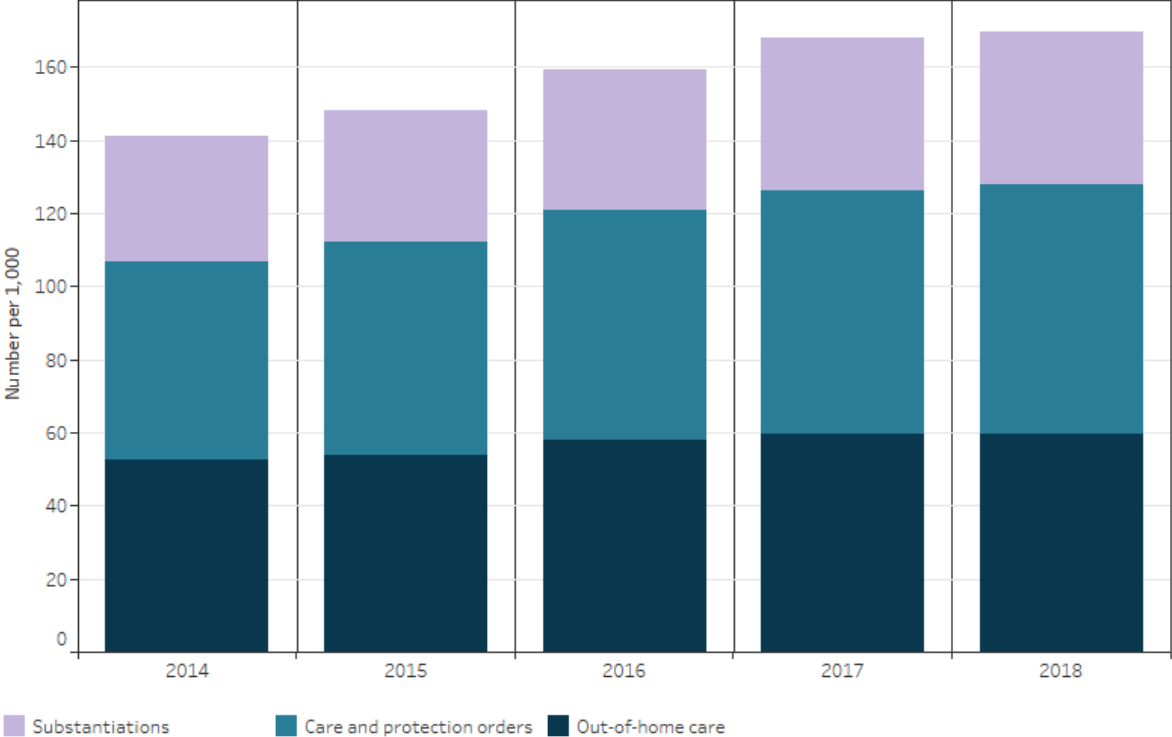
- 20,500 (69 per 1,000) Indigenous children were on care and protection orders
- 17,800 (59 per 1,000) Indigenous children were in out-of-home care.

Between 2013–14 and 2017–18, the rate of Indigenous children receiving child protection services increased from 140 to 164 per 1,000 (AIHW 2019b).

Figure 3

Number of Indigenous children per 1,000 receiving child protection services, by component of child protection system, 2014 to 2018

Filter by component of child protection system:
All



Notes:
 1. Substantiation rates for all years exclude NSW.
 2. Due to the high proportion of clients in Tasmania with an 'unknown' Indigenous status, Indigenous rates for all years exclude Tasmania.
 Source: AIHW 2019b.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Contact with police and the criminal justice system

Indigenous Australians have a long history of over-representation in the youth and adult justice systems in Australia. In 2014–15, around 1 in 7 (15% or 64,400) Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over reported they had been arrested in the previous 5 years. More than 1 in 3 (35% or 154,500) had been formally charged by police at least once (ABS 2016). See [HPF measure 2.11: Contact with the criminal justice system](#).

The National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework: Good Practice Appendix provides the evidence base for court diversionary programs that have been evaluated and found to be successful. Examples include the Elders Visiting Program, Restorative Justice, Circle

Sentencing, and Koori Courts in the Victorian Magistrates, County and Children's Courts (SCLJ 2012).

Youth justice

Supervision of young people on legal orders is a major aspect of Australia's youth justice system and can include supervision in the community or in secure detention facilities.

Also see [Youth justice](#).

On an average day in 2017–18, for Indigenous Australians aged 10–17:

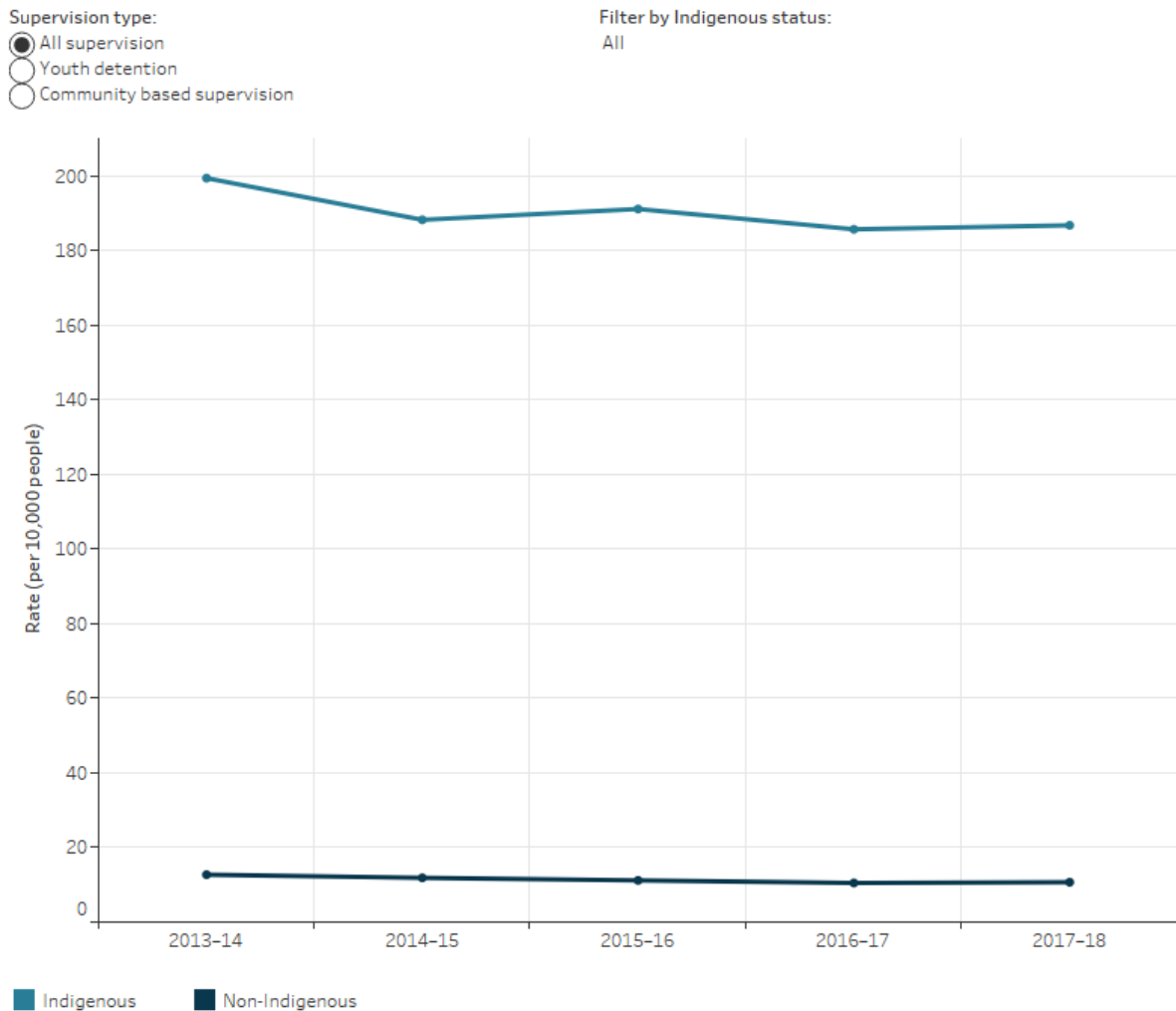
- 2,400 (187 per 10,000) were under supervision
- 37 per 10,000 (or 472) were supervised in youth detention
- 150 per 10,000 (or 1,900) were under community-based supervision
- most (80%) under supervision were male.

Between 2013–14 and 2017–18, the rate of Indigenous Australians aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day fell from 199 to 187 per 10,000 (AIHW 2019e, Figure 4).

The rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians under supervision fell over the last 5 years.

Figure 4

Rate of young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day, by supervision type and Indigenous status, 2013–14 to 2017–18



Source: AIHW 2019d.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Adult imprisonment

Indigenous prisoners are generally younger than non-Indigenous prisoners. They are more likely to have been imprisoned before and more likely to have had parents or carers in prison during their childhood (AIHW 2019d). Also see [Adult prisoners](#).

As at 30 June 2018:

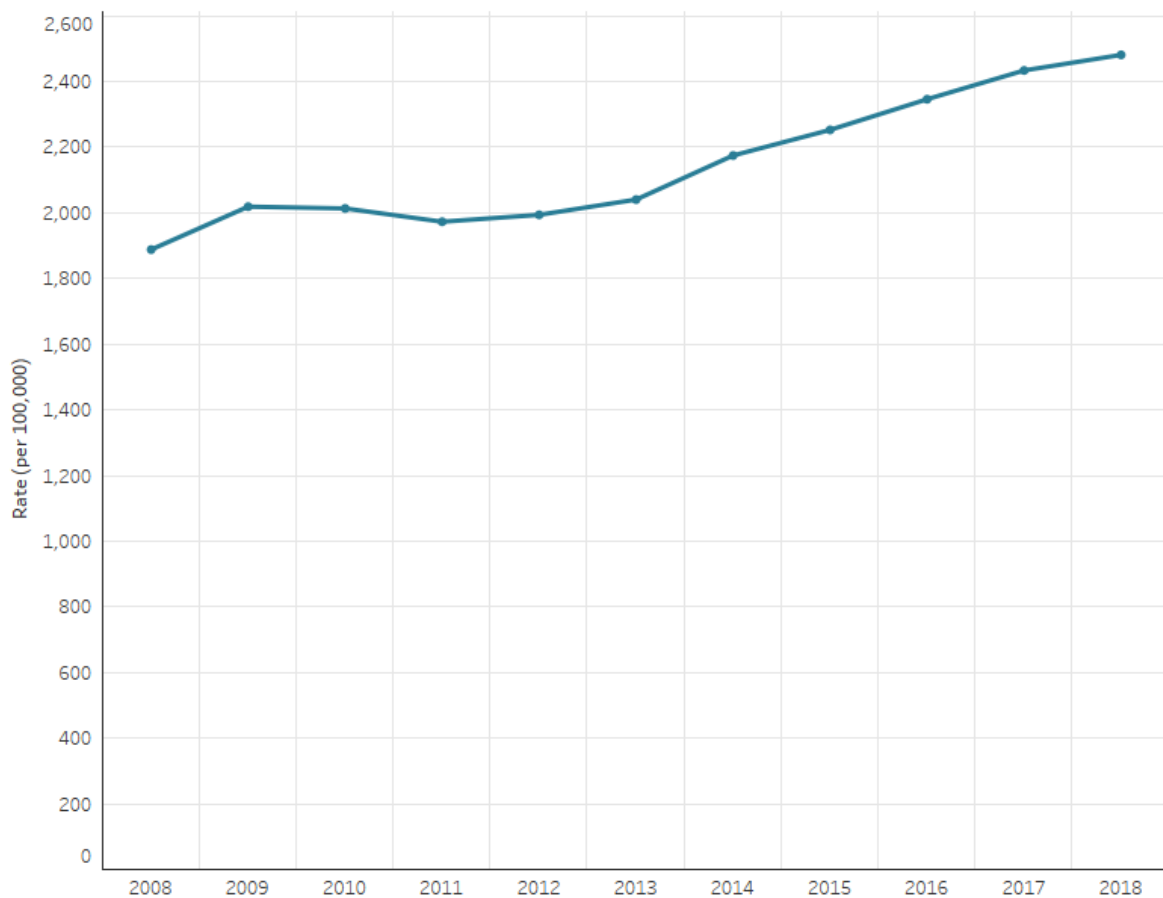
- 11,800 Indigenous adult prisoners were held in custody
- the imprisonment rate for Indigenous adults was 2,481 per 100,000
- 21% of Indigenous adult prisoners were aged 24 or under
- most (90%) Indigenous prisoners were men
- three-quarters (75%) of Indigenous prisoners had been imprisoned before

- 28% of the total Australian prison population identified as Indigenous (ABS 2018).
- Rates of imprisonment have risen over time for Indigenous and non-Indigenous adults. Between 30 June 2008 and 30 June 2018, the imprisonment rate for Indigenous Australians increased from 1,888 per 100,000 to 2,481 per 100,000 (ABS 2018) (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Indigenous imprisonment rates, by year, sex and age, 2008 to 2018

Choose a filter:
 Year
 Sex
 Age



Note: Data for sex and age filters are as at 30 June 2018.
Source: ABS 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Comparisons with non-Indigenous Australians

Disparities exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians across a range of community safety measures.

Compared with non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous Australians were:

- **14 x as likely to** be hospitalised due to assault (July 2015 to June 2017)
- **7 x as likely to** die due to assault (2013–2017)
- **33 x as likely to** be hospitalised due to family violence assaults, females (July 2015 to June 2017)
- **1.9 x as likely to** be killed by current or previous partner (2012–13 to 2013–14)
- **8 x as likely to** be receiving child protection services (2017–18)
- **11 x as likely to** be in out-of-home care (as at 30 June 2018)
- **23 x as likely to** be supervised in youth detention on an average day, ages 10–17 (2017–18)
- **17 x as likely to** be under community-based supervision on an average day, ages 10–17 (2017–18)
- **13 x as likely to** be imprisoned as an adult (30 June 2018).

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on Indigenous community safety, see:

- [The health and welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework](#)
- [Closing the Gap targets: 2017 analysis of progress and key drivers of change.](#)

For more information on Indigenous justice and safety, see:

- [Child protection Australia 2017–18](#)
- [Youth Justice in Australia 2017–18](#)
- [Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia, 2019](#)
- [Family violence prevention programs in Indigenous communities 2016](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescent and youth health and wellbeing 2018](#)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics [Crime and Justice](#) statistics.

