

Report on Government Services 2022

PART F, SECTION 16: RELEASED ON 25 JANUARY 2022

16 Child protection services

This section is presented in a new online format. Dynamic data visualisations replace the static chapter format used in previous editions. Machine readable data are also available for download. A guide is available on [accessing information in the new format](#).

Impact of COVID-19 on data for the Child protection services section

COVID-19 may affect data in this Report in a number of ways. This includes in respect of actual performance (that is, the impact of COVID-19 on service delivery during 2020 and 2021, which is reflected in the data results), and the collection and processing of data (that is, the ability of data providers to undertake data collection and process results for inclusion in the Report).

For the Child protection services section, there are no significant changes to the data as a result of COVID-19.

This section reports on the performance of governments in providing child protection services across Australia.

The **Indicator Results** tab uses data from the data tables to provide information on the performance for each indicator in the **Indicator Framework**. The same data are also available in CSV format.

Context

Objectives for child protection services

Child protection services aim to promote child and family wellbeing by:

- enabling families to care for, and protect, children and young people
- protecting children and young people who are at risk of abuse and neglect within their families or whose families do not have the capacity to provide care and protection
- supporting children and young people in the child protection system to reach their potential.

To achieve these aims, governments seek to provide child protection services that:

- are responsive, ensuring that notifications are responded to, and investigations are completed, in a timely and appropriate manner
- are targeted to children and young people who are at greatest risk
- support and strengthen families so that children can live in a safe and stable family environment
- provide quality care for children and young people aged 0–17 years who cannot live with their parents for reasons of safety or family crisis, with an emphasis on safety, stability and permanency in children's living arrangements

- meet the needs of individual children and young people in the child protection system.

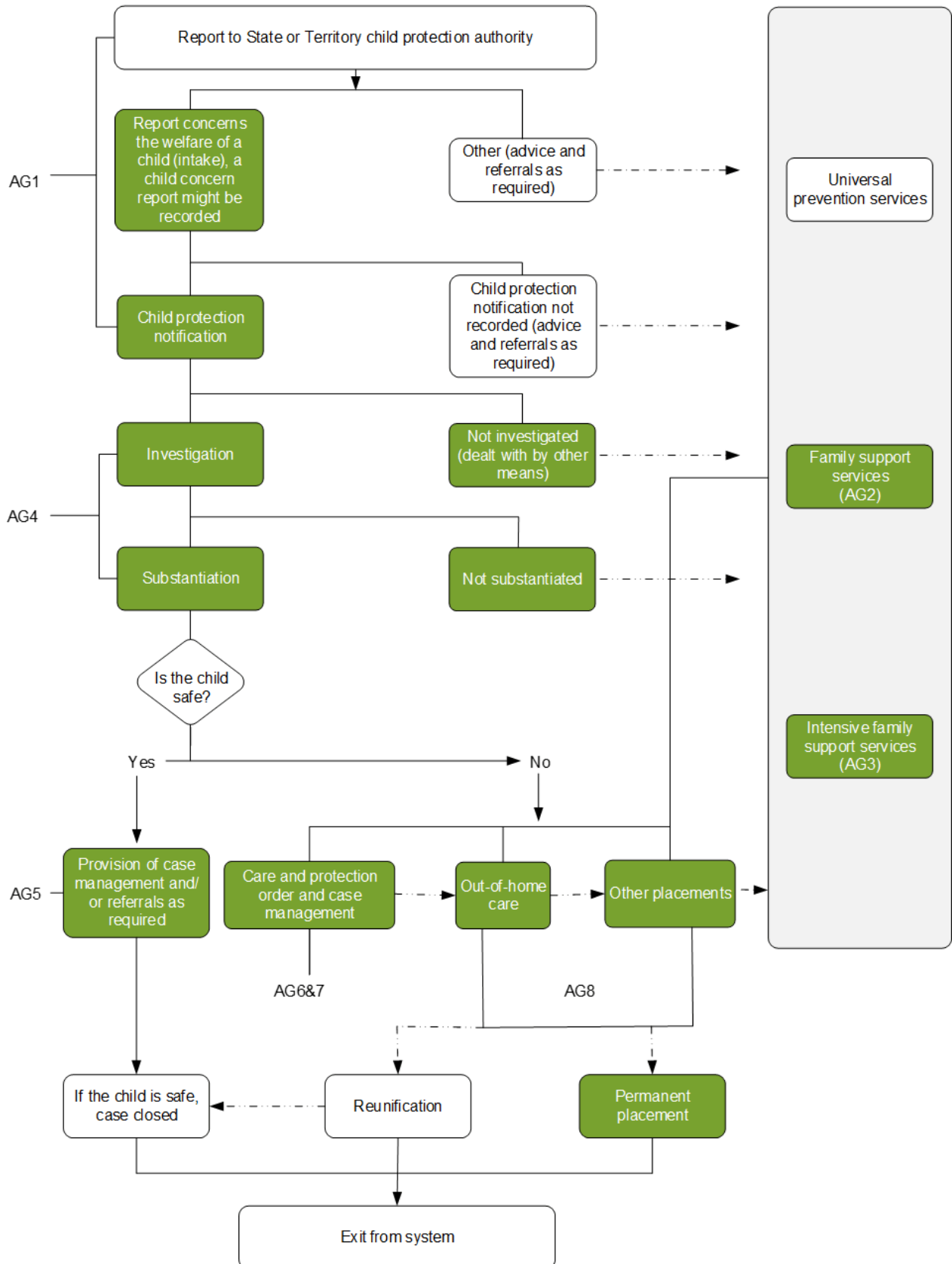
Governments aim for child protection services to meet these objectives in an equitable and efficient manner.

Service overview

Child protection services provide supports and interventions to promote child and family wellbeing, and to protect children and young people aged 0–17 years who are at risk of abuse and neglect within their families, or whose families do not have the capacity to provide care and protection.

Figure 16.1 is a simplified representation of the child protection services system, depicting common pathways through the system and referrals to support services.

Figure 16.1 The child protection services system a, b, c, d, e



a Dashed lines indicate that clients may or may not receive these services, depending on need, service availability, and client willingness to participate in voluntary services. **b** Support services include family preservation and reunification services provided by government and other agencies. **c** Green shading indicates data are reported. **d** Services differ across jurisdictions. **e** AG = Activity Group. See the 'Key terms and references' tab for detailed definitions.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished).

Roles and responsibilities

State and Territory governments have responsibility for funding and/or providing child protection services in Australia. Each jurisdiction has its own legislation that determines the policies and practices of its child protection system, and while this legislation varies in detail, its intent is similar across jurisdictions.

Other government service systems can have a role in child protection, including:

- mandatory reporting responsibilities for particular occupations in some jurisdictions
- education and child care services, which in some jurisdictions includes education on protective behaviours
- health services and mental health services, which support the assessment of child protection matters and deliver general medical and dental services as well as therapeutic, counselling and other services
- police services, which investigate serious allegations of child abuse and neglect, particularly criminal matters, and may also work on child protection assessments
- courts, which decide whether a child will be placed on an order.

This section reports on services provided by State and Territory governments to promote family wellbeing and to protect children, specifically: family support services; intensive family support services; protective intervention services and out-of-home care services (see 'Key terms and references' tab for definitions). Data are also included on expenditure by the Australian Government on intensive family support services.

Funding

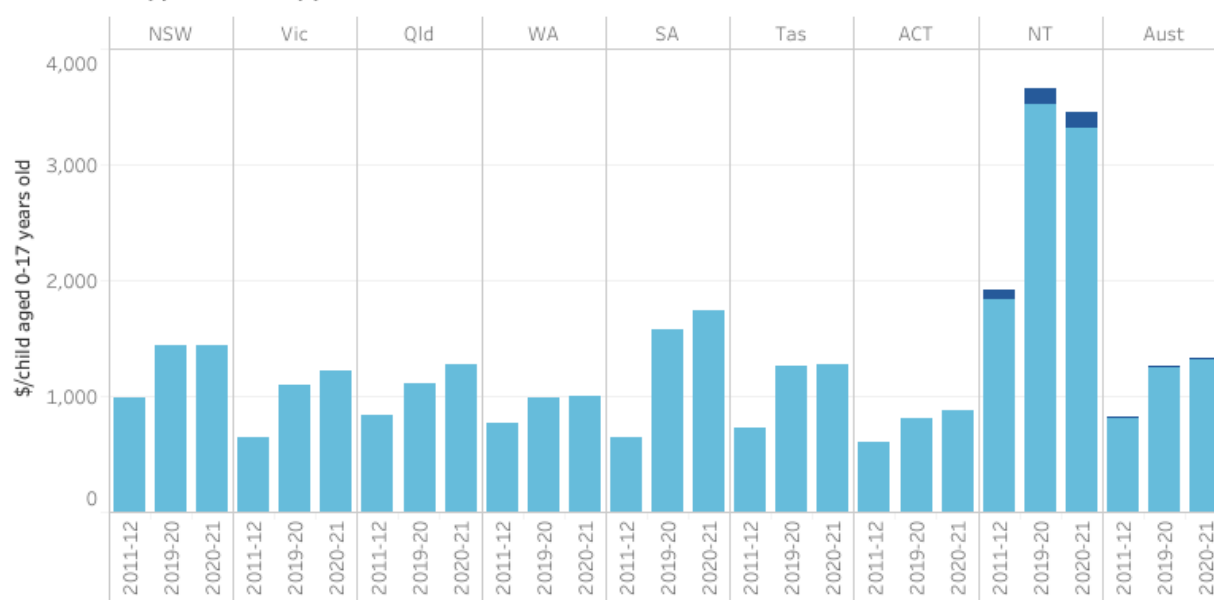
Total recurrent expenditure on family support services, intensive family support services, protective intervention services, and care services (out-of-home care and other supported placements) was \$7.5 billion nationally in 2020-21 (a real increase of 6.2 per cent from 2019-20) of which care services accounted for more than half (60.3 per cent, or \$4.5 billion) (table 16A.8).

In 2020-21, real recurrent expenditure on all child protection services per child aged 0–17 years in the population was \$1327 nationally (figure 16.2).

Select year(s):
Multiple values

■ Australian Government expenditure
■ State and Territory government expenditure

Figure 16.2 Total real expenditure on all child protection services, per child aged 0-17 years (2020-21 dollars) by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 16A.8

Data tables are referenced above by a '16A' prefix and all data (footnotes and data sources) are available for download from the supporting material below (both in Excel and CSV format).

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Size and scope

Nationally, the following number of children aged 0–17 years received protective intervention services and out-of-home care services during 2020-21 (also reported as a rate per 1000 children in the population) (tables 16A.1–4):

- 293 585 children were the subject of *notifications*; 51.9 notifications per 1000 children
- 105 407 children were the subject of a *finalised investigation*; 18.6 finalised investigations per 1000 children
- 49 690 children were the subject of a *substantiation*; 8.8 substantiations per 1000 children
- 61 743 children were on *care and protection orders* at 30 June 2021; 10.9 children on care and protection orders per 1000 children
- 46 212 children were in *out-of-home care* at 30 June 2021, 8.2 per 1000 children aged 0–17 years, with a further 10 115 children in *other supported placements*.
 - There were 56 871 children in out-of-home care at least once during 2020-21; with 11 515 children admitted to, and 11 382 discharged from, out-of-home care during this period. See Reporting on out-of-home care (below) for information about the definition of out-of-home care used in this Report.

Approximately half of all notifications nationally result in an investigation; the other half are dealt with by other means. The proportion of notifications dealt with by other means varies significantly by jurisdiction (table 16A.5). Around one in four children admitted to a care and protection order has been admitted to such orders before, though this proportion varies across states and territories (table 16A.6). Almost all children in out-of-home care are on care and protection orders (ranging from 84–100 per cent across jurisdictions as at 30 June 2021) (table 16A.7).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are overrepresented in the child protection system (tables 16A.1–4). For further details see the performance indicator 'Disproportionality' under the 'Indicator Results' tab.

Reporting on out-of-home care

National reporting on out-of-home care has been subject to substantial data comparability issues due to variations across jurisdictions in the legislation that determines policies and practices in the out-of-home care system, in particular, relating to children on third-party parental responsibility orders.

Following extensive jurisdictional consultation, Children and Families Secretaries agreed in 2019 to a narrower scope of out-of-home care to better enable comparability in national reporting. The narrower scope is consistent with permanency reforms that consider children on third-party parental responsibility orders as having transitioned from out-of-home care into a permanent and stable arrangement.

Out-of-home care for national reporting is defined as overnight care for children aged less than 18 years who were unable to live with their families due to child safety concerns. This includes:

- placements approved by the Department responsible for child protection for which there is both ongoing case management and financial payment (including where a financial payment has been offered but has been declined by the carer)
- legal (court ordered) and voluntary placements and placements made for the purposes of providing respite for parents or carers.