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Indigenous education and skills

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-education-and-skills>

Education is key to improving opportunities for all Australians. Education has been linked to improved health outcomes, employment, income and other social benefits in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (ABS 2011; Biddle & Cameron 2012; Hart et al. 2017). This page provides an overview of indicators relating to Indigenous education and skills, focusing primarily on progress against Closing the Gap education targets.

The Council of Australian Governments committed to 7 Closing the Gap targets; 4 of which are related to education.

Closing the Gap targets for education

- Ensure that 95% of all Indigenous 4-year-olds are enrolled in **early childhood education** by 2025.
- Close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous **school attendance** within 5 years by 2018.
- Halve the gap for Indigenous children in **reading and numeracy** within a decade by 2018.
- Halve the gap for Indigenous Australians aged 20–24 in **Year 12 attainment** or equivalent attainment rates by 2020 (PM&C 2019).

Of the education targets, those on early childhood education and Year 12 or equivalent attainment are on track to be met, however those on school attendance and reading and numeracy are not on track (PM&C 2019).

Early childhood education

In 2017, around 15,700 (95%) Indigenous four-year-olds were enrolled in early childhood education, in line with the target of 95% enrolment by 2025 (PM&C 2019). Among these, only 68% attended preschool for at least 600 hours, the recommended number per year under the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (DET 2017; PM&C 2019).

Most states and territories had already achieved the target of 95% enrolment for Indigenous four-year-olds in 2017. All except the Northern Territory had more than 90% attendance rates (the proportion of enrolled children who attended for at least 1 hour in a reference week). Attendance rates for Indigenous children in early childhood

education were generally lower in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas, and the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children was highest in these areas (PM&C 2019).

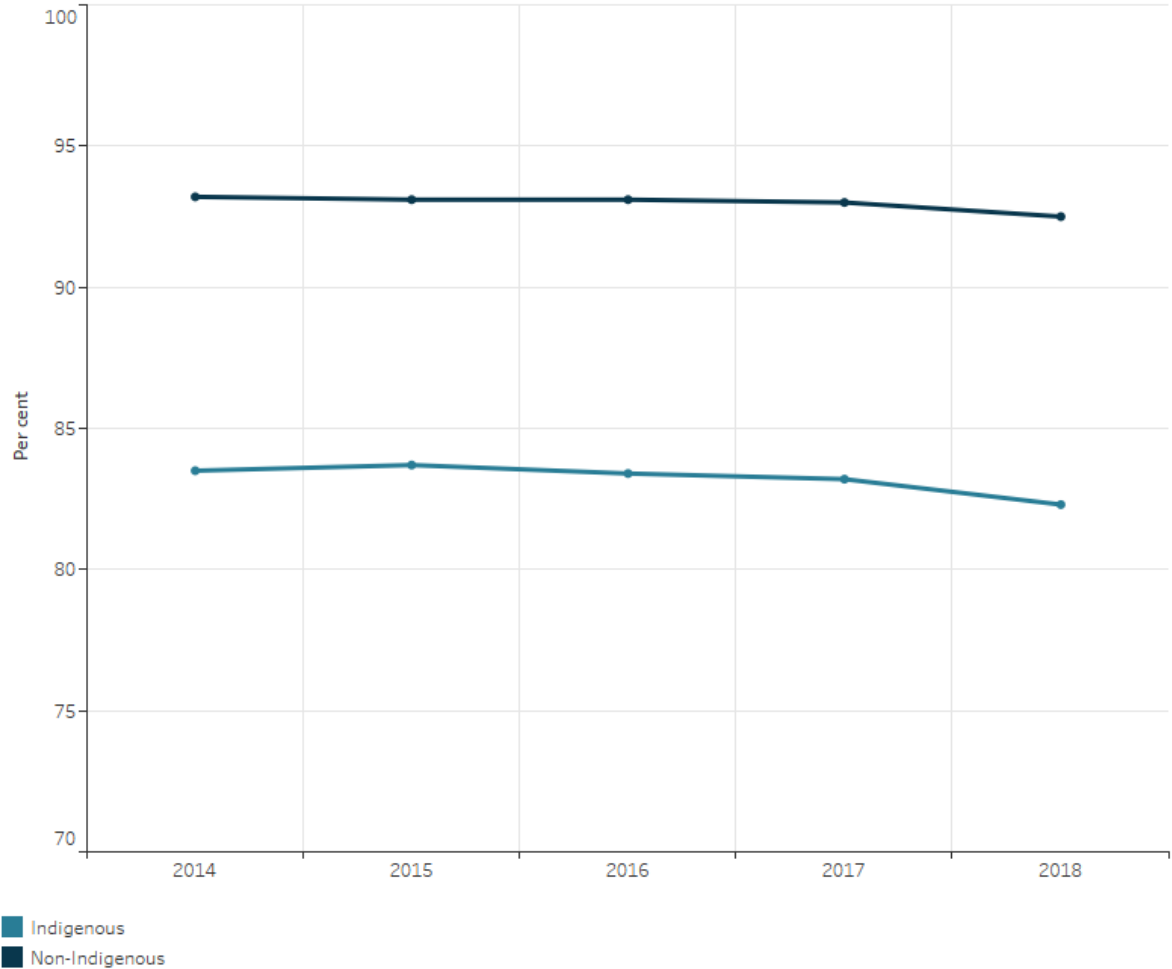
School attendance

School attendance rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in years 1 to 10 did not improve between 2014 and 2018. In Semester 1, 2018, the attendance rate for Indigenous Australian students was 82%, compared with 93% for non-Indigenous Australian students (ACARA 2018b) (Figure 1).

The latest formal assessment of progress against this target, based on 2017 data, showed that the target was not on track (PM&C 2019). School attendance data for 2018 has since been released (ACARA 2018b). However, the official Australian Government assessment of this target will be provided in the *Closing the Gap Prime Minister's report 2020*.

Figure 1

School attendance rates, Year 1 to Year 10, 2014 to 2018



Source: ACARA 2018b.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

There was little change between 2014 and 2018 in school attendance rates for Indigenous students across states and territories. The Northern Territory experienced the largest change between 2014 and 2018, with attendance decreasing by 5 percentage points. All other states and territories had a decrease of around 2 percentage points or less over this period (ACARA 2018b).

Indigenous students in *Very remote* areas have lower school attendance rates

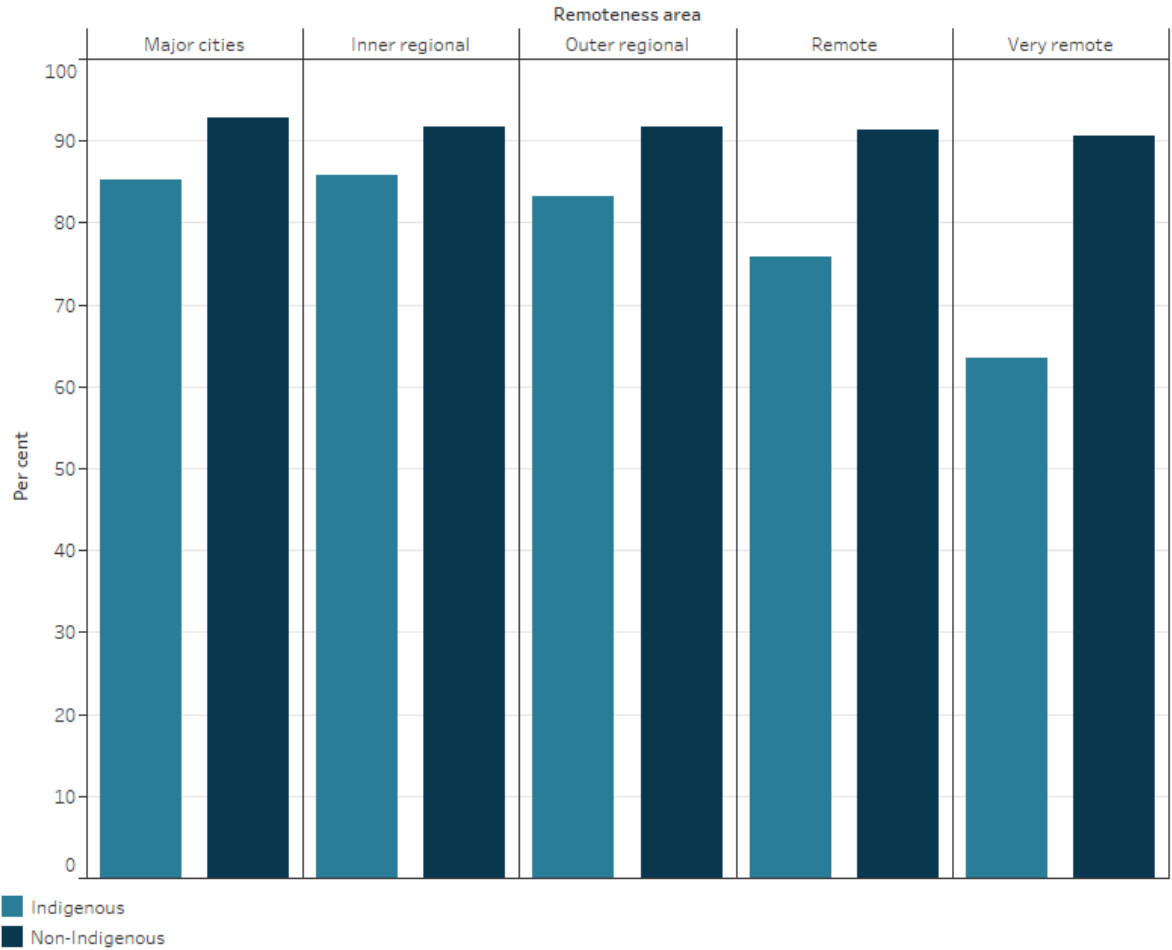
In 2018, the attendance rate was 22–23 percentage points lower for Indigenous students in *Very remote* areas (63%) compared with *Inner regional* areas (86%) and *Major cities* (85%) (ACARA 2018a). The impact of remoteness was also evident for Indigenous attendance levels

(attending 90% or more of the time). In *Inner regional* areas, 55% of students were attending at this level, however this fell to 21% in *Very remote* areas (ACARA 2018b).

Attendance rates for non-Indigenous students did not vary greatly by remoteness, and the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students grew with increasing remoteness (Figure 2).

Figure 2

School attendance rates, by Indigenous status and remoteness area, 2018



Source: ACARA 2018b.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Reading and numeracy

The target to halve the gap in reading and numeracy by 2018 was assessed by measuring the difference in the proportion of students at or above the national

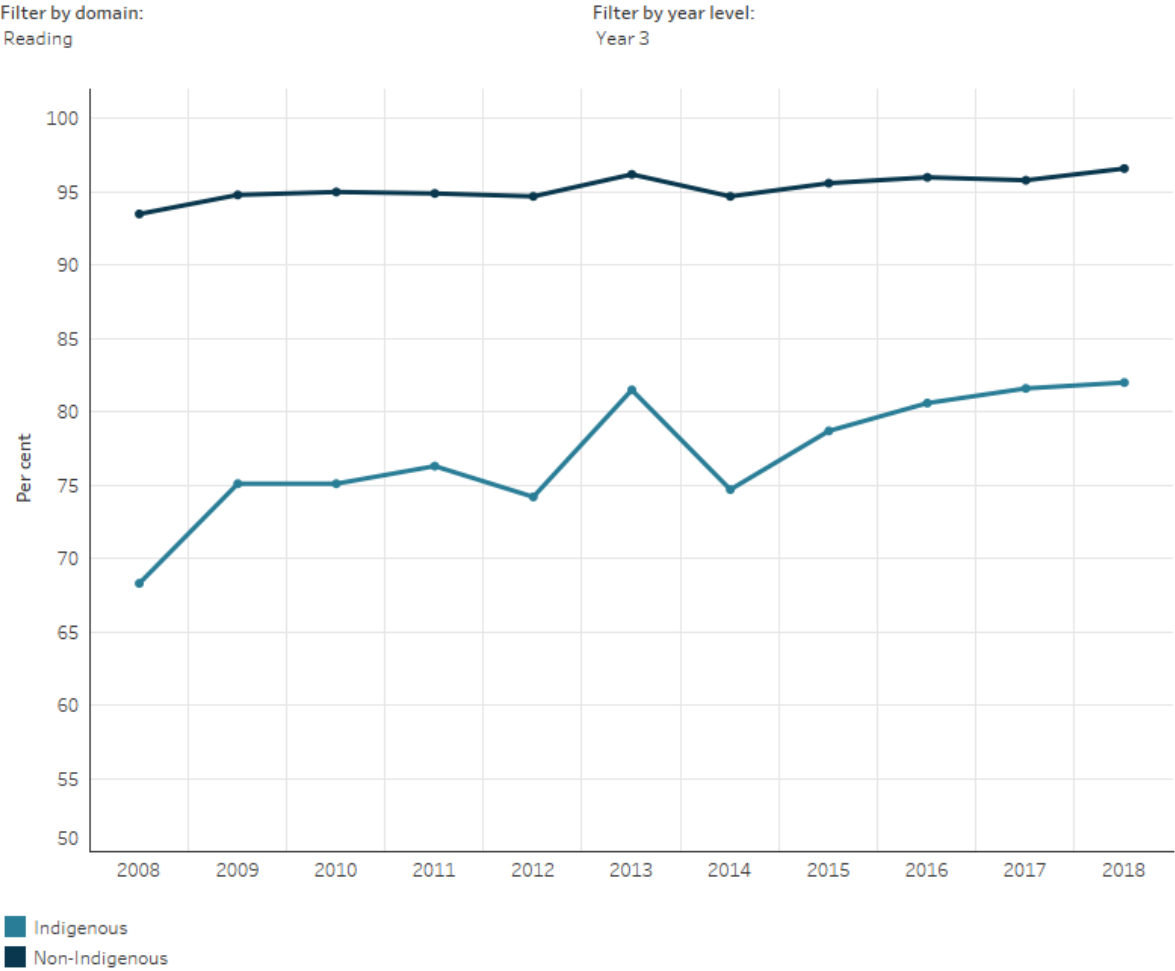
minimum standard in National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results. Progress was tracked for students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

The latest formal assessment of progress against this target, based on 2017 data, showed that the target was not on track (PM&C 2019). The NAPLAN results for 2018 have since been released (ACARA 2018a) and do not show any dramatic changes from 2017 results. However, the official Australian Government assessment of this target will be provided in the *Closing the Gap Prime Minister's report 2020*.

The gap in the proportion of Indigenous students at or above the national minimum standard decreased for all year levels and in Reading and Numeracy between 2008 and 2018 (Figure 3). The greatest improvements for Indigenous children were in years 3 and 5 Reading and years 5 and 9 Numeracy. In these areas, the proportions of Indigenous students meeting the national minimum standard increased significantly, with the gap narrowing by about 10 percentage points in each of the four areas (ACARA 2018a).