From 2018-19 data are reported for children in out-of-home care under the new definition. Other living arrangements that were previously included in the scope of out-of-home care are excluded from the count of children in out-of-home care and reported as 'other supported placements'. Supplementary data on the number of children in care, that is, out-of-home care or other supported placements, which aligns with living arrangements that were included in the previous national reporting for out-of-home care, are reported (where available) in data tables until 2018-19.

Reporting against this narrower scope will result in some jurisdictions reporting fewer children in out-of-home care from 2018-19 onwards compared to earlier years. The most significant difference relates to the exclusion of children in third-party parental responsibility arrangements, noting that some jurisdictions have already excluded these children from national reporting on out-of-home care (Victoria from 2017-18, NSW from 2014-15, and WA for all years).

Indicator framework

The performance indicator framework provides information on equity, efficiency and effectiveness, and distinguishes the outputs and outcomes of child protection services.

The performance indicator framework shows which data are complete and comparable in this Report. For data that are not considered directly comparable, text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary. [Section 1](#) discusses data comparability and completeness from a Report-wide perspective. In addition to the contextual information for this service area (see Context tab), the Report's statistical context ([Section 2](#)) contains data that may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this section.

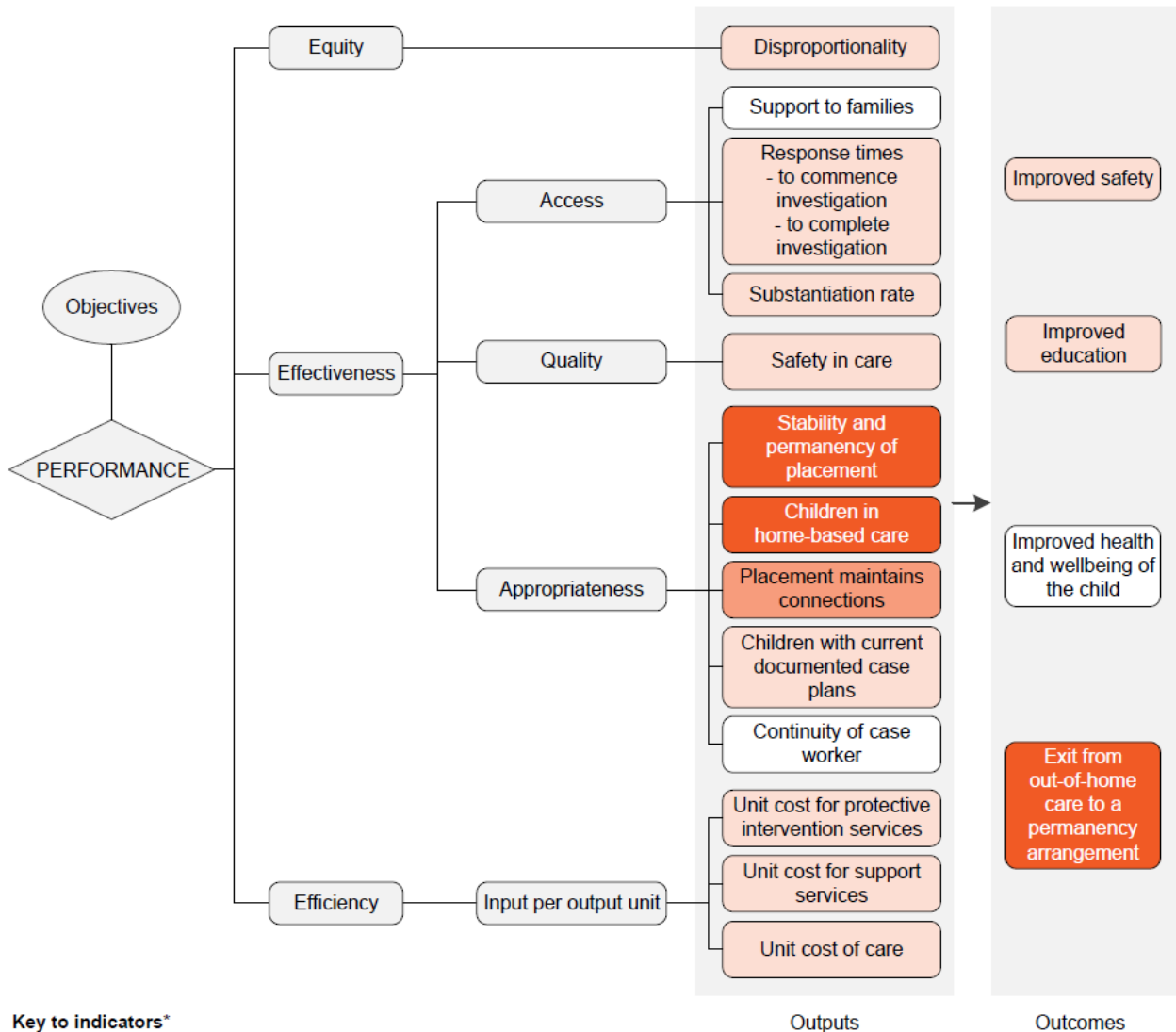
Improvements to performance reporting for child protection services are ongoing and include identifying data sources to fill gaps in reporting for performance indicators and measures, and improving the comparability and completeness of data.

Outputs

Outputs are the services delivered (while outcomes are the impact of these services on the status of an individual or group) (see section 1). Output information is also critical for equitable, efficient and effective management of government services.

Outcomes

Outcomes are the impact of services on the status of an individual or group (see section 1).



Key to indicators*

- Text Most recent data for all measures are comparable and complete
- Text Most recent data for at least one measure are comparable and complete
- Text Most recent data for all measures are either not comparable and/or not complete
- Text No data reported and/or no measures yet developed

* A description of the comparability and completeness of each measure is provided in indicator interpretation boxes within the section

Indicator results

An overview of the Child protection services performance indicator results are presented. Different delivery contexts, locations and types of clients can affect the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of child protection services.

Information to assist the interpretation of these data can be found with the indicators below and all data (footnotes and data sources) are available for download from [Download supporting material](#). Data tables are identified by a '16A' prefix (for example, table 16A.1).

Performance indicator results may differ from similar data included in jurisdictions' annual reports due to different counting rules applied for jurisdictional reports.

All data are available for download as an excel spreadsheet and as a CSV dataset — refer to [Download supporting material](#). Specific data used in figures can be downloaded by clicking in the figure area, navigating to the bottom of the visualisation to the grey toolbar, clicking on the 'Download' icon and selecting 'Data' from the menu. Selecting 'PDF' or 'Powerpoint' from the 'Download' menu will download a static view of the performance indicator results.

1. Disproportionality

'Disproportionality' is an indicator of governments' objective to provide child protection services in an equitable manner.

'Disproportionality' is defined as the extent to which a group's representation in the child protection services system is proportionate to their representation in the child protection services target population (0–17 years). Disproportionality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is calculated by dividing the proportion of children in the child protection system who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by the proportion of children in the target population who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The disproportionality ratio is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Ratio} = \left(\frac{\text{Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system}}{\text{All children in the child protection system}} \right) / \left(\frac{\text{Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the target population [0-17 years]}}{\text{All children in the target population [0-17 years]}} \right)$$

If the group's representation is proportionate to their representation in the target population, the disproportionality ratio will equal 1.0. For example, if five per cent of all children in the child protection system are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and five per cent of all children in the target population (0–17 years) are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, then the disproportionality ratio will be 1.0.

This measure comprises six ratios for components of the child protection services system (see figure 16.1 for a simplified representation of the components):

- notifications
- commencing intensive family support services
- investigations
- substantiations
- care and protection orders
- out of home care.

Disproportionality provides an indication of the extent to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are overrepresented in child protection services. Some of this overrepresentation may be a result of a government's child protection policies and practices resulting in differences in the supports and services delivered based on a group's characteristics. A group's representation should be proportional to their need for supports and services. Higher need may result in necessary disproportionality (that is, a ratio greater than 1.0). If risk factors and need are the same across groups, then neither overrepresentation or underrepresentation is desirable (that is, the disproportionality ratio should be 1.0). Both overrepresentation and underrepresentation can have undesirable consequences.

Disproportionality can reflect the uneven distribution of structural and relative disadvantage throughout the population, in addition to risk factors including economic and social factors, and can indicate a greater need for appropriate supports and services. At the same time, disproportionality can reflect biases in the system that should be avoided.

The six disproportionality ratios might fluctuate because of policy, funding and/or practice changes, such as increased investment in intensive family support and services to divert children from care, better targeting of investigative resources and the introduction of mandatory reporting. Increased community awareness and willingness to notify suspected instances of child abuse, neglect or harm can also influence these ratios.

Identification of Indigenous status may lead to data quality issues for this indicator, in particular underidentification of Indigenous status is likely to result in disproportionality ratios understating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's representation in the child protection system. The disproportionality ratios should be considered in conjunction with data on the proportion of children for whom Indigenous status is not stated, which varies across states and territories (refer to tables 16A.1–3 and 16A.34).

The 2020-21 disproportionality ratios for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children vary within jurisdictions across each of the six service types (figure 16.3 and table 16A.9).

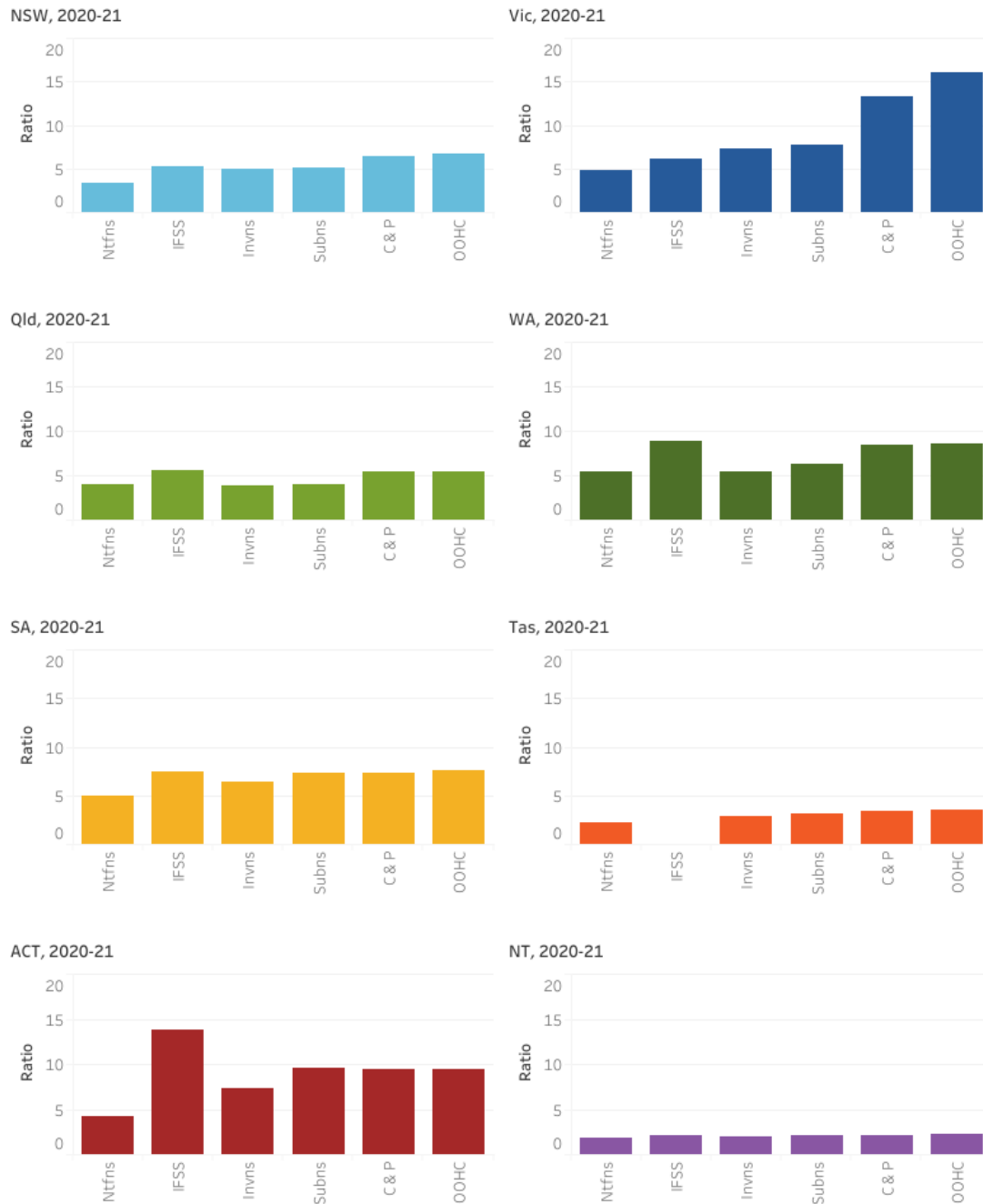
Data are not comparable across jurisdictions but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time (see caveats in data tables).