Figure 3

Proportion of students meeting the national minimum standard in reading and numeracy, 2008 to 2018



Source: ACARA 2018a.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

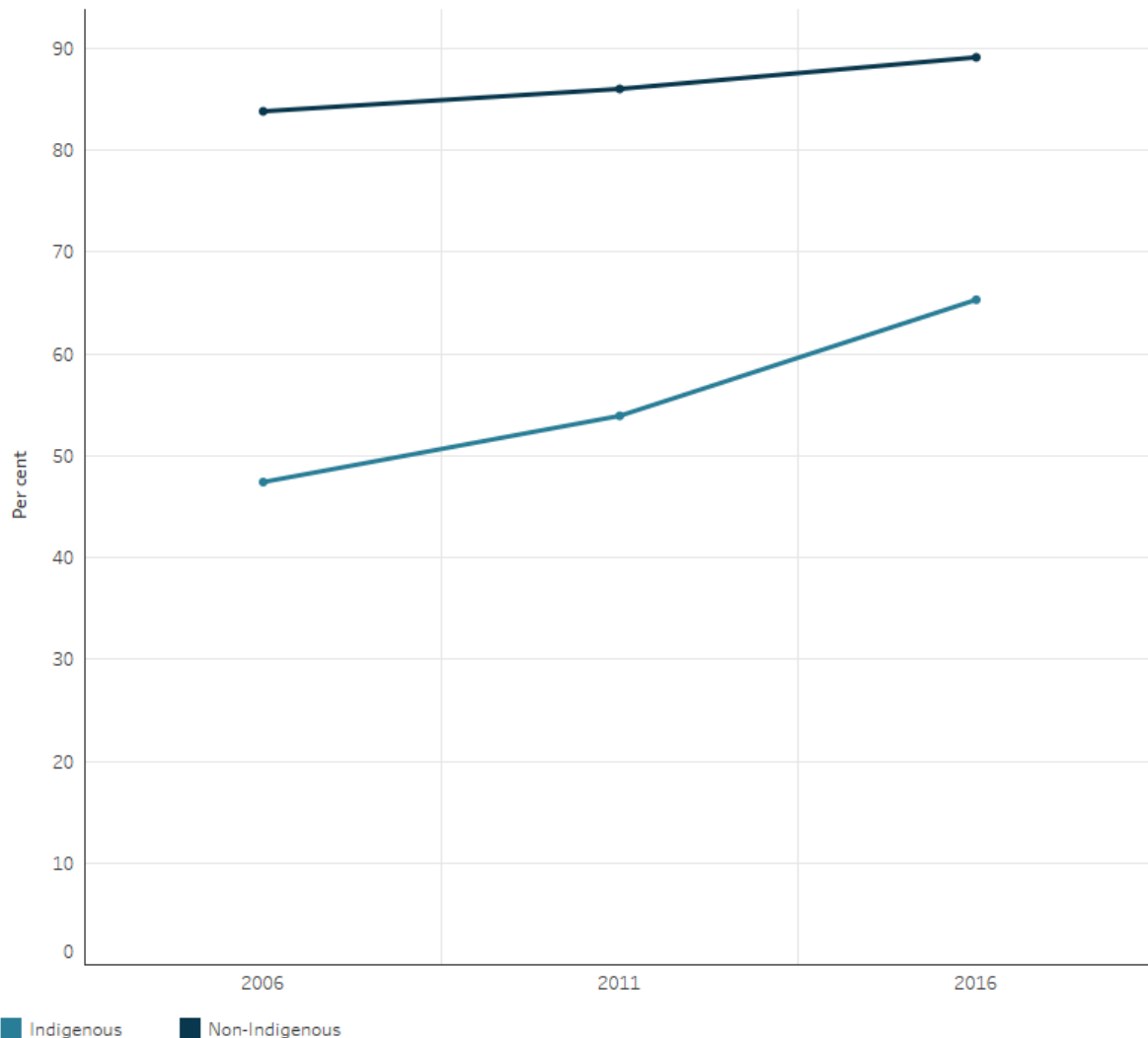
Attainment of Year 12 or equivalent

Over the past decade, the gap in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates for those aged 20–24 narrowed by around 12 percentage points. The target to halve the gap by 2020 is on track to be met (PM&C 2019). In 2006, the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous attainment rates was 36 percentage points, decreasing to 24 percentage points in 2016.

Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians aged 20–24 increased between 2006 and 2016 (Figure 4). The attainment rate for Indigenous Australians increased by almost 18 percentage points, from 47% in 2006 to 65% in 2016. The rate for non-Indigenous Australians increased by around 5 percentage points, from 84% in 2006 to 89% in 2016 (PM&C 2019).

Figure 4

Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate, 20–24 year olds, 2006, 2011 and 2016



Sources: PM&C 2019, FaHCSIA 2013.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Higher education

While there is no dedicated Closing the Gap target for higher education, improvements have been made in university enrolments for Indigenous Australians over the last 10 years. The number of Indigenous students enrolled has more than doubled from 9,370 in 2007 to 19,261 in 2017 (DET 2014, 2018).

This period saw an almost 70% increase in the number of higher education completions by Indigenous students (PM&C 2019). However, Indigenous Australians were underrepresented in universities, comprising 1.3% of the domestic higher education student population, compared with 3.3% of the total Australian population (ABS 2018; DET 2018).

Progress against Closing the Gap targets

The *Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2019* reports progress against the 4 Closing the Gap targets related to education (PM&C 2019).

Two of 4 of the **Closing the Gap targets for education are assessed as on track:**

- Target **on track** to ensure 95% of Indigenous 4-year-olds are enrolled in early childhood education by 2025.
- Target **not on track** to close the gap in school attendance by 2018.
- Target **not on track** to halve the gap in reading and numeracy by 2018.
- Target **on track** to halve the gap for Year 12 attainment rates by 2020 (PM&C 2019).

Note: Updated assessments will be released in the *Closing the Gap Prime Minister's report 2020*.

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on Indigenous education and skills and on progress on the education related Closing the Gap targets, see:

- [Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2019](#)
- [Performance Reporting Dashboard of the Productivity Commission on the National Indigenous Reform Agreement](#)
- [Australia's Welfare 2017—7.4 Closing the gap in education](#)
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 Report:*
 - [2.04 Literacy and numeracy](#)
 - [2.05 Education outcomes for young people](#)
 - [2.06 Educational participation and attainment of adults](#)
- [Closing the Gap targets: 2017 analysis of progress and key drivers of change](#)

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Indigenous employment

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-employment>

Jobs are key to improving opportunities for all Australians. Boosting employment among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians will allow many more Indigenous Australians to get ahead. Beyond higher levels of income, being employed provides other personal and social benefits (PM&C 2019). On average, Indigenous Australians have lower levels of employment than non-Indigenous Australians. Disparities in employment and income are associated with a wider range of other disadvantages, and they can also have adverse intergenerational effects on children from an early age (Case et al. 2002; Duncan et al. 2014; Marmot 2011).

Halving the gap in employment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians between 2008 and 2018 was one of the original Closing the Gap targets set by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). In December 2018, COAG published a draft set of refreshed Closing the Gap targets. The draft economic development targets focus on workforce participation and youth engagement in employment and education.

This page provides an overview of employment for Indigenous Australians, including assessing progress on the original Closing the Gap employment target.

See also [Indigenous income and finance](#) for details on the household and personal income levels of Indigenous Australians, which includes wage and salaries from employment.

Closing the Gap target for employment

The most recent data on employment rates of Indigenous Australians are from the 2016 Census of Population and Housing. Based on that data, progress on the target to halve the gap in employment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade (compared with the 2008 baseline) is not on track to be met by 2018 (PM&C 2018, 2019).

The trends in Indigenous employment can be assessed with or without adjusting for the effects of changes and eventual closure of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) (see [Alternative assessment of trends in Indigenous employment](#)). The convention is not to adjust for these changes (as in data reported in SCRGSP, 2018), and leads to the assessment that:

- Between the 2006 Census and 2016 Census, Indigenous employment rates for those aged 15–64 decreased slightly, 48% to 46.6%. In comparison, the non-Indigenous employment rate remained stable at around 72%.
- In 2016, Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 were 1.9 times as likely to be not employed as non-Indigenous Australians.

- Differences in employment rates between Indigenous males and females narrowed between 2006 and 2016, with an increase for females (43.2% to 44.8%) and a decrease for males (53% to 48.5%) among those aged 15–64.

See the alternative assessment of changes in Indigenous employment that adjusts for the presence of CDEP employment in older data sets.

Alternative assessment of trends in Indigenous employment

Assessment of trends in Indigenous employment is complicated by the many changes in the coverage, and subsequent re-branding and closure of the CDEP in 2013. The CDEP was an employment assistance program designed to help unemployed Indigenous Australians develop work skills and move into employment. In ABS surveys and censuses before July 2009, including the 2006 Census, all identified CDEP participants were classified as being employed, which contributed to an over-statement of Indigenous employment outcomes.

If employment rates are computed by excluding all CDEP participants from the reference population in 2006—with similar adjustments not required for 2016—the employment rate for Indigenous Australians increased from 42.4% in 2006 to 46.6% in 2016. This was an increase of 4.2 percentage points over that decade (PM&C 2018). (The increase in non-CDEP employment over the decade was larger for females than males—5.8 percentage points compared with 2.4 percentage points.)

Indigenous employment rates measured in this way show some increase since 2006. This pace of increase in regular (non-CDEP) employment, however, will not be fast enough to halve the gap when measured against the formal employment target period between 2008 and 2018.

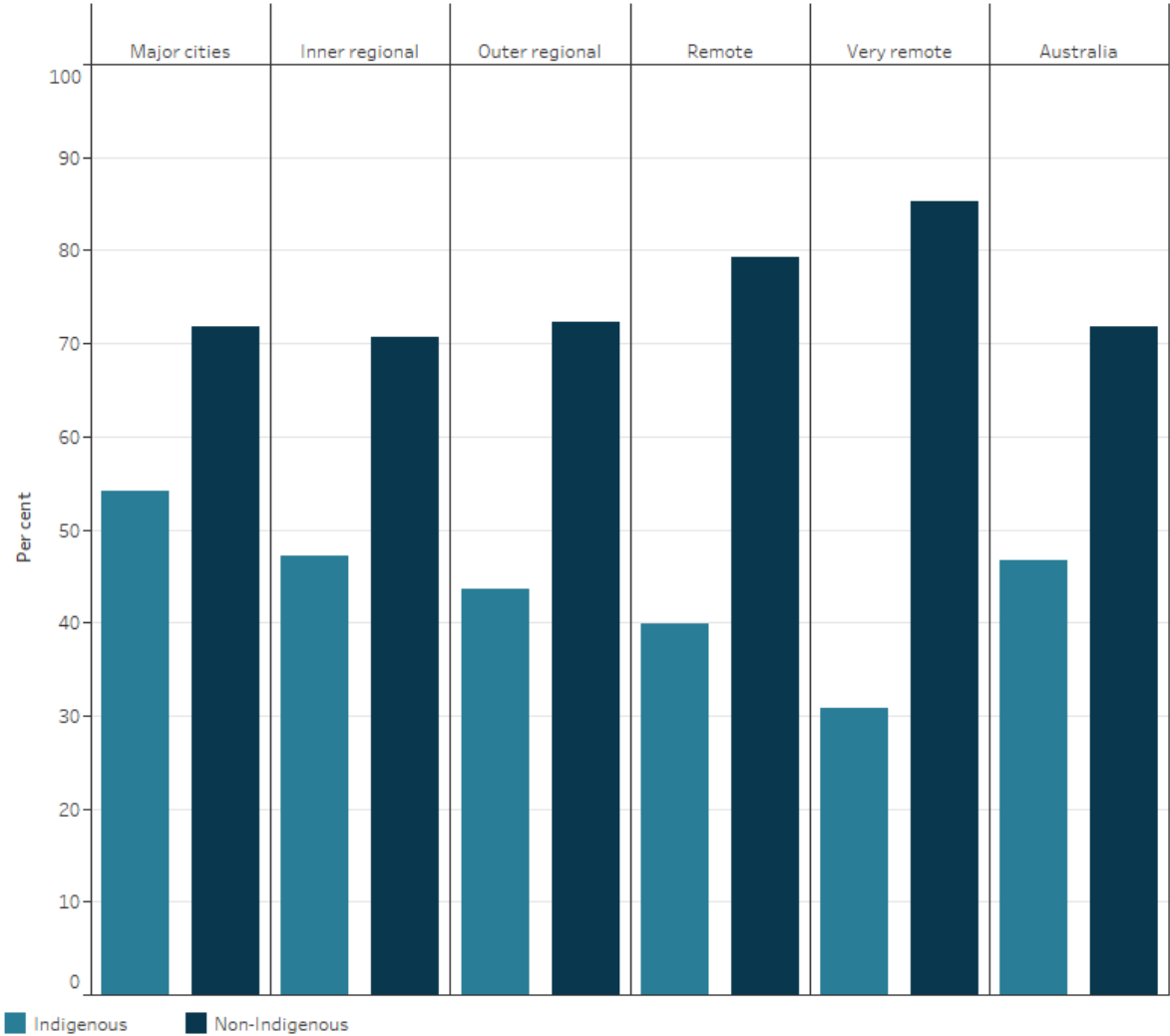
Indigenous employment by location

The proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 who are employed varies considerably by remoteness. In 2016, the:

- proportion of employed Indigenous Australians declined consistently with increasing remoteness, from 54% in *Major cities* to 31% in *Very remote* areas (Figure 1)
- gap in employment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 increased with increasing remoteness, from an 18 percentage point gap in *Major cities* to 54 percentage points in *Very remote* areas.

Figure 1

Proportion of people employed, people aged 15–64, by Indigenous status and remoteness area, 2016



Source: ABS 2018, SCRGSP 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

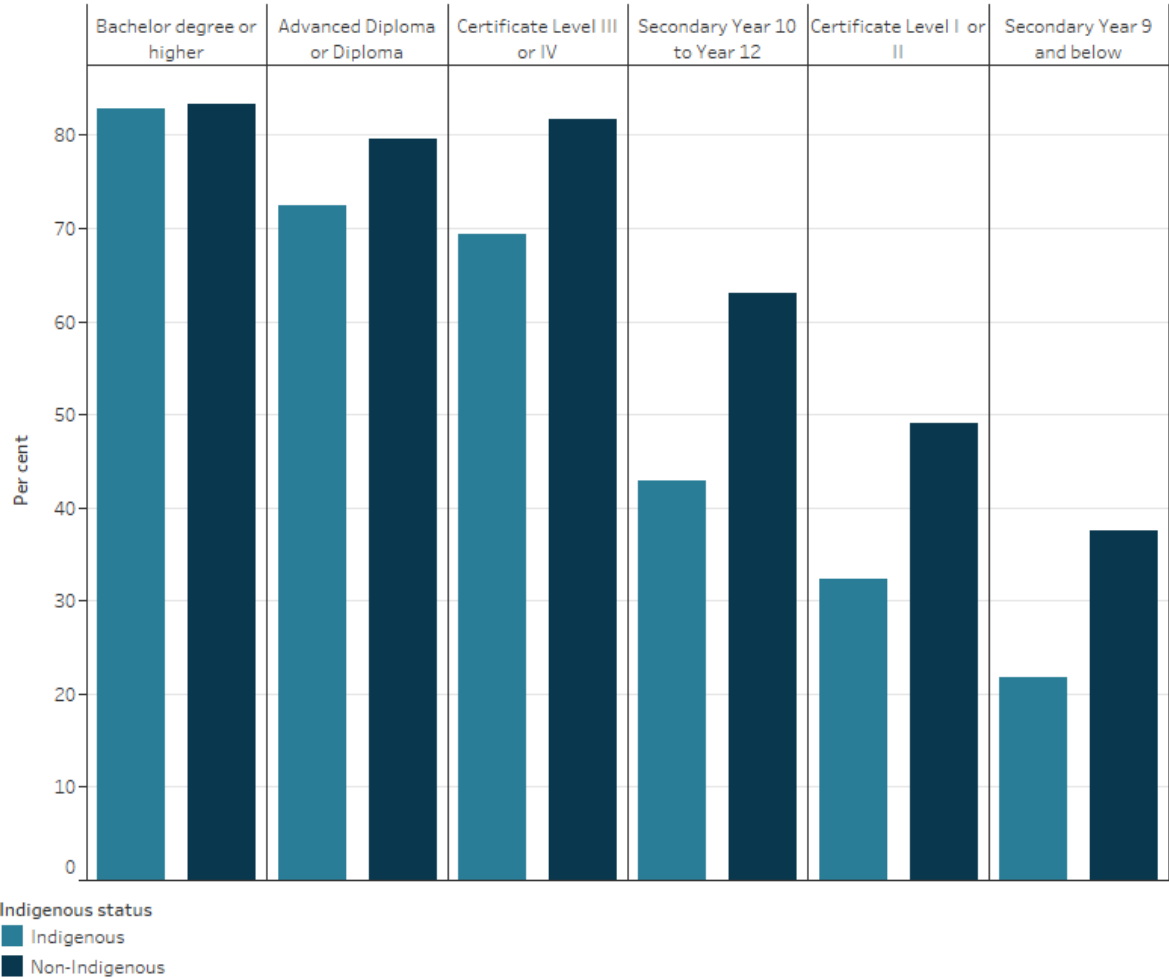
Role of educational attainment

The employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians narrows as education levels increase (Figure 2). There was effectively no gap in the 2016 employment rate between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians with a Bachelor degree or above (around 83% employed for both). Among those with a Certificate Level III or IV qualification as the highest level of educational attainment, there was a gap of 12 percentage points—employment rates of 69.3% for Indigenous Australians and 81.6% for non-Indigenous Australians. Among those with a Certificate Level I or II qualification, there was a larger gap of 17 percentage points—employment rates of 32% and 49% respectively).

Completion of Year 12 qualification also boosts employment considerably for younger Indigenous Australians compared with early school leavers. The employment rate in 2016 for young Indigenous Australians aged 18–29 who had completed Year 12 was between 1.5 and 3 times the rate for those without Year 12 qualification, depending on gender and remoteness locations (Venn 2018). Young Indigenous Australians with Year 12 qualification who were employed were also more likely than early school leavers to be employed full time, and be in a skilled occupation (Venn 2018).

Figure 2

Proportion of people employed, people aged 15–64, by Indigenous status and highest educational level, 2016



Source: ABS 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Main occupations and industry of employment

In 2016, the most common occupations of employed Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 in their main job were (Figure 3):

- community and personal service workers (18%)
- general labourers (16%)
- technicians and trades workers (14%)
- professionals (14%).

Seven per cent listed their occupation in their main job as managers (ABS 2017).

In the 2011 Census, the most commonly reported occupation for Indigenous workers was labourers (18%) (ABS 2017). In general, only minimal changes occurred in the occupational distribution for employed Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 between 2011 and 2016.

For non-Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 who were employed in 2016, the most common occupations were:

- professionals (23%)
- technicians and trades workers (14%)
- clerical and administrative workers (14%)
- managers (13%).

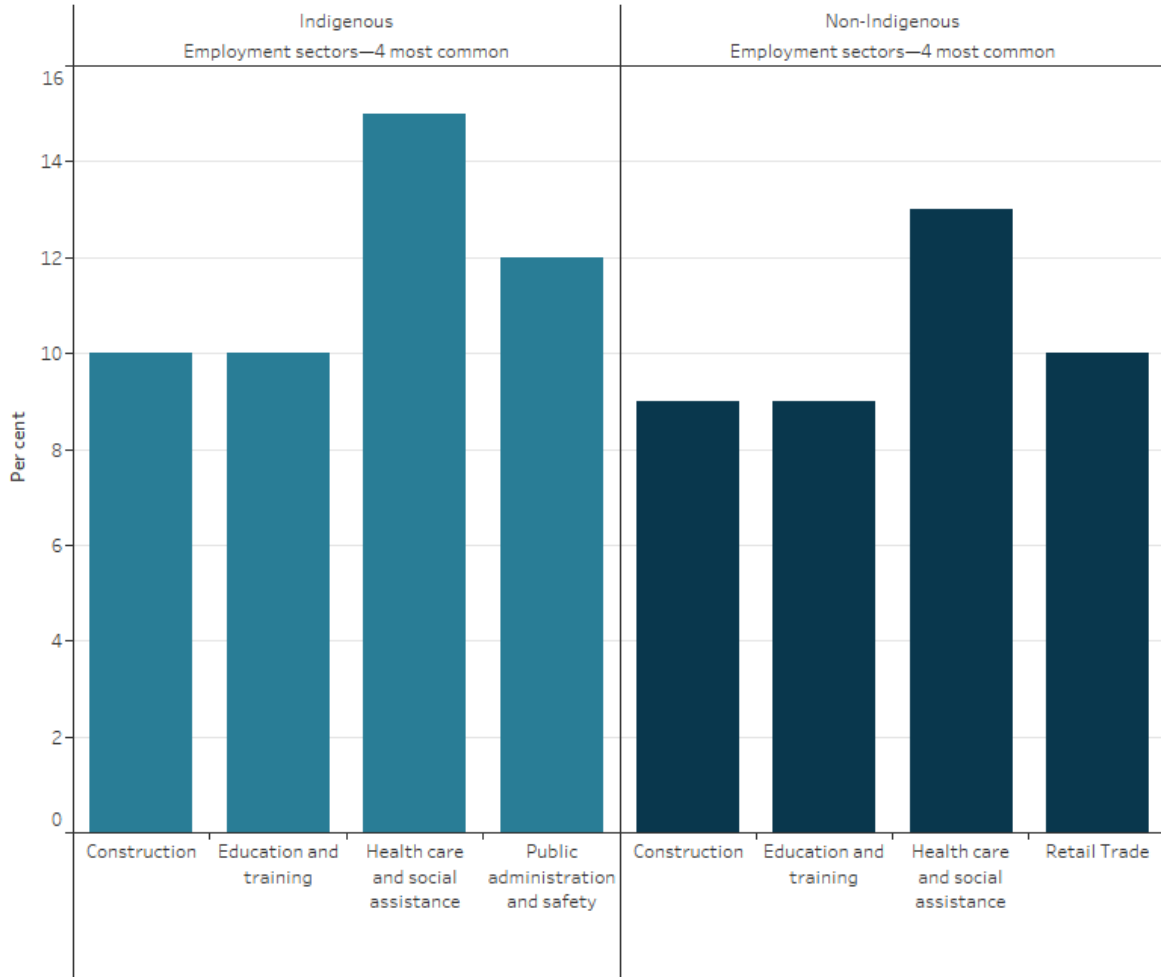
Around 36% of employed non-Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 worked as managers or professionals, compared with 21% of Indigenous Australians (ABS 2018).

Figure 3

Principal occupations and sectors of employment, people aged 15–64, by Indigenous status, 2016

Select category

Employment sectors—4 most common



Source: ABS 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

In 2016, the main industries or sectors of employment for Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 were (Figure 3):

- health care and social assistance (15%)
- public administration and safety (12%)
- education and training (10%)
- construction (9.5%).

Four per cent of employed Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over worked in the mining sector in 2016 (ABS 2017).

Of the 15% of Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 who reported being employed in the health care and social assistance industry, 78% were female (ABS 2017).

Only minimal changes occurred in the pattern of employment by industry for Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 between 2011 and 2016. Health care and social assistance was also the primary industry of employment of Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 in 2011, with a similar 15% share of total employment (ABS 2017).

For non-Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 who were employed in 2016, the main industries or sectors of employment were:

- health care and social assistance (13%)
- retail trade (10%)
- education and training (9%)
- construction (9%).

Where do I go for more information?

For additional data on employment among Indigenous Australians and progress on the Closing the Gap employment target see:

- [Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2019](#)
- [Performance Reporting Dashboard of the Productivity Commission on the National Indigenous Reform Agreement](#)
- [Census of Population and Housing: Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2016.](#)

For a more general perspective on the patterns and trends in Indigenous employment and comparisons with non-Indigenous Australians see:

- [Closing the Gap targets: 2017 analysis of progress and key drivers of change](#)
- [Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016.](#)

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Indigenous housing

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-housing>

A safe, secure home with working facilities is a key factor supporting the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Not having affordable, secure and appropriate housing can have negative consequences, including homelessness, poor health, and lower rates of employment and education participation—all of which can lead to social exclusion and disadvantage (AIHW 2017).

This page focuses on housing stability (including tenure and housing assistance), housing quality (including facilities and structural soundness) and potential overcrowding. It also looks at homelessness and the use of relevant services by Indigenous Australians.

Home ownership and housing tenure

Housing tenure describes whether a dwelling is owned, rented or occupied under some other arrangement. Based on the 2016 Census of Population and Housing (ABS 2018), of the estimated 263,037 Indigenous households, nearly:

- 2 in 5 (38%) were home owners—12% owned their home outright and 26% had a mortgage
- 3 in 5 (57%) were renters—21% lived in social housing and the rest (36%) were private renters or rented from another type of landlord.

The rate of home ownership (with or without a mortgage) has gradually increased among Indigenous Australian households: 34% owned their home in 2006; 36% in 2011; and 38% in 2016 (Figure 1).

In contrast, the home ownership rate among Other Australian households (see [glossary](#) for definition of Other households) decreased slightly over the same period: 69% owned their home in 2006; 68% in 2011; and 66% in 2016. This resulted in a closing of the home ownership gap by 7 percentage points over the decade (AIHW 2019a).

Census data also indicate that over the decade between 2006 and 2016, the proportion of Indigenous households:

- living in social housing decreased—29% lived in social housing in 2006, 26% in 2011 and 21% in 2016
- renting privately increased—27% rented privately in 2006, 29% in 2011 and 32% in 2016 (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Tenure type, Indigenous households, 2006, 2011 and 2016

Filter by tenure type:
All



Source: AIHW 2014, 2019a.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Differences in tenure type exist by remoteness area. In 2016, Indigenous households in *Remote and very remote* areas combined were:

- less than half as likely to own their own home as Indigenous households in non-remote areas (18% compared with 41%)
- 3 times as likely to live in social housing as Indigenous households in non-remote areas (56% compared with 17%) (ABS 2018).

A number of factors may influence the variation by remoteness in the tenure of Indigenous households. One is that community-titled land is more common in remote areas, and Indigenous households living on community-titled land face additional barriers in obtaining individual land ownership (see AIHW 2019a).

Housing assistance

Due to the barriers many Indigenous Australians face in the housing market, they are a priority group for, or focus of, many housing assistance services. Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) and social housing assist the largest number of Indigenous households (AIHW 2017).

Data for this section are from the AIHW's annual National Housing Assistance Data Repository.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance

CRA is a non-taxable income supplement payable to eligible people who rent in private or community housing rental markets. Recipients are 'income units'—that is, a person or a group of persons within a household who share command over income. Generally, there are more income units than households.

Data on CRA recipients show that, as at 30 June 2018, 72,981 income units receiving CRA reported having an Indigenous member. This equates to 5.6% of all CRA income units, an increase from 3.6% in 2009 (AIHW 2019a; SCRGSP 2019).

Social housing

Social housing is rental housing provided by state and territory governments and community sectors. Its purpose is to assist people who are unable to access suitable accommodation in the private rental market. Social housing includes public housing, state owned and managed Indigenous housing, community housing, and Indigenous community housing (AIHW 2019a).

As at 30 June 2018:

- 55,859 Indigenous households were in social housing, with most (35,619) in public housing, 13,817 in state owned and managed Indigenous housing and 6,423 in community housing (SCRGSP 2019)
- 17,477 permanent Indigenous community housing (ICH) dwellings were managed by funded and unfunded ICH organisations (AIHW 2019b)
- 1 in 7 (14%) households in social housing included an Indigenous member (AIHW 2019b).

Quality of housing

The 2014–15 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey collected information on: basic types of household facilities considered important for a healthy living environment; and whether the household dwelling had major structural problems.

In 2014–15:

- 29% of Indigenous Australians were living in a dwelling with major structural problems. Most commonly, these were major cracks in walls or floors, followed by major plumbing problems
- 15% of Indigenous Australians were living in a household in which at least 1 basic facility considered important for a healthy living environment (namely, facilities for preparing food, washing clothes, washing people, or sewerage facilities) were not available or did not work
- nearly 1 in 5 (19%) Indigenous Australians were living in a house that did not meet an acceptable standard—that is, at least 1 basic household facility was unavailable or there were more than 2 major structural problems
- Indigenous Australians in remote areas were more likely than those in non-remote areas to be living in a dwelling with major structural problems (37% compared with 27% respectively), that lacked basic household facilities (27% compared with 11%) or that did not meet acceptable standards (31% compared with 16%).

The proportion of Indigenous Australians living in dwellings with major structural problems or in which 1 or more basic facilities were not available was similar in 2014–15 and in 2008 (AIHW 2017).

Overcrowding

According to the 2016 Census, 10% of Indigenous households (about 26,400), across all types of housing tenure, were living in overcrowded dwellings (see [glossary](#)) (ABS 2018).

Data are also available on the number of Indigenous Australians living in overcrowded dwellings. In 2016, 1 in 5 Indigenous Australians (20%, or about 114,400 people) were living in overcrowded dwellings.