Data are incomplete for the current reporting period. All required 2020-21 data for intensive family support services are ..

Select year:

2020-21

Figure 16.3 Disproportionality ratios for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by component of child protection service system (a), (b)



Source: Table 16A.9

Ntfns: Notifications; IFSS: Intensive Family Support Services (children commencing); Invns: Investigations (finalised); Subns: Substantiations; C&P: Care and Protection Orders; OOHC: Out-of-home care.

(a) Data are not available for intensive family support services for some jurisdictions for some years, see data table for more informatio..

2. Support to families

'Support to families' is an indicator of governments' objective to support and strengthen families so that children can live in a safe and stable family environment.

'Support to families' is defined as the proportion of families identified as requiring support who receive support.

High or increasing proportions of families who have been identified as requiring support and who receive support is desirable.

Data are not yet available for reporting against this indicator.

3. Response times

'Response times' is an indicator of governments' objective to provide child protection services that are responsive, ensuring that notifications are responded to, and investigations are completed, in a timely and appropriate manner.

'Response times' is defined by two measures:

- response time to *commence* investigations, defined as the proportion of investigations commenced within specified time periods, where the length of time (measured in days) between the date a child protection department records a notification and the date an investigation is subsequently commenced
- response time to *complete* investigations, defined as the proportion of investigations completed within specified time periods, where the length of time (measured in days) between the date a child protection department records a notification and the date an investigation is completed (that is, the date an investigation outcome is determined).

High and increasing proportions of investigations commenced and completed in shorter periods is desirable.

The length of time between recording a notification and commencing an investigation indicates the promptness in responding to child protection concerns. The length of time between recording a notification and completing an investigation indicates the effectiveness of responding to and conducting investigations in a timely manner.

Response times to commence and complete investigations varied across jurisdictions in 2020-21. Nationally, 59.5 per cent of investigations were commenced within seven days of notification (figure 16.4a) and 20.3 per cent of investigations were completed in 28 days or fewer — more than one in five investigations (21.8 per cent) took longer than 90 days to complete (figure 16.4b, tables 16A.10–11).

(all measures) Data are not comparable across jurisdictions or within some jurisdictions over time (see caveats in data tables).

(all measures) Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

Select year(s)

(applies to all figures):

Multiple values

Select Jurisdiction

(applies to figures 16.4b and 16.4d):

NSW

29 days or more

22 to 28 days

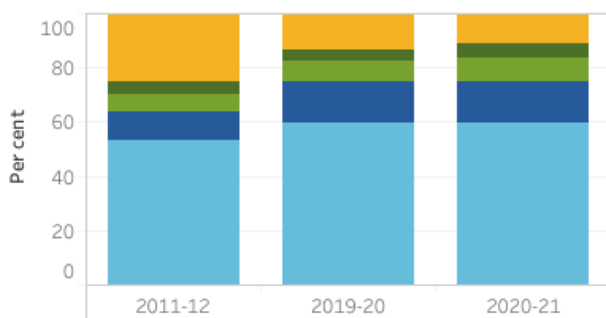
15 to 21 days

8 to 14 days

Up to 7 days

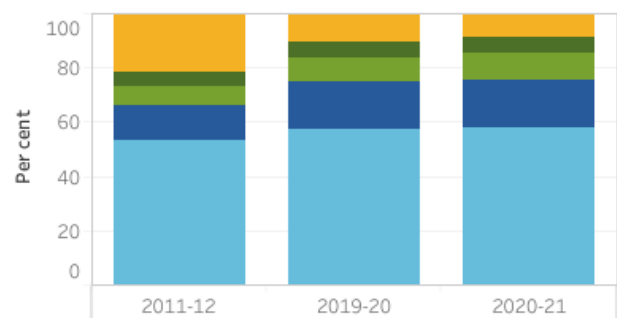
Measure 1: Proportion of investigations commenced, by length of time (a)

Figure 16.4a *Aust*



Source: table 16A.10

Figure 16.4b *NSW*



Source: table 16A.10

(a) Data for NSW were not available for 2017-18.

Measure 2: Proportion of investigations completed, by length of time

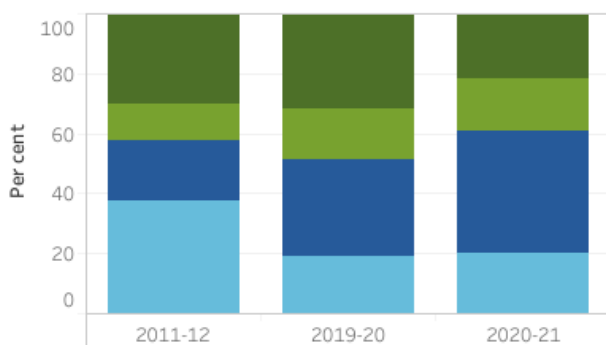
More than 90 days

63 to 90 days

29 to 62 days

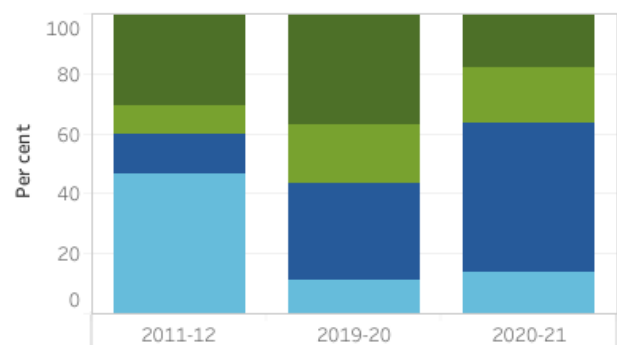
28 days or fewer

Figure 16.4c *Aust*



Source: table 16A.11

Figure 16.4d *NSW (a)*



Source: table 16A.11

(a) Data for NSW were not available for 2017-18.

4. Substantiation rate

'Substantiation rate' is an indicator of governments' objective that child protection services are targeted to children and young people who are at greatest risk.

'Substantiation rate' is defined as the proportion of finalised investigations where abuse or neglect, or risk of abuse or neglect, was confirmed.

The substantiation rate provides an indication of the extent to which services are targeted to those at greatest risk, thereby avoiding the human and financial costs of an investigation where no abuse or neglect had occurred or was at risk of occurring.

Neither a very high nor very low substantiation rate is desirable. A very low substantiation rate might indicate that investigations are not targeted to appropriate cases. A very high substantiation rate might indicate that the criteria for substantiation are unnecessarily bringing 'lower risk' families into the statutory system.

The substantiation rate might fluctuate because of policy, funding and practice changes. For example, targeting investigative resources to more serious cases may mean investigations are more likely to result in substantiation, and there are varying thresholds for recording a substantiation. Mandatory reporting, increased community awareness and willingness to notify suspected instances of child abuse, neglect or harm may also affect the substantiation rate.

The proportion of finalised investigations where abuse or neglect, or risk of abuse or neglect was substantiated varied across jurisdictions and over time (figure 16.5).

■ Data are not comparable across jurisdictions or within some jurisdictions over time (see caveats in data tables).

■ Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

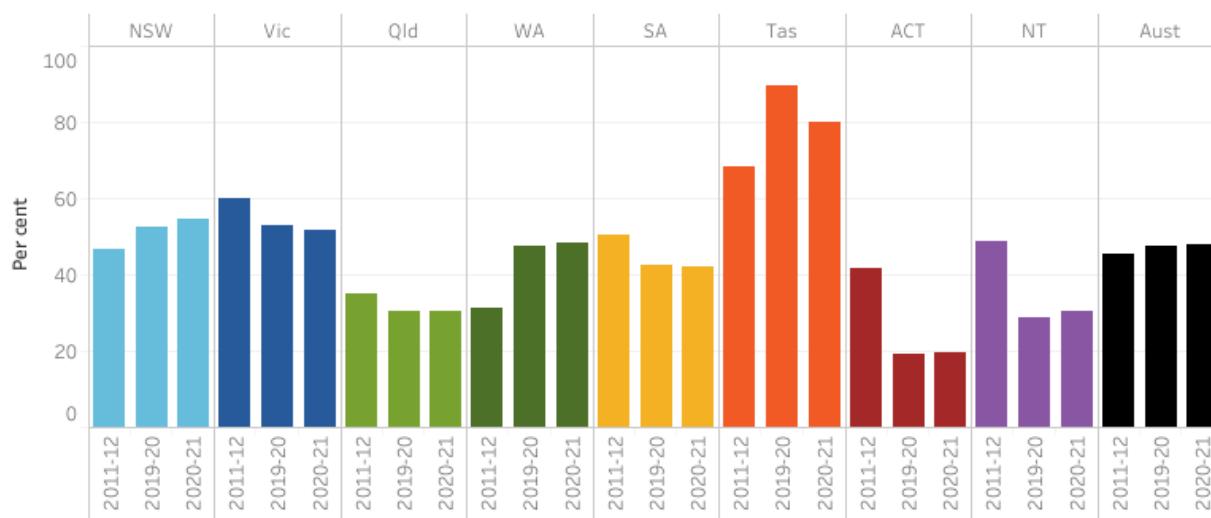
Select year(s):

Multiple values

Jurisdiction

■ NSW ■ Vic ■ Qld ■ WA ■ SA ■ Tas ■ ACT ■ NT ■ Aust

Figure 16.5 Substantiation rate (a)
by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 16A.12

(a) Data for NSW were not available for 2017-18.

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5. Safety in care

'Safety in care' is an indicator of governments' objective to provide quality care for children and young people aged 0–17 years who cannot live with their parents for reasons of safety or family crisis, with an emphasis on safety, stability and permanency in children's living arrangements.

'Safety in care' covers children in out-of-home care and children in other supported placements, and is defined by two measures:

- the proportion of children in care who were the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect (data for this measure are experimental)
- the proportion of children in care who were the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect where the person responsible was living in the household providing out-of-home care.

For the first measure, the person responsible can be anyone who encounters the child while the child is in out-of-home care or other supported placements (that is, not limited to a person living in the household). For the second measure, the person responsible is limited to someone in the household providing out-of-home care or other supported placements.

Low or decreasing proportions of substantiations for both measures is desirable. Care should be taken when interpreting these data as the threshold for substantiating abuse or neglect or risk involving a child in care is generally lower than that for a child in the care of his or her own parents. This is because governments assume a greater duty of care for children removed from the care of their parents for protective reasons.

Data reported for this indicator should be interpreted with caution. Jurisdictions employ different data systems and record keeping methods, which vary in scope (for example, whether data are collected on all, or only particular, care settings) and detail collected (for example, whether the perpetrator is recorded and whether an incident resulted in a substantiation or equivalent). These differences affect the comparability of these data across jurisdictions.

In 2020-21, the proportion of children in care who were the subject of a substantiation of abuse or neglect was less than 5 per cent across all jurisdictions for whom data were available (table 16.1a). The proportion where the person responsible was living in the household was less than 3 per cent across all jurisdictions for whom data were available (table 16.1b).

(all measures) Data are not comparable across jurisdictions or within some jurisdictions over time (see caveats in data tables).

(all measures) Data are incomplete for the current reporting period. All required 2020-21 data are not available for Victoria (who did not provide data for the first measure), and Queensland and the NT (who did not provide data for the second measure).

Select year(s) (applies to tables 16.1a and 16.1b):

Multiple values

Table 16.1a Measure 1: Children in care who were the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse; physical abuse; emotional abuse or neglect (a)
by jurisdiction, by year

		NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
2020-21	%	4.6	na	1.7	2.8	3.2	1.6	1.2	3.1
2019-20	%	3.5	na	1.6	1.7	4.0	0.5	2.3	0.9
2011-12	%	6.0	na	3.7	1.9	na	2.1	2.0	1.9

Source: table 16A.13
na Not available.

Table 16.1b Measure 2: Children in care who were the subject of a substantiation and the person responsible was in the household providing out-of-home care (a)
by jurisdiction, by year

		NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
2020-21	%	2.9	1.8	na	0.1	0.6	1.6	0.7	na
2019-20	%	3.0	1.2	na	-	0.4	0.5	2.1	na
2011-12	%	0.3	1.0	na	0.3	0.3	na	1.0	na

Source: table 16A.14
na Not available. - Nil or rounded to zero.