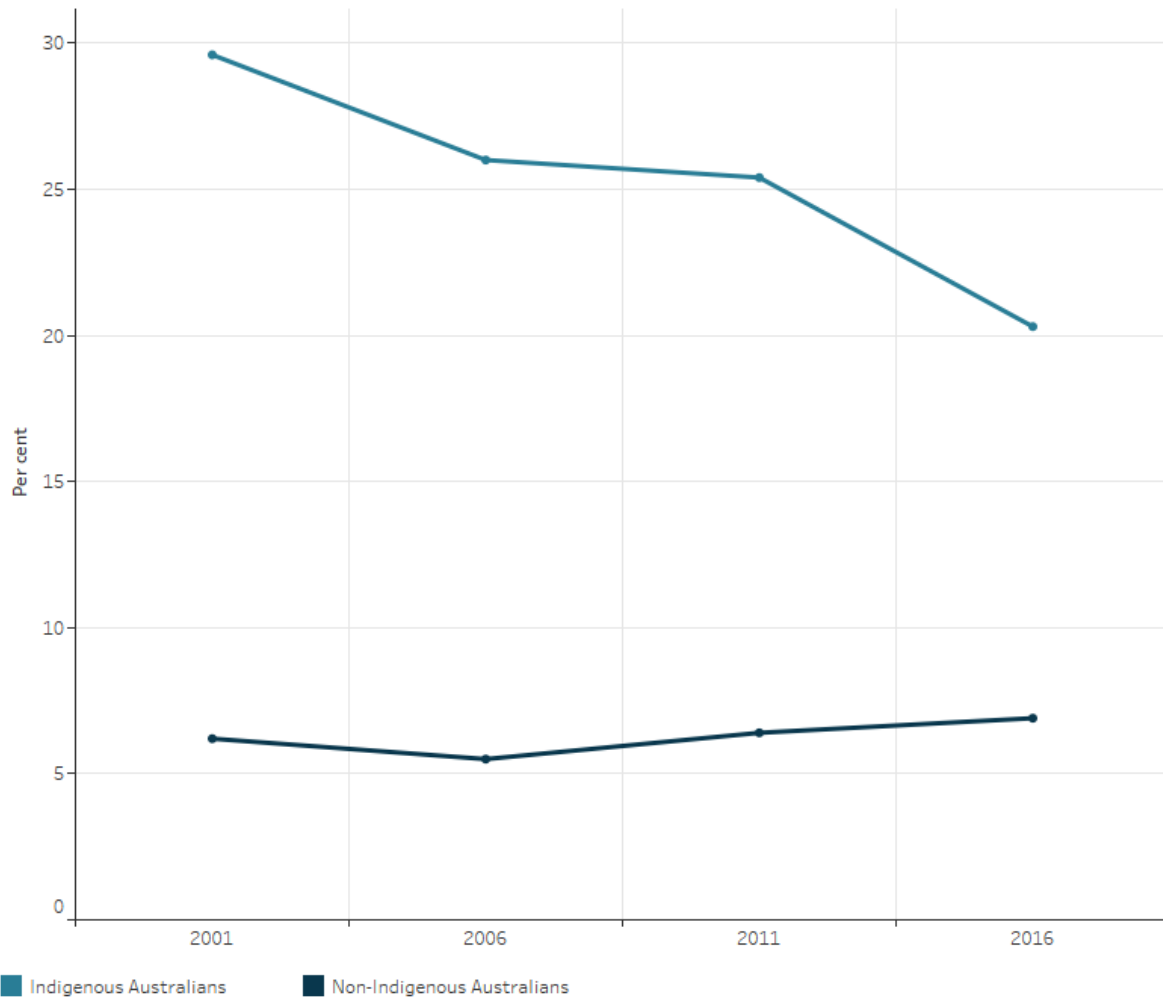
Available data suggests a decline in overcrowding over time. The proportion of Indigenous:

- households living in overcrowded conditions fell from 16% in 2001 to 10% in 2016.
- Australians living in overcrowded conditions decreased from 30% in 2001 to 20% in 2016.

In contrast, around 3% of Other households were considered to be overcrowded and 6% to 7% of non-Indigenous Australians were living in overcrowded conditions in each of the last 4 Census years (2001, 2006, 2011, 2016) (ABS 2018; AIHW 2014). These data suggest some narrowing of the gap in overcrowding levels over the decade (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Proportion of people living in overcrowded households, by Indigenous status, 2001 to 2016



Source: ABS 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Differences in overcrowding exist by remoteness area. In 2016, the:

- proportion of Indigenous households living in overcrowded dwellings was higher in more remote areas—15% in *Remote* areas and 34% in *Very remote* areas compared with between 8% to 10% in other areas
- number of Indigenous households living in overcrowded dwellings was higher in *Major cities* and regional areas (19,024 households) than in *Remote and very remote* areas combined (7,357).

Homelessness

Indigenous Australians continue to be over-represented in both the national homeless population and as users of Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS). They make up 3.3%

of the Australian population, yet have consistently higher rates of homelessness and service use than non-Indigenous Australians (AIHW 2019c).

According to 2014–15 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey data, 29% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over had been homeless at some time. By comparison, data from the 2014 General Social Survey suggest that 13% of non-Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over had ever experienced homelessness (AIHW 2017).

SHS data show that:

- in 2017–18, an estimated 65,200 Indigenous Australians accessed SHS. Indigenous Australians made up 25% of all SHS clients
- Indigenous SHS client numbers increased by 1% between 2016–17 and 2017–18, growing at a similar rate to the general SHS population (2% increase) (AIHW 2019c).

Comparisons with non-Indigenous Australians

Disparities exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians across a range of housing measures.

Compared with non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous Australians were:

- **1/2 x as likely to** own their own home (with or without a mortgage)
- **10 x as likely to** live in social housing
- **3 x as likely to** live in overcrowded dwellings
- **9 x as likely to** access Specialist Homelessness Services.

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on Indigenous housing, see:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 Report:
 - [2.01 Housing](#)
 - [2.02 Access to functional housing with utilities](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness](#)
- [Housing circumstances of Indigenous households: tenure and overcrowding](#)
- [Housing assistance for Indigenous Australians](#)

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Indigenous income and finance

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-income-and-finance>

A person's wellbeing is influenced by many factors, but having an adequate income remains an essential component in the measurement of individual and household wellbeing. Adequate levels of income for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians can help them better support themselves, their families and their communities more broadly.

The Australian Government provides long or short-term income support payments to people who cannot fully support themselves. For many disadvantaged Australians, including Indigenous Australians, having access to income assistance is key in ensuring economic and social wellbeing.

Indigenous Australians have lower average levels of employment and earnings from work and other private income sources than the general population, which can lead to higher levels of dependence on government assistance for income support (AIHW 2015:289; SCRGSP 2016).

The analysis on this page shows that for Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over:

- their median household income grew moderately between 2011 and 2016, and this growth was faster for Indigenous than non-Indigenous Australians
- the proportion of the total population who relied on a government pension or allowance as their main source of personal income fell between 2002 and 2014–15
- the proportion of the total population who received any form of income support payments from Centrelink has remained about the same in recent years.

See also 'Chapter 4 Income support among working-age Indigenous Australians' and 'Chapter 3 Income support over the past 20 years' in [Australia's welfare 2019: data insights](#) for more information on trends in the use of income support by Indigenous Australians and the general population.

Household income

The Census of Population and Housing compiles household income data for specific sub-groups, including for Indigenous Australians, non-Indigenous Australians, and the total population. This page focuses on Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over ranked by the income level of the household they live in, but with adjustments accounting for differences in household size and age profile of household members. With these adjustments, income level is referred to as the 'equivalised' gross weekly household income. See [glossary](#) for definitions.

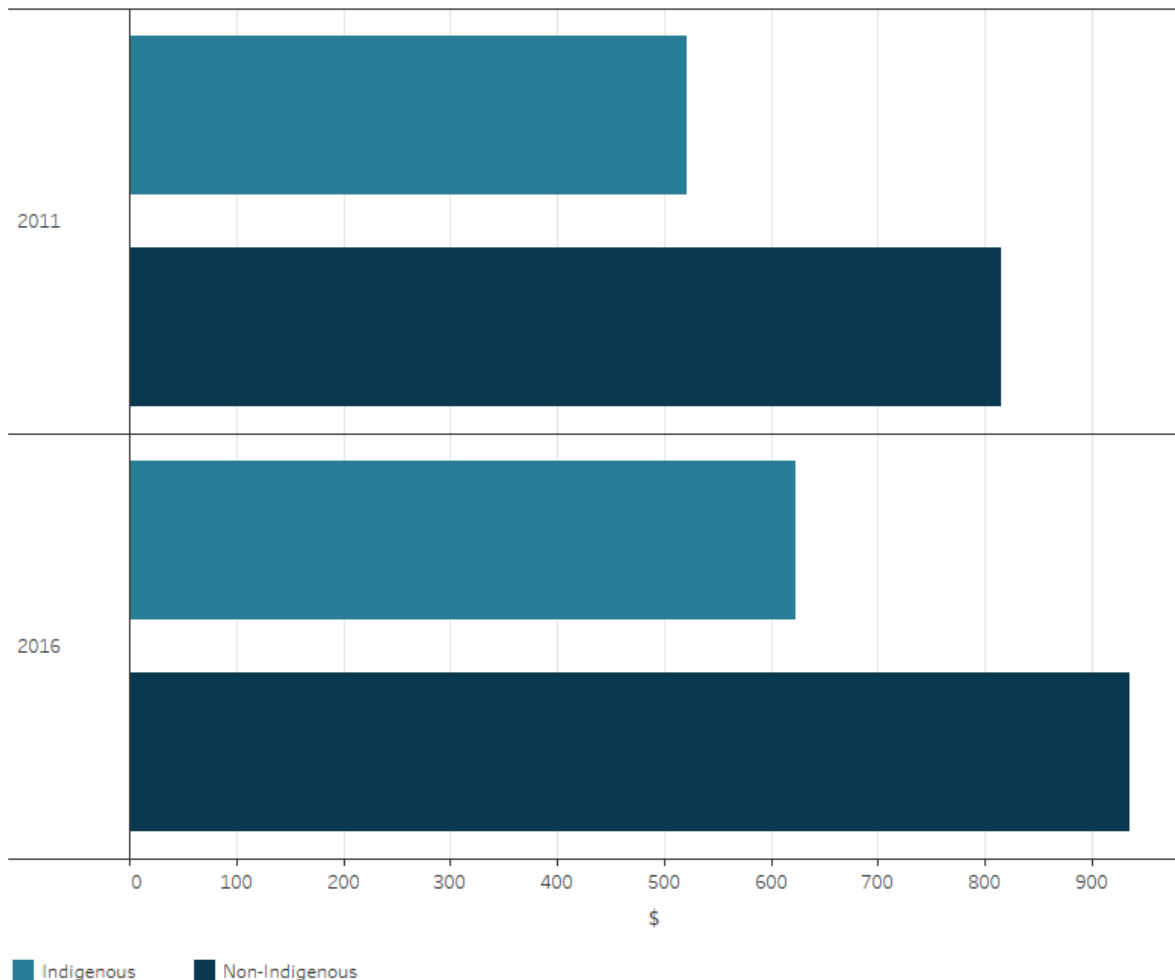
Figure 1 shows median values for equivalised (or adjusted) gross weekly household income for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over in 2016 and 2011.

In 2016:

- the median adjusted weekly household income among all Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over was \$623 compared with \$935 for non-Indigenous Australians (ABS 2019). This indicates that the Indigenous median weekly income was 33% lower
- the median adjusted weekly household income for Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over in 2016 was 19% higher than in 2011 (\$522)—9% higher after adjusting for inflation
- the median adjusted weekly household income for non-Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over grew by 5% between 2011 and 2016 after adjusting for inflation
- around 27% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over had adjusted household incomes of \$1,000 or more per week, considerably lower than the equivalent proportion for non-Indigenous Australians (46%)
- an estimated 37% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over had adjusted weekly household incomes in the bottom 20% (quintile) of the income distribution for all Australians aged 15 and over. Only 9% of Indigenous Australians were in the top quintile (ABS 2019).

Figure 1

Median equivalised weekly household income, people aged 15 and over, by Indigenous status, 2011 and 2016



Note: Includes all people aged 15 and over in households (occupied private dwellings) with complete household income data.
Source: ABS 2019.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Personal income

In 2016, the median weekly personal income for Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over was \$441 (Figure 2), compared with \$362 in 2011, an increase of 11% after adjusting for inflation. The equivalent data for non-Indigenous Australians was \$670 in 2016 and \$585 in 2011 (ABS 2019), an increase of 5% after adjusting for inflation.