6. Stability and permanency of placement

'Stability and permanency of placement' is a partial indicator of governments' objective to provide quality care for children and young people aged 0–17 years who cannot live with their parents for reasons of safety or family crisis, with an emphasis on safety, stability and permanency in children's living arrangements.

'Stability and permanency of placement' is defined by two measures:

- the proportion of children on an order exiting out-of-home care who had one or two placements during a period of continuous out-of-home care, by length of care (less than 12 months, and 12 months or more)
- the proportion of children in out-of-home care for two or more years who have had one or two placements in the last two years.

High proportions of children exiting out-of-home care, or who have been in out-of-home care for two or more years, who had one or two placements, is desirable. But this must be considered in conjunction with other placement indicators.

Children can have multiple placements for appropriate reasons (for example, an initial placement followed by a longer-term placement) or it may be desirable to change placements to achieve better compatibility between a child and family, or to achieve a permanent care arrangement for the child. It is not desirable for a child to stay in an unsatisfactory or unsupportive placement. In addition, older children are more likely to have multiple placements as they move towards independence and voluntarily seek alternate placements. And children who have been in out-of-home care for a long period are more likely to have multiple placements as they transition to a permanent care arrangement once it has been determined that they cannot live with their parents.

Data for children exiting out-of-home care are only for children who were on orders and who exited out-of-home care during the reporting period. There are limitations to counting placement stability and permanency using a cohort of children on exit from care rather than longitudinally tracking a cohort of children on their entry into care. An exit cohort is biased to children who stay a relatively short time in care and thus are more likely to have experienced fewer placements. In addition, the data for children exiting out-of-home care do not distinguish between long- and short-term orders. Long-term orders can indicate legal permanency of placement, though a child may still experience multiple placements while subject to a long-term order.

Nationally (excluding Tasmania) in 2020-21, 88.6 per cent of children on a care and protection order who exited out-of-home care within 12 months experienced one or two placements (figure 16.6a). For children who had been in out-of-home care 12 months or more this proportion was 54.3 per cent nationally (table 16A.15). To assist with the interpretation of this indicator, table 16A.16 details the length of time children spent in continuous out-of-home care for all children in out-of-home care, while table 16A.18 details the length of time in continuous out-of-home care for children who exited out-of-home care.

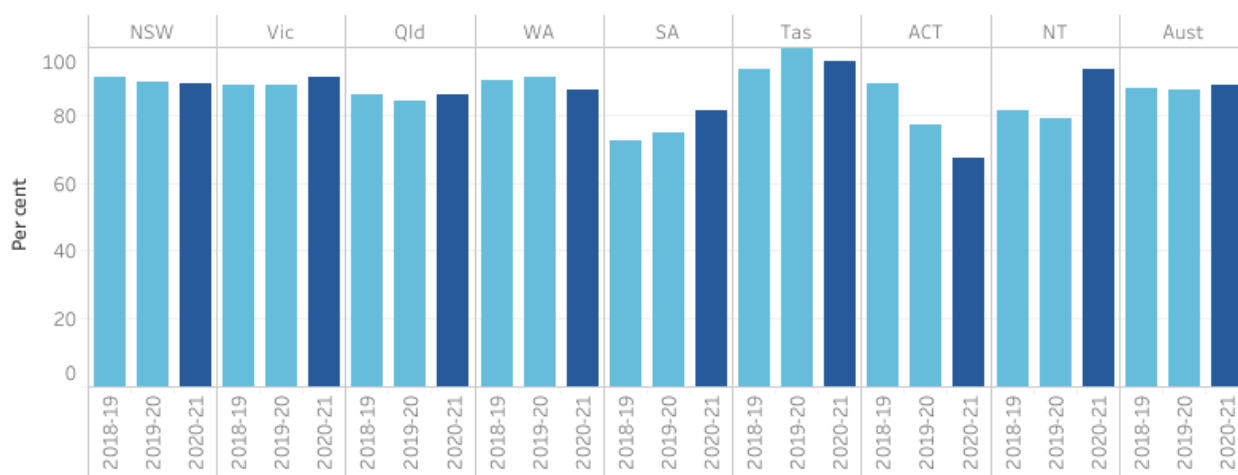
Nationally in 2020-21, 86.9 per cent of children who have been in out-of-home care for two years or more have had one or two placements in the last two years (figure 16.6b).

- (all measures) Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time (from 2018-19 onwards).
- (all measures) Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

Select length of care (applies to figure 16.6a):

- Less than 12 months in care
- 12 months or more in care

Figure 16.6a Measure 1: Children on a care and protection order and exiting out-of-home care who had one or two placements, less than 12 months in care (a) by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 16A.15

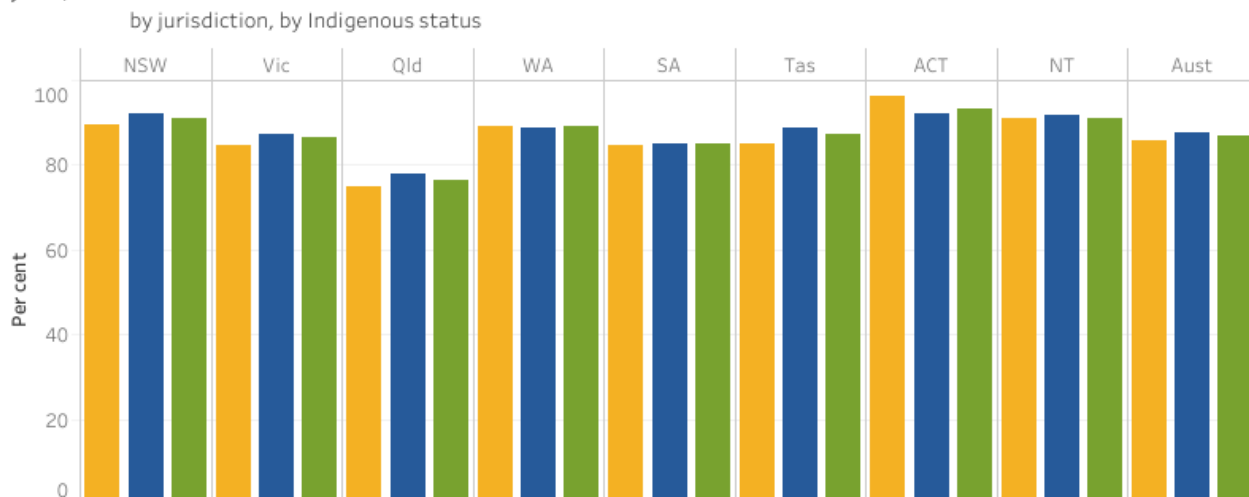
(a) The Australian total for 2020-21 for the 'less than 12 months in care' measure does not include Tasmania because Tasmania provided a derived proportion (the numerator and denominator were suppressed), meaning Tasmanian data could not be included in the computation of the Australian total.

Select year (applies to figure 16.6b):

- 2021
- 2020

- All people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Non-Indigenous people

Figure 16.6b Measure 2: Children in out-of-home care at 30 June for 2 years or more in care with 1-2 placements in the last two years, 2021 by jurisdiction, by Indigenous status



Source: table 16A.17

7. Children in home-based care

'Children in home-based care' is an indicator of governments' objective to provide services that meet the needs of individual children and young people in the child protection system.

'Children in home-based care' is defined as the proportion of children in out-of-home care who are in home-based care.

A high or increasing proportion of children in out-of-home care who are placed in home-based care is desirable.

Placing children in home-based care is generally considered to be in their best interests, particularly for younger children. Children will generally make better developmental progress in family settings than in residential or institutional care environments.

Nationally at 30 June 2021, 91.1 per cent of children in out-of-home care were in home-based care — 96.9 per cent for children aged less than 12 years, and 80.8 per cent for children aged 12–17 years (figure 16.7). Nationally, proportions were similar for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Indigenous children (table 16A.19). To assist with the interpretation of this indicator, table 16A.20 details the type of out-of-home care by Indigenous status.

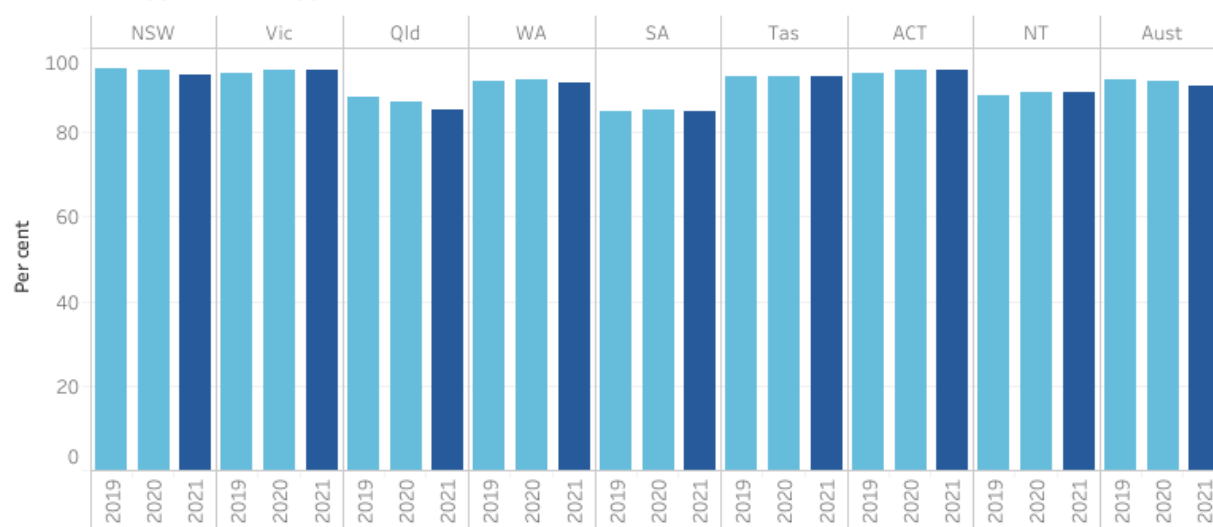
■ Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time (from 2018-19 onwards).

■ Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

Select age group:

- 0-17 years old
 12-17 years old
 <12 years old

Figure 16.7 Proportion of children (0-17 years old) in out-of-home care in home-based care by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 16A.19

8. Placement maintains connections

'Placement maintains connections' is an indicator of governments' objective to provide services that meet the needs of individual children and young people in the child protection system.

'Placement maintains connections' is defined by four measures:

- placement with relatives or kin – the proportion of all children in out-of-home care who are placed with relatives or kin who receive government financial assistance to care for that child
- placement in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle – the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who are placed with the child's extended family, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- local placement – the proportion of children in out-of-home care attending the same school that they attended before entering out-of-home care
- placement with sibling – the proportion of children who are on orders and in out-of-home care at 30 June who have siblings also on orders and in out-of-home care, who are placed with at least one of their siblings.

High or increasing rates for all four measures are desirable, though a placement decision needs to consider all factors regarding the child's safety and wellbeing and therefore may involve weighing up the measures separately. Placing children so that connections with family, kin and/or community can be maintained or enhanced is generally the preferred out-of-home care placement option due to the increased continuity, familiarity and stability for the child, and the association with improved long-term outcomes. However, placements with family, kin and/or community may not always be the best option.

The measure 'placement in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle' should be interpreted with care as it is a proxy, reporting the placement outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children rather than compliance with the principle.

Identification of Indigenous status may lead to data quality issues for this indicator, in particular high rates of Indigenous status not stated are likely to affect the results.

Data for the measures 'local placement' and 'placement with sibling' (measures 3 and 4) are under development and are not available for this Report.

Nationally at 30 June 2021, the proportion of children in out-of-home care who were placed with relatives or kin was 53.7 per cent, with the proportion similar for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (53.5 per cent) and non-Indigenous children (53.9 per cent) (figure 16.8a).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle comprises five domains; prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection (SNAICC 2013; DSS 2015). The placement domain specifies the following priorities:

- placement with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander relatives or extended family members, or other relatives or extended family members
- placement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-based carers.

If the preferred options are not available, the child may be placed with a non-Indigenous carer or in a residential setting. If the child is not placed with their extended Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

family, the placement must be within close geographic proximity to the child's family. All jurisdictions have adopted the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle in both legislation and policy.