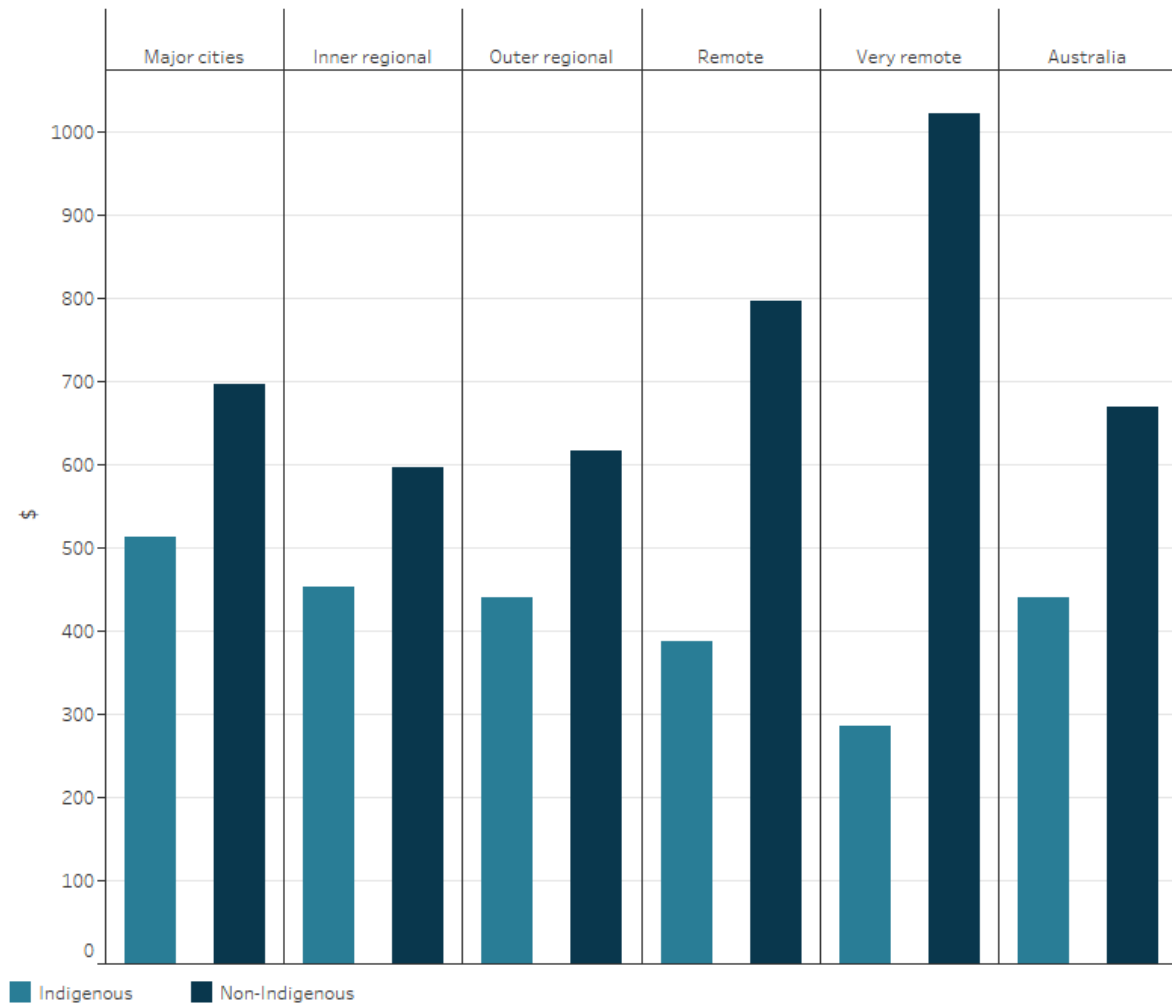
In 2016:

- 18% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over reported a gross personal income of \$1,000 or more per week. Males were more likely to have this level of income than females, 21% and 14% respectively (ABS 2018c)

- more than half (55%) of Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over reported a gross personal income between \$1 and \$799 per week (ABS 2017)
- Indigenous personal income varied considerably by remoteness (Figure 2). The highest median income level (\$513) was reported in Major cities with a consistent decrease in income with increasing remoteness. The lowest level was in Very remote areas (\$286). The latter was slightly more than half (55%) the level in Major cities
- non-Indigenous personal income also varied by remoteness but the pattern was different, with the median weekly income being substantially higher in Very remote (\$1,023) and Remote (\$796) areas than in Major cities (\$696)
- the difference in median personal income between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians was highest in Very remote areas, where the median income for non-Indigenous Australians was 3.6 times the median income for Indigenous Australians, compared with 1.4 times as high in Major cities, and 1.5 times as high nationally.

Figure 2

Median weekly personal income among people aged 15 and over, by Indigenous status and remoteness area, 2016



Source: ABS 2019.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Main sources of personal income

In 2014–15, 52% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over received a government pension or allowance as their main source of personal income, 44% relied on employee income, and a small group (4%) reported other main sources.

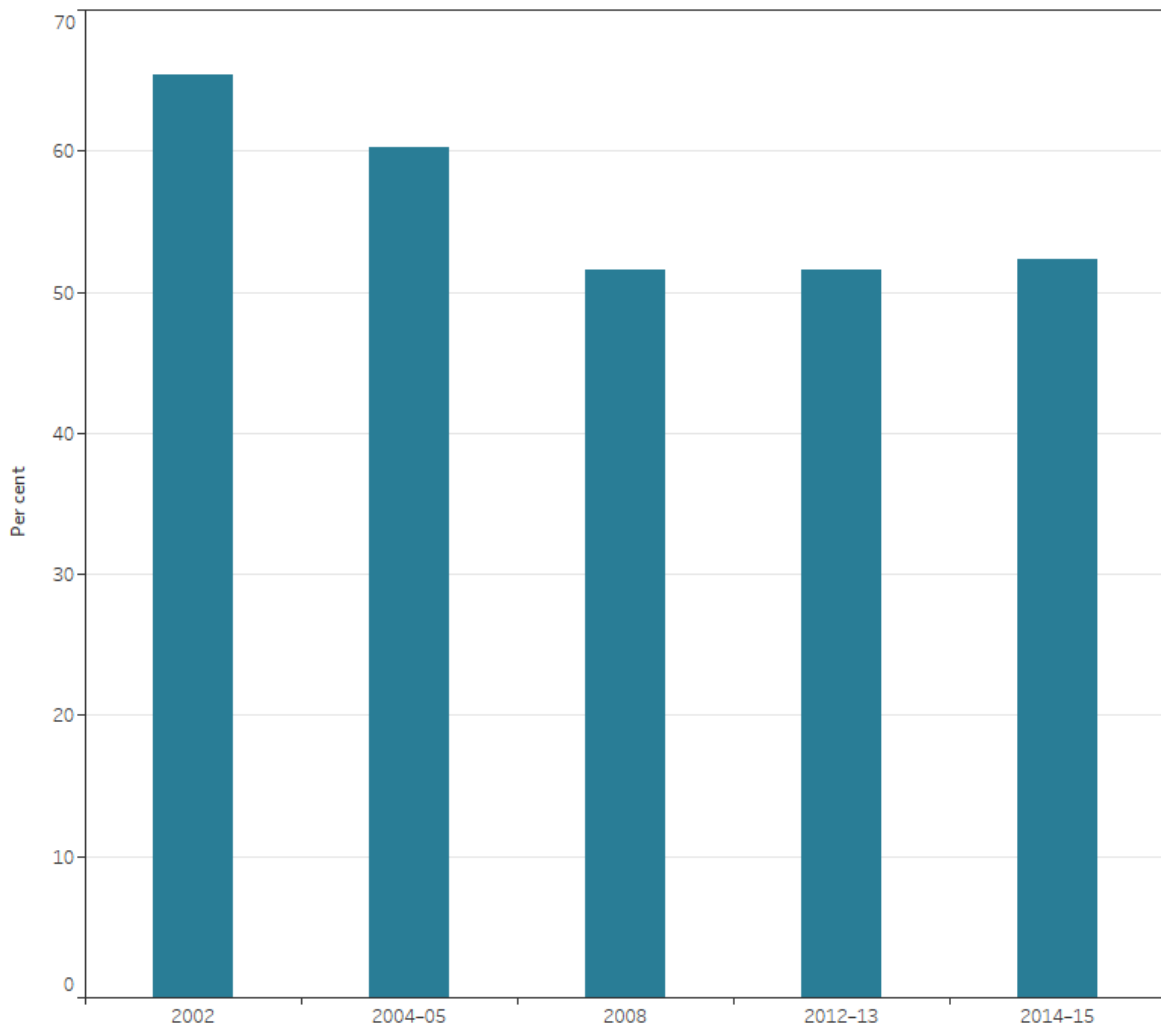
- The proportion of Indigenous Australians relying on a government pension or allowance as their main income source has fallen from 65% in 2002 (Figure 3).
- The proportion of Indigenous Australians whose main source of income was a government pension or allowance was highest in remote areas, being 65% in Very remote areas compared with 43% in Major cities (AIHW 2017:285).
- Compared with Indigenous Australians, a lower proportion of non-Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over received a government pension or allowance as their

main source of income (25%). This was the case across all age groups (AIHW 2017:285).

- The proportion of Indigenous Australians relying on wages or salaries as their main income source increased from 31% in 2002 to 44% in 2014–15.
- In 2014–15 the proportion of Indigenous Australians relying on wages or salaries was highest in Major cities (54%) and lowest in Very remote areas (33%).

Figure 3

Proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over with government payments as their main source of personal income, 2002 to 2014–15



Source: ABS 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2015, 2016b.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Income support

At 30 June 2018, 45% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over were receiving some form of income support payment—around 234,600 recipients. The equivalent

proportion for non-Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over was 23%. (See [glossary](#) and DSS (n.d.) for descriptions of income support payments.)

- The number of Indigenous Australians receiving income support payments in June 2018 was 12% higher compared with 209,000 at 30 June 2014; but the proportion of the Indigenous population aged 15 and over receiving income support payments has remained stable at 45% over this period to June 2018.
- The most common income support payments received by Indigenous Australians in June 2018 were Newstart Allowance (76,200 recipients), Disability Support Pension (48,500), Parenting Payment Single (36,800) and Age Pension (19,900) (Figure 4).

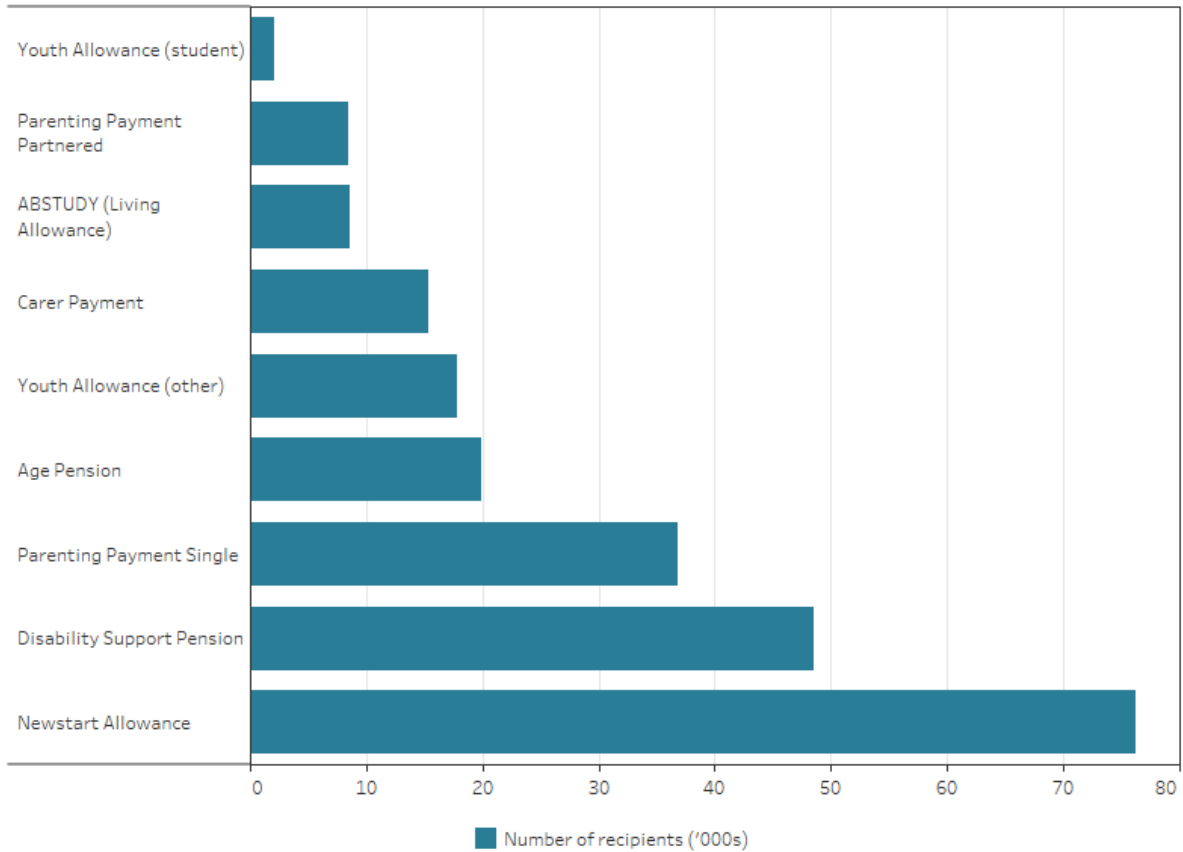
Overall, Indigenous Australians made up 5% of all income support recipients in June 2018. Excluding Age Pension, Indigenous Australians made up 9% of all other income support recipients.

- The proportion of Indigenous Australians among total income support recipients varied by type of income support payment—19% of all recipients of Youth Allowance (other), 15% of Parenting Payment Single and 11% of Newstart Allowance (Figure 4).
- These variations in the relative share of Indigenous Australians in specific income support payments can highlight the greater needs of specific sub-groups, such as the high share of young Indigenous job seekers on Youth Allowance (other) among all Youth Allowance (other) recipients.

Figure 4

Main income support payments received by Indigenous Australians, number and share in total recipients, June 2018

Number of or share in total recipients
● Number of recipients ('000s)
○ Share in total recipients (per cent)



[Notes]

Source: DSS 2018.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Financial stress

The inability to raise emergency funds and experiencing cash-flow problems are 2 measures of financial stress widely used to assess income vulnerability (Breunig & Cobb-Clark 2006; Saunders et al. 2007).

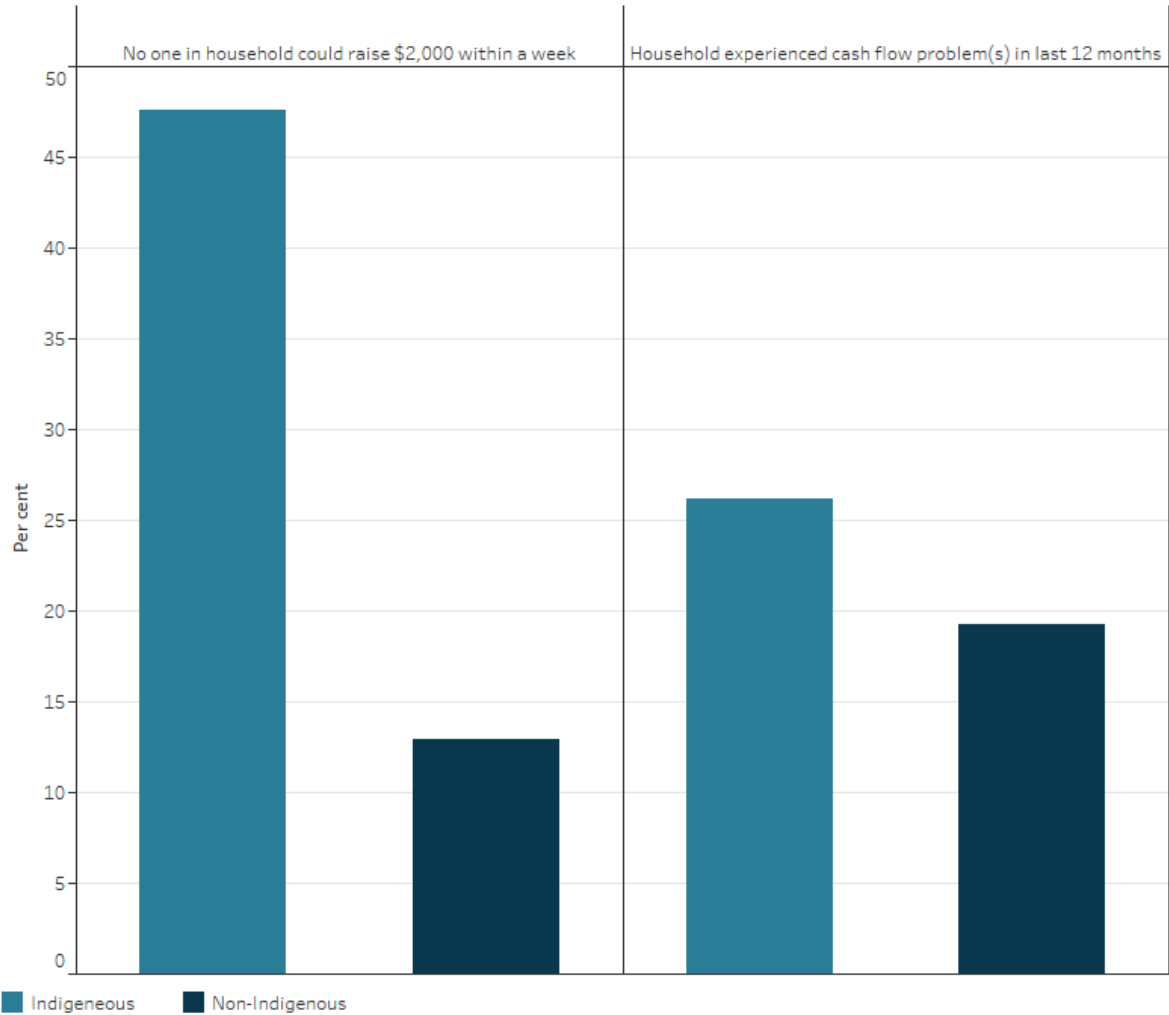
In 2014–15 among Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over (Figure 5):

- almost half (48%) reported that no one in their household could raise \$2,000 for an emergency in a week
- more than 1 in 4 (26%) reported their household had cash-flow problems in the last 12 months.