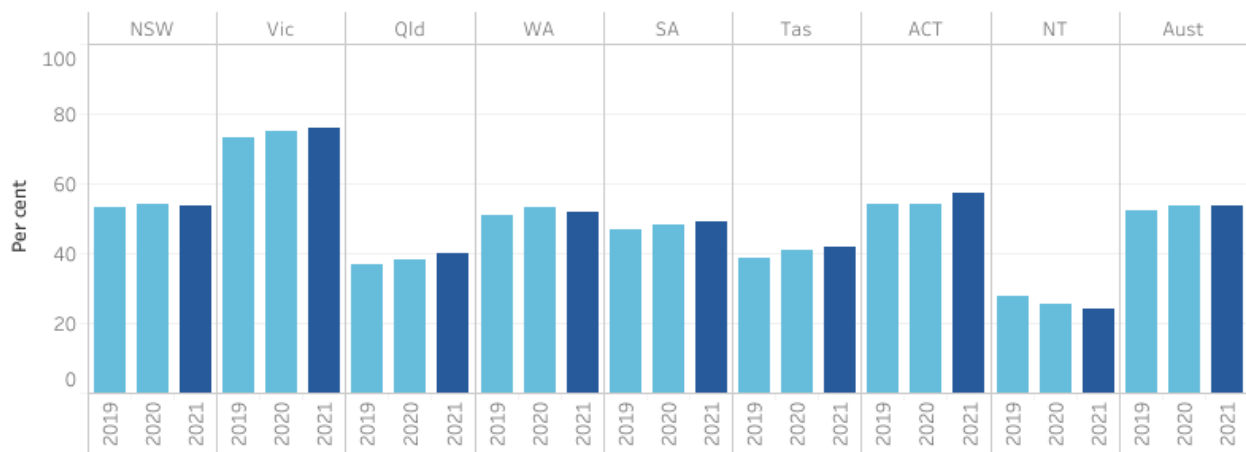
Nationally at 30 June 2021, 63.8 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were placed either with relatives/kin (54.3 per cent) or with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-based carers (9.5 per cent) (figure 16.8b). The calculation of this measure differs to that for figure 16.8a as it excludes those in independent living and unknown living arrangements.

- (all measures) Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.
- (all measures) Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

Select Indigenous status:

- All people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Non-Indigenous people

Figure 16.8a Measure 1: Proportion of children placed with relative/kin, all children in out-of-home care at 30 June by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 16A.21

- Other
- Other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carer
- Relative/kin

Figure 16.8b Measure 2: Placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care at 30 June, by relationship with caregiver (a), (b) by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 16A.22

(a) 'Other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carer' includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers who are not relatives/kin. 'Other' includes children not placed with relatives/kin or another Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander carer. (b) Tasmania's data on children placed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers who are not relatives/kin was not provided in 2020.

9. Children with current documented case plans

'Children with current documented case plans' is an indicator of governments' objective to provide services that meet the needs of individual children and young people in the child protection system.

'Children with current documented case plans' is defined as the number of children who have a current documented and approved case plan as a proportion of all children who are required to have a current documented and approved case plan.

A case plan is an individualised, dynamic written plan (or support agreement) developed between a family and an agency based on an assessment process. A current documented case plan is one that has been approved and/or reviewed within the previous 12 months.

A high or increasing rate of children with current documented case plans is desirable.

The indicator does not assess the quality of case plans, nor the extent to which identified needs and actions are put into place. These factors should be taken into account when considering the results reported for this indicator.

Nationally (excluding the ACT), 88.8 per cent of children required to have a current documented and approved case plan, had such a plan at 30 June 2021 (figure 16.9).

Data are not comparable across jurisdictions but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time.

Data are incomplete for the current reporting period. All required 2020-21 data are not available for the ACT.

Select year(s):

Multiple values

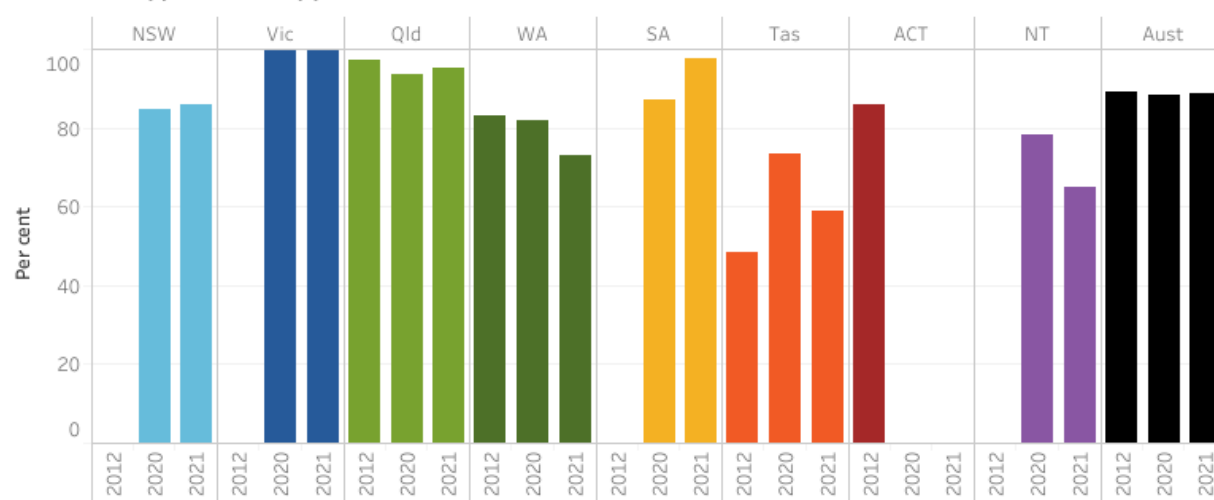
Select Indigenous status:

- All people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Non-Indigenous people

Jurisdiction

NSW Vic Qld WA SA Tas ACT NT Aust

Figure 16.9 Proportion of all children with a current documented case plan; at 30 June (a)
by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 16A.23

(a) See data tables for information on non-publication of data for individual jurisdictions.

10. Continuity of case worker

'Continuity of case worker' is an indicator of governments' objective to provide quality care for children and young people aged 0–17 years who cannot live with their parents for reasons of safety or family crisis, with an emphasis on safety, stability and permanency in children's living arrangements.

'Continuity of case worker' is defined as the proportion of children in out-of-home care who have one caseworker assigned during the reporting period.

A high or increasing percentage of children in out-of-home care who have one caseworker assigned during the reporting period is desirable.

Data are not yet available for reporting against this indicator.

11. Unit costs for protective intervention services activity groups

'Unit costs for protective intervention services activity groups' is reported as an indicator of governments' objective to provide child protection services in an efficient manner.

'Unit costs for protective intervention services activity groups' is defined as total recurrent expenditure on a child protection activity, divided by the relevant units of service activity, resulting in six measures:

- cost per report to child protection (AG1)
- cost per notification (AG1)
- cost per notification investigated (AG4)
- cost per child commencing protective intervention and coordination services who is not on an order (AG5)
- cost per order issued (AG6)
- cost per child commencing protective intervention and coordination services who is on an order (AG7).

Low or decreasing expenditure per child protection activity can suggest more efficient services, but could also indicate lower quality and should be considered together with the results for other indicators in this section.

Data for unit costs are experimental and should be considered together with the proportional allocation of total expenditure across all activity groups comprising the pathways method.

Child protection reports are not a separate process from child protection notifications in Victoria and the ACT and data for the cost per report to child protection measure are not applicable for those jurisdictions.

Unit costs for child protection intervention service activities from 2013-14 to 2020-21 varied across jurisdictions where data were available (figure 16.10). In 2020-21, the cost per report to child protection ranged from \$185 to \$380 (this unit cost is not applicable for all jurisdictions); and the cost per notification investigated ranged from \$610 to \$5241. Other unit costs are reported in tables 16A.24–31.

(all measures) Data are not comparable across jurisdictions but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time.

(all measures) Data are incomplete for the current reporting period. Required 2020-21 data for at least one of the measures for this indicator are not available for Victoria, SA, Tasmania and the NT.

Select measure:

- AG1: Cost per report to child protection
 AG1: Cost per notification
 AG4: Cost per notification investigated
 AG5: Cost per child receiving protective intervention and coordination services who is not on an order
 AG6: Cost per order issued
 AG7: Cost per child receiving protective intervention and coordination services who is on an order

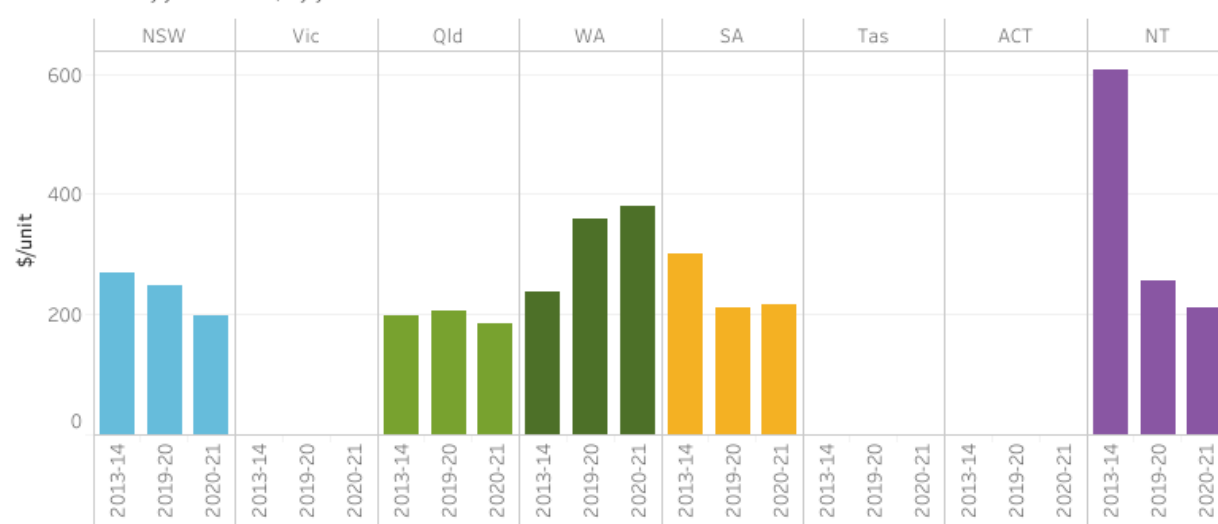
Select year(s):

Multiple values

Jurisdiction

NSW
 Vic
 Qld
 WA
 SA
 Tas
 ACT
 NT

Figure 16.10 AG1: Cost per report to child protection (2020-21 dollars) (a)
by jurisdiction, by year



Source: tables 16A.24-31

(a) See data tables for information on non-publication of data for individual jurisdictions.

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12. Unit cost for support services

'Unit cost for support services' is reported as an indicator of governments' objective to provide child protection services in an efficient manner.

'Unit cost for support services' is defined as total recurrent expenditure on support services, divided by the number of children receiving support services, resulting in two measures:

- cost per child receiving family support services (AG2)
- cost per child receiving intensive family support services (AG3)

Low or decreasing cost per child receiving support services can suggest more efficient services, but could also indicate lower quality and should be considered together with the results for other indicators in this section.

To be included in the Intensive family support services data, services must meet specific criteria, such as averaging at least 4 hours of service provision per week for a specified short-term period (usually less than six months).

Data for unit costs are experimental and should be considered together with the proportional allocation of total expenditure across all activity groups comprising the pathways method.

Data are available for Australian Government expenditure on intensive family support services. This relates to the expenditure on services in the NT and a small amount in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands in SA.

Nationally in 2020-21, the cost per child receiving intensive family support services was \$8932 (figure 16.11).

(all measures) Data are not comparable across jurisdictions but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time (see caveats in data tables).

(measure 1) Data are incomplete for the current reporting period for family support services. Only Queensland and WA are able to provide all required 2020-21 data for cost per child receiving family support services (AG2).

(measure 2) Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period for intensive family support services (AG3).