The inability to raise \$2,000 within a week for an emergency was particularly high for Indigenous Australians, 3.6 times the rate for non-Indigenous Australians (13%). The proportion of non-Indigenous Australians reporting household cash-flow problems (in the last 12 months) was 19%, with Indigenous Australians 1.4 times as likely to report cash-flow problems.

Figure 5

Experience of financial stress among people aged 15 and over, by Indigenous status, 2014–15



Source: ABS 2014b, 2016a.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Where do I go for more information?

More information from the 2016 Census on personal and household income of Indigenous Australians are in the Australian Bureau of Statistics [Census of Population and Housing: Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2016](#).

The Department of Social Services provides detailed tabulations of Centrelink-based data on a quarterly basis on data.gov.au, including receipt of income support payments and other non-income support allowances by Indigenous status. See [DSS Payment Demographic Data](#).

More information on receipt of income-support payments by Indigenous status for people aged 15–64, including time trends between 2002 and 2015, and disaggregation by state and territory, are in the most recent [Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: key indicators 2016](#) report.

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Profile of Indigenous Australians

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/profile-of-indigenous-australians>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the Indigenous 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.

This page provides demographic information on the Indigenous population, as well as information on its languages and cultures.

Indigenous population

In 2016, an estimated 798,365 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were in Australia, representing 3.3% of the total Australian population (ABS 2018b). The Indigenous population is projected to reach about 1.1 million people by 2031 (ABS 2019).

Among the Indigenous population in 2016:

- 91% identified as being of Aboriginal origin (an estimated 727,485 people)
- 5% identified as being of Torres Strait Islander origin (38,660)
- 4% were of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin (32,220) (ABS 2018b).

Indigenous identification

The Australian Government defines Indigenous Australians as people who: are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent; identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin; and are accepted as such in the communities in which they live or have lived.

In most data collections, a person is considered to be Indigenous if they identified themselves, or were identified by another household member, as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. For a few data collections, information on acceptance of a person as being Indigenous by an Indigenous community may also be required.

Age distribution

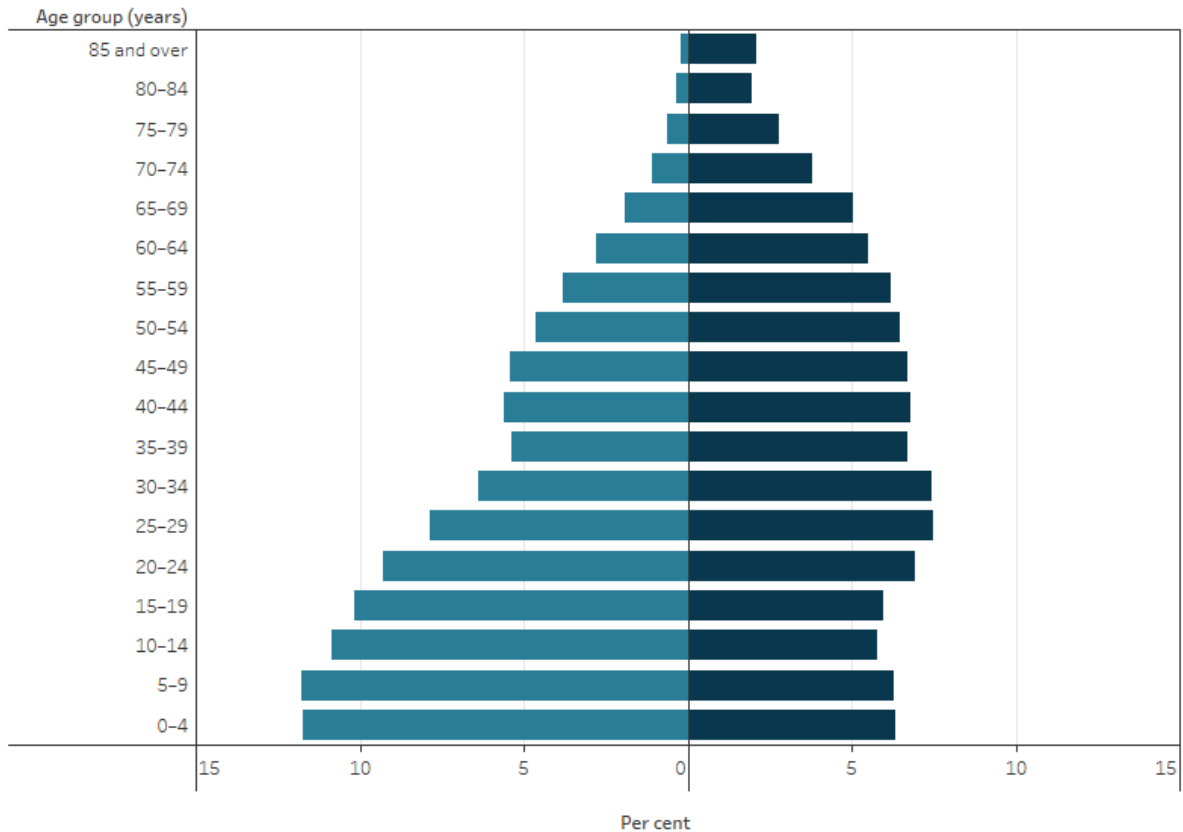
The Indigenous population has a relatively young age structure. In 2016, the median age was 23.0 years, compared with 37.8 for non-Indigenous Australians (ABS 2018b).

Among Indigenous Australians, 34% were aged under 15 (compared with 18% for non-Indigenous Australians) and 4% were aged 65 and over (compared with 16% for non-Indigenous Australians) (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Age structure of the Australian population, by Indigenous status, 30 June 2016

Select sex
Persons



Indigenous status
■ Indigenous
■ Non-Indigenous

Source: ABS 2018b.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Geographic distribution

Indigenous Australians are more likely to live in urban and regional areas than remote areas. Of the Indigenous population at 30 June 2016:

- about 4 in 5 (81%, or about 649,600 people) lived in *Major cities, Inner regional or Outer regional* areas
- about 1 in 5 (19%, or about 148,700 people) lived in *Remote or Very remote* areas (ABS 2018b).

The relative geographic distribution of the Indigenous population differs to that of the non-Indigenous population. At 30 June 2016:

- nearly all non-Indigenous Australians (98%) lived in non-remote areas (compared with 81% of Indigenous Australians), with 1.5% living in *Remote* or *Very remote* areas (compared with 19% of Indigenous Australians)
- the percentage of the total Australian population who were Indigenous was higher in more remote areas—in *Remote* areas, 18% of the population were Indigenous, as were nearly half (47%) of the population in *Very remote* areas. In comparison, in non-remote areas, 2.7% of the population were Indigenous (ABS 2018b).

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the Indigenous population by remoteness area, as well as by Indigenous Region (IREG; see [glossary](#). IREGs are another geographic classification).

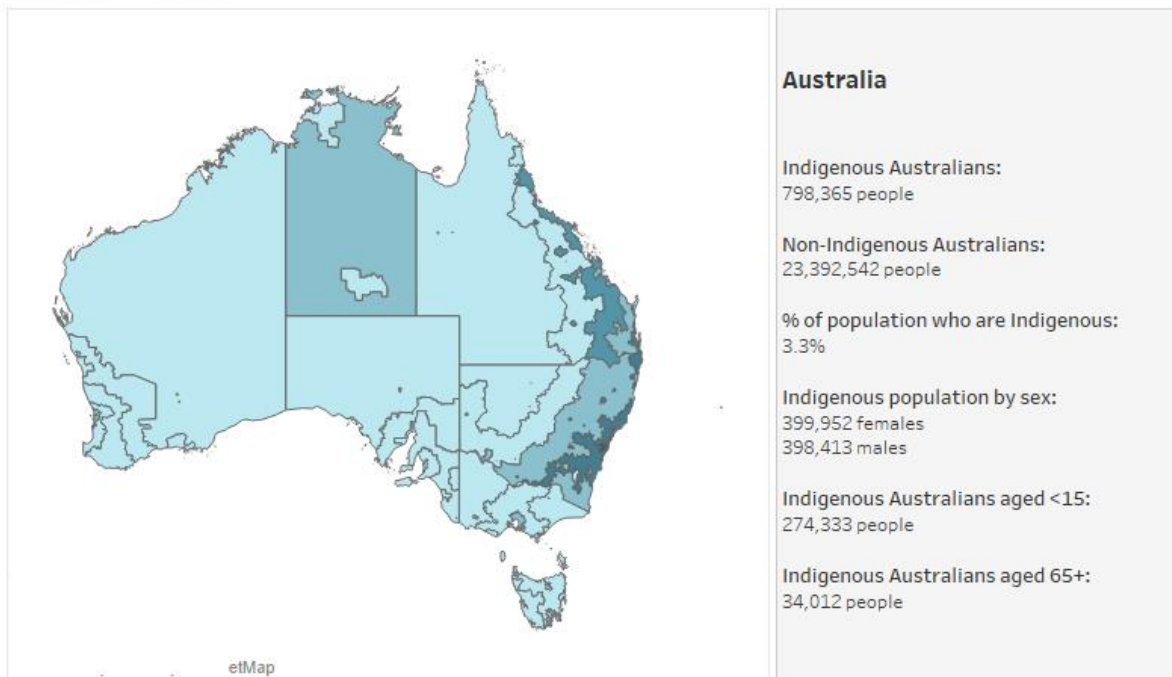
Figure 2

Geographic distribution of the Indigenous population, 30 June 2016

Select geographic classification:

- Remoteness area
- Indigenous regions

Click on area to view data



Indigenous population
852 123,099

[Notes]

Source: ABS 2018b.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Culture and language

Culture is seen as central to the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians (SCRGSP 2018).

Based on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, in 2014–15, among Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over:

- 74% (328,600 people) recognised an area as homelands or traditional country—this was 89% in remote areas compared with 70% in non-remote areas
- 62% (276,300) identified with a clan, tribal or language group—79% in remote areas compared with 58% in non-remote areas.
- 63% (277,700) had been involved in selected cultural events, ceremonies or organisations in the last 12 months—82% in remote areas compared with 57% in non-remote areas (ABS 2016b).

Indigenous languages play an important role in maintaining and passing on cultural knowledge and practices and contributing to a stronger sense of identity and belonging (SCRGSP 2018). On Census night in 2016, about 150 Australian Indigenous languages were spoken in Australian homes (ABS 2017).

In 2014–15, among Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over:

- 18% (81,100 people) spoke an Australian Indigenous language and another 20% spoke some words of an Indigenous language (88,500 people)
- the proportion who spoke an Indigenous language was higher in remote than in non-remote areas—55% compared with 8% respectively (excluding those who only spoke some words)
- 11% (46,700 people) spoke an Australian Indigenous language as their main language at home (ABS 2016b).

Additional information on Indigenous Australians and their wellbeing is reported in [Australia's welfare snapshots](#), including an overview of these topics:

- [understanding Indigenous welfare and wellbeing](#)
- [education and skills](#)
- [employment](#)
- [housing](#)
- [income and finance](#)
- [disability support](#)
- [aged care](#)
- [community safety](#).

Where do I go for more information?

See [Indigenous Australians](#) for more information.

Population estimates of the Indigenous population based on the 2016 Census are available from the ABS: [Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2016](#).

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Understanding Indigenous welfare and wellbeing

Find the most recent version of this information at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/understanding-indigenous-welfare-and-wellbeing>

A person's wellbeing is the interplay of many interrelated factors. This includes health status, individual behaviours (such as being a smoker, being immunised, or having a healthy diet), education level, employment status and social support networks. Wellbeing is also influenced by the formal and informal services and supports a person receives in time of need, which can help bolster wellbeing (see also [Understanding welfare and wellbeing](#)).

This page focuses on:

- contextual factors particularly important for understanding the welfare of Indigenous Australians
- information on the welfare of Indigenous Australians and factors influencing this
- an overview of wellbeing outcomes for Indigenous Australians
- information on the Australian Government's Closing the Gap strategy.

For demographic information on the Indigenous population, see [Profile of Indigenous Australians](#).

Contextual factors

This section provides an overview of some historical factors that are important in understanding the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians, with a focus on the Stolen Generations.

Aboriginal Australians have lived in Australia for around 60,000 years, and Torres Strait Islanders for about 10,000 years (Pascoe 2012). More than 200 distinct languages were in use at the time of European colonisation. Reflecting this history, Indigenous Australians remain a diverse group, with many languages, histories and cultural traditions. Land was, and continues to be, central to Indigenous culture, customs and laws.

In the 1900s, governments aimed to assimilate Indigenous Australians into 'mainstream' society, resulting in the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families. This is now referred to as the 'Stolen Generations' (SCRGSP 2018). By 1972, the state and territory legislation that created the Stolen Generations had been formally repealed. Removal practices ceased (HREOC 1997), although there were lags in the repeal of legislation and changes in practices in some jurisdictions.