Select measure:

- AG2: Cost per child receiving family support services
- AG3: Cost per child receiving intensive family support services

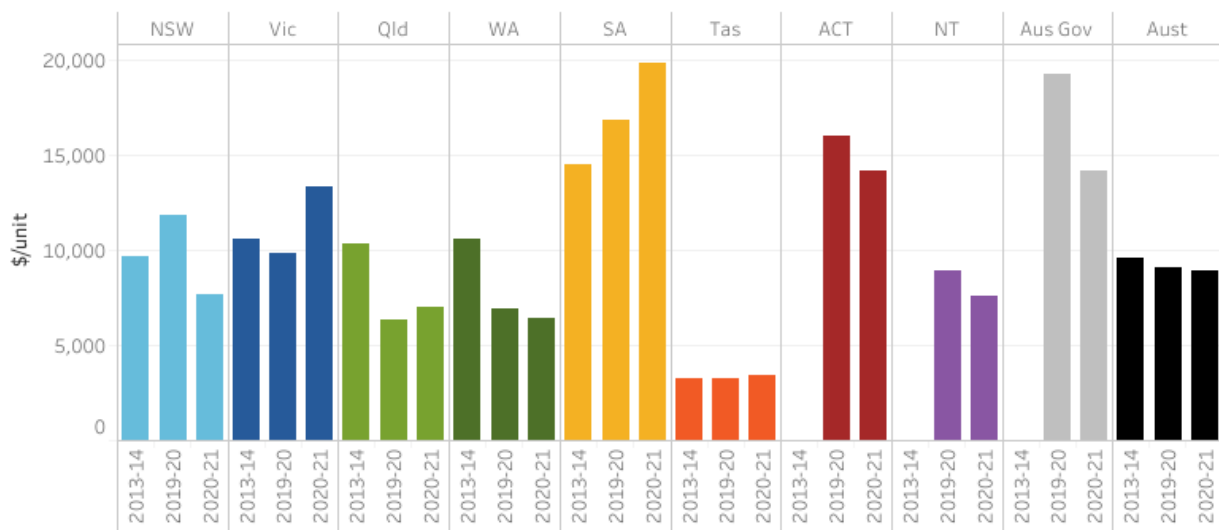
Select year(s):

Multiple values

Jurisdiction

- NSW
- Vic
- Qld
- WA
- SA
- Tas
- ACT
- NT
- Aus Gov
- Aust

Figure 16.11 AG3: Cost per child receiving intensive family support services (2020-21 dollars) (a)
by jurisdiction, by year



Source: tables 16A.24-16A.33

(a) See data tables for information on non-publication of data for individual jurisdictions.

13. Unit cost of care

'Unit cost of care' is an indicator of governments' objective to provide child protection services in an efficient manner.

'Unit cost of care' covers children in out-of-home care and children in other supported placements, and is defined as total real recurrent expenditure on out-of-home care services and other supported placements, divided by the total number of placement nights (AG8).

Low or decreasing expenditure per placement night can suggest more efficient services, but could also indicate lower quality and should be considered with the results for other indicators here.

Data for unit costs are experimental and should be considered together with the proportional allocation of total expenditure across all activity groups comprising the pathways method.

Nationally in 2020-21, the unit cost of care was \$254 and this continues the annual increases over the 10 years of reported data (figure 16.12).

Cost per placement night in care services should be considered in conjunction with expenditure on care services per child (and by placement type). The annual cost per child in care at 30 June 2021 varied across jurisdictions ranging between \$60 408 and \$128 918. In jurisdictions where data were available, annual costs were considerably higher for residential care (ranging between \$455 480 and \$881 113 compared to non-residential care (ranging between \$41 358 and \$54 460) (table 16A.36).

- Data are not comparable across jurisdictions but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time.
- Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period.

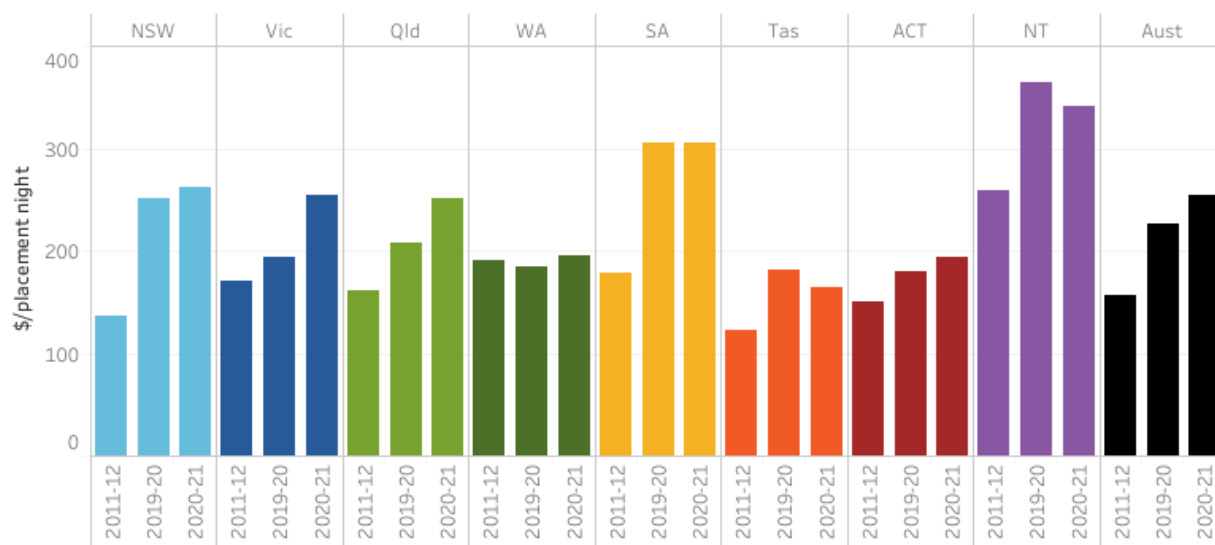
Select year(s):

Multiple values

Jurisdiction

■ NSW
 ■ Vic
 ■ Qld
 ■ WA
 ■ SA
 ■ Tas
 ■ ACT
 ■ NT
 ■ Aust

Figure 16.12 Real expenditure on care services per placement night (2020-21 dollars) by jurisdiction, by year



Source: table 16A.35



11a–13a. Interpreting costs data

Efficiency indicators for child protection services are calculated using the pathways model, a top-down activity-based costing method. Eight national pathways provide a high-level representation of the services that children and families could receive in any jurisdiction. Each pathway consists of common activity groups, which act as the ‘building blocks’ for each of the pathways. The aggregate cost of each activity group within the pathway will allow the unit cost of an individual pathway to be derived. Figure 16.13 shows how unit costs are calculated in accordance with the pathways model.

The activity groups and detailed definitions are included in the ‘key terms and references’ tab. Development of national reporting against these activity groups is ongoing and data are experimental.

		NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Superannuation	Included	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Method	Accrual	Accrual	Accrual	Actuals	Accrual	Actuals	Actuals	Accrual
Workers compensation	Included	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Payroll tax	Included	✓	✓	✓	✓
Termination leave	Included	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Method	Actuals	Accrual	Accrual	Actuals	Accrual	Actuals	Accrual	Accrual
Long service leave	Included	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✘
	Method	Actuals	Accrual	Accrual	Accrual	Accrual	Actuals	Accrual	..
Sick leave	Included	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Method	Actuals	Actual	Actuals	Actuals	Actuals	Actuals	Actuals	Actuals
Depreciation	Included	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rent	Included	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Utilities	Included	✓	✓, but not shown separately	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Umbrella department costs	Included	na	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Method	na	Dept formula	Dept formula	FTE	Dept formula	Dept formula	FTE / budget	Dept formula

Dept = Departmental

na Not available. ✓ Item included. ✗ Item not included. . . . Not applicable.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished).

14. Improved safety – substantiation rate after decision not to substantiate

'Improved safety' is an indicator of governments' objective to protect children and young people who are at risk of abuse and neglect within their families, or whose families do not have the capacity to provide care and protection.

'Improved safety' is defined by two measures:

- substantiation rate *after a decision not to substantiate*, defined as the proportion of children who were the subject of an investigation in the previous financial year that led to a decision not to substantiate, and who were later the subject of a substantiation within 3 or 12 months of the initial decision not to substantiate. The year reported relates to the year of the initial decision not to substantiate
- substantiation rate *after a prior substantiation*, defined as the proportion of children who were the subject of a substantiation in the previous financial year, who were subsequently the subject of a further substantiation within the following 3 or 12 months. The year reported relates to the year of the initial substantiation.

Low or decreasing rates for these measures are desirable. However, reported results can be affected by the finalisation of investigations, factors beyond the control of child protection services, or a change in circumstances after the initial decision not to substantiate was made. A demonstrable risk of abuse or neglect might not have existed in the first instance. In addition, this indicator does not distinguish between subsequent substantiations that are related to the initial notification (that is, the same source of risk of abuse or neglect) and those that are unrelated to the initial notification (that is, a different source of risk of abuse or neglect). This indicator partly reveals the extent to which an investigation has not succeeded in identifying the risk of abuse or neglect to a child who is subsequently the subject of a substantiation. It also provides a measure of the adequacy of interventions offered to children to protect them from further abuse or neglect. This indicator should be considered with other outcome indicators.

Varying thresholds for recording a substantiation across jurisdictions should also be considered when interpreting data for this indicator (see 'Key terms and references' tab).

The proportion of substantiations that occurred within 3 and 12 months of a *decision not to substantiate* in 2019-20 was under 8 per cent and 17 per cent respectively in all jurisdictions (figure 16.14). The proportion of substantiations that occurred within 3 and 12 months of a *prior substantiation* in 2019-20 was under 11 per cent and 24 per cent respectively in all jurisdictions (table 16A.38).

(all measures) Data are not comparable across jurisdictions but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time.

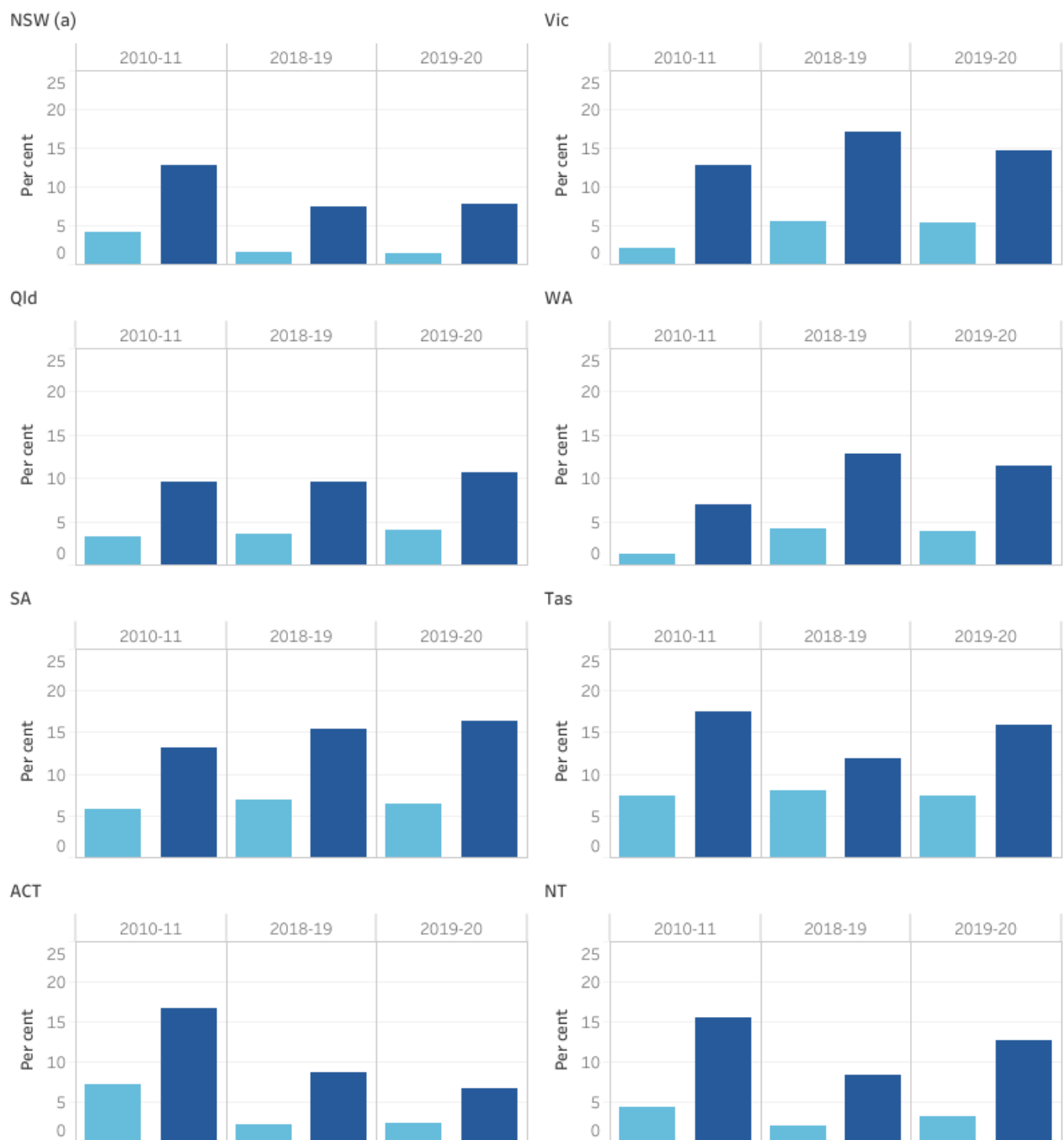
Figure 16.14, select measure:

- Children who were the subject of a decision not to substantiate and who were also the subject of a subsequent substantiation
- Children who were the subject of a substantiation and who were also the subject of a subsequent substantiation

Select year(s):

Multiple values

- Subject of a substantiation within three months
- Subject of a substantiation within 12 months



Source: table 16A.37

(a) Data for NSW for 2016-17 and 2017-18 were not available.

15. Improved education

'Improved education' is an indicator of governments' objective to support children and young people in the child protection system to reach their potential.

'Improved education' is defined as the proportion of children on guardianship and custody orders achieving at or above national minimum standards in reading and numeracy in Year 5.

A high or increasing rate of children on guardianship and custody orders achieving at or above national minimum standards in reading and numeracy, and relative to all children, is desirable.

Factors outside the control of child protection services have an influence on the educational outcomes of children on guardianship and custody orders, and care should be exercised when interpreting results.

When interpreting NAPLAN (National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy) data, it is important to take into account student participation rates (table 16A.37). Children exempted from NAPLAN testing are recorded as not having met the national minimum standards in reading and numeracy. Experimental data indicate that children on guardianship and custody orders are exempted from NAPLAN testing at significantly higher rates than the general student population, which might contribute to poorer reported NAPLAN results for children on orders, compared with the general student population.

Over the period from 2013 (the only year for which data are available for all jurisdictions) to 2019, the proportions of children in care at or above the national minimum standards for Year 5 reading and numeracy varied across jurisdictions. In 2019, the proportions were below the proportions for all students by at least 17 percentage points for the jurisdictions for which data were available (figure 16.15).

■ Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.

■ Data are incomplete for the current reporting period. Only Queensland, WA and SA were able to provide data for the 2019 reporting period.

Select year(s):

2019

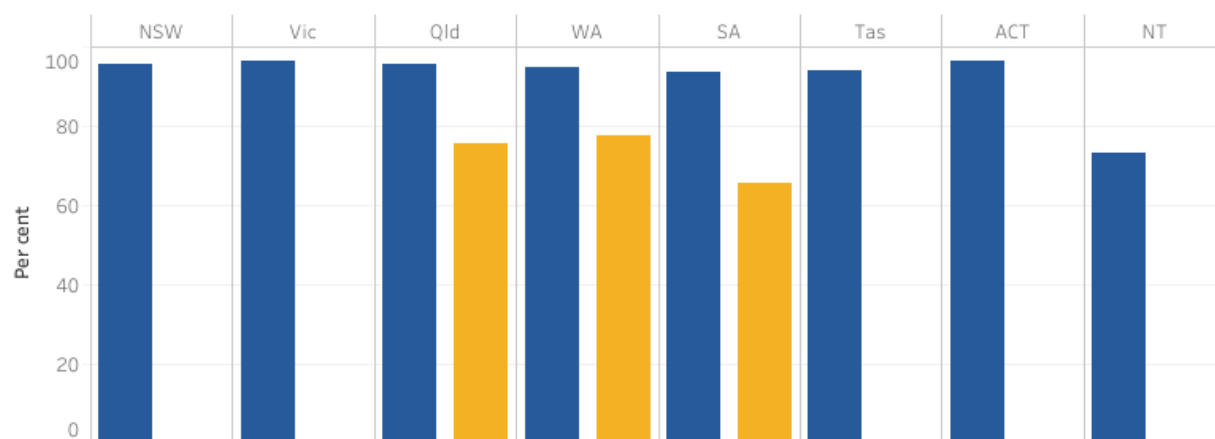
Select educational outcome:

○ Reading
● Numeracy

■ All students

■ Children on orders

Figure 16.15 Proportion at or above the national minimum standard, numeracy, 2019 (a)
by jurisdiction, all students & children on orders



Source: table 16A.39

(a) See data tables for information on non-publication of data for individual jurisdictions.

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16. Improved health and wellbeing of the child

'Improved health and wellbeing of the child' is an indicator of governments' objective to support children and young people in the child protection system to reach their potential.

'Improved health and wellbeing of the child' is currently defined by one measure related to *wellbeing*: the proportion of children and young people in the child protection system not classified in the 'abnormal' range on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scale. See 'Key terms and references' tab for further information on the SDQ.

A high or increasing percentage of children and young people in the child protection system with improved wellbeing is desirable. Data are not yet available for reporting against this measure.

A measure of improved *health* of the child is still to be developed.

17. Exit from out-of-home care to a permanency arrangement

'Exit from out-of-home care to a permanency arrangement' is an indicator of governments' objective to protect children and young people who are at risk of abuse and neglect within their families or whose families do not have the capacity to provide care and protection.

'Exit from out-of-home care to a permanency arrangement' is defined as the number of children and young people who exited out-of-home care to a permanency outcome (reunified with their families, adopted or placed on third party parental responsibility orders), and for whom there was no return to

out-of-home care within 12 months, as a proportion of all children who exited out-of-home care to a permanency outcome in the previous reporting period.

High or increasing proportions of children and young people exiting out-of-home care to a permanency outcome for whom there was no return to out-of-home care is desirable.

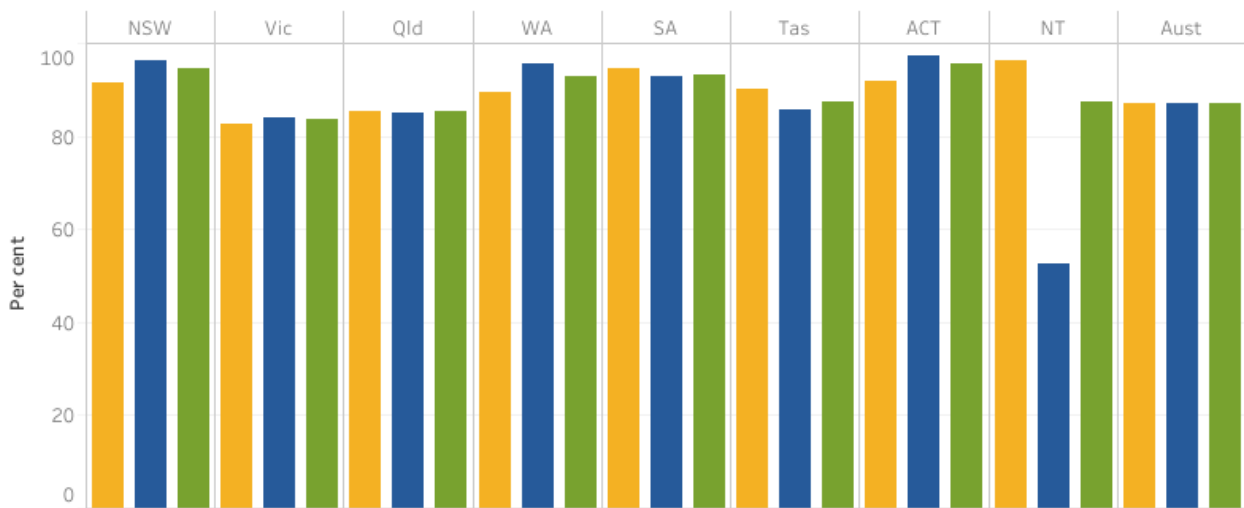
Nationally, 87.2 per cent of children who left out-of-home care to a permanency arrangement in 2019-20 did not return to out-of-home care in the following 12 months (figure 16.16).

- Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.
- Data are complete for the current reporting period.

Select year:
2019-20

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Non-Indigenous people
- All people

Figure 16.16 Proportion of children exiting out-of-home care to a permanency arrangement who did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months, 2019-20 (a)
by jurisdiction, by Indigenous status



Source: table 16A.40

(a) Data for NSW and Queensland were not available prior to 2018-19.

Indigenous data

Performance indicator data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this section are available in the data tables listed below. Further supporting information can be found in the 'Indicator results' tab and data tables.

Child protection services data disaggregated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Table number	Table title
Table 16A.9	Disproportionality ratios for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years
Table 16A.17	Children aged 2–17 years in out-of-home care for two years or more, by Indigenous status, at 30 June, by Indigenous status
Table 16A.19	Children in care and in a home-based placement, by Indigenous status, by age, at 30 June
Table 16A.21	Children aged 0–17 years in care placed with relatives/kin, by Indigenous status, at 30 June
Table 16A.22	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years in care by relationship of caregiver, at 30 June
Table 16A.23	Children aged 0–17 years with documented case plans, by Indigenous status, at 30 June
Table 16A.40	Children aged 0–16 years exiting out-of-home care to a permanency arrangement, by Indigenous status

Key terms and references

Key terms

Term	Definition
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person	Person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as being an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community with which he or she lives.
Activity Group 1 (pathways) Receipt and assessment of initial information about a potential protection or support issue	Activities that are typically associated with receipt and assessment of initial information including receipt and recording of information, review of department databases, initial assessment of information and decisions about the appropriate response. This activity can also include consultation, with possible provision of advice. Activities by non-government organisations (NGOs) may be included if appropriate.
Activity Group 2 (pathways) Provision of generic family support services	Activities that are typically associated with provision of lower level family support services at various stages including identification of family needs, provision of support services and diversionary services, some counselling and active linking of the family to support networks. Services are funded by government but can be delivered by either the relevant agency or a NGO. This bundle of services does not involve planned follow-up by the relevant agency after initial service delivery. The services will be delivered under voluntary arrangements between the relevant agency and family. Clients may receive these services more than once.
Activity Group 3 (pathways) Provision of intensive family support services	Activities that are typically associated with provision of complex or intensive family support services including provision of therapeutic and in-home supports such as counselling and mediation, modelling of positive parenting strategies, referrals to intensive support services that may be provided by NGOs, advocacy on behalf of clients, and intensive support for a family in a residential setting and/or supported accommodation. These services may be provided if other diversionary services are inappropriate to the case and may lead to statutory services being provided to the client.

Term	Definition
<p>Activity Group 4 (pathways)</p> <p>Secondary information gathering and assessment</p>	<p>Activities that are typically associated with secondary information gathering and assessment are currently counted as 'investigations' in the Report on Government Services. As part of this activity group a decision may be made to substantiate or not substantiate. Information gathering activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sighting the child • contacting people with relevant information about the child or family (for example, teachers, police, support services) • interviewing the child, sibling(s) and parents • observing family interactions • obtaining assessments of the child and/or family • conducting family group conferences • liaising with agencies providing services to the child and family • recording a substantiation or non-substantiation decision • case conferences with partners and contributors in the investigation and assessment process.
<p>Activity Group 5 (pathways)</p> <p>Provision of short-term protective intervention and coordination services for children not on an order</p>	<p>Activities that are typically associated with provision of short-term protective intervention and coordination services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with the family to address protective issues • developing networks of support for the child • monitoring and reviewing the safety of the child • monitoring and reviewing family progress against case planning goals • case conferences with agencies providing services to the child and/or family, internal discussions and reviews • specialist child-focused therapeutic support.

Term	Definition
<p>Activity Group 6 (pathways)</p> <p>Seeking an order</p>	<p>Activities that are typically associated with seeking orders (court orders or voluntary/administrative orders) including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparing applications for the order • preparing reports for the court • obtaining assessment reports to submit to the court • informing parties to the court proceedings, including parents, the child, and lawyers • informing and briefing legal counsel or internal court groups • going through internal pre-court review processes • attending court • conducting family group conferences.
<p>Activity Group 7 (pathways)</p> <p>Provision of protective intervention, support and coordination services for children on an order</p>	<p>Activities that are typically associated with provision of longer-term protective intervention and coordination services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitoring the child or young person's progress and development (for example, social development and education progress) and undertaking activities that facilitate progress and development • meeting any specific requirements of any court order • reviewing appropriateness of the order for the circumstances of the child or young person. This usually occurs at intervals established by the court or in legislation • reporting back to court • long term cases involving out-of-home care.
<p>Activity Group 8 (pathways)</p> <p>Provision of care services</p>	<p>Activities that are typically associated with provision of out-of-home care and other supported placements services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finding suitable placement(s) for the child • assisting the child or young person to maintain contact with his/her family • in some cases, staff payments for recruiting and training carers • assessing suitability of potential kinship carers • assisting the child or young person to maintain contact with their family • working to return the child home • assisting the child or young person as they prepare to leave care as the end of the order approaches.