The Stolen Generations are a particularly disadvantaged group of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (AIHW 2018b). Their forced removal from families and subsequent disconnection from Indigenous culture and land have had widespread negative impacts on their wellbeing and that of their families.

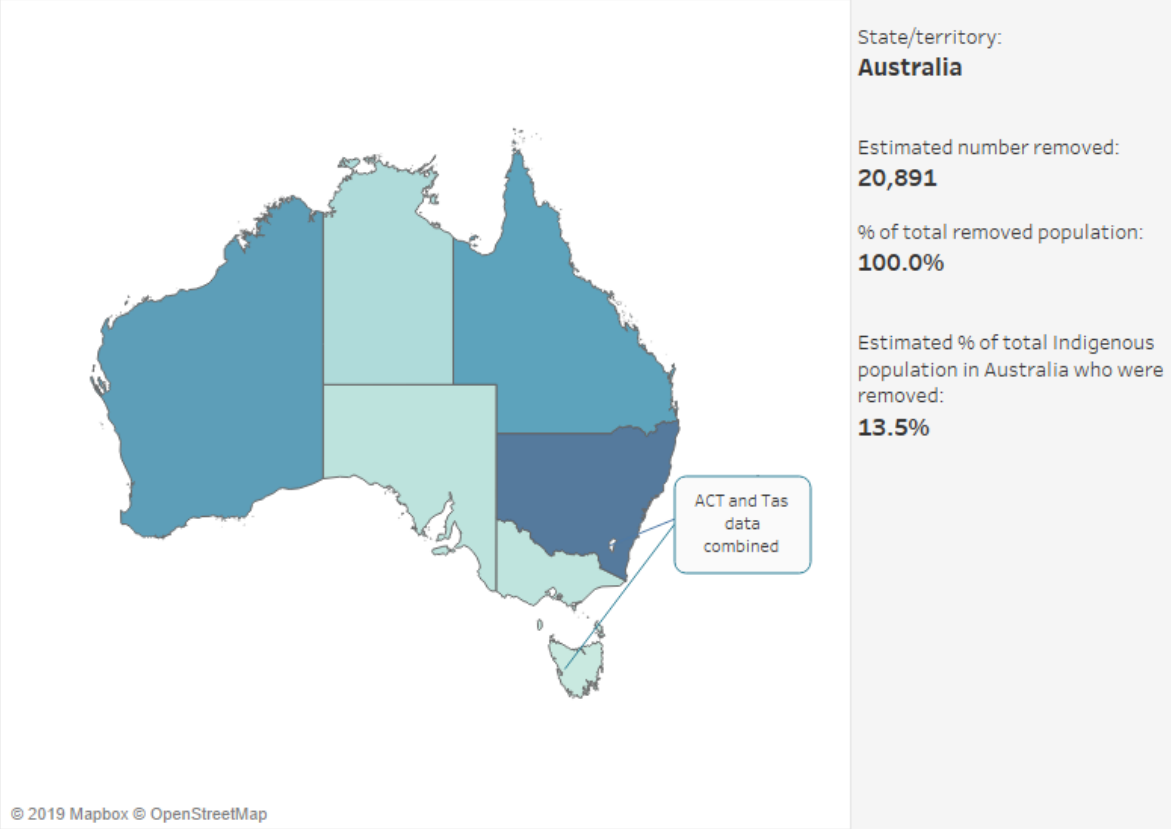
In 2014–15, an estimated 20,900 surviving members of the Indigenous population born before 1972 had been removed from their families (Figure 1; see notes for information on the analysis). Of these:

- about two-thirds (66%, or an estimated 13,800 people) were aged 50 and over
- 56% were women (an estimated 11,700 people)
- the majority (79%, or an estimated 16,600) lived in non-remote areas (ABS 2016b, AIHW 2018b).

Figure 1

Indigenous Australians born before 1972 who reported having been removed from their families, by state and territory, 2014–15

Click on state or territory to view data



Estimated number removed
1,064 6,247

[Notes]

Source: ABS 2016b.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Impact of removal from family

Using ABS survey data (ABS 2016b), the AIHW analysed various outcomes for Indigenous Australians born before 1972 who reported being removed from their family (AIHW 2018b).

This group experienced adverse health, cultural and socioeconomic outcomes at a rate higher than the Indigenous population that had not been removed.

Compared with Indigenous Australians not removed, those born before 1972 who reported being removed were:

- 3.3 times as likely to have been incarcerated in the previous 5 years
- 1.8 times as likely to have government payments as their main source of income

- 1.7 times as likely to have experienced actual or threatened physical violence in the previous 12 months
- 1.6 times as likely to have experienced homelessness in the previous 10 years.

See [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants: numbers, demographic characteristics and selected outcomes](#) for additional information on health and socioeconomic outcomes for the Stolen Generations and their descendants.

Measurement and determinants of Indigenous welfare

A broad range of factors can positively or negatively affect the welfare of Indigenous Australians. Welfare is closely linked to health and is influenced by social determinants such as education, employment, housing, access to services, culture, and community networks and safety. An individual's knowledge, attitudes and health behaviours, as well as access to appropriate welfare services and support, also contribute to welfare outcomes.

The welfare of Indigenous Australians has improved in a number of areas:

- Increases in Year 12 completion—the proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 20–24 who had completed Year 12 or equivalent increased from 47% in 2006 to 65% in 2016 (see also [Indigenous education and skills](#)).
- Increases in home ownership—in 2016, 38% of Indigenous households were home owners, an increase from 32% in 2001 (see also [Indigenous housing](#)).
- Decreases in household overcrowding—the proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over living in an overcrowded household decreased from 25% in 2008 to 18% in 2014–15.
- Decreases in homelessness—in 2016, about 1 in 28 Indigenous Australians were homeless (3.6% of the Indigenous population). This was an improvement from 2006 when about 1 in 18 Indigenous Australians were homeless (5.7%) (ABS 2016a; AIHW 2019; PM&C 2019).

Despite these improvements, Indigenous Australians continue to experience disadvantage across a wide range of outcomes. They have a lower life expectancy than non-Indigenous Australians and are more likely to experience unemployment, homelessness, violence and imprisonment (AHMAC 2017).

Indigenous community functioning

For Indigenous Australians, wellbeing encompasses both individual wellbeing and community wellbeing (AHMAC 2017; Taylor et al. 2012). Indigenous 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.

Community functioning can be defined as the ability and freedom of community members and communities to determine the social context of their lives, and to translate their capability into action (AHMAC 2017).

Six themes central to community functioning from an Indigenous perspective are:

- connectedness to country, land, and history, culture and identity
- resilience
- leadership
- having a role, structure and routine
- feeling safe
- vitality (AHMAC 2017).

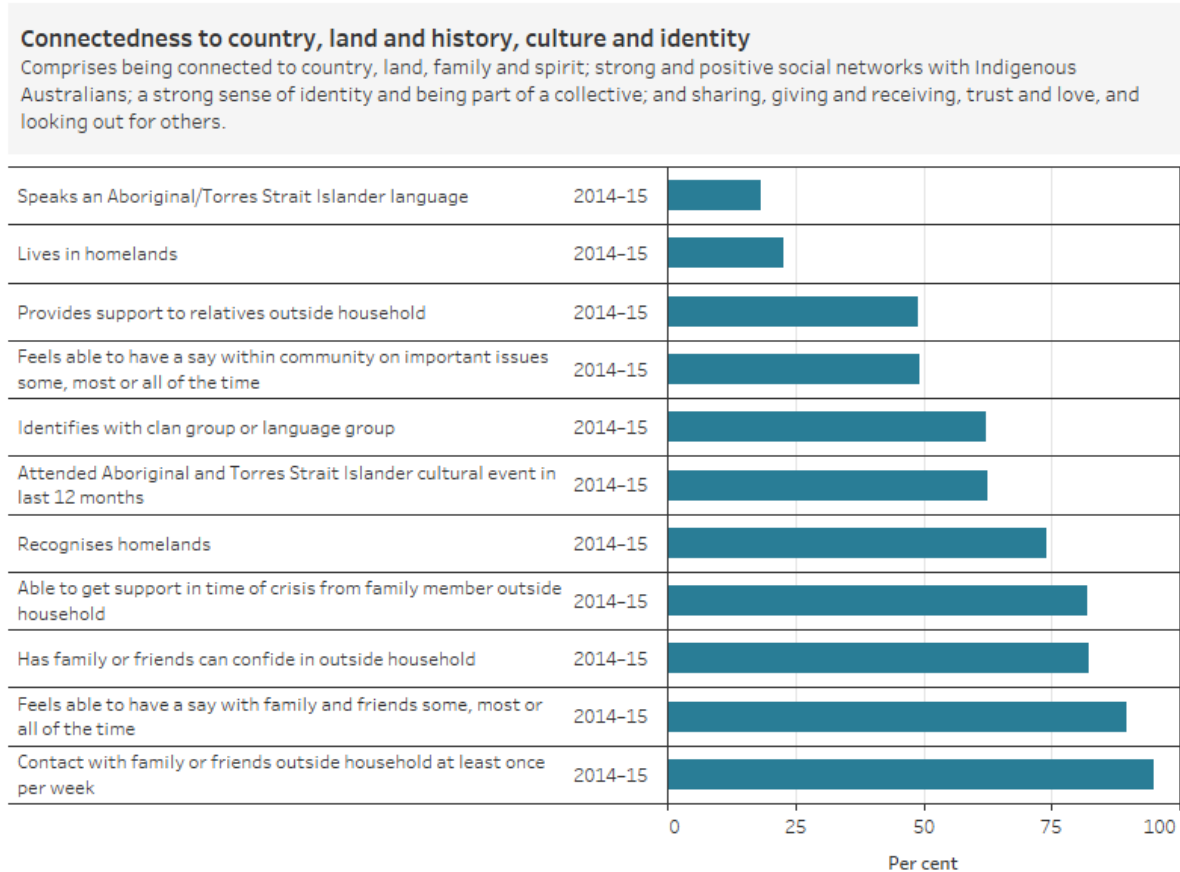
These themes—shown in Figure 2 with selected measures of each theme—are based on workshops undertaken to develop community functioning measures for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework (see AHMAC 2017). Select a theme to learn more about it.

For more information about Indigenous community functioning, see AIHW 2017:221–40 and AHMAC 2017:63.

Figure 2

Indigenous community functioning—themes and selected findings

Select theme: Connectedness to country, land and history, culture and identity Select year(s): 2014-15



Note: Data are for Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over unless otherwise indicated.
Sources: AIHW and ABS analysis of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2002, 2008 and 2014-15 (as published in AIHW 2018a); AHMAC 2017.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Welfare support and services

A person’s interaction with both formal and informal welfare support and services can help support their wellbeing.

Informal carers provide care to family members, friends or neighbours within the context of an existing relationship. The demands of the role, however, often go beyond what would normally be expected of the relationship. Informal (unpaid) care provided by family and friends often complements formal (paid) services from government and other organisations.

The 2016 Census of Population and Housing 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 2016, of

Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over for whom responses to this question were provided:

- 15% 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
- 18% of females had provided unpaid assistance, compared with 12% of males
- the proportion who had provided unpaid assistance was similar among people living in remote areas and non-remote areas (16% and 15% respectively) (ABS 2019).

See also [Informal carers](#).

Welfare support provided or funded by governments is complex and wide ranging. While welfare support is commonly seen as relating to financial income support and tax concessions, it also includes many policies and programs beyond this. For example, universal services for education and health—and targeted support for housing, employment, disability, ageing and aged care (among others)—are critical to the wellbeing of an individual and their family.

Indigenous Australians can access the same welfare support as all Australians. In addition, some welfare support targets Indigenous Australians, including the State owned and managed Indigenous housing program (SOMIH), and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flexible aged care program.

Examples of the use of welfare support and services among Indigenous Australians include:

- At 30 June 2018, 35,619 Indigenous households were living in public housing, another 13,817 in SOMIH, and 6,423 in mainstream community housing. See [Indigenous housing](#).
- Among Indigenous Australians aged 50 and over, about 20,200 received basic aged care support services in the community through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme during 2017–18. See [Aged care for Indigenous Australians](#).
- In 2017–18, nearly 16,000 Indigenous Australians received disability support services provided under the National Disability Agreement. See [Disability support for Indigenous Australians](#).
- 45% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over received an income support payment in June 2018. See [Indigenous income and finance](#).

Closing the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage

The substantial difference in almost all measures of health and wellbeing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians has become known as ‘the Gap’.

In 2008, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) committed to the Closing the Gap strategy. This national strategy aims to reduce Indigenous disadvantage in health, education and employment. It has targets, several of which are explored in [Australia’s welfare snapshots](#).

According to the 2019 Closing the Gap report (PM&C 2019), of the 7 current targets, 2 are on track—early childhood education and Year 12 or equivalent attainment. See [Indigenous education and skills](#) for more information on targets related to education and [Indigenous employment](#) for more information on the employment target.

See also the [Prime Minister’s annual report to Parliament on progress in Closing the Gap](#).

Closing the Gap targets

- Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under 5 (aged 0–4) by 2018.
- Ninety-five per cent of all Indigenous four-year olds are enrolled in early childhood education by 2025.
- Close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school attendance by 2018.
- Halve the gap for Indigenous children in reading, writing and numeracy by 2018.
- Halve the gap for Indigenous Australians aged 20–24 in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.
- Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2018.
- Close the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2031.

Closing the Gap refresh

Of the 7 current COAG targets, 4 expired in 2018. COAG has committed to work in partnership with Indigenous Australians to refresh the Closing the Gap agenda (PM&C 2018a). A proposed refreshed framework and draft targets were released in a COAG statement in December 2018, to be used as a basis for further discussion with Indigenous Australians and communities (PM&C 2018b).

Following the December 2018 COAG meeting, a Partnership agreement on Closing the Gap 2019–2029 was developed (COAG 2019). This document expresses the agreed arrangements for the formal partnership between COAG and Indigenous Australians (represented by a coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled peak bodies and organisations) in the design, implementation and monitoring of the Closing the Gap framework.

More information on the welfare and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians is reported elsewhere in [Australia’s welfare snapshots](#). This includes an overview of these topics for Indigenous Australians:

- [housing](#)
- [education and skills](#)
- [employment](#)

- [income and finance](#)
- [disability support](#)
- [aged care](#)
- [community safety](#).

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on this topic, see [Indigenous Australians](#)

For more information on the health and welfare of Indigenous Australians, see:

- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health performance framework](#)
- [The health and welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: 2015](#).

For more information on the Stolen Generations, see [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants: numbers, demographic characteristics and selected outcomes](#).

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