Term	Definition
Care and protection orders	<p>Care and protection orders are legal orders or arrangements that give child protection departments some responsibility for a child's welfare. The scope of departmental involvement mandated by a care and protection order is dependent on the type of order, and can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsibility for overseeing the actions of the person or authority caring for the child • reporting or giving consideration to the child's welfare (for example, regarding the child's education, health, religion, accommodation and financial matters). <p>Types of care and protection orders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalised guardianship or custody orders – involve the transfer of legal guardianship to the relevant state or territory department or NGO. These orders involve considerable intervention in a child's life and that of his or her family, and are sought only as a last resort. Guardianship orders convey responsibility for the welfare of a child to a guardian. Guardianship orders do not necessarily grant the right to the daily care and control of a child, or the right to make decisions about the daily care and control of a child, which are granted under custody orders. Custody orders generally refer to orders that place children in the custody of the state or territory, or department responsible for child protection or NGO. These orders usually involve the child protection department being responsible for the daily care and requirements of a child, while his or her parent retains legal guardianship. Custody alone does not bestow any responsibility regarding the long-term welfare of the child. • Finalised third party parental responsibility orders – transfer all duties, powers, responsibilities and authority parents are entitled to by law, to a nominated person(s) considered appropriate by the court. The nominated person may be an individual such as a relative or an officer of a state or territory department. Third party parental responsibility may be ordered when a parent is unable to care for a child. 'Permanent care orders' are an example of a third party parental responsibility order and involve the transfer of guardianship to a third party carer. It can also be applied to the achievement of a stable arrangement under a long-term guardianship order to 18 years without guardianship being transferred to a third party. These orders are only applicable in some jurisdictions.

Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalised supervisory orders – give the department responsible for child protection some responsibility for a child’s welfare. Under these orders, the department supervises and/or directs the level and type of care that is to be provided to the child. Children under supervisory orders are generally under the responsibility of their parents and the guardianship or custody of the child is unaffected. Finalised supervisory orders are therefore less interventionist than finalised guardianship orders but require the child’s parent or guardian to meet specified conditions, such as medical care of the child. • Interim and temporary orders – generally cover the provision of a limited period of supervision and/or placement of a child. Parental responsibility under these orders may reside with the parents or with the department responsible for child protection. Orders that are not finalised (such as an application to a court for a care and protection order) are also included in this category, unless another finalised order is in place. • Administrative arrangements – agreements with child protection departments that have the same effect as a court order in transferring custody or guardianship. These arrangements can also allow a child to be placed in out-of-home care without going through court. <p>Children are counted only once, even if they are on more than one care and protection order.</p>
Child	A person aged 0–17 years (including, at times, unborn children).
Children in out-of-home care during the year	The total number of children who were in at least one out-of-home care placement at any time during the year. A child who is in more than one placement is counted only once.
Exited out-of-home care	Where a child leaves a government-funded placement for more than 60 days. This does not necessarily mean that a child has returned to the care of his or her family.
Family based care	Home-based care (see ‘Out-of-home care’).
Family group homes	Homes for children provided by a department or community-sector agency which have live-in, non-salaried carers who are reimbursed and/or subsidised for the provision of care.

Term	Definition
Family support services	<p>Activities associated with the provision of lower level (that is, non-intensive) services to families in need, including identification and assessment of family needs, provision of support and diversionary services, some counselling and active linking and referrals to support networks. These types of services are funded by government but can be delivered by a child protection agency or a non-government organisation.</p> <p>These services are typically delivered via voluntary arrangements (as distinct from court orders) between the relevant agency and family. This suite of services does not typically involve planned follow-up by the applicable child protection agency after initial service referral or delivery.</p>
Guardian	<p>Any person who has the legal and ongoing care and responsibility for the protection of a child.</p>
Intensive family support services	<p>Specialist services that aim to prevent the imminent separation of children from their primary caregivers as a result of child protection concerns and to reunify families where separation has already occurred. These services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are funded or established explicitly to prevent the separation of or to reunify families • provide a range of services as part of an integrated strategy focusing on improving family functioning and skills, rather than providing a single type of service • are intensive in nature, averaging at least four hours of service provision per week for a specified short term period (usually less than six months). <p>Families are generally referred to these services by the statutory child protection agency and will have been identified through the child protection process. Intensive family support services may use some or all of the following strategies: assessment and case planning; parent education and skill development; individual and family counselling; drug and alcohol counselling and domestic and family violence support; anger management; respite and emergency care; practical and financial support; mediation, brokerage and referral services; and training in problem solving.</p>

Term	Definition
Investigation	<p>An investigation is the process whereby the relevant department obtains more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification and makes an assessment about the risk of abuse or neglect to the child, and his or her protective needs. Not all notifications are investigated in all jurisdictions. For example, if a determination is made that a child and family are better served by family support services rather than a child protection response, children and families might be referred to diversionary and support services. Once it has been decided that an investigation is required, the investigation process is similar across jurisdictions.</p> <p>The department responsible for child protection may obtain further information about the child and his or her family by checking information systems for any previous history, undertaking discussions with agencies and individuals, interviewing/sighting the child and/or interviewing the caregivers/parents. At a minimum, the child is sighted whenever practicable, and the child's circumstances and needs are assessed. Where possible, an investigation determines whether a notification is substantiated or not substantiated.</p>
Investigation finalised	Where an investigation is completed and an outcome of 'substantiated' or 'not substantiated' is recorded by 31 August.
Investigation in process	Where an investigation is commenced but an outcome is not recorded by 31 August.
Length of time in continuous out-of-home care	The length of time a child is in out-of-home care on a continuous basis. Any break of 60 days or more is considered to break the continuity of the placement. Where a child returns home for less than 60 days and then returns to the former placement or to a different placement, this does not affect the length of time in care. Holidays or authorised absences (less than 60 days) in a placement do not break the continuity of placement. A break in a placement does not necessarily mean a child has returned to the care of his or her family.

Term	Definition
Notification	<p>Notifications are reports lodged by members of the community with the appropriate statutory child protection department to signify that they have reason to believe that a child is in need of protection. Depending on the circumstances, not all reports received by child protection departments will be recorded as notifications. Most jurisdictions assess incoming reports to determine whether they meet the threshold for recording a notification. Where, for example, a determination is made that the alleged behaviour does not meet the definition of a child in need of protection, a child concern report or equivalent might be recorded instead. If the alleged behaviour does not meet the threshold for recording a notification or a child concern report, the person reporting the matter might be provided with general advice and/or a referral.</p> <p>Jurisdictions count notifications at different points in the response to a report, ranging from the point of initial contact with the source of the report to the end of a screening and decision making process. This means the number of notifications is not strictly comparable across jurisdictions. Notifications are subsequently investigated based on the policies and practices in each jurisdiction.</p> <p>Notification and investigation data are collected early in the child protection process and often before an agency has full knowledge of a child's circumstances. This lack of information and the inherent difficulties in identifying Indigenous status mean that data on the number of notifications and investigations by Indigenous status should be interpreted with care.</p>
Other relative	<p>A grandparent, aunt, uncle or cousin, whether the relationship is half, full, step or through adoption, and can be traced through or to a person whose parents were not married to each other at the time of the child's birth. This category includes members of Aboriginal communities who are accepted by that community as being related to the child.</p>
Other supported placements	<p>Governments may provide financial support for children and young people in living arrangements that are not defined as out-of-home care and will usually have arranged these placements. These placements usually include children on third party parental responsibility orders and children on immigration orders (where funding is provided by the Australian Government and children who do not come through the child protection system). They may also include ongoing placements for children aged 18 years or older.</p>

Term	Definition
Out-of-home care	<p>Overnight care for children aged less than 18 years who were unable to live with their families due to child safety concerns. This includes placements approved by the Department responsible for child protection for which there is ongoing case management and financial payment (including where a financial payment has been offered but has been declined by the carer). This includes legal (court ordered) and voluntary placements, and placements made for the purposes of providing respite for parents or carers.</p> <p>Other living arrangements that were previously included in the scope of out-of-home care will be reported separately as 'other supported placements'.</p>
Permanency arrangement	<p>Permanency arrangements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reunification: Where the Department/agency has transferred full parental guardianship/custody of the child back to the birth parent, family or former guardian within the reporting period. Only Department/agency-approved reunifications are included. This includes children who self-reunified, with subsequent endorsement by the Department/agency. A reunification or supervisory order may be granted or there may be no order in effect. • Finalised third-party parental responsibility order: Order transferring all duties, powers, responsibilities and authority to which parents are entitled by law to a nominated person(s) whom the court considers appropriate. The nominated person may be an individual such as a relative or an officer of the state or territory department. Third-party parental responsibility may be ordered in the event that a parent is unable to care for a child, with parental responsibility then transferred to a relative, or other nominated person. 'Long-term' generally refers to where the order confers guardianship/parental responsibility until the child turns 18 years of age. • Adoption order: An adoption order, made by a competent authority under adoption legislation, by which the adoptive parent(s) become the legal parent(s) of the child. The way in which an adoption is finalised depends on the procedures of the state or territory departments responsible for adoption in each jurisdiction. This includes both known-carer adoptions and local adoptions.
Protective intervention services	<p>Functions of government that receive and assess allegations of child abuse and neglect, and/or harm to children and young people, provide and refer clients to family support and other relevant services, and intervene to protect children.</p>

Term	Definition
Relatives/kin	People who are family or close friends, or are members of a child or young person's community (in accordance with their culture) who are reimbursed (or who have been offered but declined reimbursement) by the State/Territory for the care of a child. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, a kinship carer may be another Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person who is a member of their community, a compatible community or from the same language group.
Residential care	Where the placement is in a residential building whose purpose is to provide placements for children and where there are paid staff.
Respite care	Respite care is a form of out-of-home care used to provide short-term accommodation for children where the intention is for the child to return to their prior place of residence. Respite placements include: <i>respite from birth family</i> , where a child is placed in out-of-home care on a temporary basis for reasons other than child protection (for example, the child's parents are ill or unable to care for them on a temporary basis; or as a family support mechanism to prevent entry into full time care, as part of the reunification process, as a shared care arrangement); <i>respite from placement</i> , where a child spends regular, short and agreed periods of time with another carer other than their primary carer.
Stability and permanency of placement	<p>Number of placements for children who exited out-of-home care and did not return within 60 days. Placements exclude respite or temporary placements lasting less than 7 days. Placements are counted separately where there is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a change in the placement type — for example, from a home-based to a facility-based placement • within placement type, a change in venue or a change from one home-based placement to a different home-based placement. <p>Each placement should only be counted once. A return to a previous placement is not included as a different placement. A return home is not counted as a placement, although if a child returns home for 60 days or more they are considered to have exited care.</p>
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ)	The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire about 2 to 17 year olds. There are several versions to meet the needs of researchers, clinicians and educators. All versions ask about 25 attributes divided between five scales 1) emotional symptoms (5 items); conduct problems (5 items); hyperactivity/inattention (5 items); peer relationship problems (5 items); prosocial behaviour (5 items).

Term	Definition
Substantiation	<p>A substantiation is the outcome of an investigated notification that has resulted in the conclusion that there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been, is being or is likely to be abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. It does not necessarily require sufficient evidence for a successful prosecution and does not imply that treatment or case management is, or is to be, provided. However, if an investigation results in a substantiation, intervention by child protection services might be needed to protect the child. This intervention can take a number of forms, including one or more of: referral to other services; supervision and support; an application to court; and a placement in out of home care.</p> <p>The legal definitions of abuse and neglect are similar across jurisdictions. However, while the legal definitions for substantiating notifications are similar across jurisdictions, there remain some differences in practice, including different thresholds for recording a substantiation (that is, some jurisdictions substantiate harm or risk of harm to a child, and others substantiate actions by parents or incidents that cause harm). These differences impact on the comparability of these data.</p>
Third-party parental responsibility orders	<p>An order transferring all duties, powers, responsibilities, and authority to which parents are entitled by law to a nominated person(s) whom the court considers appropriate. The nominated person may be an individual, such as a relative, or an officer of the state or territory department responsible for child protection. Third-party parental responsibility may be ordered in the event that a parent is unable to care for a child, with parental responsibility then transferred to a relative, or other nominated person.</p> <p>Finalised third-party parental responsibility orders can be a long-term order or a short-term order.</p> <p>Third-party parental responsibility orders vary across jurisdictions. Despite this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in most instances, third-party parental responsibility orders transfer guardianship away from the state and to a known carer • in nearly all cases, third-party parental carers are offered the same carer payments as long-term guardians • there is generally no ongoing case management for children on third-party parental responsibility orders, except in Queensland, SA and the ACT, and for children subject to long-term orders granting guardianship to other suitable persons only. <p>This is in contrast to long-term guardianship or custody orders to the state, which feature ongoing case management.</p>

References

DSS (Department of Social Services) 2015, *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children — Driving Change: Intervening Early, Third three-year action plan, 2015–2018*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

SNAICC (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care) 2013, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle*, snaicc.org.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-child-placement-principle/ (accessed 31 August 2016).

Download supporting material

[16 Child protection services data tables \(XLSX - 696 Kb\)](#)

[16 Child protection dataset \(CSV - 1670 Kb\)](#)

See the corresponding table number in the data tables for detailed definitions, caveats, footnotes and data source(s).